



St Mary's East Worlington

The History

About the middle of the 12th century the parishes of East and West Worlington were formed and the two St Mary's churches were built, both dedicated to the Virgin Mary. It is believed that the East Worlington St Mary's church was built on the site of a Saxon place of worship.

Although the church dates from the 12th century most of the church that you can now see was rebuilt in the 19th century as it had then become dilapidated. The rebuilding and renovation was paid for through the generosity of its then patron, the 5th Earl of Portsmouth at a cost of £1,000.

The church once boasted a wooden spire, presumably matching the one on West Worlington Church, but regrettably this has been lost.

The Architecture

St Mary's is a stone built church, consisting of chancel, nave, south porch with a Norman doorway, and an embattled western tower containing 4 bells: The only part of the original 12th century church that remains is the Norman doorway to the nave and the church therefore is, in essence, a Victorian church.

Not everyone has approved of the efforts to restore the church as testified by a disparaging remark from a renowned local historian, William Hoskins, in his 1954 book entitled simply "Devon"; in this he wrote about the church, "almost rebuilt in 1879 and spoilt".



Churches Unite

For at least 700 years East and West Worlington were separate parishes. That arrangement changed in 1885 when the two parishes were united for civic purposes under the title of East Worlington. 34 years later the livings were similarly united by an Order of council dated August 18th 1919 and the rectory of West Worlington was sold off as a farm.

The living of East Worlington continued until 1958 at which time it was put into abeyance and the East Worlington rectory was also sold. In 1967 the two St Mary's became part of Little Dart Team Ministry, which is a group ministry of twelve churches (*Burrington, Chawleigh, Cheldon, Chulmleigh, East Worlington, Eggesford, Meshaw, Romansleigh, Thelbridge, Wembworthy, West Worlington and Witheridge*).





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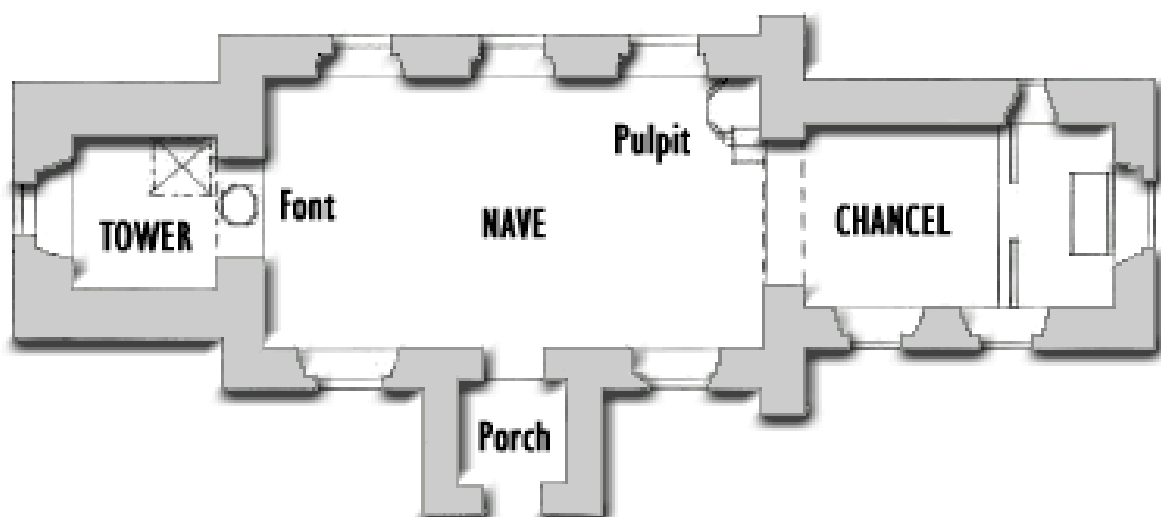
Things to look out for

Not to be missed is the Norman inner doorway to the porch. Also, look out for Stuart Royal Arms in the nave and the plaque commemorating the rebuilding of the church in 1879.

Victorian features inside the church include the floor tiling in the chancel and the cast iron lattice windows in the nave and tower. Also dating from the 19th century are the neo-Norman font with cover, and the elaborate wood panelled altar table.

Also of interest are the inscriptions in the nave in memory of the Cobleigh family in Chulmleigh. They left the interest of £200 in Consols Annuities (a form of Government bond) to be distributed by the churchwardens on Easter Monday for ever to the poor men and women of the parish not having monthly pay. It is not known when the last distribution was made.

And see if you can find this delightful gargoye.



On the north wall of the chancel there is a monument surmounted by a coat of arms to the members of the Nott family, dated 1704. A second monument, in the nave, is to the Rev. Benjamin Clay M.A. a former rector, who died in 1763.

Location

St Mary's, East Worlington is set back on the east side of the road in the centre of the East Worlington village. Nestled behind the thatched Parish Hall (formerly a tithe barn), it sits neatly between East Worlington Primary School and the thatched former rectory. The Church is approached along a narrow alleyway between the parish hall and the school and stands in an ancient churchyard surrounded by mature trees. OS Grid ref: SS 774 137