



About St Mary's

St Mary's is a fine Victorian church, rebuilt in 1879–80 by Sir John Kelk (1816–86), one of the greatest 19th-century contractors who constructed important railway and dock works, as well as many houses and churches in London.

In the 1870s Kelk purchased the famous sporting estate of Tidworth (in Hampshire until 1992) and set about remodelling Tidworth House. His architect was John Johnson (c. 1807–78) whom he had employed on many other works, including the Alexandra Palace (completed 1873, but rebuilt after a fire). Johnson had designed about a dozen churches in and around London from the 1850s but Tidworth church was to be his last. It was not started before his death and the work was supervised by G H Gordon, a canon of Salisbury Cathedral.

The architecture is inspired by 13th-century work, notably the beautiful church of St Giles', Skelton, North Yorkshire. However, it is given a very mid-Victorian twist with the deliciously fanciful bell turret and the richness of the internal ornament and decoration, notably the grey and pink Devon marble shafts to the internal arches, and the mosaic flooring in the chancel. A single great roof sweeps over the nave and aisles, and the interior is most impressive with its great height and rich decoration.

The church was declared redundant in 1972 when the parish was separated from Shipton Bellinger (still part of Hampshire) in Winchester Diocese and joined to North Tidworth (Salisbury Diocese). In 1973 it was vested in the care of the Redundant Churches Fund (now The Churches Conservation Trust).

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Due to their age, historic church floors can be uneven and worn, and lighting can be low level. Please take care, especially in wet weather when floors can be slippery.

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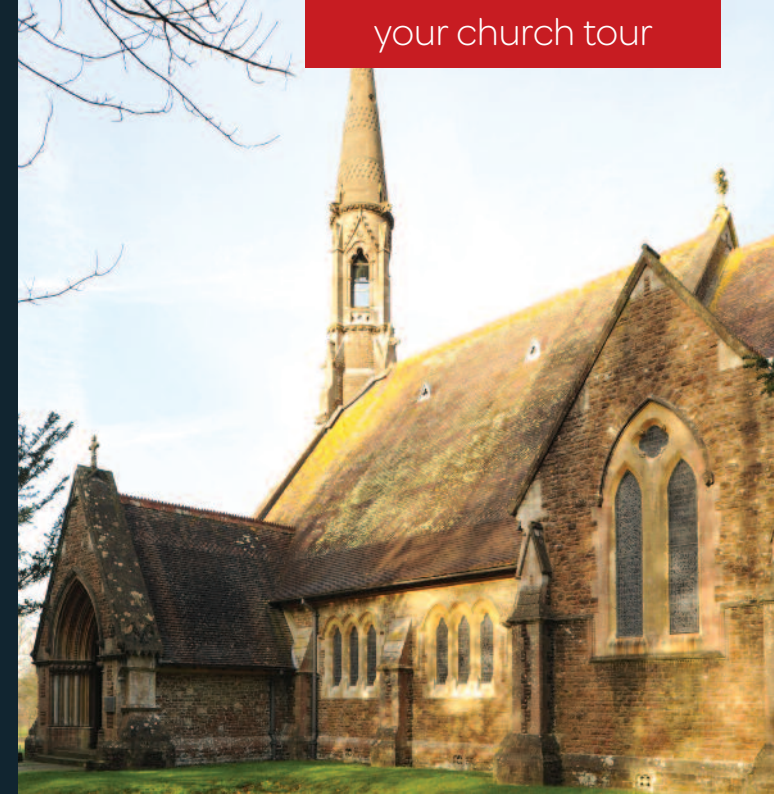


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Church of
St Mary
the Virgin

South Tidworth, Wiltshire



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1 The **pulpit** is circular in shape and rests on a half-cone. It has rich foliage carving and polished breccia shafts.



2 The tall **chancel arch**, like the other arches, has shafts of polished grey and pink Devon marble, here separated by strips of dog-tooth ornament. From the 1850s improved technology and railway transport encouraged Victorian architects and their clients to make full use of rich stonework brought from afar.

3 The **nave** is extremely tall and is covered by a keel-shaped roof. On either side are pairs of quatrefoil piers, again of Devon marble, with stiff-leaf capitals. The seats are of typical Victorian type but they carry now rare candle standards (converted for electric bulbs). From here it can be seen that the aisles have half-arches marking out the bays.

4 Two three-light **stained glass windows** depict the Annunciation (west), the Visitation, Christ with the Little Children, the Marriage at Cana and the Last Supper. They were made by one of the leading firms of Victorian stained glass artists, Clayton & Bell.

5 The west windows of the aisles have **stained glass** depicting the Four Evangelists and Mary and Joseph.

6 In the west wall is a **recess** in which hangs the rope for the single bell.



7 The square **font** is richly decorated with foliage of various kinds. The corner shafts are of breccia (as on the pulpit). Above, the west windows are filled with patterned **stained glass**.

8 The **stained glass** in the south aisle windows continues the story of Christ from those on the north side, depicting scenes from the Passion (east) to the Resurrection.

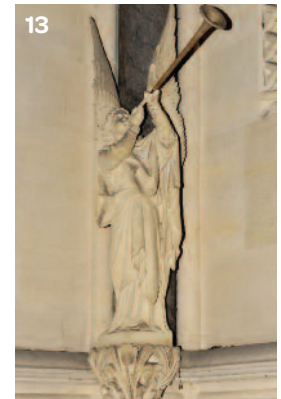
9 The **chancel** is embellished by a fine mosaic floor. The **roof** is keeled, like that in the nave, but here the three bays are filled with decorated panels depicting sacred emblems. The eastern bay is richer than the other two in order to give honour to the sanctuary below. The decoration is by the notable London firm of ecclesiastical decorators, Heaton, Butler & Bayne.



12 Above the altar (raised on four steps) is a large square **reredos** showing Christ carrying the Cross to Calvary. Like the rest of the carving it was executed by Farmer & Brindley. Above, the **stained glass** in the three-light east window shows the Adoration by the Shepherds, the Crucifixion, and the Supper at Emmaus: it is the work of Heaton, Butler & Bayne.

13 In the corners of the chancel are **angel figures** blowing trumpets.

14 A **brass tablet** memorialises the Revd H E Delme-Radcliff, who died on 16 October 1916, aged 82. He had been rector of the parish for 54 years.



15 **Triple-light lancet windows** with thin bands of nail-head decoration over the heads. The building material of the walls is rock-faced brown Bargate stone.

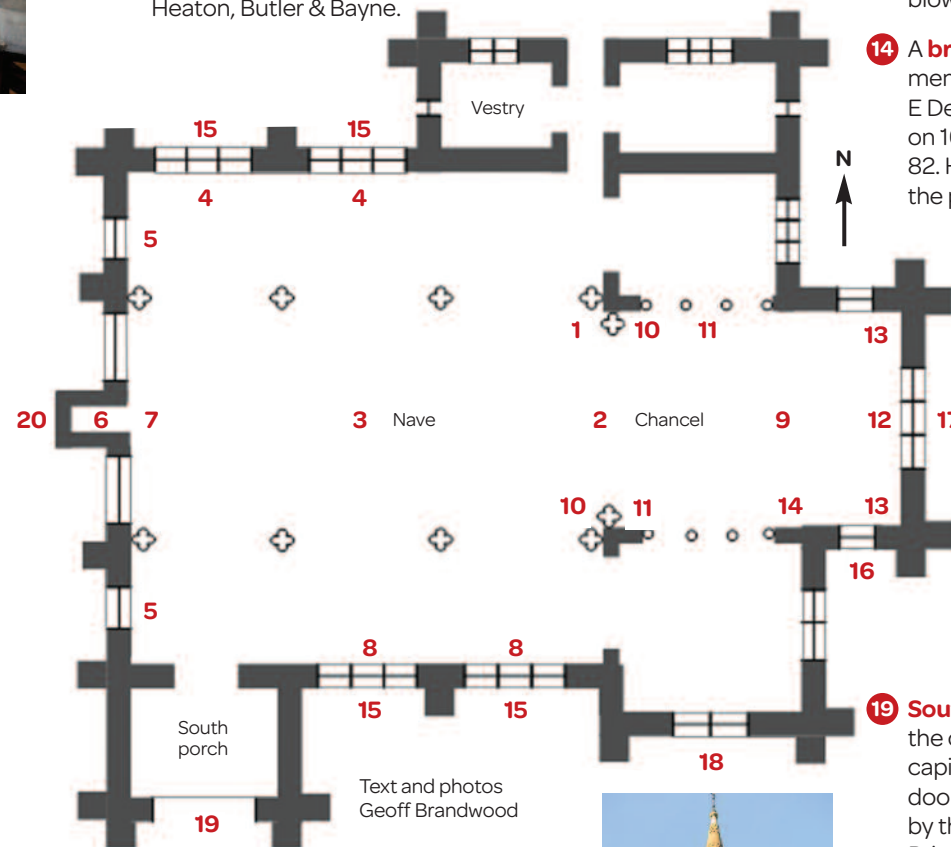
16 **Single-light lancet windows**, surrounded by dog-tooth decoration.

17 The **foundation stone** laid by Sir John Kelk's wife, Rebecca Anne, 29 June 1879. Above is the three-light east window.

18 South transept with a **two-light window** with punched tracery in the head. From here is an excellent view of the mighty **roof**, covering both nave and aisles.

19 **South porch** with exceptionally rich decoration to the outer doorway, including lovely stiff-leaf foliage capitals in the 13th-century manner. The inner doorway is somewhat simpler. The carving was done by the distinguished London firm of Farmer & Brindley. From here it is clear the western parts of the church are built on raised ground to even out the lie of the land.

20 The protruding **buttress** and its circular **bell turret** are the most striking and individual feature of the exterior. The latter bristles with extravagant ornament including grotesque winged creatures, and scaly patterns on the conical spirelet.



10 At the entrance to the chancel are a pair of ornately carved **reading desks**.

11 Behind the **choir stalls**, on either side are **triple arches** with fine tracery heads.

