



About St Mary's

The place name Stansted Mountfitchet means 'the stony place belonging to Monte Fixo', who originated from Montfiquet in Normandy. St Mary's was probably founded early in the 12th century by William de Monte Fixo (Mountfitchet) to replace a Saxon structure that stood on the same site, indicated by the mention of a priest in Domesday Book (1086). Judging by the two surviving Norman doorways and chancel arch it must have been a splendid and costly building.

It can be seen that the church was extended in the 13th century from the enlarged chancel and surviving (now blocked) window in its north wall. A little later a north chapel was added by the Lancaster family. Subsequent families associated with the church were the Middletons and Fuller Maitlands. Whilst the body of the church is built of local flint a brick tower was built in the 17th century. It houses eight bells. The church reached its present size by the addition, and subsequent remodelling, of a north aisle in 1829, although much of its character now dates from the late Victorian and Edwardian periods.

Because of its location so far from the village a replacement church, dedicated to St John, was built in a more convenient position in 1889, and this eventually led to the closure of St Mary's and its vesting in The Churches Conservation Trust in 1994. Although no longer used for regular worship, the Trust works in partnership with The Friends of St Mary's Church to ensure that the building is used for exhibitions and other events throughout the year.

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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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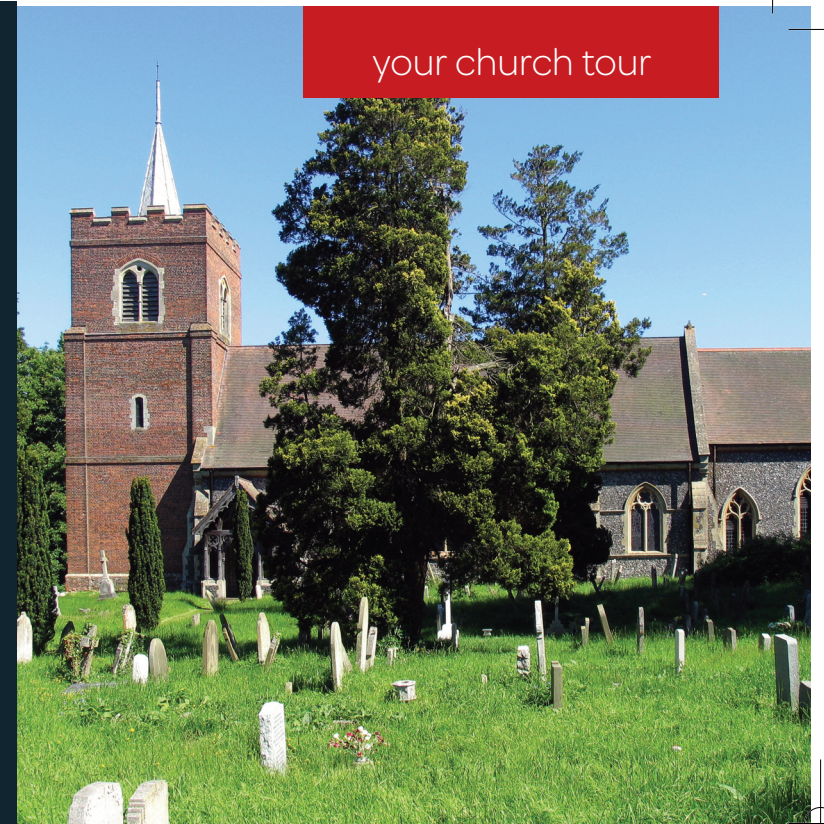
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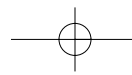


Church of
St Mary

Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex



THE CHURCHES
CONSERVATION TRUST



1 The **south doorway**, protected by a Victorian porch, is a tour de force of Norman design incorporating zigzag and saltire-cross mouldings. To the left of the door are the remains of two **mass dials** (sundials) for the priest to insert a gnomon to determine the time of the service.



2 The **font** is a fine piece of 13th-century design with volute mouldings that try to turn it from a circular tub to a square. The wooden cover dates from the 17th century.

3 The **nave roof** is entirely Victorian, designed by Thomas Dollman as part of his rebuilding of 1887. The corbels high on the south wall were incorporated to try to make the roof line up with the tower, as the nave in its present form does not have the chancel arch at its central axis.



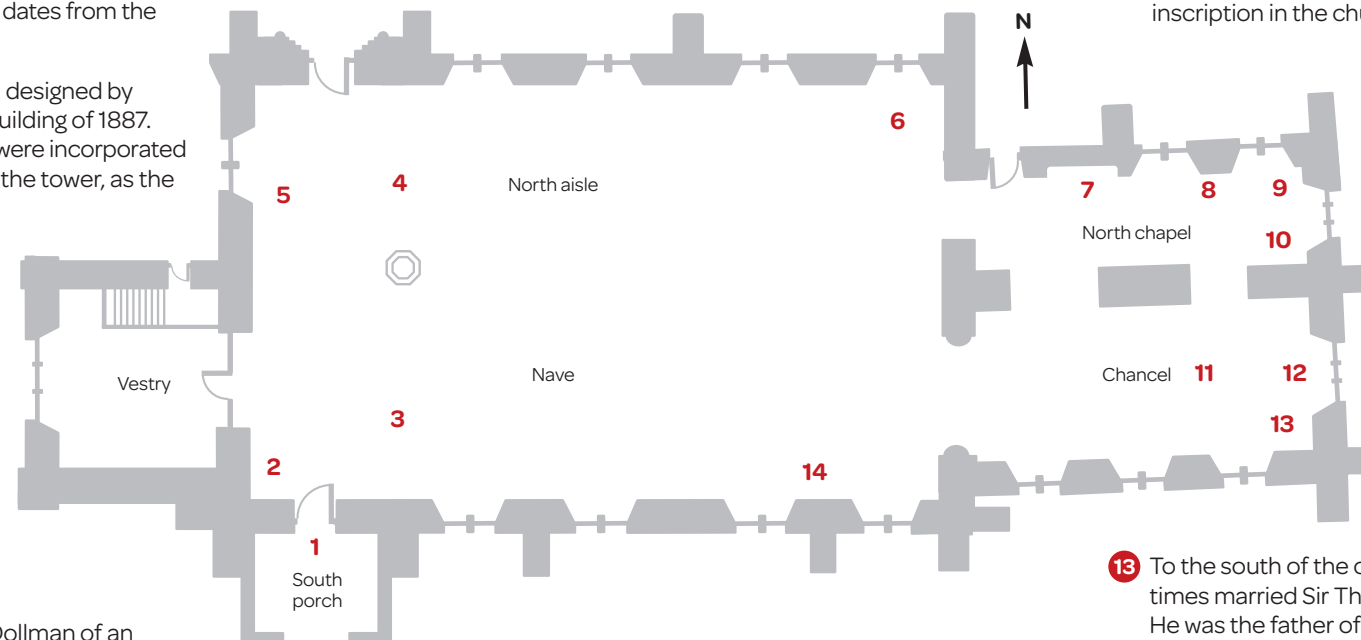
4 The **north aisle** is a rebuilding by Dollman of an earlier 19th-century aisle that had been designed to hold a gallery. The arches that separate the aisle from the nave are all of 1887. The north doorway, however, is of Norman date and was inserted into the Victorian wall. The splendid carving may only be appreciated from the outside.

5 The **west window** is a memorial to Sir Thomas Jackson (d.1915) and his son Claude who was killed in France in 1917. Look for the fine representation of a lighthouse in the lower scene representing the soul coming into harbour. Sir Thomas was the third Chief Manager of HSBC and is commemorated by a statue in Statue Square, Hong Kong.

6 The most famous **monument** in the church commemorates Hester Salusbury who died in 1614, rumoured to have been killed by a stag whilst hunting in Stansted Park. This painted alabaster effigy, depicting her in riding clothes with a wasp waist, was originally in the chancel and the cartouche above it was formerly above her feet. Look for the Crown of Thorns and Symbols of the Passion on the cartouche which were rare depictions so soon after the Reformation. The monument may have been designed by Epiphanius Evesham, one of the most celebrated early gentleman sculptors.

10 To the right of the altar, and above the piscina for the priest to wash his fingers before Mass, can be seen the **blocked 13th-century window** that originally lit the chancel before this chapel was added.

11 A small **brass** in the floor of the chancel commemorates Robert de Bokkyng who was vicar of this church under the patronage of Thremhall Priory, and who died in 1361. It is the earliest inscription in the church.



12 The vast pink alabaster **reredos** dates from 1903, and is a fine example of Edwardian design incorporating the Risen Christ, Phoenix and Tree of Life. It is a memorial to Evelyn Fuller Maitland of Stansted Hall.

13 To the south of the chancel is the **monument** to four-times married Sir Thomas Middleton who died in 1631. He was the father of Hester Salusbury whose memorial stands in the north aisle. He held many high offices including Lord Mayor of London and Member of Parliament, and lived at Stansted Hall from 1615 until his death. A translation of the lengthy inscription will be found nearby. His brother Hugh was founder of the New River Company that brought fresh water from Hertfordshire to central London. The New River opened in September 1613.

7 Set into an alcove in the north wall of the chapel is a **cross-legged effigy** of a male member of the Lancaster family for whom this chapel was built in about AD 1300. There is some debate as to which member of the family it represents.

8 The fine 20th-century metal **altar rails** were designed by William Bainbridge Reynolds (1855–1935).

9 The earliest **stained glass** in the church, the east window of the Lancaster Chapel, depicts the Good Samaritan and is signed in the lower central panel by William Warrington, 1859.

14 The **weeping woman monument** by Irish sculptor Edward Gaffin commemorates William Harcourt Torriano (d. 1828) 'upwards of forty years on the Madras Establishment of the Honble East India Company'.

General exterior and interior views by Dr John Salmon

