

St Mary & All Saints – The Pews

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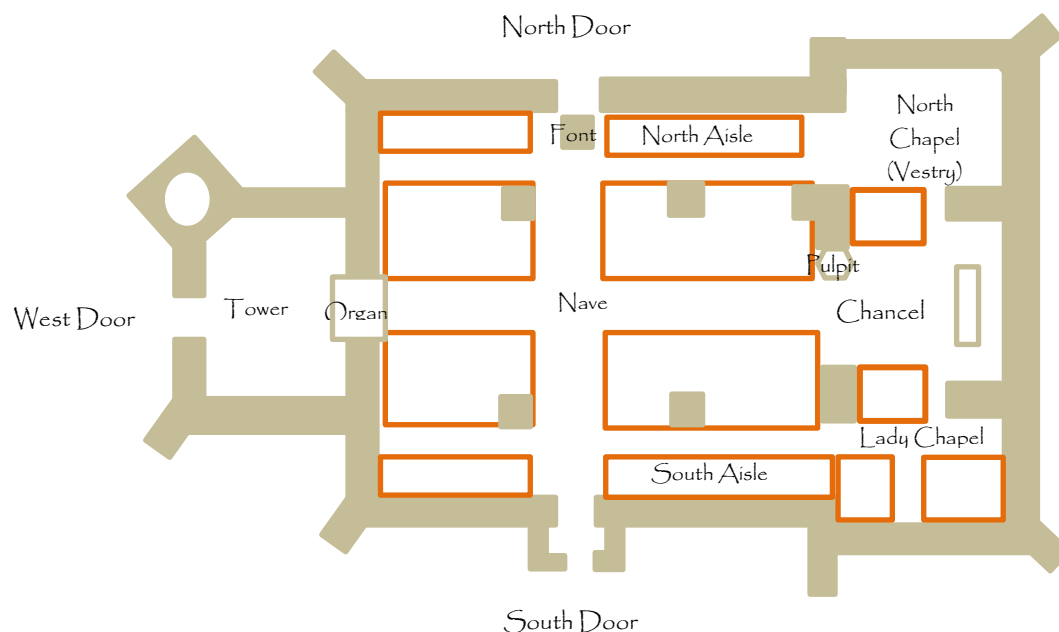
St Mary & All Saints – The Pews

In 1847 the oak Georgian box pews in St Mary & All Saints were replaced with pine pews throughout the church. The east and west galleries were removed at the same time.

Compared to the current arrangements, there is evidence that following the 1847 re-ordering:

- there were three more rows of pews at the front of the nave, extending close up to the chancel arch;
- there was one more row of pews at the rear of the nave;
- the pews at the front of the north aisle extended further towards the north chapel;
- the pews in the north aisle extended back into the north-west corner (at the time the font was located in front of the north door, and blocked this entrance);
- the pews in the south aisle extended back into the south-west corner;
- there were rows of pews on either side of the chancel;
- the Lady Chapel was fitted with rows of pews facing towards the chancel.

At this time the pulpit was probably positioned under the chancel arch, and the organ was located in the opening of the west doorway between the nave and the belfry. The internal ordering of the church may then have been as shown below (not to scale).



In all, the pews as fitted in 1847 may have had a capacity for up to 300 people.

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The rector at the time of installation of the pews in 1847 was the Rev. J.A. Griffith Colpoys. His first wife had been Anne Sumner, whose memorial is in the churchyard, near to the east wall of the church. Her father was John Bird Sumner, who was Bishop of Chester, and was later to become Archbishop of Canterbury. Her uncle was Charles Sumner, who had been Bishop of Winchester since 1827, and would have been responsible for granting the living of Droxford to the Reverend Colpoys in 1831.

Both John Bird Sumner and Charles Sumner belonged to the evangelical wing of the Church of England. It is likely that their family and episcopal connections would have influenced the services in St Mary & All Saints, and the complete re-ordering with new pews that took place in 1847.

Informal memorabilia indicate that St Mary & All Saints was strongly evangelical throughout the remainder of the 19th century, and retained evangelical features in its forms of worship up until the 1930s.

Some of the pews fitted in 1847 would have been removed during the restoration of the church carried out by Canon John Vaughan in 1903. This would have included those in the north-west corner, when the font was installed in its present position.

A faculty was granted to remove two pews in 1927.

A faculty of 1935 allowed two pews to be removed from the north aisle when the oak screen was placed at the entrance to the north chapel.

A faculty of 1946 describes the removal of two pews and the setting back of five choir stalls, at the same time as the installation of the new east window.

In 1949 three pews and a form were removed from the south-west corner of the church to create the children's corner.

In 1952 all of the pews were removed from the Lady Chapel and replaced with chairs as part of its restoration in memory of Bishop Lovett.

In more recent times two pews were removed from the front of the nave on either side, leaving the present arrangements.

Although a significant number of pews have been removed over the years, sufficient remain to capture the essence of the Victorian ordering of the church. Other furniture from the Victorian period includes the pulpit, the brass lectern, and most of the individual chairs, litany desks and kneelers currently to be found in the chancel and the Lady Chapel. Together with the remaining pews these Victorian furnishings still collectively form one of the most significant features of the church, and are a testimony to the lengthy evangelical period in the history of St Mary & All Saints during the 19th and 20th centuries.