

Buckland St Mary

CHURCHYARD VISITOR TRAIL

Walking around the outside of our church is a trip back through time. Fragments of it date back to Anglo-Saxon times, but the earliest complete part still standing dates to the 12th century, when the well-connected Sheriff of Berkshire Hugh de Buckland and his descendants controlled the village. Major rebuilding of the tower, chancel, and transepts took place in the 13th century. The churchyard is also full of interesting and important memorials to local people from the 17th century to the present day.

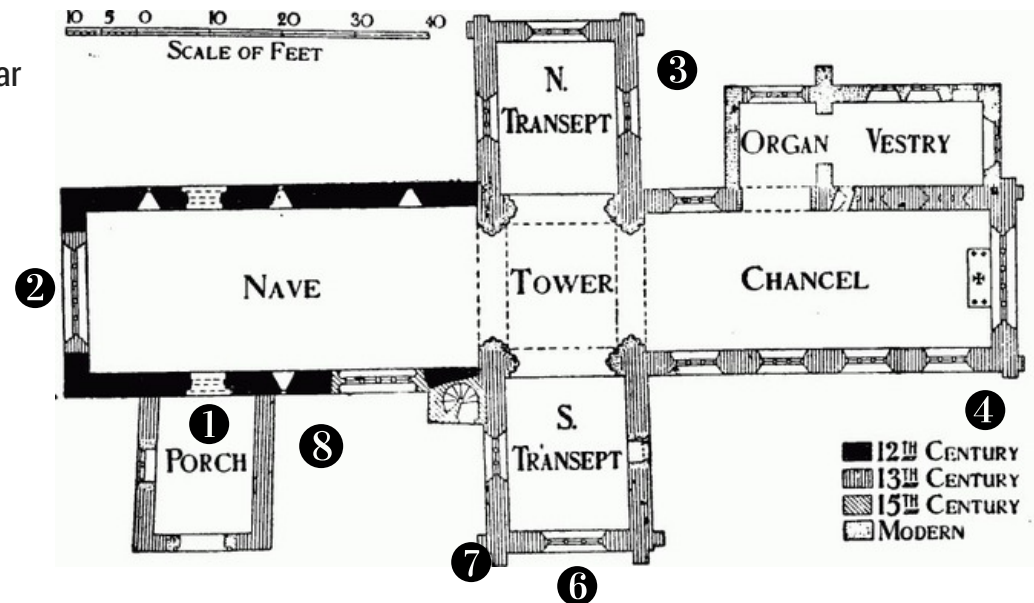
1) The large **south porch** was added in the 13th century but shelters a spectacular Norman doorway mirrored by another on the north side of the nave. These must date to the rebuilding and widening of the nave by Hugh de Buckland or his son around 1110-1130 AD; the north door links to a private pathway leading to the later de Buckland manor.

2) The **herringbone stonework** on the outside of the west wall of the nave is a classic Anglo-Saxon building technique, and may either be a fragment of the Saxon church, or evidence of a Saxon builder stubbornly sticking to his preferred techniques despite the wishes of his Norman client!

3) The **pink lichen** covering the north side of the church with its powdery texture is an unmistakable sign of climate change. This lichen was very uncommon in the UK until recent decades, when conditions grew warm and wet enough for it to thrive.

4) As you walk around the east end of the chancel, look up to the tower to see the remains of former **roof lines** cut into its faces. These show us that the roofs used to be steeply pitched and probably covered with local stone slates, before they were lowered and recovered with more expensive metal roofing when the parapets were added in the 15th century. As you continue around the church keep looking for blocked windows and doorways that show how the building was remodelled over time.

5) There are three **war graves** in the churchyard, one from the First World War, one from the Second, and one from the recent Afghan conflict. Please pause here and take a moment to reflect on their sacrifice, and to pray for all victims of war.

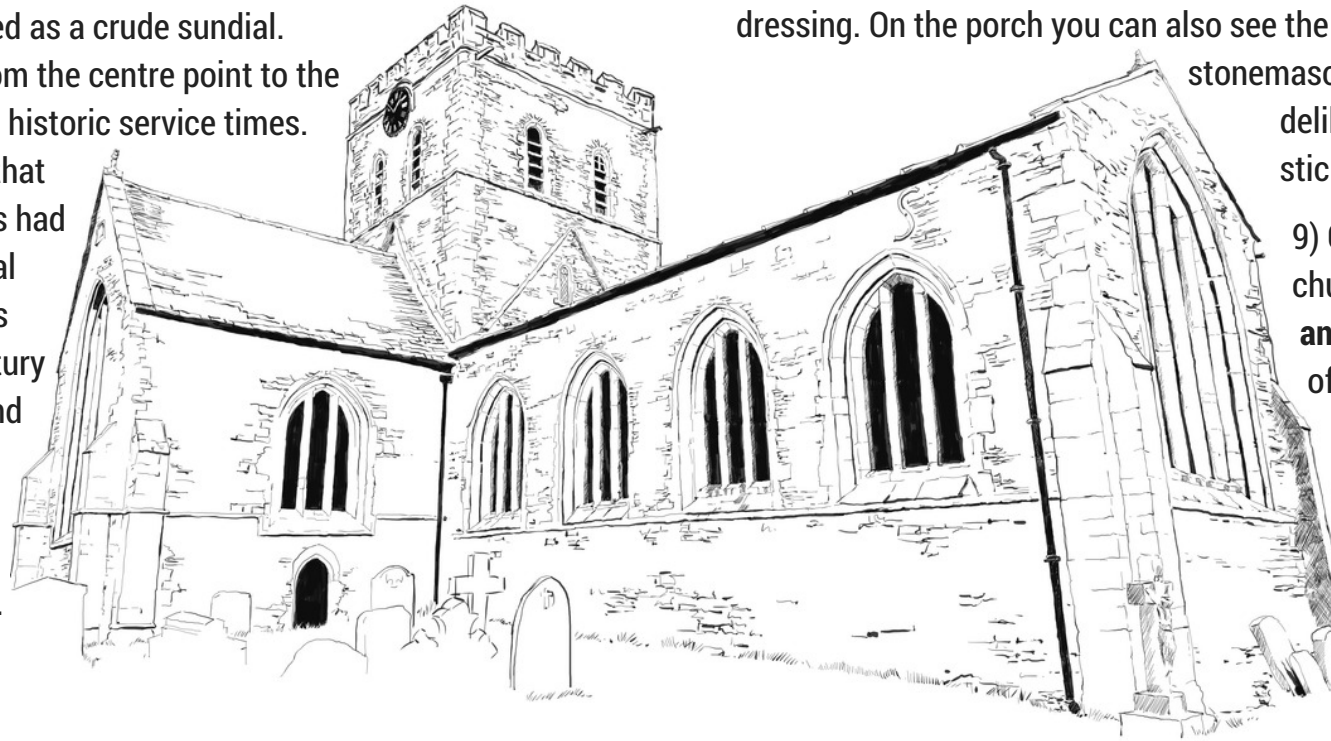


6) The **Clara Jane West monument** is immediately outside the south transept that her husband had spectacularly remodelled as a memorial to her. The white marble cross with ivy decoration creeping up it is typical of High Victorian romanticist sculpture, and would have been very costly to commission. Clara's husband, William, is buried with her in the family crypt beneath the cross.

7) There are at least two **Mass dials** scratched into the exterior stonework of the church - one on the south wall of the south transept and one by the south door, where it was later made useless by the addition of the south porch! A mass dial is a circle with a small point or shallow hole for a stick in the middle, designed to be used as a crude sundial.

Scratched lines radiate out from the centre point to the edge of the circle and indicate historic service times.

Such dials were the only way that clergymen and churchwardens had of keeping time in the medieval period - though the first clocks were invented in the 14th century they were hugely expensive and most parish churches didn't have one until increasing industrialisation made them affordable in the 18th century.



8) The **rough rubble stonework** of the church is an appearance that many people associate with medieval buildings. In reality though, almost all stone built medieval buildings would have been plastered, inside and out, and painted to give the impression of fine stonework or with colourful scenes. Much like modern day building, masons often used cheaper or more readily available materials like rubble stone, and covered them up with render or plaster to make the walls look neater. We know that this was the case at our church because the fine stone dressings at the corners of the walls and at the windows stand out much further than the rubble stone - this was to allow for a thick layer of lime plaster to go over the top of the rubble and finish flush with the dressing. On the porch you can also see the peck marks from the

stonemasons axe on the stone, made deliberately to help the plaster stick.

9) On your way out of the churchyard don't miss the **ancient yew tree** in the middle of the churchyard path. We estimate that it is around 500 years old, making it the oldest thing in the churchyard with the exception of the church itself!

We hope you enjoyed your visit to St Mary's!

Why not have a look at our other visitor trails, or at our website buckland-livinghistory.org.uk to find out more?