

## St Mary's Watford

St Mary's is the mother church of the ancient and extensive parish of Watford which has, over the past century, been divided into several parishes. The date of the first church on this site is not known, but it can be said with some certainty that for upwards of 800 years Christian worship has taken place here. No part of the existing building dates from before 1230.

St. Mary's is one of the largest churches in Hertfordshire and Watford's most ancient monument. The parts of the 1230 structure (Early English style of architecture) still remaining are the Chancel arch and adjacent walls, the South arcade of the Nave (pillars and arches), the east end and double piscina in the Chancel and the doorway over the pulpit, which was intended to give access to a Rood loft.

In 1979 the Church Centre was built to replace the old church halls and to provide accommodation for groups and social events.

*For a copy of the church's historical guide, please contact the church office.*

### The Bells

St. Mary's church has one of the finest rings of bells for many miles. Ringing for Sunday services is at 9:45 a.m. and 5:30. p.m. and practices are held on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m.

They are always on the lookout for suitable candidates to learn this fascinating art and join the band. All you need is a sense of rhythm and tone, and an ability to

grasp the fundamentals of mathematical permutations. You will be a member of a really friendly group of people here in Watford and be part of an essentially English tradition which is well known and practiced all over the world

St. Mary's has a ring of ten bells, cast by Gillett and Johnston, eight in 1919 and two smaller ones in 1946. Foundries and ringers continue to use hundredweights (cwt.), quarters (qtr.) pounds (lb.) for the weights of their bells. The tenor, the heaviest bell of the ring, weighs 24cwt (1237 kg) and the key of E flat. In addition to the ten bells there is another small bell cast in 1704.

If you would like to know more about bell ringing, please get in touch and we will be pleased to show you round and answer any questions you have.

Tower Master - Richard Hunt    Secretary – Christine Clifford

Please contact: [dukeofwellington@ntlworld.com](mailto:dukeofwellington@ntlworld.com)

### Tower

The 15th century tower is typical of Hertfordshire. In 1871 the external plaster face to the tower walls was removed and replaced with dressed stone and knapped flints and topped with battlements. The heavily-buttressed tower is 24m. to the top of the battlements. The top of the spiral stair, which has 96 steps, forms a turret at the north-east corner and there is also a 9 m. high 'Hertfordshire Spike' on the centre of the tower roof.



## The Public Image

To the many people who pass St. Mary's Church in the busy centre of Watford, the 1.5m diameter clock faces with gilded numbers and hands, high up on the tower are likely to be fairly obvious. If people are there at the right time, they will hear the clock chimes too.

There are clock faces on only three of the four sides of the tower. The reason for the west side not showing the time of day is a matter of conjecture. Firstly it should be remembered that even up to 150 years ago Watford was still quite a small town,

with few buildings to the west. The High Street ran past the east end of the church, and as a large proportion of the residents in the town occupied the many small alleyways off the High Street, clock faces on three sides would have been sufficient. It has also been suggested that as the old Workhouse was in Church Street (from 1721 to 1838), to the west of the church, there should not be a clock face on that side of the tower lest the 'inmates' should waste time 'clock-watching'.

## The Organ

The organ is based upon a Walker, three-manual and pedal instrument of 50 stops, built in 1935 embodying the soundboards and much pipework from one or more earlier Walker instruments. It was an electro-pneumatic organ having an all-electric console with pneumatic relays and action motors in the soundboards. After fifty years of service, and while work was being undertaken on the north transept roof, it was felt the organ should be cleaned with remedial work undertaken on defects and deficiencies. Messrs Hill, Norman & Beard undertook a conservative restoration programme on an instrument which in their terms, was considered to be of excellent pedigree.

By 1985 all the old wiring had to be replaced and many of the magnets renewed. Hill, Norman & Beard proposed the adoption of the Christie Multiplex Transmission System as a replacement for the old action. This offered a multi-channel facility for piston setting and provision for recording the playing of the instrument. Action response was expected to be improved by the reduction of the number of pneumatic relays in the organ.

The stop-tab console, with controls arranged in a double horseshoe format, is mounted on a mobile platform. The instrument is a typical organ of its period and retains as much of its character as possible, while making concessions to more recent thoughts in the way of mixture and mutation ranks. It is unashamedly a romantic organ but acquits itself well to a wide range of organ music.



### Specification

Great		
1	Great Open Diapason	16
2	Open Diapason 1	8
3	Open Diapason 2	8

4	Open Diapason 3	8
5	Wald Flute	8
6	Salicional (Ch 33)	8
7	Principal	4
8	Gemshorn	4
9	Nason Flute	4
10	Twelfth	2.2/3
11	Fifteenth	2
12	Sesquialtera 12.17	II
13	Mixture 19.22.26	III
14	Trumpet	8
15	Clarion (ex 14)	4

**Swell (All Enclosed)**

16	Open Diapason	8
17	Lieblich Gedact	8
18	Dulciana	8
19	Vox Angelica (I'C)	8
20	Principal	4
21	Stopped Flute	4
22	Fifteenth	2
23	Mixture 19.22.26.29	IV
24	Oboe	8
25	Double Trumpet	16

26	Trumpet	8
27	Clarion	4

**Choir (28-41 Enclosed)**

28	Contra Salicional	16
29	Open Diapason	8
30	Harmonic Flute	8
31	Viole	8
32	Voix Celeste (TC)	8
33	Salicional (ex 28)	8
34	Concert Flute	4
35	Salicet	4
36	Nazard	2.2/3
37	Harmonic Piccolo	2
38	T'ierce	1.3/5
39	Larigot (ex 36)	1.1/3
40	Clarinet	8
41	Tuba	8
42	Trumpet (Gt 14)	8
43	Clarion (Gt 15)	4

**Pedal**

44	Sub Bourdon	32
45	Open Diapason (Gt 1)	16

46	Open Wood	16
47	Sub Bass	16
48	Bourdon (ex 44)	16
49	Salicional (Ch 28)	16
50	Principal (Gt 1)	8
51	Octave (ex 46)	8
52	Echo Flute (ex 44)	8
53	Salicional (Ch 28)	8
54	Fifteenth (Gt 1)	4
55	Octave Flute (ex 44)	4
56	Ophicleide	16
57	Trumpet (Sw 25)	16
58	Trumpet (Gt 14)	8
59	Clarion (Gt 14)	4

**Accessories, Couplers, etc.**

Ch/Gt, Sw/Gt, Sw/Ch, Gt/Ped, Sw/Ped, Ch/Ped

Swell - Tremulant, Octave, Sub-Octave, Unison-Off

Choir - Tremulant, Octave, Sub-Octave, Unison-Off

Oreat and Pedal pistons combined

Double Touch Cancel to all stops on same manual/Pedal

Swell and Choir couplers read through the inter-manual couplers except Sub-Octaves to Pedal

Thumb Pistons - 10 General (1-4 only<sup>1</sup>), 6 Swell<sup>1</sup>, 6 Great, 6 Choir

6 (toe) Pedals, 1 Sw/Gt, 1 Gt/Ped<sup>1</sup>, 1 Sw/Ped<sup>1</sup>, 1 Ch/Ped<sup>1</sup>, 1 Setter, 1 General Cancel.

Notes: <sup>1</sup> duplicated by toe pistons)

Expression Pedals to Swell & Choir

**New Work - 1989**

Rank

- 9 new pipework;
- 12 new pipework;
- 15 top octave added;
- 39 wired into 36 and breaking back at the top octave;
- 43 wired into 15;
- 47 old Echo Bourdon transposed and revoiced;

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54 | wired into 1; |  
=====  
55 | top octave added; |  
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58/59 | wired into 14. |  
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