

St Nicholas Harpenden

A Guide to Our Church and Worship



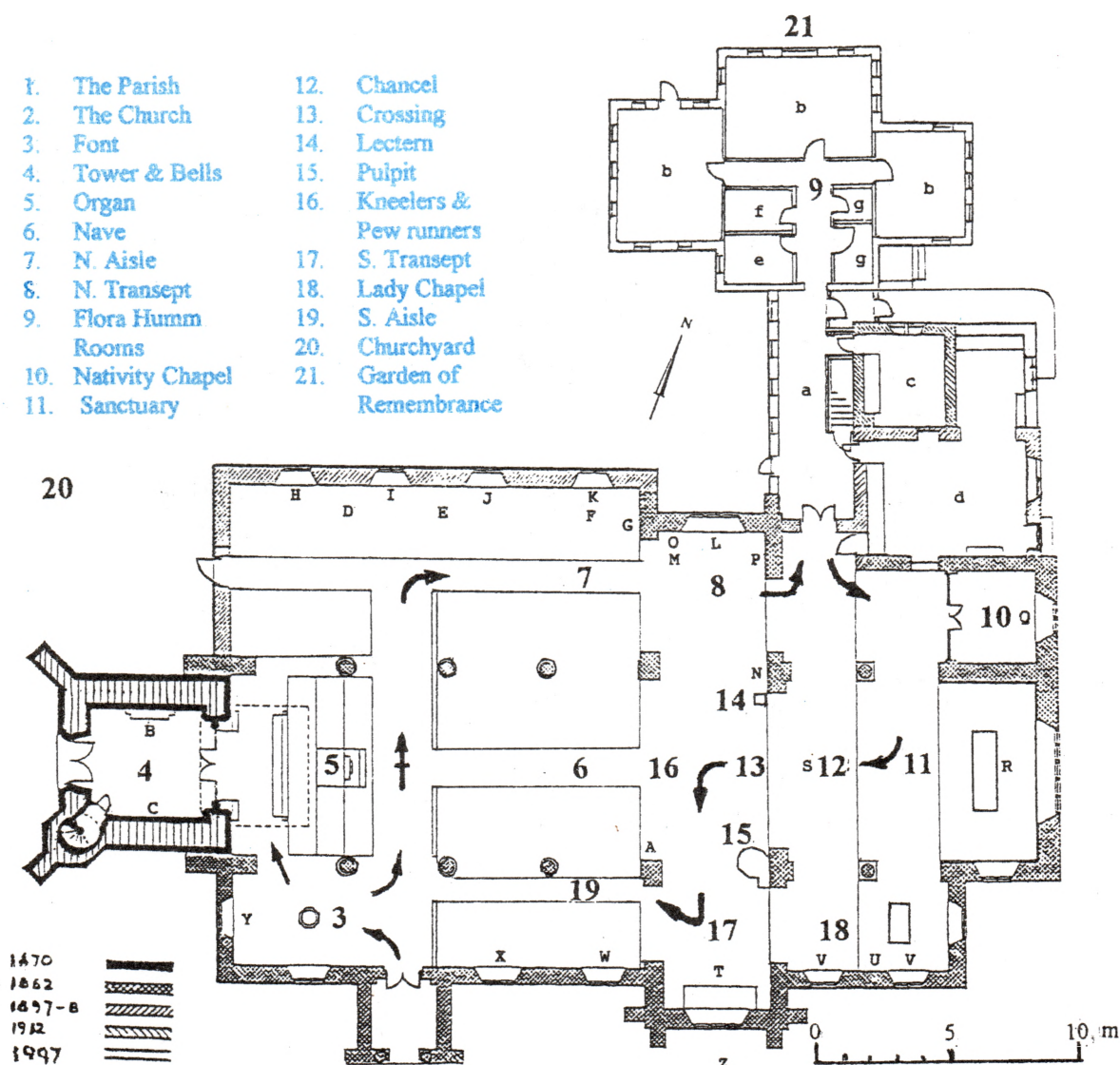
Price: 50p

WELCOME to this Parish church of St Nicholas, named after the popular saint who was an early Bishop of Myra and whose name was corrupted to 'Santa Claus'. The parish includes three Churches, the others being St Mary's Kinsbourne Green and All Saints', Batford. There are numerous activities as well as the round of services; the Hall complex caters for most of these, including many for the young. There is a rota of Church Watchers/Guides who are in the church much of the time to enable the church to stay open and to welcome you.

The Parish is involved in charitable and mission Outreach and Service, locally, nationally and overseas. It also participates in all the 'Churches Together in Harpenden' joint activities.

I do hope that you will feel drawn to this building and place of worship. On this site men, women and children have loved and served God for 800 years, trying to live out their faith in their daily lives. The writer of Psalm 122 says "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'". I hope that this guide will inspire you to share in that invitation.

Neil Collings, Rector



1. THE PARISH

In 1060, when a great part of this area was still covered in woodland and unenclosed, Edward the Confessor granted Wheathampstead Parish – which included Harpenden – to Westminster Abbey. The Manors passed into lay hands in the 17th century.

Harpenden was granted the right to hear 'mass', and to bury the dead at its 'Chapel of Ease' in 1319, thus saving the long trek to Wheathampstead. It has functioned as a separate civil Parish with its own officers since the 16th century. In 1650 it petitioned for full separation, but only became an independent Parish in 1859 when Edward Vaughan was appointed incumbent (see board in Nave [A]). St Mary's Kinsbourne Green began as a church and school in 1869 and the church was enlarged in 1968. In 1936 part of the Parish was transferred to St John's when it was created out of parts of three Parishes. In 1949 Batford was transferred from the Parish of Wheathampstead and in 1965 the Victorian Mission Church in Coldharbour Lane was replaced by the present All Saints Church in Station Road.

2. THE CHURCH

The first Church dedicated to St Nicholas was probably built in the 12th century, cruciform in design. All that remains are a few carved fragments of the stone capitals from a chancel arch, now on various windowsills.

Substantial alterations in the 14th and 15th centuries included the replacement, after a fire, of a central tower by the present three-storey one at the West end (c. 1470). This is built of Totternhoe stone and flint, the top being replaced with Portland stone in 1951. In 1861-2, just after the coming of the railway, the Norman Church, but not the tower, was totally rebuilt in a mixture of architectural styles. Ancaster and Red Mansfield stone were used by Architect William Slater in the construction of the 'new' Nave, Transepts and Chancel. The North aisle was rebuilt in 1898 and a Choir Vestry, doubling as the Parish office, added. The Flora Humm rooms, opened in 1997, are faced with Oxfordshire stone. They provide much needed vestry and office accommodation for an active Parish.

This place is consecrated to God

*You can wear the shoes but remove
from your heart*

*The arrogance, the contempt of the
other,
the hatred*

*The impurity, the envy, the revenge
So you can pray and God listens to you.*

*Prayer on the door of St Paul's Church,
Konya (Iconium), Turkey*

*We know that God is everywhere, yet for
many of us he seems to be present in a
special way in places set apart for
worship such as this church.*

*Day by day and week by week we come
together in worship, to sense something
of the mystery of God, to celebrate and
give thanks for the good things in life
and to bring our needs and longings to
him in the assurance of his
understanding, love and forgiveness.*

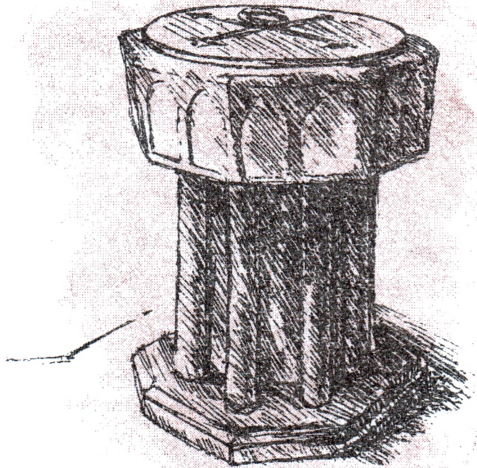
*At the DOOR we pray for all who enter
this church;*

you may like to too:

- *Visitors and pilgrims*
- *Those who come for special services
– baptisms, weddings and funerals,
for festivals*
- *day by day and week by week to
experience the mystery which is
beyond everyday life.*

3. FONT

To the left of the main door is the FONT. The octagonal bowl dates from the 12th century, and came from the mother church at Wheathampstead in the 14th century. It was restored in its present form in memory of an infant son of the first Rector of Harpenden, Canon Vaughan, when the pillared base was added.



4. TOWER & BELLS

The memorials on the walls were placed here having been removed from the body of the church during rebuilding in 1860. They include two Harpenden Hall families, Rudston (high up) and Jenkyn (B), and the Smyth family who were Lords of the Manor of Annables from 1555 to 1914 (C). A plan shows the age of each part of the church.

There are also a number of peal boards, which record various outstanding events in the life of the parish. Also to be seen are details of the bells and pictures taken at the time of their recasting in 1990. As early as 1549 three bells and a saunce (or sanctus) bell are recorded.

The ring of eight bells was recast with a tenor of over 15 cwt. There are also two bells which date from 1612 and 1613. These were retained as clock and service bells.

A clock in the tower has marked the passing of time for several hundred years. Spiral stairs lead up to the clock, bells and roof.

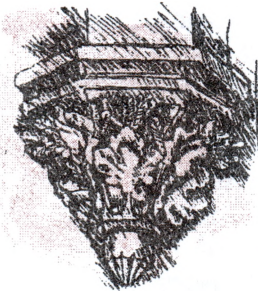
For over 800 years people of all ages have come here for baptism (christening). Not satisfied by just visiting and sharing in the life of the Church, a decision has been made to become a member of the Christian family. They, or godparents on behalf of infants, affirm their belief in God the Father who made all things, in His Son, Jesus Christ who redeemed all people and in the Holy Spirit who gives life to the people of God. They declare that they turn to Christ, repent of their sins and renounce evil.

Through the sacrament of baptism they are received into the Church of God and are welcomed:

*We welcome you into the Lord's family
We are members together of the body of Christ
We are children of the same heavenly Father
We are inheritors together of the Kingdom of God
We WELCOME you.*

At the FONT we pray for:

- *All who come for baptism, young and old*
- *All newcomers to the Christian life*
- *All members of the Church, that they may remain true to the promises made at their baptism.*



Here we pray for our ringers who call all to worship. And pray to use the time left to you on earth aright.

8. NORTH TRANSEPT

The window (L) depicts:

- a) Abraham offering Isaac for sacrifice
- b) Christ healing the woman with the issue of blood
- c) The Martyrdom of Stephen

Below are three shields of arms of 1) Wittewronge, 2) Lawes and 3) Bennett families.

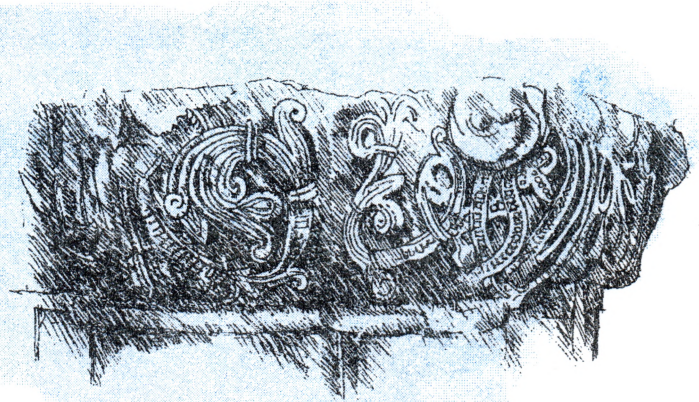
Date 1862. Made by Heaton, Butler & Bayre.

In this 'Memorial Corner' is the Book of Remembrance (M) commemorating those whose ashes are buried in the Garden of Remembrance (21). Nearby the 1914-18 fallen are recorded and on the pillar those in the 1939-45 war (N). On the North wall is a brass (O) in memory of Sir John Bennett Lawes, founder of the world famous Rothamsted Experimental Station. The ornate, black, memorial is to Charles Wittewronge. On the East wall is a brass (P) commemorating the Cressey family, with dates 1558 and 1571.



Please pray for:

the bereaved and for all listeners and counsellors



9. FLORA HUMM ROOMS

The cloister (a) to the left leads to the Flora Humm Rooms – the parish offices (b), clergy and choir vestries (c) & (d), sacristy (e), flower room (f) and toilets (g). For many people the Parish Office is the first contact with the church, as they come to arrange baptisms, weddings and funerals.

Flora Humm was Sacristan of St Nicholas' for 50 years until her death in 1993. Her very generous bequest of her property prompted this development.

The Church is always there to serve the community at these most significant points in life.

Here pray for:

All who give their time, energy and resources in serving God in the parish, in this Diocese of St Albans, and beyond.

10. NATIVITY CHAPEL

Set aside as a place for being quiet, or private prayer. The screen is in memory of the fallen in the Great War. The mural of the Nativity was painted by F O Salisbury in 1913. The small icon of St Nicholas was given to the church by the icon painter, Fr. Pefkis, a Greek Orthodox priest, during a visit to his workshop on a pilgrimage 'In the Steps of St Paul' to Greece in 1998.

The window (Q) is in memory of Eustace Jonathan Down, who died in 1911 aged 26 years. At the top is a demi-figure of Christ the King. In the main lights the angels depicted face inwards and upwards to Christ. The child in the left hand light in the centre behind the angels probably portrays the dedicatee as a child.

The small plaque shows St Nicholas' Church, Myra, brought back from the Parish Pilgrimage to Turkey in 1997.

11. SANCTUARY

The altar, or holy table, stands in the SANCTUARY, the area at the east end of the church behind the wooden benches.

The window behind the altar is of German painted glass and was given in 1862. Christian worship focuses on God as revealed to us in the life of Jesus, the central figure in the large east window. The four figures represent the four evangelists, traditionally regarded as the authors of the four gospels, together with their symbols. From the left we see 1. Matthew, with an angel; 2. Mark, with a lion; 3. Luke, with an ox, and 4. John with an eagle.

The sanctuary lamp above the altar (R) is of 18th century workmanship from Lombardy. The modern oak seats follow the design of 'coffin' stools, as do the benches which are used during Communion, and were made in 1962.

"Be still and know that I am God!"

Psalms 46. 10

*"Seek the Lord while He may be found,
and call upon Him while He is near;"*

Isaiah 55.6

*"Come to me, all you that are weary
and are carrying heavy burdens, and I
will give you rest"*

Matthew 11.28

*The central act of worship is known
variously as Holy Communion, the
Eucharist (the Greek word for
thanksgiving), the Lord's Supper or the
Mass, the action which Jesus himself
instituted and commanded us to
continue in remembrance of his death
on the Cross and being raised from the
dead.*

*Bread and wine are brought to the altar
and the priest gives thanks to God in the
prayer of consecration which includes
Jesus' own words at the Last Supper.
Those who have been confirmed receive
the bread and wine which have been
consecrated and become for us the Body
and Blood of Christ.*

*"T'was God the Word that spake it
He took the bread and brake it;
And what His word doth make it
That I believe and take it."*

(Words attributed to Queen Elizabeth I)

By the SANCTUARY please pray for:

- *All priests who serve God by
ministry to the people*
- *All who come to the altar rail to
receive the sacrament of Holy
Communion or a blessing.*

5. ORGAN

Although there had been earlier organs at St Nicholas', the first in the present church was a Robson at the front of the north aisle, given by Sir John Lawes in 1862. This was later rebuilt by Bishop and then in 1912 replaced by a new three-manual Binns organ in the south chancel aisle, the floor being lowered 3'6" to accommodate it.

As part of the church re-ordering in 1962, Walkers rebuilt this organ in its present West end position. It was developed by Hill, Norman & Beard in 1987/88 into the present balanced and comprehensive instrument of 40 speaking stops. In 1999 the casework was recast to an improved design by Herbert Norman, retaining the unusual feature of painted panels which had been executed in 1962 by a parishioner, Peggy Aviss.

(There is a leaflet on the organ.)

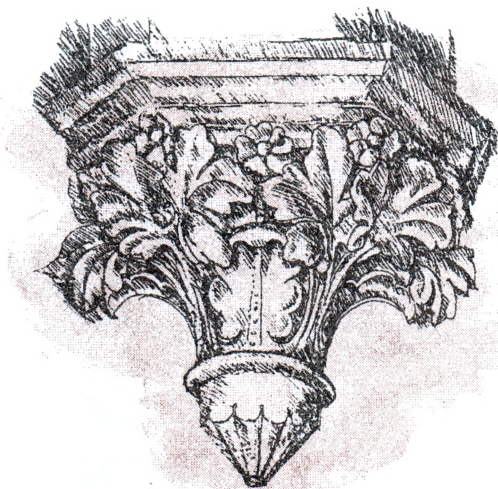


Here we pray for:

- *All musicians, whose music touches and kindles the human spirit*
- *All who make music here to the glory of God*
- *All who worship here that they may sing with joy in their hearts.*

6. NAVE

Look right into the centre aisle. This part of the church is the NAVE, so called because it resembles an upturned ship with its bank of oars. The capitals on the pillars are all different.



In the NAVE please pray for:

- *The local community and all who worship here*
- *The sick, the imprisoned, the persecuted and all who cannot join us in worship.*
- *All who find it difficult to worship*

"O WORSHIP THE LORD IN THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS" (Psalm 96, verse 9)

7. NORTH AISLE

In this aisle there is a triptych (D). This was originally designed for the chapel of HMS Glorious which was sunk by enemy action in 1940 before the triptych had been delivered. The 'Adoration of the Virgin' (E) is an oil painting copy. On one windowsill is a model of the pre-1861 church (F). The icon (G) of St Nicholas is by Basil Kassanis to replace one stolen in 1978. (See also carved figures (V) in 18).

The windows depict:

'H' St Mary supporting the Christ child whose hands are raised in blessing and St Cecilia, patron saint of music, who is holding a portative organ.
Date 1951. Made by William Morris & Co Studio, Westminster.

'I' St Edward the Confessor holding a model of Westminster Abbey (which he founded) and St Helena supporting a tall wooden cross in front of her. Historically Harpenden was part of the parish of Wheathampstead whose Manor was owned by Edward the Confessor and whose Church was dedicated to St Helena, traditionally the finder of the True Cross in Jerusalem.
Date 1944. Probably made by Christopher Webb of St Albans.

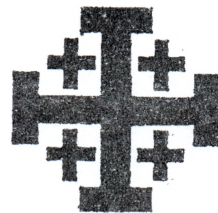
'J' The story of Jesus in the house of Martha and Mary. Christ is seated with Mary looking towards Martha who is laying the table for a meal.
Date 1913. Made by H J Salisbury, London & St Albans – brother of Frank Salisbury, artist of the painting in the Nativity Chapel.

'K' St James the Great clasping a staff from which hangs a bottle of water and holding in his left hand a book. Also St John the Evangelist supporting a golden goblet from which arises a green dragon with blue wings, alluding to the story of when he drank the poison from a cup but did not die.
Date early 20th Century. Made by George Daniels of Clayton & Bell.



12. CHANCEL

Notice the Jerusalem Cross (S) set in the chancel floor. This reminds us of the five wounds of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, and the four evangelists through whose words we learn of him.



13. CROSSING

Below the chancel step are memorial slabs (S), including a much worn medieval brass of William Anabull and his wife dated 1406 (now covered).

Various light oak items by Leslie Coburn, craftsman and bellringer, may be seen – such as the Rectors' Board (A), hymn boards, portable lectern in memory of Derek Elliott, priest, two wooden crosses, tall, short and Paschal candlesticks, and elsewhere the Font cover and moveable choir bookrests.

14. LECTERN

The modern lectern, in memory of Patricia Fulton and carved by a local craftsman, Siegfried Pietsch, was given in 1994. It replaces a brass eagle which was stolen.

The eagle was once believed to be able to look at the sun without blinking, as Christ could look on God, and was thought to be able to fly higher than any other bird, so symbolising the Ascension of Christ.



15. PULPIT

The oak panelling of the pulpit was added in 1965 to cover the Victorian – painted decoration, bringing it into keeping with the other furnishings.

At the Crossing, where nave, chancel and transepts meet, our attention is focused on teaching about the Christian faith, the Ministry of the Word. In the Holy Communion service this precedes the Ministry of the Sacrament.

Readings from the Old Testament – the Hebrew scriptures – tell of the roots from which Christianity grew. The New Testament contains accounts of the life and teaching of Jesus, his death and resurrection, and letters to the early Christian communities to teach and encourage them. We still hear the word of God today in the scriptures. Whoever we are, wherever we may be in our lives, whatever situations we face we learn that we are not alone. "Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9).

Readings from the Bible engage our minds, challenge our thinking and deepen our faith. These ancient writings may be re-interpreted in the light of knowledge and experience and re-phrased in the language of our time through preaching and teaching from the pulpit.

By the lectern and pulpit please pray for:

- *All who read, preach and teach that they may do so with sincerity and understanding*
- *All who listen to the Word of God that in hearing it their lives may be enriched, faith strengthened and needs met.*

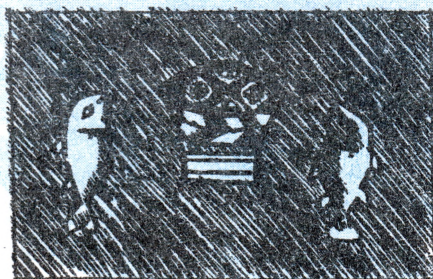
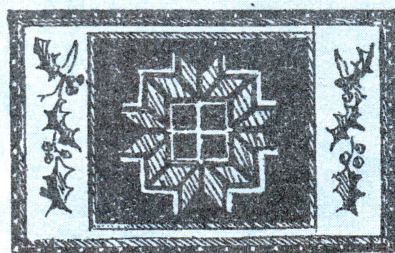
16. KNEELERS AND PEW RUNNERS

The 409 kneelers were made between 1968 – 1982 (designed by Jacqueline Fancett). They have a central cross bordered by sprigs of holly to represent St Nicholas' connection with Christmas. A few have designs for children.

The altar rail kneelers and the three chair cushions were made by 14 parishioners between January 1983 and March 1987. These have a geometric design and the St Albans Diocesan emblem.

The pew runners depict wood grain. Many of these have been given in memory of loved ones and were worked by about 40 people. The Dorcas Group were responsible for this project.

The seat cushions in the two clergy stalls were worked by members of the Parish who went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1994. The design is based on the mosaic of 'The Feeding of the 5000' seen in Tabgha Church, Galilee.



17. SOUTH TRANSEPT

The window (T) is dedicated to Caroline Spackman, wife of Dr Spackman who lived at Bowers House and was the Parish Doctor.

Date 1862. Made by Heaton, Butler & Bayne and exhibited at the 1862 International Exhibition in London where it won a prize.

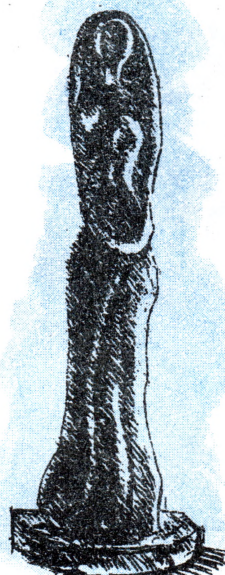
18. LADY CHAPEL

The altar was given by the children of the Sunday School in 1912.

The lamp (U) above the small cupboard (the aumbry) in the south wall is kept burning to indicate the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, reserved to be taken to those who are unable to worship with us in church – the sick or housebound.

The two carvings (V) by Basil Kassanis are of the Virgin and Child and Christ rising from the tomb; the lit crucifix is also his work.

Here, as we leave the church, we are reminded that we serve God not only in worshipping Him, but also in serving others. Six of the Corporal Acts of Mercy named by Christ are shown in the window: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, take care of the sick and visit the imprisoned (Matthew 25: 35-45).



19. SOUTH AISLE (east to west)

The windows depict:

- (W) Christ after the Resurrection comforting Mary Magdalene (John 20:16-17)

Date 1939. Made by Christopher Webb of St Albans.

- (X) Depicts St Alban in armour, his left hand holds a sword and his right hand holds a palm of martyrdom. Also, St Nicholas dressed as a Western bishop and holding a child.

Date 1883. Made by Ernest Saffling, Edgware Road, London.

Under the West window, beyond the font, is a parish memorial to George Curl, verger for 50 years (Y).

Some 2,000 years ago Jesus was born and spent about three years teaching and healing, before His death and resurrection. Today, over 900 million people worship Jesus and take Christian love to others in the world.

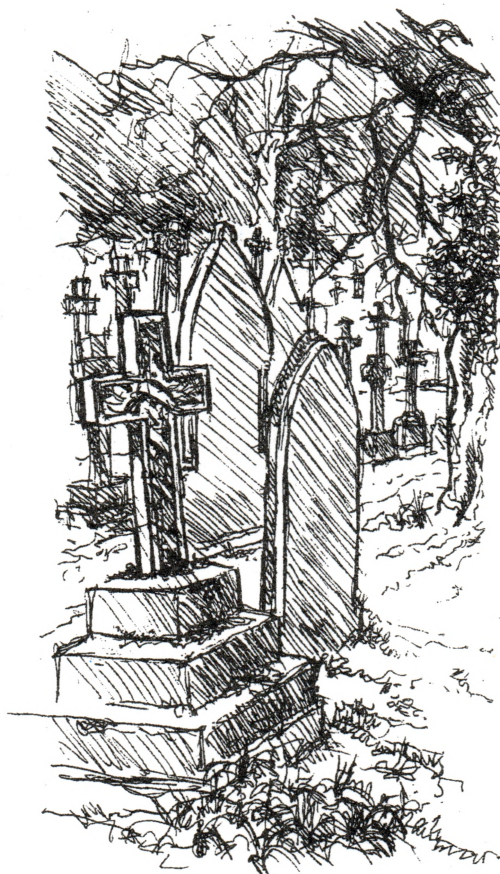
We pray that all who spend time in St. Nicholas will have received a blessing and peace.

20. CHURCHYARD

When you are outside the church notice the weathervane on the tower in the shape of a ship, St Nicholas being the patron saint of sailors, travellers and children. This was erected in 1881.

Now in the care of the Local Authority, the churchyard has been extended several times. Among those buried here are Sir John Lawes and the ashes of comedian Eric Morecambe. There is also one infamous personality, Count de Voilment – Count Esterhazy – of the Dreyfus case.

The oldest tombstone dates from 1714; children mistakenly call it "The Pirate's Grave" (Z).



21. GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE

This is where ashes are interred and memorial plaques can be placed.



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