

SHORT HISTORY OF THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY, BARNES.

At some time between 1100-1150AD, a simple rectangular chapel was built in the small, sparsely populated Thames-side village of Barnes and dedicated to the Virgin Mary, its walls composed mostly of coursed flint. An early C13th extension to the west enlarged the nave, while another to the east formed a chancel with triple lancet windows. The addition of a brick-built west tower, c1485, was the last major change until the demolition of the north wall in 1786 made way for a north aisle, side by side with the medieval chapel, providing a total seating of 460.

Early 19th century improvements to road and rail transport between Barnes and London encouraged a steady increase in population and a growing demand for places at St. Mary's, resulting in further extensions completed in 1906. The old north aisle became the centre aisle with a new sanctuary and chancel to the east, and the original medieval chapel became the Lady Chapel.

The extended church remained intact until a major fire on 8 June, 1978 totally destroyed the Victorian and Edwardian additions. Thankfully the Tudor tower survived, as did much of the original Norman chapel, with several previously unknown features from the period revealed as a direct result of the fire. These were skilfully incorporated into plans for the new St.Mary's by architect, Edward Cullinan, and are now an integral part of the re-built and revitalised church, re-hallowed 26 February, 1984. The restored original C12th/13th building is now known as the Langton Chapel.

Further reading:

A guide book is on sale in the church

St Mary's Church, Barnes: Archaeological Investigations 1978-83 by Robert Cowie and Scott McCracken. Published 2011. Suggested donation £10.

"One Church One Lord" by John Whale tells the story of the Rectors of St Mary's and how they did or did not fit in with the doctrines of the Anglican Church in their day. The Parish Records dating from 1538 are now at the Surrey History Centre at Woking (which has replaced the Surrey Record Office at Kingston mentioned in the Guide Book sources).