

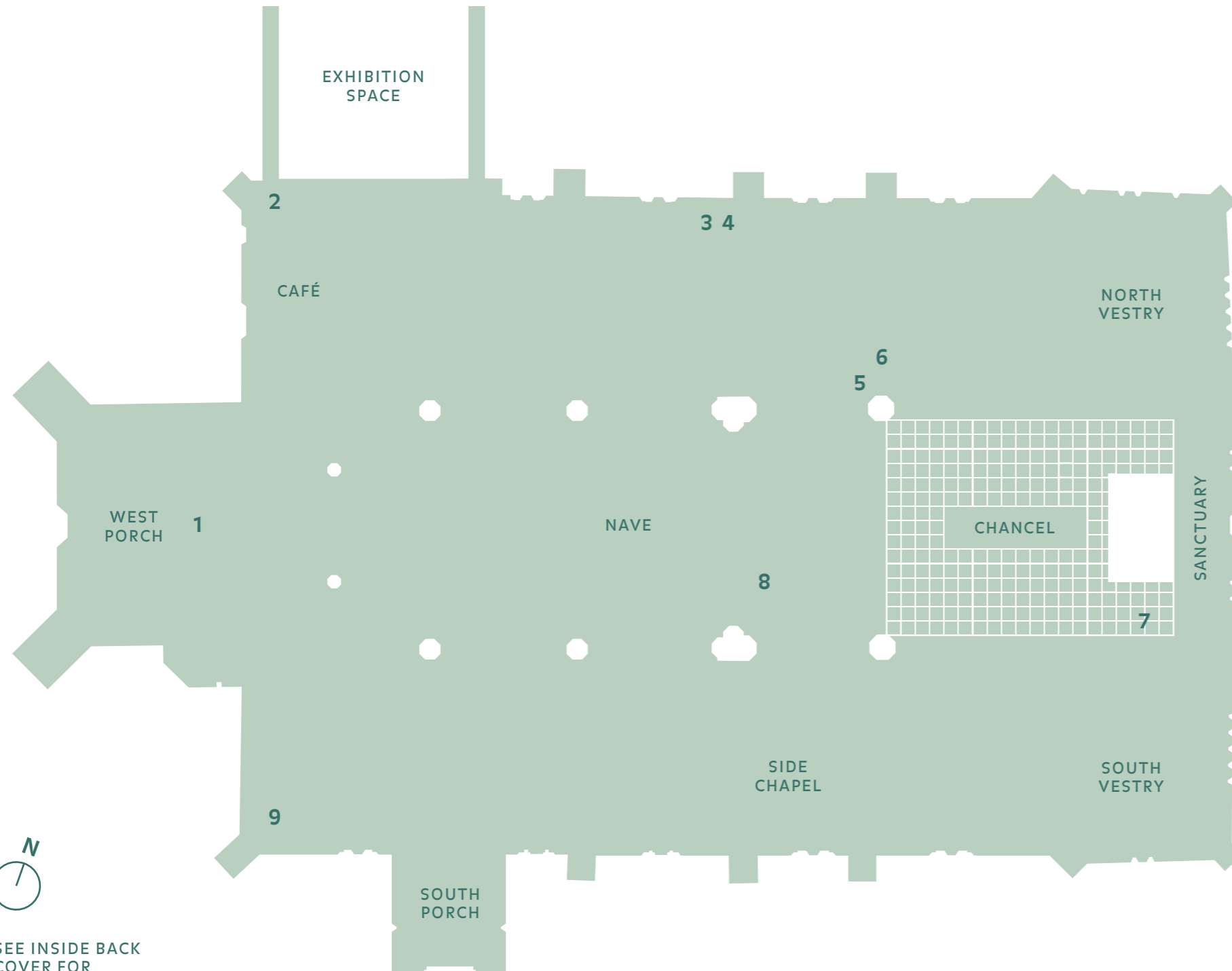


# WALTHAMSTOW LIVES



ST MARY'S  
WALTHAMSTOW

MAP



SEE INSIDE BACK  
COVER FOR  
CHURCHYARD MAP

St Mary's sits at the heart of historic Walthamstow – its story is the story of Walthamstow's people. This leaflet guides you on a tour of the church and churchyard, introducing people from across the church's 900 years of history.

We invite you to start your tour at the entrance to the church. The maps on the front and back covers of this leaflet will help guide your journey. The numbers on the map correspond to the numbers beside the key people from Walthamstow's history listed in this booklet.

## INSIDE THE CHURCH

### 1 RALPH DE TONI

St Mary's contains layers of history. You are standing in the West Porch, the current main entrance to the church but not part of the original 12th century building. The original footprint of the church lay just beyond this porch, in an area about a quarter of the size of the current building. It was founded here in the early 1100s by Ralph de Toni, son of the standard (flag) bearer of William the Conqueror and holder of the manor of Walthamstow until his death in 1126. The church stands at the meeting point of ancient pilgrimage and trade routes – this spot may have been marked by a 'preaching cross' long before the church was built. Upon his death, de Toni's wife Alice gave the church to Holy Trinity Priory, Aldgate 'for the salvation of the soul of her husband'.



### 2 THOMAS HALE

Enter the main church and turn left, past the cafe to the corner next to the entrance to our exhibition space. On the wall, you will see a memorial brass of a man in Tudor clothes, set into a wooden block. This is Thomas Hale (died 1591) who lived during the reign of Elizabeth I. You can see only the feet of his wife, Ann (died 1588), since sadly the rest of this brass has been lost. The couple are buried in the church, probably under the centre aisle, and these brasses once marked their resting place. The Hales were a wealthy, powerful family living in Walthamstow. They were also known 'recusants', the name for Catholics who were repeatedly fined for failing to attend Protestant services after the Reformation.

### 3 LADY LUCY STANLEY

Continue walking along the north wall towards the centre of the church. You will come across this splendid monument – dating from 1601 – to Lady Lucy Stanley, second daughter of the Earl of Northumberland, and four of her daughters. It is unknown how Lady Stanley and her children died or how they came to be buried here, since their family home was not in Walthamstow. We do know, however, that all five women died at the same time or very close together. Her family were Catholics at the time of the Protestant Reformation, and several of her relatives were martyred due to their beliefs. The monument is thought to be the work of William Cure the Younger, later Master Mason to James I. Lady Stanley is shown at prayer in this monument. Her clothes, including the luxurious ruff around her neck, show her status and wealth.



### 4 SARAH BONNELL

To the right of the Stanley monument, you will see an oval monument to Margaret Bonnell and her children, Sarah and James Bonnell. It has a coat of arms at the top and three cherubs beneath, each looking in a different direction. Sarah Bonnell (1696–1766) was a supporter of education for women, and in her will she left £3,500 for the founding of a school for girls in West Ham. The school still exists today and they describe how 'every year we allocate a special day to celebrate Sarah Bonnell's birthday ... We do this to remember a far-sighted woman who thought it was important to educate girls in a time when the idea of equal rights for women was seen as revolutionary.'





## 5 SIR GEORGE MONOUX

Look out for the intricate monumental brasses on a column at the eastern end of the north side. The two figures at prayer are George Monoux (1465–1544), the greatest benefactor of St Mary’s, and his wife Ann. Monoux was made Sheriff of London in 1509 and became the Lord Mayor of London in 1514. He funded the rebuilding of the St Mary’s tower in 1535. In 1527, he designed and arranged the construction of the almshouses to the north of the church. On his death, Monoux left property worth £50 a year to pay the salaries of a schoolmaster and parish clerk, who were to ‘pray for the souls of Monoux and his wives and to teach up to thirty children’.

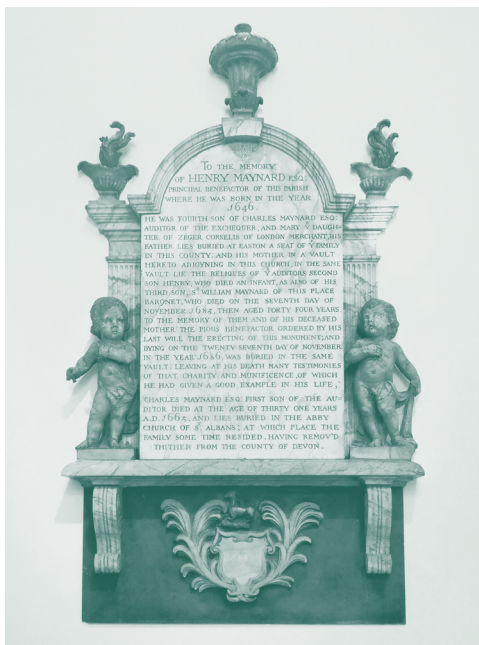
## 6 CAPT. JOHN BONNELL

Look up at the end of the north side to see a monument styled as a hanging drape, with a wreathed skull beneath. This is dedicated in part to Sarah Bonnell’s father, Capt. John Bonnell. If you look to the bottom of the inscription, can you see that the date reads 170<sup>2/3</sup>? John died in the period when the calendar was changing to start the year on the 1st January instead of 25th March. During this transition, if a death occurred between these dates, both years were shown as the year of death. You may spot other examples of dates like this as you look around the church.



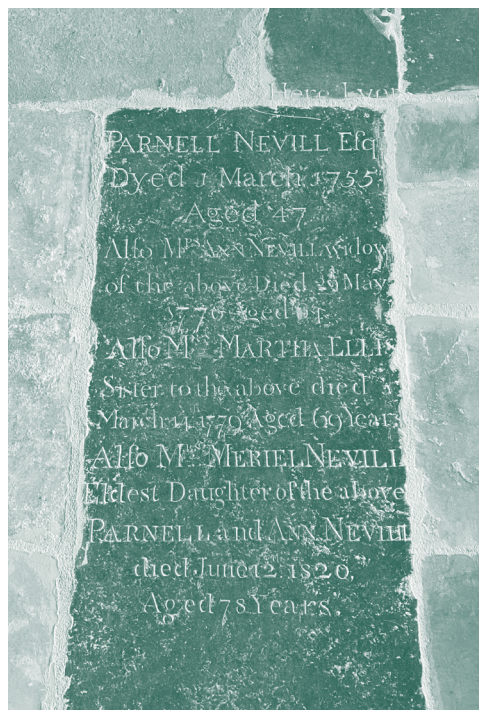
## 7 HENRY MAYNARD

On the south wall of the Sanctuary (the area surrounding the Communion Table), you will see a monument to Henry Maynard (1646–86). Maynard was St Mary's second greatest benefactor, making his money as a merchant owner of ships that brought goods to London from across the world. His father owned the manor of Walthamstow Toni and lived at the manor house, Shern Hall (demolished in 1896). We still use the silverware that Henry Maynard gave to the church as part of communion services to this day.



## 8 PARNELL NEVILL

As you walk along the Nave away from the Chancel and Sanctuary, look out for this ledger stone on the floor (it is towards the east end of the church). This commemorates the life of Parnell Nevill (1708–55), an investor who organised privateering expeditions to legally loot ships during times of war. There was once a memorial plaque to Nevill on the south wall of the church, but this became lost when a bomb destroyed this part of the church during World War Two. Over 80 years later, the plaque was found buried in pieces outside the church – a surprising and exciting historical discovery!



## 9 WILLIAM MORRIS

Before exiting the church, cross to the south-west corner where you will find a white veined marble font. The infant William Morris (1834–96) was baptised in this font. Morris was born in Walthamstow and lived for a time in Water House, which is now The William Morris Gallery in Lloyd Park – about 10 minutes' walk from St Mary's. Morris was a textile designer, poet, artist, novelist, socialist and a significant cultural figure in Victorian Britain, one of the founders of the Arts and Crafts movement.

The remainder of this trail takes place outside. Leave the church through the West Porch and cross over into the section of the churchyard opposite which has the biggest tombs. You will find a map at the back of this booklet to help guide you. Please be aware that the ground may be uneven and slippery in wet weather, so do tread carefully.



## IN THE CHURCHYARD

### 10 REVD WILLIAM WILSON

First, cross the churchyard to look at the Georgian building opposite. This was the first purpose-built Church of England Infant School in England, established by Revd William Wilson, who became Vicar of Walthamstow in 1822. He had heard about a school in Spitalfields run by Samuel Wilderspin, who believed in learning through experience and the value of play in infant education. Wilson was so impressed that, in 1824, he started his school in a tithe barn in the grounds of his house. At his own expense, Wilson later erected this permanent home for the school, which would accommodate 150 pupils, aged 2–7 years, on land belonging to him next to the church in 1828. You can see the date '1828' marked on a brick on the left side of the building. Today, this is the Church Hall, named the 'Welcome Centre'.



### 11 NANNY PEARCE AND THE WIGRAM FAMILY

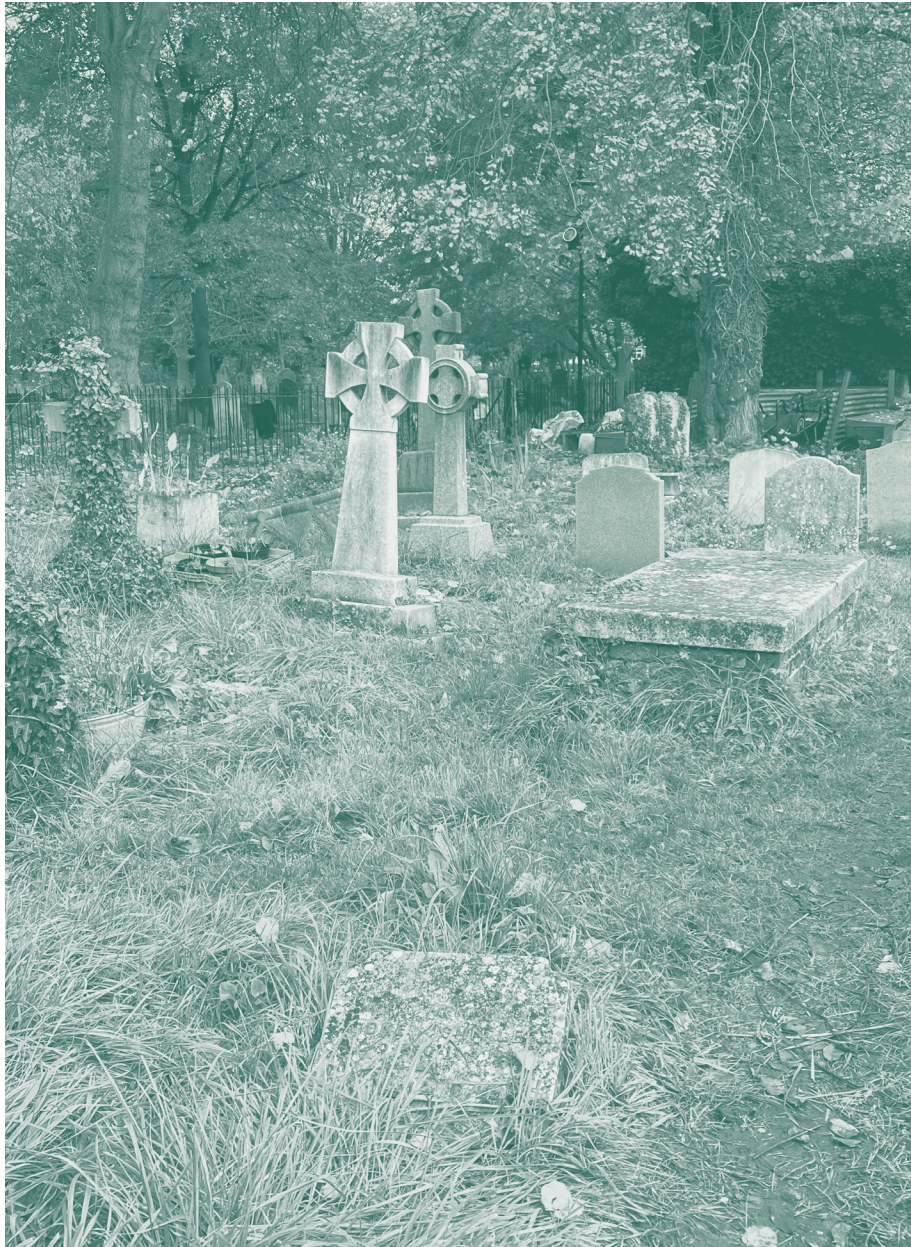
Walking back into the churchyard, head left from the path to look for this tomb. This is the vault of the Wigram family. Sir Robert Wigram (1744–1830) came to London from Ireland to train as a doctor. He went on to make his fortune in the pharmaceuticals trade and in shipping. Wigram had 23 children from his two marriages. If you look to the foot of the family tomb, you will see a small grave, nestled close to the grander monument. This is the resting place of Ann, or 'Nanny' Pearce, who cared for all of Wigram's children when they were infants. The symbolic placement of her grave is both a sign of how valued she was by the family, but also a reminder of the inequalities in society.



### 12 BONAMY DOBRÉE

Walk across the churchyard from the Wigram tomb towards the church, looking towards the left to find this impressive family vault. Buried within is Bonamy Dobrée, who was the governor of the Bank of England from 1859 to 1861. The Dobrée family originated from Guernsey and his father, Samuel, was the head of Dobrée & Sons, a merchant bank. In June 2020 the Bank of England issued a public apology for the involvement of Dobrée, amongst other employees, in the slave trade. Look out for the symbols on this grave such as the *ouroboros* (a snake eating its own tail) which represents eternity and the circle of life.





### 13 SIDNEY LEE

Cross now to the churchyard on the south of the church, using the map to guide you to this modest grave. Be aware that it might be difficult to find since it is so small, but it is opposite the church pond and a large Celtic-style cross. This is the resting place of Sidney John Lee (1890–1941), who died serving as a Fire Guard during World War Two. Sidney had previously served in World War One in both the army and the RAF. During the World War Two Blitz on London, the Home Secretary issued an appeal for members of the public to form themselves into street fire parties, later known as Fire Guards. More than 10,000 people, including women, volunteered to look out for bombs. On 19th April 1941, Sidney Lee and two other Fireguards tragically lost their lives on patrol when a parachute mine hit Beacontree Avenue.

The final two graves in this leaflet are in the churchyard to the north of the church, beyond the Monoux Almshouses. Be advised that these graves are very difficult to find and are in a remote, wilder part of the churchyard where the terrain is uneven – you may prefer to just read about these rather than searching for them. To find this part of the churchyard, turn left from where you are facing Sidney Lee’s grave. You will find a gate in the railings which leads onto a path, named Vinegar Alley. Turn right down this path until you reach the second gate on the left, which leads into the north churchyard. The graves are towards the furthest left-hand corner as you face east with your back to the almshouses.

### 14 FREDERICK BREMER

This grave lies beside a tree towards the north east corner of this section of the churchyard. The tree has been engraved with the letters ‘FB’. Frederick Bremer (1872–1941) was a gasfitter, plumber, engineer and inventor. In 1892, he built the first British four wheeled petrol-driven motor car in Walthamstow. He later drove it through local streets, following his friend and assistant, Tom Bates, who held a red flag. Bremer did not invent his car for profit, but for his own pleasure and curiosity.



## 15 REBECCA CLARK COOKE

Positioned at the eastern edge of the churchyard, this grave is just beyond and to the left of Bremer's resting place. Born in 1811, Rebecca Clark Cooke was a member of the famous Cooke family of circus performers. She was married to Henry Cooke, the son of circus-owner Thomas Taplin Cooke, and it is likely that she performed with horses. Thomas Cooke's grave, in Kensal Green Cemetery, features a statue of a horse with its head bowed in mourning, showing the depth of the family connection with these animals. The family travelled nationally and internationally, making it as far as New York with their performances. Her daughter Rosina married Grimaldi, the famous circus clown. Cooke died in 1869 aged 58. We can't be sure how she came to be buried here in Walthamstow after a life of travel, but we do know that her grandson was baptised at St Mary's two weeks before she died, whilst the residence on her burial record is shown as Stanhope Road, very near to the church.







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Thank you for visiting St Mary's. You can find out more about the church's history through our other tour leaflet, CREATIVE CHURCH, or by joining one of our tours or events. More details are available at: [stmaryswalthamstow.org](http://stmaryswalthamstow.org)