

A tour around St. Mary's Church, Thirsk

1. You came through the **PORCH**. Go back out and have a look at the deep marks carved in the walls. These were made by men sharpening arrowheads in the stone. They would practise archery in the churchyard. (They had to be able to protect the town if it was ever invaded by enemy troops.)

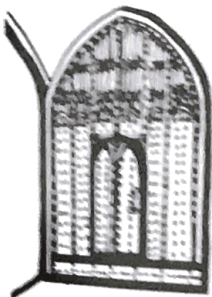
2. As you come back in through the blue door, take a look at the lovely **MEDIEVAL DOOR** on the left. This has hung here for over 500 years. There is a smaller "Wicket Door" in the middle and this little door holds the enormous lock. Can you see the nails holding the door together? Planks of oak go up and down (vertically) on the front, and from side to side (horizontally) on the back. Place your hand in the space underneath the little door. This was made by feet, wearing the wood away as people climbed inside.

3. Now you are inside, look up above the blue door. Can you see a bricked-in doorway? This used to be the way into the **PARVIS ROOM** above the porch. A man called Thomas Parkinson used to live in this room all by himself. He was a "Hermit" and eventually he became a monk at Mount Grace Priory. His cell there was paid for by Catherine of Aragon, the first of the six wives of King Henry VIII.

4. Just through the door turn left, where you will see a beautiful window on your left. This is in memory of **MAJOR BOWER**. You can see him on the plaque in the wall below. The window shows some of the things he was involved in during his life. Have a look at the display nearby to find out more.

5. Also in this corner is the **WAR MEMORIAL** showing the names of people from Thirsk who died in the First and Second World Wars and in Korea in the 1950s. Many towns and villages have their War Memorials outside where everyone can see them. The one for Thirsk is here in the church and the clock on the tower was installed as a memorial too.

6. Now retrace your steps and find the **FONT**. This is where adults and children (NOT JUST BABIES!) are baptised into the family of the Church. The font is Victorian (about 1870) but the huge lid dates from the 1400s. It works on a "Counter Balance" system. Ask an adult to explain it to you - it's very scientific! There is more information nearby for you to read.



MEDIEVAL DOOR



HATCHMENT



LECTERN

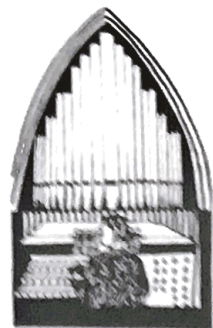


GILDED ANGEL

THE FONT



ORGAN



7. The door behind you leads to the **VESTRY** and the **TOWER**. Sorry, we can't let you go up - it's too dangerous!

In the tower there are 8 bells that are rung to let people know that a service is about to begin. Brides like to have the bells rung for their wedding.

8. Underneath the window, near the red curtain in the corner, there is a **MEMORIAL** to a man called Butterwick. Can you see the little wooden mouse carved on the top? There are some more mice and some beavers in the church. The stewards will tell you about them if you ask nicely - OOPS! Sorry, NICELY!!

9. Behind the other red curtain is the **NORTH DOOR**. This is very worn by weather, unlike the South Door where you came in which has been protected by the porch. Above the north door is a Royal Coat of Arms. This is the "badge" of King George IV. (We think the lion is like the one from the Wizard of Oz!)

10. Further along the north aisle is an old **WOODEN CHEST**. This was used for storing the church's money and valuable belongings in the days before there was a safe.

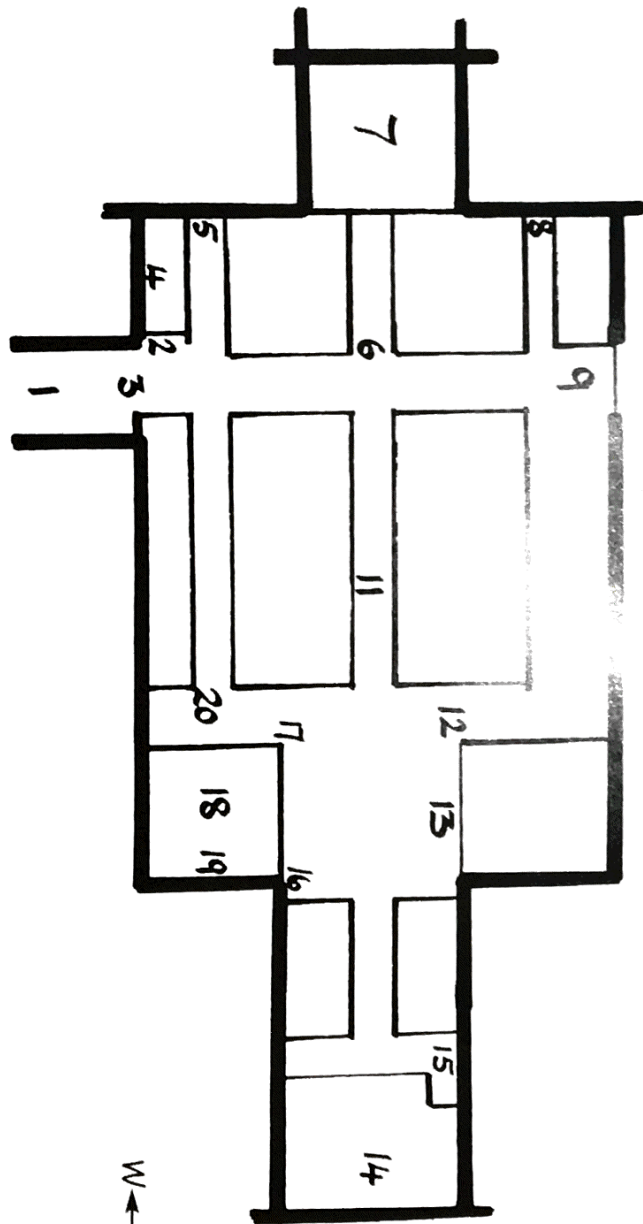
11. Now look up towards the high windows above the pews (seats) in the **NAVE**. The black-edged Coats of Arms on the wall are called **HATCHMENTS**. These were hung outside Thirsk Hall, just outside the church, to announce that a member of the Bell family had died and that the family was "in mourning". Can you see bells on some of the shields?

12. The next thing to see is the **PULPIT**. This is a round, wooden box up a few stone steps. This is where the Vicar "preaches a sermon" or speaks to the people. The pulpit is lifted up high so everyone can see the preacher and the preacher can see all of them.

13. Just around the corner is the **ORGAN**. You can see the keyboard, (in fact there are 3!!) and the "organ stops" (knobs). The pipes are up above and in the big space behind that you can't see. There are some more, high up on the wall to your right. Air is pumped through these pipes,

BIG PIPES = LOW NOTES, small pipes = high notes

14. Move up to the **ALTAR RAIL**. You are now in the **CHANCEL** and beyond the rail is the **SANCTUARY**. The **ALTAR** is really a table and represents the table where Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with his friends, the disciples. The service of **HOLY COMMUNION** is how we remember that important act in the life of Jesus.



15. Just to the left of the altar rail is a small door that opens on to a staircase leading down to the **CRYPT**.

IF IT IS OPEN YOU MAY GO DOWN. IF NOT THEN PLEASE DON'T, AS YOU MAY FALL ON THE DARK, STEEP STAIRS.

This crypt is a room built to hold up the east end of the church above it. It used to be a place for the priests to stay when they had had a long journey and it was also a schoolroom. Now it is used for meetings; for the children's Ark Club on Sundays; and we use it as a café for our visitors whenever we can.

16. As you come back down the steps from the **CHANCEL** to the **NAVE** look up at the **GILDED ANGEL**. She used to stand on top of the old organ that was in the archway at the tower end. (We think she's beautiful, even though she's made of wood!)

17. Nearby is the **LECTERN** - an eagle perched on a ball. This is a very grand book rest, holding a huge Bible. The lectern is not wooden like the angel - it is made of brass and has to be cleaned every week. (Any volunteers?)

18. Now go inside **ST. ANNE'S CHAPEL**. This is used for services when there are only a few people, so we can be closer together. The photograph on the wall shows a statue of St. Anne, teaching her daughter, Mary, to read. Mary was later to become the mother of Jesus, so that means St. Anne was Jesus' Grandma. Perhaps you'd like to think about YOUR Grandma while you are in the chapel.

19. The **WINDOW** above the chapel altar is very interesting. It is made up of very old glass that had been in other windows in other parts of the church. The new window was put together about 1870 but it was damaged during the war. When it was repaired it didn't go back together properly and now there are strange things in it. Look out for feathered bodies with human heads!! You can spot something different each time you look.

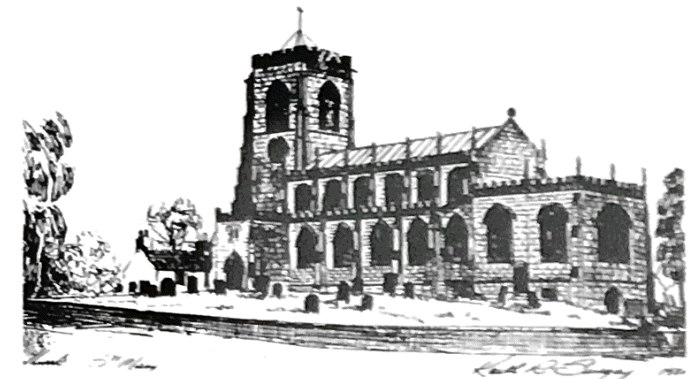
20. In the floor, just outside the chapel, you can see a triangle and a rectangle. These contain a very old **TOMB** of a man called **ROBERT THIRSK**. He died in the 1400s and left a lot of money which was used to build the church. He was a tax collector for King Henry IV, so no wonder he had lots of money!!

We do hope you have enjoyed looking around St. Mary's.

Before you leave, perhaps you'd like to find a seat somewhere and think quietly about this lovely building, all the millions of people who have worshipped God here for over 500 years and the millions of people who have visited, **just like you!**

Thank you for coming, have a safe journey. Why not try to visit some more churches? **THEY ARE FASCINATING PLACES!**

ST. MARY'S CHURCH



THIRSK