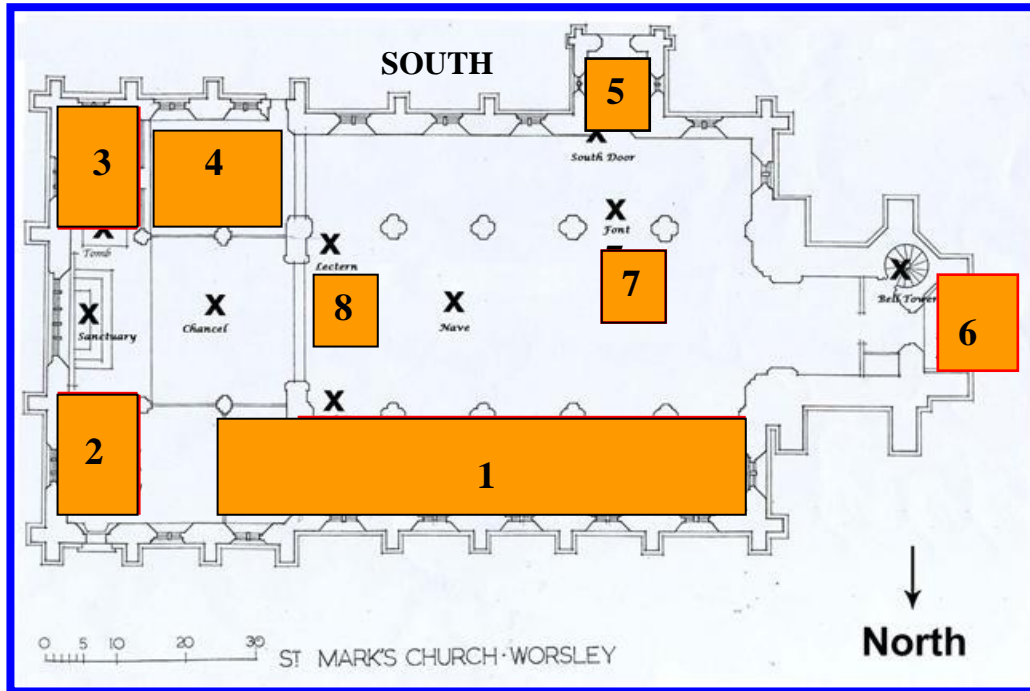




Plan of the Church



As you enter the Parish Church of St. Mark, Worsley, you may be struck by its symmetry on all sides of the building. However, it may be difficult to realise that, at the time of its consecration on 2 July 1846, the Church was missing certain aspects which were each added over a few decades in the nineteenth century. Those missing areas are highlighted above in light orange, superimposed upon a more modern plan of the Church.

The Church was designed by the great Victorian architect, Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811-1878). – designer of 470 churches! He was the first in the family line of architects who have given us buildings as diverse as St. Pancras Station, the Albert Memorial and Liverpool Anglican Cathedral. In Scott's own words, "*I have become one of the leading actors in the greatest architectural movement which has occurred since the Renaissance*". He was referring to the Gothic Revival, of which St. Mark's, Worsley, is an early and particularly fine example. Indeed, his grandson, Sir Giles (the architect of Liverpool Anglican Cathedral), is reported to have said that George considered it to be *the best of his works of art*. It took just over two years to build the Church, at a cost of about £20,000.

The exterior is modelled on an English parish church of *circa* 1300 and has fine carved stonework. Externally the spire has small flying buttresses and its pinnacles, gabled openings and buttresses are richly embellished with crockets and crosses. There are numerous carved gargoyles to the exterior of the building.

The main body of the church has fixed oak bench pews for the congregation. Arcades of arches to either side direct attention eastwards to the sanctuary. The stone columns in the nave have elaborately carved foliage and flowers to their capitals. Corbels supporting arched openings take the form of carved figure heads. The nave has an oak hammer-beam roof, made of timber brought from the Earl of Ellesmere's Northampton estate by road and then by his own Bridgewater Canal. The slate for the roof was from the Delabole Quarries in Cornwall.

(1) The most striking difference between the Church of 1846 and the one today was the absence of a **north aisle** to balance the one on the south side. Instead, there was a wall into which the present pillars and arches were built to allow for the construction of a north aisle at a later date. This occurred six years after the foundation of the Church, in 1852, when the Earl applied for permission to add a north aisle. This was done entirely at his own expense and cost £4,000. This was to allow for extra accommodation for an expanding congregation.

(2) The coming of the Earl of Mulgrave as Vicar in 1872 led to an increased emphasis on music. This necessitated some changes to be made to the **Chancel** area and these were completed in August 1884. This involved the erection of a choir aisle and organ chamber in the north wall of the chancel. In addition, the choir benches were removed and the Ellesmere stalls were transferred from the Chancel to the Chapel in order to make room for new choir stalls. In 1895, a faculty was obtained to carry out further work on the organ and part of the choir aisle was converted into a vestry for clergy and choir, as it is today. This allowed the west door to be used as a second entrance.

(3) The **private chapel** was much shorter in length than it is today. It seems certain that it was extended between the year of the Earl's death (1857) and 1862 to bring it into alignment with the east end of the chancel and to accommodate his memorial tomb. That extension would have entailed the building of an extra arch under which the Earl's tomb was installed and another pillar. That bears the initials **HE** of the Countess of Ellesmere. The wrought iron screen at that time occupied the position now taken by the chapel communion rail.

(4) There were further changes to be made to the **Ellesmere Chapel**. By the mid-1920's, the Ellesmere family had left Worsley. In 1928, the parishioners put forward a scheme to convert the chapel into an Ellesmere Memorial Chapel. The Chapel was furnished with an altar (the gift of the Marquis of Normanby) and altar rails were erected in the position occupied by the wrought iron screen. The screen was moved to its present position separating the chancel from the chapel.

(5) The **South door** was the original main entrance to the church, and continued to be so up to the 1950s when the West door came into use as a main entrance. The inner porch was not part of the original structure, but was added in 1864 to combat the draught coming into the building *"in order to prevent the great draught and cold so generally felt in the church."* It was only in the 1950's that it became the main entrance into the Church.

(6)



The **clock** on the West face of the tower is known as the Bridgewater Clock, and is famous because it strikes 13 at 1 o'clock. This device was invented by the Duke of Bridgewater when his workmen excused their lateness at returning to work after the dinner hour because they maintained they could not hear the clock strike once at 1 o'clock. The clock was originally sited in Worsley Works Yard (now Worsley Green) and was presented to St Mark's Church in 1946 by the Earl of Ellesmere to mark the Church's Centenary celebrations.

(7)

The date and maker of the **Font** are unknown. It is made of limestone, elaborately carved, with a bronze basin.

It bears the inscription:

"Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God"
(Mark 10.14)

Until recently it was plumbed into its own water supply and could be filled as well as emptied via the plughole!



(8) The **Pulpit** is of oak and is made up from carved wooden panels of various dates and styles. The panels of the **pulpit** depict the four Evangelists in the upper portion, whilst the lower portion represents various biblical scenes, including the Adoration of the Shepherds, the Adoration of the Magi, the Flight into Egypt, and, possibly, the Death of Jezebel.

The present **lectern** was made for the church in **1894**. Showing the figure of St. Mark, it cost £50! At the base is Mark's symbol, a carved winged lion. Designed by J. Douglas and executed by Edward Griffiths of Chester, it was the gift of W. L. Bousketz.

