

Local list description and map for the St Mary's Churchyard and Churchyard Extension, Harrow on the Hill

Adopted at Cabinet 23rd September 2021

This area meets the following criteria for local listing:

- (A) Date and rarity.** The older a designed landscape is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to have special interest. Likely to be designated are:
- i. sites with a main phase of development post-1840 which are of special interest and relatively intact, the degree of required special interest rising as the site becomes closer in time
- (B) Further considerations** which may influence selection, and may exceptionally be sufficient by themselves to merit:
- i. Sites having an association with significant persons or historic events
 - ii. Sites with a strong group value with other heritage assets

Summary and introduction:

The St Mary's Churchyard and Churchyard extension on Harrow on the Hill are special for history dating back to the 12th century as well as much 19th century development remaining intact. The (grade I listed) church has a Norman west tower with layers of history since – its lead spire being a landmark for miles around and being part of the 1846 restoration of the church by Giles Gilbert Scott. Churchfields shows evidence of medieval farming. The old part of the churchyard surrounds the church with Limes, 19th century Planes and several Yews. There is a 20th century parish room to the north of the church and 19th century extension to the burial grounds, laid out in a planned quarter-circle, with curving terraces. It is dominated by Yews, ragged Cedar of Lebanon, Scots Pine, Rhododendron, Holly and a large Beech multi-stemmed at base. The site contains numerous 19th century monuments (some listed) of architectural and historic interest including the Peachey tomb where Lord Byron a pupil at Harrow School used to compose his early poetry. At the entrance to the church is a lych gate of 1861, now grade II listed. The group value with these heritage assets adds interest.

Details:

Harrow School's buildings now dominate the old village of which St Mary's was the parish church, with a history dating back to at least medieval times. It is on the site of an old hilltop settlement which may have been a pagan religious centre. The

Domesday Book refers to a priest but not a church and the earliest records are of a church consecrated by Lanfranc, the first Norman Archbishop of Canterbury in 1094; the Archbishops owned the church from the Middle Ages. The church was built piecemeal and has some earlier remnants including a late 12th century font.

St Mary's today has an octagonal lead landmark spire on its 12th century west tower, 13th century chancel with lancet windows, 13th century nave and rebuilt and restored by Giles Gilbert Scott in 1846-49.

The old part of the churchyard surrounds the church with Limes along the eastern boundary, numerous shrubs, 19th century Planes and several Yews. The 20th century parish room and memorial garden is to the north of the church. The mid-19th century detached extension to the burial grounds is on the west slopes, laid out in a planned quarter-circle, with curving terraces. It is dominated by Yews, ragged Cedar of Lebanon, Scots Pine, Rhododendron, Holly and a large Beech multi-stemmed at base. It also contains numerous good 19th century monuments.

As a schoolboy at Harrow, Lord Byron used to lie on the table-top of the tomb of John Peachey in the churchyard to compose his early poetry, a spot with fine views where he 'used to spend hours musing and gazing over the countryside'. It was later referred to by him as "my favourite spot". The tomb is now grade II listed due to this association. Next to the Peachey tomb, now railed, is a plaque commemorating Byron's connection with this place, inscribed with a poem he wrote here. His illegitimate daughter Allegra by Claire Clairmont, the stepsister of Mary Shelley, was later buried in the churchyard and there is a plaque in her memory on the porch wall of the church.

She had died in 1822 in Italy aged 5, and Byron brought her body back to England for burial at Harrow. However, the rector of St Mary, outraged by Byron's reputation and her illegitimacy, only permitted her to be buried at the entrance of the church without a grave plaque, and he later refused to bury Byron at Harrow. Allegra's memorial plaque was placed here in 1980 by the Byron Society, inscribed with words from a letter Byron wrote to Shelley after her death: 'I suppose that Time will do his usual work... - Death has done his'. Other literary figures attending Harrow School include Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816) and Anthony Trollope (1815-1882).

Churchfields below the graveyard to the west show evidence of medieval farming, with terracing to allow use of plough and oxen on the steep slope. To the north of the church is a small area of private woodland reputed to have contained carp ponds dating from at least 1323 belonging to the Archbishops. In 1569 two men were caught breaking into the 'water of John Warren at Harrow Well' and taking a 100 carp 'worth 40 shillings'.

The site has strong group value with many listed buildings since the Peachey tomb, the grave of Thomas Port, the Leighton family tomb and the lych gate are all grade II

listed, whilst St Mary's Church is grade I listed. The site is also an Archaeological Priority Area.

The Leighton family tomb c1867 of granite, brick and mosaic tiles has design interest given the gothic tomb incorporates colourful mosaics and playful monograms. It celebrates the nationally significant book illustrator and cover designer. The 1838 slate headstone to Thomas Port is 12 yards west of the south porch of St Mary's Church is for the memory of Thomas Port who died in a railway accident. The lych gate to the memory of John William Cunningham, Vicar of Harrow 1801-61 is of architectural interest given its timber frame with fretted bargeboards to gable ends, on a brick dwarf wall and chamfered pad stone and tiled roof.

Sources:

London Parks and Gardens Trust, The London Inventory Historic Green Spaces, Harrow 2003

National List descriptions:

Leighton Family Tomb <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1433435>

St Mary's Church <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1079742>

Lych Gate <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1286339>

Grave of Thomas Port <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1079743>

The Peachey Tomb <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1079744>

