

St. Mary, Ealing, Middlesex

Introduction to this History, Survey and Layout document

This short document contains some information on the history of St. Mary, Ealing, and on the putting together of the collection of inscriptions which are now accessible online. The document also includes a photograph of the church, and layouts of where each memorial can be found today.

To locate St. Mary's it is recommended to access the church's website page:

<https://stmarysealing.org.uk/>

Church History

The following is based on the church's history as given on the church's website.

There has been a church building on this site for nearly a thousand years; excavations during the 19th century unearthed solid blocks of stone and ornamental work suggesting that a Norman building stood here. No pictures of that original structure survive.

This was the only church in a large parish that stretched from the Thames at Brentford, north towards Wembley, west beyond Southall, and east to Acton and Bedford Park. Richard Smart, who was the vicar of St Mary's at the end of the 16th century, compiled a census which recorded a total of 427 inhabitants in this whole area. Through the parish passed the only two roads from London to the West. They were the trade routes, and it was not uncommon for travellers to stop for refreshment at the parsonage and rest their horses.

During the Civil War of 1642, the building suffered so badly at the hands of Cromwell's troops that in 1650 a parliamentary survey described St Mary's as 'ruinated and lying open since the plundering'. Soon afterwards came the Plague, with great loss of life. After years of neglect and deterioration, the medieval church was pulled down in the late 1720s and a plain and simple Georgian building erected, complete with a new peal of bells. It is that new building, opened on Trinity Sunday in 1740, which forms the core of what still stands here today.

However Ealing's population grew rapidly with the arrival of the railway in 1838. The village became a respectable town. St Mary's still had an important role in the community, which included overseeing the workhouse, providing schools, maintaining law and order, improving roads and street lighting, distributing alms, and collecting taxes. Brentford became separated from Ealing, and parishes became smaller.

By 1860, Ealing's community believed the time had come to create a much more imposing church. The congregation at St Mary's were all too well aware that the newly erected Christ Church was attracting many worshippers, and that the existing church building 'did not call forth feelings of reverence'. It was also too small for the growing population.

The new church of 1866

The renowned church architect S.S. Teulon transformed the simple village church into a huge 'Byzantine shrine'. He did this, not by demolishing the existing church, but by greatly enlarging it, and decorating it with vibrant colours. Parish records reveal how even in those days the congregation had to struggle to find the money. Some of his ideas, including the proposal for a tall spire, had to be dropped.

On 30th May 1866 the new building was consecrated by Bishop Tait, who commented that 'St Mary's had been transformed from a Georgian monstrosity into a Constantinopolitan basilica'!

Post-Teulon additions to the building

Further works were carried out after Teulon's transformation and the vestry on the north side was extended in 1887. The organ was rebuilt and much enlarged in 1927. And the whole church was extensively refurbished and redecorated in the mid-1950s. The lounge was added to the south in 1959 and extended to form 'The Polygon' in 1978.

The most recent works had their origin back in 1984, when the Parochial Church Council decided that the only way to restore St Mary's was to undertake a total refurbishment of both the outside and the inside of the entire building. The following year a full-scale survey was carried out, which highlighted the need for urgent work to be carried out on the tower, nave, chancel and roof, as well as the interior. The exterior work was undertaken in 1988.

In 1991, plans for the internal re-ordering were presented to the congregation and the first phase, the improvements to the West entrance of the church, were financed and carried out in 1993.

Further improvements included: replacing the pews with movable pew benches, under floor heating, a new electronic organ, a new sound system, the provision of ramps to better enable access, and refurbishment of the vestry and other rooms.

The re-dedication by the Rt Revd Richard Chartres, the Bishop of London, on Trinity Sunday 15th June 2003, marked the fulfilment of almost twenty years of planning, praying and fund-raising. The restoration of this historic building is a remarkable story of the amazing goodness and faithfulness of God.

The churchyard

The churchyard was closed in 1854 since it was full. It was then allowed to become overgrown and many of the monuments were in need of repair, but a new project was started in 2008 to transform the churchyard to a natural place of restfulness and beauty. The transformation was completed in September 2014 when a formal opening service was conducted there by the Bishop of London the Rt Revd Richard Chartres.

Most of the headstones have been removed to the perimeter wall on the north side, while many more have been laid flat, as a safety measure, in other sections of the churchyard.

Memorial Surveys

A recording of the memorial inscriptions (MIs) at St. Mary's was made by members of West Middlesex Family History Society in the 1980s. The recordings were transcribed and typed up by Sarah Minney and Margaret Ridge, producing an A5 booklet with a blue cover. This booklet contained 97 MIs from the church and 119 MIs from the churchyard, and served as a useful source for the words on the inscriptions when the church was revisited in 2020.

The 2020 survey, which carried over to 2021, found essentially the same memorials inside the church as would be expected, but found a lot more inscriptions from the churchyard. Counting in the illegibles along with those that could be read the 2020/21 survey found 102 memorials in the church, and 266 in the churchyard. The main reason for the difference will have been the ability to access all parts of the churchyard. In 2020 it was not possible to see, let alone read, most of the 22 memorials along the eastern boundary to the churchyard, but early in 2021 volunteers from the church took on a significant task of clearing away undergrowth in the churchyard, and revealed about 30 graves which had not been examined up to that time.

Acknowledgements

The Society thanks Steve Paynter, vicar at the church, for his support during this project, and Roland Bostock from the Society for his work in reading the inscriptions and producing this document.

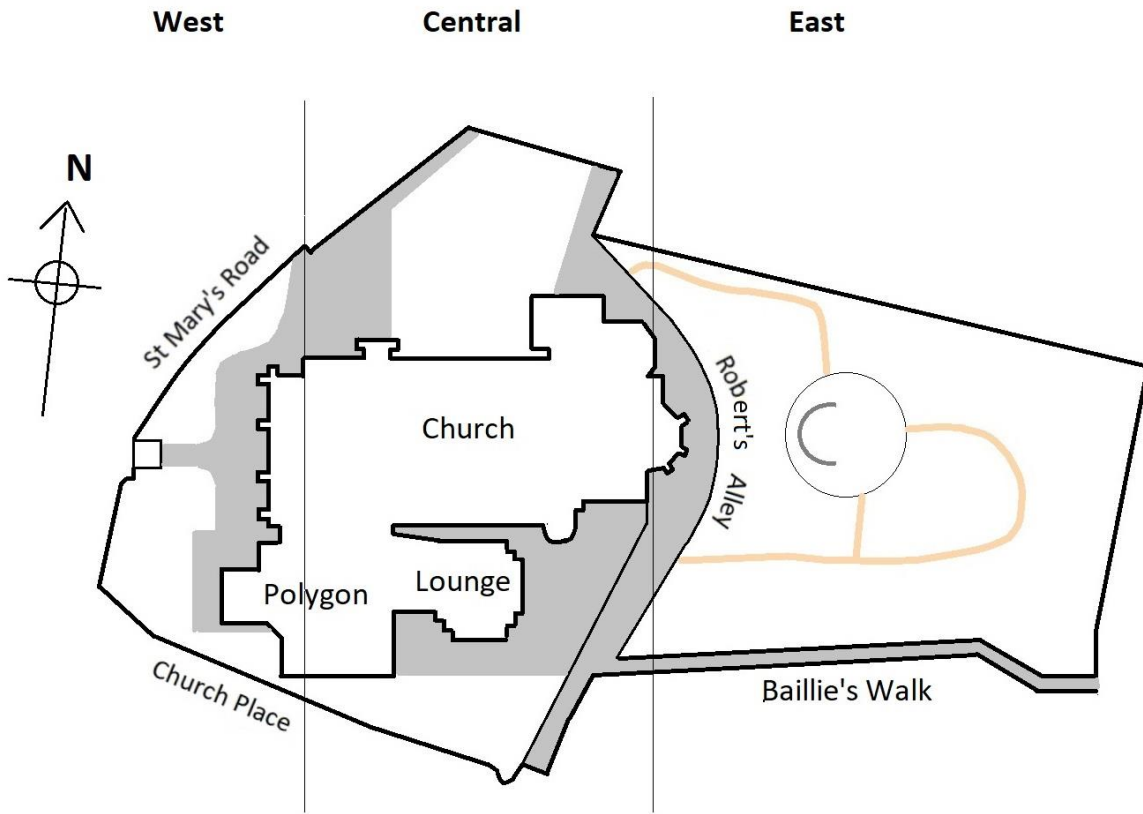
West Middlesex Family History Society, June 2021



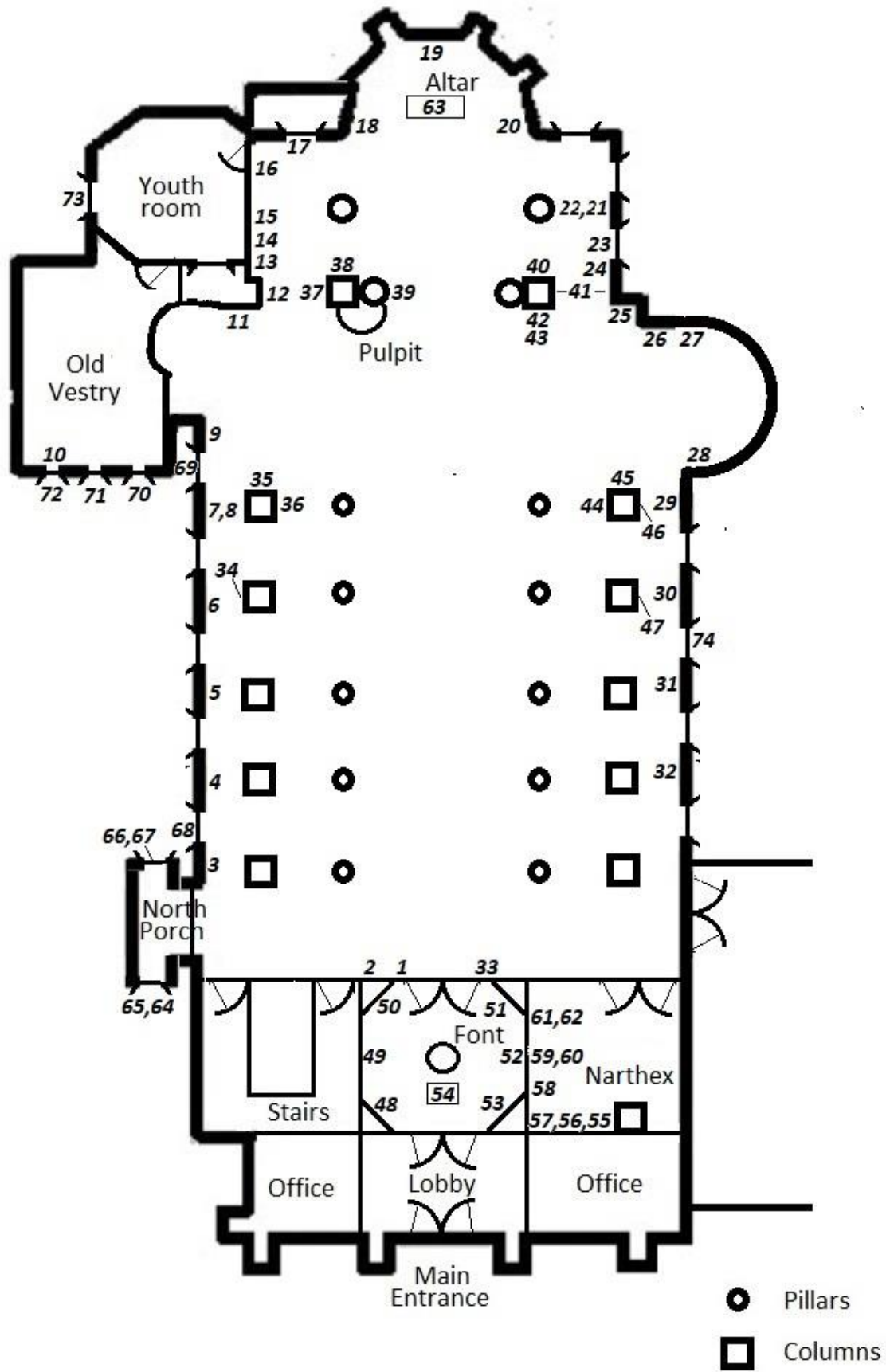
Photograph by Roland Bostock, May 2020

LAYOUT OF THE MEMORIALS

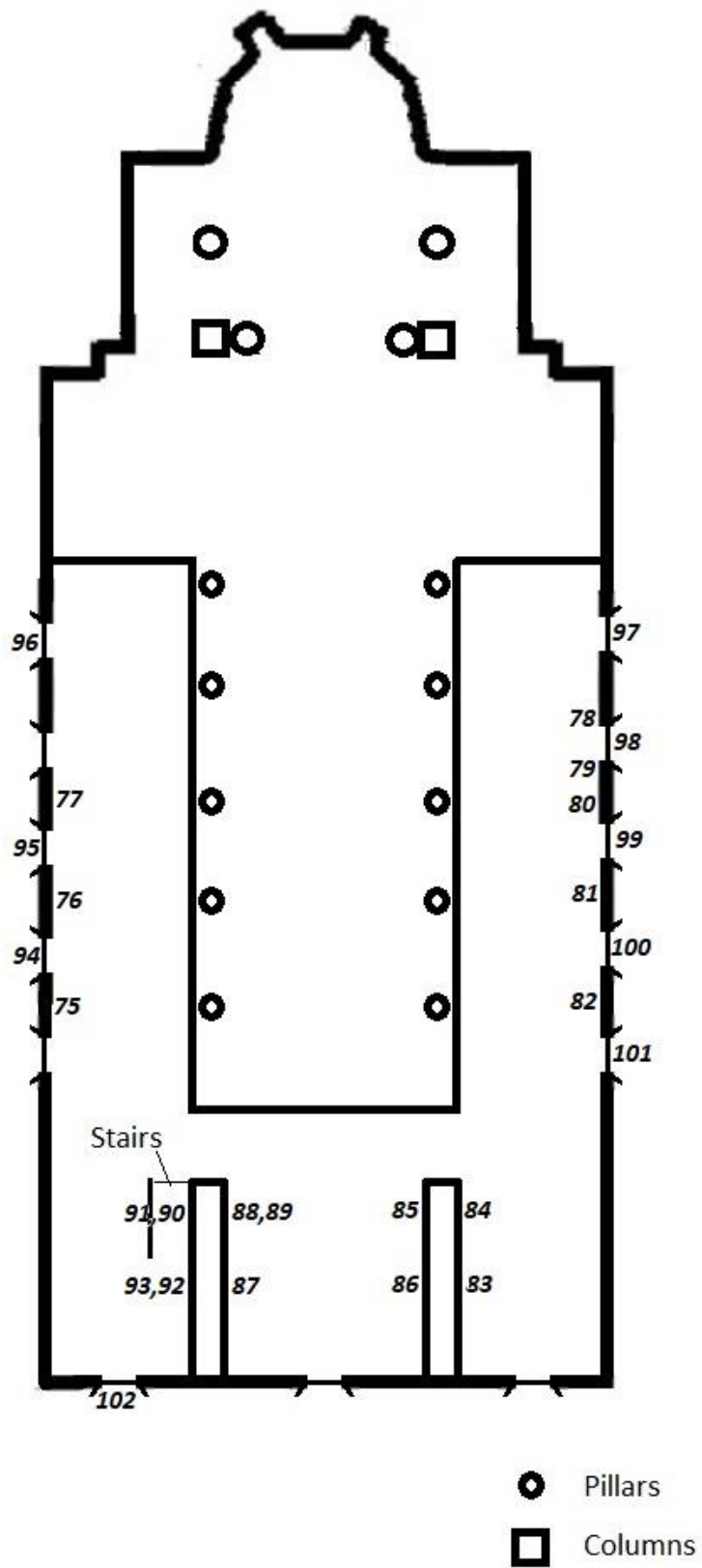
Overview



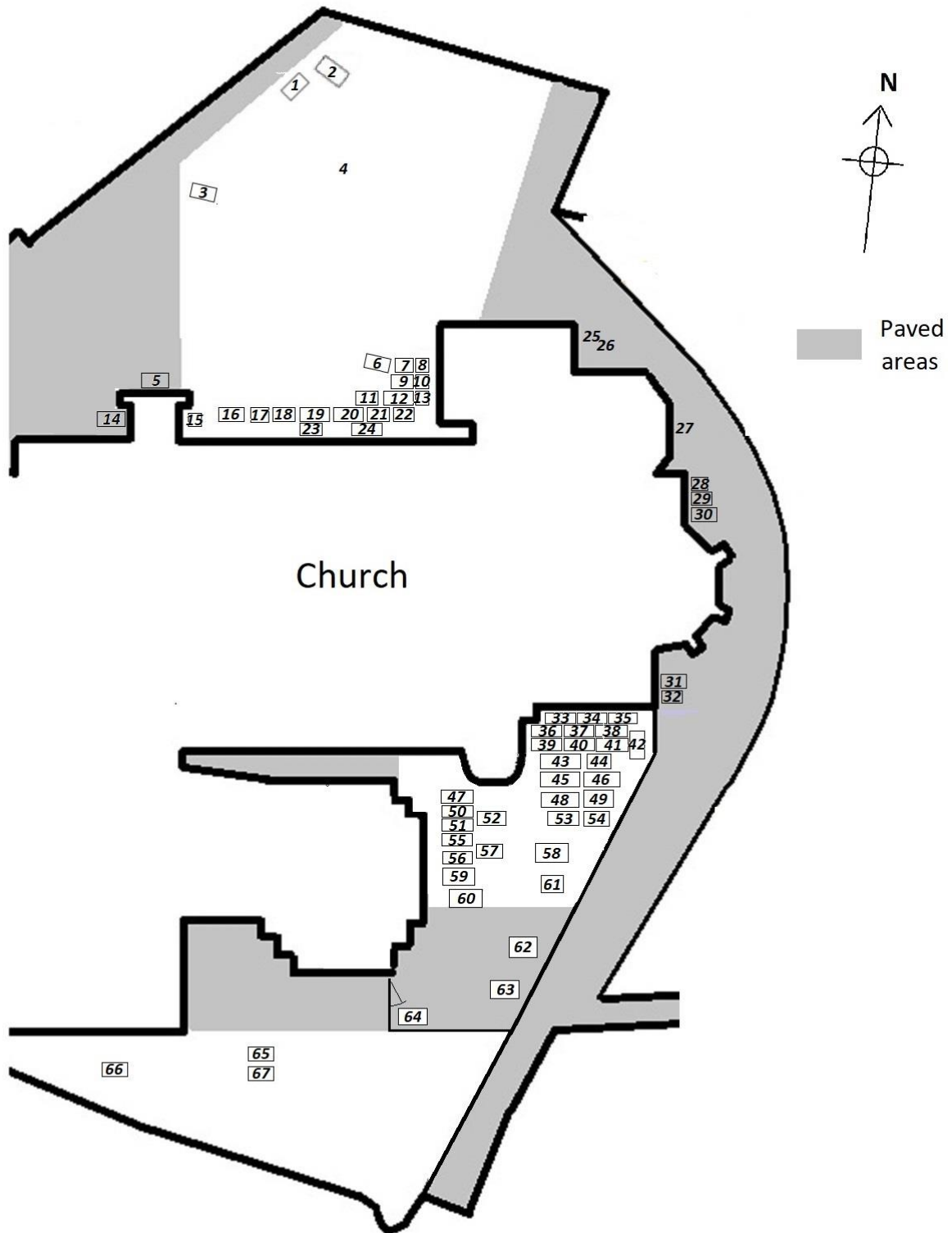
Church – Ground floor (Prefix CH)



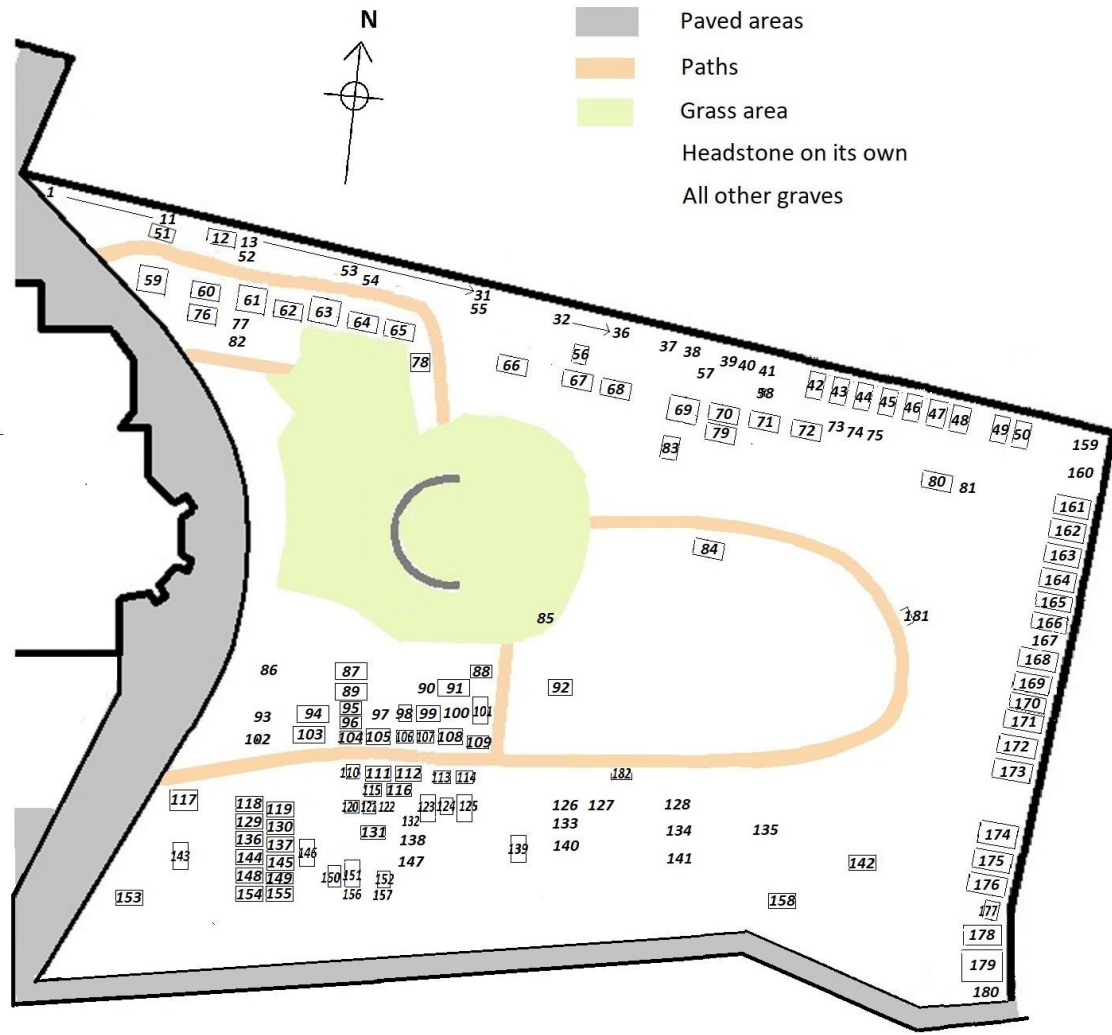
Church - Balcony (Prefix CH)



Central Section (Prefix C)



East Section (Prefix E)



West Section (Prefix W)

