



The current building was built in 1862. It was designed by James Piers St Aubyn and funded by Arthur Pryor of Hylands house. It is listed Grade 11.

The first Rector of Widford Parish was John De Askham appointed in 1340, records show that a church stood on this site from that time. The former church was replaced by the existing one in 1862, although the Records Office holds evidence of Weddings and funerals taking place throughout this time and dating back to the first church on the site, which suggests that some of the church was useable during this re-building period. The oldest remaining grave still in the graveyard is from 1729

The church stands on the land bordered by Greenbury Way to the north and at the junction with London Road to the East. To the West is parkland owned by Chelmsford City Council and known as Hylands Park. Adjacent to the church is Indian Night restaurant, formerly The White Horse Public House. The original Rectory stands behind the graveyard, with their gardens next to the graveyard, and they also have fields for horses. There are photographs of the church alongside, church buildings, a school, a caretakers house and a demountable type of building, used by the uniformed organisations who paraded at the church. The church had a choir and played an active part in village life. Some of these photographs are in the Widford Village Hall, and more information about this period can be found in Peter Turrall MBE notes on 'A History of Widford, the Church, School and Village.' Other than the aforementioned, the church has stood alone since the 1930's when the existing London Road was constructed.

Our architect is Simon Marks, and in the Quinquennial report 2014, he writes;

'The church is relatively small; it consists of a nave, north aisle, chancel and an organ loft/vestry to the east of the nave. The west tower has a very prominent stone spire. The church is entered via the south porch.

A church of Kentish Ragstone, Nave, chancel, north and south aisles, south porch and western tower with broach spire of stone. Tower with 2-light decorated style openings, buttressed and angled buttressed, windows decorated. Roofs ridged and gabled, machine made red clay tiles. Small north transept.



The nave, chancel and north aisle have brick structures faced with dressed Kent rag laid in regular courses. There are limestone dressings to the windows and buttress weathering. The rooves are covered in machine made clay tiles. The spire is finished in dressed limestone.' The two interior ceilings are a beautiful wooden construction, the same as the design of St Michaels, Galleywood, a church which Arthur Pryor went on to have built, once he had finished working at St Marys.

Simon Marks continues: 'The chancel is aligned to geographical East.

Internally the walls are plastered. It is likely that the ragstone visible externally is only a facing and that the inner walls are built of brickwork with a plastered finish. Originally the interior of the church was painted in distemper over the plaster finish. Some limited stencilling of the walls was undertaken and fragments of this are apparent in the chancel. In the 20th century the walls were re-painted.

The dressed stone used in the columns and arches of the arcade and in the corbel brackets is unpainted.

The pews and joinery within the church are of oak with polished finish. The floors are formed in soft wood in the pew platforms, and tiling in the circulation areas. The circulation areas have been covered with a fitted carpet.

The seating capacity of the nave and north aisle is approximately 120 and there is seating for 18 in the choir stalls.'



The font has been moved into the North-East corner of the church and is manufactured from Coade Stone. The wooden pulpit and pews may be original. The choir stalls were a gift from Doris Elizabeth Fordham, servant to St Marys for 33 years, 12.11.1980.

The visible inscription of the chancel has been subject to a detailed study and specialist advice concerning its nature and history. The chancel arch bares the inscription to the west side of it:

‘Yield yourselves to the Lord and enter into His sanctuary.’

The chancel arch inscription was re-painted in the 20th century, a detailed technical description of the work is available’



There have been modernisations to the interior: a wooden screen has been added to the lower arch, and a reordering of the base of the tower inserted behind the screen.

The chancel arch steps have been overlaid with a projecting plinth covered with carpet. The font has been relocated, but the pulpit remains in its’ original position.



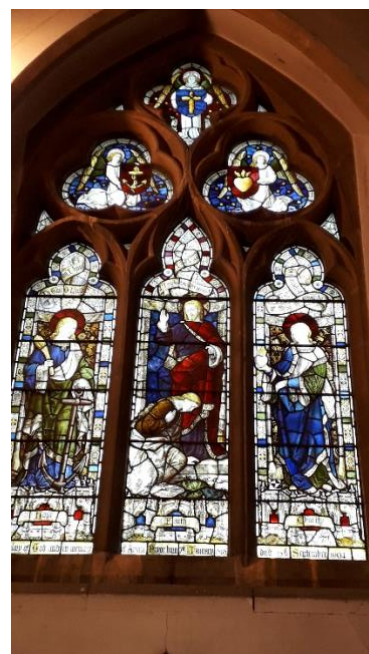
In the right hand corner of the chancel is a small piscine, similar to St Michaels church in Galleywood.





Within the church are a number of stained glass windows that were cleaned and repaired in 2016 by Aurovision. The window to the South elevation of the nave is dedicated to Mrs Elizabeth Pryor (died 1898) wife of Arthur Pryor. The windows depict Martha, Elizabeth, and Mary and a quote from Proverbs.

The window in the North west is dedicated to Mr Arthur Pryor (died 1904), formerly of Hylands House, and depicts, Faith, Hope and Charity.

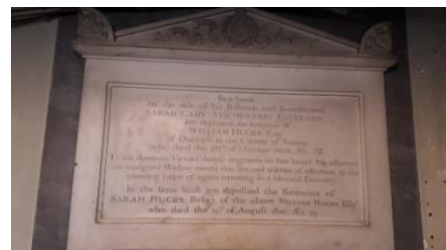


The west window in the tower is dedicated to the family of Mid Lancelot Sir Daniel Gooch R N (circa 1920), and his wife Mrs Winnifred Gooch. It depicts St Nicholas, Mary and St George. Above the main characters is a cherub, and above the cherub is an angel announcing the news to Mary. At the top of the window is a dove arriving as the Holy Spirit come down. It is reasonable to assume that the East window was installed at the time of erection. The remains of Mr Arthur Pryor and Sir Daniel Gooch are buried in the churchyard. A friend of Sir Daniel Gooch, Mr Claude Grahame-White, Aviator and founder of Hendon Aerodrome (the first London airport) was married at St Mary's on 3rd December 1911.



Within the vestry are located three memorial Plaques all of which predate the existing church and have been moved into the vestry. They are 'In memory of Elizabeth the wife of Richard Judge of Widford Hall, who died Nov 1780 and later her husband died Nov 1787.

Another plaque reads: 'In a vault by the side of his relation and benefactress Sarah Lady Viscountess Falkland are deposited the remains of William Hucks esq, 1804, and later his wife....', there is also a memorial to Reverend William Warner 1840, and his wife Henrietta.



There is a board stating various Benefactions to the poor. One by Sarah, Viscountess Falkland, another by Rev'd John Saunders and the last by Benjamin Serjeant. The fund and a method of giving to those in need is still in place today.



In the Nave are three wall plaques commemorating F W Taylor DL, Lieutenant Colonel 2/5th Essex Regiment (died 1916)., Mr Arthur Pryor 1862, and F R Thurlow MA, Rector 1903-1938.



There is a war memorial to those lost in the fighting from Widford Parish inside and outside the church. Names of those who died in the war effort are recorded from the first and second world wars.



We have a significant number of war graves and have recently received plaques from the war graves commission, to draw people's attention into the graveyard to look for them.

St Marys has a beautiful spire. There is a record in Buildings of England, by Nikolaus Pevsner, 1954, which dates the spire from 1862, the architect being St Aubyn. The spire is some 145 feet high. It contains 8 bells which are rung for Weddings using a hand pulling method.



St Marys is a landmark, seen for miles around, not least by travellers on the A12. It has a regular congregation of 33 on a Sunday and more for a celebration or rite of passage. The church is open regularly on a Friday afternoon, mainly for members to support the up-keep, but also to enable visitors to come. There are other occasional days of opening, often for cream-teas, flower festivals etc.

The church internal plaster finish has suffered long-term damage as a result of roof leaks and damp penetration. The roof has been repaired and the source of the damp resolved, however the paint finish remains discoloured and stained. The appearance does not enhance the other historic features of the interior. The existing finish is not of historic significance and redecoration could be considered.

We await a faculty to allow this repainting to be commenced. June 2019