

St MARY'S CHURCH
SELBORNE,
HAMPSHIRE GU34 3JQ
Trail Answers and Explanatory Notes
for accompanying adults

Children's Answers are in Bold. Other information is for interest and discussion.



St Mary the Virgin is a Grade I listed building and dates back to the late 12th century. It stands on a rise of ground, a short stroll from Gilbert White's house in the pretty Hampshire village of Selborne. The church was built around 1180 on the site of an earlier Saxon building. According to tradition the land on which the church stands was granted by Edith, wife of the Saxon King, Edward the Confessor, in 1049. St Mary's was mentioned in the Domesday Book; the present church with its Norman Tower and Nave largely date from 1180.

Gilbert White, the famous naturalist (1720 -1793) was a curate at the church and was famous for his '*Natural History & Antiquities of Selborne*'. He is commemorated by a glorious stained glass window depicting St Francis preaching to the birds.

An 800 year old font is another of the fine treasures belonging to this beautiful church.

1 FONT

A font is a large bowl, usually made of stone with a lead lining, at which people are baptized with **water** as a sign that they have become members of the church. The font is near the church entrance symbolizing the start of the Christian life. The cover is made from **wood** taken from the fallen yew tree which blew down outside the church in the storm on 25th January 1990.



2 ST FRANCIS WINDOW

St Francis is preaching to the **birds**.

There are many different species of birds in the window.

Here are three examples: **Stork, Owl** and **Robin**.

The window is dedicated to the famous naturalist **Gilbert White**.

3 MEMORIAL WINDOW

Timothy the tortoise (later found to be female) is sitting next to the **Frog** and she drinking from the **pool/pond**.

Gilbert White (1720 – 1793) was famous for his '*Natural History & Antiquities of Selborne*'. His writings are regarded as the first scientific observations of natural history, especially birds.

His '*Natural History*' has been continuously in print since it was first published in 1789. He studied all the plants and creatures in the circular panels. The tortoise, Timothy, was a great favourite.

This window marks the bicentenary of Gilbert White's death and was dedicated in 1993.

4 MEDIEVAL FLOOR TILES

Some of the tiles around the Yew Tree Altar were found under the floor while others were discovered at Selborne Priory in excavations begun in 1953.

5 YEW TREE ALTAR

An Altar is a special **table**. This Altar was made from a fallen **Yew Tree**.

It was carved from the largest branch of the fallen yew tree, estimated to be 1400 years old when it was blown down on 25 January 1990. The Altar was designed by Philip Hussey and Peter Legg of Buckinghamshire College, High Wycombe, without cost to the church. The finished Altar was dedicated and used to celebrate Holy Communion on 25th January 1998.

St Mary's has three Altars, the main Altar in the Chancel, one in the Peace Chapel and the Yew Tree Altar. An Altar is the focal point of a church where the main act of Christian Worship, the Eucharist (Holy Communion or Mass) is celebrated.

6 LECTERN

It is made of **brass**. A Lectern is a book stand made in wood or brass to hold the Lectionary or Holy Bible. The Lectionary on the Lectern is a book containing the extracts from the Scriptures which are read at Public Worship.

7 BLACK SLAB

The **cross** is an important Christian symbol. A cross hangs in front of the main Altar near the black slab which commemorates Gilbert White, the Vicar of the church who was the Grandfather of Gilbert White, the Naturalist.

8 PEACE CHAPEL

1914-1918 and **1939-1945**.

The First World War lost more people with the same surname.

The soldiers who died could have been brothers or cousins from the same family.

9 NORMAN PILLARS IN THE NAVE

The half skull is part of this family's memorial.

The Latin words Memento Mori are used to describe depictions of skulls and skeletons as a reminder of death. These words occurred on Memorials in the 15th and 16th centuries.



10 BELFRY

There are **eight** bell ropes.

Bells are rung on **Sunday** before the service and on **special occasions**.

11 NAVE

The kneelers are used for people to kneel on when they are praying.

Answers for this question are open ended.



As you leave the church take a look at the stump of the famous Yew Tree.

Gilbert White is buried in the church yard in a very simple grave on the north side of the church. It was his wish to have a small headstone stone and the inscription - G.W. 26th June 1793.