

St Lawrence Church
Alton, Hampshire GU34 2BU
Trail Answers and Explanatory Notes
for Parents and Teachers



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



Welcome to St Lawrence Church.

The church is an Anglican Parish Church in Alton, Hampshire. It is a Grade 1 listed building and is notable for the range of its architecture and for being the site of the concluding action of the Battle of Alton during the English Civil War. The oldest part of the church is Norman and dates from the 11th century. All four of its early Norman arches are still to be seen. In the 15th century the church was extended, a new Nave and Chancel were built and further restoration and additions followed to the present day when a very modern and beautiful award winning glass pod was designed to conceal the new church facilities. The designs on the screen illustrate the history of the town.

1 FONT

The nails were used to nail Jesus to the cross when he was crucified.

The Font holds the holy water used for christening new members of the church. This font is Victorian and is situated under the tower. The Reverend O A Hodgson, Vicar of St Lawrence Church in 1867, carved the decorations.



2 CARVING

The carving on the top of the pillar is thought to be a **wolf** eating a bone.

The carvings at the top of the pillars are very rare. They date from about 1070. In those days most people couldn't read or write so the church would be decorated with paintings and carvings to tell the Bible Stories to the illiterate medieval congregation as well as decorating the church. Other carvings at the top of the pillars are said to represent a cockerel, pelican, two donkeys with their feet in the air and a demon. You may have your own interpretations.

3 COMMUNION TABLE

The date of the Communion Table is **1680**. The Communion Table, or Altar is the focus of Christian worship. The congregation took communion at this sturdy table, in the seventeenth century.

4 STATUES

The statue is **St George**.

St George is the Patron Saint of England and the animal at his feet is the dragon. Legend has it that St George slew the dragon to rescue a princess and later became associated with brave deeds. The other statue is St Michael. They were carved in wood by Mr. Southwick who also carved figures in Liverpool Cathedral. The statues like stained glass windows served to remind the medieval congregation of the importance of heroic Christian figures. They were presented to the Church in 1927.

5 POOR BOX

This is an Elizabethan poor box nearly four hundred years old. Kind people put money in the slot to help the **poor people**. It has three locks, the keys were held by the Vicar and two Churchwardens who distributed the money to people in need so they could buy food and other essentials. Each parish was required by law to provide for its poor with a law which became known as The Poor Law. The Hampshire Record Office in Winchester has records of the monies which were distributed in Hampshire, including the parish of St Lawrence in Alton and the names of the families who received it. Today we have food banks which provide the same service.

6 STAINED GLASS WINDOW

Jesus is **ascending** up to Heaven. There are **eleven** people below Jesus .

The 1870 window shows the Ascension. The Ascension in Christian belief is the ascent of Jesus Christ into heaven on the 40th day after his Resurrection (Easter being the first day.) The stained glass window shows the disciples, or friends of Jesus looking up as he ascends up to heaven.

7 MOSAIC FLOOR

There are two different patterns of flowers and two different cubed shapes to choose from.

Mosaic tiles have been used for hundreds of years to decorate the interiors of churches, palaces and important buildings. The mosaics are made of small, flat, pieces of stone and glass of many different colours. Skilled craftsmen made the mosaics to decorate the floors and walls and you may have seen others if you have visited a Roman Villa.

8 PULPIT

The **Vicar** delivers sermons from the pulpit. This fine wooden pulpit dates from the 17th century and is Jacobean. The sermon (talk) is an important part of a service. Raising the Vicar higher than the congregation made it easier for him to be seen and heard.

9 LECTERN

It is built in the shape of an **eagle**. **The Holy Bible** rests on the lectern.

The lectern is a bookstand in wood or brass to hold the large Holy Bible from which the lessons are read. Sometimes it is shaped like an eagle with outspread wings, because eagles are thought to be the birds that can fly the highest and so nearest to the heavens. The lectern was carved in 1860s during the restoration of the church.



10 WALL PAINTINGS

The beautiful wall paintings are considered to be very rare. They were painted in the early 15th century when the whole church would have been decorated. When this was no longer allowed they were hidden behind whitewash and only rediscovered in the nineteenth century. The king is the **middle** painting.

- The top painting is believed to show St Cornelius, who died in AD 253 and was a contemporary of St Lawrence.
- The middle painting could possibly be King Henry 1V (1422-1461) who was alive when the nave was built or Edward the Confessor; his Queen, Edith held the Manor of Alton.
- The last painting is thought to be Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury Cathedral, who was murdered in the Cathedral in 1170. He is venerated as a saint and a martyr. He is wearing the red cloak and holding the mitre. Alton is on the Pilgrims Way between Winchester and Canterbury and so there may have been a connection with Thomas a Becket.

11 GLASS FRONTED BOX

A **button**. These objects were found in the church yard. The white circular pieces were lead shot which have become corroded over time and date from the Battle of Alton, which took place in the church yard. The grey button was also found in the church yard and could have come from the uniform of a soldier who was fighting in this famous battle in 1643.



12 ALTON CIVIL WAR BOARD

Colonel Boles died in the Pulpit. He was the Commander of the Royalist Troops. The Royalists troops were under attack from the Leader of the Parliamentarians, Sir William Waller. Colonel Boles and his men were outnumbered and they took refuge in the church. Although, they barricaded the Church doors, the Parliamentarians burst in and Colonel Boles was killed, reputedly in the pulpit.

13 ENDPIECE

A few words on your thoughts about St Lawrence Church.

14 CHURCH DOOR

The number of bullet holes in the front door will vary.

You have finished the Trail, we hope you enjoyed it.

