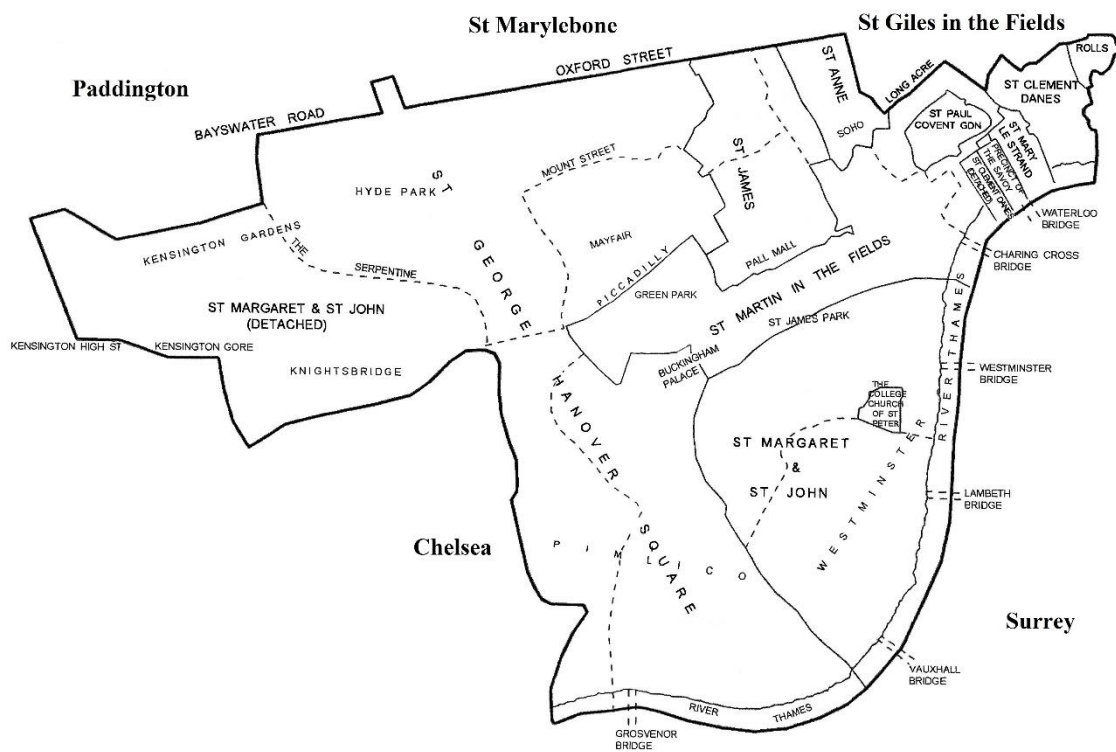




LONDON WESTMINSTER & MIDDLESEX FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

ST MARGARET WESTMINSTER

St Margaret was an ancient parish in the Westminster hundred subdivision of the county of Middlesex. The City and Liberty of Westminster was succeeded as an administrative body by the Metropolitan Borough of Westminster in 1900 and then by the London Borough of Westminster in 1965. The southern part of St Margaret parish was assigned to St John the Evangelist, following construction of the church there in 1728. A detached portion of St Margaret's is located further west and includes Knightsbridge and parts of Kensington.



The ancient parish of St Margaret's grew up around Westminster Abbey, between the King's Palace at Whitehall and the River Thames. The street names of Broad Sanctuary, Little Sanctuary and Thieving Lane are reminders of the custom of granting sanctuary to fugitives from the law in and around the Abbey precincts, which unfortunately resulted in the gathering there of a most undesirable population. Also, many people trying to escape the frequent outbreaks of plague which occurred in the City of London in the 1500s moved west into Westminster although this did not give them immunity, as the records show. Before there was a parish church in Westminster, the Abbey was used as such, and the first parish church to be built probably dates from the 12th century in the reign of Edward I and was dedicated to St Margaret of Antioch. In 1614 it became the church of the House of Commons, whose members had come to dislike the ceremonies carried out in the Abbey.

The Society has produced a Parish Guide to St Margaret Westminster which includes further information about the churches below as well as nonconformist and other denominations.



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St Margaret, Parliament Street, Westminster



This church was originally built so that local residents would not have to disturb the Benedictine monks of Westminster Abbey next door. By the 1970s the local population was so small that St Margaret's parochial duties were reallocated to neighbouring parishes.

Records of the parish include baptisms (1539-1987), marriages (1539-1987) and burials (1460-1853). Burials from 1460-1775 are recorded in the Churchwardens' Accounts; those from 1539-1853 are in the Burial Register. These records are at Westminster City Archives.

St John the Evangelist, Smith Square



This church was built in the early 18th century as one of the 'Commission for Building Fifty New Churches' in the reign of Queen Anne. Its unusual design has been likened to her upturned footstool. The church took a direct hit from an incendiary bomb in 1941. It was rebuilt to the original design in the 1960s and is now used as a concert hall.

Records include baptisms (1729-1941), marriages (1728-1947), burials (1728-1853) and are at Westminster City Archives.

All Saints, Ennismore Gardens, Knightsbridge

This church was built in 1849 and closed in 1955. The parish united with Holy Trinity, Prince Consort Road. The building now houses a Russian Orthodox Church. All Saints, together with Holy Trinity, Prince Consort Road formed the detached part of the parish of St Margaret.

Records include baptisms (1849-1955) and marriages (1849-1955) and are at Westminster City Archives.



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Christ Church, Broadway

This parish was assigned in 1844 from that of St Margaret. The church was badly damaged during the Blitz and later demolished. The parish joined St Peter, Eaton Square in 1947.

Records include baptisms (1843-1941) and marriages (1876-1947) and are at Westminster City Archives.

Holy Trinity, Prince Consort Road, South Kensington

This church has its origins in a chapel attached to a leper hospital founded by Westminster Abbey that stood in Park Side in the Knightsbridge area. In about 1630, local residents requested that the ruined chapel be replaced with a church and this was allowed with the proviso that they also attend St Margaret's church Westminster, their parish church, at least once a quarter. The current church was erected on Prince Consort Road in 1901.

Records include baptisms (1926-1958) and marriages (1904-1949) and are at Westminster City Archives.

Holy Trinity, Vauxhall Bridge Road

This church was built in 1849 on land given by Thomas Cubitt and was designed to accommodate 850 worshippers. It closed in 1953 and the parish was united with St James the Less.

Records include baptisms (1852-1953) and marriages (1852-1952) and are at Westminster City Archives.

St Andrew, Ashley Place

This church was destroyed by a bomb in the Second World War. The parish was united with St Peter, Eaton Square.

Records include baptisms (1850-1946) and marriages (1876-1946) and are at Westminster City Archives.

St James the Less, Thorndike Street

This church opened in 1862 in what was then an area of slums and tenements. The parish joined with St Saviours in the 1960s and the church is still welcoming worshippers.

Records include baptisms (1862-1949) and marriages (1862-2002) and are at Westminster City Archives.

St John the Evangelist, Causton Street

Founded in 1958, this church closed in 1974.

Records include baptisms (1958-1974) and marriages (1959-1974) and are at Westminster City Archives.



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St Mary, Tothill Fields (St Mary the Virgin, Vincent Square)

This parish was created from that of St Margaret and the church was consecrated in 1837. The church closed in 1923.

Records include baptisms (1837-1923) and marriages (1841-1923) and are at Westminster City Archives.

St Matthew, Great Peter Street

This parish was created in 1851 from that of St John, Smith Square. The church was almost totally destroyed by arson in 1977 and was rebuilt on a smaller scale. It is still open to worship.

Records include baptisms (1851-1930) and marriages (1851-1938) and are at Westminster City Archives.

St Stephen, Rochester Row



Instigated as a memorial to her father by Baroness Burdett-Coutts, this church was built in 1847 with a group of schools attached and is still open as St Stephen with St John.

Records include baptisms (1847-1988) and marriages (1850-1965) and are at Westminster City Archives.

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