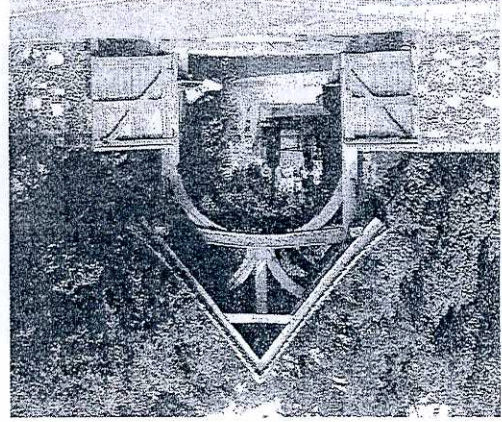


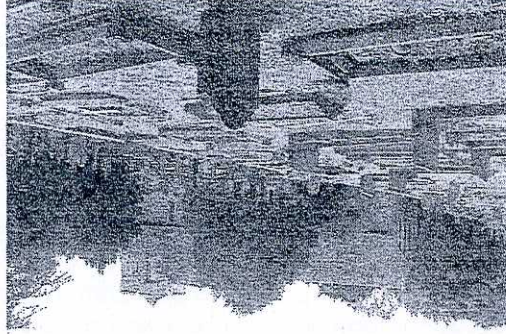
St Martin's, Canterbury
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A tour of the Churchyard

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*Being the stories of some of the  
people buried there.*  
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The
Entrance
through
the
Lychgate



The
Church
from
the
terrace

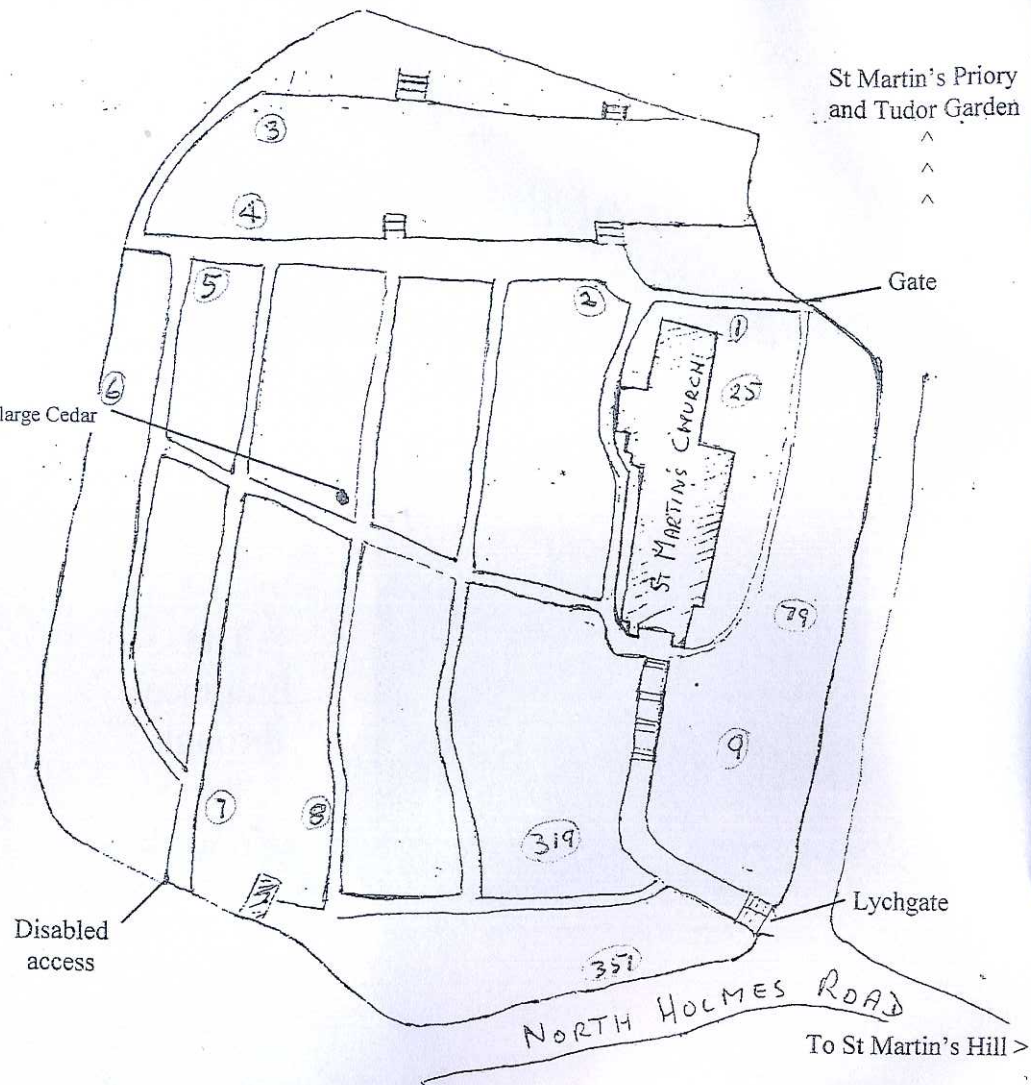
THE CHURCHYARD OF ST MARTIN'S CHURCH, CANTERBURY

St Martin's Churchyard contains at least 900 graves, amongst them those of many people eminent in Canterbury, or wider afield, in their time. Many are aware that Mary Tourtel, the inventor of Rupert Bear, is buried on the upper terrace, and the grave of the famous Canterbury artist Thomas Sydney Cooper who died in 1902 aged 99 is in the central lowest part. But many other famous people and others who reached high levels in the society of their day are buried here.

In this Churchyard are the graves of 4 Bishops, 2 Archdeacons, 2 Deans, 16 Canons, 2 Precentors, and at least 14 other priests. Among those from the armed forces are 2 Admirals, a Vice-Admiral, a General, a Major-General, a Brigadier-General, and, among the other laity, a Knight, a Judge, a Prison Governor, a Headmaster, and a Cathedral Organist.

The oldest marked graves are under the large yew trees to the South of the church. The earliest date to be seen is 1686 (grave no. 79) on the headstone of the grave of Thomas Emptage of this parish and Mary, his wife. He died on 4th January 1686 and she died on 1st July 1708. This may not be the oldest stone as it may have been erected after his wife's death. The oldest stone may well be that on the grave of a daughter of Austen and Elizabeth Neame which is dated 1692 (grave no. 25). The daughter's name is obscured as this stone has severely flaked – unlike the stone of Thomas and Mary Emptage, the carving on which is still very clear. Obviously the quality of the Emptage stone is much higher than that of the Neame stone, and also of many later stones which have weathered badly.

This dating of the earliest stones matches that of churchyards across England. Prior to the later years of the 17th century graves may have been marked with wooden crosses or memorials which have since been lost. However it may be that there were few, if any, burials in this churchyard before the seventeenth century. Certainly burials of the laity took place in the grounds of St Augustine's Abbey until 1591 – hence the name of the gateway opposite the end of Church Street St Paul's which is still known as the Cemetery Gate. It was in 1591 that the graveyard for St Paul's Church was opened in Longport. The parish of St Martin was united with that of St Paul in 1681. St Paul's graveyard was closed in 1951 and the stones there were later moved to the boundaries, when the City Council became responsible for its maintenance. St Martin's Churchyard was closed in 1977 after which the City Council likewise became responsible for its maintenance.



Plan of St Martin's Churchyard

With the location of graves referred to in the text marked with their reference numbers as used in the text.

