

The Gibson family tomb



The tomb is a local landmark and has a red “heritage” plaque on it as a local building of interest. There is no known connection of the Gibson family with Sutton but at the end of the 18th century Sutton was rural and citizens from London thought they would like to be laid to rest in such a setting. There are several such tombs along the back wall of the churchyard but none so grand by half as the Gibson tomb

The Gibson Mausoleum was erected in 1777 for James Gibson (c.1706-1776, London wine merchant and Master of the Worshipful Company of Ironmongers, and members of his family by his eldest daughter, Mary Gibson (1730-1793). Her parents had both died in 1776 and had been buried in St. Nicholas churchyard but Mary used some of her inheritance to erect the mausoleum and re-inter her parents within it.

The stone coffins along the north and south sides of the mausoleum without inscriptions contain the remains of James Gibson on the north side and his wife Martha on the south side.

The five lead lined oak coffins all have lead coffin plates. No 1 on the floor adjoining the north stone coffin contains Jane Martin (d 1764) a presumed sister of Mary Gibson and Jane Leach (d 1769) probably a cousin, both re-interred when the Mausoleum was built. No 2 on the floor nearer the south stone coffin contains Matthew Gibson, brother and business partner and executor to James Gibson (d 1773). No 3, a large coffin on top of no. 2 contains the remains of Martha Wood (d 1783)

also a daughter of James Gibson. No 4 on top of the south stone coffin contains the remains of Elizabeth Gibson (d 1787) another daughter who left a legacy of £50 for the upkeep of the tomb. No 5, on top of the north stone coffin contains the remains of Mary Gibson (d 1793) the last of the family to be interred here, who left a legacy of £5,000 on trust to the Governors of Christ's Hospital, the interest to be used for the upkeep and an annual inspection of the mausoleum. The Governors and Guardians of Christ's Hospital were made responsible for any repairs.

The two bequests are set out on painted boards in St. Nicholas Church. (see below)

The mausoleum was described in A topographical History of Surrey (1844) by EW Brayley as being 'enclosed by iron railings' but these are no longer present.

In the 1920s small ventilation grilles were inserted on three sides of the mausoleum.

On a painted board in church:

In the will of Mrs Elizabeth Gibson, spinster, dated 7 December 1786 “ I give the sum of £500 four percent Bank Annuities unto the Minister and Churchwardens (for the time being) of the said Parish of Sutton in the County of Surrey, in trust, to pay and apply the interest to the future repair of the said monument and vault as often as need or occasion shall require; and in the meantime I direct the interest of the said £500 to be laid out in the purchase of shoes and stockings for the poor people and children of the said Parish at the discretion of the Ministers and Churchwardens for the time being.

Mrs Mary Gibson by her last Will gave and bequeathed to the Minister and Churchwardens, for the time being, of the Parish of Sutton in the County of Surrey; £500 three per cent consolidated Bank Annuities on trust to be applied as follows: Five pounds to the Minister of Sutton for the time being for ever for preaching a sermon on the twelfth of August every year. Five pounds to be distributed that day at Church to the poor in every year by the Churchwardens. One pound to be paid to the Clerk of the said parish for the time being on that day in every year. Four pounds to be divided between the Churchwardens on that day in every year, on condition that the said Churchwardens do attend on the said twelfth of August in every year and survey and examine the monument and family vault of the Gibsons, and if any reparations or amendments are wanting that they do apply and certify the same to the Governors and Guardians of Christ's Hospital, and if they should refuse or neglect to repair and amend the aforesaid monument within the limited time that the said Churchwardens of Sutton for the time being give notice of such refusal or neglect to the Governors and Guardians of the Foundling Hospital. October 1793, Giles Hatch, Rector. Richard Mugridge, Thomas Young, Churchwardens.