

The Evelyn Gibbs Murals and the Hidden Treasures Project

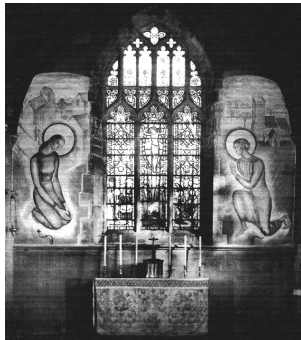
In 1946, war artist, Evelyn Gibbs painted two murals at St Martin's Church. The wall paintings, depicting the Annunciation were painted to either side of the beautiful east window. The Angel Gabriel to the right and the Blessed Virgin Mary to the left. They were painted in the medieval tradition against a local background, featuring St Martin's Church and the old Church Farm. Gibbs sketches were selected from a number of submissions by the then Rector, Father Marshall. As a result of the church extension in 1972 the east window was bricked up and the glass lost, the

barrel vault ceiling and the top two thirds of the paintings disappeared from view above the new suspended pine chancel ceiling and the bottom third of the paintings covered with a layer of emulsion. As the years went on the paintings were believed to have been destroyed. However, in 2009 electricians working in the ceiling confirmed the paintings were still there, photos were taken, English Heritage consulted, a conservation report carried out and plans for their restoration formulated. In 2012 a Heritage Lottery Fund Development Stage grant was secured to

develop plans to restore the Gibbs murals, the barrel vault ceiling and the east window as part of the Hidden Treasures project. Other work includes installing under floor heating, new stone floor tiles and new lighting. There will be three years of heritage activities for all ages, including arts, crafts, wildlife workshops, as well as volunteering opportunities. If successful the project will begin in early 2014 with the aim of not just revealing the hidden heritage but also the skills and talents within each of us. Contact us at www.stmartinsbilborough.org.uk



Evelyn Gibbs and Claude Price working on the paintings in 1946



View of the east wall c. late 1940s



Detail from what remains of the paintings today



The University of
Nottingham

Are you fascinated by church history? Could you help us bring church heritage to life?
The Southwell & Nottingham Diocese Church History Project would like to hear from you.
For more information see www.nottsopenchurches.org.uk

Many thanks to Hilary Wheat and John Day for the material used in this leaflet and to Dr Chris Brooke for photographs.

Welcome to the church of St Martin of Tours Bilborough



The church of St Martin of Tours stands on the site of an Anglo-Saxon settlement and the main body of the church dates back to the mid-14th Century with the tower being added around 1450. In 1680 the church was purchased by Ralph Edge Esq together with the rest of the Strelley Estate and it remained in the family's possession until 1927 when Patronage of the church passed to the Society for the Maintenance of the Faith.

Restoration work was carried out in 1833 and again between 1887-9 under the architect J.E. Newberry, a stone chancel

arch was added as well as new pews and the barrel vault chancel ceiling both indicative of the forthcoming arts and crafts movement.

In 1946, to help boost post war morale, two murals were painted to either side of the east window and in the following years the small Bilborough village was swallowed up by the council house estates of Bilborough and Strelley. The single aisled, medieval church was inadequate for the growing congregation. The church was finally extended in the 70s; the north chancel wall was demolished and a large modern worship space with

community rooms, toilets and kitchen facilities was added. The architect, Colin Shewring, was the brother of the then Rector, Father Derek Shewring. The dedication of the new church took place on 20th November 1972.

As a result of this extension the 20th century wall paintings, the barrel vault ceiling and the east window were all lost to view.

As the 20th century came to an end the medieval nave and tower fell into serious disrepair. In 2009 a Repair Grant for Places of Worship in England was secured from English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The tower was restored, including a new roof and parapet, the nave was re-plastered and decorated, new electrics and drainage installed. But more exciting discoveries were to come....



Old church

3 Evidence of a Gallery

In 'Walks Round Nottingham' published in 1835 the author notes, 'there is a commodious singers gallery' at St Martin's but sadly during the later restoration work the medieval minstrels' gallery was removed. It is interesting to note that the sills of the windows at the west end of the nave are higher than the other windows and this would have been to accommodate the gallery.

The old box pews were also removed and replaced by the open ones which are still in the church today.

The old lath and plaster ceiling was also removed by the Victorians and replaced with oak timbers in the nave and a more decorative carved ceiling in the chancel.

2 South Porch

Original 14th century carvings adorn the exterior of the porch. The head shown here is most likely to depict King Edward III.



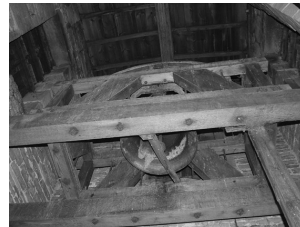
4 Bell

The original single bell, dating from 1681, was taken in part exchange by Taylors of Loughborough for a new one in 1888. An allowance of £10 12s 0d was made for the old bell making the cost of the new one £26 9s 4d plus £8 10s 0d for carriage and fitting.



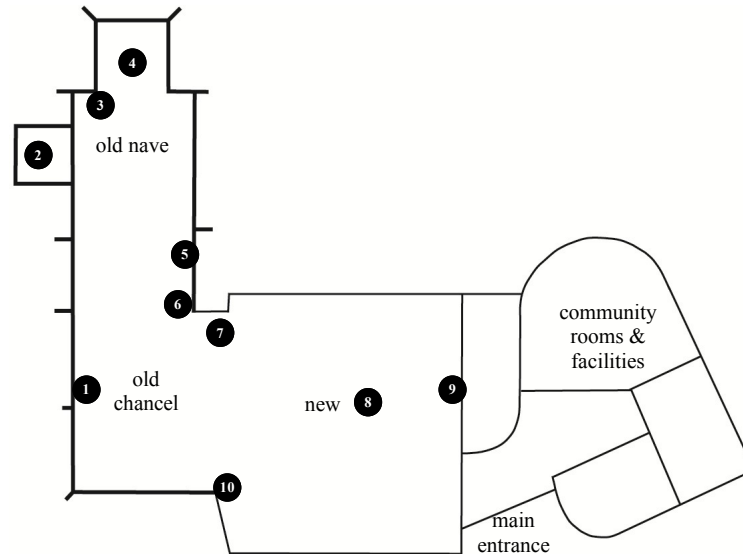
1 Helwys Memorial

In 1590 Sir Edmund Helwys of Broxtowe Hall and his daughter were buried in the church. (Sir Edmund's son, Thomas Helwys, was one of the co-founders of the Baptist religion.) There was originally a tomb in the Chancel area but this was destroyed during the Victorian renovations and the marble tombstone was placed on the North Chancel wall. During the building work in 1972 this was moved to the South Chancel wall to make way for the modern extension.



5 North arch

A blocked arch, visible on the exterior north side of the nave, may have once opened into an aisle or a chapel.



6 Crucifix

The crucifix above the pulpit in the medieval church is rumoured to have been made by an Italian prisoner of war. The words on the cross are in French but translate as follows: "You who cry come to this God because he cries You who suffer come to him because he cares You who tremble come to him because he smiles You who wander come to him because he lives here".

10 Organ

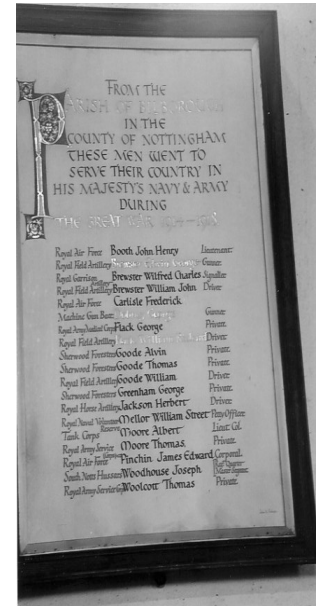
The pipe organ was a gift from Beeston Parish Church for the new church.

7 Font

In the 1970s the font was moved from the south corner of the old nave and placed in a bed of pebbles - to signify the shoreline before immersion in the baptismal waters - at the front of the new church. The font's base probably dates from c1400 but the bowl may be a later restoration one from c'1661.

8 Modern Extension

The extension was built with money from the sale of the old church hall and the land on which it stood at the top of St Martin's Road. £10,000 was given by the Church Commissioners from the sale of this land and the congregation raised £2,500. The curved walls of the new church were designed to give 'a building which had to be erected for a very small amount of money a more pleasing character'.



9 Roll of Honour

The roll of honour lists those men from Bilborough who served in the first world war. Shown in gold lettering are those who died in service:

Edwin George Brewster died on the 20th of September 1918, aged 23, and is buried at the Chauny Cemetery in Aisne, France.

Richard William Flack died on the 2nd of December 1915, aged 19, and is buried at Hill 10 Cemetery in Turkey.

George Dobney of the Machine Gun Corps died on the 29th of August 1918, aged 20. He is named on the Vis-en-Artois Memorial in Pas de Calais, France.