



Chairman's Christmas Message

Ho, Ho, Ho! (How else could I open this note given the dubious honour of being “photoshopped” in this way by our editor?). Welcome to this special Christmas edition of the Trust's newsletter.

It obviously doesn't need me to remind you what a strange, challenging year this has been. Life as we know it has fundamentally changed, perhaps in some ways for ever. However, some things remain constant. Amongst those has been the pleasure we all get from looking at our local ancient parish churches and the comfort to be gained from the realisation that they have stood in many cases for centuries, and probably will continue to do so for centuries into the future.

Nowhere is that pleasure greater than amongst the Trustees and the Friends of this Trust. We have continued to function throughout, albeit “virtually” in relation to meetings, but as the time has passed, so our ability with “Zoom” has increased. Whilst there has been the occasional experience of spending an hour looking at someone's desk-top, we have always got through! More importantly, we have continued to receive applications for our grants, which we have been able to process just as we would have done in more normal times. Equally, Maureen Hallam continues with her fundraising efforts to excellent effect which, coupled with a better than expected result to the Ride+Stride in September, gives us real confidence for next year as long as we continue to attract your support.

I hope that you and your families have as happy a Christmas period as common sense will allow, but more importantly, I send you my heartfelt good wishes for a happy and healthy 2021.

Richard Brackenbury - NHCT Chairman



A Legacy of Beauty out of Tragedy and Controversy The Starkey Window, St Michael's Halam



Halam is a small village, two miles from Southwell, tucked in a sheltered valley. The village church dates from at least Norman times and has some lovely Victorian and early 20th century windows. One of these windows shows a most beautiful scene of the Adoration of the Magi and is dedicated to Phyllis Starkey, daughter of John Starkey, MP for Newark (later Sir John). John and his wife had seven daughters and one son; the family lived at Norwood Hall in Southwell, where the Starkey family still lives today. John's father, Lewis Randle Starkey, had bought much of the land in and around Halam and the family chose to worship at St Michael's in Halam. There is still a family plot in the church yard.

In August 1918, 26 year old Phyllis Starkey and her sisters were on holiday near Coombe Martin in Devon. On the evening of Sunday the 18th Phyllis and her 17 year-old sister Sylvia Augusta set out to climb the cliffs near a point called Little Hangman. Phyllis had reached 50 feet above the beach when a section of rock gave way and tragically, she fell to her

The Adoration window, Halam

The dedication reads: "To the Glory of God and in loving memory of PHYLLIS LILIAN STARKEY born July 16th 1892 died August 18th 1918"

death. Her sister was unfortunately also knocked from her hold by the falling rocks and fell, sustaining severe cuts and bruises. A third sister, aged 14, was a shocked witness of the terrible accident. The Nottingham Evening Post reported a few days later that Sylvia Augusta was “progressing well”. Phyllis was laid to rest in Coombe Martin.

Returning to Norwood Hall after the funeral, John and his wife wanted to create a lasting memorial to their daughter who, according to her father, had a deep love of all animals and outdoor life. They thought the most fitting memorial would be “a Benedicite window”. They set about commissioning this memorial window, thought to have been designed and produced by Archibald Keighley Nicholson (1867-1937).

Unfortunately, the vicar of Halam at that time, Rev F. R. Dean, had other plans for the windows in “his” church. His idea was to portray the life of Christ in incidents from beginning to end in stained glass windows round the nave of the church. The Starkey memorial window wouldn’t fit in with his scheme. The vicar had refused to hold a Vestry Meeting to have the matter discussed and so the matter was raised at the Halam parish meeting held in the schoolroom on Monday, 30th May 1919.

The Rev Dean stated that Mr Starkey had not yet approached him properly on the installation of the window and he “was not inclined to have his property trespassed upon by him.” The meeting minutes go on to record that: “Mrs Starkey said she did not see why Mr Dean should require approaching on this matter, because soon after the death of her daughter, they received a letter of condolence from the Vicar and in it he asked her and Mr Starkey if they would like to have a stained window as a memorial. Thinking this was sufficient, she visited the best artists, in her opinion, in London and obtained designs which she had requested Mr Dean to examine, but he had refused this. She thought because it was by a different firm to which he wished to do the work.”

John Starkey made the point that there had been no new stained-glass windows installed in the church for forty years, and it would probably “be a similar length of time before anything else was done.”

Rev Dean clearly had strong feelings against the Starkeys’ plans, even going so far as to deface the notice convening the parish meeting; he “scribbled with a pencil on that portion of the agenda relating to Mr Starkey’s desire”, for which the vicar was made to apologise.

However, Rev Dean was not to get his way. The minutes state that: “Mr J. R. Starkey M.P. proposed and Mr H. Lewin seconded a resolution “That in the opinion of the Parishioners, a faculty should be granted to Mr J. R. Starkey M.P. for placing a stained-glass window in the Parish Church.” The motion was voted on, and by a show of hands was passed by a humiliating 35 for and one against – the one dissenter being the Rev F. R. Dean!

One has to have a degree of sympathy with the Rev Dean; the Starkey family although not actually Lords of the manor of Halam were certainly looked on by many as the unofficial squires of the village. Many of Halam’s residents would have been tenants of the Starkeys – the vote on the memorial window was really a foregone conclusion. Happily for us today, Phyllis’ memorial is a wonderful addition to the church and shows a most fitting scene as we approach Christmas. The family tragedy and subsequent controversy has, thankfully, left us with a beautiful, long-lasting legacy.



Detail from the Starkey window in Halam church

REVISITING PEVSNER

by Clare Hartwell BA Cantab MA

Revising Pevsner is daunting and exciting, for the acuity, brevity and perceptiveness of his summaries never cease to impress. That there is something left for the reviser to add is owed in part to new research, including the results of innovative and refined techniques, such as remote sensing and tree-ring dating. The luxury of having more time and space to devote to the individual buildings, with the ability to study comparisons and details using digital photography and the internet, cannot be overestimated. I have often thought of Pevsner, with only a notebook and perhaps a Kodak Brownie to record his impressions, as I take dozens of photographs of every detail, without even having to wait for the results to come back from the chemist. Occasionally a photograph has shown something I failed to see at the time, such as the signature on the portrait medallion of Byron at Hucknall St Mary Magdalene, which shows it is by the noted sculptor John Adams-Acton.

The revision of Nottinghamshire coincided with the thrilling new findings at Averham, where radiocarbon dating established a pre-Conquest date for the tower, and by implication, other parts of the structure. New techniques are starting to unlock the world of colour which once characterised Southwell's chapter house, while cleaning and restoration at Egmanton has literally and brilliantly illuminated our perceptions of Comper's furnishing scheme. Then there are churches such as St Helen, Thorney (1845-9), which can now be seen as an important and rewarding example of revived English Romanesque by the architect L. N. Cottingham. It is a visual delight and an exercise in scholarship which creates an intense interior atmosphere full of fascinating detail. What is more, it has a real Norman font, with intriguing and unusual designs visible only in raking light.



*St Helen's church, Thorney by
L. N. Cottingham (1845-9)*



*Stained-glass panel at Flintham of
the C17th by Henry Gyles of York*

Another revelation, difficult to appreciate in its present guise of an events venue, was the domed chapel at Kelham Hall, built in the 1920s to designs by C.C. Thompson for the theological college based there. It is an extraordinary exercise in brick Byzantine style, somehow combining

the primitive power of early Christian architecture with the panache of Dutch Modernism. There is a vaulted narthex and a cavernous interior brightened with glass by the underrated artist Richard John Stubbington. Highlights from an earlier age include the Norman wall painting at Blyth, showing fictive masonry and carving, described by later scholars but invisible when Pevsner and Elizabeth Williamson visited, as was the medieval Doom painting. Then there is the treasure trove of medieval doors and ironwork in places such as West Markham, Laneham, and Hickling, and the recent identification of medieval ironwork reused in restorations (e.g. at Staunton and Halam). Of other discoveries, the reinstated glass panel at Flintham was identified as seventeenth century work by Henry Gyles of York. Anyone who has seen his blowsy cherubs could not mistake them, and the panel is almost identical to one signed by him at Belsay.

At the end of the process of revision, I can only wish that I had had more time, for there is so much more still to find out in Nottinghamshire churches, whose monuments, furnishings, glass and structural details await the further attention of scholars, historians, church crawlers and curious visitors.

The Buildings of England: Nottinghamshire by Clare Hartwell, Nikolaus Pevsner and Elizabeth Williamson

Published by Yale University Press

ISBN: 9780300247831

"This book would make a great Christmas present for anyone with an interest in buildings' history or architecture" - the Editor

Church Picture Quiz - Spring 2020 Newsletter: No. 12

Where is this? - THE ANSWERS

- 'Pillar Capital' - south aisle arcade depicting a bishop - **Attenborough St Mary the Virgin**: *one of several C13th carved capitals in the nave*
- A rare Anglo-Saxon tower from a rare view - **Averham St Michael and All the Angels**: *you normally can't get to see this view as it is from a private garden*
- An unusual Norman porch doorway; behind the Blessed Virgin guards - **Balderton St Giles**: *an effigy of the Virgin and Child stands in the niche above the doorway*
- This is where you end up in C15th England if you don't go to Mass - **Blyth St Mary and St Martin**: *part of the 'Hell' scene from the Doom painting*
- Just the tower remains, but down the road a new church - **Bramcote Old Church (St Michael)**: *it was abandoned in 1861 and the nave, north aisle, chancel and south porch demolished in 1862*
- A Norman yeoman warms his feet in winter, high in a tower watched over by St Wilfrid - **Calverton St Wilfrid**: *one of the Norman stones set into the west wall of the clock chamber depicting various occupations of the seasons*
- The only Norman bell in the county - **Littleborough St Nicholas**: *on the west gable is a bell turret with two bells. The northern bell was made around 1180 to 1200 and is the oldest in the county*
- Forlorn little church that once fell out with Welbeck - **Carburton St Giles**: *up to the Reformation the church was probably owned by Welbeck Abbey and in early C14th there was a petition against the Abbot of Welbeck for enclosing land near the abbey belonging to Carburton*
- A simple Tudor chapel now serves to worship the Norse god - **Bede House Chapel (now the Newark Odinst Temple)**: *consecrated on Midsummer's Day 2014 as the first heathen temple in England for well over a thousand years. Odinists practice and perpetuate England's native and national faith, said to be the original Old Religion of the English people*
- The British Museum architect created this neo-Greek masterpiece for the Duke - **Milton Mausoleum**: *commissioned by the 4th Duke of Newcastle in memory of his wife. It was designed by Sir Robert Smirke and was completed in 1833*
- Joshua found ease here in 1829 - **Retford St Saviour**: *Rev. Joshua Brooks became vicar of Clarborough in 1827 and set about raising funds to build a chapel of ease at the top of Moorgate Hill, Retford, which was consecrated in 1829*
- The last remaining Rood Loft- **Sutton on Trent All Saints**: *this impressive, carved wooden C16th screen with the arms of the Meering family separates the chantry chapel from the end of the former south aisle*
- When Adam delved and Eve span - **Halam St Michael the Archangel**: *the C14th window on the north side of the chancel; Eve naked, with long yellow hair, sits on a white and yellow Gothic stool spinning with a distaff in her left hand and shuttle in her right hand, while Adam naked with a loincloth, yellow hair and beard, digs with a T-handled spade in the green grass*
- Louis Ambler worked through the war to finish this for the Duke - **Holbeck St Winifrid**: *built on the Welbeck Estate in 1913-16 for the Duke of Portland, it replaced an iron chapel erected on the same site in 1889*
- Sadly redundant, a splendid medieval church restored by Scott in 1855 - **Gamston St Peter**: *Sir George Gilbert Scott restored the church in 1855. The church closed on 1st November 2015 and the parish merged with Long Eaton. In February 2018 the building became the responsibility of the Churches Conservation Trust*

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