



Chairman's Welcome



As we move from lockdown to cautious optimism, we are probably all beginning to think about getting out and about again and perhaps even being allowed to go into churches once more. Meanwhile, they have continued to stand for permanence and continuity while our way of life changes all around us. I am pleased to report that work to keep these historic buildings in repair has mostly continued, despite Covid-19, and as the Trustees have continued to meet via Zoom, the Trust has continued to be able to help finance some of this work.

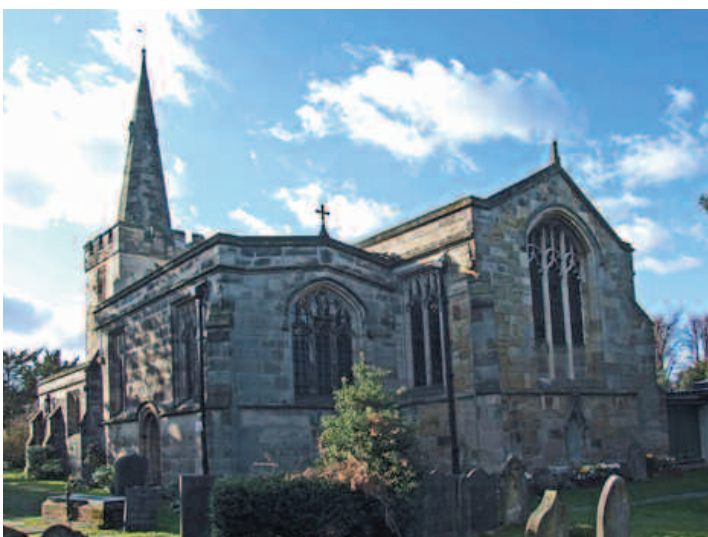
I am also delighted to report that efforts to recruit a volunteer to help market the Trust have borne fruit with Cameron Bonser having produced a most useful and detailed plan to help market the Trust more widely. This will target a broader range of interested groups, and the Trustees are making a start on implementing some of these ideas. The Trust is already attracting more interest via its online presence on Twitter and Instagram, thanks to Andy Platt, and there are moves taking place to upgrade the website.

Generally, I look forward to being able to meet up with a couple of people who might be interested in joining the Trust just as soon as such socialising becomes more acceptable; and we are tentatively considering the possibility of having some sort of social gathering in September, by which time we hope to be able to move about more freely. Meanwhile, I hope you have been able to access some of the many interesting things that are now online, including a couple of talks that the Trust has produced.

Welcome to this more optimistic Newsletter and may the challenges of 2021 be easier for all of us to manage than those of 2020. Your continuing support during these difficult times has been very encouraging for all of us.

Richard Brackenbury - NHCT Chairman

A Revelation at Wollaton The Reredos at St Leonard's Church



St Leonard's church at Wollaton

When you visit St Leonard's church in Wollaton, which in normal times is open every day, the first feature you notice from the west door is the reredos behind the altar at the far end. Gleaming white under a spotlight it is an unexpected sight in what for seven centuries or more was just another village church. So visitors regularly ask questions to which there have been no authoritative answers hitherto.

Unlike fonts or misericords or monuments, reredoses have attracted little scholarly interest and information on the Wollaton screen has been scarce. Pevsner said in his original Nottinghamshire volume in 1951: 'Very rare in the county and beyond the county ... - c1660, one is inclined to say'. The 2020 edition compares it to Gibbons and the 1690s work at Wollaton Hall.

Some observers find that its classical design without any Christian symbolism is out of place in a church such as Wollaton

and think that it would be more at home in a City of London church or an Oxford or Cambridge college chapel. The earliest depiction of it is in a photograph most likely from the 1860s, where Victorian taste had decided that it would be improved by a disguise of hangings. A few years before that the rector, the Revd the Hon. Charles Willoughby, recorded in his diary one day in 1847 that he 'painted the screen behind the altar'. His choice of colour is unknown, but in 1925 it was judged very dull and was painted 'a beautiful tone of green'. This in turn seemed very dull by 1969 when, not without dissent, it assumed its current white guise. Now in 2021 its origins and construction have been revealed by Megan Doole, currently undertaking a PhD at the University of Nottingham funded by the AHRC via Midlands3Cities.

“The reredos (altarpiece) was constructed in 1744-1745 as part of other works that were being carried out at the time on the Wollaton estate including a new stable-block. The Willoughby family had been responsible for the maintenance of the Church since 1701 and installation of the reredos was part of alterations that were described by the Rector in 1764 as ‘beautifying our church’.

The bills for the reredos are held in the Middleton Collection at the University of Nottingham but unfortunately no drawings exist so its original appearance must be re-constructed from brief descriptions.

Luckily, many of the original decorative components still remain, for example, the two fluted

Corinthian columns with pilasters behind, the broken pediment, and the cornice decorations including two roses. Most of these items were supplied by Henry Watson (1714-1786), a carver from Heanor, then Bakewell, Derbyshire, who was the son of Samuel Watson whose carving work survives at Chatsworth. Samuel was one of many English wood carvers influenced by Grinling Gibbons from Rotterdam.

The joiner who assembled the whole structure at a cost of £30 was George Eborall from Warwick. Both of these master craftsmen were part of a team that were contracted for jobs by the altarpiece’s probable designer, William Smith (1705-1747), the son and successor of the more well-known Midlands’ architect, Francis Smith of Warwick (1672-1738). Some of the original decorative elements of Smith’s design are missing, for example, a pediment ornament with two ‘cherubs heads in the clouds with wings issuing out’, and three cherubs’ heads above a mahogany frame in the middle compartment. Within the frame was a ‘Pannell inlaid with a Triangle & Rays’ - the Triangle is a common sign of the Holy Trinity.

The middle and probably also the two side compartments were altered at some point after an eyewitness account of 1810. However, the date and extent of the alterations are still to be determined by ongoing research.”

You can find copies of an illustrated guide and history in the church and a more detailed coverage in the Southwell and Nottingham Church History Project at:
<https://southwellchurches.nottingham.ac.uk/wollaton/hintro.php>

The Nottinghamshire Historic Churches Trust has made several generous grants to Wollaton Church over the years, but we are happy to say that the reredos is currently in good shape and needs no funding.

Megan Doole and Malcolm Stacey
Malcolm is an NHCT trustee



*The Reredos at St Leonard's, Wollaton
(Photo: Mary Stacey)*

Victorian and Edwardian Women Artists in Nottinghamshire Churches

The fine medieval church at Clayworth has a special claim to fame in the chancel murals there, one of the most important examples of ecclesiastical art in the county. They were executed in 1904-5 by Phoebe Traquair (1852-1936), one of the most gifted and versatile Arts and Crafts practitioners of her day, whose work was widely acclaimed and exhibited. The murals were restored in the 1990s by Hirst Conservation. Like her earlier scheme at the former Catholic Apostolic Church in Edinburgh, they illustrate influences ranging from Botticelli to Blake and Rossetti, in a composition of individuality and spirited expression. Scenes from the Life of Christ are framed by intricate borders reminiscent of medieval illuminated manuscripts and appealing elements include a group of joyous trumpeters. Portraits of members of the church choir and figures from local families appear amongst them, and elsewhere in the composition. The likenesses are said to include that of Lady d'Arcy Godolphin Osborne, who commissioned the murals following the safe return of her son, Captain Joseph Frederick Laycock, of nearby Wiseton Hall, from the Boer War.

Other women artists represented in Nottinghamshire include HRH Princess Louise (1848-1939), represented by her portrait roundel of Sybil, Duchess of St Albans at Teulon's Emmanuel church, Bestwood. Mary Moore, daughter of Temple Moore, drew the cartoons for a sumptuous reredos at Bilsthorpe in 1910, while the noted painter Edith Margaret Leeson Everett (1881-1965) designed glowing stained glass at Farnsfield church, described by Pevsner as 'an unusually good example of the date'. Much else around the county was done by amateurs, such as the screen at Farnsfield, carved by Miss Wilkins, the vicar's daughter.

Carvings at Awsworth church were done by the otherwise unknown Frideswide Worthington, sister-in-law of the curate there. One of the most accomplished of this band of amateurs was Mary Ellin Miles (1824-1884), wife of the incumbent of Bingham church.

She created a chancel scheme (much of it now missing) with paintings, stained glass and (in collaboration with her son and daughter) carved work. She is known mainly through her son, G. F. 'Frank' Miles (1852-1891, a friend of Oscar Wilde and a 'fashionable painter of fashionable women' as Pevsner put it. One of the highlights at Bingham is the beautifully restored lych gate, with decorative ironwork and superb abstracted foliage carving. This is attributed to Frank Miles, with the suggestion there was collaboration with his mother, but could it not have been the other way around, with son helping mother in the design? There is more, such as stained glass at Shelton by Lydia Wright, as well as a body of work by unknown amateurs, deserving of further study and research.



Clare Hartwell

Author of the recently published 3rd revision of Pevsner's Buildings of England: Nottinghamshire

With thanks to Dr Chris Brooke. Information on the churches and artists mentioned can be found at <http://southwellchurches.history.nottingham.ac.uk>. Phoebe Anna Traquair 1852-1936 by Elizabeth Cummings appeared in 2005. This article is based on one which appeared in The Victorian, the magazine of the Victorian Society, No. 65 November 2020.



Ride+Stride is a great day out for friends and family - also raising money for some very good causes!

companionship, enjoy a day out and have fun after months of social distancing. Perhaps having a reason to actually do something with purpose after the summer's pandemic restrictions helped to make the event a huge success, and in our county the sum raised was over £14,500, only a little less than in 2019.

Although the churches were all locked and could not really put on their usual events to welcome the riders and striders, they benefitted as usual from half of the sponsored money if they had been nominated by people taking part in the event. Many churches did put out the flags and some even safely provided refreshments. Usually this is an opportunity for churches and chapels to put on exhibitions, or graveyard tours, guided trips up the tower or to show visitors their treasures. Some take the opportunity to make some money and organise cake sales or sell teas, but the wretched Covid-19 put paid to all of that. It is truly a "win/win" event for NHCT and for churches taking part, and especially for the riders and striders who get out and visit places they might never think of going to otherwise, exploring locally or further afield.

The Trustees of NHCT would like to thank all the people who took part in the event, not only for the incredible amount of money raised but also for their interest and enthusiasm in helping to keep Nottinghamshire's wonderful ecclesiastical inheritance safe and in good repair.

The Ride+Stride 2021 will be on Saturday 11th September, and the sponsorship forms and information will be on Nottinghamshire Historic Churches Trust's website www.nottshistoricchurchtrust.org.uk or available from Margaret Lowe, the Ride+Stride Administrator, at info.nhct@gmail.com or 07757 800919.

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