

# St Martin's Desford



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**then & now**

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## Acknowledgement & Thanks

We would like to acknowledge at the outset that much of the historical information in this booklet is based upon or taken from the booklet entitled 'St. Martin's Church Desford, an illustrated guide' First published in 1983 by the Desford & District Local History Group, who also hold the copyright. We are thankful to them for permitting us to use this information and would encourage anyone wanting information that is more thorough and yet still hugely interesting to read their booklet thoroughly, you will not be disappointed.

## St Martin's: a shortened history...

The earliest written reference to a church in Desford comes in 1220 when Baron Hugh de Grantmesnail gave land to the Abbot of St Evroult (Normandy, France). The board of Rectors (just inside the church door) records the first Rector of St Martins as Brian de Walton, in 1246.

Church buildings, over the years, have changed significantly, and St Martin's is no different. Initially, St Martin's would have had a wooden 'rood-screen', separating the chancel area and therefore Holy Communion from the 'common people'. In around the 14th or 15th century, a tower was added to the church building, with the clock and some of our bells then following in around 1644. In the 16th century events of The Reformation, meant that rood-screens were removed from churches as efforts were made to make the Eucharistic Meal (Holy Communion) more accessible, and the language used in the services changed from Latin to English.

Although much of the architecture that can be seen in St Martin's today is Early English (13th Century), over the years significant renovations have taken place to maintain and develop the building. In 1884 a great restoration took place. The chancel arch was enlarged, a window was added to the west wall, the north wall and its windows were taken down entirely and moved to extend the building. During these renovations, 'modern' pine pews were added to replace the previous 'box pews'.



Restoration in 1912 saw the addition of a choir vestry at the base of the tower, with a further three bells being added to our existing trio. Then to commemorate those who were killed in the First World War, in 1920, a new south porch was added to the existing building. The life of St Martin's Church has been one of ongoing evolution during its almost 800 year history. As you will see in the pages that follow, this history is rich and varied and our evolution continues today as we continue to form part of the Desford community, in love and service of God.



## Some features of St Martin's Church...

**The Font** - Is made from sandstone and likely from the Norman period. At some point in the past St Martin's font was white-washed, and it now stands on a pedestal that was added in the 1884 restoration. It's presence in St Martin's suggests strongly that a church has stood here since at least Norman times.



**The Belfry & Bells** - The Belfry sits above the choir vestry and houses our six church bells. The total weight of these six reaches a massive 36cwt, and to support this a frame of iron and steel were installed. Bell-ringing was introduced in England in the middle of the 17th century and was, until recently, unknown outside of this country. Using six bells it is possible to have 720 different changes, creating a fantastic sound that travels far and wide.

**The Choir Vestry** - Situated at the base of the belfry, the choir vestry allows access to the bells via a wooden ladder. It is a place to store choir robes, for choir members to prepare themselves before worship, and it houses music used within the life and worship of St Martin's. This vestry was created in 1912 during the incumbancy of Rev. Thomas.



**The Pulpit** - Is made from Caen stone with marble pillars and roundels. Its decoration is reminiscent of the style found in the 13th century, and it was installed in 1884 by Emma Chamberlain. It was executed by Jones & Willis of Birmingham bearing the three figures of our Lord Jesus Christ, St Martin's, and St John. See if you can tell which is which. We'll give you a clue... Christ (look for a halo), St Martin (look for a cloak & sword), St John (look for an eagle).



**The Organ** - Our present organ is a Viscount ENVOY 350FV and it was installed in 2017. The organ has 3 manuals and a pedal board with 50 speaking stops connected to 8 speakers in the roof beams. These give a brilliant sound with different stops coming from different parts of the church, just like a pipe organ does. The 50 stops provide a wide variety of sound from quiet strings, to trumpets and many more in between, making a fine instrument for solo stops and full organ.



**The High Alter** - historically this would be the focal point of worship, used in the celebration of Holy Communion. Communicants kneel at the rail, pausing in prayer to receive bread and wine as they celebrate Jesus' love, life, death, and resurrection. Before the Reformation, altars were made from stone and afterward from wood. The cloth covering the alter changes through the seasons from white, to red, green, and purple. The High Altar dates from around 1884.

**The Brass Eagle Lectern** - Is a relatively recent addition to St Martin's, acquired in 1975 from St Hilda's church in Leicester. A lectern is used to hold the Bible during readings of Scripture in church. It is common to have a lectern shaped like an eagle as this is the symbol commonly associated with St John who proclaimed Christ as 'the Word of God' at the beginning of his Gospel.



**Stained Glass Window** - Attributed to Mayer & Co of Munich, this window displays a fantastic Nativity scene. Erected in 1984 in memory of George & Sophia Webster this widow displays the entire Nativity scene for all to admire. The central panel shows Joseph, Mary and Jesus with three angels, accompanied by kings and shepherds familiar in the Christmas story. Small pictures surrounding this scene tell of the events that led to that first Christmas, the birth of Christ our Lord.

## Recent Renovations - 2015

### Reorientation & Chairs

**At this time, a project was undertaken with the intent to develop St Martin's church building further. Whilst seeking to retain the heritage of this historical building, we wanted to develop the space to increase facilities and flexibility.**

**With this in mind, the old Rector's vestry was converted, installing two toilets, a kitchen, and a smaller vestry area, including mezzanine storage in the roof space.**

**At the same time, internal seating arrangements were altered so that pews were removed and the orientation of seating shifted toward the north. This meant greater visibility for the congregation and a space that became more flexible for a variety of needs, including new service types, concerts, social groups, school visits, seasonal celebrations, and more.**



**As part of these developments, a new altar (pictured) was installed and placed on rollers. This has also helped to increase the flexibility and usability of the space, whilst providing a focal point for the celebration of Holy Communion.**



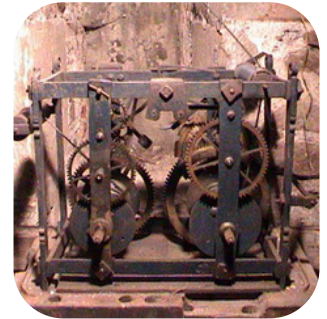
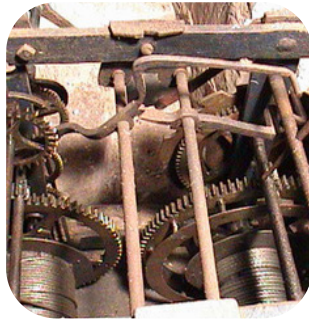
## Recent Renovations - Current

**Bells** - The current six bells were cast by Taylors of Loughborough and installed in 1912. They have had various overhauls over the years, but this is the first in over 30 years. In these current works, the bell hangers have been stripped, the existing fittings cleaned and the bell frame painted. Many of the fittings are showing their age and need renewal. The metal frame structure which holds the bells is also being cleaned and repainted to help extend its working life.

Our fantastic team of Bell Ringers ring the bells of Desford for Sunday services, weddings, and funerals. They are also rung for special events, for example during the Scarecrow Festival held in the village, or to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee.



**Clock** - This clock is one of the oldest in the county, it has a cable and weights mechanism and dates back to around the 1630's-1640's. There is evidence that some new wheels were put on after the 1750's as they are brass which wasn't used until after this time. These are rare photo's of the clock.



To keep it ticking for many years to come, the clock which is showing signs of wear will soon undergo restorative works. This will involve temporary removal so any congealed oil and grease can be removed, then the pivots will be re-bushed and the clock rebuilt and tested before returning it to the church.



## Recent Times...

### Christmas Tree Festival: 2002-current

Our Christmas Tree Festival began as a way of raising money for the Spire Fund. We sent letters to all the community groups in the parish, inviting them to decorate a tree to represent their group. We had a wonderful response and had 28 trees which filled the windowsills and overflowed onto boards placed across the pews.

After the success of this first year, we decided to continue and over the years there have been a variety of themes and we are always amazed by the ingenuity of people. Over 20 years we have inevitably lost some contributors – but gained others - and were pleased to have 36 trees in 2021 which compensated for having been unable to hold a festival the previous year due to the pandemic.



From simple beginnings, the festival grew to 4 days, with Santa in his grotto, stalls, a concert on the Saturday evening and an Advent Spiral Service on Sunday. The refreshments also expanded into a full menu with hot meals; not forgetting the mulled wine. An important part is the raffle for a splendid Christmas Hamper which has raised thousands of pounds for Loros, Rainbows and Menphys over the years.

### Phyllis Chapman Weekend: 2004-current

Back in 2004 a friend and supporter of our church, the late Phyllis Chapman suggested a challenge for our congregation to raise money for the Access For All project. This resulted in the Three Peaks Challenge.

Every year since then we have held the Phyllis Chapman Week-end, visiting various locations in England and Wales. Phyllis's son, Clive, has joined us many times.



The last two years we have been unable to hold our weekend due to Covid. It is hoped we will be able to continue in 2023.

## Scarecrow Festival: 2017- current

The Scarecrow Festival was started by a group of Desford residents, born as a fundraising event for Desford in Bloom. It has proven to be a popular event with visitors coming from far and wide.

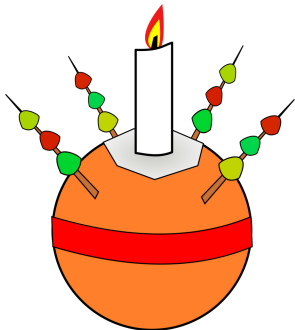
As well as an impressive trail of scarecrows, there is a programme of music on the Church Green, complete with beer tent. St Martin's have raised money from doing a BBQ and indoor refreshments. Community groups have also raised money by serving refreshments at the Church Centre. The Blue Bell pub hosts a funfair on the car park and other attractions have been held on Pickard Park. For 2021 there were stalls on a green space on the Paddocks estate.



In 2017 St Martin's was awarded 1st prize in the Community Category for their Church Choir which was accompanied by a very life-like Peter on the keyboard. The next year we were joint 2nd with a group of suffragettes proclaiming Votes for Women. In 2019 Wurzel's Tea Shoppe came 3rd. After a break because of covid, the festival returned last year and the Bellringers came 2nd with their Hunchback of Notre Dame suspended from the church tower. (The Hunchback made a return appearance with lights on for the Christmas Tree Festival).

## Christingle: annual @ Christmas

Held each year on Christmas Eve, during the service, each person takes a Christingle and the candles are all lit to create a warm glow symbolising the light of Christ bringing hope in darkness. Christingles are made using oranges and a few other bits (see below).



Each element of a Christingle has a special meaning and helps to tell the Christian story:

- The orange represents the world
- The red ribbon symbolises the love and blood of Christ
- The sweets and dried fruit represent all of God's creations
- The lit candle represents Jesus's light in the world, bringing hope to people living in darkness.

# St Martins Now

We hope that you have enjoyed this brief look at the history & life of St Martin's over the years.

Of course the life of St Martin's goes on and so we wanted to take a moment to tell you a little about what's happening in the here and now...



## Church Services:

### All-Age Church

At 4pm on the 2nd Sunday of each month

Things get MESSY!!

- we sing some songs
- a Bible story
- messy crafts & activities
- organised chaos



### Encounter

At 4pm a cafe-style service on the 4th Sunday of each month

- Informal worship service
- creative activities
- chat & play



### Sung Holy Communion

At 10.30am on the 1st & 3rd Sundays of each month is our traditional sung communion service.



### Book of Common Prayer

Every Wednesday at 8am, we hold a short spoken communion service.

A quiet space to find pause and peace.



**YOU ARE WELCOME TO COME ALONG TO ANY OF THESE & FIND OUT MORE**



## Choirs @ St Martins

At St Martins, we have some fantastic choirs... our community choir The Beaufort Entertainers and also our St Martin's Church Choir. They sing a wide range of music from glorious hymns, to seasonal performances and everything in between. Rehearsals take place on Monday evenings and Thursday evenings (though not every week). We would love for you to get involved.

If you'd like to find out more, please get in touch...  
David Williams: davidwilliamsc@btinternet.com  
Mary Collins: marykcollins@hotmail.com  
or 0116 286136

## Coffee & Chat

On Tuesdays at 10.30am in the Church Hall: a chance to get together, have a brew and chat with others



## Rainbows Toddler Group

On Wednesdays at 9.30am in the Church Hall. In partnership with some awesome local people, we support a fantastic toddler group. Come along for a warm welcome and a hot brew

## Craft Group

On Thursdays at 10am in St Martin's Church: bring your own craft of any sort, we have homemade cakes and friendly conversation

**THERE'S MUCH MUCH MORE GOING ON, TOO MUCH TO LIST HERE, CHECK OUT OUR CONTACT DETAILS ON THE BACK PAGE TO FIND OUT WHAT'S HAPPENING**

## Contacts

We hope that you have found the information contained in this booklet interesting and engaging. If you want to get in touch for any reason please do so.

You can contact us on any of the following...

For **General Information** please email:  
[info@stmartinsdesford.org.uk](mailto:info@stmartinsdesford.org.uk)

We also have a website which has information on everything happening in St Martins...

<https://www.stmartinsdesford.org.uk/>

Clergy contacts...

Rev'd Gareth: [Gareth@StMartsStBarts.org.uk](mailto:Gareth@StMartsStBarts.org.uk)

Rev'd Rob: [Rob@StMartsStBarts.org.uk](mailto:Rob@StMartsStBarts.org.uk)

For **Church Hall** booking please contact:  
email: [churchcentre@stmartinsdesford.org.uk](mailto:churchcentre@stmartinsdesford.org.uk)  
Phone: Pat Crane on 01455 823537 or  
or Ray Harwood on 01455 824014

You can also find us  
on Facebook,  
just search...  
**'St. Martins, Desford'**



-more contact details on our website-

*-Please get in touch-*

