

## Religious Architecture 2021

### September 2021: ST. BARNABAS CATHEDRAL

Our visit to St. Barnabas Cathedral was our first outing since the visit to Derby Cathedral in March 2020. Fifteen members of our group were given a warm greeting by our guide, Maggie, who is a member of the Friends of the Cathedral. She started by giving a talk about the history of Post-Reformation Roman Catholicism in Nottingham and building of the Cathedral.

From the late 16th century until Robert Peel's Emancipation Act of 1829, it was illegal for English and Irish Catholics to openly celebrate their acts of devotion. However, by the beginning of the 19th century, there was relaxing of tolerance towards their faith. A church was built in George Street dedicated to St. John the Evangelist, the building of which still stands between the former George Hotel and the Arts Theatre.

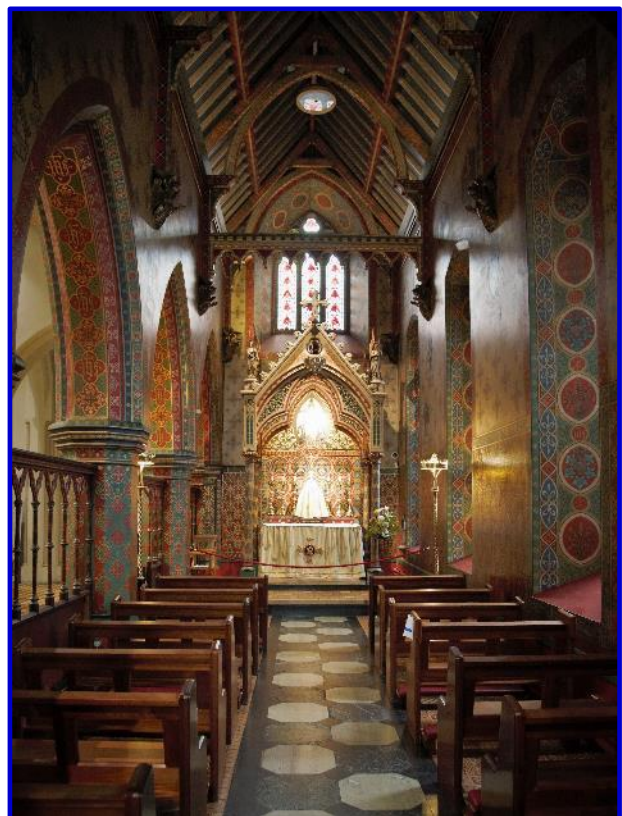
By 1840, it was becoming evident a larger place of worship was required for Nottingham. The then Priest in Charge, Father Robert W. Wilson acquired, with the approval of Bishop Thomas Walsh, Vicar Apostolic of the Central District, a 10,000 square yards plot of land at 12 shillings per square yard on white sandstone rock at Toll House Hill on the then outskirts of Nottingham alongside Derby Road; 6,000 square yards was reserved for a Convent of Mercy.

John Talbot, Lord Shrewsbury<sup>†</sup>, England's Premier Earl and a champion of the Gothic Revival, was a major benefactor of the new church. He commissioned Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812 – 1852), leader of the Gothic Revival and Catholic convert to design the church. He had already designed St. Mary's (Derby) and St. Chad's (Birmingham) cathedrals, as well as magnificent interiors, furnishings and fittings of the Houses of Parliament.

He modelled the Cathedral on the plan of the ruins of the Pre-Reformation 12th century Cistercian Abbey of (Croxden) Croxton Abbey near Uttoxeter. The cathedral was consecrated in 1844 by Bishop Wiseman, who 6 years later became the first Archbishop of Westminster.

Mike Johnson.

<sup>†</sup> *He lived at Alton Towers in Staffordshire, and was an ancestor of Bess of Hardwick.*



## **October 2021: ALL SAINTS, RADFORD**

Ten members of our group visited All Saints' Church, on Raleigh Street in Radford, where we were given a warm welcome and hospitality by Churchwarden, Lorraine Smedley.

The church together with the school, headmasters' house and vicarage, many of which are now grade II listed, were built in 1864, and designed by T.C. Hine of Nottingham. William Windley, J.P. was the sole benefactor for all the buildings. The Church building, built in the Gothic style is mostly constructed of sandstone; the 175 ft. Broach spire can be seen over a wide area of the city.

The Nave, which is capable of seating 300, has its altar on a dais, behind which there is a triptych, given to the church in 1939, it was designed by local artist, Hammersley Ball. The brass eagle lectern was given in memory of Mary Stockwood, who died in 1886 aged 16. The chancel contains several memorials to members of the Windley family.

The Lady Chapel, restored in 1986-88 has an impressive stained-glass window, which depicts the life Reverend Thomas Windley, a former vicar who was a missionary in Burma (Now Myanmar.)

A peal of six bells was ordered from John Taylor of Loughborough, and an oak bell frame, but on installation in 1864, this was extended to accommodate two extra bells. The heaviest bell weighs 17 cwt.

Built in 1864, the vicarage had eleven bedrooms and servant quarters. In 1980, the building was divided into two, the eastern half now forming the present vicarage.

In 1864, the parish was created in the area, known as Sandfield. Following the Cholera epidemic of 1832, Nottingham expanded beyond its borders along Alfreton Road, into Sandfield.

In 2002, the parish of All Saints' was joined with St. Peter with St James in the city centre, then with St. Mary's, in the Lace Market. In 2017, the parish was again split into two parishes

Mike Johnson



## November 2021: ST. MARTIN OF TOURS CHURCH, BILBOROUGH

Fifteen members of our group visited St. Martin of Tours' church, Bilborough, where we were given a warm welcome and hospitality by Mike Wakerley, Church warden, and Hilary Wheat, ex-Churchwarden, who gave us a potted history of the church, illustrated by a video.

The church, which is a little gem, was built in the late 14th century. Bilborough was a small village, which only started to an increase in population until the early 20th century, although the church was renovated in 1833 and 1887-1889. By the 1970's the congregation had outgrown the church, so in 1972 a new extension was built. Behind the altar on either side of the East Window is "The Annunciation Mural" showing the Angel Gabriel telling Mary that she will give birth to Jesus. Painted by Evelyn Gibbs, co-founder of the Midland Group of Artists assisted by Claude Price it had been commissioned by the then Rector, Father Marshall,

In 2008 – 2009, refurbish of the fabric of the church was begun, repairing the roof of the extension and re-instating parts of "The Annunciation Mural" which had been damaged during the building of the extension. The East Window had been bricked up in 1972, This was restored at the same time.

The 40 foot tower was refaced in Derbyshire gritstone in about 1450, its single bell, which weighs 224 kilogram was hung in 1888. The tower window, dating from 1833 was built to allow daylight to flood into the church on bright evenings. The Font has a base dating around 1400, whereas the bowl was added around 1661. In the graveyards, oldest identifiable gravestone dates from 1736.

St. Martin lived around AD316-397. A Roman soldier, he one day cut his cloak in two and gave half to a freezing beggar. Afterwards, he dreamt the beggar was actually Jesus. Leaving the army he later became Bishop of Tours; the patron saint of soldiers, beggars and France, his feast day is 11th November (Armistice Day), the day of our visit.

Mike Johnson



