

Inside St Mark's

St Mark's is a very special church as it is considered to be an outstanding example of a Victorian church. Of the three built by George Gilbert Scott, this the only one which remains.

George Gilbert Scott was the son of Sir George Gilbert Scott (Midland Hotel St. Pancras and the Albert Memorial) and the father of Giles Gilbert Scott (Liverpool Cathedral and the red telephone box).



The church, consecrated in 1879, was built in memory of Lady Frances Wheler, paid for by her brothers one of whom, the Rev Charles Carus-Wilson, was the first vicar. The site had been an apple orchard, given by Lady Bertie-Percy who also gave the font.



Begin your tour of the church here and look up to the large West window, given in memory of the Rev Charles Carus-Wilson, who did not live to see 'his' church completed. In 1877 he died at the early age of 47, after a short illness in Cannes.

Beneath the window is the West door, which used to be so draughty it was never used. Part of the Centenary rebuilding in 1979/80 provided a glazed porch, which keeps the church warm and enables us to use the door again.

Other improvements in 1980 were the provision of the kitchen and toilets, complete with stained glass, and the redesigning of the entrance by the South door. Before then all coffins came in where the toilets are, by the door which is still visible from the outside.

The font is of alabaster, with supporting pillars of Frosterley marble from County Durham. The massive font cover was made by Farmer & Brindley and is one of several pieces of fine woodcarving in the church.



The screen was designed by another famous Victorian architect, George Bodley, and carved by Martin and Co. of London. It was not installed until 1904 and moved to its present position in 2010.



Walk down the south aisle: to the left as you look up you will see the organ, presented in 1879 by the Carus-Wilson family. It is a replica of the organ at Ely Cathedral, made to the specification of Dr Chipps who was the organist there, and built by William Hill & Co. In 1993 it was completely rewired, with a free-standing console, by Hill, Norman & Beard (the Hill being the Hill of the original builders). It is one of the finest organs in the county.



The magnificent brass lectern, given in 1906, originally stood on the floor in the centre of the church in front of the screen.

It is in the shape of an eagle which is a traditional style for a lectern, being the symbol associated with St John who wrote one of the gospels.



Move into the Chancel and look up to where the organist originally sat at a high level, looking down into the chancel through two doors in the metal screen. The screen and the metal case were designed by George Gilbert Scott.

The magnificent painted roof was completed in 1904 to a design by C.J.Blomfield. It was repainted after the Second World War.

The reredos, behind the table, was installed in 1902. It was carved by the famous Warwick woodcarver Mr Plucknett and represents Jesus, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.



Behind the table and to each side are wooden cupboard doors... except that the left hand one isn't a cupboard but a Priest Hole. Behind is a flight of steps within the walls of the church leading to an outside door for rapid escape. It is interesting to contemplate why George Gilbert Scott incorporated it into his design.



The stained glass windows on the sides of the Chancel are the best in the church, designed by the famous stained glass artist William Kemp.

To the right of the Chancel is the Quiet Area which won a Leamington Society Award in 1997. Here was where the organ console stood from 1952 to 1993.

Notice the small stained glass window here erected in memory of a mission held in the church in November 1882 by the Rev Hay Aitken, who had worked with D.L.Moody, of Moody and Sankey fame.



The pulpit was carved by Farmer and Brindley, who also carved the font cover, and it cost a mere £63!

The painting in the South Transept is a copy of "Christ before the High Priest" by Honthorst, also known as Gerardo de la Nothe. The original is in the National Gallery.



Finally, a church is not just a building but a community of people. In the 1920's St Mark's ran a soup kitchen and hostel where the Stamford Gardens flats now rise. Today we run a number of community events and offer sanctuary, practical help and prayer to everyone in our parish.

We are still a caring community actively involved in supporting others - do please feel free to join us one Sunday.



Rugby Road, Leamington Spa, CV32 6DL
01926 421 004
www.st-marks.net

Reg. charity no. 1128485