



St Mary's Church Lutterworth



Building
And
History

Welcome to St Mary's Lutterworth

Welcome to this ancient church which has stood in the heart of this community for over 800 years.

Once a Saxon site of worship, the building dates from the 12th or 13th century. Originally with lower and steeper roofs, with no windows in the upper walls, the tower was two thirds its present height and topped by a short steeple.

The theologian and political activist, John Wycliffe (1320 - 1384), who is known as “The Morning Star of the Reformation” was Rector here during the last years of his life.

In the 15th century the height of the roofs was raised. High clerestory and decorative windows were added, replacing most of the narrow lancet windows, and a very tall spire was erected on the tower.

In 1703 this spire was blown down in violent gales and rebuilt in 1761 by the present tower and the four pinnacles.

A complete restoration of the church was supervised by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in the 1860's.

In 1994 one of the tower pinnacles had to be rebuilt and the 8 bells, which date from 1640 to 1894, were moved lower down the tower

The west end of the church was re-developed for the Millennium to provide the coffee area, toilets, crèche and office.

St Mary's continues to serve the local community, as a place of worship and witness to the Christian Faith.

We pray that you will find peace and experience the love of God in this building.

Wall Paintings

There was once a great deal of painting on the walls and pillars, some dating from as early as the 13th Century. There are two major wall paintings, which seem to have been discovered by Gilbert Scott and considerably “restored” under his direction.

Resurrection Painting

Over the main chancel arch is a "doom" or "resurrection", showing Christ in glory, seated on a rainbow, above a sea of glass. Beneath this there are people rising from their graves, or



coffins. This dates from the 15th century, although the top part of the figure of Christ was repainted on new plaster in the 1860's. Traditionally doom paintings show people on the left rising to eternal life, and people on the right proceeding to hell. Here there is no obvious difference, and as the bishop is on the right, the emphasis of the painting in this case may be the future hope of eternal life with Christ.

North Wall

The painting over the North door is believed to be 14th Century and is of greater historical interest. The top part of the painting was preserved behind galleries that were removed during the Victorian restoration.

At one time the three figures were believed to represent Wycliffe's patrons: King Richard II, his wife Queen Anne of Bohemia, and John of Gaunt. Other scholars believe it represents the French legend



of "The Three Living and the Three Dead" whereby three kings met three skeletons one day whilst out hunting. The skeletons warned them that

for all their present finery, after death they would be no more than skeletons themselves. The legend concludes that they fled in fear and lived reformed lives



thereafter. The Victorian restorers repainted the three figures, and in the 1980's the Eve Baker Trust identified fragments of painted

jaws and bones of the upper part of three skeletons to the right of

the kings – although these are hardly visible when standing below the painting. Two more figures of an unidentified priest and cardinal, in front of a tomb or altar, have also been discovered, below the hands of the king on the right, and these may also date from the 14th century.

The Lady Chapel

In the North Aisle a side chapel has been formed, separated from the Nave by an oak screen dated 1932.

There is an Elizabethan draw-leaf Communion table, which may have been brought into the church in the days of the 1662 prayer book to be used instead of the stone altar where the pre-



Reformation Mass had been celebrated. On the North side of this side-chapel is an unmarked 15th Century alabaster tomb monument. This may be the tomb of Sir William Ferrers of Groby "who obtained a grant of a market and fair at Lutterworth and who died in 1414". The arms of the Ferrers are on the external wall of the Church over the East Window, and William Ferrers is credited with the rebuilding of the chancel in the 15th Century. Alternatively the tomb may be of members of the Feilding family.

Brass Memorials

There are two brass memorials in the floor near the large tomb. One pair represents a couple in civilian dress of about 1418 and these are identified as



John and Joanna Feilding, who died in 1403 and 1418 respectively.

The Pulpit

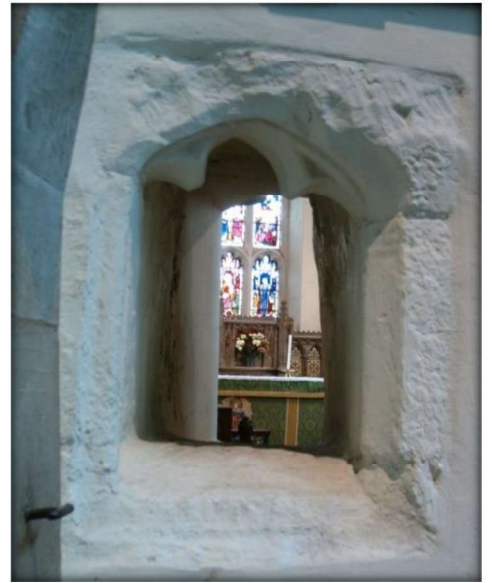
The oak pulpit has been remodelled over the years, but some panels and tracery may date back to John Wycliffe's day in the 14th century. Pictures from 1861 show it as a taller with three levels. It would have had a canopy or sounding board above the preacher's head: this was remodelled in 1852 into a hexagonal table which is now used to display 2 volumes of Wycliffe's Bible (printed in 1876).

The Church also contains various coffer stools and benches which date from the 16th and 17th centuries, and over 40 wall-mounted memorials. Further details of these and the graves in the churchyard are available from the Parish Office. In 1912 a list of all the Rectors of Lutterworth was compiled. This list dates goes back to 1223 and includes a list of the "Patrons", who were responsible for the appointment of each Rector: from Elizabeth I in 1561 this has remained with the Crown. Please ask to view if this is not on display.



The Squint

In the wall on the North side of the Chancel arch is a hagiastroscope - "saints' view" or "squint" - a hole through the wall. This allows people in the North Aisle to view the celebration at the main altar; or, to allow penitents at the North door to see the elevation of the host at the main altar.



The Bosses

The main church Nave roof is adorned with a number of intricately carved roof bosses. Bosses were originally knobs or protrusions used to aid handling of large scale construction materials, and in Gothic architecture can often be found at intersections in the ceilings of buildings. The Lutterworth bosses are of different figures or foliage patterns. The individual faces may represent benefactors or congregation members from a previous era. Heraldic devices and other decorations are also used for bosses: the Green Man is a frequent subject and was often placed above the place where the bride and groom would stand as it was believed to be a symbol of fertility.



The Chancel

The oak partition and door to the vestry were given in memory of Jim Harding, and the decorative stone Reredos behind the altar was given in 1889 by the Blackwell family. The sanctuary, behind the 18th Century wrought iron Communion rails, holds several prayer desks, the altar, a 17th Century oak chest, and two wainscot chairs. In former days one of these was believed to have been John Wycliffe's chair, but the style of workmanship is 17th Century, and the matching chair is a 19th Century replica.

On the right hand side there is a 14th Century "piscina" or basin used to wash the communion vessels, and on the left an "aumbry" of similar date - a cupboard in the wall once used to store communion vessels or the consecrated communion elements.

On the South side of the Chancel is "Wycliffe's Door". It is believed that Wycliffe was carried out through this door, to his death bed, after suffering a severe stroke, and/or that his body was carried some 40 years later, after being dug up to be burned for heresy. Beside Wycliffe's door is one of two lancet windows, rediscovered during the Gilbert Scott restoration.

There would once have been an ornate wooden "rood screen", separating the congregation in the main part of the church from the Priest and altar in the chancel. A recess next to the chancel arch once held a staircase up to the rood loft, which held a sculptural representation of the Crucifixion. The original 15th century screen was sold to nearby Stanford church in 1837.

Forming part of the organ case is a Parclose screen said to have been made from remains of the original chancel screen, found in the west Gallery at the time of the Scott restoration.

The Wycliffe Memorial

The Wycliffe memorial at the east end of the South Aisle is dated 1837 and was funded by a national subscription.

The monument shows Wycliffe preaching to villagers with his back to two figures, possibly the mendicant friars who objected to his teaching the ordinary people. The inscription reads:



"Sacred to the memory of john wyclif Earliest champion of ecclesiastical reformation in england, He was born in yorkshire in the year 1324, In the year 1375 he was presented to the rectory of lutterworth: Where he died on 31st december 1384, At oxford he aquired not only the renown of a consummate schoolman, but the far more glorious title of the evangelic doctor His whole life was one of impetuous struggle against the corruptions and encroachments of the papal court, and the impostures of its devoted auxiliaries, the mendicant fraternities, His labours in the cause of scriptural truth were crowned by one immortal achievement, the translation of the bible into the english tongue.

This mighty work drew on him, indeed, the bitter hatred of all who were making merchandise of the popular credulity and ignorance: but he found an abundant reward in the blessing of his countrymen, of every rank and age, to whom he unfolded the words of eternal life. His mortal remains were interred near this spot: but they were not allowed to rest in peace. After the lapse of many years, his bones were dragged from the grave and consigned to the flames and his ashes were cast into the waters of the adjoining stream".

The Life and Work of John Wycliffe

The portrait of John Wycliffe, dated 1786, was originally fixed to the sounding board of the pulpit. It has now been framed and hangs near the font.

He spent most of his life at Oxford University, and his writings laid a foundation for the Reformation. His outspoken criticism of the Church and its hierarchy wherever he saw unbridled power, attracted the support of some of the nobility, notably John of Gaunt, son of Edward III. In 1374 he was sent by King Edward to meet Papal delegates at Bruges. They were complaining at the high "tax" demanded by the Papacy and the appointment of foreign clergy, who sent poorly paid substitutes to do their duties.



The King may have appointed Wycliffe to Lutterworth as a reward for his services on this occasion. However, Wycliffe's writings against some of the teaching of the medieval Church, especially the dogma of "transubstantiation", lost him popularity and brought down upon him the censure of the Church authorities. He was cited to appear at St. Paul's in 1377, but the hearing broke up over matters of procedure, prompted by John of Gaunt and Lord Percy, Earl Marshall of England. This trial is shown in the print hung next to the Wycliffe memorial in the South aisle. He was summoned to Lambeth Palace, but this time the popular voice and the intervention of the Queen Mother prevented him being condemned.

The third time he was cited to appear in Rome, but poor health made this impossible. He withdrew to Lutterworth and initiated the work for which he is remembered - the translation of the whole Bible into the English language for the first time. This was before the time of printing, so handwritten copies were costly and rare, but he sent his "poor preachers", later nicknamed "Lollards", through England with portions of the scriptures, and preaching the Good News of the forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Very few copies of his Bible or other writings remain, as he was later declared a heretic; his books banned and burned, and his body dug up in 1428 to be burned, and his ashes scattered into the river Swift.

The Font

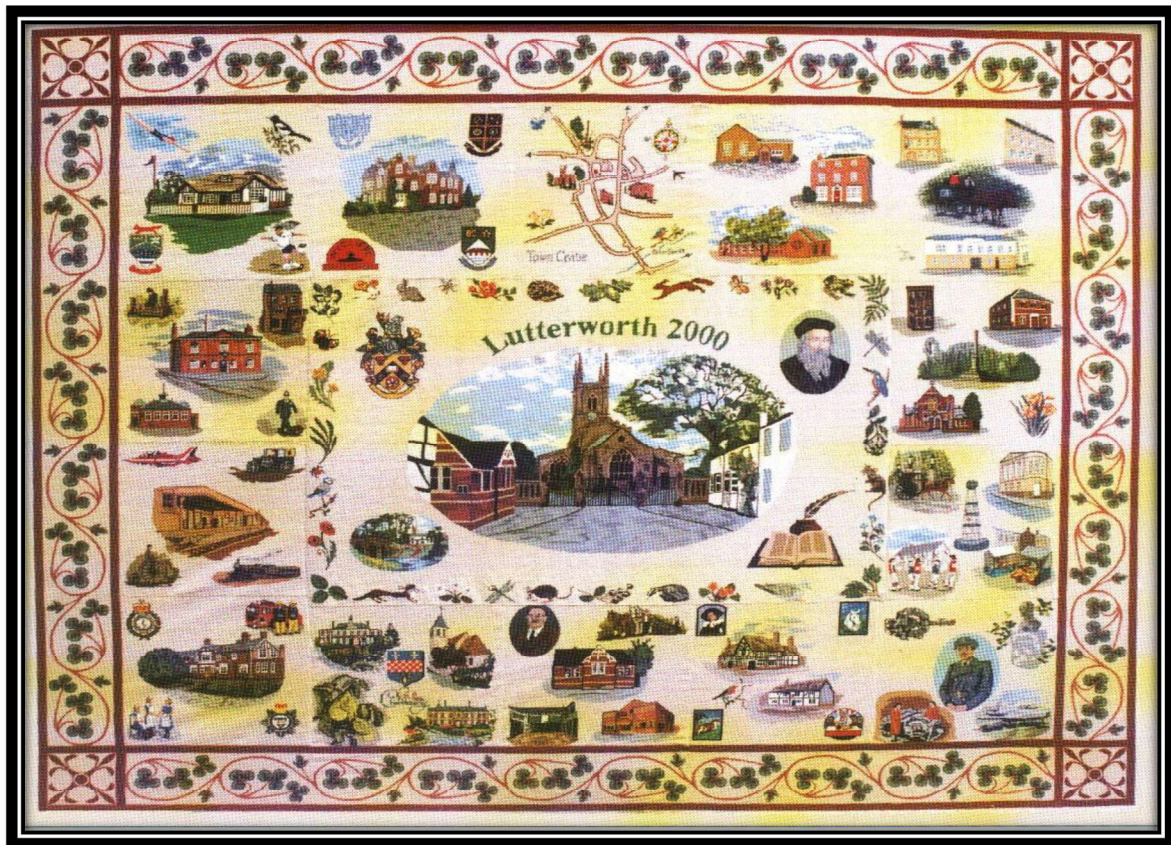
The 1891 octagonal Painswick stone font was designed by Gilbert Scott's son; given to replace an earlier one which had been dismissed as "absurd" following Sir Gilbert Scott's renovations. On each side of the font there are shields; on one is the inscription that the font was gifted in memory of John and Eliza Goodacre. Four sides show Christian symbols including a cross and the Christogram, Ihs. The remaining four sides depict scenes from the bible: Noah's Ark, the Parting of the Red sea, Jesus welcoming the children and Jesus' baptism.



The Tower Base

Underneath the tower at the West End, are located Wycliffe's portrait, two fonts and two needlework pieces from very different centuries.

The older font is an ancient example of a font, possibly from the 14th Century and is located near the doors to the Coffee area. Framed on the wall is an embroidery piece, for many years believed to be part of John Wycliffe's Cope (a semi-circular cloak). Conserved by the Royal School of Needlework in 1959, the style of embroidery, on silk velvet, with motifs of lilies and cherubim, is however more typical of the 15th or 16th Century.



On the west wall of the tower hangs the Lutterworth Tapestry. Created as a Millennium project, with 1650 local people contributing, it celebrates a vibrant local community. The central outline shows St Mary's: after so many centuries, still a centre for the faith taught by Wycliffe and available to all: "The eternal God is your refuge".

The Windows

Apart from two early lancet windows in the South wall of the chancel and in the West wall of the tower, the windows date from the 14th or 15th centuries, with stained glass from the 19th and 20th centuries.

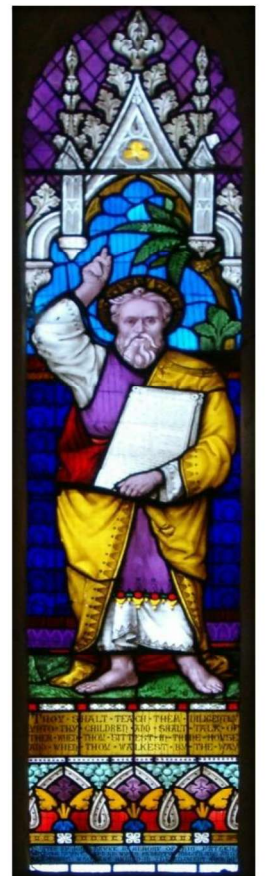


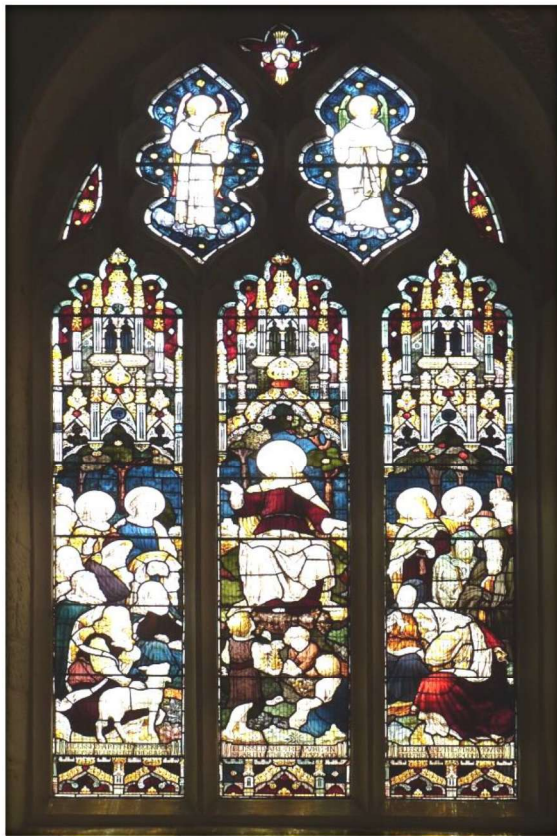
The East Window, given by the Rev. Feilding Palmer in 1885, shows our Saviour in majesty together with pictures of His Baptism, Ascension, Crucifixion and the Last Supper. Beneath are the Venerable Bede, St Augustine, the Virgin Mary, Robert Grosseteste and John Wycliffe. Above are four archangels, Raphael, Gabriel, Michael and Uriel.



The Lancet Window, in memory of Rev. Richard Wilson headmaster of the Sherrier School, shows St John the Evangelist.

The West Lancet Window in the wall of the tower features Moses with the stone tablet bearing the commandments.





The Sermon on the Mount is shown in the window given in memory of Rev. T H Tarlton, Rector from 1879-1888.

The Watts Window (1867) shows the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene and Mary of Cleopas.



The Good Samaritan Window depicts the good deeds mentioned in Matthew 25 - feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, while above are represented the six virtues - Faith, Hope, Charity, Temperance, Fortitude and Justice (Patience?).





The Topham Window was added in 1928 and shows St Timothy. The Topham family also gave the eagle lectern to the Church in 1895.

The Law Window, next to the south doors was placed in 1880 in memory of George Law and his wife Frances. It depicts Faith and Charity.



The Canon Alderson Window shows St. Anne, mother of Mary (shown as a child beside her), St. Peter and St. Paul. Underneath are the Annunciation, Nativity and Presentation of Christ in the Temple, while above is St. Guthlax (referring to Canon Alderson being rural Dean of Guthlaxton II), Saints Anselm, Bede, Aidan and Hilda and the four Latin Fathers – Saints Jerome, Gregory, Anselm and Ambrose.



Regular Activities at St Mary's

St Mary's, with our sister churches in Cotesbach and Bitteswell are lively churches, with a range of services and activities.

Sunday @ 11 is an informal service every Sunday at 11am at St Mary's in Lutterworth. It includes contemporary music, bible teaching and the opportunity for prayer and response.

'Treehouse' activities for children aged 3-11 also run during the service in the church café.

Every Sunday at 11am.

Traditional Services are held on Sundays in Cotesbach and Bitteswell. These services are based on a traditional Holy Communion with hymns and traditional music, and the person leading the service will wear robes.

These services take place at 9.30am every week, alternating between Cotesbach and Bitteswell.

A traditional service of Holy Communion is also held every Wednesday at 10.30am at St Mary's Lutterworth.

Online Church is available on our website, where most of the Lutterworth services are live streamed. You can access them here: www.lutterworthchurch.org/live

Church Café – St Mary's Lutterworth is open daily from 10am to 12 noon, and is a peaceful place for a coffee, refreshments or for a chat.

Youth Groups - Our monthly youth event on is on Thursday (7.00pm to 8.45pm) as a fun and safe place to relax, play games and get to know us. The monthly events will run alongside our weekly Sunday Night Youth (5.00pm to 6.30pm), where we share

a meal together and explore faith in Jesus.

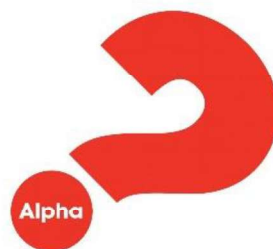
Little Acorns Toddler Group runs from 10.00 to 11.30am every Monday (term-time). A great place for children to play, for parents to relax with coffee and cake, as well as hearing stories and singing songs about Jesus.

Lifegroups are small groups that meet in the week for support, bible study, and prayer. There are daytime and evening groups on various days and locations throughout the week.

Do you want to know more about the Christian Faith?

We run a range of courses and events to introduce people to the Christian faith.

The **Alpha Course** is run over twelve weeks and each session looks at a different question about faith. After a simple meal, talks are designed to create conversation in small groups. It's totally free, and everyone's welcome. Contact the office for details of the next course.



Our **Christianity Explored** course is also a good way to explore faith.

Please do feel free to contact us if we can help in any way.

Contact Us

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Church Office

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www.wycliffefellowship.org



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Safeguarding

We are committed to the health, safety, safeguarding and welfare of our staff, volunteers and all who use our premises or services. If you have any concerns, please contact Nigel or Ben.

The Wycliffe Fellowship

The Church of England in Lutterworth, Cotesbach and Bitteswell.

Lutterworth Parochial Church Council is a registered charity number 1134507

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THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND