

St. Mary's Church Chigwell, Essex

Points from the past -

There has been a Church on this site since 1160 when the first Church was built by Ralph Britto. The most striking survival in the present building being the fine Norman doorway.

Samuel Harsnett, originally Vicar of Chigwell between 1597 and 1605, who went on to become Archbishop of York, founded Chigwell School next door in 1629. His life-sized brass in the Church is the only example of ecclesiastical work such as this in the Country. William Penn, who was granted the first Charter of Pennsylvania in 1664 was a former pupil at the school was also a regular worshipper at St Mary's.

The most famous Rector was John Rogers. He met William Tyndale and supervised the publication of the second version of the Bible in English. In Queen Mary's reign he was condemned as a heretic and burned at Smithfield on 4th February 1555.

The timbered King Post roof in the South Aisle is unchanged since 1475 and is one of only six in the Country. Attached to the roof beams is one of the finest collection of hatchments (funeral escutcheons) in the Country. The Bell Tower was also erected in 1475 on eight posts and stands independently of the rest of the Church.

After the present nave and chancel were added in 1887, G.F. Bodley was commissioned to decorate the chancel and was responsible for the beautiful ceiling, reredos and pulpit.

The Churchyard wall dates from 1727 and encompasses the place of rest for many famous names, including Edward Shillibeer, inventor of the London Omnibus.

As you can see from this very brief overview, St Mary's has a wealth of history and some unique features. Details of all these features and more can be found within the Church building.



A little from the present -

The Church has a lively all-age congregation with an average attendance (including disabled visitors from two local centres) of 100—150 each Sunday morning at our two main services (one choral and the other contemporary).

It is also used by some 400 students each week from Chigwell School next door.

“Treasure Seekers” and “Mission Possible” are held weekly for the youngest members of our congregation and culminate in some very interesting and exciting projects which they share with the rest of the Church on Family Worship days. We could well have some budding soloists and actors in our midst!

A Fellowship Lunch is held on the first Sunday of each month, after the 10.45 service for all and any who wish to attend.

House groups are held throughout the parish on a regular basis and, currently, there is an Alpha Course being held weekly.

All members of the congregation are encouraged to take part in the events organised by the Church. The bi-Annual Flower Festival and the creation of the Millennium Banner, are two examples of recent projects where many took part and contributed their various skills. We aim to make all feel welcomed and included.

We are currently seeking ways of having the Church open for some days during the week for visitors and prayer.

The Church is also used occasionally by local choral and music societies for concerts.

Faith in our future -

St Mary's has been a place of worship and love since those very early days and we trust, will continue to be so for many more generations to come.

The Church has been the centre of the village's spiritual and social life for over 850 years and is now in need of major renovations. So we are launching our Millennium Appeal to help us repair and restore the building and organ.

St Mary's needs you!

Chigwell is often depicted on television and in the media as being a wealthy parish, but the majority of the congregation do not fall into this category.

As a congregation, we are working hard to raise the sum of £140,000 which is the minimum expected cost of the refurbishment and repairs which are desperately needed.

We are keen to preserve this attractive and historically important building for the benefit for future generations and are appealing for financial help to cover the cost. We should be very grateful if you would consider helping us, please.

The work required falls into four distinct categories, details of which follow. Please read on and find out more about our unique task.

1. LIGHTING

Lighting in the early 1900's was by gas. This was converted to electricity in the 1930's and that system was updated in 1967.

The wiring and fittings have come to the end of their life and are now considered dangerous with the halogen lamps in the roof space a fire hazard.

The lack of light in the Church over the past two or three years has been most noticeable.

The new lighting will greatly enhance the brightness as well as highlight special architectural features. The Church will also be enhanced by external floodlighting

2. ORGAN

The organ was built in 1963 by J.W. Walker and replaced the Hill instrument of 1889. The eminent Ralph Downes, designer of the Royal Festival organ in 1954, was consultant, and he personally supervised the voicing and regulation.



It consists of two manuals and pedals, Great 8 stops, Swell 9 and Pedal 10. The instrument appears on page 199 in Downes book "Baroque Tricks".

The organ is an outstanding example of the period and was described by a Director of Walker's some 10 years ago as "one of the more distinguished instruments from our works".

After 38 years of constant use by both the Church and the nearby school, the organ is now dirty and the action is showing signs of wear. The electric piston action and drawstop solenoids are failing and becoming unreliable. They should be replaced by a more modern system.



The Church realises that any refurbishment of this instrument would require careful monitoring and that the work and ideals of this distinguished man should be respected.



3. ROOF



There are two main roofs from the 15th and 19th Century respectively and the earliest of these is now in need of substantial repair.

4. DECORATION

The Church has not been decorated internally since 1951 and the fabric and walls are now quite dirty. Smoke damage from a recent arson attack on the West Door has also contributed to the problem.

COST

The cost for the refurbishment of the organ by Peter Collins Ltd. will be a minimum of £30,000.00. To date we have managed to raise £8,000 towards this cost.

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

The conservative estimate of £140,000 is a huge amount to raise, but we believe that we have a responsibility to preserve this important building as a centre for Christian worship and mission in Chigwell for future generations.

We also believe that we have a gracious and generous God who has promised to supply all our needs in Christ Jesus. (Phillippians 4:19)

However, He challenges us to see all that we have is a gift from Him, and to be generous in what we give for the building of His Kingdom and in what we share with others in need.

As a Church, we tithe 10% of all that we receive and give this away to various missions and charities. Now we are asking you to help us please, with a project that we believe will help build His Kingdom here in Chigwell.

If you share our vision to preserve and enhance this beautiful and historic building as a centre for worship, service and mission for future generations, may we invite you to give as generously as you are able, please?

There are three ways you can give:

1. A one-off contribution, preferably under 'Gift Aid' so that we can benefit from the tax you have already paid on your gift without any extra cost to yourself.
2. An annual/quarterly/monthly gift (preferably under 'Gift Aid') by Bankers Order for a fixed term of your choice.
3. An interest free loan for up to five years.

A response form is attached with this brochure which we hope you will return as soon as possible.

Thank you for taking the time to read this brochure, and for whatever response you feel able to make.

We greatly appreciate your kindness. God bless you.

Peter J. Trendall
Peter Elliott
Trevor Jones
Churchwarden

Rector
Churchwarden

PLEASE ACT NOW -

We have available for your use a Donation Form and/or a Standing Order form. Please apply for one today.

You may telephone the Treasurer, shown below, or contact us by e-mail on:- stmaryschigwell@btopenworld.com

Please do not send any forms to your Bank, but forward them to the Treasurer:

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