

The Church of Saints Peter and Paul - Dedicated 1100 a.d.

Welcome.

You will have entered this beautiful building by the south door and porch, which were completely remodelled in 1763 giving the porch its rusticated appearance. Note that the south aisle windows are arched. Turn to your left past the font to see some interesting Charity Boards. There are more of these at the west end of the north aisle. On the first pillar to your left you will see a list of rectors starting in the 13th century. Straight ahead of you on the north wall is a relatively rare and rather fine Queen Anne coat of arms (reigned 1702-14) depicting the union of the two crowns of England and Scotland (rose and thistle) in 1707.

Turning to the west towards the tower you will notice the very fine double chamfered early English (late 12th century) arch, which separates the tower from the nave. As you enter the tower through the early 20th century wooden screen notice two fine early English Lancet windows. To the left and right are two more double chamfered early English arches that are now sealed. The tower contains an excellent ring of 8 bells recognised as being of excellent tone, some originally installed in the early 16th century. As well as the current 8 bells hung for full circle ringing, there is a Sanctus bell recast in 1737 hung for chiming, used to this day during Eucharist Services. To the left of the tower arch is a small brass plaque, formerly in the floor of the north cross-aisle, a memorial to a baby girl who died in 1641 and tells of the troubles of Civil War times.

The Nave

Looking east, notice the uncommonly tall nave arcades of five bays. The four round pillars are evidently a little earlier than the eight sided westerly pillars. The round pillars formed part of the original 1100 church. The current pews replaced private box pews in 1878.

Standing before the rood screen erected in 1908, look up to the right and see a rood loft doorway. Rood lofts were demolished by order of Henry VIII at the Reformation. You can see evidence of the disturbance to the stonework caused by this.

To the top left of the chancel arch, you are able to see a horse's head corbel stone. This is possibly Saxon and from an earlier church building. The arch itself is early English.

The fine brass 19th century eagle lectern was given by parishioners to commemorate the life of Edmund Bucknall Estcourt, Rector 1843-1893.

From this point you will see to your right the Lady Chapel and to the left the Holy Cross Chapel. These were both known as chantry chapels, which had their own priests to pray for the souls of the departed. In 1537 these were closed on the orders of the Duke of Somerset, Lord Protector, and were only restored in the 20th century.

In the Holy Cross chapel you can see the Decorated period window which has no glass, also the unusually elaborate squint (hole in the wall) which gives a view of the High Altar. We do not know why the squint is there as it is not a leper squint, it could however have been the site of the Sanctus bell which is now situated in the belfry.

The Chancel

The Chancel was re-Gothicised late in the 19th century. The reproduction Tudor roof, stalls, organ front, Chancel screen and panelling were all produced by the same craftsman. The communion rail with its handsome early 17th century foliated balusters is reputed to be the finest in Derbyshire.

Beyond the High Altar is a line oak carved Reredos (1908) which holds a sixteenth century copy of a painting by Annibale Carracci (who died in 1609). The original is in the Museum of Art in Naples. Sir Sitwell Sitwell, following a trip to Spain gave this copy to the church in 1802. He was attracted to it by the likeness he saw in the face of the Blessed Virgin Mary to that of his wife who died in 1797.

Monuments

On the Sanctuary walls are many monuments chiefly to the Sitwell family. The monument in the north west corner is the earliest to the Sitwells (1658) and shows two wildly gesticulating demi—figures. Note the nearby Corinthian column, which is embedded in the wall in memory of Sir Sitwell Sitwell (†1811). The work of White Watson of Bakewell, its base indicates the original level of the Sanctuary floor. The Sitwell family vault was built in 1844, hence the higher floor seen today. Before the High Altar is the grave and stone of Dr Samuel Gardener, Rector here from 1650 to 1686 during Commonwealth and Restoration times.

Windows

Nearly all of the stained glass is of the late Victorian period. A few fragments of pre-reformation glass remain in the east window, which has three shields bearing coats of arms. The right hand one of these shields is that of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, who died in 1399. A further shield to the left is dedicated to the Fréchville family (a gift of £100-00 to Camm's School by Lady Fréchville is commemorated on the board at the western end of the south aisle).

The small window in the Chancel depicts St Chad with a model of Lichfield Cathedral in his hand. In the Lady Chapel is an "Art Nouveau" designed window, dating to 1916, showing the annunciation to the Virgin Mary by the Angel Gabriel. Another fine window in the south wall and dated 1857 is dedicated to members of the Wells family.

The middle window in the north aisle is said to have been designed by C. P. Powel a former pupil of Camm's School.

The Organ

The 18th century saw the installation of an organ by Johan Snetzler of Passau, Germany. Its original position was in the west gallery. This gallery, together with those to the north and south sides of the church, was demolished in 1878, and at that time the organ was re-sited to its present position. The Sheffield firm of Brindley & Foster used the opportunity of the move to add more stops at a cost of £600. The organ's oak facade was added in 1907, and an electric blower in 1937.

Outside

Pevsner stated: "A church of exceptional architectural interest for its contribution to the 12th and 13th century styles in Derbyshire. The tower is a most impressive large square construction with broad flat buttresses. The west doorway showing advanced weathering is of three orders with early English detail but a round arch. On the stage above the door are two large Lancet windows with one small one above. At the level of the bells there are three Lancet windows to each side, which can hardly be later than the early 13th century."

The Spire, which is recessed behind a parapet without battlements, has one tier of dormer windows. The Spire itself is relatively broad and may well be early 13th century. It was extensively restored in the early part of the 20th century, and rededicated by the Bishop of Southwell on 6th April 1913.

On the north side of the churchyard is a large flat vault commemorating the life of James Montgomery, a hymn writer who lived in Eckington. The oldest gravestone is on the east wall of the Vestry. It is badly weathered but has been deciphered as "Sub Hoc Lap/de Sepeliture Dorothea Tomson uxor Richarde Tomson que obit mortem XIII Otobris 1601 ". ("Here lies the body of Dorothy Tomson wife of Richard Tomson, who died 13th October 1601"). There is a fine late 17th century slate sarcophagus type of gravestone on the south east corner of the churchyard commemorating the Hazelhurst family.