

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. SIMON & ST. JUDE

EARL SHILTON

LEICESTERSHIRE



A Brief History

(including our 'Byron' Connection)

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. SIMON & ST. JUDE

EARL SHILTON, LEICS.

The Village Referred to in Domesday Book (1086) as SCHELTONE, and in 1279 as SHULTON, both meaning 'shelf' (i.e. the village perched on a hill – in particular as it is approached from Leicester) and later as SHILTON. The prefix 'Earl' was added later, possibly to distinguish from another 'Shilton' nearby, but no doubt referred to the Earl of Leicester – one of whom was Simon de Montfort – who owned a Castle on the West side of the present Church (known as 'Castle Yard' or 'Castle Mound'), built between 1118 and 1167. The name 'EARL'S SHILTON' was then used – by some until about 1850. In 1564 ten families lived in the village. In the 1850's there was much poverty and a low standard of living – population was then 2300, of whom 1100 were employed in the Hosiery Trade. In 1844 there were 650 hand-frames (Hosiery Machines) in the village. These were hit by the Cotton Famine, creating difficulties until the Boot and Shoe Trade took its place in the 1870's, and this became the main industry moving much of the work from the homes ('Cottage Industry') into Factories. At the peak there were 30 independent Footwear Manufacturers – some very small – producing many fine craftsmen. By 1960 the population had risen to 6500 and in 1987 there were still 5 factories producing high quality footwear. Other village industries included Glove-making and there was a revival of Hosiery and Knitwear, post 1939-45 War period.

The Church There was a Chapel, with three bells, to service the Castle by 1324 and the first Church was built (on the site of the Chapel) at the end of the 14th Century, the Steeple being added 100 years later. The Tower and Steeple still survive, but the remainder of the Church was rebuilt in 1856. Local granite was used on both occasions and alternating courses of red and grey are seen on the outer walls. There is a 'bench mark' at the foot of the Tower noting it to be 396.77ft. above sea level. The clock was added in 1890, striking the largest bell.

Proceeding around the Church on the suggested route shown on the plan on Page 4

The Children's Corner - near to the main entrance – was formed in the early 1890's. In front of it is the old Parish Chest which dates from before 1550. In 1538 King Henry VIII decreed that all Parishes should record every Christening, Wedding and Burial, and these records be kept in a strong chest with two locks. In 1597 this was increased to three locks.

The Font This was originally near the North Porch – then the Main Entrance – and was moved to its present position in 2014 – the South entrance now being used on all occasions.

The Tower This is the oldest part of the Church, housing a fine ring of eight bells, the oldest three dating from 1606, 1612 and 1711. Two more were added in 1875 making five, rung at that time from the ground floor. All were re-cast in 1921 by Taylors of Loughborough and three more were added, one being in honour of the 1000 men from the village who served the colours in the first World War 1914-18. The Church has maintained a tradition of a good band of Ringers who have won many awards for good striking, together with an excellent band of Handbell Ringers. A Toilet was added in 2014.

The Coffee Corner This replaced the Font, when the latter was moved in 2014, and now provides a permanent site for refreshments.

The Windows Of the eight stained glass windows, four are by C.E.Kempe & Co Ltd. Charles Eamer Kempe was born in 1837 and founded the firm, which became famous, producing over 4000 windows between 1895 and 1934. These windows are often identified by a Wheatsheaf (from his Coat of Arms) in the bottom left corner. On Kempe's death in 1907 the firm continued with Walter Tower (a relative of our first Vicar) as Chairman, and from that time - as will be seen – a Black Tower (from the name of the Chairman) was placed in the centre of the Wheatsheaf.

Window W.6 A Kempe Window, featuring on the left St.Simon, and on the right St.Jude.

The Pulpit The carving is by Mrs. Fulshaw, wife of Dr.Fulshaw (Village G.P. and Churchwarden) in 1901, and bears the inscription " Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it. Luke XI. XXVIII "

The Arch leading from the Nave to the Chancel bears – top centre – the symbols IC XC

NI KA

This is the Greek translation of 'Jesus Christ Conquers'.

(IC – 'Jesus', XC – 'Christos', NIKA – 'Conquers'

'C' being the Capital version of 'Sigma')

The Chancel The fine woodwork and carving of the Choirstalls, Chairs, Panels around the Altar, and the Screens to the Lady Chapel are all the work of Craftsmen in the firm of Warren Stanger, Leicester, during the period 1948-56. Mrs. Stanger was first cousin of E.H.Gilbert (window W.12). The Choirstalls are to the memory of all who served in the Second World War 1939-1945.

The Chancel Carpet was made by Mrs. Archer and her daughters in 1930. When completed, they wheeled it to the Church on a bicycle from their remote cottage between Watery Gate and Croft Hill.

Thr Organ Built by Taylors of Leicester in 1933 (replacing the original organ, used from 1875), this has been renovated in 1963 and 1993, additional stops being added on both occasions.

The Decoration on the Chancel walls was by the Reverend Ferdinand Ernest Tower, first Vicar. His stencilling covered all the walls and central arches until 1959 when some parts of the exterior walls were affected by damp and it was found that the original damp-proof course had been covered. Part of this decoration on the Sanctuary Walls – either side of the East Window (W.8) – includes the Star of David, together with the Alpha and Omega, the ‘first and last’ used in the Book of Revelations as the Title of Jesus Christ who, as the word of God, is the beginning and the end of all creation. The other symbol, a letter ‘P’ surmounting a letter ‘X’ represents ‘Christ the King’ (The letter ‘X’ in Greek being equivalent to ‘CH’ and the Greek letter ‘P’ being equivalent to ‘R’ - i.e. ‘ Christus Rex’) .

The Sanctuary (containing the Altar) The main, beautiful East Window (W.8) above the Altar originally had stained glass just in the three centre lights , by an unknown artist, installed about 1884. They depict the ascending Christ with the eleven Disciples watching. The two outer lights and tracery were by Morris & Co. and date from 1925. That on the left depicts the Last Supper and above the Archangel Raphael with martyr’s palm. The row of five rounded windows above depict, from left to right, St, Mathew (Winged Man), St, Mark (Winged Lion), Angel (Holding Crown), St, Luke (Winged Ox) and St. John (Eagle).

The Lectern In the form of an eagle spreading its wings. This was given by Dr. Garrett (Village G.P. after Dr. Fulshaw and prior to Dr. Cook).

The Lady Chapel was formed in 1923, the East Window therein (W.9) by Kempe, being a Memorial to those who died in the First World War 1914-1918. Each side are panels bearing the names of all from the Parish who gave their lives in both World Wars. The Centre light depicts St. Michael plunging a spear into a dragon (the Devil). That on the left depicts St. Nicholas, Patron Saint of Children, wearing a Bishop’s Mitre, and on the right is St. George with the sword and lance wearing a cloak. For many years at ‘Sunday School Sermons’ a high sloping platform was constructed covering the whole of the Lady Chapel and the first seven pews, on which all the children were seated. To the right of the window is an ‘Aumbry’ in which are kept portable Communion vessels to take to the sick and infirm. This is in memory of Dr. James Cook, Village G.P. for over 50 years and Churchwarden for 33 years

The Suggested Route around the Church is shown above, the items being described in that order.

The Windows are designated W.1 to W.14.

Window W.10 by Jones & Willis, depicting on the left Christ teaching in the Temple with Worshipers, and on the right, Jews and Priests. In the tracery is a half figure of St. Simon with saw and fish.

Window W.11 by Jones & Willis, The text “ Suffer little children to come unto me “ . Half figure St. Jude with ship.

Window W.12 by J. Wippell & Co. Ltd. (Artist G. Cooper-Abbs), On the left an Angel holding a sacred Heart and on the right, Christ in Majesty with Martyr’s palm.

Window W.13 by Kempe, depicting on the left St. Augustine, and on the right St. Ambrose – two of the great Latin doctors of the Church.

Window W.14 by Kempe, depicting on the left St. Peter, Apostle, and on the right St. Paul, Apostle.

Board showing list of Incumbents (see next page). This is in memory of H. William Gilbert (Churchwarden 1937-45) and his Wife.

This brief insight into the History of our Church concludes with Notes on the Porch, Spire, Weather Cock, Dedication, and list of Incumbents, with details of our intriguing ‘ Byron’ Connection.

We do hope That it has been of interest and that this will be a pleasant reminder of the dedicated work of many within our Parish over very many years.

The Entrance Porch has seats on either side, where traditionally business was transacted

The Spire has rib surfaces carved in the form of curved leaves and is thus known as a ‘Crocketed’ Spire.

The Weather Cock dates from 1966, when it replaced the original.

Dedication Early records indicate that in 1743 the Church was dedicated to ‘All Saints’. Nichol (local historian) in 1811 refers to the Church being dedicated to St. Peter and being a Chapelry dependent upon the Mother Church of Kirkby Mallory. The dedication to St.Simon and St.Jude was certainly not later than 1875, and possibly dated from the time that it became a separate Parish in 1854.

Establishment as a Parish and the ‘Byron’ Connection Being a Chapelry of Kirkby Mallory prior to 1853, the Church was under the patronage of the Rectors of Kirkby Mallory, who were appointed by the Noel Family of Kirkby Mallory Hall. The last Rector was the Reverend Thomas Noel, who died on 22nd August 1853. He had been an absentee Rector and his duties were carried out by a Curate. Lady Noel Byron, the wife of the famous poet, lived in Kirkby Mallory Hall until 1822, and was responsible for the creation of the new Parish of Earl Shilton and for the appointment of the first Vicar, The Reverend Ferdinand Ernest Tower.

Lady Byron was a niece of the 2nd Viscount Wentworth who died in 1815, and although then living mainly in the South of England, she was always in close touch with her Leicestershire Estates and did much to help the local communities.

In 1853 an Order in Council established Earl Shilton as a separate Parish. Originally in the Diocese of Lincoln, by 1853 it had been transferred to the Diocese of Peterborough and became part of the Leicester Diocese in 1926.

The Church – and the Village – owe a great deal to Lady Byron and to the subsequent work and inspiration of our first Vicar, The Reverend Tower. Not only was he responsible for re-building and decorating (stencilling with his own hands) the main part of the Church, apart from the 14th Century Tower and Spire, he also built the original Vicarage (replaced in the 1950’s), the two Church Schools (known to all as ‘top’ and ‘bottom’) and started the renovation of Elmhurst Church (also part of his ‘Parish’), which at that time was a complete ruin.

Prior to 1854, couples would need to walk to Kirkby Mallory to be married. Reputedly, many turned back, having reached the boundary between the two Parishes (known as ‘the Arches’). Shortly after his appointment, the Reverend Tower held a mass Wedding for all ‘unmarried couples’ !

		<u>Incumbents</u>
18th March	1854	Ferdinand Ernest Tower
10th March	1882	Theodore Calliphronas
17th May	1883	Robert Walter Churchill Hamilton
7th Nov.	1884	John Thomas Willis
24th May	1892	James Slade Maughan
15th July	1921	Herbert Victor Williams
15th Dec.	1926	Edmund Pillifant
17th April	1943	Eynon Edryd Cyndeirne Jones
14th Sep.	1948	Alec Tewkesbury
5th May	1954	Alfred Reginald Ennis
11th Sep.	1956	George Jager
14th June	1968	Alfred Edgar Taylor
11th Aug.	1983	Norman Hulme
9th Nov.	1989	Graham Gittings
29th Oct.	2012	Martin Roger Castle