



## Chairman's Welcome

I am pleased to introduce our second Newsletter which includes stories from some of the churches we have been able to help, as well as a report on the Ride+Stride event last September. Given that the organization of this annual event was in the process of changing hands during the year, it was a great success on the day with valuable funds being raised for individual churches and for NHCT. The re-structuring of the running of this event continues, and I anticipate it growing in the next few years, encouraging churches to open their doors to welcome visitors of all kinds while at the same time raising much needed funds.

The Trust's Grants Committee members are always happy to talk to church representatives about the possibility of the Trust making a grant for work to be done, and I am pleased to welcome our new Grants Administrator, Mrs Margaret Lowe, who is very experienced in the field of historic church buildings.

I look forward to meeting some of you on Friends' church visits or at our Summer Party at Clumber Park on 12th June.

Richard Brackenbury - *NHCT Chairman*



## Saved from Obscurity!

The church of St Martin of Tours stands on the site of an Anglo-Saxon settlement, and the main body of the church dates from mid-14th century. The small, rural village of Bilborough survived on its hill looking out over the growing expanse of the City of Nottingham until after the Second World War when it was swallowed up by the council house estates that now surround it. The single aisled, medieval church was inadequate for the growing population, and the church was extended in the 1970s by removing the north chancel wall and adding on a new 'worship space', with community rooms and facilities.



*The Evelyn Gibbs murals before restoration*

In 1946, to help boost morale, two murals had been painted to either side of the East window by Evelyn Gibbs, the war artist who was living in Nottingham. During the 1970s addition, the low pine ceiling of the new church cut across the chancel, obscuring the barrel vaulted Victorian ceiling and dividing the murals into two parts; the upper half was obscured by the ceiling and the lower half lost beneath layers of emulsion paint. The beautiful stained glass East window was also lost, though fortunately the stonework was just bricked up and obscured.

With an ambitious plan to restore and, where practical, to modernize the church, and after a huge amount of fundraising and planning, the project got under way. After much diligent work by amazing craftsmen and dedicated supporters, the results are dramatic. The barrel vaulted ceiling is again visible and beautiful, the clear glazing in the opened up East window shows off the medieval stone tracery. The Evelyn Gibbs murals, in the medieval Italian style, are once again looking vibrant, depicting the Annunciation, with the Archangel Gabriel on one side of the East window and Mary on the other, set in a background depicting local landmarks.

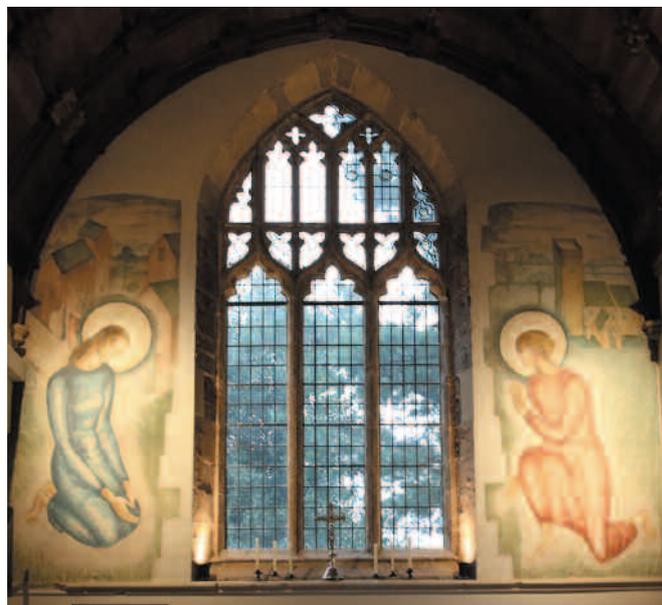
The church was finally ready for its grand re-opening in October 2014, with an impressive modern glass screen taking the place of the lost North chancel wall, connecting to the community centre.

## St Martin of Tours Bilborough

The church now has its own ground source underfloor heating, the tree that was growing out of the tower roof has been removed, and much work done to restore the stonework outside, to make the building secure, and to reclaim the surroundings and access. The last five years have brought a sad and apparently unloved old church back to life, with what can only be likened to a heart transplant!

The Trust is delighted to have helped this great project with some funding towards the restoration of the Evelyn Gibbs murals.

About 50 Friends of the Trust were given a fascinating tour of the various parts of the restoration by some of the local people and craftsmen who gave their expertise and professionalism to bring life back to St Martin's. Still surrounded by the council estates, it is a shining light once again and an inspiration for those of us faced with keeping our historic churches in good repair and in the forefront of community life.



*The Evelyn Gibbs murals today*

## It's 100% YES from me...

### St Michael and All Angels, Averham - Bells and Tower Project

So why is this article titled with a Simon Cowell catch phrase? Read on and all will become clear!

I have been the church warden at St Michael and All Angels, Averham (near Newark) for six years. When the Averham Bells and Tower Project was proposed, the estimated costs seemed so astronomically high that I felt that it was unlikely to happen in my lifetime. That was before I experienced the tenacity and fundraising skills of Martin Cooper. Martin is an Averham villager, a committed church member and had recently developed a passion for bell ringing. He set about the fundraising with vigour, making a large number of complicated grant applications, and was eventually successful in achieving the required amount. The bequests included almost £30,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and also a generous donation from NHCT.



Once the funding was in place, the project could commence and I recall, while having a coffee after our fortnightly Sunday service, Martin coming through the door and asking "Is it OK if I bring the cement mixer in now?" The estimated time to completion was six to nine months, so we hoped to have the bells in place in time for a Spring wedding that was booked.



St Michael and All Angels is the oldest church in Nottinghamshire having regular services, so at no point during the project did we consider cancelling or moving our services elsewhere. Our small congregation continued to meet each two weeks during the whole project. The main challenge was ensuring that the church was clean and welcoming for each service. When there were no floors in the tower and no louvres on the windows, the wind blew through the church and carried with it over 1,000 years of dust. Then there was electrical rewiring that went the full length of the church and seemed to wake up every resident spider.

As we are a small congregation, we fit into the choir for most services, but about once every two months we would have to prepare for a full church and clean the pews from front to back. Each time it seemed to be harder than the last and there seemed to be no end to the project. The cold weather meant that certain jobs could not be done, there were problems with the availability of key people and it all led to the project taking exactly two years.

The final push was made in June 2014 which included a professional deep clean of the church from end to end and we held a successful rededication service at the end of the month. During the service Martin thanked all the major contributors, and the final cost (including voluntary labour) came in at £100,000. It was my pleasure to thank Martin for his amazing efforts in giving Averham one of the best bell towers in the county (or even country?).

We have a tower and bells to be proud of and they are being regularly used.

- Weekly bell ringing practice has started and is being well attended.
- The hourly clock chimes can be heard all over the village, with the clock face spruced up and the clock automated.
- A number of quarter peals have already been rung by keen campanologists.
- Fantastic new access to the clock chamber and the exciting evidence of probable early Anglo-Saxon workmanship found in the walls up there.
- There was a visit by the Friends of NHCT to the church in July.
- And finally, we are now waiting for another wedding to be booked.....

So, the question that needs the Simon Cowell answer is “Would you do it again?” and I would unreservedly reply **“It’s 100% YES from me.....”**

George Binks - *Church Warden, St Michael and All Angels, Averham*

12<sup>TH</sup> September 2015



## Ride+Stride in Nottinghamshire

**R**ide+Stride is an annual event to raise funds to help support the historic churches whose care we have inherited from previous generations. By walking or cycling between churches you can raise money for the NHCT and your favourite church.



The Ride+Stride last year took place on Saturday 13th September 2014 and although the weather was hazy to start with it soon cleared up to be a dry and warm day. There were 180 churches open and 172 people took part. Most of these were cyclists but there were a number of walkers, in particular a large group from Sneinton, St Cyprians, whose walk included Lambley, Woodborough and Burton Joyce and who raised £695.

The total amount raised was £17,692. The riders/striders made a total of 1,327 church visits and they were sponsored by 1901 people. Some churches used the opportunity of an open church to welcome people from the local community and to show them something of their activities.

Many thanks to everyone who contributed in any way - not forgetting those who provided refreshments. The Victoria sponge at Trowell will be long remembered.

If you would like to take part in this year's Ride+Stride in Nottinghamshire on 12th September and help the NHCT and your favourite church raise money, please contact [nhct@keithgoodman.com](mailto:nhct@keithgoodman.com) or ring Keith Goodman on 0115 972 6590 or Anthea Moat on 01909 472324.

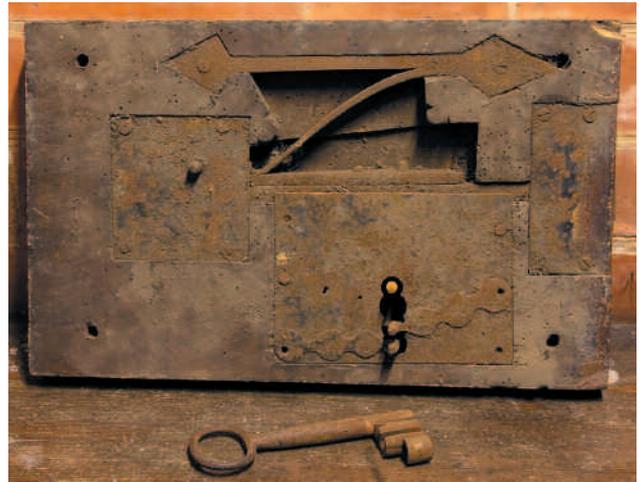
# Stories from The Keyhole

## George Olifent - Master Locksmith

**G**eorge Olifent and his wife, Val, have long been Friends of NHCT, possibly from its inception, and George's expertise with all manner of locks and keys has enabled many of our historic churches to keep their original door furniture in use. I suspect there is no lock that George has not been able to open or to repair so that it does its job properly. His workshop, The Keyhole, is immaculately ordered and everything has its place, and Val's job cards and invoices are what history is made of. Needless to say, he has a huge fund of stories to tell, and has been kind enough to share a few of them with us for this Newsletter.

"A local vicar was having to put his finger in the keyhole to hold the key in the correct position before he could unlock the church door. The keyhole was so badly worn away that we had to let in a new piece of metal and re-cut it. Moral? If a lock begins to give trouble, deal with it promptly - a stitch in time saves nine!

"At another job on a church in a field, where the church and its graveyard were surrounded by an outer wall, we transferred our tools, etc., from the car to the church. We must have somehow managed not to latch the gate securely, and we suddenly became aware of a horse munching away on the lush graveyard grass near the door. All our best efforts to shoo it out came to nothing and it wasn't until the keyholders, seeing our predicament, rattled its feed bucket and a set of thundering hooves hurtled past us and out of the gate. Moral? Food will get you out of most awkward situations."



A lock from 1777 from Winthorpe church

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**T**he Friends of Nottinghamshire Historic Churches Trust is a much valued group who pay a small annual subscription which entitles them to join several visits each year to some of the historic churches and chapels in Nottinghamshire, as well as enjoying special rates for Trust events. They also receive two Newsletters a year.

Last autumn the Friends visited All Saints church at Strelley and St Martin of Tours at Bilborough, (see the article in this Newsletter). Dr Jenny Alexander, a Trustee, lead us through the delights of Strelley, and the team leading the major refurbishment of St Martin's gave us detailed tours of the massive works undertaken there.

The next visit for the Friends will be on Saturday 18th April 2015 when we will go to Clayworth, Hayton and Claborough churches in the NE of the County. The Summer Party will be on Friday 12th June 2015 in the Walled Garden at Clumber Park, with an organ recital and talk in the Chapel to follow. Further visits will be announced later in the year.

To find out more about becoming a Friend please contact the Trust Secretary, or go to the Trust's website.

The Trust can be contacted via:

The Secretary, Mrs Anthea Moat on 01909 472324 or email: [nhct@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:nhct@hotmail.co.uk)

The Grants Administrator, Mrs Margaret Lowe, email: [info.nhct@gmail.com](mailto:info.nhct@gmail.com)

The Fundraising Co-ordinator, Mrs Maureen Hallam on 01636 812580 or e-mail: [maureenjhallam@googlemail.com](mailto:maureenjhallam@googlemail.com)

Keith Goodman, NHCT Treasurer, and 'Ride+Stride' Administrator on 0115 972 6590 or email: [nhct@keithgoodman.com](mailto:nhct@keithgoodman.com)

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