



St Mary the Virgin

High Pavement
Nott
Tel

Sold in St Mary's Church

www.nottinghamchurches.org

For a comprehensive description of St Mary's Church visit
'find out about church history' at www.nottsopenchurches.org.uk

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THE CHURCH OF St Mary the Virgin



THE LACE MARKET, NOTTINGHAM

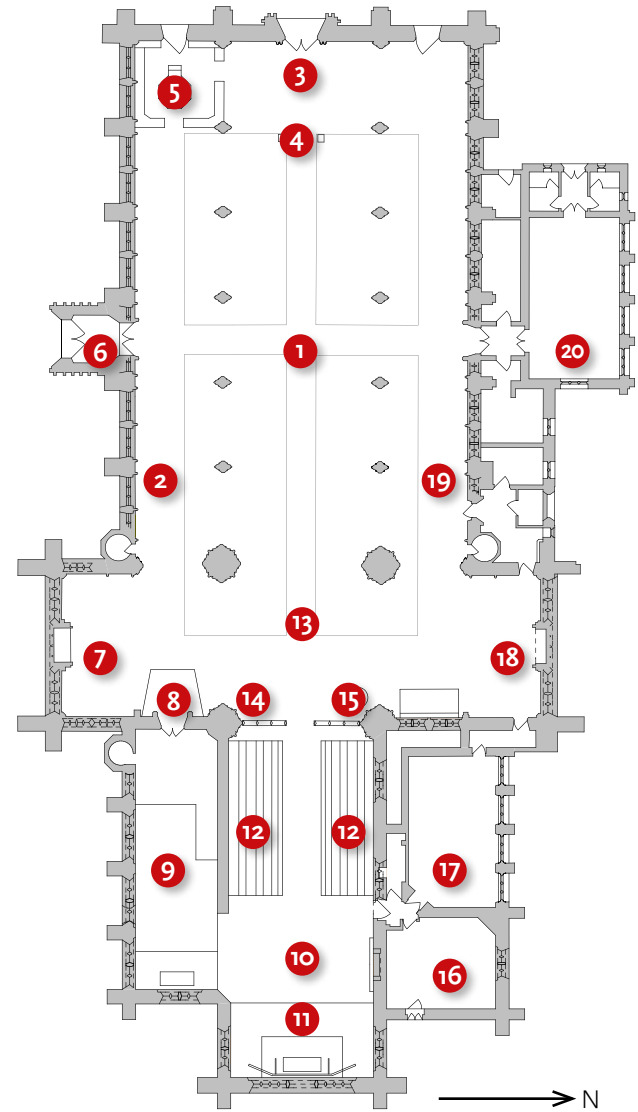


Visiting Nottingham in 1540, John Leland noted
"There be 3 Paroches Chirches; but
the Chirch of S. Mary is excellent,
[newe], and unyforme yn Work, and so
[many] faire Wyndowes yn it that [no]
artificer can imagine to set mo ther",
which we may read as "The Church of
St. Mary is excellent, new and
uniform in its construction, with
so many fair windows in it that no
craftsman could imagine more."

FROM: 'THE ITINERARY OF JOHN LELAND THE
ANTIQUARY IN NINE VOLUMES',
ED. THOMAS HEARNE, 2ND EDITION 1744



Floor Plan



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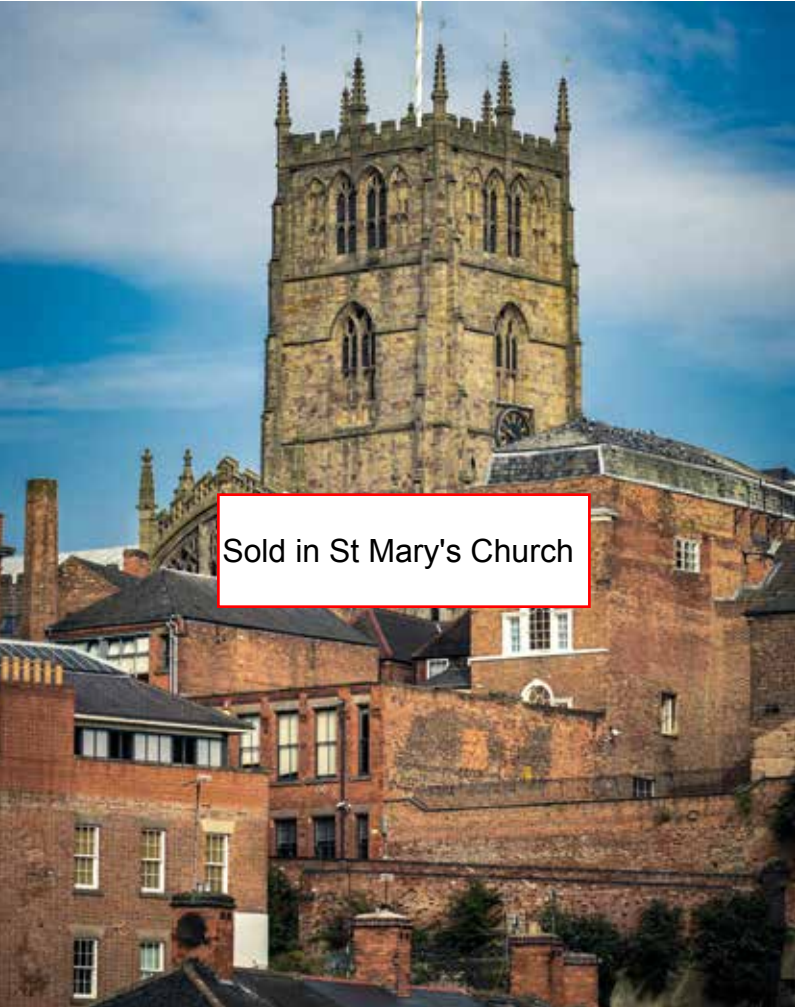
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A Living Church

St Mary's today plays a key role in the life of Nottingham through a range of civic events and special services, as well as by its contribution to the cultural life of the city. The Nave is regularly transformed into a spectacular setting for occasions such as Light Night, receptions, displays, theatre productions and concerts in many genres. Such activities, however, are built upon a strong foundation of Sunday and weekday worship which continues throughout the year. Music sung by St Mary's choir, not just at regular services but also around the city, is renowned for its range and quality.

St Mary's has received a glorious inheritance from the past. We are committed to its future in worship, in community life and in looking after and enhancing this magnificent building.

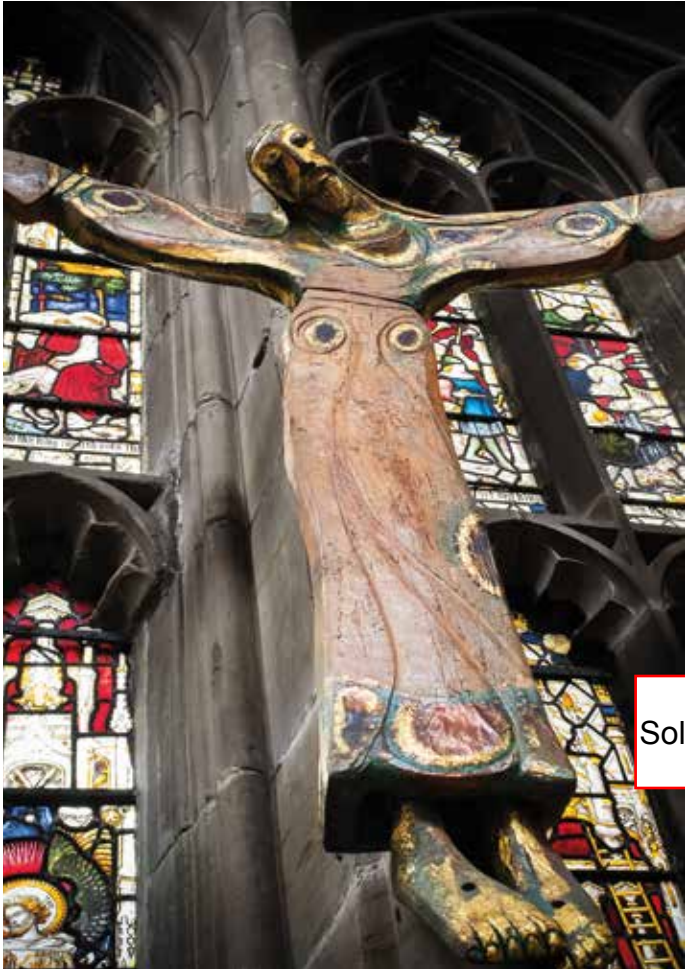


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Welcome to St Mary's

Whether you have come to seek respite from the clamour of the city, or are visiting from far afield, we hope that you will be inspired by this holy place. St Mary's is a church where countless generations have sought God, have been part of a living community and have taken part in cultural activities.

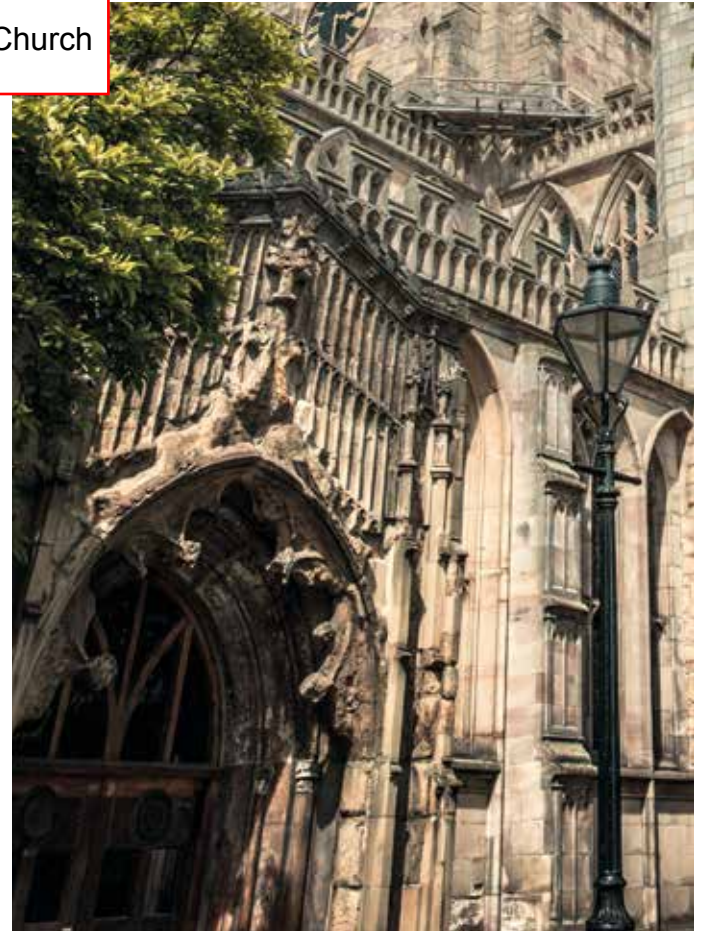
Take time to seek out the beauty which can be discovered here. Gaze upon the sheer scale of the building and wonder at the majesty of its space and light. As you begin to experience the spirit of St Mary's, allow your soul to be touched by the profound sacredness created by the prayers and devotion of all those who have loved and cared for it over the years. St Mary's welcomes all people, regardless of background or origin, and we sincerely hope that your visit will be truly enjoyable and memorable.



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safety of their souls after death and to demonstrate their growing status within the borough in a visible and impressive fashion. Close by stood the town's Guildhall, the centre of civic authority, on the site now occupied by the Contemporary Art Gallery. From this time forward, and probably long before, St Mary's was the setting for many civic occasions, such as the election and swearing-in of the Mayor and Sheriff of Nottingham.

The Reformation of the sixteenth century and the Civil Wars of the seventeenth stripped the church of much of its original splendour, but not its importance to Nottingham. Having survived desecrations as well as storms, riots and incendiary bombs, St Mary's has since been restored many times and its present beauty owes much to the skills and sensitivity of the architects, artists and craftsmen of the last 200 years. Today it is a much loved focus of religious life and symbolises – as its finest surviving medieval building – the enduring stature of a great city.



A Brief History

Christianity reached the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Mercia in the mid seventh century and St Mary's was probably founded shortly afterwards. The original building was most likely a wooden construction on the present site, close to the centre of old Nottingham. At the time of the Domesday survey in 1086 Nottingham was a royal borough and St Mary's, as the only church, had royal status.

The present building, the third known to stand here, was constructed in stages during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and reflects the prosperity that Nottingham enjoyed during that period. Its magnificent architecture, huge windows and monuments all bear witness to the funds poured into its construction by the guilds, merchants and gentry of Nottingham society. Such people were eager both to ensure the



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The Nave

The Nave is a fine example of Perpendicular architecture. Construction began in 1386 on the initiative of the then Mayor of Nottingham, John Samon, and was completed by 1475. A matrix of ten slender columns supports 12 graceful arches and above these are the 24 large windows of the clerestory. The distance from the west door to the tower crossing is 108 feet (33 metres), with the south entrance, rather unusually, at the midway point.

A thirteenth century remnant of the previous church can be viewed through a glass panel at the base of a pillar on the north side. Other remains of the earlier building were found in the nineteenth century, and these indicate that the present church was built around the older one.

A Palladian-style west end replaced the fifteenth century original in 1726. This was later felt to have been a mistake and

in 1846 the architect W.B. Moffatt designed a magnificent re-creation of the original structure.

The medieval stained glass was destroyed during the religious conflicts of the seventeenth century. Most of the present glass is Victorian, apart from the windows along the south aisle between the porch and transept which were re-glazed in the twentieth century. Carved angels were added to the ends of the roof beams during the Moffatt restoration. There are plans to gild these, to complement their cousins in the chancel.

The heated stone floor, designed by internationally-renowned artist Tess Jaray and installed in 2012, has a distinctive and striking geometric design based on a chevron motif which combines traditional and contemporary themes. The floor has been widely praised, both for its beauty and for its flexibility in use when compared with the previous configuration of low timber platforms.

West Window

The West Window is a memorial to Thomas Adams, a Worksop-born lace manufacturer and merchant who built a large and handsome warehouse in nearby Stoney Street. Made by John Hardman of Birmingham in 1876 the 42 beautiful lights, framed by intricate tracery, illustrate the life of Christ, with additional rows of pharaohs, prophets and kings. The lower panels are intentionally unglazed, in part a consequence of the elaborate porch outside. Unfortunately these have lost their original painted decoration.



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Lion and Unicorn

These magnificent heraldic beasts, which stand on either side of the crown that surmounts the west door, have been in St Mary's since the early eighteenth century, though not always in their current position. They were probably commissioned to commemorate the period when Princess (later Queen) Anne lodged in Nottingham during the Glorious Revolution of 1688, an event which removed her father, James II, from the throne. During her subsequent reign they became a symbol of the union in 1707 of the ancient kingdoms of England (the lion) and Scotland (the unicorn).



South Porch

Dating from around the start of the fifteenth century, the South Porch is the oldest surviving part of St Mary's. Externally it has an attractive (though somewhat eroded) ogee arch, with Perpendicular panelling above. Inside, the roof is of stone with four ribs crossing from side to side, with narrow stone benches below. The empty niches either side of the church door may once have housed figure sculptures.

The chief glory of the porch is the Art Nouveau bronze doorway of 1905 designed by Henry Wilson and dedicated to the memory of Canon Francis Morse, vicar from 1864 to 1886. Highly expressive panels on the doors illustrate the life of Christ with his mother Mary, to whom the church is dedicated. The image above is of Mary supporting and cherishing the body of Christ, with the gates of Life and Death suggested in the adjoining spandrels.



Baptistry

The fifteenth century carved stone font is in the same Perpendicular style as the church and features eight different panels of window-like tracery. Around the sides is inscribed a Greek palindrome - a phrase that reads the same both forwards and backwards - which translates approximately as 'Wash thy sins, not only thy face.'

The same text is inscribed around a ninth-century fountain in Constantinople, in the courtyard which stands before the Hagia Sophia, the cathedral of the medieval city; it is also found on several medieval fonts in Greece, France and England, reflecting its popular association with baptism during the Middle Ages.

The font has been in its present position since at least 1952, when the wood-panelled baptistry was built to enclose it. The suspended oak canopy was added in 1957.

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South Transept

Built around 1400, the South Transept, which has survived Puritan vandalism in the seventeenth century and an incendiary bomb in the twentieth, is one of the great glories of the building. Initially it housed both a chantry and a side chapel as well as the tomb of John Samon (d.1416), St Mary's first benefactor. Three generations of the Samon family are buried here, under a canopy similar in style to the South Porch.

The magnificent south window by Heaton, Butler and Bayne was installed in 1867. It is dedicated to the memory of Thomas Smith (d.1699) who founded Smith's bank in Nottingham and who is buried in St Mary's. The glowing glass vividly depicts the parables of Jesus.



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The pipe organ, built by Marcussen and Søn, was installed on its dramatic cantilevered platform in 1973. Its two mechanical action keyboards and pedal clavier control 25 speaking stops, ranging from soft strings and flutes to strident reeds and mixtures. The instrument speaks with great clarity and is ideal for the performance of music by J.S. Bach and his contemporaries.

A three-manual digital organ was given to the church in 2014, mainly to enhance choral services held in the Chancel. Assisted by the generous natural resonance in the building, this versatile instrument speaks from the mezzanine behind the pipe organ and has the sound and tonal range of a traditional cathedral organ.

Chapel of the Holy Spirit

The Chapel of the Holy Spirit, which stands on the south side of the chancel, was built in 1916. The architect, Temple Moore, ingeniously reused tracery from the former external wall of the chancel in the new south wall of the chapel.

The east window portrays the bride Monica Wade Dalton, who died in the great influenza epidemic of 1918 just one week after she was married. The people of St Mary's fondly refer to the chapel as the Lady Chapel, in part because of this window.

Set in the south wall is a fragment of alabaster for which Nottingham was once famous. It depicts Thomas à Becket during his exile visiting Pope Alexander III. This piece was unearthed during restoration work, as were pieces of medieval glass which have been preserved in small windows in the chapel.

On the north wall there is a fine terracotta panel, The Prodigal Son, made by the renowned ceramic artist George Tinworth in 1916.



Sold in St Mary's Church Chancel, High Altar and Sanctuary

The Chancel displays the architectural style of its rebuilding c 1470 by the Patron of the Living, Lenton Priory.

The High Altar, upon which Holy Communion is celebrated, is the focal point of the Sanctuary. The painted reredos above it was designed in 1885 by the architects Bodley and Garner and is of late medieval inspiration. In 1938 two wings were added, making it into a triptych, a painting with three hinged sections. In medieval times, such a reredos would generally have been kept closed and opened only on feast days, revealing its colourful interior. Ironically, around the time this triptych was completed, four riddel posts and a canopy were erected around the altar, making it impossible to close the doors. In 1992 the sculptor Peter Eugene Ball made a small supplementary crucifix for the altar, using a mix of recycled materials.

The marble pavement was laid in 1925, in memory of John Gray Richardson, vicar from 1886 to 1900; the railings which enclose the sanctuary were also erected in his honour. On the north side of the Chancel there are memorials to the Sherwood Foresters, the Normandy Veterans' Association and the South Notts Hussars. There are many other war memorials in stone, brass and glass throughout the church.



Choir Stalls

The carved choir stalls were designed by Gilbert Scott in 1872, the medieval originals having been removed and sold in Sneinton Market for £10.00 some years earlier. Eight of the misericords eventually found their way to St Stephen's Church in Sneinton, where they can still be seen.

The canopied seat near the altar is a 'Cathedra': a bishop's throne. It was installed by Bodley in 1890, following the announcement that a bishopric would be created for Nottinghamshire and under the assumption that St Mary's would become the cathedral. This magnificent addition lost its importance when the decision was taken to base the bishopric at Southwell Minster instead.

St Mary's has a fine choir which sings a wide range of traditional music at Sunday services and Wednesday evensongs, as well as giving regular concert performances.

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Crossing & Tower

The tower, 126 feet [38 metres] high, is supported on four massive piers inside the church. Externally there are three stages – the lowest has blind arcading, the middle features large four-light Perpendicular windows on each side whilst the top has narrower four-light Perpendicular windows flanked by pairs of blind arcading. The angle buttresses at each corner have five extensions and the tower is crowned by battlements and pinnacles. The fine ring of 12 bells is in regular use.

During a storm in 1558 part of the tower collapsed, bringing down the fan vault over the crossing. The present oak fan vault was installed in 1812 by William Stretton, both churchwarden and an architect. When the four original piers supporting the tower were declared unsafe in 1842 there was a move to demolish the building completely. Following a narrow vote in favour of restoration, the tower piers were underpinned and strengthened between 1843 and 1848 under the direction of architects Scott and Moffatt. Earlier work is exposed beneath the north-west pier.

The chancel screen (1885), the gift of Thomas Hill 'in memory of Jane, his wife', is by architects Bodley and Garner. The cross has symbols of the Evangelists and is flanked by empty plinths.

The oak pulpit is by Gilbert Scott and was the gift of the Church Congress (a precursor of the Diocesan Synod) in 1871. The brass eagle lectern (1867) was given by John Watson, church warden, in memory of his wife, Sarah. Around the base are symbols of the Evangelists.

The painting of the Madonna and Child above the lectern dates from around 1500 and is from the school of Fra Bartolomeo, who was influenced by Raphael. It was presented to St Mary's in 1839 by Thomas Wright, many of whose ancestors were connected to the church and are buried here.



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North Transept

A supremely daring example of Perpendicular architecture, the north window of the transept fills its entire wall. The stained glass, dating from the late nineteenth century, is mostly by Clayton and Bell. Note especially Jonah and the Whale (1878), low down in the smaller east window nearby.

The ornate canopy tomb has elements of four different memorials. The canopy itself, with its ogee and two figures, is in memory of Thomas Thurland (d.1473/4), Mayor of Nottingham in 1449 and 1458.

Beneath the canopy are remnants of three memorials relocated from elsewhere. The Purbeck marble slab is much earlier than the canopy and would originally have had inlaid brass effigies of William de Amyas, Mayor in 1316, 1324, 1328 and 1333, and his wife. The framed alabaster fragment to the rear portrays a bishop, and is from the tomb chest of Robert Englyshe, see below.

The slab rests on an alabaster table tomb commemorating John de Tannesley (d.1413/14), Bailiff of Nottingham in 1395 and Mayor in 1399 and 1410. The front incorporates an Annunciation scene; the lily between Gabriel and Mary is a rare example of a lily crucifix, foretelling how Mary's son, Jesus, would die.



The transept housed two guild chapels before the Reformation. The present Guild Altar against the east wall is Jacobean and a carving of Christ Crucified, created by sculptor Peter Eugene Ball and installed in 1993, hangs above it.

An interesting monument on the west wall of the transept commemorates Henry Plumptre, a juvenile prodigy who died aged 10 in 1719.



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North Aisle



Lying on the floor towards the west end of the aisle is a badly defaced effigy which was once the focal point of a fine tomb in the north transept. The figure is thought to be that of Robert Englyshe (d.1475), a rich merchant who was Mayor of Nottingham in 1470 when St Mary's was nearing completion. The original tomb was smashed by Puritans during the Civil War; the remnants were eventually removed in 1839, the mutilated effigy being sold but never collected. Since then it has sadly been without an official resting place.

Many interesting memorials from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries line the north wall, and near the east end is the fifteenth-century door which led into St James's Chantry. The heavy stone moulding above the door features several masons' marks; on either side, although damaged, are carved heads thought to represent King Richard II and his queen, Anne of Bohemia. The wooden door is itself ancient. The lock plate is of interest and has a rosette under the keyhole. On the hasp it has the characteristic square leaf, likely to be German or Flemish.