



The Church of  
**ST. GILES**  
West Bridgford Nottinghamshire



This handbook was produced in 1989 to  
commemorate the 750th anniversary of  
the appointment of the first  
Rector of West Bridgford.



## ST. GILES' CHURCH, WEST BRIDGFORD NOTTINGHAMSHIRE



*St. Giles' in the 1880s.*  
*This area is now the Lady Chapel*  
(The illustration is taken from an old painting)

**Saint Giles.** Like 161 other churches in England and 10 others in Southwell Diocese the parish church of West Bridgford was dedicated in honour of St. Giles. He is said to have been an Athenian who lived about 700 A.D. as a hermit near Arles in Provence. The local king while out hunting crippled Giles with an arrow intended for a hind which had been providing milk for the hermit. The king then gave land and installed Giles as abbot of a monastery, where his shrine later became a place of pilgrimage. Giles became the patron saint of cripples, lepers and nursing mothers. Churches bearing his name in towns were often near the gates where cripples and beggars sat, as in St. Giles Cripplegate in London, but in this diocese the churches called after him are mostly in what were very small villages. Hospitals too bore his name. His prayers were thought to be especially effective. He was also a patron saint of smithies, and a traveller could call in at the church while his horse was being shod.

**The Church of St. Giles, West Bridgford** The growth of the parish church has kept pace with the district, which until a hundred years ago had only a small population. A fort was built in 924 A.D to guard the southern end of the crossing over the Trent, and Bridgford is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086, but there is no clear evidence of a place of worship here until the 13th century. The nearest church was All Hallows at Adbolton, near where the Skylarks Home now is, and worshippers may have walked the mile to it.

In 1233 Pope Gregory IX advised the building of chapels in centres of population at some distance from a church, so that people could attend more easily in bad weather. Archbishop Walter de Gray of York strongly encouraged church building in his diocese, which included Nottinghamshire. Whether for this reason or not a parish was founded here about this time, and a church built. The first rector recorded is Luke de Crophill, instituted on October 13th 1239. The Lutterell family at Gamston, who were Lords of the Manor until 1418, may have provided the building. They and their descendants the Hiltons and Thimelbys were patrons until the end of the 16th century.

Bridgford remained small. At the end of the 18th century it had only thirty dwellings. The population was 235 in 1801, 280 in 1861, and 293 in 1881. In that year the Chaworth-Musters family at Colwick Hall made land available for building, so that in 1911 the population was 11600, and by 1931 19000.

The church in the small village had frequently been repaired, added to, or reconstructed down the centuries, and the inside altered to fit in with changing practices in worship. The sudden rise in numbers from the 1880s made it necessary to enlarge the building. This was done in two stages, in 1898 and 1912.

**The medieval building.** Today this can be seen in the chancel, nave, south aisle and the west and south walls of the Lady Chapel, and in the tower and the porch.

Like all village churches the building had two main functions. It was the centre of worship for the neighbourhood, and the place where children were baptised, and couples married, and near where the parishioners were buried. In addition the nave and porch provided for the village a centre where meetings could be held, business done and religious entertainments such as mystery plays given.

The foundations and the walls of the chancel of the Lady Chapel up to about six feet are from the original 13th century Early English building. The interior would have been very dark, lit only by narrow lancet windows and with a low roof. The doorway in the south wall of the chancel is from the 13th century, as are the **piscina**, the stone basin with a drainage channel, and the **aumbry**, the recess beside it which held the communion vessels in the time before vestries were built.



*The Lady Chapel,  
showing the sedilia, piscina and aumbry  
framed by the 1380 screen*

The 14th century, (architecturally the Decorated and early Perpendicular periods) saw considerable changes in St. Giles. The south aisle was added, the roof was raised, and four clerestory windows were put in on both sides of the nave. Narrow lancet windows in the nave were replaced by wider mullioned ones. A large east window was placed in the chancel and one was also put at the east end of the new aisle. Many parts of the inside of the building may have been painted in bright colours.

It is probable that this work was done by local builders and craftsmen, not by specialists from outside the parish. There is some evidence that the stonework in the windows was done by someone trained as a carpenter, and the work on the wooden screen shows the skill of a stonemason.

A further stone altar was erected at the east end of the south aisle, with its own piscina which is still there. There may have been a screen round it to form a small chantry chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. One of the medieval bells had Ave Maria on it, and it has been suggested that the bell was rung when Mass was sung at that altar, as well as for the Angelus.

At this time the double **sedilia** were built in the south wall of the main chancel. Normally a small church had only one such stone seat. Large churches had three, for the celebrant and the epistoler and gospeller at Mass. The two seats here may have been for the parish priest and another priest appointed for the chantry chapel.

However there does not appear to have been a legally established chantry. Bridgford is not mentioned in the 16th century chantry rolls.

The **screen** was probably erected about 1380. It then had a rood loft above it with a large crucifix, and statues of the Blessed Virgin and St. John. Those figures were removed at the Reformation, but the loft remained until the 19th century. The lower part of the screen has had to be renewed, and the portion running east and west is modern. At the top left of the old screen can be seen an interesting carving, probably of a fox running away with a goose.

The **font** is also from the 14th century. Originally it was probably nearer to the south door. To avoid superstitious use of the water in the font a cover was provided, and remnants of the fastening of the cover can still be seen.

The **south door**, the main entrance to the church, and the **porch** were built at the same time as the south aisle. In 1871, when the east window was renewed, the original stonework of the triangular section in the arch was placed in the porch. Like several other windows it was carved from one block of stone.





*St Giles'  
in the 19th century*

The 16th century saw other changes. There must have been already a small Early English tower, or else a gable steeple to hold the three bells, but early in the century the Perpendicular tower, in three stages, embattled and with crocketed pinnacles, was erected. It has a newel staircase in the southwest corner. About twelve feet up on the south wall is the Latin inscription 'Christus lapis adiutorii', 'Christ the stone of help', which is repeated on the dedication stone of the 1898 extension. A door in that south side has been filled in, and there is no west door through the tower into the nave.

On the floor of the tower are some gravestones moved from the chancel in 1871. One is of William Wragby, rector 1437-50, and another probably of Thomas de Haverthorpe, rector 1369-1415, who in his will asked to be buried in the chancel. Brass inlays have been removed.

In that century also the small lancet windows in the south wall of the chancel were replaced by the present mullioned windows. After the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558 the stone altar was replaced by the wooden communion table still used in the Lady Chapel.

In the south wall to the west of the door in from the porch there are clearly visible signs of another doorway. There may have been a schoolroom or other room at the west end of the nave which needed its own separate entrance.

As the photograph on page 15 shows, only the nave and south aisle of the old church were embattled, and in that photograph the chancel roof is higher than that of the nave. In 1898 the chancel roof was lowered, two more clerestory windows were put in, and the old chancel, new chancel and new nave were built in their present form.

**The Church of 1560-1871 and 1872-1898** There is much more in the present church building to remind us of the first three hundred years of St. Giles' existence than there is of the next three hundred.

After the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558 the Reformation began to affect the interior of churches. The stone altar was removed, and probably used to make part of the floor of the chancel. The wooden communion table was put in its place. The figures were removed from the top of the rood screen. Wall paintings and brightly coloured decorations were whitewashed. Further changes may have been made in the Commonwealth period when the rector, Francis Withington, was arrested, and the Presbyterian Samuel Coates installed in his place. He in turn was ejected in 1662 after the Restoration.

We can read descriptions of the Church as it was in 1816, (William Stretton), and in 1863 (Samuel Dutton Walker). There were box-pews and a three-decker pulpit. In the chancel were grave stones dating back to the 15th century. There was an alabaster slab which might have been part of the Founder's tomb. On the walls were the Royal Arms, and the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Some of the medieval glass remained and in the windows were the arms of the Lutterell and Chaworth families, although in the 1860s the windows were being smashed by hooligans. At the west end was a gallery obscuring the tower arch. This all went in the alterations of 1871/2. The remains of the wall paintings which had been whitewashed or plastered over were removed. Slabs in the chancel were moved to the floor of the tower or used to make altar steps. The medieval oak door was burned.

The photograph inside the front cover, taken from a painting of the interior of the church after 1872 shows what it was like before the enlargements of 1898. A very full description of the church as it was in the period 1872-98 is given in Godfrey's 'Notes on the Churches of Nottinghamshire. Hundred of Rushcliffe' 1887. He gives a list of the changes made in 1872, which in addition to those already mentioned included: renewing the windows in the south wall of the aisle, the clerestory windows, the east windows in the chancel and the aisle, rebuilding the gable of the chancel and the upper part of the walls of the chancel, restoring the chancel roof, and rebuilding the gable of the porch.

**The modern church** When the population of West Bridgford began to increase rapidly in the 1880s and 1890s the parish discussed the merits of building a new church on a different site, but decided instead to enlarge the old one. The nave and chancel were built in a style designed to fit in with the old. The foundation stone was laid by Lady Byron on October 18th, 1896, and the new nave and chancel were consecrated on September 15th, 1898. During this two year period services were held in the Musters Road School, and marriages and funerals and baptisms taken in the screened off south aisle.

The iron screen dates from 1898, as does the lectern which was given by the children of the Sunday School. Other features of the present church have been introduced at various times over the last 90 years.

The Choir stalls, the east window and the War Memorial at the west end were given in 1920 as a memorial of the 1914-18 Great War. The reredos dates from 1923, the processional cross from 1925. The Oak Screen inside the door from the south porch was given by St. Giles Lodge in 1934, the year the Lady Chapel was refurnished.



*The Chancel as it is today*

The altar in the chancel is a memorial to Canon C.N. Hatfield, rector 1930-41. The pulpit designed by Sir Charles Nicholson was erected in 1948, taking the place of one transferred from the old church. The Panelling beside the reredos was given as a memorial to Canon Wilkinson rector 1941-61. The nave altar was added in 1987.

**The East Window.** This window, a memorial of the 1914-18 war, like many other windows in the church has as its theme an event in the life of Christ. This is however supported by the depiction of great figures in the growth of the Church.

At the centre is the portrayal of the Crucifixion, the death of 'Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews' I.N.R.I., which is balanced at the west end of the Church by resurrection scenes. Beside the central panel are six others. On his right is the Blessed Virgin Mary, depicted as the grieving mother, Mater Dolorosa. On the other side is St George, who died about 303 A.D. as a martyr for his faith in Christ. Soldiers on the first Crusade had a vision of the saint before their seizure of Antioch on their way to the capture of the Holy City of Jerusalem. George became a patron saint of soldiers and ultimately of England.

The other four panels are of the 'Latin Doctors', the four great scholars and leaders who in the fifth and sixth centuries laid the foundation of the Western Church.

Jerome (Hieronymos) the scholar, author of the Vulgate, who learned Hebrew and Greek so that he could give to his readers the best possible translation of the original scriptures.

Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, the administrator, who was prepared to rebuke Emperors publicly when they fell short of Christian ideals.

Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, the theologian, whose writings dominated Christian thinking for the next eight hundred years.

Gregory the Great, the Pope who transformed the worship of the Church in his day, and was the 'Apostle of the English' who sent Augustine of Canterbury to Southern England and guided and supported him in his missionary work.

The panels at the bottom of the window depict the four Evangelists, quoting opening words from their gospels. In the centre is a pelican, which in the Middle Ages was believed to feed its young from its flesh. On either side a figure says 'Jesus is our pelican', feeding us with his Body and Blood.

The glass in the arch above expresses the symbolism of the Book of the Revelation.

The Lamb is in the centre, and to the left is an angel who cries 'Look, there is the Lamb of God, who takes away the world's sin'. Above angels sing 'Allelujah'. Below are the sun, moon and stars, and the 'four living creatures' who cry 'Holy, holy, holy.'

**The Reredos.** This embodies the main theme of the window above. In the centre is the Good Shepherd, who gives his life for the sheep. On the left is the Lamb, with the words 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.' On the right is a ram caught by its horns in a thicket 'Like one who has been brought to the sacrifice.' The two figures carrying an orb and a wreath ask the question 'Do you yourself value me?'

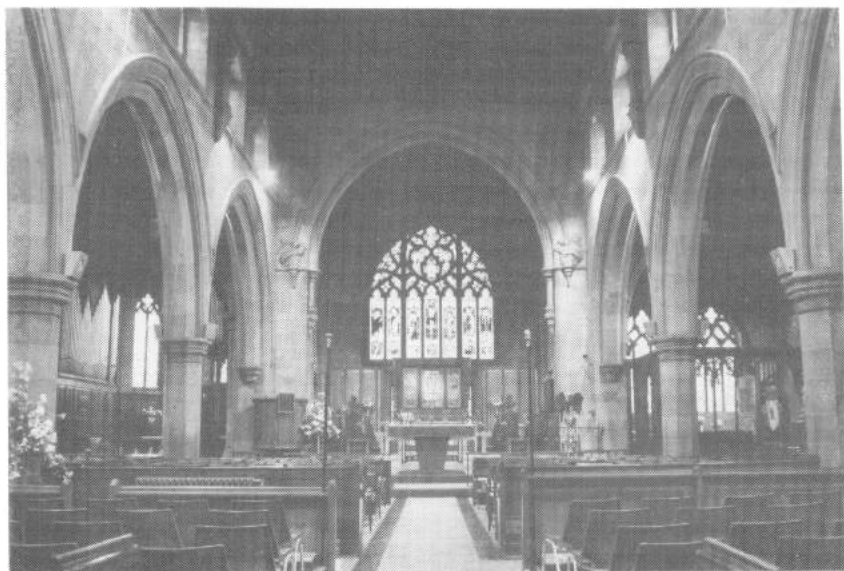
**The Nave Altar.** The material and the position of the altar or communion table express very clearly changing understandings of worship down the centuries. For the first three hundred years in St. Giles' there was a stone altar for the 'Sacrifice of the Mass', and later another stone altar in the south aisle where the service could be sung for the souls of those who built the aisle, probably from the Lutterell family.

In the 1560s stone altars were removed and wooden tables placed in the chancels. In the 17th century the Puritans placed the communion table in the nave. After the Restoration in 1660 the tables were returned to the chancels, but in very many cases were used infrequently. Morning and Evening Prayer were the services to which the congregation normally came.

In the 19th century the Oxford Movement led to a rediscovery of sacramental worship. The fashion however was to emphasise a 'high altar' in the chancel, several steps higher than the level of the nave, where the service was conducted at a distance from the congregation, with the choir in between.

The later 20th century has seen renewed emphasis on Holy Communion as a service which should be conducted with the worshippers gathered round.

The Nave Altar and the raised platform were placed in position in 1987.



*The Nave and Chancel with the Nave Altar in position*



**The North Aisle and Chapel.** Thirteen years after the new nave and chancel were consecrated it was decided to complete the extension of the church. Mrs Heyman of the Hall laid the foundation stone of the new building, on the day of the coronation of King George Vth. Special permission was given to call the new north aisle 'The King George Aisle,' and the Royal Arms appear on the foundation stone. The aisle and the George Chapel were dedicated in 1912, and a new vestry and choir vestry were built. The aisle and chapel would themselves make quite a large church, and they brought the total capacity of the building to 1200, in a district which thirty years previously had contained fewer than 300 persons.

Two interesting features in this part of the church are the windows and the reconstruction of an arch previously in the north wall of the old chancel, which was either an Easter Sepulchre, or held the tomb of the Lutterell founder of the church, or both. It now contains the 'Stone man'.

Two of the windows were given in memory of members of the choir and have a musical theme. Caedmon, a herdsman at Whitby Abbey, had a flair for writing songs in his native Old English, which brought to people of his day stories from the Old and New Testament in language which they could understand.

The left hand side of the east window depicts men and women associated with the psalms and canticles so familiar to generations of worshippers: David's psalms; Zacharias' Benedictus; the Blessed Virgin Mary's Magnificat; Simeon's Nunc Dimittis; Ambrose's Te Deum; and St Cecilia, patron saint of musicians.



The central panel recalls those from West Bridgford who were in the Navy, the Army, the Royal Air Force, or the Merchant Navy and died in the 1939-45 War. Their names are recorded in the British Legion's Roll of Honour in the Chapel. 'They grow not old as we that are left grow old.' Above are the two soldier saints, Martin and George, and at the top the Royal Arms.

The window to the right celebrates the jubilee in 1958 of the extension of the church and shows St Giles' as it was before and after 1898. West Bridgford was, until 1827, in the diocese of York, but looked to Southwell Minster as its 'mother church'. In 1827 Nottinghamshire was transferred to the diocese of Lincoln and the province of Canterbury. In 1884 a separate diocese of Southwell was formed, which, until 1927 also contained Derbyshire. Southwell returned to the province of York in 1927. The Arms of York and of Southwell here, and the window in the Lady Chapel depicting St Hugh of Lincoln, recall these associations. Above the York Arms is Paulinus, first bishop of York, and above the Southwell Arms, Archbishop Thomas from Bayeux who built the nave of Southwell Minster. (There is a photograph of part of this window on page 15.)



**An Easter Sepulchre.** The arch in the north wall of the chapel is a reconstruction of a recess in the north wall of the chancel. It then had above it the words 'Christ is risen', a thought echoed in the window above it in its present position, which was erected to the glory of the risen Christ.\*

In the Middle Ages it was usual on Good Friday to place a crucifix and the Reserved Sacrament, the 'Body of Christ', in the sepulchre, and take them out again early on Easter Day. In some churches the tombchest of the founder of the building was in that part of the chancel and was used as the sepulchre.

**The 'Stone Man'.** The effigy placed in the arch was found about 1800 in a field near the junction of Melton and Loughborough Roads. For a hundred years it was used as a boundary stone, and was then placed in St. Giles in 1898. It is impossible to identify it with any certainty. Some have suggested that it is the effigy of the Lutterell who built the south aisle. If the stone figure was originally in the church it is hard to understand why it was removed from a building which was in continuous use. It could have come from the dismantled churches of Flawford or Adbolton, or from St. John's Hospital in Nottingham, or even from the chapel which used to stand at the north end of Trent Bridge, which was turned into a fort in the 17th Century Civil War.



**The Biddle Lounge.** The passage leading to the north door was in 1986 altered to form a lounge which can be used for small meetings, and to provide refreshments for those remaining behind after the Parish Communion. The work was done as a memorial to Walter Oswald Biddle, who was churchwarden from 1976 until 1984.

**The Bells.** When the tower was built, about 1500 A.D., there were three bells, cast by Richard Mellers, Mayor of Nottingham, whose bell foundry at the back of Long Row lasted until 1791. The bell with the inscription "Celorum Christe placet tibi rex sonus iste" (this sound pleases Thee, O Christ, King of Heaven) is preserved in the church. It was cast in 1499, like a second bell inscribed "Ave Maria" and a third bell which had to be recast in 1813. These bells served St. Giles for over 450 years. They were taken down in 1955. In that year five bells from Perlethorpe Church, in Thoresby Park, became available, from a peal of six given by Earl Manvers in 1876. Two were rehung in St. Giles, three were recast by John Taylor and Co. of Loughborough and three others added, given as memorials or thanksgivings by members of the congregation. St. Giles now has a light peal of eight bells, hung in two tiers in cast iron frames resting on steel girders, with the steel headstocks set in ball-bearings. The weights are: Trebles:-G Sharp  $3\frac{1}{2}$  cwt., G  $3\frac{1}{2}$  cwt., then the Perlethorpe bells F 4 cwt. and D Sharp  $4\frac{1}{2}$  cwt., C Sharp 5 cwt., C  $5\frac{1}{2}$  cwt., A Sharp 7 cwt., and the Tenor G Sharp  $9\frac{1}{2}$  cwt. A new ringing gallery was erected in the tower in 1955.

**The Organ.** When the church was enlarged in 1898 it was decided to use the old chancel as the position for the organ. The screen and chancel arch were moved eastwards and the pipes of the new organ by Lloyd appeared over the top of the screen, the console was then next to the organ pipes. However, in 1919 it was decided to place the organ in the arches of the new north chapel instead. The 14th century screen was returned to its original position and the old chancel could again be used for worship, and it was refurnished as the Lady Chapel in 1934.

The present large three-manual organ was built by Henry Willis. It has 40 stops and 2000 pipes, with electro-pneumatic action. It was rebuilt and enlarged in 1952, and cleaned and restored in 1978.

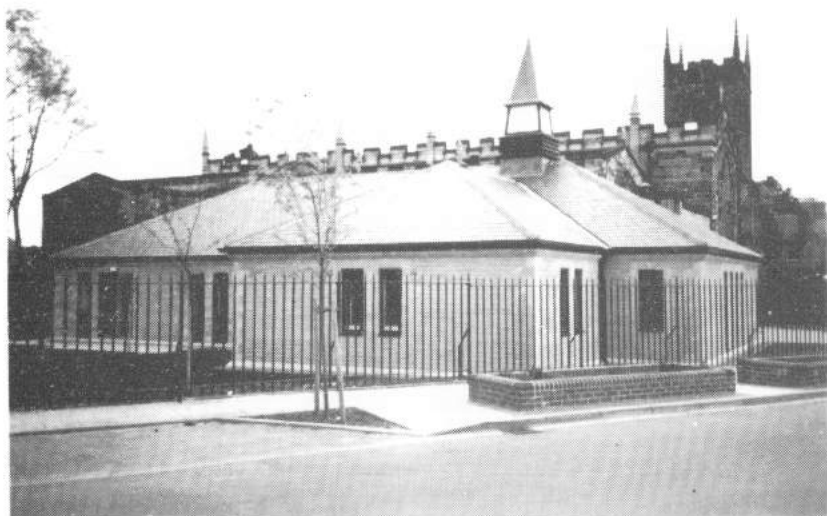
The panelling was given in memory of Dudley Newball, organist in St Giles from 1924 until 1941.



*The 1499 bell preserved in the church.  
The three small tablets carry the words  
"Ave" and "Maria" and the bellfounders mark  
from another bell cast in 1499.*

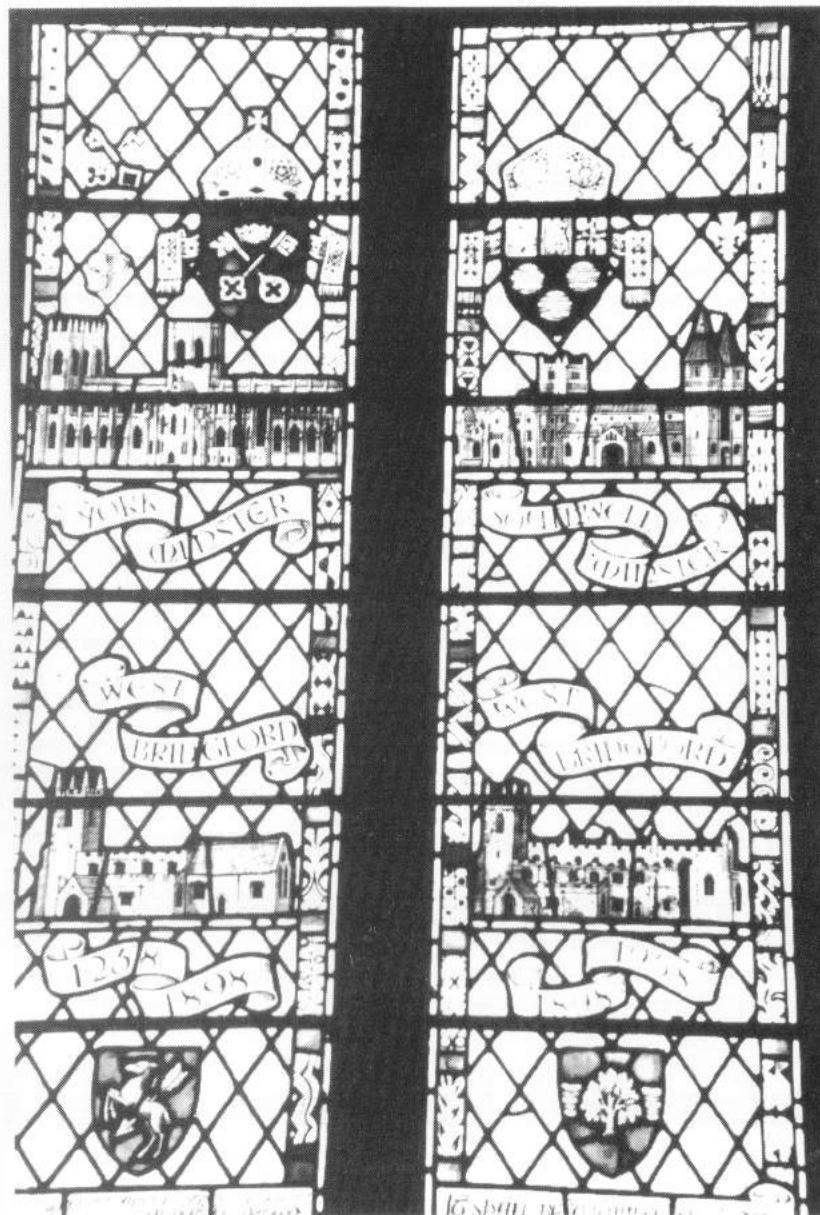


**The Church Hall.** In 1889 a new hall was built on land next to the north side of the church. The first "Parish Room" was made out of the former Rectory Coach-house in 1889. In 1928 a Parish Hall was erected on the same site at the corner of Church Drive and Bridgford Road. The new hall is of split faced York stone with a grey Spanish slate roof. Its long narrow windows and the cupola fit in well with the church behind. The hall contains a reception room, main hall, meeting room, office and toilets, and it is easy to move between it and the church. The Venerable Clive Handford, Archdeacon of Nottingham, opened the building on April 22nd, 1989.



**The church plate.** In addition to modern silver St. Giles' possesses interesting older plate, namely a flagon, paten and bowl inscribed 'West Bridgford, 1809'; a cup inscribed 'West Bridgford, 1659'; and a paten cover with the London hall-marks for 1564/5. This is probably the oldest example of Elizabethan plate in a parish church in Nottinghamshire.

In 1571 Edmund Grindal, Archbishop of York 1570-77, ordered that all medieval chalices should be melted down and communion cups made in their place. 'Ye shall minister the Holy Communion in no chalice nor any profane cup or glass, but in a communion cup of silver and with a cover of silver appointed also for the ministration of the communion bread.' Injunction of 1571.



Part of the window in the George Chapel which shows St. Giles' before and after 1898, and recalls much of the church's history.

**Fire and flood.** This century the church has survived both dangers.

During the 1939-45 war incendiary bombs fell all around the church, and in the churchyard, but did not affect the building. In 1947 and in the 1930s and previously there was very severe flooding, which covered the church site, but no lasting damage resulted. The building has changed over the centuries, but for over seven hundred and fifty years St. Giles has been here to serve the people of Bridgford.

**Further information.** The Local History section of West Bridgford County Library, two hundred yards from the church, has a great deal of material for anyone wishing to learn more about the building and the parish.

On 13 **micro-fiches** there is a record of burials at St. Giles' from October 2nd, 1559, marriages from 23rd October and baptisms from November of that year. For about 20 years from 1654 the records are rather confused. They then become better organised. This micro-fiche material continues until 1900.

The Nottinghamshire Archives Office in High Pavement also has this micro-fiche material, and the original registers. The archives of Southwell Diocese are stored at High Pavement, giving details of tithes, terriers, faculties, and parish accounts from past centuries. Among the **books** which are available in the Local History Library are:-

Robert Thoroton's "Antiquities of Nottinghamshire" 1677, edited with additions by John Throsby in 1790, which has some very brief references.

Samuel Dutton Walker describes the church of 1863.

Godfrey's "Churches of Nottinghamshire, Hundred of Rushcliffe" 1887 describes the church at that time, and also quotes from William Stretton's account of the building in 1816.

Robert Mellors' 'West Bridgford, Then and Now.' contains material on the church.

The Transactions of the Thoroton Society have descriptions of St. Giles' by Harry Gill in 1915, and by C.H.B. Watson in 1941.

Transcriptions of the old registers and of the churchwardens' accounts are kept in the church.

## RECTORS OF WEST BRIDGFORD

1239	Luke de Crophill	1673	Thomas Houghton, M.A.
1267	Robert Luterell	1692	Joseph Bruen
1315	Andrew Luterell	1717	John Stokes, M.A.
	Henry Luterell	1723	John Stokes, M.A.
1349	John de Aslacton	1749	Thomas Rose, M.A.
1369	Thomas de Hawerthorpe	1764	John Gage
1415	Richard Clarke	1770	William Thompson
1437	William Wragby	1803	Peter Thoroton, L.I.B.
1450	William Funtance	1818	Levett Henry Thoroton, B.A.
1479	Robert Hyll	1831	Roger Pocklington, M.A.
1479	John Alcok, D.D.	1834	William Musters, B.A.
1506	Robert Lovell	1862	William Roe Waters, B.A.
1517	Walter Wright	1894	James Robinson, M.A.
1529	Walter Basse	1903	Henry Marsh Edwards
1556	John Cooke	1904	Richard Hargreaves, M.A.
1571	Robert Grene, M.A.	1930	Cyril Northcote Hatfield, M.A.
1614	Francis Withington, M.A.	1941	Reginald Felix Wilkinson, M.A.
	Samuel Coates	1961	Frank Edward Worwood, A.L.C.D.
1662	Edward Greathead, M.A.	1982	Philip Noel Humphreys

