

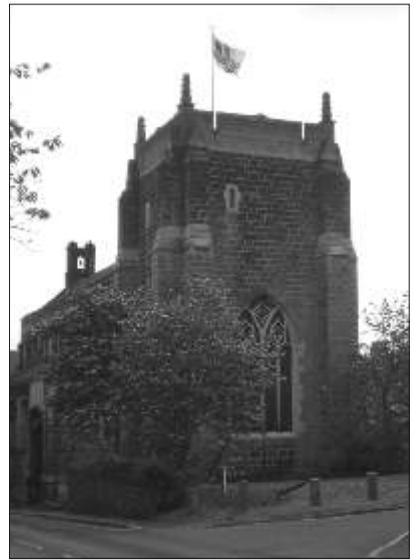
welcome to st mary's church WOMBWELL

Welcome to this holy place where worship has been offered to God since Medieval times. Although the present building only dates from 1896, there has been a chapel or church on this site from the Middle Ages.

Wombwell itself appears in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as Wambella, previously held by three Saxons but then in the possession of Roger de Busli (of Tickhill), Walter Deincourt and the King. It was one of seven villages that comprised the Parish of Darfield, where a church has existed since Norman times. A small chapel of ease was built in Wombwell consisting of a nave and chancel which probably had later additions. Evidence for some of this is given in Joseph Hunter's "South Yorkshire".

During the 19th century, the population of Wombwell dramatically increased due to the development of coal mines and other industries. The census figures show this as in 1851 the population was just 850. In 1861 it had risen to 3,738 and in 1881 it was 8,451. It became the largest township in the Parish of Darfield and was made a separate parish in 1864 which also included Hemingfield, Jump and Broomhill.

Although a new south aisle had been erected in 1835, by the end of the century the original church was not only far too small but also in a very poor condition. According to folklore, at an occasion when a party of soldiers was present, the pew on which they were sitting began to sink through the floor! It was therefore decided to demolish the existing building and erect a replacement to accommodate 750 worshippers. Money was collected, a public meeting was held and plans were drawn up. It was decided to model the new church on the style of South Yorkshire churches at the end of the 15th century and begin with the nave, extending when finances allowed. On 21st December 1896, Viscount Halifax laid the foundation stone. Hammer-dressed Darfield stone was used and the roof was covered with Brosley handmade tiles. By then the sum of £4,500 had been raised by the public towards the cost. The new nave was opened and consecrated by the Lord Bishop of Beverley on 21st April 1898.



The Entrance (1)

As you come through the south door you enter directly into the nave. The wooden structure around you was originally a Memorial Chapel, erected in memory of Church Lads Brigade members who died during the First World War. Later, many panels were engraved with details of former members of the church.

The Nave (2)

As you enter the main body of the church you will immediately notice that it is somewhat unusual. In the 1990's, it was decided to turn the main worship area around, moving the communion table to a dais at the west end. In 2007, the wooden chairs were replaced by more comfortable ones and a ramp was built to provide wheelchair access to the east end, where a second WC was installed in the former clergy vestry.

The Tower (3)

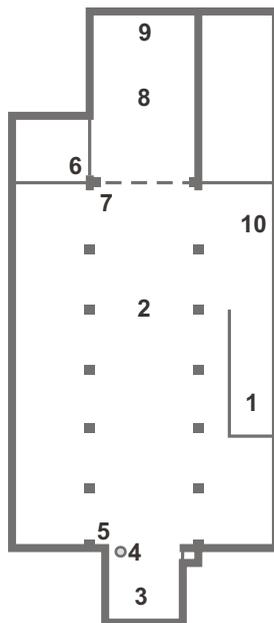
This was added to the building in 1913-1914, ending in a flat roof. It was intended to be completed by the addition of a bell chamber and a tall spire but financial difficulties after the wars and problems with coal-mining subsidence meant that this work was never finished. A bequest from a well-known local builder enabled us to add a stone parapet and a carillon of eight bells in 1961.

The magnificent stained glass window was given by the Mitchell family in memory of their son, 2nd Lt. Joseph Spencer Mitchell RFC, who was accidentally killed while flying in France in 1916 and also in grateful appreciation of the sacrifice made by men employed in Mitchell and Darfield Collieries during the First World War. If you look carefully, you can see a plane in the window.

On the left hand side there is a cricket bat which belonged to Roy Kilner, a former choir boy and CLB member who played for Yorkshire and England. Photographs below are from newspaper cuttings of his funeral in 1928 which brought thousands of mourners to the town. Nearby there is a memorial to members of the Church Lads Brigade who died in the First World War.

The Fonts (4)

After the tower was built, a font was added in the centre making a baptistry. Christenings took place here until it was decided that these should be held



during principal church services. It was then necessary to have a portable font which could be moved into the centre of the nave when required. The Mothers' Union presented St Mary's with a fine modern wood and stainless steel version, whose lid represents the Holy Spirit both coming down like a dove and as flames of fire.

As you face the tower, on the right hand side there is a third font. It comes from the previous church on this site and it was discovered in pieces, in a rockery. Its lid, which had remained in church and was being used on the later font, is carved with the names John Brama and John Stow, described as "Chappel Wardens 1724".

Relic of the Original Church (5)

Back in the nave, a stone built into the wall above the organ is also from the original church, demolished in 1896. The door next to it leads into the old porch, built with the tower and now used as the vestry. Increased traffic made it impossible to continue using the outer door, leading into Church Street, for weddings and funerals. The old National Schools building (higher up Church Street) was renovated as a replacement for the Parish Hall. The old hall was then demolished, giving us space to build a new drive across the site in the 1970's. The south door then became the main entrance to the church. The drive has recently been modified to give level access.

Hidden Arch from the Original Church (6)

In 1938, part of the old church was found under the floor of the organ chamber. A capital and part of a shaft and arch can be seen under a trap door. It was estimated that about nine feet of the shaft and base will be below ground near to Church Street, which was the original level of the church.

The Pulpit (7)

The pulpit is of carved stone and was installed when the present building was new. The original foundation stone can be found, marked with a brass plaque, just up the steps.

The Chancel (8)

This was added to the nave in 1903-4. A tablet on the left hand wall explains that the stained glass east window was given by C W Bartholomew in memory of his father Charles Bartholomew, the engineer who was a joint founder of Wombwell Main Company Ltd. Although he is now mainly thought of as the person that Bartholomew Street was named after, he began as an engineer and later manager with River Don Navigation and went on to become involved with canals and railways. He was a friend of George Stephenson CE. His family continued to have a close involvement with Wombwell until the mines were nationalised in 1946.

The chancel ceiling has been repainted in the original colours with bosses picked out in gold. Notice the four angels carrying the symbols of the Passion. Until the 1990's the chancel contained the main altar and choir stalls with an organ on the left. The screen which divides it from the nave was erected in 1937 and was given by Capt A E Allot JP in memory of his wife. This part of church has been used as a separate chapel since the decision to alter the worship area.

The Community Quilt (9)

In the year 2000, organisations representing the Parish of Wombwell and a cross-section of the life within it were invited to produce panels which were then combined to make the quilt. It now hangs below the east window.

Stained Glass Windows (10)

You will pass three more stained glass windows as you return to the south door. These were given as memorials and from them we can get an idea of what the church *might* have looked like if financial circumstances had been different and more plain glass has been replaced.

**We hope you enjoyed your visit and that you will come again.
Please sign the Visitor's Book before you leave.**

Services are held here each Sunday morning at 10am
and on Thursday mornings at 9.30am.

Our Sunday evening services are held at St George's Church, Jump at 5pm.

For further information please contact the Rector:

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