

SIDMOUTH, ST GILES AND ST NICHOLAS

Case study

from the Church Buildings Office
November 2014

SUMMARY OF WORKS

- Removal of very uncomfortable and worn pews and decayed timber platforms.
- New stone-flagged floor and underfloor heating.
- Provision of short moveable wooden pews.
- Nave altar on raised step with removable communion rails.
- Kitchen in former North porch with mobile servery in North aisle.
- Much improved lighting, quality timber fittings and glass inner doors.

Originally a medieval church, St Giles and St Nicholas was significantly reconstructed in 1860 by the Victorian architect, William White. The interior of the church was furnished in a piecemeal fashion from the nave pews in 1880 through to a glass and metal screen at the West door in 1969.

The parish commissioned a Keystone Report on the history and development of the building and its interior and this informed the design work.

This project was not driven by community needs, nor by structural problems. The then rector wanted to provide a Nave Altar and far more attractive worship space to allow more inclusive worship. The reordering design was based about two main principles – a liturgical arrangement to reflect the Anglo-Catholic tradition of the church and one which brings the congregation and liturgy into a closer relationship, and a setting which allows for a greater range of secular events such as concerts, theatre exhibitions etc.

All of the Victorian pews were removed, and new Douglas Fir benches designed by the architect were made by local joiners along with the new, bespoke altar furniture.

The church is now used for frequent concerts and other outside events, which provide some useful additional revenue. No toilets were provided under the severe cost constraints, which has proved a problem and led to some criticism from the community. This is now being addressed by a proposed extension in the North West corner.

Liturgically it is a great success, but has not as yet produced an increase in congregation which sits at around 230 weekly regular attendees – more during the tourist season.



Grade II*listed
Rebuilt C15; entirely reconstructed,
except tower, 1860 by W White

Mediaeval burial vaults were revealed when the floor was lifted, but were left firmly alone! The work was carried out under direct contract-management, by the then Church Warden. This was 'very stressful' but regarded as a success and cost-effective.

The community are now more involved as a result of numerous outside events: Concerts, Art Exhibitions, Christmas Fair etc.

Lower heating costs and increased income should ensure sustainability.



The works were completed in 2009 and cost around £400,000.

Architect: John Scott, Oliver West and John Scott Architects