

WILLAND, ST MARY

Case study

from the Church Buildings Office
March 2015

SUMMARY OF WORKS

- Removal of all pews
- Replacement with bespoke yew benches.
- Re-carpet.
- Relocate font.



Grade II listed
C15; C16 North aisle

100 people; the new benches seat a little over this number, whilst a further 36 can be accommodated on folding chairs, stored in new purpose built yew cupboards at the east end of the north aisle, where the font used to be.

In practice the changes have made the Church a more welcoming and comfortable place to be and have been part of the reason for the growth in congregation numbers. Because the new seating is portable it can be reconfigured to suit a particular use that has seen concerts, social events and baptisms and weddings take place in formats that best suit their needs. The flexibility provided by the additional temporary seating is also a useful asset.

Until recently this church was almost entirely seated with square-ended Devon vernacular straight back pews probably dating from the 1850s, with loose wooden kneelers. The pew ends retained their umbrella stands, and were fixed to the floor, which was carpeted. The pews were in poor condition, worm-eaten, and not particularly comfortable.

The new benches are of inverted Y-frame construction, made of insect repellent English yew. Most are 75" wide, seating four people, or 70" wide, making a wide three seater. In addition, there are a small number of narrower benches. Previously the church could in total seat about



The works were completed in 2008.

Architect: Jo Hibbert