

THE CHANCEL

You are now in the oldest part of the church. In the 19th century, two small 12th century windows were discovered here, which had been obscured by earlier alterations. The upper one has been glazed with a single angel (the Kings Norton Angel), and the lower one adapted to form a communion credence. We don't know when the blocking up occurred so we don't know whether it was a full window or had an aumbry below it originally. The large east window is by the famous Victorian designer Charles Eamer Kempe and dates from 1889.

THE ORGAN

There has been an organ in St Nicolas' Church since the 16th century but the first model was probably very small and portable. The current instrument was built by Norman & Beard of Norwich and has been in use since 1906.

THE NORTH AISLE

Very different from the original aisle, it was probably a space for procession rather than an area for seating and had an altar at the east end until the middle of the 20th century. The war memorial is kept in the top window. There are replicas of the memorials listed on the Lych Gate (WW1 & WW2) as well as various other memorials relocated from local factories in the latter part of the 20th century. Near the north door, hidden behind a curtain, is an inscription to a tax collector who met with a sticky end! Remnants of old gas lighting still remain in the north aisle, If you stand with your back to the north door, and look to either side of the archway ahead of you, you will see two corbels of Martin Luther and John Wesley, two staunch preachers and reformers.

THE TOWER & THE SPIRE

The tower and spire date from the 15th century. The spire is approximately 60 metres (200 feet) high. The niches in the external south face of the tower hold 19th century figures of Mary, Jesus and St. John. The clock is also 19th century and is by John Smith of Derby. The striking mechanism is no longer in working order, but the bells housed within the tower are a very fine peal. Two treble bells were added in 1962, bringing the ring to 10. An active team of bell ringers ensures that our bells are still in regular use. Inside the tower at ground level are various peal boards and indications that there was once a musicians' gallery. Look up high to see the blocked-up doorway of the 18th century west gallery. The acoustics are excellent at the base of the tower. Our forebears knew where to place their musicians!

THE MONUMENTS

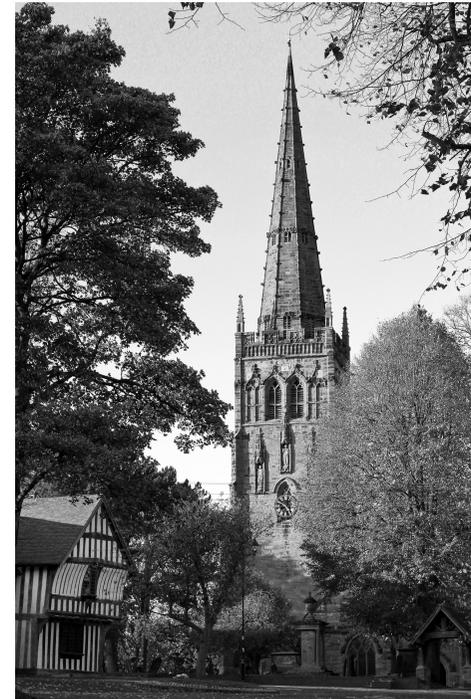
There are various monuments in the church. Two of the most impressive are under the tower. The table tomb is in memory of Humphrey and Martha Lyttleton (late 16th / early 17th century) although they are actually buried at Naunton Beauchamp near Worcester. The second is an alabaster relief tomb of Sir Richard Grevis and Dame Anne, his wife. The panel above shows their family. High above the tombs are four hatchments. They are for John Taylor, Robert Mynors, whose memorial stone is in the chancel, Mrs. James Taylor and a member of the Grevis family.

MORE INFORMATION

To find out more about St Nicolas' Church, the parish of Kings Norton and all that goes on here, visit our website at www.kingsnorton.org.uk. You'll also find a wealth of information about parish life in our monthly **Parish Magazine**, copies of which are on sale just inside the entrance to the church or at Saint Nicolas' Place, the 16th century timber-framed building next door.

St Nicolas' Church Kings Norton

A Guide for Visitors



Welcome to Saint Nicolas' Church. Please feel free to look around. Parts of this building are more than 900 years old. There has been a place of Christian worship on this site since at least the 12th century. St Nicolas' stands at the heart of the parish of Kings Norton, which sits astride the border between Birmingham and Worcestershire. This much-loved building is in daily use, highly visible, widely known and woven into the stories of many people. It stands as a living sign of Christ's shelter, hope and unconditional acceptance at the heart of a thriving community. We hope you enjoy your visit.

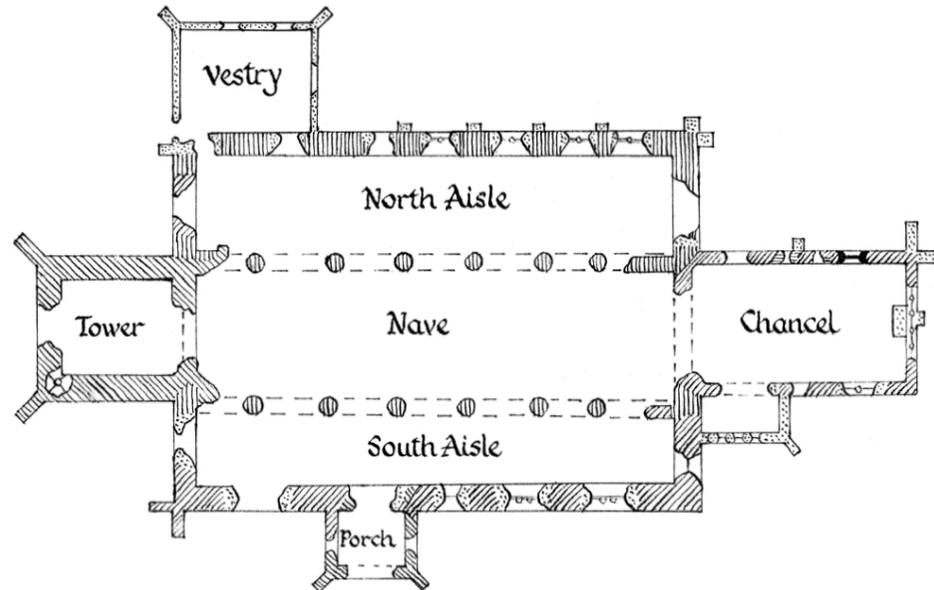
SOME HISTORY

Saint Nicolas' Church is of Norman origin though the first documentary evidence is not until 1231 A.D. when the patronage of the church was vested in the Crown, the mother church being in Bromsgrove in Worcestershire. The link with Bromsgrove only came to an end in 1905 when Kings Norton became part of the newly-formed Diocese of Birmingham. It is probable that the Norman church was built upon foundations of an earlier building, maybe of wood.

St Nicolas, our Patron Saint, was the Bishop of Myra in Turkey in the 4th century. He is associated with various miracles, rescuing and resurrecting boys who had been murdered; providing bridal dowries for a poor family; stopping fierce storms and many others. He is the Patron Saint of children, sailors, merchants, bankers, Russia, pawnbrokers, brewers, bakers, travellers, the innocent and the wronged! There are over 400 churches in England alone, named either St Nicolas or St Nicholas.

The building developed gradually, with much alteration and addition during the 13th and 14th centuries. The tower and spire were not added until the 15th century. As Kings Norton became more wealthy the church building expanded westwards. Further alterations took place in the south aisle in the 17th century. The roof of the nave was altered and the north and south aisles were each given high-pitched roofs, rather like those of houses. By the 18th century, the church had become somewhat neglected and much repair was needed.

Huge changes took place in the 19th century, when the church was restored. In hindsight, we would say that not all of the changes were desirable but, at the time, the people of Kings Norton wanted the very best and the most modern for their church. If they had not carried out the work, the church would have collapsed and would probably not be here today.



Scale of Feet
0 10 20 30 40 50

12th Century	15th Century
13th Century	16th Century
14th Century	Modern

During the restoration, the north aisle was rebuilt, removing the high-pitched roofline, the present vestry was added to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria and the old one, formerly attached to the north wall of the chancel, was demolished. The stained glass windows were inserted. Replacing what? We are not quite sure, as it is probable that the original mediaeval windows would have long since been removed or destroyed during the time of the Commonwealth (1649-1660). Internal plastering and frescos were removed. In the 20th century, the only work undertaken was the careful repair & replacement of the roof and of the tower pinnacles, the general maintenance and repair of the stonework, the restoration of the Lady Chapel in 1948 and work on the tower and bell chamber.

THE PORCH

This used to be an important area for meetings, parish decision making, settling legal matters and even for parts of services. Can you see the sundial on the outside? And what about the scratch dial on the left hand side of the gateway. These must have been important before watches and clocks were in common usage. If you step inside and look up, there are the battered remains of four corbels, one in each corner. They are the symbols of the four Evangelists (the writers of the Gospels). As tradition requires, St Matthew is represented by a winged man, St Mark by a lion, St. Luke by an ox and St. John by an eagle. The beam above your head has a date on it : 1659.

THE SOUTH AISLE

As you enter the church, on your left is the 19th century font, placed near to the door to signify that Baptism is the first step in the Christian journey. Leaving the entrance steps and turning to your right, you enter the Lady Chapel, passing a medieval water stoup, almost hidden by the cupboards. This once held holy water. Pilgrims and worshippers would have used it to make the sign of the cross, reminding themselves of their baptismal vows. Under the nativity window, beneath the altar, is the oldest known tomb in the church. It is that of Humphrey Toye, a chantry priest who died in 1514. The very worn inscription shows a figure of a priest dressed for mass with a chalice in one hand and a book in the other.

THE NAVE

A large rood screen would once have separated this area from the chancel with figures of Christ, Mary and St. John (or possibly St Nicolas) on the top of it. The points where it touched the chancel arch can still be seen, as the Victorian concrete has darkened with age. There was a fresco, a traditional Doom Painting, above the chancel arch, but it was removed during the 19th century restoration. In the early 17th century, there may have been a massive three-tiered pulpit in the middle of what is now the platform. Communion would have been taken in the chancel at this time, around a long table orientated from west to east. Seating would have varied over the ages. There would have been nothing at all to sit on in the medieval period apart from benches around the walls for the frail ("the weak go to the wall"). Pews or benches set lengthways appeared later. Our remaining pews seem to have come from another building and are made of recycled 17th century domestic wood.

The nave would have been the *people's place*, where meetings took place, business deals were made, local news was shared, markets and entertainments were held. Only the chancel would have been set aside for services. The Victorian restoration tried to alter this, opening up the whole building for worship. In recent years, we have been rediscovering this earlier understanding of the whole-community purpose of our building, as you can probably see.

Look up at the corbels supporting the nave roof. Each represents a person from the Bible. Starting from the chancel arch, they are: *Left*, St Paul, St John, St Mark, John the Baptist, King David, Abraham, Eve. *Right*, St Peter, St Luke, St Matthew, Elijah, Moses, Noah, Adam.