

Reordering Case Study: Wendover St Mary

Large-scale internal reordering, 2009-2011

For years, St Mary's, Wendover has had a thriving congregation and played an important part in town life, however, by 2009, the PCC considered that the church building was struggling to meet the modern-day needs of its users. The PCC felt that several changes were needed:

- Greater **internal flexibility**: the removal of pews and levelling of floors, which would widen the scope for the use of the church, in terms of both liturgy and community
- Improved **provision for children** and youth clubs
- Better **provision for disabled users**, including improving access and **audio-visual facilities** for those with sight and hearing problems
- **Improved lighting** scheme and efficient new **under-floor heating**
- **Reordering of chancel and sanctuary** to allow smaller services to be held there
- Freedom to place the altar in the nave as well as in the chancel, depending on the type of service

The reordering process

The first stage of reordering involved the removal of the sturdy but unremarkable Victorian pews, and the raising of the nave floor, to improve accessibility. Under-floor heating was installed at this point, and a new stone floor laid throughout the nave and side aisles. This helped to create a sense of unity in the main body of the church, and the simplified aesthetic here served to highlight the colours and detail of the chancel as a focal point.

Whilst the floor of the nave was up, several ledger stones were discovered broken in the west end. It appears that they were and deposited there during the Victorian reordering, and it is likely that the damage to them occurred when trying to remove them from the floor. The PCC decided that it would be fitting to re-instate these fine ledgers in the new stone floor, and to mortar in between the cracks in the stones to ensure a smooth surface. Thus, memorials which had not been seen for 150 years can now be appreciated in their rightful place. The fine workmanship and good quality materials used for the stone floor ensure that old and new co-exist harmoniously. The stone floor enhances a sense of light and space, and is practical, as well as attractive: the stone operates as a good thermal conductor for the under-floor heating, which creates a year-round comfortable worship space free from the old utilitarian heating units and their inefficient and rapid heating and cooling cycle.

Architectural lighting has advanced considerably in recent years, both in terms of technology and function. At Wendover, a stylish and sympathetic lighting scheme of track and remote spot-lights and LEDs was incorporated which offers flexibility in the form of multiple lighting 'scenes', and serves to enhance the language of the building by focusing light onto those areas of liturgical importance, such as the cross on the chancel arch and the altar. Particularly striking is the up-lit rise of the stone dais, which helps to distinguish visually the transition from the nave to the chancel.



Above: Before



Above: Afterwards



