



visual arts centre

The history of St John's Church

The Parish Church of St John the Evangelist was completed in 1891 and was consecrated on 15th April 1891.

Rowland Winn the first Lord St Oswald gave the land to the town and the Church was built at a cost of £20,000. It is built of Frodingham ironstone. The clock was installed in 1890 by William Potts and Sons of Leeds and they still maintain the clock to this day. The tower has a set or 'peal' of eight bells which were installed in 1893 in memory of Lord St Oswald .

The congregation attending the Church dwindled and the final service was held on April 29th 1984.

Just as you go into the main gallery, on the left hand side by the door, some 'graffiti' left by various boys from the St John's Choir! Many local surnames such as Skelton and Traviss can be seen, with some of the names inscribed as far back as 1891.

Another point of interest is the 40 beautifully carved angels that decorate the ceiling space. These are original features of the church, and are holding either musical instruments in the main part of the Church, or articles to 'help build' the Church in the Chancel space.

The Church stood derelict for over 16 years. All sorts of schemes were proposed for the empty building, but it was decided that a centre for the public in which to appreciate the Visual Arts should go ahead. 20-21 was opened on the 19th May 2001.

It is called 20-21 because the funding application to build the centre was started in the 20th century, and the project came to fruition in the 21st. It also makes reference to the phrase '20-20 vision' i.e. perfect eyesight– ideal for a Visual Arts Centre!

The gates at the front of the centre were designed and made by artist and blacksmith John Creed. Creed is the father of Martin who won the Turner Prize in 2001 for his light installation. They were inspired by a series of caricatures taken of local people. If you look carefully you can see a pair of glasses, earrings and a moustache.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit to 20-21. If you require any more help or information, please ask a member of staff.