

WELCOME TO ST GILES' CHURCH, PONTEFRACT



The Ceiling

The Organ

CI4th Arches

St Oswald's Chapel

The East Window

The New Altars

The Choir Stalls

The Lady Chapel

The Southside Pillars

St. Giles' Church is the dominant feature of the town's Market Place, and is often referred to as 'The Church at the Heart of the Town'. Its unique, octagonal tower, visible from miles around, proclaims the Glory of God to the people of Pontefract and visitors to the town. A Chantry Chapel (called St Mary de Foro, meaning "in the market place") and a small Chapel close by were dedicated to St Oswald. They were both built before 1122, nearly 1000 years ago but St Giles did not become the town's Parish church until 1789.

The Ceiling



The 16th Century Tudor ceiling timbers were once hidden under white plaster. In 1860 this was removed and the 12 bosses, made of papier mâché, were installed at the expense of Mr Tew (whose banking firm in Market Place became Barclays in 1906).

The CI4th Arches



These arches with quartifoil pillars are the oldest remaining part of our church, dating back to about 1350 AD. The base of the supporting pillars can be seen below existing floor level. The second pillar from the front was cut to fit a tall pulpit in about 1650.

The East Window



Stained glass by Kempe of London (1879) showing (from left) Jesus at his Resurrection on Easter morning, His Transfiguration and His Ascension to Heaven. The rose window to the left may also be by Kempe.

The Southside Pillars



The base of the original Norman pillars and arches on the south side of the nave have survived below the floor. The original arches were demolished and replaced in 1400. The rectangular bases to the pillars show the height of the wooden box pews built in about 1650.

The Organ



This wonderful organ by Binns of Leeds was installed in 1894, refurbished in 1954 and completely rebuilt in 2003. It is considered to be one of the finest organs in the North of England. Previous organs from 1774 onwards were located on the rear gallery and where the Lady Chapel is now. Weekly organ recitals are given at 1pm on Fridays.

St Oswald's Chapel



Troops at the Barracks marched to St Giles' every Sunday morning from 1879, for about 70 years. The memorials in the chapel commemorate members of the armed services from the Barracks and from Pontefract who have given their lives for their country since 1879. A copy of the Pontefract Roll of Honour for 1914-18 is here on the altar.

The New Altars



These altars, made of Portland stone, were blessed by the then Bishop of Pontefract in a special service in June 2013. Each altar contains a religious relic. The church was rededicated the following November, after a two year period of reordering.

The Choir Stalls



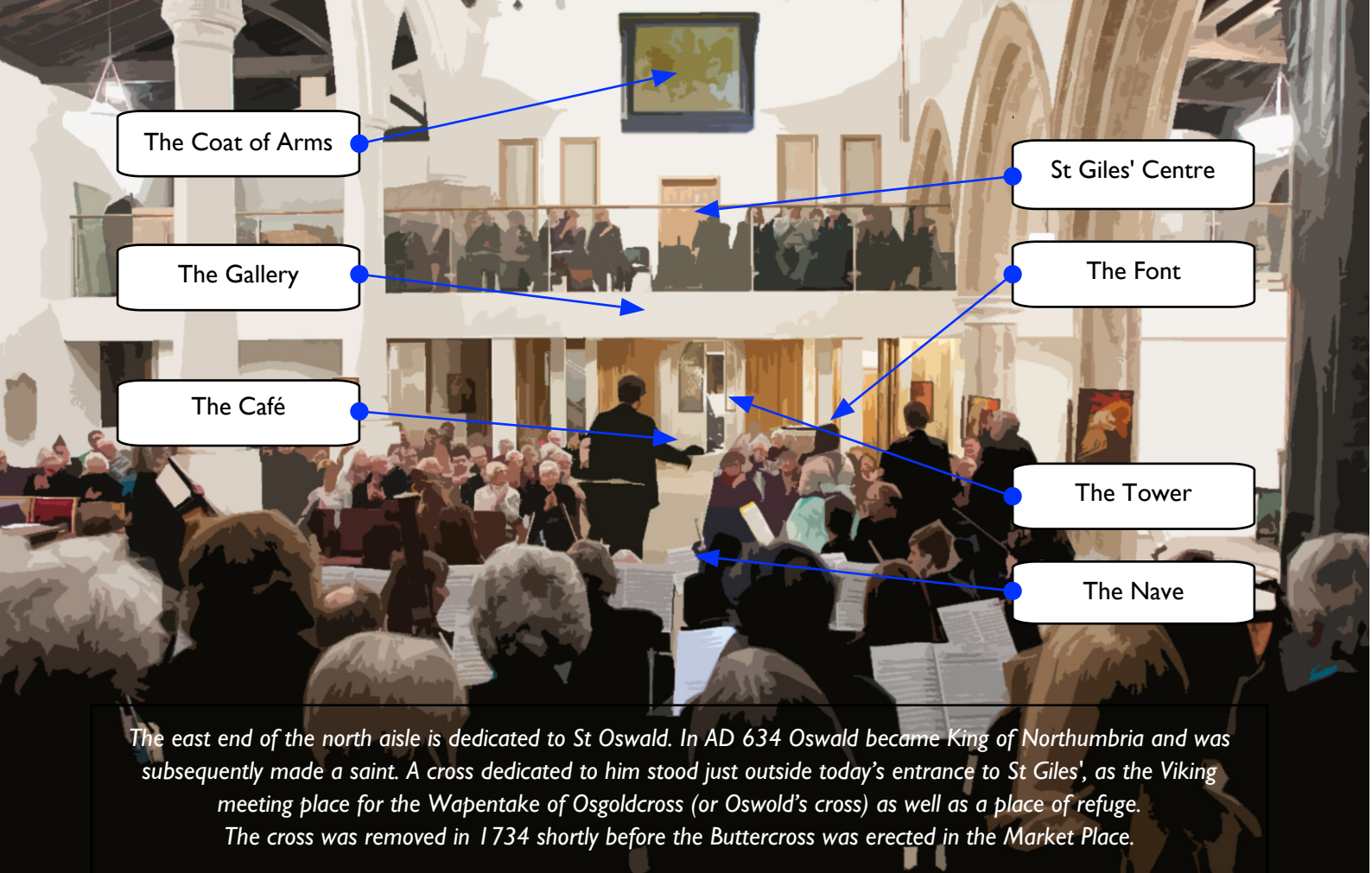
The 1902 stalls, made of ash, were replaced in 2012 by solid oak stalls made by Treske of North Yorkshire. Our choir is regarded as one of the best parish church choirs in Yorkshire.

The Lady Chapel



The statue of the Virgin Mary was made in 2012 by the monks and nuns of *La famille monastique de Bethléem* in France. Behind this altar are the vestries and a section of medieval wall from the first chapel. Candles on the tray in the chapel are lit by visitors to signify continuing prayer or to remember loved ones.

If you would like any further information, please speak to one of our Open Church volunteers.



The Coat of Arms

St Giles' Centre

The Gallery

The Font

The Café

The Tower

The Nave

The east end of the north aisle is dedicated to St Oswald. In AD 634 Oswald became King of Northumbria and was subsequently made a saint. A cross dedicated to him stood just outside today's entrance to St Giles', as the Viking meeting place for the Wapentake of Osgoldcross (or Oswald's cross) as well as a place of refuge. The cross was removed in 1734 shortly before the Buttercross was erected in the Market Place.

The Coat of Arms

This Royal Coat of Arms, dated 1742, was dedicated to King George II to celebrate the newly-installed north and west galleries in the church.

St Giles' Centre

The Centre was opened in 2012 following the major renovation of the Grade II* Listed building and provides a town centre community resource for use by local groups, clubs and numerous other organisations. The attractive and inviting reception area at the main entrance to the church leads to a large multi-purpose space incorporating a café, meeting room and passenger lift providing access to four additional meeting/activity rooms on the first floor. The Centre offers modern facilities in 18th century surroundings and aims to make a real contribution to local community needs and to assist in the regeneration of the town by attracting more visitors.

The Tower

The tower has a peal of ten bells, frequently to be heard ringing out above the town. The striking octagonal clock tower replaced an earlier tower, bells and spire in 1790. The unique design includes a crown spire, similar to those found in Newcastle Cathedral, Edinburgh and St Andrews. It was designed by Thomas Atkinson of York, deputy to John Carr.

Saint Giles

Our church was dedicated to St Giles in 1181, after Henry II authorised the St Giles' Fair to meet on market land adjacent to the church. St Giles was born in Athens in about 640 A.D. The picture shows him protecting a young deer from arrows fired by the King of the Franks. He is widely recognised as the patron saint of markets, woodlands & hospitals so it is significant that the market around St Giles' received its Royal Charter in 1258.

The Gallery

Galleries holding over 200 people existed at this high level on both sides of the nave from 1740 until 1948: the seats were mainly used for soldiers from the Barracks.

The Nave

During the reconstruction of the floor in the Nave and Aisles, the sites of 30 graves were found, dating from during the Civil War when the All Saints' graveyard was not available. The new floor is in York stone. Each of the 164 oak chairs, which replaced the traditional wooden pews, was sponsored: many in the memory of a loved one. The chairs allow flexibility for services, exhibitions and concerts. (See above picture: Pontefract Choral Society singing Haydn's *Creation*.)



The Café

Our café is run by volunteers and provides a valuable service to the community, while helping to boost church funds. It is open on Wednesday and Saturday mornings from 9 until 12. When not in use as a café, it is used by a variety of local groups, including Tiddlywinks playgroup and Pontefract Art Club.

The Font

The origin of our font is unknown. It is believed to be over 550 years old, dating back to late mediaeval times. It is here that everyone joining the Church (as children or adults) is baptised.

Church Services at St Giles'
 Mass on Wednesday at 9.30 am and Friday at 12 noon; Sunday at 8 am and Parish Mass at 10.15 am.
 Morning Prayers: Tuesday to Saturday at 8.30 am
 Sung Evensong: Sunday at 6.30 pm