



This is just a short description of the history of the Parish.

Fuller guides are available:

[All Saints Wigston Magna - A History of the Parish Church](#) by Janice Broughton ISBN 0953503801

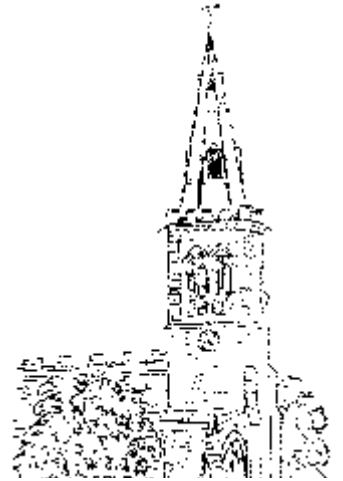
The Old Church - A History of St Wistan's Church Wigston Magna by Janice Broughton ISBN 0953503844

'Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam' - A Guide to the Architecture and Furnishings of All Saints Church, Wigston Magna by Janice Broughton ISBN 0953503828

For almost 500 years the term 'Wigston Two Steeples' has been a fitting description of Wigston Magna and many people have wondered why it is that the village always had two churches, All Saints and St Wistan's, in one parish.

All Saints' Church

All Saints' is the largest building and is the parish church. It was constructed between the years 1280 - 1320 and replaced possibly as many as three earlier church buildings on the same site.

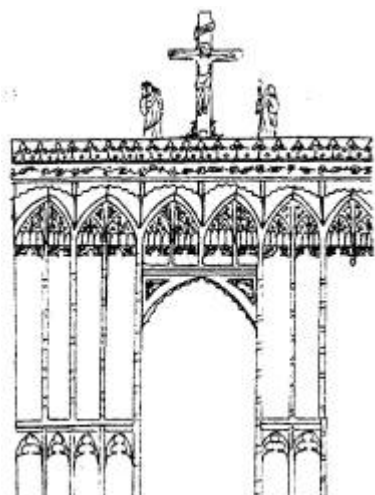


Archeological evidence shows that the early settlement of Wigston dates back at least to the sixth century, and that the pagan village was Christianized in AD 653. A small thatched wattle and daub building would have been the earliest church, followed in the late Anglo-Saxon period by a strong wooden construction later to be replaced by a single-aisled stone building erected during the Norman period in the solid Romanesque style.

In the early twelfth century the church acquired wealthy patrons when it was presented to the monastic community of Lenton in Nottingham by the Lord of the manor, Robert de Meulen, Earl of Leicester. The monastery commissioned a large church to be built in the late Gothic style, which we now call the Decorated, and which has become the building we are familiar with today. It was constructed in local Enderby pink-grey granite stone and embellished by a 90 foot tower and a 60 foot spire of limestone. The church was built on a grand scale with a central nave, chancel and two side aisles, acquiring its clerestory later in the fourteenth century.

The interior was extensively restored in the nineteenth century with many new window mouldings replacing the medieval stone tracery which had deteriorated over the centuries. The Victorians also added a new oak pulpit and matching pews in 1863, and the present flooring of cream, black and red tiles from Coalville. Finally in 1903 the chancel was heightened and refurbished and acquired the addition of a new organ building to the south wall.

The rood screen in the chancel arch is medieval but one now has to imagine its once brightly painted appearance in the Pre-Reformation church, which itself would have been a blaze of colours glowing in the dimly-lit interior in contrast the white-washed



walls of our modern church. The figures top of the screen were added in 1958 replacing those destroyed in the sixteenth century.

The present roof was built in 1637, replacing an earlier one which had collapsed in 1632, at a cost of £48. 2. 4d I The date over the chancel arch records its completion. It was painted in the strong colours of the medieval style in 1958.

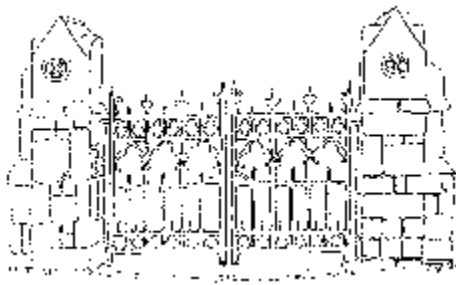


Since 1913 the worship in All Saints' has been in the Anglo-Catholic tradition which has in practice returned the church to the original medieval form of worship which had its emphasis on the centrality of the Mass.

St Wistan's

This tiny church never had the status of a parish church but evolved from a shrine chapel dedicated to a local saint who as an Anglo-Saxon Mercian prince, was murdered in 849 at nearby Wistow. His body was taken by his followers to be buried in the royal mausoleum at Repton in Derbyshire passing through the village of Wigston en route. Where the body was believed to have rested overnight a small shrine was set up to honour the prince who was later sanctified after reports of miracles and healings had taken place during visits to his burial crypt at Repton.

By 1086 the small commemorative shrine in Wigston had become integrated into a chapel served by its own separate cleric. In late medieval times the shrine was the centre of an annual pilgrimage held on the anniversary of St Wistan's murder, the 1st of June, when the whole village took part in the celebrations and worship of a jewelled figure of the saint in the north aisle of the chapel.



The Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century made illegal all worship of images of saints, shrines and relics making the little chapel redundant. It was used, from the late sixteenth century as the schoolroom of the village until 1839, and later became the meeting house of the Congregation of Independents (now the URC) towards the end of the seventeenth century.

The building seems to have been put to a multitude of uses despite being in a ruinous state with a perilously leaning steeple and crumbling masonry. It became a mortuary house, a fuel store, a barn and also managed to contain two alms-houses which were built into the east end of the nave.

In the middle of the nineteenth century restoration work was begun on the dilapidated building and it was opened again for divine worship in 1877. The Reformation of the

sixteenth century had had such drastic consequences that even the original dedication of the church to St Wistan had disappeared without trace, and for 200 years it was erroneously known in Wigston as St Woistan's. In 1957 it was returned to its true dedication and given another extensive restoration, the results of which can be seen today, mainly in the interior.

