



St Oswald's Guiseley stands at the centre of a geographically extensive parish.

It is grade I listed and can be dated back to at least 1180.

It now is a "double church" in as much as the original, medieval church was 'extended' 100 years ago by Sir Charles Nicholson by adding another nave, a north aisle and chancel – with ancillary rooms.

Vision/goals

The PCC had been struggling to achieve extra rooms within the building for the usual purposes – toilets and kitchen space, Sunday school, PPC and other meetings, toddlers & babies groups, etc.

Having discounted virtually everywhere within the building as being unsuitable, because we felt that such a large intrusion would compromise the integrity of the building, we were forced into action when our church choir enjoyed a renaissance and began to grow considerably in both size and competence.

They simply outgrew the choir vestry as well as creating a serious barrier to accessing the east end of the building where the only WC, the existing "kitchen" and sacristy were sited. This was inconvenient, to say the very least! Our priority was thus suddenly shifted in order to find another space for the choir.

How did you start?

The PCC had already considered the former chapel of St Mary and found it unsuitable for the purposes mentioned above. However, it was now seen in a different light, as the floor space would be adequate for a choir of approx. 30 member to gather, rehearse and store music and robes.

It was evident to all of us that it would not be appropriate to block off this part of the building with substantial screens and the idea of glazing was born. We then decided on an architect who seemed to have some experience in working with such materials and ideas.





Who were your main partners in developing and implementing this project?

Really, it was just ourselves working in close liaison with the architect. The Bradford DAC and English Heritage were not intrusive.

We decided from the start that the former choir vestry could become a useful small meeting room, suitably carpeted and furnished, and that the toilet/ “brew room” facilities at this end of the building could be upgraded. (We have subsequently expanded our WC provision ~ with disabled access ~ by rebuilding a former store room just outside the back entrance)

What was the total cost of the project?

Approximately £80-90,000.

What was the funding strategy?

From investments. Some years earlier we had sold a church-owned building in another part of the parish and this had created a very useful fund for such projects.

How long did it take from start to finish – from initial proposal to the building being completed and opened?

From when we decided to move on the Song Room approximately 15 months.

What lessons were learnt? What would you have done differently?

A carefully chosen architect with design flair is essential, which is what we had. It needs to be agreed in advance how many site visits are expected.

A speedy programme on site would require more frequent visits than a delayed and slower programme. Local contractors should be used when able to provide competitive tenders.

Successes:

The removal of pews from the south aisle has been a resounding success. It creates a ‘cloister’ feel, an entrance way for the choir, an extra seating area when needed and a great display area.

The Song Room is still proving itself effective. The only ‘snag’ – although we really don’t see it as such – is the lack of soundproofing. However, I suspect this would not have been possible with glass screens and, anyway, we love to hear the choir rehearsing before services!

The former choir vestry’s new life as a meeting room has proved terrific. It is suitable for small meetings; we are able to seat approx. 20 around tables to eat. It is great for more buffet-like provision; ideal for toddlers groups with 15/20 parents and their offspring.





The “brew room” (we call it that because it’s NOT a kitchen) is just about adequate for making drinks and sandwiches.

Has there been an increase in footfall?

We don’t want the choir to increase any further; there’s no room in the stalls! Certainly the small meeting room is being well used and new provision has been possible.

To what degree has this project contributed to the sustainability of the building itself?

If this means fabric-wise: we have always been conscious of our responsibility to this beautiful and ancient building and have an enthusiastic maintenance team.

However, it has made us even more aware of the need to maintain it well and to use the financial resources with which we have been blessed (further buildings have been sold!) in a careful and productive way.

What management structures are in place for the running of the building?

It's pretty much for “in house” use. Enquiries simply come through myself or the Churchwardens.

To what degree has this project contributed to the life of the church as church?

We have spent a great deal of money on the musical side of worship. Apart from this project, we have also completely restored the organ. All this has led to a deeper appreciation of our ‘traditional’ worship structure and drawn new worshippers into our community.

Sustainability of the Project: how are you looking to sustain what you have achieved in the long term?

Anything to do with choirs is somewhat fickle. However, the new song room is perfectly capable of being used for a multiplicity of these purposes should the choir fail.

Any future plans for the building?

Nothing specific. A new lighting scheme is badly needed but we may also consider the enhancement of certain areas of the sanctuary by artistic additions.

If you want to contact the church or to find out more visit their website at <http://www.guiseleyparish.org.uk/>

