

## What is the history of the KPC interior?

The Rev Anthony Upton wrote an extremely thorough and well researched book about the church in the mid-60s and a lot of the following is based upon his research, supplemented by more recent findings from various members of the congregation past and present. As part of For Future Generations, we are updating the Statement of Significance and will update this page periodically.

### The Font and Chests.

The stone font dates back to the very earliest period of the church, permission to have a font being granted in 1396. It has at various times been in its current location in the North Aisle but also in the centre aisle, close to the entrance through the tower. Its quality is generally regarded as very basic and it has suffered considerable damage over the years, with one face being a plasterwork repair.

There are two large dugout chests in the church, currently at either end of the south aisle. They are believed to be the oldest artefacts in the church; with one reputed to be over 800 years old although the provenance of the claim is unclear. They are certainly from their style very ancient and it is likely they predate the church building

### The Rood Screen.

The Rood was originally a tableau of a crucified Christ with Mary and St John on either side of the cross. This traditionally sat atop the screen which separated the nave, where members of the congregation were permitted and the chancel and sanctuary which was the preserve of the clergy and members of the College.

Our rood screen is generally regarded as a good example of these medieval rood screens, It was probably installed during one of the early extensions to the building when the roof of the chancel was raised in the early 1400s.

Positioned further to the west than its current position it formed the front of a wider rood gallery that sat between what are now the Soldiers' and St Annes' chapels. The gallery would have been used by choir and musicians, accessed by a stairway from what is now the Soldiers' chapel.

The rood gallery, and the rood characters were removed by order of Queen Elizabeth as part of the Reformation changes. During the major reordering in the 1860s, the rood screen was moved one arch to the east. A number of modifications to the screen and errors in its reassembly were made during this reordering,

### The Misericord Stalls.

These old pews are currently the rear most of the choir pews on either side of the chancel. They can serve either as seats, or with the seats raised have corbels underneath which could offer support, shooting stick style, to members of the college whilst standing during daily services. They are richly carved with foliage and animals, including a lion and unicorn.

There were originally more than the current 11. It is believed they originally sat with their backs to the rood screen and congregation, facing the altar and would have been used by members of the college until its dissolution.



In the 1860s they were moved to the east end of the south aisle, against the walls in what is currently St Annes' chapel. In the early 1900s they were moved again, to their current position and had to have a couple of stalls cut off in order to fit.

In justifying relocating the stalls in 1860, the then incumbent, Canon John Howe described them as being very rude, dilapidated and having been much mutilated.

### The Pews.

The current oak pews replaced earlier 18<sup>th</sup> century box pews during a major re-ordering in 1860 during which the Vestry that now houses the organ was rebuilt. At the time, the Incorporated Society for Building Churches (ISBC) was both building new churches and providing grants to increase the capacity of existing churches. In particular they aimed to increase the seating available for the poor of the parish, at a time when most of the pews would have been appropriated and reserved for local families and their household staff.

Knowle applied for and was granted £80 to replace the pews and increase the seating in the nave by around 180 seats, although the ISBC actually regarded the chosen seating as 'having little to commend it' and also questioned the decision to relocate the misericord stalls.

### The Eagle lectern.

This fine brass eagle was a gift to the church at the end of the 19th century.

### The Organ.

The organ was installed in the early 1900s. Bird and Son installed organs in a number of churches in the area but later stopped making organs and concentrated on maintaining instruments. The organ predates the widespread adoption of standard tuning and is almost a semitone sharp compared with modern instruments which is why it cannot be used as part of a larger music group. (Interesting fact: the gold colour pipes that you can see above the manual are entirely decorative and not part of the instrument!, the real pipes are boringly grey).



Nicholsons, a specialist organ maintainer, have recently described the organ as being in poor to fair condition and estimated that it will need around £100k spent on it the near future if it is to be kept. We are currently investigating the options to update the organ to a more modern model whilst maintaining the evocative impact and majesty of a pipe organ to many forms of worship.



### The Altar and Sanctuary

The altar is unusually high, a legacy of the days when there was a passageway under the east end of the church. In 1915, the altar table was reconstructed, bringing the rear legs to the front to extend its length and putting new plain legs at the rear.

Until 1926, people taking communion had to climb four steps to an altar rail that was at a similar height to the altar table. The floor all around the altar was then lowered so that there is only now one step but, for reasons not clear, the altar table itself was kept at its high position requiring the altar rail to be moved to the west.

We are investigating the options to remove the steps up to the altar table, simplifying the sanctuary and allowing the altar rail to be moved back to the east.

### The Soldiers' chapel.

The area occupied by the Soldiers' Chapel was originally the transept, itself an addition to the church as one of the modifications in the 15th century.

The transept was used as a small chapel until 1860, when it was filled with south facing pews for the poor. It was later a separate set of private pews for a local family, curtained off from the rest of the nave. The photograph of this configuration is one of the earliest photographs of the church.

Following the First World War, it was fitted out as a memorial to those killed on active service. The stone screen is by Bidlake, a Birmingham architect of some distinction in the Arts and Crafts style.

The organ screen is contemporary to the Soldiers Chapel.

### The Pulpit.

The pulpit is relatively late, dating from the 1930s and was a memorial gift. Like the Soldiers Chapel screen, it is designed by Bidlake, by then well into his retirement in the south east, but retaining a Professorship at the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists.

