

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St Martin's Church is a Grade 1 Listed Victorian building situated on Vicar's Road, Kentish Town. It is a building of great architectural beauty and a much loved part of the area. It is a London landmark and can be clearly seen from the viewing point on Parliament Hill fields. It features on the Parliament Hill Viewpoint plaque, reflecting the skyline as it was in July 2016. Being listed at Grade 1 places the building in the top 2.5% of listed buildings and it is of exceptional significance as one of the principal surviving works of E B Lamb, one of the 'Rogue' architects of the mid nineteenth century, principally the 1860s.

The work proposed is in response to the 2016 QI report and endeavours to maintain this significant building for the use of future generations.

Pevsner states:

"ST MARTIN, Vicar's Road, Gospel Oak. 1864-5 by *E.B Lamb*, one of Goodtard-Rendel's 'rogues' and indeed the craziest of London's Victorian churches, incontrovertible proof that the Victorians were not mere imitators in their ecclesiastical architecture. For here, although individual elements can be easily traced back to period precedent, their mixture with completely original ones results in an unprecedented whole which is both striking and harrowing. The attitude has rightly been compared with that of the innovators of Art Nouveau about 1900.* The exterior is comparatively harmless, of Kentish rag, low, but an uncommonly tall N tower close to the W end, which forms the apex of the picturesque view from the SE, the composition building up into an agglomeration of roofs and turrets reminiscent of a northern French medieval town. The tower originally had a yet taller stair-turret with a spirelet (total height 130ft). The church itself has transomed windows, many gables, and a polygonal apse, narrower than the shallow, also slightly polygonal S transept. The N transept is straight-ended. The tower at first had lofty open arches to N, E and W; the arch now leads to a large later C19 extension with details matching the church, converted to hall and church offices in 1985 by Pickard & Palmer, when the other arches were glazed.

The interior plan is a mixture of the longitudinal and the central, designed to suit a low-church emphasis on preaching and visibility. The W three bays of the nave are broad and aisleless; then come three aisled bays of central character, cut into by the transepts, equal in height. The other bays of the aisles are treated as angle chapels (the NW one, near the entrance, was originally the baptistery). Then the chancel arch and the apse. Hammerbeam roof running right through, with the fussiest, busiest details, and resting on shafts which do not go

down to the ground, but start from Cistercian-looking brackets. The square piers between nave and aisles have four such bracketed shafts to their four sides (a sight never before seen).

The patron who paid for all this was the wealthy J.D. Allcroft, glove manufacturer, of Stokesay Court, Shropshire. His monogram appears on the exterior of the nave S wall; on its reverse inside is the date 1867; opposite is Lamb's monogram. On the S wall large carved ROYAL ARMS, an old-fashioned touch. Lamb's low church FURNISHINGS match his building: STALLS with curved brackets hinting at Art Nouveua, READING DESKS and PEWS also stamped with his individual style. —PULPIT with sounding board. —FONT with curious overhanging tracery. —FONT COVER with pinnacle. MOSAICS with evangelists' symbols in tracery in the E angles of the crossing. They appear to be an early replacement of Creed and Commandment Boards. Low alabaster SCREEN and LECTERN, 1898. E apse stained glass of c. 1867 Clayton & Bell.' (The Buildings of England, London 4: North by Bridget Cherry and Nickolaus Pevsner)

English Heritage states:

Church. 1864-6. By EB Lamb for JD Allcroft; later chapel at north-west corner after 1915 by his son EB Lamb junior. Kentish ragstone rubble with fine dressings. Tiled gabled roofs with fishscale diaper patterns.

EXTERIOR: west part of nave 3 bays, aisleless, then 3 aisled bays with the transept cutting into the nave and as high as this, and with the other bays of the aisle treated as angle chapels; polygonal apse narrower than the almost polygonal south transept. Tall, 3 stage north tower (originally with corner pinnacles) close to west end with attached, even taller stair turret. Unusual modified Gothic design with eclectic and original details. Imaginative Perpendicular windows with eccentric cusping and heavy transoms, called "Tudor" by Nikolaus Pevsner. To north of apse and on south side near east end, small towers with broach spires.

INTERIOR: with elaborate carved hammerbeam roof throughout resting on shafts which do not go down to the ground but start from Cistercian-like brackets attached to each side of the large square piers which stand between nave and aisles. Lamb's choir stalls and pews, altar rails with pierced decoration, font with cover and pulpit remain. Massive organ in south choir aisle. Royal arms over south porch inside. Initials of JBA (outside) and EBL (within). Vestry fully panelled. Stained glass at east end contemporary with the church, as is the mosaic spandrel decoration in the chancel. Mosaic floors. Stained glass in nave dated 1905 and 1907: St Cecilia in memory of Harriet Puzey, organist, one by Morris and Co. Heraldic glass in transepts post-1945. Transept also has commandment boards. Memorial to John Derby Allcroft 1821-93.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Allcroft was a wealthy glove manufacturer and strong Evangelical who paid for several churches.

(Survey of London: Vol. XXIV, King's Cross Neighbourhood, St Pancras IV: London: 1952: 144).

Survey of London states:

This church was built at the sole cost of J. D. Allcroft (1821–93), of Stokesay Court, Salop., in memory of his wife, and consecrated on 3rd December, 1865. (fn. 35) Allcroft, a prominent freemason and partner in a glovemaking firm, also built the vicarage, mission hall and Sunday Schools and endowed the whole. There is a memorial to him on the south wall of the church. The architect was Edward Buckton Lamb, and the church is unusual both in plan and in the highly personal treatment of the late Gothic. It is built of Kentish rag and the eastern part of the interior is aisled. Each aisle has three bays, the centre one being wider than the other two and forming a transept on the north and south, the latter finishing in octagonal fashion. The eastern bay on each side forms part of the chancel, which has a sanctuary planned as five parts of an octagon. The lofty tower stands on the north side of the western part of the nave. (Plate 96a.) Its pinnacles were affected by bombing in the late war and have been removed. The piers to the arcades have shafts above the capitals and carry a wide hammer-beam roof and the wooden arches of the aisles.

Additional Churches', in *Survey of London: Volume 24, the Parish of St Pancras Part 4: King's Cross Neighbourhood*, ed. Walter H Godfrey and W McB. Marcham (London, 1952), pp. 140–146. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol24/pt4/pp140-146> [accessed 19 February 2020].