

Richardson was a friend and admirer of Lutyens. He designed the western extension to the nave (17 feet long), a cupola for the bell, and the entrance lobby and 'Rector's Office'. The cupola was made by a Mr Mackinnon of Bedfordshire. The African mahogany has a grain suitable for circular cutting, and with the copper used, it weighs 3 ½ tons.

St Martin's has seen many changes since 1915 but it remains the much loved home of a thriving Christian community who gather regularly to celebrate their faith.



HISTORY OF ST MARTIN'S CHURCH KNEBWORTH



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Charity No. 1133728

St Martin's Church

Until the 19th Century St Mary's was the only place of worship in the village. In 1880 the Church of England began operating in New Knebworth, when a Mission Room was built in Gun Lane, and a new church, St Martin's, was opened in 1915.

Knebworth PCC are fortunate to be the custodians of such a remarkable church building. St Martin's church was designed by the eminent architect Sir Edwin Landseer Lutyens (1869 - 1944) and reflects his own idiosyncratic style. In the Hertfordshire volume (published in 1953) of his Penguin series on The Buildings of England, Professor Nicholas Pevsner calls St Martin's 'one of Lutyens's most remarkable churches'.

In fact Lutyens designed very few religious buildings, fewer still were actually built and none of them was finished to his original designs. Best known are the two churches at Hampstead Garden Suburb (started c1909) and his aborted Liverpool Roman Catholic Cathedral. St Martin's, Knebworth is chronologically between the Hampstead churches and Liverpool Cathedral and so has been seen as a part of the development process that led to the design of the Cathedral.

Work first began on St Martin's church in April 1914 and it was consecrated by the Bishop of St Albans, Dr. Edgar Jacob, on November 12th, 1915. It was firmly laid down by the architect that only the best materials were to be used. Facing bricks and pantiles for the roof were to be specially made 'at an approved yard'. Stonework was to be 'of the best Portland stone'. Timber was to be 'Memel, Dantzig or Riga sawn die square, sound and well-seasoned, cut out perfectly. Planks, deals and battens to be cut out or converted from yellow Christiana pine well-seasoned'. The pillars are made from Portland stone, with the exception of the two Massive Doric columns that separate the transepts from the nave

which have a brick core coated with cement which, like all the cement work, was worked to resemble Portland stone.

Apart from the Font and the small Portland stone pillars, which came ready turned from the Portland quarry, all the stonework was cut on the spot by a group of local stonemasons.



The builder was Mr William Darby of Knebworth. The special bricks and pantiles were made in his brickyard at Rabley Heath. Local builders were responsible for cutting the great 12" x 18" tie beams of the roof from the round and for cutting and fitting all the woodwork in the church including the panels of the roof, the ambos, choir stalls and the altar.

Lutyens' original plan was for a much larger building and included a nave with three bays and an apse at the east end. The west end was to include a portico with steps; this was changed to a plain wall on a 'temporary' basis, though in fact the most unattractive plain brick wall persisted until 1963/4 when the church was completed to its present design by Sir Albert Richardson (1860 - 1964).