



A few years ago we held an exhibition about Marlow's many churches and were delighted to be offered on loan two models of Marlow's beautiful riverside church: one of the old All Saints, demolished in the 19th century and one of the present church in its original form. Last year the Parish Council, being concerned that the models were simply gathering dust in the crypt, agreed once again to loan them to the Marlow Museum.

Marlow's first known parish church was probably built in the 12th century of chalk blocks, locally known as clunch, on stone footings. A few fragments of these can still be seen in the churchyard beside the grass path along the river during drought conditions. There was probably an earlier church on or near this site, as St Wulfstan is said to have lost a shoe while visiting Marlow church in the 11th century. Because the church was so near the river it suffered through the centuries from flooding. This was made worse when the first pound lock was built in 1773, but the worst damage occurred after the earth lock was replaced by a stone one in 1825. At that point flood water was reaching 17 inches (43 cm) up the box pews. The foundations of the tower at the west end had become fatally undermined and in December 1830, at the height of a storm, the spire and part of the tower collapsed into the church. The next year an Act of Parliament was passed for the demolition of the rest of the church and the erection of a new one, which was completed in 1835.

The **first model**, showing the old church, was constructed in 1811 by Professor George Shegmond, Professor of Drawing at the Royal Military College, then at Remnantz. The only 12th century work left by that time was the tower, the church having been repeatedly enlarged as the town grew.

The **second model** shows the new church as it was originally designed. There is some doubt about the origin of this model. It may be the architect's model, made when the church was built, or it may have been constructed later when the church was about to be altered. Built behind the site of the old church on higher ground, the new one originally had a wide span roof, no chancel and the main entrance was on the

north side, facing the town. Internally it was very plain, with a gallery stretching the length of the church, reminiscent of 18th century churches. This was too simple for Victorians of the High Gothic period. The gallery was removed, a chancel and new windows added. Two lines of pillars were inserted, supporting a new roof with three parallel ridges. The north door, sometimes considered unlucky, was removed and a porch formed from the original arcade at the west end. The spire, which was built of very soft stone, soon needed attention, and in 1898 was remodelled to the design with eight pinnacles which we see today.

Both models, especially the one of the older church, are in need of attention and TLC, but they have become a talking point with visitors, particularly as the actual building is only a little distant from the museum and the many later changes can be identified. We are grateful to the church for the loan of the models.

Footnote. When visiting the museum, ask about a young lady who climbed the tower spire - who, how and why? Also why not ask about Marlow's Beautiful Spotted Boy who is buried in the churchyard.

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