Our St Martin's – a peek inside

A church for all

SITUATED next to Marple railway station, the distinctive outline of St. Martin's Church will be familiar to anyone travelling by road or on foot along Brabyn's Brow.

The establishment of a church at this location, was due to Mrs. Ann Hudson who inherited Brabyns Hall in 1866 from her cousin, John Wright. She loved Marple but didn't find the tradition of All Saints Church at the time to be a good match for her… so, she decided to build her own.

Today's church of St. Martin's was built by the finest craftsmen of the time, reflecting Mrs. Hudson's emphasis on art, tradition, music and beauty, and these continue to be a lasting legacy. The Hudson family followed the Oxford Movement which revitalised the high 'anglo-catholic' tradition of the Church of England, and this is reflected in St. Martin's services. The story of the Roman soldier, St. Martin, who cut his cloak in half to share with a beggar, shows the importance to the Hudsons of social action, another legacy still highly regarded at St. Martin's Church today.

Father Timothy Hupfield came to St. Martin's in 2021 from Worcestershire where he had been ministering in six village churches. His wife is also a priest, and the previous twenty years had seen the couple moving through training and fixed-term posts taking them from Cambridgeshire to Suffolk, Lincolnshire and Worcestershire, before Father Timothy arrived at St. Martin's.

He shares some of his thoughts and views with *Marple Review* readers here…



Father Timothy Hupfield says the church has a very important role to play in the community.

PHOTOS: jwransomphotography.com



What was your journey to priesthood?

"I started going to church, while studying for a chemistry degree. When I first went, it was slightly reluctantly through the encouragement of my then-fiancée, now wife. Initially, it wasn't the services that made me pay attention and want to go back to discover more, but the people there; the love of God was so clear. At twenty years old, I was baptised/christened and that was when I felt God calling me into the priesthood. This turned my plans for a drug-discovery laboratory career completely upside down!"

What attracted you to St. Martin's Church?

"I was looking to move further North and began looking at vacancies. St Martin's jumped out at me because it is a traditional, high church with incense, a robed choir, and such like. I love choral music and evensong is one of my favourite services. The church is very inclusive and has fabulous Arts and Crafts movement treasures. So, I applied, had an interview, and here I am!"

Why am I reading about St Martin's in the *Review*?

"Well, fundamentally the Church is here to serve our community. We have a lot to offer and a really important role to play in our community for all of life, not only on Sundays or for big events like weddings, christenings and funerals, although these are important. But we recognise that we could do better at telling everyone who we are, what we do and, most importantly, that everyone is welcome in our Church; we are here for you now and always."

For people who are not particularly religious, what has St Martin's got to offer?

"From the weekly board game coffee mornings and choir rehearsals, to monthly churchyard tidy-ups, regular discussion groups and heritage talks, St Martin's is a place of friendship and belonging. For many, it's a place of refuge and sanctity, helping us all in terms of our mental health and well-being, whether that's in the peace of the churchyard, the music of choral evensong, or through the fellowship and support of others. St Martin's offers everyone the stability and joy of a 'family away from home', as well as a place to explore the big questions in life."

Most people associate Church with Sundays. What happens at St Martin's on Sundays, and how might a newcomer feel?

"On Sundays, the main service is our 11:15am parish mass. It's a communion service, so we share the bread and wine. Anyone who has been baptised or christened (these words mean the same) is welcome to come up for communion, although this is a personal choice. The services are **choral**, meaning we have traditional sung music led by the choir and accompanied by the organ, **high**, in that we use incense, some of the words of the service are sung, and there are various points where members of the congregation make the sign of the cross over themselves, and **inclusive** in terms of gender and sexuality, and also in the way people worship – everyone sitting, standing, crossing themselves or not, whatever feels comfortable for them.

"What might initially strike a newcomer on entering the church is the beauty of the building. From a relatively plain outside, the wooden door opens to a treasure-trove, where there's something amazing to take in, wherever you look. To help the service flow, the hymns and readings aren't announced which can seem a little confusing to begin with. But, between the service sheet, friendly people who are happy to help, and our laid-back approach, people soon feel at home. After the service, refreshments are served in the hall, which is a great place to get to know people better."

As mentioned earlier, people often turn to the church for big events. Why is that?

"Celebrations in church can hold many memories of family occasions spent together. There is something so special about marking those events in the presence of God, and celebrating the love that God has for every one of us. This is especially true for events where life and love are celebrated with christenings, weddings and funerals. These are also occasions that can prompt us to consider the 'Big Questions' of life, another reason for turning to the Church.

"People aren't always sure who can have these services in church. At St. Martin's, anyone local could have any of them. St Martin's also offers the new prayers in church giving same-sex couples the opportunity to have public prayers of dedication, thanksgiving and asking for God's blessing."

As Easter approaches, why is it so important in the Church calendar, and what is happening at St. Martin's over the next few weeks?

"Easter is one of the key celebrations in the Church year. Christianity centres around the life of Jesus Christ. God sent his son, Jesus, to be born as one of us, at Christmas. Jesus taught us a new way of living, died for us, then was raised to life on Easter day. After appearing to his disciples, Jesus ascended to heaven, and the Holy Spirit was sent to guide our hearts and minds until he returns. The Easter Triduum (*trid-you-um*) refers to the final days of Jesus' life, his death and his resurrection, beginning with the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday, the crucifixion on Good Friday, when Jesus died on the cross, and the Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

"The season of Lent leading up to Easter, invites us to reflect on ourselves, our relationships with others, and our relationship with God. Lent ends with Holy Week, the week including Good Friday and, in that week, there will be services every day at St Martin's. See below for more details."

A personal experience of coming to St. Martin's

NEWCOMERS are always welcome at St. Martin's for services or for the various activities that take place in the church or church hall. It can be difficult taking a first step into an unfamiliar environment, but St. Martin's members make it easy for people to come along and try the church out.

Mike Livingstone joined St. Martin's congregation almost a year ago and he shares his experience with us: "I wanted to reconnect with my faith at a very personal level. I knew that this would involve going to church but was anxious about collective worship and joining a community that might make demands on my time and social energy. From the moment I met Father Timothy and his parish team I felt welcome and at ease. There was a deep respect for my personal connection with my faith and a



gentle invitation to become part of the wider St Martin's community if, and when, I chose. The nature of the worship and each of the sermons speaks to my journey in a moving and meaningful way and I very much feel at home in this beautiful architectural and spiritual environment. It is a lovely church with a wonderful community, offering a warm welcome to everyone, no matter where you are on your spiritual path."

Holy Week & Easter Services

29 March	Palm Sunday	8 am Holy Communion
		11:15 am Parish Mass St Martin's
		6:30 pm Music & readings for Passiontide
30 March	Monday of Holy Week	7 pm Meditation + Compline
31 March	Tuesday of Holy Week	7 pm Stations of the Cross
1 April	Wednesday of Holy Week	7 pm Tenebrae
2 April	Maundy Thursday	7 pm Lord's Supper and Watch
3 April	Good Friday	12 noon Liturgy of Good Friday
4 April	Holy Saturday	9 pm Easter Vigil
5 April	Easter Sunday	11:15 am Parish mass (plus an egg hunt)

Some regular events at St Martin's

- Board game coffee mornings: Wednesdays during term time, 10am-12 noon
- Country dancing: Thursdays, 2-4pm, September – April – all welcome, no experience needed
- Churchyard tidy-ups: March-October, third Saturday of the month, 10am-12 noon
- Children's Crafternoons – craft afternoons: Sunday afternoons, 2-4pm, 5 times a year
- St. Martin's Heritage Trust – talk on Arts & heritage: Saturday afternoons, 2.30-4pm, once a month

Important information

- A new website for St. Martin's is being developed at www.stmartins-lowmarple.co.uk
- Features on St Martin's are planned to continue throughout 2026 with a focus on music in the Summer *Marple Review*.
- For Baptisms, Christenings, Confirmations, Funerals, Weddings or to book the parish hall, please call Father Timothy Hupfield on 0161 511 0060 or email: vicar@stmartins-lowmarple.co.uk
- For all other enquiries please contact Alan Ashurst on 0161 456 9693 15 Brabyns Brow, Marple Bridge, SK6 5DT