

ST JOHN'S CHURCH

SHOTLEY, NORTHUMBERLAND

Memorial window - Baptistry (0.8 m x 3.4 m) 2021

My window design brings together traditional symbols of baptism with elements reflecting the dedicatee, churchwarden Wilf Smurthwaite, and the mission of St John's Church, Shotley: "With God's help, we aim to be a worshipping, growing, Christian community, serving God and others with Jesus Christ as our example and in the power of the Holy Spirit."

From the top of the window, bright rays of light shine down from Heaven above, representing the love and grace of the Holy Spirit. The rays are focussed on and received by every person baptised into the Church.

At the heart of the window is the central Christian symbol of the Cross, reminding us of Christ's sacrifice for our salvation. At the centre of the cross a living flame represents the risen Christ, the light that guides every baptised person.

Below the Cross is a scallop shell from which the holy water of baptism pours downwards to be received at the font below the window. Through this sacrament we dedicate our lives to the service of God, echoing Wilf's example of service to the Church and its community – wonderfully distilled in his personal motto: 'God first, others second and self last'.

The shape of the cross combined with the falling water below also suggests the blade and hilt of a sword, a reference to the famous group of German sword-makers who settled in Shotley in the 17th century.

Spiralling down through the window is a scroll, hinting at the paper of the scriptures and also the important early paper mill at Shotley Bridge. Inscribed on the scroll is a phrase of music taken from Wilf's favourite hymn, 'My God, how great Thou art', celebrating Wilf's contribution to the musical life of the church as singer and as organist. Above the music, a line of sheep are guided towards the Holy Spirit, referencing both Christ the Good Shepherd and Wilf's working life as a shepherd and farmer. Lettering by Phil Thomas.

The window was dedicated by the Bishop of Newcastle on 24 October 2021.

