



A HISTORY OF ST ANDREW'S IN 100 OBJECTS

5.

The Prayer Niche

Date: 14th century

The area towards the front of the south aisle has in the last two years become a special place for prayer: the candle (or 'pricket') stand has been moved there, next to a niche in the wall where there are flowers, a bible and a small basket where people can (and do) leave prayer requests, which are offered up especially at Morning Prayer on Fridays.

The niche itself was created in the major church restoration of 1880 and was one of many little nooks and crannies - such as the nearby double piscina (used for washing the communion vessels in medieval times) - filled in and plastered over, centuries ago. It is part of an arched tomb, similar to the one behind the choir on the north side. Very often such tombs commemorated the person who founded the chapel or aisle in which they are situated.

The lighting of candles as an expression of prayer was very common in medieval times—usually before a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary or a saint or, most significantly, before the giant rood or cross that hung in front of the chancel arch. Before the high level clerestory windows were inserted in the 15th century the church would have been very dark, but full of the pin-prick light of votive candles.

The heartfelt prayers offered in the basket, and reinforced by the lighting of a candle, are part of a long tradition of parishioners and passers-by dropping into the church seeking comfort and healing for themselves and their loved ones.