

Heritage & Buildings Newsletter

No. 2 - April 2014



From **Ian Simpson**

Heritage Support Officer for the Diocese of Liverpool



Cover photograph: St. Aidan's, Speke (1957, by Bernard Miller, unlisted). An unfortunate example of a church being in the wrong place at the wrong time, St. Aidan's was left high and dry by the redevelopment of the Speke estate around it and was finally declared redundant in 2010 after the heating system failed. The congregation moved into a retail unit in a new shopping centre and the church building is scheduled for demolition later in 2014. Bernard Miller (1894-1960) was a prolific designer of churches and several churches by him remain in the Liverpool Diocese, notably St. Christopher's, Norris Green, and St. Columba's, Anfield. **Above:** Stained glass at St. Aidan's Church.

Rear Cover Photographs: St. George, Everton (1814, by Rickman, Listed Grade I). This church - which celebrates its 200th anniversary on October 26th - is of international significance as the first cast iron-framed church. It is a glorious building. The spectacular East window dates from 1952, the original having been lost to blast damage during World War II.

If you would like any news items from your church, or an event you are organising, including in future issues of my [Heritage & Buildings Newsletter](#), please let me know. The deadline for inclusion in Issue #3 (July 2014) is Monday, June 23rd.

Author's Note: this Newsletter consists entirely of my own personal thoughts, reflections and opinions from my work as Heritage Support Officer. It is NOT an official publication of either the Diocese of Liverpool or English Heritage and is not to be taken as such.

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Ian Simpson MBA CBIFM, April 2014



Welcome!

I recently attended a Training Day on the subject of stonework repairs and lime mortar at All Souls, Bolton. This is a wonderful project, funded by the HLF and Churches Conservation Trust to the tune of £3m, to turn a redundant church into a community centre, and you can read about it at <http://www.allsoulsbolton.org.uk/>.

One great thing about these Training Days is that you get to have a go yourself, under the guidance of expert craftspeople, at things like pointing with lime mortar. Things that look easy when an expert does them but – as I can vouch from my own experience getting more lime mortar on the floor than anywhere near the brickwork joint – are far trickier than they seem. I have always had a great respect for craftspeople who dedicate years to learning their craft and practising it with excellence and trying some of these techniques for myself has reinforced this.

My respect for craftspeople is at least matched by my contempt for those who would destroy their work for their own gain, and sadly in recent weeks lead thieves have been making their presence felt again. I'd like to get a feel for how widespread this problem is in our Diocese, so if your church has been affected in the last few months please let me know as I'd like to do something to try and fight back against these parasites.

To contact me about lead theft – or anything else – call me on 0151 705 2127, write to me at St. James' House or email ian.simpson@liverpool.anglican.org.

In This Issue

- Asbestos in Churches – what you need to know
- Japanese Knotweed and how to deal with it
- Lost Churches of Liverpool: 2. St. Catherine, Edge Hill
- The Diocesan Advisory Committee
- Ravenna's Basilica di San Vitale

News Round-Up



Good progress is being made at **St. Dunstan's**, Edge Hill (1889 by Aldridge & Deacon, Grade II* Listed). This photo, taken on March 4th, shows the first new engineered oak floorboards laid atop the underfloor heating system which was handed over on February 27th. St. Dunstan's will be re-opened on Maundy Thursday at a special service with Rev. Richard Giles in attendance.



The North Porch Door at **St. Nicholas, Blundellsands**, was re-opened for the first time in over 20 years on Sunday April 6th following an HLF-funded programme of stonework repairs. Many thanks to Churchwarden Stephen Green for this photo of the procession through the newly-opened door.

Maintenance Training Day – June 25th 2014

This is an event for anyone who is involved in caring for a historic church building and wishes to learn the basic principles of how such buildings work and how they should be maintained.

I will lead the day, which will focus on:

- Simple steps which anyone can take to keep their church building in good condition;
- Spotting trouble BEFORE it gets serious;
- Staying safe whilst working in church;
- Legal requirements – what you MUST do to stay on the right side of the law.

The venue is ST. MARGARET OF ANTIOCH CHURCH, Princes Road, Toxteth, Liverpool L8 1TG and the event will run from 10.00am until 3.30pm. Lunch will be provided.

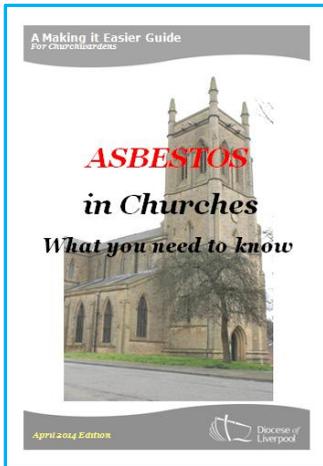
A small charge of £15.00 is made for the day - this is to cover high quality printed training materials and lunch with any surplus going to support the work of St. Margaret's Church.

NUMBERS ARE STRICTLY LIMITED TO 20 PARTICIPANTS so please book now! To reserve a place send a cheque for £15.00 per participant, payable to "BOSTON FACILITIES MANAGEMENT" to Ian Simpson, Heritage Support Officer, Diocese of Liverpool, St. James House, 20 St. James Road, Liverpool L1 7BY. Please include a contact telephone number or email address, and details of any dietary requirements you may have.

If you have any queries about the Training Day please email ian.simpson@liverpool.anglican.org.

Additional Maintenance Training Days may be arranged if demand requires. These will be advertised in the Diocesan "Bulletin".

ASBESTOS in Churches – What you need to know



I am pleased to announce that my latest *Making It Easier Guide on a Health & Safety topic is now available on the Diocesan website as a FREE PDF download.*

As ever if you would prefer to receive a printed copy in the post please send an A5 stamped self-addressed envelope ("Large" stamp please!) to me at St. James' House and I will put one in the post to you straight away.

"Asbestos in Churches – What you need to know" explains what asbestos is, why it was used and why it was banned in new buildings from 1999. It sets out what your responsibilities are under the Control of Asbestos Regulations (2012) and gives some guidance, based upon experience, of how to choose an asbestos surveyor and what to do if asbestos is discovered. It also exposes and corrects some myths that exist about asbestos, for example:

Myth: Breathing in even one particle of asbestos means I'll die a horrible death.

Truth: Asbestos is a natural mineral which forms part of the earth's crust. Even if there were no asbestos in the built environment, the natural processes of erosion and weathering mean the chances are that every one of us has breathed in minute quantities of asbestos fibre, with no ill-effects whatsoever.

Prolonged exposure to high concentrations of airborne asbestos particles does, however, significantly increase the risk of contracting certain diseases of the lungs, particularly in smokers. It is to prevent this sort of exposure that the rules governing the management of asbestos in buildings were introduced.

Japanese Knotweed – An Unwelcome Guest

There are many things for which I admire the Victorians: railways, the postal system and (of course) church building flourished in their era. Perhaps less well-known is their enthusiasm for travelling the world to bring back attractive plant specimens to beautify the gardens of the period. Many non-native species were imported and planted. Several of these did not find British conditions to their liking and quickly died out, others tolerated the soil and weather here and can still be seen today. One or two species, however, found that ours was a perfect environment in which to grow, thrive... and take over.

One such plant is Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*). It can grow at rates of up to 4cm per day and its shoots can push upwards through Tarmac surfaces. Whole plants can propagate from a tiny piece of rhizome (the fleshy root system) and the vigorous growth results in desirable plants being out-competed. In short, this plant is an unwelcome guest.

Recognising Japanese Knotweed

The early shoots of Japanese knotweed show as pale green leaves, sometimes but not always with purple veins, which gradually “unfurl” over the course of a couple of days.

Japanese knotweed in its mature form has a bamboo-like cane stem which is green with purple speckles (sometimes the stem is completely purple) and can grow to a height of 3m. The leaves are broad and bright green, with a characteristic pointed tip; they are arranged in an alternate pattern.

Between August and October masses of delicate (and admittedly attractive) white flowers are produced.

At the end of the season the plants appear to die back, leaving tall woody stems in a spectrum of shades of brown. The heart of the plant of course is the underground rhizome which is anything but dead – it is busy processing nutrients ready to come back with a vengeance next year!



1. Young, freshly-unfurled knotweed shoots.



2. Mature Japanese knotweed.



3. Beautiful flowers, noxious plant!



4. Close-up of the flowers.



5. A destructive plant which can grow anywhere.

Dealing with Japanese Knotweed

If you have, or suspect you have, Japanese knotweed in your church grounds it is important not to try and tackle it yourself. In particular DO NOT STRIM IT OR DIG IT UP as this will actually spread the plant and make the infestation worse. A knotweed infestation is a bit like an iceberg – what you can see is nothing compared to what's going on under the ground. You must assume that the rhizomes extend 7m outward in any direction and 2m down, so any digging within a 7m radius of the infestation must be prohibited.

You have a duty in law to prevent knotweed if you have it from spreading on to surrounding properties, and it is illegal to transport or dump soil or garden waste containing the plant without a license.

The most suitable treatment in church grounds is to have the plants stem-injected with herbicide at least three times a year over a period of three or four years. This MUST ONLY be done by a licensed professional and there are several firms which specialise in this work. Once the stems are dead they may be cut a few cm above the ground and burned (provided it is legal and safe to do so) – your herbicide contractor will be able to advise you about this.

Excavation is not generally a suitable method of treatment for church grounds as it would disturb any human remains which might be present. Even if there are none, it is an extremely expensive and disruptive option which is primarily intended for development sites where a quick clearance is necessary.

Top Tips – Staying Knotweed-Free

Most new infestations occur as a result of the illegal fly-tipping of material contaminated with knotweed material. The more you can do to prevent fly-tipping on your grounds (or clear it up immediately if it happens), the less likely an infestation becomes.

If you spot knotweed on neighbouring property, speak to the owners and ask what they intend to do about it. If this doesn't get you anywhere, speak to your local Environmental Health officer who can require them to deal with it.

Lost Churches: 2. St. Catherine, Edge Hill

Travelling on the number 26 or 27 Sheil Road Circular bus along Tunnel Road in Edge Hill, as you look out at the new houses on one side and former railway yards on the other it is very hard to imagine that as recently as the 1860s all this urban sprawl was in fact farmland. Yet, when the foundation stone of St. Catherine's Church was laid on 5th July 1862 the building was intended as a chapel-of-ease for a semi-rural community. The architect was John Denison Jee (who also designed the original St. Cleopas' Church in Toxteth) and St. Catherine's opened on 18th May 1863, becoming a Parish Church in 1889.



By the time this undated picture was taken, the brick building had been roughcast (pebble-dashed), an unattractive and inappropriate treatment for a church and one for which – thankfully – no Faculty permission would be forthcoming today.

The church's minimal entry in Nikolaus Pevsner's 1969 "The Buildings of England: South Lancashire" reads:

"Rather poverty-stricken and now roughcast. The features are of c. 1300. Flèche on the E. gable of the nave".



Our next photo shows a dignified interior dominated by the Chancel arch which leads the eye through to the East window. Verses from Scripture prominently surround each of these features and the East window is flanked by boards containing the text of the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. This was obviously a church which took the Bible seriously.

Looking West, we can see that the Nave was rather plain with lots of wooden panelling; a gallery ran round on three sides, supported by what appear to have been cast iron pillars. In the south west corner there is a large area of what appears to be added plasterwork resulting from severe water ingress, undoubtedly exacerbated by the pebble-dashing trapping moisture against the brickwork.



This water damage may provide a clue to the date of the picture, for Liverpool City Council's Planning records show that in 1956 permission for "major repairs" was sought and granted although no further detail is given.

St. Catherine's closed in 1973 when the parish was merged with St. Nathaniel's (which was itself to close in 1981). Planning permission for the church to be turned into a joinery shop was denied in 1974 and in 1975 an extension containing toilets was added so that it could be used as a youth club.

St. Catherine's stood – albeit latterly without its fleche – until February 2008 when it was demolished to make way for new housing.

Ravenna's Basilica di San Vitale

One of Italy's oldest and most beautiful cities, Ravenna has a fascinating history and boasts no fewer than eight early Christian buildings designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Construction of the Basilica di San Vitale started in 527AD when Ravenna was under the rule of the Ostrogoths, but was not completed until 548 by which time the city had been under the control of the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire for four years.



Architecturally, the Basilica is constructed to an octagonal plan. The building combines elements of Roman and Byzantine architectural styles. The brickwork is typically Byzantine with narrow bricks and thick mortar joints but the doorways and dome are distinctly Roman.

The external buttresses were added in the 11th or 12th Century. In 1781 the church sustained some earthquake damage. A major restoration, taking over thirty years, was carried out under the direction of Corrado Ricci and completed in 1934.



San Vitale is internationally celebrated for the scale and quality of its mosaics, the best Byzantine survivors of this art form outside Istanbul. The example above shows the Emperor Justinian (in Imperial purple, complete with halo) surrounded on his left by dignitaries of the Church including Maximian, the Bishop of Ravenna, and on his right by officials and soldiers of the Empire.

Below we see a celestial scene from the vault of the Apse in which Christ is – of course! – at the centre. San Vitale is the saint on the left of the scene as we view it; on the right, holding a model of the church, is Bishop Ecclesius.



It is not just the walls and ceilings upon which the exquisite craftsmanship of the mosaic artists of fifteen centuries ago may be seen. Large sections of the floor are decorated in mosaic; again it is remarkable how well the work has survived as evidenced by the section shown below.



Who was San Vitale? There are actually two contenders and the exact truth isn't known – it quite possibly never will be – although the legend has it that the church was built on the site where he was martyred in the turbulent early days of the 4th Century.

A ticket to visit the Basilica costs EUR9,50 plus, if I remember correctly an extra EUR2,00 if you wish to visit the Galla Placida Mausoleum next door as well. The Mausoleum is also decorated throughout with stunning mosaics but visits are limited to a maximum of five minutes in order to prevent moisture from building up in the confined space and damaging the delicate and ancient decorations.

The Diocesan Advisory Committee

The Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches, to give the DAC its full title, is a statutory body set up as a result of the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991. Every Diocese has a DAC; the following information is based on my experience as a member of Liverpool DAC but will still be of relevance to readers in other Dioceses.

The DAC is made up of a number of experts and professionals who bring together a wealth of knowledge and experience in several fields in order to provide advice, free of charge, to parishes. The Committee includes architects, surveyors and conservation specialists as well as expert advisors in specific areas such as organs, churchyards and church furnishings.

The full DAC meets monthly – usually on the last Thursday of the month – with a smaller Steering Group meeting approximately two weeks earlier.

A church wishing to petition for a Faculty should submit a Request for Formal Advice to the DAC, preferably by about a week before the meeting at which it is to be considered. The Request should be accompanied by as much detail as you can provide about the proposed work, including a Statement of Significance (if the church is Listed), a Statement of Need (all applications) and any relevant plans, photographs of affected areas, etc. You should generally get three quotations for any building or similar work, and provide a short justification for your final choice of contractor. A PCC Resolution and evidence that any relevant statutory bodies such as English Heritage, the Amenity Societies and the Bat Conservation Trust have been consulted will also be required.

If, upon consideration of your proposals, the DAC feels that it needs further information to come to a conclusion it will either request that the appropriate documents are forwarded to it in time for the next meeting, or it will arrange for a delegation of (usually) between two and six members to visit the church and study the affected area.

When it has given full consideration to the proposals, the DAC will issue a Notice of Advice (NOA). The NOA will state whether or not the DAC recommends that the proposed work be permitted. Note that a NOA recommending the work does **not** give you permission to proceed, it is a recommendation to the Chancellor that a Faculty authorising the work should be granted. The DAC may also issue a NOA with provisos; when petitioning for Faculty you will have to demonstrate how these provisos will be satisfied.

Where a major repair, refurbishment or rebuild is proposed or if new construction is planned then you **must** contact the DAC for advice at an early stage in the development of your ideas. The DAC's advice is free and following it could save you a lot of money. Not consulting the DAC brings a risk that if your proposals are rejected you will have wasted a lot of time, energy and money working up the plans.

For the same reason you should always consult the DAC before you apply for any Planning Permission or Conservation Area Consent as most local authorities nowadays charge for these services.

It is essential to realise that the DAC is an integral part of the process when it comes to making changes in churches. It is a valuable source of information and guidance, and potentially a powerful ally in what can seem like a complex and confusing process. It is most certainly not there simply to give projects a "rubber stamp" of approval!

Another important role of the DAC is maintaining an "Approved List" of Architects and Chartered Surveyors authorised to carry out Quinquennial Inspections (QIs) of churches. Only architects who can demonstrate the appropriate experience and qualifications in working with churches are included. If you wish to change your QI Architect you need to secure the DAC's permission to do so.

The Liverpool DAC's page on the Diocesan website is at <http://www.liverpool.anglican.org/DAC> and there is much more information there than can be contained in this short article.

Just For Fun....



The “Mystery Structure” in **H&BN #1** was in fact a toilet (for gentlemen only, I’m afraid, and thankfully since replaced by indoor facilities) and it is at **St. James, Westhead** which has recently benefited from the installation of a state- of- the- art Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) heating system.

I have recently discovered that the camera in my mobile phone will take what it calls “Panoramic Sweep” shots, allowing a sort of “up and over” photography showing floor, wall and ceiling details in the same picture. Here’s one of my first attempts (right) – no prizes for guessing it was taken at **Liverpool Cathedral!**

In Heritage & Building Newsletter next time...

- Keeping your Gutters Clear – a Maintenance Essential
- Lost Churches of Liverpool 3 – I haven’t decided which one yet!
- Lead Theft and how to avoid it
- Reflections On A Year In Post
- And more – watch this space!

Gremlins permitting, **H&BN #3** will be ready in early July.

