

Heritage & Buildings Newsletter

No. 8 – Winter 2015 / 2016



From **Ian Simpson**

the Diocese of Liverpool's Heritage Officer



Cover photograph: A personal favourite of mine, SS. Peter and Paul, Ormskirk. The stellar attraction of this West Lancashire town, SS. Peter and Paul is known to have been in existence by the late 11th Century and one window (though not the glass in it) has been positively dated to that period. It has undergone several successive enlargements and additions since, and is unique in having a tower and a spire side-by-side.

Above: The Font at Ormskirk dates from 1661 and proudly bears the inscription CR for Carolus Rex – King Charles II. The significance of this is immense for just a year previously the Monarchy had been restored, bringing to an end the Commonwealth era and Puritan rule. Under the Puritans ornate fonts were replaced by plain bowls but in the years following the Restoration many churches reintroduced what you might call “proper” fonts.

Rear Cover: Another favourite church, St. John The Baptist, Stokesay, Shropshire, is the setting for this window depicting Angels bringing the Good News of Christ’s birth to the Shepherds.

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 #9 (Spring 2016) is February 24th.

Author’s Note: this Newsletter consists entirely of my own personal thoughts, reflections and opinions from my work as Heritage Officer. It is NOT an official publication of either the Diocese of Liverpool or Historic England and is not to be taken as such. References to third party publications or websites are for information only and no liability is accepted for the content of these or for the results of any action taken in reliance upon them.

Ian Simpson MBA CBIFM, December 2015

Welcome!



2015 is rapidly drawing to a close - it may well have done so by the time you read this, of course - and as always this is a good time to look back at what has happened during the year and reflect upon successes and failures, hopefully learning during the process how to ensure that the successes can be repeated and built upon and that any repetition of the failures can be avoided in future.

Let's start with the successes. During the year I've delivered a number of courses in the Inspection and Maintenance of Church Buildings, teaching small but enthusiastic groups the basics of a proactive approach to keeping their churches in good order. These have led to big improvements in the care of the buildings in question, but there are still a lot of churches which need to send somebody on this or a similar course. I'll be running more courses throughout the Diocese of Liverpool, starting with Wigan, during 2016.

I've been involved in a number of successful grant applications during the year, raising just over £1 million of desperately-needed funding for repairs. This work will go on in 2016 as churches with ever-greater needs compete for finite and decreasing funds.

Having been in post with the Diocese for 2½ years now I am starting to see projects in which I've been involved for a while come to fruition. I'm particularly proud of the folk at Holy Trinity in Fingerpost who are transforming their church into a centre for social outreach in one of Merseyside's most deprived communities. The building repairs there should be completed by summer 2016.

Failures? Yes, there have been a few of those too. The most disappointing thing for me is that, despite my having spent 30 months extolling the real benefits of keeping churches open for visitors, far too many churches in this area are locked shut in between services. There are signs that this could improve in 2016 though; I will certainly be redoubling my efforts to ensure that it does!

As ever, if I can help you with any Heritage- or building--related matter don't hesitate to contact me by email ian.simpson@liverpool.anglican.org or by phone (0151 705 2127). The postal address is Diocese of Liverpool, St. James House, 20 St. James Road, Liverpool L1 7BY.



The famous – possibly even infamous given the controversy it generated when first installed in 1969 – Black Christ sculpture at **Princes Park Methodist Church** has been restored and was unveiled by the Lord Mayor of Liverpool on Sunday September 27th.

The work of sculptor Arthur Dooley who grew up in Toxteth, the Black Christ was restored in Liverpool by Castle Fine Arts under the supervision of Dooley's former apprentice Stephen Broadbent. The statue is actually subtly multi-coloured rather than completely black.

The second round of the **Listed Places of Worship Roof Repair Fund** opened on December 2nd. Details are available at <http://www.lpowroof.org.uk> and include full application guidance and a PDF Version of the application form. The latter is for guidance only and all applications MUST be made via the Online Portal. The deadline is 26th February 2016. As last time, I will be co-ordinating the Diocese's response and assisting with applications so do not hesitate to contact me if you need assistance.

Congratulations to St. George's Church, Everton (photo, [H&BN #2](#)) on being awarded just over £200,000 by the Heritage Lottery Fund for the next phase of repairs to this internationally-significant Cast Iron Church. As you read a bit further you will discover another Cast Iron Church which wasn't so lucky...

Heritage & Buildings Newsletter is available online: if you have missed any back issues, or used them to make paper aeroplanes (Concorde, for preference!), you can get them from <http://www.iansimpson.eu> (Publications page) as PDFs.

Don't forget - if you have any news you'd like to share with us, send it in to me - by email or post - by February 24th!

Maintenance Training Days for 2016

My popular and successful Maintenance Training Days will be back in 2016 with events taking place across the Diocese - probably one per Archdeaconry now that we have four of them. Dates will be announced here and on the Diocesan website as soon as they are finalised.

Making It Easier Day - February 27th 2016

I will be leading four of the Workshop sessions at the Diocese of Liverpool's Making It Easier Day on Saturday February 27th. Two of these are on visitor and tourist welcome and are linked (although you can choose to attend either or both); they are:

- Keeping Your Church Open
- Improving the experience your church offers Visitors & Tourists.

The other two are a little more "technical". The first, Making the most of your Stained Glass Windows, looks at how you can care for your church's windows and spot any defects which may require expert repair, as well as giving some suggestions for how you can tell their story in a relevant way.

The second, LED Lighting for your Church, explains the many benefits of this rapidly-improving technology and demonstrates some of the latest products on the market.

Details and booking forms will appear on the Diocesan website in due course. The whole day will be FREE to attend.

CVTA Symposium and Church Crawl - 18th June 2016

For 2016 the Church Visitor & Tourism Association is running a series of regional Symposiums rather than a national one. I am organising and leading the Liverpool event which I hope will include at least one excellent keynote speaker and a guided "Church Crawl" covering three first-rate Liverpool churches. More details to follow nearer the time; for now just put the date Saturday, June 18th in your diary with the words "NOT TO BE MISSED" in large letters!

Lost Churches of Liverpool: Dr. M'Neile's Iron Church

Liverpool's two "Cast Iron Churches" – St. George's in Everton and St. Michael-in-the-Hamlet – are quite rightly internationally recognised for the innovative use of cast iron in their construction two centuries ago. An earlier use of cast iron, dating from 1774, survives at St. James-in-the-City where the columns holding up the balcony represent one of the earliest structural uses of the material. Two lost Liverpool churches in which cast iron featured were St. Anne's, St. Anne Street, built 1770 and reputedly the earliest use of cast iron in an English church but demolished by 1870, and the subject of this article: St. Jude's, Edge Hill.

St. Jude's was built in 1831, the work of Thomas Rickman. It occupied a plot of land between Hardwick Street and Montague Street, off Prescott Street and was aligned East to West, with the entrance on Hardwick Street. From drawings I have seen the building was a single volume, the bulk of which was the eight-bay nave with lancet windows. In this respect it was similar to several Commissioners' Churches designed by Rickman, such as St. John The Divine, Pemberton of 1832. Some of the sandstone used came from the nearby Williamson's Tunnels.

There were equal-sized extensions to the west for the entrance lobby and to the east for the rather insignificant chancel. Both nave and lobby had two turrets whilst the four corners of the nave were decorated with high pinnacles. The church had a seating capacity of 1,500.

Architect and commentator James Allanson Picton (1873) was not a fan. "The public mind was not then prepared to give practical effect to the [Gothic] revival, at that time in its infancy. Hence the horrors of cast-iron tracery, mouldings run in cement, stucco façades and galleried and ceiled interiors", he wrote.

Whilst there were similarities between St. Jude's and some Commissioners' Churches, St. Jude's was in fact paid for by public subscription for the Rev. William Dalton. In 1834, Dalton appointed an ambitious and controversial cleric whose fiery preaching had impressed him, to the Incumbency of the church. This was the Rev. Hugh Boyd M'Neile.

M'Neile (this being his preferred spelling of the name) was a hard-line Calvinist who hated both what he saw as the "Popish" influence of the Anglo-Catholics and the growing interest at the time in spiritual phenomena such as "speaking in tongues", and dedicated much effort to teaching against them.

In 1835 Liverpool Corporation, newly under Whig control, resolved to secularise its elementary schools by banning prayers at assembly, scrapping religious education and replacing the Bible with a "selection of extracts from the text". This - an early skirmish in a battle for the Christian ethos of schools which continues today - incurred the wrath of M'Neile who launched such an effective campaign that not only was the Corporation forced to abandon its plans, the Whigs were voted out of power by 1841.

Rev. M'Neile was a 6'3" Irishman with, by all accounts, a beautiful voice and a compelling preaching style. He so impressed Bishop John Sumner that he appointed him a Canon of Chester Cathedral (Liverpool was then in the Diocese of Chester). He had no trouble filling St. Jude's church. His sermons lasted around 90 minutes and he never, quite contrary to the accepted practice of the time, used notes when preaching.

Never a man to moderate his opinions to spare the feelings of others, his extemporaneous oratory occasionally carried him away into highly controversial territory; in 1847 (the same year as he received his Doctorate), M'Neile pronounced the Potato Famine to be God's judgement upon the Irish for their tolerance of Roman Catholicism.

In 1848 Dr. M'Neile moved to an even larger church. This was St. Paul's, Belvedere Road and Part 2 of this article will cover that chapter of his story.

St. Jude's next appears in the public spotlight in 1882 when the Vicar, Rev. Ernest Fitzroy, was accused by hard-line Protestants of practising Ritualism. He had introduced a robed choir and processions to the church, begun intoning the prayers and encouraged the congregation to fast before receiving Communion. This was not particularly Ritualistic but it was enough to cause a large mob to descend upon the church, disrupt worship and physically attack the Vicar and the choir. The police had to break up the disturbance.

Between 1881 and 1897 the church was completely restored.

Nothing noteworthy seems to have happened at St. Jude's during the first six decades of the 20th Century. It survived World War II intact only to be demolished, along with all the surrounding residential streets, in 1966 to make way for the Royal Liverpool Hospital. The site it occupied is now underneath the Duncan Building, home to the hospital's pathology laboratories, and as far as I am aware, no trace of it survives.

St. Peter's - Shropshire's Miraculous Survivor



The subject of this article is quite possibly my very favourite out of all the hundreds of churches I've been fortunate enough to visit. Apart from being a beautiful ancient church, St. Peter's was built using a remarkable construction technique and retains most of its original fabric, it is always open to visitors and it is situated in the most peaceful rural beauty spot imaginable.

The banks of the River Vyrnwy were not always so tranquil, however. At the beginning of the 15th Century the border between England and Wales was the scene of frequent skirmishes and raids and in one such incursion (which today would be described as an act of terrorism) the Welsh chieftain Owain Glyndŵr burned to the ground the wooden Saxon church which had stood at Molverley since around the turn of the Millennium. For a wooden Saxon church to still be standing by this date was in itself a great rarity as the vast majority of such structures had been taken down by the Normans and replaced by stone buildings in the Romanesque style in the decades following the Conquest.

This took place in 1401, and the parishioners immediately set about the task of building a replacement church. They built the new church using the timber frame, wattle and daub technique and it is an example of a close-studded construction in which the wattle-and-daub panels are narrow relative to the timbers used; this is typical of English buildings of this type and period. Of particular interest is that not one nail was used anywhere in the building. Wooden pegs are used instead. The timber used throughout is local oak.

The work was completed quickly – the new church opened in 1406 – but evidently to a very high standard as most of the structure survives to this day in its original form.

At the west end of the church is a gallery, accessed via what by today's standards is an exceedingly steep and uneven staircase. There is a distinct slope to the gallery; this is not due to subsidence but to the settlement of the great oak beam upon which it sits.



As with all great church buildings, additions and alterations have taken place over time.

In 1588 a vestibule was created through the addition of wooden panelling to the entrance area. 1670 saw the addition of two features considered highly fashionable in early post-Restoration Shropshire, the porch and the bell-tower. A tour of the nearby churches will reveal several with similar additions carried out between the late 1660s and about 1690.

The pews were added in 1718 although some are later copies introduced as replacements. At the same time the walls were plastered although this was reversed by the Victorians in 1878. The Victorian alterations also included the rebuilding of the lower part of the East wall, the only section of the 15th Century fabric to have needed replacement to date.

In 1990 the river bank underneath the church was found to be at risk of collapse. Had this happened, St. Peter's would have been lost. This tragedy was averted by the construction of a 100 ft. long underground steel wall between the church and the river. Major structural repairs to the church were carried out at the same time and the church reopened in 1992.



The building itself only tells part of the story, of course, and the fixtures and fittings within it also speak of the church's long history as a place of prayer and worship.

The oldest item is the only piece known to have survived the 1401 fire: the Saxon octagonal stone font in which the people of Meverley have been baptised into the Christian faith for a thousand years. It is still used for baptisms today. The wooden font cover is believed to date from the same year as the pews, 1718.

The Jacobean era (1603-1625) is represented by the small Altar and by the elaborately-carved pulpit. This pulpit (which I think is of walnut) is worth the journey to Meverley in its own right and is as fine an example of early 17th-Century craftsmanship as you will find anywhere.

The Chained Bible dates from 1727. It was Henry VIII who had decreed almost 200 years previously that a large copy of the Bible, in English, should be placed in every parish church in England; these were usually chained as printed books were hugely expensive at the time and therefore vulnerable to the light-fingered. By 1727 costs would have been more reasonable, so the reason for retaining a chained Bible may simply be a case of old habits dying hard.

The five-light East window is one of the most recent additions to the church, installed in 1925 though very much in a Victorian style. From left to right the lights depict St. Chad (first Bishop of Lichfield, shown holding a model of Lichfield Cathedral), the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Crucifixion of Christ, St. John the Beloved Disciple, and St. Peter. A plaque dedicated in 1992 by the Archbishop of Wales celebrates 1,000 years of Christian worship on the site whilst in the churchyard stands a sundial which was dedicated on 1st January 2000 to mark the start of the Third Millennium A.D.

St. Peter's Church is a place of welcome, pilgrimage and prayer. It is always open and it is the ideal place for reflection, contemplation and spiritual refreshment. A guide booklet is available and the church has a website to assist you in planning your trip at <http://meverleychurch.co.uk/>.

I hope this article will inspire some of its readers to make the journey to Meverley to experience this priceless survivor for themselves - it is not that easy to find, being tucked away up some narrow country lanes, but it will certainly repay the effort.

Reflections on the CVTA's 2015 Symposium

This issue of **H&BN** has something of a Salopian theme running through it. This is no bad thing as Shropshire - one of England's most beautiful counties - has over 400 churches, many of which are historic, interesting and (most importantly because what does any of this matter if people can't access the church?) OPEN. Shropshire's ancient County Town, Shrewsbury, was the venue for the Churches Visitor & Tourism Association's annual Symposium this year on November 14th.

Proceedings actually began on the afternoon of Friday 13th with a fascinating walking tour of a selection of the town's churches of several denominations including the Roman Catholic Cathedral with its fine Margaret Rope windows, Shrewsbury Abbey, famous from the "Brother Cadfael" novels of Ellis Peters, and the Unitarian Chapel of which Charles Darwin was at one time a member. Shrewsbury has much to offer the "church crawler" although if you're going during the winter months you need to check very carefully in advance that the church you want to visit will be open.

Tim King, Visitor Economy Development Officer for Shropshire County Council, kicked off the Symposium proper with a round-up of recent changes in the way local authorities have funded tourism and tourist information. In the area now covered by the Shropshire authority, there had been several authorities between them employing 15 Tourist Officers. There is now one authority with one officer who devotes about a quarter of his time to tourist information. This isn't all because of so-called "austerity", however: the rise of the internet means that intending visitors can find out all they need to know from sites such as Trip Advisor and Booking.com and this has really done away with the need for council officers to do the job. What this means for churches is that they need to have good websites, and to engage with the reviews and feedback left on the likes of Trip Advisor which can suggest areas for improvement.

Churches might also benefit from joining - or helping to start, if there isn't one already - a local Churches Tourism Group (CTG) such as the Shropshire CTG whose Chairman, Christine Tinker, gave the second presentation of the morning. The Shropshire group has about 100 churches (of all denominations, but mostly Anglican) as members, and produces a very attractive free biennial guide describing this both in hard copy and on its website.

Member churches pay £60 for two years to cover the printing costs; the guide booklet is put together by volunteers and churches are encouraged to add to their entry on the website (<http://www.discovershropshirechurches.co.uk/>). On a personal note, it was the entry in this guide which first encouraged me to visit St. Peter's in Molverley.

The third speaker was the CVTA's Chairman, Canon John Brown, who spoke on the Symposium's theme of "Church Open – What Next?" building on Archbishop Donald Coggan's assertion that "the stones of which churches are constructed preach more sermons to those outside a church than are preached to those within it". The church building is the **most important asset** in the church's mission as it is a constant reminder, day and night, that God is in the midst of the community. I add the emphasis as this the Symposium took place just a few days after the publication of the Church Buildings Review.

Churches are public buildings, rather than the preserve of an elite group of "insiders" and therefore the default position should be that they are open. Very often the "reasons" given for keeping them locked shut are simply excuses. One of these is "security" – but it is actually more dangerous handing out keys to all and sundry than it is leaving the church open.

John Brown argues that there are two "ways of being open": Passive and Active.

In a Passive Open Church there would not normally be anyone to greet the visitor so to get it right, the church needs to provide good clear information about the building and what it stands for, information about forthcoming events (not ones that happened in the past, a personal bugbear of mine), encouragement to sit, pray, look around or light a candle, and some literature. Ideally there should be local contact details in the event of the visitor needing help. It is also good practice to leave a visitor's book or survey as this can provide useful feedback as well as evidence of visitor numbers if needed.

Being an Active Open Church is more than just having people on hand to welcome visitors, although that is a part of it. The church will host a range of activities and events with the people of the community as the focus: displays of local arts and crafts, themed events around local historical events, talent shows and the like. Engaging in "Public Theology" by explaining what happens at weddings, baptisms, etc., can be a good way of starting to bring about a change from being "Church for the Congregation" to "Church for the People".



The Georgian church of St. Chad (1792, by George Steuart, Listed Grade I) is most unusual in that it has a circular nave (photo, left). Note the slender cast iron columns, an early use of this technology. With a seating capacity well in excess of 1,000 it often hosts concerts and recitals and it is also the Regimental Church for the King's Shropshire Light Infantry. The church is regularly open to visitors, who are welcomed. It was therefore a highly suitable venue for the Symposium and we greatly enjoyed a guided tour of the church at lunchtime, after which the short AGM took place.

The next speaker will need no introduction to readers of **H&BN**: it was I! The topic I'd been given was "Who, and What, are Church Buildings For?" which is quite a big subject to do justice in 25 minutes.

What does the New Testament say about church buildings and their use? Nothing in fact, although we know that the Temple in Jerusalem must have been a multi-function building in the time of Christ otherwise there would have been no money changers there for Him to eject. Post-Ascension, however, the early Christians were too busy spreading the Gospel and preparing for the Second Coming to be bothered creating permanent structures. The first Christian buildings appeared around 200 years later as the Lord's return didn't occur and the threat of persecution diminished.

In the 1950s Peter Hammond (an architect who was later ordained as a priest) reviewed the theology of church architecture and in 2011 the Christchurch earthquake gave the New Zealand church under the guidance of Rev. Dr. Peter Carrell a blank canvas upon which to develop a new church buildings theology. Both Hammond and Carrell were dealing with new buildings whereas we in the CVTA are looking at how to make existing ones earn their keep. I suggested expanding Carrell's key question, "will this building hinder or help to spread the Gospel?" to "Is this building, as we present it and use it, helping to spread the gospel? If not, how can we make it do so?".

I then looked at some of the uses to which church buildings can be put and at how these can complement each other. Using an example from our own Diocese, Holy Trinity in St. Helens, I showed how an holistic programme of social outreach activities can be built up so that the church is in use throughout the whole week rather than just on Sundays.

Sometimes the different uses to which buildings can be put clash or “compete” with each other. This is inevitable in a busy multi-use building; it is how the clash is managed that makes the difference.

Creative adaptation can be the key to opening up a church building to multiple uses. I shared a couple of multi-million pound examples, followed by a highly effective one from our own Diocese which cost just £2,600, proving that adaptations don’t need to be hugely expensive. This is the system at St. Bridget with St. Thomas, Wavertree, which allows the church to be quickly converted into an attractive exhibition space. The slides from my presentation are available on my website - <http://www.iansimpson.eu>.

CVTA gatherings are always highly informative and enjoyable events where best practice is shared with a view to keeping churches open and as widely used as possible. I would recommend membership to any church which is seriously interested in deepening its Ministry of Hospitality.

Just For Fun!



The window which makes Jesus look like He has two heads (**H&BN 7**) is at **Halifax Minster**, a very fine church indeed and well worth a visit for its excellent Commonwealth windows, superb four-manual organ and fascinating memorials to noteworthy local people.

In **H&BN #9**...

The second and concluding part of our look at the life and times of Liverpool's legendary Protestant firebrand takes us to St. Paul's, Belvedere Road, to try and visualise **Dr. M'Neile's Remarkable Pulpit**. We take a trip to Hungary to look at the impressive **Nagytemplom**, the Great Reformed Church in the country's second city Debrecen.



**Wishing you peace and blessings at Christmas
and health and prosperity for 2016.**