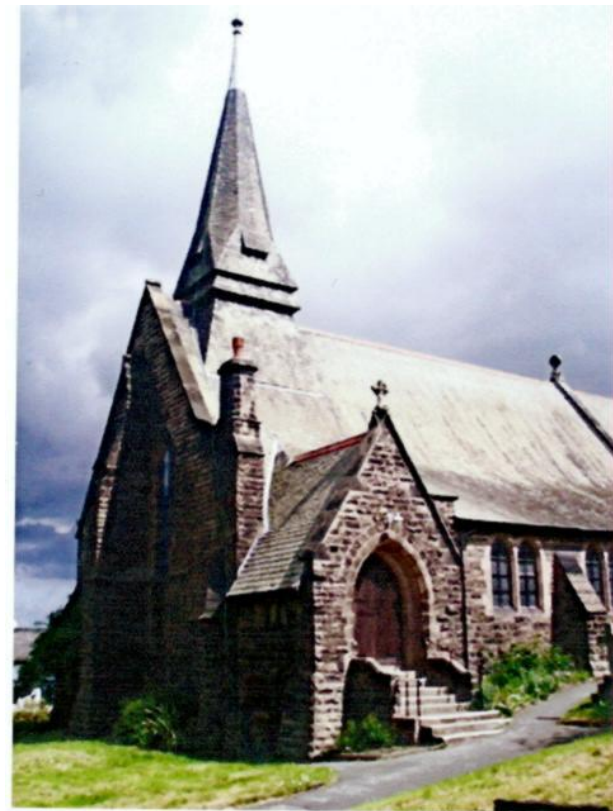


A Brief History of
the Parish Church of
St Paul's Helsby
1870 - 2008





The three windows on the south side of the Lady chapel depict "Faith, Charity and Hope" and were given by Celia Withington in 1924 in memory of her brother Arthur Withington.

- The original installation of Electric Light was given by Arthur Rundit in June 1920 and installed in 1921.

This was updated in 1953 in memory

of Celia Withington and also to commemorate the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth the Second. The current lighting system was installed in 1991 in memory of Bert Woodcock (former verger at St Paul's)

- The main Lych Gate was built in 1911 and was given by James Taylor of Heathercliffe. The other two Lych Gates were given by Arthur and Celia Withington of Brackenhurst in November 1923.
- In 1980 the organ was moved from its former position next to the vestry down into the body of the church. At the same time the organ bellows and pipe-work were moved to the rear of the church and sited in a newly constructed organ loft. The cost of this work was raised by public subscription.
- The current sound system was installed in 1991 in memory of Albert Wild - churchwarden for many years.
- The runners for the pews and carpeting for the Choir stalls were kindly donated by the Ladies of St Paul's in 2003.
- The disabled access facilities were installed in 2006

One of the more intriguing parts of the Church is the "St. Raphael windows". These two tiny windows are to be found in the porch of the Church and depict two episodes from the story of Tobias and the Angel from the book on Tobit in the Apocrypha. The Apocrypha is part of the Greek Bible from the beginning of St Paul's mission to the Gentiles – hence the importance to our Church today.



Some extracts Margaret Scott Wallace's "Guide to St Paul's Church" have been used in compiling this history and thanks are expressed for her knowledge and research into the church's history.

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

All through Helsby's long and fascinating history there is evidence of worship and several chapels were in use before St Paul's was built. The Kelly's Directory of 1882 tells us of the site of an ancient chapel erected by one Catherine Arderne circa 1650- this, and the discovery of a Roman altar at the top of Vicarage Lane in 1959, bears witness to acts of worship over the past years.

So that a Church for the worship of Almighty God could be built in Helsby, a portion of land on a fine eminence overlooking the River Mersey was given by the Marquis of Cholmondeley. A letter from the Land Agency and Estate's Office stated that in addition to agreeing the use of the land to build a church, the Marquis also donated the building stone which was from a local quarry, known locally as Ben's Quarry. The quarry, then owned and worked by Thomas Brandreth, was well known at the time for the superiority of its stone quality and also provided stone for the building of the churches at Ince, Upton and Saltney as well as repair works on Chester Cathedral.

The stone was "to be free of charge – the constructor to pay for the getting of the stone only" and the farmers who carted the stone from the quarry were paid 7/- for one horse and cart and 10/- for two horses and cart per day. The marquis further stipulated that all steps should be made of York stone.

The original design for Helsby church was carried out by John Douglas of Chester. Originally trained in Lancaster, he soon set up his practice in Chester and was responsible for the design of many buildings in Cheshire, North Wales and Northwest England, in particular in the estate of Eaton Hall. He restored old churches, built new churches and large houses, and many smaller properties. His most popular designs are those for the black and white half-timbered buildings on the East side of St Werburgh Street, Chester and the nearby Eastgate Clock. Pevsner described him, without qualification, as "the best Cheshire architect".

On the 8th January 1869, the contract for building Helsby Church was signed appointing John Thomas of Gwespyr, near Holywell as the constructor. The contract price was to be £1,720 (including the pews) and this was to be paid in seven instalments as the building progressed.

A further bill for £503 was added later for raising the floor one foot higher than the contract stated. Unfortunately the builder got into financial difficulties and on the 7th January 1870 he was declared bankrupt.

In February 1870, the Reverend William Charles Cotton MA of Frodsham signed an agreement with H.Booth and J.Richards of South Tranmere to complete the construction of the Church for £850.

In May 1870, the Bishop of Chester wrote from St. John's, Dukinfield saying that he "considered a permanent font essential but that it would be possible to make do with a temporary lectern". Meanwhile public subscriptions were being received towards the cost of the Church which had reached the grand sum of £1,914 9s 11d by the time that the Church had been completed. The perimeter wall around the Church and the Churchyard was completed in August 1870.

The Church was consecrated on Thursday the 28th July 1870 by the Bishop of Chester William Jacobson D.D. At the time of consecration the official seating accommodation was 301 and this number was calculated as follows :-

Adults @ 20 inches 229
Children @ 14 inches 72

On Sunday the 31st July 1870, the first baptism service was held at which seven children were baptised.

At this time the Church was under the jurisdiction of the Vicar of Frodsham, the Reverend William Charles Cotton MA and the Curate in charge of Helsby was the Reverend Thomas Woodrox Dix who apparently lived in Manley.

An instrument dated the 10th June 1875, transferred the right of the Reverend William Charles Cotton to nominate and present a Minister for Helsby to James Reynolds of Fox Hill. The patron of the living is now the Bishop of Chester.

Records show that the first Vicar of Helsby was John David Havard and he was inducted in July 1876. On the 28th December 1876, the first marriage was solemnised in the Church – and it was between John Wright and Emma Britland – both of whom signed their assent in the Marriage register by making a cross.

The South Aisle, Lady Chapel and Porch of the Church were added in 1908 and were built by J.G.Davies & Co. of Frodsham at a cost of £1,209 4s and the whole of this amount was raised by public subscription. The Lady Chapel was consecrated on 23rd January 1909 by the Bishop of Chester.

The present wrought iron Screen was installed in 1909 and it came from Hawarden Church and cost £85. In April of that year John Barrow of Frodsham was paid £2 15s for "Blacking and Gilding the Screen".

In 1918 the New Churchyard was opened and in 1920 the War Memorial was unveiled.

The Children's Corner in the Church was instituted in memory of Miss Bate, who had been a very popular head teacher of the old Church of England School and who had devoted her life to the children of the village.

Since the initial building of the Church many items in the Church have been donated by grateful parishioners and these include :-

- The East Window of the Church was presented by the Vicar of Frodsham, the Rev William Cotton, who worked so hard to have the building of the church completed.
- The Pulpit was in memory of James Reynolds of Fox Hill
- The Lectern was given by Mrs James Reynolds in memory of her husband
- The Organ was reconstructed and enlarged and the outer door to the vestry was added in 1907 - the cost was borne by William Griffiths of Windcliffe
- The oak panelling in the side chapel was given by public subscription in remembrance of Reverend EW Evans the Vicar of Helsby from 1903 to 1924

Services at St Paul's Helsby

- Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer) Service is held every Sunday morning at 08:00am.
- Family Service is held on the first Sunday in each month at 11:00am with a Sung Communion Service being held on all other Sundays at 11:00am
- A Wednesday Worship Service is held every Wednesday at 07:30pm



Priest in Charge

Rev. Margaret Saville
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