

# Heritage & Buildings Newsletter

No. 4 - Winter 2014/5



From **Ian Simpson**

Heritage Support Officer for the Diocese of Liverpool



**Cover photograph:** St. Cuthbert, North Meols – the oldest church (and oldest public building) in Southport. A church on this site is mentioned in the Domesday Book although the current building dates from 1739 with several alterations and additions since. In the 11<sup>th</sup> Century the church would have been on the coast although subsequent drainage and land reclamation mean it is now some distance inland. The first recorded Rector was Adam the Clerk, in 1178, and legend has it that in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century the remains of St. Cuthbert rested here as the monks from Lindisfarne travelled around the country looking for a permanent burial place for him free from the risk of Viking attacks. **Above:** Detail of a Common Yew (*Taxus baccatus*) photographed in St. Cuthbert's Churchyard. From ancient times yews were planted in churchyards and several explanations of their mystical significance have been suggested but a more mundane reason is that livestock avoid them due to their high toxicity and therefore a churchyard planted with yews would be less likely to be visited by cattle and sheep! The red "berry" actually isn't a berry at all but a mature cone – an immature cone is seen to its left. Yews can live to an extreme age and some in Wales are believed to be 5,000 years old.

**Rear Cover:** The Nativity Window, designed by Edward Burne-Jones and executed by William Morris & Co., at Grade I Listed All Hallows, Allerton.

---

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 #5 (Spring 2015) is Thursday, January 29<sup>th</sup>.

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. 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, November 2014



## Welcome!

Sometimes making a transformative change to a historic church in order to secure its future is a real leap of faith. One such project I'm currently involved with is at Holy Trinity, Parr Mount, which has recently secured a £239,400 Repair Grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to carry out urgent building repairs and improve the facilities within the church.

Two years ago the Grade II-Listed church, which dates from 1857, was threatened with closure and sale. Not only would that have been an ignominious end to the church's ministry, it would have taken away the only large community building in a parish which is one of the most deprived in the Diocese. The faith and determination of the parishioners and the support of a coalition of community stakeholders means that it is now on the brink of a renaissance.

None of which explains the harness and the orange hat I'm wearing. I am nobody's idea of Action Man, but when the opportunity came up for me to make my own Leap of Faith and raise some money to help out at Holy Trinity I couldn't turn it down - the folk there were really kind to me and my friends when we used to attend their Thursday night meetings in the late 1980s. And so, on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, a wet Saturday morning in Liverpool, I took the Zip Wire Challenge which involves jumping from a 100ft tower and sliding along a steel cable the length of Church Street.

I was terrified beforehand, but once I started "zipping" along the wire it was really exhilarating. More importantly, thanks to my generous sponsors I raised £358 (£425 once Gift Aid is recovered) for Holy Trinity. I suppose the moral of the story is this: if the opportunity comes your way to take a leap of faith, even if it seems scary and not normally the sort of thing you'd do, take it!

Fundraising for major projects within churches can be hard work, but it can also be great fun. If I can help you with this - or any other Heritage-related matter - do not hesitate to contact me by phone on 0151 705 2127 or by email [ian.simpson@liverpool.anglican.org](mailto:ian.simpson@liverpool.anglican.org). The postal address is St. James House, 20 St. James Road, Liverpool L1 7BY.

**St. Bride with St. Saviour, Liverpool** (1829 by S. Rowlands, Listed Grade II\*) has been awarded a Repair Grant of £249,800 by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Urgent works required to this elegant Neo-Classical building include re-roofing and high-level repairs to stonework and rendering.



A ruling by the Consistory Court of the **Diocese of Gloucester** criticised the Churchwardens and former Priest In Charge of Emmanuel, Leckhampton, following the sale of a £20,000 painting which had been donated to the church 60 years ago. Although they were cleared of dishonesty, they were found to have sold the painting without Faculty permission from the Chancellor of the Diocese; as a result antique dealers have now been asked to check whether church property offered to them can be legally sold. The message is clear: the sale of any church treasures requires a Faculty - if in doubt, consult the DAC before proceeding with any such sale!

It's good to see the conversion of the former **St. Cyprian's Church** at the junction of Edge Lane and Durning Road, Kensington, into student accommodation is proceeding at last. For too long this once-lovely building has been sending out precisely the wrong message about the church in Liverpool as it rotted and deteriorated in full view of everyone using one of the city's busiest road junctions.

I have now got a **Twitter** account - do follow @HeritageTiger for news and photographs from interesting churches (as well as occasional forays into the worlds of transport and Real Ale!).

Don't forget - if you have any news you'd like to share with us, send it in to me - by email, post or Twitter - by January 29<sup>th</sup>!

## Maintenance Training Days for 2015

If you haven't been on one of my Maintenance Training Days yet, you will have at least four more chances during 2015. I have reserved some provisional dates but venues have still to be confirmed (please feel free to volunteer your church as a venue!) and the idea is to have them in a geographical spread throughout the Diocese.

The proposed dates are:

- Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> April
- Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May
- Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July
- Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> October.

The days start at 10.00am. We aim to finish no later than about 3.30pm and lunch is included as are printed training materials to take home and cherish. All sessions are advertised in this Newsletter, in the Diocesan Bulletin, on the Diocesan website and at <http://www.tigerconnect.eu/maintenance.html>.

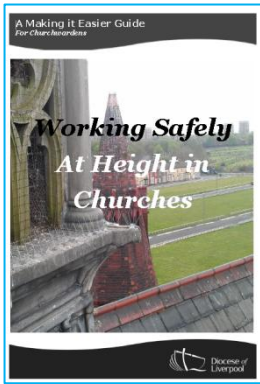
## Electrical Safety First at Christmas!

There are many ways of celebrating Our Lord's Incarnation, but burning the church down isn't one of them! At Christmas there is a temptation to overload your church's electrical installation by plugging in too many extra appliances: portable heaters, fairy lights, even one of those appalling singing Christmas trees.

Are they safe? Does your church have a current Electrical Installation Condition Report which meets the legal requirements? Download my free guide to Electrical Safety from the Diocesan website (or send me an A5 large letter SAE if you want a hard copy) to find out more about keeping your church and congregation safe from electrical hazards this Christmas.



## Beware - Idiots on Ladders!



Every year between September and December, the Ladder Association runs its "Idiots on Ladders" social media campaign. Members of the public are invited to submit photographs they've taken which illustrate the misuse of ladders or stepladders, and the photograph which gets the most "Likes" on the Facebook page ([facebook.com/ladderassociation](https://facebook.com/ladderassociation)) is the "winner" of the not-so-coveted title of Biggest Idiot On A Ladder. There is a serious purpose to all this, of course. It is to raise awareness of ladder safety.

At the time of writing there are 27 photographs on the page, all of which illustrate the WRONG ways in which a ladder can be used. You will see them perched atop Transit vans, lashed together, held up by telegraph wires.... all the people pictured are dicing with death.

If you have to work at height in your church make sure you're doing it safely. My guide to **Working Safely at Height in Churches** is available from the Diocesan website, or, as ever, by post – send me a Large Letter stamped A5 envelope and I'll send you a copy by return.

Another Ladder Association initiative is the Ladder Exchange scheme which runs till the end of this year. The idea is to provide an incentive to remove dangerous ladders from use by providing discounted replacements when the old ones are handed in. From what I have seen there are several churches which would do well to take advantage of this offer and rid themselves of their dodgy ladders!

There are several Ladder Exchange partner organisations – visit the website <http://www.ladderexchange.org.uk> for further details.

The Ladder Association (<http://www.ladderassociation.org.uk>) exists to promote safety and best practice in the use of ladders and steps in the workplace and its website has lots of useful information about selecting and using the right ladder for the job.

## Some Reflections on the CVTA Symposium

On Saturday October 11<sup>th</sup> I attended the Churches Visitor & Tourism Association's (CVTA) Northern Symposium and AGM at York University. I have discussed the CVTA briefly in these pages before as I consider that membership (just £18 per year) really is essential for any church which is serious about extending a warm welcome to visitors and tourists, and doing it professionally.

But why would you want to welcome visitors and tourists? There are several reasons, all valid, and they might include the following:

- The more people who come in to our church, the more people we can reach with the Good News!
- They are a useful source of extra revenue.
- Our church is a beautiful piece of historically-significant architecture which deserves to be seen by as many people as possible.
- We are in a rural beauty spot where visitors far outnumber the local population.
- The terms and conditions of a grant we received mean we have to open the church for visitors.

Quoting William Temple – “the Church is the only organisation which doesn't exist for itself” - Canon Michael Smith pointed out that for his church, York Minster, **welcoming people is the very reason for its existence**. Thinking about it, this is true for all churches: first impressions count and if people feel welcome when they enter a church they are more likely to engage with the message the church represents. Your church may well be smaller, newer and less spectacular than York Minster (most are!) but the principle is the same.

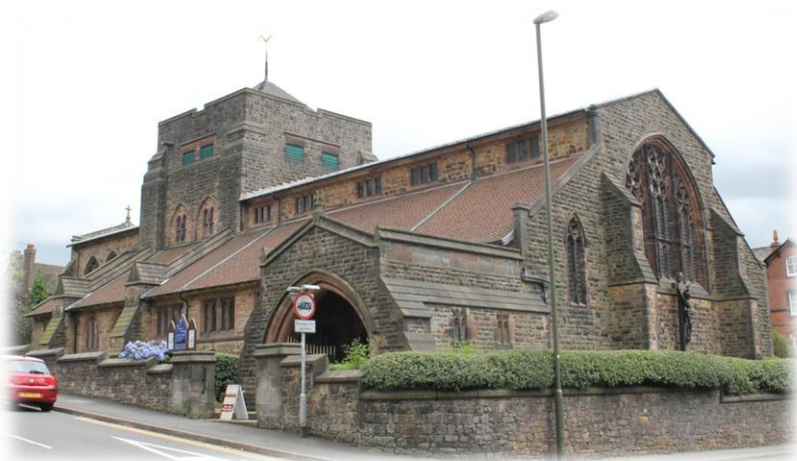
By “feeling welcome” I do NOT mean people read a sign as they enter saying “Visitors Welcome”, what I mean is they feel they are genuinely wanted in the church, encouraged to be themselves, to feel at home and to ask questions. Is this true of your church?

It's worth noting that churches can make a huge contribution to their local economy. York Minster is worth £600m per year to the City of York and supports 20,000 jobs.



In West Yorkshire, Halifax Minster's partnership approach with other local tourist-related businesses has been a key component of a revitalisation of the town's economy. Calderdale Council reckons that every incoming day visitor to Halifax spends on average £19.33 in the town, and overnight visitors considerably more.

The Vicar of Halifax, Canon Hilary Barber, explained that the Minster's three key drivers are **Education, Culture** and **Civic Engagement**. The Minster has an education officer and delivers programmes for schools, the local FE College and the University of the Third Age. It supports local artists and puts on festivals and concerts: a folk concert with Real Ale sold 800 tickets at £20 per head. It hosts civic services, such as a "Snow Heroes" service to thank everyone who rallied round when the town was hit by a particularly hard winter. All these events attract many people into the Minster who wouldn't normally come to church for an ordinary Sunday service.



*All Saints, Leek, Staffs.: a Grade I church which offers visitors & tourists a warm welcome.*

Rev. Peter Mayo-Smith is the Rector of Haworth in Brontë Country, a town which attracts more tourists annually than the whole of Kenya. Many of these visit the church, which actually post-dates the town's most illustrious residents, and there are occasionally conflicts between "church" and "tourism" uses. Tourists from some countries where there is no tradition of Christianity taking photographs at funerals is one example cited by Rev. Mayo-Smith, but on the whole he says the



benefits far outweigh the occasional difficulties. Over 2,000 people will attend carol services at Haworth this Christmas!

This tells us that it is important to recognise that being an open and welcoming Church can bring about situations which need to be managed, but these are not in themselves reasons for failing to embrace visitors and tourists. Indeed, many of the so-called "reasons" I hear for keeping churches locked all week are nothing but excuses and could easily be overcome if the will existed.

The Bishop of Selby, Rt. Rev. John Thompson, gave what I thought was a quite brilliant keynote speech offering theological insights into the wider community use of church buildings. The division between church and community in the rural areas for which he has a special remit is blurred, he argues, but that is no bad thing: the fundamental calling of the church is to share God's friendship with all, "whether or not they are 'like us'".

I would suggest that this blurring of the boundary is a feature of the better urban and suburban churches too. One building can be simultaneously a place of worship, a tourist attraction and somewhere the needy are fed: these functions are far from mutually-exclusive. Indeed, as Bishop John points out, it was the mass construction of church halls in the Victorian era which took "secular" activities out of church buildings and created the artificial division, contributing to the secularisation of Britain in the process. Dog Whipper's Pews, at Sefton Parish Church and elsewhere, remind us of a time before this when the "mixed use" was such that parishes employed officers to control the animals in church and remove them in the event of their behaviour becoming unruly – and especially if it looked like they were about to eat the Communion bread!

A key point made by Bishop John was the importance of **telling our story**. Christians are a "story people" and we are part of that story. Church buildings situate us in the story. They are "storied spaces", where memories matter; in rural areas particularly these local memories can go back many centuries. There are really two ways of telling our story: talking about it, and embodying it.

Either way, the story has to be compelling and told in such a way as to engage and enthral the visitor. Roy Thompson of York Diocese gave us an example – a festival put on at Sherriff Hutton church to celebrate the rural Yorkshire church's connections with King Richard III.

The festival featured period food, costumes and music, and was not cheap to put on. Commercial and private sponsorship was sought and the festival was advertised widely but using low-cost media. Fewer than 10% of the 550 visitors came from the village – in other words over 90% were people who never would have normally gone to that church. It made a profit of £4,600, or 15% of the annual cost of running the church.

If all this has whetted your appetite for finding out what you can do to bring your church alive and tell its story then you may well be interested in a Diocesan Tourism Event I am organising for April next year (week commencing the 27<sup>th</sup> – more details to follow) at which we will be looking at how churches can extend a first-rate welcome to visitors and tourists, the benefits of working in partnership, how churches can help their local economy and how best to interpret the building and tell the story.

In the meantime do not hesitate to contact me if I can assist you with any matter related to church tourism and visitor welcome.

## **Christ Church Kensington – some good news!**



Passing the former Christ Church, Kensington (1870, by W. & G. Audsley) recently, I was delighted to note that scaffolding is in place, vegetation is being removed and roof repairs are underway. I don't know who owns it now or what – if any – its future use will be but this Grade II Listed church is far too good to lose!

## St. Peter's, Northampton's Norman Treasure

So far in this series exploring Europe's best churches we have visited Matka in Macedonia, Ravenna and Vienna. In this issue we are looking at a church much closer to home, but no less fascinating: St. Peter's Marefair in Northampton.



You may well never have heard of St. Ragener – I hadn't – but up until the 15<sup>th</sup> Century he was something of a household name in English Christianity. Ragener was the nephew of St. Edmund, the King of East Anglia; the two men were slain together by the Danes in the year 870. His burial place was discovered on the site now occupied by the church during the reign of King (later Saint) Edward the Confessor who ruled from 1042 to 1066. Several miracles, we are told, resulted from this discovery.

St. Peter's Church dates from the fourth decade of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. Its founder is believed to have been Simon de Senlis II (c. 1098-1153), an Anglo-Norman noble rewarded for his loyalty to King Stephen with the title Earl of The Honour of Northampton and Huntingdon.

The church had close connections with Northampton Castle, built by Simon's father – also Simon – in 1084 and consigned to history by the advent of the West Coast railway line in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It is believed that the church served as the castle chapel; this would account for some unusual features of its design such as the lack of a break between nave and chancel.

The distinctive “banded” appearance of the lower stage of the tower is the result of two types of stone – ironstone and limestone – being used together for decorative effect.

Northampton was a hugely important place in the Middle Ages. It was here that Henry II fell out with Archbishop Thomas Beckett. Here King John met with his barons to negotiate the treaty that led to the proclamation of the Magna Carta. Most notoriously, it was here that Parliament met in December 1380 to pass the law which gave rise to the Poll Tax and brought about the Peasants' Revolt. All these major players in the early history of our nation worshipped within the walls of St. Peter's at some point and I found it both moving and awe-inspiring to be able to stand in a space which had once echoed with their voices.



A feature of the church's exterior is the selection of grotesques – semi-human faces, some of which are quite scary – gazing down from under the eaves. Some of these are undoubtedly modern replacements for earlier examples which have worn away over the years, but their original intention was probably to frighten away any evil spirits which might have been tempted to enter God's house and disrupt the worship!



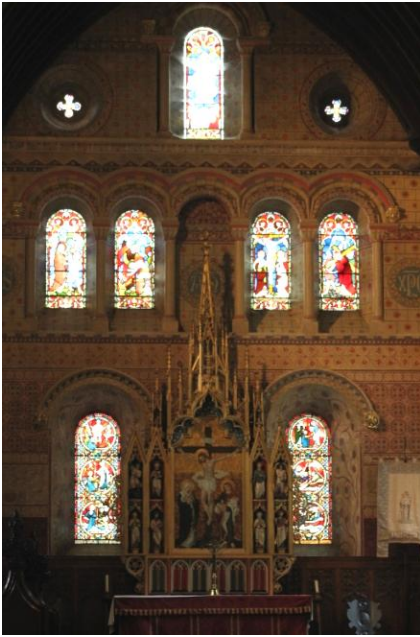
The interior is notable for the richness of its Norman carving. Each arch and each capital (example above) has its own design and the effect is wonderful. In an act of unbelievable vandalism these were plastered over in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Thankfully in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century a local antiquarian, Anne Elizabeth Baker, spent 11 years carefully removing the plaster with a knife.

The 17<sup>th</sup> Century was an eventful one for St. Peter's, as it was for Northampton as a whole. In 1607 the tower collapsed; it was some time before it was rebuilt some three metres eastwards of its original position, thus shortening the nave.

There was also the Civil War in which Northampton came out in support of the Roundheads. Whilst this was "the winning side" in terms of the War, after the Restoration Charles II ended the town's royal connections and therefore its prestige. The Castle was abandoned and the town walls were demolished.

The final 17<sup>th</sup> Century disaster to befall Northampton was the Great Fire of 1675. All Saints' Church, closer to the town's commercial centre, was destroyed (and later rebuilt by Henry Bell to a design which would not have been a discredit to Sir Christopher Wren) but St. Peter's was spared.

The next major change at St. Peter's came in the Victorian era when the east end of the church was rebuilt by Sir George Gilbert Scott.



In Victorian times, a church without steps up to the chancel was frowned upon. As noted above, St. Peter's as built had no break between chancel and nave and Scott's solution was to lower the nave floor by 12 inches so as to allow a chancel step to be constructed! Although this seems a pity to us, it must be remembered that to the Victorians this was what needed to be done to make the building support what they saw as their mission.

In the 1870s John Oldrid Scott executed the stencilled decoration to the rebuilt east wall, the reredos was introduced (the paintings are by Burlison & Grylls) and the stained glass windows we see today were introduced.

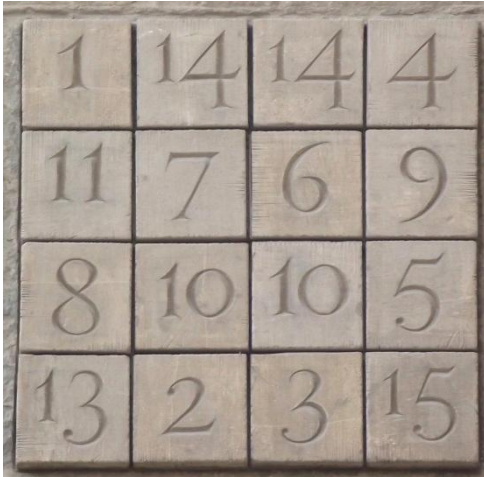
In 1995 St. Peter's was declared redundant and in 1998 the church was taken on by the Churches Conservation Trust. It is still consecrated and still used for public worship on occasions; it also hosts concerts, lectures and other events. The CCT carried out substantial repair and conservation work in 2002.

The Churches Conservation Trust, a charity established in 1969 to care for redundant churches considered too significant to lose, cares for over 340 churches across England. These are visited by over two million people every year – an average of about 5,900 visitors per church, a statistic I underline for the benefit of anyone reading this who has yet to be persuaded about the benefits and potential of church tourism.

The CCT's website, <http://www.visitchurches.org.uk> will tell you all you need to know about the Trust, its work and its churches. I would urge you to visit your local CCT church if you haven't already done so, and to support the CCT with a gift or donation. If it wasn't for the CCT, St. Peter's and several other wonderful churches simply wouldn't exist now, and the whole nation would be much the poorer as a result.



## Just For Fun!



This **Magic Square** is quite remarkable. Each horizontal line adds up to 33, as does each vertical line. So do all four corners and several other geometric combinations of numbers within the square. 33 represents the number of years of Jesus' life on earth of course, but **where is it?** Make sure you read **H&BN** #5 in January 2015 to find out!

If you've got a couple of hours to spare, why not try and work out how many combinations of four numbers there are which add up to the "magic number" 33. I had a theory that the answer to this question would itself be 33 and tried to find them all, but when I found a 34<sup>th</sup> and then a 35<sup>th</sup> I realised that there are actually quite a few more than that...

Coming up in HBN#5: The Heritage At Risk Register, another Great Church of Europe, and guidance on applying for grant funding. Don't miss it!



And finally, as this is the last **H&BN** this year, may I take this opportunity to wish you a peaceful, blessed and happy Christmas.

**All the best!**



