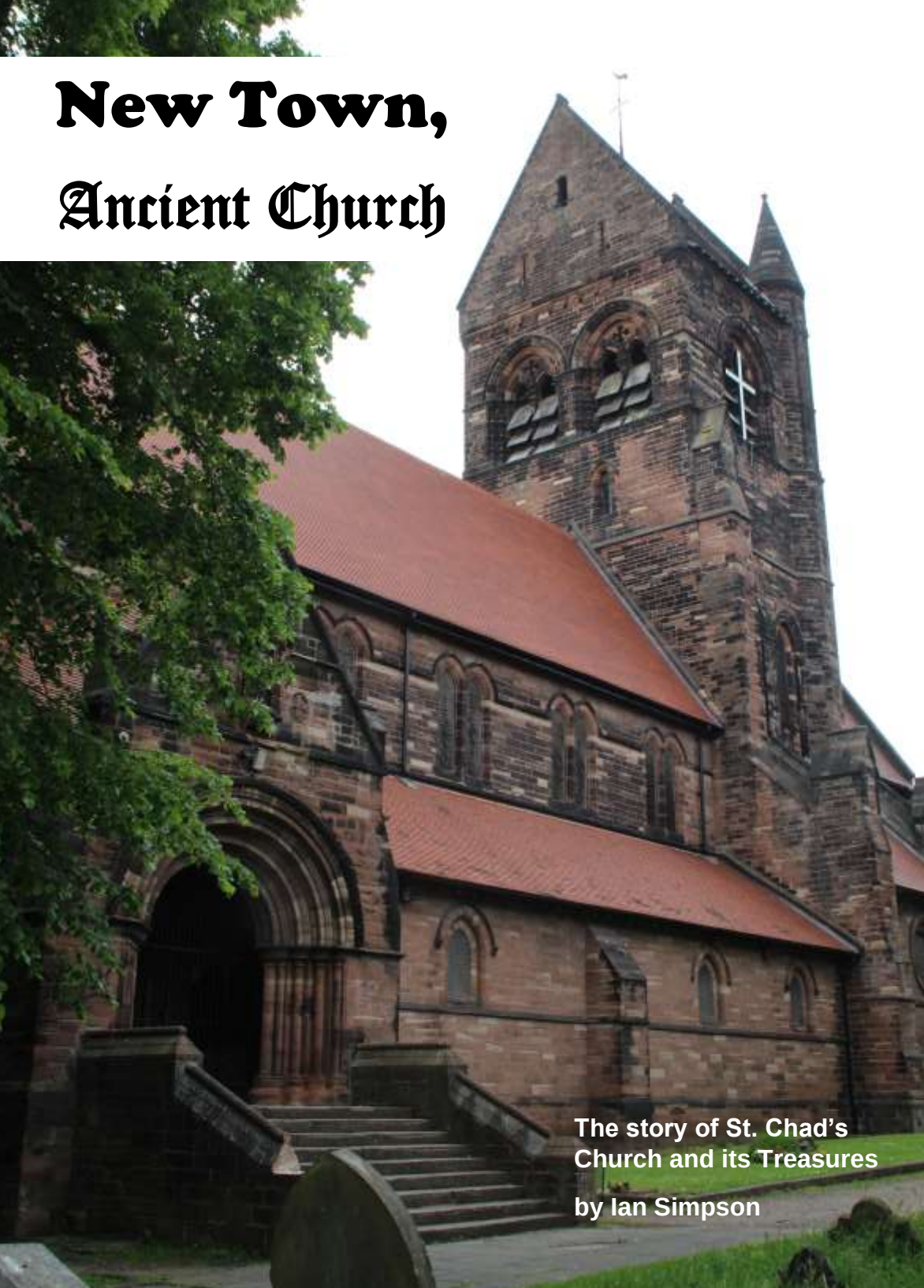
New Town,

Ancient Church



The story of St. Chad's Church and its Treasures

by Ian Simpson

NEW TOWN, ANCIENT CHURCH

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By Ian Simpson

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Photo Credits and Acknowledgements

Front cover: Exterior view of St. Chad's showing the south porch, south aisle and tower. (IS). Inside front cover: St. Chad's War Memorial. (IS). Above: The rose window above the Transfiguration scene. The scroll reads *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* - "Glory to God in the Highest" (BH).

Throughout this book, photos credited (BH) are by **Barry Hale**, those credited (IS) are by **Ian Simpson**.

St. Chad's Church and the author of this work are extremely grateful to **Andrew Mitchell** for his generous and invaluable assistance in the early stages of the Roof Replacement Project.

INTRODUCTION

Time travel is possible. If you don't believe me, come to Kirkby and look into the eyes of people who walked here, on the edge of the West Lancashire Plain, over eight centuries ago. Kirkby was a rural backwater then, a far cry from the New Town which mushroomed in the second half of the 20th century. One item connects the Kirkby residents of 1221 with those of 2021: the font in St. Chad's Church.

That isn't the only treasure to be found in St. Chad's. The church is home to one of the finest – if not the finest – collections of work by the famous Pre-Raphaelite artist Henry Holiday. The building itself is a strikingly powerful piece of architecture by Paley and Austin, one of the Victorian era's most accomplished architectural practices. There are natural treasures here too: peregrine falcons, among the fastest creatures on the planet, make the tower their home.

A common misconception is that the church is owned by, and exists for, its regular congregation. This isn't true. It is for everyone in the parish it serves, regardless of whether or not they are Anglicans, and it welcomes visitors from further afield as well - at least, it will do once again, when the current pandemic and lockdown are behind us!

This book exists in order to bring these treasures to a wider audience. That is one of the outcomes which the National Lottery Heritage Fund aims to achieve with its funding, and we are grateful to the Fund for its generous support of the 2018-20 programme of roof repairs. I've tried to write it in such a way that it will be accessible to those who are not familiar with architectural terms, church history or Bible stories whilst still offering something of interest to the seasoned "church crawler". I've included a potted history of Kirkby; this is intended to put the church into its context (it cannot be properly understood otherwise) but it is not intended as a definitive history of the town.

If this book inspires you to come and visit St. Chad's, to appreciate its heritage and to love it, then it has done its job.

Ian Simpson, February 2021.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF KIRKBY AND ITS CHURCH

Situated on the edge of the fertile West Lancashire Plain about 10km north-east of Liverpool City Centre, the town of Kirkby is home to around 44,000 people. Since 1974 it has been part of the Metropolitan Borough of Knowsley and it is fair to say that since its development as a New Town began in the 1950s Kirkby's fortunes have ebbed and flowed. Looking around the town today it is easy to forget that Kirkby is, in fact, an ancient settlement with a fascinating history.

The town's name is itself a clue to its origins. It derives from the Danish *Kyrka* (church) and *bi* (a place of residence) so we know that there was a settlement there in the 9th or 10th century and that it was Christian. Nearby Ormskirk (*Ormr's Kyrka*; Ormr was believed to have been a Viking who converted to Christianity) and Kirkdale date from around the same time.

But Kirkby is even older than that. In 1995 an archaeological dig next to St.Chad's, looking for evidence of the 9th Century settlement, found traces of an Iron Age roundhouse (a timber and mud house, built before either Christ's birth or the Roman invasion of Britain) and Iron Age pottery. These finds could date back as far as the 7th Century BC meaning that people have lived in Kirkby for 2,700 years.

The remains of an ancient track were discovered. The roundhouse, 6.5m in radius, would have housed 10 people. It was built of wattle-and-daub on a timber frame, insulated with straw and heather. It had a thatched roof on timber rafters. These discoveries were a surprise to the archaeologists, who had previously no idea of such an ancient settlement in Kirkby (although at least one Bronze Age axe had been discovered in Kirkby by 1982[1]).

The first church in Kirkby would have been the one founded by the Danish settlers. Many Danes who came to England with the Viking raids settled here, living peacefully and adopting the Christian religion. We know very little about this church.

In the aftermath of the Norman invasion of 1066, almost all Saxon buildings were torn down and replaced with Norman ones, or else rebuilt and expanded so as to be unrecognisable. This would undoubtedly have been the fate of the church at Kirkby.

Having invaded and subdued England, the Normans set about creating an inventory of all the land and property they now governed. This was done principally to ensure that tax revenues were maximised, but the Domesday Book of 1086 survives today as a fascinating record of who owned what.

The Domesday Book refers to Kirkby as *Cherchebi* which is the Norman French translation of the settlement's Danish name. At the time of the Norman invasion Uhtred was Lord of Cherchebi but by 1086 it was in the hands of the young Roger of Poitou as part of the Hundred of Derbei. A *Hundred* was a geographical division of land akin to a modern borough; the Hundred of Derbei encompassed much of modern Merseyside (apart from the Wirral) plus parts of Wigan and Salford.

Roger of Poitou (c. 1065-1123) was a colourful character. He owned most of the land *inter Mersam et Ripam* (between the Mersey and the Ribble) as a result of his advantageous marriage to Almodis, daughter of Count Aldebert II of Poitou, in the years running up to Domesday. Roger's acquisition of the lands between the Ribble and the Lune, together with Furness and Cartmel across Morecambe Bay, in 1092 set the boundaries of what would become the County of Lancashire until Local Government Reorganisation almost nine centuries later in 1974. Roger was stripped of his holdings in 1102, however, as a punishment for his part (alongside his brother Arnulf) in a rebellion against King Henry I.

The Hundred of Derbei was administered from West Derby Castle, reputedly built by Roger of Poitou. The position of West Derby was strengthened in the 12th Century when West Derby Hundred was united with the Hundreds of Warrington and Newton-in-Makerfield, and again from 1207 when King John granted a Royal Charter to the Port of Liverpool, giving access to trade with Cheshire and beyond.

Little is known of the Norman church in Kirkby. It was a Chapel of Ease to the main Parish Church at Walton-on-the-Hill, rather than a parish church in the modern sense. We do not even know whether it was dedicated to St. Chad, as the modern church is; although St. Chad was Bishop of Lichfield in the 7th Century AD, the earliest known reference to him in the context of Kirkby dates from 1733[2].

By the time the Norman church was approaching its 700th birthday it had fallen into dilapidation and in 1766 it was demolished and replaced with a red brick chapel dedicated to St. Chad. Funds for the construction were raised by the minister, Rev. Thomas Wilkinson, who had been in post since 1756 and would go on to die in 1786, at the age of 64. He died in the middle of a Sunday evening service whereupon "the congregation was immediately dismissed"[3].

A pre-1812 drawing of St, Chad's Chapel [W.J. Hammond]

The new chapel was a barn-like structure with a pitched roof and a small louvred bellcote at the west end and best described as functional in appearance rather than a thing of beauty. An unfortunate feature of the new building was that it did not include the ancient font which was instead cast out and used as a water butt.

At some point the font had been given a very thick coat of whitewash. It is suggested[4] that this – which might seem to us to be an act of vandalism – was done during the Puritan era (1649-1660) as Puritan Christianity did not tolerate the use of images of people in worship. If this is so, whitewashing the font was certainly preferable to its destruction, the fate which befell many Mediaeval fonts (not to mention statues and stained glass windows) at that time. The coating also helped preserve the font during its time outside and so we should actually be grateful to those who applied it.

Following several changes of ownership, the West Derby Hundred had been bought by the Molyneux family in 1596. As Stephen Henders notes in his excellent history of St. Cuthbert's, Halsall[5] (15km north of Kirkby), West Lancashire was a remote outpost of England in which Catholicism was not only tolerated but even flourished to a degree long after the religion and its practices had been officially abandoned in the Reformation. Like many prominent families in the area, the Molyneux remained Catholic until relatively late, finally renouncing that religion in 1769.

In 1771 the Molyneux were elevated to the title Earls of Sefton. In 1806 they donated the land upon which the Kirkby Church School was built. The purpose-built school replaced a schoolroom which had been added to the church late in the 18th Century but which had become inadequate for the needs of the community.

Growth in Kirkby's population required the chapel to be extended in 1812; the east end was rebuilt and a gallery added. Comparing the pre-1812 drawing with photographs of the chapel immediately prior to its demolition (which unfortunately were not available for this publication) it is evident that it was extended from four bays to five and that what appears to have been a wooden side extension was added to accommodate the staircase up to the new gallery. The churchyard was expanded in 1846.

In 1848 the railway arrived in Kirkby when the Liverpool, Bolton & Bury Railway Company opened a station in the town. Unlike the coastal settlements to the north of Liverpool which experienced rapid growth and development in the early railway era, the improved

communications between Kirkby and the rest of the world did not have a noticeable effect on the town's population which in 1871 stood at just under 1,500[6]. If anything the opportunity to move to bustling Liverpool 10km away caused Kirkby's population to drop in the later part of the 19th Century.

The Molyneux family purchased the *advowson* of St. Chad's (the right to select and appoint the clergy) in 1850. Around this time Kirkby became a parish in its own right for the first time. The patrons decided it was time to invest some serious money in the construction of a new "statement" church and in 1868 the fourth Earl of Sefton commissioned the noted Lancashire architects Austin and Paley to design it.

Whilst Austin and Paley were undoubted masters of the Gothic Revival style of architecture[7], the design for the new St. Chad's incorporated a number of the Romanesque features associated with Norman architecture to create a sense of continuity with the Mediaeval church. The new church was built immediately to the north of the 1776 chapel which remained in use until 1871 when the new building was complete.

St. Chad's cost £30,000 to build (equivalent to about £3.6 million today) and was consecrated on 4th October, 1871 by the Bishop of Chester. Up until the creation of the Diocese of Liverpool in 1880, the whole of what is now Merseyside was part of the Diocese of Chester.

The 1766 chapel was demolished in 1872 and much of the masonry was incorporated into the wall around the churchyard. Today the location of its altar is marked by a cross (*photo, left [IS]).*

Between 1872 and 1899 the church was beautified with the addition of a fine set of stained glass windows by the Pre-Raphaelite artist Henry Holiday. A full description of these is given later in the book.

The current organ, a three-manual instrument by Wordsworth & Company of Leeds, was introduced in 1909 and is dedicated to the memory of Rev. John Leach. It replaced an organ by E. Franklin Lloyd of Liverpool which is known to have been in the church by 1890[8]. Rev. Leach, a native of Wigan and alumnus of Caius College, Cambridge, came to Kirkby in 1881 having previously been Vicar of St. John The Divine, Pemberton (near Wigan)[9]. St. Chad's was the longest and final appointment of his career, serving for a quarter of a century until his retirement in 1906. He died at Bournemouth in 1907[10].

The opening of the East Lancashire Road in 1934 created fast road access between Kirkby, Liverpool, St. Helens and Manchester and consideration was given to opening an industrial estate in the town. It was the onset of World War II in 1939 which ultimately brought modern industrial development to Kirkby in the form of the Royal Ordnance Factory. Officially titled Filling Factory No. 7, the first shells rolled off the production lines in 1940.

Although the initial workforce was under 100, the demands of the war effort saw this increase rapidly to a peak of 23,000, most of whom were women. The complex extended to 1,000 buildings with 18 miles of road and 23 miles of railway and ultimately produced 10% of all the munitions used in the British war effort. The Royal Ordnance Factory had its own railway station, exclusively for workers[11]. The station never appeared on public timetables due to the secrecy of the operation and trains ran showing "Simonswood" as their destination.

During the war it was suggested that the font be removed and taken away to a place of safety given that the church was so close to an important potential target for enemy bombing. Rev. D.L. Griffiths, the Vicar at the time, refused on the grounds that he felt it would be improper to baptise Kirkby's babies in any other font: this was a huge risk to take. Another artistic treasure, the set of fourteen Burne-Jones windows at All Hallows, Allerton (Liverpool), was removed to a farm in

Yorkshire just two weeks before the blast from a stray incendiary bomb blew out all the plain glass introduced to replace the windows.

The Royal Ordnance Factory closed in 1946 and the site passed to Liverpool Corporation (despite being outside the city boundaries) for redevelopment as the Kirkby Industrial Estate. At around the same time the Corporation purchased large swathes of the Earl of Sefton's land for redevelopment into new housing estates.

These events kick-started the incredible post-war growth of Kirkby from a settlement of under 1,500 people to a major New Town with, at its peak, almost 60,000. By 1951 the population had passed 3,000 and by 1961 it had exceeded 52,000, making Kirkby the fastest growing town in the UK. Much of the population growth was driven by the "slum clearance" policy in Liverpool where much of the inner-city housing stock had been deemed unfit and slated for demolition. Whole families, streets and communities were moved, often against their will and with little say in their destination, to Kirkby and to other new developments such as Skelmersdale, Halewood and even Winsford in Cheshire, a full 50km from Liverpool.

Needless to say, such rapid expansion created many problems. Many families were moved into their new homes before local facilities such as shops and pubs were completed and in some cases the build quality of these new homes, thrown up to meet the timetable, was so poor that they quickly began to exhibit structural defects. By October 1972 conditions had deteriorated to such an extent that a proposed rent increase sparked a 14-month rent strike by 3,000 residents of the Tower Hill Estate.[12]

The rapid increase in population necessitated the construction of new churches to serve the new estates. The Church of England built three, the first of which was St. Martin's, serving the Southdene estate; its hall was built in 1952, followed by the church in 1964. St. Andrew's was built in 1976 but had to be rebuilt in 2002 following a fire. It continues to serve the people of Tower Hill to this day. The third new Anglican church was St. Mark's, Northwood, built in 1970. This church closed in 2016 and sold in 2020. Another important building to mention is the Centre 63 Church of England youth club, built in 1963.

St. Martin's Church, Southdene, in 2017 [IS].

St. Chad's, St. Martin's and St. Andrew's together form the Kirkby Team.

Many of the families moved from Liverpool to Kirkby were of Irish Catholic descent and seven churches were constructed to meet their spiritual needs though not all survive today. The first of these, in 1955, was the concrete-framed, brick-clad Holy Angels, designed by the prolific Catholic church building practice of L.A.G. Pritchard and Partners. Another Pritchard church, St. Joseph The Worker on Bewley Drive, opened in 1964. In 1976 St. Peter & St. Paul on Apostles Way was opened, although it was not formally consecrated until 2002.

Kirkby was added to the motorway network in 1972 with the completion of the M57, and in 1974 local government reorganisation brought Kirkby (together with Huyton, Prescot and Halewood) into the Metropolitan Borough of Knowsley, one of six constituent boroughs of the new Merseyside County Council.

In 1975 St. Chad's was added to the National Heritage List as a Grade II* Listed building[13]. This recognises its status as being a "particularly important building of more than special interest" and gives it a substantial degree of protection against inappropriate development.

Kirkby's population declined throughout the 1970s and 1980s to around 40,000 although recently it has risen slightly again. Life-expired 1960's high-density housing has been pulled down and replaced with modern townhouses. The decline in traditional skilled manufacturing and engineering employment since the 1980s has hit Kirkby hard and the retail and warehousing jobs which have replaced them tend to be lower-skilled and lower-paid.

The refurbishment of Kirkby's market (2014) and bus station (2016) brought some cheer to the town as did the announcement in 2019 that the town centre had been bought out by Knowsley Council from a private developer which had left much of the land undeveloped and inaccessible for years.

2019 saw the replacement of the worst sections of the church roof and the reinstatement of the missing rainwater goods. Some repairs were also carried out to high-level stonework. All this work should ensure that St. Chad's is watertight for several decades to come and can continue serving the people of Kirkby as it and its predecessors have done for over a thousand years. Whilst the pandemic resulted in the postponement of many events and activities to celebrate the work's completion, we know that these difficult times will pass and we look forward to writing the next chapter in the history of St. Chad's.

The North West Vehicle Restoration Trust based in Kirkby celebrates the town's transport heritage with a collection of restored buses. This bus worked for Fareway Passenger Services in the 1990s. Fareway was founded by four Kirkby busmen whose mission was to improve the town's transport links and operated between 1987 and 1996. The NWVRT puts on regular events and open days – see its website at www.nwvrt.info [IS]

WHO WAS ST. CHAD?

St. Chad was a very important figure in the church in the last third of the seventh century. Prior to the year 663, the church in the Kingdom of Northumbria had followed the traditions and customs of Celtic Christianity as taught by St. Columba and St. Aidan. These differed somewhat from those of the Church of Rome. In particular, the two churches calculated the date of Easter differently. A gathering of church leaders, called a Synod – the term is still used in the Church of England today – was called in order to settle these differences and standardise practice; this took place at Whitby in 663/4.

Right: Statue of St. Chad, West Front, Lichfield Cathedral [IS].

The Synod decided to adopt the Roman practices but shortly afterwards many leaders of the church were wiped out by an outbreak of the plague leading to many younger men being promoted to senior positions. One of these was Chad, who became Abbot of the monastery at Lastingham (in modern North Yorkshire) upon the death of his older brother Cedd. Chad became known for his devotion to prayer and study. He also travelled widely throughout Northumbria, preaching and teaching the Christian faith.

In 669 King Wulfhere of the neighbouring Kingdom of Mercia (England was yet to become a united country) made a request to Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury. Wulfhere and his brothers had become Christians a few years earlier and now the king wanted a bishop to lead the Mercian church. Archbishop Theodore knew Chad and had been impressed by his leadership and holiness, and appointed him to the new position. The seat of the new bishop was to be in Lichfield, at a church founded by King Wulfhere's predecessor Oswy in 657 on the site of what is now Lichfield Cathedral.

Chad spent the remaining three years of his life looking after the spiritual needs of the Mercians. Indeed St. Bede, writing in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (completed c.731, Bede's work is our most important primary source relating to the history of the early church in England), cited St. Chad as one of the most important figures in the conversion of Mercia to Christianity.

Chad died on March 2nd, 672, aged around 39 years. The date of his death is kept to this day as St. Chad's Day, which in agricultural folklore is considered to be the best day to sow broad beans in England. He was buried in Lichfield but his bones were later moved to a purpose-built shrine. In Mediaeval times the bones of saints were believed to have healing properties and the organisation of pilgrimages to shrines became a flourishing industry – the ancestor of today's package tour operations, you might say – and St. Chad's shrine was turned into an important tourist attraction.

The Reformation in the 1530s and 1540s put an end to this trade as Protestantism forbade the cult of relics; St. Chad's shrine was destroyed but at least some of his bones were rescued for safe-keeping. They found a permanent resting place in 1841 when they were installed in an altar at the new St. Chad's Cathedral in Birmingham.

Why is the church in Kirkby dedicated to St. Chad? Kirkby was part of Mercia in St. Chad's time and up until the sixteenth century was part of the Diocese of Lichfield of which St. Chad was the first Bishop. There is no evidence that St. Chad ever visited Kirkby, nor that any of the pre-1766 churches there were dedicated to him. It is equally true to say that there is no evidence that the earlier churches were **not** dedicated to him. We know that by 1733 there was a parcel of land "called Chad-croft adjoining ye north side of ye Chapell yard"[14], and that the 1766 chapel was dedicated to St. Chad.

The simplest explanation for the dedication might be the fact that, as someone who combined strong leadership with faith, piety and humility, Chad represented the kind of virtues to which the Christian congregation should aspire in their own lives.

THE CHURCH'S ARCHITECTURE

An interior view of St. Chad's looking west [IS].

Considering it was built to serve a settlement of under 1,500 souls, St. Chad's is quite a massive church. It was built to seat 650 which was around half the town's population in the 1870s. Its high saddleback tower (meaning the tower has a roof with a ridge and two slopes) is visible from some distance away and the church as a whole is an important local landmark.

The architectural critic Sir Nikolaus Pevsner described St. Chad's as "one of Paley & Austin's most powerful"[15] and notes the Norman detailing superimposed upon the basically Gothic design. As noted above, it is likely that the Norman elements were included deliberately to create a feeling of continuity - linking the modern church with its Norman predecessor. The most obvious example of this is the south porch with its multiple recessed round-headed arches.

Since early times it has been the custom to build Christian churches on an east-west axis, with the altar at the east end to face the rising sun. Even where a church is not built on a true east-west axis, the convention is to refer to the altar as being in the east end, deriving all the other compass points from there when describing locations within the church. St. Chad's is built on an axis with its "liturgical east" about one minute (six degrees) north of true east.

The material used to build the church is a fairly pale red sandstone with some cream mottling typical of the North Liverpool / West Lancashire region. The variation in colour within the stone derives from the iron oxide content with a redder stone having a higher concentration than a cream-coloured one. The church's roof is of red terracotta tiles.

Moving around the outside of the church in a clockwise direction, the west end features two large stone buttresses: in between these is a row of three windows separated by blind arcades; above these are three tall single windows known as lancets.

The north porch was originally identical to that on the south side but was filled in in the late 20th century to provide accommodation for toilet facilities and a small kitchen inside.

Unfortunately the north side of the church, being invisible from the road, has attracted vandalism and graffiti over the years. Not only is this a shame as modern spray paints in particular can penetrate deep into porous sandstone causing irreparable damage, it is also a crime which spoils everyone's enjoyment of the fine architecture.

The north side roof was in exceptionally poor condition by 2015. It was estimated that its replacement would cost in the region of £350,000 and so a fund-raising programme was commenced. Thanks to a grant of £225,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (now the National Lottery Heritage Fund), further grants from the Listed Places of Worship Scheme, Allchurches Trust and the Wolfson Foundation (via ChurchCare), and the generosity of many local people, the money was raised and the worst sections of roof were replaced in 2019/20. The final cost of the work was £333,900 and the results are clearly visible.

Beneath the tower, between the two mighty buttresses supporting the immense weight of the structure, the organ chamber projects out. Look up to the tower between late March and July and you may well catch a glimpse of our resident peregrine falcons as they fly out to hunt prey or return home with a meal for their chicks.

The east end of the church presents a noble but austere view. A row of blind arcading (infilled stone arches) sits beneath three single lancet windows and a circular window. This is perhaps the best side of the church to appreciate the subtle variations in colour between (and within) different stones. Note how the tower is not symmetrical – to the south side (the left as you look at it) there is a small turret. This is called a "stair turret" and shows where the spiral staircase runs up giving access to the ringing chamber and bell tower.

The cross visible to your left as you walk past the south side vestry door marks the location of the 1766 Chapel; specifically it marks the point at which the altar stood in the east end of that building.

Entering the church by the south porch, the first impression most visitors have is of a vast, cavernous space. Depending on whether it is a dull day or a bright one the interior may feel gloomy or it may sparkle

with colour as the light streams through the clerestory windows on to the mellow red sandstone. It may take a minute or two for the visitor's eyes to become accustomed to the gloom on a dark day. No two visits are the same; this is a characteristic feature of genuinely great architecture.

At the west end of the church is the ancient font, the large carved sandstone bowl in which many generations of Kirkby people have been baptised. This deserves a good, close look and its story is told in more detail in a later section.

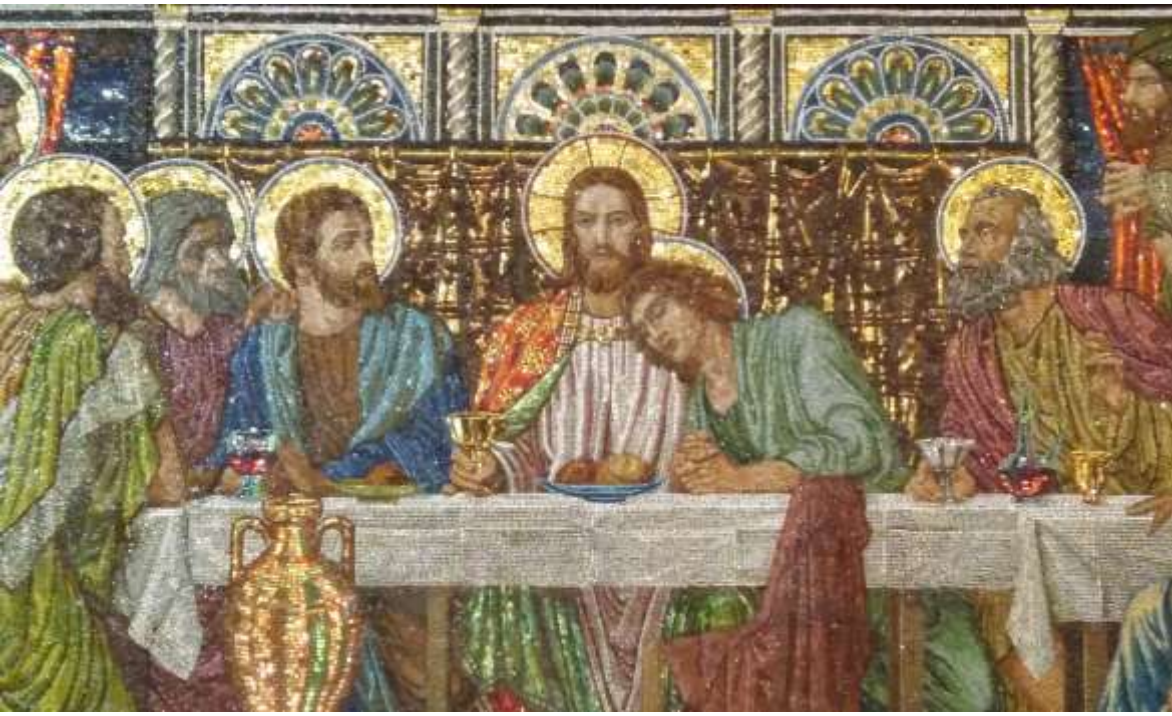
The arcades (rows of arches) on either side of the church are important both in terms of their beauty and for the strength they give to the building structure. A very unusual feature of the arcades is that the capitals (column heads) on the north side are octagonal, whilst those on the south side are circular. One explanation given for this is that, at the time the church was built, there was a dispute between the people of Kirkby and the people of Simonswood (very much a separate village in those days) as to whether they wanted circular capitals or round ones. As a compromise, the people of Kirkby who entered the church via the south porch were given round capitals on the south side, and the people of Simonswood who came in from the north were given octagonal ones on that side. Whether or not this story is actually true is lost in the mists of time.

St. Chad's is home to an extraordinary set of windows by the noted Pre-Raphaelite artist Henry Holiday. These were installed over a period of 27 years between 1872 and 1899 and form one of the best – if not the best – collections of the artist's work in one place. We will be looking at these windows in more detail later on.

One of the most thrilling features of St. Chad's architecture is the tower crossing with its Gothic arches soaring up towards the vaulted stone ceiling.

To the north of the tower crossing is the organ, a fine three-manual instrument which was installed in 1909 in memory of Rev. John Leach who was Vicar of St. Chad's from 1881 to 1906. It was built by Wordsworth & Co. of Leeds and has 25 stops – individual voices

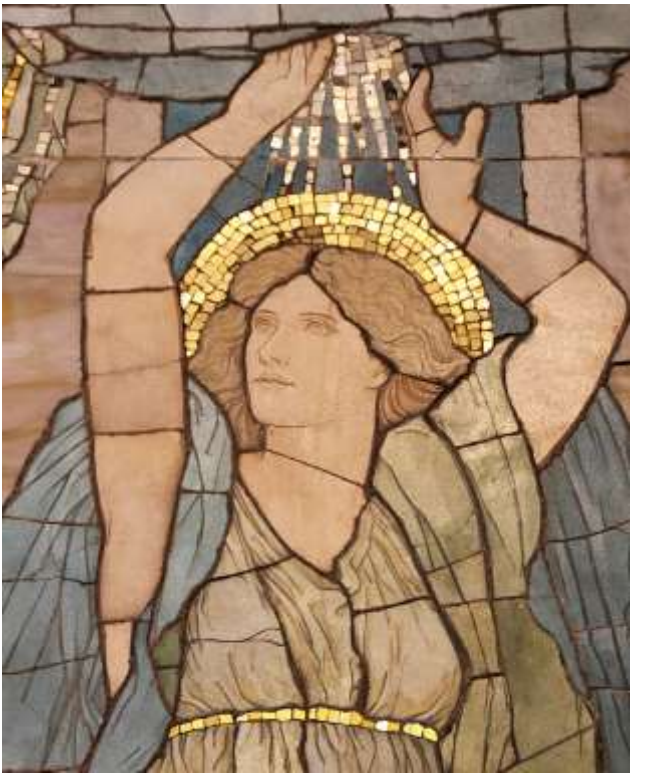
which the organist can select and combine to vary the tone and volume of the music being played. As well as producing a glorious sound in the right hands, the organ is an architectural feature of some beauty, with its solid oak panelling and rows of shiny metal pipes.



A detail of the reredos showing Jesus and his friends at the Last Supper [IS].

Traditionally the east end, where the altar (or Lord's table) is situated, is the most ornate part of a church. St. Chad's is no exception. Behind the altar is a decorative screen called a reredos. The reredos is an image of the Last Supper, the final time Jesus and his twelve disciples gathered together before the Crucifixion. It was designed by Henry Holiday and executed by the craftsmen of Salviati's workshop in Venice in 1898. Salviati was the leading mosaic artist of the time and his work was very much in demand; other examples of his work may be found at St. Bridget's Church in Wavertree, Liverpool, and St. Faith's in Crosby.

The reredos is surrounded by an exquisite frieze, also designed by Holiday, depicting angels and virtues: this is a masterpiece which shows the Pre-Raphaelite style at its best. The technique used is called *opus sectile* and was originally invented by the Romans. It uses pieces of glass, cut to shape and fitted together, to form the picture (*detail, right [IS]*).



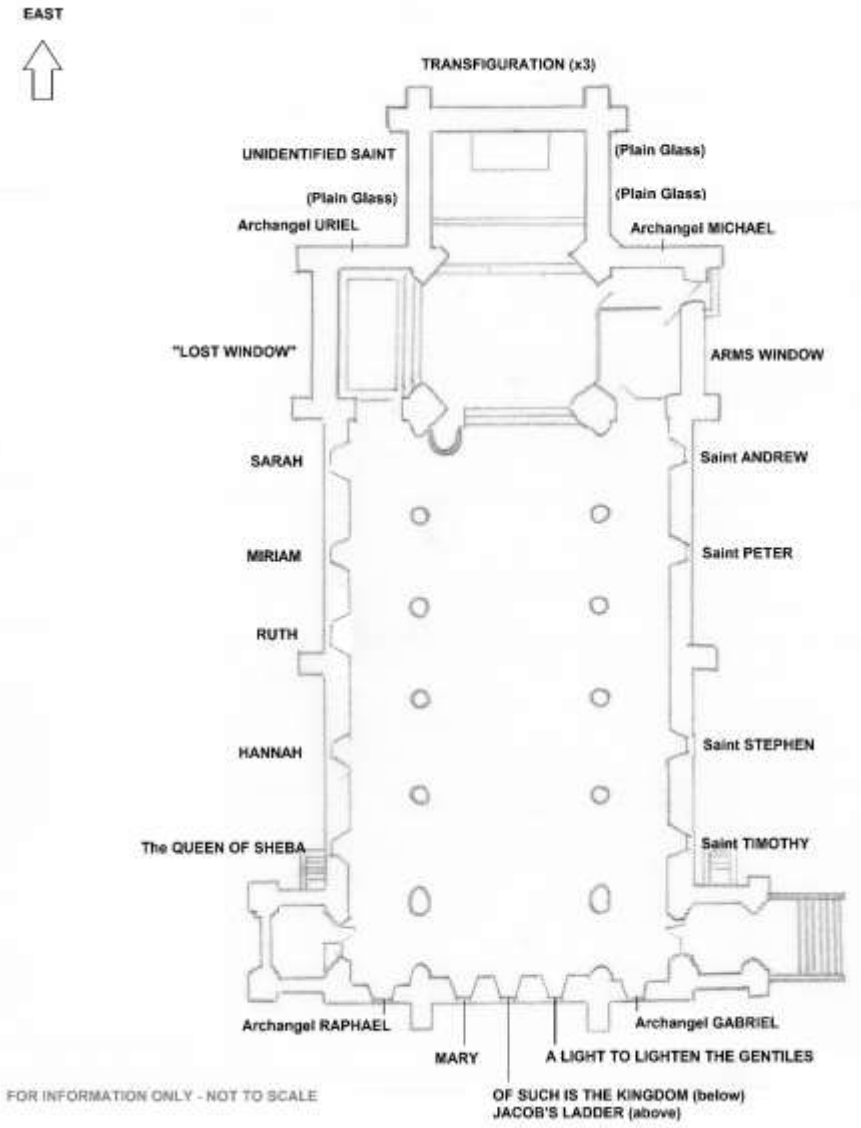
Above the frieze is a blind arcade – a row of infilled stone arches. This is another throwback to the architecture of the Norman era (original 12th century examples may be seen at Rochester Cathedral and St. Bartholomew the Great in London).

The four east windows – three lancets with a rose above – complete the architecture of St. Chad's. These superb windows are described in more detail in the next section.

St. Chad's is truly a box of treasures. If you already know the church we hope these notes will enhance your enjoyment and appreciation of it. If you do not, we hope they will inspire you to come (lockdown restrictions permitting!) and experience it for yourself.

The Archangel Gabriel Window [BH]

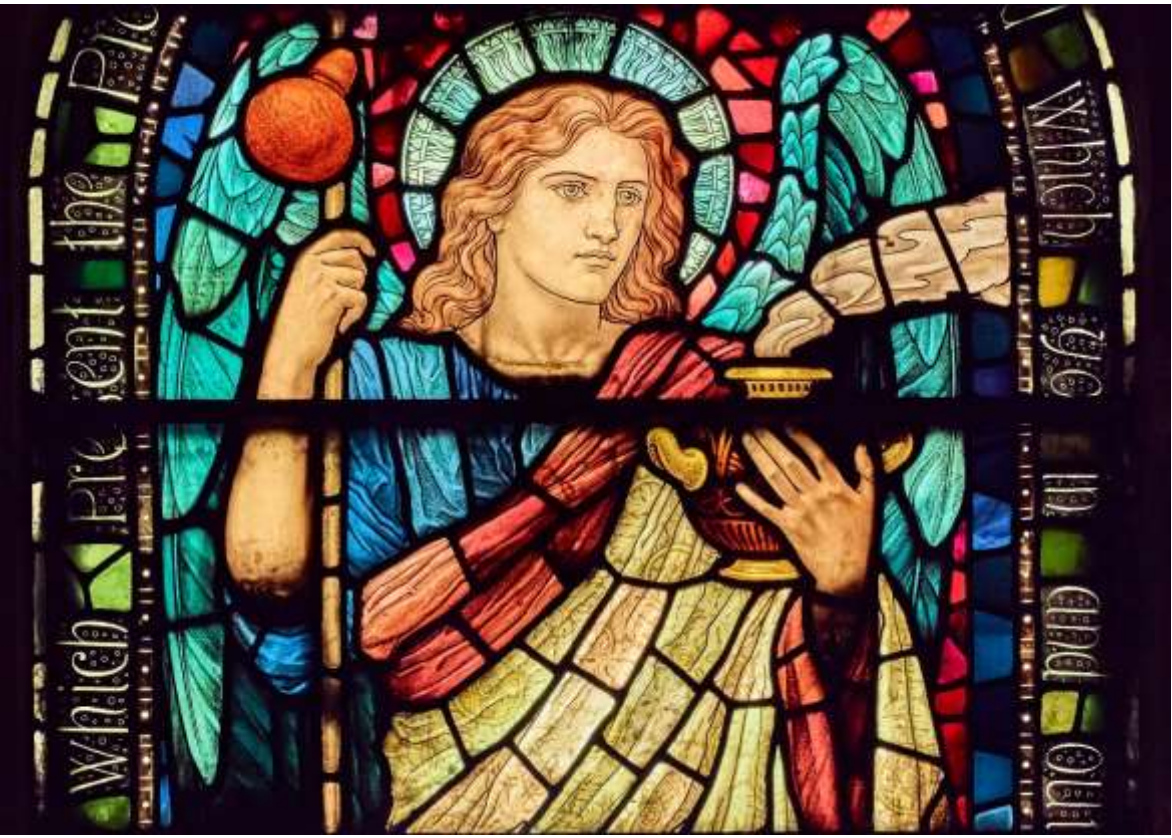
THE WINDOWS



It is traditional to describe the contents of a church in a clockwise direction. In the discussion which follows we will begin by looking at the four Archangel windows in order and then the rest of the windows.

The Four Archangels

Archangels, chiefs or rulers of angels who answer directly to God, are found in a number of religious and spiritual traditions throughout the world and are therefore not exclusively Christian. Ancient Jewish texts mention seven archangels, listed in the Book of Enoch, whilst Islam recognises four. Some mystical and magical traditions have as many as fifteen. In the Anglican Christian tradition there are four and they are represented in windows near the four corners of St. Chad's. As spiritual beings without physical bodies, any depiction of an archangel is purely an artistic interpretation.



Detail of the Archangel Raphael Window (BH).

Gabriel (SW Corner). Gabriel is the archangel who announces to the Virgin Mary that she is to bear a child by the power of the Holy Spirit[16]. The inscription around the edge reads “A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel – God With Us”, which is from the Old Testament Prophet Isaiah, whilst the banderole (the narrow flag-like device, often used in stained glass as the equivalent of a speech bubble) above Gabriel’s head reads “Blessed art thou among women”, a direct quotation from Gabriel’s greeting to Mary.

Raphael (NW Corner). The archangel Raphael is not mentioned by name in the Bible but he does appear in the Book of Tobit. Tobit is an ‘apocryphal’ book, meaning that, although it was left out of the Bible, still has something to teach us about the life of faith. Raphael is a healing archangel who is often called upon to restore faith to those who have lost it. The Raphael window was installed in memory of William Philip Molyneux, KG, 4th Earl of Sefton. He died in 1897, making this one of the last Holiday windows to be installed at St. Chad’s. The Raphael window has suffered damage from vandals over the years and some quarries have been replaced with plain glass.

Uriel (NE Corner). The archangel Uriel (meaning “light of God”) does not appear in the Bible. In *Paradise Lost*, Book III, John Milton describes him as “… one of the sev’n Spirits that stand / In sight of God’s high Throne” (654/5)[17]. The Uriel window is partially obscured nowadays by the organ case which was introduced some years after the window was installed. It was given in memory of Sarah, wife of Thomas Mercer. Sarah (née Ledson) and Thomas were married at St. Chad’s Chapel on 27th January 1858 by Rev. R.H. Grey, at the ages of 25 and 28 respectively. Thomas was a farmer and we know from the fact he could fund a window of this quality that he must have been successful. Further evidence of this is that he was asked to give evidence to the Royal Commission on Agriculture in 1894[18].

Michael (SE Corner). A fierce warrior who leads God’s army to finally vanquish the devil in the Book of Revelation, the archangel Michael is also referred to as Saint Michael and a number of churches are dedicated to him - for example at nearby Huyton. St. Michael is celebrated on September 29th and the garden plant the Michaelmas daisy gets its name as it is usually in flower around that date.

West Windows

The three lower windows are all dedicated to the memory of the 4th Earl of Sefton (d. 1897) making them amongst the last Holiday windows to be installed at St. Chad's.

The first window (approached from the south porch) is titled **"A Light to lighten the Gentiles"** and shows a scene from the story in St. Luke's Gospel[19] in which the baby Jesus is taken to the Temple at the age of 40 days; this was a religious requirement for the first-born sons of Jewish families. The elderly man holding the child is Simeon, a holy man and a visionary, who upon seeing Jesus proclaims him to be "A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of [God's] people Israel". Christians remember this event every year on February 2nd, 40 days after Christmas.

The central window, **"Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven"** features a subject which was very popular in late Victorian art; the story in which Jesus tells his disciples not to stop the children from coming to Him.

"But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven"[20]. Part of the reason for this story appearing so prominently in the imagery of the time was the high infant mortality rate – a series of long, hot summers in the 1890s had caused a spike in the death rate among young children, which was already very high due to poor living conditions and pollution in industrial areas.

The third window features the Mother of Jesus, Mary. **"Mary kept all these sayings in her heart"** (*detail overleaf [BH])* describes the teenage mother's reaction to the things that were said of her son. To hear that your son "is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel" and "a light to lighten the Gentiles" must be confusing, to say the least!

The central lancet window above "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven" is not by Henry Holiday. It depicts **Jacob's Ladder** (the ladder leading up to heaven in the patriarch Jacob's dream in the Book of Genesis) and is believed to be by the Liverpool artist H. Gustave Hiller (1865-1946). Whilst unsigned, it does share stylistic similarities with the artist's earlier work at St. Bridget, Wavertree, and (*continues on p.30)*


MARY KEPT ALL THESE
SAYINGS IN HER HEART


SO HE FED
AND RULED THEM PRUDENTLY
WITH ALL
HIS POWER
S TIMOTHY

(*from p.*27) Christ Church, Toxteth Park. The window dates from 1931, when it was given by Helena Mary, Countess of Sefton, in memory of three family members. These were Osbert Cecil Molyneux, 6th Earl of Sefton (1871-1930), his son Midshipman Cecil Richard Molyneux (1899-1916) who was killed in action aboard HMS Lion at the Battle of Jutland, and his daughter Evelyn Mary Molyneux (1902-1917).

North Aisle Windows

The North Aisle windows all depict women who feature prominently in the Old Testament. Stylistic differences between the windows suggest they were not all designed at the same time. Unfortunately these windows have all suffered vandalism damage over the years, being on the exposed north side of the building.

The Queen of Sheba. Old Testament Sheba corresponds roughly to modern Yemen, and the story of the encounter between the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon tells us that Sheba and Israel were allies and trading partners. Their two rulers may well have been closer than that: the Ethiopian legend of Kebra Nagast tells of how the Queen of Sheba bore King Solomon a son, Menilek, who became the first in a very long line of Ethiopian kings. The banderole around the Queen reads “Seek, and ye shall find”, possibly a reference to the fact that she travelled to visit King Solomon in search of his famed wisdom.

Hannah. This window is very similar to the Queen of Sheba window, suggesting the two were designed together. Hannah was an infertile woman who prayed for many years to have a child. Eventually her prayer was answered and she gave birth to a son, Samuel, whom she dedicated to the Lord. Her banderole reads “Ask and it shall be given”.

Ruth. This window is in quite a different style to Hannah and the Queen of Sheba. It also uses a different colour palette and was fired using a different technique. The breakdown of the purple and yellow pigments suggests that borax was used at the time of firing. Borax is a natural material, an alkaline compound which was added to make the glass easier to fire; unfortunately, it is water-soluble and over time it washes out, causing the colour of the window to fade.

Around the edge of the window is a version of the Mediaeval “Jesse Tree” showing how Mary, the mother of Jesus, was descended from Jesse (and therefore from his son, King David).

Miriam. In a different style again, this window takes as its subject the sister of Moses. Miriam saved Moses’ life as a baby and she later became the first woman in the Jewish tradition to be recognised as a prophet. The window is badly damaged, with Miriam’s face, right arm and left thigh all exhibiting evidence of missile strikes. This window combines elements of two styles with a Pre-Raphaelite figure of Miriam surrounded by a border of Arts and Crafts style foliage. Within this border are more Old Testament figures.

The Miriam and Sarah windows (both BH).

Sarah. This window is in the same style as Miriam's, suggesting they were designed as a pair. Sarah was the wife of the Old Testament patriarch Abraham and the mother of Isaac.

East Windows

Traditionally the most important windows in a Victorian church, the east windows at St. Chad's are upstaged a bit by the wonderful mosaic reredos and its surround. This is unfortunate, for they are windows of the highest quality. They were given in memory of the Rev. Robert Cort, who was Vicar of St. Chad's for a remarkable 56 years (1793-1850).

The three lancet windows and the rose window above the central lancet all form a single scene: a miraculous episode in the life of Jesus known as **The Transfiguration**, which is told in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. Jesus went up to the top of a high mountain where, all of a sudden, he became radiantly bright and "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (Matthew ch.17, v.2, King James Version). The Old Testament prophets Moses and Elijah (also known as Elias) appeared at either side of Jesus and he spoke with them as three of his astonished disciples looked on.

The central lancet (*photo, right [BH])* shows Jesus in a sumptuous white robe with exquisite gold details, his right hand raised in blessing.

To his right (our left as we look at the scene) is Elijah, holding a scroll; to his left is Moses, carrying one of the tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written. In the rose window above are three angels, watching the events unfold from their heavenly vantage point.

To the left of Elijah, on the north wall of the sanctuary, is a window depicting the Old Testament priest Melchizedek.

South Aisle Windows

The four South Aisle windows all depict saints – people whose devotion to God and to the Christian religion represents an outstanding example.

St. Andrew. The Patron Saint of Scotland, Andrew, is depicted with the X-shaped cross upon which he was crucified for his faith (and which appears on the flag of Scotland). He is believed to have been the brother of St. Peter. The face of St. Andrew is so detailed and lifelike that it must have been drawn from life, although we do not know who the "model" was. The style is typical of the mid- to late-1880s.

St. Peter. One of Jesus' most important disciples, Peter became the first Bishop of Rome and therefore the first Pope. Leaving his job as a fisherman to follow Christ's calling, he is depicted carrying a set of keys – the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Items which identify a saint in a work of religious art, such as Peter's keys or Andrew's X-shaped cross, are referred to as the *attributes* of the saint. The Peter window is, fittingly, in the same style as his brother Andrew's, suggesting the two were designed together as a pair.

St. Stephen. The first Christian martyr, Stephen was put to death by stoning. Many early Christians lost their lives for their faith as the radical political nature of the early Church challenged powerful vested interests. In many parts of the world today a profession of Christian faith carries the risk of persecution or even death. A large section of St. Stephen's vestment is missing and has had to be replaced with plain glass.

St. Timothy. This window is clearly one of a pair with St. Stephen and thankfully remains intact and undamaged. Timothy was a bishop in the early church who was known for his fair and encouraging leadership style, and was the person to whom two of St. Paul's Epistles, or letters, were written. He is depicted with the attribute of a bishop's crozier (*photo, p.29 [BH]).*

HENRY HOLIDAY

Henry Holiday was born in London in June 1839. His artistic talent must have been evident from an early age for at the age of just fifteen he joined the Royal Academy. Here he was introduced to Dante Gabriel Rosetti, a co-founder of the artistic and political movement known as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, as well as to Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris.

In 1861 Holiday joined the long established firm of James Powell & Sons, which was experiencing a boom in demand for stained glass windows due to the fashion for Gothic Revival architecture and the sheer number of churches being built. As Designer he replaced Edward Burne-Jones who had left to work for William Morris.

Henry Holiday became known as a brilliant technical artist with a "superb command of anatomy and a perfect understanding of the medium of glass"[21]. His attention to detail was legendary. As well as designing stained glass windows, Holiday was a painter of the highest order and a sought-after illustrator.

In 1864 Holiday married the embroiderer Catherine Raven. They had one daughter, Winifred, in 1866. The whole family were active Socialists and became heavily involved in the Suffragist Movement which campaigned for (and ultimately won) voting rights for women.

After thirty years working for Powell, Holiday set up his own studio in Hampstead where he concentrated on producing stained glass, mosaics and religious objects. He had a lifelong love of the Lake District and built a home there in 1907. Henry Holiday died in London on April 15th, 1927, aged 87.

Right: Detail from Holiday's East Window at St. John's Church, Keswick, Cumbria, executed in 1907 and widely considered amongst his best windows (IS).

Stained Glass

Perhaps the best-known of Henry Holiday's windows are in London. These include the three east windows at St. Mary Magdalene, Paddington (1869), and the glorious west window depicting the Creation at Southwark Cathedral (1903) showing his transition in style from the Pre-Raphaelites towards the Arts and Crafts Movement.

In Merseyside four other churches have Holiday glass, although these are individual windows rather than a full set as at St. Chad's. The east window, of three lights, at St. Thomas' Church in Melling about 4km away, depicts the story of Jesus welcoming the little children. It dates from 1908 and shows distinct Arts & Crafts elements such as realistic and identifiable flora and fauna.

At St. Nicholas' Church in the former coal mining community of Sutton, St. Helens, the east window of c. 1880 depicts the Three Virtues: Faith, Hope and Charity. This window is very much in the Pre-Raphaelite style but has suffered from pigment breakdown over time.

Further Merseyside windows are at St. Michael's in Huyton (two south aisle windows) and St. James in Toxteth (the east window). Windows by both Holiday and Burne-Jones were destroyed in 1940 when St. Matthew and St. James, Mossley Hill, became the first church in the country to take a direct hit from a Luftwaffe bomb.

There are several examples of Holiday's work in his beloved Lake District. In total, eighteen churches in Cumbria have Holiday windows[22] and perhaps the best is the east window at St. John's, Keswick (*detail, left [IS]*). This is a 1907 work, although in an opulent 19th Century style. Its central light shows Jesus, the Light of the World, clearly influenced by the work of the same name by Holiday's friend and fellow Pre-Raphaelite William Holman Hunt.

Other Work

Dante and Beatrice (1883) is widely regarded as Holiday's best painting. It can be seen at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool and depicts the poet and philosopher Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) meeting his beloved Beatrice beside the River Arno in Florence. Holiday was so keen to get the details right that he travelled to Florence to research the location. Having learnt that the Ponte Vecchio bridge in the background was rebuilt between 1285 and 1290, Holiday shows it with scaffolding in place.

Holiday's 11 metre mural *Magna Carta* at Rochdale's Grade I Listed Town Hall shows the events leading up to the signing of the document by King John in 1215. A £16 million programme of repair and conservation work means that Rochdale Town Hall is currently closed, but the mural will be on view to the public again when the work is complete in 2023. Interestingly, the Town Hall was opened just a week before the consecration of St. Chad's, on 27th September 1871.

Another monumental work by Holiday is the painted apse (the semi-circular east end) of St. Benedict's church at Bordesley in Birmingham, executed between 1912 and 1919. In a Byzantine style, it shows Christ in glory at the top with angels beneath.

Perhaps the best example of Holiday's work as an illustrator is Lewis Carroll's epic nonsense poem *The Hunting Of The Snark* (1874). The illustrations were printed using electrotyping which was then the most accurate way of creating mass reproductions of these finely detailed drawings.

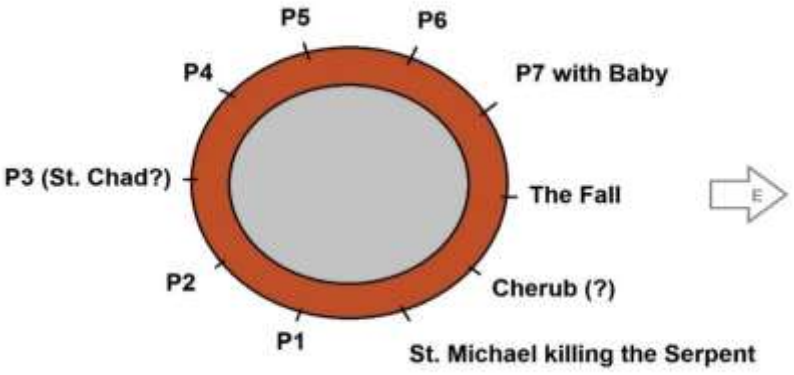
Right: an example of Henry Holiday's illustrations for the first edition of "The Hunting of the Snark" (Public Domain image)

THE FONT

The font at St. Chad's is very significant indeed. On a spiritual level, it reminds us that many generations of Kirkby families have brought their children here to be baptised – welcomed into the church family – and therefore that we are part of something with deep and ancient roots.

As a work of art it is a stunning example of early Mediaeval craftsmanship which gives us an insight into the religious mindset of the people who made it.

On a personal level, if we look closely, we can look into the faces of real people from many centuries ago and imagine them looking back at us and into our world from across the mists of time.



Top: The font, showing the Fall of Adam and Eve and the figure known as Priest 7 [IS]. Above: Plan identifying the ten scenes on the font.

The font shows a scene of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden being tempted by the devil in the form of a serpent, a figure which is thought to be a cherub holding a sword aloft, a figure which is believed to be the Archangel Michael killing a serpent and seven figures who are generally identified as “Priests”.

But how old actually is it? This is the first question most people ask about the font and the honest answer is that nobody knows for certain.

It cannot have been made before the year 960; that was the year in which the Saxon King Edgar “The Peaceful” (ruled 959 – 974) ordered that all babies must be brought to baptism before reaching the age of 37 days. Unlike modern practice, in which the infant is sprinkled with water, Saxon babies were baptised by full immersion - which accounts for the shape and size of the bowl.

It cannot have been made after 1200 as by that time work such as this had gone out of fashion in favour of Gothic architecture. There are two strong theories as to its likely date; both are backed by evidence but neither is conclusive.

The Victorian antiquarian W.J. Roberts first examined the font in 1845, at which time it had been dumped in an outbuilding next to the chapel and was coated with a thick layer of whitewash[23]. At the time the Vicar, Rev. Cort, had absolutely no interest in cleaning the font or restoring it to its rightful place within the house of God. Roberts and his colleague made several detailed drawings of the font. By the next time they saw it, in 1853, Rev. Cort’s successor Rev. R.H. Gray had had the font cleaned, fitted on to a new cylindrical shaft and installed in the chapel.

Roberts’ theory was that the seven “priestly figures” on the font represented the seven Orders of the Priesthood as laid down for the Saxon Church by Archbishop Aelfric of Canterbury; as he was Archbishop between 995 and 1005, the font cannot be dated any earlier than 995. If it is Saxon then by default it cannot have been made later than 1066, the year of the Norman invasion.

F.C. Larkin, writing in 1919[24], was of the opinion that the font is considerably later. By the time he studied the font it had been moved

into the current church building and sited atop a new circular plinth. Larkin also had the benefit of photography and illumination which had not been available to Roberts seven decades previously.

Larkin admits that the coiled snakes around the base appear as though they could be Norse in origin – in Norse culture the snake symbolised both infinity and evil – but, equally, the snake could be found in the mythology and culture of several other peoples. He argues that the sculptor may have had the Norse culture in mind when carving the font.

The arcade – the pattern of eleven arches around the font, separated by columns and acting as niches for the carved figures – also presents some dating problems as the architectural features shown are in a mixture of Saxon (stepped column bases) and Norman (the column capitals) styles.

Larkin's evidence for dating the font being Norman rather than Saxon comes from his detailed study of the figures themselves, particularly those of the seven "priests". They appear to have beards which clerics generally did not in Saxon times but which had become very common by the end of the 11th century. He also notes that the vestments the figures are wearing are of a style which would not be seen much before the start of the 12th century.

If, as Larkin suggests, the 3rd "priest" is actually St. Chad then a date after the mid-12th century is possible, for there was a revival in interest in the saint at around this time; this is when many of the great churches dedicated to him in the Midlands were founded. The evidence for this figure (P3 on the diagram) being St. Chad comes from what appears to be a ray or beam of light he his carrying.

St. Chad, so the story goes, went to visit King Wulfhere to encourage him to repent of his many sins and follow the way of Christ. Whilst St. Chad was waiting for the king, he hung up his outer garments upon a sunbeam coming through the window. When King Wulfhere arrived and saw this he tried to do the same but, unlike St. Chad's, his clothes fell to the floor. Upon seeing that the sunbeams obeyed St.Chad but not himself, the King recognised the holiness of the saint and duly repented of all his wrongdoing and injustice.

This story did not become popular before about 1150. Larkin's theory hinges upon the identification of P3 with St. Chad being correct; if it is, then 1150 is the earliest possible date for the font. Larkin further notes similarities with a font at Winchester which is known to date from about 1170, so it may be that a date a few years either side of 1170 is most likely.

What we do know is that even the latest likely date makes the font around 850 years old and as such it is the oldest man-made artefact in the Kirkby area.

ST. CHAD'S PEREGRINE FALCONS

Not all the treasures of St. Chad's are the work of human hands. The churchyard is a haven for wildlife and home to many species of wild animals, birds and plants.

Perhaps the most charismatic and iconic of the many species which live in and around St. Chad's Church is the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*). These birds are naturally cliff-dwellers but they have adapted to live on man-made structures with sheer faces such as church and cathedral towers, where they can raise their chicks in safety. Liverpool, Derby and Brussels Cathedrals all have peregrines, as does historic St. Mary Magdalene's Church in Taunton, Somerset.

Peregrine falcons return to the same nesting site each year and the pair which use St. Chad's have made this their home since at least 2015. They build their nests in early Spring, usually laying two eggs but occasionally as many as four. The chicks hatch around 30 days after the eggs are laid and fledge after about six weeks; for the next two months they remain dependent upon their parents for food. Both parents hunt.

According to the RSPB there are around 1,500 breeding pairs of peregrines in the UK[25]. To watch a peregrine hunt is to witness one of the wonders of the animal kingdom, as they stoop at up to 350kph to take their prey – which they can see from up to 3km away – with great precision.

In late Spring and Summer small piles of feathers can often be seen in the churchyard around St. Chad's; these are the remains of birds, usually pigeons, which the falcons have taken.

Peregrine falcons are a protected species under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act which makes it a criminal offence to kill, injure or disturb them or interfere with their nesting sites in any way. During the roof repairs we ensured that the peregrines in the tower were protected from disturbance at all times.

We are very grateful to Dave Gibson for these three stunning photographs of peregrine falcons taken around St. Chad's in 2020.

CHURCHYARD WILDLIFE

Late spring and early summer sees the churchyard filled with wildflowers. Cow parsley (*Anthriscus silvestris*) dominates this June view but pink campion (*Silene dioica*) and yellow meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) are also visible along with less colourful species such as field sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*). Look out for mole hills, evidence of an underground creature which – whilst rarely seen – is numerous and thriving here.

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ST. CHAD'S WELCOMES YOU!

We extend a warm welcome to anyone who wishes to visit us, either at one of our services (see below) or to our weekly Wednesday Drop-In from 10.30am*

Other events, such as Heritage Open Days each September, are advertised on our website and on our Facebook page:

www.cofekirkby.co.uk facebook.com/stchadskirkby

SERVICE TIMES (all Eucharist)

Sunday	9.30am	at St. Martin's
Sunday	11.00am	at St. Chad's
Sunday	11.00am	at St. Andrew's
Wednesday	9.45am	at St. Chad's

CONTACT DETAILS

Team Vicar of St. Chad's: Rev. Philippa Lea, 0151 547 2155

Team Rector: Rev. Jeremy Fagan, 07967 302127

* - *please check before travelling any distance*

Back Cover Photos

Inside: (left) The Ruth window from the south aisle. One of the later Holiday windows, it shows some stylistic similarities with the work of the early 20th Century Arts & Crafts windows of Bertram Lamplugh. (BH)

(right) the Jacob's Ladder window (west end), believed to be by H. Gustave Hiller (BH).

Back Cover: the Arms of the Earls of Sefton together with their motto *Vivere sat Vincere* – "to live is sufficient victory". North aisle, east end window. (BH)


RUTH

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