



HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

1857-2017: 160 Years at the Heart of Fingerpost



Services and Events at Holy Trinity

Everyone is welcome at any of our services or events! You don't have to be a "member", or a "religious person" – just be yourself.

Sunday Morning Service: 10.45

(1st Sunday of the Month: Holy Communion. 2nd and 4th Sundays: Service Of The Word. 3rd Sunday: All Age & Baptism Service. 5th Sunday: Varies)

Wednesday Lunchtime Shoppers' Service.

At Holy Trinity, our vision is to bring the Ministry of Wholeness to our community. So we don't just look after spiritual needs here, we have a range of events and activities designed to meet physical, spiritual, emotional and financial needs too.

These include:

- Healthy Eating & Cookery Classes
- Keep Fit
- Food Bank
- Benefits & Welfare Advice and Support
- First Choice Day Opportunities (Day Care)
- Craft Group
- Community Café

Contact Details

Rev. Clive Doran (Team Rector) on 01744 734335 or by email:
revclivedoran@yahoo.co.uk

Church website: <http://www.fingerpost2020.co.uk>

Welcome!

Welcome to our unique church! It's the only church in Britain to combine an exterior faced in copper slag with early laminated timber roof beams.

That isn't the only thing that makes it special, of course. It has stood here for 160 years and many generations of local people have prayed, got married, baptised their children and said goodbye to their loved ones here. Through good times and bad it has been there for the people of Fingerpost, and it still is today.

Holy Trinity is a Church of England parish church, so it belongs to everybody in the parish regardless of age, race, beliefs, etc., and all our services and activities are open to everyone.

We love to welcome visitors from further afield as well. Whether you are here to research your family tree, to study the unusual architecture, or to attend an event, please feel at home.

This free leaflet, generously funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, is a brief introduction to our history and architecture, and it celebrates the recent repair project which has made the church safer and improved the community facilities here. There is still a lot to be done, but we are facing the future with confidence.

Enjoy your visit!



Supported by

The National Lottery[®]
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



Did You Know...?

Copper Slag is a mixture of silicate minerals - a bit like glass. In sunlight it can become iridescent.

The "Copper Slag" used to build Holy Trinity was a waste product from the local smelting industry.

The irregular or "crazy paving" shape of the blocks used to build Holy Trinity gave the church the nickname of "The Giraffe Church"!

Archbishop of Canterbury
The Most Rev. Justin Welby
spent some time at Holy Trinity in September 1991 while he was training to become a Priest.

Although Fingerpost was in an important mining area, there were no mine shafts within 300m of the church. The church sits safely on a bed of clay.

Three other St. Helens churches use Copper Slag in their construction: St. Peter's (Parr), St. John's (Ravenhead) and the Welsh Chapel at Sutton Oak.



The Welsh Chapel, Lancots Lane, Sutton Oak

A Brief History of Holy Trinity

The township of Parr has a long history – the name “Parre” first appears in 1246. One of the four townships in the area, for most of its history it was a mainly agricultural area with some cottage industry (principally textiles) and small-scale mining. Following the Reformation in the 16th Century the area remained strongly Catholic, and indeed modern St. Helens still has a thriving Catholic population.

The name St. Helens, uniting the townships of Parr, Windle, Sutton and Eccleston, seems to have appeared in about 1746 and refers to a crossroads chapel in the centre of the district. Industrialisation followed soon afterwards as the development of the Turnpike roads and canals in the 1750s made the transport of raw materials quicker and cheaper. The first “industrial scale” copper smelting plant opened in 1779 and Plate glass production began at Ravenhead in 1786.

These new industries attracted people in to the area from all over rural northern England, and the population expanded rapidly.

Further growth came in 1828 when Josiah Gamble opened his first chemical works – his name lives on today as half of the Procter & Gamble group – and from 1830 the advent of railways improved transport links.

It is likely that by this time the people of Parr Mount / Fingerpost would have been served by a wooden “hut” church although no trace of this survives.

Holy Trinity Church was built in 1857 to a style known as “Early English” – simple with a layout based on the typical rural church of the 13th Century. The architects were Liverpool-based W. & J. Hay. This was not a church for a wealthy congregation so a cheap and plentiful local material was used for the outer face of the solid walls: slag from the local copper works. This very hard, glassy material – a waste product – was used locally for building though very few slag buildings survive today.

The church was built to a T-shaped plan. There were galleries at the west end and in each transept, and the building could seat 616 people.

In 1886 the church was extended and reordered in order to accommodate changes in the style of Anglican worship in the late Victorian era. A chancel and vestries were added by the local architect James Gandy (who also designed St. Mark’s Church, North Road) and a large pipe organ was installed by Wadsworth’s of Manchester.

By the 1880s the use of slag in building was almost extinct and recent investigations have shown the quality of both the material and the workmanship in the Gandy additions to be poorer than in the original 1857 construction, perhaps because the skills developed in its use during earlier decades had died out by this point.

From 1869 to 1893 the parish had been served by the much-loved Rev. W. Flaherty; following his death the East Windows were installed in the chancel. Each of the three windows contains the likeness of Rev. Flaherty as one of its central characters – this was a fairly common practice at the time.

Two further windows were added to the chancel in memory of Mrs. Jane Isabella Hibbert at around the same time.

1900 was an important year for Holy Trinity. The Mothers' Union branch, which would become the largest in the Diocese and one of the largest in the country by the mid-20th Century, was set up. The original pews were replaced with pine bench pews, adjusting the seating capacity of the church to 550, and the church was presented with a new Holy Table by Mr. Ernest Downey. This Holy Table was unique: made of Palestinian Cedarwood, it was assembled without nails of any kind.

The lantern-shaped light fittings which are in use today were introduced to the church when it was electrified in 1927; prior to this, gaslight had been used.

Throughout its history, Holy Trinity had been what is referred to as a "Lancashire Low" church – fairly traditional but not overly concerned with ceremony. In 1979 the appointment of Rev. Chris Woods brought about a radical change of direction, the church adopting the Charismatic Evangelical style of worship. Although unpopular with some long-standing members, the result was massive growth over the next few years. During the 1980s and 1990s some of the world's leading evangelists, including Eric Delve and John Wimber, preached at Holy Trinity.

Many changes were made to the building during Rev. Woods' incumbency. The organ and pews were taken out, the nave was carpeted and the west end gallery was panelled-in to create space for small group meetings. An extension containing café and community facilities was added to the church in 1990 to replace the Church Hall which was sold.

The New Millennium brought difficult times for Holy Trinity as structural problems brought mounting repair bills while the congregation declined and local economic conditions worsened. By 2011 it looked as though the church would have to close. A spirited community campaign averted this disaster and in 2013 Interim Minister Rev. Glyn Thomson put together the Fingerpost Regeneration Project Committee (FRPC). The FRPC is a coalition of church and community stakeholders who believe that regenerating the church is the key to regenerating the community and this guiding vision now informs and directs the development of the church.

In 2016 the first phase of a programme of repairs, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, National Churches Trust and the Garfield Weston Foundation was completed. The dated kitchen and café facilities were completely refurbished, the toilets replaced and a much-needed new heating system were installed. We are now working on grant applications to fund Phase II – watch this space!

Some Memories of Holy Trinity

As we were putting this booklet together we enjoyed thinking back over some of our own memories of life at Holy Trinity. Here are some which we hope you'll enjoy too:

"I used to clean out the organ pipes with a long brush - there'd be dead pigeons and all sorts in there. The blockages used to change the notes so they had to be cleared!"

"Walter Higginson used to go right up a ladder to change light bulbs. He'd use a rope to 'lasso' the light fitting then pull it over to change the bulb. You wouldn't get away with that now!"

"There was a sump pump draining the water out of the cellar when it flooded. Every so often it would stop working and you had to go down in two foot of water to give it a kick to get it going again. If that didn't work you had to hit it with a big stick."

"There was a bloke over the road who used the church bell as an alarm clock. One day it got stuck and didn't ring - this bloke complained because it made him late for work!"

"In about 1990 there was a manhole needed cleaning out so we held Kathy Woods (the Vicar's wife) upside down while she cleaned it. I held one ankle and someone else held the other!"

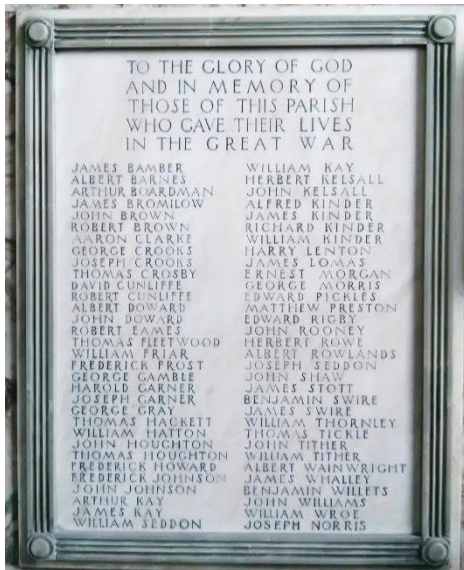
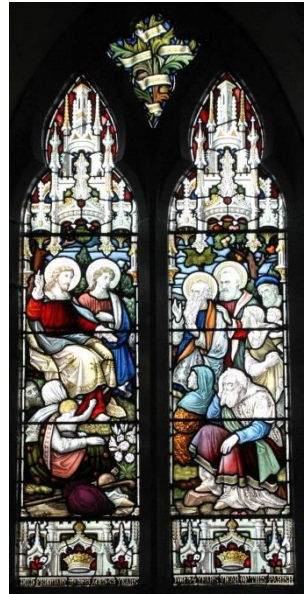
"I used to love the Thursday evening worship meetings in the 1980s - we'd come all the way from Liverpool. The preaching and the music group were excellent, and everyone was so welcoming."

Things To See in the Church

Starting at the East end, look out for the Holy Table (in some churches this is called the Altar) which is made of Cedarwood imported from Palestine. No nails were used in its construction.

The three East Windows feature scenes from the Gospels – such as the Sermon On The Mount (right) – and were given in memory of Rev. William Flaherty who was the Vicar here for 24 years. Look at the lifelike figures – there's even one man who appears to be “bored” as he listens!

On the south wall of the chancel are two lovely windows in memory of Mrs Jane Isabella Hibbert. These were made by S. Evans & Sons at their workshop in Lime Street, Liverpool, and paid for by her children and grandchildren.



World War I took its toll on Fingerpost and the names of 64 men who gave their lives in that terrible conflict are listed on the War Memorial in the south transept. We are trying to trace as many of the relatives of these men as possible in order to invite them to a special service commemorating the Armistice Centenary in November 2018. If you are one of them - or know someone who is – please email Maurice Jackson (centenaryht@hotmail.com).

Look upwards to see the laminated timber beams – some of the earliest surviving examples – and the lantern light-shades which are now ninety years old.

The oak Lectern in the shape of an eagle was the gift of Rev. S.A. Hibbert in 1878. The eagle is the symbol of St. John The Evangelist and was a very popular design for lecterns in the Victorian era.

New Community Facilities!



A very important part of our recent building project was the renewal of the kitchen, café and toilet facilities. The new kitchen features a number of improvements including low worktops which can be used by wheelchair users. All the furniture in the café is new, and it is getting good use with all our community events.

We have new toilets too – including a fully-accessible one for wheelchair users – and a new energy-efficient heating system which means we can use the church for public events all year round.

The Building Repairs

The roots of the structural problems which plagued Holy Trinity go back to the late 1970s when the church's Architects advised re-pointing the building in a cement-based mortar. This was standard advice at the time; the long-term effects upon the building were not understood. The cement mortar trapped water within the walls so over time the plasterwork started to break down, paint peeled off and the sandstone details of the exterior crumbled. The only way to put this right was to hack out the cement (a hugely time-consuming job which has to be done by hand) and replace it with the correct material, a lime mortar which allows the building to "breathe".

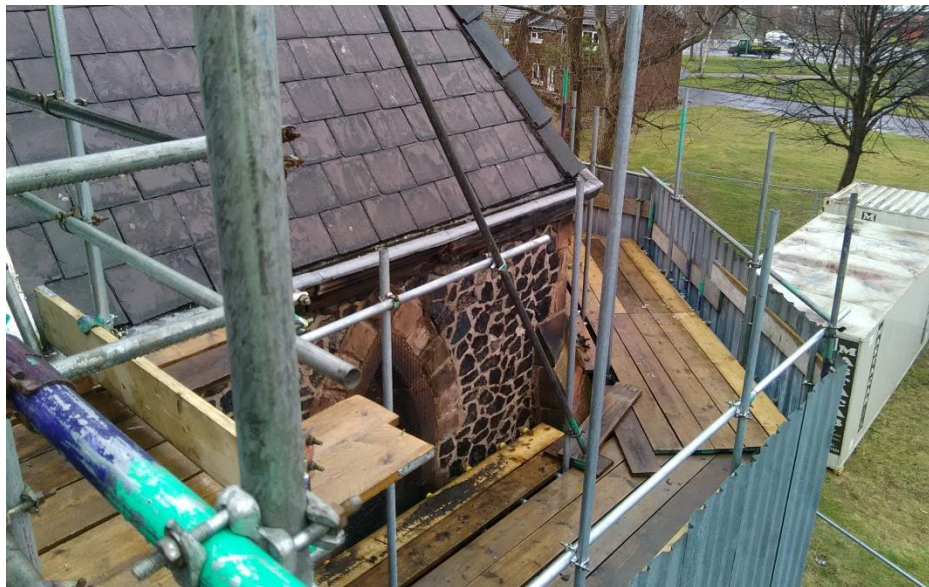
As the trapped water had washed away most of the core, the walls needed to be grouted and ties had to be inserted to stabilise the structure. So far only the chancel and east-facing walls have been done as these were the most urgent.



As the before (above, left) and after (right) pictures above show, the chancel roof was replaced. The lead-lined stone gutters were repaired, and vegetation growing from open joints was removed.

At the west end, the sandstone cross and bell housing were repaired and made safe (the consequences of a collapse here would have been unthinkable).

Some emergency repairs were made to the nave roof and to high-level stonework around the windows, but the bulk of these necessary repairs will need to be done in Phase II or even Phase III. In the meantime, Holy Trinity remains on Historic England's Heritage At Risk Register.



External Work In Progress, March 2016.

Repairs Funded By:



Total Project Value: **£362,522**
 Architects: **Anthony Grimshaw Associates**
 Quantity Surveyor: **MDA Consulting**
 Contractors: **Lloyd & Smith Ltd.**
 Heating: **Wakefield & Wilson.**



Don't forget to visit our lovely Wild Flower Garden which is a riot of colour in the summer! How many different species of flower can YOU count?

This booklet was put together by volunteers from Holy Trinity Church, and we had great fun doing it! We hope you have enjoyed it too.

Dorothy Dodd, Maurice Jackson, Eric Norton, John Woodward and Ian Simpson, June 2017.