

# A Brief History of Christ Church Crowton.

Christ Church is an active Anglican parish church in the deanery of Frodsham, the archdeaconry of Chester, and the diocese of Chester. Its benefice is combined with those of St John the Evangelist, Kingsley, and St John the Evangelist, Norley.

The lovely Grade II listed Church which was built on the highest point of the village was designed in the Gothic Revival style by Sir John Loughborough Pearson RA., FSA. It is constructed in red sandstone, with a red tiled roof. Its architectural style is that of the 13th century. The plan consists of a four-bay nave and a two-bay chancel in one range, a transept and a vestry on the north side, a south porch, and a two-tier double bellcote at the west end. The buttresses include a massive stepped buttress on the south side at the division of the nave and the chancel. The windows in the nave have two lights, and those in the chancel have three lights. Inside the church, the nave is divided from the chancel by a low wall and a double chamfered arch.



Sir John Pearson designed many new churches during his career, ranging from small country churches to major churches in cities. Among the latter, St Augustine's Church in Kilburn, London, "may claim to be his masterpiece". Towards the end of his career he designed two new cathedrals, at Truro in Cornwall, and Brisbane in Australia.

The church was consecrated on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1871 by William, Bishop of Chester. The three bells were aptly named Faith, Hope and Charity.

The Revd Charles William Spencer-Stanhope MA was the first vicar, and remained so until his death in September 1894. He provided the organ that was built in 1871 by Gray and Davidson, together with the stained glass windows above the altar and along the south wall in memory of his family. More detailed descriptions of the stained glass windows are included later in this article.

According to early church records the first baptisms were on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1871 when Emily Fond, Mary Motham, Margaret Chrimes, Mary Chrimes and Mary Lewis were baptised. The first burials followed in January 1872; on the 18th with William Stretch of Kingsley aged 31, and sadly on the 20th with Sabrina Finney of Crowton aged 22 months. The first marriage was on the 6th February 1893 when Thomas Kinsey married Alice Moreton.

The early minutes of the annual Vestry - always held on Easter Monday after Divine Service - give an insight into the early years of the Parish: in 1876 'The Choir was now in a satisfactory state, which was well exemplified yesterday Easter Day, by the way 'the service was rendered, the first day they had appeared as a surpliced choir.'

In 1889 'The Vicar expressed his thanks to God for wonderful healthiness of the parish, there having been only one adult death in 1888.'

Financial problems appeared in 1896 when it was recorded that the balance in hand was £2-10s-5d (£2.52) A worrying state of affairs, as 20 years earlier it was recorded that the Bell Ringer was to be paid £3 a year; the Verger Sexton (same man) £3 a year and the Church Cleaner £4 a year!

A number of changes have been made to the church facilities, some as donations in memory of relatives, but the majority paid for by voluntary contribution. Amongst the changes recorded are:-

1903. The parish was looking into the possibility of creating a Choir Vestry by converting the North Transept into a Vestry and Parish Room, possibly by filling in the archway. It was finally decided that a curtain be placed across the recess.

1922. A reredos, with shelf, a cross, and two candle sticks, was installed as a replacement for curtains, to commemorate the jubilee.

1926. The Lectern was replaced with an eagle pattern one in oak as a memorial to Charles Taylor Garfit and his wife Ada Maria.

1929. An oak screen was added to divide transept from nave as a memorial to James Gandy and his wife Elizabeth.

1935. The paraffin lamps were replaced with electric lamps.

1936. The original, solid fuel, heating apparatus was replaced by electrical heaters.

1946. A new stained glass window by Trena Cox, entitled "Mother and Child" was installed in the North Transept.

Trena Mary Cox (1895–1980) was an English stained glass artist and was a fellow of the British Society of Master Glass Painters. She was born Emma Trina Cox on 3 March 1895, in the Lower Bebington Urban District (i.e. not Bebbington), on the Wirral Peninsula and grew up around Birkenhead. She trained at the Laird School of Art. She had studios in Victoria Road and latterly in Watergate Street, Chester, which remained her home and, at least later, her studio, until she retired in 1972 (at the age of 77) and died, on 11 February 1980. Most of her many works are in churches in the old counties of Cheshire and Lancashire.

1952. New choir and clergy stalls were installed as memorial to William James Gandy, Barton Gandy, and John Gandy.

1970. The bells were removed due to structural problems.

1971. Oil fired central heating replaced the electric heaters.

1989. The bells were restored to western turret, with solenoid operating mechanism.

1991. The electrical wiring was replaced and new light fittings installed.

1993. The original pipe organ was replaced with an electronic model.

1996. A new Screen was installed at the west end of the nave to accommodate the relocation of the Vicar's Vestry and the Choir Vestry. The North Transept once again became part of the Church as a Lady Chapel with a new altar and wooden cross and new chairs. The old Vicar's Vestry was converted to a toilet and a kitchen/utility room

2016. The bells were refurbished and a Lightning Conductor was installed.



