

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, BICKERTON

The village of Bickerton owes its beautiful church of Holy Trinity to the population explosion of the nineteenth century. Until this time Malpas was the parish church, not only for Malpas itself but for most of the surrounding villages. However, in recognition of the rising population of the country, in the reign of William IV (1830-37) and in the first year of the reign of Queen Victoria, several Acts of Parliament were passed to promote the building of additional churches in more populous parishes.

With this in mind, a meeting was called in Malpas by seven local landowners in order to raise, by local subscription, enough money to build a church and a house for the incumbent at Bickerton. The land was donated by Sir Philip de Malpas Grey Egerton and the sum of two thousand pounds was raised by local people. Seven hundred of that was used to build the church, three hundred the minister's house and the remaining thousand was invested at 3% per annum to provide a stipend for the incumbent.



7th January 1840 was the great day when the Bishop of Chester signed the Sentence of Consecration, licensing the new church to conduct baptisms, churchings and burials. The church wardens were allowed to charge rents for some of the pews and £1-5s out of the annual pews rents were to go towards the maintenance of the church. Also a sum not exceeding £1 per annum was to be used to pay the salaries of the pew openers, beadles and for other running expenses. In addition to these financial arrangements, on 24th November 1840 a deed of conveyance was drawn up and signed by the Marquis of Cholmondeley, allocating an annuity of £25 towards the stipend, to be paid from the rents from about 41 acres of land in Chorley and Wrenbury. This was to be paid half yearly,

on 25th. March and 29th. September. The first church wardens were to be Richard and John Dutton. The first Minister was Mr. Henry Wigfield, who had to be nominated by the two rectors of Malpas parish church. He was obliged to pay 5s a year to the bishop for synodals and procurations, a fee towards the general running costs of the Church of England.

On 3rd. October 1843, the London Gazette published a list of new churches and Bickerton appears under the list with a population of 1,000 to 2,000 with an annual income raised of £120. The incumbent was to be what was known as a perpetual curate, licensed by the bishop and paid an income of £48 per annum.

On 23rd. April 1843 John Bird, Bishop of Chester, officially assigned to Holy Trinity a district consisting of Bickerton, Bulkeley, Egerton, Larkton, Duckington and Broxton.

The new church was to be built on a simple rectangular design from local sandstone, probably brought from a quarry in Handley. The foundation stone was laid by a young local man from Church Farm, Timothy Davenport, who was also one of the men who helped build the church and became the first sexton. He was a remarkable man, a stonemason by trade, he later walked all the way to Devon to work on a cathedral but he returned to his old home with his second wife and for the last twenty four years of his life he was the clerk to the Parochial Church Council. He died in 1903 at the age of 85 and is buried in the local cemetery. His family continued to serve Holy Trinity church for four generations.

The church was simply furnished and had a wooden gallery where a small group of musicians sat, led on the violin by Mr. Walley of Bickerton Hall.

For the first twenty-nine years of its existence Holy Trinity was not a separate parish and couples wishing to be married had to go to Malpas church for their wedding. However, on 28th. June 1869 the Reverend Frederick William Parry, in pursuance of the New Parishes Act of 1856, made an application to solemnize marriages. The two rectors of Malpas, Charles Augustus Thurlow and Charles William Cox agreed to relinquish the fees and at last Bickerton became a separate parish, an event which was celebrated one hundred years later in 1969 by a commemorative centenary service. George Horatio, Marquis of Cholmondley and Thomas Tyrwhitt Drake, the patrons of Malpas Church, signed the document consenting to this change and the Ecclesiastical Commission authorised it.

The new parish had a thriving congregation and it was felt that the original simple building was no longer adequate for its needs. As a result, in 1875 some considerable extensions were built; a new chancel, a vestry, an organ chamber and a porch at the west entrance, so that the original rectangular church now became cruciform in shape. The

wooden gallery was removed. These new extensions, like the original church, were funded entirely from local contributions. They were consecrated on 7th December 1876.

In addition to alterations to the structure of the church a further administrative change took place on 25th. May 1880 when the London Gazette published the fact that the upper and lower rectories of Malpas church were to be divided. The upper rectory was to remain Malpas and the lower became St. Mary, Whitewell. Also £2,956-6s-10d of commuted tithe rents of the lower patronage was to be paid to the vicar of Bickerton. The patronage of Bickerton was given to the Rev. Thomas Tyrwhitt Drake and his successors. It was thought by this time that the vicarage was inadequate and a mortgage was taken out with the governor of the Bounty of Queen Anne. This was a rather oddly named commission which had been established in 1704 to receive and administer the ecclesiastical dues annexed by Henry VIII which were then the property of Queen Anne and were used to supplement the incomes of the poorer clergy. These Governors were made responsible for the collection of tithes but when tithes were abolished by the Tithes Act of 1936 government stock was received instead. In 1948 the Queen Anne's Bounty and the Ecclesiastical Commission combined to form the Church Commission. The amount borrowed in order to enlarge the vicarage was £265 - quite a considerable sum in those days.

Now that the church and vicarage had achieved a satisfactory basic structure, the people of the parish continued over the years to beautify the church building and to bestow gifts of all kinds in memory of a loved one or to commemorate an important event.

On 19th. November 1891 a request was made by the Rev. J. Melville Hall and church wardens Thomas Hall and Frederick Chidlow to the Diocesan Office to enable them to replace the communion rails with new ones of wrought iron. A new pulpit, a chancel screen, a new screen to the vestry and new fronts to the choir seats were also to be added and new lead lights of cathedral glass to be put into the windows.

On 23rd. April 1902 it was agreed the stonework of the east window was to be replaced and a stained glass window of the Resurrection was to be put in as a memorial to the Brassey family, to be paid for by them.

On 15th. June 1911 it was decided to take down the porch at the west front and erect a baptistry and to re-erect the porch at the northwest corner of the nave. A new font was provided as a memorial to Mary Muriel Steele and it bears a plaque to that effect. Five stained glass windows were to be built into the new baptistry as a memorial to Emma Rimmer, paid for by her son. The subjects of these particularly charming windows are the Virgin and Holy Child, the infant John the Baptist, the infant Samuel and Saint Elizabeth and St. Hannah. At the same time as the baptistry was being built and the

porch moved, there was to be a new pathway to the door and the gates were moved to their present location.

On 8th. October 1913 the Rev. C. R. McKee and wardens John Roycroft and Robert Bourne obtained permission for the middle window of the north wall of the nave to be replaced with a stained glass window of the Good Shepherd as a memorial to James Melville Hall, vicar from 1879 to 1906. This was to be paid for by subscription from the parishioners.

On 29th January 1917 church wardens Edward Bird and Hugh Shore Walley administered the addition of the stained glass window depicting St. Dorcas in the second window on the south side of the nave. This was to be a memorial to Emily Haswell and was paid for by her husband.

The First World War sadly brought many losses to the parish of Holy Trinity and it was felt after the war that there should be a significant memorial to the men of the parish who had given their lives for their country. As a result, the fine oak chancel screen with its poignant inscription was chosen by the parochial church council, the vicar the Rev. McKee and the wardens Capel Harrison Lutener and Robert Bourne. In addition, a new organ was purchased from Peter Conacher of Huddersfield and was installed in 1920. This same organ is still in use today, having been rebuilt in 1958 by the makers and again in 1971 when it was converted from bellows to electricity.

On 24th. July 1922 the church wardens, Claude Wittingham and Edward Harold Davies, requested permission for yet another improvement to the church when a new vestry screen was erected as a memorial to Mary Wentworth Lutener, to be paid for by an anonymous donor and in 1925 the oak panels on either side of the altar were a memorial to Owen Capel Harrison Lutener, donated by his family.

On 14th. December 1931 the church wardens John Stephen Walley and Alfred David Roberts requested permission to renew the single light window in the south wall of the chancel and replace it with a stained glass window depicting Peace and to construct a single light window in the North wall of the chancel to depict Hope. These were to be paid for by the will of Harry Percival Mortimer, formerly of Grafton Lodge, Kingsley.

The fine stained glass window on the south side of the nave depicting Patience and Fortitude was given in 1940 by Charles Cyril and Mary Scott Denis of Broxton Old Hall in gratitude for the recovery of their eldest son from a serious illness. Opposite, on the north wall is a window depicting Mary Magdalene, placed there as a remembrance for the life of Mary Scott Denis in 1940, given by her husband.

Also on the south wall, beside the organ is a brass plaque in memory of Reginald Charles Wittingham of the 24th. battalion of the Welsh Fusiliers, a member of the choir who was killed in action on 27th. December 1917 in Jerusalem.

In 1940 to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the church the fine reredos screen was placed behind the altar having been produced by craftsmen from Chester.

Sadly, in 1945 the parishioners found it necessary to add a list of local men who fell in the Second World War to the roll of honour board which was placed near the chancel screen after the First World War. The Memorial vase was donated in 1967 by Mr. Percy Sylvester and made from oak from the Oakley Estate.

Elsewhere in the nave can be seen two church wardens' staves, paid for by Reginald Young and his daughter of Fairfield Broxton as a memorial to his wife. And on the organ case there is a silver plaque in memory of Elsie Clegg - organist.

In the chancel there is a carved oak chair which bears a memorial to Charles Robert McKee vicar from 1906 to 1935. There is also a memorial plaque to Robert and Mary Brassey, Robert Percival Brassey and William Mortimer (son-in-law) next to the family window.

While these improvements to the building were taking place, the Parochial Church Council had in mind the spiritual welfare of the parish. There had been some feelings of disquiet about the appointment of the incumbent, since a previous one of them had been an Anglo-Catholic with very rigid views. In 1934 the Rev. McKee's health was failing and the congregation were anxious that an incumbent with similarly acceptable views should be appointed. With this in mind the purchase of the advowson from the patron Sir Charles Anthony King Harmon was considered. He had purchased the patronage in 1929 along with those of Tushingham and Whitewell, for the sum of £850. They were purchased together, with no indication about what each of them was worth. However, at the time, the incomes of the churches were, Bickerton £414, Tushingham £342 and Whitewell £404. Working on those proportions, the values for purchase were worked out at Bickerton £302-10s, Tushingham £251 and Whitewell £296-10s. The Church Council instructed Counsel to act for them and £250 was offered and rejected by the patron who wanted no less than one and a half years value for the purchase. The Church Council had difficulty in finding that amount, as they also had to contemplate finding £50 a year pension for the Rev. McKee. They contested the amount asked on the grounds that there was no glebe annexed to the benefice. There was also no proper water supply to the vicarage and in fact the well water had been tested by Mr. Harold Lowe of Chester in May 1925 when it was found that it had a total of solid matter in solution of 55.0% and a high content of chlorine and nitrates. It was condemned as unfit for human consumption. It

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was tested again in October 1926 by Professor J. M. Beattie of Liverpool University. The total solid matter had risen to 72% and again the water was condemned. In fact the well ran dry soon after that and the vicarage residents had to bring their water daily from Brunty Bank well, which had been the well to a farm which had previously burnt down. Consequently of course, there was no bathroom and no hot water supply at the vicarage. In other respects the house was said to be satisfactory. The arbitrator confirmed £310 as the price of the advowson and with the costs of arbitration, solicitors and Counsel's fees, the total cost would be £399-1s-6d. How to find the money was the problem. It was decided to sell certain beautiful items of 17th. century silver gilt church plate which had been given to the church by the Marquis of Cholmondley. These items were:-

A chalice of gilt 25oz. decorated with the Cholmondley arms.

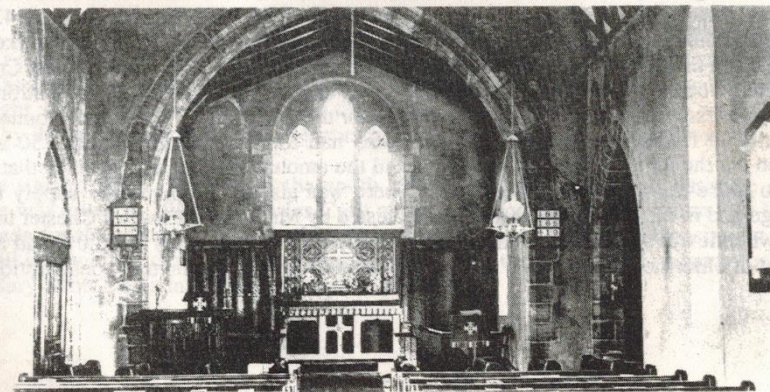
A paten of silver gilt 8oz. dated 1667.

A tassa of silver gilt 12oz. dated 1667

A flagon of silver gilt 51oz. dated 1663.

These items were so valuable that they were kept in the bank and were therefore felt to be of limited use. Unfortunately it was found that because the items had been consecrated they could only be sold to another church or to a museum, so finding a purchaser would be difficult. Eventually, a fortuitous offer from the Cholmondley family to purchase the items back, for the sum of £400, was accepted and the purchase of the advowson was thus completed.

As a result of the purchase, the patronage became the property of the Chester Diocesan Board of Patrons who would appoint the incumbent. The Parochial Church Council would have the right to make representations in writing about the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish. The P.C.C. could also pass a resolution whereby the Board, as patron, must confer with the church wardens, as the representatives of the P.C.C., before an appointment is made.



The Life of the Church

Holy Trinity church was from the beginning not only the spiritual but also the social centre of the village.

For example, between the years 1859 to 1880 the church provided an almost unique and extremely valuable service for the Parishioners. This was the cow club, an insurance club which was funded by the church, the vicar being treasurer. Members subscribing received compensation for loss of or damage to their cows. Certificates from a veterinary surgeon were required to state that the cows insured were sound and healthy and a certificate was also needed when a cow was lost or damaged. For example, on 10th. April 1874 an entry in the cow club book records "Received from the Malpas and Bickerton cow club, the sum of four pounds, the value of a calf which died on 16th. March last." The money was paid by the Rev. Parry to Job Dunning, who made his mark on the receipt with a cross.

The Bickerton Church Monthly which was produced in the 1890's provides a vivid picture of the social events which centred round the church. For example, on 1st. February 1893 there was an entertainment in the schoolroom of 'Box and Cox' performed by Messrs. Whittingham, Ikin and Hopley with Mr. W. Strong at the piano and Mr. Bebbington on the violin. In addition C. and L. Hopley, J. Ikin, A. Leach. W. Harding, J. Salisbury, T. Sarn, S. Walker and G. and R. Walley in nigger costume, provided various comic songs, jokes and conundrums.

The thriving choir entered the local choir festivals and in 1894 on the 23rd. July the choir had its annual outing to Rhyl. It rained!

Life in the parish of Bickerton in the 1890's had its darker side. In August 1893 the records of burials for the previous six months include three children under the age of nine weeks and one under three years - four out of seven burials. Life, for children in particular, was still uncertain and the summer months tended to encourage epidemics of various diseases.

A source of entertainment, rather oddly, was the local temperance society. On 10th. January 1895 an initial meeting was held and a committee of temperance advocates was

founded in the parish. In March a further meeting was held when 'a stirring address' was given on the advantages of total abstinence and on 24th. April another meeting also provided entertainment by Captain Franklin ventriloquist etc. In fact the temperance meetings could always be relied upon to provide good entertainment in addition to stirring address.

The Bickerton Monthly was issued until December 1895 and then Holy Trinity news went to the Malpas deanery magazine. This continued to record local activity, particularly those of organisations connected with the church. For example the Girls Friendly Society meetings are recorded 'to encourage purity of life, dutifulness to parents, faithfulness to employers and thrift'. In 1911 the Bickerton branch of the Mothers' Union was founded and continues to thrive today.

The years of the First World War drew the church community even closer together. In September 1914 there were services occasioned by the outbreak of war and it was recorded that there was a mood of quiet determination and optimism about a speedy, successful outcome. By 1915 the ladies of the parish were concerned with knitting socks and mittens for the troops and attending lectures on 'Economy and cooking during wartime'. By May 1916 lack of attendance at Lent services was put down to shortage of labour and every month the entries in the magazine recorded that more men from the parish were missing or dead. For example in February 1918 the death was recorded of Reginald Whittingham in Palestine on 27th. December, 'Quite one of the best sort of boys, full of spirit . . . At the recruiting meeting at the beginning of the war he was the first to get up and volunteer.' Deaths were recorded right up to the end of the war - the magazine of November 1918 recorded the deaths of Reginald Warburton, Harry Rogers and Sir Philip Egerton's only surviving son. Despite all the sadness, the parish struggled to maintain a sense of humour. One copy of the magazine recorded, 'The number of eggs sent to the National egg collection per Mrs. Davies and Mrs. Lutener was 160 for the past two months. It is hoped that after the winter's lull in operations the hens will launch a great spring offensive and deliver a substantial attack of well filled shells on the hospitals where they are so badly needed.' It was with great relief that the thanksgiving services for the end of the war were reported in December 1918.

Unfortunately, Holy Trinity was obliged to renew its wartime activities in 1939 with the outbreak of World War Two. The vicar, the Rev. Wykes gave many lectures to troops stationed locally, for example, the Polish and American troops at Cholmondley and the searchlight unit at Broxton Old Hall. There were whist drives for parcels for the troops and Red Cross parcels. Under the auspices of the Rev. Wykes and the Bickerton Institute Committee weekly dances were held and a youth club was also instituted.

Parish life returned to peace and quiet in 1945 and Holy Trinity has continued to be a tranquil and beautiful corner. In January 1967 the Minister of Housing and Local Government placed the church on the list of buildings of special architectural and historical interest. In the 1960's also, the church, in conjunction with the Institute Committee and with a great amount of work and enthusiasm, ably led by Mr. Fred Windsor, introduced the annual gymkhana and fête in order to raise funds.

By 1978 the parishes of Bickerton and Bickley were joined under one vicar, although maintaining their individual entities, and annually share certain services and other functions.

William W. Barker	1874-1879
James M. Barker	1879-1884
Charles M. Barker	1884-1889
Thomas M. Barker	1889-1894
John M. Barker	1894-1899
Frederick M. Barker	1899-1904
John M. Barker	1904-1909
Frederick M. Barker	1909-1914
John M. Barker	1914-1919
Frederick M. Barker	1919-1924
John M. Barker	1924-1929
Frederick M. Barker	1929-1934
John M. Barker	1934-1939
Frederick M. Barker	1939-1944
John M. Barker	1944-1949
Frederick M. Barker	1949-1954
John M. Barker	1954-1959
Frederick M. Barker	1959-1964
John M. Barker	1964-1969
Frederick M. Barker	1969-1974
John M. Barker	1974-1979
Frederick M. Barker	1979-1984
John M. Barker	1984-1989

Church Charities

Holy Trinity church has various charitable trusts which are administered by members of the parish.

Most of the income comes from Bickerton's share in the Malpas Rectorial Charities - a collection of charities which have accumulated over the years and include such charities as the Drake Partridge Trust and the Thurlow Nursing Trust. Bickerton also has the income from the poor allotment from the church's share of land from the enclosure of Bickerton hills in 1854. A plot of land was allocated of about four acres in Goldford Lane and the income from it was to be used for the relief of the labouring poor. The land was sold in 1884 and the money invested to provide income. The annual income from all the charities is administered by seven Bickerton people including two representatives from Holy Trinity church. The income currently is £30-35p per annum and is actually not easy to dispose of, since the problems which the charities were originally formed to alleviate are now dealt with by the National Health Service and the Department of Health and Social Security.

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, BICKERTON

Deanery of Malpas

Diocese of Chester

Province of York

LIST OF INCUMBENTS

Henry Wigfield	1840-1856
Frederick Parry, LL.B	1857-1874
William W. Burton-Phillipson	1874-1879
James Melville Hall	1879-1906
Charles McKee, B.A.	1906-1935
Thomas Geoffrey Wykes, B.A.	1935-1948
Alan Henry Edwards, M.A.	1948-1962
Effyn Owen Kelly	1962-1965
Frederick Cecil Cotes	1965-1969
John Philip Lloyd, M.A.	1969-1977
Peter Roberts	1977-1983
John M. R. Gore-Rees	1983-

GIFTS AND DONATIONS TO HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

- 1914 A silver paten presented by Mr. and Mrs. C. Toft-Smith in memory of their daughter Minnie Gertrude Nield died 2nd. January 1914.
- 1915 Two hundred pounds from the wills of Anne Elizabeth and Margaret Martha Morris.
- 1956 A new bell donated by Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Scott of Bulkeley Hall.
- 1969 New kneelers were provided by parishioners who gave money or their time in embroidery under the supervision of Mrs. C. Johnson. A celebration of the centenary of Bickerton as a separate parish.
- 1969 Four white kneelers for weddings, made by Mrs. D. Brookfield.
- 1972 Seven white Devon Pottery vases from the church working party.
- 1972 One large white pottery vase from Mrs. E. Edlemann.
- 1972 Two grey flower troughs and two wooden stands from Mrs. D. Roberts.
- March 1973 Purple altar frontal made by Mrs. C. Johnson with help from Miss K. Karslake Jones.
- March 1973 One cut glass wine cruet from Mrs. P. Lloyd.
- May 1973 Two wooden bases for flower stands given by Mr. M. Brookfield.
- June 1973 Red altar frontal remade by Miss A. Esplen and Mrs. B. Davies in memory of Cyril Benson.

- June 1973 Memorial Book Registering Burial of Cremated Remains in Churchyard given in memory of Rev. R. T. G. Wykes by his widow.
- July 1973 Two plaques of Chester Cathedral given by Mrs. G. Tydd.
- December 1973 Christmas Crib figures given in memory of Philip Walley.
- December 1973 100 prayer books given by Mr. and Mrs. J. D. McKechnie.
- 1974 Small chalice and paten cover given by Alice Proctor.
- April 1974 120 revised hymn books given in memory of Ian Frederick Kinsey.
- May 1974 120 hymn books '100 Hymns for Today' given in memory of Amy Bostock.
- June 1974 White altar frontal and superfrontal, Pulpit fall, Stole, four sanctuary kneelers, bookmark, burse and veil, given by Mr. and Mrs. J. D. McKechnie.
- July 1974 Two glass cruets with silver mounted stoppers given by Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Morris.
- July 1974 One handworked Portuguese chalice veil made in Madeira, given by Mrs. A. Proctor.
- October 1977 Antique brass Almsdish 18 inches diameter, given by Mr. and Mrs. J. D. McKechnie.
- April 1979 New English Lectern Bible presented by the family of the late Harry and Mary Vernon.
- May 1981 Altar service book, given by the Siddorn family in memory of Thomas Siddorn, churchwarden.
- 1982 Copies of the new English Bible in memory of Frederick Kinsey.

- 1984 Red chalice veil, presented by Mr. Frederick Jones in memory of his late wife, Ivy.
- 1984 Porch noticeboard, given by the family of Miss G. Milner.
- 1984 Copies of the New English Bible presented in memory of David Johnson.
- 1984 Collection bags, chalice veil and flower pedestal in memory of Mrs. Lucy Rowlands.
- 1987 A bequest under the will of Joseph Frederick Windsor for £600.

In addition to the items given for the interior of the church, the rose gardens were donated by Mr. Frederick Windsor in memory of his parents and Mrs. Freda Kynersley, given in memory of her daughter Sandra.

The garden seat is a memorial to Canon Frederick Cyril Cotes, vicar from 1966 to 1969.

Elizabeth Gater, B.A., P.G.C.E.
Bickerton 1990

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For help in the compilation of this short history I must thank the following people:-

The staff of the County Records Office, Chester.
Rev. J. Gore-Rees
Miss Maud Roberts (churchwarden)
Mr. R. Gater (churchwarden)
Mrs. M. Brock
Mr. J. Proudlove
Mrs. E. Powell
Mr. E. Morgan
Mr. E. Richards

HOLY TRINITY, BICKERTON

REGULAR SUNDAY SERVICES

1st. Sunday	Communion	9.30 a.m.
2nd. Sunday	Communion	8.30 a.m.
	Matins	11.00 a.m.
3rd. Sunday	Communion	11.00 a.m.
4th. Sunday	Communion	8.30 a.m.
	Matins	11.00 a.m.
5th Sunday	Communion	8.30 a.m.
	Matins	11.00 a.m.

