

St Chad's

Parish Church of Handforth



1899-1999



Vicars of St Chad's, Handforth

| | |
|------|------------------------|
| 1877 | A Watton |
| 1890 | JL Cotter BA MD |
| 1891 | CG Hamilton MA |
| 1895 | ER Holland MA |
| 1900 | AE Espin MA |
| 1907 | J Douglas-Willan LTh |
| 1911 | S Stockton MA |
| 1918 | HW Thomasson MA Litt D |
| 1942 | RE Frith MA |
| 1952 | BM Rees MA |
| 1960 | DL Lumb MA |
| 1972 | A Smith |
| 1979 | SP Isherwood LTh |

The Table of Vicars which hangs in St Chad's, Handforth was originally presented by Laura Butterworth in memory of her mother Electra Butterworth who died on the 16 June 1936.

'She loved to meet with her Lord in this Church'

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**ST CHAD'S PARISH CHURCH
Handforth**

Vicar & Rural Dean:
The Revd S P Isherwood



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Handforth, WILMSLOW,
Cheshire SK9 3EE
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It is worth celebrating something that reaches one hundred years of age, whether it is a person or a building. This booklet has been written to celebrate St Chad's Church building which was built for and dedicated to the glory of God on 2nd March, 1899.

Photographs of the interior, taken when it was first built, show just how it has changed over the years, and this indicates a fellowship of God's people responding to the needs of the various changes down the years both in liturgical development and in the changing fashions in church architecture.

I am privileged to be able to write this introduction to the history of St Chad's, which is not only a description of the present building, but goes back to the establishing of the original St Chad's Chapel in 1837. I am very grateful to those who have researched and made sense of many documents from the past, and completed the jigsaw to present a beautiful picture of Church life in Handforth which many will cherish.

The present generation needs to be able to rejoice in past history, but also to recognise that it is itself history in the making. We want to leave behind us a Church complex which future generations will enjoy and appreciate, and recognise our commitment to mission.

God's people have always looked back with thankfulness. The Jewish people remember the time of their deliverance from Egypt. As Christians, we look back with thankfulness to Calvary, the place of our deliverance from sin through the death of Jesus on the cross. The present congregation remember those who had the vision of building the original St Chad's Chapel, and then went for a bigger building one hundred years ago.

May our vision of what God can do never diminish, and may we always build for the future, come what may.

With very warm greetings to all who read this booklet.

Peter Isherwood



Foreword

From the Bishop of Chester

The Rt Revd Dr Peter R Forster
Bishop's House, Abbey Square,
Chester CH1 2JD



I am delighted to have been asked to write the foreword to this book.

The second half of the 19th century was a time of considerable Christian revival, which produced many new church buildings - including St Chad's Handforth, built towards the end of the great Victorian revival.

In the first half of the 19th century, there had been considerable pessimism concerning the future of the Church of England. It is good to be reminded of the ebb and flow of Anglican church life in the last century. I fully expect that the 21st century will bring new opportunities, and new growth, for the Christian Church.

We celebrate the past in order to prepare for the future. We honour the past as the platform for boldness and vision as we seek the Lord's will for his Church. I salute the achievements of the past 100 years, and look forward to all that has yet to be realised and achieved, as we 'proclaim the Lord's death, until he comes'.



Acknowledgements

The people who have gathered together the material for this book make no claim to be historians, either professional or amateur! The information contained in it has been gathered from many sources and we are grateful to those people who have given us help and tried to answer our questions. Any errors or inaccuracies are ours, and we hope none are offended by them. Please draw them to our attention so that they may be corrected in future. We would also welcome any additional information so that future writers may be better informed.

The main source of inspiration has been the Church Building and its contents. We have tried to answer such questions as: Why was a particular item here? When was it placed in the church and who made or donated it? During such a process, we have become very aware that the Church, its fittings, and associated buildings have been in an almost constant state of change over the last 100 years. The building today is a standing testimony to those many 'saints' - ancient and modern, who have worshipped here but who have also given their labour, time, money, and love to maintain, develop, and cherish it.

We wish to particularly record the help given by the following people:

Peter Bacon

Mrs Margaret Booth for the History of St Mary's Methodist Church

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David Holt

Nancy Morton

The Cheshire County Record and Diocesan Archive Office at Chester

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Michael Crabtree

Arthur Holt

John Moreton

November 1998

St Chad's Parish Church

Wilmslow Road - Handforth - Wilmslow - Cheshire SK9 3ES

Introduction

'St Chad's Church is a plain edifice of brick, with stone dressings, consisting at present of nave only and seating 250'.

Kelly's Directory 1939

The above description does not do justice to the present St Chad's Church building which has stood in Handforth for 100 years, and which for many people has a special emotional and spiritual place in their lives. The celebration of the Centenary of the present Church gives us an opportunity to review the past century and look forward to the future place of St Chad's in the community of Handforth. The fact that it almost coincides with the celebration of the 'Millennium' is perhaps a happy coincidence.

100 years is a relatively short time, only 15 or so years outside the memory span of several current Handforth residents. It may be supposed that most things are known about the current Church building. However even in 100 years much has been lost or mislaid, and the Centenary is an opportunity to gather together information and artefacts which will inform, entertain, and enrich our understanding of previous times.

The earlier St Chad's Chapel

At the end of the 19th Century there was already a Church dedicated to St Chad in Handforth. This had been founded and built as a 'Chapel of ease' to St Mary's Cheadle, because Handforth - or properly 'Handforth-cum-Bosden' was part of the Parish of Cheadle. A journey of nearly five miles to church in Cheadle along the roads and paths of the early 1800's could not have been either quick or easy. The Chapel was consecrated on 29 June 1837. It occupied a site just to the south of the present building, which was subsequently developed as part of the graveyard. The building cost £800 and was raised by subscription. The list of subscribers shows that considerable support came from Cheadle Clergy and Parishioners, and several Cheadle residents took leading roles in the establishment and subsequent organisation of the Handforth Chapel.

Photographs show the Old Chapel as a substantial building with seating for some 200 people. If a more solid perception is needed, then a visit to Woodford Church will help. Both buildings were built to a similar plan, although Woodford has a tower over the entrance at the west end. The Chapel was served by clergy from Cheadle, and the first curate designated to Handforth was The Revd Benjamin Mashiter. He also was the curate for Woodford, and lived at Woodford Rectory. St Chad's remained a 'daughter church' of St Mary's Cheadle until December 1877 when it became an ecclesiastical parish in its own right.

Why was a new building needed in the 1890s?

The population of Handforth remained fairly static at around 700 people between 1841 and 1871, but it then began to grow steadily to over 900 in 1901. Not a huge increase, but it reflected the growing prosperity of Handforth, and its transition from a largely rural community into a more substantial village. This growth was no doubt aided considerably by the opening of the railway in 1842 with a small 'Station Halt' at Handforth, which in later years became a staffed station on the north side of the road, behind The Railway Hotel.

Handforth was not only growing numerically. Several prosperous families moved into the area and built substantial houses, and some existing families built larger and more elaborate houses locally. It would be surprising if this 'gentrification' of Handforth did not provide an impetus for a larger and more elaborate Church in keeping with the perceived growing social status of at least some of its inhabitants.

Another (less worthy?) spur may have been the establishment of other denominational chapels in Handforth. A Methodist Chapel of the 'New Connection' was built in 1850 on land near the present British Legion Club. This was named Kilham Chapel and accommodated 240 people, with a schoolroom underneath for 150 children. In 1872 St Mary's (Wesleyan) Methodist Church was established on land provided by Thomas Lomas next to his home Haslen House (the site now occupied by the Pinewood Hotel). This handsome and fashionable new building would have taken the worldly focus from the older and plainer St Chad's Chapel.

A pressing problem for Handforth in the 1890's was that space was running out in the graveyard surrounding the Chapel, and an 'Order in Council' made by the Queen at Windsor in February 1896 meant that no burials could take place unless existing vaults were used. A request was made to Mr Louis Symonds (of whom more is mentioned later), to sell a piece of his land which adjoined the Chapel, but this was refused on the grounds that it would not be hygienic to develop the graveyard further towards the centre of the township. This initial attempt at meeting a growing need may have influenced later developments.

There were also wider national pressures. The Victorian age was well underway and new inventions and engineering achievements were exciting the nation. A new sense of civic pride emerged with much of this becoming focused on new buildings, civic, domestic and ecclesiastical. A number of Acts of Parliament encouraged the 'building and promoting the building of churches in populous parishes'.

Whilst it has not been possible to identify the exact impetus that eventually produced the New St Chad's, we know that the old Chapel became well established in the local community, and in December 1877 St Chad's Chapel became the Parish Church in Handforth, and therefore ecclesiastically independent of Cheadle. The Reverend Alfred Watton who held the 'Perpetual Curacy' at the time was appointed the first Vicar. The

links with Cheadle were maintained through the Rector of Cheadle becoming the Patron of the Living. This means that even today the Rector of Cheadle plays a significant part in the appointment of new Vicars at St Chad's.

There are a number of references to the old Chapel being too small for the needs of the growing community, although records show that the Chapel was by no means full every week. However on major festivals and celebrations it was probably proving inadequate in size, style, and facilities. Throughout history people have wanted their church buildings to reflect the best they could offer to God, and so it is entirely consistent with the ambitions of Victorian Handforth that a 'new and more suitable and convenient Church' should be built.

Funding the New Church

In 1895 The Revd E R Holland became Vicar, and he encouraged the efforts to build a new church. On 29 September 1896 a general meeting of the parishioners endorsed the proposal put forward by the Vicar and Wardens to proceed with a scheme for the building of a new church in Handforth. A building sub-committee was set up a month later, and fund raising began. This seems to have been a particular goal during 1897, which was Queen Victoria's (and the Chapel's) Diamond jubilee Year. The local newspaper regularly reported various functions: concerts, suppers, etc., held in the National School opposite the Chapel, at which collections and donations were received for the Building Fund.

An application was made to the Chester Diocesan Church Building Society whose minutes state that on 27 April 1897 the society agreed to grant £100 towards the (initial) target of £2000, with a note to the effect that a further application would be considered 'when and if the remaining portion of the Church is about to be built'.

One of the prosperous businessmen who had come to Handforth in the early 1840's was Mr Stephen Symonds, a partner in the Cunliffe-Symonds Calico Printing Company in Handforth. His first wife had died, but he remarried and a son Louis Henry Symonds was born to them in Handforth in 1849. This child grew up to qualify and practice as a Solicitor in Manchester. He lived at several houses in Handforth.

Mr Louis Symonds was a strong supporter of St Chad's and became a Churchwarden. He also owned the land adjoining the St Chad's Chapel, fronting on to Wilmslow Road known as 'Stapleton Meadow'. In September 1897 Mr Symonds signed a conveyance to give part of this land over to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for the purpose of building a new church to be called 'The Church of St Chad, Handforth'. It is interesting to note that the 1844 Handforth Tithe map shows that an area of land of which this formed part had belonged to a Peter Roylance who had given a portion of it in 1837 for the original St Chad's Chapel to be built.

Design, Plans and Vision of the New Church

After a limited competition for the design of the new church, (adjudicated by the Bishop), the Architect chosen was John Brooke FRIBA of Exchange Street, Manchester. It is not known whether he was related to the Brooke Family of Brooke Farm, and whose substantial memorial tablets adorned the walls of the old Chapel.



Architect's Drawing for the New Church

The Architect described the future building as follows The church is designed in the perpendicular style with 'half-timber' gables and other details characteristic of the buildings of Cheshire. The walls will be of brick, with Alderley stone dressing to the windows, doorways, and buttresses. The roof will be covered with Brosiley tiles, the principles, and rafters and boarded ceiling being of pitch-pine which will be left in the natural colour. The entrance doors will be of Dantzic oak, and the floors will be paved with solid wood blocks laid on a thick bed of cement concrete'.

The original design was for a much grander building than we see today, with a

Spire and Belltower adjacent to the main west entrance. The Sanctuary at the east end was intended to be longer - extending well into the present old hall. A vestry was planned for the SE corner - now occupied by the 'old church room'. The original design intentions can be seen in the Architect's Artistic Impression, reproduced on page 8. Within the building, the truncated sanctuary can be identified by the construction of the east end in poor 'cheap' bricks, and the three 'temporary timber windows' set high in the east wall. The space for the staircase to the 'unbuilt' tower is identifiable by the small circular cloak-room at the foot of the stairs to the balcony just off the entrance vestibule. (Before the construction of the balcony in 1974 this contained a WC).

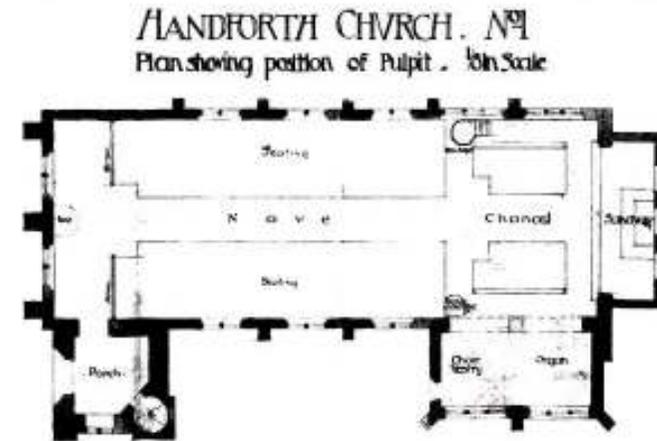
As has happened on several subsequent occasions, the full design was not implemented due to lack of cash. The temporary measures taken in the construction showed that the hope was for completion sometime in the future! It is salutary to note that if the complete church had been built at the time, subsequent developments which as time has gone by have catered for the broader needs of the Church would have been much more difficult!

The building begins

The start of the building proper was signified by the ceremony of 'cutting of the first sod' on 9th October 1897. This was done by Mrs Marion Symonds, wife of Mr Louis Symonds, and the occasion was celebrated with a procession of visiting clergy and local dignitaries, led by the Choir, with everyone in full regalia. They obviously loved processions in those days!

The Foundation Stone was laid on the 19th February 1898 by Louis Henry Symonds, following a celebratory service in the old Chapel at which Archdeacon Woosman of Macclesfield was the preacher. His appropriate text was 'I have set my affection on the house of my God' (1 Chronicles 29 v 3). The Archdeacon spoke of the wonderful opportunity which the new building would offer in future years for young and old to gain new strength, vigour and grace from above. A bottle was placed in the foundations containing copies of The Times', the 'Wilmslow and Alderley Edge Advertiser', coins of 1897, and a parchment with the names of the Clergy and Church Officers, the Architect and Builder inscribed thereon.

The builder appointed was Mr Thomas Browne of Chester, and work progressed quickly. A photograph taken in the summer of 1898 shows the new building well advanced with almost half the roof-tiles in place. Plans were being made to dispose of the old Chapel once the new building was completed and consecrated. Permission to do this (called a 'Faculty') was granted by the Diocese to the Vicar on 13 October 1898. It gave authority To take down the old church upon condition that you take special care that the said works be carried out as soon as practicable and so as to interfere with the performance of Divine Worship as little as practicable'. This work must have progressed very efficiently, because in May 1899 the first burial took place in ground previously covered by the old Chapel.



Ground Plan of New Church

Care was also taken that the area surrounding the new building was smartened up. Early in 1899 a Faculty authorised the 'taking down of a wall surrounding the Churchyard, and erecting a strong oak fence'. A photograph (see page 12-13) shows the splendid New Church alongside the Old Chapel, with the newly erected fence proudly in position. There is no evidence that any of the old Chapel structure was built into the new Church. However some of the old Chapel stone windows and gable copings were incorporated into the front of the National School which was being extended in 1898. When the site was redeveloped, the same design was replicated in the office buildings opposite the Church and can be seen in a similar form today.

The New Church

The 'new' St Chad's Church was consecrated by Dr F J Jayne, Bishop of Chester on St Chad's Day , the 2nd March 1899. The Vicar (Mr Holland) welcomed twenty eight local clergy, headed by Archdeacon Woosman of Macclesfield and Canon Symonds, Rector and Rural Dean of Stockport. The consecration was witnessed by a large congregation which overflowed the new building. The document supporting the consecration, beautifully written on vellum, and signed and sealed by the Bishop may be seen in the Diocesan Archives in Chester.

At the consecration the new church was described as being 'finished, furnished and adorned for the worship and service of Almighty God'. There were many gifts of

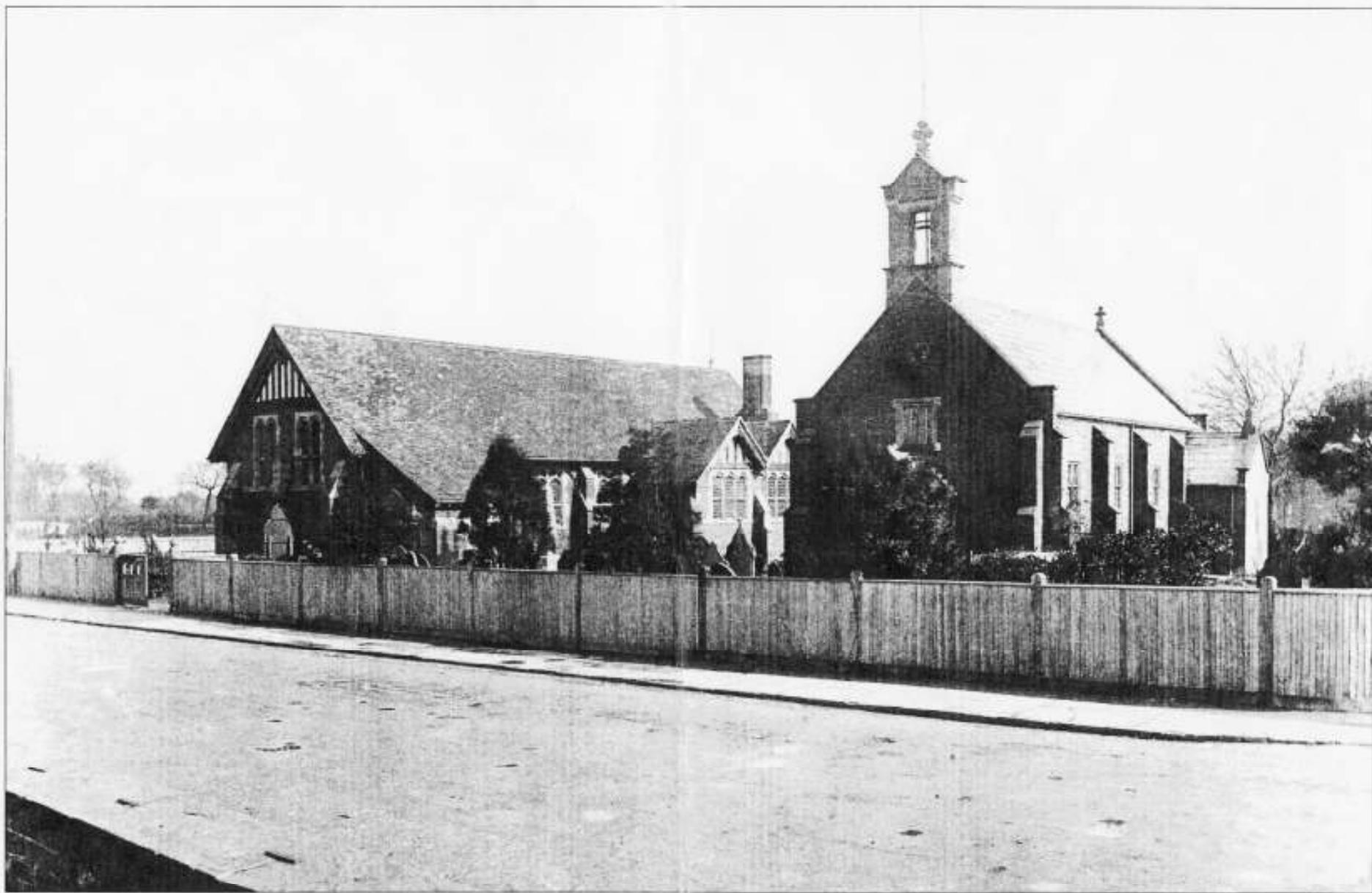
furnishings and fittings which are detailed elsewhere. Some are still regularly used in our worship today. The Brass Cross in front of the east window was an anonymous gift 'In Memoriam FjH'. The Litany Desk (now used by the Curate) was the gift of the Sunday School pupils and teachers, and the large silver Alms Dish given by members of the Brooke Family. The Oak Communion Table was bought for the new Church with the 1898 Harvest Festival Collection.

It is not recorded which 'furniture and fittings' were transferred from the old Chapel to be used in the new Church. Initially the Chapel Organ must have been transferred, as in June 1902 a faculty was granted for a new instrument because 'the present Organ is worn out and inadequate for the proper rendering of the services in the new church'. The various memorial tablets were moved and fixed to the new walls. The pulpit (made of deal) was positioned on the south side of the nave until 1909, when it was replaced with the present yew pulpit (donated by Alfred R Clegg - a Churchwarden), and moved to the north side of the Church. The old deal pulpit was made into a cupboard for choir books, and this still 'lives' behind the organ!. The font was positioned centrally at the west end of the church. This may have been the 'Gothic Font' made and donated to the original Chapel by Mr George Smith, Parish Clerk in 1837. New pews and choir stalls were made for the new Church. The small area in the south transept was used as the choir vestry, with the Vicar having to robe in the cramped space behind the organ. The ornate panelling in the old vestry may have come from the old chapel.



The Choir around 1910

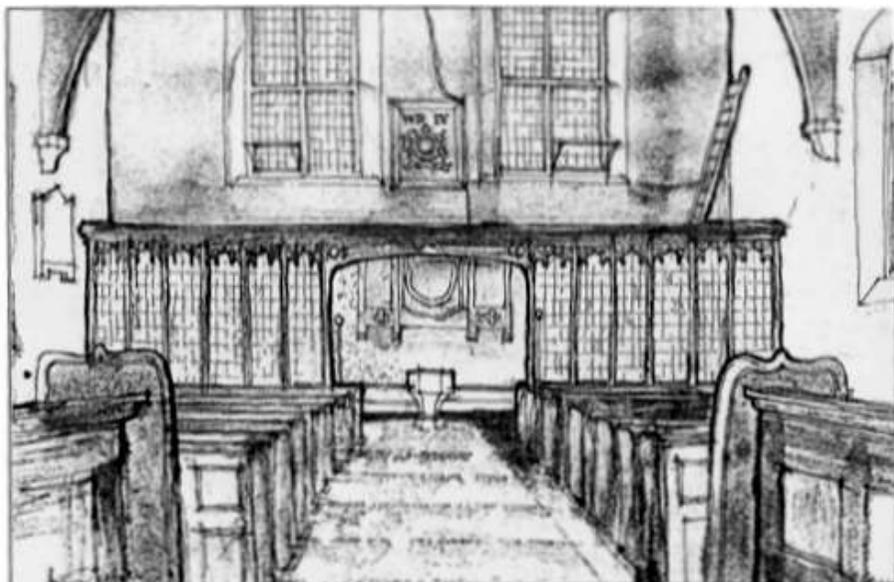
The old Chapel certainly had a Bell which hung in a bell-turret on the west end of the gable. In March 1910 we find that a faculty was granted 'for the original (chapel?) Bell to be taken down and a Tubular Bell to be hung in its place'. No tubular bell hangs in



The New St Chad's Church together with The Old Chapel - March 1899

the small western bell-gable, so perhaps this faculty was never implemented and the current bell is over 150 years old. This great age would explain the strange and unique tone! The bell itself is undated and bears the inscription 'James Radnor & Co. Loughborough Bell Foundry'.

The Royal Arms of William IV with the date 1837 on the front of the balcony are certainly a link with the old Chapel, but not in such an obvious or straightforward way as might be supposed. Since the Reformation, the Monarch's coat of arms has been placed in Anglican churches - usually at the western end of the building, indeed at one time it was a legal requirement to do so. The arms in a new church would be those of the monarch at the time of a church's consecration. The old St Chad's Chapel was certainly designed and built during the reign of William IV. However William inconveniently died 9 days before the consecration of the Chapel on 29 June 1837, and the young Victoria was Queen. Consternation! - what was to be done with the newly carved, no doubt expensive, but now outdated coat of arms? Sheer conjecture of course, but they probably went ahead and hoped the Bishop would not notice! (Well, what would today's PCC have done?!)



*Sketch of western perspective of the Church in 1975, before the Gallery was built
Drawn by Arthur Holt*

It is unlikely that the Royal Arms were transferred to the New Church immediately, as it was not until 1922 that an application for a faculty was 'to install a tablet with the Arms of William IV on the west wall of the Church in memory of the men of Handforth

who fell in the last war'. The sketch on page 14 shows how the Arms were incorporated into the War Memorial which was designed by William Morris & Co, Manchester In 1976 the tablet was taken down whilst the new balcony was being installed, but unfortunately the wood was rotten and it disintegrated. So a new coat of arms was placed at the front of the balcony, together with the date 1837 (the consecration date of the original Chapel) but the arms were still those of the wrong monarch. Queen Victoria would not have been 'amused, and the date probably misleads many people who visit the Church today!

One of the luxuries provided by the new Church would have been the central heating. The boiler was originally coal or coke fired. The fuel is likely to have been delivered from the coal yard adjacent to the railway station, and tipped down the 'drop' into the basement for stoking by the Verger. The Church has subsequently had boilers fuelled by oil and gas. The fine chimney and the adjacent twin south transept gables are arguably the most distinctive architectural features of the church.

Changes to interior furnishings and fittings

For the first few years following the Consecration, a number of improvements were made to the furnishings, mostly replacing existing older fittings as money became



*Interior of Church, looking east, in 1910
Courtesy of Gwen Cooper*

available. Some of these - such as the heating system, the new organ and pulpit have already been mentioned. The picture on page 15 shows the Church in its original 'finished state' about 1910. The Sanctuary area has hanging drapes and processional cross, with candles, brass vases, book rests and cross on the altar, and looks very different to the view from the same perspective today.

The Hope Memorial Reredos was installed in 1922 giving a more austere look to the Church interior. This trend has continued as changes have been introduced. In 1950 a new oak Lectern given by Mr and Mrs J H Price, replaced the elaborate brass eagle Lectern presented at the Consecration by the Le Mare Family, which was given to St Philip's Mission Church in Cheadle. The altar furnishings were removed, and during the 1960s the Processional Cross was donated to another church. A new hexagonal wooden Font was given in 1962, replacing the earlier marble Font at the western end of the Church.

In the late 1980's a major refurbishment of the east end of the church was undertaken. The choir stalls were removed and a raised dais constructed, incorporating the original Communion Rails. The floor of the nave and sanctuary were carpeted in the same design as the floor of the newly constructed Church Rooms.

Additions and Alterations

A small hall, kitchen and toilets were erected in 1964 adjoining the south east corner of the church. Soon afterwards a larger hall, now known as the 'old hall' was built and opened by the Rt Revd Dr Gerald Ellison, Bishop of Chester on 1st November 1969. The overall concept was to complete this with an upper floor containing rooms for Sunday School, under a continuation of the line of the sanctuary roof. This second phase was never finished.

By 1973 there was again a need to increase the seating capacity of the church. This was provided by the erection of a balcony with linking staircase within the entrance porch. The pews in the balcony came from a redundant church in Liverpool. The western screen, which was glazed, was moved forward and the glass removed to enable those seated underneath the balcony to hear what was happening. The balcony was formally opened by the Rt Revd Gordon Strutt, Bishop of Stockport on Whit Sunday 1976.

Following the closure in 1983, and the eventual sale of the National School, accommodation was needed for the Sunday School. In 1987 a new suite of rooms comprising a large lounge-type room, a kitchen, a toilet to disability standards and a Church Office were constructed down the northern side of the church. A new entrance formed a lobby to these 'New Church Rooms', which were opened on 27 January 1990 by Councillor John Jackson, a Lay Reader at St Chad's, during his period of office as Mayor of Macclesfield Borough, in the presence of the Bishop of Stockport, The Rt Revd Frank Sargeant.

The Vicarage

Whilst under the jurisdiction of Cheadle, Clergy serving Handforth lived in the surrounding area. The 1871 Census records show that the Revd John Paulette lodged with William Gibbons, a provision dealer on Wilmslow Road, and in 1881 The Revd Alfred Watton lived at Schools Hill, Cheadle. Once Handforth became a Parish in its own right, a Vicarage was needed for the incumbent. Initially a semi-detached house at 6 Sagars Road was used, with the Revd C G Hamilton (Vicar 1891 -1895) the first incumbent to live there.

In August 1913 the foundation stone of the present vicarage in Sagars Road was laid by Mrs Hawkins, who was the wife of the Vicar's Warden. This was undertaken with great ceremony and festivities. A procession started from the National School led by the Gatley Band and followed by the Robed Choir, Clergy, Wardens, Sidesmen, Sunday School and Congregation. After a good tea, there were family sports in Mr Furnival's field, and dancing went on well into the evening.

The Church Commissioners directed that the Vicarage be constructed 'using only the best materials, and a thick bed of concrete should be placed under the walls'. The Handforth people went even further and paid for a 'small wash house' to be erected which cost them an additional £100.

Other Celebrations

1937: Centenary of the foundation of the first Chapel

The Centenary services were held in December 1937. Preachers were The Revd W Morris MA Vicar of St Paul's, Bolton; The Rector of Cheadle; and the Vicar, the Revd HW Thomasson. The centenary appeal was to enable additional seating to be put into the Church.

1949: Golden Jubilee of the Consecration of the present Church

The 50th Anniversary was celebrated with a Supper and Musical Evening on 5th March. Special services were held the next day, at which the preachers were: Dr DH Crick (The Bishop of Chester), the Revd WJ Wilkinson (Rector of Cheadle), and the Archdeacon of Macclesfield (the Ven FJ Okell).

As a result of the Jubilee Appeal and Gift Day, the wooden fence round the Church which had become very dilapidated, was replaced with the Brick wall which stands today, and the iron gates were erected.

1959: Diamond Jubilee of the Consecration of the present Church

A ticket to the Social Evening on the 1st March would have cost 2/6 (121/2p in today's money!). Preachers at the Festival Services the following day were: the Ven T Clarke (Archdeacon of Macclesfield), and the Rt Revd Gerald Ellison (Bishop of Chester). The Vicar (Mr Rees) preached at an afternoon Family Service.

1974: The 75th Anniversary of the Consecration

By this time the 'old Hall' was in use, and more than 100 people sat down to an Anniversary Supper. Miss Linnet Samuels showed a film and spoke about her missionary work in Zambia. An Anniversary Family Service was held in the morning, and the Youth Fellowship compiled and led a service in the evening.

1977 Centenary of St Chad's becoming a Parish Church

Bookmarks were made inscribed with Psalm 34 v 3: 'Proclaim with me the Lord's greatness; let us praise his name together'.

Memorials in the Church

Most of the memorial plaques on the nave walls were transferred from the earlier Chapel. The majority are to various members of the Brooke family who had been landowners in Handforth since 1713, although they also had other estates in Cheshire. Of particular interest is the memorial to Peter Brooke, a lieutenant in the Royal Navy who served with distinction in the Napoleonic wars. He was mentioned in dispatches for gallantry in 1809, and was wounded several times. He was given the freedom of Liverpool for his Naval services, and he died in 1841. Richard Brooke, younger brother of Peter, became a solicitor in Liverpool, but was also a local antiquarian, and wrote many articles and pamphlets. He was a founder member of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, and was elected FSA in 1847. He died in 1861. A silver Communion Flagon is dedicated to his memory

The family of Richard Brooke FSA continued to own the Brooke Farm Estate in Handforth, and the memorial to his son Alexander Brooke was erected in 1921 by his grandson Alexander Trafford Brooke who is commemorated on the same tablet following his death in 1932.

The other memorials underline the number of well connected people who made their homes in and around Handforth during the second half of the 19th Century.

Memorials placed in the new Church are to:

Louis Henry Symonds (died 1924), and his wife Marion Bertha (died 1930).

The Revd Arthur Espinelle Espin MA, Vicar of Handforth from 1900, who died whilst still in office in 1907. A silver Pyx (a container for communion bread) was given in his memory by his mother.

Another memorial which is so prominent that all will notice, but few really examine, is the Oak Panelling and Reredos on the east wall behind the Communion Table. This is in memory of Frank Hope, son of Mr and Mrs Thomas Hope of Knowles House, Manchester Road (now the Pinewood Hotel), who died in 1921. It contains the Ten Commandments and the Creed, and was erected in 1922. (See if you can spot the carver's 'spelling error').

The Graveyard and Memorial Stones

Once the original St Chad's Chapel was established, the ground surrounding it was used as the Chapel graveyard. Rather poignantly in view of later events, the first grave was that of Sophia Symonds first daughter of Mr Stephen Symonds, who was buried on the 5 August 1843 aged 28 years. When the old Chapel was demolished, more space became available for burials - so solving a pressing problem. The last recorded burial is that of Basil Millett on 19 April 1972, although the ashes of several peoples were scattered after this date.

A report in 1972 states 'The present graveyard is in a derelict state in many areas ...many of the kerbs have subsided. Many of the headstones are leaning at such an angle that they must now be considered dangerous'. As a result of this report, and taking advantage of some environmental grants, plans were made for the graveyard to be levelled. Descendants of those buried were contacted about the proposals, and where objections were made, the stones remain in position, together with others which were either too large or of a design incompatible with the general plans. After carefully recording the position and citations of the gravestones, most of the headstones were laid down over the surface of the graves, and the whole area covered with turf. The distinct ridge running across the grass is not an ancient grave, but a planned obstruction designed to deter cyclists and other wheeled traffic!

The foundation walls and the general outline form of the old Chapel still exist below the surface of the landscaped graveyard, as well as the graves. The edging between the path and the graveyard is made from the coping stones of the old Chapel.

There are 230 recorded graves, with the headstone inscriptions commemorating some 400 people, some of whom are buried elsewhere. The Register of Burials compiled as a legal requirement contains 824 entries. A number (particularly after 1950) are

cremations, for which a separate part of the graveyard was designated. A study of the graveyard records give glimpses into the lives of Handforth people. The notion that people did not live very long is disproved, with many living well on into their 70's and 80's. However in contrast to this there are many instances of children dying in infancy, sometimes as many as four or five in a the same family.



The Church and Graveyard, before 1904

Three graves are of soldiers who died whilst guarding German prisoners in Handforth during the First World War. These graves are under the care of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

There are several interesting inscriptions. One commemorating a 3 month old child with simple theological economy reads:

'She died for Adam sinned, She lives for Jesus died'.

Another in memory of a husband, wife, and daughter has similar assurance but is expressed with more poetic imagery :

'The race appointed I have run, the battle o'er the victory won, and now I reign in heaven on high with Christ my Saviour in the sky'.

There is too much detail in the records to be reproduced here. However, they may be consulted on application to the Church Office.

Vicars and Clergy of St Chad's

This book would not be complete without an account of some of the Clergy who have served the Church over the years. Some are known only by name and dates of office. Others will be known personally by the present congregation and those who have worshipped here in the past, and so will be able to add their own experiences and memories to these brief notes.

As has been mentioned earlier, the Revd **Benjamin Mashiter** was the first Officiating Curate of the old St Chad's Chapel, under the authority of the Rector of Cheadle. Curates came at fairly regular intervals up to December 1877 when the Revd **Alfred Watton** was described as 'Vicar Designate' when St Chad's became a Parish in its own right, and he was later instituted as Vicar.

The clergy must have done a fair amount of walking in those days. There is an unpublished manuscript entitled 'Reminiscences' written in the 1950's by William Williamson who was born in Handforth 1884. His family kept a cobblers shop, and later a post office and newsagents. He records how the Revd **C Hamilton** (Vicar 1891-1895) 'sat many times in our cottage on a chair near the door resting awhile in the middle of a long walk from Cheadle Royal Hospital where he daily took morning prayers'. Mr Hamilton had been a former headmaster of Stockport Grammar School.

In May 1895 the Revd **Edgar Roger Holland** was inducted as Vicar. His family lived in Cheadle where his father was a Doctor. He led the effort to build the new Church and saw the consecration before he left in 1899. He was followed by the Revd **Arthur Espinelle Espin** who sounds as if he was a person of great character and probably related to Thomas Espinelle Espin DD, who was Vicar General of the Diocese. Arthur Espin is reported in Williamson's Reminiscences 'to have been an impressive extemporary preacher who was in great demand at Festival Services in the area. He was an Oxford MA who almost cracked our Post Office counter with his heavy walking stick when he learned of Oxford's victory in the Boat Race'. He died in 1907 and his memorial is on the south wall of the nave.

He was succeeded by **John Alfred Percy Douglas Willan**, described as 'widely known for his beneficent nature, a high class gentleman and a high churchman'. During his incumbency a letter of complaint was made to the Bishop of Chester by a gentleman who objected to the use of wafers instead of bread in the Communion Service. He resigned in September 1910.

During the first world war the Revd **Samuel Stockton** was Vicar. He is reported to have said that it was a toss-up whether he should be a Parson or a Farmer. He must have I won busy, because the population of Handforth was increased considerably when the (Cunliffe/Symonds Calico Printing Works was turned into a Prisoner of War Camp with the numbers there increasing from 500 in November 1914 to 2,000 by April 1915.

On the 1st June 1918 the Revd **Hugh Whittaker Thomasson** (see photo) began what was to become the longest incumbency to date. In 1905 he had gone to China with the China Inland Mission and it was while over there that he met and married his wife Louisa.

There is still a direct connection with him through his daughter Gwendoline who married Gordon Cooper, a local man, and Gwen is still a regular worshipper at St Chad's. During the war years many local people from Handforth were involved in the conflict abroad and in a recent discussion, the Revd Edgar Pearson who was the Curate, recalled that the Vicar visited the Church every day to pray for them. Mr Thomasson retired due to ill health in 1942.



The Revd, H Thomasson
Vicar 1918-1942

The Revd **Roger Eatherley Frith** served as Vicar from 1942 to 1951, having been a curate in York, and at St Mary's Cheadle. During his incumbency a number of days of prayer for peace were held on the orders of The King, and of course he officiated at the various Victory celebrations. The Bell was rung! Roger Frith resigned in 1951.

The Revd **Brynley Mervyn Rees** came to St Chad's after being Vicar of St Paul's, Gold Hill, West Bromwich. He was instituted on the 3 June 1952, and he resigned in 1960.

The next incumbent was **David Leslie Lumb** who came to Handforth in November 1960 after posts as Assistant Curate at Walcot (Bath & Wells), and Lenton in the Nottingham Diocese. During this period some new services in modern language were being introduced into the Anglican Church, and Family Services were started at St Chad's. David Lumb left in 1971 to take charge of a church in Plymouth.

The Revd **Alan Smith** was instituted in March 1972, and two years later was joined by Colin Thomas as the first Curate at St Chad's since Edgar Pearson during Mr Thomasson's time. This was a period of considerable growth, particularly amongst the Youth Fellowship. At this time new music was beginning to be used in Anglican Worship, and Alan encouraged this with his contributions on the guitar and trumpet. Alan Smith left in October 1978 to become a prison chaplain. Sadly his wife Kay was killed in a car accident, and he later married Linnet Samuels, who had been a missionary worker whilst worshipping at St Chad's.



Youth Group and Leaders in 1965 before their ascent of Snowdon
by permission of The Express Group of Newspapers

The Revd **Samuel Peter Isherwood** came to St Chad's in 1979, together with his wife Winifred and their family. Peter had been a Curate in Manchester and St Saviour's, Bacup. He was Vicar of St Andrew's, Livesey, Blackburn, before coming to Handforth. Peter was Licensed as Rural Dean of Cheadle Deanary on May 10th 1992

During Peter's incumbency there have been a number of Curates, who with their wives have helped to develop our worship and enrich our church life.

| | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Peter & Brenda Smith | June 1979 - Oct 1982 | June 1983- Feb 1986 |
| Adrian & Helen Thorp | June 1986 - Dec 1990 | April 1991 - March |
| Tim & Ann Wilson | 1993 July | 1993 - Jan 1997 |
| Andrew & Linda Pell | | June 1997 |
| Paul & Sue Mason | | |
| Paul & Paula Carr | | |

The Colshaw Community Church was developed jointly with the Methodist Church, and this later became a Local Ecumenical Partnership, and renamed 'Christ Church Colshaw'. To assist this work an additional member of staff was appointed.

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| Capt. Patrick Mottram (Church Army) | Oct 1993 -April 1996 |
| Mrs Angela Cummins (Assistant Minister) | Aug 1996 |

The Church Today

Much of this book has been about the church buildings and contents as they have grown and changed over the past 100 years. Buildings are important but they are seldom an end in themselves. They can inspire, and create an atmosphere for what goes on



in and around them, and this is particularly so for a church. However it is the people who are 'The Church - the Body of Christ', and in this centenary year we also celebrate those who have worshipped and faithfully served the Lord here in the past, and those who still do so today.

*St Chad's in the Centenary year
Photo: David Holt*

In 1899 St Chad's and other churches were the focus for much of the social and community activity in the township of Handforth. People came to Church as part of their weekly routine, and at festival times the building would have been very full indeed. In 1998 'going to church' is no longer the socially conformist thing to do. The spiritual aspect of life is not uppermost in the minds of most people, except in times of national or personal tragedy, such as war, disaster, or tragic death.

St Chad's has always reached out into the community, but in the 1990s this outreach is as important to the life of the Church as the regular services at which the Gospel is preached to those who come to hear. Indeed it is through contact with those in the community, whether at times of joy, sorrow, recreation or leisure, that opportunities are created to witness about the love of God, and his importance in the day to day lives of Christians. The many activities linked to St Chad's Church today testify to the faith and commitment of those who worship here.

We remember those who have built and maintained St Chad's over the past 100 years, and thank God that it is indeed a place where, as the Archdeacon said at the laying of the foundation stone in 1898:

'Old and young can gather together for worship, and where they can gain new strength and vigour, and strength from above.'

May it long continue to be so - until He comes again.

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*Many of the above titles can be bought from Handforth Library, or borrowed
through the Library Service.*



St Chad's Parish Church

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