

St James' Church Blackburn - the first 100 years

1874 - 1974

A Short History by F. Duerden

St James' Church was consecrated by the Bishop of Manchester, Dr. Fraser, on June 8th 1874. The celebration of its Centenary has been suggested as an appropriate time to review the past and to put on record a few facts in the history of the church.

The greater part of what is now St James' Parish was originally in St John's Parish. Prior to the building of St James' Church, services had been held from about 1850 in the hamlet of Pleckgate, a mission district of St John's and St Paul's. At the time the district known as Pleckgate included the areas now known as Hole l'th' Wall, Four Lane Ends and Pleckgate, together with the surrounding areas of predominantly pasture land. The services were originally held in the upper room of two hired cottages and subsequently in the building much later known as St Chad's, which was also used as a schoolroom. A baptismal register showed entries from 1864 to 1874, during which time the curates of St. John were in charge of the district. It had always been done until eventually the growing lack of adequate accommodation became too pronounced for further disregard. However, in 1873, Mr W T Carr, a Barrister at Law of the Middle Temple, gave a site for the erection of a Church. This was a disused brickfield at Ousehead on the hill at the top of Shear Brow. A subscription list was opened, at the head of which were W T Carr, Esq. H M Fielden, Esq. MP., the late widow of the late Alderman Pemberton, Richard Pemberton, Esq. of Cemetery Mill, His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch and Daniel Thwaites, Esq, together with grants from the various church building societies.

The Blackburn Standard and Patriot devoted three and half columns of close print to the laying of the corner stone on 28th June, 1873, "In the presence of a vast concourse of people". The report was sub-headed, 'Grand Masonic Ceremony' and went on "The interest taken in the day's proceedings was manifested early in the afternoon; bands of music were to be seen and heard in all directions, flags floated from the public buildings, and the whole day in the neighbourhood of St John's and Pleckgate wore a holiday appearance. The procession was in every respect a success, being numerous, brilliant and effective".

The route of the procession was from the hamlet of Pleckgate to St. John's Church, thence to the Town Hall, gathering additional members en route. It then proceeded up Preston New Road and through Corporation Park to the site in the following order:- the Band of the Orangemen, the contingent of Orangemen, the Borough Band, Pleckgate Sunday School Scholars, The Friends of Pleckgate, The Scholars of St John's School, The Mayor of Blackburn (J. Thompson, Esq.)

accompanied by many of the gentry of the town and neighbourhood, Churchwardens with their wands of office, the Clergy of Blackburn and District, Sixteen little girls, two abreast, dressed in white and carrying baskets of choice flowers, the Guest of Honour, Le. Gendre Nicholas Starkie Esq. (The Provincial Senior Grand Warden of England and Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master of East Lancashire) and finally, many of the Provincial Officers of Masonry. At the site were gathered a good number of clergy and ladies and gentlemen of the neighbourhood. After the singing of the 100th Psalm and the offering of prayers by the Rev. J Baker, Vicar of St John's, the corner stone was formally laid by Le Gendre Nicholas Starkie and offerings of corn, wine and oil placed upon it as emblems of plenty, of gladness and of peace. After the National Anthem and Benediction, the proceedings terminated as far as the adults were concerned, but the children were regaled with coffee and buns in an adjoining field - 1150 from St. John's and 250 from Pleckgate.

Although it was intended that eventually the Church would have a Tower, this feature was not included in the original building plans on account of the additional cost involved. The main structure, without Tower, was completed in 1874 at a cost of about £4,200. A subsequent comment in the Weekly Standard and Express said "The building has been described as a plain Gothic structure with nave, aisles, fine octagonal chancel, organ chamber and north porch, and, after forming a judgement from the not excessively impressive exterior, the visitor is never more surprised than by the size of, and a certain amount of stateliness, about the interior. It seats 64 people, 445 seats being free." An interesting link with St John's is to be found in the Sanctuary where stand two carved chairs presented to St John's by the St John's Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society in 1874.

The Rev. George Whalley, whose name had appeared in the register of the Mission Church at Pleckgate in 1870, was appointed as the first Vicar of St James'. The patron was the Vicar of St. John's, the Rev. J Baker, at whose death the gift of the living was to pass to the Bishop of the Diocese. In July 1875, consequent upon the Ecclesiastical District of St James' Church having been assigned by the Commissioners, marriages could be solemnised. An organ was purchased in 1875, a Day School built in 1877, and a Vicarage in 1879.

After an earnest and devoted ministry of eleven years, the Rev. Whalley died on June 11th 1885. His successor was the Rev. W H Palmer, who had been ordained as Curate to St. Paul's in the same year as St. James' was built. After two years he had been appointed Curate at St. John's where for seven years he worked with the Patron of St. James' who finally gave him the living.

Records of the period from 1875 to 1894 are extremely sparse, but it would appear from subsequent entries in the Parish Magazine, issued for the first time in January 1894, that the Mission Room at Pleckgate was closed for a time, re-opening in 1890. The cover of the first magazine and those of later issues bore a line drawing

of the Church with a substantial tower and a clock, but as a matter of fact, such a feature was not added until 1900. The magazines listed services both at St. James' and at Pleckgate Mission Room, where Mr. C H Webster, the lay assistant, was in charge, The Girls' Friendly Society was mentioned as were the Day Schools with accommodation for 140 children at St James' and 130 at Pleckgate. The Report of HM Inspectors on the Pleckgate School, for 1893, was a good one, but an intimation was given that no further yearly grant would be made in respect of the infants unless better provisions were made for their accommodation. These included larger windows, proper inlets for fresh air, reduction of draughts, provision of cloakrooms and fitting of doors to the lavatories. It also pointed out that as the classroom was much below the minimum size then recognised, it could no longer be included in estimating the accommodation afforded by the School. The report on St James' School itself was in a similar vein. The work and discipline were praised but the physical conditions were severely criticised :- the School poorly built and in bad repair, absence of cloakrooms and insufficient toilets. Warning was given that no grant would be made for 1894 unless satisfactory progress was made towards the provision of more suitable premises.

The Reports were discussed at a Vestry Meeting in July, 1894, when it was decided to build a new room at Pleckgate, and extend and remodel St. James' School. The extent of the financial problem involved in this decision can be gauged from the fact that, whilst the Warden's Abstract of Accounts for the Church Year ending Easter 1894 showed a deficit of £17. 13. 5d, the average monthly offertories of the two Churches for the first six months of 1894 were only £21.3.0d. For comparison, the average monthly offertories at St James' Church for the first 6 months of 1973 were £148.15.0d. In making such monetary comparisons, it must be borne in mind that in the 1890s costs were very much lower than today. Prices mentioned in the tradesmen's advertisements in the Parish Magazines of that time included Best House Coal 9 ½ d cwt., Tea 1s. 4d. a lb., Cameras £1.1.0d, Ladies' Costumes 10/6d, Men's suits to measure 31/6d, Trousers (Tailor made) 7/6d and Waterproofs 21/-. With the object of raising money for furtherance of the School Extension Scheme, it was decided to hold a Bazaar in 1895.

For the first time in the history of the Church, a Confirmation Service was held on January 28th 1895. There were 200 candidates present from various parishes, who received the Holy Rite at the hands of Bishop Cramer Roberts.

From mid 1894 to April 1895 when the Bazaar was held, the efforts of all sections of the two congregations were concentrated on a diversity of money making efforts - Soirees, Hot Pot Suppers, Pancake Parties, Magic Lantern Shows, Minstrel Troupe Entertainments, Tea Meetings, Social Evenings etc. The Bazaar was held in the Exchange Hall for four days and resulted in £1,085 being raised. The unsold goods were held to form the nucleus of a Sale of Work to be held later to raise the further £400 required to complete the work of extension. This was held for three

days in the Orange Hall, Richmond Terrace, in January 1896 and resulted in receipts of £250, including £90 in donations. A second Sale of Work was held in the Pleckgate Schoolroom in September, when a further £89 was raised. The extensions were in use at Pleckgate by March 1896 and at St. James' by January 1897.

As early as 1894 a local press report had stressed the fact that the Parish, two and a half miles long and half a mile broad, one of the largest in Blackburn with a still-growing population of 10,000, was still in the charge of only one clergyman and commented, in the phraseology of the time, that the non-provision of a curate "was not altogether harmonious with the fitness of things". Five years later by an Order in Council dated July 18th, 1899, the Parish boundaries were revised reducing its population to 7,000. Part of it was transferred to St. Michael's Parish and the Pleckgate Mission Church to the Conventional District of St Gabriel's.

It will be remembered that although the cover of each issue of the Parish Magazine depicted the Church complete with Tower, in fact there was no Tower. At a Vestry Meeting in April 1899 it was resolved to make a special effort to remedy this and the usual fund-raising efforts began. However, in March 1900 the Vicar was informed by the Executors of the late Mr. John Bolton, a one time Registrar at the local County Court and a benefactor of the Church during its lifetime, that he had bequeathed the sum of £1000 towards the construction of a Tower provided that the balance of the money required to be raised and the building completed within five years. Action was taken immediately by asking interested architects to submit plans bearing special reference to the existing illustration on the cover of the magazine. The six designs received were submitted through the Trustees of Mr. Bolton to a well-known firm of Church Architects for an opinion as to which was suitable for the Church. That submitted by Mr R F Gradwell, F S I of Blackburn was recommended and accepted by the Vicar and Church Officers at a meeting in December 1900. The proposed tower was to rise to a height of 85 feet from the ground, surmounted by a slated spire and a vane, making the total height 120 feet. For a long time great inconvenience had been caused by the very limited space in the Vestry and as enlargement was held to be necessary it was decided to do this work at the same time, the cost of which to be quite separate from that of the Tower. At a subsequent meeting of members of the Congregation it was decided that efforts should be made to raise £1000, of which £600 was to be devoted to Church repairs and School requirements, and the balance to the Tower Fund. The usual methods of raising money were organised, the most important being a Bazaar to be held in October 1902. The efforts of the Congregation were appreciated in an unexpected way when in May 1902 the two daughters of Mr. Bolton intimated that, having heard of the real efforts that people were making, they were willing to complete the Tower at their own expense and so leave the parishioners to raise funds for the more urgent parochial needs.

The objects of the Bazaar to be held for four days in the Exchange Hall now became repairing , cleaning and decorating of the Church, the enlargement of the Vestry, the liquidation of an existing debt on the School; and repairs and improvements in the School required by the Board of Education. The list of patrons was headed by His Worship the Mayor of Blackburn, Sir W H Hornby, Bart., M P Sir W Coddington, Bart., M.P. Herbert Whiteley, Esq., M.P. J Rutherford. Esq., M.P. R.A. Yerburch, Esq.' M.P. and the Venerable the Archdeacon of Blackburn. The next receipts were £827, including £244 in donations.

Prior to the Dedication of the Tower and the Vestry on December 13th, 1903, a report was issued outlining the work still to be undertaken - draining the church grounds, pointing the Church and boundary walls, repairing the roof, guttering and downspouting, decorating the Church, repairing the organ, repairing under the Church and providing furniture for the Vestry, matting for the Church and other items of equipment. Once again all the Societies and Groups within the Church, in particular the Ladies' Sewing Class, devoted much of their efforts to fund raising, culminating in a Sale of Work in March 1905, the receipts from which freed the Wardens from all debts in connection with the improvements in and about the Church, with the exception of a small debt on the organ.

To liquidate this debt, a social gathering had been organised for the evening of October 12th. At 6.30 on that very evening a nearby resident saw smoke issuing from the roof of the Church and immediately called the Fire Brigade. The horse-drawn hose-tender and nine men were soon at the scene of the fire, having avoided the precipitous Shear Brow by using East Park Road. Forcing their way in the Church, the firemen, realising the serious nature of the outbreak, called for reinforcements and another tender and twelve men soon arrived. The fire appeared to have originated at the East end of the Church and had got a firm hold of the organ and the roof above the organ chamber. Owing to poor pressure from the stand pipes and the volumes of dense smoke within the Church, the firemen were much hindered in their effort, but brought the fire under control in about two hours. They left about ten o'clock, leaving four men to keep watch on the smouldering debris during the night. The consensus of opinion at the time was that the Church had narrowly escaped total destruction. The Blackburn Weekly Telegraph said "The interior of the Church, so beautiful in appearance a few hours before, presented with a dismal picture - the East end was a wilderness of wreckage, charred broken pieces of woodwork and small heaps of plaster, water-sodden hymn books, buffets, pew cushions, etc. Where the organ formerly stood there was nothing but a dark chasm at the rear of which there were some fragments of blackened timber and the charred pipes of the organ. Above the organ chamber were two gaps in the ceiling and the course of the flames up to this point was plainly discernible. Although the actual fire had been confined to this part of the Church, the whole of the interior had suffered to some extent either by

fire or water. The pillars and windows were all smoke-begrimed and the general appearance of the Church was gloomy and desolate.”

The Church and its appointments were insured for £4000, the premium for the current year having been paid only the previous week. The origin of the outbreak remained a mystery, the furnace providing heat for the Church was not in use and although on the afternoon of the day in question workmen were searching for a suspected escape of gas in the basement, there was no direct evidence to connect this with the fire. The Insurance Company assessed the damage at £1,690, enabling restoration work to be put in hand at once and consideration be given to the raising of a Restoration Fund. Services were held in the School for several months until the Church was re-opened in May, 1906. It had been re-decorated throughout, the seats re-stained and re-varnished, the old incandescent gas lighting replaced by an electric installation and a new organ installed. The Restoration Account amounted to £2,178, including £920 for the organ. Despite consistent and strenuous efforts to reduce the deficit it still amounted to £197 in 1907 - and it was not until the following year that it was finally eliminated.

It is worthy of note that in the early years of this century the Church had acquired a well-deserved reputation for the brightness of its services, the choir, under the leadership of the Organist and Choirmaster, Mr. S.H. Broughton, Mus. Bac. Oxon., F.R.C.O., being regarded as one of the best in Lancashire, its services often being called upon by many parishes in the Country.

In the absence of other Church Records, the Parish Magazines have provided much of the information regarding the Church's early history, but unfortunately, those from 1907 to 1956 have either been lost, misplaced, or perhaps never collected. For some of this time the main source of information has been, of necessity, the occasional Press Report on some aspect of work at St James'.

Owing to failing health which affected his voice, the Rev. W.H. Palmer retired from his benefice on November 23rd 1916. For thirty-one years he had discharged his duties with a fidelity and zeal which endeared him to his flock, who remembered him with affection. He died at the age of 86, at his residence in Lytham St. Annes. A memorial window was unveiled and dedicated in the Church in 1931.

The new incumbent, the Rev. Henry Johnson, M.A. was appointed by Bishop Knox and licensed to the living on January 15th, 1915, his induction taking place on February 3rd.

In accordance with the provisions of the Schedule of Rules for the Representation of the Laity, consequent upon the Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act of 1919, the first Parochial Council for St James' was formed in April 1920, its first

meeting being held on May 5th of that year, when Mr. C.B. Duerden was appointed Joint Secretary with Mr. A. Pickup.

On October 31st, 1920, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Henn, the Bishop of Burnley, unveiled and dedicated a tablet and window to the memory of seventy-four men connected with the Church and Sunday School who gave their lives in the Great War. The tablet was provided by the parishioners and the window by the Young Men's Class, and both were designed and executed by the Bromsgrove Guild. At this service six brass collecting plates, given by anonymous donors, were used for the first time.

It is not generally realised that the present Blackburn Northern Cricket Club had its origin in the old St James' Cricket Club which had been formed in 1905 to provide recreational facilities for the more active members of the congregation.

Unfortunately, as a result of differences of opinion as to the sustainability of Whist Drives and Dances in its fund raising activities, the Cricket Club eventually disassociated itself from the Church and carried on its activities under another name.

Early consideration was given to the approaching Golden Jubilee of the Church and as a result it was decided to put the Church through a thorough state of repair both inside and out and to decorate the interior. |For these and other parochial objects, including augmentation of the living, repairs to Day and Sunday School and the normal recurring expenses, it was decided to organise a Bazaar and to initiate a Jubilee Fund with the object of raising £1,000, despite the fact that the town was passing through a period of trade depression. By early 1923, £123 was available for the Bazaar Fund, the Bazaar itself being held for three days in February 1924. The proceeds, together with those from other functions and a Ten Shilling Fund, brought the total of the Jubilee Fund to £1,029.

The Rev. Henry Johnson M.A. retired in February 1937 after twenty years at St James'. Although he had not been well for some time, his death in March 1938 came as a shock to his former parishioners by whom he was held in the highest esteem. He took great interest in the work of the Church Missionary Society and for the last nine years of his Vicariate the contributions to this Mission were over £100 a year. 'What he preached he did his best to practise' was the tribute paid to him by the Bishop of Blackburn in a special service at St James' preceding the funeral.

The Rev. W.J. Sheldon acted as Curate-in-Charge until the appointment of the Rev. Alan Knowles to the Benefice in April 1937.

During 1938, whilst national tensions were developing in Europe, at St James' much thought was given to the need for renovations to the fabric and furnishings of the Church and the finances involved. The necessary work was started in March, 1939. This comprised repairing and strengthening the south-eastern pillar

of the Tower, installation of a new electric lighting system, removal and replacement of defective plaster, decoration of the roof and walls and the refurnishing of the Sanctuary and Choir with hangings, carpets and coverings. At a Thanksgiving Service held on September 7th, 1939, to mark the completion of the work, the Bishop of Blackburn, after complimenting the congregation of their self-sacrifice and unselfishness in raising some £700, went on: "You have a right to be proud of yourselves. It is not too much to say that St. James' Church is now more beautiful than it has ever been. At the end of sixty-five years it is more worthy as a House of Prayer than in all its story hitherto."

The Rev. Alan Knowles resigned as vicar in March, 1940, and until the induction of a new vicar the Rev. H. Collinson of Mellor took charge of the Parish. In May, 1940 the Rev. J.E.B. Walker, M.A. was inducted by the Bishop of Blackburn. In view of the support which St James' parishioners had always given to missionary work, it seemed appropriate that the new Vicar had served for five years at Kimberley Cathedral, South Africa and that after two years' service in England he had spent a further five years abroad as incumbent of All Saints, Tientsin, in the Anglican Diocese of North China before returning to Oxfordshire in 1939.

During the war years, the normal church activities had to be adapted to the changed conditions. The possibility of air raids precluded the gathering of large numbers of people at outdoor functions such as Garden Parties. Services were re-timed to take place in the daylight and shortened in the winter months because of the ban on heating. In 1940 a system of 'Gift Envelopes' was instituted to cover the loss of revenue in the face of increased running costs. The following years it was thought desirable to obtain information on the Freewill Offering Scheme which was operating in some parishes. In 1943, when the Parochial Church Council was already assessing probable requirements in the post-war years on both a parochial and diocesan basis, the matter was again raised and after two informative addresses from a vicar and a layman from two parishes where the Scheme was successfully working, it was decided to adopt such a Scheme in 1944.

On June 26th, 1949, three stained glass windows were unveiled in the Church - the first, The Good Shepherd, to the memory of the Rev. H. Johnson; the second, St Francis, to the memory of the Misses M.E. and M.A. Pickup; and the third, St Claire, to the memory of Miss Jenny Pickup.

In November 1953, the Parochial Church Council asked the Bishop to license as a part-time assistant curate, the Rev. A.G. Clarke, M.A. who for some months past had been assisting at some services by invitation.

After a routine inspection of the organ in 1954, recognised experts reported that it was a good instrument, the replacement value of which would be about £10,000. It is interesting to note that after the fire in 1905, in which the organ was totally destroyed, the new organ cost £920. Consequent upon the report it was decided

to increase the insurance cover to £10,000 and fix a fire extinguisher in close proximity to the organ. The present organ bears a bronze memorial tablet to Mr. G.R. Hornby, M.C. Organist & Choirmaster for 25 years, 1928-1953.

After sixteen years at St. James' the Rev. J.E.B. Walker was inducted as Vicar of St. John's, Higher Broughton, Salford, on September 14th 1956. There were many expressions of regret at his leaving, particular mention being made of the happy relationship he had fostered with all sections of the Congregation and the guidance he had given to their activities. During the interregnum the Warden as Sequestrators, together with the Rural Dean and the Rev. A.G. Clarke, were responsible for the services and for the Parish as a whole.

On January 24th, 1957, the Rev. Thomas Cooper, B.A. from St, James' Chorley, was instituted by the Bishop of Burnley, the Rt. Rev. G.E. Holderness, and inducted by the Ven. C.H. Lambert, M.A., the Archdeacon of Blackburn.

In December 1958 the Rev. A.G. Clarke died after a period of ill-health. His gentlemanly good nature, patience and kindness all contributed to the feeling that everyone had lost a good friend and the parish itself a faithful priest.

Prior to the induction of the Rev. Cooper it had been decided to reconstruct and modernise parts of the Vicarage as authorised in principle by the Diocesan Surveyor. In addition to the School Extension Fund, which had been in existence for some considerable time, a Vicarage Fund was opened in 1957. In August, an examination of the fabric of the church revealed that extensive restoration was required. In 1958, the Lambeth Conference had passed a resolution approving the principles of Stewardship and asking for them to be implemented in parishes. This, together with the ever-increasing expenditure on the maintenance and repair of the buildings and the development and extension of parochial activities, encouraged the Vicar and Parochial Church Council to give much thought over a long period to the modern methods of fund raising which were being tried in many parts of the Diocese. During 1962, speakers were invited to address the Parochial Church Council on various aspects of Christian Stewardship, and, despite an initial reluctance to alter the time-honoured methods, it was gradually realised that many problems would be solved by the adoption of such a scheme. Further action was temporarily deferred when the Vicar was offered, and accepted, the Living of Holy Trinity Church, Bolton-le-Sands. He was instituted and inducted on April 27th, 1963, after a Vicariate at St James' of six years. He will long be remembered for his belief in Christian Unity and for his success, together with the Minister of Four Lanes' End Congregational Church, in organising combined services in 1962 and 1963.

On September 9th, 1963, the Rev. W.D. Robinson, M.A. the senior Curate at Lancaster Priory, was instituted by the Bishop of Blackburn, the Rt. Rev. C.R. Claxton, and inducted by the Ven. H.N. Hodd, Archdeacon of Blackburn. The new

Vicar had some experience of Stewardship since it had been operating in his late parish. At the first meeting of the Parochial Church Council after his arrival, it was decided to hold a parish meeting where the Vicar would explain the object of Christian Stewardship. After a further meeting of the Parochial Church Council, addressed by the Diocesan Secretary, it was decided to ask the Diocesan Authority to assist in running a campaign in April and May 1964 and so dispense with professional organisers who would have no interest in the Christian principles involved. It was estimated that the needs of the parish for repairs, maintenance and development would involve an expenditure of at least £12,000. At the close of the campaign £4,620 per year had been promised and further consideration was being given to covenanted subscriptions which would allow a rebate to be claimed from the Inland Revenue Department.

St James' first full-time curate, the Rev. D. Raitt, B.D., A.K.C., was ordained deacon in May 1964 and priest in June, 1965.

Sympathetic consideration has always been given at St. James' to appeals for help from charitable and missionary organisations. A report in the Blackburn Times in 1924 noted as an achievement that over a period of seven years a total of £4,200 had been raised for church expenses, of which a total of £900 was devoted to such causes. In December 1965 it was decided to increase such donations to £500 PER YEAR, which represented one tenth of the total Parish Income at that time.

January 1966 saw the £1,000 debt for the restoration of the organ fully paid off, the completion of the day school extensions and the opening of the Headquarters of the uniformed youth organisations - Scouts, Guides, Cubs and Brownies. Although much of the work connected with the latter had been supplied by volunteer labour, the cost was £2,287. Throughout its history, St James' has been fortunate in having members of the congregation, both professional and amateur, who were able and willing to undertake tasks connected with the upkeep, repair and extension of the fabric and furnishings of the Church premises and surroundings. The more menial but nevertheless important tasks, such as scraping and cleaning the pews to reveal the original wood; digging, weeding and maintaining the church grounds; cleaning and polishing the lectern (on the first occasion, to everyone's astonishment, it turned out to be made of brass) have never lacked volunteers. The results of much of this devoted, unobtrusive work is not apparent to the casual visitor, but one feature which can hardly be overlooked is to be found in the large arch over the interior doors which join the porch and the nave. In 1966 the wood which originally fitted this space was removed and replaced by three engraved glass panels, one of the Holy Spirit and two of angels, designed and engraved by Mr. Garth Edwards, A.T.D., a member of the Parochial Church Council.

The next two years saw the formation of a Baptistry (dedicated by the Rev. Thomas Cooper in February 1966), the redecoration and repair of the Church, the

provision of a Memorial Corner and the introduction of a Side Chapel. The latter was used for the first time in January 1968 on the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul, to whom it was dedicated. Its altar was a gift from the Cathedral.

In April 1967 the Rev. D. Raitt, B.D., A.K.C., had left for his new appointment as curate of Burnley Parish Church, leaving behind him many happy memories of St James' first full-time curate. The incoming curate, the Rev. Kenneth J. Phillips, a former Methodist Minister and trained at the Mirfield College of the Resurrection, was ordained deacon on May 21st, 1967 and priest on June 9th, 1968, at Blackburn Cathedral.

As a follow-up to the 1967/8 Annual Stewardship Campaign, an answer to the critics who had forecast an inevitable loss of enthusiasm with the passage of time, the following figures were published by the Committee. Including rebates from the Inland Revenue Department on sums given under covenant, the totals for years ending in May were - 1965 £4,328; 1966 £4,804; 1967 £4,972; 1968 £5,214. A simple analysis, in round figures, of the resultant financial situation of the Church showed total income £6,000 and annual costs £4,000. Of the surplus £2,000 a sum of £1,000 was devoted to the School Building Project and £1,000 to major items which occurred infrequently - for example - decorating in 1964, organ repairs in 1965, painting and pointing in 1966. In addition, a reasonable Reserve Fund was being built up for emergencies,

In January 1970, the Parish lost a good worker, whose sympathy and cheerfulness had made him many friends, when the Rev. Kenneth Phillips was licensed as Priest-in-Charge of St Christopher's Church, Lea. In November of that year the Rev. W.J. Peter Grime, M.A., who before training at Cuddesdon Theological College in Oxford, had worked in industry and teaching, was appointed as Curate. His ordination as deacon was held at St James' Church - the first ordination ever to be held in the Parish. He was ordained priest in December 1971 at Ribbleson Parish Church.

During Mr. Robinson's Vicariate, great changes were taking place in the Church, both nationally and local, consequent upon a changing society - forms of worship were being revised, there was growing emphasis on Christian Unity, and developments taking place in the government of the Church through Deanery and Diocesan Synods. Locally closer relationships were being fostered within the Church of England. The clergy met weekly at Holy Communion, going round to each other's churches in turn, and meeting annually to discuss the general work of the Church. In our own Parish another step forward was taken in the cause of Church Unity when two meetings were arranged with Lammack Methodist Church to discuss the Anglican-Methodist Conversations about reunion. These were followed in January 1965 by a joint service in St James' during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity attended by the congregations of Lammack Methodist, Four Lane Ends' Congregational and St. James' Churches. Subsequent contact was

maintained in joint meetings of the Men's Associations, Mothers' Unions and Young Wives' Associations. In January 1968 a joint service for the churches of the district was held at St James' in which the Roman Catholic Church of the Good Shepherd joined for the first time. In 1969 the four congregations involved became known officially as the North Blackburn Group of Churches. A new venture started in 1971 with the formation of a Prayer Guild, the meetings of which were held for prayer and discussion at each of the Churches in turn. Although the scheme for unity with the Methodist Church was abandoned at a national level in 1972 it made little difference to the spirit of unity locally. Here more recent developments have been joint attempts to reach those outside the Church - the uncommitted neighbours of the four churches - each house in a chosen area being visited by a team of two people representing two of the churches involved.

In November 1971, following suggestions that there was a real need for a club for "over 60's" in which the church should be involved, an inaugural meeting was held, open to any pensioner living in the St James' district. This resulted in the formation of the Northfield Over-Sixties Club which met with instantaneous success, having a permanent waiting list for membership and a full weekly programme of social events and activities.

Of more direct concern to St James' Church itself was the slow but sure progress towards a new Day School - slow because of officialdom rather than any lack of enthusiasm or effort on the part of the Managers. In March 1965 when the extensions and improvements to the existing School were nearing completion the approval of the Blackburn Education Committee was given to the School Managers' Proposal to erect an additional building nearby to hold eventually eight classrooms, an assembly hall and the usual offices. Permission was sought from the Ministry of Education, and granted in 1967, to start the first phase consisting of two classrooms and the hall, the estimated cost being £21,000, of which the Parish's share would be £5,000. In October 1967 the foundation stone of the new school was laid by Canon Swann, Vicar of St John's, but by this time permission was being sought to start Phase 2. In November 1968 the first phase of the school was officially opened by Alderman John Stirrup, although it had already being in use for a term and a half. Throughout 1969, strenuous efforts were still being made to obtain permission to start Phase 2, but it was in September 1971 before the Ministry of Education approved in principle the plans for the completion of the School. The total cost was now estimated at £6,000, of which £2,000 was already in hand from Stewardship. At long last in April 1973 the new school was actually in use, although the surrounding site was not completed.

In March 1973, the Vicar, who had been for some considerable time a member of the Diocesan Stewardship Committee as well as Chapter Clerk for Blackburn Deanery and a member of the Executive of Blackburn Church Schools' Association, was appointed Diocesan Stewardship Adviser. To allow him adequate time for his

new duties in assisting parishes throughout the Diocese to conduct Christian Stewardship Campaigns, he was also appointed Priest-in-Charge of St James', Shireshead, Forton, a much smaller parish. His last service at St James' was on July 8th prior to his licensing at Shireshead on July 17th. In addition to his organising and administrative abilities, his conception of and belief in Church Unity, and his readiness to test and evaluate new ideas and methods, he succeeded in winning and retaining the respect and affection of his parishioners.

The incoming Vicar was named in September 1973 as the Rev. Roy Braithwaite, B.A. who after three years as Curate at St Gabriel's Blackburn and three years at Burnley Parish Church, was Vicar of St Andrew's Accrington from 1966. Preparation of the Vicarage, including the installation of central heating had several setbacks which unduly delayed his institution with St James'.

Among the many devoted workers who have served St James' Church so faithfully during the past 100 years, seeking no other reward than the satisfaction of helping forward the work of their Church, one who has received recognition outside the narrow boundaries of his own parish. According to an article in the See of Blackburn, Mr Cyril B. Duerden has "a record of devoted service to his Church that is almost certainly unparalleled throughout the length and breadth of England" Now in his 80's, he joined the choir in 1906 and became a Sunday School teacher in 1911. He served with the Royal Field Artillery during the Great War and on his return to civilian life in 1919 helped the then Vicar to compile the electoral roll, in addition to his duties as Sidesman. In 1920 when Parochial Church Councils were first formed, he was appointed Secretary. He has held that position until the present time, thus achieving the unique distinction being the only person in the Church of England to have been Secretary of a Parochial Church since its inception.

THIS HISTORY IS PUBLISHED AS A TRIBUTE TO THOSE WHO HAVE HELPED TO MAKE THE FIRST 100 YEARS' HISOGTRY, AND AS AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO THOSE WHOM GOD CALLS TO WRITE THE NEXT CHAPTERS BY THEIR WITNESS TO JESUS CHRIST IN THIS PARISH.