History of Holy Trinity Church, Bickerstaffe

Holy Trinity Church was consecrated on Trinity Sunday 1843. Land and funds for building the church were provided by the 13th Earl of Derby, but the family links to Bickerstaffe date back to the 16th Century when Henry, the great grandson of the 1st Earl acquired the Manor and came to live at Bickerstaffe.



The Church was built by local labour and from stone quarried in the Township. At the beginning of the 20th century, the North Aisle extension was added by public subscription, together with an enlarged Vestry.

The Wilkinson Organ has been moved twice and had at least one re-build when additional pipes and a new console were installed.

The Tower houses a fine clock and a Carillon of eight bells – a gift in 1933 – the bells from Taylor's of Loughborough.



Before Holy Trinity

The first mention of the existence of a place of worship in Bickerstaffe was in 1389 when Nicholas de Atherton was granted a licence by the Bishop of Lichfield to build an oratory at his manor house. The exact site is unknown, but it was near or on the same foundation as the present Bickerstaffe Hall. It was still in use in 1671 when in possession of Sir Edward Stanley, third baronet of Bickerstaffe, but it seems to have been reserved for private services.

The need for a place of public worship was recognized by the Commonwealth Church Surveyors in 1650 when they described "Bickerstath' as a "towne with the p'ish church of Ormskirke a distant six statute myles and a halfe, and a myle and a halfe from the Chapel of Rainforth. The further presented the case for a Church to be built at Halecroft near the Hall."

Churchgoers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries faced a long walk to Ormskirk for the privilege of sharing public worship. Even so, many persons attended each week. The Church had a difficult task in providing for the needs of parishes without a place of worship. To alleviate the problem, each parish conducted its own affairs. Early records mention William Goore, churchwarden in 1676, and Thomas Billinge in 1707, both Bickerstaffe farmers. The accounts end in 1828, which coincides with the building of a small wooden chapel at the entrance of "Intak" paths.

Perhaps it was the absence of a church that prompted many local people to join the Quaker movement. The founder of the "Society of Friends", George Fox, published a journal in 1654 which mentions a "Biccerseth" meeting, and it is generally believed that he took part in its formation here. Around 1688 a meeting house with a schoolroom attached was built in Liverpool Road, on the site of the present Stanley Cottage. A licence was granted in 1689 and Quaker registers record more than one hundred marriages which took place there. Services were discontinued in 1789 and the house was used as a cottage until it was demolished in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Early Bickerstaffe

An old track that once formed part of Hall Lane was last used to haul stone from Barrow Nook Delph during the erection of the Church and School in the early 1840's. Traces of the track's foundation can be seen in the plantation near Keeper's Cottage. In the space of 5 years the landscape was completely transformed. The Church was sited so as to be visible to all parishioners. Edward, 13th Earl of Derby, funded the project, on condition that parishioners carry all materials. Hundreds attended the Consecration on 30th June, 1843. Architect Sydney Smirke was in the congregation. The cost of building the church was £6,000.

Dr. Nicholas Pensver tells us that the Church was built in the Commissioners Tradition, with a portal tower in Early English detail. The nave has a pair of lancets and buttresses between. At the front entrance the Tympanium is engraved with three angels in typical Victorian Romantic style. Seating accommodation was increased in 1860 by the addition of a North Aisle. The Vestry was added in 1895.

In the Chancel are two stained glass windows, one presented by Mine owner Henry Foster, who died in 1863, and the other by the Penrhyn family in memory of their deceased infant children. The Revd. O. Penrhyn, a cousin of Lord Derby, was Vicar for 11 years. The Church Clock was installed in 1890 as a parting tribute to the Revd. Dr. Wall. The fourth Vicar, the Revd. H. Rowland, printed the first Parish Magazine in January, 1892. In 1895 the heating system was refurbished and a new boiler installed under the new vestry at a cost of £980.

Bickerstaffe became an independent parish on November 14th, 1901, when the Revd. J. E. Woodrow, Vicar of Ormskirk, relinquished his privileges. Electric lighting was installed in the Church for the Dedication of the Bells, the gift of Sir Thomas and Lady Rosbotham in his Knighthood year, on November 6th 1933. The war memorial, erected in 1921 at a cost of £512, was paid for by donations from residents of the parish.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

For some 220 years before the present church was built the parishioners of Bickerstaffe petitioned for their own place of worship. They made regular trips to Ormskirk Church, some 3-5 miles away, to worship. In time each parish was allowed its own Parochial Church Council to run their affairs.

By 1828 a small wooden chapel was in use close to where the present Church now stands.

In 1839 Edward Smith Stanley, 13th Earl of Derby, announced that he would spend £6,000 on a church and parsonage.

"An old track that once formed part of Hall Lane was used to haul stone from Barrow Nook Delph during the erection of the Church and School in the early 1840's. Traces of the track can be seen in the plantation near Keeper's Cottage. In the space of 5 years the landscape was completely transformed. The Church was sited so as to be visible to all parishioners. Edward, 13th Earl of Derby, funded the project on the condition that the parishioners carried all the materials. Hundreds attended the consecration on the 30th June 1843. The architect, Sydney Smirke was in the congregation. Dr. Nicholas Pensver tells us the detail. The Church was built the Commissioners' Tradition, with a portal tower in Earl English detail. The nave has a pair of lancets and buttresses between. At the west door the tympanum carved with three angels in typical Victorian Romantic style. Seating accommodation was increased in 1860 by the addition of the North Aisle. The vestry was added in 1895. In the chancel are four stained glass windows. From the left, facing the altar:

• Depicting Lazarus, come forth. "I believe in the resurrection of the body". Henry Foster, died December 10th Anno Domini MDCCCLXIII. Aged 50 years.

• "Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden."

• "Suffer little children to come unto me." Alice Mary Penrhyn born and died May 8th 1863. Edward Geoffrey Penrhyn born June 15th 1866, died 26 February 1867. "I believe in the life everlasting."

• 1867. "This is my beloved son" To the glory of God and for the adornment of His house. 1867 By the donations of 140 parishioners and friends. Collected by two of the choir.

There are two stained glass double windows in the North wall of the church:

• "The Ascension". "I am the resurrection and the life." In memory of John Evans of Bickerstaffe and his parents also his nephew John Gilbert Evans. This window was erected by the said John Evans who died November 13th 1914.

• "Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him." To the memory of Samuel Blackburn and Sarah his wife of Stanley Cottage, Bickerstaffe. 1935.

The Rev. O. L. Penrhyn, a cousin of Lord Derby, was Vicar of Bickerstaffe for 11 years.

The church clock, made by James Condliff of Liverpool, was installed in 1890 as a parting tribute to the Rev. Dr. Wall. The fourth Vicar, Rev. H. Rowland, printed the first Parish Magazine in January 1892. Bickerstaffe became an independent parish on Nov. 14th 1901, when the Rev. J. E. Woodrow, Vicar of Ormskirk, relinquished his privileges. Electric lighting was installed for the dedication of the Bells, a gift from Sir Thomas and Lady Rosbotham (in his Knighthood year), on Nov. 6th 1933. *(Compiled with the help of Mr Owen Taylor)*

A War Memorial to commemorate the 29 parishioners killed in WW1 was erected in 1920 from subscriptions totalling £512. The memorial was unveiled by the 17th Earl of Derby on 21st March 1921.

A 3' wooden cross from the grave of an unknown soldier in Flanders was given to the church by the Rev. Canon B. Watts in the 1920's and still hangs in the church.

1947 – The wooden pulpit was removed from the north side of the chancel and a stone one installed on the south side, donated in memory of Mrs. Jane Bimpson by her husband Mr John Bimpson.

1957 – A faculty was obtained for the construction of two conveniences outside the churchyard wall.

2002 – A faculty was obtained for the construction of a toilet and kitchenette in the North Aisle of the Church.

Other notable events at Holy Trinity Church, Bickerstaffe as recorded in documents in the safe:

- 1865 – Faculty for enlarging and making other alterations (26.3)
- 1886 – Faculty for raising the chancel floor (2.2)
- 1886 – Faculty for removal of organ from Gallery to North East corner of church

- 1888 – Conveyance of land for Bickerstaffe School (20.5)
- 1893 – Faculty for removal of Retable, Brass Cross, Brass Candlesticks, Vases and candelabra from within the Communion Rails (24.1)
- 1895 – Faculty for new Vestry and Organ Chamber (19.4)
- 1900 – Authorisation for the Publication of Banns and the Solemnization of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials
- 1915 – Faculty for Stained Glass Memorial Window (Evans)
- 1928 – Faculty for Holy Table of oak and Reredos (14.2)
- 1932 – Citation to lead to Faculty for introduction of system of lighting by electricity (30.9)
- 1933 – Citation to lead to Faculty for removal of two existing bells from the Tower and the installation of a New Chime of eight bells and a tablet of brass recording their installation (21.4)
- 1934 – Citation to lead to Faculty for the removal of pews now in the Chancel and the levelling of the Chancel Floor, extension of the existing Choir Stalls, provision of two Clergy Desks, extension of the space between the East Wall and the Communion Rail and a New Communion Rail (20.4)
- 1935 – Citation to lead to Faculty for stained glass memorial window (Blackburn) (24.6)
- 1979 – Organ renovated and new console installed
- 1991 – Amplification system installed in memory of the Rev. H. Fisher "by a grateful congregation"
- 2002/3 – Pews removed from the North Aisle and a kitchen and toilet installed
- 2004/8 –
    - Altar moved forward from reredos
    - Creche area created at west end of church, behind the font and storage cupboard and shelves installed
    - New step provided to vestry doorway
    - Storage cupboard installed at west end of north aisle
    - Electricity supply to west end of north aisle renewed and additional lighting installed

- 2006 – Arches between north aisle and nave filled in to make north aisle a separate area for Sunday Club and community use
- 2007 – North aisle redecorated

Here is some information about the church from the British Listing Buildings website-

Church. 1843 by Sydney Smirke. Enlarged 1860. Sandstone ashlar with slate roofs. Comprises a west tower with spire, nave, lower chancel, north aisle under a pitched roof, and north vestry. The tower has angle buttresses, paired lancet bell openings, and corner pinnacles with flying buttresses to the stone spire. The west doorway projects slightly under a gable and is moulded with angle shafts. The tympanum is carved with 3 angels. The west window of the north aisle, which was added in 1860, is of 3 lights with Geometric tracery. The south wall of the nave is of 3 lights separated by buttresses with pinnacles and has a corbel table below a parapet. The windows are paired lancets. In the south wall of the chancel is a single lancet. The 3-sided east end has similar windows. The east window of the vestry is of 2 pointed lights with a foiled circle in the head. The north wall of the aisle is of 3 bays. The western bay is occupied by a doorway with trefoiled head and angle shafts within a gabled projection. Interior: north arcade of 4 bays. The pointed arches are plastered, have 2 plain orders, and spring from round piers with moulded capitals. At the west end of the nave is a gallery with timber front carried on timber posts. The king-post roof has curved braces to raised tie-beams. The plastered chancel arch is pointed and chamfered. Around the apse is a blind arcade of pointed arches springing from engaged shafts. The octagonal font is decorated with interlaced round arches. The apse windows contain glass from the late 1860s showing scenes from the life of Christ.