

The initial origin of the idea for a church for Ladybarn arose in late 1889, when St Margaret's Church, Burnage (which itself had opened in 1875), gave consideration to opening a 'Mission Room' to cater for the growing population in what was then a distant corner of the St Margaret's parish. After a site of St George's Road had been rejected, Lord Egerton (of Tatton Park), the local landowner, made available a site on the south side of Mauldeth Road, at its present junction with Weld Road.

In March 1890, a tender was accepted for the erection of the new building, which comprised a wooden hut, plus porch and vestry. It was virtually complete by the 21st May, and had cost £146 17s 3d, plus the cost of furniture. The first service was held on 12th June.

Events at the Mission Room were largely in the hands of the laity. A Sunday School took place at 2.30 and Evensong at 7pm. Courses of Entertainments and Lectures took place on Wednesday evenings on a monthly basis over the winter. Often these were illustrated with the aid of a 'magic lantern'.

The new Mission Room was painted externally in 1891, and from June 1892, a children's service was held at 11am. Curates from St Margaret's often helped with services.

The Mission Room was by 1897/98 producing its own annual accounts and electing its own sidesmen. In the same year, the possibility of forming a new parish to serve Ladybarn was being discussed, ironically at a time when attendance at the Mission Room services, and the winter slide shows were beginning to diminish.

With the formation of the new parish imminent, it was decided towards the end of 1899 that the Mission Room would not be large enough to serve as the parish church of the new St Chad's parish. It closed at the end of February 1900 and was finally disposed of by St Margaret's in August.

In 1900 a temporary 'iron church' was erected on the current site of the church hall site in Mauldeth Road, the land again being donated by Lord Egerton. The new church was provided under an initiative of the Bishop of Manchester who had set up a Commission charged with the task of catering for the spiritual needs of Manchester's rapidly increasing population. The building is reported to have come from Longsight, one of three such sites it had been located.

The new church was consecrated on 28 April 1900 by the Dean of Manchester and was capable of seating 130. It was furnished with gifts from wellwishers of the district. The new church's first baptism took place on 2 May 1900. On Tuesday 16 October 1900 it was announced that Ernest Barnes Ward had been appointed to the living. He and his wife, Emily Sarah, had been living in Ladybarn since the end of 1899, whilst he was organising affairs for the new parish. He had already been officiating at the new building since it opened and officially 'read himself in' as the first incumbent of the new Parish on 2 December, Advent Sunday.

The popularity of the new church was soon evident. Between March and July 1901, it was extended so that it could hold 250.

On 14 May 1901, a meeting was held to discuss the erection of a new permanent church. Reference was made to Earl Egerton and his promise to contribute towards the Building Fund which was established that night.

In May 1905, plans for the new church were being drawn up by the architect, Cecil.W .Hardisty.

The new building would be designed to seat 500 and would have a chancel half the length of the Nave. The structure would be built of Accrington brick, to reduce the need for cleaning, and would be decorated with bands of Alderney stone. The roof would be of a panelled barrel construction.

On 30 April 1906, on a day of drizzle and mist, the architect, the contractors (Messrs Hill & Heys), the rector and a fair crowd watched as Mrs Ward cut the first sod for the erection of the new church. On 8 September a rather more important ceremony took place. Assembling in the temporary church, a large procession paraded round the parish and at 4 o'clock, on arrival a bouquet of flowers was presented to the Duchess of Buckingham and Chandos by James Burgess, the senior choir boy. Earl Egerton then laid the foundation stone.

The new building was finally consecrated by the Bishop of Manchester in a special service held on St Luke's Day, 18 October 1907. The old 'tin church' which lay immediately behind the new building, was then demolished.

As well as giving money towards the new building, Earl Egerton had also donated oak and ash from the Tatton Estate to form the new altar in the church. He also gave an altar frontal. The walls of the chancel were covered to a height of 8 feet with panelling made of oak from Tatton Park. St Chad's would be one of the last churches in the Manchester area to be supported by aristocratic benefaction.

Over the door leading to the Clergy Vestry is a large panel depicting St Chad in old English Episcopal vestments with a model of Lichfield Cathedral in this right hand. This was the gift of the church architect. The Pulpit was a gift of Dr Strickland of Halifax, an old friend of the rector and his wife. The baptistery and font were gifts from the children on the parish. A two manual organ, by Hill and & Co of London, was provided.

On the 18th June 1914, work on the long awaited Rectory began, with Mrs Ward cutting the first sod. Completion was expected by October but events on the world stage, in the form of the First World War, were to intervene. It was finally finished in June 1915.

From October 1914, the Parish Magazines contained a list of all those who had taken up arms for the nation. Letters from 'the front' were also published from serving soldiers and sailors; they were to be avidly read in the Parish. From April 1915, the magazine contained a Roll of Honour' listing those who had died. From April 1916, this list became so long that it was decided to omit the earlier list of those serving from the magazine. By the time the War ended, some 102 men from the parish had given their lives in the service of King and Country.

Ernest Ward also suffered personally during the Great War. His wife and constant supporter, Sarah died on 23rd April 1918. In April 1919 it was decided to erect a memorial to Mrs Ward in the form of a Rood Beam, to be designed by the church's architect, C.W Hardisty. The beam, which is 21 feet long, crosses the Chancel and carries on it the figures of Christ on the Cross, the Virgin Mary and St John, was completed and dedicated on 29 September 1920. The beam was built by Hill and Heys, the church's original builders, and the figures were carved by Herbert Reed of Exeter.

A war memorial, inside the church, was finished and dedicated on 22 April 1922. It comprises a shrine at the west end of the south aisle with a stained glass window and a panel on which were inscribed the names of the dead.

The loss of his chief supporter and the difficult times took their toll on Ernest Ward. In January 1924, he was reported to be in poor health. On Sunday 4 October 1925, he died at the age of 59.

St Chad's first priest was generous in his praise of others, an unsparing critic of himself and one who inspired great affection. *'His generous laugh and expressive personality always dominated the surroundings'*. He would be a hard act to follow.

He was followed by Thomas Mangnall Gribbin who was inducted as St Chad's second Rector on 30 January 1926.

The green fields south of St Chad's started to be developed from the mid 1920s which resulted in additional population for the parish. The dual carriageway Kingsway was built in 1923 followed by Parrswood Road in 1928. In the same year, Manchester Corporation started building an estate of 1,144 houses between the two roads. A further 276 houses were built in the Kingswood Road area. New private houses, known as the Lathom Estate, were built to the west of Parrswood Road from December 1924. By 1930, the population of the local area had risen to 14,000.

The outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 had an immediate effect on parish life. In August 1940, Thomas Gribbin accepted an emergency commission to join the Army as a chaplain, which took effect from 1 September. John Hadfield, his nephew, took over as curate-in-charge, a responsibility he would keep until 1944.

At the end of July 1944, John Hadfield left to become vicar of St Mark's, Bolton. He is well remembered at St Chad's, as 'a lovely man, full of fun', and he would return to St Chad's on special occasions many times later in his life. In the mid 1970s, when asked to recall his time at St Chad's, he stated that his time during the war years in particular was the most profitable experience of his ministry. He died from cancer in 1992. He was succeeded as curate-in-charge by Edwin Nickson, an older man. Thomas Gribbin returned to his duties in early 1946.

At mid day on 29 October 1952, a serious fire broke out in the organ chamber, probably caused by an electrical fault in the organ blower. Fortunately it was spotted early, and the fire brigade were soon on the scene. Thirty firemen succeeded in preventing the fire spreading to the Nave by hacking through the roof above the Chancel. Considerable damage was done in the Chancel. 6 altar frontals were destroyed as was furniture, music and the organ. The chancel roof, the rood screen and the East window were all damaged.

Fortunately, repair work was under way quickly, during which time services took place in the Nave. Insurance claims plus an appeal for funds paid for the work. The Chancel was brought back into use during the week of 18 - 25 October the following year. A replacement organ was installed at a cost of £3,130, and dedicated on 11 October. It was a larger instrument than its predecessor, being originally built by Harrisons of Durham in 1906 for a private house, Brackenburgh Towers, near Penrith. Because of its unusual arrangement of the 3 manuals (keyboards) it is known locally by organists as the 'upside down organ'.

Father Gribbin left at the end of the dedication week. He was presented with a 'very comfortable fireside chair, a couple of good pipes, and a very substantial cheque'. He died in August 1977, and a memorial to him was erected very appropriately above the Children's Corner, which he had established. It was dedicated on 19 October 1980, by his nephew, the Venerable John Hadfield.

Described as a man of compassion and understanding, he was unshakeable and patient, giving endlessly of himself in the process. He knew people's talents and how to use them to the full. 'Father Tom' as he was known was tall man and covered the parish by bicycle. He was a 'saint with a sense of humour', and his rectory was haven for those in distress.

After an 8 month long interregnum, George Rooke was installed on 28th June 1954. He and his wife, Mary, had spent the previous 10 years at the living of Christ Church, Market Drayton, Shropshire.

George Rooke would be the last incumbent of St Chad's to be nominated by the Crown. In future, all appointments would be made by the Bishop as Patron, although the parish would retain the right to make representations whenever a new Rector was proposed.

In February 1955, a 'Children's Corner' was formed in the parish magazine - for many years, articles for children were to be written by various people under the nom-de-plume 'Pilgrim'. In September, a Children's Mission was held by the Church Army. A parish library was formed in church.

In 1956 it was decided to invite Ladybarn Methodist Church to join in the annual Trinity Sunday procession. This was considered successful and would continue until the processions ceased in the 1970s.

Improvements were made to the Choir Vestry in 1960 so that small meetings could be held there: PCC meetings took place there from September onwards. The parish was asked in 1962 to help in the 'Students Welcome Scheme' reflecting the now increasing use of the area to house students at Manchester's University.

In 1965, for a trial period, a Family Communion service was held at 9.30am on Sundays, during which time a temporary altar was erected at the foot of the chancel steps. It proved quite popular.

In August 1965, Father Rooke announced that he was leaving St Chad's. He left in November. George Rooke was a well-read man who presided over a parish in which rapid social and economic change was taking place, whilst at the same time considerable liturgical changes were underway in the Church of England. A very voluble and inspiring speaker, he is remembered for his good work with the young of the parish.

Derek Stanesby arrived in April 1967, being inducted on 20 April. A Londoner, in his 30s, he came to St Chad's with a young family.

Derek's initial impressions of St Chad's were that it was a 'gathered church' with a small eclectic congregation, not very 'lively'. There was little sense of it being a 'Parish Church' at the centre of a community. He saw his mission to change this; to create a sense of community involvement in the church, to bring the parish into the church and the church into the parish, thus giving the church's worship a natural context in which to flourish. He also wanted to secure a sound financial basis for the parish.

The long awaited parish hall would be one of the ways in which these aims could be achieved. An initial appeal for £20,000 was made, with an incentive that a single donor of the whole amount could have the honour of laying the foundation stone ! Needless to say, such a donor

did not come forward and the project would take another 3 years.

1968 saw a successful Stewardship Campaign undertaken in September. The response to this in terms of time, talents and money was enthusiastic, and regarded as part of the regeneration of the parish. It also enabled St Chad's to be out of debt and put the finances on a firm footing. During the campaign, some 278 families were visited, which resulted in 203 promises of giving or increased giving, amounting to some £60 per week. The new incumbency was also producing an increase in the number of communicants and Sunday School attendees.

Changes took place that were to alter the appearance of the church. Following receipt of a donation of £100, a new velvet curtain was erected behind the main altar. This was complemented by a large 'Christus Rex' acquired from Liverpool. The high altar was brought forward to enable the priest to stand behind it and make the altar more part of the communal worship space.

By the start of 1969, some £1500 had been raised for the new hall. A brochure was produced to aid fund raising after it had been ruled that a large scale lottery was not legally possible. A whole host of other fund raising ideas were tried instead. A vigil outside the church on 18 October raised some £300. Derek Stanesby took it upon himself to visit every house in the parish and ask them to donate £1. The Diocese of Manchester promised £1000. Planning permission for the new building was obtained in June 1969: previous requirements for the hall to have its own car park having apparently been overcome.

The location of the new hall was between the church and the rectory. It was a wooden structure, designed by architect Brian Vaughan to some initial suggestions made by Rod Hand, also an architect and a member of the congregation. The new building would have a large area for meetings, a 'coffee lounge' in the form of a widened corridor, a kitchen and toilets. The initial estimated cost was £8000. 7 November 1970 was set as the completion date.

7th November came and went. The new building was not accepted from the contractors after problems had become apparent with the standard of the floor. The matter was referred to an independent arbitrator who found in favour of St Chad's in February 1971. The contractors were obliged to put right the defects at their own expense. The hall was finally finished by the middle of the year and was opened on 26th June by the Bishop of Hulme. The total cost, including furniture and fittings, had been £9500.

In 1974 the altar on the northern side of the church was converted into a Lady Chapel by the addition of a communion kneeler and carpet.

1975 saw the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the parish. A series of celebrations took place and a booklet on the church's history was produced by church member and historian Ian Mitchell.

In October 1985, Derek Stanesby announced that he was leaving St Chad's on 10th November, having been invited to become a residentiary canon at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. After close on nineteen years as Rector of St Chad's he felt that the time had come to move on. He would remain there until his retirement twelve years later.

Derek, the 4th incumbent of St Chad's, is remembered at St Chad's as being an energetic, forthright and imaginative man who achieved much through successfully regenerating St Chad's as part of the local community. He insists that he could not have done this without the goodwill

and support of so many faithful parishioners. Derek's family were all involved in the life of the parish and the rectory was an open and welcoming house.

He feels that his time at St Chad's has been 'the main work of my life'.

In May 1986, Donald Pryce, previously Vicar of St James, Heywood, was invited to be Rector of St Chad's making him the 5th incumbent. Donald came to England from Jamaica in 1955 and is married to Inez, who also came from Jamaica. They had two sons.

In 1989, it was realised that the ceremonial sword, which had previously stood in front of the Scott Memorial Window, had been stolen. Churchwarden Douglas Young decided to replace this at his own expense and corresponded with the relevant regiment seeking advice on a suitable replacement. The regiment then offered to provide one at a nominal cost, which was then re-dedicated on 2 July in a service attended by the local British Legion and the 8th Army Veterans Association, at which music was provided by the Band of the Royal Artillery.

A new Sanctuary Lamp was installed in 1992. This was a gift from the nearby Christies Hospital whose own chapel was being remodelled. Other improvements carried out in this era included providing a carpet down the whole length of the chancel aisle, moving the altar in the Lady Chapel and providing a better platform for those reading the Lessons from the Lectern.

1993 saw St Chad's as the location of a 'Royal wedding' when on 24 April, former royal nanny, Alison Wardley, daughter of parishioner Irene, married royal bodyguard Ben Dady. Alison had been nanny to Sarah Ferguson's daughters Beatrice and Eugenie, who both attended the service, along with 'Fergie' herself. Donald Pryce recalls being visited by several sets of detectives to check out the security arrangements for the occasion, some of whom were dressed as 'equerries' on the day. The whole event went extremely well and gave St Chad's a welcome shot of publicity. Sarah Ferguson maintained a 'background' role, supporting her former nanny and making sure that it was Alison who was photographed by the assembled crowds, not herself. It was 'a very good occasion, with glorious weather'.

1995 saw the first 'Talent Sunday' held on 4 June. The idea here was that parishioners would take £10 and by their own enterprise seek to increase it in time for Harvest Festival. Some 13 people volunteered for the task, plus others who volunteered to raise funds without the initial £10 and children who promised to fill Smartie Boxes.

The initiative was successful with over £1100 being returned by Harvest, plus some £73 from the Smartie boxes. The exercise continues today. Some eyebrows were raised at the 10am service when one £10 note was taken away by a 'gentleman of no fixed abode'. Many did not expect this money to be returned, but Trevor Walley, who regularly attended the 8am service, was as good as his word and returned £68 later in the year. An educated man with two daughters, he had fallen on hard times as a result of marriage break-up and a drink problem. He made his money by putting in extra days into his normal 'occupation', which was selling 'The Big Issue'. He also persuaded one of his fellow sellers to take part in the effort. Trevor would stay at St Chad's for about 4 years, before moving on to Leeds, where he died three years later. Some examples of his poetry would be published in the parish magazine from time to time.

New rails at the side of the chancel steps were erected in 1999 after a gift from a parishioner in memory of her late husband. New notice boards were erected outside the church the following year.

Towards the end of 2005, a Centenary Committee was formed to oversee the celebrations in October 2007 of the 100th anniversary of the permanent church building.

At the parish meeting in April 2006, Donald Pryce announced his retirement from the end of June. He wanted to retire before reaching the age of 70, and had spent nearly 20 years at St Chad's. He retired on the last Sunday of July, and went with many good wishes and a generous cheque. Donald had been a different incumbent to his predecessor. His pastoral qualities will be his lasting mark on St Chad's. Like Derek Stanesby, he was chaplain to the Royal British Legion branch. He was also a part-time assistant chaplain at Christies Hospital and a chaplain to the local Fielden Park College. A dedicated Freemason, towards the end of his incumbency, he was appointed Chaplain to the High Grand Master of England.

Donald inspired a great degree of affection at St Chad's. The extent to which this was felt was evident in the comparative lack of reaction to the colour of his skin. One or two were reluctant to acknowledge him at first but were soon won over by him. After one parishioner had at first kept her distance, she came up to him a few weeks later and said quietly 'give me time'. A short time after that, the same person led the intercessions in the morning service. Recalling the sequence of events many years later, Donald said that he nearly cried when he heard her asking for prayers to be said for 'The Rector'.

A lengthy interregnum followed, during which St Chad's celebrated the 100th anniversary of the completion of the current building with a week of celebrations. Another church history was produced.

Early in 2008, St Chad's gained its 6th incumbent, when Elizabeth Davies was appointed Priest-in-Charge. Coming from a background in nursing, she had previously been Senior Chaplain at Bolton Hospice.

The history of St Chad's has been quite remarkable, although not in a controversial way or one that has caused headlines in the news media. It has been the story of ordinary people coming together to serve God and to be witnesses to the Mission of Christ in the world. Ordinary people from a small though distinctive community worshipping in what appears from the outside to be a very ordinary brick building, within which a very traditional form of Anglicanism is the norm.

But those who venture inside the building and take part in its functions know that it is far from ordinary. How can such a place be 'ordinary' when it inspires such affection, and when it continues - as it has done throughout its existence- to attract 'refugees' from other places. The reasons behind the fact that in its entire 112 year history it has only had some 6 incumbents need no explanation to those who know St Chad's well.

The future, of course, is another place. Shortages of clergy, pressure on diocesan budgets, team ministries and other things mean that the future of St Chad's will be different to the past. The changing nature of the area, as long standing residents leave and are replaced by others, presents its own challenges. The need to reach out to newcomers, as well as the area's large transient population, through matters such as new forms of worship and technological innovations, will be matters for the parish to address.

Whatever happens, the future will be made by the people who will make St Chad's their spiritual home. There is no doubt that they will, as ever, rise well to the challenge.

The above is an abridged and slightly updated version of the book 'St Chad, Ladybarn – the Story of a Church and its people 1900-2007' by Robert Nicholls. Copies of the well-illustrated book are still available from the church, price £5.00.