

# CHRIST CHURCH EATON



*A Guide and Brief History*



# CHRIST CHURCH, EATON A GUIDE AND BRIEF HISTORY



*Christ Church, Eaton showing a view of the bell tower.*

In 1859 the Mayor of Norwich commented,

*“a stranger visiting Norwich might think that there were already enough churches in it and that there could be no need for any new ones but...the population had nearly doubled itself within the last half century and the accommodation provided by their forefathers for less than 40,000 could hardly be thought sufficient for a population of 70,000.”*

Ten years later the Norfolk Chronicle and Norwich Gazette wrote,

*“The necessity for the erection of [Christ Church] in this rapidly increasing hamlet of Eaton will be seen at once when it is known that the population is now 1,320 (400 more than it was ten years ago) and the parish church, situated at a most inconvenient distance from the greater part of the parishioners, contains only 170 sittings.”*

So Christ Church was built as a 'chapel of ease' for the parish church of St Andrew's in Eaton village, on land donated by Horatio Bolingbroke of the Eaton Grove estate (now the site of the Norwich High School for Girls). The foundation stone, which can be found below the transept window, was re-cut for the 1972 centenary celebration. It was laid in May 1872 by the Mayor of Norwich, Robert Chamberlin. Underneath is a bottle containing coins of that year and a record of the laying of the stone.

The architects were Norwich-based J H Brown and J B Pearce, and the builders were Messrs W Wright and J W Lacey. The church is in the style of thirteenth century French Gothic, constructed of flint with Bath stone dressings, relieved with bands and arches of coloured bricks, supported by buttresses. The brickwork, carried upward into the graceful bell turret, was influenced by the Tractarian movement whose members wished to reproduce what they regarded as the pure Early English style.

Initially only enough money was raised to build the chancel, nave and transepts, with an organ chamber and vestry on the south side, but provision was made for the later addition of aisles. The Vicar, Frederick Weston (1865-75), led the Fundraising and Building Committees and paid for the apse himself.



*The church's 'elegant and graceful' bell tower.*

When the church was dedicated by Bishop John Pelham on 4 November 1873, the local papers noted its very elegant bell tower with approval; this was still in the process of construction but, when completed, they agreed it would enhance the building's external appearance, which was rather condescendingly described as currently "somewhat barn-like with a railway station style of ornament." Over the years weathering has muted the red and blue bricks and tiles and the later additions to the church did not include them. The roof was of purple slate.



*The pulpit was of carved oak, the gift of Miss Edwards of Hardingham Hall in 1918.*

The interior walls were stucco, with glazing of tinted cathedral glass to produce a 'soft, subdued and agreeable light'; the flooring of the nave and transepts was of black and red Staffordshire tiles and the chancel of Minton's encaustic, or inlaid, tiles. The church was lit by gas burners on the capitals of the pillars and encircling the columns of the chancel arch. There were seats for the choir in the chancel and benches in the church for about 250 people. The pulpit was of carved oak, the gift of Miss Edwards of Hardingham Hall, in 1918. The three

wooden panels show Jesus as the Good Shepherd flanked by Saints John (holding the "poisoned" chalice with dragon) and Peter. At the base are the four symbolic beasts, each representing one of the four evangelists, a theme repeated in the eastern lancet windows.

The original choir stalls were replaced in 1918. Those on the north side are a gift from the parents of Mrs Ida Marguerite Walker, only daughter of Mr and Mrs Josiah Ames. Ida was taken prisoner of war in Baghdad, moved from camp to camp and finally died in Constantinople on 12 October 1916. Her father, Josiah, was a silk merchant and the family lived at 153 Newmarket Road. The south side choir stalls are in memory of churchwarden's son Samuel Stewart Wainwright, who was killed at Miraumont, France on 12 March 1917. The Wainwrights lived at 97 Newmarket Road. They had a large grocery store on the site of which is now the Forum, opposite Norwich City Hall. Stewart Wainwright's name is also on the war memorial at Drayton.

The turret holds the former Cathedral sanctus bell, presented to the church by the wife of Diocesan Registrar, William Thomas Bensly, and recast in memory of Christ Church Road residents, Mr and Mrs E M Beck in 1936; Mrs Beck was one of Norwich's first six women JPs, appointed in 1922. Essential repair work was carried out to the turret in 2016.

By 1879 an apsidal chapel, north aisle, transepts, vestry and organ chamber had been added. Edward Wild (Mayor of Norwich, 1890-91) paid for the north vestry. In 1912 a south aisle was added by architect John E Burton; the west gable and door conceal the junction with the older building.

There are separate altars in the north and south aisles. There is a "Remembrance Corner" in the north aisle where Books of Remembrance are kept, recording the names of those who fell from the parish in the two World Wars as well as those who died more recently. It is a place for prayer and quiet reflection, where flowers may be left in memory of those whose remains are buried in the church's Garden of Remembrance.

During Canon Richard Hurd's time (1949-70) the south aisle chapel (the Lady Chapel) was refurbished, the tiled floor repaved with stone slabs, the heating system replaced and new clergy stalls provided. In 2016/17 some pews were removed from the south aisle to create a social space including a pull-out kitchen and disabled access WC.

Inside the church the large stained glass west window celebrates the golden wedding of Joseph John Dawson Paul (of the Norwich-based firm, Boulton and Paul) and his wife; underneath are their memorial tablets.



*The 'Te Deum West window.*



*South aisle showing the new social space.*

The window was designed and executed by Arthur J Orr of Harrow. The theme is the Te Deum. Nearby a scroll memorial records the loss of George Moore Chamberlin's wife. Chamberlin

(of Chamberlin's department store on Guildhall Hill), was the son of Robert Chamberlin, Mayor of Norwich, who laid the foundation stone in 1872. He went on to be Mayor himself in 1891. There is also a tablet in memory of Canon Richard Hurd.

The fourth window in the north aisle was blocked when a choir vestry was built at the angle of the north aisle and north transept (west side) in 1951. The original clergy vestry, on the east side, was the gift of Sir George White. It proved to be inadequate and his daughter-in-law, Lady White, left a legacy to part-fund a new choir vestry, the other half being paid for by subscription; it was dedicated by Bishop Percy Herbert in 1951. A bronze memorial tablet in the north aisle made by Jones & Willis of Norwich records Henry Newhouse (1859-1925), who was buried at sea off the west coast of Africa. Newhouse founded a steamship company and was the principal person behind the Yare and Waveney Lighterage Company, using tugs, barges and wherries on local rivers. In the current choir vestry is a memorial to John Pymar, wool merchant and churchwarden for 34 years, who died in 1884. He was a noted grower of green figs. Pictures of the Vicars of Eaton from the late 19th to the early 20th centuries are also displayed there.

The original east window with its stained glass, was given in memory of Mrs Hewitt. Its two flanking lancets were replaced with clear glass during the incumbency of Canon Whitehead (1930-38). Their removal was accompanied by the provision of a new altar in the English style. The original lancet windows were restored; they are in memory of Vicar Frederick Weston, and are in the style of the 13th century, showing Evangelist symbols with quatrefoil window-heads of the Lamb of God and the Dove of the Holy Spirit. The reveals show what remains of the original painted scheme which covered the whole of the interior of the church.



*East window.*



*South window.*

The present east window was designed and made by Antony Holloway in his workshop at Alkington near Grantham and installed by G King & Son. It was dedicated by the Vicar, the Revd. Richard Hanmer, on 13 August 1985 and presented by Mrs Maureen Pointer in memory of her husband, Peter, who died on 28 September 1983. It depicts the Tree of Life with symbols of plants, leaves, birds and winged shapes, God's creation.

The original south transept window (1873) is by Heaton Butler and Baynes of London and the illustrations, relating to the text below are, on the right,

“Raising Jairus’s daughter, in the centre, “The Good Shepherd” and on the left, “Blessing the little children”. The window is a memorial to William Nicholas Harwin Turner, proctor and solicitor of Norwich, who died on 9 March 1876. Under the south aisle window is a memorial to him, his wife Ellen and her parents, John and Judith Dixon (all buried at Intwood).

The north transept window shows three scenes from the parable of the Good Samaritan and was also made by Heaton Butler and Baynes of London. Inserted in the 1880s it is now partially obscured by the creation of a choir vestry in the 1970s. It contains a beautiful Lily decoration with deep green foliage. The top circular light contains angels and is surrounded by lilled cusps. Before the conversion the transept had been laid out in the 1950s as a Youth Chapel by then Vicar, Richard Hurd, with the entrance to the original choir vestry to the west.

The present organ was dedicated in June 1893 and replaced the earlier manual organ. It was built by Norman Bros and Beard, being specially designed for the church, and overhauled in 1966. Another major overhaul and tonal change was carried out by E J Johnson & Son (Cambridge) in 2016-2017 and the pipes were re-gilded.



*The font.*

There are four symbols carved around the bowl of the font showing different aspects of Jesus' ministry: the Lamb of God (sacrifice), the Passion Flower (suffering), the Lily (purity) and a bunch of grapes (the true vine).

Claude Messent gave a Litany desk in memory of his parents, a credence table, silver cross and candlesticks. The churchwardens' staves were given in memory of W H Perry, organist for forty years. The original silver church plate consists of a flagon, two patens and two chalices, all hallmarked with the year

letter for 1873, also the gift of Mr and Mrs E Wild. The prayer desk, lectern, font, books, worked cushions etc were presented by parishioners and others. The most interesting later addition is a paten (1911) from the parish of Santon, on the Norfolk-Suffolk border. There is a copy of Correggio's painting of the Madonna and Child above the altar in the South aisle.

On the external north west face of the porch is an interesting lead gutter head with Catherine of Aragon's "Pomegranate" badge. Moving round the north side, the clerestory windows of the original build, with their slim pilaster decoration, are visible. The glass is not original but an idea is given of the coloured lights that filled all the clerestory windows by looking up at the westernmost window on the south side from the interior, the others being covered up when the south aisle was built in 1912. There is original coloured glass above the west window and above the chancel arch.

Returning to the west porch and moving towards the Garden of Remembrance, a succession of window corbel heads can be seen which seem to mimic the medieval idea of mocking authority and scaring off 'evil doers'. There is a Yawner or Toothpuller and a Nosepicker; all these can be seen in medieval psalters, books of hours and Bibles.

Dragons and other demons' heads can be seen around the bell turret, just above the row of open arches where the turret changes from square to octagonal.

The cast iron guttering show at the eastern end a stone carving of the winged bull of St Luke and to the west the winged lion of St Mark. Half way along is another stone carving above the lead gutter head, a shield of St Andrew.

In 1998, during the re-ordering of the church, churchwarden Tony Sims was contacted by the Diocesan Registrar, John Herring, who advised him that, while Christ Church had all its licences, it had not been consecrated and that this should be rectified, ideally during the Millennium Year.

The cathedral precentor produced the order of service and the Right Reverend Graham James, bishop of Norwich, consecrated the church in 2000. The consecration plaque, below the west window, shows a the silver 'Canterbury' cross and is identical to the one worn by the Bishop at the service, which took place on the dedicatory Feast of Christ the King on 26 November. The plaque was donated by Mr. Keith Eastman in memory of his wife Joan, who had died earlier that year.

Vivien Humber, churchwarden  
January 2018.



*This octafoil is part of the restored west window*

## **Acknowledgements:**

The following provided invaluable source material for this Guide.

*Eaton and Its Churches*, Philip Hepworth, 1978.

*Christ Church, Eaton: a guide 2006/2007* by former churchwarden, Tony Sims BA.

*A short history of the radical changes in the appearance of Christ Church since 1880*, Dr Francis N Dunlop, August 2007.

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*Line Drawing Christ Church, 1873*