

St. Bartholomew's Parish Church

Barrow



A History & Guide

St Bartholomew was one of the twelve Apostles and is sometimes recorded in the New Testament as St Nathaniel. His saint's day is 24 August.

Early History of the Parish and Church

The name Barrow is said by Cheshire historians to derive from the old English word 'bearu' meaning a wood or grove, although the name is common and is occasionally linked to a hill or mound. The spelling has changed frequently over the centuries.

The first recorded mention of Barrow ("Barue") is in a charter of Edgar, King of Mercia, in the year 958, at which time it was a village on the outskirts of Delamere Forest, then known as the Forest of Mara. Cheshire suffered badly after the Norman Conquest of 1066, as William the Conqueror launched what became known as the 'Harrying of the North': a scorched earth campaign aimed at consolidating his position against Saxon and Danish lords in the north of England. Nearly half the houses in Chester were destroyed after a long siege and it was common practice to salt agricultural land to deny its productive use. The 1086 Domesday survey of England's

taxable wealth classes Barrow as "waste" – an area of negligible agricultural value – although this might simply have reflected a wooded and uncultivated landscape at that time.

It is likely that the first church in Barrow was a chantry, endowed for the reading of prayers and masses for the souls of its benefactors, and operated as a chapel under the supervision of Tarvin church, which is itself first mentioned in 1226. In 1291, the taxation of Pope Nicholas IV gave the income of the church at Barrow as £6 13s 4d and the tax as 13s 4d.

The first recorded incumbent of Barrow was presented to the living in 1313 and so is the first name on our Rectors' Board at the west end of the nave. Osbert Gifford, acolyte, was instituted on May 15th. It is interesting to wonder whether he was a great grandson of the Osbert Gifford who was an illegitimate son of King John I (1166-1216), since the name appears to have been

passed down in succeeding generations.

Osbert's patron as Lord of the Manor was Hugh le Despenser, Earl of Winchester, who with his son Hugh were favoured advisers of Edward II and were the most powerful and also the most despised nobles in England. Both were executed (1326 and 1327) when Edward was deposed by his wife Isabella. The Manor of Barrow was among lands forfeit to the crown and was allotted by Edward III to Sir Roger de Swynnerton.

Around 1349 Barrow became a 'free chapel' and in 1364 was described as the 'chapel of the manor'. In 1531 it was described as 'the parish church, free chapel or chantry of Barrow' and it became an independent church with parish and parsonage during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603).

The manor passed to the Savage family of Clifton (near present day Runcorn) through the

marriage of Maud de Swynnerton to Sir John Savage in 1409. The Savage family male line failed in 1714 and, after passing through female relatives, the manor and patronage passed through marriage to the Cholmondeley family in 1784, where it remained until 1919, when a large part of the Cholmondeley estate in Barrow was parcelled up and sold. Since then the patronage has been held by the Okell family of Barrow and is now largely ceremonial.

It is interesting to note that a number of the rectors listed on the Rectors' Board were members of these great families that held the patronage. It was common for younger sons or other male relatives to receive the living of a parish, although in many cases a lowly curate would have carried out the more onerous parish duties.

NOTE: More details on families connected with our church are at the end of this booklet.

The Church Structure

The church is listed by English Heritage as Grade II*. This is the category for 'particularly important buildings of more than special interest'.

There are no visible signs of the earliest Norman-style church buildings. The oldest parts of the present structure are the north wall and the octagonal columns of the north aisle, which date from a complete rebuilding of the church in the 15th century and are in the Gothic Perpendicular style.

The chancel was rebuilt in 1671 in the Jacobean style. The ends of the roof hammer beams display painted shields depicting the arms of the Isle of Man with, per pale, those of the Bridgman family, surmounted by a bishop's mitre. These are the arms of Dr Henry Bridgman, who was responsible for the rebuilding, which is commemorated by an inscription on the outer south wall above a now filled-in doorway to the chancel. Dr Bridgman was 3rd son of John Bridgman, Bishop of Chester, and

among other appointments was Rector of Barrow from 1639 to 1643, when he was removed from his appointment due to his support for the royalist cause in the Civil War. On the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 he was reappointed and was also made Dean of Chester Cathedral. In 1671 he was consecrated Lord Bishop of Sodor and Man but retained the Deanery of Chester and the Rectory of Barrow. He died in 1682 and is buried in Chester Cathedral. Dr Bridgman was a Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford and several of the Rectors who followed were from that college. Brasenose was founded in 1509 and had close connections with Cheshire through the Savage and Cholmondeley families.

The church was reported to be in ruinous state in 1744. The nave and north aisle were rebuilt and the tower was erected. The chancel was repaired and re-roofed in 1807 when Hugh Cholmondeley (later Dean of

Chester) was Rector. An inscription commemorating this rebuilding may be seen on the north wall of the chancel and the arms of the Cholmondeley family are on the shield below the inscription.

A major programme of works was first approved in 1870 and undertaken in 1882-84. Much of what you see in the church today dates from that time and is described as being in the Late Perpendicular style. The architect was John Douglas who was responsible for a large number of projects in the north-west, including many of the half-timbered black and white buildings of the Rows in Chester, the Eastgate Clock and a number of houses on the Grosvenor Estate. Stone was taken from the local quarry which was near the

Barrowmore Estate. The stonemason was David Hoose of Frodsham (the uncle of Arthur Lancely who lived at Rose Farm and was a church warden in 1943). The works included re-roofing of the nave, north aisle and chancel; restoration of the south wall of the nave and the porch; relaying of the chancel floor; construction of the vestry and organ chamber; removal of the gallery; installation of new pews and pulpit; and a fine new east window. An inscription commemorating these works is on the south wall of the chancel.

The extension in the north west corner of the church was completed, together with the new church hall, as a Millennium project and there is a plaque commemorating its dedication by the Bishop of Chester in 2001.

The Church

Tower: This is 58 feet high and was erected in 1744. It contains a single bell cast in 1767, which strikes the hour. The top of the tower was originally decorated

with sandstone urns at each corner but these became unstable and were removed in 1929 - their remains may be seen at the foot of the tower. In 1950

the church was advised that the bell should no longer be swung, due to possible weakness in the tower and it is now rung by striking with the clapper. In 1990 the tower suffered some damage in a minor earth tremor and repairs to cracking near the top may be seen on the north, west and south sides.

The clock is by John Moore of Clerkenwell and was presented in 1876 by Major John Clark in memory of his mother and father. His father the Reverend John Clark was Rector from 1816 to 1862. There is a memorial tablet on the north wall under the tower. The grave of Revd Clark is outside the north-east corner of the church and is somewhat out of sympathy with its surroundings, both in style and scale.

Font: This is beneath the tower and has a lead liner dated 1713, stamped with the initials of John Jellicoe and William Newport who were churchwardens; it is however likely that the sandstone pedestal is much older. The oak font cover was created by

Suzanne Hodgson of Barrowmore in 2008 with a carved frieze designed by Judith Smith, a Reader of our church, and is dedicated to David Okell.

Windows: The east window dates from 1884 and is attributed to the workshop of Charles Eamer Kempe (he put peacock feathers in his angels' wings). The four principal lights show St Werburga (patron saint of Chester) and St Bartholomew, flanking a depiction of the Adoration of the Shepherds with the Annunciation of Mary beneath. The depictions in the roundels at the foot of the outer panes are David and Goliath on the left and Gideon and the Fleece on the right. The window is dedicated to Eliza, wife of Hugh Lyle Smyth.

The three lights on the south wall of the chancel date from 1913 and depict The Good Shepherd flanked by the Virgin Mary and St John the Evangelist. These windows are dedicated to Mary Okell and came from the workshop of her nephew Gilbert Gamon.

The windows on the south wall of the nave date from 1912 and depict the Four Western Fathers: Saints Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome and Gregory. The manufacturer was Herbert Bryans, son of a vicar of Tarvin, and the dedication is to Hugh Lyle Smyth.

Also on the south wall are windows depicting St Francis and St Clare. These are dedicated to Vere and Joan Arnold and were manufactured in 1996 by Pendle Stained Glass. Design was by Jim Crombie of Bristol, based on sketches prepared by Madeleine Maddox, a local artist and wife of Bill Maddox, who had been treasurer and a churchwarden.

Although not of stained glass, the deeply-recessed Oeil de Boeuf (bullseye) window near the tower is considered a fine example of its type. It possibly dates to the erection of the tower in 1744 or may predate this.

The west window shows Christ flanked by the Virgin Mary and St George. It is dated 1930 and was dedicated to the parents, elder

brother and his wife, of Richard Gardner Williams, a businessman of local farming stock (an ancestor, Ralph Williams, was churchwarden in 1738) who rose to be Master of the Worshipful Company of Turners and made a substantial bequest to the church which, with other funds, is still known as the Churchwardens' Fund, restricted to expenditure on the fabric of the church and churchyard.

The three windows on the north wall of the nave depict Christ blessing young children. This dates from 1844 and also comes from the Kempe workshop (peacock feathers). It is dedicated by Hugh Lyle Smyth to three of his children who died in infancy.

The three lights on the north wall of the chancel show Christ flanked by the Archangels Michael and Gabriel. This is by A L Moore of London and was given in 1913 by the widow of Captain Hugh Lyle Smyth in memory of her husband, who died that year.

Pipe Organ: This two manual instrument was built by Binns of

Bramley near Leeds and installed in the church in 1888 to replace an American organ which had been hired after the 1882 rebuilding. The first recorded musical instrument installed in the church was a harmonium which was given by George Okell in 1864 and placed in the gallery, later demolished in the restoration of the church.

Electronic Organ: This was gifted by the Norman family in memory of Duncan and Dilys Norman who had lived at Greysfield in Barrow and of their son Owen who was killed in action in 1942.

Oak Panels behind the Altar: These were funded by voluntary contribution and were carved in 1902 by Norah Lyle Smyth, a daughter of Hugh Lyle Smyth of Barrowmore. The lower texts to each side are the Ten Commandments. The upper text to the north side is The Lord's Prayer and the carved figure is of course Moses. The upper text to the south side is the Apostles' Creed. The second figure according to the original faculty is

'a saint' but is often held to represent Jesus.

Altar: As the carvings which embellish the altar are of excellent workmanship, it is frustrating that there is no record of where it was produced. It was donated in 1913 in memory of Godfrey Lyle Smyth by his widow.

Candlesticks: Given in 1995 by the organist, Dorothy Williams, in memory of her husband, who had been choirmaster.

Altar Cross: Designed by Anthony Hawksley and given in 1951 by Helen Gamon (née Okell) of The Manor House and two members of her family in memory of her husband and other family members.

Brass Vases: Given by Mrs Dennis, who lived at Greysfield before the Norman family.

Sanctuary Chairs: These Glastonbury chairs were gifted by Revd Edward Gladwin Arnold, Vere Arnold's grandfather.

Communion Rail: Given in 1951 by the Okell family in memory of John Cecil Okell and his wife

Florence Hilda who lived at The Croft. It was constructed by Frank Stanyer, who lived at Milton Brook.

Wall Monument to Juliana

Wallis: Most of the wall plaques are self-explanatory but the white marble monument on the south wall of the chancel is particularly interesting. It is a memorial to Juliana Wallis, whose remains are interred near the north wall, but seems more in the nature of a celebration of the achievements of her husband, Provo William Parry Wallis. He was at the time a Captain in the Royal Navy (he eventually became Admiral of the Fleet) and lists his status as an aide-de-camp to Queen Victoria. Above the figure of the angel he also lists his battle honours, which include the famous capture of the USS Chesapeake by HMS Shannon in the War of 1812. After the battle Wallis was the senior unwounded officer and sailed the Shannon to its base at Halifax, Nova Scotia. These six days of temporary command allowed him to qualify under a special provision for those who

had commanded a ship in the period of the Napoleonic Wars, the effect of which was to allow him to remain on the active list until his death in 1892 at the age of 100, and to rack up 96 years of service (it was common practice for privileged children to be entered on a ship's muster at an impractically early age, allowing early promotion to be justified by years of service).

Lectern: Presented by parishioners in 1892 to the widow of Revd Sheffield Hardinge in memory of his ministry as Rector from 1885 to 1890 and her own service to the Parish. The Bible was given by Dr and Mrs Barby in 1983.

Pulpit: Installed as part of the restoration of the church in 1883.

Rectors' Boards: One lists the Rectors from 1313 to 1987, although there are additions noted in a separate framed document and some appointments may yet remain unrecorded. This board was carved by Norah Lyle Smyth. The second board records more

recent Rectors. This was constructed by Ken Lloyd and carved by Jennifer Howe in 2001.

Chest: The chest under the tower is dated 1718 and is inscribed with the initials of the churchwardens, John Platt and John Broadhurst.

Bench: The bench under the tower has the date 1604 and the name of William Foster, who was Rector. It is thought that the carved back may originate from an older pew.

Wardens' Staves: These are topped with a crown and a mitre, reflecting the traditional civic and church roles of churchwardens. They were presented in 1953 by Helen Gamon.

Tithe Map: This is a copy of the Barrow tithe map of 1838, which was presented by Katherine Synge who lived at the Old Rectory until 1971.

Roll of Honour: There are three boards which record those who served and those who died in each of the World Wars and

those killed in the Barrowmore bombing.

Book of Remembrance: This has a page for each serviceman from the Parish killed in the World Wars, listing his regiment and the date of his death. It includes a list of those killed by the aerial landmine which destroyed the hospital at Barrowmore Hall in November 1940. The book was researched by members of the Barrow History Group and is illustrated by Judith Smith, a Reader of our church. Calligraphy is by Revd Geoff Buchan of Anderton; the book was bound by Artisan Bindery at Barrowmore and the table was made by Nigel Bulkeley. Funding came from Barrow Parish Council, Cheshire West & Chester Council, the Trefula Trust and private donors. The Book and table were received at a church service in June 2014.

West Door: This was made by Frank Stanyer and given by George Tregoning in 1965.

Furnishings: A number of attractive and useful furnishings in the church are crafted by Ken

Lloyd, who has been a churchwarden. Some of these items are created from redundant church pews, including the cupboards and servery in the north aisle and the table by the south door.

Kneelers: There are 100 individually designed kneelers depicting scenes of Barrow, various coats of arms and a host of eclectic subjects. These were designed by Judith Smith, a Reader of our church, and

produced by parishioners and friends as a project, which was initiated by the Ladies Circle and Revd Cecil Clarke in 1978. The cushion for one of the sanctuary chairs was produced in 1987 after a visiting Bishop complained the seat was rather cold and the other chair was provided with a cushion by the National Decorative & Fine Arts Society to mark the completion in 2007 of a full recording of the church furnishings.

The Churchyard

Sun Dial: The pillar to the right of the path outside the porch is a listed monument. The sandstone base is thought to have been part of an ancient cross – it is known that a number of ancient crosses in the area were attacked by religious zealots in 1613. The carved stone at the top was prepared by Jennifer Howe to hold a brass sundial, which was later stolen.

Memorial Garden: The area beyond the east window was the

original ashes graveyard and was later laid out in memory of Alexander Reston, who died aged three. His family lived at Stamford Bridge.

War Memorial: This commemorates the members of the Parish who lost their lives in both World Wars. It was funded by public subscription and erected in 1920.

Stone Vases: To the right of the porch may be seen the fragments of the tall stone vases which

decorated each corner at the top of the tower until they were removed in 1929, due to fears for their stability.

Lych Gate: This was erected by parishioners in 1897 to commemorate the 60th year of Queen Victoria's reign. It was renovated in 1987 by a gift from Barbara Foley in memory of her husband Tom and in 2006 by a gift from Barry Owen, who was churchwarden.

West Gates: The gates at the top of the west steps were erected in 1908 by a gift from Francis Amos, Alderman of Chester, in memory of his wife Margaret. This gift is commemorated by a tablet in the tower.

New Churchyard Gates: Of the gates to the south side, one was gifted by Peter Dobbs in memory of his wife Margaret Catherine (Meg), the other is in memory of John Bailey Davies and was gifted by his children, both in 2012. The gates to the north side were gifted in 2014 by Madeleine Maddox, in memory of her husband Bill. Both sets of gates

have been replaced more than once since they were first installed in 1925, but still use the original iron furnishings.

Garden of Remembrance: The landscaped garden in the south of the new churchyard is for the burial of ashes and was originally funded by David and Catherine Okell in memory of David's brother, Roger Carrington Okell. It was renovated in 2012 by a gift from Tim Healey.

Stone Bench: The sandstone bench in the Garden of Remembrance was gifted in 2012 in memory of Eileen Stanton.

Graves: Hugh Lyle Smyth, his wife Eliza, three infant children and his second wife, Isabella Maxwell, are buried at the south-east edge of the old churchyard. The adjoining grave is that of his son Godfrey and his wife Evelyn Chomley (née Savage). Both graves are marked by Celtic crosses. In front of these lies the memorial stone of Vere and Joan Arnold.

The grave of John Cecil Okell and his wife Florence Hilda is just to

the east of the War Memorial. There is an Okell family vault to the west side of the path to the lych gate, where David Okell and his wife Catherine are interred.

There are a number of individual war graves in the churchyard, in the familiar Lutyens design. These are of servicemen who died of their injuries while in Barrow. There is a small Commonwealth

War Graves Commission grant towards the maintenance of these graves.

Just to the north of the Garden of Remembrance is a memorial stone marking the re-interment of the ancient remains of 14 bodies from unmarked graves, which were disturbed when the new church extension was built in 2000.

Families Connected to the Church

To appreciate the provenance of various items donated to the church, it may be useful to understand the association of certain families with the church and each other.

Savage and Cholmondeley: The Savage family of Clifton, near present-day Runcorn, were landlords of Barrow from 1409. The family title became Earl Rivers but this title was extinguished in 1714 when the last surviving male elected to remain in holy orders. A daughter, Lady Elizabeth Savage, Countess of Barrymore, was

granted the estates. Her only child, Lady Penelope Barry, married the Honourable James Cholmondeley, son of the 2nd Earl of Cholmondeley, in 1730. Lady Penelope died childless and the estates formally passed to the Cholmondeley family in 1784. The family seat is Cholmondeley Castle, near Whitchurch in Cheshire. They remained landlords in Barrow until 1919, when the property was parcelled up and sold off, although the Church of England primary school is built on land donated by the family.

In 1568 the Savage family built a huge family seat near Clifton known as Rock Savage. The Cholmondeley family allowed this to fall into ruin but the name Rocksavage lives on in the chemical complex and power station at Runcorn, as well as in a courtesy title for the heir to the Cholmondeley titles.

It is probable that the Barrowmore Estate derives its name from Barrow, but the coincidence of a possible association with the Earl and Countess of Barrymore is intriguing.

Lyle Smyth: Hugh Lyle Smyth was a wealthy corn merchant born in Ardmore near Londonderry. He moved to Cheshire and lived initially at Crabwall Hall in Mollington. He married Eliza Turner of Rusholme Park in 1862 and came to Barrow in 1882 to live in Barrowmore Hall, which he had designed by John Douglas. He had eleven children: Una Maud was a novelist who wrote under the name Marius Lyle; Norah was an unusual woman of great energy, a leading suffragette and

an artist, who carved the first Rectors' Board and the oak panels behind the altar (although she was later a member of the communist Second International). Various family members are commemorated by other gifts and memorials. Hugh's son Godfrey married Evelyn Chomley Savage, but her family was not directly related to the previous landowners. Hugh Lyle Smyth was churchwarden from 1882 until his death in 1911 and in 1894 became Chairman of the first Parish Council. He was High Sheriff of Cheshire in 1895.

Barrowmore Hall eventually became a sanatorium for servicemen suffering from tuberculosis but was destroyed in 1940 by an aerial landmine dropped by a German bomber. The death roll from this tragedy may be seen at the west end of the nave.

Arnold: Edwin Gladwin Arnold married the daughter of the 2nd Marquis of Cholmondeley in 1852 and was appointed Rector of Barrow in 1862 under the patronage of the Cholmondeleys.

His son, Henry Abel Arnold, became Rector in 1890 and married Mary Lyle Smyth in 1892. Their son, Vere Arnold, was churchwarden 1952-1955 and 1963-1989, in recognition of which service he was appointed Warden Emeritus from 1989 until his death in 1994. He was a prominent Liverpool businessman, Chairman of the Runcorn Development Corporation (which supervised the creation of the New Town) and was High Sheriff of Cheshire in 1958.

Okell: The Okell family moved to Barrow in the 1730s when they built The Manor House on Village Road, then known as Barrow House. They lived there until 1952, at which time the house was occupied by Mrs Helen Gamon, who was born an Okell. Her brother, John Cecil Okell,

built The Croft on the outskirts of Barrow when he married in 1912 and he became patron when the Cholmondeley estates were sold off in 1919. He was churchwarden 1923-25, 1928-34 and from 1939 until his death in 1941. He was also Chairman of the Parish Council from 1911-41, except when on active service in the First World War. His brother was Frank Jackson Okell, the first Bishop of Stockport, whose ashes together with those of his wife are interred near the north wall of the chancel. Frank's son David became patron and was churchwarden 1979-1993 and warden emeritus until his death in 2007. He is succeeded as patron of the church by his son John, although most responsibilities of the patronage are now either extinct or exercised by the diocese.

This History and Guide is a revision of one prepared by Tim Healey and last revised by him in February 2002. He drew on a number of oral sources in the Parish and cited other sources as:

- 'Old Cheshire Churches' by Raymond Richards 1947 (revised 1973)
- 'The Records of the Parish of Barrow Cheshire' compiled by Barrow Women's Institute in 1951 and revised by a second edition of 1963
- 'Barrow. The History of Cheshire Villages' by a local history group, published in 1983 and now known as 'The Barrow Book'

The present revision benefits from the 'Record of Church Furnishings at St Bartholomew's Barrow' completed in 2007 by the Tarporley branch of the National Association of Decorative & Fine Arts Societies, a further review of faculties granted by Chester Diocese and kept in the Chester Archive, and some research on genealogy and history websites.

Alan Frew
Churchwarden
October 2014