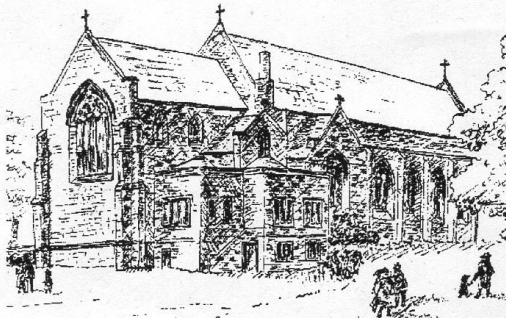


HISTORY



During the forty years or so before the First World War following the acquisition by Leeds Council of the Roundhay Park Estate, the area north west of Oakwood became ripe for development. In particular at the turn of the century Lidgett Park on the western edge of Roundhay Park was being developed residentially. One of the speculators owning land and building houses for sale was Mr. J. W. Archer who retained as his Architect Mr. W. Carby-Hall.

Three residents in the newly developing suburb, James Hare, J. B. Mays and G. W. Brown sought to provide an Anglican Church to serve the growing community. It was, of course, essential that the location should be within walking distance of the houses being built because families did not yet possess their own personal transport, so it was natural that the developer should be approached for assistance.

In due course with the help and co-operation of Mr. Carby-Hall these three gentlemen prevailed upon Mr. Archer to relinquish the present triangular-shaped site for the purpose of building a Church, a Hall and a parsonage house. Part of the arrangement was that Mr. W. Carby-Hall would be appointed Architect for the buildings required.

And so it was that on the 6th November 1899 the site "containing 11600 square yards or thereabouts" was conveyed to persons acting as Trustees for the Leeds Church Extension Society by Mr. Archer for the sum of £1,450. There are indications that the £1,450 charged by Mr. Archer was subsequently donated by him to the Building Fund.. Such a generous act would explain references in old Parish Magazines to the site being given to the church by Mr. Archer.

Once the site acquisition was in train the three initiators called a meeting at the Mansion Hotel in Roundhay Park, probably in the late summer of 1899. A mere twelve months later building began (the cornerstone was laid 13th October 1900) and nine months after that the first service took place on the 20th July 1901.

The plan for the site was to locate the Church at the west end (where it now stands), the Parochial Hall as it is now sited and a parsonage house to the north of the hall (where the headquarters of the uniformed organisations is built) What was constructed in that first year 1900-1901 was the core of the Parochial Hall complex the Large Hall. J. T. Wright & Sons were paid £3,600 to erect this hall to the design of W. Carby-Hall and it was to serve as the Church until May 1909.

The first clergyman appointed on the terms of "stipend and accommodation" was the Rev. C. E. Coade who moved on to Lincolnshire in 1903. The Rev. G. E. O'Connor Fenton appointed perpetual curate in January 1904 and was to remain incumbent for fourteen years seeing both the first phase of the church built and the establishment of the Parish in 1910. Indeed only five months after his appointment Mr. Fenton called a meeting of the congregation as a result of which a building fund for the new church was set up under the chairmanship of Mr. Chadwick. Less than three years later tenders were accepted in March 1907 for the first phase of the building which would cost £8,700. The foundation stone was laid on the 20th July, 1907 by W. L. Hepton one-time Lord Mayor of Leeds, and the Prayer of Consecration was offered by the Bishop of Knaresborough. Under the stone is embedded a glass vessel hermetically sealed containing an Order of the Ceremony, the Parish Magazine for July 1907 including a list of subscribers, newspapers for that day and coins.

The Nave took two years to build and the consecration ceremony was conducted by the Bishop of Richmond on the 22nd May, 1909. Since the first tenders were accepted, additional work on the porches, the choir vestry and the tower as far as the Nave roof had been undertaken, to a total cost of £11,637. There was a deficit of £1,500 but this was cleared by 1912. The contract for the masonry work was in the hands of Mr. George Wright, who took a keen interest in the church for over forty years. The woodwork was in charge of another of the congregation, Mr. Banks Mawson. The Architects again were Messrs. Carby-Hall and Dalby.

The alabaster pulpit along with the sounding board was given by the family of Mr. James Hare who had been one of the initiators and first churchwardens. Mr. Hare died March 1908. The west window was placed there by members of the Chadwick family in memory of Mr. F. T. Chadwick's mother. He was one of the first superintendents of the Sunday School and a most active worker on behalf of the building fund from the earliest days of St. Edmund's. He remained in office until January 1940 when he emigrated Kenya. The choir stalls, prayer desk, etc., were the gift of an anonymous donor. The font was given by the children of the parish, who subscribed towards it for several years. The organ was the gift of Mr. H. I. Bowring of Allerton Hall and his sister, Mrs Wright, in memory of their parents and it was dedicated in December, 1910.

The parish of St. Edmund was legally constituted on the 13th October, 1910 and the first Vicar, the Rev. O'Connor Fenton was instituted on the 16th December, 1910. The first organist and choirmaster, Mr. J. Groves, was appointed in 1912 and he held the post for about thirty years. Mr. J. W. Eccles was appointed superintendent of the Sunday School in 1910 and held the position for twenty-eight years. Mr. Ernest Clough was appointed People's Warden, and Mr. Arthur Craven was appointed Vicar's Warden in 1914. Mr. Craven held office until he died in 1931 and four stained glass windows at the west end of the church were placed there to his memory by the congregation.

The Rev. O'Connor Fenton left in 1918 to become Vicar of St. James the Greater, Leicester, and was succeeded by the Rev. Canon Sutcliffe Thomas. During the 1914-18 War the Parochial Hall was used as a Convalescent Hospital. The first confirmation service was held in St. Edmund's in 1919. The electoral roll was formed in 1920 following the passing of the Enabling Act in 1919, and the first Roll had 1,100 members.

The bronze War Memorial Tablet was dedicated in 1921 and the Memorial Chapel dedicated by the Bishop of the Knaresborough in 1925. During the period 1923-25 Parochial Hall was extended with upper classrooms, cloakroom and an annexe.

Canon Sutcliffe Thomas retired because of ill health in 1927 and was succeeded by the Rev. G. C. Clare. Choral Communion was introduced on the first Sunday of the month by Mr. Clare. Outstanding debts were cleared by means of a Gift Day which raised £1,120 on one Sunday in 1927. By 1929 the circulation of the parish magazine had risen to 1,100 copies, and the Gledhow Sunday School was opened that year.

In 1934 the foundation stone of the Chancel was laid by Mrs. P. T. Chadwick. The Architect for this final section of the Church was Mr. Carby-Hall's successor Mr. F. W. Dawson and the builders were again J. T. Wright & Sons. The Chancel was dedicated by the Bishop of Ripon in June 1935.

The Rev. G. C. Clare became Vicar of St. Peter's, Harrogate in 1937 after a decade in Roundhay which saw the completion of St. Edmund's as it had been planned some thirty years before, except for the spire. This remains regrettably a fragment of the original Architect's imagination, visible to others only in the perspective drawing of the Church as originally designed.