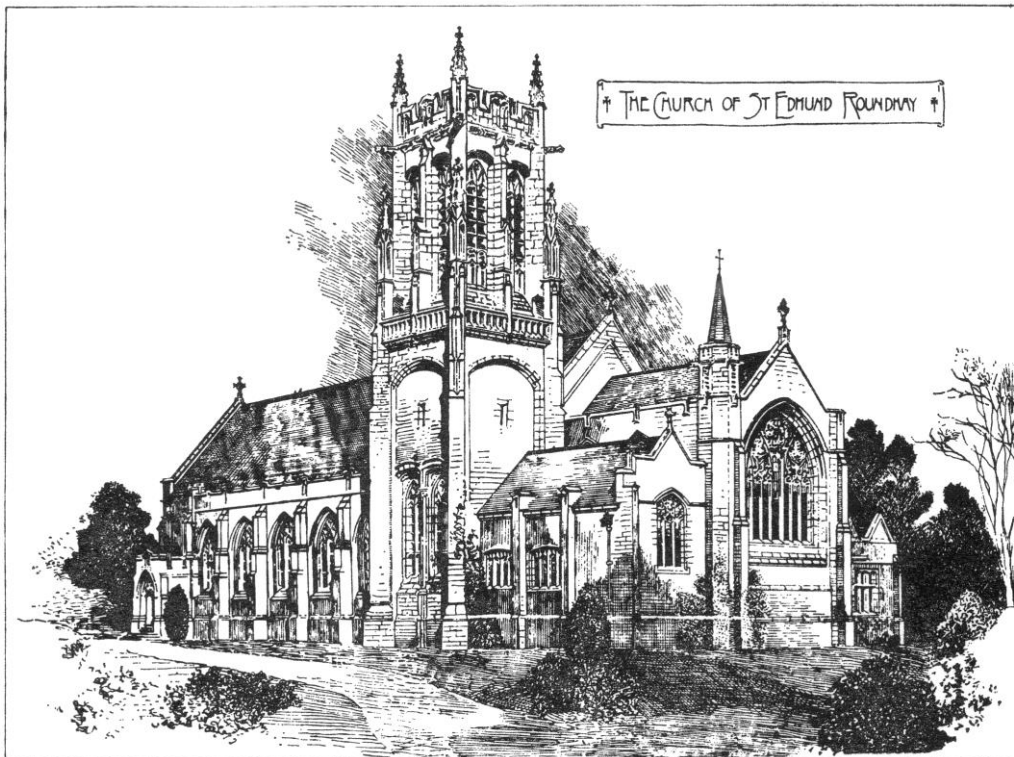


St Edmund's Early Key Figures

St Edmund's was built from the desire to have a church in the new and emerging suburb of Roundhay. The original instigators of the building were seeking to create a space for worship with suitable presence and grandeur to befit the area it served.



The book 'Roundhay St Edmund: The First One Hundred Years by Geoffrey Bass' tells of the detail of the building of the church from its inception.

It quotes the Parish Magazine article in Volume one.

'The site of about 2.5 acres was presented by Mr Archer to Messrs JB Mays, GW Brown, Jas Hare and H Bleasby, in trust to be used as they think might be best for Church and social purposes. These gentlemen handed the site to the Leeds Church Extension Society, in whose trustees it is now invested'.

Mr Archer was the owner and developer of the Lidgett Park area.

This short article is an attempt to give some details about the people who developed St Edmund's from its beginning as a plot of land to the large and impressive grade II listed building that was consecrated in 1909.

It is clear that the people mentioned in the article in the church magazine were friends and neighbours. They lived in and around the current church and vicarage and clearly met up in the late 1890s to decide to promote the building of a church in their area. They set up a building committee which became a subcommittee of the future PCC.

The key figures included:

John Basil Mays

John Basil Mays was involved as the secretary of the building subcommittee. John was born in 1850 and was a journalist and author. He was married to Elizabeth who came from York. They lived at Hollybank, 7 North Park Avenue. They had three sons. He died in 1944 and is buried at Lawnswood.

George W Brown

George W Brown was described as an ordinary member of the building subcommittee. He was born in 1860 in Bradford. He was a wholesale clothier and lived at Wedgewood, a grand house which included a field and orchard on North Park Avenue. This has subsequently been demolished and has been replaced by Wedgewood Court flats.

James Hare

James Hare was the treasurer of the building subcommittee. He was born in Pudsey 1844 and married Mary Pitts in 1866 in Kirkstall. They lived at Brooklands on North Park Avenue, opposite Wedgewood where George Brown lived. He was a merchant of woollens and worsteds which was one of the major industries in Leeds and the West Riding as it then was. He started his business in a cottage in 1865 and it grew to be one of the biggest fabric wholesalers in Britain.

James was the first Churchwarden. He died in 1908 and his sons carried on the business. One of them continued to live in Brooklands after James had died. Geoff Bass noted in his book that when James's wife died, he offered to give money for the pulpit. However, James himself died before the project was completed and his family were able to make sure that the construction of the pulpit was finished in memory of both James and his wife. You can see the inscription on the pulpit:

'In loving memory of James Hare who died March 1908 and his wife Mary Ellen who died November 1906. Erected by the family'.

Henry Bleasby

Henry Bleasby was the chair of the building subcommittee. He was born 1849 and was a commercial traveller. Henry became a churchwarden and lived on Park Road and Ladywood Road. He married May Lord in 1876. Henry worked his way up through the ranks of the company that employed him which was involved in flannel and shorts manufacturing and spent a lot of time in London where the company was based, staying at the National Liberal Club. He became a director of the firm and moved to London with his daughter after his wife died in 1899, retiring to Frinton on Sea where he died in 1937.

Other significant figures

William Carby Hall

William Carby Hall, the architect of the church, was a controversial choice as architect since he hadn't designed a church before. In the end, the design has proved itself to be a triumph even if it has had to be altered slightly to fit the needs of a 21st century congregation. Carby Hall lived at Church House on Wetherby Road near St John's church. He later moved to a house he built for himself, Summerhill, on Park Avenue before moving to Surrey. As well as a practising architect, he was a Conservative politician and an owner of racing greyhounds. He was very much involved in acquiring land for the development of the church. He was a key figure in the development of Roundhay itself.

Arthur Craven

Arthur Craven, an accountant, was another early church warden at St Edmund's. He was born 1867 in Oakworth and married Emilie Pawson in 1889. They lived at Dockroyd, at 53 Shaftesbury Avenue, moving latterly to Devonshire Avenue. There are 4 'Apostle windows' given in his memory by his friends in 1933.

James Chadwick

James Chadwick was another of the early significant figures in the church. He was an early secretary of the building subcommittee. James was born in Edinburgh in 1841. He married Jane Teasdale in 1863 and they lived firstly in Burley Grange near Headingley until 1904 but had property interests in Roundhay. He had a house built in Roundhay before moving to Harrogate in 1911. He was a manufacturer of woollens and worsteds.

His two sons were also local to the area. His elder son Frank Teasdale Chadwick lived at Earls Barton on The Drive, Roundhay. His other son, James George Chadwick, who ran the family business, lived in Moortown until he died in 1923 on the Alwoodley golf course.

James donated the money for one of the significant windows at the church, that of the west end window, in memory of his wife Jane. The window was the first stained glass in the church and was put in in 1912. James was a wealthy man and when he died his estate was worth the equivalent of £4.4 million.

John Birdsell

John Birdsell was an ordinary member of the building subcommittee. He was born in 1843 in Holbeck. His father set up a business as a machine broker in Hunslet in 1840, a company that still exists in Leeds. It is now called Robinson and Birdsell and is a demolition and recycling company. John married Mary Pickles in 1869 in Dewsbury and moved to Roundhay to live in a house called Northcote on Old Park Road, just round the corner from North Park Avenue so he was another close neighbour. They had three sons who worked in the family business. John died in 1922. One of their sons was called James Birdsell and he also married and lived in the area. Another of his sons, David, died in Salerno, Italy in the second world war and his name appears on the Second World War memorial in church. David was in the Royal Artillery.

James Edmund Maude

James Edmund Maude was the secretary to the Leeds Church Extension Society during the time that St Edmund's was being built. As the secretary he would have been responsible for overseeing the building of the church. He was born in 1847 in Chapel Allerton. He followed in his father's business working in the timber industry. The family home was 'The Mount' opposite St John's church in Moor Allerton. He died in 1933.

Thomas Maude

Thomas Maude born in 1859, was a cashier in a clothing factory. He was married to Lucy and they lived on Jackson Avenue. Although Thomas did not remain a member of St Edmund's, moving to the Church of Christ, he spent a lot of time in the church and when he died Lucy donated money for three stained glass windows over a period of time. These windows are on the east side of the south ambulatory.

Marie Ridge

Marie Ridge was the second wife of Ceres Ridge. Ceres was a manufacturing confectioner i.e. his company made sweets. Marie and Ceres were married in 1931 when Ceres was 70 years old and Marie was just 39. They lived at Falcon Nest on Old Park Road. Before the war they moved to Scott Hall Road. When Ceres

died in 1942, Marie gave money to the church for three large stained glass windows and the chancel woodwork. Marie was the superintendent of the Sunday School for many years and died 1968.

Vernon Somerset Powell

Vernon Somerset Powell was born in 1891 and married Ida Brown in 1917. They lived at Emscote on The Drive. Vernon was appointed church warden in 1931 after Arthur Craven had died and he was the driving force behind raising the money and building the Chancel which was an extension to the original building. In his professional life he was a wholesale clothing merchant. They moved to Lidgett Park Drive in 1925 and latterly to 12 Park Drive. They eventually moved to Harrogate.

Adam Boulton

Adam Boulton, born in 1921, was one of the young men who gave his life in the Second World War. There is a window dedicated to his memory. Adam Desmond Stanley Boulton was the son of Adam Boulton and Rose Kelly. They lived at Beech Lodge, 1 Park Avenue. He died in 14th Jan 1943 aged 22 in Bangladesh and was a flight sergeant.



Photo courtesy of Leeds Photographic Society

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