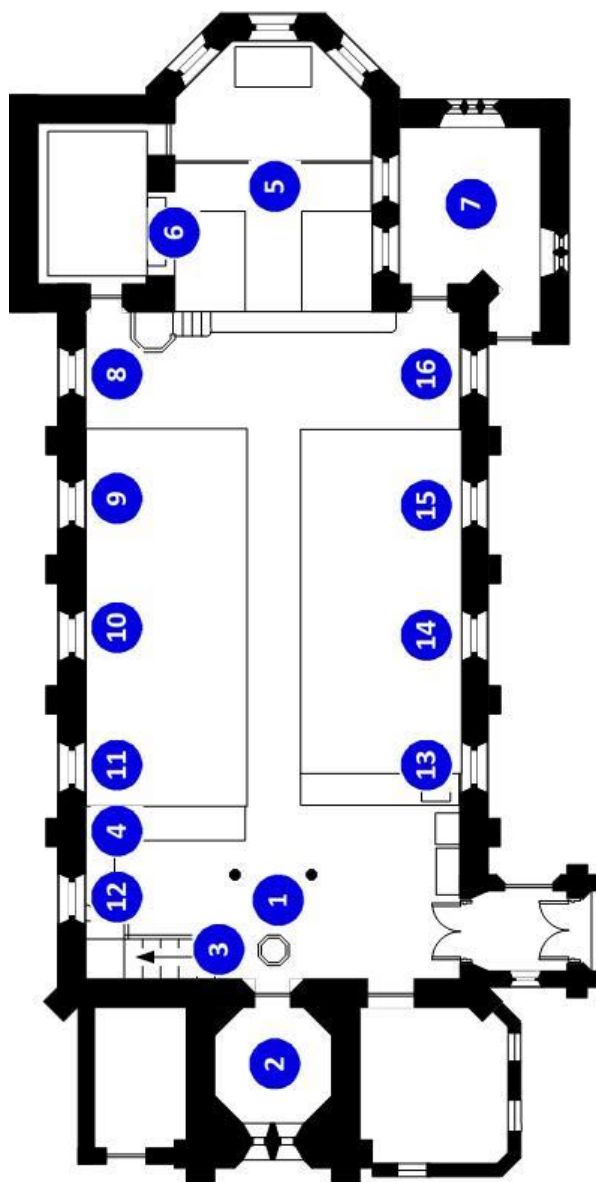


St James' Church
A Visitor's Guide



Entrance

Plan of St James' Church

Showing items mentioned in this booklet.



Welcome

Welcome to the Church of St James in the Parish of Sutton, Macclesfield, Cheshire. This much-loved building is the focus of an active Church community that has played a central part in the life of our village and its beautiful surrounding countryside since the early years of Queen Victoria's reign.

This guide is intended as a simple introduction to the Church building. It is not a complete history and neither is it a complete architectural description. It is intended to present the various features of the building and, very briefly, to describe how it has grown and developed through the years.

The Founding of St James' Church

St James' Church was first envisaged at a time of unprecedented growth for the nearby town of Macclesfield. During the first twenty years of the nineteenth century the booming silk industry caused the population of the town to double. The borough boundary was enlarged in 1835 and the area then known as the Township of Sutton, together with St George's Church (now closed), became included as part of Macclesfield. This growth of Macclesfield caused the gentry to move away from the town's densely populated centre towards the cleaner air of what was termed the "Agricultural" or "Higher" part of Sutton. This area was distinctly rural, reached towards the hills and included the villages of Langley and what we now know as Sutton Lane Ends or simply "Sutton".



Today the parish of Sutton St James remains largely rural. This view is of cottages in Clarke Lane, Langley, with tranquil Bottoms Reservoir in the foreground.

During the 1830's the Vicar of St George's, the Reverend John Burnet, often received complaints from the agricultural workers and others of "Higher" Sutton about the distance they were expected to travel via muddy rural lanes in frequently inclement weather to attend the established church. In 1838 John Burnet, together with a group of local gentlemen, formed a small and active committee to build a new church to satisfy their needs.

William Newbold soon became the Secretary of the Building Committee and the driving force behind their plans. The project to build a new church and a schoolroom for the local children soon enthused much of the local community.

Land for the Church was given by William's mother Hannah (her maiden name was, rather appropriately, Stonehewer) and by Lord Bingham, owner of the nearby Sutton Hall estate.¹

¹ In 1839 Lord Bingham succeeded his father to become the 3rd Earl of Lucan. During the Crimean War he achieved fame by ordering his brother-in-law Lord Cardigan to lead the fateful Charge of the Light Brigade.

Stone for the building came from a local quarry and, together with the necessary sand, water and lime, was carted to the building site by the horses of 38 different local people.

St James' Church was completed and opened for worship on 16th October 1840. There is no formal record telling why the Church was dedicated to St James the Great. James was a fisherman who became a disciple and messenger of Jesus and was eventually beheaded by King Herod. It may be a coincidence, but the family shield of the Stonehewer family displays ten scallop shells, the traditional emblem of St James.

To begin with St James' Church was a "Chapel of Ease" to St George's, with Prestbury as the mother church. Eventually St James' was assigned part of the district of St George's. This enabled it to become a parish church in its own right and it was finally consecrated by the Lord Bishop of Chester on 25th May 1859.



Sutton Hall

The schoolroom was completed in 1841 and provided a sound education for generations of local children for 129 years until it was superseded by the new Hollinhey County Primary School in 1970. The original schoolroom at the foot of the church path still serves the community, for it is now the St James' Church Hall.



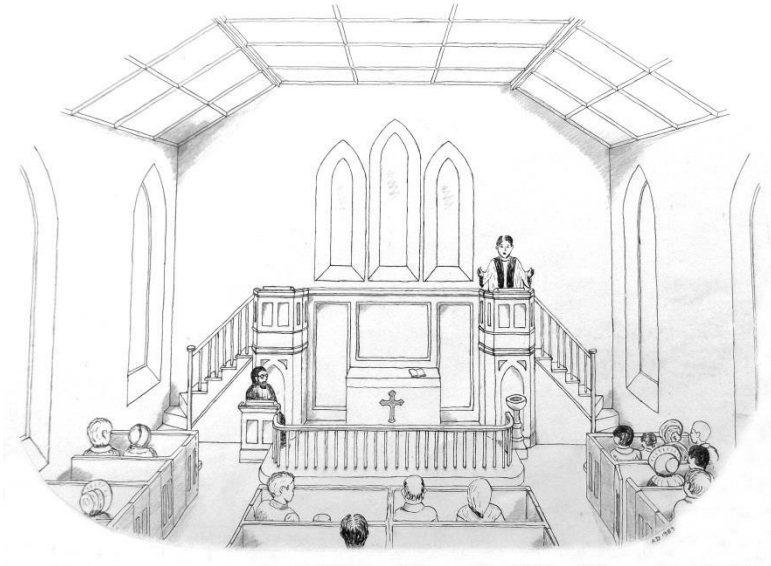
St James' Church Hall

The Original Church

Please stand with your back to the font and look eastwards to the altar and chancel arch.

It is easy to think that St James' Church has always looked the same, but very little remains as it was in 1840. There were originally two aisles in the nave, which is the main body of the Church. The congregation entered pews from either side of the aisles, each pew having four "sittings" as they called them. In those early days most people paid Pew Rents of eight shillings per pew each year. There were also some "Free Pews", and if one looks on the ends of the front pews today the word "Free" may still be seen. The present pews were installed in 1903.

In 1840 there was no chancel, but windows where the chancel arch is now. For many years on either side of the windows there were large boards inscribed with the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Ten Commandments.



How the Church may have looked in 1840 (based on an architect's drawings).

Underneath the original east windows of the Church was the altar, on both sides of which there were steps leading to large pulpits. The one on the left (north) side served as a reading desk or lectern, because at that time preaching and expounding the Bible was paramount.

But back to the present Church...

The Font 1



The beautifully carved 1883 font of Sicilian marble is placed in the traditional position near the entrance to the Church's nave to remind churchgoers, as they enter to worship, of their own baptism. It was made by William Gaulter, a monumental sculptor who at that time lived in Macclesfield and had premises in Prestbury Road. Round the font are symbols of the four Gospels; St Matthew, the man or angel; St Mark the lion; St Luke, the bull; and St John, the eagle.

William Mason Gaulter (yes, his second name really was Mason!) was born in Silverdale in one of the most beautiful parts of Lancashire. Young William and two of his sisters were born deaf and dumb.

By the age of nine William was a pupil at the Manchester Deaf and Dumb School in Chester Road, Old Trafford. As so often happens, William's handicap in speech and hearing was overcome by talent in other areas. He wrote with a clear hand and showed exceptional skill in his chosen career of carving stone.



Font detail.

The Bells 2

The door behind the font leads into the Bell Ringers' Chamber. (Sorry, but access is not normally available.) Originally the tower contained just one bell, but a clock was added to the tower in 1878 and some members of the congregation wished to go a step further by adding a peal of bells.

Because of cost the original intention was to have five bells only, with space to add a sixth when funds were available.

On hearing of this Thomas Parrott, the elderly Town Clerk of Macclesfield, presented a fine tenor bell to complete the six. The first peal was rung on 1st May 1879, which happened to be his birthday.



The Gallery 3

The gallery is above you. There was no gallery when the Church was built in 1840. A gallery was added in 1845, but in 1879 the Vicar and Churchwardens decided to remove it and one Monday morning it was pulled down. This brought a series of heated meetings in the School (now the Church Hall) followed by legal proceedings in the Ecclesiastical Court at Chester. Among reasons given for the gallery's removal was that children sitting there were often a nuisance and had even been seen playing pitch and toss during the services! The outcome was that the Vicar and Churchwardens were not forced to replace the gallery but were ordered to ensure that the equivalent number of "sittings" they had removed be restored to the Church.

The present gallery was added in 1903.

The Roll of Honour 4

In a glass case is the Roll of Honour from the First World War. This records not only those who gave their lives for their country but also the many young people from the village who served bravely in the armed forces and survived.

However the Roll omits the name of another local victim of that conflict. Born in Sutton, Florence Wallace Watson (née Stancliffe) was drowned when the transatlantic Cunard liner *Lusitania* was torpedoed and sunk by a submarine in May 1915. Florence's body was recovered and today she lies almost unrecognised in the churchyard. Her grave is marked by a table stone and may be seen alongside the path on the north side of the Church building.

The Chancel 5

Another tribute to those who lost their lives in the First World War is in the Chancel. This is the red lamp that hangs from the centre of the ceiling – see the brass plate on the north wall of the Church.

The chancel itself was added in 1871. The altar, where each week we celebrate the Last Supper and Christ's giving of Himself, is the focal point of the Church and of our worship. Some of the altar frontals are quite old; if they look new it is because they have been expertly refurbished.



Commemorative Lamp.



*Red altar frontal
(left) and detail
from another
(below).*



The mosaic reredos behind the altar depicts, in the centre, the scene of the infant Christ receiving gifts from the Wise Men. On the left panel is St James (Jacobus) and on the right hand panel St John. This reredos is believed to be the work of Antonio Salviati's Venice and Murano Glass and Mosaic Company. Mosaics by this company adorn many famous buildings including Westminster Abbey, the Albert Memorial and St. Stephen's Crypt in the Houses of Parliament. A Salviati mosaic of The Last Supper decorates the high altar of Chester Cathedral.



The three east windows are in memory of John Smith, one of the first Trustees of this Church. His father, William, had founded a silk printing business in Langley. John spent much of his time on good work in the community.

The windows depict the parable of the sheep and the goats. The central window is of the king seated in judgement. The outer windows (some a bit faded) show the feeding of the hungry, the giving of water, the giving of clothes and the welcoming of the stranger. “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and fed you?” “Anything you did for one of my brothers here, however humble, you did for me.”

Note the scallop shells painted on the chancel ceiling. Scallops are the traditional symbols of St James. Medieval Christians making the pilgrimage to his shrine at Santiago de Compostela in Spain often wore a scallop shell symbol on their hat or clothes.

The Organ

The organ was originally built by W. Hill & Son and was first used for the harvest festival in 1901. The organ chamber was extended in 1935 to install electric blowing apparatus.

After almost one hundred years the moving parts and leather work of the instrument were showing signs of wear and the pipe sounds had become noticeably dull, but help came from a lady member of the congregation who left a legacy specifically to cover the cost of restoration and augmentation.

Work was completed in 1999 and the organ has now been described as a joy to play. It can still produce the same range and tonal quality that it did over a century ago, while the enhancements of modern technology have proved to be equally satisfying.

Alongside the chancel (but not normally open to the public) is the Vestry. **7** This was added in 1881; prior to that the vestry was at the west end of the Church, in the room that is now the bell ringers' chamber.

The Nave Windows

Returning to the nave, look at the windows on the north side.

North side:

8 The window next to the pulpit is perhaps the best quality window in the Church. It was produced by William Morris and Company and was erected in 1910. It depicts the Good Samaritan at the bottom and Dorcas at the top.

Dorcas, a woman who lived in Joppa, was always doing good and helping the poor. When she died, the people of Joppa called upon Saint Peter who raised her from the dead.



Dorcas.

9 The next window shows, at the bottom, Solomon building the Temple.

It is in memory of the Reverend Thomas Hughes, the second Minister of this Church. It was during his time at St James' that the chancel was built, and the Vicarage.

10 The next window is of Dorcas again.



- 11 The window next to the gallery was originally positioned where the stairs are now but was moved when the present gallery was built.

This window is Pre-Raphaelite in style but is not by the William Morris Company. The upper part, “The Light of the World”, is loosely based on the famous painting by Holman Hunt. The lower part represents Christ healing a blind man.

The window partly hidden by the stairs was installed in 1990. Note the heraldic shields containing scallop shells. These reflect those on the chancel ceiling.

The Light of the World.

South side:

- 13 (The window next to the gallery.) This is dated 1897 and depicts a pilgrim ending life’s journey at the gate of heaven and being welcomed by an angel. The pilgrim is dressed as St James; note the scallop shell in his hat.

This window commemorates Theodore Bent, who lived at Sutton Hall (see page 4 and 5) and was a noted Victorian antiquarian and explorer. The window was erected by his widow Mabel, who had bravely accompanied her husband during their travels in Arabia and Africa and 14 recorded their adventures in a diary and photographs.

The next window has another illustration of the Good Samaritan in its lower part, but the main picture is of the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard.

15 This window could be called the Easter Window. “I am the Resurrection and the Life” is the upper half, with the Raising of Lazarus at the bottom. This window was erected by Theodore Bent in memory of his parents.



*“I am the Resurrection
and the Life.”*

16 The window next to the vestry was installed in 1922. It represents St Dorothea, and is in memory of Dorothea, the wife of the Reverend Acheson Smyth who was at that time Vicar of this Church. St Dorothea died as a martyr in about 313 AD under the persecutions of the Roman Empire.



St Dorothea.

There are no historical facts, but the legend is that she was jeered by a young lawyer as she was on her way to execution for refusing to marry or worship idols. The lawyer asked her to send him fruits from the garden (of paradise) where she was going. She agreed to do so and prayed just before her execution. An angel appeared and gave the young lawyer a basket containing three apples and three roses – hence the illustration on this window. The lawyer was converted and also became a martyr.

And finally...

We hope you have enjoyed your visit to St James' Church here in Sutton. If you would like to know more please visit our website at suttonstjames.org.uk. Alternatively you may call 01260 253945 or write to: St James Vicarage, Church Lane, Sutton, MACCLESFIELD, Cheshire, SK11 0DS.

Details of this month's Services may be found on the notice board attached to the stone gate pillar at the foot of the entrance pathway.



Grateful thanks are acknowledged to Mr Alan Dinnis who painstakingly prepared this guide – based partly on notes made by the late Revd Colin Eastwood. In addition thanks are due to Mr Scott Barnard and Mr Michael H Wootton for some of the photographs.