

Visitor Leaflet

ST JAMES' CHURCH WESTHEAD



Incumbents of St James'

1851 – 1856	Rev. E. C. L. Blenkinsop	Curate in Charge
1856 – 1860	Rev. J. A. Kershaw	Curate in Charge
1860 – 1891	Rev. J. A. Kershaw	Vicar
1892 – 1902	Rev. E. E. Wood	Vicar
1902 – 1906	Rev. A. H. Higson	Vicar
1906 – 1936	Rev. E. D. Jordan	Vicar
1936 – 1953	Rev. J. C. G. Mercer	Vicar
1953 – 1958	Rev. D. B. Griffiths	Vicar
1958 – 1964	Rev. J. Backhouse	Vicar
1964 – 1968	Rev. G. Allen	Vicar
1968 – 1974	Rev. D. Post	Vicar
1975 – 1982	Rev. S. R. Smith	Vicar
1983 – 1990	Rev. J. C. Rimmer	Vicar
1990 – 1997	Rev. N. T. B. Deane	Vicar
1998 – 2007	Rev. D. G. T. Towler	Vicar
2008	Rev. G. Milford	Vicar

A Brief History of St James' Church

St James' Church Lathom was consecrated by the Bishop of Chester on 19th August 1851. It was, and still is, the only church in Lathom.

The funds for the church were provided by local landowners. Land for the church was given by Lord Skelmersdale. This family lived at Lathom House and became the Earls of Lathom. The Earl of Derby paid for the church building, its furniture and fittings whilst Edward Stanley Esq, of Cross Hall, who owned the local quarry in Ruff Wood, provided the sandstone for the church.

Sydney Smirke, a renowned and famous architect, was chosen to design the church. He was instructed that the building should have a steeple and a side aisle and the windows were to be in the early 14th century style.

The exterior of the church in 1851 looked much the same as today except that the vestry was much smaller and was accessed from the chancel.

Two other interesting external features are the wrought iron Victorian gentleman's toilet on the north side of the church and the lych gate built in the 1890's. This is now a listed building as the coffin rest is very rare.

The church was lit by oil lamps either suspended on chains from the roof or on fixed wall brackets. Originally heating was provided by coal and coke fires, possibly in the form of stoves. Later central heating was provided by an external solid fuel boiler and recently (2011) an Air Source Heat Pump system which provides warm air flow has been installed.

At the request of Lord Derby, the first curate-in-charge was the Rev. E. C. L. Blenkinsop. He was the chaplain of the workhouse in Ormskirk and had founded two schools in this area. In 1860 the new parish was created and the Rev. John Atherton Kershaw became the first vicar.

16. The lectern with the traditional outspread eagle's wings (carrying the word of God) dates from 1903 and was given by the parishioners in memory of the Rev. Kershaw. Originally it was on the left of the chancel arch, possibly because the oil lamps which lit the church were more plentiful on that side.
17. Ladies belonging to the church, made the inspiring millennium wall hanging to commemorate the year 2000. It depicts aspects of Westhead both in the present and in the past.
18. Similarly the gloriously colourful modern stained glass window depicts the transition from old to new Westhead. It was made by Barbara Hallam of Stained Glass Experience. It was the first window to show a computer!
19. Until 1997, the octagonal font was in the traditional place by the entrance to the church. It symbolised the entry of the baby into the Christian life so always used to be placed near to the door.
20. The story of the good shepherd is the theme in this memorial window. It commemorates the death of the son of Ellen and James Mills. Samuel, aged 20, was lost in the wreck of the Anglo Saxon off the coast of Cape Race in 1863.
21. This is the original Day and Sunday School banner. It was carried in the village processions. The earliest processions started in the 1860's.

10. High on the wall on either side of the altar are two Victorian wall paintings. The figure on the left side represents Jesus and the one on the right is St James carrying the traditional pilgrim's bag.
11. The wooden panels at either side of the reredos are a war memorial and they are inscribed with the names of the men of the parish who sacrificed their lives in the two World Wars.
12. According to a document in the Lancashire Archives, the carved altar is the original one dating from 1886.
13. Behind the altar is a reredos with four carved figures. These are all linked with Lindisfarne and the spread of Christianity in the Saxon era. From left to right: St Finan who built the first church on Lindisfarne, King Oswald, King of Northumbria (he was later St Oswald), St Cuthbert Bishop of Lindisfarne, St Aiden Bishop of Lindisfarne.
14. Inscribed on the wooden panels behind the organ and the choir stalls are the names of all the local servicemen who served in both World Wars. It is unusual for a church to have the names of all those who enlisted. There is also a reference to the men who enlisted at Lathom House which was probably the biggest remount depot in England in World War One.
15. The oak choir stalls date from 1939 and were given by Mrs Matilda Gaskell in memory of her husband who worshipped here. However, until the electric organ was installed, they were seldom used as the distance between them and the old pipe organ at the back of the church caused a time lag which caused problems for the choir.

In 1868 a wonderful pipe organ, built by Robert Postill of York, was erected at the west end of the nave. It had manually operated bellows but in 1966 it was converted to electricity. This replaced the small organ in the chancel.

In 1886 payments were made for a holy table, a reredos and a stained glass window. Towards the end of the 19th century a further stained glass memorial window was placed in the north side of the nave.

In 1895 the church was restored throughout and we are told it "now affords 420 sittings of which 210 are free". In 1903 the oak lectern was given by the parishioners as a memorial to the first vicar.

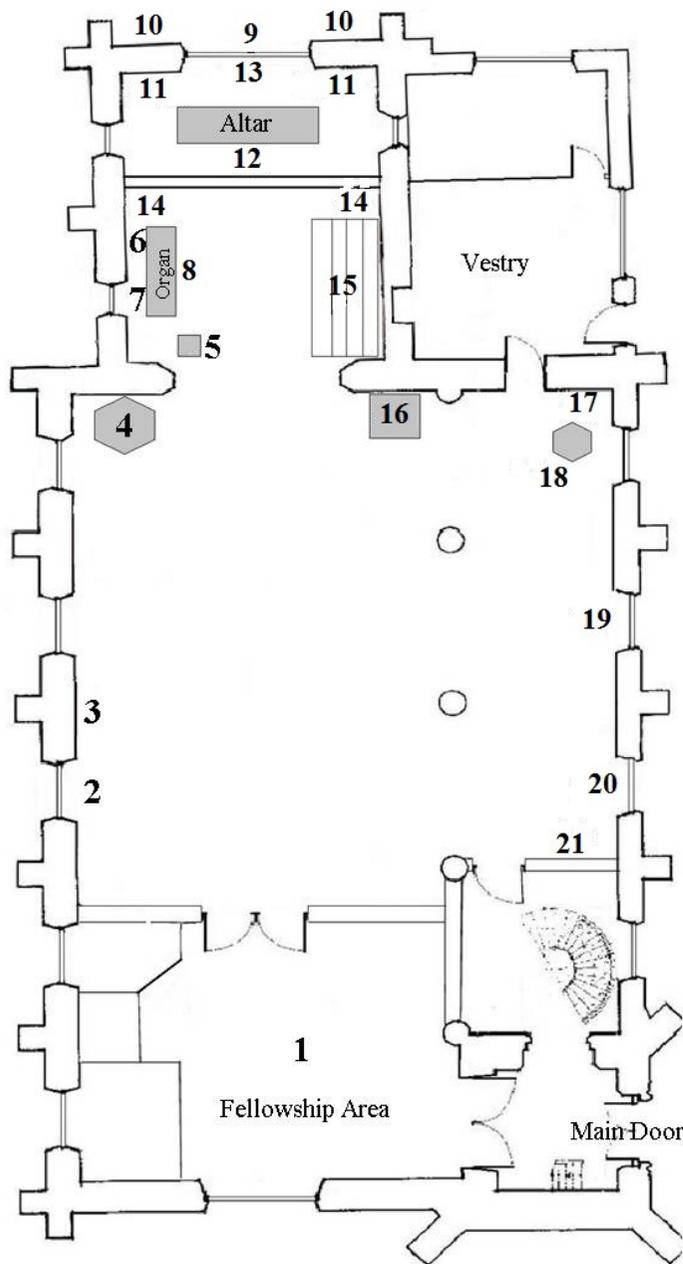
The aftermath of World War One brought great changes. The beautiful east window is a war memorial as is the oak panelling in the chancel.

1939 saw the demolition of the old vestry and the building of a new one in memory of the Rev. E. D. Jordan. At the same time new choir stalls and a clergy chair were installed in the chancel.

After World War Two, additions were made to the war memorials. The church was completely re-roofed in 1986, re-wired in 1989, re-decorated in 1991 and totally re-ordered in 1997.

Further details of items mentioned above can be found in "A walk through St James' Church" which follows.

A Walk Through St James' Church



KEY

1. Fellowship Area
2. Stained Window
3. Commemorative Plaque
4. Pulpit
5. Clergy Chair
6. Memorial Plaque
7. Memorial Windows
8. Organ
9. East Window
10. Wall Paintings
11. War Memorial
12. Altar
13. Reredos
14. Armed Forces – World Wars
15. Choir Stalls
16. Lectern
17. Millennium Wall Hanging
18. Font
19. Millennium Window
20. Stained Window
21. Original Day and Sunday School Banner

1. The Fellowship Area was made when the church was re-ordered in 1997. A plaque can be seen above the hatch.
2. The stained glass window shows the presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple at Jerusalem. (See plaque on window ledge.)
3. The commemorative plaque is to Walter Henry Jones who was a lay preacher and Sunday school teacher here.
4. At the opening of the church in 1851, the pulpit was at the right side of the chancel arch.
5. The vicar's chair dates from 1939 and was the gift of Mrs Matilda Gaskell in memory of her husband.
6. This plaque is in memory of the wife of the Rev. John Kershaw, the first vicar of this parish. She died, aged 42, in 1865. Also named are three of their young children who died aged 7 years, 4 years and 7 months respectively.
7. Two small stained glass memorial windows.
8. This electric organ replaced the old pipe organ when the church was re-ordered in 1997.
9. The beautiful East Window is a memorial to those who lost their lives in World War One. It was designed and made by Shrigley and Hunt from Lancaster. The window was donated by Henry Tyrer and Co., shipping brokers of Liverpool. The family lived locally and employed men from the village. The window shows figures and images of war but in the centre is the figure of Christ and his angels in heaven which symbolises the promise of life after death.