

Ecclesiastical parish of  
BROUGHTON

# **A TALE OF TWO CHURCHES**

**At Broughton  
In the  
Deanery of**

CLIVE CP

OLD  
CHURCH

NEW  
CHURCH

**Wem & Whitchurch**

**Diocese of Lichfield**

## **FOREWORD**

St Mary's Church Broughton is a beautiful, peaceful place of worship and prayer. The people who worship here are enthusiastic and committed to working to care for the building and the community. All who visit St Mary's find a warm welcome and a peace in this quiet, secluded, special place. This little church is full of history, art and many interesting links with the past. My appreciation goes to Bob Wellings and my predecessor Canon William Price for their hard work and scholarship in producing this account of its history. My hope is that through reading this excellent book you will enjoy learning about the church's past and be inspired to discover for yourself the simple beauty of this place and the warmth of its people.

Peter Barnes

## **BROUGHTON: A TALE OF TWO CHURCHES**

**Rev Canon William Price.**

**2008.**

In his volume on Shropshire in the King's England series (1939) Arthur Mee wrote of the two churches at Broughton-with-Yorton. 'One is a shapeless and overgrown mass of ruins, a church 800 years ago, abandoned owing to its low position by the source of a stream; the other is a stone church with a timbered turret standing solitary in a bower of trees'.

## **THE OLD CHURCH**

Some writers believe that Broughton was a settlement in Roman times, but this seems unlikely, although it is possible that there were Roman tiles in the old Church. We do not know when the first Church was built in Broughton, but there was a priest at Yorton at the time of Domesday Book (1086). Until 1718,



View of the Old Church at Broughton, taken June A.D. 1858.



View of the Chancel in the Old Church at Broughton.

**Old Church 1858**

when it became a separate parish, Broughton was a chapelry in the parish of St. Chad's, Shrewsbury.

It seems that the old Church was of late 12<sup>th</sup>-century origin, of yellow/grey and red sandstone. It had a nave, chancel, porch, and a small turret, with a 12<sup>th</sup>-century chancel arch.

Richard Gough, author of the famous *History of Myddle*, received part of his education at a small school at Broughton run by the Revd. William Sugar, the minister of the Church, and after Sugar's death Gough read some of his former teacher's manuscripts. Sugar believed that there had once been a small monastery on Broughton Bank, but Gough had never heard of it. Indeed he thought that the building on Broughton Bank had been a castle.

More interestingly Sugar's papers included an account of rare and important privileges granted to 'the holy Chappell of our blessed Lady of Broughton in the County of Salop'. This had been founded by 'the revelations and power of God, and the miracle of our Lady'. Unfortunately no details of the miracle are given. By the authority of Pope Julius II (1503-1513) and Pope Leo X (1513-1521) any pilgrim who prayed in Broughton Chapel on certain festivals of Mary, or who contributed to the building and maintenance of the Chapel, was granted an indulgence of 1500 days remission of purgatory. Four times a year a Requiem Mass was offered in the Chapel for the repose of the souls of deceased pilgrims and benefactors. This venture was short-lived, of course, for in a few years the Protestant Reformation swept away indulgences and requiems.

Some, but not all, later references to the old Church call it St. Margaret's. According to a plan made at the time of its being abandoned, the font was in the chancel, and at the west end there was a gallery, entered by stairs inside the Church. There were no windows on the north wall of the nave. A larger window at the east end of the south wall of the nave gave light to the three-decker pulpit. Most of the pews were the property of local families.

On the day, 22 April 1858, before the old Church was largely demolished Miss Allen, daughter of the Archdeacon of Salop, sketched the interior and exterior of the building, and copies of her drawings are to be seen in the new Church.

Before work on the new Church had begun, the roof of the old Church was removed and the nave was demolished. (This seems somewhat rushed, unlike the situation in the parish of Newtown, now in the same group of parishes as



Painting of ruins of old church in early 20th Century.



Churchyard at old church 2006 by local artist  
Jean Hammond

Broughton, where, in 1869, the old Church was left standing and used until the new Church was completed.) At first the chancel arch was left standing, but by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Dean Cranage was writing his ten volume work on the churches of Shropshire, the old Church, which he said was dedicated to St. Margaret, was a ruin, overgrown with nettles and weeds. Only the chancel walls remained standing. Then two windows in the east wall were visible, as was a piscina recess in the south wall of the chancel. South-west of the ruins were the remains of the churchyard cross.

Fifty years ago one could still see where the windows had been, and even seven years ago one could still see something of the structure, covered with ivy, but by 2008 nothing is visible of the building. The site still belongs to the Vicar and churchwardens.

## THE NEW CHURCH

In June 1857 an Appeal was launched for the ‘Broughton Church Rebuilding Fund’:

‘The above Church is probably the most dilapidated Church in the County, as well as the dampest and coldest. It is proposed to rebuild it on a new and better site, given by Robert Gardner, Esq., of Leighton Hall. The Patron [Lord Hill], Incumbent, Owners, Occupiers, and many Strangers have come forward, as will be seen by the subjoined list, but there is still a deficiency. Any assistance may be forwarded to Rev. J. Wood, Grinshill, who will thankfully acknowledge the same, or paid into Messrs. Burton’s Bank, to the credit of the “Broughton Church account”’.

Although the Appeal referred to the dilapidated state, dampness, and coldness of the Church, the real reason for abandoning the site was the wetness of the churchyard. It was, however, the case that the old Church was actually flooded at times. Lord Hill had offered to give another site for the new Church, but ultimately the chosen spot was that given by Mr. Gardner of Yorton.

Some subscribers had already been generous. Lord Hill gave £130, Mr. Nevett £25, Archdeacon Allen £20, Mr. Heatley £15, and the Bishop of Lichfield, the Rev. J. Wood [the Vicar], Miss Pitt, and R. Lyster, Esq., £10 each. Other contributors gave lesser sums, and the total received, before the Appeal was penned, was £304 19s.



Altar at Harvest. The altar frontal was designed & made  
By Rev Ann Hadley & ladies of the congregation.

The new site was conveyed by a deed dated 19 December 1857, and a faculty was issued on 7 April 1858 for the demolition of the old Church. The architect of the new Church, built of Grinshill free stone, by tradition quarried from the wood across the lane, was Thomas Denville Barry of Liverpool, a man of 'rising fame'. It was his first Church in Shropshire. The builders were Messrs. Smith and Cank, whose quotation for the work was £495. The font, altar, communion rails, bells, and 'indeed everything which was in a perfect state' were moved from the old Church to the new. A harmonium in the new Church was, it was said, of great assistance to 'the well-trained choir in the psalmody'. Unlike in the old Church, all pews were free. The first architectural drawings show a simple bellcote at the west end, with one bell; later this was changed to the present turret with two bells. All the drawings include a pulpit in the Church, but it is almost certain that no pulpit was ever placed in the Church. Perhaps there were not the funds to pay for it...

The last baptism and the last funeral in the old Church were held on the same day, 21 April 1858, and the roof of the old Church was taken down, it seems, two days later. The Vicar laid the first stone of the new Church, 'privately, but not without prayer', on 11 May. There is no record of the date when the first service was held in the new Church, but it was presumably used for the first funeral in the new churchyard, not yet consecrated, on 24 October 1858.

The consecration of the new Church, now definitely called St. Mary's (although on the architect's plan it was called Holy Trinity), and churchyard took place on Wednesday 27 April 1859. Before the great day a local newspaper devoted some space to Broughton's churches. 'Much interest was lately awakened for the old fabric, venerable for its age and singular locality, and we are glad that sufficient remains of it are left to mark the spot. The new site, however, is as favourable as the former was inexplicable. It nearly adjoins Sansaw Hall demesne, the seat of Major Martin and Lady Edwardes [they had each donated £10], and commands a beautiful view of the bold hill and quarries of Grinshill'. The account went on to regret that the railway timetable did not provide trains at convenient times for people to travel to the consecration of the Church, 'but we trust they will either take the 9.20 train from Shrewsbury or join together for other means of conveyance'. [The railway line from Shrewsbury to Crewe, with Yorton station, had opened on 1 September 1858. Was the decision to build a new Church in some way connected with the imminent arrival of the railway?] It seems that a considerable sum of money still had to be raised, although the newspaper account finished with the statement that 'we believe it to be probably the cheapest church in the county'

On 27 April 1859 the Lord Bishop of Lichfield, the Right Revd. John Lonsdale, consecrated the new Church and churchyard 'in the presence of a large and respectable congregation'. The service began at 11.30 a.m. with a procession of at least 23 clergy and the Bishop. After the consecration the Revd. Hugh Stowell of Manchester preached a long sermon on the text 'The simplicity that is in Christ' (2 Corinthians, 11, 3). Mr. Stowell, a member of a distinguished Manx clerical family, was one of the leading Evangelical preachers of the time, famous across the country for his opposition to Popery and High-Church Anglicanism. It was quite something to have him as preacher at Broughton. (The Stowell Memorial Church in Salford was named after him.) In his sermon he spoke of the simplicity of the Gospel and of the 'simple, modest house of prayer' in which they were assembled, at a time when there were many heresies and departures from the simplicity of the Gospel'. He also spoke of true worship and the beautiful simplicity of Christian obedience to God. At the close of the service the collection produced a further £30 for the Building Fund.

Another well attended service was held in the afternoon, when the Hon. and Rev. Orlando Watkin Weld Forester, Rector of Broseley, preached. He was the son of the first Baron Forester of Willey Park, near Much Wenlock, and a Prebendary of Hereford Cathedral. Later he became a Canon of York Minster.

The Revd. John Wood seems to have been the prime mover in the decision to abandon the old Church and build a new one, with clearly the support of Viscount Hill of Hawkstone. Mr. Wood was born at Grinshill, of a distinguished local family, in 1801, and he became Vicar of Grinshill, of which parish he was also Patron, in 1849, and then also Vicar of Broughton in 1855. He died in 1864. He was succeeded by the Revd. John Hawksworth, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and formerly a barrister-at-law, who had care only of Broughton and who lived in Wem. (There appears never to have been a Vicarage house in Broughton.) Mr. Hawksworth wrote several books of an Evangelical nature, including *A Historic Record of Priestcraft or Self-appointed Sacerdotalism* in 1874. He died in 1876, and the next Vicar of Broughton was the Revd. John Wright, who had been Vicar of Grinshill since 1874. He was a skillful woodworker and, it is believed, made the oak reredos around the altar. Broughton and Grinshill shared the same Vicar, living at Grinshill, until 1946. Since 1948 Broughton has been linked with Myddle, with the Revd. Edgar Burford as Curate-in-Charge until 1951, when he was inducted as Vicar of Broughton. (He, and his successors until 1967, also had charge of Grinshill.)

In recent times much has been done in the Church. A new roof was put in place in 1994, when the Church was also repainted, and the extension to the church-



yard was consecrated in January 1999. Two attractive lights were installed in the churchyard, at the cost of Myddle and Broughton Parish Council, in 2004.

It is inconceivable that an ancient Church like the old Church at Broughton could be abandoned in the present time. Dean Cranage at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century thought that it would have been better to have repaired or restored the old Church. He considered the new Church to be ‘one of the poorest ecclesiastical buildings in the county’, and he added: ‘It is difficult to enter into the feelings of the last generation who could build such a church as this and leave the old chapel of St. Margaret, about a quarter of a mile away, to decay’. On the other hand a writer in 1859 saw the new Church as ‘a small unpretending building, but...at the same time so neat and chaste in design, and so well and substantially built, that no one can see it without being struck by its beauty and solidity’.

Worship in this simple, light, little Church is a very special experience, and the Church has many friends. Please pray for the clergy and congregation, that this small Church, on its own by the side of the lane, and sheltered by trees, may always stand as a witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

## **A TOUR OF THE NEW CHURCH AND CHURCHYARD**

On entering the Church through the south doorway the visitor sees the circular Norman font, brought here from the old Church, and possibly 800 years old. Many years ago the pews at the back of the Church were re-arranged to give more space around the font.

To the right of the font is the memorial to those five men from this little parish who fell in the First World War, and beneath the memorial is a framed list of the names of all 15 men, including the fallen, from Broughton who served in that conflict. Note that 4 were members of the Pryce family, 3 of the Sands family, and 2 of the Tibbott family.

Further along the north wall is the beautiful Millennium Sampler, made by Mrs. Margaret Wellings and Mrs. Gwen Pritchard.

The table in the vestry, through the door in the north wall, was the altar in the old Church.



Millennium Sampler..



Detail of old Church showing table now in vestry.

The safe in the vestry contains the parish registers, which begin in 1705. It also holds a rare (if not unique) Elizabethan chalice-cover, on which is a serpent forming a ring.

Just inside the communion rails, which came from the old Church, is the memorial to the Revd. John Wright, Vicar of Broughton for 34 years, who died on Christmas Day 1912 at the age of 78. He was Rural Dean of Wem for some time. The tablet records that 'The tablet, carved panels and organ' were given by his widow and daughters. It is likely that the woodwork was by Miss Elizabeth Wright, his daughter, who also carved the pulpit in Grinshill Church, although the wooden reredos (behind the altar itself) was probably her father's work.

The former pipe organ was removed over 30 years ago, and at present the keyboard is used.

The altar flower vases were presented in memory of Isobel Downing by the Women's Gas Federation. (This was 'a social forum for women where the use of gas in the home [was] further encouraged'.)

The small tablet on the south wall commemorates the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of Mrs. Olive Key, who had by then played the organ for over 41 years. Her final service as organist was on 28 September 1997. Mrs. Key died on 2 January 2008 at the age of 100 years.

The memorial tablet to Jeanne Gordon, who died at Hamburg in 1879, recalls the Nevett family of Yorton Villa, one of the gentry families in the parish, and subscribers to the Building Fund.

At the west end of the south wall are copies of the watercolours made by Miss Allen of the old Church on 22 April 1858, the day before it was demolished.

On the west wall there is an oil painting of the old Church. This is of uncertain date, and shows some features, the chancel walls and window openings, still visible. The painting below, by Mrs. Jean Hammond, shows the site in 2006, when it was almost totally overgrown.

On leaving the Church, look up and see the two bells in the belfry. They came from the old Church. They have not been rung for over 60 years. One is probably from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the other dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



Decorated Font  
2004



Mrs Key Organist for over 41 years.



New Churchyard lights blessed by Bishop of Shrewsbury  
10th October 2004

The third grave from the north on the west wall of the churchyard, belonging to the Mullineux family and surmounted by the large cross, has an almost illegible inscription on its reverse, informing the reader that Martha Mullineux, who died at the age of seven months, was the last person to be baptized in the old Church and also the first to be buried in the new churchyard.

The churchyard lights by the lane were donated by Myddle and Broughton Parish Council, and dedicated by the Right Revd. Dr. Alan Smith, Bishop of Shrewsbury, on 10 October 2004.

Beyond the west wall of the churchyard, and entered through a gap in the wall, is the extension to the churchyard, dedicated on 24 January 1999 by the Right Revd. David Hallett, Bishop of Shrewsbury.

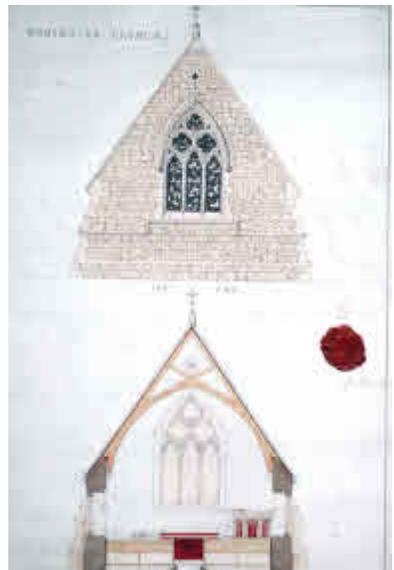
The two small trees flanking the entrance to the new churchyard were planted and blessed in memory of Kerry Walker, who died by drowning in California.

### **VICARS AND PRIESTS-IN-CHARGE OF BROUGHTON SINCE THE NEW CHURCH WAS BUILT**

1855-1864 The Revd. John Wood  
1864-1876 The Revd. John Hawksworth  
1876-1912 The Revd. John Wright  
1913-1924 The Revd. Edward Reith  
1925-1946 The Revd. Geoffrey Dixon  
1948-1952 The Revd. Edgar Burford  
1953-1959 The Revd. Vincent Gower Jones  
1959-1970 The Revd. Prebendary John Ayling  
1970-1971 The Revd. Prebendary Frederick Chapman  
1971-1979 The Revd. David Evans.  
1980-1992 The Revd. Philip Collis Smith  
1992-1999 The Revd. Prebendary Ann Hadley  
2000-2008 The Revd. Canon William Price  
2008- The Revd. Peter Barnes

In 1994 Rev Ann Hadley was almost certainly the first woman priest to pre-side at communion in the Lichfield Diocese at the 9.00 am service at Broughton on 24th April.

# **Original Drawings for New Church**



**BROUGHTON: A TALE OF TWO CHURCHES**

**Rev Canon William Price. 2008.**

**Produced & Published by Bob Wellings. 2008.**

**On the 150th Anniversary of St Mary's Broughton.**

**All proceeds for Church Funds.**