

St Chad's Church

Things to look for on an educational visit to St Chad's For Secondary School use

Alice Wharton

St. Chad's Church Kirkby was built at the expense of the 4th Earl of Sefton with the help of the free labour of his tenants in the area. In October 1868 at a meeting of the Kirkby and Simonswood tenants, it was agreed that for every two Cheshire acres of land rented by each farmer – he would do one days carting of the stone to be used for the new church.

This was local sandstone carried from the quarries in Kirkby and Melling. The quarry in Kirkby was situated in Quarry Green that's how the area got its name.

The 4th Earl of Sefton laid the foundation stone on 31st March 1869. It was expected that the church would only take a few months to be built, but the work was interrupted by a strike amongst the masons and it was two years before the work was completed. The church became known as the Country Cathedral.

The Pillars

It is said that at the time of building, there was a dispute between the Kirkby farmers and those from Simonswood about the design of the pillars for the church. They settled the argument by building octagonal pillars along the north aisle and round pillars along the south aisle.

The tradition is preserved to this day to explain why at Harvest Festival time the Kirkby farmers would decorate the south of the church and the Simonswood farmers would decorate the north side and they would not sit with each other.

The Churchyard

The new church was built near to the old chapel, which can still be seen in the churchyard. The old chapel was taken down in 1872 and its stones were used to build the wall around the new church. The last service to be held in the chapel was a Communion Service celebrated at about 8 o'clock in the morning of Wednesday 4th October 1871. That was the day the new church was consecrated. The War Memorial was erected in the churchyard to the memory of all the people of the area who gave their lives in the two World Wars. At the base of the cross is an inscription of the year A.D. 870.

The Font

The most treasured possession of St Chad's Church is the ancient Font, which is over one thousand years old and is of Saxon or early Norman origin. The red sandstone Font lay for a long time neglected in the churchyard being used as a water butt, it stood beside the old schoolroom door and was used by the children to sharpen their knives and pencils on it. Eventually it was moved into 'Bier House and was left in a corner partially hidden under planks, ropes and tools and ended up covered in whitewash. The Font was rescued by the Vicar Mr Gray in 1850 and restored to the chapel. When the new St Chad's was built the Font was transferred to the new building. The design of the Font consists of a double coil of serpents on which rests the upper part of the Font which is circular and has ten different sized compartments, each one containing a figure. One scene shows Adam and Eve with the tree of knowledge of good and evil and a serpent. In the next compartment is a winged figure with a sword raised in its right hand. The next figure is of Christ driving a spear into the head of a serpent. The other seven compartments have single figures believed to represent the seven orders of the clergy in the Saxon church. Around the bottom of the Font is a carving of a rope, which has no beginning and no end. This is to show that Gods love is everlasting and continuous.

The Windows

Above the Font is a large window it shows the dream the Jacob had where he laid his head upon a stone and fell asleep. He dreamt that he was a stairway reaching up from Earth to heaven, with angels going up and coming down on it. The window is called Jacobs Ladder and it was put there to remember the 4th Earl of Sefton.

Either side of the church shows famous men and women from the Bible. On the Ladies side there is the Queen of Sheba, Hannah, Ruth, Miriam and Sarah. On the Men's side it shows St Andrew and St Peter these were both fishermen. Then there is St Stephen and St Timothy. All of the windows are made of special glass called stained glass windows.

The Vestry

When we go to church we put on our best clothes. The Vicar or Priest also needs to wear special clothes. They wear a scarf, which is called a stole, and his coat or cloak is called a chasuble. These come in different colours for different times of the year, they come in red, white/gold, green, violet and sometimes black. Some of them are used at special services.

The silver-plate that the bread for Communion is placed on is two hundred and fifty years old, it is called a paten. The cup, which holds the wine, is called a chalice.

The Reredos

The high altar is a long table where the bread and wine is consecrated into the body and blood of Christ. Behind the altar is a very large picture showing Jesus and his disciples, they are having a celebration, which is called the Last Supper. After the supper Jesus was taken away and crucified.

To the left of the altar is a picture of George and the Dragon. The whole of the picture is made up of very small pieces of shiny coloured tiles and it is called a mosaic. Proper name is a Reredos. The Rev John Leach vicar in 1881 donated the artist was Henry Holliday. It is covered during Lent to remind us that Jesus is soon to be crucified and it will be uncovered on Easter Sunday when Jesus rose from the dead after being laid in the tomb.

Aumbrey

A special place built into the north east sanctuary wall (front left) where the consecrated bread is kept. Sometimes it is used for the sick people who cannot get to church. The vicar takes it to them to help the people remember God is still caring for them.

Organ

The organ was put into place in church on the 23rd September 1909.

Pulpit

This is where lesson is read and the vicar will give his sermon.

The walls are made of sandstone and the roof is made of wood. The seats are called pews and they are in the main part of the church called the nave.

Hymn Boards Hymns (praise to God, special songs for church).

Candles to light and say a prayer for sick or hospital or just to remember a loved one.

Alice Wharton is the oldest member of St Chad's, born in 1908, and is a local historian.