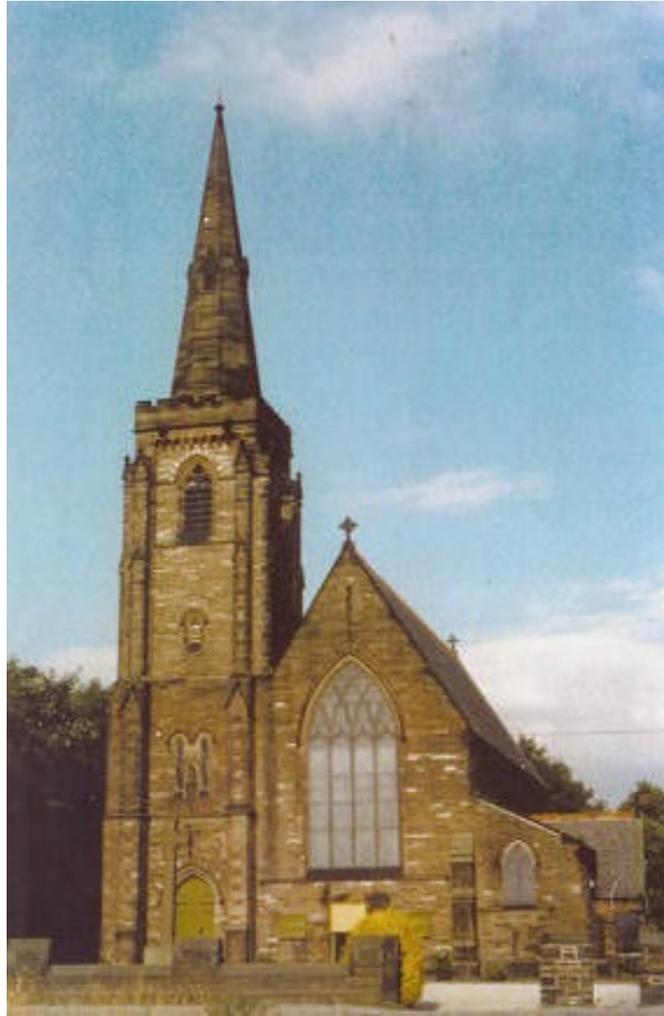


St Stephens Church Belle Vale Rd Gateacre Liverpool



The Beginning

In 1857 some of the people living in Gateacre decided to make a request to the vicar of Childwall, the Reverend Augustus Campbell, to whose Parish they belonged.

That since a number especially of older people were finding the journey up the hill to Childwall Church too difficult, they desired to have a service on Sunday evening in the School-room, and so prevent people from attending services not belonging to the Church of England.

The then Vicar, the Revd Augustus Campbell replied to the effect that it might prove to be too heavy a burden for any subsequent vicar who might not be so well equipped as himself, since he had three curates to help him. However, he finally decided to allow one of his curates to hold a service in the school-room. He therefore gave authority to the Reverend Thomas Chambers to conduct a simple service of prayer, Bible-reading and exposition only on Sunday evenings, so as to keep the church members together.

As time went on, these services became so well attended that a number of people began to put forward the idea of building a church for them selves, so that the full regular services might be properly conducted in Gateacre.

The result of this movement was the formation of a committee under the chairmanship of **Revd. Canon Warr, Vicar of Childwall**, to consider the question of bringing a church into being, and raising the necessary funds.

The Building of St Stephens

In 1870, two members of this committee, **John Dutton Esq.** and **Edward Moss Esq.** together provided the land necessary for a church site. This was in fulfillment of a promise previously made by the late Thomas Dutton Esq., before his death.

The church was designed by Cornelius Sherlock,

The Foundation Stone was laid by **Edward Gibbon Esq.**, On **Easter Monday, April 1st 1872**. The service was conducted by the **Revd. Canon Warr**, the Vicar of Childwall.

During the next two years our beautiful building was completed and was consecrated on the 11th February 1874 by the Lord Bishop of Chester in whose Diocese lay the whole city of Liverpool.

The first entry in the Service Register of the church is that of the Consecration, at which the Bishop of Chester preached the sermon, taking for his text Acts Ch.7 : 59,60; the account of **The Stoning of Stephen** to whom the church is dedicated. The preacher at the first service on the following Sunday was the **Chancellor of the Diocese, J.E.Espin**, and at the evening service it was **Revd.Canon Warr, Vicar of Childwall**.

Chapel of Ease

For the next nineteen years St. Stephen's was a Chapel of Ease to Childwall Parish Church, and the clergy of Childwall were entirely responsible for all the services.

However, in 1893 Gateacre was made into a separate Parish, and the **Revd. J.J. Sandys** was appointed as the **first Vicar**. He served the church faithfully for 25 years, until his death in 1918.

Early Curates

Among the assistant Curates who served the Parish in those early years were:- **Revd. E G Alderson**, **Dr Tully**, **Revd. W. Riches**, **Revd. S. Jackson**, **Revd. F. L. Davies** and **Revd. H. R. Day**, who remained as Curate from 1907 to 1922, continuing to live in the Parish.

The First Church Wardens

The first Churchwardens were **Sir Arthur B. Forwood M.P.** and **Thomas Harrison Esq.**, who were also Churchwardens of Childwall before 1894. They were followed by **Dudley B. Forwood Esq.**, and **Professor D. Caton**, **Percy Bateson Esq.**, and **Robert Allen Esq.**, the latter being People's Warden from 1901 to 1906. **Mr. S. D. Grundy** who served as vicars warden from 1911 to 1947.

The Choir Vestry

The choir vestry was a later addition to the fabric of the church, and a small tablet on one of the walls tells the story.

It reads:-

"This Vestry was built to the Glory of God and in commemoration of the 60th year (the Diamond Jubilee) of the reign of her most gracious Majesty Queen Victoria by Colonel William Hall Walker of Gateacre Grange. 20th June 1897".

The Architect was Mr. Charles E. Deacon.

The Old Vicarage was built in the church grounds in 1895. **The New Rectory** was built in 1983

The Patronage of St. Stephen's had remained in the care of the Vicar of Childwall, since he was responsible for the appointment of the clergy while the area was in the Diocese of Chester. However, in 1902, the City of Liverpool was declared as a new Diocese, and the Patronage was transferred to the care of the First Bishop of Liverpool, Dr. Ryle.

The next great event of national importance to be chronicled in this history of our church was the outbreak of the Great War of 1914-18. This, with its accompanying black-out restrictions, brought about a change of the timing of the evening service. As it was difficult to ensure that the windows were adequately screened so as to comply with restrictions at night, it was decided that Evening Service should commence at 3.30 p.m. during the winter months, and revert to the usual time of 6.30 p.m. during the summer. War conditions brought many difficulties, especially in the realm of the repair and upkeep of the church building, since it was almost impossible to find either men or materials for necessary work.

However, the greatest blow to the church at this time was the sudden death of its first Vicar, the Revd. J.J. Sandys. Since 1893. He died very suddenly while he was attending a memorial service to his friend Dr. Chisholm in St. Peter's Church, Woolton, in September 1918.

In 1920 the church found itself faced with a problem of massive repair work, partly as a result of heavy storms during which the Cross at the east end of the church had been blown down with resultant damage to roof tiles of both the Chancel and the Choir, and in addition the gutters and the down pipes needed cleaning and repairing, and bell-ropes had to be renewed as the aftermath of wartime restrictions.

Many ways of raising funds were employed and the extensive repair programme was undertaken. Finally in 1929, it was at last possible to hold a special Service of Renewal and Re-Hallowing, which was conducted by the Vicar the **Revd. H.J. Gibbins** who had succeeded the **Revd. J.J. Sandys**.

To mark the end of the war period a Memorial Cross of Woolton Stone was erected in front of the church and was dedicated on June 22nd 1921 by the Lord Bishop of Liverpool, the Rt. Revd. Dr. Chavasse.

The names of 21 men are inscribed in alphabetical order on three sides facing Belle Vale Road.

The stone is inscribed:-

"In honoured memory of the gallant men who gave their lives for King and Country in the Great War, this memorial is gratefully dedicated.

Fletcher Cowley, Edward Cowley, Harry Felton, Fred Felton, Walter Godbold, Frank Guy, David Hardbottle, William Harrison, Arthur Hilton, John Hilton, Harry Hunter, George Hunter, William Johnson, John McLaughlin, Harry Miller, John Radcliffe Harry Sefton, John Sefton, William Smith George Squires, George Welch

During the year 1939 the organ was found to be in urgent need of repair and an 'organ fund' was established to cope with this necessity. Messrs Rushworth and Draper were asked to estimate the cost which they placed at £200 They carried out the work and when it was finished a special service of the re-opening and re-hallowing of the organ was held at which Revd. Norman Louch A.R.C.O., B.A. preached the sermon and afterwards gave a recital.

The year 1939 brought again a period of war to the country. Unlike the previous war, the people at home were much more deeply involved as there was the added threat of air-raids. The people of Gateacre found themselves dealing with such hitherto unknown problems as Air Raid Precautions, the distribution of gas masks and the question of evacuation, though this last did not affect the area quite so much until later on in the war

In 1946 a synthetic Peal of Bells was installed in the Tower both as a memorial and also to celebrate the end of the war. A Memorial Tablet was placed in the church in honour of the men who lost their lives in the 1939-43 war; and the Lord Bishop of Liverpool dedicated both the Peal and the Tablet on June 22nd 1946. The Peal of Bells was never very successful and was discontinued. 12 Names of those who fell in the 2nd World War on 3 sides of the memorial cross facing the Church

Eric Bassie, Cecil Davies, Frank Gates, Geoffrey Guy, William Edward Hounslea, James Hesketh, John Moon, Edward Owen, Neville Wilshaw, Norman Williams, Harry Wilson, Charles Ernest Wrigh

During and after the war the population of the Parish increased very rapidly as new housing appeared and the work of the Parish increased in proportion. A large new housing estate known as Naylor'sfield and Netherley St Stephens had new church build called Christ Church Netherley to help with the care for the Gateacre Parish.

In 1975 Gateacre Parish was made a team ministry and is served by 3 churches Christ Church Netherley, St Marks Childwall and St Stephens Gateacre in 2005 we celebrated 30 years of the team.

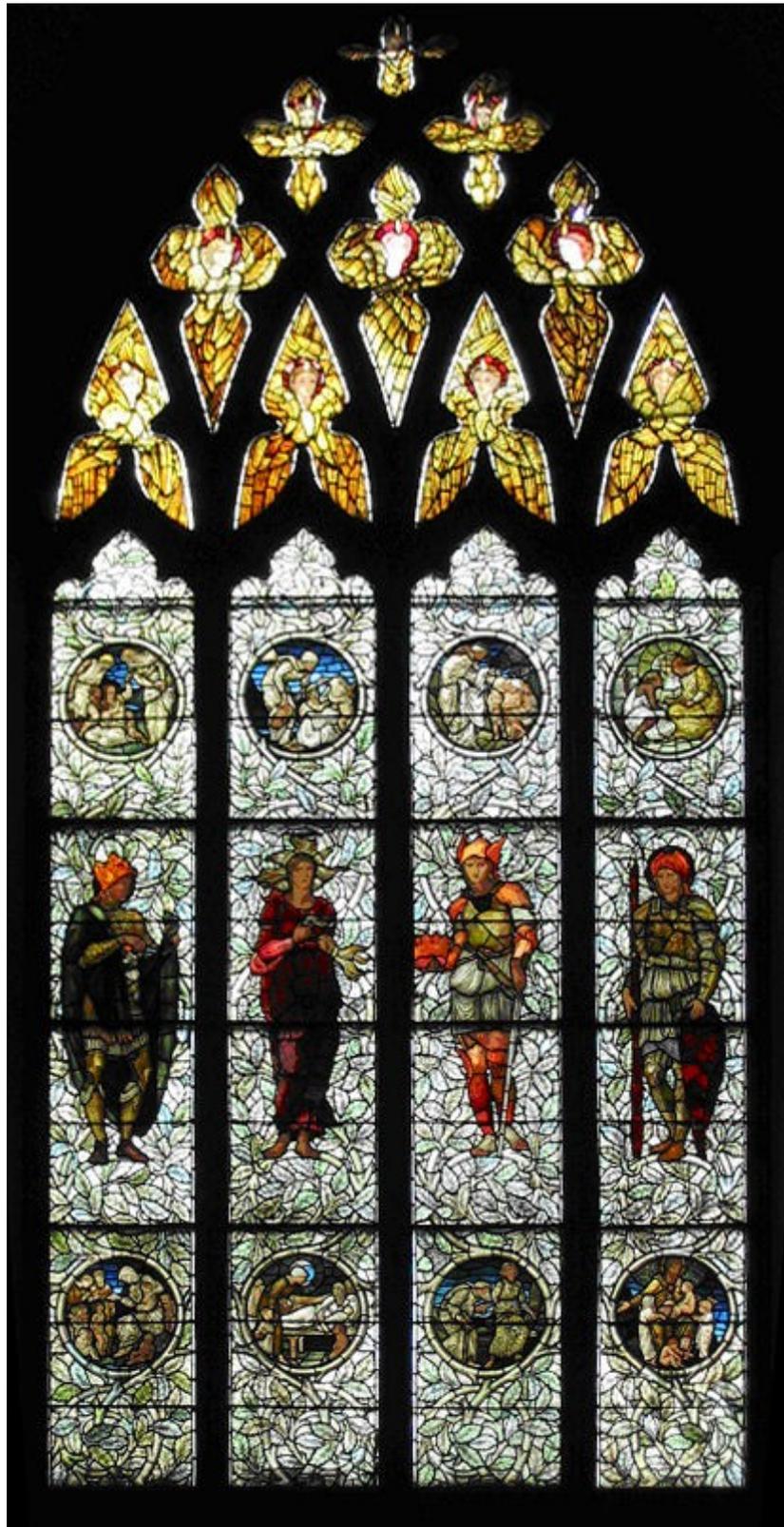
This is a brief history of St Stephens and we have much to be thankful for those who have gone before many people since 1850s to the present day have served faithfully Our Lord Jesus Christ in Gateacre and Little Woolton and beyond with their lives and labour.



Stephens's interior from a Church Magazine 1937

St Stephens's interior approx 1996





West Window by William Morris and Burne Jones 1893 in memory of Eliza Walker who died in 1882
wife of Barclay Walker of Gateacre Grange (who built Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool)



The East Window in 1875 by Fredrick Preedy in memory of Joseph Hornby of Druids Cross

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