

Holy Trinity Church in Waterhead

A brief history and guidebook

Local background

Waterhead occupies Oldham's north-eastern extremity on the ancient road between Manchester and Huddersfield. Oldham itself is the highest borough in England. The altitude of Waterhead Mill Bottom is about 700 ft above sea-level, but the land rises steeply beyond the Medlock Valley to over 1000 ft at Old Nathan's and 850 ft at Stone Breaks Hill.

The quality of the soil around Oldham was always poor. As local names testify, much was moorland and scrub: 'Oldham Edge' = was the portion beyond the habitable parts of the town; 'Moorside' = land adjacent to infertile land; 'Littlemoor' = a smaller stretch of poor-quality land; 'Coldhurst' = inhospitable heathland that was cold (presumably as a result of damp); and so on.

Waterhead itself took its name from the local water-powered corn-mill, so it was called 'Waterhead mill' at the time of the 1851 census. It was originally a hamlet located beyond the periphery of Oldham, so local correspondence was always addressed to 'Waterhead near Oldham'.

Waterhead still retains an air of slight separation although in truth it is today encircled almost entirely by other districts of Oldham: this one-time village is now juxtaposed with parts of Greenacres, Littlemoor, Watersheddings, Moorside, Lees, Austerlands and Scouthead. And it also abuts the natural splendour of the Strinesdale nature reserve, and has views over the hills of Saddleworth.

Until 1625, the village was surrounded with open moorland farmed in common. It was also a source of peat for fuel as remembered in the name of nearby Lower Turf Lane. Enclosure to form settled fields resulted in a pattern of large, regular strips of land that can still be made out above Austerlands.

The earliest actual mention of Waterhead was Watergate Mill in 1648; and in 1654, 'that Water Corn Mill commonly called Watergate Myll' (where the suffixes '-head' and '-gate' are equivalent and both indicate a mill-race). So this mill could be identical with a 'Watergate' mentioned in an earlier document of 1468.

Being too poor for agriculture, the land between Oldham and Waterhead was cheap and therefore ideal for industrial entrepreneurs. Like many northern towns, Oldham grew fast, ensuring that the Industrial Revolution gathered pace in Lancashire. So Waterhead and

indeed the whole of the Oldham area experienced extensive industrialised growth from the eighteenth century into the early years of the twentieth.

Waterhead village was the site of considerable industry and commerce. Much of that local growth centred round mills processing cotton and making cloth, although the coal industry retained some importance. By the end of Victoria's long reign, as much as 10% of the world's cotton was processed in Oldham. And these mills dominated the lives of Waterhead people. Most of the Waterhead mills were built on green-field sites. The *Orb* and *Majestic* (both owned by The Lancashire Cotton Corporation) were two such. The *Cairo* and the *Majestic* were two of the last to be built, and were both erected in 1903. The steam for the *Orb's* engines came from a reservoir built on the western corner of the small green in front of the new Waterhead Church, as seen in the map below. Presumably the sale of the land helped fund the Church.



A A map of Waterhead village as it appeared in 1907.

The new Manchester–Huddersfield–Wakefield turnpike road was a welcome upgrade to the major packhorse route into Yorkshire. A 1735 Act of Parliament funded the extension of the road as far as Austerlands and, 23 years later, a further Act funded the road's journey into Yorkshire. The road has since undergone several major changes in route to yield a gentler climb and alleviate the camber, and is now the A62 Huddersfield Road.

Several local pubs date from about this period. For example, the *Coach & Horses* was built in 1821 and the *Peels Arms* on Den Lane in 1833. At Waterhead Mill Bottom, the landlord of

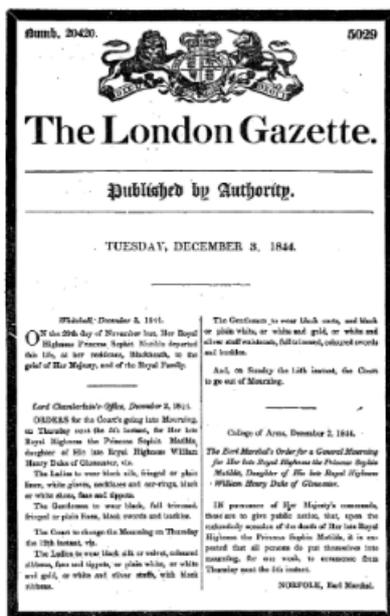
the *Gardener's Arms* built the *Bull's Head* in 1823 when the new road across the Pennines was built. It still remains.

As Waterhead village expanded, many of its inhabitants believed their village needed a new church. The Congregational Church already had two local meeting places, in Greenacres and later in Springhead. Further Congregational services commenced in local cottages in 1837; and Waterhead chapel was built in 1870 on Huddersfield Road. A further chapel at Pastures was built in 1856 (and closed as late as 1963).

Other churches in Waterhead

Three chapels were built in Waterhead during the nineteenth century, but none survives. Waterhead Congregational Church in Church Street was opened on Wednesday 29 June 1870 at a cost of £220, but was replaced with shops in the 1970s. The Waterhead New-Connexion Methodists erected a chapel on Spring Hill in 1838 which closed in 1976 and Waterhead Primitive Methodists on Heywood Street opened in 1832 and closed in 1970 to make way for sheltered housing. Watersheddings Wesleyan Methodists opened in the early 1870s. It closed in 1976 when it amalgamated with the Waterhead Chapel and moved to a new building in Ripponden Road known as the East Oldham Methodist Church.

But many local people felt that Waterhead needed its own Established Church. Historically, the village lay in the ecclesiastical Parish of Prestwich cum Oldham — as did virtually all of modern-day Oldham. Following the great Reform Act of 1832, the village was assigned to the new Parish of St James, although the nearest Established Church was St John the Baptist, located about ½ mile away in Hey or Lees.



“ SCHEDULE.

“ The District of **WATERHEAD**, being
 “ All that part of the district of Saint James, in the ancient parochial chapelry of Oldham, in the county of Lancaster, and in the diocese of Chester, situate on the south eastern side of an imaginary line extending towards the south west from a point on the north eastern boundary of the said chapelry (marked *a* on the map or plan herewith); along the middle of the high road from Ripponden to Oldham, to a point opposite to the middle of Littlemoor-lane (marked *b* as aforesaid); and thence southward, along the middle of such

B The London Gazette announces the creation of the Waterhead ‘district’, in 1844. Issue 20420, page 5032 (CHECK). Right: the detail of the new district occurs after the legal preamble.

The new Parish was still too large, and needed to be subdivided further. So it was possibly a relief when the *London Gazette* for Tuesday 3 December 1844 bore this pronouncement, 'At the Court of *Windsor*, the 28th day of November 1844, PRESENT, The Queen's Most Excellent Majesty in Council' and then set out the legal apparatus for splitting the new Parish of Oldham into five separate 'districts', including Waterhead. So the Diocese created the new Anglican Parish of Waterhead in 1844 and soon afterwards the Revd P H Reynolds was appointed its first Incumbent, in 1845. His task was mammoth for the new Parish stretched from Grains Bar, several miles beyond Moorside, to Millbottom on the bottom right of the map above.

The Waterloo and Peel Churches

The end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 created the first stability England had seen for almost a century. The peace brought a new sense of intellectual freedom and was accompanied by the creation of new industries, new political landscapes, and of course the new wealth that came with a cessation of war. A first fruit of this money and energy involved planning for a better future. That process also involved re-assessing the past through a re-discovery of history.

The first major change to affect the Church was a readjustment of the relationship between Parliament and the Church. The first Act of Parliament sponsored by this new mindset was the Church Building Act of 1818 which voted £1,000,000 toward the cost of building many new Anglican churches. The Parliamentary representatives who enacted the process were the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, so the new churches were soon called 'Commissioners' Churches' (although some were also called 'Waterloo Churches' and 'Million Act Churches').

In many cases the Ecclesiastical Commissioners provided the full cost of the new church while in others they provided a grant with the balance being raised locally. The principal Commissioners' Churches in Oldham are St James', Barry Street (1829) and the rebuilt Parish Church (St Mary with St Peter, 1836).

In 1843, the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, passed a similar Act 'to provide better provision for the spiritual care of populous parishes'. The reason for the Act is rehearsed in its Preamble where it says 'it is expedient to make better provision for the spiritual care of populous parishes' and thereby 'render the estates and revenues vested in the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the funds ... applicable to such purpose'.

This far-reaching measure was soon termed the 'Peel Act'. It permitted the first major boundary reforms of the modern age, thereby allowing the sub-division of geographically-large or overly-populated parishes, and thence created a series of smaller parishes.

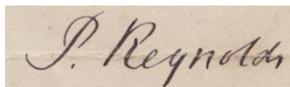
The Act's first precondition for a new parish was a population exceeding 4,000 souls—easily achieved for a rapidly industrialised town like Oldham. The town was duly ceded from the vast medieval Parish of Prestwich and thence subdivided into a series of new, more manageable parishes.

The Act's core purpose was to enable local clergy to provide better provision for the spiritual care in these new and populous regions. So a central feature of the Act was providing endowments that paid a generous stipend for the new class of Vicars. The stipend was generally set at about £150; and the stipend at Waterhead was exactly this amount. The patronage of all the Peel Churches alternated between the Crown and the diocesan bishop.

The Act also created Church buildings, which were inevitably called 'Peel Churches'. The Act stipulated that at least half the seats in each church should be free i.e. attending a service of divine worship did not necessitate the poor paying a pew rent. In effect, then, the Act was a form of suffrage for it legislated for the poor to have equal access to God.

The five Peel Churches of Oldham are St Mark's in Glodwick (1844); Holy Trinity in Waterhead (1847); Holy Trinity in Coldhurst (1848), St Thomas' in Werneth (1855), and the district church of St John's Chadderton. Although St Thomas' Church, Lees in east Oldham was built at the same time and by Shellard, who designed Waterhead, it is not a Peel Church.

Revd Patrick Reynolds (1845–1854)

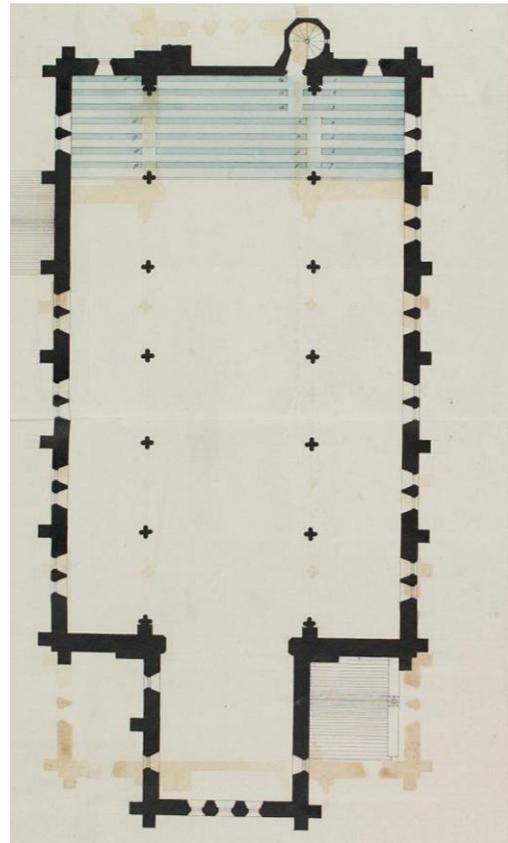
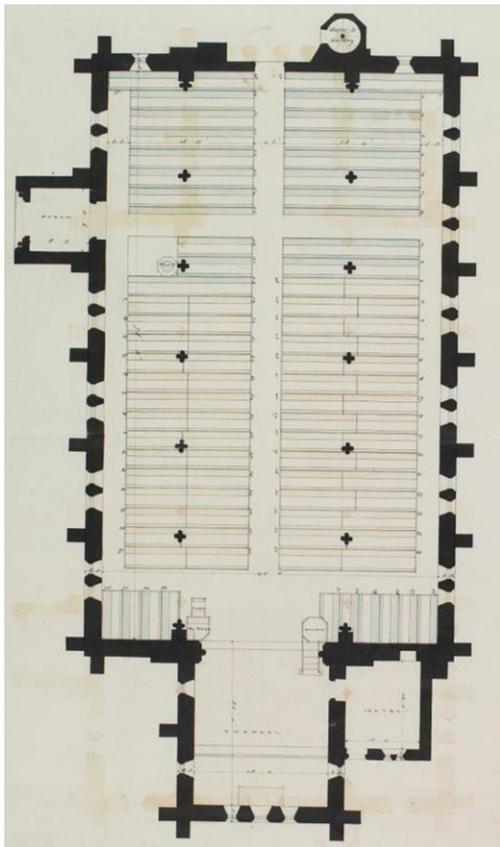


Reynolds was a 'perpetual curate' of Waterhead. This archaic phrase was in common use during the first half of the nineteenth century, and simply meant an Incumbent who had no right to supplement his income from tithes, glebe, or other ancient endowments. After 1868, an Incumbent would have been styled 'Vicar'. The living at Waterhead was such a perpetual curacy, in the alternating patronage of the Bishop of Manchester and the Crown. In common with all the Peel Churches, as Incumbent, Reynolds' salary was relatively high at £150 per annum. It was not high for Oldham, though, as the town was by then one of the industrial powerhouses of the British Empire—indeed, one of the wealthiest towns in the world.

Reynolds found lodgings at a local farm and made friends with a local surgeon, Dr Abraham Leach. At this time there was still no local church building so together they inspected several buildings that might accommodate a Sunday school for the children and a place of worship for adults. Services (and Sunday-school classes) were held in a room above two local cottages located in the Grove, a row of dwellings off Sidebottom Street (now demolished). The first congregation comprised about half a dozen people. These first worshippers, including the new Vicar, nicknamed the site, 'The Old Cathedral.'

Reynolds met with apathy from most people and open hostility from a few. But his enthusiasm and energy meant that numbers grew fast. The land on which the Church is built was formerly in the ownership of the Lord of the Manor of Ashton. It was converted to cotton spinning in about 1800, and soon acquired the name of Lower Mill. Four years before the founding of the Church, the land changed hands again when it passed to A.R. Sidebottom of Lincoln's Inn, London, who gave the land to Reynolds for building a new Church. The land occupies a fairly steep rise on the left hand side of Huddersfield Road

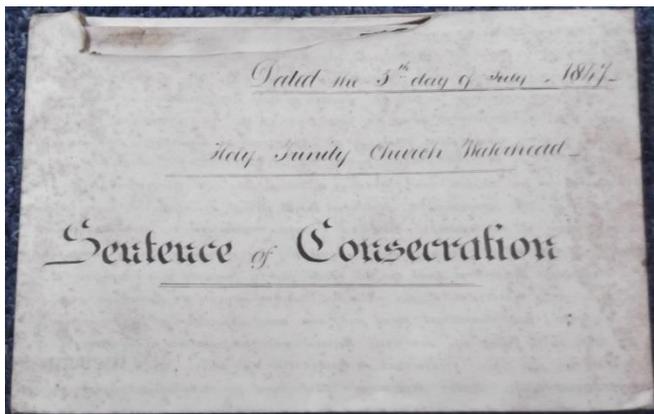
about a mile from the centre of Oldham. Unusually, it is situated on the extreme eastern



boundary of the parish.

A *The Church was built to a design by E H Shellard. The left image shows the ground floor with pews, while the right image shows the capacious gallery. © Lambeth Palace Library. Reproduced with kind permission of the Church Commissioners.*

Reynolds raised sufficient money to start building the Church. The first stone was laid within three months of his arrival, on 9 March 1845. When completed, the building was dedicated to the 'Holy and Undivided Trinity', and was consecrated on Trinity Sunday, 5 July 1847, by the Rt Revd John Sumner, the then Bishop of Chester. The Diocese of Manchester was founded slightly later that same year as a ceded section of the Chester Diocese). Sumner became Archbishop of Canterbury the following year.



C *The 'Sentence of consecration: a legal document signed by Bishop Sumner ensuring the Church had been consecrated according to canon law. The intricate calligraphy inside the document runs to many thousands of words.*

Church Wardens were elected within a week of the dedication. In those days there were two, each with a slightly different role: Reynolds chose Mr T G Brideoake as the so-called Vicar's Warden while the people chose Edward Mayall as their Warden. He was only 23. In those days, the latter's role was entitled the Rate-Payer's Warden because he was responsible for collecting pew rents. Both Wardens were generous benefactors of the new Church, and both have local roads named after them.

1847 at a glance

Politics The Factory Act became law, and established a maximum 10-hour working day for women, and for boys aged 13–18. The Whig Party later won the general election under Lord John Russell; and the rebuilt Lords' Chamber in the Palace of Westminster was completed to the design of Charles Barry.

Firsts The world's first civic public park opened at Birkenhead in Merseyside; the first steam railcar was designed and built by James Samuel and William Bridges Adams; and the world's first Vegetarian Society was formed.

Births The Scottish-born inventor of the telephone, Alexander Graham Bell; the suffragist and feminist Millicent Fawcett; the novelist Bram Stoker (whose most famous work was *Dracula*); the comic writer George Grossmith.

Deaths The palaeontologist Mary Anning; the painter William Simson; the chemist Charles Hatchett; the popular hymn writer Henry Francis Lyte, whose most famous hymns are probably *Abide with me!* and *Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven*.

Literature The following were published, or the first episode appeared in serial form: Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Frederick Marryat's *The Children of the New Forest* and William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*.

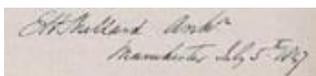
Science George Boole formalised his 'symbolic logic', which led to the Boolean algebra that drives the modern computer; Ignaz Semmelweis first prevented the transmission of puerperal fever; and James Young Simpson discovered the anaesthetic properties of chloroform and first used it on an obstetric patient.

A new church

The Church committee sought the services of a young Manchester architect, E H Shellard. He had designed several new Churches in Lancashire and the Manchester area, and was well regarded. He accepted the commission at a total fee of £128 7s 0d.

Edwin Hugh Shellard

Edwin Shellard was the architect who designed Holy Trinity Church. We have no likenesses of him. He was born in Cheltenham on 8 February 1815 into what would today be regarded as a middle-class family. His father Joseph was a Surveyor of Roads and Joseph's occupation was described as 'Gentleman' on Edwin's own marriage certificate.



B *Shellard's signature as it appears on the original plans for Holy Trinity Church, Waterhead.*

In the late 1830's Edwin was working from 4 Regent Street, Cheltenham at *Baker and Shellard: Architects* from where his first church design was accepted. This Church, St Philip and St James, Leckhampton was consecrated on 1 May 1840. The local press described the 850-seat church, saying 'The whole has been well and spiritedly carried out, and reflects the greatest credit upon the well-known abilities of our highly talented and respected townsman, E H Shellard, Esq. architect &c. by whom it was designed and superintended'. This is quite an accolade for a 25-year-old.

At this distance of time it is not always possible to discover the reason for certain events but, by the early 1840's, Edwin had relocated to the North of England and established his practice on King Street, Manchester and was making a name for himself as a designer of church buildings which became the bulk of his work.

Most of his designs were in the early-English school of architecture. Furthermore, a look at his nearby churches such as St John Failsworth, St Mary Droylsden, or St Matthew

Chadderton, reveal a certain 'house style' with some features being duplicated or perhaps just slightly tweaked.

Shellard married in 1850 and settled in Mottram where he attended St Michael's Parish Church. There were no children. He died on 1 February 1885, just one week before his seventieth birthday, and his widow installed a beautiful alabaster pulpit in the church in his memory.

Edwin Shellard's career was relatively short at around 25 years but in that time he designed or enlarged/renovated over 30 church buildings, most of which survive and are listed by English Heritage. An examination of them shows that he had an eye for a graceful line and detail which continues to delight and inspire the worship of God over 150 years later. Holy Trinity is a fine example of this.

Les Garner

The Gothic Revival was still popular at this time, so Shellard chose the Early-English style of the thirteenth-century to create a beautiful structure. It was said to be capable of accommodating 800 worshippers, in part owing to a capacious gallery running the entire length of the west end, although 400 seems a far more likely capacity. Shellard chose an exterior of coursed squared rubble with ashlar dressings surmounted by a Welsh slate roof with ridge cresting. Entrance was achieved through a gabled south porch with shafts to its doorway, and with cornice and overhanging eaves.



A The earliest known photograph of Holy Trinity Church, Waterhead. The photograph dates from before July 1857 when the wall encircling the burial ground was completed. The location of the few graves in the foreground suggests the image was taken no later than 1868.

Inside, Shellard divided Waterhead's long nave by buttresses from the two lean-to aisles. Each nave arcade has six bays with clustered banded shafts and roll moulded capitals.

Stumpy wall shafts carry a cambered truss and collar roof with king posts. All the walls and ceilings were gloriously painted; and much of the ceiling work still remains. At the front, shafts act as responds to the chancel arch which, from the very start, was decorated with a painted biblical text. Although Pevsner describes the Church as ‘unadventurous when compared with his nearby St Thomas’ Lees,’ the local consensus suggests the beautiful interior of Waterhead Church is superior.

Each of the nave windows — there are twelve in all — is a double lancet with a quatrefoil above. Higher still are the trefoiled clerestory windows, one above each quatrefoil.

The chancel and sanctuary at the eastern end of the Church are both lower in height. The windows are stepped lancets and an east window with continuous hood mould. There is a continuous sill band, and heavy unmodelled blocks between the windows and, possibly-unfinished corbel heads.

The cost of building Waterhead Church



C *Coins dating from the year of the Church’s foundation, 1847, when Victoria had been queen a mere 10 years. Left: A gothic crown. Right: a penny.*

Waterhead’s new church was expensive. Although the minister’s stipend was paid by Parliament (see page XXX), financing the erection of a new Church building was entirely the responsibility of its new Vicar, Revd Patrick Reynolds.

We know the cost of building Waterhead Church because this remarkable man kept a meticulous ledger detailing all the donations received. Reynolds wrote widely and was remarkably successful. The ledger reveals how he wrote 4,800 begging letters (at an additional cost of £20 0s 0d). A single page of his ledger — dated 1845, so only two years before the Church’s dedication — details support he received from Church luminaries such as His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, £10; the Revd Lord Bishop of Manchester, £5; the Bishop of Bangor, £5; and the Rt Hon Lord Bishop of Leinster, £1.

Reynolds also wrote begging for money from non-clerics. He elicited funds from Lady Clements (£1); the Rt Hon Earl of Radnor (£25) and the Rt Hon Lord Stanley (£10). Local legend says he received £10 from the dowager Queen Adelaide. As a mark of the Queen’s known piety and modesty, she appears in the ledger in 1845 in an entry marked ‘A friend’, which is the only anonymous entry in the whole book.

The overall cost was prodigious. In an age when the average farm labourer earned about 18–20 pence a day, the concluding balance (undated but undoubtedly 1855) reveals a total cost of £3780 5s 6d. Of this huge amount, £1,380 was contributed by church-building

societies while the remainder was collected from the inhabitants of Waterhead, Oldham and environs.

The cost did not just involve stone and labour. Reynolds' ledger list the following items:-

Postage of 4800 letters [from Revd Reynolds], £20 0s 0d

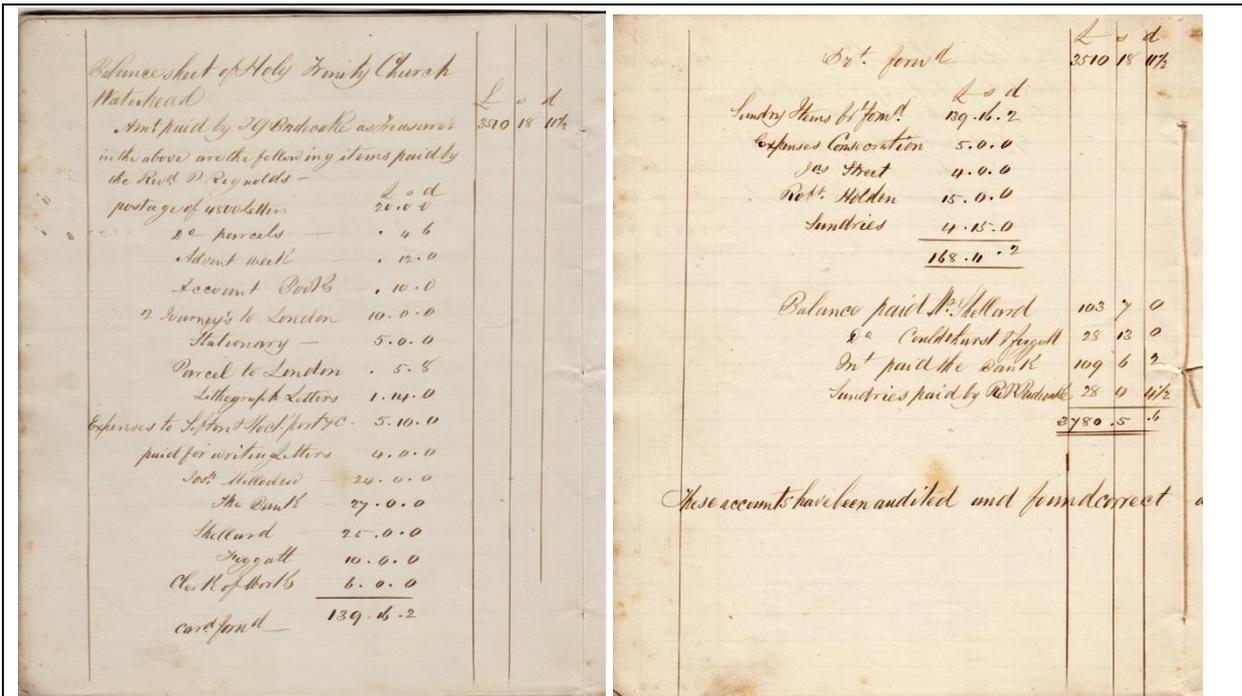
2 journeys to London, £10 0s 0d

Lithograph letters, £5 0s 0d

Shellard [the architect], £25 0s 0d and, later, a further £103 7s 0d.

Am't Grants of Year		£	s	d
Subscriptions Waterhead Vicinity		574	2	9½
Collected from Waterhead Vicinity		£	0	0
Revd Reynolds 2 Subs	100.0.0			
J H. Insworth Esq	25.0.0			
Wm Lawrence Sudby Esq	20.0.0			
M ^{rs} Wadley Wale	20.0.0			
M ^{rs} Alice Marshall Munc	20.0.0			
J H. Borge Esq London	20.0.0			
R ^t Hon Earl of Radnor	20.0.0			
M ^{rs} Holland London	10.0.0			
M ^{rs} R. Glyn Bar ^t	10.0.0			
Right Hon Earl Radnor	10.0.0			
Miss Carver Ashford Hill	10.0.0			
Rev ^d M ^r Pethwell Esq	10.0.0			
Miss Casemore Esq	10.0.0			
Smith Wright Esq	10.0.0			
R ^t Hon Lord Stanley	10.0.0			
Wm. Lakenchere Esq	5.0.0			
M ^{rs} Simcoe Thross	5.0.0			
M ^{rs} Todd London	5.0.0			
per the Rev ^d Reynolds	260.0.0			
Am't of Grants of Year		1555	0	11
Sub: Waterhead Vicinity		574	2	9½
per the Rev ^d Reynolds		£	0	0
Lady Mary Hay Astle	450.2.0			
M ^{rs} G. Feljumb	1.0.0			
Lady & Elements	1.0.0			
Westgate Street School (Chap)	10.0.0			
The Rev ^d Lord Bishop of Munich	5.0.0			
Bishop of Bangor	5.0.0			
R ^t Hon Lord Bishop of Linc ^h	1.0.0			
Miss Percival Lister	10.0.0			
Rev ^d G. Hale	1.0.0			
Josh Smith Suffolk	1.5.0			
Rev ^d & J. Bunting	1.0.0			
Rev ^d Brewster Roston	3.0.0			
Miss Harterth	2.0.0			
Am't collected in Church July 23 ^{rs}	22.9.17½			
Rev ^d Edw ^d Birch	1.0.0			
Numerous small Subs	8.14.0			
which d ^r per the Rev ^d Reynolds	574.11.17½			
Amount in full	2653	14	10	

B Revd Reynolds' own hand: pages from his ledger. Both pages date from 1845. In all, Reynolds wrote 4800 letters seeking financial assistance. These pages ably demonstrate the wide support Reynolds was able to elicit.



B Revd Reynolds's final accounts for building the Church, dated 1855. On the left-hand page, the third entry from the bottom reads simply 'Shellard 25 . 0 . 0' The second page shows the architect later received a further £103 7s 0d.

By any reckoning, Reynolds raised a colossal amount of money yet he was still short of the total required. Eventually, one of Waterhead's main 'cotton men', T. G. Briedeoake, cleared the residual debt with a donation of £880 5s 6d. The Church therefore opened without debt.

Firsts at Waterhead Church

The first **religious service** was its consecration on Trinity Sunday, 5 July 1847. It was conducted by the Rt Revd John Sumner, Bishop of Chester.

The first **hymn** was sung during this service of consecration. It was a now forgotten hymn by Isaac Watts, 'Lord of the worlds above, how pleasant and how fair'.

The first **baptism** was performed by Revd Reynolds on Sunday 8 July, 1847: Thomas, son of John and Eliza Mayall. John Mayall was also the Church's first People's Warden.

The first **marriage** was solemnised by Revd Reynolds on 26 July, 1847, between Benjamin Stott, widower, and Mary Winterbottom, widow, of Waterloo Lane, Waterhead. Neither of the witnesses could write, and so each marked the register with a cross against which was written, 'X his mark'—in 1847, only men could witness a wedding.

The first **burial** was conducted by Revd Reynolds on 3 September, 1847, when Miles Cocker was buried. He lived in Waterhead and was aged 7 months.

The first **Vicarage** on Church Street (now named Church Street East) was completed on Monday 24 February 1857. This building was extended in 1870.



B Children assembled outside Waterhead National School. The photograph is undated but the costume suggests c. 1870s. The identity of the teacher is not known. One of these children was grandfather to an older member of today's congregation.

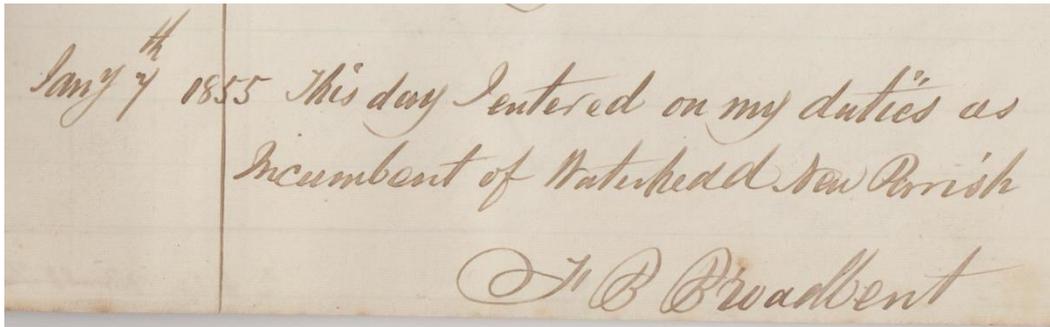
Reynolds' achievements become ever more astonishing when it is appreciated that he also helped found the daughter Church of St Thomas' Moorside. He described the process many years later to the Church's third Vicar, Gouldie French, in a letter dated 1886: 'The Trustees of the dissenting chapel of Moorside gave me their place of worship. I had it licensed by the Bishop of Manchester, took duty therein every Sunday evening and presided over the day and Sunday schools till I left for Birmingham. It was this work that paved the way for the building of the Church schools and Vicarage of Moorside ...'

As indicated, Revd Reynolds left Waterhead in 1854 for the Parish of St Stephen's Newtown Row. He preached his final sermon on Sunday 15 October that year. Reynolds died in this new office in 1890.

Revd Francis Buckley Broadbent (1855–1878)

Reynolds was replaced by the Revd Broadbent, who took office in early 1855. He made his mark immediately, for a new hand appears in Reynolds' ledger below the last financial entry: 'Jany 7th 1855 This day I entered on my duties as Incumbent of Waterhead New Parish. F B Broadbent'.





B Francis Broadbent enters the history of Holy Trinity Church Waterhead on 7 January 1855.

Broadbent had been trained at the theological College of St Bees close to the Cumbria coast, which specialised in training its students as home missionaries and clergy to the poor or heavily-industrialised areas. He soon demonstrated the effectiveness of that training. His first act was to convene the Annual Parish Meeting for Easter Monday, April 9, at which the agenda mentioned 'the desirability of a new font'. He commissioned a local stonemason, and the font was installed on Sunday 3 September that same year.

Next, Broadbent oversaw the enclosure of the graveyard, which had been used for burials for ten years, but remained open on all four sides. It was completed two years later in 1857.

Broadbent also formed an array of societies and groups. He founded the Waterhead Church and Schools' Sick and Funeral Society on 22 April 1848, and the Sunday School and Congregational Library the following year, on 15 August 1849. The tradition of the Whit Walk at Waterhead also began during his Incumbency.

A daughter Church: The St Ambrose Mission

In about 1870, Broadbent became increasingly concerned for the wellbeing of poor children in the area of Littlemoor Lane in today's Watersheddings. He found a suitable cottage, the exact location of which is now unknown. The cottage was soon full. In nearby Shrewsbury Street was a new day school for local children. Its founder was inspired by Broadbent's work, and gave him the use of the building, rent free, for Sunday teaching. (A century later, the school relocated a few yards to become today's Littlemoor Primary School.)

Waterhead's third Vicar, Gouldie French, called the project 'St Ambrose' Mission'. While the Church was clearly dedicated to St Ambrose of Milan (d. 397), the reasons for this unusual choice of patron remain unclear; it may be relevant that Waterhead's Parishioners' Sidesman at this time was one Ambrose Harrop.

Gouldie French sourced funds for a Curate-in-Charge to run the Mission. The first was the Revd David Dorrity MA, who was ordained specifically for such a role in 1883. He was clearly able, and was later inducted to a prestigious living as Rector of St Ann's Church in Manchester, and yet later became an honorary Canon of Manchester Cathedral.

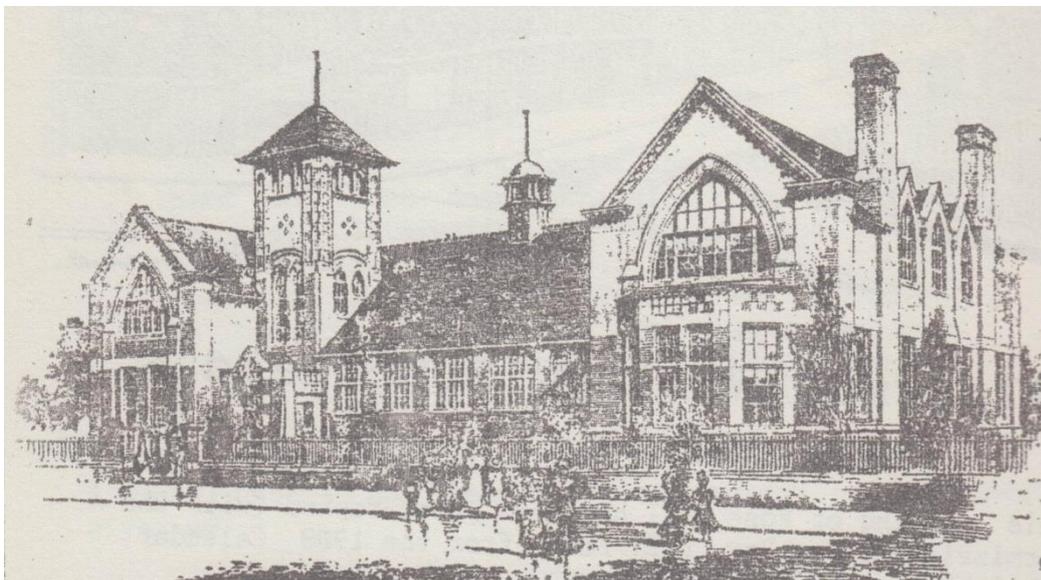
Soon, a succession of Curates were building up the congregation, organizing, teaching, and accumulating the necessary funds to build both the Church and a vicarage next door.



B *The Revd David Dorrity MA, Curate of Waterhead and Curate-in-Charge of the St Ambrose Mission.*

In 1907, the Bishop of Manchester appointed a commission to oversee and apportion the provision of Churches in East Oldham. In consequence, he proposed that, a portion of St James' Parish together with a portion of Waterhead parish were formed into a new district for the purpose of forming the new Parish of St Ambrose. Waterhead's Curate, the Revd T C Holt, was to be its Curate-in-Charge. The corner stone of the new building was laid on 25 April 1908, and the Bishop of Manchester formally dedicated the building on 1 February 1909. The Mission was formally a Church while remaining a daughter church of Holy Trinity.

St Ambrose Church closed in 1983*, and is now a pre-school and nursery.



B *St Ambrose Church in 1930. The image is from Lees, 'A short History of St Ambrose Church'.*

Curates of Waterhead, with responsibility for St Ambrose Mission Church

The Revd David Dorrity	1883–1887
The Revd D H Griffiths	1887–1889
The Revd G Tomlinson	1889–1891
The Revd J Sidgreaves	1891–1893

The Revd T Wortley Hodson	1893–1897
The Revd A G Sykes	1898–1902
The Revd F A Owen	1902–1905
The Revd T C Holt	1906–1913
The Revd J H Garnett	1913–1918
The Revd F C Shirtcliffe	1918–1925
The Revd J Wareing	1926–1929
The Revd E Abel	1929–1930

Like his predecessor, Broadbent's energy and foresight extended to the fabric of the Church. He wanted to expand on Shellard's original vision since the Church had neither spire nor tower. So in 1869 he formed a committee under the chairmanship of Dr Leach. The Church had soon employed Thomas Cook of Mossley as its architect. A foundation stone was laid on Thursday 22 May 1873 but the work (under *Messrs Geo. Mallalieu Bros. of Austerlands*) progressed slowly owing to lack of funds. Torrential rain delayed the laying of the final stone but finally, at about 4 o'clock on Monday 18 September 1876, a stone measuring 3 feet and 6 inches was laid. Altogether, the height of the tower and spire was 123 feet and six inches at a total cost of £1,350. Above the pinnacle of the tower was a weathervane of copper weighing 70 lb and 8 ft 2 inches in height. It was yet another gift to the Church from Edward Mayall. (It was replaced in the 1980s to commemorate the verger, Tom Dalton.)

Waterhead tower has a tall lower stage with clasping buttresses; and paired lancets above now light the base of the tower. The capacious paired bell chamber contains a single bell, and has lights in the upper stage, a corbel table and brooch spire with lucarnes.

At the same time as the erecting of the tower, a new west entrance was added through the base of the tower. Its substantial wooden door is single chamfered with a stone surround with shafts and deep moulding. This vast door remained the principal Church entrance until late in 2012 when it was bricked shut to make way for the new toilet block.

Having overseen the completion of the tower and spire, and started a new daughter Church, Broadbent died in office in 1878. He had been Vicar of Holy Trinity Church for 23 years.

Revd James Gouldie French MA (1878–1926)

James Gouldie French was the Church's third Vicar and in some respects its greatest.

Gouldie French's began as a Curate in the nearby parish of St James on Barry Street about 1½ miles nearer Oldham Town Centre on today's A62. He was 27 years of age and given the task of establishing Christian classes for the poor of the Church's neighbouring ward, Clarksfield. The success of his preaching meetings (in a back room on Back Marsh Street) soon led to the creation of a self-supporting mission (or 'daughter') Church to St James'. St Barnabas' Mission later became St Barnabas' Parish Church on Arundel Street.

The strength of Gouldie French's achievement earned him the Incumbency of nearby Waterhead. Appointing a man just short of 35 years of age was daring after so strong a predecessor as Broadbent. It was a wise choice, for he left it stronger than when he arrived and remained Holy Trinity's Vicar for 48½ years.

Virtually the entire internal fabric of today's Waterhead Church was completed during Gouldie French's incumbency: he oversaw the relocation of some of the nave pews under the balcony (1883) after finding dry rot at the west end of the Church, the building of a new organ chamber (1905), the replacement of the pulpit (1905), major internal reordering (1906), and the addition of a much enlarged, gabled vestry (1911).

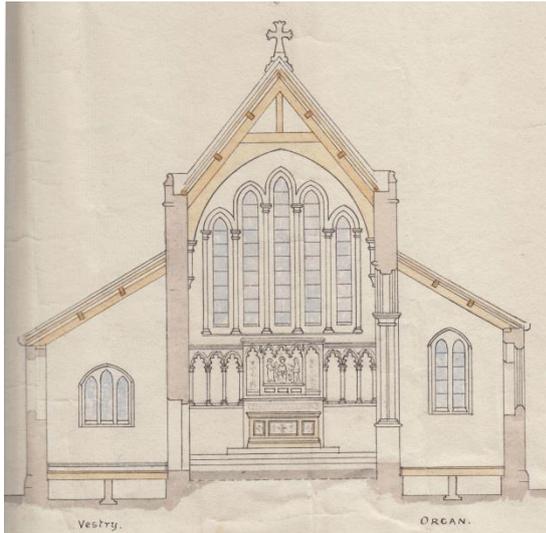
The internal reordering of 1905–6 included a new pulpit, altar, reredos, and choir pews, and redecoration of the chancel and sanctuary in the elaborate 'William Morris' style.



J. Gouldie French.

A vision of a reordered Church?

Gouldie French plans for reordering the chancel were clearly in his mind many years before the actual project occurred, for in 1883 he commissioned the church architect *H Cockbain* of Middleton to explore different visions of the chancel. Almost none of these proposed alterations were actually enacted, and even those which did come to fruition in the 1905 reordering were executed in a simpler, plainer style.



B Looking east The simple altar installed by Reynolds has become a High Altar, which can only be reached by climbing four steps. It has an elaborate reredos immediately behind it, with ornate stone work.

Gouldie French also proposed a vastly enlarged vestry (left) and an organ chamber (right), each with their own windows.



B Looking south A capacious organ chamber has been installed, and a large number of pipes are visible through three large gothic arches. The steps to the left of the image lead to the new High Altar. Set into the wall beside the altar on the extreme far left are two seats for servers; and two slender lancet windows now pierce the upper wall.



B Looking north In this vision the Church has new clerestory windows: triple lancets rather than trefoils.

Two wide gothic arches with slender tracery pilasters (presumably of wood) look into the vestry; or they are ornamental, in which case the door-like structure is an optical illusion.

The small 'cupboard' to the right of the image, just above the steps, is likely to be an *aumbry*—a recessed cupboard in the wall near the altar used to store sacred vessels, and the reserved sacrament.



A The earliest known photograph of the Church interior, presented in 1911 by a member of Vicar Broadbent's family, to be hung in the new, enlarged vestry. The image is easily dated for the gas lights (introduced in 1870) are not yet fitted but the Church's first pulpit has been adapted, which occurred in 1869. Also note the lack of an organ chamber, and the floor of the sanctuary has not yet been raised and decorated with encaustic tiles. The 'wire' apparently running across the windows is in fact a scratch on the original photographic plate.



A *The Church interior, probably in early 1906. This is possibly the first photograph of the Church's third pulpit of marble and alabaster which was installed in late 1905. The right-hand side of the photograph shows the nave-facing pipes of the new organ chamber, which was also installed in 1905. But the new altar and reredos are not yet in place, and they were introduced in 1906.*



A *The same Church interior a few months later, after the installation of the new reredos.*



A *The finished result: the Church interior in about 1920. Note the extensive new stencil work on the walls and the newly installed reredos. Notice also how the old gas-lights have been changed to accommodate electric light.*

Gouldie French sponsored a wide array of societies and clubs for the betterment of his parishioners: Bible Reading Union; Church Defence Association; Church Missionary Society Parochial Association; Church Pastoral Aid Auxiliary; Communicants' Union; Elocution Class; Teachers' Preparation Class; and a Temperance Society.

He was also planning a new Church Institute for Holy Trinity. The postcard image above / below shows the pipedream image, which was first published in October 1909. A site was gifted by Mrs Hague in March the following year and plans drawn up.

Something clearly went wrong as this building was never built. A committee was convened in May 1911 to plan a new Parish Hall and Institute at an estimated budget of £650. The building was formally opened by Mrs Wakeham on 11 November. By mid-1912 Gouldie French could write, 'we are glad to state that everything in connection with the Parish Hall and Institute is going on quite satisfactorily.' By November 1913, the new Institute was finally open, for the Parish Magazine was advertising a Literary Society, a Billiards League, and several lectures in the new building.



B A design for Waterhead's new 'Church Institute' first published in 1909. An institute was built in 1912 to a simpler design. Curiously, the image of the Church in the background has no south porch.

Gouldie French championed many other causes: the Church soon sponsored the erection of Oldham's first memorial to the Great War, on Heywood Street within sight of the Church. And Waterhead Scouts were also one of the first scout troops in the whole of Lancashire, founded in April 1911, about three years after the movement started nationally.



C *The Revd Gouldie French with the Waterhead Scouts: the boy in the foreground, to the immediate left of the Scoutmaster, is John Brooks from the current Church congregation. He was born in 1911 and remembers Gouldie French, thereby dating the photograph to 1924 or 1925, so this is one of the last photos of Gouldie French before he died in 1926. Mrs French is seated to the Vicar's left.*

In 1926, 'Daddy' French died in office at the age of 78 and an era ended. He was buried in the churchyard (near Waterworks Road). To honour its colossus the Church commissioned a lych gate on Church Street East.

Lych gate

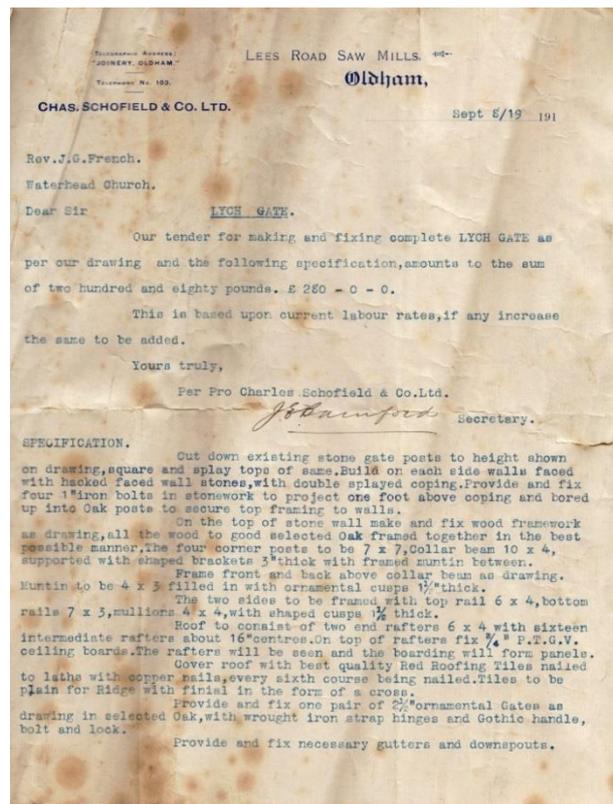
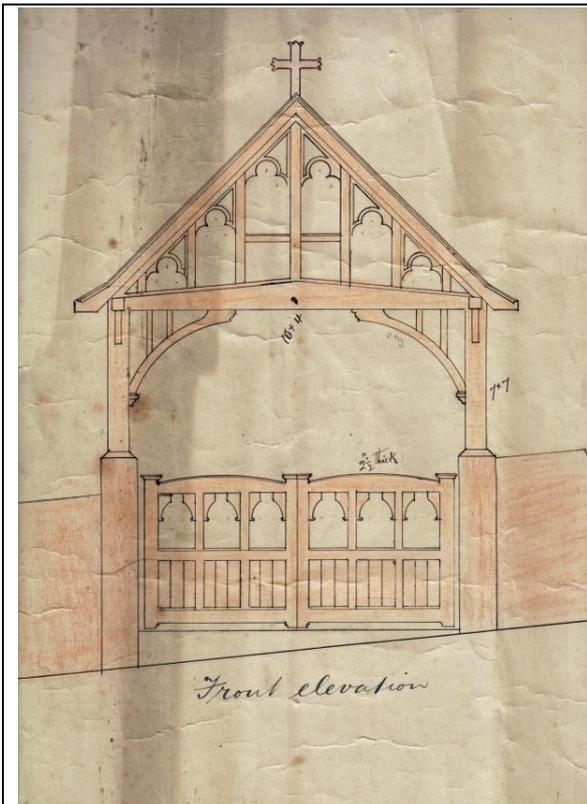
A lychgate (also spelled 'lichgate' or 'lycugate') is a gateway covered with a roof found at the entrance to a traditional English or English-style churchyard. It also appears as two separate words lych gate. The word comes the Old English *lic*, 'corpse' because in pre-modern times a bier and coffin had to pass through it to enter the hallowed ground of the churchyard.

The original designs for Waterhead Church included no lychgate. Gouldie French had already commissioned drawings and a tender had just started when he died. It was eventually built by *Charles Schofield & Co* of the Lees Road Saw Mill. The original quote of 1928 (for which Schofield forgot to complete the date) was reckoned at £280 0s 0d. The eventual cost was borne by public subscription, with a bronze plaque installed to the memory of Daddy French.



B *The lych gate was erected in memory of the Revd John Gouldie French: bronze memorial plaque.*

The lych was clearly built to a poor specification for it quickly lapsed into a state of poor repair. It was demolished in 2013 following a severe storm which had weakened the roof struts beyond realistic preservation.

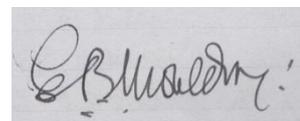


C The original plan for the Lych Gate: the front elevation was the face on Church Street East. The original quote for building the Lych Gate was incorrectly dated, but was produced in 1928.

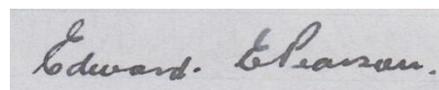
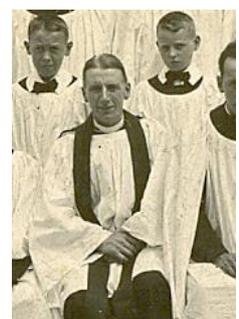
Revd E B Moulding MA (1926–1933) Edward Moulding was always known as 'Mr Moulding'. He appears to have liked children and, in 1929, curtailed off the north-west corner of the Church to create a children's corner. This feature must have become decrepit over the years for it was completely reformed in 1966.



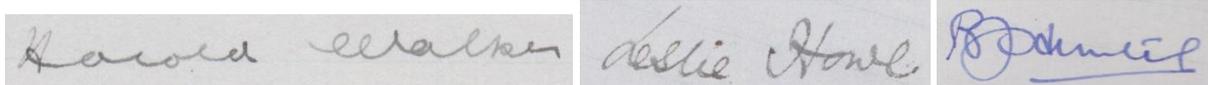
Revd Edward E Pearson (1933–1938) Edward Pearson was known as a kindly and happy man. He was also an inspiring and encouraging preacher which explains why his annual services to commemorate Armistice Day became so popular with ex-servicemen that extra seating had to be found for them.



Like most of his predecessors, Pearson died in office, and was buried in the Church grounds. His grave lies opposite the vestry door, within sight of the memorial plaque on the east wall of the church that commemorates the men of the Parish who gave their lives in the First World War.



The twenty-year period from just before the Second World War saw relatively little work on the Church owing to the attrition to the town and its people and their economic plight. During this time, the Church was served by three vicars. The **Revd Harold Walker (1938–1948)**, who was previously Vicar at St James Church, a mile away in Derker. During his ministry, in 1945, a silver cross and oak credence were given to the Church in memory of a Church benefactor, Councillor Frederick Feber. Next, was **Revd Leslie Howe (1948–1952)**. He was remembered a tall and jovial man. Under his ministry, wall-mounted gas heaters were first installed into the Church (1949) and the capacious west-end gallery was removed in 1951 after the discovery of dry rot. The next Vicar was the short-tenured **Revd R J Hunting (1953–1956)**, about whom very little is now known.



Revd Charles E Shaw (1957–1994) Vicar Shaw's time at Holy Trinity started badly as his wife Ada died within six months of his arrival, so his long tenure was often a time of great loneliness.

Little was done to the Church building during Vicar Shaw's long incumbency except the building of a new boiler house in 1969 to house an oil-fired heating system (it was later converted to gas, in 1991). Also, to a design all of his own, he installed a speaking clock and placed it near the top of the tower. Instead of chimes, an amplified voice, synthesised and disembodied, floated across the slopes of Waterhead saying such phrases as, 'It is now eight o'clock'. The clock cemented Shaw's local reputation for endearing eccentricity. It stopped soon after his death in 1994, it remains much missed in some quarters.



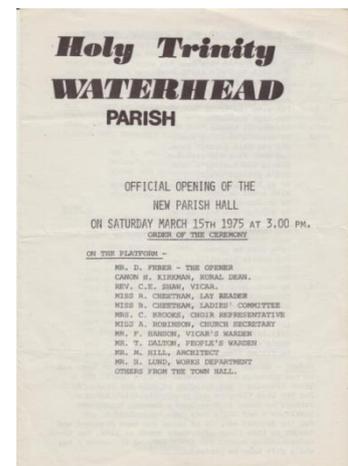
Many of Vicar Shaw's passions centred on life outside the Church. He was a world-class botanist and a Fellow of the Linnean Society (the world's oldest active biological society, founded in London in 1788). His gift for finding rare plants in strange places such as rubbish tips became almost legendary, and his enthusiasm and wide-ranging knowledge helped inspire a generation of gardeners and botanists, including the well-known BBC broadcaster Roy Lancaster.

Vicar Shaw was a champion of local dialect, hence the local poet Harvey Kershaw of Rochdale wrote 'The Parson o' Waterhead' about him. This love of dialect helped inspire his affectation of a bluff Lancastrian exterior which hid a warm sense of humour and a gift for extravagant kindness.



B *The old Waterhead National School was demolished in 1974. In its place, the Parish was given a new Hall.*

Several changes occurred in Waterhead Parish during Vicar Shaw's incumbency. The Waterhead National School was fading fast, in large part because the 1946 Butler Education Act took so many powers from Church schools and built so many other 'state' schools. The numbers of pupils at Waterhead School were dropping fast. In 1900, the School taught about 200 children but only 32 were in the School by 1965. Oldham Council bought the School in 1974 and used the land to build the warden-care complex of Rose Hill Court and Daisy Hill Court. As part of the contract, the Council constructed a new purpose-built Parish Hall slightly up the hill, on Waterworks Road which opened the following year. Within a very short time, this new Hall was found to have been built to a poor quality and specification, and only now is it being renovated.



C *The Church opened a new Parish Hall on Saturday 15 March 1975.*

Like many of the Church's Vicars, Vicar Shaw died in office — the oldest to do so. He was 90 and had been awarded an MBE by the Queen a matter of a few days earlier for his 'services to botany'. He is buried in the graveyard near the new boiler-house, and is commemorated by a magnificent memorial window located between the sanctuary and vestry.

Revd Garry Whittaker (1995–2005) Garry Whittaker was another Vicar with firsts: for example, he was the first Vicar of the new Millennium and the first Vicar to be known by his Christian name.

Garry was an extremely capable preacher, which helps explain the major expansion in congregational numbers during his incumbency.



No building works occurred during his tenancy, although he did oversee the Church's 150th-anniversary celebrations.

Garry is currently Team Rector in the Rossendale Team of Churches.

Revd Douglas Oates (2006–2008) Vicar Oates was the first 'Team Vicar' in the Church's long history, before which he taught mechanics at Oldham College. Doug was 'Team' Vicar because Holy Trinity had joined the Medlock Head Team of east-Oldham Churches, the others being St Barnabas in Clarksfield and St John the Baptist, in Hey or Lees. As Team Vicar, Doug was also responsible for nearby St Barnabas, Oldham, thereby re-uniting the two after Daddy French left St Barnabas for Waterhead in 1876.

Several changes occurred to the building during Doug's incumbency. Firstly, the ramshackle path encircling the Church was levelled and tarmacked and, internally, a lead theft caused part of the chancel ceiling to collapse, which splintered many of the choir pews beneath. He oversaw the necessary Chancel repairs. He was also the first Vicar in recent times to seriously discuss reordering the Church to a more modern specification.

Revd Dr Paul Monk (2009–present) Paul was for many years engaged in chemical research.

On becoming Team Vicar in 2009, he made a priority of restoring and re-ordering the Church to make it suitable for modern worship. Accordingly, in 2010, the vestry was stripped and redecorated and the chancel re-ordered and painted. In 2011, the chancel was repaired with much of its electrical wiring being replaced and new flood-lighting installed. The church also had to contend with much vandalism, with virtually all its lead being stolen. The relevant areas were repaired and at much the same time, the outside of the Church was flood-lit and a modern CCTV system installed.



In 2012, the old south porch was reinstated with a new door and lighting, and a modern toilet block installed under the tower, which meant blocking off the old entrance under the tower. Also, about a third of the pews at the rear of the Church were removed to create a large 'community space'; the pulpit (which was wobbling ominously) was removed and the old 1855 stone font mounted on the pulpit's empty plinth; and a few box pews were removed at the front of the Church. Also in 2012, new microphones were installed together with purpose-built housings for the apparatus controlling the sound system.

In 2013, the north roof was entirely re-slatted and funds obtained to re-slate the remainder (the south side) in 2014. Also in early 2014, the sound-system was completed with new speakers and amplifiers, and the area in front of the south porch will be developed to make it fully disability-compliant. Looking further into the future, the Church plans to repair the spire and tower and replace the aging lighting system.

At the same time, the Parish Hall has been re-ordered with a new fire-alarm system (2011), new floor and redecoration throughout (2012) and its first sound system (2013). Also in 2013, the Church established a youth club and the Waterhead Community Choir.

In these and many other ways, Holy Trinity Church is being made available to a new generation of worshippers.