



HUYTON PARISH CHURCH

A Brief History of the Church Building

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that the Church has – though not always willingly – adapted to the needs of the Parish.

In the early years the Church had to adapt to the changing circumstances brought about by the English Reformation: thus changing from the rule of Rome to the Church of England. This certainly affected the relationship between Church and Manor, between the reforms imposed by the royal household and the new found freedoms of theological expression.

The Industrial Revolution brought a great many people into Huyton from Liverpool and elsewhere. Although many people came as workers for the coal mines and quarries, it was the owners together with a retinue of servants who built and occupied the large villas that sprang up in the parish. The church needed to expand so the building was greatly enlarged, the box pews were removed and new seating was installed.

As a church we have thought deeply about the needs of our community. In trying to meet those needs we have made a start but we feel the time is right to have a more radical approach just as the Victorians did two hundred or so years ago.

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EARLY HISTORY OF HUYTON PARISH CHURCH

Date of the original foundation of the church unknown.

12th century the church was granted to the priory of Burscough, by Robert, son of Henry de Lathom 'at the time of its foundation'

1359 The tonsured alabaster effigy lying in the south aisle.

1527 The Harrington Family Chapel is mentioned in the will of Hamnet Harrington. The Harrington's were Lords of the Manor.

1536 at the closure of Burscough Priory by Henry VIII, the church has come under the patronage of several families. The House of Stanley possesses the patronage of the church at this present time.

1543 the church was in a poor state.

1555 The chancel measuring 31 x 30 feet, was so dilapidated service took place in the nave.

1592 Chancel still in need of repair.

1644 William Bell became vicar by popular demand.

1647 Harrington Chapel Screen was '*Puld downe*' At this time there were considerable repairs and alterations being made to the church.

1662. Act of Uniformity William Bell ejected.

1663 Harrington Screen was '*Set up and repaired*' During this time the church was repaired.



The screen (circa 1460) which now divides the chancel from the nave, formed part of a magnificent private chapel of the Harrington Family.....

'This screen was never made for its present position, and I incline to the belief that it originally formed the division between the chapel and the church proper, which would also explain the mullions on the right hand side being much thicker than the others..... . The screen has been much patched that it is very hard to explain many things about it. It was at one time very highly decorated, as traces of gold and colour were found on it on its recent restoration.' Turton, F.T. (p117)

Turton goes on to describe how 'when the floor of the church was excavated lately,' (?) he searched for evidence of any foundation which would relate to the chapel but as there was none, he concluded that the chapel was 'simple divided off 'from the church and did not 'project from the building itself'

Turton then continues speaking of the sides of the Harrington Pew which '*lately stood on the north side of the nave*' and that it '*probably formed part of the division*' Turton clearly saw the pew because although it had by this time been removed he had made a sketch of part of it and '*an accurate copy of the inscription and style of lettering*'

"PVL.D.DOWNE IN TIME OF REBELLION 16/47 SET UP AND REPAIED BY JOHN HARRINGTON EQUIRE 16/63 FECIT JOHN HALSALL" Turton, F.T. p117

1836 '*The chancel is divided from the body by a carved screen of old oak, ornamented by foliage, flowers, arabesque work, and blank shields.*' He then adds '*The arms of the Harrington's appear upon the oaken screen, and upon a pew, carved in antique letters, is an inscription- "Setyd and repaired by John Harrington, Esquire, 1663-Fecit Richard Halsall."*' Baines, E.(p50)

The difficulties in reading the 'antique' letters may account for the differences .

1089 Huyton is mentioned in the Domesday Survey .The discovery of a ' capital of a small column was found in the grouted filling of a wall' during the alterations and repairs of 1873/4 Turton, F. T. (Copy p5) It showed carvings of four helmeted heads in the Saxon style. Together with the fact that the Saxon Lord Dot governed the region, it is more than likely that there was a Saxon church on this site.



The font still in use is believed to be early Norman



1359 The tonsured alabaster effigy lying in the south aisle is almost certainly that of John de Winwick who was buried in his chapel on the south side of the church. There were two chantries founded in the church; that of John dedicated in **1350** to the Virgin Mary and the other dedicated to St Michael by Richard his brother. Turton F. T. (copy p25)

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS

English Reformation – a series of events in the 16th Century.

Huyton Church no longer under the authority of the pope became part of the established church, The Church of England.

English Civil War – 1642 -1651

The emergence of Puritanism greatly influenced the church when Rev William Bell became vicar - (1644-1662)

The Industrial Revolution 18th and 19th century

HUYTON PARISH EXPANSION



This is a coloured version of an etching dated 1816 and signed George Cole Bainbridge (1788-1840) author of *The Fly Fisher's Guide* which is illustrated with exquisite coloured plates. Although there is no signature on this picture, it can clearly be attributed to him. (Susan Bainbridge- descendent - USA)

'Before **1815** the church consisted of the nave and a narrow south aisle, a chancel and a tower'

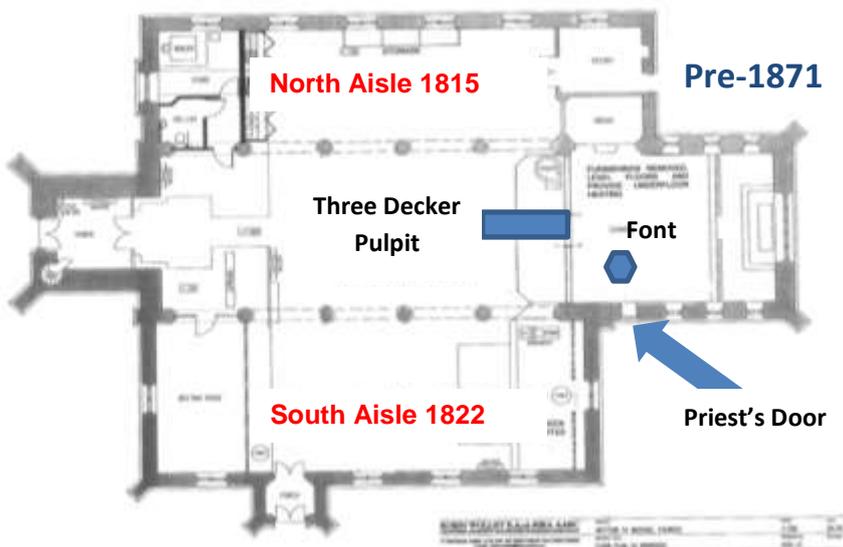
This picture not only illustrates the narrowness of the South Aisle but also shows the chancel as it was at that time. The priests door can be seen although it is more clearly visible on the etching.

1815, May 25. Faculty to take down the North Wall and to enlarge the said Church.

1822, Oct. 25. ——— to pull down the East and West Walls and the whole of the South Wall, to extend the site and remove the pulpit, &c. Turton, F.T.- from church records}

'As regards the north side of the nave, this was rebuilt in **1815**, and the south, east and west walls in **1822**, while further general repair took place in **1873**, when the church was re-seated' Turton, F.T. (copy p 22)

'Over the church door is the memorial – "This church was enlarged in 1823, and thus 120 additional sittings were obtained, and the whole of that number are free for ever.....' Baines, E (p 5)



Pre 1726

Huyton was a sleepy little hamlet tucked between forest and marsh land

1726-1781

Turnpike roads developed - Population increased

1830 – 1837

Huyton Railway station opened. Huyton and surrounding areas attracted the Liverpool Merchants and the wealthy middle classes.

1801- 1901

Census' showed a population increase from 2,013 to 6,551

1930's

Liverpool Corporation bought land from the Earl of Derby for public and private housing

1940 – 1960's

Throughout this period large council estates were created. Within the present parish - the Bakers Green, the Bluebell and Moscroft were among those estates primarily build as social housing. The Trees Estate and other properties for private ownership sprang up too. Since then, there have been numerous smaller developments in and around the parish.

Present day 2014

The development of the Huyton Town Centre began back in the 60's and 70's but it has been in the last twenty years that the 'village' has become a bustling vibrant shopping area.

No longer is the church closely linked with the former village but still retains a quiet dignity on the northern boundary of the town. The rail service is still an important factor in the development of the town: so too the buses which together with several car parking areas contribute in bringing people from further afield.

'This font, prior to **1871**, stood in the chancel near the "Priest's Door", while the middle of the east end of the nave was blocked by a large "three decker" pulpit, reading desk and clerk's desk' Turton F T (Copy p14)



'At the east end of the South aisle is a second font, found under the west tower in **1873**. It belongs to the first half of the twelfth century.....' (Farrer, W. and Brownbill, J. (p151-157)

MODERN / MORE RECENT INOVATIONS

A new baptistry was created in **1963**. Pews removed and wall benches added, with a raise platform. All walk spaces are covered in Marley tiles throughout the church and both the heating and the lighting upgraded.

Most significant changes to the church was the removal of some pews on the north wall of the north aisle and the installing of a Kitchen, behind which is a much needed toilet which can be accessed by all and a storage cupboard which houses the boiler.



The Community Room created at the west end of the south aisle has proved to be invaluable as a play area for young children during services to making a quiet space for worship and prayer.

The Installation of screens and projectors with console, provide a much needed service for people who are not familiar with church worship. The use of MSPower Point to project words and illustrations has meant that the services created are both interesting and engaging for a twenty-first century congregation.

FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

We have no records as to where the screen was 'set up' when it was restored to the church in **1663** but there is little doubt that in **1836** the Harrington Screen separated the chancel from the nave.(Baines, E.) As to the position of the screen, I strongly believe that it could not have been in its present position at that time but further back , probably in line with the east end of the north aisle. (see floor plan)

The key to this understanding is as follows:-

By **1836** both the north and south aisles were up, the hexagonal font was near the priests door and the large three decker pulpit 'blocked' the east end of the nave. (Turton F T Copy p22)

The chancel by this time had probably been lengthened. However, the floor of the chancel was not raised up as it is today. This could not have been done until this font had been relocated which possibly took place in **1872/73** 'when the church was reseated' (Turton F T Copy p22)

Further, as the construction work to build the north aisle was so extensive, any pew, chapel or indeed chancel screen attached to or in close proximity to the north wall prior to **1815** would have been removed in order to preserve it. Indeed the extensive work involved in lengthening the chancel possibly in **1822** the same would apply. I believe that after the extension of the chancel, the screen was set up in the position mentioned earlier and was only placed where it is today at the earliest in **1872/73** when possibly the whole of the chancel was refurbished in line with the rest of the church.

A photograph of the interior of the church dated **1884**, clearly shows the screen in its present position. It also shows the organ arch prior to it being squared off. However, we are still uncertain as to when the screen was placed where it is today, except to say that by close observation the wall on the right to which the screen is fixed, is not in line with the rest of that chancel wall. This is due to the blocking off of the priests door which happened after 1871.

1894

Reredos given 'in memoriam'



1925 The present organ (Messrs. Rushworth and Dreaper) was presented to the church by John Stone, Esq in memory of his son.

'In order to improve tonal egress the sides of the arch were cut away and squared off. Prior to that, the arch was the same as the rest of the north arcade. (Philip Bell – former organist)

It is believed that this is the third organ to occupy this space. Prior to this the music was provided by instrumentalists (see notes)



At the same time the vestry screens on the west side of the North aisle – by Tom Stone Esq. in memory of his brother, which by Mr F E Howard of Oxford made to 'match' the Harrington Screen



CONCLUSIONS

Structurally the church has gone through many changes since its foundation. Much of the major alterations and innovations took place between 1801-1901 to meet the needs of the local community, dominated by the rich merchants who had moved into the area. Since that time, although there has been some essential repairs and alteration, much are somewhat superficial. Some of the more recent work is of a very high standard, particularly the Community Room and the Kitchen in the Cupboard. In contrast the work done in the baptistry is visibly and practically of a much lower standard. As for the rest of the 'furniture' the Victorian pews, are of no merit whatsoever. Aesthetically they are dull and of poor quality and do not enhance either the building or the worship.

The church now has a new challenge. With the development of the Town Centre, the church can no longer think of itself as a village church but rather a Town Centre Church, with different needs.

Our thoughts for the future include freeing the building from the restraints of the past, to refresh the space bringing it into line with the comforts and standards of this century and breathe new life into what is basically a beautiful building full of hidden treasures just screaming to be set free. Our plan is to make all areas of the church easily accessible for worshippers and the general public, to display more openly the treasures of the past and create a warm welcoming space which allows for a variety of activities.

By relocating the screen we will not only open up the chancel, revealing the fine reredos, which at this time is largely hidden but will also redress the balance of the building. The new position of the screen will complement the vestry screen and become a fitting backdrop for the baptistry, where it will be seen in all its glory. Rev Liz Collison 2014

Bibliography

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A History of the County of Lancaster: Vol 3 - Published 1907 pages 151-157
<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?=41313>

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'Notes on the History of Huyton, especially with reference to its church'
[Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1881-82 Vol 34 pg 88ff](#)
[Mocavo.com](#)

A book commonly referred to as 'The Little red Book' is no longer in the hands of the Church but there is a photocopy of it. Although it is not signed or dated it is believed to be that of Fletcher Turton. References to this have copy preceding the page number.

Photographs

Front cover

Knowsley Local History. Ref no. HU174 Date – 1860. History.knowsley.gov.uk/huyton.html

Chancel Screen

Stefan Weig (2014)

Floor plan

Robin Wolley B Arch RIBA AABC (2014)

All other photographs

Rev Liz Collison (2014)

Coloured picture of the church date 1816 attributed to George Cole Bainbridge.

This is a photograph of a print owned by Graham Austin, a member of this church.

Although unsigned it has been authenticated by Susan Bainbridge(USA) ancestry.co.uk

NOTES

The church wardens accounts Turton F T

1785 ' To Faculty for the Gallery in the church.' P 101

1791 ' To reeds to a Bassoon' p 108

1803 ' To New Bassoon etc'

***Fletcher Thomas Turton (1854-1932)** (ancestry.co.uk)

Architect and surveyor with offices in Municipal Building Liverpool.

At the time of his election to the Historical Society, the family, his wife Elizabeth and daughter Annie together with a housekeeper and cook, lived in Hazel Bank, Huyton. They were members of Huyton Parish Church. At the time of his death (his wife having predeceased him) he left his daughter Annie – and his solicitor £23,128 18s 2d. Annie Turton is one of the named benefactors of the church.

This profile has been added to show the importance of his testimony.