

THE PARISH CHURCH  
OF  
ALL SAINTS, WIGAN

A Short History and Guide

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# Wigan Parish Church

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*A Short History and Guide  
written at the time of the  
Re-Hallowing of the Restored  
Church on 3rd October, 1957*



## THE ORIGIN OF THE CHURCH

The Parish Church of All Saints is by far the oldest church in Wigan but when it was founded and when the Christian religion was first established in Wigan is unknown. The earliest possible mention of a church at Wigan occurs in the Domesday Survey of 1086. In describing what is now South Lancashire, the King's Commissioners noted that in King Edward the Confessor's time (1042-1066) the Church of the Manor of Newton-in-Makerfield was endowed with one carucate of land. Wigan Church is not specifically mentioned but there are very strong reasons for assuming that it can be identified as "the church of the Manor of Newton." If this is the case, and such a conclusion seems inescapable, then Wigan Parish Church was founded at least as early as the reign of Edward the Confessor and probably even earlier and so can claim to be one of Lancashire's oldest parish churches. It was beyond any doubt established by 1199, when King John appointed Adam de Freckleton perpetual vicar of the church of Wigan at the request of Ranulf, Treasurer of Salisbury, the first known Rector of Wigan.

## THE PARISH

When the church was first founded, and for many years afterwards, it served a vast area. The parish of Wigan, in addition to Wigan itself, contained the townships of Pemberton, Billinge (Chapel End and Higher End), Winstanley, Orrell, Upholland, Dalton, Ince, Hindley, Abram, Haigh and Aspull. It was ten miles in length from Billinge (Higher End) in the west to Hindley in the east and about six miles across from Haigh in the north, to Pemberton in the south. Altogether, it covered 29,033½ acres. Until Sir Robert de Holland founded a Chapel at Upholland in 1307, Wigan Parish Church was the only church in this vast area. Chapels were founded at Billinge in the reign of Henry VIII and at Hindley in 1641. St. George's, founded in 1781, was the first chapel of ease in Wigan itself. Since then numerous other churches have been founded and given parishes carved out of the ancient parish of Wigan. Now, the parish of All Saints covers a comparatively small area, chiefly the centre of the town, and in 1951 had a population of 6,575.

Wigan was originally included in the diocese of York. Towards the beginning of the 10th century the land between the Ribble and the Mersey, including the parish of Wigan, was added to the diocese of Lichfield. It remained in that diocese throughout the Middle Ages till 1541, when it was transferred to the new diocese of

Chester. Since 1880, Wigan has been in the diocese of Liverpool, which was carved out of Chester in that year. The Rural Deanery of Wigan, which, broadly speaking, covers what was the ancient parish of Wigan, was created in 1865. Before that, from medieval times, Wigan formed part of the Rural Deanery of Warrington.

### THE CHURCH

The church stands on the crest of a hill in the centre of Wigan, which slopes away rapidly to the south and more gently to the north. It is at least the third building on that site. Most of the present structure was erected between 1845 and 1850, when the church was almost entirely rebuilt. It was a copy of the church which was taken down then which seems to have dated in the main from the later Middle Ages, probably the late 14th or 15 centuries, though parts of the tower and perhaps other fragments were earlier and additions and alterations had been made in the succeeding centuries. It was a lofty and well-lighted building, in the Perpendicular style, covering exactly the same site and following the same plan as the present church, and much the same in general appearance. Little is known of the building which preceded it, though there is a very shadowy tradition that it was destroyed by fire, and it certainly had a tower, the lower portion of which dated from the 13th century at least and probably from earlier. A few fragments of Norman, Early English and Decorated work were discovered during the 1845-1850 Restoration, indicating the existence of work of those periods, though none of these is visible today.

### THE REBUILDING OF 1845-1850

The 19th century, when religious revival and economic prosperity went hand in hand, was a great period of church building and during this time most of Lancashire's old churches were rebuilt or restored. Wigan Parish Church was one of the first to be rebuilt. Apparently it was in a bad state of repair. As early as 1810, and again in 1813, after some alarm about the condition of the building, architects were called in to examine it, though on both occasions they pronounced it safe. In the autumn of 1844, alarmed at the dilapidated condition of the building, the Churchwardens called in two architects who reported that it was in a "ruinous condition," the timbers of the roof being unsound and the walls out of perpendicular, in some cases fourteen or fifteen



inches. No doubt the building, black and decayed as it was, was in need of thorough repair and when the church was taken down it was discovered that the foundations had been undermined by the digging of graves both inside and outside the church. Even so, it seems evident from the architect's preliminary reports that repairs could have been accomplished without the complete rebuilding which was actually carried out. This was no doubt chiefly due to the "devotion, taste and well-timed zeal" of the Hon. Colin Lindsay (1819-1892), son of the 24th Earl of Crawford, who was Churchwarden from 1845-1855. A zealous Churchman, much influenced by the Tractarians, he was the founder and first president of the Manchester Church Society which, largely through him, amalgamated with similar bodies in 1860 to become the English Church Union, of which he was president from 1860 to 1867. He was largely responsible for the restoration of Wigan Church between 1845 and 1850. The project was turned down by the parishioners when first suggested in 1844 and again in 1845 in a series of stormy vestry meetings and it was not really till 1848 that they could be persuaded. Even then, they expressed the wish that the new building should be in as similar a style as possible to the old church.

The architects selected to rebuild the church were Edmund Sharpe of Lancaster (1807-1877), and his pupil, Edward Graham Paley (1823-1895). Sharpe, himself a pupil of Rickman, designed about forty churches, many of them in the Romanesque style. Paley, grandson of William Paley, the famous theologian, joined him in 1845 and Wigan Parish Church was one of his earliest works. Later he went on to build or restore a great many Lancashire churches, from 1851 to 1868 on his own and from 1868 onwards in partnership with H. J. Austin. Some of his later works are amongst the glories of 19th century church building. There is considerable evidence that though Sharpe, who left church building for engineering in 1851, no doubt supervised the restoration at Wigan, a great deal of the actual work was left to Paley.

The rebuilding, by the "express wish of many of the parishioners," was very conservative in character. The Tower, the Walmesley Chapel and the two turrets between the Chancel and Nave were left unaltered. The rest of the church was apparently taken down and rebuilt from the foundations. It was, however, a close copy of the previous building. Except for the door under the west window which was not rebuilt, a new door which was inserted on the north side and the removal of the galleries, all the

"principal features and proportions of the old church were rigidly adhered to, though they were renovated in a better style and made more beautiful in their details." Paley himself publicly stated that in heights and depths and thicknesses the new building was the same as the old and that as far as practicable the old style was preserved. Much of the material of the old church was used in the new and a description of the new church, printed on the occasion of its consecration, declared that the roofs, the pillars and a great portion of the walls were "their old friends with their faces washed, arrayed in clothes of little better fashion."

Work began in the autumn of 1845 when the Chancel and its aisles, the Crawford and the Legh Chapels, were pulled down. It took nearly two years to rebuild them and the Chancel was reopened on All Saints' Day 1847 when over a hundred clergy were present and the collection amounted to £1,300. As soon as this part was available for divine service, the rest of the church was pulled down and rebuilt. Work started in January, 1848. By the end of that year, the new nave was temporarily licensed for divine service. Work continued on the North and South Aisles and in 1850 the whole church was completed and furnished. The restored church was consecrated at a great service on 3rd August, 1850, by John Graham, Bishop of Chester, at which two thousand people were present, including the Chancellor of the Diocese, the Mayor and Corporation of Wigan, the boys of the Wigan Grammar School and local and other clergy, and every seat and convenient standing place was occupied. The service was followed by a dinner, described in a contemporary report as "a magnificent banquet," in the Blue Coat School.

In the work of rebuilding, the masonry, building, plastering and carpentry were carried out by Edward Harrison, builder, of Blackburn. The painting of the Chancel roof and of the pews was done by S. Shrigley, of Lancaster, fore-runner of the firm of Shrigley and Hunt, and the rest of the painting by Brice Grant Dean of Wigan. James Burland and Sons of Wigan were responsible for the plumbing and glazing, John Gibbs, of Oxford, executed most of the sculpture and ornamental stone work. The total cost of the restoration was £15,065/4/1. The Rector, Henry J. Gunning (1833-1864) paid for the Chancel and Lord Crawford for his Chapel. For the rest, £5,576 was collected in voluntary subscriptions, £1,033 was acquired compulsorily from the parishioners by Church Rates levied by the Churchwardens, and £4,540 was borrowed from the

Public Loan Commissioners on the security of the Church Rates, but most of this loan was never repaid.

### **THE RESTORATION OF 1898-1902**

Apparently, during the rebuilding of 1845-1850 the building was not properly supervised and a good deal of bad work was allowed to pass and in parts bad stone was used. This fact, together with the effect of the grime-laden atmosphere of Wigan on the soft Longridge stone, which was used in the rebuilding, made a complete restoration of the building necessary only fifty years after it was rebuilt. The work began in 1898. The whole of the exterior stone work was repointed and cleaned, renewed where necessary, and given three coats of szerelmey to preserve it. All the many pinnacles were taken down, reset and dowelled with copper, instead of iron which had caused them to decay. The roof was repaired where necessary and the vestry roof reslated. All the clerestory windows were re-glazed. The porch was cleaned, the statues replaced and the windows glazed. Inside the church, the stonework was cleaned and the plaster renewed in places, though it was stripped from the arches of the Tower and Walmesley Chapel. New tiles were laid in the Nave and in the passage between the north and south doors. Oak panelling was installed round the lower part of the walls in the Baptistery (it was continued round the whole church in 1903) and the divisions between the seats in the Nave and Aisles were cut away. In 1902 electric lighting was installed for the first time to replace the gas lighting, first introduced in 1833, and finally the whole church was repainted. The cost of all this was just short of £3,000. The Rector paid for the Chancel and the owners for the Crawford and Walmesley Chapels. The rest of the money was raised by public subscription. The work of restoration was supervised by the Wigan architects, Heaton and Ralph, who were responsible for a good deal of work in Wigan, including the church of St. Mark, Newtown.

### **THE RESTORATION OF 1947-1957**

In 1922, the Tower, which was not rebuilt in the 1845-1850 rebuilding, nor repaired in the 1898-1902 restoration, had to be completely restored. The following year the interior of the church was cleaned and repainted and the electric system was rewired, but



beyond this no other work was necessary. Twenty years later, however, at the end of the 1939-1945 War, the church was obviously once again in need of a thorough over-hauling and repair. The exterior stone was defective in many places and in need of repointing. The lead covering of the roofs, laid in 1845-1850, was worn out, whilst inside the plaster was much decayed, the electric wiring was in need of renewal and the whole church was dilapidated and dirty.

Work started on repairing the exterior in 1947. Beginning at the east end, the whole of the stonework was repaired and renewed where necessary and the whole of the exterior was cleaned and re-pointed. This was finished in 1952, at a total cost of £648. In 1954 the roofs were repaired, death watch beetle having been found in one or two places, and then their lead covering was replaced with copper. The roofs were finally finished by August, 1955, when the Walmesley Chapel roof was completely renewed and re-covered along with that of the Tower. The work was supervised by Leonard Barnish, of Liverpool, consulting architect from 1952 to 1955.

The building thus having been made secure and weather-proof, a start was then made on the interior, which, between August, 1956, and October, 1957, was completely restored under the direction of J. B. S. Comper. First of all, the electric system was completely rewired and entirely new light fittings provided. Meanwhile, nearly the entire surface of the walls was replastered. The roofs were cleaned and then the church was whitened throughout, the stone work being lime-washed and the walls painted. A new oak floor was laid down under the Tower. Finally, the Reredos, Screen and Pulpit were lavishly decorated in gold and colour and the Crawford and Walmesley Chapels were restored and furnished. The cost of all this work was over £13,000, most of which was provided by voluntary subscriptions, £8,000 of it within a year of the issue of an appeal for £10,000 in September, 1956. As a climax of all this work, the Bishop of Liverpool conducted a great service of Re-Hallowing and Thanksgiving on 3rd October, 1957, which was attended by the Mayor and Corporation of Wigan and a large congregation.

### **THE PRESENT BUILDING**

The church as it is now is a lofty and well-proportioned building, in the Perpendicular style. It has a Chancel of two bays,

much too small and cramped in proportion to the large Nave of six bays, from which it is separated by a high and imposing Chancel arch. Both Chancel and Nave have aisles, the aisles of the Chancel being taken up with Chapels, one of which is completely filled by the organ. Another chapel opens off the North Aisle. The massive Tower stands on the north side of the east end of the North Aisle, the Vestry projecting eastwards from it. The whole building is impressive and has a real dignity and beauty but it suffers from being a copy of its predecessor and is not as free and inspired and alive as some of Paley's later churches. It is also marred by too many pews which occupy almost every available space, leaving only narrow alleys down the Nave and Aisles which gives the church a crowded and cluttered appearance and robs it of spaciousness.

The interior, which tended to be very dark and gloomy, was much improved in 1956 when it was whitened throughout, as was the almost universal practice in English parish churches till little over a hundred years ago. It is clear that until it was rebuilt in 1845-1850, Wigan Parish Church, from time immemorial, was whitened throughout. Such a treatment brings light and brightness into the church, it shows off its excellent proportions to the best advantage by cutting out jarring contrasts between stone and plaster, and it provides exactly the right background for the lavish colour in which the most important parts of the church are decorated so that they stand out in greater splendour, along with the coloured windows, which are vastly improved against a white background. The idea that a church should necessarily look old and dark and gloomy, the heresy of "the dim religious light" is largely a Victorian invention, the product of romantic antiquarianism and mis-reading of history. Now, Wigan Parish Church, restored to the light and bright and white appearance it had for centuries till just over a hundred years ago, but more magnificent and splendid than ever before, stands in the centre of Wigan as an outward sign of the lightness and joy and purity which should be the characteristics of the Christian Life, and gives to those who enter it a glimpse of God's majesty and holiness and beauty and a sense of His presence in order and purity and peace.

### THE CHANCEL

The Chancel, small and cramped for a church of such a size, was the first part of the church to be rebuilt in 1845. There is a

This was on Sunday at 8 a.m. till 1870, when it was changed to 7-45 a.m., at which time it remained until it reverted to 8 a.m. in 1957. In 1887, a daily celebration was started and has been maintained ever since. The Sunday 9-30 a.m. sung celebration, which is now the main weekly service of the Holy Communion, was started in 1923.

The elaborate **Reredos** behind the High Altar was made when the church was rebuilt and was erected in 1847. It was carved out of Caen stone by John Thomas, a sculptor of considerable merit who superintended the ornamental stone carving during the rebuilding of the Houses of Parliament and who carried out a prodigious amount of work in many parts of the country. To begin with, it was quite plain and undecorated except for the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments which, after the custom of those days, were painted in the centre compartments. It was decorated in 1891 as a memorial to Canon Bridgeman, Rector of Wigan, 1864-1895. The stone work remained unchanged except in the centre where the two panels were made into one and raised to make room for a gradine or shelf. The panels were filled with opus sectile, a kind of mosaic, made by Messrs. J. Powell. These are the mosaics we see today. The centre panel, over the altar, contains a representation of the Adoration of the Lamb by the Church of God. Between this and the shelf are shields bearing the symbols of Our Lord's Passion. On each side of the centre panel were placed in 1897 figures of the two great archangels, St. Michael to the north and St. Gabriel on the south. The four figures in the panels on either side of the reredos are of those who specially bear witness to the priesthood of Our Lord in the Holy Scripture—King David and the prophet Isaiah on the north, the prophet Zechariah and St. Paul on the south. So, the centre panel shows Christ as the Victim, "the Lamb as it had been slain," the side panels Christ as Priest.

In 1957, having been cleaned and repainted, the stonework of the reredos was gilded and painted in lavish colours. The mosaics were cleaned, the archangels were painted in natural and bright colours, with their emblems beneath, and the interesting features were picked out and emphasised where possible. The reredos is now a more worthy setting for the High Altar and a focal point for worship and meditation.

The **choir stalls** were put in during the 1845-1850 rebuilding, the semi-returned stalls for the clergy by Advent Hunston of



Tideswell in 1909. The roof, saved from the old church, probably contains medieval work, though it was largely restored in 1813. The panels were re-painted and the stars renewed in 1956, following an ancient tradition. It had been completely re-painted in 1923 and previously when the church was rebuilt between 1845 and 1850 but there are records of the eastern part of the nave roof being "painted blew and having gilt stars intermixed with the blew paint as is also very common in old Chancels," at the beginning of the 18th century and probably earlier still.

The **Bishop's Chair** was made when the church was rebuilt, probably by Rattee of Cambridge. The **Sedilia**, designed by F. E. Howard of Oxford, were erected in 1931.

### THE NAVE AND AISLES

The lofty Nave, surmounted, as is the Chancel, by a clerestory, was rebuilt in 1848, though in the rebuilding the stones of the old 14th or 15th century Perpendicular pillars and possibly of the arches, though not the capitals, were re-chiselled and used again. The angels at the top of the corbels and just over the capitals were carved by John Gibbs. The Nave has aisles to north and south of the same length but of different widths. Five of the stone shields over the capitals in the aisles contain Hebrew characters which make up the inscription, "The Lord is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises." The rest are filled with various symbols. The **niche** in one of the pillars on the north side is apparently ancient. It is mentioned at the beginning of the 18th century, but nothing is known of its origin or purpose. The **roofs** of both Nave and Aisles are the old medieval roofs, much repaired through the centuries but saved and used again when the church was re-built. One of the medieval oak angels taken down from the corbels in the 1845-1850 rebuilding still survives. The **pews** of Baltic deal were put in when the church was rebuilt; their height and number robs the church of spaciousness and mars its proportions.

The Nave is dominated by the **Screen** at the east end, which separates it from the Chancel. The present screen is modern, being put up in 1912 as a memorial to Col. R. A. Ffarington. It stands on the site of the ancient rood-screen which was destroyed, or at least partly destroyed, in the 16th century, its timbers being used by Rector Fleetwood to make "plaine formes" for seating the parishioners. In 1620 the organ stood on a loft or gallery, possibly part of the old rood-screen, on this site. This was destroyed in the



Civil War and in 1680 the Mayor and Corporation erected a gallery for themselves on this site. This was pulled down in 1709 and was replaced by a new organ-loft which remained till 1845. In the new church there was no Chancel screen until 1912, when the present one was built. It was designed by W. D. Caroe, a distinguished and well-known architect, who was responsible for a great deal of work in English parish churches. It is based on the best of the old Lancashire and Cheshire screens and bears a considerable resemblance to the early 16th century screen in Sefton Parish Church, just north of Liverpool, which Caroe restored. The Wigan screen, made of oak, was carved by Messrs. Cornish and Gaymer of North Walsham, Norfolk. The upper portion is richly carved with oak leaves and branches and grapes in the medieval manner with little figures of angels carrying the symbols of Our Lord's Passion. There is also a good deal of nice carving on the back of the screen including various sorts of animals and birds and angels. The whole screen was richly coloured and gilded in 1957 and is now one of the finest in Lancashire. It brings warmth and colour to the church. It improves the somewhat small and undistinguished Chancel. It provides a fitting framework for the altar and the reredos beyond and reminds the worshipper of the majesty and the glory of God.

At the north-east end of the nave is the **Pulpit**, erected along with the reredos when the church was rebuilt. It dates from 1847 and took the place of an 18th century three-decker pulpit which stood against the fourth pillar of the Nave from the west, near the centre of the church, whither it had been moved from further east in the 17th century. The present pulpit, designed by E. G. Paley, was carved in Caen stone by John Thomas. In 1888 it was decorated by Kempe. In 1957 it was completely re-decorated in rich greens and reds and grey and gold, each panel containing a different abbreviation or monogram of Our Lord's name.

In a corresponding position on the south side is the **Lectern**, an eagle of solid brass, made by Potter of London in 1850. Originally it stood in the centre of the Nave just below the Chancel steps and its present position was occupied by the **Reading Desk**, commonly known as the "Rector's Stall," which now stands under the Tower arch.

At the extreme west end of the Nave is the **Mayor's Gallery**, which is reserved for the use of the Mayor and Corporation of the Borough of Wigan. In its present form, the gallery dates from the

rebuilding of 1845-1850. Of special note are the three chairs, originally intended for the use of the Mayor, the ex-Mayor and the Senior Alderman, decorated with the Royal Arms and with the Arms of the Borough of Wigan and the Diocese of Chester, the carving of which was carried out by Mr. Rattee of Cambridge. This is where the Corporation sits when the Mayor pays a state visit to the church. From time immemorial it has been the custom for the Mayor and Corporation to sit together on such occasions. The earliest mention of this is in 1626 when they had seats at the east end of the north aisle. Some years later, finding these seats unsatisfactory and "having mind to sitt in more state" they moved into seats on the south side of the east end of the Nave. Eventually, in 1680, after Sir Roger Bradshaigh, the Mayor, had written to the Bishop of Chester complaining that "myselfe and the aldermen my brethren are cooped up in at our church," the Mayor and Corporation were allowed to build themselves a gallery under the arch between the Chancel and the Nave. In 1709, being resolved to erect a new loft for an organ on the same site, Edward Finch, Rector, 1707-1713, with the support of the parishioners, pulled down the Mayor's Gallery and thus started one of the sharpest and most bitter conflicts in the history of the long struggle between the Rector and the Corporation in Wigan. After a long legal tussle the Rector eventually won and the Corporation had to give up their gallery. They then tried to build a new one towards the east end of the North Aisle but opposition from the Legh family put an end to that. They apparently took all this with bad grace and, refusing to sit together in church, they either "sate promiscuously or absented themselves from church." In the end, peace was restored in 1718 when Peter Shackerley, an Alderman and former Member of Parliament for Wigan, possibly with an eye on future elections, bought the western gallery, erected when Bishop Stratford was Rector (1689-1707) and handed it over to the Mayor and Corporation. They have occupied the same site ever since.

South of the Mayor's Gallery, at the west end of the South Aisle, stands the **Font**. Originally it stood mid-way between the two western-most pillars of the Nave "on three great stayres" or steps, but unfortunately it was moved by Bishop Bridgeman in 1620 "to a pillar on the south side of the middle aisle, near the west end of the church." The font so removed was probably the octagonal 14th or 15th century one the bowl of which, restored to the church after serving for many years as a rain butt in the Hall garden, still remains near the present font. Made of mill-stone

grit, it is large in size and has a band of quarter foils round its outer surface, so arranged as to allow two to each face. This was probably the font removed from the church in 1707 when a graceful font of classic design was erected. This again was ruthlessly removed during the rebuilding of 1845-1850 and a new font designed by Mr. Carpenter on Gothic lines and carved by John Thomas was installed. This was replaced by the present font, a copy made in 1912 by John Phillips, one of the sculptors employed on Liverpool Cathedral.

In a position corresponding to the font at the west end of the North Aisle are the seats known as the **Strangers' Gallery**. They stand on the site of a gallery built for strangers by Peter Shackerley, early in the 18th century, at a time when all the seats in the church were owned by separate individuals and families. The present oak seats were installed to commemorate the Coronation of King George V in 1911.

At the opposite end of this aisle, against the organ, there stood from 1929 to 1956 a small altar at which the Holy Communion was celebrated and before which the daily offices were said. This was erected temporarily to provide a much needed quiet place for prayer and meditation and for the daily services until such time as an adequate Chapel could be provided. The print of the Adoration of the Lamb by the brothers Van Eyck, finished in 1432, which hangs upon the organ screen, served as its reredos; the altar is now in the vestry.

## THE TOWER

The Tower is by far the most ancient part of the church. From what remains of its architectural features, and they have been much obliterated during the centuries, the lower portion appears to date from the 13th century. It may be earlier and the features still remaining may have been added later, but failing documentary evidence this point must remain in doubt. The Tower was altered and re-clothed in the Perpendicular style about the middle of the 15th century, probably when the rest of the church was rebuilt. The angle buttresses were added then and the well-designed belfry-stage, lighted by duplicate windows. The whole terminated in a simple parapet and eight pinnacles. The Tower was not much altered in the 1845-1850 restoration but it was raised in height in 1861 when the present clock chamber and final pinnacles were added after the design of E. G. Paley. At this time also the buttresses



were altered and resurfaced, an external entrance was made for the stairs and a new plinth was introduced. The Tower was last restored in 1922 when the lower half, being in a dangerous condition, was completely refaced in Parbold stone, under the direction of Paley and Austin.

The Tower is of a singular and massive character. The thickness of the walls and the character of the masonry suggest a fortress rather than a church. In origin it probably had something to do with defence; in the early Middle Ages, military towers connected with churches were not uncommon, especially in border counties. At a much later date the Tower was actually used for defence. In 1643 during the Civil War when Royalist Wigan was being besieged by the Parliamentary troops, as a last resort a body of eighty-six men of the garrison retired to the Tower and from there kept up an incessant fire on the Parliamentary troops who had occupied the rest of the town. They only surrendered when Col. Rosworm, one of the leaders of the Parliamentary forces, threatened to blow up the Tower unless they came out.

Inside, the ground floor of the Tower, which opens into the church through a massive and ancient arch, has always presented something of a problem. In 1620 it was apparently used as a storehouse but in 1622 Bishop Bridgeman, in whose opinion it was then "a dark hole of no use, a most filthy stinking dungeon," flagged it and announced that he intended to seat or wainscot it and use it as a Vestry or Consistory, though not much seems to have come of this. After the rebuilding of the church in 1845-1850 this space was filled with pews, stretching to the pulpit, which were allocated to the Sunday School children. In 1867 the seats were cleared out and the organ, transferred from the Legh Chapel, was erected there, where it remained until 1878 when it returned to the Legh Chapel. The following year, where it had stood was repaired, screened off from the church with what was later described as a "paltry, pitch-pine partition" and used as a vestry for the choir, who from 1847 had been accommodated in the "Choristers' Sacristy" at the east end of the Legh Chapel. Rector Thicknesse, 1922-1936, lamented in 1925 that it was "a shame to clutter up the Tower with paltry cupboards and benches" and had hopes of furnishing it as a Chapel, but it remained as the choir vestry until 1954. In that year the choir moved out into new quarters in the church yard and in 1956-1957, having been provided with a new oak floor, the ground floor of the Tower was completely cleared and restored. It now serves as a muniment room where are kept



the extensive music library, the altar frontals and some of the parish records. The rest of the archives, apart from those in the vestry safe, are kept in the massive **oak chest** at the east end of the North Aisle which may possibly be the "large strong chest lin'd with green bays or plaine to secure the plate and ornaments of the Altar and Church goods," made by Matthew Scott in 1708-9, though it may be earlier.

Of special interest under the Tower are the window in the west wall which, though much restored, dates from the 13th century, and part of a pagan **Roman Altar** which is built into the splay of the east side of the modern window in the north wall. It was found in the rebuilding of 1845-1850 buried beneath the High Altar and was placed in its present position then. It is unfortunately only partly visible, so that it is impossible to tell whether it has a Roman inscription on the hidden side. On the exposed face is a half-obliterated modern inscription, dated 1604. It was probably used in the Roman station of Coccium, which can almost certainly be identified with modern Wigan, and which probably stood on the hill now occupied by the parish church.

The **Clock** in the Tower is first mentioned in 1620 but it was apparently there before that. The present clock dials date from 1900 and the chiming mechanism from 1903. Beneath the clock is the belfrey, containing eleven **Bells**. There is no record of bells at Wigan during the Middle Ages but it is very probable that there was at least one, if not more. In 1552 there were four bells at Wigan. They may have been acquired a short time before 1548 when it was reported that the Churchwardens "had sold thirty (sic) chalices for £8/8/9, which sum was bestowed toward the payment of our bells bought of the King." During the Civil War in the 17th century the bells were used for military purposes. By 1717 there appear to have been five bells, together with a small bell known as the Catherine Bell. It is not clear whether this was a sanctus bell but if it were dedicated to St. Catherine, as is probable, it must have had a medieval origin. In 1732 the bells were recast and made into a peal of eight by Abraham Rudhall of Gloucester. The tenor bell was recast in 1774 by Thomas Rudhall of Gloucester and remade again in 1870 by Taylor of Loughborough. The bells were again recast by Taylor of Loughborough in 1935 and two new ones added to make a peal of ten bells, hung upon a new bell-frame of steel and cast-iron. There is also a small bell known as the Priest's Bell or the Ting-Tang.

## THE ORGAN AND CHOIR

Wigan Parish Church has a long musical tradition. In 1620, which is the date of the earliest record, there was an organ on the screen between the Chancel and the Nave. A new organ was made in 1623 and served until it was destroyed by the Parliamentary soldiers when they captured Wigan and ransacked the church in 1643. In 1708 Richard Welles, a munificent benefactor of the parish, left money for a new organ which was erected on a gallery on the old site by 1714. This apparently remained in the church till 1844; it obstructed the view of the Chancel and there was a passage only twelve feet high beneath it. A new organ, incorporating some of the older work, was started by Richard Jackson of Liverpool and finished off by Hill of London, and was installed at the west end of the Legh Chapel in the rebuilt church. By 1867 this had proved unsatisfactory and it was again completely rebuilt by Hill of London and moved to a new site under the Tower. In 1877 it was again dismantled and moved back to the east end of Legh Chapel by the same firm. The case facing the Chancel was designed by Paley. In 1886, it was once more taken down, overhauled and repaired and re-erected, this time in its present position in the western bay of the Legh Chapel. Finally, the whole organ was completely rebuilt on its present site in 1901-1902 by Norman and Beard. Parts of former organs, including the whole of the case work, were retained, but most of it was new. This, except for some additions and alterations, including a new electric motor installed in 1906, when the brick chamber east of the organ was built, is the present organ.

The history of the choir is sketchy. The psalms were apparently sung during divine service shortly after 1622 but there is no mention of a choir. In the time of Bishop Stratford a gallery was erected at the west end of the church "for the use of such persons within the parish as had and should attain to some competent skill in singing, to the end that by their sitting together they might the more easily perform their several parts in singing psalms and keep tune to each other," though in 1718 this was appropriated by the Corporation. At the beginning of the 19th century there was apparently a mixed choir of boys and "singing girls"; the boys apparently wore surplices and the girls special bonnets and spencers and shoes, provided at the cost of the parish. Immediately before the rebuilding of the church the choir sang from the organ gallery under the Chancel arch and was apparently composed of boys from the Blue Coat School who wore "white gowns." In the new church

the choir, as became the common practice after the 19th century Tractarian revival, were provided with special stalls in the Chancel and have remained there ever since. Apparently, under the influence of Colin Lindsay and through the zeal of Thomas Graham, organist from 1844 to 1867, an attempt was made to sing choral Morning and Evening Prayer after the restored church was opened but the choir was not popular. Their music, especially the choral Evensong, was distasteful to the congregation, who much preferred the state of things before the restoration. Nevertheless, it was persisted in and under a series of brilliant organists, the choir reached a very high standard and Wigan Parish Church become well known towards the end of the 19th century for its music and its choir.

Amongst the later 19th and early 20th century **organists** and **choirmasters** who were responsible for this development of a cathedral type of service at Wigan Parish Church were Walter Parratt, 1868-1874, later knighted and eventually organist of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and Master of the Music under Queen Victoria and later under Edward VII and George V; Charles H. Moody, 1896-1899, later organist of Ripon Cathedral; Edward C. Bairstow, 1899-1906, later knighted and eventually organist of York Minster; and Edgar C. Robinson, 1906-1919, afterwards assistant organist and choir master at Liverpool Cathedral.

### THE CHAPELS

The church contains three chapels added at various times by important families in the parish. In the Middle Ages it was the common practice for well-to-do people to found such chapels in parish churches, where they were buried and where they and their families were remembered after death. They were called chantries. In Lancashire, some chantries were founded in parish churches as early as the 13th century, but most of them date from the later Middle Ages, from the 15th and early 16th centuries. They were of two kinds. Some were endowed with land and property which provided a stipend for a chantry priest who was legally instituted as its incumbent. Others were unendowed. A chapel was built and an altar dedicated but no endowment was provided. Such chapels were served by priests nominated, paid and removed by the founder or his family and had a very precarious existence. In Wigan Parish Church there are examples of both kinds of chantry.



## THE CRAWFORD CHAPEL

The oldest and only endowed chantry in Wigan Parish Church was that on the south side of the Chancel in what is now commonly called the Crawford Chapel but which is described at various times as the Altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Mary's Chapel or Chancel (chancel being at one time interchangeable with chapel), the Bradshaigh Chapel, the Balcarres Chapel and Haigh Chancel. It was founded by Lady Mabel Bradshaigh of Haigh Hall, the heroine of the famous Wigan Mab's Cross Legend, on 26th July, 1338. She endowed it with property in Haigh and Wigan to enable a priest to celebrate divine service at the Altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Wigan Church, remembering especially the souls of herself after death, King Edward II, her husband, Sir William Bradshaigh, her parents and all her ancestors, Roger, then Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, and all the faithful departed. This was faithfully done by a succession of priests officially instituted to the incumbency of the chantry for the next two hundred years. In 1547 Parliament passed an act dissolving all the chantries and appointing commissioners to confiscate their property. When they came to Wigan in 1548 they found Hugh Cookson, the Bradshaigh chantry priest, carrying out his duties which were "to celebrate for the souls of the founders and to sing mass with note twice a week." It was observed that the Chapel possessed no plate and vestments, even though the foundress had provided for them, and that the priest used those belonging to the church. The endowments were assessed at the yearly value of £3/5/10 and, having been seized by the Crown, were disposed of on 26th September, 1548, to John Kitchen, a notorious speculator in plundered Church property, and Gilbert Moreton, of Whalley, at a handsome profit. The chantry building still remained the property of the Bradshaighs of Haigh Hall.

Nothing survives of the original Chapel erected by Lady Mabel Bradshaigh. After the suppression of the services in 1548, the Chapel fell into disuse. It was probably neglected by its owners, though towards the end of the 16th century there seems to have been a half-hearted attempt to repair it. In 1620 it was apparently in ruins and Bishop Bridgeman, who was restoring the Chancel of the church at that time, had difficulty in persuading Roger Bradshaigh to restore it. In 1625, however, the latter did commission a stone-mason to carry out certain repairs but little seems to have been accomplished. In 1679 the Chapel was still in ruins and Sir Roger Bradshaigh, whose monument still survives in the



Chapel, the then owner, "being not accommodated with a seate in the Parish Church of Wigan anyway suitable or agreeable to his quality" was given permission to erect a private gallery at the north side of the east end of the south aisle, over what had come to be the Bradshaigh burial place, until the ruined Chapel should be restored. In 1719 Sir Roger Bradshaigh, Member of Parliament for Wigan from 1695 to 1747, completely restored the Chapel. The walls were repaired and built up. A door was made at the east end. The partition walls, put in the arches between the Chapel and the South Aisle and the Chancel whilst it was in ruins, were taken down. The gallery of 1679 was extended and improved and new seats were provided in it and beneath it. This restored Chapel was demolished in 1845 and was entirely rebuilt by 1847, as part of the complete rebuilding of the church, by James Lindsay, 23rd Earl of Crawford, whose family had inherited the Chapel from the Bradshaighs at the end of the 18th century. This is the present building.

In 1946 when he left Haigh Hall the 28th and present Lord Crawford decided to hand over the Chapel to the Church, suggesting that it should be remodelled and refurnished to provide a place for the daily service. The Chapel was officially handed over in 1949 and Lord Crawford offered to restore it as a memorial to his parents. After much delay, a scheme for the restoration of the Chapel was prepared by Sir Hubert Worthington, the Manchester architect. Work began in February, 1954. The tomb of the foundress and her husband was moved from the east end to the north side, the pews which faced northwards were removed, a new wooden block floor was laid and an altar, the first since 1548, was installed. After that the work progressed slowly and the furnishing of the Chapel was not completed until 1957. The restored Chapel was re-dedicated, as it had been originally founded, as a **Lady Chapel** and as a memorial to David Alexander Edward Lindsay, 1871-1940, 27th Earl of Crawford, and Constance Lilian, his wife, by the Bishop of Liverpool on 3rd October, 1957. It is now used for the daily services of Morning and Evening Prayer, which have been said at Wigan Parish Church for a great many years, and for the daily celebration of the Holy Communion.

The Chapel contains several monuments to members of the Bradshaigh and Lindsay families. The oldest and most conspicuous is the altar tomb of the foundress, Lady Mabel Bradshaigh and her husband, Sir William. This has had a chequered history. It is

mentioned and sketched in the Bradshaigh Roll, an ornamental pedigree of the Bradshaigh family, probably drawn up by Randle Holme, of Chester c. 1647. It was sketched by the great antiquary Sir William Dugdale in 1662. In 1829 the effigies were described by Roby, the Lancashire author, as "rude and unshapely masses, time and whitewash . . . having almost obliterated their form." Immediately before the restoration of the church in 1845-1850 the effigies, commonly known as Adam and Eve, apparently stood outside the Chapel proper at the east end of the south aisle, under the stairs leading to Lord Crawford's pew in the south aisle gallery. When the Chapel had been restored they were moved into it and placed on a new base at the east end. This was the work of John Gibbs, who also re-chiselled the medieval figure of Lady Mabel and made a completely new one of Sir William. The old figure, of which it was a copy, was put inside the tomb, where it still remains. This romantic restoration is the tomb as we now have it. On the south wall of the Chapel is a black marble tablet to Sir Roger Bradshaigh (1628-1684), with an elaborate Latin inscription, now painted over. On the east wall of the Chapel, on each side of the altar, are two immense marble monuments, that on the north to Alexander, 23rd Earl of Crawford (d. 1825) and his wife, Elizabeth Bradshaigh Dalrymple, heiress of the Bradshaighs (d. 1816) and that on the south to Maria Margaret Frances (d. 1850) the wife of the 24th Earl of Crawford. The monuments were carved in Florence by Félicie and Hippolyte de Fauveau, the former of whom achieved considerable fame in the 19th century as a Romantic sculptress. They are typical of her neo-Gothic style and her fondness for symbolic details.

Most of the people commemorated by these monuments are buried in the vault which extends as a crypt below the whole of the Chapel. Built in 1845-1847, when the Chapel was restored, it took the place of an earlier vault. When this was demolished, the coffins it held were renewed or repaired and put into the new vault, which now contains fourteen coffins altogether. Three bear no inscriptions and two of these are reputed to contain the remains of Sir William and Lady Mabel Bradshaigh. The last person to be buried in the vault was Alexander, 25th Earl of Crawford, noted as one of the most learned and accomplished men of his time, who died in 1880. He was first of all buried in the chapel at Dunecht House, Aberdeenshire, but his body having been stolen from there in 1881 was reburied in the vault at Wigan as soon as it was recovered in 1882.

On the ceiling and north wall of the Chapel are hatchments commemorating deceased members of the Lindsay family. The two coloured windows in the Chapel are of special interest and are typical of their period. The east window contains figures of St. Paul, St. George, St. Martin and St. Oswald in the main lights, with illustrations above of the sacraments of Holy Baptism, Confirmation, Ordination and Holy Matrimony, and below, eight shields of arms showing the descent of the Bradshaighs and Lindsays. It was designed by Lady Jane Evelyn Lindsay and made by Butler, Heaton and Bayne, who also designed and made the window in the south wall depicting angels representing mercy, truth, righteousness and peace.

### THE LEGH CHAPEL

On the other side of the Chancel is the Legh Chapel, now completely filled by the organ and the organ blower. Its history is very obscure. There is no record of the date and manner of its foundation, nor of its dedication. It was apparently founded by the owners of Norley Hall, on the outskirts of Wigan, one of the sub-manors of the manor of Pemberton, and was part of that estate. The Norleys of Norley Hall are first mentioned in 1292. In 1370 the manor of Norley Hall was acquired by marriage by the Leghs of Adlington in Cheshire and later of Lyme and continued in their possession for many generations. Hence the Chapel came to be known as the Legh Chapel and they held it as owners of Norley Hall. It is not mentioned in a detailed account of Norley Hall and its properties written in 1466, so it is doubtful whether it was in existence then but it is very probable that it was founded by the end of the Middle Ages and that it was an unendowed chantry served by a Legh chaplain.

The first definite mention of the Chapel occurs in 1619. It was then in ruins and its condition was an obstacle to the rebuilding of the Chancel by Bishop Bridgeman. The latter apparently tried to persuade Sir Peter Legh, 1563-1626, the owner of the Chapel, to rebuild it but without success. In 1620 he lamented that Sir Peter Legh was not ready to go on with repairing his Chapel and apparently took steps to compel him to restore it by bringing the matter to the notice of the Archbishop of York. Whereupon Sir Humphrey Davenport of Bramhall, an eminent lawyer, judge and adviser to Charles I took up Sir Peter's case and, writing to the Archbishop, pointed out that the Chapel had been in a ruined condition "tyme out of memorie," that the church of Wigan was



complete without it and more than sufficiently large for the attendance—"seldom a quarter of it is peopled at the time of divine service." This seems to have been the end of the matter; there is no record of any legal proceedings against Sir Peter Legh at York and by 1622 when Bridgeman had finished his Chancel nothing had been done.

From this it seems obvious that the Leghs had little interest in maintaining the Chapel and for most of the 17th century it remained in a ruined condition. Presumably the arches between it and the rest of the church were walled up but it must have been a source of inconvenience and embarrassment to the parishioners. In 1655-1656 the Churchwardens paid for essential repairs. In 1660-1661 they went to see Mr. Legh on two occasions, probably to remonstrate with him about the condition of his Chapel and to try to persuade him to keep it in decent repair. Eventually the problem was solved. In 1683 Richard Legh of Lyme, Lord of the Manor of Norley and therefore owner of the Chapel decided to hand over the "antient Chappell belonging to the said Lordship and Manor, adjoining the north side of the Chancell of the Parish Church of Wigan" to the Rector and Churchwardens for use as a vestry of which the church was in need. His gift was accepted, the Chapel was rebuilt by the parishioners in 1683 and was used as the vestry of the church till 1845, though after being damaged by fire in 1813, when the roof fell in, it was never thoroughly restored. The Chapel was rebuilt along with the rest of the church between 1845 and 1850 and, a new vestry having been built alongside it, it has been occupied for most of the time since then by the organ.

When Richard Legh gave his Chapel to the Rector and Churchwardens he made two reservations. He was to be allowed, in return, to build a gallery for the exclusive use of his family across the east end of the north aisle, with the use of the stairs in the Chapel, presumably those up the turret to the gallery. The Leghs firmly resisted encroachments on this gallery by the Mayor and Corporation of Wigan in 1713 and it remained until it was taken down in 1848. Secondly, he reserved the rights of his family to burial in the Chapel and these rights were exercised as late as 1817 when Thomas Claughton of Haydock Lodge, a cousin of the Leghs, had his agent buried there.

### THE WALMESLEY CHAPEL

The third Chapel is that which opens off the North Aisle



commonly known as the Walmesley Chapel but known at different times as the Gerard Chapel and the Gerard-Walmesley Chapel. The date of its foundation and its original dedication are unknown but it seems to have been founded towards the end of the Middle Ages as an unendowed chantry by the Gerards, Lords of the Manor of Ince from about 1400. In 1541-1542 Hugh Cookson, later priest of the Bradshaigh chantry, was serving as a chantry priest at Wigan and was being paid by Thomas Gerard, so it is probable that he was officiating in the Gerard Chapel. The first definite reference to the Chapel occurs in 1615 when it is recorded in the Parish Register that "Myles Garratt of Ince, Esquire, was buried at Wigan in his owne Chancel."

The Chapel is one of the oldest parts of the church as it was not rebuilt with the rest of the church between 1845 and 1850. Whether anything remains of the original building is not clear, though the pillar and the arches which divide it from the body of the church may possibly be late medieval. It appears that when the chantry services were discontinued it fell into ruin along with the Crawford and Legh Chapels. In 1647 the Churchwardens complained to the Quarter Sessions at Wigan that it was "in great decay, the windows of the same being broken most part down, to the great annoyance and hurt of the said church and especially to the grief of the congregation at such time as they are present." The court ordered it to be repaired by those administering the Gerard estates. During the 18th century, William Gerard, 1718-1764, the last male member of this branch of the Gerard family, apparently hard pressed for money, made a practice of leasing the Chapel and its seats. In 1745 by agreement with William Gerard, James Laland erected and paid for new seats in the Chapel and in return was given a lease of the Chapel, promising to keep it in repair, though Gerard kept a seat for himself and stipulated that none but Gerards should be buried in the Chapel. After some difficulties caused by the death of James Laland, this lease was given up in 1751 but later in the same year Gerard again leased some of the seats and in 1756 he leased two seats in a gallery in the Chapel which was described as "lately erected and built." In 1760 he prepared plans for pulling down the pillar and arches between the Chapel and the North Aisle so that the gallery would have a better view into the church and thus be more useful and profitable, but this was apparently never carried out. A plan of the Chapel drawn up in 1751 shows that the structure of the Chapel was much the same then as now, but it was completely filled with

pews facing towards the church and there was a door at the extreme western end of the north wall. In 1830 Charles Walmesley constructed a vault beneath the Chapel, the entrance of which can be seen in the present floor. It contains four coffins, the last burial taking place in 1850. Many generations of the Gerards and Walmesleys were buried in the Chapel but until the vault was made they seem to have been buried in ordinary graves. In the restoration of the church between 1845 and 1850 the gallery of 1756 was taken down and the window at the east end of the Chapel in the Tower wall, presumably blocked up when the Chapel was built, was opened up again, but otherwise the Chapel was not altered. It was thoroughly restored between 1898 and 1901 by Humphrey Walmesley of Westwood House. The exterior was repaired. The old box pews were removed. The floor was levelled and tiled in black and white and a handsome iron screen, made by Hardman and Powell, was installed between the Chapel and the North Aisle. At the same time, three old hatchments were transferred from the Chapel of Westwood House and put in the Chapel.

The Gerards of Ince, who almost certainly founded the Chapel, became staunch adherents of the Roman Catholic Church after the Reformation and suffered many difficulties because of their religion. About 1667 Thomas Gerard, the last male member of the family, sold his estates and the Chapel to his cousin, Col. Richard Gerard, one of the Gerards of Bryn. The last male member of this branch of the family was William Gerard (d. 1764), whose sister and heiress married John Walmesley. In this way the Chapel, along with the Manor of Ince, passed into the hands of the Walmesleys who were also Roman Catholics. Thus there was the unusual position of a Chapel in an English parish church being owned by a Roman Catholic family. After the Chapel had been restored by Humphrey Walmesley, by an agreement of 1907, the Rector and Churchwardens were allowed to use it for certain purposes but they were forbidden to erect an altar there or to celebrate the Holy Communion. C. C. Thicknesse, Rector, 1922-1936, anxious to furnish a Chapel for the saying of the daily offices and the daily celebration of the Holy Communion, twice, in 1922 and again in 1935, asked for permission to use the Walmesley Chapel for this purpose but with no success. Eventually, however, in 1955, having been approached by the present Rector, Colonel C. T. J. G. Walmesley relinquished his rights in the Chapel and handed it over to the Church.


It was then completely restored. The old lath and plaster

roof being decayed and beyond repair, an entirely new plain modern wooden roof was substituted. The Chapel was then refurnished under the direction of J. B. S. Comper. The irregularly placed window in the east wall between the Chapel and the Tower which had been blocked up when the Chapel was built and re-opened between 1845 and 1850 was again walled up. Heating was installed, the whole Chapel was re-plastered and then whitened. An altar, under an elaborately decorated tester was set up and furnished. An aumbrey, with a lamp of antique Italian silver, was built in the north wall, and the screen was gilded. The restored Chapel was dedicated on 3rd October, 1957, by the Bishop of Liverpool as a **Chapel of the Resurrection**. Here the names of deceased parishioners and benefactors are recorded and they are remembered year by year at a weekly celebration of the Holy Communion, so that the Chapel is now fulfilling the same sort of purpose for which all the Chapels in the church were originally built. Here, too, is reserved the Blessed Sacrament for the Communion of the sick and the Chapel provides a quiet place for meditation and prayer.

### STAINED GLASS

Little is known about the contents of the windows in medieval times, though doubtless some of them at least were filled with coloured glass. In 1590 there was still a considerable amount scattered about in various windows, chiefly of a heraldic type. In 1671 similar heraldic fragments, along with other glass "wherein is contayned several effigiesesses (sic)," with a good deal of Latin lettering and almost certainly of a medieval date, were in existence in the church. Apparently, in 1845 just before the church was rebuilt there was very little stained glass in the church and such as there was was in scattered fragments in various windows. When the windows were taken down, Richard Burland, one of the contractors, carefully collected together this glass, some of which he considered dated from the 14th century, and with the assistance of some modern stained glass, managed to fill the upper tracery of one of the new windows in the North Aisle. When a modern stained glass window was erected there the old glass was taken out and was fortunately preserved in the vestry. The medieval fragments are now being separated from the modern glass by the glaziers of York Minster under the direction of the Dean of York and are to be re-glazed and fitted into one of the windows of the Walmesley Chapel, where a couple of medieval fragments have already been





inserted. The fragments date from the late 14th and early 15th centuries and are of considerable interest because they are the only known fragments of glass made by a medieval local school of glass painters in Lancashire.

All the rest of the glass which fills all the main windows in the church dates from the 19th century and is of different periods and varying quality. It was much improved by the whitening of the church, which shows off to the best advantage the considerable merit of some of the windows. The earliest windows are that west of the font (1845), the east window (1847) and the west window (1849), all of which are by Wailes of Newcastle. Clayton and Bell are represented by a series of four windows in the North Aisle, dating from 1872 to 1899. Hardman erected three windows in the South Aisle between 1855 and 1866. Also represented in the church is the work of Laver, Barraud and Westlake; Heaton, Butler and Bayne; Burlington and Grill and Morris and Fawkner. The latter executed the fine St. Christopher window in the South Aisle which was designed by Sir Edward Burne Jones.

### THE MONUMENTS

Like other parish churches, Wigan Church was used for burials well into the 19th century. All the well-to-do families in the parish had their special burial places, usually under their pews, and all who could, especially during the later 17th and 18th centuries, tried to be buried in the church. The result was that every available inch of the interior of the building was occupied by vaults and graves and the church was filled with monuments and gravestones. Most of these disappeared when the church was rebuilt; not a single slab remains in the floor but some were preserved amongst the other monuments on the walls. The collection is not particularly notable from an artistic point of view but the monuments are interesting historically.

Probably the oldest monument is that reputed to be the effigy of a medieval priest, found far below the Chancel floor in 1845 and placed in the sill of the north window of the Tower. Only the face is visible, the rest of the effigy being buried under plaster. The effigy of Lady Mabel Bradshaigh, already described, is of similar date. Built into the wall of the Tower and set flat in the paving of the Churchyard near the Crawford Chapel door are two stone slabs bearing foliated crosses, possible grave slabs or coffin lids



dating from the 14th century. Also in the Tower is a tombstone brought in from the Churchyard which is reputed to bear the date 1506 or 1586; if this is the case, though it is very doubtful, it is a very early example of the use of Arabic figures. On the wall of the South Aisle is a black marble slab commemorating George Hall, Rector of Wigan and Bishop of Chester, who died at Wigan Hall in 1668 and is buried in the sanctuary of the church. The simple monument to Roger Downes (d. 1676) is a shadow of its former self, having been ruthlessly cut down when the church was rebuilt. Before that the slab was supported by two black marble pillars of the Ionic order, with the family arms and emblems above and below. One of the finest monuments in the church is that of James Bankes of Winstanley, who died in 1689. This typical late 17th century monument was originally placed in the Nave over the niche in one of the pillars near the Bankes family burial place which was on the north side of the Nave between the second and third pillars from the west. Its original colours having completely disappeared, it was re-coloured in 1957. Of similar date and type is the charming monument, also in the South Aisle, to John Baldwin, d. 1726. Amongst the other monuments are an ancient and well-worn brass to Susannah Shaw, d. 1685, a plain marble slab commemorating Richard Welles, d. 1708, a generous benefactor of the church, an interesting tablet to Bryan William Molyneux of Hawkley, d. 1805, hidden in the arcading at the east end of the South Aisle, and a brass at the east end of the Nave commemorating Albert Harry Hodd, who died in 1871 whilst assistant curate of the church. This is interesting as a rare example of a modern brass depicting a priest in Eucharistic vestments.

### PLATE AND VESTMENTS

The church has an extensive collection of plate though most of it is modern. In 1552 the commissioners of Edward VI found one chalice at Wigan Parish Church. There is no trace of this now, nor of any immediately post-Reformation plate. In 1643 during the Civil War the church was sacked when the Parliamentary forces captured Wigan. The soldiers "took and plundered to the very utensils of the Communion table which one Tildesley hung around him as the spoils of the Popish idol," so it is not surprising that after the Civil War the church possessed only pewter plate, until in 1670 two silver Communion cups were purchased. At the beginning of the 18th century Richard Welles made a gift of Communion plate, the exact details of which are not known. In 1724

two large patens were presented by Grace Browne and are the earliest pieces of plate which the church possesses. They are fine examples of hand-hammered silver; in the centre of each is the sacred monogram I.H.S. with a cross surrounded by rays of glory. They were made in London in 1724 by Bowles Nash, a well-known ecclesiastical gold-smith, examples of whose work are rare. With the exception of these two pieces, all the Communion plate was melted down and remade in 1846 by Keith and Company of London. The new pieces bear the inscriptions which were on the old, most of which were given by Richard Welles. They include three large silver gilt chalices, fashioned on 16th century models, three silver patens in a similar style, and three silver gilt flagons, jug-shaped and quasi-Classical in design with Gothic ornament. There is also a large paten. The rim dates from 1846 but by tradition the centre is reputed to be medieval. Its history and origin are unknown but it seems to be undoubtedly of early manufacture. Whether it was in the church before the 19th century is doubtful; it was probably presented at the time the plate was remade. The paten is of silver, double gilt; the centre is elaborately and finely worked and represents the offering of gifts by the Wise Men.

The other 19th century plate includes a small silver chalice of 1879, based on a 15th century design, and used for the daily celebration, a small paten of 1884, a chalice spoon of 1846 and various odd pieces of sick Communion sets. From the 20th century there is a small silver chalice and paten made by Pratts in 1913, copied from a medieval model and set with garnets. This was used in the Chapel of All Saints' Mission House until 1954. In 1923 a silver processional cross and a silver gilt ciborium were presented, a pair of silver processional candlesticks in 1943 and a silver alms dish in 1947. Also of interest are a small flint glass cruet of 18th century make, twenty-one pewter alms dishes, three of 1825 and eighteen of 1840, and a wooden alms box dated 1632.

Nothing of the ancient **vestments** survives but in 1552 the church possessed seven copes, one of green silk, two of old silk, two of white twill and one of yellow silk. There were also ten "vestments of such like silk and colour" and four tunicles, two of red silk and two of green silk. What happened to these vestments when their use was discontinued in the 16th century is unknown. The use of vestments at the Holy Communion was restored on All Saints' Day, 1922, and the church now possesses several sets of vestments, and three copes. The best white burse and veil, used to cover the sacred vessels at the Holy Communion,

are made out of what is reputed to be 15th century damask; it was presented to the church by R. G. Matthew, Rector, 1896-1921.

The church also possesses a very interesting **tapestry** made at the beginning of the 17th century at the Royal Tapestry Works at Mortlake. One of a set of seven tapestries worked from the original designs of Raphael, it depicts the story of Ananias and Sapphira as told in the Acts of the Apostles. About 1620 a set was purchased by Bishop John Bridgeman, then Bishop of Chester and Rector of Wigan, who set up this one as a dossal cloth behind the altar in the Chancel of Wigan Parish Church which he had completely rebuilt. Eighteen feet six inches long and five feet eight inches in height, though now somewhat reduced, most of the border and some of the design having been cut away, it stretched right across the east end of the Chancel and was typical of the way in which the east ends of many churches were decorated at this time under the influence of William Laud, eventually Archbishop of Canterbury 1633-1645. It remained in that position till 1844, when the Chancel was rebuilt. It was then taken down and put away, though since then it has been exhibited in two places in the church, on the north wall of the Legh Chapel and over the south door, but since it was cleaned and restored in 1922 it has not been permanently displayed because of the many difficulties encountered in **fixing and hanging** it.

## **THE ARCHIVES**

The church possesses an interesting collection of documents and papers which are a valuable source not only for the history of the church but for that of Wigan and district generally. The Parish Registers of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials begin in 1580 and fill over eighty volumes, the first of which, from 1580-1625, has been printed and published. The Churchwardens' Accounts and Vestry Minutes, except for a short period in the 19th century, are complete from 1651 and provide a wealth of detail about parish life in the 17th and 18th centuries. Of special interest is the Bridgeman Ledger, an account of important parish matters started in 1616 by Bishop Bridgeman and added to by some later Rectors. Also of considerable interest are the Registers of Services which begin in 1812, the Preachers' Registers, 1864-1951, a collection of mid-19th century rate books which give much information about every township in the parish and a fine series of tithe maps drawn up towards the middle of the 19th century. The Parish Magazine,



started by Bridgeman in 1865, only a few years after the first of all parish magazines was started at Derby in 1859, is almost complete to the present date. In addition, there are numerous documents and papers including faculties and deeds of all descriptions, correspondence, charity records, apprenticeship indentures and service papers. The earliest document dates from 1613.

## THE CHURCHYARD

Surrounding the church is the ancient churchyard which for many generations was the burial place of the parishioners. The earliest reference to its use for burial occurs in 1411, but it was probably used long before that. In 1457, having been the scene of fighting and bloodshed, it was closed for burial until it had been reconciled. Originally the churchyard was probably confined to the south and north sides of the church and was used again and again. Any bones which were turned up were placed in the charnel house or "bone house" which occupied the site of the present vestry. During the 18th century, however, this became inadequate and new land was continually being acquired for extensions to the graveyard. In 1794 and 1796 land was purchased on the south-west side of the churchyard and in 1796 on the north-west. All this land was apparently laid out as extra burial ground in 1796. In 1808 more land was added and again in 1822 but by 1850 even this was inadequate and it was resolved to purchase further ground. This was never done, however, for the Churchwardens were notified that burials in the churchyard were to be discontinued from 1st January, 1855. This date was later extended to 1st January, 1856, then to 1st June and 1st September, 1856, and finally an order in Council of 4th November, 1857, prohibited new graves in the churchyard but allowed the use of vaults and brick graves for the burial of the close relatives of those already buried there. In this way the churchyard continued to be used for the rest of the 19th century, though in 1874 the Wigan Corporation were allowed to build a new street across the extreme western end of it. The last burial took place in the churchyard in 1904 and by an Order in Council dated 11th July, 1905, the churchyard was closed for burials. It was apparently in a desolate and shocking condition and in 1909, under a special agreement between the Rector and the Churchwardens and Wigan Corporation, the latter undertook to lay out the churchyard as a garden and to take over the responsibility for maintaining it, though it still remains the property of



the Church and is under the jurisdiction of the Church authorities. With few exceptions, the old gravestones were buried, the churchyard was relaid and in 1911 was opened as a garden.

In the churchyard stands the **Wigan War Memorial** erected in 1925 to commemorate those killed in the 1914-1918 War. It is a fine piece of work built of Clipsham stone and designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott.

## WIGAN HALL

At the bottom of the hill which slopes down northwards from the church and standing on its own small hill is **The Hall**, the home for many centuries of the Rectors of Wigan. From the earliest times until they sold their manorial rights to the Wigan Corporation in 1861 the Rectors of Wigan were also Lords of the Manor of Wigan and so the Rectory was known as the Hall.

Little is known of the early buildings on this site. In 1618, shortly after he became Rector, Bishop Bridgeman made considerable additions to his parsonage, the Hall of Wigan, including a private chapel. In 1695 the house was almost entirely rebuilt by Bishop Nicholas Stratford, though some of the older parts were left standing. This was apparently a "solid but unpretending edifice." In 1790 when George Bridgeman became Rector he found the Hall "a very ancient and irregular building, composed of bricks and slate." It took him twelve years to put it in good repair. Nevertheless, in 1837 Rector Gunning had to spend £2,000 on it. By 1873 the house had been so undermined by the coal pits beneath it that with the exception of the servants' quarters it was completely pulled down by G. T. O. Bridgeman, Rector, 1864-1895. He built the present Hall, completed in 1875, and designed by G. E. Street, in the Tudor brick and half-timbered style. Having been almost sold to the Wigan Corporation, it was saved and completely restored by the present Rector in 1956. The remnants of the pre-1875 buildings, being beyond repair, were demolished and the whole house was put into good order and repair. Though the house dates only from 1875 it contains several older pieces, probably put in by Bridgeman. In the chapel are the two wings of a German altar piece of late medieval date, each with two ranks of four saints, finely carved, and on the back paintings of a similar date. In one of the windows of the house is a panel of Swiss coloured glass dating from 1540-1550, whilst there are modern replicas of other

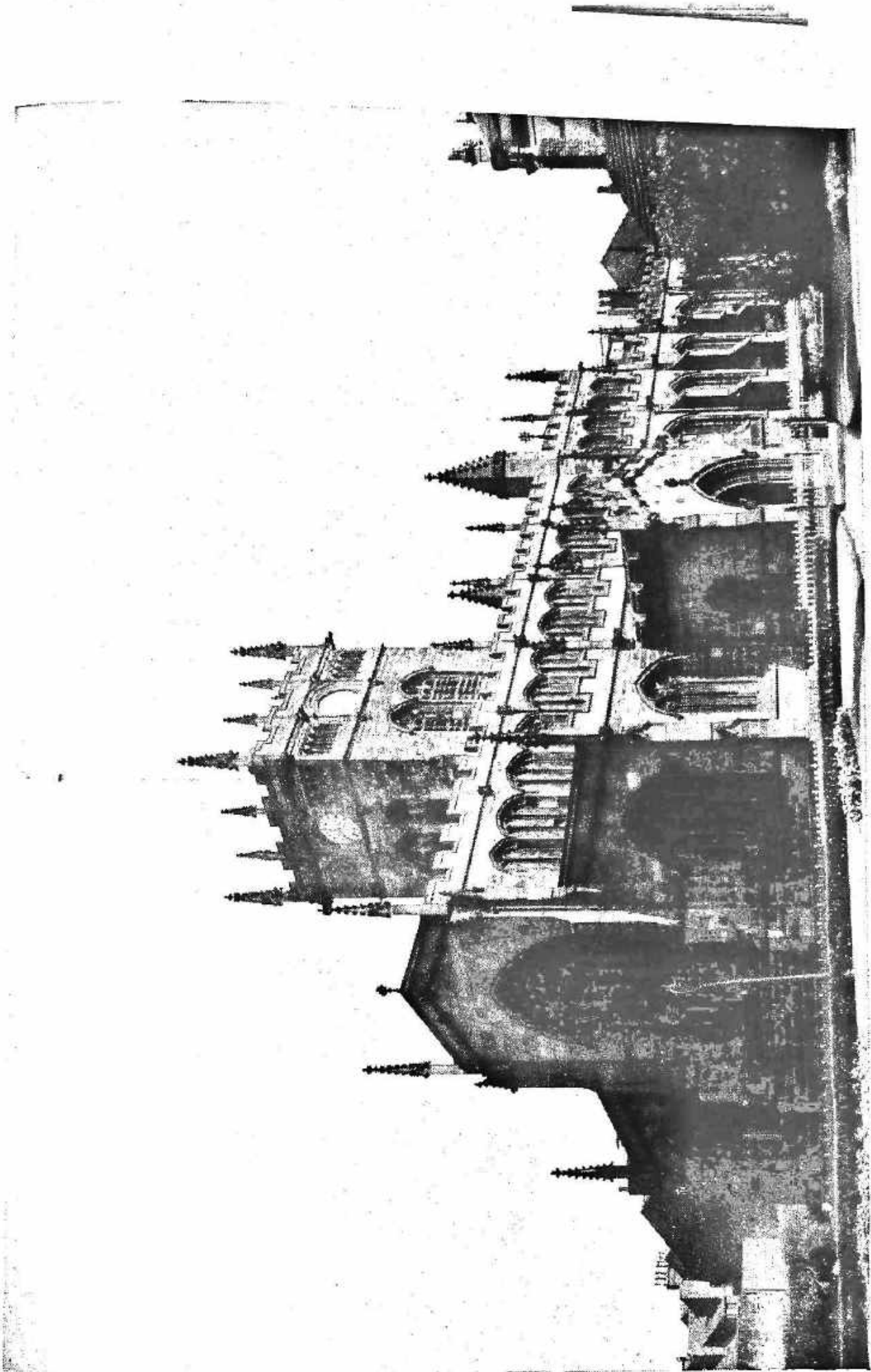
late medieval glass in other windows. There is also some fine old panelling, either saved from previous houses or brought from elsewhere.

The names of the **Rectors of Wigan** from 1199 are recorded on a tablet in the South Aisle of the church, the first known Rector being Ranulf, Treasurer of Salisbury. Many of the Rectors have been distinguished men. John Mansel (c. 1242-1264) was Chancellor of the Exchequer to Henry III. It was he who secured for Wigan in 1246 the Charter from Henry III which made it a borough and began its independent civic existence. John of Winwick (1350-1359) was Keeper of the Great Seal to Edward III. Thomas Linacre (1519-1524) was the first president of the Royal College of Physicians and a distinguished Renaissance scholar. From 1616 to 1707 the Rectory of Wigan was held by the Bishops of Chester and so Wigan came to have as Rector Bishop John Pearson (1673-1686), author of the *Commentary on the Creed* and one of the Church of England's most distinguished theologians.

The patron of the benefice is the Earl of Bradford, the descendant of Sir Orlando Bridgeman who purchased the living c. 1661 and whose family have a long and intimate connection with the church and parish.

## PARISH BUILDINGS

The oldest of the other parish buildings is the **National and Bluecoat School** in Hallgate. Founded as a Charity School in 1774 in close connection with the Church, it moved to its present site in 1825 when the present school, rebuilt in 1839, was erected. The **Infants' School**, next door, built by Canon Bridgeman and designed by G. E. Street, was opened in 1867; it has a particularly fine and graceful hall. **All Saints' Secondary Modern School** in Frog Lane was opened in 1932 and provides for children from several parishes. **All Saints' Mission House** in New Market Street was built in 1893 as a house for the sisters of the Community of St. Mary the Virgin, Wantage, who began to work in the parish in 1887. For many years they did great work, especially amongst women and girls, caring diligently for the sick and poor and providing retreats and quiet days. They were withdrawn in 1954. After being renovated and repaired, the Mission House was opened in 1957 as a parish hall and meeting place.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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J. O. COLLING.

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