

Christ Church, Oakworth, West Yorkshire

Statement of Significance



The North side facing the main road.

May 2019

Section 1

Factual Information

Parish: Oakworth

Dedication: Christ Church

Deanery: Keighley

Diocese: West Yorkshire and The Dales

Grid Reference: SE 03080 38842

Postcode: BD22 7PB

Local Planning Authority: Bradford Metropolitan District Council

County: West Yorkshire

Statutory Listing of Church: Grade II

Conservation Area: Oakworth



Description of setting

Oakworth village rests in the foothills of the Pennines overlooking the Worth Valley near to the larger town of Keighley and in the heart of West Yorkshire's Bronte Country. The village originally developed as a self-sufficient agricultural community located alongside an ancient road between Yorkshire and Lancashire. During the course of the 18th and 19th centuries the growth of the textile trade and advent of the Industrial Revolution had a major impact on the form and character of Oakworth and by the middle of the 19th century the settlement, which had previously consisted of several agricultural hamlets had expanded and developed into a busy mill village.

Since then, with the decline of the textile industry, many of industrial mills have given way to a number of housing developments and the character of Oakworth has altered from a busy industrial village to a more dormitory settlement with many residents commuting to the larger surrounding urban areas to work.

The Church of Christ Church stands modestly alongside the original sandstone buildings and cottages in Oakworth village conservation area adjacent to the Keighley to Colne road. Although from a distance the church dominates the skyline, within the village the prominence of the building is somewhat lost behind the height

of the boundary wall and the location of the building is away from the main village hub.

The Church Building and Exterior

Christ Church is a Grade II listed building dating from 1845, the original architect is recorded as William Wallen of Huddersfield. The listing notice describes the building thus:

'Dressed sandstone. Welsh slate roof. West tower, nave with south porch, chancel with vestry to south. Early English style. Tower: 4 stages with string courses, single buttresses, clock stage below belfry openings, corbelled cornice and parapet. Nave: 5 bays, divided by buttresses, with porch to bay 2. Lancet windows with string course below and a continuous hood mould above. Moulded gutter brackets. Chancel: one bay, narrower than nave with, to east end, 3 lancets, the central one taller.'

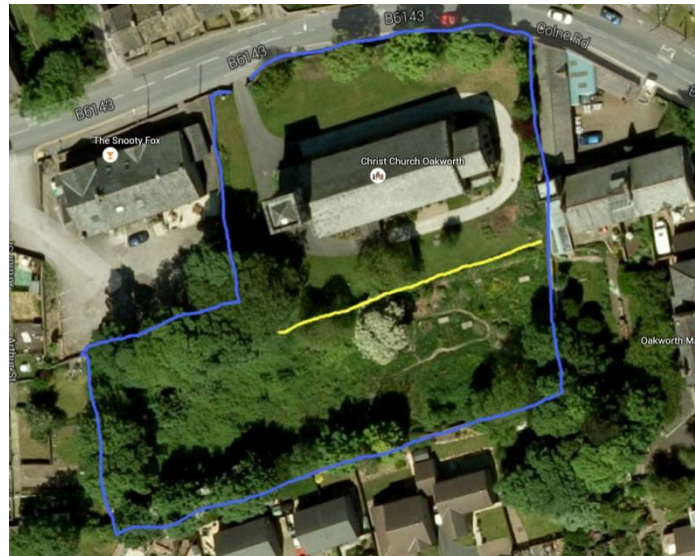
A reasonably short description for a relatively plain building. The description makes no mention of the choir vestry extension added in 1886 to the north side of the tower, now used as a kitchen. It is also incorrect in recording a 'continuous hood moulding above' to the lancet windows, a feature which only appears on the east and west elevations and tower.

The land on which Christ Church is built, and for the graveyard, was gifted from the Lady of the Manor, Mrs Sarah Ferrand, of St Ives, Bingley. The cost of the building was £2019, with a £500 grant being made available from the second phase of the Church Building Commission Grant of 1824. Local mill owners - the Haggas family - were also generous benefactors of the building. In May 1844, Oakworth had been made a Parochial District. On Monday 28th June 1845, a procession headed by a band and including masons, joiners and subscribers left Keighley National School at 9am for Oakworth. At 10:30am Mr James Mitchell of Oldfield House laid the foundation stone of the new church, and the Revd. William Busfield Rector of Keighley, delivered a sermon on the occasion. The church was consecrated under the title of Christ Church on 18th November 1846 by the Bishop of Ripon, Rt Revd Dr Charles Longley.

The outside appearance of the building has changed very little, apart from the addition of the aforementioned choir vestry extension to the north side of the tower in 1886. A clock by Mr Cryer of Bingley was added in 1865 with dials placed on the north, south and west faces of the tower. A cast iron bell by Naylor, Vickers & Co of Sheffield was also hung in the tower to allow the clock to strike on the hour. It is believed the Haggas family donated the cost of the clock to the benefit of the village community. The clock mechanism was electrified sometime in the early 2000's and the striking mechanism disabled.

Churchyard

The entrance to the church is from Colne Road via a stone columned gateway and it's assumed the original double iron gates were removed during World War II. During 1973 the majority of the gravestones were cleared from the churchyard and some planting of trees took place. At the request of family a few of the gravestones remain. Fortunately we have a record of the inscriptions of all the gravestones cleared during this time.



The churchyard is divided into two areas by a banking and low level beech hedging, as indicated by the yellow line. To the north of the beech hedge the churchyard mainly consists of grassed areas, shrubbery, a couple of mature willow and sycamore trees. The south side of the churchyard was for many years unmaintained and it became overgrown with brambles. However, about 10 years ago a project began with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to regain approximately half of that area clearing the brambles and it was transformed into a wildlife garden.

There are 2196 recorded burials in all the areas of the churchyard, the last full burial took place in 1972. Unfortunately the burial register shows some evidence that records have not always been well maintained over the years and the number of actual burials in the churchyard could certainly be higher. Out of those 2196 recorded burials, only 896 graves can be identified by matching them with the existing plan of the grave plots. With the number of plots marked on that existing churchyard plan we assume there is very limited space for new burials, if any, but unfortunately we cannot identify the location of any plots or grave spaces which may be vacant.

The churchyard contains one Commonwealth War Grave of Pvt Fred Binns, a local man who died on 10th April 1916, although his memorial stone is sited away from his actual place of burial.

Church Interior

The rather modest interior of Christ Church has undergone a steady evolution with a series of reordering and additions to the building from not long after the building was completed. The first pews were installed in 1865 to replace the original freestanding benches in the nave. These pews were described as having 'doors and were enriched with some amount of ornamentation, not thought to be necessary on the free seats.'¹ Polished wood wainscoting was also added to exterior walls to just below the bottom of the windows, 'a great improvement on the late bare and somewhat damp walls'.² In 1869 the church was lit for the first time with 'antler shaped gas burners arranged down each side-aisle giving an abundance of light'.³ The earliest known photograph of the interior from 1880 shows those first ornate pews stretching across the width of the nave and forming two side isles. The original 'narrower' chancel arch can also be seen in the photograph, along with the recently installed east window.



Christ Church 1880



Christ Church around 1925

The present pews were installed in 1886 forming a central aisle and two side aisles. Choir stalls were also added, the organ rebuilt and the choir vestry, now the kitchen, was added on the North side of the tower base. Just three years later in 1889 another extensive reordering took place giving many features that remain today. The chancel arch was remodelled and widened to open up the view towards the sanctuary, and make the arch more imposing. On the lower sections of the arch

fine carvings of the Ark, the Lamb, candles, vine and corn were added as an interesting feature. The present tongue and grooved timber suspended ceiling was added to the nave and the 'seldom used, unsightly' gallery at the West end of the building was removed.

¹ Harwood, F. & Butterfield, A. (1996) '*Christ Church, Oakworth. 150th Anniversary Booklet*' p3

² *ibid* p4

³ *ibid*



In 1912 a new additional inlaid stone font carrying the symbols of the Four Evangelists was erected at the West end of the church in commemoration of Mr W Hartley, the Sunday School Superintendent for thirty years. An elaborate carved wooden font cover was added to this font in 1933 with a statue of Christ the King standing above, made by Mr Alex Smith the local artist and craftsman who carved the Reredos panels and figures. This font and its cover was disposed of when the original organ was replaced with another organ

purchased from a redundant chapel in Laycock village and sited at the West end of the building in 1972. The statue of Christ the King was retained from above the font cover and for many years it sat on the floor in a corner of the building until it was restored in 2013 and given a more prominent position adjacent to the Reredos.

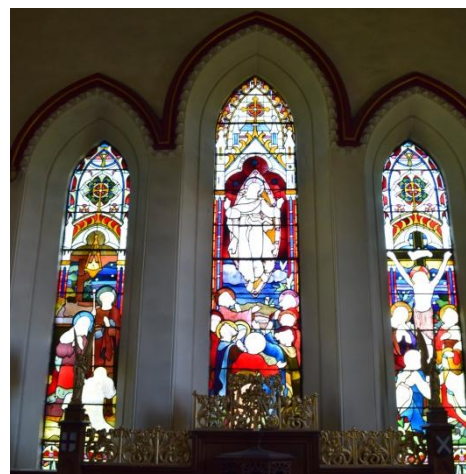


In 1977 the Church Hall, now the Snooty Fox pub, was sold due to increasing repair costs, and the proceeds from the sale of the hall were used to fund a major re-ordering of the church building which began in 1985. The whole West end of the building was redeveloped and a wall erected across the width of the church to form a meeting room. The organ was dismantled and relocated in newly formed North-West corner of the church and new toilets were added to the base of the tower.

In 2009 it was clear that the organ was in need of considerable restoration. Due to the high cost of the restoration, and considering the amount of space taken up with the organ casing, it was decided to re-order the North-west corner by placing the font in a more prominent position and the purchase of a new digital organ.

Stained Glass

The East Window was installed in around 1875 and is dedicated to the memory of Revd John Smith, vicar of Oakworth 1851-1874. It consists of three lancet lights depicting the Nativity, the Ascension and the Crucifixion. The church history booklet states that it 'came from York' and it has been suggested it could possibly be the work of J. W. Knowles. Unfortunately much of the painted detail of the faces and figures featuring in the window has been lost over the years.





The external walls of the nave contain three stained glass windows. The earliest of these windows was the work of James Powell & Sons and installed in the South wall in 1921 in memory of Sir James Henry Haggas, local mill owner who died on 6th April 1917. The main subject of the window is a crowned figure of Christ in glory bestowing a Crown of Life upon a kneeling male figure. The inscription carried by two angels above reads: "Be thou faithful unto death & I will give thee a crown of life."

The second window to be installed is sited in the North wall just before the chancel arch. The commemorative inscription at the base of the window reads: "To the glory God and in the memory of John Newsholme, Hannah Newsholme and Mary Ann Newsholme." The upper scene depicts Christ in the house of Mary and Martha whilst the lower scene shows The Good Samaritan. We don't have any information regarding the artist and manufacture of the window, but the church history booklet dates the window as 1930 although it has been suggested stylistically its date is somewhat earlier.



One of the most striking and vibrant windows in Christ Church is situated in the South wall and is the work of Paul Woodroffe, installed in 1933. The main subject is Christ blessing the children, in the upper panel is The Nativity and the bottom panel showing Christ's Presentation in the Temple. The commemorative scroll at the base of the window reads: "To the glory of God & in memory of Jane Judson, John William Hartley & his wife Sarah Hartley."

The most recent stained glass window was originally installed to the South wall at the West end of the church in 1968 with the intention of moving the font and creating a Baptistry adjacent to the South door. Following the major re-ordering of 1985, the window was incorporated into the newly formed West partition wall of the nave with a light box behind for illumination. The window is the work of Shrigley & Hunt of Lancaster and depicts a Female figure with a child at a stylized font incorporating a Cross, Chi Ro and the Star of David. The inscription at the bottom of the window reads: "The gift of Joseph and Marguerita Lund 1968."



The Reredos

One architectural feature which stands out in the rather plain interior of Christ Church is the late Gothic styled, oak panelled, carved Reredos. It was installed in 1925 and the work of local artist and craftsman Mr Alex Smith, whose services were also employed to create the Font cover already mentioned. The centre niche contains a carved crucifix, with figures of the Blessed Virgin and St John the Evangelist on either side. The four remaining niches carry carved figures of 'The Northern Saints'. Reading from left to right: St Oswald, King of Northumbria holding his sceptre in his right hand, with his left hand resting on his shield of arms. St Hilda, Abbess of Whitby, holding a Rosary in her right hand and a book in her left, and standing on a snake. St Margaret, Queen of Scotland, holding a sceptre in her right hand and cross in her left. Finally St Aidan, Bishop of Lindisfarne, holding a stag's head in his right and a cross headed staff in his left. In the pilasters between the niches amongst the carved foliage are the heads of animals and birds found in various parts of the Bible. The buttress posts are surmounted by two angels, and fixed to the top of the posts the arms of St George and St Andrew.



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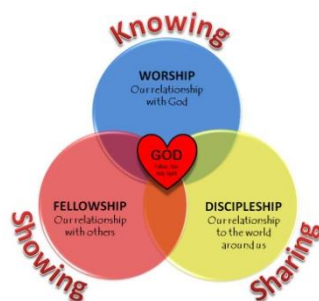
Significance for Mission



The leadership and PCC of Christ Church understand the church building to be a primary source of God's Mission in our community. Surprisingly, as stated in the introduction, the prominence of the church building suffers due to its issues of access and geographical location within the village. The South entrance of the church makes it very difficult for visitors to know how to access the

building and public car parking space adjacent to the church is virtually nonexistent. Despite these frustrations, over the past seven years the PCC has been working hard to raise the profile of the building as part of our understanding of mission. We have established good strong links with our community, school and local families by regularly holding events such as Friday Film Night, Children's Holiday Clubs, Easter and Christmas Crafts, Art Exhibitions, Food Festivals, Wine and Beer Tasting Evenings. All these events, plus our regular worship have contributed to increasing our physical and spiritual presence within the village, despite the continued problems of access and car parking.

Part of the PCC mission strategy over the past nine years has been to make the church building and its facilities available to non-profit organisations free of charge. We already have a number of these groups regularly using the building, Rainbows, Brownies, Small Steps (mum's & toddler group), Holden Art Group, and we have hosted numerous charity fund raising events including Sue Ryder and their local hospice, Manorlands. We also host a Pilates and a Yoga group, both of which are run commercially and give us some income. We expect the demand for affordable community space to rise in the future.



We believe we have a gift in our building to offer to our local community and we want to encourage local groups to come and use our facilities. Our Mission Statement of **Knowing, Showing and Sharing God's Love**, expresses the PCC's desire to use and share our God given blessings and assets with our community and those around us. We don't have a separate church hall, just narrow meeting room at the back of church, and at the

moment we are very much aware of the restrictions the building places on some of our mission activities. Therefore we have a vision to make our church building more accessible, suitable, adaptable for multi use and available for our local community.

Completion of Phase 1

In January 2015 an ambitious feasibility study and plans were drawn to reorder the complete building making it fit for mission. Due to the high cost of such an ambitious project it was decided to split the work into 3 phases: Phase 1 the interior of the worship space; Phase 2 front entrance porch and car parking; Phase 3 extension of the meeting room, refurbishment of kitchen and toilets.



In March 2017 a new lighting scheme was installed, removing the old inadequate pendant lights and replacing them with LED downlighters. Spot lights were installed to highlight the stone kneelers and the wonderfully carved Reredos. Colour changing LED's were installed in the sanctuary to provide a wall wash effect to add a bit of drama.

In April 2019 the second part of the work was completed. The pews had been removed and replaced with 126 stackable oak veneered chairs. The existing radiators were repaired of leaks and powder coated to match the decoration. A new engineered oak laminate floor was laid and the whole space redecorated. Phase 1 is now complete at a total cost of around £125,000 with all the money being raised by the congregation's hard work and sacrificial giving.

Collapsed Graveyard Wall

In July 2018 after a long spell of dry weather, a section of the South graveyard wall collapsed during a localised heavy rainstorm. The majority of the stonework fell into the neighbouring garden of 8 Heritage Way. The South graveyard wall is of a dry stone construction but it is also a retaining wall, the ground level being higher on the graveyard side of the wall. In some sections the wall has been reinforced using gabion baskets on the party side when the adjacent housing development was built some 20 years ago and ground dug away.



The proposal to reconstruct and reinforce the section of the collapsed wall should not cause any long term detrimental impact on the graveyard and surrounding area.