

Christ Church by Paul Dawson

The opening for divine worship on 23rd March 1871 of a United Methodist Free Church on Thornes Lane to seat 600 people at a cost of £1,200, agitated the Vicar of Thornes, the Rev Henry Jones, to consider either enlarging St James's or building a new church to accommodate more people to extend the influence of the Established Church in the area. Canon Wyndham Mason Maddon of Holy Trinity Church, however, felt that the people of Thornes would benefit from a new church, rather than an enlarged St James.



To this effect, Mrs Frances Rebecca Robinson, ? widow? wife of the Rev Disney Robinson of Woolley and daughter and heir of Robert Hodgson of Haigh Hall, offered at her own expense to erect “a large and beautiful Church” for the people of Thornes, to endow it and to provide a parsonage for the vicar, and a mission hall, on the condition that the committee then in existence, would undertake to provide the required amount for the remainder of the buildings necessary to form a complete church organisation.

A committee was formed and subscription book opened and by 1874 nearly £2,600 had been raised. Mrs Robinson donated the princely sum of £8,650pounds. On October 20 the same year the new Parish of Christ Church Thornes was taken out of the parishes of Holy Trinity and of St James, Thornes.

Building estimates from various firms were taken, the lowest being £12,500 which would pay for the erection of a church, mission hall, parsonage, school, and a school master's house.

Plans were prepared for the project by Messrs Habershorn and Pite of Bloomsbury Square London. The contracts awarded were:

Building.. ... G Fawcett
 Joinery.. ... William Dickinson
 Plumbing and Glazing.. .. Samuel Kirk
 Plastering Charles Driver
 Iron Work Samuel Kirk
 Heating Apparatus
 and Gas Fittings.. ... Berry of London

The total cost of the contracts being £5,900

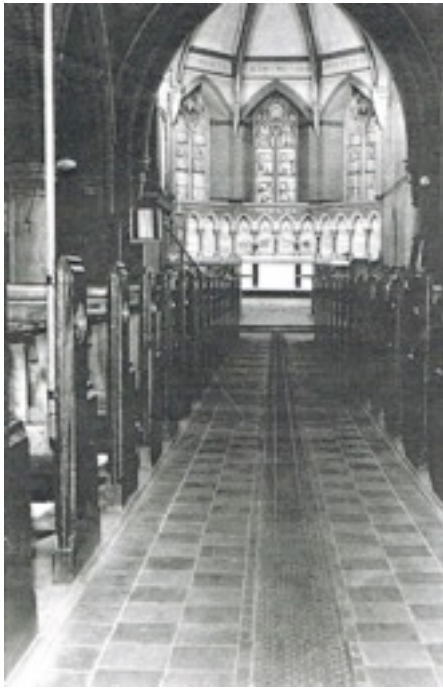
The building costs incurred were:

Church (to Build).. ... £3,750
 Church(to endow).. ... £3,000

Building and site of Parsonage.. ... £1,450
 Building and site of Mission Hall.. . £500
 Site of Church and Schools.. ... £1,000
 School Master's House.. ... £240
 Fences and Drains.. ... £360
 Total.. ... £.11,250

The endowment was to be provided by Mrs Disney Robinson, and yielded an annual living of £200 exclusive of the parsonage.

The foundation stones of the new church were laid on Thursday 18 June 1874 and it was consecrated on April 22 1876 by the Bishop of Ripon.



The church, which could accommodate 596 people, stood at the top of Mark Street, only a short distance from the Methodist Church. It was built out of rusticated stone and stock-pressed red brick, and consisted of a chancel, nave, aisles, north porch and north pinnacled tower with spire over (120 feet high) which contained a single bell, and was built in the “Gothick” style which contrasted with its classical and nonconformist neighbour. The same contrast of Classical/Nonconformist and Gothick/Anglican was also seen with other Wakefield churches notably West Parade Methodist and Holy Trinity, Eastmoor Methodist and Saint Faith’s, Westgate End Methodist and St Michael’s.

The bell was a gift from Mrs Robinson and was supplied by a celebrated London maker; she also supplied the Reredos, Altar and Pulpit Falls, as well as the Communion Plate and Chairs. Mrs Robinson gave about £10,000 pounds per year to the church, exclusive of the endowment, through gifts and donations.

The Mission Hall, was approximately 25 feet by 50 feet and could accommodate roughly 250 persons. The school could accommodate about 290 children in the hall and class rooms.

After opening, the scheme had cost £12,500pounds, which left the trustees with a deficit of 800pounds, not the 200pounds as stipulated on opening. In order to do this numerous fund-raising activities were carried out:

Bazaar, Donations etc..	£2,160
Grants.. . . .	£500
Sale of Work.. . . .	£20
T K Sanderson.. . . .	£5
Mrs Broughton.. . . .	£2

Collection (opening services).. ..£28 12s 6d

At the conclusion of the opening service, which was led by the Bishop of Ripon, a luncheon was held in the Mission Hall, and had been provided by Mr Dawson, confectioner of Northgate.

The Bishop of Ripon presided at the principal table having on his right:

Mrs Disney Robinson

Mr Edward Tew

Thomas Kemp Sanderson MP

W S Stanhope MP

J H Dixon

Rev Alexander Scott

On the Bishops Left:

Mrs Alexander Scott

Mrs Hodgson of Charlston Hall

the Rev Norman Dumesnil John Straton, Vicar of Wakefield

Mrs Godfrey Armitage

Miss Douglas.

A sale of work was held subsequently to raise church funds, which was under the chairmanship of the vicar's wife, Mrs Scott, Mrs Abell and other church ladies.

The first incumbent from 1875-1880 was Alexander Scott. His successors were Herbert Lunn (1880-1884), Daniel S Cowley (1884-1890), and James A Pride (1890-96)

It was under Pride that the choir adopted white surplices. To discuss the matter, a meeting was held in the mission room in April 1891. The meeting of twelve people voted wholly in favour, apart from two abstentions, to adopt white surplices for the choir, which were donated by the then choirmaster Walter Radley. He was supported by Richard Holt, Mellor Jowett, Frederick Harrison and Alfred Jowett.

In 1896 the church had a second-hand two manual and pedal Abbott & Smith pipe organ installed. This replaced the organ of 1876, which had been installed by Alfred Kirkland in the purpose-built organ chamber, which was situated on the northern side of the chancel. Pride also noted that the parsonage was an unhealthy dwelling due to its proximity to the river which caused excessive damp, and that a new parsonage should be secured at all costs for the good health of the occupant.

In the late 1890s, 2 South Parade, was rented from William Gerald Briggs as a vicarage for William Bartlem (1896-1909) and then the residence of the curate, who in 1907 was John Mason.

George Edward Craven held the living of Christ Church from 1909 to 1920.

The church celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1924, when a commemorative article on the church's history appeared in the Wakefield Express

Slum clearance in the years immediately after the Second World War removed much of the population from the area. The living was held in plurality with St James, Thornes, from 1950 and the two benefices were united in 1956. Christ Church was demolished in 1957, its Infants School closing in 1964.