

St. Matthew's Church Stretton with Appleton



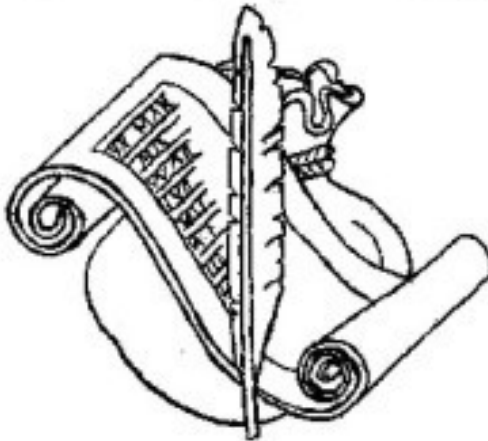
A Church Guide

2017

SAINT MATTHEW

St Matthew, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ, Apostle and Evangelist, also called Levi, was sitting at his tax-collector's desk in Capernaum, when he was called by Christ. He followed Him immediately and also gave a feast for Jesus and the other disciples. After the resurrection of Christ, while Matthew was still in Judea, before going to the district he was to evangelize, he wrote the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Hebrew for the sake of the Jews who had become believers. He then went to Ethiopia and preached the Gospel, confirming his teaching with many miracles. He incurred the displeasure of the new king of Ethiopia, and on 21st September he was killed at the altar while celebrating Mass, thus becoming a martyr. His body was taken to Salerno and later, under Pope Gregory VII, it was transferred to the church dedicated to St. Matthew.

Wood carving on the front of St. Matthew's altar depicting a money bag, scroll and pen.



St Matthew's Church

The influential Starkey family owned Stretton from the reign of Henry II 1154 – 1189 AD – the time of Thomas Becket, to the beginning of the 18th century. A chapel was probably built for family worship during the 13th or 14th century. The chapel is referred to in the will of Richard Starkey in 1527 as the Oratory of St Saviour, to which he bequeathed money “for a new steeple for a greater bell to be rung for the services”.

In Leycester's “History of Cheshire” we are told that there was an ancient Chapel of Stretton in 1666 “ruinous and in decay”.

It was thought that this was situated near the present Tanyard Farm in Well Lane, Lower Stretton, where there is an ancient footpath and stile known as “chapel stile”. This site would also have been between Over Hall and Nether Hall, owned by branches of the Starkey family. We are also told that there were many coats of arms in the high altar window, including the Starkey Coat of Arms – (a black stork on a silver field).

It is not known why in 1666 it was in disrepair.

A new church dedicated to St. Matthew was built between 1826 and 1827 in the reign of George IV as a Chapel of Ease to Great Budworth, from funds administered by the Church Commissioners.

The Architect was Philip Hardwick, and it provided seating for 250 people. It was described as an “un-inspiring Gothic structure with a tower”. It was consecrated by Bishop Blomfield in 1827, together with a burial ground. The first Minister of Stretton was the Reverend Richard Janion (Perpetual Curate).

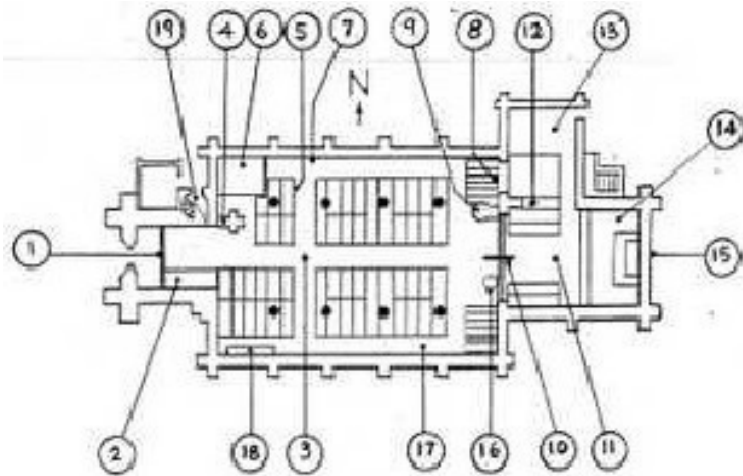
Archdeacon Richard Greenall and Stretton church.

Richard Greenall held office at St. Matthew's from 1831-1867, as a perpetual curate, Rural Dean of Frodsham, Canon of Chester Cathedral and finally Archdeacon of Chester. He was also Patron.

He was the son of Edward Greenall of Wilderspool and the elder of twin brothers – the other twin being Sir Gilbert Greenall M.P. Richard graduated from Brasenose College Oxford with a B.A. in 1828 and a M.A. in 1831.

In 1838 Stretton National School was built, largely through his energy and enthusiasm. He also subscribed to the building of several other churches in the area. In 1855 he married Eliza Lyon at St. Matthew's. In 1859 he commissioned Mr George Gilbert Scott, the famous architect, to build a chancel at St. Matthew's at a cost of £1,700. Sadly he died suddenly in 1867. After his death, with George Gilbert Scott again as the architect, the church was rebuilt as a memorial to him. It was rebuilt in red sandstone and has a wooden roof tiled with Westmorland slate. It was also found necessary to rebuild the tower. Eliza, the Archdeacon's widow, shared the cost of doing this with her brother, Mr Thomas Henry Lyon, at a cost of £5,000.

The church is a Grade II listed building.



West Door Screen is of oak with double central doors and a single door. It was made by Hayes & Finch of Liverpool and installed in 1982.

The Bookshelves were donated by Mr and Mrs Molloy to commemorate their Golden Wedding in 1994 and were also made by Hayes & Finch.

The Nave The word comes from the Latin “Navis” meaning a ship. The ship was thought to be the symbol or sign of the Christian Church which carried believers over the sea of life into the safe harbour of Heaven. It is divided into five bays, the pillars of which are alternately circular and octagonal, surmounted by richly moulded capitals. The roof is made of red deal, and the pews of English oak. The passage tiles are red and black. The old kneelers are gradually being replaced by ones worked by Members of Stretton Mothers’ Union and other parishioners. This project was started by Mrs Marion Wilkinson. The red carpet was donated by Mr Harold Smart.

The Font was presented by the Clergy Daughters of St Elphin’s School (Warrington Parish Church) in 1867 in memory of Archdeacon Greenall. It is made of stone with a lead-lined bowl. There is a carved oak canopy which is raised and lowered by weighted pulleys.

The Marble Tablet on the floor near the clergy vestry is in memory of the first Minister of Stretton, the Reverend Richard Janion, who died prematurely in October 1831 aged 40. It is reported in the newspaper of the time” The Bell’s Weekly Messenger” that there was a violent gale blowing during the afternoon and that he had been struck by a falling tree branch as he was walking along Wilderspool Causeway. He was universally respected.

The Clergy Vestry is enclosed by a wooden carved panel screen. It is in memory of Miss Mabel Fairclough and was installed in 1963. The west-facing stained glass window depicts the text "Suffer the little children to come unto me".

The north-facing window depicts "There was a certain rich man" and "God be merciful to me a sinner".

Second World War Plaque was dedicated on 19th February 1950 at Matins by Douglas Henry Crick, Bishop of Chester from 1939 – 1955. The Reverend A J White was vicar of Stretton at the time. The names on this plaque, together with others, were put on the Memorial in the churchyard in January 2001.

The Tapestry hangs by the north aisle transept. It depicts various parts of the parish and scenes of parish life through the years. It consists of embroidered pictures made by individual parishioners. Mrs Glenys Rowlands, the wife of Reverend Robert Rowlands the vicar from 1971 - 2000, designed and assembled the tapestry and Mrs May Fildes provided the frame. It was put in place in November 1991. A book attached to the frame gives a key to the various items.

It is hoped that, eventually, another tapestry will hang on the south aisle transept wall. This depicts "Noah's Ark – the End of the Flood". It measures 6 feet by 5 feet and is currently being worked by members of the Church Kneeler Group.

The Pulpit was designed by Mr George Gilbert Scott and installed at the same time as the new chancel in 1859. It is made of English oak panels, each containing carved foliage, standing on stone, interspersed between red marble pillars. Four steps lead up to the platform. It is fitted with a brass lectern.

The Brass Hand Rail was donated by Mr Frank McKie in memory of his wife Jose. It was made by Hayes & Finch of

Liverpool and was dedicated in November 2000. It is much appreciated by those who need some assistance in negotiating the steps when taking Communion. It is removable for certain occasions, such as weddings, when the couple stand at the steps.

The Chancel In 1859 Archdeacon Greenall commissioned George Gilbert Scott, the architect and grandfather of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott (the architect of Liverpool Anglican Cathedral) to design a new chancel at a cost of £1,700. The builder was Mr R Fairhurst of Whitley and the stonemason Mr Holland of Northwich. It has a cradle roof with carved bosses. At each side are the oak seats or stalls for the choir, donated by Joseph Peter and Eva Clare in 1965.

Even though it was built ten years earlier than the rest of the church and is more ornate both inside and out, the two blend very successfully together.

The tiles in the sanctuary are thought to be Minton encaustic (tiles with inlaid designs) and are quite ornate. Throughout the rest of the church they are black and red with a surface texture like orange peel. These were supplied by William Godwin of Lugwardine, Herefordshire, famous in the 19th century. He was responsible for tiles in the eastern part of Hereford Cathedral and many other churches. The backs of the tiles show the name of the manufacturer and the place. Fairly recently some of these black and red tiles have been replaced by J Ackson, a tile manufacturer from Stoke on Trent.

The Organ is played at most services for hymns, psalms and general church music.

It was built by "Father" Henry Willis, born 1821 in London, the great organ-builder of the Victorian era. He was responsible for the organs in Gloucester Cathedral, Hyde Park at the Great

Exhibition of 1851, St George's Hall Liverpool, the Royal Albert Hall, St Paul's Cathedral and many more.

St Matthew's organ was given by Thomas Henry Lyon, was installed in 1876 and was originally hand blown (the lever is still in position and can be used in the event of a power failure). Tremulant and clarinet stops were added in the early 1920s by the Willis firm.

The electric blower was fitted about 1938/39 and in 1947 a radiating and concave pedal board and a balanced swell were fitted.

It has two manuals or keyboards with a compass of four and a half octaves, and a pedal compass of two and a half octaves. To the left of the organ is a plaque to the memory of James Parkinson who died in 1928. He was the organist at Stretton for over 33 years. He was also head gardener for the Lyon family at Appleton Hall.

Below this is another plaque dedicated on 7th July 2013 to James Edward Smith, organist and choirmaster of St. Matthew's Church from 1977-2009.

The choir vestry is behind the organ. It has simple paired lancets, or narrow windows in the gable and square-headed windows in the sides. It is used by the choir for robing and for newly married couples to sign the register.

The Sanctuary is where the altar stands. The altar is sometimes very richly decorated, sometimes simply covered with a cloth and normally has a cross and candlesticks on it. The candles are lit at the beginning of every service and snuffed out either during or at the end of the service. The candle snuffer was presented to St Matthew's by the Reverend Robert Rowlands on his retirement in August 2000.

At different times of the year, a different coloured altar "frontal" is placed over the altar. For example, it is either

white or gold at Christmas and Easter, or when it is a church festival. Other colours are red, purple and green. At the Holy Communion Service, the priest gives out the bread and wine at the altar, reminding us that Jesus Christ died for us.

Altar rails were introduced at the time of the Reformation in England (early 1500s) and the posts were placed close together to keep out dogs!

Behind the altar is the screen known as the reredos, dedicated to Christopher Stephen Lunt.

Both the altar with its carved frontal and the reredos are of oak and were made by the local cabinet makers E H Sankey in 1957. A further inscription on the altar says "To the Glory of God". The Holy Table was renovated and a new setting provided by members of the Stretton branch of the Girls' Friendly Society in 1966.

The oak Bishop's chair is in thankful memory of Joseph Robert Smith 1960-1966, a member of St. Matthew's Sunday School. In 1911 the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments were engraved on the east wall of the church by Mr Segar Owen and Mr Welsby. In July 1912, to commemorate their 40th wedding anniversary, Mr Thomas Henry Lyon arranged for the lettering to be gilded, and Mrs Lyon donated a new altar frontal. In November 2005, restoration and gilding work with 23.5 carat gold leaf was done on the lettering by Germaine Denn from the Professional Gilding Conservation and Restoration Centre in Whitechapel in Liverpool.

The East Window above the altar depicts the Ascension of Christ. It was given by parishioners in memory of Canon Charles Francis Cross M.A., who was vicar of Stretton for forty years from 1897-1937, Canon of Chester and Rural Dean of Frodsham. The window was designed and made by Miss T M Cox of Chester and was dedicated by the Archdeacon of Chester on 27th April 1939.

OTHER STAINED GLASS WINDOWS - the windows in the south and north aisles have geometrical tracery, and depict the parables and miracles of Jesus.

The windows over the West Door portray the Nativity with one panel showing Joseph holding the Infant Christ. This window was in memory of Archdeacon Greenall. The window on the north side of the chancel has plate tracery and depicts Christ's teaching in the temple. Much of the stained glass work was carried out by Clayton and Bell of London. In the 1860's they specialised in inventive re-creations of medieval glass marked by simple linear designs and strong clear colours.

THE CLERESTORY WINDOWS – there are five pairs of lancet windows high up in the north and south walls of the nave. Each pair is separated by stone mullions.

Lectern is the desk from where the Bible is read. The word “lectern” derives from the Latin “legere” to read. Usually there are two readings in a service, one from the Old and one from the New Testament. St Matthew's lectern is in the form of a brass eagle and is 80 inches high.

The flying eagle is the symbol of St. John the Evangelist. and represents the taking of God's message to every part of the world.

The Brasses There are two very fine brass memorials – one in memory of Thomas Lyon 1859, and the other in memory of Vanda Lyon (daughter-in-law of the above) 1861. They are both in the floor of the south aisle and are described in detail in the book “The Monumental Brasses of Cheshire” by Lack, Stuchfield and Whittemore.

The altar Linen Box is used to store the altar frontals, the bookmarks for the lectern bible, the collection bags and other church linen.

The Bell Tower The church built by Philip Hardwick in 1827 was described as “an un-inspiring Gothic structure with a tower”. In 1870-72 when the nave was rebuilt in memory of Archdeacon Greenall, it was found that the tower was unsound. His widow Eliza and her brother Thomas Henry Lyon paid to rebuild it. The tower is 75 feet high, has angle buttresses, an octagonal north east turret, a shaped oak door in a cusped archway, singled and paired lancets, paired bell openings and a corbelled plain parapet. The tower is divided into four stages. The first contains the stained glass windows dedicated to Archdeacon Greenall, which can be seen in church. There are 41 spiral stone steps leading to the second stage, which is the ringing chamber. A wooden ladder leads to the next floor containing the clock mechanism. A further wooden ladder leads to the actual bells and finally there is another wooden ladder to the top of the tower where there is a weathercock and a flag pole. From the top of the tower on a clear day, it is said that seven counties can be seen. It is also said (and has been verified) that the foot of the tower is on a level with the top of the spire of St Elphin’s Parish church, Warrington.

The Weathercock – above the book shelves at the back of the church is a carved wooden plaque “To commemorate the diamond wedding of James and Isabella Pollitt August 24th 1950”. The new weathercock and fixtures were given by their children. The weathercock is made of aluminium, with brass letters. It was renovated in 2001 by David Booth and David Hart.

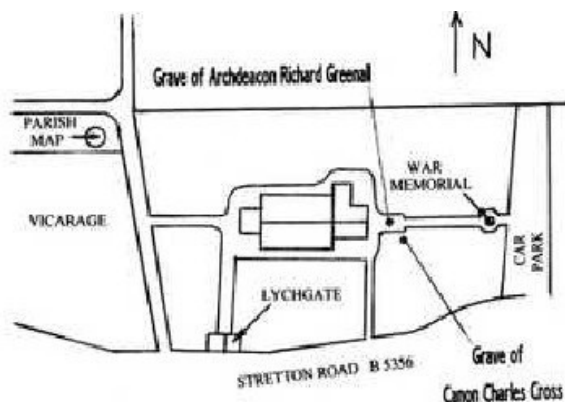
The Bells There are eight bells, ranging from the treble weighing three and a half cwt. (190 kg), to the tenor at over nine cwt. (460kg). The bells were purchased by public subscription and installed in 1850 in the former tower and later re-installed in the tower designed by Gilbert Scott. The first five are inscribed “C & G Mears – Founders London 1850”. On the tenor is inscribed “This bell was purchased by the parish of

Great Budworth in 1827 - Dobson Founders, Downham, Norfolk". The bells were re-hung and quarter turned in 1920. This was repeated in 1987, but on this occasion ball bearing mountings were installed. In the year 2001 the wooden bellframe was replaced by a steel frame and the bells taken away by Hayward Mills of Loughborough to be cleaned and retuned. They were rehung and there was a special rededication Service on Sunday 9th September.

In 2003 two new bells were cast making eight in all and were hung in 2004. The Treble is inscribed with the words "The first shall be last and the last first" – Matthew 20:16. The inscription on the 'two' reads "Rev'd. Robert Rowlands Vicar 1971-2000", celebrating his ministry in Stretton. They were dedicated by the present Vicar and Rural Dean the Revd. Elaine Chegwin Hall on December 12th 2004.

The Clock Faces are on the west and south sides of the tower. They were renovated in 1963 under the auspices of the vicar, the Rev. Thomas Pennell. Mr Miln, a parishioner, was asked to suggest some twelve letter mottos instead of the usual twelve numbers. He produced a list of over 80, from which "Time is not all" and "Forget not God" were chosen. It is said that there are only two other churches in the country with lettered faces – the nearest being at Cheadle near Manchester.

The Churchyard



The War Memorial - at the east end of the churchyard is a tall stone cross, approximately 15 feet high, mounted on an octagonal base. It was originally consecrated on All Saints Day 1st November 1923 by the then Bishop of Chester Henry Luke Paget. The Vicar at the time was the Reverend Charles Francis Cross and the Churchwardens Robson John Chorley and Philip Darbyshire. The inscription above the plinth reads "This cross was raised to the Glory of God in the year of Our Lord 1923 as a memorial of men connected with the Church and Parish who gave their lives in the Great War or through the hardness then endured". According to the church records, the money for the Memorial was raised by parishioners' donations. At that time, no names were inscribed on it. In January 2001 the three bronze plaques with the names of those people who died in, or as a result of both World Wars were added. Stretton Parish Council, in conjunction with St Matthew's Parochial Church Council, made a major contribution to this as their Millennium Project, together with public donations. The plaques were dedicated on Sunday 18th March 2001 by the Reverend G Buchan, the assistant priest.

Graves.

Archdeacon Richard Greenall is buried in Stretton churchyard, together with his wife Eliza, below the east window in the footpath leading from the church to the War Memorial.

In 2013, his original upright marble gravestone was relocated 5 metres to the south, alongside the footpath to the small churchyard gate, and was replaced below the East window by a flat York stone slab, giving his and Eliza's details.

There is also a brass dedicated to him at All Saints Church, Daresbury, inscribed "Rev. Richard Greenall M.A. Archdeacon of Chester and incumbent of Stretton 1806-1867 dedicated by brother Gilbert.

Canon Charles Francis Cross is buried alongside the pathway leading from the east window of the church to the War Memorial. The grave is in the form of a Celtic cross on a plinth.

The Lychgate is the main entrance to the churchyard. On the front roof beam is carved "I am the Resurrection and the Life". The name comes from an old English word meaning "corpse" and is where the parish priest used to receive the coffins and read part of the burial service. St Matthew's lychgate is built of Cheshire stone with a heavy oak roof and slates. Some lychgates have benches at the sides as seats. It was donated in 1889 by Mrs Edith Grace Lyon, a member of the well known local family in memory of her brother William Stewart Branker. The dedication plaque is under the roof.

The Parish Map – this project was started in 1987 as a result of an essay written by a ten year old pupil at Stretton school, who "wished to put back the oak trees that the bull-dozers knocked down to make way for the new roundabout on London Road".

Forty people attended a public meeting, chaired by the Reverend R Rowlands, and it was finally decided to make an outdoor pictorial map recording historical, natural and social features of the area before it was completely changed by new development. A map engraved in stainless steel was finally put in place in 1991 at the footpath junction on the Roman Road behind Stretton church. The stone plinth on which the map is fixed was erected by the Warrington Commission for New Towns. A grant from the Cheshire Heritage and Recreation Department, together with other private donations, helped to meet the cost. Dr. Ralph Tomlinson was the driving force behind the project, Mrs Glenys Rowlands was the artist and Eric Hand was responsible for the engraving.

In June 2006 the stone plinth was re-orientated so that the map could be read correctly (with north at the top). The plinth work and re-installation of the map was done by Mallett Stonemasonry.

Ministers of Stretton

- 1828 - 1831 Rev. Richard JANION (Perpetual Curate)
- 1831 - 1867 Rev. Richard GREENALL (Perpetual Curate)
Rural Dean of Frodsham
Canon of Chester Cathedral and
Archdeacon of Chester
- 1868 - 1896 Rev. Henry Russell DODD (Vicar)
He became a Canon in 1880
- 1897 - 1937 Rev. Charles Francis Cross (Vicar)
Rural Dean of Frodsham
Canon of Chester Cathedral.
- 1937 - 1958 Rev. Alfred John WHITE (Vicar)
- 1959 - 1970 Rev. Thomas Edward Nickson PENNELL (Vicar)
- 1971 - 2000 Rev. Robert ROWLANDS (Vicar)
- 2000 - Rev. Geoffrey BUCHAN (Assistant Priest)
- 2001 - 2013 Rev. Elaine Chegwin HALL (Vicar)
Rural Dean of Great Budworth September
2003-2010
Honorary Canon of Chester Cathedral
January
- 2012
- 2014 - Rev. Alan Jewell (Vicar)

Patrons

The patrons of St Matthew's Church, Stretton, were Mrs. Phillida du Bois Grantham and Dr. S.P.L. du Bois Davidson, descendants of the Lyon Family of Appleton, who had many connections with and played an important part in the formation of the church. Sadly Dr. S.P.L. du Bois Davidson died in 2016 and her successor is being considered.

Church Services

1st Sunday in the month	8.00am	Holy Communion	
		10.30am	Parish
Communion			6.30pm
Evensong			
2nd Sunday in the month	8.00am	Holy Communion	
		10.30am	
Morning Worship			
		6.30pm	Evensong
3rd Sunday in the month	8.00am	Holy Communion	
		10.30am	All Age Worship
			6.30pm
Evensong			
4th Sunday in the month	8.00am	Holy Communion	
			10.30am
Morning Worship			
	6.30pm	Evensong	
5th Sunday in the month	8.00am	Holy Communion	
		10.30am	
Morning Worship			
	6.30pm	Holy Communion	
Thursdays		10.30am	Holy Communion

During the winter months, when the clocks are put back, Evensong is at 4.30pm

Praise and Play

Meet every week during term time on Fridays at 2pm in church.

Sunday School

Go-Kidz for children age 2 1/2 to 7

Joy-at-St. Matthew's for children age 8-14

At present these groups are not meeting as we are looking for a leader. We hope they will re-start later this year.

D F & M R Hart

Pamphlet compiled July 2001

Amended 2003

Amended 2004

Amended 2009

Amended 2011

Amended 2013

Amended 2014

Amended 2016

Amended 2017