

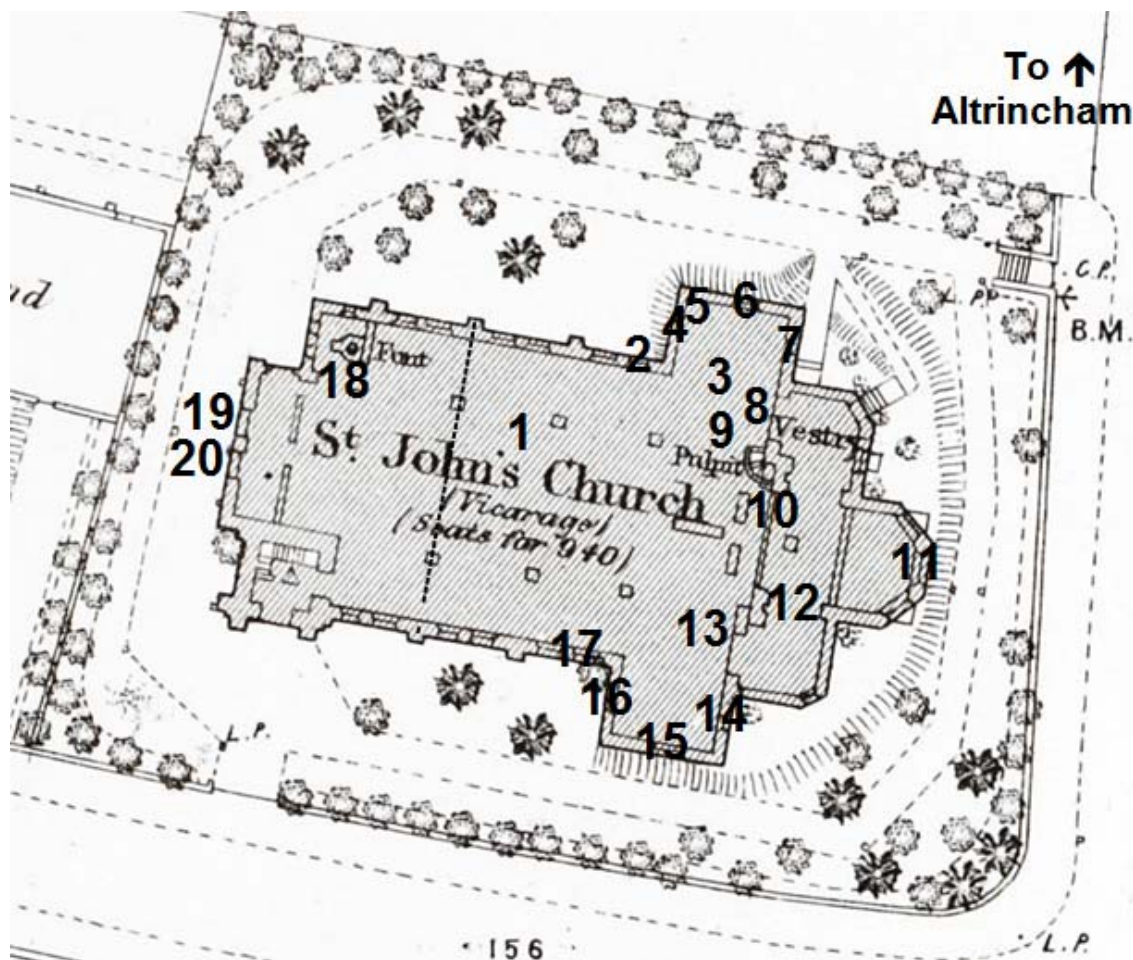


Guide to the Features of St John the Evangelist, Altrincham

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2016

Welcome to the Church of St John the Evangelist, Altrincham. This guide was written for visitors to explore the Victorian church and describes the main features and the stories behind them. Here is a numbered summary on an OS plan of the church dating from a survey undertaken in 1876.



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1. Interior of the Church of St John the Evangelist

The church opened in 1866 to serve the expected increase in population of the surrounding area which was close to the market town of Altrincham and its new commuter railway.

It was designed by Manchester architect J Medland Taylor and is based upon the Early English style of 13th century churches with their geometric tracery windows and pointed arches. At the east end is an unusual 5-sided apse.

The lofty nave is very broad and looks more so because it has been made shorter due to the gallery at the back of the church being walled in during the 1990s and the parish hall created in the space below. A photo taken just before this happened shows the gallery.

The arches of the nave are unusually low which means the columns are well-spaced. The fact they were specified to be only 1 foot 8 inches wide gave an unrestricted view for most of the congregation. The carved capitals of the columns have leaf and flower designs and the four creatures of the Apostles.

The stained, pitch pine pews with their pull-out kneeling stools are original.







2. St Hilary and St Augustine

This window in the north aisle was dedicated by the congregation to Hilary Austin Wainwright who died aged 7 in 1901. He was the son of the first vicar Rev. Canon Frederick Wainwright by his second wife Edith, who was 28 years his junior and the daughter of a Bowdon dentist.

St Hilary and St Augustine were bishops and teachers in the early Church.



3. Wooden screen

The oak screen was installed in 1938 to form the reredos which separated the nave from the chancel, as seen in this wedding photo of Joan Livingstone and John Winstanley in 1965. It now forms the Chapel of our Lady and St Elizabeth.

St Elizabeth's was a mission church in Newtown which opened in 1890 but closed in 1969 when it was bought and demolished by the council. The dense terraced houses which had once surrounded it had already been pulled down. The furniture in this chapel was brought from the old church.



4. St Paul

This memorial window is by the Lancaster company of Abbot and Co Ltd as seen by the signature at the bottom. It is dedicated to Charles Duckworth who was a retired merchant of printed, dyed and cotton goods and died in 1922. It depicts St Paul with his sword.

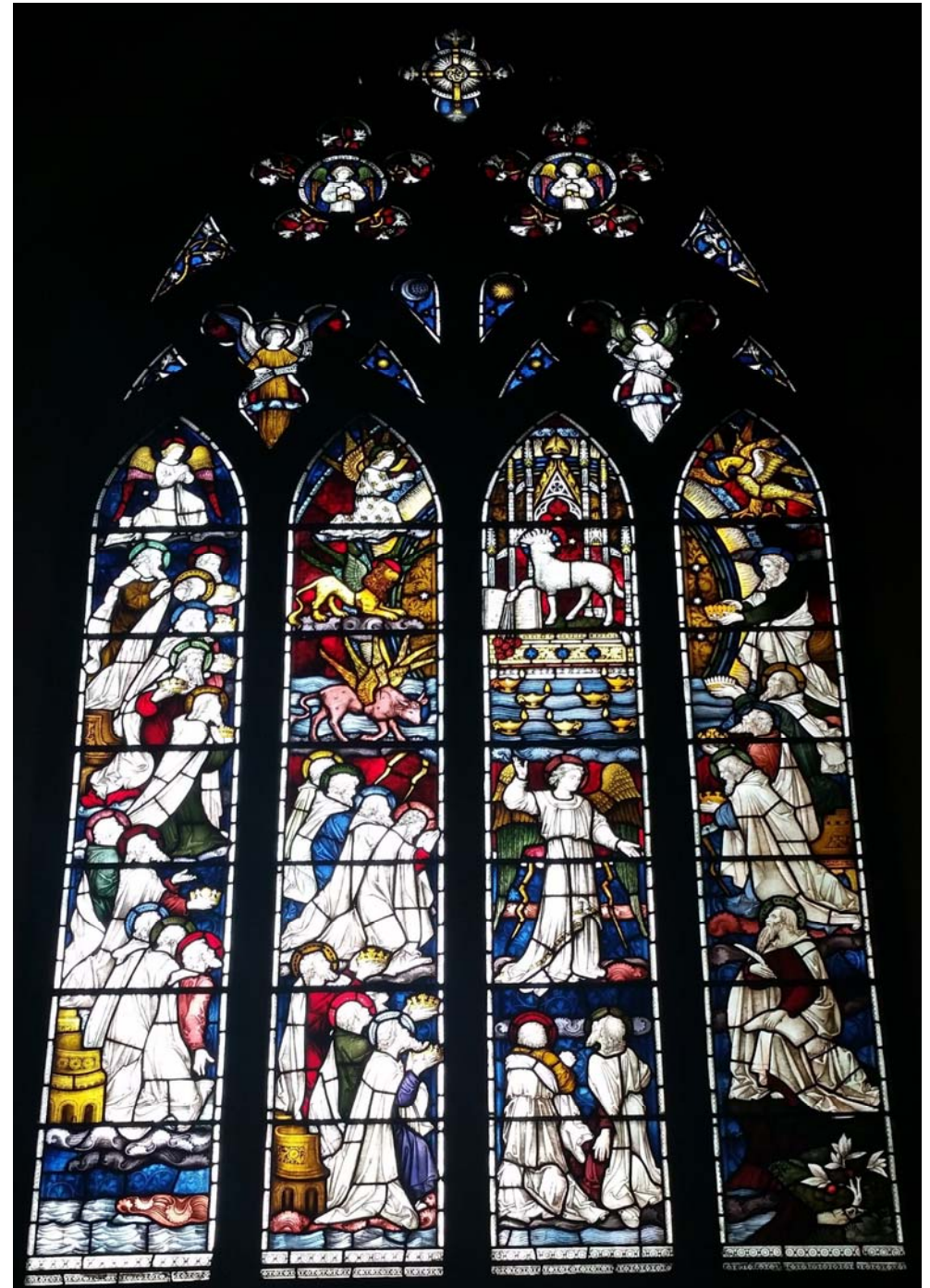
Amongst the memorials, on the wall opposite is a plaque to his son Bernard. He was killed in action in 1916 during the gallant attack on Devil's Wood at the Battle of the Somme.



5. St John on the Island of Patmos writing the Revelation

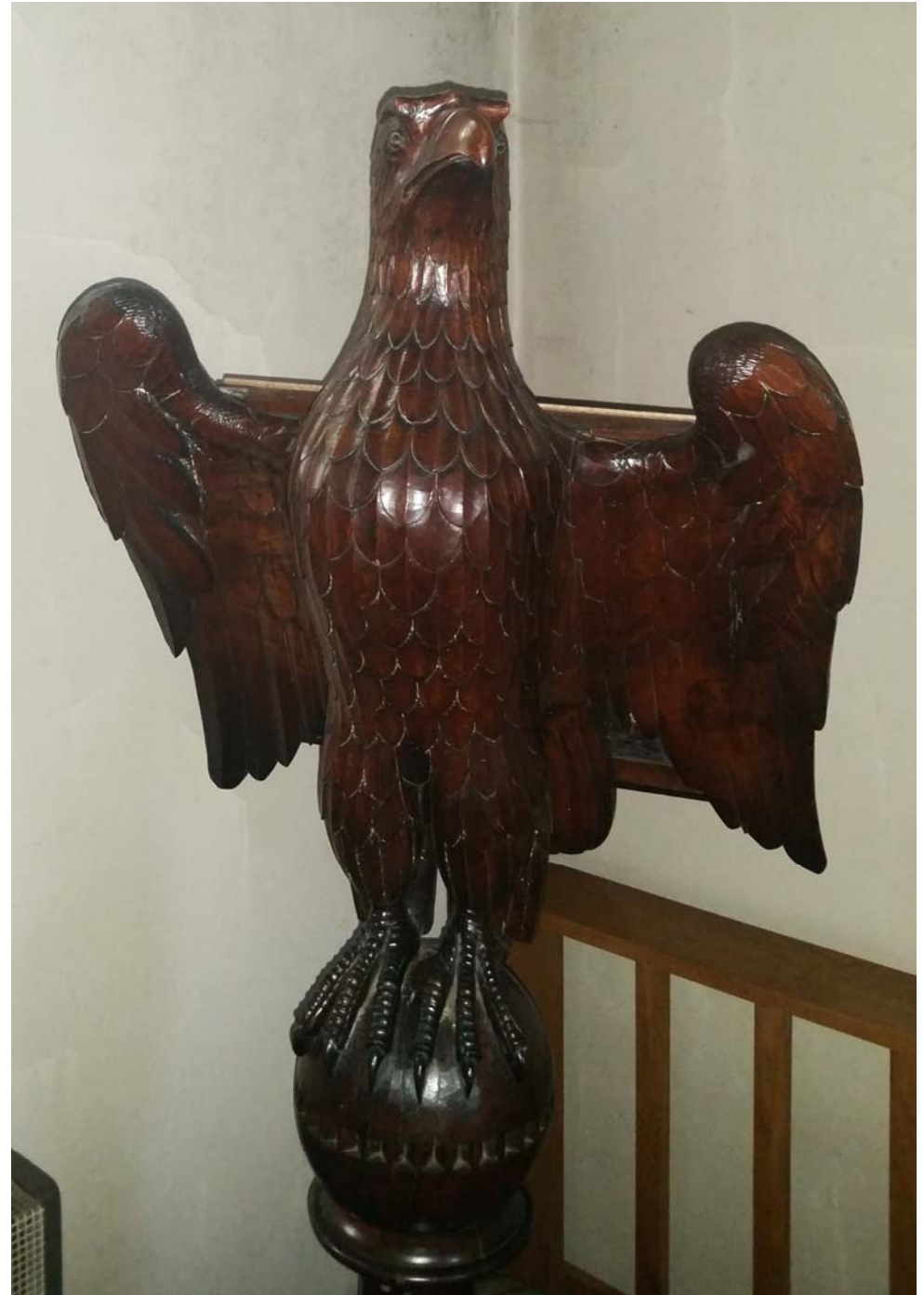
This fine window depicts St John the Evangelist in the bottom right hand corner. Before him is an extraordinary vision presented by an angel which he recorded in the Book of Revelation in the New Testament. The 24 elders can be seen kneeling in worship of the lamb on the throne of God, surrounded by 7 lanterns, a winged lion and ox and the eagle which gave St John his inspiration.

The window is in memory of John James Occleston, a wealthy smallware and umbrella manufacturer who had recently moved to the grand mansion of Silverlands on Devisdale Road. He died in 1883.



6. Eagle and orb lectern

The carved 19th century eagle with outspread wings representing divine inspiration flying over an orb of the world, was used to hold the Bible during readings. A common form of lectern in most Anglican churches, the eagle was also the symbol of St John the Evangelist.



7. Coronation of a girl by an angel

(Ellen) Maud Wainwright, the 4-year-old daughter of the vicar Frederick Wainwright and his first wife Elizabeth, died from the effects of a scald in the bath. This window was placed in her memory by her friends in the congregation at Xmas 1875.



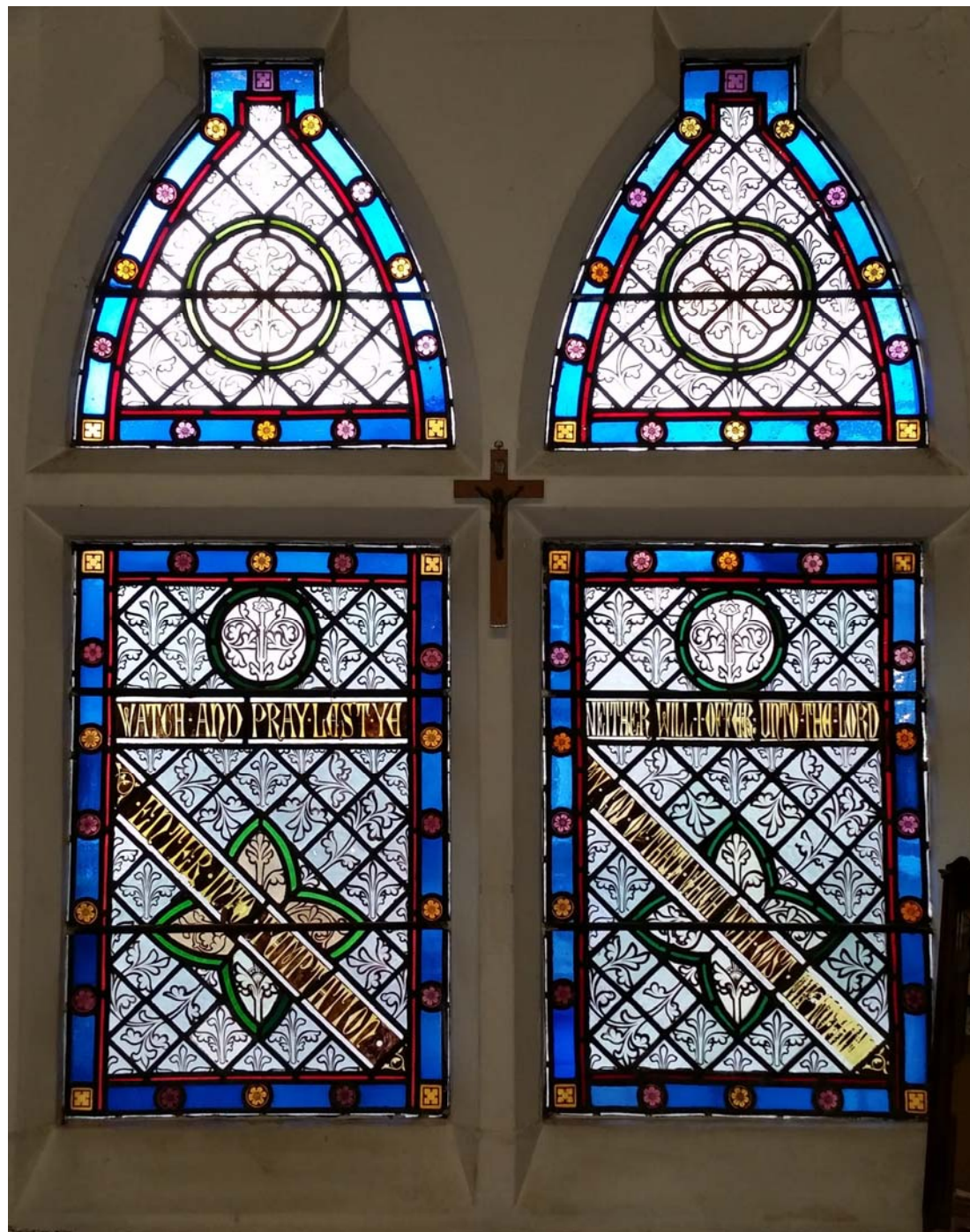
8. Stone pulpit

Made of Caen limestone with alabaster panels, this circular pulpit was designed by the architect of the church, J Medland Taylor. It has a tower-like appearance with moulded gothic arches.



9. The Vestry and List of Vicars

1866 Frederick Wainwright
1916 Napier Malcolm
1922 E H Hughes Davies
1931 Thomas E Lee
1953 E J Basil Jones
1961 Christopher T Sparks
1968 Trevor Lynn
1972 David Ellington
1980 William Moxon
1991 Donald Brockbank (Priest-in-charge)
1996 Ronald E Cork (Priest-in-charge)
2001 Julian Heaton (Priest-in-charge)
2007 Edmund Betts (Priest-in-charge)



10. WWI memorial

The tablet made of marble with a carved alabaster surround decorated with oak leaves and acorns. It simply lists the names of the 122 men of the Parish whose lives were taken during WWI. Detailed information collected about the men can be found online at <http://www.traffordwardead.co.uk/>

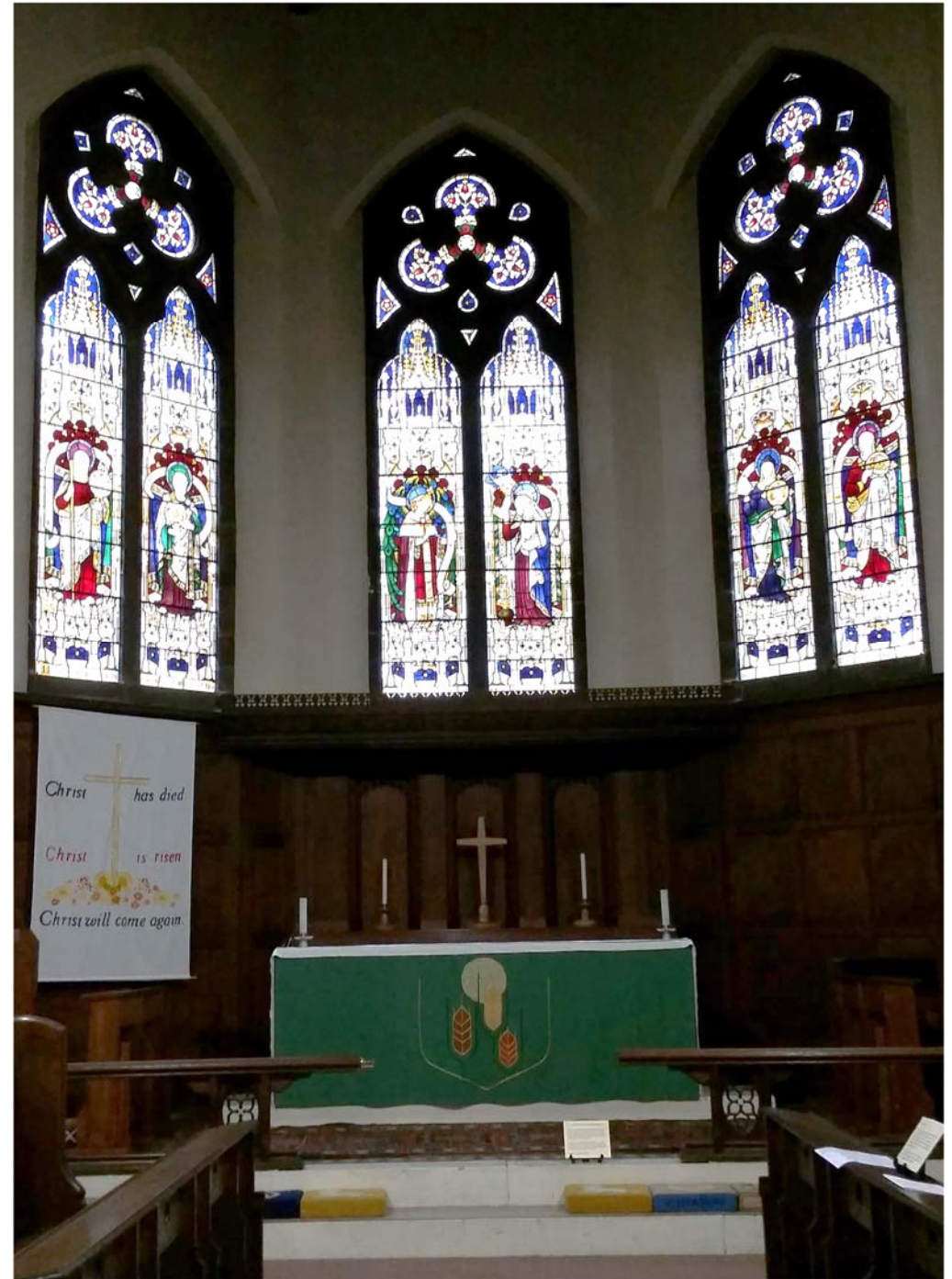


11. The Four Apostles and the Annunciation

Above the altar in the chancel to the left are St Luke with his ox and St John with the eagle. St Matthew with a winged bull and St Mark and a lion are to the right. At the centre can be seen the Annunciation to Mary by the Archangel Gabriel.

This set of windows was dedicated in 1923 to commemorate the 50 years of service in this church of the first vicar Rev. Canon Frederick Wainwright from 1866 when it opened until 1916.

Note the Victorian tiled floor below.





12. The organ

The organ is a 3 manual (Great, Swell and Choir) and pedal instrument built by Jardine and Co in 1886 and rebuilt by Ernest Wadsworth of Manchester in 1901. Originally it was hand-pumped. A suggestion in the 1890s to run it by a gas engine was rejected on safety grounds.

To the right of the chancel there is a plaque to William Maxfield, composer and organist at St John's for 47 years from 1884 until 1936.



13. The font

Like the church and pulpit, the Caen limestone font was designed by the architect J Medland Taylor. It is noted for its four stubby columns and quirky bent supports holding the bowl. The decorative metal font cover is of a later date.

The font used to be in the baptistery area to the far rear left of the church by the main entrance of the west doors. It has been regularly used as a key feature for flower festivals.





14. Child St Samuel on his knees in prayer

In the south transept, this single panel window is linked to the one opposite. It was put up by insurance broker George Johnson and his wife Emma from Hale, in memory of their only son Edward who died at age 11 in December 1871.

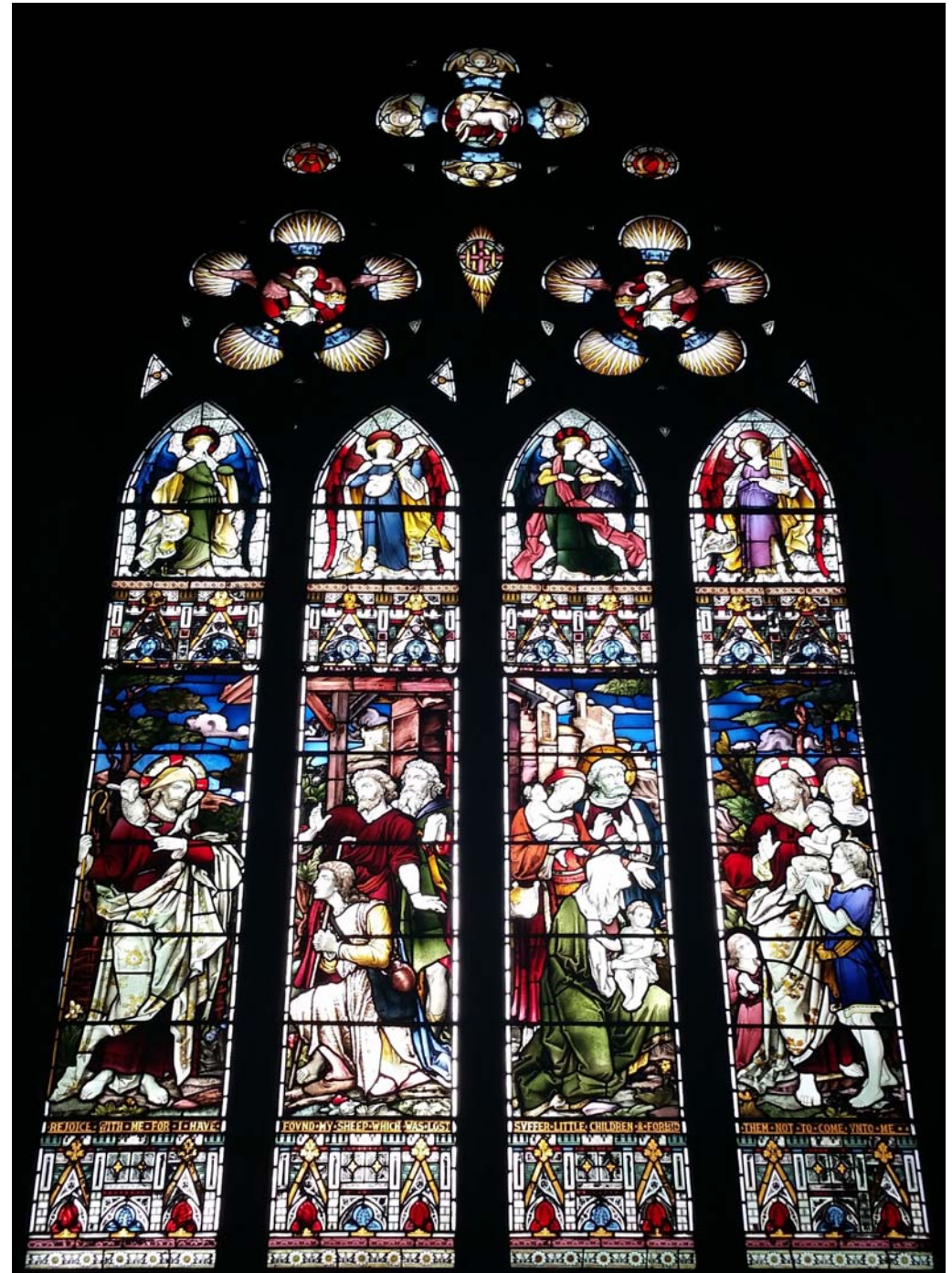
The design is by William F Dixon who had trained with Clayton and Bell. He established his own firm in 1872 so this would have been one of his first commissions.



15. Parable of the Lost Sheep and Christ Blessing the Children

This main window in the south transept was dedicated by the congregation to Elizabeth Wainwright who died in 1882 aged just 40 and was the first wife of the vicar. She left 2 adult and 3 teenage children as well as new born baby John.

The panels on the left show Christ as a shepherd with the single lost sheep that was found likened to a repentant sinner, as described in a Parable by St Luke. In the right-hand panels, Christ lays his hand upon the children presented to him, despite his stern Apostles suggesting they were not important enough for him to bother with.



16. Christ in Glory

This window like the one opposite was put up by George and Emma Johnson to their only and devoted daughter Elsie, who died aged 34 in 1898.

It depicts Christ in Glory, but unusually for an Anglican church, it shows Christ suffering with his crown of thorns. It is reminiscent of Holman Hunt's painting *Light of the World* (1851).



17. The Last Communion

Featured here and dressed in theatrical armour is Captain Norman Briggs Antrobus. He had been a student of electro-chemistry in Manchester and joined the 4th South Lancashire Regiment. He was shot and killed by a German sniper as his company was digging a new trench near Hooze in Flanders in 1915.

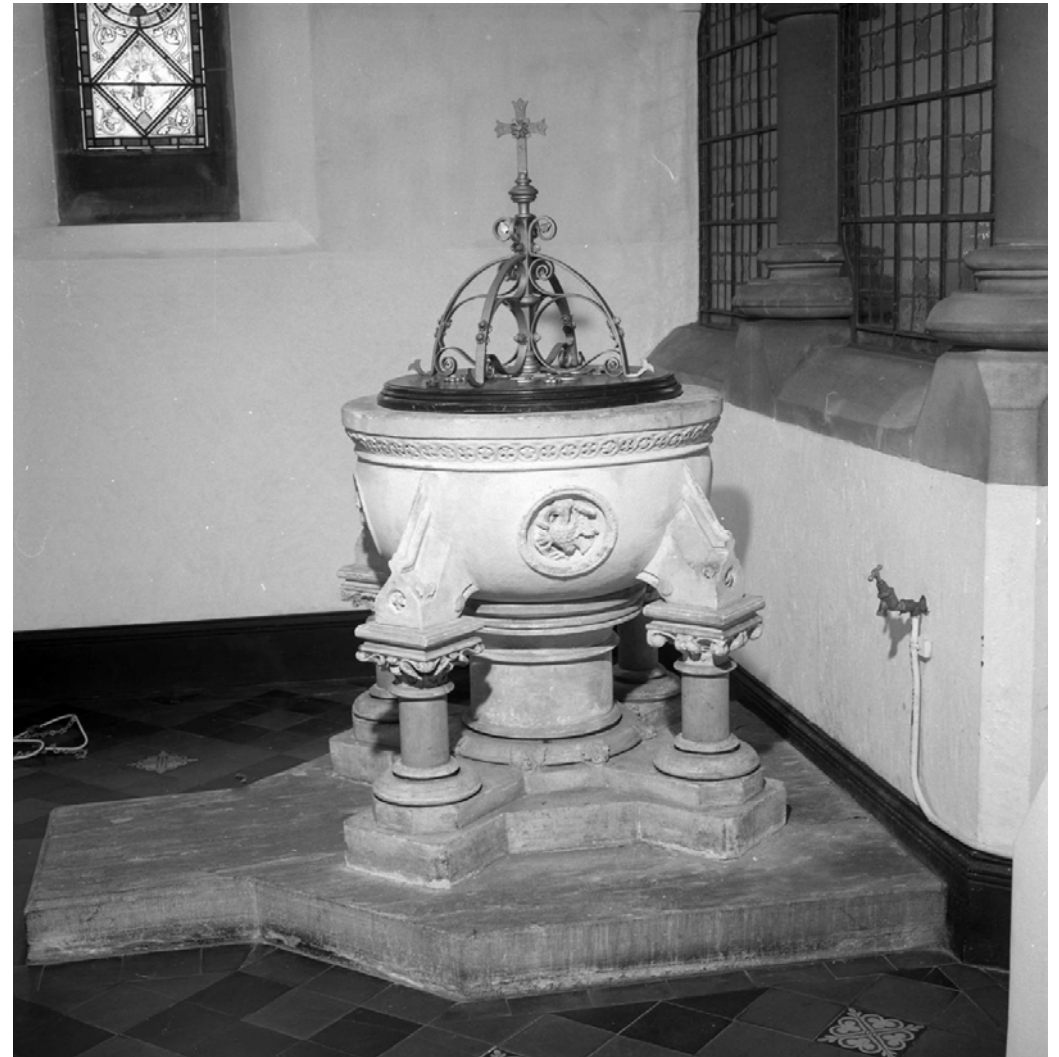
This window was put here by his parents Ernest and Clara Antrobus of Norleon, Park Road in Hale and dates from 1916. The face of Norman is taken from a photograph of him while the vicar is said to resemble Rev Napier Malcolm who took office in 1916 after Norman's death.



18. Former baptistery

The original location of the stone font was to the left of the main west doors, where the modern kitchen sink is now located. The baptistery was separated by a screen with stone arcade which can still be seen with inscriptions relating to the Sacrament of Baptism. The simple windows also have relevant quotes from the Bible.

The staircase to the former gallery is a later addition, with the original one still in place by the south door.



19. The exterior of the church

The church is on the site of farm buildings beside an ancient trackway sloping down from the ridge of the hill between Altrincham and Bowdon. Built upon a bank, it is now a significant landmark in the area.

The building is made of roughly cut sandstone set in snecked coursing whereby a regular joint is interrupted at intervals with different sizes and shapes of stone.

In addition to the main honey-coloured stone, three other different colours are used in the banding, although the polychromatic effect is hidden by 150 years of grime. There are ashlar dressings.

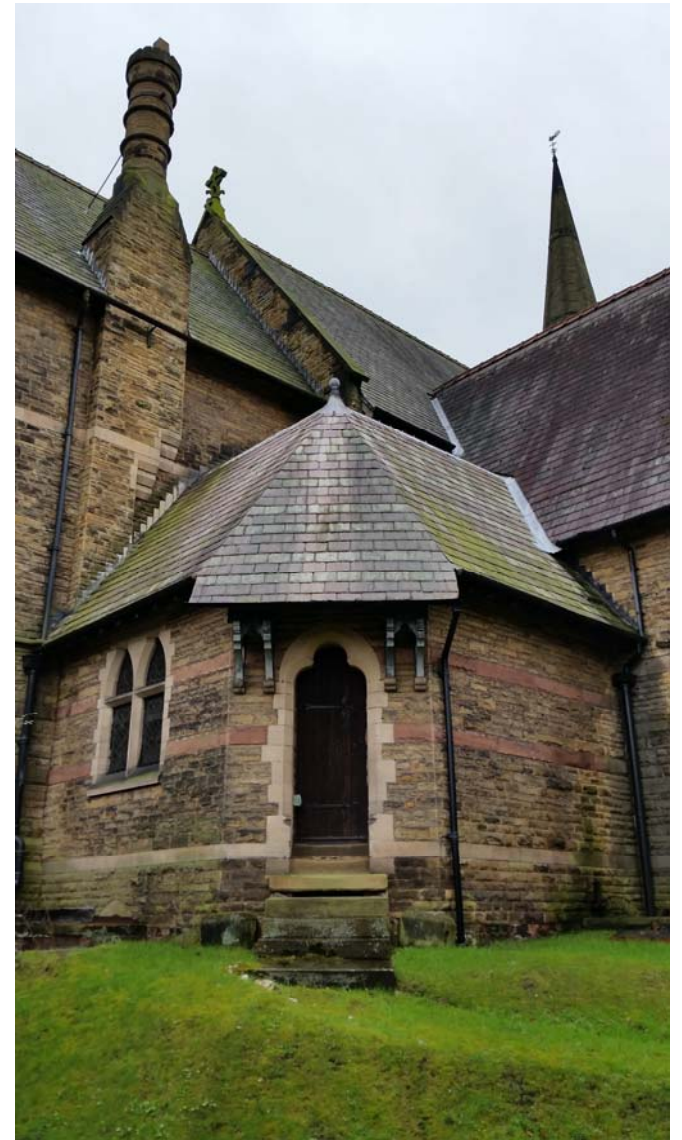
There is a grand west entrance with double oak doors and cast iron fittings and an imposing central column.

The 3-stage steeple is 140 feet high. The broach spire starts from a square base, then is carried into an octagonal section by means of triangular faces. The steeply pitched roof is decorative with its pattern of Welsh blue and Westmoreland green slate tiles.

The church was Grade II Listed in 1985. It has recently become a virtual Pokémon Go Gym Level 3.





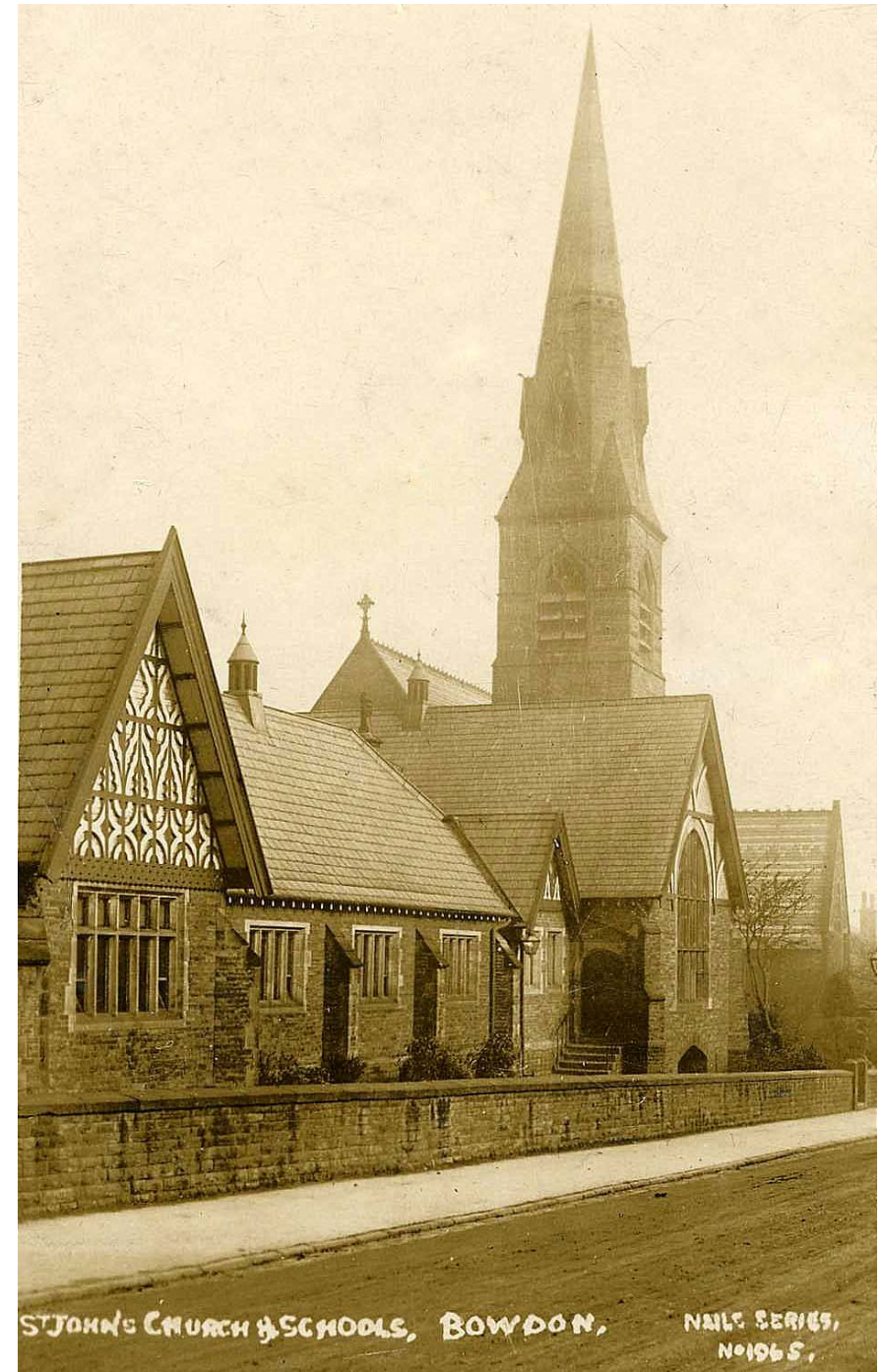
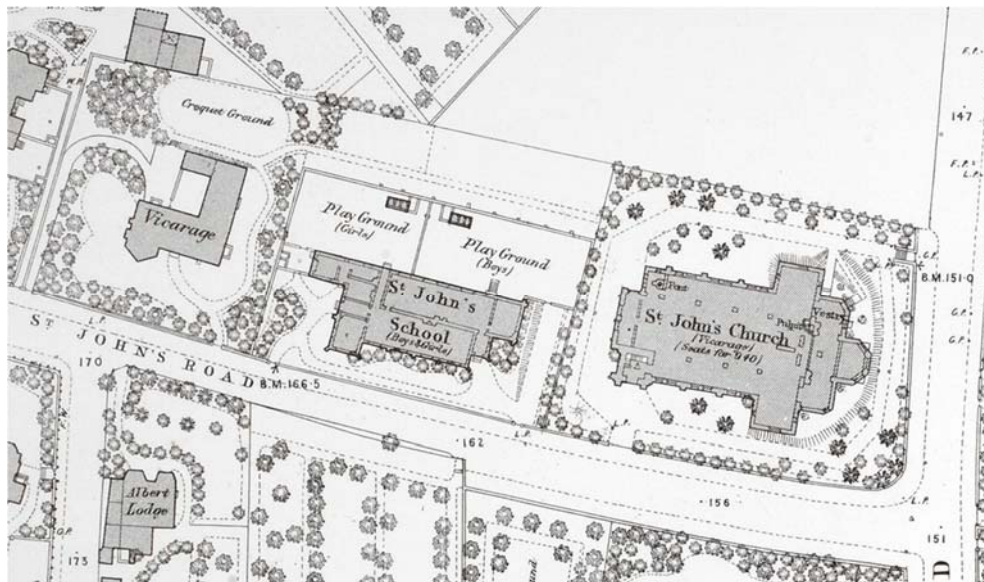


20. Associated buildings

Next door to the church is the former Parish Room which has been successfully converted for residential use.

Further up St John's Road, the old school building is currently a doctors' surgery with parking to the rear in the former playgrounds and Vicarage garden. It is seen here in the early 1900s.

The modern town houses beyond mark the site of the old Vicarage which was built in 1871 and demolished in the 1960s. The closeness of the Vicarage, school and church can be seen on the OS Plan surveyed in 1876.



Credits and acknowledgments

Access to research material and the church building has been with the kind assistance, support and permission of the vicar, churchwardens and members of the church of St John the Evangelist, Altrincham.

The research undertaken in the Cheshire Record Office and shared by Stephen Birchall has also been invaluable.

All images are by courtesy of the Altrincham Area Image Archive supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund

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Please see the PDF of 150 years at St John the Evangelist, Altrincham by Stephen Birchall, 2016 for a description of the history of St John's along with the school, St Elizabeth's church and the Newtown area.