

St John and The Holy Cross Church, Cotebrook

A short guided tour

Welcome to this small church.



In the porch there is a rather weathered plaque commemorating the financial support of the Incorporated Society for Building & Churches (now The Incorporated Church Building Society (ref ICBS 07571)) for the building of the church in 1873, and imposing a condition that all the seats be for the free use of the parishioners.

The church was built in 1873-5 to a design by George Street, a leading practitioner of the Victorian Gothic revival (*see separate information sheet 1 for additional information*) at the instigation of the then Rector of Tarporley, Rev J H Cooper and Miss Cecely Egerton of Oulton Park.

The church has traditional pews, with a font of a conventional eight sided design, placed in the traditional position near the door. There are stained glass windows above the altar in the east end of the church and a painting below (of which more of both later).

Beside the font is a memorial to the 58 men from the parish and congregation who lost their lives in the 1914-18 War. There is also a plaque explaining the re-arrangement of the chancel in 1950 to commemorate the connection of the Spiegelberg family with the church (*see information sheet 5*).

On the right of the nave is a plaque noting the installment of the grilles to protect the stained glass windows in memory of Diana Kirkbride, née Spiegelberg, who died in 1958.

The next plaque commemorates a donation in 1902 by William Mann of £1,000 towards providing a resident curate for the church. This would be somewhat in excess of £100,000 today (2012).



The pulpit was given by Benjamin Bagnall in memory of his mother who died in 1890.

The painting above the altar is *The Petition of the Repentant Sinners*, given by George Spiegelberg in 1950. It shows Jesus standing on His Mother's knees, listening to the prayers of the repentant sinners Mary Magdalene, the Prodigal Son and King David.

Above the altar and to either side are windows by Charles Kempe, a noted Victorian stained glass designer (*see information sheet 2*). From the left, they depict St Michael the Archangel,



then St Mary the Virgin, Jesus, St John and the Prophet Isaiah. They commemorate Sir Philip de Malpas Grey-Egerton (10th Baronet) (*see information sheet 3*) and his wife Dame Anna Elizabeth who died in 1881 and 1882 respectively.

The bishop's chair was given by the parishioners in 1967 in memory of George and Fanny Spiegelberg and the

lectern was given in memory of Anthony Spiegelberg who died in 1926.

The organ, a two manual instrument with a pedal board by Peter Conacher & Co ("the Old Firm") of Huddersfield (*see information sheet 4*). It was installed in 1902 in memory of Felicia Mann.

In the tower is a rare set of tubular bells by Harringtons of Coventry which, according to the plaque by the door to the vestry, were installed in January 1893 by Cecely Countess of Selkirk to commemorate the wedding of her brother Sir Philip Henry Brian Grey-Egerton (12th Baronet). A tolling device was added to the clock bell in 1905 in memory of a long serving church warden, Gordon Ackerley.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN OUR CHURCH. WE REMEMBER ALL OUR VISITORS IN OUR PRAYERS.

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This is a  initiative

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Information sheet 1

Architecture and architect

The church was designed by G E Street and is constructed in red sandstone rubble (irregular shaped stones) with ashlar (regular shaped stones) dressings. It has a roof of red tiles that are pierced along the ridge. Its plan consists of a four-bay nave, a short chancel with a vestry beneath, and a northeast tower. The tower is located in the angle between the nave and the chancel, and is buttressed. It contains a clock and louvred lancet bell openings. At the summit is a pyramidal cap with a weathervane. The nave windows are small, with three lights and trefoil heads. On the sides of the chancel are two lancet windows. Beneath the chancel, the vestry has a door with a Caernarvon arch, and a two-light mullioned window. The east end is buttressed and contains a triple lancet window. At the west end are four lancet windows with trefoil heads, with a quatrefoil window above.

George Street

George Edmund Street (20 June 1824 – 18 December 1881) was an English architect, born at Woodford in Essex. Stylistically, Street was a leading practitioner of the Victorian Gothic revival and is perhaps best known as the architect of the Royal Courts of Justice, on the Strand, London. Street was elected an associate of the Royal Academy in 1866, and a fellow in 1871; at the time of his death he was professor of architecture to the Royal Academy. He was also president of the Royal Institute of British Architects. He is recorded as having worked on at least 179 Anglican ecclesiastical buildings, the largest being the nave of Bristol Cathedral and the restoration of Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin.

At an early age Street became deeply interested in the principles of Gothic architecture, and devoted an unsparing amount of time and labour to studying and sketching the finest examples of medieval buildings in England and on the Continent. Street's personal taste led him in most cases to select for his design the 13th century Gothic of England or France, his knowledge of which was very great, especially in the skillful use of rich mouldings. His most recognisable building is probably the Royal Courts of Justice in London. Street carried out a number of new works in Ireland, including the small clifftop church of St. John the Evangelist at Ardamine, Co. Wexford, and Piltown Church, Co. Kilkenny. His most significant work was the controversial reedification of the historic Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin. He was responsible for demolishing the historic choir which he considered to be of 'no historic significance'. He was also responsible for the restoration of St. Brigid's Cathedral, Kildare Town, Ireland which was a roofless ruin when he started work. The Cathedral was reopened in 1896. He succeeded in rebuilding the lost walls to match the remnants which remained of the original walls and square tower.

In addition to the Law Courts, by far the majority of Street's output was for ecclesiastical uses, the largest being the nave of Bristol Cathedral and the restoration of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin. He is recorded as having worked on 179 Anglican ecclesiastical buildings for the Incorporated Church Building Society alone.

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Information sheet 2

Stained glass by Charles Kempe

Charles Eamer Kempe (29 June 1837 - 29 April 1907) was a Victorian stained glass designer and manufacturer. His studios produced over 4,000 windows and also designs for altars and altar frontals, furniture and furnishings, lichgates and memorials that helped to define a later nineteenth century Anglican style. The list of English cathedrals containing examples of his work includes: Chester, Gloucester, Hereford, Lichfield, Winchester, York .

Charles Kempe was born at Ovingdean Hall, near Brighton, West Sussex in 1837. He was the youngest son of Nathaniel Kemp, a cousin of the Thomas Read Kemp, a politician and property developer responsible for the Kemptown area of Brighton and the maternal grandson of Sir John Eamer, who served as Lord Mayor of London in 1801. After attending Twyford School, he attended Pembroke College, Oxford where he was influenced by the Anglo-Catholic Tractarian revival and considered a vocation to the priesthood. When it became clear that his severe stammer would be an impediment to preaching Kempe decided that "if I was not permitted to minister in the Sanctuary I would use my talents to adorn it", and subsequently went to study architecture with the firm of a leading ecclesiastical architect George Frederick Bodley, where he learned the aesthetic principles of medieval church art particularly stain glass. During the 1860s Kempe collaborated with Bodley on the internal painting of two churches, All Saints, Jesus Lane in Cambridge and St John's, The Brook in Liverpool. Later in 1892 Bodley and Kempe would work together once more on All Saints at Danehill, East Sussex .

In 1866 he opened a studio of his own in London, supplying and creating stained glass and furnishings and vestments. The firm prospered and by 1899 he had over fifty employees. As a trademark, the firm used a golden *garb* or wheatsheaf, taken from Kempe's own coat of arms. The mid Victorian period were important years in the history of the design of English churches and Kempe's influence is found in numerous examples, many in his home county of Sussex which has 116 examples of his work. Rosalie Glynn Grylls, Lady Mander, whose home Wightwick Manor, near Wolverhampton, contains many pieces of Kempe's stained glass, wrote in 1973: *Kempe's work has a unique charm; its colours shine out from jewels that cluster on the mitres or the crowns his figures wear and from their peacocks' feathers, while angels playing their instruments are drawn with tender delicacy and scattered above the main windows informally but making a pattern of precision. Above all, the prevailing yellow wash is literally translucent, for it lets through the rays of the full or the setting sun...*

Kempe was a rather shy person, who never married. He continued to live in Sussex most of his life and in 1875 he bought and renovated an Elizabethan House at Lindfield, near Haywards Heath in West Sussex. Kempe would entertain his clients and professional colleagues from his home enjoying the role of a country squire.

Kempe died in 1907 and is buried in the churchyard at St Wulfran's Church, Ovingdean. Unfortunately, most of Kempe's records were disposed of after the firm shut in 1934.

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Information sheet 3

Sir Philip Grey-Egerton

Sir Philip de Malpas Grey Egerton, 10th Baronet FRS (13 November 1806 – 6 April 1881) was an English palaeontologist and Conservative politician who sat in the House of Commons variously between 1830 and 1881.

Egerton was the son of Sir Philip Grey Egerton, 9th Baronet and his wife Rebecca Du Pre, daughter of Josias Du Pre of Wilton Park, Beaconsfield. He was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, where he graduated BA in 1828. While at college his interest in geology was aroused by the lectures of William Buckland, and by his acquaintance with William D. Conybeare. He inherited the baronetcy on the death of his father in 1829. He was elected Fellow of the Royal Society in 1831, and was a trustee of the British Museum.

While travelling in Switzerland with Lord Cole (later to be 3rd earl of Enniskillen) they were introduced to Prof. L Agassiz at Neufchâtel, and determined to make a special study of fossil fish. During the course of fifty years they gradually gathered together two of the largest and finest of private collections—that of Sir Philip Grey Egerton being at Oulton Park, Tarporley, Cheshire.

Egerton described the structure and affinities of numerous species in the publications of the Geological Society of London, the *Geological Magazine* and the *Decades of the Geological Survey*; and in recognition of his services the Wollaston medal was awarded to him in 1873 by the Geological Society. He was also a member of Grillion's Club, and compiled a history of the club's first fifty years in a book: 'Grillion's Club: From Its Origin in 1812 To Its Fiftieth Anniversary', published in 1880.

Egerton was a Deputy Lieutenant and J.P. for Cheshire and a Lieutenant Colonel in the Cheshire Yeoman Cavalry. He was elected Member of Parliament for the city of Chester in 1830 but lost the seat in 1831. He stood unsuccessfully at Cheshire South in 1832 but was elected in 1835 and held the seat until 1868. He was elected MP for West Cheshire from 1868 until his death in London in 1881.

Egerton's collection of fossil fishes is now in the British Museum. He is commemorated in the name of the Rusty-fronted Barwing *Actinodura egertoni*.

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Information sheet 4

Organ by Peter Conacher & Co

Peter Conacher was born in Scotland in 1823, a time when there were few organs in Scotland, and little opportunity for a career in organ building, tuning and restoration.

Peter Conacher went to Leipzig where he was an apprentice organ builder and voicer. On his return to England he worked for Hill & Sons, and Walker & Sons. When Walker & Sons sent Peter Conacher to work on their new organ at Highfield Chapel, Huddersfield, he saw the opportunity to start his own firm in an area of rapid growth. Peter Conacher started trading in 1854 with a partner called Brown, who soon lost heart and returned to London. He took on a new partner, Joseph H. Hebblethwaite (a local gentleman and music-lover) and with his financial help built a new factory in George Street, equipped with a small steam engine which powered a circular saw. Recitals on his new instruments were given to large audiences in the erecting hall of the factory by two young men, Mr. Albert L. Peace (later Dr. Peace, of St. George's Hall, Liverpool) and Mr. Walter Parratt (later Sir Walter Parratt, Master of the Royal Music). On the death of Mr. Hebblethwaite, Peter Conacher was joined by his brother, and their first project was to build an organ for the Yorkshire Exhibition of 1866. This instrument was awarded a grand medal and was sold to Huddersfield Parish Church.

In 1873 Springwood Organ Works was opened. It was said at the time to be the largest and best equipped in England, and with its large steam engine, full compliment of machinery and eighty craftsmen, built around thirty large organs each year.

After training in France, Peter's son, Joseph H. Conacher brought several French organ builders home with him and joined the family firm. The firm went from strength to strength, but this was interrupted by a serious fire at Springwood Organ Works in 1910. There soon followed the Great War, after which the building of new places of worship declined, but Peter Conacher & Company's work was still in demand. The Depression and the Second World War followed, and many of Britain's old established organ builders closed down.

Today, Peter Conacher & Company is included on the Conservation Register maintained by the Conservation Unit of The Museums and Galleries Commission. The firm concentrates on the high quality conservation and restoration of pipe organs, harmoniums and reed organs of all makes, and carries out general maintenance and tuning, as well as continuing act as a Conservator for museums.

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Information sheet 5.

The SPIEGELBERG family

The Spiegelbergs' connection with Cotebrook started in 1912 when Assheton Clegg, Margaret "Marmie" Spiegelberg's father, bought Rushton Bank from the Executors of a Mr. Coupland. In 1925 he sold Rushton Bank to George Spiegelberg (Francis "Frank" Spiegelberg's father) who pulled the house down as it was full of dry rot and built the present house which he renamed Cotebrook House.

In 1926 his younger son, Anthony ("Tony") died of cancer in his second year at St. John's College, Oxford and is buried in St. Helen's churchyard.

In 1931 Frank married Marmie and their only daughter Diana, who had married Timothy Kirkbride in 1956, tragically died of polio in South India at the age of 24 in 1958.

To celebrate their Golden Wedding in 1950, George and Fanny (née von Recklinghausen) paid for re-arranging the choir stalls and chancel and gave the 17th Century painting above the altar. They both died in 1961 and are buried in the churchyard together with the ashes of their daughter, Mary Burne who died at the age of 91 in 1993.

Frank and Marmie with their family went to live at Cotebrook House in 1961. They died in 1979 and 1999 respectively and are buried in the churchyard. Their eldest son Anthony William Assheton ("Bill") has lived as a tenant of the Egerton family at Oulton Park House since 1979. He married Mary Rose ("Rosie") née Birch, and widow of The Hon. Hugh Stanley in 1973. For six years they lived between Buxton and Macclesfield but apart from that time, he has been a warden since 1962. Their daughter Diana was baptised in this church in 1977 and married Nicholas Edwards at St. Helen's in 2007. The other member of the family who is buried in the churchyard is John Francis, the youngest son of Frank and Marmie who died in 1995 at the age of 46. His two sons Benjamin ("Ben") and Hubert ("Bertie") were both baptised here in 1978 and 1982.

Richard, the second son of Frank and Marmie, had a Service of Blessing in the church after his marriage to Suzanne Dodd in 1980.

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