

## Introduction

Knutsford in Medieval days had two chapels, one on King Street, and the other known as the Parochial Chapel near to Booths Hall, which had been in existence since 1316. Under an Act of Parliament in 1741 Knutsford was made a District Parish, and ceased to be within the parish of Rostherne. A new church was commissioned under the architect John Garliver, who had already been responsible for Booths Hall. The church was built in Georgian style using local brick with stone dressings and consecrated on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1744.

## The Bells

As we approach this Grade II listed church up the steps from Church Hill we see the large bell tower which houses 8 fine bells. The tower originally held six bells which were cast by Abel Rudhall of Gloucester, five being recast from four bells that had previously hung in the Parochial Chapel. The first peal was rung on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1748. A further two bells cast by John Taylor & Co of Loughborough were added in 1996 to make the full peal of eight bells that can be heard today.

## The Porch

Entering at the doors in the tower, you come into the church. Take a good look at the various panels on the walls which contain many historical details. High up on the right hand corner, at the next set of doors, is a notice saying that the seats in the church are free and unappropriated. At one time people paid rents for seats in church and it took an arduous fight to get rid of this abuse.

## The Narthex

Entering the doors we move into the Narthex or reception area to the church which was created in 1975/76 by walling off the back part of the church to make, at that time, a place for meetings, etc, with a kitchen to the left and a room to the right. It also provided a new gallery upstairs, so joining the two side galleries. Stairs at either side of the narthex give access to the gallery area.

## The Interior

Entering through the doors ahead you move into the church itself where you see a building beautiful in its simplicity. Down either side, there are Tuscan columns, with arches and galleries above. The gallery runs along three sides of the church fronted with oak panels.

## The Chandelier

Hanging in the centre aisle, is an elegant brass chandelier, a gift from John Hall in 1763. It holds 24 candles which are lit on special occasions, such as the Christmas Carol Service.

## The Chancel

At the far end of the church, or east end, is the chancel, which dates from Victorian times and replaced the original apse recessed end in 1879. The chancel houses the communion table and choir pews. The letters IHS carved on the table are the first three letters of the Greek spelling for Jesus, reminding us of whom we worship. The cross and candlesticks on the table are superb examples of British workmanship by Sir Charles Nicholson and placed in church in the 1930s.

## The Windows

Above the table is the east window showing three scenes in the life of John the Baptist, to whom the church is dedicated. John the Baptist is the figure in brown. The window is a memorial to the vicar, the Rev Robert Clowes, who started the Knutsford May Day Festival in 1864, together with his two daughters.

Other stained glass windows may be seen in the aisles; on the north (left hand) side are two depicting Moses and Daniel. On the south side is one entitled 'Suffer the little children' given in memory of a child whose likeness is said to be that of the child in the window. The memorial, on this side wall, is by Sir Richard Westmacott, who was Professor of Sculpture at the Royal Academy in 1827, and was responsible for the figures in the pediment over the portico of the British Museum.

## The Lectern and Pulpit

The brass lectern, shaped like an eagle, is the stand which holds the Bible and from which God's Word is read. The eagle is standing on a round ball, which represents the world and the eagle's outstretched wings are a symbol of the spread of the Gospel over the world. On the other side is the pulpit, which was originally a three-decker, from which God's Word is preached.

## The Fonts

There are two baptismal fonts in the church. The larger one is ornate Victorian Gothic and has scenes from the life of Christ round the bowl. The smaller font dates from 1741 and is marble with a wooden cover made in 1910. It was apparently discarded when the larger font was given to the church, but was eventually found in a Knutsford garden in 1909 and restored to the church.

## The Memorial Chapel

The Memorial Chapel on the south side is panelled in old oak which came from Tabley Old Hall and commemorates the fallen of two world wars. There is a plaque dedicated to the men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Parachute Battalion, No 2 (Para) Commandos and the SAS Battalion who trained in the area during World War 2. During 1943 the Rotary and Inner Wheel of Knutsford 'adopted' HMS Wren, a ship in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Escort Group escorting Atlantic and Russian convoys, and with the help of the town provided comforts for the crew, thus starting a lasting relationship with the town. The ship's bell was presented to the church and the HMS Wren Association Standard laid up for safe keeping on the disbanding of the Association in April 2010.

Other items of interest are the brass lectern made from shell cases from World War 1, brought from Flanders and presented to the church by Rev 'Tubby' Clayton of Toc H fame. He lived for a time at the Test School in the 1920s. This was housed in the disused gaol building behind the Sessions House, and was for men to test their vocation to the ministry. The men worshipped in the church and there is a photograph of many of them near the door to the narthex on the right, together with a brass memorial plate.

One further item is the credence table at the side of the chapel, which was made from the old church doors of 1744. They were rescued by some far sighted person just as they were about to be thrown out.

### The Organ

The organ, an important instrument in any church, has been replaced and updated a number of times. The first organ was installed in 1773 in the West Gallery and removed in 1879 leaving the two side galleries and the east end extended with two side vestries. Above the south side choir vestry an organ chamber was constructed. The present organ was installed in 1882 by Alex Young. It was rebuilt in the early 1900s by Binns of Leeds, when some additions were made. The console at the time was inside the organ chamber, the organist looking out from two opening doors almost about the vicar's pew.

A further rebuild was completed in the 1940s and a new console placed out on the south gallery as seen today. In 1986 Leonard Reeves of Stoke rebuilt the action and the console, together with a major clean-up. The action was electrified, direct from the keys to the pipes, giving a much better response. The console downstairs was installed in 1996 enabling the balance of the organ to be better heard and adjusted for congregational and choir singing. In 2010 the organ works were cleaned and work done to update the electronic action that makes the organ play. A recording system has been installed that enables the organist to record the playing of the organ into a laptop computer for future playback when the organist is not available. For further details see separate booklet.

### The Church Centre

Attached to the south side of the church building is the Church Centre, entered through the double doors at the south corner from the church, or from outside down the side of the church. It was built in Georgian style to match the church and is in similar brickwork. It was dedicated by the Bishop of Chester in September 1991 and forms a useful addition to the church, providing space for children's and youth work, toddler groups, meetings and conferences.

### To Conclude

This church building that you have visited may have changed over the years since 1744, seen many historical events and known many changes in our town and nation. However, the Worship of God, the reading of the Word of God, the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Salvation he offers to all who believe remain the same.

We read in the Bible: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever – Hebrews ch13 v8

For God so loved the World that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life – John ch3 v16

For more details take a Preaching Programme leaflet, giving full details of services and other activities

Look at our website: [www.stjohnsknutford.org.uk](http://www.stjohnsknutford.org.uk)

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st john's knutford   
TRUTH UNITY MISSION

## WELCOME TO THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST KNUTFORD

### INFORMATION LEAFLET

Please feel free to look around and learn more about this beautiful building

