

PINE CONE

The Newsletter of The Friends of St Mary's Church, Wreay
Issue No28 May 2024



St Mary's Church circa 1898

Shrovetide in Wreay
Heating St Mary's
Wreay View

DEAR FRIENDS



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"Tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire."

Gustav Mahler

I trust that Mahler would have approved of the event on Shrove Tuesday in a packed Plough Inn. The folk music of his childhood and the sounds of village songs and dances are tightly woven into his songs and symphonies. The musicians who played at Pass the Jug Round showed us that traditional music is very much aflame, with renditions of songs passed down and contemporary works inspired by place and nature. It was a joyous evening which, I believe, brought back some of the Shrovetide festivity to Wreay.

The main item in Pinecone 28 takes a more literal look at ashes and fire with a historical review of the heating of St Mary's. This was prompted by the fact that our present oil boiler has ceased to function and the requirement today to consider the ecological aspects of heating our churches. It is a very difficult tightrope to walk - how to ensure a warm welcome for occupants of the church and how to preserve its precious fabric and yet at the same time having a reduced impact on the environment.

Finally we look forward to a celebration of the visual arts with a workshop led by the talented professional artist, Alison Critchlow. This will be followed up by an exhibition of works of art featuring or inspired by St Mary's Church and Wreay village, past and present. I do hope that you will be able to drop in over the August Summer Bank Holiday weekend.

Thanks once again to Peter Ratcliffe for his generous sponsorship of this edition of Pinecone.

Raymond Whittaker, Chairman and Editor

SHROVETIDE IN WREAY



For centuries Shrove Tuesday has been a day of riotous events in the village of Wreay most of which we would now consider to be totally unacceptable. This year the Friends brought celebration back to Shrovetide in Wreay with an evening of folk music, pancakes and tales of Cumberland past in the Plough Inn.

Since at least 1655 there had been the annual Shrove Tuesday cock fight. It was in that year that a Mr Graham gifted a small silver bell as the winner's trophy. The previous year Oliver Cromwell had banned cock fighting but Mr Graham, who along with the majority of Cumbrian gentry, was a Royalist so was only too pleased to show his contempt for the Roundhead government.

Three weeks before the event the boys of the school chose two of their colleagues as captains, provided that their parents were able and willing to bear the expense of the contest. After an early dinner the two captains along with their friends, distinguished by blue or red ribbons, marched in procession to the village green each with three cockerels. The ultimate winning captain pinned the silver bell to his hat. The bell is recalled on the flag of Wreay which is displayed in the Plough and flies from the village green flagpole.

By the early 19th century cock fighting was recognised as a barbaric custom and was superseded, for better or worse, by the Wreay Hunt along with a mock election of a mayor of Wreay. This dates back to one Shrove Tuesday around 1780 when the Duke of Norfolk along with John Losh of Woodside, father of Sarah Losh, and his brother James, having finished dinner and no doubt a bottle

or two in the Plough sallied forth to the village green in a mock procession - the Duke wearing a blue silk scarf was Mayor, John Losh his sword bearer and James as Recorder of the borough of Wreay. Mr Liddell of Moorhouse preceded them as town crier calling out 'Oyez, oyez' with the villagers joining in. A local newspaper report of 1846 enters into the spirit of this tradition of the small village of Wreay making fun of the neighbouring Carlisle City.

'On Shrove Tuesday this event, which had been looked forward to with considerable interest in the neighbourhood, came off with great eclat, when no less than 115 of the aldermen, councillors, and independent burgesses of the ancient municipality of Wreay dined with the Worshipful the Mayor, Peter Hodgson Esq of Dalston Old Brewery. It is needless to say that the banquet was sumptuous, and if turtle soup and sherbet were wanting, the deficiency was more than made up in the abundant and substantial fare provided by the respected hostess, Mrs Longrigg, of the Ploughman Inn. She had done all she could to set off her property to advantage, and the large room in which the company feasted was suitably fitted up for the occasion. The worshipful the Mayor acquitted himself with a dignity befitting the high office which he had the honour to hold, and the account given of the proceedings of the corporate body during the past year sustained the celebrity of the ancient borough, and contrasted strongly with the tortuous policy of a neighbouring rival, which affects to regulate the internal economy of a small village commonly known by the name of the City of Carlisle.'

'On Tuesday the assemblage was numerous, and the whole party entered into the excitement of the chase. The dinner took place at half-past two. Then came the election of the chief magistrate for the ensuing year. Moffat Hetherington Esq polled 49, Wilfred Kirkup Esq 45 Joseph Hall Esq 21. The

Errant Thieves



Mark Carruthers



John Chambers



Worshipful Moffat Hetherington was accordingly declared duly elected amidst plaudits of the multitude.'

'The sports were then proceeded with, and amongst those worthy of notice were the foot races of the pupils of Wreay School; they were well contested and caused considerable amusement. A pair of gloves were likewise leaped for. The Mayor elect, celebrated for his agile and athletic feats, won the guerdon of his skill, but generously handed them to the one who next came nearest to the mark. Afterwards the chairing of his worship was conducted with due ceremony. He was carried through the borough in triumph and great array, whilst the splendid streets of the populous borough resounded to the continuous acclamation of the multitude. The day was beautifully fine, and the sun never shone or set on a more cheerful scene'.

Perhaps the scene in the Plough on Shrove Tuesday 2024 was not as riotous but nevertheless the establishment was full to overflowing with the current landlord, Sam Fiddler, and chef, Ben, serving pancakes savoury and sweet. Entertainment was provided by Errant Thieves, Mark Carruthers, John Chambers and The Talkin Fellas with folk songs, traditional and new, based on local history and landscape. Linda Scott recited poems in local dialect and tales of Shrove Tuesday past were told.

The evening started and finished with recordings made in 1953 and 54 in the Plough Inn by two Carlisle friends, Robert Forrester and Norman Alford, who had spent many happy hours cycling around north Cumberland sketching, fishing and visiting the local public houses. There they met and made friends with 'some grand old lads' and encouraged them to sing some of the old songs that they knew. Some 70 years later we heard the voices of those 'grand old lads' echoing down the decades.

Linda Scott



The Talkin Fellas



HEATING ST MARY'S

by Raymond Whittaker

How do you heat a church in a time of climate crisis?

In February 2020, General Synod set a target for all parts of the Church of England to become Net Zero by 2030. "Net Zero Carbon" is defined as when the amount of greenhouse gas emissions added to the atmosphere is no more than the amount removed, reached by radically reducing emissions and removing the remaining "residual" emissions, through purchasing renewable energy and offsetting.

This is an ambitious, and some may say an impossible, target given the nature of the Church of England's building stock, particularly the churches themselves – ancient buildings of historic value, large in volume, draughty, with no insulation and little opportunity for installing any without radically affecting their character, used infrequently, for short periods only, by diminishing congregations with access to limited funds. And yet it is a responsibility that weighs heavy on us all – we must reduce our carbon footprint or else face the dire consequences.

Considering the way forward first of all led me to explore how St Mary's was heated in the past.

The financial accounts for the building of St Mary's throughout 1841 and 1842, as copied by the Rev Richard Jackson into his notebook, list in detail the cost and origin of timber, stone and glass but make no reference to any form of heating except for a brief footnote to 'stove ornaments from Paris'. It is not clear whether this means ornaments that adorn stoves or, more likely, ornamental stoves.

Henry Lonsdale in his 1867 book, *The Worthies of Cumberland*, writes in the chapter dedicated to Sarah Losh:

'The stove at the west end of the church is of iron, cast in the form of the stem of the sigillariae, as found in the lower Northumbrian Coal-Measures. On the antique stove in the east end stands a bronze holy-water pail.'

The concept of a stove resembling a sigillaria - a tree-like plant from the Carboniferous and Permian periods that reached a height up to 30 metres, with a tall, single or occasionally forked trunk – sounds to be so in tune with the designs of Sarah Losh, which include a pulpit in the form of a prehistoric calamite. So we can safely assume that the church was heated originally by two stoves at the west and east ends which presumably were coal fired and so required flues.

Visitors to St Mary's will have noted the grotesque reptilian figures that sit at eaves level at each corner of the nave - a dragon at the north east, crocodile at the south east and snake at the south west, each sitting to one side of a stone pier. At the north west corner there are two creatures, a tortoise beside the pier and an unknown winged, sharp toothed beast directly above the cap stone of the pier. We can be certain that the dragon lived up to its fire breathing reputation and terminated a flue within the north east stone pier as Henry Lonsdale recorded Sarah's concerns over the stability of the dragon in her own words:

'Should any repairs be required here, great caution should be used to prevent it falling. The iron bar inserted in its jaw, is to prevent the starlings from making nests in it. A fine brood of young birds was hatched here soon after its erection, and the flue was completely choked up by the sticks and rubbish of the nest.'

The flue can still be identified by the square metal access door at the base of the pier. This would serve the stove at the east end but what of the cast iron west end stove? Did this have a similar flue that terminated with the winged beast atop the north west pier? There is no evidence of an access door but then the chimney would most likely have been cleaned from the metal flue leaving the stove. Perhaps this was also originally the case with the north east stove and the flue access door was introduced at a later date when the heating was modified.

The Rev A R Hall in his 1929 publication, *Wreay*, throws some light on the flues/chimneys while confusing matters as well:

'Projecting from the eaves at each side are grotesque reptilian figures.....One of these figures, the crocodile at the north west corner, served a useful purpose. From his mouth smoke might once have been seen to issue. In the original heating system of the Church, a stove was placed below the floor in the centre of the nave, and a flue run beneath the surface diagonally to this corner, and up the wall through a chimney which terminated in the crocodile's mouth.'

The crocodile is actually on the south east corner so is Rev Hall referring to the winged beast at the north west? He records that 'the original heating system of the Church, a stove was placed below the floor in the centre of the nave'. It is not unusual for stoves or boilers to be placed in sunken pits within the nave central aisle and often covered over by an ornamental grille. St John's Church at Cumdivock has an extant pit. St John's was built between 1870 and 1872 to the designs of the Carlisle based architect, C J Ferguson, who would later have an involvement in changes at St Mary's. It seems likely that the Rev Hall is describing this later version of the heating system and not the 'original' as he claims..

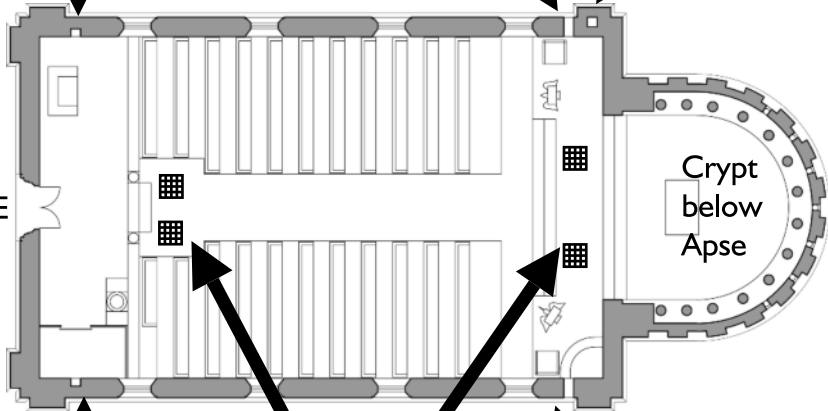
Tortoise & Winged Beast



Dragon



Flue Access



Snake



Floor Grilles



Crocodile

Jenny Uglow, in her 2012 book *The Pinecone*, perhaps following the Rev Hall's lead, writes that 'the four monsters on the corners hid ventilators while the dragon on the north-west (east) corner was 'for the emission of smoke' from the boiler below the floor of the nave.' Following close inspection I would question that the monsters on all four corners hid ventilators as, while the dragon, tortoise, crocodile and winged beast are open mouthed, the snake's mouth remains firmly shut!

By the 1880s heating technology had moved on and, under the patronage of Rev James Arlosh, Sarah's nephew and inheritor of Woodside, a new system was installed. The Carlisle Express and Examiner reported on 26th September 1885 the re-opening of St Mary's:

'The interesting church at Wreay, built some thirty years ago by Miss Losh of Woodside, will be reopened on Sunday next with a harvest thanksgiving. For some time past the church has been under the workmen's hands. A new heating apparatus has been inserted by Messrs Haden of Manchester, and the interior has been painted and decorated by Leech [sic] of Cambridge, under the direction of Mr C. J. Ferguson. The very pretty churchyard has been laid out and walks formed round the church.'

George and James Haden, heating engineers of Trowbridge, specialised in 'state of the art' hot air systems and worked throughout the United Kingdom on private residences, public buildings and churches. In 1842 George Haden had patented 'Apparatus for warming and ventilating buildings'. A client list of the mid 1840s starts with His Most Gracious Majesty, George the Fourth (Windsor Castle) and His Grace, the Archbishop of Canterbury (Lambeth Palace). Further down the list are included Sir James Graham Bart MP (Netherby) and, along with colleges and schools, the News and Reading Rooms in Carlisle.

Rev A R Hall noted in his book, *Wreay*.

'The mode of heating was afterwards replaced by another, by means of hot air, the air being taken in through grids at the west end of the Church, passing along a trench to a furnace placed in the crypt, and thence back to the Church through grids at the eastern end. When this was done the turret-like chimney to the north east was built.'

The floor grilles remain, two at the west end of the nave aisle and two on the step leading to the apse, now infilled below the metalwork with stone slabs. The formation of ductwork beneath the stone slab floor was presumably made easier by the fact that in order to keep the floor dry Sarah had raised it on dwarf walls creating a ready-made void. The 'turret-like chimney' can be seen on photographs of the church in the album presented to Rev Hall by the villagers

on the occasion of his marriage in 1898. A circular flue rises up through the roof just above the now redundant dragon and terminates in a lantern style chimney with conical hat giving it a rather oriental appearance.

The Rev Hall continues in his 1929 publication:

'The same chimney serves now for the third mode of heating which has been adopted – that of low pressure hot water, distributed by pipes and radiators from a boiler placed in the crypt.'

There is no explanation as to why the ducted hot air was abandoned. Was it merely down to changing fashion and improving technology? But this new technology was to have its own short comings as Rev Hall wrote in his Annual Parochial Statement in January 1933:

'After ten years use the boiler of the heating apparatus developed a crack, making necessary a new section, and other repairs, which will cost not less than £10 – but this can be met from the ordinary income of the General Church Fund.'

It proved not to be that simple as two years later he wrote:

'The boiler of the Church Heating Apparatus has been found to be so defective, that the Church Council have decided to have it renewed at an estimated cost of £26 – towards which I invite donations from all parishioners and members of the congregation.'

This episode has a familiar contemporary ring.

The heating arrangement in St Mary's has retained the same principle design up to the present day with changes to the fuel source, oil replacing coal, a new boiler with balanced flue passing through the crypt wall and additional multi-paneled radiators to improve the comfort levels for a congregation used to centrally heated homes. In 2007 the latest installation was carried out by Christopher Dunphy Ecclesiastical Ltd. The company, formed over 40 years ago by a young Chris Dunphy working from a base in Littleborough, Lancashire, is perhaps the 20th century equivalent of G & J Haden. In 1979 the company



St Mary's circa 1898



Detail of chimney

installed the heating in Salford Cathedral and by 1987 were working nationally, specialising in the design and installation of heating systems for churches.

The 21st century has seen improvements in control systems with the Dunphy 'Churchwarden' constantly monitoring the internal and external temperatures and capable of being programmed to keep the church at a low temperature throughout the week, so maintaining the fabric of the building, and boosting it in time for Sunday services.

Boilers housed within the damper atmosphere of the crypt will only last so long and so the present PCC is faced with the same problem as the Rev Hall reported in 1935 unfortunately the cost will far exceed £26! Today, though, we have new concerns to consider. With the target of Net Zero Carbon by 2030 it is no longer simply acceptable to replace like-for-like fossil fuel boilers and so the PCC have carried out a thorough options appraisal and drawn up a de-carbonisation plan. To help with this process the church commissioned an energy audit from a national consultancy, ESOS Energy, which the Friends of St Mary's funded.

The report discounted many of the 'eco' solutions such as air and ground source heat pumps and solar panels as they would have significant visual impact upon this Grade II* building and could not be delivered via the current efficient pipework and radiator installation. One option is to change to an electrical system with under pew heaters which complies with the church authority's principle of heating the people rather than the building. However there is concern that this approach would not maintain the condition of the unique fixtures and fittings in St Mary's as well as the apse murals - the only remaining example of F R Leach & Sons work in this area in the mid 1880s.

The PCC has recently gained approval for the replacement of the existing boiler with a new more efficient HVO-ready oil boiler. HVO stands for hydrotreated vegetable oil and, as part of the paraffinic family of fuels, it is a fossil-free alternative to mineral diesel, resulting in up to 90% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. There are concerns, though, over its possible reliance on palm oil and the resultant deforestation of areas.

It has been noted that small rural churches contribute only a minor percentage of carbon emissions and St Mary's in particular has been considered an exceptional case as it is necessary to heat the building as well as the people in order to maintain the unique fabric. Moving forward, however, the PCC will continue to take note of the development of 'green' technology and look to positively improve the carbon footprint of St Mary's whilst continuing to care for and preserve this special place.



WREAY VIEW

The Friends of St Mary's Church, Wreay

ART WORKSHOP WITH ALISON CRITCHLOW

Saturday 15th June 10am to 4pm
The Sarah Losh Heritage Centre, Wreay

A day's art workshop led by the talented professional artist, Alison Critchlow, drawing inspiration from the unique St Mary's Church and its surroundings. Work in the medium of your choice and show it at the exhibition in August. Tea/coffee available, bring your own lunch.

£25 per participant bringing own materials. £30 including materials.

Contact raymondwhittaker53@gmail.com to book a place.

ART EXHIBITION

Saturday 24th August to Monday 26th August 10am to 4pm
The Sarah Losh Heritage Centre, Wreay

An exhibition of works of art featuring or inspired by St Mary's Church and Wreay village.
Free entry Refreshments available