

# VCH SHROPSHIRE

## Vol. VI (ii), Shrewsbury

### Sect. 2.1, Parish churches

#### 4.1.4, St Chad's

This text is made available to readers in advance of its full publication. We welcome suggestions for improvement, references and, of course, we invite readers to point out errors.

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Illustrations may be found in a further file.

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## ST CHAD

St Chad's and St Mary's represent two early ecclesiastical poles, situated on the highest points within the loop of the Severn and associated respectively with episcopal and royal authority from at least the 10th century. As a parish church under the patronage of the bishop of Lichfield, St Chad's commanded the largest and most populous of the Shrewsbury parishes, its territory extending beyond the medieval borough. The history of St Chad's is complicated by the fact that the tower of the medieval church collapsed in July 1788 and a new church, bearing the same name, was erected on a nearby site. Whilst there is a continuous ecclesiastical history, in the history of the church as building there is a profound break. This account presents what can be discovered about the lost church whilst describing the standing building of the new St Chad's, which was consecrated in August 1792 and remains in use for regular worship.

### CHURCH ORIGINS AND PAROCHIAL ORGANISATION

The continuity of urban life at *Viroconium* in the later 6th through to the mid 7th century, and the putative seat of a bishop there, suggests not only the continuance of Christianity in the area, but the importance of the Roman city within a local ecclesiastical organisation.<sup>1</sup> A successor church established at the site of the future Shrewsbury is a possibility.<sup>2</sup> Such a church might have been appropriated by the Mercian regime, but equally St Chad's might have been a new foundation along with the westwards extension of Mercian authority in the late 7th century, or the establishment of Shrewsbury as a seat of Mercian royal power in the 9th century.<sup>3</sup> It has been argued that the site of Shrewsbury was first settled by religious communities, with St Chad's the earliest and having formerly held more extensive estates that had suffered fragmentation by 1066.<sup>4</sup> An alternative view, however, is that Mercian royal authority came first, with royal estates being divided and shared to endow the episcopal church, creating an assemblage of 'divided vills'.<sup>5</sup> This view fits the situation in the Mercian burgh of Shrewsbury, which was divided, for ecclesiastical purposes, between the royal free church of St Mary in the north and the episcopal church of St Chad in the south. The matter is

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<sup>1</sup> *VCH Salop* VI pt 1, 5–7, and references.

<sup>2</sup> *VCH Salop* II, 114–19, note 18.

<sup>3</sup> *VCH Salop* VI pt 1, 7.

<sup>4</sup> *VCH Salop* VI pt 1, 7; *VCH Salop* II, 114–19, notes 16, 17.

<sup>5</sup> A. Sargent, *Lichfield and the Lands of St Chad. Creating Community in Early Medieval Mercia* (Hatfield, 2020), 70–3.

further complicated by the origins and status of the respective holdings of the bishop and of the church of St Chad in and around Shrewsbury.<sup>6</sup> In 1086, the bishop was recorded as having held 16 dwelling places (*masurae*) in the *civitas* of Shrewsbury, which were liable to geld as burgages, of which 10 were now waste and the remaining six paid a total rent of 4s. 7d. The next entry in Domesday Book records that the bishop once had 16 canons in Shrewsbury, who did not pay geld, and it was not known what they had formerly rendered to the bishop.<sup>7</sup> Before 1066, therefore, the precursor to St Chad's was a well-endowed community of 16 resident canons directly dependent on the bishop. By 1086, 'St Chad' did not hold any taxable property within the town, but possessed a block of manors west of the Severn: Bicton, Onslow and Rossall, with Shelton held as tenant of the bishop; Broughton and Yorton more distant to the north; as well as the isolated manors of Marton (Wittery hundred) and Little Eton (Condovery hundred). The bishop as tenant-in-chief held the 16 *masurae* in Shrewsbury free of geld, with the manors of Shelton, Betton, Crowmeole and Longner near Shrewsbury. The Anglo-Saxon religious community therefore appears to have ceased to exist by 1086. It was refounded or reorganised as a college of secular canons, probably by Bishop Roger de Clinton (1129–48).<sup>8</sup> The same bishop reorganised the Lichfield cathedral community into a college of secular canons.<sup>9</sup> His foundation of Buildwas Abbey also reorganised episcopal estates in mid-Shropshire, from which St Chad's acquired the bishop's lodging (*dominicum hospicium*) and up to 21 burgages in Shrewsbury.<sup>10</sup> The college of St Chad was established by 1152 when the bishop's right of patronage was confirmed by the pope.<sup>11</sup>

The estates in and around Shrewsbury held in 1086 by 'St Chad' or the bishop were incorporated into the medieval parish of St Chad.<sup>12</sup> The adjoining townships of Broughton and Yorton, about nine miles north of Shrewsbury, formed the most distant portion of the medieval parish, where the college of St Chad collected the tithes and possessed a valuable estate which furnished individual prebends. There was a priest at Yorton in 1086 and the 12th-century church of St Margaret remained in use until 1858.<sup>13</sup> The dean and chapter of St

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<sup>6</sup> The following is a summary of the detailed account of the medieval college in *VCH Salop* II, 114–19.

<sup>7</sup> Domesday reference. *VCH Salop* II, XXX.

<sup>8</sup> *VCH Salop* II, 114–19, notes 23–28.

<sup>9</sup> *VCH Staffs*. III, 140–66, note 36.

<sup>10</sup> *VCH Salop* II, 50–9, 114–16, notes 26–28; Sargent, *Lichfield and the Lands of St Chad*, 79–80, 122.

<sup>11</sup> *VCH Salop* II, 114–16, note 24.

<sup>12</sup> *VCH Salop* II, 114, notes 12–15.

<sup>13</sup> W. Price, *A Tale of Two Churches at Broughton in the Deanery of Wem & Whitchurch, Diocese of Lichfield* (Broughton, 2008).

Chad's provided a chaplain or curate. The chapelry was apparently lost to St Chad's parish with the dissolution of the college. In 1548 it was declared that St Margaret's, Broughton, was 'a parish church in the country' and the parish register begins in 1586. The patronage of Broughton and Yorton passed to the Crown with the other rights of the former college of St Chad, and eventually to the lord of the manor of Broughton.<sup>14</sup>

The parish thereafter consisted of a large part of Shrewsbury and eight rural townships; in 1772 there were about 900 houses.<sup>15</sup> The extensive parochial territories beyond the Severn were successively granted 'district chapelry' status during the mid 19th century, beginning with Frankwell, the closest and most densely populated. St George's chapel was constructed in 1832 and Frankwell became a district chapelry in 1837.<sup>16</sup> At Bicton there was a small chapel of ease with its own endowment, adjacent to Bicton Hall; c. 1788 the altar-piece from old St Chad's church was installed there.<sup>17</sup> Bicton became a district chapelry in 1857; Holy Trinity church was built on a nearby site and formally replaced the old chapel in 1888.<sup>18</sup> In 1855, the southwestern part of the parish became the district chapelry of Christ Church, Shelton and Oxon, consisting of the townships of Shelton and Oxon, Woodcote and Horton, and Crowmeole, with a newly-built church dedicated to the Holy Trinity, now called Oxon Church.<sup>19</sup> In 1860, the southeastern part of the parish became the district chapelry of St Margaret, Betton Strange, consisting of the townships of Betton Strange and Alkmere.<sup>20</sup> The boundary of St Chad's with Shelton and Oxon parish was adjusted in 1957 in favour of St Chad's.<sup>21</sup>

By the mid 1970s the parish of St Chad had a population of 2700 and was served by a vicar, a curate, a part-time assistant curate and a retired non-stipendiary minister. The parish absorbed the town centre portions of St Mary's parish in 1987. A group parish of St Chad and St Mary and St Alkmund was created in 2001.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> SRO, B/A/3/118; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 205; J.B. Blakeway, 'History of Shrewsbury Hundred or Liberties: Broughton', *TSAS*, 2nd ser., vol. 2 (1890), 319–32, at 327–8, 331; [anon. ed.], 'Inventories of the Church Goods of Shropshire temp. Edward VI.', *TSAS*, 12 (1900), 84–112, at 107, 111.

<sup>15</sup> SRO, B/V/5/18.

<sup>16</sup> *London Gaz.*, 17 Jan. 1837, 122.

<sup>17</sup> SRO, B/V/5/18: St Chad's, Shrewsbury, 3 (1772); SRO, B/V/5/22: Bicton (1832); Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 193 note 1.

<sup>18</sup> SA, P31/F/1/1, P31/B/3/1.

<sup>19</sup> *London Gaz.*, 8 May 1855, 1785. See SA, P243.

<sup>20</sup> *London Gaz.*, 12 June 1860, 2206.

<sup>21</sup> *London Gaz.*, 15 Mar. 1957, 1652.

<sup>22</sup> SA, P251/F/4/1/3/1.

## Advowson and Church Endowment

### *Advowson*

The bishop of Lichfield was patron of the deanery of the college of St Chad and collated to the prebends.<sup>23</sup> Royal patronage was asserted at times throughout the 14th century – a writ of prohibition in 1344 claimed that St Chad’s was a royal free chapel independent of all ecclesiastical jurisdiction – but these were ‘not serious attempt[s] by the Crown to obtain control of patronage’ from the bishop.<sup>24</sup> At the dissolution of the college in 1548, one of the curates was retained to serve the parish church and his immediate successors were appointed presumably by the Crown.<sup>25</sup> In 1579, Elizabeth I granted the Crown’s remaining rights in the former deanery of St Chad’s, including the advowson of the parish church and its chapelries, to Sir Christopher Hatton, who immediately sold them on.<sup>26</sup> In 1588, the corporation of Shrewsbury purchased the advowson and other rights from Hatton’s successors in title,<sup>27</sup> assuming the right to present a preacher or stipendiary curate to St Chad’s. Thomas ap Rees (Prees/Price), then the curate of St Julian’s, was appointed curate in 1579, and was ‘expressed to be appointed by a patent from the corporation’ of 1583.<sup>28</sup> Peter Studley was presented as minister and curate of St Chad’s by the corporation in 1623,<sup>29</sup> and Richard Poole in 1637.<sup>30</sup> In that year, the corporation’s right of patronage was challenged in the *quo warranto* proceedings that led to major revision of the corporation’s constitution. As part of this settlement, in 1638 the corporation agreed to surrender the advowson to the Crown.<sup>31</sup> In 1873 the Lord Chancellor conveyed it to the bishop of Lichfield.<sup>32</sup> When the parishes of St Mary,

<sup>23</sup> Above, note 000.

<sup>24</sup> *VCH Salop* II, 114–17, notes 46–54; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 185–6, 188.

<sup>25</sup> Edward Stevens (curate 1550–3): Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 212; J. Hunter, ‘Inventories of the Church Goods in the Town of Shrewsbury at the Time of the Reformation, and Proceedings Respecting Them in the Reign of Edward VI. A.D. 1552-53’, *Archaeological J.* 12 (1855), 269–74 at 271, repr. *TSAS*, 10 (1887), 399–408, at 403; John Marshall (occurs 1558, 1561): *Clergy of the Church of England Database* (CCEd), <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/persons>, CCEd person ID 27965.

<sup>26</sup> *VCH Salop* VI, 160, citing *VCH Salop* II, 117; *Cal Pat 1578–80*, 155; SA, P253/F/3/5/2/1; ‘Shropshire. Memorials or Statements of Charitable Donations’, 186–7; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 209.

<sup>27</sup> SA, P253/F/3/5/2/1; ‘Shropshire. Memorials or Statements of Charitable Donations:–52 Geo. III c.102’ in House of Commons. Miscellaneous Papers viz. Charitable Donations, Parish Returns, and the Poor Clergy. Session 8. November 1814–12 July 1815. Vol. XII, 170–91 at 186–8; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 210.

<sup>28</sup> SRO, B/V/1/11, B/V/1/15, B/V/1/24; CCEd person IDs 19121, 28675, 28693; cf. Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 212–15; B. Coulton, *Regime & Religion. Shrewsbury 1400–1700* (Logaston, 2010), 58, 59, 69.

<sup>29</sup> SRO, B/C/5/1640; ‘Shropshire. Memorials or Statements of Charitable Donations’, 183; CCEd person ID 28693; cf. Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 213.

<sup>30</sup> SRO, B/A/4/18, B/V/1/62; ‘Shropshire. Memorials or Statements of Charitable Donations’, 183; CCEd person ID 132746; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 215.

<sup>31</sup> *VCH Salop* VI, 153–4; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 209–10.

<sup>32</sup> SA, P253/F/2/1; *London Gaz.*, 6 May 1873, 2264–5.

St Alkmund and St Chad were merged in 2001, the advowson of the joint benefice remained with the bishop of Lichfield.<sup>33</sup>

### *Income and Property*

The medieval college of St Chad was endowed with lands, rents, tithes and profits of jurisdiction from properties both within the borough and beyond. The dean and canons were assigned particular prebends and also shared a common fund with the vicars choral and curates. The vicars choral and curates additionally received offerings and obits from the altars and chantries they served.<sup>34</sup>

In 1542, the dean and chapter let the deanery for 61 years at £10 per annum to Humphrey Onslow, a landowner in St Chad's parish.<sup>35</sup> Weeks later, the dean and chapter separately leased their rights in the chapelry of Broughton and Yorton to Roger Bromley of Broughton.<sup>36</sup> The college was dissolved in June 1548, when its gross value was assessed at nearly £50.<sup>37</sup> The site of the college was sold by the Crown in 1549 to Hugh Edwards and William Knight, then London merchants.<sup>38</sup> In the same year, the Crown granted the tithes of the farm or grange of Crow Meole to John Southcote and Henry Cheverton, who in 1550 sold them on to a parishioner, Roger Luter.<sup>39</sup> In 1552, the great tithes of Frankwell, Woodcote and Horton, Bicton and Calcott, Shelton, and Whitley and Welbatch, valued at £8 19s. 8d., were granted to Shrewsbury corporation as part of the endowment of the Free School.<sup>40</sup> The remaining tithes were leased to a George Beston or Beeston – probably George Beeston of Beeston (Cheshire) – in 1570,<sup>41</sup> while Onslow and Bromley retained their leases.<sup>42</sup> In 1579, ownership of the remainder of the former college property then in the hands of the Crown was granted to Sir Christopher Hatton.<sup>43</sup> The dissolution of the medieval college of St Chad

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<sup>33</sup> SA, P251/F/4/1/3/1. For the reorganisation see above in this section.

<sup>34</sup> See the detailed account of the college at VCH *Salop* II, 114–17.

<sup>35</sup> SA, 3890/2/1/16; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 201–2.

<sup>36</sup> J.B. Blakeway, 'History of the Liberties of Shrewsbury: Broughton', *TSAS*, 2nd ser., vol. 2 (1890), 326.

<sup>37</sup> VCH *Salop* II, 117; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 204–6.

<sup>38</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 258.

<sup>39</sup> 'Shropshire. Memorials or Statements of Charitable Donations', 186. For Roger Luter (d. 1601) see 'Shrewsbury Chronicle', 347.

<sup>40</sup> VCH *Salop* II, 117; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 206. See also SA, P253/F/3/2/48–49: bishop's claim to procurations from the impropiators of tithes of the former college of St Chad, 1749.

<sup>41</sup> TNA, E 321/28/52, E 321/29/88, E 321/43/100; 'Shropshire. Memorials or Statements of Charitable Donations', 186; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 205–6; 'Beeston, Sir George (c.1520–1601), of Beeston, Cheshire', *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1558–1603*, ed. P.W. Hasler (1981), <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/beeston-sir-george-1520-1601>.

<sup>42</sup> SA, 3890/2/1/16.

<sup>43</sup> See above, note 000 [26].

and the alienation of all its property thus set the scene for the limited endowment and absence of glebe lands of the post-Reformation parish church.

After the dissolution, a stipend of £15 per annum was granted to the curate, apparently by the Crown.<sup>44</sup> This was supplemented by donations. Thomas Nichols, pewterer, by his will of 1576, left £40 to provide an annuity to maintain ‘a learned, godly and virtuous preacher’ at St Chad’s, to be appointed by the corporation; from 1579, this provided £4 6s. 8d. per annum.<sup>45</sup> In his will of 1578, Thomas Blakemore, a London public notary who was born in St Chad’s parish, left a fund for finding a preacher at St Chad’s which realised £104 12s. 10d.<sup>46</sup> With this sum, supplemented by its own funds, in 1588 the corporation purchased the rights that had been awarded to Sir Christopher Hatton, notably the ‘Easter Book’, all the tithes from three pastures lying just outside the town wall, and the small tithes of Frankwell.<sup>47</sup> These were then demised by the corporation to each successive minister for his maintenance.<sup>48</sup>

Further income was recovered or donated. In 1623, David Lloyd ap Roger of Shrewsbury gave the corporation a tenement in Frankwell, among other benefactions, to pay 10s. per annum to ‘the minister or chief curate’ of St Chad’s.<sup>49</sup> In 1641, Thomas Edwards of the College, the former residence of the college clergy, gave a legacy of £2 per annum.<sup>50</sup> The Crow Meole tithe was restored in 1674 when the owner, Nathaniel Tench, a London merchant, gave the tithe to the corporation on trust for the whole proceeds of the tithe to be paid to the minister of St Chad’s for an annual sermon and on condition the minister resided and officiated in person.<sup>51</sup> By 1698, the original £15 stipend was said to yield less than half that sum.<sup>52</sup> Further small donations to endow sermons were made in the 18th century.<sup>53</sup> By 1772, the total endowment of the minister was *around* £150 or £160 per annum.<sup>54</sup>

The new church had a source of income from pew rents. An anonymous commentator writing in the early 19th century remarked that the pews were ‘let by auction’ and that there was

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<sup>44</sup> SRO, B/V/5/18, St Chad, Shrewsbury, 5 (1772); S. Watts (ed.), *Glebe Terriers of Shropshire. Part 2 (Llanyblodwel to Wroxeter)*, Shropshire Record Series 000 (Keele, 000), 102. See above, note 000 [25].

<sup>45</sup> ‘Shropshire. Memorials or Statements of Charitable Donations’, 186–8.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> SA, P253/F/3/5/2/1; Watts (ed.), *Glebe Terriers*, 102–3; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 204, 210.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Shropshire. Memorials or Statements of Charitable Donations’, 187–8.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 183–4.

<sup>50</sup> Watts (ed.), *Glebe Terriers*, 102; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.*, II, 258–9: Thomas Edwards of the College (1555–1634). See below, ‘Clergy Houses’.

<sup>51</sup> ‘Shropshire. Memorials or Statements of Charitable Donations’, 188.

<sup>52</sup> Watts (ed.), *Glebe Terriers*, 102.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 102–4.

<sup>54</sup> SRO, B/V/5/18, St Chad, Shrewsbury, 5.

‘considerable competition for the most favourable positions’.<sup>55</sup> Pews were auctioned for a period of five years and the rent raised at the 1827 auction was £457. In 1832 the auction raised £412 9s. 6d., five years later in 1837 this had increased to £479 13s. 6d. and in 1842 there was a further increase to £483 11s. 6d.<sup>56</sup> In 1851, however, the vicar reported that there were no pew rents ‘at present’.<sup>57</sup>

In 1851 the living was worth £350 per annum, out of which the vicar paid £120 for a curate and a smaller sum for a second curate.<sup>58</sup> In 1873, when the patronage was conveyed to the bishop of Lichfield, the gross income was stated to be £365.<sup>59</sup> In 1893 the Ecclesiastical Commissioners awarded £21 per annum to the vicarage; an additional £21 per annum was added in 1909 and £3 in 1911.<sup>60</sup> In 1908 the Lichfield Diocesan Church Extension Society made a grant of £160 towards the augmentation of the benefice.<sup>61</sup> By 1909 the number of pews that could be rented had decreased and the rent was £193 13s. 0d.,<sup>62</sup> and by 1938 there was a ‘scheme in place to abolish pew rents’.<sup>63</sup> In 1935 the living was worth £520 gross per annum and by 1951 it had increased to £668.<sup>64</sup>

### *Clergy Houses*

Individual houses and gardens were provided for the dean and 10 canons within the extensive college precinct extending south of the church.<sup>65</sup> From the 13th century these dignitaries were not generally resident, however, and the prebendary plots were leased or sold. The premises consisting of a gatehouse, courtyard, hall and dovecote, known as ‘the College’, was the residence of the vicars choral and other clergy who served in the church.<sup>66</sup> At the dissolution of the college all these properties were sold.<sup>67</sup>

After the Reformation no house was provided for the incumbent of St Chad’s until the 20th century.<sup>68</sup> Funds were raised by subscription, and in 1908–10 the house on Claremont Bank

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<sup>55</sup> SA, P253/V/3/3/3, [St Chad’s church] ‘A 100 Years Ago’ – undated, typescript (c.1917).

<sup>56</sup> SA, P253/1048/729, St Chad Pew Rent Auction Record. [not found in current catalogue]

<sup>57</sup> Field, Church and Chapel, 76.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> SA, P253/F/2/1; *London Gaz.*, 6 May 1873, 2264–5 (the actual income figure is for 1871).

<sup>60</sup> *London Gaz.*, 5 May 1893, 2626; 9 Apr. 1909, 2819; 31 Mar. 1911, 2621.

<sup>61</sup> SA, P253/F/3/5/2/6.

<sup>62</sup> SA, P253/B/8/4/4, St Chad Pew Rents.

<sup>63</sup> SA, P253/H/2/2, St Chad Parish Magazine, July 1938.

<sup>64</sup> *Crockford’s Clerical Dir.*, 64 (1935), Darling, Edward Moore (vicar of St Chad’s since 1930); 74 (1951/2), Horan, Trevor Forbes (vicar of St Chad’s since 1945).

<sup>65</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 184–5, 200, citing deed of 1326.

<sup>66</sup> Thompson, ‘Certificates’, 307; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 199–200, 204, 256.

<sup>67</sup> VCH *Salop* II, 117, notes 106–14; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 258.

<sup>68</sup> SRO, B/V/5/18 (1772); *London Gaz.*, 6 May 1873, pp. 2264–5.



next to the churchyard, and its adjoining cottage, coach house, stables and grounds, were purchased by Lichfield Diocesan Trust for a vicarage.<sup>69</sup> In 1913 the (unmarried) vicar and curate both resided there.<sup>70</sup> In 1923 a freehold property at 21 Town Walls was purchased for the use of a curate; the total cost, including £35 for repairs, was £650. The monies required were raised from: subscriptions of £122, sale of work within the parish which raised £203 and a grant of £325 from the Ecclesiastical Commission.<sup>71</sup> In the late 1950s a house was purchased at 4 Copthorne Crest, Porthill, for the new curate and in November 1959 the parish newsletter mentioned that the parish needed '£250 to pay off the debt' on this property.<sup>72</sup> St Chad's vicarage is at 14 Claremont Bank at the time of writing.

## RELIGIOUS LIFE

### *The Middle Ages*

The college of St Chad was established in the first half of the 12th century.<sup>73</sup> The dean and most of the canons probably ceased to reside in the 13th century and the church was served by two sacristans (later 'curates'). Vicars choral were instituted, possibly in the late 12th century, when the church's fine martyrology was created.<sup>74</sup> In 1278/9, of the 19 or 20 burgages belonging to the church of St Chad in Shrewsbury, six were held by individual canons and one by the dean as pertaining to their prebends.<sup>75</sup> The distribution of the college's endowment between the dean and the 10 canons was confirmed in 1326. The 'vicars', presumably vicars choral, were assigned the tithes of the demesne at Betton Strange.<sup>76</sup>

In 1330 the dean and chapter granted all offerings made at the altar of St Martin to the upkeep of the church for 200 years.<sup>77</sup> 'Keepers of the fabric of the church of St Chad' had been

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<sup>69</sup> SA, P253/F/3/3/2–19, P253/F/3/6/12–13, P253/K/4/1.

<sup>70</sup> Derbyshire Advertiser and J., 2 May 1913, 4.

<sup>71</sup> SA, P253/K/3/, purchase of 21 Town Walls.

<sup>72</sup> SA, P253/H/4/2, St Chad Parish Newsletters, Nov. 1959; *Crockford's Clerical Dir.* (1961/2), 256, 1013, 1671.

<sup>73</sup> See above notes 8–11. A small collection of deeds concerning endowments for the maintenance of the church, 1280–1498, survived the dissolution of the college: SA, P253/B/4/7/1–28.

<sup>74</sup> VCH *Salop* II, 114–17, notes 64–80; Oxford, Bodl. MS Rawl. D 1225, martyrology.

<sup>75</sup> U. Rees, 'A Late-13th Century Rental of Tenements in Shrewsbury', *TSHAS*, 66 (1989), 79–84. These burgages, most reported to be 'waste' in 1278/9, should be distinguished from the canons' houses, cf. VCH *Salop* II, 116 note 65.

<sup>76</sup> VCH *Salop* II, 114–17, note 30, citing: Bodl. MS. Gough *Salop*. 14, pp. 28–35 (?copied from the martyrology: Bodl. MS Rawl. D 1225, f. 85?); Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II. 184–5. The feast of the translation of St Martin, the date on which the inquest was recited, is 4 July (cf. Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II. 185); possibly the recitation took place at the altar of St Martin, see note 81.

<sup>77</sup> SA, P253/B/4/7/8; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 196.

instituted by 1339.<sup>78</sup> By the mid 15th century, churchwardens ('guardians and surveyors of the fabric of the church of St Chad') were administering property in the town, including lands and tenements in Frankwell and Castle Foregate granted to the Weavers' Guild in 1469.<sup>79</sup>

The 'vicars' mentioned in 1326 probably already served chantries. Baldwin's chantry may have been founded for the soul of John Baldwin, who died in 1324.<sup>80</sup> John of Prees presented an image of the lying-in (*gesina*) of the Virgin Mary and other images which were displayed at the altar of St Martin by 1330, and in 1339 he endowed a chaplain to celebrate before the 'Gisina' (*sic*).<sup>81</sup> In 1386, the dean and chapter appointed Richard of *Estone* chaplain to a chantry in the church.<sup>82</sup>

In 1407 a Lollard priest named William Thorpe visited Shrewsbury and preached from the pulpit of St Chad's, denouncing transubstantiation, images and pilgrimages. He was thrown into prison in Shrewsbury then transferred to the Lollards' Tower at Lambeth Palace.<sup>83</sup> Thorpe must have had some sympathisers in the town, but otherwise the religious life of the church appears to have remained orthodox.

Between c.1410 and 1423, Benedicta Upton endowed almshouses in St Chad's churchyard. Administration of the endowment was entrusted to Thomas Attingham, the chaplain of the altar of the Virgin Mary *in gesina*. Richard Attingham, burgess, presumably a kinsman of the chaplain, made further grants to the almshouses, confirmed in 1457. By then the almshouses housed 13 poor people residing in 13 chambers under one roof.<sup>84</sup> At around the same time, c.1459, the Mercers Guild founded the altar of St Michael in St Chad's church, its endowment being to fund a chantry chaplain and also to provide for 13 poor people. In

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<sup>78</sup> SA, P253/B/4/7/10.

<sup>79</sup> SA, P253/B/4/7/20, /22, /25, /27.

<sup>80</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 208; Bodl. MS. Rawl. D 1225, f. 20v.

<sup>81</sup> SA, P253/B/4/7/8, /10; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 207.

<sup>82</sup> SA, P253/B/4/7/13.

<sup>83</sup> Forrest, *Old Churches*, 91; M. Jurkowski, 'The Arrest of William Thorpe in Shrewsbury and the Anti-Lollard Statute of 1406', *Hist. Research* 75 no. 189 (2002), 273–95.

<sup>84</sup> VCH *Salop* II, 110–12. Cf. the anonymous Shrewsbury Chronicle, reporting the apocryphal foundation by a brewer named Benedict Tupton in 1409/10 (*TSAS*, 1st ser., 3 (1880), 242–3).

1466/7, the almshouses and their administration were transferred to the Mercers Guild.<sup>85</sup> At the dissolution of the college, the Mercers' chantry was still responsible for the almshouses.<sup>86</sup> Meanwhile other chantries and obituary masses had proliferated.<sup>87</sup> The services of the Holy Trinity and of St John the Baptist existed by 1459.<sup>88</sup> Those that endured for more than a few generations were those founded or taken over by the town's guilds. Of the six guild chantries in Shrewsbury churches recorded in 1547/8, four were in St Chad's, one being the Mercers' service of St Michael. The service of St John the Baptist was founded by Thomas Berwick, Richard Hord and others, *c.* 1401, but by 1548 was the chantry of the Tailors and Skinners Guild.<sup>89</sup> The Weavers Guild took over the service of the Virgin Mary *in gesina* in 1469.<sup>90</sup> The service of the altar of St Katherine was said to have been founded by Robert *Endeslowe* (Onslow?) but by 1548 was the chantry of the Shoemakers Guild.<sup>91</sup> Finally, the Burton chantry in St George's chapel was founded by the will of Edward Burton of Longner, *c.* 1524. The town's 'morrow mass' was celebrated there daily when the daybell was rung.<sup>92</sup> The chantries in St Chads were all endowed to fund a single priest, usually one of the vicars choral. Of the four guild chantries, the Mercers' was the most generously endowed, with annual revenue of £7 9s. 8d. in 1548, but as noted above, it included maintenance of the almshouses. In comparison, the annual revenue of the Tailors and Skinners chantry was £4 8s. 10d.; the Weavers £2 10s. 0d, and the Shoemakers £2 5s 8d.<sup>93</sup> The Mercers, Tailors, and Weavers fraternities owned 30 messuages and 100 a. in the town and liberties of Shrewsbury.<sup>94</sup> In the early 16th century there were also images of St Chad and St Mary Magdalene in the church, and a decorated cross stood in the churchyard.<sup>95</sup> The college owned an impressive collection of vestments, including several copes of various seasonal colours, eight suits of vestments, and towels, cushions and pillows. Jewels and ornaments worth £140 were disposed of after the dissolution of the college.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>85</sup> SA, P253/B/4/7/20–2; W.A. Leighton, 'The Guilds of Shrewsbury. Mercers, Ironmongers and Goldsmiths Company', *TSAS*, 1st ser. 8 (1885) 269–412, at 364–70.

<sup>86</sup> A.H. Thompson, 'Certificates of the Shropshire Chantries under the Acts of 37 Henry VIII, cap. IV, and I Edward VI, cap. XIV', *TSAS*, ser. 3, vol. 10 (1910), 307–8, 341; *VCH Salop* II, 110–12.

<sup>87</sup> See *VCH Salop* VI part 1, 122–3, 125.

<sup>88</sup> SA, P253/B/4/7/21.

<sup>89</sup> *VCH Salop* VI, 123; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.*, II, 207–8; Thompson, 'Certificates', 308–9, 341.

<sup>90</sup> SA, P253/B/4/7/27; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.*, II, 207; Thompson, 'Certificates', 310, 342.

<sup>91</sup> Thompson, 'Certificates', 310–11, 342.

<sup>92</sup> Thompson, 'Certificates', 342–3; *VCH Salop* VI part 1, 122, 125.

<sup>93</sup> Thompson, 'Certificates', 306–11, 339–43.

<sup>94</sup> TNA, C 2/Eliz/H21/34.

<sup>95</sup> *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 258, 296.

<sup>96</sup> Hunter, 'Inventories of the Church Goods', 271–2, 273.

Wealthy and important individuals buried within St Chad's church included William Sugden, master of the Drapers' Guild, buried in 1502.<sup>97</sup> Morris Minton, 'one of the counsell' of the town, and Roger Luter, gent, were buried in the Lady chapel in 1523 and 1526.<sup>98</sup> Edward Burton, gent, of Longner (a detached portion of St Chad's parish), died in 1524 and was buried in St George's chapel alongside his wife Joyce (*Jocosa*).<sup>99</sup> An alabaster grave stone commemorating them was set beneath the Longner pew on the north side of the nave, possibly having been moved there at the dissolution of the chantry chapels.<sup>100</sup> Rowland Lee, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield and Lord President of the Marches, who died in Shrewsbury in 1542/3, was buried before the high altar; his brother, George Lee, was then the dean of St Chad's.<sup>101</sup>

In the late Middle Ages, as well as contributing to the maintenance of the church, the dean and chapter paid the salary or wages of the curate and secondary curate of the parish church. In 1543, Humphrey Onslow, as lessee of the deanery, agreed to discharge the dean and chapter's responsibility by paying part of the curate's salary at £4 6s. 8d. per annum.<sup>102</sup> At the time of the Dissolution there were at St Chad's the dean and 10 prebendaries, as well as four vicars choral and two parish priests (curates) engaged to sing daily divine service, the latter two being paid £6 13s. 4d. and £4 6s. 8d. respectively. A payment of 6s. 8d. was 'a reward to a Welshe preest at Lent tyme'.<sup>103</sup> The parish congregation consisted of around 1,000 'houseling' people (communicants).<sup>104</sup> [check reference]

### *Reformation to Interregnum*

In the iconoclasm that followed the Royal Injunction of July 1547, the pictures of St Mary Magdalene and St Chad were taken out of St Chad's and burnt in the Market Square.<sup>105</sup> All of the clergy were pensioned except one of the curates, Edward Stevens, who served as curate from 1550 to 1553.<sup>106</sup> Stevens was deprived of his ministry at St Chad's in 1553 for being

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<sup>97</sup> Shrewsbury Chronicle, 251; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 230.

<sup>98</sup> Shrewsbury Chronicle, 254, 255; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 230.

<sup>99</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 230, assert that this is the only reference to St George's chapel in St Chad's church, but see note 92, above.

<sup>100</sup> Shrewsbury Chronicle, 257; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 230–1, with engraving of the tomb stone (after Dugdale), now located in Atcham parish church. See below, 'Church Architecture'.

<sup>101</sup> Shrewsbury Chronicle, 257; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 231.

<sup>102</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 201.

<sup>103</sup> Thompson, 'Certificates', 307.

<sup>104</sup> Thompson, 'Certificates', 339–40.

<sup>105</sup> Shrewsbury Chronicle, 258; VCH *Salop*, VI part 1, 163.

<sup>106</sup> Shrewsbury Chronicle, 263. See above 'Advowson'.

married.<sup>107</sup> He was succeeded by John Marshall, possibly to be identified with the other curate of the dissolved college.<sup>108</sup> According to Owen and Blakeway, Marshall was in turn deprived at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign.<sup>109</sup> But in the *Liber Cleri* of 1558 a John Marshall alias Beche is recorded as curate and in 1561 a John Marshall again appears as curate. There is no evidence of any institution between 1558 and 1561 therefore it seems that John Marshall was not in fact deprived.<sup>110</sup> He certainly left his mark on local folklore for it was claimed that on the day of Elizabeth's accession in 1558 Edward Burton of Longnor Hall near Shrewsbury, 'a zealous assertor of the Gospel, all Queen Mary's days', was so overcome with joy that he 'immediately expired'. According to Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* Burton had expressed a wish that no 'mass-monger' should be present at his funeral. When his body was brought to St Chad's for burial, the curate, John Marshall, refused burial on the grounds that Burton's Protestant beliefs were heretical. Burton was therefore buried in his own garden.<sup>111</sup> If Marshall did refuse Christian burial on the grounds of heresy, this would have been a rare event indeed. There is apparently a precedent when, a few weeks earlier, the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield was said to have supported the curate of Wem's refusal to bury William Glover, also denounced as a Protestant heretic.<sup>112</sup>

Humphrey Onslow, a person closely involved with the affairs of St Chad's, funded building work on 'the upper part' of the Lady Chapel in c.1571–2.<sup>113</sup> This may have been connected with the burial of his nephew Richard Onslow (1527/8–1571), a prominent London attorney and sometime Speaker of the House of Commons, who died suddenly while visiting Humphrey in 1571. An elaborate tomb bearing fine alabaster effigies of Richard and his wife, Catherine, was erected in the arch between the south side of the chancel and the Lady chapel; it is now located in the Abbey church.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Shrewsbury Chronicle, 263.

<sup>108</sup> Thompson, 'Certificates', 340.

<sup>109</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 212.

<sup>110</sup> SRO, B/V/1/2; B/V/1/3; B/V/1/5; B/A/1/15, ff. 20r–21v.

<sup>111</sup> Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1583), Book 11, p. 1739; John Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online or TAMO* (1583 edition) (The Digital Humanities Institute, Sheffield, 2011). Available from: <http://www.dhi.ac.uk/foxe>. A more elaborate account is narrated in T. Phillips, *The History and Antiquities of Shrewsbury*, 2nd edition (ed. C. Hulbert) (1837), 204–6.

<sup>112</sup> Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1583), *ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Shrewsbury Chronicle, 270: listed in the annal for 1571/2, but not necessarily occurring in that year.

<sup>114</sup> Shrewsbury Chronicle, 269–70; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 167–8, 195 note 1; 'Onslow, Richard (1527/28–71), of Blackfriars, London', in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1558–1603*, ed. P.W. Hasler (1981), <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/onslow-richard-152728-71>.

Ecclesiastical commissioners met in St Chad's church in 1584 to review conformity in the town. On their instruction, the churchyard cross was taken down.<sup>115</sup> In 1587, during the incumbency of Thomas Price, the stone font was moved away from the entrance, taken out of the church and broken; it was replaced by a wooden one in the chancel. Following complaints from the congregation, however, the stone font (presumably, repaired) was reinstated in its former place less than a year later.<sup>116</sup>

Religious divisions continued in the 17th century. At a visitation held in 1633 presentments were made against more than a dozen recusants, a similar number of parishioners who refused to kneel for communion, and nearly two dozen who refused to bow at the name of Jesus.<sup>117</sup> Three years later great lengths were taken to pursue charges against one Walter Grinsell for covering his head during divine service, not kneeling during the confession, Litany or Lord's Prayer, not standing for the Creed and the Gospel and not bowing at the name of Jesus, even though the churchwardens repeatedly admonished him to stand, kneel and bow at the appropriate times.<sup>118</sup> The most notorious case was the murder in 1633 by Enoch ap Evan, a yeoman's son from Clun, of his brother and mother allegedly in a dispute over the propriety of kneeling at communion. Peter Studley, then curate of St Chad's, took the opportunity to publish a tract against Puritanism, which ascribed ap Evan's crimes to extreme Puritanism. The outcome was not favourable either for ap Evan, who was executed for his crimes, or for Studley who was compelled to resign in 1637.<sup>119</sup> His successor was Richard Poole, the last curate/preacher to be presented by the corporation. Poole was also rector of Meole Brace; he died in 1643 and was buried at St Chad's.<sup>120</sup>

### *Interregnum*

There is no episcopal record of the next minister of St Chad's, named Lendall, but in 1644 the corporation awarded him the £5 per annum stipend to read morning and evening prayers daily in St Chad's church. When Shrewsbury fell to the Parliamentarians in 1645, Lendall was among the prisoners taken.<sup>121</sup> In the 1640s proceedings were taken against Lendall for 'delinquency'.<sup>122</sup> In 1646 the parishioners of St Chad's elected Thomas Paget, a close

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<sup>115</sup> Shrewsbury Chronicle, 296.

<sup>116</sup> Shrewsbury Chronicle, 310; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 209; Forrest, *Old Churches*, 97.

<sup>117</sup> SRO, B/V/1/53.

<sup>118</sup> SRO, B/C/5/1635, 1636.

<sup>119</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 214–15; P. Lake, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and a Shropshire Axe-Murder', *Midland History* 15 (1990), 37–64; VCH *Salop* VI part 1, 167–8; TNA, SP 16/278/88; SP 16/386/89.

<sup>120</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 215; CCEd Person ID: 132746.

<sup>121</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 215–16.

<sup>122</sup> Auden, 'Ecclesiastical History of Shropshire', 253–4.

associate of the radical preacher Julines Hering. A ‘magisterial’ figure in Shrewsbury, nevertheless in 1659 he was persuaded to move to Stockport, clearing the way for the appointment of John Bryan, the son of Puritan divine Dr John Bryan of Holy Trinity, Coventry.<sup>123</sup>

*1660–c.1873*

John Bryan was ejected in 1662. Together with Francis Tallents, the ejected minister of St Mary’s, he remained in Shrewsbury and founded a Presbyterian church in the High Street in 1691.<sup>124</sup> Bryan was replaced in 1662 by Dr Roger Hayward, a royal chaplain and later prebendary of Lichfield Cathedral.<sup>125</sup> His successor William Bennett (vicar, 1681–1721) was a more humble Shrewsbury native, as was William Adams (vicar, 1732–75).<sup>126</sup>

In the 18th and early 19th centuries, St Chad’s maintained a tradition of low church observance, later described as ‘severely simple’,<sup>127</sup> and the accommodation of Nonconformism.<sup>128</sup> William Adams, himself baptised at St Chad’s, served as ‘vicar’ for over 40 years, from 1732.<sup>129</sup> ‘[As] a whig and low churchman, his politicks were unacceptable to many of his parishioners’, nevertheless he was praised for ‘his learning and talents, his gentlemanly demeanour, and the active zeal with which he promoted every useful institution’.<sup>130</sup> In 1772, Adams reported that he preached at St Chad’s every Sunday but for most of the year resided at his other living in Cound.<sup>131</sup> The role of ‘lecturer’, funded by ‘the Afternoon Sermon’, had devolved to a curate in deacon’s orders, whose stipend was £24 from the collection and £30 paid by the vicar.<sup>132</sup> In the 1820s the curate still served as lecturer.<sup>133</sup>

In 1772, Adams reported that a Presbyterian congregation was thriving in the town, with about 200 members and two meeting houses in St Chad’s parish, as well as meeting houses of Quakers and Anabaptists.<sup>134</sup> There were also 21 Roman Catholics in the parish, who met

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<sup>123</sup> Coulton, *Regime and Religion*, 106, 110, 113, 117–18, 128–9, 132.

<sup>124</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 216–18; Auden, ‘Ecclesiastical History of Shropshire’, 300–1. For biographies of Bryan and Tallents see Phillips, *History of Shrewsbury*, 218–22.

<sup>125</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 218; CCEd Person ID: 52300.

<sup>126</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 218.

<sup>127</sup> SA, P253/V/3/3/3 (c.1917).

<sup>128</sup> VCH *Salop* vi pt 1, 198–9.

<sup>129</sup> See for biography of William Adams: H.R.H. Southam, ‘Lord Clive and the Rev. Dr. William Adams, of Shrewsbury’, *TSAS*, 4th ser., vol. 7 (1918–19), 96–107 at 99–107.

<sup>130</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 218–19.

<sup>131</sup> SRO, B/A/1/21, B/A/1/23, B/A/4/31, B/V/5/18; CCEd, person ID 7054.

<sup>132</sup> SRO, B/V/5/18.

<sup>133</sup> SA, 6001/3055: Henry Pidgeon, ‘Salopian Annals’, I, f. 36v.

<sup>134</sup> SRO, B/V/5/18.

regularly for worship with a local priest, but, Adams declined to identify the priest or the location of the meetings.<sup>135</sup>

William Adams resigned the living in 1775 when he was appointed master of his Oxford college, Pembroke.<sup>136</sup> He was succeeded by Thomas Humphries, promoted from the second mastership of Shrewsbury School. On Humphries' untimely death in 1783, Thomas Stedman was presented by the Crown to St Chad's.<sup>137</sup> Stedman, from the Bridgnorth area, was also a graduate of Pembroke College, Oxford and of low church leanings. His early mentors were Sir James Stonhouse, bt and the eminent Shrewsbury Nonconformist, Job Orton.<sup>138</sup>

Thomas Stedman had not been long in post when it was revealed that the massive fabric of the medieval church was in danger of collapse. In the early summer of 1788, large cracks began to develop in the northwest crossing pier. Thomas Telford, county surveyor, recommended that the tower should be taken down and the nave roof and north wall reconstructed. It was too late, however. The start of hasty remedial work to the cracks weakened it further, and the northwest pier of the crossing arch collapsed early in the morning of 9 July 1788, the central tower falling catastrophically onto the body of the church below.<sup>139</sup>

Stedman duly and promptly published '*A Letter to the Inhabitants of St Chad's Parish on the Late Fall of Their Church*' (1788). Whilst the chancel, south transept and Lady chapel suffered little damage, the general opinion was that the old church should be taken down and a new church built. An Act of Parliament was passed for the purpose in 1789, empowering trustees to execute the project. The Act permitted the trustees to borrow £10,000 using the church rate as security.<sup>140</sup>

The Act stipulated that the old chancel had to be taken down within six months and the materials removed from the site. Salvaged fittings, furnishings and memorials were stored or

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<sup>135</sup> SRO, B/V/5/18. The priest lived in St Julian's parish (ibid.).

<sup>136</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 219–20.

<sup>137</sup> Letters from the Rev Mr Job Orton and the Rev. Sir James Stonhouse, Bart, M.A. to the Rev. Thomas Stedman, M.A. Vicar of St Chad's, Shrewsbury (2nd edn, 1805), II, 180–4.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.*, II, 245–7. See below, 'Religious Architecture' for the detailed account by W. Horton.

<sup>140</sup> SA, P253/J/4/2–6; SA, D 41: An Act for Re-building the Parish Church of Saint Chad, in the Town of Shrewsbury, and County of Salop, 29 G 3. c. 31. (1789); An act for enlarging the powers of an act passed in the twenty-ninth year of the reign of His Present Majesty, intituled, an act for rebuilding the parish church of Saint Chad,... (1791)



sent to other churches: for example, the altar-piece to Bicton chapel; the tree of Jesse window to St Mary's; the Burton memorial to Atcham parish church.<sup>141</sup>

The choice of site for the new church proved highly contentious, with opposing factions in the town advocating rebuilding on the old site versus building on a new one.<sup>142</sup> The conflict was resolved by the architect, George Steuart, who rejected the old site, leading to the location of the new church above the Quarry. Steuart produced several alternative plans, three rectangular, like his All Saints church in Wellington, and one circular. As the circular plan was both highly innovative and expensive, the trustees would have preferred a rectangular church. With the townspeople exhausted by the conflict over the site, however, Steuart was able successfully to promote his ambitious circular plan. The foundation stone was laid on 2 March 1790, the feast day of St Chad, 'without much ceremony', according to Owen and Blakeway.<sup>143</sup>

As the construction of Steuart's circular church was more expensive than the original budget allowed, a further Act of Parliament was passed in 1791, permitting the trustees to borrow a further £6,000.<sup>144</sup> The balance of the final accounts was £17,752 excluding the bells, for which a further £1000 was raised by subscription.<sup>145</sup> The new church was consecrated on 20 August 1792.<sup>146</sup>

On learning of the disaster in 1788, Sir James Stonhouse wrote words of comfort to his friend the vicar: 'You will get a new and more convenient church, in which you may be heard, instead of the large old gothic one'.<sup>147</sup> The circular design of the new church was particularly designed for the best acoustics, and also ensured that 'every individual ... may command a good view of the officiating minister', not least because Steuart's interior design included a triple-decker pulpit set centrally, in front of the altar.<sup>148</sup> It also accommodated a large congregation, up to 2150: with 1000 seated in the nave, 750 in the gallery and 400 poor persons on benches.<sup>149</sup> The radical design also dispensed with the conventional orientation,

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<sup>141</sup> Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 125, 531.

<sup>142</sup> E.g., *Hereford J.*, 29 Oct. 1788, 3.

<sup>143</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.*, II, 249–50. See below, 'Religious Architecture' for the detailed account by W. Horton.

<sup>144</sup> SA, P253/J/4/26; SA, D 41.

<sup>145</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.*, II, 250.

<sup>146</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.*, II, 249–50.

<sup>147</sup> Letters from the Rev Mr Job Orton ..., II, 272–3.

<sup>148</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.*, II, 252. See below, 'Furnishings' by W. Horton.

<sup>149</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.*, II, 252.

Steuart judging that the best arrangement for the site was to build the church with its small chancel at the west end.<sup>150</sup>

The greater part of Thomas Stedman's time as vicar was then spent in the new St Chad's church, where he served until his death in 1825.<sup>151</sup> Stedman's successor, James Edward Compson, may have initially ministered in person but by 1827 he 'found the duty of the parish too much for him' and engaged a curate.<sup>152</sup> Compson died in 1835 and was succeeded by Francis Knyvett Leighton. The same year, John Yardley, then assistant curate, was appointed stipendiary curate. In 1836 Leighton resigned and Yardley was promoted to vicar 'on the application of numerous and influential parishioners and from other quarters'.<sup>153</sup> Yardley remained vicar of St Chad's for his whole career, and apparently held no other living, until his death c.1888. Curates, therefore, were important during this period.<sup>154</sup>

Henry Stedman Polehampton, a grandson of Thomas Stedman, was appointed curate of St Chad's in 1849. He resigned in 1856 to become a chaplain to the East India Company but died the next year at Lucknow during the Indian Rebellion. Polehampton's successor, Frederick Wilson Kittermaster, was his contemporary at Pembroke College, Oxford. In 1858 Kittermaster preached his friend's funeral sermon at St Chad's, and published it with a biography of Polehampton.<sup>155</sup>

Kittermaster then addressed the traditional low churchmanship at St Chad's. In 1860 he introduced 'Gregorian chants'. The organist, J. Tomline Jones, initially resisted, claiming that the chants 'had a Roman Catholic tendency' and that the congregation disapproved. At least one parishioner, however, defended the curate in a letter to the *Shrewsbury Chronicle*.<sup>156</sup> Kittermaster tendered his resignation in 1864, 'with the sole view of restoring peace to the parish'. His supporters credited him with diligently serving the parish almost unaided and with achieving the parish's new charity school buildings in Bridge Street and other schools in the

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<sup>150</sup> See below, note [223].

<sup>151</sup> Pidgeon, 'Salopian Annals', IV, f. 30r.

<sup>152</sup> Pidgeon, 'Salopian Annals', V, f. 14r.

<sup>153</sup> *John Bull*, 3 Oct. 1836, 12.

<sup>154</sup> *Crockford's Clerical Dir.* (1868), 742; (1872), 967.

<sup>155</sup> F.W. Kittermaster, "Blessed Are They That Mourn". A Funeral Sermon on the Death of the Rev. Henry Stedman Polehampton, M.A. (London and Shrewsbury, 1858).

<sup>156</sup> *Shrewsbury Chron.*, 22 Mar. 1861, 5.

rural chapelries.<sup>157</sup> Yardley's son, John Scott Yardley, was appointed curate in 1875.<sup>158</sup> Further concerns about 'Romanising' were aired in 1885.<sup>159</sup>

In 1832, the parish population was 7720; the parish church had seating for 1688 of which 380 were free. Additionally, Bicton chapel had seating for 210 and the recently constructed chapel of St George (Frankwell) 750.<sup>160</sup> St George's, Frankwell, was created a district chapelry in 1837.<sup>161</sup> By 1851, the parish population had increased to 7924; St Chad's parish church had seating for 2050, of which 400 were free pews and 250 on benches. Three Sunday services were held; the average attendance was 1050 in the morning, 250 in the afternoon and 960 in the evening. Additionally there were 1470 Sunday scholars in the morning, 670 in the afternoon and 1020 in the evening.<sup>162</sup>

It was nevertheless observed in 1824 that, 'The congregation generally is small for so large and respectable a parish.'<sup>163</sup> A large proportion of that population, however, as before, was attending Nonconformist places of worship. In 1851, the congregations with chapels within the urban part of the parish were: Wesleyan Methodist (St John's Hill and Frankwell), Methodist New Connexion (Town Walls), Particular Baptist (St Austin Street), Baptist (Claremont Street), Congregationalist (Swan Hill), Unitarian (High Street), Society of Friends (St John's Hill), Calvinistic Methodist and Welsh Calvinist Methodist (Hills Lane) and Roman Catholic (Beeches Lane).<sup>164</sup>

The surviving Lady chapel of old St Chad's church had been used mainly as a school since c.1800. By the 1860s, however, it was no longer needed for this purpose as new parish schools had been provided. The interior of the chapel was then restored and fitted up for worship, c.1867, through the efforts of Price Williams, who resided at the College. A special service was held in March 1868 to celebrate the re-opening of the building for religious services. There was free seating for about 200.<sup>165</sup> By August that year, regular Sunday afternoon services were

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<sup>157</sup> *Eddowes's Shrewsbury J.*, 28 Sept. 1864, 4; *Coventry Standard*, 27 Jan. 1865, 4. On the schools: *Shrewsbury Chron.*, 17 Aug. 1860.

<sup>158</sup> *Crockford's Clerical Dir.*, 10 (1878), 1062; *Wellington J.*, 29 Apr. 1882, 6; *Eddowes's Shrewsbury J.* 18 Apr. 1883, 3.

<sup>159</sup> *Wellington J.*, 2 May 1885, 6.

<sup>160</sup> SRO, B/V/5/22, St Chad's Shrewsbury (1832).

<sup>161</sup> *London Gaz.*, 17 Jan. 1837, 122. See SA, P254.

<sup>162</sup> Field, *Church and Chapel*, 77.

<sup>163</sup> Pidgeon, 'Salopian Annals', I, f. 36v.

<sup>164</sup> Field, *Church and Chapel*, 77–80.

<sup>165</sup> *Shrewsbury Chron.*, 6 Mar. 1868, 7; *John Bull*, 7 Mar. 1868, 7.

held in the chapel by the vicar and curates of St Chad's and particularly attended by 'servants and the poorer classes'.<sup>166</sup>

Even while under the patronage of the Crown, St Chad's was associated with episcopal authority. It was the church used for visitations and confirmations by the bishop or archdeacon. For example, in 1824, the new evangelical bishop, Henry Ryder, performed a visitation and confirmed more than 1,000 people at St Chad's.<sup>167</sup> Consistory courts and probate courts were held in the Lady chapel, 'usually denominated the bishop's chancel'.<sup>168</sup>

St Chad's was also the civic church of Shrewsbury, described as 'the chief church of the town, and used on all publick occasions'.<sup>169</sup> In 1581, during a visit by Sir Henry Sidney, Lord President of the Marches, St George's day was marked by a large procession from the Council House to St Chad's. Sidney was seated on the right-hand side of the chancel, where a place was prepared for the Queen and the ceremony held as though the monarch were present.<sup>170</sup> The 'Assize sermon' that preceded the opening of the Assizes, attended by the judges and civic officers, was preached at St Chad's with due pomp and ceremony.<sup>171</sup> The corporation attended St Chad's for the major annual festivals of Easter, Whitsunday and Christmas.<sup>172</sup> The service for the new mayor was held at St Chad's and the vicar was *ex officio* the mayor's chaplain.<sup>173</sup>

An annual service held at St Chad's to raise funds for the Royal Salop Infirmary, from as early as 1747, became a date on the civic calendar. The collection was taken by two young women of county society, each supported by a young man, who held the collection plates at the church door. In the 1820s, the treasurer and subscribers to the Salop Infirmary and other 'gentlemen' processed to the church. In 1827, '[t]he Infirmary meeting was as usual most numerous and respectably attended ... the display of gentlemen of rank and honour in the procession and ladies the pride of Shropshire in the church was truly creditable and

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<sup>166</sup> Eddowes's Shrewsbury J., 12 Aug. 1868, 5.

<sup>167</sup> Pidgeon, 'Salopian Annals', I, fos. 65–6. See also, e.g., *ibid.*, I, fos. 12, 14r, 55v; IV, f. 20r; V, fos. 19r, 83r.

<sup>168</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.*, II, 193; *Salopian J.*, 15 Apr. 1835, 2 (probate).

<sup>169</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.*, II, 252.

<sup>170</sup> W.A. Leighton (ed.), 'Early Chronicles of Shrewsbury, 1372–1603', *TSAHS*, 3 (1880), 239–352 at 285–6.

<sup>171</sup> Pidgeon, 'Salopian Annals', e.g. I, fos. 4r, 14r (1823), 40r, 66 (1824); 1826: IV, fos. 7, 26v; 1827: V, fos. 1, 33r, 70r, 82r.

<sup>172</sup> Pidgeon, 'Salopian Annals', e.g. I, fos. 5r, 8r, 40r, 54r.

<sup>173</sup> Pidgeon, 'Salopian Annals', e.g. I, fo. 74r; IV, f. 49r; SA, P253/E/3/2: vicar as chaplain of the corporation (1980).

honourable to our county'. The service still continued, less 'picturesque' but with 'more seemliness', in 1928.<sup>174</sup>

St Chad's was and is also the Shropshire regimental church. In 1860 the curate F.W. Kittermaster was appointed honorary chaplain of the Shropshire Rifle Volunteers.<sup>175</sup> Large annual church parades for the whole Shropshire regiment were held with a procession from the Market Square to St Chad's.<sup>176</sup> Numerous memorials to campaigns of the 53rd Regiment of Foot, and its successor regiment the King's Shropshire Light Infantry (KSLI), are mounted in the entrance hall to the church. In 1950–1, St Aidan's chapel, which opens off the entrance hall, was enlarged and converted to the regimental chapel of the KSLI; regimental colours were laid up there in 1952 and 1966.<sup>177</sup> The annual award of the freedom of the town to a military unit, which continues to the time of writing, has customarily involved a service in St Chad's.

### *1873 to Present*

After the creation of new parishes at Frankwell, Bicton, Shelton and Betton Strange, the population of the urban parish was 4760 in 1872.<sup>178</sup> Thereafter the population reduced steadily, to 3100 in 1918 and 2064 in 1960.

The patronage of St Chad's was transferred to the bishop of Lichfield in 1873. The long-serving vicar, John Yardley, was succeeded by E.S. Carpenter in 1888.<sup>179</sup> Sir Lovelace Tomlinson Stamer DD was already suffragan bishop of Shrewsbury in 1892 when he resigned the rectory of Stoke-on-Trent (Staffordshire) for the vicarage of St Chad's. In 1896, Stamer resigned St Chad's for the rectory of Edgmond (Shropshire).<sup>180</sup> His successor, Charles Bulmer Maude, was appointed vicar of St Chad's and archdeacon of Salop in 1896.<sup>181</sup>

Richard Eden St. Aubyn Arkwright, a direct descendant of the Derbyshire industrialist Richard Arkwright and a grandson of Lloyd Kenyon, 3rd Baron Kenyon, of Gredington, was instituted

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<sup>174</sup> Pidgeon, 'Salopian Annals', I, fos. 21r (1823), 73r (1824), IV, f. 42v (1826), V, f. 42r (1827), 90–2 (1828); *Birmingham Daily Post*, 6 May 1889, 5; SA, P253/A/8/3/6: order of service (1919, 1920); *Truth*, 11 Jan. 1928, 9.

<sup>175</sup> Crockford's Clerical Dir., 1868, 391.

<sup>176</sup> *Wellington J.*, 29 April 1882, 6; *Bridgnorth Journal and South Shropshire Advertiser*, 3 Feb. 1900, 2.

<sup>177</sup> SA, P253/7/2/19–21; P. Francis, *Shropshire War Memorials, Sites of Remembrance* (2013), 188–90.

<sup>178</sup> Crockford's Clerical Dir. (1872), 967.

<sup>179</sup> Crockford's Clerical Dir., 23 (1891).

<sup>180</sup> *Crockford's Clerical Dir.*, 23 (1891), 1184; 29 (1897), 1225–6.

<sup>181</sup> Crockford's Clerical Dir., 29 (1897), 910.

vicar in 1906.<sup>182</sup> St. Aubyn Arkwright had long suffered from poor mental health and ultimately committed suicide at St Chad's vicarage in 1913.<sup>183</sup> The following year, after funds were raised by public subscription, the north vestry was converted to a chapel dedicated to St Aidan in his memory.<sup>184</sup>

Vicars of St Chad's in the 20th century held the living for between three and ten years, and most were then promoted from St Chad's to superior appointments in Lichfield or other dioceses:<sup>185</sup> F.W.T. Greenwood, 1913–24; F.E. Overton 1924–30; B.S. Lombard, 1927–30<sup>186</sup>; E.W. Darling, 1930–36; R.M.B. Close, 1936–8; C.B. Roach, 1938–42; W.A. Parker, 1942–5; F.T. Horan, 1945–52; F.A.R. Chapman, 1953–6; W. Johnston, 1956–64; F.N. Lewis, 1965–9; C.G.H. Spafford, 1969–76. Finally Michael Pollit (b. 1930), appointed in 1976, settled in Shrewsbury. Pollit was awarded a prebend of Lichfield cathedral in 1981 but remained vicar of St Chad's.

The steady population decline in the urban parishes was represented at St Chad's by a fall to 2064 in 1960.<sup>187</sup> In 1987, when St Mary's parish church was made redundant, Pollit became vicar of the combined parish of St Chad and St Mary, and in 1991 he was appointed priest-in-charge of St Alkmund's. Pollit retired in 1995 and was succeeded by C.F. Liley. On Liley's departure in 2001, for the offices of archdeacon of Lichfield and cathedral treasurer, the next incumbent, M.W. Thomas was first appointed as priest-in-charge of Shrewsbury St Chad and St Mary. Residing at The Crescent instead of St Chad's vicarage, Thomas was promoted to vicar of Shrewsbury St Chad, St Mary and St Alkmund in 2007. He was made a prebendary of Lichfield cathedral in 2011 and retired in 2013. Throughout the 20th century the vicar had employed one or two curates. Thomas was supported by C.J.D. Walker, a retired priest who served as honorary curate of Shrewsbury St Chad, St Mary and St Alkmund from 2007. M.W.A. Chadwick was appointed vicar of Shrewsbury St Chad, St Mary and St Alkmund in

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<sup>182</sup> *Crockford's Clerical Dir.* (1910), 35; 'The Peerage', <http://www.thepeerage.com/p60154.htm#i601535>.

<sup>183</sup> *Derbyshire Advertiser and J.*, 2 May 1913, 4.

<sup>184</sup> SA, P253/7/2/1–18. See below, 'St Aidan's Chapel'.

<sup>185</sup> Relevant entries in: *Crockford's Clerical Dir.*, 50 (1918–19), 55 (1925), 59 (1930), 64 (1935), 67 (1938), (1951/2), 75 (1953/4), 78 (1959/60), 82 (1967/8), 85 (1973/4), 87 (1977–79), (1991/2), 94 (1995/6), 95 (1998/9), (2004/5), (2014/15), (2016/17).

<sup>186</sup> Bousfield Swan Lambard OBE, exceptionally, retired from St Chad's to a less demanding role after just three years, on grounds of health. As chaplain to the British Embassy in Russia, 1908–18, he had been arrested and tortured during the Bolshevik revolution. *Crockford's Clerical Dir.*, 59 (1930), 64 (1935); *Western Morning News*, 10 Apr. 1930, 8.

<sup>187</sup> *Crockford's Clerical Dir.*, 78 (1959/60): Johnston, William.

2013, residing at St Chad's vicarage, Claremont Hill. The departure of Yejide Peters in 2022 left the vicarage vacant at the time of writing.<sup>188</sup>

By the second decade of the 20th century, Holy Communion was held twice on Sundays and once on Thursdays,<sup>189</sup> and there are indications that the changes introduced to the services at that time were met with resistance from some parishioners.<sup>190</sup> In the early 1950s Holy Communion was held twice on a Sunday and a Thursday and once on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday.<sup>191</sup> By the 1960s Holy Communion was held daily, and three times each Sunday. The parish newsletter in 1960 referred to a 'well kept Lent' and commented that Easter communicant numbers were greater 'than last year at over 2500 from Ash Wednesday to Maundy Thursday'.<sup>192</sup> The 'high' nature of churchmanship during this period was evidenced in 1958 when the parish newsletter announced that 'the vicar will be in church to hear confessions on Christmas Eve' and in 1960 by a 'three hour devotional service on Good Friday'.<sup>193</sup> The number of Holy Communion services held at the church was constant through to the end of the 1970s when they were held twice on a Sunday and once every other day apart from Friday.<sup>194</sup>

## CHURCH ARCHITECTURE by Wendy Horton

### Old St Chad's Church

#### *Site*

Shrewsbury was built on two hills within a meander of the River Severn, the hills separated by a shallow east–west valley occupied by the High Street. St Mary's church is located on the summit of the northern hill at the highest altitude in the town, whilst old St Chad's church was on the highest point of the southern promontory. St Chad's church was said by tradition to be on the site of a palace of the kings of Powis, although no material evidence for this has been found. When the Mercians took control of the site in the 8th century, they built a collegiate church dedicated to St Chad, which by 1066 had 16 secular canons. Rebuilt by the Normans on a large scale, the cruciform church was 168 ft long and 95 ft wide between the

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<sup>188</sup> <https://stchadschurchshrewsbury.com/contact-us/whos-who/>

<sup>189</sup> SA, P253/H/2/1: Parish Magazine, Jan. 1914.

<sup>190</sup> SA, P253/1048/4884 St Chad Letter of Complaint 26 July 1914. [not found in new catalogue]

<sup>191</sup> SA, P253/H/2/4: Parish Magazine, Jan. 1953.

<sup>192</sup> SA, P253/H/4/3: Parish Newsletter, May 1960.

<sup>193</sup> SA, P253/H/4/1, P253/H/4/1/3: Parish Newsletters, Dec. 1958, Apr. 1960.

<sup>194</sup> SA, P253/H/4/22: Parish Newsletter, Sept. 1979.

transepts. It extended beyond the limits of the current churchyard on the north and east sides and its west end was 5 ft from the western boundary railings (Figure 1). Collegiate buildings were located southwest of the church, running from St Winefride's convent along College Hill and possibly as far west as Swan Hill. The massive form of St Chad's church with its central crossing tower can be seen in many 18th-century depictions of the town, until the devastating collapse of the tower on 9 July 1788 which destroyed much of the building. Only the Lady chapel, south of the former chancel, now survives, whilst a new St Chad's church was built on a different site further west.<sup>195</sup>

### *The Pre-Norman Church*

After the collapse of St Chad's tower in 1788, Owen and Blakeway reported that Saxon fragments were found in the collapsed rubble, particularly within the fill of the massive crossing piers. Some pieces were decorated, including an eagle's skull frieze, a corbel in the form of a head and a carving of the three faces of the Holy Trinity. More Saxon work was found in the Norman crypt, beneath the north transept when it was excavated in 1889–90 under the direction of John Nurse (see below). The four-bay crypt had a row of central columns aligned north–south and detailed investigation showed that the columns had monolithic axe-hewn cores, narrower than the sockets of the Norman bases. These were interpreted by Nurse as Saxon, as the monoliths were worked with an axe rather than a chisel as was usual in Norman times. The cores may have been columns *in situ* in the Saxon church, later encased by the Norman builders, but this would assume that the new church was planned around an existing building. Alternatively, the Saxon monoliths may have been re-used in the Norman crypt perhaps to provide additional strength. A find of particular interest was a copper alloy stylus of 8th- or 9th-century date, found at the bottom of a trench along the north side of the crypt. Outside the western wall, in the graveyard, two charcoal burials in stone cysts were discovered in 1889–90, such burials commonly found in the late Saxon period. They were buried side-by-side, oriented east–west and approximately 1.37 m below ground level, so higher than the floor of the crypt, suggesting the latter was always a below-

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<sup>195</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 180, 194; J. Newman and N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Shropshire* (New Haven, 2006), 522; N. Baker, *Shrewsbury: An Archaeological Assessment of an English Border Town* (Oxford, 2010), 94–5, 87; T. J. Howell, *The Stranger in Shrewsbury* (Shrewsbury, 1816), 104; Shropshire HER PRN 08253; Ordnance Survey, SJ 4912 (1965), 1:2,500.



ground structure. John Nurse reportedly said that the foot of a buttress, presumably Norman, rested upon the cysts.<sup>196</sup>

### *The Medieval Church*

It is possible to reconstruct the character and development of the medieval church from 18th-century paintings, drawings and descriptions. The collapse of the tower occurred at the time when Revd Edward Williams was producing his watercolours of Shropshire churches, which so accurately depicted their fabric (Figures 2, 3), whilst contemporary accounts were given by Owen and Blakeway and by Thomas Phillips. The 12th-century Norman church had a cruciform plan and was constructed of red sandstone. It consisted of an aisled nave, central two-stage crossing tower, north and south transepts, chancel and flanking chapels. There was a crypt underneath the north transept, although its north wall was exposed due to the slope so it acted as a plinth (see Figure 3). Some Norman features were retained until the collapse, particularly the round-arched north doorway which had scalloped mouldings. Inside the nave were five-bay arcades with round arches on cylindrical piers with filleted capitals, whilst round arches were also present between the chancel and chapels. Despite its Norman origins, the building had a pronounced Early English character having been re-fenestrated with tall lancet windows. This may have occurred c.1226 when Henry III provided a grant of four woods, although this cannot be confirmed. There were six lancets on each side of the nave clerestory, to the transepts including triple stepped lights to the north and south ends, and around the chancel. These lancets were finely moulded with tall ringed clustered shafts and stiff leaf capitals, whilst a pointed west doorway was in similar style. Inside, the pointed arches of the crossing were Early English, supported on four massive diagonally-set piers with complex mouldings. Although the chancel had a coved plaster ceiling, Owen and Blakeway recorded the springing of ribs of former groin vaulting at the tops of the clustered shafts (Figures 4, 5, 6).<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 194; D.H.S. Cranage, *An Architectural Account of the Churches of Shropshire* (Wellington, Shropshire, 1894–1912), x, 910–12; J. Nurse, ‘The Crypt of Old St. Chad’s Church, Shrewsbury’, *TSAS* 13 (1890), 359–68; *Salopian Shreds and Patches*, 9 (6 Nov. 1889); SHYMS 2013.00030: Photograph of copper alloy stylus; Shropshire HER PRN 01437, 62595, 62597, ESA 1304.

<sup>197</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 184, 190–6; SA, 6001/199: Revd Hugh Owen, *The History of Shrewsbury* (c.1825), which incorporates SA XLS2392 with paintings and drawings; SA, 6001/372/1, ff. 49, 50: Revd Edward Williams, *Watercolours* (1788–9); Cranage, *Churches of Shropshire*, x, 899–912; Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 522–3; T. Phillips, *History and Antiquities of Shrewsbury* (1779), 85–9; Shropshire HER PRN 01094.

In 1393 a calamitous fire was caused by a careless plumber working on the leads, which destroyed the upper parts of the church. Reconstruction work was undertaken in white Grinshill sandstone, clearly shown in Revd William's watercolours, including the tower, roofs, parapets, upper aisles and west end. The tower was given Decorated louvres, plain parapets and a pyramidal roof, its earlier appearance is unknown. The large six-light east window was probably contemporary and the chancel vaulting either destroyed or removed (Figure 4).<sup>198</sup>

There was less Perpendicular work than in other Shrewsbury churches, but the Lady chapel was remodelled in white Grinshill stone, possibly in 1496. A 15th-century window was inserted into the east end of the north chantry chapel, and late Perpendicular square-headed windows were inserted into the aisles (Figure 4). In the south wall of the chancel were three sedilia with lierne vaulting over, which now survive outside (see below). The battlemented south porch was Perpendicular or later, as were the crude buttresses supporting the north aisle.<sup>199</sup>

### *The Medieval Crypt*

The four-bay Norman crypt was of red sandstone with an approximate size of 10 m x 7 m, the floor c.3.5 m below the current level of the graveyard. Following a local campaign to discover more about the ancient structure, it was excavated in 1889–90 under the direction of John Nurse, architect, by labourers employed by the Shropshire Archaeology Society (Figure 7). The excavations showed that the Norman vaulting had been destroyed when the tower fell, explaining an order given in April 1790 to infill the crypt, presumably on safety grounds. The outer walls on the west, south and east sides were of coursed rubble, generally in good condition and up to 1.5 m high, whilst the northern boundary is formed by the later churchyard wall and an iron gate. The vaulting had been supported on round arches on a central row of short, round columns with chamfered bases, and on responds engaged with the outer walls. At the south end, opposing doorways through the west and east walls led into the north aisle and north chantry chapel, respectively, the latter with a chamfered head. Also on the east side was a wide doorway leading into a chamber via a vestibule, its purpose unknown. An early staircase to the southwest was replaced by a wider staircase to the

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.; SA, PR/2/373.

northwest in the 18th century. Several of the pillars were later encased in white sandstone with a semi-octagonal profile, of 14th-century character (See Figure 7). The crypt clearly functioned as a charnel house as many bones and several coffins were excavated. It was later used for storage when it became known as the Dimmery, or dark place.<sup>200</sup>

### *Post-Medieval Alterations and Furnishings*

The East window contained a fine depiction of the tree of Jesse which occupied the four central lights of the window only, and had been moved there from the Franciscan (Greyfriars) church after the Dissolution.<sup>201</sup> The Lady chapel is said to have been re-edified in 1571 by Humphrey Onslow on the interment of his nephew, Richard Onslow, Speaker of the House of Commons, who was buried under the arch between the chancel and chapel, close to its east pier (see below). Inside the nave was a pointed wood-panelled roof of c.1633, the ribs springing from corbels decorated with angels holding shields and with celestial devices at the intersections of the beams, all painted and gilded by Samuel Kirke of Lichfield (Figure 8). There were galleries over the aisles, transepts and west end, the latter on Corinthian columns and supporting an organ in a decorative case, erected in 1716 and made by Thomas Swarebrick of Germany. On top stood an effigy of St Chad in his priestly robes. A painted and gilded wood-panelled pulpit of 18th-century character, with a round-arched recess containing a Bible, was positioned close to the southwest crossing pier, whilst the mayor's seat was against the northwest pier. A classical-style oak altar-piece had two figures on the pediment representing the gospel and hope. There were 10 bells in the tower, recast in 1701 from the original five bells of the college. By the 18th century, the upper part of the East window had been crudely repaired with wood. In 1782–3, the Lady chapel was re-roofed at a cost of just over £104, the gable bearing this date (Figure 9).<sup>202</sup>

### *Collapse of the Tower*

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<sup>200</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 193–4; Phillips, *History*, 85–9; Cranage, *Churches of Shropshire*, x, 910–12; Nurse, 'Crypt', 359–68; *Salopian Shreds and Patches*, 9 (6 Nov. 1889); Shropshire HER PRN 62595, 62597, ESA 5452.

<sup>201</sup> BL, Add MS 30331, ff. 29–30; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 316–19.

<sup>202</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 190–5; Phillips, *History*, 85–9; Cranage, *Churches of Shropshire*, x, 899–900, 907; Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 531.

In the early summer of 1788, large cracks began to develop in the northwest crossing pier, causing great concern amongst the church-goers. Thomas Telford was asked to undertake an investigation and concluded that the digging of graves around the northwest pier had undermined its structural integrity, and that the north wall of the nave was in a dangerous state, exacerbated by the poor condition of the roof timbers. He recommended that the tower should be taken down in order to rebuild the northwest pier, and that the nave roof and north wall should also be reconstructed. Despite Telford's expertise, it was resolved at the next vestry meeting that this was a great exaggeration, and that a mason could simply cut out the defective masonry and replace it, with little consideration given for the weight of the tower and bells. After the mason had begun his remedial works, when the sexton began to ring the bell, a shower of mortar descended and the tower began to shake causing the sexton to flee. The northwest pier of the crossing arch collapsed the next morning, 9 July 1788, the central tower falling catastrophically onto the body of the church below. Revd Williams recorded the damage in his watercolours, showing only the south side of the tower remaining. The roofs were destroyed, except for those over the chancel, Lady chapel and south transept. The south aisle arcade and roof were intact but unstable, whilst the walls were damaged to various degrees but particularly on the north side.<sup>203</sup>

Following this disaster, most agreed that a new church should be erected rather than an attempt made to reconstruct the old church, especially as the masonry was said to be defective. The prominent architect, James Wyatt, was approached for this purpose, but he delayed in responding, so the London-based architect, George Steuart, who had recently undertaken work at Attingham Park, was engaged instead. A bitter argument ensued as to whether the new church should be on the existing site or a different site, but this was resolved by the architect, who did not regard the existing site as suitable. Plans then proceeded for a new church at the top of the Quarry park.<sup>204</sup>

### *The Church Site and Lady Chapel*

The only exception to the demolition of old St Chad's in 1788 was the Lady chapel, which was to be immediately repaired and re-roofed in the plainest possible manner, following a

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<sup>203</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 245–8; SA, 6001/372/1, ff. 49, 50; SA, P253/V/3/3/1: Old St. Chad's, Shrewsbury, booklet by J.A. Morris; Shropshire HER PRN 62597, ESA1306.

<sup>204</sup> Cranage, *Churches of Shropshire*, x, 912; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 248; SA, P253/V/3/3/2: Notes by J.A. Morris.

scheme submitted by Joseph Bromfield. The two wide arches leading into the Lady chapel were infilled, the north arch with re-used red sandstone, the west arch with pink sandstone ashlar and a pointed-arched doorway. Double doors, with square and diamond-shaped panels and a date of 1663, were relocated there from the west end of the nave. The floor was raised and the pews were dismantled, whilst the 18th-century pulpit and hatchments from the old church were moved into the building. Exterior drawings by John Buckler, one dated June 1823, show the chapel in this simple form (Figure 10).<sup>205</sup> Soon afterwards a small bell tower was erected at the west end, as depicted in the painting published by Revd Owen (see Figure 9). A new east gable was subsequently constructed of sandstone ashlar and bore an inscription recalling the history of the church and its subsequent collapse.

The building was re-used as a mortuary chapel and as a school, a report of 1827–8 stating that the latter had been established for 20 years and had a roll of 200 boys.<sup>206</sup> Henry Pidgeon referred to the interior of the Sunday school being beautified in August 1827, whilst iron railings were mounted on the walls surrounding the burial ground. A weather vane and cardinal points had been erected on the summit of the east end earlier in the year.<sup>207</sup> The interior was restored in 1868 and fitted out for the resumption of worship (Figure 11).<sup>208</sup>

Some furnishings from the old chancel were moved to Bicton chapel in 1789, but many were returned over a hundred years later on the construction of a new Bicton church. In May 1913, the altar-piece, which had been reduced in size, was taken from old Bicton chapel and installed in the Lady chapel. In June 1913, the southwest stair-turret was partly rebuilt. It was reported in the church magazine of October 1917 that the Lady chapel was no longer a store-house and was to be used for divine service accommodating up to 200 people. The walls had been cleaned and painted and a large platform made for the old altar-piece. The altar rails and classical-style reredos returned from Bicton and the two large gilded angels (Gospel and Hope) which had stood on the latter's entablature were fixed over the west entrance vestibule. An old Norman tub font, which had gone to Bicton c.1760, was also brought back and positioned in the southwest corner, its bowl and rim decorated with a diaper pattern. A Faculty was granted in 1954 for repairs and restoration of the roof, walls and windows. The

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<sup>205</sup> BL, Add MS 36378, John Buckler, drawings: f. 60 (June 1823), f. 108 (n.d.)

<sup>206</sup> Howell, *Stranger*, 105, 126; SA, 3916/1/2 (180 girls in 1823). See *VCH Shrewsbury*, part 2 (this volume), Education.

<sup>207</sup> SA, P253/V/3/3/1–3; Cranage, *Churches of Shropshire*, x, 904, 908; SA, P253/J/4/4: Act (1789), 769; Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 522–3; SA, 6001/199: Revd Hugh Owen; Pidgeon, 'Salopian Annals', V (24 August 1827), VI (May 1829).

<sup>208</sup> See above, 'Religious Life'.

cost was £1500, partly funded by the Shropshire Archaeology Society.<sup>209</sup> In 1983 the Church Commissioners appropriated ‘the redundant church of Old St. Chad’ and its site for use as ‘an exhibition and tourist centre’.<sup>210</sup> In the 21st century the premises were occupied by Shropshire Council and used for storage.

### *The Current Lady Chapel*

Internally, the white-washed chapel retains the character of an 18th-century church, but the exterior is a more confusing spectacle as the north and west sides were internal walls of the church dating from the 12th century. The north side was formerly the interior south wall of the chancel and contains a wide segmental arch with large filleted roll moulding and hood (Figure 12). The east pier was partly altered, possibly in connection with the Onslow burial of 1571. Abutting the west end of the arch is the massive diagonally-set southeast crossing pier, composed of multiple clustered shafts with stiff leaf capitals. The former chancel was longer and higher than the existing Lady chapel. To the east of the arch is a triple-shafted respond demarcating a bay division within the Early English chancel. This was cut by the Perpendicular sedilia of white Grinshill stone, the three stalls consisting of pointed-arched niches under lierne vaulting with flower bosses at the intersections. When the east end of the chancel was demolished, a south window of Early English triple lancets was truncated, leaving a tall blocked lancet with splayed reveals and clustered shafts, and the reveal of a second light to its left which forms the current northeast angle of the Lady chapel.<sup>211</sup>

The west wall of the Lady chapel continues south from the southeast crossing pier and represented the division with the south transept. Access was through a large elliptical arch with keeled roll mouldings springing from square imposts and stiff leaf capitals, although the outer mouldings are only visible inside. Such keeled mouldings are typical of the Transitional style in the late 12th century (Figures 13, 14). Claspings the southwest angle of the Lady chapel is a staircase projection of red sandstone, which overlies a clustered shaft, probably the reveal of a former transept window. On the north-facing return of the projection is the shoulder of an arch, blocked with stone, which was the original entrance. It was later replaced

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<sup>209</sup> SA, P253/B/7/6/4–5, 8; Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 148, 523; Cranage, *Churches of Shropshire*, x, 900, 904–6; SA, P253/B/7/6/3: Faculty.

<sup>210</sup> *London Gaz.*, 27 Oct. 1983, 14124.

<sup>211</sup> Cranage, *Churches of Shropshire*, x, 907.

by a south door under a shallow-arched head. The stairs accessed a galleried passage along the east side of the transept which led to the bell-loft in the crossing tower.<sup>212</sup>

The south and east external walls were rebuilt in white Grinshill sandstone in Perpendicular style, possibly in 1496. Both walls have two three-light windows with a sill band, plinth band and narrow buttresses (Figures 15, 16). Older red sandstone remains beneath the west window of the south wall, continuing up to its left haunch, which seems to relate to a 14th-century tomb recess inside. The window above the tomb recess is Perpendicular, its hoodmould with head-stops of a man and a woman (renewed). Red sandstone is also found below the plinth at the east end, where there is an exterior tomb with flat-arched head. The other three windows have trefoil-headed lights in Decorated style. Although possibly 14th-century re-insertions, they are more likely to be part of the 1591 're-edification', in post-Reformation gothic style. This is corroborated by Owen and Blakeway who stated that the Perpendicular south window was earlier. Beneath the north window of the east end is a narrow doorway with depressed head, probably also of 1571 and later blocked with stone.<sup>213</sup>

### *The Interior*

The interior white-wash partly obscures the masonry but some medieval features are well preserved, such as the late 12th-century stiff leaf capitals supporting the western arch (Figure 17), and the Early English lancet in the north-east corner with keeled shaft which once lit the chancel. Its blocking clearly shows the Lady chapel is later than the chancel. Although the northern arch is 12th century, it has a green man head-stop on the east side of the hoodmould, of 14th-century character (Figure 18). Contemporary and beneath the west window of the south wall is a Decorated tomb recess with shallow arch and complex mouldings. There is evidence for two earlier roofs: In the north-west corner is a narrow shaft with low capital decorated with volutes, which probably supported a vaulted roof in the 12th century (see Figure 17). The second is represented by a decorative corbel supporting a short wall post, located above the western arch and a predecessor to the panelled ceiling with finely moulded beams inserted in 1571.

### *Monuments in the Former Church*

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<sup>212</sup> Cranage, *Churches of Shropshire*, x, 909.

<sup>213</sup> Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 522–3; Cranage, *Churches of Shropshire*, x, 905–6; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist. II*, 193, 195.

Several of the monuments were moved to other churches following the collapse. An engraved alabaster tomb lay under the Longnor pew on the north side of the nave, depicting Edward Burton of Longnor (d. 1524) and his wife, Joyce. They were depicted praying beneath gothic tabernacles, with three shields bearing coats of arms and effigies of seven daughters at their feet. The tomb slab was subsequently moved to Atcham church. On the south side of the altar was a large marble tomb to Rowland Lee (d. 1544), bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, said to be without any figure or inscription. It was moved within the church in 1720 to make more space and not recovered after the collapse; a tablet to commemorate him was later erected above the sedilia (see below). There had been many fine wall monuments relating to the prominent families of the town. Some were moved to the new church, others to their country seats. A monument dedicated to Martha Owen (d. 1641) and her baby was moved to Condover, whilst a large hanging monument to Richard Lyster (d. 1691) went to Alberbury. In the chancel was a large marble cartouche with naturalistic engravings to Vincent Corbet (d. 1692) of Moreton Corbet, moved to the church there. Pidgeon reported in August 1824 that the Onslow altar tomb, formerly under the arch between the chancel and Lady chapel, had been moved to the north aisle of Holy Cross church. It was replaced on the site by the burial of Johnathan Scott (d. 1829), scholar.<sup>214</sup>

### *Monuments in the Lady Chapel*

Wall monuments and hatchments were moved into the Lady chapel, and the raised floor laid with ledger slabs after the demolition. On the north wall is an impressive Jacobean wall monument of black and white marble: figures of a man and woman facing each other in prayer are under classical-style canopies, framed by black Corinthian columns supporting an entablature, over which are representations of two daughters between heraldic emblems. It is dedicated to Thomas Edwards (d. 1634), and his wife who died in childbirth with her unborn child. On the east wall, between the windows, is a classical-style pink marble tablet with open pediment topped by a draped urn, the sides finely decorated with garlands of flowers. By Thomas Farnolls Pritchard, it is dedicated to Richard Hollings (d. 1741) (Figure 19). To the south is a stone rectangular tablet between Ionic columns with classical-style detail, dedicated to Richard Taylor (d. 1676) and members of his family. Above the west vestibule and partly obscured by it are three large wall monuments: on the left, a highly decorative classical-style

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<sup>214</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 230–45; Cranage, *Churches of Shropshire*, x, 907; Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 102, 125, 230, 412; Pidgeon, ‘Salopian Annals’, I (9 August 1824); VI (February 1829).



oval with scrolls, cherubs and shields; to the centre, a square tablet surmounted by an urn, to Martha and Richard Morgan (d. 1730 and 1745), and to the right, an oval tablet on darker background to James Pilling (d. 1781) and his wife Elizabeth.<sup>215</sup>

Mounted into the backs of the now external sedilia are two tablets, one to John Bryan (d. 1662) who was ejected as minister of St Chad's, the other to Rowland Lee, bishop of Lichfield and Coventry (d. 1544) (Figure 20); the original marble tomb was in front of the altar. On the ground is a relocated medieval coffin.<sup>216</sup>

### *The Churchyard*

The Norman church was larger than the existing churchyard on its north and east sides as Princess Street and Belmont were widened after the collapse, the roadworks revealing many human bones which had to be re-interred. Probably at the same time, the east end of College Hill was joined to Princess Street via a dog-leg. Excavations for a new gas main in 2001 revealed the sandstone wall of a former medieval building on Princess Street which must have been demolished when the road was altered. It is likely that the graveyard originally extended further south, down the hill towards the river. Undated human remains were found in the late 19th century close to Town Walls, which may be connected with the Saxon or Norman church.<sup>217</sup>

Before the road alterations, College Hill to the west was straight, leading directly to the church, and was lined with regular plots probably for ecclesiastical housing. The whole area was redeveloped in the 18th century when a number of large Georgian villas were constructed, but there is evidence of medieval college buildings within them. Inside the rear range of Clive House are three cross-frames of a timber-framed building of c.1500, possibly with a hall at the south end. Parallel to the east and within St Winefride's convent is one large bay of a timber-framed building. The west and south sides of the churchyard are bound by brick walls of different phases of St Winefride's convent, but a short stretch of red sandstone

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<sup>215</sup> Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 523; J. Ionides, *Thomas Farnolls Pritchard of Shrewsbury Architect and 'Inventor of Cast Iron Bridges'* (Ludlow, 1998), 234.

<sup>216</sup> Cranage, *Churches of Shropshire*, x, 907.

<sup>217</sup> Baker, *Shrewsbury*, 94–5; Shropshire HER PRN 31110, 60334–5

wall may relate to an earlier building, and is also on the highest point of the site, just over the 70 m contour.<sup>218</sup>

There were safety concerns in 1995 over subsidence to the west of the Lady chapel, a test-pit revealing that this was caused by the roof of a burial vault of 18th-century appearance collapsing. The brick vault was 2.2 m × 0.82 m in size and about 2 m deep. Its existence shows that Telford was correct about the digging of graves undermining the crossing piers of the church.<sup>219</sup>

The old churchyard remained consecrated ground after the collapse, the Act for building the new church stipulating that it should be walled in and preserved with two or more footpaths formed across it. As little damage as possible was to occur to the graves during demolition, and any requiring removal would be relocated in either the old or new churchyard. An example is a large three-panel chest tomb of sandstone ashlar dedicated to Jonathan Scott of Betton (d. 1746), which is located outside the north wall of the Lady chapel. It has a recessed central panel with oval inscription to members of the family, and the slab is surmounted by a decorated and fluted urn. It was noted in the Act that the almshouses and messuages on the east side of the churchyard and the messuages to the north, were all in a ruinous condition but still occupied. If funds were available from voluntary subscription, they were to be pulled down so the churchyard could be enlarged or improved.<sup>220</sup>

The site of old St Chad's continued to be used for burials after the church was demolished. Both 'the old and new churchyards of St Chads Shrewsbury' were closed to burials from 1857, except for burials in existing vaults and certain walled graves.<sup>221</sup> A plan of the churchyard dated 1858 shows the almshouses on Belmont backing onto the churchyard, but they were removed later that year (Figure 21). A new footpath had been created, running southeast to northwest across the churchyard. A new east boundary wall of red sandstone with saddleback coping was constructed, which was not quite aligned with the east end of the chapel, and terminated beyond the northeast corner of the churchyard.

On the north side, where Princess Street had been widened and linked to College Hill, a red brick wall with sandstone coping was constructed. The former crypt is distinguishable along

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<sup>218</sup> Baker, *Shrewsbury*, 94–5; NHLE List entry 1271068: Clive House, listed grade II\*, List entry 1271079: St Winefride's convent, listed grade II; Shropshire HER PRN 01516: Also see PRN 62108 and 62139 for details of the encased timber-framed buildings.

<sup>219</sup> Shropshire HER PRN 62597, ESA1306.

<sup>220</sup> SA, P253/J/4/4, 770–4, 789; SA, P253/V/3/3/1-3; NHLE List entry 1246518, chest tomb listed grade II.

<sup>221</sup> SA, P253/J/4/13–20; *London Gaz.*, 26 Aug. 1856, 2910; 3 Feb. 1857, 384.

the north side as a large depression in the ground, accessed via an iron gate. A century after the excavations of 1889–90, subsidence along the sides had started to expose burials and masonry, so in 1997 the ground was re-graded and backfilled to protect the structures. Three of the square bases seen in 1889–90 were recorded, the others either buried or lost, along with one column, two octagonal responds and a capital.<sup>222</sup>

## **St Chad's Church**

### *Site*

St Chad's church is located at the top of St John's Hill, reigning over the Quarry park to the south and within a loop of the River Severn. Located approximately 400 m west of old St Chad's church, its altitude is not quite as high as the latter but has a more open and picturesque aspect. St Chad's church is regarded as one of the finest Neo-classical churches in Britain and forms a focal point for Georgian Shrewsbury. Built in 1790–2, it was designed by the Scottish architect, George Steuart, and has a circular body designed to improve its acoustic performance (Figure 22). Such churches had been built in London, Edinburgh, Newcastle and Belfast, and were probably modelled on James Gibbs' plans for St Martin-in-the-Fields, London (not executed). The church is not correctly oriented from an ecclesiastical point of view, with the tower and entrance facing east and the altar at the west end marked by a prominent Venetian window.<sup>223</sup>

The churchyard is located between St John's Hill and Claremont Hill to the east and west, respectively, pre-existing streets which are not quite parallel. There is historic housing at the narrower north end, whilst along the south side is St Chad's Terrace, constructed after the church was completed. From this road, the ground slopes down towards the River Severn, encompassing the Quarry park. The church is at the south-west corner of the churchyard with an eastern forecourt.

There was considerable argument over whether the proposed church should be on the existing site or a new site, but Steuart insisted on the latter. The position finally agreed upon was at the highest point between St John's Hill and Claremont Hill, but it may have been chosen because the trustees were able to purchase all the houses, messuages, lands and gardens

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<sup>222</sup> SA, P253/B/10/1; Shropshire HER PRN 62595, 62597, 01094, ESA5452,

<sup>223</sup> Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 57, 523–4; Ordnance Survey, SJ 4912, 1:2,500 (1965): St Chad's church is at 65.7 m AOD, whilst old St Chad's is at 67.4 m AOD.

occupied by Martha Kirby, widow. A site previously proposed lower down in the Quarry park offered a more spacious setting with the possibility for ‘making a spacious walking or driving way round the whole structure’.<sup>224</sup> The chosen site also included part of the town wall including a tower, which had to be demolished at the expense of the parishioners. The trustees had been offered a choice of four plans by Steuart, one rectangular and three circular. Steuart promoted the circular designs due to their superior acoustics, but the trustees initially chose the cheaper, more traditional rectangular design. They were finally persuaded by Steuart that a circular plan would better suit the site. The new church was to have a dome, cupola, tower or steeple, to a design approved by the Diocese of Lichfield. Contracts for building the church were to be advertised in the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* or similar and a book of accounts was to be kept by the Trustees. Mural monuments from the old church could be re-fixed in the new church, but no interments would be allowed in the new church.<sup>225</sup>

### *Contracts*

The neo-classical architect George Steuart (c.1730–1806) gained several commissions in Shropshire, including Attingham Hall, Millichope Park, Lythwood Hall and All Saints church, Wellington. St Chad’s church is regarded not only as his best work, but as one of the most impressive and ambitious Georgian churches in Britain.<sup>226</sup>

After the trustees had accepted Steuart’s drawings, tenders for the building work were duly advertised in the local newspapers. George Steuart was assiduous in devising contracts, drawings and working instructions. A single contract was awarded on 30 November 1789 to the stonemasons, Carline & Tilley, and the bricklayer, Jonathan Scoltock, who were to start work immediately. Substantial foundations had already been made, using stone from the old church and from the section of the town wall recently demolished. The first stone was laid on 2 March 1790. Best white Grinshill freestone was to be used for the exterior, costing £1,693 for 19,400 ft, and best flag for the stairs. Different types of moulded and decorative stonework, such as pilasters, balustrades and cornices, were costed separately per foot. Scoltock was to provide good and sufficient brickwork for the internal walls, the cost

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<sup>224</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.*, II, 249.

<sup>225</sup> Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 248–50; Cranage, *Churches of Shropshire*, x, 912; T. Friedman, ‘The Golden Age of Church Architecture in Shropshire’, *TSAS* 71 (1996), 93–101 (for a detailed discussion of the architecture); SA, P253/J/4/4: Act for Rebuilding the Parish Church of St Chad, 1789, pp. 751–7, 768–74, 784.

<sup>226</sup> George Steuart: <http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk>; D. Watkin, ‘Steuart, George (c. 1730–1806)’, *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/38500>; H. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840* (1978), 780–1; Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 523–4; Friedman, ‘Golden Age’, 93.

including labour not to exceed £1,200. The brickwork was fixed to the exterior facings with iron cramps, whilst sand was provided by the trustees. The chamber was to be ready for the roof by October 1790, and the tower and exterior parts finished before October 1791. The building was completed on 20 August 1792.<sup>227</sup>

The carpentry and joinery was undertaken by John Hawkeshaw, a neighbour of George Steuart's in London, the contract worth £2,664. Different products were costed separately, including column casings, the gallery front, altar rail, reredos and pew backs. The trustees were to provide some of the timber along with iron cramps. Mr Hawkeshaw was to follow the orders of George Steuart, providing enough workmen so the stonemasons and bricklayers were not delayed.<sup>228</sup>

A contract for the timber was drawn up with John Bishop and Joseph Bromfield, timber merchants of Shrewsbury, in May 1790. There was one competitor, Nathaniel Cooper, coachmaker, but the former's tender was the lowest and most advantageous. The products were costed by foot or cubic foot and included Danzig timber, English oak, seasoned pine, Peterborough fir, best Christiana white and yellow plank and Riga wainscot.

Joseph Bromfield was well known in the county for his fine decorative plasterwork, and is thought to have been engaged at Attingham Hall with Steuart, so his origins as a timber merchant may seem surprising. In 1789 he was briefly, but unsuccessfully, clerk of works, and was soon replaced by the Scottish builder, John Simpson, who is commemorated inside the church. The schedule for plasterers' materials was very detailed, most products measured by the yard, including panelled soffit, moulded cornice, enriched frieze and Corinthian capitals. Some ornament was to be executed by hand, including the fine nave ceiling with glory in the centre. The cost of the plasterwork appears relatively low, at £300, and was to follow the drawings supplied by George Steuart.<sup>229</sup>

A London firm, Underwood, Bottomley and Hamble, provided the metal sash windows at a cost of £250. The ironwork was supplied by local founder, William Hazledine, and was executed by John Fradgley of Shrewsbury, blacksmith. Although priced by the hundredweight, Fradgley was also to use any old iron lying in the warehouse and other buildings belonging to the trustees.

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<sup>227</sup> SA, P253/J/3/1–3; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.* II, 248–50; Friedman, 'Golden Age', 100; 'St Chad's church, Shrewsbury: Guide', 2017 edition, 8.

<sup>228</sup> SA, P253/J/3/4.

<sup>229</sup> SA P253/J/3/5; Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 51, 126; Friedman, 'Golden Age', 99.

The plumber contracted was Robert Hill of Shrewsbury, who was to cover the roofs with lead and supply gutters, rainwater heads, pipes and flashings. It was to be fixed according to the architect's instructions and had to be cut and weighed in front of the clerk of works and the offcuts returned.<sup>230</sup>

### *Exterior*

The church consists of a large circular body 100 ft (31 m) in diameter, linked by an oval vestibule to a prominent three-stage tower, flanked by single-storey pedimented vestries and fronted by a large east-facing portico (Figures 23, 24, 25). Constructed entirely of white Grinshill ashlar, the roofs are not visible and the rainwater goods are disguised within the masonry to maintain the clarity of the design. The whole composition has an elegant simplicity and symmetry, the constituent parts brought together in a unified form.

The cylindrical body of the church is two-storey, the shorter lower storey of rusticated stone on a plinth with plain square windows. To the south-west and north-west are rectangular doorways within moulded frames, leading to the galleries. Above the string course, the upper storey is of smooth ashlar with paired Ionic pilasters dividing the tall round-headed windows, the latter with panelled aprons and a fluted impost band. The windows are iron-glazed, though not all in the same style as some have been replaced over the years. A deep hollow-moulded cornice supports the parapets which have intermittent balustrading. At the west end is a large Venetian window within a square frame, marking the position of the altar, the lights divided by narrow Corinthian pilasters. The small oval vestibule has a circular apse to north and south, each containing a staircase lit by a single window, all in the same style as the circular body.

The three-stage tower is 150 ft high, consisting of a circular stage over an octagon over a square, each with a plan smaller than that below. The square lower stage is of rusticated stone with parapets, a clock mounted on the east face. Of smooth ashlar, the second stage has tall round-arched louvres in recessed panels to the cardinal faces, the intermediate faces with paired Ionic pilasters. At the top is a cylindrical bell cupola surrounded by an arcade of Corinthian columns which support a large leaded dome. It is thought that the sequence of

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<sup>230</sup> SA P253/J/3/7-8; Friedman, 'Golden Age', 100.

square, octagon and cylinder is copied from earlier international precedents, such as the reconstruction drawings for the Tour Magne, Nimes, published in 1778.<sup>231</sup>

Projecting in front of the tower is the imposing Doric entrance portico, the four large columns supporting an entablature with triglyph frieze and a triangular pediment. Inside is a tall round-arched doorway between paired Ionic pilasters containing double panelled doors and an over-light. Above the entrance is a large tablet stating that the first stone was laid on St Chad's Day, 1790.

The single-storey vestries flanking the tower have gabled pediments to north and south and parapets to the sides. Each vestry has a recessed round-arched window under the pediment and another facing east, with a continuous fluted impost band.

### *Interior*

Inside the tower chamber is a lofty circular entrance hall with doors to left and right leading into the former vestries, now pastoral room and vestry to the south and St Aidan's chapel to the north. Panelled doors under a round arch lead into the oval vestibule, the apses at each end housing swept staircases which rise up to the gallery landing (Figure 26). The stairs have elegant cast iron balustrading with bronze floral motifs and moulded wooden handrails, whilst the ceiling cornice has modillions decorated with flowers. From the oval vestibule, access via a small circular ante-chamber leads into the main body of the church.

The main chamber is a rotunda except at the west end, where there is a short rectangular chancel flanked by hidden gallery staircases, all within the outer circle. Ionic columns with gilded capitals support the gallery, seven on each side beneath the gallery front and six supporting the rear. These columns are constructed of cast iron with an outer casing of deal. The moulded gallery front has balustraded parapets, rising through which are very narrow fluted columns with Corinthian capitals, standing on the Ionic columns below and supporting the ceiling (Figure 27). A very deep decorative cornice emphasises the high circular ceiling, with ornate plasterwork by Joseph Bromfield: around the outside is a band of acanthus fronds, whilst in the centre is a fine glory consisting of a circle of cherubs in clouds within a sunburst (Figure 28). In the nave, the floor is flagged and there are nine rows of panelled

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<sup>231</sup> Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 523–4; Friedman, 'Golden Age', 95–6; Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.*, II, 252; 'St Chad's church, Shrewsbury: Guide', 2017 edition, 8.

pews and wainscot panelling. The gallery has four banks of raked pews, the organ sited centrally on the east side.

The chancel bay has a round panelled arch on heavy impost, each supported on a square formation of Corinthian columns. Narrow Corinthian shafts divide the lights of the Venetian window, supporting a cornice broken by the tall central arched light. In the spandrels above are gilded cherubs in clouds with rays (Figure 29).

### *Furnishings*

George Steuart designed the large triple-decker pulpit which formed the main focal point of the church, with uninterrupted views from the nave and gallery (Figures 30, 31). The pulpit obscured the altar which had a simple reredos of Norwegian oak. Steuart submitted designs for the organ case in 1791, the instrument itself supplied by Robert and William Gray. A silver christening basin was said to be in the centre of the nave. Three bells survived from the collapse of the old church and were hung in the new church. The bellringers raised funds for a new peal of 12 bells, cast by Thomas Mears of London in 1798 and costing £800 including the scrap value of the old bells. Additions in St Chad's church included a grey marble font with oval fluted bowl on a stem of clustered shafts, brought from Malpas, Cheshire, in 1843. The clock on the gallery front was added in 1848. A new organ was presented by Colonel Wingfield in 1861, the maker unknown, which required alterations to the gallery and seating at an estimated cost of £4 18s. 0d. This organ was repaired by Nicholson and Lord in 1889.<sup>232</sup>

### *Alterations from the Late 19th Century*

There have been few alterations to the fabric of the church, the building retaining its fine Georgian character, but changes have been made to the furnishings and ordering of the interior. A significant re-ordering took place in 1888–9 when it was decided to remove the large triple-decker pulpit in front of the chancel. The sacrament began to take precedence over preaching in the late 19th century, the altar becoming the focus of worship. A meeting was held in the vestry in August 1888 to discuss obtaining a Faculty for the re-ordering,

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<sup>232</sup> Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 524; Friedman, 'Golden Age', 96, 101, Plate 19 (see also framed photo inside church); Owen and Blakeway, *Hist.*, II, 250–2; Cranage, *Churches of Shropshire*, x, 913; Pidgeon, 'Salopian Annals', V (16 July 1827), VI (22 Sept. 1829); 'St Chad's church, Shrewsbury: Guide', 2017 edition, 14, 21, 24; SA, P253/B/2/3/1/58/4.



which was granted by the Diocese of Lichfield in October 1889. The chancel was extended by 14 ft internally with a raised altar reached by steps, a new communion rail and panelled reredos (Figures 32, 33). The choir stalls were extended towards the chancel, having formerly been in front of the pulpit. A fine pulpit of ornamental copper and brass openwork, by George Birch, is a memorial to Henry Morris given by his wife in 1891 (Figure 34). It was offset south of the chancel arch, its position matched on the north side by a brass eagle lectern dedicated to Richard Hughes. The existing grey marble font was moved to the side of the east entrance doors. Many of the new items were offered as gifts from the parishioners, including the lectern, altar table, credence table, clergy stalls and a litany desk.<sup>233</sup>

Another Faculty was issued in August 1893, mainly for alterations to the seating. It was proposed to lower the whole of the seating on the ground floor, including the choir, whilst the pew backs were fixed into sloping positions and the doors removed. The font was relocated in front of the pews in the south-east quadrant (Figure 35), and the organ of 1861 was moved further forward on the gallery. A new heating system was installed with a new boiler and ventilation shafts carried through the roof and capped with cowls.<sup>234</sup>

In 1905 a new organ by Norman and Beard of Norwich was installed in the same position as the old one. A Faculty was obtained in February 1905, the estimated cost £1,450 minus £200 for the sale of the old organ to Norman and Beard, the balance raised through subscription. The final cost was £1530 less £250 for the old organ, with the addition of a screen behind the organist. Associated building alterations, including the removal of 12 sittings, were made by Thomas Morris of Shrewsbury at a cost of £41 6s. 8d. The organ was restored in 1963 by Nicholson and again in 1985 and 2011 by Harrison & Harrison of Durham, the latter work costing £300,000 with the addition of new stops. In 1914 a new peal of 12 bells were cast by Taylor's of Loughborough, and two further bells were added to celebrate the Millennium.<sup>235</sup>

Embellishments in the chancel occurred in 1911 when a Faculty was granted to Revd Richard Eden St Aubyn Arkwright. A black and white marble pavement with steps was laid in the sanctuary and the altar rail was replaced in 1912 by one of oak and ebony with coromandel inlay, by Mervyn Macartney. The approach to the pulpit was altered and the steps reversed, which cost £255 and was a gift of a benefactress. A new painted and gilded reredos by Cecil

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<sup>233</sup> SA P253/B7/5/1–4, including Faculty; SA, PH/13/S/6/2; Cranage, *Churches of Shropshire*, x, 913; 'St Chad's church, Shrewsbury: Guide', 2017 edition, 19.

<sup>234</sup> SA P253/B/7/5/7: Faculty.

<sup>235</sup> SA P253/B/8/3/3, 16, 20; 'St Chad's church, Shrewsbury: Guide', 2017 edition, 21, 24, 28.

Hare was installed in 1923 as a war memorial. It has a tall round-arched panel in the centre depicting the Crucifixion flanked by statues and biblical scenes in relief, and was accompanied by a new altar and wainscot panelling (Figure 36).<sup>236</sup>

### *Building Repairs Since 1900*

Issues arose with the tower from 1907 when there was displacement at the south-west corner. Oak tie beams had been used in the original construction but an ingress of water had rotted the timbers resulting in cavities. These oak beams had to be removed and replaced with brickwork. Further inspections by the architect, A.E. Lloyd Oswell, revealed more serious problems. In January 1908 he reported that where the octagonal stage rested on the square stage, water had seeped beneath the lead covering rotting the timberwork, leaving the superstructure unsupported and in danger of toppling over. Underpinning was urgently carried out by Mr Bowdler, builder, the project costing nearly £600. A routine inspection of the church in March 1957 by Bernard Miller, architect, reported that there were ongoing problems with the buried timber construction in the tower, especially the horizontal joists. The gradients of the conical roof over the main chamber have proved too shallow, requiring regular checks for leakages and clearance of snow. Major repairs were undertaken to the exterior of the tower, dome and flanking bays in 2012–13 at a cost of approximately £1 million, including replacement of the iron cramps which keep the masonry in place. Similar work was undertaken to the circular chamber and staircase vestibule in 2017.<sup>237</sup>

### *St Aidan's Chapel*

Following the death of Revd Richard Arkwright, vicar 1906–13, it was decided in November 1913 that the north vestry should be converted into a chapel to commemorate his work and where daily services and guild meetings could be held. The estimated cost was £500 and a memorial fund was established. A leaflet listed subscriptions already offered and asked for more contributions.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> SA P253/B/7/5/9: Faculty; Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 523–4; ‘St Chad’s church, Shrewsbury: Guide’, 2017 edition, 20.

<sup>237</sup> SA, P253/B/7/1/6, 9, 11, 21; Cranage, *Churches of Shropshire*, x, 912; ‘St Chad’s church, Shrewsbury: Guide’, 2017 edition, 8, 28.

<sup>238</sup> SA, P253/B/7/2/1, 5.

Drawings of the proposed alterations were provided by Lloyd Oswell in August 1913. These showed an extension to the north, resulting in seating for 97, with a central aisle leading to a north apse containing the altar. An ornate reredos was to contain three arches, with dedications to SS Chad, Oswald and Aidan (Figure 37). This scheme was superseded by new proposals by the same architect the following year, the new arrangement involving the addition of an apsidal chancel to the west of the former vestry. This simple design was smaller and cheaper, but also meant the integrity of the east entrance front was maintained because the apse was hidden from view. The Faculty was granted in April 1914 and the contract awarded to Thomas Morris of St Austin's Friars, Shrewsbury, at a cost of £395, the work to be completed by July 1914. A further £28 10s. was added for marble pilasters whilst some wooden tablets with benefactions were taken down and relocated to the Lady chapel of the old church. The apsidal chancel is in classical style, the round arch with fluted keystone and a panelled soffit decorated with stars. As the north vestry was converted into a chapel, the south vestry was retained for the clergy and its basement became the choir vestry.<sup>239</sup>

On 3 November 1950 St Aidan's chapel was re-dedicated as a memorial chapel for the King's Shropshire Light Infantry. The conversion included fixing wooden panels with gilding and fluting onto the walls, which record the battle honours of the regiment and a commemoration of the 4th Battalion. A panel on the east wall lists the battle honours of the Herefordshire Regiment. At the same time, the altar was replaced with the addition of a bronze cross and two bronze candlesticks, whilst an aumbrey was inserted into the east wall. This scheme, by Bernard Miller, architect of Chester, cost approximately £4,000 which was raised by the KSLI and volunteers (Figure 38).<sup>240</sup>

### *Monuments*

There are many fine wall monuments commemorating significant individuals in the history of the church and town along with a large ensemble of war memorials. On each side of the chancel arch are two monuments with Roman-style busts (Figures 39, 40). That to the left is a memorial to the ironmaster, William Hazledine (1763–1840), who supplied iron for the church, the bust within a garlanded arch with inscribed tablet below, inside a square frame with sunbursts in the haunches. He had made a request to the trustees before his death that his

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<sup>239</sup> SA, P253/B/7/2/2, 3, 5, 9, 10; SA, P253/B/8/7/1.

<sup>240</sup> SA, P253/B/7/2/20: Faculty.

monument could be erected in the church, permission being given with conditions in September 1828. The bust on the right of the arch represents John Simpson (d. 1815), clerk of works during the construction of the church, who often worked with Hazledine and Telford. The design of his memorial is similar to that of Hazledine, but with scrollwork and small flowers decorating the arch. Both memorials are by J. & J. Carline, stonemasons, but the busts were carved by the portrait sculptor, Sir Francis Chantrey.<sup>241</sup>

Immediately flanking the chancel arch are classical-style tablets dedicated to the Revd George Scott and the Revd Richard Scott, benefactor, on the left and right, respectively. Mounted on the north wall of the chamber is a tall monument with triangular pediment to John Hiram Haycock, architect of Shrewsbury, who died in 1830 aged 70 years, and his descendants. On the right of the east doorway is a pedimented tablet with an urn, by John Cross, dedicated to John Woodward (d. 1855) who held various public offices in the borough.

In the stair vestibule is a richly-carved monument to John Hill, mayor of Shrewsbury (d. 1731), and members of his family, in the form of a garlanded concave oval, the inscription between swags. It was moved from old St Chad's church and re-cut by Richard Dodson. The entrance hall bears a large number of tablets including war memorials. Of particular interest is a large monument to the north, dedicated to soldiers of the 53rd Shropshire Light Infantry who died in the Indian Rebellion in 1857. It was carved in relief by Samuel Manning Jnr in 1860 and bears two uniformed armed soldiers flanking an urn on a pedestal against a background of swags (Figure 41). Above the west door is a pink marble monument with broken segmental pediment in memory of the 4700 men of KSLI who died in 1914–18. There are many hatchments on the walls, especially in the gallery, where 16 are mounted.<sup>242</sup>

### *Stained Glass*

St Chad's church was designed to be light and airy so had mainly plain glass in the windows. An exception was the original west window of the chancel, commissioned from Francis Eginton, who also produced the east window for St Alkmund's church. Because the glass was pastel-coloured, it allowed in too much glare from the sun during evensong, so was replaced in 1836–42 with a much darker piece by David Evans, depicting the Descent from the Cross flanked by the Visitation and Presentation. It was copied from Reubens' altarpiece in

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<sup>241</sup> SA, P253/B/7/5/8; Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 525.

<sup>242</sup> Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 525; 'St Chad's church, Shrewsbury: Guide', 2017 edition, 10.

Antwerp Cathedral. The window was a gift of Revd Richard Scott, who gave four further windows by David Evans in 1844, all showing gospel scenes in bright colours. They are located to the south-east and north-east of the nave and in the same positions in the gallery. Revd Richard Scott was himself commemorated in the north window of the gallery, with a coat of arms surrounded by patterned glass. To the north-west is a memorial window to Revd John Yardley, depicting ‘The disciple who Jesus loved’ by J. Davies of Shrewsbury, 1887, a gift of the parishioners. In the nave north window is a memorial to Edward Muckleston of Quarry Place, Shrewsbury (d. 1851), with a heraldic emblem and geometric motifs. In the north apse above the stairs is a brightly coloured painting of the Ascension by Hardman, c.1851.<sup>243</sup>

### *Churchyard*

Iron railings on low walls formerly encircled the front of the building, dating from 1789 and produced by William Hazledine, which are visible in contemporary south views of the church (see Figure 22). These were removed during the Second World War, in 1941, to supply iron for the war effort. The act of 1789 allowed for a new road, later named St Chad’s Terrace, to be constructed along the south side of the building, linking the south ends of Claremont Hill and St John’s Hill.

The 1789 act also authorised the trustees to purchase land for a burial ground.<sup>244</sup> This was a garden on the north side of the new church, purchased from William Mostyn Owen.<sup>245</sup> The graveyard is not conspicuous and is only open on the south side, flanking the church building. To the south-east, iron railings separate the burial ground from the entrance forecourt, including a gate between square stone piers with fluted bands. There are simple iron railings and a gate at the south-west corner.<sup>246</sup> The resulting graveyard is not quite rectangular, reflecting the earlier plot layout of Claremont Hill and St John’s Hill, the brick boundary walls relating to these plots (Figures 42, 43). Within it, laid out along the avenues amongst shrubs and trees, are many chest tombs and grave slabs – one inscribed with the name ‘Ebenezer Scrooge’, a character from Charles Dickens’s novella, *A Christmas Carol*, which

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<sup>243</sup> Newman and Pevsner, *Shropshire*, 524–5; ‘St Chad’s church, Shrewsbury: Guide’, 2017 edition, 17.

<sup>244</sup> SA, P253/J/4/9–12.

<sup>245</sup> Owen, *Shrewsbury*, 191.

<sup>246</sup> Friedman, ‘Golden Age’, 94; SA, P253/J/4/4, 751–2, 757; SA, PR/4/10; ‘St Chad’s church, Shrewsbury: Guide’, 2017 edition, 17.

was created in 1984 for a film version of the story.<sup>247</sup> The burial ground was closed to burials from 1857, except for burials in existing vaults and certain walled graves.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> C. Donner (dir.), *A Christmas Carol* (1984).

<sup>248</sup> SA, P253/J/4/13–20; *London Gaz.*, 26 Aug. 1856, 2910; 3 Feb. 1857, 384.