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The Roman Catholic Church of Sts Peter and Paul including Presbytery

This text has been prepared for VCH Shropshire by Wendy Horton with the research assistance of Dr Judith Everard, Linda Fletcher and Richard Hoyle. It 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.

The illustrative images to the text will be found in another file.

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The Roman Catholic Church of Sts Peter and Paul including Presbytery

Salters Hall is a medieval or late medieval house a few hundred yards from Newport. Its history has been traced elsewhere. It was acquired by Thomas Talbot of Longford in 1673 and on the failure of that line of the Talbot family, became a property of the earls of Shrewsbury. On the sale of their Longford and Newport holdings in 1788-9, Salters Hall was retained by the then earl for the use of the Catholic congregation which had previously met at Longford Hall. The hall was also used to accommodate the Catholic priest serving the community. A presbytery for the resident priest and a church were added c. 1828.[1] Whilst the west of the site has been heavily developed, the Hall (and of course the church) remains in the possession of the Catholic diocese.

The church and presbytery are set within a large walled enclosure bounded by Salters Lane to the south and Waterside Mews to the north east. There is a tarmacked car park to the north with cast iron gates leading off Waterside Mews, and surrounding gardens elsewhere. The presbytery adjoins the south side of the church with a private entrance off Salters Lane.

The house

Encapsulated within the attic of the 19th-century presbytery is the lower, narrower pitched roof of Salters Hall including a lead-lined gutter. An internal photograph shows a curved wind-brace suggestive of a medieval open-hall or solar, whilst remnants of a medieval screens passage have been observed inside the building. This medieval house was probably built by the Salter family in the 15th century, perhaps by John Salter (d.1492).[2]

Externally, the 2-gable south end of the presbytery retains brickwork of c.17th-century appearance in the eastern portion, corresponding with the encapsulated roof. Internally, this wall is timber-framed with carpenter's marks. The pre-1638 remodelling by Sir Walter Chetwynd included the insertion of two chimney stacks, one at the south end and another heating an inner room. On the first floor above the inner room is a 17th-century wood-panelled ceiling with chamfered beams, probably representing the ceiling-in of the open-hall or solar. There is a steep wooden staircase in the south west corner adjacent to the fireplace. The flight leading up to the attic has two square newel posts with bulbous finials of roughly 17th-century appearance. A probable bolt-hole or priest's hole from the Civil War period is located adjacent to the first-floor inner room.[3]

The Catholic church of Sts Peter and Paul.

Around 1828, John Talbot commissioned Joseph Potter, architect of Lichfield, to design a Catholic church and presbytery in a simple gothic style. The presbytery was built around the buildings of Salter's Hall and incorporated at least part of its sub-medieval roof structure. The new church was opened in July 1832 by Bishop Thomas Walsh of Wolverhampton. It was

[1] See the separate account of the history of Salters Hall.
[2] NHS03577: Salters Hall, draft booklet, 2003; SNAP N002185, N002186; M. Moran, 476: An 'echo' of a screens passage was referred to.
[3] NHS03577; SNAP N002189, 2187, 2654.

beautified internally in 1842 and further improved in 1851 by the prominent Catholic architect, Charles Hansom. The first Bishop of Shrewsbury, James Brown, who was consecrated in 1851 before the completion of Shrewsbury cathedral in 1856, lived at Newport presbytery until 1868. He subsequently moved to a property in Belmont, Shrewsbury.[4]

In 1902-6, the church was altered and internally renovated by Edmund Kirby & Sons, architects of Liverpool, under the supervision of Father C. Giles. The partnership also added the west porch and baptistery in 1912-13 and the large rose window in the west end in 1919. Edmund Kirby (1838-1920) was a Catholic architect who had been articled to E. W. Pugin. He was then assistant to John Douglas of Chester before setting up his own practice in Liverpool in *c*.1867.[5]

Correspondence from 1903-5 suggests that Edmund Kirby & Sons, architects, and Edwin Whittingham, contractor, were retained to undertake maintenance at Salter's Hall.[6]

Exterior

The church and presbytery are constructed of red brick in Flemish bond with sandstone dressings under tiled roofs (Figs 1, 2).[7] The church is of five bays with continuous nave and chancel in Early English or lancet style. On the south (geographical north) side, each bay contains a tall lancet with continuous hoodmould, the bays divided by thin brick buttresses. The gable ends have tall angle buttresses, raised kneelers and stone copings, the east end blank except for a small rectangular louvre in the gable. A single lancet lights the sanctuary on the north side, the rest of the elevation being adjoined by the presbytery. The west end is surmounted by a gabled bellcote, beneath which is a cusped statue niche containing a replaced white stone statue of Virgin and child. The original west window, shown in a photograph of *c*.1900, consisted of plain triple lancets with a small statue mounted at sill level (Fig. 3). Beneath was an arched doorway in a moulded stone surround flanked by ornate foliage urns, outside which were small lancet windows. In 1912-13, a triple-gabled full-width porch incorporating a baptistery was added to the west end, designed by Edmund Kirby and built by Edwin Whittingham of Newport (Fig. 4). Materials included bright red Ruabon brick, sandstone dressings from either Grinshill or Hollington and newly-quarried slate. A moulded-arched doorway in the centre contains double wooden doors with brass-studded ribs and decorative furnishings. To each side are niches with trefoiled heads and ornate canopies containing statues of St Peter and St Paul in Portland stone. An estimate for their production was submitted by Messrs. Martyn at £11 each. Lighting the outer bays are 4-light windows with trefoiled heads and small shaped lights in the gables. In 1919, Edmund Kirby & Sons

[4] Newman and Pevsner, 442; Historic England, 1188022; *The Tablet*, 21 Nov. 1857, 741. Joseph Potter also designed Oscott College in Birmingham; Michael Fisher, *Puginland. A. W. N. Pugin, Lord Shrewsbury and Staffordshire* (2002), 28; Peter Phillips, 'Shrewsbury, a Catholic community, 1750-1920', in J. P. Marmion (ed.), *Shrewsbury. Millennium essays for a Catholic diocese* (2000), 73, 88; www.sspeter-paul.co.uk/; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Francis_Hansom.
[5] Liverpool Record Office (LRO), 720 KIR 3399-402: Edmund Kirby & Sons, architects; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund_Kirby
[6] LRO, 720 KIR 3399.
[7] Liturgical compass points are used in this account: The east end faces geographical west.

replaced the original triple west window with a large rose window in Decorated-style, above which is a statue in a niche (compare Fig. 1 with Figs 3 and 4).[8]

The adjoining 4-bay presbytery forms a unified west front with the gabled church to the right. There is an advanced gabled bay to the left (geographical south), with three smaller bays with gablets to the centre. The latter form a symmetrical grouping with central Tudor-arched doorway under a square hoodmould, the wooden door in the same style as the church doors. All the windows have arched lights under square hoodmoulds, with three lights flanking the door, two lights to the left end and first floor, and single lights to the attic. The brick chimneys are in Tudor-style with tall octagonal shafts, paired or in groups (see Fig. 5). The geographical south end facing Salters Lane has two gables, that to the right retaining earlier brickwork, probably of 17th- or 18th-century date, and small rectangular windows. The left gable end has a Tudor-arched doorway and windows in the same style as the entrance front. The rear elevation has similar windows and a large gable right of centre. In the angle with the church is a lean-to timber conservatory, said to have stained glass panels, one bearing a date of 1884 and the initials, I R. It was intended to form a link between the presbytery and church (see Fig. 6).[9]

Interior

The 5-bay chamber is undivided, the sanctuary marked by a step up from the nave and characterised by ornate gothic-style decoration (Fig. 7). There is a Tudor-arched priest's door in the north wall. The roof has shallow-arched braces resting on octagonal corbels and a painted coffered ceiling. The panels over the sanctuary are painted green and red with gilded crosses. The reredos has a large pointed-arched recess with roll mouldings containing a gilded tabernacle on a tall pedestal with traceried panels. Above is an oil painting depicting the crucifixion within a gilded frame, its cornice bearing the following motifs: the insignia of St Peter and St Paul, the Loggerheads of Shropshire and the three fishes of Newport. The painting is thought to be after the Italian artist, Guido Reni (1575-1642), and was restored in 2007. Flanking the central arch are pointed-arched niches containing statues under gilded coronets, carved by Lane and Lewis of Clifton. The Virgin Mary carrying Jesus and Joseph holding a lily are to left and right, respectively. Edmund Kirby & Sons produced a specification for decorator's work in April 1905. In the sanctuary, the reredos, tabernacle, side niches and statues were to be painted and gilded to match the existing with no change to the patterns. A contract for the work was awarded to Elphege J. Pippet of Birmingham following an agreement with Father Giles in May 1905. A pen and ink drawing of 1938 and photographs of 1953-4 show pairs of narrow traceried panels to each side of the oil painting, these have since been removed (Fig. 8). The altar has a coloured front in the manner of cloisonné, with three large gilded circles containing quatrefoils within quatrefoils decorated with geometric bosses and religious crests. The metalwork was removed by Edmund Kirby & Sons in 1905 for repair, the work being undertaken by Hardman and Co. of Birmingham. Encaustic tiles in a geometric pattern are laid over the sanctuary floor, also forming an inlay in the front faces of the 2-tier altar plinth. Stencilling in the sanctuary was undertaken by Suter of Birmingham, possibly in 1851, and is shown in images of 1938 and 1953-4 with geometric and IHS motifs. In 1954, a specification for internal decoration was put forward by

[8] Newman and Pevsner, 442; Historic England, 1188022; https://taking-stock.org.uk/building/newport-st-peter-and-st-paul/; SA, PH/N/8/10/26: Photograph of west front, *c*.1900; LRO, 720 KIR 3401-2; SA, PH/N/8/10/61: West front, 1973.
[9] Newman and Pevsner, 442; Historic England, 1188022.

John Sheridan of Kirby & Sons, with Messrs Snow of Wolverhampton the appointed contractor, but the Bishop of Shrewsbury considered the price too high and the work was postponed. Renewed decoration was undertaken in the early 21st century with coloured stencilling up to dado height, including foliage, IHS motifs and keys. There is a wooden reading lectern with three pierced quatrefoils.[10]

The nave has parquet wooden flooring and oak benches. A Tudor-arched door in the north wall opens into a passage to the presbytery, with a door on the right leading into the sacristy. The nave walls are adorned with the painted and gilded stations of the cross, and in the north west corner is a large raised figure of Christ. At the west end is a 3-bay timber gallery supported on wooden king-posts, with open arcading to the front (Fig. 9). The church could accommodate up to 300 worshipers including those in the gallery. Beneath is the original entrance with half-glazed doors, and to the left, a statue of a nun holding a red rose and cross in a pointed-arched niche. To the right is a wide arch with iron gates leading into the baptistery: In the centre is an octagonal stone font on marble shafts, the faces with carved quatrefoils bearing motifs, including a cross facing east. An estimate for a font-cover of Austrian oak was provided by Martyn & Co. of Cheltenham. Standing on the lid is a carved wooden figure of St John the Baptist in the form of a robed man holding a lamb, designed by Edmund Kirby in July 1913. Within the south side of the porch is a timber staircase leading to the organ choir gallery, right of which is a recent Lady chapel with statue of Virgin and child. [11]

Monuments

A slate tablet is set into the floor in front of the step up to the sanctuary. It depicts the outline of a gabled church bound by an inscription and is dedicated to Father George Howe (d. 1837), the church's first priest. On the north wall of the sanctuary is a gothic-style marble wall monument carved in relief, dedicated to Canon Michael Trovell (d. 1875) (Fig. 10). A robed man is shown standing in front of an altar under an ornate ogee arch. The altar depicted is not the same as the current one: The front has simple quatrefoils within circles between corner colonettes, and the one portrayed may represent the original altar. The gothic canopy over appears to be later. Mounted on the south wall of the nave is a slate tablet with inset brass figure of a woman reading a bible and holding a rosary, dedicated to Mary Ann Horton (d. 1852), who was buried at Brewood. Further west is a carved wooden tablet with two decorative gothic arches, under which are Virgin and child to the left and a woman praying to the right, dedicated to Ann Morgan. There are small brass tablets flanking the door leading to the presbytery, dedicated to Revd David Williams (d. 1902) and Father Denis Smith, parish priest 1944-79. Small brasses at the west end adjacent to the statue niche are dedicated to Revd Lawrence Lock Lovett, priest of the Diocese of Shrewsbury (d. 1905), and Alexander Thomas Knight and his wife, Maria (d. 1905 and 1904). [12]

Stained Glass

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[10] Historic England, 1188022; https://taking-stock.org.uk/building/newport-st-peter-and-st-paul/; www.sspeter-paul.co.uk/ inc. drawing, 1938. The motifs above the painting; *The Tablet*, 21 Nov. 1857, 741; SA, xls16132: LRO, 720 KIR 3399, 3407

[11] Historic England, 1188022; https://taking-stock.org.uk/building/newport-st-peter-and-st-paul/; www.sspeter-paul.co.uk/ ;SA, xls16132: LRO, 720 KIR 3400-1

[12] Historic England, 1188022; https://taking-stock.org.uk/building/newport-st-peter-and-st-paul/; www.sspeter-paul.co.uk/

The north and south lancets in the sanctuary contained stained glass by Wailes of Newcastle which depicted Sts Peter and Paul. These were removed in 1912 when the artist Margaret Rope was commissioned to produce stained glass for five lancet windows in the church. They depict Sts Peter, Paul, Winefride, Nicholas and Our Lady Help of Christians, with colourful scenes beneath. They are found in the sanctuary north lancet and four of the south lancets. The south west lancet has plain glass. (Fig. 11). [13]

Grounds

The church and presbytery are enclosed by a high red brick wall of several phases dating back to the 17th or 18th century. The oldest fabric is at lower levels around the car park to the north and includes a narrow Tudor-arched doorway, now blocked. The wall has bullnose blue brick copings typical of the late 19th century. A Newport Improvement plan of 1851 included an item to widen Salter's Lane between Lower Bar and the Catholic church. Salter's Lane was further improved and straightened in 1931, when outbuildings and a pigsty in the church ground, were demolished and the south wall taken down. An agreement was made between Newport UDC and the priest, John Miller, the latter paying £20 towards the works, after which the wall was to become part of the highway. The new wall was 161ft long and 6ft high from the level of the pavement, with the old bricks and copings re-used. The front entrance at the south east corner was reconstructed, but has since been removed and replaced by walling with new brick courses at the base. It includes a narrow pedestrian entrance with an old studded door.[14]

The gardens, accessible from the car park through an arch, are laid with lawns, shrubs and trees. There is a war memorial to the north east, unveiled on Good Friday 1920 by the rector, Father C. Giles, assisted by Revd Dr Hazlehurst. It consists of a stone figure of Christ attached to a simple wooden cross. Laid on the ground in front is an inscribed marble tablet listing the ten men of the congregation who died in World War I (Fig. 12). An additional name was added after World War II. In the centre of the garden is a group of statues forming a shrine to Our Lady of Fatima, re-dedicated in 2017 by Bishop Mark Davies. [15]

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[13] Newman and Pevsner, 442; https://taking-stock.org.uk/building/newport-st-peter-and-st-paul/; http://www.sspeter-paul.co.uk/: Details of the paintings are provided here

[14] SA, DP567: Newport Improvement, 1851, J. Treasure, surveyor; SA, DA11/154/5: Newport UDC, Jan 1931

[15] www.iwm.org.uk/ WM 14044; Wellington Journal, 10 April 1920, p. 10; www.sspeter-paul.co.uk/