

**ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH
AND LANGLEY PARISH**

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Langley Local History Society



A record of the parish and its churches, 1845 to 2006

I am not only grateful to Dr Daniels for producing this book but also for the careful recording of the church which is very important at a time when its future is uncertain. That record is a part of an attempt to handle the long drawn out and painful process of making St Michael's redundant, and so relieving the local congregation here of a responsibility it can no longer fulfil.

We are currently (May 2006) awaiting the consultative document from the Church Commissioners in London which will test whether we can proceed with this. If we are successful the church building will become the responsibility of the diocese of Birmingham and they will see if there is another fellowship that is willing to buy it so that it can continue in Christian worship. Whether such a sale proves possible, or, whether the worst comes to the worst and wholesale re-ordering or demolition were to become the only options, it will be important for local people to have a proper record of how the church was in order to comment in an informed way on any changes.

The Anglican fellowship will meet in another local venue, and the current plan is to accept the hospitality of the Methodists in Edward Street. Historians will not be unaware that Anglican churches in this district, like their Free Church sisters, do move about! During the twentieth century Holy Trinity and St Paul's Smethwick were demolished and St John's Langley and St James Round's Green were relocated, both moving to more modest worship areas in the process, while Oldbury underwent a downscaling internally. This re-trenching seems to be part of a continuing process.

Christians across Western Europe know that we are becoming counter-cultural, and the established churches – in this country the Church of England – are the most affected by this change. Why Langley should be even more affected than other post-industrial areas (if indeed we are) is another interesting question for the historians, but it is certainly hard to live through. As with any time of mourning there are two lights in a gloom which at first seems all-pervasive.

The first is the light of thankfulness for what is past. It is right to take careful records of St Michael's because of its beauty and also because it has been the scene of so many significant family occasions and a place of real faithful witness. That faithfulness, and the happiness and love it brings with it, is witnessed by bricks and mortar but is not dependent on them, resting as it does on Christ himself. The changes we are witnessing, however upsetting, do not and cannot extinguish such faith.

This brings me to the second light, a faith in the future. As a Christian I believe faith in Jesus cannot be extinguished but is subject to the constant renewal of the Holy Spirit. As an Anglican I also hope that at least a few Christians will want to express their faith in the reserved, reasoned and respectful way our tradition has represented, unless and until God clearly calls us in another direction. Other churches have survived and even flourished after such major change. I trust we have that potential here and must admit to have reached the stage where I just want to get on with it, though things may still take some time to resolve. In the meantime give me a ring (552 5005) to come and see what is, especially inside, a beautiful building and while you are there you might like to say a prayer of thanks for what is past and of trust for the future, as generations before you have done.

Revd John Barnett
May 2006

THE STORY OF ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH AND LANGLEY PARISH

Establishing a parish

In 1843 an Act was passed facilitating the creation of new parishes in those historical parishes which had grown very large. This was "*An Act to make Provision for the Spiritual Care of populous Parishes*", 6 & 7 Vict. c. 37. It was particularly needed for those parishes which had grown rapidly as a result of industrial expansion and urban growth. Halesowen parish was an excellent case, and in 1840 it still covered the large area that had made up the mediaeval manor of Hales. Accordingly, it was split into five parishes, among them 'Oldbury-cum-Langley' and 'The Quinton', which included the rural hamlet of Warley.

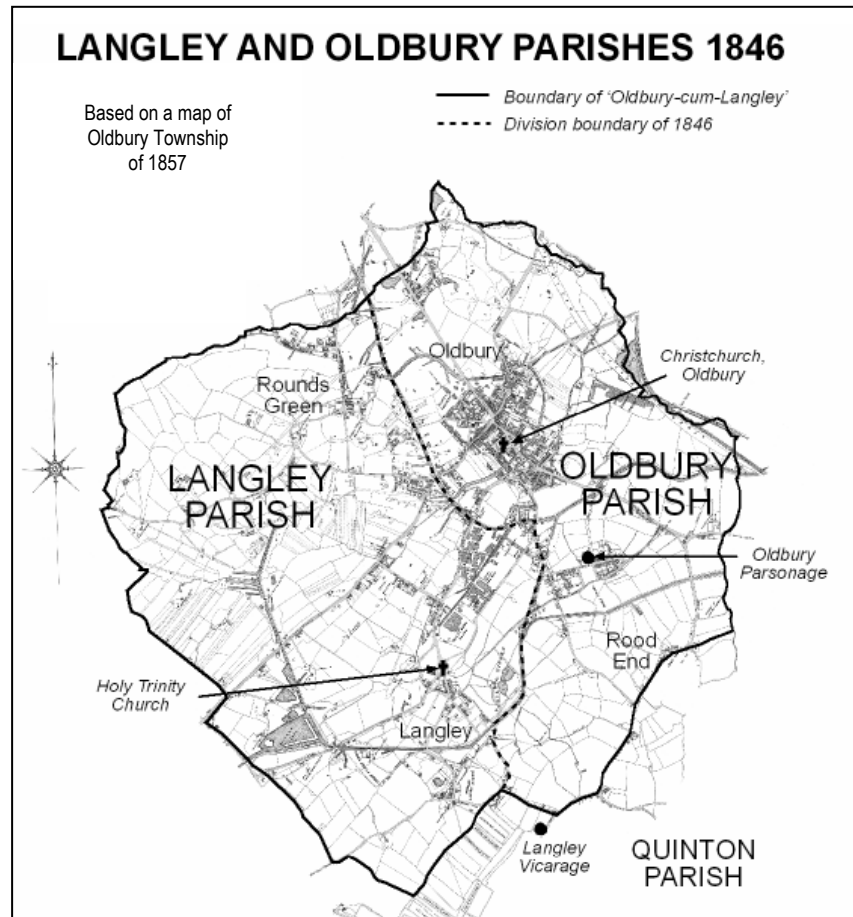
On 23 December 1845 the new parish of Oldbury-cum-Langley itself was split by an Order in Council to create the parish of Oldbury and the New District of Langley, effective from 16th

January 1846. Under the 1843 Act, the new areas were designated 'Districts' until a parish church was consecrated in them, when they became a 'New Parish'. The Order defined the 'District of Langley' as:

"All that part of the district of Oldbury-cum-Langley, in the parish of Halesowen, in the county and diocese of Worcester, situate on the western side of an imaginary line commencing at a point ... in the middle of the Wolverhampton level of the Birmingham Canal, where it crosses the boundary between such district and the parish of Rowley Regis, and then extending southward and eastward, along the middle of such canal as far as the bridge ... which supports the road leading from Oldbury to Tat Bank; and thence southward, two hundred and twenty yards, or thereabouts, along the middle of such road to the bridge ... over the Titford Canal; and thence also southward along the middle of such last-mentioned canal to the bridge ... over the same canal at Hobbicca's Lane; and thence along the middle of the lane leading to Langley-hall, as far as the boundary of the said district of Oldbury-cum-Langley."

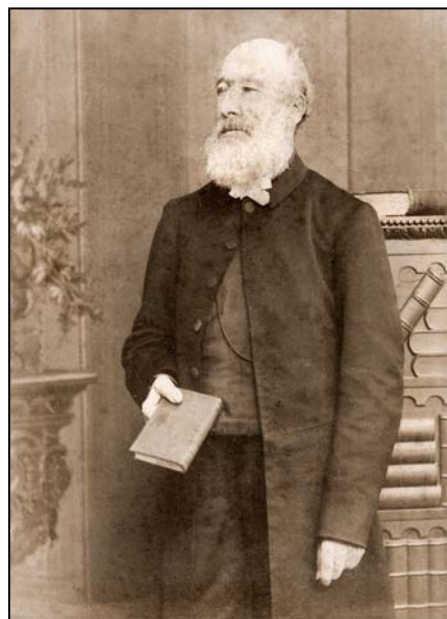
By this division, Rood End was included in Oldbury parish and Rounds Green was part of Langley district.

By 1846, Oldbury had its new parish church, Christchurch, which had been consecrated on 28th June 1841, but Langley was without a suitable church. When Langley District was created, Rev William Laing had been curate of Oldbury-cum-Langley for two years, and immediately was appointed Vicar of Langley. A 'temporary church' was licensed as an additional place of worship in a hired room, from 6th April 1848. The 1851 religious census reported an endowment of £130 per annum, 73 sittings, and average congregations of 17 with 55 Sunday scholars, morning and afternoon. The first baptism was held on 23rd April 1848.



This was a period of rapid expansion for Langley, with the opening of chemical works, coal mines, iron works and brickyards in the vicinity. The heart of Langley ‘village’ was created in the 1850’s with housing for the new workers and the first shops. The erection of a new church to serve them was a priority for Rev Laing. In April 1851 an area of farm land, part of the Park House estate, was given by the Houghton family as a site for the church.

The foundation stone for the new building was laid by Lord Lyttleton, and the building erected at a cost of £6000. The Bishop of Worcester, Rt Rev Henry Pepys, consecrated the building on 9th August 1852. That day, Langley became a parish, with its new parish church of ‘Trinity Church at Langley’, although it was almost universally known as ‘Holy Trinity’. The ‘petition to consecrate’ states that there were four hundred sittings, of which three hundred were to remain free, and this was an adequate number for the growing village. The church was licensed for marriages, and the first was carried out on 22nd November 1852.



Rev William Laing, Vicar of Langley, 1846-1888



Mrs William Laing

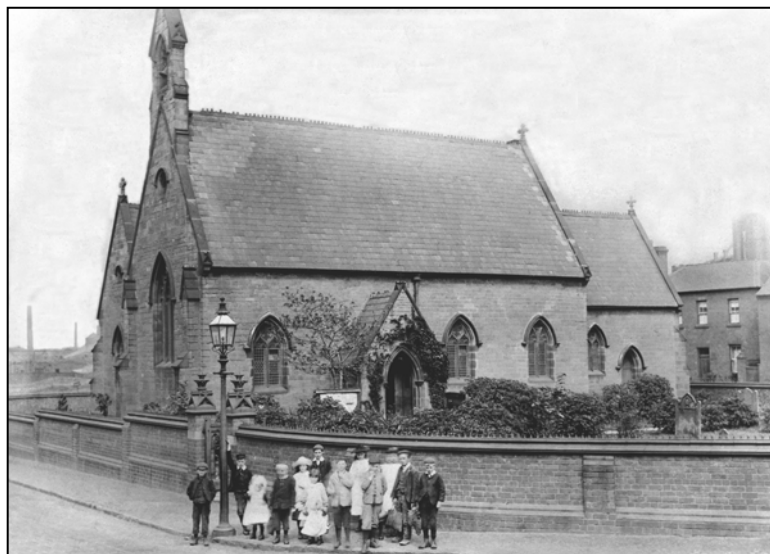
The church was surrounded by a graveyard, and burials continued until 1869. In 17 years there 871 burials, of which 434 were infants under a year of age, a further 383 children aged one year to sixteen and the remaining 54 adults. This is a sad reflection of the high infant mortality rates in Langley in the mid-nineteenth century.

Rev Laing had lived at ‘Spon Villa’, Langley during the formative years of the parish, but there was a need for a suitable vicarage to be built. In December 1855 a plot of land of two roods fronting Moat Lane, part of the Monkton estate, was conveyed by Anne and George Monkton of Somerford to the Commissioners for building new churches, and the vicarage was subsequently built there. On 20th April 1857 the Bishop approved it as a ‘House of Residence for the Incumbent’. Although it was within half a mile of the Church, the approval noted that the residence was not actually in Langley parish.

William Laing remained Vicar until 1888, when he retired from the ministry after forty-two years in the parish. He was succeeded by Rev Michael Pryor, who, like William Laing, had spent two years as curate in Oldbury before his appointment as vicar of Langley.

The need for more space

Holy Trinity served the people of Langley well, but as more houses were built and the population of Langley continued to increase, the four hundred seats in the church were not enough for the parish. Plans were drawn up to enlarge it to 600 sittings, but the cost in stone to match the original church was £2500: this was considered too expensive and plans for extending Holy Trinity were rejected by the Bishop. One of the first duties of the Rev Pryor



Trinity Church, Langley known as ‘Holy Trinity’

was to inspire the building of a larger parish church for Langley.

A Committee was established under the chairmanship of Alexander Macomb Chance and first met on 26th March 1889. Walter Showell, owner of Crosswells Brewery, acted as Secretary, and it had twenty-seven members plus the Rev Pryor and the two assistant clergy at the time, Rev Leonard Barclay and Rev Samuel Taylor.

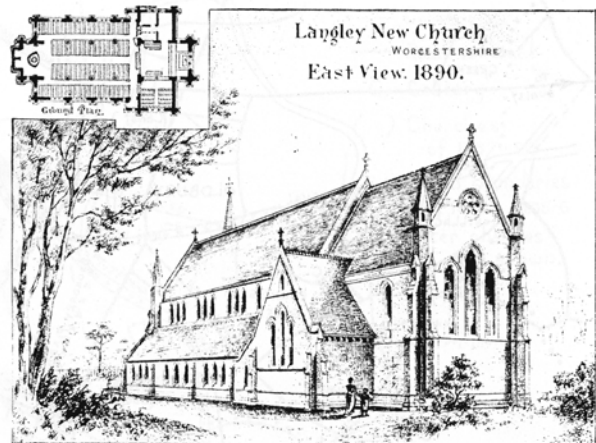
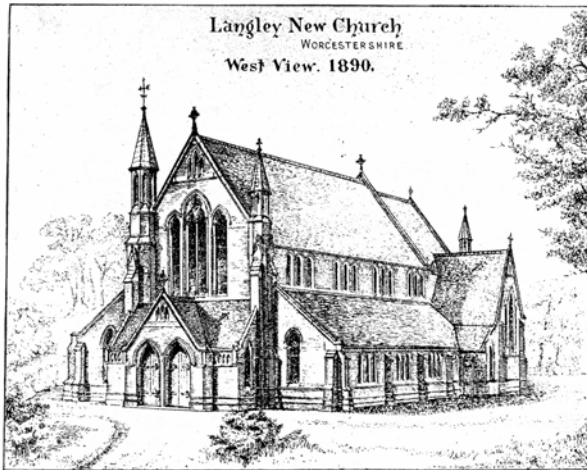
A site was available in Causeway Green Road, a field given by Mrs Mary Barrs, and large enough for a school to be built next to the church. Other sites were considered at Causeway Green and Bristnall Fields, but rejected, and the chosen site was close to new housing developments.



Interior of Holy Trinity Church

Plans were sought up for 'a substantial brick building to accommodate 600 persons the cost not to exceed £5 or £6 per sitting' from two firms of architects, Osborn & Reading of Birmingham, and Wood & Kendrick of West Bromwich. Each firm originally tendered separately, but they were asked to act together to obtain the best features of each design in the building. The Birmingham firm of Thomas Rowbotham was engaged as builder.

The committee had secured donations totalling £3621, which would have covered the initial targeted cost. This included twelve donations of £100 or more from local companies, industrialists and church



Patron.
THE LORD BISHOP OF WORCESTER.

Committee.

Chairman - *ALEXANDER M. CHANCE, J.P., Edgbaston.
Treasurer - THE REV. MICHAEL PRYOR, B.A., Langley Vicarage.
Hon. Secs. - **WALTER SHOWELL, Bell Hall, Bellouscham.
 - THE REV. MICHAEL PRYOR, B.A., Langley Vicarage.

*ALFRED THOMPSON, Langley House, Langley, *Chairman Oldbury Local Board.*
 *JOHN W. WILSON, J.P., Bransford, Edgbaston.
 THE REV. L. L. BARCLAY, B.A., High Street, Langley, }
 THE REV. SAMUEL TAYLOR, Triford Road, Langley, } **Assistant Clergy.**
 C. H. SHARPE, L.R.C.P., Trinity Street, Langley.

*T. BAKER, High Street, Langley. *W. DAVIES, Crosswells Road, Langley. *W. LOWE, Park Lodge, Langley.
 *A. BENNETT, Viarage Road, Langley. *E. GADD, Trinity Street, Langley. *R. PATTISON, Vicarage St., Langley.
 *J. CARTER, Trinity Street, Langley. *T. GROVES, Junction Street, Langley. JOHN RICE, The Oaklands, Warley.
 *C. COOK, High Street, Langley. *ALFRED HANDS, High St., Langley. *A. H. SMITH, High Street, Langley.
 *J. COX, Bristnall Terrace Langley. *J. HUGHES, Boxkidge Street, Langley. *C. THOMLINSON, Vicarage Street, Langley.
 *W. H. CULLEN, Boxkidge St., Langley. *E. JOHNSON, Langley Green. *A. TROBRIDGE, Boxkidge St., Langley.
 *G. DEELEY, Sandon Road, Edgbaston. *A. JONES, Broad Street, Langley. *H. WHITE, Crosswells Road, Langley.

*Concessing Committee.

Joint Architects.
 MESSRS. OSBORN & READING, Birmingham. MESSRS. WOOD & KENDRICK, West Bromwich.

Builder.
 MR. THOMAS ROWBOTHAM, Birmingham.

Clerk of the Works.
 MR. JOHN COX, Bristnall Terrace, Langley.

Hon. Secs.
 C. COOK, THOS. JONES, A. TROBRIDGE, } **Concessing Committee.**

First List of Donations.

	1889	1890	1891	TOTAL.
The Lord Bishop of Worcester ...	£ 1,000 0 0			1,000 0 0
The Right Hon. Earl Beauchamp ...	21 0 0			21 0 0
Worcester Diocesan Church Extension Society ...	500 0 0			500 0 0
Incorporated Church Building Society ...	150 0 0			150 0 0
Chance Brothers, Oldbury ...	250 0 0	250 0 0		500 0 0
Albright & Wilson, Oldbury ...	150 0 0	150 0 0		300 0 0
Mr. and Mrs. Walter Showell, Belbroughton ...				200 0 0
Alexander M. Chance, J.P., Edgbaston ...	100 0 0	100 0 0		200 0 0
John H. Chance, Edgbaston ...	100 0 0	100 0 0		200 0 0
George F. Chance, M.A., Clent Grove ...	50 0 0	50 0 0		100 0 0
Lewis Demuth & Co., Oldbury ...		50 0 0	50 0 0	100 0 0
R. Hingley, M.P., Graldley ...				100 0 0
Walter Showell & Sons, Limited, Langley ...				100 0 0
"Anonymous," per Lloyds Bank ...	20 0 0	20 0 0		40 0 0
William F. Chance, J.P., Oldbury ...	25 0 0	25 0 0		50 0 0
George Thompson, Langley ...	20 0 0	10 0 0		30 0 0
Walter Showell, Jun., Harborne ...				20 0 0
John Jordan, Shirley ...				10 10 0
				£ 3,621 10 0

Architects impression of the new church from the appeal leaflet of 1890

bodies. The Lord Bishop of Worcester gave £1000, Chance Brothers £500, Albright & Wilson £300, Alexander Chance £200, and Mr & Mrs Walter Showell £200. However, it became clear that the final cost would be nearer £5000, and an appeal leaflet was published seeking to raise a further £1400 towards the total estimated cost. The aim was to open the building in the autumn of 1890 free from any debt.

The new Church was consecrated on Thursday 30th October 1890 by the Bishop of Worcester, Henry Philpott. The dedication was not generally announced until it was seen on the service booklet: 'Consecration of St Michael and All Angels' Church, Langley, in the Diocese of Worcester'. Just a week earlier 'The Birmingham Daily Gazette' had reported on 'The New Church for Langley' without any reference to its intended dedication. It was the last official duty of Bishop Philpott, who retired from office the next day, but one dear to his heart since he had championed the new building.



St Michael and All Angels as depicted on a postcard sent from Langley in August 1907

The 'Daily Gazette' of 31st October reported the ceremony in some detail, with the following summary of his sermon, based on Galatians c6 v10: *"As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith"*.

"He said that the occasion on which they were assembled together would, he hoped, remind them of one particular form of doing good, which from some points of view was more efficient than any other, inasmuch as the good which they had in view realised the things which reached beyond the affairs of this world and touched closely spiritual and eternal interests. The providing of the means of instruction in religious faith, of an opportunity of frequenting regularly the use of the service of common public worship, was a work of greatest excellence. The promoters of the erection of the church had recognised the binding force of the Apostle's precept in the text, and had been trying to obey it for the spiritual profit of the large number of persons whom they hoped would be benefited by it. How different in reality were the circumstances now, under which they were called to put in use the universal rule of doing good to all men, to whom the words were written. All men with whom they were in these days brought into contact bore the name Christian; but alas! what a mockery of the use of words was it to apply the words "household of faith" to the crowded populations of our seats of trade and commerce. There must be some great sin and evil among them, which required correction, or the words would not seem to mock them as it were with painful irony when they thought of them in connection with the so-called Christian people they saw about them. Surely those who had had an opportunity of doing good must have failed to take advantage of it, and that not only here and there but regularly, systematically, through many generations. They dared not apply the term "household of faith" with any clear sense of truth to multitudes of the people who lived about them. It was well known that in that and other districts where there was trade and commerce there were multitudes of people who never

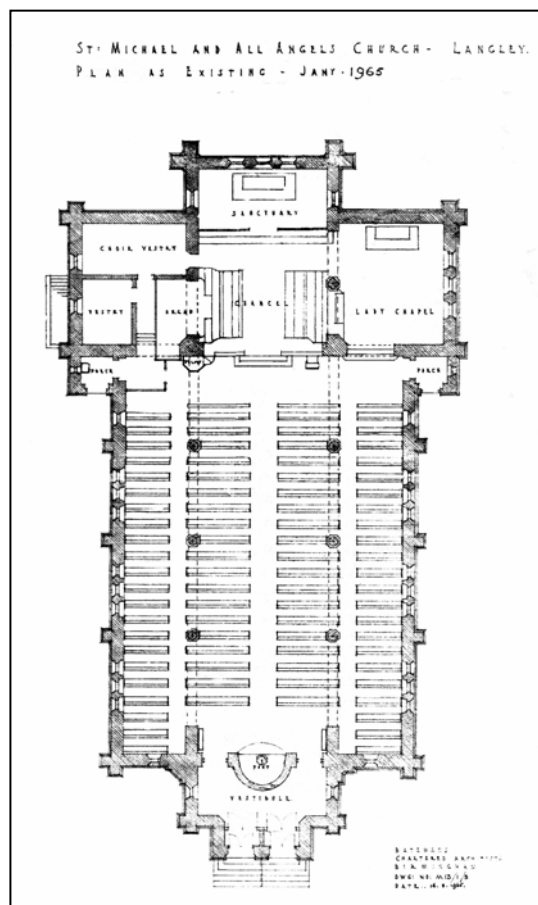
entered a place of worship, never heard read a chapter of the Bible, and never uttered a prayer. They knew little more of the way of salvation than the heathen who never heard of the name of Christ. Was it not in their power to do good to all such people, who, though nominally Christians and of the “household of faith”, had little of no such claim to the application. To properly fulfil the purposes the Church held in view, they wanted more churches free to the poor to enter, without money and when they chose. They wanted more clergy to minister in their large parishes, endowments for such clergy, not, indeed, such as would give them the luxuries of life, but enough to save them from anxiety about the maintenance of their families, and to enable them to give themselves up entirely to the labours of their spiritual calling. They wanted more Scripture readers and pious men among the laity who would help the ministers of the Gospel in going about in the streets and lanes seeking for Christ’s sheep dispersed abroad. The building of the church in which they were gathered was an instalment of the great work that was to be done in the district, but he was anxious to take advantage of the opportunity to impress upon the minds and hearts of his hearers that there was a great deal more work yet to be done, and to ask them to think about the means, from time to time, of giving practical effect to the Apostle’s precept.”

The service was attended by various local dignitaries, including the MP Benjamin Hingley, Walter Showell and G S Albright. One significant absence, that of Alexander Macomb Chance, who was ill, was noted with great regret by the speakers. After the service, tea was taken in a large tent, and a general meeting held. There was reference to the endeavours to establish another church building at the other end of the parish, namely at Rounds Green. Freehold land had been promised by Miss Palmer, and the Bishop hoped that within a year a new church would be opened, and promised £200 towards the venture. The day concluded with an evening service, ‘when a very large congregation was present’.

Outline of the new church

The building consecrated in 1890 is unchanged externally 115 years later, but is less plain within. ‘The Birmingham Daily Gazette’ of 24th October 1890 describes the original church, and the reported clearly approved of the design:

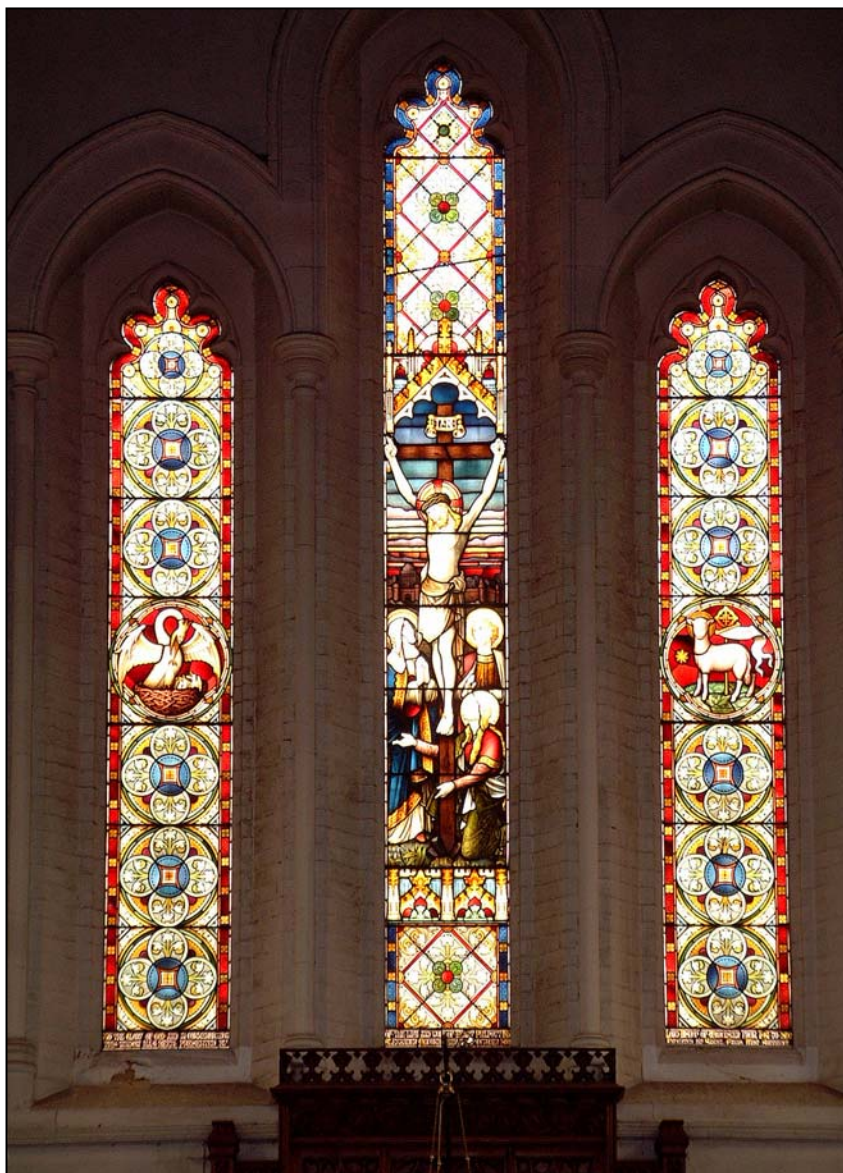
“The church is planned to accommodate 617 worshippers, viz, choir 30, nave 281, aisles 244, and chancel aisle 62. At the west the church is entered through two doorways into a northex 24 feet wide, projecting into which is the baptistery, circular in plan, with the doors to the north and south aisles on either side. The nave is 75 feet long by 24 feet wide, and the aisles are 75 feet long by 11 feet 3 inches. The chancel is 35 feet 6 inches long by 24 feet wide. On the north side are the choir and clergy vestries, also the organ chamber and on the south side an aisle 22 feet 9 inches by 19 feet 3 inches. In the designing of the church a simple treatment in brick and stone of the early decorated Gothic style of architecture has been adopted. The western gable has a four-light traceried window, with stone shafts and arches; also an elegant three-light piercing above. The massive octagonal bell turret in the north angle, with the smaller turret on the south, each turret having good buttresses, make an effective treatment. The east end has triplet windows, with stone joints, shafts, and arches, and the turrets and buttresses are designed in harmony with the western elevation. The north and south elevations are pierced with three-light windows, and have simple but strong brick buttresses, the general effect of the whole being very satisfactory. Internally the blending of the stone piers, the moulded red brick arches, and plastered walls produces an artistic result. The nave is admirably lighted from the western and Clerestory windows. The chancel is lofty and has a barrelled wooden roof, and the arcading to the south chancel aisle of the north side as



Plan of St Michael's Church drawn in 1965, before the font was re-sited, changes to the entrance vestibule, and removal of some pews to create the Children's Corner.

seen from the nave, in conjunction with the east window is pleasing to the eye. The nave and aisle seats are very comfortable, and the chancel fittings appropriate and tasteful. The floors under the seats are laid with wooden blocks upon concrete, and the aisles with tiles.”

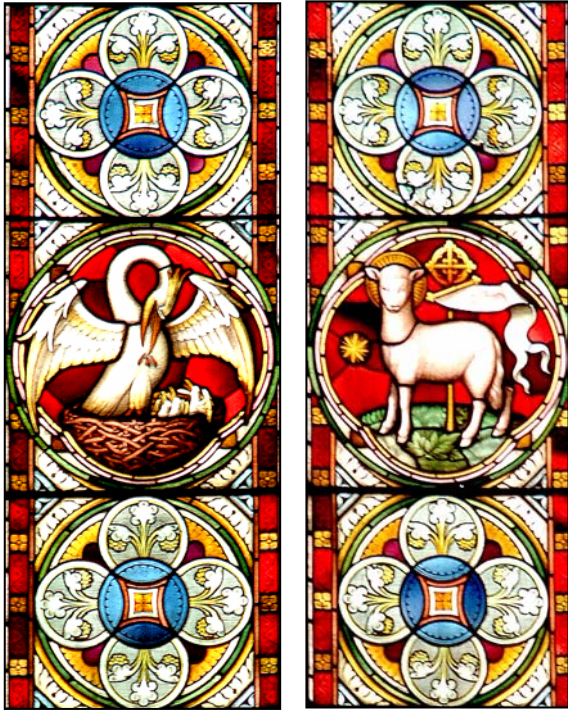
The bricks were mostly supplied by the Cakemore Brick Company, and the ornamental facing and moulded bricks by Messrs J King and Co of Stourbridge. The exterior stonework was in Hollington stone, and the interior stonework in Bath stone. The gas supply was installed by the Oldbury Gas Co, and the fittings by Messrs T Thomason and Co of Birmingham. The church had a heating system from the start, installed by Mr J Grundy of London.



East window, St Michael and All Angels Church

The windows were clear-glazed, except for the very fine east window, which is richly coloured, and the focal point for the worshippers.

The inscription below the window relates its origin: *“To the glory of God, and in commemoration of the life and work of Henry Phillpot, D.D., Lord Bishop of Worcester from 1861 to 1890, this window has been presented by Alexander Macomb Chance, 30 October 1890.”* The centre light shows the crucifixion of Christ, with Mary his mother, St John and Mary Magdalene at the foot of the cross. The other lights show traditional Christian emblems. In the left light, the pelican wounds itself in the breast to feed its young – a symbol of



Christ's redeeming work, especially in the Eucharist. In the right light is the lamb and flag. The window was made by Samuel Evans of Birmingham. He was well known to Alexander Macomb Chance since he had been a glass artist at Chance Brothers glassworks in Smethwick, and colleague of T W Camm, until Chance's 'Ornamental Department' was closed down, when he set up in business separately.

The original furnishing of the sanctuary is shown in the photograph included in Rev Henry McKean's 'Picturesque Oldbury' of 1900. Behind the altar was a curtain the full width of the sanctuary, and above it the words 'THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED'. The lectern in the form of a carved wooden eagle is in place, and the general arrangement very similar to that in 2005. The organ is shown in position, but this instrument, built by Nicholson of Worcester, was not installed until 1894.



Interior of St Michael's Church around 1900, showing the original décor with the curtain below the East window.

Developments within the parish

With the opening of the new building the Building Committee had not finished its work by a long way. There were plans to build a school next to the church and extend the work to the north-west area of the parish with new churches there.

Following the opening of the church, the Bishop of Worcester as alternate patron of the living, the Crown as alternate patron and the Vicar, Michael Pryor, had certified to the Ecclesiastical

Commissioner that ‘it would be for the convenience of the new parish of Langley that the new church of St Michael and All Angels, situate within the new parish, should be substituted for the old parish church (dedicated to the Holy Trinity) of the same new parish’. It was not until the 5th February 1891 that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners sealed the instrument making the substitution, so this is the date that St Michael’s became the parish church and Holy Trinity was reduced in status to a chapel of ease to St Michael’s. The vicar had the benefit of two curates until the start of the First World War, and worship continued at Holy Trinity. However, with the transfer of all endowments, emolument and rights to St Michael’s in 1891, Holy Trinity lost the right for marriages to be conducted there. It was not until 7th March 1899 that the Bishop of Worcester issued a new license for publication of banns and the solemnisation of marriages at Holy Trinity. In 1899, Holy Trinity School on the corner of Titford Road and Old Park Lane were opened to accommodate 336 children, mixed and infants.

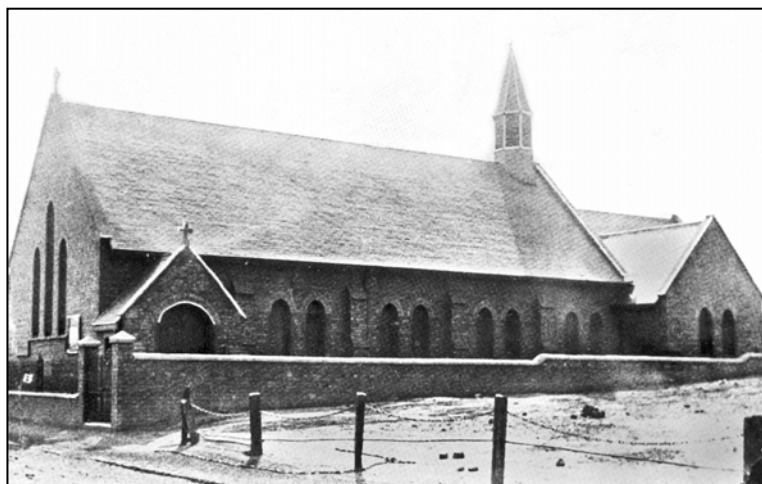


St James' Church, Rounds Green

The promise of a new church made at the consecration of St Michael’s was fulfilled when St James’s Church was opened as a chapel of ease in Rounds Green of 5th June 1892. This was a red-brick building with a belfry over the chancel arch housing a single bell, and capable of seating 350 worshippers. It cost £2500, and much of the money was given by Walter Showell and his wife. She also presented the stained glass east window in memory of her father. Work in the area would have been quite a challenge. There had been a strong Methodist influence in the area for forty years, and it was situated in

the heart of a poor, industrial area, a region of marl-holes, brick works and coal mines, and close to the edge-tool works of ‘The Brades’. Four years later, a school for 200 children was built next to the church.

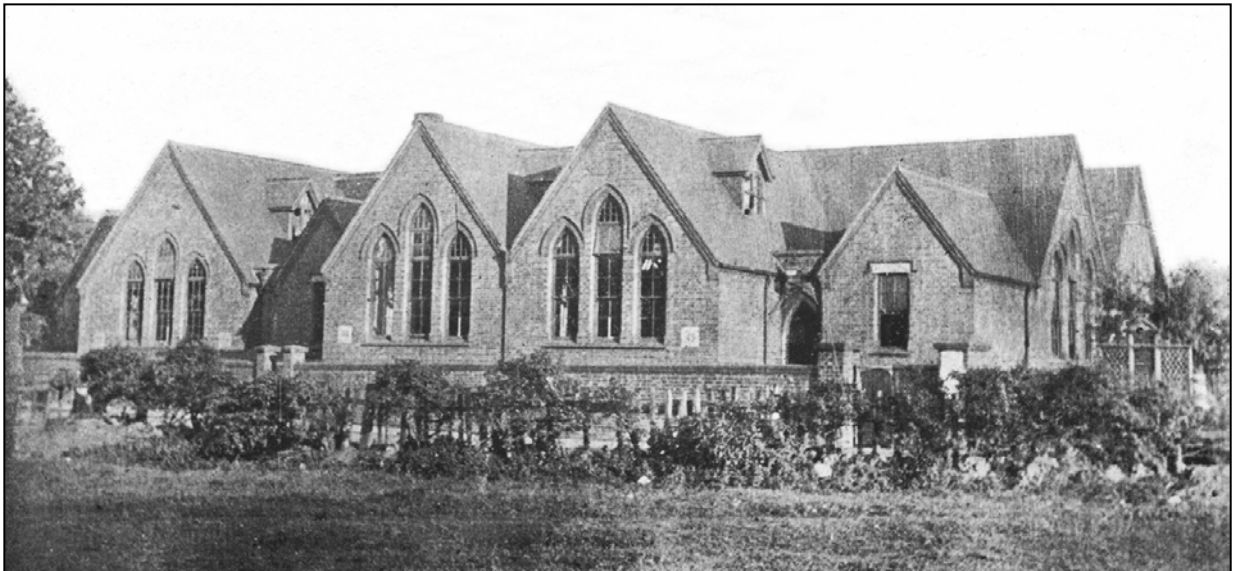
This was not the end of church building in the parish, for one more was to be built, the Church of the Good Shepherd, in Birchfield Lane, similar in style and size to St James’s Church.. This too was a small brick-built church with a belfry over the chancel arch, and again a single bell. The brick were given by several local brick makers, but the majority came from Webb and Ivery. It was this firm who also give the site, and their managing director, Edgar Webster, together with his wife, were the inspiration and main benefactors for the church. Mrs Webster laid the



Church of the Good Shepherd, Birchfield Lane

foundation stone, and the church was dedicated on 29th August 1899 by the Bishop of Worcester. The church, which had cost £2500, had seating for 350 worshippers. A school was also built at the same time, next to the church, and capable of accommodating 336 mixed and infants.

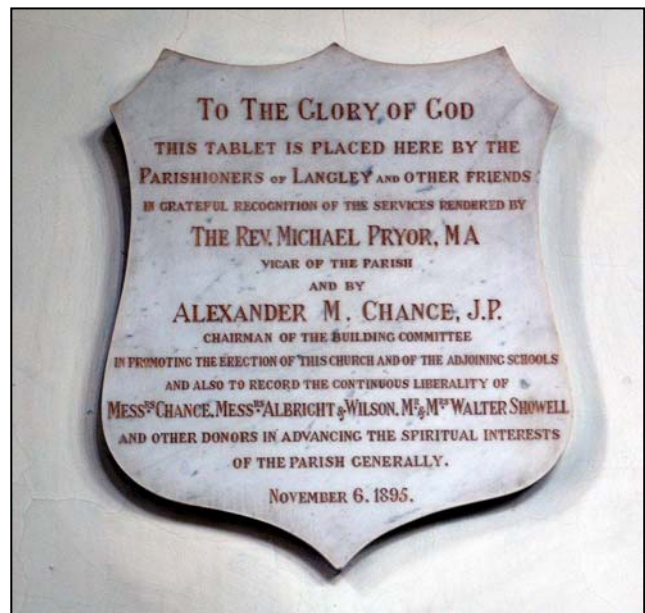
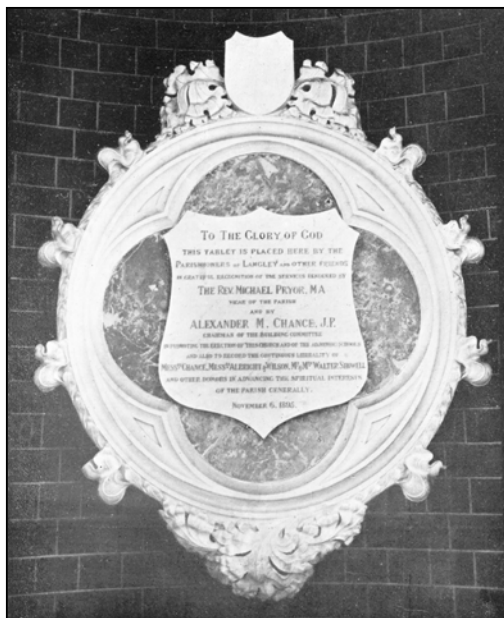
The run of school building had started with the erection of St Michael’s Schools on the remainder of the land given by Mary Barrs. These were opened on 21st August 1893 by Bishop Perowne. They were designed by B Osborne and built by a local firm, James Light from Arden Grove, Langley. They were designed to accommodate 600 pupils, but opened in stages. The first section had space for 280 children



St Michael's School, 1900

ranging in age from three to thirteen, but this was extended twice before the end of the century, an infant school being opened in 1896 for 200 children, and further extensions in 1899 to accommodate another 100 pupils. By September 1893 the school was popular, oversubscribed and overcrowded, with 324 pupils on the books!

The achievements at St Michael's were celebrated after the building of the school when a plaque was placed in the north wall of the church recognising the services rendered by Rev Michael Pryor, Sir Alexander Macomb Chance, Messrs Chance, Messrs Albright & Wilson and Mr & Mrs Walter Showell. It was unveiled on 6th November 1895, and originally contained within an elaborate moulding. The moulding was subsequently removed, and the plaque is now mounted directly on to the wall of the building.



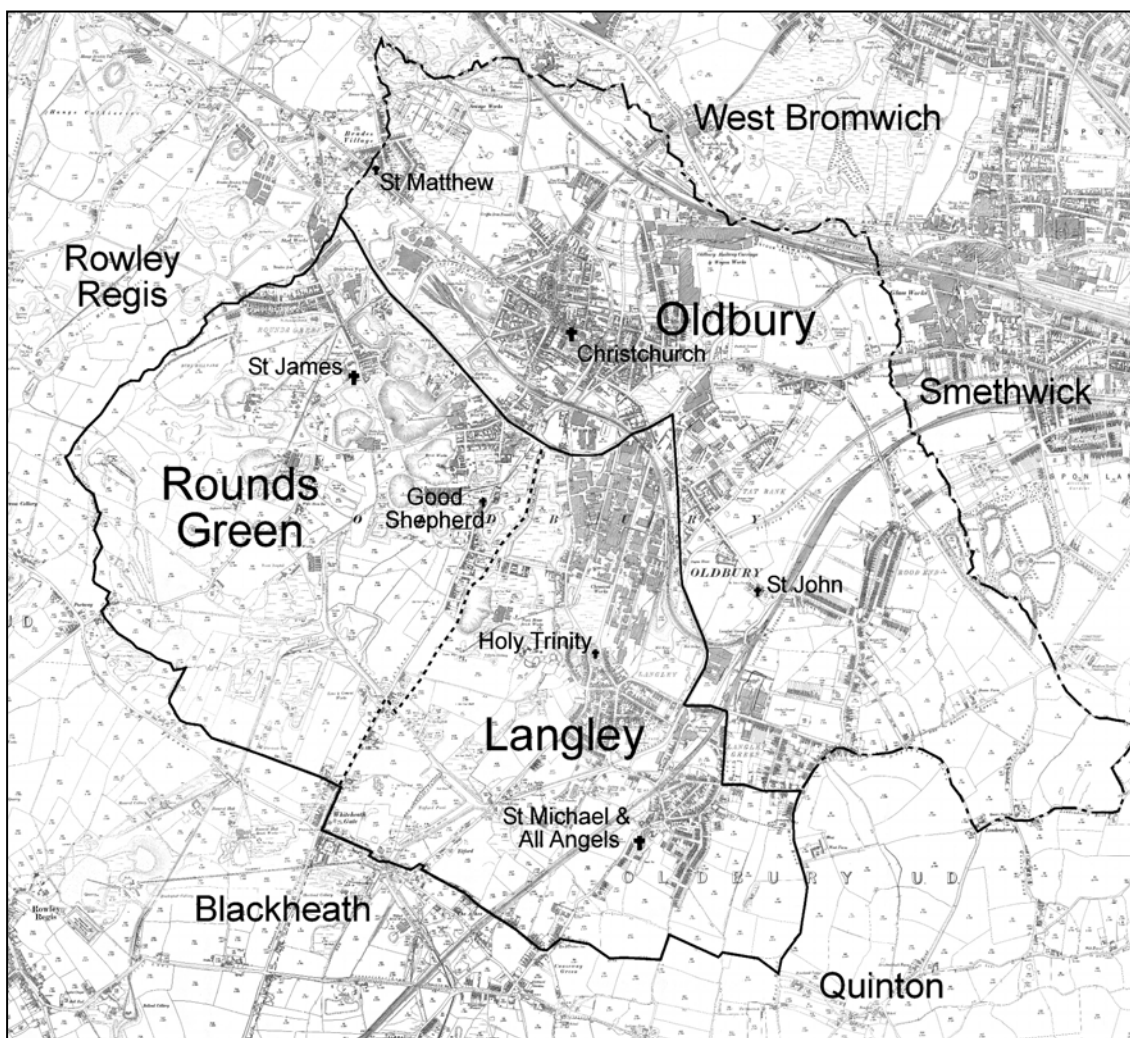
The Pryor-Chance Plaque in 1900, as originally mounted, and as displayed in 2000

In 1890 the parish had one church seating four hundred worshippers, and no school provision. By 1900 the parish had four churches providing in total for 1700 worshippers, each with an adjacent school providing education for 1500 local children. This was a remarkable expansion for the Anglican cause in the area and a great tribute to the vision of the vicar and the building committee.

There was a long-term goal to this rapid building, and this was realised in 1905. The intention was to divide the parish so that the north-west section became the New Parish of Rounds Green with St

James’s Church as the parish church and the Church of the Good Shepherd as its chapel of ease. On 10th May 1905, the King’s consent was given for the establishment of ‘The District Chapelry of St James, Round’s Green’, and the conduct of banns, marriages, baptisms, churchings and burials there. The dividing line between the parishes followed

“the middle of the Churchbridge Branch Canal for a distance of twenty-two chains and a half or thereabouts to the centre of the bridge which carries Park Street over the said Branch Canal, and extending thence south-westward and in a direct line for a distance of thirty-two chains and a half or thereabouts to the southern corner of the close numbered 397 upon the Ordnance Survey map of the Parish of Oldbury on the scale of twenty-five inches to one mile published in the year 1904, which close is situate upon the north-eastern side of the Titford canal and contains the Boat Inn and certain Cottages, and extending thence southward and in a direct line for a distance of three yards or thereabouts to the middle of the Titford Canal for a distance of about three chains or thereabouts to the centre of the bridge which carries Birchfield Lane over the same canal, and extending thence southwestward along the middle of Birchfield Lane for a distance of seventeen chains and a half or thereabouts to the point where the said New Parish of Langley, the New Parish of Saint Paul, Blackheath ... and the Parish of Rowley Regis all meet”.



Langley, Oldbury and Rounds Green Parishes after changes in 1906

Minor changes to Langley parish were made in February 1906 to tidy up outlying portions of Langley, Oldbury and Quinton parishes. The new boundaries between the parishes were defined thus, all detached portions reverting to the parish in which they fell:

“The boundary of between the Parish of Oldbury and the New Parish of Langley shall be: Starting from the junction of Joining’s Bank and Moat Lane Westward along Joining’s Bank, then North along Thompson Road, then West along Station Street to the Birmingham Canal, then along the Canal in a North Westerly direction to the Dingle Brook Course and the boundary of Tividale Parish and the boundary of Rowley Regis Parish.

The boundary of between the Parish of Oldbury and the Parish of The Quinton shall be: Starting from the junction of Joining's Bank and Moat Lane, proceed along Moat Lane and Vicarage Road to its junction with Dog Kennel Lane, then along Dog Kennel Lane in an easterly and south easterly direction to it junction with Londonderry Lane, then East along Londonderry Lane to the boundary of Holy Trinity Parish, Smethwick.

The boundary of between the New Parish of Langley and the Parish of Quinton shall be: Starting from the junction of Joining's Bank and Moat Lane proceed South along Moat Lane to the stile on the right hand opposite the entrance to Knotsall Lodge, then over this stile on along the field footpath in a Westerly direction across two fields to the footpath which is a continuation of Farm Road, then along this footpath in a Southerly direction to Pound Road to and along the boundary of the New parish of St Paul Blackheath."

These changes had the advantage of bringing the Vicarage with the parish!

Embellishing the Church

The church building was gradually embellished by the addition of various memorial plaques, stained glass windows, fitments, crosses and church plate.

The first faculty was granted for the erection of a marble memorial to Rev William Laing. This was granted to Rebecca Whitehouse for a plaque in the South Wall of Holy Trinity Church, where he had served his years in ministry. Rebecca was William Laing's daughter who, in 1884, had married William Latham Whitehouse, the son of a clergyman. The plaque records his period as incumbent from 11th March 1846 to 29th September 1888, and quotes St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, c2, v2: 'I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified'. The memorial remained at Holy Trinity until its demolition in 1968, when it was rescued from the rubble and re-sited in the north wall of St Michael's Church.

In 1900, the Vicar of Langley, Michael Pryor and his family suffered a great loss with the death of their daughter, Gladys Georgina Muriel, at the age of twelve years from rheumatic fever and bronchitis. In July the next year, the Vicar circulated a letter with the Parish Magazine in memory of her. She was a treasured and spiritual child as these quotations from the letter illustrate: "She was unselfish and truthful and essentially a child of prayer ... asked at any time to make a choice of one out of two gifts, she



Laing memorial, moved from Holy Trinity in 1968



Rev Michael Pryor and family with Gladys inset

would always allow her sister to choose first, never desiring the best for herself ... hers was a life of prayer. She cultivated the habit of talking with Jesus, not only morning and evening, but during the day. Often in the train and in the garden we should notice her lips moving, and this became such a habit that her little sister would sometimes say "What are you talking to Jesus about now." ... We were looking forward with great hopefulness to her becoming a great help to us in the parish. On her twelfth birthday she took a Sunday School class, being most

anxious to do so because Jesus spoke in the temple at that age.” Her life was commemorated that year in a stained glass window made by Thomas Camm of Smethwick. This shows Jesus with the children gathered around him, and his hand resting on the head of Gladys Pryor. This window was used as the focus for the Children’s Corner, created in 1985.

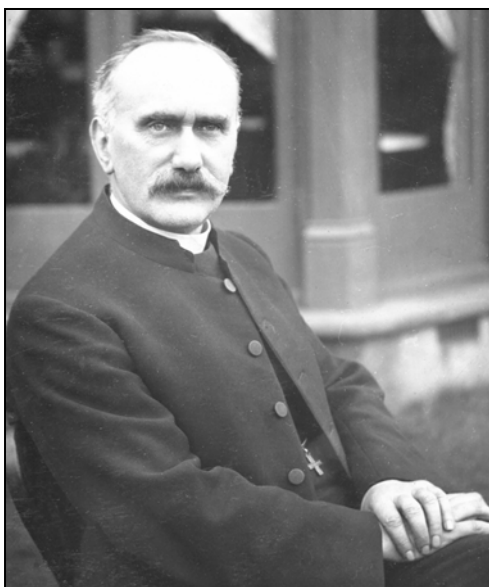


Gladys Pryor Memorial Window showing Christ with a group of children and including the face of Gladys Pryor



The Johnson Memorial Plaque

A memorial brass sited in the south aisle was erected by Mary Johnson in memory of her husband, Edward, who died in 1901 and had been a sidesman at the church



Rev Walter Wale

After fourteen years, Michael Pryor left Langley for Holy Trinity Margate, and Walter Wale became the new Vicar, serving from 1902 to 1930. Under his incumbency there were several important changes to the interior. 1904 saw the first significant change with the granting of the faculty for an oak reredos to be installed. This was a wooden screen which replaced the curtain and motto below the east window, spanning the full width of the sanctuary. This included four carved emblems in the panels to the right and left of the altar, five loaves and two fishes (teaching), the chalice (communion), the crown of thorns (the passion), and the shell (baptism). In 1970 side panels were installed matching the original reredos.

On 24th January 1908 the Bishop granted the faculty for ‘a second Holy Table in the side Chapel to the south of the Church’, permitting the celebration of Holy Communion in this chapel. Originally, it appears to have been called the ‘Morning Chapel’, but now became the ‘Lady Chapel’.

The interior of St Michael's around 1910, showing the new wooden reredos behind the altar, and the four symbols carved into the reredos: the shell, the cup, the cross of thorns and the five loaves and two fishes.



The Lady Chapel

The Hollins Memorial

In 1913 the death of Elijah Hollins, a prominent Oldbury lawyer, was commemorated by a tablet given by his two daughters. They also presented the metal chancel screen that was fixed above the original stone screen; in 1977 the stone screen was lowered, reducing the overall height.



The most striking change resulted from the First World War. Two three-light stained glass windows were installed in the south aisle of the church, replacing the plain glass and adding colour and brilliance. The window nearest the western end is the memorial to all the men of Langley killed in the war, and their names are recorded on four scrolls included in the design. The centre light shows the figure of St George with the figure of Faith ('Fides') in the left pane and Hope ('Spes') in the right pane. The window bears the dedication 'To the Glory of God and in grateful memory of the men of Langley who fell in the Great War 1914-1918'.



The windows commemorating the dead of Langley in the First World War

The names of the fallen as recorded in the four panels of the window are:

Brown, B	Gould, H	Mortimer, J	Slim, T F
Baker, C	Gould, T	Mordan, E	Slim, L
Bayliss, W R	Holmes, J C H	Maskell, L	Stride, J J
Barnsley, A	Heeley, T	Mobberley, W	Stevens, A
Berry, J	Hackwood, W	Neale, T	Siddaway, F
Blewitt, G H	Jennings, J H	Oakley, C	Sadler, J J
Branch, W	Johnson, G J	Plant, A	Turner, W
Cowley, F	Lloyd, C P W	Parkes, T L	Thornloe, A
Comley, E	Ludlow, J E	Pickering, F	Vickers, E
Cox, E	Lloyd, W	Perry, J	Williams, J
Doyle, W T	Lawton, T	Robbins, H	Walker, J W
Edwards, W	Marshall, G W	Round, J	Walters, J
Fanthom, T	Moore, D G	Rigg, H T	Winterton, C P
Frith, C	Gilbert, G W	Ricketts, J	Woodcock, R
		Smart, A E	Yardley, S F
			Smart, A

One of the names in the window is that of C P W Lloyd, and a second three-light window was given by his parents. This is similar in colour scheme to the main memorial window, showing St Michael in the centre light, between St Gabriel (the Archangel Gabriel, the messenger) and St Raphael (the Archangel Raphael, the healer). The dedication records the connection with St Michael's Church: *'To the Glory of God and in loving memory of Cecil Percy William Lloyd (R. R. R.) formerly a Choir Boy of this Church, who died in action in the battle of the Somme, July 24th 1916. This window is given by his parents.'* Both windows were installed in 1921.



Memorial window to Cecil Percy William Lloyd, killed on the Somme, 24th July 1916



Langley War Memorial

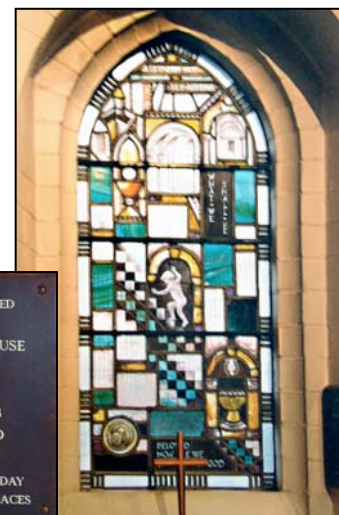
The final item of remembrance was a 'grey granite rustic cross' erected in 1924 in the churchyard of Holy Trinity on the north side of the church. This commemorated *'The Glorious Dead, 1914-1918 Their name liveth for evermore.'* When Holy Trinity was closed, the war memorial was re-sited at St Michael's, on the north side of the entrance steps.

A third three-light window was added in the south aisle in 1930, a memorial to Nancy Mary Amphlett. The centre light shows Jesus carrying a lamb and surrounded by sheep, the left light St Elizabeth and St John the Baptist as a youth carrying a dove, and the right light Charity carrying a baby with other two children. The dedication reads *'To the glory of God and in loving memory of Nancy Mary Amphlett (née Stockton) who entered into rest May 3rd 1929 aged 82 years'*. She was the wife of John Ockey Amphlett, who had been churchwarden on several occasions in the 1890's and 1900's,

and was much involved in the work at St Michael's.

In 1966, the west end of the church was restructured, removing the font and providing a central inner entrance with double doors and recesses on either side whether there had formerly been entrance doors. Toilets were installed off the vestibule!

Two pews were removed from the front of the south aisle and the baptistery located there. Two years later, the



THIS WINDOW IS DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF
SAM & EMILY WHITEHOUSE
MALCOLM WARD
DONALD POWELL
JOHN & MARY LAMB
FLORENCE HALFORD
ELSIE BAXTER
LOOKING UPWARDS EVERY DAY
TOWARDS THE HEAVENLY PLACES

The Baptistery window



Memorial window to Nancy Mary Amphlett showing St Elizabeth with John the Baptist, Jesus as the Good Shepherd and Charity

originally font was replaced by a more ornate font with an oak cover from St Chad's Church, Smethwick when that church closed. In 1977, the baptistry was further enhanced by the installation of a single-light stained glass window in the south wall behind the font. This modern design showed the progress of the soul through conception, birth, baptism, the Eucharist, and finally to heaven.

In 1966 the chancel and sanctuary were carpeted in blue, adding to the richness of east end of the building. By then a Bishop's chair had been added to the furnishings of the sanctuary, the gift of Mrs H Whitehouse and M Latham in 1961.



The Baptistry re-sited in 1966, with the font transferred from St Chad's

The last memorial to be added to the church, in 1991, was a brass plaque in memory of Canon Richard Simpson, who had been Vicar of Langley for twenty-three years. It is sited by the window of the baptistry, and reads: *"To the memory of Canon R J G Simpson / Vicar of this Parish 1957-1980 / who died on 21st December 1984 / aged 69 years / Jesus said 'I am the Way the Truth and the Life'"*.

Church Plate

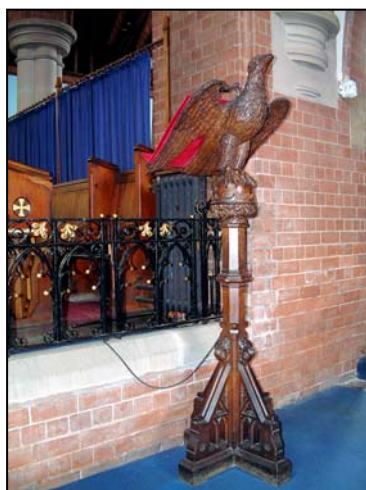


The Canon Simpson memorial plaque



The Bishop's Chair

The earliest surviving inventory completed by Rev Walter Wale is undated, but relates to the church existing in the Diocese of Birmingham and the Harborne, and is countersigned by E Roberts and J O Amphlett as churchwardens: this dates it to 1913 or 14. It lists two electroplate chalices, two electroplate patens, two electroplate flagons, a brass altar desk, the oak lectern, a metal font ewer, an iron and oak font cover, six brass vases, a brass alms dish, two sanctuary chairs, two faldstools, two warden' staves and one bell in the belfry.



The lectern and chancel rail

Updates to the inventory up to 1947 add altar crosses and a silver chalice and paten. Under a faculty of September 1931, plain brass crosses were placed on the holy tables of St Michael's and Holy Trinity. The cross from Holy Trinity was taken to St Michael's when Holy Trinity closed



Doyle memorial chalice and paten

and used on the altar in the children's corner from 1985. There is a note with one of the church papers that a cross from Holy Trinity in memory of Mrs Jane Morton was transferred, but no indication whether this is the cross of 1931. The additional silver chalice and paten is probably that made in Birmingham in 1921 and given in memory of Walter Doyle who was killed in action in the Great War.

The oak cross and candlesticks were added to the altar in the Lady Chapel in 1945, and this chapel was refurnished in 1954, including the addition of a curtain screen between the choir and the Lady Chapel, and the replacing of pews with chairs. In 1991 the Lady Chapel was panelled to match the sanctuary, the result of a gift in memory of Mr and Mrs W Bates by their son. The 1954 faculty which allowed changes to the Lady Chapel also approved the redecoration of the interior of the church, and, more significantly, disposal of the old altar ornaments, and installation of a cross and candlesticks on the altar, a brass processional cross, brass warden's staves and a brass verge. These were given to commemorate the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, the previous year.



Silver wafer box



Communion Plate



Altar Cross

In 1953 a chalice belonging to Rev Walter Wale was given by his children. Subsequently, a wafer box, made in London 1957-8, was given in memory of Florence Howell, and a home communion set, made in London in 1944-5, was given by the St Michael's branch of the Mothers' Union in 1959.



Altars at St Michael's

Top-left: The Sanctuary

Top right and bottom right: The Lady Chapel

Left: The Children's Corner

The closure of Holy Trinity Church

Holy Trinity had largely operated separately from St Michael's, with its own churchwardens and committee. It sent its own representatives to deanery and diocesan meetings. Although the Vicar and Parochial Church Council were legally responsible for Holy Trinity, in practice they exercised a light touch. It was normally under the care of the curate of the parish, and had a loyal and largely independent congregation. When Rev Duff left in 1946, he was not replaced as curate; services were suspended at Holy Trinity for a year, and worshippers encouraged to attend services at St Michael's.

Services restarted, however, and in the 1950's, the council of Holy Trinity raised around £5000 to put the fabric into good order. Curates were again in post from 1955 to 1960, but after that date there was no likelihood of a further appointment, and it was left to the Vicar to maintain services at both churches. The curate's house was sold, following a joint decision of the committees of both churches in 1960. Against this background, there were some discussions between the members of both churches, without a decision on the future of Holy Trinity being made. At the Parochial Church Council of 31st October 1960, the Vicar, Dick Simpson, read a statement outlining the considerations leading to his decision to close Holy Trinity Church, and the last service was to be held there on 13th November.

The last service was morning communion, followed by a Remembrance day ceremony at the war memorial in the churchyard. In the afternoon the Sunday School met for its prize-giving. The locks were then changed and the police were in attendance to prevent the holding of an evening service in the building. The speed of closure and the manner in which it was imposed, without consultation, caused great resentment among the congregation. Some people did join the worship at St Michael's, but many of the congregation continued to meet for worship together at Titford Road Schools. The 'Friends of Holy Trinity' was formed and fought for the re-opening of the church. Technically, the church was not closed by the actions of 13th November, but its services merely suspended.

The Bishop of Birmingham did decide to close the church, however, and in 1964 the Church Commissioners confirmed this decision. The Friends of Holy Trinity appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council on the basis that the suspension of services was not valid, and that the

Bishop's contention that Holy Trinity was not required for the worship was, therefore, also invalid. On 30th March 1965, the Lords gave a lengthy judgement which sealed the fate of the church. The judgement sets out the events and arguments in detail and was not uncritical of the process, but their final paragraph confirmed the closure:

"It is only too clear from the arguments in this appeal that there are two strongly held opposing views. The appellants hold with deep feeling the opinion that Holy Trinity Church should be reopened and used for providing services for its congregation in the church to which they are accustomed. Sympathy is due to the appellants and other members of the congregation who have lost their church. Nevertheless there are strong reasons – good practical reasons – for the views held by the Bishop and supported by the approval or acceptance of the scheme by the other ecclesiastical authorities who were consulted. There is no error of principle or wrong decision. On all facts of the case, as revealed by the evidence, Holy Trinity Church is not required for the purposes of Divine Service.

Accordingly for the reasons that have been given their Lordships will humbly propose to Her Majesty that the scheme be affirmed."

The Bishop issued the certificate of closure on 17th June 1965. The final blow came on 26th January 1968 when an order in council was passed 'authorising the taking down and the sale of the materials and site of the church of Holy Trinity, Langley, situate in the parish of Langley, in the diocese of Birmingham'. The net proceeds were to be paid to the Expenses Fund of the diocese. In September 1968 the church building was demolished to ground level, but the foundations not excavated. The boundary wall was also demolished to ground level. The burials were not removed from the graveyard. The site was conveyed to Warley Corporation in September 1971 for £350 as landscaped as 'a public open space and/or public highway'.

The whole events of 1960 to 1968 at Holy Trinity caused considerable bitterness and division within the parish, which might have been reduced by more sensitive handling of the original decision to suspend services.

Into the twenty-first century

The work at St Michael's continued under Rev Dick Simpson until 1980, then Rev Frank Giles and Rev Christopher Beaver. During this time, St Michael's School was moved from Causeway Green Road to a much larger site in Throne Road, enabling it to take more pupils and work in better buildings with



Demolition of St Michael's School, 1989

playing fields and modern facilities. The new school was opened on 5th September 1973, the culmination of a long struggle to free the school from the original Victorian buildings. On Wednesday 30th October 1993, the school celebrated its centenary with a service in St Michael's Church.

When the school moved out of the Langley premises the original school building was demolished and the site sold to developers, but the block added in 1938 was retained and converted into a Church Centre.

In 1990 the Church Centenary had been celebrated during the week from Sunday 28th October to Sunday 4th November. Evensong on the first Sunday was led by the former Vicar of Langley, Canon Owen Yandell, and on the second Sunday, Choral Evensong was led by Birmingham Cathedral Choir. On the Tuesday a Centenary Festival Service was led by Rev Frank Giles, and The Bishop of Birmingham led Holy Communion on 1st November, All Saints Day. A 'Parish and People Exhibition' was held during the week, and the booklet 'St Michael & All Angels' Langley - A Parish Profile' by Rev Beaver issued, summarising the history of the parish and the church.

As the end of the century approached, the church attendances gradually fell, while maintenance costs for the building rose. After the departure of Christopher Beaver as Vicar, Langley parish came under the care of Rev Richard Etheridge, Vicar of St John's Rood End; he was responsible for St John's and Christchurch as well as St Michael's. When he retired, Rev John Barnett, who had been the Vicar of

Christchurch at the Quinton, was appointed Vicar of Christchurch, Oldbury in May 2003. Together with an Assistant, Rev Alastair Barrett, he assumed responsibility for the parishes of Oldbury, St Michael's Langley, St John's Rood End and St Mark's Londonderry. Faced with even lower congregations in Langley and at Rood End, the services at St John's and St Michael's were suspended and the Anglican services held at Edward Street Methodist Church, Langley Green, near to St Michael's Church.

Langley has returned to the situation in the 1840's, initially part of a larger parish including Oldbury and Rood End, and from 1848 having a temporary church in a hired room. One hundred and sixty years ago, however, it was a period of expansion and growth for the area; now, however, the future is less certain. This uncertainty applies not only to the future of the fellowship who met at St Michaels, but also to the war memorial, and the stained glass windows, particularly the war memorial windows and the Camm window.

Terry Daniels
Langley Local History Society
February 2006

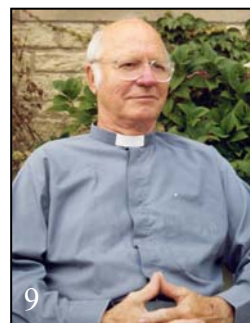
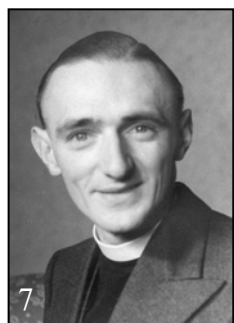
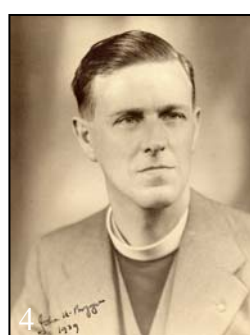
Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Rev John Barnett for access to the documents relating to St Michael and All Angels Church, and for the opportunity to record the details of the building.



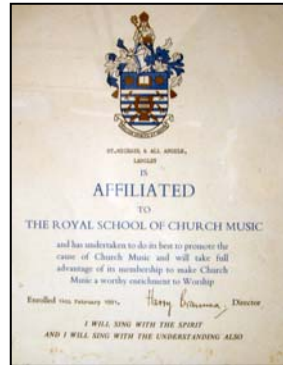
Vicars and Curates of Langley Parish

	Vicars of Langley		Curates at Langley
	William Laing	1846 – 1888 [HT]	Philip Cornish Pratt 1852 – 1854 William Arthur Norris 1854 – 1856 Thomas Henry Friel 1868 – 1871 Jonathan William Marsden 1871 – 1873 George Lowe Whitehouse 1873 – 1879 William Blake Atkinson 1878 – 1879 Ebenezer Johnson 1879 – 1889
1	Michael Pryor	1888 – 1890 [HT] 1890 – 1902 [StM]	Leonard Lancelot Barclay 1889 – 1890 Samuel Taylor 1889 – 1891 George Arthur Anning 1890 – 1899 Alfred Charles Howell 1891 – 1900 Edward Arthur Berry 1889 – 1900 Arthur Wellesley Bailey 1900 James Hindle Rawcliffe 1900 – 1902 Herbert Pegg 1900 – 1902 Arthur Ernest Browett 1900 – 1905 Edwin Thomas Kerby 1903 – 1904 Robert Withers Carpenter 1904 – 1910 Joseph William Greaves 1905 – 1907 Jonathan Evans 1907 – 1909 Donald Marten Wilson 1909 – 1910 John Daniel Thomas 1910 – 1914 William David Richards 1912 – 1914 Charles Ernest Barlow 1915 – 1926 Herbert George Dudley 1927 – 1929 Walter John Bastow 1929 – 1931 John Walter Povah 1932 – 1933 Henry Raveley Guest 1934 – 1936 John Martin Preston 1936 – 1939 Richard Tydeman 1939 – 1941 Adam Alexander Howard Duff 1943 – 1946 Thomas John George Andrew 1955 – 1957 Jack Francis Bulliman 1957 – 1960
2	Walter Wale	1902 – 1930	
3	Joseph Griffith Roberts	1930 – 1935	
4	John Hickey Boggon	1935 – 1939	
5	Leslie Reynolds	1939 – 1943	
6	Frances Edward Drewett	1943 – 1950	
7	Owen James Yandell	1950 – 1957	
8	Richard James George Simpson	1957 – 1980	
9	Frank Edwin Giles	1981 – 1988	
10	Christopher Martin Beaver <i>St Michael, St John and Christchurch</i> Richard Etheridge <i>St Michael, St John, Christchurch and St Mark</i> John Barnett Alastair Barrett (Assistant)	1989 – 2003 –	



Details and corners





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