

= All Saints ' Church , Runcorn =

All Saints ' Church is the parish church of Runcorn , Cheshire , England , sited on the south bank of the River Mersey overlooking Runcorn Gap . There is a tradition that the first church on the site was founded by Ethelfleda in 915 . That was replaced , probably in about 1250 , by a medieval church that was altered and extended in the 14th and 15th centuries . By the 19th century the building 's structure had deteriorated and become dangerous , and it was replaced by a new church , built between 1847 and 1849 to the designs of Anthony Salvin .

The church is built in local sandstone and is in Early English style with a tall steeple at the southwest corner . Some of the furniture in the church was moved from the previous building , as were some of the memorials , the majority which are to members of the Brooke family from nearby Norton Priory .

All Saints is an active Anglican parish church in the diocese of Chester , arranging services on Sundays and home groups during the week , in addition to weddings and funerals , and running a community project . The church is designated as a Grade II * listed building .

= = History = =

A church has stood on the site of the present structure for centuries . There is a tradition that the first church was founded in 915 by Ethelfleda when she built a castle nearby . Dedicated to St Bertelin , it was probably a simple structure of wood and thatch . Runcorn is not mentioned in the Domesday Book , but there is evidence that Nigel , the first baron of Halton (died 1080) , conferred the church with a priest " in the days of the Conqueror " . A medieval church was subsequently built on the site , during the 19th @-@ century demolition of which Norman capitals were found in the masonry of its tower . Judging by its Early English style of architecture , the local historian H. F. Starkey estimates that the medieval church was probably built in about 1250 . The chancel was rebuilt in the 14th century with Decorated tracery in the east window . During the same century an embattled tower was built at the west end of the church , and this was either rebuilt or increased in size in the following century . A major item of the church furniture was a pre @-@ Reformation rood screen . It was destroyed when the church was rebuilt in the 19th century , although a few fragments were used in the construction of the present choir stalls . The nave of the church measured 52 feet (16 m) by 40 feet (12 m) and the tower was 57 feet (17 m) high . At some time the dedication of the church was changed from St Bertelin to St Bartholomew , and later to All Saints .

By the 18th century the south aisle was in a serious state of decay , and in 1740 it was rebuilt in brick . In 1801 a commission reported that the church " was too small to conveniently contain the inhabitants of the parish " . It was extended by enlarging the south aisle and by adding galleries to it and to the west end . The former Gothic windows were replaced by round @-@ headed windows . During the first half of the 19th century there was increasing concern about the fabric of the church . The tower was becoming dangerous , and the vestry gave orders " that the bells were not to be rung " . In 1817 it was recommended that the height of the tower should be reduced . The south wall of the chancel was leaning and only kept in position by its roof . The south aisle , built only 15 years before , was sinking , and gaps were appearing around the windows . It was concluded that the church should be demolished and replaced . Some temporary repairs were carried out but there was insufficient money available to rebuild the church at that time . In July 1843 it was reported that the church was in a " very dangerous condition " , and calls were made for " necessary repairs to be made forthwith " . By December of that year architectural reports had been obtained from the architectural firm of Scott and Moffatt , and from Anthony Salvin , both of which concluded that the church was beyond repair . In September 1846 the last sermon was preached from the medieval church , and by November contracts for building a new church were completed .

The new church was designed by Salvin . Its foundation stone was laid at Easter 1847 by Richard Brooke , the eldest son of Sir Richard Brooke of Norton Priory , and the church was consecrated by Dr John Graham , Bishop of Chester on 11 January 1849 . The church , which provided seating for 1 @, @ 600 people , cost £ 8 @, @ 052 to build , met by public subscriptions and by the parish rate .

The major donors were Miss Orred , the largest land owner in the town , Sir Richard Brooke , the dean and chapter of Christ Church , Oxford , and the Earl of Ellesmere . The stained glass in the chancel windows was donated by Sir Richard Brooke . A clock was installed in the tower in 1851 , and three new lancet windows were added to the chancel in 1900 . In 1910 a papal bull issued by Pope Boniface IX was found in the churchyard that referred to the dissolution of Norton Priory .

= = Architecture = =

= = = Exterior = = =

The church is built of Runcorn sandstone with a slate roof , and is in Early English style . Its plan consists of a nave of five bays with north and south aisles and a clerestory , a chancel that is lower and narrower than the nave , and a steeple at the southwest corner . The steeple consists of a square tower with an octagonal spire rising to 161 feet (49 m) . The steeple has corner buttresses , large louvred lancets at the bell @-@ stage , and two tiers of lucarnes springing from the base of the tower and from the broach . At the corners of the nave and the chancel are buttresses that rise up as spirelets . On the gables of the chancel and the nave are cross finials and pinnacles . There is an organ chamber at the east end of the north aisle , and a war memorial chapel at the east end of the south aisle . The windows along the clerestory are round with inset quatrefoils ; all the other windows are lancets .

= = = Interior = = =

The five @-@ bay arcades are carried on square columns with angled corners and have foliated capitals . The chancel is paved with Minton encaustic tiles . The marble reredos dates from 1888 , and the alabaster altar rails from 1900 ; both were donated by the daughter of Rev John Barclay , a former vicar of the church who died in 1866 . Mural tablets , some of which were moved from the old church , commemorate members of the Brooke family and previous vicars of the parish . Also brought from the old church was " a curiously designed table said to have been used as a communion table " , two sanctuary chairs (one in Jacobean style) , and a chest . In addition , a royal coat of arms of George III , and a benefaction board dating from about 1700 were moved from the old church . The oldest memorial is to two women described as " both good wives " who died in 1672 . The next in age is a large tablet to the memory of Thomas Brooke , who died in 1737 . Two memorials are by John Bacon ; one to Sir Richard Brooke (died 1792) features a putto unveiling an urn and the second , to another Sir Richard Brooke (died 1796) , shows a female figure by an urn . The memorial to Thomas Brooke (died 1820) is by B. F. Hardenburg of London . A memorial to another Sir Richard Brooke (died 1865) is a brass in the form of a cross . In the nave are a number of Georgian tablets including one to John Bankes (died 1817) , by T. Grindrod . The Rev John Barclay has a memorial by Williams and Clay of Warrington containing his portrait in relief . The stained glass in the chancel includes two windows with depictions of the Annunciation and the Resurrection . In the south aisle is a memorial to J. R. Hughes , who died at sea in 1874 ; " he is shown in the water wearing nothing but mutton @-@ chop whiskers and a crown proffered by an angel " . The three @-@ manual organ was installed in 1908 and carries a plate saying it was " assisted by Andrew Carnegie " . There is a ring of eight bells cast in 1851 by Charles and George Mears , the tenor weighing 153 @-@ 3 @-@ 15 in cwts @-@ qtrs @-@ lbs or around 800 kg , having a diameter of 39 inches (0 @-@ 99 m) and tuned to the note E.

= = External features = =

A former hearse house at the southeast corner of the churchyard dates from about 1833 , and has been converted for use as an electricity sub @-@ station . It is a rectangular single @-@ story building of red sandstone with a quarry tile roof . The door opening at the front has a wide

semicircular arch with a keystone and springing blocks , above which is a string course and a cornice with moulded eaves . On the west side and at the rear are small vents with semicircular heads and keystones . The hearse house is listed at Grade II .

= = Appraisal = =

All Saints ' Church is recorded in the National Heritage List for England as a Grade II * listed building , having been designated on 7 December 1965 . Grade II * is the middle of the three grades of listing , and is applied to " particularly important buildings of more than special interest " . Hartwell et al. in the Buildings of England series comment that the church is " more generous and rounded than many of Salvin 's other later churches " , and refer specifically to its " high , graceful " steeple .

= = Present day = =

The church is an active parish church in the diocese of Chester , the archdeaconry of Chester , and the deanery of Frodsham . Its benefice is combined with that of Holy Trinity , Runcorn to form the benefice of Runcorn All Saints with Holy Trinity . The patron of the church is Christ Church , Oxford . All Saints serves the Old Town area of Runcorn , and arranges services on Sundays , together with baptisms , thanksgivings , weddings and funerals . The church also runs a community project known as Open Door . In addition it organises home groups during the week .