

A Brief History of St George's Church, Redditch

Like many similar industrialised towns, Redditch expanded rapidly in the 19th century and the provision of parish churches for the Church of England expanded with it.

Early in the 19th century the local churches were at Beoley, Ipsley, Tardebigge and the small chapel of St Stephen on the green in the centre of the town. St Stephen's was rebuilt, in its present form, in 1854/55. Other churches followed: St Luke's, Headless Cross, originally built in 1843, was expanded to its present size in 1867, St Philip's, Webheath was built in 1870 and St Peter's, Crabbs Cross in 1896. During this period several non-conformist churches and chapels, and the Roman Catholic Church, were also built in the town.

In the 1870's the Vicar of St Stephen's, Revd Fessey, with senior and influential members of the congregation, decided that a new church was needed in the area around Beoley Road to accommodate the needs of the workers in the needle industry, which was mainly concentrated in this part of the town. Funds were raised, land was given by the Windsor family, of Hewell Grange, and the well known Victorian church architect, Frederick Preedy, was contracted to design and build the church we now know as St George's and from which the surrounding area later got its name. The church was consecrated by the Bishop of Worcester in November 1876 as a "Chapel of Ease" to St Stephen's meaning that it was part of the parish of St Stephen's, not a parish in its own right. This situation remained until 1905 when St George's became a separate parish with its own vicar and parochial church council.

St George's remained an independent parish until 1981 when it became part of the Ridge Team of Redditch churches. Since 2005 St George's has been a member of Redditch Holy Trinity Team, along with St Stephen's and the parish churches of Beoley, Webheath and Tardebigge.

The current parish of St George's includes Lakeside, Lodge Park, Smallwood and St George's.

The Church Interior. The church was built in 1876 with the nave, chancel and south aisle. The north aisle (where the piano is) and the vestry were added in 1898. The pulpit, font and pews are all from 1876. The wooden screen at the back of the church is from 1908 and was originally within the chancel arch.

The organ was purchased from Queen's College, Oxford, and installed in 1964.

The east window is a memorial to Rev Fessey and his wife and dates from 1895.

The side window in the south aisle is a First World War memorial and was designed and made in 1920 by Alfred Pike who had a studio in Tardebigge.

The St George and Good Shepherd windows date from c 1905.

The most recent addition is St George's Community Hall which, together with the linking lobby and toilets, was added in 1992.

This is only a brief history and we will look to expand it to include more details of the personalities connected with the church over the years and personal memories of local people and parishioners.

Sources: *The Buildings of England, Worcestershire*, Alan Brooks and Nikolaus Pevsner. Yale University Press, 2007.

Churches of Worcestershire, Tim Bridges. Logaston Press, 2005.