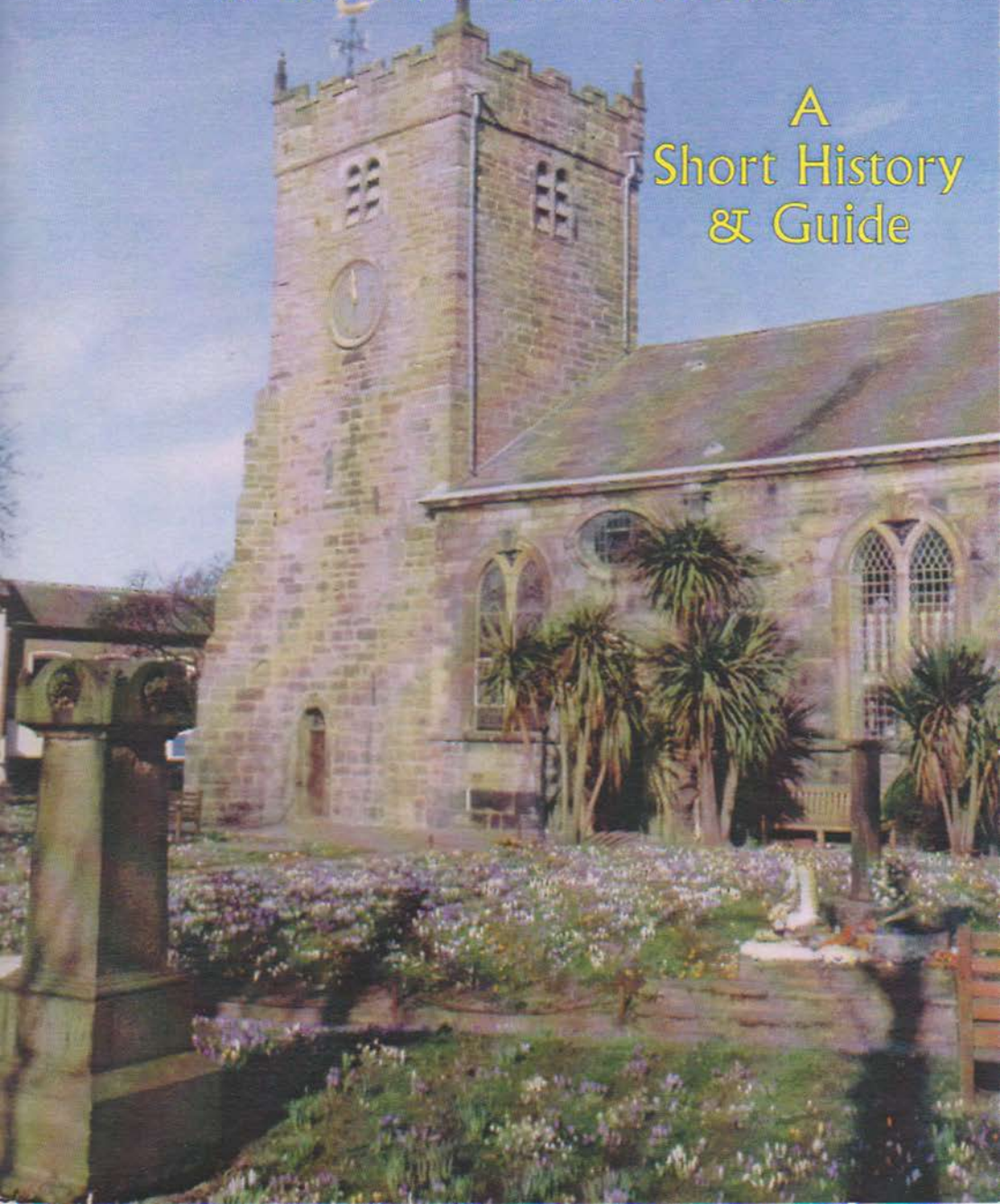


POULTON-LE-FYLDE PARISH CHURCH

A
Short History
& Guide



POULTON-LE-FYLDE PARISH CHURCH

A Short History and Guide

by

Peter Fox

Revised

by

Christine Storey



INTRODUCTION

Poulton-le-Fylde is proud of its Parish Church and rightly so. Worship has been offered continuously on this site for over 900 years and the church remains at the heart of the community, just as it was all those years ago.

Through the pages of this Guide you will learn a little more of the long and distinguished history of this place as well as discovering the story behind the building as you now find it.

We remain grateful as a Church to the efforts of Peter Fox whose substantive work this guide remains and to Christine Storey who has revised and updated the new edition.

Martin Keighley
Vicar, 2004.

The 'churchwardens' stone' in the choir vestry



SAINT CHAD

The church is dedicated to St. Chad, a Northumbrian missionary of the seventh century. He was one of four brothers, all of whom became priests and of whom two, Chad and Cedd, were consecrated bishops. About 664, after studying at Lindisfarne, Chad became Abbot of Lastingham, a lonely abbey on the Yorkshire moors between Whitby and Helmsley. He was soon summoned from the seclusion of his monastic life and in 666 was made Bishop of York. Bede, the great scholar-monk, to whose *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation* we owe most of the details that we know about Chad's life, tells us that 'Chad was consecrated bishop and immediately devoted himself to the task of keeping the Church in truth and purity, to the practice of humility and temperance, and to study. He visited cities and country districts, towns, houses and strongholds, preaching the gospel, travelling not on horseback but on foot after the apostolic example.'

Three years later, however, Theodore, the Archbishop of Canterbury, deposed him from his see on the grounds that he had been improperly ordained. Chad's humility on his removal so impressed Theodore that instead of sending him back to Lastingham he re-ordained him and appointed him bishop of the Mercians. Chad established Lichfield as the

A fifteenth-century drawing of St. Chad, from a manuscript in the Bodleian Library, Oxford

þe toke and beried hy at wrecette: men are tyme.
 þere his bouys lym nobly: in a cut fair schyng.
 for his loue oure lord hay þe: fair merade of þe wroust.
 Now god lete vs to þe sope come: þe he is inne broust.
Sent Chadde þe goode man: was of Ingelond.
 Bisshop he was of lichefelde: as I vnderstond.
 He was soueast þat tyme: þe sent Austyn cam.
 And þe chad first in Ingelonde: and broughte cristian.
 A boue are hundred yer: and ten and ten.
 after þat oure lord crist: on erpe a lyste I wen.
 Sent chadde in northumb lond: he be fore was.
 þanne þe archebisshop of edewik: teir þo bi me.
 þe king asþey was þo: king of northumb lond.
 In sent chadde for sope: erke goodnes he foud.
 Erchebisshop of edewik: he des him to be yere.
 And sente him toward mairden: þat he said were.
 he me not to mairdenber: he cam not bi hwe.
 To þe archebisshop of amirder: þe he nas er of hwe.
 þo wente he toward þe mairk: to bringe þis to fone.
 þat was bisshop of þe mairk: þe bisshop wyne.
 So þat of þe bisshop wyne: said he was þo.
 He wente toward edewik: þo þis tere was I do.
 He foud þis saite 1137 and day: þo he þidur com.



*"Saint Chadde þe goode man: was of Ingelond.
Bisshop he was of lichefelde: as I vnderstond ..."*

seat of the diocese, and near the church there he built a small cell to which he could retire for prayer and meditation. He died of the plague in 672. Bede says of him: 'In addition to all his merits of temperance, humility, zeal in teaching, prayers, and voluntary poverty and other virtues too, he was greatly filled with the fear of the Lord and mindful of his last in all he did.'

Though his episcopate at Lichfield lasted only three years, his sanctity left a deep impression. In the Middle Ages he was one of the most popular of the English saints and a number of legends grew up around miracles he is said to have performed. Why was a church in Poulton dedicated to St. Chad? There are just over eighty churches with this dedication in England. Of these about 35 have a pre-Reformation foundation and the majority of these old churches are close to Lichfield. Dedications to a particular saint would be made for a variety of reasons - one individual may have had national recognition as a saint, while other dedications were made to local missionaries known only in their own area. In the days before widespread literacy people preferred their church to carry the name of a saint who was heroic or saintly, or renowned for visible signs of a holy life. St. Chad's church at Poulton is some distance from Lichfield, the dedication suggesting that the story of Chad's life and the miracles attributed to him after his death spread as far as the Fylde. His feast day is observed on 2nd March.

The church from the south east



HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN POULTON

Before the coming of the Normans in 1066 the Fylde, or Amounderness as it was then called, was a remote corner of the kingdom whose history is shrouded in obscurity. In the ninth and tenth centuries the Vikings, sailing across from their conquered territories in Ireland and the Isle of Man, raided the western parts of Britain. Amounderness, which owes its name to these Scandinavian invaders, has a long, flat coastline which provided an ideal landing place, and there is little doubt that the area suffered greatly at the hands of the invaders. Any church which existed here in Saxon times would not long have escaped destruction.

It is not known whether there was in fact a Saxon church in Poulton, or even whether there was one here at the time of the Domesday Book, twenty years after the Battle of Hastings. Lancashire had not been established as a county in 1086, and Amounderness is included in the section of the Domesday survey dealing with Yorkshire. The details given for the area are very sketchy, maybe because it was not visited by King William's surveyors or because it had been so devastated that there was nothing further to report. The survey states that there were three churches in Amounderness, but does not make it clear which they were. Preston (then named as Prestune), Kirkham (Chicheham), St. Michael's-on-Wyre Michelscherche) and Poulton-le-Fylde (Poltun) are all possible candidates. When describing other counties the Domesday Book omits churches which are known to have existed in 1086, and so it is possible that in fact there were more than three churches in Amounderness at the time.

In 1094 Roger de Poitou bestowed lavish gifts on the Benedictine abbey of St. Martin de Sees in Normandy, and among these gifts was a grant to establish a dependent priory at Lancaster. To this priory, St. Mary's, was granted the advowson (the right to appoint the clergy) of nine churches, including that of Poulton.

Roger's charter reads:

Let it be known ... that Roger, Count of Poitou... gave to God and St. Martin the church of St. Mary at Lancaster... He gave also in Agmundernes, Pulton and whatsoever pertains to it, and the church with a carucate of land, and with all the other appurtenances. Moreover, he gave the tithe of venison and of the pannage (pig food from the woods, such as acorns) of all his groves, and the tithe of his fishery...

The right to appoint the vicar of Poulton remained with Lancaster Priory until 1414, a situation which was not always accepted locally without question. In 1196 for example, Theobald Walter, who had recently been given Amounderness by Richard I, claimed that the advowsons of Kirkham, Poulton and Preston should be included among his entitlements.



Interior of the church, looking east

The matter went to court and it was decided that Theobald Walter should give up his claim to the church of Poulton, but he was granted the advowsons of Kirkham and Preston.

Relations between the prior of Lancaster and some of the inhabitants of Amounderness were at times somewhat strained. The monks from Lancaster frequently had to travel across the lands of the Banastres, a local landed family who held property in Thornton, Staynall and Singleton. In 1330 a dispute arose over the right of way across these lands and the collection of tithes, and this led to an attack on the prior which brought down upon the Banastre family the wrath of no less a person than the King himself. He, Edward III, set up a royal commission under John Travers and other to investigate:

'Edward, by the grace of God King of England, Lord of Ireland and Duke of Aquitaine, to his trusty and well-beloved John Travers...

greeting. From the grave complaint of our well-beloved in Christ, Ralph, Prior of Lancaster, we have understood that Adam Banaster, knight... and certain other malefactors and disturbers of our peace, took the said Prior at Poulton with force and arms and brought him therefrom to Thornton, and imprisoned him there and maltreated him and assaulted his men and servants there, and beat, wounded, imprisoned and maltreated them... and did other enormous things to him to the grave damage of the said Prior and against our peace'.

Sir Adam Banastre was fined and pledged to allow two routes across his lands.

In 1291 Pope Nicholas IV sent out Papal commissioners to assess all the benefices in the country. This assessment shows that at this time Poulton was the third richest church in the county, being assessed at £68 13s 4d. By comparison, Preston and St. Michael's-on-Wyre were valued at £66 13s 4d, Kirkham the richest in Lancashire at £186 13s 4d, but Lytham at only £4.

Thirty years after this valuation, in 1322, the Scots under Robert the Bruce followed up their annihilation of the English army at Bannockburn by invading and pillaging northern England. They reached as far south as Preston, and in Poulton, which suffered particularly, they 'burned to the ground all the inhabited places in the parish and killed or carried into captivity practically all the inhabitants'. The damage which they caused in Amounderness as a whole must have been immense, for the assessment of the churches here was reduced by over two thirds as a measure to relieve some of the hardship which the people were suffering.

Any respite was short-lived, however, because in 1349 the Black Death struck. The plague, which had broken out occasionally in the past and was to ravage the country sporadically for the next three hundred years, swept across England in 1349 killing between one third and one half of the population. It was not only the peasants who suffered. Between 8th September 1349 and 11th January 1350 half the parish priests in Amounderness, including the vicar of Poulton, succumbed to the plague, and the parishes of Kirkham and Garstang lost their priest twice in this period of only four months.

In 1414, shortly after he came to the throne and the year before Agincourt, Henry V dissolved those priories which were dependent upon abbeys in France. Among these was Lancaster Priory, whose possessions, including the advowson of Poulton, were given to the monastery of Syon at Isleworth in Middlesex. Syon was suppressed by Henry VIII in 1539 and its possessions passed to the king, but his daughter, Elizabeth I, granted the advowson of Poulton to the Fleetwood family, with whom it remained for over two hundred years, descending

eventually to the Hesketh family and, in 1934, to the Diocesan Board of Patronage.

The period of the Reformation was one of great upheaval throughout the land. Lancashire was one of the centres of Catholic resistance to the new beliefs, and the parish of Poulton produced Queen Elizabeth's most savage adversary in religious matters, Cardinal William Allen. He was born in 1532 at Rossall Grange, which was at that time within the parish boundary. During Mary's reign he was principal of St. Mary Hall, Oxford, but was later forced to leave the country because of his opposition to Elizabeth's establishment of the Church of England. Even though he ran the risk of being arrested, he returned secretly to England in 1562, and it is believed that he spent the next few years hidden at Rossall and in the homes of various Catholic friends, including Mains Hall, Singleton. Since most of the inhabitants of the Fylde were Catholics, he ran less risk of being betrayed here than elsewhere. He was involved in some of the plots against Elizabeth, and the Queen's agents attempted to assassinate him whilst he was abroad. After moving to Rome, he was created a cardinal in 1587 and published two works intended to incite the English Catholics to rebellion against Elizabeth. He also worked closely with King Philip II of Spain in planning the invasion of England, the ill-fated Armada venture of 1588. He died in 1594 and was buried in the English College in Rome, confident that England would return to the Catholic faith. The Duke of Sesa, the Spanish ambassador in Rome, sent



Peter White's stone in the choir vestry



A bishop's travelling chair, date unknown, in the sanctuary

an account of Allen's last illness to Philip II, writing: 'He has bequeathed in his last testament certain ornaments... to the church of the parish where he was born, when it shall become Catholic again, and meanwhile they are to remain in the English College'. These items have since disappeared, possibly at the time of the French Revolution.

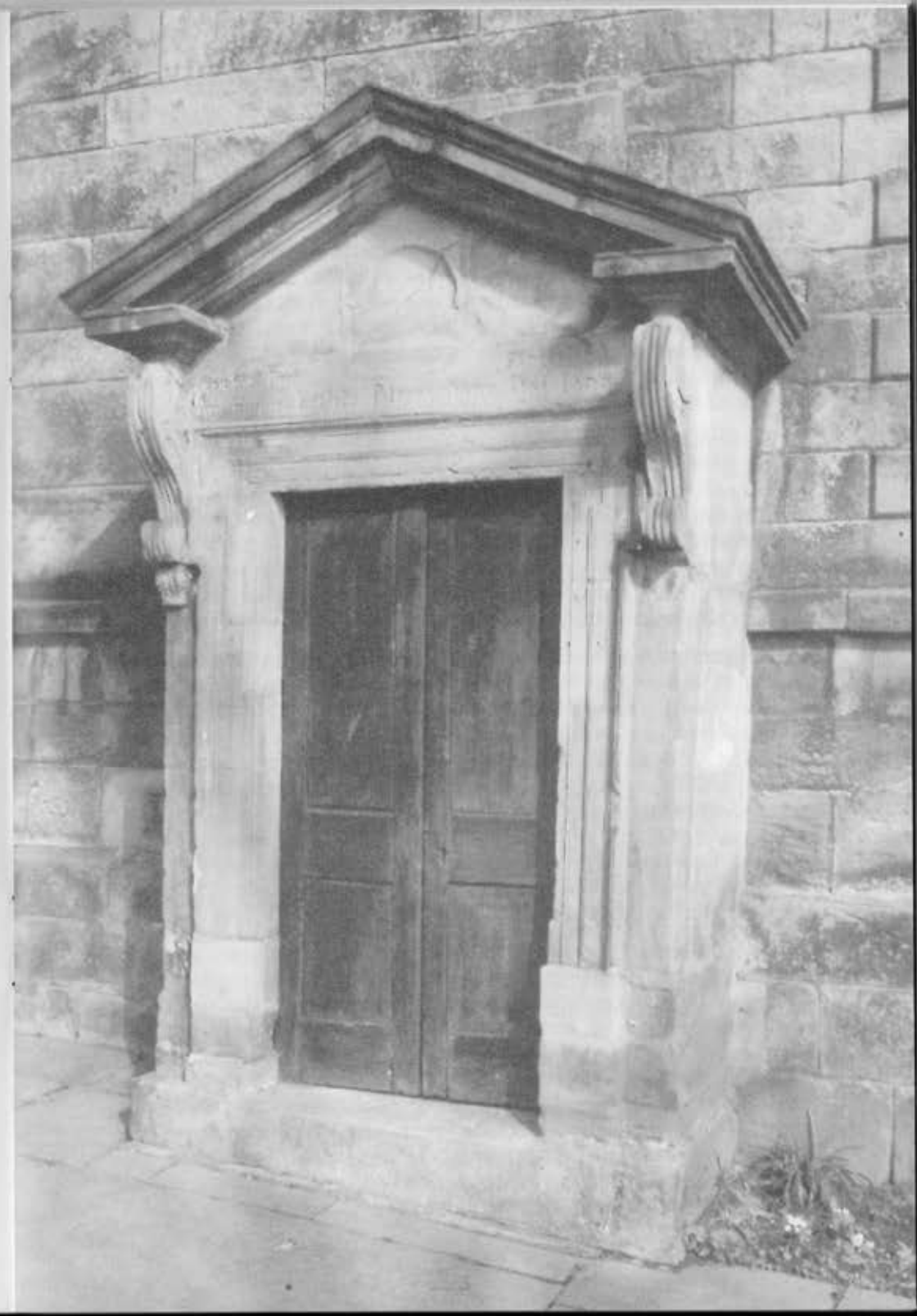
Lancashire was among the poorest of the English counties and at times it could prove difficult for the community to maintain the fabric of the parish church. Money was often raised by selling church property, a process which was continued at St. Chad's into the nineteenth century. Thefts from churches were very common, with chalices, crosses and even bells disappearing. A ring of thieves operating in the Fylde was uncovered in 1535 who raided both Singleton and Lytham churches and others further afield; stolen chalices were taken to Penrith where they were sold to gold and silversmiths.

During Elizabeth's reign the majority of parishioners retained their Catholic faith, but the period also produced perhaps the most remarkable vicar in the long history of the parish, a representative of the other main strand of religious faith in Lancashire - Puritanism. This was Peter White, who became vicar of Poulton in 1583 and served, with a short break, for nearly seventy years. In about 1590 he, together with a number of other clergymen of the diocese, signed a report listing 'The manifolde Enormities of the Ecclesiastical state in the most partes of the Countie of Lancaster'. This document, which is distinctly anti-Papist and Puritan in tone, lists what its compilers considered to be abuses of faith or morals, including:

'Continuall recourse of Jesuites and Seminarie Priestes into these partes. Many places and persons justly suspected to have Masses daily... Popishe ffastes and ffestivalles... duely observed... Wackes, Ales... Bearebaites... Bonfiers, all maner vnlawfull Gaming, Piping and Daunsinge, and suche like, ar in all places frely exercised vppon ye Sabboth... There is no smale corruption in the Churche officers: as, in the Church-wardens, Sidemen, and Parishe Clerkes... The Churches generally lye ruinowse, vnrepaired and vnfurnished of thinges decent and necessarie for the action of the ministerie'.

By 1650 Peter White, who during his time as St. Chad's refused to wear a surplice for services and did not permit singing or the use of the cross in the service of baptism, must have been in his nineties. He had lived to see the end of the Tudor dynasty, the reign of two Stuart kings, the Civil War and the execution of Charles I, and now, in the Commonwealth Church Survey conducted under Cromwell, he was described as 'verie aged and Infirme' though 'formerly an able and painful (i.e. conscientious) Minister'.

In Lancashire Catholic priests were well organised and by the late 16th century there were over ninety households where seminarians could find shelter and help, thirteen of them in the parish of Poulton. Poulton was regarded as one of the most Catholic parishes in the county. In Lancashire Justices of the Peace appeared to be doing little to enforce the laws against recusancy and the ineffective administration and widespread Catholic sympathy meant that sanctions were applied haphazardly in the county. Common experiences forged closed bonds between the Catholic families in Lancashire and they were in close contact with one another, acting as guides for visiting priests, circulating



RIGHT: Doorway to the Fleetwood family vault

news of drives against Catholics and ensuring the safe passage of letters.

At the Reformation St. Chads's had become the Anglican parish church and Singleton became the centre for Catholic worship. The chapel there continued to be the focus for Catholics until the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 when it was wrecked and its contents stolen or destroyed. In 1812 the new owner of Singleton made it impossible for the lease on the building to be renewed and it was decided to build a new church on land in Poulton lying between Moorland Road and the Breck given to the congregation by Thomas Fitzherbert Brockholes. The church, dedicated to St. John the Evangelist, was opened in 1813. It was replaced in 1912 by a larger building designed by Pugin. In 1983 the old chapel became a listed building.

It is recorded that around 1830 the Vicar of St. Chad's had returned an old vestment which appears to have been found hidden behind the altar, to St. John's Catholic church in Poulton, describing it as 'papist'. In a list of vestments at St. John's dating from the early 1830s there appears to be a reference to a vestment 'very old with grotesque figures'. Maybe this confirms the tradition. Black and white photographs were sent to the V & A in 1939 for identification and the vestment appears to be from the early sixteenth century with English embroidery.

In the aftermath of the Civil War marriage banns were still called in St. Chad's but all marriages had to be conducted before the Justices and in Preston marriages were conducted before the mayor. St. Chad's registers record at least 10 marriages conducted at Barton Hall by Edward Hull on May 13th 1656 and marriages of other Poulton people were conducted at Preston by Mr. Sherbourne, JP. At this time the clergy were replaced often by men with little training - 'tinkers, cobblers, saddlers, coachmen took on them the ministry of the word'. Homilies were provided to be read rather than allowing the clergy to preach sermons. However when in 1658 Cromwell died and with the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, the clergy went back to their parishes.

From the sixteenth century local inhabitants had been given a variety of responsibilities for their community including poor relief, maintenance of the local roads, punishment of vagabonds and the destruction of vermin. To do this a constable, highway surveyors, assessors of meat and of bread, ale tasters and overseers of the poor had to be appointed. These were unpaid volunteers and many were reluctant to take on the roles. The township also meted out its own punishment; a ducking stool stood in Poulton at the bottom of the Breck where the offender was put in a chair suspended on a long pole pivoted over a pond and ducked into the water. As late as 1800 Jane Breckal had to parade round the inside of the church, clothed in white, bare footed and holding a candle in each

hand as penance for misbehaviour, 'a spectacle of mirth to an unfeeling crowd'.

For centuries the countryside around Poulton and the River Wyre was open land with few trees or hedgerows, open fields and common meadows. Beyond this stretched moorland and marsh. The rough grassland provided valuable grazing for livestock in the summer months and the mossland provided peat and turf for fuel. This pattern can still be detected in Poulton. The Market Place itself was surrounded by houses each with its own small piece of land used to grow vegetables or fruit for the family and to keep geese or chickens, a cow or a few pigs. The last of these small allotments were covered when the Teanlowe carpark was built in 1968. Beyond these gardens open fields lay in all directions providing grazing for animals. Shippons dotted round the town were used to house the stock in harsh winters and store extra fodder. Further out from the town centre on the east side was the poorer quality grazing land, still marked by the position and name of Moorland Road. Beyond this was the mossland stretching out towards Singleton where peat and turf were dug for fuel and rushes gathered for a floor covering.

THE PRESENT BUILDING

Before looking at the present church in detail, let us turn back to that ancient building given by the Norman knight Roger de Poitou to the Abbey of Sees in 1094. In 1751 major alterations were carried out both inside and outside the church. All that remains of the ancient building is a description written by Thomas Whittaker, the Vicar of Blackburn and Whalley, in his book 'A History of Richmondshire' in 1828, who realising that soon the people of Poulton would have forgotten what the ancient church had looked like, described it thus:

'It is of importance to preserve the following accurate account of that building from a recollection of almost seventy years. The old church of Poulton had only a nave and north aisle; with four octagonal columns, extending from the chancel to the font, and sustaining semi-circular arches. The tops of the east and other windows were also semi-circular. It seems probable... that the original columns... had been cut away to angular pillars..., about the time of Henry VIII'.

William Thornber writing in 1837 said the church had been 'principally of red sandstone'. Traces of this can still be seen today at the base of the south outer wall.

Until recently it was thought that the church had been completely demolished and rebuilt in stone in 1751, but in 1990 damp-proofing was being carried out on the inside walls and a good deal of plaster was removed revealing the building fabric. Instead of the expected grey stone, the walls were found to be built of red sandstone blocks. The outer surface of the walls is simply covered with a thin skin of grey ashlar stone. A diagonal line (now under a protective layer and plaster) running across the west wall near the south west corner of the gallery, discovered at the same time, is thought to have been a roof line dating from the medieval period.

Several Victorian antiquarians has described the church as being 'razed to the ground' in 1751, (often copying their descriptions from one another), but recent research through church records has found no firm

*Choir vestry
Carved oak screen from the family pew of the Fleetwood-Heskeths*



evidence for this, and it seems more likely that a major programme of repair and renovation in the latest Georgian architectural style was undertaken. Marriages, baptisms and burials continued in the church throughout 1751.

As part of the renovations, a gallery, which had stood against the east wall of the old church, was pulled down and rebuilt at the opposite end of the church against the west wall. Side galleries were built, extending from this new west gallery right to the east wall, further than they now reach. At the same time the pulpit was moved into the centre and arrangements made to fund the alterations.

A summary of the faculty for erecting these galleries reads: 'William Stratford, Commissary in the Archdeaconry of Richmond in the Diocese of Chester to John Bird, John Birley and Richard Tennant, all of Poulton, Greeting... it hath been Certifyed unto us that John Bird, John Birley and Richard Tennant for the better Uniformity of the Parish Church of Poulton, which is now taken down and Rebuilding, have proposed and agreed to take down the Gallery over the Chancell in the East end of the said Church which at present is very Irregular and incommodious and to Rebuild the same (with a convenient Staircase, Stairs and Passage leading thereto) at their own expence in the West end thereof to Adjoin the North side of the Gallery there now standing and be made Unifrom therewith Provided they may have the Liberty of Erecting a Gallery of about Tenn foot wide on each side of the said Church Extending from the Front of the said West Gallerys to the East end of the said Church and containing in length Sixty Four Foot or thereabouts and in Height from the Floor of the said Church to the Basis of the said Gallerys Eight Foot or thereabouts... We do Grant this Our Licence or Faculty to the said John Bird, John Birley and Richard Tennant... Given at Richmond the Twenty Fifth day of June in the Year of Our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Fifty One'.

Messrs Bird, Birley and Tennant were given the right to sell the pews in the new side galleries in order to recover the building costs, and on the back of the faculty is a list, dated 1 August 1752, which names the new owners:

Seats in the South side Gallery

'To the above named Richard Tennant a double pew over the Staircase at the East end and South Side marked No. 1'.

'To Miles Barton Surgeon a single pew adjoining thereto being the second pew from the said East end and marked No. 2'.

This system of private ownership of pews continued until 1914, when,



after much opposition, all the pews in the church were declared 'free and open'. A example of the problems involved in allocating pews appears in the minutes of the vestry meeting of 7 April 1890:

'Messrs Gaulter and Bennett laid a complaint against the Churchwardens for having assigned a pew in the South Gallery recently occupied by the late Mrs Gaulter to Mr James Richardson to which Mr Plant (the churchwarden) replied explaining that Mr Bennett's application for the pew had received due consideration but the Wardens felt it their duty to assign the seat to Mr Richardson on account of his large family and the fact that he had been waiting over five years for a suitable seat. He also explained that Mr Gaulter had never applied for the pew at all. After some further discussion the subject was dropped, Mr Bennett remarking that he would continue to occupy the pew until he was turned out by main force'.

Until 1868 the inside of the church was perfectly rectangular, but in this year the semicircular apse was added at the expense of the vicar, the Reverend Thomas Clarke, in order to provide more worthy surroundings for the altar. In 1883 major alterations were carried out. The organ was removed from the west gallery to its present position in the chancel, and choir stalls were also set up in the chancel. The Fleetwood family pews, which had formerly stood over the Fleetwood vault in the southeast corner, were removed. The carved oak screen now forming the front of the choir vestry had previously surrounded these pews 'looking like a cross between a railway carriage and the centre piece of a gondola'. All the box pews downstairs and those in the west gallery were removed and replaced with the present benches, and the staircases at the east ends of the galleries were removed, leaving the one staircase in the north-west corner.

In 1955 a further renovation was carried out. A centre aisle was added, the Victorian wrought-iron pulpit was removed and many of the objects accumulated over generations were cleared away in order to simplify an overcrowded church.

Left: The Pulpit

*Hatchment of Eliza Debonnaire
(died 1833), first wife of
Sir Peter Hesketh Fleetwood*



A TOUR OF THE CHURCH INTERIOR

This tour starts by the south-west door, the door through which you will probably have entered the church.

The Choir Vestry

The present choir vestry was originally constructed in the 1883 as the baptistry. It is formed from an elaborately carved oak screen dating from the seventeenth century which, together with a second one now lost, once formed part of the family pew of the Fleetwood Heskeths. This ancient pew originally stood in the place of the choir stalls, close to the door of the south side and was moved to its present location during the re-ordering of 1883. On each side of the door you can see carved the garbs (wheatsheaves) which form part of the crest of the Hesketh family, and on the front of the screen are a double-headed eagle and a griffin, both from the family arms. The Fleetwood and Hesketh families, linked by marriage in the eighteenth century, held the advowson of Poulton



The Georgian staircase

from the time of Elizabeth I until after the First World War, and the name of the Fleetwoods lives on in the name of the nearby town, which was founded in 1836 by Sir Peter Hesketh Fleetwood.

High on the church walls you can see the diamond-shaped hatchments bearing the arms of members of the Fleetwood-Hesketh family. It was the practice in former times that, when a person died, a hatchment bearing the coat of arms was painted and later hung in the parish church.

The low door in the screen comes from the former pew of the Rigby family of Layton (now part of Blackpool). On it are carved the initials of Sir Alexander Rigby, the date 1636, and a goat's head, the family crest.

Inside the choir vestry are two carved stones, one bears the name of the vicar, Peter White, and the date 1622, when it is believed that repairs were carried out to the chancel. The second has six sets of initials,

The faculty for erecting

William Stratford Doctor of Laws Commissary in a
 Decree well beloved in Christ John Bird John Birley and Richard Donnant all of Poulton in the
 it hath been Certified unto us under the hands of Roger Loshell Patron, the Reverend Ho-
 as forsaide that the said John Bird John Birley and Richard Donnant for the better Uniformity
 proposed and agreed to take down the Gallery over the Chancel in the East end of the said
 opposite in the West end thereof to adjoin to the North side of the Gallery there new standing and
 said East Gallery for the same that may be sustained by the removing the same and alter-
 ing of a about four foot wide on each side of the said Church beginning from the front of
 feet on their abents and in height from the floor of the said Church to the top of the said
 plane where the same lately stood near to the place where the Church Wardens seat was lately set
 them the said Certificates that the said John Bird John Birley and Richard Donnant for and
 having already in writing obtained the Consent of the Proprietors thereof for that purpose
 that the said Pulpit and Reading Desk may be removed to the place above specified and in manner
 of the Inhabitants of the said Parish, and also humbly requesting that we will grant a licence
 the said Galleries and making the Alterations above mentioned And also that they may have the
 the said Parish as shall stand in need thereof in order to rebuild the same for the Charge
 as forsaide. **And Whereas** we have caused a public Citation to be issued out against
 having or pretending to have any Right Title or Interest in or unto the said Gallery over the
 Gallery is intended to be removed in the said Church where in the said North and South Gallery
 opposite to each other in the said Church in the said East end of the said Church and in the
 within the Borough of Richmond in the County of Chester On the Wednesday the fifth day of June
or faculty under the Seal of our Office ought not to be granted to the said John Bird John Birley
 the same with a convenient Stair Case Stairs and Passage leading the aforesaid Church on expense of the said
 Satisfaction to the several owners of the seat in the said East Gallery for the same that may be sustain-
 as forsaide on each side of the said Church with convenient Stair Cases leading thereto at the North and

perhaps those of the churchwardens, and the date 1638.

The South Aisle

Walk down the south aisle towards the choir stalls. The baptistry was placed in this position in 2001. This font, provided as a memorial to the Haworth family of Whitworth, is the last of several fonts which have stood in St. Chad's. One - an octagonal font with a cross, the letters MH and the date 1649, had been removed from the church in 1751 and in 1840 was found buried at the edge of the churchyard close to Chapel Street by workmen digging a foundation. A newspaper of the time - the Preston Pilot - recorded the place where this antiquity was discovered as being a hollow filled up with the rubbish of the old church. At the time of the re-ordering in 1751 a new font had been placed in St. Chad's, but this was removed to the vicarage lawn in 1871 and replaced by a third

galleries, dated 17 June 1751

throughout the whole Archdeaconry of Richmond in the Diocese of Chester lawfully Constituted
 a County of Lancaster and in the Archdeaconry aforesaid the said **Grating Whereas**
 Lord Joseph Clerk Vicar and the Church Wardens of the Parish and Parish Church of Poulton a
 in the Parish Church of Poulton aforesaid which is now taken down and rebuilding have
 therein which at present is very irregular and inconvenient and to rebuild the same at their
 be made Uniform therewith and also to make Satisfaction to the several owners of the seats in the
 and leaving the seats therein **provided** they may have the Liberty of erecting a
 the said West Galleries to the East end of the said Church and containing in length sixty four
 four or five feet on their abents. And that the Pulpit and Reading Desk may be removed from the
 into according to the plan form of the said Certificate annexed and consenting and agreeing as far as in
 upon the Considerations aforesaid shall and may have the Liberty of removing the said East Gallery
 also of erecting a Gallery on each side of the said Church of the Dimensions aforesaid and likewise
 aforesaid as it will greatly tend to the Uniformity of the said Church and to the benefit and advantage
 finally under the Seal of our Office to the said John Bird John Birley and Richard Donnant for binding
 to sell and Dispose of the seats found in the said Intended side Galleries to such persons within
 and Expenses they will necessarily be put to in building the said Intended Galleries and making the altera-
 all and single the Inhabitants and Parishioners of the said Parish of Poulton and all others who
 dwell in the East end of the said Church or to the place at the West end of the said Church to which the
 are assigned to be erected and built or to the place where the said Pulpit and Reading Desk as a
 of them as they shall see cause to congregate in the Chapel of the Lady and to provide a
 that to show and expound Cause lawful and reasonable if they had or knew any why our Licence
 and Richard Donnant to take down the said Gallery over the Chancel in the East end of the said Church and to rebuild
 and thereof to adjoin to the North side of the Gallery there new standing and to make Uniform therewith and to make
 by the removing the same and altering and leaving the seats therein And to erect a Gallery of the Dimensions
 and South East end of the said Church if necessary according to the plan form before mentioned and also

font in memory of a daughter of the Vicar Rev John Hull, who died in 1866. In turn it was replaced in 1932 by the present font.

All the seats downstairs date from 1883 when the old box pews, which were 'of various makes and shapes - broad, narrow, open, closed, high, low' were removed. On the south wall is a marble tablet in memory of various members of the Hull family. John Hull, who was born in Poulton in 1761, was a surgeon and botanist of some renown and was the author of several books about British plants. He lived in a house on Ball Street opposite St. Chads. One of his sons, John (commemorated on a brass further along the south wall), became a vicar of Poulton in 1835, and the other son, William Winstanley Hull, fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, and a writer on religious matters, was an ultra-Protestant who strove to prevent the admission of Jews and Roman Catholics to Parliament.

*The grave of Edward Sherdley -
the 'pirate's grave'*



The Lectern in the shape of an eagle dates from 1948 and is of brass.

The Chancel

Turn into the chancel and, when you reach the three steps up to the sanctuary, stop and turn round. From here you can see how the architect who rebuilt the nave in 1751 achieved his aim of turning a medieval church designed for the celebration of the Mass into an eighteenth-century preaching box for the parishioners to listen to sermons. Preachers say that the acoustics of the church are excellent. Until 1883 the galleries, which now stop about seven metres short of the east wall, reached as far as the wall, containing several more pews and ending with a staircase. On the south side of the chancel the choir stalls occupy a position over the Fleetwood family vault where the Fleetwood pew formerly stood. On the wall behind the choir stalls are three brasses, all of them date from the pre-1751 church. They are memorials to 'Anne Wife of Richard Hodgson, Vicar of Poulton, who dyed the sixth of December 1697', Geoffrey Hornby, and his daughter, Dorothy. The two Hornby brasses were removed from the stone slabs covering the graves and forming part of the floor when the chancel floor was raised in 1883. Geoffrey Hornby's funeral was accompanied by dramatic events - let the nineteenth-century historian, Thornber, tell the story:

"The west side of the market-place (which consisted of low, thatched buildings) was burnt to the ground in 1732, from the carelessness of a boy carrying an unprotected light; and it happened at this singular and awful juncture, that as the funeral of Geoffrey Hornby, Esq. was passing for interment, the hatbands of the mourners were scorched by the sparks which the winds hurled from the blazing conflagration".

£1032 was needed to fund the rebuilding and donations came in from all over the country. Over the years people of Poulton responded to similar appeals for financial assistance from all over the country and even further. They contributed to Colchester, Wetherby chapel and Wallazea (Wallasey) they sent £12/10s/2d to Lytham church in 1766 and, £1/0s/9d to Padiham in 1763. Appeals came in from further afield - Philadelphia, New York and Westphalia. As late as 1862, with concern spreading for those employed in the cotton industry in Lancashire suffering in the wake of the American Civil War and the resulting shortage of cotton imports, a house to house collection was made in Poulton with collecting boxes also in each church, the money paid into the Central Relief Fund in Manchester.

The Organ

There seems to have been an organ in St. Chad's around 1780 bringing added expense. Possibly the entry 'Sundry expenses about the organ,



Interior of the church, looking west

£10/5s/7d' refers to its purchase and setting up in the church. There are other charges associated with it - 'Organist £5/2s/6d and Organist's salary £15/15s/0d. Soon after a Singing master was hired at an annual cost of £15/15s/0d.

The simple band with a group of singers in the west gallery, known as the singing pew, became a common feature of churches towards the end of the eighteenth century. Most of the composers were amateurs and the music produced included local and traditional hymns and music popular with ordinary people in the parishes. In 1840 a violincello was bought for St. Chad's at a cost of £5/2s/6d, paid for by the sale of the old organ to Thomas Hardman, landlord of the Green Man, for £3/0s/0d, the rest being made up with subscriptions. Maybe the musicians and singers provided the music for the next few years - it was not until 1855 that a new organ was bought, the money for it having been raised by

public subscription. The clergy generally were concerned that church musicians were just as likely to play their instruments for local dances as for church services and in many churches changes were put in place to remove the musicians from the galleries and bring the singers and organs down to the ground floor where they could be watched. By the early years of the nineteenth century the singers in St. Chad's were located downstairs in a singers' pew. Then, as part of the major re-ordering which took place in St. Chad's in 1883, in what was considered to be a more seemly arrangement, the organ was moved from the west gallery to the ground floor and placed in a new area at the north east end of the church created by removing the staircase at the end on the north gallery. The singers were replaced by a robed choir in new choir stalls standing opposite the organ. Some years later in 1891, it was decided 'in order to improve the musical portion of the service' to disband the old mixed choir and form a new one of men and boys dressed in surplices. In 1912 the old organ was replaced with a larger instrument at a cost of £500 plus the old organ in part exchange. It was hand blown until 1929 when an electric blowing plant was installed.

The Altar in St. Chad's originally stood against the east wall, but in 1868 an apse was added to the east wall, paid for by the Vicar the Rev. Thomas Clarke. Unfortunately he died before the work was completed and it was his wife who received on his behalf the grateful thanks of the congregation. Some graves had to be removed from in front of the east wall where the apse was to be built and £3 was kept by the churchwardens to be given to the representative of the family of the Addisons if demanded, in lieu of iron rails and stone pillars which had been removed from the site of the new chancel. There is no record of the offer having been taken up.

The Pulpit has had a chequered history. In 1877 the pulpit then in use was removed to make way for a new one, and inside the discarded pulpit were found the four elaborately carved panels which you now see. These were hung on the wall of the church until 1955, when they were reassembled to form the present pulpit which itself replaced one made of wrought iron. The style of the carving, particularly the semicircular ornament in the centre of each panel, suggests that the pulpit is Jacobean. This is corroborated by evidence from a similar pulpit in Ribchester parish church which bears the date 1636. The pulpit, which is octagonal in plan, will originally have consisted of five panels, although only four were found in 1877. The missing one has been replaced by a blank panel at the side nearest the organ. The inscription along the top of the panels is therefore incomplete, but would read:

C RIE : ALOVD : SPARE : NOT : LI FT:VP : THY : VOICE : LYKE (A; TRVMPET)
(Isaiah 58.1)



*Choir vestry
Low door from Sir Alexander Rigby's pew*

The Sanctuary

The archway marks the position of the former east wall of the church until the apse was built in 1868. The altar was given in 1912, and the reredos, panelling and sanctuary windows were all installed in the 1930s. The two windows on the south side of the sanctuary depict the archangel Gabriel, with a lily, and Raphael, with a fish and shepherd's staff. The two matching windows on the north side also show archangels: Uriel holding a flame and Michael with a shield and spear. The carved oak reredos shows, from left to right, the Annunciation, St. Chad, the Supper at Emmaus, St. Hilda (founder of the Northumbrian monastery at Whitby), and the Resurrection. In the sanctuary is a bishops's chair, a bishop's travelling chair and other chairs of the Victorian and Queen Anne periods. The elegant brass chandelier is inscribed with the date 1710 and the name of the maker, Samuel Smith, in the 'little old Bayley, London'.

The Georgian staircase at the end of the north aisle leads up to the gallery. The stained-glass panels in the window to the right of the staircase were taken from the old east window when the apse was built in 1868 and illustrate the bread and wine of the eucharist.



*Brass chandelier in the sanctuary,
dated 1710*

The Gallery

The benches in the west gallery date from 1883, but the box pews in the north and south galleries have remained virtually untouched since the galleries were erected in 1751. On the pew doors you can still see the brass plates indicating the former owners of the pews, and on one of these (the third from the far end in the south gallery) is the name of Christopher Albin, the original purchaser of the pew when it was put up for sale in 1752. At the end of the south gallery you have a good view of the Royal coat of arms, a necessary item for all churches to display from the time of the Restoration and Charles II. This one shows the arms of King George III.

An interesting memorial close to the bottom of the staircase commemorates members of the Harrison family who moved to Horncastle in Lincolnshire. Edward Harrison MD probably became a physician to Alfred Lord Tennyson and also worked with Sir Joseph Banks, both of whom lived in the area.

A TOUR OF THE CHURCH EXTERIOR

The Tower

The tower probably dates from the time of Charles I and can be reached only through the small door outside the church. It contains eight bells. An inventory of 1552 records that there were then 'iij lytle belles in the steeple', and of those at present in the tower five were recast in 1741, one in 1865, and the two newer ones date from 1937. The bells are still rung regularly by hand for services. The ancient practice of tolling the curfew bells continues today, when the bell is rung at eight o'clock on winter evenings from September to March. Since 1962, however, the curfew bell has been rung automatically. Against the west wall, outside the tower, can be seen what is possibly an old font. The stone beside it dated 1693 came from Sir Alexander Rigby's town house which stood in the market place on the site currently occupied by the National Westminster Bank.

A visitor in the 1870s recorded sights from the top of the church tower some now long gone: 'Fleetwood with its regular masonry and sharp mastheads. The bay of Morecambe with its belts of sand, the heavy smoke from the smouldering furnaces of Barrow, the rugged and romantic mountains of Westmorland and Cumberland, the labyrinthian hollow in which Preston seems to sit moodily with its factories, Longridge Fell, Pendle and Rivington Pike, North Meols and Southport make a faint light line on the eastern edge across the estuary of the Ribble. Lytham dreams on in its selectness and salubrity, Blackpool rises like a dark stately promontory of masonry to the south west. The intermediate space is filled in with villages and wide expanses of agricultural land ... and ... fourteen windmills'.

The Churchyard

The churchyard was closed for burials in 1833, but since 1957 a small number of interments of cremated remains have been made in the ground to the west of the tower. A thorough tidying of the graveyard was undertaken in 1973, when the area was levelled and many of the stones set into the ground as paving slabs. In spring the churchyard is a carpet of snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils.

The Cross

Beside the footpath close to the south door can be seen the remains of what may have been the churchyard cross. The sundial shaft is relatively modern, but it stands on two ancient circular steps which could have been the base of a preaching cross erected even before there was a church on this site.

The Fleetwood Family Vault

Follow the path along the south wall of the church and look where at the remains of the old sandstone walls where they meet the path. Just past the south-east door to the church is another doorway which leads down to the Fleetwood family vault. Over the door are two handsome carved scrolls and the inscription 'Insignia Rici Fleetwood An Hujus Eccliffe Patronis Anno Dni 1699' ('The arms of Richard Fleetwood Esq. patron of this church Anno Domini 1699'). The arms can no longer be seen in the stonework, but the Fleetwood family arms feature in the lead rainwater heads along the nave wall. About eighteen members of the Fleetwood family are buried in the underground brick lined vault.

The Graves

There are several 'table tombs' left when the churchyard was re-ordered in 1973. One close to the south door records the Seed family - Richard and Catherine and the deaths in infancy of many of their children. A second, on the north side near the Thatched House, records the members of the Harrison family. Here are the parents of the Rev William Thornber, later a vicar of St. John's, Blackpool where he is buried. William wrote a history of Blackpool and its neighbourhood, which was printed in 1837 by Thomas Smith in his shop in the Market Place, now occupied by the Trustee Savings Bank.

An interesting gravestone can be seen by the door to the clergy vestry, at the south-east corner of the church. This grave, known to generations of Poulton children as the 'pirate's grave', is that of Edward Sherdley, who died in 1741. On it are carved some reminders of our mortality: a skull and crossbones, an hour glass with the sand run out,

and a snuffed candle. There is certainly no evidence to suggest that Mr Sherdley indulged in piracy.

The Churchyard

Past generations of parishioners have had to raise money for the upkeep of St. Chad's. The churchwardens' account books record the sale of old flag stones and even church plate in order to raise money for repairs to the church and the churchyard. This provided plenty of work for local tradesmen and women.

"Thomas Stables for bell Roaps, 10s/6d. Thomas Wilde for paving 6d. Thomas Santer for work in church yard 6s/0d. Hugh Seed for flagging, £6/18s/8d. Richard Jackson for carting flags £1/7s.0d. Thomas Crook for church steps, 18s/4d. James Crookall for a gate stoop for church gate, 2s/0d. Thomas Santer earned 1s/- for mowing the churchyard. The needs of all these workers were catered for, and in place of the present day cups of tea, they had ale - 'allowance for ale for workmen 1/10d'. The church clock gave regular work to Samuel Lomas, a clock maker of some renown in the county, who lived in Sheaf Street. 'To Mr. Lomas for mending Clock etc. 2/2d ... Putting up clock 3/0 ... Putting up ladder, 6d ... Mr Lomas for clock finger and repair of the clock this year and last'.

The poor condition of the roads meant the rushes placed on the church floor to mop up the mud and rain water needed to be changed regularly and the floor swept with besoms. It cost money to replace the rushes - 'cartage of rush 6/6d, Sam taking rush out of church, 1/6d' - a process which went on until the early years of the nineteenth century. Throughout the year, but particularly for important festivals, much cleaning went on for which people were paid: Cleaning candlesticks, 2s/0d. Scouring pewter, 2s/6d. Cleaning windows, 7s/0d. Cleaning the bell loft, Cleaning and washing church after the white limers, 1s/6d. Clerk's wife cleaning church & church plate, 3s/3d. Washing surplices, 4s/0d. Cleaning pewter, 5s/0d. Lomas cleaning clock, 1s/0d. John Santer for cleaning shandileers, 3s/0d.' Perhaps this was too big a job for one man, for two weeks later 'December 16th cleaning shandileers, 3s/0d.' Thomas Santer 'for cleaning church, rushes and mending slates, £1/6s/8d.'

The Bray Library

One of the parish's treasures is its Bray library. In the early eighteenth century, Dr Thomas Bray, founder of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), sent out to sixty-one parishes in England and Wales collections of books on theological subjects intended to encourage learning among the clergy. Of the original libraries only a very few

remain nearly intact and Poulton's collection of about eighty volumes is one of these. In 1978 the library was deposited at the John Rylands University Library of Manchester so that the books can be used by students and scholars. The parish continues to uphold Dr Bray's principles by maintaining a modern library from which parishioners may borrow.

The Font



