

## When Kildwick Church nearly fell down – and what was done to save it

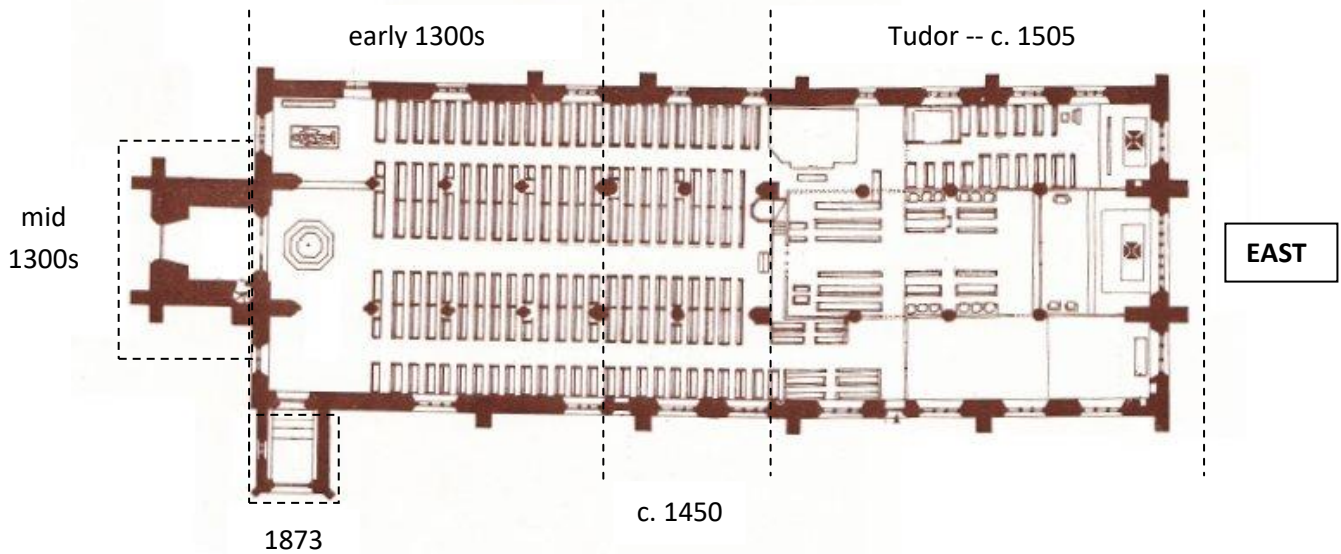
### Introduction

The history of Kildwick Church is long and rather complicated. Even a cursory examination by someone, such as the author of this piece, who has no real understanding of architectural history leads to the conclusion that the current building has been extensively re-modelled over the years - with various extensions added and changes to the roof-line made.



**Exterior of Kildwick Church, showing the south side of the building.  
The clear “break” in the roof-line indicates the start of the Tudor extension.**

The generally accepted view, taken from a number of histories, is that the earliest part of the current building is at the west-end, and that this dates from the early 1300s; the tower is slightly later, from the mid-1300s; the central section dates to the mid-1400s; and the east-end is from around 1505. The porch is Victorian.



Plan of the current St. Andrew's Church building, showing its phases of development

### The first signs of trouble

In the 1890s it became clear that some of the workmanship in these various phases of building was less than wonderful.

**KILDWICK.**

**FALL OF A BEAM IN THE CHURCH.**—Early on Monday morning last the vicar discovered that one of the large oak beams, which are placed as a cornice around the top of the walls in the Church, at the height of about eight yards, had, through some unaccountable means, fallen into the body of the church, and in so doing had split the pew top on which it alighted and broken the book rack and case clean off. A joiner was at once called in, and replaced the fallen beam, and also tested the whole cornice, and in addition made them all secure by driving in nails, so as to prevent the possibility of a further fall. Had this happened the previous evening the result would have been difficult to predict, as a communicants' class was held after evensong, and the bulk sat directly on the spot upon which it fell. There is now no possibility of a second occurrence, the beams having been made firmer than when first put in.

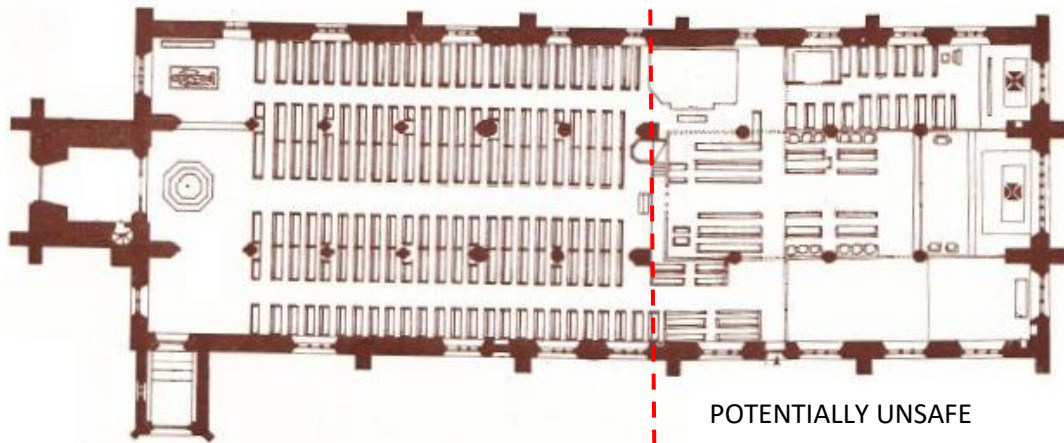
Craven Herald 8/4/1892

So, that was all sorted then ?

Well, apparently not. Although no newspaper reports have been found it does seem that someone was rather concerned about the condition of the church fabric and, at a meeting of the church management committee in May 1897, it was decided to ask the professional opinion of an architect.

## The full nature of the problem

By the end of May 1897, the architect had reported back. It was not good news. He recommended that "No part of the Church east of the pulpit should be used until restored".



Area of the church thought unsafe – as of May 1897

In June, the architect's report was revealed to the parishioners.

**KILDWICK.**  
**DANGEROUS STATE OF THE CHURCH.**—A gathering of the parishioners of Kildwick took place in the National Schools last night to hear a report upon the condition of the church building. The Vicar (the Rev A D C Thompson) occupied the chair.

Mr Peterson, architect, Bradford, reported upon a recent examination of the fabric. He stated that three bays of the choir were 6in. out of the perpendicular. The centre pillar of the south aisle was considerably damaged, and this fixture was not only insecure in itself and dangerous to the public, but was also an eyesore. He considered that the north and south arcades should be rebuilt, and that the roof of the church should be reslated. He estimated the cost at about £1200.—The Vicar said that they believed the total alterations needed would mean an outlay of about £1400 or £1500.—Mr F P Peacock, a warden, said that they had no funds with which to face the outlay, and were, in fact, £20 in arrear at the end of the last financial year.

But exactly how dangerous was the building ?

The report of the same meeting in the Keighley News included a quote from the architect that: "... he was strongly of opinion that the church must be looked to without unnecessary delay. The chancel was in that state that a man could not tell whether it would stand ten years or ten hours."

(A later article quoted Mr. Peterson as saying that the church could collapse "in ten minutes".)

The situation was urgent. So what was to be done ?

Some of the pillars at the east end of the church, those identified as being in the most dangerous condition, were propped but beyond that very little work was done on the building for the next four and a half years !

## **Problems, discussions and delays (1897 – 1901)**

### **1897**

In November 1897 a Church Restoration Committee was formed, with the church-wardens acting as members, with Dr. Fletcher and Mr. F.G. Peacock, as Secretaries. Austin and Paley of Lancaster were appointed as architects.

The immediate problem was money. The church had none; in fact it was in debt. An initial appeal for funds was largely unsuccessful and it was left to members of the parish to try and raise funds. An undated article in the Craven Herald records ladies of the parish providing tea every other Tuesday at 6d each – but it was clear from the outset that the work would take more money than could be raised from the parishioners alone.

The financial situation was exacerbated by the fact that, surprising though this might sound to a modern-day lay person, the church management committee did not have the full say over what could be done to the church building. The east end of the building – the section most in need to attention – was the responsibility of Christ Church, in Oxford. Other smaller areas, including the two chapels at the east end were the responsibility of private patrons.

Christ Church initially disputed exactly how much of the area that required attention was their responsibility – a disagreement that went on until March 1900. Nevertheless they agreed to an immediate donation of £300.

### **1898**

In January an appeal was launched to raise funds for the restoration work.

In September the vicar, Rev. A.D.C. Thompson, wrote to the restoration committee announcing that he intended to tell the congregation that the building had been declared safe – although there is no evidence of this being the case – and that the choir would resume their seats (in the area which Peterson had described as unsafe).

The views of the committee, the congregation and the choir are not known. But if this did happen it must have been a short-lived, and potentially dangerous, experiment.

In November an architect appointed by Christ Church visited the church and noted that the building “continues to give way”. He recommended that all future services should take place in the school building and that the organ be temporarily moved to the west end of the church for safety. In his letter to the committee he included a newspaper clipping about a church in France that had recently collapsed following a storm.

## 1899

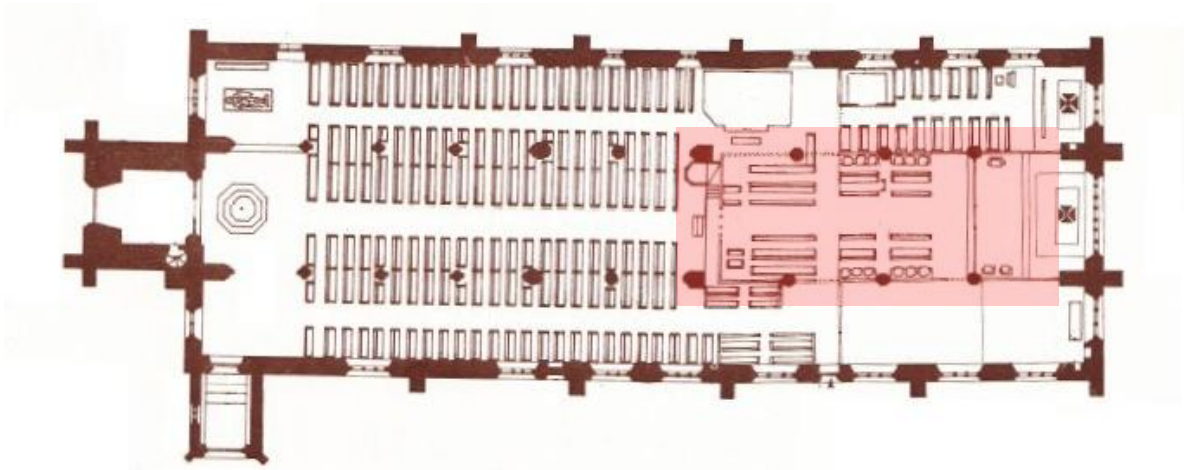
In January 1899 any progress on the restoration work came to a sudden halt, when the vicar resigned. Rev. Thompson had been in ill health for some time and the strain of the restoration work, plus the demands made upon him by the typhoid epidemic then raging in the village, led him to announce his immediate departure.

In June there was a flurry of letters between Christ Church and the new vicar, Rev. E.H. Morris. Christ Church were concerned that there was no plan for the restoration of the *whole* church, beyond the section for which they were responsible. They felt that there was little point spending money on their section if, subsequently, the rest of the building was found to be in a bad condition.

In October the mill owner Mr. James Bairstow agreed to act as Treasurer to the restoration committee in advance of a major appeal for money to potential “high value” donors.

In November a representative from Austin and Paley visited to prepare the definitive specification for the restoration work, as requested by Christ Church. Their full report was presented in December.

This extended the area requiring attention further west than the original plan and a recommendation was made for the immediate propping-up of the pillar to the west of the organ. The cost of the restoration work would increase by 20%.



**Area of the church thought to require attention (shaded) – as of December 1899**

However there was some good news for the church. In their investigations the architects found that the original chancel (the area for which Christ Church were responsible) also extended further west than originally thought. Nevertheless, as time would tell, the architect’s view of the work required massively underestimated the extent of the building’s problems – which would only come to light once work had started.

## 1900

In January the “subscribers” appeal letter was sent out. A revised version was sent in February – which included details of the £1185 already raised by the church; and in March a group of potential donors was shown around the building.

The full amount given by donors during the whole of 1900 totalled just £380. A church bazaar, held over three days in June, raised over £540. The Duke of Devonshire made an interesting offer: that he would give £100 to the fund “when you have succeeded in reaching the required sum”.

On March 26th the restoration committee received a letter from Christ Church offering the church £750 “in full discharge of their obligation”. This was accepted.

By the end of the year a full and final set of plans for the restoration were in place and work was ready to start. Unfortunately, at this critical moment the vicar decided to go on holiday to France – for four months !

## 1901

The vicar returned to Kildwick in March and immediately tendered his resignation.

Fortunately it didn’t take long for a new vicar, Rev. E.W. Brereton, to be appointed. Unfortunately, at the first meeting of the restoration committee he attended, in June, the new vicar asked for a range of changes to be made to the previously agreed plans.

These largely involved an internal reorganisation of the church, mainly with regard to the private chapels at the north-east and south-east corners of the building. He also wanted some of the private pews to be made available for use by the choir and insisted that the work be done in phases so that a part of the church would be available for services throughout period of the restoration. Most of these changes required obtaining permission from the various individuals who “owned” the chapels and pews, necessitating further delay – and a further increase in the cost of the work.

Local companies were invited to tender for the work to be carried out and, on October 11th, the following tenders were accepted:

Mr. John Barritt, Kildwick (Stonemason)	£ 1600-0-0
Messrs. Judson & Steele, Keighley (Joiners)	£ 1046-0-0
Mr John Greenwood, Crosshills (Plasterers & Slaters)	£ 69-10-0
Messrs. Lambert & Son, Haworth (Plumbers)	£ 276-0-0
Laycock & Bannister (Organ works)	£ 165-0-0
Total:	£ 3156-10-0

So everything looked to be in place and ready to go. What could possibly hold things up now ?

It seems that late in October Christ Church withdrew their offer of £750 on the grounds that it had been made before the recent revisions to the plan. A angry exchange of letters then took place, including one sent by the former vicar, Rev. E.H. Morris, to the committee. He wrote:

*What has gone wrong ? The £750 was agreed. I was present and will be prepared to act as a witness !*

The promised amount was finally confirmed by Christ Church in mid-November. However the money was only handed over in instalments as sections of the work was completed. This led to angry exchanges between the committee and Christ Church on more than one occasion.

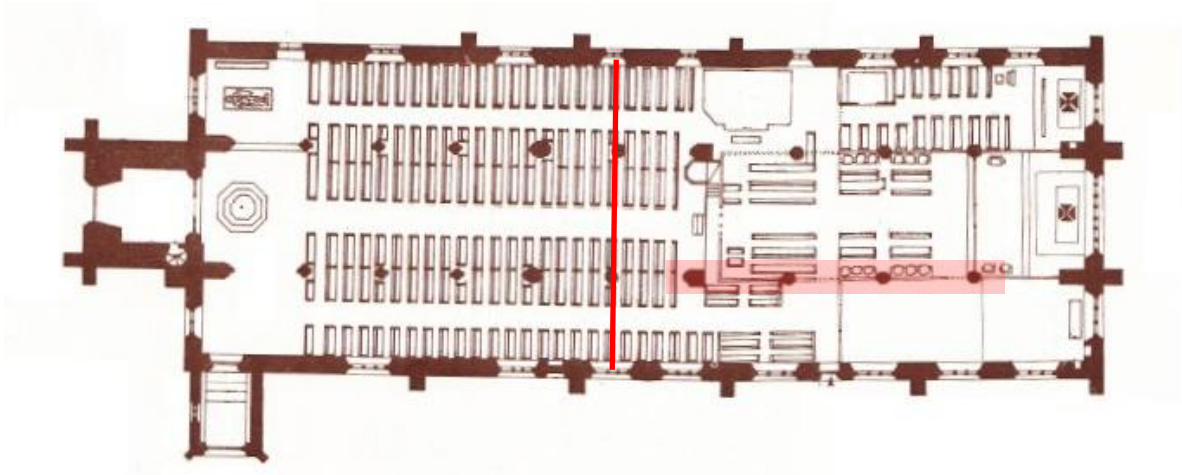
The final service before the restoration work commenced was held on the Sunday before Advent; November 24th, 1901. It was almost 10 years since the first report of structural problems was reported.

## Restoration work (1901 – 1903)

**NOTE:** *In addition to structural work done on the church, the restoration project also involved work on the organ, the installation of a new heating system, and replacement gas-lighting. See [Appendix A](#) for details of some of the work done on the organ. As for the rest, although these form interesting stories in themselves they lie outside the scope of this piece and are referenced only in passing.*

The day after the final service work on the restoration of the church began.

All the moveable furniture: screens, pews, etc., were taken out and put into storage. A wooden partition was then built between the fifth pillars from the east end, extending across the full width of the building. The altar was set up in front of the partition and it was here, in the western part of the church that services were conducted between December 1st 1901 and September 21st 1902.



**Location of the protective partition (red) – 25/11/1901 to 20/9/1902  
and the work carried out in December 1901 and January 1902 (shaded)**

On December 2nd, the plaster was stripped off the four arches and pillars on the south side that had been previously been propped – shown shaded above. Cracks were found in a number of the pillars and arches, with one pillar cracked diagonally almost from top to bottom.

The reason why the pillars were leaning towards the south was also found. None of them had foundations and had been erected on the surface of the soil, or only a few inches beneath, and over graves which had subsequently collapsed.

All four pillars and arches, and the wall above that the arches supported were demolished. It was during this work that the wall above the arches would found to contain blocks of stone with carved scroll-work, later identified as being fragments of Saxon (actually Anglo-Danish) crosses dating from around 950AD.

New foundations were dug for all four pillars, to a depth of six feet, and filled with concrete.

On January 18th 1902, a ceremonial laying of the new foundation stones was carried out. They were laid by (west to east):

- Mr. John Clough, of Steeton – a significant contributor to the restoration fund
- Mr. F. E. Slingsby, of Farnhill Hall – member of the restoration committee
- Dr. Fletcher, of Crosshills – ditto
- Mrs. Brereton – the vicar's wife

Each of the four were presented with a commemorative silver trowel – one of which has recently been donated to the church.



**Ceremonial trowel presented to Mr. John Clough of Steeton**

Sadly John Clough did not live to see the work on Kildwick Church completed. In May 1903, on a visit to Blackpool, he was knocked down and killed by an electric tram. Dr. Fletcher also died soon after the ceremony, in February 1903.

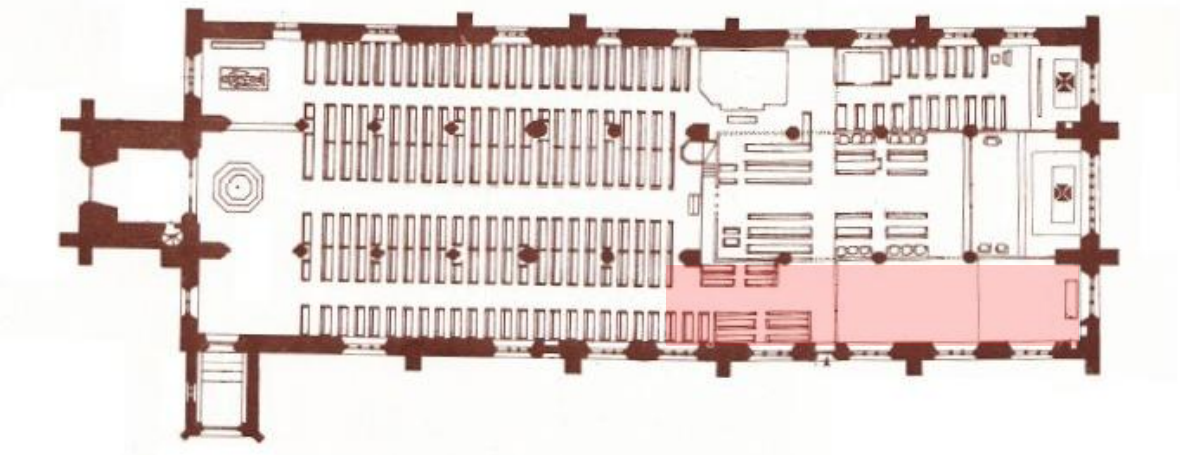


Once the foundation stones were laid the pillars, arches and wall was rebuilt using the old stones where possible and new stones where the old ones could not be re-used.



**Three of the four rebuilt pillars and arches at the south-east of the church**

Attention then turned to the external wall of the south aisle and its roof.

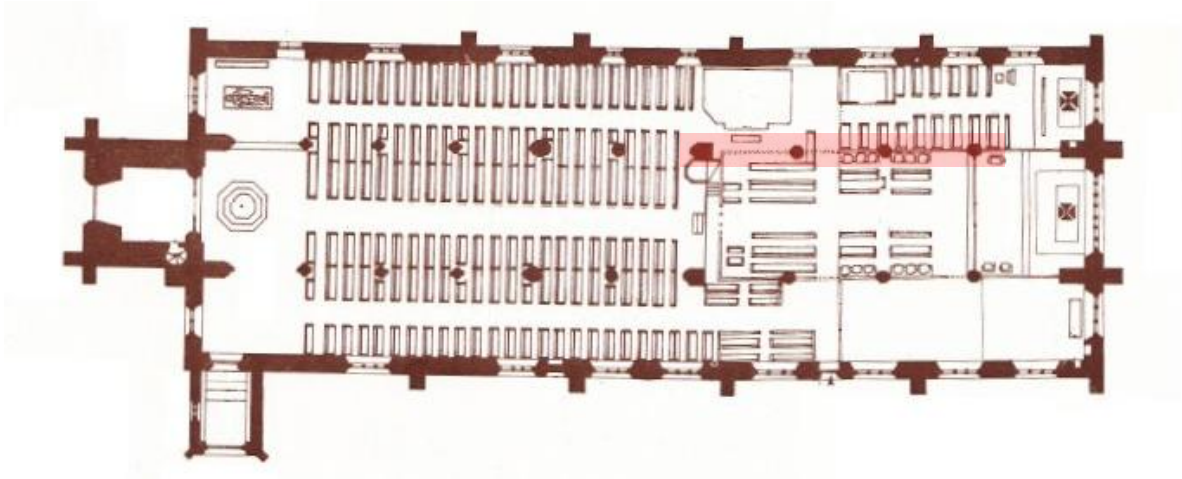


**Location of the work carried out on the roof and inside of the south wall  
in February and March 1902 (shaded)**

It was found that the spars holding up the roof of the single-storey south aisle were rotten and needed to be replaced.

This work involved removing the existing plaster on the inside of the south wall. It had been hoped to then just re-point the stonework, however it was found that the size and quality of the stones did not allow re-pointing, and the wall would need to be re-plastered.

With structural work completed on the south side of the building, attention was next turned to the four pillars and arches on the north side.



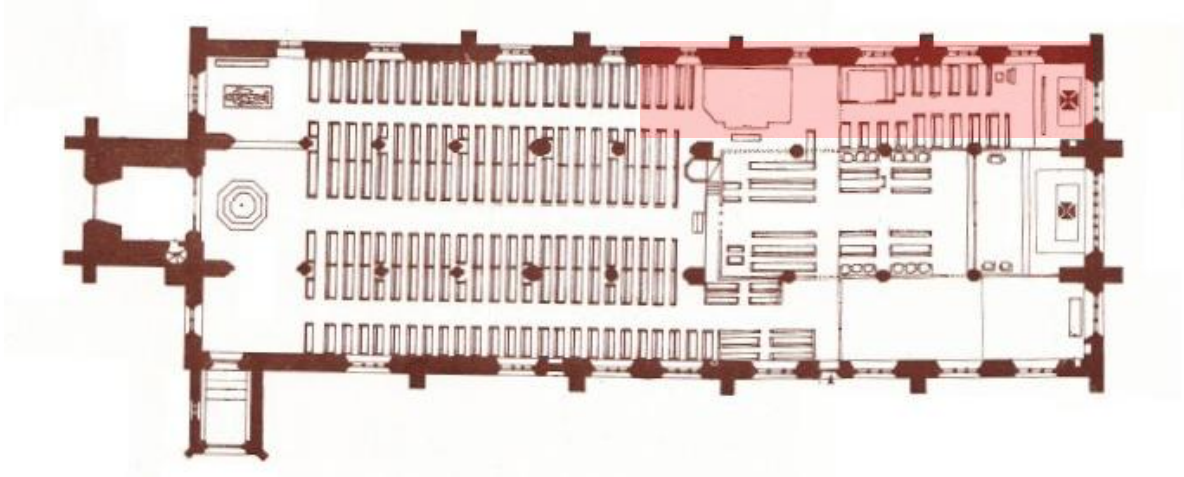
**Location of work carried out on the north side pillars  
in March and April 1902 (shaded)**

On April 19th, the foundation stones of the four new pillars on the north side were laid by (west to east):

- Mr. James Bairstow, of Sutton – mill owner
- Mr. F. G. Peacock, of Crosshills – committee member
- Mrs. Atkinson, of Headingley – daughter of the Rev. J.T.C. Fawcett (former vicar)
- Mr. Frank Lace, of Crosshills.

At almost the same time, agreement was finally reached with the owner of the chapel in the north-east corner of the building (the Currer Chapel) to remove a memorial located in front of the window in the east wall and place it on the north wall.

This reordering of the chapel turned out to be rather fortuitous as it was quickly found that part of the north wall of the chapel – the exterior wall of the building – was leaning inwards.



**Location of work carried out on the north side of the building during May and June 1902 (shaded)**

The roof was removed and the external wall taken down. Here again it was found that this wall had no foundations, having been built directly on the ground surface.



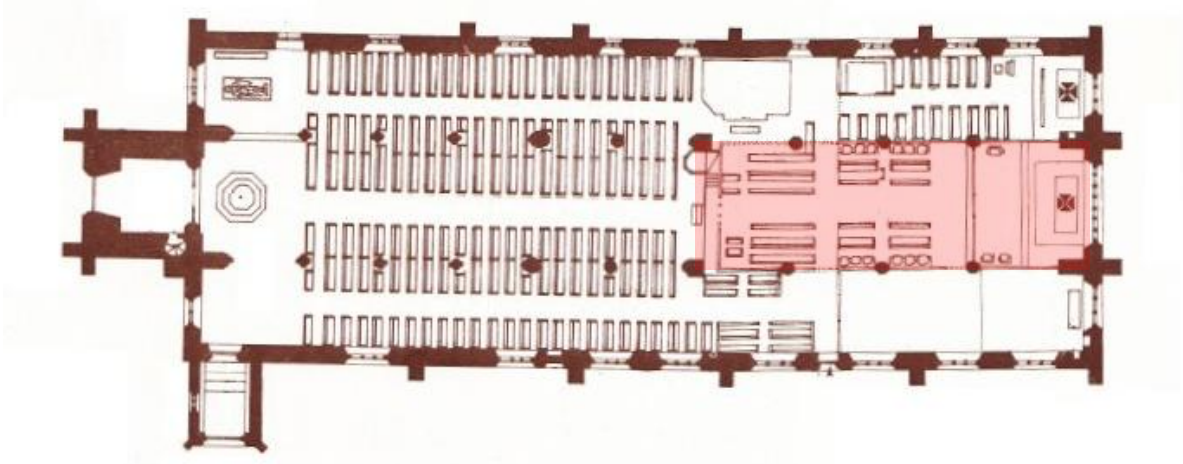
**Curren Chapel, looking east, without a roof and with part of the north wall taken down (June 1902)**



**Work in progress on the north side of the building, looking west.  
The back of the partition built across the church can be seen.**

At the same time, at the other end of the building, work was going on to provide a subterranean boiler room for the new heating system abutting the outside of the north wall of the tower. It was found that the tower was also without foundations, and required very careful underpinning.

By July it was time to carry out the most delicate part of the entire project.



**The re-positioning of the central section of the roof on the rebuilt pillars and arches (July 1902)**

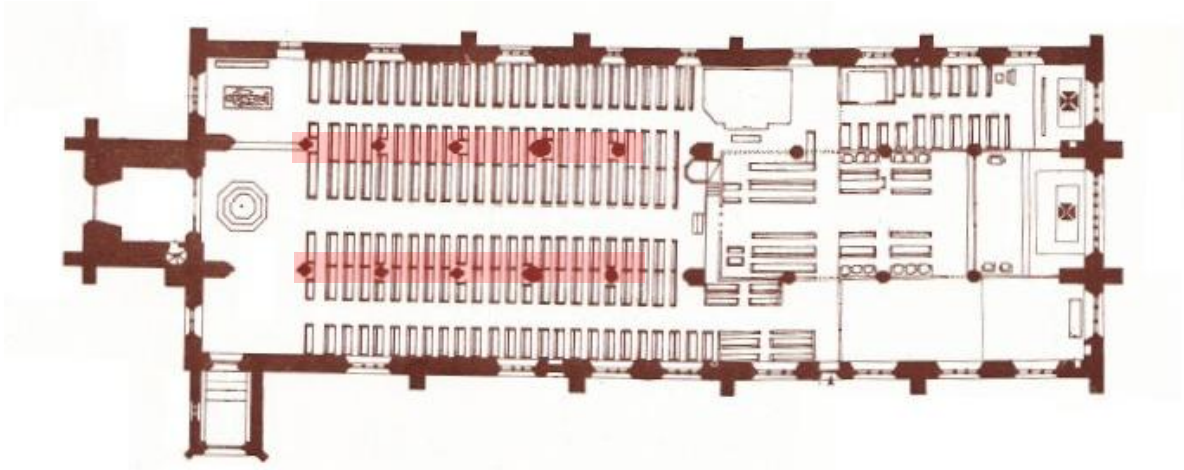
Work on the pillars and arches had corrected their lean to the south and made them perpendicular. During this work the roof of the central section had been held up with props. It was now time to realign the roof and fix it to the newly repaired walls.

This required careful levering of the roof into a position approximately a foot to the north of its previous location. This delicate process took two days and was achieved without removing any of the slates.

In August the roof on the north side, covering the Curren Chapel, was re-slatted and the process of making the east end of the building available for use started.

In September the protective screen, that had been in place since November 1901, was removed and services started to be held in east end of the church as the focus of the restoration work switched to the other end of the building.

At the end of September 1902 the pews were removed from the west end, the partition that had blocked off the tower was taken down and the west end of the building opened up (one of the suggestions made by Rev. Brereton and since reversed).



**Location of work carried out on the pillars of the west end during Autumn and Winter 1902 (shaded)**

Removal of the plaster showed the poor condition of many of the pillars:

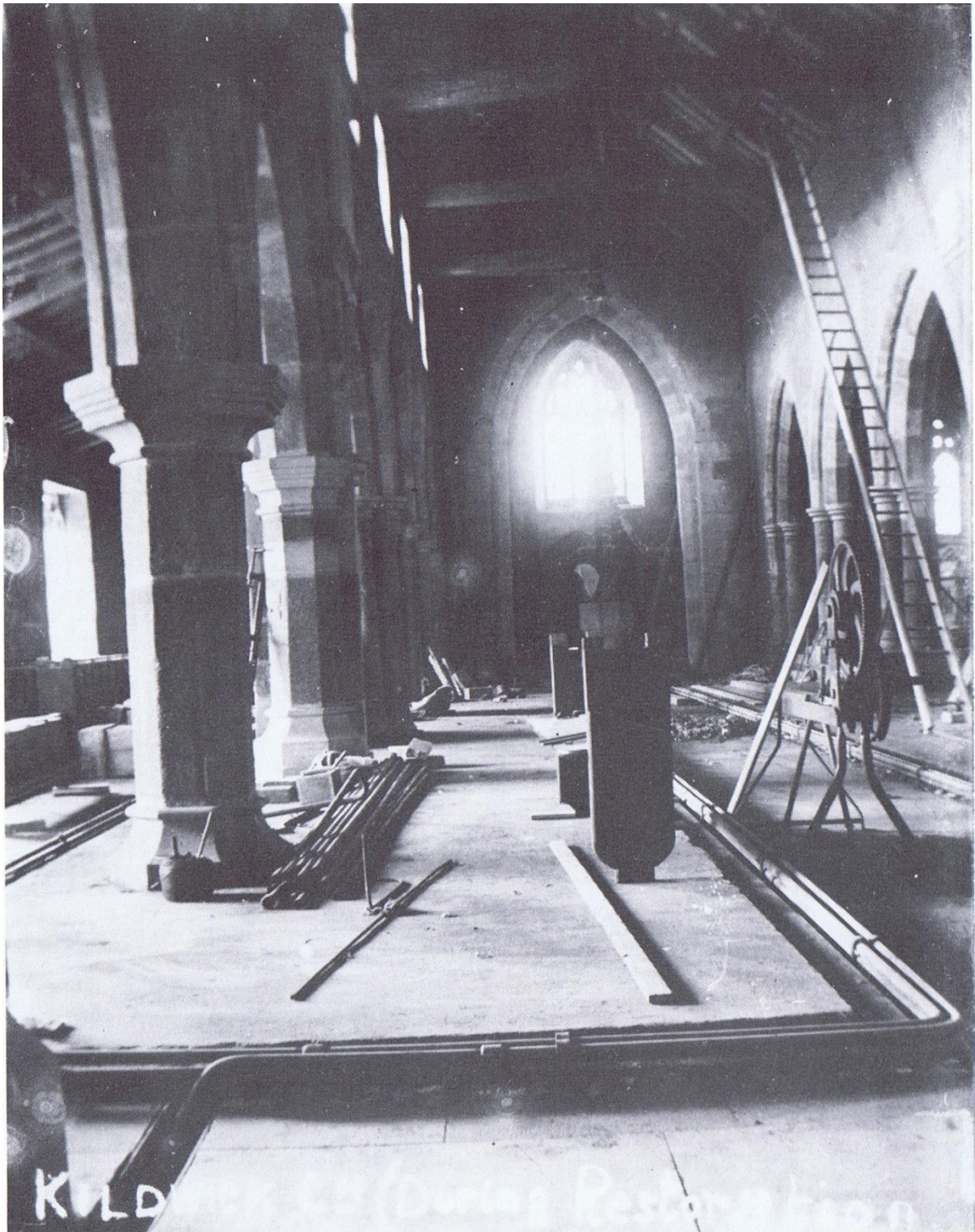
- North side, pillar four (from west end): built largely from rubble
- South side, pillar four: ditto
- North side, pillar five: missing most of the base, which had been cut-away

In the end it was decided to take down and rebuild all the pillars except the second and third from the west on the south side.

It was also found that:

- Beneath the plaster above the second pillar on the north side, there was hidden a much-faded painting, probably showing St. George and the Dragon.
- The pair of pillars fourth from the west end probably marked the eastern limits of an earlier building. (Possibly the 1300s church ?)

The rebuilding of the pillars and the subsequent re-roofing of the north side of the church brought an end to the structural work.



**Work in progress at the west end of the church (Autumn/Winter 1902  
Notice the opened-up west end of the church, all the pipe-work, and the new masonry**

Spring and early summer of 1903 saw the completion of all plastering; the installation of a new heating system; new gas lighting; and the laying of wooden block-flooring to support the pews.

Not all of this work proceeded without issue. In particular, plans for the lighting were repeatedly changed until it was finally decided that the arrangement used prior to the restoration would be re-instated. There were also problems with the wooden block-flooring which was found to be “lifting” in places; the contractors put this down to the amount of re-plastering that had been done which had left the church very damp, a situation exacerbated by the fact that the heating system was not yet fully operational.

On July 18th 1903 the restored church was formally re-opened by Dr. William Boyd-Carpenter, the bishop of Ripon. It was a day later described by the vicar of Kildwick, E.W. Brereton as being “ever memorable to the present generation”. A series of “festival services” took place throughout the following week.

It is in the nature of large building projects that work on minor “snags” continues after any official completion date, and the situation was no different at Kildwick.

- Just a few days after the re-opening a gas leak was discovered in the lighting system; it took almost a month to locate and fix.
- The damp problem was not getting any better and, in the end, it was decided that a drainage trench would be dug along the north side of the building.
- It was also decided that the coping stones on the top of the tower were in a dangerous condition and needed to be replaced.

All outstanding payments were made to contractors on 30th November 1903.

## How much did it all cost ?

The total cost of the restoration work came to just short of £ 4400.

Payments made to contractors included:

John Barritt (Builders)	£ 1588-18s-11d
Judson and Steele (Carpenters)	£ 1221-5-8
T. Lambert & Sons (Plumbers & Glaziers)	£ 347-8-10
Austin & Paley (Architects)	£ 282-10-7
Laycock & Bannister (Organ Works)	£ 223-0-0
John Greenwood (Plasters & Slaters)	£ 178-14-10
Richard Rundle, Bradford (Heating)	£ 168-10-6
J.W. Singer & Sons (Gas Fitters)	£ 67-15-8

Other, smaller, amounts were paid for:

- Additional joinery and carpentry
- Additional plumbing
- Painting
- Printing, postage, etc.
- A new safe in the vestry

## How was it all paid for ?

The restoration fund received major amounts from the following sources:

Donations to the fund	£ 2095-3-3
Bazaars and "sales of work"	£ 946-5-2
Christ Church, Oxford	£ 750-0-0
Teas and entertainments	£ 188-1-0
Collections at special services	£ 184-14-0
Bank interest	£ 120-6-7
Legacy of Miss M.A. Greenwood	£ 74-14-0

The legacy from Miss Greenwood caused a bit of a stir.

—Mr Peacock said he wished to mention an important matter that had arisen through an unjust rumour being circulated that the Vicar had misappropriated a legacy of £74, left by a Miss Greenwood. According to the lady's will the money was left to her trustees, upon trust, for the "vicar for the time being of St. Andrew's Church at Kildwick." The trustees paid over the money, and the Vicar, who was in doubt whether it was intended for church purposes or for the benefice, decided to call in the assistance of the wardens and the Church Restoration Committee. Inquiries were made with a view to ascertaining Miss Greenwood's intentions, and although nothing definite could be ascertained on the point, the Vicar at once decided to apply the money to the Church Restoration Fund. He (the speaker) thought it only right that this statement should be made to stop the mouth of slander.—Mr Slingsby said the report was cowardly and despicable.—The Vicar said that from what inquiries he had since made he had satisfied himself that whatever the wording of the will was, it was Miss Greenwood's actual intention that the money should go into the Church Restoration Fund. It came to his knowledge that certain rumours were being circulated about the parish that he had misappropriated the money, and he made it known that he should take action for libel against any person against whom he might have grounds for doing so. The rumours then suddenly stopped.

Extract from the report of a church management committee meeting (Craven Herald: 17/4/1904)



## Who were the major donors ?

The following major donors, who contributed more than £ 50 each to the restoration fund, have been identified:

Bairstow family, Sutton	> £ 450
Thomas Clough, Steeton	£ 275
John Brigg and family	£ 100
Duke of Devonshire	£ 100
John Clough, Steeton	£ 100
Spencer family	> £55
James Lund, Malsis Hall	£ 50

These donations account for just over half of the £ 2000 of donations made by individuals to the restoration fund. Amounts of less than £ 20 were not recorded separately in the fund accounts and it known that several people, including Mr. Slingsby of Farnhill Hall, made small donations throughout the project.

One notable absence from the list of major contributors is Col. Wilson of Eshton Hall. He was lord of the manor of Kildwick, and it is known that he gave only £ 10 !

## Appendix A – Improvements to the organ

Work on the Kildwick Church organ during the 1901-3 renovation was carried out by the local company Laycock and Bannister of Aire Street, Crosshills. This was appropriate as John Laycock, the founder of the company, is buried in Kildwick Church graveyard, in a plot surmounted by a stone representation of the first organ that he built.

Laycock and Bannister had not built the original Kildwick organ, and neither had they ever been responsible for its maintenance. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, an initial estimate of £150 for the dismantling, removal, storage, repair, improvement and rebuilding of the organ was quickly increased when, early in October 1901, the company made a full assessment of what the repairs would entail.

A letter addressed to the vicar and churchwardens, dated October 9<sup>th</sup> 1901, began ominously:

*Gentlemen*

*We have been over to examine your Organ with a view to repairs and improvements as requested by you and we found the Organ to be in a very bad condition ...*

The letter then went on to describe in some considerable detail the work required to make the instrument serviceable. Most of the improvements suggested were designed to bring it up to the level of specification suggested by the College of Organists. Additional repairs were required to quieten the noise coming from the various mechanisms.

The Restoration Committee sought references from organists who had experience of Laycock and Bannister organs or of maintenance work carried out by the company on other organs, which were unanimously positive. And so at a meeting of the Restoration Committee, held in Kildwick school in the middle of October 1901, a revised tender of £165 was accepted, allowing the organ to be dismantled and removed from the church before the structural work commenced.

From the earliest times the flow of air through the pipes of an organ had been provided by means of manually operated bellows. A choir-boy or a young member of the congregation would be nominated to pump a lever up-and-down to force air through the instrument. This, of course, produced a very variable result, depending upon how long the "volunteer" could continue to operate the bellows and how even a flow of air could be maintained.

By the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, at the time that rebuilding work was being carried out on Kildwick church, organs in buildings that had a mains water supply were starting to use Water Engines instead of manually operated bellows. These produced a far more even and extended flow of air.

It had already been decided to have mains water laid on to the church as part of the rebuilding work and so, in May 1902, Laycock and Bannister suggested using the mains water supply to power the organ, using a Duncan Water Engine, at a cost of an additional £58 – bringing the total cost of the organ repairs and improvements to £223.

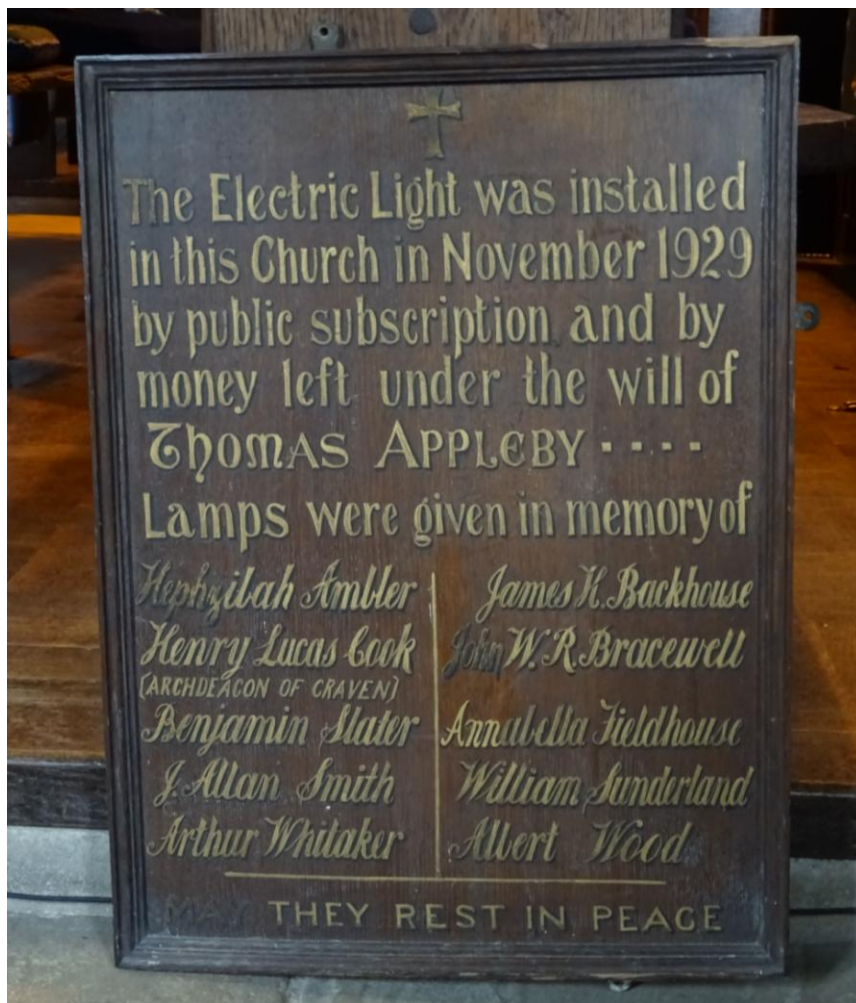
**Note:** Following the 1898/99 typhoid epidemic, the lord of the manor of Kildwick, Col. Wilson, had been more-or-less forced to rebuild the water supply to the village and lay new pipes. It was entirely within his character that Col. Wilson agreed that the church could be connected to the mains but it would cost them £1 per annum and he reserved the right to disconnect the supply in dry weather.

It was determined that the Water Engine mechanism would be positioned in a space under the church tower, where the removal of the old heating apparatus and the installation of a new one had left sufficient space. In addition, placing the engine close to the new heating system would ensure that the water pipes did not freeze up in winter. Test showed that the mains water supply would be sufficient to provide the 50psi air pressure required to operate the organ, and Laycock and Bannister confirmed that valves would be fitted to the mechanism to ensure that there was no over-blowing or bursting of the bellows.

Work went ahead and the only problem seemed to be that when the system was examined in April 1903 the area around the new motor was found to be so damp that the company recommended additional heating be installed. However this seems to have been a general problem rectified when the new drainage trench was dug on the north side of the building. Following an examination of the organ in April 1905, Laycock and Bannister were able to report that there was nothing that needed to be done and that the organ would “settle-in” naturally over time.

It is unclear how long the Duncan Water Engine was in use at Kildwick. However, records from Laycock and Bannister show that by 1935 they had replaced it with an electrically-powered blower.

A wooden plaque found recently in the church suggests when electricity may have been first installed.

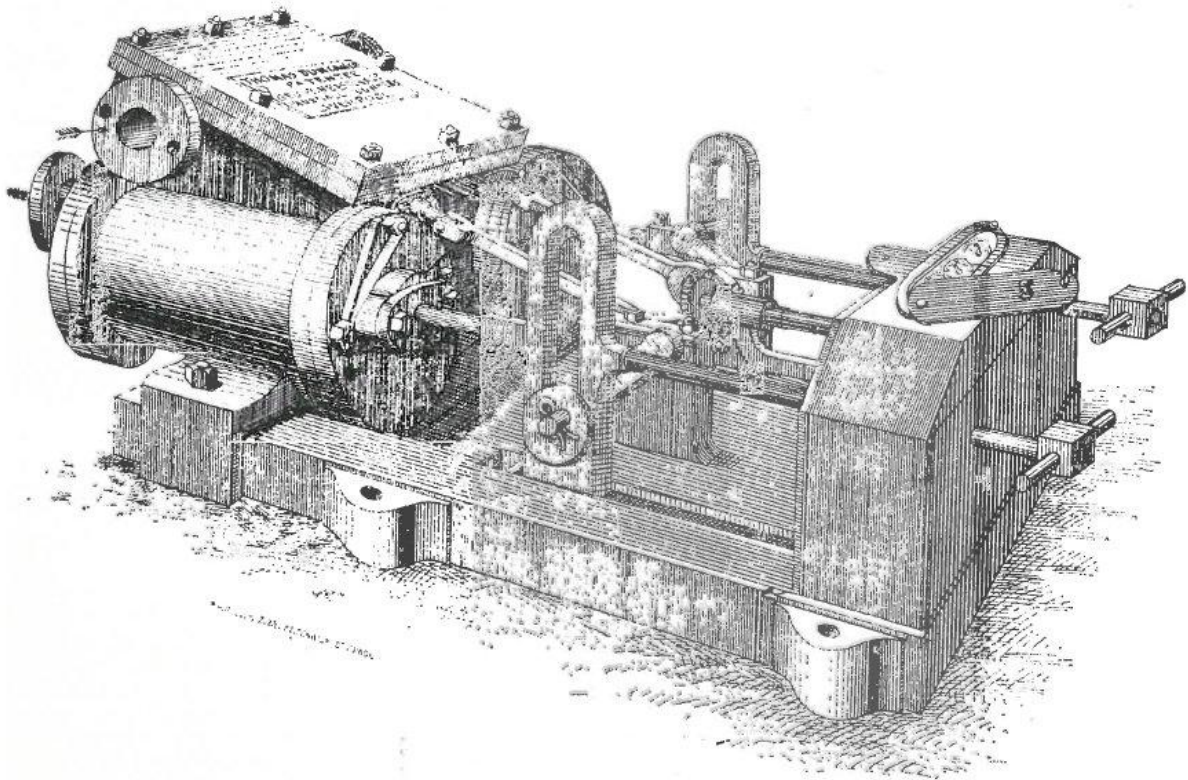


A plaque commemorating the installation of electric lighting – in November 1929

It seems reasonable to assume that any electricity supplied to the church would be first used to light the building, with the installation of an electric blower for the organ occurring between that date and the first record of one in 1935.

### About the Duncan Water Engine

Thomas Duncan was born in Perth in 1804 and, in 1842, was appointed as the first Water Engineer to the Borough of Liverpool, where he was responsible for improving the supply of water to the borough. In his role as Water Engineer, Duncan invented and patented a pressure-driven water meter, which was subsequently used as the basis for a hydraulic motor suitable for use, where the water supply was of sufficient pressure, as a blower on small pipe-organs.



**Engraving of a Duncan Patent Water Meter**

Water engines became a widely used method for organ blowing. The foremost Victorian organ builder, Henry Willis (known as “Father Willis”) patented his own water engine, which was used to power the original Albert Hall organ; and others were used across the country – including the Square Chapel in Halifax and the organ built for Leeds Town Hall.

The obvious disadvantages of using water to blow organ pipes led to the rapid replacement of water engines as electricity was introduced. By 2018, when the organ at St Michael and All Angels' Church, Averham, was renovated at a cost of £20,000, it was thought to be one of only two water-blown organs left in the UK.

## Appendix B – A possible “stand-in” organ

Directly opposite the big pipe organ, tucked away behind the choir pews, is an unexceptional piece of “furniture”. At first glance this could be mistaken for a rather large bureau but closer inspection reveals the presence of a pair of foot-operated bellows, and opening the lid confirms that this is a small “reed organ”, sometimes referred to as a harmonium.



### Who made it ?

As is typical, the name of the manufacturer is shown on the “stop-board”. Unusually, at least for a church in the north of England, it turns out that this organ was made by an American company: the Taber Organ Company of Worcester, Massachusetts.



The company was founded in 1883 by William B. Taber, who bought out the Worcester Organ Co. and renamed it. The company continued in business until the early 1900s, before going out of business.

The firm was known for building very elaborate, ornate organs which were at the height of lavish Victorian style. The musical quality of these organs was equally as impressive as their aesthetic appeal, and the firm enjoyed an excellent reputation.

# THE TABER ORGAN.

**SUPERIOR IN EVERY RESPECT.**

These Organs are made of the very best materials, in the most substantial manner, and have a fine Varnish and Polished Exterior Finish. The Interior is also of Excellent Workmanship, having the best known Mechanical Arrangements, not liable to derangement.



**THEY HAVE NO EQUAL**  
**For Brilliancy, Power, Quick Response,**  
**and Fine Tone Colour. N. B. Our Instruments are Fully**  
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A short clip of a Taber organ, dating from around 1890, being played in the Lee Conklin Reed Organ Museum, can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtrl8XbzzRg>

### How did it get here ?

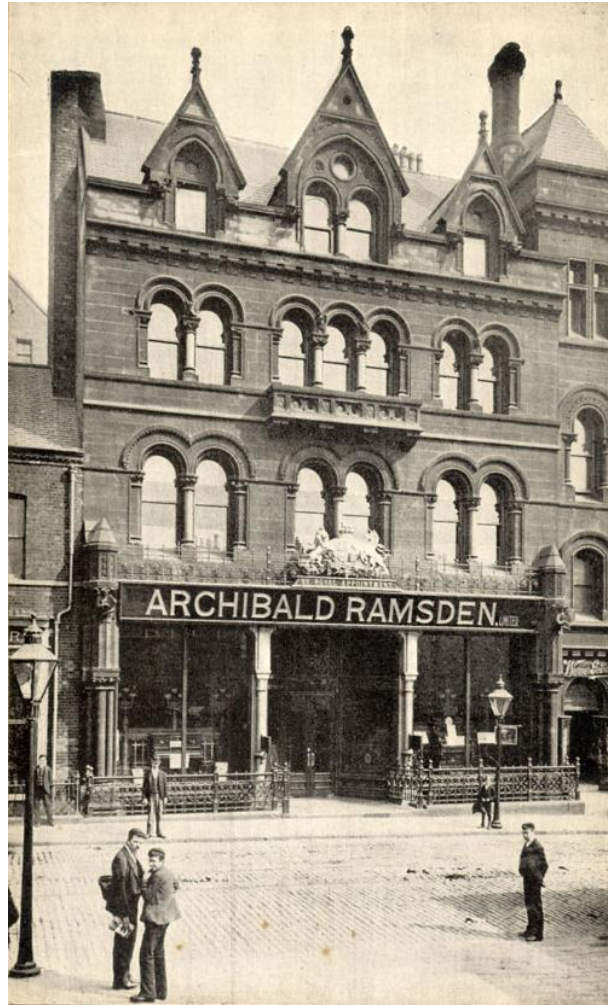
How the organ came to be in St. Andrew's is a mystery unlikely to be solved. However, below the stops is information on how the instrument came to be in the UK:

*Archibald Ramsden  
Limited  
Sole importer. London & Leeds*



Archibald Ramsden Limited was in business in Leeds from about 1864 to the 1950s; with a branch store in London. The company sold organs, pianos, harmoniums and sheet music.

The founder of the company, E. Archibald Ramsden (1835-1916), was also a performer and inventor who held several patents for improvements to organs and harmoniums. In 1872, the company moved into a new building, at 12 Park Row, Leeds, that included offices, warehouses, and a "music saloon," where musical performances were held.



### **When was the Taber organ used in St. Andrew's ?**

It's very unlikely that we will ever know when the Taber organ came to St. Andrew's or what it was used for. Typically a harmonium would have been used in a church before a full pipe organ could be purchased – this was certainly the case at Farnhill Primitive Methodist Chapel – or when an existing pipe organ was unavailable.

During the course of the 1901-3 restoration of the church, the large pipe organ was dismantled and placed in storage. The minutes of the restoration committee give no indication of what, if any, instrument was used to accompany the choir and congregation in this period. However, the dates for the Taber company and the importer Archibald Ramsden certainly offer the possibility that the harmonium might have been used a possible "stand-in" during that time.





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Information on the Taber Organ Company was provided by members of the Organ Historical Society USA, and the Worcester Chapter of The American Guild of Organists.

Additional material was provided by Dr John Laycock, a direct descendant of John Laycock, organ builder and the founder of Laycock and Bannister.