

History of St Paul's & St Luke's



St Paul's and St Luke's. Wood Green, Wednesbury, West Midlands
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St Paul's Church



St Paul's Church is a Grade II listed building which is described as a Parish church, consecrated 1874. Rock-faced red sandstone with tile roof. Comprises a nave with clerestory, a lean-to west porch, north aisle, north vestry, a south aisle under a pitched roof, and a lower chancel with a tower with a spire against its north side. Windows contain Geometric tracery of various descriptions. At the west of the nave, above the porch, are two trefoiled lights flanking a central window of two trefoiled lights.

Each aisle has a west window of two lights. The north and south aisles are each of three bays. The south wall of the transept is of two bays. The east window is of five lights under a pointed head.

The three-stage tower has angle buttresses and is broached to a stone spire. The bell openings are of two lights on each side, with moulded pointed heads.

INTERIOR: has five-bay arcades with pointed arches and round piers with moulded caps and bases. The nave has a boarded barrel roof with tie-beams and tall bolted king-posts. The aisles have open timber roofs, the south aisle having trusses with arch-braced collars.

The moulded pointed chancel arch has short attached columns as responds, carried on corbels. The chancel screen is of wrought iron. The chancel has a barrel roof, twin sedilia and a piscina, and a carved stone reredos. Windows contain some glass of late C19 and early C20 date.

Further information: This building or structure is included in the schedule of buildings of special architectural or historic interest made under to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and preceding legislation.

St Paul's Exterior

A bronze plaque fixed to the southeast wall of the nave in 1926 records that the church was built "to the Greater Glory of God and in memory of their father and Grandfather late of The Forge, Wood Green by Edward, Henry, Alfred and Frederick Elwell".

Those commemorated were Edward Elwell (1783-1869) and his only son Edward (1814- 1857) both proprietors of Wednesbury Forge and manufacturers of edge tools. The brothers were aged respectively 26, 25, 24, and 22 when their grandfather died and when they presumably decided to build the church not only for the reasons stated on the plaque but, according to George Tuthill first Vicar of St. Paul's, for the benefit of the Forge workmen. In their decision to set aside a fair proportion of their inheritance the four young men may well have been influenced by Richard Twigg the saintly Rector of St. James', Wednesbury and by his High Church patron John Nock Bagnall, with both of whose families the Elwell's were friendly.

The foundation stone was laid by Alfred Elwell on 1 May 1872 and shortly afterwards, and somewhat belatedly, the plans for the church were submitted to the local authority and duly passed. Building went on rapidly through the summer of 1872, by August 1873 the main structure, less the upper storey of the tower and the spire, was completed and a year later, on 21 August 1874, the church was dedicated to St. Paul by the Bishop of Lichfield.

The cost of the building was £5,300. of which the Elwell family provided the whole less a grant of £300 from the Lichfield Diocesan Church Building Fund. The builder was Horsman of Wolverhampton.

In 1887, the year of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, the tower was completed and the spire 125ft. high added at the expense of the Elwell family.

The last major alteration to the exterior of the church was in 1922 when the present vestry was constructed on the site of the former north porch, the materials of which were re-used.

The lych gate was built in 1926 at the expense of Arthur Richards of The Limes. Wood Green, in memory of his son, Edwin Arthur Richards.

St Paul's Interior

The following brief description of the interior of the church is taken from the article in "The British Architect" : "The nave which is 36ft. high to the ceiling is divided from the aisles by five moulded arches upon columns with clerestory above lighted on the north by mullioned and traceried windows and on the south by cinquefoils. The chancel arch rises from moulded corbel shafts the arch itself being of lofty and graceful proportions and richly moulded.

The western window consists of a mullioned two-light opening surmounted with tracery flanked on each side with simply dressed lancets. The eastern window consists of five lights, surmounted with richly dressed and moulded geometrical tracery . . . A low septum or screen wall divides the choir from the nave and the foot piece of the altar is raised seven steps above the floor of the nave".

Since this was written much has been done to adorn the church. The east window was presented in 1883 by the widow of Edwin Richards of "The Limes", the proprietor of the Portway axle works. The Richards family were generous supporters of St. Paul's for half its existence. The reredos of red Carlisle stone by Bridgeman of Lichfield was provided by public subscription in 1904 in memory of Alfred Elwell. The organ, which replaced an earlier instrument, was provided in 1934 by public subscription to celebrate the church's Diamond Jubilee and dedicated the following year. The chancel screen was also provided by public subscription in 1903 in memory of George Tuthill. The altar rails and lectern were given in 1906 in memory of Job Edwards and his wife. Edwards was the proprietor of the Eagle Tube Works. Wednesbury, and lived at Wood Green.

Windows have been given in memory of the following:

- 1 Georgina Elwell. Eldest daughter of Alfred Elwell (died 1883 aged 12)
- 2 Fanny Fisher Tuthill, wife of George Tuthill (1887)
- 3 Betsy Knowles, widow of John Knowles. A Mayor of Wednesbury, a churchwarden at Wednesbury Parish Church and proprietor of the Walsall Street Tube Works. Members of his family lived at Wood Green (1888)
- 4 Monica Tuthill, Isabella Francis and George Tuthill (1901). Monica, Tuthill's daughter and Isabella Francis, his mother-in-law were both suffocated at the vicarage, presumably in their sleep on 20 January 1900.
- 5 James McDougall. Founder of the Hope Tube Works, Mesty Croft (1906)

6 Isaac Griffiths J.P., churchwarden of St. Paul's from its foundation and joint proprietor of the imperial Tube Works, Mesty Croft. (1916). He lived at a house called "The Hollies" opposite the church and he and members of his family gave the font in 1888 in memory of their mother-of "The Oaks".

A window in the north aisle was presented in 1919 by the firm and employees of Edward Elwell Ltd. in memory of some of their number who were killed in the Great War. A marble plaque, which recorded their names, fell to the ground on 14 February 1971 and was shattered.

The names are: Joseph J. Carless, Alan H. Adams, Ernest E. Elwell, Ben Bartle, George Farmer, John Brown, William Marlow, Harold Blewitt and Fred Wilkes. Altar vessels were presented in 1885 by Wilson and Margaret Lloyd of Myvod House, Wood Green and by other donors subsequently.

Interior Re-order

- The latest interior changes to the church were in 1998 when the reordering of the church included the moving of the organ to the rear of the church which gives more room close to the altar.
- The choir are now seated at the rear of the church on the left side of the church adjacent to the organ.
- The lady chapel and font were also moved to the right hand side of the church.
- The pews were rearranged to give better visibility for the congregation.
- At the rear of the church an area was created to give the church a 'foyer' area prior to entering the main body of the church.
- The reordering has created a much 'friendlier and warmer' feel to the church bringing the interior more into the 21st Century.

Vicars of St Paul's

1875	George Tuthill	1943	Frank A. Moss
1901	Henry E. Elwell	1954	Ernest Tutt
1906	Lorenzo A. Pritchard	1967	David Tustin
1907	John A. R. Wilkin	1971	H. Derrik G. Jenkins
1922	Gerald A. Stokes	1976	John Bucknall
1933	John O. Nicholls	1984	Colin R. Gough
1938	Henry Bursell	1993	John D. Points
1942	Charles K. Thacker	2002	Jill Warren

Our Churchbells

An inscription near the belfry door records that Mary Ann Richards, widow of the late Edwin Richards of "The Limes", Wood Green in September 1887, gave the peal of 8 bells. Mrs. Richards, the founder of the Wednesbury Art Gallery left a legacy of 700 for a peal of bells, which were supplied by Taylor's of Loughborough for rather more than that sum two years after her death.

Peal boards record some of the notable peals rung by St. Paul's ringers. One of these was reported in "The Ringing World" for 12 February 1926 under the heading "A Unique Achievement". The paper described how. After repeated difficulties and misfortunes, a complete band of change ringers had been found from the employees of Wednesbury Forge. What the article did not say was that the moving spirit behind the achievement was Edwin Joseph Tyler, who died on 25 February 1954 after being ringing master at St. Paul's for nearly sixty years.

For many years repairs to the bells were carried out free of charge by the Forge. Now however when a complete overhaul is required, professional bell founders have to be employed if the peal is to be preserved for future generations of St. Paul's parishioners.

Other sources read as follows

A new ring of eight bells was cast for this church upon completion of the tower in 1887 and hung in a two-tier composite frame - the treble, second, fourth and sixth on the top tier - with wooden headstocks and plain bearings. However, full circle ringing was not permitted for more than a year to allow the tower and spire to settle and so at their opening they were only chimed. In 1988, Taylors retuned the bells (which originally weighed 4.0.16, 4.2.4, 5.0.21, 6.0.24, 7.2.14, 8.2.12, 11.3.21 and 16.3.17 in F) and re-hung them in the existing frame but on ball bearings. A new first floor ringing room was constructed in 1999.

Bell Inscriptions

1	John Taylor & Co.	1887	4.0.0	F	25½	Eight far Sounding Bells are We, Mary Ann Richards gave us. Taylor Loughborough made us in Victoria's Jubilee 1887
2	John Taylor & Co.	1887	4.1.18	E	26¾	Good Neighbours all list to our call. God's love forget ye never. 1887
3	John Taylor & Co.	1887	5.0.0	D	28¾	While e'er we ring honour the King Jesus who saver forever. 1887
4	John Taylor & Co.	1887	5.3.26	C	31¼	Magnify ye day by day him who teaches us how to pray life bestowing Holy Ghost. 1887
5	John Taylor & Co.	1887	7.1.14	Bb	34	Father Son and Spirit free ever blessed Trinity. Praise ye men and angel Host. 1187
6	John Taylor & Co.	1887	8.1.18	A	36	Joy bells over man maid we peal together joined for woe and weal, Trust God, love Christ, be kind, do right then Satan's might need never affright 1887
7	John Taylor & Co.	1887	11.3.0	G	40½	J. Taylor and Co. Bellfounders Loughborough 1887. G. Tuthill Vicar, Isaac Griffiths, Isaac Aston Churchwardens. To the Glory of God and for the use of St Paul's Church Wednesbury. Bequeathed by Mary Ann Richards, The Limes, Wood Green.
8	John Taylor & Co.	1887	16.1.22	F	45¾	The knell I toll of passing Soul just summoned to her maker. The flesh here lies the Spirit flies Saviour to Glory Take her. 1887

St Luke's

St. Luke's began as a mission church in a building which was used as an elementary school by Edward Elwell.

The building was bought from him for £300. It was opened in 1881 and through the efforts of the Curate in charge, was enlarged in 1884 when a chancel was added.

The church was opened in 1895.



The 'New' St Luke's

The elderly building was replaced by the current building, for which £10,000 had been raised in 1973 by the efforts of many people including Mr. Ronald Spruce, the Treasurer of St Luke's from 1965 until his death in the late 1980's.

Without the dedication and commitment of many parishioners, especially Mr. Spruce, the rebuilding would have been delayed for many years.

