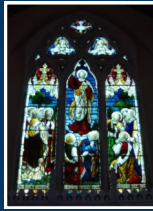


# History of Christ Church

Christ Church was designed by H. Oldham Chambers, built in 1868, and opened on 12th February 1869.

It is distinguished by the fact that it is the most easterly church, with the most easterly stained glass window, in the British Isles. It is unusual in that it points towards the north rather than the east.



At first Christ Church had a fuller title of 'The Cunningham Memorial Beachmen's Church for the Beachmen and Fishermen of Lowestoft'. Francis Cunningham had been Vicar of Lowestoft for 45 years, and raised the money for the construction, sadly dying shortly before its completion.



Christ Church was built to serve the Beach Village fishing community, from the harbour to the Lighthouse. It was a close-knit community: tiny rows of 17th and 18th century fishermen's cottages; a hive of industry packed with smokehouses, pickling plots, rope sheds, net yards, boat builders, fish merchants and pubs, joined to the High Street above by a series of steep, narrow lanes called Scores, some of which survive today.

The area was known as 'the Grit' by those who lived there, and had a population of 2,500 in 1900. It was probably East Anglia's poorest urban neighbourhood.

The Beachmen also served as lifeboat men and if news of an emergency was received during a church service, some members would leave to help in the rescue.

Each autumn the Scots fisher-girls arrived for the herring season, gutting and packing the 'silver darlings' into barrels to be sent countrywide and overseas.



For fifty years after it was built, this church served its community quietly and faithfully, until the Zeppelin raids of 1914-18 devastated the houses of the fishing community. In the 1930s, the Lowestoft Corporation began to declare the area unfit for human habitation' to justify wholesale demolitions. Some rows were replaced with soulless council blocks. But when the Germans came back in 1939-45, the area was extensively bombed. Perhaps the worst destruction of the Second World War occurred when evacuated homes were used for training in house-to-house fighting, in preparation for the D-Day landings. The War changed the Grit forever.



And even as the second lot of repairs were underway, Lowestoft's oldest enemy invaded. In 1953, the 'East Coast Floods' brought a 'wall of water' through the Beach Village, including the church. Christ Church was flooded for days and the Vicar helped rescue people from their homes, even rowing a boat inside the church. By the 1960s, the only people left living 'on the Grit' were people who could not afford to live elsewhere. The last of the area's twelve pubs closed in 1968. The collapse of Lowestoft's fishing industry in the 1970s only accelerated matters.

Today, Christ Church finds itself tucked behind the Lowestoft Police Station and on the edge of an industrial estate with a wide variety of commercial outlets, warehouses and workshops including the Orbis Centre for renewable energy and Sea Land Pipes. It is dwarfed



by Gulliver, the local wind turbine, which is the tallest in the United Kingdom. The fishing industry survives in the form of the vast Birds Eye fish-processing factory, which spreads along the road beyond the church.

Although a lot of restoration has been done recently in the Upstairs Rooms of the Halls, which are now excellent for meetings and youth groups, much still needs to be done. The building is nearly 150 years old and needs constant repair, maintenance and upkeep, not least due to its exposed position so close to the North Sea and the winds which buffet it so severely.



However, the 'Church' is the people who worship Christ; and they remain, following on in Christ Church's fiercely evangelical tradition. Christ Church has always had the character of a mission church and was extensively used during the revival in Lowestoft in 1921. Today, 2014, it serves to host weekly worship, weddings, funerals, baptisms, Easter celebrations, harvest and, of course, Christmas. It is a lively, friendly and international fellowship, welcoming people of all ages and stages of life and faith, and from all across Lowestoft. The Bible tells us that through the Lord Jesus Christ we can be rescued, forgiven, reconciled and re-united with our Father in heaven. Why not come and join us and hear more about this good news!