

Halsall Newsletter

February 2026

A HUGE THANK YOU.

Working together we can do amazing things.

With your ongoing support for ST. CUTHBERT'S HALSALL we have reached **£36k** of the £40k we need to create disabled access to the church and graveyard, and to start the process of applying for grants to repair the West Window, roof and much more...THANK YOU.



We need a final push to reach £40k so the work can begin....

We raised an amazing £1675 with the Christmas raffle. Thank you to all who brought tickets and well done to all the prize winners.

Costs keep rising and so we need to keep on raising funds but we are hopeful that work will be able to start on the disabled access late spring...

We are almost there please carry on giving generously and supporting events when you can.

In addition to supporting those events please consider giving either a one-off donation or a regular gift to St Cuthbert's via



PARISH GIVING SCHEME

as all the money goes directly to us and we can claim gift aid on it if you are a UK taxpayer. This QR code will take you directly to our page.



FRIENDS OF ST CUTHBERT'S

You can also support St Cuthbert's by becoming "a friend".

All the funds raised through this scheme are directed to the maintenance and repair of the church building and grounds.

There is a minimum donation of £20 per year to join, but you can then choose how much and how regularly you donate.

For further information please contact info@halsallstcuthbert.co.uk



Ladies Pop-up Shop & Fun Fashion Show!

**SHOP YOUR FAVOURITE HIGH STREET BRANDS
AT UP TO 70% OFF!**

Colours.

**[FUN]DRAISING
FASHION SHOWS**



**Friday 13th March 2026
In aid of St Cuthberts Church**

Halsall Primary School, New Street, Halsall, L39 8RR

Doors open 7pm, show starts 7.30pm

Tickets: £6 *bring your own drink and nibbles*
Tickets to be purchased in advance

Raffle: FABULOUS prizes to be won at the show!

For tickets and more information please contact:
Sue Goldstraw - 07792479205 - suegoldstraw61@gmail.com





The Rector Writes

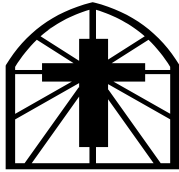
When I first saw Neil, who ultimately became my husband, I saw a well-dressed, slightly awkward hospital chaplain, chatting up the nurses on the care of the elderly ward where I was working as a junior doctor. Later, after we had been brought together by a mutual friend who thought we would be good for each other, Neil told me that he had seen me as a busy doctor in a white coat who could not possibly have time for a guy like him.

We all make assumptions about people and situations based on what we see and what we think we know. Most of the time those assumptions serve us reasonably well, but there are times when they do not. That is particularly true when we are thinking about what makes us who we really are underneath the roles we inhabit and the labels applied to us.

As human beings we can find it hard to see beyond those labels and our perceptions to see the person and hear their story. Jesus, on the other hand, looked beyond the cultural norms and expectations of the world he was born into and saw the essence of everyone he encountered, meeting them where they were. The woman who was constantly bleeding was called out of the shadows and valued for her tenacity even as Jesus was on his way to the house of a synagogue leader. The Samaritan woman at the well was recognised for her knowledge of faith as well as challenged about her choices. He had the measure of the individuals he chose to be in his inner circle, encouraging each one to step out in faith as they were able. Jesus sees into the heart of an individual and treats them with respect, even if they choose to reject what he offers.

At St Cuthbert's we have been reflecting on how we look beyond labels and assumptions and offer a hospitality of welcome. We recognise we have not always got it right and that we are on a journey, trying always to do better. Will you join us in that journey this coming year? Why not come along to a church service or one of the events during the year and help us discover how to look beyond our assumptions and, in return, encounter some surprises of your own.

With every blessing, Susan



Service in the United Benefice for February 2026

Regular services every Sunday:

St Cuthbert's

9.30am. Holy Communion
(1st & 3rd Sundays, Book of Common Prayer)

In term time alongside the main service:

1st Sunday, Church Without Walls
3rd Sunday, Messy Church

St. Thomas'

8.00am. Said Holy Communion
(Book of Common Prayer)

11.00am Parish Eucharist with hymns

In term time:

2nd Sun, Parade Service with Scouts & Guides
4th Sunday, All-age service

Regular midweek services:

Wednesdays	11am	St Thomas' Said Holy Communion
Thursdays	9.15 am	St Cuthbert's, Said Morning Prayer
	1.30 pm	St Cuthbert's, Said Holy Communion with prayers for healing

Special services this month:

Wednesday 18th February Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent

11am St Thomas' said CW communion with imposition of ash for those who would like it
7pm St Cuthbert's said CW communion service with imposition of ash for those who would like it

Lent Course each Tuesday evening 7.30 - 9pm

Why not come and explore different aspects of being an inclusive church and building communities where all are enabled to flourish as art of your Lent discipline? Final programme of speakers is being finalised but will include hearing from individuals working in education, with refugees and the triangle of hope.

Tuesday 24th February

What does the story of the prodigal son tell us about inclusion Susan Salt

Other dates will be 3rd March, 10th March, 17th March and 24th March

(Details in the next edition of the Halsall news)



Talk by Will Daunt on the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins
and his links to Lydiat

Tuesday 17th February 2026

St Thomas' Millennium Centre

7.30pm to 9pm

with raffle and refreshments.

Free admission but donations welcome

No booking necessary

**HALSALL PARISH COUNCIL
MEET 2ND WEDNESDAY EACH MONTH**

Next meeting

7.30pm

11th February 2026 at St. Aidan's Hall

**Parish Council Website :
halsallparish.gov.uk**

SANCTUARY LIGHTS



FEBRUARY

1ST JOHN MARTIN BANKS
5TH ELLEN PRESCOTT
6TH CLIFFORD GUNNING
6TH ERIC STOPFORTH
7TH EDNA MAY ELLIOTT
7TH JEAN MARGARET SIMPKIN
8TH JOHN ROY PRESCOTT
10TH MARGARET HUNTER
14TH VALERIE JEAN STOPFORTH
17TH THOMAS HILTON
19TH JIM WILKINSON
20TH AGNES HOLGATE
20TH MARJORIE MAWDSLEY
20TH KENNETH BAILEY
21ST FRANCES HILDA ROBINSON
23RD JOHN HOUGHTON
25TH ANTHONY BULTEEL



Access to St Cuthbert's Church

If you require the ramps to be put over the steps in order to gain access to church services or to visit the graveyard, please ring to arrange a mutually agreeable time.

Carol Ward 07522 206664

Sefton Warm Spaces

a space for community
and warmth in Sefton



in partnership with  

Warm Spaces Sefton and St Thomas' Church Luncheon Club.

Every Wednesday afternoon 12.30-2.30pm (approx.)

Back at St Thomas' Millennium Centre, Church Lane, L31 4HL

All welcome for a simple meal, conversation and laughter.

MAN WITH VAN

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CONTACT MICK 07807 789072

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presents

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*St. Aidan's Hall
Renacres Lane
Shirdley Hill
L39 4SF*

*Friday 20th February
From 7.30pm*

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Contact Noel on 07485 151395 for tickets

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- 3 Receive a confirmed written offer.
- 4 Complete the payment for your vehicle.
- 5 Schedule a convenient vehicle pickup along with paperwork handling.

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What our happy customers are saying...

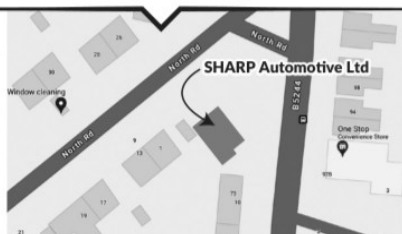
"John viewed my car on a Friday, agreed figures same day and collected Monday. I didn't have to move from my house. Highly recommended". Samantha G, Scarisbrick

"Straight forward transaction, gave £250 more than the dealer offered and allowed me to keep hold of my current car until my new car arrived". Tristan R, Burscough



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FOLLOW US ON:   

MON- SAT
SUNDAY

DINE IN

wild root

TAKEAWAY

9AM-4PM
10AM-4PM

PLANTBASED

CAFE

COFFEE BRUNCH

SMOOTHIES LUNCH

DOG FRIENDLY KIDS MENU FREE PARKING SPECIALITY LATTES FRIENDLY STAFF

Wild Root is a plant-based café located on New Cut Lane, Halsall, proudly rooted in our community. Many members of staff, including the owner Charlie, grew up and live in Halsall and attended Halsall St Cuthbert's Primary School, fostering a deep connection to the area.

Exciting things are blooming here on New Cut Lane! Alongside our cosy plant-based café, Wild Root, we're now joined by some wonderful local businesses – Wildflower, bursting with beautiful blooms and gifts; Reformme Roots, your haven for yoga, Pilates and all things wellness; and Wild & Seek, a magical outdoor play space where little ones can connect with nature.

Pop by, soak up the community spirit, and see what's new!
Head to our website to discover all our upcoming events and workshops.



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PLAY



WELLNESS



GIFTS

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ANDREW ROUGHLEY

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- All areas covered

If you require any further information or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.



Halls for Hire

ST AIDAN'S HALL

Hourly rates are as follows

One-Off Users £20 per hour, Regular Users £15 per hour
Kitchen, amplifier & speakers, projector & screen, ample parking
Cathy Smith 07935 657880
HalsallTrust@gmail.com

MEMORIAL HALL and PLAYING FIELD

Available for bookings; days, evenings, Saturdays after 7pm & Sundays

Changing Rooms, Showers, Toilets, Kitchen, Main Hall with Dance Mirrors. Tables and Chairs for 60+ guests.

£20 per hour, £15 per hour for regular users

Catering service available from Bakehouse Café next door

Folding Tables and Folding Chairs available to hire

Cathy Smith 07935 657880

HalsallTrust@gmail.com

HALSALL ST CUTHBERT'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL HALL

Tuesday Evenings from 6pm or Saturday.

Contact Miss Hampson at School Tel : 01704 840253

HALSALL PARISH CENTRE

The Parish Centre is available for private lettings

Please contact Miss Hampson at school

For details of charges and availability

Tel : 01704 840253

SHIRDLEY HILL ACTIVITY CENTRE

Renacres Lane, Shirdley Hill L39 8SG

Hourly Rate £20.00

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Please contact Angela Harding for availability

Tel : 07944 441850

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01704 891555

22a, Liverpool Road North,
Burscough, L40 5TP

Golden Charter
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Covering all areas



Whats On

CLUB/GROUP	MEETINGS	CONTACT
1st Halsall Scout Group Boys & Girls age 4-14	Halsall School Hall Boys & Girls age 4-14	Sue 07792 479205 Jane 07887 685219
Halsall Village Proud & Tidy group	Various working parties around the village	Eleanor Wroe 01704 841216 Enid Banks 01704 567654
Saracen's Head Crown Green Bowling Club	Various Contact Lynda for details	Lynda Hodge 07435 971762
Ormskirk & District Lions Club	Charity supporting local causes Looking for new members	Sylvia Corfield 01704 840705
Yoga	St Cuthbert's School Wednesday from 7.30pm	James McLoughlin 07852 192440
FROGS Friends of Shirdley Hill Village green	9.30am Tuesday & Friday	01704 840607
Jigsaw Library Free to join & borrow	We ask for a donation of a jigsaw then you can borrow as often as you like	Sue Charnock Facebook Page
Halsall Bees & Butterflies Brigade	Meets once a month See article for details	Clare Edwards cedwards1144@gmail.com
Halsall Badminton club	Halsall School Thursday 7.30pm	Jim 01704 840908 Margaret 01704 840305
Yoga	St Aidan's Hall Mondays from 6pm	Angela 07513 802976
Pilates	Haskayne Village Hall Tuesday 9.30 - 10.30am Tuesday 6.30 - 7.30pm Thursday 9.30 - 10.30am	Andrea Kerfoot 07540 053002 a.davies11@sky.com

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www.wecaregroup.co.uk**

THE CHURCH OF ST CUTHBERT, HALSALL

Rector	The Rev Susan Salt	07730 197656
Curate	The Rev Glen Gardner	0151 287 1686
Reader	David Walker	0151 520 2496
Church Wardens	Carol Ward	07522 206664
	Pamela Carr	01695 423817
Verger	Sarah Mitchell	01704 889237
		07808 064996
P.C.C. Secretary	Mike Stephenson	07749 676868
P.C.C. Treasurer	Colin Throp	01704 841281
Organist	Vacancy	

PARISH COUNCILLORS

Chair	Mary Lyons	01704 840607
Vice Chair Councillors	Noel McCarthy-Thomason	07485 151395
	Raymond Brookfield	07771 798167
	Lesley Stephenson	07813 563239
	David Adams	07795 083885
	Keith Wright	07507 209674
	Beth Roberts	07961 697064
	Tim Atlay	07721 867605
	Paul Barker	07768 797466
	Elizabeth Wright	07817 056145
	Cathy Smith	07935 657880
Parish Clerk	Marilyn Westley	07738 680752
Borough Councillor		Ellr.MWestley@westlancs.gov.uk
County Councillor	Alexander Blundell	Ellr.Blundell@westlancs.gov.uk
	Jane Marshall	Ellr.Marshall@westlancs.gov.uk
	Leon Graham	07856 930907

March 2026 MAGAZINE

**Closing date for Articles and Adverts :
13th March 2026**

Contributions by Email to halsallnews@gmail.com

All details in the magazine are correct to the best of our knowledge at the time of going to press.

Christmas Prize Draw Winners

Number	Prize	Winner
1	£100 voucher	Cody Pilgrim
2	Drinks Hamper	Ashton Gardner
3	Saracens Voucher	Alison Counce
4	Weekend Away	Ann Grimshaw
5	Afternoon tea	Eileen Houlgrave
6	Fruit and veg box	Alan Watterson
7	Farmer Ted Voucher	Bill Cushion
8	Beefeater Voucher	Nancy Webster
9	Bottle Brandy	Janet Bond
10	Wild root voucher	Neil 9 Chestnut close
11	Rose Wine	Beth Roberts
12	Flowers	Martin Jones
13	Christmas Hamper	Ann Marshall
14	Primrose Hill Voucher	Viv Core
15	Bottle Baileys	Simon Bounds
16	bottle Gin	Holly Hilton
17	White Wine	Kem Ali
18	Quality Street	L Griffiths
19	Champagne	Michael Webster
20	Bottle Whisky	Teddy Tomlinson
21	Bottle Gin	Margaret Webster
22	Bottle Wine	Cunningham Ashford
23	Quality Street	Sue Goldstraw
24	Bottle wine	Steph Halsall Hall
25	Bottle Wine	Margaret Webster
26	Celebrations	James Kenyon
27	Box biscuits	Aeron Goldstraw
28	Bottle wine	Mark Savage
29	Perfume	Christine Jones
30	Toiletries Basket	Maria Kenyon
31	Box Biscuits	Glyn Jones
32	Confectionery box	Gill Helps
33	Prosecco	Lyn Hartley
34	Whisky	Rachael Burrows

HALSALL PARISH COUNCIL

Halsall Parish Clerk

Cathy Smith has accepted the position of Parish Clerk. Thank you to all applicants and congratulations to Cathy on her new role.

Vacancy for Assistant Parish Clerk of Halsall Parish Council (part-time)

Part - time (5 hours per week)

Salary based on NJC pay scale (point 14-17, pro rata)

National NJC pay awards will apply

Halsall Parish Council is seeking an enthusiastic and highly motivated candidate for the above vacancy.

The primary role of the assistant parish clerk is to support the work of Halsall Parish Council and the Halsall War Memorial Playing Field and Hall Trust. The parish clerk will work closely with and under the supervision of Halsall Parish Council Clerk and report to the chair through the parish clerk.

The average workload is estimated to be five hours per week, although this varies with a peak of activity around the meeting dates. Work is mainly from home, with visits to the village halls.

Please read the job description and person specification for more details on the role. If you think you would be suitable for this post, please send your CV with covering letter outlining how you meet the criteria for the role. Please send your application by email to halsallparishclerk@gmail.com

Closing date of 27th February 2026. Interviews will take place in early March and the post is expected to start before 1st April 2026

Job description and person specification are available here

<https://www.halsallparish.gov.uk/news/post/10/assisant-parish-clerk-vacancy/>

Section 137 Grants

Grants are available for local groups and organisations that can provide benefits to the area or its residents. The Council also supports registered charities. To apply for a grant after 1st April, please contact the Parish Clerk for an application form.

Road Safety

Numerous complaints have been received from residents regarding speeding and pavement parking, particularly on Renacres Lane and Heathey Lane. These concerns have been forwarded to the relevant authorities, and we have requested more frequent speed camera visits. We kindly remind residents, if you must park on the pavement, please leave sufficient space for pedestrians to pass. Vehicles blocking the pavement create hazardous conditions, causing people to step onto the road, which is not only unsafe but also inconsiderate.

Planning

Planning applications are published for information only. Applications are typically only open for 21 days from publication by West Lancashire Borough Council (WLBC). Residents can view and comment on planning applications at

<https://pa.westlancs.gov.uk/online-applications/search.do?action=simple&searchType=Application>

Planning Applications

2025/1049/FUL Date Valid: 8 December 2025

Proposal: Single storey extension at front side and rear.

Site Location: 32 Summerwood Lane, Halsall, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 8RJ.

Planning Decisions

2025/0584/PIP Decision: Permission in Principle Refused

Proposal: Application for Permission in Principle - Residential development up to 4no.dwellings.

Location: Land North West Of, Heathey Lane, Shirdley Hill, Halsall, Lancashire, L39

2025/0690/FUL Decision: Planning Permission Granted

Proposal: Erection of a wall and gates.

Location: Dicconsions Farm, Dicconsions Lane, Halsall, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 71-IR

2025/0713/PNC Decision: PNC Details Refused

Proposal: Application for determination as to whether prior approval of details is required - Class Q, Agricultural buildings to dwelling houses.

Location: Brookside Farm, Carr Moss Lane, Halsall, Lancashire, L39 8SA

2025/0835/PNP Decision: Prior Notif-Agriculture-Details Approved

Proposal: Consideration of Details for Prior Approval - Agricultural storage building.

Location: Land North Of Plex Lane, Plex Lane, Halsall, L39 7JY

Halsall War Memorial Playing Field and Hall Trust

Halsall Parish Council is Trustee for the Memorial Hall and Recreation Ground which is a self-funding Charity no 521111 regulated by the Charity Commission.

The "Trust" is at www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100095608597326

Recent Events

Over the xmas period we held a couple of events and raised funds through donations for the hall. The Childrens xmas party—£38.00, Lights switch-on £130. We have also raised over £500 from the sale of the Halsall Calendars. More events are being planned for 2026 which we will announce shortly.

Gift Aid

The Memorial Hall charity can now receive donations through the Gift Aid Scheme so for every £1 that is donated a further 25p can be claimed from HMRC. Gift Aid envelopes are available in the Hall or contact us for one.

Recycling

A recycling clothing bank is available for you in the Memorial Hall car park. Funds raised support blood cancer research charity.

Noel McCarthy-Thomason (Vice Chair) and Cathy Smith (Parish Clerk)

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The service includes:-

- removal of dead flowers and plants, etc and replacing with fresh cut seasonal flowers
- cleaning of the memorial and vase pots
- trimming and edging grass and pruning shrubs where necessary
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 Facebook : randbclinical

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Gas Emergencies	0800 111 999
Electricity NW	105 or 0800 195 4141
United Utilities (water / flooding)	0345 672 3723
Flooding - Highway	0300 123 6780
Police Contact (non urgent)	101 OR 01695 566058
Local Police Officers or PCSO's	01695 566444
Street Lighting Fault Reporting Line	0300 123 6780
Fire Safety Helpline	0800 169 1125

POLICE CONTACT DETAILS

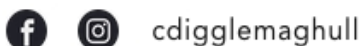
Neighbourhood Policing Sergeant, 4110 Billy Matthews e-mail
Billy.Matthews@lancashire.police.uk
 or alternatively Neil Cronshaw who is the Community Beat Officer
 for Halsall at 7176@lancashire.police.uk

**Residents should phone 999 in an emergency
 and 101 to report a crime and obtain a crime incident number.**
 Local contacts are for local issues and consultations only.

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NOW IN HALSALL



The Bees and Butterflies Brigade



For many wildlife species, February is a month to stay hidden or asleep. Bumblebee queens are snug in soil or grassy clumps and over-wintering butterflies have found a cool, dark spot in a shed or outhouse to wait out the dark and cold. Despite this, there are still some amazing creatures to be seen if you have time to get outside and have a look.



With many branches bare, I love looking for birds at this time of year because they are easier to spot than in the summer. One of my favourite things to do on a crisp winter day is to walk along the canal to Halsall cutting. Wrens weave in and out of the ivy, hunting for bugs and spiders, then fly across to the other side of the canal as I pass, searching out the safety of bramble and nettle. Blackbirds scuff through fallen leaves, hoping for a woodlouse or worm, or pluck the last of the hawthorn berries. Robins are there, too, with feathers fluffed against the cold; one was brave enough to come close to take a little piece of berry suet from the ground at my feet. Looking up, the jay is sometimes there, just as a flash of colour - blue wing patches, a white rump - searching through the oak trees for acorns. And then, in a flash of electric blue, skimming just above the water's surface, the kingfisher, the spirit of the cutting.



How is it possible to see such things and still keep our footing on a muddy path? Well, put simply, it really helps if we are aware of what's happening on the edges of our vision. Broadly speaking, we have two kinds of vision: the front on, straight ahead kind of vision that helps us read or watch a screen (we use this a lot in the modern world) and our peripheral vision, our "did-I-really-see-that?" kind of vision. It is the peripheral vision that can help us detect and recognize what's happening in the natural world. It helps us to sense things around us that are not immediately obvious. Imagine the moment when you see a movement "out of the corner of your eye" and you turn your head to respond..... that's when the magic happens, the movement becomes filled with shape and colour and you have seen something special.



Of course, it helps to walk quietly and have moments of stillness, but the more we respond to our peripheral vision, the wilder our world becomes. Have a practice next time you are out and about around the village or canal - hopefully you'll find that your sight is better than you ever suspected.



Clare Edwards

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<https://www.halsallparish.gov.uk/news/post/10/assisant-parish-clerk-vacancy/>

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Halsall History Group
Talk by Dr Colin Penny 16th January 2026

Centuries ago, England was under the blanket of superstition in a time when the wrath of God and exclusion from heaven was the souls worst fate. During this period, in the year 1612 to be exact, the most infamous witch trial in British history was unfolding. It featured a criminal case in which 12 people from Lancashire were accused of witchcraft, more than any predeceasing case. Not only does this make it a landmark trial of witchcraft, but additionally being one of the best documented we must review through a modern lens. The brief scene set, the people of Halsall and the surrounding areas were recently blessed with a visit from Dr Chris Penny, curator of the Lancaster Castle Museum. Friday 16th January was a particularly cold winters night, as we gathered at the Halsall Community Memorial Centre. The attendance exceeded my expectations, with a real hustle and bustle in the air. Apparently, the allure of condemned witches still has the same appeal it did, in the 17th century. Not only was the talk to feature the circumstances surrounding the accused, but the local connections of Halsall to this tragic trial. So, as Dr. Penny began his introduction, we sat in silence with our hot beverages and biscuits, eager to hear an experts take. The talk featured heavily around Sir Cuthbert Halsall, a prominent figure, landowner and politician from centuries ago. The name of our civil parish village and many surrounding buildings have their origins in his family name. This in mind, we wondered how he could have been connected to Pendle Witches.

Setting the scene, Dr. Penny laid out a somewhat complicated but well-orchestrated series of events, broken down chronologically from Cuthbert's early days to his positions of authority. If we travel backwards into the past of 1601, Sir Cuthbert Halsall became High Sheriff of Lancashire, a role he was undertaking for the second time around. He was originally removed from the bench for suspected Catholicism early in King James's reign. However, subsequently conformed and was reinstated in about 1609, serving as Lancashire sheriff again in 1612. Dr. Penny reiterated how truly rare and uncommon this was, it simply did not happen. Within his professional opinion, he theorised that Sir Cuthbert must have conducted an action of great significance to be reinstated to power. There are a few avenues this may have taken, but by linking connections between Sir Cuthbert and Lord Monteagle, we begin to unravel another infamous trial altogether. To set a brief connection, the two men had fought alongside Robert Devereux, the 2nd Earl of Essex. Not only did they have mutual connections but were also in-laws by marriage; albeit illegitimate on Cuthbert's side. For those reading that are unfamiliar with Lord Monteagle, he received the secret letter through the door of his London property in 1605, exposing the entire gunpowder plot by warning certain gentry to stay away. This letter ultimately sealed the fate of Guy Fawkes and the entire gunpowder plotters. Monteagle did not want to simply take the letter to King James and relay this devilish Catholic plan, he wanted to catch the plotters red handed, receiving the full royal acknowledgement and accolade. Over the years, it has been greatly debated whom penned the Monteagle letter. Many attributing the exposing document to Monteagle's other brother-in-law, Francis Tresham. However, when we search for the answer to Sir Cuthberts miraculous re-instatement as High Sheriff by King James, Dr. Penny summarises it absolutely could have been him. Imagine that - a figure famous from our local history responsible for exposing the gunpowder plot. Whilst we may never know the truth, it does add up.

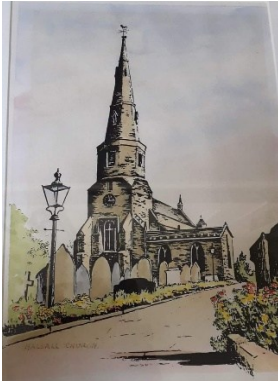
Considering the above information, those of us in Dr. Penny's audience had now digested the relevance of our local setting to the trial of the Pendle Witches. Sir Cuthbert Halsall was High Sheriff of Lancashire, overseeing law and order; in a land described as wild, lawless and filled with hidden Catholics. In early 1612, a Lancashire Magistrate by the name of Judge Roger Nowell approached Sir Cuthbert with a rather curious incident. An accusation of witchcraft in the isolated Lancashire hills. A young beggar girl by the name of Alizon Device had cursed a peddler after his refusal to gift her some pins. Upon uttering the curse, John Law the peddler, collapsed to the ground convulsing. One side of his face drooped, alongside the limbs on this same side. What we would call a coincidental stroke in the modern day (possibly brought on by the stress of the curse) the superstitious locals, particularly the peddler's son blamed witchcraft. Ultimately, two poor families of Pendle, headed by matriarchs began accusing each other. They had been squabbling for years and now they had the perfect opportunity to get rid of one another. Instead, the incriminated not only their entire families, but other local innocents. Particularly a lady named Alice Nutter, who was rather wealthy in comparison to her fellow accused witches. But, Alice had roots in Catholicism and was believed to still be practising this forbidden religion. This alone connected her with devilry in the eyes of English authorities. Now, Sir Cuthbert knew the importance of impressing the King and what could be better, than documenting a trial of the King's two most feared enemies being brought to justice, witches and Catholics. The gunpowder plotters were dead, and he would now ensure these witches swung too.

The talk by Dr. Penny did not focus heavily on the witch trial at Lancaster Castle or accused persons as individuals due to time constraints. However, it is a subject I have researched for many years. Having a fascination with dark history, folklore and hauntings – the Pendle Witch trials really drag you in, kicking and screaming. The trial set standard for children being permitted to give eye-witness evidence in court for a witch trial, given Alizon Device's younger sister, Jennet testified against her entire family. As a result, this allowance of fantastical testimony led to the inhabitants of New England executing 25 people accused of witchcraft during the 1690's. This dark period in American history often being referred to as 'The Witches of Salem'. In conclusion, this talk was not simply to shock us on the witches' alleged actions of meeting with the devil himself, but to give a clear timeline of Halsall's connections to the trials. Whether you believe the allegations or think it superstitious purging, you cannot deny the entirety of Newchurch-in-Pendle and Pendle Hill itself, boasts a strong atmosphere in the air. The story will live on forever, alongside its modern accompaniment of ghost stories from the area. If you are interested in the latter, please do follow my social media accounts in which I delve into dark history and hauntings. Simply search 'The Jack O' Lantern' on TikTok, Instagram or Facebook.

In the meantime, happy hauntings.

Ray Turner

The Church as Work of Art



This was the title of a book by Alec C Taylor a foremost writer on England's churches. He mentioned Halsall St Cuthbert's in county lists but did not refer to it in any greater detail in his book which was a lost opportunity. It prompts the suggestion that he never ventured inside to see an interior, which would undoubtedly fit the category of 'Work of Art.' Simon Jenkins who wrote 'England's 1000 Best Churches' similarly omitted Halsall from his selection. I wrote and asked him why? His answer was, he couldn't gain entry. This was not unusual.

Today the fact that the church is medieval and 700 years old is often a surprise to visitors. They are misled by the spire which, if it is not falling down, is giving false impressions. It is essentially a Victorian addition on a medieval tower. As R.J Brown author of 'The English village church' wrote, the spire serves no purpose other than emphasising the monumental character of the structure. It is possibly a first impression that has led many who pass by on the road to consider that St Cuthbert's is a Victorian 19th century church and not a medieval work of art. It was also the first impression I had back in 1983, until May Gaskell gave me a tour and showed me its wonders. Halsall has a glorious interior, some of it was obtained by inglorious means, but it is still steeped in history. Other contributions to the interior from parishioners do, in some cases, say more about the giver than the medieval church. A few are result of circumstance such as the poor-quality carvings in the chancel which were cut by a novice mason after the Black Death in 1349, when there was a shortage of masons. A parishioner of the time in the parish church of Ashwell looked at similar unskilled work and wrote 'I spit at it.'

The Reformation did it no favours either. The vast rood screen and loft were taken down but it took 100 years or so for Halsall to conform to an interior commensurate with the Book of Common prayer. When it did conform during the spiritually austere years of the late 17th and 18th centuries, the medieval church was hidden behind layers of wood plaster and board. This was done to make the sermon most important and turn the church into a barely recognisable meeting room. We know this because there is a painting of the interior in 1794.

In the 19th century the influences of Pugin, Butterworth and Gilbert Scott called for the 'beauty of holiness' to be re-established in English churches and It is comforting to know that when thousands of churches were being built, the perfect model decided on for so many architects was the medieval ideal and undoubtedly Halsall fits that ideal.

The 19th century renovations are beyond what we can imagine. The side wall on the south side of the nave was taken down to six courses to be reconstructed as it was but several courses lower. The north side was completely rebuilt and is all 19th century. The roofs were both overhauled and the chancel was covered in lead. The overall result was a huge building site with the interior exposed to the elements.

The outer walls were rebuilt by Paley and Austin with new windows and roofs. However, the pillars, tower, chancel arch, and chancel are medieval and original. This then is the real treasure. The space from the west tower allows the eyes to sweep the perspective up to the main altar and great east window just as the original 13th century architect intended. Halsall also glories in its Easter Sepulchre, the sedilla, piscine, ancient door and hagioscopes which are part of what is called the 'Sarum set.' This was required for worship under the Sarum liturgy and is rare in a medieval church. Add to this the Bell cote, the Benediction carving, misericords and tombs. Just some of many amazing features of the church.

At the beginning of the 20th century the church character changed, and it became somewhat of a mausoleum to the Boer War after the death of the rector's son, Wilfred Ashley Blundell in the Battle of Belmont 1899. The regimental and imperialism which is very apparent today in the windows and wall brasses, give an ethos of empire and ironically the greatest world conflict World War 1 was still 14 years away.

Stephen Henders

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