

# HALE CHAPEL

Unitarian

Chapel Lane, Hale Barns, Altrincham,  
Cheshire



Registered for worship 16<sup>th</sup> July 1723

# **A BRIEF HISTORY**

## **HALE CHAPEL**

### **A BRIEF HISTORY**

In 1720 John Crewe, Lord of the Manor, declared his intention of restoring the Ringey (Ringway) Chapel to the Established Church. By 1722 the Dissenting congregation and the Minister, Nicholas Waterhouse, were turned out of Ringway Chapel. After this event 13 of the dissenters bought a piece of land known as 'Buttsfield' lying between Hale Barns and Warburton Green for £5, and a new building was erected for the congregation.

On 16<sup>th</sup> July 1723 the new Meeting House was registered as "intended for a place of divine and religious worship" and a formal opening was conducted in October 1723.

The building had two entrance doors in the south wall, long since walled up and replaced by the present single entrance in the east gable.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1732 Hale Chapel was put in trust. Future trustees were to be "elected and chosen by the majority of the communicating members attending divine worship at the Meeting House". The congregation then drew up a written code of regulations determining the roles of minister and congregation.

In 1740 a Day School was founded on land purchased in Hale Barns village, a forerunner of the Sunday School.

On Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1788 a Sunday School was opened, and the scholars met in the Day School premises.

In 1821 a gallery was added to the Chapel with an outside brick staircase with stone steps and a handrail. Also erected in the south eastern corner of the chapel yard was a schoolroom with stabling below. The scholars used the gallery and then later it was used by the choir, with a violin accompaniment.

After 1860 this gallery became unsafe and was dismantled, along with the outside staircase, and the doorway was blocked up.

At this time a harmonium was installed in the Chapel, followed by an organ in 1882.

In 1880 a new schoolroom was built next to the Day School in Hale Barns village, and this was enlarged in 1886 and 1910. The old Sunday School building in the Chapel-yard, which had become unsafe, was demolished by 1885.

The Meeting House, amid the scattered farms of a thinly populated area, was the only place of worship within Hale and Hale Barns for some 150 years, until the arrival of the railway, when the locality changed to suburban and attracted church building of other denominations.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Chapel provided virtually all the community facilities in the village of Hale Barns, eg: a Penny Bank, a library, a singing class, a Band of Hope, a cricket team and a club.

In 1852 the Chapel was registered for marriages. Interments also began in the graveyard.

In 1906 a new belfry, to the design of Mr. P.S. Worthington, was donated to the Chapel by Mr. Wolff.

The Lych Gate dates from the 1890's and was refurbished in 2001.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Sunday School flourished, with an annual May Queen Service, drama society and youth club.

In the 1970's the Sunday School declined and eventually closed. The schoolrooms are still used for social functions for the present congregation and the local community.

The Chapel continues to flourish and in 1994 the vestry was enlarged and modernised, which enables meetings to be held and coffee served after services.

In 1993, due to deterioration and expensive repair costs, the organ was removed and replaced with a Viscount Electronic.

In 1999 a new sound and loop system was installed. Another improvement in that year was the purchase of new pew cushions with legacy funding.

The Chapel is a member of the local 'Haldean' group of chapels; comprising Hale, and Dean Row Chapel, Wilmslow.

Services are conducted every Sunday at 9.30am by the Minister.

## THE INTERIOR OF HALE CHAPEL

The Chapel building is substantially in its original form with its box pews and pulpit with sounding board.

The emphasis is on a good solid building with the interior being made up of the minimum requirements for a service of worship, namely pews, a pulpit and a communion table, - the focal point being the pulpit, to emphasize the Puritan tradition of the preaching of the word. They are grouped in a central block facing the pulpit and in two side wings. The pews are very plain with no end carvings.

You are instantly struck by the Puritan interior décor with plain whitewashed walls, relieved only by simple wooden panelling and beams, the belief being that the congregation should concentrate wholly on the pulpit, the preacher, and God, - the environment being of little importance.

During the Autumn of 1901 the old frosted glass windows were replaced with clear, slightly tinted, leaded panes - a change which has greatly added to the picturesqueness of the building.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century came a change in architectural style, which was to be later known as the Gothic Revival. This can be seen in the stained glass windows which were introduced in the form of memorial windows, and the beautiful 'Caritas' window.

The 'Wallace Window', which was donated to the Chapel by the widow of the Reverend Charles Wallace MA., who was minister at Hale Chapel for 37 years, (1819-1856), was originally installed over the door, but later removed to the left hand side of the pulpit, thereby balancing the present stained glass window on the right hand side.

In 1905 the organ was moved to its present position to enable the new 'Caritas' window to be installed.

The 'Caritas' window was presented to the Chapel in 1906 by Mr. Henry H. Worthington, in memory of his mother, Mrs. James Worthington.

The central figure of Charity was designed by Sir Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), and the Winged Minstrels on either side are both to designs by William Morris.

Increasing industrialization meant many members of the congregation had become wealthier, especially through the expansion of the cotton manufacture. Included in the memorials is one to the wife and child of T.H. McConnell of Hale Carr, Chairman in the 1860's, whose firm owned the largest cotton mill in Europe. The grave can be seen on the south side of the chapel.

In the cabinet on the wall of the Chapel are two pewter cups and a pewter plate, uninscribed, but believed to have been in use from 1723 until the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when, on June 11<sup>th</sup> 1801, Mr John Worthington gave a present to the congregation of two very elegant silver cups, for communion use, followed on November 4<sup>th</sup> 1804 by an equally elegant silver dish. These are still in use today.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century memorials were added to the Chapel interior:

eg: the wooden wall clock, Roll of Ministers board, wooden font, lectern, wall cabinet, the book case near the Chapel entrance, and the large table in the vestry. An oak bookcase in the vestry was donated in memoriam to Mr Issac Garside bell-ringer, chapel keeper for many years.