

# Prescot Parish Church

It is not known when the first church was founded in Prescot, however the name Prescot originates from the Anglo-Saxon word 'Preosta-Cote', which means 'Priest's Cottage'.



Prescot Parish Church, Fairclough 1898

There have been at least two churches on this site. The circular shape of the churchyard is typical of churches built before the Norman conquest, so it is possible that there was a church in Prescot before 1066. The earliest known written record of a church in Prescot was made in 1140, it is known that it was called Saint Mary the Blessed Virgin.

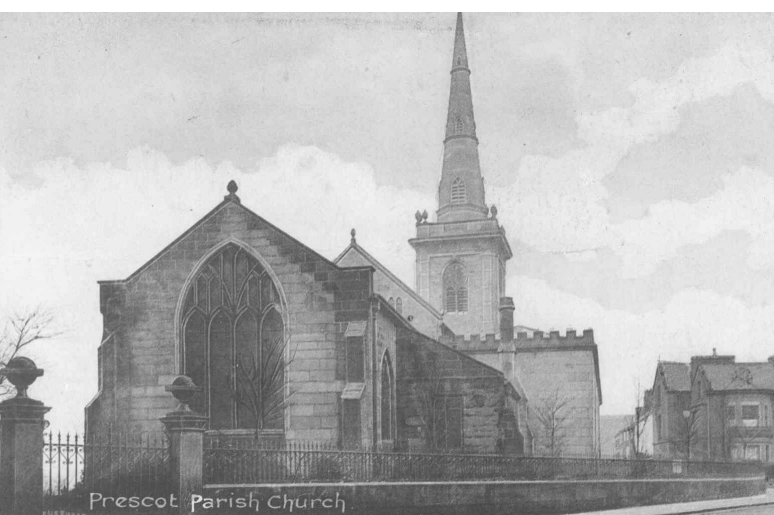
In 1393 the Rector of Prescot, John Fairfax, left in his will '*10 pounds to build a tower of stone for my church at Prescot*'.

The only remaining parts of the medieval church are the Anglo-Saxon font, parts of the chancel wall, and the chantry chapel. The chantry chapel built in 1410, would have been dedicated to a saint, and is now the clergy vestry.

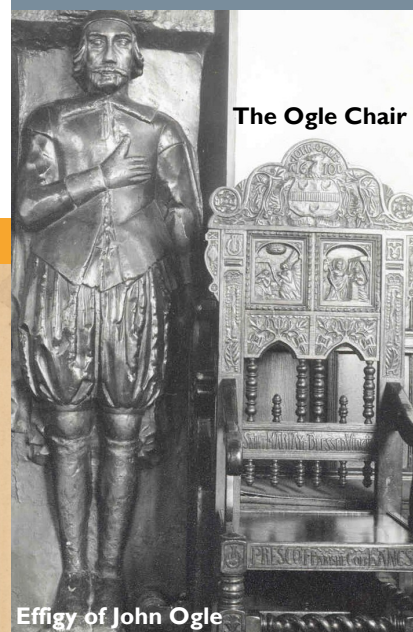
By 1600 the church buildings were noted as being in poor condition and rebuilding of the church took place in 1610. The chancel and nave were demolished and rebuilt, with the 14th century tower left as part of the church. Two of the main benefactors of the rebuild, John Ogle and Sir Thomas Bold, are commemorated on the pendants of the black oak collar and hammer beam roof of the nave, carved with; '*Thomas Bold Knight 1610 and Ladibrigit Bold his wife*'. The pendant opposite features the Ogle family coat of arms.

<http://www.knowsley.gov.uk/things-to-see-and-do/galleries-and-museum.aspx>

The Ogle family were Stewards of the Manor of Prescot, and to Lord Derby for over 200 years. John Ogle bought Halsnead Estate in 1608 and Whiston Manor from Sir Thomas Bold in the same year, and became Lord of the Manor of Whiston. In 1610 he donated a carved black oak chair to the church. The chair disappeared during the Civil War, it reappeared in an auction in 1920 and was returned to the church.



Interior of Prescot Parish Church

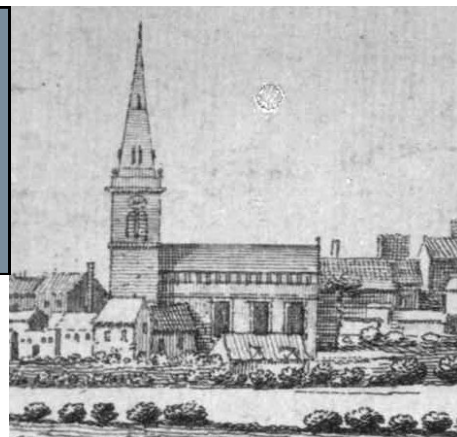


The Ogle Chair

Effigy of John Ogle

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In 1719 a report found the 14th century tower unsafe and recommended demolition. A new tower and spire were built in 1729, but the new spire put too much stress on the building, along with problems from lightning strikes during severe storms. The new tower had to be replaced in 1797, but lightning struck again during the rebuild causing damage which delayed completion. The tower and spire were strengthened and restored in 1992.



Detail from 'Prospect of Prescot'  
William Winstanley engraving, 1743

Standing 250 feet above sea level, the present tower and spire rise to 150 feet, and is a landmark. The church and its spire were observed by ships in the Mersey estuary and used for navigation. The tip of the spire is topped by a weather vane in the form of a lion which is an emblem of the town's crest shared with King's College, Cambridge.

The ancient sandstone font in the Baptistry is the oldest item in the church, dating from the Anglo-Saxon period. In 1850 it was given to St. Bartholomew's at Roby when the church was built, where it was used until 1874, it was then put out in the churchyard. In 1891, Canon Harry Mitchell wrote in the Parish Notes for July *"The Ancient Font used in Prescot Church for a thousand years has been found. I have searched for it ever since I came to Prescot and have at last discovered it in the churchyard at Roby. The Vicar of Roby is good enough to renounce any claim he may have upon it in favour of its original owners, the parishioners of Prescot, and it will accordingly be restored to our Parish Church. It is by far the oldest relic now existing of the first church built on the Preoste-cote hill."*

## Inside the tower

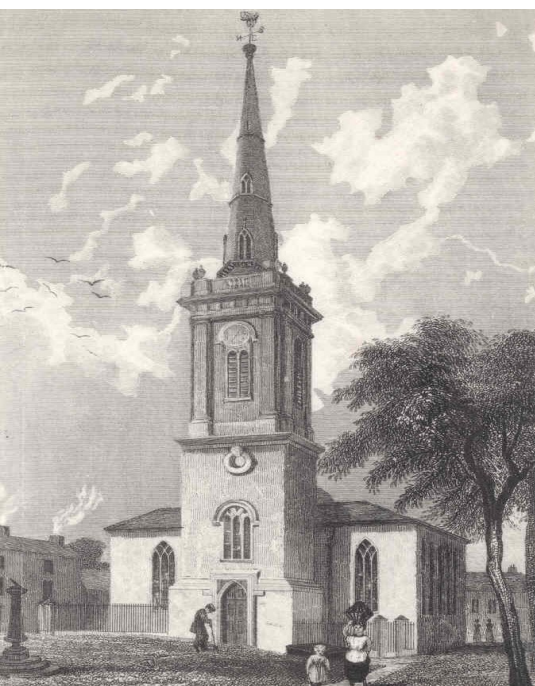
There are 109 steps in total to the roof of the tower. The steps also take you to the ringing chamber, bell chamber, old bell chamber, and clock room.

Records show there were bells in Prescot Church from as early as 1291.

Today there are 8 bells dating from 1845.

The bells were re-tuned and re-hung in 1934 and again in 1994, inaugurated by the Duke of Gloucester.

The old bell chamber was used up until the 1960s. Above this chamber is the clock room and the inside of the spire.



Prescot Parish Church is the only Grade One listed building in the Borough of Knowsley.

## Inside the bell chamber

