

Our Church Today ...

Welcome to the Church of Holy Trinity with St Mary. Our doors are open every day to welcome visitors. Come and explore our history, reflect on our Christian story and faith and take a moment to enjoy the stillness and tranquillity of this sacred place.

There has been a church in this part of Berwick for around 900 years. The regular worship here is part of that long tradition telling the Christian story throughout the generations.

Today the church welcomes people from across the community. It is a place for celebration and for sharing grief and concerns, a place for the large scale civic events and the intimate family occasions.



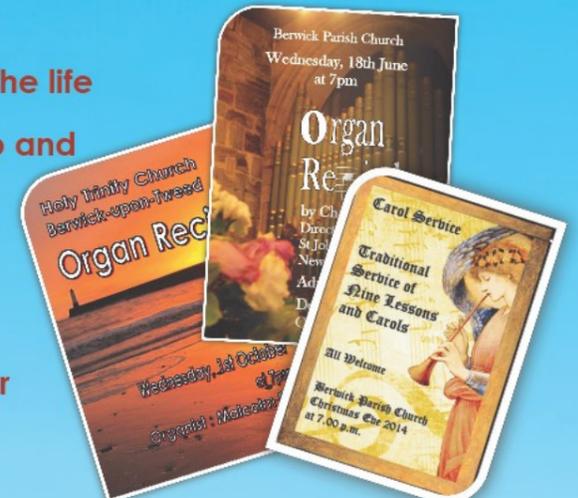
Photograph by Paul Marshall



Photograph by Tierney Photography

Music plays an important part in the life of the church. A number of concerts are held in the church during the year.

Many people share in the life of the church, in the worship and in the care of the building. The church has strong links with local schools, the local hospital and with many other aspects of Berwick life.



This Church is one of only three churches built during the Commonwealth period (1649-1660), and the only one still in use as a Parish Church.

- † Why was it built?
- † What changes have there been since the building was consecrated in July 1662?
- † Where were the earlier churches in Berwick?

If you would like us to remember you in our thoughts and prayers please visit the side chapel at the front right hand side of the church, where you may light a candle and write down your prayer request.



In 1994 the Vicarage and Parish Centre were built on land next to the churchyard.



This centre is well-used by the local community for a wide variety of events.

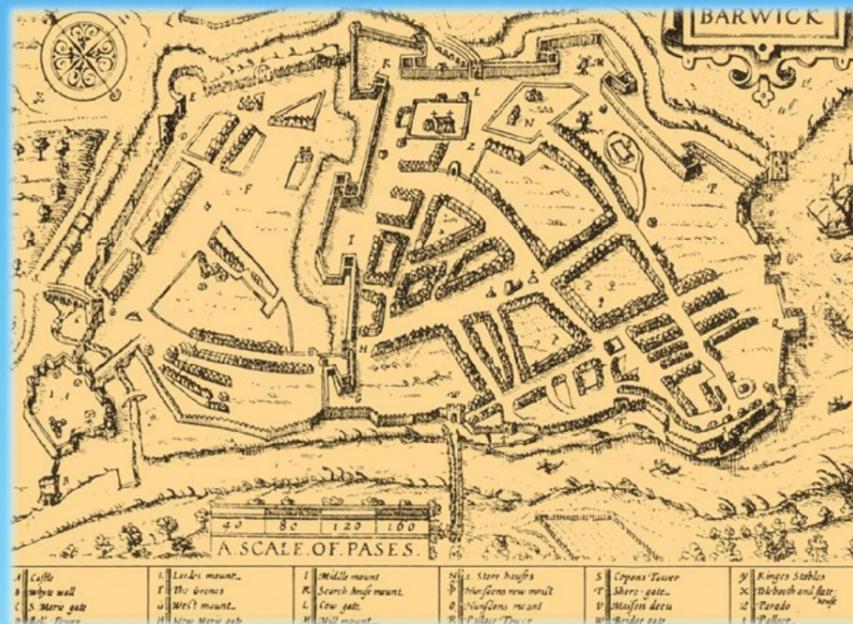
Our Church : Berwick's Early Churches

The **STORY** of the first churches in Berwick is described as 'somewhat obscure and the details altogether wanting.' (John Scott, 1888)



The **CHRISTIAN STORY** of this part of the country is closely tied to the Celtic Church and the local saints, including St Aidan and St Cuthbert. In Berwick the earliest records of a church, some 500 years later, are from the deserted medieval village of Bondington, to the north of the Tweed in the vicinity of Castle Terrace. This church was dedicated to St Mary.

By the early 12th century the town was divided into two parishes and Holy Trinity Church is recorded from around 1120. It was originally linked to Kelso Abbey but by 1156 was linked to Durham. The church was just south of the present church and is shown on maps of 1580 and 1610. There are no descriptions of this church but the maps depict a very simple building.



John Speed's plan of Berwick-upon-Tweed 1610

Other churches recorded are St Laurence, on Castle Terrace and St Nicholas in the vicinity of Kings Mount. The original St Mary's church was abandoned at the end of the 13th century and its name given to a church at Marygate.

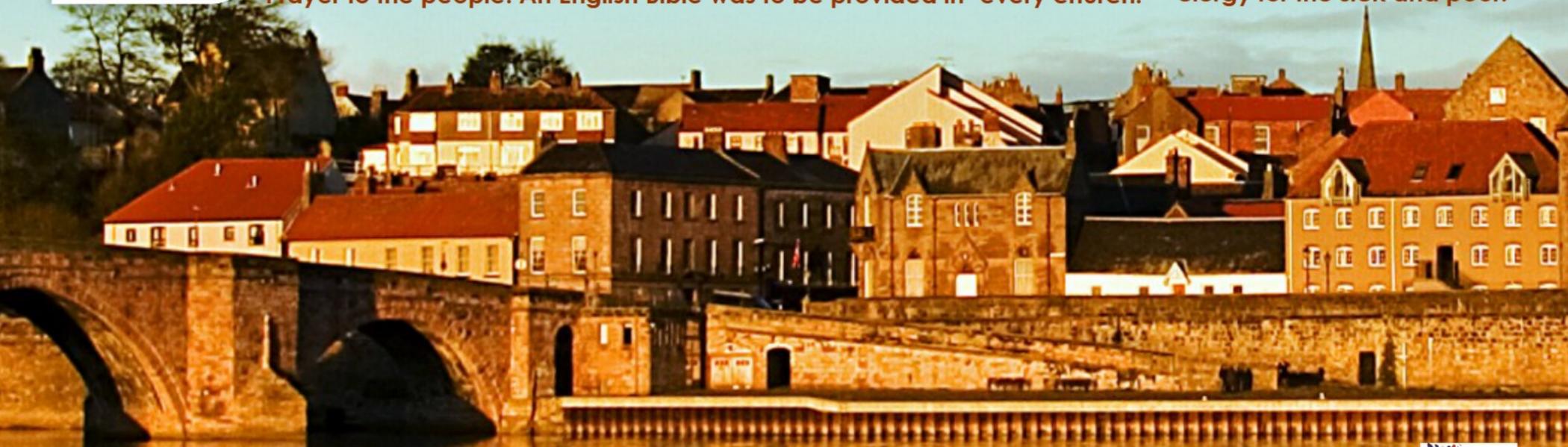
Winds of Change ...



By the early 1500s a number of people were criticising the Church: its wealth and much of its worship. The Reformation and development of the Protestant church was underway. Between 1532 and 1534 Henry VIII broke away from the church in Rome. At first little changed. Gradually clergy were encouraged to pay more attention to preaching and to teaching the Lord's Prayer to the people. An English Bible was to be provided in every church.

In the 13th and 14th centuries there were several religious houses in Berwick-upon-Tweed which included Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites and Augustinians. The friars were sworn to poverty and worked among the people as priests and teachers.

Although there were no abbeys close to Berwick there was a constant presence of monks from the Scottish monasteries. These brought prosperity to the town as it processed monastic goods and supplies. Berwick also had a number of hospitals run by clergy for the sick and poor.



Our Church : Cromwell's Commonwealth Church Building

In 1625 James I died and was succeeded by Charles I. The religious unrest which had been simmering over the last 100 years increased until the relationship between the king and Parliament finally broke down in 1642 with the beginning of the Civil War. It was not a good time to propose the building of a new church. But since the 1560s when St Mary's church was demolished to allow the construction of the Elizabethan ramparts . . .

' the inhabitants were necessitated to make use of a very little church (Trinity) meanly built, and not room enough for half the inhabitants.'

In July 1641 the Mayor, Bailiffs and Burgesses of Berwick presented a petition to Charles I requesting permission to collect donations towards the building of a new church.



Funds were collected throughout England and the buildings on the site of the Castle were purchased for building materials.

Throughout the construction of the church funds were tight and the Governor of Berwick-upon-Tweed, the Puritan Colonel George Fenwicke, played a key role in the completion of the church.

The foundation stone was laid in April 1650 and, although work was not complete, the church opened for worship in 1652.

When the church was finished it was plain and simple. Its focus was the pulpit in the centre of the south side, with galleries on the other three sides, as preaching was most important. There was no set form of worship until the Prayer Book was reintroduced in 1662.



The interior prior to the alterations of 1855



The Parish Church of St Mary (1858-1989)

There have been many changes to the building since it was consecrated in July 1662.

Of the three galleries only a smaller west gallery remains, the east gallery was removed in 1855 when the chancel was built and the altar established in its current location.

Originally there was no organ; the first organ was installed in the west gallery in 1773 and after several reconstructions the organ chamber was moved to the north side of the chancel in 1905.

The vestry was added in 1855 and in 1990 a meeting room was created on the north side of the church.

The original church had no stained glass.

The windows today include stained glass from the 16th, 17th, 19th and 20th centuries.

Following the closure of the Victorian parish church of St Mary in Castlegate in 1989 the church was renamed the Church of Holy Trinity with St Mary.

Please take a moment to explore the church and discover more about its fascinating story.



Our Church : John Knox in Berwick

After nearly 200 years of border dispute English rule was established in Berwick in 1482. However, stability was short lived and the town became an important garrison town during the unrest that persisted, particularly following the death of Henry VIII in 1547.

Meanwhile, the church was in a state of change.



Edward VI encouraged the development of the Protestant church. In 1549 Thomas Cranmer introduced the Book of Common Prayer, to be used in all churches.

It was in 1549 that John Knox first came to Berwick.

Well known as an eloquent preacher and appointed by the Privy Council to develop the Protestant church in England, he found a town full of discontented and poorly paid soldiers. John Brede, the Master of the Musters, wrote:



Knox preached many times in the Parish church of St Mary. His message had a positive effect on the morale of the town, drawing people in from far and wide.

‘No man can have anything unstolen ... the price of victuals is excessive, the sick soldiers from Haddington, etc., are shut out of houses and die of want in the streets. The whole picture of the place is one of social disorder and the worst police. It will require a stern disciplinarian in the pulpit as well as a strong preacher to work out a moral and social reform’.

Knox did not believe that the changes in the church went far enough, but he remained a respected preacher within the Protestant Church of England until after the death of Edward VI in July 1553.

Knox's Pulpit?

Although the present church was not built when Knox was preaching in Berwick many people think that the pulpit in the church was used



by him when he preached in the town.

After Mary came to the throne the Protestant form of worship was prohibited.

Knox kept in touch with the congregation in Berwick-upon-Tweed before he left the country to escape persecution. In 1553 Knox wrote ‘A Godly Letter of Warning of Admonition to the Faithful in London, Newcastle and Berwick’

‘And with you that unfeignedly mourn for the great shipwreck of God's true religion, I purpose to communicate such counsel, now by my rude pen, as sometimes it pleased God I should proclaim in your ears... that so you avoid and flee, as well in body as in spirit, all fellowship and society with idolaters in their idolatry.’

When Elizabeth I came to the throne in 1558 the church was deeply divided. The 1559 Act of Uniformity introduced a revised Prayer Book. This kept some of the traditional practices: the use of vestments and kneeling to receive communion. Reading the Bible and preaching kept their importance. Some churches kept a strong Protestant style of worship. It was this, and the influence of John Knox on the church in Berwick, that was seen in the rebuilding of Holy Trinity some 100 years later.