

On the south wall of the Chancel is an interesting MEMORIAL TABLET. Jan Van Zoelen, whom it commemorates, was a Dutchman living in Bristol. The date of his death (3rd September 1689) suggests that he was accompanying the army of William III (William of Orange) which was camped between West Kirby and Hoylake before embarking for a campaign in Ireland which culminated in the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. The camp was on marshy ground and disease was rife - it may be that Jan Van Zoelen contracted his final illness there. Far from home, he was given burial in the Parish Church - even in death a stranger found a home amongst God's people here. We want our church to become a house of prayer for all people, in life as well as death.



*Embroidered kneelers*

The hand embroidered KNEELERS, all different, were made by members of our church community in the 21st century. There is a catalogue explaining their dedications and imagery near The Hogback stone.

There are many other things to see in St Bridget's - for more detailed information about the history and windows look at the folders on a table at the back, by the Visitors Book, or visit our website. Our Museum, in St Bridget's Centre across the churchyard, is open on Saturday mornings.

Before you leave, please do have a look at the LADY CHAPEL to the left of the Chancel - it is a very special place for us. Here the weekday Eucharists are celebrated, and the consecrated Bread and Wine of Holy Communion are reserved in an AUMBRY (a wall cupboard) for taking Communion "by extension" to the sick and house-bound. Many people find the Lady Chapel to be a good place to pray. Of course, we can pray anywhere, but sometimes we need particular spaces, signs and symbols to help us focus and centre down.

Please feel free to use the Chapel or elsewhere in the Church as a place to be still in the presence of God, and please pray for our worship and witness.

## WHO IS ST BRIDGET?

St Bridget was a contemporary of St Patrick, born in Ireland about the year 455, traditionally to a pagan father and a Christian mother. She founded a religious community at Kildare. She is depicted with her abbess's crozier in the Annunciation window in the chancel. God's grace in Bridget was remembered throughout the Celtic world - hence the dedication of this church.



*St Bridget in the Annunciation window*

[www.stbridgetschurch.org.uk](http://www.stbridgetschurch.org.uk)  
[www.westkirbymuseum.co.uk](http://www.westkirbymuseum.co.uk)

**If you would like to keep this, please put a donation in the box.**

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# A Walk around the Parish Church of St Bridget, West Kirby



Seeking to follow Jesus with open hearts, open minds and open hands



**WELCOME** to the Church of St Bridget, West Kirby.

This is a holy place where Christians have worshipped for over a thousand years, and a place where God's love has been met and received by many thousands of his people.

We love St Bridget's very much, and we hope that your visit will help you to understand just how special it is. This building and its fittings witness to the living church that meets here, and to the God who has given our lives meaning and direction.

## HOW OLD IS IT?

This is always a difficult question to answer since the church has been altered and added to over many centuries. Though we know that Christians worshipped here at the time of the first Millennium, the earliest parts of the building surviving and visible are the VESTRY DOORWAY and some of the masonry in the north wall of the Lady Chapel, which are of the early 14th century.

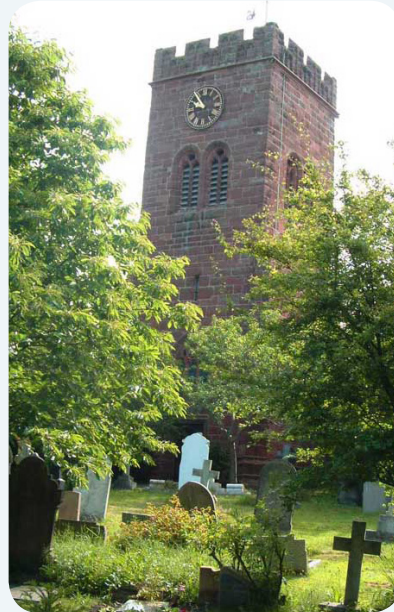
Much of the EAST WALL of the chancel and chapel is of 15th and 16th century date, although the window tracery is a Victorian renewal of old work. The tracery of the EAST WINDOW behind the High Altar is almost identical to that at Shifnal Church in Shropshire, but otherwise unique in design.

The TOWER is mainly 16th century, although built around an earlier core. There is a ring of eight bells, four of them over 200 years old. A skilled team ring for Sunday morning services as well as weddings and other occasions.

There was a major restoration of the church in 1869/1870 by the architects Kelly and Edwards of Chester. They rebuilt the aisle walls and replaced the arcades (the arches) which had been removed in the 18th century.



Caldly Church



The tower

At the same time, and in the years afterwards, a number of very fine fittings were added, including the stained glass and ironwork. Much of the impetus for restoration came from the Barton family of Caldly Manor, who were also responsible for the establishment of a congregation in Caldly village.

CALDY CHURCH is our "daughter" church, a second beautiful church in the same parish.

## WHAT IS THERE TO SEE?

Pride of place must go to the HOGBACK STONE in the South Aisle. This was unearthed at the time of the restoration of the church and is a thousand years old. Hogback Stones are common in Cumbria and are usually of Anglo-Norse origin. This is the southernmost example. There was a predominantly peaceful Viking settlement in Wirral in the 10th and 11th centuries, mainly from Ireland. Many were already Christian, or soon became Christian, and the dedication of the church to St Bridget suggests this Irish influence. The Hogback stone was probably a grave marker, and is likely to be one of the earliest signs of a Christian presence in this area. There are leaflets with more information by the Stone.



The Hogback stone



The Font

The FONT, though it dates from the Victorian restoration of the Church, is based on a Norman design and is wide and deep, allowing in theory for baptism of children by total immersion (and for adults to sit in and have the baptismal water poured over them!). In the 21st century we added a shelf for candles, and use a bowl on top for baptisms. Why not light a candle there and say a prayer: a request or a thank you? Baptism is the sign of the new beginning God offers to us in Jesus Christ, washing away all that is wrong, showing

his forgiveness, and raising us up to new life. The BENCHES around the Font are 17th century in date.

The STAINED GLASS and IRONWORK are almost all to the design of Charles Kempe, thought by many to be the premier Victorian designer. It spans almost his whole career, from the Chapel east window of 1870 through to the dormer windows in the roof of 1906/7. Look for the Christmas story in the south aisle, and the orchestra of angels in the chapel. There are two windows however which are not by Kempe - can you see which they are?



Stained glass



Chancel Arch carvings

Kempe also designed the painted and stencilled work above the CHANCEL ARCH. The wooden figures were carved in Oberammergau. The central "IHS" motif is a monogram of the Greek name of Jesus, and the Latin texts translated are *Name above all names* and *Blessed be the name of the Lord*. The adoration of the carved angels reminds us of who Jesus is.

The furnishings are richer towards the east end of the Church and the SANCTUARY. Many of the fittings here are of quality Victorian work and one of the Altar Frontals, which vary in colour and style depending on the season of the Christian year, is by Kempe. The richness of the Sanctuary, focused on the ALTAR TABLE, reflects the significance of the Eucharist (Holy Communion). Here, through the forms of bread and wine, we receive the life of Christ himself. Here we celebrate and proclaim the Cross of Christ, through which we can come back to God, and we know afresh his love, forgiveness and healing.