



## The History of Holy Trinity Church in Strond Street, Dover 1835 – 1939

Traveling the new A20 towards Folkestone it is difficult to place the site where once stood Holy Trinity Church, but if one looks over the seaward parapet of the new Limekiln Bridge, the site of the church can be seen, just to the left of the railway line and partly under the structure of the bridge.

A curate of St. Mary's, the Rev'd. W. S. Cole, working at "the Pier", decided that there was a need to establish a church in the area. He had an ally, both spiritual and financial, in the then serving Archbishop Howley. There was money available from the government, if an equivalent amount could be raised locally. Land was offered by Knight, Coleman & Rutley, brewers, on a site where there had been a former Inn and Brewhouse known as "The Cock", at a price of £1102.

The "Pier" had built up over the years from about 1600 by the deposit of shingle. The same thing had happened at the old harbour under the Castle and shipping had moved to the western end under the lee of Archcliffe Fort. Paradise Harbour had been constructed but had silted up and thus, gradually, more and more land became available. Much building took place, including warehouses, small tenements and inns for passengers travelling through Dover or waiting for fine weather. The population grew but there was little thought of spiritual needs. The Methodists did have a meeting place but they moved to lower Snargate Street in 1834.

The Rev'd. Cole worked very hard to raise the money to build the church and became its first minister. The foundation was laid in 1833 and the church was consecrated in September 1835. The restricted site meant that it was not facing East and the interior measurements were 73 feet and 58 feet wide. It had galleries and it had seating for 1550 and 942 free. The pew rents paid the stipend of the priest.

There were quite a few well-to-do residents on the Seafront at the Esplanade and Waterloo Crescent and most of them attended Holy Trinity. The building and the land were officially in St. James's parish but in 1854 they were transferred over. The church became independent from St. Mary's and the priest was styled as a Vicar and allowed to conduct Baptisms and Marriages. The Rev'd. Cole held his post until 1846 during which time he raised money for gas lighting (in 1842) and also started

the Holy Trinity Day and Sunday Schools. Land was provided for this by Isaac Minet, the Huguenot banker. In 1858 there was an enlargement of the schools and evidence shows a master at a salary of £150 per annum, a mistress at £48 per annum and an infants mistress at £35 per annum. The expenses of about £250 were covered by the congregation and by £50 per annum from the "School Pence" fund made up by payments by parents.

In 1862 there were proposals for the railway, the London, Chatham and Dover, to tunnel through the cliffs to reach the harbour. The schools were right in the path if the planned Harbour Station. By 1867 the railway company agreed to provide new buildings and as a temporary measure the school was carried on in the old "Ship Inn".

1867 saw the start of the 18-year ministry of the Rev'd. Woods and during this period there was the insertion of some very good stained glass in the church and in 1880 a parishoner provided an excellent organ which was still there at the centenary in 1935(?).

The first fifty years had been influenced by the Evangelical Movement but when the Rev'd. Sarson arrived he was a member of the Oxford Movement with High Church beliefs and was disliked by some but left his mark on the parish and was revered by many later. The population of the parish had risen to about 4,500 at the close of the 19th century but declined to 4,000 in the next. In 1910 there were 446 communicants at Easter.

The 1914 war brought changes and the wealthier people from the Sea Front houses moved out, never to return. The church was used by the "Dover Patrol" and those who took part in the Zeebrugge raid attended service there before sailing. The memorial to those involved was placed in the church and was recently on view in the Dover Museum.

After the war the Harbour Station was little used and a link was made with the

38 Seafront railway over the Wellington Bridge. This meant that steam trains were passing within a few feet of the main entrance and colliers were unloading in the Granville Dock. I still remember the last vicar, the Rev'd. Heath, perched on a ladder trying to remove the resulting soot from the twin pinnacles at the front of the church.

The 1939 war caused the area to become derelict again and the church was taken over by the Navy. The building was damaged and never re-opened the services being carried on in the Parish Hall near Finnis's Hill, overseen by St. Mary's. I am told that the vicar was paid a compensation for disturbance due to the trains rattling by.

In 1923 a footbridge was built near the church to avoid the level crossing at the Crosswall and to link up with the Viaduct, the building of which had destroyed so many houses at the Pier. The Aycliffe Estate was built round the old Railway Cottages and we now have the Aycliffe Church Centre in the middle. The new A20 has sliced through the Pier and most of the old parish has disappeared under concrete. There is very little to show where the old parish grew up on the reclaimed land.

The church provided the schools for the area and they have left their mark, but that is another story for someone else to tell. There has since been another relocation of the school.



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As part of a scheme to provide more and more quay space, the church met its end by demolition c1960