

On March 7th the meeting of Sandbach History Society took the form of a visit to St Luke's Parish Church, Holmes Chapel. Peter Cotton gave an illustrated talk after which there was an opportunity to look around the inside and the outside of the building.

There has probably been a church on this site since the 13th century when it was a chapel-of-ease in the extensive parish of Sandbach. As well as being in an elevated and prominent position, the churchyard is circular, a shape which is associated with early medieval ecclesiastical foundations.

The present building, dating from 1430, was timber framed with a sandstone tower at the west end, also believed to be early 15th century. It is thought that the church at Holmes Chapel was one of the Cheshire half-timbered churches similar to, Marton, Siddington, etc. During the early 18th century, however, the nave and chancel were encased in brick. Other alterations were made largely in the 17th and 18th century including an extensive gallery running the length of the nave on the south side.

Eight oak pillars, resting on original stone footings, support the medieval roof trusses. These were only revealed when a plaster ceiling – installed in 1702 to retain the warmth in an unheated church – was removed in 1935.

There are a number of memorials on the walls but the fate of stone effigies, previously in the church, can be inferred from an entry in the Churchwardens Accounts of 1717 when it was reported that 3d. was spent on "carrying Gravestones out o' th' Chancell."

There is a peal of seven bells, all dated. Five of them, dated 1709, have references to the English victory over the French in the War of the Spanish Succession.

"The Story of St Luke's, Church Hulme" (Cotton, Cameron and White) was published in 2020 and may be obtained, price £15, by emailing papscotton@sky.com

The next meeting of Sandbach History Society will be held on Tuesday 4th April in **Sandbach Library** at 8.00 pm. Paul Hurley (aka Time Traveller) will give a talk entitled "Murders and Misdemeanours" – a collection of true-life crime stories giving a vivid insight into life in Cheshire in the 19th and early 20th century. Visitors are welcome but are asked to contact 01270 760810 to check on the availability of places. For further details see www.sandbachhistorysociety.org.uk