

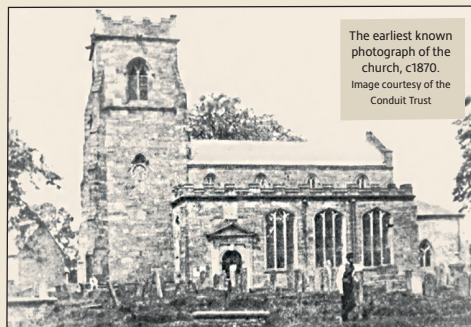
# 3. ST LUKE'S CHURCH

## The origins of the CHURCH

It is thought that a small chapel was built here in about 1100. Additions to this modest building through the centuries have given us the fine landmark we see today.

We know little about the history of St Luke's before 1850 because of a fire that destroyed most of the church records.

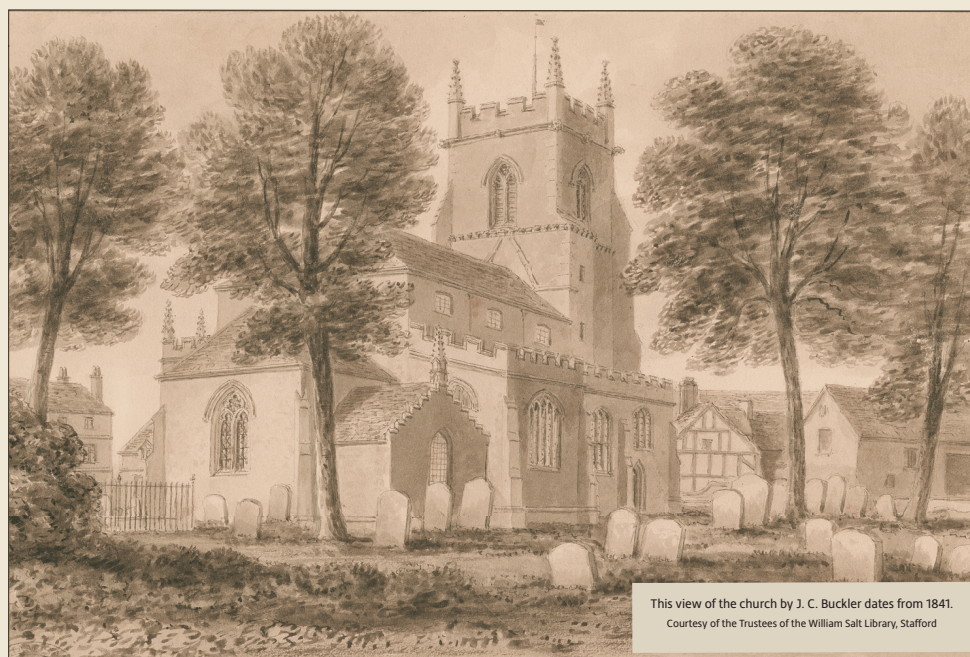
We do know, however, that in 1293 the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield ruled that despite not having a graveyard of its own, this was a church and not a chapel. Eventually it gained a churchyard, which was consecrated in 1330. In this same century, the church was almost entirely rebuilt. Most of the internal walling in the western part of the nave and the four western-most arches of the two arcades date from this period.



The earliest known photograph of the church, c1870. Image courtesy of the Conduit Trust



A postcard of the church, published some time before 1930. Gas lighting was installed in the church in the early 20th century, so the lights you can see at the end of the pews are probably lit by gas. Image courtesy of Ray Smith



This view of the church by J. C. Buckler dates from 1841. Courtesy of the Trustees of the William Salt Library, Stafford

### Church life before the Reformation

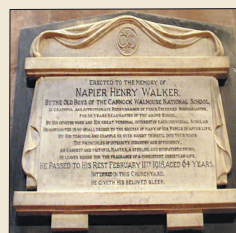
During the 15th century the church would have been a focal point for the community. People would gather here to meet friends and listen to the daily Mass. The bells would have acted as the local clock – probably the only formal timekeeper in the whole community.

Before the Reformation that occurred in the 16th century, priests tended not to preach sermons. They recited the service in Latin, which few people understood. There were no pews in the church, so the congregation had to stand or kneel, and men and women were separated. If there was a bench against the wall, the old and infirm could sit on it – hence the expression 'the weakest go to the wall'.

### The Reformation to the present day

After the Reformation, a vestry (where the vicar kept his vestments) and an upper west gallery were added. With the growing population of the 18th and 19th centuries, larger congregations needed to be accommodated, so two more galleries were built, one in 1720 and one in 1810.

Later in the 19th century, the church was further upgraded. A new chancel was added with a new combined vestry and organ chamber. It is reputed that up to this point an organ had to be carried every Sunday to the church and back from the Rising Sun public house that was across the road! In 1839 a vicarage was added to St Luke's, but it was demolished in 1973 to make way for a new by-pass.



This tablet inside the church commemorates Napier Henry Walker, who died in 1916. He was headmaster of Walhouse School in Cannock for 36 years, and this memorial was erected by his former pupils. Image courtesy of the Conduit Trust



The bells of St Luke's in 1928. On the left is the Reverend Price, and on the right is the vergers, Mr Berton. Image courtesy of the Conduit Trust

### The church clock

The ancient weight-driven tower clock broke down in 1962, but it is still preserved in the clock chamber of the tower. The present clock is driven by electricity, and was donated by the Conduit Trust.

### The church grounds

When the churchyard was landscaped in 1949 and 1950, the gravestones were laid flat. You can see them around the church and its boundary wall.

### The church bells

Through the ages, the number of bells at St Luke's church has increased. In 1553, an inventory shows that there were four bells. By 1849, there were six bells, and by 1923 they had been recast and increased to eight. In 1995 the bell-ringers of St Luke's launched an appeal to increase the peal to ten bells, which raised £30,000. Six new bells were cast, and the new peal of ten bells was dedicated on 30 March 1996.

## EXPLORE AND DISCOVER

### Making bells

Bells today are usually much more musical than they were in the past. The material and shape both affect the sound given by a bell.

The right material for a bell is bronze (a mixture of copper and tin). Brass (copper and zinc) works for town criers' bells but, being soft, does not ring as well. Most bells you will see in churches are bronze, although you might find some steel ones in Sheffield.

Bronze has a relatively low melting point of around 1,000 degrees Celsius and in mediaeval times it was quite possible to reach this temperature using a charcoal fire with air blown through it with bellows. One mediaeval activity survives – the molten metal is still stirred with a willow branch, which removes air and avoids holes in the bell.

Church bells are made individually and can last for 1,000 years. The bells at St Luke's were made in 1923 and 1996 by Taylor's Eayre and Smith, of Loughborough.



Bell moulds in the Casting Hall.



Pouring the molten metal into a ladle.



A timber bell crook is used to form the shape of the bell.



Stirring (polling) the metal with a willow branch.

Taylor's Eayre and Smith, and the John Taylor Bellfoundry Museum have kindly provided this information and its accompanying pictures.

### The World War One window

This is one of the World War One commemorative windows on the south side of the nave. The window shown here was donated by Charles Adshead Loxton (b. 1864), in memory of his son Charles Edward Holden Loxton (b. 1893), known as Edward, a Lieutenant in the North Staffs Regiment. Edward died on May 23rd 1915 at Wulverghem in Belgium and is buried in Nieuwkerke Cemetery.



The World War One Window, St. Luke's Church, Cannock. Image reproduced courtesy of St. Luke's Church, Cannock. Thanks to Nigel and Janet Bailey and to David Gethin



Take on the  
**Cannock Chase Heritage Trail Challenge**  
with the **Cannock Chase Can App!**

**Cannock Chase Can** is an exciting health and wellbeing programme to help you make healthier lifestyle choices. It hosts a variety of wellness challenges which can be undertaken as an individual, group or family. Here's how you can get involved...

Download the App for **FREE** today by visiting **Google Play** and the **App Store** and searching for '**Cannock Chase Can**'.



Scan the QR codes on each interpretation board to bring to life elements of the Trail. Content has been created by local schoolchildren alongside professional artists and The Birmingham Repertory Theatre.



Collect all the QR codes for each themed trail to complete the challenge and gain points and rewards for your efforts.