

## The History of the Church of the Ascension in Woolston.

- 1649:** A commission set up by Cromwell's parliament to survey the parishes and churches throughout the country decided that a church should be built within Woolston to serve the parishes of "Wilgreave, Martinscroft, Woulston, Fearnheade" as well as parts of "Poulton and Winwicke". At this time the people of the Woolston area would attend Warrington's Parish church St. Elphins, the oldest church in the town.
- 1893:** A new parish church was built to serve the newly formed parish of Padgate. It was consecrated Christ Church on 26th September, 1893 by the then bishop of Chester, Dr. John Bird Sumner. As well as the Padgate area, it also served Woolston and Orford.
- 1874** Thanks to the generosity of a prominent local citizen, Mr. William Beamont, a church of England school was built in Woolston, at a cost of £1100, to serve the families of the hundred or so farmers and labourers who at that time made up the population of the village of Woolston.
- 1906:** A site for a church in Woolston in Manchester road near Martinscroft was offered by a Mr. Edward Dennett but nothing came of this.
- 1907:** The Bishop of Liverpool, Dr. Chavasse, visited Woolston to speak about proposals for a new church.
- 1909:** A Woolston Church Building and endowment Fund was set up.
- 1909:** The school building was licensed for worship as a Mission church to Christ Church. The altar was housed below a mock stained glass window in an annex separated from the schoolroom by a demountable wooden partition. The six-seater desks had tops that swivelled to form backrests thus converting into pews for the Sunday services. Evening Prayer was read each Sunday at 3:00pm, preceded by Sunday School at 2:30. Holy Communion was celebrated on the fourth Sunday of each month. The clergy from Christ Church officiated on these occasions.
- 1917:** Local businessman and philanthropist Mr. Edward Gorton donated the plot of land bounded by Hillock, Warren and Dam Lanes as a site for the church.
- 1959:** After several years of argument and discussion, the Revd. J.O. Colling, vicar of Padgate, had the plans accepted.
- 1968:** May: The first turf was cut by Miss C.M. Gorton, Mr. E. Gorton's daughter.  
September: The foundation stone was laid by Revd. J.O. Colling.
- 1970:** On Ascension Day, May 7th, the Church of the Ascension, Woolston was consecrated by The Bishop of Liverpool (later Archbishop of York) the Rt. Revd. Stuart Blanch

## A Brief History of Woolston

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The name of the district of Woolston first appears in a charter dated about 1180. It is derived from two Old English elements – a personal name, “Wulfes” of “Wulfsiges” followed by the word “tun”. In 1292 one Robert de Woolston was a witness to charter granted to the people of Warrington by William le Boteler. A family called Woolston lived in a manor there until it passed by marriage into the family of Hawarden of Flintshire in the fifteenth century, and by marriage again in 1575 to the Standish family. The manor was now called Woolston Hall and stood in the vicinity of what is now Hall Road. It had a domestic chapel from where Benedictine priests administered to the spiritual needs of the people of Woolston and Warrington, from the latter part of the seventeenth century to about 1771. In 1835 the Catholic Church of St. Peter was opened, followed in 1840 by a school for 120 children. Records show that in 1895, 64 children were attending. A Wesleyan chapel had been erected in the neighbouring district of Martinscroft in 1827. The Church of England school – the Mission - was opened in 1885.

For many centuries after the Norman conquest, Woolston remained a quiet backwater. It was connected to its nearest neighbour Warrington by an early, primitive road, and to Thelwall across the River Mersey by a ferry, a service which continued until a few years ago. By the seventeenth century a high road between Warrington and Manchester existed, one of the four roads shown in Ogilby's Britannia of 1675. Early in the eighteenth century this became a turnpike road. At the same time a short canal, the first Woolston Cut, was constructed as part of an early navigation scheme designed to eliminate the long bends in the river in its course eastwards from Warrington. Less than a century later a second canal, the New Cut was opened. Woolston remained essentially a small farming community, separated by fields from its neighbours.

In the last thirty or so years, major changes have taken place in Woolston. The opening of the motorway network, together with the development of Manchester airport have led to a period of expansion in Woolston and the surrounding areas. Industrial estates have been built allowing businesses easy access to all major traffic routes. This has led in turn to a large house building programme and most of the green fields of thirty years ago have disappeared. New schools, shops, doctors' surgeries and churches have been built to accommodate the influx of people to the area.