# St. Nicholas Church

MARTON MOSS, BLACKPOOL

(IN THE PARISH OF HOLY TRINITY, SOUTH SHORE, BLACKPOOL)



THE FIRST
HUNDRED YEARS

1873-1973

# FOREWORD BY CANON NEIL L. PRITCHARD, M.A.

Vicar of Holy Trinity Church and Rural Dean of Blackpool

Any account of the Church on the Moss must attempt to capture the spirit of a close-knit community bound together by ties of family and local loyalty, rooted in Church and School. In this account of the history of St. Nicholas Church, Marton Moss, Mr. Alan Calvert, himself a Moss native, has gone far towards presenting this spirit and we are grateful to him for the professional manner in which he has conveyed, not merely the facts of the past hundred years, but the underlying significance behind the records — the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows of the people who built the Church and School.

The link between Church and School is traditional in the Church of England and it expresses an important element in our Christian religion: the responsibility to train the children both in the things of the Spirit and in the knowledge of the world about them. No Church can neglect its children and claim to obey the mind of Christ; no School can neglect the spiritual needs of its children and claim to fulfil the demands of true education. It is the achievement of the Moss to combine the double role so well. It is significant that the dedication of the Church is to St. Nicholas — the patron saint of children.

In this centenary year we give thanks to God for the witness to him of generations of Moss people and we remember with gratitude all those who in former times and in this present day serve their God and their fellow men so faithfully in St. Nicholas Church and School.



## JOINT BEGINNINGS

A hundred years ago Marton Moss was an isolated community which did little to interest or excite the outside world. Yet the opening of a combined school and church in School Lane was sufficiently important to attract a representative of the "Gazette News" from Blackpool.

Writing about this strange land two miles from the beach, he said: "It is intensely rural in its aspect, and the inhabitants have a certain primitive look about them which conveys the idea that they are descendants of men who were tenant farmers on the marsh hundreds of years ago."

His readers, probably imagining bones through noses and webbed feet, learned that many of these Moss 'natives' were farmers with large families and that the district had been sadly deficient in church and school accommodation. At one time the nearest churches had been at Holy Trinity, South Shore — more than two miles away — and St. Cuthbert's, Lytham, which was even further. Rumour had it that on occasions well—intentioned worshippers setting out for St. Cuthbert's were unable to refrain from a call at the Trawlboat Inn, and once inside soon forgot all about Divine Worship.

Much of the Moss at the time came under the Clifton Estate at Lytham and Lady Eleanor Cecily Clifton, wife of the Squire, made this project possible. She kept a kindly eye on the school and the records show that one Tuesday afternoon she was scheduled to be driven there in a pony carriage by Mr. Thomas Fair, the Estate's Agent.

As more and more children from the prolific Moss families were sent along to learn the three 'Rs' it was clear that the cottage school was not big enough. So Col. and Lady Clifton decided to build the school–church in School Lane which was to be the back–bone of educational and spiritual life on the Moss from the day it opened — April 16th, 1873.

#### THE SCHOOL:

The earliest days of the school are recorded in a fascinating log book which reveals something of the style of life on the Moss at the time.

Whilst the good Lady Eleanor no doubt fondly imagined universal enthusiasm for the noble concept of education, the 'primitive' farmers knew the harsh, economic necessity of getting as much out of the land as possible. Numerous entries in the log concern absent scholars who were engaged on the land in weeding, potato planting and the like. Sometimes the older pupils disappeared at the beginning of the busy summer and did not come back until winter.

Attendances were also often poor due to sickness — mostly whooping cough and fever — and the log shows that there was an irregular attendance during the week ended October 24th, 1873 because of the 'inclement weather'. If we believe what we are told about the toughness and hardiness of our forbears the mind boggles. What was it? A monsoon? On one occasion the school was closed with a one—word explanation — Worms!

It is perhaps as well that the Cliftons kept an eye on the school because it certainly had its troubles in the early days of its life. An entry for September 11th, 1873 reads: "Received a parcel of embrocation from Lady E. C. Clifton to be distributed among the children suffering from whooping cough." Then on October 16th — seven months after the school opened — the hard—working Mr. Fair paid a visit and promised to send some fuel to enable the school to light fires for the first time.

Life could not have been easy for the teachers if the comment for December 5th is anything to go by: "Examined 3rd class, but few of them able to read the easiest monosyllables." Other entries make it clear that many children aged 12 to 14 could hardly read or write.

The people who shouldered the burden of this daunting educational task were the first headmaster and headmistress, a Mr. J. and Mrs. A. Bogle, who were there from the beginning until 1892. A monitress assisted for just short of two years, when the log book records that four new ones were appointed — Mary Gregson, Ann Singleton, Mary Webster and Elizabeth Eaves. It's hard to think of a better sample of traditional Moss names. They were presumably not in it for the money because the pay was 1s. 3d. a week — 'two only to teach at the same time in alternative weeks, the week they are not so employed to have lessons with 1st class.'

By 1875 the pattern of school life had been well-established and the children were being taken for day-long picnics on the sandhills. In addition the curriculum was looking adventurous, for on October 15th it is recorded that the school 'commenced teaching sewing to the little girls between 3 and 5 years.' The idea would no doubt be considered revolutionary if somebody suggested it for today's generation of toddlers.

On June 19th, 1877, the South Shore annual Club Day and Fete was held at Blackpool, attracting a great many people — including the Moss scholars. The log book says resignedly: 'Sent the few children (12) who came to school home for the remainder of the day.'

By 1878 the school was clearly trying hard to solve its absenteeism problem because one lad is shown to have been suspended until his parents promised to see that he

attended school more regularly. The father apparently made the promise, but the overall problem remained. On August 27th, 1880 the record reads: 'Fine harvest weather — a great many children absent.'

In spite of all these difficulties the school continued to develop healthily and increasing demands on accommodation made it necessary over the years to build extensions and make alterations. Throughout all these, however, the original 'village school' facade and main entrance at the front of the building have been maintained. There were several brick crofts in the area when the school was built and there is every possibility that its bricks were cast locally. Additional rooms were added to the original school hall and house in 1877 and 1900 and then in 1909 there were further extensions, brought about mainly by the Rev. A. R. Burgess, who was the first priest to take charge of the Moss church.

This dedicated man, who made a tremendous impact on the district, was tragically killed in a motor-cycle accident in 1911 when returning home from festivities on the Moss in connection with the Coronation of King George V. In his will Mr. Burgess left £500 to further the work he had so diligently carried out for the church he served, with instructions that the interest be used to liquidate the debt on the church-school, and afterwards to supplement the stipend of the priest-in-charge of the 'Moss church.'

There was a blow in 1922 when Lancashire Education Committee (the Moss did not come under Blackpool until 1934) 'black-listed' the school as 'inadequate' and requested that a new infants' department be built. This represented something of a crisis, but the managers, who were determined to maintain a church school, were equal to the situation. They decided on a major re-building scheme.

The managers were the Vicar of the mother parish of Holy Trinity and Messrs. H. F. Harrison, James Melling, T. Fenton, Alex Webster and Thomas Boardman. Ald. Fenton did not attend the school himself, but he was proud of the fact that his father was one of the pupils at the original small school in Division Lane.

He took a very close interest in the Moss School and it was his generosity and hard work which did much to secure the improvements which were so badly needed. The interest-free loan of £1,200 which he advanced towards the project relieved the school of a great financial burden.

As a result of this and successful money-raising efforts the school was able, in 1927, to build three new classrooms for infants, a kitchen, a teacher's room, an extension to the Men's Insutute and a spacious entrance hall. At the same time the heating apparatus throughout the old part of the building was completely re-organised.

It was a school for all ages until October 1st, 1921, when the infants' classes became a separate department with its own head teacher, Mrs. H. S. Hargreaves. A major break with tradition came in June, 1939, when the senior children started to be transferred at 11 to the Highfield Schools. The separate Infant and Junior schools system continued unitl 1947, when they were amalgamated under one headmaster, Mr. C. Whitfield. Later that year he was succeeded by Mr. K. Daniels, who was to guide the school through two decades before his retirement in September, 1969. Mr. Daniels, who was greatly respected on the Moss, also served for many years as church secretary.

Life at 'St. Nick's' had a flavour of its own, helped considerably by a 'playground' which included a field and a small pond. One year in the early fifties the latter provided an abundance of small frogs which caused the female teacher a certain amount of consternation when a dozen or so mysteriously found their way into the classroom during lessons! The field also provided plenty of room (and a soft surface) for mock battles on a grand scale in which the fourth and first year pupils would take on the second and third years.

Then there was the occasion at morning assembly when the headmaster's opening piano chords seemed strangely muffled. An investigation revealed that the instrument was full of pies and cakes — suspiciously similar to those given to well—scrubbed Sunday School scholars at their party in the room the day before.

In 1957 there were further improvements which included two new classrooms and the provision of a meals serving area. Sliding partitions allowed existing classrooms to be converted into a hall which could be used for dining, physical training, music, etc. Cloakrooms and indoor toilets were added in 1968.

In 1972 there was further building of an extra class-room and anciliary rooms.

As it reaches its centenary, the 'Moss School' moves along smoothly and happily under the headship of Mr. Norman Holding.

# THE MOSS HEAD-TEACHERS ALL-AGES

1873-1892 - Mr. J. and Mrs. A. Bogle.

1892-1905 - Mr. J. E. Parr.

1905-1921 — Mr. J. A. Hargreaves.

### JUNIORS (7-14)

1921-1939 — Mr. B. Williamson.

## INFANTS (5-7)

1921-1922 - Mrs. H. S. Hargreaves.

1922-1946 - Miss E. Berry.

## JUNIORS (7-11)

1939-1946 - Mr. E. Harwood.

## INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOL (5-11+)

1947 (January to June) — Mr. C. Whitfield. 1947–1969 — Mr. K. Daniels.

1970- — Mr. N. Holding.

#### THE CHURCH:

Marton Moss came under the ancient parish of Poulton in the early part of last century and before, but in 1870 it was detached and transferred to Holy Trinity Church, South Shore.

When the school-church opened in 1873, lay readers from the mother church conducted the weekly service held every Sunday at 3 p.m. The Vicar and other clergy took over when special occasions came along.

Members of the congregation must have become proficient furniture-removers because any desks moved had, of course, to be put back so that the church could become a school again the next day. Musical accompaniment was provided in those pioneer days by an 'American' (footblown) organ. A larger, hand-blown, instrument was acquired in 1905.

Life for the early worshippers continued in this pattern until 1909, when the Rev. A. R. Burgess, who has been previously mentioned, was placed in charge of St. Nicholas'. He set about arranging more frequent services and organising a generally more corporate church life for the people who made up the Moss congregation. It was a sound foundation which was to bear the test of time.

After his sad death in 1911 the church was supplied with lay readers from Holy Trinity, with the Vicar or one of the curates conducting special services. The lay readers, Messrs. Wright, Rose and Wild, consolidated the good work on the Moss from then until 1934, with a short break in 1922–23, when the Rev. W. Binch was priest–in–charge.

The next important chapter in the story of the church came when the Rev. J. M. Lloyd was appointed priest—in—charge at the beginning of 1934. He was the first actually to live on the Moss and he impressed the locals with the way he immediately set to work with great enthusiasm.

He really 'took his jacket off to the job,' to quote some of the Moss people of that time.

The feeling had been growing for a while before he arrived that the church in the schoolroom was totally inadequate for the expanding congregation. There was no provision for week-day services, for instance.

Mr. Lloyd translated the need into action and launched a building fund in 1935 to pay for a semi-permanent church on land on the west side of Common Edge Road. This site was obtained as a free gift through the good offices of Mr. Whinnerah of the Clifton Estate and Blackpool Corporation. A firm called Ginger, Lee and Company of Manchester was given the contract to build the church, which cost £1,800 including the organ.

The foundation stones were laid on October 19th, 1936 by Ald. Fenton and one of the Sunday School scholars, Jackie Barrow, who was about 11 at the time. It seems that the Sunday School voted to see who should have the honour and Jackie won handsomely, but it was discovered

that some of his friends had tried to make sure of his success by voting twice! However, when the ballot was taken again fairly he still came out on top. The first service held in the new, wooden church was Holy Communion on Christmas Eve. 1936.

The dedication by the Bishop of Lancaster, the Rt. Rev. Benjamin Pollard, was on Wednesday, January 27th, 1937, when the loyal church workers sang with every justification: 'We love the place, O God, wherein thine honour dwells.'

Although typically a 'mission' type of building, the small church had a pleasant atmosphere. The altar dedicated to the memory of Mr. Burgess was at the east end of the church, the choir stalls were on the left and right of the chancel and the organ was advantageously situated in a chamber on the left. Numerous memorial gifts helped furnish the new building.

After the debt on the church was cleared, consideration was given to providing permanent accommodation for the priest—in—charge, who had previously lived in a rented house in the area. There was sufficient space in the church grounds for a parsonage so there was no problem in finding a site. A Building Fund for this project was launched and eventually a compact house was erected at the west end of the church grounds and dedicated in 1952. The Rev. Graham Foley (now Vicar of Leeds), was the first priest—in—charge to live there. It was during his time on the Moss, by the way, that St. Nicholas' Church acquired its first bell and a small belfry.

The church suffered a sad loss in October, 1957 with the sudden death of Mr. Frank Dickinson Healey, who had been the organist for nearly 50 years.

It had been intended all along that a permament church should be built one day and the ground-work for this was started in the late 1950s. An appeal in February, 1958, to raise £450 needed because the church boiler was faulty, led to 250 people agreeing to subscribe a shilling a week. As it happened this was the beginning of a remarkable fund-raising drive on the Moss which has continued up to the present day.

The priest-in-charge in April, 1959, the Rev. Alan Dawkins, wrote an article in the church magazine which started: 'Will you help us build a church?' The answer

was a resounding 'Yes!' Those who were already subscribing to the boiler fund continued to do so and others answered the call by agreeing to give £1 a year.

When Mr. Dawkins left he was succeeded by the Rev. Eric Carter, who reported in January, 1960 that the Blackburn Diocesan surveyor had inspected the site and that the estimated cost of the church would be £20,000. At that time they had £1,000.

There was clearly a long way to go, but Mr. Carter and the church folk tackled the problem with traditional Moss gusto.

In May, 1960 a new appeal was made for people to give five shillings a month to the fund, it being hoped that 300 subscribers would bring in £900 a year. The same May saw the start of a money-raising scheme which will always be remembered on the Moss. This was the one which involved St. Nicholas' going into the produce market through the generosity of local growers who gave a 12 lb. box of tomatoes each week. They were picked-up by the Rev. E. Carter in various vehicles, including a van which became affectionately known as 'Blue Streak'. Once collected, the tomatoes were sent away to market and the cheque came back made out to the Building Fund. Mr. Carter reported in December that the scheme brought in slightly more than £200 in the first season.

Fund-raising after Mr. Carter left in 1962 was continued by the Rev. St. John Turner, who reported in the magazine in March, 1963 that an approach had been made to Laurence King, the architect responsible for the new St. Nicholas' church at Fleetwood and the restoration of Blackburn Cathedral.

Plans were produced and the following month they were placed on exhibition in the church for a week during which special services were held. Soon afterwards plans were announced for a Family Unit scheme in which it was envisaged 100 families would give five shillings a week to bring in £1,300 a year for the Fund. This was more successful than anticipated, for in September Mr. Turner reported that 160 families were involved — each giving an average of £9 a year. March, 1964 saw the start of the Memorial Bricks scheme, which enabled people to 'buy' bricks at a shilling each and have an 'In Memoriam' notice inserted in the church magazine.

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A lead brick placed behind the foundation stone contained various modern objects and a list of 200 names — church officials and subscribers. The Building Fund on that day stood at £6,300.

Dr. Claxton was unable to be present for the dedication of the new church on June 26th that year, so it was conducted instead by the Bishop of Lancaster, the Right Rev. A. L. E. Hoskyns–Abrahall.

Among those present were the Vicar of Holy Trinity, the Rev. (now Canon) Neil L. Pritchard, who had actively encouraged the building of the new Church, and the Rev. John Drake, Rector of Greenville, North Carolina, who was shortly to take charge of Holy Trinity for 12 months while Mr. Pritchard exchanged places with him and went to America. Representatives of the Free Churches and the Roman Catholic Church attended the service, which was followed on a closed television circuit in the old church by 150 people who were unable to get in.

The money raising continued afterwards and various social events were held to boost the Fund, which was also assisted by a number of legacies.

On entering the new church, the immediate impression is of light and spaciousness. The free-standing Altar, backed by the blue tones of the east wall with the large gilt and black cross suspended from the sanctuary roof, is a most striking feature. The choir stalls and the organ are in the north Transept, the ceiling of which unfortunately acts as a 'lid' over the organ, reducing the volume of sound. It is a two-manual instrument with 10 stops, couplers and pedals, and was transferred — with slight modifications — from the old church. It cost £278 when it was bought in 1936.

The pews — also transferred from the wooden church — accommodate 200 worshippers. Two memorial stained glass windows are on either side of the west door and the font is at the end of the aisle. A large, stainless steel cross graces the outer east wall and the electrically—operated bell is in the slender spire on the church roof.

Until 1969 all St. Nicholas' wedding services were held at Holy Trinity, but in that year it was granted its own licence and on December 13th Graham Easton and Carole Cooper were the first couple to go down the aisle.

#### SOCIAL CENTRE:

Since the new church was built the first one has taken on a new lease of life as a church hall, and is used by various organisations, including the youth club, guides and brownies, the Mothers' Union and the Sunday School. All sorts of socials and regular events like the traditional Moss whist drives are also held there.

Previously the school was the social centre for life on the Moss and the building was always well booked—up with one thing or another.

The Sunday School was started in the early years. In 1945 the Sunday School took over the organising of the Moss' annual Rose Queen Festival, to be held with the Garden Party, an event which has continued with great success ever since. The Rose Queen has always been crowned by a lady who has had some connection with the Sunday School — teachers etc. The Rev. W. Starkey introduced Sunday School anniversaries during his two years at St. Nicholas'. These involve scholars singing hymns at all three church services on the anniversary Sunday.

A branch of the Mothers' Union was formed in 1934 and it is still going strong today. Mrs. Bowe, the first Enrolling Member, was succeeded by Mrs. W. Butler, who held the position until it went to Mrs. Starkey and subsequently the wife of each priest-in-charge to come to the Moss.

The building in School Lane has also served for many years as a meeting place for the men of the district. On October 28th, 1912, the Marton Moss Men's Institute was formally opened by Mrs. Winder, wife of Dr. Winder of South Shore, who played the opening snooker games with the Vicar. There were eight committee members and the Vicar was the chairman.

The Institute started with one billiard table, but a second was acquired when further accommodation became available in 1927.

Guarantors when the club was formed were as follows:

Anthony Hargreaves, Schoolmaster — £10.
Alec Webster — £5.
Samuel Atkinson — £5.
William Barrow — £5.
James Hargreaves — £5.
Thomas H. Cardwell — £5.
George C. Cartmell — £5.

The Institute's debts were cleared by 1934 and the club has continued quietly on its way ever since. It has a membership now of about 25.

Cards were played there at one time, but this has discontinued. The members who drafted the original rules obviously intended that decorum should be maintained at all costs, for one of them read: 'The use of obscene language and the wearing of clogs is strictly prohibited.'

The Dramatic Society was started in 1940 and raised funds by plays and concerts until disbanded in 1963.

A branch of the Girls' Friendly Society was operating from 1927 to 1950. It was followed by the Women's Fellowship.

A company of Guides and Brownies was formed in 1964 and is still active.

Space, unfortunately, will not allow a detailed look at any more of the organisations which have thrived on the Moss.

#### THE FUTURE:

Money-raising for the new church has involved a tremendous amount of faith, hard-work and time-consuming dedication, but St. Nicholas' is now within sight of paying off the £24,000 it cost. About £17,000 of that has been raised since 1959, including £10,000 since 1965. St. Nicholas' has been able to pay off the debt of £13,000 owed to the Blackburn Diocese and has been helped by grants of £2,000 from the Diocese and £3,000 from the Church Commissioners. All that is outstanding now is £1,600 owed to the St. Nicholas' school managers and £472 loaned by the Holy Trinity Parochial Church Council.

This may be the last page, but the history of the 'Moss Church' is not yet written. The hundred years which have passed since its formation are, as we pray and believe, only a prelude. Because we know this booklet ends in mid—career we have told the story so far confident in the knowledge that it will be continued. Could a future chapter describe how St. Nicholas' became a Parish Church in its own right?

We greet across the years the historians of the future. May they find the flag flying in their day as we have found it in ours.

'Yea, we have a goodly heritage.'

## VICARS OF HOLY TRINITY, SOUTH SHORE

1870–1881 J. Ford Simmons, M.A. 1881–1905 S. Y. B. Bradshaw, M.A. 1905–1920 F. H. Powel, A.K.C. 1920–1933 P. C. Dean, M.A. 1933–1939 E. M. Gresford–Jones, M.A. 1939–1944 R. P. Wilson, M.A. 1944–1958 C. N. Wardle–Harpur, M.A. 1958–1973 Neil L. Pritchard, M.A.

#### PRIESTS IN CHARGE OF ST. NICHOLAS' CHURCH

1909-1911 Rev. A. R. Burgess 1911-22 Messrs. Wright & Rose (lay readers) 1922-23 Rev. W. Binch 1923-34 Mr. F. Wild (lay reader) 1934-38 Rev. J. M. Lloyd 1938-40 Rev. P. Hayller 1940-44 Rev. S. B. Wallis 1944-52 Rev. T. Livingstone 1952-56 Rev. G. Foley 1956-57 Rev. W. Starkey 1957-59 Rev. A. Dawkins 1959-62 Rev. E. Carter 1962-65 Rev. St. J. Turner 1965-68 Rev. E. Angus 1968-70 Rev. B. Marshall 1970-73 Rev. T. Green 1973-Rev. I. Hollin 14

#### CHURCH WARDENS

- W. Gregson
- W. Barrow
- A. Webster
- J. Barrow
- T. Webster
- F. Pearson
- R. Hargreaves
- R. Barrow

### **ORGANISTS**

Mr. Webster

Mr. Chadwick

1907-1957 Mr. F. Dickinson Healey

1957-1958 Mr. D. Taylor

1958- Mr. J. Cyril Watkin

## SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

Miss Beetham

Mr. Wright

Mr. Rose

Miss Ashworth

1923-1925 Mr. Wild

1925-1951 Mr. R. Hargreaves

1951-1967 Mr. J. Stephens

1967-1972 Miss E. Eaves

1972- Mrs. R. Barrow

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#### CENTENARY 1973 — OFFICIALS

Vicar: The Rev. Canon Neil L. Pritchard, M.A.

Priest in Charge: The Rev. I. Hollin.

Churchwardens: Mr. R. Hargreaves, Mr. R. Barrow.

Organist and Choirmaster: Mr. J. C. Watkins.

Secretary: Mr. W. W. Phelps.

Treasurer: Mr. N. Holding.

Headmaster: Mr. N. Holding.

Sunday School Superintendent: Mrs. R. Barrow.

Sunday School Secretary: Miss J. Wickstead.

Sunday School Treasurer: Mr. J. Stephens.

Building Fund Secretary: Mr. K. Riding.

Building Fund Treasurer: Miss M. Gibson.

Free Will Offering Secretary: Mrs. E. M. Morfitt.

Magazine Secretary: Mrs. H. Wilkinson.

Electoral Roll Secretary: Miss S. Eaves.

Mothers' Union Secretary: Mrs. R. Barrow.

Mothers' Union Treasurer: Mrs. R. Browell.

Women's Fellowship Secretary: Mrs. K. Riding.

Women's Fellowship Treasurer: Mrs. D. Rawcliffe.

Guide Captain: Mrs. F. Rushworth.

Assistant: Mrs. B. Robinson.

Brownie Guider: Mrs. Bracegirdle.

Assistant: Miss C. Ellis.

Youth Club Leaders: Mr. & Mrs. H. Rhodes, Mrs. D. Smith.

Institute Secretary: Mr. J. Stephens.

Day School Managers: The Vicar, Mr. R. Hargreaves, Mr. K. Riding, Alderman A. Ashworth, Mrs. B. J. Howarth, Mr. J. C. Sanderson.

## **ADDENDUM**

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1944 - 49 S. A. M. Woodhouse, M.A.