

HOOLE LANE MISSION HALL

St. Paul's Church in Boughton decided that a mission hall should be provided in the area separated from it by the canal which had been built in 1779.



Hoole Lane Mission Hall

Some sources suggest that the Mission Hall was built for the canal boat people and indeed in 1870 the Shropshire Union Canal Company was operating 213 narrow boats, rising to 395 in 1889, and 450 by 1902 (<http://www.canalroutes.net/Shropshire-Union-Canal.html>). The canal network ran from the River Mersey at Ellesmere Port through Chester to Hurleston near Nantwich, into numerous towns via short arms and branches, including Whitchurch and Ellesmere in Shropshire and Llangollen and Llanymydd in Wales. Compared with other canal companies affected by the arrival of the railways, the Shropshire Union was a great success.

Also, at that time, the land between the canal and the railway was being developed on fields which had been acquired from the railway company. A licence application in 1877 for the pub which was to become the Lock Vaults shows that over 100 houses were already erected there with plans for another 300. This development would have also re-enforced the decision to build the Mission Hall so near to its parent church. A picture of the lock keeper's cottage shows the spire of St. Paul's Church and how close it was.

Lock Keeper's Cottage

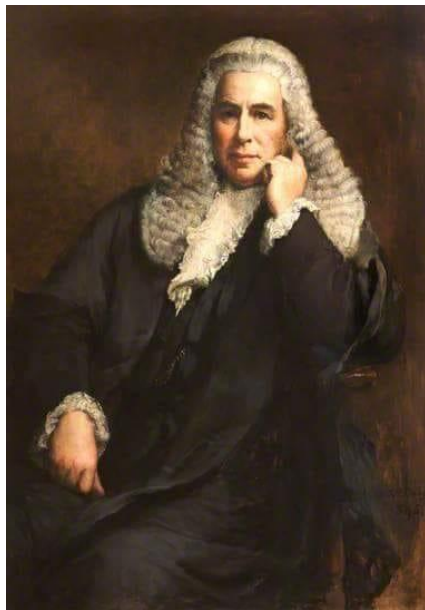




Contemporary newspaper reports show that the Mission Hall was open as early as 1883 but the Victorian County History says 1887. John Douglas the celebrated local architect who built Walmoor House and worshipped at St. Paul's Church is credited with its design, the spire certainly having his trademark design.

Hoole Lane Mission Hall

The foundation stone for the Mission Hall was laid by Horatio Lloyd who went on to become Circuit Judge for Chester and North Wales, Recorder of Chester and he was eventually knighted. He was a local boy, at the age of 11 (1841 Census) living in Spittle, Boughton (so named because it was originally the site of a hospital). In 1881 he was living at No. 3 Sandown Terrace. His contribution to local life in Chester resulted in his portrait being painted and his bust being on display in the entrance to the Town Hall, where it remains today.



Painting and bust of Sir Horatio Lloyd

During the 1880's the Mission Hall was used as "a public elementary school, the managers giving notice in October 1885 to the Town Council that it would have to close".

The Mission Hall remained in use for religious worship until 1933. After it closed it became the Club Room for St. Paul's Church. One of its main uses was for table tennis. St. Paul's was in a league of other Chester churches and local organisations which competed during the pre World War Two years. After War broke out, the Hall was taken over as a bakery by T. Price & Sons. The company already had a bakery in Duddon and had run the shop opposite the Mission Hall since the 1900's (the shop being originally No. 7 Railway Terrace, on the corner with Cross Street, re-numbered No. 37 Hoole Lane).

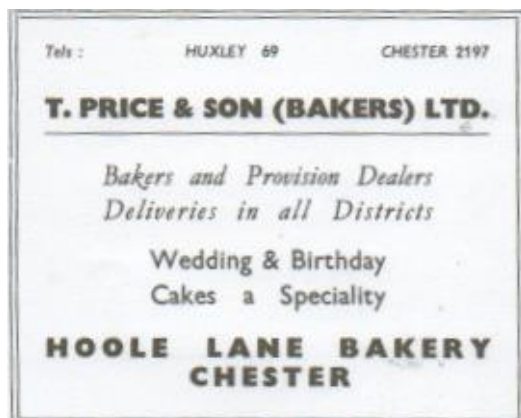


No. 37 Price's shop on Hoole Lane

The Mission Hall functioned as a bakery during the Second World War and documents in the Cheshire Record Office enable a picture of the austerity of that time to be drawn. There was a 'Director of Bread' at the Ministry of Food which had been moved out of London to Colwyn Bay. Notices were received from the Director of Bread that all unnecessary transportation should be avoided. Price's were instructed that they had to obtain the 432 pounds of flour which they used each week from Dean's at Upton mill rather than from Frost's at Ellesmere Port. All their margarine, syrup and treacle had to be obtained from one supplier. Their application for a 1.5 sack dough kneader was refused, they were allowed a 1 sack machine instead. In 1940 they were allocated 22 units as their petrol allowance. Hovis, the well-known bread company were approached by Price's to help with advertising on their two vans. A letter in 1942 shows that Hovis allowed them £2 towards the cost of lettering on "the whole back space" of the vans, and enclosed transfers which read -

GOLDEN BROWN HOVIS FOR HEALTH, HANDS AND LOAF

T Price & Sons continued their bakery until at least the late 1960's, two advertisements illustrating their business.



Hoole U.D.C. Handbook circa 1950



Cheshire Observer December 1965

The shop at 37 Hoole Lane then appears to have become a Spar Grocery and between 1974 and 1977 it was occupied by Power Mowers Ltd. In 1976 Chester City council issued its Hoole Lane Compulsory Purchase Order and the properties including No. 37 on the northern side of Hoole Lane were eventually demolished. The newsagent and tobacconist on the corner of Edge Grove was also knocked down and the current frontage to Hoole Lane was built.



Newsagent/Tobacconist on the corner of Edge Grove

The Mission Hall appears to have remained vacant until the start of the 21st Century when it was eventually converted into accommodation called Mission Mews.



Mission Hall fitted with French windows