

FORMER HOLY TRINITY CHURCH (AREA 3)

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Holy Trinity Church, Camp Hill, Bordesley once stood head and shoulders above the surrounding area in an ever changing Birmingham. It is a Grade II listed former Church of England parish church built between 1820 and 1822 by the architect Francis Goodwin. The church is said to have been modelled on King's College Chapel, Cambridge. The light honey coloured Bath Stone used in its construction gives it a very distinctive appearance, noticeable for miles.

It was once the site of the most important Anglo-Catholic controversies in Birmingham and was the centre of a simmering row over high church practices introduced by vicar Richard William Enraght. His trial in 1880, dubbed the Bordesley Wafer Case, gripped the nation. He advocated 'ritualism' – a blend of Catholic and C of E practices, and was prosecuted for using eucharist candles and wafer bread in Holy Communion and allowing Agnus Dei to be sung – all forbidden by the bishop. Father Enraght refused to attend his own trial, brought under the Public Worship Regulation Act, and received the maximum penalty – imprisonment and dismissal from the parish.

It ceased being a place of worship in 1971 just at the time I became an apprentice attending Christ Church School of Art and Decorating in Sparkbrook. This was an annex of Birmingham Polytechnic College. As a 16 year old, it seemed quite a long bus ride from Erdington through town and beyond into an area previously unknown. Holy Trinity Church was like a milestone, indicating a significant part of the journey was complete and I was on course and heading in the right direction.

There were plans afoot to turn it into Trinity Arts Centre, but this only ever got as far as a graffiti sign on the doors indicating an aspiration never fulfilled. For many years it served as Trinity Night shelter for the homeless, and today it currently stands empty.

As I looked at the church to take these photos, it appeared lonely and forlorn on the top of Old Camp Hill. Now isolated in a virtual traffic island between the roundabouts known as Bordesley Circus and Camp Hill Circus on the Middleway Ring Road, it's a landmark that has become invisible in the landscape, familiarity eroding away the curiosity of the casual passerby.

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I see this object and it evokes fond memories of a youthful past. It was a place I could use to orientate myself in an unfamiliar area when out of my comfort zone. Now I love this area and feel both happy and at ease whenever I walk here.

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