

Baptisms at St John the Baptist, Burscough and Lathom Park Chapel, 1832-1858

A guide for online researchers by Keith Jenkins (November 2013)

Before the church now known as St John the Baptist, Burscough Bridge, was assigned its own parish in 1847 it was known as "St John's at Lathom", having been consecrated in 1832 as a chapel of ease for St Peter and St Paul, Ormskirk.

The older Lathom Park Chapel was also known as St John's – full title The Chapel of St John the Divine, Lathom Park – and baptism records for both churches were at various times in the 19th century copied into the Ormskirk Register for St Peter and St Paul as well as being kept separately. Thus there are often two online entries for the same baptism, on Ancestry and on Lancs BMD, and as the page headings also vary it can be difficult to be sure at which "St John" a baptism took place.

The details below have been compiled to try to help researchers surmount this problem.

St John Burscough

The earliest baptism records by the minister, John Bowman, date from Sept 30 1832 and the first page is headed "Chapel of St John, Lathom". Page numbering is complete from 1 to 300 (1858) and the page headings as far as P159 (1847) say "Chapelry of St John, Lathom", "St John's Lathom", plain "Ormskirk" or "Lathom", or "Ormskirk at the Chapel of St John, Lathom".

These records were copied, almost exactly, into the Ormskirk register where they appeared each year between those for St Peter and St Paul, Lathom Park Chapel and Skelmersdale Chapel, under page headings "Ormskirk at St John's, Lathom" or "Ormskirk at St John's Chapel, Lathom". Because of the interspersing of these records, the page numberings for the Burscough baptisms are not consecutive, jumping as each year passes.

On Page 158 of the Burscough register there is a note saying: "Separate parish assigned by Order of the Queen in Counsel, 22 July 1847, and on Page 160 (Sept/Oct 1847) there is a note initialled WW (William Wannop, who succeeded John Bowman as Minister in 1840) saying: "A district was this year assigned by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to this church under the designation of St John's Burscough Bridge", and from then on the page headings say: "Ormskirk at the District Church of St John's, Burscough Bridge", "Ormskirk at St John's, Burscough Bridge" or "St John's Burscough Bridge".

The records from 1847 to Dec 30 1849 were copied into the Ormskirk Register, under page headings "Ormskirk at St John's Burscough Bridge", at which point the duplication appears to cease.

The Burscough Register continues from P160 to P300, where the final entry is dated Aug 1 1858. Later **Burscough** registers are straightforward with page numbers 1-500 covering 1858-94 and 1-300 covering 1895-1919, not all of which are yet online.

Lathom Park Chapel

Baptism records for Lathom Park Chapel appear to have been kept only in the Ormskirk Register from 1813 to 1854 under page headings "Ormskirk at Lathom Chapel", with page numberings jumping from year to year because of the interspersing with Ormskirk, Burscough and Skelmersdale records (see above).

Then in 1855 the Minister, Richard Battersby, started his own register with pages numbered 1-85 covering 1855-1911 and headed "Ormskirk (at Lathom Chapel)", plain "Ormskirk" or "Ormskirk at Lathom Park Chapel" and sometimes including Hoscar Moss Mission Room. These records were still copied into the Ormskirk Register (though some are missing) under page headings "Ormskirk at Lathom Chapel" until 1894 at which point the duplication appears to have ceased.

Ministers

Perhaps the best clue to the identity of the church is the name of the officiating minister. At Burscough the main names were John Bowman and William Wannop, with others by D E Stephens, John Thomas, Charles Forshaw, John Ireland, J A Kershaw, E L Blenkinsop, James T Wareing, William Adamson, John Nicholson, John Collins, James Clark, Thomas Lampter and C J Perry.

But there were also a few by the minister from Lathom Park Chapel, Richard Battersby – two in 1834 (P21), three in 1836 (P40) and two more in 1852 (P220), but it is clear that these were at Burscough, not Lathom, because the full page entry on Ancestry has other entries by John Bowman, and there is no evidence that he performed any baptisms at Lathom Park Chapel.

Officiating ministers at Lathom Park Chapel, before Richard Battersby appeared in 1825, (not all easy to decipher) were Robert Mayow, William Myers, George Coventry and Gilbert Ford, then J Bromilow, W E Rawsthorne, W G R Fenwick, John Lomax, Nigel Neville, John Thornton, T E Cox, William Bevrige, William Seelly and P J Blackaway.