

When Burne-Jones Was In Brighouse



I must have walked passed St James Church in Brighouse many times in my youth. It wasn't demolished until 1973, and by that time I have moved out of the area. When I returned in the early 1990s, all signs of its existence at the bottom of Bonegate in Brighouse had been buried under a new housing development. It is a great pity that I never stopped to explore the building when it was still standing, because it appears to have been full of artistic surprises.

This particular photograph of the Church – which stood on Bradford Road just north of the town centre – does not make it look very grand, but that may be the fault of the postcard photographer rather than the church architect. It was opened in 1870 as a “*chapel of ease*” for Brighouse Parish Church (St Martin's on Church Lane). It's size – it could accommodate 450 worshippers – reflected Brighouse's status as a growing town, and it's cost (some £3,500) was raised by local subscription.



Detail of Crucifixion Window by Edward Burne-Jones from St James Church Brighouse. Now in Cliffe Castle Museum, Keighley: Photograph Wikimedia Commons.

Shortly it opened two stained glass windows by the famous Pre-Raphaelite artist, Edward Burne-Jones, were installed; and later further windows by Ford Madox Brown and Dante Gabriel Rossetti were added. The church was eventually closed in 1970 (exactly 100 years after it was opened) and it was demolished in 1973. Luckily, the windows were saved and can now be found in Cliffe Castle Museum in Keighley. From illustrations I have seen of them, they were significant works of art, and a visit to Cliffe Castle to see them is high on my to-do list. Perhaps if I had paid more attention fifty years ago, I would have seen them in their original location.