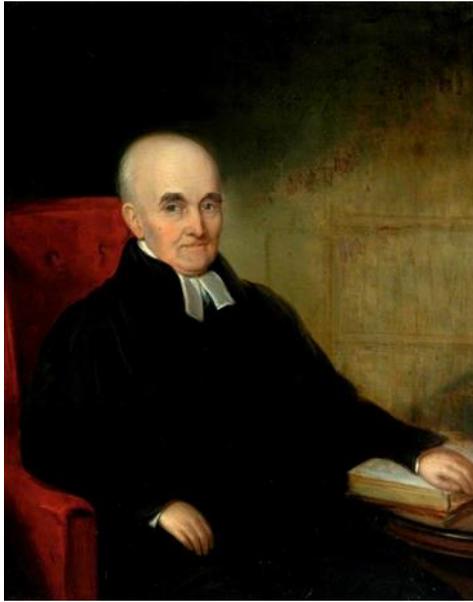


No.2 Early inspiration



Rev Hammond Roberson

Holy Trinity was built by the young Benjamin Haigh Allen. We do not for certain where Allen was educated, but he was certainly a well taught young man. By the age of 21 he was managing a large estate and was a Deputy Lieutenant of Yorkshire. He was a keen proponent of education and set up a Sunday school for working children at Greenhead before the church was opened.

It seems quite likely that he went to school at Healds Hall in Liversedge. Healds Hall was established as a boys boarding school in 1795 by the Rev Hammond Roberson. Roberson had a passion for education. Healds Hall was not his first school. While he served his curacy in Dewsbury, he was inspired by the Sunday school pioneer Robert Raikes of Gloucester, and started what was quite possibly the first Sunday school in the North of England. By 1783 it taught nearly 400 working children. He then opened a day school at Squirrel Hall in Dewsbury Moor in 1788, later moving to Healds Hall.

Roberson saw the need for a new church in the growing industrial area of the Spen Valley and used the proceeds from his school to build a church. Christ Church Liversedge was built at his personal expense at a cost of £7500. Roberson must have been a persuasive teacher, 35 of his pupils were later inspired to build churches themselves. Benjamin Haigh Allen may well have been one.

Certainly Allen was inspired by Roberson. He started the one of the earliest Sunday school in Huddersfield, he had Holy Trinity built by the same architect to a very similar design and both had a strong belief in the establishment and maintaining law and order. Healds Hall was attacked by the Luddites in protest of the manner Roberson sought to quash the rebellion. Allen was equally forthright when he served as one of Huddersfield's JPs and was required to summon military assistance to help keep local law and order.

Roberson and Allen both left impressive legacies to their local communities and were inspiring figures of their day. We might not have their wealth, but we should try to emulate their zeal for the concerns of our times.

Andy Barber
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