

Converting St Barnabas Church

Creating the Church's new toilet block



Panorama image of the new toilet block.

St Barnabas Church was built in 1911. The building was upgraded in 1932 and a substantial parish hall added. That Hall burnt down in 1961 and was rebuilt in 1964. The main space in the new hall was dominated by a colossal theatrical stage. St Barnabas' *Amateur Dramatic Society* was soon producing the best pantomimes anywhere in Oldham. The kitchen and scullery for the 1911 Church became the stage's prop-storage area.

Times changed. TV and the internet intervened. The Church's last production occurred in 2005 and the stage became derelict and its prop-storage area became in reality an unsafe junk store. In 2018, we converted the storage area to become the Church's new toilet block. We converted the stage itself in 2020 to house the Church's food co-operative.

St Barnabas Church serves a poorer part of Oldham, itself a town with daunting levels of poverty. Accordingly, we rent the Church to a wide array of small, local clubs and groups. It's become the venue of choice for a great local people to follow the clubs and projects that generate companionship, betterment, and improves social cohesion.

But such groups need facilities. Our large complex of buildings had one small toilet in the foyer and a small row of dilapidated toilets in the main hall. We could not rent to more than one group at a time without one group 'gate-crashing' another. We needed more.

We gutted the storage room and blocked off its entrance to the stage. At the same time, we created a new doorway into the main worship area of the Church at the back of the nave. The unusual shape of this old kitchen-scullery was just right to create three walk-in toilets and one fully disability-compliant toilet. We also created a new fire-escape route.

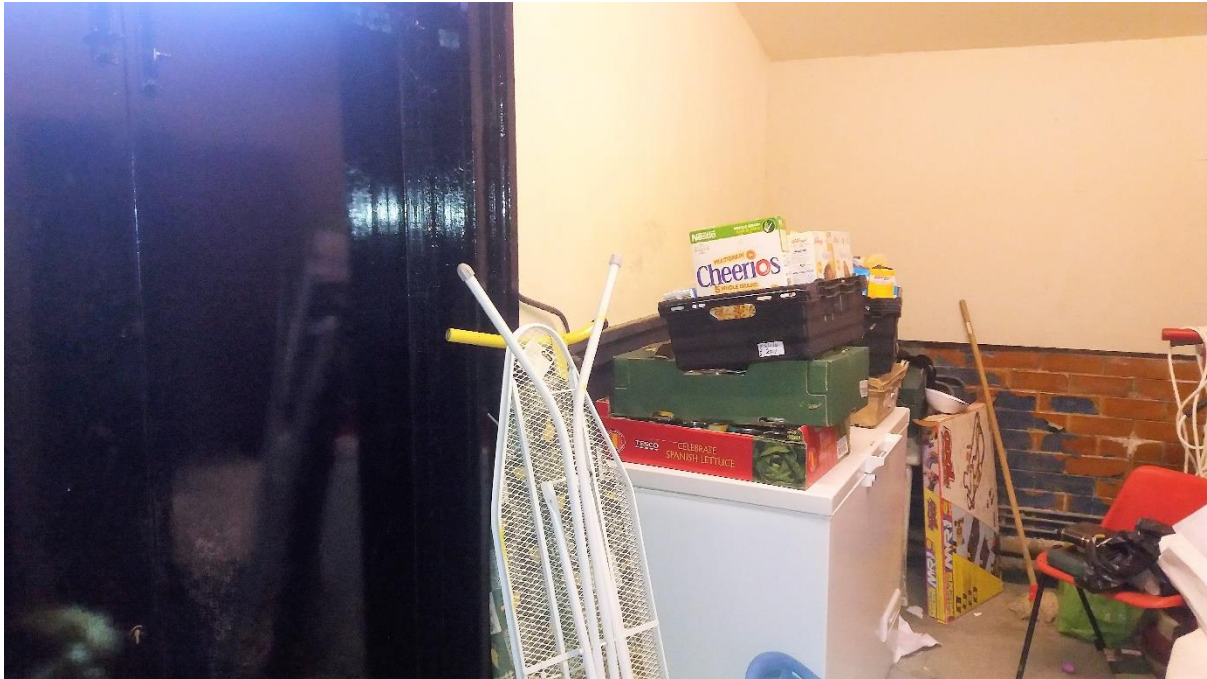
This project has improved our eco-Church profile. Firstly, we can now house several groups at a time, which itself means we cross-subsidise one group with other—they recycle each other's heat, for example. The entire block is insulated with carbon-neutral electric panel heaters. We were keen for all the toilets to operate with a dual-flush mechanism because it radically decreases our use of water. We've fitted each cubicle with LED lighting on PIR sensors. And the new toilets are easy to clean with eco-friendly products.



Above View from the front of the Church looking toward the back. The red circle shows the door to a small shallow book cupboard. We removed its brick backing to create a new doorway into the toilet block.

Below This book cupboard was located beside the baptistery.





Above Like so many disused spaces 'the old kitchen' was actually storing junk. The black shape to the left was a nailed-up door. It is now a new, additional emergency exit.
Below Gutting the room before creating the stud walls.



During and after Clockwise from top-left:

- Knocking through from the old kitchen room and looking into the Church nave.
- Looking from the Church into the new toilet block.
- One of the new walk-in toilets.
- The fully disability-compliant toilet.

