

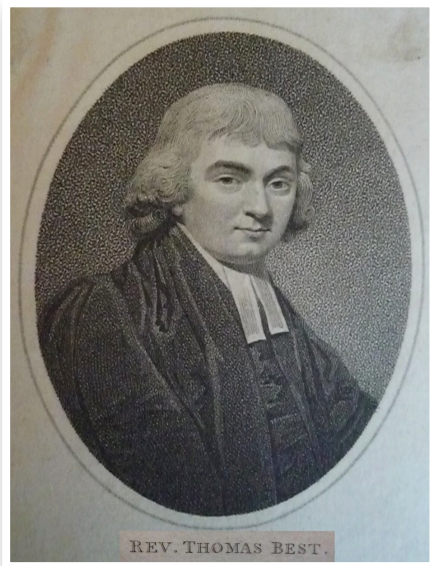


**POST CODE:** B63 2UL

**ADDRESS:** St Peter's Church, Church Road, Cradley

**GPS Location:** N.52.464050 W. -2.086549

**Memorial Location:** Tablet inside main church building



## Thomas Best [1760 – 1821]

Thomas Best was born in Stourbridge in about 1760 and was originally a worshiper with the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion that broke away from the Church of England in 1782.

As a student Best visited Cradley in 1783, preaching in the streets and attracting a number of followers. When he was ordained by the Bishop of Llandaff the following year he came to live in Cradley. A Countess of Huntingdon's Connection group was soon formed that met in a room at the home of Mr Parry. As membership grew, the society borrowed the Wesleyan chapel in Butcher's Lane, which it then purchased in 1786. Pews and galleries were built with seating for 300 people.

A further year on and in August 1787, the group formed the Independent Congregational Society and later Best left the Countess of Huntingdon Connection to become the society's pastor.

By 1789 the society had outgrown their premises and established a Trust. Land at the current location

of St Peter's was purchased by Best for £200 and the building in Butcher's Lane was demolished, and its bricks used to form the foundations of "Cradley Chapel", as St Peter's was then known. In 1791 the chapel opened for public worship. A school was erected near the chapel, which accepted fee-paying students and provided free places for 50 boys and 50 girls. The school erected by Best and his followers was demolished in 1854 and a new National School was built opposite in Church Street

Thomas Best died at his home at Colley Gate House in 1821 and a mural tablet to him is erected in the main church building.

SACRED  
TO THE MEMORY  
OF THE REVEREND THOMAS BEST  
FIRST MINISTER OF THE CHURCH,  
WHO, AFTER A LABORIOUS AND FAITHFUL DISCHARGE  
OF HIS MINISTERIAL DUTIES  
IN THIS PLACE  
DURING NEARLY FORTY YEARS,  
WORN OUT  
IN THE WILLING SERVICE OF HIS GOD AND SAVIOUR,  
ON THE XXV DAY OF JULY MDCCCXXI,  
IN THE LXI YEAR OF HIS AGE  
ENTERED INTO REST.

"REMEMBER THEM  
WHO HAVE SPOKEN UNTO YOU THE WORD OF GOD:  
WHOSE FAITH FOLLOW,  
CONSIDERING THE END OF THEIR CONVERSATION:  
JESUS CHRIST  
THE SAME YESTERDAY AND TODAY,  
AND FOR EVER"

HEB. XIII., 7.8.

*This Memorial,  
a tribute of esteem affection and regret,  
was erected by the Seat-holders.*