



Parish Church News

Alvediston

Re-opening of Alvediston Church 1865

The re-opening of the pretty little church of Alvediston, which is situated about fourteen miles from Salisbury, in one of the most delightful parts of the Chalk Valley, took place on Thursday last, the festival of St. Thomas the Apostle.

It is highly gratifying to announce, not only that so desirable a work has been carried out, but also that the result has been attained chiefly through the energy and liberality of some of the principal laymen of the parish.

The church, an interesting structure of the thirteenth century, had for years been in a sad state of dilapidation, while the arrangement of the seats was such as to shut out the great bulk of the parishioners.

Early in 1864 it became evident that if something were not done, the roof would tumble in, and accordingly the Churchwardens, Mr. Day and Mr. Rogers, assisted by Mr. Parham, applied themselves to the task of raising funds, not only for the restoration, but for the enlargement of the sacred edifice.

Representations were made to the heads of King's College, Cambridge, to whom the chancel belongs, and they at once contributed £125; the Pembroke family, who own much of the adjoining property, gave between £200 and £300; Admiral Gawen Roberts, whose family belonged to the Norrington property before it was transferred to that of the Wyndhams, contributed £100; Mr. Day, Mr. Rogers, and Mr. Parham subscribed in an equally liberal manner, and the bulk of the remainder of the £1200 required for the work, was readily subscribed by others of the parishioners: a circumstance which does them all the more honour, when it is remembered that within a few years they have liberally contributed towards the erection of a handsome parsonage house, which stands on an eminence close to the church.

Success in one good work stimulates to another, and having so excellent a pastor as the Rev P S Desprez, the good people of Alvediston are not likely to rest satisfied with what they have already achieved. A new school is needed in the parish, and it is hoped that ere long a building for this purpose will be erected in

close contiguity to the parsonage and the church. So far as moral and religious influences are concerned, the parish of Alvediston will then be as well cared for as any other parish in the Diocese.

An addition of about a quarter of an acre has been made to the churchyard, the land being given by the Earl of Pembroke, Mr. Rogers at the same time relinquishing a leasehold interest in the property. From the fact of its including a venerable yew, the present may have represented the earlier boundaries of the churchyard. The additional ground was consecrated on Thursday.

The church, as already indicated, contains a great deal of 13th century work, and the aim of Mr. Wyatt, the Diocesan architect (under whose superintendence the restoration has been carried out), has been to preserve all the main features of the original architecture. The only alteration made in the form of the building has been in the erection of a vestry on the south side, and the addition of a chancel aisle for the accommodation of the children. The nave and transepts remain as they were, and so does the tower, which, though of the Perpendicular period, includes a gable and other features of continental character.

The south transept contains the tombs of several members of the Wyndham family; and while the workmen were excavating for the foundations of the new vestry they discovered, lying on its face, a very interesting foliated stone cross, of the 13th century, which had evidently belonged to some tomb. This relic has been inserted in the eastern wall of the chancel, immediately over the Communion table. The east window had been presented by Lady Herbert, in memory of her late husband. The centre light contains a representation of Christ on the cross, the two side lights being occupied by figures of St. John and the Virgin. Underneath, there is the following inscription:- "To the glory of God, and in memory of Sidney, Lord Herbert, this window was erected by his widow". The south window, which contains a figure of St. Andrew, is also the gift of Lady Herbert. Both are by Lavers and Barraud, of London. The seats, which are of uniform height, are of stained pine. The church is fitted with a warming apparatus, by Handen, and the whole of the work had been exceedingly well carried out by Mr. Miles, builder, of Shaftesbury.

The Bishop of Salisbury preached on the occasion.

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