



## MELKSHAM

### Re-opening of St. George's Church

This church, which is dedicated to St. George, was re-opened on Tuesday last; and the circumstance was the cause of much rejoicing in the quiet little village in which it stands. For a long time, nearly a year, the work of reparation and restoration had been going on, and, consequently, when the time for re-opening approached, great anxiety was felt in all those who had taken an active part in the good work, that the event should be celebrated with those demonstrations of Joy which it so well deserved. And most successful were they, for everything was so well managed, and everyone so anxious to do his and her best – for as usual the ladies were foremost in lending a helping hand – that the affair went off with the greatest eclat. Near the Church the village was decorated with flags, devices, and evergreens; and in the road leading from the Parsonage to the Church an arch was erected, which for taste and symmetry may well vie with many of much greater pretensions. There were also two smaller arches, one of them being over the gate at the entrance to the Church-yard. Inside the Church the same good taste exhibited itself in well chosen and well executed texts, composed of leaves and flowers, which had a very pleasing effect.

There was much need of the restoration which has been so well effected, for the sacred edifice had fallen into a bad state of repair. The original Church, or rather Chapel, was probably built towards the close of the twelfth, or in the early part of the thirteenth century, of which, however, only the western wall remained. From that time, until the end of the 15th century, the building underwent many changes and alterations, the Chancel having been the latest addition. Owing to defective foundations and ill-constructed roofs, the whole fabric became much dilapidated and a large portion of the walls required rebuilding or extensive repairs. In the work of restoration the original forms and details have been strictly adhered to, except in the Chancel, which was of a late and debased style of architecture. This has been somewhat lengthened, and a larger Chancel arch formed, with an entirely new roof and east end. The unsightly bell turret has been replaced with a spirelet more in accordance with the roof of the Church. The seating is of a plain and substantial character and is constructed entirely of English Oak. The pulpit, the gift of Mrs. Bruges, of Semington, is of stone, circular in form, out of a single block and is lined with wood. The east and west windows have been filled with stained glass by Messrs. Lavers and Barrand of Bloomsbury; - one, a memorial window to the Beaven family; and the other presented to the Church by friends of the Rev. C. J. Down, curate of the parish. The whole of the works have been executed to the satisfaction of all concerned, by Messrs. Gane, builders, of Trowbridge, under the direction of Edward Christian, Esq., of 10 Whitehall Place, London, the Architect. The Church consists of Nave, 40 feet by 22; Chancel, 25 by 15; and the North Porch. The walls are built of stone and the roofs covered with stone tiles. The building is warmed by Gurney's Ventilating Stove. The population is 280, of whom 160 can be

accommodated in the building. The cost amounts to above £1,000; the contributors towards it being, the Duke of Somerset, Lord Matravers, Walter Long, Esq., W. Bird, Esq., J. Matravers, Esq., Messrs J. and T. Beaven, Mr. Ghey, The Church Building Society, Magdalene College, Cambridge, All Souls College, Oxford, etc.

Fortunately the day was fine and cheering with a bracing, frosty, air. The Lord Bishop of the Diocese and the clergy assembled at the house of the Rev. C. J. Down, and proceeded thence, in order, to the Church; - among those present were the Revs. Richard Crawley, H. Lee, S. Littlewood, R. Gibbons, W. Badger, W.H. Pooke, J. D. Hastings, R. S. Moore, E. T. W. Thomas, - Bradley, Jno. Wilkinson, W. Laxton, - Awdry, etc., etc. Morning prayers were said by the curate; the lessons were read by the incumbent the Rev. R. Crawley; the Communion Service by the Lord Bishop, and the Epistle by the Rev. J. D. Hastings. The Bishop then preached a sermon from these words – “The Lord’s delight in them that fear Him, and put their trust in His mercy.” Psalm cxviii, 11

After the sermon, his Lordship returned to the communion table and read the Offertory Sentences, while a collection was being made by the Churchwardens. After the Holy Communion, the Bishop and Clergy, and the wives of the latter, together with many of the neighbouring gentry, among whom were Mrs. Daubeney of Seend, Mr. and Mrs. Sylvester of Bower Hill, Mr. and Mrs. King of Melksham, J. R. Gwatkin, Esq., T. Bruges, Esq., J. Awdry, Esq., of Melksham, etc, etc., adjourned to the School Rooms, recently erected, and partook of a sumptuous cold collation, handsomely provided by the Rev. Messrs. Crawley and Down. As soon as the repast was concluded, His Lordship proposed the healths of the Incumbent, and the Curate, and of the Churchwardens leaving immediately after. Nor were the poor forgotten, each adult being supplied by the same generous donor with one pound of beef, and each child with half a pound, thus gladdening their hearts on this auspicious day, some of those present were also hospitably entertained at the Manor House, by Mr. Pocock. The offertory amounted to nearly £35.

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