

A
HISTORY
OF
Christ Church,
Stone, . . .

1837-1900.

By REV. J. R. LINE, M.A., Vicar.

*Profits to be devoted to the
New Nave Fund.*



IT was in the year 1837, Queen Victoria having just ascended the throne, Samuel Butler being Bishop of Lichfield, and Lucas Gibson perpetual Curate of Stone, that the first steps were taken towards the erection of a new Church in Stone. The first promoters of the scheme, forming the original committee, were: Rev. Francis Kitchin, assistant curate of Stone, Archdeacon Hodson, the Rev Henry Sneyd, and Henry Moore, Esq. To these must be added Lord St. Vincent, Lord Harrowby, Revs. R. B. Baker, J. S. McDougall, Messrs. W. B. Meeke, John Joule, R. Ford, E. T. Dickenson, and J. Heeley.

The population of the district to be assigned to the new parish was scattered over a very wide area, and included not only the portion in and immediately adjoining the North end of the town (1561), but also Darlaston, Meaford, Spring Vale and Hill Top (466), Oulton (270), Hobbergate, Oulton Heath, Moddershall and the Outlanes (160), Tittensor and Beech (397), a total population of 2,854. It was to relieve the mother church of Stone from the impossible task of

meeting all the needs of this wide district, and also, in the words of the minutes, "to remedy the evils arising from the unfortunate system of pew-appropriation" there, that the new church was proposed. A public meeting gave authority to the deliberations of the Committee, and before the close of the royal year, 1837, the site was fixed upon, and the scheme fairly launched.

Thus began an effort of Church Extension which has been continually maintained over 63 years, and of which the re-building of the Nave in the present year is only the latest episode.

Three sites were considered. The first was in the upper part of Oulton Road, over-looking Oulton, near where the Grammar School now stands. The second was "just on the rising of the hill on the road leading to Oulton." The third was at the upper corner of what is now the Vicarage paddock, close to what is now the Railway Bridge. The last named site was offered by Earl Granville, and recommended to the Committee by the Earl of Harrowby. The inhabitants of the town portion of the new district also petitioned for its adoption. This would have been the site for Christ Church, but the railway, which was being projected at the time, came with powers to cut through the very spot chosen for the church, and forced the Committee to build upon the lowest portion of the field which Lord Granville's generosity had placed at their disposal.

The Church was built by public subscription, over two hundred names being entered on the list, besides a very large number of subscribers who contributed by means of collecting cards. The chief donors were the Viscount St. Vincent £100 (to whose family Christ Church has always owed much), Earl Granville £100, Earl of Harrowby £100, Viscountess St. Vincent £50, Rev. H. Sneyd £50, and the Duke of Sutherland £20. Among the contributors appears the name of the Queen Dowager. Grants were paid by the Diocesan Church Building Society £550, Railway £200, Canal Company £100. Mr. H. Ward (Stoke) was the architect, and Mr. Emery (Stoke) was the contractor, the total amount of contract being £3,382 2s. 2d. June 28th, 1838, Coronation Day, was celebrated in Stone by the laying of the foundation stone by Lady St. Vincent, which is duly recorded on a copper plate now fixed on the original stone in the S.W. angle of the church. The Church, which consisted of chancel, nave, and West Gallery, all of the plainest, was completed in 1839. There are very many who remember the square pews, and long windows, *and blinds*, which were consistent with the ideal of church architecture in the thirties. The twin spires and turrets were a familiar feature in Stone for 63 years, and the ivy which gradually covered the plain red brick walls gave beauty to what otherwise was not a beautiful edifice. A handsome silver service of Communion Plate was presented to the Church by Lord and Lady St. Vincent. The gift of £1,000 by Rev. C. Simeon

the well-known and saintly leader of the Evangelical school, was the first step towards an endowment. The patronage of the living (which was constituted a benefice in 1845) was accordingly placed in the hands of the Simeon trustees, and the Rev. Francis Kitchin, who had been the leading spirit in the building of the church, became the first "perpetual curate" of "the new ecclesiastical district of Christ Church, Stone," an office which he held with honour and usefulness till his death in 1853. To him, and to those who worked with him is due, under God, much of what two generations and more have enjoyed. A window placed in the church to his memory is now fixed in the North aisle. The parsonage was built, under the management of the same committee, in 1841. The schools, called "Diocesan Schools" adjoining the South boundary of the Churchyard were completed in 1842. For the site of Church, Vicarage, Churchyard and School, the parish is indebted to the generosity of the Lord of the Manor, Earl Granville.

The Rev. John Ford became vicar in 1853, and held the office until 1882, his character and long ministry of nearly 30 years being still a fresh memory among his people. His mark has been left indelibly on the history of Christ Church. Of much of his work, the simple earnest ministry of a Christian Pastor and friend, no earthly record can be made. But as an active administrator he has left a full record behind him. Early in his incumbency an infants' school and

master's house were added to the school buildings (1856). Later in his life, 1870, a new infants' school was built in the rapidly growing district of Stonefields. To his personal generosity the benefice owes the paddock which he added to the glebe, and provided the extension of the churchyard which became necessary in 1868. But it is for the creation of the two daughter parishes of Oulton and Tittensor that John Ford's name will be most remembered. In 1860 he took steps to build Oulton National School, which for many years was the scene of the ministry of Mr. Ford and his curates. A similar centre for school and worship was maintained at Tittensor, the Church Pastoral Aid Society helping, as it still does, towards the support of the assistant clergy. But the growth of the town population made it necessary that other provision should be made for these outlying districts. Oulton became a separate parish, or more strictly "consolidated chapelry" on October 28, 1879. (S. John's Oulton), Church and Parsonage having been built under Mr. Ford's guidance, with the hearty co-operation of the Oulton residents. The first stone of St. Luke's, Tittensor, was laid on June 18th, 1880, by the Duchess of Sutherland, the Prince of Wales being present. Tittensor parish was constituted in 1882. Having effected that, Mr. Ford resigned in the same year. The first incumbents of these parishes were nominated by him, Rev. W. B. Masefield, Tittensor, and Rev. J. Y. Dod, Oulton, and he then ceded the patronage to the Simeon trustees.

Meaford, with Darlaston, was now all that was left of the huge rural district of Christ Church. In 1880 Lady Forester built a handsome little school and house, which is still the scene of weekly ministrations from Christ Church.

The Rev. John Ford resigned in 1882. His death took place in 1886, and he was buried in Tittensor Churchyard. A memorial brass and stained glass window were placed in the new chancel of Christ Church that year.

The Rev. Walter Jeffery Thompson, M.A., Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, succeeded Mr. Ford. Now came another active period of Church extension. Supported by a willing committee, and by all the people, the new vicar introduced a scheme for the restoration of the church, which, if not dilapidated, was fast becoming inadequate to the growing needs of the parish. The issue of this movement was the building of a new chancel, the re-seating of the Church, the removal of the organ (the gift of Mrs. Foden, of Edge Hill) from the gallery to the chancel, the erection of a new pulpit, and other minor improvements. This work was effectually carried out in 1885, Mr. Hawley Lloyd (Birmingham) being architect, and Mr. Inskip (Longton) contractor. A brass lectern was presented by Misses Masefield, and a font was given two years later as the children's memorial of the Queen's Jubilee in 1887. About this time also the Stonefield School was enlarged, and a new wall erected fronting the Vicarage and Churchyard in Radford Street.

In 1886 it became necessary, through the condemnation of the old schools by the Education department, to make further provision for school accommodation. Once more the people and friends of Christ Church were equal to the occasion, and the present handsome schools in Northesk Street were built in the Jubilee year, 1887. These were built by public subscription at a cost of £2,500, Lady Forester, of Meaford, generously providing the last £1,000. Mr. Hawley Lloyd was again the architect. The Rev. W. J. Thompson, supported by a succession of efficient curates, re-organized the pastoral work of the parish, and for 12 years took the lead in many branches of pastoral, social, and evangelistic work, until, in 1894 he left for Holy Trinity, Leicester.

The Rev. John Russell Line, M.A., late scholar of Downing College, Cambridge, was instituted by the Bishop of Lichfield on Sunday, September 9th, 1894, and is still the incumbent of Christ Church. It was in August, 1896 that the proposal to re-build the Nave, which this present year sees completed, was first made.

Serious defects were discovered that year in the spires and roof, the repairs of which the diocesan surveyor estimated at £500. Instead of effecting these repairs, and thus rendering permanent a building confessedly inadequate to the needs of the place, it was resolved to re-build the Nave so as to accommodate 200 more worshippers. The approach of the

Queen's Diamond Jubilee year gave special significance to the idea. A large number of donations were at once promised, Mrs Foden, of Edgehill, to whose generosity the church already owed its organ. The death of that lady in February, 1897, before her promise could be realized, gave a check to the scheme and postponed the work for two years. Subscriptions of £100 and upwards were made by Mr. W. R. Parker-Jervis (Meaford), the late Mr. Hamar Bass, M.P., Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Brandon, Dr. Fernie, Messrs. John Joule and Sons, Rev. J. R. and Mrs. Line, the Misses Masefield, Mr. and Mrs. R. Stubbs, and Mrs. Young. £50 and upwards have been subscribed by the late Earl of Harrowby, Miss Preston, the late Mrs. Fernie (Stone), Mrs. Andrew Fernie (London), Mr. A. Henderson, M.P., late Mrs. W. Stubbs, Mr. Pauer, Mr. and Mrs. W. Taylor and Miss Webb. £20 and upwards have been given by Mr. W. Wells-Bladen, Mrs. Ford (Blurton), Mrs. Ford (Stone) Mrs. Pyatt, Mr. S. Perry, Mr. W. C. Stubbs, and Mr. Warner (Barlaston). The list at present includes over 260 names. At the time this brief history goes to press, an effort to raise the last few hundred pounds is being successfully carried out. The amount of contract (undertaken by Mr. Yoxall, of Stoke-on-Trent) which includes laying out new churchyard paths, and the erection of new gates, is £2,770, to which a considerable sum is to be added for a new block floor, heating apparatus, and other extras.

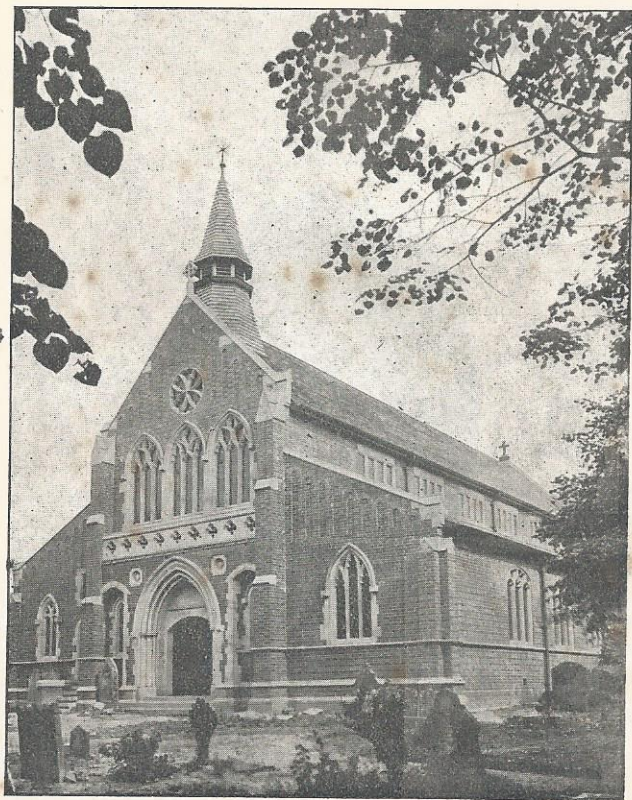
The new nave is designed by Mr. C. Lynam,

ADDENDA.

P. 9, line 5—add after organ, “heading the list with
a promise of £500”
line 20, add “Mr. J. T. Harris.”

J. R. L.

F.R.I.B.A., of Stoke. It is in the early decorated style and consists of nave, arcades, and aisles. It is built of brick with rich dressings of Hollington stone. The demolition of the old building was commenced on May 1st, 1899. The foundation stone was laid on June 20th, the 62nd anniversary of the Queen's accession, the Right Rev. Sir Lovelace Stamer, Bishop of Shrewsbury, officiating. The original foundation stone, laid on coronation day, 1838, by Lady St. Vincent. was used as a resting place for the new stone. In a cavity therein the vicar placed a sealed metal box containing a Bible, with certain coins and newspapers. The new stone was laid by W. R. Parker-Jervis, Esq., grandson of the lady who placed the first stone in position. Mrs. Parker-Jervis received purses, which, with the offertory, amounted to £112. The building proceeded during the twelve months which followed. Every portion of the old material was used. The heavier stones of the turrets now form part of the columns which support the church, and every particle of the old building forms some part of the new. It was at first feared that the chancel might appear dwarfed by the lofty proportions of the nave. Such, however, has not been the case. The proportions are graceful and most pleasing to the eye. The Font has been removed to the S.W. angle, and an inscription cut upon it to announce that it was "The children's offering to commemorate the Jubilee of H.M. Queen Victoria, 1887." Three new memorial windows are placed in the apse, completing five lights



CHRIST CHURCH, STONE.

representing the life of our Lord. The five windows are in memory of Mary Carter, of those baptised in the church, of John Ford, of Daniel Dawson, and of William Saben. At those points on either side of the chancel arch, where the arcade joins the chancel, are two carved angelic figures, holding scrolls with inscriptions befitting the pulpit ("Good tidings of great joy") and the dedication of Christ Church ("A Saviour, Christ the Lord"). Over the porch is a small gallery, which brings up the total seating accommodation of the church to 600. On either side of the West door are carved heads, representing Queen Victoria and the present Bishop of Lichfield (Right Rev. Augustus Legge, D.D.) who will dedicate the new building to its sacred use on September 13th. The edifice is surmounted by a bell turret of oak and shingles which reaches an altitude slightly higher than the old spires.

Here for the present, this brief history must end. May the next chapter be a record which no earthly pen can describe, of true seeking after God, and of the worship of Him "in spirit and in truth"; the fitting of living stones for a place in his Heavenly Temple.





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