

Back Tracks

Local historian Peter Turner journeys back to our people and places of yesteryear

The following is taken from Rev T.D. Lawtons Book, History of St Anne's Church. Brown Edge which is itself a remarkable history of thinking and attitudes of the early part of the last century. The book was written in 1944.

St. Anne's Church

When "Colliers"—as they were then called—began to be housed in this area, by the Colliery Owners, Sunday Services were held in Little Stone House Farm, which still stands some two or three hundred yards from the Churchyard Gates. For these Services the Rector of Norton-in-the-Moors made himself responsible, as Brown Edge was at that time a part of his Parish. The original plans, giving the acreage and owners' names of all the lands which were acquired for the building of the Church, and Vicarage, and providing land for a Garden, Churchyard, Day School, with School House and Garden, are all in a good state of preservation. They will now be deposited in a really safe place—in the large new Safe procured through the Centenary Repair Fund. The principal land owners were Messrs. Adderley, Chetwynd and Sparrow—presumably the owners of Black Bull Colliery. Other owners who parted with their lands, were William Hargreaves, Elijah Mayer, Thomas Sheldon, H. H. Williamson, and Richard Sheldon. There is much which we should like to know about the very earliest beginnings, which finally resulted in the building of the Nave, and the commencement of "Public Worship" in the new Church; but all the information we have is condensed into two short but reliable statements :—

A slate Tablet inside the Church, above the West door reads

This Chapel was erected in MDCCCXLIV to accommodate CCC sittings, and in consequence of a Grant from the Incorporated Society for promoting the enlargement, building and repair of Churches and Chapels, all are hereby declared free and unappropriated for ever.

Henry Burgess, M.A., Rector, James Mayor, Uriah Carden, Churchwardens of the Parish of Norton-in-the-Moors.

NOTE by the Author :—There is an oral tradition in the Parish, passed on from father to son, from generation to generation, that the amount referred to in the foregoing was £100.

There is no hint **in** any of the Records of the Church, of Pew Rents ever having been charged.

A Note in the handwriting of the Rev. St. John Mitchell, runs

"By an Order in Council, dated 3rd September, 1844, a District was assigned to the Church of St. Anne, built by voluntary contributions ; Site and £500 given by Sir Charles Bowyer Adderley and others. Patron—the Bishop. Rev. St. John Mitchell, Vicar."

So that of no single person can it be said— as of the centurion of old—"he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a Synagogue"—S. Luke vii. 5. They were men who—whilst rejoicing (with Paul) that they were saved by grace, through faith, believed, with James, that "faith without works is dead", Their faith must be visible by their actions ; for "by their deeds ye shall know them."



When, however, we come to consider the Church Tower, Spire and the Organ ; the Vicarage, and the Caretaker's Cottage, we can speak definitely of one benefactor. Hugh Henshall Williamson Therefore in this repair and improvement scheme we are workers together with God, in the fulfillment of His eternal purposes; handing on His truth—"the father to the children"—Isa. xxxviii., 19. To help God's people to the performance of this duty, in the Dispensation of the Jews, the Passover was ordained. "Arid it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service ? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, Who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses"—Ex.xii., 26-27. Just so was it with the Lord's Supper (of which the Passover was a type), for we are definitely told that it was instituted to "show forth the Lord's death till He come"—I Cor. xi., 26. Therefore we have the highest

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authority—even that of Géd Himself (by His Word and Spirit) for what we are doing and teaching ; and if He is for us who can be against us

These pages will prove that God has ever been on the side of the faithful few who have "dared to be a Daniel," dared to take a stand for Him and His truth. Seeing then that God is for us we can face the unknown future with calm confidence. He knows "the end from the beginning."

The Fabric

St. Anne's Church is a daughter Church of Norton-in-the-Moors—which was itself descended from the original Mother Church built at Stoke-on-Trent in the eleventh century, but in this brief enquiry into, and record of the history which concerns us most today, we must reluctantly pass over the centuries whose generations have spoken for God—Who was their dwelling place, and is now ours "in all generations"—Psalm 90.1.

There is no record of any Foundation Stone Laying, and we do not know the date when building operations actually commenced, but on a Land Plan of the Church, Churchyard and "Parsonage House" there are two dates. One reads—

"Land bought by H.H.W. from Charles Hales, 6th Nov., 1851, and given to the Parsonage." The other—"House and Infant School built by H.H.W. in 1852."

These dates, however, are seven and eight years after the completion of the Nave.

The late Mr. John Charlesworth, of Chapel Lane, who died early in 1922, age 89, told the writer that when he walked to the Pit as a boy, he passed the rising walls of the Church daily.

The Nave was completed early in 1844, and Services began immediately after the Consecration, but the Foundation Stone of the Belfry Tower, and Spire, was not laid until 1851, by Rev. S. Pearson—shortly after his appointment as Vicar, or "Minister," which he always wrote in the Registers until 1862, then "Incumbent." The date of their completion is chiseled on the stonework above the Tower (not the Belfrey) door :—1854. A note on the Title-page of the first Baptism Register, in the handwriting of Rev. G. Young—who became Vicar in 1870—is as follows

"Church consecrated 29th May, 1844. Spire completed 1853. Vicarage house completed 1853."

He has clearly made a mistake concerning the date of the completion of the Spire ; which should be 1854; but his date for the completion of the Vicarage is

corroborated by the date 1853 chiselled on a stone above the South window of the Drawing Room.

In some of the old records it is stated that the stone for all the buildings—Church, Vicarage and School—though local in a sense—was actually quarried some distance away ; but no exact spot was named.

To mark the completion of the Nave a Silver Medal was struck, one being presented to every male parishioner of seventy years, or over. This gives a good view of the outside of the Church—looking N.W., from a S.E. spot. It shows the South Porch open, as the main entrance. The view on the reverse side of the medal remains a mystery. It was evidently purely imaginary in the mind of the artist in Birmingham—where the Medal was made. Certainly it bears no resemblance to the interior of the Church, as will be seen from the illustration herein—which is practically the same as when the Medal was struck, except that in those early days there were apparently no chairs in the centre of the flooring ; in fact there was then no need for them. Today probably not half a dozen of these Medals could be located, but many people have testified to having seen one; and one is still preserved in the Church Safe. It does not bear any date.

SILVER MEDAL



Silver Medal St Anne's Church

I would be interested if anyone knows of the whereabouts of any of these medals. I was always told as Mr Lawton says that there was one in the safe. I suspect however that when the Church was broken in it disappeared then.