



# *Restoration of the Parish Church Bishopstone 1891 - 1892*

## **Dedication of the Bells**

Wednesday last witnessed a most important event in the history of this parish, more particularly in connection with the parish church. It will be remembered by many of our readers that the parish church of St. Mary was partially destroyed by fire after evening service last Good Friday. The chief loss was the splendid peal of eight bells which had been in the belfry for nearly 200 years, and the old clock, which had been going 248 years. The restoration was commenced in May last, the work being placed in the hands of Messrs. Wheeler and Son, of Wantage, who did the work of restoration in 1883, when the church was completely restored.

Rapid progress has been made with the work, and the contractors have been given complete satisfaction. Messrs. Wheeler's contract was for £1,540, but there will be considerable extras added to this in consequence of additional brickwork required in the tower. Two thirds of the roof of the church has been replaced with new material and considerable other work done. The contract for bell hanging was let to Messrs. Blackburn and Greenleaf, of Salisbury, the contract price being £235. The new peal of eight bells has been supplied Messrs. Mears and Stainbank, Whitechapel, London. Mr Ewen Christian, architect to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, was the architect for the work of restoration. The new peal is considered equal to the old one, and some of the oldest inhabitants, on hearing a peal rung on Wednesday, declared they could not distinguish any difference between the new and the old, there being such a similarity.

The work of restoration is not yet complete, as the new clock is not fixed. But it is intended to fix it next Easter, the cost of this being estimated at £150. The sitting accommodation is for the present a temporary arrangement of chairs, but in July or August next the church will be seated with new oak seats, and then the work of restoration will be completed.

The total cost of the complete restoration is estimated at £2,500, and this is covered by insurance to the extent of £2000. The deficit has been met by donations from sympathisers with the Vicar, the Rev. H. Ault, in the loss the parish sustained by the fire. Mr. Ault has worked most indefatigably in the matter, and his efforts, assisted by those of the energetic Churchwardens, Mr. T. Hickman and Mr. C. W. C. Edmonds, have met with a ready response. A friend of his, an anonymous donor, gave £100, and other friends contributed another £100. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners also gave £100. This, together with other subscriptions and offertories made in various parish churches on behalf of the object have reduced the deficit down to £130 or thereabouts.

At the time of the fire we gave a very full account of the church in the *Advertiser*, reproducing complete particulars as to the restoration of the church in 1883. But it may be interesting to give the inscription on

the old bells and that on the new ones. The inscriptions on the old bells were as follows:- On the treble, second and third, in plain one inch Arabic letters, "Robert and James Wells, Aldbourne, feit 1796, the gift of Mr. Thomas Goddard". Forth bell – singular to say there was no inscription, only an ornamental belt formed of plus marks round the waist. Fifth bell - "Anno domini 1636". Sixth - "Prayse God 1605, I.W.". Seventh - "O Praise the Lord 1602 "I.W.". Tenor - "Anno domini 1636, I.G., (the G being written backwards). "W.T.". The inscriptions on new bells :- On Tenor - "To the glory of God, and for use if this church these eight bells were erected in December 1891. in place of a peal of the same number destroyed on Holy Friday, March 27th 1891. Christopher . C. Edmonds and Thomas Hickman, churchwardens; Herbert Ault, vicar". Seventh bell - "May God's blessing rest upon the church and parish of Bishopstone". Sixth - "Praise God in His holiness; praise Him in the firmament of Hos power". Fifth - "Praise Him in His noble acts, praise Him according to His excellent greatness". Fourth - "Praise Him in the sound of the trumpet, praise Him upon the late and and harp". Third - "Praise Him in the cymbals and dances, praise Him upon the strings and pipe". Second - "Praise Him upon the well tuned cymbals, praise Him upon the loud cymbals". First - "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord".

The total cost of the bells is £501, with £235 for hanging, but out of the £501 there is a discount of 5 per cent., and an allowance to be made for one ton of metal which was saved from the old bells, and which is incorporated in the new peal. This brings the cost of the bells alone to bout £400, in addition to which there is the cost of hanging. The weights of the new bells exclusive of the clappers are as follows

Tenor, 19 cwt 2 qr. 19 lb.	Fourth, 8 cwt. 1 qr. 6 lb.
Seventh bell, 14 cwt 2 qr. 12 lb.	Third, 7 cwt. 1 qr. 19 lb.
Sixth, 11 cwt. 1 qr. 2lb.	Second, 6 cwt. 1 qr. 13lb.
Fifth, 9 cwt. 2 qr. 24 lb.	Treble, 6 cwt. 0 qr. 12 lb.

Total weight 4 ton, 3 cwt. 2qr. 1 lb., which is rather; heavier than the old bells.

We may add that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have had the chancel re-roofed. In taking off the old roof a curious discovery was made. The workmen found a hive of bees and a quantity honey, which they carefully removed.

The opening services on Wednesday last commenced with a celebration of the Holy Eucharist at 8.45 a.m. The interior of the church looked very pretty in its Christmas garb, and quite made up for the somewhat desolate appearance of the centre of the church owing to the chairs for seating accommodation not having arrived. The work of the decoration was successfully carried out by lady members of the congregation. The communion table was beautified with vases of choice flowers, and the choir stalls were very prettily decorated. The pulpit was embellished with evergreens, and in panels were pictures representing St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John. The reading desk looked especially pretty, being covered with evergreens and a bed of white wool to represent snow and frost laid on the front, on top of which was a cross made of jessamane and red berries. Over the entrance to the chancel was the motto "Praise the Lord for his goodness", this being worked in white letters on a red ground, with a border of greenery around it. The font also had received most careful attention in the decorative art; it was covered with evergreens and berries, with representations of frost and snow, and surmounting the whole was a large cross made of evergreens.

The service for the dedication of the bells commenced at 11.30 a.m., at which there was a fairly numerous congregation. The clergy present were the Rev. and Hon. Canon Ponsonby (Rural Dean and vicar of St. Mark's Church, New Swindon, Rev. J. Lyte (Lambourne), Rev. C. F. Trower (chaplain to Lady Craven, of Ashdown Park), Rev. J. B. Kearney (Bourton), Rev. W. B. Pitt (Liddington), Rev. A. MacDonald (South Marston), Rev. R. E. Richards (Little Hinton), Rev. H. Miller (Ashbury), Rev. H. King (Wanborough), and the Vicar (the Rev. H. Ault). The last named conducted the dedication service, which was held in the basement of the tower, and immediately beneath the belfry. Special prayers were read by the Vicar, and the choir sang Psalms 150 and 122. Mrs. Ault presiding at the organ. The ringers then sounded a short peal on the new bell, after which the choir and congregation sang the following hymn:-

Thanks to Thee, O gracious Lord,  
For all Thy gifts of love;  
To Thee we owe all here below,  
All bliss to come above.  
*[Hymn continues with six more verses]*

Another special hymn was then sung, "Great City blest of God; Jerusalem the free". The choir and clergy then proceeded to their places in the chancel, where the Te Deum was sung, and an address was afterwards given by Canon Ponsonby. The rev gentleman did not select any special text as the subject of his address, but preached a short sermon appropriate to the occasion. He said he had been asked to assist in the dedication of those bells, which had just sounded out so beautifully. How thankful the parishioners must have been to hear the sweet sound of those bells once again, and to again, be able to worship on their own church, in god's most holy house. They had met together that morning to dedicate those bells – to dedicate them to the service of the Almighty, so that they might be His and His only, and used for His honour and glory. To those whose calling it was to ring the bells, he asked them to forget that they were God's bells, to touch them with a knowledge that they were His. .... *[sermon continues]*. At the close of the sermon the Rev. Mr. Ault announced that the offertory about to be taken was in aid of the church restoration fund. They hoped to place a clock in the tower at Easter, and new oak seats in the church next July or August. To do this it would be necessary to spend £500 more than the insurance came to, and which was nearly £2000. They had already nearly £350 towards that £500, leaving a deficit of about £150. He had received tokens of goodwill and kindness from many outside their parish. A recessional hymn "Brightly gleams our Banner", was sung, and the service terminated.

In the afternoon a peal of 5,040 changes was rung on the bells by a special band of ringers, comprised as follows:- Mr. J. W. Washbrook (Oxford), conductor Rev. F. E. Robin son (Drayton, Abingdon), Rev. G. F. Colridge (Caversham, Reading), Rev. H. A. Cockey (Oldlands, Bristol), Mr. Wm. Lawrence (Whitechurch, Oxon), Mr. Thos. Blackburn, Mr. Wm. Greenleaf, and Mr. Alfred Goddard (Salisbury).

At 7.30 there was another service, evensong and sermon, the Vicar occupying the pulpit. The special services will be continued every day till January 3rd, special preachers attending. On Sunday next the preacher will be the Rev. A. J. Pile, formerly vicar of Bishopstone.

**Swindon Advertiser and North Wilts Chronicle, 26 December 1891**

### **Complete Restoration of the Parish Church Dedication by the Bishop**

It is now some sixteen months since the parishioners of Bishopstone had the unhappy experience of having their parish church partially destroyed by fire, resulting in an almost irreparable loss by the destruction of the splendid peal of eight fine toned bells and the old clock. This occurred on the evening of Good Friday 1892, and Tuesday last witnessed the complete restoration of the church, and the dedication by the bishop of the final portion of the work

It will be remembered that the work was partially completed last Christmas and the new peal of bells was then dedicated by the Bishop. Then at Easter the new clock was erected and dedicated, and the only portion of the work remaining to be done was the new pews and screen, which were completed this week, and dedicated on Tuesday.

It is needless to go through the details again of the work which has been done. Suffice it is to say that the contract for the work of restoration was let to Messrs. Wheeler and Son, of Wantage, who so successfully carried out the restoration of the church some eight years ago, and who have again given every satisfaction on the present occasion. The total cost has been upwards of £2,500, the Ecclesiastical

Commissioners bearing the whole cost of restoring the church. The architect was Mr. Ewan Christian, of Whitehall, London. The new peal of bells was cast by Messrs. Mears and Stainback, and were hung by Messrs. Green and Blackleaf, of Salisbury. The clock was supplied by Messrs. Smith & Son, of Derby. The portion now dedicated consists of a new oak screen and oak seats, with fine tracery cut frontals, made from the design of the architect. The floors are of wood block with oak kerbs, all the wood work being composed of English Oak.

We are pleased to state nearly the whole of the sum required for carrying out the restoration has been raised – at least within £50 of the required amount.

The dedication service on Tuesday last commenced at 3 pm. Previous to which, however, a peal of double Norfolk Cork bob, 5040 changes, was rung by the Gloucester and Bristol Diocesan Association of ringers, composed as follows:- Treble bell, Rev. H. A. Cockey; second, Rev. G. F. Coldridge; third, Mt. T. Blackbourne; fourth, Mr. R. T. Hibbert; fifth, Rev. F. F. Robinson; sixth, Mr. E. Bishop; seventh, Mr. J. Hinton; tenor, Mr. J. W. Waskbrook, of Oxford (leader). This was the first peal in the method rung on these bell. After the service a touch of grandsire triples was rung by the same party. The Union Jack was to be seen floating from the tower and the church was prettily decorated for the occasion. The font especially was beautifully treated with flowers and greenery; around the base was a quantity of ferns and flowers, while on the top was arranged flowers of various kinds, including double and single dahlias, geraniums, &c., rising to a pinnacle, on which rested a cross made of evergreens of white flowers.

Besides the Bishop, the Right Rev. Dr. Ellicot, of Bristol, the clergy present were the Rev/ D/ Ware (St Paul's, New Swindon), Rev C. R. Gott (St Paul's, New Swindon), Rev. C. F. Goddard (Christ Church, Old Swindon), Rev. J. H. Light (vicar of Lambourne) and his curate, the Rev. W. Pollock-Hill; Rev. H. Ault (vicar of Bishopstone), Revs. H. T. King (Wanborough), W. B. Pott (Liddington, - Richards (Little Hinton), J. B. Kearney (Bourton), S. I. Crawhall (Shatton), F. E. Robinson (Drayton) and others. There was a numerous congregation, and amongst the laity present we noticed the Countess of Craven, Mrs. A. L. Goddard, Mrs. H. Kinneir, Mrs. Pitt, Mr. and Miss Fairhorne, Miss Tombs, and Mrs Gott, Mrs Taylor, Mrs Bennett (Dursley), &c.

The service commenced with singing of a special hymn as a processional, "Advance, advance I the day is come", Mr. Maberley, organist at Lambourne Parish Church, officiating at the organ. The clergy and choir the took their places in the chancel, and the Bishop then offered prayer and dedicated the new seats in the following words; "I now dedicate the work of restoration that has been done in this church to Almighty God, to His honour and glory in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen". A shortened evening choral service followed. The lessons were read by the Revs. S. I. Crawhall and – Richards. The special Psalms for the occasion were 132, 133, and 136. The magnificent and Nune Dimitis were sung to the pretty chants of Sireper in F, and the anthem was by Tahis Trimnell, "I have built thee a house". The Vicar, the Rev. H. Ault, intoned the prayers, and the hymn before the sermon was "Christ is our corner stane" (239A and M). The sermon was preached by the Bishop, who took for his text the words "Through fire", 1st Corinthians, 3rd chapter and part of the 15th verse (revised version). Prefacing his sermon by a remark on the restoration of the church. Dr. Ellicott said he could not stand before them that afternoon without having many anxious and serious thoughts come to his mind – thoughts of the great trouble which it had pleased Almighty God to bring to that parish. Their church was visited by a destructive fire, a large portion of the building, including the peal of bells, consumed by the devastating flame. He knew how sad they were to think of it, and how sad it made him when the news reached him. But now it had pleased God to turn again their captivity, and they were met to celebrate the complete restoration of the building. It was wise and prudent of them – he wished every parish would take warning and do likewise – to have their church insured. But that means and with the assistance of many kind friends, who had given most generously towards the work, they had been able to restore the church and make it more handsome than it was before. That was a day for profound thankfulness for God's blessing to them in aiding them to restore that beautiful place of worship. He trusted that the sad time which they had passed through would be the means of enabling them to show a deeper affection towards their venerable parish church than they had before. He often noticed that the restoration of a parish church aroused the people to more activity. There was something in the restoration of a church which helped to restore the spiritual life in the parish. He trusted it would be so in Bishopstone. Turning to the subject of his text, which he said was part

of a very solemn passage in St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. Dr. Ellicott pointed out the duties of workers who were serving in the army of Christ, and asked his hearers to carefully consider what was their life's work and to see that that work was built on a good foundation. There would come a time for most searching investigation, and he trusted that all would be ready at the Master's call. They could not all be ministers in the church, but they could carry on the work in one way or another. One of the most cheering signs to him during his thirty years ministry in this Diocese was the increasing interest taken yearly in the gathering of church workers in the fine cathedral at Gloucester, and the large number of laity who took part in the gathering. Even the humblest among them might take some little part in the work of the church, and he trusted that all in that parish would do their little in the cause of Christ. Then they would pass away eventually to the unseen world with the thought and feeling that they had been prompted by Christ to do good work.

After the sermon the Bishop pronounced the Benediction, and the hymn, "For all the Saints" was sung as a recessional.

In the evening a special service was held, the sermon being preached by the Rev. Douglas Ware, vicar of St. Paul's, New Swindon. The offertory taken during the day amounted to upwards of £15, towards the £50 required to clear off the debt.

The services will be continued to-morrow (Sunday), when the preacher will be the Vicar, the Rev. H. Ault.

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