

THE CENTENARY OF
THE CHURCH OF
ST. JAMES THE LESS
HAMBRIDGE.

1844 to 1944



O how amiable are Thy dwellings!

Thou LORD of HOSTS.

This is none other than the

HOUSE of GOD;

and this is the

GATE of HEAVEN.



I N T R O D U C T I O N .

The Church of St. James the Less, Hambridge, was consecrated on February, 2nd, 1844, by the Bishop of Salisbury, Dr. Edward Denison, who acted on behalf of the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Dr. George Henry Law, who was unable to attend.

As it will be seen in the following pages, the building of a Church at Hambridge was necessitated by a considerable increase in the population owing to the making of a small canal from the River Ile to Westport, which derives its name from the fact that it is the terminus of the canal. I have endeavoured to find out when the canal was begun and for how long it was used, and the actual date when it ceased to be operated. Presumably the introduction of railways had something to do with its disuse, as was the case with many of the smaller canals.

The old parish of Curry Rivel extended from the western borders of Lowport to a point about halfway between the Clarence Inn and Westport Inn. The ancient parishes of Dornishill and Goose Bradon lost their Churches a long time ago; and although they remained parishes they were sinecures, that is, they had rectors who received their tithes, but these rectors had no cure of souls, because the Churches had ceased to exist. There were apparently many of these small parishes up and down the country, some of which became sinecures, and some still have their Churches. Hambridge is not, strictly speaking, a parish; but an ecclesiastical district in the parish of Curry Rivel, and independent of Curry Rivel in matters ecclesiastical.

It must have been very inconvenient for the people of Hambridge a hundred years and more ago to have to go to Curry Rivel, especially for Baptisms, Marriages, and Funerals. And so the provision of a Church at Hambridge was a real blessing.

About ten years before the Church was built the Oxford Movement began. Mr. Grueber was at Oxford University at that time and came under the influence of the Movement, the purpose of which was to revive the life of the Church of England and persuade people that the Church of England is not merely a protestant sect, but a real part of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, with a continuous history from the foundation of the Church by our Lord. And so the first Vicar of Hambridge diligently taught the Catholic Faith and conducted the services of the Church in accordance with the regulations laid down in the Book of Common Prayer, which had been ignored in this country for so long. So what might be called the "Hambridge Tradition" was established during Mr. Grueber's long term of office, and has been maintained by all his successors. For many years I have enjoyed the friendship of the Rev. W. H. Haviland, who was assisting Mr. Grueber during the last few years of his life, and was with him at the time of his death. He is my chief source of information.

I much regret that no records exist regarding the services and ordinary occurrences in the parish during the first fifty years. The vestry minute-book contains hardly anything except the appointment of Churchwardens ~~from year to year. And the old account-books have disappeared.~~ A regular record of services has been kept from 1897 to the present day. I have selected some items which may be of interest, and perhaps recall to memory incidents which otherwise would have been entirely forgotten.

I think I might appropriately mention here two men who have been connected with the Church for many years and whose friendship and loyalty I personally have much appreciated. One has already gone to his rest - Mr. Alfred Willey, for so many years sexton; the other is Mr. Joseph Ree, who has been a member of the choir for over sixty years and is still a tower of strength in that capacity.

Perhaps I may be permitted to add a brief notice of an incident which has remained fixed in my memory for forty-five years. I was spending a few weeks at Shepton Beauchamp Rectory at the end of 1898, and one day I walked over to Hambridge hoping to see Fr. Marson. As I entered the Vicarage gate, he came down the drive seated in his trap and driving the old white horse. He could not stop, as he had an engagement elsewhere; but I have always remembered the question he put to me - "Have you a keen nose for heresy?" I do not know now whether I have or not. My friends would probably say "No"; and my enemies (if I have any) might say "Yes." I think Fr. Marson had recently had a visit from the Kensitites: which was perhaps his reason for asking the question. But I hope he did not think that I was one of that gang.

Well, here is my little record of Hambridge for what it is worth. Doubtless there are many defects and omissions, but I must plead my lack of greater knowledge, and ask you to accept it as a memento of the Centenary of St. James' Church from its Incumbent.

H.R. Willimott.

C I R C U L A R A P P E A L .

The following is copied from the appeal for funds to build the Church, which now hangs in the vestry.

The great and pressing necessity for a new Church for Westport and Hambridge, and the adjacent district, will appear from the following statement.

The Parish of Curry Rivell extends from the town of Langport six miles in the direction of Ilminster: the Parish Church is within two miles of Langport. Upwards of two miles from the Church towards Ilminster is a Hamlet called Hambridge, and a mile and a half beyond Hambridge is an entirely new place called Westport, brought into existence by a new Canal. The rapidly increasing population of those two places, with a scattered population of a small adjacent neighbourhood, already exceeds 500 persons, and they are from two miles to three miles and a half from their Parish Church, and it is proposed to build a District Church for their accommodation.

It is to be endowed (after the deaths of the present incumbents) with £35 and £90 per year, the revenues of two sinecure Rectories, which are locally situate within the district, Richard Thomas Combe Esq. and Thomas Bampfild Uttermare Esq. the Patrons, having handsomely given the livings for the purpose, subject to the life interests of the present Incumbents. Besides Mr. Combe and his brother, who have subscribed largely, and the Farmers who have agreed to haul the stone gratis, there is no one in the District able to give, and an appeal to the charitably disposed is indispensable. It is proposed to build the Church and Tower in the Gothic style, with the beautiful white lias stone of the neighbourhood, the durability of which has been proved by the experience of ages; and to add as soon as the funds permit a Parsonage House.

The site is to cost - - - - -	£140
The Church and Tower - - - - -	800
Extras - - - - -	200
To purchase a temporary endow- ment until the death of one of the Incumbents - - - - -	300
Parsonage House - - - - -	700
	<u>£2140</u>

The Reverend Chancellor Law, the highly respected son of the Lord Bishop of the Diocese, has given his most valuable co-operation, and his Lordship, and also the Diocesan and Incorporated Church Building Societies, have approved of the plans, and subscribed liberally towards the Church; and the following kind and handsome subscriptions have also been received; but when it is seen how very inadequate they are to realize all the proposed benefits, it is earnestly hoped that those who are able will contribute according to their means, in order that the Word of Salvation may be preached to this poor and increasing Population.

Members of the Committee -

H.P.Collins.

~~Vincent Stuckey.~~

T.B.Uttermare.

Rev. E.Lance, Rural Dean.

Rev. Hugh Speke, Vicar of Curry Rivel.

Rev. J.S.Coles, Rector of Shepton Beauchamp.

Honorary Secretary - Mr.Nicolas Broadmead.

(Here follows a list of subscribers, 216 in number, and the amount already given when this appeal was issued was £1047-6-0.)

(I have not been able to find out how the rest of the money needed was procured to enable building to be commenced, and completed, so that the Church should be free of debt on the day of its Consecration.)

THE CONSECRATION.

Extract from the "Taunton Courier" of Feb. 14, 1844.

LANGPORT. On Thursday se'nnight the Right Reverend The Lord Bishop of Salisbury arrived here in the afternoon and drove to the residence of Vincent Stuckey Esq., of Hill House, where a large party was invited to meet his Lordship: among the guests, we understand, were the following:- The Hon. and Rev. Lord John Thynne, The Hon. and Rev. the Chancellor of Wells, The Ven. the Archdeacon of Bath, The Rev. G. Neville, The Rev. J.S. Coles, The Rev. W.R. Newbolt, The Rev. E.P. Henslowe, The Rev. J.B. Norman, The Rev. C.S. Grueber, The Rev. W. K. Hamilton, (Chaplain to the Bishop of Salisbury,) A. Lethbridge Esq., C. Collins Esq. of Hatch, R.T. Combe Esq. of Ernes Hill, T.B. Uttermore Esq., and N. Broadmead Esq.

His Lordship with several of the guests remained the night at Mr. Stuckey's mansion, and on the following day notwithstanding the unfavourableness of the weather, a ^{with} numerous concourse of the inhabitants of Langport at a ~~late~~ early hour, marched towards the new Church at Hambridge, where were assembled a large party of the neighbouring clergy and gentry. Shortly after 10 o'clock the Bishop of Salisbury proceeded from the residence of Mr. Stuckey, accompanied by the high officers of the diocese, to the Church which is situated on the borders of the parish of Curry Rivel, on the high road to Ilminster, and was received by the future minister, the Rev. C.S. Grueber, the Registrar, etc. etc., and assisted by the clergy, performed the solemn and interesting ceremony of consecrating the building and adjoining cemetery. His Lordship preached a striking and eloquent sermon, taking for his subject "My house shall be called a house of prayer".

The Church was crowded to overflowing, and at the offertory a liberal collection was made - about £135. Without a fear of contradiction we pronounce this edifice to be one of the neatest and most chaste in style of the many new Churches we have lately inspected: and considering the means at the disposal of the Architect, G. Ferrier Esq., great credit is reflected on his judgment and science. This Church, to be known as St. James, Hambridge, is but slenderly endowed, but it is understood that at some future period the sinecure rectories of Goose Bradon and Ernes Hill, the former in the gift of T.B. Uttermare Esq., the latter belonging to R.T. Combe Esq., will be annexed to it. The workmanship in and about the sacred edifice evinces that much praise is due to the builder, Mr. Maurice Davis Jun. of Langport, who has exerted himself to carry out the intentions and designs of the Architect.

V I C A R S of H A M B R I D G E.

Charles Stephen Griebel, B.A.	1844-1894.
died Sept. 30, 1894.	
Charles Latimer Marson, M.A.	1895-1914.
died March 3, 1914.	
Arthur James Hook, M.A.	1914-1921.
ceded April, 1921.	
William James Dight.	1921-1927.
died April 20, 1927.	
James Arthur Gibson.	1927-1930.
resigned June, 1930.	
Hugh Rudolph Willimott, M.A.	1930-

C H U R C H - W A R D E N S .

Each warden remained in office until a fresh one was appointed.

1845	Samuel Taylor	James Freeman
1849	John G. Taylor	
1853		Frederic Coggan
1869		William Rowsell
1876		Philip Faulkner
1887	William J. Manfield	
1892		Frank Griffin
1895		Thomas Small
1898	Thomas Lloyd	
1903	George Templeman	
1905		E.W. Wyatt
1912		Richard T. Combe
1915		T. Pope
1916		J. Brown
1921		Richard T. Combe
1923	R.S.J. Spilsbury	
1929	Thorold Gooding	
1932		William F. Stephens
1939	Harold Marsh	
1941		Leonard Meade

FURNITURE and ORNAMENTS.

The Altar and Hangings were given in memory of Fr. Mar-
son in 1915. The riddell posts surmounted by angels
were added in 1941.

The Sacred Vessels (silver chalice and paten) were sub-
scribed for by people in the parish and bought in 1902.

The chalice bears the inscription in Latin - "Christo
quo donum dederunt Hambridgientes ejus. A.S. MDCCCII."

There is another chalice and paten, made of base metal
and gilded. The chalice bears the inscription - "In

Memory of Charles Stephen Grueber; fifty years Vicar
of St. James, Hambridge. 1844-1894." They were presuma-

bly used from 1894 to 1902; there is no record as to
the vessels used from 1844 to 1894.

The Aumbry was given in memory of William John Dight
by his widow.

The East Window Bears the inscription - "In memory of
John George Appold. Died Aug. 31, 1865." He was bro-

ther of Mrs. Grueber.

The two Standard Candlesticks were "made out of the old
beams from St. Mary's, Taunton. Presented to St. James'

Hambridge." I believe the donor was the Rev. J. S. Coles,
Rector of Shepton Beauchamp. The date is not known

but probably it was about 1865.

The Sanctuary Carpet was given by Miss Aylward, 1899.

The Bishop's Chair and two Stools were bequeathed by
Miss Anne House, 1935.

The Communion Benches were given in 1930 by an anony-
mous worshipper at the Church.

The Vestments have been made in recent years to replace
worn-out sets. There are eight sets and three copes.

The chest in which they are kept was given in 1939.

The Banners. That of B.V. Mary was subscribed for by
members of the Mothers' Union in 1934.

That of St. James the Less, the patron, was given in
1935.

The rest of the ornaments of the Sanctuary were given or bought at various times. They include cruets, plated wafer box, bells, credence table, box-seat, seven sanctuary lamps, three thuribles, two incense boats, processional cross, gospel lectern, two lanterns, two processional candlesticks, etc.

The Clock was given during Fr. Marson's incumbency.

The Organ bears the inscription - "Presented by Charles Stephen Grueber, 50 years Vicar of this parish". It was partially destroyed by fire on Jan. 23, 1929. The present organ was built in that year, the old material not damaged by the fire being used.

The Font is the one placed in the Church in 1844.

The oil Painting is a reproduction of Raphael's Madonna, and was given by Mrs. Combe in 1925.

The photogravures were given by Mrs. Spilsbury.

The Christmas Crib, with complete set of figures, carved at Barrington, were given in 1933.

The Bell is reputed to have been brought from Ilchester gaol, which ceased to be used about 100 years ago. It is certainly not the one used at executions, which is in Taunton Museum.

~~The Funeral Bier was given in memory of B.M.W. 1936.~~

Two Coffin Stools and a purple and gold Pall.

The Flag-staff and St. George's Flag have been purchased recently, and are used for the first time on our Centenary Festival.

THE REGISTERS.

There have been 1192 Baptisms..
 313 Marriages..
 675 Burials.

THE GRUEBER CHARITY.

Mr. John George Appold Grueber, son of the first Vicar, bequeathed £300, but when his affairs were finally settled only £183-9-4 were available. This money is held by the Charity Commissioners on behalf of the Trustees, who are the Vicar and Church-wardens. The income amounts to about £4 per annum, and is expended on coal for necessitous widows.

THE SPILSBURY BEQUEST.

The late Mrs. Spilsbury, who died on Dec. 9, 1931, bequeathed £90 in memory of her husband; the income of which is to help the general expenses of the Church. This also is held by the Charity Commissioners, who pay the interest into the Vicar and Church-wardens' account at the Westminster Bank, Langport.

THE ALFORD CHARITY.

The Trustees of this charity are the Vicar and Church-wardens of Curry Rivel, who make grants to certain people in Hambridge from time to time as circumstances permit.

THE PROPERTY OF THE BENEFICE.

The official register of the property held in trust for the benefice by the Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty gives the following information:-

1849. A house etc. and about $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres of garden, ground and lawn called Bowie or Little Bowhay, in the Chapelry, intended for a residence for the Incumbent.
A close called ~~Slutlands~~, on the residue of which the Church of St. James the Less and the School House have been built.
1865. A close called Sydenham's opposite the Parsonage. (1920 - 400 sq. feet, part of this close, was sold to the Trustees of the Parish War Memorial.)
1890. An orchard adjoining the Vicarage garden.

From the above it would seem that the Vicarage was already in existence at the time when the property was acquired. Mr. Grieser enlarged the house considerably. He also built the Church Cottage, the Cottage now called Ferndale, which was sold during Fr. Marson's incumbency.

There was also the Long Room, situated in the corner of Sydenham's nearest to the present school grounds. This room was used for many years for parochial concerts etc., and was finally pulled down in 1910, by which time it had become unfit for repair, after efforts had been made to retain it in an usable condition.

A FEW ITEMS OF INTEREST.

A note appears in the Register of Baptisms, vol.I, p.9, "The Vicar had two years' illness from overwork, from Feb.1888 to March 1890, but he was partially able to do some work in 1889."

The Rev.C.S.Grueber died on September 30, 1894, having been Vicar of Hambridge for just over fifty years.

On October 4, 1895, Mrs.Grueber died.

As already stated, no records exist of the services held in the Church before 1897. Proceeding from that year we have entries relating to the following events.

1900. A flagstaff was erected on the Tower.

1901. Jan.27 - Requiem for Queen Victoria.

Feb.2 - Funeral Of " "

1902. June 2 - Thanksgiving for Peace after the South African War. Large congregation.

Aug. 9 - Coronation of King Edward VII (postponed owing to the King's sudden illness.)

May - Hambridge Benefit Society. Club Day.

1914. Mar. 3 - Death of the Rev.C.L.Marson.

Mar. 7 - Funeral, at which the Bishop of Bath and Wells officiated, assisted by the Rev.F.M.Etherington and the Rev.D.M. Ross.

July 5 - The Rev.A.J.Hook was inducted.

Aug. 4 - Declaration of War.

1915. Aug. 8 - John C.Marson was killed at the Dardenelles.

Oct. 3 - New Altar etc. were dedicated as a memorial of Fr.Marson.

1917. June. - The Rev.A.J.Hook went away as an Army Chaplain, his place being taken temporarily by the Rev.W.J.Dight, assistant priest of Shepton Beauchamp.

1918. Nov.11 - Thanksgiving for the Armistice. "The news was received about mid-day. A wet evening, but very good congregation considering that about half the parish was laid up with influenza."
1920. Sept. - The Rev.A.J.Hook left to become Vicar of St.John's, Taunton.
 Nov.14 - The Rev.W.J.Dight was inducted.
 Dec.19 - The War Memorial was unveiled and dedicated.
1922. - Extensive repairs to the Church were taken in hand and successfully accomplished.
1923. July - Death of Mr.G.D.Templeman.
1924. Oct. - The Mothers' Union was started.
1927. Apr.20 - Death of the Rev.W.J.Dight.
 July14 - Induction of the Rev.J.A.Gibson.
1929. Jan.23 - The Organ was partially destroyed by fire.
1930. June24 - The Rev.J.A.Gibson resigned.
 July27 - The Rev.H.R.Willimott was inducted.
1932. Jan. 2 - Death of Mr.R.T.Combe.
1938. Feb.20 - Electric light was installed.
 July 8 - The Bishop of Bath and Wells consecrated additional Churchyard, given by Mr.Combe.
1941. March - The Church was cleaned and distempered. The Riddell posts were erected round the Altar.
1943. Dec. - A new Flagstaff was erected on the Church Tower.