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# Ashendon Church - Architectural Discoveries - The Bucks Herald (1923)

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## ASHENDON CHURCH - INTERESTING ARCHITECTURAL DISCOVERIES

Ashendon Church, the subject of interesting correspondence in recent issues of the Bucks Herald, was reopened for public worship on Tuesday, the Bishop of Buckingham officiating. Through the unexpected disclosure of architectural features of considerable importance, the church has aroused the interest of experts and increased the affection of the parishioners for an historic fabric that once served as landmark to Saxons and Danes, and the construction of which dates back to at least the 12th Century - possibly earlier.

For generations the walls of the interior had been plastered. This required re-washing, but when an attempt was made recently to do this the plaster began to crumble, and it was decided to strip the walls. For some years the presence of a door in the north wall had been suspected, and the removal of the plaster disclosed it. But none suspected that a few yards away, on the same wall, was embedded in the plaster a solidly constructed "squint" and doorway which at some time possibly gave access to a place where the sacrament was reserved. That a north transept existed is adduced by the fact that a buttress still stands supporting the north wall. Above the "squint" was also discovered an entrance to the rood loft. The chancel roof has been cleared of much lath and plaster, and the oak beams oiled and polished. In the course of this work an attempt at an inscription was discovered, three figures, 166, being clearly discernable, but the fourth, which would have given the year, is indistinct.

The west end has also been cleared of lath and plaster partitions, disclosing walls that have never been seen within living memory. A new door has been erected, and the round Saxon font placed in a new position after being for years partly embedded in a plaster covered pillar in the centre of the church.

Whatever architectural and historic merits may have been claimed for the retention of the covering which has been removed, the consensus of the opinion in the village of Ashendon favours the appearance of the church as it is today. The restoration and renovation work has been well carried out by Mr. W. Figg, of Waddesdon, under the direction of Mr. C. O. Skilbeck, of Bledlow, who was called in as an architectural adviser and expert.

The Dedication of Gifts - A crowded congregation attended the re-opening of the service, at which Rev. A. F. G. Fletcher, Vicar of Ashendon, officiated, assisted by Rev. T. Appleton, Rector of Ludgershall and formerly Vicar of Ashendon and Rev. Dr. Elwell, Vicar of Long Crendon. Ex-servicemen attended, having paraded under the direction of Mr. R. While. The 1st Ashendon Company of Girl Guides were also present in charge of Miss Clemow, and the Brownies were in charge of Miss Michell. After Evensong, prayers of thanksgiving and of dedication were said by the Bishop of

Buckingham, who, in addition to the restoration of the church, had in mind gifts of a cross and candlesticks which stood upon the altar, all of which were "in memoriam". The cross was the gift of Mr. F. Murrell-Wright of Port Said (who has shown considerable interest in the village church) and is inscribed thus on the base: "To the Glory of God, in memory of H. W. M-W, August 17th 1923". The candlesticks are the gifts of Mrs. Roads of Ashendon. In the course of an address the Bishop said that they must indeed be described as one of thanksgiving for those who lived in Ashendon and its immediate locality, because God had put it into the hearts of many to do their utmost to restore and renovate His House, which stood in their midst always speaking to them of His existence.

"Carry your thoughts back" the Bishop added. "Ashendon took its part in the old Saxon days in those great struggles which existed in this part of the country. It took its part in those days when this part of the country was subject also to attacks from the Danes, and history has it that King Ethelred was a martyr in the immediate vicinity of the parish of Ashendon. History has it now that there was a Bishop of Dorchester who was present at a great battle near this spot, and that he gave his life."

That wonderful church was served by the Abbey of Notley. As they looked at it today, changed to a certain extent, it nevertheless brought home to them that Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever, and how God in His mercy made provision for His children all down the ages - a house in their midst to which every parishioner had the right to go, a trusting place between God and the soul. Let not that day pass out of their lives, the Bishop concluded, without it leaving a real impression which would show itself. Let them go forth determined that the dear old church should continue and God's guidance to be the same living witness, speaking to them of their future towards God and man, and might the up-growing generation find that their betters were setting them such an example that the old traditions of Ashendon might be handed on and that God's kingdom might be enlarged and His honour and glory testified to by the way in which they tried to live and work as the children of God. As the service closed a collection was taken for the restoration fund. This realised £14 towards approximately £100 - which is still required.

War memorial unveiled - Subsequently Major H. L. Aubrey-Fletcher, D.S.O. M.V.O. unveiled the village War Memorial, a granite cross which has been erected on an elevation near the entrance to the churchyard. It bears the following inscription: "1914-1918 In affectionate and grateful memory of parishioners who fell in the Great War. Albert Lay, O.B.J.I. Dec 12 1915 aged 20 years, Walter Ewers O.B.L.I Aug 28 1918 aged 21 years. Also in honour of all those who did their duty from this parish".

The simple impressive ceremony was conducted in the presence of a large congregation, including relatives of the deceased, and a parade of ex-servicemen, all of whom wore their service medals. Having removed the large Union Jack which draped the Memorial, and declared it unveiled "To the Glory of God and in memory of the men of Ashendon who gave their lives in the Great War" Major Aubrey Fletcher delivered an appropriate speech, in which he emphasised that the men who fought in the War left us an example of cheerfulness and friendship which was essentially characteristic of the English soldier. He suggested that as the people of Ashendon passed by and saw that Memorial they would not only think of sadness, that men had died, but of the characteristics of cheerfulness and friendliness which they and all who served had shown, and would resolve to follow their example.

As a finale to the proceedings buglers from Aylesbury introduced by Mr. J. Prothero, sounded the "Last Post", and wreaths were placed upon the Memorial, including a tribute of laurels and lilies "in affectionate and sincere memory of the parishioners of Ashendon and Pollicott".