

St. John's Church, Newsholme, in the Parish of Keighley and Diocese of Bradford: 1844-1944.

THE ANCIENT PARISH OF KEIGHLEY in the West Riding of Yorkshire is in shape an irregular oblong with a circular projection at the S.E. corner, in the centre of which stands the Parish Church of St. Andrew. The N.E. corner is on the bank of the Aire at Utley; the N.W. one at the Hitching Stone, and the S.W. one at Great Wolf Stones. Almost in the centre of this area, on high ground (900 ft. above sea-level) stands the grey stone hamlet of Newsholme, surrounded by farms and fields. Because the population of Keighley is collected into the valleys of the Worth and the Aire, Newsholme is often thought of as an isolated and remote spot, four miles away from the Parish Church: but actually St. John's Church is quite near the geographical centre of the Parish.

Newsholme, moreover, has a long history of its own. Together with Keighley proper it appears in the *Domesday Book*, thus:

TERRA REGIS IN EVRIC SCIRE
WEST REDING

IN CRAVE

b. In Neuhuse. Wills. i. car' ad
gld.

Translation:

The King's Land in York-Shire
WEST RIDING

IN CRAVEN

Berewick. In Newhouse William
had one carucate to be taxed.

This signifies that at that time there would be at "Newhouse" a small estate with just sufficient arable land to be worked by one plough, and with the necessary buildings, pasture, and woodland for the appropriate number of men and animals. A carucate is estimated at about 120 acres.

We may, however, pass over the mediæval centuries, and come down to the year 1670 when Robert and S. Hall built the farm-house now known as "Church Farm." This is really the time of building of St. John's: for the Church is a room cut off from the farm; and the architecture of the house is typical of what a conservatively-minded man of that age would delight in. Robert Hall is remembered for having had a bitter controversy with Keighley's famous Rector, Miles Gale, over the building of the Grammar School endowed by John Drake. Hall was the senior lay trustee, and a man who spoke his mind strongly.

Rectors
of
Keighley

The provision of the Church or "chapel of ease" was made in 1844. No record of the actual date of the first services seems to be available. Frederick Greenwood, the then possessor of Church Farm, generously handed over two rooms from the house; one for the Church, the other for the Sunday School; and the former was licensed for the services of the Church of England. This room will hold up to 200 persons; it is lofty, with wooden pillars supporting the roof, and well lit, and approximately square in shape.

William
Busfeild,
1840.

Of the first thirty years of the Church's life we can find no account: but from 1872 onwards there is more material. In that year took place a considerable renovation of the interior: the seating re-arranged, the organ removed to the east end, and choir-stalls erected, the walls repainted and adorned with a text over the altar. Service was held on Sundays at 2-30.

William
Malam,
1871.

The following year, 1873, there was a change in the curacy-in-charge: the Revd. J. R. Davenport being succeeded by the Revd. Wm. Mitchell,

B.A., of Magdalen Hall (now merged in Hertford College), Oxford. Announcing the latter's appointment in the Parish Magazine the Rector writes: "The difficulty of obtaining Curates for such remote places as Newsholme and Braithwaite renders it imperative to form them into a new District—an endowment for which might be supplied by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Steps are in progress for accomplishing this desirable purpose. The Bishop [of Ripon] gives his hearty sanction to the project, which will, after certain preliminaries, be set before the Church-people of Keighley. We hope they will render all the aid in their power to increase the efficiency of the Church in this overgrown parish."

Nothing further, however, seems to have transpired, and the proposal must have been abandoned: as was also a much later one to transfer the district to Oakworth Parish.

Newsholme presents no exception to the West Riding rule that the Sunday School Anniversary and the Harvest Thanksgiving are two days of great importance. In the 1870's the former was held on the third Sunday in June, and the S.S. Festival on Parish Feast Tuesday in July. As is still the approved practice, there were special services, sometimes guest-preachers, and large collections, often amounting to £10 or over. The Festival was more secular: a band was hired (the Turkey Mills Brass Band from Goose-eye in 1872; the Cowling Band in 1879) and at 2 p.m. scholars, teachers, and friends assembled, formed a procession behind the band, and proceeded to various houses in the neighbourhood. At some calls the visitors would be "hospitably entertained with milk and a variety of cakes." Then came tea on return to the School: in 1879 tea lasted from 4 to 7 p.m. After this the folk—and the band—adjourned to a convenient field for games and music. It is very pleasing to read of numbers of the town-dwellers of the Parish joining in these festivities.

In 1878 the choir-seats, which had faced the congregation, were turned

to face N. and S. and also enlarged. A Reading-Desk was constructed between the Altar and the Pulpit. It is at this time that we have the first references to the monthly Communion Service, which was then held in the morning of the third Sunday in each month. Also in 1878 the Farm and Church were presented, without formal conveyance, by Mr. F. B. Greenwood, J.P., to the Rector and Wardens of Keighley.

1879 is a year of note in Newsholme's history. An anonymous lady made a donation of £2 5s. 0d.; the people added to this; and the Font was acquired, and dedicated by a Baptism Service at which the Rector baptized six children. Anniversary and Harvest were highly successful, the Church being crowded out. Three churchwardens were elected at a congregational meeting held on Midsummer Day: Messrs. T. E. Midgley, Walbank, and Nice.

In 1880 efforts were begun to raise money for a new and better organ, the first being a tea-party on April 3. Rector Longsdon, who evidently took great interest in and did much for Newsholme, commends this effort to the "neighbours in Keighley." The task of finding money for so expensive a project was a big one; but success was eventually achieved: Mr. Seth Burwin of Oakworth opened the organ on June 29, 1889.

An anonymous lady gave a worked Alms-bag to the Church in August, 1897.

Two years later there came to take charge of the Braithwaite-Newsholme area one who is still remembered for the faithfulness and devotion of his ministry—the Lay Reader Mr. James Hindle. It is still related how Mr. Hindle would walk from his home at Laycock to Braithwaite Church on Sunday mornings and evenings, to Newsholme in the afternoons, Sunday after Sunday. Equally hard did he work during the week. He served the district for 23 years, retiring in 1922, when the Newsholme people gave him as a testimonial £15 and three pictures of the Church and village.

Frederick
Daustini
Cremer,
1888.

Henry
John
Palmer,
1899.

Henry
John
Longsdon,
1877.

The Anniversary Services on June 15, 1902, were marked by the appearance of new ornaments for the Altar, viz., hangings of red and gold brocade, and frontal of green and gold silk tapestry with frontlet and orphreys of green velvet. A "lady in the Parish" did the making-up of these ornaments, and the people raised the cost of the materials, £3 10s. 0d.

While speaking of Altar ornaments, it will be well to mention that St. John's Church possesses a singularly charming set of Communion vessels in britannia metal: a small flagon, a paten, and two medium-sized chalices of the ancient Byzantine shape. The plate is devoid of any ornamentation, but is well designed and gains by its very simplicity.

Other interesting possessions of the Church are a magnificent lectern Bible of 1839 and a large Prayer Book of similar date, both gifts of S.P.C.K., and possibly used in the earliest days. There are also four large boards painted with the Lord's Prayer, X Commandments, and Apostles' Creed.

A change was made in the tenure of the building in 1907: the gift of the farm-house to the Rector and Wardens of 1878 was revoked by Capt. Greenwood, who gave in lieu £150 to be invested for the parochial Clergy Maintenance Fund. The Church is now held on lease by the Rector and Wardens from the owners of Church Farm; a rent of 1/- p.a. is payable every December 31; and provision is made for the terminating of the lease if services cease to be held.

During the next decades no outstanding events are noted: but we may well think of the regular worship and social life of the Church proceeding on its orderly round year by year. The Great War of 1914-19 would not be without its effects: but the Church survived. That the Newsholme people are not easily put out by difficulties is shewn by an old saying of theirs, which we will quote here: "Well, ther' war' ollus a hill

agean a slack—and two i' Newsholme-dein!"

As mentioned above, Mr. Hindle retired in 1922.

The first Bishop of Bradford (Dr. Perowne) visited Newsholme on May 20, 1928, and dedicated a new frontal, pulpit-cloth, and book-markers in memory of Mrs. Burwin. We may note that the Church also has a white frontal with red ornamentation which originally belonged to another of our District Churches, All Saints', Highfield. This is generally used at Communion Services, now held on great festivals and on the afternoon of the fourth Sunday in each month.

In 1930 the organ received a thorough overhaul. Electric light was put in in 1934.

John Merrin,
1927.

J. C. F. Hood,
1932.

At this point it is fitting to express very sincere thanks to Mr. Harry Bancroft, who has most kindly furnished the writer with a beautifully-written manuscript book containing extracts from the Parish Magazine and other sources, upon which the above narrative is based. Mr. Bancroft's labours have largely made the writing of these notes possible: and we hope to arrange for the preservation of his MS. in permanent keeping.

So our story draws to its halting-place. It must not, however, be thought that this means a cessation of the life of the Church: on the contrary, the various observances now traditional to Newsholme are all kept up, even though the out-break of war in 1939 again created difficulties. Thus, besides the keeping of the Church's Kalendar, the marking of her seasons—Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Whitsun, and Trinity—in appropriate manner, and the administering of the Occasional Offices, as well as the maintenance of the good work of the Sunday School and of the branch of the Mothers' Union (which has been in existence about 15 years), Newsholme has its "Walking Day," the modern representative of the former S.S. Feast, its S.S. Anniversary in June, its Harvest Festival in early autumn, its "Flower" Sunday in August, and

Ludovick
Stewart
Robinson,
1909.

Edward
Thomas
Gurney
Hunter,
1918.

also various annual social events. All these attract a good number of visitors from the neighbourhood, whom the Newsholme folk delight to welcome with warm hospitality. Gifts continue to be made to the Church from time to time: new books for minister or choir or congregation; a "fair linen cloth" or a new burse and veil for the Altar; new flower-vases; and so forth.

No account of Newsholme Church would be complete without a mention of the late Mrs. Page, born Martha Spencer. For the space of a generation before her passing-away on September 14, 1940, she was prominent in the church-life, as a Sunday School teacher, as a Mothers' Union leader, as a general organizer and planner where such an one was needed. In all she did, Mrs. Page shewed a wonderful spirit of keenness and sincerity. It was delightful to converse with her, for she spoke the Yorkshire dialect as a natural language (as, of course, it should be spoken). A great debt is owed her of affection and gratitude by the present Newsholme people, both young and old. The second Bishop of Bradford (Dr. A. W. F. Blunt) on March 2, 1941, dedicated the Altar-piece (a framed "Medici" reproduction of Perugini's "Crucifixion") as her memorial.

At length we reach 1944—the Centenary Year. The Council decided to utilize the S.S. Anniversary date—June 18—as the actual date of opening was unknown. This was preceded by a special meeting of the Mothers' Union, attended by members from all the Parish branches and addressed by Mrs. Graham Meredith, Diocesan Secretary, on June 6; and by a social day, Saturday, June 10, when the ceremonies of "Walking Day" were performed, and followed by tea, games, a concert, and a social evening. Mr. J. G. Fearnside was organizer and master of ceremonies on this day. Two services, at 3 and 6-30 p.m., were held on the 18th, and

were attended by hundreds of people. At the former service, conducted by the Revd. K. Law, M.A., the preacher was the Provost of Bradford, the Very Revd. J. G. Tiarks, M.A.; and the choir was augmented not only by willing friends, but also by the choristers of the Parish Church in their surplices. In the evening the Rural Dean of South Craven (the Revd. E. E. Peters, M.A., Vicar of Silsden) officiated and preached: the augmented choir again gave special music. On the following Sunday there was a celebration of the Holy Communion.

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In reviewing this record of a century's activity the writer also looks back upon his seven-and-a-half years' connexion with St. John's Church as priest-in-charge and is tempted to pose the question, "what is it that sustains and energizes the life of which St. John's Church is the centre?" There may be many factors: but certainly at Newsholme as we have experienced it, there does exist the "worshipping community" of friends and neighbours. The Church, with its School, stands in their midst, maintaining its silent witness day by day to the Faith, and forming a focal point for their social activities. The community, however, is not isolated: a visible reminder of its union with the Universal Church is furnished by its ordained ministers. To further this sense of community of friendship within the larger body is surely one of the main principles of Anglicanism: and its working is exemplified in a place like Newsholme, it may be on a miniature scale, but in full quality. By the grace of God may this condition long continue to prevail: that so Christ's words may be ever fulfilled there: "Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them"; and, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

C. P. L. DENNIS.