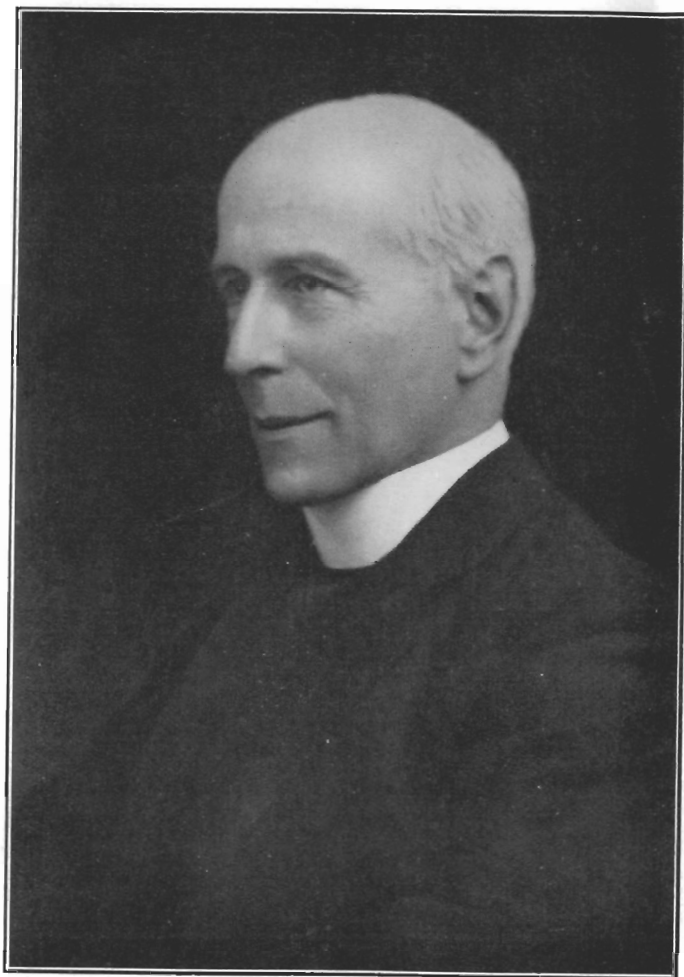


Memories
of
S. Cross, Knutsford

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Rev. W. ARMOUR, M.A. Vicar of S. Cross, 1893-1936.

Foreword . . .

Although the Church and Parish of S. Cross are of no great antiquity, many have been anxious to know its history, and the present Vicar is one of many who will be most pleased that this booklet has been published.

We are indeed grateful to the kind parishioner who conceived the idea of this short story of our Church, and who has made its publication possible.

All the proceeds of its sale will be devoted to Church Funds, and I know that she will feel amply repaid for all she has done if all the copies are sold.

There could be no one better fitted to write this memoir than the Reverend W. Armour, the beloved Vicar of S. Cross from 1893 to 1936. He has given us a most interesting account of the growth of S. Cross, and his own personal reminiscences of those 43 years make the whole story really live. We wish to thank him most sincerely for so kindly writing a narrative which we shall value greatly.

Eric W. Thomas.



PART I.

IN medieval England on large estates it was usual for the church to be placed near the residence of the landowner, who provided the minister, who lived as chaplain at the Hall. Thus a church stood for centuries near the Hall at Norbury Booths and was attended by the tenantry on the estate. The area of the churchyard is marked by a railed enclosure, the church having fallen into decay and been allowed to perish.

For a town had grown "across the brook." It is said that the formation of Tatton Park involved the removal of three hamlets whose inhabitants were domiciled in Knutsford, which thus became a considerable community. The adjacent landowners at Tatton, Toft and Norbury Booths combined to build a church in Knutsford, appointing the minister in turn, the church being dedicated to St. John Baptist. The registers from the Norbury Booths church were taken to St. John's, and a new vault was made under it to which were transferred the contents of the family vault under the old church.

This change caused great heart-burning throughout the Booths estate. The tenantry seem to have felt that they had been robbed of an ancestral inheritance. They refused

to be reconciled to the change, and to attend the new church. Eventually, to make some satisfaction to the people for what they had lost, Peter Legh of Norbury Booths conceived the idea of a church in Cross Town, which he would plan himself, which should be built of materials on the estate and by the hands of the tenantry themselves, so that the people should feel it was really their very own. This was done in 1856, the Parish of S. Cross being constituted two years later. Rev. L. W. Riley, M.A., who had been master of the Grammar School, was appointed Vicar. The farmhouse hard by the church was adapted to form a vicarage, and received a considerable extension to accommodate the boarders whom the Vicar brought from the school. The stable became a schoolroom, over which were placed the dormitories for the boys. The school bell is still in position, and traces of the farm also remain. The pump is there, but covered with ivy, and an overflow pipe from the well is still visible. The vicarage at one time held thirty-five people.

The community being small, the pastoral work involved was not exacting and the Vicar was able to discharge the duties of his ministerial office, look after his school, and bring up a family, one of whom became distinguished as the Archbishop of Perth, Western Australia. The Archbishop's eldest son was a Rhodes Scholar, and after being a prisoner in the Great War began a career of signal promise as Correspondent to "The Times" in China, where he lost his life in the unsettled state of the country. Another son is now Bishop of Bendigo in the Province of Victoria. "C. Riley 1877" used to be on a window-pane in our bedroom at the vicarage. In that year he and I were at Cambridge, and I remember him as a noted figure on the river and in the schools. When as Bishop

he was told of his name being still on the window-pane, he said, "Windows seem to last longer than they used to."

A tablet to the memory of the Archbishop is affixed to the north wall of the sacarium of the present church. The Cross on the Altar was a memorial to his father, the inscription being in stone on the same wall. The father's grave is near the churchyard path.

The Vicar's earnest desire that the people should regard the church as a place where they might feel at home in their Heavenly Father's House was evidenced in a remarkable way. When the fabric was completed, and before the stalls and pews were in position, the parishioners were gathered in the building and had tea. No doubt the wish was expressed that, when the church was furnished and consecrated, they might often meet there to receive the Bread of Life.

S. Cross was fortunate in its first Vicar, who was greatly beloved. An evidence of his kindness of heart remains to the Parish for all time. In the hollow beyond the Paper Mills on the Mobberley Road stood a group of cottages known as Pig Cote Row. In one of them dwelt a family named Winstanley—no connection whatever with a parishioner of that name who afterwards became Churchwarden. One of the boys of the family, named Edmund Gannon, a chorister, and in school showing exceptional ability, being neglected at home, was befriended by the Vicar, who guided him through the preliminary stages of training for the profession of teacher. The promise of the boy was fulfilled in the man, and throughout a successful career as Schoolmaster he preserved a thankful remembrance of all that he owed to S. Cross and his kind

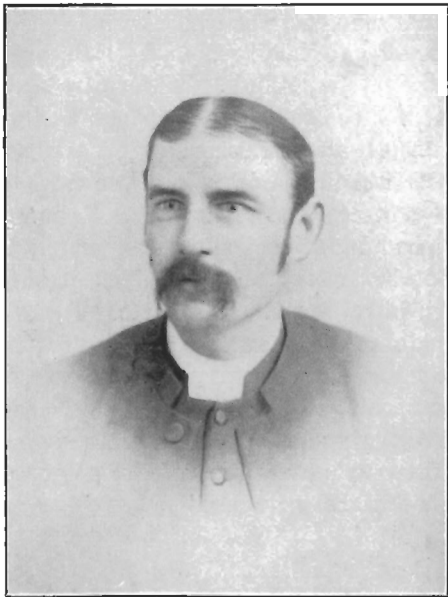
benefactor there. At the end of his days he asked to be laid as near him as possible and bequeathed all his savings to S. Cross, whereby the endowment of the church was increased by a hundred a year. He is commemorated in a tablet on the north wall of the church.

Soon after the coming of the second Vicar, Rev. R. T. Bradbury, M.A., the fabric of the church was found to be in such an unsafe condition that it was eventually decided that repair was impracticable and that rebuilding was the only sound remedy. The recently constructed railway had brought a considerable number of well-to-do people to the parish and neighbourhood, and with the assurance of their help it was possible to attempt the great work.

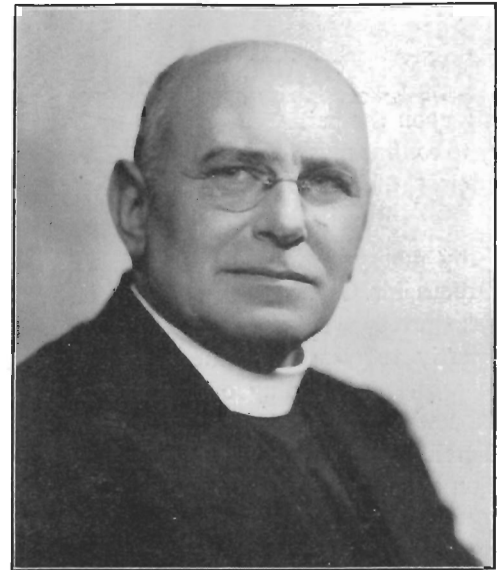
It was done in three stages—first, the Chancel and the Nave with Vestries were finished; then, as a commemoration of Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1887, the Tower was built, bearing the date on its battlements; and finally the side aisles completed the whole within ten years, and the Vicar could gratefully announce, "We have built a church and paid for it." It was really a wonderful achievement, for the community, though well-to-do, was not a large one. It meant raising an average of a thousand pounds a year while the work was in progress. The work was done, but it cost the Vicar his life. His health had never been good and it broke down completely under the strain. He died within a year of the completion of the building, in retirement at Reigate. The window on the north side of the sacarium at S. Cross is to his memory. It might be said of him, as was said of another, "He won all hearts by opening to them his own, and so administered the sacred trust committed to him as to show yet once more that the people know the voice of a good shepherd, and will follow where he leads."



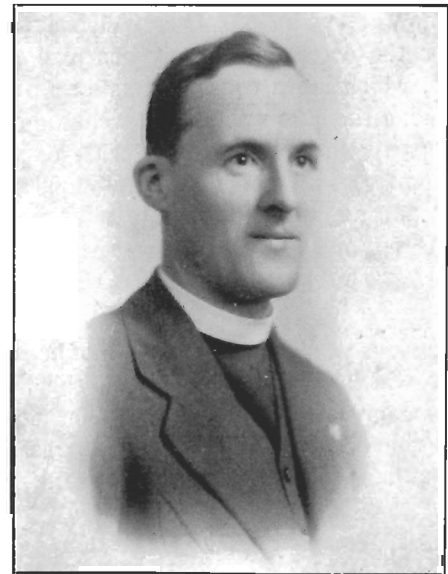
Rev. L. W. RILEY, M.A. First Vicar of S. Cross, 1858-1875.



Rev. R. T. BRADBURY, M.A. 1875-1892.



Rev. H. COOPER ANDERSON. 1936-1939.



Rev. E. W. THOMAS, B.A. The present Vicar, 1939.

PART II.

Entering upon the period covered by my own ministry, I shall try to confine myself to matters which may prove of general interest, though not always of the first importance.

Before my first year was out, at the instance of the Churchwardens, Mr. C. J. Galloway and Mr. H. T. Silvester, a fund was started, which eventually reached a thousand pounds, partly to clear off some outstanding accounts connected with the building operations, and partly to purchase a new organ more in keeping with the dimensions of the church. The organ was supplied by Messrs. W. Hill & Son of Westminster for £535, Sir William H. Houldsworth, Bart., M.P., being a great help in choosing the instrument. It was opened by Sir Frederick Bridge, Mus. Doc., Organist of Westminster Abbey. The old organ was sold to Moberley Church for £100.

The Vicar's wedding in 1897, Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, was the occasion of many generous gifts from parishioners, which are a constant reminder of the kind donors. Among the gifts was a most welcome cheque for £119, used partly in meeting the expense of setting up house, and partly in a payment to Cambridge University for an M.A. degree which is largely a matter of fees. Mr. H. A. Birley and Mr. H. T. Silvester were Wardens in this year.

In the previous year the idea of a peal of bells had been mooted, for which there is a frame in the belfry, but preference was given to the needs of the school, and for this object a sum of twelve hundred pounds was eventually raised, in the hon. treasurer'ship of Mr. Frank Merriman,

and later of Mr. J. Wilson Rooke, partly to meet current expenses and partly for the extension and renovation of the building.

At a later date an extension of the playground, with the addition of a garden, was obtained through the instrumentality of Mr. T. Blatherwick, who was a Foundation Manager of the school.

Many valuable gifts were made to the church by individual members of the congregation, and a list is subjoined, but, in the absence here and there of inscriptions or other records, is unavoidably incomplete.

Choirstalls—Sir William Houldsworth.

Font—Mr. and Mrs. Murray Speakman.

Pulpit—Mr. William Jones, father of Mrs. Greenup.

West Window—Mr. and Mrs. Galloway, in memory of a son.

Window on South side near organ—Mr. Galloway, in memory of his wife.

Both these windows were from the firm of Morris & Co., from drawings by Burne-Jones.

Screen—Mr. Galloway and Children, in memory of their mother.

The work was carried out under the direction of the Architects of the Church, Messrs. Austin & Paley of Lancaster.

Window on North side—A Son and Daughter of Mr. Galloway, in his memory.

Sanctuary Carpet—Mr. and Mrs. C. Gerald Agnew.

Rug in Sacrarium—Mr. and Mrs. T. A. Stuttard.

"The Deposition from the Cross," affixed to the South West pier of the Tower, was the gift of Mr. H. A. Birley. The Architects of the Church handled it with tenderest care as being of fragile material, but subsequently discovered that it was of solid brass throughout. This afforded a clue to its history and period. It may have been originally in the private chapel of a mansion. On such a theory, if the mansion was destroyed by fire, this masterpiece may well have been rescued and preserved. But whatever its history, it was eventually inherited by Mr. Birley who gave it to S. Cross.

The Jubilee of the Church was marked by the gathering of a fund, of which Mr. F. Boyd Merriman, now Sir F. Boyd Merriman, K.C., O.B.E., M.C., was hon. treasurer, for the increase of the endowment. A sum of £1,000 was eventually raised, which, with the help of a grant from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, enabled the endowment to be increased by £50 per annum.

Through the kind interest of the Wardens, Mr. Robert Manners Downie and Mr. Hubert Winstanley, 1918 being the twenty-fifth year on my ministry at S. Cross, a semi-Jubilee gift, consisting of a cheque for £255 was presented to me, and a gold wrist-watch, with commemorative inscription, to Mrs. Armour. The gift to me was promptly invested in War Savings, the gift to Mrs. Armour is still her faithful and cherished companion. An album containing the names of the contributors accompanied the gifts.

The enlargement of the vestries was undertaken during the long and fruitful term of office of Mr. H. Winstanley and Mr. F. Ashworth as Wardens. The original accommodation of the vestries was quite inadequate and had

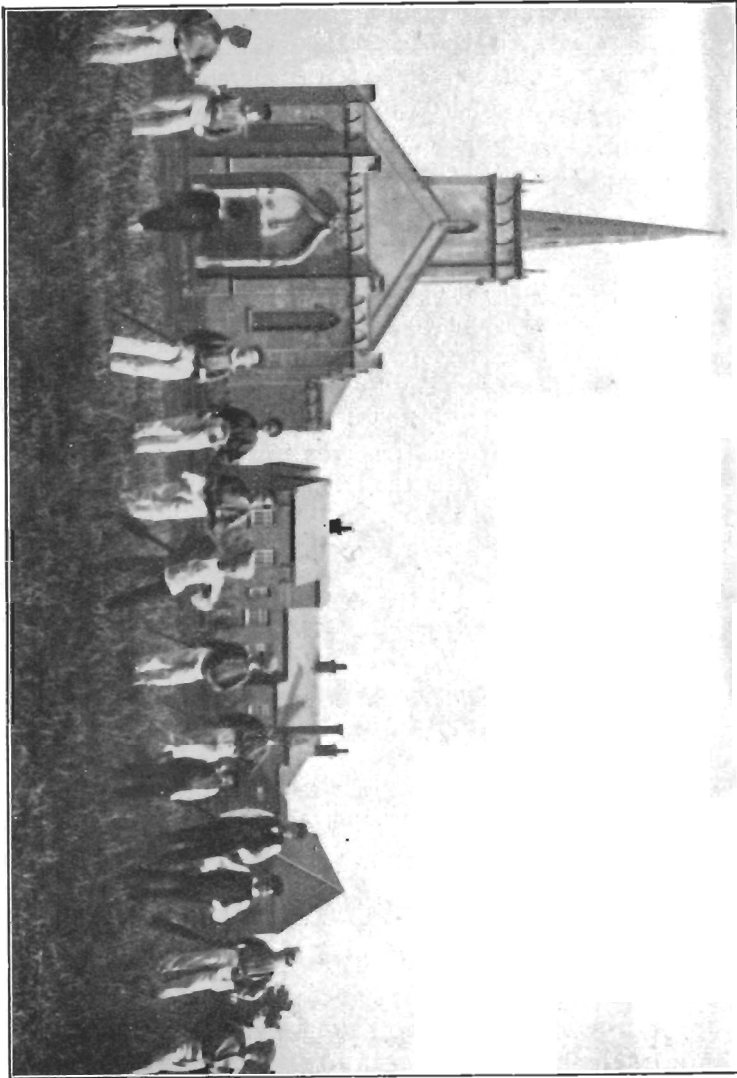
become a serious inconvenience when the choir developed an abnormal growth, under a most talented and popular organist, Mr. C. H. Thompson, F.G.O., A.R.C.O. Mr. Thompson had been secured to the church by the zealous quest of Mr. W. Andrew Jones, who had been Warden at the time of the vacancy. The additional benches and book-rests for the chancel were provided at the same time.

With these last in position it was possible to accept the offer of the Hallé Choir to come, sixty of them, to S. Cross, in acknowledgment of their appreciation of the organist's accompaniments at the extra rehearsals in their preparation of "The Dream of Gerontius." The service was the ordinary weekday Evensong, sung instead of said, our own choir being installed to the east of their usual position. The Hallé Choir rendered "The Hymn of Praise" as an anthem, and after the Evening Hymn at the end of the service, sang unaccompanied "Hail gladsome Light," from Sullivan's "Golden Legend."

It has been said that the most wonderful instrument is the human voice. As a rule it can only be heard at its best in a concert room. To hear that noble hymn, as it was then sung, in our beautiful church, as part of an act of worship, was the experience of a life-time.

At the early service, on Festivals, in "The King of Love," the melodies of the accompaniment seemed at times in the nature of an inspiration.

At length, as though consumed by the fire of his genius, in the prime of life, after but a brief illness, this gifted acquisition to our church was taken from us. His wife and daughter, in whom he had been greatly blessed, went to Canada and are now settled in Vancouver where new friends have not displaced the old.



In the same year Frank Merriman was laid in our churchyard. Hard by lies R. Charles Longridge. S. Cross Church and Schools from the beginning of their renewed life owe an incalculable debt to these two friends.

Major Hill, who had been chiefly instrumental in the rebuilding of the church, also lies in its shadow. The east window was his gift in memory of his parents. It depicts the Crucifixion, the treatment being capable of affording a vivid illustration of the foundation truth of the Gospel, a record of which notable feature may well conclude these reminiscences.

On one occasion in the course of the 9 a.m. Parish Communion, during the address, at an allusion to the contrast between our Lord on the Cross of shame and on the Throne of His Glory, attention being drawn to the subject of the window, the central Figure was seen to have become a blaze of light.

POSTSCRIPT.

Three items are added to the above reminiscences :—

1. I once took part in an entertainment in the school, contributing two songs, "Three Fishers" and "Three Jolly Sailor Boys." Shortly afterwards returned for a few years to Knutsford Mr. Charles Pierson, who had been voluntary organist and choirmaster to the first two Vicars, and had brought the choir to an excellence which may have been equalled, but not surpassed. Accepting an invitation to take part in the next entertainment, he sang two songs (neither by special request), "Three Fishers" and "Three Jolly Sailor Boys."

2. Dialogue at vicarage on Monday morning between Vicar and munition worker quartered in Cross Town, who

had come to put up the Banns, and had given his name, which had been written down:—

Vicar: "Lady's name?"

Munition Worker: "Miss So-and-so!"

Vicar: "I must have her Christian name. What is her first name?"

M. W., after a pause: "I don't know!"

Vicar: "What do you call her?"

M. W.: "Miss So-and-so!"

Vicar: "Well, you must get the first name. Put it on a piece of paper and drop it into my letter box. It will then be ready for Sunday."

Dialogue resumed on following Friday morning, Vicar meeting munition worker in Middle Walk, wheeling a barrow.

Vicar: "Well, I've not had that name yet."

M. W., putting down barrow: "No, but I'm going down there this week-end, and I'll find out."

He never reappeared. It may be that he had made up his mind about the girl but was afraid to ask her, and thought that by putting up the Banns the matter might be settled over her head.

3. A neighbouring padre, to whom I recounted the above, told of an occasion when, after the Banns had been duly published once, the man came to say that on thinking matters over he had come to the conclusion that it **was** the sister he ought to marry, and could the Banns be altered? The Vicar said that there would be no difficulty in altering the name, but it would mean the issue of another set of Banns—that would be another half-crown.

"Oh, I think I'll go on as I was." The half-crown **settled** it.