



Parish Church News

Holy Trinity, Oare

1858 - 2013

In 1858 the population of Oare was not so very different as it is today although there were fewer dwellings and larger families. The 1851 census for Wilcot records some 332 people as living in Oare.

At that time there was a well supported Methodist Chapel in Pound Lane but no church. It had long been a concern of the Vicar of Wilcot, the Revd. Maurice Goodman, who lived at Oare House that there should be a small church in Oare to relieve the young and elderly from the long walk to Sunday services at Wilcot. On his death in 1856 his widow, Mrs. Ann Goodman, was instrumental in obtaining land, securing funding and appointing an architect, S. S. Teulon, to provide a church in his memory. The land, previously the estate timber yard, was provided by his heir Mr. Edward Goodman.

The architect Samuel Sanders Teulon, born in 1812 and practicing from 1838 until his death in 1873 was much sought after by those commissioning churches, country houses and estate properties. He had an open acceptance of innovation in his designs and a highly original gothic style. His clients, who were largely aristocratic land owners, included Prince Albert and the Prince of Wales. Royal commissions included estate cottages and workshops at Windsor. Perhaps today he is best remembered for his design of the Buxton Memorial Fountain erected in 1834 in the Victoria Tower Gardens, Westminster to commemorate the abolition of slavery in the British Empire.

In his church and grand country house buildings Teulon used contrasting materials, textures and colours to good effect as seen here in the careful detailing and contrasting colours of the interior brickwork. Those who visit and worship here appreciate the quiet spirituality and sense of warmth and internal space which is contrast to the restrained Norman French exterior.

Sir Niklaus Pevsner, the renowned architectural historian suggested Holy Trinity Oare is perhaps the ugliest church in Wiltshire. Apparently he later softened his criticism. Pevsner had a keen eye for

authenticity and did not admire the way in which Teulon interpreted the gothic style. It must be remembered that in his prodigious undertaking to visit and record for publication every building of importance in England Pevsner kept to a punishing schedule and visited up to fifteen small towns and villages a day. By necessity he would not have been able to spend very long in our small Victorian country church.

The Church of England has long had to adapt to changing needs and circumstances, so clearly demonstrated in the history of Oare church. Holy Trinity was consecrated in September 1858 as a chapel-of-ease or daughter church of Wilcot which it remained for the next thirty four years. In 1892 Oare was created an ecclesiastical parish with a separate incumbent. Following the first world war, in 1922 the parishes of Oare and Huish became a joint benefice styled Huish with Oare, retaining both parish churches. In 1951 the Vicar of Wilcot became Rector of Wilcot and Rector of Huish with Oare, the appointments held in plurality.

Over the last forty five years there has been a number of changes with the introduction of Team Ministry in 1970, initially as the Swanborough Team of five parishes later enlarged to nine; from 1998 following amalgamation as the Pewsey and Swanborough Team and currently as the further enlarged Vale of Pewsey Team now comprising fifteen parishes served by a team Rector, two team vicars, one ordained local minister and two Licensed Lay Ministers, a very different situation from that of 1858 when the Vicar of Wilcot lived in Oare House.

Inside the church are several memorials to the Rogers' family of Rainscombe who were benefactors to the village. The hanging cross, the gift of the Revd. Stanley Coggins in memory of his mother was made by the staff and pupils of Guthlaxton School, Leicester in 1969.

In the 1990s there was some re-ordering of the interior, the choir and some rear pews removed, the font repositioned and new carpeting throughout.

The churchyard is carefully managed as a wildlife sanctuary while the church is home to a small colony of bats. The original Oare school building was beside the road boundary, the cast iron school gate being still visible partly encased in the wall capping to the front railings.