

# Barnet and District Record Society

## BULLETIN

## East Barnet Parish Church

**T**HE history of this ancient Church goes back for over eight centuries for it is thought to have been built about A.D. 1080-1100, and whilst it is fairly certain that East Barnet was inhabited long before this, we must visualise the Church as being set in a clearing of an enormous forest. Some part of this stretched eastwards into Essex and to Highgate in the south. It is reliably stated that when the Church was erected no other church building existed between St. Albans and London. The Abbot of St. Albans exercised lordship as far south as this parish and was both patron and rector until the Reformation, when the patronage was transferred to the Crown. Here, then, was established a kind of outpost where lived a small community of woodsmen, rough and uncouth, who owed allegiance to the mitred Abbot of St. Albans, and it is interesting to try and imagine the types of people, their costumes and general bearing who first attended service here — standing or kneeling on the floor, there being no seats.

Domesday Book does not mention East Barnet. During the course of its history East Barnet has variously been known as East Bernet or Bergnet, and some early documents refer to it as La Barnet or Le Barnete, and here was erected a small Church dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin; it was built on clay and the walls were constructed of rubble and plaster, and has stood for over eight centuries a monument to the religious zeal of those early enthusiasts. According to Sir Henry Chauncey, the Hertfordshire historian, the Church stood in the middle of the village at the beginning of the 18th century. We do not know the name of the builder, and neither do we know the original dimensions, but the north wall seems to indicate the extent of the original building. This wall has definitely been established as a Saxon and Norman wall by the Representatives of both the Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings Department of the Ministry of Works and the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings. It remains in a splendid state of preservation, although damaged in the Second World War. One can imagine that the three small apertures in the wall which serve as windows would lend themselves to a successful defence if necessary, and as can be seen the wall is some three feet thick. The glass in the windows is probably of the 13th or 14th century. The doorway under the gallery—which had been bricked up for a number of years — was re-opened in 1911. The inner doorway on the south side also appears to be part of the Norman building, and it is of interest to note the sundry rough

markings in the stonework surrounding the entrance. These rough-cut crosses and other less well defined marks have been held to be very old, and opinion has been expressed by those versed in antiquarian lore that they probably record vows made by parishioners who perchance never returned to fulfil them, or they may have been Masonic marks of those engaged in the building of the Church.

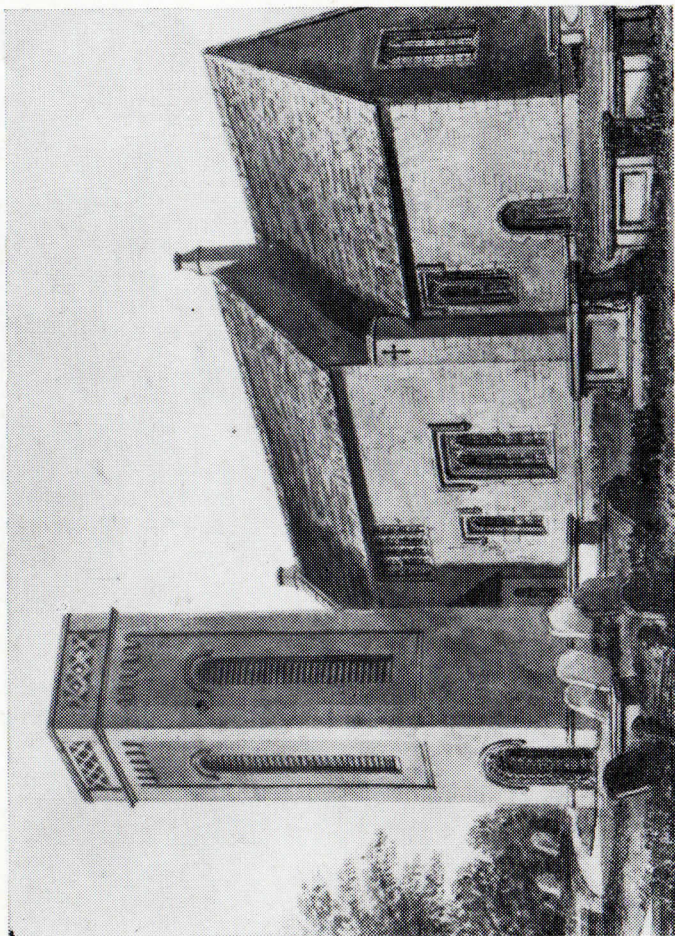
In 1829 a small sum of money was expended on the Church and the wainscoting removed from the north wall, and this revealed a piscina or credence table half-way up the Nave. We know that the pre-Reformation Church contained three altars to each of which a certain Joan Dudman bequeathed an offering in her will in 1541, and it is generally supposed that this credence table is connected with one of these three altars. Joan Dudman resided in a house called Dudmans, which latterly became known as Clock House. It is interesting to note that another of these altars — or a part thereof — may still be in use in the Rector's Vestry. The walls of the Church at this period were decorated with red lines in imitation of masonry, and the centre of each division had a six-leaved flower. The windows had border lines. A new pulpit was provided at this time and may now be seen on the north side of the Church, but originally this was injudiciously placed — for its occupants — against the southern wall and was in full track of the noonday sunlight. It replaced one of those constructions with a large sounding board which have been irreverently styled three-deckers. We know that the Chancel which was originally built in 1400, has been repaired and enlarged on several occasions, and there is a record available giving the names of contributors and the amounts subscribed for the repair of the Chancel in 1632, which were obtained mainly through the efforts of Sir Robert Berkeley, the ship money judge. It is known that in addition to voluntary contributions, a levy was made on the occupiers of land in the parish. The total charge in respect of the repairs was £73 2s. 2d. When Salmon wrote his history of Hertfordshire in 1728, Sir Robert Berkeley's arms impaling those of Conyers still remained in the north window of the Chancel, which is thought to be 15th century. An inventory of Church goods and ornaments taken in December, 1633, reveals the amusing item of "an heure glasse," which unfortunately has been lost, in common with so many other ornaments. In 1880 the Chancel was again rebuilt and lengthened by twelve feet eastwards, the organ chamber added by Col. Church in memory of his wife, and the present east window presented by Mr. Frederick Searle Parker, the co-churchwarden. This window, which cost £100, replaced a much smaller window which represented the Raising of the daughter of Jairus and the Raising of Lazarus, which was

presented in memory of the son and daughter of Thomas Wyatt, of Willenhall House. This latter window, which replaced one given by the Rev. B. Underwood in 1807 at a cost of £22 12s. od., was placed in the organ chamber, but removed in 1951 following damage by thieves. Also at this time the wooden lectern was replaced by the present brass one. It is of interest to note that up to the end of the 19th century the Ten Commandments flanked the east window.

One peculiar arrangement of the Church may be noticed, namely, the three large oak tie beams spanning the whole of the Nave and binding the north and south walls together. This may be a wise provision, for the Church is almost unique in that it has two roofs. It is reported that a zealous churchwarden anxious to preserve the old roof, and to perpetuate his fame and his carpentry, and the bricklaying of one of his neighbours, decided to raise the walls some ten or twelve feet — probably about the commencement of the 19th century, but it could have been earlier. The rafters of the original roof are of unequal size and very rough, no attempt having been made to square them off or to make them of equal length. Access to the roof is from the gallery. Formerly the ceiling in the Nave of the Church was painted with flights of angels, and in a letter read to the Cambridge Camden Society on the 13th January, 1852, by Mr. G. E. Street, a noted architect, he remarks that he could descry here and there paintings over the whole ceiling, and adds "one can quite imagine such an arrangement being very beautiful." The painting is believed to have been done in the 15th century, some of which was visible until quite recently. During World War II, however, the ceiling was damaged and some part of it became unsafe, and when after the war permanent repairs were possible the Rev. F. Robinson, the Rector, and his wardens considered it was an opportune time to have the ceiling thoroughly examined. This was done by the same authorities who examined the north wall, and in their report they acknowledged the existence of some kind of paintwork, but considered that the work involved in removing the whitewash would entail a great deal of expense in time and money as the pigment was actually on the surface, having worked up through the successive coats of whitewash, and the result would not be satisfactory. After considerable thought by those responsible, it was decided to have a complete new ceiling. A specimen of the old ceiling may be seen in a case placed at the west end of the Church. The cross over the east window on the outside was also damaged during the war and was repaired at this time. It was thought by those repairing the Church that it could have been an ancient cross of the 15th century.

A gallery at the west end of the Church was originally erected about the middle of the 17th century, and it is recorded that at one time there were two galleries — one of which was set apart for children. The choir of the Church, together with a barrel organ, which was given by Sir Simon Haughton Clarke, were originally placed in the gallery. It is of interest to note that up to the end of the 19th century the choir contained boys and girls. A surpliced choir was formed in 1889. In 1816 Dr. Garrow — the Rector at that time — built a Vestry at the west end of the Church and enlarged the existing gallery. In 1911 the Rev. Maw had the present Vestries built at the south-east end of the Church. A wooden turret surmounted the west end of the Church in 1794, and Sir Henry Chauncey writing in his *History of Hertfordshire* refers to East Barnet Church as being “cield within and covered with tyle to which joyns an erection of wood at the west end thereof where are three small bells, and a short spire on it.” The existing Bell Tower was erected in 1828, and up to a few years ago was almost completely covered with ivy, but this was finally removed, leaving the Tower as you now see it. The Tower when originally built was separated from the Church. In 1861 Mears, of London, cast at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry two bells for the Tower, and their weights were 4cwt. 3qr. 14lb. and 3cwt. 3lb. For many years, however, only one bell was in use as the larger one of the two was cracked. In 1960 these bells were replaced by three smaller ones in memory of Mr. and Mrs. W. Taylor.

Up to 1866 the Rectors of this Church had been responsible for maintaining services at the Chapelry of St. John the Baptist, Chipping Barnet, but after this date this Chapel of Ease — as the Church was described in the survey of Church lands made in 1648 — became separated from the Mother Church. It is recorded that this was held by some to be contrary to law, as the Churches were not three miles distant from one another. According to the Terrier drawn up in 1887, 90 acres of land were taken from the Mother Church and given to the Chapelry of Chipping Barnet in 1866, and this left them without any Glebe. An Act of Parliament assigned two acres of land in lieu of Rights of Common at Barnet to the Rectory House, but this was also taken away. At the same time by a Privy Council Order, East Barnet parish was ordered to pay two-fifths of the Land Tax on Chipping Barnet. Also the Mother Church was deprived of any participation in the Ravenscroft Fund for Church building purposes, which at that time was valued at £1,200 per annum. In 1868 the old south wall was pierced by two arches and the south aisle built, and the seating accommodation was thereby doubled. At this time the Church was reseated throughout — several of the pews had



EXTERIOR VIEW OF CHURCH, 1828

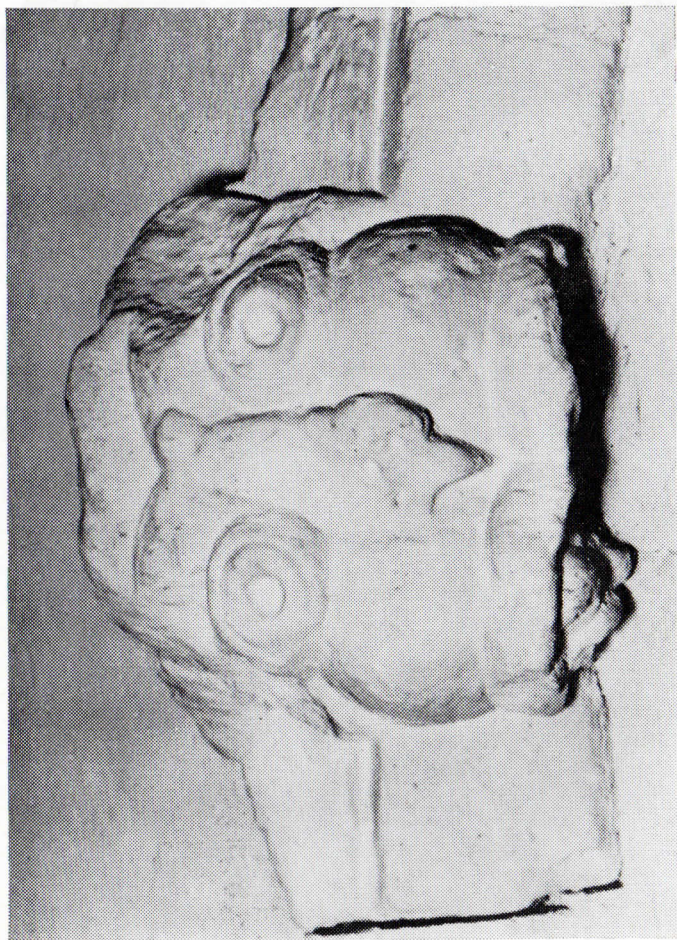


A DRAWING ON THE WEST JAMB OF THE INNER DOORWAY  
OF THE SOUTH PORCH



ONE OF THE WINDOWS IN THE NORTH WALL





CARVED HEAD OVER INNER DOORWAY OF THE SOUTH PORCH

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been enclosed with woodwork, entrance being gained by a door, but unfortunately these were removed and the office of Pew opener thereby lapsed. A new font was presented at this time, and the former font, which was bestowed by the Rev. Benjamin Underwood and had stood under the gallery, was then moved to its present position outside the Church by the main entrance, and is inscribed "To the loving memory of all the little Flowers of the Font which He hath gathered." The cost of these alterations amounted in all to £1,060. It is recorded that in 1875 a painted window of the Annunciation was placed in the west end of the Norman aisle to commemorate the foundation of the Church by the Abbey — this was presumably removed in 1911, but no details are known. The Church is reputed to be the last in the district where the churchwarden with his wand preceded the Rector on entering and leaving the Church and in going to and from the pulpit, a practice which continued until 1907. The east window in the south aisle was unveiled in 1950 by Mr. R. Maudling, M.P. for Barnet.

### MEMORIALS AND TOMBS

On passing through the south porch there may be noticed several grave slabs forming part of the central floor of the Nave, and although most of them are now illegible we know that one is to Rear-Admiral Warre, another to Thomas Boehm, who died in 1770, and one to Francis Noble, who died in 1789. The most notable and interesting slab in the Chancel is that of Mrs. Conyers, widow of Thomas Conyers. He predeceased her by some thirty years, and the family lived at Church Hill House, which stood on the site now occupied by the Boys' Farm Home. It was at this house that Lady Arabella Stuart was kept in custody by order of James I, and it is of interest to note that the Rector of that period was paid the sum of £5 in order to say prayers for Lady Arabella. As is well known, of course, she escaped from Church Hill House so that she could rejoin her husband, but was recaptured and committed to the Tower. Another slab records the burial of Lady Mary Ingram on the 13th May, 1661, who made some singular provisions in her will such as "I desire to be buried in decent and handsome manner," and continues "I will not be opened, embalmed with sear clothes in a coffin with locks and keys, the keys putt into the grave with mee and a fair large stone laid over mee." She was the third wife of Sir Thomas Ingram, a wealthy Londoner chosen to be Sheriff in 1614, but declining to serve. Another slab is to Elizabeth Wickham, whose father-in-law was William Wickham, Bishop of Lincoln, and afterwards of Winchester, and Chaplain to Charles I. Within the altar rails one of the slabs is to the memory of the Rev. Robert Tayler, a former

Rector of the parish. There are several mural tablets on the walls, but for a Church so ancient as this there are few memorials of note. On the south wall of the Chancel is one to Selina Augusta Blanc, wife of the Hon. William Blanc, Attorney-General and President of the Council for the Island of Dominica in the West Indies, who died in 1839. On the south wall in the Nave there is one to Lt.-Col. Isaac Eaton, who saw military service in many parts of Asia and died on the 20th February, 1789, and was buried in the adjoining churchyard. Another to Rear-Admiral Henry Warre, who was appointed a churchwarden in 1800 and died in 1826. He built a house which he called Grenada Cottage in honour of his victory over the French off the coast of Grenada in South America. The house was later known as The Grange. On the north wall a mural tablet records that Lt.-General Sir George Prevost, Bnt., who died in 1816, was Governor-General and Commander in Chief of the British Forces in North Africa, and who by his wise and energetic measures — with an inferior force — preserved Canada to the British Crown. In view of his distinguished services to the country it was decreed that the names West India and Canada should be inscribed on the banners borne by his family and their descendants. The tablet in memory of those men who fell in the First World War was dedicated by Bishop Taylor Smith, who was at that time Chaplain-General to H.M. Forces. Mention should be made of the hatchments which may be seen in various parts of the Church, and which do much to relieve the monotony of the walls. There are at present ten, but it was believed that many more were removed to either the Bell Tower or placed between the two roofs of the Church. On investigation, however, no trace of these could be found. The last hatchment placed in the Church in 1862 was that of Frederick Cass, of Little Grove, whose eldest son, the Rev. F. C. Cass, M.A., was for some time Rector of Monken Hadley and the author of a number of interesting local histories. It has been said that in no Church in England of its size are there to be found so many hatchments.

## RECTORS

A COMPLETE list of the Rectors of this Parish, which goes back to 1324, may be seen in the porch. Many of them were men of great learning and influence who, in view of their responsibilities in connection with the Church at Chipping Barnet, formed a close tie with the Grammar School, which was founded in 1573. The Rector at that time, the Rev. Edward Underne, who was instituted Rector of East with Chipping Barnet in 1567, took an active part in procuring its foundation and was appointed a Governor. It is recorded that in 1575 Mr.

Underne appeared before the Corporation of London to solicit funds for the completion of the school building, and at the same time he obtained permission to ask for collections within all the parishes of the City. It would appear therefore that he is the real founder of the Grammar School. Many of the Rectors of this parish have been elected as Governors of the school, and this continued until the parishes were divided in 1866. The next incumbent, Edward Grant, was headmaster of Westminster School, became Prebendary of Ely, and was buried in Westminster Abbey — without any memorial, but does not appear to have resided at East Barnet. Edward Munnes, when instituted Rector in 1601, was already Vicar of Stepney. He was appointed sub-almoner to the Queen under the Bishop of Chichester. The Rev. John Goodwin, instituted in 1639, was a staunch royalist, and in his own handwriting he records in a register that “John Goodwin Rectour of East Barnet was sequestr. in the yeare 1643, and until the Kinges returne, all was neglected christenings, marryages and Buryalls.” He was again exercising his functions at East Barnet in 1650. The Rev. Robert Tayler, besides being a Prebendary of Lincoln, held the donative rectory of Monken Hadley from the year 1673. At one time it was thought that he was the author of that excellent book entitled “The Whole Duty of Man,” but subsequent investigations seem to have disproved this. However, he left by his last will a copy of this book to every family in his parish as an instance of his dying care and concern for their souls. He died in 1718. The Rev. Gilbert Burnet, instituted in 1719 and elected in the same year as a Governor of the Grammar School, was buried in East Barnet Church beneath the rector’s pew on the north side of the altar, without any memorial, in 1726. Richard Bundy, who followed, is recorded as having written a number of books on Holy Scripture and history, and it was said that “his successors in this Rectory owe much to his memory,” as by resorting to the expedient of taking his tithes in kind from certain reluctant land-holders he compelled the parishioners to assent to a more equitable composition, thereby augmenting the value of the benefice. Then comes Daniel-Cornelis Beaufort, who was born at Wesel in 1700, quitted the Prussian Army for the University of Utrecht, and was later elected a Governor of the Grammar School, and of the Rev. Samuel Groves — who was of French extraction — it was said “he was no better Steward than Mr. Beaufort,” although remaining in this preferment for 26 years. He was the son of a Huguenot named Croux, but changed his name. The Rev. Benjamin Underwood, who was instituted in 1769, had a long incumbency which covered the entire period of the troubles that followed the outbreak of the French Revolution. It is interesting to note that in 1803 a

meeting was held in the Parish Church of the respective Committees of the United Parishes of East Barnet and High Barnet, when it was resolved unanimously to stand or fall by King and Country, and to learn the use of arms that the parishioners might be ready in the case of invasion or insurrection to defend a mild and benevolent King. Mr. Underwood, who died at the Rectory in 1815, was presented by Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, to St. Mary Abchurch in the City of London in 1769, and in 1780 was collated as a Prebendary of Ely Cathedral by his uncle, the Bishop of Ely. Dr. David William Garrow, who followed, was the son of Sir William Garrow, Knt., a solicitor and Attorney-General as well as a Privy Councillor. Dr. Garrow was a Chaplain in Ordinary to the Prince Regent. The next Rector, Thomas Beard Elwin, was the third and youngest son of Fountain Elwin of Edmonton, who had been private secretary to General Tryon, sometime Governor of New York. He was also chaplain to Mr. Cass of Little Grove, when High Sheriff of Hertfordshire, and preached before the Judges in All Saints' Church, Hertford, at the Spring and Summer Assizes. He was one of the first clergymen to adopt the surplice in the pulpit. During his incumbency a redistribution of the dioceses brought the Church into the Diocese of Rochester. He died at the Rectory in 1866, and the same year the Rev. C. E. Hadow was instituted. He was the first volunteer Chaplain to the Forces in the Crimea, and read the "Charge of the Light Brigade" to the troops. Subsequently he handed a copy of this to every survivor. In 1909 the Rev. J. K. Wood, who was in charge of the Boys' Farm Home, which is situated next to the Church, was recommended for the living at a stipend of £200 per annum. At this time the boys of the Home constituted the majority of the choir. It is recorded that during the reign of Edward I the living of East Barnet was rated at £6 13s. 4d. per annum, and at the time of the Dissolution it was valued in the King's books at £22 2s. 8½d. per annum. The original Rectory stood near to the entrance of the churchyard, but fell into ruin, and Sir Robert Berkeley thereupon purchased the present Rectory site — the original lease being dated 1631 and gave the old Elizabethan cottage thereon for a new Rectory, which, with additions made at various times, remained in use until 1911. The Manor House, which stood adjacent to the Rectory ground, was demolished in 1820, and the grounds were added to the Rectory site. At one time it is believed that the Cat Inn — which was some 300 years old when demolished by fire — had an arrangement with the Rectors of the parish whereby they were enabled to stable their horses at the inn, but efforts to substantiate this belief have proved unavailing so far. It was destroyed in 1955.

## CHURCHYARD

ENTRANCE to the churchyard is through a lych gate, which was erected in 1871 when the churchyard was fenced, the total cost being £130. The last burial took place sometime in the early 1940's, and the churchyard is now closed and under the care of the London Borough of Barnet. Approaching the Church along the main pathway one notices the Sharp monument with its canopied urn. This is similar to one at Chelsea to Sir Hans Sloane, which may have been designed by Joseph Wilton. To the east of the Church may be seen some of the oldest memorials, those of the Hadley family, three altar tombs—their eldest son, John Hadley, invented the sea quadrant and reflecting telescope—as well as the memorials to Major General Augustin Prevost of Greenhill Grove, and family, and Wyatt family of Willenhall House. The elaborate monument in the north-east corner in memory of Sir Simon Haughton Clarke and family was placed in this position so that it might be seen from Oak Hill, and was reported to cost at that time £1,000. He was the ninth baronet and died at Oak Hill on the 28th August, 1832. On the north side may be seen five obelisks, which with one exception are to the Grove family.

## REGISTERS AND CHURCH TREASURE

THE earliest Register of Burials, Christenings and Weddings records these events as far back as 1553 in a volume transcribed in 1637. It is of interest to note that towards the end of the 17th century one of the registers was accidentally sold, and after having been missing for over a century was discovered by a Mr. Thomas Laycock, a bookseller, of High Street, Bloomsbury, who offered it to Mr. Elwin—the Rector at that time—for the sum of £2, at which price it was restored to the parish. The Church treasure includes one Jacobean chalice and paten and one paten of 1770.

W. S. TAYLOR,  
July, 1966.