

Heritage Day

Welcome to a brief history of The Parish Churches of Saint JAMES' WEDDINGTON and Saint THEOBALD and Saint CHAD CALDECOTE

The information now being read to you comes from a small booklet that was previously printed in the nineteen sixties.

The Parishes.

The name Weddington (old spelling, Watitune) is probably derived from Watling, a street, hence the town near the Watling Street. Weddington is a small parish, bounded on the west and south by the River Anker and to the north east by the Watling Street.

The formation of the parish can be traced to the time of Edward the Confessor 1042 to 1066 when it was in the possession of Hereward, a free man. After the Conquest the parish, which comprised the Church and Weddington Castle and adjoining lands, was given to Count Meulan, though later it passed into the hands of the Astley family under the Earls of Warwick.

The castle itself was probably built by Thomas Marquess of Dorset, who enclosed the whole of the parish of Weddington in 1491. In 1561 to 1562, the castle was granted to Henry, Earl of Huntingdon, Humphrey Adderley and John Cholomely.

Humphrey Adderly gradually acquired all the manorial rights, and they were then held until 1739 when Thomas Adderly made a conveyance of the manor and presented it to the Church. The castle was pulled down and the material used to build houses. The manorial rights today belong to the eldest son of the late Rev. Bracebridge Lindsay Hall.

Caldecote (derivation: calla, a general cota, a house) was held before the conquest by Tonna, in 1086 it was held by the Bishop of Chester, the overlordship of the Bishops being recognised until 1470. About 1166 it was subinfeudated to the family Ruffus of Walshall, who sold the manor to Robert de Herle in 1304.

In 1540 the manor was granted by Michael Purefey of Whellesborough. A descendant, William, a strong supporter of Parliament was a member of the High Court which tried Charles 1 and signed his death warrant. At the Reformation he was exempted from the Act of Indemnity and his estates forfeited.

In 1642 Caldecote Hall was attacked by Prince Rupert at the head of 18 Troops. The hall was bravely defended by George Abott, eight men and some maidservants. Part of the main door of the church was a door of the Hall. It bears the bullet marks of this encounter.

In 1707 Caldecote passed to Sir Norman Wright, Keeper of the Great Seal. In the middle of the 19th century the Manorial rights passed to Henry Townshend. His son, Captain Townsend, was Lord of the Manor until 1925 when these lapsed.

The Hall was brought by the present owner, Mr C. E. Colbourn, in 1953, from the Church of England Temperance Society. In 1955 most of the Hall was gutted by fire. The servant's quarters escaped damage and have been turned into a number of flats.

ST JAMES', WEDDINGTON.

The present church was probably built as an extension to a Norman edifice, by Gilbert Adderley, in 1733. There is a tombstone by the wall of the Church which reads:- Here lies the Body of GILBERT ADDERLEY, Esq., descended from WOLSTON ADDERLEY the son of JOHN ADDERLEY, who was Brother to HUMPHREY ADDERLEY, the last mentioned in the monument erected on the North side of the Burying Chapel.

He married LUCY, daughter of THOMAS SAVAGE, Esq., of Elmly Castle in the County of Worcester and had issue by her two sons and a daughter. He built this Church at his sole expense in the year 1733, and died the 30th of December the year following, aged 66.

And inside the Church by the font the following wall tablet:-

The original font was removed when this Church was enlarged in 1733, restored in 1858 by Catherine the wife of the Rev. G. W. Sandford, M. A., Rector of Weddington.

The Observer Annual of 1898 puts a different emphasis, but without presenting evidence. "1733 Weddington Church rebuilt after nearly being destroyed by fire".

Observer Annual 1898.

The church was improved (£1,540) in 1881 by Mr. S. Fox, of Achenstone, from a plan under the direction of Sir A. W. Blomfield, R. A., of London. In 1291 the church was valued at £4 and in 1535 at £8 10s. 6d. The registers date from 1663.

The living of Weddington was presented to Richard Vines, a Puritan, in 1627, and that of Caldecote in 1630. He was gifted as a preacher and preached before the House of Commons. Later, in 1644, he became Master of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge.

Weddington and part of Caldecote are now included in the Parish and borough of Nuneaton (Borough Extension 1931). As Nuneaton expands in size new estates like the Weddington Estate are springing up. Therefore, the church has to serve a greater number of people.

A new organ has been given to the church and bears the inscription: "This organ was given by the family and parishioners in memory of the late Rev. Bracebridge Lindsay Hall, B.A., who was Rector of Weddington 1906 to 1955."

A new screen and choir stalls were installed in 1961.

Architectural Features.

The north transept (12½ ft. x 13½ ft.) is the earliest part of the Church. It has an early 14th century stone archway to the nave. The east wall contains a restored window of three trefoiled lights, under a main square head; the lights being dwarfed as the sill is raised to form an altar. Note, trefoiled is an ornamental design of three rounded lobes like a clover leaf.

In the north wall is a reset early 14th century pointed door head, it can now only be seen in outline outside as it has been blocked in. There is a small piscine (half missing) on the transept side which was used by the priest to cleanse the vessels used in Holy Communion. Note, the Latin word piscina (or sacrarium) denotes a shallow basin placed near the altar of a church.

This transept is now an organ chamber and small vestry. The chancel (21 ft x 15½ ft.), of red brick, is lighted by a modern east window of three lights, a north window of one light and a south window of two lights. These windows and the modern arch are all designed in the 13th century style.

The nave (37½ ft x 17½ ft.), is also of red brick, and consists of four bays. In the north wall there is a window and in the south wall three windows all of two lights and tracery of late 13th century style inserted by Henry Cunliffe Shawe, Esq., in 1875.

Over the modern south doorway, at the west end of the wall, is the faint outline of a former round headed window. The west tower (approximately 8½. Square) has two floors. The ground floor, originally a porch, but now used as a vestry has a modern west doorway and another into the nave.

The second storey has a 1733 south window of two lights. Unfortunately, there is no way up to the bell chamber which is illuminated by modern windows. The roof is shaped like a tall pyramid with small lights as dormers.

The Font.

The font has an early 12th century round, slightly tapering, bowl, surrounded by interlacing arcade pattern (Norman to early English design). The stem and the base are modern.

The Pulpit.

Originally a "three decker" the hexagonal pulpit with field panels is of 1733. The pews, now cut down to modern seats, were also made in 1733.

The Bell (Now Removed).

The only bell is inscribed to "Ralph Adderly 1703".

Painting.

There is an oil painting "Crucifixion" at the rear of the church positioned behind the Alter. It was given by the one time owner of Weddington Castle.

Memorials.

The North Transept contains an elaborate mural monument to Humphrey Adderley, who died 29th July, 1598, aged 86. He was a Gentleman of the Wardrobe to Kings Henry VIII and Edward VI and Queens Mary and Elizabeth 1. There is a second inscription to his son Humphrey, who died 10th November, 1637, aged 54.

This memorial was erected in 1639 by Adderly descendants. A grave slab is erected to the memory of Gilbert Adderly.

Advowson.

The Advowson descended with the manor until the death of the Rev. S. B. Heming, when it passed to the Rev B. H. Hall and in 1873 to the Rev. R. S. Bracebridge Heming Hall. Since 1906 it has been held by the Rev. Bracebridge Lindsay Hall until it passed on his death to his eldest son. George Ronald Bracebridge Hall.

List of Rectors.

A list of rectors from 1312 may be seen inside the church near the door. A series of small mounds have been noticed at a short distance north of Weddington Church, and it is thought that they are the site of a former village which was vacated by villagers when the parish of Weddington was enclosed and depopulated by Thomas Marquess of Dorset.

Weddington Castle or Hall was probably built on the site of a "Capital Mansion" of 1566. The building shown in the photograph was demolished during the period between the two World Wars. Castle Road was so named because it was built on and near this ancient building.

ST. THEOBOLD and ST. CHAD CALDECOTE.

Caldecote church is of late 13th century origin, though today only the chancel and nave are of this date, the rest being modern. The church was restored in the 19th century at a cost of £2,000.

The Church is very beautiful and contains almost perfect monuments to the Purefey family.

Architectural Features.

The chancel (28ft. x 16ft.) is deflected slightly north of the nave axis and is of late 13th century date. In the south wall are two original windows of two trefoiled lights and restored tracery. Between them is a 14th century blocked doorway. The original two light window and low side window have been reset in the north wall. Under the western window there is a blocked rectangular low side window.

The piscine is situated in the south wall. The walls are of local purple sandstone while the small square buttresses are of cream stone ashlar. The nave (41ft. x 22½ ft.) has three windows each side with restored tracery.

The south doorway has an ancient oak door hung by straphinges; the upper is original and has large thin scrolled branches and a fleur-de-lis end. The thicker west wall has a 6ft. wide shallow middle buttress to support the bell turret. On either side of this there are two restored 14th century windows of two lights.

The octagonal turret is of rebuilt stonework. The north doorway opens into a small modern vestry which is lighted by a north window set with a 15th century figure of St John.

The Font.

The font is modern. The complete lower part was used as a flower pot. Parts of the 12th century font were found in the grounds of Ansley Hall. In 1960 these parts of the font were returned to Caldecote Church.

Memorials.

Towards the west end of the nave are two mural tablets of stone, the southern is to Michael Purefey, who died 22nd July, 1570, and the northern to his wife, Joyce. On the north side of the chancel there is an alabaster mural monument to William Purefey, who died 1st September, 1616, and to his son, Francis. Above the mural there are the arms of Purefey, Wigston and Baskerville.

A similar monument can be seen on the south side to members of the Purefey family. Also on the south side there is an alabaster tablet to George Abbott of Caldecote who defended the "adjoining house" against Prince Rupert in August, 1642.

Finally, a small mural tablet can be seen to Sir D. Nathan Wright, who for five years was custodian of the Seal of England, and who died 1721. The tomb of the Purefey family was dismantled and put into the churchyard when the church was repaired in 1766.

It would seem that the fragments of the tomb were removed from the churchyard and placed in a cell beneath a Chinese Temple at Ansley, 1778. Subsequent to 1814 these fragments were removed and placed in the grounds of Ansley Hall to form the basis of a rockery.

By kind permission of the National Coal Board these fragments were restored to Caldecote Church in 1960. At the time of going to press, research work is proceeding so that the inscription on the stones may be interpreted. It appears certain that these fragments formed one side of a Purefey tomb or vault which was on the south side of the Chancel and opposite the kneeling figures in the illustration. (See Dugdale's Antiqs of Warwickshire for a picture of the tomb).

Advowson.

The Church had a priest in 1086, however there is no mention of the advowson until 1349 when Sir Robert de Herle held it. The rights then passed to the Hastings family of whom most important was William, who became Lord Hastings of Hastings in 1442 and held many offices King Edward IV. He was arrested, charged with high treason, and beheaded by orders of Richard Duke of Gloucester, in 1483.

Note, in English law, advowson is the right to appoint a clergyman to a vacant ecclesiastical benefice or church living

About 1566, the advowson was acquired by the Purefeys and it descended with the manor till 1824, when it passed to the Earl of Strathmore, and later to Capt. H. L. Townsend. Today the living is united with Weddington and the advowson given by the Church of England Temperance Society to the Bishop of the Diocese.

Charity.

A school was founded in 1647 by George Abbot, who gave £4 10s.0d. per annum to pay a school teacher to teach poor boys and girls, £10 per annum to buy school books and catechisms, and £5 per annum for other things including 10s. a year to the Minister to buy himself a pair of gloves.

In 1922, rent charges were redeemed under the Authority of the Charity Commissioners in consideration of a sum of £360 Consuls. This sum is regulated by the Commissioners who direct that a half of the income is applied to educational purposes, 10s. a year to the Rector, and the remainder to purchase bibles and testaments for the poor.

Today the school rooms are used as the Parish Hall. The carving on the commemorative plaque was done by Mr. J. Lathbury.

Access to the Church.

Thanks to the action taken by the Atherstone Rural District Council in 1960, it is now established that the public have a right of way on foot to the Church from Caldecote village.

Few visitors, if any, can leave either Weddington Church or Caldecote Church without being conscious of having entered a "House of God". The worship and prayers which have been offered in these churches over the centuries can be felt. It is, as it were, the praises and prayers of the faithful of many generations flowing into the churches from the walls

The splendid carvings in Caldecote Church and the very ancient windows all help us "lift up our hearts".

We thank the compiler of this short history of Weddington and Caldecote Churches who went to a great deal of trouble in verifying facts. We cannot thank the writer by name because a wish was expressed that the writer should remain anonymous.

We can, however, express gratitude to the following people who helped in various ways to make this booklet possible: to Mrs P. E. Woolcombe-Adams, Mrs A. C. Beasley, Mrs G Blower, Mr H. Brown, Mr S. C. Clarke, Mr A. Sheasby and Mr A. Wale for information gladly and freely given and to Miss A. Barrett who kindly read and typed the MSS.

We thank the Nuneaton Observer for the Photographs of Caldecote Church, and Weddington Castle or Hall. The proceeds of the sale of these booklets will be divided equally between Caldecote Church and Weddington Church.

Before you leave the Church will you pray that the Church may be a live witness to the saving powers of Our Lord Jesus Christ for many generations to come.

J. B. GALE,
Rector of Weddington and Caldecote