

CUDDESDON - Its Story, by the Rev.E.A.Davies (extracts).

- cf. Parker's Guide to the Architectural Antiquities in the Neighbourhood of Oxford.
- The Victoria County History of Oxfordshire, Volumes I and II.
- The Manning Manuscripts in the Ashmolean Library.
- MSS indexed under Cuddesdon, Wheatley, in the Bodleian.
- Registers and Churchwardens' Accounts (Bodleian).
- Registers of the Dioceses of Lincoln and Oxford.

In 1948 some odd looking arrowheads and a stone axe were dug up near the Post Office. Dr. Hassall of Wheatley has in his possession a stone knife which was unearthed in that village. Does this prove habitati n here in the stone Age? No proof, but possible, and well within the area agreed to have been inhabited then.

Most guide books begin in 956, but indications for 900 years earlier (Parker published in 1847, just before discoveries made). In 1847 a Roman Villa was unearthed on Castle Hill on the Cud/Wheat. border, a contemporary grave in the Palace Wood, a cemetery near the Villa; in 1916 a house in Palace Wood, another just outside (near stone pit on Dove House Farm). All point to third and fourth centuries. Three known houses close together suggest a community - probably several more somewhere. Report on 1916/1921 excavations in the Wood says house on first century foundations. Some piping for heating baths found, some still with soot! This the earliest tangible date. Even some small fragments of painted wall too.

PW grave discovered in 1847 by workmen repairing gate (to left of present one). Skeletons found 2 or 3 ft down in interesting formation, face down in a circle, heads outwards and legs crossed. Objects found: 2 delicate little glass vases (in BM), 2 swords (disappeared now), and a bucket, originally regarded as fine quality Anglo-Saxon workmanship, but shewn by Sir Martin Conway to be Coptic, of a type which stood upon a flange and may have been used as a lustration pail on primitive altars. How did it get here from Egypt? Why the skeleton formation? Any religious significance or some Xian tragedy early on?

Abingdon connexion in 2 fine chartularies in BM. In "Saxon Oxfordshire" (. Record Soc.) is a translation of the Royal Charter (cf. P295) allowing the Earl's gift to be put into effect. The boundaries of Cuthesdane include Denton (Dane's Town or Dene or Valley Town) or Garsington (Gersedune, The Grassy Hill), but do Wheatley (Hwaeteleah, The Wheatfield) and Horsepath(The grass track over Shotover?) and the Mill. Cuddesdon means The Hill of Cuthen or Cuthe (some ancient resident here?).

When Domesday Book was written, there was to be found among the larger houses of the neighbourhood, a Manor House at Chippinghurst owned by the Count of Evreux, and before many years had passed a Manor House was erected at Denton, and also at Cuddesdon. By 1272 it is certain that there had for long been a Manor House here and it probably stood somewhere near where the church now is, perhaps on the ground now covered by the houses and buildings of Dove House and Manor Farms. So then such a house certainly stood there, and it seems to have been in connexion with that house that the church was first built, possibly as a chapel to the manorial tenant. In the Domesday Survey, which was compiled about 1080, there is no mention of a church, and its silence may be taken as evidence that at that time one did not yet exist. When, however, Abbot Paricius died in 1117, it was said of him that he built a church at Cudesduna, and when in 1146 Pope Eugenius III as a privilege took the Abbey

under the protection of the Blessed Peter and himself..he confirmed to the Abbey its possession of Cuddesdon. All this would seem to indicate that a church, probably quite a small and perhaps a temporary structure, was built here about the beginning of the twelfth century, but practically nothing of it now remains. There are several fragments of indented mouldings, taken from some earlier arch, built into the walls of the south transept and the tower, which may come from it. Apart from these fragments it has entirely passed away.

The present building was erected about 1180 on a cruciform pattern with a tower at the intersection but without aisles. Much of this remains - majority of present church: tower arches, W door and ironwork, S doorway, W buttresses, N transept walls with small Norman window and part of corbel table, stair turret, corbel table on each side of nave under aisle roofs with upper parts of pilaster buttresses (rest cut away for arcade), rood loft door with Norman string course below head of one of original clerestory windows over ~~head~~ point of ~~N tower~~ central arch on N side, part of stone step in N transept, since restored - all twelfth century. Lancet windows in W end of aisles c.1350 (?). In 1350 it is probable that the work on the N aisle was done before that on the S - lancet windows different outside, and S wall raising much more clumsy. cf. original roof line on W wall exterior. Lychnoscope for people to watch from outside; an undated plan of the church published in 1846 indicates that this passage was closed at each end to form a vestry, but no window is marked. The Churchwardens' accounts for 1828 record expenditure on new glass and joinery and other items for the 'new room' which suggests that the window was made when the passage was converted into a vestry in that year, and in consequence more light was needed for the newly-enclosed room.

Porches used as schoolrooms in mediaeval times?

The Chancel was built in 1500, but was never completed - cf semi-arches in it and transepts, only needing to knock away the walls. Probably unfinished because of suppression of manasteries (including Abingdon) in 1545 by Henry and Cromwell. Under monks the Church was very fine - rich and warm pastel shades, and in N transept buff wall with delicate red petals, brown stems, and green intertwining. During 1949 restoration, two large angels with spreading wings were found on each side of arch, but only underside of arch could be preserved. Whitewash and plain glass from reformers, though apparently some paint left - in early 18th cent there is record of an order made by the Archdeacon that the pillars be scraped - cf especially the tower arches for traces of scraping and scraps of paint even.

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CUDDESDON AND DENTON

CUDDESDON
Church of All Saints

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Church. Mid-late C12, aisles C13, C15 chancel restored 1849 by B.Ferry, restoration of 1851-3 by G.E. Street. Limestone rubble with ashlar dressings; some old plain-tile roofs. Cruciform plan with central tower, the 3-bay nave having aisles to north and south and porches to south and west. 2-light side windows of chancel have pointed segmental-arched heads; 3-light east window is probably C19. Transepts are late-Romanesque, the north retaining its corbel-tables and angle-shafts; rebuilt south wall with C15 3-light window matching that in the north transept. Aisles originally C13 with surviving lancets to west, and east of the south porch, a triplet above which is a 2-light window of c.1300, formerly a gabled dormer but incorporated into C14 walling when the aisles were raised. 2-light window with reticulated tracery west of the porch and two 2-light windows with Geometrical Decorated tracery in north aisle. South porch is probably C14 and shelters a transitional doorway under a moulded outer arch with dogtooth ornament on detached shafts with carved capitals. C14 clerestory has 2 pointed-trefoil windows each side. West wall of nave is largely late-Romanesque with clasping angle-shafted buttresses and a sumptuous doorway having an outer arch of 2 orders - projecting under-cut lozenges and a row of dogtooth ornament - on detached shafts with primitive stiff-leaf capitals. The door retains its elaborate C12 crescent hinges. The deep semi-circular porch has an entrance arch of 2 chamfered orders on detached shafts with moulded capitals. The north-west stair turret to the 3-stage tower has angle-shaft to its top stage; elsewhere the tower has pairs of angle buttresses. The top stage with paired lancet openings was rebuilt in 1630. Interior: Chancel has 2-bay blind arcades over the side windows and an elaborately-coffered canted roof with carved bosses, probably C19. The transepts have blind semi-circular arches to east, the north incorporating a blocked C12 doorway and window; round the walls are stone benches, and the roofs have arched braces to collars and curved wind-braces, possibly C15. The crossing has elaborate arches with much chevron, and compound piers with a variety of fluted and water-leaf capitals. The ribbed vault is by Street. C14 nave arcades and arch to south transept, but the shallow-pitched 5-bay nave roof is probably C17 and has square baluster king-posts. The west wall has the remains of C12 vaulting-shafts. The oak benches include much C17 panelling, some carved with lunettes, but the chancel woodwork is entirely C19. The pulpit of 1896 is by C.E. Kempe. Much C19 stained glass: west window of 1852 by Hardman to Street's design; east window of c.1890 by Kempe and probably also several aisle windows; episcopal armorial panels in the chancel. Monuments include a wall-paque of 1620, 3 late-C18 memorials with classical surrounds and cartouches, and wall-tablets to several C19 bishops of Oxford. The C12 crescent hinges on the west door are good examples of the 40 or so surviving. The church belonged to Abingdon Abbey.

(V.C.H. Oxfordshire, V; Buildings of England, Oxfordshire, pp.562-3; G.J. Hollister-short, Discovering Wrought Iron, 1970, p.12)

APPENDIX

1. The Reverend E A Davies in his history of Cuddesdon, 'Cuddesdon - its Story' writes ' the memories of hundreds recall this place with love and gratitude and with a deep sense of indebtedness to all that this beautiful church and its people have meant in their lives and preparation for the work of their ministry. Such great names as Edward King, Henry Scott Holland, H P Liddon, Charles Gore, Lord Lang, all of whom have in various ways derived inspiration from and gave their inspiration to this place - we should do well to remember our own responsibility for passing on this heritage'.
2. Archbishop Cosmo Lang wrote to his parents shortly after his ordination, 'It was not as you imagined in Christ Church Cathedral but in Cuddesdon Church - in my own spiritual home - my true birthplace - the centre of the highest and deepest associations of my life. Was it not a sign of the goodness of our Father he so ordained? I shall never forget the feeling of awe and joy - moving even to fear - which came over me as in procession we entered the dear old church singing Bright's beautiful ordination hymn'.
3. Lord Runcie, Baron of Cuddesdon, when being interviewed on the radio says 'I realised this place was going to mean a lot to me in the future - and my goodness it was the case because fourteen years later it was to this village that I came to be Principal of a Theological College but also vicar of this parish and although people outside thought and have always thought my main task was to be Principal. I know that what meant most to me was this church as a place of prayer where God met ordinary people or rather where God met us.' In his biography Margaret Duggan says that the major attraction for him at Cuddesdon was that the job included the incumbency of a country parish which would anchor all that he was doing in the daily realities of church life.
4. Some students tend to forget that All Saints is a parish church. However, we often receive notes of appreciation when they leave that they have been able to be involved with the parish. Recently a first year student said to me when he wanted to pray he went into **All Saints** because he found it so much easier and real.

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VICAR - ALL SAINTS CUDDESDON

Historical background.

- 1635 John Bancroft built first bishop's palace on glebe land.
- 1637 Vicarage and rectory combined, with the bishop technically vicar and the church was served by a curate chosen by him. Except during the Commonwealth this arrangement lasted until 1652
- 1852 Vicarage separated from the see by Act of Parliament, with the bishop holding the advowson.
- 1854 Theological College opened. Bishop Wilberforce had appointed the Reverend A. Potts as vicar and asked him to be first principal of the college. The vicar became principal not the principal the vicar!

In Cuddesdon we have been isolated to a certain extent from the harsh realities of 'cost effectiveness'. I know without the presence of the College the parish would not have a vicar, or curate, regular Sunday services, services on holy days, a Sunday school and its related activities.

We realise that the idyll of a country parish is no longer realistic and the pressures on the Principal of the College have increased immensely. Even so, I have known eight curates from Michael Scott-Joynt to Stephanie Bullock, and it would be interesting to hear their views, but the system worked well with the Principal as vicar and a member of staff as curate.

The relationship between the College and the parish is unique and as a former curate, Peter Cornwell, said 'the College was regarded as a sort of corporate lord of the manor and with so many parsons and potential parsons in the village they had high expectations of the clergy and their ministrations.'

There must be discussion before breaking with 100 years of tradition. What concerns us if the Principal and College staff are reduced to taking the Sunday services that All Saints will become virtually a collegiate chapel. Who do we find to maintain it?