

ST JAMES CHURCH, HOLLOWELL (adapted from the Hollowell & Teeton Parish Council website)

HISTORY

It was 1840 before Hollowell had a church of its own. The place itself can be traced back to the Domesday Book, and down the centuries there are occasional references to the manor and records of people who lived here. In the census of 1841 the population is given as 273.

The Revd J D Watson

John David Watson came to Guilsborough in 1830 at the age of 25. He came to be curate to his uncle, Thomas Sikes, and five years later he succeeded him as Vicar. With his wealth he was able to do great things. He bought land for a church and paid for the building to be erected in 1840.

In 1838 he had already bought the 17th century house next door (now Beech House) to be the Vicarage. In 1839 he bought Robert Middleton Dukes to Hollowell to be his curate and the priest in charge of Hollowell but Dukes died in 1843.

However, investments were made to build up an income for the priest, and in 1850 Hollowell became a separate parish. In 1870 it was re-united with Guilsborough, and now shares a Vicar also with Cold Ashby, Thornby, Cottesbrooke, Creaton, Spratton and Ravensthorpe.

Design

When the church was designed, people were still hanging on to the eighteenth century ideal of a single space where everyone present could see everything without being hidden behind a pillar or cut off by a screen. Classical architecture, however, had gone out of fashion. Here, the single space is given a gothic style marked by the tall lancet windows.

Watson is said to have been influenced by his travels in Italy, and this may help to explain details of the apse, and the lack of any entrance porch. The architect responsible was Kempthorne, and Nikolaus Pevsner describes his triple-shafted west portal as 'quite ambitious'. The church is built of local sandstone from Brixworth and Duston..

Font

Coming into the church, one's eye is caught by the massive stone font. Here hundreds of children have been baptized into the Christian faith. The register of baptisms which was begun in 1850, when Hollowell became a separate parish, is still in use.

Pews

Pews on either side of the wide main aisle are not quite so high as the box pews that were then going out of fashion – like those at Cottesbrooke. They are still much higher than the later Victorian pews which are to be found in most parish churches.

Organ

For many years the congregation had to make do with a barrel organ, turned by hand. One of its disadvantages was that it could play only a limited number of tunes. By the end of the nineteenth century there must have been a pipe organ. In 1915 a second hand organ was purchased and the organ chamber had to be enlarged to fit it in. For over thirty-five years the organ was pumped by hand before an electric blower was attached. Experts regard it as a fine example of a small Victorian organ. A complete overhaul was undertaken in 2003, thanks to a generous grant from the Hollowell Steam Rally.

Lectern and Pulpit

There is a plain wooden lectern, which fulfils its purpose admirably. This is to hold a Bible open for public reading. It is large enough to hold both a King James Version Bible and a modern translation. The pulpit commemorates the life and work of William Burgess (1834-1905) Vicar of Hollowell for thirty years.

Sanctuary

The main focus is the Communion table or altar and people kneel at the rail in front of the altar to make their Communion together.

A much smaller table to the south of the altar is called the Credence Table. To the north of the altar is a carved oak chair which was given by the Revd and Mrs William Burgess in memory of their daughter Mary who died at Hollowell in 1896.

A sanctuary with the many-sided shape we have here is known as an apse. It is a reminder that in the early church when the bishop used to preside over the service from a seat behind the altar, with his presbyters sitting on either side of him in a semi-circle.

For Communion the bread is on a silver plate, or paten and the wine is in a silver goblet, or chalice. Ours were given in 1840 by the Revd R M Dukes before the first opening of the church, and have been in use ever since.

Memorials

The donor of the Communion silver was the same man who now lies buried in the Nave of the church, between the choir stalls. His monumental brass bears the inscription:

"Robert Middleton Dukes, Clerk. M.A. Fellow of Queen's College, Oxford, and sometime Curate of this Parish, died 1st day of August MDCCCXLIII aged xxviii years"

On the south wall are two simple wooden memorials.

Windows

The apse is lighted by three lancet shaped windows filled with stained glass. Above the entrance door at the west end is a wheel window with stained glass made by Moberly for Powell's.

Bell

Outside the church, above the wheel window, is a turret with a single bell. This is rung before services. It used to be the custom before funerals to give the bell one ring for each year of the deceased's life. This custom was abandoned during the Second World War when bells were to be rung only in the event of an invasion.

Heating

There have been several methods of heating the church, of which traces can be seen. One suspects that none was very effective. Originally a large stove stood in the middle of the aisle. From it a pipe led across the top of one on the pews to the south side, where there is still blackened wood. At the fiftieth anniversary celebrations in 1890, a collection was taken to start a fund for a "better heating apparatus". By the 1920s there was boiler below ground outside the church, where a water butt now stands. From it large central heating pipes ran down each side of the aisle, and these are still to be seen. With the arrival of electricity in Hollowell in the 1930s, heated bars were installed in the pews. More recently, efficient electric heaters have been put on the walls.

Funding

In 1986, when funds were needed for the repair of the church roof, Mr Allen Eaton of Hollowell arranged for the first Steam Rally to be held, in a field offered by Mr Albert Litchfield. Since that time Hollowell Steam has raised large amounts for Church projects and increasingly for other charities.

Apart from the cost of maintaining the fabric and providing heat and light for service, occasional improvements are needed. There is a current project to replace the altar linen and provide some decorative needlework.