

CAINSCROSS CHURCH

WORKMEN UNEARTH OLD FONT

Drainage Scheme Saves Chancel

WHEN St. Matthew's Church, Cainscross, was enlarged and a chancel added in the years 1895-7 a new font, more in keeping with the dignity of the restored and beautiful building, was installed. But no record remained of the original font, which was placed in the building erected in 1837—the year of Queen Victoria's accession to the throne.

Last week the old mystery was solved when workmen, engaged on the new drainage scheme now being installed outside the church, unearthed the font while digging a trench on the north-west corner.

The old font is made of local stone with heraldic shields carved on the side panels. When asked what he thought was the explanation for its burial, the Vicar (Rev. H. G. Wicks) said "the present font was probably felt to be more in keeping so far as size is concerned and, at that time, there was no 'Care of Churches Commission' in being!"

It is possible that the font just unearthed may yet return to its former sacred use and find a home in some place of worship.

Old Churchgoer's View

Mr. A. J. Dee, of Cainscross, who has been associated with the church for very many years, is unable to solve the mystery of why the font was buried. He remembers the original font in position before extensions were carried out and a new font installed, when the Rev. E. W. Place was vicar (in the early 1900's). Mr. Dee thinks, but is not absolutely certain, that the font unearthed last week is the original one.

When the church was consecrated in 1837, no mention was made of the font, although the following extract taken for the February 5th (Sunday) edition of the magazine "John Bull" of the year 1837, a copy of which is kept by Mr. Dee, refers to minor items such as chairs, one of which is still to be seen in the present church:—

"The new church at Cainscross was consecrated on Thursday by the Lord Bishop of Gloucester. The building was crowded to an overflow, and the collection at the close of the service amounted to £125. This beautiful edifice has been built at an expenditure of upwards of £3,600, a great part of which was raised by voluntary subscription. It is endowed by Colonel Daubeney by investing the sum of £1,000 in the funds and a further sum as a repairing fund."

The font will be on view at the church fete on June 28.

New Drainage System

In the six years that Mr. Wicks has been Vicar of Cainscross, much work has been done to restore the fabric of the Church which has been found to be in a bad state.

Much of the trouble originates from the lack of a proper system of drainage to carry away storm water, always considerable in amount from a building with a large roof area. At Cainscross, soakaway pits were constructed to absorb water from the church roof but these have long since ceased to function properly. Architectural examination has shown that much water has collected under the main fabric of the building and that, in particular, the chancel was being affected.

Chancel In Danger

Another fault in construction, discovered by the experts, was a lack of a damp course. As the foundations of the chancel were almost like a tank, due to failure of the soakaway pits, moisture was finding its way into the stone itself and causing considerable decomposition and flaking. Indeed, so serious had the trouble become that the architects were of the opinion that if nothing were done the chancel would be in danger of collapse within a period of 50 years.

To ensure that the trouble is properly abated and unlikely to occur again, the church authorities have engaged a firm of building contractors to put in a modern drainage system which involved the laying of glazed pipes all round the church and linking them with the main sewer. A cost of £240 is involved and it is hoped to raise the bulk of this amount at a special fete on June 28.

Mr. Wicks tells us that since he came to Cainscross it has been necessary to spend £100 a year on the church fabric. Recently it has been found that the leads in the plain glass windows have become decomposed and this work, which is also urgent, will cost £271 to carry out.

In his appeal the Vicar adopts the line that the people of 1951 should try to ensure that their church, which was handed to them by their forebears, should be passed on to posterity in good condition. This he suggests, could be Cainscross's method of marking the Festival of Britain.

Parish Hall

Under the will of the late Miss Spry Davies, of Elmfield, Cainscross, the church authorities were left an acre of ground on the main road at Ebley for the building of a parish hall. This scheme, it is understood, cannot be proceeded with at present on the grounds of cost. Recently, planning permission has been granted to an outline application for the erection of a hall on the site. It is now proposed to fence off the hall site facing the road and to continue the agricultural use of the land at the rear with separate access on to the main road.