

PM 1759

WOLBOROUGH, St LEONARD, NEWTON ABBOT, DEVON (EXETER):

Referred under the *Pastoral Measure 1983*.

LISTING: Grade II, having Group Value with Nos 41, 45, 49, 55, 57, and 59 Wolborough Street. [List published 22 March 1983].

LOCATION AND SETTING: Newton Abbot grew up at the head of the Teign estuary between the hilltop villages of Highweek to the north and Wolborough to the south. From the start it fell into two parts divided by the river, Newton Bushel in Highweek chapelry to the north and Newton Abbot in Wolborough parish to the south, but over the years the distinction has become blurred. The town's great period of growth was the mid to late nineteenth century when it spread into a rather sprawling shape along the valleys and up the hillsides.

Wolborough Road leads south-west from the town centre and then southwards towards Totnes. If anything marks the town centre it is the tower of the previous chapel of St Leonard, now stranded churchless in the middle of the street about 200 yards east of the present church. St Leonard's stands on the south side of the road, amongst a variety of two and three-storeyed buildings in varying states of repair, with a restaurant/hotel abutting the east wall and St Leonard's Road, a street of small two-storeyed terraced houses, running along the west side. There is no curtilage, the north (liturgical west) front and west (liturgical south) side rising directly from the pavements, a house abutting on the east (liturgical north) and on the south (liturgical east) a new residential development consisting of a three-storeyed brick block of flats called Church Court. On the opposite side of Wolborough Street buildings have been demolished and there is a large car park, so that the church now has more presence in the townscape than might have been expected. [Liturgical directions are used in the remainder of this report].

BUILDING HISTORY: by Richard Millward, 1834-6, with a chancel added to designs by J. W. Rowell, 1876-7.

The first St Leonard's was built as a chapel of ease to Wolborough and was in existence by 1350, when it is first mentioned in surviving records. It consisted only of a nave and tower and fell out of use in the 1830s when the Revd John Bradford, curate-in-charge, refused to conduct services in it. The foundation stone of the new church was laid by Thomas Knight Sweetland, the oldest of the chapel feoffees, on 20 September 1834. (The old nave was demolished that year, and when an attempt was made to demolish the tower in 1897 the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings rallied support for its preservation; since 1971 it has been in the care of the local authority. It contains a ring of eight bells, six by Pack and Chapman of Whitechapel, 1772 and two by Mears & Stainbank, 1887, and a clock).

The land for the new church was given by the 10th Earl of Devon, who also contributed towards the cost of £2,614. The architect, Richard Millward, seems to be otherwise unknown, although a Henry Millward was practising in Newton Abbot in 1868. The church was consecrated by Dr Henry Phillpotts, Bishop of Exeter, on 24 November 1836. The designer of the chancel, Joseph William Rowell (1827-1902) had settled in Newton Abbot in 1855 and designed a number of buildings in the area including Italianate housing in the town

commissioned by the Courtenay family, a house of 1861 in eclectic Tudor style at Torquay and a little church at Collaton St Mary, Paignton, of 1864 designed in 'a more mature Victorian Gothic' (Cherry & Pevsner). The chancel cost £1,700 and was opened in February 1877. In the early years of the 20th century the church became more Catholic in its observance and acquired a number of appropriate furnishings.

PLAN: aisleless nave of five bays; chancel of three bays with north organ chamber, south chapel and eastern vestries.

DIMENSIONS: nave 18.3m by 13m; chancel 6.75m by 5.8m.

BUILDING MATERIALS: the walls are built of local grey limestone rubble with stone dressings; the nave walls are of very small stones, more refined on the west front than the sides, and the chancel has more precisely squared stones, though no larger, and dressings probably of Bath stone. The nave roof slopes are covered with slates and those of the chancel, chapel, organ chamber and vestry were recovered with asbestos cement slates in 1983.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: St Leonard's is a simple building of two campaigns which are clearly differentiated in their architectural styles: the nave is characteristic of the insubstantial Gothic of the 1830s, while the chancel is in the slightly French 13th-century style typical of the 1860s and 70s. Being towerless, the exterior is unassuming, while the interior, formerly a large open galleried space, has been subdivided to form a hall in the western bays with kitchen and lavatories within the north-west and south-west porches.

Presumably the survival of the tower of the old chapel to contain the bells made a tower unnecessary here. The result is a building of almost non-conformist appearance (especially with its double west doorway, which probably dates from 1895). The front is of three bays, the middle one projecting slightly and having thin octagonal turrets at the angles. It is divided by stringcourses into three levels. The lowest has a pair of doorways with shafted jambs and moulded arches, the tympana pierced by glazed cinquefoils and outlined by hoods with foliate stops. The middle level has a window of four equal trefoil-headed lights and tracery of two quatrefoiled circles, with a larger octofoiled circle and two small trefoiled circles. The moulded hood has returned ends. The top level forms the gable and has five graded blind lancets, the middle one louvred at the top for the small single bell. The side bays have pointed doorways at ground level, both now crudely adapted to form windows, and two-light windows with tracery quatrefoils at gallery level. On the steps of all the doorways are cast-iron boot-scrapers. There are no buttresses.

The side walls of the nave each have five tall three-light windows with trefoil-headed lights under moulded hoods with returned ends. The westernmost on the north is blind because of the adjoining window. The roof ridge is lower than the west gable suggests, allowing space for a small housing for the bell behind the top of the gable wall.

The chancel roof ridge is almost exactly the same height as that of the nave, but the roof is more steeply pitched and the pent roofs of the north organ chamber and south chapel stand below a clearstorey. This has groups of three trefoil-headed lancets under linked hoods. The east gable has three graded lancets with trefoiled heads and a foiled opening set within the head of the window - a quatrefoil in the middle light and trefoils in the side lights. These are set high in the wall because of the pent roof of the vestry all along the wall below. The south

chapel has two two-light windows and an arched doorway in the south wall, and the south of the vestry has a Caernarvon-arched doorway. The vestry windows in the east wall consist of three groups of three rectangular lights.

The twin west doorways lead into a small lobby with stairs running up to the galleries at each side. The interior of the nave is enormously wide, and has galleries on three sides running straight across the windows and carried on thin cast-iron pillars of quatrefoil section. The capitals are unusual, being in the form of four heads of sheep, cherubs, kings, dogs and so forth, and some with foliage. The sub-division in 1974 was achieved by bring the west gallery front forward and creating a hall in the space below, with a kitchen in the north-west porch and lavatories in the south-west porch. A new wood-block floor was laid at one level throughout. In the remainder of the nave the alleys are close-carpeted and the pews stand on boarded platforms. The gallery front has a cornice along the lower edge and rectangular moulded panels. Most of the seating has been removed from the galleries, which are only used for indiscriminate storage. The roof is slightly pitched and divided into eighty-one square panels by moulded ribs with small foliate bosses at the intersections. The central ridge is interrupted by two circular ventilation roses.

The original east wall had a rose window of fourteen trefoiled lights, below which was a communion table with an altarpiece of Our Lord Carrying the Cross, copied from one in the chapel of Magdalen College, Oxford. In 1876 this was all removed and the wall was pierced by three arches.

The chancel floor is raised on four steps with several more steps further east - one east of the stalls, two at the rails, and a double footpace. The choir is paved with red, green and buff tiles and the sanctuary floor is concealed by carpet. The chancel arch has a flat soffit with rolls along the edges; it is carried on paired marble shafts with shaft-rings carried on corbels and with foliate capitals carved with wheat, grapes and passion flowers. The moulded hood terminates in foliate stops. At each side are smaller arches opening to the organ chamber on the left and the chapel on the right. These have two chamfers, the inner dying into the responds and the outer returning to the floor, and hoods with foliate stops.

The chancel is of three bays with paired arches opening to north and south in the two western bays. These are carried on flat responds and on paired shafts with foliate capitals in the middle. The easternmost bay has two sedilia within recesses on the south side of the sanctuary, with shafts, moulded capitals and trefoiled heads, and a credence shelf, transformed in 1958 into an aumbry, within a trefoiled recess in the north wall. The east windows are set high in the wall and have shafted reveals.

The roof structure is concealed by boarding forming a five-sided cradle vault. The twenty square panels between moulded ribs were painted in 1881 with roundels which contain: in the lower register plants including apples, thistles, passion flowers and pomegranates on the north and wheat, grapes, roses and lilies on the south, against each of which is a scroll with 'Alleluia'; musician angels in the middle tier; and on the uppermost tier quatrefoils containing a cross with the Chi-Rho monogram, a cross with 'Dux', 'Rex', 'Lux' and 'Lex' on the arms, a cross with the IHS monogram, and the Agnus Dei over the altar. Each panel has eight stars on the background.

FURNISHINGS AND FITTINGS

1. Altars:

- (i). The high altar is of oak, with seven bays of arcading along the front, late 19th-century.
- (ii). The Lady Altar is of oak, with two bays of four-centred arches on square legs, perhaps the frame of the original altar of 1838.

2. Reredoses:

- (i). The high altar reredos consists of a large rectangular panel in a frame with a row of quatrefoils along the top and single ones at the lower corners and in the middle of each side; the frame may have been that originally provided for the 1838 picture of Our Lord Carrying the Cross, but it now encloses a panel covered with a Watts fabric to which is affixed a crucifix with a minute Christus Rex which looks like the work of Faithcraft, 1966.
- (ii). The south chapel reredos is made of the uprights and four flattened arches probably from a rood screen, possibly from the old chapel of St Leonard.

3. The pulpit is polygonal, of Bath stone with trefoiled niches in each face carrying statues of St Leonard, St Joan of Arc, St Martin of Tours, King Clovis and Bishop Remigius, all connected with St Leonard or France, under a vine trail cornice; designed by Messrs Locke, carved by Herbert Read and installed in 1924.

4. The lectern is an elaborate iron pedestal set on three feet and carrying a desk, richly decorated with scrolls, spiral tendrils and curled leaves, a much more interesting example than usual, c1870 (though apparently given in 1936).

5. The font is of stone, octagonal with moulded base, small blind trefoiled arches on the stem, leaves on the underside of the bowl and quatrefoils round the bowl carved alternately with a shield and a fleuron. It stands on a polished mottled Devonshire marble step. It is 15th-century, and was given in 1877 by the Earl of Devon from Salcombe church which he had recently restored; it replaced a font given by the Bishop of Exeter at the consecration of the church, which was passed on to the Union Workhouse. The cover is flat, of oak with an iron cross.

6. Stained glass:

- (i). The east window depicts The Nativity, The Crucifixion with The Supper at Emmaus below, and The Resurrection, c1883, perhaps by a pupil of Clayton & Bell. It commemorates Thomas Mackeral, who made his fortune as a chemist in Barnstaple but, having been brought up in Newton Abbot, built almshouses here in 1874; when he died in 1883 he was buried in Wolborough churchyard.
- (ii). South chapel I: The Epiphany and The Presentation in the Temple, c1876.

- (iii). South chapel II: Christ and the Doctors and The Wedding at Cana, commemorating a death in 1864 but probably also of c1876.
- (iv). The west window has plain glazing with a panel near the top showing the arms of Courtenay, Earls of Devon, on ground glass; in the tracery lights are crosses and coloured geometrical patterns; c1836.
- (v). The side windows in the west wall have nice coloured circles and fleurons in the tracery, c1836.

7. Monument:

- (i). To Charles Walter Foss, organist, d.1884; brass tablet.

8. One bell, uninscribed, no details available.

9. The organ was built by Hele & Company of Plymouth in 1909 and has three manuals and pedals with the specification:

Great: 8,8,8,8,4,4,2,8;
 Swell: 16,8,8,8,8,4,II,8,8, Tremulant;
 Choir: 8,8,4,4,2,8;
 Pedal: 16,16.

The action is mechanical; there is no case, only a series of three unencased groups of pipes.

- 10. The communion plate consists of a paten on foot by W Parry of Exeter, 1749; a cup by Barnards of London, 1838, a replica of a cup of 1829 given to the parish church of Wolborough in 1838; a baptismal shell by TT, Birmingham, 1902; a chalice and paten by EDW, London, 1913; a ciborium by Wippell, 1932 and a wafer box also by Wippell and a small, heavy chalice and paten by Osborne, London, c1930.
- 11. The registers were not inspected; those not in current use are deposited at the Diocesan Record Office.
- 12. Woodwork:
 - (i). Pair of candlesticks, turned balusters, of wood painted gold, probably by Faithcraft, 1966.
 - (ii). Chair of oak, with turned legs, arms, a back with a scrolled top and a panel with lugged corners on the back, oak, 17th-century.
 - (iii). Pair of stools, modelled on joint stools used for coffins, not old.
 - (iv). The stalls are of oak, with panelled fronts pierced with ogee quatrefoils in the Bodley manner, 1926.
 - (v). Two chairs, oak with traceried backs, c1840, probably from the original chancel.

- (vi). The pews are pine benches with rounded ends, installed in 1880.
 - (vii). Board recording the erection of the chapel in 1836 by voluntary contributions assisted by the Incorporated Church Building Society; it was to have 800 sittings of which 379 were to be free, the old chapel having had 191 of which 60 were free.
13. Metalwork:
- (i). Iron screen at the chancel arch, with two gates, of stock design, set on a low stone wall with recessed quatrefoils in circles, intrinsic with the pulpit base, c1888.
14. The communion rails are of brass, a stock design, c1876.
15. No war memorial.
16. Miscellanea:
- (i). Photograph of the interior looking east, c1910.
 - (ii). Oil painting on canvas, large and so dark as to be indecipherable but apparently depicting a monkish saint in a cope, probably St Leonard; it is lying in the gallery.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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White, History, Gazetteer and Directory of Devon, White, 1878-9.

STATE OF REPAIR

(Summarised from latest quinquennial inspection report dated March 1992 by Grant & Green, Totnes)

The report is confusing because the chancel (which is at the geographical south end of the building) is referred to as the south end while the liturgical west end of the church, at the geographical north end, is called the west side).

The architect found that the structure was sound and that the west and north elevations were in good repair following cleaning and repointing in 1986.

The nave roof slating was in good order and the remaining roof slopes had been recovered in 1983. Nevertheless the 'end of the principal truss at the north end of the main roof and parts of the wall plate are rotted due to damp caused by roof and flashing leaks together with death watch beetle and furniture beetle'. The rainwater goods, mostly cast-iron gutters, needed attention, as did several windows.

OTHER CHURCHES IN THE AREA

(for comparison only)

Wolborough, st Mary (0.4 mile south): A typical Devon church, sited on the hill south of the town, with early west tower and nave and aisles of six bays, shallow transeptal chapels, and south porch; recent modest north-west extension. Good furnishings include a Norman font, painted screen across nave and aisles, late 15th-century brass eagle lectern, a 15th-century bell and stained glass by Kempe. Amongst the monuments are a table tomb of c1516 and an elaborate wall monument with figures of c1634.

Highweek, All Saints (0.8 mile north-west): the other mediaeval parish church, on the hill north-west of the town, and a again of the typical Devon plan and style with west tower and nave with continuous aisles, built in the first quarter of the 15th century. The nave has an old wagon roof, but the east end of the church was rebuilt in 1892. Contemporary font and some fragments of stained glass.

Highweek, st Mary (0.3 mile north): by E H Sedding 1904-8. Long nave with clearstorey and low passage aisles, west window with swirling tracery and two strong mullions typical of the designs of this family. Three east windows, the middle one (and the piscina and pulpit) brought from St Mary's Chapel. Elaborate screen and reredos.

Wolborough, St Paul (0.4 mile east): by J W Rowell, 1859-61 with aisles added in 1871 and vestries in 1886. A low cruciform building with canted apse, lancet windows and central wooden bell-turret. Damaged in the war and restored, most windows now filled with post-war glass. Re-arranged with a central altar under a corona lucis in 1977.

Wolborough, St Michael (0.8 mile south-east): by Rowell, Son & Locke, 1910. A small red-brick mission church now used as a dual purpose building with a hall in the nave.

COMMENT: It is understood that the needs of the town are adequately met by the five churches listed above (there is also St Luke, Milber, built in 1936-63 to designs by Arthur Martin, brother of J Keble Martin, the vicar, to an interesting and complex plan, which serves the eastern suburbs). It is therefore proposed that St Leonard's should be declared redundant. Since it is a building of some architectural interest which seems to be in generally sound condition, the Council hopes that an alternative use will be found for it.

(Visited by the Deputy Secretary (Casework) on 2 April 1996)

Photographs available from Diocesan Pastoral Committee

DIF/pd

26th September 1996

