

Marston Times

PARISH CHURCH OF SAINT NICHOLAS

850 NOT OUT!

It sounds like a cricket score.

We put it that way just to let you know that the first mention of Marston Church was in 1122. It was mentioned in a charter by which King Henry I granted the Chapel at Marston, among others, to the Canons of St. Frideswide's. Marston, Elsfeld, Binsey and Headington were all mentioned in the same document.

850 years . . . just think of it!

Your parish Church was here during the time of Richard the Lion Heart and the Crusades, the Black Prince, the Battle of Agincourt, Caxton, Columbus, Henry VIII, Crommer, Drake, Oliver Cromwell, the Battle of Blenheim, William Pitt, John Wesley, Napoleon, Cardinal Newman . . . From its tower Roundheads have watched Royalists in the University (Gun) Park and bellringers have gazed at sputniks.

Through its ancient porch have passed the sad and the sorrowful, the silent and the singing. Babies have been christened at its font, young people confirmed in the nave, couples married at the chancel steps, the coffins of young and old have rested beneath the chancel arch. Sunday by Sunday the bells have called the faithful and the faithful to hear the Word of God and receive the sacrament. There are many who seldom attend church who would give their last penny to keep its doors open. There are others for whom every arch and window is a familiar

friend . . . for whom the very atmosphere of the Church gives comfort and peace.

We shall give thanks for our Church and for all for which it stands and means to us, on Sunday, 3rd December at 10 a.m. This is Advent Sunday, the first Sunday of the Church's New Year, and the Sunday closest to St. Nicholas Day. We shall be privileged to have worshipping with us on that day The Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress of Oxford, who live in the parish of New Marston, which was carved out of the original parish of Marston - a parish which used to stretch from St. Clements to Northway.

Do come along on 3rd December at 10 a.m. and bring your family and friends . . . Let it be a time of real rejoicing for us all, as we rededicate ourselves in the service of Christ our Lord, and begin a New Year in the life of our Church.

John N. Rumbold

Vicar and Rural Dean.

N.B. There will be a Special Youth Service on Sunday evening, 3rd December at 6.30 p.m., to which all our Youth Organisations have been invited. Young people will take part and the Reverend Colin Bennetts will speak.

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How do you picture the Christmas scene? Centuries of tradition have offered to us both sentimental and down-to-earth settings.

Even the gospel narratives have a differing emphasis. Matthew, writing predominantly to the Jews, says that Jesus was born during the reign of King Herod. Luke, writing for non-Jews, many of whom were Romans, uses as his date-line the names of the Emperor Augustus, and Quirinius, Governor of Syria. Both writers agree that the birth was in Bethlehem. The details are relatively unimportant to the central fact of the story that God broke into history at a definite time and place. This He did in a unique way, and St. John describes it by saying: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us", i.e. God revealed Himself through a baby born to Mary, and growing up within a human home.

Certainly there was an air of expectancy about a Messiah amongst both Jews and Gentiles, but the birth of Jesus in a manger was something no-one expected:

"They were looking for a king
To slay their foes and raise them high
Thou cam'st a little baby thing
That made a woman cry".
Yet God opens the eyes of unlikely people - unlikely in the world's eyes.

It was upon a group of shepherds, men who lived close to nature, down-to-earth folk, that the news first dawned of the Saviour's birth; not in a palace but in a cow-byre. These men were open to the message of God, and after they had seen the baby Jesus, returned to share the good news of his birth with others.

In faraway lands, some say it was Persia, astrologers pondered the rising of a new star. Their knowledge led them to believe that a new and greater King of the Jews had been born. The symbolic gifts they brought symbolised the homage of other nations, and the universal search of mankind for meaning to life.

The infant Jesus grew up within a home, receiving the love and care of his parents that helped to create a balanced personality and counteract the trauma of a refugee life in Egypt.

No doubt the very pressures of his early childhood, the peoples with whom he was brought into contact, had their influence upon him during those formative years.

He grew 'in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man'. The only incident concerning his youth that the Gospels relate is that of being found by his parents at the age of 12, questioning the rabbis in the Temple at Jerusalem. No doubt this experience helped to focus his awareness of his future role in God's plan for the world.

At the outset of his ministry came the time of testing when alone in the wilderness, he grappled with the terms of his Messiahship. Was he to be temperal ruler, wonder worker, social reformer, or the Messiah of whom Isaiah spoke, who would suffer to redeem sinful mankind? He knew within himself that there was only one answer to this question, an answer that would lead him along the lonely road to Golgotha. He had the power to call down a legion of angels, but he would instead tread the path of suffering love.

The people with whom he came in contact, especially the disciples, became aware that Jesus was not just a son of man, but The Son of Man. Gradually, and only with difficulty, they began to perceive that Jesus was not just another prophet sent by God, but that, as St. Paul says: "in Him dwelt all the fullness of Godhead bodily". After his death and resurrection they began to be aware of His presence within themselves through the power of the Spirit, and this can be our experience today.

"Tho' Christ in Bethlehem a thousand
times be born
Unless he's born in thee, thy heart's
forlorn".
M.E.C.

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SEASON'S GREETINGS



Ring forth merry chime
Declaiming to all
That now is the time
To come at Christ's call;
To Matron and Maiden
To Father and Boy
To Saint and Sin-laden,
Give Tidings of Joy.

We asked Mrs. Warner for a drawing
for this festival season of Advent and
Christmas.

Bells have been used in worship from earliest times. We know Chinese were using them for religious ceremonies 2000 years before the birth of Christ. In the Old Testament we read of bells being used on the vestments. It was towards the end of the sixth century in Italy that they started to have a prominent place in Christian worship. From the eighth century bells, much in their present form, cast in bronze, have been used.

So in using bells as a symbol of the greetings we send to our readers at this time we are following a long tradition at St. Nicholas and elsewhere.

THE BELLS OF ST. NICHOLAS

My first introduction to St. Nicholas' bells was on 8th June, 1932, when the five bells were re-dedicated after being re-hung.

The Church Warden's accounts begin in 1529 and go down almost continuously, except for a gap in the middle of the 17th century. There are apparently no interesting entries relating to the bells, merely small repairs, the earliest being in 1547. It would seem that the predecessors of the 1932 peal were either mediaeval bells, or recast in 1620 to 1660.

In the time of Edward VI an inventory records: "Item: 3 small belles in the steeple and oon sanctus bell". This sanctus bell, which would have been rung during the Holy Sacrament, has disappeared, although looking at the church it is easy to see where it could have been.

The first peal on the 1932 bells was rung on 26th July, 1948 in 2 hours 35 minutes. Since then records have been regularly made and broken. The first peal by an entirely local band was on 1st December, 1956, rung as a welcome to Miss K. Liles, who came as Church Worker.

The tower records the making of a world record (one still held). Part of the detail recorded is: "On 7th April, 1958 in 6 hours 20 minutes, a peal of 12600 changes in four doubles methods. . . . Longest length of doubles yet rung, exceeding that rung at Whaplode Lings 10080 on 27th February, 1775 in 7 hours 26 minutes".

In September 1966 I became the first person to ring 50 peals in one tower; in 1969 Mr. R. H. Jones rung his 50th peal.

The sixth bell, hung and dedicated this year enables us to ring minor methods. The first quarter peal of minor has already been rung.

There is a set of hand-bells presented to the church by the ringers in 1953 to mark the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Mr. Jennings of the Victoria Arms, the previous owner, said that these had been in his family for over 50 years. These bells have been used for carols round the streets at Christmas, and in local hospitals.

The last peal on the old five - the 81st - was rung in February, 1972. Before this article is published the ringers of St. Nicholas hope to have rung the first full peal on the six bells.

By Mr. A. Gammon, Secretary of the bell-ringers, who also chose the verse above.

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PATRONAL FESTIVAL

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

ADVENT SUNDAY, 3RD DECEMBER

10 a.m. Parish Communion and ACT OF DEDICATION for the whole Parish
6.30 p.m. Special Youth Service

BIBLE SUNDAY

SUNDAY, 10TH DECEMBER

10 a.m. Canon W. H. Murray Walton will preach at the Parish Communion
11.15 a.m. ST. NICHOLAS TOY AND GIFT SERVICE for parents and children.

We hope to welcome many parents and children to this service when toys, gifts and cash will be received. These will be distributed to homes throughout the county by the Children's Officer.

broadcast service

SUNDAY, 17TH DECEMBER

10 a.m. Parish Communion and Broadcast Service from Radio Oxford. Please be in Church by 9.40 a.m.

"JOURNEY TO THE KING"

MONDAY, 18TH DECEMBER

The 2nd Marston Girl Guides invite you to their Christmas entertainment in the Scout Hut at 7 p.m.
Admission 5p Refreshments available

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WEDNESDAY, 20TH DECEMBER

6.30 p.m. A FAMILY CAROL SERVICE FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN, followed by Coffee and mince pies in the Church Hall. Parents with small children most welcome. Admission by free ticket.

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

CHRISTMAS EVE

6.30 p.m. FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT. Admission by free ticket

11.30 p.m. MID-NIGHT COMMUNION SERVICE

CHRISTMAS DAY

8 a.m. and Noon Holy Communion

11 a.m. CHRISTMAS FAMILY MATINS

5.30 p.m. Evening Prayer (said with no sermon)

WE WISH YOU ALL A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS
AND INVITE YOU TO JOIN WITH US IN
WORSHIP AT ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH

HARLOW SCHOOL

In October 153 pupils from Harlow School together with six parents took part in a Sponsored Walk which raised £385. The money is to be shared between the School Fund and old people at Christmas.

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