



HOLY TRINITY, COLCHESTER

INTERESTING LECTURE BY DR. LAVER

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Thanks to an interesting lecture by Dr. Philip Laver, F.S.A., in the parish room on Tuesday evening, much information concerning the history of Holy Trinity Church, Colchester, was imparted. There was a large audience, and the Rector (Rev. E. R. Monck-Mason), who presided, said both the church and the parish were of extraordinary antiquarian interest, and they were fortunate in having a lecture from Dr. Laver, an acknowledged authority on such subjects, and whose distinguished father was at one time a churchwarden of Holy Trinity.

THE LECTURE

dealt with many hitherto unknown points about the church and the parish, and was illustrated with lantern slides that made it doubly illuminating and interesting. Dr. Laver remarked that in Roman times Colchester had its temples, and in the home the Romans had an altar which was held in honoured veneration. Later Christianity appeared, and after a long period of persecution it became the State religion. Troubles everywhere led to the withdrawal of the Roman troops, and for 300 years we did not know happened in this country, except that it was practically a period of continuous warfare between the inhabitants and the invading Saxon and other hordes. So far as Essex is concerned, he added, we need take note of nothing from a churchman's point of view till the year 653, when Cedd, an Englishman and a monk from the north country, started his missionary work in his endeavours to convert from paganism the inhabitants of these parts. Cedd was accompanied by another priest, and, says Bede's Ecclesiastical History, when these two, travelling to all parts of the country, had gathered a numerous church to our Lord, they built churches in several places, "especially in the city, which in the language of the Saxons is called Iltranscstir, as also in the which is named Tilaburg." This passage mentioned two definite places, Iltranscstir (or Othona, the present Bradwell-on-Sea) and Tilaburg (or Tilbury), but it also referred to other churches. He wished, said the lecturer, that he could claim that part of the tower of the church was a portion of these churches. It was, however, inconceivable that a

place of the importance, even in Saxon days, of this town, should have been without some evidence of Cedd's effort. Thanks to the removal of plaster from the church they were able to examine the details of the work and methods of construction. The plaster was put on subsequently to 1633.

THE FAMOUS TOWER

Entering into a detailed description of the famous square tower, with its unique "triangular" arch, Dr. Laver pointed out that this tower was built of Roman material, and in three stages, which were marked by string courses round the tower. It was erected, he considered, between A.D. 800 and 900, and not - as some writers had stated - just before the Norman Conquest. The south aisle of the church, he remarked was late 14th century and the south chapel late 15th century. The beam with blue and white stripe, which extended across the chancel, was similar to one in All Saints', Maldon. The porch was 15th century work, and the door-plate was, he believed, made by the same man - Thomas De Leighton - who, in 1390, made the wonderful plate on St. Peter's Church door, and a similar one at St. Leonard's, Hythe. Dealing next with the history of the church, Dr. Laver said there was no mention of it in Domesday, but Domesday did mention Colchester as containing seven priests, and he claimed one of these as the minister of Holy Trinity, placing others to St. Mary, St. Peter (2) and Greenstead. The first of which they had any mention was Dom. Roberts, whom they found in the Borough Records in 1312, and the list was, as far as they knew, complete from that day to the present. The first we would mention would be Richard Crowle, instituted some time after 1382, for in 1393-4 he was granted by the bailiffs and commonalty of the town a tenement opposite the churchyard for a rectory - but where the exact site was he could not say. In 1410-11 an alteration was made for John Mallyng, the then rector, was granted a tenement with its appurtenances next the churchyard for a rectory, and this was repeated in 1464-5 to Thomas Banastre. John Dyson, instituted November 1510, and who died in 1511, held a chantry in West Bergholt, the chapel of West Donyland or Berechurch, not yet made into a separate parish, and also Pentlow, and must have had a strenuous time to properly fulfil his duties. It was during the tenure of rector William Jay that in 1536 Lord Audley, who had recently obtained the manor of Berechurch and placed his brother Thomas there, with the rector's consent and that of the Abbot of St. John's, these two parishes were separated, and Berechurch became a parochial church. Jay received in compensation for loss of office, Porters in Ardleigh and other sums to make up his income.

THOMAS NEWCOMEN,

son of Stephen Newcomen, rector of St. Peter's, and educated at the Colchester Royal Grammar School, was instituted rector in November 1628. He was a loyalist, and, in attendance on Sir John Lucas at his house on St. John's Green, formerly St. John's Abbey, he was on August 22, 1642, seized with others and conveyed to London. Poor Newcomen soon found himself in the Fleet prison, and there stopped until 24th September, when he was set free, and at the Restoration was rewarded by the gift of a prebendal stall in Lincoln, and other honours. During the period of the rectorship of Rev. Charles Lidgould, 1736-1766, a farm was purchased at Walton-on-the-Naze to increase the stipend. This, however, has since been lost - gone to the sea, thus repeating the fate of the estate belonging to a prebendal stall in St. Paul's Cathedral, which is now called "Prebenda consumpta per mare." The lecturer next mentioned Rev. Lewis Welsh Owen, during whose day the church was so horribly mutilated by the addition of the present north aisle - a perfectly atrocious piece of work ! He added that on the death of the Rev. John Bush Early the parish was seriously interfered with, and much property at the west end of the town abstracted for which put poor return was made by the addition of that part within the walls which includes up to the east side of Head Street. He also mentioned in passing that after the siege in 1648, when St. Mary's was ruined, Holy Trinity was held by the rector of St. Mary's by sequestration, and service for both parishes were held in Holy Trinity Church, which state of affairs lasted till 1714, when St. Mary's was rebuilt, but the desequestration did not take place till 1735. The lecturer next described the fittings of the church - the bell made in 1633 by the elder Miles Graye: the font which is 15th century; the chest in the vestry, which is mentioned at the visitation of 1633 as wanted two locks; the ancient mazer or wooden bowl now used for receiving the collections, but as to when and how it came to the church there was no record; and

THE CHURCH PLATE.

In the visitation of 1685 mentioned was made of a silver plate which had gone, like an old patten and other things, but said Dr. Laver, we are in a better state now than in 1608, when the wardens reported: "They have no potts to fetch wyne in to the Communion Table." A pewter flagon now in the vestry may be the result of this 1608 visitation. The lecturer passed on to a reference to the monuments, and speaking of William Gilberd, author of "De Magnete," and his birthplace, Tymperleys - part of which is still standing - he characterised it as a disgrace that it is not owned

by the town and kept as a shrine to the memory of Colchester's greatest scientist, but, with the perversity of those who should know better, its acquirement was lost at the recent sale of the property. He next described interesting parish buildings - the almshouses in Eld Lane, the old parish workhouses formerly at the west end of the almshouses, both originally built for a hay factory, and in a survey of the history of the parish said they could not say what was its original extent, but it probably contained East Donyland and St. Giles as well as Berechurch. Now it consisted of a part compact as possible within the walls and of several scattered fragments without. Eld Lane must be very old, and was practically the walk on the Roman wall of the town. Lion Walk or Cat Lane referred to one of the principal inns of the town, and never had a very aristocratic history. Culver Street was probably derived from a pigeon house - possibly in the grounds of East Hill House; and St. John Street was formerly Gutter Lane - descriptive of its former state ! With the recital of interesting persons resident in the parish Dr. Laver closed a lecture that was very informative, historically useful, and keenly enjoyed by the audience. He was heartily thanked for his latest contribution to the parochial history of Colchester.

DEDICATION FESTIVAL.

The lecture was given in connection with the dedication festival of Holy Trinity, celebrated on Sunday by special services.

On Wednesday evening Mr. E. H. Turner, A.R.C.O., gave an organ recital in the church which was greatly enjoyed. Mr. F. Warner sang "If with all your hearts," and Mr. J. Cole "Nearer, my God, to Thee" (Carey). Mr. Turner's interesting programme, which was brilliantly played, was as follows:- Cuckoo and Nightingale concerto (Handel); (a) Ariel (b) Berceuse (Bonnet); Toccata in D Minor (Bach); Prayer and Cradle Song (Guilmant); Nachtstuck (Schumann); Suite Gothique (Boellmann).



Trinity Street in 1921.

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