

History of Eppleton All Saints Church 1923 to 1962

by Martin Lewins

1923 Organ cleaned at a cost of £112

1924 Electric Light introduced into the church

1925 Internment of the Rev. Robinson Hindle took place at South Bolton Cemetery. He had been vicar at Eppleton from 1886 until 1915.

1926 The funeral of Richard Scorer aged 72 years on 17th June. He was a well-known resident of Hetton - le - Hole and was the first Secretary of the Parochial Church Council.

1930 The Rev. G. Salisbury began his vicariate. New furnaces were put in the cellar. The Colliery Company gifted the Church Hall to the Church.

1931 New spouting and gutters for the church cost £100. A children's corner was set up in the church. The church hall was modernised and the floor levelled and renewed. Cloakrooms were fitted and lighting added and later two lavatories and two classrooms were added, all by voluntary labour.

1932 The interior of the church was renovated and cleaned. A pulpit canopy was presented to the church. The panelling of the chancel and sanctuary in oak was started

1933 The Silver Jubilee of the Parish was celebrated by visits from three former priests Messrs Reed, Breffit and Ellis. A new screen to the organ chamber was added late in the year together with a new credence table and a memorial to the late vicar. A board with the names of clergymen in gold leaf was added and dedicated by Dr. Gordon, Bishop of Jarrow.

A new hot water system was fitted and for the first time the chancel (east end) was heated by hot air and hot water radiators. The old church hall in George Street (Tin Pot Hall) was demolished after it was sold. A loud speaker system was fitted in the church for the first time. A small brass cross on an ebony base was presented by a family in the parish in memory of a son who drowned in a pond behind Eppleton Colliery and who was a member of the Sunday School.

The sidesmen presented new coconut matting for the centre aisle. A beautiful new altar lining made in a convent in Cyprus was given to the church by the ladies. Ceilings were fixed in the church hall to improve the warmth of the hall. New fencing was fixed around the church in parts while the rest received an overhaul.

1935 The north-east gateway was walled up, the gates having been damaged by a coke wagon.

1936 A new boiler was fixed in the cellar. Twelve pictures which had been presented in 1932 by a German artist were dedicated and placed on the panels of stonework between windows on the north and south elevations. They represented the 12 stations of the cross. The church windows at the east end were given wire protection and the same occurred at the church hall. For the first time a missionary effort was started, the church undertaking to educate an African boy for 5 years.

1938 Two beautiful altar cloths were given by members of the congregation. A new oak altar rail and vicar's stall were dedicated by the Archdeacon of Durham as a thanksgiving for the preservation of peace in 1938. A public toilet was built within the vicarage yard. It was built by a bricklayer, joiner, plumber and slater from the Hetton Lime Depot who gave their labour freely so that it was completed in July in readiness for a garden party.

1939 In August volunteers painted all the clear glass windows black as well as most of the west window. Black-out shutters were fitted in all the lower windows and black-out curtains on ropes and pulleys were assembled for east and west windows. Shutters were made for the vestry windows. In September 1939 the church hall was taken over by soldiers of the King.

1940 The vergers retired due to illness. Heavy snow made the work of volunteers more arduous as pathways and entrances had to be cleared. A number of trees were damaged and had to be cut down then cut up by volunteers. In April/May a government order meant that all decorative metal rails had to be removed for the war effort and only the gates were left in place.

1942 Church organ cleaned at a cost of £74 and an electric blower added at a further cost of £60. Sir Lindsay Wood who had lived at Hetton Hall for a time, and was Chairman of the Hetton Coal Company died. He lived at The Hermitage at Chester-le Street where his wife had died in 1891. The contents of the Hermitage were to be sold including the silver trowel used by his wife when she laid the foundation stone of the church in 1883. The Rev. G Salisbury went to the sale and purchased the trowel for an unknown sum. I do not know what has happened to the trowel since, but I do hope it is safe. The church bell was rung for 30 minutes on the orders of Winston Churchill in thanks for the victories in the Middle East.

1944 The small boiler was repaired and covered with chicken wire and asbestos paste. The magic mineral was coated over the wire to retain the heat for a very large church. Many years later asbestos would become classified as a dangerous material.

1946 The Church hall was handed back to the parish. It had been in use by the members of Hetton Home Guard from 1941. A new door and steps were fitted as well as repairs to some of the windows. Funds for repairs etc came from a series of beetle drives and dances.

1947 A grant was received to remove black-out paint and the cleaning of the church began. Repairs to the arches also took place and a new carpet fitted in places to replace the worn coconut matting. The church was given a thorough cleaning.

1950 A new boundary fence was bought and fitted by volunteers.

1951 Once again the entrance gates which had survived the war were damaged by a coke lorry. They were replaced with light weight gates.

1952 Rev G. Salisbury retired to Coventry.

1956 A furnace and small boiler were removed and replaced with a single large boiler together with new radiators. Pews were cut to accommodate their installation. Church hall seating sold the cricket club. Sunday school started again in the church hall. A choral society was started.

1957 A Youth Club started in the church with a police constable as leader.

1960 The Youth Club disbanded and the vestry was used as a games room.

1962. Rev. Davies leaves the parish.