

**S. BOTOLPH'S CHURCH,
CAMBRIDGE**

NEWSLETTER FOR FEBRUARY 2017

Notes from the P.C.C. Meeting (31st January)

- Book Sale to be held on Saturday 18th March
- Lent Group to meet, suggested dates Tuesdays 7th, 14th & 21st March, subject 'Paul and Empire'
- Next P.C.C. meeting: Tuesday 25th April
- Annual Church Meetings: Sunday 30th April
- Refreshment Days for Visitors:
 - Monday 1st May
 - Saturday & Sunday 17th-18th June (St Botolph's week-end)
 - Saturday 15th July
 - Saturday 9th September
- Annual Outing: Saturday 13th May, to St Albans & Hampton Court

From the Registers

Funeral Tuesday 31st January Michael Turner

Now follow a contribution from Margaret Widdess on Hymnody, and her Thank-you after her farewell on 4th December. K.H.

St Botolph's and the Victorian hymn

Margaret Widdess

What do Thomas Webster, John Mason Neale and John Bacchus Dykes have in common? They were all 19th-century hymn enthusiasts, and they all had some connection with the parish of St Botolph.

I own a copy of Webster's *Tunes for Country Churches*, a collection of hymn tunes made by the Revd Thomas Webster, Vicar of Oakington and Rector of St Botolph's, Cambridge from 1834 to 1840, and printed at the Pitt Press in 1838. Some of the tunes are apparently by Webster himself, while others are by different composers. The advantages of using selected hymns frequently ('conducive to devotion'), rather than risking the 'dissipating effect' of too much variety, are commended in the introduction, in which Webster

also shows enthusiasm for the proper chanting of psalms. He advises on chanting by whole choirs and congregations, contrary to the prevailing custom of leaving the chanting to the 'shrill' voices of children.

Hymns had been widely used in evangelical churches but discouraged by the authorities. This collection reflects the growing acceptance of hymns in the church at large, but still belongs to the age of individual parish collections; the age of large hymnals providing hymns for any parish to select from came later, with *Hymns Ancient & Modern* 1861 and the *English Hymnal* in 1906. These hymnals offered standardised versions of tunes and words, whereas Webster's *Tunes* have variations in what we regard as familiar tunes, and different words are frequently set to them. For instance, 'Lo! he comes with clouds descending' is set to a different tune from Helmsley, the one we know, while other words are set to Helmsley. 'Rejoice, the Lord is king' set to the tune of 'Ye holy angels bright' works particularly well. The collection includes a lot of hymns that are largely forgotten, but are interesting 'period pieces'.

The book's local interest is illustrated in Webster's naming of two of his tunes after his own parishes. One is Oakington, and another is St Botolph, which is different from the later St Botolph tune that we sing ('Jesu, the very thought of thee'). Furthermore, his reference to children chanting psalms fits with the account of the consecration of Mill Road Cemetery in 1848, when children chanted Psalm 39. A further local connection with hymns is that Webster's son-in-law, who married his daughter Sarah in 1842, was the Revd John Mason Neale (1818-66). He was the distinguished translator of ancient hymns (Jerusalem the Golden, for example), who was involved in compiling an early hymnal himself. Webster's and Neale's interests in hymns were different, and the two men may not have been sufficiently acquainted before Webster's death in 1840 to compare notes, but the connection with St Botolph's is of interest.

I have been reminded of another connection between hymns and the parish, through an alumnus of St Catharine's College, which is in the parish. This year, on 22 January, the anniversary of his death, a plaque was unveiled in the College Chapel to commemorate the Revd Dr John Bacchus Dykes (1823-76). He was a co-founder of the Cambridge University Musical Society, but also the composer of many favourite hymn tunes, including 'Holy! Holy! Holy!', 'Praise to the Holiest in the height' (Gerontius) and 'Eternal Father, strong to save'. I was delighted to see that at the bottom of the plaque are the words *Dominus regit me*, the Latin title of the 23rd Psalm in the Prayer Book and the

name of one of the best-loved Dykes tunes to which 'The King of love my Shepherd is' is frequently sung at St Botolph's.

Dykes' tune *Christus consolator* was a setting of John Mason Neale's words, 'Art thou weary, art thou languid', which Dykes wrote two years after Neale's death. This hymn did not appear in the *New English Hymnal*, as some Victorian hymns were branded 'sentimental' at the time, but it survived up to *Hymns Ancient and Modern Revised*. It is not clear whether or not the two men met, but as they both had strong High Church views that brought them into conflict with the church authorities, it is possible that they knew each other, or at least knew of each other. Thankfully, many of Dykes' tunes and Neale's words have lasted well and are still enjoyed, while sadly, many of the hymns included in Webster's *Tunes* are no longer current.

January 2017.

I was delighted to see so many people, congregation and other friends, on my last Sunday at St Botolph's. I very much appreciated the refreshments, music and kind words. Thank you so much for Mrs Horbury's lovely card (which I hope to see as a postcard before long, having failed in my attempts to capture the interior of St Botolph's in the way this card does), the very generous token and the history book, which I am thrilled to have both for its information and the charm of its style – all so thoughtfully chosen. In gratitude not only for my last Sunday but also for the last 19-20 years, and wishing you every blessing,

Margaret Widdess.

Items for the March Newsletter by Monday 27th February, please.

K.H.

CALENDAR

EPIPHANY V Sunday 5th February

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion

11.00 a.m. Sung Eucharist

Epistle, Mr Hodson; Refreshments, Barker

Preacher: The Revd Patrick Cotton

4.15 p.m. Evensong

Wednesday 8th February 10.30 a.m. Holy Communion

SEPTUAGESIMA 12th February

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion

11.00 a.m. Mattins

1. Genesis 1.1-2.3, Dr Lindsay; 2. John 1.1-18, Mr Barker

Preacher: Dr Jonathan Holmes, Fellow of Queens'

12 noon Holy Communion

4.15 p.m. Evensong

Wednesday 15th 10.30 a.m. Holy Communion

SEXAGESIMA 19th February

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion

11.00 a.m. Sung Eucharist (Order 1)

Epistle: Dr Hunter; Intercession: Mrs. Coggill

Preacher: Canon Brian Watchorn

4.15 p.m. Evensong

St Matthias, Apostle, transferred Wednesday 22nd

10.30 a.m. Holy Communion

QUINQUAGESIMA 26th February

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion

11.00 a.m. Mattins

1. Genesis 12.1-9, Mrs. Horbury; 2. I Corinthians 12.4-end, Mrs. Irvine

Preacher: The Revd Ank Rigelsford

12 noon Holy Communion

4.15 p.m. Evensong

Ash Wednesday Wednesday 1st March 10.30 a.m. Holy Communion

LENT I 5th March

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion

11.00 a.m. Sung Eucharist

Epistle, Mrs. Baker; Refreshments, Teasdale

The Revd Patrick Cotton

4.15 p.m. Evensong

Churchwardens

Mrs. K. M. Horbury 01223 363529, Mrs. V. Baker 01223 426911