

Buckingham

Advertiser

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CASTLE HOUSE SOLD

CASTLE HOUSE, one of Buckingham's finest old houses, has been sold. The prospective buyer — contracts have still to be signed — is a Mr. D. Edmondson.

The Advertiser understands that he intends to use the house for his own occupation, and will restore it to residential use after its years as Buckingham Borough, and then Aylesbury Vale District Council Offices.

The buyer has included the garden, and the car parking space just past

the house, in the deal, so these two much used facilities will be no more available to the regulars. The scheme dreamed up by the Vale planners to convert the outbuildings into small bijou residences will also have to be abandoned. The purchase price has not been revealed yet.

GAMES AND DANCING IN CHURCH?

A RECTOR'S suggestion that two under-used churches could be used for games and dancing, has horrified some members of the congregations. They are aghast at the idea of bingo, discos and darts matches being held in their centuries-old parish churches.

But the Rector, the Rev. Derek Tinsley has warned that because of the "phenomenal" cost of maintaining the churches at Akeley and Leckhampstead "may have to close altogether if they are not put to good use."

And he is urging people to overcome their prejudices. "I would love to see the churches used as village social centres. If people want to church seven days a week for different activities, they would feel more at home for the actual

Sunday worship," he said.

Radcliffe and table tennis in the churches could be arranged more easily than discos and bingo.

"But this is something that could be explored — there need not be a categorical 'no'," said Mr. Tinsley. It had already been done very lately at Woughton, in Milton Keynes.

People's minds were closed to the idea because they had grown up seeing the church solely as a place where people went for church services, he said.

"We have got things out of true by making buildings exclusively for worship," said Mr. Tinsley, he pointed out that two hundred years ago church buildings were used as village halls.

"It was only when pews were put in that their usefulness was limited," he said. In Leckhampstead over 1,000 has been spent on the church. In Akeley they face the prospect of a bill for

thousands of pounds for restoration work. "For the amount of time the churches are used in a week, the cost of their upkeep is totally unjustified. When people overseas are starving, is it right to spend so much on a building which no-one uses?" he said.

LUXURY

The cost of a service is nearly £30 — "a great luxury for an hour, for 100 people who might well feel it's their duty to go to church rather than something they desperately want to do."

"And is it right to ask the village like Akeley to cough up £1,000 to restore a church which they largely don't attend?" questioned Mr. Tinsley. He felt it was their responsibility to retain

their heritage — and the churches would be there long after the village halls had fallen down.

Mr. Tinsley added: "Maybe there are certain things we would have to draw the line at. The church commissioners would require certain limitations but they might not be as stringent as the people themselves impose."

He said it wasn't his idea to exclude things but people had a choice: "They either go on using their church and broadening the use of the building or they face the possibility of it closing."

In the village reaction to Mr. Tinsley's suggestion was mixed. Mrs. Gladys Mansfield, churchwarden at Leckhampstead for six years, said: "I don't hold with churches being used for events

like darts, drinks and gambling. It would need a lot of money to turn it into a community centre and apart from that we've already got a village hall which is good for another 28 years."

Leckhampstead parish clerk, Mr. Bill Dixon said: "The village hall is a corrugated iron hut which is very dilapidated. It is quite used but the church is very little used. If all the village hall activities were transferred to the church it would give the church more revenue and make it better used."

"Some people say it is sacrilegious but I personally consider it's either that or the church will be shut down." Churchwarden at Akeley, Mrs. Violet

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DANCING IN CHURCH

From Page One

Cowley said: "People who haven't been to church since they were christened are shutting themselves out as a community centre."

People still want the church for weddings and christenings but you only see them at those times."

She said people feared that if it was used as a community centre the church would be vandalised.

"I wouldn't want it used for bingo but I think it could be used for musical evenings

and wedding receptions," she said.

Mr. Bill Panter, chairman of the parish council at Akeley said: "I think the church's

centre would be limited — and people with parents buried in the churchyard wouldn't take too kindly to people running over it."

NOTE: At Buckingham, members of the United Reformed Church have tackled their church upkeep problem the other way. They have closed their church, and now hold services in the church hall adjoining.

ORDER YOUR NEW CAR BEFORE

AKELEY METHODISTS GO

FOR ELECTRIC MUSIC



A MUCH NEEDED electric organ has been installed in the tiny Methodist Chapel in Akeley to make services more enjoyable for the congregation of about three.

And organist, Mrs. Ivy Land, is delighted as she can now dispense with the old pedal organ which she has struggled to play for the last fifteen years.

Mrs. Land told us that she had found it increasingly hard work as the pedals were so stiff and the notes produced by the woodworm ridden instrument were not always what they should be, especially in the cold winter months.

So, when Mrs. Land and her husband, Tom, spotted the second-hand electric model at a reasonable price, they decided to snap it up for the chapel. Later they were repaid from the chapel funds.

WORTH IT ALL

A certain amount of work was necessary to clean up and repair the instrument which had been badly neglected, but as far as Mrs. Land is concerned, it was well worth the effort.

The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel was built in 1829 and the average attendance at their Sunday services is just three people. But it is hoped that the new organ might attract a larger congregation.

Over the Christmas period a carol service will be held in the chapel and possibly, in the New Year, a concert will be organised.

Akeley church to be made redundant?

St. James' Church, Akeley, has recently been declared structurally unsafe by the district engineer of Aylesbury Vale District Council and the necessary steps are in hand for the parish church to be declared redundant. An initial sum of £20,000 is required to put right the results of mortar erosion between the stonework of the tower and in a village of 300 souls, half of them pensioners, the money is just not forthcoming. Indeed, if the villagers were able to raise this vast sum, an equivalent amount would be needed every ten years to maintain the initial restoration. Thus the sad

by Susan I. Hatton

decision has been taken for the church to be demolished, the spot where it now stands to be grassed over, and for the graveyard to be still used for village burials.

The church was entirely rebuilt of local stone in 1854 and is thus not old enough to be considered an "historic building". It is built on the site of an earlier church but only the inner oak doors remain from the earlier building. The new church was consecrated by the Bishop of Oxford in July 1855, and consists of a nave and chancel and the tower at the south side. The oak timbers were cut from Akeley Wood, the octagonal font is of Painswick stone and the church is in the Early Decorated period. The most appealing feature is the stained glass window, which

St. James' Church, Akeley, was built in 1854 to replace a much smaller church, but recently it has been declared structurally unsafe. Photograph by Alan J. Martlow.



was erected to the memory of the Rev. John Risley, who built the Old Rectory.

The village also has a Methodist chapel and school, a new school, a flourishing public house called the Bull and Butcher in addition to a post office cum shop. Although attendances at the church have been poor in recent years it is a village landmark and its loss is greatly regretted by the local community.

Akeley is a village without a great deal of recent history attaching to it, yet at the turn of the century it was an entirely self-reliant community, creating its own pleasures after hard toil in the fields and at the lace pillows. It maintained its sturdy independence through its cottage industries and small

farms, having no overlord to bend the inhabitants to his will.

At about this time the village had a thriving brickyard and pottery owned by Mr. Robert Watts, who lived at The Cedars, possibly the most handsome house in the village and now, alas, demolished to make way for Cedars Close, an estate of new houses. The kilns were situated in Chapel Lane (known as Duck End in those days) he clay being dug locally and useful items such as flower pots, large red pans for the making of home-made wine and decorative tiles were made here. Pottery Farm derives its name from this bygone occupation. Each Saturday a load of flower pots, bowls and other crocks went to Buckingham market and, from time to time, to the surrounding villages where Mr. Stowe, a tall, thin eccentric lay preacher, took his pony and trolley cart calling "Two half-penny flower pots for one penny".

In those days there were two general shops, one also doubling as the post office. Bread was baked at the Greyhound, formerly a public house and now privately owned. After the bread was removed from the oven village women took cakes or perhaps rabbit stew and pies along and for a penny were able to have their meal cooking for them—a much cheaper and less time-consuming occupation than having to collect sticks and heat their own ovens. There were two cobblers, a butcher, a builder and undertaker, a coal and wood merchant, a tailor and wheelwright who made craftsmen-built farm wagons and other machinery, carrying

The Greyhound public house as it was in 1930. The door on the left led to a tiny cottage which was let separately, and the balcony was the section on the end.



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Right. The smallest house in Akeley in Chapel End. It has now been pulled down. Left. The Mothers' Union outside the rectory, probably just before 1900.

out his trade in the yard of the Bull and Butcher.

In addition, Becky Knibbs sold an ointment which she made (probably just goosegrease and herbs) which was reputed to be a certain cure for chilblains.

As in so many villages, the highlight of the year for the children at least was the Christmas party, given by Mrs. Pilgrim, who lived at Akeley Wood, a large house built some miles from the village. The children were transported in Mr. John Mumford's farm wagons to "the riding school", now used as a gymnasium since the house was converted to a boy's preparatory school about four years ago. The next bright spot in the year was Akeley Feast, celebrated in August when the show business family of Sheppard brought the swings, roundabouts and shooting gallery to Akeley from Binsworth and set out their stalls.

I was fortunate enough to be able to borrow a booklet entitled "Notes from the Annals of Akeley" which first appeared in the Buckingham Advertiser in fourteen parts, written during World War One by the then rector, the Rev. J. Maurice Turner. He believed that the name of the village is derived from Ake, the old Anglo-Saxon word for oak, and ley, a field. In some ancient documents the name is spelt Oskaley, but in Domesday it is recorded as Achele. He translates Folio 149 of the Domesday Book as follows:

Robert holds Achele of Walter Giffard. It was rated as three hides. The arable is four carucates. There are four oxen in the demesne, and two carucates may be made. There are two copyholders and four cottagers, having two ploughs and a half. There are two servants. Meadow sufficient for one plough and eighty-five hogs. In the whole value it is worth and was always worth 40s. In the time of King Edward 60s.

In the Annals of Akeley Mr. Turner mentions the death of Ann Clarke in 1773, an old lady who lived to the great age of 104. Her gravestone is on the right hand side of the pathway going up to the church.

He also says that Akeley is noted for the longevity of its population and quotes: "One old lady who lost her daughter aged seventy thus lamented her death: 'Ah! I never did think I should rear her'".

Thomas Andrew, the rector who buried Ann Clarke, was the last of the rectors to be

buried in the parish and the last to live in the then rectory, a thatched dwelling which now forms part of the garden of the Old Rectory, a building designed by Sir Gilbert Scott.

After I had visited the church I called on Mrs. Whitehall, one of the village's oldest inhabitants and she told me that, as a child, she could remember the village schoolmaster leading the children into the playground where they sang patriotic songs "to the flag" in honour of Mafeking being relieved. Her mother-in-law had been commissioned to make a table centrepiece in Buckinghamshire lace for one of the queens (though Mrs. Whitehall could not remember which queen) and she had over 400 bobbins on her pillow in order to work the intricate pattern.

Another elderly resident told me that until ten years ago there was no cross on the altar in the church, no candles and no flowers. A small noticeboard in the porch states that the Church Society endowed a number of seats for the poor (this being at the time when people paid for their seats) thereby enabling the society to have a major say in the running of



the church. The Church Society is still a patron of the living, though Akeley now shares its rector with four other parishes.

After St. James has been demolished will the village lose its chief religious links? The Rev. Derek Tinsley hopes the services will continue to be held in the school hall or elsewhere and that the strong community spirit which exists in Akeley will still flourish.

In 1837, the year Queen Victoria came to the throne, the Rev. John Risley was inducted as curate at Akeley and in the Annals of Akeley his praise is sung: "... Akeley will be forever indebted to this Rector for his munificent gift and strenuous exertions in getting the pretty little church built." *T139

art
thief

Was it yesterday
or a generation past
that I stood in the oakwoods
and tracked the acoustic loops
of the ring-doves' calls?

And looked down then,
saw the smallest nest in the world
of grasses fine as human hair,
and plugging it tightly,
shyly, brownly
the mother wood-lark
staring upward.

But being bird
and the smallest bird in the world
she fled bequeathing her tiny eggs
so brightly trecked
to me
who took all three
and with a pin
evicted
three thin streams of life

denied three songs
and kept three shells
in my private museum
of burgled art.

DAVID GILL

The Rev. S. G. Williams "filched back" to Akeley

THE PARISH CHURCH of St. James', Akeley, was filled to capacity on Tuesday evening last week, for the licensing of the Rev. Samuel G. Williams, as Curate of Akeley and Leckhampstead.

This ceremony has brought back to the locality a very well-known personality, who is a Freeman of the Borough of Buckingham.

Prior to taking up a new life in the Church, Mr. Williams was a respected master at the Royal Latin School, Buckingham, for 40 years and he is a former Borough Councillor, Mayor and later, an Alderman.

For many years he and his wife, formerly Miss Olive Eales, lived at Maids-Moreton and took a very keen interest in church affairs.

The licensing was carried out by the Bishop of Buckingham, The Rt. Rev. G. C. Pepys, who was assisted by the Rev. W. J. Waker, Rural Dean of Buckingham.

Among other members of the clergy present were The Rev. E. C. Rees, Rector of Shalstone, The Rev. A. Russell Twyford, Rector of Maids Moreton, The Rev. A. F. T. Newell, Vicar of Gawcott and Hillesden, The Rev. J. Arthur Hoyles, Methodist Superintendent Minister, Buckingham, The Rev. T. A. Wharton, Vicar of Chipping Norton, where the Rev. Williams was Curate, and The Rev. R. Jeans, Vicar of Upwell, Cambs, a former Vicar of Chipping Norton.

The Churchwardens in attendance were Mrs. G. King and Mrs. E. Hart (Akeley), and Mr. A. L. Lester and Mr. J. M. Davies (Leckhampstead). Among the congregation were members of the Parochial Church Councils and Parish Councils, a coach party from Chipping Norton, representatives of Akeley and Leckhampstead Youth Clubs, and many friends of the Rev. and Mrs. Williams from Maids Moreton and Buckingham.

The organist was Mr. E. Hollyoak, and the hymns sung were "God of mercy, God of grace," "O Holy Spirit, Lord of grace" and "Glorious things of Thee are spoken." During the last hymn, a collection was taken for the Ordination Candidates' Fund, without which it would be impossible to finance the training of candidates for Ordination.

So well known

The Bishop of Buckingham began his address by welcoming the Rev. Williams—"a bit superfluous since he is so well known," he commented. He said how pleased he was to have him and his wife back in Bucks again.

"We have filched him back... to do what? asked the Bishop. He explained that the Rev. Williams now had three duties to fulfil. Firstly, said the Bishop, he must be a messenger—with the people; secondly a watchman—over the people; and lastly a steward—for the people.

The Bishop noted that the Church had no fair linen on the altar, no cross and no candlesticks; it was now the Rev. Williams' job, he said, to put such matters right.

The Rev. Williams welcomed everyone who was present and thanked the local bellringers for sounding a quarter peal at Leckhampstead on Monday night in honour of the occasion.

After the service, light refreshments were provided for the congregation in Akeley Village Hall.

Already in residence at Akeley Rectory, the Rev. Williams and his wife asked to go carol singing with members of the Akeley Sunday School and the Youth Club on the following night as they were so impressed when they heard the singers rehearsing in the Village Hall.

AKELEY

Parish Church.—On Tuesday, April 18th, the Easter Vestry was held at 7 p.m. Mr. G. Attwood produced the accounts for the year, and was able to show a balance to the good, thanks to the generosity of Capt. and Mrs. Price. Capt. R. K. Price was again elected as People's Warden, while the Rector, Rev. J. M. Turner, again appointed Mr. Geo. Attwood as Rector's Warden. Messrs. J. Winterburn and J. Steer were again elected as Sidesmen. The resignation of the Sexton, Mr. J. Key, was brought before the Vestry, but no decision was come to respecting a successor. It was then proposed and carried that the Table of Fees be sent to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for revision. Mr. Geo. Attwood has now completed his fortieth year as Churchwarden, his first election being in 1882, with Mr. Jas. Mumford as his colleague. To be churchwarden as long a time as the Israelites were in the wilderness is a most unique record, and we question whether it can be beaten in the whole of Buckinghamshire. Mr. Attwood is 83 and is going forward with his duties as Churchwarden. We wish he could be Churchwarden another 40 years.

AKELEY

VESTRY AND PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL MEETINGS.

The annual Easter Vestry meeting and Parochial Church Council was held on Tuesday, April 3rd.

Mr. Geo. Attwood gave his statement of accounts, which showed a balance on the right side through the generosity of Capt. R. K. Price and the economy of Mr. Attwood. Mr. G. Attwood was appointed once again as Rector's warden for the first time. He is 85, and still going strong. Mr. Attwood, in reply, said he only promised the Rector to act as warden for the duration of the war, but now he had got him to promise to be warden for duration of the peace, so he must go on. Capt. R. K. Price was elected people's warden, and Messrs. J. Steer and J. Winterburn sidesmen.

The difficulty of filling the verger's office had been got over by appointing a woman, who succeeded in performing all the duties satisfactorily except the digging of the graves. The Rector informed the meeting that not only was it a worry to get a verger, but to define what a verger was when they had got one, and the following curious points have come to light:—"When the Verger is opening the Church he is a Sexton. When he leads the responses and says 'Amen,' he is a Clerk. When he tolls the bell he is a Sexton. When he assists at baptisms he is a Clerk. When he prepares the table for communion he is a Sexton. When he assists at a funeral he is a Clerk. When he shuts up the Church he is a Sexton. When he assists at a wedding he is a Clerk. When he draws his fee for a grave-stone he is a Sexton. When he draws his fee for a wedding he is a Clerk. When he draws his fee for a funeral he is a Clerk and Sexton rolled into one, for he performs duties both inside and outside the Church. When he digs a grave he is a Sexton and not a Clerk, but his wages as a grave-digger is distinct from his sexton's fee. When he cleans the Church he is neither Sexton nor Clerk."

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