

BADSEY VILLAGE CROSS.



ERECTED TO THE MEMORY OF
Rev. THOMAS HENRY HUNT,
for 35 years Vicar of Badsey-cum-Wickhamford.
OCTOBER 15, 1910.

A FORMER VICAR OF BADSEY.

Dedication of a Memorial Cross.

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On Saturday afternoon, the Archdeacon of Warwick dedicated a handsome cross which has just been erected in the Churchyard at Badsey to the memory of the late Rev. Thomas Henry Hunt, who was Vicar of Badsey from 1852 to 1887, and Rural Dean of Evesham from 1881 to 1887, when he resigned the living and went to live at Ruyton Park, Shropshire, where he died in 1896. As Vicar of Badsey, Mr. Hunt was beloved and esteemed by all his parishioners and he enjoyed the friendship of many people throughout a wide district. He was of a very kindly and charitable disposition, and although it is twenty-three years since he left the parish his memory is most affectionately cherished by the people among whom he used to minister. A work in which he took a great interest was the restoration of the Church of St. James, towards which he contributed a sum of £500. The work of restoration was carried out by Mr. Thomas Collins, of Tewkesbury, whose name has been associated with many church restorations all over the country; the architect was Mr. T. Graham Jackson, now R.A. A new South aisle, with porch was built, and a vestry was provided on the north side of the chancel; the old gallery was demolished and the high pews removed; a new floor was laid, and other necessary work done. The church was re-opened on Thursday, October 15th, 1885; there were two services, at which the Bishop of Worcester and the Archdeacon of Worcester preached, and there was a public luncheon. The 15th of October is a day peculiarly associated with the Rev. T. H. Hunt

and Badsey; not only was the restored church opened on that day, but it was on October 15th, 1852, that Mr. Hunt first came to Badsey; by way of welcome, the parishioners unharnessed the horses of his carriage and dragged it down the village street. October 15th of the present year, the anniversary of Mr. Hunt's first appearance in Badsey and of the re-opening of the Church, was accordingly chosen as the day for the dedication of the Cross which the parishioners have erected to his memory. Besides contributing very handsomely to the restoration of the church, the late Mr. Hunt practically got the National Schools (now known as the old schools) built for the parish, and he was instrumental in getting the churchyard enlarged and in erecting the handsome wall built along the front of the Churchyard.

Mr. Hunt's family erected a stained glass window to his memory in the eastern wall of the chancel, but the parishioners themselves felt that they would like to commemorate his vicariate in some way. As there have been many calls on their generosity—there was a debt on the restoration fund to pay off and the bells needed re-hanging—they have been unable to do anything until recently, but now that those matters have been settled they felt that the twenty-fifth anniversary of the re-opening of the church would be a fitting occasion on which to give expression to their feelings of affection for their former Vicar. They accordingly opened a subscription for the erection of a cross in the churchyard and they engaged Mr. Jackson, R.A., from whose plans the church was restored, to design a suitable cross. Mr. J. Sladden, who was one of the churchwardens at the time of the restoration, greatly interested himself in the memorial fund, and most of the subscriptions were collected by Miss Ethel Sladden. The necessary funds were very willingly contributed; the donors, most of whom came from the parish, numbered over four hundred—a striking testimony to the regard which Badsey people have for a Vicar who left them as long ago as 1887.

Many years ago there was a cross in Badsey Churchyard, but no living person remembers it. In the Churchyard have laid some worked stones which according to tradition—in this case no doubt a reliable one—formed part of the old cross. These stones have been made use of in the new cross. Our illustration will convey a better idea of the new cross than any verbal description. It is octagon in shape, and the total height is 12ft. 6in. The plinth, steps, and taper shaft are all of Broadway stone. It looks very new at present, but Broadway stone is known to weather beautifully. Round the cross is the inscription:—"Ad hon: Dom: nri: Jesu Xti: et in memoriam Tho: Hen: Hunt, A.M., hujus par: vic: MDCCCLII—MDCCCLXXXVII."

The work has been exceedingly well carried out by the well-known firm of Messrs. W. and H. Gardiner, of Evesham, and it should do something to add to their already high reputation for stone work. The parishioners are highly pleased with the memorial, and quite rightly so, for the design conveys an impression of simple beauty and dignity which is in keeping with the Church close by and is far more effective than anything of an elaborate or ornate character. This cross will probably stand in Badsey Churchyard for many hundreds of years as an example of the good taste of the early part of the twentieth century.

There was a large congregation at the dedication service on Saturday afternoon, and the decorations which had been placed in the church for the harvest festival the following day gave the building an attractive appearance. The service was conducted by the Vicar (the Rev. W. C. Allsebrook), and other robed clergy present, in addition to the Archdeacon of Warwick, were the Revs. J. M. Walker (vicar of Evesham and Rural Dean), W. H. Shawcross (Bretforton), and H. Wilkinson (Crophorne). Two sons of the late Mr. Hunt were present at the service—Capt. Cecil Hunt (Ruyton Park), and Capt. Charles Hunt, the latter being accompanied by his wife. Miss Eva Hunt (the late Mr. Hunt's daughter) was unable to be present through ill health. Evensong was sung as far as the end of the third collect; the special Psalms were lxxxiv., cxii., and cxlix; the special lessons were Numbers xxi. 4-10, and John iii. 2-17; the first was read by Capt Cecil Hunt and the second by the Vicar of Evesham. Goss's anthem, "O Saviour of the World" (sung without organ accompaniment, as were also other musical portions of the service) was well rendered by the choir. During the singing of the hymn "We sing the praise" the choir, clergy and congregation proceeded to the cross, where the dedicatory prayers were read by the Archdeacon. The hymn, "When I survey," was then sung, after which the Archdeacon delivered a brief address in church. He said the idea of parish crosses was no novelty in England or in the world. A thought which might seem strange to them on an occasion like this was that parish crosses were familiar objects before Christian times. In Roman times village crosses stood outside the villages; they were set up in places which people would not go past if they could help it; they were places to be avoided and shunned, even as the hill of Calvary outside Jerusalem was a place feared and avoided. In some villages and towns in England there were still found places known as Gallows Hill—there was one about a mile outside Warwick—a place to which felons and criminals were dragged for the last cruel punishment of the law. That was what the village cross meant

to the people in the old heathen times. It was placed outside the kindly dwellings of men, and the meaning of it was horror and shame and death. But all that was changed. Now the cross stood in the centre of the village, and if people lived rightly it stood in the centre of village life, not a thing thrust away and avoided; it meant not horror and despair and death, but peace and hope and life. How was it that the cross, which was a symbol for all that was not only painful and dreadful but disgraceful, came to be the symbol of salvation and glory, so that we stood it in or midst and were fain to turn out eyes upon it in times of joy and hope and more still in times of sorrow and loss and despondency? It was because in the eternal wisdom and love of God there fell a day whereupon misguided men crucified and nailed to the cross the Holy One and Just, Him who was Son of God and Son of Man. To help us to remember Him who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, there was exalted in the mind of man that dreadful instrument of punishment whereon He suffered and died. Because their blessed Lord died upon the cross for their salvation they were doing a fitting thing that afternoon. The cross was a good and right memorial for those who had lived an unselfish and God-fearing life; perhaps especially fitting was a churchyard cross as the memorial of one who as parish priest in that place gave a great part of his life and substance to the worship and glory of God, and to the leading of men in the ways of God. It was fitting to keep fresh and green the memory of one who was marked with the cross, a crusader; a fighter in the service of the Crucified. The cross also stood as a symbol of things which it was good the parishioners should not forget. It stood as a symbol of the unity and society of the place. It told them that each one lived not to himself or to herself, but as a member of the community. It the days gone by the cross meant suffering and shame; the cross of Christ meant suffering and shame borne for a good cause, for the best of all causes; humbly and patiently borne, it meant, in the best sense of the word, sacrifice.

The service terminated with the hymn "Abide with me" and the Blessing.

SOCIAL GATHERING.—INTERESTING SPEECHES.

In the evening a social gathering was held in the Old Schoolroom to enable the inhabitants of the village to meet the two sons of a former and highly esteemed Vicar. There was a large company present, and as Captain Cecil Hunt, and Captain and Mrs. Charles Hunt entered the room they were warmly received. Hearty handshakes and a few words here and there was the rule for a little time, and then refreshments were handed round to the company. The room was prettily decorated for the occasion, and at one end a platform had been erected. This old building is, of course, associated in no small way with the Hunt family, and the older members of the audience could easily recall incidents of long ago; perhaps many of them had received their early education within its walls. But Badsey has grown since those days, and the education of its children has now to be imparted within a larger and more commodious building.

The Rev. W. C. Allsebrook, at the commencement, said it was a very great pleasure to him to offer a hearty welcome to their old friends, and he was specially glad of the circumstances which had occasioned their visit. When Mr. Hunt came to Badsey he found a dilapidated church, a burial ground which was private property, and no proper school to supply the wants of the place. Now these things had all been remedied, and most of the credit was due to Mr. Hunt. Most of the work of improvement would have been indefinitely postponed but for his enthusiasm and liberality. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Hunt came up to the standard of Goldsmith's village priest,

“in his duty prompt at every call,

He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all;

He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,

Allured to brighter worlds, and—led the way.”

In speaking of the good work Mr. Hunt had done it would be ungenerous to make no mention of those who had succeeded him. (Hear, hear.) He (the Vicar) came to Badsey seventeen years after Mr. Hunt, and at once realised that in spite of all that he had done everything would certainly not have been in the state that he found it but for the fact that Mr. Hunt's successors had followed up the work he had set on foot. Both Mr. Price and Mr. Gepp were men of more than ordinary ability. He hoped that all of them in due course might have a memorial in their parish church. But it was his duty and pleasure that night to express the satisfaction that

some of them felt at making the acquaintance of Mr. Hunt's sons and many of them at renewing it. (Applause.)

Capt. Cecil Hunt said he could not tell those present how much he felt their hearty welcome. He was very sorry that his sister was not able to be present through ill health, but although not with them in person her thoughts would be with them all the same. He could not tell them how touched he was when he got Mr. Sladden's letter telling him of what was to take place that day, for he had no idea that they proposed to erect a memorial to his dear father. It was a great honour to him, and showed the feeling of Badsey towards him; there could be no greater honour than to have his memory recalled in the way it had been after so many years. It was one of his father's greatest pleasures in life to restore the church and to do all the good he could amongst those in the village. Perhaps it would be of interest to them to hear something of his father's life. (Applause.) He was born in the year 1826, and his father, who was also a clergyman, bought himself a living in Shropshire. There were eight children. His father was sent to Eton, where he played cricket and fives and other games, and afterwards went to Christchurch as a junior student. He then entered the Church, and was sent into Essex. He was afterwards offered the living of Badsey, and of course took it. At that time the Vicarage was not what it was now; he believed there were about two bedrooms. It even led his (the speaker's) grandmother to say that she “really did not know what would happen if his father got married.” But he did get married after all, and then the babies began to arrive. When he and his brother were at school nothing seemed to please his father more than when they both brought home cups they had won in the sports. But he must return to what he was saying of his father. He was a man who was always willing to do all that he could for other people. (Hear, hear.) In speaking of the memorial, he must congratulate them on the design; it was a pretty and delicate piece of work, and did credit to the architect and the man who chose him. He was very glad to see them all again, and he mentioned that while at the Vicarage he had been round every nook and cranny. He must also congratulate those present on the continued prosperity of Badsey, and in conclusion he again thanked them for the memorial they had erected to his father's memory, and if he might be permitted to do so, he would thank them in his name.

Capt. Charles Hunt also made a short speech. He said he could not possibly hope to follow the winged words of his brother, for he was always a “gallous chap,” but one thing he could say, and that was the memorial they had erected to his father's name was a very

beautiful piece of work, and when Father Time had laid his hand upon it it would be still more beautiful. One thing that had struck him on his return to Badsey was the tremendous extension of the market gardening industry. A good many of the gardeners now owned their own houses, and he urged them to go on and prosper so that the days of the old yeomen of England might come again. He believed the late William Holyoake was the last of the old type; he owned his own house and farmed his own land. Let them remember that it was far better for their sons to work and live on the land and guard against the possibility of them migrating to the towns. He concluded by expressing his thanks for what Badsey had done to keep alive his father's memory.

Capt. Cecil Hunt made a few additional remarks, and in doing so mentioned the honesty and integrity of George Hardiman, who, in digging over his land, came across a gold chain that his (the speaker's) father had lost many years ago. He thought he displayed great honesty in immediately returning it to its owner. He also had to thank the Vicar for his kindness in making the arrangements for that day's proceedings, and Mr. and Mrs. Sladden for their hospitality. Mr. Sladden had taken a great deal of trouble in assisting with the arrangements for the memorial.

The Vicar heartily thanked Capt. Hunt for all the kind things he had said about him.

Mr. Julius Sladden gave a brief outline of how the memorial scheme came to be set on foot. It was, he said, a great day for Badsey when the restored church was re-opened, but there was perhaps a tinge of sadness in recalling it, for many who were there then had now passed away. But he was very glad to welcome back members of Mr. Hunt's family that day, and glad, too, that they were pleased with the memorial; he hoped it would prove a worthy memorial of a worthy man. Mr. Hunt was no ordinary man or ordinary Vicar, and he was loved by all. There was something intensely human about him; he was kindly to rich and poor, old and young alike, and a welcome visitor in the homes of the well-to-do and the cottages of the poor. He (Mr. Sladden) was churchwarden at the time of the restoration of the church, which in itself was a memorial of Mr. Hunt's good work. (Applause.)

The Vicar was responsible for an excellent musical programme, songs being given by Capt. and Mrs. Charles Hunt, Capt. Cecil Hunt, the Vicar, Miss Pethard, Mr. Gus Dore, Mrs. Taylor, Mr. E. Crisp, and Mr. J. F. Agg.