

THE CHURCH OF ST. LAWRENCE

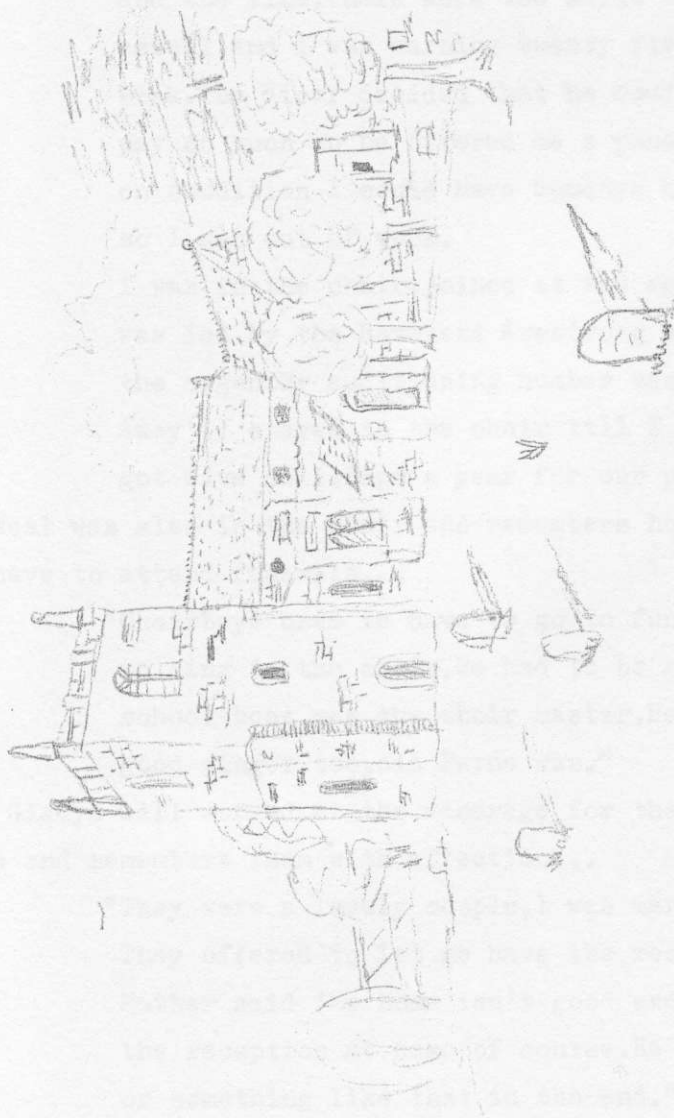
The church, which is a building of stone in the early English style, but has considerable remains of the Norman period, stands on the hill to the east of the windmill. According to legend the original site for the church was to have been where the village green now is but during the night the stone, which was to have been used for building, was mysteriously spirited away to the top of the hill. The builders decided to comply with the 'spirits' and so the church was built on the hill. At that time the church was known as 'All Saints' but the name was changed to 'St. Lawrence' in 1916.

The building consists of chancel, nave and aisles, transepts, south porch and an embattled western tower. There are, at present, six bells in the tower. The second, third, fourth and fifth bells were cast by Thomas Russel of Wootton in 1731. Over the chancel door there is a sun dial and a stained glass window was erected by parishioners to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897. The register of Vicars dates from 1358 to the present day.

In the cemetery adjoining the churchyard is a marble obelisk, the base of which bears the names of the men of the village who lost their lives in the 14-18 war. The following report appeared in the Leamington Courier on April 9th 1920...

"In spite of the wet weather there was a very good attendance at the Parish Church on Sunday afternoon, when an obelisk, erected to the memory of the men of the parish who fell in the war, was dedicated. The memorial, of polished granite, is erected in the centre of the cemetery. It bears the names of thirty men and the following inscription: 'This tablet was erected to the memory of the men of the parish who glorified God by giving their lives for their country in the Great War, 1914-1919. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' The memorial service was conducted by the Vicar (Armstrong) who gave a short address. A hymn, 'Fight the Good Fight', was sung in Church and 'On the Resurrection of the Morning' in the cemetery."

Many villagers have reminiscences about the Church and the Vicars over the years. Mrs Baynton remembers...



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NAPTON.

"The old vicarage was a beautiful building but it was sold because the clergy needed the money. It was the Reverend Howes who was Vicar at the time. Another I remember was the Reverend Alwyn. In those days they didn't use first names, the Vicar was respected and looked up to because he was well educated."

Mr Jones-Gill was in the church choir as a boy and also remembers working at the vicarage...

"I worked at the vicarage doing odd jobs, gardening, filling the bath by carrying the water up in buckets and the like. There were two maids who worked there as well and I was earning twenty five shillings a week. The Vicar decided that he couldn't afford to pay so much so he offered me a pound a week. I agreed on condition I could have Sundays off but he refused so I was out of work.

I was in the choir, joined at the age of ten, when it was led by the Reverend Armstrong and Miss Ives played the organ. My auditioning number was 'Green Hill Far Away'. I stayed in the choir till I was fourteen. We got five shillings a year for our pains."

Mr Neal was also in the choir and remembers how the choirboys used to have to attend funerals...

"Choirboys used to have to go to funerals. I used to sing in the choir. We had to be good singers, our school boss was the choir master. He was a pretty good singer too, old Payne was."

Mrs Gladys Gill worked at the vicarage for the Rev. Alwyn and his wife and remembers them with affection...

"They were a lovely couple, I was married from there. They offered to let me have the reception there but Mother said 'So home isn't good enough?', so I had the reception at home of course. He was made Archdeacon or something like that in the end."

Mrs Worrall also remembers the Rev. Alwyn, who was Vicar of Napton from 1927 till his death on 6th January 1957...

"He was a very good Reverend, Alwyn. He died outside the church on a Sunday. He was going to church and he died outside, sitting in his car. When they came to take him away they couldn't close the back door because he'd set stiff and you see they'd got him laid out in that little green van and his feet were

poking out. It was dreadful because he was such a reserved man but it was the only means of getting him near the place. Alf Eadon and Charlie Green took him to the mortuary."

The present Vicar of Napton is the Reverend Peter Jackson, who is a popular and enthusiastic member of the community.

Other places of worship in the village were the Congregational Chapel, built in 1867, as well as the Primitive Methodist and the Christadelphian chapels. Today only the Methodist and Christadelphian chapel remain. The nearest Congregational or Roman Catholic Church are to be found in Southam.