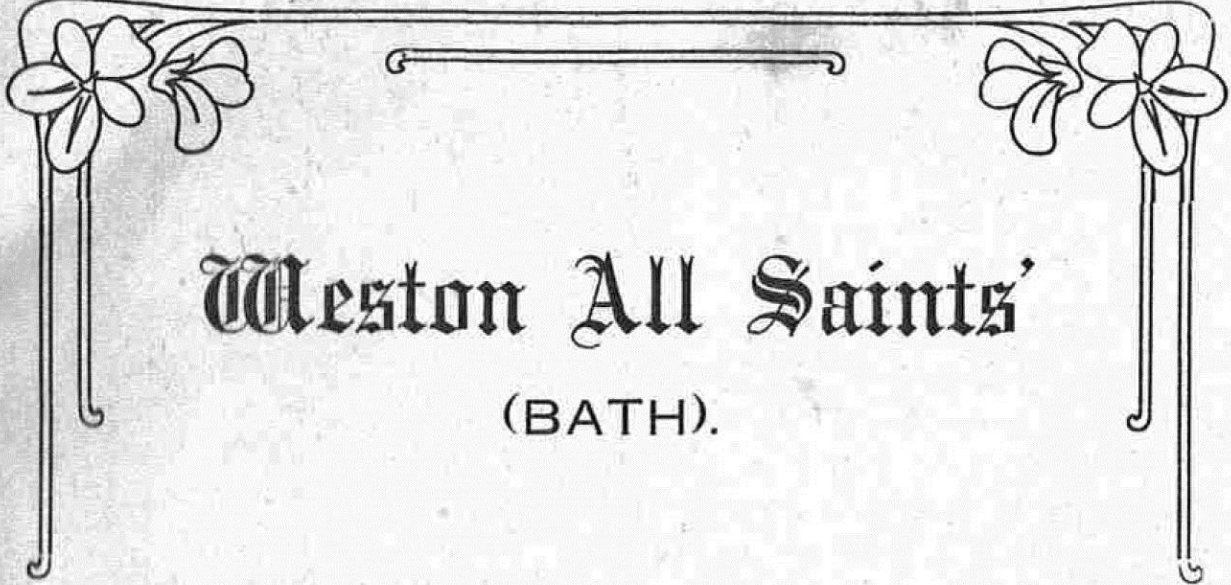


J. H. O.



Weston All Saints'

(BATH).

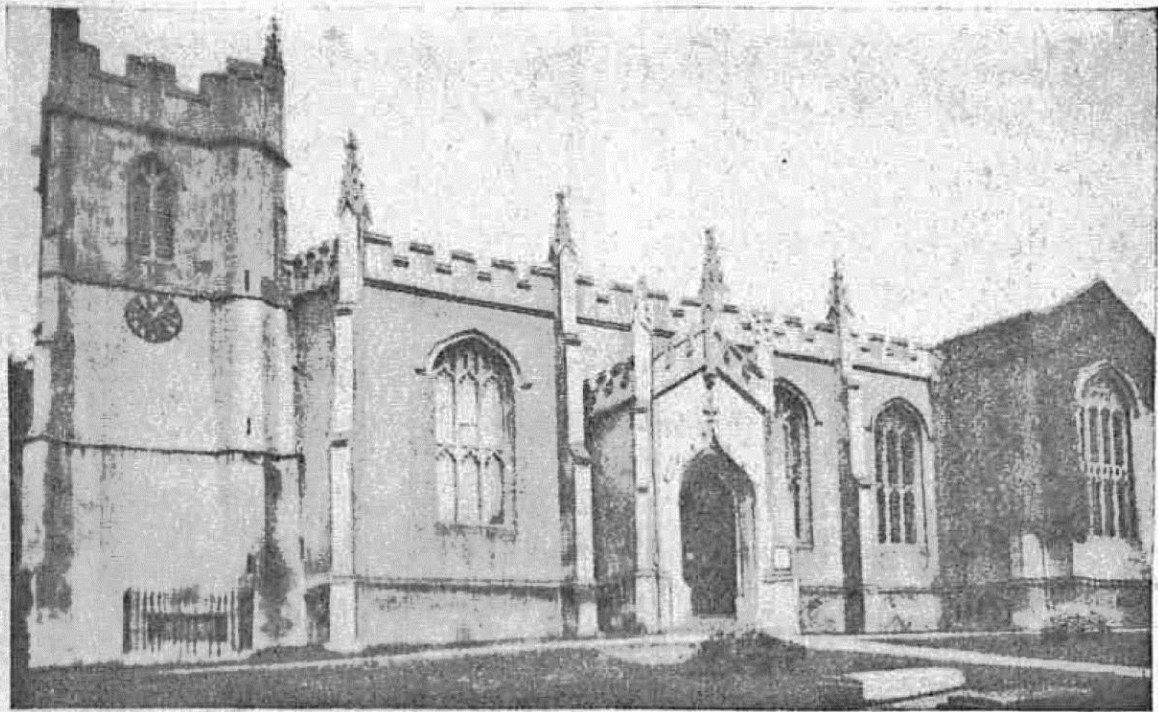
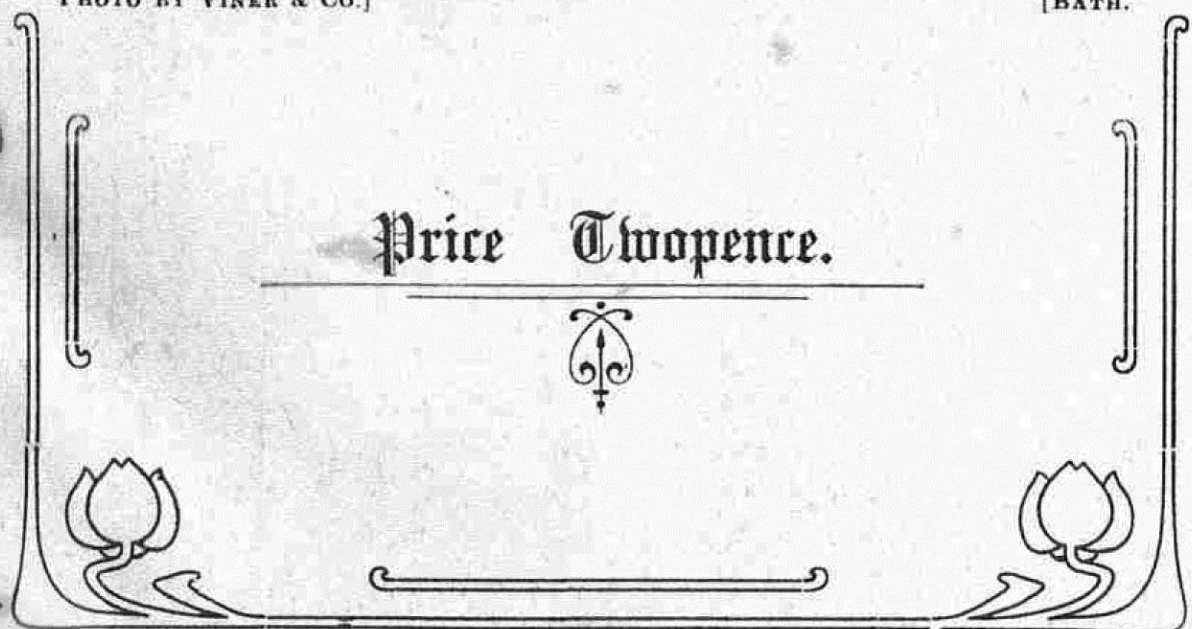


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[BATH.



Price Twopence.



Weston All Saints

(Bath)

Before the eyes of the observer who stands on the steps of the South porch of this old Parish Church and looks forth, there is spread a very beautiful prospect. Right opposite him he sees a graceful building of some antiquity standing close to the Manor House, which is hidden among the trees where the rooks' nests are to be seen in great numbers. This old building is now called the Manor Farm, but was probably originally built for use as a barn about 1535; a portion of each bay, together with the old Prior's residence, was pulled down in 1780, and the remainder converted into a dwelling-house and used as a Farm. To right and left of this the eye rests on the beautiful wooded hills which surround Bath. All around him are the graves of the dead, whose bodies rest in the ground hallowed for many centuries, and he realizes that he stands on a site long dedicated to the service of God, and the centre of the religious life of the community.

Far back indeed does the history of Weston go – in Doomesday Book, "Westone" is twice mentioned. "The Church of Bath holds Westone in the time of King Edward it gelded for 15 hides."

In sketching the history of Weston we must touch briefly on that of the Abbey Church in Bath. Bath Abbey was founded as a house of Nuns by King Osric in 676 – but in 758 it had become a house of Monks, when a King of the West Saxons granted land at South Stoke to the Monastery of St. Peter. It is said that King Offa re-built the Monastery in 775, and there is a tradition that he established secular clergy in the place of Monks. For this, says the Editor of the Chartularies of Bath Abbey, there is no evidence, and the story is plainly unhistorical. King Edmund (940-960), among other grants, gave five hides of land at Weston to the Monastery. Under King Edgard, who was crowned at Bath, we find it a Convent of Benedictine Monks – Elphege of Weston, afterwards Bishop of Winchester and later Archbishop of Canterbury, being one of the first Abbots.

William Rufus in 1090 made a certain John of Tours, called de Villula – a well-known and wealthy physician – Bishop of Wells. He obtained a grant, from the King, of the Monastery, and removed his See from Wells to Bath. When he

came to take possession he found Church and city in ruins owing to a rebellion in favour of Robert, the eldest son of the Conqueror. In 1106 the Bishop of Bath gave back the Monastery its lands, and in this way the whole parish of Weston passed into its possession. In 1292 we know that Weston was an Ecclesiastical Rectory valued at £8. Between 1293 and 1444, a Vicarage was endowed and the Rectory was appropriated by the Monastery. In the year 1539 the Monastery of Bath was finally dissolved, and the parish of Weston, after 600 years under Monastic control, passed to the Crown. The Rectory or rectorial tithes, after passing through various hands, was brought by John Harrington, of Kelston. In the Chancel of the Church may be seen today a tablet which records the gift by John Harrington of the Rectory to the parish in order that the minister may reside, dated 1699.

The present Church, with the exception of the Tower, which is said to be of 15th century work, and the Chancel and Transepts which are quite modern, was built in 1831 on the site of a much smaller building pulled down in that year. It was erected at a cost of £3000, and is built in the perpendicular style, with Nave and two Aisles, and a West Gallery - in which the Organ stood till the building of the Chancel in 1893.

The ceiling of the Nave and Aisles is panelled and painted to represent oak, and the difference can be seen where the real oak roof begins near the Chancel steps. The Chancel and Transepts were built in 1893, and consecrated by Bishop Bromby, owing to the illness of the Diocesan, Lord Arthur Harvey, when the Rev. E. H. Hardcastle was Vicar. The old Church would seat 170 people – that built in 1831 about 565, and the present Church holds roughly 600. From a brass on the South wall of the Sanctuary we learn that a large proportion of the money required for the building of the Chancel was given by Mrs. Fraser, widow of the second Bishop of Manchester, who lived in Weston. She also gave the beautiful carved figure of our Lord above the Altar. On a tablet next to this brass we read the names of John Shute and Philip Bury Duncan, men of great piety and holiness of life; John Duncan, was the father of Mrs. Fraser, and like her, a benefactor of his native place. One of the features of the Church is the number of mural tablets, of which there are between 90 and 100 – the majority of which record the lives, deaths, and virtues of many who appear to have had no connection with Weston beyond the fact of burial

in the Churchyard. Before the Bath Cemeteries were opened, Weston being a quiet and picturesque little country village – at that time quite cut off from the city – was a favourite burying place for more than 200 years. The oldest tablet in the Church is one to the memory of Arthur Therston, Alderman of Bath, who died March 19th, 1641-2. This, with a half-length sculptured figure, is now to be found in the Tower, over the door leading into the Church. There is also an interesting tablet on the West wall in the gallery, recording the death of a great granddaughter of William Penn – in these words: - “Christiana Gaskell – she was the only daughter of Wm. Penn, Esq., of Shanagarry, in the County of Cork, the grandson of W. Penn, the founder and first proprietor of the City of Philadelphia, a Province of Pensylvania, in America.

On the wall of the north transept may be read the following inscription: -

Sacred to the memory of
Mrs, Resbury Hocker
Who died Nov. 30th, 1802,
aged 68.

In 1795 Mrs. Hocker, who lived in a house where the Schools now stand, established small, free Schools in cottages; at one time she had five schools in existence with 80 children attending. Not only did she find nearly all the money required to keep them going, but she herself superintended the Schools, and on Sundays took the children to Church. Her memory was for long held dear in Weston, and her gifts of books were treasured for many years.

There are also several tablets relating to the Leir family of Weston House, who have been situated in the parish and have held property in it for a very long time.

One curious inscription may be read on a shield high up on the South wall: - “In memory of John, eldest son of Joseph and Jane Spry, who was carried off in the prime of life by overheating himself and then plunging in cold water.” He died April 28th, 1797, aged 21.

The oldest thing in the Church is a stone coffin lid, which was discovered in 1830 under the wall of the old South porch when the new Church was being built. After being left for a time in the crypt, it was placed in a recess on the

North side of the Chancel, when that was added in 1893. There is an inscription on it recording the burial of Bishop or Prior without date – but the lettering is of the 12th or 13th century. In Mr. Clement Bush's notes he says it may be translated thus: "Under this tomb rest the bones of Godfrey, who was Bp. or Prior of this place while he was living," or "Under this tomb rest the bones of Father Godfrey, who was Prior of this place, a priest of God, he was himself a virtuous man." There was a Godfrey, a Belgian, the 17th Bishop of Wells, and 2nd of Bath and Wells, who held the See from 1123-1133 – he was also Chancellor of England, and it is on record that he died on August 12th, 1133, and was buried in the Cathedral, Bath – as Weston Church then belonged to Bath, he may have been buried here – but that is only an assumption.

The Tower – probably built in the 15th century – is in the perpendicular style, and in good preservation; the West door opens into the Tower, the ground floor of which is used as a belfry. There is a stair turret leading up to the clock chamber and on to the bell loft. The Tower is battlemented, and has four corner pinnacles still standing – the four smaller pinnacles resting on the gargoyles having been taken down as unsafe a few years ago, and not renewed or replaced. There are six bells – their weights respectively being 607, 639, 700, 819, 982 and 1448lbs. The Churchwardens' accounts state that "Thomas Bilbie cast all wee." Be it remembered in November, 1739, Weston six old bells were taken down and carried to Chewstoke and new cast by Thomas Bilbie for £40. He added 100 lbs. of new metal for £5. The new bells were fetched in Feb. 1740, in two wagons by men and boys, it being a hard frost. Hanged by John Bush, John Terrell for £20. Wm. Cheyne, Rector. An inscription on the tenor bell says : "Thomas Sedamore, Gentleman, and Mr. Thomas Peckstone, Churchwardens, 1739. T. B.

Churchyard

This has been closed for burials since 1875, and is full of interesting tombs with their accompanying inscriptions. Many well-known names are to be found on the stones – among them that of the wife of William Falconer, the poet, and author of the "Shipwreck," a sea poem remarkable for its fidelity to nature and founded on his own early experience. The tomb is a plain altar shaped one on the West side of the Church, and is inscribed:

In Memory
of Mrs. Jane Falconer,
Relict of Mr. William Flaconer,
who was unfortunately lost
on board the "Aurora."
She departed this life
March 20th, 1796
aged 61.

Also we can see the tomb of William Oliver, M. D., F. R. S., who was a member of the Oliver family, at one time Lords of the Manor of Weston. There is a monument to him in the Abbey, but he is buried at Weston. He is the author of the recipe for biscuits known throughout the world, and was one of the earliest friends of the Mineral Water Hospital. Died March 17th, 1764.

There are many other interesting tombs and inscriptions, many now mouldering into decay. The fine Churchyard Cross was put up in 1898 and dedicated on October 3rd, by the Rev. E. H. Hardcastle in memory of the Rev. John Bond, Vicar of Weston from 1826-1882 and Prebendary of Wells.

Registers

These begin in 1538 that is, three years after they were first ordered by Thomas Lord Cromwell. They were originally written on paper, but in 1603 it was ordered that they should be transcribed on to vellum. This was done at Weston by Thomas Peckstone, Vicar, on the order of "Mr. Doctor Powell, then Archdeacon of Bath." In 1906 the registers were transcribed into one volume by the Rev. C. W. Shickle, F. S. A., making a most valuable reference book. The list of Vicars begins in 1297 with Jordanus, but the name of Adam de Karliun should be inserted before him – date uncertain. The Parish was divided in the year 1878, when the Chapel-of-ease, built and dedicated to St. John the Evangelist in 1837-8 in order to accommodate the increasing population in that neighbourhood, was erected into a Parish Church after enlargement.

The present organ, built by Sweetland, of Bath, was put in in 1893. It bears the following inscription: "To the glory of God and in loving memory of Harriet Mackinnon Hardcastle, wife of the Vicar of Weston, who died, Feb. 5th, 1892. This organ was dedicated by her nearest relatives on Christmas Eve, 1893."

The font was also given by children of the parish and from outside in memory of Mrs. Hardcastle.

Most of the glass in the Church, with the exception of the East Window, which is by Wailes, is by Powell & Powell, of Whitefriars. The North Transept window and the South Aisle window were given by Mrs. Carr, of Weston Manor, in memory of her son and husband. She also gave a recreation ground to the parish in 1912. The South Transept window is in memory of Nutcombe Quick, of Templecombe House, accidentally killed at the age of 21. It illustrates the Te Deum. The Pulpit was given by the Misses Pinder in memory of their parents. The large Chancel Screen was erected in 1901 in recognition of the services of the Rev. E. H. Hardcastle in enlarging and beautifying the Church. It was given by the Rev. Thomas Whale, who lived in the parish for some years after retiring from his Devonshire living; and the smaller side one by Miss Archer Thompson in memory of her parents and brother. In 1914 the present handsome oak doors in the South porch and at the West End were erected by the congregation in memory of Mr. W. S. M. Goodenough, who was Churchwarden for 37 years, and died in 1913; while the year before the oak Altar rails were put up in memory of Mr. Henry Trickey, Warden for 48 years, who died in 1909.

The Litany Desk is made of old and new oak. That part of it facing east is a piece of oak out of Wells Cathedral many hundreds years old. It was carved and given by Miss Archer Thompson.

The Church was lit by electric light in 1914, paid for out of a sum of money given by Mr. Goodenough some years before.

The new Vestries were built in the time of hr Rev. M. E. Hoets, Vicar from 1901-1912, and Prebendary of Wells.

Some of the Communion plate is old. There is a beautiful chalice and paten dated 1692, and the oldest Church spoon in Somerset belongs to Weston

Parish Church. It is a fine specimen of an Apostle spoon and bears the date 1647.

At one time it is said there was a Rectory of Lansdown, which was held by the Monks of Bath Abbey; after the dissolution it was given in 1551 to Lord Clynton and Saye – Lord High Admiral of England – who sold it to Sir Richard Sackvyle. It became merged and unknown, and part of the tithe came to the Vicarage of Weston. The remains of a Church or Chapel are to be seen on Lansdown built in the style of the 14th century, and now incorporated into a farmhouse known as Chapel Farm. It is said to have been dedicated to St. Lawrence, and some derive the word Lansdown from Lawrence Down. Also near this Chapel stood till about 1850 an old doorway of what is supposed to have been an ancient hospital for the entertainment of pilgrims on their way to the shrine of St. Joseph of Arimathea at Glastonbury. The Parish of Weston extends to, and includes in its boundaries, the monument to Sir Bevil Grenville, who fell near that spot in the Battle of Lansdown in 1643. On the top of the Down – in the parish- are to be seen some irregular earthworks or pits which tradition says – to quote Mr. Bush again- were thrown up by the Parliamentary troops before the battle. There is also to be seen not far from the Chapel Farm one of the holy wells of Somerset, known as St. Alphege's well – the water falls into an old Roman coffin. This stone coffin – according to Father Ethelbert Horne – was brought by a farmer some 30 years ago from North Stoke to make a drinking place for his cattle. Fr. Horne points out that it was not uncommon to find a holy well by a frequented pilgrim track, and this is a good example. Quite recently two Roman columns were unearthed near the monument when digging by some North Somerset Yeomanry was in progress, and have been presented to the Museum of the Bath Literary and Scientific Institution.

Compiled largely from papers left by Mr. Clement Bush, and from other parochial records. Easter, 1916.