

CHAPTER 20.

ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS

Let us allow our imaginations to take over for a while and let us suppose that an Essingtonian, present at the opening of St. John's Church in December 1933, then went away and didn't return until 1992. What changes would he notice?

Well, first of all he would certainly recognise the building for the exterior of the Church has changed scarcely at all. Nothing has been built on, nothing has been knocked down - in fact nothing has changed apart from the addition of an illuminated cross on the Church tower. This cross was Wesley Hinks' brainchild though sadly no money was available to install it during his lifetime. Some parishioners now refer to it as 'Wesley's Cross'.

Our returning native would, however, notice that the Church no longer stands in splendid isolation. There are houses along Wolverhampton Road to the South; former police houses on its western boundary; the Hill Street developments are to the north and Hill Street itself and Hawthorne Road are to the East.

He would notice that tarmac has replaced the gravel in the drive and he would notice too the vicarage which has been built (1954) since his last visit as well as the Church Hall (1966) behind.

Once inside the Church, at first glance he would feel that there has been no great change here either, but as he wanders and looks he agrees that there have been subtle changes - not very spectacular, but definite. First he would notice the font (1935) dedicated to 2/Lt Joseph Smith killed in World War I, and behind it a small stained glass window (1959) installed in memory of Beatrice Clift. Near here the War Memorial (1948), made of white alabaster (from Derbyshire), commemorates the Essington fallen.

The Stations of the Cross, woven by the children of St. John's School (1981) would catch his eye as would the carpet in the centre aisle and Chancel. This was a bequest from the late Percy Griffiths, faithful chorister and groundsman who also stoked the boilers until he was well into his eighties. The absence of radiators might prompt our visitor to ask 'What of the boiler?' The answer lies in the electric heaters on the walls (1986).

As he walks up the aisle he may notice prayer desks commemorating Alice Griffiths and Grace Jordan as well as the chairs and lectern which came from Newtown when St. Aidan's closed in 1969 - and perhaps he wonders what happened to the great carved lectern which stood in the old Church.

And now, immediately before him he sees the most obvious addition since the opening - the nave altar (1985). This lovely piece of craftsmanship was placed in memory of Dorothy Sadler and nearby he will see the portable font (1969), a reminder of the much-loved Nurse Palmer who not only brought scores of Essington children into the world, but continued to take an interest in them as they grew up.

Beyond the Nave now to the Chancel. The old 'hand-blown' organ has gone, replaced by a quite magnificent instrument from Repton, installed (1950) as a memorial to the fallen. As he raises his eyes he sees dominating the whole Church, the great Cross dedicated in 1974 to the memory of Sidney Jones. Above that, where once was plain glass is the stained glass window placed in 1956 by Lorenzo Appleby in memory of his wife.

As our returned native stands on the Chancel steps, the lights of the re-wired system reflect on the polished oak floor which has replaced the former floor of indeterminate composition. Both lights and floor were renewed in 1969 through a generous gift by R.L.Vernon, Esq.

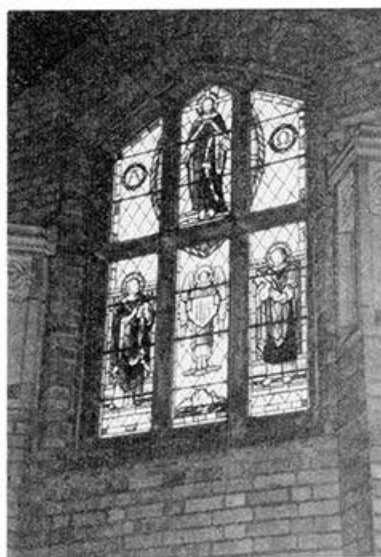
Perhaps our Essingtonian, taking in the whole scene, would hopefully feel that the people of St. John's have not been idle during his absence and have faithfully preserved their heritage.



The Font



Baptismal Window



East Window