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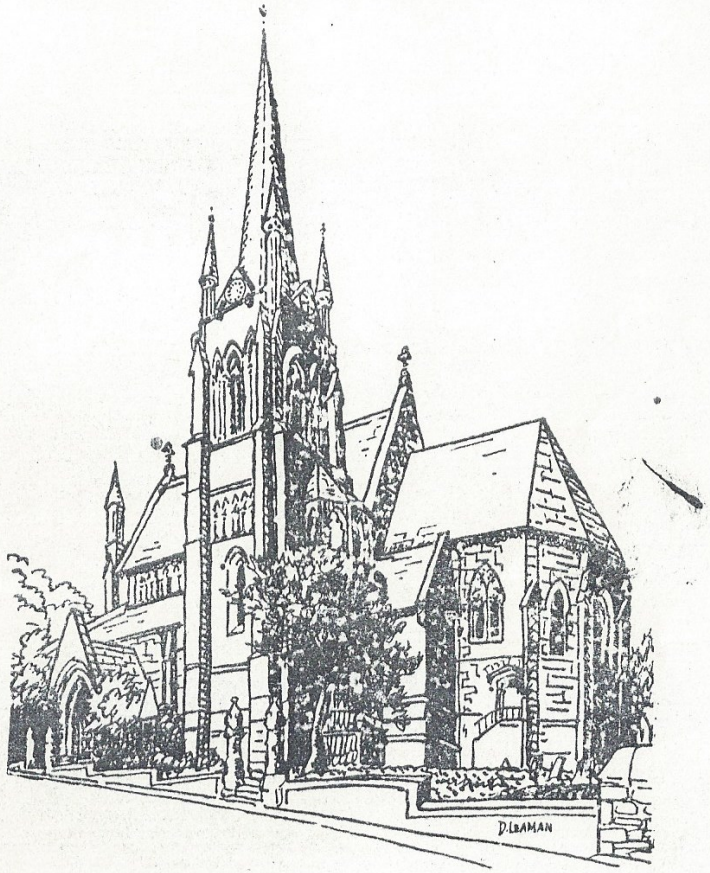
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ST. MARY MAGDALENE
UPTON, TORQUAY



A BRIEF HISTORY

by

D. J. SEYMOUR

Price 6d.

List of Rectors

Although the parish had its beginnings in 1848, there have been so far only six Rectors.

Richard Robbins Wolfe, M.A. 1848–1883.

Edward Pease Gregg, M.A. (Nephew of the above). 1883–1915.

John Tongue, A.K.C. 1915–1928.

Frederick Edward Compton, L.Th. 1928–1938.

George Ernest Arrowsmith, M.A., F.R.G.S. 1938–1951.

Percy Sands, M.A. 1952–

Bellamy, Printers, St. Marychurch Road, Torquay

St. Mary Magdalene with St. James Upton, Torquay

Church and Parish

The Parish of Upton was constituted in the year 1848, and the Church begun a year later. The old Parish Church of Tor was by that time unable to accommodate the population of a rapidly growing town, and there was a great need for another church. The new Parish of Upton consisted of most of Torquay to the east of Tor and St. Marychurch boundaries, and extended over Warberry Hill to Wellswood and the Babbacombe Road--a huge area, which in later years was to be many times sub-divided into other parishes as the town grew into a thriving sea-side resort.

The Church was designed by Anthony Salvin, a famous architect of the period, and dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene. It consists of Nave and Chancel, a North and South aisle, with chapels at the East End. The South Chapel is now occupied by the organ. The building is in the Early English style, and built of stone obtained locally at Barton Quarries.

The Tower and Spire

In the year 1852 it was decided to add a Tower and a Spire to the new Church, in memory of the Duke of Wellington. They were erected by public subscription, and completed in 1854. The elegant weather-cock, which crowns the Spire, was designed by Pugin, another famous Victorian architect. The Spire rises to a height of 165 ft. and stands proudly above the busy main thoroughfare of the town. It is odd to think that in 1849 this Church stood amid quiet gardens; no one at that time could have foreseen that it would one day occupy a site in the very heart of a large town, and that the Civic centre would stand beneath its shadow.

The Ring of Eight Bells

The Tower contains a ring of eight bells, cast by Pannell of Exeter in 1855. The weight of the Tenor is 14 cwt. 2 qrs. The bells were given by public subscription as was the Clock, which is in memory of the Prince Consort. It was first known as the "Albert Memorial" Clock. As is customary, all the bells bear inscriptions; the most interesting is that on No. 3., for it commemorates the taking of Sevastopol in the Crimean War, and reads, "*Conserva me Domine. Sevastopol. Sept.* 8. 1855". Most of the bells carry Latin texts and also bear the names of the Rector, Wardens and Architect.

They were re-hung in 1931 by Taylor, of Loughborough, who arranged them in two tiers. Ringers will be interested to know that they are noted for their good "go".

Chancel

When the Church was first built, the interior, though spacious, was plain. About the year 1879, plans were made for entirely transforming the Chancel. The first part of the work, which took years to complete, was the new Organ with its handsome case and screen, described below. Next followed the marble floors, chancel and parclose screens. All this was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott, and executed by Temple Moore. It can be seen that the very best architects of the day were employed, and no money was spared in making the Church as beautiful as possible.



Photo by Nicholas Horne

The coats of arms are of the Sheppard family who gave the Screen. The whole design, which rather suggests a cathedral chantry-chapel, is most unusual. The carved and gilt oak organ-case in the Chancel, also designed by Scott, was described by the late Andrew Freeman, the great authority on organ-cases, as "of great beauty".

The Children's Corner and Baptistry

The Baptistry at the West end of the North Aisle is in memory of the second Rector, The Rev. E. P. Gregg. In 1954 it was extended to make a Children's Corner. The blue carpet is from Westminster Abbey and is part of the huge carpet made for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II., which this Children's Corner commemorates. The little red stool was also used at the ceremony, and the two blue stools at the Coronation of King George VI.

Over all hangs another picture by Tom Mostyn, the "Adoration of the Magi". Painted in warm and glowing colours, it forms a perfect background to this "Corner".

The Windows

The Apse windows, and that in the Baptistry, date from the opening of the Church in 1849.

The large two-light window on the North Side of the Chancel is in memory of the Rev E. P. Gregg. On one side is Christ the Good Shepherd, and on the other He is shewn blessing the little children.

In the South Aisle is a window in memory of another Rector, the Rev. John Tongue, and it was given by his wife. It shews a figure of St. John the Evangelist.

Memorials

The most noteworthy person to be commemorated is the Rev. Dr. William Scoresby (1789–1857) well-known for his outstanding work as an Arctic explorer and the valuable work he undertook in perfecting the ship's compass. The memorial is in the North Aisle, and his grave, duly adorned with ship's instruments, is on the north side of the churchyard.

In the South Aisle is a large and impressive mural tablet to the memory of Henry Forbes Julian, who died in the "Titanic" disaster, after first saving many lives.

St. James' Church

The daughter Church of St. James' stands at the north end of the parish. In 1910 this district constituted a separate parish, and the small church then built was intended as a temporary building only, and designs were brought out for an imposing permanent church. These plans, however, were never carried out, and in 1947 the two parishes, by order of the Church Commissioners, were joined to form the united parish of St. Mary Magdalene with St. James, Upton.

★★

I am very grateful to Deryck Seymour for this brief History, that brings our Church alive.

It is in no way a precis of a larger History that he is compiling, but specially written for this purpose.

March, 1962. *P. SANDS, Rector.*

Rector's Stall

This was given in memory of Mrs. C. B. Bell, and is made in oak by the celebrated "Mouse" man (Robert Thompson of Kilburn, Yorks.) The little mouse is to be found on all his work, and duly appears here.

On the kneeler and chair seat are coverings of petit-point work. In them are woven in colour the arms of Kitson and Sheppard, which also appear on the parclose and organ screens. The work was designed and executed by Capt. Gilbert H. Roberts, C.B.E., R.N. of Little Priors, Watcombe.

Candlesticks

The Candlesticks on the High Altar date from the 18th century, and are of Spanish or Portuguese origin, and were given in 1961 in memory of Gertrude Seymour.

Pulpit and Screen

The Pulpit and adjoining Screen are a memorial to the first Rector, Prebendary Richard Robbins Wolfe, M.A. (1848–1883). The pulpit, given by his two daughters, is of Caen Stone, whilst the base is of local marble. There are five niches, containing figures of St. Mary Magdalene (centre) and the four Evangelists, whilst on the other side of the preacher, stand St. John the Baptist and St. Paul.

The Screen, given by the sons, relatives and friends of Preb. Wolfe, shews the vine-leaf motif (representing Christ) which is so common in old Devon Screens.

The arms of the Wolfe family are on the back of the Screen. It is interesting to note that Wolfe who took Quebec came from the same family.

Both Pulpit and Screen were erected in 1905, and were designed by Temple Moore.

The North Chapel

The Pulpit Screen forms an effective entrance to this Chapel, which was furnished in 1928 by Mr. C. N. Luxmoore and his wife, Stella. The picture of Christ in the Wilderness is by Tom Mostyn, the well-known artist. The North window was specially enlarged to let in sufficient light for the picture. The Chapel was re-lit in 1953 in memory of Edward Bottomley.

The Organ

The first Organ in the Church was built by Dicker, of Exeter, and stood at the west-end on both sides of the main door, whilst the choir sat on a kind of bridge between the two sections. When the choir moved to the Chancel, the organ went with it and occupied the South Chapel.

In 1880 this organ was sold to the church of St. Michael and All Angels, Swanmore, Ryde, I.O.W. where it still is.

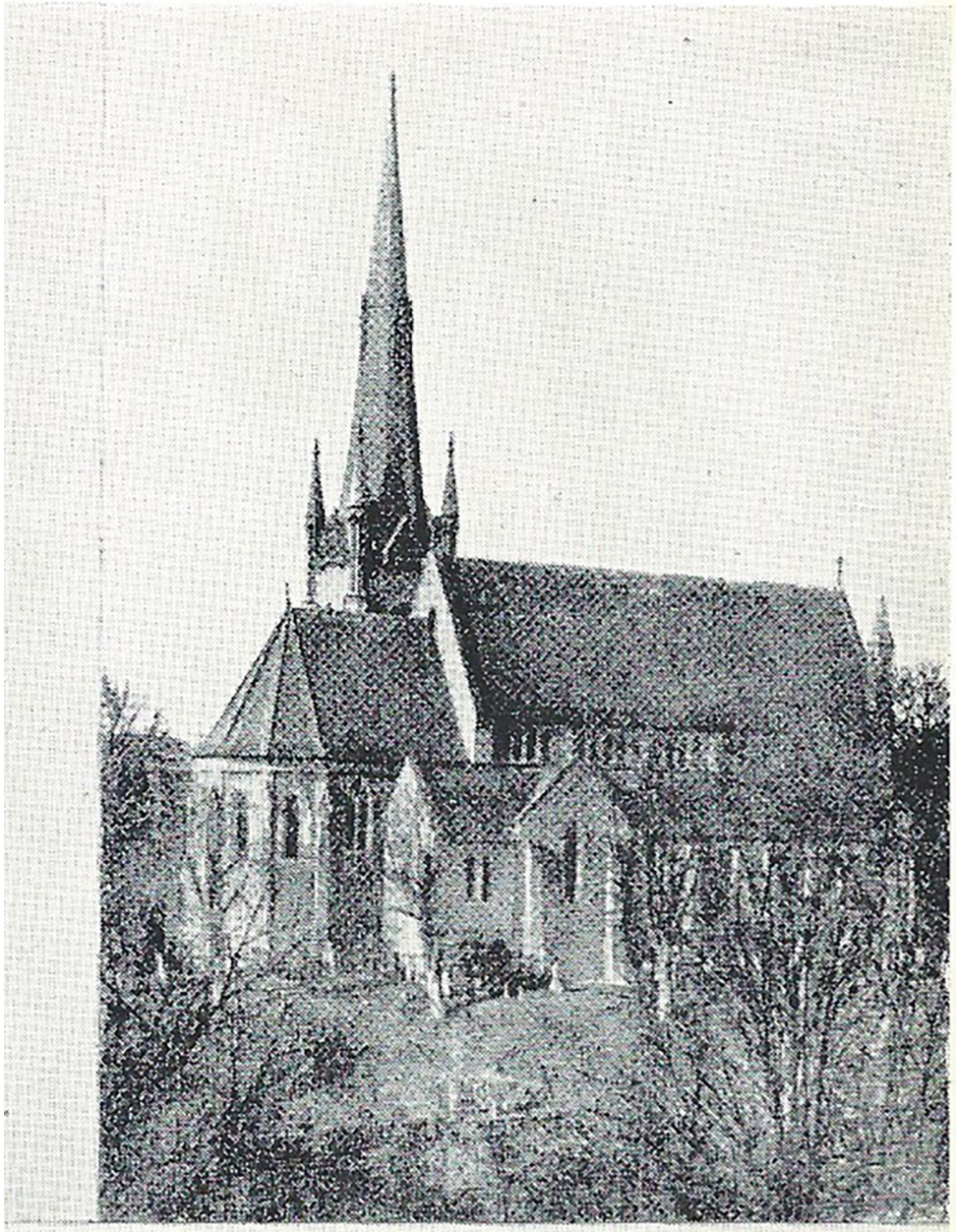
A new organ was built by Hele & Co. of Plymouth. It was first erected in the old St. Andrew's Hall, at Plymouth for exhibition purposes, and many famous organists of the day gave recitals on it whilst it was there.

It consisted of four manuals and over 50 stops, and was rebuilt and enlarged in 1910, when pneumatic action was added.

To mark the centenary of the Church in 1949, it was again overhauled and brought up to date. It now consists of four manuals and 76 draw-stops, and is one of the largest organs in the West country.

The handsome screen at the end of the South Aisle houses the main part of the instrument, and was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott. Its erection was the first part to be carried out in the ambitious scheme for beautifying the East end of the Church.

The three carved figures in the centre represent St. Michael and the angels, Raphael and Gabriel. The large slab of terra-cotta marble beneath them is considered the finest ever produced from Petitor Quarry.



Reprint by J. and L. Knowles

Exterior of Church from the north (c. 1920)

The Parclose Screens

The North Screen is in memory of William Kitson, of Hengrave (the house which is now the Nurses' Quarters at the Torbay Hospital.) The panels shew (east to west) 1. The offering of Isaac. 2. An allegorical figure representing Faith. 3. The Good Samaritan. 4. An allegorical figure of Charity. 5. Our Lord appearing to St. Mary Magdalene in the garden. 6. An allegorical figure of Hope.

The South Screen is in memory of Alfred Byard Sheppard and his wife, and the panels shew: 1. The Judgement of Solomon. 2. An allegorical figure of Justice. 3. The Conversion of St. Paul. 4. An allegorical figure of Hope. 5. The Martyrdom of St. Stephen. 6. An allegorical figure of Fortitude.

The Reredos

The lower part of the Reredos was begun in 1889, and is of local marble, whilst the figures are of alabaster. It shews three scenes from the life of St. Mary Magdalene. The centre panel depicts her at the foot of the Cross; the north panel is the appearance of Our Lord to Mary Magdalene in the garden, whilst the south panel is of the washing of His feet.

The central panel was given by the Rector at that time, and his wife, (Rev. E. P. and Mrs. Gregg). It is said that they kept themselves in poor circumstances for many years, so liberal were they in their giving to see the Reredos completed.

The side panels were given by Mrs. Kitson, of Hengrave, Mr. and Mrs. Kitson, of Shiphay Manor and Miss Lovell Phillips.

The upper part of the Reredos was not undertaken until many years later. Its large central figure is that of the Risen Christ, in company with the great characters of the Old Testament—David, Daniel, Moses and Elisha. On the screens on either side are figures of St. Peter and St. Paul.

The Apse

In the angles of the Apse is a splendid series of canopied figures. They are, from north to south, St. Irenaeus, St. Polycarp, St. Chrysostom, St. Clement, St. Ambrose and St. Jerome. Above these figures, just below the roof, are angels bearing scrolls on which the word "Alleluia" is inscribed.

The Marble

All the varieties of marble used in the Chancel walls, screens and floor, come from local quarries at Petitor, Ogwell and Ashburton. The central panel of the Organ Screen, in the south aisle, was considered at the time of building to be the finest piece ever produced by Petitor Quarry. It is doubtful whether any other Devon Church can shew such a fine array of local marble.

Sanctuary Chairs

The two large chairs on either side of the Sanctuary have a most interesting history. They are made of carved oak, taken from the old Tudor manor house of Torwood Grange. This was demolished in 1843, and all the handsome carvings which formed part of the stairs and window frames were bought by W. C. Burt, a local cabinetmaker. He it was who made these chairs and presented them to the Church in 1849. A short inscription, telling of their origin, is to be found under the seat of each chair.

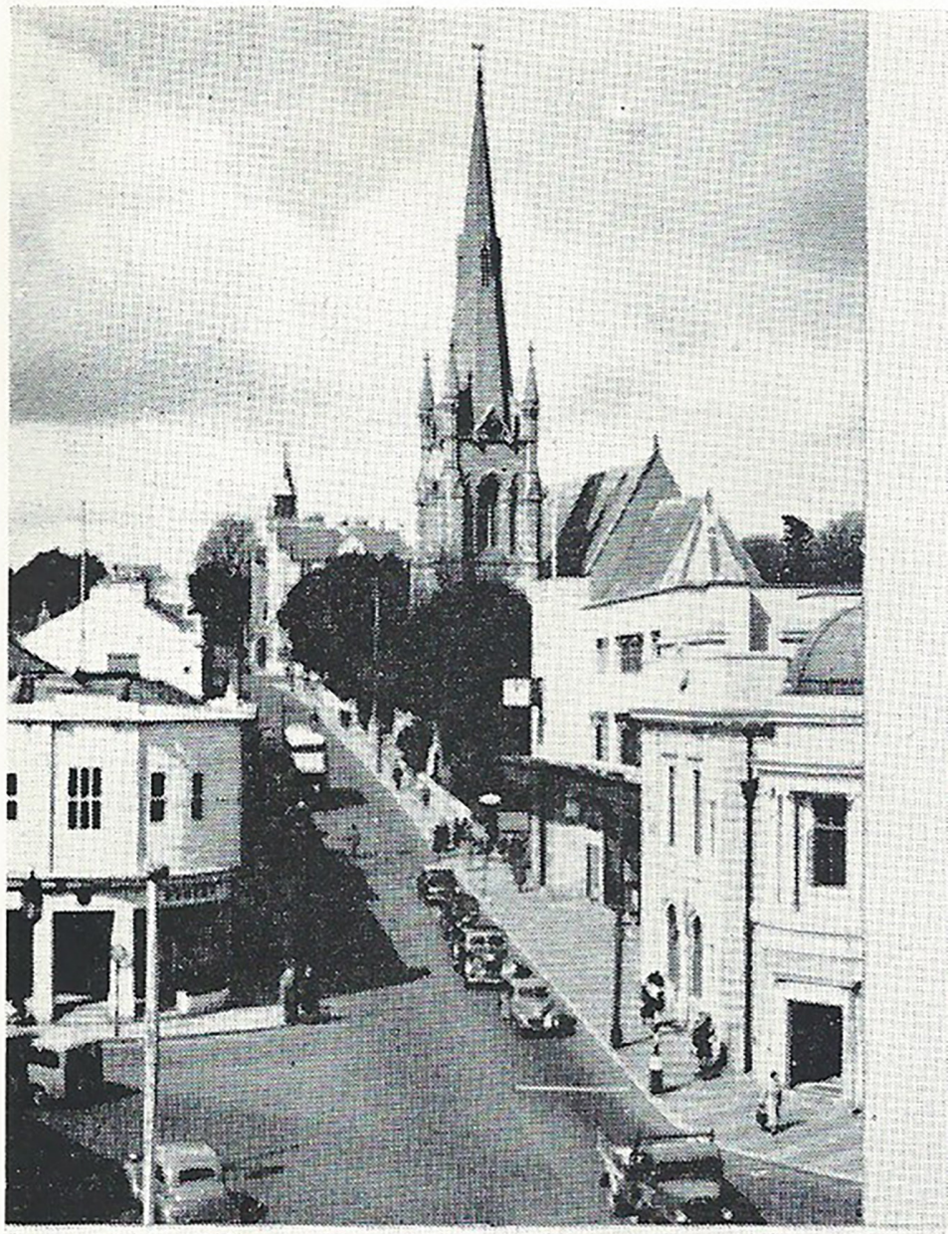


Photo by B. Bartlett

Tower and Spire from Castle Circus (1954)