

VIEW FROM THE SOUTH-WEST

A Descriptive Account

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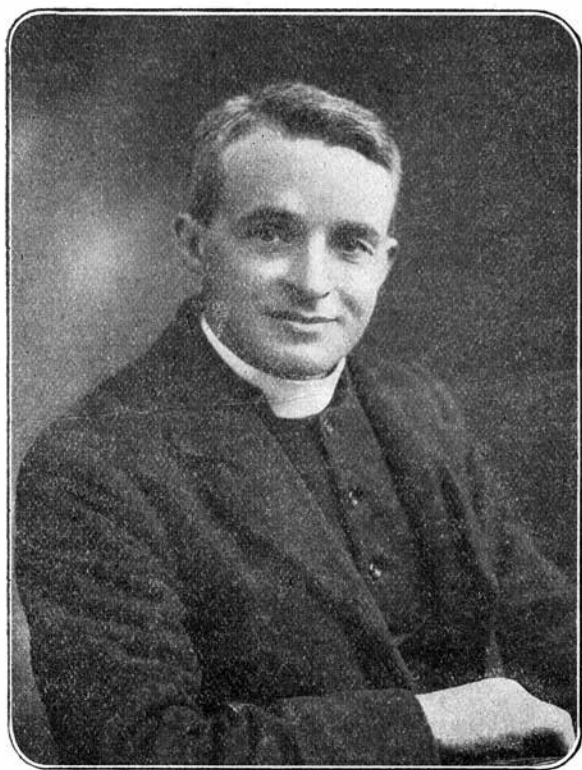
St. Aidan's Parish Church

SUDDEN, ROCHDALE.

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Consecrated March 24th, 1915.

*Re-printed from "Rochdale Times."*



**Rev. HARTLEY HARRISON, First Vicar of St. Aidan's.**

## DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING.

The Consecration of its Parish Church on Wednesday, March 24th, 1915, by the Bishop of the diocese conferred parochial status upon St. Aidan's, Sudden. Unlike the Parish of Norden, its topographical counterpart, Sudden (South Dene), lies wholly within our municipal boundaries, and encloses an area of about 454 acres. The new Parish, to which the Parishes of St. Alban's, All Soul's, and St. Martin's contributed portions of their original areas, though nowhere greatly distant from the Broadway, retains a considerable residue of wooded valley, lane and hedge-row, field-path and farmstead, which make the latest perhaps also the pleasantest of Rochdale's Town parishes. Space and elevation were recently found within its borders for the acquisition of Rochdale's Springfield Sanatorium.

The population now approaches 3,500, and there is more than a prospect of rapid industrial and residential development to justify this enterprise of faith by which a settled ministry and the opportunity of worship in a permanently-consecrated Church have been provided.

The New Church, designed by Mr. Temple Moore, of Hamps'ead, the pupil and fellow-worker of the late Sir Gilbert Scott, and in turn the preceptor of his illustrious grandson, upon whom fell the honour of designing Liverpool Cathedral, occupies a commanding position within the angle formed by the Manchester and Bolton Roads, standing about 100 yards distant from the proposed site generously given by the Rev. Canon Hartley, Vicar of All Souls', in 1908, which was subsequently found unsuited to support a heavy building. The present Church-plot, containing the large area of 4,365 square yards, by the kind co-operation of the late Mr. Thomas Hargreaves, was acquired in 1913 at a cost to the Building Fund of £550. With its principal frontage and entrance adjoining a great highway, the Church is now permanently guarded from the incursion of new streets and the encroachments of building enterprise, and preserves within its enclosure on the Marland side a glorious open prospect of Rochdale's cincture of hills towards the west and north.

### Tribute to Workmen.

The work of building the Church was entrusted to Messrs. Ullathorne, the restorers of Selby Abbey after the fire, under the vigilant and capable foremanship of Mr. William Burnett, who leaves behind him in the completed pile of St. Aidan's a lasting testimony of sincere and faithful, as well as of trying and responsible, work. The interests of the Architect, the Building Committee, and subscribing friends have been carefully and continuously watched by Mr. F. A. Verity, of Royle Cottage, and Mr. Fred Cartwright, of Liverpool, quantity-surveyor. In the last and most significant resort the erection of the Church is due to the skill and patience of the workmen employed, and in this essential St. Aidan's has been very fortunate in the devotion and courtesy with which a succession of workmen have co-operated through the vicissitudes of two summers and winters. The only accident, happily proving slight, was that which happened to William Collinge, scaffolder. James Devaney, labourer, Mostyn W. Parry, mason, and Herbert Hopkinson, mason, stone-setter, and waller, have wrought from first to last. To the last-named St. Aidan's owes its gateway and an almost incredible proportion of its whole bulk, and in particular the characteristic ancienry of its imperishable vari-coloured random-faced walling, the most difficult and deliberative of all good walling. The Sacred Monogram, IHC, inscribed by the Foreman on the face of the out-door pulpit, is to the memory of John Duesbery, mason, of Goole, who wrought the corbels (where his mason's mark may be seen) which support the pulpit. He died, aged 45, on July 27th, 1914, and is buried in Rôchdale Cemetery.

Towards the end of August, 1913, excavations were begun, and at a cost of £400 a ferro-concrete raft, continuous throughout, one-foot thick, and some 6,000 sq. ft. in total area, was laid down to receive and transmit securely to mother earth the weight of wall and pier and buttress. The foundations of the Nave-wall, Nave, and Chancel piers on the north are buried some twelve feet below the present ground level. The Foundation Stone, which has inscribed faces within and

without the Church, was placed in the east wall of the Epiphany Chapel by Lady Rochdale, at a solemn service on St. Luke's Day, October 18th, 1913.

#### A Stately Pile.

Seen from a distance, in spite of its uncompleted Tower, St. Aidan's Church takes the eye by its quality of distinction and stately massivity, and on a closer view it challenges attention by its severe unconventionality. Its strongly compacted rubble walls dispense, except at the east end, with the aid of buttresses; every square yard of wall-face is a study of stone-mosaic of varied hue and size and shape, emblematic of the endless diversity of human character built into the Universal Church; the high ridge-line of the Chancel, with plain wrought-iron crosses at either end, over-tops the Nave; roofs, here of tile, and there of slate, contrast their great areas of multi-shaded colour; a star-like device takes the place of the stone cross on the Chapel-gable; a sturdy battlemented beacon-turret breaks the 100 feet length of south aisle and Chapel wall, rises above their parapet and holds out from its face an external pulpit to the wayfarer; tall lancets, alternately single and double, stoutly saddlebarred and stanchioned, pierce the high length of south aisle wall between porch and turret; the axis of the Church's length refuses alike orientation (by necessity), and parallelism (by design) with the adjoining highway.

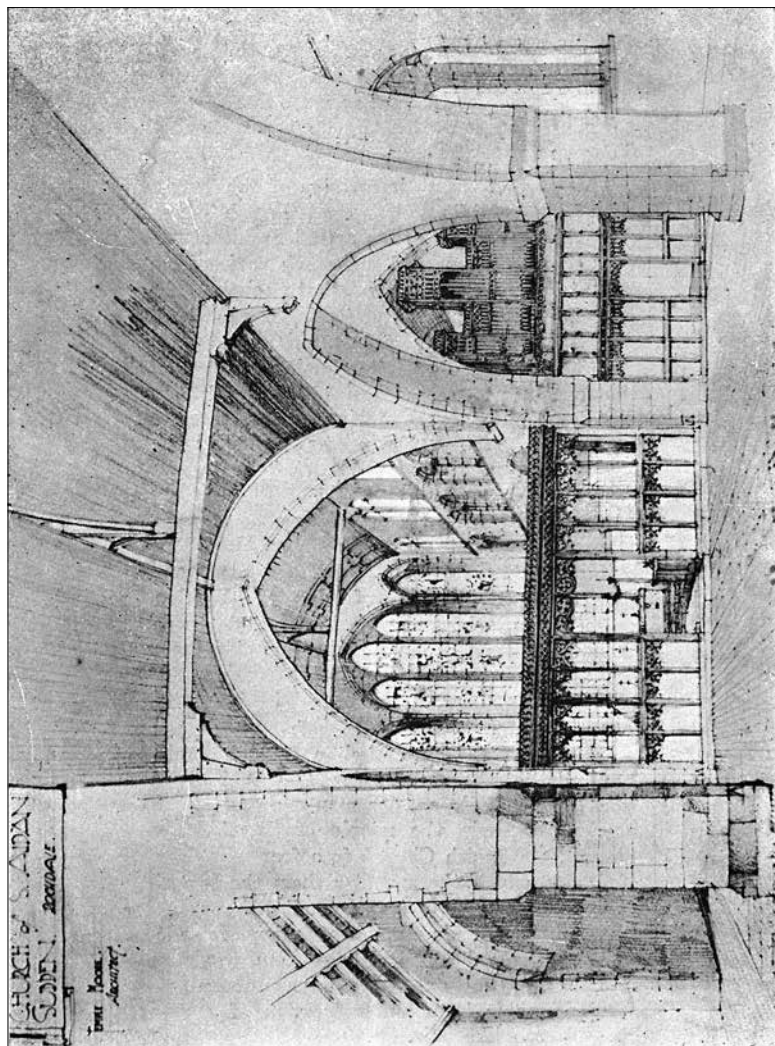
The interior of St. Aidan's deepens this impression of strong and deliberate individuality. Its walls are plastered to a rough surface, and pierced by quaint unexpected openings and castle-like doors of iron-studded oak. The archæological features of aumbry, piscinæ, low-side window, are not lacking. The foot falls quietly on the solidity of its broad uncarpeted grey-flagged passages; broad steps, some three or four, lead gently to the Sacrarium and the Altar-pace. Overhead there is diversity of inner roof, barrel, lean-to, open-timbered. Simple, stately, plain-soffited, wide-spanning arches of an unusual type, found in Kent and Ireland, slightly horse-shoed at the spring, carry walls 4½ft. and 3ft. thick, unashamed to be supported by square piers of enormous strength. Withal in the day-time there is abundant dif-

fusion of subdued but ample light from deeply-splayed lancets, and from the five soaring lights of the truly Great East Window whose glazed surface adds up to some thirty square yards.

#### Glories of the Church.

The two glories of the Church are, first,—its unusually spacious and lofty double-aisled Chancel with entrant arches 25ft., 31ft., and 15ft. in height. The Chancel arcades on the south and north, opening into the Epiphany Chapel and north aisle respectively, are divided from lofty clerestories by interesting pairs of shafted triforium openings, diversely designed and presenting strong contrasts of lighting on either side. The middle space of the Chancel is lighted by 21 windows. The internal treatment of the stonework of the Great East Window is very fine. Inclusive of its aisles the Chancel is 51 feet wide, and of equal height and length (36ft.) internally. The canons of a Collegiate Church at the beginning of the 13th century would have been proud to fulfil their course of daily ministry in the light and dignity of such a Choir. The second glory of the Church will one day be its massive Tower which lacks some twenty feet of its battlemented belfry stage. With walls  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet in thickness, and sides of 28 feet, it covers an area at the base of 78 square yards. Its N., E., and S. walls, carried on great piers and arches within the Church, form a stately and spacious Baptistry, lighted by three fine lancets of equal height in the Tower-wall above the western ceremonial entrance.

The other entrances to the Church are by Porches at the western ends of the N. and S. aisles, by a Chapel-door on the S. and a Vestry-door on the N., each outer door being of a different design. The dissimilarity of the capitals of the S.W. Portal will strike the observant. The S. aisle, 16 feet in width and 93 feet in length, extends to the eastern limit of the Church, the N. aisle, 9 feet in width and some 13 feet shorter, terminates in the Clergy Vestry. The Choir and Parish Vestry, with a similar sized Heating Chamber below, is a commodious room (36 feet by 11 feet) on the N. of the Chancel. The internal length and breadth of the Church is 102 feet by 51 feet, with a minimum seating



accommodation for 500 persons. The Epiphany Chapel (36 feet by 16 feet) has an accommodation for 50. The Organ (by Jardine and Co.) occupies an advantageous position in a stout-beamed, oak-floored gallery over the western bay of the Chapel. A broad newel stairway in the Turret gives access from within the Church to the open-air pulpit, the organ-loft, and the outer roofs. Its narrower companion-newel leads from the S. Porch to a Ringing Chamber with the generous area of 50 square yards.

The strong first impression of the grave simplicity of St. Aidan's Church hinders the realisation of its actual architectural diversity. The span of each arch varies from west to east, and from north to south. The exterior gives no sign of its inner wealth of fifteen major arches. One could not guess that the mason's craft has busied itself with the insertion of more than 100 quoined window and other wall-openings and recesses (some 70 of which are windows, glazed in the ancient way with clear diamond panes) or that there were 19 doors to go in and out of. The provision of the conveniences of storage spaces has not been overlooked. The building consumed and consolidated more than 3,000 cubic feet of dressed Weldon stone from Northamptonshire, and more than 3,000 tons of close-grained rubble from the neighbouring hills, with thousands more of mortar and cement, flag and slate and tile, steel and brick and timber.

It is a marvel that such a Church could be built in these days for £6,000, and it would be a kindly act for men and women of goodwill to help the people of St. Aidan's to set their Parish Church free from the debt of £2,000 which chastens for them the joy of its consecration. It is no small honour for St. Aidan's people, and the many friends who have helped, and will help them, to share in the bestowal on generations unborn of the inalienable boon and possession of a Village Church like this.

#### **Handsome Furniture.**

The Chalice and Paten of silver-gilt, worthy of the Church and designed by its Architect, were hand-wrought by the Duchess of Sutherland's Cripples' Guild, and were ready on August 31st last, St. Aidan's Day. The



underside of the Paten bears the inscription: DIE QUIETIS AIDANI, MDCCCXIV. ("on the Day of Aidan's Rest"). The Church-plate includes that formerly in use at Sudden Mission Room and Marland School. The principal Altar and its Ornaments were the gift of Canon Hartley. The Altar is simply and beautifully vested. The Communicants' Kneeling desks in the Chancel and Chapel, as well as the principal Altar and its Ornaments, are of oak (the latter gilded), and are the sterling workmanship of Messrs. Blakeley and Wild, of Heywood. The Altar Ornaments from Marland School are retained in the Chapel, and the oak Altar-rails from Marland are incorporated in the east front of the Organ Gallery. The Font, originally placed in St. Alban's Church in 1856, and long in use at Sudden Mission Room, has been re-modelled by Mr. Chadwick, monumental mason, and stands in fresh beauty against the broad N.W. Pier of the Tower. On a stone bracket above the Font the gilded oak Altar Cross from Sudden Mission Room is placed, opposite a tablet in the wall on which the C.L.B. Motto "Fight the Good Fight" is to be inscribed. A corresponding tablet in the S. arch of the Tower will bear the inscription of the C.E.M.S. Badge and the words "All in One." Facing this hangs the "Roll of Honour" of St. Aidan's Parish. The "Defenders' Cross," of beautiful design, gleams against the shadow of a dark wall-arch over the doorway at the W. end of the S. aisle. This Cross, with the "Last Post" Roll of Remembrance in its socket, will be finally fixed on the W. Gable of the S. aisle at the end of the War. The Pulpit, Lectern, Litany-desk, and Chapel Prayer-desk, are all in oak by Robert Bridgeman, of Lichfield. All the above oak furniture has been designed by the Architect, and is the gift of personal generosity and affection. The Holy Bible in the Revised Version, on the Lectern, and given along with it, is the best that could be bought. The beauty of the Chancel is at present marred by the lack of the permanent choir-stalls, as some would think the Nave and Aisles are by the lack of permanent oak-pews. Other personal gifts are the Hymn-boards, the Kneelers, the Collecting-plates, the Credence Table, Chapel Lectern and Book-rest, Chapel and Chancel dossals, the Litany Book, the "Evensong Proverb" in 13th century lettering from the tomb of Henry III., Westminster Abbey, the Normandy Font-ewer of quaint design, the American Organ in the Chapel, the Door-mats, the Vestry Table, Carpet, Ink-stand, and Clock. A stone from Hadrian's Wall, with its face wrought 18 centuries ago, seen in the Clergy Vestry wall over the safe, commemorates the Northumbrian diocese of Bishop Aidan. The sweet-toned Bell, permanently mounted behind the Turret,

has an interesting industrial history, and another association not forgotten, having hung for more than a half-a-century on the gable of the Oakenrod Mill. It now invites to worship some few whom in very early childhood it bade to work. The heating of the Church is by means of 32 radiators, twelve of which are concealed, as for example the pair in the thickness of the wall beneath the chastely-designed East Windows of the Chapel. The charming architectural unification of these twin shafted lights at their head should be noticed. The radiation of heat plays through wall-shafts and sill-slits upon the faces of nearly all the windows. The enhancement of the internal interest of the Church by its ranges of radiator-recesses of varied architectural design will not escape observation. A very liberal installation by the Rochdale Electric Company floods the Church at will with artificial light.

#### **Built for Endurance.**

The student, present and future, of the Ancient Churches of our Land, will delight in the sincere and archaic quality and the devotional austerity of St. Aidan's Church, and posterity, a thousand years hence, will recognise and appreciate the affinity between the Churches built for endurance in the time of the First Crusades and this of St. Aidan, reared and consecrated to the worship of God during a Crusade of far greater moment to which St. Aidan's Parish gave also of its best sons, and as the centuries pass, gratitude will be forthcoming for the legacy of a House of God, designed and built with honest and devout intent, with deliberate renunciation of superficial prettiness, and with sober preference for noble reserves, seen and unseen, of structural stability.

The first Wardens of St. Aidan's Parish are Mr. Robert Bentley, of Oulder Cottage, and Mr. Fred A. Verity, of Royle Cottage, who is also the Treasurer of the Building Fund. The Rev. Hartley Harrison, who has been pastorally associated with Sudden for nearly 18 years, becomes its first Vicar.

Since its Consecration the Care and Cleaning of the Church has been undertaken gratuitously as a labour of love.

The response evoked by the provision of the New Church has been very encouraging.

Architecturally Rochdale is richer for its latest Church, and it is to be hoped and trusted that the flock who have earned the right to love it, and those who worship there in years and centuries to come, may help to welcome and enlarge that Kingdom which "stands and grows for ever."

H. H.

