

Transcript from Wimbledon Borough News Jan 14<sup>th</sup> 1921

(Some punctuation added throughout)

## **DEDICATION OF THE WARRIOR CHAPEL AT THE PARISH CHURCH**

**Saturday 8th January 1921**

(including sermon by the Bishop of Southwark)

The dedication of the Cecil Chapel at the Parish Church as a Warrior Chapel and a “thanksgiving to Almighty God and a tribute to the men of Wimbledon who died that England might live” took place on Saturday afternoon. This Chapel, as most of our readers know, is one of the chief features of the Parish Church, dating from the year 1638, and contains within its walls, some of the greatest treasures in the parish. For many years however, despite its considerable historic interest, it has been used as a robing room for the choir at the church.

The Chapel was originally built by Sir Edward Cecil who fought in the time of James I, over the very battlefields in Flanders, where so many of our own brave men have fought and fallen during the Great War. Thus, no more fitting war memorial could be conceived than the opening of this Chapel, and it will be handed down to succeeding generations as a place of remembrance where the names of the fallen will be recorded.

The Vicar, the Rev. Horace Monroe, in issuing his appeal for funds to carry out the necessary work describes the Chapel as follows. The Altar tomb of Sir Edward Cecil, Viscount Wimbledon stands in the centre of the Chapel and bears an inscription which says that “he followed the Warres [sic] in the Netherlands five and thirty years and fought in the Battle of Newport [Nieuwpoort], a name so recently made familiar to us all. Here also is a stained-glass window showing the figure of a Knight in plate armour, probably St George, as he bears in his right hand a spear with a square banner on which, as well as on his shield, is the cross of St George. Bartlett, in his History of Wimbledon says that armour has the character of that worn about the end of the reign of Edward III, but the glass itself appears to be somewhat later. The large use of the white and silver stain suggests the XV century, though as to the armour Bartlett may be correct, as in such glass the armour represented is often of earlier date than the painting itself. In addition to such appropriate adornment for a Warrior Chapel, fragments of old armour hang on the wall and will be brought into view. The Cecil Chapel is lighted by small perforations containing the Arms of Edward Cecil himself, Sir Andrew Noel of Darby Leicestershire, father of his first wife Theodosia and Sir William Drury whose daughter he subsequently married. Another perforation contains the arms of Francis Lord Willoughby of Parham who married Eliza, Sir Edward’s third daughter. One is masked by the old Vestry roof and remains to be discovered by Sir Thomas Jackson. It will be interesting to know what Arms may be hidden here, certainly not those of the family into which this daughter married, as the perforation is placed over a memorial to his second daughter whereon is simply inscribed “Dorothy Cecil, unmarried as yet”. From the centre of the roof there hangs over the Altar Tomb a large and massive Viscount’s coronet, the coronet of the only peer who ever bore the title of Wimbledon. \*\*

The dedication service was conducted by the Bishop of Southwark [Rt Rev Cyril Garbett] who was assisted by the Vicar (Rev Horace Monroe). After singing of the hymns “Christ is made the sure

foundation” and “Praise my Soul the King of heaven” and Psalm CXXII, a prayer and then two lections [from I Kings 8 and Wisdom 4] , the Bishop, followed by the Vicar proceeded to the entrance to the Chapel. The dedication ceremony then took place and the choir sang the Contakion. The altar and screen were then dedicated by the Bishop “In the faith of Jesus Christ and in memory of his servants Llewellyn Wood Longstaff and Gerald Cornock Taylor”. After the singing of the hymn “For all the Saints who from their labours rest” the Bishop of Southwark in his address took for his text Ephesians 2 verse vii. [That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus]. He said ...

“...that in all our great cathedrals and churches we could **trace the history of the last thousand years** \*. In the fabric, in the architecture, in the memorials, and in brass, in the inscriptions on the walls, in the signs of effacement and change, as well as in the beauty and dignity of these churches, we could easily see the results of many of the crises through which the nation had passed. We could see the signs of social and political change and disorder leaving their marks within the churches, we could see the signs of the struggles through which the nation had had to pass. And we in our generation were adding another chapter to this history. The terrific events of our day were leaving an outward mark on the buildings of our time. In the ages to come, men looking over the intervening centuries would notice in our churches the signs of struggle through which we had passed in the last years on the Continent. In Flanders and in France many a noble ruin would witness to the horrors of war, many a church shattered by shellfire and blackened by flame, would witness to the appalling devastation of war. But even in our land, spared through the mercy of God from invasion, there would be marks of war written on our buildings. Out in the open, on the village greens, and more often in the churchyards, there would be a wayside cross or Calvary, with its roll of names reminding generations to come of those who had laid down their lives in the Great War. In almost every one of our churches, in stone, in brass or in oak, there would be some memorial recording the offering made by the men of the parish in the Great War.

[sic] They in that parish that day set apart their memorial, a specially fitting one, for they had taken an old Chapel and given it a new significance and meaning. That Chapel had had on its walls in past generations its inscriptions to one who had fought in the Lowlands and in the Battle of Nieuwpoort, and now these memories were still preserved, but would be overshadowed by a greater memory, the memory of those men, who from that parish went forth to die in our own day. Very beautifully as that memorial had been conceived, very skilfully as it had been carried out, it was now, in the days of the Epiphany an offering to come of those who made the great sacrifice. Their primary motive, the motive which prompted them in this offering was love and gratitude, love for those they know who went to die. In that congregation there were many tender hearts as they thought of those near and dear to them who made the great sacrifice. Gratitude too was in their mind – gratitude to them for all they did, for all their endurance, gratitude to Almighty God for the victory He gave them, and unable to visit graves in lands far away, they could come to that Chapel, and there they would make their offerings of flowers and remember in thanksgiving and pray for those who had died. There they had a memorial which would call to them, and others, remembrances of the victory. But in setting apart that memorial there was yet another motive, they **were thinking of the ages yet to come.**

That Chapel would be a witness in four or five centuries' time, and what would men think of the spirit of the nation which fought in the Great War? What would be the judgment of historians on the spirit of our people at that time? When the historian of the future went into our churches and saw marks with long rolls of names, perhaps effaced by time, when he faced the village cross and saw on it inscribed, the number of those that went away from that small village, he would feel that there was indeed a spirit of sacrifice and resolution in the nation, and as he turned to the utterances of some who died and suffered, he would see shining forth the spirit of sacrifice in the nation. In the words so familiar to many of them he would catch the spirit which moved so many of those who died. There in the spirit of sacrifice, in the sacrifice of those who endured and suffered, in the sacrifice of those who sacrificed and mourned, was to be found the true spirit of the nation, the spirit of those who saved freedom for the world. And in the ages to come, men would ask another question, "What use did those men of the twentieth century make of the freedom which they bought so dearly, or the victory that was gained at such a price?" The answer to that depended upon themselves and was still uncertain. Social disorder and social unrest were seen everywhere, controversy and strikes were found in all lands, and the murmur of preparation for the next war was heard by those who listened. The hope of the future lay in the spirit of sacrifice. The spirit of sacrifice which won the war would alone win the peace, and when individuals and classes and nations subordinated their own interests to the common good, then would peace be truly won. As they thought of the sacrifice made by those who gave their lives in the Great War, they heard the call and they needed to dedicate themselves in the spirit of sacrifice for others, putting aside all thoughts mean and selfish and greedy and unworthy, in their lives – in their individual lives and in their lives as members of the nation – and let the nation seek the good of the human race. For in sacrifice alone there could be found peace and brotherhood and joy, and as they followed those who made the great sacrifice, they must remember One who made the supreme sacrifice. Whose cross was marked on their brow at baptism, and in the strength of His sacrifice, they prayed that they and their nation might follow the example in sacrifice and faithfulness and duty of that who for their country laid down their lives."

\*phrases in bold, are bold headings in the original

\*\*some of these items no longer at St Mary's

### **DEDICATION CEREMONY ON SUNDAY**

The Mayor, Alderman Dudley Stuart, members of the Corporation and representatives of the magistracy and other public bodies attended the morning service to witness the dedication of the ensign which flew at the mast of HMS Inflexible during the War, recently presented to the Parish by the Admiralty, in connection with the opening of the Warrior Chapel. The Vicar, the Rev Horace Monroe conducted the service and there was a crowded congregation.

Before the service, the Mayor addressing the Vicar and Churchwardens at the Chancel steps said “Mr Vicar and Churchwardens, we rejoice to hear that this ensign of HMS Inflexible has been presented by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to the Parish Church of Wimbledon on the occasion of the opening of the Warrior Chapel, in remembrance of those who have fallen in action at the Battle of Jutland and other naval engagements of the Great War. We are proud to be associated with you, who now become the custodian of the battle flag and we hope that you and your successors will preserve it forever within these sacred walls”.

The Vicar in replying expressed his thanks to the Mayor and Corporation and added “we have accepted the custody of this gift in proud and undying memory of the men who fell in action in the naval engagements of the Great war”. After performing the dedication ceremony, the Vicar in the course of his address said the ensign was flown on HMS Inflexible which ship was next astern to HMS Invincible, the flagship of Admiral Hood, whose leading of his division into action was specially mentioned in Admiral Lord Beatty’s despatch as one of the most gallant incidents in the Battle of Jutland.