

memorandum

Date: Friday, February 13, 1998
To: Brian Austin
From: Jolyon Booth
Reference: Material for Magazine

Here is the tidied up text of the Salle guide I mentioned to you. The introduction was by David Rosenthal (DR) the rest by (Brian?) Wise, headmaster of Reepham School. There are also a few illustrations and no doubt more could be added.

There are two main difficulties with it. Much of it is written as a guide to be held while you walk round. The concern over present day forms of worship is of interest only to members of the Church and the opinions expressed will not be well received by all of those. However it does tie up and link together a lot of local characters and history with the history of England going on around them. It also explains a lot of the architectural features, not only of Salle, but other churches as well.

I am not sure how much it is possible to rewrite it so as to overcome the difficulties and keep the virtues but I am prepared to try.

JRB

David Rosenthal completed his guide in 1992

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE CHURCH OF SALLE

It is not easy to explain or account for the unique quality of Salle. Certainly it imparts a sense of security and quietness, of space and light, that is instantly felt to be uplifting. And this is felt by even the most casual of visitors in some measure; most fully by devout and experienced churchmen.

Partly this must be caused by the church's situation; a little removed from the turbulence of roads and dwellings; set on a small eminence and clearly visible from a distance, but, for all its great size, modest, not intrusive amongst its trees, but at home there. Push open the great west door, and enter into serenity.

Perhaps, too, the very age of the building is reassuring. It stands now scarcely altered from what it was five hundred years ago. There are the marks of the sometimes violent religious passions of past generations; the marks of the saw that cut down the rood screen; the defaced sculptures on the font; the lost painted glass. Yet the integrity of the building is able to contain these, and still be strong. In these alarming times it is a source of strength to feel that something noble has survived through all the turmoil of centuries; and to feel that it will remain, and that we, too, can endure, partaking of the dignity which this church possesses. For, like every noble work of men, this church speaks of human worth, nourished by the glory of God.

Perhaps, too, prayer has saturated the stone. It is not too fanciful to imagine that a hundred generations of ordinary people, coming here in simple faith, with the same perplexities and joys and signs that are ours, are a firm spiritual fellowship with us.

But Salle is not to be explained; it is to be experienced and enjoyed; it is a legacy of rich blessing that is ours in gratitude to accept and to maintain.

D.R.

THE CHURCH OF SAINT PETER AND SAINT PAUL

The church was built in the Perpendicular style during the first half of the 15th century, and the limestone used came from Northamptonshire.

First, notice the high TOWER, with its four pinnacles, the sound-holes with their complicated tracery, and the splendid WEST DOORWAY.

Two angels swing censers overhead as you enter through the great door, and your eye is at once caught by the high arcade of the NAVE, with its slender piers and great dimensions. The ROOF has arched braces - a marvel of engineering. The arched braces of the wide and lofty roof come down to rest on brackets, which are themselves the ends of the aisle-rafters, brought through the nave walls. By this daring feat of construction, the downward thrust of the roof is brought down onto the walls of the aisles and so to the ground. In the roof angels fly at the crossings of principals and purlins.

The LADY CHAPEL, a vaulted upper room with painted stone bosses, is above the NORTH PORCH. In olden days the 'road' passed by the north porch in which most of the business of the village was transacted.

THE BRASSES: 250 years ago there were still several brasses in the north transept, and the central and side aisles. Today only 4 remain in reasonably good condition. In addition to the 'Rose' brass in the north transept there is the 'Fountaine' brass; the indentation of the stone gives a good idea of what the whole brass was originally like, but today only 2 of John Fountaine's 3 wives are there in brass. In the central aisle there is a brass to Geoffrey and Alice Bolyn, but their 5 sons and 4 daughters are missing. And in the south aisle is a 'Shroud' brass to John Brigg - whose son built the south transept and the south porch.

THE BELLS: The bell chamber of the tower contains 8 bells. The 2 oldest date from the 1420s. The next oldest is dated 1698. There are 3 19th century bells, and the total of eight is made up by 2 modern bells, given by Sir Woolmer White, of Salle Park, with a new bell-frame in 1910.

THE HASE MEMORIAL: An entry in the registers tells how it was erected without the leave of the Rector or the Bishop. The subsequent law-suit brought by the Rector provided a valuable precedent, whereby it was established that no person could erect any monument, in the church or in the churchyard, without the sanction of the incumbent or the Bishop.

(Bulwer v Hase)

THE NORTH TRANSEPT: The third window is modern, installed in 1912 as part of the restoration; it depicts the history of the church.

In Mary's brief reign, back came the Roman form of worship, and the persecution of heretics followed. Most of the martyrs were humble folk - shopkeepers, artisans, and the like - but of the bishops, four, including Cranmer, died in the flames. IN EAST ANGLIA the ideas of the Reformation had met with an enthusiastic reception and had spread rapidly among all classes. Persecution entirely failed to check them. In the diocese of Norwich more men and women were burnt at the stake than in any other diocese except London and Canterbury.

THE NEW SETTLEMENT UNDER ELIZABETH

ELIZABETH I, on her accession to the throne in 1558 - 426 years ago - lost no time in re-establishing the supremacy of the National State, with the National Church as its servant. The Book of Common Prayer was brought back into use. As a new generation grew up under the influence of the bible, the prayer book, and a common loyalty to the Queen, the new settlement was accepted and successful.

THE ELIZABETHAN SERVICE AND THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER: The prayer book used in our church today, the 1662 version, differs little from Cranmer's; and it is not difficult to picture a service in Elizabeth's day. The prayers were said and the psalms sung. Congregational singing was a great part of the appeal of Protestant worship. But instead of the hymns now sung, the psalms were sung in a metrical version, of which only Psalm 100 is still familiar - as a hymn: *'All people that on earth do dwell'*.

Dr. A.L. Rowse, an authority on the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, and an avowed agnostic, has this to say:

"It is impossible to overestimate the influence of the Church's routine of prayer and good works upon that society: the piercing effect upon the imagination and conduct of the petitions with their affecting phrases, repeated Sunday by Sunday: *'We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us.'* - *'O Lord our heavenly father, almighty and everlasting God, which has safely brought us to the beginning of this day: defend us in the same with thy almighty power and grant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger.'* For our forefathers in their day they provided a system of belief, making a whole world of experience within which to live, giving satisfaction to the inmost impulses of the heart while not disturbing the critical standards of the mind, setting a guide to conduct in all the concerns of life, instructing in duty to God, one's neighbour and one's self, offering such consolation as nothing else in grief, in sickness, and in the hour of death. Simpler societies cannot live without a myth to support them; more sophisticated societies are the poorer without them."

IN SALLE, Roger Townsend, made rector in 1523, continued to serve until 1538, four years after Henry VIII's break with Rome, a period of 15 years. The next rector, William Warrison, served through the next 20 turbulent years until Elizabeth's accession in 1558. In that period William witnessed the installation of the bible in English in the church, the disappearance of the 'image' and the altar of St. Thomas Becket (because Henry VIII was only too aware of the clash in earlier times between King Henry II and Archbishop Becket over the right of the Church and the clergy), Edward VI's introduction of the first Book of Common Prayer, and Mary's reintroduction of the Latin Mass-book and the seeking out of heretics.

Finally came order and continuity. Having on the order of the new Queen cut down the rood-screen and brought back the prayer book in English, both Rector and parishioners were able to worship in peace, while the Queen spent the rest of her long reign restraining the reformers.

In 1603, the year of Elizabeth's death, the rector recorded in the parish register: *'150 communicants; no Roman Catholics'*.

Wrathall, inducted in Elizabeth's reign in 1590, through the reign of James I, and into the early years of Charles I's reign.

In 1637 Roger Howman succeeded Richard Wrathall and, with the villagers of Salle, he endured the Civil War, Cromwell's Republic, and saw the restoration of Charles II, and the reintroduction of the Book of Common Prayer. There is no indication of whether Roger Howman was superseded by a Presbyterian minister in the troubled years when the Puritans held sway and the prayer books gathered dust in a corner of the church. Undoubtedly the Church of England suffered sorely in Norfolk, as elsewhere; in this period the Bishop of Norwich was ejected from his cathedral, and the Salle parish registers are almost blank. Roger Howman's eldest son, also Roger, a Norwich doctor, was interred in the chancel in 1705.

A third long-lived rector took over from Roger Howman. Samuel Flack remained in office through the rest of Charles II's reign, surviving the Great Plague of 1665 (of which there is no mention in the parish records). Samuel Flack took the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 in his stride, survived William and Mary, and served on in the reign of Queen Anne until 1708. He deserves to be remembered along with his famous contemporary the Vicar of Bray.

EAST ANGLIA IN THE CIVIL WAR: Norfolk and the other counties of East Anglia formed a Parliamentary stronghold in the Civil War. Many of Cromwell's Ironsides came from this region, to form the backbone of the Parliamentary armies.

How could the gentlemen of Norfolk so conduct themselves as to retain their hold on their broad acres? The Paston of the day neatly dodged the issue by crossing the Channel to avoid a choice of sides. Most of the squires - few of whom were Puritans - came down on the side of Parliament, including Miles Corbett of Sprowston, who was one of the signatories of Charles I's death warrant. The le Stranges of Hunstanton were Royalists; they organised the defence of King's Lynn and held out for a considerable time, until the parliamentary forces cut off the town's water supply.

IN SALLE there had been Fountaines from the 14th century, and Brigg Fountaine became a captain in the Norwich Militia, and was named as a member of the Norfolk Committee which was responsible to Parliament for the support in the area of their cause. His relationship with his neighbour, Sir John Spelman of Stinton Hall, Salle, must have been a strained one. Sir John was a fervent Royalist. In December 1642 he spoke out so strongly in favour of the King's cause at an assembly of the gentry of the county that he was '*commanded to depart the meeting*'. Soon afterwards he joined Charles I at Oxford, where in July 1643 he died of 'the camp fever' in an epidemic which had broken out among the Royalist troops in the overcrowded city.

THE ROYAL SOCIETY: Founded under the patronage of King Charles II, the Royal Society, with Isaac Newton among its founders, familiarised the minds of their fellow-countrymen with the idea of Law in the Universe, and with scientific methods of enquiry.

Their approach was that God was to be praised by studying the Plan of His Creation - but no attempt was to be made to fit the findings of science into any scheme of theology. God and the Soul were taken for granted - and left aside.

The 18th Century: THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND THE NON-CONFORMISTS

In the same decade, Church of England and Non-conformist schools began to spread in the towns and villages, anticipating the introduction of compulsory education in 1870.

In the Church of England the 'High Church' movement encouraged the clergy to take greater care of and interest in their approach to the appearance of their churches, their conduct of the services, and the regular celebration of Holy Communion. The Evangelicals, with their emphasis on personal salvation, became a force again; and the Church Army was founded in the wake of General Booth's Salvation Army. Less obviously, Latitudinarianism - the tolerated variety of opinion in religious matters - flowed beneath the surface.

IN SALLE, two rectors - Edward Bulwer (1818 - 1847) and Charles Marsh (1847 - 1902) - between them spanned nearly the whole of the 19th century.

The village school, built by Sir Edward Jodrell at a cost of £500, opened its doors in 1864.

Late in the 19th century the floor of the nave of the church was green with damp, and the rain poured in through the roof. In 1906 the rector, Frank Lillingston, with the support of Sir Alfred Jodrell, set up a restoration fund. To help the appeal Mr. Lillingston issued what must have been the first guide to Salle to be published. The sum to be raised was £1,500, one hundred pounds having been spent on steel rods across the nave.

The nave seats then were in '*common painted deal boxes of the 18th century*'; the three-decker pulpit was on the south side of the nave with '*a strange foot made of a huge log of timber with some curious holes in it*'. But the nave appears not to have been used. The congregation entered by the chancel door, and '*the chancel alone is large enough to meet our requirements*'. (We can still fill it in 1984).

The overhaul of the church was completed in 1912. The nave-roof was repaired, and the windows reglazed. Sir Alfred Jodrell, related to the Edward Hase whose memorial caused so much trouble, made some restitution by reglazing the windows of the north transept. Two new bells and a new bell-frame, the organ and the vestry box were installed by Sir Woolmer White of Salle Park.

A POST-CHRISTIAN ERA?

In 1859 Charles Darwin published his '*Origin of Species*'. Since then, scientists have explained away most of the mysteries of the Universe. In thought and religion, the impact of Darwin and Freud can fairly be compared with the impact of Erasmus and Luther in the years of the Reformation. As a consequence, some theologians today refer to our living in a 'post-Christian era'. Whether or not we agree, there are two streams of thought, to some extent related, of which church-people should be aware. One is that the Church should consist of a body of 'committed' Christians. The other is that 'Buildings are not the Church'.

Regarding 'committed' Christians, in *The Times*, Bishop West had this to say: "There are signs that liberalism in the Church of England is suffering an eclipse. Generosity of spirit is not always found in a ship's company under threat. There is a tendency to look for Jonahs. There are indications that a closer definition of membership is being demanded. In the year AD.2000 such congregations as survive will probably have a high preponderance of converts who will use the word 'Christian' in an exclusive sense. Much that has given the Church of England its distinctive character could easily be lost. As Bishop Hooker in Elizabeth I's time said: '*Zeal, except when ordered aright, useth the razor with such eagerness that the life of religion is thereby endangered.*' A Church without a liberal streak may make headway but it is surely at risk."