

THE OXFORD MOVEMENT AND ITS LEGACY

On 14th April about 50 members and local residents assembled in Holy Trinity Church, Sandgate Road, Folkestone, a church built by the landowner, Lord Radnor, for the growing population as the town expanded westwards; it was designed by Ewan Christian, consultant to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. After a welcome by Mary Berg, Hilary Tolputt explained how 'filthy, fishy Folkestone' grew into a fashionable resort in the 19th century, largely due to the coming of the railway and the popularity of its healthy site and amenities. Sheila Sweetinburgh, one of the organisers, gave a detailed and intriguing exposition by 13th century William Durandus of the medieval symbolism of all parts of a church building. It was the publication of a translation of the first book (out of eight) of his 'Rationale' by the Camden Society which influenced the Oxford movement as churches were restored and new ones built in expanding Victorian towns.

The main lecture was given by Dr Michael Chandler, former Dean of Ely and former Canon Treasurer at Canterbury Cathedral. He dealt with the 18th century background of the evangelical revival and the storm over Roman Catholic Emancipation in 1829 and the threat to the Church of England posed by the Whig reforms after the 1832 Reform Act. The Oxford Movement grew out of John Keble's Assize Sermon on 'national apostasy' in 1833 and the series of 'Tracts for the Times', started by John Henry Newman. These were widely circulated giving rise to the alternative name of Tractarianism. Other authors contributed pamphlets on associated theological subjects. The main issue was whether the state should have authority over the church without the church's approval; controversy dominated the church, the Tractarians being accused of seeking to introduce popery into the Church of England. After Newman's Tract XC in 1841 the bishop of Oxford banned further pamphlets. Four years later Newman was converted to Roman Catholicism and the informal leader Dr Pusey, Professor of Hebrew, was silenced by the university authorities at Oxford when he preached a controversial sermon in 1843. Nevertheless, the movement continued, having an important influence on parish life outside Oxford. Dean Chandler then outlined some of the notable court cases of the period. These related to the spread of ritualism which provoked a backlash and the imprisonment of some clergy convicted of breaking the law.

After lunch members were divided into three groups which rotated between workshops on documents illustrating the Oxford Movement in a Kentish parish, documents connected with the introduction of ritualism at Holy Trinity, and a study of symbolism in Holy Trinity guided by Imogen Corrigan. The day ended with a general discussion and thanks to the organisers.

Lawrence Lyle

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Dean Michael Chandler lectures on the Oxford Movement



Hilary Tolputt's lecture in Holy Trinity church



Jackie Davidson discusses the church documents



Imogen Corrigan leads the guided tour