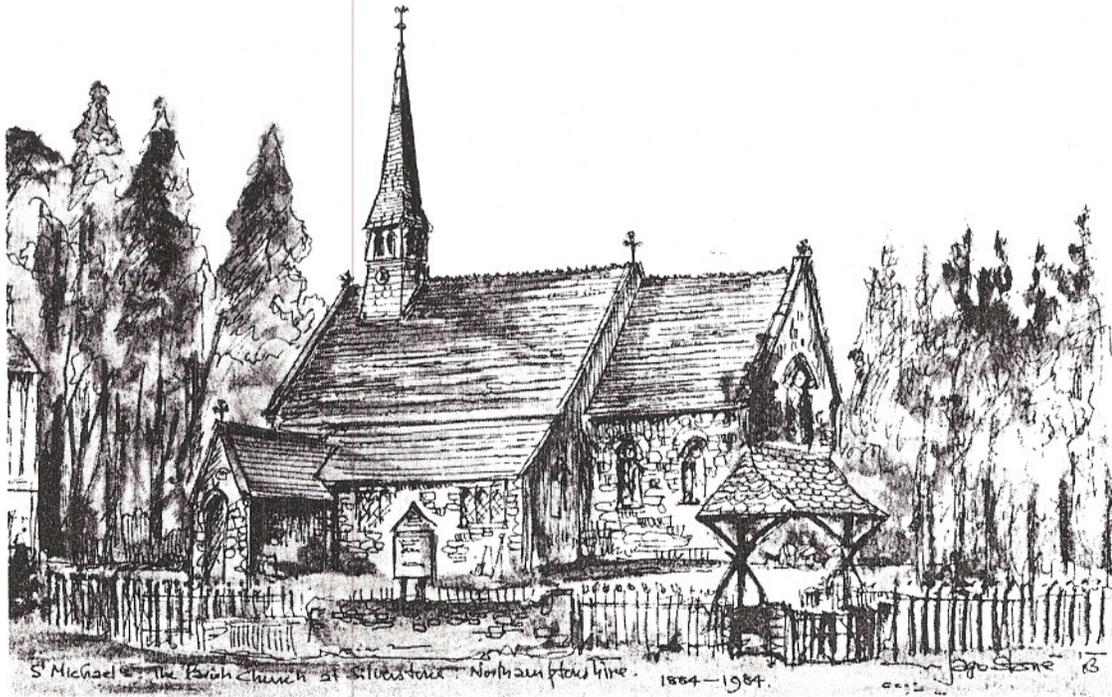


THE REBUILDING OF ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS
SILVERSTONE, 1884



An early place of worship in Silverstone was a chapel attached to the royal hunting lodge, built in about 1200. This is later referred to as a chapel of ease to the church at Whittlebury.

The chapel was replaced by a small church in 1780 - This building was described as a "barn" (Bishop Magee) and as "about the most uncomely edifice ever demoninated by the respected name of Church" (Mr R Loder). Rev. J E Linnell in "Old Oak" refers to "the scornful utterances of wicked wags with regard to Silson Church".

It was dedicated to St Michael, but somehow it got to be called St Anne's and thus its name is printed in some county histories. Two photographs of this plain building hang at the back of the present Church.

In 1882 Robert Loder Esq. M P for Shoreham, of Whittlebury Lodge was seen examining the building - At that time, the Rev John Fallon was the resident curate living at "The Walnuts". He "had quickly won the hearts of all his parishoners" but was considering leaving due to the depressing atmosphere of the Church in which he had to work.

Seeing Mr Loder's interest in the Church building, the villagers drew up a memorial, referring to the "desire we have long entertained to see our Parish possessed of a more suitable Edifice for the purposes of Divine Worship" but "the greatness of the work required seemed to make the undertaking quite beyond our means". However "the fact that you have been lately seen examining the Building seems to revive our hopes" "that you will be disposed to give us your advice and generous help in so great an understanding."

Mr Loder responded cautiously, willing to finance the work but only on condition that he should "be free to act as I think best and only answerable to my Bishop or his Archdeacon". This was accepted by the Vestry Meeting on April 22nd 1882.

The New Church was built on the old foundations, but with a larger vestry and the addition of a porch - The new seating arrangement was to accommodate 262 people. The design was by Mr Piers St Aubyn of London. The work was done entirely by local men from Silverstone and Whittlebury - Mr St Aubyn said "One and all had taken the greatest possible interest in the building and done the work to the best of their skill and knowledge."

The pulpit and reading desk were carved by Mr Wrighton Linnell. James Adams, stonemason, (grandfather of Mrs Holton, wife of our present organist) carved stone taken from Mr Loder's quarries, where Clare House is today. Another stonemason, Mr Lepper, carved the windows and Mr Osborne, grandfather of Mr Leon Blackwell and father-in-law of Mrs G Osborne was the stonemason who made the font.

Born in 1880, little Lettie Liddington lived at the Mill along Whittlebury Road. Several times she took a can of tea to her brother, Frederick, who was working on the church from 1883-4. All her life, she could remember walking up the aisle on the neatly levelled sand, prior to the laying of the tiles for the floor. Later she became Mrs Jack Webb of "The Limes" Little London and mother of Mrs Violet Potter and Mrs Mildred Varney.

During the re-building, Mr Thomas Barford, Church Warden, of Home Farm, allowed one of his barns to be used for worship. It was the barn that runs alongside Green Lane - A faculty was granted "to celebrate Divine Service" but "on no account to solemnize Mariages".

-M- The first marriage in the new church was that of James Whitlock, aged 23, a baker, and Mary Ann Linnell, aged 22, on August 4th 1884. The bride was the aunt of Messrs. Jim, Sim and Vic Linnell and of Mrs Doris Hinton.

There were three bells in the bellcote of the new church and these were rung by Mr Edward Reeve, shoemaker, maternal grandfather of Mrs Marjorie Cracknell. He was a keen bellringer greatly admired by the parishioners for his skill with the bells.

Bishop Magee travelled from Peterborough to Whittlebury Lodge on Saturday, September 27th 1884 to spend the weekend with Mr Loder - they attended church at Whittlebury on Sunday morning.

The official opening of Silverstone Church was on the morning of Monday September 29th, St Michael's day and it was a great occasion with at least 500 people present. The workmen would have had a day off to be at the service - Bishop Magee, Rev. A J Street Rector of Whittlebury, Rev. J Fallon curate of Silverstone, visiting clergy and the choir processed from the National School, which is now the Church Room. Among the clergy were the Revs. R Lickes and J Wolfendale, Wesleyan Ministers.

According to the supplement of the Northampton Mercury, the organist and choir rendered the service in "a creditable manner," although the former was playing under difficulties as only 5 out of the 18 organ stops were working.

After the service, about 120 people were entertained by Mr Loder to luncheon at Whittlebury Lodge. Mr Loder, the Bishop, Mr St Aubyn, the architect, and Mr Fallon all made speeches, encouraged by "hear, hear" and occasional "laughter". The party from Peterborough returned there by the 4.10 train from Towcester.

In the afternoon, the members of the choir and the Sunday School teachers from Silverstone were entertained to tea in the Riding School at Whittlebury Lodge - Among the Sunday School teachers would have been Miss Martha Julia Linnell whose memorial tablet is behind the font.

There was an evening service at Silverstone when the vicar of Brackley preached the sermon.

Material researched by Colin Hughes

Sources and acknowledgements -

The Record Office, Delapre Abbey
Record Library, Abington Street
Whittlebury Church
House of Commons