



TROUTBECK CHURCH

WESTMORLAND

Troutbeck Church was probably founded about four hundred and fifty years ago but the present building is not much more than two hundred years old, as nearly the whole of it dates from 1736. It was so extensively restored and altered in 1861 that at a first glance it might be taken for a Victorian church. The changes were particularly drastic inside the building, but there is an old water-colour drawing (now hanging near the door) shewing it as it used to be. It had a tiny railed-off altar at the east end, a large box pew belonging to Admiral Wilson of The Howe on the north side of it, another faculty pew belonging to the Brownes of Townend on the south side, whilst the rest of the seats in the chancel were occupied by other leading inhabitants of Troutbeck and Applethwaite. Separating the chancel from the nave was a slender oak screen. The seats in the body of the church were simple oak benches. The pulpit, reading desk and clerk's seat formed a "three-decker," and at the west end there was a gallery. All these furnishings were swept away in 1861 and many of them were replaced in varnished pine, as was fashionable at that time. Recently the chancel was altered again, being furnished and panelled with fine seventeenth-century carved oak which came originally from Calgarth Old Hall down by the shore of Windermere.

The east window, a large one in comparison with the small church, is filled with stained glass designed by three of the Pre-Raphaelites: Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Ford Maddox Brown and William Morris. It is remarkable to find a window by such distinguished artists in this country church. The colouring is extremely good and the general effect is very light and pleasing; it is in marked contrast with most of the other Victorian glass in the

smaller windows. The Crucifixion in the centre of the east window is notable for portraying our Lord without a beard. Another window by Burne-Jones is in the north wall and is conspicuous for its brilliant reds and blues.

The pulpit and font are modern but near the font are an old oak chest with strap-hinges and 3 locks, and an old oak table with cupboards underneath, supposed to be the old communion table which is known to have been given to the church in 1684. On the gallery are fixed the Royal Arms of George III, dated 1737. In the tower are six modern bells and one dated 1631 with the inscription

“ Jesus be our speede.”

It is on this ancient bell that the clock strikes. In the vestry are preserved two silver chalices, the first being Elizabethan (made in York, 1584) and the second (also made in York, 1679) given by Agnes Birkett in 1688 during the reign of James II.

Amongst other relics are an old pewter flagon and dish, two collecting “shovels” dated 1692, a pitch-pipe, the parish registers from 1579, the churchwardens’ accounts from 1641, a plan of the church in 1706, and a series of old service papers (1691-1720) including the Service of Thanksgiving for the Union of England and Scotland in 1707.

The churchyard with its three ancient yew trees has three lych gates, one at each entrance. The cross commemorating the parishioners who gave their lives in the 1914-1918 war is a remarkable single block of Lakeland green stone. Contrary to some people’s expectations, John Peel is not buried here (he lived and died at Caldbeck in Cumberland) but near the south gate

is the grave of a centenarian, Mrs. Longmire, who died in 1868 aged 103. Near the east end of the church is buried the Rev. William Sewell, parson of Troutbeck for 42 years, who died in 1869. Many stories are told of him, and he was a notable character. In addition to his duties here, he was also master of the Kelsick grammar school at Ambleside. In 1840 he built the inn at the top of Kirkstone pass on a piece of Common land which had been allotted to him as "perpetual curate" of Troutbeck. The living became a vicarage in 1882; until then the parson was only a "curate", under the Rector of Windermere, and the whole of Troutbeck was formerly in the Parish of Windermere.

The origin of Troutbeck "chapel" or church is lost in the mists of antiquity but it must have been founded in the Middle Ages. It is first mentioned in 1506. Troutbeck chapel was consecrated for the first time on 6th July, 1562 by the Bishop of Chester as "Jesus Chapel" (a very unusual dedication) and a second time on 30th April, 1563 by the Archbishop of Canterbury, but nobody quite knows why a second consecration was necessary. Very little of that church remains today, because in 1736 a great restoration took place, and both the main building and the western tower were rebuilt. This is commemorated by the date 1736 carved on a stone over the west doorway. But built into the wall above it there is a three-light window that must be of sixteenth-century date, and this is the only visible link with the Troutbeck chapel that existed on the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

"Peace be to this church and those that worship in it, peace be to those that enter in and go out from it, peace be to those that love it and that love the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."