Re-Opening of Ashendon Parish Church Pre the Bucks Herald Article of 1923. Possibly written in about 1918 and certainly before the plasterwork was removed from the walls. The Rev Thomas Appleton who presided at the service was Rector of Ashendon from 1907 until 1920 when he went to Ludgershall

St Mary's Church, Ashendon, is one of those old parish churches with which Bucks abounds, and around which many interesting historical associations gather. Standing high on the hill, it is a prominent figure for miles around. It dates from the eleventh century, as is indicated by its architecture and its internal adornment. The Vicar, Lay Rector, Churchwardens and parishioners have for some time realised the necessity of thoroughly restoring the Church, and have now completed their effort in this respect. The Church has been thoroughly renovated, both externally and internally. Plans and specifications prepared by Mr Philip Inns, of Buckingham, have been approved and, under the supervision of the same gentleman, the work has been satisfactorily carried out by Mr. Holland, builder and contractor, of Waddesdon. All the historical features have been carefully restored intact. The earliest part of the church is the arch and window opposite the north wall directly over the font, which is of different character to the other portions, and there are indications of additions in the 14th century, several portions being of the architecture and style of that period. In a niche in the chancel is to be seen a stone figure of a Crusader, in armour lying full length with feet crossed. The tower, with its ancient buttresses, appears to be of the same period, and the church is a substantial structure and shows no signs of weakness. The bells in the tower are each inscribed as follows : No 1, "R.A. 1633", No. 2 "Henry Bagley made me, 1658"; No.3 "By my voice the people may knowe to

come to hear the Word of God, 1658"; No. 4 "Sanctus H. B., 1668".

The work that has just been carried out has included the renovation of the chancel by the Lay Rector, Earl Temple; the stripping and re-covering of the roof; new stone coping on east end wall, with new stone cross finial. Internally all the old pews have been removed and modern, much more comfortable seats substituted. The chancel floor and altar step have been restored in a substantial manner. The floors in the aisles and chancel are laid with prepared oak blocks to pattern, and the seats have been raised, thus adding to the comfort. The walls are coloured with specially selected tint, which harmonises with the new work. On the east end wall and three feet north and south is oak panelling, kindly given by Miss George and another lady parishioner. All defects in stone work have been restored, and a vestry formed in the east end of the south aisle. The lower portion of the tower has been renovated, including the porch, the old style being maintained. The pulpit has been carefully restored, and there is a new oak lectern, made and beautifully carved by Mr. H. Boughton (Ashendon). The Communion cloth, richly embroidered in gold, is of artistic design and character, and is entirely the work of Mrs. Appleton, who has presented it to the Church; the antependium for the pulpit, also beautifully wrought, is the gift of Miss Appleton. The brass hanging lamp in the chancel, communicants' kneeler, and sanctuary mats have been contributed by parishioners and friends through Mrs. T.J.George. New oak choir stalls are placed in the chancel, and the church is in every way well restored and of pleasing appearance.

The re-opening service was held on Wednesday afternoon, when the Rev. T. Appleton (vicar) and Messrs. T.J. George and R. Boughton (churchwardens) had the privilege of welcoming one of the largest congregations that has ever attended. The church was filled to its utmost capacity, many being unable to gain admittance. The congregation included Sir Lancelot Aubrey-Fletcher, Lady Verney, Mr. and Mrs. F.T.H. Bernard, Mr., Mrs. and Miss Harper (Aylesbury), Mrs. Appleton, Mrs. George, Mrs. Boughton, Mrs. G. A. Sims (Winchendon), Mr. P. Dodwell, and others (Waddesdon), etc. The clergy robed in the schoolroom adjoining, the Rural Dean, (Rev. A. Bros, vicar of Shabbington) being present to dedicate the new work and various gifts presented to the church, and preach the sermon. The other clergy included Rev. T. Appleton, Rev. J. Riley and Rev. C. Millington (Brill), Rev. Johnson (Ludgershall), Rev. H.T.Sortwell, Rev. Johnston (Wotton), Rev. J.B. Tyson (Chilton), and Rev. G. Dangerfield (Aylesbury). The service opened with a hymn "We love the place, O God", as a processional, followed by the dedicatory prayers said by the Rural Dean. Then there was evensong, the lessons being taken by the Revs. J. Riley and J.B. Tyson, and prayers said by the vicar. The hymns "O Lord, how joyful 'tis to see" and "Christ is our Corner-stone" were sung, and Psalms xiviii. And lxxxiv. said.

The Rural Dean took his text from II. Chronicles ii, 4 and in the course of an interesting dedicatory service pointed out that Solomon's temple was the first permanent building for the worship of God, the tabernacle having been previously used by ancient Israel, but when the nation settled down in peace under a king there was a desire for a permanent

House of God.

The task of building it was committed to Solomon, and he described it : "The house that I build is great; for great is our God above all gods." From that period they might trace the erection of these permanent buildings for the service of God. He supposed the houses of God first built in the country were rude and rough, and there were still a few remains of Saxon church work. When the Normans came in, civilization was raised to a higher level, and much more beautiful and massive architecture was soon seen, and beautiful houses of God were soon dotted all over the country. Sometimes they were erected by the large land owner or some religious house, and sometimes by parishioners, until at last, there was hardly a parish which had not its church. Tracing the history of the many parish churches dotted all over the country, the Rural Dean remarked that the architecture of the Ashendon Parish Church taught them that it existed in 1200. Seven hundred years was a long time to look back upon, and how many changes there had been; how much prosperity and adversity that old parish church had seen! There was the prosperity of the ante-Reformation period, with its beautiful ritual adornments which the Churches owned. And then came the Reformation period, when all was swept away; and then, again, the Civil War followed, followed by the restoration of the Monachry but stagnation in the Church. Coming to the period of our own time, they found a great reform. In that deanery out of 17 churches, 12 had been restored within the last 33 years. The Ashendon church had been beautiful in various ways, and they could that day, take up Solomon's language, "The house that I build is great, for great is our God above all gods". Nothing kindled a greater zeal for God than a restored church in

which to worship Him. As they look back into history they would see that was so. As Solomon used the temple, so do we in our day, use the house of God. Having emphasised the close association of the parish church with all the principal events in life, the Rural Dean spoke of the generosity with which church building had been supported, and referred to the erection of a beautiful new cathedral at Liverpool, rich men being moved out of love to subscribe liberally to that object. It was right we should make the churches as beautiful as possible, for they were the scene of all the important events in life and the witnesses of our joys and sorrows. So they felt the restoration of their parish church wasa matter which concerned them personally. The restoration of their church was not merely for the perpetuation of sentiment, but for use in religion. They had not restored their church simply because it was associated with the sentiment of their lives, but that it might be a house of God for ever, where, the prayers of His people might ascend. Not for themselves alone did they undertake such work, but for their children. The church parish was the possession of the people: something that had been handed down to them. We were life tenants of the church, and must tend it carefully and see that it was never alienated from its true purpose. The greatness of a nation depended not on its wealth or vastness of empire, but on its uprightness and honesty of purpose and truthfulness, and tracing history, we should find it was just those principles which had made England great and honoured abroad. It was because England is at heart a religious nation and has the name for honesty and uprightness that we were honoured in the earth. If we would maintain that position we must train our children in the path of righteousness through the school and the Church, There were many

opponents making continual attacks on religion, and that was all the more reason we should hold fast and be prepared to maintain our principles. They had restored the house of God, and only needed now that the spiritual life of the people should be stimulated.

Following the Rural Dean's interesting discourse, the hymn "O worship the King" was sung, during which an offertory was taken for the Church Restoration Fund, the amount contributed being £8:18:91/2.

Immediately after the service an adjournment was made to Mr. Boughton's farm, where tea was served in a shed, the arrangements being very ably and satisfactorily carried out under the supervision of Mrs. Appleton, Mrs. R. Boughton, and Mrs. T.J. George, assisted by Mrs. Roads, Mrs. T. Barton, Mrs. H. Curtis, Misses Boughton, Appleton, Roper, Ridgway, Bell, and Payne. There was also a sale of work with numerous attractions. The ladies in charge of the stalls were Mrs. S Smith, Mrs. T. Boughton, Mrs. And Miss Harper, Mrs. Ridgway, and Miss Faulkner, suitable plain and fancy articles, sweets, etc., finding ready purchasers. Other attractions were a fishing pond with Mr. Appleton in charge; bran tub, at which Mr. T. G. Boughton did good business; and the ever-popular hoop-la, with Mr G.F. Boughton as principal. The weather was delightfully fine, and consequently, the proceedings passed off very pleasantly. It is estimated that Wednesday's effort will provide the amount required to complete the fund, and should a balance accrue it will be devoted to the Organ Fund.