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*The Story of*  
**BOLSOVER PARISH  
CHURCH**



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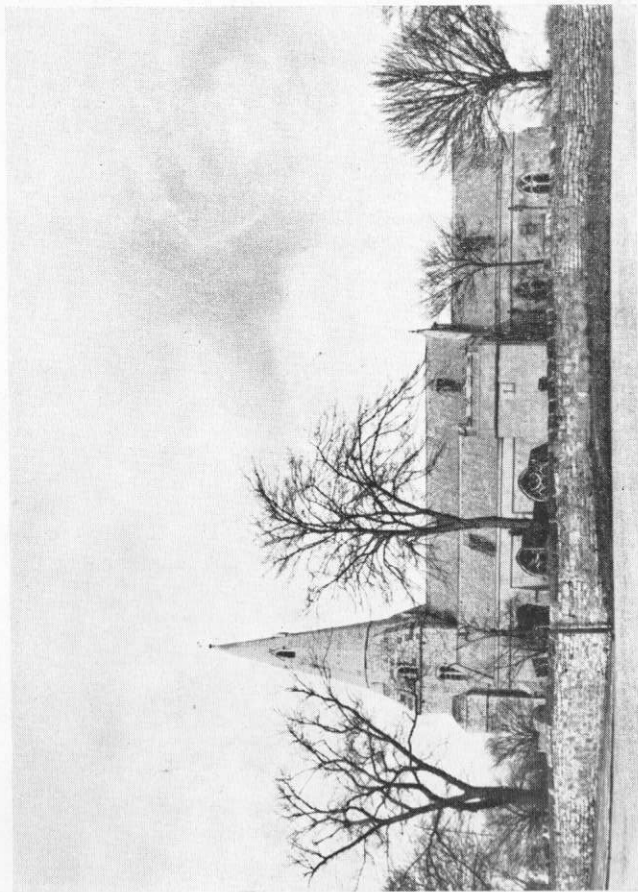
*The Story of*  
**BOLSOVER PARISH CHURCH**  
S. MARY AND S. LAURENCE

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Bolsover Church

## Bolsover Parish Church

WITHIN the last few decades the Industrial Revolution has brought to the town of Bolsover an increase of trade and prosperity which it had never known before. But in very early days, when only a quiet country town, it had a widespread reputation for its metal-work, mostly buckles, spurs and the like. Nor did it lack the colourful pageantry of men at arms and fluttering standards as the nobility, and occasionally, even the King himself came to the great castle on the hill on which the town stands. Through all these centuries the church too had been in existence and played its notable part. Indeed it is hard to say which of the two could claim to be the earlier building—both are said to have had Saxon beginnings. Both have been through many vicissitudes. To-day the castle is but an empty ruin though its imposing facade and majestic sculptural embellishments attract countless visitors during the summer months. The church, though nearly destroyed by fire in 1897, has risen anew to carry on uninterrupted the great work of the Kingdom of God.

Before describing the actual church building, it is perhaps desirable to recount briefly, the principal events which go to make up the history of the place.

There is little, but what is euphemistically described as tradition, to inform us of the state of affairs in Bolsover before the coming of the Normans in the 11th century. We know that it was situated in the Saxon Kingdom of Mercia, and the earthworks, of which traces still exist, would seem to show that it was a fortified place of some importance even in those days.

When the Norman William came to the throne in 1066, a more orderly system of government was established, and written records began with Domesday Book about 1085. From this we learn that Bolsover was one of the Manors with which the Conqueror delighted to reward his Barons for their loyalty and their help. It thus came into the hands of William Peveril (this was the same Peveril who was described by Sir Walter Scott in his novel *Peveril of the Peak*).



This faithful adherent of King William I followed the usual practice of setting up a fortress from which to exercise his feudal authority, and for the purpose he naturally chose the commanding position which the existing castle occupies, on the site of the old Saxon fortifications.

Up to this time we have no mention of the church, but it has been conjectured that a Christian church had existed on the present site some time before the Norman Conquest. It is even said that the site had earlier been used for devotional purposes by the Druids in ancient British times.

However, the first written record we have, shows that in 1152 the Peveril family made a grant of the living to the Abbey of Darley. This took place when Henry II was King of England. What the church was like in those days is hard to conjecture, but there are certain remains (see page 9) which are characteristic of that period (before the Norman conquest) when the Norman style of building had been introduced and had begun to replace the more elementary Saxon methods.

Thus, in actual point of date of foundation, it might seem that the church is older than the castle.

The gift of the living to the Abbey of Darley was confirmed in 1215 by the Earl of Derby, who had seized the castle for King John, after it had been occupied by some of the disaffected Barons.

This seems to have been a time of considerable activity in the place. The church was restored, and even largely rebuilt. At this time too was built the beautiful tower and broach spire, which almost alone has survived the disintegrating hand of time and the perils of fire. This church would have been built in the Early English style, which was just then in the course of development into an essentially independent and native style of architecture.

By this time too, Bolsover had become a thriving market town, with its own crafts of metal-work (see page 5).

After this rebuilding of the church, there is little to record for nearly four centuries. The Reformation came and went, but its full impact was probably little felt by a church which does not appear to have had a monastic or collegiate character.

But a new period of activity set in during the 17th century, when the castle came into the hands of the Cavendish family. It had undergone many vicissitudes, since it had been a centre of the rising of the Barons against King John, and had been retaken for the King by the Earl of Derby in 1215. It had been then granted to the Earl of Chester; reverted to the Crown again; was held in the 15th century by Edmund Tudor, whose son, King Henry VII brought to an end the Wars of the Roses.

In the 16th century, King Henry VIII granted it to the Howards (who became Dukes of Norfolk) after which it again reverted to the Crown. Later in the 16th century it came into the possession of the Earl of Shrewsbury, who in turn sold it in 1613 to Sir Charles Cavendish, whose son, a loyal supporter of the Crown, was created Duke of Newcastle. By this time the castle was practically a ruin, but the Cavendish family brought with them a new and vigorous spirit of initiative, which resulted in a period of greater activity for both church and castle.

The castle was greatly enlarged and beautified by the addition of the Terrace Buildings and the Riding School, which gave the whole structure a most imposing aspect, which it still retains in spite of present-day neglect.

To the church was added the mortuary chapel, known as the Cavendish Chapel, which adjoins the south aisle. This was built to receive the mortal remains of its founder, Sir Charles Cavendish (ob. 1617). His grandson, the second Duke of Newcastle, was also buried here, as have been many others of his descendants up to quite recent times. This beautiful addition to the church was carried out by Huntingdon Smithson, the architect who had been responsible for the additions to the castle. He also is buried in the church, a memorial stone in the floor of the choir recording his death in 1648.

The coming of the Cavendish family to Bolsover was also marked by a great revival in the social life of the place. King Charles I was entertained at the castle on more than one occasion during his reign, and it is on record that a Masque by Ben Jonson was performed for his pleasure during one of his visits.

This was during the time of Sir Charles Cavendish's

son, who became the first Duke of Newcastle. He was a loyal supporter of King Charles I. When the Parliamentarians seized power and brought the King to execution, he fled to France, having given all his possessions in the service of the King. The castle was sacked by the Puritans, but when the Restoration came, he returned to Bolsover (now as Earl of Newcastle). By careful management, he made the great house more or less habitable. He was created first Duke of Newcastle by King Charles II in 1665, and on his death was buried in Westminster Abbey. The second Duke, his son, continued to live in the castle, but he died without issue and the place fell on evil times. It eventually passed to the Bentinck family and during the 18th century, the castle was dismantled and all its contents removed to the Duke of Portland's great house at Welbeck.

During this period, the church probably suffered like others from the iconoclastic zeal of the Roundheads, and had many of its treasures and ornaments destroyed, but no record remains of what was done.

We now get only occasional glimpses of the history of the church. Restorations took place in 1704, 1773 and 1834. In 1878 a more drastic and comprehensive reconditioning of the building took place. The galleries were removed, and the north aisle and organ chamber added. A rood screen of great beauty was erected, the chancel arch was restored and the whole church was resealed. This very full restoration took place during the incumbency of the Rev. T. C. Hills, and it was hoped that the church would then serve the community without further need of extension or cost for many a long day.

But it was, alas! not to be. On January 24, 1897, during a bitterly cold and frosty spell, the church was burnt to the ground, leaving nothing standing but the ancient tower and the Cavendish Chapel.

Everyone set to work with a will. It was only about a year and a half, on September 21, 1898, before the new church was consecrated by the Lord Bishop of Southwell. That it was found possible to achieve so remarkable a result in so short a time was largely due to the infectious enthusiasm and prodigious efforts made by the vicar, Rev. T. C. Hills, who had been responsible for the last

restoration of the church. His memory is perpetuated in the screen beneath the chancel arch, and many other benefactions have resulted in greatly adding to the beauty of the church and its ornaments.

During the middle of the 19th century, viz. : from about 1820 to 1880, the connection between church and castle was maintained by the use of the Keep as a vicarage.

The influence of the church in the rapid development of the parish in more recent times owing to industrial expansion, is shown by the establishment of daughter churches at Whaley Thorns, Shuttlewood and Stanfree, and Carr Vale.

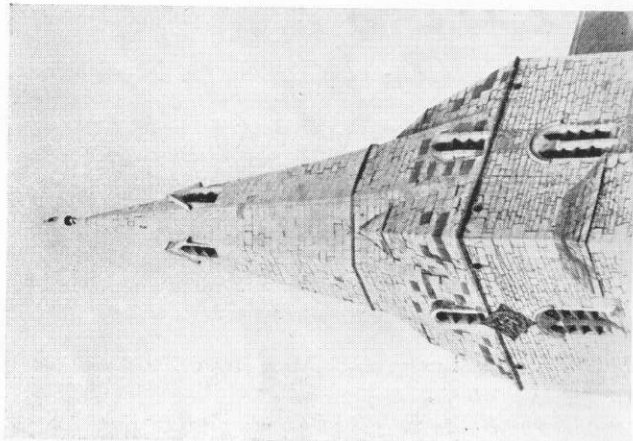
### THE CHURCH BUILDING

The visitor approaching the building from the south side will not perhaps realize at first sight that the main part of the church dates only from the last years of the 19th century, for the restoration which took place after the great fire of 1897 was made to harmonize most effectively with the lovely 13th-century tower and broach spire, which is almost the sole surviving feature of the mediaeval church.

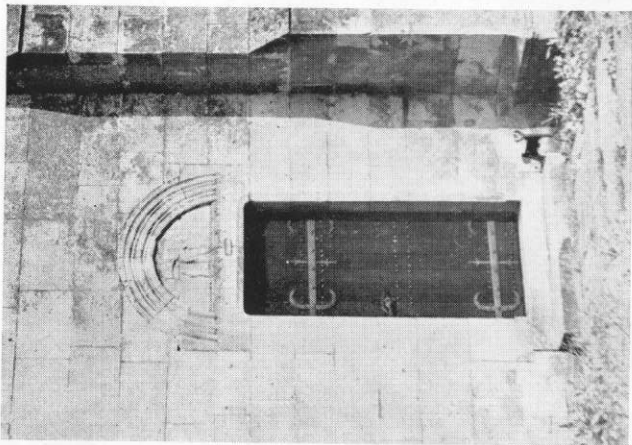
The tower has in each face a round-headed Early English two-light window. The broach spire springs, as its name implies, straight from the tower walls without intervening parapet or pinnacles. It is an octagonal spire, with spurs at each angle, with single lights at each side of the base, a string course above the spurs, and canopied lights close to the summit.

Another even earlier relic of the mediaeval building can be seen over the small door on the south side of the chancel, the priests' door leading to the sanctuary. This Tympanum, or stone carved in low relief in the space between the round-headed Norman arch and the square-headed door below, is a characteristic feature of the Norman style of building, which began before and flourished after the actual Norman conquest. We should be safe, therefore, in regarding this as a part of the earlier church of William Peveril's time. The carving represents the crucifixion (with figures of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and St. John).

The interior of the church is spacious and well lighted.



*13th-Century Broach Spire*



*Tympanum over the Priest Door  
of the Sanctuary*

It has a lofty roof, supported on handsome arcades, which have been designed to preserve the Early English character of the old church.

Within there is little which can be considered as remaining from the mediaeval building except the piers of the chancel arch which were partially incorporated in the new building. But there is one ancient piece of carved stonework, which recalls the splendour of the mediaeval masons' craft. This is the almost unique slab, which is affixed to the wall close to the font. It has been considerably mutilated, but enough remains to give it exceptional interest to antiquarians. The subject is the Adoration of the Magi. It was originally coloured, and it has been conjectured that it formed a part of the reredos over the high altar in pre-Reformation days. It was discovered during restoration of the church at the beginning of the 18th century. The workmen, on removing a large doorstep at the entrance to the chancel by the door on the south side, found on its underside what was evidently a sculpture of importance. It was then cleaned and placed again in the church in a position worthy of its historic value.

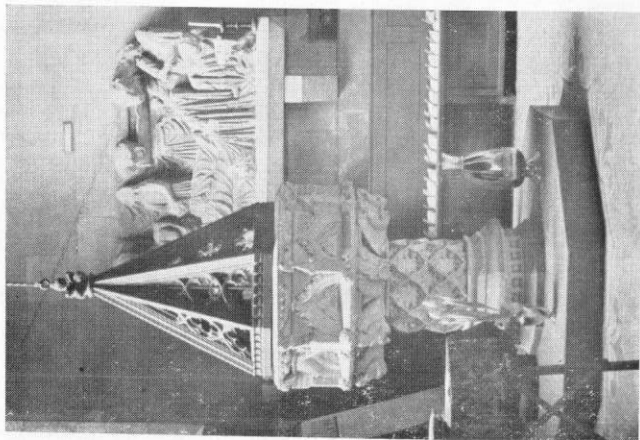
The transept-like chapel on the south side of the church, at one time separated by a wall but now open to the south aisle, is the Cavendish chapel, which also fortunately escaped undamaged in the fire of 1897.

It contains the tombs of members of the Cavendish, and of the later Cavendish-Bentinck families. The two most notable memorials are those of Sir Charles Cavendish who died in 1617, and of his grandson the second Duke of Newcastle, who died in 1691. The chapel was built by the architect, Huntingdon Smithson, who was responsible for the additions to the castle during the same period (see page 7).

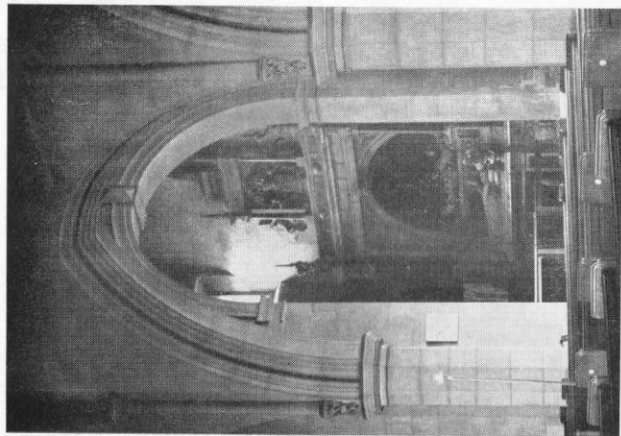
The imposing memorial to Sir Charles Cavendish has a finely executed effigy of the Knight in armour under a canopy, while that of his wife reposes on a lower sarcophagus on the side of which are shown their three sons kneeling. The quaint inscription is in the form of a dying admonition to his sons, of great tenderness and beauty.

The Duke of Newcastle's tomb is supported by four





*The Font and the Adoration  
of the Magi*



*The Cavendish Chapel, 1618*

massive columns, with sculptured effigies representing History and Fame.

The modern furnishings of the church are typical of the love and devotion which went to the restoration of this well-loved church after the fire of 1897.

Among other objects worthy of note are the magnificent stonework of the font and of the pulpit, the lovely chancel-arch screen which was erected during the incumbency of the Rev. B. S. Batty, in memory of the Rev. T. C. Hills (see page 8), the belfry arch screen in memory of a former churchwarden, and the fine Caen stone reredos, with figures of the Virgin Mary and of S. Laurence to whose honour this church is dedicated.

The tower has a fine peal of eight bells, which have been hung since the fire in 1897.



## VICARS OF BOLSOVER

1149-1153	ROBERTUS AVENEL. CLEMENTUM.	
1200 [circa]	ALAN. [Physician to King John].	
1312	JOHN de BALYDEN.	
1349	ROBERT de BURLEY RICHARD de THURSMANLEY } ROBERT HOPE. } Probably victims of the Black Death.	
1381	ADAM de FENTON.	
1390	JOHN STANLEY.	
1407	WILLIAM PREDYN. JOHN de BRADWELL.	
1421	RICHARD FEYRECLOUGH	Canon of Darley
1464	JOHN HARRISON.	
1465	JOHN STUBBER. ROBERT CARTLEAGE.	
1501	HUMPHREY HALLE.	
1515	RALPH SMYTH	Patron : The King.
1548	HUMPHREY SMYTH.	
1567	WILLIAM HODSON ROGER BROOCKE.	Patron : The Queen.
1617	WILLIAM WATSON	Patron : Sir. W. Cavendish.
1650	THOMAS FOUKES RICHARD CHADWICK.	Parliamentary Commission.
1690	ROBERT KILBORNE	Patron : Henry, Duke of Newcastle.
	HUGH JENNINGS.	
1698	RICHARD CHADWICK.	
1750	JOHN RICHARDSON	Patron : The Countess of Oxford.
1760	WILLIAM RICHARDSON	Patron : Margaret, Duchess of Portland.
1769	EDWARD OTTER	Patrons : Robert Harley and James West.
1785	JOHN EYRE	Patron : The Duke of Port- land.
1798	EDWARD OTTER	Patron : The Duke of Port- land.
1818	WILLIAM CALCRAFT TINSLEY	Patron : The Duke of Port- land.
1833	JOHN HAMILTON GREY	Patron : The Duke of Port- land.
1866	THOMAS CHARLES HILLS	Patron : The Duke of Port- land.
1900	ARTHUR VAUGHAN COLSTON	Patron : The Duke of Port- land.
1906	BASIL STAUNTON BATTY	Patron : The Duke of Port- land.
1911	FRANCIS HANMER WEBB PEPLOR	Patron : The Duke of Port- land.
1914	DAVID AKRILL JONES.	
1922	JOSEPH EDWARD PAGET.	
1938	GEORGE ARTHUR LEWIS LLOYD	Patron : The Duke of Port- land.
1954	WILFRED SPEAKMAN	Patron : The Lord Bishop of Derby.

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