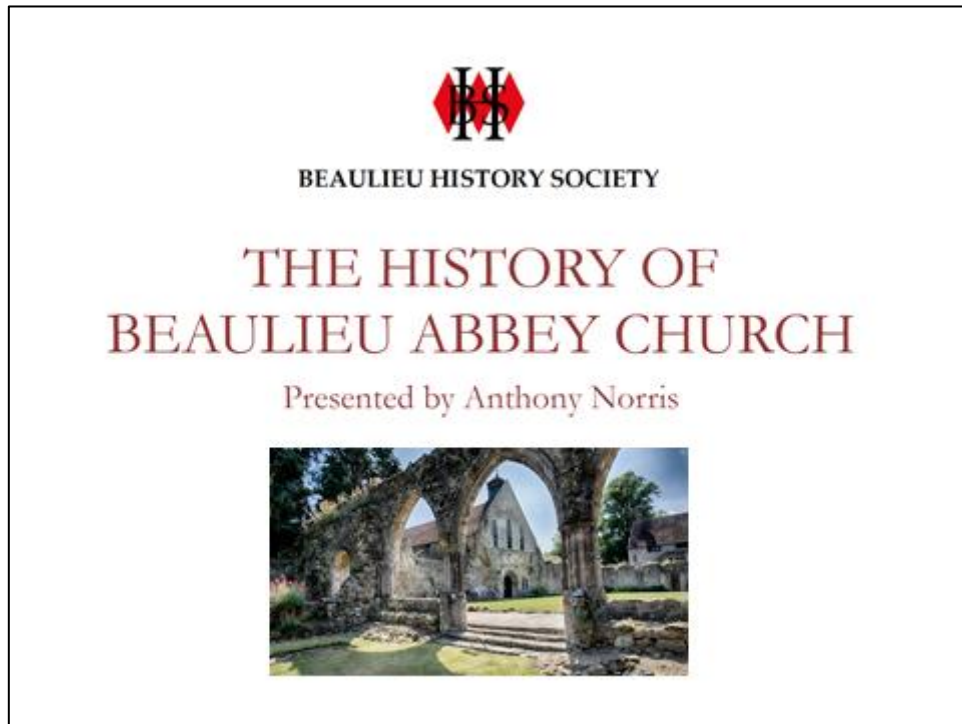


THE HISTORY OF BEAULIEU ABBEY CHURCH

Beneath is, in its entirety, the talk given by Anthony Norris to the Beaulieu History Society on Friday May 20th 2016. The talk was illustrated with slides and the format below is such that beneath each slide is the commentary given while the slide was visible to the audience.



Good Evening.

My name is Anthony Norris and I have been involved with the Beaulieu Abbey Church for many years.

At the outset might I express my appreciation to Ken Robinson who has helped with the slide show and to Susan Tomkins, the Estate Archivist, who has provided me with some early pictures of the church.

PART 1



THE ROOF BOSSES

During many sermons, I have had the opportunity to survey the architecture of the interior of this building and in particular the roof bosses.



**WILLIAM OF
WYKEHAM**

KING RICHARD II

**POPE
BONIFACE IX**

I have had the opportunity to be looked down upon by King Richard II, Pope Boniface IX and William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester. The wagon shaped ceiling was put in place at the tail end of the 14th Century, hence these representations.

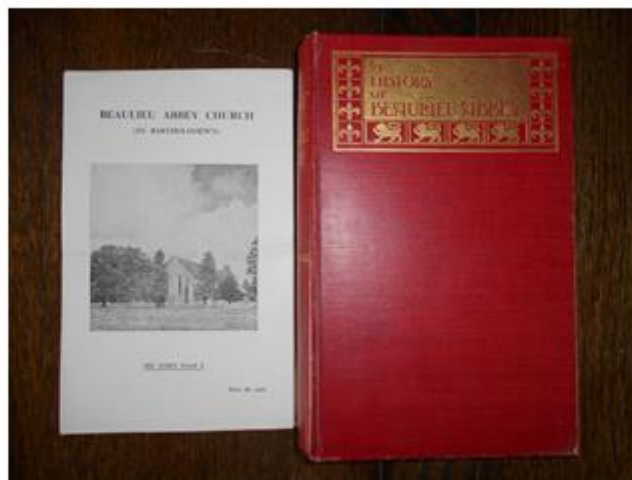
My interest in History has led to me posing many questions concerning the church to which I have endeavoured to find answers.



MY COPY OF THE BEAULIEU RECORD

With any question concerning the Beaulieu Abbey Church I have immediately consulted my Beaulieu Bible, of course I refer to Captain Widnell's 'Beaulieu Record', written in the 1960s, in which he catalogues much of the history of the church since the Dissolution.

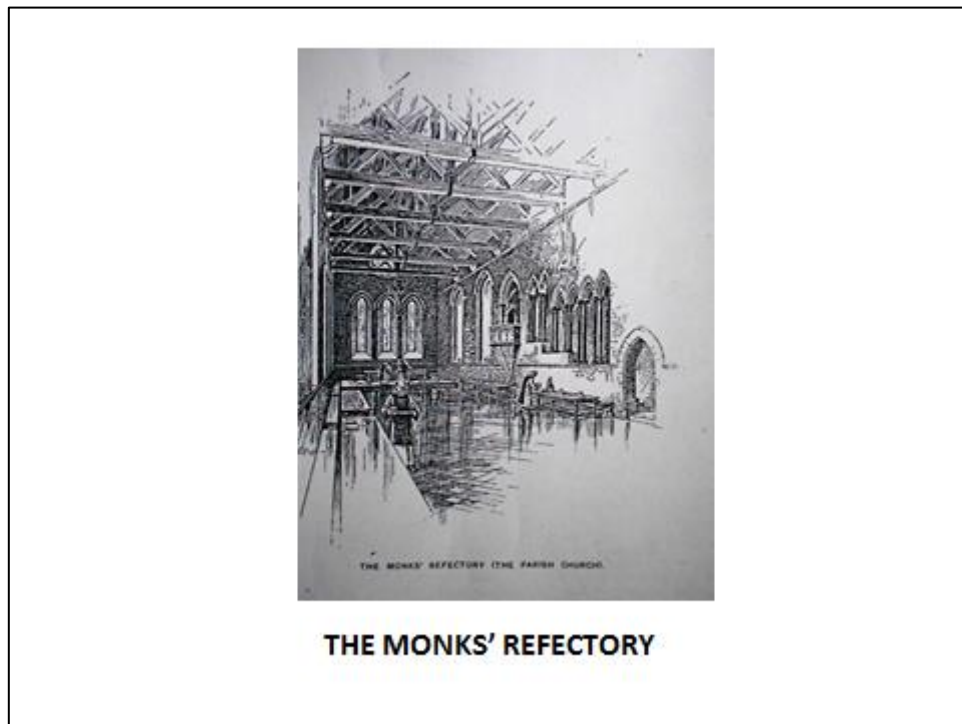
Anyone interested in the chronological history of the church would find most answers there.



BOOKS ON BEAULIEU

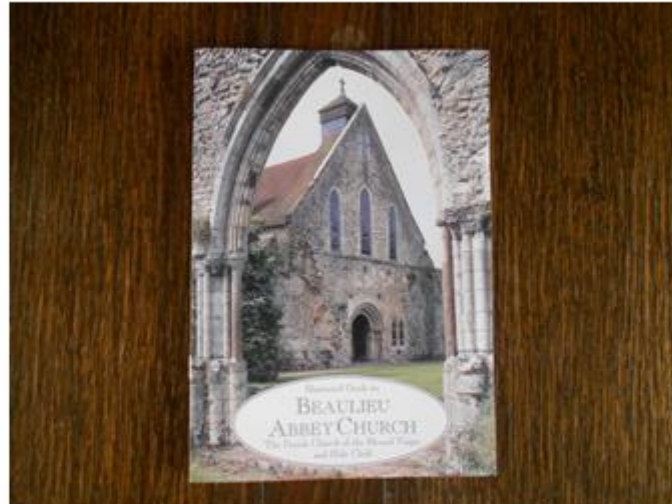
Indeed Captain Widnell wrote the first guide-book of the Abbey Church in 1956.

In 1911 Sir James Fowler, the Warden of the Abbey, produced a book entitled 'A History of Beaulieu Abbey'. This may be considered the definitive book on the history of the Abbey.



The illustrations in this book were provided by Mr Ferdinand Fissi and included one of the Abbey Church which, of course in those times was the Monks' Refectory. These conjectural drawings provide us with a very good idea of how the Refectory looked.

So from about 1227 until 1538 this is probably how the present Abbey Church looked. I do have issues with two aspects of the drawing but Mr Fissi was not fortunate to have all the information at his fingertips that I now have. The issues concern the pillars and the arch at the entrance to the arcade and will become evident later.



GUIDE BOOK pre 2014

You should all have in your possession an 'Illustrated Guide to Beaulieu Church'; the recent changes to the church, instigated by the previous incumbent, have rendered this booklet obsolete. However, most of its contents are accurate and its photographs do show how the church looked in 2014. The main change I refer to is in the central recess behind the altar where a bas-relief, which has now appeared on the West wall, was replaced by a cross. More about this later.

Likewise the Sanctuary Lamp kindly donated in 1889 by Lord Henry Scott as a 'Thank You' for his safe return home after spending time away recovering from illness. It is no longer a Sanctuary Lamp with originally a candle, but more recently a light bulb, to provide permanent light. It has been moved adjacent to the pulpit where it is very difficult to replace the bulb, which has now blown. We are still awaiting its replacement. Hopefully in the near future it will be returned to its rightful place.

Incidentally, if you are interested in a particular piece of the church furniture and its history, if you look hard enough you will find it explained on a plaque or similar. Might I cite as an example, the wrought-iron screen separating the nave from the chancel.

When was that put in place and by whom? I expect all of you at some time have climbed the two steps into the Chancel but have you seen the brass plaque by the left gate...



JOHN FLEURET'S PLAQUE

'To the greater glory of God. This screen was presented to the church of Beaulieu by John Fleuret of Forest Lodge, Hythe, Easter 1897 in the 60th Year of the reign of her Majesty Queen Victoria'; It was designed by Sir Arthur Blomfield and this name will appear frequently in the context of the design of the furniture of the church [and also alterations to Palace House].

What about the history of this lectern?



THE LECTERN

Along its edge we read 'To the Glory of God and the Honour of his Holy Word, Easter 1903' It was given anonymously but we believe it was given by Miss Bacchus of Whitehall.

So it's all there if you look closely enough.

So it is time to start... Time for a sermon I think... Of course, this must be spoken from the pulpit where, in pre-dissolution times the monks were read bible or religious passages while they ate in silence. So there will be a short delay while Christopher Hampton



CHRISTOPHER
HAMPTON

ascends the steps in the arcade to the pulpit where he will give his sermon.

(from the pulpit) The text for my sermon is the last verse of the first chapter of the book of John: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter, ye shall see heaven open, and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the son of man.'

Words of great assertion, and therefore of great importance. What can more import us, that were exiled out of Paradise, and bequeathed to the earth than have heaven open? That were sequestered and retired from the society of Angels, than to have their sweet haunts again, and their ministry too? Than to have ingress and egress, and familiar intercourse with God.'

Thus starts the sermon preached by Christopher Hampton from this pulpit on August 9th 1609 in the presence of Henry, 3rd Earl of Southampton



**CHRISTOPHER
HAMPTON**



**HENRY, 3rd EARL
OF SOUTHAMPTON**

and his Majesty King James 1st.



**CHRISTOPHER
HAMPTON**



**HENRY, 3rd EARL
OF SOUTHAMPTON**



KING JAMES 1st

(walking down arcade steps to the lectern) Christopher Hampton was the Chaplain to Henry, 3rd Earl of Southampton who, although being imprisoned by Queen Elizabeth 1st, was released when King James 1st ascended the throne and resumed his place at Court. King James 1st made many visits to Beaulieu, usually staying in Palace House; his visits were mainly for his passion, hunting. His stays were usually in August and he visited the Abbey church and attended services on at least two occasions, but probably many more. Indeed as well as August 9th, he attended a service at the

church on August 31st 1609, for which, also, the sermon is preserved. One can imagine the church being packed with his considerable entourage as well as the prominent persons of the area.

We are fortunate that Christopher Hampton wrote a book in which he included his sermons. He later became Archbishop of Armagh.

King Charles 1st visited six times between 1625 and 1631, also for hunting, though no definitive records exist of visits to the Abbey Church though they were quite likely.



KING JAMES 1st

Returning to the early visits of King James 1st; on 20th February 1608 he granted a charter to Henry, 3rd Earl of Southampton, respecting rights and privileges within the Manors of Beaulieu and Titchfield and gave the right to hold a weekly market every Thursday but also a fair 'at aforesaid town of Bewley in the vigil and of the day of the feast and of the day after the feast of St. Bartholomew the Apostle every year holden for the same three days.'

The Feast of St. Bartholomew was on September 4th, and that was one of the two Beaulieu fair days down to the date when, early in the 20th Century, Henry 1st Baron Montagu of Beaulieu closed the fair on account of the perpetual riots and rowdiness. The straw that broke the camel's back was the fact that he gave all his workmen the day off and they didn't go to the fair!

In view of the fact that the proper name of the Beaulieu Church was St. Bartholomew, it is significant that the date chosen for the fair should be that very day.

So the questions are, why, and when, was the dedication of the church to St. Bartholomew decided?

What do we know about St. Bartholomew?

Bartholomew was one of the 12 Apostles; Bartholomew preached the Gospel in India and went to Greater Armenia and brought Christianity to Armenia in the 1st Century.



ST BARTHOLOMEW

He was martyred in Armenia, flayed alive and crucified. The account of St Bartholomew being skinned alive is often represented in works of art and consequently he is often shown with a large knife, holding his own skin.



ST BARTHOLOMEW ST THOMAS

Various parts of his body were apparently preserved and his skull was venerated in Frankfurt Cathedral and it was well known that, as late as the fourteenth Century an arm of St. Bartholomew was kept in a silver chest on the High Altar at Beaulieu. The celebrated medieval historian, Dr. Rose Graham wrote ‘... there stood on the high altar an image of the Virgin Mary wearing a silver-

gilt crown set with precious stones: a gold shrine and a silver chest containing the arm of St. Bartholomew.’

The arm of St. Bartholomew was given to Canterbury Cathedral by Queen Emma, wife of King Canute, in the 11th Century. As late as 1099 it was still there.

Monasteries traditionally held relics from the Holy Land which would be kept on altars or stored in aumbry and be brought out on special occasions, and carried in processions.

It is most likely then that the Arm was one of the Relics from the Holy Land brought to the Abbey at its foundation. It should be remembered that Beaulieu Abbey was destined to be the largest Abbey in the country at the time.

I would expect such an important relic to be jealously guarded and the monks would be very reluctant to give it up. Moreover there does not appear to be any documentary evidence to suggest that the Chest containing the arm was taken from the Abbey at any time. In fact, further references are non-existent.

This begs the question, what happened at the dissolution? What happened to the image of the Virgin Mary with the silver gilt crown which adorned the High Altar? Suspicions that it was thrown into Sowley Pond to avoid it falling into the hands of Henry VIIIth proved unfounded following the draining of the pond in the early years of the 20th Century. As regards the silver chest – Where is it? If it was hidden, it’s probably still there.

The grave of King Richard 3rd was discovered in Leicester recently, 500 years after his death. One wonders whether secrets still lie beneath Beaulieu Abbey waiting to be revealed... Perhaps it is time to get our metal detectors out!

The association of the Abbey to St. Bartholomew does lead one to think that this could be the reason for the dedication of the church to this saint, at some time, and probably during the time of James 1st.

It is believed that, almost immediately after the dissolution the present church was used by the villagers. A sentence in the will of Richard Bromall of Beaulieu in 1540, contains the bequest “item to the newe church of Beaulieu, a yereling”. Also, the will of Richard Elyott refers to “paryssche church of our Blessed Lady in Bewley.”

So, almost immediately after the Dissolution this building became the parish church.

References to any dedication are infrequent, the church usually being referred to as the ‘Parish Church of Beaulieu’.



1868

The earliest I can find of a dedication to St. Bartholomew is in Kelly's Directory of 1847, and the Ordnance Survey map of 1868 refers to it as St. Bartholomew's Church.

However I would suspect its dedication was much earlier in the light of the association of St. Bartholomew to Beaulieu and in 1608, King James 1st giving the right to a fair on St. Bartholomew's Day.

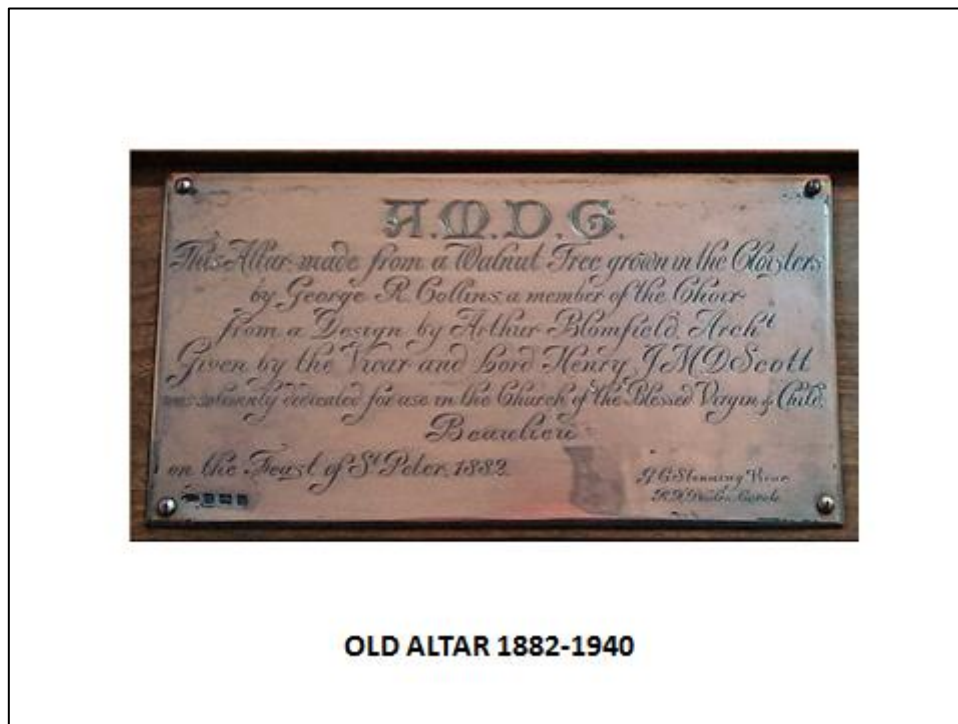
So when did the dedication change?

Kelly's directory of 1880 still refers to it as St. Bartholomew's church.



OLD ALTAR 1882-1940

Now, in 1882, a new wooden altar was made for the church and until 1940 took pride of place in the Chancel. It is now in the gallery forming the Altar of the St. John's Chapel.



OLD ALTAR 1882-1940

It bears a silver plaque carrying the initials and words:

A.M.D.G. This altar made, from a walnut tree grown in the cloisters, by George R. Collins a member of the choir, from a design by Arthur Blomfield Arch^t. Given by the Vicar and Lord Henry J M D Scott, was solemnly dedicated for use in the Church of the Blessed Virgin and Holy Child, Beaulieu, On the Feast of St. Peter 1882. [June 29th] Signed: G.C. Stenning [Vicar]; R.F. Powles [Curate].

The initials A.M.D.G. are the initials of the latin phrase 'Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam' which I believe means 'For the greater glory of God.'

It seems logical to me that, if something as important as the change in dedication is to be made, there must be something physical to commemorate it. I believe that this is the evidence that it was in 1882 that the designation changed, though, strangely, there are no newspaper reports. I suspect that it was the beliefs of the Vicar, George Stenning, and the Curate, an increasingly influential Robert Powles, that persuaded Lord Henry to agree to changing the dedication to the Blessed Virgin and Holy Child.



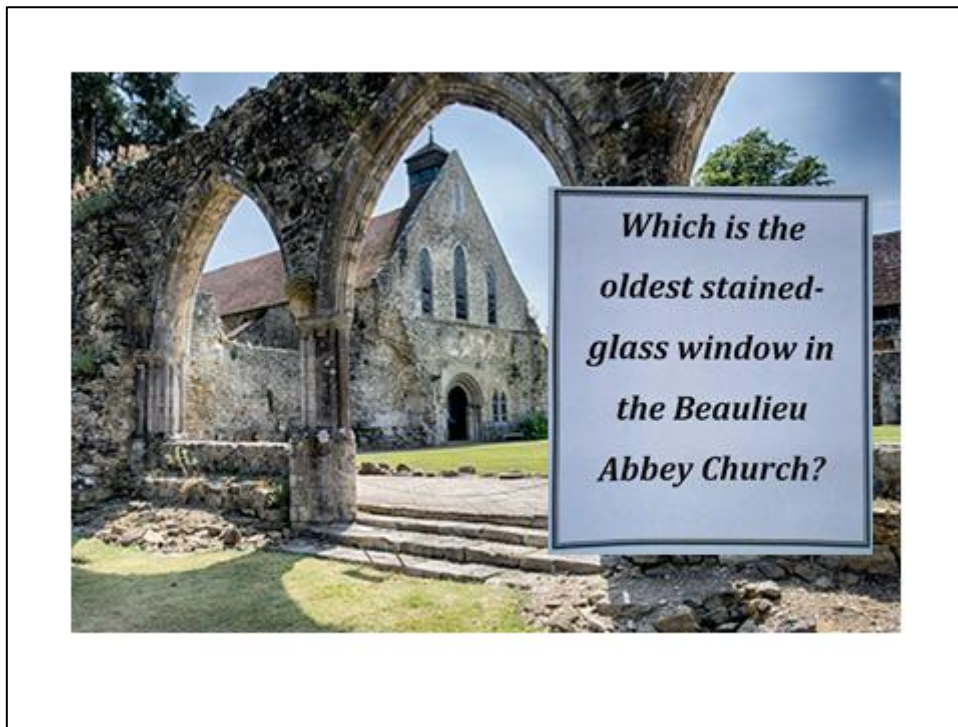
SIR ARTHUR BLOMFIELD

It is worth mentioning at this point, the celebrated Victorian Architect, Sir Arthur Blomfield, who designed many of the alterations of the church; we have already met the iron screen, designed by him; likewise the altar, but he also designed



WALKER'S ORGAN

the casement of the organ, as well as the pews in which you are all sitting [you might be thinking ... he's got a lot to answer for!]



Let us now spend a few minutes looking at the windows of the church.

Since until 1939 it was a private church it is not surprising that many of the stained glass windows reflect events in the lives of the Montagu family. The windows at the South and North ends commemorate Lord John Montagu. Those at the South end his 21st birthday in 1887 and those at the North end, his life. Those at the North end are worthy of a visit as one can appreciate the full beauty of the stained glass. I do, often, as I am ringing the bell, which incidentally dates from 1655. Two of the windows on the East wall commemorate the lives of Lord Henry Montagu and his infant son James Francis, who incidentally was the first member of the Montagu family to be buried in their private cemetery, in what was originally the Monk's Vestry. Directly opposite, on the West wall, is the window commemorating the life of Lady Wharnccliffe, Lord Henry's mother-in-law.

However I would like to spend a few minutes answering a popular question that visitors to the church ask me.

And that is... Which is the oldest stained glass window in the church?

As the church was originally a Cistercian refectory it is not surprising that there were no stained glass windows before the dissolution. In fact we have to wait until Victorian times.

Many think that the stained glass windows in the arcade are some of the oldest and, indeed they are. Helpfully, the date of their installation appears at the bottom of one of them, 1864



ARCADE WINDOW

and on another, the company who provided them, O'Connells of London.



ST PETER ST PAUL

The most beautiful are those of Peter and Paul behind the pulpit but unfortunately are difficult to see from the nave of the church. The windows in the arcade are, as one descends, of St. Augustin holding the flaming Sacred Heart; St Bernard with crook and Bishop Montagu.



BISHOP MONTAGU

Bishop Montagu is of interest because of the name. Bishop Montagu, who lived from 1568-1618 was the son of Sir Edward Montagu of Boughton whose eldest son became 1st Baron Montagu of Boughton. The family tree leads directly down to the 3rd Duke of Buccleuch and hence to the present Montagu family.

Bishop Montagu became the 1st Master of Sidney Sussex College Cambridge, was Bishop of Bath and Wells from 1608-1616 and then Bishop of Winchester until his death in 1618. He was very influential in the time of King James 1st, edited the collected works of King James 1st, and is believed to have been one of the translators of the King James Version of the Bible, published in 1611.



1860 WINDOW

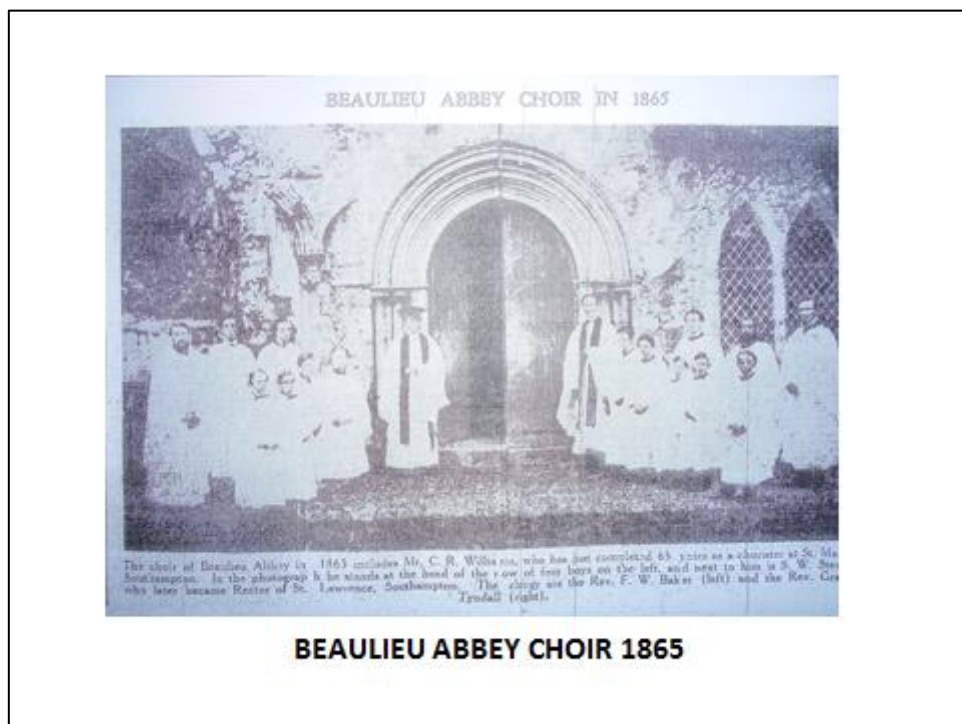
However these windows are predated by the most southerly window in the west wall, stained glassed in memory of the first wife of Rev. Frederick Walter Baker, the incumbent from 1847 until 1869.

He married Lucy Woodward in October 1841 but the marriage did not produce any children.

Lucy Baker died on the 30th March 1858 and her loss was reflected in the following report in the *Hampshire Advertiser* of April 3rd 1858: 'On the 30th ult. at Beaulieu Rectory; after a short illness wife of the Rev. F. W. Baker. Her uniform kindness to the poor; her indefatigable exertions for the general good of the parish; and the very lively interest which she always took in the schools, will cause her loss to be long and deeply lamented.' This window, the first to be stained-glass was a memorial to Lucy and is dated 1860.

It was beautified in 1951 in memory of Edward Pleydell-Bouverie, the second husband of Pearl Pleydell-Bouverie who many will recognise as the widow of Lord John, 2nd Baron Montagu, who died in 1929, and whose memorial tablet is on the East wall.

The Rev. Frederick Walter Baker had a significant influence on the life of the parish from the day of his arrival following the departure of Rev. William Tyrrell in 1847, until his retirement in 1869.



The oldest photograph of the Church Choir dates from 1865 and shows the Rev. Frederick Walter Baker, wearing his mortar board, together with the choir. Unfortunately the original has disappeared from the church [likewise the photographs of the choir in 1887 and 1897.] It was only by chance that I discovered this photograph in the Evening Echo of sometime in the 1930s. Unfortunately the reproduction is not very good.



A few years back, Mary Lowe gave me a number of old large photographs of Beaulieu and amongst them was one of the choir of 1903. This is the oldest which now exists. [Incidentally we see the bejewelled processional cross which stands behind me. Its history is uncertain but almost certainly it was presented to the Church by Lord Henry Scott sometime in the late nineteenth century].

Frederick Baker oversaw the excavations and restorations of the Abbey under the direction of the 5th Duke of Buccleuch in 1863 when all the foundations of the old Abbey were traced and preserved. In addition, in 1856 he supervised major work in the church and the replacing of a number of the roof bosses, as well as many of the changes to the church which had been made in 1840 by the Rev. William Tyrrell. These will be discussed in the second part.

The Beaulieu Record recalls that the Rev. Baker paid one third of the cost of restoring Mary Do's monument in 1857. He also paid for the first organ to be installed in the church in 1858.



NELSON'S BULLET

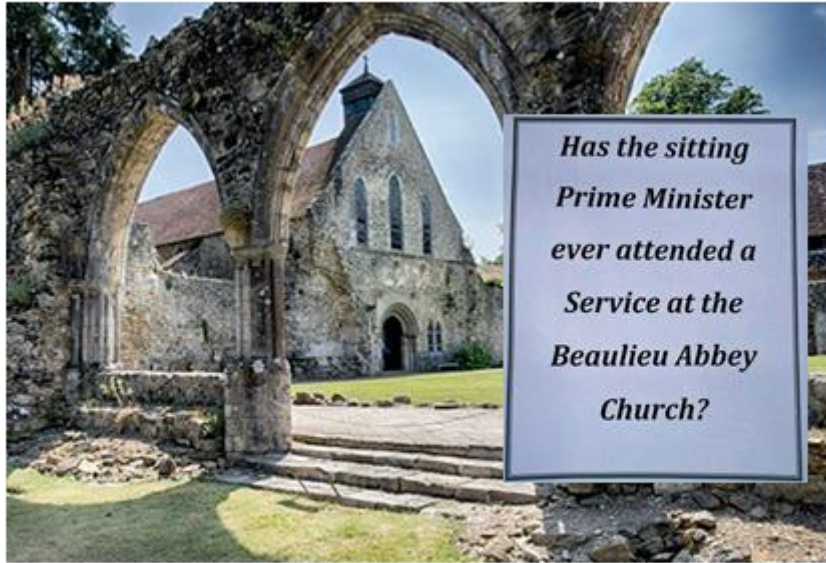
Frederick Walter Baker's mother was the sister of Sir William Beatty, the surgeon of Lord Nelson on the Victory. It is recorded that following the death of Nelson, Sir William Beatty retained the fatal bullet and had it mounted. On his death in 1842, the bullet passed into the ownership of Rev. Frederick Walter Baker, then Vicar of Bathwick.

He didn't keep it but immediately presented it to Queen Victoria. It now forms part of the Royal Collection and is on display in Windsor Castle.

Rev. Baker retired in 1869 and moved to Hove though kept in contact and returned many times.

When you arrived you were presented with a copy of the Church Guide which had been in circulation for many years and has since, in many ways become obsolete due to changes in the church, most recently by Rev. Ryc. Smith who replaced Martin Travers' bas-relief behind the altar, as can be seen on the back page of the booklet, by a red and gold cross.

However this booklet is, in many respects, a useful document as it describes, and illustrates, many of the features of the church, which are still present. I include in this the stained glass windows and their description which negates the need for me to talk further about them.



At the start of the talk I referred to occasions when the monarch, King James 1st, attended services here. It set me thinking – has the sitting Prime Minister ever attended a church service here?



?

Trawling through old newspapers my question was answered. I shouldn't have been surprised when I discovered the answer. Many will remember that Hon. John Montagu, was the M.P. for the New Forest from 1892 until 1905.

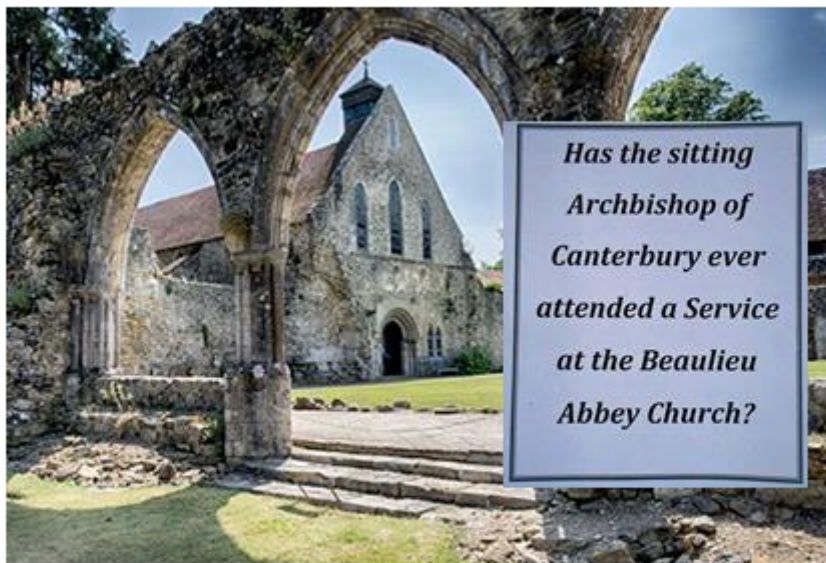


ARTHUR BALFOUR

On Friday October 28th 1904, the Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, spent the weekend at Beaulieu after having addressed a Conservative meeting on the Friday evening at Southampton. On the Sunday morning he, together with his hosts, attended morning service in the Abbey Church and it is recorded that, Lady Cecil Scott Montagu, the wife of Hon. John Montagu, and a fine musician, composed a tune for 'Guide me O though Great Redeemer' which was used during the service.

N.B. After Arthur Balfour's visit he was ill for a week – what did they feed him in Palace House I wonder?! ...

I cannot find any other references of Prime Ministers visiting the Abbey Church.



*Has the sitting
Archbishop of
Canterbury ever
attended a Service
at the Beaulieu
Abbey Church?*

So I then searched around to find any reference to the sitting Archbishop of Canterbury attending a service here.



TUBBY CLAYTON'S PLAQUE AND LAMP

Erected in 1984, in memory of the founder of Toc H who lived in Beaulieu as a boy, is the 'Tubby' Clayton Memorial.



THE REVEREND PHILIP CLAYTON

Here is a photograph of 'Tubby'.



JUNE 3rd 1984

The memorial tablet was dedicated by his Grace Dr. Robert Runcie, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, on June 3rd 1984.



JUNE 3rd 1984

In this photograph are some familiar figures which I recognise...Lord Edward Montagu in the suit at the front; either side of Robert Runcie are the two church-wardens, Pearl Pleydell-Bouverie, Lord Edward Montagu's mother, and Fred Norris, my uncle. The Rev. Terry Abernethy, the incumbent,

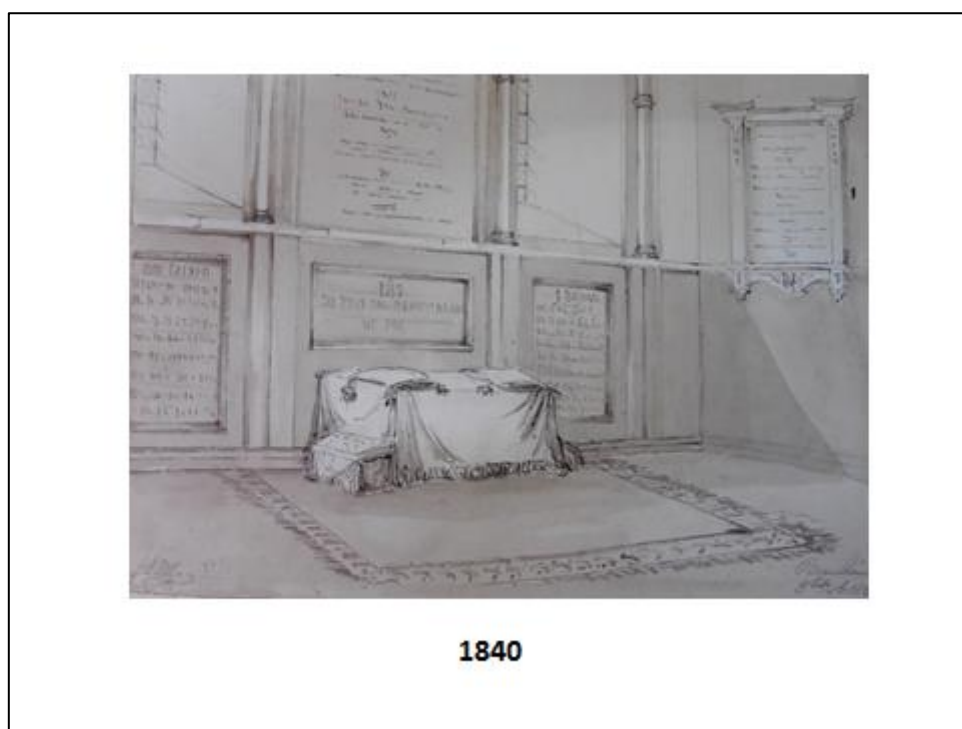
is wearing the beautiful cope which has been worn by the priests for over a century; it was provided by a benefactor to Rev. Powles sometime during his incumbency.

Robert Runcie was friends with the Leach family of Ladycross Lodge; when visiting he would often attend the Sunday early Morning Communion Service at Buckler's Hard.

I want to now spend a few minutes looking at the Chancel, and specifically, the recess behind the High Altar.

In 1743 a large buttress was placed against the South end of the Church and this covered up a lancet window similar to the two which still remain at the South End of the Church. The corresponding space in the church has been filled in differing ways over the years.

It would appear that prior to the alterations of 1840, which will be discussed later, it was left empty.



As part of the 1840 alterations it was replaced by a large white screen on which was written the Ten Commandments. It is worth noting that, in 1672 a Mr Weddell was paid no less than £3 for 'writing the Commandments and other verses'. This was before the 1743 buttress blocking the central window was built, so these writings would not have been in the same place as after the 1840 alterations. It would be interesting to know on which wall they were written.

Alterations in either 1856 or 1876 led to the sill in front of this space being raised and used as part of the altar, whilst behind was a dark screen.



1909

Following the death of Lord Henry Scott, 1st Baron Montagu of Beaulieu on November 4th 1905, Lord John Montagu, his heir, commissioned Charles Sykes to produce a triptych as a memorial to his father and which would be placed in the space behind the altar. The subject chosen was 'The Descent from the Cross' and was put in place in April 1909.

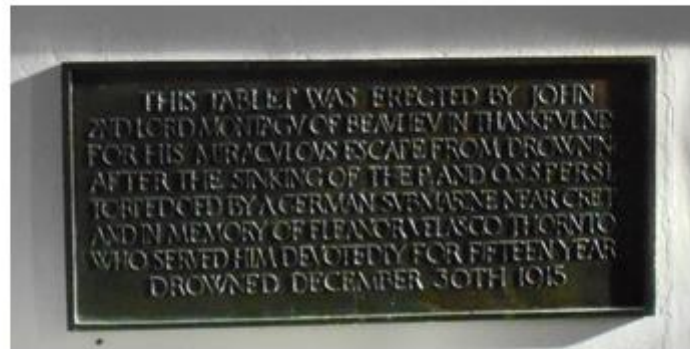


ELEANOR THORNTON (left) and CHARLES SYKES (centre)

Charles Sykes was an English Sculptor who designed the 'Spirit of Ecstasy' mascot which appears on the bonnet of all the Rolls Royce cars.

From 1902 he was the illustrator for Lord John Montagu's magazine, 'The Car'. The model for the 'Spirit of Ecstasy' was Eleanor Velasco Thornton who was Lord John's secretary and mistress.

Eleanor Thornton was drowned in the sinking of the SS Persia in 1915, but Lord John survived. He was missing for four days before his life-raft was discovered and in the meantime, the Times had published his obituary. So Lord John was able to return and read his own obituary!



ELEANOR THORNTON PLAQUE

The plaque on the East Wall, designed by Lady Shackleton, is a lasting memorial to Eleanor Thornton.



THE BRONZE MADONNA

During Charles Sykes stay in 1909 he also designed the bronze Madonna which fills in the niche on the South wall of the Gatehouse, now Palace House.

Charles Sykes' Triptych remained in place until the Rev. Frazer Powles' successor, the Rev. Cyril Pearson, took it down in 1940, and replaced it, in the central recess, with a bas-relief by Martin Travers, 'Reliefs' – the Madonna and Child. The Dove was added by Lady Armstrong in 1944.



RYC'S CROSS 2014

This remained in place until the previous incumbent, the Rev. Ryc Smith, with the almost unanimous support of the Parochial Church Council, agreed to remove it to its present site, and in the central recess there should be the red and gold cross which is there now; the wood from the cross was taken from the old war memorial in the churchyard which of course was replaced some years ago by the present stone cross.

We will now take a short break and in the second half we will look at the results of recent research in the church.

PART 2



LORD MONTAGU OF BOUGHTON

We are now in 1839; Lord Montagu of Boughton the landowner, the first to use Palace House as his home. He opened the first school in Beaulieu which is still on its original site; provided piped water from Abbotts Well to the village; built a new Parsonage, as well as being a generous benefactor to the church.

So we are back in 1839, 21st June to be precise. The Rev. Henry Adams had died on 27th April and



REV. WILLIAM TYRRELL [YOUNG AND OLD]

Rev. William Tyrrell had been appointed his successor. Lord and Lady Montagu of Boughton met the Rev. William Tyrrell at Basingstoke and they travelled to Beaulieu by road-coach together. Imagine the conversation between them; Lord Montagu telling him all about the church and, probably now, after 49 years of incumbency of Henry Adams, the need for some updating of the church.

Arriving for the first time, this is what he would have seen.



1834



1834

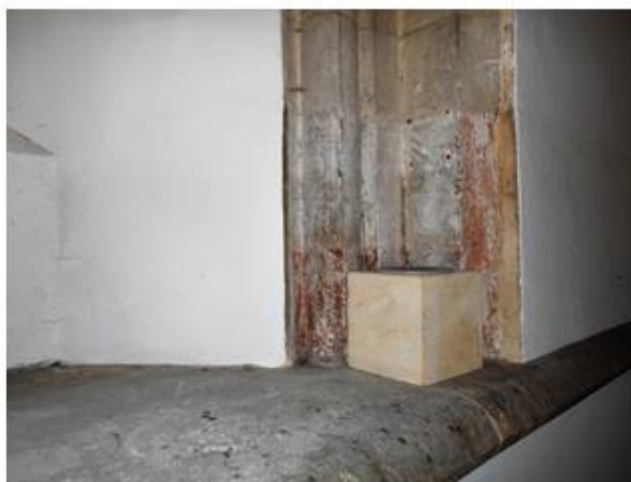


1834

We are fortunate that some drawings of the church dated August 13th 1834 have survived and they give us a very good impression of the church that would have greeted the Rev. William Tyrrell.

Obviously it was not to the Rev. William Tyrrell's liking and he proposed changes to the church.

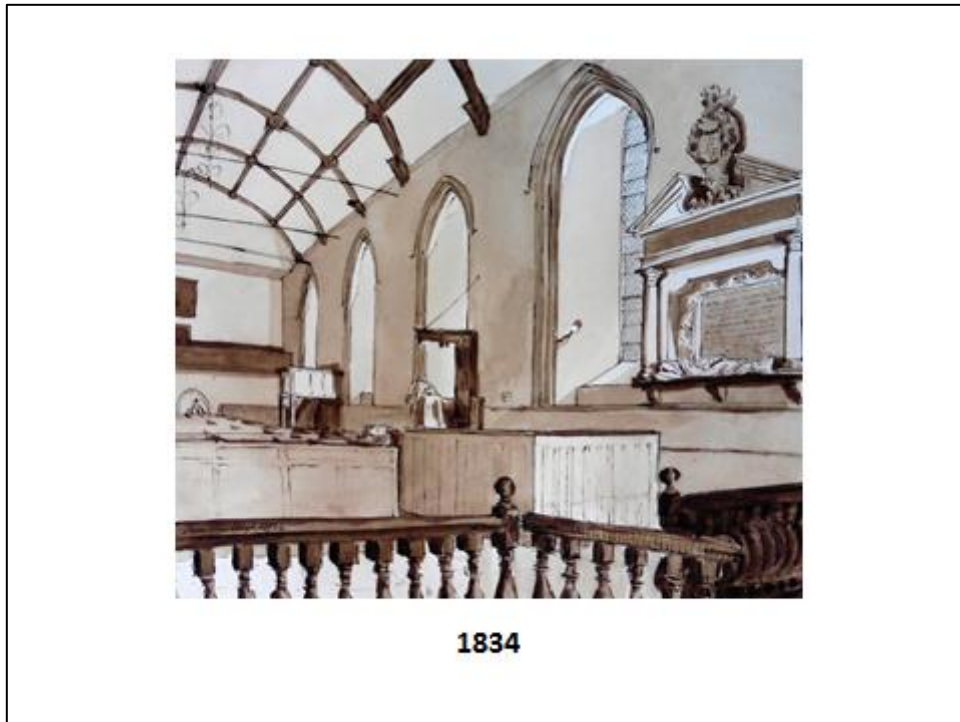
In the second part of the talk I would like to share with you one or two aspects of these changes that have only recently been discovered, before looking at later changes.



RED WALL MOULDINGS

I have for many months been baffled at the appearance, all the way round the church of red mouldings above the sills. The only explanation that I could find for this was if the string around the church, and probably the floor, had been first raised and then lowered. When and why was a mystery, though it was well known, and documented that the nave of the church was lowered in 1896.

So the question is, when was the church floor raised?



So we have the earliest drawings of the interior of the church drawn on August 13th 1834.

At this stage it might be worth noting the Rev. Henry Adams had been curate, and for all intents and purposes, priest from 1790 and so this was the interior of the church he administered. He was buried May 4th 1839.

On his death the Rev. William Tyrell was appointed by Lord Montagu of Boughton [William Tyrell had been at St. John's College, Cambridge at the same time as the 5th Duke of Buccleuch, Lord Montagu of Boughton's nephew. This probably explains his appointment.]

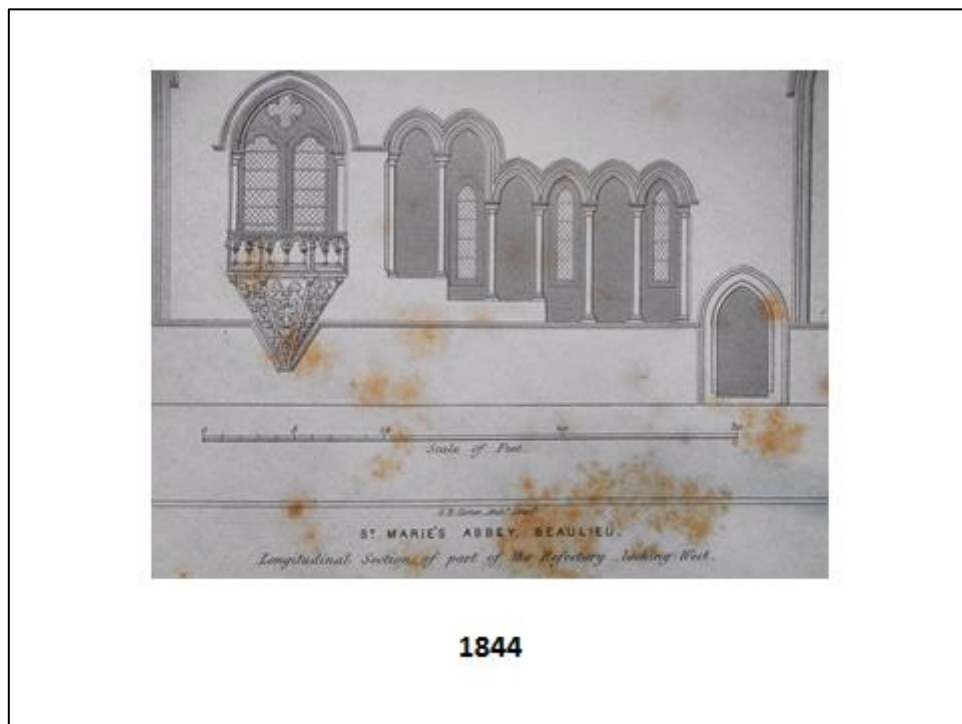
Imagine his surprise at the state of the old church and so he immediately persuades Lord Montagu that it needs updating.

The *Hampshire Advertiser* of December 30th 1839, reports the following... 'Lord Montagu, the principal landowner of the neighbourhood, with his accustomed liberality [he opened the Beaulieu School on its present site and provided water to the village by piping it from Abbots Well], has presented a sum of 300 pounds for the laudable purpose of repairing that ancient church. The munificent donation was announced at his lordship's annual audit dinner, by his steward, Mr. Thomas Cheyney. The Rev. Mr. Tyrell, M.A. from St. John's College, Cambridge, the respected incumbent of the parish has also given 50 pounds; the parishioners have therefore only to raise the small sum of 250 pounds, which they unanimously resolved upon subscribing immediately.' [£600 then = £48,400 in 2014].

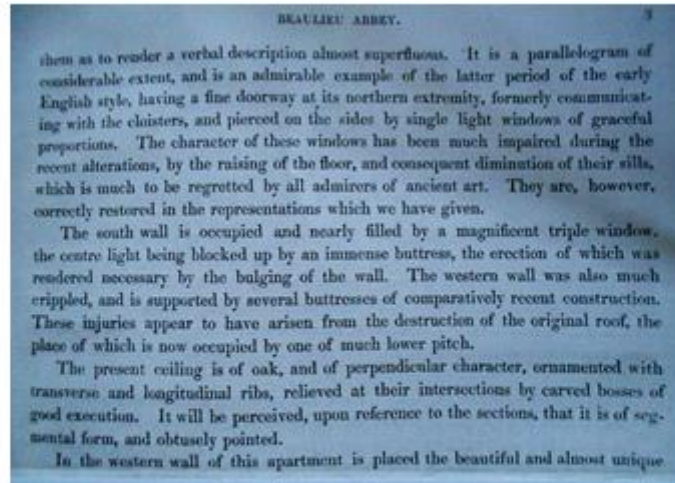
This was an expensive time for Lord Montagu of Boughton for the Parsonage where Henry Adams lived [on the site of the present Parsons Mead] had been in disrepair and so was demolished. A new home for the incumbent had to be built and it was so built, to the instructions of William Tyrrell at the top of the High Street, and it is now called The Lodge, the home of Lord Montagu. It was totally financed by Lord Montagu of Boughton.

What were the proposed changes? Church papers from December 17th 1839 shed some light. 'At a public vestry of this Parish holden this day in pursuance of public notice for that purpose given, it is resolved that it will be proper to erect a new gallery on the north end of the parish church, also to renew, make an alteration in the Chancel and Communion, alter the casement of the windows, add another door covered in green baize to the entrance, whitewash paint and otherwise repair the said church.'

It is only very recently that I read a booklet, by Owen Carter showing John Weale's drawings of the church on July 1st 1844.



His scale drawings are worth looking at, though that of the pulpit and arcade are drawn as he thought they originally looked like, rather than what he saw in 1844. Notice the width of the steps in the arcade 1:2:3.



OWEN CARTER'S DESCRIPTION OF BEAULIEU ABBEY CHURCH

In the introduction the following paragraph is written...

The church is 'a parallelogram of considerable extent, and is an admirable example of the latter period of the early English style, having a fine doorway at its northern extremity, formerly communicating with the cloisters and pierced on the sides by single light windows of graceful proportions. The character of these windows has been much impaired during the recent alterations, by the raising of the floor, and consequent diminution of their sills, which is much regretted by all admirers of ancient art.'

This confirmed my suspicions that the floor of the whole church was raised during the alterations of 1840. In fact it was raised to the height of the present Chancel.

So the next question is... Why did they raise the floor of the church, and why did they raise it to this height?

Move forward to 2014 when the heating in the church was being updated. A passing remark from one of the engineers has, I believe answered the question, and more besides



BURIAL VAULT

While removing the front choir stall and stone slab on the East side to change the pipework half of one end of what was a vault was revealed.



MOLL DO'S MEMORIAL

The arch is directly and symmetrically in front of the Moll Do memorial.

Photographs were taken before the slab and choir stalls were replaced.

Now it is well known that beneath the chancel a significant number of persons have been buried. The parish records tell us that 'Edmond Stansby was buried on the 21st of February 1653/4 in the

Chancel'; also 'Frances Abbot was buried in the Chancel of the Parish Church of Bewley in the year 1654'.



CAPTAIN JOHN WILLIAM'S PLAQUE [DECEMBER 1839]

Reading the memorials in the Church there are a number which refer to the burial in the vault. Might I mention the memorial in the nave to Captain John Williams of Buckler's Hard who died December 22nd 1839 and was buried December 31st 1839. The wording begins... 'In a vault below are deposited the remains of...'



1872

Now, this memorial was originally in the window space in the Chancel as one can see in Lord Henry's drawing of pre 1874. That memorial was moved following the death of James Francis, the infant son of Lord Henry and Lady Cecily Montagu in March 1874 and to whom the stained glass window there is dedicated.

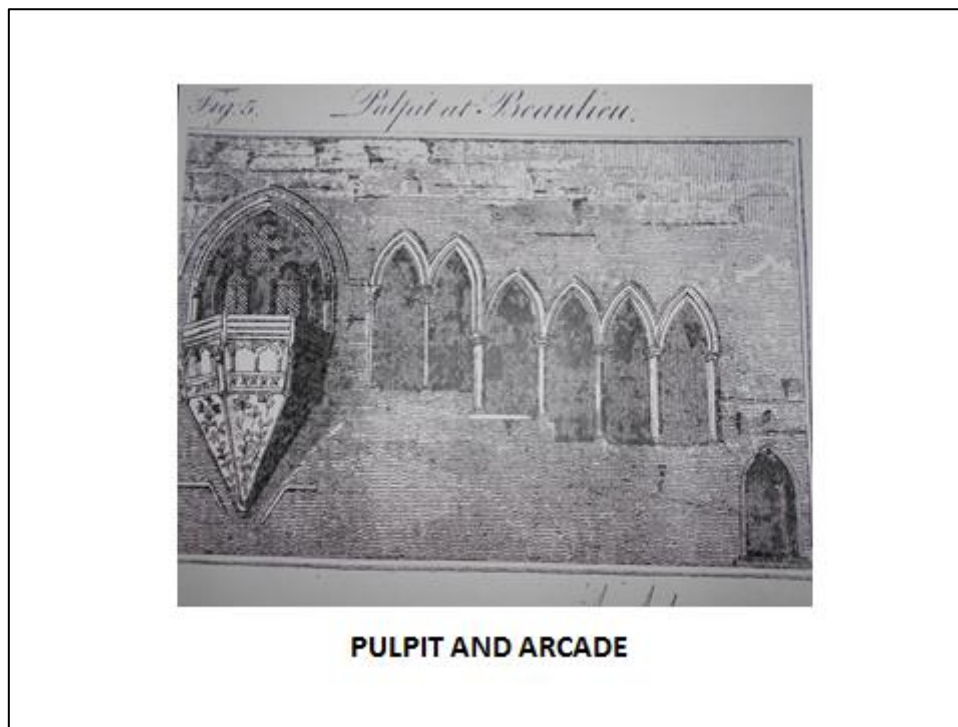
Until recently, I believed that Captain John Williams was the last to be buried in the vault. Incidentally the Rev. Henry Adams who was buried May 4th 1839 was also buried in the vault. His father was the shipbuilder and whose body lies beneath the Chancel, as does his wife.



THE BARNEY FAMILY PLAQUE

Now, I believe Hannah Barney, aged 57 buried April 20th 1840 to be the last. There are no plaques in the chancel of the church after this date which could commemorate burials in the church.

I believe that the floor of the whole church was raised in 1840, and its principal reason was to cover up the entrance to the vault. The peak of the semi-circular vault being just below the floor of the chancel is convincing evidence. Looking at contemporary drawings confirm this.



However the most conclusive evidence is an old drawing which I discovered in the church archives and which must have eluded Capt. Widnell when he wrote *The Beaulieu Record*. It shows the pulpit and arcade *before* the floor was raised. Its date is uncertain; it is obviously taken from a book but the spelling Beaulieu suggests the drawing was made sometime before it appeared in the book. In the 18th Century, Beaulieu was spelt Bewley.

Let us do two measurements:

Firstly, the height from the original floor to the height of the chancel. This can be done by measuring the distance from the bottom of the gully containing the central heating pipe to the floor of the chancel. This is readily done using a bamboo cane which can be passed through the grille concealing the pipe. I will do the measurements close to the chancel steps... The distance is 30" [76 cm].

Secondly, the height from the lowest ledge of the arcade to the apex of the entrance doorway (ignoring the thick border). Using my bamboo cane we see they are about the same... Also 30".

This suggests the whole floor of the church was raised at the same time and the doorway to the arcade raised by the same height as the floor.



1834

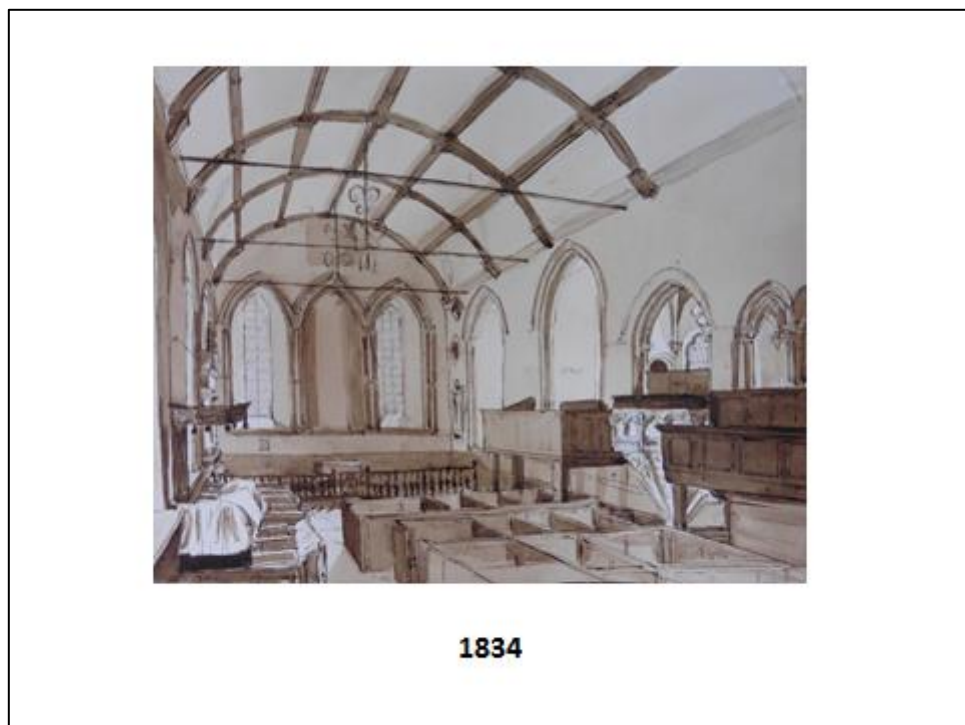
Might I just now revert to the drawing of 1834, before the alterations of 1840. Looking closely at the foreground, is that a trapdoor leading to the vault? A significant part of the archway to the vault must have been visible.

The large rectangle could be the gravestone slab commemorating Susanna Lambert who was buried on February 14th 1654. She was the wife of Richard Lambert, tenant of the mill for 40 years. This slab is now north of the font. There seems also to be another slab to the left. This could be the gravestone slab which is now at the East entrance to the church, though it has eroded so much that to whom it was commemorating cannot be identified. Of course it could be this slab which is in the foreground, with that of Susanna Lambert to the left.

Notice also that the wall tablet commemorating shipbuilder Henry Adams is shown.



Is the archway of the vault hidden behind the barrier?



There are a number of other issues I have concerning these drawings:

1. Where is the font?
2. There is no evidence of The Lord's Prayer, The Ten Commandments or The Creed being displayed as was required. One might think that he had not bothered to include them. However, in the earlier drawing the artist has gone to the trouble of showing the plaque commemorating Henry Adams, not just including the name on the plaque, but also the

writing 'Sacred to the memory of Henry Adams Esq'. This suggests that the artist has included all visible writing.

3. The presence of all the galleries would make the visibility of the altar table very difficult.

4. Is that a pulpit against the East wall? Why have a pulpit there if the services took place at the South end? – it would be behind some of the seated congregation.

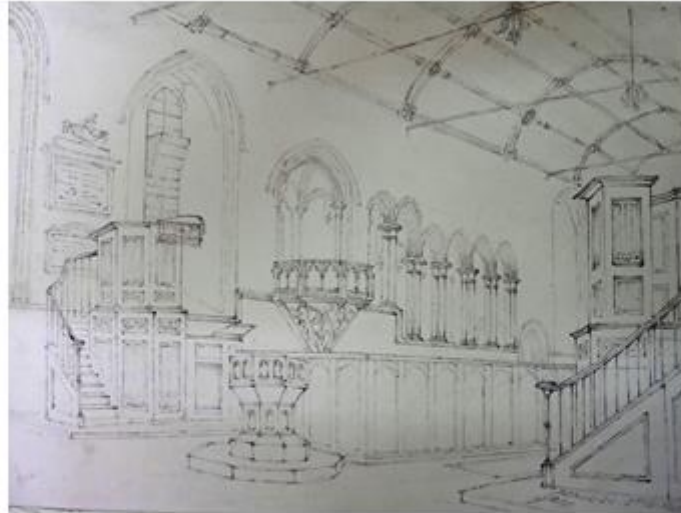
Is it just possible that an altar was used along the East wall as was traditional? Also, notice the box pews; do the seats appear to be the wrong way round?

I suggest, then, that prior to 1840, the church was used East – West.



1840

We are fortunate in that the Rev. G.A. Montgomery made two drawings of the church post the alterations of 1840.



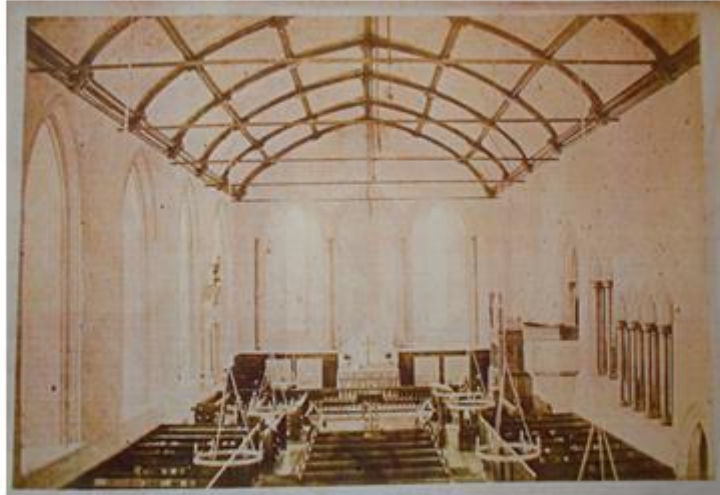
1840

Notice in particular the height of the arch leading to the arcade and also the design – 5 pillars having same length.



1872

If we move forward we could look at the drawing by Lord Henry Scott of the interior of the church dated about 1872...



Pre 1874

and a photograph of about the same time which we will look at again later; they are nothing like the drawings of 1840.

Before we move forward we much celebrate the work of the two main initiators of the first major changes in the church.



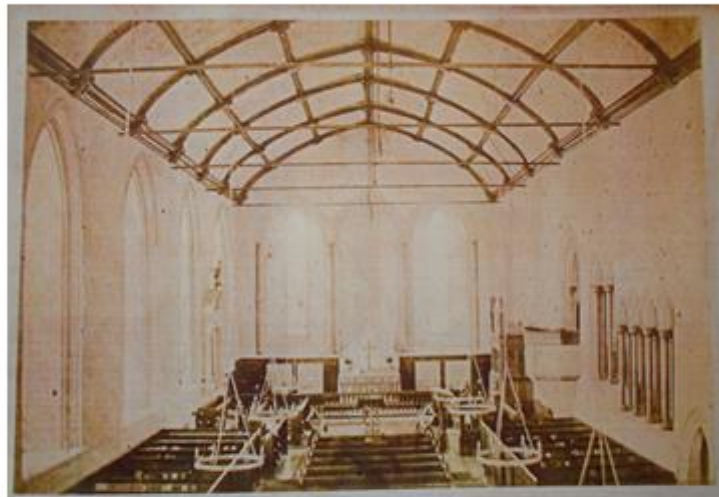
LORD MONTAGU OF BOUGHTON'S TABLET

Lord Montagu of Boughton died in 1845 and he is remembered by the tablet in the Chancel.



WILLIAM TYRRELL'S PLAQUE

In 1847 William Tyrrell was appointed Bishop of Newcastle in Australia, a diocese which covered half of Australia. He died in 1879 and left all his money to the church.



Pre 1874

Now, we know there were major church alterations in 1856 but it is not recorded what exactly was done. By now Rev. William Tyrrell had departed and the Rev. Frederick Walter Baker had replaced him. We can only gain an idea of the changes by looking at the two pictures shown earlier. By now we have the first organ in place; this organ was paid for by Rev. Baker and was installed in 1858.

However, if we look at some of the roof bosses – they are dated 1856; so work on the ceiling must have been done, possibly the bosses which had not deteriorated being repainted and others replaced – look at those with the date 1856; but also those with the B and Q – almost certainly referring to the Duke of Buccleuch and Marquis of Queensbury. Remember, in 1856, the landowner was Walter Francis, the 5th Duke of Buccleuch. I suspect he paid for most of the work.



1876 - 1896

The next changes took place in 1876 while the incumbent was Rev. George Covey Stenning. We do have a number of photographs of the church after these changes, and also a very helpful newspaper report. Quoting from the *Hampshire Advertiser* of June 3rd 1876... 'Among the improvements recently made in Beaulieu Church, the most noticeable are a beautiful stained glass window by Heaton, Cutter and Baynes, in memory of the infant son of Lord and Lady Henry Scott; a very handsome reredos of mosaic work in glass by Messrs. Powell; the new pavement of the sanctuary with tiles which are copied from original Beaulieu Abbey tiles... and the lowering of the chancel windows to their original level when traces of the original colouring were discovered'.

The handsome reredos apparently didn't go down well if one believes the newspaper report in the *Hampshire Telegraph* of October 16th 1878... 'As an example of superfluous decoration, I may mention the Chancel of Beaulieu Church upon the borders of the New Forest. There, in a plain, old-fashioned white-washed church is a grand display of highly-coloured glazed tiles upon the wall behind the altar. I am not surprised that many of the villagers consider this a useless improvement and term it "staring".'



CHANCEL TILES 1876

The pavement in the sanctuary copied from original Beaulieu Abbey tiles is still there.



1893

Amongst the other photographs Mary Lowe gave me was a very good one of the church in 1893. Notice the absence of the organ – it was taken away for restoration.



1897

Lord Henry Scott paid for all the alterations of 1876 and was called on again in 1896 when the nave of the church was lowered by about a foot leaving the Chancel at its original height; this being done no doubt to improve the visibility of the Chancel from the nave.

Also the box pews so loved by Lord Montagu of Boughton were removed and replaced by pews designed by Sir Arthur Blomfield.

This photograph also shows the fine reredos on the South wall, made in 1876, and much derided by the villagers.

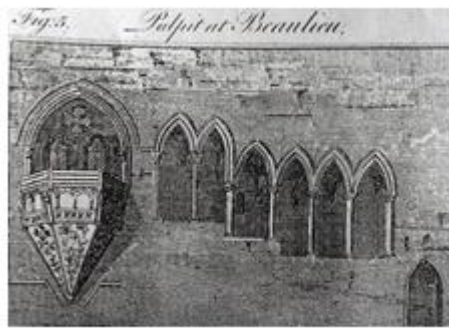
Further major changes did not take place until the retirement of Rev. Powles in 1939. His successor, Rev Cyril Pearson decided to remove Charles Sykes' triptych, Lord Henry Scott's reredos and remove the organ to the back of the church. In place of the triptych he had placed a bas-relief as discussed earlier. The triptych was placed in the Gallery until someone put their foot through it. It was then burnt. A sad end.

The 1950s saw major changes to the arcade when the cast iron pillars of the 1840s were replaced by Portland marble; also the lengths were to be as they were originally, though the early drawing of the pulpit and arcade shown earlier seem to contradict this.



PRESENT VIEW OF THE PULPIT AND ARCADE

So this is what the pulpit and arcade look like now.



VIEWS OF THE PULPIT

We can see how the design of the arcade has changed. Ferdinand Fissi's drawing is inaccurate and the arcade should have the design of the one alongside. The pulpit from 1840 until the 1950s is as in the drawing of 1856 bottom left, and the photograph is as we see the arcade today.

However the main alteration, in 1958, at the instigation of Rev. Samuel Davies was to open up again the North entrance so access to the church could be made directly from the cloisters to the nave.



1950

The only photograph showing the North end of the church prior to these alterations was taken by Pearl Pleydell–Bouverie just before her daughter Caroline’s wedding on February 15th 1950.

When opening up the North End of the church, the staircase to the Gallery was bricked up and until 1965 the only access to the Gallery was via a step-ladder in the present day choir vestry. In 1965 a new stairway was built, and the Gallery Chapel was restored and refurbished. It was consecrated on the Eve of All Saints, 1965, by the Bishop of Winchester and dedicated in honour of St. John the Evangelist.

One final change was the replacing of the bas-relief of Martin Travers by a red and gold cross. Martin Travers ‘Reliefs’ being resited on the West wall opposite the main East door through which the congregation arrive.

So we are now up-to-date. One wonders what changes will take place in the future but one suspects that they will be minor in comparison with those of the previous century. Earlier changes have been financed almost wholly by Lord Montagu of Boughton, Lord Henry, Lord John and Lord Edward Montagu. Now the church is under the ownership of the Diocese of Winchester one wonders whether permission would be given for major changes.

As Beaulieu was a private church until 1939, there have been far more changes than would otherwise have been the case. Clergy came and make persuasive arguments to change the church, in the name of improvement; and the poor landlord had to finance them.

The Parish of Beaulieu must express considerable gratitude to the many generations of the Montagu Family as whenever something needed to be done they were very generous in providing the necessary finance.

I am pleased to say that this still continues.

Thus we now reach 2016 with the church as you see it around you.

We've covered 800 years in 90 minutes; quite an achievement!

And tomorrow, we'll all meet in the cloisters with our metal detectors and see if there are any more surprises awaiting discovery.



BEAULIEU HISTORY SOCIETY

THE HISTORY OF
BEAULIEU ABBEY CHURCH

Presented by Anthony Norris

- thanks to Ken Robinson for help with this presentation

The End