

The Parish of Shebbear

Shebbear was formally called Sepeeberie and afterwards Shaftebeare or Shaftebeare, whence it became Shebbeare, Shebbear. It is frequently mentioned in Domesday Book as furnishing grants of money for the Crusades. The Parish Church is a large and beautiful edifice, capable of accommodating about 500 persons. It was consecrated by Bishop Grandison in November 1358, and dedicated to St. Michael. The bells are six in number, and of fine musical tone. A beautiful Norman arch is the first feature of interest and meets the eye on entering the church, and the pillars and arches of the nave are said to be magnificent specimens of early art. The pulpit is, without doubt, one of the oldest and best in the Diocese; the carved oak being simply unique, and has been most carefully preserved. A handsome stained glass window has recently been placed over the alter, the funds for which were collected by Mrs Earle of Lovercott. The church and churchyard are famous for singular inscription, one of which is the following:- Here lyeth the body of Browne Badcock, son of Thomas Badcock, of this parish, gent who dyed on the 19th October, Anno Domi 1656 Altatis suae 27



Within this bed of dust, sleeps a brother
Who grieving in one head, joy'd in another.
That he exchang'd for this, and now on high
Advanced by the Head lives, ne'er to die.
Earth made him red, ye water made him browne,
Blonde made him White, this colour wonne ye crowne.
He lived so that just men that his name had
No more than one syllable of Bad.
This cock crows hallelujahs, and shall sing
Endless hosannas to the Eternal King.
Let not young saints old devils mortals scare,
Rare fruits soon pluck't young saints soon glorious are.
Christus mehi vita et mori luerum."

The Church patronage was formally vested in in the Abbey of Tor, one of the monasteries suppressed by Henry VIII, and consequently the living became the property of the Crown. One of the best known vicars of Shebbear was William Battishall, whose monument remains in the chancel. He was rejected from his living during the time of the Commonwealth by the celebrated William Morice (whose signature may be seen in the Parish Register) and others of the Parliamentarian party. It appears that the Vicar was greatly loved by his people, and had sufficient influence to become reinstated, though he was much persecuted by "divers fanatics" He held the living through those troubled times, and witnessed the restoration of the Monarchy, dying in the year of the Great fire of London 1666.

Another great Vicar Peter Davey Foulkes who held the benefice for 25 years, and died in 1854. He was universally beloved and his "pious memory" survives to this day. One of his daughters married P A Kingdon Esq., the present Lord of the Manor. There is a large endowment for "repairing and maintaining the Parish church" which dates from the times of James I. In connexion with the large stone in front of the old oak is annually turned by the young men of the village on the eve of the Gunpowder Plot.

The manor of Durpley contains an ancient stronghold called Durpley Castle, which is supposed to have been the purpose of defence during the Danish inroads. Doubtless some sanguinary encounters took place in the neighbourhood as the names and positions of Battle Down and Battle Hill remain to this day.

Ladford has some interesting associations. It appears that this estate was formally in possession of Dame Prenergast, a pious lady, who built the "south aisle of the church and covered it with lead." Her monument, beautifully carved, is inserted in the south wall. Ladford was afterwards held by Thomas Hawkford, son of the celebrated Sir William Hawkford, Chief Justice of England, immortalised by Shakespere, who lived in th etime of Henry IV and Henry V. Sir Robert Cary married a daughter of Sir William, from whom the unfortunate Queen of Henry VIII. Anne Bolelyn descended. There was a private chapel or small church attached to this residence, which was pulled down at the Reformation period, and the materials are said to have been used in building the present Rectory of Newton St Petrock. The old Manorial House has long disappeared, having been destroyed by fire, and is now replaced by a modern farmhouse owned and occupied by Mr Chamberlain. A curious story is told by some aged people respecting an underground chamber or cell that is said to have been discovered in the garden by a former occupant about 50 years ago, when a large amount of treasure trove was unearthed.

Lovacott, the residence of Alfred Earl Esq., is also a very ancient estate. It is mentioned in Domesday Book in the year 1086, and was then held by a Saxon named Rudd. Allacot takes its name from Johannes Alvethot who held the land subject to condition of holding the king's stirrup whenever his Majesty came to Shebbear. A private chapel was also attached to this residence.

The charities of Shebbear produce a yearly income of more than £200, and are left in trust for the church and poor – liberal provision being allowed for education of poor children. Of the donars it may be said in the words of the poet
"Quique sui memores,
Alies fecere morendo"

WILLIAM C WALLACE Vicar 1889