

A Walk Round St. John's Church, Levens

The font is the gift of T.R.G. Baddyll of Conishead Priory. To the West of the font is a door into the vestibule and a staircase to the gallery. Through the first window on the stairs is a view of the Japanese style enclosure for the bells. This was erected in 1913 by the vicar, the Rev. Sidney Swann, who had previously been a missionary in Japan. The West Gallery is a common feature of churches built before the gothic revival and here singers and musicians would lead the service as Thomas Hardy depicts in his novels. The choir pews in the chancel with a carving of the Bagot coat of arms were a much later addition, the gift of Josceline and Richard Bagot.

There is a fine view of the interior of church from the gallery and above the arch is a tablet recording the opening of the church for divine service by John Bird, Bishop of Chester. Levens wasn't transferred to the Diocese of Carlisle until 1856.

There is a bell in the tower which is inscribed, 'Joseph Winder Made Mee 1846'. This is probably a bell bought by the patron from a church on her estates in Castle Rising and recast by the Kendal firm.

On the north wall of the nave is a copy of Gentil de Fabriano's 'The Adoration of the Magi', in a gilt frame. Further along is a plaque commemorating James Gandy of Heaves the son of Col. Brandreth of Hyland who took the name Gandy on marrying Jane, the heiress to the Heaves estate.

The organ was made by Wilkinson of Kendal and sited at the rear of the church in 1883. An organ chamber was made around 1913 and the organ moved to its present position. The addition of a water-engine for blowing the organ was a great success, apart from Mondays, which being Washing Day, lowered the water pressure.

In the chancel is a plaque commemorating the lives of the first two incumbents, the Rev. William R. Stephens and the Rev. J. Smith, who between them served the parish for eighty-four years. There is also the large memorial to Fulk Greville Howard who died in 1846.

The vestry was provided by the Hon. Mary Howard in 1873 and extended in 1972. Beyond the vestry is a lancelet window in memory of William Bannerman Vicar from 1921-46. In the window is the eagle which is the

symbol of St. John, and also the scene of 'Jesus turning the water into wine'.

The paneling of the sanctuary was given in 1956 in memory of three brothers, George, James, and William Rothwell of Boxtree.

The East Window is in memory of Josceline Fitzroy Bagot d. 1913 and his son Alan Desmond Bagot d. 1920. The scene is of the crucifixion with the cross represented as the Tree of Life. The branches bear twelve manner of fruits and the leaves are for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22 v. 2ff). On either side of Jesus are his mother Mary, and St. John. Two angels are depicted holding symbols of the Holy Communion. Jesus is also portrayed in glory against the background of 'The Holy City, New Jerusalem'. (Rev. 21:2ff). He is accompanied by angels, two of whom are holding the Crown of Life. (Rev. 11:10) At the foot of the window are illustrations of The Nativity, the Transfiguration, and an appearance after the Resurrection.

On the south of the sanctuary is a window in memory of L.B. Culshaw of Cherry Cottage, Cotes. The main scene is 'The blessing of the loaves and fishes'.

Opposite to the memorial to her husband is that of Mary Greville Howard who died in 1877. In the nave is the memorial to General Arthur Lupton who lived at Levens Hall for many years. Above the entrance to the church are the panels of the Ten Commandments which were originally on either side of the sanctuary.

The two stone angels in the porch are in memory of Emily Mclead, May 25 1984 – Mar 13 1986, the work of Josephina da Vasconcellos who has sculptures in many of our cathedrals and large parish churches.