

**CELEBRATING THE REOPENING OF
ST. MARY'S CHURCH COLEORTON IN 1854
FOLLOWING ITS RESTORATION**



**A pen and grey wash drawing of St. Mary's Church by H.W. Burgess.
Dated c.1852**

In 1851/2, two new windows were put in the west side of the church for the first anniversary of the 9th Baronet's wedding and the baptism of his son and heir. This appears to have been the start of the complete restoration of the church, when the north aisle was also extended.

BY SAMUEL T STEWART - SEPTEMBER 2024

PREFACE

This publication forms part of a series of publications relating to the social and industrial history of Coleorton, which are free to download and read on his website samuelstewart.com

© Samuel T Stewart - **September 2024**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by means, electronic, mechanical or otherwise without first seeking the written permission of the author.

The following is a synopsis of an article which appeared in the July 7th 1854 edition of the Leicester Journal –

“A Conjoined Anniversary meeting of the Coleorton Association of Church Choirs, and the Re-Opening of Coleorton Church on Tuesday July 4th 1854.”

The Coleorton Association of Church Choirs originated two years ago and had its source in the laudable desire to improve and elevate church music, which has, during the last few years, arisen in the Church of England. Its principle founder, we believe, was the Reverend H. Bennett, of Whitwick. It has since been taken under the patronage of the neighbouring clergy and gentry, who have rightly judged that one way at least of improving the influence they possess to the good of those around them was to diffuse and cultivate a taste for genuine church music, especially among the poorer classes of the population.

Such effects are beneficial alike to the cause of religion and amelioration. For that, the choral services of our churches, generally speaking, up to a very recent date, were anything but excellent, and calculated to excite no feeling less than devotion, we presume no argument is required to prove; and that the cultivation of good music, both sacred and secular, is among the most efficient means to civilise and humanise the masses of our population, is now universally admitted. We regard it therefore as highly fitting, that the clergy, whose office obliges them to seek both the honour of religion and the welfare of their fellow men, should take the lead in movements of this kind. The success which has attended the efforts made in the vicinity of Coleorton is most remarkable.

At present, we believe the association includes seven choirs – namely those of Coleorton, Whitwick, Normanton, Swepstone, Ibstock, Long Whatton and St. George’s, Swannington. The choirs are composed almost exclusively of working classes in the strictest sense of the term, and whether we consider the materials of which they have been formed, or the difficulties in a district like that under consideration exist in the way of practice and improvement, we must regard the progress made as wonderful, and that it must be highly satisfactory to the benevolent individuals who have done so much to promote it, we can have no doubt. The first anniversary meeting was held last year in Whitwick.

This year, the anniversary was most appropriately conjoined with the re-opening of Coleorton Church, which has lately been restored, partly in the decorated and partly in the perpendicular style, under the directions of Mr. H. Stevens of Derby, principally we understand, at the expense of Sir Geo Beaumont. We have not been able to learn the precise cost, but it will probably very considerably exceed £1,000. The edifice is now one of which the Parish may well be proud. It is fitted with *open seats instead of pews*, and every arrangement which could secure the becoming conduct of divine worship and the comfort of the worshippers, appears to have been made. A very neat organ (a Double

C), built by Mr. H. Bryceson, of Tottenham-Court-Road, London has been placed in the chancel, also, we understand, at Sir George Beaumont's expense.

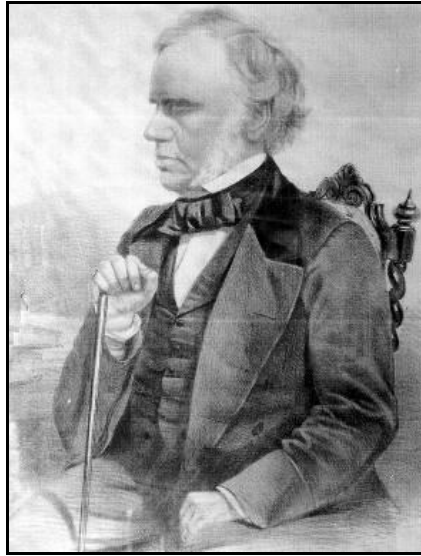
The morning service commenced at half-past eleven. The church was crowded with a numerous and highly respected assemblage. **We were pleased to observe, however, that the poor were not excluded, either by their own indifference to the service, or by the want of room for their accommodation, but attended in considerable numbers, and manifested great interest.**

The associated choirs numbered seventy persons, chiefly of course, young men and boys. The organ was not opened during divine service, as we understood, from the apprehension that singers not being accustomed to it would be more hindered than helped by its accompaniment. With due deference, however, to the gentlemen by whom the arrangements were made, we cannot avoid expressing a belief that its use would have been very advantageous, inasmuch as it would have prevented a want of confidence which was very perceptible, in some portions of the service especially. If we might adventure a remark or two, by way of criticism, it would be on the character of some one or two of the selections, which appeared to us rather too difficult, especially in the absence of an instrument. However, the whole went off exceedingly well, and we were particularly struck with the correct and distinct enunciation of the words, which, were not of easy attainment, **particularly in a rural district.**

During the morning service, the prayers were read by the Rev. F. Merewether; the first lesson by the Rev. T. Helmore; the second lesson by the Rev. H. Bennett; the communion service by the Rev. Dr. Wordsworth, Canon of Westminster, assisted by the Rev. – Jordan; Mr. Merewether read the offertory; the sermon was preached by the Rev. Canon Wordsworth (a close relative of William Wordsworth the Poet).

Continued over page

At the conclusion of the service, Mr. Edward Mammatt of Ashby de la Zouch, played some voluntaries with great effect.



Edward Mammatt was the son of Edward and Eliza Mammatt of Ashby and he was blind from childhood. He was born on March 26th 1807 and died on April 23rd 1860. Edward played the organ at St.Helen's Church, Ashby from the age of 13 and wrote organ and choral music which is still available today. He lived in Rawdon Terrace, Ashby.

He received a medal from 'The Royal Society for the Arts in 1837-8 for his invention of a writing apparatus for the blind.



The memorial to Edward Mammatt in St. Helen's Church, Ashby.

After the service, a large proportion of the congregation retired to a spacious and commodious marquee erected in the grounds attached to the Hall, where an excellent luncheon was awaiting them. Through the kindness of Sir George Beaumont, the whole of the choristers sat down with the company, and appeared to enjoy themselves very highly, the juveniles especially. The number present at the table, including the choirs, was about two hundred.

At the conclusion of the luncheon, Sir G. H. Beaumont rose to give the first toast of the day. A number of toasts and speeches followed (*far too numerous to list*). The President gave "the preacher of the day – Dr. Wordsworth", which was received with much applause.

The Rev. G. R. Portal, of London, gave "the ladies" which was coupled with the name of Lady Beaumont. **The Rev speaker pointed out in the course of an eloquent speech, the important services which females can render to the ministers of religion.**

The company left the tent to spend an hour wandering over the beautiful grounds of the mansion. At half-past five, the bells were chiming for evening service and at six o'clock the church was again filled with a very numerous congregation.

The collection at the offertory in the morning and in the evening at the door amounted to £46 19s 10d. The services were concluded by a quarter before eight o'clock.

Amongst the numerous clergy, ladies and gentlemen present and recorded at the services and dining were E. Fisher Esq., E. Fisher Junior Esq., and Mr and Mrs. Sherwin of Coleorton. (*This would have been William Sherwin junior and his wife. He formed a solicitor's partnership with the aforementioned Edward Fisher senior.*)