

NETHEREXE CHURCH (Newspaper article July 1907)
RE OPENED AFTER RESTORATION

Netherexe Church has been re-opened by the Lord Bishop of Exeter (Dr. Robertson) after thorough restoration. Practically the whole of the cost has been borne by the Lord of the Manor (Mr. Reginald Hill). The church which was founded by the family of De Crewes somewhere about 1125 and contains many interesting memorials and a Norman font (the bowl of which some 25 years ago was restored to its original position from a farmyard in the neighbourhood), has been given an entirely new oak roof. The walls of the little edifice, which accommodates about 80 people, have been carefully repaired so as not to do away with any antiquity, while a new vestry has been added on the north side. The windows have been redecorated and some of the interior furnishings renewed. The architect was Mr. Wykeman Chancellor, of Messrs. Chancellor and Sons, London and the contractor Mr. A.E. Phillips of Woodbury.

The church was too small to seat all those desirous of being present at the re-opening. The difficulty, however, was overcome by providing seating accommodation outside the West door. The surpliced clergy present, in addition to the Bishop, were the Rector of Rewe (the Rev. E.E.E. Heathcote, who also has charge of Netherexe Parish), the Rev. W.M. Smith-Dorrien, of Crediton, and the Rev. A.K. Noon, of Butterleigh.

The congregation included, in addition to Mr. Reginald Hill, the architect and contractor, the Revs. C. Peacock (a former vicar of Netherexe), W. Carew (Bickleigh), and J. Thomas (Sutcombe), Mrs. Reginald Hill, Miss Hill, Miss Coleridge (Cadbury), Mrs Heathcote, Mrs Noon, Miss Richards, Mrs Peacock and Miss Peacock, Miss Anson (Tiverton), Mr and Mrs R Snow, Mr and Mrs Herbert May, Mr and Mrs J Alford, Mr and Mrs E Alford, Messrs W F Richards, W Daniels (London), and A B Bramwell.

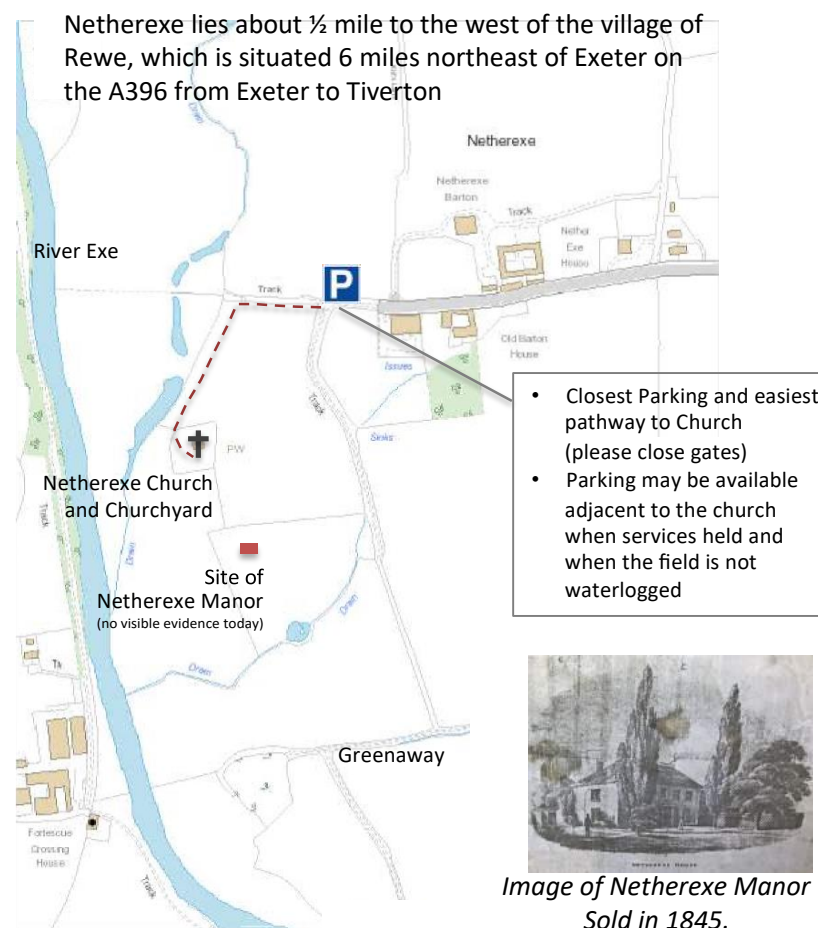
The service was a hearty character. The hymns sung were "Come, Holy Ghost" and "We love the place of God". Messrs. W.J. Cotton, W. Belgrove and W.F. Crabbe (of Exeter Cathedral Choir) and A.G. Wills, of Exeter, attended, and beautifully rendered the anthem "God is a spirit". The Lessons were read by the Revs. A.K. Noon and W.M. Smith-Dorrien. The Lord Bishop preached an appropriate sermon from the words "Except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it" (Psalm 1, cxxvii). At the close of the service a collection was taken on behalf of the Three Towns Church Extension Scheme. Subsequently those present sat down to luncheon on the lawn adjoining Mr. Hill's shooting box. An orchestra from the band of the 4th Battalion Devonshire Regiment in which Mr. Hill is a captain, played selections. Mr. R.M. Flint, of Exeter, was responsible for the erection of the marquee and awning.

*'Dearly beloved in the Lord,
we are gathered together to-day
to render humble and hearty thanks to Almighty God
for His goodness in prospering the work of the
Restoration of this Church, and to implore the
continuance of His favour and blessing upon it.
Wherefore I bid you secretly in your prayers to ask
God's blessing upon this Church, for which prayer
there shall be silence kept for a space*

Blessing by the Lord Bishop of Exeter on re-opening 20 July 1907.



Photo of Netherexe Church and Churchyard looking northwest



Contact

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The Netherexe Parishes

Netherexe parishes are a community of churches in the Diocese of Exeter serving the communities of Brampford Speke, Cadbury, Newton St Cyres, Rewe with Netherexe, Stoke Canon with Huxham, Thorverton and Upton Pyne.

The churches of the Netherexe parishes together form a 'Mission Community', which commits itself to maintaining a worshipping, witnessing community within all our parishes and making the gospel known to people of all ages and backgrounds.

The Netherexe Parishes
Website: www.netherexe.org

Produced by
Brian Please



**THE PARISH CHURCH of
ST JOHN The BAPTIST, NETHEREXE**

WELCOME to Netherexe Church. We are delighted that you have taken the time to find and visit our church.

One of Devon's quaintest and most isolated churches. A simple stone church set in the midst of fields close to the banks of the Exe, "lit by candles, heated by the warmth of its congregation".

The parish was mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 as "Niressa", later known as Nether Ex with 28 people living in the manor with the existence of an Anglo-Saxon chapel.

It is stated that the church was founded by the de Crewes (De Cruis) in about 1125. The earliest mention seems to be in 1269, when it was connected to St Nicholas Priory in Exeter and joined (a daughter church) to Brampford Speke. Henry Borough of Broadclyst acquired the tithes in about 1560 and formed a trust of The Eight Men of Broadclyst who owned the living until 1916 when it was transferred to Viscount Hamilton and William Wyndham.

The present church was rebuilt in the late 15th century. The chapel was largely reconstructed in the 18th century and in the late 19th century the Hill family restored the church and met the whole cost of restoration. The church has been in regular use for worship since then and the churchyard fenced and gated is still in use. The church was designated as a Grade I listed building in 1961.

The church lies above the flood plain of the River Exe and there has never been water in the church within living memory nor in oral tradition over the past two or three generations.

We are obligated to keep the church door locked at all times except during services and on the church open day.

*God of heaven and earth
we thank you for your grace and mercy
that has shone through the lives of the saints in
Netherexe in many years past.
We pray that this church may always bear witness
to your redeeming love, that all who enter these
doors may be filled with your presence
and may come to know and love you,
through Jesus Christ. Amen*

'Honour the Lord with thy first fruits so shall thy barns be filled with plenty'.
Proverbs Chap 3, Verses 9&10.



Sketch of Netherexe Church by Hester Frood (1882-1971)



There are no utility services to the church so winter services are lit by candlelight in 5 candelabras.



Memorial to members of the Young family. Peter Young became Lord of the Manor of Netherexe in 1770.



On the N side a credence table (for standing communion elements) erected in memory of Francis Christopher Hill of this parish, who was responsible for the restoration of the church.



Graveyard

The oldest memorial is the square stone standing against the outside of the Vestry wall to Thomas Cole of 1684. This stone was removed from inside the church during the restoration in 1907.

The tallest grave with the urn on the E side is of Clifford Martyn Young who inherited the Manor House and much of the parish in 1827.

There is another grave on the S side close to the wall of the church, lying north to south (the mound has been levelled, and there is no headstone). Tradition says that it was of a woman who was buried thus, at her own request, so she could face the preacher in the pulpit and hear the lesson read by the parson at the lectern just inside the window.

In the churchyard there is a grave in the SW corner, fenced off, of Anne Vavasour, wife of Sir Henry Maghull Mervin Vavasour, 2nd Baronet, who died in 1845 during a visit to Netherexe. This was always known as the Roman Catholic's Grave. It was thought she was staying in the Manor House when she died.

In Devon Notes and Queries 1904-5, there is a reference to "An Act for Burying in Woollen Only", 1678. A document still exists which certifies that Joan Smith was buried in Netherexe in wool only, in 1714.

West of the Church is a Commonwealth War Grave to 1833 Private E Dewdney, Devonshire Regiment (cyclists battalion), died 17th December 1915, aged 23.

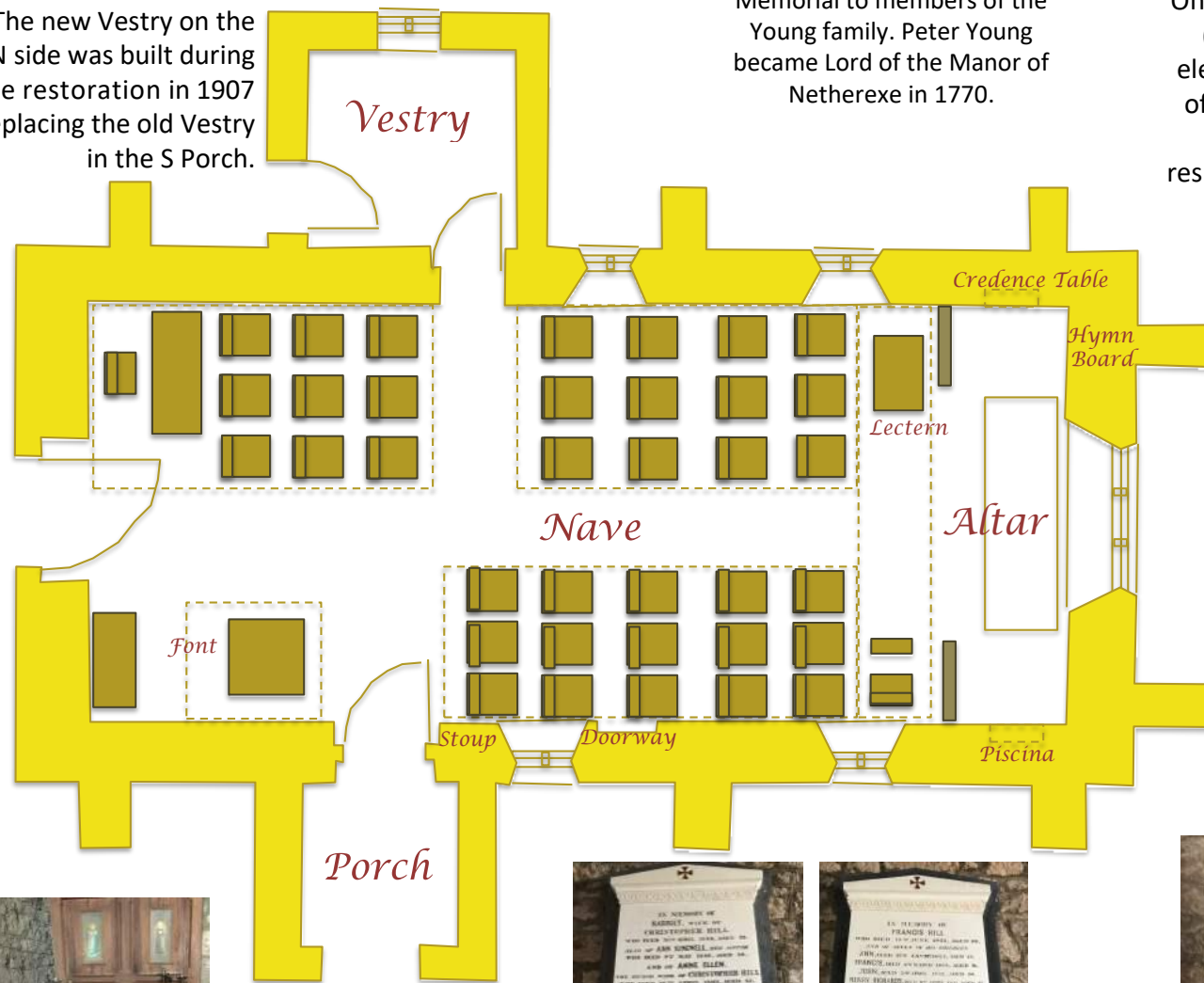
The ashes of Sir Cyril Fox, archaeologist and historian, were dumped in the graveyard by the undertakers in 1975. He often visited the church.

On the North perimeter there is a small chancel house, at present, unusable.



Church Harmonium

The new Vestry on the N side was built during the restoration in 1907 replacing the old Vestry in the S Porch.



Hymn board in memory of Fred Alford who farmed Nether Exe Barton.



Church Altar, used for services at Easter, Whitsun, Harvest Festival, Christmas and other occasions.



A single bell is in a small turret at the west end of the church. The bell was cast by John Penington's Bell Foundry in Paul Street Exeter in 1676. The wood frame of the bell was last repaired by John Hayward in about 1975.

There are 3 sets of Bible and Prayer Book in the Church. One dated 1822 was said to be given by Christopher Hill. The next two were given by Clifford Martyn Young in 1844. The ones now in use were given by Miss Caroline Swete in 1916. There is a Prayer book, not in use, to commemorate Lily Crook in 1967, who gave a lifetime of service to the church.

The Font is said to be Norman with a square bowl (found in the local farmyard) for holding baptismal water, scalloped beneath, standing on a circular shaft and scalloped on the base. The red stone is thought to be Thorverton stone.



There are 4 wall tablets in the church commemorating members of the Hill family, including Reginald Hill (known as Colonel Hill). He owned the parish and was landlord of Nether Exe Barton.



An excellent trefoil headed piscina remains on the S side of the chancel with a drain used for washing communion vessels. Note how rough and crooked are the stones that have been used in the masonry round it. A tile commemorates the lives of Thomas & Susannah Cole.