



ALL-SAINTS... CHURCH LAWTON.

ADAM AND EVE ALMS DISH.

PLATE WITH A HISTORY.

'Adam and Eve' Alms Dish... All Saints ...

The large brass plate which stands on the small credence table near the altar, is used to receive the collecting plates brought up to the front of the Church by Sidesmen during services.

It is said to be one of only four such surviving plates in the country, and is known as an 'Adam and Eve Alms Dish'.

Close inspection will reveal just why it has been given this name, for its centre bears a rather primitive, yet intricately-detailed picture of Adam and Eve, carefully tooled into the brass. Adam stands on the left, an ugly-looking club gripped in his right hand, whilst his left hand is stretched out towards Eve, who faces him on the right. He appears to be reaching out for the apple which she is temptingly holding up in her right hand. This is still attached to a branch, seemingly broken off from the tree behind them, and in its turn firmly held in the mouth of the serpent, which is coiled around the trunk of the tree, its head extended above Eve.

The figures have surprisingly shapely legs, and very distinct ribs, although the craftsman who carried out the work could not have been very knowledgeable about anatomy, as he only gave them three pairs each (and what happened to the one which Adam is supposed to have lost to Eve?) Behind the figures, the tree has beautifully-shaped branches and leaves, and bears several more apples. The rim of the plate has to be examined at close quarters to fully appreciate the delicate workmanship used in the intricate patterns which it bears; the two outer circles of pattern being built up by a continuous coiled-rope effect, the detail of which has to be seen to be believed.

Alas we have no record of just how old is the plate, and for how many centuries it has been in use in our Church, but we do however know that it was in use in 1817, for it was during that year that it mysteriously disappeared. Almost eighty years were to elapse before it was found, lying at the bottom of the canal, during dredging work, presumably having lain there for all the years it had been missing.

It is thought that it may have been stolen in the belief that it was made of gold, and on realization that it was merely brass, had been thrown by the thief into the canal. It is said that at the time of the discovery there was just one old lady in the parish who could remember back to the time when she had seen it being used in Church all those years previously.

Whether the evident signs of damage to the plate were a result of its sojourn in the canal, or merely the result of general wear and tear over the ages is not known. Whatever the cause, it was decided in 1968 that it was in need of urgent repair, and these repairs were carried out by Mr. L. Roberts, thus ensuring that this ancient vessel could continue in use in our Church for what we hope will be countless more generations yet to come.