

(PAUL PARISH CHURCH)



A SHORT HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION
OF THE PARISH OF
St. POL-DE-LEON

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PAUL PARISH CHURCH

"The Parish Church of Saint Pol de Leon"

1. The Parish Church of Paul is so named after its Patron Saint, the locally famous Paul or Paulinus who founded the Diocese of Leon in Brittany (Pol is an old French form of Paul). Paul himself was either Paul of Penychen, one of the sons of a Romano-British family, who was otherwise known as Paul Aurelian; or, on the other hand, a well known Carmarthenshire Saint, who was known under the name of Paulinus. It seems more probable that Saint Pol de Leon was Paul Aurelian. He was most certainly one of a number of Celtic Saints inspired by the Religious Revival initiated by Saint German of Auxerre who came over from the Continent in the middle of the 5th Century A.D., to these islands, to combat the Christian Heresy of Pelagianism (a kind of "Do It Yourself" Christianity in which God was somewhat of a forgotten factor.) Before proceeding to Brittany to found the Diocese of Leon with its Cathedral of Saint Paul Aurelian, the Celtic Saint settled for a time, it is thought, in what is now known as the Parish of Paul in Cornwall, to be near his Sister, Sitofolla, who had founded a Convent by the shores of Mount's Bay, that is, near Penzance.
2. Paul Feast or Patronal Festival, is celebrated in Paul, as on the Continent, on the Sunday nearest to 10th October, because Saint Pol de Leon was confused with yet another Paulinus who had been Archbishop of York and afterwards Bishop of Rochester who died on 10th October. Actually, the real date of the death of Saint Pol de Leon was 12th March, and so it is to this date or the Sunday nearest to this day that Paul Feast should be held. However, the confusion has been sanctified by the years and it is too late to make any change at this late date. Saint Pol de Leon is one of the "Seven Saints of Brittany" whose "remains" were to be visited in Pilgrimage and venerated as relics of a Holy man.
3. The first Church at Paul was probably built by Saint Pol de

Leon himself. There is indeed a portion of an ancient Celtic Cross built into the Churchyard Wall which is considered by the experts to be well over 1,000 years old!

4. Paul Church is mentioned in a 13th Century Document as being given by Earl Richard, King of the Romans to the Cistercian Order as part of the endowment for the founding of a Cistercian Monastery in Gloucestershire, in thanksgiving for escaping with his life from a terrible storm at sea, when returning to Cornwall from Gascony. Earl Richard, King of the Romans, was the second son of Henry II and brother of Henry III. He was called King of the Romans because he was Emperor-Elect of the Holy Roman Empire which was the last remnant of the Old Roman Empire. In effect, he was King of Germany and a most important member of the English Royal Family.
5. At the Reformation, the patronage of the Living passed to the Crown (that is, the reigning Monarch appointed whoever was Vicar.) In Queen Mary's reign Paul is listed as the richest Parish in the widespread Deanery of Penwith (which covered the whole of the Land's End area), being shown as possessing much valuable Church Plate.
6. In 1595, seven years after the defeat of the Spanish Armada (the Armada first sighted at Lizard Point on 28th July, 1588), the Spaniards came again to Cornwall; coming this time in four great Galleons, they landed Raiding Parties along the Coast, terrorizing the surrounding countryside and setting fire to farms and villages along Mount's Bay. Sir Francis Godolphin, a local Cornish dignitary, did what he could to rally the thoroughly frightened villagers in defence of their homes and liberties, but nothing effective was accomplished till help came from Plymouth to drive out the raiding parties. In particular the Spaniards landed one small force at Mousehole (described in Arthur Mee's book on "Cornwall" as "a fishermen's Town as typically Cornish as Cornish granite or Cornish Cream", and incidentally, forming part of Paul Parish) where a desperate encounter took place. There was a staunch resistance as is revealed in the Church Register on the days immediately following the raid. The

first four names recorded are of those who perished in defence of the town. "James Keigwin of Mousell being killed by the Spaniards was buried the 24th of July." (The raid took place the day before on the 23rd July!) "John Pearce Peiton was buried on the 24th daie of July". "Jacobus de Newlyn occisus fuit per inimicos et sepultus est 26th die Julii. (Jacobus or James of Newlyn was killed by enemies and buried on the 26th July.) "Similiter T Cornwall et sepultus the 26th July." Mousehole was plundered, looted and burned, and then the Raiding Party proceeded up Paul Lane (formerly a Roman Road to the West) to Paul Church, the greater part of which they burnt down with the exception of the great granite Tower which is said to be the second highest tower in Cornwall, (being 89 feet high, which together with the small Beacon Tower on top of the main tower, reaching up as it does a further 20 feet, means that the total height of the whole structure is 109 feet. Fires lit on the Beacon Towers of Churches and on top of hills meant in times of emergency, such as the Napoleonic War, that a signal could reach London, it is said, in twenty minutes! From Paul Church Tower, some 16 Parish Church Towers can, on a clear day, be seen), this present ancient tower being in good repair even to the present day. Inside the Church, one beautiful sculptured arch at the North side of the Chancel is probably the only portion of the original mediaeval Church other than the Tower (and possibly the Porch) which remains intact; and still bears marks of the intense scorching it received from the Spanish Fire of nearly 400 years ago. (The Spaniards were experts on the use of fire as witness their Autos da fe of those days when they burned Heretics as part of a festival!) There are Cannon Balls near to the Small Arch already referred to, which are said to have been fired by the Spaniards during the Raid. In his most interesting "Short Account of the Ancient Church of Paul", published in 1910, to which this pamphlet is heavily indebted, Mr. Cecil Aitken, the son of the then Vicar of Paul (Rev. R.W. Aitken) has this sidelight to throw on the Raid ... "A tradition in the Parish states that in coming up the hill from Mousehole, the Spaniards encountered some country people carrying bundles of furze; and driving them into the Church, forced them to drop their burdens,

which they then set on fire, and as it chanced to be a strong South-West wind blowing at the time, they opened the doors to expedite the fire in its destructive work." In all this, alas, the Spaniards were all too successful!

7. SOME ITEMS OF INTEREST IN THE CHURCH AND CHURCHYARD:

(a) Dolly Pentreath's Monument

This monument is set in the Churchyard Wall. It was erected in memory of Dolly Pentreath who is buried in the Churchyard and who is said to have been the last person to use the original Cornish Dialect in normal conversation. The Monument was put up in 1860 by the Prince Louis Lucien Bonaparte, a descendent of the great Napoleon, who was helped in this project by the then Vicar of Paul (Rev. J. Garrett). Cut into the stone is a transcription of the 5th Commandment ("Honour thy father and thy mother") in old Cornish.

(b) Mural Tablet to an unknown Warrior

The Mural Tablet is to be found on the North Side of the Chancel, just behind the Choir Stalls and on it are to be read these words: -

"Interr'd near this place lies ye body
of Captain Andrew Elton
Commander of the Geoffrey Galley
He was killed in an engagement
with a French Privateer
Off the Land's End of England
Sept. 4th, 1710, aged 53.
His merit being sufficiently known
he needs no further inscription."

The sad truth is, as Mr. Cecil Aitken points out in his "Account of Paul Church" that in spite of the last two lines of this inscription, nobody seems to have any knowledge of who he was or whence he came.

(c) A Suit of Armour

In the so-called Newlyn Aisle of the Church (on the North side of the Church) behind the Organ, hangs some old Armour consisting of a Cuirass (Body Armour, Breat plate and Back plate, all fastened together) and two Swords, belonging to William Godolphin of Trewarneth, Squire of the Parish, who died in 1689.

(d) Monument to Captain Stephen Hutchens

This memorial is on the South Wall of the Church and was erected as a remembrance of Captain Stephen Hutchens of the Parish of Paul who died at Port Royall, in Jamaica, 1709, at the age of 41. He was in the service of the East India Company. The tracery and design of an old East Indiaman (Sailing Ship) are carved in marble on the memorial; while the writing on slate is in several languages. On the Plaque it is stated that he gave £100 to the Church and £600 to found the "Hutchens Almshouses" which stand next door to the Church. In old Cornish dialect is to be seen the following couplet: -

"Eternal life be his whose loving care
Gave Paul an Almshouse and the Church repair."

(e) Slat Tablet to the Martyrs from Paul

Outside the Church is a Slat Tablet, put in honour of three young Fishermen from Paul Parish whose names became immortalised through responding to the Challenge of Captain Alan Gardner, R.N., to become fishers of men, when he called for volunteers to take the Gospel to the natives of a foreign land -

Tierra del Fuego (the land of Fire) a part of the Argentine, near the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic, in the year 1850. They all died through their terrible privations; martyrs for the cause of Christ. The names of the young men from Paul Parish were, respectively,

John Badcock, John Bryant and John Pearce. In his diary, Captain Alan Gardner records the death of John Badcock. For weeks the young sailor had been suffering from scurvy and had throughout shown a wonderful spirit of patient endurance. He died singing one of Wesley's hymns - ending with the words: -

"Before the Throne my Surety Stands
My name is written on His Hands."

The names of the three Johns of Paul live for evermore in the Christian Church. The present Anglican South American Missionary Society, a very active body, is the direct result of the self-sacrifice of these remarkable men. "The Blood of Martyrs is the Seed of the Church!" The Slate Tablet outside the Church and its marble replica inside the Church are well worth reading over and pondering!

(f) Chandeliers

The two extremely massive and very beautiful Brass Chandeliers hanging at the East End of the Church are of 18th Century origin; and give a Blaze of Light to the Glory of God and for the service of the Worshippers.

(g) Windows

There are a number of windows in the Church well worth examining but the prize should surely be awarded to the East Window which was put into the Church by the late Mrs. W.E.T. Bolitho of Trevelloe, Paul, in memory of her husband and son, both of whom died from wounds in the 1914 - 1918 war. The window is also a Memorial to the men of Paul Parish who went down in their ships at the Dardanelles. The main figure in the Window is that of Sir Galahad, the finest of The Knights of The Round Table. The Window is in brilliant colours of red, green and gold, and it contains these lovely lines by Maurice Baring: -

"And you will speed us onward with a cheer
And wave beyond the stars that all is well!"

(h) Bells

The Church has six fine Bells, which are regularly rung by a devoted band of Ringers. The three earlier Bells are dated 1727. The Tenor Bell is 14½ cwt. in weight and was brought up Paul Hill with great difficulty. It is inscribed: -

"I to the Church the living call
And to the grave do summon all!"

The other earlier Bells are inscribed respectively: -

"Prosperity to this Parish!" - and
"Prosperity to the Church of England!"

In 1950, three new Bells were added, the Six hung in a new frame, and the Tenor Bell recast, as a memorial to the men of the Parish who fell in the 1939 - 1945 war. This was done during the Vicariate of the Rev. W. V. Wagner. The new Bells were called respectively: -

"Mary" (the gift of the Mothers' Union)
"St. George" and "St. Pol de Leon" (and inscribed
"God Bless our Parish").

At the Service of Dedication of the New Bells, a hymn was sung with this verse: -

"And so we pray that God may bless
Each Church's ringing band,
As in the Tower they praise the Lord
In Cornwall's pleasant land!"

(i) Choir Vestry

A Choir Vestry was built at the West End in the Bell Tower at a cost of approximately £2,000 and dedicated by the Archdeacon of Cornwall in 1968.

(j) Piscina

There is a Piscina set in the South-east Wall of the Church which was used in mediaeval times for the Cleansing of the Chalice and Paten after use in the Holy Communion.

CONCLUSION:

A record of the Vicars of Paul is to be found on a board just inside the Church.

"Unfortunately all usual records were destroyed at the time of the Spanish Raid, but the present registers date from that time forward, and are in a good state of preservation.

The oldest volume commences with the following references to subject: -

"JESU SPES ET SALUS MEA!"

"1595"

"JESU MY HOPE AND MY SALVATION"

"1595"

(Extract from C. Aitken's "Short Account of the Ancient Parish of Paul." Published 1910)

We of the 20th Century may add: -

"JESUS MY HOPE AND MY SALVATION!"

"1966 Anno Domini!"

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Vicar of Paul.

