

(4th February 2018 – Nidd Church 150 years)

Don't you just love the internet and the millions of bits of useless information you can pick up on it?

I thought it might be fun to look at 1868, and see what happened in that year... nothing incredibly out to the ordinary it has to be said, but Wikipedia did come up with one or two nuggets (10 in fact!):

- January 9 – Penal transportation from Britain to Australia ends,
- February 24 - Impeachment of Andrew Johnson President of the United States,
- March 12 - Alfred, Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, Duke of Edinburgh, is shot in the back in Sydney, Australia, at a fundraising event for the Sydney Sailors Home, by Irishman Henry James O'Farrell. The prince survives and quickly recovers; O'Farrell is executed on April 21.
- May 26 – Fenian bomber Michael Barrett becomes the last person publicly hanged in the United Kingdom.
- May 29 – The Parliament of the United Kingdom passes the Capital Punishment Amendment Act, thus ending public hanging.
- June 2 – The first Trades Union Congress is held in Manchester, England.

- July 5 – Preacher William Booth establishes the Christian Mission, predecessor of The Salvation Army, in the East End of London.
- August 20 – Abergele rail disaster in Wales: An *Irish Mail* passenger train collides with 4 cargo trucks loaded with paraffin oil (more akin to modern kerosine); 33 are killed (the first major train disaster in Britain).
- December 9 – The world's first traffic signal lights are installed at the junction of Great George Street and Bridge Street in the London Borough of Westminster.

Nowhere is it mentioned the goings-on at Nidd - this lovely church at Nidd being consecrated... that's because in the great scheme of things it didn't matter – who cared back then that the Bishop and 16 clergy processed down the aisle repeating the 24th Psalm. This was a church of the Oxford Movement, maybe not directly, but certainly indirectly and as such churches were springing up all over the place – so it doesn't seem important in the grand scheme of human activity that this church was built.

However, I would argue the contrary... this church is incredibly important - just think for a moment about the countless number of individuals who have been through that door over the last 150 years... individuals who have come to worship their God publicly, or who have come in the silence and stillness to worship their God privately.

Think of those who have been baptised here, married here... who have had their funerals here. This church has remained a constant beacon of God's light at times when His people have needed him the most.

It's true to say that a church isn't the building, instead the 'church' is the people inside it, take them out and you are left simply left with a pretty building... that is true, but this building has been a symbol to the rich and poor of this parish for the last 150 years – it's been more than simply a pretty building, and that is what we are celebrating this morning.

These sentiments dovetail with certainly our first reading for today from 1 Corinthians...

1 Corinthians 3:9 –13, 16–17

For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God

dwelleth in you?

If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.'

In other words – you will be judged according to your actions and because you are God's temple, then you better get it right!!

Our Gospel uses a similar theme but slightly different in talking about Peter being the rock on which the church was built.

Matthew 16:13 –18

'And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'

And so, it is good that we are here – it is good that we come to worship this day – it is good that we come to remember and celebrate - but what good is celebrating the sinking of past foundations if we are not building up firm foundations for the future.

Many who come to our church week in and week out are visitors from the hotel – I believe we offer a particularly ministry of spiritual warmth and welcome to those who are on holiday – people take breaks from the humdrum of ordinary life for many different reasons... this church is here to offer a place of quiet and prayer during the week, and worship on a Sunday.

And for this village – this building represents the only public building left in Nidd... this isn't my church, or Mervyn's church,

or Lord Mountgarret's church, this is YOUR church – we must all work together to ensure it remains a part of the life of this village for the next 150 years.

That is our challenge today – let us take a moment to open our hearts and ears to listen to what God may be saying to us, and let us be as active as our forebears, who had the vision to build this church, and let us build strong foundations to keep it rising ever upwards.

Amen.