# **NEW CHURCH AT BRACEBRIDGE HEATH**

## DIOCEAN MAGAZINE REPORT FOR **SATURDAY 30TH MAY 1908**

Bracebridge Heath, although a somewhat limited community, can boast of certain historical institutions. It is almost beyond doubt that it derives the name of St. John’s Heath from the Knights Hospitallers of St John, who in the Middle Ages, held certain rights in the parish, which they retained up to the reign of Queen Elizabeth *(1st).* The Heath, which is an integral part of the ecclesiastical parish of All Saints, Bracebridge, has in recent years developed considerably, and has a population of about 1,500 souls.

The want of some suitable meeting place for the Church people in the district was painfully obvious, and the vicar (the Rev. E Stafford Smith.) conceived the idea of inaugurating services in the schoolroom at the Heath. The number of worshippers gradually increased, and the Sunday school was commenced, and two years ago steps were taken to provide a church. The project advanced rapidly, and on St Matthew’s Day of last year the ceremony of laying the foundation stone was performed by the Bishop Suffragan of Grantham, and the church was dedicated by the Bishop of Lincoln on Saturday afternoon May 30th.

The building is of local brick, with a sparing use of stone in the windows, which are all of fifteenth century in character. The woodwork is – all except the oak altar – of deal, stained a brownish green, except the boarding of the semi-circular roof, which is finished in white. The walls are panelled all round up to the window-cills, and a high chancel screen and a simple panelled reredos give dignity to the chancel and alter.

Pulpit and lectern are provided, and while in the chancel there are fixed seats, the nave is seated with chairs. The roofs are covered with Staffordshire tiles of a dark red colour.

There is ample vestry accommodation, and stoves provide the necessary heating. There is room for about 160, and the total cost of £1,300 does not include the site, which was the gift of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. The building was designed by Mr. C. Hodgson Fowler, while a local firm, Messrs H. S. and W. Close of Lincoln, have given the fullest satisfaction as builders.

The Bishop of Lincoln was attended by his chaplain (the Rev G. F. Wilgress), and other clergy present were the Rev. F Stafford Smith (vicar), Revs. Cannon Crowfoot, Cannon Hicks, E. Akenhead, E. A. Trasenter, H. W. Snape (Harmston), Dr. Quilter (Waddington), C. C. Ellison and F. Jones (assistant curate).

The Bishop said the dedicatory prayers.

The Bishop based his address upon Hebrews vii, 25 “Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” He spoke of the Ascension of our Lord, and His present life and work for us in the heavenly world. They might say, What had that got to do with their coming there that afternoon? Well, the object of the Church was to remind them of these things. The Church reminded them of the “yon-side” life. It was not like a mechanics’ institute or any other building; it was a “yon-side” building to prepare them for the life above. It was to remind them of the living Body of Christ, more than the mere building of brick, however nice it might be. It was to remind them of the church of the living God, of which he is the living Guiding Head. The Church had been built to assist them to become Christ like Christians, so that when they come to die they might pass surely, trustfully, hopefully, up and up and up and here His voice say ‘friend come up higher’ to the place which He had prepared for Him in heaven.

The church was dedicated to St John, and the vicar explained that the Bishop had licenced it for all holy rites except that of matrimony.