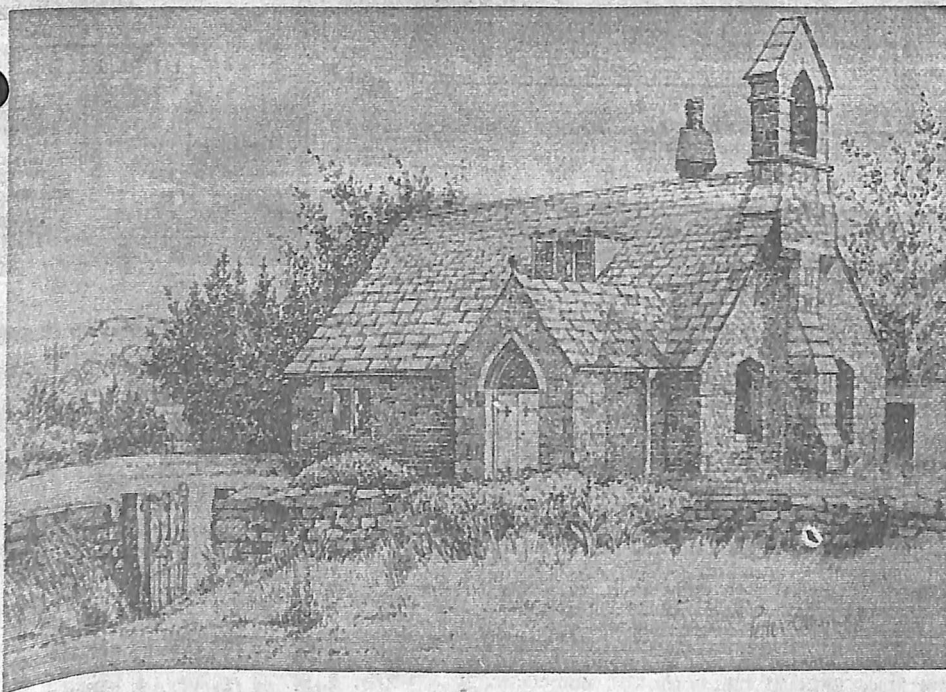


The front room of the house was a wet day play room, and dinner room for those who could not get home in the hour allowed.

A wood hut behind the school stored the church pews and neelers during the week.



## 'Noah's Ark' Church!



The tiny community of Eldroth will have special reason for rejoicing on Easter Day, for they will gather in the church which was three feet deep in flood water just 18 months ago.

It was Autumn, 1981, when the waters rushed into the church causing a greath deal of damage, to the the timber floor and interior walls, and totally destroying the soft furnishings.

The residents of the village's 40 households, which are mainly scattered farms, were then faced with a difficult decision.

They could either take on the formidable task of draining and restoring the church, including raising the necessary finances, or raising the necessary finances, or they could opt for the easier alternative of holding their twice monthly services in the village hall or making the short journey to Austwick Church.

The desire to save the church was unanimous, and it was not long before the local farmers

were moving in with their tractors and J.C.B.'s to drain away the stagnant water, and scrape up the thick mud beneath.

The present vicar, the Rev. John Dalby, said he never had any

doubts about local people's capability to complete the task, and nor was he surprised at their determination to do so.

"Most times people are willing to jog along and take the church for granted, but when it comes under threat they show they must want it, or they would not put so much time and effort into it," he said.

Perhaps it was as much the village's history as its religious centre that people were anxious to preserve. Dating back to the early 17th century, the church also served as a school until 1947, and many of the village's present inhabitants were pupils there.

For such a tiny church the Rev. Dalby said he couldn't imagine how it could have ever been used as a school, church, and school house. But its practical use has given it some unusual features—a chimney, for one, and a pot-bellied stove that has now been restored and brought back into use.

### MEMORIES

Old farmers have told him of how they had to move the desks

out of school each Saturday to make it ready for church on Sunday, and perhaps it is memories such as these which fired the local people to spend their evenings and weekends, digging and building.

It was expected that the work would take about two years, and they set themselves a minimum target of £3,000. In the end everything has been completed within 18 months, and the 120 people, including children, have raised £5,000 in that time, allowing them to make the church even better than it was before the floods.

The Historical Churches Preservation Trust contributed a considerable sum of £1,500, and the Craven District Council also allowed them a grant of £250. But the rest was raised through auctions and jumble sales, and by selling wood and peat, and framed prints of the church like the one shown.

They received contributions from throughout the country and abroad, from friends and relatives of Eldroth residents, and also from one Blackburn man

who thought he was a descendant of someone mentioned as a defaulter in the church's original deeds.

Local workmen lent their time and equipment free of charge, and Redlands Quarry gave them the fillings with which they constructed the new cement floor. Apart from the roof and the pointing of the internal walls, they did all the work themselves.

The altar was salvaged and has been drying out at the vicarage, and the pews and prayer desk have been kept in a nearby cowshed. Giggleswick School boys have helped to restore much of the woodwork.

Ikley Parish Church donated its second-hand hassocks, and a new set of prayer books were given in memory of local farmer Mr. Frank Booth, who was a former governor of the school.

The carpet is due to be laid on March 28 which will allow them a few days to do the finishing touches, replace the furniture, and arrange floral decorations in time for the opening ceremony on Easter Day.

### BISHOP

The Bishop of Bradford the Right Rev. Geoffrey Paul, is to lead the service, and the Rev. Dalby has sent invitations to everyone who helped or contributed to the church restoration.

Extra seating will be brought in to accommodate everyone no matter how many attend, and the chairs and benches will then have to be transported back to the village hall for the celebration tea which follows.

The Rev. Dalby was writing invitations and making arrangements for the big day when the Craven Herald called to see him, and he admitted that it made a pleasant change from writing begging letters.

He was also confident that there would be no recurrence of the flooding, as British Rail have now re-built the embankment which caused the original drainage problem.

While the church has been closed, church services have been held in the village hall, and the community atmosphere which has grown during the project has caused a slight rise in attendances.

The Rev. Dalby hoped that congregations would remain high when they were back in the newly restored church, and all the activity of the past 18 months was behind them.

He was full of praise for the small, but fiercely independent community of people who still have a church and a village hall of their own

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 Eldroth Church  
 and School House  
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 A wood hut behind  
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