

ELDRONTH CHURCH: A GUIDE TO THE FEATURES

This building has stood on this spot since 1627 at the latest. In a will dated July 12 1627, Gyles Moore speaks of, "the chappell or schoolhouse at the Badger ground in Eldroith", which means that the building must have been here then. There are later features, as you will see, because the school/chapel was in constant use, repair and adaptation.

The Font

Probably Victorian, and added at the 1861 renovation (see date over the door)

The Windows

1. The East Window. Firstly, notice that the window is not central, most likely because the church was extended on one side after this window was put in. The window would originally have been in the centre of the East wall. It is original, and would have been built in the time of Charles I.
2. The two old windows on the south wall. These too are original (note the scooped mullions). A sensible size to keep out the driving rain so common here.
3. The other windows date from 1861, and are an attempt to copy the style of the older ones, though they are bigger to let in more light.
4. The dormer window, and the two skylights were added in 1861 to lighten the schoolroom.

The Stove and Fireplace

The fireplace was added in 1861, and was blocked up for many years. We uncovered it to take the stove. The iron stove, used in the school, is typical of many such pot bellied heaters, and it used to stand in the church, about three feet forward of its present position. It gets very hot indeed when lit, and would be a great comfort to cold and wet pupils.

The Altar Rails

These are a new addition, in the English style, but the timber dates back. It was originally ships timbers, reclaimed and used, as many of these timbers were, in a local farmhouse. This fine oak has been worked by a local joiner.

The Altar

A very old oak table, dating back many years, and probably given early in the history of the church. The new ~~iron~~ frontal was a gift made locally for the re-opening.

The Porch and the Chimney

Both added in 1861, and the chimney is worth walking round the building to see.

The 1983 Renovation

This included picking the plaster from the walls, and pointing them; putting in a solid floor, repairing the roof and windows, rewiring the church, carrying out much drainage work, new guttering, door and window repairs. The inner door has been turned over and rehung at some time - you can see where the fixtures were.

Eldroth Church, Parish of Austwick, North Yorkshire

If you stand on the Austwick side of the A65 road and look away from the National Park, towards the Bowland Fells, you will see that the lowest part of the Parish lies before you. The names of the farms - Waters, Low Waters, Low Dyke - speak of a time when the land was even wetter than it is now. In the middle of this low-lying land is Austwick Moss, and on the far side of the Moss the community of Eldroth begins. It consists of scattered farms rising to the moors above. There is no real centre to Eldroth, though the Settle road links the side roads and the two most important clusters of buildings. One is based on Eldroth Hall, and includes the Village Hall; the other is the Church and School House, the telephone kiosk and a post-box, set at a junction where a footpath from Austwick meets the road to Kettlebeck, Ravenshaw and Black Bank. Eldroth is a working farming community.

The Village Hall and the Church stand for the social and spiritual sides of life, and the Church is far older. It also represents the determination, generosity and forethought of past members of the community. The building they provided was no architectural extravagance, but a modest, sober and manageable Chapel - which reflected their concern for the faith of the Church of England and for a sound basic education. Eldroth Church was built about 1627, because, in the words of its benefactors, it was *'about two or three miles distant from the Parish Church and having such waters between them and their Parish Church as many times are not passable neither on horseback nor foot.'* Gyles Moore of Eldroth and John Radcliffe of Keasden, together with others, built a *'Chappel or School house'*, *'to have prayers read and children taught there.'* The school seems to have been the most important reason for the survival and upkeep of the building over the centuries, though generations of Eldroth people have been baptised there and Divine Service, on alternate Sundays, has in the end outlasted the school.

Moore's gift of land in 1627 produced 30 shillings a year, and this bequest is still paid in the form of an annual rent charge, though it now goes to Austwick School. Other bequests over the years added to the income of the school. In 1701, Arthur Ingleby gave £1 annually for teaching three poor children, and in 1722 Thomas Lawson left £50 for the use of the school at Eldroth - *'for the free teaching and instructing of four of the poorest and most indigent children in the Township of Lawkland.'* In 1759, Thomas Green left £50 for Eldroth School (and £50 for Austwick) to teach *'five poor boys or girls.'* In 1874, the endowment of the School or Chapel was said to consist of five acres of land, let at £10 a year, together with the bequests already mentioned. The income was applied solely to the School. Three years later, two distinct charities were established: the Eldroth Chapel Charity and the Eldroth School Charity. All these references show that Moore's original intention was being carried out, and that worship and teaching were still going on on the site of his 1627 deed. There is further evidence of local concern in 1813, when the roof was *'upon examination found to be in a very ruined state.'* Robert Stackhouse was appointed to raise the money and supervise repairs at a *'Meeting of the inhabitants of Lawkland Township.'* The bill came to £10-4s-6d, and included the repair of *'sundry forms and a table - 14s-6d'*, as well as the major roof repairs.

All this time the Church served as Chapel, School and school house, according to Thomas Barker, who was present at a Charity Commission Enquiry in 1870. It was in 1840 that what we now call the School House was built by subscription, and at the time of the 1870 meeting a teacher was living there. The house had a cloakroom used by the children, and an oven, *'which is useful for drying their clothes and cooking or warming their food.'* From this date until 1947, the school was held in the Church, which was licensed by the Bishop for Common Prayer, preaching and administering the Holy Communion and Holy Baptism, *'on condition that the portion inside the Communion rails shall not be used for the purposes of the school.'* A major restoration took place in 1861, when a new roof was put on, the porch and a fireplace were added and the unusual chimney was built. This is the building in the modern print. The East Window is original, as are the windows on the back of the Church.

The School closed in 1947, and the pupils, the land and the endowments were amalgamated with Austwick School. The School House was later sold. For the first time, Eldroth Church was a purely ecclesiastical building, and it was refurnished in 1953. The closing of the School meant that the building was not as easily maintained, the stove stayed unlit and the Church was more liable to damage from the elements. Severe flooding in the late 1970s destroyed the soft furnishings and set up dry rot.