

Old Rectory,
Ewelme,
Oxford.

July 1950.

Dear Friend of Ewelme Church,

In the report sent to you in January, we said that we hoped to hold our Service of Thanksgiving in June but there have been various delays and unexpected repairs so that the date now fixed is ~~Sunday, September 24th~~ at 3 p.m. If you are able to be present and would like a seat or seats reserved in the Church, will you, please, let me know before September 15th.

Saturday. Sept. 23rd

We are waiting for the tower and North porch to be coppered. The woodwork is all finished, the new clock installed and the bells in place. As the bells could not be moved out through the West door, the early Victorian deal screen at the West end had to be taken down and this opened up a vista of the Church, unseen for a hundred years, revealing the original plan of the architect. We have not replaced the screen but instead have hung curtains from the apex of the belfry arch which can be drawn when required.

A mullion of one of the clerestory windows fell and broke a choir stall. On examination, other stonework needed attention and in addition we have had to spend over £100 on having many of the windows re-lead and broken glass replaced. Our Architect assures us that the fabric of the Church is now in really good order and it is wonderful to be within sight of the end of the great task which you have helped us to complete. We are also within sight of getting all the money we require and are deeply grateful to you for your help.

The accounts have been audited half-yearly and detailed balance sheets will be available in Church on September 24th. These will shew how the money, just about the £5000 we asked for, has been spent but will not show what is beyond price, the enhanced beauty and dignity of the Church and the love, care and sacrifice which have made this restoration possible.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret G. Somervell,

Hon. Secretary and Treasurer.

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EWEELME CHURCH

Insert in envelope accompanying
9747 in EG. 3.

No date (Dec. '36)

To the Editor of the Times

Sir- Will you allow me to make an appeal in your columns, on behalf of Ewelme Church? The whole of its roof has been so severely damaged by the death watch beetle that immediate restoration is essential. Our architect estimates that we shall need about £3,500 to do this properly. We are a small community of 469 people. We till the land and grow watercress for a living. From the village and neighborhood sums have been received which, with a grant from the diocese, amount to £680. To raise the remainder a much wider appeal is necessary.

Ewelme is remembered by most people for its own natural charm and for the group of buildings comprising the school, almshouse ("for 13 poor men"), and church, which form a combination unique of its kind in the unity and completeness of the whole and in the beauty of its setting.

Begun in the year 1432, it was completed and endowed by William De La Pole, 1st Duke of Suffolk, and Alice, his wife. She was the daughter of Thomas Chaucer, son of Geoffrey Chaucer, the poet, and widow of the Earl of Salisbury, Commander-in-Chief of the Army in France, who was killed at the siege of Orleans in 1428. She had thus married successively two of two of the most distinguished Englishmen of the time. Thomas Chaucer came into possession of the Manor of Ewelme at the end of the 14th century. He fought at Agincourt, taking with him to France men from Ewelme. Member of Parliament for Oxfordshire, several times Speaker of the House of Commons, Ambassador to France, negotiator of the treaty of Troyes, he held high office under Richard II, Henry IV, and Henry V.

Ewelme is thus intimately connected with the fortunes of the Chaucer and ill-fated Suffolk families. The first Duke of Suffolk was murdered at the instigation of his political opponents. The 2nd Duke, John, married Elizabeth Plantagenet, sister of Edward IV, and so the descendants of the poet Chaucer had risen to be princes, and one of them, John, Earl of Lincoln,

was actually named as heir to the throne by Richard III. He and his two brothers all met with violent deaths, and with them the male line of the De La Poles became extinct. In 1605 James I united the Rectory of Ewelme to the Regius Professorship of Divinity at Oxford and the Master of the Almshouse to the Regius Professor of Medicine. The former arrangement came to an end in 1872; the latter still exists.

Among the treasures of the church are:- The well-known beautiful alabaster tomb of Alice, 1st Duchess of Suffolk, "a monument as fine in taste and as masterly in execution as any of our alabaster works", and of great interest nationally because it is in all probability a product of the school of sculpture that flourished at Nottingham during the 15th century; the tomb of Thomas Chaucer with its 24 shields and 2 perfect brasses; the oak and chestnut roof of the chapel decorated with many carved figures of winged angels and the Sacred Monogram; the lofty and elaborate font cover, said to be the earliest of its kind; the Screen; 16 ancient brasses dating from 1434; and a number of smaller objects of archeological interest. All these have been well cared for for 500 years. Of these we are the present custodians, and we ask for financial help to ensure their safety by restoration to its former soundness of the roof of the sacred building which houses them. We still want about £2,800. Our appeal has the approval of the Bishop of Oxford.

I shall be glad to receive and acknowledge any contribution that may be sent to me.

A. T. HUMPHREYS,

Rector of Ewelme.

[A picture appears on p. 18].