

THE COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON'S CHURCH, NORTH STREET, BRIGHTON

A complete descriptive list of its monuments, with brief notes on the building and its contents, made on 17 October, 1963.

By RONALD F. NEWMAN

Erected in 1871 in Gothic style, the building replaced a chapel founded in 1761 by Selina, Countess of Huntingdon. It consists of a large hall of six bays with galleries on three sides and a shallow sanctuary, lighted by a large five-light window of good tracery, on the other. The two western bays contain an entrance vestibule below the deep gallery with a second gallery above that. Above the entrance doors in the W. wall are a pair of tall three-light windows of poor design and a large *rosace*. The roof has been raised and a clerestory inserted to good effect.

At the N.E. corner of the hall is a vestry with white-painted, panelled (?) walls, one window and a back entrance. Among its furniture are two chairs and a mirror bequeathed by the Countess. On the walls are photographs of former ministers: Joseph Sortain, B.A. (1832-60), John Benjamin Figgis, M.A. (1861-98),¹ E. A. Dowsett (1899-1907), and W. Downham (1908-). There are also three engravings: two of the Countess of Huntingdon—one, bearing a facsimile signature and the date 13 June 178-, by J. Cross after F. Hurlstone (*Catalogue of Engraved British Portraits*, no 1, where it is said to have been published by R. Baynes in 1824), and the other, published by Carrington Bowles after J. Russell (*op. cit.*, no 2), presented to Hartwell O. Grissell by the subject's great-great-grandson on 17 April, 1871. The third is a mezzotint by H. Dawe, after a drawing by Mr. Hardy of Joseph Sortain, B.A., published by W. H. Mason, Repository of Arts, 1 Ship St., Brighton (*op. cit.* no 1).

On a window sill in the S. nave wall (that upon which the plaster cast of the bronze medallion from monument 5 (*see below*) is placed) is another engraving of the Countess of Huntingdon. It shows her portrait medallion from the monument which she erected to her husband in Ashby-De-La-Zouche church, Leicestershire. The drawing was made by T. H. Maguire and engraved by M. & N. Hanhart; the original monument was the work of J. M. Rysbrack. This engraving is not included in the *Catalogue of Engraved British Portraits*, II, published by the British Museum in 1910.

SCHEDULE OF MONUMENTS

In NAVE:—On N. wall

(1) Recording the renovation of the chancel and organ in 1950,

¹ *Sic*; see also p. 66.

with a legacy from Mr. Hugh Snelling, 60 years connected with this church.

A very small, rectangular horizontal brass, its surface inscribed in black enamelled characters.

- (2) To the memory of those killed "For King and Country/1914-1919", and of those who served in the Great War.

Three upright rectangular panels of which the centre bears the names of the dead in black lettering with a gilt inscription above; each panel has bevelled edges and an ogival, trefoil top; the whole set in a rectangular horizontal frame with a moulded and chamfered cornice rising to a triangular top centre above a triangular pedimented panel (over the whole) bearing a further gilded inscription; the entire tablet executed in varnished, light-stained oak.

- (3) Charles Heisch, b. 2 August, 1820, d. 2 January, 1892.

Rectangular horizontal brass which has a dull surface with an inlaid, black enamelled inscription, red majuscules and figures, enclosed within a red border-fillet.

- (4) Emma Pace, d. 27 January 1919, aged 84, a life-long worshipper here, and to her sister, Harriett Berral Pace, b. July 1827, d. October 1913, "a faithful and zealous labourer for her Saviour".

Rectangular horizontal brass with an inscription in Gothic characters beneath a central Latin cross and enclosed in a simple border fillet, all inlaid in black enamel. *Signed* (in lower left-hand corner): CULN/GAWTHORP & SONS, LONDON/.

- (5) John Benjamin Figgis, M.A., T.C.D., b. 6 July 1837, minister here 1861-97, d. 3 September 1916. *Erected* "by friends far & near".

Upright rectangular tablet of white marble bearing the inscription beneath an oval bronze medallion portrait against a sunken background with a plain border; this bas-relief depicts his head, turned half toward dexter, face in old age, with short, straight hair, parted on left, side whiskers joining a moustache, a clean-shaven chin and incised eyes, wearing an open, fur-collared overcoat, a closed coat, upstanding cassock and a clerical collar; the tablet flanked by pilasters of polished, rose-pink alabaster supporting a moulded entablature with a broken, segmental pediment whose scrolled volutes are joined by a swag of bay with leaves forming pendants at either side of the pilasters; the whole on a rectangular horizontal base with a projecting ledge and a chamfered soffit on chamfered, bay-leaf carved, rectangular horizontal corbels. *Signed and dated* (on truncated neck of the bronze): Herbert Hampton S^c/1918/.

A framed plaster cast (the original model?) of this relief is preserved in the church. It bears a small brass tablet, incised: REV. J. B. FIGGIS, M.A./BRIGHTON/.

- (6) Esther Ann Stepney, Sunday School teacher here, d. 7 May 1914, aged 62.

Inscribed, rectangular horizontal tablet of white marble with a stilted, segmental top centre, and with its lower angles splayed outward to form lateral, rectangular projections; the lower centre has been removed in order to leave the extremities as laterally breaking, rectangular horizontal corbels to whose lateral projections the lower angles of the tablet are outwardly splayed; on a rectangular horizontal, dark grey background. *Signed* (in lower right-hand corner of the background, in incised and gilded lettering): PHILLIPS.

- (7) The Rt Hon. Lady Frances Hastings, 3rd daughter of Theophilus, 7th Earl of Huntingdon and Frances, his 2nd wife (daughter of Francis Fowler Levison¹, of Harnage Grange, Shrops., adopted heir to his uncle, Sir Richard Levison of Titelham, Staffs., maternal granddaughter of Peter, Baron Kinderton, of Cheshire,) b. 9(?) January 1695, d. 25 January 1760, aged 56 years, 15 days.

A lozenge-shaped brass with foliated edges. Removed here from Spa Fields Chapel, London.

- (8) Selina, Countess of Huntingdon [1707-1791]. Recording the dedication of the circular window in the front of this church to her memory on 20 March 1871, by the congregation of Spa Fields Chapel, London.

Rectangular horizontal brass with a black enamelled inscription within a double border-fillet which encloses a trailing floral ornament.

- (9) Joseph Sortain, A.B., b. 20 July 1809, 28 years [(1832-60) minister] here, d. 16 July 1860, after a prolonged illness. *Erected* by his congregation.

Inscribed rectangular horizontal tablet of white marble flanked by pilasters on large, rectangular horizontal bases with moulded and splayed edges and chamfered, fluted soffits—each with a plain, rectangular horizontal apron; the pilasters have foliage-carved chamfered capitals supporting a plain, broken frieze, a chamfered cornice, heavily moulded with echinous and leaf-ornament, and a low, stilted, triangular pediment which has stilted, triangular *accroteria*; the whole set against a rectangular horizontal background of grey marble with a triangular top. *Signed* (in lower left-hand corner of the background, in incised and gilded lettering): BENNETT/.

In SANCTUARY:—On N. side (on E. wall of the alcove).

- (10) Miss Durrant, 31 years teacher in, and later superintendent, of the Sunday School here, d. 22 December 1844, aged 51. *Erected* by Joseph Sortain, A.B., minister, and members of the congregation.

Small, rectangular horizontal tablet of marble bearing the

inscription; having a narrow horizontal channel between the top and its stilted, triangular pediment; against a rectangular horizontal grey background with a triangular top.

The last service was held in the chapel on Sunday, 25 September, 1966 (*Brighton & Hove Gazette and Southern Weekly News*, 30 September, 1966). The building and its site were afterwards sold to a "development" company and the proceeds applied to the use of other chapels in the Connection. On 20 November, 1969 demolition of the tower was begun following a complaint to the town authorities, based on the opinion of an independent surveyor, that it was a danger to public safety. This opinion, however, was not shared by the Borough Surveyor (*Brighton Herald*, no. 8524 21 November, 1969). The body of the chapel still remains, pending a decision as to the future use of the site.

I am much obliged to Miss E. Greenhill, of Brighton Reference Library, to Messrs. Elleray and Prescott, of Worthing and Littlehampton Public Libraries respectively, and F. T. Newman, for their kindness in providing details concerning the history of the building.

¹ *Sic.* G.E. C[ockeyne]'s *Complete Peerage*, vol. 6 (1926), p. 660, gives Francis Leveson Fowler.