

Archdeacon Malcolm Graham - Vicar of Trentham

John Malcolm Alexander Graham was born in Margate in 1851. After graduating from Brasenose College Oxford, and ordination as deacon, he served as a vicar at St Paul's Burslem for nearly 20 years. After a few years in Dorset, he became Archdeacon of Stoke on Trent and Vicar of Trentham in 1908, when he succeeded the Reverend Piggott.

He was married to Florence Louisa Coghill from Newcastle and they had four children. On arriving in Trentham, when he was 57, he lived with his wife, plus three female servants, in the Parsonage behind the Mausoleum. In 1911, a new Vicarage was built for him on The Ley. The higher ground was thought to be more beneficial to Mrs Graham's health.

The Archdeacon had found favour with the 4th Duke, but, after he died in 1913, the 5th Duke was not so amenable. The old Duke had promised that there would be no golf, fishing, or boating on a Sunday. However, the new Duke was happy for the golf course to be open on Sunday morning and other activities to take place in the afternoon, as he did not share the Archdeacon's fears about the secularisation of Sunday.

Another prolonged dispute related to the band playing in the nearby bandstand on Sundays and he finally had to admit defeat. Nor was he, despite vigorous protests, able to stop the Duke from allowing the Gardens to apply for a licence to sell alcoholic drinks.

He played an important role in supporting parishioners through the dark days of the war and the uncertainty of jobs and homes, following the departure of the Duke and sale of the estate in 1919.

He had to pay £3 insurance for the church against Zeppelin attack, to which he objected.

He chaired the public meeting to discuss the war memorial on 21st March 1919. The Sentinel reported him as saying that they all felt that they could not allow the services of the men from the village, who had fought for them and in many cases given lives for them, ever to be forgotten. So they needed to try to devise the best means of keeping those names in remembrance by making a suitable memorial, particularly to those who had made the great sacrifice. He officiated at the service prior to the unveiling of the war memorial on 2nd October 1921.

Archdeacon Graham was a popular and influential man in Trentham and throughout North Staffordshire, but tragedy struck in December 1931, when he was knocked down by a motor car by Ash Green Corner and died later at Longton Cottage Hospital. Eighty clergymen attended his funeral, conducted by the Bishop of Lichfield with the Bishop of Stafford reading prayers. There were too many mourners to fit into the church.

In addition to his years of distinguished service for this area, his obituary drew attention to his sporting interests and artistic talents. "An Oxford Blue, he was an exceptional athlete, a remarkable skater, a skilled tennis player and a golfer of considerable accomplishment... Another facet of his exceptional characteristics was his pursuit of art... He contributed to the Parson Painters exhibitions and to those of the North Staffordshire Arts Society... His loss is uncommonly great."

A long time was spent in choosing a suitable memorial for such a well-loved man. The Graham Vestry at Trentham Church was completed in 1933 and was dedicated by the Bishop of Lichfield on 10th September in the same year.



Archdeacon Graham playing on the Trentham golf links on his 80th Birthday.

CORONER'S TRIBUTE.

High tribute to the qualities of the late Venerable John Malcolm Alexander Graham, Vicar of Trentham and Archdeacon of Stoke-on-Trent, was paid by the City Coroner (Mr. W. M. Huntbach), at the inquiry at Longton Cottage Hospital to-day into the regretted death of the Archdeacon, who was fatally injured in a road accident at Trentham.

A verdict of "Accidentally run into by a motor-car" was recorded.

The Coroner told the jury that about 4 p.m. on Wednesday the Archdeacon left home to pay parochial visits according to his custom. About 7.30 he called at the Post Office, Ash Green, and it was about ten minutes later, while using a flashlight and apparently searching for a gate which led to the Vicarage, that he was knocked down by a car.

Mr. Ronald M. Ford, of Lancaster-road, Newcastle, said the Archdeacon, his uncle, was 80 last birthday. He believed his eyesight was failing somewhat, but his hearing was quite good.

AN EYE-WITNESS.

Miss Constance Harvey, of Stone-road, Stone, said she was walking on the footpath in Stone-road, Ash Green, towards Stone.

I saw Mr. Graham on the opposite side of the road and coming from the direction of Ash Green Corner (continued the witness). He was near to the channel of the road, and using a flashlight, apparently searching for the small gateway leading to his house. His back was towards Ash Green Corner, and I also saw the lights of a car which was then near Ash Green Corner, having come from the direction of Hanford, about 20 or 30 yards behind him.

At the time a motor lorry was approaching from the direction of Stone, and it was by its lights that I could see Mr. Graham. I did not actually see him knocked down, but heard the noise caused by the collision. I ran across the road and found a car had stopped near Mr. Graham. I rendered what assistance I could. I do not remember hearing any hooot.

DRIVER'S EVIDENCE.

Collision Where Road was Darkened by Trees.

Sergeant F. Saunders said there was a rough grass verge, but the gateway abutted practically directly on to the road. It was a very dark night. The spot, which witness had passed only a few minutes before the accident, was darkened by overhanging trees, and the nearest light was 60 yards or more away.

Mr. Stanley George Chadderton, corn miller, of Greenbank House, Springfields, Trent Vale, said he was driving a small saloon car towards Stone, accompanied by Mr. Cyril W. Ball, of Trentham-road, Oakhill. He was travelling at about 20 miles an hour, and on the extreme left of the road. He went over more to the left when he saw the lorry coming. He thought he had dimmed his lights. The lorry's lights were moderate, but they did to some extent interfere with his line of vision.

He was about to pass the lorry when he felt a bump. He applied his brakes and stopped at once. He found he had collided with a gentleman who appeared to be badly hurt. He was carried into a house near by, and witness asked his companion to phone for a doctor while he himself communicated with the police. He had seen no one on the road prior to the accident.

Wilfred Bentley, of Birmingham, driver of the 30-cwt. lorry said he had just slowed down on coming to the bend, so that his vehicle could not have been making much noise.

Dr. F. R. Oliver said death was due to a fractured base of the skull and shock. There was also a compound fracture of the right tibia and fibula. Archdeacon Graham never regained consciousness, and he did not think he could have felt anything.

CORONER'S TRIBUTE.

"I have had many cases to inquire into but this is one of the most painful," said the Coroner. "I have had the pleasure of knowing this lovable gentleman for something like half-a-century. When I was a boy he came to school and played cricket against us, and I have often met him on the cricket field. All through his life he 'played cricket,' and I can hardly trust my voice to speak about him personally."

He thought they might take comfort, added the Coroner, in the fact that probably the Archdeacon did not suffer at all, and also that he was the victim of misadventure and not of the negligence of anybody.

The verdict having been returned, Mr. T. E. Spraggon, of Newcastle, who appeared for the driver of the car, expressed the deepest sympathy of Mr. Chadderton and his passenger, and the Coroner and jury joined in condolence.

"I feel," said the Coroner, "that North Staffordshire has suffered a great loss which it will feel severely."



A MUCH BELOVED ARCHDEACON.

YOUTHFUL in mind and outlook, active and still athletic, despite his eighty years, the Venerable Malcolm Graham, Archdeacon of Stoke-on-Trent, has passed from a full, busy and beneficent life as the result of a motor accident. The news has come as a profound shock to all of us, for he was greatly beloved throughout the Diocese and in a still wider sphere.

His years at Burslem, where his chief lieutenant was Dr. Stuart, Dean of Carlisle, were a vigorous and highly successful ministry. Comparative retirement in Wiltshire, for recuperation, were followed by the still more responsible work of Archdeacon of a great industrial district, and he has continued it with undiminished vigour and truly faithful service.

An Oxford Blue, he was an exceptional athlete, a remarkable skater until a few years ago, a skilled tennis player, and a golfer of considerable accomplishment. Another facet of his exceptional characteristics was his pursuit of art with more than the average amateur's accomplishment. A friend of Brabazon, he, too, painted in the impressionist manner, and was young and receptive to the last in his artistic outlook. He contributed to the Parson Painters' Exhibitions and to those of the North Staffordshire Arts Society. In all his spheres of activity he was affectionately received. His loss is uncommonly great.



Long procession of clergy, headed by the Bishop of Lichfield, at the funeral of Archdeacon Malcolm Graham, at Trentham this afternoon.

THE FUNERAL OF ARCHDEACON GRAHAM.

Great Assembly at Trentham.

MEMORIAL SERVICE.

A great assembly, including many clergy, from all parts of the Diocese of Lichfield, paid an impressive last tribute to the Venerable Malcolm Graham, Vicar of Trentham and Archdeacon of Stoke since 1908, at the funeral at Trentham Church this afternoon.

Archdeacon Graham, who was eighty years of age, was walking near his residence on Wednesday night when he was accidentally knocked down by a motor-car, and he died the same night in Longton Cottage Hospital.

Although the Memorial Service was held in Stoke Parish Church at the same hour, the little church at Trentham was filled long before the service was due to commence, and so great was the number attending that the road to the cemetery was lined throughout by parishioners and other mourners.

The Bishop of Lichfield conducted the service, which was of a simple but impressive character. The prayers were read by the Bishop of Stafford.

The chief mourners were the Rev. Eric Graham (who read the Lesson) and Mr. Kenneth Graham, sons of Archdeacon Graham. Major Graham, another son, is with the 2nd Worcesters at Malta.

The hymns chosen were "Jesu, Lover of my soul" and "Rock of Ages."

A large number of mourners had also assembled at the graveside, and joined in the hymns "Abide with Me" and "May the Grace of God, Our Saviour." The Bishop of Lichfield having conducted the last rites, a long procession filed past the grave, including clergy from fifty-three parishes.

STOKE MEMORIAL SERVICE.

The memorial service to Archdeacon Graham at Stoke Parish Church this afternoon was conducted by the Rector of Stoke (the Rev. Preb. D. H. Crick) and the Rector of Hanley (the Rev. H. A. Tamplin), assisted by the Vicar of Tunstall (the Rev. A. M. Coxon), the Rector of Keele (the Rev. B. Grimwood), and the Rev. I. D. Edwards, curate at Stoke.

In his address, the Rector said the late Archdeacon had the heart of a child, in that he exemplified trust and goodwill. He was a man of God furnished unto all good works.

The service opened with the Pilgrim's Hymn, "Who would true valour see," the other hymns being "Jesus lives" and "Let saints on earth." The service closed with Chopin's Marche Funebre.