



The Church of Saint-Quentin Hamlet/Village of Aire-sur-la-Lys

The hamlet (technically a village in English), originally had the name of Blety. It has a remarkable little church which deserves to be better known.

A church dedicated to Saint-Quentin existed in Blety from the beginning of the ninth century. The original burnt down, but was re-built and consecrated by the bishop of Therouanne in 1023.

The village church is mentioned in the Charter of Philippe I (1075) which confirmed the possessions and rights of the Collegial Church of Saint-Pierre.

An under-curate so-designated by the Chapter served the parish. In 1535, the church acquired the right to church bells and in 1577 to a baptismal font.

In the sixteenth century (between 1563 and 1598), the Roman nave was enlarged by two gothic naves built on the east and north sides.

In 1792, the parish was closed ; the last curate being the abbot Desprez. Saint-Quentin became a branch of Saint-Pierre. It seems that the church was re-opened to the cult of Saint-Quentin from 1797. It returned to being a parish around 1820.

In the nineteenth century, important works were undertaken under the leadership of Monsignor Scott, the doyen of Aire. The old Roman nave was replaced with a neo-gothic one. The bell-tower was moved and a new one built above the porch. This was destroyed by lightning on 8th June, 1914. It was replaced in 1924.

The church of Saint-Quentin was classified as a historic monument in 1989.

INTERIOR

The church today is neo-gothic in style with two naves, the vaults of which are divided by beams and tracery.

The keystones of the arches display sculpted figures :

- among them the Trinity,
- Saint Quentin, and Saint Omer.

At the bottom of the choir, maintenance works in 1998 revealed a funerary niche dating from the gothic nave of the sixteenth century.

Above, the window, hidden in the nineteenth century, was a Christ Crucified, given by a parishioner and taken from a ruined calvary formerly found on a tomb in the hamlet.

The choir is lit by four glass windows. They are a remarkable example of a translucent style of decoration, popular in the first half of the nineteenth century, but rarely found today. These stained-glass windows show a progression of simple, geometric motifs of various kinds : Greek crosses, eight-pointed stars, circles, carved lozenge-shaped rosettes. The technique is crude. These works in glass are dated 1851, 1854, and 1881, but although late the name of the master glassworker is unknown.

This type of glass work is unusual because there are no decorative figures. Patrick Wintrebert has noted, " in spite of its modesty, this example of traditional glass work offers a significant contribution to the nineteenth century renaissance in glass working. "

At the entrance to the choir, a paving slab of white marble recalls " the gift of Mme Demeure Wayens " ; she paid for the paving of the central aisle.

In the choir, the font consists of three features : a base of claws dating from the thirteenth century. The support for the basin has an ornamentation of carved latticework. The basin itself has a relief of personages with crossed arms and apparently belonging to Roman times.

In the main nave, against the pillar are Saint-Antoine and Saint Eloi.

In the nave to the north there are two gilded reliquaries on the altar. Against the wall, between two windows is the martyrdom of Saint-Quentin. A window, gift of Mgr Scott, has his armour and motto, " Regi patriae que fideli " (faithful to king and fatherland).

A grand picture of the Crucifixion, somewhat primitive, is to be restored by the Historic Monuments. The artist is unknown and the work unsigned.

In this nave, the keystones of the arch have the arms of Aire and of the Chapter. The date 1598 is the evidence of when this part of the church was built.

The Road to the Cross was inaugurated in April, 2003. It is the work of Jean-Georges Capelain. These pictures are painted according to the colours of the rainbow, symbol of the alliance of God with men at the end of the Flood.

The present bell, called Leonie Marie, was baptised on the 21. September, 1924. The god-parents were M. Arthur SCHOTSMANS and Mme Adolphe SALOME.

EXTERIOR

Outside, a pretty carved frieze runs round the two choirs. It represents the animals and signs of the zodiac with the dates of 1563-1567. The date on the gable of the sacristy is 1616. The north-facing gable, lightly set back from the gate way and with a wall of " red bars ", was restored in 1995.