

## The Reverend John Scandrett MA (Cantab)

1862-1908

### Notes made by A D Brindley

I have long had a latent interest in this second cousin which had been implanted by my father who used to say, when I was a boy, 'he would have been a bishop' as his work and service in the East End of London had been one of great devotion. I knew too that, like me, he had been a Pierrepont Scholar but had used an unusual means of journeying from The Brook, Kingsland to Lucton; he went by donkey. Whether this is legend or part or whole truth I do not know but the information probably came from my father who was a contemporary of John.

I have on several occasions looked upon his grave, alongside his father and mother, James and Milbro Scandrett, as the unusual inscription amidst the gravestones in Kingsland churchyard does incite some notice

His sister, Charlotte, is buried with him four years later as his wife never, I suspect, wished to return to Kingsland. She was a miss Wade, who apparently was not enamoured with the rural village at the turn of the century.

The bound volumes of the Leominster News, now in Berrow's House, the offices of the Hereford Times, has produced some very interesting news of this local scholar. Here is a summary of this funeral notice:

'He was the only son of James Scandrett and his death has occasioned profound sorrow in Kingsland and district. He had been in failing health for the last year or two but appeared to be better and on the evening of 25<sup>th</sup> November, he conducted business with his church wardens. Next day, however, he unexpectedly and peacefully passed away. Many expressions of sorrow have been received by his widow, including touching letters from the Bishop of Stepney (Archbishop designate of York) and the Rev Watts Ditchfield, Vicar of Stepney, who was a former colleague at North Row. Several other East End clergy testified to John's unselfishness and loyalty'.

'John Scandrett was a Pierrepont Scholar and the only one to carry off an exhibition of £300 to the Universities since the foundation of the school (1708). He proceeded to Queens College, Cambridge and graduated BA, later to receive his MA. His first curacy was at St Stephen's, North Bow, and here his work was so much appreciated that, on leaving, he was presented with a gold watch and a valuable set of books'.

'He was presented to the living of St John's, Wapping eight years ago (1900) and it may be said that he spent his life in and for Wapping. His work was his joy. With a large hearted sympathy for the poor and suffering, he identified himself with the varied interest of his parishioners; he was deeply interested in the welfare of children and was dominated by a desire to be useful to all. He was a strong supporter of temperance and other movements and he was a forceful preacher who won the esteem of all classes'.

'He was a member of Stepney Borough Council, Board of Guardians, etc. The restoration of St John's Church with that of the vestry and its surroundings will speak of his interest and work'.

'Preaching on the Sunday following John's death, the vicar of Stepney took his text from Titus 1, 2 and spoke of the loss sustained by the church and parish. The vicar was a friend of John Scandrett and he never knew a more conscientious man, who was loved by all who knew him; he laid down his life for this church and parish'.

'John's body was conveyed from Wapping to Kingsland by train and arrived on Wednesday evening when it was received and placed in the church overnight. The funeral service was conducted by the Rev James Jobling and the lesson read by the Rev R Evans of Eyton. The choir sang Psalm 39 and the hymns were *Through the night of doubt and sorrow* and *Now the labourers task is o'er* Miss Margaret Jobling was the organist and, at the close played *O rest in the Lord*'.

'His father was too ill to attend and was sustained by the widow, who remained with him. Among the mourners were, Miss Scandrett (Charlotte), Miss Wade, sister-in-law, Mrs Brindley, aunt, Miss Brindley, Mr and Mrs Brindley, cousins. John Edwards, Dr Robert Williams, Mrs Nott, Rev J Davies,. Mrs Fitzpatrick, etc'

The wreaths contain some interesting names, for example Stepney Chapter, Mayor of Stepney, Wapping Guardians, Wapping School, Lodge of King Solomon, Ladies of Pier Head (Wapping), Sunday School Scholars, Pery Symonds (sic) MP (?Leominster MP), Organist and Choir, Wapping, Clerks at Fields and Warwick, Children at Cheshunt, his little goddaughter, Joan, his little godson, Eric.

On the following Sunday, Rev James Jobling preached the sermon which is printed in full in The Leominster News. His text came from Acts 7, v60 'And when he had said this he fell asleep' which refers to St Stephen to whom the Rector made several references in likening John Scandrett's example to the saint. John was close to the local Rector and exchanged duties with him.

The Rev James Jobling particularly recalled John's funeral sermon on John Gethin, who was lost with his family on the *Drummond Castle* off Ushant. John used to say that he had two classes of people in Wapping; the poor and the very poor and a population within 24 hours of starving.

When at Wapping, James Jobling heard so many talking of John's goodness. John allowed no-one to be buried on the parish but found the expenses somehow. His parishioners were particularly fond of Watch Night Services, Harvest Festivals and Funerals.

John was taken away like St Stephen and, quoting Charles Kingsley, 'It must be His doing, it is so strange and painful'; also Browning 'Things learnt on earth must be practiced in Heaven'.

'John's own words were like arrows, pointed and heated, they pierced our hearts. He was especially fond of children and he quotes an incident when he was with John and his wife on Tyneside, where they had gone to help with John's health'.

In conclusion, on the wreath from the local Wapping children was written

'God gave him to us  
To teach us to pray  
To love that dear Saviour  
He is with today'

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**John Scandrett** was presented to the living of St John's, Wapping in 1900. This was celebrated in an article in the Leominster News and North West Herefordshire & Radnorshire Advertiser on Friday 03 August 1900.

**THE REV. J. SCANDRETT'S PREFERMENT.** Old Luctonians and friends of the Rev. John Scandrett will be glad to learn that he has been presented by the Bishop of London, to the living of Wapping, as successor to the late Dr. Carter, who has filled the benefice for the last twenty years. The living is a Rectory and carries with it a Fellowship of Zion College, and also the Whitenwall Lectureship. Mr. Scandrett is the son of Mr. James Scandrett, agent to the Rev. R. Evans, of Eyton Hall. Both father and son were scholars of Lucton, and the latter carried off the annual Exhibition of £300 to Queen's College, Cambridge, where in due course he graduated B.A.,

and M.A., and was afterwards ordained by the present Archbishop of Canterbury. He has been since working in the East End of London, where he has made many friends, as a proof of which he has been the recipient of several testimonials and other marks of esteem.

We quote the following from the testimony of one of his leading parishioners in his first parish, that of St. Stephens, North Bow. "His thoughtful, encouraging way at all times, his disinterested and self-denying labours among the very poor, and his ever kind attention to the sick and dying has endeared him to very many. It is very encouraging to Mr. Scandrett to see that his work has been appreciated and gratifying to his friends to know that he has obtained 'his preferment by merit and that it has been given to him at the hands of one so well in a position to judge of his capabilities and fitness for such an important charge. We heartily congratulate him on his success, and hope he may be spared many years, with health and strength, to continue his useful work. It may be said that he spent his life in and for Wapping. His work was his joy. With a large-hearted sympathy for the poor and suffering, he identified himself with the varied interest of his parishioners; he was deeply interested in the welfare of children and was dominated by a desire to be useful to all. He was a strong supporter of temperance and other movements and he was a forceful preacher who won the esteem of all classes. He was a member of Stepney Borough Council, Board of Guardians, etc.

The restoration of St John's Church with that of the vestry and its surroundings will speak of his interest and work. But his work and his life were cut short by ill health. He and Jane were only married for seven years. As Anthony Brindley records: He had been in failing health for the last year or two but appeared to be better and on the evening of 25th November, he conducted business with his church wardens. Next day, however, he unexpectedly and peacefully passed away. Many expressions of sorrow have been received by his widow, including touching letters from the Bishop of Stepney (Archbishop designate of York) and the Rev Watts Ditchfield, Vicar of Stepney, who was a former colleague at North Row. Several other East End clergy testified to John's unselfishness and loyalty.

This was reflected in the following article which appeared in a special supplement to the Leominster News on Friday 11th December 1908 and reported the sermon given at John's funeral in full – surely proof, were it needed, of the esteem in which the man was held in the area where he grew up.

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#### **THE LATE REV. J. SCANDRETT. M.A. FUNERAL SERMON AT KINGSLAND.**

At the morning service, last Sunday, at St. Michael and All Angels' Church, Kingsland, touching reference was made to the death of the Rev. J. Scandrett, and the service was of an impressive tone. The relatives and friends present included the bereaved widow, with whom universal sympathy has been felt. She did not attend the funeral but remained at home with the father of the deceased, seeking, in the midst her great sorrow, to comfort him in the trying hour. The Rev. Jobling preached, selecting for his text the words " And when he had said this fell asleep" (Acts. vii., 60). These words, marked, describe the peaceful end of the young Christian martyr, St. Stephen. All know why I have chosen this text this morning. There is one thought and one occupying all our hearts and minds, the loss of our dear brother, John Scandrett, who fell asleep in Jesus on the 26th November at Wapping Rectory, and was in Kingsland Churchyard by the side of his mother on Thursday last, amid many signs of deepest sorrow and sympathy. How bravely he fought the disease for months, and continued at the post of duty until the end. Alas! That it conquered, and we are struck dumb by the loss of a tenderly loved friend, an earnest student of the Word of God, a devoted and faithful preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, ardent temperance and social reformer. It is unspeakable sorrow, and one would fain be hushed and still and speak only to his God and ours. A feeling of pained surprise oppresses us as it oppressed the early

Church when the brave young deacon, the strong "was carried to his burial by devout men who made great lamentation over him." The removal of our dear young brother - I call him young because he was only 46—is a special affliction. He was often associated with our work here, and next to his own parish in Wapping we enjoyed his ministrations more than others. He came readily and served us nobly.

When he was curate of Bow and came from time to time to spend his holidays with his dear parents, he always found his way to the vestry of the Parish Church, took his place by my side, and volunteered to do anything in the service of the Church. We loved him and looked for his appearing with eagerness and his earnest voice was frequently heard within the Church of his baptism. His brave, quickening words will live and throb in our memories for many days to come. One sermon is still well remembered by you all, preached on the occasion of the loss of John Gethin, with his wife and family in the wreck of the Drummond Castle off Ushant, in June 1896. A relative of Gethin, writing to the aged and broken-hearted father this week, when trying to pour some balm into the wound, reminded him how his son had poured heavenly consolations into their hearts in their dire calamity.

When he was appointed Rector of Wapping it was my privilege to exchange duty with him for a few weeks each autumn, and it gave me frequent opportunities of seeing the results of his unsparing faithfulness and strenuous toil as a parish priest. How different will be the lot of his successor, with rectory, church, and schools all renovated and beautified during his brief ministry! I have told you more than once here of the splendid way in which he was facing the duties of a most difficult East End parish. Wapping being practically an island was cut off from all access to the rich slummer (sic) from the West End, so that he did not obtain much charitable assistance for his poor as came to neighbouring parishes, and therefore he had to put his hand very deeply into his own pocket. He used to say "that he had two classes of people in his parish, the poor and the very poor, and that he had a population within 24 hours of starvation."

If time permitted I could give you many beautiful testimonies of the way in which he saved whole families from want and ruin. One morning I was passing the long, narrow, principal street, and I came across three women who were talking together. I asked them if they ever found their way to the parish church, and one replied. "Yes, Sir, we love our little parson because he is kind to the poor." There are three things his parishioners were very fond of a watch-night service on New Year's Eve, a harvest festival, and a funeral. A funeral is a real luxury with them, and it is most remarkable the interest they take in these melancholy functions. Mr. Scandrett made it a rule that no member of his congregation should ever be buried by the parish. If there was no one able or willing to bear the expense of the interment he raised the money somehow, and gave the deceased as good a funeral as any member of the congregation would be likely to have. He therefore deserved a very good one for himself.

The Bishop and clergy, the Mayor and his fellow-Councillors of Stepney, the Churchwardens and parishioners of Wapping have done their utmost to honour him, and here in Kingsland "devout men carried him to his grave and made great lamentation over him ". The removal of the far-seeing, brave-hearted St Stephen, when all eyes were turned upon him, when he was felt to be the man for the hour, must have been nothing short of a tragedy. Alas! this young and elect servant of God is suddenly and unexpectedly taken away whilst the work he seemed specially fitted to accomplish was little more than begun. It must be confessed that to the church that swift extinction of service was painfully and mysteriously premature. But we remember for our comfort that St. Stephen's martyrdom was a moment of Divine manifestation and victory. Already the sight of the Saviour had gladdened and fired his soul. It was a fore-glimpse of the glory that was to be revealed to him at the manifestation of the sons of God, it was the Divine guarantee that his life and work were not broken nor ended by death. And His is the great truth we need at such a time, for the bitterest ingredient in our cup of sorrow is that our friend has been taken so young, so suddenly, when the Church and the world needed his services too deeply. It is therefore almost tragic that our friend should be withdrawn to the angels under such circumstances, when his services were so much needed by the poor and the suffering, and the unemployed dockers of Wapping. And did we not know that "every man's life is a plan of God," and that the premature

ending of service by disease is a part of that deep mystery of law, we could hardly say " It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good." With sorely bruised hearts we confess, with Charles Kingsley, " It must be His doing, it is so strange and painful."

Death did not end him, for it did not end the Christ, who is our life. There is no death; what seems so is illusion. Our fellow-toilers and members of the pilgrim host have passed on before us into that eternal realm and enjoy therein a perpetuity of progress and blessedness. It doth not yet appear what we shall be. "Things learnt on earth," Browning says, " we shall practise in heaven." Nothing is lost. That culture of the various faculties, that ripening of the spirit of the man: the saintly worker, the teacher has not ended in a sigh and a grave. The worker outlives his best earthly work. The short life of rapid growth is only the first stage of an unending progress, a preparation for a holier service. Of Stephen it is reported that his opponents could not resist the wisdom with which he spake. His talk was not a luxury but a deed, a warfare, a crusade, an assault, on the forces of evil, a movement towards righteousness.

And I am sure you will agree with me when I say that the late Rector of Wapping preached as a man who had to get something done. His was no mere lip rhetoric. But he sent his truth like arrows, pointed and heated, so that they came burning their way into our hearts. The terrible realism that marked his sermons was always of the conscience, and searched out our sins. How incisively he rebuked our apathy towards the weak, the suffering, and the unfortunate. He was especially fond of little children and their cry for help always met with a prompt response from him. I would like to illustrate this beautiful trait in his character by an incident that I witnessed when he was staying at Tynemouth for his health last summer. When on my holidays I spent a day with him and Mrs. Scandrett. On returning to Newcastle in the evening they accompanied me by ferry boat from Tynemouth Haven. The Nelson, one of the latest battleships, was then lying in the river at Jarrow, and when passing it a young child, eager to see it, rushed across the boat, and a gust of wind carried her hat into the river. The poor child was at once filled with the greatest distress and her parents only made matters worse by reproaching her for not taking more care of her hat. Mr. Scandrett at once went to console her, asked her mother the price of the hat, took out his purse and gave her the amount, asking her to buy the child a new one. Then all was sunshine, and all smiles once more. I have beheld many wonderful things in the famous old Tyne, but never anything to surpass in idyllic beauty the scene of that summer evening in the ferry boat.

I would like to add another word of the same kind. Among the many handsome wreaths that have been laid on his grave there is one of surpassing interest from a family of thankful young children to whom the Rector had given a great deal of temporal help. The simple lines they have written on the card that accompanies it are evidently original and ' run thus— God gave him to us: To teach us to pray, To love that dear Saviour He is with to-day. He rightly felt that no efforts and sacrifices made to promote the welfare of the young would be lost, because the boys and girls of today will be the men and women of the next generation to occupy the pews of our churches, and the kiss he gave to the children at baptism was always pleasing to the parents. The Bible tells us that Stephen was a man 260 "full of faith." "Full of grace and power," "full of the Holy Ghost." Fullness is the mark of the man. His life was full of activity, his speech was full of matter, his being was full of the Spirit of holiness. Does not this suggest the true secret of our deceased friend's power?

He was a man full of faith in Christ, in His redeeming sacrifice, and the certainty of the revelation of the Father's love. He was full of "grace and power." He preached with his whole heart the secret, saving Gospel of Salvation through Jesus Christ, and has prepared us to say with submission concerning his own departure, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." We pray that God's "strong consolations" may sustain all the bereaved ones, the aged father who has lost the apple of his eye, the bereaved wife and disconsolate sister, and we pray that the quickening Spirit will bring to a perfect harvest all the good seed his servant has sown.

