

Old Elizabethans mark 70 years since Derbyshire 'exile'



Old Elizabethans in Buxton, Derbyshire, in a ceremony marking the end of their exile there 70 years ago. Former college master Bruce Parker reads out wartime Red Cross messages exchanged by boys with their Guernsey families, with him are Lynn Lewis, centre, Rob Champion, Joan Champion and Roy Queripel, far right. The Old Elizabethan Association has funded the restoration of a slate plaque, inset.

A GROUP of Old Elizabethans gathered in Derbyshire over the weekend to take part in a ceremony marking the end of their 'exile' there 70 years ago.

Three of the wartime students, Rob Champion, Roy Queripel and Lynn Lewis, together unveiled a plaque outside Tideswell Church, near Buxton.

The Old Elizabethan Association has funded the restoration of a 'quiet area' in the church precincts where the slate plaque now stands.

It has been engraved by present college students and records the school's gratitude for 'the kindness of the people of the Buxton area to the boys

by Nicola Gibbons

of Elizabeth College who worshipped in this church during their exile from Guernsey in the Second World War 1940-1945'.

The short ceremony outside the church followed a special service inside the building, known as the Cathedral of the Peaks.

A large number of the present Tideswell congregation also attended as well as many Old Elizabethans and Guernsey friends of the college.

A cross which was used by the college in its wartime chapel at Whitehall in Derbyshire was laid on the church's high altar during the service.

Bruce Parker, a former master at the college and the current Chairman of the College Foundation, read out wartime Red Cross messages exchanged by boys with their Guernsey families to illustrate how brief and remote the contact had been during their five-year exile.

Rob Champion, now 85, told the gathering how inspirational the then college principal, Henry Milnes, had been to all the boys.

He read out the emotional speech the Rev. Milnes had delivered in Tideswell Church in January 1945.

He said: 'A year in which we may reasonably hope to see an end to our exile

and a realisation of the hope so often deferred.

'In these years, the college has greatly distinguished itself. OEs, scholars and staff have all played a valiant part... I believe there is a great future for the college and happiness for us all.'

The current principal, George Hartley, had sent a message to Tideswell.

'Thank you all for showing your support for the college and helping commemorate our time in Derbyshire in this special way.

'We are very proud of our long-standing association with this beautiful part of England and hope that it remains in place for many years to come.'