

Ancient Treasure, Living Church



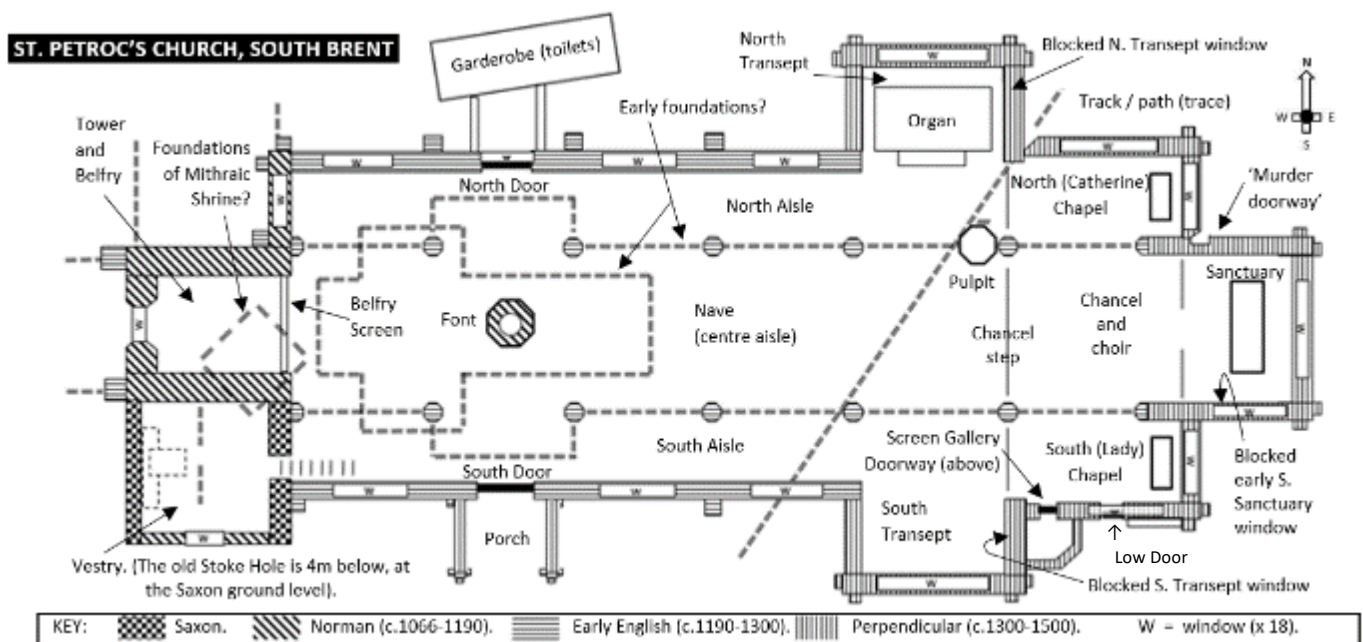
A Guidebook to St. Petroc's Parish Church, South Brent and its stories

compiled by

Peter Taylor



A general view of the interior of St. Petroc's, with the new lighting installed 2017



A Diagrammatic Plan of St. Petroc's

The orientation of the church is not exactly east, but east-by-north, about 11° north of east; this is thought to be in honour of the feast day of St. Petroc on 4th June.

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A Guidebook to St. Petroc's Parish Church, South Brent and its stories

**Compiled, researched and edited by
Peter Taylor**

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20/04/2020 16:17:00

THANK YOU for having a look at this electronic draft of what I have been researching about St Petroc's Church.

I shall be very interested in any suggestions for improving the contents, or correcting mistakes.

Please use the contact provided on the website to send me a message.

Thank you.

Peter

= marker, for REVISION NEEDED

(Reminder for PT) If names in the index appear in BOLD, this is a glitch as none are set to do so. To remedy, ensure hidden text is NOT being displayed, then save and close the document. Re-open, and with the cursor in the index below, Update it with ALT+S+D.



Acknowledgements

Any such book as this would be impossible to produce without an enormous quantity of help from other people. The help of many parishioners, including a few now departed, has been essential, but the largest debt is to churchwarden Mr. Greg Wall; his published books on South Brent were the starting point, but then his knowledgeable comments, and his patience with my interminable enquiries, have proved invaluable. Thank you too to those many others who have treated my persistent questioning with kindness; they helped me to gain the knowledge and understanding which is otherwise not easily available to 'blow-ins'. Special thanks to my wife Joy who has patiently answered "Oh, OK then" to innumerable calls of "I'm just going down to St. Petroc's for a bit". After a while, I did learn to add the obviously re-assuring local phrase, "ullbeebaccombdrrekly".

I owe a great debt to the professional architects and engineers who accompanied me on countless visits to churches in Essex in the Archdeaconry of Harlow in years past; they taught me to observe carefully in hope of a greater possibility of real understanding.

I am also extremely grateful for help in translating the document discussed in Appendix 1, as it is a long time since I tackled much Latin: thanks to John Froggatt for the loan of his Latin Dictionary, and particularly to his long-standing friend Sir Michael Partridge KCB who—when recruited (and somehow persuaded) by John—translated the entire Latin text in one day.

I am hugely indebted to Sheila and Peter Finch for proof-reading the early text, and giving many helpful suggestions and much good advice.

There are different interpretations possible for some of the features in St. Petroc's, and so many things still to be understood and added—and probably mistakes to correct ... I have changed my mind on several things several times. If you can see items to be put right, or if you can point out further sources or supply further information, please do not hesitate to be in touch with me and corrections can be made.

I have found it a huge pleasure to embark on this journey of observation, questioning, discovery, and realisation, which I hope you enjoy sharing.

P.T.

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Introduction

A Time Machine

I forget where the idea came from, but it's useful: you can think of many an English parish church building as a time machine. To get the full benefit, we absorb all the perspectives we can observe, and strenuously attend to each of the dimensions on offer—Past, Present, Future, and Space.

St. Petroc's is of course an ancient treasure, and many people's first instinct—to concentrate on the past—is perhaps the most obvious. Understandably so, for we do stand to learn much that is fascinating. By observing and reflecting we can begin to appreciate what people long ago thought and did, and to ponder why they did it. But that on its own would be too one-dimensional, too superficial. And anyway, if all we do is look at the past, we are actually going exactly against the mindset of those whose work we observe, since they made changes in their day for their future. They were looking forward, using the space they had, making the changes they needed. Why insist on looking at a photograph only in black-and-white, when full colour is available?

Other people more instinctively concentrate on the present; they seem almost to exclude the past in their thinking about a place like St. Petroc's. They so much love the people and activities connected with the present life of St. Petroc's; and of course they benefit enormously. As each takes their part in a living church, they feel themselves to be members who—as St. Peter put it all those years ago—“like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house”. This is the purpose of the Church of England's ministry in every parish, serving and building faith in community.

But this idea of St. Peter, that people can be thought of as stones brought to life, points to the third dimension of the church as a time machine. Perhaps in the back of St. Peter's mind was the great stone that he knew had ‘come to life’, or had at least moved—the huge stone that originally sealed a tomb in a garden, but was rolled away to reveal the Resurrection of Jesus, the key to the future. A clear focus on the future must have been the whole reason for ever building something like St. Petroc's—whether it was inspired by memories of the sixth century warrior-monk Petroc, or perhaps, as legend has it, he actually founded it and maybe also some forerunner of Buckfast Abbey. People built a church here because they were thinking of tomorrow. They were providing for others as well as for themselves and their own future. But the real inspirational energy comes from seeing the future as God's future, in realising that time itself—whatever time may be—moves towards a fulfilment beyond anything that humans can achieve. Peter the fisherman of Galilee knew that stones do not live. But there was something about Jesus Christ that had changed him, and he likened it to stones becoming living. It was a bringing of life to what was dead—a Resurrection. Maybe, as we look at the physical stones of St. Petroc's, we should think of them as looking at us, watching, waiting, wondering if in us is stirring a response to this Loving, Transforming God. This is how a physical church building acts as a time machine. It reveals the past to us, declares the future to us, and calls for change in us—change in our present, change in our time, change in our space.

“Ancient Treasure ... Living Church”

Prelude

The text of the Leaflet “A Brief Guide to St. Petroc’s Church”

The text of this prelude chapter is almost identical with the leaflet “A Brief Guide to St. Petroc’s Church” (January 2019 version) which is a free handout available to visitors to the church. Therefore you can use this or the “Brief Guide” leaflet on a short visit, and then read on here in more detail at leisure—and perhaps visit again another day.

Historic England lists the “Church of St. Petrock” (yes, they have that, not “Petroc”!) as a Grade I historic monument, List Entry Number 1147794; it was Grade II from February 1961 until amended to Grade I on 28 January 1987.

The Index at the end of the book may help find another reference to any particular item.

The Parish Church of St. Petroc, South Brent A Brief Guide

WELCOME TO ST. PETROC'S

We hope this leaflet will help you explore the Church.

So, who was St. Petroc?

Not everyone has heard of our patron saint, Petroc! He was the son of a Welsh chieftain, who became a priest. He came to Devon and Cornwall in the middle of the sixth century, bringing with him the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is quite probable that the first Christian building on this site was constructed at his instigation.

The Saxon and Norman Churches Stand in the back of the church, by the doors into the tower ... you are now in the oldest area, dating from before the 1066 Norman Conquest – the Saxon Church. It had a tower with four small arms, stretching out north, south, east and west. The Norman Tower and Church were built on these foundations. The largely underground Saxon tower base can still be seen, and so can the south arm, where the Victorians put a boiler house.¹ (Above that is the Vestry, up the steps made from the old stone pulpit, see p. 4 [*of the leaflet*]). No other visible evidence of these earliest buildings survived the 19th century alterations.

An effigy over the bell-ringing room west window may just about be visible. From a tomb destroyed in Cromwell's era, it is probably of Vicar John Hay (*see Leaflet p. 4*); or it might be of John, first Baron Petre (pronounced ‘Peter’), son of Sir William Petre K.G., first lay Lord of the Manor and Patron of the parish after Buckfast Abbey lost its powers. William played a major part in the Dissolution of the Monasteries (including Buckfast Abbey); he was later Secretary of State to four Tudor monarchs. Petre’s Cross is up on Dartmoor.

Turn to look east, up the church Sometime before the 12th century, the west and north transepts of the old church around the tower were demolished. By 1247 (when the village consisted of the church and seven houses!), the nave

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¹ When the church heating was renewed in the 1970s and a boiler put in the Saxon basement, bones were found buried there. See Greg Wall, ‘Portrait of South Brent’, p.4.

had been beautifully rebuilt, with new north and south aisles. The nave stopped at the present chancel step. By the 15th century, the north and south transepts and the chancel/sanctuary had been added, and later (as is obvious from outside) so were the side chapels. All this was before 1436, for reasons which will appear. At some point, the Rood Screen also was added. The exact dates of all these additions is unknown; was Buckfast Abbey involved?

The Rood Screen From Medieval times until 1870, the view looking east was dominated by a huge wooden Rood Screen, so named from the crucifixion scene that stood over it: a figure of Christ suffering on the cross ('rood'), with St. Mary and St. John either side, watching. In early days they would have stood on a thick 'Rood Beam' spanning those two high ledges west of the chancel arch. Reputedly one of the most beautiful in Devon, the Screen divided the "holy" part of the church, the chancel, from the rest. (This had a practical purpose: in the Middle Ages, the church would have doubled up as a general meeting place, as well as being the house of God.) When the Rood Screen was installed, the Rood Loft on it was evidently to be so tall that major alterations were needed to the two east-most arches in the nave – and with the Screen now gone, we see the result: two very odd-shaped arches, above where the Screen once was! Fragments of the old wooden Rood Screen are still here, and will be pointed out in this guide. For example, the Belfry Screen at the foot of the tower incorporates an ancient coloured beam which was rescued from the old Rood Screen.

The Font was probably the first thing you noticed as you entered the church. Baptism is the sacrament of entry into the church, Christ's mystical Body. This Font is made of red sandstone and dates from Norman times. The decorations on the bowl are rope, honeysuckle, and sawtooth – designs seen in Buckfastleigh and other churches in the area.

The Church Door The twin outer porch doors are a modern feature installed in 2002, but the innermost Main Door is very ancient, possibly medieval. It is now left open. An interesting feature is the Sanctuary Ring on the outside – the handle that will not turn. To claim sanctuary a fugitive had only to grab on this ring to be safe from the civil authorities – for a while anyway! The upper door hinge has been re-positioned. In the wall just east of the inner doorway is a medieval Holy Water Stoup. You would dip your finger in the holy water as you came in, and make the sign of the cross on your forehead – much as had been done at your baptism when you first entered the church. At the foot of the

[Leaflet page 3]

stone stairs to the Vestry, see two Old Doors with very fine carving, exuberant remnants of the old Screen.

The South Aisle Note the low stone seats beneath each window. In the very early days these were the only seats for the congregation unless they brought their own. Hence the expression "the weakest go to the wall".

The South Transept High in the east wall here are signs of a disused early window; it had to be blocked when the wide south chapel was added. The huge stained-glass window celebrates Jesus' Resurrection. Dated 1896, it is in memory of the Hamlyns (who ran Buckfastleigh mills). South Brent's War Memorials are now both here.² Parts of the old Rood Screen are in the base of the memorial table.

The South Chapel (now the Lady Chapel). It seems the door under the window was put in when the other (older) doorway was needed for the spiral screen staircase when that was added just outside in the churchyard. Look up and see, halfway up the staircase, the opening which once led out to the Rood Screen gallery. The altar table here is believed to be the original Tudor holy communion table. To its

² The World War I Memorial was initially installed across the (closed) north door. It was moved to the south transept when in 1999 the north door was re-opened and the garderobe constructed. The WWII memorial, — initially in the north (Catherine) Chapel on the wall between the window and the organ (where the fixings are still visible) — was then also brought down to the south transept.

right is the aumbry, the safe, for reserving consecrated bread and wine. The memorial stone of Walter Taylor, Vicar of Brent 1747-1764, lies in the floor, under the 1935 Icon of Madonna and Child especially 'written' (painted) for this church by the internationally acclaimed local iconographer Lillian Delvoryas. Recently, a member of the congregation, Peter Noble, carved the figure of St. Petroc and his wolf, the two tall statues above the choir stalls, and the five Celtic Cross roundels under the east window.

The Sanctuary Entering the chancel, stand at the rail and face the communion table (of 1933). On the right are three stone seats – the “Sedilia”. These were for the celebrant, the deacon, and the sub-deacon at the Eucharist (Holy Communion). Above the sedilia, notice the remains of stonework from an earlier window, necessarily altered and moved to the east when the east wall of the south chapel was built (obviously considerably later than the sanctuary). The memorials on the walls are all related to former incumbents of the parish. In 1924, the communion rail was made from parts of the medieval Rood Screen, still with some ancient colouring visible. The east ‘Nativity’ window is dedicated to then Lord of the Manor, John Elliott, who died 1874, aged 24. Below the Amyatt memorial on the north wall of the sanctuary is the rectangular ‘Murder Doorway’, now walled up (very clearly seen from outside). In Spring 1436, after

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vespers on the feast of Corpus Christi, a group of men led by one Thomas Weke entered the church and seized the vicar, Master John Hay. They dragged him out of the church through this door and for reasons unknown battered him to death. (Apart from—famously—at Canterbury Cathedral, in how many other churches has this happened?) Records tell us the Bishop of Exeter re-consecrated three altars on 11th September 1436: “the principal altar in honour of St. Petroc and blessed Mary, virgin; the altar in the north aisle in honour of blessed Mary, virgin; and the third altar in the south aisle in honour of Saints Catherine and Margaret”. In the 1870 restoration works, the ‘Lady Chapel’ changed sides—the Organ was then occupying the north chapel.

The Choir Stalls (1926) are by Harry Hems of Exeter, reputedly in a style similar to that of the medieval Screen.

The Pulpit (1934) was made in wood, to match.³ The old stone pulpit and its steps became the steps to the Vestry.

The North Chapel (the St. Catherine Chapel, previously dedicated to St. Mary). Above the communion table is an old coloured vine carving from the Screen – another fragment of its vivid colour work. The altar frontal is Jacobean.

The Organ (North Transept) In 1946, the then organ was moved from the north chapel into the north, or farmers’, transept. The present organ, from Christ Church Plymouth, came here in 1995/6.

The North Aisle has the memorial to Admiral William Cuming, one of Nelson's commanders. The Millennium Tapestry featuring local scenes was embroidered in the village to commemorate the Year 2000.

The North Door was—in pre-Reformation days—opened during baptisms “to allow the Devil to leave the baby being christened”.⁴ (Before churchyards became so overcrowded, the north side was kept for those who died in dubious circumstance – so there are fewer old graves there.) Above the door, the 1907 window in memory of Blanche Elizabeth May shows St. Margaret and St. Elizabeth of Hungary and St.

³ The *South Brent Visitation Book*, page 67, for 22 March 1934 records that the old stone pulpit had been removed “and a new pulpit of carved oak, costing £228, has been put in its place. This gave 50 men work for 9 months.” The *South Brent Visitation Book* dates from 1822 and preserves in manuscript the annual observations of the Rural Dean (and occasionally of the Archdeacon or Bishop) on individual matters requiring attention, but it is not a descriptive narrative. See ‘South Brent Visitation Book’ in the index for references made to it.

⁴ The Rev. R. S. Hawkins of Morwenstowe is believed to have said that north doors were opened at baptisms so that the Evil One might depart; the door was then closed until the next baptism.

Ursula. The World War I memorial first stood across this doorway.⁵ The doorway itself now leads to the garderobe (including toilets, kitchen and boiler house, added in 1997).⁶ The 'Parables Window' at the west end of the north aisle depicts Jesus' famous parables of the Prodigal Son, and the Good Samaritan. Dated 1856, it is the only window glass to have survived the restoration work of 1870, and is dedicated to John Elliott who bought the Lordship of the Manor from William, 11th Lord Petre in 1806. His son is mentioned

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above (see The Sanctuary). Two Old Chests can be seen nearby; one is thought to be medieval, the second dates from the reign of King Charles I.⁷

The Roof was renewed throughout in 1870, and repaired in 1952.⁸ The new lighting (2017) means we can now appreciate it much more easily.⁹ It looks like the inside of the hull of a ship. Early missionaries used to upturn their boats to make the roof of their first church. So the main aisle of a church is called the nave from the Latin *navi*, "with a boat".

The Tower The church was renovated ("restored") in 1870, to good effect, after repeated complaints about the condition of the church from successive Archdeacons and Rural Deans of Totnes. A large wooden gallery¹⁰ with seats underneath (by then largely rotten) had stood against the tower. "Players" in the gallery accompanied the singing. The congregation in their high box pews would have actually turned to face them during the singing. Plaster and whitewash covered the walls. All this was removed in 1870, and every window renovated except the 1856 Parables window glass. A solid fuel central heating system was installed. (The heating is now gas-fired, and was last upgraded during the 2017 works.)

The Tower ground floor room is now the Choir Vestry.

The six Bells (cast by Bilby in "Collumpton" in 1759) are regularly rung by our prize-winning Ringers.

Unfortunate Vicars Besides the murder of one of our Vicars, two others suffered unfortunate fates. The Rev. Robert Knyght, Vicar in 1392, was imprisoned in the Flete prison in London for stealing fish from the Abbot of Buckfast's fishponds, and causing an affray(!). The Rev. Prebendary John Gandy, Vicar in 1645, found himself on the wrong side of the Parliamentarians. He was deprived of the living and turned out of the Vicarage (perhaps today's Island House, east of the churchyard wall; William Crossing author of the Dartmoor 'Guide' later lived there for a while¹¹). Mr. Gandy was made to walk all the way to Dartmouth in his full clergy robes, carrying his Bible and Prayer Book. What makes the incident more poignant is the fact that Mr. Gandy's family had shown great kindness to the family of the man who did the eviction, the Rev. Christopher Jelinger, who then occupied the living and vicarage of South Brent during the Commonwealth. When King Charles II was restored to his throne in 1660, the Reverend Mr. Gandy also was re-instated, returning to South Brent vicarage for 12 more years.

⁵ On the War Memorials, see the footnote on page 10.

⁶ The old north doorway is 13th Century. It seems that in 1824 or 1825 (see Archdeacon's Visitation of 1824, page 55 below) it was blocked up, as in 1848 it definitely still was (see *TEDAS* special report, page 35 below). It was re-opened in 1999 when the Garderobe was built. The *South Brent Visitation Book*, page 99, entry for 24 February 1999, reports the Garderobe to be then complete. For tantalising mention of a possible and long-forgotten (but unlikely) old chamber that is said to have stood above the north door entrance, see p. 57.

⁷ The carving on the chest probably indicates Charles I, not Charles II as the leaflet originally said.

⁸ The roof slates, found to be loosening because the nails were perishing, were re-fixed in 1952-53 (*South Brent Visitation Book*, pp. 77-78, for 1951 and 1954).

⁹ For a summary of the various ways the church has been lit in the past, see the footnote on page 68.

¹⁰ This west gallery is referred to in entries in the *South Brent Visitation Book*, where we read of 'the old singing seats', and 'the bench and rubbish beneath [is] to be removed' (1824), 'the singing Gallery' (1848, 1849), and just 'the Gallery' (1850).

¹¹ William Crossing lived there from 1872 to 1897.

The Restoration Work done in 2016-2017 When visiting the church in June 2017, the Archdeacon of Totnes declared

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the church building was probably looking better now than it has ever done in all its long history. We certainly think so! The work in 2016-2017 had two main aims. First was in the Tower, both externally and internally, to remedy the result of serious water ingress and prevent new damage. Second was to radically improve the internal lighting within the building. Thanks to many gifts and grants, and much hard work, this programme is now successfully completed.

St. Petroc's does not stand still ! The Brentonians of the late 20th and early 21st centuries have placed their mark on this ancient building. But the Church of God is made of living stones, as St. Peter said. Our main focus is the worship of God in his majestic love; and loving service and mission in our community – the same reasons St. Petroc would have wanted this building all those years ago.

In the St. Petroc's service book we use, there are several illustrations by another internationally acclaimed local artist, Lydia Corbett, who knew Pablo Picasso.

Our current service times are published on the notice board outside the churchyard gate. This is a wonderful place to worship and pray – join us, please, if you can!

Before you leave to look around outside the building, why not pause, and thank God for all that Jesus Christ did for us. Pray for those who live and worship here, for those special to you, and for yourself ... and help us help alleviate suffering in other places by putting a donation in a box, or use an envelope to make your choice – Thank you!

We hope you have enjoyed exploring St. Petroc's

Outside the church: Notice how the Tower has been heightened at times. The old Saxon foundations are under the vestry. The Sundial, high on the south transept wall, has been there since 1685. The church did once have a Clock, but without a face; it just chimed the hour. The 'Murder Doorway' can be clearly seen if you walk out to the east end of the churchyard and then continue round on the grass, past the east window; the old doorway is in the angle with the north chapel wall. It does look quite low; but everyone was shorter then, they say! ¹²

¹² In the mid 17th Century, the average height of men was apparently 5' 6" (1.69m), and that of women was 5' ½" (1.54m), considerably shorter than today.

Chapter 1

—A Detective Story—

How did St. Petroc’s get like this?

Part 1 – the Building we see

In an ideal world there would be a treasure trove of historical documents, easily available, where we could search for the story of the building of St. Petroc’s, and get the answers to all our questions. Sadly, very little documentary evidence before the early 19th Century seems to have survived. It is well known that underneath the Tower and present Vestry lie the Saxon origins of St. Petroc’s, and indeed some Saxon arch and wall work is still to be seen. But the Church of St. Petroc’s that we see and love today has undergone many alterations since those olden days. How did all this happen?

A thousand and more years have seen much change to what countless thousands of successive parishioners would recognise as “their church”. It is natural to ask, “When exactly were all these alterations made?” But it is hard to be sure. True, there are a few fixed points, but much uncertainty remains between them. Like a patient detective, all we can do is make the best of the evidence and the clues that we have, and see what emerges.

The earliest building of which we have any clear evidence is the Saxon building at the base of the Tower. Saxon ground level is well below the present level of the churchyard here, as the cellar below the present Vestry shows. Churchyard ground levels have risen over the years, as the land was repeatedly dug and re-dug for new burials. When this happened, the bones of previous interments were removed to charnel houses, much as in the Jewish practice of removing bones to ossuary boxes a year or so after burial. When this practice stopped, permanent headstones became practicable. In the Choir Vestry also, inside the centre base of the Tower itself, are low arches which have been dated to Saxon times.

When the Normans came, they found or built extensions on all four sides of the Tower, which until then was the centre of a cruciform church with four short arms. It would seem likely, as Scott observes,¹ that the Normans needed to enlarge the nave of the church to the west of the tower, but the lie of the land and the steep drop to the river just to the north-west gave them insufficient space; so instead they decided to extend the church to the east.

Looking outside at the north face of the Tower we can see the remains of the semi-circular Norman arch that gave access from the Tower base to the extension to the north. See how low the arch is compared with the nearby window. The stonework in-filling the arch clearly later than the old water-rounded river stones of the adjacent walls. We are looking at history here.



BLOCKED NORTH ARCH IN
TOWER BASE

¹ Scott, Mack & Clarke: ‘Towers and Bells of Devon’, p.356.

Inside the building, the fine red sandstone Font is early Norman. With its rope, honeysuckle and sawtooth designs it is not unlike the fonts in similar churches locally. Buckfastleigh folk might think we had ‘borrowed’ theirs, before that sadly was damaged in the Holy Trinity church fire of 1992. Intriguingly, the font at St. Petroc’s Dartmouth is almost identical. In the years up to 1848, the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society undertook a major survey of apparently all the church buildings in the diocese, which then included Cornwall as well as Devon. They described the Font in “BRENT, SOUTH, St. Patrick” [*sic*] as follows:

Norman—now in north aisle, formerly in nave, against third north pier. See drawing.²

So the Font which formerly had stood in the nave was removed at some point prior to 1848 into a position in the north aisle near the third pillar (from the east), a somewhat cramped location near the north door. Evidently it stood there until 1870 when it was moved to its present (and perhaps original) place in the centre of the nave, between the north and south doors.³



THE NORMAN FONT

It seems clear that by 1247 the church had been altered from the Norman building. The bases of most columns in the Nave are as we can see much larger than the present columns require, more like the bases needed by the thicker style early Norman columns found in some churches dating from then. It may not be immediately obvious what has happened, but clearly there had been a large building with side aisles before the present nave with its piers and side aisles was constructed.⁴



OVERSIZE BASE OF COLUMN NEAR S. DOOR

² *TEDAS*, ‘Rough Notes’ (1848), a printed document evidently circulated to members for their comments (they might have thought to correct ‘Patrick’ to ‘Petroc’!). Frustratingly, the ‘drawing’ referred to, among other drawings once apparently held in the *EDAS* archives, has not yet been located. It would be very interesting to see all such drawings to learn how the church appeared before 1870. The ambiguity in the Rough Note about the position of the Font is resolved by the *EDAS* ‘Special Report’, see p. 58.

³ From the *South Brent Visitation Book* entry for 1824 we discover that evidently it was the custom for parson and people to kneel around the font at baptisms, since instructions are given to provide “cushions for the font kneeling stools”.

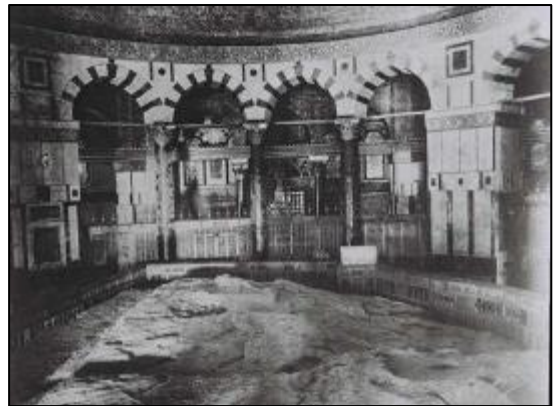
⁴ For the possibility that the present arcades were built in the early 1100s, see footnote on page 16.

The church of 1247 would then have consisted of a rebuilt larger nave, stopping at the present chancel step, with side bays or aisles to the nave, in Early English style (usually reckoned c. 1180-1275). The oversize Norman column bases just noted show that side aisles had existed from very early times. The beautiful stonework of the two arcades of arches and of the aisle windows is very sophisticated and impressive. Who could fail to admire the result—double-moulded wedge-shaped stones⁵ in alternating colours (‘polychromy’) forming the arcade arches. And the side aisle windows made to match, with delightful white ‘intrados’ stones lining the underside of the arch directly above the window. Brilliant!



NORTH ARCADE AND NORTH AISLE, LOOKING NW

This type of arch building is very reminiscent of the Islamic work that might have been seen by those who went on the Crusades, and of continental churches connected with the Crusade project.⁶ Indeed, it has been argued that polychrome voussoirs act as a symbol of the Crusades and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.⁷ First completed in A.D. 691-692, it is one of the earliest surviving examples of Islamic architecture, with a dome constructed almost exactly the same size as that of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, completed in A.D. 335.⁸ It contains at its heart arches constructed with alternating polychrome stones surrounding the ancient Rock itself, where once stood the Ark of the Covenant within the Holy of Holies of the Jewish Temple. The Dome of the Rock was captured by the Crusaders in A.D. 1099, whereupon the Augustinians turned it into a Christian church, the ‘Templum Domini’ as the Templars later called it. Jerusalem was recaptured by Saladin in 1187 and the Dome re-consecrated as a Muslim shrine. (It is not technically a mosque, despite being sometimes referred to as the ‘Mosque of Omar’; that is actually a different building near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.)



ARCHES INSIDE THE DOME OF THE ROCK, JERUSALEM

So the 1247 church resulting from that post-Norman phase of the building was a rectangular space adjoining the east face of the tower and including side aisles (but no transepts). We can imagine its east wall consisting of a large east window in the centre, where the present chancel arch is, and a smaller

⁵ The technical name for each of the wedge-shaped stones which together form the arches is ‘voussoir’ (pronounced ‘voo-swar’). We’ll refer to this style again, and use VS as an abbreviation.

⁶ Such as Vézelay, Clermont-Ferrand and Le Puy in France, all with early 12th Century prominent polychrome voussoir work.

⁷ Dodds makes the interesting assertion that alternating polychrome voussoirs were intended to act as a memorial particularly of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. We read (pages 115-116): “The alternating voussoirs, which embrace the rock at the building’s heart like a garland, are a particularly bold rhetorical statement and a significant means by which the building is remembered. More elaborate, sumptuous, and exotic than the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Dome of the Rock was also an easier monument to allude to visually because of its polychrome masonry”. Perhaps polychrome voussoirs were used in Christian buildings to reference the conquest of the Dome of the Rock by Christian Crusaders, who regarded it as “the Temple of the Lord”. If so, the polychrome arcades in St. Petroc’s were likely constructed in the early/mid 1100s.

⁸ The diameter of the Dome of the Rock is 20.20 m and its height 20.48 m, while the diameter of the dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is 20.90 m and its height 21.05 m.

window each side of that in the east end walls of the north and south aisles – three windows in the one east wall. Probably the windows at the east end of the two side aisles were similar to the window at the west end of the north aisle, with VS stones and white ‘intrados’ stones lining the underside of the arch. And very likely there would have been a similar fourth side window in each aisle where the transepts now open out, either matching the existing three side aisle windows facing north and south, or possibly a little larger.

The Chancel Arch

The top two stones of the apex of the west face of the chancel arch show some small square indents, which are quite likely the fixing points for the ‘Rood’—the depiction of the Cross of Jesus’ crucifixion. Together with the figures of St. Mary his mother and St. John on either side, this would in early days have stood on the Rood Beam which spanned across from the two projecting ‘corbel’ stones that can be seen each side at the foot of the high arch. Clearly, the Cross was of an impressive size; in many churches they were chained for additional safety, and perhaps those square indents are fixing points for such chains.⁹ There are some further marks on the stones lower down the arch each side—were these perhaps where the tops of the figures of St. Mary and St. John were secured? If so, this gives us some idea of the size of all three components which stood on the Rood Beam, even all these years after Rood Beams were ordered to be taken down in the 1500s.

The Church Door

The entrance was from the south, but the Porch we see was not added until probably the 15th Century. The ancient Church Door is made of overlapping planks with iron strap-work. Its exact age is unknown, but we can see how the upper hinge has been re-positioned a few inches higher than its earlier setting. The ring that will not turn is the old ‘Sanctuary Ring’; in olden times a fugitive holding it could claim right of sanctuary, and stay in the church free from prosecution for usually 40 days until the case was properly heard. The right of sanctuary was abolished in the early 17th century, so this ring is old and the door probably older.

Window styles

It is worth noticing the window just west of the south door, and the one opposite in the north aisle. Their stone tracery pattern is not the same as we see in the four other aisle windows, which are of a design popular at a slightly later time. But these two to the west have stone tracery of earlier design (popular around 1290 - 1310), where all the ascending stone verticals (mullions) divide (like a ‘Y’) but then continue curving, all with the same radius, until they meet the curving edges of the window opening. The beautiful and elegant stonework of these two windows was replaced in the 1870 restoration works, copying the shape of what had existed before,¹⁰ so giving us good further evidence for the early date of the nave and side aisles in their present layout.



⁹ There may well be corresponding indents on the east face of the arch, enabling a clamp to secure the chains; but the timbers of the chancel roof now obscure the high east face of the chancel arch from our view.

¹⁰ As we know from the Reports of the *EDAS* quoted elsewhere.

Subsequently, the outside north and side walls of the lean-to aisles were raised by one or two feet. This was probably done at quite an early stage, perhaps shortly after the building of the transepts. The addition to the wall is especially clear above the south aisle windows, appearing there as an obvious line that runs along the aisle walls at the same level, north and south, above all six windows. If the light is good, the additional stonework is clear in the south transept also. It remains unclear why this was done, but perhaps it was felt that the roof looked too close to the VS stonework of the windows, and the roof height or slope angle (or both) needed to be adjusted.

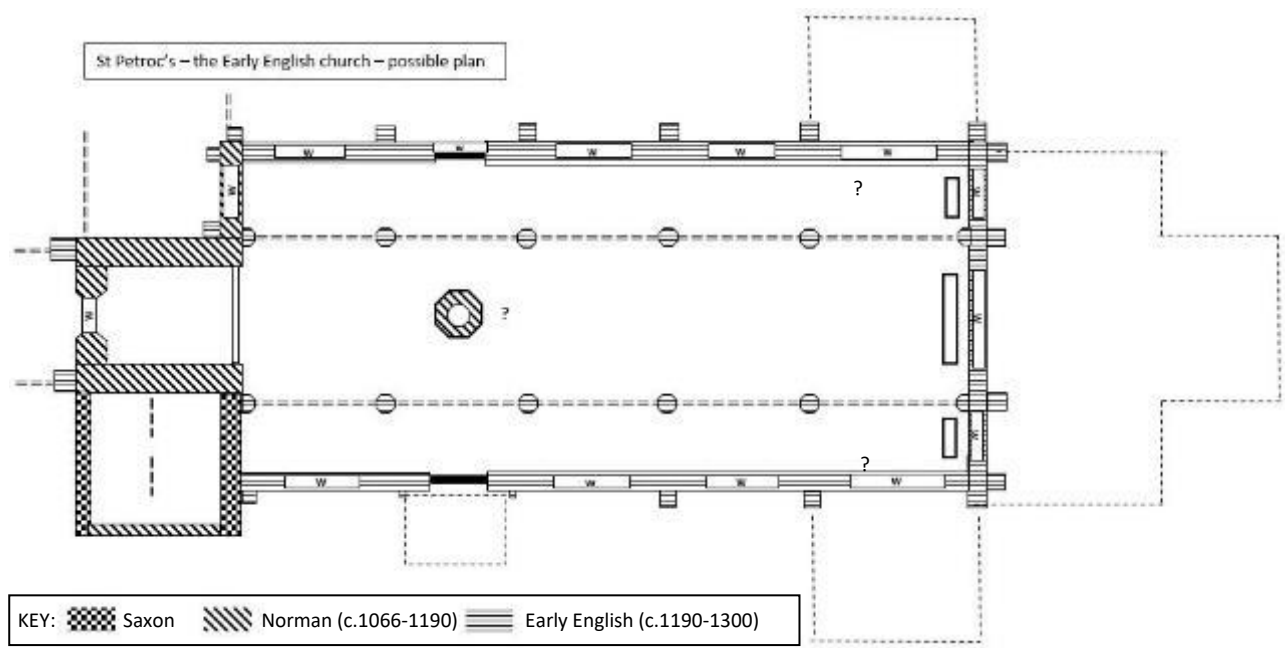


S. WALL RAISED BY ADDED STONEWORK

It is evident that this addition was made considerably later than the building of the aisle walls. Looking at the north aisle window at the north west end, we see that several inches of the apex of the VS stonework appear as if sliced off, where three new rectangular stones are obvious just below the 'plate' (the horizontal wooden beam set on the wall to support the roof timbers). The line probably shows where the wood plate beam of the previous wall rested. The fact that the walls were raised, but by a relatively small amount, shows that there was a restraint on how much additional height could be tolerated. Perhaps the limited height of the Norman Tower (which did not have its present top stage at that time) was a consideration. The other five windows in the nave aisles are very slightly less high, so their VS stonework escaped the slicing we see here at the north west.

TRUNCATED STONEWORK, N. AISLE,
ABOVE THE AISLE WINDOW AT THE W. END

All this work resulted in the Early English church—a fundamentally rectangular building to the east of the old Saxon-Norman Tower. Perhaps it looked something like this:



This building would therefore have had three east windows. What did they look like? To think about this, we shall need to move ahead to consider the next major phase of building works—the addition of the north and south transepts and then the chancel / sanctuary in Perpendicular period and style (c.1300-1500).

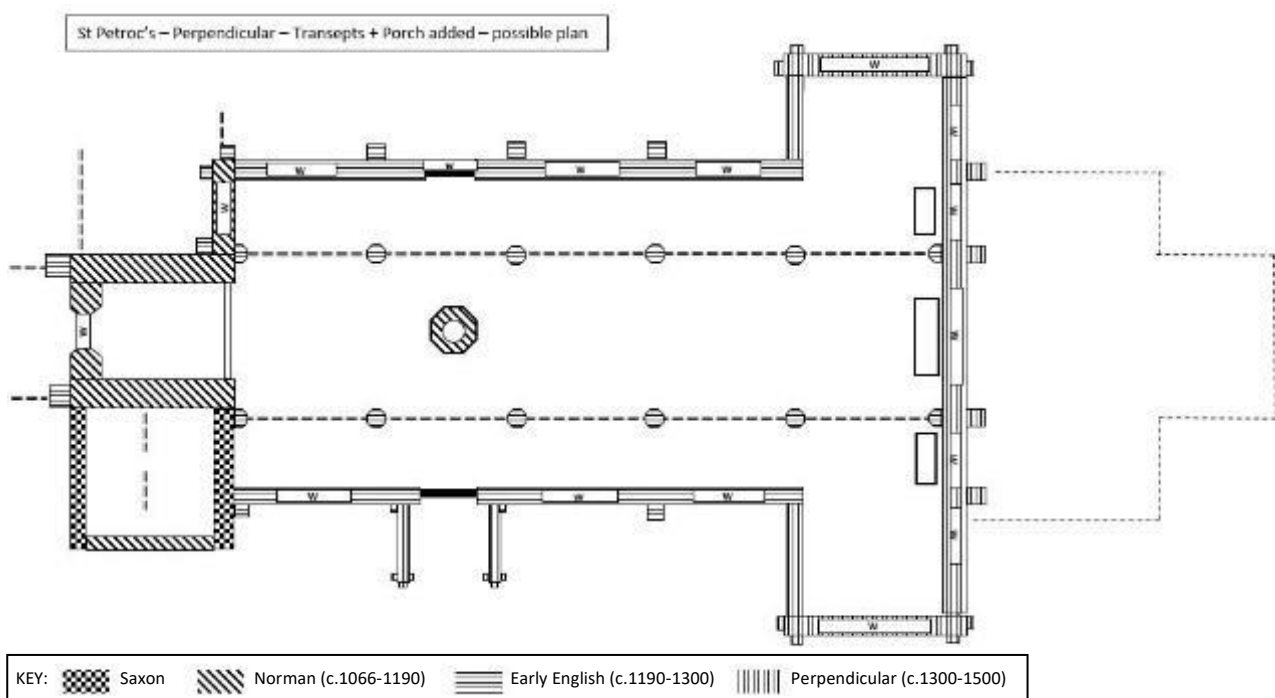
To summarise so far, the 1247 Early English church that the builders of the next generation inherited consisted of the Norman Tower, less tall than at present but with a southern addition, and then to its east a rectangular building with side aisles. In other words, basically our present building but without transepts, porch, chancel, sanctuary or side chapels (*see dotted outlines on above plan*). It probably included the existing three aisle windows on the north and three on the south (with probably a fourth where both transepts now open out), a south and north door, with south and north arcades of arches in the nave, and in the single east wall three windows side by side. It seems very likely therefore that with all these matching arches, the three east wall windows would have been in similar style with VS archwork, with the central east window naturally larger. (For further evidence and comment, see page 27.)

It would be many years until a Rood Screen was installed at floor level across the entire width of the church, but at this earlier stage a Rood Beam would have stood spanning the two corbel ledges high up just west of the present chancel arch, with the figure of Christ upon the Cross ('Rood'), with the figures of Mary his mother and St. John either side. (All Rood Beams and Rood Lofts were ordered to be removed in the 16th Century, and very few originals have survived in England—but see page 34 for a surviving Devon example.)

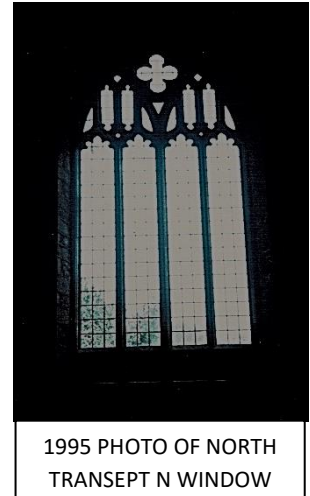
But then came energy for a new development. Transepts!

The North and South Transepts

The Transepts were the first major alteration to the Early English rectangular church.



When the builders came in the ‘Perpendicular era’ (c.1300-1500) to add the north and south transepts, new large windows were required for the north and south windows of the transepts, plus two new east windows for the transept east walls. They had the existing stone of the supposed east-most ‘fourth’ side windows (or whatever was there) to take down and work with, of course. The north transept north window was admittedly enlarged in the 1870 Restoration (see page 60), but we can see both externally and internally that the main windows of the transepts have been beautifully created to match the Early English work, with VS stonework fully in keeping, possibly incorporating some rescued ‘fourth-window’ material. The internal view of the north transept north window is today somewhat obscured by the organ, although you can see the VS stonework at the top of the window if you stand in the south transept; and it can be viewed from outside. A photo taken in church in 1995 before the organ was installed in the north transept shows the tracery of the north window there, similar to that of the sanctuary east window and that in the larger window in the south transept. This south window stone tracery also was renewed in 1870 (as were almost all the window openings) before the Hamlyn glass was inserted in 1896, but the previous designs were honoured. These three major windows—sanctuary east window and transept windows to north and south—all have very similar tracery and it is very credible they were built together,¹¹ although the north transept north window was smaller in earlier times, and the south transept south window is considerably the tallest, the largest window in St. Petroc’s—details on page 102.



1995 PHOTO OF NORTH
TRANSEPT N WINDOW

Each transept at this stage had its own new north or south window, and also a window in each transept new east wall, beside the east aisle windows mentioned above which occupied today’s openings to the north and south chapels (remember, the chapels did not exist yet). We can see this very clearly in the case of the north transept, which has been disturbed less by the building of the side chapels than the south has. The east window of the north transept, already blocked in 1848,¹² still has its VS archwork and the white intrados stones lining the underside of the arch. (For more details of that disturbance, see below under The Side Chapels, page 25).

In the north Chancel-aisle is a four-light east window, Third-Pointed, the north window is debased ; the south Chancel-aisle corresponds with the north.

The north and south transept arches are similar. They are of two centres, and much stilted on the Chancel side, as though a considerable portion of the lower part of the arch had been cut away ; it may possibly have been effected in order to give room for the rood-loft. The transept roofs are of the cradle form, panel-plastered ; in the north transept, the east window is blocked, and the north is of debased character ; in the south transept one south window is of the same character as the east window of Chancel.

N TRANSEPT E WINDOW ALREADY BLOCKED IN 1848
(TEDAS, 1848, p. 154)

¹¹ If the transepts are Perpendicular, they must be very early, say c.1300, since they preceded the Chancel, and the east window which (though since restored) probably came from the present chancel arch is of 1200-1310 style, see below p.22.

¹² TEDAS, 1848, p.154.

The south transept was built larger than that to the north—there was no need here to worry about falling into the River Avon! It is about 11” wider.¹³ Moving south from the central east window, the east wall had two windows; remains of only the southern-most are now visible. It had to be blocked later, when the wide south chapel was added. But if you stand at the corner junction of the chancel and the south transept, near the vicar’s stall, under the bent or ‘stilted’ arch, and then walk south pacing out the width of the present south aisle, the same distance again brings you exactly to the south edge of the blocked window ... those two windows in the east wall south of the central east window were identical in size. They would also most likely have both had VS stonework above the arch, as is confirmed by the blocked portion still visible high up on the wall. At the lower (springing) edge of the remaining arch we still see a step in the stonework (*black arrow*), just as in the north transept east window, and in the six side aisle windows, and in the north aisle west window; so this east wall transept window had striking white ‘intrados’ lining stones like those other arches. Perhaps, when this window was blocked in at the later building of the south chapel, the white intrados stone that was here was moved to the equivalent position in the south chapel south window?



BLOCKED UP OLD E. WINDOW
IN E. WALL OF S. TRANSEPT

So the church now consisted of the fourteenth-century rectangular building, but with north and south transepts added (each with their own north and south windows), and now FIVE windows in the east wall, two each side of the no doubt glorious central east window! Possibly, probably, all had white intrados framing. To the west stood the Tower (still not yet at its full modern height) and the southern Tower projection. See the diagram above.

We have to admire those transept builders. The result of their work, copying the Early English window style they inherited with beautiful new VS stone windows in the north and south transepts, must have been truly impressive. If we did not independently know for certain that the transepts were later than the Early English building, it would be easy to think that that church had been built with transepts then. And in a building of this sophistication and class, we can be sure the east window would have contained brilliant coloured glass. No wonder St. Petroc’s South Brent was a noted parish.

Imagine being present at a service in this church! Worshippers would assemble in the Nave and in the transepts either side, and they would see the Holy Communion celebrated so near to them—just below the present chancel Step—that the sense of nearness must have been inspiring! Worship at Exeter Cathedral, of comparable date, might well have been grand, but it was rather distant; at St. Petroc’s it was close and exhilarating! Perhaps that experience, all those years ago, has helped create in the building the emotional warmth and friendliness that so many people comment on today.

Before long, more development was to come. The chancel/sanctuary and the north and south side-chapels were added, in Perpendicular style.

¹³ i.e. in the north-south direction, as was recorded in a plan made by EDAS (TEDAS, 1896, insert facing p. 131).

The Chancel / Sanctuary / East Window

It might well be asked, how do we know the Chancel / Sanctuary were not added at the same time as the transepts? We have no documents to guide us. But we do know that the Roman Catholic Church’s Lateran Council of 1215 officially endorsed the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and the building of many chancels resulted, where the priest was to celebrate the Holy Communion (or Mass) away from the bulk of the people.

The real answer to the question must lie in the evidence of the chancel arch itself, which had to be created when the new chancel was built to the east. What happened to the east window of that Early English church? If the chancel had been the work of the transept builders, it would surely have had VS stonework soaring over the arch, just as they did for their additional east wall transept windows and the new large north and south transept windows.

Here is a call for creative imagination: When the chancel was added, would anyone have wanted to scrap the church’s existing central east window? Surely not! So we are led to the intriguing possibility that when the chancel was added, the large east window where our present chancel arch is was carefully taken down, with its VS stonework, in order to become the new east window in the chancel/sanctuary. The same impressive VS stonework typical of the early rectangular church still surmounts it in pride of place. In other words, when we look at the east sanctuary window today, we are basically looking at the stone design-work of the east window of the 1247 building.¹⁴ And how much nearer it would have felt to everyone, standing at our present chancel step! The rising window mullions divide into Y’s to carry an echo of the ‘intersecting’ tracery we noticed at the west end of the church, but here crowned with a circle enclosing a quatrefoil (where the angel now sings out his news); this is classic Geometrical/ Intersecting tracery of the Early English (Early Gothic) period, about 1200-1310,¹⁵ and it is clearly not as late in design as the Perpendicular-style east windows of the side chapels. The other two (smaller) east windows in the Early English church, at the east end of the north and south aisles, would likely have been of a similar design, surmounted by VS stonework in alternating colours. Some trace of this VS work still remains in the arch over the step into the north chapel, which we consider further on page 27.¹⁶

By contrast, the stonework of the chancel arch itself looks much more like that of the entrances to the side chapels (and also the piercing arches from those chapels into the chancel, which date from the 1870 Restoration).¹⁷ So we conclude that the transept builders did not also build the chancel / sanctuary and chancel arch. They were added well after the transepts—though still before the side chapels came along, as will emerge.

So the chancel / sanctuary was added probably in the 14th Century, in Perpendicular style (usually flexibly dated c. 1300 – 1510), after the addition of the North and South Transepts (probably complete before 1310). All this was evidently done—and the side chapels also, see below—before 1436 when the Reverend Master John Hay was murdered. (The Porch is thought to be 15th Century, but it is unclear whether it was added before or after the side chapels. Was it added after the John Hay murder perhaps?)

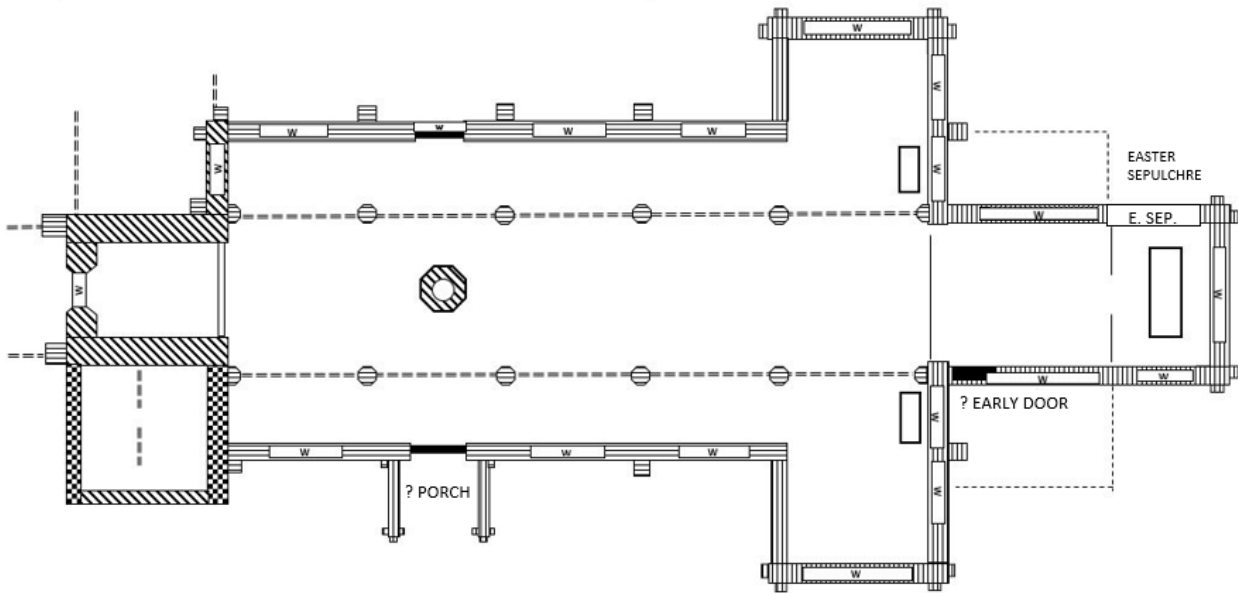
¹⁴ The east window we see now, of course, is as renovated in the 1870 works; and it contains the 1874 Elliott glass.

¹⁵ This puts a latest date of c.1310 by which the window—and therefore the even earlier transepts—must have been completed.

¹⁶ For a clear summary in one place of many relevant window tracery styles, see the website for St. Wulfram’s, Grantham.

¹⁷ It seems likely the piercings to the side chapels were originally of two bays, not one as now, see p. 65.

St Petroc's – Perpendicular – Transepts, Chancel & Porch added – possible plan



The constructors of the chancel/sanctuary built the north and south chancel walls, and for an east window they probably moved the east window they found above our present chancel step to its new location in the new east wall of the sanctuary, as discussed above.

In the north chancel wall there was very likely a window, though this is not certain. Many north chancel walls do not have glass windows, as the extra light gained is limited; but it is very possible that such a window did exist here and that later it became the north chapel north window. The Perpendicular era builders of the chapels put in a Perpendicular style east window in the north chapel, but they did not install a matching Perpendicular style north window. The reason is clear: they had a perfectly good earlier window on site—the north window of the chancel (see below). But what we do certainly find in the north chancel/ sanctuary wall is the



SANCTUARY N. WALL: BLOCKED DOOR, AND REMAINS OF CURVED EASTER SEPULCHRE ARCH

blocked rectangular 'Murder Doorway', and very clear from outside is the way it has been squeezed into the exterior angle of the walls. Inside, just east of it, we see half a now filled-in arch. This is almost certainly what remains of an 'Easter Sepulchre' (used in old Good Friday/ Easter celebrations, see below).

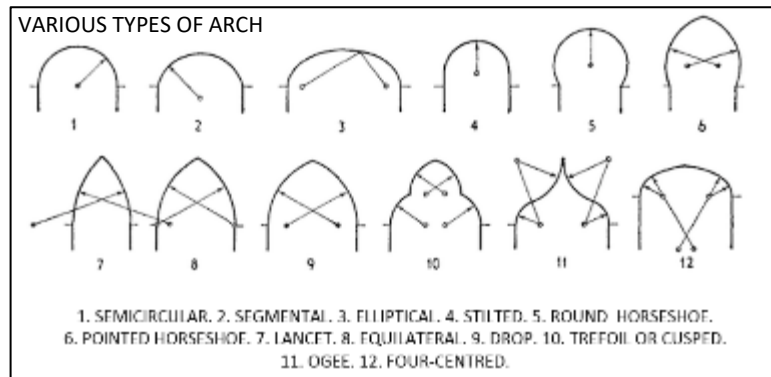
In the south chancel/ sanctuary wall we know there was one window, and almost certainly there were two. It is obvious where one was—see the remains high up in the sanctuary above the 'Sedilia' (three stone seats). Evidently there was an arched window here of reasonable size, with VS stones as expected to match the great east window, and with appropriate mullions (vertical elements) and tracery. If we assume, fairly, that the VS stones we see have not been moved, we can imagine the rest of the arch neatly spanning the triple Sedilia. (The three Sedilia heads themselves are ogee shaped i.e. curve-and-reverse-curve, see below, that fit nicely with the



THE SEDILIA IN SANCTUARY

Perpendicular period. The positioning of the Sedilia at the height we find them confirms that the sanctuary floor was originally designed to be at its present level; they provided seating for the celebrant, deacon and sub-deacon at Holy Communion. On the present sanctuary south window, see below.)

Clearly the window arch itself above the sedilia was quite shallow, much shallower than the present window which replaced it. Possibly it was a 'drop' arch with a blunt-pointed top; or more likely a simple 'segmental' (i.e. a segment of a circular arch, a slice off the top of a circle—with no point at the top), rather like the round-top Norman style of the arches we see inside the main north and south church doors at the west of the nave. Quite likely the Easter Sepulchre arch was originally the same shallow round-top design; in that case there would have been an elegant balance between the two Norman style arches near the west end (i.e. over the doors), and the two at the east end (over the Sedilia and the Easter Sepulchre). This was really quite stylish building.



As to a second south wall chancel window, over the choir, there is no conclusive direct evidence (although see below, page 33), but these were common because without one the chancel would have been a very dim place, difficult for a choir, difficult for the conduct of services. It is therefore very likely there was a second (large) window in the south wall of the chancel. Then, when the later south side chapel was constructed, perhaps this second south chancel window was taken out and moved to become the sanctuary south window, behind the Sedilia; or else to be the south chapel south window. Again, as in the north chapel, a Perpendicular style east window was installed in the south chapel. We will return to this in the discussion below of the Priest's Door.

The Side Chapels (that is, the north and south Chancel aisles)

It is obvious from outside that the two castellated side chapels were a later further addition, built in the 14th or 15th Century and certainly before 1436, as we shall see shortly. They have two-centred arch windows, in slightly ‘dropped’ style (less pointed than ‘equilateral’, see arches diagram above) which retains a gothic feel that echoes well with the work in the nave, even though they have not been



COMPTON CASTLE CHAPEL
(TRANSOM CIRCLED)

surmounted with VS stonework. But how radical were the changes these side chapel builders brought in? We can see that they were clearly quite enthusiastic ‘Perpendicular’ Men, keen to bring the very latest fashion in church architecture to Brent: in both north and south side chapels notice the very assertive transom (horizontal) elements near the top of the east windows, which would never have been contemplated in earlier years, and even today look a little jarring. A window with a

similar bold transom and similar stone tracery, apparently dated to the mid 1400’s, can be seen in the chapel at Compton Castle near Paignton; this is consistent with a date before 1436 for the two east windows in the side chapels at Brent. In both the north and south chapels, we have Perpendicular style east windows and Early English style windows to the north and south, so it is natural to conclude that these two side windows were removed from their positions in the chancel walls, and re-used as the side windows in the two chapels. An alternative attractive possibility is that the present sanctuary south window, above the sedilia, had been the window in the south chancel wall before the south chapel was built; notice from the earlier photo, and especially from outside, how the window extends below the top of the stone sedilia, which suggests the window was moved into position here retaining its former dimensions.

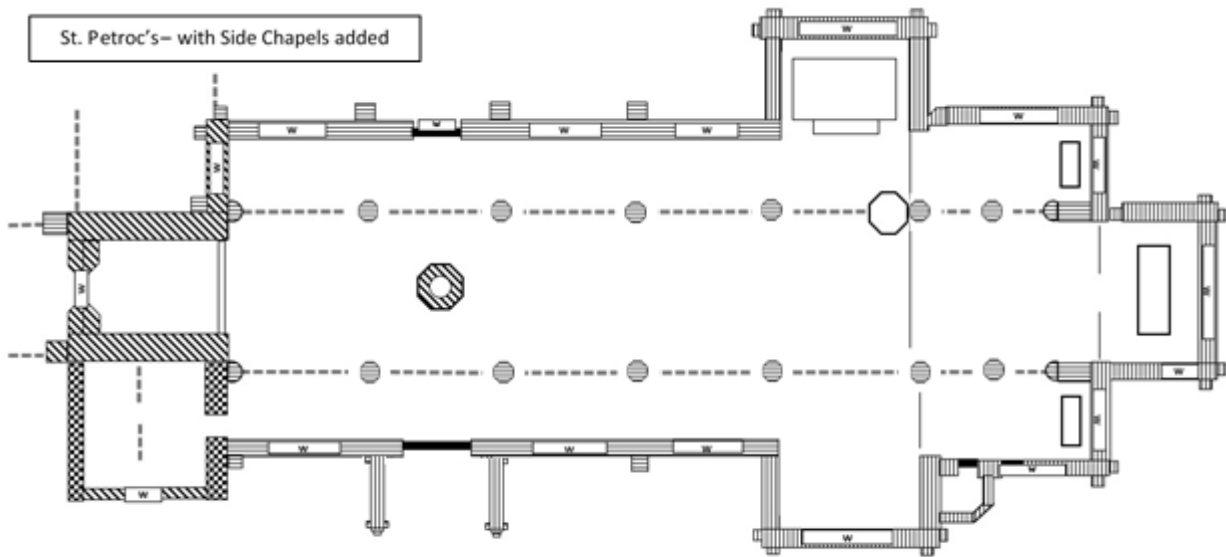


TRACERY IN E. WINDOW
OF NORTH CHAPEL, BRENT

Sadly, no detailed records about the building of the side chapels at Brent seem to have survived; but again we can let the building tell us some more of its story, and there is much to consider.

The following diagram shows the result of this last major building project, meaning that by 1436 at the latest the church was in basically the same shape as today—the chief difference being that when the side chapels were added, there were originally intermediate piers, as shown, in the north and south piercings to the side chapels from the chancel, making two bays in each rather than one as now.¹⁸

¹⁸ The evidence for the openings from the Chancel into the side chapels being formerly of two bays, rather than one as now, is discussed on page 65.



(For an explanation of the additional columns shown in the chancel arches to the side chapels, see the section entitled 'The Side Chapels (continued)' on page 30.

Looking first at the north side chapel, it is clear simply from outside that the chapel builders wanted to make it as large as they reasonably could. We can see how the north wall of the chapel only avoids a collision with the (subsequently blocked) window of the north transept by some very odd cutaway corner work (*see photo adjacent*). And much the same goes for the 'Murder Doorway': while that was still unblocked it would have been unusable unless cutaway stonework as we see here had again been used where the north chapel east wall meets the chancel (*see discussion and photo below*).

Back inside, standing in the north side chapel looking west, up to the junction of the north wall of the north chapel with the east wall of the transept (i.e. the SE corner of the north transept itself, *ringed white below*), it is possible to see how the corner gives support to stonework arching not only to the left (south, over the present entrance to this north side chapel), but also off to the right (north).



IN NORTH CHAPEL, LOOKING W.



N. CHAPEL (LEFT), AND N. TRANSEPT BLOCKED E. WINDOW

Two or three similar VS stones going north are actually visible internally (*ringed white in adjacent photo*), stones that would initially have been outdoors, forming the external frame of the present blocked east window of the north transept. (This window was later blocked, by 1848 at the latest, see page 20). Where the widened entrance to the chapel now is, there was previously of course only a window, probably like the aisle arch we can see just west of the north transept; notice how the VS stones (*at the left of the solid black ring*) match the shape of the VS framed

arch to the west (*dotted black ring*). The chapel entrance arch had to be rebuilt. We can see original VS stones of what was once the window at the east end of the north aisle giving place (*solid black ring*) to new stonework to meet the rebuilt stone corner, which has been pushed out and actually lies slightly north of the line of the old north aisle wall. But the chapel builders kept what they could, and that included all the VS stonework of the (today blocked up) north transept east window.

So far as the south chapel is concerned, here greater changes were afoot. It was clearly decided to have this new south chapel also as long and as wide as possible. Perhaps South Brent’s population was growing at this time. The south chapel projected so far eastwards that its east wall entailed dismantling the earlier high south window in the sanctuary that was centrally positioned over the Sedilia, and filling in under some of the VS stonework that we can see today above the Sedilia. The new window inserted behind the Sedilia was very possibly the window that would have existed in the south wall of the chancel before the south chapel was built—it is obvious (especially from outside) that the window behind the Sedilia is taller than was really needed; but the chancel south window was on site, and available! Alternatively, perhaps less likely, that chancel south window might have been moved to become the south chapel south window.

Again, the south side chapel was to be so wide that its south wall completely collided with the south-most window in the east wall of the south transept. This was a much more radical rebuild than the re-worked corner we observed in the north chapel. All this happened long before the external spiral staircase was added. And that east window in the south transept had to be blocked up too; its stonework was mostly removed, together with all evidence of its companion arch immediately north of it. No doubt all this stone was immediately put to use in the rebuilding scheme, but a new wide arch had to be made to give entrance from the west into the south chapel. We can see that (in contrast to what happened in the north aisle) the new high wide arch from the transept into the present south Lady chapel is of different construction, with large white stones forming the “intrados” under-surface of the arch; above the arch there is no VS stonework which was so typical of the Early English arches and windows in the nave and side aisles.



S. CHAPEL S. WALL, AND S. TRANSEPT

What these side chapel builders achieved helps us understand the story of St. Petroc’s. Interesting possibilities begin to emerge. We have seen, on the north side, how they maximised the width of the north side chapel as far as they reasonably could. Where the chapel met the north transept, they built a chamfer (visible from outside, see photo on a previous page), and thus maximised the amount of light entering the east window of the north transept. But they also wanted to make the north chapel as long as possible in an eastward direction, and here we can observe the building telling us another part of its story. The new east wall of the north chapel comes so far east that it almost obscures the ‘Murder Doorway’ in the north wall of the sanctuary. In fact, a quite unusual cutaway is provided to give access to the doorway (*see adjacent photo; more striking from outside*). Again, although sadly no records survive to give us details, we can confidently conclude that this doorway was here, open, and in use when the chapel builders did their work; otherwise they would not have troubled to create the angular stonework we see today – they would have just butted the new wall up to the north wall of the sanctuary and obscured most or all of the blocked doorway; there would have been no reason not to. So the ‘Murder Doorway’ was open and in use here when they built the north chapel. Therefore, this chapel was built well before 1436 when Vicar John Hay was murdered. This is confirmed by the record of the re-consecration of the church which followed in September 1436, mentioning aisles to the north and south (see below). Exactly how quickly after his murder the doorway was blocked up we do not know; but we can well imagine that the horror of those shocking events might have prompted the permanent closure of that doorway within a very short time, especially if it was through this doorway that his assailant Thomas Weke and comrades gained entrance to the church and then dragged the Vicar out.

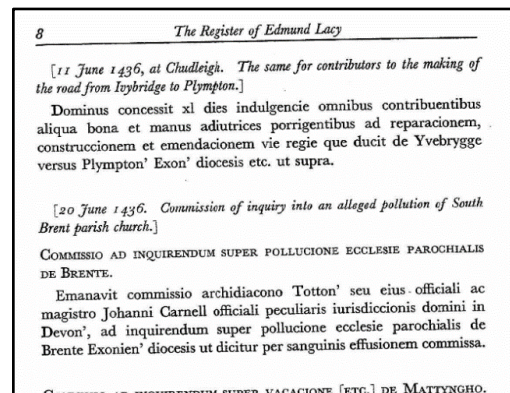


‘MURDER DOORWAY’, AND CUTAWAY IN CHAPEL E. WALL

In summary then, we can safely conclude that transepts, chancel and side chapels all existed in the time of Vicar John Hay, because of the evidence the building itself still provides, and because of the documented events of his murder in 1436, which we now consider. The same ‘build-it-big’ philosophy evident in both chapels, and the fact that their east windows are almost identical, make it virtually certain both were built at the same time. (These conclusion are unaltered by the further discussion below about the position of the north doorway.)

The Murder of Master John Hay, Vicar 1428-1436

The Register of Bishop Edmund Lacy (or Lacey), Bishop of Exeter from 1420-1455, tells us how on 20 June 1436 the bishop commissioned the Archdeacon of Totnes, or his officer John Carnell who had specific jurisdiction in Devon, to enquire into the ‘pollution’ of Brent parish church as alleged to have been committed by bloodshed. In Spring 1436, after the evening service of vespers on the feast of Corpus Christi, a group of men led by one Thomas Weke a parishioner entered the church, perhaps through the north door in the sanctuary, the now blocked ‘Murder Doorway’, and seized the Vicar, Master John Hay. (‘Master’ indicates he held the degree



of Master of Arts from Cambridge¹⁹ or more likely Oxford²⁰ University, given Exeter’s links with Exeter College²¹ Oxford). They murdered him either actually in the church (which would account for the Bishop declaring the church had been “polluted”), or dragging him out of the church through the ‘Murder Door’, they battered him to death outside. The reasons are unknown. We read that the Bishop, on September 11, 1436, visited and ‘reconciled’ the parish church of Brent and the contiguous churchyard. The same day, the Bishop also consecrated (i.e. re-consecrated) its three altars: namely the principal one in honour of St. Petroc and blessed Mary, virgin; the altar in the north aisle in honour of blessed Mary, virgin; and the third in the south aisle in honour of Saints Catherine and Margaret.²² (In the 1870 restoration works, the ‘Lady Chapel’ changed sides; the Organ was then occupying the north chapel.)²³

[11 Sept. 1436. Reconciliation by the bishop of South Brent church and churchyard after their pollution by bloodshed.]

RECONCILIATIO ECCLESIE PAROCHIALIS DE BRENTA ET CIMETERII.

Item undecimo die mensis Septembris apud Brenta Exon’ diocesis dominus reconciliavit ecclesiam parochialem ibidem et cimiterium contiguum eidem polluta per sanguinis effusionem perpetrata inter magistrum Iohannem Hay vicarium ibidem et quendam Thomam Weke de eadem parochia.

[Same day. Consecration of three altars at South Brent.]

CONSECRATIO ALTARIUM IBIDEM.

Item eodem die ibidem dominus consecravit in ecclesia parochiali de Brenta predicta tria altaria videlicet altare principale eiusdem ecclesie in honore sancti Petroci et beate Marie virginis, altare in boreali ala ibidem in honore beate Marie virginis, et tercium altare in australi ala ibidem in honore sanctarum Katerine et Margarete.

We know nothing of the reason for the attack on Vicar Hay, but however strict and unpopular he might have been up to that point—or caring and respected—we can be sure he was completely wrapped in holiness and love in everyone’s estimation from the moment of the murder on! Everyone knew that Thomas à Becket had suffered similarly at Canterbury Cathedral in 1170, and had been sainted. An elaborate tomb in church for the Reverend John Hay—not to say Saint John Hay—would have been a natural response; and Brent’s fame grew.

It is not known how many other parish churches have in their history the murder of a serving vicar. Sadly, it is not unknown today. Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, had been murdered in the Cathedral there in 1170, and Bishop Walter Stapledon, Bishop of Exeter, while in London attempting on the King’s order to protect the City, was dragged out of St. Paul’s Cathedral by a mob and murdered on 15 October 1326.²⁴ A similar such event in a Devon parish church would have brought it considerable fame, not to say notoriety.

¹⁹ Cambridge University was founded in 1209 and was granted a Royal Charter by King Henry III in 1231.

²⁰ Oxford University was teaching as early as 1096. It grew rapidly from 1167 when Henry II banned English students from attending the University of Paris.

²¹ Exeter College Oxford was founded in 1314 by Devon-born Walter de Stapledon, Bishop of Exeter 1308–1326, as a school to educate clergymen. At its foundation it was popular with the sons of the Devonshire gentry.

²² Dunstan, Lacy Reg. vol. iii. fol. 134. Interestingly, in Bishop Lacy’s register for September 14, 1438 there is mention of a “chapel of St. Lambert at Hurburneford in South Brent parish”. On this old chapel at Harbourneford, see page 73.

²³ However, an organ had existed on the (modified) Western ‘singing’ Gallery from at least 1859. In the *South Brent Visitation Book* (p.30, entry for 19 Apr 1859) the then Rural Dean, Henry Hare, writes: ‘a new Organ has been erected and the gallery lowered to receive it, which has greatly improved the general appearance of the Church.’ In retrospect, it seems amazing this was done when so much urgent restoration work was needed—see page 61f. In the event, the gallery was gone in 1870; presumably the organ from it was the one then installed in the north chapel, hitherto the Lady Chapel, which the south chapel then became known as. For further details about the Organ, see p. 50.

²⁴ This is related by William de la Dene in his *Historia Roffensis*, a History of the See of Rochester in the early mid 1300s.

The Side Chapels (continued)

The construction of the side chapels probably also involved the piercing of the chancel walls they adjoined, unless that was done a little later (unlikely, see comment below about the Priest’s Door). In the south wall of the chancel, we reasoned above that there would previously have been a large window to provide light, which had to be dismantled when the south chapel was added (and we argue below, was perhaps re-located there as the south chapel south window). The 1870 excerpts from the *Western Morning News* (see below) indicate that the chancel was greatly changed in the Restoration done then. The wide white arches separating the chancel from the side chapels seem contemporaneous with the construction of the side chapels, but it is now clear that the present arch stonework was inserted in 1870, so we have to wonder what had been there before.²⁵

Although it is popularly believed that our word *chancel* derives from the French word meaning singing, connected with our word *chant*, it comes in fact from the French usage of *chancel* from the Late Latin word *cancellus* ("lattice"), referring to the typical form of rood screens. And there is evidence that here in St. Petroc’s, as in many churches, there were also ‘parclose’ screens—elaborate wooden screens, perhaps similar in workmanship to the Rood Screen—on the north and south sides of the chancel. As noted by Bond and Camm (writing in 1909),²⁶ these had separated the chancel from the side chapels, but they allowed plenty of light through to the chancel. Before the 1870 Renovations, the openings between the chancel and the two chapels each had an intermediate pillar, so that each opening consisted of two arches to the side chapels – the plan on page 26 shows them.²⁷ Standing near the communion rail and looking at the face of the west end of the north sanctuary wall, a small stone can be seen filling a scar in the top semi-octagonal white stones (*see photo*). A similar scar can be seen above the choir stalls in the next column to the west. This marks where horizontal wooden beams along the top of each part of the parclose screen to the north side chapel was fixed. Corresponding scars can be seen on the south side of the chancel. Perhaps there was badly decayed and old-fashioned wood in the screens here, which were removed in 1870 (or perhaps before), as we read in the *Western Morning News* article quoted below. (In some columns of the north arcade in the nave, there are also some similar marks—remnants of some old feature yet to be identified.)



PARCLOSE SCREEN FIXING, NORTH
CHANCEL

²⁵ The piercing to the side chapels was originally of two bays, not one as now; see pages 26 and 64.

²⁶ F. Bligh Bond had earlier given lectures on Church Rood Screens, e.g. to the Devonshire Association in 1902, see *Devonshire Screens and Rood Lofts* (DA, vol. 34, pages 531-550). Of Brent’s Screen, he did say (p. 549) it had been “removed in 1864 and allowed to rot in the churchyard”; but the screen was definitely at least partly present in 1870. See further, page 34f below.

²⁷ For more on the Chancel Reconstruction in general, see p. 63.

It is worth noting here the high standard of woodworking that evidently characterised the Screen and therefore probably the parclose screens also. (For a fuller discussion of the old Rood Screen and its workmanship, see page 34.) The continuance of this tradition is seen in the present choir stalls, clergy stalls and pulpit. The two finely-worked wooden doors rescued from the old Screen in Brent which can be seen immediately west of the main church door give us an idea of the woodwork that formerly enclosed the east end of the church. They are not actually a pair; and we do not know whether they were part of the Rood Screen itself, or part of these chancel parclose side screens.

The large white semi-octagonal stone capitals



SEMI-OCTAGONAL PIER STONES,
SOUTH CHANCEL

The large white stone capitals²⁸ that now stand at the west ends of the sanctuary north and south walls are massive and impressive. But before the side chapels were added and the chancel walls were pierced, those walls would have remained solid to at least head height as far west as the present chancel step.²⁹ So these huge (and costly) white stone capitals, and the stones below them, were not in this position originally; might they in fact date from the Early English church, originally forming the piers on the then east wall (where our chancel step now is) at the eastern end of the north and south nave arcades? We can well imagine them there, with the stonework of that early east wall abutting them on each side, and the east window above the wall between them. When the side chapels were built and opened to the chancel, perhaps the opportunity was taken to move these large white stones to their present positions, grandly terminating the

sanctuary walls, and fully on view again as they had been in the Early English church. If not, they would have been hidden from view when the elaborate Rood Screen was installed, and the Rood Loft above it.

This reading of the evidence is reinforced by the fact that these huge semi-octagonal white stone capitals have flat north and south faces, and not the moulding on their other visible faces. They were intended to abut some adjoining structure. But, in their present positions, there was never any such stonework. If they had indeed originally been part of the chancel step piers, they would have abutted either the early east wall there, or else the woodwork of the old Screen. But that second suggestion is unlikely, because the present capitals of the chancel step piers (where the Screen had been until 1870) clearly now have additional moulding on their north and south faces, applied so as to match the profile of the other faces. The fact that they too once had flats on their north and south surfaces shows that they (and not the semi-octagonal white stones) were in their present positions when the Screen was still in place just before 1870. So it seems that when the chancel and side aisles underwent “alterations amounting almost to



THE OLD DOORS (DETAIL)

²⁸ ‘Capitals’ are the stones at the top of a pier or column, which ‘cap’ it. (Strictly, these half-columns are ‘responds’.)

²⁹ But see below.

reconstruction”,³⁰ the semi-octagonal white capitals had long been where they now are—perhaps moved there when the side chapels were constructed, as suggested above.

It is possible that the building of the side chapels and the installation of the Rood Screen were a single grand project. It is noticeable today that the pillars at the chancel step (especially on the south side) which were fully revealed again when the Screen was removed in 1870 seem to be of inferior quality to the other pillars in church. This may guide us to an explanation, when we consider what had to be done when the Rood Screen came to be installed. We know that in addition to the large cost of the timber and its installation and carving, major work was needed to the Nave transept arches (where the distorted or ‘stilted’ arches are today). Those two arches had to be altered to accommodate the height of the Loft on the new Screen, and the piers of the chancel arch obviously needed to be rebuilt. So this is the most obvious moment for the large semi-octagonal white stones to have been moved from their position at the chancel Step in the Early English church to their present position either side of the sanctuary step. The rebuilt chancel step piers did not have to be of such high quality appearance because they were going to be hidden very shortly by the new Screen!

On the other hand, perhaps Screen and south chapel were not a single project; might not better arrangements for an external ‘Priest’s Door’ have been made than we see today? If the Screen did arrive later, with a staircase now required to access the Loft above it, the larger door in the south chapel wall (previously an exterior door to the churchyard) was commandeered for the new spiral staircase, and it was decided to squeeze in a new smaller external ‘Priest’s Door’ under the south window of the chapel. We may never know the timing for sure.

It is not entirely true to say that the chancel walls were ‘solid to at least head height’, as stated above, since it is very possible that, long before the side chapels were built, there was already a ‘Priest’s Door’ in the south chancel wall leading directly from the chancel to the churchyard outside. These are found in many churches. Even if the ‘Murder Door’ was in use in the north wall, a south Priest’s Door in the chancel wall seems almost definite. If a Priest’s Door to the churchyard had indeed existed in the south chancel wall near where the Vicar’s stall now stands, then when the south side chapel was built, and the chancel wall pierced, perhaps this door opening was moved to its present position, where the foot of the spiral staircase now is. As the spiral staircase had not then been built, it would again have opened out to the churchyard as a Priest’s Door. An overhead view shows the two churchyard paths from the Lych Gate, one towards the south Porch, and the other towards the south chapel. That second path is arguably aligned less towards the newer smaller door and more towards where the door now used to access the spiral staircase would have originally opened onto the churchyard; it must represent the well-used way to an early south ‘Priest’s Door’. Both paths are in essence centuries old.



³⁰ To quote the *Western Morning News* report, see p. 63.

Then when the Rood Screen and Rood Loft were constructed, and the spiral staircase added in the churchyard, access to the rood gallery via the new spiral staircase was required ... and the Priest’s door was in exactly the right place. A new smaller Priest’s door to outside was therefore inserted under the south chapel south window. The detailing here is very crowded, and that smaller door is clearly secondary to the window; it is too low, and the ground level outside looks to have been reduced to meet it.³¹ (There is even some suggestion in the pared-away sill of the window seen from outside that the door was once proposed a little further east). The older doorway and its threshold were at a better level. But the very existence of this additional low door proves that a south ‘Priest’s Door’ was thought to be needed, so very likely there had been an earlier one. The slightly ‘afterthought’ character surrounding this low door fits in with the spiral staircase being installed sometime after the south chapel was finished, for otherwise a neater combination of Priest’s Door and chapel south window could easily have been found—the window could have been slightly higher, even if it was in fact moved from the chancel south wall. So all these pieces of the jigsaw begin to fall into place, justifying the supposition the chancel had a south Priest’s Door, and agreeing with the suggestion above that the south chapel south window had previously been the large south window in the chancel. And perhaps, when the chancel was built, it did also have a large north wall window, and that also was moved out to become the north chapel north window.



DOORS IN S. CHAPEL WALL

If it is correct that the present north and south windows of the side chapels were previously windows in the chancel, then the only new windows required when the side chapels were added were the east windows for each of them. And we can see how in tracery style they are very sympathetic to the side windows, except for the distinctive Perpendicular transom (horizontal) element introduced into them—the Perpendicular men making their statement quite clearly!

³¹ I am grateful to Mr. Peter Finch, a long-standing member of the congregation, who tells me that about 30 years ago he was commissioned to add an external 5-inch-thick concrete sloping threshold to prevent water entering under the ‘Priest’s Door’. Until then, rainwater would gather at that local low point in the churchyard and simply flow in—seeing the door open makes this very believable. (The addition of further gravel to the paths outside has lifted the path level now to the top of the concrete door threshold.) This is a further indication that the external natural ground level had been reduced to accommodate the door under the window; and that therefore the doorway is indeed a ‘late’ addition to the building, as we have argued above.

Chapter 2

How did St. Petroc’s get like this? – Part 2

The Rood Screen (*what Rood Screen?*) and Rood Loft

The Screen that once stood in St. Petroc’s is said to have been one of the most splendid in all Devon. It appears to have been the final major element added to St. Petroc’s, until the changes of the 19th Century. But—by all accounts—what a magnificent and exuberant element it was! When was it put in? Generally it is thought that whilst some Rood Screens appeared in large churches from c. 1250, in most parish churches in Devon they began to be introduced from around the 1380’s.¹ If the arguments in the preceding chapter are correct, all the work of adding the transepts, then the chancel/ sanctuary, then the side chapels, took place early in the 200 years between 1247 and 1436. The low Priest’s Door in the south chapel was discussed at the end of the previous chapter with the conclusion that it is best explained as an addition after the completion of the south chapel, when the larger door just west of it ceased to be used as an exit to the churchyard and was instead pressed into service for the new spiral stairway built to access the high Rood Loft above the Rood Screen. This suggests that the Rood Screen (or at least access to the Loft above it) was not installed until after all the chapel work was complete, which was before 1436. This leaves ample time for the South Brent Screen to have been a distinguished and quite early example. (As for Rood Lofts, these were all ordered to be dismantled by Order of the Privy Council in 1561 under Elizabeth I, so that marks the very latest date. But amazingly, part of one pre-Reformation Rood Loft gallery still survives in Devon, at Atherington, whereas Rood Screens themselves survive in many places—there are 115 in Devon churches today.)



ATHERINGTON LOFT

The actual installation of the Screen—quite apart from the making of it—was a major project. It was clearly planned to be so impressive and so large that structural work was needed to the transept arches (the east-most arches of the north and south nave arcades) to accommodate the height of the screen and the Rood Loft above it against the chancel arch piers. We can still see some dowels where it was attached. These two distorted arches look unsightly perhaps to us today, in contrast with the beauty of all the Early English VS archwork in the rest of the nave, but the distortions so obvious today would of course have been largely masked by the glorious Rood Screen itself.

What did the Old Screen look like? It is a pity that despite considerable efforts to find photographs of the Screen before it was dismantled in the 19th Century, none have yet come to light. We must continue to hope that a photo will eventually emerge from someone’s attic!

But some tantalising written descriptions have survived. To summarise the evidence that is given in detail below: Brent’s Rood Screen was apparently still intact when described in 1822 by Lysons and Lysons who call it ‘particularly rich’, and ‘extending across both aisles’, i.e. both side aisles. In 1847, Davidson described it as ‘Remains of a chancel screen but much in decay’. In the 1848 *Transactions of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society* (*‘TEDAS’*) it was reported ‘Roodscreen exists but not in original form’, with eleven bays in all (i.e. five centrally, plus three across each side aisle). In 1870 the *Western*

¹ The earliest Screens in Devon date from c.1380, according to Williams, 2008, p.254.

Morning News reports a screen was in place ‘across the chancel’ then. That last fact can hardly be doubted; so we have to treat with some reserve the accuracy of the 1909 statement in Bond and Camm (see below) that the screen “was removed in 1864 and allowed to perish”. Perhaps the 1848 statement ‘Roodscreen exists but not in original form’ can guide us towards some reconciliation of these contradictory accounts: work to rescue serious decay extended over several years, and in 1864 perhaps it was the bays in the side aisles that were removed. Then maybe some work was later replaced (the *Western Morning News* tellingly specifies a screen ‘across the chancel’)? In 1887, Worthy reported that the screen had been considered impossible to restore.²

The best single source for details of the Screen at South Brent now appears to be M. A. Williams in his 2008 Exeter Ph.D. thesis ‘Medieval English Roodscreens, with special reference to Devon’, which is a rich resource for all Devon’s Rood Screens, giving much fascinating background information. On page 345 he gives a very useful compilation and summary of known references to Brent’s screen, which we gratefully acknowledge (although he ignores the evidence provided by the two *Western Morning News* articles which contradicts the Screen being ‘Removed 1864’):

“South Brent (St. Petroc and St. Mary).—*Earliest record*: 1822 (Lysons, vol. 1, p. cccxxvii). *Features*: Rich, with roodloft. Extends across both aisles (Ibid.). Remains of a chancel screen but much in decay (Davidson 1847, vol. 3, p. 625). Roodscreen exists but not in original form: five bays in nave, three in each aisle (TEDAS, iii, 1848, p. 154). Roodscreen much decayed; it was considered impossible to restore it (Worthy 1887, vol. 2, p. 212). Roodscreen removed about forty years since (Stabb 1908-16, vol. 1 (1908), pp. 114-15). Removed 1864³ (Bond and Camm 1909, vol. 2, p. 285). Extant now: No.”

The *Exeter Flying Post* reported on 22 March 1871 that a meeting of the *Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society*, held the previous Thursday, received a description and drawings of the Old Screen in South Brent, supplied by the architect for the Restoration, Mr. James Hine.⁴ There is also the 1848 report referred to by Bond and Camm on page 299 (vol II, see illustration below) and included in full by John Stabb in his 1908-1916 book ‘*Some Old Devon Churches*’ (page 114) where he wrote of South Brent:

The present tower was originally the central tower of a cruciform church on the same site; on the south side, next to the porch, there still remains what was the transept of the cross church; this is now used as a vestry.

The rood screen was removed about 40 years since [*i.e. about 1870*]. The following description of it is given in the Exeter Diocesan [*Architectural*] Society’s Transactions [*sic*], Vol. 3, p. 154 [*i.e. 1848*]:—

“It is of five bays in the nave and three in each aisle, there is a peculiarity in its tracery which contains within it crockets, and a finial. The screen has been patched with portions of the old carving inserted without any attempt at arrangement”.

At the restoration of the church the screen was removed, the framework was stored for some years in the vicarage, then in a stable loft, where possibly it still remains; all that is left of the carving consists of a short length over the altar.⁵ The rood staircase, carried up in a turret on the south side of the church, remains. There is a priest’s door in the south chancel aisle. The font, made of red sandstone, is Transitional Norman in design, with a circular bowl with cable moulding, supported on a shaft with a base of two rolls, standing

² Worthy, ‘Devonshire Parishes’ (1887), vol. 2, p. 212.

³ The Screen was at least partly present in 1870; the statement ‘Removed 1864 (Bond and Camm 1909, vol. 2 page 285)’ (actually page 284) is either wrong, or else the Screen was partly replaced again after 1864 only to be finally removed in 1870.

⁴ These drawings by Mr. Hine have so far escaped detection in the EDAS archives. By April 1861 Mr. Hine had already prepared one report (*South Brent Visitation Book*, p.32, at 11 Apr 1861). See p. 61.

⁵ The ‘Vine Carving’—probably the best-preserved piece then remaining. The above description of course predates the 1924-1933 sanctuary re-ordering, when the ‘Vine Carving’ was moved into the north chapel.

on a plinth. The building was reconciled by Bishop Lacy after the murder of the vicar in the church about 1436; at the same time he dedicated three altars. The registers date from 1677.

The Screen was clearly not in original shape or good condition in 1848, and had been ‘patched’.

The *Western Morning News* article of 4 October 1870 says⁶ that St. Petroc’s possessed “a very handsome oak screen, beautifully carved and at one time richly coloured”. This ‘handsome’ must be a reference to how handsome it had once been: it was in a very bad way in 1870. Bond and Camm in *Roodcreens and Roodlofts*,⁷ record that South Brent’s Screen was “removed in 1864, and allowed to perish” (or, as Bond had stated in a 1902 lecture to the Devonshire Association,⁸ “and allowed to rot in the churchyard”); but this must be an error, for on page 299 they give a description of the former South Brent screen, saying it was removed “about 30 years ago, on the occasion of a very drastic restoration”, i.e. in 1870 (see accompanying illustrations). In any case, there is the evidence of the *Western Morning News* articles. The *Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society* commented briefly again in 1896.⁹

APPENDIX E	
List of Screens Removed, etc., with Dates	
ALVINGTON, WEST	Since 1869.
ASHBURTON	In 1718.
ASHCOMBE	Sold in 1820.
ASHFRINGTON	Removed in 1846; since destroyed.
AXMINSTER	Roodscreen removed, 1860; parclose removed, 1875.
AVETON GIFFORD	Removed, 1869; restored, 1886.
BRADSTONE	since 1840.
BRIDESTOWE	in 1869.
BRATTON CLOVELLY	since 1820 (a small portion remains).
BRENT (SOUTH)	in 1864, and allowed to perish.
BROADHEMBURY	Removed in 1851, and burnt in a shed.
BRIXHAM	prior to 1861.

BOND & CAMM ‘ROODSCREENS AND ROODLOFTS’ VOL.2 (1909), p. 284

SCREENWORK IN THE COUNTY OF DEVON	
299	
<p>BRENT, SOUTH. There was formerly a very fine roodscreen with a parclose standing in this church, but it was removed about thirty years ago, on the occasion of a very drastic “restoration,” when the contractor was allowed to take away most of the old oak, some of which passed into private hands. The framework of the screen, after resting for some time in the churchyard, was removed to the Vicarage, but on the rebuilding of the same a few years ago it was carried out to the stable loft, where some fragments of it now remain in a very decayed condition; and it is to be feared that under present conditions it is likely to undergo further deterioration. Reference to the screen will be found in the <i>Exeter Dioc. Trans.</i>, Vol. III, Part III, p. 154 (1849), and in the same for 1896, p. 132. It was of eleven bays, five in the nave, and three in each aisle, with tracery of the Dartmouth and Ughborough type, containing within it crockets and a finial. The vaulting was missing, and the spandrels were covered with portions of old carving attached at random. All the carved work is now lost, with the exception of a small fragment fixed over the altar, the colouring of which has been restored.</p> <p>Baring Gould, “Dartmoor,” p. 210, “Book of the West,” I, 37, 225; “List of Buildings having Mural Decorations”; <i>Exeter Dioc. Arch. Soc. Trans.</i>, III, iii, p. 154; <i>ibid.</i>, 1896, p. 132.</p>	

BOND & CAMM ‘ROODSCREENS AND ROODLOFTS’ VOL.2 (1909), p. 299

In his 1899 ‘Book of the West’, Baring-Gould mentions South Brent prominently when discussing Church Screens that had been removed, although he seems to think Brent’s had been in a restorable condition:

As stone was an intractable material, the Devonshire men who desired to decorate their churches directed their energies to oak carving, and filled them with very finely sculptured bench-ends and screens of the most elaborate and gorgeous description.

So rich and elaborate are these latter, that when a church has to be restored the incumbent trembles at the prospect of the renovation of his screen, and this has led to many of them being turned out and

⁶ The *Western Morning News* newspaper articles from 1870 and 1871 are reproduced below, page 63f.

⁷ Bond and Camm, 1909, Vol. II, p. 284,

⁸ For Bond’s lecture to the Devonshire Association, see the footnote on page 30.

⁹ *TEDAS*, 1896, p. 132, adding little to what had been said by them before, especially in 1848, but also referencing Murray’s ‘Devon & Cornwall’ (1864). Murray briefly mentions the Norman Tower; “some good Flamboyant windows” (Flamboyant style was a phase of late Gothic architecture in 15th-century France and Spain, with stone window tracery in a flamelike S-shaped curve); and adds “there are also the remains of a good screen” (1865 edition, page 64). *TEDAS* commented in 1896 that the screen is “no longer in existence!”. In 1925 it is recorded that “Parts of the old Screen destroyed in 1870 have been utilized in construction of Altar Rails, a beam in the tower arch and a table under the War Memorial” (*South Brent Visitation Book*, entry for 27 Feb 1925).

destroyed. South Brent screen was thus wantonly ejected and allowed to rot. Bridestowe was even worse treated: the tracery was cut in half and turned upside down, and plastered against deal boarding—to form a dwarf screen.

"What will my screen cost if it be restored?" asked [some different] rector of Mr. Harry Hems. "About four hundred pounds." "Four hundred pounds! Bless me! I think I had best have it removed." "Very well, sir, be prepared for the consequences. Your name will go down to posterity dyed in infamy and yourself steeped in obloquy." "You don't mean to say so?" "Fact, sir, I assure you." That preserved the screen.¹⁰

Baring-Gould was somewhat scathing about the 1870 Restoration; despite what he says, he would surely now agree the beauty of St. Petroc's shines again—the church is certainly not a 'woe' today:

South Brent is dominated by Brent Hill, that was formerly crowned with a chapel dedicated to S. Michael. The parish church, a foundation of S. Petrock, possessed a fine carved oak screen. The church has, however, been taken in hand by that iconoclast the "restorer," who has left it empty, swept and garnished—a thing of nakedness and a woe for ever. The screen—the one glory of the church—was cast forth into the graveyard, and there allowed to rot.¹¹

Bond and Camm commented in 1909 that the screen at Rattery (which was later restored, in 1911) "is said to exhibit some rather fine detail. It is of the same type as the screen at Ugborough, and that of South Brent was similar",¹² although Williams classes the screen at Rattery with that at Torbryan.¹³



THE SCREEN IN RATTERY ST. MARY. SAID TO BE SIMILAR TO THE BRENT SCREEN

As to the visual character of the screen, we have evidence to hand. Firstly of course, there are the



COMMUNION RAIL
IN BRENT

fragments in St. Petroc's church today. There is the coloured work incorporated into the Communion Rail, the Vine Carving now under the north chapel east window, and the beam incorporated into the belfry screen at the west.¹⁴ From the 1920s photograph from the Cranch collection we can see that this



NORTH CHAPEL: THE COLOURED VINEWORK WHICH
FORMERLY HUNG ABOVE THE CENTRAL HOLY TABLE

¹⁰ Baring-Gould, 'The Book of the West', (vol. 1, 'Devon'), p. 37-38. He also has an interesting theory about St. Petroc's and the re-founding of Buckfast Abbey. See page 81.

¹¹ Baring-Gould, 1900, p. 210. (He was so cross about this that he repeated his complaint about South Brent on page 225: "A few years ago the fine screen of South Brent was thrown out when the church was made naked under the pretence of restoration, and allowed to rot in an outhouse." But we know what he does not state, that in fact it was in very poor condition.)

¹² Bond and Camm, 1909, p. 344,

¹³ Williams, 2008, p. 393.

¹⁴ See note on the Communion Rail / Altar Rail on p. 110

was the short piece “over the altar” under the main east window that was referred to by Stabb, and said by Bond and Camm to have had its colouring restored.¹⁵ Vine carvings were favourites in screens, probably because of biblical descriptions of the decoration of the Jewish Temple. Especially notable are the two doors (not actually a pair, but clearly parts of the same work) now on view just west of the old main south door.¹⁶ The intricacy and complexity of some of this carved work has an exotic, almost eastern character. If that was typical of the rest of the Screen, and if the Choir and Clergy stalls and Pulpit preserve designs from the old Screen, as was reported, it must indeed have been a wonder to behold. Some have said it must have been of quite early date; a date in the mid 1400’s does seem very possible.

The Rood Screen in nearby Torbryan Church, which has astonishingly survived to the present day with its coloured work almost undamaged, dates from about 1430 (according to Stabb) and is known to have been completed by 1480, although paintings were still being added in the reign of Henry VII (1485-1509) (*see photo*). It is a superb example of a pre-Reformation Screen, well worth viewing. Dartmouth (St. Saviour’s) has a very fine ancient screen, and Brent’s had “tracery of the Dartmouth and Ugborough type” (Bond and Camm). Williams also recognises the St. Saviour’s Dartmouth type in the existing screens at Blackawton, Chivelstone, East Allington, East Portlemouth, Sherford, Slapton, and South Pool. Devon’s churches are famous for the quantity and quality of their surviving old Rood Screens, rivalling those of East Anglia; many counties have none.



PART OF A PANEL FROM
THE ROOD SCREEN AT TORBRYAN

The construction and installation of a Rood Screen was a major project. The descriptive displays at Torbryan explain that once the finance was secure, a master carpenter was commissioned. His first task was to find the timber. A suitable oak tree in the wood was selected; it would be felled in the autumn, then cut and stacked to dry out for several months. The master would make his design from the best examples of Rood Screens and similar work that he had come across. Sawyers would cut the timber accordingly, while it was still fairly green, and joiners then pinned it together under weights to dry out for a second time. Later the carpenters knocked it apart for transportation to the church in question, and assembled the pieces, carrying out final shaping as required. Large mouldings were side axed to a rough form and then cut and fitted by the carpenter, and the sculptor carved the detail. The oak screen was then pinned by temporary draw pins and held together by a mortice-and-tenon frame. In the generally fairly damp environment of the church, it ‘dried’ again for the third time. Gradually it shrunk to a tight fit, but it would be a long time until it was all dry enough to be painted. Pigments sourced from all over the world were commonly used.¹⁷



THE SCREEN IN St. SAVIOUR’S, DARTMOUTH

¹⁵ Wall, 2005, p.4 acknowledges the Cranch collection.

¹⁶ A detail of the old Screen doors is shown on page 31.

¹⁷ For a very detailed account of screen construction, see Williams, 2008, chapter 5.

We may perhaps be forgiven for being glad St. Petroc’s has no Screen today. How cluttered and crowded the church might have felt, how cut off the eastern part of the building, how remote the choir and the Holy Communion Table. The airy welcoming feel that many visitors find in the church today might have been less apparent. But it would, nevertheless, be fascinating to see what the old Screen had looked like before it fell into such decay and disrepair that, despite hopes to the contrary in 1870, its final removal was the only option. We know that Torbryan, a few miles away, had contemporary links with Brent families into the 1600-1700s, for example the Prowse family who are commemorated in both churches. Perhaps the screen at St. Saviour’s Dartmouth provides the best impression of the overall structure and general appearance of the Screen that was at Brent, while the dazzling medieval screen at Torbryan, with its elaborate carvings and panels and colourwork, gives us the best available clue to how exuberant the colouring of the Rood Screen at Brent once was.

How could all this work have been afforded?

All the development work we have discussed in this chapter, and indeed the construction of the Early English church itself that came before it, would have been very costly, millions of pounds in today’s money, and we have noted the evidence that high quality work was done at each stage. The answer to this question of cost may lie in the responsibility that Buckfast Abbey had in the earlier years, since the Abbey—which became a richly endowed house—was Patron of the Vicarage, and the Abbot of Buckfast was Lord of the Manor and held the Manor House here, the historic present Church House just south of the churchyard. If so, then the architectural stonework of Brent’s windows may reflect the style of the windows that once existed in the pre-Reformation Abbey, of which the style of window work is still disputed.¹⁸ Then also, in later years, after most of this work was complete, the income of the Vicar was greatly augmented in 1559 by the arrangements Sir William Petre facilitated (see Appendix 1 and the chapter on finance). Or perhaps Brent parishioners, who prospered from the sheep who grazed these well-watered fields, clubbed together (as Brent folk still do) to support the latest project together out of goodwill. Roodscreens in particular (as distinct from the chancel) were usually considered the property of the parishioners, and there was local competition between some parishes to have the best!

¹⁸ See Beacham, Peter (ed): ‘Buckfast Abbey – History, Art, Architecture’, 2017.

Chapter 3

How did St. Petroc’s get like this? – Part 3

A Puzzle remaining ... and a possible solution

There is one remaining unsolved problem, which possibly has already come to mind. It concerns the very puzzling actual position of the so-called ‘Murder Doorway’. The question facing us is, What accounts for the ‘Murder Doorway’ being where it is? We have noted how very carefully the building of the chancel was done, especially in the creation of the large east window (or its relocation from its earlier position at our present chancel step). We noted the VS stonework above the east window, and above the window over the Sedilia. But we have only briefly commented on the other VS stonework remains we can see here, the partial low arch in the chancel north wall—the ‘Easter Sepulchre’. What can explain the very puzzling fact that the so-called ‘Murder Doorway’ was allowed to intrude onto it?



SANCTUARY N. WALL: BLOCKED DOOR, AND
REMAINS OF CURVED EASTER SEPULCHRE ARCH

There are many surviving examples of these ‘Easter Sepulchres’. They were unique to England and Wales, which had used the Sarum (Old Salisbury) rite of the old Roman church. In Devon, there is a famous 16th century example at Holcombe Burnell church, west of Exeter, where a monument in the north wall of the sanctuary to one of the Denys or Dennis family was used as an Easter Sepulchre. Interestingly, it was to a member of that family that at the Dissolution of the Monasteries the king granted Buckfast Abbey. There is an elaborate Easter Sepulchre in South Pool church not that far from Brent. Some surviving in East Anglia date from the early 1300s.



EASTER SEPULCHRE IN
HOLCOMBE BURNELL

The Easter Sepulchre was a recess usually in the chancel/ sanctuary north wall, and in pre-Reformation ceremonies a wooden crucifix and the consecrated bread and wine from the Maundy Thursday mass would be placed into it on Good Friday, until on Easter Sunday they would be brought out in triumph, to echo the message of Christ’s glorious resurrection in action as well as in word. The recess was sometimes adapted from that of an existing recumbent tomb, perhaps that of the builder of the church, and sometimes it was purpose built, as is probably the case in Brent. The coloured VS stonework of the chancel builders is again much to be admired. We can imagine the missing stonework in place, and the complete arch a very impressive feature.

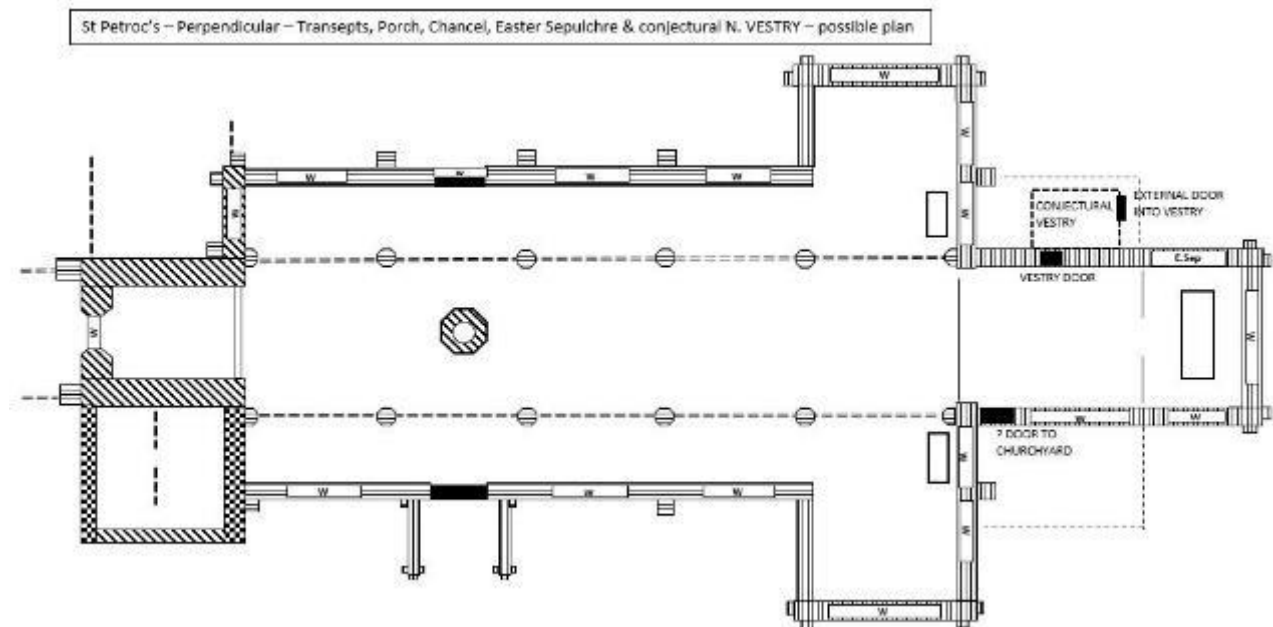
But the question then naturally arises, with that Easter Sepulchre arch so obviously deliberately built into the sanctuary by the chancel builders, and dignified with showy VS stonework, how did the door we now know as the ‘Murder Doorway’ ever come to be placed where it is, virtually destroying the Easter Sepulchre? There are no doubt several possible solutions, but here is the best I have come across. Although admittedly conjectural, it builds on what evidence we have, and seems to make sense; see what you think.

It is suggested that the chancel/ sanctuary was in fact designed and built with a north door—but certainly not where it is now. Why? Because it was the north door to a long-lost north clergy Vestry, built at the same time as the chancel, or a little later, standing where the north chapel came later to be built. This would not have been at all unusual; a clergy Vestry to the north of the chancel is a very common feature, and with an external door it would give the clergy easy access to the chancel for saying Morning and Evening Prayer each day, without having also to unlock the doors in the Screen and open up the whole church. That would have meant carrying the often very large main church door key. St. Petroc's possesses an ancient rusty key which still works the south door lock; it is about 10 inches (25 cm) long, and far too heavy for any pocket—the Vicar may well have carried it tied to his belt. Possibly there was already a south chancel Priest's Door as well.



THE OLD KEY TO THE SOUTH DOOR

The exact position of this north Vestry is quite uncertain of course, but it would have been well away from the window at the east end of the north aisle. The vestry door to the chancel could have been a little further east than shown below if there were choir stalls in the chancel to be avoided; perhaps it stood near the sanctuary step. It would be interesting if ground-penetrating radar were to find any evidence of an earlier building under the north chapel floor. Here is a sketch of how it might then have been:



If this is correct, then when the north and south chapels later came to be built, this north Vestry would have to have been taken down.¹ The stone doorframe from the chancel to the north Vestry would have been moved east to its present position, the so-called 'Murder Doorway'. There was a good case for retaining an external door to the chancel/ sanctuary for clergy use. This meant disturbing the Easter Sepulchre, but perhaps those old annual ceremonies had fallen out of use locally by then (although in some places they did continue even until shortly after the Reformation). The new position for the door was of course not ideal; we see out in the churchyard how the external door frame in the angle with the

¹ Is this when the Vestry was provided in the area of the Saxon south extension to the Tower? See the discussion below immediately following.

north chapel east wall was cut away, as a compromise between not wanting the door to be any further east, and not wanting the north chapel to be any smaller. The old (east?) doorway into the north Vestry from the churchyard may well have been moved to the new south chapel and re-used as the doorway we see now at the foot of the spiral staircase, or perhaps discarded if there had been a south chancel external door as shown tentatively in the above diagram. After the 1436 murder of Vicar John Hay and the blocking up of the north sanctuary ‘Murder Doorway’, the doorway now at the foot of the spiral staircase was used as a Priest’s Door to the churchyard, if the spiral staircase did not then already exist. When the building of the spiral staircase took over the use of that door, a new Priest’s Door was then inserted, a little uncomfortably, just to the east of it under the south chapel south window.

This reconstruction is admittedly mere conjecture, until we know what evidence if any lies under the north chapel floor, but it does have the merit of explaining all the odd features we have discussed and how and why each came to be where we now see it.

Chapter 4

From the 15th to the 19th Century

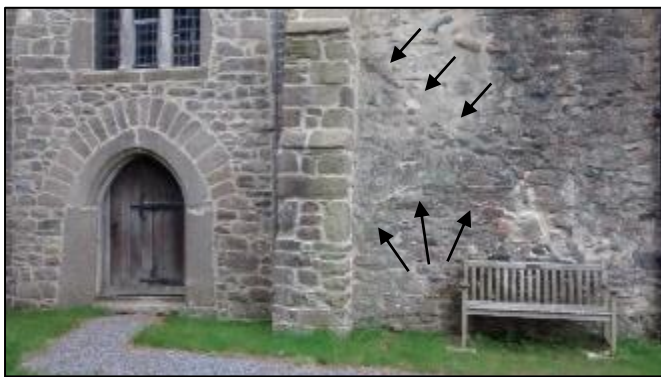
The Clergy Vestry south of the Tower

The interesting building south of the Tower has two rooms, or spaces, one above the other. In very early times, it is thought the lower space was used as a mortuary chapel.¹ At some point, the first floor space above the Saxon foundation adjoining the south of the Tower was rebuilt and fitted out as a Clergy Vestry. However, this was in two stages, as we learn from the *Western Morning News* excerpts printed below.² For several hundred years, the Vestry was clearly below the present first floor Clergy Vestry which in 1870 had a fireplace with the date 1726 over it.

Even if the conjectural explanation given in the previous chapter of the Vestry being moved from the north-east to a south-west position is not accepted, a Vestry must have been located here at some other time when it was clear that one was needed. In 1538, Cromwell ordered from the court of Henry VIII that every wedding, baptism and burial was to be recorded, and registers began to be kept somewhere better than simply in the old wooden ‘church chests’ with their three padlocks—one key for each of the Vicar and the two Churchwardens. Church chests were in widespread use until Jacobean times, the early 1600s.



TOWER FROM THE SOUTH



TOWER WEST DOOR, AND SOUTH TOWER EXTENSION

Looking first at the external west facing stonework just south of the west Tower doorway, we see some hints of an early lean-to structure over the area just south of the Tower, the Saxon basement. Remnants of a wide semi-circular arched doorway can be made out in the wall under it, which might have given access to the Saxon area some meters below. The top of this old arch is very low compared with the Tower door, and suggests that it was built when the prevailing ground level nearby was

considerably lower, therefore at quite an early date. This west facing stonework has clearly been disturbed; much change must have come when the flue and chimney was built for the upper room fireplace (with date over it 1726, but there may have been an earlier fireplace). Later, more change came when the Victorians installed a boiler in the Saxon basement. But who knows what was there before?

The Upper Chamber

The Upper Chamber in the building south of the Tower has been in use as the Clergy Vestry throughout all living memory. But for hundreds of years beforehand, the Vestry occupied the space below it, hard

¹ Kelly's Directory, 1923.

² The *Western Morning News* articles are reproduced on page 63f.

as that may now be to believe. Inside that 'Saxon area' nothing much now remains of the old ground floor Vestry. There are tentative indications in the internal walls that the upper chamber floor was once at a lower level; in the internal south wall east of the existing door is a small blocked opening, as if for a window or a niche for an oil lamp; and in the east wall are remains of a doorway into the church (entering directly under the present Vestry stone steps). Externally in the south wall is, firstly, the door with semi-circular (Norman style) arch (*black arrow*). This door is now the access to all the Saxon basement area, including where the Victorians installed a boiler at the foot of the chimney, but very likely it was previously used as the external access to the old ground floor Vestry.



S. DOOR BELOW VESTRY WINDOW

Secondly, higher up outside, just under the east foot of the existing three-light Vestry window, can be seen remains of an old arch in similar style to the door (*white arrows in previous picture*). Going up into today's Vestry we find the inside of the arch, but the western half is missing, and the arch is much higher inside than outside—compare the arch work with the level of the bottom of the window glass. When complete, this internal arch would have reached across almost as far as the centre window. The internal surface of the arch slopes downwards, towards the lower external arch, showing that this was not a window but a staircase, giving access from the churchyard to the upper chamber. So presumably there were steps outside in the churchyard (the wall is not thick enough for a spiral stairway). This arch inside the upper chamber is so low—see the waist-height cupboard surface in the adjoining photo—that the floor must have been much lower in earlier times (as noted, there is some evidence for this in the walls of the Saxon space underneath). Perhaps the bottom of the 'small blocked opening' in the internal south wall noted above is roughly where originally the foot of this stairway emerged.



DOORWAY ARCH IN PRESENT VESTRY

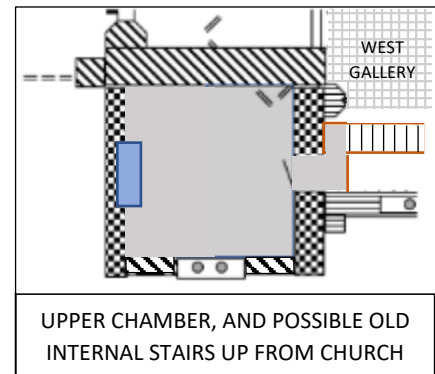
Externally, this high blocked doorway looks to be later than the existing Norman-style south wall door, and the stonework around its arch is disturbed. The downstairs area must once have been divided into two spaces with different floor levels. At least by the time the fireplace bearing date 1726 was installed (although there may have been a previous fireplace)—and probably much earlier, perhaps from the 1400s—the whole upper chamber floor was clearly at its present higher level. It seems very likely that the chamber floor was raised, and the exterior small south door inserted, when the space at ground level was wanted for use as the Vestry, see below.

A comparison of this blocked doorway to the upper chamber with the existing south door to the Saxon basement suggests that four or five extra outdoor steps would be required, perhaps set against the existing south wall—see adjacent reconstructed image. Or it could be that those external steps were fully enclosed in a stone covered way attached to the outside of the building on the south, with an access door at ground level instead, facing east. The stonework of the adjacent east corner looks altered, note the different much whiter stones, and the ground level here does appear to have been raised for some purpose, compared with the level of the entrance to the basement, so this is quite likely. There is also a

faint vertical discolouration running down from just east of the present central window, where such an extension might have abutted the old south wall. In any case, the three-light Tudor-style window in the existing Clergy Vestry, with the strain-relieving arch above it that we can see from outside, seems to have been added (probably enlarging a previous smaller window) after the staircase door arch was blocked up, for the present window occupies space that the arched stairway partly used in the upper chamber. If the upper chamber had originally had only a single lancet (slit) window, it would have been quite a dim room.



When the ground floor space was converted for use as a Vestry and its ceiling raised, probably around 1400 or so,³ these old external stairs and doorway to the upper chamber must have been removed—the underside of the rising stairs would have occupied far too much space below. With the external stairs gone and the doorway they led up to blocked, the ceiling-and-floor were raised, and a new access made to the refurbished upper chamber. At some point the upper chamber window was enlarged. In 1726 the fireplace was installed, but there may have been an earlier one. Access to the chamber by a staircase directly from the Vestry beneath might perhaps have been desirable, but the Vestry was small and dim anyway, the old red brick twin barrel-vaulted ceiling there shows no sign of a staircase having gone up through it, and there is no visible trace of a stairway there. We know there must have been good access to the upper chamber, since the existence of the 1726 fireplace shows that it was in regular use long before the Vestry was moved up here.



So we conclude that access to the refurbished upper chamber was probably by the same doorway we see today, in its east wall. It is possible, though we may never know exactly, that at first there was a platform just outside the present upper chamber door which was reached via a wooden staircase just to the north of the present stone stairs (*see adjoining illustration, 'Upper Chamber'*). When the West Gallery was put in (probably later), perhaps the same wooden staircase was adapted to give access to the Gallery.⁴ Underneath the platform was the entrance from the church to the 'ground-floor' Vestry, going down three or four stone steps so that there would be adequate head-room, as the upper chamber floor is at approximately head level seen from the church (*see following illustration, 'Old Vestry'*).

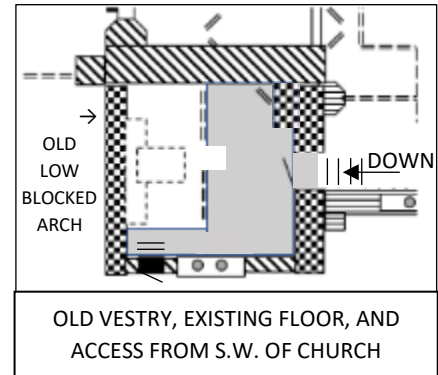
It would perhaps have been possible to provide the upper chamber access staircase and access to the Vestry underneath in opposite positions to those shown here (the staircase down to the Vestry would

³ Assuming that is roughly when the conjectured north Vestry was taken down and the north and south chapels built. They were complete at latest by the time of the murder in 1436, of course. See page 41.

⁴ When the West Gallery came to be added, perhaps in the 18th Century, this wooden staircase could have also given access to the Gallery: at the top of the wooden staircase (where the Prowse memorial now hangs) you would turn left to approach the upper chamber, or turn right to walk round the south side of the Gallery to reach the front, and then climb up the sloping stepped floor to find a seat. The north side of the Gallery might once have had a staircase also, but perhaps not in 1856 when the Parables Window glass was inserted, as it would have been obscured. For more on the West Gallery itself, see page 65.

then be an awkward dog-leg under the platform above), but the mention of plastering “the left side of the staircase to the Vestry” in 1827 in the *South Brent Visitation Book* confirms the simpler conclusion.⁵

Until the south extension to the Tower was adapted and a Vestry installed below the upper chamber, it is very likely that the whole basement space was at the lower Saxon level, rather than only the western part as now. If so, the floor level of the area intended for the Vestry would have had to be raised to the level we see today.⁶ If the platform and stairs to the upper chamber existed as suggested in the previous paragraph, that would require the Vestry entrance from church to be a few steps down, in order to have clear headroom under the platform. Entrance from the churchyard outside was probably via the south door that now accesses the Saxon basement (*doorway shown here in black*), and we notice that its threshold is set a step or two lower than the church internal floor level, and then there are two steps down as you enter. So the Vestry floor was indeed three or four steps below church floor level (*existing old vestry floor shown shaded in the illustration here; the unshaded area is many feet lower again, at Saxon level*). It would have been a small vestry, especially with part of the basement lower and separated off; maybe that part was once used for storing churchyard tools for maintenance and for gravedigging, later the Victorians installed a boiler there. Perhaps the old low blocked arch in the west wall mentioned above was used to access the basement in very early days.



Entrance from the church into the ground floor Vestry was made through the wall underneath where the 1933 stone stairs now go up to the present Vestry; in the east wall of the ground floor space there is still evidence of a narrow blocked doorway to the church which would emerge under the present stone stairs. As the old Vestry floor level was below church floor level, there was a staircase with three or four steps down from the church to reach the Vestry. A Vestry window would certainly have been needed: there is the small blocked recess in the internal south wall roughly where the proposed earlier external staircase door had been (below the east end of the Tudor window in the upper chamber), and another window could have existed in the disturbed stonework further east. It is just possible that early photographs could yet emerge, perhaps of wedding couples signing the register, which would give us a better idea of this old Vestry. Some of its walls still have whitewash, but it is very easy to imagine how dark and cramped (and damp?) this downstairs Vestry probably felt inside. Even—especially—if it had been in use for hundreds of years, no-one could doubt that a new and better Vestry was desirable.

Growing dissatisfaction with that centuries-old Vestry below the Upper Chamber may have given rise to a gradual use of the Upper Chamber as a Vestry well before it was finally moved up there, and some years before the 1870 Restoration—at which time the *Western Morning News* excerpts quoted below show that officially at least the Vestry was still in its lower position. There is mention in the *South Brent Visitation Book* entry for 1858⁷ of a fault in “the roof over the Vestry”, which perhaps evidences some use of the Upper Chamber then as an additional Vestry.

⁵ “The left side of the staircase leading to the Vestry to be plastered.” (*South Brent Visitation Book*, p. 9, entry for 22 Nov 1827). This ‘left side’ of the staircase down to the Vestry would have been against the south wall of the church, by the south west window. All 21 mentions of the (clergy) Vestry in the *South Brent Visitation Book* have been scrutinised for this discussion. See also under the ‘Restoration’, page 61 below.

⁶ If this were ever excavated, what treasures from the 1400s or so might be unearthed?

⁷ The *South Brent Visitation Book* entry for 1858 is given on page 61, and the *Western Morning News* reports on page 63f.

When did the Vestry finally move up to its present first-floor position? The reports of the 1870 works do not mention moving the Vestry from its centuries-old downstairs position. With the 1870 removal of the West Gallery, and the staircase to it, new access to the upper chamber would be necessary anyway if the same staircase had served both. A new staircase was needed.

Looking carefully where the existing stone staircase meets the south wall of the church, we can see a clear sloping line, marking a previous staircase. (*In the adjacent photograph, the line on the wall is arrowed; the blue Vestry carpet is just visible*). In the *South Brent Visitation Book* entry on page 66 for 16 March 1932, the Rural Dean mentions the need for “the mending of the rails leading up to the vestry”.



EVIDENCE OF PREVIOUS STAIRCASE UP TO VESTRY

So that first staircase either had wooden steps with iron rails, or perhaps was entirely of iron.⁸ If it had been of wooden construction, one wooden stringer board would have run up against the wall here (stringer boards house the treads and risers of a staircase). We can see that the stairs rose slightly more steeply than the later stone stairs, which were not installed until 1933/34, using stone steps from the previous pulpit (see below). We can be confident this sloping line is not a remnant of pre-1870 access to the upper chamber, which for centuries had the Vestry underneath it, since there would not have been sufficient headroom to get through to the Vestry door under it.⁹

So the Vestry was moved up well before 1932, and very probably in 1870. The entrance to the old Vestry at the south-west corner of the church was blocked, and a new staircase up from the south aisle provided where the sloping line just discussed runs, by the present stone steps. In 1933 or early 1934, stone from the pulpit was used to make the present staircase; the *South Brent Visitation Book* for 22 March 1934 says, “The old stone pulpit has been converted into stairs to the Vestry”.¹⁰ The *Western Morning News* article of 4 October 1870 (reproduced below on page 62) mentions the “chamber above the Vestry”, and reports that “there will be a new stone Pulpit”; but in a later *Western Morning News* article dated 13 November 1933 we read that “The stone pulpit which replaced the old oak structure, with its sounding board, has been replaced.”¹¹ It had lasted just 63 years. It is surprising to see how worn the steps have become in only 150 years; perhaps the whole stone structure was proving unsatisfactory for a variety of reasons, apart from the desire to install the present fine carved oak pulpit, which is said to have given 50 men work for 9 months.¹² Whenever the Vestry moved up, its entrance was through the doorway we see today, directly above the old ‘ground-floor’ entrance to the lower room. Again, if photographs from this period emerge, perhaps of Wedding Couples signing registers in the Vestry, the date might be found more exactly.

⁸ The mention of ‘rails’ (instead of simply ‘rail’) rather suggests iron rails each side of the staircase, which perhaps favours an entirely iron construction.

⁹ In any case, previous evidence would have been removed when the internal walls of the church were all repointed in the 1870 works. From the solely historical point of view, this is a pity, since that work has eradicated many other clues to what had been present in the past.

¹⁰ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p. 67, for 22 March 1934.

¹¹ For this and other citations, see page 72.

¹² It is a beautiful piece of work. The *South Brent Visitation Book* states: “a new pulpit of carved oak, costing £228, has been put in its place. This gave 50 men work for 9 months.” (*South Brent Visitation Book*, p. 12, 1934).

The relationship between the lower and upper chambers remains intriguing. What was the original purpose of the upper chamber? We have seen that in very early days it had direct external access, and its floor was lower than at present. Later the external access was removed, the floor was raised, and it was equipped with a fireplace, larger windows, and a new, internal, access. Most likely, that upper room had in earliest times acted as a priest's chamber for visiting clergy to use when there was no resident clergyman in the parish, or indeed for the parish priest to live in, just as the so-called 'Parvis' rooms built over the old porches in other churches were used.¹³ In the Middle Ages, parish priests would often lodge in a room over an old church porch. Then from about the 12th Century onwards, separate parsonages—rectory or vicarage houses—were built to house parish clergy, so there was less need for such parvis room accommodation, and the space was available for other purposes. Once the upper chamber received easy access and larger windows and a fireplace, perhaps it then became 'the parish room' of those days; it would have been a good place for the Vicar and Churchwardens to hold small meetings, such as the Feoffees would have from time to time.

The Tower

We are in the dark as to exactly when the somewhat squat Saxon-Norman Tower was heightened. It must have felt rather undersize, because of the high nave roof. The nave walls at plate level (where the roof slope meets the wall) show that at an early time the nave walls were heightened by a few feet; once that was done there was a strong incentive to add the fourth (top) stage to the Tower, or otherwise the nave roof apex might, as we can check today, have been higher than the Tower! The apex of the roof could hardly have been much lower, and the slope shallower, or rain would have blown in under the slates ... perhaps it was that which prompted the raising of the roof.

Externally we can see several different layers of work in the Tower, some including earlier stone. Probably the lower three of the four stages are Norman, the fourth being Early English—was this when the nave roof was raised? The battlements would have been added to the Tower sometime later, perhaps when the side chapels which also have battlements were added.¹⁴ In the lowest stage, on the west, a fine Early English doorway formed of four large granite stones has been added, readily admired from outside. The next level up is Norman, but the three-light window is Early English, of elegant appearance. The third stage, also Norman, has Saxon-shaped windows in the north, south and west, and the principal stones extend through the thickness of the wall. The external Tower buttresses seem to be Early English, probably added to strengthen the base of the Tower when the Saxon-Norman extensions were pulled down and the Tower arches blocked.

Apparently, the Tower once had a spire. In about 1760, Jeremiah Milles the Dean of Exeter Cathedral visited South Brent and records that "at the W. end of ye church is a square tower with a spire, in which are 4 bells and a clock".¹⁵ When the Reverend John Swete made a water colour illustration of St. Petroc's

¹³ For example, the Parvis Room over the porch at Holy Trinity Coventry, and at St. Mary's Chelmsford (now Chelmsford Cathedral). The porch at St. Petroc's was probably not added until the 15th Century.

¹⁴ "The Battlements on the east end of the north aisle were blown in upon the roof during a severe gale in the winter [of 1895-96] and have been replaced." (*South Brent Visitation Book*, p.45, 8 Apr 1896).

¹⁵ Milles's visit cannot have been much after 1760, for the six new bells were cast in 1759 and presumably installed shortly afterwards. The clock apparently never had a clockface, but struck the hour. Milles is quoted in Stéphan (1970) p.155, where the Swete illustration also is mentioned. Swete was born in his father's home in Ashburton, which in 1997 was serving as the *Golden Lion Hotel*, just as it had been since 1795.

in 1794, the spire had disappeared. Holy Trinity Buckfastleigh is one of the few churches with a spire remaining, although they once were plentiful.¹⁶

It seems that certainly as late as 1903, and perhaps even until 1925, the tower arch into the church was completely open, without any screen.¹⁷ The damp that was prevalent in the tower must have caused a severe damp cold draught into the church. The 1925 screen (and subsequent improvements in the bell chamber and ringing room) will have greatly decreased this problem.

On the south extension to the Tower, see *The Clergy Vestry* on page 43ff above.

The Sundial

One external change we can date is the addition of the Sundial on the wall of the south transept. It is dated 1685, during the incumbency of Vicar John Willcocks. It carries the cheerful wording,

As time and hours pas a way
So doth ye life of man decay

In those days, life was more obviously precarious, and more often short, than we are accustomed to today. Perhaps it was donated by someone who had recently experienced these sorrows in their own family.

The Organ

It seems that a permanent Organ was introduced first into St. Petroc's in 1859. For a long while before then, perhaps from the early 1700s, a large wooden Gallery had stood at the west end of the church against the Tower wall, and from it 'singers' would lead the congregation, presumably aided by some musical instruments.

But in 1859, despite the generally poor condition of the church, it was decided to go to the expense of adding an Organ to St. Petroc's. In the *South Brent Visitation Book* entry for 1859, the then Rural Dean Henry Hare complained (again, as he had before) about the "ruinous state" of parts of the roof, but then continued:

'A new Organ has been erected and the gallery lowered to receive it, which has greatly improved the general appearance of the Church.'¹⁸

In retrospect, it seems amazing this was done—especially since there was not only the expense of the organ itself, but also work to lower the western gallery somewhat—when so much urgent restoration was needed.¹⁹ In the event, the gallery was completely dismantled and removed just 11 years later, in the 1870 Restoration. Presumably the organ from it was the one then installed in the north chapel. Hitherto that had been the Lady Chapel, with St Catherine's chapel on the south; but with the organ now

¹⁶ Several spires were visible from the top of Brent Hill in the 1700s, see page 75.

¹⁷ A tower arch screen was recommended by the Rural Dean in 1903, see *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.50 (11 Apr 1903). In 1925 a beam from the old Screen is reported to be in place in the tower arch, see *SBVB* p.63 (27 Feb 1925).

¹⁸ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.30, entry for 19 Apr 1859. No photographs of the Gallery and Organ seem to have survived.

¹⁹ For fuller details of the 1870 Restoration, see page 61f.

in the north chapel, the south chapel became known as the Lady Chapel, which has continued ever since.²⁰

In 1895 it was found that “The Organ is somewhat out of repair”.²¹ As a consequence, it was decided to upgrade the Organ. The work was done by Messrs. Hele and Co. of Plymouth, and the Archdeacon of Totnes declared the Organ open for Divine Service at an event in Easter Week, 1898:

“ ... The Church has been thoroughly cleaned from roof to floor in preparation for a function which is to come off on Friday April 15th on the occasion of the opening of the enlarged and restored Organ. ...”²²

In a 1909 photograph of the interior of St. Petroc’s,²³ we can just make out the organ standing in the north chapel and organ pipes facing west. In 1914, there had been trouble with damp and lack of ventilation in the church generally, and a gas stove was put in the organ chamber.²⁴

In 1926, a new “carved oak” organ screen²⁵ (and also fine new choir stalls) were given in memory of Mr. George Vere Hugh Cholmondeley of Glazebrook House, South Brent.²⁶ In October 1931, at the Harvest Thanksgiving service, the organ broke down, and it was discovered that nearly £50 (a serious sum at the time) would be required for repairs.²⁷

In 1945/1946 it was decided the north chapel should be opened up once again, as it had been before 1870. So, shortly after 26 Mar 1946,²⁸ the organ was moved from there into the north transept (the “farmers’ transept”). Presumably much of the Cholmondeley organ screen, then only 20 years old, was incorporated in the move. The result was most pleasing.²⁹ The organ screen today contains two carvings of angels from the original doors and posts and a wooden statue of St. Cecilia from the parish church of Châteauneuf-du-Faou, South Brent’s twin town in France.

The Second World War Memorial which is now sited on the west wall of the south transept was originally located here in the north chapel. It was on the wall just west of the north window, and the marks where it was fixed can still be seen; they exactly match the size of the monument itself. As the memorial relates to the restoration of the north chapel, it is appropriate to give the opening text of it here:

**To the glory of God
this chapel was restored in
thankful remembrance of the
men of this parish who died**

²⁰ The Lady Chapel (south chapel) was restored in 1933/34. See *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.67, entry for 22 Mar 1934.

²¹ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.44, entry for 7 Feb 1895.

²² *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.46, entries for 31 Mar 1898 and 17 Mar 1899.

²³ Stabb, 208a, shown below on page 68,

²⁴ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.57, entry for 8 Apr 1914. The church was connected to electricity in 1936-1937 when it is first mentioned in the *South Brent Visitation Book*: “The supply of electric light and power in the Vestry and tower make a great improvement.” (p. 70). Electricity enters the church near the south west base of the tower. The national Central Electricity Board and the National Grid were created in 1926.

²⁵ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.63, 12 Apr 1926; also *Western Morning News*, 30 Mar 1926.

²⁶ He is buried in the 1910 Churchyard in the grave where his young son had been buried in 1914.

²⁷ *Western Morning News*, 2 Nov 1931.

²⁸ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.73, entry for 26 Mar 1946.

²⁹ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.74, entry for 17 Mar 1947.

for King and Country in the War of 1939-1945

In about 1961, the present wooden screen in front of the organ seat was given in memory of Andrew William Cranch 1869–1938 and his wife Marian Elizabeth Cranch 1873-1961.³⁰ In 1965, some necessary restoration work was done on the organ.³¹ Then in 1978/79 we read "...The Organ has been cleaned & extended at a cost of £800."³²

When at last the old organ needed to be replaced, the organ which had been in Christ Church Plymouth was obtained, and it was installed here in 1995/6. Its technical specification is as follows: **### Organ specification to follow**

The Bells

We know that in mediaeval times St. Petroc's had four bells. The *Inventory of Church Goods* held by the Public Record Office says that in 1553 there were in "Southebrente, iiij belles yn the towre their". In about 1760, the four bells were mentioned by Jeremiah Milles, Dean of Exeter, following a visit he made to Brent.³³ These four would probably have been much heavier, in the mediaeval fashion, than the six that followed them, which are the present bells. What happened to the mediaeval bells is uncertain; quite commonly, old heavy mediaeval church bells were recast, and that may be what happened at Brent. (In 1866, 15 of the 20 churches in the Stanborough Hundred still had four bells.³⁴) All the six new bells for Brent were cast in 1759 by Thomas Bilbie (or Bilby) of Cullompton, and each is engraved with a motto (see below). In 1835 the Rural Dean ordered that new bell ropes were required.³⁵ In 1856 it is reported that "The bells have undergone a general repair & are in good order".³⁶ In 1865, the details of

308	THE CHURCH BELL	
HUNDRED OF HEYTOR—continued.		
Parish of Coffynnoill.	iiij belles in the towre their.	Pa
Wolborough, with the Chapel there.	viiij belles in the church and chapell their.	
Carswell Abbatis.	iiij belles yn the towre their.	
Brodehempston.	iiij belles in the tower their.	
Iplepen.	iiij belles in the tower their.	
Bokelond in the More.	iiij belles in the towre their.	
Staverton.	iiij belles in the towre their.	
Widscombe in the More.	iiij belles in the church their, one litle bell in the chapell of Saynt Leonard in Spicheweke; i litle bell in the chapell of Seynt Peter.	Pa
Bery Pomery.	iiij belles in the tower their.	
Denbery.	iiij belles in the tower their.	
Corbrian.	iiij belles in the tower their.	
Saynt Mary Church.	iiij belles in the towre their.	
Wodelond.	iiij belles in the towre their.	
Lytchempston.	iiij belles in the tower their.	
HUNDRED OF STANBOROUGH.		
Parish of Northuishe.	iiij belles in the towre their.	Pa
Chapel of Saltcomb.	one bell their.	
Parish of Est Alynngton.	iiij belles in the tower their.	
Wodeleigh.	iiij belles in the tower their.	
Southebrente.	iiij belles yn the towre their.	
Rattree.	iiij belles in the tower their.	
West Alcompton.	iiij belles in the tower their.	

BRENT'S FOUR BELLS IN 1553 (PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE),
AS REPRODUCED IN *TEDAS*, 1866, p.308

³⁰ Details of the Organ seat screen are given on page 112.

³¹ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.86, entry for 24 Feb 1966.

³² *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.91, entry for 5 Feb 1979.

³³ For Milles' visit see page 48.

³⁴ Ellacombe, 'The Church Bells of Devon', in *TEDAS*, 1866, p.308.

³⁵ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.13, entry for 2 Jun 1835.

³⁶ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.27, entry for 16 Apr 1856.

the bells and their inscribed mottos were recorded by the Rev. H. T. Ellacombe, see following illustration entitled “61 Brent, South”.³⁷ The Rev. Mr. Ellacombe apparently visited all the bell towers of Devon.

The bells have been carefully maintained as needed over the years. In 1891, we read in the *South Brent Visitation Book*: “It is to be hoped that the timbers of the Ringing loft and the woodwork of the Bell-cages will be renewed where necessary & the whole of the bearings of the Bells carefully repaired – at present it is scarcely safe to ring the Bells”.³⁸ In 1893 we have: “The Bells require attention and the Dean Rural strongly advises the Churchwardens to engage a competent person to inspect and report upon their condition.”³⁹ The same year, the wooden bell-frame was reported to be in need of repair by the *Western Morning News*.⁴⁰

Clearly the warning was heeded, for we then read in 1894: “There is good prospect of the Bells and cages being put into good order speedily”,⁴¹ and in 1895: “The Bells have been admirably rehung by Mr. Stokes of Woodbury at the cost of £107. Six in number”.⁴² The bells were reported to be “in good order” (1898) , and “in excellent order” (1899). In 1928, the Rural Dean was pleased that “The tower is dry and there are no wedges between the bell frame and tower wall”.⁴³

But there was a problem in 1937: “The next task is to rehang the bells which are reported to be dangerous. £300 is needed for this, and the Parish will know that it is worth while to raise this sum promptly”.⁴⁴ That must indeed have been understood, for in 1938 we read: “This now a magnificent Church ... the great effort to re-hang the bells has been successful”.⁴⁵ Right up to the present day they are

³⁷ *TEDAS*, 1866, p.319.

³⁸ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.42, entry for 26 Feb 1891.

³⁹ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.43, entry for 6 Apr 1893.

⁴⁰ The *WMN* extract for 31 July 1893 is shown on page 71.

⁴¹ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.44, entry for 26 Feb 1894.

⁴² *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.44, entry for 7 Feb 1895 (similar comment in 1896). Also see Kelly's Directory, 1923.

⁴³ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.64, entry for 1 Mar 1928.

⁴⁴ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.70, entry for 10 Mar 1937.

⁴⁵ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.70, entry for 23 Feb 1938. The bells were re-hung in 1937 in a cast-iron frame by Taylor's Bellfoundry.

cared for and rung today by an enthusiastic ‘Tower’, who frequently return from their various outings as the top prize-winners.

The inscriptions on the bells are, as recorded by the Rev. Mr. Ellacombe in 1865:⁴⁶

1. TO CALL CHRISTS FLOCK I ALOUD DO SING T B F 1759
2. SUCCESS TO OUR ARMS THOMAS BILBIE FECIT 1759
3. GOD SAVE THE CHURCH & KING :: I : V :: R : H :: CH : W : T B F 1759
4. THOMAS BILBIE CULLOMPTON CAST US AL 1759
5. ⊕ MR JOHN VEAL & MR RICHARD HANNAFORD CHURCH WARDEN 1759
6. THE REVEREND WALTER TAILER VICAR MR JOHN VEAL & RICHARD HANNAFORD . CH : WARDENS ⊕ RELIGION DEATH & PLEASURE CAUSE ME TO RING THOMAS BILBIE FECIT 1759

61. BRENT, SOUTH.		
<i>S. Petrock.</i>		
1	TO CALL CHRISTS FLOCK I ALOUD DO SING T B F 1759	29½
2	SUCCESS TO OUR ARMS THOMAS BILBIE FECIT 1759	30½
3	GOD SAVE THE CHURCH & KING :: I : V :: R : H :: CH : W : T B F 1759	33
4	THOMAS BILBIE CULLOMPTON CAST US AL 1759	34½
5	⊕ MR JOHN VEAL & MR RICHARD HANNAFORD CHURCH WARDEN 1759	38
6	THE REVEREND WALTER TAILER VICAR MR JOHN VEAL & RICHARD HANNAFORD . CH : WARDENS ⊕ RELIGION DEATH & PLEASURE CAUSE ME TO RING THOMAS BILBIE FECIT 1759	43
B, D.		G
<i>August 16, 1865.</i>		

BRENT'S SIX BELLS AS RECORDED, WITH THEIR DIAMETERS, BY ELLACOMBE IN 1865.
(TEDAS, 1866, p.319).
["B, D." MEANS BAD AND DIRTY CONDITION]

The Inscription on bell no. 1 (the Treble) is an allusion to the imagery of Christ's disciples as a flock of sheep as found in the Bible, for example in St. John chapter 10. 'T B F' abbreviates 'Thomas Bilbie Fecit' (*Latin for 'Thomas Bilbie made'*).

The Inscription on bell no. 2 may well refer to the contemporaneous French and Indian War of 1754–63 in the North American territories, part of the worldwide Seven Years' War 1756–63. The colonies of British America fought against those of 'New France'. British troops suffered some severe setbacks, but between 1758 and 1760 the British military launched a campaign to capture the Colony of Canada (a part of 'New France'). Britain eventually emerged from all this as the then dominant colonial power in North America.

The Inscription on bell no. 3 has the initials of the Churchwardens and perhaps alludes to 1 Peter 2:17 (Authorised Version). But it may have a deeper significance, in that those words of the apostle, 'Fear God and honour the King', are later reported by Prince (1810) to be what Vicar Gandy had said in his defence when attacked by those who came to eject him unjustly from his Vicarage in 1644. Mr. Gandy's name stands alongside that of murdered Vicar John Hay as a celebrated name in Brent's history, and this inscription might be an allusion to Gandy's words a hundred years or so before.

The Inscription on bell no. 4 refers in full to the bell-founder Thomas Bilbie and his foundry at Cullompton. (Some have doubted that all six of today's bells were the original 'us all' cast by Thomas Bilbie, and that one is a later replacement; but this is now thought unlikely.) The Bilbie family supplied 352 bells in Devon between 1715 and 1815 from their foundry at Cullompton entitled 'The West of England Church Bell Foundry'. (But that is nothing compared with the 5,000 or so bells from the famous 14th Century Gloucester bellfounders; for 500 years they supplied bells to all parts of England and Ireland, the East and West Indies, and North and South America, then finally amalgamated with the

⁴⁶ I am grateful to Patrick McCulloch, a past Lord Chief of the Ringers, for personally re-reading the inscriptions and confirming the correctness of Mr. Ellacombe's record for all six bells. The transcript given by Scott (2007, p. 356) is almost identical.

Whitechapel foundry). The Bilbie foundry at Cullompton flourished until 1813 when Thomas's son Thomas Castleman Bilbie died at the age of 55. A certain William Pannell continued the business, and his son Charles later moved the business to Exeter, continuing there until 1855.⁴⁷

The Inscription on bell no. 5 names the Churchwardens John Veal and Richard Hannaford responsible for the commissioning of the set of bells, a very expensive project even if the metal of the previous four mediaeval bells was re-used.

The Inscription on bell no. 6 (the Tenor) is the longest by far, and includes the name of the Vicar of the time, the Reverend Walter Tailer (or Taylor, as his tombstone in church has it, probably more accurately, see separate note). The Hannafords are well known in the records of the Brent Tithe Map, and of the Churchyard, and also at nearby Rattery; and the Veale family were prolific and still active in South Brent at the end of the Victorian era (as house builders). The concluding words on the bell allude in turn to Sunday worship, Funerals, and Weddings.

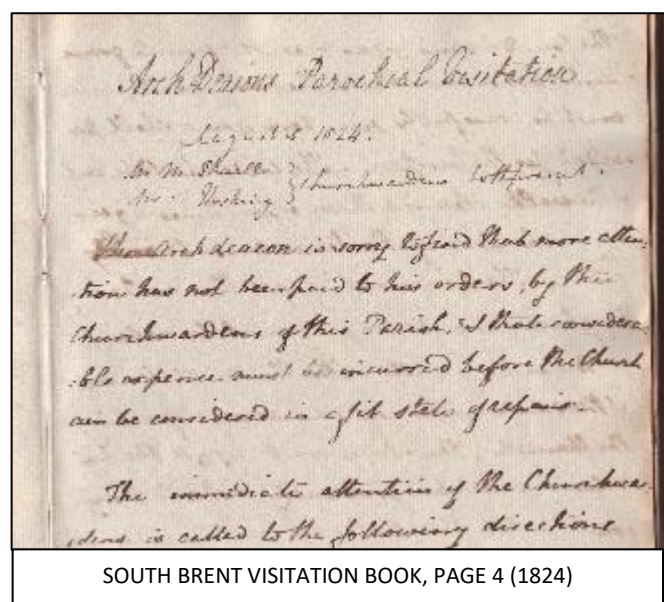
The ringers keep up the old custom of electing a Speaker and Crier at their annual meeting. The signatures are entered in a Ringers' Book, the original of which dates from 1781 and was in current use until only very recently when a second book was started. There used to be various rules, enforcing progressive fines for bad behaviour, of 2d, 6d, 1s, (= approximately 1p, 2.5p, 5p); the final penalty being expulsion. We have not been told if they are still in force. In an entry of the same year, the Lord Chief was William Foot, and it is recorded that he was chosen 'Mayor of this ancient borough'. This seems to be the only known reference to South Brent being a borough, which is a much debated point.

On 5 May 1848, the Bells were rung amid great celebrations to mark the opening of the Devon Railway. In the 2016-2017 renovations, when dangerously rotten timber needing replacement was discovered in the Tower near the bells, the opportunity was taken to re-arrange the sound-deadening chamber floor levels and thereby improve access to the bells for maintenance.

St. Petroc's in the early Victorian years

Although early evidence and documents about St. Petroc's seem to be elusive, some records do exist which describe how the building stood by the dawning of the Age of Victoria.

The *South Brent Visitation Book*, dating from 1822, is a record of the comments of the Rural Deans (with occasional entries by the Archdeacon and Bishop) on their annual visits to ensure the good maintenance of the church. This was a well-established custom, and continues to the present. In the entry for August 5 1824, R.H. Froude, the Archdeacon of Totnes who supplied the book, bemoans the poor state of the Church and lists many items needing attention:



⁴⁷ TEDAS, 1866, p.280.

Archdeacon's Parochial Visitation.

August 5 1824. Mr M Thuell, Mr Hosking, Churchwardens both present. The Archdeacon is sorry to find that more attention has not been paid to his orders, by the Churchwardens of this Parish, and that considerable expense must be incurred before the Church can be considered in a fit state of repair. The immediate attention of the Churchwardens is called to the following directions. A trench must be sunk in an effectual manner round the whole of the exterior wall of the fabric, to the depth of the church floor, provided that no injury be done to the foundations, & no recently formed grave disturbed. Any bones that may be displaced must be carefully reinterred in a shell provided for the purpose. The weeds should be cut and the walks cleaned three or four times a year. The door of the tower must be neatly cased. The pavement of all the aisles being rough uneven and decayed must be relaid. Beginning with with *[sic]* the north transept and the small north window next adjoining the Chancel, the stone work of all the windows must be gradually restored throughout until the whole be compleated *[sic]*, in the same fashion and with the same description of materials as is now used for the mullions and heads. Good clean glass should be substituted for that which is nasty. An old door way on the north side may be blocked up.⁴⁸ The Skreen *[sic]* should be painted of a light stone colour.⁴⁹ The Churchwardens are in like manner to call on the Rector *[sic]* to put the whole of the Chancel into a complete and substantial state of repair. The pavement must be worked smooth and laid even and with materials of good quality. The stone work of the windows being much dilapidated must be restored according the *[sic]* directions already given for repairing those in the body of the Church. No burials are to be permitted within six feet of the Church walls. No long seats must be converted into large pews without authority from the Ordinary.⁵⁰ The Archdeacon expects that a report be be *[sic]* made to him in the first week of January next of the progress made in the work. The best way would be to borrow money under the act⁵¹ for the completion of the whole work at once - but the Churchwardens are left to their own discretion. The orders of the Dean rural to be complied with.⁵²

The other annual entries are similar, if shorter, and contain several matters of interest, but they do not amount to a descriptive account of St. Petroc's sufficient to enable us to visualize the interior of the church with any clarity. The *South Brent Visitation Book* contains many comments on individual items requiring attention over the years, which are best considered as those features are discussed, rather than all together at one point. The Index provides references.

The next substantial evidence is two Reports by the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society, both dating from 1848. They are the first full descriptions of St. Petroc's Church of any length that I have found. Here first is the detailed entry in the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society's 'Rough Notes':⁵³

PARISH: BRENT, SOUTH, V [*V* = *Vicarage*]. Dedication St. Patrick *[sic!]*. Acres 10180.⁵⁴ Population 1237. Accom. 534.

CHANCEL: Length 30'. Breadth 17'10". 1 pier north, and 2 responds,⁵⁵ octangular; south ditto. Piscina blocked. One sedile remaining; two others blocked. East window, transition from second to third pointed. Orientation east by north. Screen, with five bays in nave, and three in each aisle.

NAVE: Length 80'. Breadth 17'10". Piers four; moulded caps. Arches of two orders, with chamfered edges.

NORTH AISLE AND TRANSEPT: Length 62'4". Breadth 7'6". Transept, 12' by 16'. Trans. [*i.e. transept*] arches, stilted on chancel side. North aisle, with four windows; two of 2-light, perpendicular; one debased;

⁴⁸ This is some evidence that the Church North Door (opposite the South Door and Porch) had not been blocked up until now.

⁴⁹ The overpainting of the rood screen suggested here implies it was not in an attractive condition.

⁵⁰ That is, authority from the Bishop of the diocese.

⁵¹ The Church Building Act 1819 (59 Geo. III c.134) amended that of 1818 (58 Geo. III c.45) and enabled such loans.

⁵² *South Brent Visitation Book*, page 4 (entry for August 5 1824),

⁵³ Items within [...] are my comments.

⁵⁴ The area of the parish is huge, at 10,180 acres, and accounts for the large tithe income (on which see separate chapter).

⁵⁵ On "1 pier north, and 2 responds, octangular, south ditto" see below, and see Chancel "Reconstruction", page 64.

one of three-light, decorated; one west window two-light, decorated. South aisle windows the same, without a west window, or any over doorway.

SOUTH AISLE, &c.: Length 62'4". Breadth 7'6".

TOWER: Transition from Norman to early English. Now the western tower; built as a central tower—square, of four stages, with three string courses; two low battlements on west face. The tower windows Norman, of 1-light. Belfry windows, lancet. Parapet embattled, springing from early English corbel table. See drawing of Norman window.⁵⁶

FONT: Norman—now in north aisle, formerly in nave, against third north pier. See drawing.

PORCH: South, with chamber over north doorway,⁵⁷ and doorway in north chancel aisle blocked.⁵⁸ Priest's door in south chancel aisle.

PECULIAR FEATURES, &c.: Church of much interest,—much of early date, with various transitions. Roofs, of moulded ribs, with plaster between ribs. Roof of aisles peculiar—being lean-to and curvilinear.⁵⁹ Dripstone terminations of east window, early English heads, with foliage out of the mouth. Western gallery of worst possible description. Pews all modern, without a vestige of ancient woodwork, except in screen, which is crocketed in the tracery. In 1436, Bishop Lacy reconciled this Church, after profanation by the murder of its Vicar, and dedicated three altars,—that of the Patron and our Lady,—in the north aisle that of our Lady; in the south, that of St. Catharine and St. Margaret. A Chapel of St. Lambert, at Harburneford, occurs about the same time.⁶⁰

It seems fair to conclude that in St. Petroc's the old pews (as distinct from the general sittings, see below) were mostly removed in the mid 1840s. From 1823 onwards, there are frequent complaints by Rural Deans in the *South Brent Visitation Book* that pews need to be repaired.⁶¹ But there are no more complaints or even mention of pews after the 1843 entry. The above report of the *EDAS* in 1848 shows the "Pews, all modern, without a vestige of ancient woodwork". So we may conclude the old pews were taken out in the mid 1840s, and perhaps no private pews were authorised to be constructed after then. On the other hand, in the public seating, there was probably old woodwork remaining. Complaints that the seating and especially that under the 'singing gallery' was out of repair continue through the 1840s and 1850s. In 1859 the Rural Dean, Henry Hare, declared that "the seating is in a very unsatisfactory state". Not until 1895, after the 1870 Restoration, is the seating described in the *South Brent Visitation Book* as "good".

We should remember that the terms 'pews' and 'seating' were distinguished in Victorian times. 'Seating' was simple public benches or chairs. But whereas we now use the word 'pew' to mean a bench seat, it had been defined by Dr. Johnson (d.1784) to be "an inclosed seat in a church". 'Pews' in early Victorian time usually appears to have been the shorthand term for such 'box-pews' or 'boxed-pews', which were private household spaces, rectangular, and often too highly enclosed to see into. In some churches families fitted them out with luxurious cushions and furniture—even a heating stove! ⁶² (What they were like here we do not know.) The cost of maintaining the pews assigned to various households would fall to those

⁵⁶ This drawing, found in the *EDAS* Scrap Book box and apparently drawn personally by Archdeacon Froude, is a simple sketch of the tracery of a 2-light window, roughly resembling the present north aisle west window (which now has glass in memory of John Elliott senior).

⁵⁷ On the mention of a 'chamber over north doorway' see comment below, following note on Buckfastleigh.

⁵⁸ 'Doorway in north chancel aisle' seems clumsily worded to us, but we must remember that 'chancel' then included what today we call 'sanctuary'. What is meant is the blocked up ('murder') door in the *north sanctuary wall*.

⁵⁹ It seems possible from this that before the 1870 Restoration the side aisles had bowed, not flat, lean-to roofs.

⁶⁰ On the Chapel of St. Lambert at Harburneford, see p. 73. The entries for South Brent and for Buckfastleigh are copied *verbatim* from *EDAS*, 'Rough Notes', printed 1848, found in the Scrap Book box of *EDAS* records at the Devon and Exeter Institute. Regrettably almost all the 'drawings' were missing.

⁶¹ E.g. the *South Brent Visitation Book* entry for 1823 names household pews requiring attention: "... Mr Wright's pew. Mr Ford's - Mr Edmund's - Mr Skelton Norkins - Mr Pearce's Pews to be repaired ...".

⁶² On Church Pews, their history, and the legal complications surrounding 'private' pews at the time, see Fowler (1844).

families, not to the Churchwardens, although the Churchwardens remained responsible for seeing that the work got done.

The *EDAS* 'Rough Notes' parallel entry for Holy Trinity Buckfastleigh glows with praise for the restoration that had been effected there over the two years prior to its re-opening on 23 July 1846. To quote [emphasis original]:

"Buckfastleigh, Holy Trinity: The appearance of this *restored* Church is such as should give courage to all zealous in the cause of these Holy Houses of Prayer. The general effect is exceedingly good,—the height, ample aisle, and unencumbered chancel, very striking. The roofs (lean-to in the aisle, and richer in the chancel,) are of oak, and stained wood, open, and substantial,—after Mr. Hayward's plan. The pews are equal, low, decent, and of good proportion; and the gallery gone! The happily combined zeal of the Vicar and Churchwarden, aided by land bequeathed in olden time for the purpose, have effected all this, and most gratifying it must be to the parishioners at large." (*EDAS*, 'Rough Notes', 1848).⁶³

At a time when St. Petroc's was in such poor condition, perhaps such a positive experience of restoration at nearby Buckfastleigh helped inspire and prepare the people of Brent for the thorough and very costly 1870 Restoration at St. Petroc's, including the removal of the west gallery.

In the *EDAS* 'Rough Notes' on St. Petroc's quoted above, it is intriguing to read the note "chamber over north doorway"—this would be a room apparently otherwise unknown, presumably over the area where the garderobe corridor now stands; it might have acted as a primitive priest's chamber. However, it is hard to believe that such a structure would have left no visible marks at all to be seen today. Perhaps we ought to allow that this 'Rough Note' was a little too rough, and conclude that what was referred to was the very unusual chamber over the south vestry, which was not otherwise mentioned despite being so odd a feature.

In the chancel, the comment '1 pier north, and 2 responds, octangular; south ditto' is evidence that the chancel openings to north and south chapels were each of two bays, not one as at present, with a pier between, so that behind the choir each side were two arches.⁶⁴

The west Gallery comes in for especial condemnation, as being of "the worst possible description"; a phrase that would be re-used in the second and fuller Special Report.

The *EDAS*'s complementary and more narrative Special Report then followed quickly. It again commented on the disgraceful condition of the western Gallery, but also clarified the positions occupied by the Font at different times. The full text, from the Quarterly meeting held on 26 October 1848, is worth reproducing in full:⁶⁵

⁶³ The historic building of Holy Trinity Church Buckfastleigh then had a series of troubles. It then suffered an arson attack in 1849, and damage by lightning in 1884. In World War II the stained glass windows were damaged by the explosion of a bomb nearby. Most recently, it was seriously damaged in an act of arson in 1992, which has never been satisfactorily accounted for: the stone Chancel Arch there suffered so badly that although it was standing after the fire, it had to be taken down in the interests of safety. A few items that did survive the blaze can now be seen in the modern building of St. Luke's Buckfastleigh. The ruins of the old church on the hill are open to visitors, and provide a peaceful space. See Helen Harris, 'The Church on the Hill' (1996), for a full account of Holy Trinity Buckfastleigh.

⁶⁴ The *Western Morning News* reported in 1870 that work on the chancel and its aisles was 'almost ... reconstruction' (see pages 64 and 65). That was no overstatement, now we know that those two intermediate pillars were completely removed.

⁶⁵ *TEDAS*, Quarterly Report, 26 October 1848, pp. 153-156. The error "St. Patrick" which we find in it recurs in old Ordnance Survey maps from the Victorian era.

NOTES

(on the second 1848 EDAS paper, 'Special Report')

Brent in Domesday Book ...

"St. Patrick" !!

Chantry here = chancel side chapel

For 'Rough Notes', see above.

Tower originally was centre of cruciform early church.

"debased" = flattened arch.

3 Sedilia: 1 (W) open, 2 others blocked (as piscina).

The chancel openings to the side chapels were formerly of two bays (not one as now). Cf 'Rough Notes'. See p.63.

"abacus" = large load-bearing stone.

Cut-away transept arches gave space for a high Rood Loft above the Screen (Loft no longer present in the 1800s).

Rood Screen existing:
5 bays in Nave,
3 in each aisle,
Total: 11 bays.
Repairs of poor quality.

SPECIAL REPORT

ON THE CHURCHES OF ST. PATRICK, SOUTH BRENT, AND ST. MARY'S, DARTINGTON.

YOUR Committee proposed at the last General Meeting to visit a few of those Churches in the neighbourhood of Totnes, which were known to the Ecclesiologist as containing many subjects of much interest. They decided on meeting at South Brent, a Church of much antiquity, situated on the borders of Dartmoor, and immediately on the banks of the river Avon. The manor of Brent is mentioned in Domesday Book as belonging to the Abbey of Buckfast, and it seems to have been one of the richest possessions of that religious house, its rent in the time of Henry VIII. exceeding £120 a year.

The Church is dedicated to St. Patrick ; its present ground-plan, which differs much from the original design, consists of Chancel with two chantries, transepts,

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nave, with north and south aisles, south porch and western tower. The exact dimensions may be seen by reference to the last sheet of the Society's Rough Notes. The orientation, east by north, would support the commonly received theory which makes it to depend upon the festival day of the patron Saint (June 4.) Before describing the particulars of the *present* Church, it may be as well to state that the western tower evidently appears to have been designed as a central tower to a cruciform Church ; the low transept arches may still be evidently traced, corresponding with the present western arch, but of smaller proportions, and its whole character resembles the common type of the early central, rather than of the western tower.

To commence with the Chancel ; it is of good proportions, but retains little or nothing of its ancient ornament ; the east window is of the transition period from Decorated to Perpendicular, or very early Perpendicular. It is of four lights, five-foiled, super-mullioned, with pierced quatrefoils in the tracery ; there is one south window, debased ; all the wood-work connected with the altar is modern carpenter's work. The western sedile alone is left, though others may be traced, and the piscina is blocked up ; the pier-arches, north and south, are of two orders, chamfered, each springing from an octangular pier with moulded caps, and a corresponding respond.

The Chancel-arch is of two centres, springing on each side from an abacus in a line with the Chancel wall-plate.

In the north Chancel-aisle is a four-light east window, Third-Pointed, the north window is debased ; the south Chancel-aisle corresponds with the north.

The north and south transept arches are similar. They are of two centres, and much stilted on the Chancel side, as though a considerable portion of the lower part of the arch had been cut away ; it may possibly have been effected in order to give room for the rood-loft. The transept roofs are of the cradle form, panel-plastered ; in the north transept, the east window is blocked, and the north is of debased character ; in the south transept one south window is of the same character as the east window of Chancel.

The rood-screen still exists, though not in its original form. It is of five bays in the nave, and three in each aisle ; there is a peculiarity in its tracery, which contains within it crockets and a finial. The screen has been patched with portions of the old carving, inserted without any attempt at arrangement.

The north piers of the nave are four, octangular, with moulded caps. The south

NOTES (cont):

“western gallery of the worst possible description ... a great disfigurement to the Church” ... (but we could wish for more details).

No mention of any Chamber above N door (cf. ‘Rough Notes’).

Side-aisle roofs curved.

Font – position clarified.

Most drawings mentioned regrettably not yet traced in the EDAS records.

3 main Church doors:
W, N (blocked up), S.
[Permission for the north door to be blocked up was given in 1824, see *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.6.]
Priest’s door in S chancel-aisle (= S chapel).
Blocked door in chancel = ‘Murder Door’.

Scrapbook drawings not all found in the archive.

Vicar John Hay murdered in 1436. Church ‘reconciled’ (≈ re-consecrated), and three altars rededicated.

R.H. Froude was Rector of Denbury and also of Dartington for 60 years, from 1799-1859, and Archdeacon of Totnes 1820-1859.

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piers resemble those on the north. The pier-arches on each side of the nave are four, two-centred, and of two orders, chamfered. The belfry-arch is very early, of the First-Pointed period, springing from a moulded abacus. The nave roof has moulded ribs with plaster between them. The pulpit, reading-pew, and pews, are all modern, and there is a western gallery of the worst possible description, destroying much more Church-room than it affords, and being a great disfigurement to the Church.

The north windows of the north aisle are four. The two towards the east are Third-Pointed. One over the north doorway is debased, and the one nearest the west is of Second-Pointed period, of three lights, the lights trefoiled, with reticulated tracery; the west window of north aisle is also Second-Pointed, of two lights, from which the foliations are gone; the tracery consists of two small trefoils, and one quatrefoil, with one large quatrefoil above. The windows of the south aisle are similar to those in the north, except that there is here no west window, and none over the south door. The roof of both aisles is peculiar, being a curvilinear lean-to; it has a very good effect and is well worthy of adoption. The font is Norman, it now stands in the north aisle, against the fourth pier, its original position having been in the nave against the third north pier. An accurate drawing, made at the time, will give the best representation of it.

The tower is of the transition period from Norman to First-Pointed. It is square, of four stages, with three square string-courses, and an embattled parapet, resting on a corbel-table; there are two low buttresses of two stages against the western face.

The belfry windows are all single lancets, but those of the tower are of Norman character and peculiar form; having a double circular head, with a square block between; a drawing will best represent them*. There is also a later window of three lights over the western door; the piercings of lancet form, under a blocked arch. The western doorway is two-centred, with hollow moulding. The north doorway has been blocked up; the south porch has a flat ceiling, the inner doorway a hollow moulding, and the outer, being of two orders, has each one moulded. There is a Priest’s door in the south Chancel-aisle, and a door, probably of a sacristy, has been blocked in the north side of Chancel.

The masonry of the Church is very good, all of granite; the buttresses and quoins being of ashlar, and the rest in rough courses. There are two buttresses at

* See Scrap-book.

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each angle, one, between the windows; a parapet over rood-staircase, and north and south Chancel-aisles.

The Church, both within and without, is devoid of ornament, with the exception of two corbel-heads, forming the dripstones of the east window, which are carved with foliage, springing from the mouth, and surrounding the head.

There is a lych-gate of modern construction.

One circumstance may be here mentioned in connexion with this Church, which is recorded in Dr. Oliver’s *Monasticon*, that in the year 1436, Bishop Lacy reconciled this Church, which had been profaned by the murder of its Vicar, and at the same time dedicated its three altars.

From Brent, your Committee proceeded under the kind guidance and con-
vance of the Archdeacon of Totnes. the President of the Society for the

The Restoration of 1870

The factual descriptions of 1848 mentioned above do not reveal how bad the condition of St. Petroc's had become by the late 1850s. In common with many ancient churches in the mid-Victorian era, it stood in great need of repair and restoration, which the Victorians sometimes handled well, and sometimes not so well. In the case of St. Petroc's, the final result was excellent—but only after much delay.

As an example of the generally poor condition of St. Petroc's in mid-Victorian times, we have the Rural Dean's comments in the *South Brent Visitation Book* in 1858:

"I must call the attention of the Churchwardens to the suggestions given last year as to the Belfry window, which requires to be replaced by a new one. It would be very desirable to lay a wooden floor over the damp and uneven stones within the Communion rails. The roof over the Vestry & over part of the Chancel (particularly the former) is very defective & should be immediately attended to. Henry Hare, Dean rural."⁶⁶

Although the *Western Morning News* is clear in its reports⁶⁷ on the 1870 Restoration works that for centuries the vestry had been in the lower space, and still then was, perhaps this 1858 comment about the "roof over the Vestry" indicates that the Upper Chamber (the present Vestry) had by then already been brought into use as an additional vestry. But the generally bad state of repair of the building is clear.

The huge task of renewing the Church building caused years of concern and planning. Perhaps the positive restoration achieved in 1846 at Holy Trinity Buckfastleigh, noted a few pages earlier, gave encouragement to South Brent to undertake a similarly massive task. By 1861, there was a parish "Committee for the Church repairs", and the architect Mr. James Hine of Plymouth had been commissioned to draw up a report on St. Petroc's. As the *South Brent Visitation Book* records in 1861:

"There has been a very full report drawn up by Mr. Hine Architect of Plymouth, and he reports the state of the roof especially to be absolutely dangerous, and the Committee for the Church repairs have engaged him to draw up plans and estimates for the thorough repair of the Church."⁶⁸

Others agreed. Temporary repairs were proving expensive, and we read in 1864 that such cost "might be saved if the Church were thoroughly renewed as was proposed two years ago. The Church, which ought to be the finest in the Deanery appeared to me to be one of the most neglected".⁶⁹ In 1865 it was "... in the same disgraceful state".⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p. 29, for 30 Apr 1858. The "roof over the Vestry" (and that over the Chancel also) was mentioned again in 1859 as "ruinous", and in 1860 as "worse" and with slates missing. In the 1860 Visitation, the Rural Dean adds that he is aware there is "an intention" to raise funds and restore the church (*South Brent Visitation Book*, p. 31, for 28 Mar 1860.)

⁶⁷ The *Western Morning News* reports published on 4 Oct 1870 and 11 Feb 1871 are reproduced on pages 63f.

⁶⁸ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p. 32, for 11 April 1861. The existence in 1861 of such a Committee shows that the need for serious work was then widely accepted in the parish. For more on Mr. Hine, see below.

⁶⁹ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p. 33, entry for 4 Apr 1864 written by the Rural Dean, R Champernowne (who was very probably part of the Champernowne family who had lived in Devon since arriving from Chambernon in France in the twelfth century. They owned the Dartington Hall estate from the mid 1550s until it was sold in 1925 to the Elmhursts).

⁷⁰ *South Brent Visitation Book*, p. 33, for 15 Mar 1865.

The perilous state of St. Petroc's, and the success of the eventual Restoration, is clear from these further comments of the Rural Deans at their Visitations in 1869 and 1870, and then in 1877 (no Visitations were recorded in the six interim years), taken from the *South Brent Visitation Book*:

3 Apr 1869: "The whole Church is in a deplorable state. The Rural Dean will make a special Report of the state of the Church & the neglect of substantial restorations which have been proposed for so many years. R. Champernowne."

25 Apr 1870: "It is useless to say anything about the Church, except that it is still in the same wretched condition as it has been in for many years and is gradually getting worse. It is a disgrace to the 'Church people' in the Parish. R. Champernowne RD."

21 Mar 1877: "I am happy in being able to give a very different report from that of my predecessor on the other page. The Church was entirely re-roofed and restored in 1870 – all the interior is in perfect order – The pipes and gutters should be re-painted, the eastern buttresses fresh pinned in their foundation, and some portions of the walls re-pointed, and vegetable growth removed. Books and registers in good order. R. Bartholomew RD." ⁷¹

So finally, after a long-drawn out process, in 1870, St. Petroc's underwent a major Restoration. Evidently work commenced after the April 1870 Visitation report quoted above. The church stood open to the skies, unusable for many months. I am inclined to think that the restoration works are celebrated on a stone above the centre south pillar of the nave, where it is plausible that the number 1870 in black can be made out. This is admittedly very indistinct, and not everyone agrees with me!

The architect engaged for the Restoration was the one consulted in 1860, Mr. James Hine F.R.I.B.A.,⁷² from the practice of Hine and Odgers of Lockyer Street, Plymouth. (This firm built several churches and non-conformist chapels in the South West as well as the old Plymouth Municipal Buildings, and Moorhaven Hospital at Bittaford—'the Plymouth Asylum'.

When Mr. W. H. May joined the firm, by 1906, it became known as Hine, Odgers and May. James Hine was the cousin of George Hine, one of the most prolific asylum designers in England.) The *Western Morning News* printed articles in late 1870 and early 1871 that give us brief details of very extensive activity. They are so informative and interesting that they deserve to be reproduced here in full. Note how some ideas of what existed and what could be done changed as time went by.



⁷¹ *South Brent Visitation Book*, pp. 35-36, for 1869, 1870 and 1877.

⁷² Mr. Hine wrote an article 'Plympton in the Olden Time' published in the Plymouth Institution Annual Report 1866-67.

RESTORATION OF SOUTH BRENT CHURCH. (Western Morning News, 4 Oct 1870)

Nearly 250 years ago, Tristram Risdon, writing of the parish of South Brent, found little in the village to note beyond the fact that a town so near Dartmoor had “a fat parsonage”. So far as the living is concerned, Risdon might say pretty much the same now as then; but although he did not live in times when church restoration had become a science, he would a short while since have seen much to deplore in the decay and disfigurement of the venerable

RESTORATION OF SOUTH BRENT CHURCH.
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into powder, the roof being really quite unsafe; and while the interior was filled with a choice collection of box pews, the exterior had been liberally treated to patches of slate and slapdash. Things had certainly come to the worst; when it was resolved that a thorough restoration should be made, and Mr. Hine, of Plymouth, being called in,⁷³ the works were determined upon which are now in course of execution by Messrs. Call and Pethick. The outlay in all will be about £1,800,⁷⁴ the cost of the chancel restoration being defrayed by the Vicar, the Rev. W. S. Cole.

One fact will shew at once the necessity for, and thoroughness of, the restoration. At the present moment there is nothing standing of the body of the church but the bare walls, and every window is being denuded of its mullions and tracery. The edifice is in many parts an exceedingly interesting one. It consists of chancel and chancel aisles, embattled; transepts; nave and lean-to aisles; western tower, south porch, and a curious annexe adjoining the tower at the end of the south aisle, which has been used as a Vestry. The building is of various periods. The tower, low and battlemented, is of early date; but not improbably is more recent than the Vestry, in which there are some semi-circular arches which have been considered to be Norman. Though this may be doubtful, there is an unquestionably fine old Norman font, which will be put upon a new granite base. Over a fireplace in a chamber above the Vestry is the date 1726, and the letters P.F.R.Y. Each side of the tower has been pierced with an archway, but the west and east ones now only remain open. The nave is divided from the aisles by late Decorated⁷⁵ arches of four bays. The windows are mostly Perpendicular, those of the south aisle more particularly. There is, however, a very elegant two-light Decorated window in the north aisle, which will be replaced by a *fac simile*. The south transept contains a good lofty four-light Perpendicular window, but a window in the north is mean and comparatively recent, and will be replaced by one of better design. The chancel and its aisles have undergone alterations amounting almost to reconstruction, and present later characteristics than any other parts of the structure.⁷⁶ The east window is four-light. The rood loft staircase is intact; and a very handsome oak screen, beautifully carved and at one time richly coloured, remains *in situ* before the chancel. This every effort will be made to preserve, but the wood is unfortunately much decayed. The removal of the plastering has revealed a piscina in the chancel, another in the north chancel aisle, and an aumbry in the south transept. The piscina first named was filled in with fragments of tracery; one bay of a Decorated sedilia was open before the works commenced.

Every portion of the plastering of the fabric will be removed. The internal walls will be repaired and pointed, the stonework of the arcades, etc, being dressed over. Such of this work as has yet been done looks exceedingly well, a pleasing effect being produced by some red stones used by the old builders. Externally the walls will be pointed. The windows will be refitted with stonework of the same design as that removed (with the exception specified), so much of the old as is available being utilised. The roofs

⁷³ See comments above on Mr. Hine's 1861 report to the parish on the condition of the church building.

⁷⁴ In today's money (2018) about £205,000.

⁷⁵ The architectural description 'Decorated' usually means the years 1250-1350 or so.

⁷⁶ The note “The chancel and its aisles have undergone alterations amounting almost to reconstruction” will refer to the chancel openings to the side chapels being changed from two bays to one bay. For a fuller comment on this, see page 64.

will be boarded; the seats low and open; the aisles tiled; there will be a new stone pulpit; and altogether, whilst seeming as gray and venerable as ever without, the church—thanks to Mr. Hine’s appreciative skill—will be transformed out of knowledge within.

SOUTH BRENT CHURCH RESTORATION. (Western Morning News, 11 Feb 1871)

During the restoration of South Brent Church, referred to in these columns two months since, some very interesting Norman remains have been brought to light. Mysterious to Devonshire archaeologists was a curious old structure at the south-west end of the church, adjoining the tower, which, for the last two or three centuries at least, has been used as a vestry. This building possessed a semi-circular headed doorway at the south end. The taking down of the west gallery disclosed an arch of Norman construction in the east wall of the tower, and the more recent removal of the plaster from the inside of the tower below the belfry has brought to light an arch of the same style and period in each of the other walls. All are blocked up with with *[sic]* comparatively modern masonry. The exterior of the tower has been partially restored, and with the exception of the upper stage is found to be altogether Norman. After a careful examination of the masonry the architect, Mr. Hine, has come to the conclusion that it was the central tower of a cruciform Norman church, of which the curious building on the south side was one of the transepts. What is now the tower arch opening into the present nave was formerly the chancel arch. Belonging to this early structure is the font of red sandstone with mouldings and carving of Norman character.

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There are many interesting details here; and we could wish for more, but no doubt many items were so familiar at the time that no-one thought it necessary to mention them. Now, we wish they had—for the memory is quite lost. We realise the serious scale of the works when we note that £1,800 of 1870 money is equivalent to about £205,000 in 2018 terms.⁷⁷ And this did not include the cost (perhaps half as much again?) of the substantial works east of the chancel arch which were paid for by the Vicar, the Rev. William Speare Cole. That he could afford to do so, given warning, is believable, see the notes on the value of the Vicar’s income at that time which can be found in the chapter on Tithes and Income.

Probably the most important reference is to the old Rood Screen, that in 1870 ‘remains *in situ* before the Chancel’ (but, apparently in 1870, not the side aisles?). But perhaps the most intriguing is the mention of ‘a chamber above the Vestry’ and a fireplace there bearing the date 1726 (no longer visible). The Vestry referred to by the *Western Morning News* was therefore definitely underneath the present upstairs Clergy Vestry. Slightly lower than the floor level of the church, it was presumably accessed from outside through the door in its south wall that the *Western Morning News* mentions. This space came into use as a Vestry perhaps in the early 1400’s. This is in rough agreement with our conjecture about the Vestry set out above. The initials “P.F.R.Y.” (and the date 1726) reported to be above the fireplace in the upper chamber are probably the initials of the then churchwardens; none of the Vicars around that time had such initials.⁷⁸

Chancel “reconstruction”

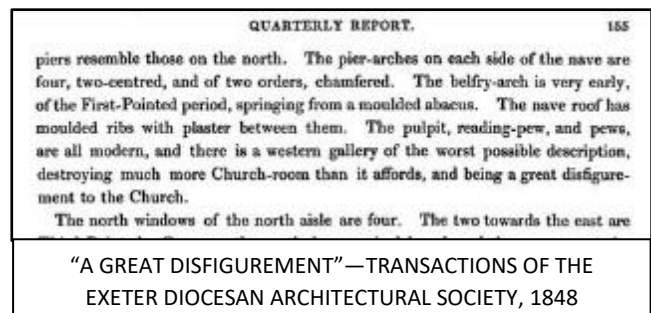
⁷⁷ Historical inflation values from <http://inflation.iamkate.com/>. The 1846 restoration of Holy Trinity Buckfastleigh cost £1,300 (*The Ecclesiologist*, 1849, p.267).

⁷⁸ For a fuller consideration of the Vestry and the building south of the Tower, see page 44ff.

The second surprise from the *Western Morning News* reports is that “The chancel and its aisles have undergone alterations amounting almost to reconstruction”, which otherwise we might not have guessed. But coupling this with the detailed evidence “1 pier north, and 2 responds,⁷⁹ octangular; south ditto” from the *EDAS* reports of 1848,⁸⁰ we realise that the chancel openings to the side chapels north and south were (prior to 1870) of two bays, not one as at present—that is, that there was an intermediate pier (pillar) standing where the back row of the choir stalls each side now stands, and two arches opened into each of the chapels, rather than a single arch as now. To remove both those piers and make a single arch in place of two each side, imitating the stonework of the south transept arch into the south chapel, would indeed have been a very costly operation. We should be grateful to the Rev. William Speare-Cole for spending so much of his own money on this improvement, which might otherwise never have been done ... today, such work would probably not be allowed at all! It has created light, calm and peace, and has allowed the choir stalls to be set back, effectively widening the chancel.⁸¹

The West Gallery

For a very long time a sizeable Gallery stood in church against the east face of the Tower. In the *South Brent Visitation Book*, entries in 1824, 1848, 1849, and 1850 refer to it as ‘the singing seats’ or ‘the singing Gallery’ or just ‘the Gallery’.⁸² In 1848 the *Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society* described a “western gallery of the worst possible description ... a great disfigurement to the Church”.⁸³ In 1870 it was completely dismantled.



Evidence of the Gallery can still be seen in the first pillars of the nave arcade east of the Tower, to both north and south, where the capitals of the columns and some stones in the arcade have been cut away to accommodate the sloping woodwork of the Gallery and its supports. Against the foot of the column below the northern of these two cutaways can be seen a concrete filler, no doubt showing where the vertical timbers supporting the Gallery rested that side. The moulding on the capitals has since been made good again, as is visible. The slope of these cutaways shows that the front part at least of the Gallery was sloping, but in fact they are at about the correct angle to meet the horizontal course of stone on the east face of the Tower above the arch, so probably the Gallery sloped back all the way to the Tower with a stepped floor up from the front, which would make sense. We may never be sure, but perhaps there was a flat area at the front, on the east, where musicians could perform, and stairs up from the church below along the south (and north?) sides of the Gallery.⁸⁴



⁷⁹ A respond is a half-pier or half-pillar which is bonded into a wall and designed to carry the springer (the lowest wedge-shaped stone of the arch) at one end of an arch.

⁸⁰ On the 1848 *EDAS* Reports, see pages 56 and 58.

⁸¹ The Choir Stalls were, in 1963, “spread out and given more spaciousness”. *South Brent Visitation Book*, p.84. (1963).

⁸² *South Brent Visitation Book*, pp. 2, 21, 22.

⁸³ *TEDAS*, 1848, page 155.

⁸⁴ For more about Gallery access see footnote on page 46.

We know from the 1871 *Western Morning News* article quoted above that the old West Gallery had completely obscured the old east arch in the Tower, so probably the ceiling under the sloped seating area was flat. With a large stepped Gallery, everyone there could have seen what was going on in the body of the church—and could be seen, and heard.

When the West Gallery was added is unclear. It must have been ancient, for however damp the church had become, the Gallery must have been in place for a long time if it was a ‘disfigurement’ in 1848, and had fallen into such decay by 1870 that it had to be removed. It was quite common after the Reformation for musicians and lay choirs to lead the singing from a gallery at the west end. St. Petroc’s West Gallery too may have dated from then; such West Galleries became widespread in the 1700s.

At the same time as choirs and musicians began using a west gallery, it became common in churches for the altar, more often at that time called the Holy Table or Communion Table, to be brought forward at Communion time away from the east wall of the sanctuary, typically to the chancel step. We remember how the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* sets out at the beginning of *The Order for the Administration of THE LORD’S SUPPER or HOLY COMMUNION* that “The Table at the Communion time having a fair white linen cloth upon it, shall stand in the body of the Church, or in the Chancel, where Morning and Evening Prayer are appointed to be said”. This echoes the practice before chancels were built, as mentioned earlier (note the words “or in the Chancel”), and envisages the Holy Table being moved to such a position in preparation for the Holy Communion service, and moved away again afterwards.⁸⁵

That may sound odd today; but in the 1700s in rural parishes, Communion was usually only administered to lay parishioners four times a year. The 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* expects that “every Parishioner shall communicate at least three times in the year, of which Easter to be one”.⁸⁶ Churches today are accustomed to weekly celebrations of the Holy Communion for the whole congregation, but for earlier days we have to distinguish between the celebration of Holy Communion and its administration (to more than the clergy); celebration could well be a weekly event for the clergy, even daily in some places, but general administration to parishioners was rare (hence the little-used paragraphs in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*, through which the minister would give notice of a forthcoming general administration of the sacrament). The modern widespread expectation of a weekly communion was virtually unknown. When the congregation did receive the consecrated bread (they would in some places not be allowed the wine), they would do so at the screen door by the chancel step, perhaps kneeling in twos, or standing in a long line north to south, much as they had done in pre-Reformation times.⁸⁷ In the mid 1700s, Bishops sent round “Visitation Returns” enquiring about the state of church life in parishes, including how often “the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper” (Holy Communion) was publicly administered. In 1779 the Reverend James Lyde, who had been the ‘officiating minister’ (though never officially the curate) at South Brent from probably c.1764 and during the incumbency of Mr. Nosworthy, was evidently still ministering at Brent. He replied to the Bishop’s Enquiries without apparent apology or embarrassment that “The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is administred [*sic*] four Times a year; and the number of Communicants generally about seventy”.⁸⁸ In

⁸⁵ For further on the position of the Communion Table, see discussion at John Gandy’s memorial, page 107; and Appendix 3.

⁸⁶ The rubric printed at the end of the Holy Communion service.

⁸⁷ Williams, 2008, pp. 68-69.

⁸⁸ Episcopal Visitation Return, 1779, shown on p.129. An article about Totnes clergy in the Transactions of the Devonshire Association, 1900, Vol. XXXII, p.458 states that the Rev. James Lyde (brother of the Rev. John Alan Lyde, who was Vicar of Totnes 1786-1795) “was the Vicar of Brent, near Modbury, from 1764 to 1796”. Although never actually the Vicar, nor even officially

1744 things had been similar; enquiries from the bishop had brought this response: “Frequency of communion: The Holy Sacrament of the Lords Supper is administred [*sic*] in my Church four times in the year on Easter day Whitsunday, the Sunday before or after Mich[ael]mas and on Xtnas day. Number of communicants: I have betwixt three & four Hundred Communicants in my Parish of which about a Hundred doe Usually Receive & as will (=well?) as I can recollect there were more yⁿ an Hundred Received last Easter”.⁸⁹ Proposals that had been made in 1689 but never actually adopted were that: ‘... in every great town or parish there shall be a Communion once a month; and in every parish at least four times in the year, that is, on Christmas-day, Easter-day, Whitsun-day, and some Lord’s-day soon after harvest, at the ministers discretion. And all Ministers shall exhort their People to communicate frequently. And every Parishioner shall communicate at least three times in the year, of which Easter to be one.’ Although all this was never actually enacted, clearly a substantially similar practice was widespread.

I know only one clergyperson who has ever conducted a Holy Communion service exactly as set out in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer—few people have ever seen it done, I never have, and most who think they are familiar with the BCP would have quite a surprise if they did see it! For one thing, in many places if the Communion Table stood in the chancel it would stand not north-south, but “end-on”, i.e. east-west! But there is a widespread and welcome re-introduction of placing the Communion Table on or just below the chancel Step for some services—in some places it is then described as a ‘Nave Altar’.

Despite hopes in 1870 that the old Rood Screen could be saved, it was in the event not rescuable as a complete item. Thankfully, however, some intact pieces from it have been preserved and re-used in church.⁹⁰

Accepting what the first *Western Morning News* article says had already been done in 1870,⁹¹ all the window mullions and tracery (stonework apart from the wall openings themselves) in the church were taken out and reproductions inserted that matched the original design of what was removed, re-using any sound material, as was common practice.⁹² But there were just two exceptions. Firstly, the glazing of the two-light north aisle west window was retained, having been given in 1856 in memory of John Elliott the elder, Lord of the Manor; and secondly, we note that the north transept north window, mysteriously said to have been recent, was enlarged.

It sounds as though by 1870 the fabric of the church generally had become appallingly damp and decayed, and had been like this for some decades beforehand—witness the complaints of successive Archdeacons and Rural Deans of Totnes in the *South Brent Visitation Book*. The 1870 Restoration clearly made a huge improvement to the fabric. The beautiful waggon roof we see today was also installed

Curate, James stood in for Vicar John Nosworthy (1765-1778), and until 1796, and did the Vicar’s job, so was perhaps popularly regarded as ‘the Vicar’. Mr. Nosworthy was also Vicar of Townstal-with-Dartmouth and perhaps lived mostly there.

⁸⁹ 1744 Episcopal Visitation Returns (sent out by the Bishop, May 15, 1744). 1744 was the year Vicar John Harris was instituted at Brent; but this return recalls two previous Easters, so was probably written by his predecessor as Vicar, Henry Bradford.

⁹⁰ For what has been preserved from the old Screen, see the Prelude, and also the discussion of the Rood Screen, page 34ff.

⁹¹ See *Western Morning News* transcripts on p. 63.

⁹² We know they reproduced the designs of the old nave aisle windows, for example, as we have the 1848 descriptions referred to earlier.

then.⁹³ All told, there must have been a welcome transformation in the experience of worshipping at St. Petroc's.

After all the restoration works, St. Petroc's was finally re-opened on Thursday 17 August 1871. This received national comment in *The Illustrated London News* for 2nd September 1871: "[On] 17th ult, the Bishop of Exeter preached [at] the reopening of South Brent Church, Devon, on which some £2000 has been expended in repairs under Mr. Hine, architect. The collection was over £33. The church ... is a very interesting one ...". (The relative income value of the £33 collection in 1870 is perhaps £4,000 in 2018, an excellent and enthusiastic collection; the repairs bill of £2,000 is about £230,000 in 2018 terms.)

However, there was still some outstanding debt on the Restoration Fund until at least 1890, as we can see from the newspaper cuttings copied below. Presumably the debt was extinguished by late 1892, as we read that funds were then being raised for new lighting for the chancel.⁹⁴

A photograph of the interior of St. Petroc's dating from about 1909 gives us intriguing information about the furnishing of the church around that time.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, the photograph is not of very high resolution, and many details we would wish to examine are not especially clear. Nevertheless, some things are evident. The upper part of the Cuming memorial near the north transept was still in place (the rounded top is missing today). Beyond it, plenty of light is streaming into the north transept, where there seem to be pews, and the east window of the transept is blocked up.⁹⁶ The Organ and its pipes can just be seen occupying the north chapel. The white stone pulpit is in place, where the beautifully carved wooden replacement of 1933 now stands. In the



AN INTERIOR VIEW OF ST. PETROC'S, CIRCA 1909 (STABB)

sanctuary, the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments boards on the east wall either side of the window can be made out; their fixing points are still visible today. There appears to be a reredos curtain behind

⁹³ Looking up at the Chancel arch from the nave, the pale markings we see behind and above the existing roof frame timbers may show the position and size of pre-1870 roof timbers—as well as the circular mark, note the sizeable horizontal mark spanning the wall. Perhaps these timbers against the old stonework had shielded it from centuries of candle soot.

⁹⁴ Lighting: The Church was still lit by oil lamps in 1892, and the new lighting for the chancel would have been new oil lamps (the text of the 28 Oct 1892 *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* article is given on p.71). Gas lighting came to St. Petroc's in 1908-1909 (*South Brent Visitation Book*, the entry for 31 March 1909 being most complimentary). There is evidence visible still in the church of where gas pipes ran. For an example, see the south face of the column behind the Vicar's stall: an unfilled hole running up through the moulding at the top of the column is very clear, as are the lamp bracket fixing points just below it. Such holes can also be detected on the north of that pillar, and on the south face of the opposite (north) pillar, both those holes now having been filled. Electricity was installed in 1936, as the 1936 faculty shows; the electric lighting was noted at the 1937 Visitation by the Rural Dean as "a great improvement" (*South Brent Visitation Book*, 10 March 1937).

⁹⁵ Stabb, 208a.

⁹⁶ The north transept east window was reported in 1848 to have been blocked up, see page 21.

the communion table (the table that now serves the south chapel), and the carved and coloured wooden beam from the Old Screen (the 'Vine Carving') rests above it.⁹⁷ The waggon roof appears to be as it is today. The Vicar's old Stall (and the curate's old stall on the north side) have their 'poppy head' carving. There seems to be a brass lectern⁹⁸ at the chancel step, as was common in many churches into living memory. A heating grating runs the length of the nave and in the foreground around the Font, so some work to the stone floor here has been done since then to result in the floor of today. The Font does not have its present later base surround (what we see in this photo is probably the new base said in the *Western Morning News* article of October 1870 to be supplied in the restoration work), and there are multiple pews in the present narthex area, one reserved for a Churchwarden who was thus well placed to watch the door; the same cardboard signs "Churchwarden" are still in church. But generally the church interior is very familiar and recognisable, some 110 years later.

The Vicarage(s)

As discussed on page 48, it is very likely that the accommodation for South Brent's Vicar around the time of the high Middle Ages (c. 1066-1272) was the primitive form of the upper chamber built to the south of the Tower. Probably it was entered by an external staircase which was removed sometime around A.D. 1400 when the lower ground-floor chamber began to be used as the Vestry. Separate parsonage houses began to be provided in England generally from about the 12th Century onwards.

In Brent, several houses seem to have been used as the parsonage house—'the Vicarage'—over the years. Some say the earliest Vicarage was the present 'Church House' standing just south of the churchyard (now mostly a private property, but on the west housing the Church Room and Church office). This is certainly an ancient building, but in the early years it clearly was the Manor House, i.e. the house for the Lord of the Manor, so would have been for the Abbot of Buckfast to use at will, in his role as Lord of the Manor, rather than be a vicarage house for the Vicar of South Brent (although it did become the Vicarage for a while in the 20th Century). We know the Abbot had a garden hereabouts. In 1517, the Abbot granted to the Feoffees a site for a 'Church House' to be built and the profits used to maintain the parish church. Again it is tempting to think this refers to the present 'Church House', immediately south of the churchyard; but the site is described as having tenants on the south, north, and east, with 'the King's road' on the west, so it appears it cannot.⁹⁹

Another possible Vicarage that we can identify is the very old dwelling known today as 'Island House', also now a private property, a few yards east of the churchyard wall, which is probably the 'Church house' of the Abbot's 1517 grant just referred to. It is poignant to stand outside it, and recall the story of Vicar John Gandy; to imagine his arrival, then his eviction in 1645 at the time of the Commonwealth, and his distraught wife's forced removal from the house, and finally his eventual return to enjoy 12 peaceful years here again. In recognition of his patience under suffering and his godly character, Oxford University awarded him in 1661 the honorary degree of S.T.P., the abbreviation for the Latin *Sacrae Theologiae Professor*, i.e. Professor of Sacred Theology, what we call now a D.D., Doctor of Divinity—he was not a 'Professor' in our modern usage meaning a University teacher or Head of Faculty. Also possibly at Island House we can imagine the life and times of his successor as Vicar, John Willcocks, and his family;

⁹⁷ This is the 'Vine Carving', now in the north chapel, called the 'short length over the altar' in the 1848 *TEDAS* report quoted in full by Stabb (see p.35 above), also referred to by Bond and Camm, vol. 2, p. 299, as the 'small fragment fixed over the altar'.

⁹⁸ A brass lectern had been donated in 1892-1893 (*South Brent Visitation Book*).

⁹⁹ Probably the old house now called 'Island House' is referred to, as now discussed. See also under 'The Feoffees', page 87.

Mr. Willcocks served an amazing 43 years as Vicar, as his memorial stone inscription records with suitably muted pride. In his time, it was probably thought to be the longest incumbency of South Brent; and it may well be the longest ever to date, unless the record of Gervaise, Vicar in the late 1200s and apparently serving 48 years, can be substantiated.¹⁰⁰ We can contemplate the plans no doubt discussed in the Vicarage for John Willcocks' daughter Catherine to be married, and for her husband the Reverend Thomas Acland, third son of Sir Hugh Acland of Killerton House, to succeed him as Vicar in due course. William Crossing the Dartmoor author and antiquarian lived here at Island House for some years in later times, and also at Lydia Bridge.

Then, with fortunes greatly improved, the large detached residence now known as 'The Manor House' that stands in its own grounds beside the Avon became the Vicarage. How this may have come about, and what effect this arrangement perhaps had on the relationship between parson and people, is discussed in the chapter about finance and property.

The last Vicar to live there was the Rev. Lawrence Vesey, who was Vicar 1950-1971. Then, as that very large property was no longer thought appropriate, the present 'Church House' (the medieval Manor House, south of the churchyard) did become the Vicarage. It was certainly convenient to the church, perhaps (from a clergy perspective) too convenient. Many present parishioners remember pleasant events held there and in its garden, even if they prefer to forget its pervasive winter cold and damp. The last Vicar to "enjoy" living there was the Rev. David Niblett, Vicar from 1977.

His successor the Rev. John Harper became Vicar in 1992, and occupied the present Vicarage, the modern house on Hillside in the same parcel of land as the Victorian house now known as The Firs. By contrast it was a welcome, warm, and dry haven—Vicarage families could finally end their long struggle with the damp if historic beauty of 'Church House'.

References in various publications after 1870

1871-03-17	<i>Exeter and Plymouth Gazette</i>	Drawings of South Brent Church were shown by Mr. Hine [<i>same event as next entry?</i>]
1871-03-22	<i>Exeter Flying Post</i>	[Report on meeting of the <i>Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society</i> the previous Thursday, 16/3/1871] ... Some interesting drawings of South Brent Church, in the deanery of Totnes were exhibited by Mr. Hine. ¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ See the list of Vicars on page 122.

¹⁰¹ Eager to view such drawings, I visited the Devon and Exeter Institute in Cathedral Close, Exeter. I verified the 22/3/1871 *Flying Post* report and then searched the *TEDAS* for the 16/3/1871 Meeting. Perhaps the drawings had been on the agenda, but the meeting was pre-occupied with problems at the Cathedral; the *Transactions* have no mention of South Brent or Mr. Hine at that meeting. Neither is there any mention of them in a later report, or in any of the previous quarterly/annual reports which I read through back to 19/3/1868. (Indeed, in the index to the *TEDAS* Series II five volumes there is only one reference to South Brent, at *TEDAS*, II, iii, p. 207, quoted with Soden Smith on p. 120.) Staff at the D&EI were very helpful, but were unable to locate any drawings by Mr. Hine in the *TEDAS* scrapbooks. Regrettably therefore it seems we must accept that those "drawings by Mr. Hine" are no longer traceable. The only drawing the D&EI could find was a 1848 sketch (made by Archdeacon Froude himself) of a window, footnoted in the 1848 report, and of no especial interest.

1871-09-02	<i>Illustrated London News</i>	[On] 17th ult, [<i>i.e.</i> 17 August 1871] the Bishop of Exeter preached [at] the reopening of South Brent Church, Devon, on which some £2000 has been expended in repairs under Mr. Hine, architect. The collection was over £33. The church, which is a very interesting one, with considerable Norman ...
1884-07-20	<i>Western Morning News</i>	Event on Vicarage Lawn to liquidate £80 debt remaining on Restoration Fund.
1890-10-18	<i>Totnes Weekly Times</i>	Mrs Speare-Cole [<i>the wife of the Vicar, the Rev. Mr. William Speare-Cole</i>] is again using her indefatigable endeavours to wipe off the small remaining debt on the Church Restoration Fund by promoting "Magpie Minstrels" and a musical cantata entitled "The Gipsy Revells".
1892-10-28	<i>Exeter and Plymouth Gazette</i>	SOUTH BRENT. There has been a great need of additional lights in the chancel of South Brent parish church, and preparations were being made to raise the desired funds.
1893-07-31	<i>Western Morning News</i>	Bellframe woodwork needing restoration.
1900-06-22	<i>Western Morning News</i>	Portions of life-size recumbent effigy and tomb found during the restoration [are] supposed to be of Vicar murdered in 1436. [<i>The head of this effigy is now visible above the west window of the Tower ringing room</i>]
1912-02-16	<i>Western Times</i>	Opening of new South Brent Coronation Church Hall. [<i>Built in 1911 for the village by the church, which also owned the land, it soon became known simply as the Church Hall. It was sold to the Village in the 1960s and is now the busy and popular Village Hall.</i> ¹⁰²]
1924-03-31	<i>Western Morning News</i>	Recently discovered remains of the ancient Rood Screen in South Brent Church. [<i>It seems probable</i>

¹⁰² Rosemary Stansbury, quoted in Wall (2008), p.153.

some had been languishing in the 'Saxon Room' space and in the Vicarage.]

1926-03-30	<i>Western Morning News</i>	Memorial choir stalls and organ screen, in memory of the late Mr. G V Cholmondeley of Glazebrook South Brent.
1931-01-12	<i>Exeter and Plymouth Gazette</i>	Rev Clarence Elwell, Vicar of South Brent, and Rev William Kilbride Gallagher, ¹⁰³ Rector of Wilford, Notts, will shortly exchange benefices.
1931-11-02	<i>Western Morning News</i>	During the recent harvest thanksgiving services at South Brent Parish Church the organ broke down ... it was discovered that nearly £50 would be required for repairs.
1932-12-23	<i>Western Times</i>	Alteration to the Sanctuary in South Brent church.
1933-04-17	<i>Western Morning News</i>	Bishop dedicated a new altar in South Brent church on Sat 15/4/1933.
1933-04-20	<i>Western Morning News</i>	SOUTH BRENT'S NEW ALTAR The new altar which has been erected at South Brent Parish Church to replace the old altar, which was out of harmony with the decoration of the church ...
1933-04-21	<i>Exeter and Plymouth Gazette</i>	.. NEW ALTAR DEDICATED AT SOUTH BRENT. New altar has been dedicated in South Brent parish church by the Bishop of Exeter.
1933-11-13	<i>Western Morning News</i>	The stone pulpit which replaced the old oak structure, with its sounding board, has been replaced.

¹⁰³ Mr. Gallagher is perhaps the earliest Vicar now held in living memory, see p. 137.

Chapter 5

Other old Places of Worship: The dependent Chapels at Harbourneford and Brent Hill; and South Brent Methodist Church

The Chapel of St. Lambert at Harbourneford

The name 'Hurberneforde' is certainly known from 1223, when "Ricardo de Hurberneforde" appears as a witness to Charter 49 (dated 3 May 1223) preserved in the Buckfast Abbey Cartulary concerning land in Holne which Hurgelas de Holna transferred.¹ The spelling 'Hurburneford' is known from 1275, when "Will. de Hurburneford" appears as a witness to a transfer of land within the parish of Brent.² And a chapel is known to have existed at "Harberneford" about 160 years later: in Bishop Lacy's register for September 14, 1438 we read that permission is given to

"sir John Ufforde Vicar of Brente for divine service celebrated by himself or others in the chapel of St. Lambert at Harberneford in the parish of Brente".³

But no such building exists today; where was this Chapel of St. Lambert in Harbourneford?

In his reply to the Episcopal Visitation enquiry in 1744, the Vicar of Brent⁴ gave the following answer as to whether there were any Chapels (or Chapels in ruins) in the parish:

We have no Chapel within our Parish wherein Divine Service is performed. There are y^e Ruins of an old Chapel at a village Called Habournford two miles distant from y^e Parish Church, but there is no Remembrance or even Tradition of its having had Divine Service performed in it only there is mention made of it in an old Terrier, which I have met with among y^e Records of y^e Court at Exeter.⁵

Clearly, by 1744 there was no living memory of services in that then-ruined Chapel, nor any oral tradition passed down that services had ever been performed there. Memories often linger long in small rural communities, so this probably indicates that worship there had indeed ceased a very long while since. Nevertheless, "there are y^e Ruins" still then visible, not pulled down.⁶

It proves very hard now to discover where St. Lambert's Chapel stood. The 1842 South Brent Tithe Map around Harbourneford is interesting, but no chapel is shown, and none of the Tithe Apportionments

¹ Buckfast Abbey Cartulary fragment, Charter XLIX (49) in Hingeston-Randolph, 'Grandisson', p. 1598. Arguably, the spelling 'Hurburnaforde' is witnessed even earlier, since 'Widone [Guy?] de Hurburnaforde' appears in Charters 43 and 45, which although not dated individually were probably earlier than Charter 49 (Buckfast Abbey Cartulary fragment, Charters XLIII (43) and XLV (45) in Hingeston-Randolph, pp. 1594, 1596.)

² Chanter, 'Extracts ... Leger Book ... Buckfast Abbey', Trans. Dev. Assoc. (1913), p.157.

³ Or perhaps read 'Hurberneford'. Dunstan, Lacy Reg. vol. iii. fol. 134.

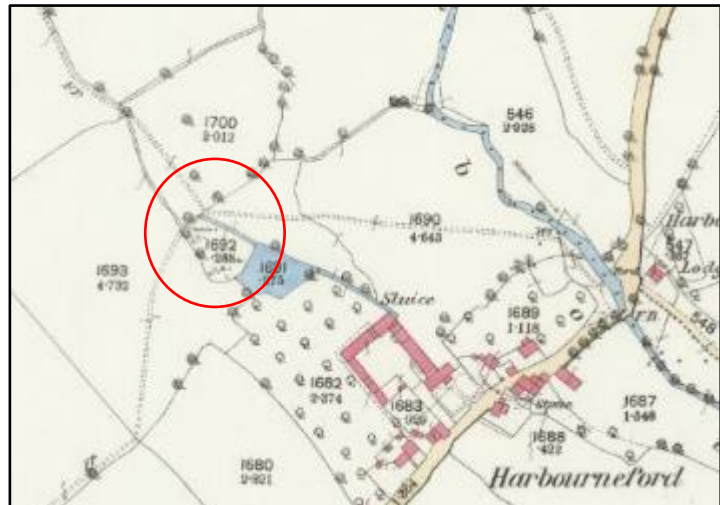
⁴ As the 1744 return also mentions a recollection of two Easter services, the Vicar making this return was probably Henry Bradford, Vicar since 1739. John Harris became Vicar only in 1744, so could hardly have then remembered two Easters at Brent.

⁵ 1744 Episcopal Visitation return (South Brent), Chanter, 225B, 507-508. The 'old Terrier' (a roll or return of land) would make for interesting reading, if ever it could be traced; but perhaps this is simply a reference to Bishop Lacy's register.

⁶ In his reply to the 1779 Episcopal Visitation, the Rev. James Lyde, Officiating Minister at Brent, wrote: "Chapels: There is no Chapel in this Parish." (Chanter, 232B, 556).

contain the word “Chapel”, as one might perhaps have expected (and as is found for the Chapel on Brent Hill, see below). And no present-day Harbourneford house names seem to help.

The only (faint) clue perhaps lies in the fact that on the 1887 Ordnance Survey map (1:2,500 County series Plan) three footpaths converge just behind and about 200m. north-west of Court Gate, a Grade II Listed Building which incorporates some features dating from the 16th Century. There is a footpath coming in from the east, from the ford itself; and the footpath from the north-west, from Zempson Bridge, is shown meeting it where another path comes from the west, from where Cuttleford farmhouse used to stand, just east of Stippadon. Where these paths meet is a small enclosure (no. 1692 on the map).



HARBOURNEFORD (1887 O.S. MAP): 3 PATHS CONVERGE BEHIND COURT GATE – A POSSIBLE LOCATION FOR THE LOST CHAPEL?

The path from the east and that from the north-west (Zempson Bridge) persisted onto the 1906 map, and the Zempson Bridge path appeared on the OS 1:10,560 Plan as late as 1963; but none of these three paths appear on modern O.S. maps.

Might this be the location of the lost Chapel of St. Lambert? Those three paths must have had some function.

We must hope that more evidence may yet emerge about this lost Chapel of St. Lambert; any information will be very gladly welcomed.

The Chapel of St. Michael on Brent Hill

It is not now generally doubted that the ruins at Map Reference SX 70317 61687 near the ancient fortified summit of Brent Hill are those of the old Chapel of St. Michael that once stood there. This was convincingly demonstrated in 1970 by Stéphan,⁷ and in 1972 the predecessor body of what is now Historic England accepted the ruins as a scheduled monument and listed them as Grade II.⁸

In the ruins still standing, the north splay of the east window can be seen standing in the east wall, and what is almost certainly the corresponding south splay can be seen in a separate block of masonry lying nearby to the south. Stéphan argued that the chapel was probably first built in or just after 1374 by the Abbot of Buckfast. Apparently it was struck by lightning in 1777, or at least by ‘hard winds’ (see below). On the 1842 Tithe Map Apportionment, fields 2158 and 2159 on Brent Hill are named as “Chapel Hill” and “Chapel and Rocks”, and the ruined Chapel is clearly drawn in outline.⁹ In medieval times an annual

⁷ Stéphan, 1970, p. 124.

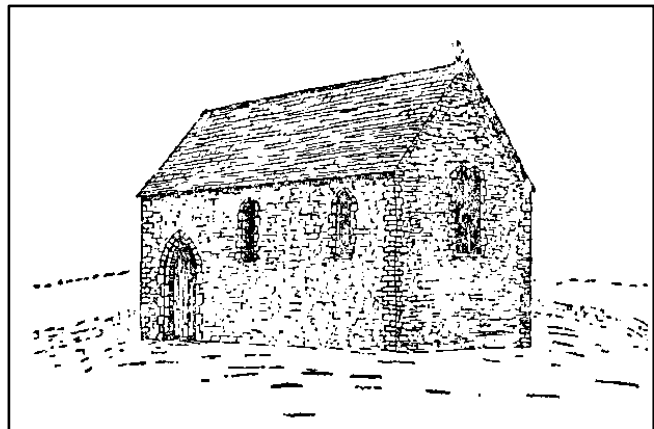
⁸ Historic England: “Remains of chapel on Brent Hill”. List entry no: 1002610. Date first listed: 12-Jun-1972. See <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1002610>. Also see 1147776.

⁹ The 1887 and 1907 Ordnance Survey maps both label the ruins as “Chapel (remains of)”.

festival mass and fair was held here at Michaelmas time (late September).¹⁰ In present times, the Chapel is the destination for the popular annual Good Friday pilgrimage carrying a cross up to Brent Hill which then stands there until Whitsunday, by generous permission of the landowner. Over 100 people made the ascent in 2019. This has been happening annually since 1971, except when, in 2001, access was prevented by foot-and-mouth disease restrictions. In 2020 the Coronavirus pandemic, which spread across the world causing large numbers of deaths and severely restricting movement and normal activity, resulted in not only the cancellation of the Good Friday pilgrimage, but even the closure of all churches, so that Easter Sunday Services could not take place in churches anywhere. It was the first time that all churches were ordered to be closed and no public services take place in them on Easter Sunday since 1208.¹¹

Stéphan published a reworking of a sketch dated 1753, and a manuscript description of the chapel on Brent Hill by Jeremiah Milles, Dean of Exeter Cathedral, indicating the chapel had a corbelled stone roof.¹² Milles writes:

To the Eastward of Brent rises a high hill call'd Brent Hill, on ye summit of which are the remains of an ancient Chappel dedicated to St. Michael, 11 paces long and 8 wide from out to out. The roof within is arched with stone, and filled up with stones placed horizontally but projecting one before ye other as they go downwards, which serves



SKETCH OF BRENT HILL CHAPEL
(STEPHAN (1970) p. 126)

instead of tiles or slates and is a solid way of covering. ... This situation commands a very noble prospect Eastward, Westward & Southward & ye churches in this neighbourhood which are generally crown'd with spires enliven ye prospects & distinguish very well ye respective situations of ye parishes.¹³

Certainly, on the celebration of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee on 20 June 1887, after a day's celebrations, a great procession to Brent Hill took place:

"At about 9.15 a torchlight procession was formed, containing about four dozen torches, and, headed by the band proceeded to Brent Hill. The torches were distinctly visible from Rattery and Ugborough Hill and the winding procession formed an effective spectacle. On the summit of the hill was found Major Daubenny and Mr. Cornish-Bowden J.P.. Major Daubenny and Mr. Gerald Carew¹⁴ let off a quantity of good rockets and other fireworks of which they bore the expense. Mr. Conran, at the appointed time, lit the bonfire and in less than two minutes, one dare not venture within 20 yards of the flaming mass. When the fire was lit the band played one verse of the National Anthem, and the people joined in the singing. After

¹⁰ For the granting of this fair in 1340, see page 76.

¹¹ The reason then was power, not plague. King John had refused to accept Pope Innocent's appointee, Stephen Langton, as Archbishop of Canterbury. The pope responded by placing England under an interdict between March 1208 and May 1213, thus preventing the clergy from celebrating the sacraments. (Bishop Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York designate, writing in *'The Spectator'*, Magazine, 4 April 2020.)

¹² In Stéphan (1970) p. 125. See also Stéphan, Dom. J., (1959-1961), 'St. Michael's Chapel on Brent Hill', 50-51.

¹³ Milles, Jeremiah: "Survey of the parishes of Devon" (Manuscript), in Stéphan (1970) p. 125.

¹⁴ Perhaps the Rev. T. G. Carew who was assistant curate here in 1898.

spending about an hour watching surrounding fires, of which more than 50 could be counted. Mr. Harris proposes “Three cheers for the Queen” as a finish up to a most pleasant day’s enjoyment.”¹⁵

It seems that celebrations had occupied the whole day, and concluded with this evening procession to Brent Hill.

The last total eclipse of the sun, on 11 August 1999, was marked by another excursion up Brent Hill: a large number of village residents ascended the hill that day to watch the event from there.¹⁶

The ruins of St. Michael’s Chapel Brent Hill are listed by Historic England as both a Scheduled Monument and a Listed Building Grade II. The details given by them include: ¹⁷

Despite damage caused by natural disasters and subsequent re-use the medieval chapel of St. Michael on Brent Hill 625m NNW of Leigh Cross survives comparatively well and has a richly documented history. It was built to celebrate mass on a specific day as part of a particular celebration by an abbey, the dissolution of which forms a major part of British religious, social, economic and political history. The subsequent erection of a folly on the site to monumentalise the original chapel indicates that it was still held in high regard despite periods of iconoclastic rebellion during the Reformation and Restoration and even following the major damaging event in the 1770’s. The chapel will still contain archaeological and environmental evidence relating to its construction, use, reconstruction and subsequent re-use until its final abandonment and may reveal important information about the nature of the celebration of religious fairs through time and its overall landscape context.

This monument includes a medieval chapel situated close to the summit of Brent Hill overlooking the Avon Valley. The chapel survives as a rectangular building measuring 6m long by 3.5m wide internally, with upstanding masonry walls to the north and east of up to 0.9m wide and 1.5m high, elsewhere the walls and internal structures are preserved as buried features. The walls are constructed from mortared rubble faced with trimmed and dressed granite blocks. Part of a window splay is visible in the east wall and a 0.9m wide door opening is traceable on the ground in the south west corner. At some distance to the south lies a small block of detached masonry.¹⁸ The chapel has a well documented history. In 1340 Edward III granted Abbot Phillip of Buckfast (the abbey owned the manor of Brent) the right to hold a three day annual fair at South Brent to celebrate the feast of St. Michael.¹⁹ In 1374 a charter for the erection of a chapel was licensed by Bishop Brantyngham and gave permission for mass to be heard once a year on St. Michael’s Day, to coincide with the fair. The time delay between these two events may have been brought about by the Black Death, which delayed construction of the chapel.²⁰ In 1777 the chapel was damaged during a storm, allegedly by a lightning strike. It was subsequently incorporated into a folly in about 1781 and there is a published sketch dated 1789 of this building as a ‘monument to the former chapel’. Several

¹⁵ The Totnes Times and Devon News, July 2nd, 1887.

¹⁶ I am indebted to Peter and Sheila Finch for these details.

¹⁷ Historic England, Scheduled Monument List Entry Number 1002610. Listing text is copyright, and is reproduced here by permission, see Credits. The ruins are also summarily listed as a Grade II Listed Building under List Entry Number 1147776.

¹⁸ This detached block of masonry also has a splay, suggesting to me that it was part of the south of the east window.

¹⁹ St. Michael’s day is 30 September, ‘Michaelmas’.

²⁰ It is estimated that in 1348-1350 some 40-60% of the population died from the Black Death. At the time, the plague was referred to as the “Great Pestilence” or the “Great Mortality”. The phrase ‘primam pestilenciam’ (first pestilence) appears in the Buckfast Cartulary referring to 1348-9 [Hingeston-Randolph, ‘Grandisson’, p. 1608]. When the plague returned in 1361-62 a further 20% were lost. It was not until the 17th century that the term “Black Death” became common, so named due to the blackening of hands and feet which it caused preceding death.

sources suggest a ‘windmill’ in its place by the 1790’s.²¹ This building was also severely damaged by storms in 1824 leaving only fragments of the original chapel. There is also a suggestion that a ‘watchers hut’ was erected to provide shelter for those involved with a nearby beacon, but as to whether this incorporated the chapel or not is unclear.²²

Fire-Beacons

Brent Hill was an important link in the chain of Fire Beacons that covered the land in late mediaeval times. It is believed there were 89 in Devon, more than in any other county, probably because of the extent of coastline. I have seen it named ‘Brent Beacon’ on one version of Ogilby’s strip map of 1675, and that is how it features on Benjamin Donn’s map of 1765.²³ ‘Ugborough Beacon’ is not far off to the south west. In his famous ‘Historical Views of Devonshire’ published in 1793, Richard Polwhele nowhere mentions South Brent itself, but ‘Brent-hill’ is one of the thirteen beacons listed, with their bearings, visible from ‘Fire-beacon-hill, on Bozumseale, in the parish of Ditsham’.²⁴



DONN'S 1765 MAP,
WITH BRENT HILL LABELLED AS 'BRENT BEACON'

Plymouth was linked to the rest of England eastwards by a network of three beacon chains; one to the north via Tavistock, the main one to the east via Ugborough Beacon and Brent Hill Beacon (which we can see was a key link), and the third along the coast. A pamphlet produced by Devon County Council in the mid 1990s gives some interesting details along with a plan of the beacon network:

iv. And Woodbury-castle in a line with it. Exmouth-point, and ope of the river, twenty degrees S. of E. On a hill on Radway estate, in Bishop's-teignton, are the remains of a beacon. A lane, called Beacon-lane, leads W. from Hennock-village, to an eminence that bears the name of Halfewood-hill. Here stood a beacon, the traces of which were visible a short time since. In the Southams, also, beacons may be traced; the link between those already noticed, and the beacons on the southern coasts of Cornwall. The bearings taken from Fire-beacon-hill, on Bozumseale, in the parish of Ditsham, are as follows: The summit of the hill by Ivy-bridge W.N.W. Brent-hill, N.W. by W. Ashprington-church, four miles N.W. Holm-church, N.W. by N. Broadhempston-church, eight miles N.N.W. Totnes, a little more to the north, six miles. Dartington, a little more to the north of Totnes. Heytorr-rock N. Torr and Mary-church, eight miles, N.E. Ditsham-church, one mile N.N.E. East-point of Torbay N.E. by N. Opening of the harbour of Dartmouth S.S.E. Tunistal-church, two miles S. On the skirts of Dartmoor, in the parish of Ugborough, are four vast heaps of stones, oval and concavated. One of these is called *Sharpitorre*, from the shape, I suppose, of the eminence on which it is placed. The largest and two least lie on the opposite side of a vale, and are by the moor-men called *Dree-berries*, doubtless a corruption of *three barrows*. On enter-

BRENT HILL MENTIONED AS A BEACON,
IN POLWHELE 'HISTORICAL VIEWS OF DEVONSHIRE', VOL. 1, P.44

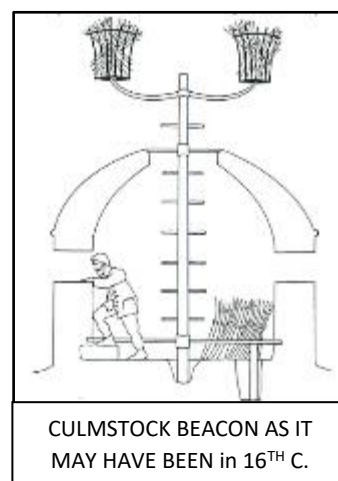
²¹ The 'Great Universal Directory' of c.1794 states that on Brent Hill "there is a monument erected by Mr. Tripe, surgeon of Ashburton, to the memory of an ancient chapel which was first demolished by hard winds, and not being re-established, became quite ruined."

²² I would think it very unlikely that the chapel was altered, in the early years of beacon activity anyway, but it might perhaps have served as a shelter if the beacon itself provided none—unlike that at Culmstock, see below.

²³ Also on Donn's map note 'BRENT' (not South Brent), 'Oldley' (today's Owley; it appears as 'Owleigh, alias Howleigh' in a Feoffees' paper of 1729), 'Bideford' (today's Bittaford), 'Peter Cross Tor' (Petre's Cross), 'Leedy Bridge' (Lydia bridge), 'Binningknowl' (Beneknowle), 'Barnshill' (Baron's Hill), and 'Harberton Ford' (Harbourneford, known as 'Harberneford' in 1438, see p.73; confusion possible with Harbertonford south of Totnes; Harbourneford was listed as 'Harberton Ford' also in Cary's 'New Itinerary', 1802. Reversion to the 15th Century name has since eliminated any confusion). St. Petroc's is shown; also a house or building beside the river: perhaps the sometime Vicarage (today's 'Manor House'), or else the old mill by today's railway bridge.

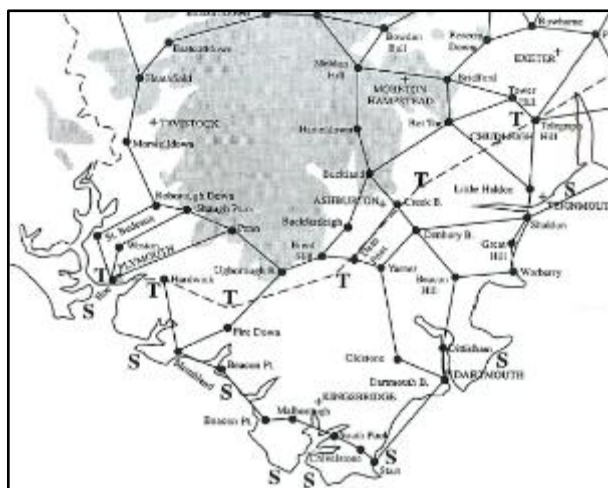
²⁴ 'Fire Beacon Hill' features on the current Ordnance Survey map about 1 km. south of Dittisham on the side road to Bosomseal, at an elevation of 160m. (Many of the bearings given are accurate; but some seem way out.)

The first written record of a beacon in Devon occurs in a document of c.1200, when land belonging to Torre Abbey was described as nearby the **'verbecna'** ('ver' fire + 'becna' beacon) on Woodbury Common. ... At the outbreak of the Hundred Years War with France (1337- 1453), fresh orders came from the king to the sheriffs of all the counties, including Devon, to prepare beacons to be lighted. The instructions were renewed in 1372 and 1373. (In 1377, Parliament added that London beacon-keepers were to supplement their fire signal with *'...making also all the noise they can with horn and with shouting'*.) ... Such was the fear of the Spanish Armada that in 1586 the Deputy Lieutenants of Devon sent instructions round for the readying of beacons, and commanded that *"no furze or heath to be on fire after seven in the afternoon"*. Apart from the approaching Spanish Armada of 1588, Brent Beacon was no doubt used on many occasions. ... The beacons were maintained into the 17th Century. We learn of the maintenance of Ugborough Beacon from the Ugborough Churchwardens accounts of 1636 and 1665, but the beacon system became less significant as armed forces of men were maintained more often in strategic locations, and did not have to be summoned from their local parishes [*where, often, arms had been retained in secure locations*²⁵]. ... Two early beacon houses survive in Devon, one near Culmstock, the other at Shute in the parish of Colyton. At Shute, there is a fireplace which helped keep the beacon keeper warm on cold nights. The keeper's job is described in old parish records, which tell us that he had to watch *'tediously day and night from March to October, he should not even be allowed a dog for company, sheltered by a but without seats or place of ease less he should fall asleape'*. ... The beacon house at Culmstock still has a circular hole in its roof for the pole. At both Culmstock and Shute there are narrow slit windows facing in the direction of other beacons, so that the keeper could look out for the warning signal. Both beacon houses were probably standing by the early 16th century. ... The last recorded use of beacons was in 1690, when Teignmouth was invaded by the French. They attacked and burnt the town, but made off a day or two later. ... From the middle of the last century, bonfires have been lit on hilltops across the countryside, some on old beacon sites, to celebrate special events such as the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897, Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953, the 400th year commemoration of the Spanish Armada in 1988, and in 1995, the 50th anniversary of the ending of the Second World War.



CULMSTOCK BEACON AS IT MAY HAVE BEEN IN 16TH C.

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FIRE BEACON NETWORK MAP
FROM D.C.C. PAMPHLET "FIRE BEACONS"

In the accompanying map, "T" means Telegraph Stations using lamps and shutters to get urgent messages to London, and "S" means Signal stations to communicate with shipping.²⁶

Brent Hill remains a breezy location evocative of the bygone Michaelmas day celebrations, and actions in defence of the realm. On a sunny day it is an exhilarating place for a walk and a picnic—and a place to ponder what history it has seen.

²⁵ For an 'Armour Chamber' in Brent, where weapons were stored, see page 89.

²⁶ The network plan and most of these details are from the D.C.C. pamphlet, "Fire Beacons".

South Brent Methodist Church²⁷

South Brent Methodist Church was founded in the time of Vicar Walter Taylor (Vicar from 1747-1765). For some while, small groups of Dissenting Christians had met in various houses, but when parlours became inadequate a place set aside for worship was needed. At that time, Church Street was called Duck Street because of the ducks that used to swim in the stream that flowed down the street, and behind a row of shops and houses at the bottom of Duck Street stood a Millers Store or Barn owned by an Ugborough man. In 1757, he leased it to the newly formed early Methodists, who converted it into a Chapel, where John Wesley (1703-1791) once came to preach.²⁸ 'Wesley Cottage' now on that site preserves the memory of Wesley's visit, as does the name Chapel Mews. In 1813 the Chapel was conveyed to a body of Trustees for the nominal sum of ten shillings (50p).

The present Methodist Church building dates from 1887, as the two foundation stones say, but William Myles writes in his 'History of Methodism'²⁹ that the first church "on this site" was opened in 1812. (The Methodist Church in 'Buckfast Leigh' was opened the same year, and Ashburton's a few years earlier, in 1808.) The church was greatly enlarged in the 1887 rebuild. Five tiny cottages are said to have stood in front of it in Victorian times, the church being accessed through an archway under them. The cottages are shown on the 1842 Tithe Map, and they are said to have been demolished after the first World War, as is mentioned by Greg Wall;³⁰ but they do not seem to be on the old 1887 or 1906 25" Ordnance Survey maps, so it is unclear exactly when they did come down.

The Methodist Church plays an important role in the Christian life of the village, and the 'Schoolroom' attached behind it (although no longer perhaps used for that exact purpose) is a popular venue for small receptions, groups and meetings.

²⁷ For most of these details of South Brent Methodist Church I am greatly indebted to Mrs. Patsy Tidball, who kindly loaned me a copy of Albert Dyer's 1987 pamphlet. I am sorry if the positioning of this feature does not meet with everyone's approval, and views will differ. I wanted somewhere to include some reference to this old church and its important part in the history of Christian faith in South Brent.

²⁸ From the 1779 Episcopal Return (see p. 132) it seems that the Methodist Church was not complete and open before that date.

²⁹ Myles p. 430 (1813 edition).

³⁰ Wall, 'Portrait', p.7.

Chapter 6

How did the Parish Church system develop in England?

Monasteries, abbeys and priories had existed as religious houses in England from very early times, long before the parish church system developed here. The English word ‘parish’, meaning unit of local government, has filtered down to us from Ancient Greek, via Latin and old French. The parish system hardly existed in England until the end of the 7th Century when it began to be applied in a few places by Archbishop Theodore of Tarsus (602–690, eighth Archbishop of Canterbury). But it would be centuries before the parish structure that we recognise everywhere today came into being.

In A.D. 855, the right to receive ‘tithes’ (tenths) of agricultural produce was granted to the English churches by King Ethelwulf. (The legal validity of the tithe system was affirmed under the Statute of Westminster of 1285. Tithes as such, i.e. in kind, were commuted into money payments known as rent-charges by English law in 1836. These were ended in 1936, but the final consequences of tithes were only legally extinguished by Parliament in the 1977 Finance Act.)

Tithes were the tenths of the produce of all (well, almost all) the land within the area of the local Manor, and this was to become the basis for the financial support of parish clergy.¹

Parish churches began to be built in England from roughly A.D. 900 onwards, but it was in the 11th and 12th centuries that parish churches really became common, as the result of increasing wealth and a widespread enthusiasm for building. The parish church was initially the personal property of a (usually lay) rich landowning Lord of the Manor. He provided some of his land and built the church on it, and then from about the 12th Century on he provided a ‘parsonage’, a house for the priest. Often this was the farm house for the ‘glebe’ land (see below). This explains why some old churches are adjacent to historic properties. Sometimes there was an earlier Saxon building to use as a base for the new church. This was the case here in South Brent, where also the successor to the old Manor House stands just south of the churchyard.

Arrangements were created for the support of the parish priest. The term ‘benefice’ in church law means a beneficial office—an ecclesiastical appointment with benefits attached. There are several different sorts; the key point is that the ‘incumbent’ (occupier) of the benefice is required to perform certain duties or conditions of a spiritual kind (the ‘spiritualities’) while being supported by the revenues attached to the office (the ‘temporalities’). In the case of a parish, the benefice or ‘living’ came to be called a ‘rectory’² and it included receiving the tithes; it was the source of the support needed by the parish priest to free his time from the need for a secular occupation. He was instituted as incumbent by the bishop who entrusted him with the ‘care or cure of souls’³ of those living within his parish, the

¹ See the section on Tithes, p. 89.

² ‘Rector’, ‘Rectory’, from Latin *regere*, to direct.

³ Strictly the incumbent was the ‘curate’, he had the ‘cure’ or care of souls; cf. the French ‘curé’ meaning parish priest. The 1662 English Book of Common Prayer uses the term curate to include all incumbents, whether they were rector, vicar or perpetual curate. ‘Perpetual’ meant that the holder could not be dismissed by the patron who made the appointment; for an example of the use of ‘perpetual vicar’ see page 145. The term ‘perpetual curate’ arose as an administrative anomaly in the 16th century. (Unlike ancient rectories and vicarages, which had secure incomes, perpetual curacies were supported by a cash stipend, usually maintained by an endowment fund, and had no ancient right to income from tithe or glebe. They proliferated in the

‘spiritualities’. The bishop then mandated the archdeacon to induct him into the ‘temporalities’, so that he would be entitled to receive the benefits and to occupy the parsonage. Something very similar is still done today. His duties were to live in the parish, to lead worship in the church on Sundays and pray there every day, and to provide pastoral care for his parishioners.

By his bishop’s act of institution he had become the ‘rector’ of the parish, and in return, once inducted, he was entitled to the benefits of the benefice attached to that parish, the ‘rectory’—which we should think of not so much as a house, but primarily as a source of income. A rectory benefice included several components. First, it included the right to receive the tithes which had to be collected in (after the Tithe Commutation Act 1836 they were to be paid in their money equivalent). Second, it included the profits from farming the ‘glebe’ (land within the manor that belonged to the benefice rather than to any other local landowner, and which might be farmed by the parish priest himself or let out by him for rent; glebe land was therefore excluded from being tithed). Third, it included the right for him to occupy the ‘parsonage house’ while he remained in office. And fourth, it included the right to receive ‘occasional fees’ (fees due for services he would take on occasions as they arose, such as weddings and funerals). In a sense, a rectory-benefice was like a modern trust fund; the trust in this case was that its property and various income streams belonged to the parish priest by virtue of his appointment as rector, but the sources of the money could not be alienated and they were not inheritable personal possessions: the income was his while he was in office, but after him it would belong in turn to his successor when instituted by the bishop.

The Lord of the Manor, who was then also the ‘patron’ of the church, originally had the right not only to appoint the parish priest and to install him, but also to dismiss him, and to charge a fee when he was appointed, and to demand an annual rent—after all, the Lord of the Manor was still the proprietor of the land which he had provided for the church and parsonage to be built on.

Because this system was open to much abuse, Pope Gregory brought in reforms in the 11th century which largely extinguished these powers for lay patrons. All they were left with was the ‘advowson’, the right to nominate a new priest to a vacant benefice; whom the bishop would institute if he agreed that the person nominated was suitable. The parochial cure of souls in England thus became the freehold property of the incumbent, whose income in the forms of tithe and glebe constituted a benefice, and who then carried the title of rector.

Further notes on ‘the Advowson’

The advowson is the proper name for the right to act as patron of the parish and “present” the next incumbent to the Bishop.⁴ To hold the advowson carries little financial advantage in itself, but it was valuable because the holder could offer a job and income to an ordained friend or relative. The advowson of South Brent has had some ups and downs over the years; until 1539 it was in the hands of Buckfast Abbey, but thereafter it rested with Sir William Petre and his descendants for many generations until they sold it. For the appointment of the Reverend Mr. John Gandy on 7 February 1638, the patron is listed in

early 19th Century as new parishes were created, but the term was effectively extinguished in 1868.) In modern England, the word ‘curate’ is used informally to mean an assistant to the parish priest; the proper full description of such a person is ‘assistant curate’.

⁴ To “present” the new incumbent usually involved actually personally presenting the new incumbent to the Bishop during the institution ceremony, as is usually done still today; but it could be a previous formal written nomination by the patron.

church records as “the Crown” i.e. King Charles I.⁵ This was of course the same Mr. Gandy who was deprived of the living under the Commonwealth and later restored. The advowson had reverted to the Crown for this turn, presumably because the patron William 2nd Baron Petre, son of John the first Baron, had died in 1637; and his son Robert, 3rd Baron, who would have inherited the advowson with the lordship of the manor, had died early in 1638 before making any presentation. Robert's son William, 4th Baron, was only 11 years old at this point, so was not able to act as patron, therefore the advowson reverted to the Crown.

Another interesting set of circumstances came into play for the institution in 1716. The patron acting at the institution of the Reverend Thomas Acland on 8 May is recorded as Lady Anna Acland of Killerton, Devon.⁶ The advowson had been previously granted ‘*pro hac vice*’ (Latin, = for this turn) by Thomas Lord Petre, of Writtle (6th Baron, died 1706), the true patron, to Johannes Willcocks (the previous incumbent who resigned in 1715 and died in 1717) and Lady Acland, in 1716 a widow. (She had married Sir Hugh Acland of Killerton in 1674, he died in 1714). Their third child (b. 1678) was Thomas Acland, whom she now presents to become ‘Rector’ of South Brent (on ‘Rector’ see later notes) to follow the Rev. John Willcocks. Intriguingly, we read that Mr. Acland was married to a ‘Miss Willcocks’ ... the daughter of John Willcocks the previous Vicar! The monument stone now on the floor in St. Petroc’s near the North Door records Thomas Acland, Vicar of this parish and third son of the Aclands of Killerton, and gives his wife’s name as Catherine. Thomas and Catherine were married by License at Sowton on 12 February 1712.

But Lord Petre had died in 1706. In order to ensure that the Rev. Thomas Acland would become Vicar of South Brent in due course (as in 1716 he did), Lord Petre while still alive transfers the advowson for the next turn to people who would arrange this whether or not he or others had died: namely the Rev. John Willcocks, father of the bride-to-be, and Lady Anna Acland, mother of the bridegroom-to-be. (This was prudent on his part perhaps, lest the circumstances of 1638 mentioned above be repeated.) Rather nepotistic, but intriguing ... Result? The Rev. Thomas Acland became Vicar of South Brent!⁷ The advowson itself still remained in the ownership of the Petre family until for the 1737 presentation, when Sir William Pole is listed as ‘true patron’ presenting the Rev. Charles Taylor to become Vicar. So the advowson had been sold or transferred by the then Lord Petre (Robert, the 8th Baron). (The Pole family had strong links to the Carew family of Marley Head).

Very soon after that, we read that a “Mr. John Taylor of Totnes” (who had his country seat at Marridge Farm) was patron for the appointments after that of the Rev. Charles Taylor, namely in 1739 (of Henry Bradford), 1744 (of John Harris), and then again in 1747 (of the Rev. Walter Taylor)! No doubt the Taylors were all related. The advowson was then sold (or transferred) again, successively to Dr. James Amyatt, and then in c.1805 to the Rev. George Baker, and then transferred to subsequent Vicars after him.

To return to the Gregorian Reforms of the 11th Century. As a result of these reforms, individual lay patrons realised they were losing some of their powers, and anyway it was no longer thought so acceptable for churches to be private property. Therefore many patrons decided to give up the proprietorship of the parish church and its land, and they donated the parish church to some religious house such as a nearby monastery, but retained their advowson powers as patron. Many no doubt liked to represent this as a charitable, perhaps a meritorious, act. Church law meant these religious bodies were more able to charge rents and collect fees from the parish clergy, and they could petition the Pope for various exemptions. Such monasteries became legally the ‘rector’, the owner of the rectory. As a corporate body they could not be the parish priest, so they appointed successive parish clergy to serve

⁵ See CCED.

⁶ See CCED.

⁷ For some of these details see CCED, and additionally <http://landedfamilies.blogspot.co.uk/2013/03/15-acland-of-killerton-and-columbjohn.html>

the parish vicariously on their behalf; such a priest so appointed (and instituted by the bishop) was known as the ‘Vicar’.

This was the case at Brent. Buckfast Abbey—founded in 1018 (or perhaps re-founded from an earlier abbey)—had come into ownership of the rectory and the church, probably by gift, and had become the official rector; also, in Brent’s case, the Abbey became Lord of the Manor and Patron (as they remained until 1539, see below).

Baring-Gould has an interesting speculation about St. Petroc’s name and the re-foundation of Buckfast Abbey that is perhaps worth recounting:

‘Now I have an idea concerning it. Two of its churches were Harford⁸ and South Brent, and both are dedicated to S. Petrock. We find S. Petrock again, further down the Dart, at its mouth. Where we find a Celtic dedication, there we may be pretty certain that either the saint founded the church, or that it was given to him, not necessarily in his lifetime.

In Celtic monasteries, when a grant was made, it was not made to the community, but to the saint personally, who was supposed never to die, and all the lands and churches granted became his personal property. Now, as we find two of the churches belonging to this venerable abbey bearing S. Petrock’s name, I think it quite possible that the original abbey may have been, like that of Padstow, a foundation of S. Petrock. When, however, the abbey was re-endowed and recast, and occupied by monks belonging to the Latin orders, S. Petrock would be ignored at Buckfast, and the only indication left of his having once owned the whole territory of Buckfast would be the lingering on of his name in some of the churches that belonged to that same territory.’⁹

So far as tithe and glebe income was concerned, monasteries often fell into keeping for themselves all the income of each rectory they ‘owned’ instead of passing the benefit on to the parish priest; some amassed huge treasures in this way, but then this practice too was banned by the decrees of the Lateran Council in 1215.

From then on, medieval monasteries and priories were constantly petitioning the Pope for exemption from these decrees, so that they could ‘appropriate’ the income from the glebe and the tithes due to the rector of the benefice, and legally keep it for themselves after all. The rectory was said to be an ‘appropriated rectory’.

This arrangement also was misused by religious houses, which frequently became unnecessarily rich, with predictable temptations not always resisted; so in the 13th Century diocesan bishops in England established the rule that monasteries and priories could appropriate for themselves only a part of the rectory income. There was similar misuse abroad: the Synod of Mentz in 1261, for example, complained that few churches in Germany could support their parish priests, so completely had the monks absorbed their revenues.¹⁰ English monasteries were now told they could retain only the profits from farming the rectory’s glebe land (land belonging to the rectory outright) plus the income of the ‘greater tithes’ (tenths of whatever grew of itself without man’s labour—corn, wheat, grain, apples, hay, wood etc). But

⁸ It is not clear how Baring-Gould linked Harford to Buckfast Abbey. The eight parishes acknowledged today by Buckfast Abbey to have had livings formerly in their gift are: St. Petroc, South Brent; St. Petroc, Petrockstowe; Holy Trinity, Buckfastleigh; St. Mary the Virgin, Down St. Mary; St. Peter, Zeal Monachorum; St. Mary, Churchstow; St. Edmund, Kingsbridge; and St. Michael, Trusham. See Clark, ‘Goodly Places’, 2018.

⁹ Baring-Gould, ‘A Book of the West’, vol. 1, pp. 261-262.

¹⁰ Larking, p. 61.

all the 'lesser tithes' (tithes of all other produce) had to remain within the parish benefice and be given to the vicar appointed to serve the parish.

This should have helped the parish clergy, and it worked to a degree. But the writing had been on the wall for a long time and corruption was prevalent. Everything came to a head in the Dissolution of the Monasteries which took place between 1536 and 1541. It caused many changes. Rectories that had been appropriated by monasteries and abbeys were summarily sold off by the King, or awarded by him to chosen lay persons. As we have seen, a rectory was primarily the right to an income from the produce of the land of the parish, and in some cases this was a lucrative right. So-called 'monastic lands', which were lands which had been acquired by monasteries over the years in their own name, were a further large asset.

When this happened, the former monastic lands and the rights to collect the 'greater tithes' were sold off or given to laymen who became known as 'lay-rectors' or 'lay impropriators'. The system was known as 'impropriation', and it took over from the 'appropriation' system described above when religious houses kept the tithes.

Parliament finally abolished the paying of tithes in the Tithe Act 1936. Then in 1976 the Endowments and Glebe Measure finally severed the ancient connection between parish church and endowment: all benefice glebe that had hitherto vested in the incumbent was transferred to the diocesan board of finance and managed professionally.

Chapter 7

Poor or Rich?

Parish Finance, Tithes, Feoffees, and Property

Brent, and Buckfast Abbey

Buckfast Abbey was surrendered by the abbot Gabriel Donne and his fellow monks to Sir William Petre and his colleagues as agents for King Henry VIII on 25 February 1539. The gold, gilt and silver, from the treasures of the abbey was considerable: it amounted to 1.5 tons, which were carried off to the Tower of London. That much gold at today's price would be worth in the order of £35m.¹

The site of Buckfast abbey was granted by the king to Sir Thomas Dennis or Denys, knight, of Holcombe Burnell, who had married Donne's sister Elizabeth.² The manor of Brent came into the hands of Sir William Petre (whose descendants went on to live and still do live in Ingatestone in Essex). Some writers say it was by gift of the King, some that it was by sale. In fact it appears it was by 'grant', effectively both gift and sale, an exchange of lands for no money, but with a definite net benefit to Sir William. He surrendered some lands he already had to the King, and in exchange received the Manor of Brent. The advantage to Sir William was probably about a quarter of the true value of Brent.³ Later, in 1547, Sir William bought 'Brent Moor' from Sir Thomas Denys for £20, under a covenant that the commoners' rights were protected.⁴ Petre's Cross (at Map reference SX 65361,65493) and Petre's Bound Stone (at SX 691,659 on Ryder's Hill) on Dartmoor commemorate this purchase.⁵

Sir William was a lawyer and clearly a capable man. Earlier in life he had been attached to the court of Anne Boleyn. Like most of his descendants after him, he was a life-long and devout but private Roman Catholic. He was already rich and powerful; his star was in the ascendant. He was reticent, wise and canny, and perhaps ruthless; he went on to become Secretary of State to no less than four successive Tudor monarchs without, literally, losing his head. It seems that soon after coming into ownership of the Manor and rectory of Brent, Sir William, who helped re-found Exeter College Oxford, had generously transferred the revenues of the rectory of Brent to Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. The Dean and Chapter of Oxford Cathedral were now, thanks to Sir William, for practical purposes the lay-rectors of Brent and proprietors of the land on which the church was built.⁶

The Manor of Brent had been part of the Abbey possessions, so the Dissolution was to have significant implications for the Vicars of St. Petroc's, South Brent. It is quite possible that over past years, the wealthy Buckfast Abbey enhanced the Vicar's income informally in various ways; wealthy patrons would often find ways to augment the situation of clergy they had appointed to poor church livings. That happens still to this day.

¹ The figure of £35m. is a metal only price, and overlooks the added value of the workmanship of the items, but it also overlooks that some items were only gilt or silver.

² See Wikipedia, 'Gabriel Donne'. Also see CCED under Gabriel Donne ###.

³ Emmison, 1961, p.186.

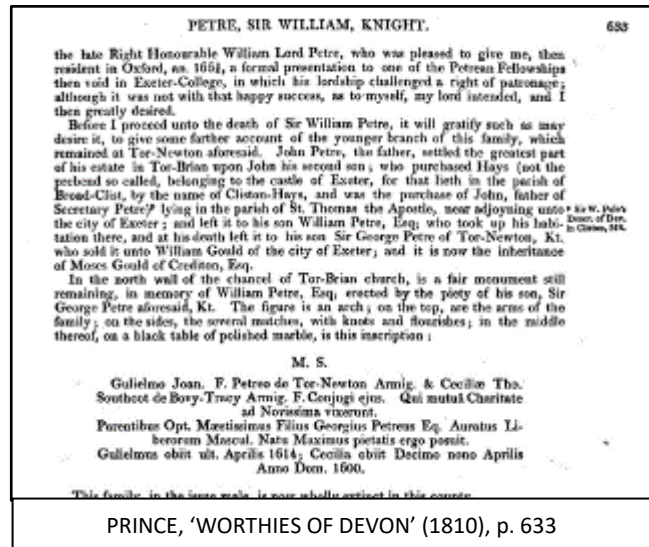
⁴ Devon Heritage Centre: Refce 3841M/T/5, Bargain and sale, South Brent, 16th March 1547, Sir William Petre and Sir Thomas Denys of Holcombe Burnell.

⁵ It is thought that the standing stone at Petre's Cross is the original shaft, but following some mutilation by Redlake peat cutters is now mounted upside down; the chamfered base which would have fitted into a socket stone is now uppermost. Sir William erected three other crosses also, at Three Barrows, Lower Huntingdon Corner, and Buckland Ford (now missing).

⁶ See Appendix 1, page 147. For a consideration of the sale of the advowson and 'the perpetuity of the rectory', see p. 131.

Since 1516 the Vicar of Brent had been the Reverend Walter Southcote. Quite likely he was related to the John Southcote of Bovey Tracey to whom, with Anthony Burleigh, on November 11 in the following year, the Abbot of Buckfast had leased the tithes of sheaf [i.e. sheaves of cereal crops] and hay of Brent, for sixty years, at the yearly rent of £20. The Abbot could see the way things were going; and by means such as this, alienating much of the Abbey's asset base into the future, he perhaps hoped to secure his own future income.

The Southcotes of Bovey were later related by marriage with the Petre family, as a monument in Torbryan church shows, reported by Prince.⁷ It seems Sir William's son John Petre settled his Torbryan lands mostly on his second son John, who left it to his son William (great grandson of Sir William); he died in 1614 and had married Cecilia Southcote of Bovey Tracey who died 1600, both are the subjects of the Torbryan memorial. Quite likely the Petre and Southcote families became acquainted when Sir William took over as Patron from the Abbey in 1539 or 1540, while Walter Southcote was Vicar of Brent.



In any case, watching from a safe distance, Vicar Southcote would have seen the nearby Abbey dissolved in 1539, and then the patronage of Brent pass to Sir William Petre. Eleven years later, on 25 July 1550, the Reverend Philip Phrear became Vicar. We know nothing much directly about the next nine years, but in 1559 we find that in some distress Mr. Phrear had petitioned the Bishop of Exeter. Perhaps the implications of the disappearance of Buckfast Abbey and its money had not been clear to him, or perhaps things had suddenly deteriorated. Maybe Walter Southcote had had family money to support him at South Brent; but evidently Philip Phrear did not. He submits that his financial situation is now very perilous. He doubts he will ever have a successor (this may have been a veiled threat that he might resign and leave for a better post elsewhere). Could something please be done?

We do not know exactly what had gone wrong, but we can piece together some bits of the picture. Before the Abbey was dissolved, the Vicar would have been receiving the 'lesser tithes', and of course the 'occasional fees' of the parish. But now the Abbey had gone, what had happened? The lesser tithes should have still been paid to the Vicar, but were they? Any informal benefits or hand-outs from the Abbey would certainly have disappeared. Perhaps all he was left with was the parsonage and the meagre fees for occasional services. This meant poverty.

Mr. Phrear decided to write to the Bishop. Although his submission seems not to have survived, fortunately we do have the text of the Bishop's response (the 1559 'Composition'; for a translation and comments see Appendix 1).

⁷ Prince, 'Worthies', p. 633.

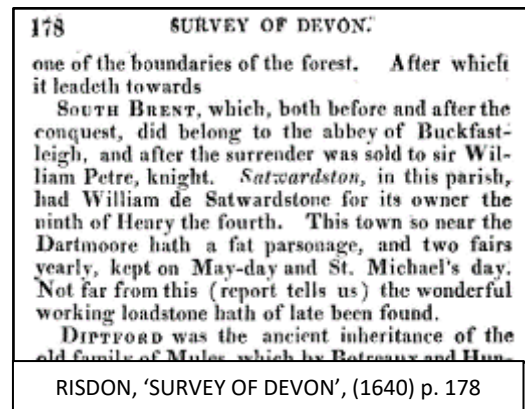
The Bishop clearly asked his advisers to look into the matter thoroughly. A very generous agreement, a 'Composition', was put in place.⁸ In summary, the outcome was that, provided the Vicar of Brent agreed to pay £20 every year to Christ Church Cathedral Oxford, and also that every successor Vicar paid £3 6s 8d to that Cathedral upon his institution into office as Vicar, then he and his successors in perpetuity would receive all the income (i.e. from the glebe and the greater tithes, etc.) of the rectory, which had rightly been the income of Sir William Petre, as rector; income which that Cathedral, as Petre's grantee, had been receiving for these last ten years or so. They would both now relinquish all rights to it.

This outcome does suggest that the Bishop and Sir William had come to agree that Brent had somehow been short-changed in the wake of the dissolution of Buckfast Abbey. Sir William had generously already consigned the rectory income to Christ Church Oxford; now they were persuaded to give it up again.

Now £20—the amount the Vicar had to pay each year—was in the 1550s a very sizable sum, worth perhaps £9,000 today; but the income of the rectory which would now come to the Vicar amounted to about £120 per annum—about £56,000 a year in today's money! He could just about afford to pay that £20.

Rags to riches indeed. The Reverend Mr. Phrear's reaction is not recorded, but he must have been relieved, to say the least. Suddenly, Brent was transformed from a miserably poor Dartmoor living into one of the best paid vicarages in Devon. When he died, his successor was the Reverend Mr. Richard Fountain, who had been educated at Oxford at Sir William's expense,⁹ and who was instituted on 8 May 1561 as Vicar of Brent. In 1577, Mr. Fountain offered hospitality in Brent to Roger Braunche who was visiting the West Country on behalf of his employer John Petre, the son of Sir William who had inherited his father's estates.¹⁰ Braunche's records state, "Given to one of Mr. Fountain's men at Brent the 10th of April ... 6d." (Six pence was roughly the daily wage of a craftsman.) How many other men Mr. Fountain retained is not stated, but he was clearly running a far bigger staff than Mr. Phrear could have contemplated twenty years earlier. Note Braunche's comment: "one of" Mr. Fountain's men; how many were there?

As Tristram Risdon was to write some 80 years later in his '*Survey of Devon*' (written in 1640, though not apparently published until 1714), "South Brent ... This town so near the Dartmoore hath a fat parsonage ...".¹¹



A note on 'Satwardstone':

Risdon also mentions a settlement in the parish named 'Satwardston', with William de Satwardstone there in 1376. There were interesting extracts relating to Brent in the now missing old Leger Book of Buckfast Abbey, which were copied in about 1610 by Sir William Petre's steward. These extracts are stated to date between 1270-1314. A 'Steph. de Siccewardiston' occurs in a land transaction at 'La Hega' (no date given). Also 'Ada de Sitwardiston' and 'Ric. de Sitwardiston' are witnesses to a land transaction at 'Sheplegh'

⁸ In church law, a 'real composition' is the technical term for a legal re-assignment of the sorts of income involved here.

⁹ Emmison, 1961, p. 305.

¹⁰ Edwards, 1975, p. 106.

¹¹ Risdon, 'Survey', p. 178.

(Shipley), which is also undated but stated to be in the time of ‘Abbot Petrum’ and of ‘Gervasio tunc Vicar de Brente’ (Gervase the then Vicar of Brent).¹² Gervase is thought to have been Vicar of Brent from 1289 to 1337, and there was an Abbot at Buckfast named Peter mentioned in the Lord Petre Archives in 1291 to 1313. The Shipley lands transaction involving ‘Ada and Ric. Sitwardiston’ would therefore have been in this time. There are also mentions of ‘Will. de Sittewardiston’ and ‘Steph. de Shidewardeston’. (Another Abbot Peter is mentioned in the Cartulary of Buckfast Abbey in 1242, but the date is too early).¹³

No names similar to Satward are to be found in the A.D. 962 King Edgar ‘Charter of Huish’,¹⁴ which deals with land bordering on South Brent, and there seems to be no evidence of a local equivalent of the Scandinavian Siward (who was famous as an earl in Northumberland in the 11th Century). So we are left uncertain about the origin of the name Satwardstone. Perhaps the name Satwardstone has come down to us in what we know today as Stidston.¹⁵

As to the mention by Risdon, writing in c. 1640, of Lodestone¹⁶ then having “of late” been found (on Brent Hill), this is mentioned by Thomas Westcote¹⁷ (the Devon topographer, c. 1567 – c. 1637) and by the Royal Society, to whom Dr. Edward Cotton¹⁸ sent a large lodestone for testing in 1667: see attached extract from Lysons and Lysons. ‘Loadstone’ is also reported by Milles (mid 1700s) to have been found in the neighbourhood of Brent Hill.¹⁹ The 1906-1907 Ordnance Survey map shows the word ‘Quarry’ in Cross Park field (north of Whinfield, formerly named Bellevue), and the adit in the NE corner where the magnetite was extracted. Many Brent boys (and a few girls) have scrambled into this now often (and dangerously) flooded adit, where bats now roost.²⁰

cclxviii DEVONSHIRE.

Horn-stone. — Pseudomorphic — moulded apparently in cavities resulting from the disintegration and loss of fluor spar, and of iron pyrites, in South Hooe mine, Beer Alston.

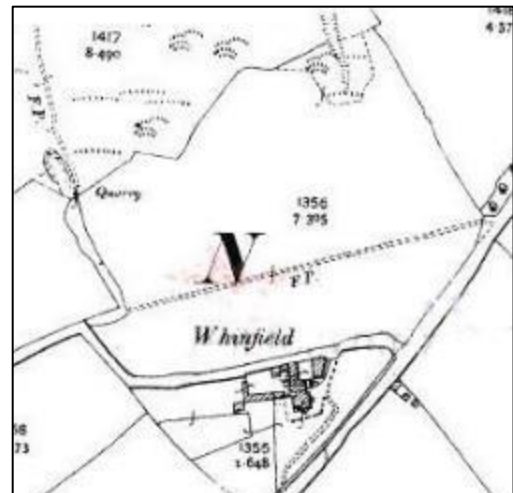
Hydrargillite, or Wavellite. — Six miles from Barnstaple, on the road to South Molton, in black greywacke slate (Dr. Wavell); in the blue greywacke slate at Torquay; (J. Meade, Esq., 1817.)

Iron. — Specular or micaceous iron ore, South Molton; also in a vein, in granite, two feet thick, near Hennock; and near Mount Tavy, Tavistock.

— magnetic. — Wheal Crowndale mine, in the parish of Tavistock; in the massive state, Tavistock, South Brent. Risdon, speaking of the latter place, says, not far from hence the wonderful working loadstone bath of late been found. Westcote also mentions a mine or quarry of loadstones at Brent. In 1667 Dr. Edward Cotton sent a loadstone of 60 lb. weight to the Royal Society from this place; though it raised no great weight of iron, it would move a needle at the distance of nine feet.

— spathose iron. — Beer Alston and the neighbouring mines; fine crystals: Wheal Crowndale, Tavistock.

LODESTONE (MAGNETITE) FOUND AND QUARRIED AT BRENT –
LYSONS & LYSONS, 1822, p.cclxviii



O.S. COUNTY SERIES, DEVON MAP 1:10,560,
1906-1907

¹² Chanter, ‘Extracts ... Leger Book ... Buckfast Abbey’, Trans. Dev. Assoc. (1913), p.156.

¹³ For a list of Abbots of Buckfast, see Beacham, ‘Buckfast Abbey’ (2017), or visit the Abbey’s website.

¹⁴ Part of the Petre deposition in the Essex Record Office.

¹⁵ See also the final footnote to these paragraphs on Satwardstone, and the mention of the surname Stidston in the section following on Brent Feoffees. On Benjamin Donn’s 1765 map (see page 75) Stidston is not mentioned by name, but the map shows what we call Stidston Lane leaving the Buckfastleigh (i.e. Exeter) road in Hillside and heading towards Rattery. The ninth year of Henry IV mentioned by Risdon would be 1376.

¹⁶ Lodestone (i.e. magnetite, Fe₃O₄, used in early navigational compasses) was known for its magnetic properties by the Greeks from c. 600 B.C., and by the Chinese from c. 2,700 B.C. The old word ‘lode’ (cf. ‘to lead’) means ‘way’, but lodestone was also spelt ‘load-stone’, from its ability to lift a load several times its own weight. Risdon reports it had been found ‘not far from’ Brent. Geologically, Brent Hill is distinct from the granite mass of Dartmoor.

¹⁷ Westcote was a friend of Tristram Risdon and of Sir William Pole (1561-1635), both also topographers (Dict. Nat. Biog).

¹⁸ Dr. Cotton was Archdeacon of Cornwall. That then being part of Exeter diocese, he sent the stone via the Bishop of Exeter. (Birch, Hist. Roy. Soc. 1666/7, p.149.)

¹⁹ Milles is quoted in Stéphan (1970), p.126.

²⁰ Greg Wall and John Collier have admitted to exploring it in younger days. If lodestone had been found here in ancient times, could ‘Satwardstone’ be a corruption of ‘south-ward-stone’ perhaps, indicating its direction-finding capability?

To conclude this discussion of the financing of South Brent Vicarage, it is quite clear that the poverty of the Vicar of South Brent had been very thoroughly and permanently eliminated. But how much of a benefit would these riches prove to be in the following years? No doubt the huge sums available to the Vicar were a temptation to many. There were arguments and squabbles over the advowson from time to time. But some Vicars certainly found ways to ensure that South Brent parishioners and generations following would benefit from the large income that they received as their Vicar, until the inequalities of clergy pay came to a decisive end in the 20th Century. The Rev. William Speare-Cole, for example, spent huge amounts of his own money on restoring the chancel and side chapels of St. Petroc's around 1870; the total cost of the church Restoration then was about £230,000 in today's terms.²¹ Earlier vicars too were thoughtful and generous; some took steps to reinforce the resources and influence of the Feoffees.

The Feoffees and Parish Charities

Most parishes had 'parish lands' under the trusteeship of feoffees, and perhaps as other individual charities for local benefit. South Brent was no different. As well as Feoffees, Brent's local charities included Petre's Gift (for the poor), Willcocks' Gift, Acland's Gift (both for education), and Bradford's Gift (providing Bibles).

<p>HUNDRED OF STANBOROUGH.</p> <p>Parish of South Brent :</p> <p>Parish lands.</p> <p>Wilcocks's gift.</p> <p>Acland's gift.</p> <p>Peter's gift.</p> <p>Bradford's gift.</p>
<p>BRENT CHARITIES 1839</p> <p>IN 'CHARITIES OF DEVON' p. 6</p>

The quaint title Feoffees belongs to the trustees of the charity in Brent endowed for the benefit of local residents. Similar bodies of Feoffees did and do still exist in several other places. Unfortunately, it seems the very early records of the Brent Feoffees were lost some while ago, but the Feoffees were certainly set up here well before the 1539 Dissolution of Buckfast Abbey.

The earliest Feoffees document accessible today seems to be the 1518 transfer of property from Abbot Alfred²² of Buckfast, preserved in a 1728 document. It was dated 3 June, '10 Henry VIII' [= 1518], and refers to the new building of 'a new church house' which was then to be let out. The abstract reads:

(1) Alfred late Abbot of the house and Church of St. Mary of Buckfaste and his convent granted to (2) John Ferris, Robert Foxhold, Roger Hendiston, John Deymand of Palston, John Thorn, William Alman, Edward Sander and John Stidston²³ of Corindon:

Premises: a parcel of land and a garden to build a new church house on, and use the profits thereof to maintain the parish church of South Brent and its ornaments. Also when feoffees are reduced by death for 2 or 3 men, they are to convey the estate to new feoffees.²⁴

Clearly the 'new church house' was expected to be rented out for the benefit of the charity, not occupied by the Vicar.

In the time of Vicar John Gandy, a lease of 20 May 1668 names Phillipp Veale, John Luscomb, John Prowse, George Foster, John Trist of South Brent, as feoffees, and leases property in Ashburton to John Skreech of Ashburton, clothier.

²¹ The enormous contribution of the Rev. William Speare-Cole is understated on the memorial to him in the Chancel. See p.65.

²² Alfred Gyll was Abbot of Buckfast from 1512-1525 (Stéphan (1970), p. 181).

²³ On this surname Stidston, see the previous discussion on Satwardstone.

²⁴ *South West Heritage Trust (SWHT)*: Reference 3250 A/T/B/T 16.

Intriguingly, a lease to Crispian Grute in 1669 seems to be describing the present Church Room and the ground floor room used as the church office, as the western end of 'Lower Church House':

Premises: one ground floor room called Lower Church house, and half of the upper floor (the western lower end) and ground adjoining at the back called Brewershay, that is "that parcel of ground which was lately inclosed for an herbe garden" and also the parcel of land lying between the herb garden and Grace Andrews' hedge and access to and fro for [Crispian Grute of South Brent, butcher] + free access for lord of the manor + officers to hold courts and for parishioners in the half of the upper floor here granted.²⁵

In 1704 we find an interesting lease by the Feoffees which provides details of how various parts of the Church House appears to have been used:

Premises: rooms in the Church house called the Brewhouse and two chambers over it, + the ground floor room called the workhouse or Ripininge house and one chamber over it called the Armour Chamber and the Brewhousehay adjoining to the Church House from the ""Backdore upward to a moate in a hedge late Grace Andrews' hedge"" containing 12 feet of ground + access, all of which was in the occupation of William Andrew, father of Nicholas Andrew ... 20 Nov. 1704.²⁶

By 'Ripininge' we understand 'ripening', which connects well with the presence of the 'Brewhouse'. From the mention of 'the Armour Chamber' we conclude that in a day when established military settlements were scarce, weapons were stored here, ready to be issued when alarms were made, perhaps through the beacon system.²⁷ Swords and similar weapons were often stored securely in manor houses, churches etc. in case the local militia needed to be raised at short notice. So the 'Church House' mentioned here is indeed very likely to be identified with the old Manor House south of the churchyard.

The Rev. John Willcocks died in 1717 and in his Will dated 26 April 1713 gave land in trust to produce income for educational purposes – 'teaching poor children of Brent' – and this became known as 'Willcocks' Gift' or 'the John Willcocks Charity'.²⁸

In 1728 reference is made to that much earlier 1518 transfer, set out above, in which the Feoffees had received property from Abbot Alfred of Buckfast. In 1728 the Feoffees, obeying the last clause of the 1518 transfer, conveyed this property to 'John Cory, clerk' and 17 other parishioners, evidently to be the new Feoffees, as these names are referred to as the Feoffees in another deed the next year.²⁹

Also in 1728, we read of certain "lands in Ashburton, late in the occupation of William Soper, late of Ashburton, butcher, formerly the inheritance of John Elliott of Port Elliott in Cornwall".³⁰ This establishes a probable link between the Elliotts of Port Elliott and the John Elliott of Buckfastleigh who in the 19th Century became Lord of the Manor.

²⁵ *SWHT* Reference: 3250 A/T/B/T 3.

²⁶ *SWHT* Reference: 3250 A/T/B/T 14.

²⁷ For a discussion of the Fire Beacon system and Brent Hill Beacon, see page 76.

²⁸ Will of John Willcocks ("... of South Brent in the county of Devon, Clerk ...") retrieved via Ancestry. The official copy gives the probate date as 3 May 1716, but that must be a transcription error for 1718, as he died 26 Dec 1717. The charity is referred to in (e.g.) *SWHT* 3250 A/Z/1.

²⁹ *SWHT* Reference: 3250 A/T/B/T 15; for more on the Rev. John Cory and the memorial to him in St. Petroc's, see page 110.

³⁰ *SWHT* Reference: 3250 A/T/B/T 15.

Vicar Thomas Acland was involved in a transfer in 1733 which set up a trust for ‘teaching poor children of Brent’, subsequently known as ‘Acland’s Gift’ or ‘the Thomas Acland Charity’.³¹ Then in 1770 a Lease was granted which recited an earlier lease that had been made in the time of Vicar Richard Fountayne (only a short while after the substantial increase in the Vicar’s income effected by Sir William Petre): made in 1588 it was a lease for 3,000 years!³² The 1770 document names Vicar John Nosworthy and other familiar names: Henry Nosworthy, gentlemen, Philip Goodridge, surgeon, John Veale, Thomas Ford, George Hosking, Othniel Gidley, Henry Farleigh, Jeffrey White, Timothy Thuell (*formerly spelt Thewell*), William Skelton, the younger, John Harrie, William Andrew, Robert Luscombe, the younger, Richard Hosking, John Brooking, Henry Hosking, John Ford the younger, Jarvis Veale the younger, all of South Brent, yeomen.

In 1800, the Rev. Robert Bradford gave by deed 10 shillings a year to the vicar and churchwardens of Brent for Bibles to be given on Christmas Day “to four poor children who should be able to read”.³³ This became known as ‘Bradford’s Gift’ or ‘The Bradford Charity’.³⁴ The parishes of Dean Prior and Holne were also to benefit in the same way.

Another sample abstract of a conveyance from the records of the Feoffees gives an example of local generosity and concern for the poor. In 1810 spinster sisters Sally and Peggy Ford gave the land called ‘Crecroft’ to ‘provide a school for poor children’, so strengthening the intentions of the charities founded by vicars John Willcocks and Thomas Acland. This field Crecroft in Aish seems previously to have been only leased to the Feoffees, now it is given outright. The 1810 trustees included the Vicar George Baker and many other Brent folk; John Ford, Augustus Amyatt and William Cuming all have memorials in church.³⁵ The sisters wanted to provide additional funds for a school to help “poor children” (i.e. the huge majority, whose parents could not afford schooling for their children).

Reference: 3250 A/T/B/T 24

Title: South Brent: Conveyance

Description:

1. Sally Ford and Peggy Ford of South Brent, spinster daughters + co heiresses of John Ford, late of S. Brent, gentleman, deceased, who was only surviving trustee of part of the parish lands of South Brent
2. Walter Palk, esquire, Sir Henry Carew, Bt., George Baker, clerk, Vicar of S. Brent, Augustus Amyatt, esquire, William Cuming, esquire, of the Royal Navy, Jeffery White, Othniel Gidley, Thomas Ford, John Mole Thuell, Henry Ford, Richard Stranger, Richard Adams, William Skelton, Hosking [*sic. - surname only given here*], Henry Bradridge, Jeffery Hosking, Henry Hosking, Joseph Pearse, John Cuming, Robert Cuming, Richard Stidston, Christopher Bidlake of Elwill, Roger Bidlake, Othniel Gidley the younger, John Hosking of Stidston and John Luke, inhabitants or owners of land, in South Brent

Premises:

one close of land called Crecroft at Ash on the west side of the road from Ash village to Ashridge containing one acre of land formerly in the possession of (?Thomas Wyatt) but now of (blank) as tenant.

Profits:

³¹ *SWHT* references: 3250 A/T/B/T 24, 3250 A/Z/1: see p. 122.

³² Extracted from the 1674 assignment at *SWHT* Reference: 3250 A/T/U/T 1. For the 1770 document see *SWHT* Reference: 3250 A/T/B/T 22.

³³ This 1800 deed in Chancery confirmed the 1769 Will of Rev. Robert Bradford of Buckfastleigh. See ‘Charities of Devon’, pp. 73, 138, 141.

³⁴ We learn from ‘Charities of Devon’ page 141-2 that this Rev. Robert Bradford (making the gift in 1800) was the great-nephew of the Rev. Robert Bradford (for sixty years Vicar of Buckfastleigh, 1717-1777). He was thus related to the Rev. Henry Bradford (Vicar of Brent 1739-44), who was the brother of Robert, Vicar of Buckfastleigh; see the Henry Bradford entry, p. 133.

³⁵ See pages 97 and 109.

to be used to provide a school for poor children, in addition to those provided for by Rev. John Wilcocks [*sic*], late vicar of South Brent, deceased, + for educational purposes mentioned in the will of Thomas Acland, deceased, vicar of South Brent dated 1733 + in an indenture of feoffment dated 1748

Consideration: 10s

Date: 21 Feb. 1810

In 1923 the Feoffees income was about £142 (about £7,700 in 2018's income value), and it was devoted to three purposes in approximately equal shares: to the poor, to education, and to maintenance of the parish church.³⁶ The South Brent Feoffees continue to be an active local charity, with considerable sums to distribute in accordance with their charitable objects and to assist in meeting local individual needs.

“The Great Universal Directory of 1794”³⁷

This Directory gives us a general idea of the prosperity or otherwise of Brent in the later 1790s.

South Brent is a small town situate in a valley, encompassed by hills, and is a great thoroughfare from Plymouth to London. On the north east side is a very high hill called Brent Hill, about a mile from the town, adjoining the turnpike road that leads to London³⁸, on which there is a monument erected by Mr. Tripe,³⁹ surgeon of Ashburton, to the memory of an ancient chapel which was first demolished by hard winds, and not being re-established, became quite ruined.⁴⁰

It is an ancient borough, governed by a court leet and baron of the lord of the manor; likewise two constables and a sealer of leather. It had anciently a market held on Wednesday, which has long been disused; the shambles are now standing, and the market bell which stood on the top of it fell down in 1790 and broke in several pieces. There are two fairs annually, the last Tuesday in April and last Tuesday in September.

Two stage coaches pass through it from Plymouth about 11 o'clock every day, on their way to Exeter, and there are two from Exeter which pass through about one o'clock to Plymouth. Russel's stage waggon from London passes through on its way to Plymouth, Thursday mornings, and Abbott's wagon from Exeter to Modbury.

There are very few freeholders in the place; the town is under the general tenure of lease for life and so is the major part of the parish, under the Right Honourable Robert Edward, Lord Petre, baron of Writtle.

The following are the principal inhabitants:

CLERGY: Amyatt, Rev. John, Vicar. PHYSICIANS: Goodridge, Philip, surgeon. Langworthy, George & Son, surgeons. Parnell. John, surgeon. TRADERS &c.: Andrews, Richard, farmer. Andrews, Peter, tailor & shopkeeper. Bickford, John, victualler. Caril, John, paper maker. Cumming, Robert, mason and Clerk. Cumming, Robert jun. farmer. Foot, Agnes, shopkeeper. Foot, William, blacksmith. Ford, Peter, mason. Gidley, Othniel, farmer. Hannaford, Richard, butcher. Hocking, John, cordwainer. Hocking, R B, schoolmaster. Langmead, William, constable. Manning, William, butcher. Pethyjohns, Francis, blacksmith & portreeve.⁴¹ Pierce, Joseph, butcher. Stidston, Richard, farmer. Stidston, Richard, jun, glazier. Thuell, M. John, farmer. Trust, William, woolcomber. Thompson, William, victualler. Wyatt, John, baker.

³⁶ Kelly's Directory, 1923.

³⁷ Although quoted as “of 1794”, it was in fact published in sections until as late as 1798.

³⁸ We can conclude from this that today's 'lane' through Harbourneford to Brent was then the turnpike, the main road to London! What distinguished travellers has it seen ... even if it was, as rumoured, faster to go from Exeter to Plymouth by sea than by land if the weather was calm.

³⁹ The noted historian and illustrator, the Reverend John Swete, was of this family, being born Tripe before changing his name by deed poll. He painted a view of St. Petroc's Church.

⁴⁰ For this ruined Chapel of St. Michael on Brent Hill, see page 74.

⁴¹ A Portreeve (otherwise port warden) is the title of a historical official in England and Wales within a town. The duties have varied over time. The nearest to South Brent still in office today is at Ashburton.

Many of these names are familiar today; and Brent seems then to have had about 15 shops – or traders.

Tithes, the Tithe Map, and the value of South Brent's tithes

Under the tithe system, every holding of land in a parish was to help support the parish clergy by supplying the incumbent with a tenth of the produce of the land. The tithe was a tax consisting of a tenth of the natural increase of flocks, herds, fields and woods. It was originally paid "in kind" (rather than in money equivalent) and was intended to link pastors with the farmers of their parishes: with a good harvest, farmer and clergyman gained; in a bad year, both suffered together. The clergyman was responsible for collecting his own tithe, going into the fields and assessing crops, inspecting orchards, counting cattle, sheep or even beehives. He had to know the source and amount of each farmer's income in order to know how much he could expect to collect as tithe. And disputes and court cases were common: apples were tithed, but should windfalls be? (Yes, replied the courts.). It was a dilemma for a conscientious clergyman; if he tried to realise the full amount of tithe income due, he risked contaminating good parochial relationships; if he didn't collect what he should, he and his family suffered, and he lowered the value of his living for future incumbents.⁴²

A system which should have created a strong bond between the parson and his farming people was in practice vulnerable to selfishness and corruption, since clergy being responsible for the collection of the tithes due to them spent much time checking the produce in farmers' fields and arranging to collect their tithes. There was ample scope for disagreement and concealment and consequent deterioration of relationships. In addition, the tithe system did not bring into account forms of local wealth other than farming, such as commerce or manufacturing or the professions, which were becoming increasingly significant. The system was flawed, and was increasingly seen to be so.

In the sixteenth century, a report (quoted by Hill) had stated: "It is felt to be a great indignity that tithes are rendered each year to parochial ministers by the poor and labouring peasantry, whilst wealthy merchants and men abounding in learning and skill contribute practically nothing to the necessities of the ministry".⁴³ For the seventeenth century, Hill goes further: "the Church was far more than a religious institution: it was a political and economic institution of the greatest power and importance. There might be many reasons, over and above the purely religious, why men should wish to overthrow the ecclesiastical hierarchy in 1640."⁴⁴ In the eighteenth century, the complaint was similar: "Another saith he dwells in a city or market town and hath no land, though it's like he gains more by trade than ten poor countrymen that pay tithes do by their lands. . . . The rich generally pay little, and the poor husbandman bears the burden".⁴⁵ The tithe system was in deep trouble.

We can well understand how the collection of tithes was a source of ill-feeling between clergy and farmers. How were both parties to be of a generous heart? Clergymen were liable to accept less in order to keep the peace and maintain good relations with their parishioners. They would sometimes either neglect their collection of tithes, to their own and their family's detriment and that of their successors, but to the benefit of the farmer; or else diligently collect their full due of tithes but irritate the farmer.

⁴² Sutherland, 'Tithes and the Rural Clergyman in Jane Austen's England', 1994. The whole article is enlightening on the early 19th Century background.

⁴³ Quoted in Hill, 'Economic Problems', p. 77.

⁴⁴ Hill, p. x.

⁴⁵ Hill, p. 108.

Many clergy would hold a seasonal annual ‘Tithe Feast’ to make the whole tithe collecting process more congenial. And many would forego collecting the full tithe where they knew there was real and not merely pretended hardship.⁴⁶

As Sutherland concluded, “Tithe rights, however, were property, and the example of the French Revolution frightened the government from taking action against established religion or the rights of property until well into the nineteenth century. When paying tithes had ceased to be a sacred obligation and had become a commercial transaction pitting clergy and their parishioners as adversaries, the Church lost more than money by the change.”⁴⁷

Until the passing of the Tithe Commutation Act 1836, tithes on lands in a parish were payable as produce. In some places large tithe barns were built to accommodate the produce as it was gathered in. By the 1830s it had become clear that this system was outdated and perhaps unworkable, so it was decided that tithes should instead be commuted into financial payments due to the tithe-owner, payments known as rent-charges. Parliament then passed the Tithe Commutation Act 1836 to bring this into effect. Surveyors were appointed to prepare maps of each parish showing the existing buildings, roads, and fields etc. No property names appear on the map, only numbers, but in an extensive accompanying schedule all numbered properties were named, and their owner, occupier, and area was given. Even the area occupied by hedges was separately recorded; it was a very thorough survey, although not totally free from cartographic error. The surveyor’s report ended with a statement of the total amount payable by each owner/occupier. Usually these rent-charges were due to the local rector, but, as we have seen, in the case of South Brent they were to be payable to the Vicar of South Brent in office at the time. Most Rectors, as former recipients of the tithe, were not generally in so rich a position as the Vicar of South Brent, and rectors suffered from the introduction of the Tithe Redemption Act, since the drop in the price of corn in following years, on which alone the Apportionments were valued, resulted in a 30% drop in income and widespread hardship.⁴⁸



BRENT VILLAGE CENTRE ON THE 1842 TITHE MAP

Tithe rent-charge was finally abolished by Parliament a century later by the Tithe Act 1936. Then in 1976 the Endowments and Glebe Measure finally severed the ancient connection between parish church and endowment: all benefice glebe that had hitherto vested in the incumbent was transferred to the

⁴⁶ Hill, p. 77.

⁴⁷ Sutherland, p. 54.

⁴⁸ The severe hardship arising from the Tithe system was discussed at length in the 1898 Preface to *Crockford's*. The first appearance of *Crockford's* was in 1858.

diocesan board of finance and managed professionally. The inequalities of clergy pay that had arisen as the accidents of history and had persisted for centuries were finally brought to a close; they had caused extreme poverty for some and obscene riches for others, even though all were doing equivalent jobs.

The Tithe Map for South Brent has now been made available on-line as high resolution colour images, as has been done for all Devon.⁴⁹ The 1842 Apportionment Report of the South Brent parish surveyors commissioned to assess the Rent Charges in lieu of tithes is viewable in classic copperplate script. The report shows how the 1836 Act came into effect in this area. The value (2018) of every pound in 1840 is at least £85 (a conservative estimate), so when we read in the report of the Commissioner that the tithes of South Brent payable to the Vicar were £975 10s 0d then, we must think in terms of an annual income (in addition to the provision of a Vicarage house) of more than £80,000 in today's terms—a very sizable sum, about 3½ times 2018 average income. The Vicars of South Brent were well off, and could afford to support a number of local causes, and several Vicars did.

The Map is of considerable interest. The on-line images are of high quality, oriented to the north-north-west. The area covered is very similar to that enclosed by the present civil parish boundary as shown on modern Ordnance Survey maps.

As noted above, no place names of houses appear on the map itself, but many property names are mentioned as 'Estate names' in the Apportionment, and they are as follows (spelling follows the transcription of the Apportionment record, for their exact location see the on-line record):

Aish Town, Aish Town Cottages, Aish Woods, Almshouse Cottage, Andrews Tenement, Badworthy, Bakers Tenement, Barley Coombe, Barrack Street, Between the Ways, Bidlakes Burland, Binnamore, Binnicknowle, Binnicknowle Cottages, Brent Mill, Brent Mill Cottages, Brent Mill Farm, Bulhornstone, Burges Tenement, Burland, Burlands, Butchers Lane, Charford, Church Street, Churchills, Clobhills, Clovers Aish, Corringdon, Court Gate, Cranches Tenement, Crooks Burland, Cuddleford, Didworthy, Dockhill, Dolbiers Brent Mill, Downstow, Dukes & Peeps Binnamore, East & West Moore, East Wonton, Elwell, Factory Tenement, Forder, Fore Street, Freeland & Mitchelwell, Gills Down, Gills Tenement, Gingaford, Ginkems House, Gispeadown, Glaze, Glebe, Great Aish, Great Bulhornstone, Great Lincombe, Great Palstone, Great Over Brent, Gribbles Down, Harburford Cottages, Harburford Mills, Harrell Water, Heathstow Tenement, Hennaberry, Higher Badworthy, Higher Beara, Higher Binnamore, Higher Lutton, Higher Pennaton, Higher Yelland, Higher Over Brent, Horsebrook, Horwells, Kerry Downs, Kerswill, Knights Tenement, Knowlings Tenement, Knowlings Thinnicombe, Late Bunkers Tenement, Late Langmead Tenement, Late Stidstones Tenement, Ley, Lisburne, Little Aish, Little Brent Mill, Little Bulhornstone, Little Palston, Lower Badworthy, Lower Beard, Lower Gingaford, Lower Lincombe, Lower Lutton, Lower Yelland, Luscombes Tenement, Lutton, Lydia Mills, Man Aish, Merrifield, Monks Aish, Nichols Tenement, Over Brent, Packhorse Field, Packhorse Tenement, Palstone Parks, Paper Mill, Rock Cottage, Shepherds Aish, Shipley, Shuts Lutton, Skeltons Tenement, Soper's Horsebrook, Splatton Cottages, Sprigs Moor, Staddons, Stewlake, Stidstone, Stippadon, Stockbridge Lane, Summers Wood, The Islands [*sic*], Thinnacoombe, Thinnacoombs, Thinnicombe, Thinnicombs, Town Tenement, Treeby's Aish, Tucking Mills, Underhill, View Cottage, Weare Down, Webb Land, Weeks Horsebrook, West Wonton, Westabrooks, Westabrooks Tenement, Western Over Brent, Windslades, Woodley's Didworthy, Wyatts Aish, Yellands Thinnicombe, Yeo Parks, Zeale.

⁴⁹ Search online for 'South Brent tithe map'.

In addition, some of the Plot names are of interest, but there are almost 1300 different entries, too many to list here.⁵⁰

Many of the personal names that feature in the Tithe Apportionments will be familiar to Brentonians today; a list is provided in Appendix 2.

⁵⁰ For full details of place names in Estate names and in Plot names, see the material on the website.

Chapter 8

Memorials and Inscriptions in St. Petroc's Church including the Windows, Wall tablets, and Floor Memorials

Listed in sequence for walking round the church in an anticlockwise direction from the Font.

Other floor memorials exist, but sadly are illegible or fragmentary or both. Several large stones have blank lower sections; probably they once stood as headstones in the churchyard, but were brought in during the 1870 restoration. Many stones in the churchyard have interesting links to names in the church ... but that is another story!

Date on Memorial (date = the earliest date shown*)	Entry no.	Name (or principal name) on Memorial. 'etc' indicates other names. (**)	LOCATION	FL=Floor. G=Glass window. WM=Wall Memorial. o=Other.
1604	1	? (oldest stone found in church)	FL	SW of Font
(? 1700s)	2	Lord of the Manor? Petre? (conjectural)	FL	Immediately W of old S door
1717	3	Prowse, Robert	WM	SW wall, top of Vestry steps
1806	4	Ford, John	FL	Between Font and S door
1743	5	Bickford, Frances	FL	SE of Font
1822	6	Furneaux, William (etc)	WM	S aisle, S wall, middle
1895	7	Lovell, Stanhope (etc)	WM	S aisle, S wall, near transept
1896	8	Hamlyn, Thomas (etc)	G	S transept window
1696	9	Prowse, John	FL	S transept, near window
1685	10	Prowse, Robert (etc)	FL	S transept, N of other stone
	10A	<i>War Memorials</i>		<i>S transept</i>
1672	11	Rev. Dr. J. Gandy/ Rev. Mr. J. Willcocks	FL	S chapel floor, W
1678	12	Widdow, Christian	FL	S chapel floor, centre
1684	13	Luscombe, Thomas	FL	S chapel floor, E
1764	14	Rev. Mr. Walter Taylor	FL	S chapel floor, NE
1930	15	Wood, Clive	o	S Choir Stalls
1829	16	Holberton, Ann (née Baker)	WM	Sanctuary, S wall
1845	17	Rev. Mr. George Baker	WM	Sanctuary, S wall
1874	18	Elliott, John (jnr), (Lord of the Manor)	G	Sanctuary, E window
1845	19	Rev. Mr. Nathaniel Cole	WM	Sanctuary, N wall
1802	20	Rev. Mr. John Amyatt	WM	Sanctuary, N wall
1924	21	(Sanctuary rail and gate)	WM	Sanctuary, N wall, above rail
<i>To follow</i>	22	<i>Name to follow ###</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>Chancel Candelabra</i>
1729	23	Rev. Mr. John Cory (**)	WM	N chapel, NE wall
1794	24	Trow, Richard	o	N chapel, NE corner, against wall
1869	25	Cranch, Andrew William (etc)	o	N transept, Organ seat screen
1926	26	Cholmondeley, George Vere Hugh	o	Clergy stalls in Chancel
1909	27	Perkins, Alan	o	Hymn board, chancel arch, S
1824	28	Cuming, William (etc)	WM	N aisle, N wall, W of organ
1799	29	Ford, Richard	FL	N aisle, just E of N door
1907	30	May, Blanche Elizabeth	G	N aisle, window above N door
1831	31	Lee, Ann (etc)	FL	N aisle, W of N door
1856	32	Elliott, John (snr), (Lord of the Manor)	G	N aisle, W window
1751	33	Rev. Mr. Thomas Acland	FL	SW of N door, E of pillar
1828	34	Joint, Agness	FL	Immediately N of Font
<i>Mid 1400s?</i>	35	The Effigy. + Sundry monuments	o	(Various)
* In the Notes below, after the earliest date on the memorial, any later/latest date is given [in brackets].				
** All those shown as 'Rev.' were sometime Vicars of this church, except the Rev. Mr. Cory.				
No West floor memorials are dated after 1831, so perhaps that floor was mostly re-laid in the 1870 works.				
The Effigy in the Bell-ringing room is noted at the end of this chapter.				

Notes on the Inscriptions

KEY: [...] = illegible text. [abc] = possible text. ? = doubtful. (=abc) = translation. / = new line.

St. Petroc's is not overfilled with monuments, for which we should probably be thankful, but those that are here have interesting stories to tell, whether they are in stone, in wood (in a few cases), or in the glass of the major coloured windows (the 'teaching windows') which celebrate Christ's Incarnation, Words, and Resurrection. They all give illumination, colour, and character to this ancient building, reminding us that a church is primarily people, not things, however interesting the things may be.

1) Monument SW of Font, huge letters on old stone (set in the floor) 1604

The earliest memorial stone so far located in the church. Although so early, it is in English not Latin. Like so many, it probably originally stood in the churchyard.

[...] **the wife** [...]/
 [...] **eres wh[o]**/

[die]**d the xvii (=17) day** /
 [...?]un ?[Juli] **1604**



The 4 of 1604 is at the broken right edge of the stone and is not complete, but no other numeral could start with such a pointed incision, amazingly very clear more than 400 years after it was cut. The stone records the death of an adult female resident of Brent who was clearly **born in the 1500's**.

Many floor stone fragments in this area are dated in the 1700s.

2) Immediately W of the old S door – PETRE? (*conjectural*) – (no date).

This is intriguing.

UNDER [HERE? ...] /
LIETH THE [...] /
OF THIS MANO[R ? ...] /
AND FAMILIE [...]



This partial stone seems intact at its top, bottom and left edges, but is badly damaged on the right edge. Probably it was a large landscape-oriented stone, perhaps part of a table-tomb, and inscribed with much more missing text than – sadly – we can now hope to recover.

If the word 'Manor' is right (which is admittedly open to doubt, but there are few alternatives in this context for a suitable word in a phrase running 'of this man...'), it is tempting to think that this was originally part of a large monument in the churchyard to the memory of the Lords of the Manor of South Brent. The inscription might have read 'Under Here now at peace / Lieth the body of NNN Lord / of this Manor ... / And Familie ...' or perhaps just 'Under here Lieth the Lord Of this Manor And Familie' or something similar.

Lords of the Manor in the 19th Century were the Elliott family, who held the dignity for 100 years after John Elliott the elder purchased it from Lord Petre in 1806; but the stone and lettering look too old (of the 18th century?) and too weather-beaten to be of the Elliotts' doing. In any case, the tomb of Mr. John Elliott and his family exists in the churchyard—it is a large stone 'table tomb' (square box-like structure) south of the main door and not far from the Church Room entrance. In 1856 and in 1874 (just before and just after the 1870 church 'restoration') the Elliott family put expensive coloured memorial windows into the church—first the 'Parables Window' (representing Jesus' parables of the Prodigal Son to the left and the Good Samaritan to the right) at the north west, and then the main east window which celebrates the Incarnation of the Son of God.

So we are led to conclude that perhaps this old fragment of a stone lying by the church door is a tantalising contact with **the Petre family**, who from 1539 on had so important a connection with South Brent. Sir William Petre was prominent as one of those involved in the Dissolution of the Monasteries; on 25 February 1539 he visited Buckfast in person and accepted the surrender of Buckfast Abbey to the King. Later he became Lord of the Manor of South Brent, and Patron of the Vicarage (i.e. the person to nominate a new Vicar to the Bishop when a vacancy occurred); these were responsibilities previously held by the Abbey. There is a persistent legend that Sir William Petre's son John Petre (1549-1613), who in 1603 was created the 1st Lord Petre of Writtle, had a special link with Brent. We know that through his Will many parishes including South Brent benefitted by the trust which was later known as 'Peter's Gift' or 'The John Petre Charity'.¹ Although he and most of his descendants the Lords Petre are actually buried at the family church at Ingatestone, Essex,² it is not impossible for some member(s) of the Petre family to have been buried—or at least commemorated—here in South Brent. John Petre's agent Roger Braunche, touring the West Country estates of his master, records his visit to Brent on 10 April 1577, in the time of Richard Fountayne, Vicar 1561-1600.³ Fountayne had been educated at Sir William's expense.⁴ The ancient effigy re-discovered in 1900 and now in the bell ringing room above the tower west window was once thought to be that of John, 1st Lord Petre; but it seems to represent a man with a tonsure haircut, and thus a clergyman. More likely therefore, as the *Western Morning News* reported in 1900, it represents the murdered Vicar **Master John Hay**, whose heinous death in 1436 would have brought celebrity status to Brent, rather as Thomas à Becket's murder in 1170 had so very famously done at Canterbury.⁵

There are no substantial links today between the Petre family and Brent; although the late Lady Petre, mother of the present Lord Petre (who is a prominent figure in Essex), lived at a well-known house just north of Buckfast Abbey in recent living memory and was a not-to-be-trifled-with presence in the Roman Catholic community. The Petre family is active and respected to this day in Essex, where the present Lord Petre, who long served as Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant for Essex, lives in Ingatestone Hall as did

¹ The parishes and annual amounts (to be paid out of Petre's greater tithes at Cornworthy) were: 'St. Mary Michael Exeter 20s., Cornworthy 40s., St. Thomas Devon [*i.e. Exeter*] 20s.; and Torbrian, Denbury, Broadhempston, Ipplepen, Kinkerswell, East Allington [*or Alvington*], Paignton, Brent, Newton Bushell, Churchstow, Dodbrooke, Buckfastleigh, Clifton Dartmouth, Kingsweare, Townstall and Brixham, severally, 20s a piece' ('Charities in the County of Devon', main list under Cornworthy, p. 10. Kinkerswell is almost certainly a misprint for Kingsbridge, see the text under Cornworthy on p. 11). 'Petre' and 'Peter' are equivalent. Petre died 20 Oct 1613, his Will was dated 4 Feb 1570. Also for Brent see *SWHT* reference 3250 A/Z/1.

² It is not known why the coat of arms of John Petre that hung in Dodbrooke church said he was buried in St Thomas Exeter ('Charities of Devon', p. 188). His biography says clearly "He was buried at Ingatestone on October 20th [1613]" in Essex (Edwards, *John Petre*, p. 101).

³ Edwards, *John Petre*, p. 106.

⁴ Emmison, *Tudor Secretary*, page 268.

⁵ *Western Morning News*, 22 June 1900, reproduced on p. 71. For a fuller discussion of the ancient effigy, see page 119.

many of his forebears. In a personal communication (November 2018), after I had informed him of this fragmentary stone, the present Lord Petre of Writtle told me he thought it was “fairly unlikely any of the family are buried there” [i.e. at South Brent], and he did not seem to know of any family monument ever having existed here. Nevertheless, South Brent was an important medieval parish, the Petre family were prominent local land-owners, and they were Patron of the living; so a memorial to them in the churchyard—even if not a gravestone as such—would not have been at all out of place. But regrettably, until better information emerges, the true identity of this stone and its intriguing inscription must remain subject to speculation and uncertainty.

3) Wooden Wall Monument, SW wall adjacent to Vestry – PROWSE – 1717

Square wooden wall memorial with Skull & Crossbones border and a coat of arms of three lions rampant

In Memoriam Roberti Prowse filii / Johannis Prowse de Moore qui vitae / humanae complevit cursum Decimo / nono Die septembris, et sepultura Patris / additur, Anno septuagesimo octavo / Ætatis suae, Annoque Domini 1717

In Memory of Robert Prowse son of John Prowse of Moore, who completed the course of (this) human life the Nineteenth Day of september, and was added to his father's tomb, in the seventy-eighth year of his Age (life), and in the Year of the Lord 1717



'Moore' is a farm about 1½ m from Brent on the road through Avonwick towards Totnes, and is mentioned again in the FORD memorial (below).

Clearly Robert Prowse was born c. 1639. He died the same year, 1717, as the celebrated Mr. Willcocks, who was Vicar here 1672-1715, see below.

See the two Prowse memorials set into the floor of the south transept.

The name Prowse is well known in **Ugborough**'s records, but no link has yet been established to this Robert and John Prowse. Another Robert Prowse, son of Barbara and Thomas Prowse (the son of Wilmus Prowse) was born May 02, 1657 in Ugborough, and died aged 62 in 1720. He had a child GRACE PROWSE, b. 1680.⁶

There was a WILMUS [= William?] PROWSE, who was born abt. 1610, and married CHRISTIANA WYNDEATT June 24, 1637 in Ugborough. If Wilmus had a brother John, the Robert of this Brent memorial would perhaps have been a nephew of Wilmus.⁷

⁶ For the Ugborough branch, see http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/valwilkins/prowse_genrep.htm

⁷ Wilmus might be the same person as the William Prowse buried in **Torbryan church**, if Christiana had died and he then married the Agnes commemorated in Torbryan. The impressive floor slab there memorialises (in English) **William PROWSE**, who is described as '**borne at Moore in South Brent**'. It mentions also Agnes Prowse his wife and Margaret Prowse their daughter. They died 1680, 1704, 1705 respectively. It is found just east of the medieval screen gates to the chancel in Torbryan church—a privileged location. East of that is the old stone altar slab now lying there in secondary use as a monument, inscribed in Latin to a previous Torbryan incumbent, and still clearly showing the traditional five incised crosses in memory of the wounds of our Saviour Christ.

4) Floor Monument, near S door, S of Font – FORD – 1806

This memorial reads:

**In memory of /
John Ford /
of Kerswell in /
this parish who died the /
7 day of Nov. 1806 aged 77 years /
also of Sarah his wife /
died December 22 1826 aged 84 years.**

John Ford is probably the same person that we meet as involved in the endowment of the Feoffees in the 1810 conveyance, see note on page 88. It is not known if this John Ford (born c. 1729) was related (as elder brother?) to Richard FORD (d. 1799 aged 63, so born c. 1736, see notes below) of Moore, whose stone is near the N door, but it does seem very likely, as Kerswell is a farm about only ¼ m S of Moore. On the name 'Moore', see on the Prowse memorials.

5) Floor Monument, just SE of Font – BICKFORD – 1743

This slightly reddish stone, of almost marbled appearance, reads:

**"Here lyeth the body of Frances the wife of Henry Bickford who departed this life the 2nd
(or 22nd?) day of May 1743 aged 61"**

6) Monument on S wall of S aisle – FURNEAUX – 1822 [1860]

**In memory of William Furneaux who died April 3rd 1860 aged 73 years
Also Celia his wife died September 17th 1835 aged 49 years
And Mary their daughter died January 2nd 1822 aged 5 years
Also Thomas their son died March 19th 1844 aged 18 years
Elizabeth their daughter died November 18th 1855 aged 30**

This memorial shows how common it was to die before age 50. The Furneaux family had been prominent benefactors in Buckfastleigh parish,⁸ and perhaps in South Brent also, since this monument to them is placed here without actually saying they were buried in this churchyard.

There were marriage links between the Furneaux, the Hamlyn, and the Nosworthy families, see below on the 'Resurrection' window in the south transept, in memory of Thomas Hamlyn.

⁸ See Helen Harris, 'The Church on the Hill' (1996).

7) E end of S aisle, junction with S transept – LOVELL – 1895 [1903]

Brass wall plaque with crest and motto:

Tempus omnia monstat

In loving memory of

Capt. Lovell Stanhope Richard Lovell, Late 13th light infantry

Only son of Vice Admiral W. Stanhope Lovell K.H.

Died Apr 29th 1903 aged 76

Also of Matilda Jane his wife died Nov 7th 1895

Also of Lieut. George Herbert Salathiel Lovell (Roberts Force)

Son of the above. Died at Wynberg S. Africa April 14th 1901

‘Tempus omnia monstat’ (= ‘Time shows all things’ or ‘Time clarifies everything’) is the Lovell family motto.⁹ It appears in ‘The Book of Mottos’ published 1841 as follows:

**Tempus omnia monstat. *Time shows all things.* Badcock, of
Bucks and Lincolnshire.**

It is given as belonging primarily to the Badcock family. Captain Lovell’s father William Stanhope Lovell was born Badcock and changed his surname (see below), but kept the motto!

It might appear strange that Captain Lovell was named ‘Lovell’ both in Christian name and surname, but he is featured with this full name in the National Archives. The reason lies in family history.

Back in the 17th century, **Sir Salathiel Lovell** (d.1713) had been an English judge, Recorder of London, and a Baron of the Exchequer. (‘Salathiel’ occurs in the Authorised Version of Matthew ch 1 and is the Greek form of the Hebrew Shealtiel which means ‘asked for from God’. His father was a clergyman who had been also parliamentarian in the English Civil War; and his brother was the naturalist Robert Lovell.)

Salathiel had two daughters, Penelope and Jane. Penelope Lovell married the Rev. Michael Stanhope, a canon of Windsor. Their fourth son was named **Lovell Stanhope** (1720–1783), who was also a lawyer, becoming a Member of Parliament in 1774, and a gentleman usher to the Queen in 1761. Our Captain Lovell appears to have got his first names from him. Jane Lovell married into the Badcock family, and **William Stanhope Lovell**, the Admiral, seems to have been a descendant of hers. He was born Badcock, but changed his surname back to his ancestral name of Lovell, of which they all seem to have been proud; he gave his son the names **Lovell Stanhope Richard**! As a Vice-Admiral, he had served under Nelson at the battle of Trafalgar in 1805. (So also did Admiral CUMING, see later entry; did they know each other? And did they know the naval family Brewer? See later note on the COLE memorial.¹⁰) He went on to serve with distinction in North America, and was present at the capture of Washington in 1814.

The decoration ‘**K.H.**’ awarded to William is unusual. It is an abbreviation of ‘Knight of Hanover’. The Royal Guelphic Order, also known as the Hanoverian Guelphic Order, was an honour founded by George, Prince Regent in the name of his father King George III in 1815; it was awarded by the Royal House of Hanover. (Guelph was a family name of the German Hanoverians). In the United Kingdom the award was used only briefly, and not after the death of William IV in 1837 which resulted in the ending of the personal union with the Kingdom of Hanover. It was regarded as a foreign decoration by the United Kingdom; so this decoration did not in itself entitle the holder to be styled as ‘Sir’ in the UK.¹¹

⁹ With the Latin word ‘monstat’ compare our word ‘demonstrates’.

¹⁰ For the COLE memorial see page 107.

¹¹ The decoration K.H. was also held by William Kuper D.D., K.H., father of naval officer (later Admiral) Sir Augustus Leopold Kuper whose home was The Rock, South Brent. In June 1837 Augustus married Emma Margaret, (d. 1877), eldest daughter of

"Roberts Force" is a reference to the troops led by Major General Sir Frederick Roberts VC at the Battle of Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1879.

In the 1910 Churchyard is buried Mary Winnie K. Stanhope Lovell who died in June 1930 aged 69. She may well have been a daughter of the Captain, and brother of Lieut. George.

8) S Transept, large 4 light window: 'Resurrection' – HAMLYN – 1896

Following the 1870 renovations, we observe many additions and improvements, and here is the largest and arguably most impressive window in St. Petroc's, though perhaps the least well-known, hiding away in the south transept but giving light and colour to all.

It depicts the Resurrection and Glory of Christ. We see, in a roundel at top centre a Crowned figure and the words:

Thou art the King of Glory O Christ (*words from the 'Te Deum'*)

I.H.S. (= *Iesus Hominum Salvator* = *Jesus Saviour of mankind*)

Angels making music represent the unceasing praise of heaven's almighty King.

Then, in 8 small panes in two rows L to R, i.e. E to W, these 7 words also from the 'Te Deum' (the lower east-most pane left blank):

Holy Holy Holy Lord God of Sabaoth

In 4 large panes, L to R, i.e. E to W, a visualisation of the Resurrection as recorded in St. Mark's gospel, and of its two chief preachers:

1st, **St. Peter**, with the keys (the Resurrection message?) to heaven's kingdom, see Matthew 16:19;

2nd, **an Angel at the Empty Tomb of Christ**, announcing the Resurrection to ...

3rd, **Three amazed Women**, one carrying spices, who came expecting to anoint the dead body of Jesus;

4th, **St. Paul**, inviting us to read a book (i.e. the New Testament letters he wrote).

In 4 smaller panes below, the first in Bishop's robes, the Patron saints of the United Kingdom:

St. Patrick

St. George

St. Andrew

St. David

Then across the entire width in two lines at the foot:



naval officer Sir Gordon Bremer (whose grand-daughter Emily Bremer Howard married the Rev. William Speare-Cole, Vicar). Augustus was made a CB in 1842, Rear Admiral in 1861, C-in-C in China in 1862, and KCB in 1864, returning to England in 1865. On 6 April 1866 he became a vice-admiral, and on 20 October 1872 admiral. He died at home at The Rock, South Brent, on 29 October 1885.

To the glory of God and in loving memory of her brother Thomas Hamlyn son of Thomas and Joanna Hamlyn of Leigh Grange this window is dedicated by Mary Nosworthy Hamlyn February MDCCCXCVI (=1896)

The window as a whole celebrates scenes from the discovery of the empty tomb of Jesus Christ and his Resurrection, as recorded by St. Mark, who names the three women who were the first witnesses of the Resurrection: "When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him." (Mark 16:1) What a surprise awaited them!

The Hamlyn family were prominent industrialists in Buckfastleigh, where for many years they ran the mills. They were well-established locally. In the floor immediately NW of the Font lies an 1806 stone, slightly truncated at LHS, which appears to read:

"In [Me]mory of John / Hamlyn /
[who] died Feb ye 2nd (or 22nd?) 1806 aged 68 years /.. /
(and, in a monumental mason's roundel:) **William Rowland (?) Ugborough"**

This John Hamlyn was therefore born c. 1742; perhaps he was the father of Thomas Hamlyn the elder (b. 1784, see below), and so Mary's grandfather.

The 1896 date is interesting. Mary Nosworthy HAMLYN died early in 1895 aged 64.¹² The window was obviously a sizable and very costly project requiring much advance planning, and 1896 had been set for its dedication. It was of course completed in accordance with her wishes, but she died before it could be dedicated ... if she had been unwell for some while, the work would no doubt have been accelerated, but it seems she never saw the window complete and in its place, as we do! Its Resurrection theme must have been so poignant in the minds of her mourners.

Mary is recorded in the 1861 census as 'Mary Norsworthy [*sic*] Hamlyn'—perhaps that spelling of her middle name hints how broadly the first 'o' in 'Nosworthy' was locally pronounced and heard by the census clerk. She was given as aged 30 (so born c. 1831), living with her parents at Stippadon (a farm a mile N of South Brent, not far from Leigh Grange), daughter of Thomas Hamlyn (farmer, aged 77; so born c. 1784) and Joanna (his wife, aged 63; so born c.1799). Also listed are Mary's brother Thomas the younger (of the window), born a year after her, and three servants. Both she and Thomas are recorded as born in South Brent. The 1851 census is similar. Thomas clearly died before her (it is he, not the parents, whom we should regard as living at Leigh Grange, which is a sizeable residence in its own grounds about ½ m NE of South Brent). Mary apparently did not marry.

Mary's mother **Joanna**, born Joanna NOSWORTHY, is listed in the 1861 Census as born in 1798 in 'Manniton' (presumably Manaton, near Lustleigh). She married Thomas HAMLYN on the 17 Jun 1829, apparently at Manaton. She died 1885 aged 87 (registered 1885 Q2 Totnes 5b 134).

A Maria Hamlyn of Buckfastleigh (b.1809)—no doubt a relative—married a John Furneaux (b. 1803) in 1832 at Buckfastleigh. On 'Furneaux' see the south aisle tablet noted above.

The Hamlyn name is still known around Buckfastleigh and Ashburton.

In 1765 the Rev. John **NOSWORTHY** had become Vicar here, when it seems he was aged 38.¹³ He would have been aged 71 in 1798 when Mary's mother Joanna was born, so Joanna was probably not his

¹² Her death was registered in Totnes: 1895 Q1 Totnes 5b 180.

¹³ He was admitted to Sidney Sussex College Cambridge aged 17 on Oct. 10, 1744, the son of James Nosworthy of Totnes.

daughter but his grand-daughter; if so, Mary (born 104 years after he was) would then be his great-grand-daughter.¹⁴

9) S transept floor, near the window – PROWSE 1696

A bordered marble slab set in the floor of the south transept, near the window. The foot of this stone is set to the south:

Here lieth the body of / John Prowse of Moor / gent buried the 14th day of / August anno domini 1696 / aetatis suae 59

Perhaps “Moor” here is the same property known later (and to this day) as Moore.

“aetatis suae” = of (in the year of) his age.

See also the comment on the wooden PROWSE memorial by the vestry stairs, and on the next stone.

10) S transept floor, north of the above stone – PROWSE 1685 (1715)

A fine bordered marble slab set at the centre of the S transept. This stone is laid with its foot to the north:

check spelling

Christiane ye wife of Robert / Prowse of north harburn / ford was here interred ye / 21st day of march in ye / yeare 1685 (?) also Richard prorowse / of stippadon thier [sic] / fourth son was here / buried ye first day of / June anno dom / 1715 aetatis suae 39

Both these Prowse stones have a incised simple border, so they were never intended to stand in the churchyard as headstones. Most likely they were originally intended as floor slabs covering the actual burials (as in the case of Vicar John Gandy, see below). Alternatively, it is possible they were originally the tops of tomb-style chest memorials standing in the churchyard (such chest tombs are sometimes described as false sarcophagi, since although they have the shape and size of a coffin, the body itself was always buried below ground level, the chest itself being empty). However, the inscriptions on these two Prowse stones do not appear to have been subjected to much weathering, so it is more likely they were always intended to be inside the church building. Probably then, the burials lie below these two stones.

See comments elsewhere on the Prowse family here and at Torbryan.

10A) The War Memorials in the South Transept.

The WWI memorial mounted on the east wall of the south transept originally stood across the church's north door, before that was opened in 1999 to give access to the Garderobe area.¹⁵

The WWII memorial now mounted on the west wall of the transept was originally mounted on the north wall of the north chancel chapel just west of the north window; the marks on the wall there can still be seen, and have exactly the same dimensions as the WWII memorial itself. It commemorates also the restoration of the north chapel with a suitable text – see the note on the north chapel on page 50.

¹⁴ A John Nosworthy was vicar of Townstal-with-St. Saviour's, Dartmouth, in the 1760s until 1779; this must be the same person, and by Dispensation of the Archbishop he held both posts 'in plurality'—that is, simultaneously. An Edward Nosworthy may have been Rector of Diptford in 1662. The surname appears again locally in the 1700's and 1800's.

¹⁵ On the WWI Memorial see the footnote on page 10.

In recent times it has been discovered that some further names ought to have been entered on the WWII memorial, and this has now been remedied; a modern memorial in bronze has also been added on the west wall.

11) S chapel floor, a large black stone – GANDY 1672 and WILLCOCKS 1717

This stone at the west end of the south chapel floor by the step, facing east, is currently covered by a carpet. It has a border cut all round so was never intended to stand as a headstone. It is severely eroded by more than 300 years of footfall.

It is a VERY INTERESTING old combined memorial to **two vicars on a single stone**.

a) Gandy.

This impressive stone, lying head to the west, is badly eroded, but I made out at least this:

H S E

Johannes Gandy

... rgi ... rebend ..

[..] ... 1672 ...

The Latin abbreviation H S E = *hic sepultus est* can mean 'Here is buried ...' OR 'This is the grave of ...'. The stone continues with the nominative Johannes, so we are to read 'Here is buried'.

(For the Willcocks text which follows the Gandy memorial, and further notes on both men, see below.)

At the time I found this very unclear stone (2/9/2017), I wrote in surprise and delight:

Johannes [*G or C*] andy ... If the date 1672 is correct, then this monument must memorialise John Gandy!

Then I discovered that the full text of **the Gandy memorial** is provided as follows by Prince.¹⁶ Although not without error: the actual inscription on the stone definitely begins H.S.E. ('here is buried'), not M.S. ('in sacred memory of'), it has Johannes not Johannis, and it reads '..rebend..' not '..raebend..'.

It is unclear how it all fitted on the stone we can see, unless abbreviated – see comments below. Prince gives:

M.S. [*actually: H.S.E.*] Venerabilis viri Johannis [*actually: Johannes*] Gandy, Sacrae Theologiae Professoris Virginis [*see note*] apud Sarum Praebendarii [*actually: ..rebend..*] et hujus Ecclesiae Rectoris.

Cujus pietatem eminentiorem, ac singularem morum integritatem, inter homines, immitare [*read: immutare ?*] viator, et eosdem, quos ille caelos, cum eo expecta.

Obiit die mensis Julii 19 An. Aerae Christianae 1672.

For MS read **HSE**. For Johannis (genitive) the stone actually reads **Johannes** (nominative).

The reading 'virginis' (Latin 'virgo', a virgin) is hard to understand here in its usual meaning; but we are to take it to mean 'a pure man', which by all the evidence he certainly was, and the use of the word in this adjectival sense is mentioned in the dictionaries.¹⁷ If it were not for the clarity of the existing letters 'rgi' on the stone it would be tempting to say this was another dictation or transcription error by Prince for the two words '**Vir Genius**' (or similar), which would translate as 'a man of talent', also making very good sense.

¹⁶ Prince, 'The Worthies of Devon', 1810, p. 399, (reproduced here on p.108).

¹⁷ e.g. Lewis and Short, art. 'virgo'.

The three established reading errors by Prince embolden us to further suggest a fourth: that for ‘immitare’ (which is extremely difficult) we should read **‘immutare’**, with the sense ‘unchangeable’.

Accepting all these we have as a rough modern translation:

***Here is buried the much-revered man John Gandy, D.D.*,
a pure man, a Prebendary of Salisbury cathedral
and Rector [sic] of this Church.
Of most** eminent piety, and singular integrity of character,
among men an unchangeable messenger,
the same (men) who with him await heaven.
He died the 19 day of the month of July in the year of the Christian Era 1672.***

* literally, professor of sacred theology, but see below.

** literally, more

Prince tells us that the stone was provided by his widow. She was the daughter of Mr. John Ackland of Exeter. The Gandy family also was prominent in Exeter (e.g. Gandy Street), and later also in Plymouth, where a Rev. John Gandy was Vicar of St. Andrew’s 1769-1824 and was made an honorary Prebendary of Exeter cathedral in 1777.

‘Sacrae Theologiae Professoris’ or S.T.P. is the older Latin name for the degree of D.D., and refers to John Gandy having been awarded D.D. by Oxford University in 1661 “for his great learning, loyalty and sufferings”,¹⁸ not to his ever having occupied a university Chair of Theology. He had been made a non-residentiary prebendary (or canon; an award of distinction for a clergyman) of Salisbury Cathedral the same year he was appointed to South Brent. In all, Dr. Gandy is therefore perhaps the most distinguished person ever to have held the post of Vicar of South Brent (although the most famous may well have been his much earlier predecessor, the murdered Master John Hay). Gandy’s son was the non-juring Bishop Henry GANDY 1649-1734 (who consecrated Ralph TAYLOR on his return to the national church; that same surname belongs to two later Vicars of Brent). Other members of the Gandy family played notable parts in the history of Exeter, where his brother was three times Mayor; the Gandy name is remembered to this day in Gandy Street, where at no. 23 (perhaps the site of the Gandy household) is found *John Gandy’s*, now a music and wine bar.

On the use of ‘rector’ see after the note on Willcocks.

b) Willcocks

Willcocks is definitely spelt with 2 L’s on the stone, so we would expect that to be the correct spelling as at 1717.¹⁹

**H S E
Johannes Willcocks .. Artium
Magister .. sc .. Exonii c.
[pre]bendarius et hujus ecclesiae par
Quadragenta et tres annos Rector [sic]
Obiit Vicesimo sexto December
anno Domini 1717 aet 73**

The text translates:

¹⁸ See illustration on p.105.

¹⁹ But the church’s old silver Flagon has ‘Wilcocks’, see below, so it seems either spelling was accepted at the time.

Here is buried John Willcocks ... Master of Arts ... Prebendary of Exeter Cathedral and of this parish church forty-three years Rector [sic]. He died the 26th day of December 1717 aged 73.

If Willcocks who was instituted on 4 November 1672 served 43 years we reach November 1715, and we know that Thomas Acland was instituted on 8 May 1716. Evidently John Willcocks resigned the living, maybe through illness, since his stone tells us that he died aged 73 on 26 December 1717. (It was good to be thinking of him on Boxing Day 2017, exactly 300 years later; I was the same age.)

In his Will, Vicar Willcocks gave a field at Aish for the charitable purpose of ‘teaching poor children of Brent’; this became known as ‘Willcocks’ Gift’ or ‘The John Willcocks Charity’.²⁰

See the floor memorial of Acland, near the N door, mentioning Catherine Acland (née Willcocks).

c) Further notes on Gandy and Willcocks:

‘Rector’ for both men seems initially hard to explain. But Sir William Petre and the Dean and Chapter of Oxford Cathedral as lay-rector (Petre having earlier given them the income of the rectory) had in 1559 granted to the Vicars of Brent in perpetuity the full proceeds of the great tithes. This was the consequence of the ‘Composition’ sealed by the Bishop of Exeter that year, by which the previously very poor vicarage of South Brent received permanent Augmentation from the proceeds of the tithes of the rectory of Brent. (See Appendix 1). This made South Brent among the richest livings in Devon! The Vicar would then have had to gather the tithes etc. in, and therefore became known locally as Rector, since gathering in the tithes is what rectors did. (Note that Thomas Acland, who succeeded them, though son of a knight, is just ‘Vicar’ on his stone, as is strictly accurate, although apparently he was presented (strictly, inaccurately) to be instituted as Rector. Quite possibly he had family money and did not need to depend on receiving the tithes.) See also the note below on the George Baker 1810-1845 stone.

Why are both inscriptions on a single stone? It is unusual for two successive incumbents to be memorialised on the same stone. And it is not obvious that there is enough space on the stone above the Willcocks inscription for the whole Gandy inscription as given by Prince (unless it was heavily abbreviated, as was often done). There is still empty space below the Willcocks inscription, but this stone never stood in the churchyard; it was always intended to lie in church as a floor slab.

The explanation probably lies in the close family links with the Aclands. John Gandy had married an Acland/Ackland, and John Willcocks’ daughter Catherine also married an Acland, Thomas, who followed Mr. Willcocks as the next vicar. No doubt they arranged for the large black marble stone to John Gandy laid by his widow to have an additional inscription memorialising Mr. Willcocks’s long ministry in Brent—this may even have been intended by Mrs. Gandy. And we should not be concerned by minor variations of spelling of names in an age where literacy was less prevalent and the sound of a name was more significant; spelling was much more fluid in those days.²¹

²⁰ See p. 122.

²¹ John Gandy’s Will includes the spelling ‘Ackland’.

Among the church's old silver is a Flagon with the following inscription:

Given by Mrs Eliz: Lee Daughter
of y^e Revnd. Mr. John Wilcocks
Late Vicar of this Church 1717

1717 was the year when, on December 26th, the Revd. Mr. Wilcocks died; so it seems possible the reference is intended to be to his death, rather than to the date of the gift. The silver hallmarks indicate a maker's date of ###. There are also, as shown, a fine chalice (communion cup) and a paten (i.e. shallow plate, Latin *patina*). These items of 'church plate' (a collective term for church objects made of precious metals) are kept in remote safe custody, not in the parish, and are brought out to be displayed on special occasions, as they were when this photograph was taken in June 2019.



ST. PETROC'S SILVER
CHALICE, FLAGON, AND PATEN

In his 1810 book *'The Worthies of Devon'*, John Prince writes that Dr. Gandy the Vicar of Brent was interred "in the chancel of his church there, very near the communion table". It seems hard to us today to see how the memorial, just east of the chancel step in the south chapel, could be described as 'very near the communion table'. Almost certainly this stone originally lay within or just outside the present sanctuary and was one of those moved in the 1870 Restorations, when the church floor was improved.²²

This may be an appropriate place to point out the instruction of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*, which ordered that "The Table at the Communion time having a fair white linen cloth upon it, shall

stand in the body of the Church, or in the Chancel, where Morning and Evening Prayer are appointed to be said". The words are deliberate: it was expected that the Table would not always stand 'in the body of the Church, or in the Chancel', only 'at the Communion time.' It would have been moved to and fro its normal position near the east wall. We have to bear in mind that in earlier days Holy Communion was received by the congregation at large only a few times each year—not at all frequently, let alone weekly—even if the clergy did celebrate the service each Sunday.²³ Moorman has an enlightening

K. Char. 2d, when he was restored to his former preferments, which he thence enjoyed until the time of his death.
Soon after the King's return, going to Oxford, anno 1661, Mr. Gandy, for his great learning, loyalty, and sufferings, was honored by that university with the degree of doctor of divinity. But returning into the country, he retired to his charge at South-Brent, aforesaid; where he continued in the painful faithful discharge of his ministerial function; and in the works of charity and hospitality all the residue of his days.
He was a good divine, and an excellent christian; being eminent for many graces and virtues, which recommend him as a fit example to posterity; especially his integrity and honesty; his candor and humility; his love and charity. Though with St. Paul, 'he had whereof to glory,' upon that account; yet he never boasted of his sufferings; nor maliciously prosecuted his persecutors; but praying for them, left them 'to that God who judgeth righteously.'
Having now lived to a good old age, near seventy years, Dr. Gandy died at his house at Brent, July the 19th 1672; and was soon after interred in the chancel of his church there, very near the communion table. On whom his disconsolate widow laid a large black marble-stone, with this inscription:
M. S.
Venerabilis viri Johannis Gandy, Sacrae Theologiae Professoris Virginis apud Sarum Praebendarii et hujus Ecclesiae Rectoris.
Cujus pietatem eminentiorem, ac singularem morum integritatem, inter homines, immitare viator, et eosdem, quos ille caelos, cum eo expecta.
Obiit die mensis Julii 19. An. Ærae Christianae 1672. (Note.)

DR. JOHN GANDY, IN JOHN PRINCE, *'THE WORTHIES OF DEVON'* (1810), p.399

²² It was natural at the time of Prince to regard the sanctuary as being part of the chancel.

²³ On the frequency of general distribution of Holy Communion, see page 66.

contemporary account from 1565 of the various placements of the Communion Table, too long to insert here; see Appendix 3.

12) S chapel floor under carpet, E – WIDDOW – 1678

A carpet is currently lying over this stone. It reads:

**Here was interred Christian Ford Widdow
of North Harburnford
the first day of January 1678
Grave my bones the Lord my soul doth keep
This with him lives whiles [...] in him sleep
Expecting life again which he shall give
[...] ? ever for word which makes to (or the?) bones join (or ?? live?)**

Considering his middle name, it is quite possible he was related to the Fords who have other memorials in the church. Or should we regard this as the grave of a woman, Christian FORD, a widow? Christian was a common Christian name for a woman—see for example one of the Prowse graves in the south transept, which also mention North Harburnford.

About 30 years after this burial, Joseph Addison wrote a verse in an essay appearing in *The Spectator* on March 8 1711, which quickly became well known:

When I lay me down to Sleep,
I recommend my self to His care;
when I awake,
I give my self up to His Direction, Amen.

Perhaps Addison was drawing on material known in Widdow's time. A later variation was printed in *The New England Primer* of 1750. It was a popular verse and many variations are known.

13) S chapel floor, to the E – LUSCOMBE – 1684

Stone faces east, near the communion table; normally this orientation was reserved for clergymen. The Luscombe and Widdow slabs appear to be the only floor slabs E of the chancel arch not related to a clergy family.

**Here lieth the body of / Thomas Luscombe / of Ley who was buried ye / second day of
December / An Dom (?) 1684 ... (### move H Table to read the rest)**

This "Ley" could well be the property later referred to as Leigh or Leigh Grange.

14) S chapel floor, to the NE - TAYLOR – 1764

This stone faces south! It has perhaps been relocated since it was first laid. (A clergyman's stone would normally have been laid facing east, as the Gandy/ Willcocks stone is, see above). Was it relocated because of the installing of the choir seats? Or did Mr. Taylor's stone have to be moved when the re-ordering of the chancel took place in 1870-71? We may never know.

**In memory of Walter Taylor BA
Vicar of this parish
who died Decr XIX [=19th] MDCCLXIV [=1764]
aged XLII years [=42]**



Walter Taylor was born in 1722/3 and so was just 25 years old when he became Vicar here in 1747. To have gained so prestigious an appointment as Vicar of South Brent at that time and when he was so young means he must have been well connected! Perhaps he was a relative of Bishop Ralph Taylor (1647-1722, see notes on John Gandy, above), and/or the Rev. Charles Taylor (Vicar three before him, from 1737-1739), and/or of Mr. John Taylor, the Patron active in the mid 1700s? Such things did happen ...

Also during Walter Taylor's incumbency, the six Bells in St. Petroc's Tower were installed. They were cast in 1759, the fourth bearing his name and those of the then Churchwardens: Hannaford (a name well known locally) and Veale (whose family were house builders in Brent in the 1890s).²⁴

15) Inscription on back of South Choir Stalls – WOOD –1930

Inscription carved in wood and attached to the south face of the seat back of the south choir stalls:

**Clive Wood / who loved and served /
this village and church / 1930 - 2006**



This photograph was taken in the morning of 25 October 2019, the day of the funeral of his widow, Nano Wood, also a well-known and well-loved member of the congregation.

The sense of light here in the south chapel has been greatly increased since the Cedar of Lebanon tree standing in the east section of the churchyard sadly fell unexpectedly early on Wednesday 16 October 2019.

²⁴ For details of the Bells, see page 52.

16) Sanctuary S wall, W memorial – HOLBERTON (née Baker) – 1829

**Near this spot are deposited the mortal remains of
Anne Holberton**

**Wife of the Rev Robert Holberton
and second daughter of the Revd George Baker
Rector [sic] of this parish**

**She died at the parsonage April 14 A.D. 1829
having just completed the 26th year of her age.**

**“All flesh is grass and all the goodliness thereof is as
the flower of the field**

**The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word
of our God shall stand for ever” Isaiah XL (=40)**

**“Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep
it” Luke 11.28**



This stone was presumably put up by her distraught father, the Rev. George Baker, who was Vicar from 1810-1845. On ‘rector’, see the note to his own memorial.

It may be significant that the place of her death is described as ‘the parsonage’, rather than ‘the vicarage’. Mr. Baker was instituted as Vicar not Rector of the church (although he was also in fact the collector of the tithes by virtue of the 1559 Composition, see Appendix 1, so might have been colloquially referred to as ‘rector’). Although Mr. Baker clearly liked to be known as Rector, he was in fact so far as his ministerial duties were concerned legally the Vicar, and the parsonage house therefore would correctly be called the vicarage, not the rectory. By using the word parsonage in this permanent monument to his daughter, he conveniently avoids using either ‘rectory’ (which he might have preferred, but was inaccurate), or ‘vicarage’ (which was accurate, but he might have disliked).

17) Sanctuary S wall, higher, to the east – BAKER – 1845

This stone stands above the west end of the three Sedilia.

**To the memory of
the Revd George Baker MA
Vicar [sic] of this parish 35 years
He died at Torcross on the 1st September 1845
aged 69
“Looking unto Jesus”**



Here, the Rev. George Baker is correctly described as ‘Vicar of this parish’, which he had been for 35 years, from 1810-1845. He is described as Vicar in Cox’s Clergy List 1841. It was in about 1805 that the Rev. George Baker bought the advowson, “the perpetuity of the rectory”.²⁵ Sales like this were not unusual. As we see in the chapter about the endowment of the Vicarage, the income of the Vicar had been augmented since 1559 by the revenues previously belonging to the rector, including the tithes; but

²⁵ As is said in the 1810 Appendix to Risdon’s Survey of Devon; see page 131 below.

the sale of the perpetuity of the rectory meant that whoever bought it became the patron of the parish who had the right to nominate a new vicar at the next vacancy.²⁶

18) Sanctuary, E window: ‘Incarnation’ – Mr. John ELLIOTT (jnr) – 1874

The first coloured window to be put in after the 1870 renovations in St. Petroc’s, this window immediately illuminates us as we come into the church; it celebrates the Incarnation—the becoming-human—of Jesus the Son of God.

In a roundel top centre is an angel carrying the banner

Glory to God in the Highest

Then four panes with figures of the evangelists and their names (L to R, = N to S):

St. Matthew – St. Mark – St. Luke – St. John

The main scene is of the Nativity.

At the foot across the entire window is:

To the Glory of God and in honour of His House this window is dedicated by Emily Bradley Elliott widow

To the memory of her husband John Elliott Lord of this Manor who died 24 Sept. 1874 at the early age of 24.

This John Elliott, Lord of the Manor, was the son of the John Elliott, previous Lord of the Manor, whose memorial is in the 1856 window at the W end of the N aisle.



19) Sanctuary N wall, to the east – COLE – 1845 [1920]

Sacred to the memory of

Rev. Nathaniel Cole M.A. Exeter Coll. Oxford

Vicar of this parish 1845 – 1866

Rev. William Speare-Cole B.A. Ex. Coll. Oxford

Vicar of this parish 1866 – 1905

during whose incumbency both church and vicarage were restored.

Emily Bremer Speare-Cole his wife

grand-daughter of Adm^l Sir Gordon Bremer G.C.B. R.N.

Rev. Henry Gordon Speare-Cole B.A. his son.

Emily Elizabeth Mima Southey his daughter.

Rev. Howard Speare-Cole Vicar 1905 – 1920



Much work was done to Vicarage and Church during the incumbency of the Reverend William Speare-Cole, particularly the church “restoration” in 1870-71. For further notes on the Cole family see the discussion on page 141 and following.

Sir Gordon Bremer is one of three Admirals to feature in South Brent’s memorials – see the mention of Vice Admiral LOVELL (above), and the memorial to Admiral CUMING (below).

²⁶ For further notes on the implications of ‘the rectory’, see the chapter on ‘How did the Parish System develop?’.

20) Sanctuary N wall, to the West – AMYATT – 1802 [1845]

The Amyatt family was well-known in the area, including one serving as doctor and then one as Vicar.

Sacred to the memories of

the Revd John Amyatt late Vicar of this parish obt. 9 January 1810 aet. 51

and Margaret his wife obt. 23 May 1803 aet. 50

also John Amyatt Esq MD obt. 24 June 1810 aet. 76

and of Margaret his wife obt. 31 March 1803 aet. 66

likewise John James Amyatt eldest son of the above Revd J Amyatt obt. 25 March 1802 aet. 16

also Caroline Amyatt obt. Oct 3rd 1817 aet. 20

**the wife of Augustus Amyatt Esq the only surviving son of the above Revd J Amyatt
and by whom this tablet is erected 1845**

A family story full of sadness; deaths in 1802, 1803, 1803 again, 1810, 1810 again, and 1817.²⁷

In 1802-03, within the space of 14 months, the Vicar suffered the loss of his young son, then of his mother, and then his wife, Margaret (née Wise). He died, no doubt 'full of sorrows', in early 1810.

Five months later came the death of his father the doctor, who must have been heartbroken



to have seen the deaths of his grandson, then of his wife (Margaret née Taylor—is there a connection to the previous Vicars of this name?), then his son's wife, and then his own son the Vicar; and to be unable to cure them. Then Caroline née Anketell, the wife of Vicar Amyatt's only surviving son Augustus, died aged 20 in 1817. The 'only' is so very telling. But Augustus who died in 1857 had two older sisters, Margaretta Taylor Amyatt (who married Maj-Gen. Peter Brown, and died 1867), and Susanna Amyatt. It is interesting to note that it was not until 1845, the year that John Amyatt's successor as Vicar, George Baker, died, that Augustus Woodville Amyatt finally got this tablet erected to his father John Amyatt. An earlier Rev. John Amyatt had been Rector of Aveton Gifford 1678–1690, see the CORY memorial below.

21) The Communion Rail (not a personal monument) – 1870 [1924]

Brass plaque, on the N engaged column of the end of the sanctuary north wall

**These altar rails together with the War Memorial shelf and the beam
in the tower arch were from the remains of the ancient screen
taken from the church at its restoration in 1870
and now replaced. Easter 1924.**

It is rewarding to look closely at the communion rail and see how it has been constructed from fragments of the old screen. Medieval red and green coloured elements are still clearly visible today. 1924 was the year that fragments of the Old Screen were re-discovered, see the report in the *Western Morning News*

²⁷ The Latin abbreviations are *obt.* for *obiit* (died) and *aet.* for *aetatis* (aged).

for 31 March 1924 quoted above.²⁸ We should be very glad these old pieces had been retained, and were so imaginatively re-used.²⁹ ‘War Memorial’ here of course refers to World War I.³⁰

22) Candelabra in the Chancel – NAME ### - DATE

Text to follow

23) N chapel, N wall, near Holy Table – CORY – 1729 ### insert photo

Text of the memorial:

**In memoriam Reverendii Johannes Cory
LLB**

**Quondam de Avetongifford Rectoris
qui obiit Lisburn in hac parochia
24mo Julii 1729**

This translates as:

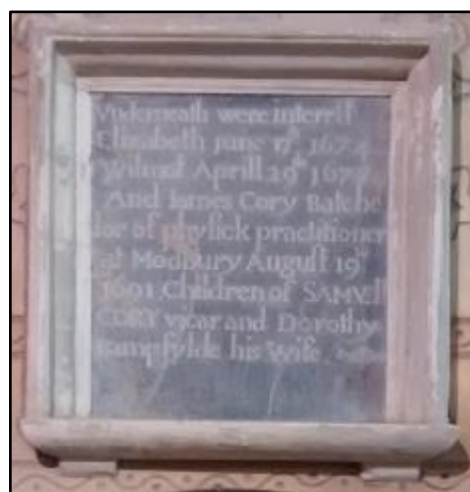
***In memory of the Reverend John Cory
LLB,***

***sometime Rector of Aveton Gifford,
who died at Lisburn in this parish
24th July 1729***

The Rev. John CORY was Rector of Aveton Gifford from 1690 to 1698. It was not at all unusual in those days for a cleric to have studied for a degree in law. (His predecessor at Aveton Gifford was a Rev. John Amyatt, Rector there from 1678 until he died in 1690. No doubt it was one of his descendants, another Rev. John Amyatt, who was Vicar at South Brent in the late 1700’s – see the Amyatt entry listed above.) Records show that in 1698 John Cory “resigned” the living at Aveton Gifford. Perhaps he then had another appointment before moving to Lisburn, since he did not die until 1729, although efforts to locate such an appointment have so far failed. Perhaps rather he moved in 1698 to live at Lisburn, a farmhouse just SE of Marley Head between South Brent and Rattery, in order to be near **the Rev. Samuel CORY**, probably his father, who was Vicar of Rattery for an amazing 48 years, from 1663 until he died in 1711. Perhaps John became his father’s assistant curate at Rattery—or was just a helpful local presence in the area. This seems likely; in 1728 we read the South Brent Feoffees transferred land to ‘John Cory, clerk’ and others on their taking over as new Feoffees, see page 88f.

The Rev. Samuel CORY is remembered in St. Mary’s Church Rattery, in a memorial on the north wall in the sanctuary there: *Underneath were interr’d / Elizabeth June 17th 1674 / Wilmot Aprill 29th 1678 / And James Cory Batche / lor of physick practitioner / at Modbury August 19th / 1691. Children of SAMUELL / CORY Vicar and Dorothy Bampfylde his wife.*

Samuell’s wife Dorothy Bampfylde may well have been the daughter of the Rev. James Bampfylde, who became perpetual Vicar of Rattery in 1634.³¹ It is therefore quite understandable that John Cory might have moved to be near his father in his later years—he had had such sad losses to bear and was perhaps by 1698 a widower. Two-centuries-



CORY MEMORIAL, 1691,
IN SANCTUARY OF ST MARY’S RATTERY

²⁸ See p.71.

²⁹ As noted in the *South Brent Visitation Book* for 27 Feb 1924 (p.63).

³⁰ On the War Memorials, see the footnote on page 10.

³¹ The CCED record for Rattery.

plus later, in 1923, a **Rev. James Cory** is recorded living at Greenbank, South Brent³² – perhaps he was curate to Vicar Clarence Elwell, instituted that year, or to Clarence's father W.R. Dunlop Elwell, the previous Vicar? (The house named 'Elwell', coincidentally just south of Lisburn, on the lane from Avonwick towards Harberton seems independent of the Elwell family; it is mentioned in the 1842 Tithe Apportionments, and as 'Elwill' in the 1810 Conveyance to the Feoffees, see page 88f.).

Recently, almost a further century on, a **multi-great** grandson of the Rev. John Cory visited St. Petroc's to view the memorial to his ancestor; he recorded his pilgrimage in the church visitors' book.

24) N chapel, NE corner, against E wall – TROW 1794

In the NE corner of the chapel, by the Communion table, this stone—finely engraved, though now somewhat eroded—rests loosely against the E wall:

**Here lieth ye body / of Richard Trow of ye / parish of
Stowgorse in ye / County of Somerset^{sh}. / who dyed
April ye 5th day / [i]n ye 79th year of his age in ye /
[ye]ar of our Lord 1724 [?]**

'Stowgorse' (nowadays known as Stogursey) is a small village about 8 miles west of Bridgwater. The connection of Richard Trow with South Brent has not yet been found.

24A) NOTE – for the north chapel:

The World War II memorial at one time hung on the wall of the north chapel, just to the west of the north window: the fixing marks can still be seen on the wall. The Memorial refers to the restoring of this north chapel following the Second World War, and is now mounted in the south transept, opposite the WWI memorial. See page 50.



MEMORIAL TO RICHARD TROW

25) North Transept, Organ seat Screen – CRANCH – 1869 [2003]

Three inscriptions, L to R i.e. W to E:

To the Glory of God and in memory of Andrew William Cranch 1869–1938 and his wife Marian Elizabeth Cranch 1873–1961.

To the Glory of God and in thankfulness for the life of Mary Naomi Cranch 1905–2003. A life dedicated to others. Brown Owl for 50 years.

In thanksgiving for the life of Andrew William Cranch 1902–1988. Churchwarden 1935–1977.

Miss Cranch who died in 2003 is commemorated also through "Miss Cranch's Garden" which is at the corner of Vicarage Road just outside the west end of the Village Hall (known as the 'Coronation Church Hall' from 1912 to the 1960s, it was then bought from the church by the village³³).

The 42 years' service as churchwarden of Mr. Bill Cranch (1902–1988), from 1935–1977, is perhaps reminiscent of an earlier and more stable era than ours. At the time of writing, his widow Mrs. Renée

³² Kelly's Directory 1923.

³³ Wall (2008), p 153.

Cranch (née Piper) is a well-known and well-respected senior member of the village and church. Her husband's family name still stands over the shop in the village that they ran for many years. The Cranch name is also well known in Totnes, Kingsbridge and Salcombe.

While you are here, walk into the chancel and see ...

26) The Clergy and Choir stalls in the Chancel – CHOLMONDELEY – 1926

North side: ('Cantoris')



South (Vicar's) side ('Decani'):



[The terms Decani (literally: of the Dean) and Cantoris (of the Cantor) usually refer to the south and north sides of the chancel respectively, reflecting on which sides of the choir the Dean and the Cantor of a cathedral would each sit, although there are some English churches where by local custom they denote the opposite sides.]

On the N Clergy stall, facing S:

To the glory of God and in beloved memory of George Vere Hugh Cholmondeley of Glazebrook in this parish these stalls are placed here by his wife, Easter 1926.

And on the S Clergy stall (the Vicar's stall):

R.I.P.

"I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "Love never faileth."

The fine carving and natural representations in this woodwork are reputed to have echoed the workmanship of the old Rood Screen, which was dismantled in 1870. Since the present Communion Rail was constructed from parts of the Screen in 1924 (see above), examples of the old workmanship were to hand and we can see how that style was copied. Harry Hems (1842-1916) had a famous workshop in Exeter and was responsible for the Choir Stalls, and for much fine woodwork and stone-carving in the County and in the South Hams district. His work is celebrated today with many fine examples in the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter.

George Vere Hugh Cholmondeley was born on 13 September 1871, the son of Lord Henry Vere Cholmondeley, second son of William Henry Hugh Cholmondeley, 3rd Marquess of Cholmondeley and hereditary grand chamberlain of England. His mother, Fanny Isabella Catherine, was from the Spencer family. He served as a J.P. for Devon. The clergy stalls were given in his memory by his wife, Ida Sophia Cholmondeley (née Gilliat). He died aged 53 on 31 March 1925 and was originally interred at St. Mary's Plympton, but a faculty enabled his remains to be exhumed and re-interred here in a grave-space that had just been reserved for him and his wife in Brent.³⁴ She died aged 67 on 5 August 1938; they are buried in the 1910 Churchyard, as are three children: their (only?) son, Hugh Henry Vere (died aged 14y,

³⁴ Two Faculties dated 1925 held in the Devon Record Office reserved the gravespace and authorized the exhumation.

31 July 1914); Irene Marcia (died aged 62y, 2 April 1965); and the ashes of their sister, Mrs. Joan Cecily Marshall (née Cholmondeley) (died aged 60y, 5 November 1966).

For an earlier mention of Glazebrook House, in 1831, see the entry for LEE below.

27) Hymn Board above S clergy stall – PERKINS – 1909

On a small brass plate are the words:

“In loving memory of Alan Perkins 1909-1983 R.I.P.”

Was he a choir member perhaps?

28) North Aisle, N wall, W of N transept – CUMING – 1824 [1828]

This stone is now missing its low rounded headpiece, which has left its markings on the wall. The complete monument is just discernible in the c.1909 photograph of the church given in Stabb.³⁵

In a typical ‘mourning memorial’ we read:

Thy Will be done

Sacred to the memory of Admiral William Cuming

Who departed this life Jun 20 MDCCCXXIV (=1824) aged LXIV (=64)

And of Catherine Grace his wife who died 30 March MDCCCXXVIII (=1828) aged LXXI (=71)



Admiral William Cuming was one of Admiral Lord Nelson's commanders. Very likely he knew Vice Admiral William Stanhope LOVELL, who also served under Nelson (see the LOVELL entry, above). And did he know Admiral Sir Gordon BREMER (see the COLE memorial, above)? There are several gravestones of members of the Cuming family in the NE section of the churchyard. A Rev. John Cuming, son of Mr. Samuel Cuming of Totnes, was Vicar of Totnes 1781-1783.³⁶

It is interesting that about 1½ m SE of Lower Dean is found Cuming Farm.

³⁵ The c.1909 photograph from Stabb, *Some Old Devon Churches*, is reproduced on p.68.

³⁶ Transactions of the Devonshire Association, 1900, Vol. XXXII, p.458.

29) N aisle, a few feet SE of N door, floor slab – FORD – 1799

(Not shown in this image is the lower part of the stone, completely blank and so presumably the underground part of what was formerly a standing headstone, as no doubt were many of the similar stones now laid flat in church).

The dedication is clear enough, but the lower part of the stone is badly eroded, and the verses are certainly hard to read. However, once a few words become clear, it is possible to look for possible matches with the aid of the internet, and then the rest can be recognised and confidently deciphered in full.



**Underneath / lies the Body of / RICHARD FORD /
of Moore in the Parish of/
Harberton who dep. this Life/³⁷
the 22nd of October 1799 Aged / 63 years.**

**To God I cry'd who to my help /
Did graciously repair /
In Trouble's dismal Day I sought /
My God with humble Pray'r /**

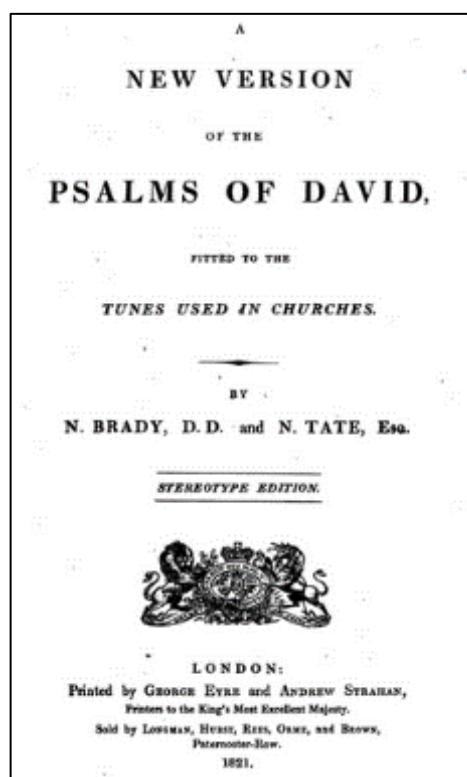
**With patience to the last he did submit /
And murmur'd not at what the Lord thought fit /
He with a Christian courage did resign /
His soul to God at his appointed time.**

On 'Moore', see below.

We notice immediately that two independent verses with different metres have been put together here. Reading between the lines, it seems Richard Ford suffered greatly towards the end of his life, but bore it patiently and with faith in God.

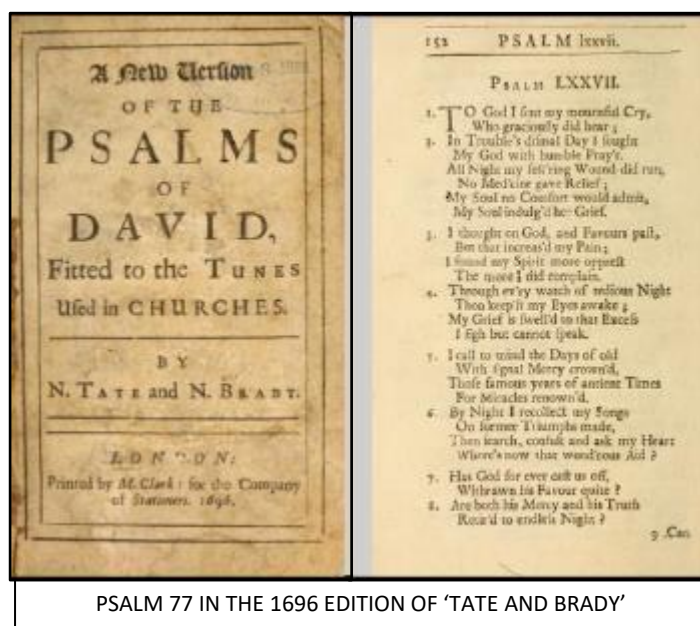
The first stanza on this 1799 stone has exactly the same words as found in Ps 77:1-2 in the 1821 book "A New Version of the Psalms of David" by Nicholas Brady and Nahum Tate. Metrical paraphrases of the Psalms were popular in churches, because they made singing the psalms so much easier. Their version of Ps 34, "Through all the changing scenes of life", is frequently sung to this day. Tate wrote the famous Christmas Carol, published in 1700, "While shepherds watched their flocks by night".

This psalter was first published in England in 1696, and it proved much more popular than an earlier paraphrase, produced by T. Sternhold and J. Hopkins. The Rev. Nicholas Brady D.D. was a poet, author, and an Anglican clergyman who served in Clapham and Tooting. Mr. Nahum Tate was poet laureate of England, as well as being a playwright and an adapter of other people's plays.



³⁷ 'dep.' in line 5 is an exact transcription.

The stone is dated 1799. The 1696 edition was by 'N. Tate and N. Brady', and in it Ps 77 verses 1 and 2 read slightly differently from the gravestone (*see photo; observe verse 2 is mislabelled '3'*). But in the 1698 second edition the psalm reads exactly as Ford and others knew it, as it does in the 1821 edition. All three editions were titled "A New Version of the Psalms of David", but the 1821 edition contained many more long-metre (L.M. 8.8.8.8) versifications, and also included some ten psalms in an 8.8.8 metre not found in previous versions or in the Scottish Psalter. This additional metre, plus some 37 long-metre renditions, provided more variety than the earlier metrical psalters and their predominant use of common-metre (C.M. 8.6.8.6) settings.



PSALM 77 IN THE 1696 EDITION OF 'TATE AND BRADY'

An interesting question arises: Does the use here of this version of Psalm 77 amount to evidence that metrical versions of the psalms such as 'Brady and Tate' were being sung in St. Petroc's in Ford's time? It does seem likely.

The second stanza is an independent memorial verse in a different metre. It was well-known in churchyards across the UK and the USA at the time. It does not occur in the Brady and Tate paraphrase.

Moore is a farm about 1½ m E of South Brent, near Blue Post on the Avonwick road, and still today is listed as 'Moore, Harberton'. But Moore is described as 'in South Brent' in the Prowse memorial at Torbryan church, and see on the Prowse stones in the south transept. Interestingly, in 2017, we read that Mr. Vooght lives at Moore; Vooght is a name still well remembered in Brent.

There is also near the main S door a memorial stone to a **John Ford of Kerswell**, in line with S arcade of arches (as noted above). Kerswell is about ¼ mile from Moore. See also the note to the **Widdow** memorial (above).

30) N aisle, stained glass window above N door – MAY – 1907

A three light stained glass window over the 13th Century north doorway, the three panes have figures and names of saints as follows left to right i.e. W to E, before the dedication that follows:

**St. Ursula St. Elizabeth of Hungary St. Katharine /
To the glory of God and in loving memory of Blanche
Elizabeth May died March 26 1907**



Is anything known of Blanche May? **St. Ursula** is known as a Romano-British saint, but clouded in a dense fog of legends, some involving 11,000 virgins as her companions. Because of the lack of definite information, she was dropped from the Roman Catholic calendar in 1969, after centuries of doubt about her historicity. In 1493, when Christopher Columbus was sailing to the Americas, he sighted what we know now as the Virgin Islands (of which there are about 100) and gave them the name 'Santa Ursula y las Once Mil Vírgenes' (Saint Ursula and her 11,000 Virgins). The name was later shortened to Las Vírgenes (The Virgins). Sir Francis Drake visited the Virgin Islands at least three times in the late 1500s.

St. Elizabeth of Hungary, also known as Saint Elizabeth (or Elisabeth) of Thuringia, born 1207, was a princess of the Kingdom of Hungary. By marriage to the Landgrave (Count) of Thuringia, Germany, she became Landgravine (Countess) of Thuringia. She was a greatly venerated Catholic saint and an early member of the Third Order of St. Francis, by which she is honoured as its patroness. Elizabeth was married at the age of 14, and at 20 she was widowed. After her husband's death she sent her children away, regained her dowry, and used the money to build a hospital where she herself served the sick. After her death at the age of 24 she became a symbol of Christian charity. She was canonized on 25 May 1235.

St. Katharine – many saints are remembered by this name, it is not clear which of them is referred to here.

31) N aisle, W of the N door, by step to narthex – LEE – 1831

UNDERNEATH THIS S[TONE] /
ARE DEPOSITED / THE REMAINS OF /
ANN LEE / WHO DIED AT GLAZEBRO[OK] /
HOUSE IN THIS PARISH O[N THE] /
8TH OF APRIL 1831 AGED 57 {?} /
ALSO / THE REMAINS OF /
WILLIAM LE[E] / [remainder of stone obscured]



It has not yet been possible to discover more about the LEE family. For a later mention of Glazebrook House, in 1926, see the entry for CHOLMONDELEY, above.

32) N aisle, W window: The 'Parables Window' – John ELLIOTT (snr) – 1856

A two-light Decorated-period (c.1250-1350) window, with restored stonework, now with two stained-glass scenes, one from the parable of the Prodigal Son (St. Luke ch. 15) and one from the parable of the Good Samaritan (St. Luke ch. 10).

(at the very top, a small shield and the motto:)

PERADVENTURE

(then, much further down:)

**Father I have sinned against heaven – When he saw him he had
compassion on him**

**To the Glory of God and in grateful memory of John Elliott Lord
of this Manor Died 1856.**



This is in memory of the John Elliott who bought the Lordship of the Manor from Lord Petre in 1806, and died 26 October 1856.³⁸ He was the father of the John Elliott commemorated in the east window, who perhaps erected this window to his father's memory. The shield at the top was their family crest, and 'Peradventure' their family motto.

In 1806 the Petre family sold the Lordship of the Manor of South Brent, to Mr. John Elliott for £11,000 (around £1m in modern money). Presumably some of the manor lands still remaining in the possession of Lord Petre were included in this sale, together with the Manorial title. The Elliots of Buckfastleigh were related to the Elliots of Port Elliott in Cornwall. It is said that while he was pondering the purchase of the Lordship of the Manor, John Elliott would walk up to the top of Ugborough Beacon, sit in the natural stone chair-like formation which is up there, and survey South Brent spread out before him!

This is the only coloured glass window to have survived the 1870 restoration ... we can imagine the opposition there would have been to any suggestion of removing a window only 14 years in place, and connected to the Lord of the Manor too! In recent years, South Brent Parish Council has purchased the dignity, so presumably the Parish Councillors are the Lord of the Manor now—or is it just their Chair?

An interesting choice of parables to commemorate this prominent character. And are we to conclude from the texts chosen from these famously searching parables that John Elliott was well aware of personal failure, and not inclined to pretend otherwise; but was also deeply convinced of the divine love of which Jesus speaks? The texts are from Luke 15:18 and Luke 10:33. The scene on the left, from the story of the Prodigal Son, is very reminiscent of Rembrandt's famous depiction of the welcome home of the errant younger son. Do we detect the aloof elder son, errant in a different way, at a distance in the doorway? The right-hand window shows a scene from the story of the Good Samaritan. In both panels, food and drink are being provided to the needy.

³⁸ Trans. Dev. Assoc. 1913, p.153.

33) Floor, SW of N door, in line with N arcade, – ACLAND – 1751 [1761]

(A huge and interesting stone, landscape format, the top half entirely blank for some reason, only the lower half inscribed, and the right extreme edge missing.)

**Here lyeth [ye] body of Thomas ye third [son of Sir Hugh] /
Acland of Killerton, Baron, Vicar of this [church and prebendary of the cathedral]
Church of [St.] Peter Exon (=Exeter) who died ye / i day of Se[ptember]
[in the] / Yeare of our Lord 1751[?] aged 52 [? perhaps 53?] /
and of Catherine His Wife who died the [...] /
November 1761(?) Aged seventy three [?...]**

Acland's wife's maiden name was Catherine Willcocks, and she was thus born c.1688, while her father the Rev. John Willcocks then aged c. 44 was Vicar of this parish (1672-1715. He died 1717 – his memorial is in the S chapel, see notes above).



At about age 24, she had married Thomas Acland of the Aclands of Killerton House in

1712. She probably lived much of her life in South Brent Vicarage (then perhaps the present Island House). From her birth in 1688, while her father was Vicar 1672-1715, until her marriage in 1712 is 24 years; and then while her husband was Vicar (1716-1737) is 21 years more; that's at least 45 of her 73 years! Who else might have lived there longer? Well, it was a close-run thing ... her father had lived there as Vicar 43 years, and he might also have spent his final two years as an invalid there, being tended by his daughter, who was then Mrs. Acland, the new Vicar's wife!

34) Immediately N of the Font – JOINT – 1828

A slightly reddish fragmentary stone, the top and the right edge being missing:

**[...] / The memory of / AGNESS, the Wife [...] /
Hercules JOINT, of [...] / Who departed this [life] /
26 July 1828 / Aged 88 year[s]**



This inscription is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, the capital T in the first line 'The memory of' suggests that above it lay not just 'Sacred to' cut in plain text, but perhaps an elaborate motif bearing those words. Secondly, we can see that the inscription originally read 'EGNESS' and was corrected to 'AGNESS'. Thirdly, in the date line, remains of a superscript 'th' are visible just before the number 26; careful examination suggests the mason originally carved 27th or 29th. The surface has been abraded to remove the number, but the superscript 'th' just remains. Then the correct date 26 was carved; and the month and year. Assuming that the following line is complete and is centred on the stone, the mason did well to get the date approximately centred after his mistake, although the space between the day and the month is a little tight.

All this confusion makes one wonder whether the instruction to the monumental mason was given by word of mouth, and that he wrote it down wrongly. That would explain how he got the name of the deceased as ‘Egness’ (local pronunciation for ‘Agness’), and remembered the day of her death wrong. Who knows—perhaps her name was really Agnes not Agness, but seeing what the mason had carved the family concluded they really should have written it all down, they didn’t have the heart to insist on yet another correction (which would not have looked well), and it seemed too expensive to start again with a new stone!

35) The Effigy, now in the Bell-Ringing Room

This Effigy, of which only the head survives, is mounted on the west wall in the bell-ringing room in the Tower, just above the window. Although the Effigy bears no inscription, this seems an appropriate place to record it, as it is clearly a personal memorial, and one of some prominence.

The effigy represents an enduring mystery, as the identity of the person represented is still perhaps not absolutely certain. Only the head has survived from what would have been a complete figure tomb, which is thought to have been situated in the south transept at some time, and was then in the Sedilia in the sanctuary (see below). By some, the effigy was believed to be that of **John, first Baron Petre**, son of Sir William Petre K.G.; this was apparently the view of Lysons and Lysons in 1822 when mentioning the ‘monument’.³⁹

SOUTH BRENT, in the hundred of Stanborough and in the deanery of Totton [*i.e. Totnes*], is a small market-town about eight miles from Ashburton, and about 200 from London. The number of inhabitants was returned in 1801 at 1032, in 1812 at 1230. The market is on Friday for butchers' meat, &c. There are cattle-fairs on the last Tuesday in April and the last Tuesday in September. They were altered to these days in 1778.⁴⁰ The villages of Aish or Ash, Haburnford, and Wonton, are in this parish.

The manor of Brent belonged to the abbot and convent of Buckfastleigh. After the dissolution it was purchased by Sir William Petre, ancestor of the Right Hon. Lord Petre, who is the present proprietor. Most of the land has been sold off. The abbot of Buckfastleigh had the power of inflicting capital punishment.

In the parish church is the monument of John Peter [*sic*], customer of Devon, 1570, (an ancestor of Lord Petre's.)⁴¹

The Rev. George Baker is impropriator of the great tithes, and patron and incumbent of the vicarage.

The Rev. John Wilcocks, [*sic*] who died in 1715,⁴² gave 100l.⁴³ for teaching poor children of Brent and the village of Ash; it was laid out in land, which now produces 8l. 10s. per annum. The Rev. Thomas Acland gave a field at Ash, now let at 4l. 4s. per annum, to the same purpose.

³⁹ Lysons and Lysons, pp. 47ff.

⁴⁰ In earlier times the autumn market day or ‘fair’ was on 30 September, ‘Michaelmas’, dating from 1340; see page 76.

⁴¹ This “monument” was evidently on public display. This sentence perhaps gave rise to the tradition that the effigy was of John 1st Lord Petre. But at most it would have been a stone memorial to him, not an indication of his burial here, since we know from his biography that John 1st Lord Petre was buried at Ingatestone, Essex, the Petre family estate, on 20 October 1613 (Edwards, page 101), not at Brent. “Customer” was the name for a controller of ‘customs’ (taxes) on the movement of goods. Today’s title ‘H. M. Revenue and Customs’ continues this usage. 1570 refers to John Petre’s activity as Customer.

⁴² Actually 1715 was the year the Rev. John Willcocks resigned as Vicar. He died on 26 December 1717, according to his monument in church.

⁴³ One hundred pounds in 1717 would be about £18,000 today (2018). The “8l.10s.” income would be about £1,000 today.

Lysons and Lysons were perhaps recording the current belief about the monument being of John, 1st Lord Petre.

We know that in 1848, the sanctuary had:

“Piscina blocked. One sedile remaining; two others blocked”.⁴⁴

It was in these blocked up Sedilia and piscina that the effigy was re-discovered when those spaces were opened in the 1870 Restoration work or just before. Sometime therefore between the work of Lysons and Lysons in 1822 and the year 1848, the monument and effigy were moved to the sanctuary, probably because they were by then in broken ‘fragments’ (see below).

In 1871, E.H. Soden Smith produced a thin pamphlet of 24 pages entitled ‘A List of Buildings having Mural and other painted decorations’. Intriguingly, it implies the parclose and rood screens at Brent were still present, so the parclose screens endured until about that date. The text itself must have been compiled before the 1870 removal of the screens:

BRENT, SOUTH, CHURCH, DEVONSHIRE.

Rood and parclose screens.

Fragments of a fine effigy and high tomb, with the original colouring and gilding on them. Discovered built into the sedilia and piscina recesses. Date 15th cent.

Exeter Diocesan Architect. Soc., 2nd series, iii. 207.

cf. H. Rogers, *The Ancient Sepulchral Effigies, &c. in Devon*, p. 58.⁴⁵

Was this perhaps the publication that, in 1877, W.H. Rogers quoted, having surveyed the old monuments of Devon? He wrote of Brent, in words very similar to the above:

During the restoration of South Brent Church a few years since, it was noticed in the columns of a county newspaper, that there was discovered, built into the recesses of the sedilia and piscina, some very fine fragments of a life sized recumbent effigy and high tomb, of the fifteenth century, with the original colours red, green, and gilding on them.⁴⁶

If the dating “fifteenth century” mentioned in both these accounts is correct, the effigy cannot be of John, Lord Petre, who died in 1613; but it could be of Master John Hay, the Vicar murdered in 1436. (Attempts to locate the “county newspaper” mentioned have so far failed, but a review of Soden Smith might have been published.)

Exactly how these fragments were ‘built into the recesses of the sedilia and piscina’ is not stated. For many years, only the one western *sedile* of the three had been open, the other two and the piscina remaining blocked up, so perhaps the effigy had been placed there some time after 1822, and lay hidden there with the divisions between the piscina and the eastern two sedilia broken through to enlarge the

⁴⁴ TEDAS ‘Rough Notes’ of 1848, held in the Devon and Exeter Institute, Cathedral Green, Exeter.

⁴⁵ Soden Smith published a second enlarged edition of 58 pages in 1872; a third edition, more fully titled and greatly expanded by C.E. Keyser, was published by Eyre and Spottiswoode in 1883. The text quoted is from Keyser (1883 p.38), as the text of the earlier editions has not been traced, but it does not appear to have been revised. The references to EDAS and Rogers date to well after 1870 when the screen was removed, and would not have appeared in the earlier editions.

⁴⁶ Rogers, ‘The Ancient Sepulchral Effigies and Monumental and Memorial Sculpture of Devon’, 1877, pp. 57-58. Also in TEDAS, II, iii, p. 207.

space. It was a position of honour, much as Bishop Stapledon of Exeter who had himself been murdered in 1326 was given an elaborate tomb in Exeter Cathedral.⁴⁷

It does seem that the head represents someone with a clerical tonsure style of haircut, therefore a clergyman, which further goes to exclude John, first Baron Petre. Of all Brent's vicars up to the time of Cromwell likely to have been dignified with a tomb and effigy in church, the unfortunate **Master John Hay**, murdered in 1436, seems the most prominent candidate, and this was the identity favoured by the *Western Morning News* in their article on 22 June 1900 (see page 70).

⁴⁷ For the murder of Bishop Stapledon, see page 30.

Chapter 9 – The Vicars of South Brent and their times

<i>Date</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>Vicar (* = Memorial in church)</i>	<i>Presenting Patron ()=for this turn</i>	
1268 Jan 8	21	Richard of Teyngmuive (= Teignmouth)	Buckfast Abbey	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Before the Reformation, clergy were often styled 'Sir', if they had no degree.</p> <p>'Master' indicates the degree Master of Arts, i.e. M.A., — as were many later Vicars.</p> </div>
1289	48	Gervaise	"	
1337 Jan 5	12	Sir John Durant	(Bishop)	
1349 May 13	?	Sir Benedict Riche	Buckfast Abbey	
?	?	Sir John Brugge	"	
?	?	Robert Knyght (<i>before 1392</i>)	"	
1406 Feb 11	21	Master John Junne	"	
1427 Dec 6	1	Master Edmund Fychet	"	
1428 Feb 19	8	*Master John Hay (= <i>effigy?</i>)	"	
1436 Sep 18	5	Sir John Ufford (<i>or Offorde</i>)	"	
1441 Feb 25	12	Sir John Frensshe	"	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>'Master' indicates the degree Master of Arts, i.e. M.A., — as were many later Vicars.</p> </div>
1453 Apr 24	8	Sir David Frensshe	"	
1461 Jun 7	8	William Jemse (<i>or Jewse?</i>)	"	
1469 Sep 7	?	William Feyer	"	
?	?	William Hale	"	
1498 May 18	12	John Drake	"	
1510 Feb 17	6	Master Robert Barber	"	
1516 Nov 21	34	Master Walter Southcote	"	
1550 Jul 25	11	Philip Phrear (or Frere)	Sir William Petre KG	
1561 May 8	39	Richard Fountayne	William Petre, Knight, KG, Chancellor	
1600 Jan 22	32	Nicholaus Gill	John Petre / (Sir Hugo Fountayne)	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>(Hugo Clifford & Humphrey Burrington)</p> <p>(The Crown)</p> <p>?</p> <p>[restored]</p> <p>William, 4th Baron Petre</p> <p>(Lady Anna Acland)</p> <p>William Pole, bart., true patron</p> <p>John Taylor of Totnes, true patron</p> <p>John Taylor of Totnes</p> <p>John Taylor of Totnes</p> <p>Dispensation from Abp Canterbury</p> <p>(Dr John Amyatt) / James Amyatt M.P.</p> <p>The Rev. George Baker</p> <p>? The Rev. Nathaniel Cole</p> <p>The Rev. Nathaniel Cole</p> <p>The Rev. William Speare Cole</p> <p>Mrs Emilie Elwell (in 1923)</p> <p>Mrs Emilie Elwell</p> <p>G. S. Cowie Esq.⁵</p> <p>The Bishop of Exeter</p> <p>"</p> <p>"</p> <p>"</p> </div>
1632 Oct 31	6	Thomas Clifford	(Hugo Clifford & Humphrey Burrington)	
1638 Feb 7	(19)	*John Gandy (<i>deprived in 1645 ...</i>)	(The Crown)	
1645 !!	15	Christopher Jelinger (<i>intruder</i>)	?	
1660 ...	(19)	*John Gandy D.D. (<i>... restored</i>)	[restored]	
1672 Nov 4	43	*John Willcocks	William, 4th Baron Petre	
1716 May 8	21	*Thomas Acland	(Lady Anna Acland)	
1737 Feb 21	2	Charles Taylor	William Pole, bart., true patron	
1739 Jun 13	5	Henry Bradford	John Taylor of Totnes, true patron	
1744 Sep 28	3	John Harris	John Taylor of Totnes	
1747 Jun 19	18	*Walter Taylor	John Taylor of Totnes	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Dispensation from Abp Canterbury</p> <p>(Dr John Amyatt) / James Amyatt M.P.</p> <p>The Rev. George Baker</p> <p>? The Rev. Nathaniel Cole</p> <p>The Rev. Nathaniel Cole</p> <p>The Rev. William Speare Cole</p> <p>Mrs Emilie Elwell (in 1923)</p> <p>Mrs Emilie Elwell</p> <p>G. S. Cowie Esq.⁵</p> <p>The Bishop of Exeter</p> <p>"</p> <p>"</p> <p>"</p> </div>
1765 Jun 1	13	John Nosworthy (<i>died 1778</i>) ¹	Dispensation from Abp Canterbury	
1782 (.) ²	28	*John Amyatt	(Dr John Amyatt) / James Amyatt M.P.	
1810 (.) ³	35	*George Baker	The Rev. George Baker	
1845	21	*Nathaniel Cole ⁴	? The Rev. Nathaniel Cole	
1866	39	*William Speare-Cole	The Rev. Nathaniel Cole	
1905	15	*Howard Speare-Cole	The Rev. William Speare Cole	
1920 Apr 26	2	William R. Dunlop Elwell	Mrs Emilie Elwell (in 1923)	
1922	8	Clarence Elwell	Mrs Emilie Elwell	
1931	14	William Kilbride Gallagher	G. S. Cowie Esq. ⁵	
1945	5	Ivor K. Jones	The Bishop of Exeter	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>"</p> <p>"</p> <p>"</p> <p>"</p> <p>"</p> <p>"</p> <p>"</p> <p>"</p> <p>"</p> <p>"</p> </div>
1950	21	A. Lawrence Vesey	"	
1971	6	L. Michael Malsom	"	
1977	15	David Niblett	"	
<i>Vicars of South Brent and also of Rattery:</i>				
1992	8	John Harper	Joint Patronage: Bp. Exeter / Mr. Savery	
2000	17	David R. Winnington-Ingram	"	
<i>Team Vicars: (in 2018, the new Dart and Avon Team Ministry was formed to include South Brent and Rattery)</i>				
2019	-	Gina Radford	The D & A Team Ministry Patronage Board ⁶	

¹ The Rev. John Nosworthy held South Brent in plurality with Townstal-with-Dartmouth, and died in November 1778 (see p. 129). Then a Dispute over the Patronage (see discussion below) left the Rev. James Lyde (who had been officiating minister for Mr. Nosworthy) ministering alone during the vacancy at Brent (with occasional visiting help) until John Amyatt became Vicar.

² John Amyatt's institution date has not been found; but before Feb 1783, as he then starts signing Marriage Registers as "Vicar".

³ George Baker must have been instituted before 21 Feb 1810, as a Feoffees deed bearing that date names him as Vicar.

⁴ In 1850 Nathaniel Cole is listed as the patron (Wall, 'A Portrait of South Brent', p. 25).

⁵ G. S. Cowie was the son of Mrs Emilie Elwell by her first marriage to G. J. W. Cowie; see note below for 1931.

⁶ For details of this Team Ministry and its formation, see page 139.

Additional biographical details on each of the Vicars of South Brent, by date of Institution.

(Where assistant clergy are known, they have been inserted in the date sequence below.)

The patron of the vicarage was Buckfast Abbey until 5th July 1546. Sir William Petre became Patron at that date, and so after him was his son John, 1st Baron Petre, and then his descendants, until they sold the advowson in the 1700s.

The spelling of names was famously flexible especially in the earlier years, and does not necessarily indicate a mistake or error, simply acceptable ambiguity.

1268: Richard of Teyngmuive (= Teignmouth) was apparently the first Vicar of Brent. This date is credible; the first recorded Vicar of Buckfastleigh was Walvanus, 12 Jan 1263/4.⁷

1289: Gervaise (or Gervoise), **Vicar**. Some authorities say he was no longer Vicar after 1296, which if true means either there is a gap in the record here, or that John Durant's date should be earlier.

1337: John Durant (or Sir John Durant), **Vicar**. "Sir John Durant, a poor priest, was collated⁸ '*Auctoritate Apostolica*'⁹ [at Chudleigh], 5 Jan 1337/8".¹⁰

The term 'poor priest' is interesting, as it suggests John Durant was associated with the movement started by John Wycliffe (c. 1320s – 1384). A 'poor priest' (or 'poor preacher') was one of an English order of itinerant preachers founded by John Wycliffe and composed of followers who went out two by two, practicing apostolic poverty and pledged (but not by permanent vows) to bring the Gospel to the people. Wycliffe was one of the first to attempt to bring the Bible to the people of England in their own language; the English language had been eclipsed by Latin since the Norman Conquest.¹¹ His was an early voice opposed to the corruptions in religious life, and he called eventually for the dissolution of the monasteries. If Bishop Grandisson thought this was a controversial appointment, as the fact that he secured 'auctoritate apostolica' (the authority of the Pope) to back it may suggest, he must have had definite confidence in the character of Sir John Durant.

Bishop John Grandisson instituted 10 'poor priests', always by collation, and always with 'auctoritate apostolica'. He evidently valued their ministry, for he made provision in his Will for the support of such 'poor priests'.¹² He was evidently concerned for the poor generally, and amongst many other bequests he willed that "... on the said day of my burial, a hundred of the poorer people be provided with cloaks and hoods, if so many can be procured, made of thick cloth, white or grey ...". He also willed to "... the Brothers of the Hospital of St. John at Exeter, being priests, two shillings each; the infirm there, twelve pence each; the prisoners at Exeter, forty pence, to buy bread; the infirm of the House of the Blessed Mary Magdalene

⁷ Harris, 'The Church on the Hill', p. 77.

⁸ 'Collation' is the term used for institution when the patron is on this occasion the bishop himself, which can occur if the proper patron fails to nominate to the living in due time.

⁹ 'Auctoritate Apostolica' indicates 'with apostolic authority' – i.e. that the apostolic authority (of the Pope) was involved and the action therefore irrevocable. The 1367 appointment of Robert Landscoegeke to St. Winnow, also by collation, was 'by Papal Provision' according to the Register; and papal 'provision' usually meant papal command, which rather implies the Pope was keen to see some corrupt excesses opposed. Grandisson, 'Registers', p. 1503.

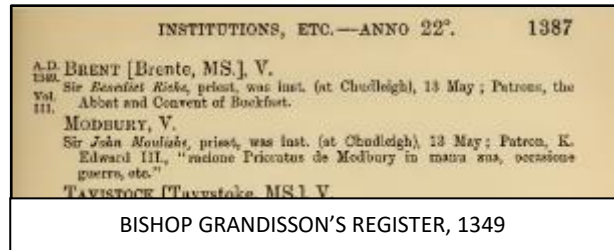
¹⁰ Hingeston-Randolph, 'Bishop Grandisson's Registers', p. 1319. Two years are quoted since the year then turned in April. It is not impossible that Durant was a relation of Bishop William Durand (1230-1296), whose book '*Speculum Juris*' is mentioned in Bishop Grandisson's Will as a valued possession of his ('Registers', p. 1520).

¹¹ "Hardly ever before or since has a national culture been so easily, so rapidly, or so completely submerged as was the Anglo-Saxon in the last thirty years of the eleventh century. The English language went underground for three centuries." Moorman, p. 60.

¹² Grandisson, 'Registers', p. 1520.

at Exeter, two shillings, to be divided amongst them ...".¹³ He did bequeath many valuable items to different people and churches, but following the example of the apostolic church, he "did not forget the poor".

It had been thought that in 1349 John Durant was succeeded as Vicar here by Sir John Monlisle. But this is a transcription error: the Bishop Grandisson institutions register for 13 May 1349 does indeed mention Moulishe (not Monlisle), but as going to Modbury, not South Brent, and specifies that Benedict Riche was the same day instituted to 'Brente'.¹⁴



1349: Sir Benedict Riche, Vicar. Instituted on 13 May by Bishop Grandisson at his palace in Chudleigh. It might seem odd to us today that the institution was not conducted in the parish church, but the reason is at hand: Grandisson's register shows that in 1349 he authorised 48 institutions in May alone! No doubt this reflects not only the size of the diocese (which then included Cornwall as well as Devon), but also the devastation caused by the Black Death, see below. 'Institution' to the office of vicar or rector of a parish is fundamentally a legal act by the bishop, conferring on the new vicar the duty of 'cure' (care) of the parishioners and transferring to the new vicar the rights to the vicarage house and income, and it need not be a public event; the pastoral, personal and public ceremony of 'induction' in the parish church was then carried out by the archdeacon at a later time on the 'mandate' of the bishop, putting the new vicar publicly in possession. These legal arrangements still persist today, although usually combined in a single public event in the parish church.

It is not clear who actually inducted Riche at South Brent: probably not the archdeacon, who would normally induct a new vicar. For we read in Grandisson's Register that on 16 May after the bishop instituted Sir John de Poghulle to be vicar of Buckfastleigh it was arranged to prepare "letters of induction directed to the Archdeacon of Barnstaple, the Archdeaconry of Totnes being still vacant." So was the Archdeaconry of Exeter. Other officials or a local vicar could be specially commissioned (then named as 'commissaries') to induct in case of need.

Hingeston-Randolph commenting on late 1348 writes: "The "Black Death" was desolating the land; and, as Parish after Parish fell vacant, newly appointed Clerks came to the Bishop [= Grandisson] at Chudleigh for Admission, almost day by day; on some days one, on others in groups; and very many of the Entries begin with the words, "Item, eisdem die et loco" [Item, same day same place]".¹⁵

The Black Death was extremely severe.

?date: Sir John Brugge, Vicar.

John de Brugge is mentioned as Vicar of Buckfastleigh in 1382, having previously been Vicar of Townstal, Dartmouth. His predecessor as Vicar of Buckfastleigh was 'William', mentioned in 1353, and his successor John Fardell, perhaps linked with the ancient Fardel Manor near Cornwood.¹⁶

?date: Robert Knyght, Vicar.

We know that Vicar Knyght must have been instituted before 1392, for that is the date that as Vicar he was convicted of stealing fish from the Abbot of Buckfast's fishponds, and committed to the Flete prison in London. He apparently appealed and was declared innocent, but it is not clear what then occurred. Quite probably he returned to Brent, for his successor was not instituted for another 14 years.

¹³ Grandisson, 'Registers', p. 1511f.

¹⁴ Hingeston-Randolph, 'Bishop Grandisson's Registers', p. 1387.

¹⁵ Hingeston-Randolph, 'Bishop Grandisson's Registers', p. 1530.

¹⁶ Harris, p.77.

The Black Death: *The unknown dates around this time and the relatively rapid succession of vicars may well reflect the prevalence of the Black Death in the fourteenth century, which killed parishioner and priest alike in its various recurrences. This produced a theological problem at the time, since it was widely believed that the plague was a judgment from God; but this was a puzzling ‘explanation’, as neither confessor nor penitent was exempt from its terrors.*¹⁷

1406: John Junne MA, Vicar.

In 1427, on September 17th, the Bishop instructed the Archdeacon of Totnes to enquire into the vacancy at Brent; apparently a certain sir William Deyman had been presented by the Abbot of Buckfast to be the new Vicar. Then on 26 October 1427 it emerged that the Archdeacon was prohibited from admitting anyone to the vicarage of Brent pending a dispute over the advowson between King Henry VIII and the Abbot of Buckfast (who had nominated Edmund Fychet on Jul 16 1427). This prohibition was finally relaxed on 6 December 1427, without a full disclosure of the reason for the dispute. The new Vicar to be instituted was:

1427: Edmund Fychet (‘Master’ Edmund Fychet), **Vicar.**

Edmund Fychet seems to have been the brother of John Ffychet who became Abbot of Buckfast in 1440. Edmund had made his will September 12, 1427, desiring to be buried in the abbey church [of Buckfast], and leaving to the monastery “*unum librum diversorum sermonum in Gallia scriptum, et alium parvum librum Gallicum cum paucis sermonibus in fine illius.*” i.e. a book of various sermons written in French, and another small French book with a few sermons at the end of it. Perhaps these were monastery-approved sermons, suitable for use in local parishes, which others after him might use.¹⁸

We read that “John Ffychet succeeded, October 16, 1440f.” as Abbot of Buckfast, following Abbot Thomas Rogger. If it is true that John was Edmund’s brother, this shows another close link between the “religious” monastery clergy and the “secular” clergy serving in local parishes. Indeed, perhaps Edmund had been a monk at Buckfast before serving as Vicar of Brent; however, while a monk he would not have been allowed to make a Will.

1428: John Hay, Vicar (‘Master’ John Hay).

This is the unfortunate Vicar who was assassinated in 1436 either in the churchyard just outside the ‘Murder Doorway’, or, as seems more likely, in the church itself. These horrifying events caused Bishop Edmund Lacy, Bishop of Exeter, to come to St. Petroc’s on 11th September 1436 and ‘reconcile’ (purify) the church and churchyard, and reconsecrate the three altar tables. The balance of probability is that the effigy now on display in the Bell-ringing room is the head from an elaborate tomb of Master John Hay erected in his memory.

1436: Sir John Ufford (or ‘Offord’, as in the Register of Bishop Edmund Lacy, p. 148), **Vicar.** One wonders how he managed the tumultuous aftermath of the murder of his predecessor. No wonder he stayed only five years. Hopefully he

COMMISSIO AD INQUIRENDUM SUPER VACACIONE [ETC.] VICARIE ECCLESIE PAROCHIALIS DE BRENTA.

17 Sept. 1427; to the archdeacon of Totnes, to enquire into the vacancy etc. of the vicarage of the parish church of Brenta, to which sir William Deyman chaplain has been presented by the abbot of Bukfestr’.

[26 Oct. 1427. Prohibition as above, for the vicarage of South Brent, the advowson being disputed between the King and the abbot of Buckfast.]

BREVE NE ADMITTAS AD BRENT’

Henricus Dei gracia rex [etc.] venerabili [etc.] E. [etc.] salutem. Prohibemus vobis ne admittatis aliquam personam ad vicariam ecclesie de Brente que vacat ut dicitur et de cuius advocacione contencio mota est in curia nostra inter nos et abbatem de Bukfest, donec discussum fuerit in eadem curia utrum ad nos an ad prefatum abbatem pertineat eiusdem vicarie advocacio. Teste meipso apud Westm’ xxvj die Octobris anno regni nostri sexto. Aumener.

[6 Dec. 1427. This prohibition also is relaxed, as above.]

BREVE REGIUM

Henricus Dei gracia rex [etc.] venerabili [etc.] E. [etc.] salutem. Licet nuper per breve nostrum vobis prohibuerimus ne admitteretis personam ad vicariam ecclesie de Brente vacantem et de cuius advo-

REGISTER OF BISHOP EDMUND LACY (1427), VOL. 1, PAGE 205

¹⁷ See the further note on the Black Death on page 75.

¹⁸ Oliver, p. 418 (p. 371)

was a wise man who breathed some peace, serenity and godliness into a troubled and possibly divided village. It was also during his time that, in 1438, the Bishop granted permission for services to be held in the Chapel of St. Lambert at 'Hurburneford', so perhaps he was indeed a peaceable and godly influence in the area.¹⁹

1441: Sir John Frensshe, Vicar.

1453: Sir David Frensshe, Vicar.

1461: William Jemse ('Jewse' in some documents) , **Vicar.**

1469: William Feyer (or Fever), **Vicar.**

?date: William Hale, Vicar

1498: John Drake, Vicar.

Nothing much seems to be known about him, but wouldn't it be interesting to know if he was related to Sir Francis Drake (c. 1540 – 1596)?

1510: Robert Barber, Vicar.

1516: Walter Southcote, Vicar.

For some notes on Walter Southcote and the extensive Southcote family involvement in the locality, see page 85.

On 25 February 1538, Buckfast Abbey surrendered to the King's Commissioners (one of whom was Sir William Petre). It lost its role as Lord of the Manor of Brent and Patron of the Vicarage, and ceased to exist as a community. On 5 July 1546 Sir William Petre became Lord of the Manor and Patron of the Vicarage of Brent.

1550: Philip Phrear LLB (or 'Frere', (CCED wrongly lists his institution as being to 'Brent Tor')), **Vicar.** Instituted on 25/7/1550, the patron being William Petre, Knight, of 'Ingatstone' (Ingatestone), Essex. Philip Phrear came from being Vicar of Buckfastleigh, where he had been instituted as Vicar on 8/12/1535, patrons the Abbot and Convent of Buckfast; he was succeeded there on 25/7/1550 by George Carsleigh.²⁰ But we can imagine he was still sympathetic to Buckfast's ways perhaps. For the 'Composition' of 5/5/1559 which so radically altered the finances of South Brent vicarage in Philip Phrear's time, see Appendix 1.

Clergy Marriage: *It was in early 1549 that Anglican Clergy were first allowed to marry. But this was a short-lived period of legality; when the young King Edward VI (reigned 1547-1553) died early, and the country returned to Catholicism under Mary (Queen from 1553-1558), she saw to it that clerical marriage was abolished. Married ministers found themselves separated from their spouses and their marriages dissolved. Only under the grudging acceptance of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603) was clerical marriage established, albeit with reserve in the opinion of many.*²¹

1561: Richard Fountaine MA, Vicar, (sometimes written with 'ff' as the symbol for 'F', so 'ffountayne'. CCED has this entry, but listed erroneously under Brent Tor, as for Mr. Phrear.)

¹⁹ For the Chapel of St. Lambert at Harbourneford, see page 73.

²⁰ Harris, 'The Church on the Hill'.

²¹ Thompson, p. 2.

Instituted on 8/5/1561, William Petre, Knight, KG, Chancellor, being the Patron. Sir William had paid towards the costs of Fountaine's education, so perhaps he too was sympathetic to the old ways.²² We read that in April 1577 Roger Braunche, the agent of Sir William's son and successor John Petre, visited Brent and received hospitality from Vicar Fountaine.²³ Mr. Fountaine's Will was proved 1632, describing him as "clk" i.e. clerk in holy orders.²⁴

1599: Nicholas Gill MA (or Nicholaus Gyll), **Vicar**. (Again CCED has this entry but listed erroneously under Brent Tor). Instituted 22/1/1600, the patron presenting on this occasion being Hugo Fountayne, armiger, the advowson having been granted (*pro hac vice* = for this turn) to the late Richardus Fountayne, the previous incumbent, by Johannes, 1st Baron Petre; presumably Hugo Fountayne is son of previous Vicar the Rev. Richard Fountaine, and Lord Petre had agreed that Nicholas Gill should be appointed in due course. On 17/4/1622 Gill is described in the *Episcopal Visitation Book* as 'Rector' - probably an error caused by the popular understanding that as the parish priest at South Brent was now collecting the tithes, he must be the rector! After Nicholas Gill died in 1631/2, the Administration of his Will was proved in 1632, describing him as "vicar of South Brent".²⁵

1632: Thomas Clifford MA, Vicar. He was instituted on 31/10/1632, the presenting patrons being Hugo Clifford & Humphrey Burrington, as the advowson had been assigned (*pro hac vice* = for this turn) by William, 2nd Baron Petre, the son of Sir William Petre's son John the 1st Baron. Perhaps Hugo Clifford leant on Baron Petre to get his relative (brother?) appointed to Brent. The Petre family had Roman Catholic sympathies, and so did the Clifford family of Ugbrooke House, Chudleigh. Assuming, fairly, that Thomas was from that family (where Hugh/Hugo and Thomas were frequently given names) we can imagine it all being planned. From 1633 he was also Vicar of Harberton, and in 1637 he was made an honorary Canon of Exeter Cathedral. He died on 7 January (or February?) 1637/38²⁶ and was buried in Chudleigh. After Thomas Clifford died, the administration of his Will was proved in 1637, describing him as "Vicar of S.B.". ²⁷

1634: The Rev. David Mole BA became Curate at South Brent on 12/3/1634.²⁸

1638: John Gandy MA, Vicar. Born 1604 or 1605 (CCED). He had studied at Oriel College, Oxford, and was then ordained. He was already an honorary Prebendary of Salisbury Cathedral before being appointed to Brent.

He was instituted as Vicar of South Brent on 7/2/1638, the patron named as 'The Crown' (i.e. King Charles I). (He was perhaps recommended by the Bishop of Salisbury to the King for appointment to Brent when it became vacant and in the King's gift this turn, because of his ability.) The advowson had lapsed to the Crown for this turn, since the legitimate patron William 2nd Baron Petre had died 1637, and his son Robert 3rd Baron who would have inherited the advowson died in 1638 - perhaps he was too ill to act for February 1638, or if it was in January 1638 that he had died, his son William 4th Baron being only 11 years old was too young to act as patron.

John Gandy's elder brother was Henry Gandy who became Mayor of Exeter. A renowned old Exeter street (called Correstrete in 1265, the name probably coming from the Middle English word for the currying or the curing of leather) was renamed Gandy's Lane and then Gandy Street after Henry Gandy, Mayor of Exeter in 1661 and 1672. The name is further perpetuated there today by 'John Gandy's pub', presumably on the site of the family house in the street.

²² Emmison, p. 305.

²³ Edwards, p. 106.

²⁴ DCCWA.

²⁵ DCCWA.

²⁶ The double year numbering is due to the year changing at March 25th in those times. We would call it Jan 1638.

²⁷ DCCWA.

²⁸ Mole or Molle. CCED 54977: Devon RO, Chanter 151a (Subscription Book).

John Gandy's wife Anne was the youngest daughter of Mr. John Ackland, alderman of Exeter. They had several children, among them a daughter Anne, and a son Henry (1649-1734).²⁹ Henry had become senior fellow of Oriel College Oxford where he studied, but in 1690 refused to swear the oath of allegiance to William and Mary and so was deprived of that position. As a non-juror, he left the Anglican fold but was ordained bishop in 1716, staying close to Anglican service patterns; he consecrated Ralph Taylor who was also a non-juror as a bishop, and others also. Bishop Henry Gandy was described in a notice of his death in the Daily Post as 'a person of great piety, singular modesty, extremely temperate, diligent and regular through the whole course of his life'.³⁰ Henry left a wife Ann and a daughter Anne.

In 1645 John Gandy was a target of the Parliamentarians who deprived him of the living of South Brent and intruded the Rev. Christopher Jelinger from Plymouth as Vicar. Mr. Gandy suffered unjustly at their hands and relied on the support of friends for the care he and his sizeable family needed. Before returning to South Brent in 1660, he had been appointed Vicar of Bridford, just east of Moretonhampstead. After he was re-instated at South Brent, Oxford University awarded him the degree of S.T.P. (Sacred Theology Professor, what we nowadays call D.D., Doctor of Divinity) in 1661 for 'his learning, loyalty, and sufferings'.³¹ In the national publication, 'The Church Magazine', an article describes John Gandy's removal from Brent, and then recounts a visit he made after his return to South Brent to one of the army officers, now in prison, who had maltreated him. Understandably, the major now expected his former victim to have his revenge on him, but instead he discovered how kindly John Gandy treated him.³²

Even one of the chief persecutors, who was imprisoned, he paid him a visit. The Major, expecting that Mr. Gandy would have expostulated with him about his hard usage and taken his revenge—prevented his speaking first, by saying to him, "Doctor, I now lie at your mercy." "And," replied the good old gentleman, "I am resolved to be revenged on you;" and calling for a bottle of wine, after he had cordially drank to him, said, "Now I have satisfaction." As indeed he had: namely, the great satisfaction of imitating the most excellent example, and obeying one of the most divine precepts of his Blessed Master.

CHARACTER OF DR. JOHN GANDY,
RECOUNTED IN 'THE CHURCH MAGAZINE', 1841, p.377-8

1645: Christopher Jelinger (intruder). See above entry. In 1636, Christopher Jelinger had been licensed as curate of St. Andrew's Plymouth, East Stonehouse chapel (CCED).

1660: John Gandy (restored). See Gandy entry above. He was made DD in 1661, and died on 19/7/1672. Another Rev. John Gandy, descended either from him or more likely from Henry Gandy his elder brother, was Vicar of St. Andrews Plymouth 1769-1824, and Prebendary of Exeter Cathedral.³³ John Gandy is described as 'Rector' on his memorial slab in the south chapel, and also in a Dispensation by the Archbishop of Canterbury which allowed him to hold two livings simultaneously: on 29/3/1667 he had been instituted as Rector of nearby North Huish (CCED).

1672: John Willcocks MA, Vicar, (or Wilcocks; or Wilcox, as CCED). Monument in church on the same stone as John Gandy, see the commentary on that monument. He was probably born in c. 1644, since his monument says he died 26/12/1717 aged 73.

Instituted on 4/11/1672, presented by the patron, Lord Petre (= William, 4th Baron Petre). His daughter Catherine married Thomas Acland, the next Vicar. He ministered here for 44 years, probably the longest-ever serving vicar of this parish. In his Will dated 26/4/1713 he set up a charity for 'teaching poor children of Brent', which became known as 'Willcocks' Gift' or 'The John Willcocks Charity'.³⁴ He

²⁹ See the entry in the Dictionary of National Biography.

³⁰ D.N.B.

³¹ Prince, 'Worthies of Devon', p. 399.

³² 'The Church Magazine', 1841, pp. 377-8.

³³ For full details see the text in Prince, 'Worthies', pp. 398ff.

³⁴ See p. 122.

appointed his wife Anne as executrix, and names daughters Mary, Elizabeth (and her minor son John) & Katharine (= Catherine, as above?). Grant of Probate given as 3 May 1716 (a likely transcript error for 1718).

The Advowson evidently was granted temporarily to other people after 1672 (it was assigned to Lady Acland for the appointment to follow John Willcocks, but by 1737 had been sold to Sir William Pole who is named in the records as 'true patron' then).

1716: Thomas Acland MA, Vicar. Monument in Church now on the floor near the pillar by the N door. Instituted 8/5/1716, the presenting patron being Lady Anna Acland of Killerton, Devon. The advowson had been previously granted (*pro hac vice* = for this turn) by Thomas Lord Petre, of Writtle (6th Baron, died 1706) to Johannes Willcocks (incumbent 1672-1715, died 26/12/1717) and Lady Acland, widow. (She was the daughter of Sir Thomas Daniel of Beswick, Yorks, and in 1674 had married Sir Hugh Acland of Killerton, who died 1714). On 12/2/1712 at Sowton, Exeter, their third child Thomas married Catherine Willcocks, the daughter of previous Vicar John Willcocks! In 1716 Lady Anna Acland (acting alone, presumably because John Willcocks is ill – he died in 1717) now presents Thomas (aged c.38) to become 'rector' of South Brent (but the monument in Church correctly says 'vicar').³⁵

During his time at Brent, Acland gave a field at Aish to further the purposes of the John Willcocks Charity in 'teaching poor children of Brent'; his gift was known as 'Acland's Gift' or 'the Thomas Acland Charity'.³⁶ Thomas had a sister Susannah Acland who died 1696. He was made a Prebendary of Exeter Cathedral before apparently resigning as Vicar of South Brent in 1736 or 1737, when his successor was appointed. He died 1 Sep 1751 aged 52 (so born c. 1699).

It is tempting (and reasonable) to presume that Thomas Acland's family and that of Ann ACKLAND of Exeter who was the wife of John Gandy are related. For if so, this might explain how, most unusually, two vicars appear on the same monument, Willcocks and Gandy together. Thomas Acland had married Catherine Willcocks, and on John Willcocks's death (a year after Thomas became Vicar) the Acland family agreed the memorial to him go on the Gandy stone - they might even insist, especially if it had been Ann Gandy née Ackland's wish.

1737: Charles Taylor BA, Vicar.

Instituted 21/2/1737, the named patron being 'William Pole, bart., true patron' (CCED). Was the Rev. Charles Taylor related to Mr. John Taylor, future patron of the vicarage? The Rev. Charles Taylor's Will was proved in 1739; "clerk, South Brent" (DCCWA).

The list of vicars in Ugborough Church has a 'Charles T. Taylor' as Vicar there from 1730-1738; this might possibly be the same person.

The mention of William Pole, bart., as 'true patron' is interesting. Evidently the Petres had now sold the advowson, a practice which did not become illegal until the 20th Century.³⁷ The following three successive mentions of 'Mr. John Taylor of Totnes, true patron' confirm that the Petres were then no longer involved in the patronage, although they remained Lord of the Manor until the early 1800s.

1739: Henry Bradford MA, Vicar.

Instituted 13/6/1739, patron: 'Mr. John Taylor of Totnes, true patron' (CCED).

His Will was proved 1744, "clk South Brent" (DCCWA).

³⁵ For more details see, e.g., <http://landedfamilies.blogspot.co.uk/2013/03/15-acland-of-killerton-and-columbjohn.html>

³⁶ See p. 122.

³⁷ In 1924, a Measure received the Royal Assent which provided that all advowsons should become unsaleable after a certain time; that is to say, after the occurrence in each benefice of the next two presentations. Thus, gradually the sale of advowsons came to an end. But in the short term sales rapidly increased: patrons were eager to sell while their proprietary rights had still some financial value, and the opportunity was used to secure advowsons for party purposes. Certainly it is noteworthy that transfers rose from 86 in 1922 to 107 in 1924, 132 in 1925, and 200 in 1929, some of these transfers being gifts, not sales (Hansard, House of Lords, 22 Mar 1933). Advowsons may still be transferred today, but only by gift or inheritance.

The Bradford family were active clergy in the area. Henry was the son of John Bradford, of Poughill, Devon. He matriculated at Balliol College Oxford in 1714, aged 18; BA 1718, MA 1721. In 1727 he became rector of St Mary Tavy, Devon; and vicar of South Brent in 1739 (CCED).

(He was therefore the brother of the Rev. Robert Bradford BA - born about 1694 the son of John Bradford of Poughill - who was instituted in 1717 or 1718 as Vicar of Buckfastleigh, and died 19/4/1777.³⁸)

It was probably Mr. Bradford, rather than his successor Mr. Harris, who submitted the 1744 Episcopal Visitation return shortly before dying.³⁹ Mrs. Robert Bradford was involved in a patronage dispute after the death of the Rev. John Nosworthy. See the 1779 discussion below.

1744: John Harris LLB, Vicar.

Instituted 28/9/1744, 'Mr. John Taylor of Totnes, true patron' (CCED).⁴⁰ He resigned in 1747, and his successor was Walter Taylor, perhaps a relative of the patron; so was Mr. Harris put under some pressure to resign? Much later, in 1820, a 'John A. HARRIS' was curate of Ringmore.

1747: Walter Taylor BA, Vicar.

Instituted 19/6/1747, with 'Mr. John Taylor of Totnes, true patron' (CCED). Monument in NE floor of S chapel: he died aged 42, so was 24 or 25 when instituted. We may well conclude he was related to the patron. Six new Bells were installed in his time, newly cast by Thomas Bilbie/Bilby of Collumpton.

1765: John Nosworthy MA, Vicar, (CCED, but wrongly listed under Brent Tor).

The Rev. John Nosworthy had on 27/4/1763 been granted a Dispensation by the Archbishop of Canterbury instituting him to the living of Townstall, Dartmouth, and it appears he continued to hold that living (worth £200 p.a., about £26,000 today) when—on 1/6/1765—he was granted another Dispensation to also become Vicar of South Brent (then worth £350 p.a., about £45,000 today), holding both appointments 'in plurality' (i.e. together, not otherwise allowed). These were each well-paid livings, especially Brent, and holding both together he was certainly a rich man. In order to physically maintain ministry in two separated parishes many clergymen would have appointed an assistant curate to share the work—so did Mr. Nosworthy, but not in the case of the Rev. James Lyde, see below.

The son of James Nosworthy, John was born in Totnes in 1727 and went to school at Tiverton, possibly at Blundell's School which had been founded in 1604. At age 17, on 10/10/1744, he was admitted a 'pensioner',⁴¹ a common arrangement, at Sidney [Sidney Sussex] College Cambridge, which had very close links with Blundell's School. He matriculated in 1745, graduated B.A. 1748-9, and M.A. 1752. He was ordained deacon February 1749-50.

He appointed two curates, but then apparently left the work of ministry at South Brent mostly to his stand-in there, officiating minister the Rev. James Lyde, see the following entry. It seems Mr. Nosworthy retained Brent Vicarage for himself or a nominee to live in, as James Lyde reports he lived not at Brent but at Ugborough with the vicar there. According to the Episcopal Visitation Returns (see below), John Nosworthy died in November 1778/9. His Will was proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury in 1784, as the last Will 'of John Nosworthy of Dartmouth, Devon, clerk'.

1768: The Rev. John Clyff BA was licensed as Curate to South Brent on 7/11/1768. This date, not being at the usual ordination times of Michaelmas (September 29) or Petertide (June), suggests that he came here as an experienced priest from another parish. He was assigned a stipend of '£40 a Year payable Quarterly with Surplice Fees. Clause of Residence' (i.e. he was to reside in South Brent).⁴²

³⁸ Harris, 'The Church on the Hill', p.78.

³⁹ The 1744 Episcopal Visitation return can be viewed on the Friends of Devon's Archives website. Also see Chanter 225B, 507.

⁴⁰ To find this 1744 entry in CCED, search under South Brent, not under Harris (this name link is missing from CCED).

⁴¹ To be a *pensioner* at a Cambridge college meant in those days the same as to be a *commoner*, i.e. a student who is not a *scholar*, and who therefore pays for his tuition and *commons*. *Commons* was the name for cheap food taken in college.

⁴² CCED 140659. Devon RO, Chanter 88 (Licence).

1772: The Rev. John Cuming BA (Exeter College Oxford; born 11/5/1750) became Curate of South Brent on 20/9/1772. He was assigned a salary of '£42 a Year, payable Quarterly. Clause of Residence'. He had been ordained the previous day by the Bishop in the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Bishop's Palace in Exeter.⁴³

c. 1778: James Lyde, clerk – N.B. not Vicar. It might seem that Mr. Nosworthy had appointed James Lyde his assistant curate at Brent, but Mr. Lyde's own comments in his 1779 Visitation return show that he was never made the established Curate, and was simply the Officiating Minister. As such, he would have been a visitor—even if a sufficiently regular one to have become informally regarded as 'the Vicar of Brent', as his brother wrote, see comments under the 1779 Dispute. A curate's stipend at around this time was often £35 or £40 p.a. – less than a quarter of an average incumbent's income, less again of Brent's.

The Rev. James Lyde was born at Berry Pomeroy and baptised there on 6/5/1741. He was made deacon at the St. Peter-tide ordinations on 23/6/1765 and appointed to Manaccan & Anthony, Cornwall (Cornwall was then part of Exeter diocese), then ordained priest at the Michaelmas ordinations on 21/9/1766 and appointed to serve at Ruan Minor, Cornwall (CCED). Quite soon thereafter, he came and ministered at South Brent as assistant to (or substitute for) Vicar John Nosworthy.⁴⁴ See the following paragraph about the Patronage Dispute. His Will was proved 1796, describing him as "clerk, South Brent" (DCCWA), but N.B. 'clerk' not 'Vicar'. It appears that his burial was at South Brent and is entered in the South Brent **Burial Register for 1796** (??? ###.)

1779: Dispute over the Patronage

In 1779, there was a Dispute over the Right to next Presentation. The Petre family were not able to resolve the dispute as they had sold the advowson by at latest 1737 to Sir William Pole, and Mr. John Taylor of Totnes was the true patron after him. Vicar Nosworthy had been appointed by Dispensation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and evidently the identity of the patron after Mr. John Taylor was now disputed. Perhaps John Taylor who presented Henry Bradford to be Vicar had informally promised Mrs. Robert Bradford a part in the patronage, but in fact had then sold (or given) it to Dr. John Amyatt who on 24/9/1756 had married a Margaret Taylor (1737-1803), perhaps a relative of Mr. John Taylor. Considering the large income the vicarage of Brent carried, the right to appoint its vicar was a valuable asset.

On 15 March 1779 Episcopal Visitation Returns⁴⁵ were sent out from the Bishop to all the parishes in his great diocese. Reply was made by Vicar Nosworthy's assistant, James Lyde, since Mr. Nosworthy had died in November 1778. Here are Mr. Lyde's answers (the full text of the Bishop's questions has been inserted in {braces} from the questionnaire form):

"(1.) Residence, curate and lecturer {Do you reside personally upon your Cure, and in your Parsonage or Vicarage-House? If not, where do you reside? And what is the Reason of your Non-Residence? Have you a Curate Resident, who is duly licenced, and with what Salary? Have you any Lecturer? What is his Name? And how is he provided for?}: My Lord, I think it proper first of all to acquaint your Lordship, that the Church of South Brent is now vacant by the Death of the late Wm⁴⁶ Nosworthy in November last, - that the Right to the next Presentation to this Church has been & still is disputed by John Amyatt <M:D:> on one Side, and

⁴³ CCED 140808. Devon RO, Chanter 713 (Ordination Register); Chanter 88 (Licence).

⁴⁴ The Rev. James Lyde was the brother of the Rev. John Alan Lyde, Vicar of Totnes 1786-1795, and was alleged to be "the Vicar of South Brent" from 1764 to 1796 (see "Totnes clergy", in Transactions of the Devonshire Association, 1900). He was never actually the Vicar nor officially Curate (as he emphatically said in 1779, see below); yet for years he clearly did the Vicar's job.

⁴⁵ The 1779 Episcopal Visitation return can be viewed on the Friends of Devon's Archives website. Also see Chanter, 232B, 556.

⁴⁶ In referring to the Rev. John Nosworthy, is the 'Wm' an abbreviation of 'William' (as an additional Christian name of his), or is 'Wm' simply a transcription error for 'Jn'? Mr. Lyde himself would probably not have been mistaken.

Mrs Bradford Widow of the late Mr Bradford V: of Buckfastleigh in the other;⁴⁷ and that Mr Chancellor Carrington was pleased in Justice to my Services at this Church to appoint me to serve it during the Vacancy. — In Answer to the above Enquiry, I do not reside in this Parish, but with the Vicar of Ugborough at the Distance of three miles from this Church. Mr Freeman Freke, Clerk, went lately to reside in the Vicarage House. I consider myself as ill treated by this Man, and therefore I humbly hope, your Lordship will permit me to make my Complaint to your Lordship of him. (2.) **Other benefices** {*Have you any more Benefices than one? If another, what, and where is it?*}: I have none. (3.) **Divine service at other churches** {*Do you perform Divine Service at any Church besides your own? and where?*}: I do not perform divine Service at any other Church. (4.) **Frequency of divine service** {*How often is Divine Service performed in your Church? If not twice on the Lord's Day, with a Sermon in the Morning, for what Reason?*}: Divine Service is performed twice on the Lord's Day with a Sermon at each Service. (5.) **Frequency of communion** {*How often is the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper administered? And what Number of Communicants have you?*}: The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is administred [*sic*] four Times a year; and the number of Communicants generally about seventy. (6.) **Catechising of children** {*At what Times do you catechise the Youth of your Parish?*}: As I never was the establish'd Curate of this Parish, I never did catechise the Youth of it. (7.) **Church fabric** {*Is your Church and Chancel in good Repair, and your Church-yard well kept? And have you all Things decent for divine Service?*}: The Church & Chancel are in good Repair, and the Churchyard well kept, and all things belonging to divine Service in decent order. (8.) **Glebe terrier**⁴⁸ {*Have you a Terrier of the Glebe Lands, Houses, &c. according to the Tenor of the 87th Canon? If not, let one be made and delivered in at the Visitation properly signed.*}: Being only the officiating Minister, I am unable to give any Answer to this Enquiry. (9.) **Number of families** {*What Number of Families have you in your Parish?*}: The number of Families in this Parish, according to the best Information I can procure, amount to about one hundred and sixty.⁴⁹ (10.) **Chapels** {*Have you any Chapel within your Parish? Who nominates to it? By whom is it served? How served? And with what is it supported?*}: There is no Chapel in this Parish.⁵⁰ (11.) **Papists, dissenters and meeting houses** {*Have you any reputed Papists in your Parish, and how many? Have you any Meeting-Houses for Dissenting Congregations? How many? And of what Denomination? Who are their Teachers?*}: The [*sic*] are no reputed Papists, nor Meeting-Houses for Dissenting Congregations in this Parish.⁵¹ (12.) **School, alms-houses, hospital and charitable endowments** {*Have you any publick or other School in your Parish? Any Alms-Houses, Hospital, or other charitable Endowment? Are they duly managed according to the Direction of their Founders? Have you any parochial Library?*}: There is a publick School for Reading & Writing possess'd of a small Endowment which, as I am inform'd, is duly managed according to the Direction of its Founder; and an Alms House, but no Hospital nor parochial Library. (13.) **Charity** {*Have any Lands or Tenements, or other Benefactions, been left for any pious and charitable Uses? And are they duly applied?*}: There are Lands & Tenements {in this Parish} [*sic*] which were given to Trustees for pious & charitable Uses, and which, I am told, are duly applied. *Priest's orders and institution*: The Date of my Priest's Orders is the 21st Day of September 1766. A Letter directed to me at Ugborough near Modbury woud [*sic*] come in regular Course. I am, My Lord, your Lordship's most Obedient & most Humble Servant, James Lyde."

The impression we gain of the Rev. James Lyde is that he was a conscientious and diligent priest, preacher and pastor, perhaps better treated by the Vicar of Ugborough than by the Vicar of Brent whose

⁴⁷ John Amyatt M.D. would have been wanting to present his son John Amyatt, who did indeed become the next Vicar; Mrs Bradford's husband the Rev. Robert Bradford vicar of Buckfastleigh since 1717/8 had died in 1777, and she presumably wanted to appoint another of her (husband's) family to the lucrative Brent vicarage, Henry Bradford having been Vicar of Brent from 1739-1744. Mrs Dorothy Bradford died aged 85 on 1/5/1804 (The Lady's Magazine, May 1804, p. 280).

⁴⁸ A land terrier, otherwise simply a terrier, is a record of land holdings.

⁴⁹ From this 'about 160 families' we can estimate the population of Brent at say 500-800 in the 1770s. The 1744 Return had given the population of Brent as 178 families, indicating a roughly stable population.

⁵⁰ By 'Chapels' is meant Church of England Chapels. As to the sometime Chapel of St. Lambert at Harbournford, see page 73.

⁵¹ It seems from this 1779 answer that the opening of South Brent Methodist Church must have been after 1779. See the notes on South Brent Methodist Church in chapter 5.

poorly-paid stand-in he had hitherto been (or by the Rev. Mr. Freeman Freke⁵² who seems to have moved into Brent Vicarage). Never officially the Curate, James Lyde was evidently the 'Officiating Minister' for years.

John Amyatt M.D. might well have been playing for delay in having this dispute over the next presentation brought to final resolution. He wanted to present his son as next Vicar, but his son was not ordained deacon until June 1782 "to serve at Ringmore", four years after the living of Brent became vacant! He could not have been instituted as Vicar until he was ordained priest, which happened on 22/9/1782 when again he was "to serve at Ringmore". We know that the Rev. James Lyde did not die until 1796, and he appears to have been buried in St. Petroc's churchyard, so perhaps Dr. Amyatt persuaded the Bishop to let James Lyde continue ministering at Brent, and to wait until the Dispute was ended, not instituting anyone until the Rev. John Amyatt could become Vicar. The church Marriage Registers were first signed by John Amyatt as 'Vicar' in February 1783. But James Lyde was popularly believed to be the Vicar of SB from 1764-1796, as the *Devonshire Association* reported.⁵³

The dispute was eventually somehow resolved, and the Rev. John Amyatt became Vicar of South Brent in 1782 or early 1783. We read that later Sir James Amyatt (uncle of the Rev. John Amyatt's uncle, and brother of Dr. Amyatt) was Member of Parliament for Totnes 1774–1780, then for Southampton 1784–1806; in 1795 he applied in Parliament for ecclesiastical patronage for his nephew John Amyatt of Totnes, presumably to add a further living to his incumbency of South Brent.⁵⁴

1782: John Amyatt, Vicar.

Born 1758 and baptized in 'Totness' on 29/3/1758, he was the son of John Amyatt M.D. At the St. Peter-tide ordinations on 9/6/1782 he was made Deacon and licensed as Curate of Ringmore with a stipend of £35 p.a. plus Surplice Fees (fees for weddings and funerals), "and to reside" there in Ringmore (CCED). Just three months later at the Michaelmas ordinations on 22/9/1782 he was ordained Priest, to serve on at Ringmore, with an increased stipend of £40 p.a., but by the end of the year he was Vicar of Brent! Other curates went to Ringmore in 1783. Evidently Dr. Amyatt had acquired the advowson intending to appoint his son in due course. But the perhaps unexpectedly early death of Vicar Nosworthy caused a problem (John Amyatt was not ordained until 1782!), and Mrs. Bradford intervened. The Advowson was disputed, see previous paragraph. The argument between Dr. Amyatt (his father) and widow Mrs. Bradford was finally resolved and he became Vicar in 1782/1783. The exact institution date has not yet come to light, but he was signing the marriage register in February 1783 as 'Vicar'.

Vicar John Amyatt died on 10/1/1810, and was buried 15/1/1810 in the vault of St. Michael's, Bath.

We ought to note that on 24/9/1756 John Amyatt's father Dr. John Amyatt M.D. married Margaret Taylor (1737-1803), and the witnesses were Mary Amyatt (probably Dr. Amyatt's mother Mary née Dyer) and Geo. Taylor (her father?). Margaret might very well have been related to the 'Mr. John Taylor of Totnes' who was patron of South Brent in the mid 1700s. They were a prominent family, and their forebears had bought Maridge (or Marridge) Mansion and Farm, near California Cross.

Also, John Amyatt M.D.'s father had a step-sister Elizabeth Amyatt (d. 1756) who married a John Wilcocks—was he a relative of the Rev. John Willcocks (vicar 1672-1715) ... a son perhaps? If so, then all three families were related—Willcocks, Taylors, and Amyatts!

⁵² He might be a relative of the Rev. Thomas Freke, who was born 1774 in Modbury and ordained acolyte on 28/5/1797.

⁵³ *The Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science, Literature and Art* 1900 report on the Vicars of Totnes.

⁵⁴ History of Parliament, art.: 'Amyatt, James': "On 28 May 1795 he applied for ecclesiastical patronage for his nephew John Amyatt of Totnes." But it does not state what parish the patronage was for, and the Rev. John Amyatt had been Vicar of Brent for 13 years by then. The *'Great Universal Directory of 1794'* confirms that John Amyatt was Vicar in 1794.

It is also noteworthy that the Rev. Thomas Baker MA had been instituted as Rector of Ringmore in 1759, where the patron for that turn was John Baker BD.⁵⁵ It seems likely that these Bakers were friendly with the Amyatt family and were all related to the Rev. George Baker who was to become Vicar of South Brent in 1810.

1797: The Rev. William Ilbert Birdwood, born 2/4/1775 in Dartington, was ordained on 24/9/1797 and was licensed as Curate of South Brent the next day. He was assigned the stipend of '£50 a Year and Surplice Fees'.⁵⁶

1799: The Rev. John Taylor BA, born in Totnes on 15/12/1774, was in all likelihood a member of the Taylor family encountered earlier. He attended Exeter College Oxford, was ordained on 24/09/1797 and licensed the next day to serve first at Dartington. On 28/7/1799 he was ordained priest, and on 29/7/1799 he was licensed as Curate of Brent and assigned a stipend of '£50 a Year & Surplice fees'. But on 18/12/1799 he was moved for unknown reasons to be Curate of Ipplepen and assigned '£38 a year'.⁵⁷

1804: The Rev. John Huxham BA was born in Harberton on 29/7/1774 and after his ordination as deacon on 24/9/1797 he went to serve at Buckfastleigh. It appears that he was not ordained priest until 7/10/1804. The next day he was licensed as Curate of South Brent, and was allotted a stipend of '£45 a Year and Surplice fees'.⁵⁸

c.1805: The sale of the Advowson, and the 'perpetuity of the rectory'

We read, in the 1810 Addition to Tristram Risdon's book 'A Survey of Devon', page 384, that

'Lord Petre, about five years ago (*i.e.* c. 1805), sold off a great part of the manor of South Brent, to different purchasers. The remainder, with the manorial rights, remain in his Lordship's fee. The perpetuity of the rectory was sold to Rev. — Baker, who now resides at the parsonage.'

384	ADDITIONS TO RISDON'S
(162)	The manors of SOUTH HUISH and THURLESTON belong to Lord Courtenay.
(162)	The manor of SOUTH MILTON belongs to Mr. Walter Prideaux, attorney at law, Totnes. In this parish is <i>Horswell-house</i> , the seat of Mrs. Ilbert, relict of the late William Ilbert, Esq.
(163)	SOUTH BRENT. Lord Petre, about five years ago, sold off a great part of the manor of South Brent, to different purchasers. The remainder, with the manorial rights, remain his Lordship's fee. The perpetuity of the rectory was sold to the Rev. — Baker, who now resides at the parsonage.
THE ADVOWSON OF BRENT IS SOLD TO REV. MR. BAKER, c. 1805. (RISDON, 'ADDITIONS', 1810, p. 384)	

So in the years around 1805 Lord Petre sold off much of the manor land, though retaining some and also retaining his title of Lord of the Manor.

The 1811 edition of Risdon's, which includes the original book and the 1810 'Additions', uses the phrase 'the perpetuity of the rectory' three times (and 'the perpetuity of the living' once more); all four occurrences are in the 1810 'Additions' section.⁵⁹ The phrase is used to mean the advowson, that is the right to be the patron of the living of the parish. This was a valuable possession, because it enabled the holder to appoint a suitable ordained friend or relative to a lifelong post, which in some cases carried a guaranteed good income.

⁵⁵ The true patron of Ringmore in 1697 was Francis Kirkham.

⁵⁶ CCED 115272. Devon RO, Chanter 88 (Licence).

⁵⁷ CCED 146475. Devon RO, Chanter 88 (Licence).

⁵⁸ CCED 145161. Devon RO, Chanter 88 (Licence).

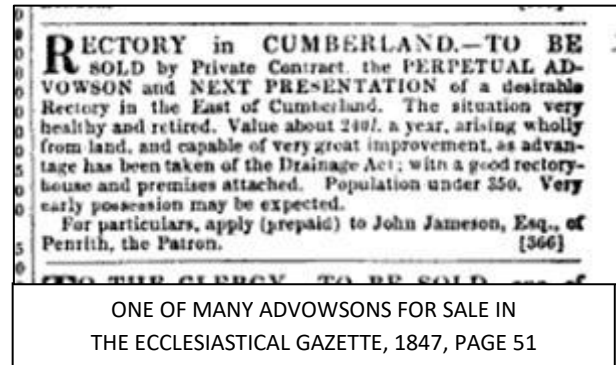
⁵⁹ Risdon's uses the phrase 'perpetuity of the rectory (or living)' on pages 384 (South Brent), 388 (Newton Ferrers), 411 (Stowford), and 423 (Horwood).

The first impression we get is that Lord Petre sold the perpetuity of the rectory to the Rev. Mr. Baker. However, we know this cannot be correct, because the advowson had been transferred in the 1700s to Sir William Pole, from whom it was passed to others, including Mr. John Taylor of Totnes.⁶⁰

Our first impression being wrong, we realise that Risdon (or more accurately his 1811 editors) meant that the advowson indeed was sold to the Rev. Mr. Baker, but not by Lord Petre; it was sold by the current patron, whether Dr. James Amyatt (who did not die until 24 June 1810), or Sir James Amyatt MP, or perhaps someone else to whom the advowson had been transferred. Mr. Baker was then able to present himself for institution as the next vicar of South Brent after Vicar John Amyatt died on 10 January 1810. Perhaps Risdon's is unclear and ambiguous because the editors themselves did not know who sold the advowson to Mr. Baker.

The Rev. Mr. Baker was sold 'the perpetuity of the rectory' before Vicar Amyatt vacated the vicarage.⁶¹ We remember that the Baker and Amyatt families knew each other well. By selling the advowson to Mr. Baker, the Amyatts ensured that when Vicar John Amyatt vacated the vicarage, Mr. Baker would become Vicar by presenting himself to become the next vicar.

Although the sale of advowsons is now no longer legal, it was quite common in the early part of the 19th Century. The purchase of an advowson meant that the owner acquired the right to present a person of their choice, such as an ordained son or other family member, to be the incumbent of that parish at the next vacancy, so assuring them a job and an income. In the adjacent excerpt from *'The Ecclesiastical Gazette'*, the phrase 'very early possession may be expected' indicates that the rector currently in post was of a very advanced age, as is stated explicitly in other adverts on the same page of the Gazette. Clergy often stayed in post into their 90s if they had no independent means to rely on in retirement, as pensions for retired incumbents had not yet been brought in and there was no compulsory retirement age. In my younger days I came across many vicars serving well into their eighties.⁶²



In 1806, although this escaped the notice of Risdon's editors, Lord Petre did also proceed to sell the Lordship of the Manor to Mr. John Elliott, probably the John Elliott of Port Elliott, Cornwall, and of Buckfastleigh.⁶³

1810: George Baker, Vicar. (CCED Person ID: 139475, but the link to South Brent is missing).

George Baker would have been born in c. 1776, since according to his memorial in the chancel he died in 1845 aged 69, so was about 34 years old when he became Vicar here. He seems therefore to be the George Baker who according to CCED⁶⁴ was baptized at Wolborough (just south of Newton Abbot) 17/5/1776; graduated BA from Sidney College Cambridge; made deacon 23/12/1798 by the Bishop of

⁶⁰ This is confirmed by the official Institution Records of the Church of England published online in the *Clergy of the Church of England Database (CCED)*.

⁶¹ 1810 Appendix to Risdon's Survey of Devon, p.384.

⁶² The Ecclesiastical Offices (Age Limit) Measure 1975, effective 1 January 1976, did finally introduce a compulsory retirement age of 70 for all parish clergy, but if clergy remained in the same office they held immediately before it came into force, they did not have to retire at 70 and could remain in that same office for as long as they wished, just as before. Later provisions now enable bishops to allow clergy to continue serving in charge of the same parish until age 75 in some circumstances.

⁶³ See the Faculties index in the Devon Record Office, Exeter. (An alternative identification is: 'Elliott, John, b. abt. 1777 in Rattery, Devon, England. Bap. 24 November 1777, father Richard Elliott, mother Joan Savery'. See <http://www.kaysway.org/elliott.htm>. Many Elliotts are listed on this website.)

⁶⁴ The *Clergy of the Church of England Database* (online resource).

Exeter to serve Shillingford (north of Tiverton); then ordained priest 17/5/1800 to serve Charlton (east of Kingsbridge). After a few years there he came to be Vicar of South Brent. As we have just noted, a few years before being instituted here he had bought the 'perpetuity of the rectory' (the advowson) of South Brent which made him the patron of the living.⁶⁵ Following the death of the Rev. John Amyatt in January 1810, he was therefore in a position to present himself to the bishop to become the next Vicar of South Brent.

It seems also that the Rev. George Baker was one of those to whom Lord Petre sold some of the manor lands and holdings he still owned. There are 15 properties appearing as 'Baker's Tenements' in the 1842 Tithe Apportionments, which list 18 named tenements in all, comprising a total of 305 holdings between them. These 'Baker's Tenements', held personally by Mr. Baker in his private name, are of course distinct from the other holdings held as Glebe numbering 111 holdings, which were his to farm or let out while he was Vicar. ('Holdings' includes all distinct holdings shown on the Tithe Map such as sheds and linhays or even wide hedges, as well as houses or fields).

The manor lands would be various holdings within the parish of Brent which were owned by Lord Petre as Lord of the Manor. Together with all other property within the parish boundary, except glebe, these holdings would have been liable, whoever owned or occupied them, to pay tithes to the lay rector—in the case of Brent that was initially Sir William Petre, until the tithes were all transferred to the vicar by the settlement in the 'Composition' of 1559 (see Appendix 1); the current Vicar effectively became the lay rector.

So George Baker was patron of the living, and Vicar, and, like the vicars before him since 1559, also the lay impropriator, or 'lay-rector' (receiving the tithes). Thus George Baker could technically be termed 'rector', as on the memorial to his daughter Anne;⁶⁶ but to see this written in church, certainly nowadays, is rather misleading, as most modern readers of the monument would probably conclude he was the (spiritual) Rector, i.e. instituted as Rector of the parish, with ministerial duties. The actual memorial to George Baker himself describes him accurately (and more appropriately) as 'Vicar of this parish'. But clearly he did think it sounded good to be known as 'Rector'. Both John Gandy and John Willcocks are described in their memorials as 'Rector' (see note under the Gandy / Willcocks memorial). Had this precedent made George Baker want to be ranked with these eminent predecessors of his? He is described correctly as Vicar in Cox's Clergy List 1841.

It is perhaps natural to enquire, why in Mr. Baker's time the condition of the church was allowed to depreciate so severely that it was attracting such unfavourable comment by the 1840s. But the problems were very serious and challenging, as later events would show, and solutions would not have been easy to come by or to afford, nor be capable of sudden implementation.

1829: The Rev. Frederic Merton Walter was probably already quite experienced as a priest when on 19/12/1829 he was licensed as Curate of Brent. He was assigned a stipend of 'Yearly Stipend of Fifty Pounds to be paid by the Vicar of the Parish Church of South Brent aforesaid, at four Quarterly Payments, by even and equal Portions. Together with the Surplice Fees'. He went on to serve as Curate of Modbury in 1831, and then of Townstall with St Saviour (Dartmouth) in 1834.⁶⁷

1831: The Rev. James Cottle MA LL.B. LL.D. was born in 1806 in Bemerton, near Salisbury, the parish where George Herbert served. In 1830 he married Sarah Wilmot, daughter of John Harington, Esq., of

⁶⁵ See the 1810 Appendix to Risdon's Survey of Devon, p.384.

⁶⁶ The memorial to Anne Holberton née Baker is considered on page 107.

⁶⁷ CCED 146595. Devon RO, Chanter 94 (Curates' licences).

Penzance. He was ordained deacon in 1831 and came to South Brent, with the 'yearly Stipend of Seventy pounds to be paid Quarterly, for serving the said Cure. And we require you to reside within the parish'. He was ordained priest in 1835. He was vicar of St Mary Magdalen, Taunton, 1840-9, and then Domestic Chaplain to Lord Ashburton. He became vicar of Trinity Church, Weymouth, in 1852, and died there in 1863, where he is buried.⁶⁸

1845: Nathaniel Cole, Vicar (CCED Record ID: 195243, but link to South Brent missing.)

He was born 21/3/1789, made deacon 28/10/1813 by the Bishop of Exeter to serve as curate at St. Thomas Exeter, then ordained priest 13/11/1814. He married Emmeline Mary Buchanan Morris, and they had five children: Jane Frances Cole (b. 6 Feb 1822, Whitestone, Devon), Emmeline Mary Cole (b. 22 Mar 1824, Whitestone, d.1891), Elizabeth Cole (b. 26 Mar 1826, Whitestone, d.1852), William Speare Cole (b. 26 (or 18?) Dec 1828, Whitestone, d.1905), and Henry Cole (b. 11 Oct 1829, Whitestone, d. 1890).

Nathaniel died 9 April 1866, his Will being proved 5 June 1866 by his daughter and eldest child Jane Frances Cole showing his effects as 'under £1,500'.

The value of the living in Nathaniel Cole's time was £906,⁶⁹ perhaps worth £100,000 in 2018. So, in Tristram Risdon's words, it was still 'A fat parsonage'.

Nathaniel was the father of the next Vicar, and he "was not only incumbent, but patron and appropriator of [the] great tithes in 1850",⁷⁰ just as George Baker before him was, as we have seen; so we can assume he bought or was given the advowson by the Rev. George Baker or his representative.

In the years that Nathaniel Cole was Vicar, the condition of the church was becoming even worse, and this occasioned repeated comment not only from the local Rural Dean, but also from the Archdeacon. The *Western Morning News* articles of 1870 and 1871 leave no doubt as to the extent of decay.⁷¹ There must have been some disarray in the parish as to what was to be done, especially with so fine a Rood Screen in far from fine condition. As the 1870 Restoration took place so very soon after Nathaniel's son succeeded him as Vicar, it is probably fair to conclude that they had worked together on preparing for the very extensive work that the Restoration would involve.

In the 1851 Census the Vicarage is listed between Wool Factory and Grist Mill – so presumably the Vicarage was then the present 'Manor House', the large house by L'Aune (the Avon).

1866: William Speare-Cole MA, Vicar. (Strictly, not hyphenated, but the hyphenated form became accepted.)

Born 18/12/1828, at Whitestone Exeter. Died 10/3/1905. Son of Nathaniel Cole (1789-1866) the previous Vicar and Emmeline Mary Buchanan Morris (1800-1878), and father of the next Vicar. A William Speare was a prebendary of Exeter Cathedral 1810-1812 (CCED), and might perhaps have been the source for his having been given the name Speare if his parents had known Prebendary Speare; this name was also passed on to the next generation through their elder son Howard, the next Vicar.

⁶⁸ CCED 140736. Devon RO, Chanter 95 (Curates' licences).

⁶⁹ White, 'History', 1831.

⁷⁰ Wall, 'A Portrait of South Brent', p. 25.

⁷¹ For the *Western Morning News* articles, see p. 63.

In *Crockford's Clerical Directory* for 1868, William is listed as 'COLE, W.S.'; South Brent is described as having as patron the Rev. N. Cole, who had in fact died in 1866; the Vicar's income was £890 (the largest incumbent's income on that whole page of *Crockford's*), and the population was given as 1205. In the 1874 *Crockford's*, he is listed as 'COLE, William Speare', educated at Exeter College Oxford, deacon 1852, priest 1853, and both Vicar and Patron of the parish; the Vicar's gross income from 'T.R.C.' (Tithe Rent-Charge) was £965 plus 32 acres of Glebe; and the population was 1449. But from the 1885 edition of *Crockford's* shown here we learn that there were now 30 acres of Glebe, and the population had dropped slightly to 1298; and that William had served as curate of Rattery.

<p>of South Brent, 1853-54.</p> <p>*COLE, William Speare, South Brent Vicarage, Ashburton, Devon.—Ex. Coll. Ox. 1851. ¶ 1852, ¶ 1853 by Bp of Ex. V. of S. Brent, Dio. Ex. 1866. (B, pres. V; Gl. 30 a. value 80l; T.R.C. 966l; Fees 3l; Gross Inc. 1049l; Net 858l and Ho; 6000 a; Ch. Accom. 500; Pop. 1298.) Formerly C. of Rattery, Devon; Sherford, Devon; Bedford Chap. Bloomsbury; Chilton, Sussex. [2]</p>
<p>W. S COLE IN CROCKFORD'S, 1885</p>

In noting the large income of the Vicar of Brent, we should also note that incumbents at this time usually paid greatly increased rates compared to the lay population around them, who were rated on the rental value of their home. Clergy were assessed not simply on the rental value of their accommodation, as others were, but on the gross income of their benefice, so that they paid rates as if the rental value of their house was equal to their entire income! This notorious injustice was eventually righted, but not after much suffering by clergy—the vast majority—on lesser incomes than Brent afforded.⁷²

William married Emily Bremer Howard (grand-daughter of Admiral Sir Gordon Bremer), and so it was from her that their eldest son got his Christian name Howard.⁷³ Their children, as we read from the memorial in church, were: Emily Elizabeth Mima Southey (née Cole) (1865-1913), Howard Speare Cole (1867-1933), Edith Buchanan Cole (1869), Henry Gordon Cole (1870), William Gordon Cole (1871), and Arthur Speare Cole (b. 3/7/1874).⁷⁴ The 'Gordon' came from Emily's kinship with Adml. Sir Gordon Bremer; and we notice that the name 'Speare' was not always given to the children.

In White's *Devon History* for 1890, 'Charles [sic] Speare Cole' [*Charles is an error; read William*] is described as appropriator of the great tithes, patron, and vicar.

Emily E M Cole married Arthur Howard Southey J.P. on 27 Feb 1883; in 1911 he is described as age 71, retired Army Captain, she is aged 45, 'of private means'. They had 9 children, of whom 4 had died by 1911. Their household in Norton Bavant, Hampshire, in 1911 included three of their children, two footmen, plus 7 other servants ...

1894: The Rev. Howard Speare-Cole, son of William, was working with his father as Curate of the parish, having first served as Curate of Holsworthy. As we know, he then went on to himself become Vicar in 1905.

<p>of South Brent, 1894-95; Bishopric 1896-97.</p> <p>*COLE, Howard Speare, South Brent, Ivy-bridge.—T.O.D.; B.A. 1892, M.A. 1896. ¶ 1893, ¶ 1895 Ex. C. of S. Brent, Dio. Ex. 1894. ¶ C. of Holsworthy, Devon, 1893-94.</p>
<p>H. S COLE IN CROCKFORD'S, 1898</p>

1898: The Rev. T.G. Carew was Curate at South Brent.⁷⁵

1905: Howard Speare-Cole MA, TCD, Vicar.

Born 1867, son of the above. The 1871 Census shows three households in the Vicarage house, so presumably it was still the large former Vicarage known today as 'Manor House', by L'Aune. The 1881

⁷² *Crockford's*, 1898, Preface. By acreage, Brent is the largest of all the parishes on the same page in the tables at the end of that edition.

⁷³ William and Emily were married in the Registration district of Kensington, 1864 Q4 1a183. On 'Bremer', see the index for Bremer, Adml. Sir Gordon.

⁷⁴ Information partly from Ancestry.com, and partly from Kays Way website. But note that the monument in South Brent church clearly gives Emily Elizabeth's third name as 'Mima', not 'Maria' (which is therefore an error in those sources).

⁷⁵ Listed in the table at the end of *Crockford's*, 1898.

Census describes him as a Scholar, in the 1891 Census he was a student at Trinity College, Dublin. From the 1898 *Crockford's* we see he was made deacon 1893, ordained priest 1895, and served as curate of Brent from 1894, with his father as Vicar, having formerly served a year as curate of Holsworthy. In the 1901 Census, he is described as a clergyman, living in the Vicarage with his father (the Vicar) and his mother. The 1908 *Crockford's* states that he is the patron of Brent as well as being Vicar. In the 1911 Census, he is shown as Vicar, and is described as single, living in the Vicarage with his mother and 2 servants. In 1910-11 he gave an acre of ground to be an additional church burial ground—what we know now as the '1910 Churchyard' (Kelly's Directory, 1923). He died June 1933 in Paddington.

1920: William Rankin Dunlop Elwell LCD, Vicar.

William Elwell was born the eleventh child of his parents in Weston super Mare on 21/4/1850, and his wife Ellen Hughes née Wood was born c. 1844; her father was Thomas Smith Wood, a non-conformist minister.⁷⁶ William and Ellen were married on 18/4/1876 in Weston super Mare. In 1881 he was a private school master in Weston Super Mare. In 1882, aged about 32, he entered the London College of Divinity to train for the ministry, being made deacon in 1884 and serving as curate of Aldbourne, in the diocese of Salisbury; then at Atworth, Wiltshire from 1887 to 1892, when he became rector of Stow-Bedon, Attleborough in the diocese of Norwich.

ELWELL, William Rankin Dunlop, Stow-Bedon Rectory, Attleborough.—Lon. Coll. of Div. 1882. π 1884 Bp Kelly for Sarum, p 1885 Sarum. R. of Stow-Bedon, Dio. Nor. 1892. (39, pres. R; T.R.O. 336l, av. 230l w 14 a of GL. val. 25l; Eccles. Comm. 14l; Gross Inc. 270l, Net 218l and Ho; Pop. 282.) \mathcal{J} C. of Aldbourne 1884-87; Atworth 1887-92.

W. R. D. ELWELL IN *CROCKFORD'S*, 1908

They had four children, Royston William Dunlop (born 26 Apr 1877 in Weston S Mare, died 1915), Edgar Moffat (born Oct 1878 in Weston S Mare, died 1947), Violet (born 11 Feb 1881 in Weston S Mare, died 1970), and Clarence (born Jul 1887 in Shaw, Wiltshire, died 1963). In 1907, Ellen herself died; William would have been aged about 57.

From 1910-1915 William was vicar of Chudleigh. On 7 June 1910 he swore an affidavit requesting a licence to marry Emilie Cowie, a widow, in her parish church in Kensington, and they married there later that month.⁷⁷ She was aged 67, and he was 60. She had been born in 1843 in St. Gluvias, Penryn, Cornwall as Emilie (or Emily) Mead, the daughter of a corn and flour merchant, later mill owner. She and her first husband George James Webster Cowie, a solicitor, were married in Shanghai China on 14 March 1868. In 1871 she was in Budock, near Penryn, with her parents. But she was soon out in the Far East again, and they had three children: George Selbourne (born c. 1873 in Shanghai; mentioned again below under vicar Gallagher), Mable Minnie (born c. 1874 in Budock Cornwall—so Emilie continued to come home occasionally), and William Russell (also born in Shanghai c. 1878). But in the 1881 Census, we learn that she was living as a widow then aged 36 in Tavistock with her three children plus a servant Mary Lavis. Her husband had died in 1879 in New York.

In the 1911 census, we see Vicar William aged 61 is living in Chudleigh as the Vicar there, "married under one year" (but his wife is not named in the Census return), "no children" resident, with three servants listed. From 1916-1919 (during World War I) he had permission to officiate in the diocese of Winchester.

When he was instituted on 26/4/1920 ⁷⁸ as Vicar of South Brent he was aged 70, so it is not surprising he served here only two or three years (a person aged 70 would not today be instituted to a living). In 1922, he presumably retired, as his son Clarence Elwell, born 1888 the son of his first marriage, was instituted as Vicar of South Brent.

⁷⁶ Details at <http://www.portbury-hundred.co.uk/trinitymarr.htm>

⁷⁷ Marriage index: Kensington, 1910 Q2 1a 211,

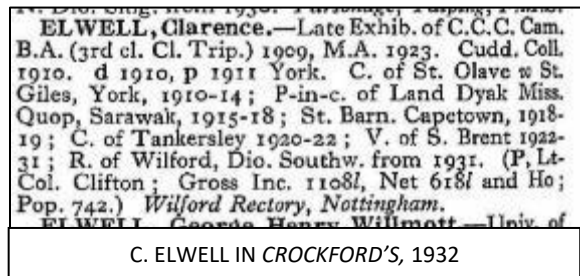
⁷⁸ The *South Brent Visitation Book* entry for 22 Mar 1920 (p.60) states that "the benefice is vacant at present"(!)

In 1923, the vicar's income was valued at £1041, a very good income; it also included 32 acres of glebe, and the vicarage was then in the gift of the patron Mrs Emilie Elwell, wife of former vicar William Elwell.⁷⁹ Perhaps she been given the advowson by her husband who like recent former vicars was also the patron; if he had become ill shortly after arriving in Brent, such action would ensure that if he were to die, then Clarence his son could become the next vicar. As it happened, both he and his wife lived on a good few years in retirement, Emilie dying in 1928 aged about 83, and he in 1932 aged about 82.

There seems to be no connection between the farm that stands near South Brent called Elwell (or Elwill), which is mentioned in the 1842 Tithe Apportionments, and the Elwell family, who had roots in West London and the area surrounding Corsham, Wiltshire.

1922: Clarence Elwell MA, Vicar.

Born 1888, son of the previous Vicar and his first wife Ellen Wood. He studied classics at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and trained for the ministry at Cuddesdon Theological College, Oxford (much more 'high-church' than the more evangelical London College of Divinity where his father trained). He and Mary Morely Wilson married in January 1915 when he was about 27. For three years shortly after their marriage



they served as missionaries in Quop, Sarawak; they would have sailed five years after his father married Emilie Cowie who had strong links with the Far East, as mentioned above. They had four children: Margary [sic] Stephanie (born 1916 in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia), Royston William Dunlop (born 1918 also in Kuching), John Hughes Morley (born 1919 in Cape Town, South Africa), and Oenone Edith (born 1920 in Yorkshire). Does anyone still remember the missionary interest in Malaysia that the Rev. Clarence Elwell might have encouraged in Brent? By exchange of benefices, Clarence moved in 1931 to become rector of Wilford; he died on 4 Jun 1963.

1923: the Rev. James Cory is recorded as living at Greenbank – was he acting as an assistant curate in the parish?⁸⁰

In 1931, the Rev. Clarence Elwell and the Rev. William Kilbride Gallagher, rector of Wilford in the diocese of Southwell, Nottinghamshire, exchanged benefices.⁸¹ Clarence died on 4/6/1963.

1931: William Kilbride Gallagher MA, Vicar.

The Rev. Mr. Gallagher, Vicar 1931-1945, was another of the Vicars of South Brent who had been to Exeter College Oxford. He trained for the ministry at Wycliffe Hall Theological College in Oxford (a less high-church college than Cuddesdon). He may be the earliest Vicar still clearly remembered today, as he is by Mrs. Renée Cranch, née Piper, a well-known senior member of the village, who was born here and still treasures the prayer book he gave her in memory of her Confirmation.

⁷⁹ 1923 information from Kelly's Directory 1923.

⁸⁰ Residence as given in Kelly's Directory, 1923. Other Cory family members are mentioned on p. 110.

⁸¹ For a report of this exchange of benefices, see p.71.

It is interesting to note in the attached text from *Crockford's* that the patron of the parish in 1932 is given as 'G. S. Cowie, Esq.' This will be the 'George Selbourne Cowie' we noted a few paragraphs above as the son of Emilie Cowie, who had herself as Mrs Elwell become patron of Brent. Presumably she had passed the advowson of South Brent on to him, perhaps in her Will when she died in 1928. In 1932 he would have been about 60.

<p>GALLAGHER, William Kilbride.—Ex. Coll. Ox. B.A. 1905, M.A. 1909. Wycl. Hall, Ox. 1906. d 1906, p 1907 Sarum. C. of Blandford Forum 1906-12; Sandringham w W. Newton and Babingley 1912-16; R. of Barton-in-Fabis 1916-20; Wilford 1920-31; V. of S. Brent, Dio. Ex. from 1931. (P. G. S. Cowie Esq; T.R.C. 975<i>l</i> w Gl. val. 9<i>l</i>; Q.A.B. 3<i>l</i>; Eccles. Comm. 228<i>l</i>; Fees 20<i>l</i>; o.s. 15<i>l</i>; Gross Inc. 125<i>l</i>; Net 1024<i>l</i> and Ho; Pop. 1601.) Vicarage, South Brent, Devon. (Tel. South Brent 47.)</p>
<p>W. K. GALLAGHER IN <i>CROCKFORD'S</i>, 1932</p>

The other abbreviations give the annual income of the vicar; from the Tithe Rent Charge (£975), Glebe land (yielding £9), Queen Anne's Bounty⁸² (£3), Ecclesiastical Commissioners (£228), Fees (£20), and Other Sources (£15), Net income £1024, (again the largest on that page of *Crockford's*). The Population of Brent is now 1601. And the vicarage has a telephone!

1945: Ivor K. Jones, Vicar.

Details about Mr. Jones have not yet been found – can anyone provide information?

1950: A. Lawrence Vesey, Vicar.

In the early 1950s Mr. and Mrs. Vesey were involved in a very bad road traffic accident whilst on holiday in Gothland on the North Yorks Moors. Mrs. Vesey was injured more seriously, but both recovered. In 1961-63 Mr. Vesey served as Rural Dean for the area. He retired from South Brent on 31 August 1971. During the time Mr. Vesey was the Vicar here, his son Peter died in the course of a sailing expedition with a friend. In 1972, shortly after Vicar Vesey left, the north east Lych Gate was refurbished in Peter's memory, and a suitable plaque was placed there which we can see today.

Both Mr. Vesey (who died in 1988) and Mrs. Vesey (who died in 1993) are buried in the 1910 cemetery.⁸³

1971: L. Michael Malsom, Vicar.

Before coming to Brent, the Rev. Michael Malsom was Vicar of Harberton. He was made Rural Dean during his time there, and after moving to South Brent he continued as Rural Dean until 1974. After leaving Brent, he went to St. Marychurch, Torquay, and finally to The Church of the Ascension in Plymouth, before retiring to St. Mellion, Cornwall.⁸⁴

1977: David Niblett, Vicar.

He was the last Vicar to occupy what is now Church House. After he left, the Vicarage then became the present modern house in Hillside next to the Victorian house now known as The Firs. (See below).

In 1992,

The benefice of South Brent and the benefice of Rattery became a united Benefice, so that one clergyperson was appointed as the incumbent of both.

The parishes themselves continued with distinct and separate legal identities, keeping their own Churchwardens, Parochial Church Councils, financial responsibility, etc.

Vicars of South Brent and of Rattery:

1992: John Harper, Vicar.

⁸² Queen Anne's Bounty was a scheme established in 1704 to augment the incomes of the poorer clergy of the Church of England. How it came to benefit South Brent, which was far from a 'poorer' living, is unclear. The functions and assets of Queen Anne's Bounty were merged with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1947 to form the Church Commissioners.

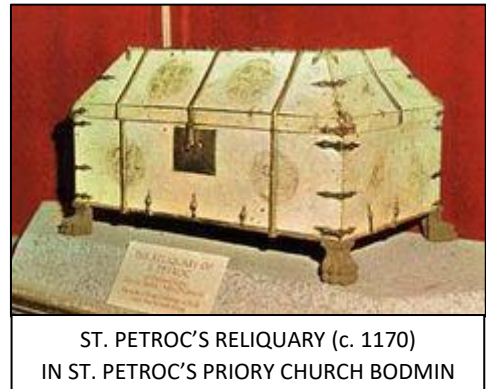
⁸³ Thanks to Mr. Greg Wall for additional information about Mr. & Mrs. Vesey (personal communication).

⁸⁴ Thanks to Mr. Greg Wall for a personal communication giving this information about Mr. Malsom.

Mr. Harper was the first Vicar to occupy as a Vicarage the modern house that stands back from the road in Hillside in the same grounds as the Victorian house now called 'The Firs'. It was bought from Mr. Roger Cockings (sometime Churchwarden) and Mrs. Hilary Cockings, who had completed the building of it and lived there for some years.

2000: David R. Winnington-Ingram, Vicar, (resigned 2017).

Mr. Winnington-Ingram led several parties of parishioners on pilgrimage visits to Taizé (the inspiring ecumenical community near Lyons in France founded by Brother Roger Schütz). He also led visits to Bodmin to view the reliquary there which is famous for having held the bones of St. Petroc. It is said that 'Petroc died at Treravel, while travelling between Nanceventon (Little Petherick) and Llanwethinoc (Padstow), and was buried at Padstow. The monks there later removed themselves, along with Petroc's body, to Bodmin where his Norman casket reliquary can be seen. His relics were secreted out of the country in 1177 and Henry II intervened to get them returned. In reparation, William, Bishop of Coutances, presented to the Cornish people a fine ivory reliquary.'⁸⁵



2018: The Dart and Avon Team Ministry was formed.

In 2018, after a period of consultation, it was decided that a new Team Ministry should be formed, to be named "The Dart and Avon Team Ministry" and to comprise the parishes of St. Petroc's South Brent, St. Mary's Rattery, and the parishes that were at that time part of the Dart Valley Team Ministry.

Known as "The Dart and Avon Mission Community", this therefore includes the two larger communities of Buckfastleigh (with St. Luke's Church) and South Brent (with St. Petroc's Church), together with the smaller communities of Dean Prior (St. George the Martyr Church), Landscope (St. Matthew's Church), Littlehempston (St. John the Baptist Church), Rattery (the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary) and Staverton (St. Paul de Leon Church).

The Team Ministry was established with the posts of Team Rector and Team Vicar, and the expectation that there would usually also be one or two Curates. They are joined by volunteers such as Readers, who are licensed by the Bishop, and by retired Clergy who hold the Bishop's Permission to Officiate.

The Team Rector has overall responsibility in the Team, and is involved with the parishes of Buckfastleigh, Dean Prior, Landscope, Littlehempston and Staverton. The Team Vicar focusses mostly on the parishes of South Brent and Rattery.

2019: Gina Radford, FRCP, FFPH, Team Vicar.

The Rev. Professor Gina Radford was until March 2019 a 'self-supporting' (i.e. non-stipendiary, not receiving any stipend as pay) priest in East Anglia, and one of the two Deputy Chief Medical Officers for England, from which post she then retired.

On 12 June 2019 she was licensed as Team Vicar for South Brent and Rattery by the Rt. Rev. Robert Atwell, Bishop of Exeter, at a welcome service in St. Petroc's Church, and became the 46th known Vicar of South Brent.

⁸⁵ 'Padstow' is 'Petrocstowe'. See <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/328410997812771423/> - retrieved 14 Dec 2019.

Chapter 10

Renovation Work in 2016; and later events

I am feeling rather unsure what should go in this chapter ... or even if this chapter should exist at all!

I've got some photos of the church while it was full of scaffolding, and some close-ups taken from the top of the scaffolding inside church, giving a very unusual perspective. This was due to the kindness of the clerk of works taking me up there. Also he took me up the scaffolding round the outside of the tower, with some close-up photos of ancient stonework ...

But as opinions vary on how successful the water excluding measures for the tower actually proved to be, it may not be appropriate to comment. What do you think?

Perhaps there is a case for some comment on the universally welcomed improvement in the lighting of the building. Would anyone (perhaps a PCC member?) feel like having a go at a description of the improvements made?

Do we need this item on **the old Cedar Tree**? What do you think?

The Cedar of Lebanon

Shortly after midnight on the morning of Wednesday 16 October 2019, the huge Cedar of Lebanon tree suddenly fell. This photograph from September 2014 reminds us how majestic a tree it was in its later years. It has overshadowed the eastern part of the churchyard for so long, and it is a sad loss to the churchyard and to the village as a whole. Fortunately, no-one was hurt, and very little damage was caused to the church building. Only two or three old gravestones were damaged, but in any case, all the stones in that area of the churchyard were transcribed early in 2019.



On 16 October the churchyard suddenly looked very different. Gravestones visible and undamaged in this second photo can be seen in the earlier photo. The path from the north-east lychgate was completely blocked. It is not surprising perhaps that so old a tree might fall. It had received remedial tree surgery in previous years, nevertheless its collapse was unpredicted. Down it came with a crash that woke nearby residents some time after midnight, on a night of little wind but very heavy rainfall. As to who planted the tree, or when, there seems to be no clear record; but



judging from where it stood, in the raised eastern walled section of the churchyard, it may possibly date from the 1820's or thereabouts.

Another photo also taken the same day shows how near the falling tree came to hitting the east end of the church building. Amazingly, no serious damage was done. No windows were broken or stonework damaged, only a short section of guttering was swept down, and a few headstones knocked over.



It is providential that the tree fell when the risk to people walking in the churchyard was small. Had it happened at some other time, the consequences could have been extremely serious.

Another photo, taken from the east churchyard wall by the road, shows the view looking west. The east end of the church building can just be picked out through the broken branches.



It was thought that morning that a crane might be needed to remove the tree most efficiently, and this indeed proved to be true. In the days following, many villagers came to see the sad sight of the fallen tree lying in the churchyard, and then to see it being expertly cut up and carted away. The churchyard will look different for ever. Although the majestic old cedar is very sadly missed, after a few months many people were saying how much they liked the openness and light that now floods the churchyard and brightens the inside of the church building.

A slice from the lower trunk of the tree is to be kept and after an appropriate period of drying, it will be displayed permanently in church.

The Rowan Tree near the Church Room door

Only a short time later, on Saturday 2 November 2019, the Rowan tree near the Church Room was discovered fallen. Again, no-one was hurt, and no serious damage was done to the Church Room or the adjacent Church House—even the small window just visible in this photograph escaped intact.



Ground levels in the Churchyard

The present (private) 'Church House' just south of the churchyard is an ancient building incorporating the remains of the medieval Manor House. When we compare the ground level of the house and its garden with the level of the adjacent churchyard, we see how over the centuries burial and re-burial can raise the land surface very considerably. This effect probably also partly explains the low level of the old Saxon work under the Tower compared to the ground surrounding it. The rest of the church was clearly built on land that naturally rose gently towards the east, but the Saxon ground level under the Tower is in fact quite near the level of the path that leads on down to Millswood Mill and *The Island*. The re-digging that caused ground levels to rise was stopped when permanent gravestones became the custom and

graves were not constantly re-dug. But it is instructive to compare ground levels in the churchyard with those of any of the surrounding land to the south or west; and especially to the south-east. There the old stone retaining wall, which is a listed structure in its own right, shows how the churchyard earth level has risen, even though it may well have been given extra height at some point, probably well before the opening of the 19th century. The paths within the churchyard also show this effect in places, as the land either side of them got re-used but they were not raised to match.

Postscript

A Church for Today, and a Church for Tomorrow ...

One of the most striking features in the story of St. Petroc's and its people is a clear boldness to make change. We have observed this at so many points in its history. All down the years, St. Petroc's people were prepared to make alterations, some of them very substantial and costly, to adapt the building and what they did in it to the new circumstances of life in Brent.

The evidence we have surveyed has shown how the relatively small and simple Saxon building, a cross-shaped structure with the central tower, became a much larger rectangular church—much more flexible for the uses which the mediaeval village then required. It was further extended, perhaps as the population grew, until by the mid 1400s it was approximately the shape we see today. Some things were then added—such as the Rood Screen and Rood Loft, the West Gallery, and the box pews—and then removed again. During the course of all these years it was beautified with other elaborate and fine workmanship, which was all (or almost all) then radically removed when it was past its best or no longer suitable for purpose. Countless meetings of vicars, churchwardens and people will have taken place to ponder the latest problems, consider alternative actions, and seek God's wisdom in charting the way forward.

Conservation, in the narrow sense of mere preservation, has not been the tradition of St. Petroc's.

The people of St. Petroc's and South Brent are their descendants today. What must St. Petroc's do now to adapt to current needs? What different things should we be doing, and what changes should we be making to the building that we cherish, so that we can take our part in this procession of the faith-full?

How ought our worshipping be renewed? What new forms of ministering are required to meet the needs of today's residents? How can the community of the church and the community of the village overlap more strongly together? What concerns of the local population ought the church take up and champion? Who are the poor of today and what do they need? Who are the rich of today and what could they do? The task of easing need and relieving poverty was addressed by the founding Feoffees all those years ago: what should be done now? And—since each of us is both poor and rich in different ways—what sort of interactive community should the church model to society?

What changes are now appropriate for the building of St. Petroc's? What advantages for the village would result from some radical changes to the interior?—none probably so radical as the changes done in 1870 were felt to be! What different possibilities would arise if all the congregational pews were removed (again), and the resulting large flat flexible open space made available for events 'in the round'? How might worship be enhanced if more space was available at the chancel step? How would people react if seating were more comfortable, and chairs could be arranged to suit the event? What musical celebrations would seek out such an adaptable space—provided there was no more carpet to spoil the acoustics! And what village meetings could then take place in what would be easily the largest flexible gathering space in the village?

What are the dynamic and human characteristics of a "Church for Today"? What are the personal challenges to be flexible and adaptable that face today's congregation? How does the inspiration of living faith equip us to be spiritual in a material world? How does the Good News of Jesus Christ transform thinking on these subjects?

How can the "Ancient Treasure, Living Church" that is St. Petroc's be a Church for Today? And a Church for Tomorrow?

POSTSCRIPT

APPENDIX 1

The Text of the 1559 ‘Composition’ restructuring the financing of Brent Vicarage.

The Latin text of Bishop James Turbevill’s 1559 ‘Composition’ is available in the 1846 book ‘Monasticon Diœcesis Exoniensis’. It was written by the Rev. George Oliver, an English Roman Catholic priest, and can be viewed on-line.¹

The vital words, about a third of the way through the text below, are shown **in bold**; they brought the agreement into effect immediately after the festival of Michaelmas (September 29) in 1559. The implications are discussed in the earlier chapter on Finance, Tithes and Property.

**Direction concerning the Vicarage of Brent
(Bishop James Turbevill's register, fol. 48.)**

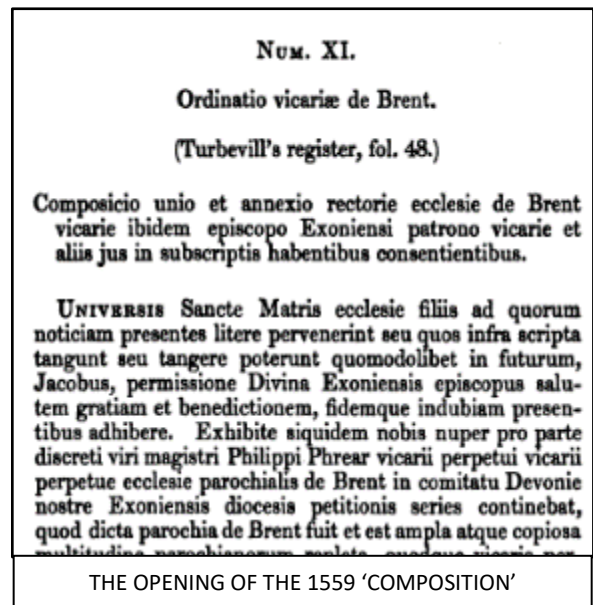
A composition, union and annexation of the rectory of the church of Brent, and of the vicarage by the Bishop of Exeter, and the patron of the vicarage, and other persons whose names are written below as having given their permission and consented to this agreement.

TO ALL sons of Holy Mother church to whom notice of these present letters will come or whom what is written below affect or will be able to affect in some way in the future, James, by Divine permission bishop of Exeter Greeting grace and blessing, and sure trust to adhere to the present document.

Since the presentation to us recently on the part of that distinguished man, master [*i.e.* ‘Master of Arts’ = M.A.] Philip Phrear, perpetual² Vicar of the perpetual vicarage of the parish church of Brent in the county of Devon in our diocese of Exeter, containing a series of petitions

—that the said parish of Brent was and is large and filled with an abundant number of parishioners, and that the perpetual vicarage of that church was and is so poor and meagre in its past and prospective revenues, that it is not enough to maintain the Vicar who personally holds the cure of souls of those same parishioners, so that unless by a sufficient increase in income of that vicarage a secure future can truly be foreseen as soon as possible, the result will be that the said vicarage and the cure of souls of the parishioners by a suitable shepherd may be abandoned—

for this reason a petition was humbly made to us on behalf of the same Philip Phrear, the aforesaid Vicar, that, having taken due account of the arguments put forward, we should agree to provide for him and his successors out of a sufficient increase in income for a larger maintenance of the said Vicar who will show zealous service.



¹ See Acknowledgements on page 5 for the help I received from Sir Michael Partridge with this document. I take responsibility for occasional deviations made from the English translation I received from him, to make it more easily readable (although a less strictly accurate translation perhaps); also, I was able to recognise some technical ecclesiastical terms.

² In former times, once a ‘Perpetual’ Vicar was instituted, he could not be removed by the nominating patron; but if not ‘perpetual’, he had no security of office, and could be summarily removed.

As a result of which we, the aforementioned bishop, having sure and certain knowledge of the truth of the facts put forward and foretold—as much from public report and the account of trusted witnesses as from the evidence of our own eyes, and on that account reflecting on the reason for making an increase in the income—

we initiated a communication with those respected men, the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral of Christ in Oxford, of the foundation of King Henry the Eighth, the rectors and proprietors³ of the said parish church of Brent, and we held a conversation and a discussion with them on that subject.

And they, after carefully weighing up the arguments contained in the facts put forward and in the petition forecasting the future, finally, after various shared discussions and mature deliberations held on that subject, for the preservation of the boon of reconciliation and friendship on this account for ever, and especially in order that the aforesaid cure of the vicarage may be more zealously served, to the honour of God and the edification of the said parishioners, by the mediating counsellors and friends in the community,—

and also through the advice, goodwill and expressed consent of that distinguished man Sir William Petre, knight, the true and undoubted personal patron of the said Vicarage, by our established decree— they have all of their own free will agreed to the regulation and authorisation of the increase in income for the aforesaid vicarage and to the assignment of the same share amongst all the parties;⁴

We therefore, James the aforesaid bishop, gratefully accepting the agreements and undertakings of this kind by the aforesaid parties, made through their properly appointed representatives in our presence,⁵ and with their express agreement to our giving publicity to the decision and regulation on this matter and to making public our decision and regulation of this kind and to giving effect to it straightaway for those seeking and asking for it, after the rights of these matters have been aired, examined and understood for the first time by us, and the issues have been considered and the legal arguments on this subject considered, and from and with the advice of those skilled in the law, with whom we have also had careful and full discussion and deliberation on this subject, as well as considering and reflecting on the saying of the apostle that it is only right that he who serves the altar ought to be given life by the altar,⁶ so we have decided to publicise in this manner our aforementioned regulation and decision in the name of Christ and we are proceeding in the manner that follows.

First, to wit, **we the aforesaid bishop grant the rectory of the aforesaid parish church of Brent, together with all and several its tithes, rights and benefits both spiritual and temporal belonging to it whatsoever, to the said master Philip Phrear, Vicar of the same for the time being, and his successors whatsoever in the same vicarage for all time in the future,** forever and unchallengedly holding, retaining and possessing the rights of the aforesaid vicarage in form and manner, and we add and confirm the increase in income of the aforesaid vicarage; so that, provided immediately after the next feast day of Saint Michael the Archangel which will be in the year of our Lord 1559 master Philip Phrear the said present Vicar will be in lawful possession of that same vicarage—or if not, his future successor who then becomes Vicar—he can come into that same rectory, with all the tithes, rights and benefits whatsoever pertaining and belonging to it, and can receive and acquire true and actual possession of the same, and can make charges and arrange for the use, convenience and benefit of it and of them, and employ, enjoy and rejoice in them for ever;

under the following conditions, however, and not otherwise and in no other way, that is, the aforesaid Vicar and whoever else is his successor as Vicar, in view of the increase in income and of the additional

³ Christ Church Cathedral Oxford could be described as the ‘rectors and proprietors’ of Brent as, having been granted all the tithe income by Sir William, they were until this Composition collecting in the tithes.

⁴ Shared, in the sense that both Christ Church and Sir William were hereby renouncing rights to the income of the rectory.

⁵ Clearly a meeting was held by the Bishop with the authorised representatives of all parties present on the date subscribed.

⁶ The nearest apostolic saying to this is that of St. Paul who wrote: “In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel” — 1 Corinthians ch. 9 v. 14.

funds of this kind and of the other prepayments, will pay or cause to be paid the sum of £20⁷ of lawful English money annually and in perpetuity from the revenues of the same, to the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church of Christ in Oxford of the foundation of King Henry the Eighth—and to their future successors dean and chapter every year in future for ever—well and faithfully at that same cathedral church at the two usual terms of the year, namely, at the feast of the annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of Saint Michael the Archangel in equal shares for the use of the aforesaid church.

Next, we wish, decree and determine that the aforesaid respected men, the Dean and Chapter of the same Cathedral Church, both those present and their future successors whoever they may be, will protect and defend, insofar as it will be right, the abovenamed master Philip Phrear, both the present Vicar of Brent aforesaid and the future successors to the same vicarage, whoever they may be, in quiet and peaceable possession of the rectory, tithes, rights and benefits aforesaid from time to time and as need demands.

Next, we decree and determine that if in the unlikely event it happens in future that whether through fault, oversight or negligence the annual payment by this Vicar of the £20 aforementioned is limited or owed in whole or in part, being unpaid in arrears after one of the aforementioned feast days by which it ought to have been paid, then in that case we wish and ordain that, six weeks having elapsed from whatever feast or term on which it should have been paid as aforesaid, at the next following feast day the Vicar who then for the time being has been remiss and negligent in paying—for every month after the said six weeks have passed for which he continues to defer payment—shall forfeit, lose and pay £20 in English money to the said Dean and Chapter by way of penalty, provided that no more than three months shall have passed in delay of this kind:

And if the Vicar, those said three months having passed, shall have persisted in his negligence of this kind, and in the aforesaid delay in payment, then or at any other time thereafter in the judgment of the said Dean and Chapter and of their successors, it is our wish and ordinance that it is and shall be good and lawful for the same Dean and Chapter and their successors and their appointed agent or agents whomsoever in this matter to effect entry and re-entry into that rectory⁸ and its aforesaid tithes, rights and benefits with impunity, and to retain possession of them for themselves until such time as so much of the aforesaid annual payment and its arrears and of the said penalty and of the monies incurred and expended by cause and reason of the delay shall be recovered to the full satisfaction of the same Dean and Chapter.

Now, if the aforesaid Vicar or any of his successors, after an entry of this kind has been made and possession taken by the said Dean and Chapter and their successors or their agent or agents within the time of one whole year following after such an entry, has not fully paid both the payment and the arrears together with the monetary penalties and forfeitures owed to the said Dean and Chapter, then we wish, decree and determine that this our regulation shall be held to be null and void; but that the said Dean and Chapter and their successors shall in this event be, and shall remain, in their original possession of the said rectory and all its rights and belongings in perpetuity.⁹

Further: We wish and ordain that the perpetual Vicar of the said perpetual vicarage, who will be presented to the same vicarage when its next vacancy arises in whatever way that occurs, and is installed in the same—and his successor perpetual vicars—will be required within one year from the time of his installation in and from that same vicarage by way of precepts, collections or possessions to pay and give satisfaction faithfully and for all time the sum of £3 6s 8d of the lawful money of England to the said Dean and Chapter and to their successors Deans and Chapters in the name of this acknowledged concession.

⁷ On this £20, see comment after the translation.

⁸ i.e. regain possession of the income of the rectory.

⁹ It appears that down the years the vicars always made all the prescribed payments, whether on time or late. So the augmentation of the vicarage was never made void, and Vicars of Brent received the full tithes. The annual £20 payments to the Dean and Chapter of Oxford were made, it seems, right through to the time of the Rev. William Speare-Cole in the late 1800s. See the comment following the text of Appendix 1.

And if in future a fault occurs either of delay in paying the said sum of £3 6s 8d, or else in the monetary penalty imposed in respect of an unpaid debt and a said payment held back and delayed longer than is reasonable, contrary to the manner of our present ordinance, as often will happen to occur, it is and shall be lawful for the said Dean and Chapter and for their successors and said agent or agents to effect an entry with impunity into that rectory with its tithes, rights and benefits for themselves until such time as he shall have repaid as much of the said £3 6s 8d and said penalty and arrears and also of the expenses incurred by reason of the non-payment of the debt as shall fully satisfy the aforesaid Dean and Chapter.

and if, within the time of one year following such an entry, the payment and arrears and monetary penalties and forfeitures and said debts owed to the Dean and Chapter have not been fully repaid, then we wish and decree that this our regulation shall be null and void: but that the Dean and Chapter and their successors shall be, and shall remain, in their original possession of the aforesaid rectory with its rights and all its belongings for ever;

in this case we pronounce and decree that the said Dean and Chapter in the aforesaid rectory should be freed from our regulation for the better increase of the income of the aforesaid vicarage for its fuller life and hospitality (from which whichever Vicar happens to be there at the time is able to offer fit hospitality), then the aforesaid Dean and Chapter by the said rectory or by some other suitable means should find church funds to support the incumbency.¹⁰

And if any doubt should arise on this our present regulation or a substantial query comes to light on its powers or authority, we reserve for the present time the task of uncovering and interpreting the doubt or the query to the Lord Chancellor of England.

To bear witness to the pledge and witness of all and several of the aforementioned parties we have caused and taken care to arrange for the present tripartite letters of witness to be put together, and for them to be joined together with the appending of our seal, the common seal, and the seals of the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church of Oxford and those of the aforementioned patron and Vicar.

anno domini pro tempore consecrationis per presentes. In quorum omnium et singulorum fidem et testimonium premissorum presentes literas testimoniales tripartitas superinde fieri easque tam sigilli nostri quam sigilli communis sive capitularis decani et capituli ecclesie cathedralis Oxoniensis predictae necnon sigillorum patroni et vicarii prenominatorum appensione communiri fecimus et curavimus. Datum quoad sigilli nostri hujusmodi appensionem quinto die mensis Maii anno Domini 1559 et nostre consecrationis anno quarto.

FINAL PART OF THE 1559 ‘COMPOSICIO’

Given under the appending of our seal on the fifth day of the month of May in the year of the Lord 1559 and in the year of our consecration the fourth.

[The seal of the dean and chapter of Christ Church was affixed on the same day, and also that of Sir William Petre and Philip Phreare; and evidently three ‘letters of witness’ were made, presumably for the parties represented to take away.]

Comments:

This ‘Composition’ represents a remarkable act of generosity by the Dean and Chapter of Oxford and also of course by Sir William Petre who doubtless had initiated it, see the following paragraph. The result was that the income of the Vicar of Brent rose in 1559 to about £120 p.a. (worth about £55,000 p.a. in 2018 money).

The sum of £20 required to be paid annually by the Vicar to the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church of Christ, Oxford, appears to be a substitute for the annuity of £20 (or conceivably a supplement to it) that Sir William had granted to Christ Church immediately after receiving the Papal Bull of 28 November 1555

¹⁰ The exact meaning and implication of the text of this sub-paragraph (‘in this case’ ... ‘incumbency’) is obscure. Possibly it means that in the event of the failure just outlined the Dean and Chapter should find another way to augment the vicarage.

which explicitly absolved him from any possible ecclesiastical censure for having benefited from receiving church lands. He also granted Christ Church a similar sum of £20 from the rectory of Hawkhurst in Kent. This Bull by Pope Paul IV is unique in being I believe the only papal muniment received by an individual owner of former church property to confirm him and his heirs for ever in their possessions. It refers to ten manors and several small properties, other than South Brent.

Sir William was prudent to have sought and obtained this 1555 dispensation. The Roman Catholic Queen Mary reigned from 1553-1558 and had re-established Roman Catholicism in the country. In seeking it, he had declared his readiness to apply the income from his rectories to spiritual purposes, regardless of the religious preferences of the current monarch: before 1559 he had given substantially to Christ Church Cathedral Oxford, now he helps support the vicarage of South Brent.

In truth, Petre was only a minor beneficiary of church land. By the time of his death he had spent over £7,000 on properties in Devon, Somerset and Dorset, out of a total lifetime net expenditure on lands of £22,000. Holding seventeen manors, he owned more than 20,000 acres in the West Country, and almost as much again in Essex. By the time of his death he had made extensive grants and endowed fellowships at several Oxford Colleges.¹¹

¹¹ See further, Emmison, 1961, pp. 185f, 268ff. The Wikipedia article ‘William Petre’ gives a biography and record of his educational and charitable foundations.

APPENDIX 2

NAMES in the SOUTH BRENT TITHE MAP APPORTIONMENTS

The Tithe system was an essential feature of village life throughout England, and of local involvement with the parish church. As we have discovered earlier, it played an especially unusual part in South Brent, with the assignment of the tithe income in full to the Vicar by means of the 1559 'Composition', which rescued him from abject poverty and delivered him into quite unnecessary wealth, the direct result of the exceptionally large area of the parish, more than 10,000 acres (4,100 hectares) of productive farmland. Some Vicars of Brent used this income well, endowing local charities such as the Feoffees and founding education in the village. For example, as well as those noted elsewhere as helping the Feoffees and setting up particular charities, we read that the Rev. Dr. Gandy was generous and thoughtful "in the works of charity and hospitality all the residue of his days".¹ The Revd. William Speare Cole was clearly very generous, in paying personally for the complete re-ordering of the part of the church building east of the chancel arch, which cost upwards of a hundred thousand pounds in today's money. But others perhaps became the victims of their wealth, in ways not unfamiliar to us across society today.

Down the years, landowners and their tenants were all involved in delivering their tithes, until the system was recognised as being so unsuited to purpose that it was thoroughly surveyed and reformed in the 1840s and subsequently. The tithe system no longer operates today.

An alphabetical list of all personal names found in the almost 5000 entries in the South Brent 1842 Tithe Map Apportionments follows, giving the frequency with which each person is mentioned, whether as owner or as occupier of portions of land (sometimes very small portions, as even hedges were separately listed). The names of corporate bodies follow the individual names. The Tithe Map itself is briefly discussed on page 92.

No attempt has been made to correct possible errors or spelling mistakes, except as noted in footnotes. For further details, consult the Tithe Map itself, and the Apportionments.²

Individuals:

ABBOTT Robert (6), **ADAMS** Aaron (89), **ADAMS** John (89), **ADAMS** Mary (89), **ALLEN** John (95), **ANDREW** Mildred (39), **ANDREWS** Andrew (4), **ANDREWS** Grace (94), **ANDREWS** Henry (15), **ANDREWS** Richard (6), **ANTHONY** Grace (57), **ARTHUR** Richard (96), **BAKER** George (Reverend) (223), **BAKER** George (Reverend) (Glebe)³ (111), **BIDLAKE** Christopher (46), **BIDLAKE** Christopher {apparently another of the same names} (122), **BLANKLEY** Edward (22), **BLATCHFORD** Faithful (6), **BOON** Eliza (2), **BOON** Stephen (134), **BOWERMAN** Margaret (36), **BOYER** John (10), **BOYER** Richard (7), **BRADRIDGE** Mary (20), **BRADRIDGE** William (79), **BROOKING** John (9), **BROOKING** Philemon (112), **BROOKING** William (4), **BULLER** John Buller Yard (Sir)⁴ (114), **BUTTER** John (M.D.) (531), **BUTTER** John (4), **CALLARD** John (24), **CAREW** Elizabeth (Lady) (766), **CAREW** Walter (Sir) (13), **CLANCY** John (5), **CODD** John (92), **COLE** James (junior) (39), **COLE** James (senior) (74), **COLE** John (1), **COLE** Robert (5), **CORNISH** James (232), **CORNISH** William (8), **CRANCH** John Roope (88), **CROSSING** John (91), **CROSSING** Thomas (36), **CUMMING** John (30), **CUMMING** Richard (89), **CUMMING** Robert (94), **CUMMING** William (12), **CUTMORE** Henry (78), **CUTMORE** William (49), **EARL** Joseph (17), **EARL** Joseph (junior) (62), **EARLE** Joseph (18), **EARLE** William (5), **EDMONDS** John (12), **ELLIOTT** James (196), **ELLIOTT** John (432), **FARLEY** John (6), **FARLEY** Richard (3), **FOOT** William (8), **FORD** Peter (44), **FORD** Thomas (108), **FURNEAUX** Christopher (4), **FURNEAUX** William (231), **GARLAND** James

¹ Prince, 'Worthies', page 399; see image on page 107 above.

² Search on-line for 'South Brent Tithe Map' for the very high quality images and further information available there.

³ 'GLEBE' land:—Glebe land is mentioned under the above entry 'BAKER George (Reverend) (Glebe)'. It was land in a parish that was the property of the vicar for him to control, use and/or manage but only while he was vicar; it did not belong to him in his private capacity, and after he ceased to be the vicar it passed automatically into the control of his successor as vicar. (Nowadays all former parochial Glebe land is managed professionally by each diocese.) Other entries appearing under ministers' names which omit mention of 'Glebe' therefore refer to them in their private capacity, whether as owner or as occupier.

⁴ 'Sir John Buller Yard BULLER' (as in the Apportionment) was more correctly Sir John BULLER-YARDE-BULLER.

(2), **GIDLEY** Jane (3), **GIDLEY** Mary (23), **GIDLEY** Sarah (6), **GLANDFIELD** George (13), **GOODMAN** Henry (319), **GOODMAN** James (31), **GOODMAN** Susan (13), **GURRIDGE** George (20), **HALSE** William (8), **HAMLIN** John (101), **HAMLIN** Thomas (108), **HANNAFORD** Henry (5), **HANNAFORD** James (9), **HANNAFORD** Samuel (19), **HANNAFORD** William (2), **HANNAFORD** William Knott (19), **HARD** Richard (43), **HARLEY** William (30), **HARRIS** John (4), **HARVEY** William (5), **HEATH** Henry (22), **HEATH** John (8), **HEATH** Richard (13), **HEATH** Roger (2), **HEATH** William (77), **HEWETT** John (4), **HEXT** Quintin (143), **HEXT** Thomas (43), **HINGSTON** Peter (78), **HOARE** Henry (52), **HOCKBLOCK** William (31), **HORRELL** Margaret (6), **HORRELL** William (6), **HORSWELL** John (7), **HOSKING** John (96), **HOSKING** Richard (248), **HOSKING** William (12), **HOSKING** William Skelton (84), **JEWELL** John (101), **JOHNSON** William Cooper (Reverend) (95), **JOINT** Hercules (2), **KING** Thomas (265), **KINGSTON** John (28), **KINGWELL** Henry (4), **KINGWILL** Henry (150), **KNOTT** John (9), **KNOTT** William (12), **LANG** John (5), **LANG** Mary (5), **LANGWORTHY** Arthur (32), **LANGWORTHY** Mary (11), **LAVERS** Robert (23), **LEAMAN** Edward (20), **LOWE** John (31), **LUCE** John (57), **LUSCOMBE** George (22), **MANNING** Henry (9), **MANNING** John (103), **MARSHALL** Richard (M.D.) (97), **MATTHEWS** William (49), **METHERELL** William (11), **MORGAN** Andrew (4), **NEWMAN** Thomas (3), **NICHOLS** William (29), **NISBIT** Francis (93), **PEARSE** Robert (52), **PEARSE** William (143), **PENHALAM** Thomas (3), **PENNY** William (5), **PERRING** Robert (6), **PETHYJOHN**⁵ John (2), **PETHYJOHNS** John {senior} (8), **PHILIPS** David (20), **PRAED** William Mackworth (23), **ROUSEHILL** James (5), **ROWSE** Joseph (4), **RYDER** John Cumming (54), **SALLACK** Samuel (3), **SAUNDERS** Jeffery (60), **SAVERY** John (144), **SAVERY** Servington (31), **SCOBLE** William (3), **SEARLE** John (2), **SETTERS** John (7), **SHERWILL** Alfred (13), **SMERDON** Elijah (82), **SMERDON** Richard (95), **SMERDON** Sarah (6), **SMERDON** Thomas (94), **SOPER** John (23), **STRANGER** Elias (8), **STRANGER** John (168), **STRANGER** Richard (158), **TAYLOR** Charles (22), **TAYLOR** Eloesia (59), **TEED** Mesdames (13), **THUEL** Timothy (22), **TOLSHER** Samuel (7), **TONKIN** Warwick (Sir) (25), **TRANT** Philip (82), **TUCKER** Robert (11), **WAKEHAM** Arthur (5), **WAKEHAM** John (232), **WAKEHAM** John (junior) (49), **WAKEHAM** Thomas (162), **WALTERS** Frederick (Reverend) (27), **WARREN** John (Reverend) (16), **WAYCOTT** William (2), **WHITE** John (Reverend) (34), **WHITE** Walter (2), **WILLS** Thomas (7), **WINDEATT** William (4), **WOODLEY** Charles (54), **WRIGHT** Andrew (99), **WYATT** Richard (5).

Corporate bodies:

SOUTH BRENT Churchwardens (4), **SOUTH BRENT Feoffees** (16); **BRIXHAM Feoffees** (35), **TURNPIKE Trustees** (1).

⁵ 'PETHYJOHN' (as in the Apportionment) may be an alternative version of 'PETHYJOHNS' or 'PEATHYJOHNS', as the mention of '{senior}' suggests.

Appendix 3

Altars and Communion Tables

Henry VIII brought about a great rift with the authority of the Roman Church, but for the average parishioner nothing much had changed during his reign, 1509-1547. The church building and services did not change. The stone altars were undisturbed, the clergy conducted the same old familiar services, Mattins, Mass and Evensong, which were almost entirely still in Latin. Chantry Chapels, often the side chapels within the parish church, continued to have Masses offered for the souls of those departed who were rich enough to have left sufficient funds for the purpose in their Wills. But things were changing: Henry VIII ordered the Dissolution of the Monasteries, which took place over the years 1536-1541, and chantries began to be abolished.

Henry died in 1547. He had arranged that his son and heir, Edward VI, was brought up and educated by a reformist tutor. The Council that governed in the name of Edward due to his being under age brought in many reforming changes. Some change was introduced into public worship through the 1548 'Order of the Communion'. An even more significant date was Whitsunday, 9 June 1549, with the introduction of the full new English Prayer Book: suddenly the Latin Masses were gone!¹ After three centuries, the people of England could once again worship in their own language.² Around 1550, the first move towards full Protestantism came from Nicholas Ridley, Bishop of London; he ordered all stone altars to be removed and replaced by communion tables. So wooden Holy Tables were installed, and preaching rapidly took over from the Mass as the focus of worship. The next Prayer Book of 1552 made further reforms.

When Edward died aged sixteen in 1553, and Mary became Queen, her fanatical Roman Catholic views reversed many of the reforms of Edward in a 'Counter-Reformation'. But these in turn were swept away again when in 1558 Elizabeth began her reign.

However, despite the 1558 Act of Uniformity, after these turbulent years the situation in the parishes was far from uniform. A fascinating description has come down to us from Edmund Grindal. Eventually he became Archbishop of York, then Archbishop of Canterbury from 1576-1583; but in 1565 he was Bishop of London. Moorman reproduces Grindal's account of what he found in the parish churches of London. Queen Elizabeth may have been constantly demanding uniformity, but with variety of effect, for the utmost diversity prevailed:

'Some say the service and prayers in the chancel, others in the body of the church; some say the same in a seat made in the church, some in the pulpit with their faces to the people; some keep precisely to the order of the book, others intermeddle psalms in metre; some say in a surplice, others without a surplice; the Table standeth in the body of the church in some places, in others it standeth in the chancel; in some places the Table standeth altarwise, distant from the wall a yard, in some others in the middle of the chancel, north and south; in some places the Table is joined, in others it standeth upon trestles; in some places the Table hath a carpet, in others it hath not; administration of the Communion is done by some with surplice and cap, some with surplice alone, others with none; some with chalice, some with a communion cup, others with a common cup; some with unleavened bread, some with leavened; some receive kneeling,

¹ Rebellion in Devon and Cornwall was opposed to this change, but was famously defeated at Sampford Courtenay.

² Moorman, p. 60.

others standing, others sitting; some baptise in a font, others in a basin; some sign with the sign of the cross, others sign not; some with a square cap, some with a round cap, some with a button cap, some with a hat.³

Variety evidently prevailed—not to say chaos! But as Moorman comments a few pages later, change had come to stay:

‘In place of the old stone altars were now movable wooden tables which normally stood altar-wise at the east end but were moved down into the body of the church during the Communion. The Lord’s Prayer and Ten Commandments were now inscribed on the wall of each parish church in place of old medieval wall-paintings; pulpits were built in increasing numbers, and old chantry-chapels were often converted into family pews for the gentry. Normally, the priest conducted Morning and Evening Prayer from a seat in the nave, and the clergy were ordered to say the offices [*i.e. the services of the day*] audibly and not to ‘mumble nor tumble all things without devotion’. They were encouraged to preach if licensed to do so; otherwise to read one of the Homilies, a second collection of which appeared in 1562’.⁴

This all helps us understand how the Communion Table, which we think of today as set in its own permanent position, was in those days moved around as necessary. As we saw above, this is reflected in the wording of the opening rubric (instruction) still printed today in our *Book of Common Prayer* before the Holy Communion Service: “The Table at the Communion time having a fair white linen cloth upon it, shall stand in the body of the Church, or in the Chancel, where Morning and Evening Prayer are appointed to be said. And the Priest standing at the north side of the Table ...”⁵ The instructions at the close of the Communion Service that parishioners should receive the holy communion themselves at least three or four times a year were indeed widely in effect, as the Episcopal Visitations for 1744 and 1779 quoted earlier show.⁶ So the Communion Table was indeed moved into position as required for those three or four special occasions, and moved back again afterwards.

Almost certainly, Dr. Gandy’s memorial was originally laid in the sanctuary (‘chancel’) near the Holy Table as Prince records,⁷ and was moved to the south chapel when renovation works were done in 1870. However, in the light of the above variety of practice concerning the Communion Table, it is perhaps just possible—just—that the Gandy stone was always here in the south chapel, and that the Communion Table used when Communion was administered to the people was kept there. We may never know for sure. But the evidence around us in St. Petroc’s makes for an intriguing local story.

³ Moorman, p. 217.

⁴ Moorman, p. 219. Not all those who were ordained to conduct services were also licensed to preach. If they were not, they were to read an authorised sermon or ‘homily’.

⁵ “The priest standing at the north side of the Table” (not the north *end*) suggests that it stood with its long sides to north and south, and short ends to east and west—which would be the only practical arrangement given the width of most chancels.

⁶ For the Episcopal Visitations of 1744 and 1779, see pp. 66 and 133.

⁷ Prince, ‘Worthies’, p. 108.

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