

ASHBOURNE CHURCH, 1840.

(DR. TAYLOR'S PEW TO THE LEFT OF THE PULPIT).

DERBYSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL

AND

NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

A famous pew in Ashburne Church.

By ERNEST A. SADLER, M.D.

WHEN I acquired the Mansion there came into my possession a parcel of documents, three at least of which are of some interest to archæologists and Johnsonians. They refer to the exchange or purchase of pews in the parish church of St. Oswald, Ashburne by Dr. John Taylor.

The Mansion is the house situated in Church Street, Ashburne, which will for ever be associated with the name of Dr. Samuel Johnson, who on many occasions came there to visit his life-long friend, Dr. John Taylor, who at that period owned and occupied the house. The earliest portions of the Mansion date from 1680. It was built in or about that year by Benjamin Taylor, an attorney-at-law, and the grand-father of Dr. John Taylor, on a site originally occupied by the house of the priest who served the ancient chantry of the Holy Cross in Ashburne Church. It passed into the possession of Dr. Taylor on the death of his father, Thomas Taylor, also an attorney, in 1731. With the house were associated one or more seats or pews in the parish church of Ashburne, as was the

case with many other houses and lands in those days. There were two seats belonging to the Mansion, the position and description of which are given in the first of the three deeds referred to above.

This deed is a long and wordy document and would appear to be unnecessarily so for such a simple proceeding as the transfer of church pews from one person to another. The documents relating to the Mansion contain several deeds or indentures transferring pews, while those relating to the transfer of real property are scanty in the extreme, so that it would appear that the transfer of a seat or pew was a much more important matter in those days than the transfer of the house to which it belonged. This deed, which is given in full in Appendix A, is a piece of parchment 33 inches by $27\frac{1}{2}$, and it contains 1870 words. It is dated 19 September, 1766, and it arranges for the transfer of two seats belonging to Dr. Taylor to Lord Scarsdale and Mr. John Tomlinson of Derby, for one seat in the joint possession of Lord Scarsdale and Mr. Tomlinson, which they made over to Dr. Taylor in exchange "in consideration of the sum of five shillings, a piece of lawfull money of Great Britain."

The seats belonging to Dr. Taylor and inherited from his father with the Mansion were situated (1) in the Women's West Gallery "which seat or pew is now lined with green," and (2) in the Bradbourn Choir (the present South Transept) "which said seat or pew is now lined with red"; both seats "belonging to an ancient messuage or tenement in Ashbourn now in the possession of the said John Taylor." The seat belonging jointly to Lord Scarsdale and Mr. Tomlinson, which came into the possession of Dr. Taylor as the result of the exchange, was situated in a very prominent place in the nave close up to the S.W. pier of the tower (which at Ashburne occupies a central position between the nave and the chancel), and on the site of the old chantry of the Holy Cross. (See plate I).

It is interesting to note that the position of the new pew which Dr. Taylor thus acquired was on the site of the chantry of the Holy Cross, which was served by a priest who lived, previous to 1680, in the house pulled down by Benjamin Taylor to make room for his new house, the Mansion. This consideration may have been the reason why Dr. Taylor wished to exchange the pews in the West Gallery and the Bradbourn Choir for the one on the site of the ancient chantry with which his own house had such important associations; but to those who know the character of Dr. Taylor and his love of pomp and show will be inclined to think that a pew in the centre of the church just under the pulpit offered more scope for display and publicity. That Dr. Taylor was fond of display is brought out very clearly in the biography of Dr. Taylor by the Rev. Thomas Taylor. One incident is well worth quoting:

“ Another instance of his love of display was afforded by the family pew in Ashburne church. As a prebendary of Westminster he became entitled, by way of perquisites, to a portion of the velvet trappings used at the Coronation of George III. They had been used for ecclesiastical purposes. Many men would not have scrupled to use them otherwise. They would have sold them, or converted them into hangings for their doors, or perhaps have made horsecloths of them when they had lost their richness and their novelty. Taylor hit upon something much more appropriate. He gave the cushion upon which the crown had rested for the use of Ashburne pulpit; the rest he applied to the adorning of his own pew. It was a roomy pew standing on the site of the ancient chantry of the Holy Cross. Furnished with large shelves for bibles and books of devotion, supported by gilt brackets, and lined with velvet it was brought into perfect correspondence ‘ with his substantial creditable equipage.’ It was not without reason therefore that as he sat, or

reclined therein one Sunday in the autumn of 1777 Boswell felt "great satisfaction in considering that he was supported in his fondness for solemn worship by the general concurrence and munificence of mankind."

It is evident from the deed that the exchange of pews took place in 1766, and Dr. Johnson had probably paid several visits to Ashbourne before this time. A visit between the years 1737 and 1740 is recorded on the testimony of the daughter of Dr. Lawrence, on which occasion Johnson made or renewed his acquaintance with the Meynells at Bradley, with Miss Hill Boothby and Mrs. Fitzherbert. The date of this visit was probably August or September, 1738, when according to Hawkins, Johnson went into Leicestershire to apply for the mastership of Appleby School, and when it is likely that he also went to Ashburne, and would probably have worshipped in one of the old pews in the West Gallery or the Bradbourn Choir.

But the definite records of Johnson's visits to Ashburne begin with the year 1767, and visits followed at frequent intervals after this; in 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772, 1774, 1775, 1776 (with Boswell for one day only), 1777 (the visit with Boswell recorded so fully in the "Life") 1779, 1781 and 1784 in the last year of Johnson's life when he was suffering from dropsy and asthma. In a letter from the Mansion to Dr. Brocklesby dated Aug. 16, 1784, he writes "Better, I hope, and better. My respiration gets more and more ease and liberty. I went to church yesterday, after a very liberal dinner, without any inconvenience; it is indeed no long walk, but I never walked it without difficulty, since I came, before." On this, and on all occasions since 1766, he would doubtless sit in the roomy family pew that Taylor had acquired from Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson.

A second deed exists which seems to show that Dr. Taylor was not satisfied with the accommodation to be obtained in the pew he acquired in 1766, for in May

1775 he entered into negotiation with Mr. Tertius Dale, Grocer, for the purchase of a second pew in Ashburne church. Mr. Dale was originally a resident in Ashburne, but at the time of the sale had gone to live in Nottingham where he would have no further use for a seat in Ashburne church. The new pew adjoined the one Dr. Taylor already possessed, and was situated to the east and south of it, occupying a position where the Tower and the Bradbourn Chapel or South Transept met. (See plate I).

The deed transferring the seat to Dr. Taylor is given in full in Appendix B. Though neither so long nor so elaborate a document as the earlier one, it is interesting partly on account of its quaint phraseology, but chiefly because one of the witnesses to the deed was Dr. Taylor's butler, Richard Peters, whose signature is reproduced in facsimile in plate II, fig. 2. Richard Peters will always be famous by reason of the reference to him in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. On Boswell's first visit to the Mansion in March, 1776, a visit which on this occasion lasted one day only, Boswell says, after a remarkable description of Dr. Taylor himself, that he "took particular notice of his upper servant, Mr. Peters, a decent grave man, in purple clothes, and a large white wig, like the butler or *majordomo* of a bishop." Peters only survived his master 10 months; he died at the age of 78 and was buried at Ashburne on the first of December, 1788.

Another deed in my possession shews that the seat was first rented and then bought on April 4, 1766, by Mr. Tertius Dale the grocer, when he was living in Ashburne. The original owner was a Mr. Rupert Getliffe, surgeon, who had married Elizabeth, a sister of Dr. Taylor, and afterwards had gone to reside at Cheadle in Staffordshire, where, as I suppose, having no further use for the seat he had disposed of it to Mr. Dale for the sum of five pounds.

Even the death of Dr. Taylor did not end the special history of this pew. Another document, dated as late as

12 July, 1860, exists, which endeavours to establish the identity of the pews of that date with those which existed in Dr. Taylor's time, and proves beyond all doubt the exact position of the pews in which Dr. Johnson worshipped in Ashburne Church. This document is an affidavit, the full text of which appears in Appendix C.

Dr. Taylor, on his death in 1788, left the Mansion and all his other properties to William Brunt a distant relative, one of the conditions in the will being that, as soon as Brunt came into possession of the property, he should take the surname of Webster "being the name of my grandmother and common ancestor of myself and the said William Brunt."

It would appear that in the middle of the 19th century there was some question concerning the title of the owner of the Mansion at that day, who had bought the property from the Websters, to the seats in the Parish Church; the matter was further complicated by the replacement of the old pews by new ones at the restoration of the church which took place in 1840. The affidavit sworn to by an old servant at the Mansion when it was in the occupation of William Webster, Dr. Taylor's heir, about the year 1812, endeavours to establish the claim of the owners and occupiers of the Mansion to the seats which had belonged to that house since the days of Dr. Taylor, and to identify the new pews as being the direct descendants of the old ones. Incidentally the affidavit refers to an old custom of draping a pew in black when a death occurred in the family to whom the pew belonged. Plate I gives a view of the pews as they existed after the restoration of 1840, and shows the prominent position they occupied in the church.

At the next restoration in 1878 the pews made in 1840 were in their turn removed, and the church everywhere re-seated with open oak seats, thus removing the last traces of a pew which had had such a varied and interesting history.

APPENDIX A.

Copy of a Deed of Exchange between the Right Honble. Lord Scarsdale and Mr. Tomlinson of the one part and the Rev. Doctor Taylor of the other part.

This Indenture made the Nineteenth day of September in the sixth year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King George the third over Great Britain and so forth and in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and sixty six **Between** the Right Honourable Nathaniel Lord Scarsdale Baron of Scarsdale in the County of Derby and John Tomlinson of Derby in the said county Gentleman of the one part and the Reverend John Taylor of Ashborne in the said county of Derby Clerk and Doctor of Laws of the other part. **Whereas** the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson are the joint owners of a certain seat or pew in the parish church of Ashborne aforesaid and have agreed with the said John Taylor to exchange the same with the said John Taylor for two other certain seats or pews in the said church hereinafter particularly mentioned. **This Indenture therefore witnesseth** that the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson in consideration of the sum of ffive Shillings a piece of lawfull money of Great Britain to them in hand severally paid by the said Taylor upon the Execution hereof the several receipts whereof are hereby respectively acknowledged and for the consideration hereinafter mentioned **They** the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson **have** and each of them **hath** Given Granted Bargained sold and exchanged and by these presents **Do** and each of them **Doth** Give Grant Bargain sell and exchange unto the said John Taylor his heirs and assigns **All** that Seat or pew in the parish church of Ashborne aforesaid situate and being in a certain Isle there very near and opposite to the pulpit in the said Church which said Seat or pew is appurtenant and belonging to two ancient Messuages

Houses or Tenements situate and being at Offcoate and Underwood in the said county of Derby and now in the several possessions of George Redfern as Tenant to the said Lord Scarsdale and Thomas Smith as Tenant to the said John Tomlinson ~~Together~~ with all Hereditaments to the said Seat or pew belonging or in any wise appertaining ~~And~~ the Reversion and Reversions Remainder and Remainders Rents Issues and profits of the said Seat or pew ~~And~~ all the Estate Right Title Interest property profit claim and demand whatsoever of them the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson of in and to the same. ~~To have and to hold~~ the said Seat or pew with its appurtenances unto the said John Taylor his Heirs and assigns ~~To~~ the only proper use of the said John Taylor his Heirs and assigns for ever. ~~And~~ the said John Taylor for the considerations aforesaid and in consideration of ffive Shillings of like lawfull money to him in hand paid by the said Lord Scarsdale upon the Execution hereof the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged. ~~He~~ the said John Taylor ~~With~~ Given Granted Bargained Sold and exchanged and by these presents ~~Both~~ Give Grant Bargain sell and exchange unto the said Lord Scarsdale his Heirs and assigns ~~All~~ that the second Seat or pew situate and being in a certain Gallery in the parish Church of Ashborne aforesaid called the Womens West Gallery which said Seat or pew is now lined with Green and belongs to an ancient Messuage or Tenement in Ashborne aforesaid now in the possession of the said John Taylor =x=x=x=x=x=x=x= ~~Together~~ with all Hereditaments to the said last mentioned Seat or pew belonging or in any wise appertaining ~~And~~ the Reversion and Reversions Remainder and Remainders Rents Issues and profits of the said Seat or pew ~~And~~ all the Estate Right Title Interest property claim and demand whatsoever of him the said John Taylor of in and to the same. ~~To have~~

and to hold the said last mentioned Seat or pew with its appurtenances unto the said Lord Scarsdale his Heirs and assigns. To the only proper use of the said Lord Scarsdale his Heirs and assigns for ever. And the said John Taylor for the considerations aforesaid as also in consideration of the sum of ffive Shillings of like lawfull money to him in hand paid by the said John Tomlinson upon the execution hereof the receipt whereof is hereby also Acknowledged. He the said John Taylor Hath Given Granted Bargained sold and exchanged and by these presents Doth Give Grant Bargain Sell and exchange unto the said John Tomlinson his Heirs and afsigns All that Seat or pew situate and being in a certain place in the parish church of Ashborne aforesaid called Bradborne choir which said Seat or pew is now lined with Red and belongs to an ancient Mefsuage in Ashborne aforesaid now in the possession of the said John Taylor=~~×~~=~~×~~=~~×~~=~~×~~=~~×~~= Together with all Hereditaments to the said last mentioned Seat or pew belonging or appertaining. And the Reversion and Reversions Remainder and Remainders Rents Issues and profits thereof. And all the Estate Right Title Interest property claim and demand whatsoever of him the said John Taylor of in and to the same To have and to hold the said last mentioned Seat or pew with its Appurtenances unto the said John Tomlinson his Heirs and assigns. To the only proper use of the said John Tomlinson his Heirs and assigns for ever And the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson do hereby for themselves their Heirs Executors and Administrators covenant promise and Grant to and with the said John Taylor his Heirs and assigns that he the said John Taylor his Heirs and assigns shall or lawfully may peacably and quietly at all times hereafter have hold use occupy possess and enjoy the said seat or pew hereby granted to him as aforesaid and receive and

take the Rents Issues and profits thereof to his and their own use and benefit without the Let Suit trouble or disturbance whatsoever of them the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson or either of them their or either of their Heirs or assigns And also that they the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson their Heirs and assigns and all and every other person and persons whatsoever having or lawfully claiming or hereafter lawfully to have any Estate Title or Interest of in or to the said seat or pew so granted to the said John Taylor as aforesaid shall and will at all times hereafter at the request cost and charges of the said John Taylor his Heirs or assigns make and execute all such further and other reasonable acts and assurances for the more perfect and absolute conveying and assuring the said granted Seat or pew with its appurtenances to him the said John Taylor his Heirs and assigns as by him the said John Taylor his Heirs or assigns shall be reasonably required Subject to the proviso hereinafter first mentioned And the said John Taylor doth hereby for himself his Heirs Executors and Administrators covenant promise and Grant to and with the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson their Heirs and assigns that they the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson their Heirs and assigns shall or lawfully may peaceably and quietly at all times hereafter have hold use occupy possess and enjoy the said Seats or pews hereby granted to them as aforesaid and receive and take the Rents Issues and profits thereof to their own separate use and benefit without the Let suit trouble or disturbance whatsoever or him the said John Taylor his Heirs or assigns And also that he the said John Taylor his Heirs and assigns and all and every person and persons whatsoever having or lawfully claiming or hereafter lawfully to have any estate Title or Interest of in or to the said Seats or pews so granted to them the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson as

aforesaid shall and will at all times hereafter at the request cost and charges of them the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson their or either of their Heirs or assigns make and execute all such further and other reasonable Acts and Assurances for the more perfect and absolute conveying and assuring the said Seats or pews with their appurtenances to them the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson their Heirs and assigns as aforesaid as by them the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson their or either of their Heirs or assigns shall be reasonably required subject to the proviso hereinafter last mentioned. **Provided** always and it is covenanted and agreed by and between the said Lord Scarsdale John Tomlinson and John Taylor and each and every of them for himself his Heirs Executors and Administrators doth covenant promise and agree to and with the other of them his Heirs and assigns by these presents that if either of the said Seats or pews mentioned to be given and exchanged by the said John Taylor to the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson shall be at any time recovered detained or taken away from them the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson or either of them by reason of any former Title Cause or Right whatsoever being or beginning before the date of these presents that then and from thenceforth it shall and may be lawfull to and for the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson or either of them their or either of their Heirs and assigns into the said Seat or pew with its appurtenances so given and granted by them the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson to the said John Taylor to re-enter and the same to have and take again and to receive the Rents Issues and profits thereof to their own use and to enjoy the same as their former Estate for ever according to the true Intent of these presents **Provided** always and it is hereby also covenanted and agreed by and between the said John Taylor

and the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson and each and every of them for himself his Heirs Executors and Administrators doth covenant promise and agree to and with the other of them his Heirs and assigns that if the said Seat or pew mentioned to be given and exchanged by the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson to the said John Taylor shall be at any time recovered detained or taken away from him the said John Taylor his Heirs or assigns by reason of any former Title Cause or Right whatsoever being or beginning from the date of these presents that then and from thenceforth it shall and may be lawfull to and for the said John Taylor his Heirs and assigns into the said Seats or pews with their appurtenances so given and granted by him the said John Taylor to the said Lord Scarsdale and John Tomlinson to re enter and the same to have and take again and to receive the Rents Issues and profits thereof to his and their own use and to enjoy the same as in his or their former Estate for ever according to the true interest of these presents In ~~Witness~~ whereof the partys aforesaid to these presents have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

[Signed] Scarsdale

Seal.

J. Tomlinson

Seal.

John Taylor.

Seal.

[On the back of the parchment is written:]

Sealed and delivered by the within named Lord Scarsdale in the presence of

[Signed] John Broadhurst

Sealed and delivered by the within named John Tomlinson and John Taylor in the presence of


[Signed] Jas Davenport.

APPENDIX B.

Copy of Deed granting a seat in Ashburn Church to the Rev. John Taylor.

This Indenture made the twentythird Day of May in the Fifteen Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Third by the Grace of God of Great Britain France and Ireland King Defender of the Faith and so forth and in the Year of our Lord one Thousand Seven Hundred and seventy five **Between** Tertius Dale of the Town and County of the Town of Nottingham Grocer of the one Part and The Reverend John Taylor of Ashborn in the County of Derby Doctor of Laws of the other Part **Witnesseth** that for and in Consideration of the Sum of Five Pounds of lawful Money of Great Britain to the said Tertius Dale in hand paid by the said John Taylor at or before the sealing and delivery here of the receipt and Payment of which said sum of Five Pounds he the said Tertius Dale doth hereby Admitt and acknowledge He the said Tertius Dale **hath** Granted Bargained and Sold and by these Presents **Both** Grant Bargain and Sell unto the said John Taylor his Heirs and Assigns **All** that Pew or Seat with the Appurtenances situate and being within the Parish Church of Ashborn aforesaid and now in the Possession of John Armstrong as Tenant to the said Tertius Dale and all the Estate Right Title Interest and Property whatsoever of him the said Tertius Dale of in and to the same **To have and To Hold** the said hereby Granted Pew or Seat with the Appurtenances unto the said John Taylor his Heirs and Assigns To the use and Behoof of the said John Taylor his Heirs and Assigns for ever **And** the said Tertius Dale for himself his Heirs Executors and Administrators doth Covenant promise and agree to and with the said John Taylor his Heirs and Assigns in manner following (that is to say) that it shall and may be lawful to and for the said John Taylor his Heirs and Assigns Tenant or Undertenants from time to time and at all times hereafter

Peaceably and Quietly to have use occupy and Enjoy the said hereby Granted Pew or Seat and every Part thereof without any the lawful Lett Suit Trouble Molestation or Interruption of or by the said Tertius Dale or his Heirs or any other Person or Persons lawfully Claiming or to claim by from or under him them or any of them And that free and Clear and freely and Clearly acquitted and discharged of and from any former Grants Bargains Sales or other Titles, Charges or Incumbrances whatsoever made or done by the said Tertius Dale or any other Person or Persons whomsoever lawfully Claiming or to Claim by from or under him them or any of them. And Further that the said Tertius Dale and his Heirs and all and every other Person and Persons whomsoever having or lawfully Claiming or to Claim any Estate Right Title or Interest in or to the said hereby Granted Pew or Seat by from or under him shall and will at any time hereafter upon the Reasonable request Cost and Charge of the said John Taylor his Heirs or Assigns make do and Execute or cause and procure so to be all and every such further and other Lawful Act Deed Matter or Thing in the Law whatsoever for the better Conveying Assuring and confirming the said Pew or Seat unto and to the use of the said John Taylor his Heirs and Assigns for ever be the same by Deed or Deeds or otherwise and so as no such further Assurance or Assurances Contain no further or other Warrantry or Covenant then against the Persons who shall make the same and their Heirs and all persons Lawfully Claiming by from or under them or any of them. In Witness whereof the said Parties to these Presents have hereunto sett their Hands and Seals the day and year first above written.

[Signed] Tert^s  Dale.

[On the back of the parchment is written:]

Received the day and year first within written by me the within named Tertius Dale of and from the within named John Taylor the within mentioned Sum of Five Pounds being the full Consideration Money within mentioned to be paid by him to me I say received the same by me

Tert^s Dale.

Witness:— Rich^d Peters
Jno Langford

Sealed and delivered (being first duly stampd) in the presence of us

Rich^d Peters
Jno. Langford.

APPENDIX C.

Copy of Declaration of Mrs. Judith Ford, dated 12th July, 1860.

I Judith Ford the wife of Richard Ford of Ashborne in the County of Derby Inkeeper Do solemnly and sincerely declare that I am sixty five years of age that when I was seventeen years of age namely in or about the year one thousand eight hundred and twelve I lived as servant (being then Judith Greatorex spinster) in the family of the late William Webster Esquire of Ashborne That the said William Webster and his family then resided in the Mansion House in Church Street in Ashborne aforesaid lately occupied by Henry Folliott Powell Esquire That I well recollect the pews in Ashborne Church then occupied by the said William Webster Esquire and his family and servants. They consisted of two large pews in the Body of the Church one occupied by the family was a square pew abutting upon the north side of the large pillar which stands fronting the pulpit as at present fixed and the other for servants was also a large pew adjoining to the family

pew on the east side of it That I have seen the present pews numbers 40, 41 and 42 said to have been allotted on the re-pewing of the Church in respect of the said Mansion—That the said pews are upon the same ground or site as the said old pews except that the present family pew number 40 is not so deep from North to South as the old family pew the latter formerly extending as I believe partly into the present Aisle in front of the pew and the pillar is now restored, part of which appeared to have been cut out to give more room for the old family pew. The old Servants pew was also wider and not quite so long as the pews 41 and 42. That whilst I so lived servant with the said William Webster Esquire a Daughter of Mr. Webster's named Fanny died at her father's House at the age of about seventeen and was buried at Ashborne and Mr. Webster caused the said family pew to be hung with black cloth in memory of the said Fanny Webster And I make this Solemn Declaration etc. conscientiously believing the same to be true, and by virtue of the provisions of an act made and passed in the Session of Parliament of the fifth and sixth years of the reign of His late Majesty King William the Fourth intituled "an Act to repeal an Act " of the present Session of Parliament intituled an Act " for the more effectual abolition of Oaths and Affirm- " ations taken and made in various departments of the " State and to substitute Declarations in lieu thereof " and for the more entire suppression of voluntary and " extrajudicial Oaths and Affidavits and to make other " provisions for the abolition of unnecessary Oaths."

Subscribed and declared at Ash-
borne in the county of Derby
this twelfth day of July, 1860.

Before me J. J. Wise.

[Signed] Judith Ford.

A commissioner to administer Oaths in Chancery in England.