

NOTES ON THE RECORDS AND HISTORY
OF THE PARISH OF ST. MICHAEL,
WOOD STREET.

BY

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UNDER the provisions of the Union of Benefices Act, the united parishes of S. Michael, Wood Street and S. Mary Staining have been joined to S. Albans, Wood Street, and the Church of S. Michael's is about to be pulled down. This Parish Church is mentioned in a will enrolled in the Husting Court in 1349, and in 1381 a rector of the parish—Ive, leaves a message for the church and parish. Stow tells us the patronage of this church formerly belonged to the Abbey of S. Albans, and on the dissolution of the monasteries passed into the hands of the King, Henry VIII, by whom it was granted to one William Burwell. In 1588 it became the property of the parish. From that time till the present union of parishes it was carefully guarded by the parishioners, and the extant minute books give an account of the election of successive rectors down to the present time. The value of the living before the Great Fire (1666) was a little over £60 a year, and the parishioners often had to supplement their Rector's income by subscriptions and grants from the parish church funds. After the Great Fire, when the parishes

of S. Michael, Wood Street, and S. Mary Staining were united, the tithe of the two amounted to £84, and the value to be assessed for as the income from the two parishes was fixed at £100—£16 more than the value of the tithes. The only trace of what the church was like before the Fire is to be seen in an arch still remaining and in the lower part of the old tower. In 1627 an additional door was opened in Wood Street, through the head of the north aisle, being the chancel end, the only door previously being in the middle of the south aisle, opening into Huggin Lane. There was also an image of S. Michael, for altering which the accounts tell us the Churchwardens in 1643 paid 2s. 11*d.* What the alteration was is not mentioned.

Stow gives a list of eight monuments in the church in 1597, the one of most interest perhaps being that of John Lambarde, Draper, Alderman and Sheriff of London 1554, and "father to my loving friend William Lambarde, Esq., well known by sundry learned works he hath published." William Lambarde was a keen student of Anglo-Saxon, like Archbishop Parker and John Fox, "the Martyrologist," and in the next generation, Spelman and Twisden. He was also a friend of Camden, and the first writer of what are now known as County Histories—the History of Kent, the county in which he resided.

It may be worth while to repeat the curious narrative, given by Stow, as to the burial in this church of the head of James IV, King of Scotland, who fell on Flodden Field, in 1513. At this time Ferdinand, King of Spain, the Emperor Maximilian, and Henry VIII were, at the instigation of the Pope, engaged in war with the King of France, whose armies had

invaded Italy. The King of Scotland, at the instigation of his old ally, the King of France, took this opportunity to attempt to pay off old scores against England, and crossed the Border in 1513. A papal interdict had been issued forbidding James to enter on war against England at this time, but James anticipated its arrival. Being under an interdict, his body was disqualified for Christian burial. Henry, his brother-in-law, took advantage of this to refuse burial, and although the Pope removed the ban and expressed a wish that the body should be buried in St. Paul's, no heed was paid to his desire. King James's sword, dagger, and ring, were placed in the Heralds' College, London.

The narrative runs thus :

“There is also, but without any outward monument, the head of James the fourth King of Scots of that name slayen at Flodden field and buried here by this occasion. After the battle the body of the said King being found was closed in lead and conveyed from thence to London and so to the Monastery of Sheen in Surrey where it remained for a time but in what order I am not certain, but since the dissolution of that house in the reign of Edward VI, Henry Grey, Duke of Suffolk being lodged and keeping house there I have been shewed the same body so lapped in lead close to the head and body thrown into the waste-room amongst the old timber lead and other rubble. Since the which time workemen there for their foolish pleasure hewed off his head and Lancelot Young, Master Glazier to Her Majesty feeling a sweet savour to come from thence and seeing the same dried from all moisture and yet the form remaining with the hayre of the head and beard redd brought it to London to his house in Wood Streete where for a time he kept it for the sweetness, but in the end caused the sexton of that Church to bury it amongst other bones out of their charnell.”

If this story be true, there must have been kinder friends than his brother-in-law, who had the body carefully embalmed. Tytler accepts the story as true. Dr. Hill Burton characterizes it as “odd,” but the

mystery that surrounds the disposal of the King's body has never been dispelled.

The old building of S. Michael's was repaired and the bells re-hung about a year before the Great Fire, but of the cost there is no record, as the account books are blank from 1664 to 1670.

For rebuilding the church after the Fire, both Church and parish lands were mortgaged for £500, and £100 were given by a William Harvey, who does not appear to have resided in the parish, but whose family were buried in the church. Stow and Strype both record that there were monuments in the church (they still exist) to one Harvey, citizen and Draper, Deputy of the Ward, 1597 (the parish books tell us that it was through this man's agency that the advowson came to be parish property), to another Robert Harvey, 1608, to William Harvey, in 1677. This last was most probably the donor of the £100. He is spoken of later on in the account books as Alderman, and seems to have resided in the parish of St. Laurence Jewry. In 1672 the cost of re-building and furnishing was ordered to be divided between the parishes, in the proportion of two-thirds to S. Michael's and one-third to S. Mary Staining. The latter claimed a share in this donation of £100, but the Registrar decided, on the evidence of Harvey's brother, that the donor (now deceased) intended his gift for S. Michael's and St. Michael's only. Probably the other Harvey monument, of 1679, belonged to this brother. The account books tell of many visits paid to Dr. Wren as to the building of the new church, and this same year he was invited to a dinner (cost 15 guineas) the expenses of which were defrayed by sixteen parishioners who sat down with him. In 1673 he

and the churchwardens paid a visit to a church in Lumber Street for the purpose of seeing the arrangements there. At this time the pewing of the new church was in hand. In 1673 is the first inventory after the Fire, which contains :

2 guilt silver Chalices with their covers w^t 62 ozs. 16 dwts.

and one Silver Chalice with cover w^t 12 ozs. 1 dwt.

In 1674 the pulpit, reading desk and clerk's desk were removed from their first position to the north "ile." In 1677 a handsome font is ordered to be erected, the cost of the stone work was £8 and of the top £1 5s. (this font is still in the church). There was a dispute as to the church plate of S. Mary Staining from 1676-9, when a committee was appointed to arrange matters. The cost of the church is said to have been nearly £2,500, and in 1679 fifteen guineas are ordered "to be paid to Sir Christopher Wren for building the Church." In 1694 the church was lighted by two branches of sixteen lights each, and in 1708 there were four bells in the tower.

And now for PARISH HISTORY as recorded in the minute books. These begin in 1644, and the Rev. Arthur Jackson was Rector. He had been educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, had been for some time lecturer in the parish, and was appointed Rector in 1625. On the nomination of the Clothworkers' Company, of which his father and his uncles had been Court members, he was appointed Minister also of Lamb's Chapel. He belonged to the Puritan school, and refused to read the famous "Declaration on Sports." Bishop Laud remonstrated with him, but on being pressed to institute proceedings refused, saying: "Mr. Jackson is a quiet and peaceable man; I will not have him meddled with." The

scanty income of the Rectory has been mentioned before. On 31st July, 1645, £6 a year was voted by the Vestry to assist Mr. Jackson to provide an assistant. Next year the Rector represented to the Vestry "that his present allowances were 'out of the rent of a house £7 the tythe and Lecture Money,' and that these amounted to so little that he had been for long obliged to draw on his own resources. He had had larger proffers from other places. If they would raise his income to £120 he would rather accept that and stay among them than go where he would get more." The parish agreed "to make additions to the lecture money and pay something out of the church revenues belonging to the parish; but this was to continue no longer than the State shall settle other competent maintenance or the said Mr. Jackson shall continue our Minister." Twenty-five approved of this proposal and three dissented. Mr. Jackson's son, in a memoir prefixed to his father's posthumous works, says "he spent £2,000 out of his own personal property while Rector here," and adds that in two years' time the parish augmentation fell so far short that his friends in the parish who most desired his remaining there persuaded him to accept of any other offer. With others of the Presbyterian party, Mr. Jackson protested against bringing King Charles to his trial. Whether his favour for the King rendered him unacceptable to a portion of his flock or the state of his health rendered him unfit to discharge the duties of his office, his signature appears at the audit of accounts for the last time on 12th April, 1648, and at a Vestry meeting, 29th May, 1649. Four months after (September, 1649) the *major part* of the Vestry agreed "That Mr. William Taylor, the Minister, and

his congregation shall have the use of the parish church for their public worship twice every Lord's Day and to continue so long as the parish shall be willing and no longer." In 1653 Mr. Taylor is spoken of as the "Minister." As the names of both Jackson and Taylor are appended to the address to the "Christian Reader" prefixed to the later English editions of the "Westminster Confession of Faith," it is probable that this was a friendly arrangement, owing to the state of Mr. Jackson's health, between him, the parish, and Mr. Taylor.

On the arrival of Charles II in Scotland, in 1651, a number of the Presbyterian Clergy in London were prepared to welcome and support him. They were arrested (Jackson among them) and placed in the Tower. On June 12th, 1651, an order was made on his own petition, praying that in regard of his great infirmities the Council will not send him to prison, but accept bail for his appearance—that bail be taken of him in bond of £1,000 and two sureties of £500 each, on the usual terms. At the trial of Christopher Love, perhaps the most outspoken of the Royalist Ministers, June 20th, 1651, Jackson refused to acknowledge the Court as a lawful one, or to give evidence, and was fined £500, and committed either to the Tower or the Fleet, from which, after seventeen weeks' confinement, he was, on the intercession of his friends, released. But to return to the Parish Minutes. At a Parish Meeting on April 25th, 1655, it is found that £87 11s. 1d. is due to Mr. Jackson. It is resolved to pay this "on condition that Mr. Jackson empower the Churchwardens to look after the tythes to recover and retain the same to the proper use of this parish they keeping Mr. Jackson free of all tenths due to the

State—that he shall and do resign the said Rectory when and as he shall be thereunto required.” On May 9th, the Churchwardens are empowered “to supply the Church every Lord’s Day until the choice of a minister be made and allow 10s. a sermon if required.” Six candidates enter the list, and at the end of six weeks Mr. Parsons is elected, and allowed “£120 per annum payable quarterly (£60 from tythes and £60 from subscriptions of the parishioners and out of the parish revenues).” On 26th September, Mr. Jackson formally resigned, and the same day “the Churchwardens are empowered to present Mr. Parsons to the Committee appointed for examining, approving and allowing of Ministers.”

The whole proceedings appear to be of a friendly nature and are in strong contrast with what took place in many parishes during these troublous times. At the time of the Restoration, Mr. Jackson was minister of S. Faith’s, and in the name of the London Clergy presented Charles II with a Bible on his passing through S. Paul’s Churchyard on his first entry into London. At S. Bartholomew’s Day, 1662, he retired, and thenceforth lived with a relative at Edmonton till his death in 1666, which, however, took place in Milk Street, in the house of Thomas Major, one of his friends, whither he had come for the purpose of being near medical aid which he required for the disease under which he laboured. Richard Smith, in his obituary, records, “7th August 1666, Old Mr. Jackson, sometime minister of S. Michaels Wood Street there buried in the ruines.” Smith, who had been secondary of the Poultry Compter, was at this time residing in Moorfields. He had evidently written up the obituary after the Great Fire in the first days of September,

adding "in the ruins" to describe the state of the Church and Churchyard when he wrote.

Mr. Thomas Parsons now elected Minister of S. Michael's had, in 1650, been nominated by Cromwell fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge. He proved an active member of what was called the Classis—(the Presbytery of London was divided into four ? Classes) and was held in great esteem among them. He was Clerk and assessor in their meetings of 1659 and 1660.

In the March after his election the following minute occurs, illustrative of the curious attempts in these unsettled days to provide for Church Discipline.

"Agreed upon at a full vestry this day met (our Mr. Parsons being present) That in order to participasion of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper by such as shall be Communicants thereof in this parish that this method shall be observed—

"Forasmuch as it is unanimously agreed to that notoriously ignorant and Scandalous persons are no fit subjects, for the participasion of that ordinance, so continuing ;

"1st. That therefore (in order to satisfaction concerning the fit Knowledge of persons to be communicants) our said Minister confer with such as mean to be communicants for his better information therein ;

"2nd. That as to persons in any way notoriously Scandalous the minister shall have to his assistance from tyme to tyme the two Churchwardens yearly elected as also four other persons to be joined with them for the admittance or refusal of such persons as in point of conversation shall be by them judged fitt or unfitt and these (four persons named in the minute) are the persons unanimously pitched upon to join with our said minister and Ch. W^{ms}. for the purposes aforesaid."

Six months after another curious entry for a Vestry occurs :

"MEMO: that at this Vestry there were delivered to Mr. Parsons the Vulgar translation of the Bible by S. Jerome and the Common Prayer Book to be redelivered to this pth on demand."

Difficulties arose from time to time about the amount raised from tithes, but Mr. Parsons seems to have been well approved, for in 1659 a Committee was appointed to have a house built for the Minister on certain ground specified, probably on part of the property from which the sum of £7 was due to the Minister as house rent. On 24th August, 1660, the money due to Mr. Parsons up to Midsummer was ordered to be paid and the King's Arms to be set up in Church. The cost was £6. The £60 from the parish seems to have been regularly paid. Mr. Parsons retired at S. Bartholomew's Day 1662, and in the beginning of next year a Committee was appointed to collect the tithes due to Mr. Parsons up to Michaelmas last, and £25 10s. to be paid in the meantime. The same day Mr. Horton was elected Rector at £120 per annum. In order to avoid dispute as to the amount collected from tithe, the Vestry appointed the Churchwardens to arrange for the collection of tithe and pay the amount over to the Rector. Horton resigned towards the end of 1664, and Mr. Martyn was elected his successor on 19th January following, and on the 2nd February was chosen Lecturer for one year at £40 and £6 for a reader. Mr. Martyn seems to have been popular, for in 1673 a Committee was appointed "to collect £17 due to him and something over for his interest in the rebuilding of the Church and his civility to the Parishioners." In 1681 and 1682 the well-known Dr. George Hickes, at that time Vicar of All Hallows Barking, was elected Lecturer of S. Michael's.

Among later Rectors was Dr. Thomas Birch, the son of a Quaker resident in Clerkenwell, elected 24th February, 1744. Two years later he was

appointed Rector of S. Margaret Pattens. He was Secretary to the Royal Society 1752-6, and in the latter year fell in a fit of apoplexy from his horse on Hampstead Heath and was killed. His contributions to historical research were numerous, and at his death he left his papers to the British Museum, and a bequest of £500 to assist in paying two additional attendants. As S. Mary Staining was united to S. Michael's, it may be mentioned in passing that Mr. Austin of S. Mary Staining was one of the City Clergy who stayed at his post in the Plague of 1665 and died there, as well as Mr. Stone, Rector of S. Alphage. Mr. Austin was succeeded by a Dr. Isaac Tonge, who, as his parish was taken away from him after the Great Fire, devoted himself to issuing attacks on the Jesuits. He was the first to whom Titus Oates disclosed the pretended plots he had to reveal. S. Michael's Vestry appointed a Committee to ask Dr. Tonge to resign (1680) S. Mary Staining, but before the Committee met he died in December, fortunate in being spared the knowledge of the terrible evils which ensued on the disclosure of Oates' plots.

The minute books of S. Michael's, in 5 vols., are continuous from 1644 to 1843, barring three years after the Great Fire. The account books from 1619 to the end of 1718, barring 1664 to 1670, are in 1 vol. containing Church and Parish Accounts. Church disbursements from 1737 to 1871, 1 vol. Parish disbursements from 1745 to 1866 in 2 vols. Assessments for poor, 1775 to 1851, in 1 vol. A rough copy of minutes, 1692 to 1716, in 1 paper covered volume. A list of briefs read in church, 1757 to 1816. Some of the earlier pages have been cut out. In connection with briefs it may be noted that this parish collected

£7 8s. 4d. on a brief for the poor oppressed Protestants in Lesuah, Poland, and in Bohemia. This was part of the collection about the application of which there has been so much dispute.

Extracts and references have been already given from these minute books. The Easter elections of churchwardens, sydesmen and collectors are very regularly entered, as well as the December elections of civic and parish officers. In addition to Common Councilmen, Wardmote Inquest, Constable and Scavenger, there occurs, from time to time, the election of four bearers—persons, I presume, elected for the purpose of bearing to the churchyard the bodies of those who died in the parish. In the account books may be found the usual grotesque descriptions given by collectors and churchwardens of the objects of casual relief—illustrations of the methods in use for preventing wanderers from obtaining a settlement in the parish—gifts of money to wanderers under way to their proper parish—or to distressed sailors on the way to their native district. Under the old system of equalizing the incidence of poor relief, S. Michael's must have been considered a fairly well-to-do parish, as they paid to the assistance of S. Giles, Cripplegate, annual sums varying from £6 to £2 10s.

The first entries in the minute book refer to the monies in the poor box, which had been tampered with. It was ordered that the churchwardens apply such monies strictly to the use of the regular poor or to cases requiring occasional relief. The first election of a Vestry Clerk appears unfortunate. "Richard Satherwaite of y^s psh. Scivener is appointed as Clerk of this Vestry at 30s. per annum so as he duly give his attendance therein being summoned thereunto as

other parishioners are." From payments in the account books, Richard Satherwaite had acted as "Shorthand Clerk" to the Vestry for some years previously. A month after the appointment it is again ordered, "That Richard Satherwaite shall be dismissed from being any longer the writing Clerk of this parish because he hath oftentimes neglected the same and upon admonition gave very ill language to the Chw^{ns}. and many other of the Parishioners." Richard Satherwaite continues to reside in the parish till 1662, when his name appears for the last time on the assessment roll.

During the struggle of 1645, the various fast and thanksgiving days were duly kept in the parish, which seems to have contributed *freely and voluntarily* to the relief of "the maimed and wounded soldiers," "their widows," the "distressed Irish," as well as to the assistance of districts which had been injured by the contending armies—round Bristol and Manchester. (A full list is given in the minute book.)

From June to December there are about a dozen entries of such collections. Sometimes the sermons were preached at S. Albans', sometimes at S. Michael's. When the collection was for public purposes it was transmitted entire; when for the poor it was divided between the parishes.

For the relief of Taunton, held by Colonel Massey for the Parliament, the sum of £20 3s. 10d. was collected in June, the largest subscription being £3 from one Emma Drake, a stranger. One parishioner (who had at Easter fined for Constable) subscribes £2, seven others £1. Among the last is one Dr. Bastwicke, probably the same who with Prynne and Leighton were so cruelly used by the

Star Chamber. In addition, some volunteered "Musquetts," one sent "a Musquett and a bandoleere." The "Musquetts" and money were handed over to Alderman Bunce, less 4*l.* for the portorage of the "Musquetts." On December 10th there was a collection of old clothes for the army. These were sent to Christ's Church. Lists are given in the minute book.

The first assessment roll (Easter, 1645) amounts to £35 15*s.* The Wood Street Compter stands highest in the roll for £1 6*s.*, four others are assessed at 17*s.* each. The assessment roll is regularly entered from year to year, and would prove a guide to anyone anxious to trace residents in the parish.

In December, 1648, just before the King's trial, Fairfax came up to London demanding money and threatening to quarter his soldiers in the City. At the request of the citizens, however, he relented, and promised if the City would provide beds and appurtenances to quarter his soldiers in empty houses. S. Michael's portion was 24 beds, etc., a full list of which, with the names of the donors, are duly entered in the minute book. In 1654 a select Vestry of 21 was appointed on trial for two years to discharge all the functions of the parish Vestry, saving only the election and maintenance of a minister.

Along with these old books of record, there is also a lease of three dwelling-houses, which stood at the west end and north-west corner of the old church, granted—

- (1.) At Christmas, 8th Henry IV (1407), by Agnes Pychard to John Heeds. It bears an original seal, somewhat broken.
- (2.) A release of the same property to John Brown by the same, dated some days after

the feast of S. Benet, Abbot, 10th Henry V, 1422.

- (3.) A translation of the above No. 2.
- (4.) Transfer of the parish advowson to William Harvey, 1581.
- (5.) Transfer of advowson from one set of feoffees to another (1612), with a translation.
- (6.) Another of 1648.
- (7.) The roll of assessment for the original tythes of the combined parishes, previous to the order for £100.

These various books and papers belonging to S. Michael's, Wood Street parish, have been placed for safe keeping in the Library at Guildhall, but the older ones will require delicate handling, as the paper in some parts shows signs of decay. It might be worth while for the custodians of old Vestry and account books to join in making arrangements for such books to be kept and preserved for reference in connection with the Library. Many interesting items of parish history would then be more likely to come to the knowledge of the public than when they are kept separately and under different custodians.

The wish expressed by the writer of this paper has been to a large extent accomplished, it having been the aim of the Committee of the Guildhall Library and their Librarian to procure for deposit in the Library the ancient records of the City parishes and wards. In this they have been materially assisted by the valuable co-operation of Mr. Deputy White, a member of the Committee, and also a member of this Society. It may be interesting to add a list of the parishes and wards whose older books of record, either wholly or in part, have up to the present (March,

1900) been received for preservation in the Guildhall Library.

PARISHES.

St. Anne and St. Agnes ; St. Botolph, Billingsgate ; St. Bride, Fleet Street ; St. John the Baptist upon Walbrook ; St. John Zachary ; St. Mary Abchurch ; St. Mary Colechurch ; St. Michael, Wood Street ; St. Mildred, Poultry ; St. Peter, Cornhill ; St. Stephen, Walbrook ; and St. Swithin, London Stone.

WARDS.

Billingsgate, Cheap, Cornhill, Farringdon Within, Langbourn, Vintry, and Walbrook.
