A Short History of
STRATTON ST MARGARET PARISH CHURCH
and other articles on the Village
(*Illustrated*)

By

F. W. T. FULLER, B.A. (Cantab), F.R.G.S.
Reader, Licensed to the Parish of Stratton St Margaret
and the Rural Deanery of Cricklade

with an introduction by
The Revd. G. R. FOOKS, M.A. (Cantab)
Vicar of Stratton St Margaret

Profits on the sale of this pamphlet will be given to the Parish Church Fabric Fund

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2/6

That ye may tell it to the generation following. Psalm xlviii.13

INTRODUCTION

The history of the old churches of England is the history of the country itself. Those who delve in the registers and records of the Church are doing a great service to the nation; for, by so doing, they unearth some of the priceless details which add the living touch to history.

We who live in Stratton are fortunate in having not only an interesting past but a historian who is full of enthusiasm and never ceases to search for further knowledge. The thanks of all Strattonians, and indeed, all historians, is due to Mr Fuller for all the time and talent he has given in presenting our local history to us in readable form. His enthusiasm is so infectious that not a few others have begun to take a new interest in our church and the history of Stratton.

I sincerely hope that this booklet will be well and widely read not only by the older inhabitants, but also by the many younger people who inherit this priceless piece of England.

The Vicarage
Stratton St Margaret

G. R. FOOKS

Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. Joel i.3

NOTE BY THE COMPILER

These articles, which are a description of the Parish Church and others on the village of Stratton St Margaret, appeared in the Parish Magazine during 1947, 1948, and 1949. They are reproduced more or less in the form in which they appeared, except that a list of the Vicars of Stratton has been added, and minor inaccuracies have been corrected. I am aware that the same information is given in different articles, but without drastic revision this could not be avoided.

In reading any such series of articles, it must be remembered that they are as accurate as possible at the time of writing, but like all history they may have to be revised when other information comes to light.

In due course I hope to compile a fairly comprehensive history of the parish, and I shall be glad of any old photographs of the village, newspaper cuttings etc. that anyone may be able to loan me.

If this booklet does nothing more than interest some in the heritage we in Stratton possess, especially in our parish church and in all that is connected with it, then my time will not have been wasted.

The drawings have been done by one of the younger parishioners, Mr Philip Nethercot, whilst Mr W. Bramwell Hill and Mrs M. E. Whale have allowed me to use their photographs. Mr Hill gave me many useful suggestions, and the Vicar has given me every assistance by allowing me the use of various documents etc., and also by helpful advice.

Cuddesdon College
Oxford
January, 1950

F. W. T. FULLER

THE PARISH CHURCH

EXTERIOR

A casual visitor to Stratton St Margaret is apt to miss the church completely, standing as it does in a quiet 'backwater'. There is a pleasant view from the Highworth Road looking across the aerodrome. The church is built on one of the highest bits of natural ground in the area, and may be on the site of some earlier Roman heathen temple. A Christian building certainly preceded the present building.

The visitor approaching our church gets a view of the squat west tower, and the ends of the north and south aisles with their steep roofs. He sees little else. The large trees on either side of the gateway were planted only forty years ago, and their site is outside the old churchyard. (*These trees were removed in the spring of 1949, in an effort to lighten the church and because the roots were causing much damage to the pathway and the drains.*) The churchyard has been extended twice within the last eighty years. The old iron churchyard gates are still in existence at the entrance to the Clays allotments in Churchway.

The building consists of a nineteenth-century tower, a modern vestry and chancel, all of which have been added to the original thirteenth-century building of nave and two aisles. The porch is a fourteenth-century addition.

The exterior of the building is disappointing; any parapets or gables it may have possessed have long since gone, and the windows lack 'labels' (the architect's term for an ornate stone framing over the window). The exterior of the archway of the north aisle doorway is well worth examining; it is a Norman one rebuilt into the present wall about 1280.

The severe and somewhat bleak stone building with its stone roof, when viewed from the South Marston field footpath, shows the lines of Early English architecture at its best—if allowance is made for the addition of the modern chancel.

There is little of interest in the churchyard, except perhaps the tombstones of the seventeenth century torn from their original positions and now against the north wall. The yew tree is quite

old and may have provided our forefathers with staves and bows; it certainly shields the main door of the church from prevailing winds. The old school stood within the shadow of the tower, as also did small thatched cottages within living memory.

The old Elizabethan tithe-barn still stands in Church Farm yard on the opposite side of the road.

Church Street was the first street in the village to have street lamps; it has progressed through the three stages of paraffin, gas, and electricity.

THE SOUTH PORCH

The south porch is a fourteenth-century addition to the thirteenth-century church. The outside doorway is plain with continuous arch mouldings. On the outside walls are traces of small incised dials, a primitive type of sundial or clock.

There was originally a small room over the porch, of which only the newel stairway remains. This room must have been very small and dark. The use of this room can only be conjectured; it may have been a type of priest's vestry, or maybe here is the origin of any learning in the village; this may have been the place where the priest taught the children. The porch carries the original fourteenth-century roof timbers.

The doorway into the church is a mean pointed arch, but is the same age as the aisle wall. Beneath the plaster of the right-hand door jamb is a fourteenth-century holy water stoup. (*An attempt in the summer of 1949 did not find the stoup, but uncovered some interesting thirteenth-century masons' marks.*)

The only stone seats to be found in the whole church are those existing in the porch.

The porch was placed on the south side of the church to obtain the full benefit of the midday sun, because the porch was originally used for various purposes. It was used for marriages, and banns were published here. Chaucer's 'Wife of Bath' tells us in the *Canterbury Tales* that she had taken three husbands 'at the church door'. The first part of the baptism service used to take place here. To the porch the people resorted to transact their business and to discuss the latest news, here notices were proclaimed. A revival of this secular use is seen in the civil notices displayed now.

The floor is paved with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century tombstones, amongst them being one upon which is the arms of the de Lacey family, who once held manorial rights in the village. The stones were probably moved from their original positions when the chancel was enlarged and rebuilt early in the nineteenth century.

In 1890, a stone cross was placed over the porch to replace an original one long since gone. This cross was blown down in a storm in 1924, and only the shaft remains above the porch doorway. The rest of the cross is to be found in the south aisle with other broken masonry.

THE NAVE

The interior of the church bears evidence of having possessed considerable beauty and interest, but has been reduced to comparative bareness by misjudged restoration in the past. The old stonework has been scraped (mostly during the nineteenth-century renovations), so that it is difficult to distinguish the modern copy.

The nave of four bays was constructed in the late thirteenth-century (*c.* 1280) and although it has lost its original richness of colouring, the glow of gilding, and the vividly painted murals, the beauty of line and noble proportions remain. The nave arcades are unusual and particularly graceful with slender cylindrical pillars, having richly moulded capitals containing nail-head and dog-tooth design, with a particularly small abacus mould. The 'bell' of the cap is very graceful and well-formed. The bases of the pillars are moulded and each pillar base is of varying design, one on the north side with angle tongues to connect it to the square block under. The arches are pointed and of two orders of chamfers.

Originally the roof was steep pitched and the same height as the roof of the aisles, but was raised in the sixteenth century when the present clerestory and roof were built. The roof is of the cambered tie-beam form. It is still lead covered.

The arch at the west end is a copy, and was built at the same time as the tower in the early nineteenth century, but there may have been a west doorway in this position. The small light high

above the lectern was discovered when the chancel arch was raised.

In medieval times the people stood in the nave for services. Later the old-fashioned box pews appeared; the church records quote various private box pews.

There might even have been a West Gallery, since it is clear from records that Stratton possessed a church orchestra, and the usual place for such musicians was a gallery in the west end. The present pews are late eighteenth century. The pulpit, which probably replaced the old 'three-decker,' is dated 1848, and was constructed at Bath. Opposite the pulpit, where the lectern now stands, was the old reading desk and lectern combined—the marks are still visible on the floor and wall. This was removed and converted into the screen across the belfry archway. The present carved wooden eagle lectern was placed in the church in 1896 in memory of a former vicar, the Rev. I. S. Crawhall. Above the lectern and pulpit originally hung two old banners.

The litany desk and the churchwardens' wands are modern.

NORTH AND SOUTH AISLES

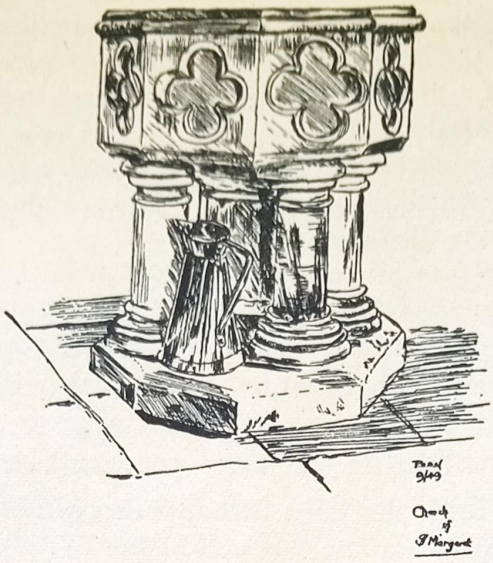
The south and north aisles are of the same date as the nave—late thirteenth century. At the east end of the south aisle (where is now the war memorial) there is evidence of the existence of a side chapel. (*Since the writing of this article, the old chapel has been restored as St Catharine's Chapel.*) The altar was much elevated, since the east window is high and the piscina with quatrefoil bowl and shelf and trefoil arch in the south wall, has its bowl 4 feet 7 seven inches above the present floor. The piscina was for washing the holy vessels used at the Communion service, and the custom was to drain away the holy water after the priest had washed them. The water ran away through the small hole in the bowl of the piscina and drained into consecrated ground. The site of this early side-chapl later housed the organ until the present vestry was built.

The present octagonal font was placed in the church about a hundred years ago, when the then existing Saxon font (dated *c.* 1280) disappeared completely. The Children's Corner was constructed by public subscription in 1937.

A bleak photograph of the church immediately after the extension of the churchyard in 1896

The church in 1896, showing the low chancel arch, oil lamps, six candles on the altar, old banners, etc. (*The arch was raised in 1912*)

The church in 1921



The font which replaced the saxon font removed c. 1850

The north aisle contains a Norman doorway which was rebuilt into the present wall in the thirteenth century; it is probable, therefore, that the north aisle is the site of the previous church.

There is a recessed tomb projecting into the north wall. It contains no figure, and certainly has not possessed one since the late sixteenth century. The workmanship around the tomb is very poor, and almost looks like the work of the nineteenth century, which is unusual since it was constructed in the time of Edward I when the purest and most refined work is found. There is a nail-head ornament on the flat cusped arch, and a very crude conventionalized carving above. The pinnacles flanking the recess are equally badly carved. The terminals of these and of the arch appear to be seventeenth-century restorations.

The tomb may have been the old Easter Sepulchre, in which the cross was placed on Good Friday and then removed to the altar with great ceremony on Easter Sunday. It was used to house a heating stove before the present heating apparatus was installed. It now contains various pieces of carved stonework from the exterior of the building: a seventeenth-century cannon-ball, and a lead-filled skull. (The stories attached to the lead-filled skull are many; some say that the hot lead was poured in through the

victim's eye-sockets, others say the victim was a nun, whose white-habited ghost is said to haunt the church and village. It is more probable that the lead ran into the skull by accident, but there is no record of a fire which might have caused the lead to melt.) In one of the window-sills are portions of old bells containing inscriptions which were removed when the bells were recast.

The north aisle roof, like the south aisle, was originally lead covered, but was stone tiled in 1840.

The vestry screen was placed there in 1896 when the vestry was built. It was then that the ancient squint was discovered and restored with a new wooden lintel to replace the old rotting one. The ornate and embellished squint in the south aisle is modern.

RESTORED CHAPEL IN THE SOUTH AISLE

On 4th September 1949, the Lord Bishop Suffragan of Malmesbury dedicated a chapel at the east end of the south aisle, as a memorial to the fallen of the two World Wars.

The original altar which stood in this position must have been considerably higher than ground level, as is indicated by the height of the window and the piscina.

The present altar is in oak, which tones with the new altar rail, and both were made from timber of pews no longer in use, and were worked in true medieval fashion by two village craftsmen, who prefer to remain anonymous.

The furnishings are of a pleasant blue, and the reredos curtain is suspended from a wrought-iron rod. The altar cross and candlesticks are in cast pewter and match with the pewter vessels restored for use in this chapel. The kneeling mats and carpet were made by a local disabled ex-serviceman.

The architect has drawn attention to the excellent stone floor in this part of the church, now visible since several pews have been removed.

The names of those who were killed in the 1939–1945 war have been added to the plaque containing the names of the 1914–1918 dead, which is erected on the south wall immediately below the piscina.

The restored chapel is dedicated to St Catharine of Alexandria, and is used for weekday services.

THE BELL-TOWER

The bell-tower is situated at the west end of the church, and is a low squat tower built in the Norman style. Although constructed at the end of the eighteenth century, the tower tones extremely well with the ancient fabric of the rest of the church. So squat is the tower that the ringing is done from the ground floor; there is space only for the bell chamber, a ringing chamber is not possible.

There is no evidence of any earlier provision for the bells, but it is not improbable that a small bell turret stood over the east or the west wall of the nave. In 1553 it is recorded that Stratton Sci [*sic*] Margrette possessed three bells.

In the old days the bells were not only used for calling the faithful to worship—they told of the passing of a villager, were perhaps used for curfew, and were also used for warnings, when the peal was reversed and rung from the lowest to the highest tones.

Of the present bells, No 7 is the oldest, dated 1669 and cast by Edward Neale of Burford, and is engraved with the Royal Arms. Until 1931 there were two older bells, one made by Roger Purdue of Bristol in 1622, engraved with the Prince of Wales's feathers; and another also made in 1669 by the same Edward Neale of Burford. This bell was inscribed with the Royal Arms inside a square, and also with the names of the churchwardens, T. Reade and T. Jackson. Both bells were recast and rehung, but sections containing the old inscriptions may be seen in a window-sill in the north aisle.

The tenor bell, which is over three feet in diameter and weighs over eight hundredweights, was cast in 1816 by G. and G. Mears of London. The N in the spelling of London has been omitted and there is a flaw in the inscription of the date.

Two bells were added in 1909 as a memorial to Albert Barnes, who was churchwarden for many years. Again, in 1931 two smaller bells were added and the whole peal tuned and rehung with new fittings. The treble bell has the inscription 'The children gave me', and was actually hauled into the tower by the then Sunday School children. There is also a smaller bell still hanging in the tower, which was originally rung immediately before services, and is locally known as the 'ting-tang', but is not now used.

The peal of eight bells is frequently rung by visiting teams of bellringers. Nowadays the Stratton bellringers have amongst them several lady ringers, and as early as 1924, Mrs Ferris (then Miss N. Moulden) rang in a peal of Minor, with 5040 changes. The church also possesses a set of hand bells. The church records contain frequent entries of 'beer for the bellringers'.

The tower was originally topped with a flagstaff, over which ruled a gilded weather-vane in the shape of a cock, both of which were blown down in a storm in 1938. Nowadays the tower appears to be lower than it actually is, due to the great height of the two trees, planted forty years ago, on either side of the churchyard gates.

(In the spring of 1949 the two trees were removed, the effect of the removal being a better view of the tower, which does not now appear to be so squat.)

THE CHANCEL

The chancel is perhaps the least pleasing part of the church. It is an early nineteenth-century structure and has no great historical treasures or interest; of the earlier chancel we have no records, except that it is obvious from the exterior walls that much of the old masonry was re-used. The upkeep of the chancel is legally the liability of the Warden and Scholars of Merton College, Margaret Oxford, who have held the rectorial rights of Stratton St since Robert de Merton gave them to his College in 1308.

The steep timbered roof is the finest feature, and the painted and gilded shields on the beam ends are interesting. Those over the sanctuary are painted with symbols, such as the Cross and Crown, whilst upon the others are painted the arms of various families connected with the parish: the de Lacey family arms with three swans' heads; the Archer family arms with three arrow heads; the arms of Merton College with its red and blue chevrons; and one combining the arms of the dioceses of Gloucester (crossed keys) and Bristol (three crowns), which were united under one bishop for many years. The missing shield used to portray the arms of the Kemble family, with three heads, each with the tongue protruding.

The windows are modern copies of the Gothic style, and are mostly on the south side, the one over the priest's stall having been transferred when the vestry was built in 1896, and the organ removed from the south aisle.

The choir stalls, altar, reredos, priest's desk, processional cross, and chancel furnishings are all modern, and the mural paintings of the angels on the east wall were done during the last half-century or so.

The large monument dated 1748 was replaced in the wall at the time of rebuilding. Although no plans or records appear to exist of the old chancel, it was obviously shorter than the present one; the line of vision of the old north squint would place the altar near the present steps leading up to the sanctuary.

Owing to the chancel step being out of square, the impression is gained that the chancel is not square with the nave, but appears to incline to the north by almost two feet. This is so with many chancels, and the traditional reasons given are that the evil spirits lived in the northern direction, and the other that the plan of a church represents Our Lord upon the Cross, with His head inclined to the right.

THE WINDOWS

When John Aubrey the Wiltshire antiquarian visited Stratton in 1625, he made the following report: 'In the north wall is an old niche, but without any monument. In a windowe on the south side is a picture of St Katharine with her wheel, and another, broken in the first columne, which I suppose to be the titular Saint of this church.' These old glass windows of St Catharine and St Margaret have long since disappeared, probably at the time of the Commonwealth; all the present glass is modern.

Of the actual construction, the west window in the south aisle is a single-light trefoil-headed lancet with a flatly-pointed inner arch. Originally, all the three windows of this aisle were alike, but one was widened and a two-light window inserted in the fourteenth century, and the other in the nineteenth century. The original windows of the north aisle differed from those of the south, having trefoil inner arches. Again, only one window is left with a single lancet light, as on the south side; the altera-

tions were made in the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries. The window in the priest's vestry originally stood in the wall now replaced by the vestry screen in 1896.

The subject matter of the modern glass windows is interesting. The main east window shows the Crucifixion as centre piece, supported on either side by the Last Supper and the Resurrection (Breaking of the Tomb). Above them are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet (alpha and omega). The window on the north side of the sanctuary shows the Nativity (with angels) and the Epiphany, that on the south side showing a further picture of the Resurrection morning and the Ascension. The window at the east end of the south aisle depicts St Alban, the first British martyr, who was a soldier, and forms part of the war memorial. The window in memory of Frederick Day, a missionary priest killed in China, portrays St Margaret and St Philip the Deacon, showing that both parts of the original large parish shared in the commemoration. A window in memory of Elizabeth Langrey (1882) shows the Resurrection, and the single-lancet window nearest to the font is a memorial to a former vicar, the Rev. Septimus Crawhall (1899), and pictures the Good Shepherd.

The wall memorials are few. In the chancel is an alabaster to one Thomas Reade, dated 1748, whilst in the north aisle is one to William Jones who lost his life 'in 1837 in the calamitous fire at Southampton'. At the west end of the north aisle, removed from its place at the opposite end, where are the family vaults, is an alabaster monument of Catherine Hedges or de Lacey; also a brass (removed from its stone which is now part of the belfry floor) to the same family. Also in the north aisle is a tablet to the Rev. Wallinger Goodinge and his wife.

In the south aisle are two modern brasses and above the door are interesting seventeenth-century wooden and canvas memorials, with painted skulls, crossbones, and hour-glasses. One records the gift of £200 by a William Hedges, while the other two are in respect of the Kemble family and have been removed at some time from the north aisle.

Many of the stones which were apparently part of the north aisle floor now form the floors of the belfry and the porch.

Amongst the altar furnishings and church plate, Stratton St Margaret possesses two treasures, an Elizabethan chalice and an antique frontal.

Both the red and the white festal frontals are excellent needlework. The embroidered portions of the white frontal originally formed part of an Italian priest's vestments, and were brought back from Italy by the wife of a former vicar, Mrs S. Crawhall. The work appears to be that of the early seventeenth century. The white satin background had perished and the embroidery has been remounted by Messrs Mowbray. In 1926, when the Church Congress was held in Cheltenham, this frontal was one of the main items in an Exhibition of Ecclesiastical Art. Also, for use with this frontal, there is a super-frontal of excellent antique lace, and another, recently presented, of Indian silver-thread embroidered work.

Records show that 'in 1553 there was left for the Parish of Stratton Sce Margaretts a Chalice weighing 16 oz. and the same quantity of silver was taken for the King's use'. It was presumably the silver of this chalice which eventually went to make up the Elizabethan silver chalice. This priceless cup was in bad repair in the middle of the nineteenth century and its use was discontinued on this account, and it was condemned as past repair. The highest offer for it at the time was 4*s.* 6*d.*, which Mr C. W. Barnes the churchwarden declined, and had it repaired at his own cost and returned it to the church in 1892. The cup is of very ancient shape, and has been confirmed as Elizabethan work by authorities on antique plate. Its date is about 1570–5, as the shape and details decide sufficiently well in the absence of any hall-mark. It is furnished with a cap or cover, common to chalices of its date, which no doubt at one time served as a paten. This same chalice has recently been repaired and silver-gilt lined by Messrs Mowbray, who have valued it as priceless.

Also amongst the church plate, there is a pewter set of communion vessels, which was returned into the custody of the church in 1923. The chalice and paten are comparatively modern and were probably purchased for use when the Elizabethan cup and paten were condemned. The alms dish and flagon are old—seventeenth century. These old pewter flagons are rarely found,

and those that are in existence usually date from the time of the Civil War.

When the Elizabethan silver cup came into use in 1570 or 1575 it probably formed part of a complete silver set, including a silver flagon and alms dish. Where are they? The date of the pewter flagon and alms dish suggests that they were given by King Charles I. When the King was compelled to take up arms against Parliament, the Colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, private gentlemen, and churches, gave up their silver to be melted down for the King's service. The Vicar of Stratton St Margaret was the Rev. Christopher Jole, instituted in 1634, later deprived by Parliament. He was a Royalist and probably used his influence with the parishioners. Pewter vessels were presented by the King to parishes which gave up silver to his cause, so this old flagon and alms dish bear testimony of the loyalty of Stratton to its King. The alms dish now shows signs of having been used as a common plate for some time.

The church also possesses another small silver Elizabethan chalice of exquisite workmanship, less than two inches high, dated 1602, which was presented to the church, together with a silver-gilt Elizabethan paten, by Mr F. Cripps-Day in 1932. At the same time Mr Cripps-Day gave two small pewter vessels and a pewter paten, all of early date.

The rest of the church plate consists of the silver paten and flagon in present use, a mother-of-pearl baptismal shell, and a brass alms dish.

Unlike many antique treasures which are carefully locked away from public view, the altar frontal and the Elizabethan chalice are in constant use at Stratton St Margaret, making a factual link between today's worshippers and those of four hundred years ago.

(In September 1949, the old pewter vessels were restored for use in the restored St Catharine's Chapel, as a part of the war memorial.

The chalice has been partly remodelled, and one of the patens fits it as a cover. The two small pewter vessels presented by Mr F. Cripps-Day have similarly been restored, but not remodelled.)

Although the most modern part of the church, the vestry contains one of our most valuable assets, the Parish Registers. Almost as important are the parish records of Churchwardens' Accounts.

The Registers of Baptisms, Burials, and Marriages date from 1608, but three pages are missing from the Baptism Register for the years 1684 to 1698; and the Register of Marriages is defective for approximately the same dates. The early registers are written on parchment, and the quaint spelling and arrangement makes the contents difficult to understand. Strangely enough the handwriting of the seventeenth-century vicars is easier to decipher than those of the eighteenth century. The Registers contain the receipt for their custody by the Secular Registrar appointed by Oliver Cromwell, and the notation by the Rev. Christopher Jole when he returned as Vicar at the Restoration.

It is from these parish records that we are able to deduce population figures for the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Stratton, and estimate to what age they normally lived and the size of their families. It was these registers which helped the Commissioners of George III in 1800 to record the increases in population. It is worth noting that in that year, Stratton St Margaret, with the tithing of Upper Stratton, consisted of approximately 300 men and 280 women, of whom 310 were employed in agriculture, 37 only in commerce and manufactury, the rest presumably being the womenfolk in the homes and the gentry who did not work.

We can only surmise from some items in the Registers:

1645, Margaret, the wife of John Butler, was buried Oct. 30th, at night; Margarrett the daughter of John Butler was buried Oct. 31st at night; John Butler was buried Nov. 2nd; the wife of William Richman was buried Nov. 22nd. She died in John Butler's house.

What happened in John Butler's house in October 1645? Was it stricken with the contagious plague?

Other items give us an intimate insight:

1647. Widdow Humphrey buried on 21st Nov. She was supposed to be an hundred years old

—a ripe old age for the seventeenth century. An illegitimate child was recorded as:

John filius populi [son of the people], Anne Heath being mother.

March 13th, 1633 records the burial of Samuel Fowler, Vicar of the parish, one of the few vicars to die in office.

It is interesting to see that some old Stratton names have survived and some of those in the earliest registers are still familiar today: Horton, Chamberlaine, Barrett, Wicks; whilst others have disappeared altogether: Kemble, Beams, Richman, Tuggy.

In addition to the Registers there are the Account Books of the churchwardens. From these we are able to discern what sort of music the church enjoyed:

Reeds for clarinet 1*s*. 6*d*., Bass viol bow 7*s*.

We know how the bellringers refreshed themselves:

Beer for bellringers 2*s*., 2 quarts of beer for the bellringers 1*s*.

The churchwardens handled the Poor Law Relief:

Relieved man and woman with pass 1*s*.

Nothing seems to have been outside their jurisdiction. They handled the Parish Rate—in 1846 a sixpence in the pound rate brought in £140; they handled the education:

1844, Paid Mr Povey for teaching, 1*l*. 5*s*. 0*d*.

They paid the road cleaner; they acted as pest exterminators, and the amounts they paid for sparrows destroyed is shown in many places. In 1835 appears an entry:

Paid Ingram for going in search of the murderer of a child, found in a drain on the Swindon Road, 2*s*. 6*d*.

and again,

Jurymen and constables' expenses, 10*s*. 6*d*.

Also in the records are rare Briefs, or copies of appeals made in Stratton for various charities: collections for the victims of the Plague of London in 1665; for the sufferers in the Great Fire in 1666; for the liberation of Christians captured by the Turkish pirates; for the Irish Protestants in time of persecution; for helping the inhabitants of Ludgershall and other Wiltshire villages to rebuild their homes after disastrous fires.

There is the record of the trust by which John and William Barrett in 1663 gave to the church the Old Church House (now demolished, opposite the 'Jacob's Ladder' on Churchway) and two acres, three and a half roods of land for a fabric fund to be controlled by the churchwardens.

To all these records, various incumbents have at different times added their own personal notes, making the already valuable information more understandable and interesting. Even the place for Vestry Meetings was somewhat unusual—the Crown Inn.

More than anything else, our parish records prove that the Church has not been a mere ornament but a living organism, the Parish Church itself a priceless heritage, ours to use and to treasure and to maintain for future generations.

A PRAYER

O Everlasting God ,with whom a thousand years are but as one day, and in whose name are treasured in this Thy House the memorials of many generations; grant to us, whom Thou hast made members of Thy Church in this parish, such measures of grace and wisdom, that we neglect no portion of our manifold inheritance, but may guard and use it to Thy glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ST CATHARINE'S CHAPEL

The decision to dedicate to St Catharine the memorial chapel that has been restored in the south aisle is a happy one. When John Aubrey the seventeenth-century antiquarian visited the parish church, he commented on the fact that there were only two stained-glass windows, one to St Margaret, the patron saint of the church, and another in the south aisle which showed St Catharine. It is quite likely that the original chapel was dedicated to St Catharine of Alexandria, since the two saints, Margaret of Antioch and Catharine of Alexandria, are often found coupled together.

It was the voices of these two saints that Joan of Arc heard telling her to carry out her great works. An old vellum book with Roman characters, written in the reign of Stephen or Henry II, gives the legends of St Catharine, St Margaret, and St Juliana. These legends of the lives of the saints or martyrs were usually recited or sung to people in churches on the days when the feasts of the saints were celebrated, and in an age when, through ignorance of the laws of nature, many ordinary occurences appeared as supernatural. It is, therefore, not surprising that St Catha-

rine's story contains several miracles. The legend was translated from some ancient manuscript in Greek, about the beginning of the tenth century, and has been handed down in several forms.

Some legends say that Catharine was the daughter of the Emperor Constantius; this would make her the sister of Constantine the Great; others say she was the grandchild of Constantine. Although authentic history is silent, at least all the legends agree that Catharine was of royal birth.

Catharine at the age of twenty had no father or mother, but had armed herself with the Faith, and upbraided the pagan Emperor Maxentius for his heathenism. She was brought to court, sentenced to prison and the torture house, but her judges would not condemn her to death, so the Emperor had them all burnt. Each time Catharine was tortured, the angels came and ministered to her wounds. When Catharine refused to marry the Emperor, he had a machine made by which to tear her to pieces. Some legends say that the machine had four wheels, others say only two, or even one. In any case, the wheel was a new kind of torture and was full of knives and spikes. Catharine prayed for deliverance, and an angel came like a thunderbolt from heaven, shattered the wheel in pieces, the fragments killing over four thousand heathen—the first 'catharine wheel' was certainly a firework. Catharine was afterwards taken to the city gate, where she was beheaded. Several miracles are recorded; from Catharine's severed neck flowed milk and blood to bear witness of her purity. Angels carried away her body to Mount Sinai, and a stream flowed from her stone coffin, a stream which cured all kinds of diseases.

The first record of the introduction of St Catharine into England appears in 1030 A.D. when Geoffrey de Gorham, Abbot of St Albans, wrote a play called *Ludus Sanctae Catharinae*, incidentally the first record of a theatrical play. This provides another small link with the restored chapel, for the window in the east end of the south aisle portrays the first British martyr, a Roman soldier St Alban, to whose honour the abbey, of which Geoffrey was Abbot, was dedicated.

The Feast of St Catharine found no place in the calendars of the 1549, 1552, or 1559 Prayer Books, but was restored to the Black Letter or Minor Saints' list in 1604, with 25th November

as her feast-day. Her symbol is an eight-spoked wheel, with prongs on the rim.

The spelling of Catharine's name (as distinct from Catherine, which comes through the Latin) is due to the derivation from the Greek word *katharos* meaning 'virtuous and maiden purity.'

It is fitting that a chapel which is being restored as a memorial to soldiers, sailors, and airmen who fell in crusades against evil in 1914 and 1939 should be dedicated to St Catharine of Alexandria, whose story, together with that of St Margaret of Antioch, the patron saint of the parish church, must have been very familiar to those soldiers who crusaded against the enemies of Christianity in the East during the eleventh century.

ST MARGARET OF ANTIOCH

The parish church is dedicated to St Margaret of Antioch. This dedication is not mentioned in documents until about 1294, but this is at a time when many churches were being dedicated to St Margaret, probably due to the stories about her that the Crusaders had heard.

It is about this time that Margaret, the Queen of Edward I, held Stratton in her dowry, so the name may have been added in honour of the Queen's patron saint. Or the rebuilt church in *c.* 1280 may have been ready for use on St Margaret's day—20th July.

Of St Margaret herself very little is known. History says that she was a maiden of Antioch in Pisidia *c.* 304 and was martyred under Diocletian. This much is probably true. Tradition says that she was the daughter of a heathen priest and was brought up as a Christian by her nurse. When she refused to give up Christianity, she and the nurse were reduced to tending sheep. There she was seen by the ruler Olybius, who, attracted by her beauty, wished to marry her if free-born, or to buy her if a slave. Margaret replied that she was free-born but a servant of Jesus Christ and she rejected his overtures.

She was imprisoned, when the Devil appeared to her in the form of a fierce dragon, which swallowed her; thus some stained-glass windows show her issuing from a dragon's mouth. Later she was tortured and beheaded.

St Margaret is shown in heraldry wearing a crown and holding a double-crossed staff, and is usually treading the dragon under her feet.

With St Catharine of Alexandria she appeared to Joan of Arc and advised her in her undertakings.

VICARS OF STRATTON ST MARGARET

The first mention of anyone in Holy orders having charge 'of the cure of souls' in Stratton St Margaret, is that Robert de Merton was Rector in the early fourteenth century. He gave his rectorial rights to his college at Oxford, who appointed the first vicar in 1308. Merton eventually became Bishop of Rochester.

There appears to be a hiatus in the Diocesan Registers for various periods and it has not been found possible to date some incumbents. At the time of compilation of this list (October 1949) it seems that the name of the 6th vicar is unobtainable.

1308	Reginald de Altaworth (Altaworth is the early 14th century name for Highworth)
1317	Thomas de Ocham
1338	Laurentius (said to be a native of Stratton St Margaret)
1353	William Agge
1361	Thomas de Foxton
—	[*6th vicar unknown*]
1429	Robert Berkesdale
1450	John Bemptbowe
—	William Sampson
1467	Nicholaus Perysson
—	Sampson Aleyn
1488	Gilbert Lancaster
1498	Richard Haliday
1507	Roger Typton
1545	Edmund Cooles
1555	Gulielmus Meyer
—	William Fowler
1625	Samuel Fowler

1633 Walter Attwood
1634 Christopher Jole (who was ejected at the time of the Commonwealth and a certain Weekes, a Secular Registrar, was appointed. Christopher Jole came back at the Restoration, and is buried in Stratton churchyard)
1671 Godfrey Jenkinson
1680 Nathaniel Massey
1703 Gulielmus Palmer (appointed by Queen Anne)
1733 Joshua Harrison
1737 Henry Godwin
1742 Wallinger Goodinge
1787 James Hare
1808 John Salter
1833 Charles Nesfield
1864 Humphrey Chesshire
1879 Septimus Crawhall
1895 Alexander N. Scott
1898 Cecil Foster Burgess
1912 Sydney Denton
1926 Eric Vivian Rees
1933 Charles Louis Malaher
1935 Charles Donald Reynolds Sharpe
1941 Eric Santer
1948 George Richard Fooks

'ENDUE THY MINISTERS WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS . . .'

When the Rev. G. R. Fooks was instituted as Vicar of Stratton St Margaret in February 1948, he became the 39th vicar. It is 640 years since the first vicar was instituted and records exist of the names of all the vicars except the 6th, who was instituted between 1361 and 1429. Each vicar has been presented to the living by the Warden and Scholars of Merton College, Oxford, with the exception of Gulielmus Palmer, presented by Queen Anne because Merton College had not exercised their right in the appointed time.

Wallinger Goodinge, 1741, seems to have remained in office the longest with a vicariate of 46 years. Eight vicars have stayed for more than twenty years, of whom three exceeded thirty years. The shortest tenure was two years. Three vicars died in office before the early seventeenth century, when William Hedges left a fund for the widows of Stratton's vicars. Since then five have died in office, but none seem to have left a widow to benefit from the charity.

On two occasions vicars have exchanged Stratton for another parish; the last time being when William Sampson exchanged with Nicholaus Perysson, of Chippenham. The 3rd vicar of Stratton, Laurentius, who was instituted in 1338, is said to have been a native of the village. The first vicar was a native of Highworth. William Agge was the vicar who saw Stratton through the period of the Black Death; William Sampson probably prayed for those engaged in the Wars of the Roses; Roger Typton cared for the parish during the many changes made by Henry VIII; Edmund Cooles must have used the Prayer Books introduced by Edward VI and Archbishop Cranmer; William Fowler saw the spacious days of Queen Elizabeth's reign; Christopher Jole was vicar through the troubled period of history known as the 'Glorious Revolution'; and James Hare was the last vicar to farm glebe-land.

Perhaps the most interesting man was Christopher Jole, who was appointed in 1634, deprived of the living by Parliament in 1650, came back in 1662 at the Restoration of Charles II, and remained till his death in 1671. His tombstone here in Stratton contains interesting verse '. . . Search here beneath this stone, and you shall find the relique of a Christ cross-bearing mind, a pattern, to all Christians left behind. Poor, pious, blind yet patient; harried with troubles still content . . .'

STRATTON 'WORTHIES'

A quick glance at our church records shows us many interesting people who were connected with the village of Stratton.

Robert de Merton, the founder of Merton College, Oxford, and later Bishop of Rochester, had 'the cure of souls' of Stratton in the thirteenth century.

In 1305, Adam of Stratton lost his lands by an attainder act of Henry III, and in 1338 another native of Stratton, one Laurentius, was appointed vicar.

At the time of the Commonwealth, a certain Weekes boasted that he was neither priest nor layman, but both—he was the Registrar appointed by Oliver Cromwell to record births, deaths, and marriages when the vicar had been turned out.

William Barrett gave the church the old almshouses near the 'Jacob's Ladder' inn and some land near Churchway, the income to form a small fund by which the churchwardens might keep the church fabric in repair.

William Hedges left monies for the benefit of vicars' widows, but few vicars have left a widow. Of the Hedges (or de Lacey) family of Kingsdown, one Robert was a President of the East India Company in 1814. A grandson, another Robert Hedges, was made governor of the old castle of Borris-in-Ossory, Ireland, as protector of the Protestants in that district. After many skirmishes he was killed whilst hunting

In 1725 John Herring gave lands to provide an income to educate six poor children, and to assist four poor widows at Christmas.

Nearer our own time, Frederick Day, a native of the village, became a priest and missionary and was killed in the Boxer Rising in China in 1912.

The heritage of our parish is something for us to treasure, and then to pass on to the generations to come.

STRATTON'S GROWTH

Although England was divided into parishes much earlier than Norman times, there are no reliable extant records until the *Domesday Book* which was compiled in 1086. At that time Stratton consisted of all the land that now forms the parishes of Stratton St Margaret, Upper Stratton, and St Barnabas (Gorse Hill). The population was about forty! The manor of Stratton was at that time in the possession of Nigel, the physician of William the Conqueror. The parish remained in its original outline until as late as 1891, when the Gorse Hill part of Stratton became part of Swindon. In 1932, the parish was divided into

the two ecclesiastical parishes of Stratton St Margaret and Stratton St Philip, but still remains one civic parish. The present ecclesiastical parish is bounded by no less than eight other parishes, one in the neighbouring diocese of Salisbury.

(The parish in the Salisbury diocese is, of course, Chiseldon, which adjoins Stratton St Margaret at Stratton Nythe.)

What happened to the population? Although no records exist, it must have grown by 1280, when our present parish church was built, and there were enough people by 1447 to warrant King Henry VI granting a Charter for a Fair.

(This fair evolved into Stratton Feast, the Sunday nearest St Margaret's Day, which, reckoned by the Old Calendar then in use, would be the Sunday nearest 2nd August.)

The Church Registers indicate a constantly growing population all through Stuart and Hanoverian times. According to an old gazetteer, in 1800 the total number of inhabitants was 745, which meant that Stratton's population was smaller than that of Wanborough, which at that time boasted 903! According to the population census of 1801, however, the number of inhabitants in Stratton St Margaret (including Upper Stratton) was only 580. With the rapid industrialization of the Swindon area, by 1871 there were 2527 in Stratton. The figures have increased between the wars, and although there are no official figures for the present time, the population of Stratton St Margaret must be quite large—about eight thousand.

Strangely enough, the development of the village has been lop-sided; the church is situated right on the edge of the built-up area, and there is on two sides of the church only one farm between it and the next parish boundary.

(*One of these farms has now been demolished to make room for the aerodrome and demolition of the other has begun.*)

'WHAT'S IN A NAME?'

Have you ever thought about the wealth of old names that still exist in Stratton?

The name of the village itself—Stratton (derived from the Latin *strata* [a paved way] and the old Norse *ton* signifying a place surrounded by a hedge or fortified)—probably dates from

Roman times. In the Domesday survey of 1086, it is spelt Stratone; in some ancient documents preserved in France (dated 1150) it is recorded as Strattuna; whilst the Assise Roll for 1253 tells us of Straton. The affix St Margaret does not appear until about 1294, at a time when churches were being dedicated to St Margaret of Antioch, whose story was being told to Crusaders. It was also around this date that Margaret, the French Queen of Edward I, held Stratton in her dowry. In order that there shall be no mistake the documents say 'Straton Sce Margarete, *juxton Altam Swyndon*' [in close proximity to high Swindon]. Various other documents speak of Overe Stratton, Nether Stratton, Stratton Superior, these being the two familiar villages Upper and Lower Stratton; Upper Stratton because it stands on the higher ground.

Of districts, the place we know as Dockle was known in 1278 as the 'home of Henry de Dochull' [the hill where the dock grows]. Pen Hill is quoted as early as 1093 as 'aettam penn' [the hill with a sheep pen or farm upon it]. The Breach is recorded as the Esturbreache in 1261 and means new land taken into cultivation. Kingsdown speaks for itself, and the King held the manor in 1227.

Field names, too, have survived—The Moors, on the Highworth side of the village derives from Mora (1277) meaning marshland. Slade Keys on the Oxford Road, now wrongly quoted Slade Hayes, is mentioned in 1277 and indicates 'a shallow valley or depression.' The Cossicles, near South Marston (1261), is the old 'cotsetla' [land of the cottagers]. Harnells in Oxford Road (the old name of the road until about 1910) comes from Harnhull (1278) meaning 'hareshill or boundary hill'.

A field near Kingsdown cross-roads, called 'Old Berries,' is a corruption of Olebury (1412) meaning 'old camp or earthworks'. Long Gore (14th century) on the Wanborough side of the village signifies, as it still is, a triangular piece of ground.

The fact that we once had a Priory in Stratton (standing opposite the Vicarage) which was confiscated by Henry VI, is remembered by Priory Lodge, a modern house, and by the old name of Church Farm, shown on a map of 1887 as Priory Farm. Pigeon House Lane tells us of the great pigeon lofts which originally belonged to the Manor House, and in fact the old

medieval pigeon house still stands there against Pigeon House Farm. Hyde Road is so named because Ann Hyde, wife of James II, once stayed near there at the old nunnery of Blunsdon. Churchway was a raised and paved pathway to bring biers to the church from the tithings of The Green and Upper Stratton (the Cowleas pathway).

Brewery Farm reminds us of the Star Brewery which once existed in Lower Stratton Green, and Wharf Farm of the days when the old canal was not merely a name. Pond Farm is a grim reminder to old parishioners of the frequent winter floods which used to stretch from the old Tilly's Pond across the Ermin Street.

Of inns, most of the names tell their own story. The 'Plough Inn' was until the end of the last century known by the much more quaint name of 'Speed the Plough Inn'. The 'Jacob's Ladder' is the only inn so named in the whole of England.

The well-known landmark known as the 'Willow,' although it is really a lime tree, is the site of an old willow tree. The parish council planted the lime tree after a vain effort to get a fresh willow tree to grow.

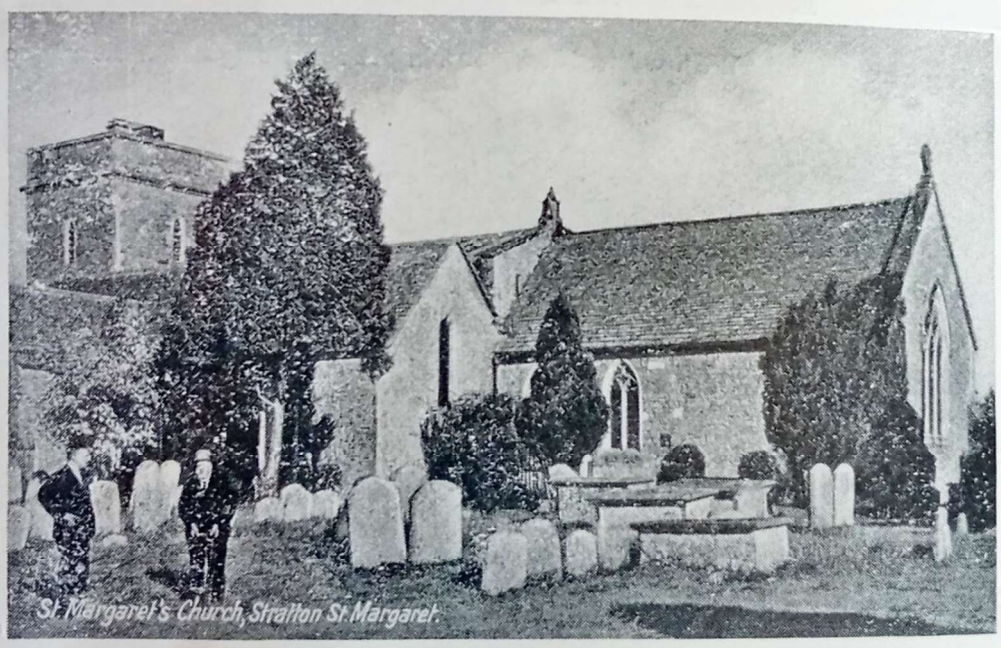
'OUR SHELTER IN THE TIME OF STORM'

It was pointed out at the Annual Parochial Meeting (1947) that we should soon have to face the problem of extensive repairs to our church roof. Even the roof of the parish church has its own history. Originally when built in the late thirteenth century, the nave roof was of the same height as the north and south aisles. They were all lead covered, as were most church roofs at that time. There is a medieval lead foundry still working in Lincoln Cathedral. Our nave roof was made higher when the clerestory was added in the sixteenth century to give extra light to the centre of the church and is now the only part leaded, the other roofs are all stone tiled.

The south aisle was re-roofed in 1846 at cost of £170 10*s.* 9½*d.*, whilst the sum of £90 18*s.* 7*d.* was spent in re-roofing the north aisle in December 1840, but in those days the lead from the north aisle alone was sold for £73! At some earlier period than these re-roofings, the church had already lost its

'The Street' and 'Willow' in 1896, showing the old original willow tree

An unusual view of the church from the north-east



A modern view of the church from the south-west

gable copings and whatever parapets it possessed. The wooden rafters of the south aisle were renewed in 1892 after the weather had almost ruined the woodwork.

The belfry roof and the roof of the chancel are dated late eighteenth century and the choir vestry 1896, but a smaller chancel existed before those dates. The repair charges for the chancel roof are payable by Merton College, Oxford, who have been Rectors of the parish of Stratton St Margaret since *c.* 1300. There exists no evidence of any provision for bells in the original church, but as two of the bells are older than the tower, it is not improbable that a bell-cote stood over the east wall of the nave, and has disappeared with the other external features.

The south porch, over which was originally a small room and of which the newel stairway remains, carries its original oak roof timbers, although built as an addition to the church as early as the 14th century.

Commonplace things like church roofs can be interesting.

'THE GOOD OLD DAYS?'

In these austere days, with ever rising prices, a peep into our church records recalls the 'good old days' that our grandparents remembered in their youth. We must, however, remember that wages too were low, the normal worker received less than a pound a week, and even those employed on the important task of teaching in the schools got precious little for their labours as the following extract shows:

1884, Paid Mr Povey for teaching, three-quarters of a year, 1*l.* 5*s.* 0*d.*; Paid Miss Barnes for quarter of a year, 8*s.* 4*d.*; Paid Mr Bisley for one year, 16*s.* 8*d.*

This was the old Church School adjoining the church, near the tower (now churchyard) and was presumably for part-time teaching. Other items:

1831, Beer for bellringers [frequent items under this heading], 1*s.*; 1849 Paid for 1½ cwts. of coal, 7*d.*; 1848, Carriage of new pulpit from Bath, 2*s.*; 1852, New door to pulpit, 6*d.*; 1875, Harmonium, 8*s.*; 1875, New window in Church [probably the middle window in the north aisle] 1*l.* 7*s.* 0*d.*

As late as 1891 a Sunday School teachers and choir outing,

numbering 41, including a special train from Stratton station to Weston-super-Mare, cost only £9. It is recorded that the dinner consisted of 'an unlimited supply of hot and cold mutton, beef, ham, backed up with gooseberry tart'!

In 1889, well within living memory, the expenditure shows the sum of £6 1*s*. 9½*d*. sufficient to heat and light the church for a whole year.

It is no small wonder that our grandparents frequently recalled their youth.

HOSPITAL SUNDAY

This year (1947) will probably see the end of an institution which has come to be regarded as a tradition in Stratton St Margaret. With the advent of the National Health Bill, our Hospital Sunday will disappear.

The old church records show that Stratton has for many hundreds of years been charitably minded. Stratton made collections for victims of the Great Plague of London in 1665; for the sufferers in the Great Fire in 1666; for the liberation of Christian men captured by the Turkish or Algerian pirates; for the Irish Protestants in time of persecution, and also for the French Protestants when they were forced to leave their country. It also has helped to rebuild Ludgershall and other English villages destroyed by fire.

It is no small wonder that when the Victoria Hospital was being built, Stratton responded, and on 22nd June 1886, the first Hospital Sunday was held, when the result was £5 9*s*. 2*d*. Nowadays the average is £40, although at times over £60 has been collected. For many years the Friendly Societies of Stratton organized the procession. Originally the procession formed at Upper Stratton at 2.30 p.m., and after a long march of both villages finally attended Evensong at St Margaret's church. It was found that the number of juveniles decreased after the tea at Kingsdown!

A collector who will be well remembered was old John Horton, a faithful member of St Margaret's congregation, who always collected in an old battered top hat! He was only once beaten as

highest collector, and then only after a recount when a French penny was found in his box! Another worker who has long been connected with both Hospital Sunday and St Margaret's church is Mr Jesse Loveday, who happily is still with us.

Thus will Hospital Sunday, with its procession, its banners, the crowded church, the familiar hymns, fade into memory and into the history of our village—truly the old order changeth.

LEGEND AND FOLKLORE

Although village legends are not history, they sometimes lead to new discoveries, and in any case they are interesting.

Amongst the folklore of Stratton is the reason for the name 'Stratton Crocodiles' by which all Strattonians are known. In the days when ladies wore long fur stoles, one was dropped in Ermin Street near the Old Bush. A reveller from the 'Jacob's Ladder' upon seeing the fur, hastily returned to the inn for assistance in killing the 'crocodile' which had appeared from the ditch, and a gallant party went forth armed with staves and pitch-forks to attack a lady's fur!

Other traditions which exist without historical foundations are that Stratton was an Anglo-Saxon market town, and that stage coaches once rumbled down the old Ryall Lane at the back of the church. The supposed trench-grave in Stratton Green for victims of a plague, however interesting, will not bear investigation.

Of ghosts, many allege that they have seen a white-habited nun, sometimes in the church, but even as far afield as Stratton Green. The nun always disappears before questions can be asked. Some connect her with the lead-filled skull in the church, but again no proof is forthcoming.

Whether Oliver Cromwell stabled his horses in Stratton church has still to be verified—his troops were certainly in the district—but then, Oliver Cromwell seemed to have toured the country stabling horses in churches, in the same way that Queen Elizabeth went round sleeping in beds!

'AND OUR MOUTH SHALL SHOW FORTH THY PRAISE'

Did our forefathers praise God with singing in the church which originally stood on the site of our present parish church? Probably the officiating priest would sing Gregorian plainsong, as he would be a monk from the great abbey at Malmesbury, for although Stratton was then in the Diocese of Ramsbury, the pastoral care was probably in the hands of Malmesbury's mitred abbot, and it was as early as 675 that Aldhelm had made the first organ and taught music at Malmesbury. In 1075 the village became part of Old Sarum Diocese and later (in 1194) of New Sarum (Salisbury). St Osmund, Bishop of Salisbury (and nephew of William the Conqueror) compiled a manual and missal, after the Use of Sarum, which would have been used at Stratton, and it was from these books that the greater part of our Prayer Book was translated in the sixteenth century. Whether our vicars, the first appointed in 1308, were musical, we do not know.

Congregational singing came with the Reformation and the Protestant Reformers who recognized its importance. At Stratton we might even have heard Merbecke's plainsong settings, written around this time. Singing and music were discountenanced by the Puritans—in 1643 choirs and organs were prohibited. Stratton would come under this ruling, since our vicar, Christopher Jole, was turned out by the Puritans at the time of the Commonwealth and a Secular Registrar appointed to keep our registers. When Christopher Jole came back in 1660 at the Restoration, it is fairly safe to surmise that music came back to Stratton church.

By 1830 Stratton possessed a church orchestra. They had a gallery or raised box pew at the back of the church, near the then new tower. The records show such items as: 'Paid for bass viol strings, 3*s*.; Reeds for clarinet, 1*s*. 6*d*.' The Clerk led the singing and his massive desk stood just outside the chancel where the present lectern stands (the marks are still visible on the stone floor), but was later removed and the panels thereof converted into the belfry screen.

In 1856 the church boasted a seraphim (a kind of harmonium) for which the churchwardens paid 2*s*. 6*d*. for tuning and 25*s*. for repairing. It was then claimed by a Mr Day, but the vicar, the

Rev. Charles Nesfield has annotated the records to show that Mr Day had only lent the seraphim to the church. By 1875 a harmonium was in use, the player receiving the salary of £1 for four Sundays.

In 1892 comes the first mention of a pipe organ; the Parish Magazine advertises practice on a two-manual organ, 20 stops, $2\frac{1}{2}$ octaves of pedals, couplers—all for 8*d*. an hour, including blower! The organ then stood in the south aisle near the present war memorial, but was badly damaged by rain until the south aisle roof was repaired. In 1896 the organ was transferred to its present position when the vestry was added to the church. It was rebuilt and extra pipes and stops added in 1924.

HIGHWAYS AND BYEWAYS

Stratton derives its name from the fact that it stands upon the old Roman road, the Ermin Street, which runs from Gloucester to Newbury. This is our oldest highway, and was known until a hundred or so years ago as the Fosse Road.

The only turnpike road to run through Lower Stratton was that which entered Stratton at the old Turnpike House in Oxford Road and then followed the present Swindon Road and Highworth Road. Before the railway track and The Green bridge were built, the road from Swindon joined with the Stratton end of Gipsy Lane, and the district now known as 'The Green' is shown on old maps as 'Stratton Marsh'.

The Oxford Road, with its present teeming traffic, is quoted in 1795 as 'part of an ancient bridle-track leading from Shrivenham to Rodbourne Cheney'! This led from Shrivenham to The Green bridge, where it followed Gipsy Lane and the Green Lane to Upper Stratton and then on to Rodbourne Cheney. The Green Lane is an ancient one and was originally called Marsh Lane.

The Churchpath and the raised Cowleas footpath are old *churchways*, which enabled parishioners in the outlying districts to get to church. The small lanes in Stratton Green—those opposite the Baptist Church, Tilly's Lane, and the present West End road—were originally the boundary paths of the real ancient Stratton village green. Other ancient lanes are the present Ryall Lane,

and Nythe Road, originally an ancient lane known as Long Gore Lane. If this old lane is followed to Nythe Farm, near the Fox Covert is an old grass lane, all that remains of the old Park Lane.

Until 1795, Stratton had few enclosed fields—the agriculture was carried on in large open fields where each land-owner possessed a number of strips of land. In addition there were common pasture-lands (in the north-west of the village), meadow-lands by the streams, and other large open spaces. The question of footpaths would rarely arise—unless they crossed cultivated land; the great open spaces belonged to the village. Most tracks did, however, lead to or from such important places as the parish church or the village pump. When the open spaces of Stratton were fenced in by Act of Parliament in 1795, a certain amount of protection was given to footpaths which crossed hithertofore unenclosed land. Thus we still have a four-feet right-of-way from the church to South Marston, another across the old Cleys Field to the old Long Gore Lane, from the end of West End Road to Upper Stratton, and from the Highworth Road to Kingsdown. The building of the canal lost us at least one footpath, the building of the railway lost us another; others are in dispute—precious rights we must protect and hand on to others.

(Since this article was written, due to the expansion of the aerodrome the footpath from Ermin Street to the Highworth Road has been shortened, whilst one to South Marston has been closed altogether. Another pathway to South Marston will be established, partly along the old disputed right-of-way and then by a new route to emerge somewhere near the railway bridge at South Marston.)

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