

Parish Records of Kingston St. Mary, 1641=1852

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THE village of Kingston or Kingston St. Mary lies at the foot of the Quantock Hills rather more than 3 miles from the town of Taunton. Its principal feature is its ancient Church, the tower of which takes a high place amongst the beautiful towers for which Somerset is famous. In its admirable proportions, its rich but restrained decoration and its light and elegant corner pinnacles, it is a delight to the eye, while the warmth of its stone-work assumes in various lights hues of gold and rose colour of extraordinary beauty.

The records of the church and parish do not go back so far as one might wish. The Registers date from 1677 only, but the churchwardens' accounts carry us back to 1641¹ and they contain a list of the churchwardens from 1571 onwards. The overseers' accounts date from 1671. From an examination of these much can be drawn and it may be remarked here what a valuable mine of information such accounts afford. Much attention has rightly been given to church registers, but churchwardens' and overseers' accounts which are often full of curious and interesting detail have not infrequently been neglected and even allowed to disappear.

The overseers' accounts of 1671 show us the parish divided into five tithings—Kingston proper, Naylesbourne, Cowes-huish, North Fulford and Ilebeare. The rate for the relief of the poor sets out the persons rated. Mr. Thomas Camplin,

¹ There are a few earlier leaves, but owing to damp and decay they are in very imperfect condition.

whose beautiful memorial tablet is on the north wall of the chancel, was then Vicar, and at the head of the list for Kingston tithing appears 'the Lady Warre for Hestercombe'. Under 'Naylesbourne' we find George Knight, whose tablet is outside the priest's door, and Bults of 'Doddle'. Lady Stawell of Cothelstone is rated for Deanes Farm, Cowes-huish, and Dr. Dyke and 'Thom. Dyke. Gent' (whose brasses are on the wall of the Tetton 'Aisle') also appear. Two churchwardens and four overseers were appointed every year, for the rate is stated to be made by them 'together with the consent of other the inhabitants of the said parish'.

In 1642 the following 'Implements' belonged to the Church and were delivered to the succeeding Churchwardens.

'Impr. A communion cupp of silver wth a silver cover and a silver bread plate. A flagon of Tinn to set the wine in upon the Communion Table. Item. a cushion for the Pulpitt and a case to keepe him in and a Pulpitt Clothe. Item. one Bible, Three Common Prayer bookes, one booke of Homelys. Bishop Jewell's works agst Mr. Hardinge. The Booke of Cannons. Tenn prayer bookes for speciall times. Two Register Bookes Two Carpetts Two Surplices, one Hower glasse. One Linnen Table Clothe for the Communion Table. Two glasse Bottles to fetch wine in. Fower mattes to kneele on. Item. The greater part of two corsletts.'

The 'Writings' included 'a parchmt Rolle of the p'ish rates', a counterpart Lease of 'Whitefeild' and certain Bonds and 'There is with us Twelve pound and 1 quarter of Bell mettle wh was hewed from the Bells and there is alsoe with us five and Thirty pounds of Bell mettle wh. was the Bell Cannons.'

In 1644, however, there is a significant 'Note of the things taken and carried away oute of the Church, viz. All the silver plate the Booke of Cannons, Three Common Prayer Bookes, Ten other prayer books for speciall times, Two Surplices and the Linnen cloth for the Com'on Table'. The 'parchment Roll of the Parish rates' also disappeared, but it was afterwards 'seen in Philip Cornish his custodye for he denyed $\frac{1}{2}d.$ of his rate so fored to pduce itt (the halfpenny rateable upon Cleehill's meade)'. The sum of 12s. 6d. was expended on 'a chalice wth a cover of Tinn and 3 yds. of Holland for a cloth

for the Communion Table' in place of the things removed. When our accounts begin, bread and wine is provided for communion at Michaelmas, Christmas and Easter, but after 1644 there is no further entry under this head until 1662. During the troubled years that intervene, the parish affairs seem to have followed to some extent their normal course. The bells were rung on the 5th November every year, much work was done in keeping the Church in repair, mending the churchyard wall and the Church House and attending to the clock and the bells. The accounts were made up every year and usually 'seen and allowed' by apparently two justices.² In 1643 they spent 4s. at the Archdeacon's visitation at Taunton, but no similar item appears until after the Restoration. Warrants of Authorization were annually obtained and 'Hospitell Money' was paid every year to the constable and less regularly for repairing of bridges or for 'the releife of maim'd souldiers', but the great mass of entries in these years is concerned with payments to distressed persons passing to or from Ireland. They came in parties: 'Two gentlewomen and their folliers taken by their enimys 3s.' (1652), 'two families of Irish people who had lost their estates in Ireland having breifs 2s. 6d.' (1653), 'two families of Irish people going to Ireland being 14 persons wh had a breife 1s. 6d.' (1653), 'given unto 3 severall companies of Irish people 5s.' (1654), 'an Irishman wch lost all his goods by the Rebels' had 2s. 6d. in 1646. In 1643 an Irish gentleman, his wife and children, 'wch had all his estate taken from him by rebells in Ireland' had 6s. Irish ministers in similar case also received help. An Irish minister in 1647 had 10s. for preaching. Nor were Irish people the only persons in need of relief. There were the 'three men of Barnstable taken prisoner by the Turks' (1643), the 'man who had lost by the Spaniards', the 'Londoner that had his children burnt' (1659), and the 'poore man that had lost all by fire, he and his children scalded (1653)'. In 1643 the following entries occur. They appear to refer to the improvement of the defences of Taunton Castle:

² The Accounts are 'seen and allowed' in the years 1649 and 1652 to 1658, both inclusive. These entries and signatures cease after this date.

| | |
|--|-----------|
| ' Paid David Bedy and John Roster for working at the Castle the last year, 4 days a year . | 00.06.08 |
| ' A noat of such tooles as I have deliver'd into the Castell and have paid for | |
| ' Item. paid to Johan Deane for one whelebarrow | 00.03.00 |
| Item. paid Gorge Oake for one spade . | 00.01.04 |
| Item. paid Philip Cornish for one bill hooke . | 00.01.00 |
| Item. paid old Ball of Cheddon for one hatchet | 00.01.00 |
| Item. paid to Gorge Knight for one axe . | 00.01.08 |
| Item. paid to Thomas Blanchflore for one pickaxe | 00.01.04 |
| Item. paid to Richard Farthinge for one spad | 00.01.04 |
| Item. paid for one shovell of my owne . | 00.01.04 |
| Item. paid Wille Knight for one Krowbar one hatchet and bill hooke and one pickaxe . | 00.07.08 |
| some is | 00.19.08' |

In 1644 the stocks had to be mended, but by 1646 new ones were required. 'James Bulte' was paid 6s. for '11 planckes wh made the stocks', 'John Slocombe' had 8s. 8d. for 'making the stocks and a plancke for soles', and 'Tho: Smyth' supplied 'Iron used about the stocks and church house' for 4s. 10d. In the same year 5s. was paid for 'writing the Covenante'. John Bulte was paid 15s. for 'going with his plough to Milverton and Taunton' (1649). When a dead man was 'found in the p'ishe neare John Welshman's house' a 'messenger' was despatched to the coroner whose fee was 10s.—a 'jurie' was impanelled, 'fower men' set 'to watche' the dead man who was then 'stretched forth' and buried, the whole costing £1 6s. 0d. (1651). 'Allmost one hundred of Read' and 'six burdens of sparr gaddes'³ are required for thatching the parish house and 8s. is paid for the work (1654). In 1656 'we have agreed for a Bench to be sett about ye yew tree att these p'ticular charges

| | | |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| ' To pay for | { Fower Loades of stone . . . | 00.03.04 |
| | { Two Sackes of Lime . . . | 00.03.00 |
| | { The carriage of ye stones . . . | 00.05.04 |
| | { The worke in setting ye Bench . . . | 00.06.00' |

An indication of the state of public affairs is given in 1650 when 2s. was paid 'for defacing the King's Armes'.

³ 'Sparr gaddes' are gads or sticks to be split up into spars for thatch.

' Doctor Dicke and Thomas Cornish ' were churchwardens in 1660-1 and £8 was promptly paid for ' the King's Armes ' duly replaced, a ' Common Prayer Booke ' was bought for 10s., a ' paper to pray for the Quene ' cost 6*d.*, the Ringers had 2s. 6*d.* for ' ye Coronation day ' and ' powder and match for the Trayners ' cost 3s. 10*d.* and ' tenn pounds of powder and mach ' for them 15s. In 1662 the Archdeacon's visitation occurs again, taking place at Bridgwater, and the sacraments are again administered, bread and wine for Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter Day costing respectively 5s. 7*d.*, 1s. 9*d.* and 9s., the ' flaggon ' is ' amended ', another Prayer Book purchased for 7s. 8*d.* and £3 6s. 6*d.* is paid for ' ye surplice and the making and washing and a cloath for ye Communion Table and for the fringe about it and making and washing ' and 3s. for preserving ' the carpet of ye Communion Table '. Next year £5 is paid for ' a chalice and a cover for communion ' which the amended list of ' implements ' shows to have been of silver, and £1 18s. 6*d.* for ' a Hearse cloth ', the Register is sent to Wells, timber is brought from Hestercombe for the Church, £10 paid for ' amending ye arch ', £1 6s. 3*d.* to the ' hellier ' ⁴ for his wages for ' amending ye Lidds ' and £1 0s. 3*d.* for ' yron work '. It is now noted that some of the travellers to be relieved have ' a certificate under the Broad Seale of England ' or ' the King's Broad Seale '. There are still for some time travellers from Ireland who have suffered losses, but these give place to ' distressed women their husbands being taken by ye Turks and kept slaves ' (1663), sufferers from ' loss by shipwreck ', poor soldiers and seamen, ' 2 Bristoll men wch were taken by ye Hollanders ' (1664), ' a wounded seaman that was carried on a horse ', ' distressed Londoners ' (1665), ' one Capn. Barr his wife and 2 children wth a passe, who lost at sea by a Turkey pirate to the value of 2000^l his sonne and sonne in law being carryed away by the pirate ', 1s. 6*d.* (1666), and ' great losses by the Hollanders ' and ' by the Dutch ' (1667).

The Book of Homilies disappears from the list of ' Implements ' after 1670, but there is a note in 1666 that this book was ' in the hands of Joseph Palmer ', so it was possibly not returned but entered for another year or two by inadvertence.

⁴ ' Hellier ' is a thatcher or tiler.

The Churchwardens seem, however, to have got rather confused, for in 1665 they note that 'Juell against Hardinge is in the custody of Joseph Palmer', and next year they repeat this 'as we have formerly pceived and entered in the book', but go on to say 'But we conceive it to be rather'. Then striking all this out they enter boldly that 'the Book of Homilies is in the hands of Joseph Palmer', the name being added in another hand.

During the years after the Restoration a fairly regular course is pursued. The ringers ring on the 29th May and 5th November every year. The Bishop's Court and Visitations are duly attended, the Vicar being allowed 2s. for his dinner on these occasions. The Sacrament is administered five times in the year, on Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter Day, Whitsuntide and 'Christtide'. The Church is regularly and frequently repaired. £1 6s. paid for 'cramping the pinnacles of the tower'. £1 6s. 8d. for 'yron work about the same', 14s. for 'carrying and re-carrying the old and new lead of the Tower to and fro Taunton', £7 for work, 15s. for boards, £8 6s. 4d. 'for new lead and exchange of the old' and 10s. for 'wood and Charcole to sodder the leads', all in 1676. We regret to find 1s. 6d. for 'clensing the inside walls of the church of spider threads and filth' (1680), but the surplice and church linen are washed regularly and the flagon and church plate scoured. A chest cost 12s. and '3 locks for ye chest' 3s. (1664) and the 'Keyes of the church coffer' are 'righted' (1670). In 1678 a copy is purchased of the Act for burying people in woollen and the first burial 'after ye woollen Acte' is entered in the Register on 1 September, while a return of the persons so buried is made each subsequent year. Money is spent about the 'seates' in the church and for mending 'the leads over the porch and Dr. Dyke his Isle' (1672-3) and 'Mr. Tho: Dyke his guift to the poor' is distributed on St. Thomas's day 1674 by the Vicar and Churchwardens.⁵

In 1681 the communion table was railed in and the following items occur :

⁵ Thomas Dyke had died 26 May 1672 at the age of 81. His brass may be seen in the Tetton aisle and is illustrated in *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, lxxxiii, ii, 138.

| | |
|---|--------|
| ' Paid for the timber to make the Rayles to the communion table | 2.17.6 |
| Paid Mich: Wallis for the carriage of the said timber | 5.0 |
| Paid Robt. Smyney his wages for 29½ dayes work for making & setting the said Railes | 2.19.3 |
| Paid for a Bolt & Hinges for the doore of the sd railes | 9.0 |
| Paid for varnish nailes and speekes used about the rails | 7.5' |

In the same year ' a new booke only with the singing psalms for the clarke ' was purchased for 5s.

Richard Camplin, Vicar from 1662, had been succeeded in 1669 by Thomas Camplin⁶ who held the living until his death in 1716 when he is worthily commemorated by the entry in the register of burials, ' Thos. Camplin, Vicar of Kingston, who had most faithfully and diligently served this parish neare fifty yeares, vivat memoria (ob. 18 Apl. Vier. 48 years) '. He was 79 and had lost his wife Martha (' vivo chara et a mortuo non divisa ' according to the monumental tablet) nine years previously at the age of 60. He had seen various vicissitudes. In his own family three sons and a daughter had been born during his vicariate and two children had died within two months of each other in the spring of 1689.

In 1680 we have for the first time a record of payment ' unto Peter Withers for ringing ye Great Bell 30th of January 2s.' and this recurs each year up to and including 1687 and again in 1690.⁷ It is to be noted that this differs from entries of the ordinary ringers and is the only time when the ' Great Bell ' is specified. It is curious to find after an apparent cessation of nearly thirty years that the bell is again rung on 30 January 1728 and at frequent intervals up to 1754, after which it may have been included in the clerk's annual salary and expenses, as the duty seems to have been performed by him and not by the usual ringers.⁸

⁶ The Camplins appear to have been Somerset people. Both Richard and Thomas were M.A. of Oxford. Thomas matric. 11 April 1660, St. Mary Hall, Foster, *Alumn. Oxon.*

⁷ In the Churchwardens' accounts of Pitminster for the year 1675, 6d. is charged ' for a proclamation for the observing of the thirtieth of Januarie '.

⁸ Robt. Sminey was to be paid £3 per annum for executing and performing the office of a Parish Clerk, 15 April 1754.

There were many other occasions during Mr. Camplin's regime when the bells were rung. On the accession of James II, 6 February 1685, on 'Saint George his day' in the same year, on the anniversary of 'King James the second his coming to the crown' in 1686 and 1687. Though Monmouth was in Taunton and passed to Bridgwater, no allusion to his short-lived rebellion or the Great Assize which followed is to be found, but on 1 July 1688, the bells are rung 'as a triumph for the birth of the Prince of Wales', on which occasion there was a bonfire 'in Triumph' for which faggots and seams of wood were provided. But the triumph was shortlived. Next year the ringers had 10s. on 'the day King William was crowned' and 'charges happening to the parishe in pursuance of King William his service' cost 3s. 6d. They rang for the Coronation, 11 April 1690, 'att the Irish triumph', on the return of King William from Ireland, 'upon reducing of Ireland', 'upon news of the victorie over the French at sea (1691-2)', 'the thanksgiving day for discovering the plot against King and State (1695-6)', 'the thanksgiving day for peace with France (1697)'. But in 1702 King William dies and Queen Anne succeeds. The sum of 2s. was paid 'to the apparator for proclamation and prayer book set forth for the observation of a day to prais God for our victorie over the French', and the ringers had at the same time 5s. They had 2s. on 23 August 1705, 'a day of thanksgiving and rejoicing'.⁹ In 1712 (rather late in the day it would seem), 'Mr. Frey' was paid £5 15s. for 'painting the Queen's Arms', 'deales and carriage for the frame' cost 12s. 1d., 'gold for the frame' 4s. 9d., 16s. 'for laying on ye gold', and 10s. 'for making ye frame'. A new 'Common Prayer Book' was bought in 1713 for 12s. In the same year there was 'ringing at the day of rejoicing for ye peace',¹⁰ and 'ringing at the day of rejoicing at the proclamation'. Then in 1714 there is yet another change and the bells are rung for the coronation of George I.

One or two special entries are to be noticed. In 1691-2 2s. 5d. was paid 'for wine at the comunion in wh. Sr Fra: Warre and other gentn. did ptake', and on 3 October 1702,

⁹ Blenheim was fought 15 Aug. 1704.

¹⁰ The Peace of Utrecht, 31 March 1713.

4s. 4d. 'for bread and wine when the gentn. received the comunion'.¹¹ Otherwise during this period the administration seems to be confined to the great festivals but sometimes includes Trinity Sunday instead of Palm Sunday, and in one year the 'Sunday before Christmas' in addition to Christmas Day. There are also 'Fast days' as well as 'days of rejoicing' and special prayer books for these and other occasions 'commanded to be used'. In 1685 9s. had been paid 'for new binding ye Book of Bishop Jewell his works'. The 'book-binder' was paid 14s. 'for a large Common Prayer Book' in 1702.

John Skerratt, B.C., succeeded good Mr. Camplin in 1716, and the occasion is marked by a special celebration, 'for bread and wine at the first coming of the parson' 2s. 10d. His coming coincided with the purchase of a silver flagon, for which and for cleaning the old plate 'Mr. Dare'¹² was paid £13 3s. 6d. He continued in office fifteen years. Like his predecessor he attended the visitations and was allowed 2s. 6d. for his dinner, in addition to which he was sometimes 'treated with a pint of wine' for 1s. Much repair was done to the church in these years. In 1720 John Jordan 'for washing the church and cullering the windows and the pillars and righting and cullering the vault and other plaistering about the church' was paid £1 14s. In 1722 John Hadden was paid

¹¹ The Test Act of 1673 made it necessary for all officers, civil and military, to receive the Sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England. Sir Francis Warre and other magistrates could take no part in local government until they had obtained their Sacramental Certificates. Many of the Certificates for this period are preserved in the Somerset County Council Record Office. *Somerset & Dorset Notes & Queries*, xxii, 143. For the form of the Certificates, see *ib.* xi, 312.

Sir Francis Warre of Hestercombe, son and heir of Sir John Warre (d. 1669), was born c. 1659; matriculated at Oxford (Oriel College) 16 Oct. 1674, aged 15; was sometime Captain in the Duke of Monmouth's Regiment, and was created a baronet, 2 June 1673. He was M.P. for Bridgwater in four Parliaments, and for Taunton in eight Parliaments until he was unseated in 1715; and was Colonel of the Taunton Regiment and Vice-Admiral of Somerset and Bristol. He died at Ghent in Flanders, 1 Dec. 1718, and was buried at Kingston ten days later. His only son, John, was a Captain of Dragoons, and is stated to have died at Ghent c. 1710, aged 32. *Complete Baronetage*, G.E.C., iv, 56. The conduct of Sir Francis Warre in dealing with the difficult position created by Judge Jeffreys in the case of the 'Fair Maids of Taunton' was worthy of praise. Webb's edition, Toulmin's *History of Taunton*, 141.

¹² No doubt a member of the well-known family of Taunton silversmiths of the name.

14s. 3d. 'for 9 days and a half about pointing ye church' or 9d. a day and his boy 6s. for 8 days, but William Holman was paid 2s. 6d. 'for ten quarts of cyder for John Hadden in his work'. In 1725 'Mr. Parker' had £45 'for work done about the church' and in 1727 'Mr. Frey' was paid £2 4s. 6d. for 'colouring ye Pulpitt font and schreen and King's Arms next ye bellfrey and varnishing about ye Communion Table'. Another expense in this year was a new 'Pulpitt cushion' which was a serious and costly business.

'Paid for ye Pulpitt cushion one yd crimson velvet £1 1 yd Mantua silk 5s. gold fringe 5s. 7½d. silk 3d. 3 yds ¾ and ⅛ gold lace 8s. 5d. 2 oun crimson silk 4s. gold thread 1s. 11d. pd. for making and tassells 2s. 6d. 3 shammy skins to hold ye feathers 3s. 6d. more goose feathers 2s. 6d. making ye cushion 4s. more gold fringe for ye tassells 7s. 6d. making the case for the cushion of ye old Pulpitt cloth &c. 1s.'

'A large Common Prayer for Mr. Skerratt' cost 15s. 6d. in 1728. During this Vicariate Dr. Henry James, late master of Queen's College, Cambridge, and Regius professor of the university, gave by his will of 14 February 1716, 'to this parish (the place of his birth) the sum of £100 to purchase lands for ye benefit of a charity school or for some other charitable use and purpose as the Bishop of this diocese for the time being shall direct' and to this 'Thomas Dyke of Tetton Esqre' added £105 'to be applyed to ye same charitable uses with Dr. James's above menconed'. With these sums 'the minister and churchwardens purchased Sept. 17, 1721, three parcells of land in the parish of Halse called Shutlands which was this day conveyed in trust for a charity school as appears by ye Deed then executed'. In 1725 a direction was given by the Bishop of Bath and Wells 'for the setting up and maintaining one school for the education of the poore children of the parish the place of the school and the nomination of the master to be in the joint consent of the Vicar and Vestry and the nomination of the children to be made by the Vicar and Churchwardens. Any difference between the Vicar and the Vestry to be determined by the Archdeacon personally or by 2 or 3 by him specially appointed. Any between the Vicar and the churchwardens to be determined by the Archdeacon or his Surrogate.'

In 1730 at a meeting of the churchwardens and other inhabitants it was consented to—that Edward Dyke of Tetton Esqr. his heirs and successors should for the future be excused payment of church rates for the estates known as Higher & Lower Tetton on condition of keeping 'the Ile 19 ft. long and 15 ft. wide in which he and his family now sitt in good and sufficient repair without charge or burden to the parish, that the ground underneath the said Ile should remain for their sole use for a burying place for himself and family without fee on condition of repairing the said Ile, and that the 2 short seats at the right hand of ye entrance into ye sd church and within ye sd Ile be and remain to the use of the parishioners as heretofore'.¹³

John Skerratt signs each page of the Register up to 1730. The only entry relating to his family is of the baptism of a son James, 'son of Jno. Skerratt, Vicar, and Christian', 30 July 1721. He appears to have come to Kingston as quite a young man and in 1731 he resigned the living and became Rector of Brereton in Cheshire.¹⁴ He was succeeded by Henry Hake,¹⁵ a man of 47 who signs the baptismal register 31 December 1731, but he only lived two years and was buried at Kingston 6 September 1733. The next Vicar, John Winpenny, was presented by the Dean and Chapter of Bristol on 11 September, instituted on the 18th, and inducted on the 21st and held the living for thirty-eight years, being buried at Kingston on 13 August 1771. Four daughters, Jane, Margaret, Bridget and Elizabeth, and one son, Andrew, were baptized at Kingston and three daughters were buried, two being infants. 'A new surplice' and a Hood were purchased for him in 1736 for

¹³ Edward Dyke was not buried here. He died 14 Aug. 1746 at Pixton and was buried at Dulverton. His widow, daughter of Sir John Trevelyan, Bt. of Nettlecombe, married Alexr. Luttrell of Dunster Castle and surviving him died 20 June 1764, and was buried in the family vault of the Luttrells at Dunster. Mrs. Eliz. Dyke of Tetton married Sir Thomas Acland, Baronet, at Kingston Church, 7 January 1744.

¹⁴ He was the son of Edward Skerratt of Newall, Cheshire, matric. Brasenose Coll., 16 April 1709, aged 17. B.A. 1712, M.A. from Christ Coll., Cambridge, 1727. He became Vicar of Biddulph, Co. Stafford, 1733. Foster, *Index Eccl.*, *Alumn. Oxon.*

¹⁵ He was son of John Hake of Plimstock, Devon, matric. Exeter Coll., 13 March 1700-1, aged 16, B.A. 1704. Vicar of Bodmin, Cornwall, 1706. Rector of Botus Fleming 1721. Foster, *Alumn. Oxon.*

£3 14s. 6d. and there seems to have been a doubt about his degree, for the entry is for 'a Batchelor of Arts Hood'—the word 'Batchelor' is struck out and 'Master' inserted, but this also is struck out.

Various matters of interest arise during this long vicariate. A 'silver plate' added in 1736 is stated to be 'the gift of Mrs. Jane Edwards of Bristol'. In 1741 'John Long' was to be paid £10 5s. 'for ceiling the body of the church from the Belfry to the chancel' and three months later it was agreed that he should be paid £9 10s. 'to ceil the 2 sides of the church answerable to the middle part, to set the timbers upright and find everything that should be wanting'. In 1742 still more interesting entries occur. On 26 July 'at a parish meeting this day (after due notice given) it was unanimously agreed . . . that a new Pulpit be erected at the expense of the parish not exceeding £40 and that the present churchwardens Mr. Thos Cole and Mr. Thos Cornish agree with a workman for making the same'. In May 1743 'Thos Kingson' was paid £31 1s. 'for erecting the new Pulpit etc.', and the fact thus emerges that the beautiful carved pulpit now in the Church was the work of a village craftsman.¹⁶ He was occupied also with other work in the church. He was paid 2s. for altering the Reading Desk, etc., and £9 9s. for other 'work about ye Church', while John Bailey was paid £7 10s. 'for ye iron rail at the pulpit' and Joseph Hyde had 7s. 6d. for 'painting ye pulpit rail'. At the same time John Haddon and John Jordan were again at work on the Church: the former had £22 13s. 10d. for 'work about ye church tower' etc., and the latter £2 2s. for 'work about ye churchyard walls'. John Bailey had also £2 14s. 11d. for iron work while 'Thos Bailey (Bridgewater)' was paid £2 10s. 'for a new weathercock'.¹⁷ An echo of the '45' is to be found in 1746 when in May 1s. 6d. is paid for 'the Thanksgiving Prayer for ye suppression of ye Rebellion' and in October 1s. 6d. for 'the Thanksgiving prayer book'. Despite this loyalty to

¹⁶ A little information about Thomas Kingson (or Kingston) can be gleaned from the Registers. On 20 Nov. 1732 he had married Mary Sminey, a well-known Kingston name, and the baptisms of four daughters are entered between the years 1733 and 1738.

¹⁷ A rate for all these works was made 2 March 1742-3 and provided £112 2s. 6d.

the reigning sovereign, the Great Bell is still rung for Charles I on 30 January.

In Mr. Winpenney's time, trouble arose as to the appointment of churchwardens. At a meeting on Easter Monday, 27 March 1749, Mr. Thomas Bult was chosen churchwarden by the vicar, but Mr. John Bobbett and Mr. Thomas Knight of Loads were chosen 'by ye Parishioners according to custom'. At a vestry on Easter Monday, 16 April 1750, for this purpose, 'it was agreed and resolved by the majority of the parishioners then present to choose Mr. John Farthing and Mr. John Bult churchwardens for the year ensuing according to the ancient custom of ye said parish', and at a meeting on 12 September it was agreed by the majority present that church rates should be made for (inter alia) 'defraying and paying the costs and charges the parishioners have and may be at in vindicating and supporting the Right and ancient custom they have in making choice of churchwardens'. On 15 February following it was agreed by all present 'that the charges which the Parishioners have lately been at in the Archdeacon's Court and Court of Wells in dispute about the choice of churchwardens and churchwardens' accounts shall be paid by the money that shall arise from the church rates which are to be made for that purpose, and that for the future it is agreed that the churchwardens of ye sd parish shall be chosen by tenements according to the ancient custom', and Thomas Coles Esq. and Mr. John Farthing were not to act as churchwardens for that year but 'Mr. John Bult is to do the office of a churchwarden alone'. It was further agreed that the churchwardens being for the future 'chosen by their respective tenements according to the usual and most ancient custom . . . a list of tenements should be entered in the Church Book as a standing rule to choose churchwardens by for the future in their turns and such parishioners as were longest out to be chosen first to execute the office'. On 9 October 1751 it was 'unanimously agreed and resolved that the charges which Thomas Coles Esqr (of our said parish) have lately been at in the Court of Wells and the Rev. Mr. Archdeacon's court of Taunton relating to the churchwardens and churchwardens' accounts shall be paid by him the said Thomas Coles Esqr and not again allowed him by ye parishioners'. They seem,

however, to have thought better of it, for in 1753 they 'pd Tho Coles Esq ye Balance of his account relating to ye Lawsuit in the Bishop's Court' £3 3s. 3½d.

Despite the unanimous resolution the new practice does not appear to have been adhered to, for in 1762 the churchwardens are chosen 'by the joint consent of the Vicar and a majority of ye vestry', in subsequent years 'by the joint consent of the Vicar and vestry', and in 1769 one churchwarden is chosen by the Vicar (who signs) and one by the parishioners whose name is in another handwriting, signed by three parishioners, while the same thing occurs in 1770 and 1771, five signatures of parishioners being appended to the last appointment. This closes Mr. Winpenny's ministry and we must go back to pick up one or two other incidents.

In 1752 there was a village tragedy, the memory of which has been preserved by an entry on the flyleaf of the register.

'Wednesday July the 22 1752 Saml Bobbett kill'd Simon Yaw (his Father's apprentice) by sticking the prongs of a pick into his Poll or back part of 's Head. Buried 25. Fled from justice.'

The register of Burials has the terse entry, 'Simon Yaw bur 25th July 1752 murder'd'. The Bobbett and Yaw families occur frequently in the register. Simon, the son of Simon and Elizabeth Yaw, was baptized 30 April 1731¹⁸; Samuel, the son of John and Anstice Bobbett, on 24 October 1731, so that these two lads were much of an age. A 'pick' is a 'pitchfork' and it seems probable that some quarrel arose in the hayfield.

More work at the Church merits notice. In 1752 'a new Church Clock and quarter clock for the use of the parish' was decided upon and the churchwardens were to 'employ as cheap as possible they can a good workman for that purpose'. They paid 'Henry How' £21 'in full for the new clock as by receipt' and 'Samuel Waterman for timber board and labour for the clock house and solar of the school chamber as by bill and receipt' £7 2s. 0d. The Tower was examined in 1755, the top of the Tower righted (1757) and 22 lbs. of Iron

¹⁸ He was apprenticed to Mr. Bobbett 30 March 1739 at the usual age of 8. Samuel Bobbett's mother, Anstice, was buried 30 May 1739. John Bobbett was buried 25 April 1762.

used about it. In 1760 iron for cramping the Tower cost £5 15s. 0d. and cramping the South pinnacle £2 2s. 0d. In 1763 cloth and 500 brass nails were provided 'for the forms round the Communion rails', and lath nails for the forms in the church. There was in this year 'a prayer for ye Princes birth', which cost 1s. In 1741 'the antient seat belonging to the Vicarage that was erected in the chancel' having been 'taken down and destroyed by order of John Bampfylde Esq. (Impropriator)' the churchwardens, overseers and other parishioners met in October of that year consented 'that our Vicar John Winpenny may put up a seat for his family in the East end of the North Isle of the Church'.¹⁹

In 1761 trouble had arisen about the school. Mr. Winpenny called a meeting 'to look into the affairs relating to the Charity School' when it was found that the school had been 'totally neglected by John Hele the schoolmaster for several years last past' and thereupon 'the vicar and vestry being Trustees of the said school do adjudge the said John Hele an unfit person to continue schoolmaster any longer and do hereby declare the sd Charity School to be void of a master'. In 1762 his place was taken by 'John Haddon of our parish' who was to have 'the annual income of the estate at Halse settled on our Charity School aforesaid for the educating and instructing 12 poore children of our sd parish (to be nominated by the Vicar and Churchwardens for the time being) in reading writing and arithmetic to the best of his power according to the true intent meaning and direction of a Deed under the hand and seal of the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells dated 29 Sept. 1725 and to continue schoolmaster so long as he behaves himself well'.

Mr. Winpenny (we may hazard a guess that the name 'Winpenny' attached to a house in the parish perpetuates his name) was succeeded by the Rev. James Brown, M.A., who held the living for twenty-one years. Fresh activities soon commence. On 21 October 1772 'at a vestry met upon due notice given to consult about a Branch or Candlestick it was agreed that a Branch should be had and the present church-

¹⁹ John Bampfylde in 1718 had married 'Mrs. Margaret Warre', the only daughter and heiress of Sir Francis Warre of Hestercombe. John Bampfylde was buried at Kingston 22 Sept. 1750; his widow 25 June 1758.

wardens be impower'd to contract for it and the money be raised by a Church Rate to pay for the same'. Accordingly in the same year they 'paid Mr. Bailey for the Branch £24'. This is the beautiful brass chandelier which is still such an ornament to the church. It bears the inscription 'The Rev. James Brown, Vicar. Thomas Cogan and Christopher Haddon Churchwardens. Thos Bayley fecit 1773.' It will be remembered that in 1742 'Thomas Bailey (Bridgewater)' was paid £2 10s. for a new weathercock and as there was a firm of brass-workers at Bridgewater of that name it is obvious that the 'branch' came from their workshop. Candelabra bearing the name of this firm are to be found in many Somerset churches.²⁰ We now find an annual charge for 'candels' and frequent payments for 'cleaning the Branch'. It had to be mended in 1776 for 1s. and righting it in 1778 cost 1s. 6d., 'a pair snofers' cost 2s. (1774) and another 'pair' 6d. (1777).

Mr. Brown began by choosing his own Churchwarden and letting the second be chosen by the parishioners, but by 1775 both churchwardens are chosen by the parishioners, and the vicar does not even sign the entry of appointment except in one year, 1781. In 1773 the affairs of the School were discussed and it was agreed that the annual income should be deposited in the hands of the Vicar and Churchwardens and that 'there be a book kept and a regular account entered therein of the Persons names by whom the children are taught and the children's names that are taught'.

The fine and costly pulpit cushion had worn out in process of time. Already in 1763 2s. had been paid 'for six pounds of feathers for the cushions in Pulpit, etc.', and 2s. 11d. 'for making the cushions, cloth and thread', and in 1772 8s. was paid 'for silk for the cushion' and 2s. 'for repairing the same'. A Book of Homilies was bought in 1774 for 9s. 4d. More work was necessary on the Tower. Richard Southard had £1 1s. 'for doing the pinacl' and £1 17s. 'for riteing the arch', £4 4s. 'for making 4 holes in the Tower' and 8s. 6d. 'what he laid out for drink about the arch' (1777). Iron and 'things' for the Tower were fetched from Taunton and Cheddon, Southard bored 4 more holes in the Tower at £4 4s. and 'Pearce' had

²⁰ For example, a fine chandelier in St. Mary's Church, Stogumber, bears the inscription, 'Thos. Bayley, Bridgewater, fecit'.

£20 10s. 9d. 'for the iron to brace the arch and Tower'. A Rate for this work was made 15 May 1778.

The Sacrament during these years seems to have been administered five times in the year. There were prayers and thanksgivings on various special occasions, 'On the birth of a Princess' on several occasions, 'for the Queen', 'for the peace' (1784),²¹ 'for the King after his sickness' (1786). The 'Church Bible' was bound for £1 1s. (1787). In 1780 William Granger 'of our parish of Kingston' was nominated 'Schoolmaster of our Charity School', but in the following year John Fudge was appointed in his place. In 1783 Mr. Brown was much displeased at the imposition of a marriage tax²² and gave vent to his displeasure in an entry in the register. 'A deplorable tax upon marriage commences this awful year. Oct. 11, 1783. When will these distressing visitations end?' However, he thought better of it and the entry is struck out in ink.²³ In 1790 a perambulation of the Boundaries of the parish was held on two days in May, an account of which is inserted in the register and signed by Mr. Brown who describes himself as 'curate'.

The earliest book of churchwardens' accounts ends in 1720 and the second book runs from 1720 to 1791 at which date we have now arrived. In 1792 James Brown was succeeded by the Rev. Aaron Foster who held the living until the middle of the nineteenth century.²⁴ There is a gap in the records from 1792, but this is partly covered by a 'Vestry Book' begun 28 January 1782 and continued until 24 November 1800. On the first leaf of this book is the following: '1st January 1782 a list of the members of the Union Society of the Parish of Kingston as this day settled and agreed upon under the following articles.' Twelve signatures follow but no articles. The book contains entries of meetings held for the most part monthly with generally a break for July and

²¹ Peace between England and Holland, 20 June.

²² Act, 25 Geo. III, c. 71. It was repealed by 34 Geo. III, c. 2, 1794.

²³ He also made a note in the Baptismal Register—'a shameful Tax commenced upon Births and Burials and Baptisms', but this is also struck out, the word 'shameful' specially scored through.

²⁴ He was a Somerset man and had two brothers, Robert and Edward, who were both Prebendaries of Wells. Aaron and Robert were at St. Mary Hall, Oxford; Edward was at Wadham College.

August and they deal in the main with the apprenticeship of children, the supply of clothes to the poor, the settlement or removal of divers persons and the levying of poor rate. There is generally a President who is never the Vicar.

A few of these provisions may be noted :

‘ Any member revealing any business transacted at a meeting to the detriment of the parish or any member to forfeit 5s. to the Secretary.’

‘ Any person giving information of any felony committed in the parish to the value of 40s. or under to receive as a reward £1 1s. on conviction of the offender ’ (1782).

‘ Ordered that the Churchwardens do forthwith buy cloth for a new surplice of the same sort as the last and get the same made by Easter Day next ’ (1783).

The Surveyor of the Highways to give ‘ Coplestone Warre Bampfylde Esq.’ notice ‘ to do his Statute labour according to Law ’, he having refused ‘ for several years last past ’ and to ‘ report the result of his application to the then next vestry for the consideration of the parish ’. Notice also to be given him as to church rates, he having ‘ for several years last past neglected and refused to pay his Church rates for his Estate at Hestercombe in “ our parish ” ’ (1783).²⁵

‘ October 30, 1786. It was agreed by the majority of the vestry to take 10 pounds out of the poor stock to pay a master for teaching the Quier of Singers of our said parish.’

The Surveyors of the Highways to collect 1 year’s composition for the year 1789 and pay £20 thereout ‘ to the Trustees of the Taunton Turnpike to be expended in making a Turnpike road through Kingston street ’ (1790).

‘ April 19 1797. At a meeting of the majority of the Parish of Kingston . . . it was agreed “ that the usual Parish meetings shall be continued on the last Monday in every month except June, July and August, and that the dinner never consist of anything more than a Rump of Beef and a Ham with Fowls or a Fillet of Veal, and that the Liquor be nothing better than Beer. That ye company shall meet at ye Church at 11 o’clock

²⁵ Copleston Warre Bampfylde was the only surviving son of John Bampfylde and Margaret Warre and as such succeeded to the Hestercombe Estate. He died 23 Aug. 1791 and there is a tablet to his memory in the S. aisle of the church. A short account of his versatility and genius is given in *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, lxxxv, 97.

on the said day for transacting business and that those who are not there before 12 o'clock shall forfeit the sum of 1s. (altered from 2s. 6d.) to be applied for ye Relief of ye poor, unless ye majority shall deem their excuses reasonable."'

'The Alphabet in "leaden letters" to be had and some printing ink to mark the Parish Linnen with' (1799).

'That six days Statute Labour be performed on the Roads according to Act of Parliament by every Person occupying a Plough Land in the Parish instead of the usual mode of three days all.' (2 April 1800.)

The Vicar inserted a statement in the Register (1798) that 'the Vicarage House was in so ruinous and decayed a state that with two years' income of the living it could not be made habitable' and therefore having obtained the consent of the Bishop (as ordinary) and the Dean and Chapter of Bristol as patron, he had sold 'the small Tythes of Cothelston (which belonged to the Vicarage of Kingston) together with the old Vicarage house in Kingston and with the money purchased the present house with all its offices and outhouses, a large garden and three small orchards containing by estimation 5 acres more or less all adjoining the house. By doing this I have provided a comfortable residence for myself and successors and as I have expended out of my own pocket above £70 in repairing the premises I hope that my successor will not think of demanding any sum for dilapidations.'

Following on this, it was resolved at a vestry on 7 May 1800 that 'the poor house at the churchyard gate and that in Kingston Street be sold . . . and that a Poor House be erected on the spot where the old Vicarage House stands, to be made as a workhouse for the poor' and that a Committee be form'd to see the Building properly erected'. There are 12 signatures headed by J. T. Warre²⁶ and the Vicar, and 5 dissentients. Mr. Foster signs the various resolutions from May 1796, sometimes signing first, but not described as Vicar.

This concludes the Vestry Book and a 'Church Book' takes up the story from 1820. This can be dealt with briefly. The formula for appointment of Churchwardens runs 'at a vestry etc., we appoint the following'. The Clerk's salary has been

²⁶ John Tyndale Warre was nephew and heir to Copleston Warre Bampfylde. He died 1819, and was buried in the Hestercombe vault.

raised from £3 to £5 per annum. Provision is made for the Sacraments sometimes noted as 'five sacraments' (1821-5) more often four only (1830-50). The Clerk is paid 2s. 6d. in 1830 for 'taking the children to confirmation', in 1836 for 'attending children at confirmation', and in 1851 for his 'expenses at the confirmation'. Church repairs appear from time to time. 'Varnishing and cleaning the oak seats in the church cost £5 4s. 1½d.' in 1841. In 1846 the pulpit cushion again required attention. 'Mr. Newberry for velvet etc., for the pulpit cushion as per bill £2 14s. 4½d.'

A Vestry Book which runs from 1831 concurrently with the 'Church Book' sets out the appointment 3 June 1831 by 'Malachi Blake Esq. one of H.M.'s Justices of the Peace for the County' of 20 parishioners as the select vestry for the care and management of the concerns of the poor of the parish, pursuant to Act, 59 Geo. III, 'to amend the laws for relief of the poor'. This select vestry is appointed every year and four overseers continue to be annually appointed. In a further Vestry Book which runs from 1835 to 1855 we find the vestry proceeding, 22 April 1842, to the appointment of a sexton in the room of Thomas Fudge the late sexton when his widow Mary Fudge was appointed 'sextoness' and 'to have the assistance of his brother Anthony'. She held the office until her death in 1871, nearly thirty years later.

New Registers were ordered in 1813 and from that date the quality, trade or profession of the father is set out in all baptisms, that of the husband in all marriages and the age of the deceased in all burials. One personal note by the Vicar in the register of burials deserves mention. 'Burials, March 28 1815' Hannah Scammell 69. Note. She lived in the service of the Revd. A. Foster and family for forty-six years, was an affectionate and faithful servant and a good Christian. A. Foster.' The Rev. Aaron Foster had come to the parish as a young man of under thirty and after forty years of service there are indications that his strength was failing. With very few exceptions all baptismal entries in the Registers are signed by him as performing the ceremony up to 1837. Then 'Robert Crosse, curate',²⁷ begins to sign. Mr. Foster signs again

²⁷ From the time Robt. Crosse commences his entries, the term 'Yeoman' is substituted for 'Farmer'.

at intervals, but after July 1841 his signature ceases to appear. He died at the Vicarage at the age of eighty-seven and was buried at Kingston on 5 December 1851.

The Rev. Eccles John Carter, M.A., succeeded him and signs the register as Vicar 25 April 1852. He lost no time in proposing alterations, removal of pews in the chancel, of pulpit and reading-desk, etc. In July 1852 he proposed the purchase of the site of the old Vicarage House and garden lying immediately above the churchyard, as being the ancient glebe, for the purpose of erecting a Vicarage House upon it. But by November 1852 the Archdeacon of Taunton had descended upon the scene and in a letter laid before the vestry on All Saints' Day wrote, 'I am sorry to find your church much out of repair. The walls roof and windows generally both of the body of the church and of the chancel will require immediate attention . . . a formal application should be made by you to the Dean and Chapter of Bristol to ascertain what they hold to be their exact position in reference to the duty of repairing the chancel. When this has been ascertained we shall know better how to proceed'. The sounding-board was particularly obnoxious to the Archdeacon. 'The sounding-board is to be removed from its present useless position and may be carried away out of the church. I should object to its being placed again over the pulpit . . . If the material of the sounding-board cannot be applied to any purpose inside the church it should be destroyed, but it should (not) be applied to any profane or common purpose.'

How the various alterations and repairs were discussed, disputed and ultimately carried out, some desirable, some otherwise, how the necessary faculties were obtained and the interior of the church gradually assumed its present appearance are matters which lie outside the scope of this paper.

My grateful acknowledgments are due to the Rev. Noel Marsh, Vicar of Kingston, who has placed the parish records freely at my disposal and given me every possible assistance.