St. Michael on Greenhill, Lichfield a history

Part 4. Churchyard stories

Chris Baker

St. Michael on Greenhill - a history; Part 4. Churchyard stories © C J Baker, 2023. All rights reserved.

The author

Chris Baker was born and brought up in the parish of Pensnett, in the Black Country, and attended Bromley County Primary School and Brierley Hill Grammar School. He then studied Engineering at St. Catharine's College. Cambridge, from where he gained his MA and PhD. After spending some time working for British Rail in Derby, he moved back into academia - firstly to the University of Nottingham, and then to the University of Birmingham, where he taught fluid mechanics to several generations of Civil Engineering students. His research interests are in the fields of wind engineering, environmental fluid mechanics and railway aerodynamics. He is a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers, Institution of Highways and Transport, the Higher Education Academy and the Royal Meteorological Society. He retired in December 2017 but continues to work on various aspects of railway aerodynamics as Emeritus Professor of Environmental Fluid Mechanics at the University of Birmingham. He is also an Anglican clergyman attached to the parish of St. Michael-on-Greenhill in Lichfield.

Contents

The author		i
Contents		ii
Preface to Parts1 to 4		iii
Chapter 1	St. Michael's churchyard	1
Chapter 2	Civic stories	5
Chapter 3	Ecclesiastical stories	13
Chapter 4	Military stories	23
Chapter 5	Creative stories	29
Chapter 6	Tragic stories	35
Chapter 7	Postscript	39
Bibliography		42

Preface to Parts 1 to 4

The word "church" of course primarily refers to a gathered body of Christian believers. Nonetheless in popular usage it has come to refer to the building in which such a body of believers meet. And some such places have very long histories of their own. One such is the church of St. Michael on Greenhill in Lichfield. This is a very ancient worship site and has probably been the focus of some type of ritual activity for the last 1500 years. The church itself is less ancient, first appearing in the historical record in the twelfth century but it has an interesting story to tell. Here we tell that story in four parts - the first from the Romans to the Reformation; the second from the Reformation to the end of the eighteenth century; the third for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries up to 1945; and the fourth tells the stories of some of those buried in the church's large graveyard.

Obviously, a history of this type uses material from a wide range of sources. The approach taken here is to try to make the text as readable as possible, by not including detailed references, but using web links to specific sources and details of the more general sources that have been used have been put in the bibliography that is given at the end of each part.

Chapter 1. St. Michael's churchyard

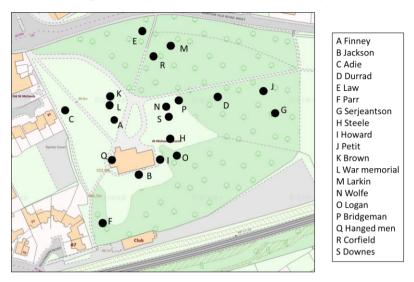


Figure 1. Plan of the graveyards

The nine-acre churchyard, which sits on top of the prominence known as Greenhill, is of some antiquity and is allegedly one of the five ancient churchyards of England consecrated by St. Augustine (along with Glastonbury, Lindisfarne, York and Canterbury). As noted in Part 1, in archaeological investigations of the churchyard in the 1970s a crouched burial was found, indicating a possible Anglo-Saxon burial. The dedication of the church to the psychopomp St. Michael also suggests potential continuity with the Roman equivalent of Mercury, possibly suggesting use in the late Roman period. Be that as it may, the existing churchyard contains a large number of memorials from the seventeenth century to the present day, even though many have been moved from their original position in the reordering of the 1960s. In this book we will tell the stories of a few of the many thousand who are buried here, from all walks of life. However, we

begin in this chapter with some general comments about the churchyard and how it is arranged. Hopefully readers may be inspired to visit and to see for themselves the graves of those whose stories are told here. The graveyard is shown in Figure 1, together with the locations of the burials of those whose stories will be told below.

The churchyard is effectively divided into two - the old (full and closed) churchvard around the church with an area of around seven acres, and the new churchyard to the west that was opened in 1944 and is still in use. This book only considers graves in the former. In the late 1960s, a major re-ordering of the old churchyard was carried out. prior to responsibility for it being taken by the local council. This involved moving many headstones into clusters and either grassing large areas of the churchyard for the purposes of maintenance or encouraging the growth of scrub and trees. This has led to it becoming something of a wildlife haven, with very many different species of plant and tree and it is highly valued as an outdoor resource by those who live locally. Before the reordering a survey was carried out of all the graves that were visible in 1967. 2084 graves were identified, and the names of those they commemorated were recorded dating back to the 16th century. In 1984 the Birmingham and Midland Society for Genealogy and Heraldry carried out a major survey of all the graves in the churchyard that were the visible, and transcribed 1562 inscriptions - so there had been something of a loss of inscriptions over the years since 1967. Sadly, the effects of time have meant that many of the inscriptions identified in the 1960s and 1980s are now very difficult to read, and a considerable debt is owed to those who undertook the surveys and recorded the information for posterity.

Up to the eighteenth century, the bulk of graves seem to have been to the immediate north and south of the church. Indeed, in the area to the north between the church and the Birmingham Road there are very many old graves still in place (Figure 2). By the middle of the 19th century, grave space was becoming somewhat limited, and new areas for burial to the northeast and southeast of the church came into use (Figure 3). This latter area was very much affected by the re-organisation of the 1960s and many of the graves were either buried (if they just consisted of kerbstones) or moved into clusters.



Figure 2. View from the church looking north



Figure 3. View from the church looking east

One of the oldest graves is the enigmatic "saddleback" memorial shown in Figure 4, one of the four listed monuments in the churchyard. The inscription is very worn, and the dedication of the monument can't be read. This grave features in a nineteenth century drawing that is in the William Salt library which gives the date of the grave as 1674, and with a little imagination this can be made out on the tomb itself.



Figure 4. The Saddleback grave.

In Chapters 2 to 6 we consider the stories of individuals whose graves are (in the main) still visible, under a number of headings – Civic stories, Ecclesiastical stories, Military stories, Creative stories and Tragic stories. Figure 1 shows the old churchyard, with a key to the location of the graves of those who will be considered. Finally in a postscript in Chapter 7 we reflect on the stories that are hinted at by the memorials and stories that will never be told.

Chapter 2. Civic stories

The churchyard contains the graves of a number of those who were prominent in the civic life of Lichfield. In this chapter we consider four of these – Edward Finney, the Jacksons of Wall, the Adies of Pipe Hall, and William Durrad.

Edward Finney (A on Figure 1)

The dedication on the grave of Edward Finney to the north of the church (Figure 5) reads as follows.

Here lieth the body of Edward Finney the elder of this City Gente, who departed this life 1st May 1640 and the bodies of Michael, Thomas, John and Joyce, four of his children.

This makes it the earliest surviving grave in the graveyard. Pleasingly the historical records tell us a little more about Edward Finney. He was one of the bailiffs of the City of Lichfield in the 1620s and 1630s and was active in civic life. After his death he established a "bread dole" at St. Mary's endowed with 1s. a month which still existed, as the Edward Finney Charity in 1715. A sort of 17th century foodbank!



Figure 5 The Finney grave.

The Jacksons of Wall (B).

The Jacksons of Wall are interred in a very noticeable chest tomb on the south side of the church, very close to the church itself. It is probably the largest tomb in the graveyard, which makes the fact that it did not feature in either the 1967 or the 1984 survey the more remarkable. The lengthy inscription, taking up all four sides, reads as follows (Figure 6).

Edward Jackson Gentleman, of Wall died December 19th 1760 aged 58 years; Sarah Jackson, his wife, and the daughter of John Porter of Wall died June 7th 1776 aged 58 years. Thomas Jackson, Gent of Wall, brother of Mr Edward Jackson, dies July 16th 1784 aged 80 years. Thomas, son of Thomas and Mary Jackson, Master of the Free Grammar School, Dudley died April 1st 1797 aged ?? years. Henry Jackson, Gentleman, late of Wall, September 13th 1810 aged 65 years; Sarah Jackson his wife and daughter of Thomas and Mary ?? of Lynn died March 15th 1808 aged 57 years Edward Jackson, Gent of Wall died June 26th 1830 aged 59 years; Mary Jackson his wife died October 5th 1851 aged 73 years

The Jacksons were major landowners in the village of Wall and are buried in St. Michael's graveyard as the parish of Wall was not established till 1845. Edward Jackson the elder (d. 1760) lived at Wall Hall, which had been in the family for several generations. He enlarged it significantly and in 1753 he married Sarah, sister of Sheldon Porter of Wall House which was rebuilt about the same time. On his death his estate passed to his brother Thomas (d 1784), then living in Dudley. Thomas was himself succeeded by his son Thomas (d 1797), an ordained clergyman, who was Master of Dudley Grammar School, and then to the younger Edward Jackson (d1830). Edward and his wife

Mary shared their home with one Richard Croft Chawner, whom they brought up from childhood. Chawner became a barrister but did not practise, preferring to pursue interests in farming and business. He ran a model farm at Wall Hall and was secretary of the Lichfield (later Lichfield and Midlands Counties) Agricultural Society, probably from its formation in 1838 and certainly from 1842. He was also active in the South Staffordshire Railway Co., the South Staffordshire Waterworks Co., and the Cannock Chase Colliery Co. They were a family much involved in the life of the city and its surrounding.



Figure 6. The Jackson grave

Richard and Thomas Adie (C)

The inscription on the imposing Adie grave (Figure 7) between the church and the north gate (which is another listed monument) reads as follows.

Sacred to the memory of Richard Adie, Gent, who died October 1st 1807 aged 61. Alice relict of Richard Adie, Gent. Died January 20th 1836 aged 88. Sacred to the memory of Thomas Adie of the City of Lichfield, departed this life April 3rd 1859 aged 70 years. Also in memory of Thomas Richard, infant son of Thomas and Anne Adie who died February 1st 1831 aged 6 months. Also in memory of Ellen Anne infant

daughter of Thomas and Anne Adie who died March 14th 1835 aged 4 months. Also to that of Anne wife of the late Thomas Adie who died February 25th 1860 aged 66 years.

Richard Adie was born in 1746 and married Alice Aston at St. Michael's in 1787. He was a plumber and glazier, and according to the little the records tell us, a man well respected in the city. Thomas their son was born was born in 1789 and married Ann Titlev in 1827, again at St. Michael's. He is also referred to in the press as a plumber and glazier, but clearly the family trade had done well and by the 1830s was resident in Leomanslev Mill and styled as a gentleman. He was appointed as a member of the unreformed (and self-selecting) corporation of the city. After the Municipal Reform Act of 1835, the corporation refused to co-operate with the commissioners appointed by the act, although a minority, including Thomas Adie was willing to co-operate. He became the only member of the old corporation to be returned as a councillor at the elections which followed. In political terms he was a radical - the group of Whigs on the way to becoming liberals. He was mayor in 1839 and again in 1856. In the 1840s he was involved in an acrimonious legal battle with the Pipe Green Trust over the ownership of the Leomansley Mill pool, that ended in some confusion with Adie retaining the ownership of the pool despite formally losing the case.



Figure 7. The Adie monument.

William Durrad (D)

William John Durrad was born in 1817, the second child of John and Ann Durrad of the village of Welford in Northamptonshire and baptised in the parish church. In the early 1840s he was part owner, with a cousin of a bookshop in Eccleshall in Staffordshire. It was there that they met the vicar of the parish Rev. Henry Moore, later Archdeacon of Stafford, who was something of a bibliophile. From that meeting, the influence of the clergyman was enough to find the elder William a position in the London and North Western Railway in 1845 as the company's agent in Lichfield, prior to the opening of the railway. When the railway opened in 1847, he was the designated Station Master of the first Lichfield Trent Valley station, on a salary of £120pa. He was also at that stage a married man, having married Elizabeth Lowe, at Tettenhall in April 1846. The original Lichfield station was situated on the west side of the Lichfield / Burton Road which the railway crossed on the level, i.e. on the opposite side to the current station. Figure 8 shows the rather

grand style that was adopted by the architect John William Livock. The station building contained not only the passenger facilities and offices but was also the Station Manager's House. This station and the nearby South Staffordshire Railway station were both closed in 1871 and a new station, with low level and high-level platforms, opened at its present site. William was the Station Master for the entire life of the original Lichfield station, with a wide range of responsibilities for the passenger and freight traffic, and for a significant number of staff. - clerks William and and the porters as well as vard staff. Elizabeth's children were born at regular intervals over the first decade and a half of his tenure as Station Master. and all were baptised at St. Michael's church, the station being situated in Streethay, a township at the northern end of the parish. He was churchwarden for a couple of years in the 1850s and the churchwardens accounts in his neat copper plate hand, still exist in the Records Office.

When he resigned from his post as Station Master in 1871 there was a collection for a testimonial in the town, announced in the press, that raised a considerable (but not specified) sum. After his resignation William, Elizabeth and Emma moved to Misterton Cottage which still exists on the corner of Trent Valley Road and Wissage Road, as Holly Lodge – in the grounds of the Samuel Johnson Hospital. It was (and indeed remains) a substantial property. Shortly after his resignation from the railway, William took up the post as High Bailiff at Lichfield County Court, based in St. John's Street, which he was to retain for the rest of his life. In this role he was responsible for executing warrants and court orders. He also had ecclesiastical responsibilities that may have dated back to his time as Station Master. Firstly, he was Apparitor to

Archdeacon of Stafford (who by this time was the Henry Moore mentioned above), with the responsibility to summon witnesses and execute the orders of the ecclesiastical court. Secondly, he was sub-librarian in the Cathedral library, so he obviously retained his bibliographic interests. Both positions would have supplemented the pension from the LNWR. In his civic roles he appeared regularly, if briefly each time, in the local press in the 1870s and 1880 – at the Mayor's luncheon, the Sheriff's breakfast and the perambulation of the city. He was also active in the St. John's Freemasons Lodge end held office there – as Junior Deacon in 1870 and as Junior Warden in 1876.

1882 saw the death of his eldest son. William junior in Rugeley where he was a bank manager, from "congestion of the lungs". A muffled peal of bells was rung at St. Michael's after evensong on a following Sunday, where both William junior and his father had been regular ringers. The following year William's wife Elizabeth died William Durrad himself died in from heart disease. January 1889. His obituary records that he had been ill for several weeks beforehand following an operation from which he was never to recover. The funeral was a full choral service and at the burial the choir gathered around the grave and sang the hymn "Now the Labourer's task is o'er". William, his wife Elizabeth and William junior are buried together in one grave in the graveyard of St. Michael's church (Figure 9).



Figure 8. The original Lichfield Trent Valley station



Figure 9. The Durrad grave

Chapter 3. Ecclesiastical stories

In this chapter we consider the lives of those buried in the churchyard with ecclesiastical connections – the long serving parish clerks of the sixteenth century, William and William Clarke; the ecclesiastical lawyer Chancellor Thomas Law, and four long serving rectors of the parish, Thomas Gnossall Parr, James Serjeantson, Otho Steel and Percival Howard.

William Clarke and son

The Morning Chronicle of October 8th, 1822 reports as follows.

In St. Michael's churchyard at Lichfield an ancient tomb stone was lately discovered which had been buried in the earth a great number of years. Upon it are deeply cut the following inscriptions. "Here lyes the body of WILLIAM CLARKE who was clarke of this church 51 years and buried March 5th 1525 aged 96. Here lies the body of William Clarke, clarke of this church 71 years who died September 26th 1562 aged 86".

The dates and longevity of those interred are remarkable. The Morning Chronicle notes that the elder William would have lived through the reigns of six monarchs, and the younger through the reigns of seven. The latter would have experienced the tumult of the Reformation and counter-Reformation that seems to have had a considerable effect on the fabric of St. Michaels. The inscriptions were still readable in the 1960s and 1980s when surveys of the churchyard monuments were carried out. It was also recorded in these surveys that the stone was "restored" in 1870. At the time of the earlier survey the monument was to the south of the church but was

moved, probably more than once, in the churchyard reordering that followed. Unfortunately, it's current location is unknown.

That is however not the end of the story. References to William Clarke can be found in the historical sources. In Harwood we read of a William Clarke who in 1662 gave Elias Ashmole information on monuments in the church that had been destroyed in the civil war and is described as having been clerk to the parish for 65 years and his father had been clerk before him for 52 years. In the churchwarden's accounts we read of a William Clarke (presumably the elder) being paid 8s for his year's wages in 1580, and another William (presumably the younger) bring the custodian of church property in 1657. On the basis of these records, it thus seems likely that the death dates recorded in the Morning Chronicle, and "restored" in the 1870s were misreadings and were a century too early - and were probably "restored" incorrectly. If that were the case, the lives of the two William's would have been even more interesting than supposed, with the elder being a small child in the initial iconoclasm of the Reformation. and living through the Counter Reformation, when the churchwarden's accounts give a good description of the very catholic vestments and eucharistic tableware used in St. Michael's. William the younger would have experienced the terrors of the Civil War. Commonwealth and Restoration.

James Thomas Law (E)

James Thomas Law (1790–1876) (Figure 10) was the eldest son of George Henry Law, the bishop of Bath and Wells, He studied at Christ's College, Cambridge, took holy orders in 1814, and proceeded to his M.A. in 1815. In April 1818 he was made prebendary of both Chester and

Lichfield Cathedrals and in 1821 he was appointed chancellor of the diocese of Lichfield. In 1820 he married Lady Henrietta Charlotte Grey (1799–1866), eldest daughter of the 6th Earl of Stamford and they were to have four children.

He was a supporter of the Birmingham School of Medicine and Surgery at Queen's College, Birmingham, of which he was elected honorary warden in 1846, and of Lichfield Theological College, and was also Master of St. John's Hospital, Lichfield. He also sat as a judge on the Diocesan Consistory Court and in the local Probate Court. He was a significant benefactor to the city of Lichfield and in 1838 he gave the statue of Samuel Johnson in the Market Square; part of the land for the new Public Library in Beacon Street and, in 1871, the fountain in Beacon Park.

He published widely across a wide range of disciplines – in theology "A Catechetical Exposition of the Apostles' Creed"; in horticulture "The Poor Man's Garden"; in ecclesiastical law "The Ecclesiastical Statutes at large" and "Forms of Ecclesiastical Law"; church practice "Lectures on the Office and Duties of Churchwardens"; and history "Materials for a Brief History of Queen's College, Birmingham". In addition he was the translator and editor of the works of many other ecclesiastical lawyers. A polymath indeed.

The Chancellor law monument is very prominent on the north side of the graveyard (Figure 11). This too is a listed monument. When originally built it contained a clock, lit by gas. The inscription reads as follows.

In memory of HENRIETTA CHARLOTTE LAW eldest daughter of GEORGE HARRY SMITH 6th Earl of Stamford born September 12 1798 married December 16 1820 to the Rev. JAMES THOS. LAW eldest son of the Bishop of Bath and Wells, died February 25th 1866. 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord'



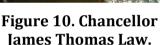




Figure 11. The Law monument.

Thomas Gnossall Parr (F)

Thomas Parr was born in 1800, the son of another Thomas Gnossall Parr, a Lichfield solicitor, and remained unmarried (Figure 12). He was an assistant curate at St. Michael's from 1828 to 1831 when the Perpetual Curate was Edward Remington. He became Perpetual Curate himself on Remington's death in 1831 and was made Rector in 1867 just two weeks before his death. He also held the post of Dean's vicar at the cathedral. During his twenty-six-year tenure her performed 1866 baptisms, 780 marriages and 916 funerals – quite astonishing numbers. In 1861 he was living at the Parsonage House on Mount Pleasant with his sister Anne, and a single servant. The Parr family grave in the churchyard remains a striking memorial - see Figure 13 - which reads as follows.

Thomas Gnossall Parr died March 13th 1843 aged 68. Anne his wife died May 31st 1839 aged 61. Anne Parr their eldest

daughter died Aug.... 1862 aged 59. Thomas Gnossall eldest son of Thomas Gnossall Parr and ANN PARR...years, incumbent of this parishand Deans Vicar of Lichfield Cathedral died December 23rd 1867 aged 68. Richard Parr died at Worksop May 19th 1862 aged 56. William Septimus Parr died at Welshpool June 16th 1862 aged 47. Benjamin and Edward Parr died in their childhood.



Figure 12. Thomas Gnossall Parr



Figure 13. The Parr memorial

Despite his church activities, he remains surprisingly absent from press reports of the time – perhaps reflecting his relatively lowly status in ecclesiastical terms, as a perpetual curate.

James Jordan Serjeantson (G)

James Jordan Serjeantson (Figure 14) was born in Liverpool in 1835, the son of a Liverpool merchant and an Irish mother and attended Liverpool Grammar and Rugby Schools. In 1854 he matriculated at Trinity College in Cambridge and was awarded his BA in 1858 and his MA in 1861. He was a rowing blue and part of the University

crew that lost the boat race in 1857 by 11 lengths. There have only been six larger losing margins in the 190-year history of the race, so it is doubtful if it was an experience he relished. He was ordained deacon in 1859 and priest a year later, both at Lichfield Cathedral. He served a curacy at Stoke from 1859 to 1868 before coming to St. Michael's. He married Elizabeth Buckley, a clergyman's daughter in August that year and they were to have seven children.

It is clear from the records we have that he was an assiduous, hard-working parson, much admired and respected by his parishioners. In June 1877, he notes in the service register that "this is the 1000th sermon I have preached in this church". In June 1983, he was to write again "this is the 2000th sermon I have preached in this church". This is an average of around 130 per year! Some indication of his activities can be judged from the activities of Holy Week in 1882. In total there were 16 sermons or addresses that week, all preached by Serjeantson. He presided at the pastoral offices – 1223 baptisms, 1289 marriages and 215 funerals in total over the years of his incumbency and presented 20 to 30 young people each year for confirmation. He had gifts other than his preaching and pastoral abilities. Within twelve months of arriving in the parish he was awarded the prize for the best variegated geraniums at the annual flower show (which almost certainly didn't go down well with some of the more established exhibitors!) and he was also a valued member of the bell ringing team. His name can still be found on a number of memorial boards in the belfry, that commemorate the ringing of specific peals – for example he was part of the team that rang a complete peal of Grandsire Minor in 1876. He also served as a Workhouse Guardian and took an in various educational initiatives within the city.

He died on New Year's Day 1886 and was buried four days later with the Bishop of Lichfield presiding at the gravesidel. His final illness seems to have been short – he was still presiding at funerals two weeks before he died. Elizabeth was to outlive him by 33 years. Their graves, and the graves of their infant children, are, at the time of writing, currently inaccessible in the very overgrown area at the east of the old churchyard. But James Serjeantson does have other memorials – a plaque in the chancel in the church and a fountain on Greenhill that was erected in his memory in 1886 (Figure 15). Both memorials speak eloquently of the high esteem in which he was held in the church and the city and the love that his parishioners felt for him.



Figure 14. James Jordan Serjeantson



Figure 15. The memorial Fountain on Greenhill

Otho Steele (H)

The third of the long-serving rectors was Otho Steele (Figure 16). He was born in the 1839, educated at Trinity

College Dublin, and served in parishes in the east of England, Guernsey and Stoke before coming to St. Michael's in 1893. He remained there till 1913, when he resigned due to increasing infirmity. At his departure he was presented with an illuminated address and a cheque for 100 guineas, and his wife, who was also quite infirm at that stage, was presented with a travelling rug and a handbag. The speeches at the presentation spoke very fully of the mutual regard between Steel and his parishioners, his long term support of the church school, and his care and management of the parish. He was to die in 1922, and is commemorated in a memorial plaque in the chancel. His fairly modest grave is shown in Figure 17. He is buried with his daughter and son-in-law. The inscription reads as follows.

In loving memory of Otho W. Steele died 25th May 1922 aged 83 years. Rector of this Parish 1893-1913. Cicely Mary Anderson daughter of the above born 11th June 1877 died 2nd Sept. 1972. Henry Stewart Anderson, C.M.G., R. A.M.C. born 15th April 1872 died 12th May 1961.



Figure 16. Otho Steele



Figure 17. The Steel grave

Percival Howard (I)

Percival Howard was the last of the long serving Rector of the parish and was in post from 1913 to 1946 (Figure 18). He was born in Hampshire in 1876 and received his university education at St. Catharine's College in Cambridge. He was ordained deacon in 1899 and priest in 1900, both at Lichfield Cathedral. He then served as a curate at Brereton from 1899 to 1904, and at Tettenhall from 1904 to 1913, before coming to St. Michael's. He served for some time as an army chaplain to the 137th Infantry Brigade in France from 1915 to 1916, sending letters back to home that were published in the parish magazine and the local press. Asan example, the first of his letters, published in July 2015, reads as follows.

My Dear Friends

Just a line to let you know that I have not forgotten you. At present I am stationed at Boulogne and attached to a large Military Hospital where I look after certain wards; the suffering of some of the poor chaps is terrible to see, but they are simply splendid and wonderfully cheerful: they appreciate everything one does for them and are delighted to meet anyone from their own part of the country. Yesterday I was talking to a Tamworth Territorial who knew several of our Lichfield men and he was ever so pleased to see me. There is also a nice Institute here where men go in the evening. We get up sing-songs and concerts for them and always have a Hymn and a few evening prayers with them. The cemetery in Boulogne is beautifully kept, a part being set aside for the graves of the British dead; each grave is marked with a cross bearing a number and many of the graves have flowers planted on them. My orders for France were so sudden that I had little chance of saving good-bye to many of you, but I know you will "carry on" in my absence and loyally back up my colleague, Mr. Muriel, who is left in charge. I will try and write further next month when I have got more into the swing of my work; at present I am very busy and have to find out so many things with regard to my duties. I know you will remember me in your prayers: I do not forget you.

Yours very faithfully......

He was appointed Rural Dean in 1924, and a Prebendary of Lichfield Cathedral in 1937. He became a very familiar figure cycling around Lichfield on parish duties, and was much admired and loved, not least for his enduring cheerfulness. When he retired in 1946 the occasion was marked by a bell peal of "Grandsire Doubles" that lasted almost 3 hours to which there is a memorial in the belfry. At a crowded reception at the Guildhall, he was presented with a cheque for £258.

On his death in 1955 his ashes are interred in a small plot to the east of the church (Figure 19) – one of the earliest such interments in the churchyard. There is also a memorial to him in the chancel in the church.



Figure 18. Percival Howard



Figure 19. The Howard grave

Chapter 4. Military stories

There are numerous military burials in the churchyard and in what follows we consider just a small selection of these – Colonel Peter Petit, and Corporal John Brown from the nineteenth century, the Commonwealth War graves memorial and a small selection of those it commemorates from the 20th. We also consider the life of Elizabeth Logan, a nurse who is buried in the churchyard, who served with Florence Nightingale in the Crimea.

Peter John Petit (J)

Throughout the 19th century, there were regular military burials at St. Michael's, mainly of those who were no longer on active service, but still retained their military connection. One such was Peter John Petit, who is buried together with his numerous siblings in the large chest Petit tomb (Figure 20). Whilst the Petit family will be discussed in the next section, the part of the lengthy inscription of relevance here reads as follows.

PETER JOHN PETIT Lieutenant Colonel of Her Majesty's 50th Regiment died February 15th 1852 aged 46 years

The funeral cortege was lengthy, led by the Chief Superintendent of Police, followed by Petit's groom (presumably leading his horses that pulled the carriage), the vicar of St. Mary's and the Perpetual Curate of St. Michael's, followed by the coffin borne by six officers of the regiment, and numerous other officers, mourners and friends. Interestingly 12 privates were included as "underbearers", who had served with Petit in the Indian Campaigns of the previous decade. The service was led by

his brother-in-law Rev Dr. Jelf. Such funerals and ceremonies were not uncommon.



Figure 20. The Petit Tomb

John Brown (K)

John Brown(e) of the 17th Lancers during the Crimean War was one of the trumpeters on the day of the ill-fated Charge of the Light Brigade in 1854. John was born in 1815 in Nottingham and married a Dublin girl named Margaret Barrett and they lived at 40 Wade Street, Lichfield. During his time in the army receiving the Russian Medal with four clasps, as well as the Legion of Honour and the Turkish and Indian Medals. He died at the age of 85 years in 1898. He was buried with full military honours in St. Michael's Churchyard. His memorial is shown in Figure 21 - the precise location of his grave is not known. He was well decorated receiving the Russian Medal with 4 clasps, as well as the Legion of Honour and the Turkish and Indian Medals and some of these are shown in Figure 22.



Figure 21. The John Brown memorial slab



Figure 22. John Brown's medals

War Memorial and War Graves (L, M, N)

The Commonwealth War Graves memorial is very obvious to the north of the church (Figure 23). This contains the names of a large number of soldiers buried elsewhere in the churchyard, often with the distinctive CWG headstones. For example from the first world war we have the Larkin brothers, Frank and Mervyn, sons of Herbert and Harriet (Figure 24)

..... Also FRANK LARKIN his brother Lance Corporal 1st North Staffs. Regiment who fell in action at Ypres July 9th 1915 aged 31 years. Also of MERVIN GODFREY LARKIN brother of the above born September 22nd 1888 who fell in action in France March 14th 1917.

And from the second we have that of George Wolfe, the son of John and Harriet Wolfe (Figure 25).

....Also his brother L/Cpl GEORGE WOLFE 6th North Staffs. Regt who made the supreme sacrifice at Caen Aug 15th 1944 interred in Grand Aunay British Cemetry France aged 23 years.

George's brother Arthur also died just before the end of the war following a collision between his motorcycle and a pedal cyclist on Christmas Eve, as the war was coming to an end.

14700155 Craftsman A. R. WOLFE, R. E. M.E. accidently killed 26th December 1945 age 20. Beloved by all but loved by Jesus best.

The feelings of both sets of parents on losing two sons in this way can scarcely be imagined.





Figure 23. The Commonwealth War Graves memorial



Figure 24. The Larkin grave



Figure 25. The Wolfe grave

Elizabeth Logan (0)

Not all military stories are about soldiers – for example Elizabeth Logan was a nurse in the hospitals in the Crimea in the 1850s. We only know the bare details of her life from the inscription on her gravestones, and a few other sources.

Sacred to the memory of Elizabeth Logan who died February 28th 1878. Having acted with Miss Nightingale in the Crimea on her return she followed the profession of sick nurse for which she was eminently qualified by her skill and experience. A strong sense of duty and great kindness of heart. No one who witnessed her self-denying exertions in aid of suffering humanity could ever forget them. Well done good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

She was 66 when she died, and the burial register tells us she lived at Dam St. In the 1861 census she is recorded as a nurse, lodging with a greengrocer and his wife on Market Street. She there identifies herself as "Mrs" and her birthplace is given as Glasgow. In the records of Miss Nightingale's nurses, she is noted as coming from Edinburgh and having been recommended by "Dr Simpson and others and committee of Nursing home" and was "one of the very best nurses, returned on the Ottawa, July 1856". Florence Nightingale writes of her to her friend Lady Cranworth from the Barrack hospital at Scutari in early July 1856.

My probable last letter to you is merely to say that Elizabeth Logan, nurse, whom I have sent home by the Ottawa is, on the whole, the one I consider the most respectable and sober, efficient, kind and good of all my nurses, the one I most hope not to lose sight of, the one I have the deepest regard for. She wishes for a private situation. If she comes to you for a character, I think you may be perfectly safe in recommending her. She is an excellent nurse.

Praise indeed from such a source. We read of her briefly again in August 1856 when she wrote to Nightingale saying her wages had not been settled (one presumes by the army), and in February 1857 when she wrote thanking her "for the Sultan's gift and for her help in securing her present agreeable situation". Would that we knew what the gift and her situation was!

The fact that she was (presumably) a widow and children are nowhere mentioned in the records, makes tracing further details of her life through registers and censuses very difficult. Her headstone is now lying flat and for many years was partially covered. At the time of writing, it has been cleared and there are plans for it to be raised to a vertical position.



Figure 26. The Logan headstone

Chapter 5. Creative stories

In this chapter we consider those who have considerable creative gifts – the artists of the Petit family, and the sculptor Robert Bridgeman.

The Petit family (J)

The Petit family grave is very prominent in the churchyard, and has an information board about the life of the most prominent of them, John Louis Petit, the landscape painter and architectural critic. His sisters Emma, Maria, Harriet and Elizabeth were also more than competent artists and left their own body of work. The inscription reads as follows.

LOUISA PETIT sixth daughter of the Rev. HAYES PETIT deceased and HARRIET his wife. From a life of almost uninterrupted suffering which she bore with true Christian patience and cheerfulness she was released by a merciful providence on the 30 day of November in the Year of our Lord 1842 aged 30. Also of LOUIS PETER PETIT of Lincolns Inn, Barrister at Law, third and youngest son of the Rev. JOHN HAYES PETIT, and HARRIET his wife. He died on 28th May 1848 aged 32 years. PETER JOHN PETIT Lieutenant Colonel of Her Majesty's 50th Regiment died February 15th 1852 aged 46 years. ELIZABETH HAIG daughter of JOHN HAYES PETIT born September 11th 1810 died July 5th 1895. Hic J acet quod mortal e est viri Reverendi JOHANN LS LUDOVICI PETIT AM, died 2 Dec. 1868 aet suae 67. EMMA GENTILLE PETIT born August 7 1808 died January 30 1893. SUSANNA PETIT died February 12 1897 aged 83.

The first of the Petit family to arrive in England was Lewis Petit (1665-1720), who, with many other Hugenots, fled to England from Caen on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes

in 1685. He served in the British army as an engineer, rose to the rank of brigadier-general and was appointed lieutenant-governor of Minorca. The next two or three generations were equally as successful in their chosen careers in the legal and medical professions and the family prospered. This was helped by some advantageous marriages into wealthy English families, and by 1800 they held large estates in the Wolverhampton area. John Haves Petit (1771-1822) inherited the largest of these at Ettingshall, but also followed an ecclesiastical career and served a curacy at Ashton under Lyme near Stalybridge in Cheshire. During his time there he married Harriet Astley of the nearby town of Dukinfield. Harriet was born in 1779 to the painter John Astley (1724-1787) who was himself a wealthy landowner. Harriett was one of three sisters, known as the Manchester beauties, and her marriage to John Hayes would have brought him both a beautiful wife and a substantial supplement to his already considerable income. In 1811 John Haves Petit was appointed Curate of Donnington, and then in February of that year he was also appointed as a Perpetual Curate at Shareshill, to the northeast of Wolverhampton. After his death his wife Harriet and her unmarried daughters moved to the house in the house in Tamworth St, Lichfield that was owned by her brother-in-law Louis Hayes Petit.

A number of the children of John Hayes and Harriet were artists themselves. Most prominent amongst these was of course John Louis Petit, and we will consider him in more detail below, but Emma Gentille, Maria Katherine (later Jelf), Harriet (later Salt) and Elizabeth (later Haig) have also been identified and the best are of a high quality. There is also some evidence of paintings by the sixth sister Susannah. They were a very talented family.

John Louis Petit (Figure 26) was born in 1802, was the eldest of John and Harriet's nine children. He inherited the Ettingshall estate on the death of his father in 1822, and also inherited the bulk of the estate of his uncle Louis Hayes Petit when the latter died in 1849. In total they formed a very substantial estate in the Wolverhampton area, that was being heavily exploited for coal, iron ore and limestone. After he graduated from Trinity College in Cambridge in 1825, John Louis Petit firstly pursued an ecclesiastical career being curate at St. Michael's in Lichfield from 1825 to 1828, under the Perpetual Curate Edward Remington, and then curate at Bradfield and Mistley in Essex from 1828 to 1834. He married Louisa Reid, the daughter of George Reid of Trelawny in Jamaica in 1828 but they were not to have any children. He gave up his post in Essex in 1834 and from the mid-1830s onwards he devoted his time to his painting and architectural criticism, and became the leading opponent of the gothic movement in church architecture. He seems to have been well liked and respected by all, even his intellectual opponents. Two examples of the work of John Louis are shown below - the church at Clifton Campville in Staffordshire (Figure 27), and a blast furnace in Bilston. one of the few realistic depictions of the industrial landscape from that period (Figure 28).



Figure 26 John Louis Petit

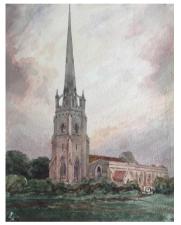


Figure 26 Clifton Campville, Staffordshire, by John Louis Petit, 1845



Figure 28. Blast furnaces at Bilston by John Louis Petit, 1853

Robert Bridgeman (P)

Robert Bridgeman (Figure 29) was born in Cambridgeshire, the son a farmer. By 1877 he and his wife they were living in Lichfield where he worked on the cathedral. In 1879 he set up his own firm in Lichfield, which specialised in ecclesiastical and architectural work in wood, stone, alabaster and metal. By 1912, Robert's son Joseph had joined the firm and it traded as Robert Bridgeman & Son. The firm's major projects included the

Gothic façade of the John Rylands Library in Manchester, the west front of Lichfield Cathedral during the 1880s (including the statues, of which Robert carved the majority himself) as well as pieces in St. Philip's Cathedral and St. Chad's Cathedral in Birmingham and sculptures in many other cathedrals in England, as well as work overseas.

Robert was Sherriff of the city in 1908 and donated a larger-than-life statue of Edward VII to the city. He was churchwarden at St. Mary's from 1900 to 1909 and donated a carved wooden organ screen when he stepped down. He was mayor in 1913 and 1914. His son Joseph was also in turn both Sherriff and Mayor.

The eulogies after his death spoke very highly of him "a just and generous employer..... esteemed and revered by all who knew him", "the soul of an artist and the executive ability of the skilled craftsman", "a genial and kindly manner...revered by his workpeople". His coffin bearers were six of his workers, and all the employees of the firm attended his funeral, together with the great and the good of Lichfield civic life.

The memorial inscription on his grave (Figure 30) reads as follows.

ROBERT BRIDGEMAN, Sculptor. Sheriff and twice Mayor of this City departed this life March 1st 1918 in his 73rd year. After life's fitful journey may he rest in peace. ROBERT GEORGE BRIDGEMAN Serge. Royal Engineers killed in action in France Nov. 5th 1916 aged 24. SARAH ANN wife of JOSEPH HENRY BRIDGEMAN died April 18th 1948 aged 83 years. JOSEPH HENRY BRIDGEMAN twice Mayor and also Sheriff of this City died February 24th 1951 aged 80 years.



Figure 29. Robert Bridgeman



Figure 30. The Bridgeman grave

Chapter 6. Tragic stories

Often the memorial inscriptions hide the tragic life stories of those which they commemorate. In this section we think about a number of these – the last men to be hanged in Lichfield, a family killed in a house fire and two deaths in a wartime railway accident.

John Neve, William Wightman and James Jackson (Q)

At the base of the church tower is the memorial of John Neve, William Weightman and James Jackson (alias Richardson) (Figure 31). The first two were found guilty of passing and having in their possession forged notes, and the latter of forging a draft. They were found guilty of forgery in a crowded Guildhall in March 1810. When the death sentence was pronounced, we are told by the press that Weightman heard his sentence "with considerable firmness" but Neve was "greatly affected and shed tears copiously". They were hanged at the Gallows Wharf on Friday June 1st 1810. This was to be the last public hanging in Lichfield. They were taken to the wharf in a mourning coach, where a large crowd awaited them, as they climbed into the gallows cart. Weightman and Neve were described as "Two genteel looking young men" who took off their hats and bowed to the crowd. They then spent 15 minutes in prayer with the officiating clergyman, said their goodbyes and shook hands with those around them. Neve kept hold of a book (a bible?) until the last minute and appeared very Weightman "smiled penitent. frequently on surrounding people, presented his neck to the cord and behaved to the last moment with a fortitude worthy of a better cause". They were executed at 10 minutes past noon. The gravestone denotes only the initials of the three men, with the date of the execution.





Figure 31. The memorial of the hanged men.

Figure 32. The Corfield grave.

The Corfield family (R)

The Corfield memorial is at first sight a simple family biographical memorial, until one realizes that all but one of the eight commemorated died on the same day (Figure 32). This was the result of a fire in a house on Breadmarket Street in January, 1871 (next to the Johnson House) that resulted in watch and clock maker William Corfield, his mother, his wife and his four children all suffocating due to smoke inhalation. The inscription reads as follows.

In memory of Margaret Corfield age 81. Also of William her son age 47 and Theresa Mary his wife age 35. They died January 14th 1873. Also of their children William James age 5 years and 5 months. Mary Theresa age 4 years and 2 months. JOHN aged 3 years and 1 month. Ellen age 6 weeks. They died January 14th 1873. Thomas died May' 27th 1871 age 17 days

A large crowd attended the funeral in the churchyard and the whole incident was covered in detail by the press. The family were Catholics and the catholic funeral liturgy was said over them in the Guildhall by the catholic priest. The bodies were then taken to the churchyard where the Anglican funeral liturgy was read in full around the graveside by James Serjeantson. At the time this was a legal requirement for burial in Church of England graveyards but seems nonetheless somewhat insensitive to the family. The press reported that James Serjeantson's voice trembled with emotion as he read the words of the funeral service around the grave before the coffins were lowered one by one. The reports of the day suggest the grave was near the church door, but now the headstone can be found towards the northern edge of the churchyard.

Blackout deaths (S)

In February 1940, two LMS railway workers were killed during the blackout just south of Lichfield City station when they were struck by a north bound train. They were Horace Downes aged 36 (Figure 33) and Charles Taylor aged 55. Downes left a widow and two young children. Both he and Taylor were well liked in the area, with wide circles of friends. Downes normally worked as a lorry driver for the railway company, but had been diverted to track work because of the weather conditions – there was a heavy snowfall with around a foot of snow on the track. Taylor and Edwin West, an 18 year old plate layer who was working with them, were regular track workers. They had been clearing snow all day and in particular were tasked with clearing the points to the south of the station. The train that hit them was running over an hour late, presumably because of the weather conditions. Because of the blackout there was little light, and, crucially, no

lookout had been provided, Taylor and Downes were working in the four foot and were struck by the train and almost certainly killed instantaneously. A verdict of accidental death was recorded – perhaps in normal times more might have been said about the decision by the chief Ganger not to provide a look out.

The inscription on Downes grave (Figure 35) refers obliquely to the circumstances of his death, and also to another wartime tragedy for the family.

In loving memory of HORACE DOWNS accidentally killed Jan. 29th 1940 aged 36 years, Always remembered by FLORRIE and children. Also of ROBERT his brother who died in a Japanese P. O. W. Camp Borneo Aug. 3rd 1945 aged 35 years.



Figure 34. Horace Downes



Figure 35. The Downes grave

Chapter 7. Postscript

Earlier chapters have briefly told the stories of some of those who are buried in the churchyard, where the records give us sufficient information. But there are many others whose memorial inscription's hint at pain and grief. We have already met one such in Louisa Petit, whose inscription on the Petit tomb reads as follows.

LOUISA PETIT sixth daughter of the Rev. HAYES PETIT deceased and HARRIET his wife. From a life of almost uninterrupted suffering which she bore with true Christian patience and cheerfulness she was released by a merciful providence on the 30 day of November in the Year of our Lord 1842 aged 30.

WE also have the following.

Sacred to the memory of HANNAH wife of JAMES DABBS who died March 15th 1834 aged 48 years. A long affliction I do bear. Physicians were in vain. Till God did please to summons me. And ease me of my pain. Sacred to the memory of PHILIP SALT who departed this life January 29th 1823 aged 46. Also SARAH his daughter who died May 16th 1834 aged 23.

In memory of MARY WALTHO after 13 years sickness and suffering in hospital, buried here March 11th 1872 aged 39 years.

And many others. The grief in a family is often only too plain when a child dies. A few illustrations are given below. The first, for Talitha Morley, quotes a saying of Jesus, that refers to a dead child he brought back to life Using the Hebrew words "*Talitha cum*". The second and third record multiple childhood deaths in the same family.

Sacred to the memory of TALITHA the only and dearly beloved child of SAMUEL MORLEY Vicar of Warslaw—cum—Elkstone in this County and SARAH his wife. She died in her infancy 15th day of July 1861. She is not dead, but sleepeth.

In affectionate remembrance of the beloved children of JOSEPH and ANN ALLTON. JOSEPH who died June 12th 1855 aged 14 years. ELIZA ANN who died December 22nd 1856 aged 3 years 8 months and WILLIAM ALFRED who died June 7th 1862 aged 18 years. Also of three others who died in their infancy.

In memory of dearly beloved children of HERBERT & HARRIET LARKIN. AMY born October 24th 1872 died September 24th 1896. KATE ELLEN born September 30th 1877 died March 23 1897. WILLIAM HENRY born June 11th 1875 died April 8t 1876. FLORENCE born December 23rd 1878 died September 23 1879. LUCY DOROTHEA born September 21st 1885 died October 26 1886.

Finally, there are the residents of the Workhouse. Of the 2467 workhouse burials found in the registers, only 10 have memorial inscriptions of any type. Even the place of their burial is lost – perhaps somewhere to the south of the church, perhaps in multiple graves, but we can't be sure. Only their names remain. These are among many untold stories in St. Michael's churchyard that we will never hear.

We end with some final words of warning to us all.

Lost in the bloom of life lamented maid. Sweet by thy slumber in death's dreary shade. And when thou leav'st thy lowly bed of rest. O may'st thou mount and mingle with the blest.

Weep not for me my mother dear. I am not dead but sleeping here. My end you know, my grave you see. Prepare therefore to follow me.

Death to me no warning gave. Therefore be careful how you live. Prepare in time make no delay. For no one knows their dying day.

Ye, who with youthful steps, now lightly tread. O'er these green hillocks of the unconscious dead. Pause a few moments at this lowly tomb. And learn — an early death may be thy doom.

Bibliography for Parts 1 to 4

Much of the basic information found on this site has been taken from three sources - two volumes of the Victoria County History and the early nineteenth century work of Thomas Harwood. All are available on line.

- A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 3 By G C Baugh, W L Cowie, J C Dickinson, Duggan A P, A K B Evans, R H Evans, Una C Hannam, P Heath, D A Johnson, Hilda Johnstone, Ann J Kettle, J L Kirby, R Mansfield and A Saltman/ Edited by M W Greenslade and R B Pugh. Victoria County History-Staffordshire.
- A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 14, Lichfield Edited by M W Greenslade. A detailed thematic account of the city of Lichfield and outlying townships, including Burntwood. Victoria County History - Staffordshire.
- Thomas Harwood (1806) <u>"The History and Antiquities of the Church and City of Lichfield:: Containing Its Ancient and Present State, Civil and Ecclesiastical; Collected from Various Public Records, and Other Authentic Evidences"</u>

In addition, much use has been made of the UK census collection and material relating to St. Michael's at Staffordshire Records Office

- <u>UK Census collection</u>
- Records of St. Michael's Church, Staffordshire Records Office

The short church history of Carpenter has also been used.

 Carpenter Rev. (1947) "St. Michael's Church, Lichfield. A short history", revised by J. Baker (1982)

Place name evidence was taken from the work of Horovitz.

 Horowitz D (2005) "The Place Names of Staffordshire", published by D Horovitz, Berwood

Extensive information on the burials in the churchyard (from the registers and monumental inscription surveys, can be found on the author's web site at https://profchrisbaker.com/lichfield-st-michaels-lichfield-registers-and-records/

A number of sources were used that are not available on the web. These include the following.

- Basset S (1981) "Medieval Lichfield: A topographical Review", Transactions of the South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society, XXII, 93-121
- Basset S (1992) "Church and diocese in the West Midlands; the transition from British to Anglo-Saxon control", Pastoral Care Before the Parish p. 13-40
- James T (1998) "The development of the parish of St. Michael-on-Greenhll over 1500 years", St. Michael's Papers; number 1, St. Michael's PCC
- James T (1999) "St. Michael's dedication, associations and imagery", St. Michael's Papers; number 2, St. Michael's PCC

Finally, for those interested in the celebrations of the ritual year, the following book by Ronald Hutton is a good read.

 Hutton R (1996) "The Stations of the Sun – a History of the Ritual Year in Britain", Oxford University Press