

# St Michael Lichfield history

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# St Michael's church, Lichfield – Landscape, Topography and Archaeology

April 12, 2020

## **Introduction**

The historical importance of St. Michael's church in Lichfield has been made clear in other articles and posts on this site. Now, in the near future new church rooms will be built behind the church, and no doubt archaeological work will be required to investigate the site of the new build. I thus thought it would be appropriate to gather together historical and archaeological material concerning St Michael's, to inform both those involved in the coming work and the congregation of St. Michael's in general (of which, it will become apparent, I am a member). Thus in what follows I will present the results of a number of investigations by various authors – the first that considers St. Michael's in the context of the early church in Lichfield; the second which considers the local topography around the church and churchyard; and the third which considers the results of previous archaeological digs. I won't present any information on the development of the ecclesiastical parish, building or churchyard, except in passing. These are well enough covered in the guidebooks that are available in the church, the Victoria County History (1990) and in the work of Trevor James (1998).

## **A Romano-British diocese?**

Bassett (1992) considers a number of ancient churches in the Midlands, and discusses how they might have evolved over the period of late antiquity after the departure of the Roman armies. Amongst those he discusses is St Michael's. Based on material from a very wide range of sources, he comes to the conclusion that a good case could be made for St Michael's being the centre of a British ecclesiastical diocese that predates the Augustinian mission in 596AD. His reconstruction of the possible extent of this diocese is shown in Figure 1 below. It can be seen to be very extensive indeed, occupying land in the area between the Tame and the Trent. Indeed an argument can be made that it also extended east of the Tame, as the townships of Haselour and Statfold have historical links with St. Michael's. James (1998) has arrived at a similar conclusion as regards the size of the ancient parish of St. Michaels, although he doesn't speculate on its episcopal nature. Bassett's arguments are complex and in places compelling, but I must admit to not being entirely convinced by them. Many of the points he makes would be just as applicable to a large secular land unit as to an ecclesiastical unit. There is also a basic assumption that St. Michael's has been a parochial church for much of its existence, whereas the historical record, for example as outlined in Victoria County History (1990), suggest that the parochial system was only formalised within the last few centuries with much of the earlier pastoral work being focussed on the cathedral prebends. But the thought that St. Michael's was an episcopal see is an attractive one to a member of the current congregation. In particular I like the implicit suggestion in Bassett that the Cathedral, St. Mary's

and St Chad's parishes were all created out of the much larger St. Michael's parish – and thus later arrivals on the Lichfield ecclesiastical scene.



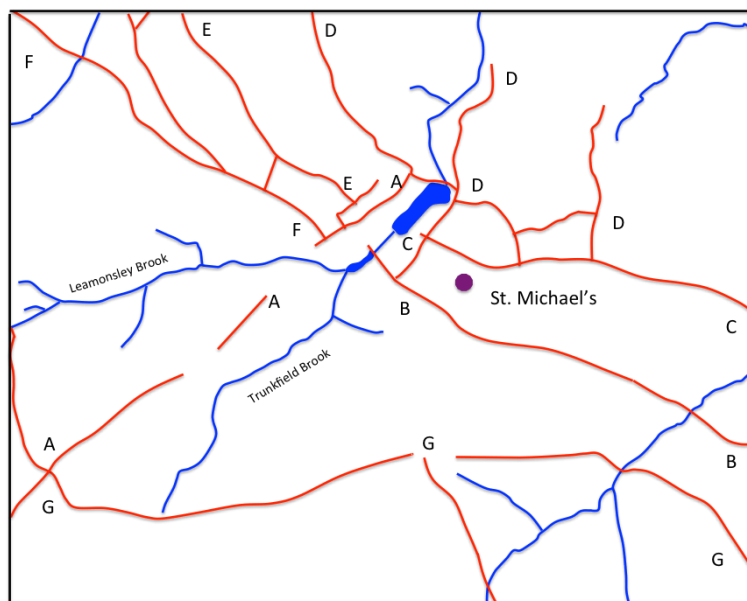
**Figure 1. The Romano-British diocese of St. Michael's as reconstructed by Basset**

(This is a simplified version of the map in Basset (1992) and shows 19<sup>th</sup> century townships and parishes. The parish of Lichfield St Chad includes the Cathedral and Lichfield St. Mary. The parish of Lichfield St Michael includes the townships of Streethay, Fulfen and Freeford.)

### **Lichfield topography**

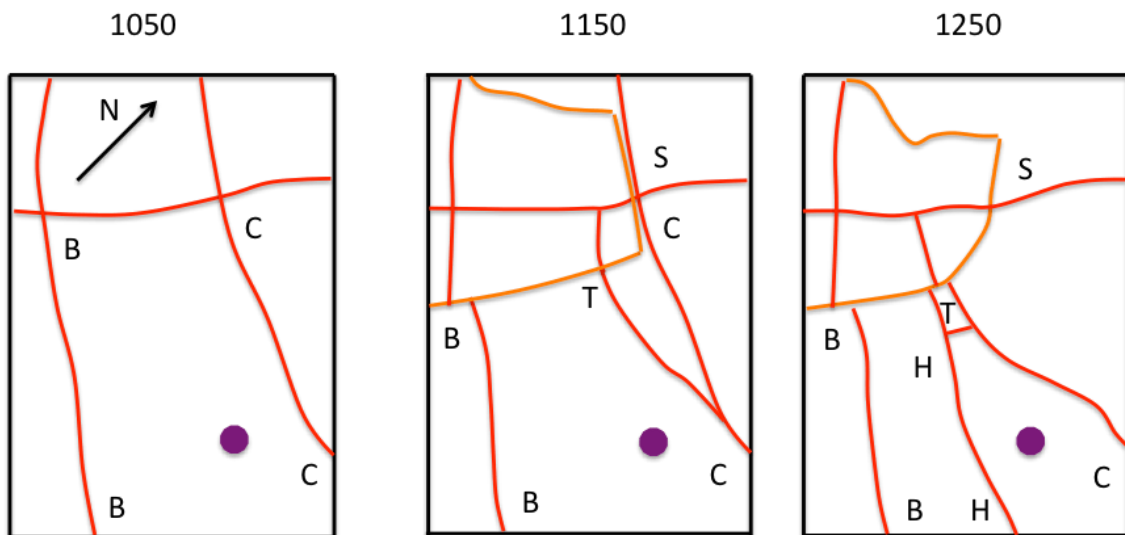
In an earlier paper Basset (1981) discusses the development of the city of Lichfield and its environs. In an extremely detailed topographical study of the area he studied the relationship between field boundaries and roads and trackways shown on tithe maps. He was able to show that some trackways conformed to the field boundaries, and were thus presumably in place before the field system was laid out, whereas some roads cut across the field boundaries and thus can be conjectured to post-date the establishment of the field system. The point of most significance to emerge from this map is that Ryknield Street cut across a number of pre-existing field boundaries, which thus implies that the field system was set out in very early Roman times, or more probably because of its extent, in the Bronze and Iron Age periods. Figure 2 shows the major trackways and roads that were identified as conforming with field boundaries, and which can thus be taken as of pre-Roman origin. The modern day names of these roads are given in the key to help with identification. It can be seen that Lichfield was far from being an underdeveloped area at the start of the Roman era, with a number of trackways converging on the area.

Whilst the map of figure 2 is interesting in a general sense to all who know the area, of particular relevance in the current context are those in the vicinity of St. Michael's church. Note that the church is shown in purple to reflect its potential episcopal nature! Road B on the map follows the current lines of Darnford Lane, Boley Cottage Lane and Frenchman's Walk. Within Boley Park its course has been built over, but the general line has been preserved between the end of Boley Cottage Lane and Frenchman's Walk by Broadlands Rise, a connecting jennel, and Oakhurst. Road C follows the lines of Cappers Lane and Burton Old Road. Around St. Michael's its course is no longer directly visible – this will be seen to be of relevance in what follows. Note that Sturgeon's Hill / Rotten Row does not appear on the map – this clearly cuts across field boundaries and postdates the laying out of the field network.



**Figure 2. Ancient roads and trackways in Lichfield (from Basset, 1981)**

A – Walsall Road, Christchurch Lane, Gaia Lane; B – Darnford Lane, Boley Cottage Lane, Frenchman's Walk; C – Cappers Lane, Burton Old Road; D – Valley Lane, Wissage Road, Curborough Road / Nethrstowe; E – Grange Lane; F – Cross in Hand Lane, Beacon Street; G – Fosseway Lane, Fosseway, Shortbutts Lane, Tamworth Road



**Figure 3. Roads in the vicinity of St. Michael's**

(Road identifiers the same as in figure 2. H – Sturgeon's Hill / Rotten Row, S – Stowe Gate, T – Tamworth Gate. The edge of the burgh is given by the brown line)

Basset also looked in detail at the development of the city. In short, the city was a planned development, laid out by Bishop Roger de Clinton around 1125 to 1150 Figure 3a shows the roads around St Michael's around 1050AD, with the same identification letters as in figure 2. Figure 2b shows the road layout inferred by Basset in 1150AD after the Burgh was laid out. It can be seen that a new road has developed from Road C (Burton Old Road) and heads to the Tamworth Gate (denoted by T). The old road continues to the Stowe Gate (S). By 1250AD the situation has changed somewhat. The old road to the Stowe Gate no longer exists (although it can even now still be traced by the lines of back gardens along part of its course). Road H (Sturgeons Hill / Rotten Row) has appeared and converges on the Tamworth gate and the diverted road C. At the gate there was an open area that was used as a market, and which ultimately became the cattle market. The diverted section of road C was eventually to become part of Trent Valley Road / Church St. at the bottom of St. Michael's graveyard. The important point to appreciate is that over the course of this development, the area around St. Michael's graveyard became increasingly constrained, both by Road H and by the diversion of Road C and the market area. It is quite possible that the size of the graveyard was actually reduced by these constraints.

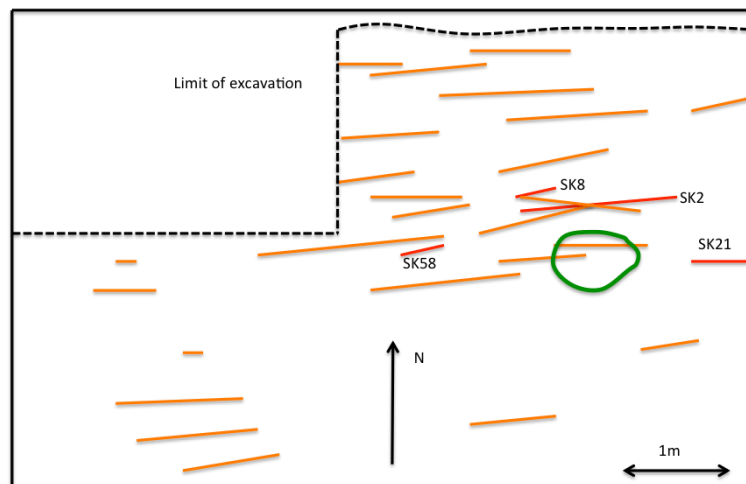
### **Archaeology**

There have been two archaeological excavations at St Michael's in recent decades. The first was by Gould and Gould (1976) who cut a trench in the bank between the old and the new churchyard to see if there was any evidence of a churchyard enclosure, as is often found around ancient churches. There wasn't. You win some and you lose some.

The second excavation was carried out in 1978 on the site of the new choir vestry (Wilson, 1981). A sketch of the excavation is given in figure 4. This was rather more profitable in terms of the archaeology as follows.

- A single post pit, filled with sandstone fragments in the bottom layer.
- 49 complete or partial skeletons, mostly buried in the Christian manner with head to the west (so they would face their maker at the resurrection). There were two exceptions. Skeleton 21 was buried with its feet to the west, in a manner that would be suggestive of a priestly burial (so he would face his flock at the resurrection). The expected chalice and paten were not found, possibly because this skeleton was at the edge of the excavated area and its head was outside the area. Murphy's law and all that. Alternatively Wilson suggests he simply could have been buried the wrong way round. Skeleton 58 was a crouched burial. Such burials are known from Palaeolithic times. In a Christian context they are most often dated from the Anglo-Saxon period. No independent carbon dating was possible. In addition skeletons 2 and 8 were of a woman and a small child – who possibly died during childbirth.
- Five flint flakes from the Mesolithic period but in a secondary context; large quantities of building material from earlier churches, including 300 fragments of glazed medieval roof tiles; a range of different types of decorated floor tile; a sherd of Roman pottery; a halfpenny from the reign of George III and a silver penny from the reign of Richard II.

There thus seems to be some evidence of very early use of the Greenhill site, but precise dating was not possible.



**Figure 4. The 1978 excavation**

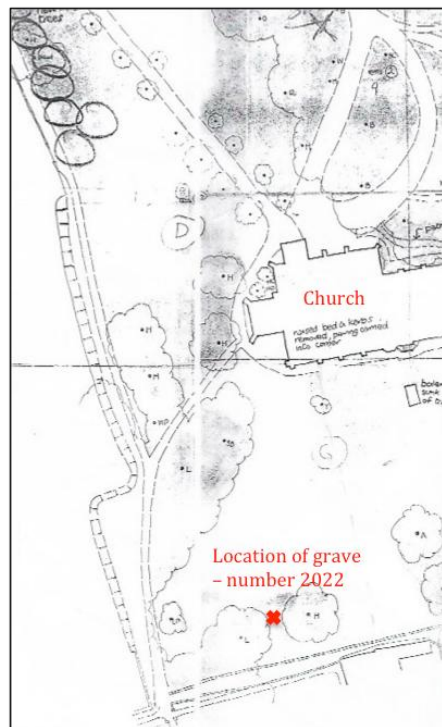
(The area of excavation covers the area of the current choir vestry. Brown lines indicate burials with skull to the west. Red lines indicate specific skeletons discussed in the text. Green indicates the posthole.)

## A personal postscript

There is a further quasi-archaeological point of personal interest. In 1822 one John Baker and his wife Anne (nee Woodfield) were buried in the churchyard at the location shown in figure 5. They were my great-great-great grandparents. I can find out little about them other than that they were very prolific in producing children (11 can be traced). They were one of the few of my ancestors to be able to afford a gravestone. St. Michael's monumental inscriptions records the inscription as

*2022 John Baker 17/9/1822 also Ann Baker*

So it was probably not a terribly large gravestone. It has of course been moved as the churchyard has been tidied over the recent decades and I don't know its location. If anyone comes across it at any stage please let me know! Further fascinating details of my family tree, the members of which were almost exclusively miners, ironworkers or agricultural labourers, can be found [here](#).



**Figure 5. Location of John and Ann Baker's grave**

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Basset S (1981) "Medieval Lichfield: A topographical Review", Transactions of the South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society, XXII, 93-121

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# St. Michael's, Lichfield in the 19th century. Part 1

June 17, 2020



[St Michael's Lichfield, c 1845](#)

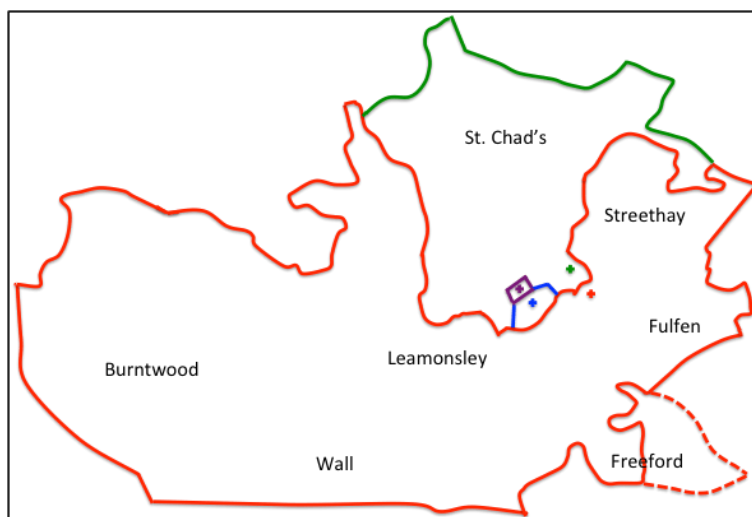
## Preamble

The most common modern use for parish registers for baptism, marriage and burial is in family history research – to trace the lives of individuals and families through the centuries. But they also form a rich historical resource that can be looked at in quite another way. Where detailed registers exist, they allow a picture to be built up of the wider societal context, by looking at the entries in the register as a whole rather than individually, and considering details of birth and death statistics over time; the professions and trades of those bringing children to baptism and their places of residence.

In this post we take such a wide look at the parish registers for St. Michael's parish in Lichfield during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These have been conveniently produced by [Midland Ancestors](#) as .rtf files, and can thus, with some manipulation, be imported in EXCEL and interrogated in a number of different ways. We begin by briefly describing the registers and the nature of St. Michael's parish in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, then move on to consider statistics of baptisms and burials. The registers also give details of where the individuals lived and their trades or professions, and thus give us a snapshot of Lichfield society in the period. The marriage registers allow the level of literacy to be determined, from an analysis of those who signed the registers, and those who simply made their mark. The registers also allow a survey of names to be carried out, which shows how the popularity of different Christian names varied over the century. Finally the registers cast some light on the ministers who performed the services, and on the nature of church practice.

The information presented here will mainly be in the form of simple graphs and tables. Not everyone will be comfortable with such a presentation, but the material to some extent demands it. I will however attempt to describe the information shown on these figures in a more qualitative way, and try to draw out what they can tell us about church and parish in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### St Michael's parish and the registers



**Figure 1.** The red solid line indicates the boundary of St. Michael's parish around 1820. The red dotted line indicates the extra-parochial portion of Freeford township. St Michael's church is indicated by the red cross. The green, blue and purple lines and crosses indicate the boundaries of St Chad's parish, St Mary's parish and the Cathedral Close and their churches respectively. The extra parochial area of the Friary is not shown.

The formation of parishes came relatively late in the Lichfield area, where the ecclesiastical organization was, until the seventeenth century, largely based on the Cathedral Prebendial system, with the Prebends appointing vicars who took responsibility for the three city centre churches. It was eventually divided into three parishes – St. Mary's covering the city centre, St. Chad's to the north-west and St. Michaels to the south west, south east and south (figure 1). There were three extra-parochial areas – the Cathedral Close, the area around the old Friary and part of the township of Freeford. Of the three parishes, St. Michael's is the largest. The church itself and its large graveyard on Greenhill is just to the east of the boundary with St. Mary's parish. In the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the parish contained the land immediately to the east and south of the city centre, and large areas further to the south and east containing a number of smaller townships – Wall to the south, Burntwood in the south west, Streethay in the north east, and Freeford and Fulfen to the east. In addition there were a number of detached portions – at Fisherwick and Haselour to the east for example. Thus, whilst the registers mainly concentrate on those who live close to the church in the more densely populated area on the eastern edge of the city, they also contain entries for a more dispersed rural population. As the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed, some of the outlying townships became

parishes in their own right – Burntwood in 1820 and Wall in 1845 and after those dates their inhabitants largely disappear from the St. Michael’s registers. Similarly a large area to the west of the city around the hamlet of Leamonsley formed Christchurch parish in 1848.

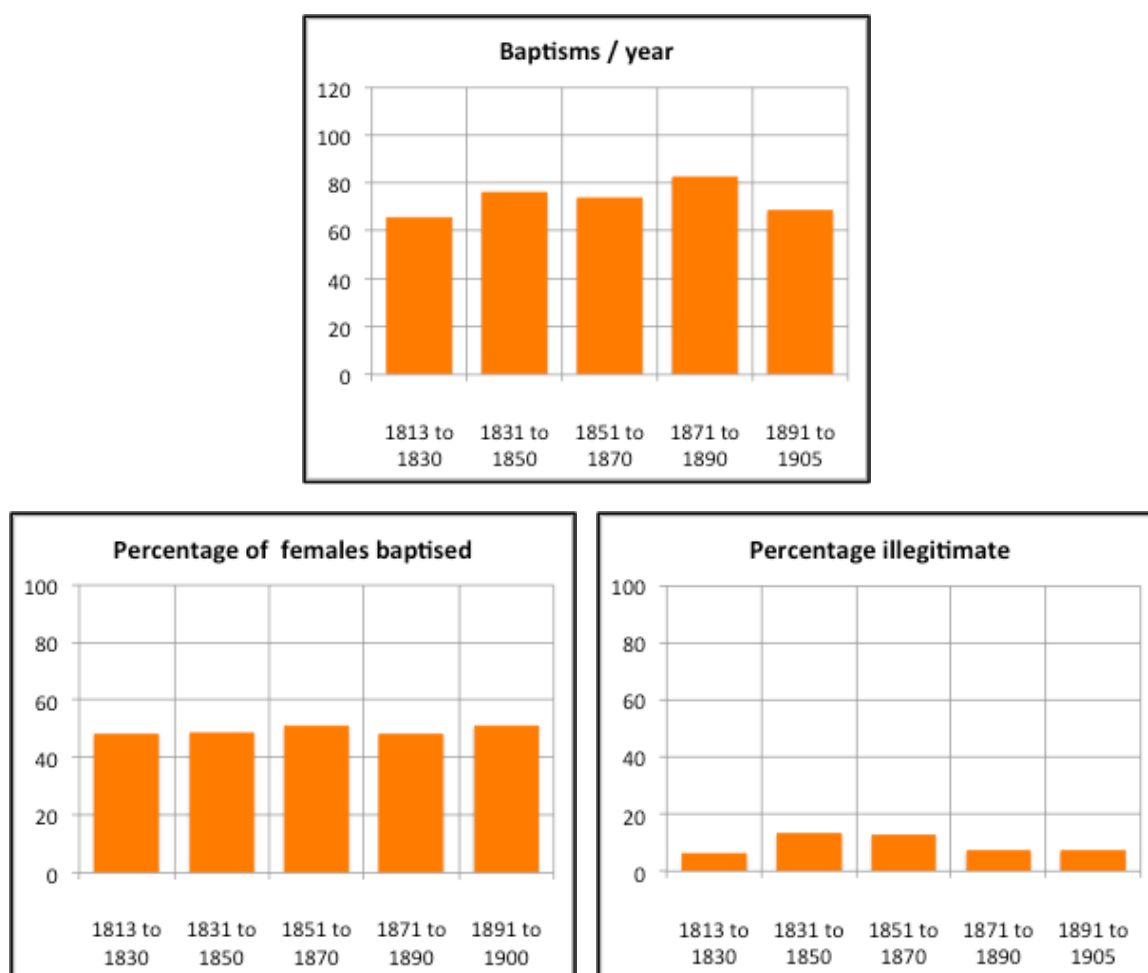
There are however further complications. St. Mary’s parish that encompasses the city centre has no graveyard, and used that at Greenhill. Thus the St. Michael’s burial register also contains many entries from St. Mary’s parish. There also seems to have been a leakage across parish boundaries in baptism and marriage, with parishioners of St. Mary’s and St. Chad’s using St. Michael’s – and no doubt vice versa. The other complicating factor was the existence of the Lichfield Union Workhouse in St. Michael’s parish from 1840 onwards, which housed paupers from a wide area around Lichfield. As these were mainly men, care needs to be taken in any analysis, as the Workhouse entries in the registers can skew the statistics significantly if they are not allowed properly for.

Before considering the detailed statistics from the registers, it is instructive to look at the general social make up of the parish in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The baptismal registers contain brief descriptions of the occupation of the one who brings the child for baptism, usually the father. A statistical analysis of this information is, to say the least, difficult, so I will confine myself to only broad comments here. In total there are 6885 baptisms recorded. The number of families represented will be significantly less than this of course. But for these baptisms 2100 give an occupation as “Labourer” and around 650 are economically inactive (most often “Single Women” in the Workhouse or “Spinsters”). Thus around 2750 are at the lowest levels of the society of 19<sup>th</sup> century Lichfield. At the other end of the scale, there are around 35 baptisms of children of those who might be described as “Professional” – bankers, solicitors, architects etc.; 29 from the Ecclesiastical Establishment; and 40 who describe themselves as “Gentlemen”. In between there is a wide range of trades and occupations present of differing levels of skill, from low skilled gardeners and bricklayers to the highly skilled clockmakers, cordwainers and coach builders. Basically it seems that St Michael’s in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a church for the workers and middle class artisans and tradesmen of the city – and certainly it attracted few at the higher end of the social scale to bring their children for baptism. This is in accord with the various monuments and inscriptions within the church, few of which date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with most from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, indicating that for this period the upper reaches of Lichfield society looked elsewhere.

### **Population Statistics**

Figure 2 shows the basic statistics from the baptismal register for the period between 1813 and 1905. Here the data is shown in nominally 20 year bands, with the first (1813-1830) and the last (1891-1905) being somewhat shorter. This variability in period can be allowed for to some extent by considering the number of baptisms / year in each band. It can be seen that there were around 70 baptisms a year across the period, with that figure remaining relatively stable. The expected rise in baptism numbers due to population growth thus seems to have been balanced by the number of baptisms taking place in the new chapels at Burntwood, Wall and

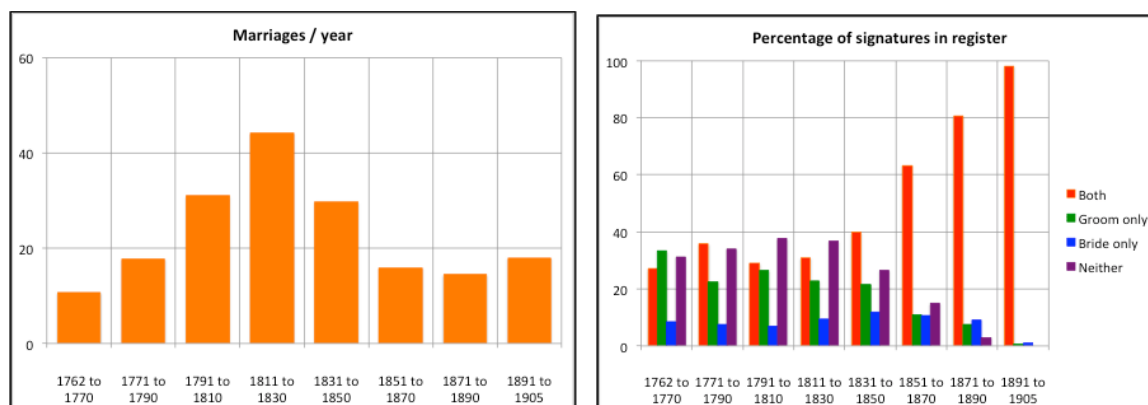
Christchurch, and also no doubt by an increase in the number of baptisms in non-conformist churches. The percentage of females was baptized was close to 50% throughout the period as would be expected, which at least shows the inhabitants of the parish in the 19<sup>th</sup> century did not practice female infanticide. Finally it can be seen that the number of illegitimate children baptised is around 5 to 10% of the whole. This graph may not be wholly accurate however, as illegitimacy was recorded in different ways over the century, or not recorded at all, so some cases may have been missed, but any errors will be small.



**Figure 2.** Baptism statistics for number of baptisms / year, percentage of baptised females and the percentage of illegitimate children

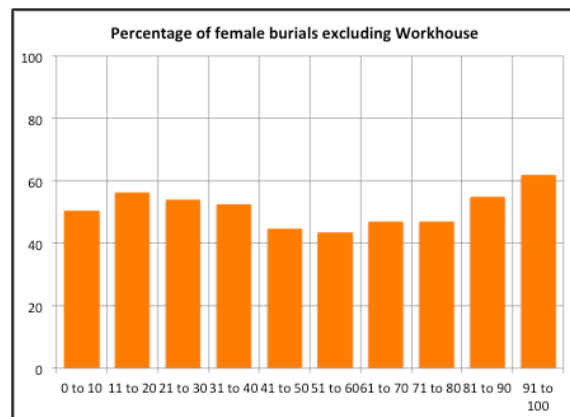
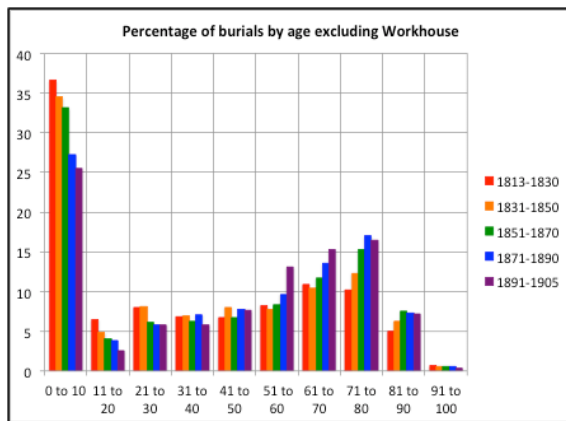
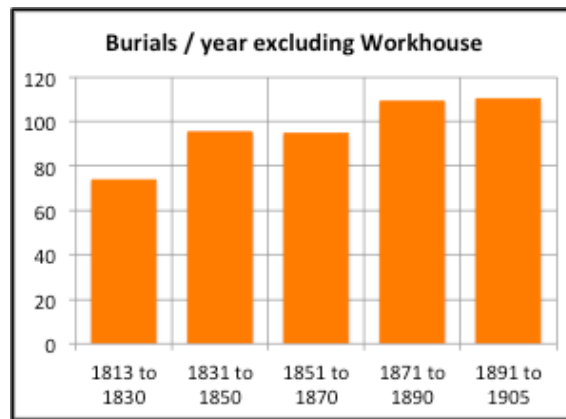
Figures 3 show the marriage statistics . This data is given over a longer period than for the baptismal registers, as the .rtf transcription extends back further into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The number of marriages per year peaks at something over 40 marriages per year between 1811 and 1830. The register also provides an indication of the level of literacy amongst those getting married. The right hand figure gives the proportion of weddings where bride and groom both signed the register, just one of them signed, or neither signed. Very broadly, up to the middle of the nineteenth century, there were around a third of marriages where neither couple could sign their name, a third of marriages where one of them could (most often the groom) and around a third where both signed. After that time, the proportion of weddings where both signed

increased rapidly, no doubt due to the establishment of the National Schools in the area, and by the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century both partners almost always signed.



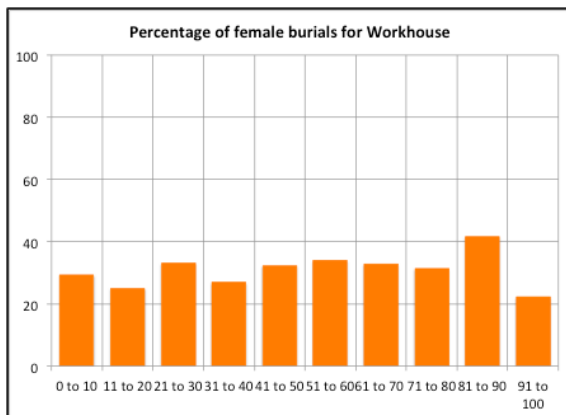
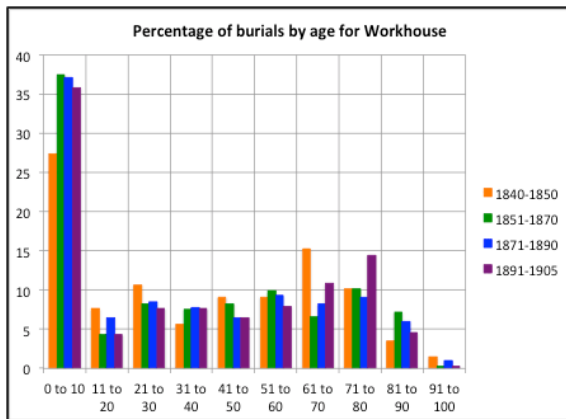
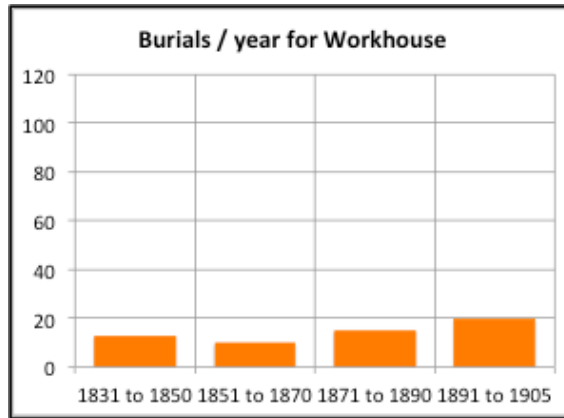
**Figure 3.** Marriage statistics, showing number of marriages per year and the percentage of participants signing the register.

Figure 4 shows the analysis of the burial statistics, excluding the Workhouse entries. The number of burials / year increases through the century, reflecting the increase in population. In the breakdown of burials by age group, the large infant mortality rate is clear, although burials in the 0 to 10 age group decrease from 36% of all burials to 25% over the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This same trend of reducing mortality is shown in the 11 to 20 and 21 to 30 age groups. The number of burials then increases with age, with a peak in the 71 to 80 age range, with a sharp fall off for the oldest age ranges. The percentage of female burials against age range rises from around 50% for the lowest age range, then increases to around 55% for the 11 to 20 and 21 to 30 age ranges, reflecting deaths during childbirth. There is a trough at just over 40% in the 51 to 60 age range as male mortality peaks, with a rise to around 60% in the highest age ranges, which simply reflects the greater longevity of women if they survive infancy and childbirth.



**Figure 4.** Burial statistics, excluding Workhouse data, showing number burials / year, burials by age range and percentage of female burials

Figure 5 shows similar figures for Workhouse burials. It can be seen that the number of burials per year is between 10 and 20 – a significant proportion of the whole. The burials by age show the same form as for the general population, although the child mortality rate remains at around 35% throughout the century rather than falling. The percentage of female burials by age do not show the same trend as for the general population, although this might possibly be because the sample size is smaller and any trend masked by statistical variation.



**Figure 5.** Burial statistics, for Workhouse data, showing number burials / year, burials by age range and percentage of female burials

## St. Michael's, Lichfield in the 19th century. Part 2

June 17, 2020



St. Michael's, Lichfield

### **Residence**

The baptismal and burial registers allow the residence of the parents of the baptized child and those who have died to be identified, at least in broad terms. Neither measure can be regarded as an accurate measure of population, as the same couple may well figure more than once in the baptismal registers, and those who have died may not be long term residents of the parish. To investigate how this population is dispersed across the parish, we define the following districts.

### ***Within the parish throughout the study period***

- Greenhill – the dense urban area close to St Michael's church that extended up Burton Old Road and Trent Valley Road as the century progressed, together with its rural hinterland, broadly covering the area of the current Boley Park Estate.
- St. Johns – based on the urban area around St. Johns Street (including, and south of St John's Hospital) and the Birmingham Road, stretching south to the canal, with its rural hinterland in the Borrowcop and Berry Hill area. Note that the St. John's and Greenhill as defined here did not have a direct road connection between their major centres for much of the study period, with journeys between them requiring a passage through St. Mary's parish.
- The Workhouse on Trent Valley Road (the later St. Michael's hospital).
- The hamlet of Streethay to the north of the parish, including the development in the second half of the century of much railway activity around Trent Valley Station.

- The rural hamlets of Freeford and Fulfen to the east of the parish.

### ***The out of parish townships***

- Burntwood, together with Edial and Woodhouses, which became a separate parish in 1820 with the opening of Christchurch, Burntwood.
- Wall, which became a separate parish in 1845 following the opening of St. John's Church in 1843.
- Leamonsley to the west of the city which, with Pipe Hill, became the parish of Christchurch, Lichfield in 1848.

### ***Out of parish districts***

- The parish of St. Mary Lichfield, including the extra-parochial areas of The Close and The Friary.
- The parish of St. Chad, Lichfield
- Any other out of parish location outside Lichfield.

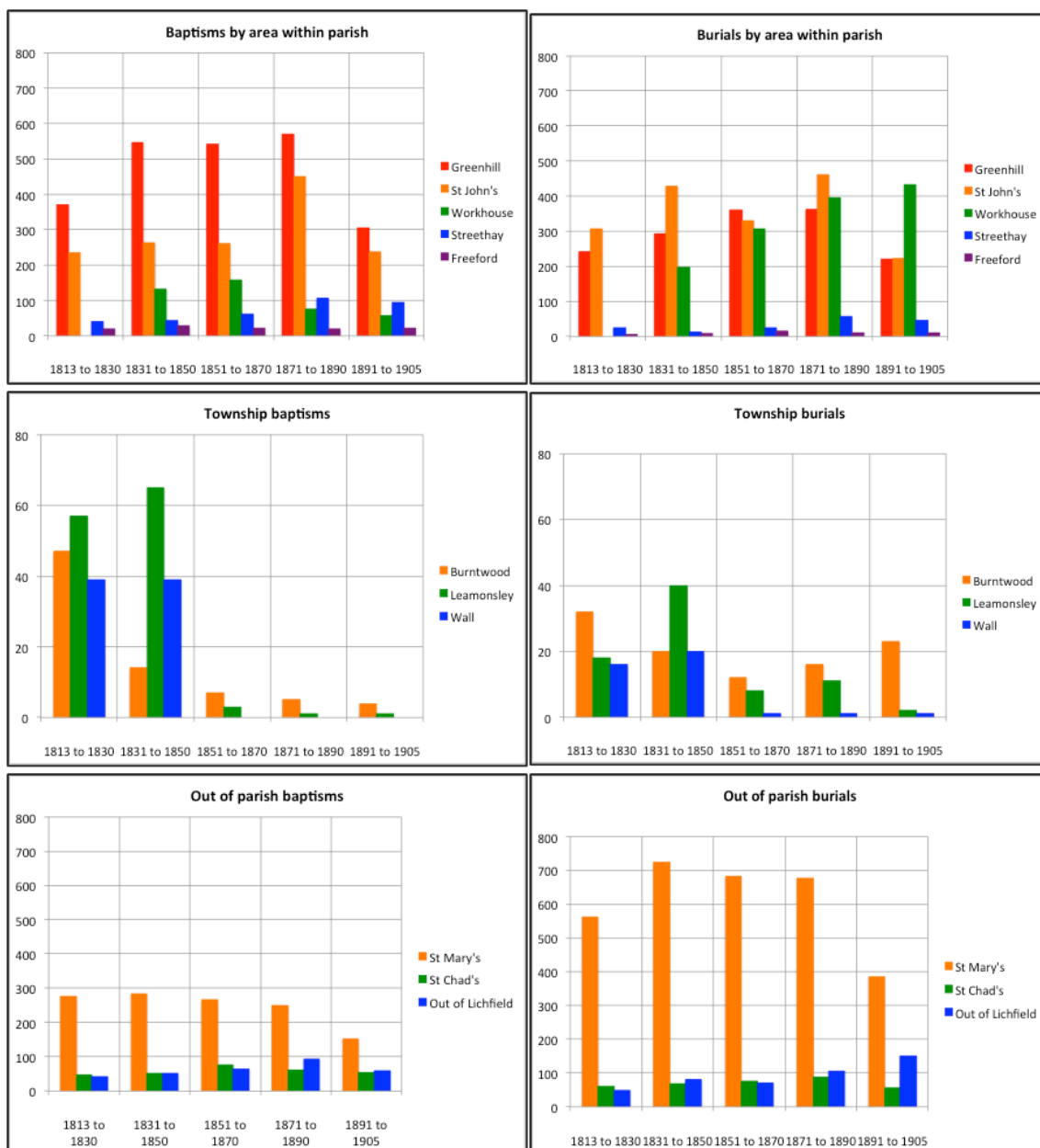
Figures 6 below shows the baptisms (on the left hand side) and burials (on the right hand side) for each of these three categories. These graphs show actual baptism numbers in (nominally) 20 year periods, rather than the number of baptisms per year. Note again that the first and last periods are somewhat shorter than 20 years.

Consider first the baptisms and burials in the different areas of the parish itself. For the former, the largest contributing area is Greenhill, with St. John's the second largest. The situation is reversed for burials, perhaps indicating a rather younger population in the Greenhill area. The Workhouse baptisms and burials begin in the 1831 to 1850 period, as the Workhouse opened in 1840. In general the number of baptisms decrease with time, while the number of burials increase markedly, until in the period from 1891 to 1905 they are the single biggest number of burials. Both baptisms and burials increase over the century in Streethay, reflecting the growth of railway based activities there, whilst the figures from the rural area of Freeford / Fulfen remain small and constant.

The township baptisms and burials show a major fall after the chapels in the respective area are opened – 1820 for Burntwood, 1845 for Wall and 1848 for Leamonsley. The baptism figures fall more dramatically than the funeral figures, suggesting that a number of township residents wished to be buried in family graves at St. Michael's.

The out of parish baptisms and burials are interesting. There can be seen to be significant cross boundary baptisms of parishioners from St. Mary's and St. Chad's parish, presumably because of family or other historical connections. The number of burials for St. Mary's parish was however very large, due to the fact that there was no graveyard there. This imposed a considerable load on the clergy at St Michael's (as will be seen below), In 1886 the Vicar of St.

Mary's agreed to conduct the funerals of his parishioners in St. Michael's churchyard, but he stressed that by ancient custom it was the duty of St. Michael's clergy to do this. A somewhat grudging agreement it would seem. From 1888 an annual collection was taken at St. Mary's for the upkeep of the churchyard. Both these developments probably reflect a grievance extending over several decades that St. Michael's clergy were providing unpaid services to St. Mary's parish. The out of Lichfield category includes baptisms for families from the towns and villages surrounding the city, but also significant number from further afield – in particular from Birmingham and London – probably because of historic or family connections.



**Figure 6.** Baptism and burial statistics by areas of residence

Finally the registers reveal the existence of some interesting groups of people in the population for whom a more in-depth study might be appropriate – the soldiers from the Militia Barracks in the Sandford Street area; the canal workers and boatmen on the Lichfield and Hathersage

Canal and the wharfs in the St. John's area; a huge community of coachmakers, coachmen, horsemen etc. connected with the coach routes through the city, and, in the second half of the century the railway workers on the London North Western Railway through Trent Valley and the South Staffordshire Railway through Lichfield City.

### **Analysis of Christian names**

Both the baptismal and burial registers can be used to study how the Christian names of those in the parish varied over time. Whilst this might seem a somewhat trivial analysis, it does reveal something of changing attitudes and perceptions over time. From the baptismal registers, the information is directly available on a year-by-year basis. Extracting dated information from the burial registers is a little more tricky and requires the birth year to be calculated from the death year and the age at death. Even if the names are all related to the birth year, one might expect some differences – the baptismal registers will, in general, refer to those who were born in the Lichfield area, the burial registers will contain entries relating to those who were born elsewhere. Similarly the latter are more likely to indicate the preferred name of the deceased – be it first name, middle name or by-name. These points being made, details of the names over a period of around 180 years are given in table 1 for men and table 2 for women. Each table shows the following information, for the usual nominal twenty-year periods.

- The most popular ten names in that period and the percentage of the total number of register entries for each of these.
- The percentage of the total number of register entries that are accounted for by these top ten names.
- The number of different names used in the period.

For both male and female names the following broad conclusions can be drawn.

- The most popular names remain pretty much the same over most of the period studied.
- For the earlier periods in the 18th century the top 10 names account for 80 to 90 % of all names. This figure falls throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century to around 60% for male names and 35% for female names.
- Over the same period the number of different names increases by a factor of four.
- Female names were always more variable than male names.

The most popular male names (William, John and Thomas) each account for about 20% of all entries in the early periods, falling to around 6 to 12% in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Similarly the most popular female names (Elizabeth, Mary and Sarah) account for around 15 to 20% of all entries in the earlier periods, falling to around just 3% in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Two points arise from this study. The first is that the increasing number of names in use possibly reflects the movement from a very conservative society (at least in terms of names) to

one with a wider outlook. Indeed, some of the minor names not shown in the table are quite outlandish and unconventional, particularly for the female names – for example Rosetta, Vanda and Pretoria. Secondly, in their conservatism the most popular names are very similar to those outlined in two other studies that I have carried out for the western region of the Black Country – for the parish of [Kingswinford](#) in 1822 and 1840, and for the members of the [Shut End Chapel in Pensnett](#) from 1840 to 1890. The general population for these two studies was again composed of unskilled and skilled manual workers, and were thus similar to the population make up of St. Michael's parish in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Period	1731-1750	1751-1770	1771-1790	1791-1810	1811-1830	1811-1830	1831-1850
Register	Burial	Burial	Burial	Burial	Baptism	Burial	Baptism
<b>Top ten names and percentage of total</b>	John 28 William 21 Thomas 16 James 7 Joseph 6 Charles 5 Robert 5 Ralph 2 Richard 2 Edward 1	John 19 Thomas 19 William 15 Joseph 7 Richard 6 George 5 James 5 Samuel 3 Edward 2 Robert 2	Thomas 18 William 18 John 17 James 8 Joseph 6 George 5 Richard 4 Edward 3 Robert 3 Samuel 3	William 20 John 17 Thomas 15 James 8 Joseph 6 Richard 5 George 4 Edward 4 Henry 4 Charles 4	William 17 Thomas 15 John 14 James 9 George 8 Charles 5 Joseph 5 Henry 4 Edward 3 Samuel 3	John 16 William 14 Thomas 9 James 6 Joseph 6 George 5 Charles 4 Henry 3 Samuel 2 Richard 2	William 16 John 14 Thomas 11 George 8 Joseph 7 Henry 7 James 6 Charles 5 Edwin 2 Alfred 2
<b>Percentage of total entries of top ten names</b>	93	83	83	85	84	67	78
<b>Total number of different names</b>	16	39	49	59	51	72	61
Period	1831-1850	1851-1870	1871-1890	1871-1890	1871-1890	1891-1905	1891-1905
Register	Burial	Baptism	Burial	Baptism	Burial	Baptism	Burial
<b>Top ten names and percentage of total</b>	William 14 John 14 Thomas 10 James 8 George 7 Henry 5 Joseph 5 Charles 4 Edward 3 Alfred 3	William 20 John 13 Thomas 11 George 9 James 6 Henry 5 Charles 5 Joseph 4 Edward 3 Frederick 3	William 16 John 12 Thomas 11 James 9 George 6 Henry 6 Joseph 5 Charles 3 Edward 3 Alfred 3	William 13 John 10 George 8 Thomas 8 James 5 Joseph 4 Arthur 4 Frederick 4 Alfred 4 Henry 4	William 12 John 9 Thomas 7 George 5 Henry 5 James 5 Charles 4 Joseph 4 Arthur 4 Edward 4	William 11 John 9 George 7 Arthur 6 Thomas 6 Albert 4 Charles 4 Ernest 3 Frederick 3 Alfred 3	William 13 Thomas 7 John 6 George 6 Charles 5 Albert 4 Joseph 4 James 3 Arthur 3 Ernest 3
<b>Percentage of total entries of top ten names</b>	74	77	76	64	59	56	64
<b>Total number of different names</b>	74	61	60	81	67	73	65

**Table 1.** Analysis of male Christian names

Period	1731-1750	1751-1770	1771-1790	1791-1810	1811-1830	1811-1830	1831-1850
Register	Burial	Burial	Burial	Burial	Baptism	Burial	Baptism
<b>Top ten names and percentage of total</b>	Mary 30 Elizabeth 19 Ann 13 Sarah 12 Anne 9 Margaret 4 Dorothy 3 Martha 3 Catherine 2 Frances 2	Elizabeth 20 Mary 17 Sarah 17 Anne 13 Ann 6 Catherine 3 Jane 3 Hannah 3 Margaret 3 Alice 3	Mary 23 Elizabeth 16 Sarah 13 Anne 9 Hannah 7 Ann 5 Jane 5 Catherine 5 Margaret 1 Martha 1	Mary 22 Sarah 12 Elizabeth 12 Ann 10 Anne 8 Hannah 5 Jane 5 Catherine 2 Charlotte 2 Maria 2	Mary 19 Sarah 12 Elizabeth 11 Ann 11 Eliza 6 Jane 5 Hannah 5 Harriet 4 Emma 4 Anne 2	Mary 19 Elizabeth 13 Sarah 11 Anne 8 Hannah 6 Ann 5 Jane 5 Catherine 4 Margaret 5 Martha 3	Mary 18 Anne 11 Sarah 9 Emma 9 Elizabeth 8 Hannah 5 Harriet 4 Eliza 4 Jane 3 Caroline 2
<b>Percentage of total entries of top ten names</b>	87	85	85	81	79	77	73
<b>Total number of different names</b>	22	39	56	56	51	66	59
Period	1831-1850	1851-1870	1871-1890	1871-1890	1871-1890	1891-1905	1891-1905
Register	Burial	Baptism	Burial	Baptism	Burial	Baptism	Burial
<b>Top ten names and percentage of total</b>	Mary 17 Elizabeth 10 Emma 8 Sarah 8 Anne 6 Harriet 5 Ann 4 Eliza 4 Hannah 3 Ellen 3	Mary 14 Sarah 10 Emma 7 Elizabeth 7 Alice 5 Anne 5 Harriet 4 Eliza 4 Fanny 3 Louisa 3	Mary 13 Elizabeth 8 Sarah 7 Emma 5 Harriet 5 Annie 5 Alice 3 Anne 3 Eliza 3 Ann 3	Mary 9 Alice 6 Elizabeth 6 Sarah 5 Annie 5 Florence 5 Emma 5 Ada 3 Eliza 3 Ellen 2	Mary 11 Alice 7 Annie 6 Sarah 5 Elizabeth 4 Ellen 4 Lucy 4 Ada 3 Emma 3 Florence 3	Alice 4 Elsie 4 Florence 4 Annie 4 Mary 3 Dorothy 3 Beatrice 3 Elizabeth 3 Ethel 3 Winifred 3	Dorothy 4 Elizabeth 4 Annie 4 Ethel 3 Fanny 3 Mary 3 Sarah 3 Alice 3 Edith 3 Elsie 3
<b>Percentage of total entries of top ten names</b>	67	63	57	48	51	34	35
<b>Total number of different names</b>	78	83	82	132	74	123	83

**Table 2.** Analysis of female Christian names

### Ministers and Church

Table 3 below shows the Perpetual Curates (Rectors from 1868) at St. Michael's, their curates or assistants, and the chaplains of the Workhouse in the period we are considering, together with the absolute numbers of baptisms, marriages and funerals they carried out. The longevity of the ministers in charge is notable, with only three perpetual curates / rectors from 1813 to 1886. The first of these, Edward Remington, was actually the brother of an earlier Perpetual Curate at St Michael's and the son of another, the dynasty extending back to 1757. His early career included Perpetual Curacies at St Chad's Lichfield and Pipe Ridware, before coming to St Michael's in 1805. In 1820, he was, in addition to St. Michael's, instituted as Curate at Burntwood, when Burntwood itself achieved parochial status. As Perpetual Curate of St.

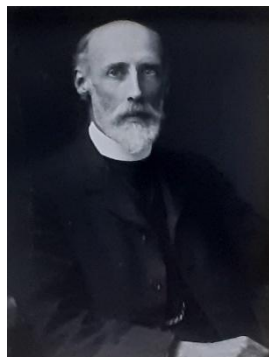
Michael's he would already have had oversight of Burntwood, but it seems he was formally designated its first incumbent, at least for a short period until 1828. From 1829 to 1831 he was also Vicar at Wirksworth in Derbyshire. How he managed these two rather far-flung parishes is not clear, but doubtless he utilized the services of his curates.



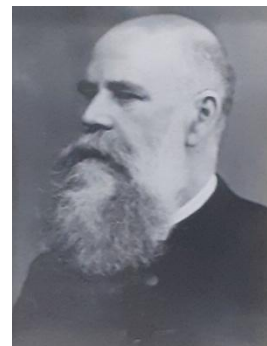
Thomas Gnosall  
Parr



James Sergeantson



Cyril Hubberd



Otho Steele

### **The 19th century Rectors**

One of these curates was Thomas Gnosall Parr, who held that post at St. Michael's from 1828 to Remington's death in 1831. He was then appointed Perpetual Curate, a post he held for 37 years before becoming the first Rector in 1868, one year before his death. He was born in 1800, the son of another Thomas Gnosall Parr, a Lichfield solicitor, and remained unmarried. In 1861 he was living at the Parsonage House on Mount Pleasant with his sister Anne, and a single servant. The number of baptisms, marriages and funerals conducted by Remington and Gnosall Parr was eye-watering – the largest number in the table being the 3168 funerals conducted by the latter. Whist they were assisted by a string of curates, they still seems to have carried most of the load themselves.



The grave memorial



Parr family members



Thomas Gnosall Parr



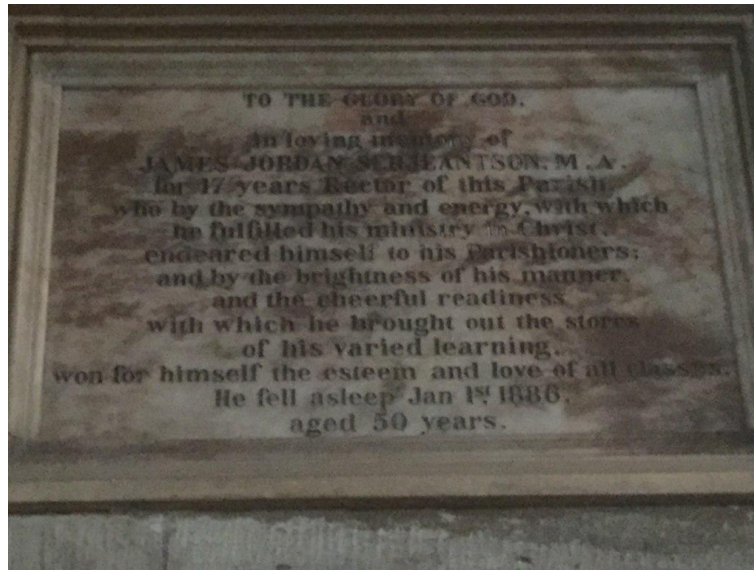
Thomas Parr Senior and his wife

### The Parr grave in St Michael's churchyard

The first clergyman to be appointed Rector, James Sergeantson, was from Liverpool and educated at Trinity College in Cambridge. He was a rowing blue and part of the 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 I doubt it was an experience he relished. He served a curacy at Stoke before coming to St Michael's. He was married to Elizabeth, a clergyman's daughter and they had at least 5 children. In 1881 they lived at the Rectory, with a housekeeper, cook and two servants. He is recorded on a memorial in the church as being part of the team that rang a complete peal of Gransire Minor in 1876. He died in 1886. A memorial plaque in the chancel at St. Michael's reads

*To the glory of God and in loving memory of James Jordan Sergeantson M.A. for 17 years rector of this parish..... He fell asleep January 1<sup>st</sup> 1886 aged 50 years.*

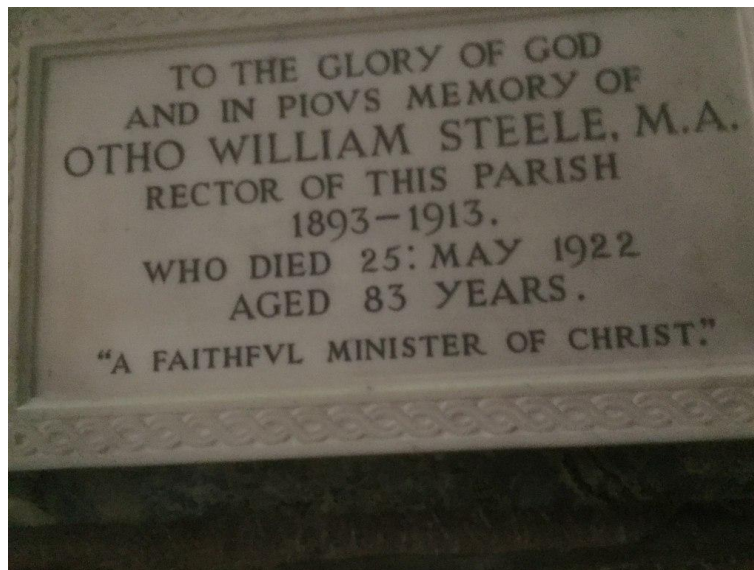


### **The Serjeantson Memorial**

Sergeantson was followed by Cyril Hubberd, an old Etonian who graduated from St. John's College Cambridge, and served in parishes in the south of England before coming to St. Michael's. In 1891 he lived at the Rectory with his wife Agnes, their two children, a cook, a nursemaid and two housemaids. In 1886 he secured an arrangement, albeit somewhat grudging, with the Vicar of Mary's who agreed to conduct the St. Mary's funerals, although more often than not, this resulted in the St. Mary's curates carrying out the duty on his behalf. When Hubbard left St Michael's in 1893, he moved to the south of England and out of parish ministry. Perhaps St. Michael's was too much for him. He is however recorded as a Chaplain in various European cities in the 1900s.

The last of the 19<sup>th</sup> century rectors was Otho Steele. 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, and died in 1922. Again there is a memorial plaque in the chancel that reads as follows.

*To the glory of God and in pious memory of Otho William Steel, M.A. Rector of this parish from 1893 to 1913 who dies 25<sup>th</sup> May 1922 aged 83 years.*



### **The Steele Memorial**

The situation with regard to the Workhouse was interesting. The chaplains of the Workhouse conducted baptisms there, but these were recorded in the St. Michael's register. However, up to the 1880s, all the funerals were conducted by St. Michael's clergy. After that there seems to have been some overlap at that time with some of the curates at St. Michaels also acting as Workhouse Chaplains.

### **Closing comments**

The registers also indicate that a not-insignificant number of services were conducted by either visiting clergy (presumably at the family request) or by other clergy in the locality, to cover absence and holidays no doubt. The funerals of the residents at St. John's hospital were usually conducted by the Master of the Hospital. In the early part of the century, the burials were actually in the grounds of St. John's, with the burials registered in the St. Michael's register, but later internments were in St. Michael's graveyard.

Perpetual Curates / Rectors	Dates	Baptisms	Burials	Marriage	Curates	Dates	Baptisms	Burials	Marriages	Workhouse	Date	Baptisms	Burials				
Edward S Remington	1813-1831	915	916	686	J L Petit	1825-1828	61	163	35	E Oldacres	1842-1863	223	2				
					T Gnosall Parr	1828-1831	195	200	50								
Thomas Gnosall Parr	1831-1869	1866	3168	780	T Helmore	1841-1842	11	8	2								
					H Oldenshaw	1844-1845	13	6	0								
					W Melland	1850-1853	99	30	4								
					S Andrew	1853-1864	261	82	34								
					J Andrew	1859-1860	19	12	1								
					E Arden	1861-1869	215	94	10								
James Serjeantson	1869-1886	1223	1289	215	E Vernon	1867-1868	10	22	3					S Latham	1866-1871	28	1
					J Still	1869-1871	46	94	11					G Woodyatt	1873-1874	6	0
Cyril Hubbard	1886-1893	360	364	66	J Lloyd	1872-1873	50	98	7	T Munday	1875-1882	26	12				
					P Petit	1888-1889	12	7	2	G Hayward	1885-1896	36	27				
Otho Steele	1893-1905	797	659	201	G Proctor	1891-1893	35	29	3								
					H Muriel	1900-1905	47	187	19								

**Table 3.** Rectors, curates and chaplains

This post has presented what at first sight is a rather detailed technical examination of manuscripts. However it does reveal some quite fascinating details of the development of St. Michael's parish over the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was basically the parish of the lower and middle classes of the area, with very few of those at the top of Lichfield society. We see clearly a significant decrease in childhood mortality in this group over that period, and the huge risk of childbirth to women is all too clearly seen. The rise of basic literacy can also be seen from the signatures in the marriage registers. The development of the different areas of the parish can be traced in terms of a growing population and a widening of residential areas, with the increasing numbers of those within the Workhouse a reminder that such growth does not benefit all level of society. The analysis of Christian names sees an essentially conservative use of a small sub-set of names develop into a much wider use of a wide range of names, perhaps reflecting the growing horizons of the population. In ecclesiastical terms, the effect of the outlying townships becoming parishes in their own right is apparent, and the interactions between the city centre parishes is very clear – as are the reasons for the disagreement over funerals and burials between St. Michael's and St. Mary's.

But there is much more that could be said of course about some of the many individuals who feature in the registers – for example [Rev John Louis Petit](#), the curate from 1825 to 1828 and a noted landscape painter, [James Law](#), the Chancellor of the diocese, whose Mausoleum still dominates the front of the churchyard (see below), John Brown, who sounded the trumpet at the charge of the Light Brigade, and many others from long term Lichfield families.

There is of course further work that could be done of this type. Perhaps the most obvious extension would be to do the same sort of analysis for the registers of St. Mary's and St. Chad's as the three churches obviously have significant interaction. This would be quite possible as for the period covered in this blog the registers are again available in .rtf format that can be manipulated in spreadsheets. Maybe one day in the near future I will summon up the energy to do this.

The second extension, that would require more work, would be the integration of the current work with other datasets – and in particular the census returns and the St Michael’s Monumental Inscriptions. Whilst the data is available, the actual task of correlation and assessment would be very significant. Maybe in a year or so.

Finally the work could be extended to look at earlier time periods – but here the registers are not in the same convenient format, and to make them so, at least from the publicly available databases would be a huge task. Maybe in another life.



[Chancellor Law Mausoleum](#)

## The St. Michael chalice of 1684

December 30, 2020

In [A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 14, Lichfield](#) we read the following in the section devoted to St. Michael's church in Lichfield.

*At some date a silver-gilt chalice and paten of 1684 were acquired. They were sold with a pewter flagon and plates in 1852 to a Birmingham firm in part payment for a new set of plate. The chalice and paten of 1684 were bought the same year by St. Clement's, Oxford.*

Clearly this was later regretted and we read

*... attempts in 1892 and 1923 to recover them for St. Michael's were unsuccessful.*

And there I might have left the matter, perhaps as a sort of parable on the foolishness of church wardens, and the futility of the pursuit of modernity, but for the all seeing eye of Google. A quick search of "chalice / St Clements / Oxford" let me to [An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of Oxford](#) from 1929 in which I found the rather poor photograph of the 1684 chalice shown below. It is rather fuzzy, but I think the motif is clear enough – the winged archangel trampling over the devil at his feet. I can't read the caption, so if any reader can enlighten me on this I would be grateful. The question arises as to where the chalice and its associated paten are now. To find the answer to this would I am afraid take more than a quick Google search. Perhaps one day....



## Lichfield St. Michael's – pictures held by William Salt Library

May 20, 2021



[St. Michael's Lichfield in the mid-nineteenth century](#)

The William Salt Library holds a significant number of mainly late eighteenth and early to mid nineteenth century drawings and paintings of St. Michael's church in Lichfield that show the development of the church over that period when significant rebuilding took place. For copyright reasons these cannot be reproduced, so in this post I have listed them all in chronological order; given a link to the web page for each picture that opens in a separate tab; and reproduced the text describing each picture. The intention is to provide a convenient platform to understand the development of the church and churchyard throughout the period concerned.

[Go to site](#) 1732 'The South West Prospect of the City of Lichfield.' Stretching from the west to St. Michael's, an easterly suburb. With a key describing the important features. Inscribed with a brief history of Lichfield. Artists: 'S. & N. Buck, delin. et sculp., [drawn and engraved].

[Go to site](#) 19th of April 1746 'St. Michael's Church near the City of LICHFIELD.' Anonymous.

[Go to site](#) 1760 – 1799 (c.) 'St. Michael's Church Lichfield, with the Arms formerly in the Windows.' North view of the church, [apparently adapted from V.142b.] The church is surrounded by drawing of 17 coats of arms, which used to be in the windows. Anonymous, [? Stringer.]

[Go to site](#) 1769 'St. Michael's Church, Lichfield, 1769.' North view showing the clerestory, the north aisle and porch, and the three-staged tower and spire at the west end. Anonymous.

[Go to site](#) 1760 – 1799 (c.) ‘Showing the tower and spire from a field to the west of the church. Artist: ‘E. B. pinx.,[painted].’

[Go to site](#) 1784 ‘St. Michael’s Church in Lichfield, North (corrected to South.)’ One dormer window is shown over the south aisle. The tower and the south door (without a porch,) are also shown.’J. W. delin.,’ [drawn; John Wright, 1784]

[Go to site](#) 1784 ‘An ancient monument in the chancel of St. Michael’s Church, Lichfield.’ Showing a recumbent figure under a cusped arch. artist: ‘J. W.’ [John Wright, 1784.]

[Go to site](#) 1798 ‘St. Michael’s Lichfield, 1798.’ South east view showing the south door with no porch. The clerestory and nave are not shown owing to the high south aisle. There is also a high chancel with a row of top windows. Anonymous,

[Go to site](#) 1800 – 1899 (c.) ‘Showing an old tomb called ‘saddle-back’ and dated 1674, with a distant view of Cathedral from the south east. Anonymous.

[Go to site](#) 1805 ‘An Ancient View of the City of Lichfield. From a painting in the possession of the Revd. Henry White.’ West view showing the gate tower, St. Mary’s church with a spire, and St. Michael’s church on a hill to the right. ‘C. Pye, sculp., [engraved].’

[Go to site](#) 1824 ‘Font in St. Michael’s Church, Lichfield.’ Showing an octagonal font with shields on panelled sides, and fleurs de lis and roses below. One shield is marked W.C., 1669, and another with a cross flory between Maltese crosses. Artist: ‘J. B.,’ [John Buckler.]

[Go to site](#) 1832 ‘St. Michael’s Church, Green Hill, Lichfield, Sketched 1832.’ Showing the church in a country setting, with people standing on a road in the foreground. ‘Robt. Noyes.’

[Go to site](#) 1833 ‘North West (corrected East) View of Saint Michael’s Church, Lichfield.’ Showing the east window, the chancel (with clerestory), the north aisle and porch, and the tower with a spire. artist: J. Buckler.

[Go to site](#) 1838 ‘South West View of Saint Michael’s Church, Lichfield.’ Showing the tower and the spire,

[Go to site](#) 1841 ‘South East View of Saint Michael’s Church, Lichfield.’ Showing the east window and the chancel (before rebuilding) with later [?vestry] addition to the south aisle. Artist: G. Buckler.

[Go to site](#) 1841 ‘North West View of Saint Michael’s Church, Lichfield.’ Chiefly showing the tower and the spire, also the north aisle and the porch. Artist: J. C. Buckler.

[Go to site](#) 1841 ‘Ground Plan of Saint Michael’s Church, Lichfield.’ Shown before the extension of the south aisle. A south doorway is shown, but a north porch. Artists: J. C. and G. Buckler.

[Go to site](#) 1841 ‘Interior View of Saint Michael’s Church, Lichfield, from the Chancel.’ Showing the pulpit, a reading desk, and some carved pews in the chancel. artist: G. Buckler.

[Go to site](#) 1841 :Interior View of Saint Michael's Church, Lichfield from the north aisle.' Showing a view across the nave, with box pews and a three deck pulpit. Artist: J. C. Buckler.

[Go to site](#) 1841 'The North Porch of Saint Michael's Church, Lichfield.' North view showing a crenellated porch, with two shields of arms and a canopied niche above, but without cross or letters. Artist: J. C. Buckler.

[Go to site](#) 9th of September 1842 'North east view of the north porch with shields of arms and a canopied niche, but without cross. Anonymous, [A.E. Everitt.]

[Go to site](#) 1843 'South East View of Saint Michael's Church, Lichfield.' Showing a two-storey addition which has been made to the south aisle on the east end (with door) and a south door has been inserted in the chancel. Artist: J. Buckler.

[Go to site](#) 1844 'South West View of Saint Michael's Church, Lichfield.' Showing the tower and the spire, and the south aisle. Artist: J. Buckler.

[Go to site](#) 1844 'North West View of Saint Michael's Church, Lichfield.' Chiefly showing the tower and the spire, also the north aisle and the porch. Artist: J. Buckler.'

[Go to site](#) 1844 'North East View of Saint Michael's Church, Lichfield.' Showing a north north east view of the east window, the chancel (with clerestory), the north aisle and porch, and the tower with a spire. 'J. Buckler.'

[Go to site](#) 1844 'Interior View of Saint Michael's Church, Lichfield, from the Chancel.' Showing a view of the Nave through the chancel arch (perpendicular style). The three pairs of columns seen are of cluster type, (the sides are rounded and should be hollowed.) artist: J. Buckler.

[Go to site](#) 1844 'Lichfield, St. Michael's.' South west view showing the tower and the spire, also the south aisle. Artist: H. J. Noyes.

[Go to site](#) 1845 'Porch on the North side of Saint Michael's Church, Lichfield.' North west view showing a crenellated porch, with two shields of arms and a canopied niche above, also letters E and R, and a floriated cross above. Artist: J. Buckler.'

[Go to site](#) 1846 'South East View of the New Chancel of Saint Michael's Church, Lichfield.' Showing the three lancet lights at the east end, and two on the south side. There is no door. Artist: J. Buckler.

[Go to site](#) 1846 'Effigy on the North side of the Chancel of Saint Michael's Church, Lichfield.' Showing a male with a long gown and hood, with long sleeves. His hands are as at prayer, his head is on a cushion and his feet on an animal. Artist: 'J. B.,' [John Buckler.]

[Go to site](#) 1846 'Interior View of the Chancel of Saint Michael's Church, Lichfield. Showing the interior of the new chancel, which has a stone groined roof, and lancet lights. In the north wall is a plain arch with an old recumbent effigy. Artist: J. Buckler.

[Go to site](#) 1847 'East View of Saint Michael's Church, Lichfield.' A three lancet window has taken the place of a five light perpendicular window, and the chancel clerestory has been removed. Artist: J. Buckler.

[Go to site](#) 1858 St. Michael's has a Perpendicular west tower and spire and the rest of the church is mostly Early English. It was extensively restored by Thomas Johnson of Lichfield in 1841-42. This is one of a series of watercolours of all the churches in Lichfield Diocese in Staffordshire, painted by Miss Theodosia Hinckes and Mrs Rebecca Moore for Lichfield Cathedral between 1857 and 1861. Reproduced by Kind Permission of the Chapter of Lichfield Cathedral who retain copyright.

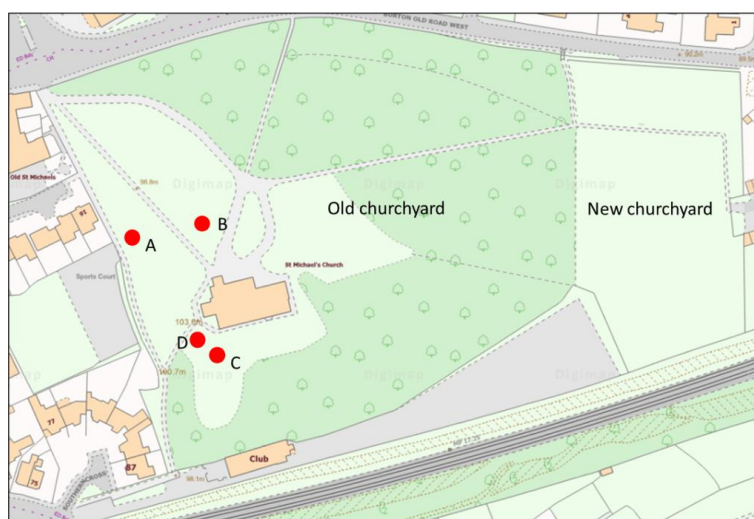
[Go to site](#) 1950 – 1970 (c.) Most of the Church dates from 1842-43 and is by Thomas Johnson.

# The seventeenth century graves of St Michael's churchyard

June 10, 2021

## The churchyard

The surviving grave monuments in St. Michael's churchyard in Lichfield are mainly from the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with only a very few from the seventeenth century still in existence. In the main this is simply the result of natural decay – the lifetime of stone inscriptions in the graveyard seems to be of the order of 250 years. And over the course of the churchyard's 1500 year existence, graves must have been dug over existing graves on many occasions. But there are a few graves that probably date from the seventeenth century and we will discuss these in this post.



**Figure 1 Grave locations**

The locations of the graves are shown on the map in figure 1 which shows the old churchyard, closed to new burials, and the new churchyard to the east that is still in use (although filling up rapidly). It can be seen that the graves we are considering are all, unsurprisingly, in the old churchyard and located quite close to the church. A study of the dates of all the graves in the old churchyard, suggest that most burials up to 1800 were in the area to the immediate north, west and south of the church, and the large areas to the east began to be used from around 1800. The churchwarden's accounts indicate that the churchyard was let out for grazing and for taking a hay crop through to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, so this was presumably the main function of the eastern area before it was used for burials.

## The Saddleback and Finney graves



[Picture from William Salt library](#)

**Figure 2 The Saddleback grave**

Returning to the graves, let us first let us consider those at the front (north) of the church. The first of this pair (A) is the unusual saddleback grave shown in figure 2 above. 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 and can be accessed from clicking the button above. That drawing gives the date of the grave as 1674, and with a little imagination this can be made out on the tomb itself. Apart from the date, it is the style of the grave that makes it so distinctive. It is a shame that the dedication is illegible.



**Figure 3. The Finney grave**

The dedication of the other grave to the north of the church (B) can however be distinguished (figure 3). This reads

*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.*

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.

### **The Clarke grave**

The third of the graves that we consider here has a particularly interesting history. This is the monument to William Clarke and his son, another William, two longed lived parish clerks. The Morning Chronicle of October 8<sup>th</sup> 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 (C on the map) but was moved, probably more than once, in the churchyard re-ordering of the 1970s. Unfortunately it’s current location is unknown. There are one or two possibilities with very well worn inscriptions, and if I can make a positive identification I will edit this post and include a photo.

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 to me likely that the death dates recorded in the Morning Chronicle, and “restored” in the 1870s were misreadings and were a century too early. 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.

### The Miesson grave



**Figure 4. The Miesson grave**

It must be admitted that the final grave we consider here (at D on figure 1) can't be shown to belong to the seventeenth century, but it certainly has the look of something that old, and as we will see if of some interest (figure 4). Up till recently, this was the fairly simple chest tomb of Elizabeth Miesson and William Miesson . Recently the tomb has collapsed, and the inscribed end pieces placed on top of the remains, with the broken lid to one side. These are not particularly easy to read, but do confirm the names. A web search on Ancestry reveals there were several folk with these names in Lichfield around 1650 to 1750. The memorial to Elizabeth indicates contains the name of the city, rather inelegantly spread over two lines, as LICH and FIELD i.e. with a spelling mistake. The tomb could well have been a source of some embarrassment!

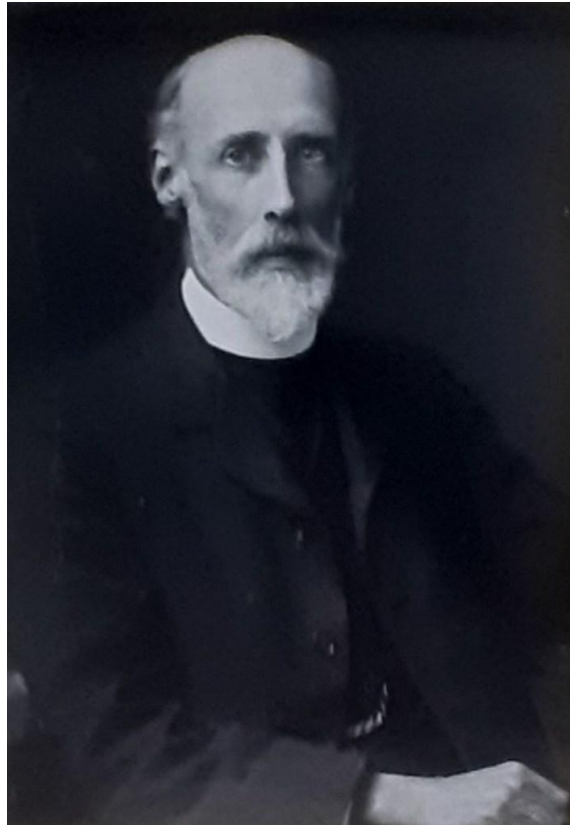
# St. Michael's church, Lichfield – from the parish magazines 1889-1892

December 21, 2021



I have recently come across a bound copy of the church magazines from 1889 to 1892. In this article I will share some items of interest that I found there – some that will describe situations that will be very familiar to the current congregation and some that are rather strange in modern terms.

The vicar for those years was the Rev. Cyril Hubbard, an old Etonian who the census tells us lived at the Rectory in Mount Pleasant with his wife, two children and four servants (!), and had been Rector since 1886. He seems to have been the driving force behind the magazine and wrote an article each month – a mix of devotional and news material. He was particularly concerned to increase the number of communicants, but also to repair and restore the tower and the chancel which were in a poor state of repair – more of this below. As ever, there were financial issues, and not infrequent requests for subscriptions to projects and for increased weekly offerings. In the November 1892 magazine he both announced that he was leaving the parish and also named his successor who had been appointed by the Bishop of Lichfield – Rev Otho Steele from Hanley. He was to leave early in 1893, and Rev Steel took up the post very soon afterwards. It doesn't happen like that these days!



Rev. Cyril Hubbard

The magazine was a simple four- page affair – essentially a folded A4 sheet. There is an indication that these magazines were the first that were wholly church produced – a more generic "Banner of Faith" magazine having been used beforehand. The front page was standard and gave details of the services and other activities. On a Sunday there were four or five services – a weekly Holy Communion at 8.00am (some things never change); Mattins at 10.45; a monthly Holy Communion at 12.00; an afternoon service at 3.00, that on various Sundays of the month included a Children's service, baptisms, or churchings; and Evensong at 6.30.

There were also services on Wednesday evenings at 7.30 in church, and on Tuesday evenings at 7.30 in St. John's St., and in Streethay. It is not clear where the latter were held – presumably in hired rooms? Sunday Schools were held in the School at 9.30 and 2.30, and also in St John's St. and occasionally Streethay at 2.30. There were a number of regular Monday meetings – a Clothing Club at the School from 12.00 to 1.00, three Mothers meetings at the Rectory, City Mill, and Birmingham Road Barracks at 2.00, and a Band of Hope Meeting (a young person's temperance society) at 6.00 in the School. On Saints' days there was a service of Mattins at 9.00. The Rev Hubbard and his congregation were not idle!

In addition to all the above there were occasional lectures, bible studies, concerts and so on. Of particular interest were the Smoking Concerts for men, where the entrance fee was 2d, for which they received 1d worth of tobacco and the rest being spent on the hired room and heating. Newspapers and board games were provided, and those who came entertained each other with song and rhymes (in a fog of tobacco smoke one assumes). The annual Vestry

meeting took pace just after Easter, for the election of Churchwardens and presentation of their accounts; and the election of sidesmen for the parish and for the surrounding hamlets – Streethay, Fulfen, Tamhorn, Freeford, Statfold and Fisherwick. Sidesmen had a more representative role in that period than their current role as being welcomers into church. The churchwardens accounts for 1890 show a total income of £204 with £70 from St. Michael's Trust, £52 from the offertory and £45 from burial and other fees; and an expenditure of £165 with £37 being spent on the organist and choir, £51 on the Sexton's wages; £25 on the heating and cleaning; and £18 on "making a new carriage road to the church door". There were special collections for charities such as "Waifs and Strays", CMS, the clothing club et.c of £32 in total.

At the start of the period covered by the magazines, both the tower and the chancel were in a poor state of repair and it had become inadvisable to ring the bells except when strictly necessary. The tower had suffered from severe settlement problems, and by late 1889 there was a wide crack in the south wall that ran the entire height of the tower and part of the spire, and the western buttresses were also in a poor state. There were also problems with the north wall, and parapets. An appeal was launched to meet the £250 required for the work, which was successfully completed by September 1891.

The chancel had been extensively modified in the 1840s, when the roof was lowered, the walls plastered, a vaulted roof added, and all the windows (including the large east window) replaced by narrow lancet windows- in an effort to restore it to some (fictional) early English style. By 1889 it was in a very poor state of repair and work clearly needed doing. Rev. Hubbard largely financed this from his own resources. The plaster was removed, a new oak ceiling added, and the east window restored to its past (and current) form. At that point there was not enough money to install stained glass, which was eventually incorporated a decade later. To the right of the altar a credence niche was created in the wall for the communion vessels. It was decorated with tiles found in a vault to the north of the altar that was entered by stairs beneath it – these tiles can still be seen. The choir were moved into the chancel, a move which gave the Rev. Hubbard some anxiety as to whether they were too remote from the congregation to properly lead the singing, and he pleaded for the congregation to join in the singing psalms and hymns. The clergy reading desk was also moved into the chancel, which gave similar concerns, although it seems that the (unamplified of course) voice of Rev. Hubbard could still be heard.

The new Girl's school was opened with a great fanfare in July 1889 – effectively the completion of the school in the form that many older residents of the parish will have known it. The new building was the part of the school next to Church Street and connected with the 1858 building with the tower to the south of it. At the opening, children's games were played and after a short service of dedication the building was handed over by the Hon Alfred Percy Allsop, who had served on the school management committee for a number of years and had paid for the new building. The enthusiasm was somewhat damped within a few days by the sudden departure of the much-respected schoolmaster, Mr Lasseter, following the death of his wife and his own ill

health. A former pupil teacher was drafted in to keep the school running while a new master was appointed. The school accounts for 1889 show an income of £479 with a government grant of £217, school pence (from families) of £130 and voluntary contributions of £53; and an expenditure of £493, with £404 spent on teachers' salaries. There were 107 boys on the register, 92 girls and 60 infants (who were presumably also boys and girls).

At that time most of the burials in the churchyard were in the now overgrown area next to what we call the new churchyard, and these are recorded month by month in the magazine, in much the same way as now. A couple of articles also give details of the avenue that runs up to the church from the north gate. Mr Henry C Malden, in describing his research in the parish registers, informs us that the avenue was set with *elm* trees on February 26<sup>th</sup> 1750 – on a “windy Tuesday”. In 1890, many of these were in poor condition and had, according to Mr Walden, felt the effects of many windy Tuesdays and seen their best days, and it was decided to replace every other one by quick growing *lime* trees. Of crab apples there is not a mention. Mr Malden ends his article with the words.

“Sooner or later, my readers, like them, will have seen their best days, and have their names added to the long list of those whose last home is in the old churchyard on the hill.”

And that seems a good place for me to stop as well!

## James Jordan Serjeantson – Rector of St. Michael’s church in Lichfield, 1868 to 1886

January 3, 2022



From the early 18th century until 1867, the clergy at St. Michael’s were “perpetual curates” – appointed by the incumbent of St. Mary’s. These were paid a cash stipend, but had no income from tithes and glebe lands, and were often of lower social standing than Rectors. At the start of December 1867, the then perpetual curate, Thomas Gnosall Parr, who has been in post as a Perpetual Curate since 1831, was made the first Rector of the parish. He was not to enjoy that title for any length of time and fell ill and died shortly afterwards on December 23<sup>rd</sup> 1867.

He was succeeded in June 1868 by the first to actually be appointed to the post of Rector – James Jordan Serjeantson (pictured). Serjeantson 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 I doubt 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 left Stoke in June 1868 to high praise from his incumbent and the Archdeacon, with gifts (including a hall clock) from parishioners and Sunday School children. 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 shown below. In total there were 16 sermons or addresses that week, all preached by Serjeantson. His sermons were very practical and he made no claim to eloquence, but were much appreciated by his congregation. It would seem he was quite blunt in his manner, not afraid to call a spade a spade, but was nonetheless admired for his straightforwardness.

Palm Sunday	Morning	Holy Communion with 15 communicants
	Afternoon	Sermon on Philippians 2.8
	Evening	Sermon on John 15.13-14
Monday	Unspecified	Address “Christ suffered and died as a sacrifice for sins.”
Tuesday	Unspecified	Address “Christ suffered and died to make atonement.”
Wednesday	Unspecified	Address “Christ suffered and died as an example.”
	Evening	Sermon on St Mark 14. 71-77
Thursday	Unspecified	Address “Christ suffered and died to enable us to live a holy life.”
Good Friday	7.00	Sermon on Romans 4.25
	9.00	Sermon on St Matthew 26.39
	Morning	Sermon on Isaiah 53.3
	Afternoon	Sermon on Two words from the cross
	Evening	Sermon on the last words
	Unspecified	Address “Christ suffered and died that we might have life eternal.”
Saturday	8.00	Holy Communion with 43 communicants
Easter Day	9.30	Holy Communion with 17 communicants.
	Morning	Sermon on Isaiah 38.16 and Holy Communion with 49 communicants
	Afternoon	Sermon on Colossians 3.3 and baptism of five children
	Evening	Sermon on 1 Corinthians 15.14
Monday	Unspecified	Baptism of four adults
Wednesday	Evening	Sermon on Romans 5.2-21

He presided at the pastoral offices – 1123 baptisms, 1189 marriages and 215 funerals in total over the years of his incumbency and also presented 20 to 30 young people each year for confirmation. One of the more memorable funerals was that of William Corfield and his wife Theresa, his elderly mother and four young children who all died from suffocation in a house fire on Breadmarket Street, next to Dr Johnson’s birthplace in January 1873. 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.

Theologically, he seems to have been very much against the ceremonial associated with the Anglo-Catholic Oxford movement and is recorded as a signatory of a letter of 1875 to the bishops that argued against legalizing the use of eucharistic vestments and the eastward position for celebrating the eucharist. Some aspects of current worship at St. Michael’s would have certainly made him uncomfortable! The service register indicates he was a strong supporter of the Melanasian Mission, formed by Bishop Selwyn, the former Bishop of New Zealand, and indeed one of his curates, Rev John Still (1869-1871), left Lichfield to become a

missionary in the South Pacific, at a time just following the martyrdom of Bishop John Patteson in the Solomon Islands.

Serjeantson 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 the founder and 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 was a very knowledgeable naturalist, who initiated a scheme for replacing dead trees in the churchyard; an amateur astronomer (possessing his own telescope), and as a historian he was well acquainted with the church records. In short he was something of a polymath. He also served as a Workhouse Guardian and took an in various educational initiatives within the city.

In 1881 he and his wife, their two sons, Cecil (10) and Ronald (7), and three daughters, Mildred (5), Edith (3) and Monica (1) lived at the Rectory on Mount Pleasant, with a housekeeper, cook and two servants. Two other children died as babies – Edward in 1870 and Joyce in 1884.

He died on New Year's day 1886 and was buried four days later, with the funeral being taken by the Vicar of Stoke on Trent and the Vicar of St Mary's, with the Bishop of Lichfield presiding at the graveside. His passing was very extensively covered in the local press, with full obituaries and even the full text of memorial sermons! 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. I have not succeeded in identifying them, although I have received many bramble scratches in the trying.



But James Serjeantson does have other memorials. A fountain on Greenhill that was erected in his memory in 1886 contains the inscription

*Erected by parishioners and friends in grateful and loving memory of the Rev J J Serjeantson MA, Rector of St. Michael's, Lichfield.*

In addition, a plaque in the chancel at St. Michael's reads

*To the glory of God and in loving memory of James Jordan Serjeantson M.A. for 17 years rector of this parish who by the sympathy and energy with which he fulfilled his ministry on Christ endeared himself to his parishioners and by the brightness of his manner and his cheerful readiness with which he brought out the stores of his varied learning won for himself the esteem and love of all classes. He fell asleep January 1<sup>st</sup> 1886 aged 50 years.*

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. He perhaps deserves more recognition as the first to be appointed Rector of the parish.

Chris Baker

# The memorial inscriptions in St. Michael' churchyard in Lichfield

February 7, 2022

## **Preamble**

The churchyard of St Michael-on-Greenhill in Lichfield is one of the largest and possibly one of the oldest in the country and has long served as the last resting place of the people of the Lichfield parishes of St Michael and St. Mary. Unsurprisingly it is rich in grave memorial inscriptions that give a glimpse into the life and times of those whom they commemorate. This post will consider a number of aspects of these memorials, although space constraints mean it will inevitably be somewhat superficial and will leave much more to be said.

## **Context**

But first some context. The churchyard is effectively divided into two – the old (full and closed) churchyard around the church with an area of around nine acres, and the new churchyard to the west that is still in use, although space there is becoming limited. This post only considers 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 re-ordering a survey was carried out of all the graves that were visible and 2084 graves were identified, and the names of those they commemorated were recorded dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1980s the Birmingham Society for History and Genealogy carried out a major survey of all the monumental inscriptions in the graveyard, and transcribed 1562 inscriptions. 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. Indeed some of the inscriptions below can no longer be located due to the headstones being moved, and these surveys are the only record we have.



Old churchyard



New churchyard

### **The churchyards at St. Michael's**

There is however some reason to think that the recorded graves and inscriptions represent only a small proportion of the burials in the graveyard. Between 1813 and 1905, there are 9128 entries in the church burial register. For the same period the 1960s survey identifies 1729 burials in 1099 graves and the 1980s survey of inscriptions identified 1623 burials in 1018 graves. Doubtless some burials and graves have been lost due simply to degradation over the course of the years – both due to the effects of the climate and to human action. With regard to

the latter, [pictures of the church from the 1830s in the William Salt Library](#) show a number of gravestones that seem to have been done away with in the church rebuilding in the “gothic” style in the 1840s. The Victorian restorers were far from being historically sensitive. But the large number of recorded burials in relation to the number of graves does suggest that the major proportion were in unmarked graves, which is perhaps not surprising. This number of such burials was swollen by the fact that St Michael’s was the burial ground for Workhouse residents. Thus the grave inscriptions that we have only tell us something about the levels of society that could afford the services of a stonemason.

### **The nature of the inscriptions**

The bulk of the inscriptions have a very simple biographical form – a dedication (In memory of / In remembrance of / Sacred to the memory of etc.) followed by the full name of the deceased, an indication of where they were from, a description of death (died / fell asleep, entered into rest etc.) and a date and age of death. A typical example is that of Maria Webster.

*Sacred to the memory of MARIA WEBSTER of the City who died Jan. 16 1873 aged 78 years.*

This can be repeated a number of times depending on how many are buried in the grave or commemorated on the memorial, which is not necessarily the same thing. Apart from giving names and death dates, such inscriptions are not terribly informative. Where there are numerous burials in one tomb, the inscriptions can become very complicated. For example, those the Bird family tomb has the following set of inscriptions.

*SUSANNA BIRD died October 28<sup>th</sup> 1754 aged 34 years. HENRY BIRD many years an Alderman of this City died November 1<sup>st</sup> 1783 aged 65 years. ANN BIRD wife of WILLIAM BIRD died May 28<sup>th</sup> 1778 aged 28 years. WILLIAM GUEST BIRD Esq member of the Corporation of Lichfield who died after an illness of two days in the Faith of Jesus Christ on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of September 1833 in the 46 year of his age at Margate in Kent where his remains are interred. Be ye therefore ready also for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not. SUSANNA MARGARET SALT daughter of WILLIAM & ANN BIRD died November 28<sup>th</sup> 1851 . She was a Christian of rare excellence. WILLIAM BIRD of this City died the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 1817 aged 72 years. MARY BIRD relict of WILLIAM BIRD died April 7<sup>th</sup> 1821 aged 74.*



**The Bird tomb**

However, some memorials contain more information. Some of this is an extension of the biographical, describing the role of the deceased or the nature of their demise. In the above example Susannah Margaret Salt is described as

*a Christian of rare excellence*

The biographical style is particularly common for military casualties. For example, that of James Henry Thorpe which is part of a larger family inscription

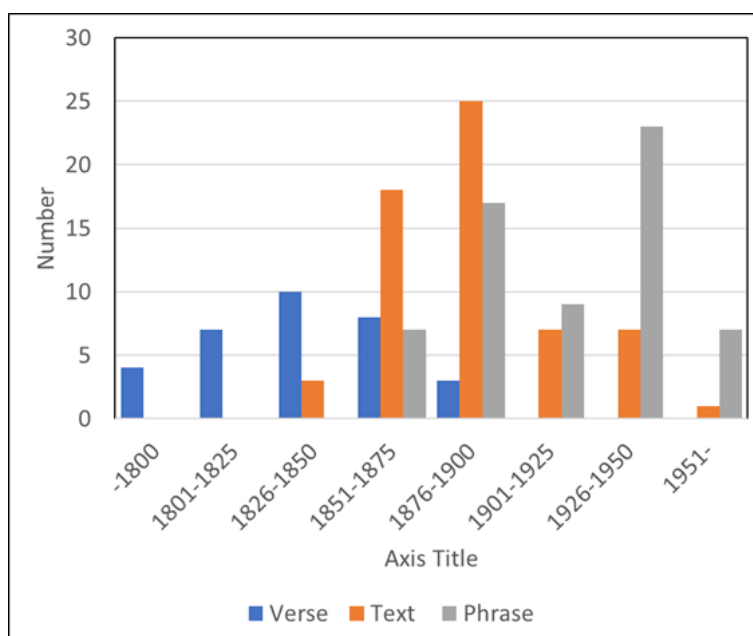
..... *Also of their youngest son JAMES HENRY THORPE, Sergeant 1st South Staffordshire Regiment who fell in action at Kleine Zonnebleke, October 26<sup>th</sup> 1914 aged 26 years.....*

Instead of, or as well as, such biographical information, around 180 graves give inscriptions of a pious or religious nature. These are of three forms. The first, and earliest, is in the form of a verse (I hesitate to use the word poetry, since many of the inscriptions represent crimes against the English language!) such as that for Thomas Lee.

*Sacred to the memory of THOMAS LEE who departed this life December 15<sup>th</sup> 1829 aged LXX. No flattering titles deck this humble stone. This verse is sacred to the truth above. Here lies exceed the character who can. An upright Mason and an honest man...*

The second is a verse from the bible, often a verse used in the funeral liturgy – such as “*In the midst of life we are in death*” or “*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord*”. The third type is a simple vaguely religious, but non-scriptural sound phrase such as “*Peace, perfect peace*”, “*Rest in peace*” or “*Reunited*”.

Interestingly these three types can be distinguished by the age of inscription. The bar chart below shows the raw number of each type of inscription in 25 year periods – the non-uniformity of the data is such that I have not attempted a more rigorous statistical analysis. It is clear that the verse form has maximum popularity between 1826 and 1850, the biblical text between 1876 and 1900, and the simple phrase between 1926 and 1950.



**Inscription types by date**

In what follows, we will first give a few of the more interesting examples of the “biography” type of inscription, and similarly give some examples of the verse form.

## **Biographic inscriptions**

### ***Soldiers***

There are a number of biographic descriptions of soldiers’ lives – both those who died at an advanced age and those who dies on active service. Perhaps the most visited of the memorials is that of Trumpeter John Brown, who served in the Crimean War.

*Near here is the grave of Trumpeter JOHN BROWN 1815—189B who sounded the trumpet for the 17<sup>th</sup> Lancers at the Charge of the Light Brigade, Balaclava 25<sup>th</sup> October 1854.*



### **Trumpeter Brown Memorial**

More details of Trumpeter Brown can be found [here](#). A number of Lichfield soldiers were killed in the first and second world wars and these are memorialized both on individual gravestones and on the Commonwealth War graves memorial. These include the following.

*..... In loving memory of FRANK STANDLEY BUTLER 1st/ 8th Royal Warwicks who fell in action in France August 17 1917 aged 20 years.*

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

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

It is hard to imagine how the deaths of two sons affected the parents of Frank and Mervin Larkin.

### **Civic officials**

A number of civic officials are buried in the graveyard, including former Mayors of Lichfield. The memorial to Alderman Joseph Raby from 1916, Mayor in 1915 also contains memorials to his wife who dies in 1938 and to his son who died in action in an unspecified location in 1918.

*In loving memory of Alderman JOSEPH T. RABY, J.P. , F. J. I. Mayor of Lichfield 1915—16 called suddenly to rest May 30<sup>th</sup> 1916 aged 62. Also HANNAH his beloved wife died April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1938 aged 86. Also Pte. HORACE S. RABY beloved son of the above who died November 8<sup>th</sup> 1918 aged 26 years.*

The memorial to Robert Bridgeman, a sculptor by profession, contains both his biographic details, a short non-scriptural phrase, memorials to the death of his son in the first world war; and also the memorials to another son who was also mayor, and to that son's wife, and is a good example of how complex the inscriptions can become.

*ROBERT BRIDGEMAN, Sculptor. Sheriff and twice Mayor of this City departed this life March 1<sup>st</sup> 1918 in his 73<sup>rd</sup> year. After life's fitful journey may he rest in peace. ROBERT GEORGE*

*BRIDGEMAN Serge. Royal Engineers killed in action in France Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> 1916 aged 24. SARAH ANN wife of JOSEPH HENRY BRIDGEMAN died April 18<sup>th</sup> 1948 aged 83 years. JOSEPH HENRY BRIDGEMAN twice Mayor and also Sheriff of this City died February 24<sup>th</sup> 1951 aged 80 years.*

### **Church officers and clergy**

A number of church officers and clergy have memorials in the churchyard, The oldest of these is to the father and the son both named William Clarke, long term clarkes of the church. The death dates assigned when the stone was restored in 1870 were 1525 and 1562, although [I have argued elsewhere](#) that this is probably a misreading and they should be a century later.

*Here lyes the body of WILLIAM CLARKE who was clarke of this church 51 years and buried March 5<sup>th</sup> 1525(?) aged ??.* *Here lies the body of William Clarke clarke of this church 71 years who died September 26<sup>th</sup> 1562 aged 86. Restored 1870*

The two churchwardens that are explicitly mentioned are George Andrews and William Treadgold, the latter being warden at St. Mary's rather than St. Michaels. There are however others buried in the churchyard who are not so identified – for example [William Durrad, Lichfield's first Station Master.](#)

*In loving memory of GEORGE ANDREWS sometime churchwarden of this parish born December 31<sup>st</sup> 1828 died July 24<sup>th</sup> 1905. Also of CATHERINE ANDREWS his widow born April 20<sup>th</sup> 1826 died April 24<sup>th</sup> 1909.*

*In loving memory of EMMA wife of WILLIAM TREADGOLD who died April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1935 aged 75. Also of WILLIAM TREADGOLD Churchwarden of St. Mary's, Lichfield, who died September 1<sup>st</sup> 1944 aged 81.*

Four of the first five rectors of the parish are buried in the churchyard – Thomas Gnossall Parr, James Serjeantson, Otho Steele and Percival Howard. The inscriptions on the graves of Parr, Steele and Howard are given below. Only the names of the Serjeantson grave were recorded in the 1960s survey and this was not recorded at all in the 1980s. The story of these rector's is [told elsewhere.](#)

*THOMAS GNOSALL PARR died March 13<sup>th</sup> 1843 aged 68. ANNE his wife died May 31<sup>st</sup> 1839 aged 61. ANNE PARR their eldest daughter died Aug.... 1862 aged 59. THOMAS GNOSALL eldest son of THOMAS GNOSSALL and ANN PARR...years, incumbent of this parish .....and Deans Vicar of Lichfield Cathedral died December 23<sup>rd</sup> 1867 aged 68. RICHARD PARR died at Worksop May 19<sup>th</sup> 1862 aged 56. WILLIAM SEPTIMUS PARR died at Welshpool June 16<sup>th</sup> 1862 aged 47. BENJAMIN & EDWARD PARR died in their childhood.*

*In loving memory of OTHO W. STEELE died 25<sup>th</sup> May 1922 aged 83 years. Rector of this Parish 1893-1913. CICELY MARY ANDERSON daughter of the above born 11<sup>th</sup> June 1877 died 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept. 1972. HENRY STEWART ANDERSON, C.M.G. , R. A.M. C. born 15<sup>th</sup> April 1872 died 12<sup>th</sup> May 1961.*

*PERCIVAL HOWARD born 7 July 1875 died 16 October 1955. Rector of this Parish 1913—1947.*



The Parr memorial



The Percival grave (cremated remains)



The Steel grave

## **The clergy graves**

### **Children**

Of the different types of inscriptions, those in memory of children are the most poignant, and given the high incidence of child mortality up to the start of the twentieth century, the most common. A few illustrations are given below. The first, for Tabitha Morley, quotes a saying of Jesus, that refers to a dead child he brought back to life. The second and third record multiple childhood deaths in the same family.

*Sacred to the memory of TABITHA the only and dearly beloved child of SAMUEL MORLEY Vicar of Warlaw—cum—Elkstone in this County and SARAH his wife. She died in her infancy 15<sup>th</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> 1855 aged 14 years. ELIZA ANN who died December 22<sup>nd</sup> 1856 aged 3 years 8 months and WILLIAM ALFRED who died June 7<sup>th</sup> 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 24<sup>t</sup> 1872 died September 24<sup>th</sup> 1896. KATE ELLEN born September 30<sup>th</sup> 1877 died March 23 1897. WILLIAM HENRY born June 11<sup>th</sup> 1875 died April 8<sup>t</sup> 1876. FLORENCE born December 23<sup>rd</sup> 1878 died September 23 1879. LUCY DOROTHEA born September 21<sup>st</sup> 1885 died October 26 1886.*

## **Others**

There are a number of other interesting biographical descriptions in the churchyard. Firstly that of Elizabeth Logan. Her story perhaps to be told more fully.

*Sacred to the memory of ELIZABETH LOGAN who died February 28<sup>th</sup> 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.*

The Corfield memorial is at first sight a simple family biographical memorial, until one realizes that nearly all of them died on the same day. This was the result of a fire in a house on Breadmarket Street in 1871 (next to the Johnson House) that resulted in William Corfield, his mother, his wife and his four children all suffocating due to smoke inhalation. A large crowd attended the funeral and the whole incident was covered in detail by the press.

*In memory of MARGARET CORFIELD age 81. Also of WILLIAM her son age 47 and THERESA MARY his wife age 35. They died January 14<sup>th</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> 1873. THOMAS died May' 27<sup>th</sup> 1871 age 17 days.*



**The Corfield Grave**

## **Family Groups**

There are a number of family groups of graves in the churchyard. The most prominent of these are those of the Treadgolds, with thirteen burials in six graves between 1894 and 1971, the Gilberts, with thirty two burials in nineteen graves between 1790 and 1904, and the Larkins

with forty three burials in 18 graves between 1827 and 1977. These include the grave of Sidney and Eva Larkin, the parents of the poet Philip Larkin, who famously once said of Lichfield ‘God, this place is dull’. Behind Sidney and Emma’s grave is the memorial to another Philip Larkin who died in 1878. The story is told that when the 18-year-old poet came across this gravestone, he was understandably perturbed and wrote to a friend, ‘I reeled away conscious of a desire to vomit into a homburg hat’.



Treadgold



The parents of Philip Larkin



The older Philip Larkin

### The Treadgold and Larkin Graves

#### Verse inscriptions

A number of verse inscriptions are given below. It is very easy to be rude about the quality of both the rhyme and the rhythm of these verses – and indeed I have been so above. But nonetheless they were chosen by relatives of those who are buried in the churchyard and must express at least something of what they wished to say. So, whilst 200 years on, we may be amused by what is written, it is perhaps important not to be too critical and scornful.

#### Early deaths

A number of the verse inscriptions refer to early and sudden deaths – often as dire warnings for those who follow to prepare themselves for a similar fate.

*Sacred to the memory of ANN RILEY who died October 28<sup>th</sup> 1838 aged 75 years. Also of ROBERT RILEY who died May 24<sup>th</sup> 1843 aged 81 years. Sacred to the memory of SARAH RILEY who died September 18<sup>th</sup> 1825 aged 28 years. 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.*

*In affectionate remembrance of WILLIAM HITCHINS who died December 27<sup>th</sup> 1867 aged 21 years. He sleeps in Jesus. Also of JOHN HENRY HITCHINS who died October 5<sup>th</sup> 1869 aged 23 years. 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.*

*In affectionate remembrance of HARRY ALLEN MOONEY who died June 30 1883 aged 20 years. 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.*

*Sacred to the memory of SUSAN daughter of WILLIAM and SUSANNAH ROGERS who died Feby 28 1843 aged 19. Also of two sons and one daughter who died infants. 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. Sacred to the memory of WILLIAM ROGERS who died July 29<sup>th</sup> 1864 aged 82. Also of SUSANNAH his wife who died April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1866 aged 83.*

### **Husbands and fathers, wives and mothers**

The verses for family members are often quite sad and reflective whilst describing the attributes of the deceased.

*Sacred to the memory of JOHN HILL late of the Scales in this City who died April the 27<sup>th</sup> 1809 aged 66 By sudden death, he was deprived of life. Left years, son and daughter, and a faithful wife. Who mourn his loss and hope his sours on high. With Jesus Christ above the starry sky. His near relations do his fate bemoan. And to his memory have placed this stone.*

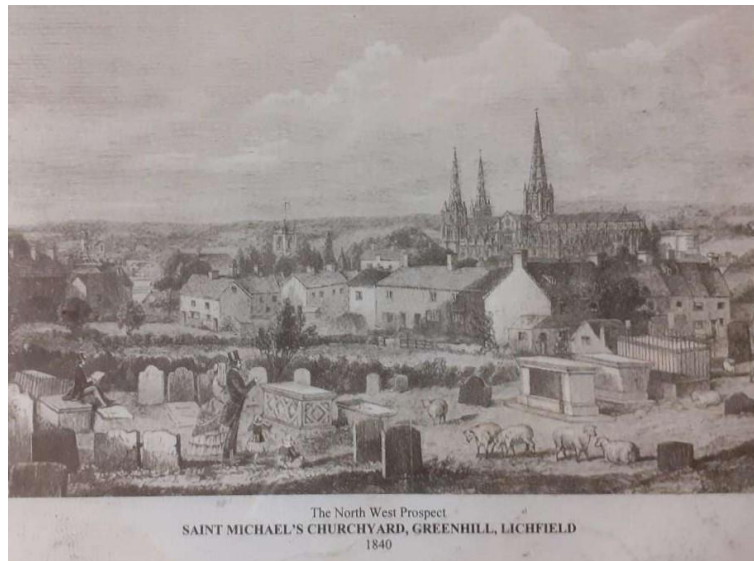
*In affectionate remembrance of WILLIAM BOOTH who departed this life April 5<sup>th</sup> 1876 aged 67 years. Dear wife and children do not weep. Whilst with the dead do sleep. A troublesome world I left behind. A crown of glory I hope to find.*

*In memory of ANN the wife of GEORGE GILBERT who died November 2 1824 aged 57 years. and of two children who died in their infancy. A faithful wife in silence slumbers here. A tender mother and a friend sincere. While living just, industrious and kind. A loss to all her friends she's left behind.*

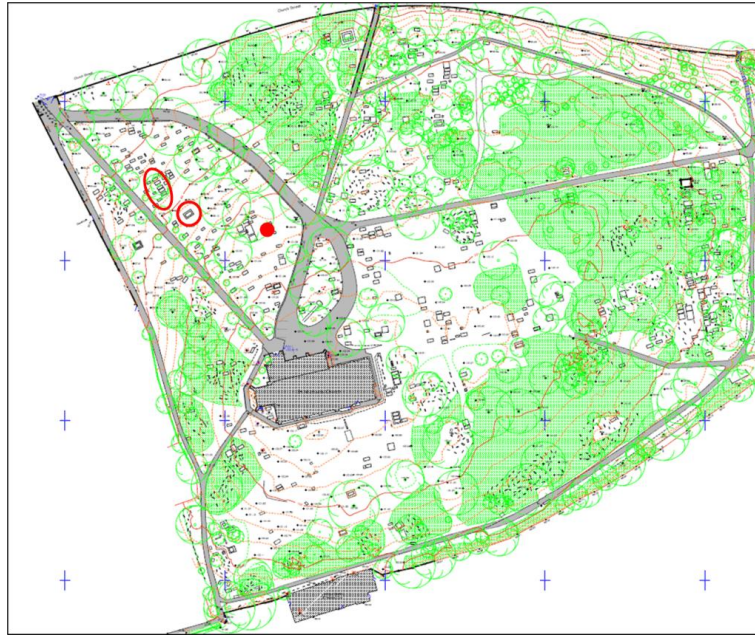
*Sacred to the memory of HANNAH wife of JAMES DABBS who died March 15<sup>th</sup> 1834 aged 48 years. A long affliction I do bear. Physicians were in vain. Till God did please to summons me. And ease me of my pain. Sacred to the memory of PHILIP SALT who departed this life January 29<sup>th</sup> 1823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

## A view from St. Michael's church in Lichfield in 1840

September 17, 2022



Recently, whilst searching for some lost material in the choir vestry at St. Michael's, I came across a framed version of the picture shown above, which is one that I have not seen before. It shows a view from the north side off the church looking out over the city in 1840. In some ways it is very familiar, with the cathedral in the background, and in the middle distance, towards the left of centre, we can see St Mary's, but without its spire that wasn't added until the rebuilding of the 1850s and 1860s. In front of St. Mary's, we can see the back of houses that were on Greenhill, and housing in the area that we know as Deanscroft but was more usually referred to at that time as Dean's Croft. Indeed parts of this were still owned by the Chapter of the Cathedral in the 1840s. The Greenhill / Church St / Dean's Croft area was quite densely populated at that time. Now that area is largely taken by the old school buildings (built in stages in the second half of the nineteenth century). The position of the cathedral and the houses enables the position of the artist to be determined fairly accurately – see the map below.



**The solid red circle shows the approximate position of the artist, the open red circle the position of the Emery tomb, and the red ellipse the position of the Harrison tombs.**

But it is in the foreground that we see the major changes when comparing this picture with what we see now, with many more graves and monuments visible than is now the case. But here all is not all that it seems. Firstly, it is puzzling that the avenue of trees that leads from the church door to the north gate is not shown. This was planted as an avenue of elms in the 1750s and should have been visible. Perhaps they obscured the view, and the artist, as was his or her prerogative, thought it best to omit them. Secondly it is difficult to reconcile the grave locations in the picture with those currently visible. A photograph that shows roughly the same view is shown below. Whilst many of the headstones were laid flat in the re-ordering of the churchyard in the 1960s, the chest tombs were generally left in position, and these have usually survived to the present day.



**The current view, showing the Emery tomb to the left and the Harrison tombs to the right**

What remains in today's view is the large Emery chest tomb to the left, and the rather dilapidated row of chest tombs to the right. The details of the graves in the picture from 1840 are a little different in the photographs with different grave styles and only three graves in the row to the right, again suggesting the use of "artistic license" in the drawing. Some of the grave details are reminiscent of those on other chest tombs in the graveyard, so the artist might have been trying to capture a range of details not completely in the field of view. The ground level also appears to have changed, with a build up of the ground around the base of the tombs so that they appear lower than they did originally. This is due to many decades of grass growth and mowing, leading to a steady increase in height of the ground surface.

Returning to the graves themselves, the inscription on the Emery tomb was recorded in the 1980s as follows, although much of this is no longer readable.

*Sacred to the memory of WILLIAM EMERY died December 9th 1767 aged .9 years. And of MARY his wife who died... Also of ELIZABETH and ANN daughters of WILLIAM and MARY EMERY. ELIZABETH died January 27th 1773 aged 16. ANN died..... WILLIAM who died March 12th l...,and ANN EMERY his wife died July 8th 1825 aged 66. Also JOHN son of RICHARD and ANN EMERY died January 18th 1853 aged 46. And of RICHARD EMERY who died February 23rd 1826 aged 72 also ANNE wife of above died December 17th 1863 aged 82.*

Those to the right are largely of the Harrison family. Again in the 1980s the inscriptions were transcribed as follows.

*Rev. JOHN HARRISON son of THOS. and FRANS. HARRISON died January 22nd 1793 aged 39. THOMAS HARRISON son of THOS. qnd FRANS. HARRISON died December 31st 1807 aged 48*

*Here lieth the body of ANN the wife of SAMUEL HARRISON who departed this life Jany 1st 1785 aged 48. Also near this place lies the body of JESSE DEE (brother to the said ANN HARRISON) who died June 1st 1785 aged 39*

*To the memory of SAMUEL HARRISON who died April 2nd 1798 aged 62.*

*In memory of Sarah Harrison who departed this life July 28th 1835 aged 72 years*

These tombs have seen better days as can be seen from the close up picture below.



**The Harrison tombs**

Of course, what is also missing from the modern photograph is the sheep – the nineteenth century version of the council grass mowing machine – and the rather elegantly dressed family who are walking down the path from church. The husband and wife are very clear, but their two young children less so. In the original picture there is a similarly dressed gentleman sitting on a chest tomb that is no longer identifiable, apparently studying his laptop, although this is probably not the correct interpretation!

## A nurse's grave

February 4, 2023



In the records of headstone inscriptions for St. Michael's churchyard in Lichfield, we find the following entry.

*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.*

The burial register tells us that she was 66 when she died and the register and lived on 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. This leads me to conjecture that she was widowed before she went to Crimea, and probably had no children, although there are lots of other possibilities of course.

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 as she. We read of Elizabeth briefly again in August 1856 when she wrote to Miss 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!

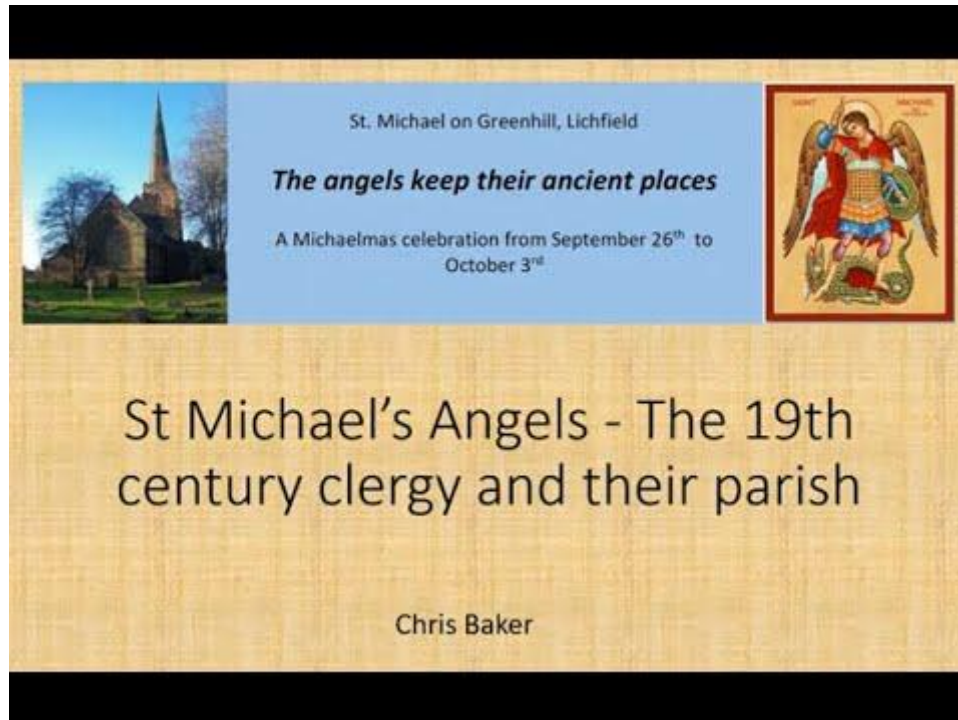
And that is about as much as we know of her. The fact that she was probably a widow with her husband's name makes her very difficult to trace through the census and baptism and marriage registers. Indeed Elizabeth Logan is not an uncommon name in Glasgow and Edinburgh around that period. So we have no details at all of her early life, or what she did when she returned from Crimea, other than that she finished up in Lichfield. In addition, sadly, her grave can no longer be positively identified, and there are a number of broken or very worn monuments in the region where a 1984 survey by the Birmingham & Midland Society for Genealogy & Heraldry (Midland Ancestors) suggests it is to be found. But the presence of her grave in the churchyard does balance to some degree the many soldiers graves found there, including of those who fought in the Crimean War.

So to end with a plea – if any reader can provide any more information about her life, it would be hugely appreciated.



# The 19th century clergy of St Michael's Lichfield

February 12, 2023



St. Michael on Greenhill, Lichfield

*The angels keep their ancient places*

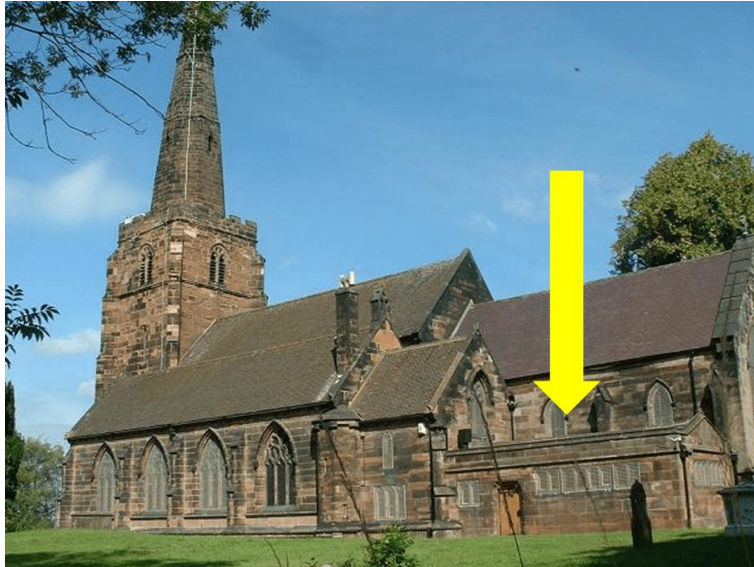
A Michaelmas celebration from September 26<sup>th</sup> to October 3<sup>rd</sup>

St Michael's Angels - The 19th century clergy and their parish

Chris Baker

# 100th Anniversary of the dedication of the choir vestry at St Michael's church in Lichfield.

February 19, 2023



**The location of the choir vestry**

From the Staffordshire Advertiser January 13<sup>th</sup> 1923.

## **St. Michael's Church. Lichfield. New Vestry erected at a cost of £1,200**

*On Sunday evening the large and commodious vestry which has recently been erected at the south east corner of St. Michael's Church, Lichfield, to replace the small and inadequate room utilized by the clergy and choir in the past, was dedicated by the Archdeacon of Stafford (Rev. High Bright) in the presence of a large congregation.*

*At the morning service the Rector (Rev. Percival Howard) took advantage of the opportunity to refer to the important improvement which the vestry has made to the church, and in the course of an appropriate address outlined the course of the restoration of the church in the years 1842 and 1890 .....*

There follows a very lengthy description of all the alterations made between 1842 and 1892, before finally returning to the matter in hand.

*..... Since then no structural alterations had taken place until last year, when the Parochial Church Council decided to put in hand the building of a new vestry. This work has now been completed under the direction of Messrs. Bateman and Bateman, Architects, by Messrs. R. Bridgeman and Sons, and in place of the old and inadequate vestry, a large and commodious room has been created, which the Rector thought they would all agree was a handsome addition to the church, and in perfect keeping with the rest of the architecture. To prevent the smoke and fumes entering the church, considerable alteration has also been made to the flue.*

*The whole of this work, which had cost £1,200, has been carried out without an appeal thanks to the generosity of their forefathers, who had left an endowment for the benefit of their church.*

*Following the dedication on the evening, the Archdeacon preached from the text “Seek ye My face! My heart said unto me, Thee, they face Lord, will I seek (27<sup>th</sup> psalm, 8<sup>th</sup> verse)*

*The congregation included the Mayor (Councilor J. H. Bridgeman), the Sheriff (Mr W. E. Pead), the Town Clerk (Mr W. Brockson) and a number of other leading citizens.*

It is tempting to think that the alterations to the flue were to remove the smoke and fumes generated by the clergy and choir, but these were probably something to do with the boiler house beneath the vestry! And for all the praise heaped on the design, the roof has leaked continually over the last 100 years.

Of the people mentioned, the mayor, J.H Bridgeman was the son of Robert Bridgman, who was an earlier mayor and the founder of the Ecclesiastical Architects Robert Bridgman and Sons. The firm had many local commissions including the east front of the cathedral. Both Robert and John are buried in the churchyard. Mr Pead, the Sheriff wrote a lengthy war diary describing the war in Lichfield, that was published and is available on Google Books. The Rector at the time, was Percival Howard (Rector 1913-1946), who served as an army chaplain in the Great War, and reports of his leaving presentation suggest he was highly regarded in the parish. There is a memorial to him in the chancel.

But after a hundred-year life, changes are in the air. The new parish rooms are intended to be connected to the church through the choir vestry, so that part of the church will see major changes in the next few years. But a hundred years for £1200 still represents pretty good value for money.

# History of St Michael's Lichfield

February 23, 2023



The history of St. Michael-on-Greenhill,  
Lichfield

Chris Baker

# The Changing Face of Death

February 24, 2023

*The paper summarised in this blog was originally intended to be sent to journals for publication – after five years of retirement I felt able once again to resume my career long warfare with journal editors and referees. However reading the journal author guides quickly made me change my mind, and I decided simply to mount the papers on this website. This has advantages in that doing so is good for my blood pressure and state of mind, and also allows for immediate dissemination of what has been written, but also disadvantages, in that the papers have not been tested by peer review and, as I am possibly the world’s worst proof reader, no doubt have significant numbers of typographical errors. Readers will come to their own views as to whether my approach has been the correct one.*

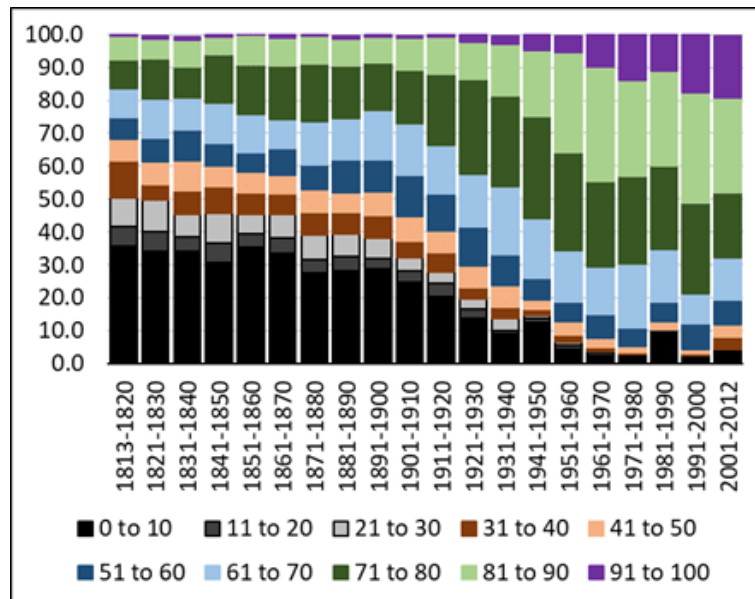
*The full version of the paper is given in [Appendix 1](#).*



## Outline

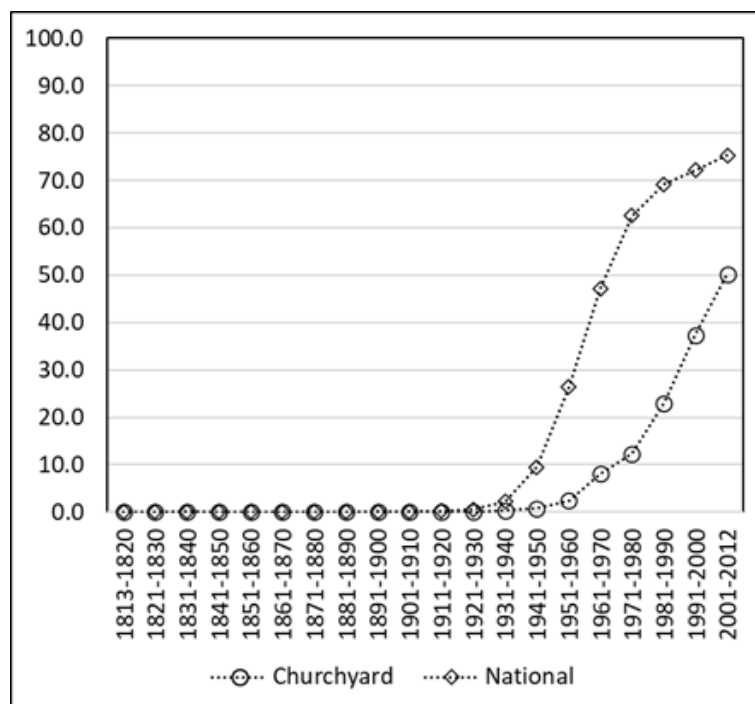
This post links to a paper that analyses the burial registers of St Michael’s church in Lichfield over a 200-year period from 1813 to 2012, together with the memorial inscriptions for that period found on graves in the churchyards. It is written in a deliberately academic style, which probably restricts its audience somewhat, and is very technical and statistical in its approach. Indeed, it is based on a collated spreadsheet analysis of all burial register entries, grave location records and monumental inscriptions. In summary, the analysis shows that over the first 150 years of the study period there was a remarkable stability in interment and funerary practices, but in the final 50 years there was a very major change. We will consider these in outline in this post, but full details can of course be found in the paper.

Over the 200 year period, the age profile of those interred changed in accordance with national trends, with a marked reduction in infant death rates, and an increase in deaths in the older age ranges – see figure 1 for female deaths for example.



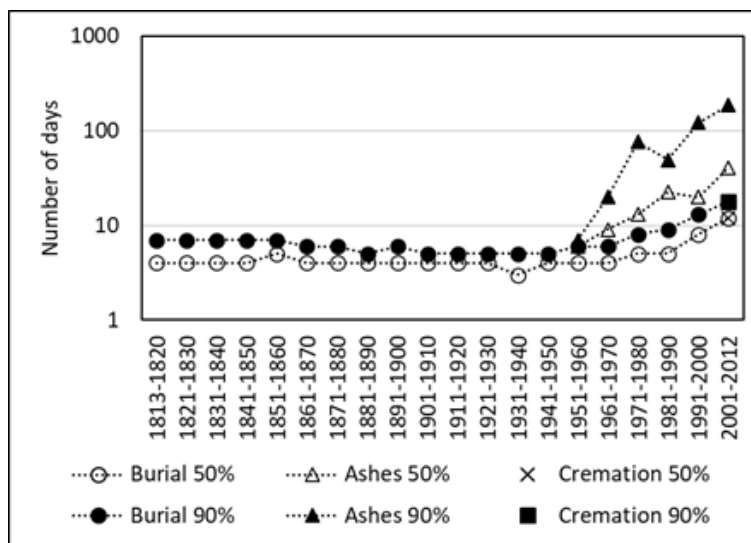
**Figure 1. Female interments by age 1813-2012**

The biggest change to occur in the study period has been the change from burial to cremation as the major mode of interment – the national and St Michael’s percentage are shown in figure 2. It can be seen that St Michael’s lags significantly behind the national trend, not least because proper arrangements were not made for the interment of ashes until 1979 when a Cremated Remains area was set out.



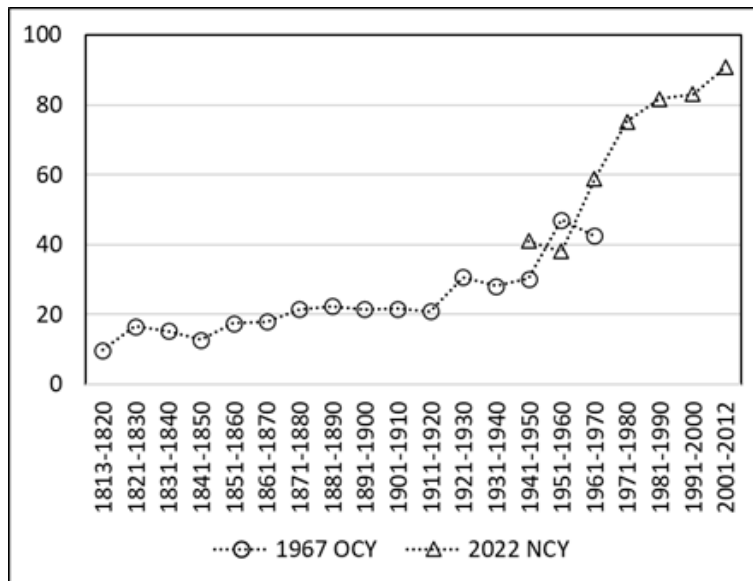
## Figure 2 National and local percentage of cremations

The interval between death and interment was remarkably stable up until the 1950s, with a 50<sup>th</sup> percentile value of 3 to 4 days, and a 90<sup>th</sup> percentile value of 6 to 7 days (figure 3). However in the 1960s, these values began to increase., and by 2012 the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of the interval between death and burial was 12 days, and between death and interment of ashes following cremation was 41 days. It is conjectured in the paper that this increase for both burials and interments. has been driven by the need to arrange a time for the crematorium service. These changes have profound effects on the nature of the mourning process. By the time of the funeral the families have passed through the first acute stage of grief and have become much more active in planning and conducting the funeral itself.



**Figure 3. 50<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentiles of intervals between death and burial (1813-2012), interment of ashes (1960-2012) and cremation (2001-2012)**

Associated with this, the percentage of graves with headstones or other monuments has increased significantly since the 1960s, from around 20% of all interments up till then, to around 90% by 2012 (figure 4). The nature these inscriptions has changed too, with family relationships becoming the primary subject.



**Figure 4. Percentage of graves with monuments in both churchyards 1813-2012**

Taken together, I argue in the paper that the data is consistent with earlier work by others that indicates the focus of interments and funerals has moved away from concentrating on the Christian message of resurrection and eternal life, towards celebration of the life of the deceased, primarily in the context of the family.

## A little more on a Nurse's Grave

March 3, 2023

[In a recent post](#) I set out what we know of Elizabeth Logan, a nurse who swerved with Florence Nightingale in the Crimea and who is buried in St Michael's churchyard. Towards the end of the post I wrote

*"In addition, sadly, her grave can no longer be positively identified, and there are a number of broken or very worn monuments in the region where a 1984 survey by the Birmingham & Midland Society for Genealogy & Heraldry (Midland Ancestors) suggests it is to be found."*

Thankfully her headstone has now been found, not by me, but by my wife who took all of 60 seconds to find what I had spent several hours looking for. My only excuse is that I was looking for a reasonably vertical headstone rather than one laid flat and half buried under grass – see the photo below. It can be seen to be in rather poor condition, and clearly some thought needs to be given as to how it can be better cared for and displayed.



## Saddlebacks and serendipity

January 3, 2025

In 2021 I discussed some of the [early graves in St. Michael's churchyard in Lichfield](#). Amongst these was the distinctive "saddleback grave" shown in Figure 1 below, one of the five listed monuments in the churchyard. At the time I wrote as follows.

*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 ..... That drawing gives the date of the grave as 1674, and with a little imagination this can be made out on the tomb itself. Apart from the date, it is the style of the grave that makes it so distinctive. It is a shame that the dedication is illegible.*



**Figure 1 The Saddleback grave in 2021**

And this is where serendipity comes in. Over the last few days I have begun to think about filling in some of the gaps in my long term project to collate the memorial inscriptions of St. Michael's churchyard with the burial registers – specifically to include material from the early registers up to 1812. A very helpful archivist at Staffordshire Archives told me that these have been scanned and can be found on *Find my past*. So I have been busy doing some mass downloads of the material during my seven day free trial (as you do). Whilst doing this I came across the sketch shown in Figure 2 in the register from 1680-1741, on a blank page opposite the entries from November to March 1691 (note this was before the calendar change!)



**Figure 2. The sketch from the 1680 to 1741 Register**

It clearly shows the Saddleback grave and gives the inscription as

*Here lyeth the bo... of James Allen Esq..... 1677*

There is another note in lighter script that says

*Illegible in 1891*

So it seems we have an identification of the occupant of the Saddleback grave – although the date is given as three years later than indicated on the William Salt picture. Checking back on the records however in the 1574 to 1680 register, the only entry that corresponds to the name is from 1674

*April 13th Mr James Allen, Magistrate, Beacon St*

Beacon St is somewhat conjectural however – it is not easy to read. So it looks as if the William Salt date is the correct one.

The registers tell us little else. There is an entry for the marriage of James Allen (Gent) to Mrs. Hester, daughter of Richard Pyot (Dyot?) in November 1658 at St. Mary's which seems possible. However this was in the Civil War / Commonwealth period when records become very patchy, so there may have been other about with the same name. If any reader knows more of James Allen, then please let me know. But a least we now have a name.

# Stephen Glynne's church notes – Lichfield St. Michael

June 3, 2025

## **Preamble**

The Glynne Baronetcy dates back to 1661, with its main estate at Hawarden in Flintshire. The 8th Baronet, Sir Stephen Glynne (1780 to 1815) married Mary Griffin, daughter of Lord Braybrooke. After his early death, he was succeeded by his son Sir Stephen Richard Glynne, the 9th Baronet (1807-1874). I first came across him as the owner of the Oak Farm Iron Works in the Black Country, which was the subject of a spectacular financial crash. Glynne was saved from financial ruin by the efforts of his brother-in-law, the future Prime Minister William Gladstone, at very considerable expense to the latter.

More widely, Stephen Glynne is best known as a church antiquarian. Over the course of his adult lifetime he visited over 5000 churches in England and Wales, making notes, and in some cases sketches of their architecture, plans and furnishings. These notes can be found in 106 volumes now housed in the [Gladstone Library at Hawarden](#). Only a small minority of these have been transcribed and published. Here we give a transcript of his notes for St. Michael's in Lichfield. The restoration of the early 1840s, which is of relevance to what follows, is described in Part 3. At that time the Lichfield Society for the Encouragement of Ecclesiastical Architecture were instrumental in the rebuilding of the church (and the chancel in particular) in the prevailing gothic fashion.

## **Stephen Glynne's description of St. Michael's, Lichfield**

Stephen Glynne's notes on St. Michael's church in Lichfield are brief and mainly straightforward. They are oddly dated 1827 and 1849, but the description is clearly from a visit in 1849 after the extensive "restorations" of the early 1840s. There are a couple of entries on a blank facing page however that refer to the pre-restoration church and that might refer to an 1827 visit (given at the end of the transcript below).



St. Michael's in 1845 (post-restoration)

### **The transcript**

*The church is conspicuously situated on the eminence called the Greenhill at the eastern extremity of the city within a very spacious cemetery commanding pleasing views of the Cathedral and surrounding county. The church is of the usual form with aisles and clerestory to the nave and a western tower with stone spire. But with the exception of the steeple, the whole church has been lately almost entirely renewed and in great measure rebuilt in tolerably good style. The steeple which is of red sandstone, appears to be a three ?? (1) of plain kind. The tower is embattled with corner buttresses, a string course under the belfry only. The belfry windows of two lights on the north and south is a long ??? slot - a questionable lancet on the west, but no west door. The spire is octagonal but not ribbed, having three horizontal bands and two tiers of spire lights, which are on the same sides. The north aisle, as rebuilt, has a low pitched roof and a battlement with three Perpendicular windows. The south aisle is wider and loftier with a high pitched roof and Perpendicular windows, varying in tracery. At the east end has been added a gabled chamber for receiving the Organ (2). The nave is of four bays, the arcades with pointed arches and octagon columns. The chancel has been wholly rebuilt in the Perpendicular style – its east window a triplet and on each side three single lancets. The chancel is groined, the ribs springing from shafts (3). The clerestory of the nave has a high pitched tiled roof and windows of two lights. The north porch is set in the western bay .*

*(4) The ancient chancel had a three ?? (1) east window, and the former chancel, as appears from a view in Shaw's Staffordshire, had a quasi clerestory, an upper tier of windows. The whole of the former church was perpendicular.*

### **Notes**

1. This symbol can't be read, but it is the same at both places where it occurs.
2. The description of the church matches what can be seen today, with one exception – the

description of a gabled chamber for the organ. This clearly refers to a structure that was replaced by the [current choir vestry in 1923](#) and can be seen in the foreground of the picture above.

3. The restored chancel was itself significantly altered in the late nineteenth century, with much of the work of the 1840 restorers removed or altered.

4. The text in this paragraph probably refers to an 1827 visit.

## Appendix 1 The changing face of death

## **The changing face of death.**

### **A statistical examination of the registers and records of St. Michael's Church, Lichfield from 1813 to 2012**

Rev. Prof. Chris Baker<sup>1</sup>

#### **Abstract**

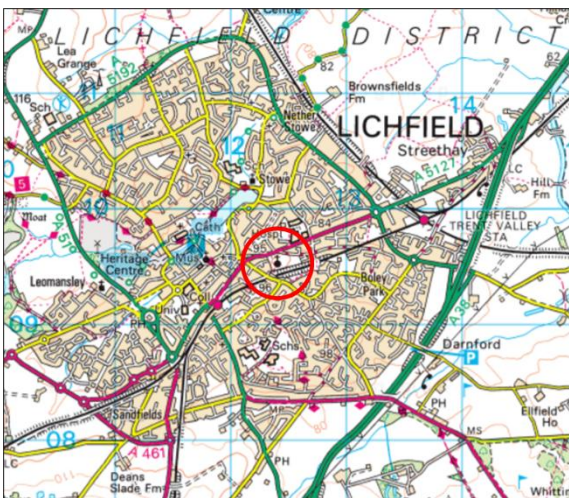
This paper examines the changing practices surround death, funerals and interments over a two hundred year period from 1813 to 2012 in the Lichfield area. The approach is essentially statistical and uses data from burial registers and monumental inscriptions from the nine acre churchyard of St Michael's church in Lichfield. In total over fifteen thousand interments are recorded over that period. The paper firstly considers the sex, age and residence profiles of the interments, and then looks in detail at the transition from funerals being mainly burials to being mainly cremations and interments of ashes, specifically looking at the intervals between death and burial or cremation and interment of ashes. The nature of memorial inscriptions is also considered, together with the nature of the funerals themselves. The data show that from 1813 to the 1960s there was a remarkable degree of stability in funeral practices, the intervals between death and burial, and memorial inscriptions, alongside a changing death age profile that reflected national trends. After the 1960s there was major change, as cremation became the dominant form of interment, and the intervals between death and burial / cremation / interment increased significantly. Alongside this, the percentage of interments with memorials increased to very high levels, and the memorial inscriptions changed in nature to reflect family ties. Whilst necessarily the data is specific to one location (and the St. Michael's data is somewhat skewed by the existence of a large number of workhouse burials), they do tend to support the argument of Lampard that over the last 50 years, funerals have changed from having a specifically Christian focus on resurrection and ongoing existence, to becoming memorials of an individual's life and family relationships.

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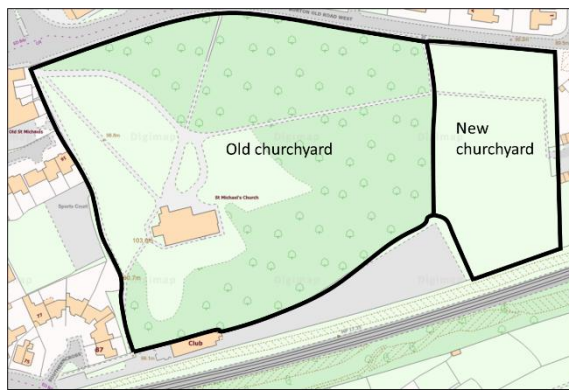
<sup>1</sup> Emeritus Professor of Environmental Fluid Mechanics in the School of Engineering at the University of Birmingham, with Permission to Officiate as a priest in the Diocese of Lichfield

## Introduction

The nine acre churchyard of St. Michael' church in Lichfield (Figure 1a), 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). In archaeological investigations of the churchyard in the 1970s <sup>2</sup> 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 <sup>3</sup>. 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.



a) Location of St. Michael's (red circle)



b) The churchyards



c) Old Churchyard looking towards the church from the east



d) New Churchyard from the east gate

<sup>2</sup> Wilson P "Investigations in St Michael's and St Mary's churches, Lichfield", Transactions of the South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society, XXI, 1981

<sup>3</sup> James T "The development of the parish of St-Michael-on-Greenhill over 1500 years", St Michael's papers number 1, PCC of St Michael's, Lichfield, 1998

### **Figure 1. St. Michael's church and its churchyards.**

The churchyard comprises two sections – the old churchyard, which was formally closed to new burials in the late 1960s, and the new churchyard, which opened in 1944 and is still in use, although burial space is becoming very restricted (Figure 1b). When the old churchyard was closed, responsibility for its maintenance was handed over to the District Council. To make this easier, there was a major reconfiguration of the churchyard in the late 1960s, with many gravestones being moved into clusters, and many kerbs being buried (Figure 1c). Occasional burials or interment of ashes have continued to take place since closure with the opening of existing graves. The new churchyard contains rows of graves, most of them with memorials, together with a cremated remains area (Figure 1d).

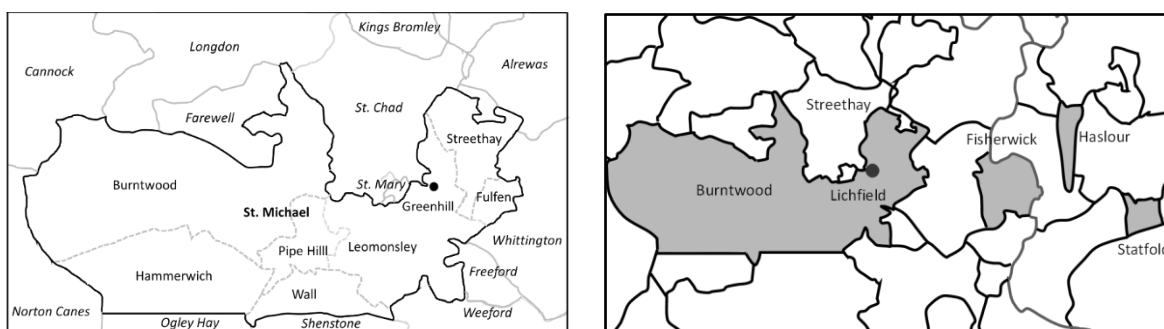
Using the information from the churchyard memorials, together with further information from the burial and service registers, this paper will present a largely statistical account of the changing nature of death and burial practices in the Lichfield area over the two-hundred-year period from 1813 to 2012. Firstly, however it is necessary to give some contextual information about the church and the parish which is of relevance to this analysis.

For most of its existence, Greenhill, and the associated small settlement of the same name, was outside the bounds of the city of Lichfield as set out by Bishop Roger de Clinton in the 12th century<sup>4</sup>. The churchyard served as the burial place for those living within the city as well as for those from large swathes of the surrounding area. Unlike most towns and cities, the organisation of parishes came late to Lichfield, and up to the sixteenth century and possibly beyond, pastoral responsibility was on the basis of the scattered and interlacing estates of the Cathedral Prebends. Parishes come into historical view around that time and the 19<sup>th</sup> century parish and townships in the areas are shown in Figure 2. The city itself, with the exceptions of the extra parochial areas of the Cathedral Close and the Friary, formed the parish of St. Mary. St. Chad's parish was formed of a discrete block of land in the Stowe area north of the town, and St. Michael's parish contained large swathes of land to the west and south of the city – around Greenhill itself; Leomansley, Wall, Pipe Hill, Hammerwich, Burntwood and large areas of Cannock Chase to the south and east (Figure 2a); and detached portions at Fisherwick, Haselour and Statfold to the west (Figure 2b). The churchyard at St. Michael's served as the churchyard for both the parishes of St. Michael and St. Mary. This situation persisted over the centuries, and indeed still does, although the outlying townships were separated into their own parishes in the first half of the nineteenth century and the area in the south of the city around Leomansley became the parish of Christchurch. In the latter half of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth, Lichfield grew significantly in size, and Greenhill and considerable areas to the west became urbanised, significantly increasing the population of St. Michael's parish. On the other hand, in the second half of the twentieth century, St. Mary's parish was

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<sup>4</sup> Victoria County History. A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 14, Lichfield. Lichfield: History to c.1500 Pages 4-14, 1990, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/staffs/vol14/pp4-14>

largely depopulated as it became a commercial rather than a residential area. St. Mary's church was closed in the early years of the current century and the parishes of St. Michael's and St. Mary's were merged. Thus, in the period under consideration the registers and burials record the burials in the outlying townships as well as in the two parishes up to around 1850, and after about 1960 the number of burials from St. Mary's parish fell significantly, with the majority of burials coming from the new developments to the west of Greenhill.



a) Main parish area around Lichfield

b) The detached portions of the parish

**Figure 2. 19<sup>th</sup> century parish and township boundaries** (the church is shown as a black circle)

The other factor that needs to be mentioned at this stage is the existence of the Lichfield Union Workhouse in St. Michael's parish. There were small workhouses in the city and in Greenhill in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which served the local population, but these were replaced by the Lichfield Union establishment which opened in 1840. This served a very wide area with Rugeley in the west, Tamhorn to the east, Shenstone to the south and Kings Bromley to the north<sup>5</sup>. Those who died in the Workhouse were all buried in St. Michael's churchyard. As these were, at least in the first instance, predominantly male, the death and burial statistics are inevitably somewhat skewed. In the twentieth century the Workhouse gradually transformed into a hospital for mainly elderly people, and after the NHS was formed it became St. Michael's Hospital, catering for mainly Lichfield residents. In the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in response to the request from the Registrar General in 1904 not to use the rather stark "Workhouse" designation in registers and other official documents<sup>6</sup> the register entries became firstly "Workhouse Infirmary" and then "15 Trent Valley Road". The successor establishment, which still operates, is the Samuel Johnson hospital, and some original buildings still remain.

<sup>5</sup> The Workhouse. The story of an institution. Lichfield, Staffordshire. <https://www.workhouses.org.uk/Lichfield/>

<sup>6</sup> The Workhouse. The story of an institution. Workhouse, timeline. <https://www.workhouses.org.uk/timeline/>

In the next section, the methodology used in this investigation is described – essentially the collation of monument and grave information with burial register information into a searchable spreadsheet format that enabled detailed analysis to take place. The first part of this analysis is then set out in the following section where basic statistical information is presented – number of interments, burial analysis by age and location etc. An analysis of the late twentieth century development of cremations as the major mode of interment is then presented, together with a discussion of the changing time delay between death and interment. Memorials and inscriptions are then considered in terms of the relationship between the number of memorials and number of burials, and also the changing frequency of different types of inscriptions. The nature of funeral services is then described, in particular considering the roles of clergy from the parishes of St. Michael and St. Mary and the Workhouse Chaplains, and the operation of the 1880 Burial Act Amendment <sup>7</sup>. Finally, the data is drawn together, and conclusions are drawn.

This paper of course contains only part of the story – there is much more that could be said about how the data presented here illuminates aspects of the wider history of St Michael’s church, and about the lives of the very many people who are interred in the churchyard. Both of these require presentations of a different type to the one used here, which the author hopes will become available in the near future.

## Methodology

At the start of this investigation a number of records and registers were available as follows.

- The results of a 1967 Council survey of all the graves in the old churchyard that were then visible that identified their location, and transcribed names and dates of death. Around 2100 graves with 3600 individual burials were identified at that stage <sup>8</sup>.
- A survey of Monumental Inscriptions carried out by volunteers from the Birmingham and Midland Society for Genealogy and Heraldry (BMSGH – now Midland Ancestors) in 1984 and available on CD, that identified around 1600 graves in the old churchyard and 600 in the new churchyard <sup>9</sup>.
- Burial registers dating from 1813 to the present<sup>10</sup>. Those from between 1813 and 1940 had been transcribed in the past and are again available on CDs produced by Burntwood Family History Group. Only the index information is provided for the period from 1905 to 1940 <sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Burial Act Amendment <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/43-44/41>

<sup>8</sup> Plans and Transcripts of 1967 survey held by St. Michael’s church, Lichfield.

<sup>9</sup> Midland Ancestors (BMSGH) CD available at <https://midland-ancestors.shop/index.php?route=product/search&search=lichfield%20st%20michael>

<sup>10</sup> Registers from 1813 to 1940 held in Staffordshire Records Office with catalogue numbers LD27/1/9, LD27/1/10, LD27/1/11, LD27/1/12, LD27/1/13, LD27/add/10, LD27/add/11, LD27/add/12, LD27/add/13 <http://www.archives.staffordshire.gov.uk/CalmView/TreeBrowse.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&field=RefNo&key=CD253%2f1%2f1%2f1>. Records from 1940 held by St. Michael’s Church, Lichfield.

<sup>11</sup> Registers 1813-1905 available from Burntwood Family History Group CD <https://www.bfhg.org.uk/resources>

- Burial, cremation and interment records held electronically by the church from 1999 to 2012.
- Service registers that give sporadic, and one suspects incomplete, information concerning funerals, burials, memorial services etc..

The 1967 and 1984 surveys have been collated into a spreadsheet format and the latter has been very considerably extended to include memorial inscriptions up to 2012. A number of what appear to be typographical errors in both surveys have also been corrected. The registers from 1940 to 2012 have also been transcribed and added to the spreadsheet and more information added to the earlier transcriptions from 1905 to 1940. Each entry on the burial register has one line on the spreadsheet, which contains the following information where it is available.

- The Surname and Christian names given in the Burial Register.
- The Surname, Christian names and post nominals from any inscription.
- The death age from the Burial Register.
- The address at time of death from the Burial Register.
- Officiating minister from Burial Register.
- Notes made in Burial Register.
- Plot number from Burial Register.
- Inscription from grave / memorial.
- Death year, month and day from Burial Register (from 1990 onwards).
- Death year, month and day from any inscription.
- Cremation year, month and day from Burial Register (from 1999 onwards).
- Interment year, month and day from Burial Register.
- 1967 survey grave number (OCY only).
- 1984 survey area (OCY only).
- 1984 survey grave number (NCY only).

In total there are 15,444 entries in the spreadsheet from 1813 to 2012. This work is fully described on the author's website <sup>12</sup>, where a version of this spreadsheet is provided that can be accessed and downloaded for family history studies. Addresses and other details from 1923 onwards which are used in an anonymised form in the study reported here, are not given in the online version for reasons of confidentiality.

### **Basic statistics**

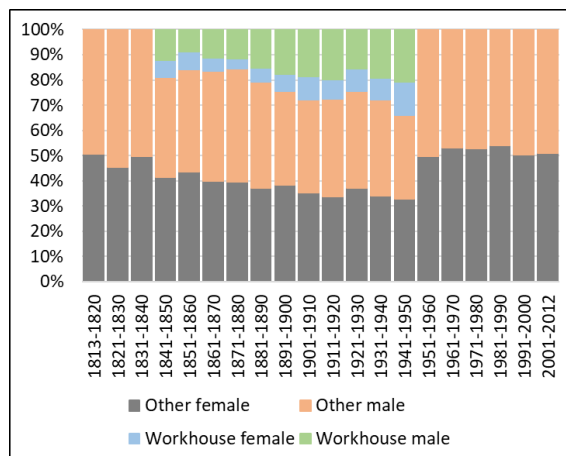
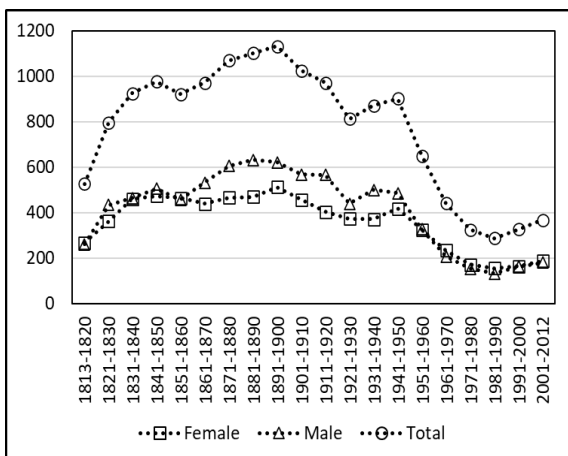
We begin our analysis of the data by considering some basic statistics – numbers of interments and breakdown by sex and age, expressed in terms of deaths per decade. Figure 3a shows the overall number of deaths, with each data point representing one decade in the record. The number of female and male deaths is also shown. In general, there can be seen to be an increase

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<sup>12</sup> The Churchyard at St. Michael's, Lichfield – registers and records <https://profchriskbaker.com/lichfield-st-michael-church-and-parish-new/the-churchyard-at-st-michaels-lichfield-registers-and-records/>

up to the 1840s, then a levelling off until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, then a significant fall from around the 1950s to the 1980s before remaining level. The early rise is in line with the considerable population increase in that period, and the levelling off is largely due to the outer townships of the parish becoming parishes in their own right and with their own burial grounds. The overall number of interments remains at around 800 to 1000/decade before the rapid fall between the 1950s and the 1970s and a levelling off thereafter. We will return to this below, but it would seem that this is largely because of the national increase in the proportion of cremations, and the lack of facilities at that time for the interment of cremated remains in the churchyard.

There can be seen to be significantly more male deaths than female deaths from the 1840s to the 1940s. This is due to the fact that those who died in the Union Workhouse were buried in the churchyard, and these were predominantly male. This is illustrated in figure 3b, where a breakdown of workhouse and other deaths is given. Workhouse data is presented from the 1840s to the 1940s, 1948 being the year of the formation of the NHS. The latter is a somewhat artificial boundary, as the Workhouse gradually became a hospital for old people in the period from 1910 to 1948. The overall proportion of female interments falls significantly below 50% from the 1860s to the 1940s. This is in line with the number of inmates in the workhouse – for example in 1851 there was a slight preponderance of men (61 males to 51 females) whilst in 1881 the imbalance was much greater (101 males to 41 females) <sup>13</sup>.



a) Male, female and total number of burials 1813-2012

b) Percentage of male and female burials from Workhouse and elsewhere 1813-2012

**Figure 3. Interments in the churchyard by decade**

Figures 4a and b show the age profile of interments (expressed as a percentage of the sample used) again by decade, for female and male interments. They show the same basic pattern. For the data from 1813-1820 there is high infant mortality in the 0 to 10 range followed by a relatively

<sup>13</sup> Census collection

constant death rate through to the 80-90 age range. Over the decades, the infant death and deaths in the 10 to 60 age range decrease significantly, and the percentage of deaths in the older age ranges of 60 to 100 increase, with the most recent data showing maximum values in the 80 to 90 age range. The data for males tends to peak a decade earlier than for females, reflecting the shorter male lifespan. The trends of decreasing infant mortality and increasing life span are of course precisely what would be expected and are in line with national data <sup>14</sup>.

The workhouse data shown in Figure 4c is somewhat different, but consistently shows maximum values in the 70 to 80 age range, and lower percentages of child deaths, which is in line with the Workhouse population. The percentage of child deaths increases in the 1940s as the institution became a general hospital for the area.

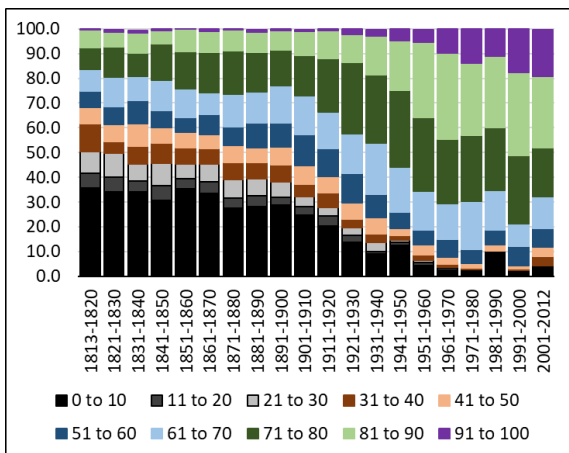
The register data also enables an analysis of interments by residence to be carried out (Figure 4d). For simplicity we define the following residence categories.

- Less than 1 mile from the churchyard – this includes most of the city of Lichfield and its three ancient parishes of St. Michael’s, St. Mary’s, St. Chad’s and (from the 1840s) the parish Christchurch. Because of the significant population interaction between the parishes, no attempt was made to categorise the data on a parish basis.
- The Workhouse and its successor titles – Workhouse infirmary, 15 Trent Valley Road, and St. Michael’s Hospital – from 1840 to 1950.
- Between 1 and 5 miles from the churchyard. This includes the rural hinterland of Lichfield, and the old townships of St. Michael’s parish that formed parishes of their own in the nineteenth century – Burntwood, Hammerwich, Wall, Haselour, Statfold and Fisherwick.
- Between 5 and 25 miles from the churchyard. This includes most of the neighbouring large towns – Tamworth, Burton-upon-Trent, Derby, Stafford and all but the southern and western fringes of the Black Country and Birmingham conurbation. It does not include Stoke on Trent, Leicester or Coventry.
- Over 25 miles from the churchyard.

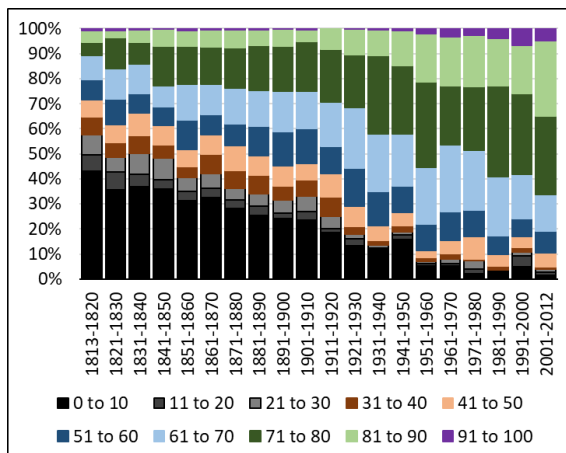
Unsurprisingly it can be seen from Figure 4d that the churchyard largely served its local population. The Workhouse category is significant during the period of its existence, although again it should be pointed out that from 1910 onwards it was gradually transformed into a hospital and thus the workhouse deaths recorded were more and more of local residents as the years progressed. The burials from the one to five mile category decrease in number from 1813 to 1850 as the townships form their own parishes. Perhaps most significantly it can be seen that the burials from outside the city gradually increase until in 2001 to 2013 they form around 30% of the interments. This reflects the increased mobility of families over the years, and the desire to be buried close to relatives.

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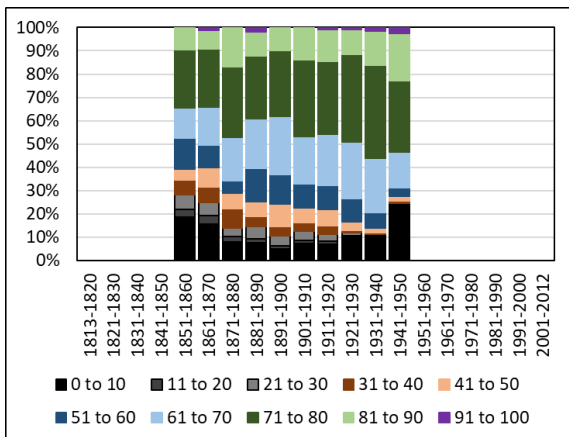
<sup>14</sup> Office for National Statistics. Death  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths>



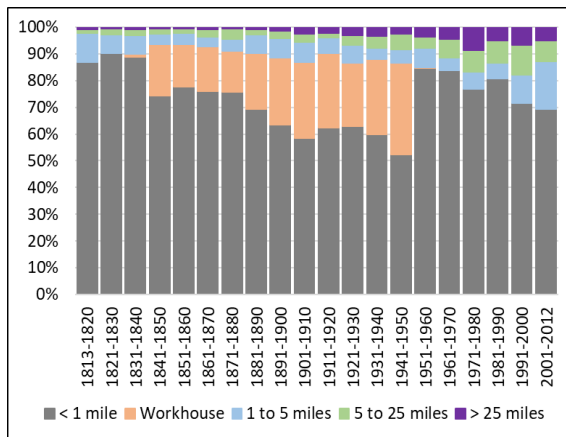
a) Female interments by age 1813-2012



b) Male interments by age 1813-2012



c) Percentage workhouse interments by age 1851-1960

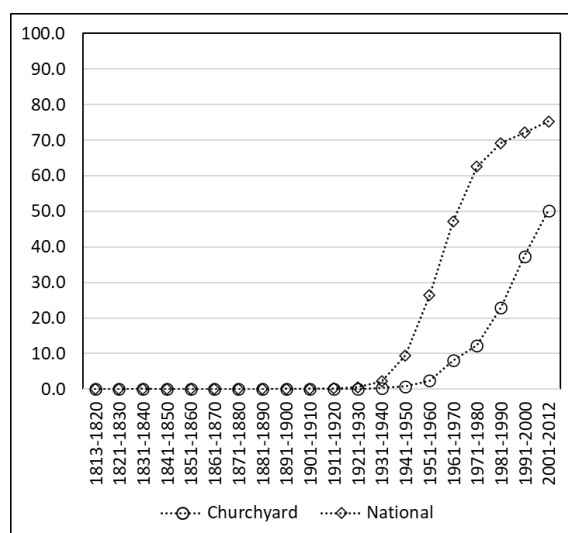


d) Percentage interments by address at death 1813-2012

**Figure 4 Age profiles and residence of interments**

## Burial and cremation

One of the major changes in burial custom in the UK over the last century has been the transition from burials to cremations <sup>15</sup>. Figure 5 below shows the national (English) percentage of cremations over our study period. Cremations began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the percentage rises steeply from 1940 onwards and by the early 21<sup>st</sup> century cremations account for over 85% of all interments. The equivalent values for St. Michael's churchyard are also shown. It can be seen that the percentage of interment of ashes lags significantly behind the national figure and does not begin to rise till the 1960s and 1970s. This may be due to a number of reasons – the inherent conservatism of the Lichfield population, the lack of provision of specific space for interment of ashes in the churchyard until the cremated remains plot was laid out in 1979, or the generally increasing secular nature of society. In any case, this effect is probably responsible for the large fall in the number of interments overall from the 1960s onward (figure 3), with the churchyard coming to be mainly used by those who specifically desired burial.



**Figure 5 National and local percentage of cremations**

The combination of the interment dates in the registers, the death dates on the grave inscriptions, and, from 1999, the cremation dates from the church electronic records, allows the delay between death, cremation and interment to be studied. The basic results are shown in Figure 6a. This shows the following information by decade.

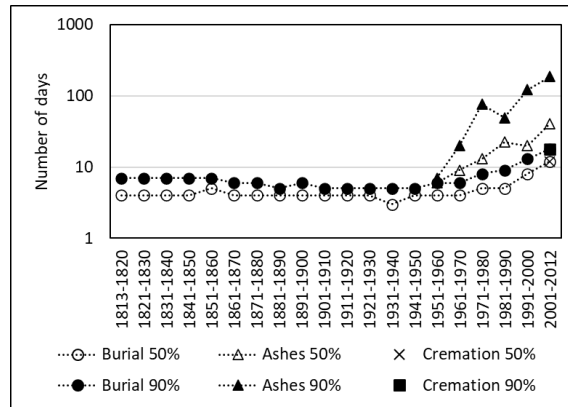
- The 50<sup>th</sup> percentile (in days) of the interval between death and burial (1813 to 2012), death and interment of ashes (1961 to 2012) and death and cremation (2001 to 2012 only). This is the value of the interval in days for which 50% of the data is above that value and 50% below.
- The 90<sup>th</sup> percentile of the same data - the value of the interval in days for which 10% of the data is above that value and 90% below.

<sup>15</sup> The Cremation Society. Cremation Statistics. <https://www.cremation.org.uk/statistics>

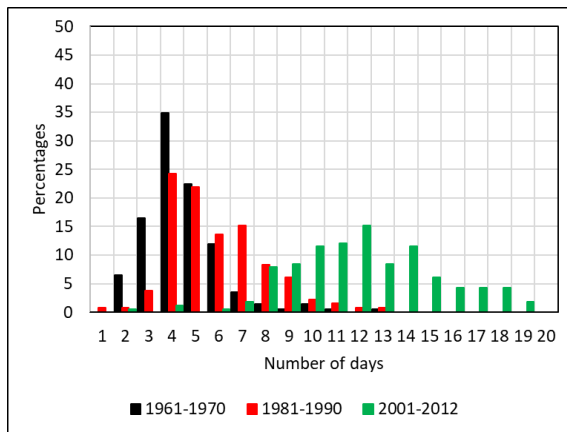
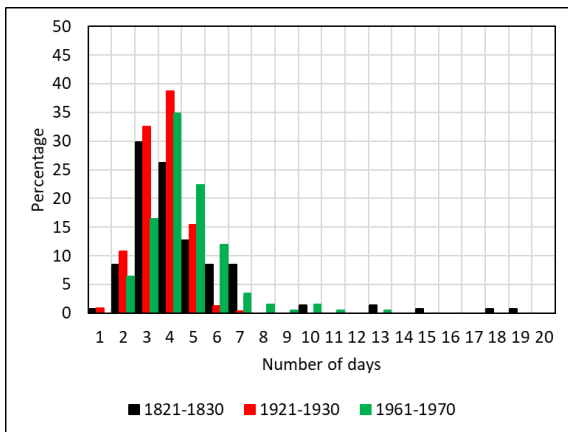
Note that the y axis is logarithmic to accommodate the long intervals for both the 50<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentiles between death and interment of ashes. The striking thing about the data is the stability of the death / burial interval from 1813 up to the 1960s with a 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of around 4 days, and a 90<sup>th</sup> of around six days. In the 1960s the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile for the death / interment of ashes interval increased somewhat around 6 days and the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile interval only slightly higher at around seven days. From the 1960s all the intervals rise significantly and by the early years of the current century the 50<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentiles of the death / burial delay are 12 and 18 days, matched very closely by the single data point for the death / cremation delay. The values for the delay between death and interment of ashes are much higher at 41 and 187 days.

The reasons for such an increase are almost certainly quite complex and will be discussed further below. At this point it will simply be pointed out that the similarity of figures of the burial and cremation intervals does suggest that the latter is at least partly driven by the demands made on the crematoria, and the increasing delay in obtaining a “slot” for the cremation. Be that as it may, the increase in both the 50<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentile data does indicate a profound change in the nature of the mourning process for those affected.

More details of the various intervals are shown Figure 6b to 6e. Figure 6b shows the percentage of burial by number of days after death from 1813 to 1970. The peaks are at around 3 to 4 days, with very few burials over 8 days. There is remarkably little variation over that period. Figure 6c shows a similar figure from 1960 to 2012. The gradual lengthening of the death / burial interval and the spreading out of the distribution is clear. Figure 6d compares the death / burial and death / cremation intervals for 2001 to 2012 and their similarity is clear, suggesting, as above, that the timescale of the former is driven by the timescale of the latter. Finally figure 6e shows the distribution of the death / interment of ashes interval. Note that the x axis is in intervals of days that double from one category to the next to accommodate the very long intervals, and also that the data from the early decades is quite sparse. But again the trend is clear, with increasing intervals over the decades, and some very long intervals between death and interment, with the ashes sometimes held by the deceased family for a considerable time.

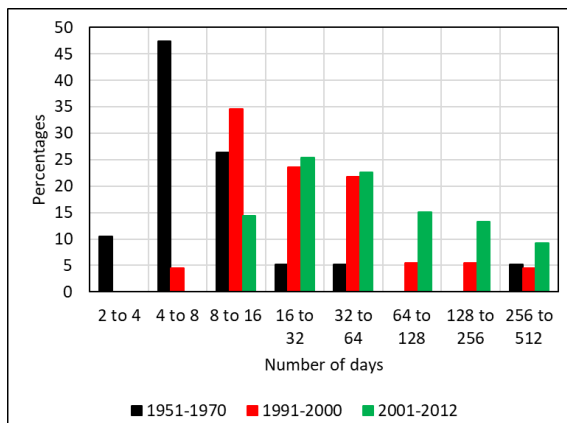
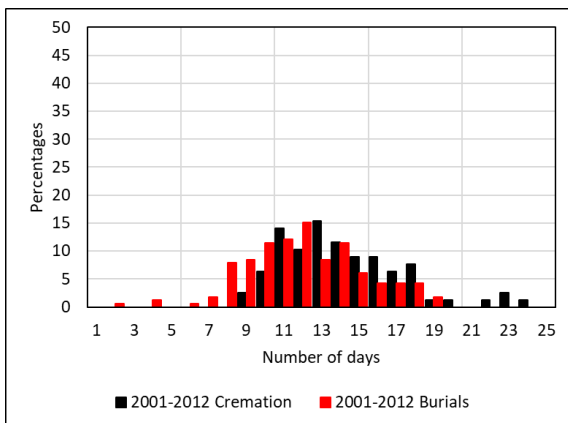


a) 50<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentiles of intervals between death and burial (1813-2012), interment of ashes (1960-2012) and cremation (2001-2012)



b) Histogram of intervals between death and burial 1821-1830, 1921-1930, 1961-1970

c) Histogram of intervals between death and burial 1961-1970, 1981-1990, 2001-2012



d) Histogram of intervals between death and burial and death and cremation 2001-2012

e) Histogram of intervals between death and interment of ashes 1951-1970, 1991-2000, 2001-2012

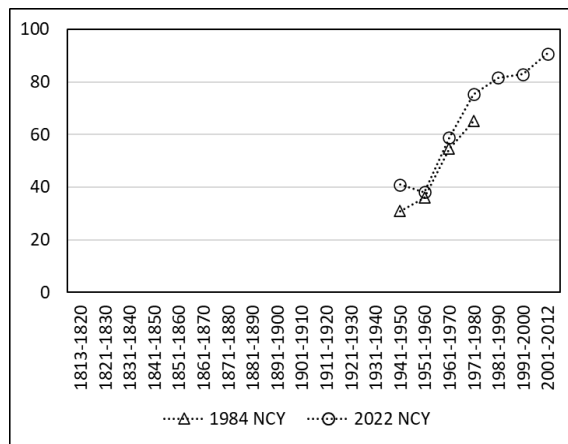
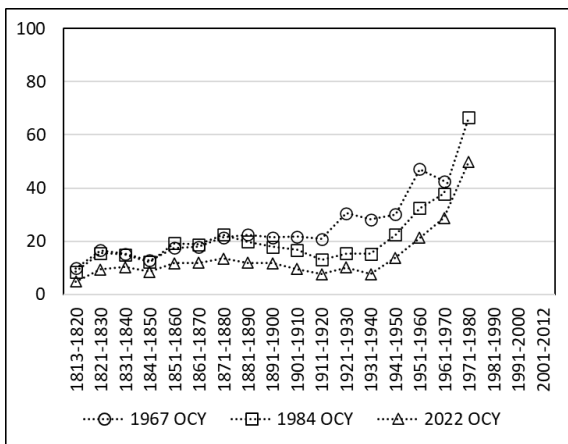
## Figure 6. Intervals between death and burial, cremation, or interment

### Memorials and inscriptions

In total 2759 names from between 1813 and 1967 were recorded on monuments in the old churchyard in the 1967 survey and 2274 in the 1984 survey, following the reordering of the graveyard in the late 1960s. Recent investigations by the author have identified only 1412 of these. The percentage of graves with memorials in terms of the total number of burials by decade is shown in figure 7a below. The 1967 and 1984 percentages are in close agreement up to the 1890s, but the curves then diverge, indicating that the more modern graves were lost in the reordering, perhaps because they mainly consisted of kerb stone that were buried. The results of the recent investigations fall below both, indicating that a significant number of monuments have been lost since 1984 as nature has taken over areas of the churchyard. Taking the 1967 and 1984 data together however indicates that the number of graves with memorials from the 1850s to the 1920s was around 20% of the total burials. This percentage decreases before 1850, perhaps due to inevitable loss of the monuments through age and wear, but increases markedly from the 1920s onwards.

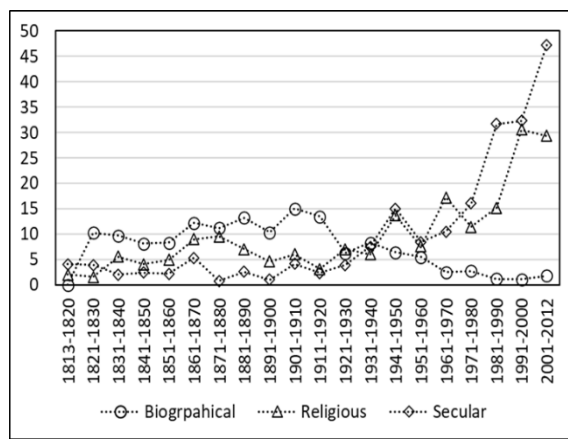
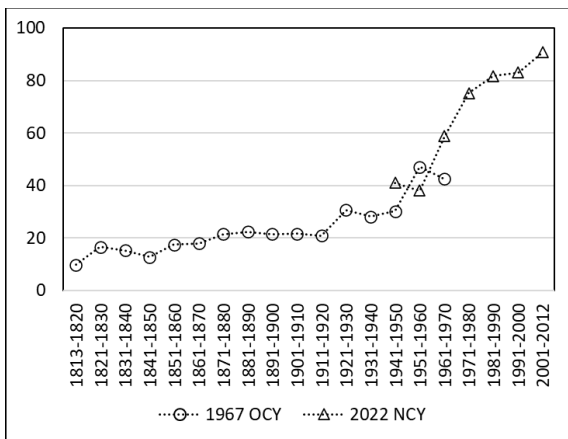
Figure 7b shows similar results for the new churchyard from the 1984 survey and the recent investigations. Paradoxically the data for the latter lie above that for the former – due to headstones being added many years after death, perhaps when the grave was reopened for the interment of a husband or wife, or for their cremated remains. Both curves show the same upward trend, with around 90% of the more recent graves having monuments of some sort or another.

Figure 7c brings together the 1967 results for the old churchyard and the recent results for the new churchyard, on the basis that these the most comprehensive. They show a very consistent trend, with steady increase in the percentage of graves with monuments from the 1920s onward.



a) Percentage of grave with monuments in the Old Churchyard 1813-1880

b) Percentage of graves with monuments in the New Churchyard 1941-2012



c) Percentage of graves with monuments in both churchyards 1813-2012

d) Percentage of burials with different kinds of inscription

**Figure 7. Percentage of interments by decade with visible monuments in both Old and New Churchyards and breakdown by type**

The data also allows the type of inscription to be studied. In what follows we only consider the inscriptions on gravestones – those on the cremated remains plots only have sufficient space for names and death date. For the gravestones, which of course all have names and dates of death, we define four broad categories of inscription as follows.

- Biographical – some details, usually very brief of one or all of location of birth or death, place of abode, nature of death, occupation etc.
- Religious – a bible or hymn quote, a mention of God the Father or Jesus, the expectation of being reunited with a loved one or of life beyond the grave. In many cases the theology of such inscriptions is not always terribly rigorous.

- Secular – mention of memories of the deceased, ongoing love for the deceased, the qualities of the deceased as child, parent, grandparent etc or any combination of the words “rest” and “peace”. Such inscriptions are often expressed in terms of what can (very) loosely be described as poetry.

In the analysis the second and third categories were taken as mutually exclusive, but the first and one of the latter two can occur together. On the basis of these categories, the percentage of interments with inscriptions of various types is shown in figure 7d. In the nineteenth century it can be seen that only small proportions of inscriptions contain more than name and death date, with biographical details rather more common than religious or secular inscriptions. The former often includes location of residence and sometimes occupation such as “*Maltster, late of this City*” Religious inscriptions range from the short such as “*Thy will be done*” to the verbose “*Beneath this stone he sleeps whose memory dear from weeping friends long claims the tender tear. Alas how short the joys that earth can give, 'tis bliss alone with Christ in Heaven to live*”. Similarly, more secular inscriptions have the same range – from “*Her end was peace*” to “*Gone is the face we loved so dear, silent the voice we loved to hear*”. This situation changes markedly from about the 1930s onward, with biographical details dwindling in number whilst religious and secular inscriptions increase. Religious inscriptions move away from biblical or hymn quotes to rather inchoate expressions of hope of being reunited with a spouse or of some sort of after grave existence, whilst the secular inscriptions become almost wholly family based – for example “*a devoted mother, nan and great nan who will never be forgotten*” and “*Cherished memories of a proud and caring husband, father and grandfather.*”. Such is the ubiquity of expressions of this type in more recent memorials, that one wonders what has become of the curmudgeonly grandfathers or the cantankerous grandmothers.

At this point, some qualifications to the analysis should be added. Those families who choose burial and thus the inscriptions are a small proportion of the whole and wholly self-selecting, and thus at least the recent trends cannot be taken as representative of Lichfield society as a whole. Secondly the inscriptions do not of course necessarily reflect the beliefs or otherwise of those who have been buried, but rather those of the family or, perhaps more cynically, of the stonemasons who suggest and use stock content. The inscriptions should thus perhaps be interpreted as reflecting a societal mood, rather than individual beliefs or feeling.

### **Funeral services**

In this section we consider the nature of the funerals themselves. Firstly, let us consider the ministers who carried out these services, for which the data in the registers gives us some information We divide these ministers into five categories.

- Ministers who were based at St. Michael’s – Perpetual Curates and Assistant Curates up to 1868 and Rectors and Curates from then up to the 1980s, when services also came to be taken by non-stipendiary ministers, deaconesses and assistant ministers.

- Ministers who were specifically designated as chaplains to the Workhouse / St. Michael's hospital.
- Ministers who were based at St. Mary's. It has already been pointed out that the churchyard was used for burials by both the parishes of St. Michael and St. Mary. Up to the 1880s services were in the main conducted by staff at St. Michael's, then regarded as the junior church. This changed at around this time, after what can be inferred from the record was a somewhat heated debate between the clergy and churchwardens of the parishes<sup>16</sup> when the Rector and Curates from St. Mary's began to take the services for at least some of the burials from that parish. As St. Mary's dwindled in population and the church was closed in the 1970s and 1980s, responsibility for the reduced number of funerals went back to staff of St. Michael's.
- Ministers from non-Anglican churches (usually Roman Catholic and Methodist) who buried members of their congregation in the churchyard after the passage of the Burial Law amendment Act in 1880<sup>17</sup>. These burials are noted in the registers as "Certified by xxx" where xxx was either the name of the minister or funeral director. After about 1975, the name of the minister is found in the registers, without any indication of certification (see below).
- Ministers from other Anglican churches, either giving cover to staff at St. Michael's, or by the request of the family of the bereaved. This included services led by the Chaplain and Master of St. John's Hospital which is in St. Michael's parish, for residents of that establishment.

The results of the analysis are shown in Figure 8, where the percentages of interments by each category of minister is shown by decade. Workhouse interments were in the main carried out by St. Michel's clergy from the opening of the Workhouse through to 1920, and the chaplains concentrated on other duties. From the 1920s to the 1940s, the Vicar of Wall seems to have had specific Chaplaincy duties and carried out the large majority of Workhouse / Hospital interments.

St. Mary's staff start to carry our interments in the 1880s, mainly those from St. Mary's parish, and whilst in the first instance they are very significant they fall to very low levels in the 1960s. The Certified burials under the 1880 act following non-Anglican funerals seem to represent around 10% of all interments from 1880 onwards. The reason for the change in nomenclature described above is not wholly clear. A former Archdeacon of Lichfield has suggested to the author that it might be for one of two reasons<sup>18</sup> – a simple change in the nature of completing the registers in a perhaps more ecumenically-friendly way being initiated under one Rector that carried forward, or a change in the nature of certification, with death certificates for all interments being sent to the Registrar and a formal notification of certification in the register became no longer required.

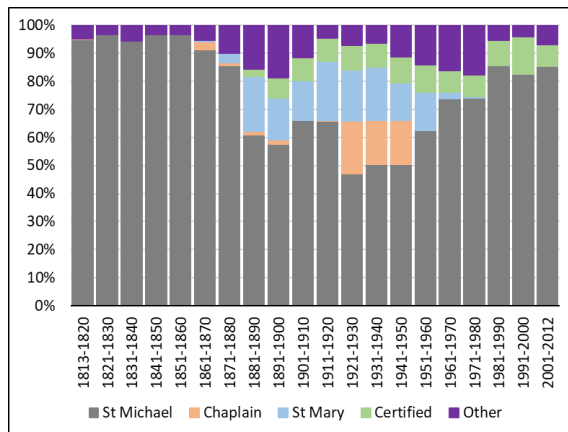
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<sup>16</sup> Victoria County History. A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 14, Lichfield. Lichfield: Churches Pages 134-155, 1990 <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/staffs/vol14/pp134-155>

<sup>17</sup> Burial Act Amendment <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/43-44/41>

<sup>18</sup> Personal Communication from Venerable Simon Baker 12/2022

Finally, the proportion of interments carried out by other Anglican clergy was around 5% from 1813 to 1860 and from 1980 to 2012 was again around this value. In between the proportions were rather larger and fluctuated between 10 and 20% of the total.



**Figure 8. Percentage of interments carried out by different categories of minister.**

Now let us consider the funerals themselves. On the day of the funeral, the body and mourners would normally set out from their place of residence to where the funeral was to be held, either as a small group, or as part of a larger cortege. For those who had played a major part in civic life, the cortege could be a grand affair, with horses and carriages, mourners lining the streets in silence, and perhaps business closing as the cortege passed – for example that of Chancellor James Law in 1876 included the Bishop and many clergy, the Mayor and Corporation and students from the Theological College<sup>19</sup> or of former mayor and ecclesiastical sculptor Robert Bridgeman in 1918, attended by the Mayor and Corporation with full regalia<sup>20</sup>. Similarly old soldiers who were connected with the Militia Barracks in the city could expect a military procession. For example, Abraham Onions, a Waterloo veteran, was buried with full military honours in 1868, with a troop of the Yeomanry and a military band leading the procession, and the deceased charger following the coffin “fully caparisoned”<sup>21</sup>. However, for many the procession to the funeral would have been a small affair as they made their way to the funeral at St. Michael’s, where the funeral could either begin in church and then move to the churchyard for the interment or could be held wholly at the graveside. The service in church may simply have consisted of spoken prayers, but on occasions a full choral service would be held - for example, the funeral of William Durrad in 1889, a former church warden and Lichfield’s first station

<sup>19</sup> Staffordshire Advertiser 4/3/1876. For more on Chancellor Law see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_Thomas\\_Law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Thomas_Law)

<sup>20</sup> Lichfield Mercury 8/3/1918, For more on Robert Bridgeman see [https://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/view/person.php?id=ann\\_1394806036](https://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/view/person.php?id=ann_1394806036)

<sup>21</sup> Staffordshire Advertiser 25/4/1868

master, for which a full order of service has survived <sup>22</sup> and which included the choir singing a hymn around the grave.

For the residents of St Mary's parish, the funeral service could have been held in that church and for non-conformists or Catholics, services would of course have been held in their own chapels. After the service in those chapels, the cortege would have reformed and continued to St. Michael's churchyard for the interment. Before the Burial Act Amendment of 1880, the Anglican funeral service would have been used at this point, regardless of what was used in the chapel. For example, at the funeral of five members of the catholic Corfield family, killed in a house fire in Breadmarket St. in 1873, the Catholic liturgy was read over the coffins in the Guildhall by the Catholic priest and the Rector of St. Michael's used the entire Prayer Book liturgy at the interment in the graveyard which was watched by several hundred people <sup>23</sup>. After the Act, the use of the Anglican liturgy was no longer a requirement for burial in the churchyard.

Most bodies would be buried in coffins, which had become relatively common by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it is likely that in the early years of the study, some would have been buried in a woollen shroud. There were exceptions however – Susannah Petit, sister of the landscape artist and architectural critic John Louis Petit<sup>24</sup>, was buried with five of her siblings in the family tomb encased in a “metallic shell” within an oak coffin <sup>25</sup>. Up to the second half of the nineteenth century, burials were mainly around the western and southern sides of the church, with grave positions being somewhat random. In the 1860s a new area to the northeast of the church was opened up for burials, with a more regular arrangement of graves which was used through to the closure of the Old churchyard. It is not clear where Workhouse or very young infants were buried – there are indications in the registers from the 1940s and 1950s that these were to the south of the church, but it is not possible to be precise in terms of location.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the funeral services themselves would have used the order in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer <sup>26</sup>. This was quite brief – opening sentences, psalms 39 and 90, the passage describing the nature of the resurrection from Chapter 15 of St. Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, and then short prayers of commendation or committal. The focus throughout was on the Christian doctrines of resurrection and eternal life. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the funeral service from the (unauthorised) 1928 prayer book <sup>27</sup> came to be the preferred choice of most ministers. This was similar in style and tone to that of 1662, with more choice in terms of psalms, readings and prayers. Services continued to be held both wholly at the graveside and with the first part in church.

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<sup>22</sup> Lichfield Mercury 25/1/1889. For more on William Durrad see <https://profchrisbaker.com/2021/01/15/lichfields-first-station-master/>

<sup>23</sup> Staffordshire Advertiser 18/1/1873

<sup>24</sup> For more information on John Louis Petit, see the website of the Petit Society <http://revpetit.com/>

<sup>25</sup> Staffordshire Advertiser 20/2/1897

<sup>26</sup> G. Nicolasi “A concise history of the Book of Common Prayer”, iUniverse

<sup>27</sup> J. G. Maiden “National Religion and the Prayer Book Controversy, 1927–1928”, Boydell & Brewer, 2009

Over the course of the next few decades the situation changed considerably with nearly all services beginning in church before the coffin was taken to the graveyard or crematorium. This often involved a journey of considerable length between the church and the crematorium. The various experimental liturgies that eventually led to the Alternative Services Book <sup>28</sup> and Common Worship <sup>29</sup> were increasingly used as a rather loose framework for the services, with the family taking a much more active role in the planning and carrying out of the service, in terms of readings of scripture and more secular material, delivering eulogies etc. Lampard <sup>30</sup> suggest that this indicates a change in focus, away from the themes of resurrection and eternal life to remembrance and thanksgiving. This is very much consistent with the author's experience as an officiating minister at funerals over the last thirty years.

The analysis for the number of burials and interment of ashes presented above disguises a rather more complex reality than suggested by the results shown in Figure 6 with a wide mix of different types of service and their combination. This can be shown by an analysis of the data from 2001 to 2012 for which an electronic database exists with details of other services and events. A breakdown of these, conducted either by staff of St. Michael's and / or with interment in the churchyard, is given in Table 1 below. The basic form is a funeral service in the graveyard, church or at the crematorium, followed by a burial or cremation with or without a later interment, but there are many possible variations. In the table, those cells shaded in light grey represent the burial data shown in Figure 6 (24.6% in total) and those in dark grey the interment of ashes data shown above (25.2%). Taken together they represent only about half the total number of events in the database. The situation was almost certainly similar in previous decades and whilst the number of interments declined, it is likely that the ministers at St. Michael's presided over many services at crematoria that are not recorded in the church service books.

	Percentage of events
Graveside burial only	6.9
Graveside service and burial	0.3
Church service only	2.4

<sup>28</sup> D. Hebblethwaite "Liturgical Revision in the Church of England 1984-2004: The working of the Liturgical Commission" Joint Liturgical Study 57, Grove Books, 2004

<sup>29</sup> T. Lloyd "Death and Dying Step by Step: A Funerals Flowchart", Grove Books, Worship Series 160 (2000)

<sup>30</sup> J. Lampard "The future of Christian funerals". Epworth Review, January 2011

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/2584/epworth-review-john-lampard-0111.pdf>

Church service and burial	17.4
Church service and burial elsewhere	2.9
Church service and cremation	10.7
Church service and cremation with later interment of ashes	6.8
Cremation service and cremation	32.0
Cremation service and cremation with later interment of ashes	6.3
Interment of ashes	11.8
Memorial service	2.2
Memorial service with interment of ashes	0.3

**Table 1 Service combinations 2001 to 2012**

### **Discussion**

The analysis that has been presented gives some indication of how burial practices in St. Michael's churchyard have changed over a two-hundred-year period. From 1813 to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there seems to have been little change, other than in the areas and institutions that the churchyard served. The intervals between death and burials were short, of the order of three or four days. The nature of the burial service remained constant with the use of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer or the 1928 book, with services either entirely at the graveside or with the first part held in church before the committal at the grave. Around 20% of those buried were ultimately commemorated in inscriptions, and there were a large number of unmarked graves, especially of those from the Workhouse or those who died in the first year off their life. Burials were in the main from St. Michael's and St. Mary's parishes, although both parishes saw major fluctuations in population. The workhouse burials had a significant male majority, but the parish burials had the expected even split between males and females. After the passage of the Burial Laws Amendment Act of 1880, around 5 to 10% of the burials were certified under the act and were conducted by Roman Catholic or Non-conformist ministers. The death ages varied significantly across the period, with the number of infant mortalities falling very significantly and the peak of the mortalities moving into the 70 to 90 age band.

However, the situation changed rapidly in the second half of the twentieth century. The main driver for this was the nationwide increase in the number of cremations. This resulted in a major decrease in the number of interments in the graveyard from the 1950s to the 1970s. After a Cremated Remains area was laid out, the number of interments stabilised, with the proportion of interment of ashes increasing until it was around 85% of all interments in the early 2000s. This change was accompanied by what might be described as a temporal change in the process of interment, with the interval between death and burial or death and cremation gradually extending up to an average of around 12 days in the first decade of the twenty first century. The intervals between death and interment of ashes became very long and very variable, with an average of 47 days, but with some intervals of many months or years. A wide range of different

combinations of funeral services, burials, cremations, interment of ashes came to be used. It has been conjectured above that the lengthening of the death / burial interval was locked into the cremation / death interval (which was determined by the availability of the crematoria) through the practice of funeral directors. There was also a significant spatial change in the interment process. Even for interments in the churchyard, the walk from church extended considerably when the new churchyard was opened. But for cremations, there was a much longer journey to be made between the service in church and the crematorium. In general, only close family would make this journey, and for the committal.

Alongside this major change there were two other changes that perhaps reflect larger social trends. Firstly, amongst the self-selecting group that chose to be buried in the churchyard, the percentage of graves with inscriptions increased markedly from around 20% so that by the last decade of the analysis around 80% of burials has gravestones with inscriptions. The nature of these inscriptions also changed, moving away from biographical details or religious quotes towards those that were connected with family relationships. In addition, the proportion of interments of those who lived outside the parish increased to around 30% of the total, indicating the increased mobility of society and a desire to be interred with family members.

Taken together these data are consistent with the thesis proposed by Lampard that there has been a change on the nature of funerals from forward looking, seeing the funeral as a step in the movement of the deceased towards resurrection and eternal life, to backward looking, concentration on the memorialisation of the deceased. This is particularly true of the funeral service itself, wherever it may be held, which have become occasion for eulogising the life of the deceased, with very much less emphasise on the future. The increased interval between death and either burial or cremation allows the family to pass through the first acute stage of grief and gives them the time an ability to become involved in the planning of the service, rather than being forced to accept the standard liturgy. One might even suggest that the very long intervals between death and the interment of ashes, if they are ever interred, allows for a mobile memorial to remain with the family – tales abound of cremated remains being placed at very visible points within homes. The inscriptions on gravestones similarly have become largely memorial, setting the deceased within the family context. Whether or not this trend is to be welcomed or regretted depends very much on one's point of view.

### **Acknowledgements**

The author owes a significant debt to those employees of Lichfield City Council who produced the maps and plans of the 1967 survey, and those members of the Birmingham Genealogical and Historical Society who transcribed the memorial inscriptions in the 1980s. Thanks are also due to staff at Staffordshire Records Office who made records available to the author even during their period of rebuilding and refurbishment.