

## RELIGIOUS HISTORY

### ST GEORGE

The church of St George of the spring or well, recorded with that dedication in the late 12th century, was a chapel of Taunton priory, confirmed in 1400.<sup>1</sup> Long and short work at the west end indicates that the church is probably pre-Conquest but was rebuilt, probably in the 13th century. From 1308 the vicar of St Mary's Taunton was responsible for Wilton.<sup>2</sup> It was served by chaplains later known as perpetual curates and was recognised as an independent ecclesiastical parish by 1739.<sup>3</sup> The curacy became a vicarage in 1868 and remained a sole benefice, in 2024 with Galmington as a team ministry.<sup>4</sup>

The small, scattered population probably accounted for post-Dissolution neglect and there was some nonconformity. The building of large houses from the early 19th century provided more support for the established church. Galmington formed part of St John's parish, Bishops Hull between 1934 and 1969. Detached areas were moved into Bishops Hull and land at Fullands to Taunton St Mary.<sup>5</sup>

### Origins and Endowment

Before the dissolution Taunton priory took the income from Wilton assessed in 1536 as £3 17s. 7d. but they paid the chaplain £5, later £5 6s. 8d.<sup>6</sup> Before 1540 the tithes were farmed to merchants Alexander Togwell and Robert Hill for £6 13s. 4d., from which the stipend was paid. Under the 1549 sale by the Crown the new owner Silvester Tanner was allowed to convert church property to his own use provided he paid the stipend.<sup>7</sup> Thomas Worth (d.

<sup>1</sup> *HMC Wells*, I, p. 38; *Cal. Papal Letters*, V, p. 362.

<sup>2</sup> Bp Hobhouse, *Bp Drogheda's Reg.* 69.

<sup>3</sup> TNA, C 85/41/6; HO 129/315/3/3/3.

<sup>4</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 12 Aug. 1868: BNA accessed 22 Nov. 2023; *Dioc. Dir.*

<sup>5</sup> SHC, D/D/ord/78/2, 110/2; D/P/wilt/22/3/2, 4; below, this section, Galmington.

<sup>6</sup> *Valor Eccl.* I, 171; TNA, E 315/400, f. 22.

<sup>7</sup> TNA, SC 6/EDWVI/403; *Cal. Pat.* 1549—51, pp. 36, 38

1730) was said to have paid £10. By the mid 18th century voluntary payments by parishioners were needed to secure regular services.<sup>8</sup>

Various grants and gifts through Queen Anne's Bounty between 1739 and 1769 totalled £750 of which £200 was invested in 6 a. at Bradford on Tone in 1766.<sup>9</sup> Gifts and parliamentary grants totalling £900 were made between 1811 and 1824 and in 1815 the living was worth £95.<sup>10</sup> In 1890 the vestry agreed to allow the vicar £50 a year and by 1905 his income was over £280.<sup>11</sup> By 1821 a field at Sherford was called Glebe because the vicar had a rent charge on it from 1744. The vicar had land in Taunton bought in 1813, Downlands in Uffculme, Devon bought in 1773 and an allotment on Hackpen Hill from 1838. It was all sold in 1916.<sup>12</sup> By 1961 the living was valued at £488 a year with over £400 from offerings.<sup>13</sup>

Lack of a house meant the minister was rarely resident until Revd John Ward Spencer. (1843—85) rented the house west of the church, which was acquired as the vicarage in 1863.<sup>14</sup> His successor took a house in Taunton and let the vicarage but by 1901 the vicar was resident.<sup>15</sup> The house was modernised c. 1953 but in 1963 expensive repairs were needed so a new house in the garden, designed by Steel and Colman, was completed in 1968. The old house was sold in 1969.<sup>16</sup>

### Advowson

By the 12th century Taunton priory held the church and advowson. After the Dissolution the advowson was held by the lay rectors.<sup>17</sup> After the sale and dispersal of the rectory the incumbent Edward Trowbridge Halliday bought it c. 1830 and presentations were sold to

<sup>8</sup> SHC, DD/WY/16/3/12.

<sup>9</sup> C. Hodgson, *An account of the augmentation of small livings...of the Bounty of Queen Anne* (1826), pp. 182, 234; SHC, DD/CH/90/3, 97/7.

<sup>10</sup> Hodgson, *Queen Anne's Bounty*, pp. 206, 234; SHC, D/D/RB (1815).

<sup>11</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/4/1/2 (1878); D/D/Ri.

<sup>12</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/13/1/48; tithe award; D/D/Ri/1; D/P/wilt/2/9/1 (1916), 3/1/1.

<sup>13</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/4/4/1.

<sup>14</sup> SHC, tithe award; D/B/ta/13/1/1; D/P/wilt/3/3/1.

<sup>15</sup> SHC, DD/KIT/14/1; D/D/Va/22/2/6.

<sup>16</sup> SHC, DD/WBF/3/179; D/P/wilt/3/4/1—3; D/B/ta/24/1/177/10627.

<sup>17</sup> *HMC Wells*, I. p. 38; above, landownership, rectory.

successive clergy. In 1908 former vicar Daniel Pring bought it and his family retained it until it was vested in a patronage board after 1960.<sup>18</sup>

### Parish life: pre-1800

An early stone church indicates at least prosperous patronage and Taunton priory appears to have rebuilt the church in the 13th century. In 1330 a man was threatened with distraint of his corn if he did not deliver a cow to the church.<sup>19</sup> By 1437 Wilton had its own chaplain who had presumably left by 1444 when it was said that the priory had not provided a chaplain. The prior and the vicar of St Mary's, Taunton were summoned before the bishop. The matter was presumably settled as thereafter Wilton had a parochial chaplain.<sup>20</sup> In 1465 a Wilton man was ordained to the priesthood.<sup>21</sup> A 15th-century Exeter bell remained in the tower until recast in 1892.<sup>22</sup> In 1511 a man left money for a 'coop', presumably a church chest.<sup>23</sup>

After the Dissolution the church was apparently neglected and in 1588 had one sermon a year.<sup>24</sup> Apart from the fabric nothing survives from the medieval church and there is no Elizabethan plate. George Purdue of Closworth cast a bell for the church in 1605.<sup>25</sup> Curate James Jones was accused in 1606 of marrying strangers at unlawful times and places, baptising illegitimate children at home and having an illegitimate child himself. Another clergyman who served was not known to be licensed and Wilton was described as a lawless church. In 1609 several people did not receive communion.<sup>26</sup> Successive curates, who seldom served more than a few years and were often pluralists, conducted illegal weddings, a curate's

<sup>18</sup> *Rep. Com. Eccl. Revenues* (1835), pp. 158—9; *Taunton Courier*, 4 Nov. 1863: accessed 22 Nov. 2023; SHC, D/D/Ra/2/76; D/P/wilt/2/9/1, 8/4/1; *Crockford* (1959—60); *Dioc. Dir.*

<sup>19</sup> SHC, A/BFA/6.

<sup>20</sup> TNA, C 85/41/6; H.C. Maxwell-Lyte, *Reg. of Bp Bekynton*, I, pp. 9, 140, 398; SHC, D/D/Vc/20.

<sup>21</sup> R. Dunning, *Bath and Wells Ordination, 1465—1526*, 3—4.

<sup>22</sup> SHC, A/EFT/163; DD/X/NDS/4.

<sup>23</sup> F.W. Weaver, *Somerset Wills 1501—30*, 157.

<sup>24</sup> SHC, D/D/Ca/23, 41, 57, 86.

<sup>25</sup> SHC, PAM 245.

<sup>26</sup> SHC, D/D/Ca/151—2, 160; W. Husband, *Depositions in the Consistory Court of the bishop of Bath and Wells II 1604—6* (2019), 232—3.

wife failed to attend church and the wardens were unable to prevent a man building a seat on the site of the clerk's desk in 1620.<sup>27</sup>

In 1630 the curate John Bowden failed to conform to the prayer book or use an approved catechism. In 1636 there were no communion rails, no font canopy and the seats needed repair, perhaps indicating Puritan leanings and the alienation of at least some parishioners. The silver chalice and altar cloth were in the possession of a warden who died *c.* 1641 and not returned until after 1662 implying communion had not been celebrated. In 1662 curate George Bindon was ejected and in 1664 Wilton was without a minister and their register was detained by a former churchwarden who had failed to provide accounts for three years.<sup>28</sup> A man reportedly hanged himself at a church window *c.* 1685.<sup>29</sup>

Clergy from neighbouring parishes or even further afield served into the 18th century as there was neither house nor income.<sup>30</sup> The parish maintained the church, spent generously on perambulation and ringers and had communion four times a year. Mr Wroth cast a bell in 1712 and another in 1719 dedicated to George I. The parish installed communion rails, furnished the pulpit, created a christening pew, for which a canopy was made in 1721, and mended the churchyard railings. The middle aisle was ceiled in 1723 when the pillars were painted, the church was tiled with 13,000 stone tiles in 1735 and paved with brick in 1737.<sup>31</sup> A singers' seat had been given up by 1728. In 1773 a singing gallery was built and books and a pitch pipe were bought. In the early decades of the 19th century the church had a bass, a cello and a violin and paid the singers £2. In the 1842 a voluntary subscription was raised for an organ, apparently installed in the gallery, and by 1845 the parish paid an organist.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> SHC, D/D/Ca/175, 220, 235, 248.

<sup>28</sup> SHC, D/D/Ca/274, 310, 338, 342a.

<sup>29</sup> R. Locke, *The Western Rebellion* (1782), 3.

<sup>30</sup> SHC, D/D/Vc/2; DD/WY/16/3/12; DD/HCK/9/1/6.

<sup>31</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/4/1/1 (1712—52); SHC, A/EFT/163.

<sup>32</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/4/1/1 (1728, 1773, 1801, 1806, 1812, 1836—7, 1845); D/D/Cf/1870/6; DD/SAS/C795/CH/8.

The parish enjoyed unusual stability under James Hurley who served the parish from 1745 to 1784. He also served Taunton St James, Trull, the gaol and was master of the grammar school and there were only 15 communicants *c.* 1776.<sup>33</sup> By the 1780s Wilton had an assistant curate. The church timbers and pillars were blue and the chancel arch painted to resemble porphyry, all repainted in ochre in 1802. Benjamin Hammet's gave an altarpiece with Corinthian pilasters and flaming urns framing a painting of Christ blessing bread and wine. The wainscoted pulpit sounding board had five gilded urns and the reading desk and singers' gallery were of panelled mahogany. There were plain deal pews and an oak communion table.<sup>34</sup> Carved and painted arms of George III were installed in 1787.<sup>35</sup>

#### Parish life: The 19th century

In 1804 Mr Bilbie recast the 3rd and 5th bells at Cullompton, Devon. The north aisle, said to belong to Cutliff farm George Powell having purchased the right to a seat and burial there in the 17th century, was reseated in 1809 and mourning hangings were bought for the death of Princes Charlotte in 1818.<sup>36</sup> In 1815 both curate and assistant were non-resident pluralists although the former paid £35 out of the living to the assistant who presumably took the one Sunday service.<sup>37</sup> The influx of wealthy parishioners brought about change. In 1831 a subscription was raised for new communion plate and in 1837—9 the church was enlarged and refitted providing over 200 additional seats, half free, mostly in box pews.<sup>38</sup> In 1842 James Marshall donated a reading desk and altar, a new bible and prayer book were provided, the pulpit was moved and repainted in 1843, a window in memory of Sir Benjamin Hammet

<sup>33</sup> SHC, D/D/Vc/88; D/P/tau.ja 22/23.

<sup>34</sup> McDermott and Berry, *Rack's Survey of Som.* pp. 286—7; SHC, DD/SAS/C795/CH/8.

<sup>35</sup> *PSANHS* LXXXV, 240.

<sup>36</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/2/1/1 undated note; 4/1/1 (1804, 1818).

<sup>37</sup> SHC, D/D/Rb (1815).

<sup>38</sup> *Incorporated Church Building Soc. Ann Rep.* (1927), p. 92; SHC, D/P/wilt/4/1/1 (1831, 1838).

(d. 1800) was installed in 1849 and from 1851—2 the church was gaslit.<sup>39</sup> In the 1840s there were two Sunday services but the minister was rarely resident.<sup>40</sup> Pew rents still produced over £9 in 1851.<sup>41</sup> The largest expense was rebuilding the tower, said to be dangerous and clamped with iron, and extending the churchyard in 1854.<sup>42</sup>

In 1870 John Houghton Spencer demolished the vestry, built another one north of the chancel, removed the gallery and sited the organ in the north aisle. New floors, gas stoves, open pews, mostly facing east and freely available after the start of services, font, pulpit, altar and rails, reading and clerk's desks, books and soft furnishings were provided. The Marshall family paid for most but the parishioners raised the cost of the Ham hill stone font.<sup>43</sup> By then there was a surpliced choir and monthly communion. Easter communicants rose from 40 in 1871 to 61 in 1872.<sup>44</sup> The parish depended on offertory receipts although a voluntary church rate raised over £20 in 1882. The biggest expense was paying the minister, organist, choir, ringers and sexton.<sup>45</sup>

In 1887 encaustic tiling and a new reredos of the Ascension carved by Earp and Sons were installed in the chancel, Sunday and weekly communions were celebrated, a parish magazine was started and there was a parish library. In 1890 a small transept was added to the north aisle to better accommodate the organ and a transcript of the parish registers was made by John Houghton Spencer in memory of his father John Ward Spencer, vicar 1843—85.<sup>46</sup> In 1892 two bells were recast and a 6th added by Taylors of Loughborough. By 1895 there were 143 Easter communicants, up to 40 on alternate Sundays when there were two communion

<sup>39</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 12 Oct. 1842, 2 May 1849: accessed 22 Nov. 2023; SHC, D/P/wilt/4/1/1 (1843—4, 1851—2).

<sup>40</sup> SHC, D/D/Va/1/12, 2/12.

<sup>41</sup> TNA, HO 129/315/3/3/3.

<sup>42</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/3/5/1; 4/1/1 (1853—7), 18/4/3.

<sup>43</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 16 Nov., 7 Dec. 1870: accessed 22 Nov. 2023; SHC, D/D/Cf/1870/6; D/P/wilt/4/1/2 (1871).

<sup>44</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/23/42; D/D/Va/12/12, 14/12; A/DBL/133/1.

<sup>45</sup> SHC, A/AHH/10.

<sup>46</sup> SHC, D/D/Cf/1887/16; D/P/wilt/2/8/5, 6/1/1; J. H. Spencer, *A Copy of the Parish Registers of Wilton* (Taunton, 1890).

services, matins and evensong. There was an additional monthly afternoon service.<sup>47</sup> In 1897 the choir stalls were replaced.<sup>48</sup> In 1898 98 people subscribed to the parish library and 169 to the magazine, 153 belonged to temperance groups, there was a licensed lay reader, a surpliced choir of 23, half paid, and seven female parish visitors. By 1905 there were 14 choirboys who were paid up to £1 each.<sup>49</sup>

#### Parish life: The 20th century to present

A church council was started in 1903 chaired by the vicar and including four women members. It folded in 1905 but was revived in 1916.<sup>50</sup> The sexton or vergger had a house in Westgate Street in 1904 and another in the same street was acquired in 1956 and used until 1960 or later.<sup>51</sup> The tower was restored after a lightning strike in 1901, in 1902 a new organ was purchased from Minns of Taunton for which a blower was bought in 1932, and in 1904 electric light was installed. The chancel was raised and redecorated c. 1905 by J. Dudley Forsyth with wall paintings, a new reredos and a new east window, the existing east window was moved to the west end.<sup>52</sup> At that date 37 people were confirmed, there were 234 Easter communicants, 72 children at Sunday school, three or four Sunday services and two each weekday, four churchwardens, seven district visitors and seven paid bellringers. The parish raised £112 to pay a curate. The plate comprised the 1636 silver chalice and a silver replica, three 1831 patens and a modern flagon.<sup>53</sup> New oak doors were installed in 1906, a new pulpit

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<sup>47</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/2/5/1.

<sup>48</sup> SHC, D/D/Cf/1897/4.

<sup>49</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/2/5/2; 23/1, 42.

<sup>50</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/9/3/1—2.

<sup>51</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/1/7/3; 2/8/6 (1904), 9/3/4, pp. 23, 47, 49.

<sup>52</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/4/1/2 (1904); 2/8/6; 5/4/2; 23/35; D/D/Cf/1905/153, 932/16: *Taunton Courier*, 13 Dec. 1905: BNA accessed 24 Nov. 2023.

<sup>53</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/2/9/1; D/D/Ri.

in 1908 and a lych gate by Cottam and Samson in 1909.<sup>54</sup> In 1917 there was concern that appropriation of seats had 'crept back in'.<sup>55</sup>

In 1913 the parish spent over £50 on the organist and choir and in 1922 there were two choirs.<sup>56</sup> Vicar, John Noble Broughton served overseas during the latter part of the First World War.<sup>57</sup> In 1926 the parish received two silver patens given to a former curate by St George's, Portsea and in 1927 a silver baptismal shell.<sup>58</sup> In 1928 and 1937 tithe ownership was fragmented and owners disclaimed liability for the chancel and even the diocese was unsure as the parishioners had been repairing it.<sup>59</sup> In 1929—30 the bells were rehung and two added by the ringers to raise the peal to eight. About this date the parish acquired two modern chalices with patens and a communion set for private use, replaced in 1971.<sup>60</sup> Services were unchanged in the 1940s. At Easter 1949 there were 316 communicants and the sacrament was reserved although the parish wanted a moderate churchman.<sup>61</sup> Women had joined by the choir by 1959 when robes were donated for them.<sup>62</sup> A branch of the Church of England Men's Society was formed in 1960, had 39 members by 1966 but disbanded in 1986.<sup>63</sup> There was an assistant curate in the 1960s when the parish was given another silver chalice and paten. Four of the seven Easter services were communion services and there were 510 people on the electoral roll.<sup>64</sup>

In 1961 the lady chapel in the south aisle, designed by Robert Potter of Salisbury, was consecrated, and its donated window designed by Paul Jeffries and Whitefriars Studios was

<sup>54</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/2/8/6 (1906); D/D/Cf/1905/153, 1907/246, 1909/230.

<sup>55</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/2/8/6 (1917).

<sup>56</sup> SHC, D/P/tru/23/71; D/P/wilt/2/8/6 (1922).

<sup>57</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 4 May 1919; BNA accessed 24 Nov. 2023.

<sup>58</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/5/2/2; DD/WBF/20/208a/7.

<sup>59</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/8/4/1.

<sup>60</sup> SHC, D/D/Rrd/2; D/D/Ri/4; DD/X/NDS/4.

<sup>61</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/1/1/4, 2/5/5—6.

<sup>62</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/9/3/4, p. 108.

<sup>63</sup> SHC, DD/CEMS.wi/1, 4.

<sup>64</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/1/2/1, 5/2/2; A/DBL/156/5; D/D/Va/37/2/6.

dedicated in 1962.<sup>65</sup> That entailed moving memorial tablets and windows and removing the aumbry. The choir stalls were altered in 1964 and the organ was rebuilt in 1973.<sup>66</sup> In 1981 the bells were rehung and two new trebles added increasing the peal to ten. In 1984 an aluminium and glass tower screen replaced the wooden one.<sup>67</sup>

In 1978 there were three clergy, two based in Galmington, and 498 Easter communicants. By 1980 Easter communions had fallen to 296 including those receiving at home but the church was overfull. At Christmas there were 606 communicants falling to 117 by 2012 when there were only two Sunday services and one weekday communion in church although others were held in local homes for the elderly.<sup>68</sup> In 2023 the parish opened a community fridge at the hall. In 2024 there was a communion service each Sunday, sung on alternate Sundays, and a morning worship service for young people.

### Church and churchyard

The church of St George, of flint and rubble with Doulting and Ham dressings, comprises chancel, a nave with aisles, west door and south porch, largely rebuilt in 1838 and a west tower, rebuilt in 1854. However, it preserves Anglo-Saxon long and short work at the west end indicating a stone nave. The church was probably rebuilt in the 13th century with an arcade like that at St Mary's in Taunton and a plain tower with large quoins and later battlements. It was remodelled in the 15th century including a new arcade retaining the earlier piers. In the 1780s it was only 68 ft by 32 ft with a 50-ft tower housing five bells, one cracked.<sup>69</sup> The two-bay aisles had only one side window. The two-light, square-headed chancel windows and the similar three-light window over the chancel arch indicate that the

<sup>65</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/8/4/2.

<sup>66</sup> SHC, D/D/Cf/1960/2/5, 1964/1/17, 1972/4/12; DD/X/NDS/4.

<sup>67</sup> SHC, D/D/Cf/1981/9/8; 1984/5/17.

<sup>68</sup> SHC, A/DBL/156/13a, 16, 20; D/P/wilt/1/7/2.

<sup>69</sup> J. Orbach, *S. and W. Som.*, 613; McDermott and Berry, *Rack's Survey of Som.* p. 286—7.

chancel was built or rebuilt later than the nave.<sup>70</sup> From 1837 Richard Carver enlarged the church, providing a new chancel and extending both aisles eastward in a flat-roofed form with square-headed windows. He may have removed the stucco. He placed the pulpit in the central position of the former altar but it was moved aside in 1844.<sup>71</sup> In 1852—3 Carver replaced the plain medieval tower with one only slightly more elaborate. In 1855 the only remaining earlier fabric was the south arcade and the fenestration was reportedly reproduction Perpendicular.<sup>72</sup> The south porch was added in 1870.<sup>73</sup>

The oldest glass is late 17th-, at the head of a north aisle window. The 1849 Hammet window now over the west door has lost his portrait, given to the county museum. The 1883 stained glass windows were reputedly Kinglake family memorials like that to Robert Arthur Kinglake (d. 1893) over the chancel arch. The 1905 east window is by J. Dudley Forsyth and the 1962 lady chapel window by Paul Jeffries. Sir Benjamin Hammet's monument by Westmacott was erected by his son *c.* 1804.<sup>74</sup> Several early 19th-century monuments are by Longs of Taunton. Most furnishings are Victorian. The Edwardian green marble pulpit by Dudley Forsyth has mosaics of preaching saints and Savonarola. Some 1970s light fittings were made by patients at Tone Vale Hospital. Of the ten bells the two oldest are dated 1605 and 1810, four were cast or recast by Taylor's of Loughborough and Mears and Steinbank cast two in the 1930s and two in 1981.<sup>75</sup>

The tiny churchyard may have been extended south at an early date as a public footpath through it may mark the road line.<sup>76</sup> It was full by 1849, offensive when dug and urgently needed an extension.<sup>77</sup> In 1854 the house on the east was bought and demolished and

<sup>70</sup> SHC, Pigott coll, J. Buckler, 1832.

<sup>71</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 10 Jan. 1838: accessed 22 Nov. 2023; SHC, D/P/wilt/7/4/1; A/DAS/1/448/1; A/DIF/116/265; DD/X/NDS/4.

<sup>72</sup> Sir S. Glynne, *Church Notes for Som.* (Taunton, 1994), 379—80.

<sup>73</sup> SHC, DD/WBF/20/208a.

<sup>74</sup> SHC, DD/X/NDS/4T/PH/dvs/1.

<sup>75</sup> SHC, D/D/Cf/1907/246, 1974/7/5; DD/X/NDS/4.

<sup>76</sup> SHC, tithe award; *Taunton Courier*, 4 Nov. 1863: accessed 22 Nov. 2023.

<sup>77</sup> TNA, MH 13/180/137, pp. 259—61; 13/180/294, ff. 628—30.

its garden west of the church was partly thrown into the churchyard by 1856. Northern extensions were made in 1884 and 1905.<sup>78</sup> Railings around the tombs and an iron gate were taken for scrap from 1940 but the vicar saved the churchyard railings.<sup>79</sup> There are few pre-1800 memorials in either the church or churchyard. Among surviving tombs are those of Sir Benjamin Hammet and architect Richard Carver and his family. Land north of the church not needed for burials became allotments. Part was sold for development since 1970 but a substantial area remains. Water rights were sold when the stream was altered in 1985—6.<sup>80</sup>

### Sherford Hall or Iron Room

An iron parish room was erected in 1887 at Sherford on land rented from Mr Cousins, west of the present Bridge Corner. There were meetings twice a month, men's bible classes and social events.<sup>81</sup> It seated 40 and was used for Lent mission services in 1905 and for a men's club and bible class in 1907.<sup>82</sup> The men's club was re-started in 1920 but had presumably ceased to by 1924 when the scouts were allowed to move the room behind the former parish school and in 1940 it was requisitioned as a military dormitory.<sup>83</sup>

### ST MICHAEL'S GALMINGTON

By 1887 Sunday afternoon and evening and Wednesday evening services were held in the Galmington schoolroom and it had its own harvest festival.<sup>84</sup> Elizabeth Cleave donated an iron church by Humphreys of Knightsbridge in 1892. It was erected on Hoveland, now Galmington, Lane as a Wilton mission church, later St Michael, and licensed for worship. It

<sup>78</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/4/1/21 (1854, 1857); 3/5/1—3; D/D/Ri/1; *Taunton Courier*, 20 Feb. 1856: accessed 22 Nov. 2023.

<sup>79</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/9/3/3 (July 1940); 2/8/6 (Jan. 1943).

<sup>80</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/3/6/1—4; above. intro.

<sup>81</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/2/8/5 (1887—8); D/D/Ri/1.

<sup>82</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/2/9/1 (1905); D/D/Ri/1.

<sup>83</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/9/3/2, p. 35, 18/11/2 (1924), 23/2, 33.

<sup>84</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/2/8/5 (1887); *Taunton Courier*, 5 Oct. 1887: BNA accessed 5 Dec. 2023.

could accommodate 100 people with transepts for an organ and a vestry.<sup>85</sup> There were two services on Sunday with fortnightly communion and a weekday service in the 1890s but by 1899 only weekly evensong and a monthly morning communion were celebrated although it was in the care of a curate. Easter communicants rose from 12 in 1893 to 22 in 1905 and in 1908 a lay reader was appointed.<sup>86</sup>

In 1934 under 1933 boundary changes Galmington became part of St John's parish, Bishops Hull. The church became a charity and in 1958 St John's bought land on which a prefabricated church hall for Galmington was built from 1961. In 1969 Galmington was returned to Wilton ecclesiastical parish, which gained the built-up area of Galmington in Trull parish, extended again in 1993.<sup>87</sup> Electricity was provided in 1940, an American organ replaced the harmonium in 1943 and a memorial window was installed in 1947. In 1953 the organ was exchanged for a reed organ.<sup>88</sup> The church had a silver chalice and paten by 1948 and in 1956 had weekly communion.<sup>89</sup>

By 1961 the population of Galmington was *c.* 1,500 and two services were held each Sunday although evensong was later dropped. Some people felt it was not a 'proper church' as it was not consecrated.<sup>90</sup> In 1966 money was raised to buy 1 Comeytrove Lane for the curate.<sup>91</sup> By then the church was deemed unsafe and in 1969 the two Sunday communion services, a family service and a Thursday service were held in the hall. There were 61 Easter communicants and a monthly evening service and church parade.<sup>92</sup> In 1971 the church was demolished and replaced by a new temporary one nearer the hall, which was retained. The church, also dedicated to St Michael, was opened and licensed for marriages in 1971.

<sup>85</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/23/40; wilt.m/2/9/1.

<sup>86</sup> SHC, D/P./wilt.m/2/5/1, 2/8/5 (1899), 2/8/6 (1908).

<sup>87</sup> SHC, D/D/ord/78/2, 110/2; D/P/tau.jo/5/1/1; DD/WBF/20/478/8; D/P/wilt.m/9/3/2; D/P/wilt/22/3/2, 4.

<sup>88</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt.m/4/1/2.

<sup>89</sup> SHC, D/P/tau.jo/5/2/1; D/P/wilt.m/9/2/1; SHC, D/P/wilt/9/3/4, p. 153.

<sup>90</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt.m/9/2/1; DD/WBF/20/478/8.

<sup>91</sup> SHC, DD/X/TDS/10; D/P/wilt/23/1.

<sup>92</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt.m/2/9/1, 9/3/2; DD/X/TDS/10.

Attendances increased to 100 at family service in 1979, 152 Easter communicants in 1982 and 220 people at Christmas midnight communion.<sup>93</sup> The site was considered unsuitable for a permanent church and a new building for 250 on Pitts Close off College Way was dedicated on 9 June 1987. The old site was sold for housing development.<sup>94</sup> In 2009 St Michaels became a separate parish with its own incumbent.

The first church, of corrugated iron, was cross-shaped with a small bell turret. It was furnished with altar, rails and pulpit but the nave had chairs rather than pews.<sup>95</sup> The 1971 building, designed by Steel, Coleman and Davis, had a sloping roof and largely glazed walls.<sup>96</sup> The 1987 St Michaels, designed by Stephen Bartlett of Stone and Partners, is a barn-like building with a gambrel roof, flanked by hipped roof meeting room areas.<sup>97</sup> The St Michael war memorial window was moved from the iron church to each of its successors.<sup>98</sup> The exterior Cross was supplied by Colthursts.<sup>99</sup>

#### NONCONFORMITY

Wilton was apparently a conforming parish but in the early 17th century many failed to attend church, partly due to a lack of regular services and the poor quality of curates.<sup>100</sup> An anabaptist refused to come to sign the 1641 protestation and in 1655 30 people are said to have attended a religious meeting in Wilton.<sup>101</sup> Curate George Bindon, ejected in 1662, lived in the parish and preached in the Taunton area in 1669.<sup>102</sup> Taunton ejected minister Joseph Alleine (d. 1668) moved to Fullands where he helped ordain three young men.<sup>103</sup> Houses were

<sup>93</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt.m/2/5/1, 6.

<sup>94</sup> SHC, DD/X/TDS/10; A/DQO/9/13; D/P/wilt/5/1/1, 5/4/3; D/P/wilt.m/6/2/1, 3/3/3.

<sup>95</sup> SHC, DD/WBF/20/208a; D/P/wilt.m/3/4/1

<sup>96</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/215/12673.

<sup>97</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/5/4/3; J. Orbach. *S. & W. Som.*, 614.

<sup>98</sup> SHC, A/EPF/75 (July 1990).

<sup>99</sup> SHC, D/P/wilt/5/4/3.

<sup>100</sup> SHC, D/D/Ca/175, 220, 235, 248, 266, 274

<sup>101</sup> Howard and Stoate, *Protestation Returns*, 120; SHC, Q/SR/91/13—14.

<sup>102</sup> Crippen, *Nonconf. in Som.*, 21, 26.

<sup>103</sup> SHC, D/N/tau.pm/6/10 [6—7].

licensed for meetings between 1699 and 1706 but no permanent congregation was established.<sup>104</sup>

Four Quakers were recorded in 1745 but by *c.* 1776 only the Pike family remained. Two Presbyterian families presumably attended Pauls' meeting in Taunton.<sup>105</sup> In 1839—40 methodists had an evening service in Galmington. It was not continued although there was reputedly a chapel, denomination unspecified, amongst cottages opposite the present Shepherds Rest. The offer of a site for a Methodist chapel in 1935 was not taken up.<sup>106</sup> An Independent chapel, built at Sherford in 1847 with 100 seats, was attended by 48 in the morning and 66 in the evening in 1851 including 36 schoolchildren.<sup>107</sup> It was not recorded again.

A group of houses on the corner of Wilton Grove and Westgate were converted into a place of worship *c.* 1854 for the Plymouth Brethren.<sup>108</sup> After they returned to the Taunton Octagon the Westgate chapel, part of which was converted to a house *c.* 1863, passed to the Mormons but they left after 1864.<sup>109</sup> It was probably the Bethesda chapel in Wilton Grove used as an evangelical hall in the 1900s but sold in 1911 and since enlarged as a house.<sup>110</sup>

Roman Catholic services were held at St Michaels in Galmington in 1968 and the St Thomas Indian Orthodox Church held services there St Michaels in 2024.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>104</sup> SHC, D/D/RRw/1.

<sup>105</sup> SHC, Q/RJ/35/28; D/D/Vc/88.

<sup>106</sup> SHC, D/N/tmc/4/2/4, 7/2/3; D/P/wilt.m/23/1.

<sup>107</sup> TNA, HO 129/315/3/3/3.

<sup>108</sup> Harrison, Harrad & Co *Dir. Som.* (1859); *Taunton Courier*, 13 July 1864: BNA accessed 24 July 2019.

<sup>109</sup> SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/5/133; *Taunton Courier*, 13 July 1864, 25 July 1915: BNA accessed 24 July 2019..

<sup>110</sup> *Goodman's Dir. Taunton* (1902—3), 137.

<sup>111</sup> SHC, DD/X/TDS/10; A.ARD/1; indianorthodoxuk.org: accessed 10 Apr. 2024.