



ST. PETER'S: THE NAVE—LOOKING WEST

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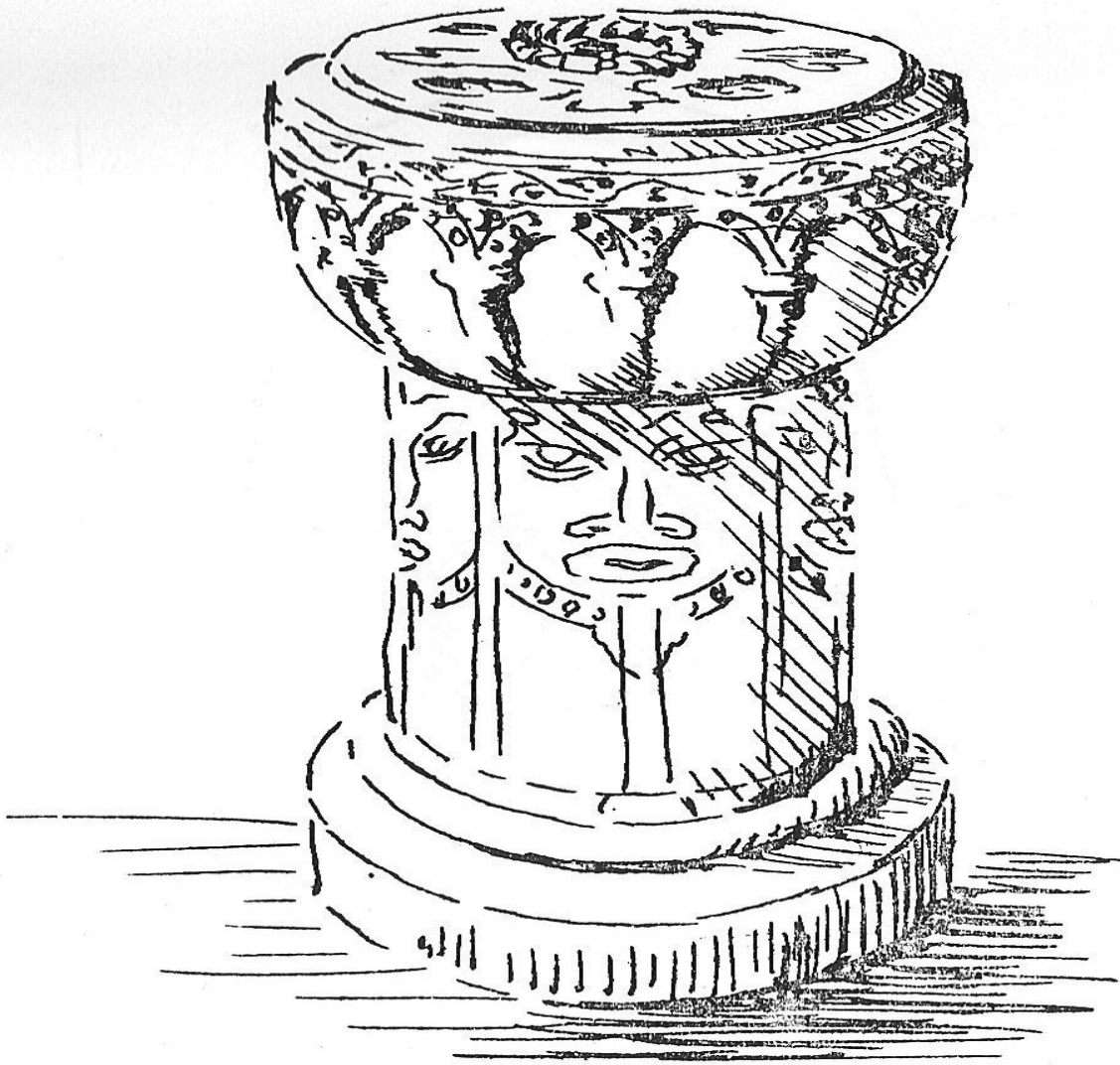


THE ANNE HILL MEMORIAL
(by Flaxman)

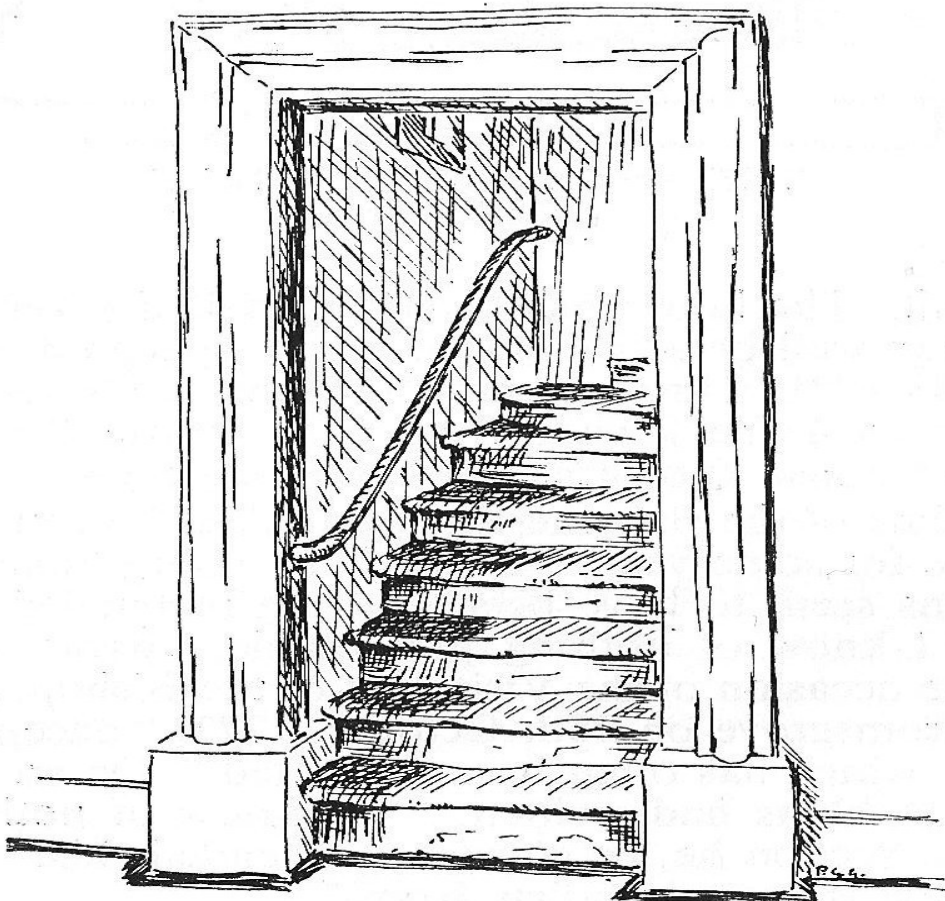
boundary wall. The house has been remodelled several times and parts of it may well be as old as the barn. It ceased to be used as the Rectory in 1921. Until the new Rectory on the main road was completed in 1924 the Rector lived in the little black-and-white timber-framed house known as the Dower Cottage.

At the time of the Broome Enclosure Act the church had been in a bad state for some years—certainly by the autumn of 1773 the churchwardens seem to have been growing reconciled to this state of affairs. “I know of nothing presentable,” wrote John Harris, Junior, on the occasion of the Visitation of the Bishop, in the Parish Church of Bromsgrove on 28th October, 1773, “except the church pulled down, which has often been presented.” On an earlier occasion Joseph Robbins had written: “We know of nothing presentable.”* On reflection he, or someone, amended this: “We present that our church is entirely fallen down.”

* Presentments of the Churchwardens, 23 July, 1773.



THE NORMAN FONT



STAIRCASE TO THE GALLERY

Whether this should be taken to imply that the whole building was derelict may be open to question, for the Registers show that marriages, baptisms, and funerals were taking place. At the same time it is evident that the parish was suffering some neglect. The church had been re-built as recently as 1739, during the incumbency of Thomas Dolman, who died in 1745. He was followed by Thomas Bradburne (1745-1770), John Dolman (1770-1783), and John Dudley (1783-1810), none of whom signed the Registers, which suggests that they were absentees. The church, after the death of Thomas Dolman, was served by John Perry, Vicar of Clent (1736-1781), and from 1781 by his son, Littleton Perry (he prefers the spelling *Lyttelton*, but his name was not originally spelt that way), the succeeding Vicar of Clent. After 1794, with a few exceptions, the registers are signed by John Bradley, Curate, until Edward Dudley takes over in 1802. All sign as Curate (occasionally Minister), but Edward Dudley, of course, became Rector in 1810.

What then was happening to the church of Broome? An absentee Rector was nothing unusual in the 18th century,* neither was pluralism and nepotism, but as he was traditionally responsible for the upkeep of the chancel (the nave being the responsibility of the parishioners) any lack of concern on his part might easily lead to neglect of the fabric. Trouble of this kind was evidently developing at Broome in the 1770s.

The present church was built in 1780, but the chancel was lengthened and a vestry built on its north side in 1861.† The vestry now also serves as an organ chamber, instead of (as originally) the upper stage of the tower. Another addition of 1861 is the tower staircase. These alterations and additions, though making the church more convenient, have hardly improved its appearance and have spoiled the original proportions. An early print shows the chancel with a single window in its south wall.

The Norman font has a bowl of mid-12th century date, and is possibly a relic of Maurice de Ombersley's church. The stem is modern. The memorial to Mrs. Anne Hill on the north wall of the nave is by Flaxman. Outside one may note how carefully the brickwork of the vestry is matched with the nave and chancel. The eastward lengthening of the chancel is even better. It may be that the bricks removed from the original north wall were used again in lengthening the south wall. On the other hand, with the staircase to the upper stage of the tower no attempt has been made to blend the work.

Until about the mid-19th century the church stood alone on the green formed by the triangle of three lanes at the centre of the village. Church House was originally built for Miss Dudley,

* It has been estimated that well over half the incumbents of English Parishes in the 18th century were absentees. See N. Sykes, *Church and State in England in the 18th Century* (1934), p. 217.

† Internal dimensions: chancel 20 ft. 6 ins. by 12 ft., nave 25 ft. 6 ins. by 15 ft. Compare the interior with that of Himley Church.



THE CHURCH HALL



SCHOOL HOUSE

a sister of Edward Dudley the Rector, but has since been considerably altered and enlarged.*

Of the other buildings which now occupy the green, the Parish Room—originally Broome School—bears the date 1889 on a rain-water head, and the nearby School House 1890. But there was a school in the village considerably earlier than 1889—at least by 1847. Mrs. Emma Crawford, schoolmistress for 28 years, retired in July, 1875, as is recorded in a Bible presented to her on the occasion by the Rector, Joseph Green Bourne. The site of her school—which would seem also to have been her house—was on the opposite side of the road to the later school, on the site of the present Bourne Cottages. Extant Log Books go back to 22nd September, 1880, when Caroline Ann Aldridge was mistress. In July, 1882, the Diocesan Inspector described the premises as “inconvenient, ill-ventilated, and cramped,” and suggested that the managers would do well “either to build a class room or an entirely new edifice.” Not surprisingly he found that the standards left much to be desired and concluded his report with a warning: “If the average attendance is again allowed to exceed 24 the entire grant may be forfeited.” By 1889 it would seem that the Managers were doing something towards meeting the Inspector’s criticisms, for on his visit in June he records that “a new building will shortly be erected to take the place of the present unsatisfactory premises.” By October the school is described as being in a state of transition. The new building is evidently almost ready and the Inspector anticipates that it will be of great benefit to the children. He is right. He finds them in their “handsome and convenient new premises” when he comes round again in July, 1890, and in September the School has gained for the first time a place in Class A.

The School had an old well in the playground, which was separated from the road by iron railings. On the opposite side of the road was the School garden, a piece of land given by Mr. Sam Meredith, of the later Broome Farm.

Broome School closed in December, 1933, and the children transferred to Blakedown.

The village remains small, with neither shop nor public house. After its centuries of quiet existence, of slow growth and gradual change, modern conditions are rapidly producing a society that has little use for the traditions of village life and may soon create a race that has never seen a cow milked nor the corn harvested, so that even a village that escapes submersion in the urban sprawl faces a future that can have little in common with its past.

The charm of a village is easily destroyed. In a commercial and technological age such as ours it is an inheritance worth preserving, not merely from a romantic attachment to the past, but for the sake of the sanity and well-being of future generations.

* Original (undated) plans by Birmingham architects Swift and Dudley. Later rooms were added over the outbuildings at the SE corner. On N side a porch with room over by the Stourbridge architect Tom Grazebrook.

The Early Registers

The earliest volume contains entries of baptisms and burials from 1664 to 1785 (though the first page is now difficult to read), and of marriages to the year 1753, after which they are entered in a separate book, commencing in October, 1755, and ending in 1809.

From 1755 to 1780 they are signed *J. Perry, Curate*, sometimes *Minister*. (John Perry was Vicar of Clent, 1736-1781.) In 1782 there is one signed *J. Lomax*, and one *L. Perry, Curate*. From 1783 to 1794 they are signed *L. Perry*, or *Lyttelton Perry*, sometimes describing himself as *Curate of Broom*, sometimes as *Vicar of Clent*. (He was Vicar of Clent, 1781-1817.)

In 1795 they begin to be signed *John Bradley, Curate*, the last one being in May, 1799. There are two exceptions. In June, 1797, one is signed *Thos. Chambers, Rector of Spiral*, and one in December, 1797, by *Edwd. Hill*.

There follow one more in 1799 signed by *John Bradley, Curate*, and one in January, 1809, signed by *Edward Dudley, Curate*. There are no signatures of the Rectors *Thomas Bradburne* and *John Dudley*, which indicates that they were absentees.

The third book contains baptisms and burials from August, 1785, the first page being signed by *L. Perry*, and *Richard Acton, Churchwarden*. From 1794 to 1802 the entries are by *John Bradley, Curate*, in a beautiful script which impressed his successor *Edward Dudley* to the point of emulation. He failed to live up to it.

Bishops' Transcripts go back to 1613.

There are instances in the 18th century of infants being "privately baptised"—irregular, but prevalent, being often the only means of ensuring the performance of the rite.

SOME BROOME FIELD NAMES

Kiln Pit
Nailer's Close
The Feathers
Tinker's Bush
Great Kite Furlong
Mins Yard Field, or Little Gain
Castle Hedge
Hazel Wicket Sling
Little Coney Gree

The Organ

The organ was built in 1913 by Lindsay Garrard, a small builder who also provided organs for St. Saviour's, West Hagley, and Holy Trinity, Belbroughton, at about the same time. The Broome organ was originally placed in the West gallery with a detached console at the south end of the nave. The action was tubular pneumatic with barred chests and sliderless drawstop action.

The stop list was as follows:—

Great		Swell	
Diapason	8	Lieblich Gedeckt (metal)	8
Dulciana	8	Viol (tin)	4
Keraulophon	8	Voix Celestes (II ranks)	8 T.C.
Gemshorn	4		
		Octave and suboctave couplers	
		Tremulant	
Pedal			
Bourdon	16)	unit chest	
Flute	8)	Swell to Pedal	
		Swell to Great	
		Great to Pedal	

The organ was later removed from the gallery and installed in the north chancel chamber by Stanton of Walsall. The console was placed with it in the chamber and an electric blower fitted. The move had the effect of attenuating the tone very seriously so that the organ was quite inadequate for congregational accompaniment. By 1956 the action had seriously deteriorated and the organ was rebuilt with electric action by Laurence Snell. The console was reconstructed and moved to the south side of the chamber.

The swell Celestes was replaced by the Great Keraulophon, revoiced and provided with an additional treble octave. The Keraulophon was replaced by a new Fifteenth on the Great. The Bourdon unit was extended upwards to provide three additional stops on the Great and one extra in the Pedal division. An amplifier was provided with a microphone in the organ chamber and loudspeaker in the nave roof. This amplifier helps to offset the loss of tone due to the damping effect of the chamber.

The present stop list is as follows:—

Great		Swell	
1. Bourdon	16	8. Gamba	8
2. Open Diapason	8	9. Gedeckt	8
3. Stopped Diapason	8	10. Viola	4
4. Dulciana	8		
5. Gemshorn (conical)	4	Suboctave	
6. Flute	4	Octave	
7. Fifteenth	2	Tremulant	
Swell octave to Great			
Swell unison to Great			
Swell suboctave to Great			

The swell organ has an additional octave of pipes in the treble for use with the octave coupler.

Pedal	
11. Bourdon	16
12. Octave	8
13. Fifteenth	4
Swell to pedal	
Great to pedal	
Amplifier switch and indicator light.	

SOME RECTORS OF BROOME

1190—1203	Alexander de Brimsfield
1203—	Brother John
1397—	Dom Philip
1540—	Thomas Beche
1558—	Thomas Wareole
? —	Thomas Farmer
1567—	Richard Mytton
1585—1614	Thomas Cox
1622—	William Underhill
1655—1662	Humphrey Waldron (<i>Friend of Richard Baxter</i>)
1662—1681	Alexander Lawder
1681—1682	Nathaniel Dolman
1682—1691	Thomas Dolman
1691—1706	John Saunders
1706—1709	Richard Corns
1709—1745	Thomas Dolman
1745—1770	Thomas Bradburne (<i>Probably non-resident; signs no register</i>) (<i>John Perry, Vicar of Clent, 1736-1781, signs registers as Curate from 1755, and was perhaps Curate from the death of Thomas Dolman in 1745</i>)
1770—1783	John Dolman (<i>No signatures in Registers</i>)
1783—1810	John Dudley (<i>No signatures in Registers</i>) (1782-1794 Lyttelton Perry, Curate. Followed his father as Vicar of Clent, 1781-1817. From 1802 Edward Dudley, Curate)
1810—1858	Edward Dudley
1859—1897	Joseph Green Bourne
1897—1909	Joseph Handforth Bourne (<i>Curate from 1893</i>)
1910—1913	C. Chetwode Hamilton
1914—1921	Joseph Handforth Bourne (second incumbency)
1921—1924	G. H. Seeley (<i>Archdeacon of Rangoon</i>)
1924—1928	A. McGhee
1929—1939	Thomas Frederick Monahan
1940—1941	Cecil John Chesshire
1941—1949	Eustace Bertram Rivers de Jersey
1949—1968	Charles Marsh
1969—	Walter Richard Iliffe

Thomas Dolman, Rector of Broome, 1709-1745, was guardian of the poet and landscape artist William Shenstone, of the Leasowes, Hales Owen (1714-1763). Thomas Dolman married Shenstone's maternal aunt, Mary Penn, at Churchill (17 Feb. 1725-6). She died in 1733. They had three children, Thomas, Nathaniel (died in infancy) and Mary. Prolonged law proceedings concerning their shares in the Harborough estates complicated Shenstone's relations with Thomas, but he had a warm regard for Mary (Maria) Dolman. She died of smallpox, aged 21, after a visit to London. Her burial is recorded at Broome, 7th April, 1754.