A History of St. Giles' Church Bubbenhall



Victoria Airey

Windows on Bubbenhall
A **Local History** Publication

A History of St. Giles' Church Bubbenhall

by

Victoria Airey

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To the inhabitants of
Bubbenhall, past and present,
several of whom have
contributed in different ways
to this book.

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Last but not least, my heartfelt thanks to Jan Lucas, former Chair of Bubbenhall Parish Council and Webmaster of Bubbenhall Village Website until 2023, who has been a working partner and friend over so many years.

Introduction

In 1979, well before the days of websites and the internet, I was asked by the Rev. Trevor Sykes, priest-in-charge of Bubbenhall from 1968 to 1999, if I would write a booklet on the history of our church. The result was Bubbenhall Church and its People, which also attempted to give some background about the parish, the clergy, and the inhabitants of the village.

Now, some forty-five years later, there are few copies of the booklet left and much further research has been done in the intervening years. The opportunity presents itself to write a new version of the church history, this time also in the form of a pdf script.

For those who prefer to read information on the history of the church in less detail a shorter version is available on the village website via this link https://www.bubbenhall.info/church.php

This book will also be posted there in due course.

Good Reading!

Vicky Airey

July 2025

1. St. Giles

The church is dedicated to Saint Giles, who was also known as Giles the Hermit. He was said to have been born in Athens but fled to Southern France, where he lived for a long time as a hermit, feeding on wild roots and herbs. He also befriended a hind, who nourished him with her milk. However, one day a royal hunting party was out shooting deer, but instead of killing the hind they accidentally wounded Giles with an arrow through his knee. He remained disabled for the rest of his life, but the king esteemed Giles' holiness so much that he was given land on which to build a monastery, and there he became abbot. He died c. 710–24. The monastery said to have been founded by him, at St. Gilles-du-Gard in Southern France, became a pilgrimage centre on the road to the famous shrine of St. James of Compostella in Spain.

Because of his lameness St. Giles became the patron saint of the handicapped, of cripples, beggars and lepers, but also of swineherds, spurmakers, and blacksmiths; also, by reason of the hind, of nursing mothers who had trouble producing milk. He became well known as one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers,



Figure 1: *Postcard view of the lane down to the church c.1900.*
In the foreground to the right, Woodbine Cottage, where the parish clerks of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries lived. Church House is on the left, nearest the church.

who each provided a specific form of assistance. Among others of the Helpers popular in medieval England were St. George and St. Christopher.

St. Giles became popular in Britain in the eleventh century when returning crusaders brought news of his cult. Some 160 churches have been dedicated to him in England alone, many of them being sited at crossroads with a smithy nearby for travellers' use, or near a hospital. It is not known why St. Giles was chosen as the patron saint of the church in Bubbenhall.

He is also patron saint of Edinburgh, and his patronal festival is on 1st September.

2. The Church Building

There was no church here in the days of the Domesday Survey. Its first mention was in a list of chapels belonging to Coventry Priory. Gerard la Pucelle, Bishop of Coventry 1183–85, issued a grant whereby he took the monastery and all its possessions under his spiritual protection. Here the Chapel of Bubbenhall is tacked onto an earlier list of chapels in and around Coventry given by Earl Ranulf of Chester to Coventry Priory by means of a charter. It would seem therefore that Bubbenhall already had a chapel in the time of Earl Ranulf, i.e. sometime before his death in 1153. The charter was undated but mentions Prior Laurence, who was appointed in 1144. It may well be that the Earl was responsible for building the chapel at Bubbenhall.[1]

In a report, Archaeological Observation at St. Giles's Church Bubbenhall, Warwickshire, produced by the Warwickshire County Museum Field Services Archaeology Projects Group in December 1999, it was stated that during the excavations of footings for a side extension north of the tower, ten burials and a scatter of thirteenth to fifteenth century pottery were revealed. One burial was recorded from below the base of the north-west buttress of the late thirteenth century nave, suggesting burials associated with the church or chapel recorded here in the twelfth century. No evidence for the building itself was recorded, however.





Figures 2 and 3: *The two late thirteenth century Green Men on either side of the baptistry arch. Photos: Author.*

[1] *See F. Bliss Burbidge, Old Coventry and Lady Godiva (Birmingham, 1952), pp. 94-95 and p. 160.*

The two neighbouring prebends of Bobenhull and Ryton were founded in 1248 after the churches had been granted to Bishop Weseham of Lichfield (1245–56) by Prior Roger of Coventry. By giving up the perpetual right to appoint clergy to these two churches the prior was able to retain patronage of St. Michael's Church in Coventry.[2] This agreement was confirmed by the bishop and the prebend of Bobenhull endowed in 1255. The prebendary's stall in the cathedral choir still carries an old spelling of the name of the parish, "BOBENHULL".

According to Nikolaus Pevsner's Warwickshire volume in The Buildings of England series the present church building is from the thirteenth-century: the chancel has red sandstone lancet windows, there are two late thirteenth-century Green Men with naturalistic foliage acting as head corbels at the tower arch looking towards the nave.

The nave itself has a finely moulded south doorway as well as a now blocked-up north doorway. The chancel is Early English too but has two Victorian side arches. The south quoins of the nave show that the chancel arch has been moved a little to the east. Until recently there was a small piece of medieval stained glass in the window of the vestry.



Figure 4: *The Norman Font. Photo: Author*

The font is late Norman and was restored to use in 1865, having disappeared and according to hearsay been used as a drinking trough at the mill. A marble font was in use for many years before the return of the font from the mill.

In the will of Mary Turner[3], who died in 1607, she gives instructions that she wishes to be buried beside her first husband, Henry Beere, who died in 1574. According to her description, he was buried in the aisle of Bubbenhall church beneath the chancel door.

[2] *See T. Sharp, Illustrative Papers on the History and Antiquities of Coventry (Birmingham, 1871) p.3.*
[3] *TNA: Prob 11/111.*

Neither aisle nor chancel door exist any longer, though an engraving in the Aylesford Collection[4] from 1800/1820 shows a possible blocked-up chancel doorway near the south-east end of the church, this part of the building having been rebuilt when the church was altered in the mid-nineteenth century. Another possibility is that the blocked-up opening nearest to the exterior buttress under the third chancel window on the south side is the remains of the original chancel door: the ground level would gradually have become higher over time as burials continued in the churchyard. A vent built into the wall of the church suggests that there might be a burial vault nearby.



Figure 5: *Blocked-up opening, possibly with a nearby Beere family burial vault. Photo: Author.*

There is no further information about the structure or interior of the church until Sir William Dugdale's Antiquities of Warwickshire, published in the second half of the seventeenth century with its illustrated description of the coats of arms in the chancel windows.

[4] *In the collections of Birmingham Library (Birmingham Archives and Collections) – from a series of Warwickshire engravings of seats of the nobility, churches, etc. done by a Mr. Jeayes, drawing master, Coventry.*

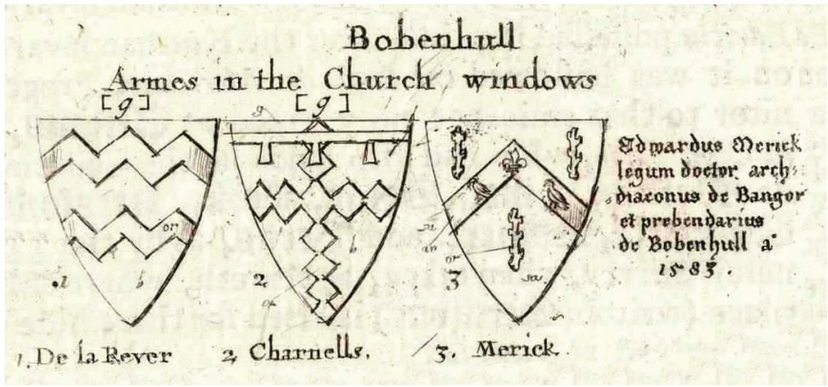


Figure 6: *Coats of Arms in Bubbenhall Church Windows* [5]

Edmund Merick, Doctor at Law, Archdeacon of Bangor (alias Edmund ap Meurig), was born c. 1530 at Bodorgan, Llangadwaladr, Anglesey. He was Prebendary of Bubbenhall in the late sixteenth century until his death in 1605. In his will[6] he directed, "And my bodie to be buried in the Chancell of Bobenhill or in the Cathedrall church of Lichfield or in burial where it shall please God to dispose."

In the second edition of Dugdale's work on Warwickshire, published in 1730, revised and with additions, there is also a description of the monuments in the chancel of the church to both Edward and Katherine Draper, with inscriptions on two flat stones, probably removed during the 1860s. The first of these also had a coat of arms and a motto in French. Several generations of the Draper family lived at the house at the Cross, now known as the Manor House. Edward made a good marriage with Millicent, daughter of Thomas Clerke, Lord of the Manor of Wolfhampcote. He also inherited a house and lands at Easenhall from his father, David. However, Edward died in 1667 before his son had completed his education. Edward was ill and asked for his father-in-law to come over from Wolfhamcote to discuss final arrangements, having previously made a will in 1658 but without settling the inheritance of his land, but Edward died on a Sunday morning and Thomas Clerke did not reach him in time. Edward gave instructions to his wife which were approved by his earlier appointed executors and the matter was settled amicably.

[5] *De la Rever: 2 bars indented or*
Charnells: A cross indenting with a label of 3 points overall
Merick: Sable on a chevron a fleur de lys between two martlets, between two ragged staffs or.

[6] *Will of Edmonde Meyricke, The National Archives (TNA) PROB 11/107/454.*

On a bend slipt carnations with a border engrailed. Motto: Rien san travail.[7]

> *"Here lieth interred the body of Katherine, wife of Samuel Wade of Whaberley, In the parish of Stonely, and County of Warwicke, Gent. and daughter to Edward Draper of this Parish, Gent. Who departed this life 18th December 166…"*
>
> [The Parish Register states 1667]
>
> *"Here lies the body of Edward Draper*
> *Gent. who deceased the 8th day of September A.D. 1667*
> *It is a maxim, neither*
> *Birth or state,*
> *Honour nor goodness, can divert our Fate"*

The only extant evidence of the church building from the early seventeenth century is in the church porch. The outer beam is dated 1616 and even more clearly, over the inner south door, is carved 'JB: PA: CW.' (John Busbie: Peter Atkins: Churchwardens.)



Figures 7 and 8: *The outer and inner porch beams. Photos: Author.*

[7] *In translation: "Nothing without work"*

In 1685, however, the Visitation Records[8] state that Thomas Ebourne and Thomas Edwards are "to bring in their presentation copy of the Register and Terrier of the glebeland and the said Eborne to take his oathe etc". In 1686 Thomas Edwards and Thomas Eborne are to "certifie that their communion table is railed in cercature". (i.e. the altar was replaced by a table, which was railed in.)

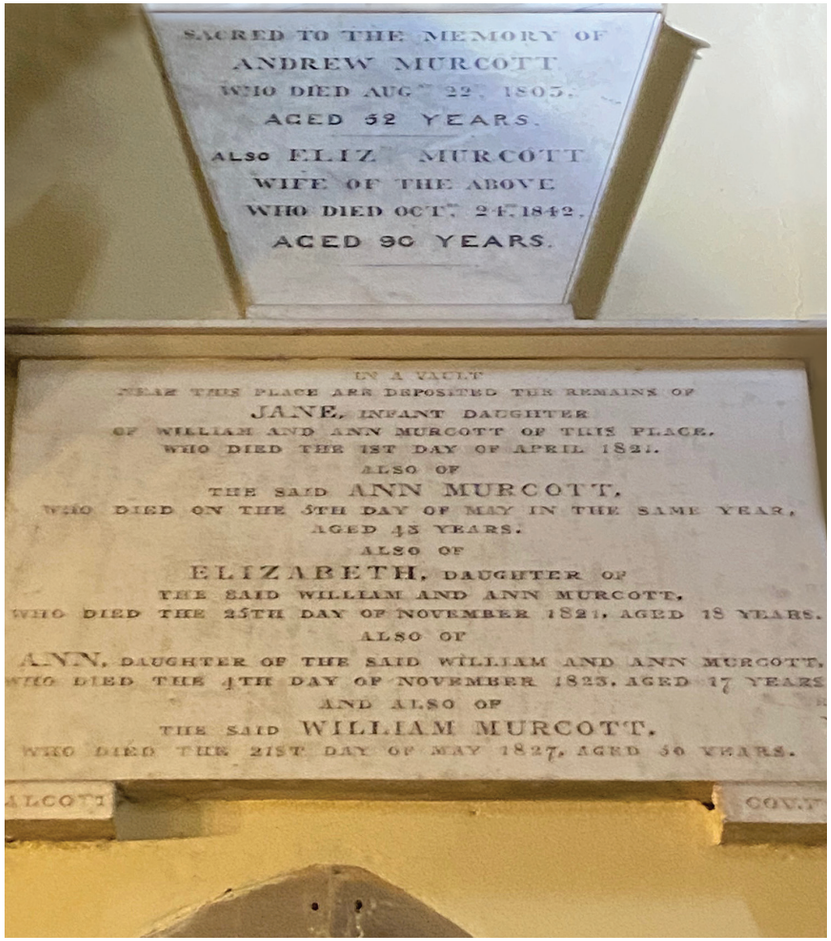


Figure 9: *The Murcott monument. Photo: Author.*

[8] *Visitations, or Church Courts, held regularly by the diocese (in this case Lichfield). The local church court for Bubbenhall would have been in Coventry. Matters brought up included the granting of probate after a death. Visitation Records 1685: Staffordshire Record Office: B/V/1/86: for 1684–93: B/V/1/85.*

From the first half of the nineteenth century, a wall plaque above the vestry door on the north side of the chancel records the death of Andrew Murcott in 1803 at the age of 52 years. His wife Elizabeth (née Ashmore) died at the age of 90 in 1842, a noteworthy age in the mid-nineteenth century.

A plaque below records the deaths of his eldest son, William, and family, up to William's death at the age of 56. He and his wife had four daughters but no sons. Their last child, Jane, died in infancy in 1821, her mother just over a month later, presumably in the aftermath of this sad childbirth.

In November of the same year their eighteen-year-old daughter, Elizabeth, died, and in November two years later their seventeen-year-old daughter, Ann. Now their only surviving child was Caroline, born in 1815, the year of the Battle of Waterloo.

As the nineteenth century progressed the fortunes of this branch of the family, who lived at the Cross House, progressed from bad to worse. In November 1990, while doing some repair work under the choir stalls, also on the north side of the chancel, a burial vault was discovered, thought to be the burial vault of the Murcott family.

3. Bells and Bell Ringing

Until recently the church had only three bells:

- dated c.1580–1600 (cast by Newcombe)
- 1670 (cast by Henry Bagley) and
- 1813 (cast by Thomas Mears).

The Churchwardens' Accounts of 1809–1938[9] mention:

> 1812 "for bell ropes £1-2-6."
>
> 1813 "Pd. Mr. Over for new casting & mending the gt. bell £36-1-6 Pd. Thos. Jeacock for his bill for Ale, eating etc. while at work at the church the bell etc. £4-6-4. Pd. Josh. Mills for Iron work for the Steeple £10-3-10."

Miss Twigger's typescript History of Bubbenhall, written in 1962, mentions that in 1927 the bells were re-hung.

In the early nineteenth century the bells used to be rung every year to commemorate "Gunpowder Treason" on 5th November and the anniversary of the king's (George III's) coronation, 22nd September. Here is the entry in the Churchwardens' Accounts for 1810:

> "4/- for coronation & gunpowder traison jubilee."

On 24th October 1865 and again in July 1866 the Churchwardens' Accounts record payments for ringing the bells at the opening of the church after the enormous restoration project. The Coventry Standard reported on 28th July 1866, that "The old building was as ugly as it was uncomfortable." At the re-opening on 17th July a "triumphal arch was erected at the entrance to the churchyard… and the flags were flying in various parts of the village. It was a red-letter day in the history of the village, and the people generally kept holiday."

In the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries the bells were rung on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, and the ringers used to scratch their

[9] *WCRO: DR0519/1*

names in pencil on the whitewashed walls of the belfry. Here are some of the inscriptions which were still legible in 1967:

> "Elliott 4 1894
> Henry Elliott carried up"
>
> "Mr. Sneath Nov. 12th 1936"
>
> "Xmas 1937 Mrs. Wilkins"
>
> "1943:
> R. Elliott J. Hancock
> S. Ruck G. Elliott
> M. Summerton M. Sibley
> G. Austin J. Bourke"

After the Second World War a number of the same ringers and a few others would go down to the church regularly on Christmas Eve and again on New Year's Eve, climb up into the belfry and ring at midnight. The ringers for New Year's Eve 1954 are listed as G. Glover, R. Elliott, S. Ruck, G. Elliott.

There is also an instruction on one of the walls:

> "When the Bell's up
> Pull the Clock Hammer down"

The reference above to Mr. Sneath records the day the new Rector, The Rev. William Sneath MA, formerly incumbent of Withyham with Blackham in the Diocese of Chichester, was instituted in his new parish.

Eventually the three bells could not be rung because they were hung in an early seventeenth-century timber frame. In the 1950s they were converted for chiming by having ropes attached to their clappers. They were then operated from the baptistry instead of, as earlier, the belfry. These three old bells were always rung, or later chimed, in traditional order: A, C-flat, B-flat, over and over again.

The New Bells

Donations in memory of our longstanding priest-in-charge, Trevor Sykes, as well as David Limbrick, and Norman & Cora Perks, led to a matching grant from ENTRUST, enabling the restoration of the bells and the bell chamber.

This project took place in the millennium year 2000 and coincided with work begun on the renovation and re-decoration of the baptistry and the rear of the church. The BBC made a documentary programme for BBC1 about the ongoing improvements in the church, concentrating on the renovation of the bells but also including the relocation of the font and the creation of an activity area.

The old tenor bell by Thomas Mears II, London, 1813 was used for its metal in the casting of four new bells, whilst the largest of three bells from the redundant church of St. Bartholomew at Little Packington became the fifth bell. The old second bell of the original three at Bubbenhall by Henry Bagley I, c. 1670, became the tenor in the new ring of six bells. The old Bubbenhall treble bell by Newcombe of Leicester, c. 1580–1600, has been retained in situ, but is not in use at present.

The bells were installed in the first week of September 2000 and dedicated on September 17th. The new bells were cast without canons (loops of bronze equally distanced from each other, encircling the top of the bell and cast together with the bell itself), but the older ones retain theirs. The two old bells were tuned and new fittings were supplied, together with a cast-iron-and steel two-tier frame installed lower in the tower below the old frame. The work was carried out by J. Taylor of Loughborough.

The first quarter peal on the new ring of six bells was rung on 27th January, 2001, in memory of J. Trevor Sykes, 1968–99.

The six bells are now:

1. By John Taylor, Loughborough, 2000, weight 236 pounds.
New. G
IN LOVING MEMORY OF/DAVID LESLIE LIMBRICK/21-11-65
–28-9-98/FROM ALL YOUR FAMILY/AND FRIENDS.

2. By John Taylor, Loughborough, 2000, weight 286 pounds.
New. F
THIS BELL/ IS GIVEN AND DEDICATED TO/NORMAN AND
CORA PERKS/MEMBERS OF THIS CHURCH/FOR MANY YEARS.

3. By John Taylor, Loughborough, 2000, weight 326 pounds.
Recast. E Flat

WE FOUR BELLS/WERE CAST FROM/THE TENOR OF FORMER
YEARS/WHO WAS CAST IN LONDON/THE FOUNDER THOMAS
MEARS/A.D. 1813

4. By John Taylor, Loughborough, 2000, weight 370 pounds.
New. D
IN MEMORY OF/ REVEREND JOHN TREVOR SYKES/32
YEARS PARISH PRIEST. /THIS BELL IS DEDICATED/TO HIS
GRANDCHILDREN.

5. By Edward(?) Newcombe, Leicester, c 1588/1600, weight 475 pounds.
No dates on the bell. C
Formerly the largest of the three bells at the now redundant St. Bartholomew's, Little Packington. The sound is a bit dull – characteristic for that age of bell.

6. By Henry Bagley I, Chacombe, 1670, weight 591 pounds.
The tenor bell. B Flat
The inscription includes the name WILLIAM CLARKE. This bell has a particularly beautiful sound.

The old treble cast by one of the Newcombes of Leicester, c.1580–1600, has been retained as the clock-strike bell, but is not in use at the moment.



Figure 10: *The old Bubbenhall treble bell with clock strike. Photo: Peter Sheen.*



Figure 11: *The new bell dedicated to the Rev. Trevor Sykes. Photo: Peter Sheen.*

The four new bells were cast by the Loughborough Foundry of John Taylor in 2000. John Taylor & Co. continues a line of bell founding unbroken since the mid-fourteenth century, when Johannes de Stafford was active only 10 miles away from the site of the present foundry. The foundry has been operated by members of the Taylor family since 1784. It moved to Loughborough in 1839 as a condition of its contract to recast the bells of Loughborough Parish Church. In 1877 the Taylors cast the great ring of twelve bells for St. Paul's Cathedral and in 1881 Great Paul.

Taylors took a party of bellringers from Bubbenhall to their furnace, to watch the Mears bell being melted down. A little metal was added, and all four bells provided and fully inscribed – a celebration of the millennium. The bells went into the tower in July/August 2000.[10]

[10] *Information on the state of the old bells and on the new bells project from Peter Sheen, 2021–22.*

History of the Three Original Bubbenhall Bells

The clock bell is the original No1 bell, a treble. It still has canons but one is cracked. The smallest of the bells, it bears only a patterned ring around the haunch. This was the oldest of those up in the tower. Taylors dated it to somewhere around 1585–1600, because it carries no inscription and is slightly vertical in section, an older format.

In The Church Bells of Warwickshire by the Rev. H. T. Tilley & H.B. Walters, published in 1910, there is, however, a note on p.30 of an inscription:

+ A + A B D C BD BDC EFG (see illustration in Tilley & Walters)

They state that two other Warwickshire churches, at Bourton-on-Dunsmore and Lower Shuckburgh, have similar crosses and letters of the alphabet. These are characteristic of Thomas Newcombe (1562–80), though there is no explanation of their possible meaning. Nevertheless, they think the bell may be by his predecessor, or his successor, Robert Newcombe II (1580–98).

The Newcombes of the parish of All Saints, Leicester, were a large family of several generations, married into two other sixteenth century bell-founding families there. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, they appear to have cast aside their old initial crosses and other marks as well as their old sets of letters and forms of inscription. Later they used a cross and plain Roman capitals.

The last dated bells of the Newcombes in Leicestershire are from 1612. They then merged with the Watts family, or may have been taken over by them.

The original No. 2 bell was made by Henry Bagley I and cast-dated to 1670 at the haunch with churchwardens' initials cast into the ribbon. There is, in fact, a name visible, WILLIAM CLARKE. It weighs around 5cwt and has a collared frame so that the canons were retained.

Henry Bagley I established the Chacombe bell foundry near Banbury in 1631. It lasted for 150 years. Henry Bagley I worked from 1631 to 1674 and died in 1682/83 around the age of 75. There was a long gap in his activity during the Civil War, the Battles of Edgehill (1642) and Cropredy (1644) taking place in the vicinity. In 1674 he took his son, Henry Bagley II, into partnership and together they cast a ring of six bells at St. Michael's, Coventry, working on site. The choice of the Bagley Foundry in the late seventeenth century

may be related to the fact that Bubbenhall still had manorial connections with Burton Dassett at that time. Henry Bagley was a leading bell founder during that century.

The original No. 3 bell was cast as a tenor bell by Thomas Mears II of the Whitechapel Foundry in London in 1813. There is an entry in the Bubbenhall Churchwardens' Accounts for 1813: "Pd. Mr. Over for new casting & mending the gt. bell £36-1-6", which would seem to refer to the recasting of this bell at that time. By 2000 the sound of this bell was so bad that it could not be re-tuned, and was therefore melted down and incorporated with the new bells. Whitechapel is possibly the oldest and best-known bell foundry in England and dates back to the Middle Ages. Thomas Mears II's grandfather, William Mears, joined the firm as an apprentice in 1762. The bell of Big Ben that strikes the hour was recast by George Mears, a later member of the family, in 1858. The last of the Mears at the Whitechapel Foundry died in 1873.

4. Work on the Church: *Restoration and Modern Additions*

In 1813 the Churchwardens' Accounts[11] have the earliest reference to winding up the clock; and in 1852 £10 was paid for "Mr Woods' bill for a new dial to the church clock". In 1880 Alfred Eaton, the village carpenter (who by the late nineteenth century was also the caretaker of Bubbenhall Reading Room), was paid 5/6d for work on the old clock case and in 1924 the clock was regilded for £4 0s 5d. The entry of 1925 of £5 for the repair of the church clock is typical of further entries. During a long period after the Second World War the clock hands were still but in 1974, after various repairs and renovations it was once more in working order.

In 1814 "Messrs Parkin and Cooper for an iron chest £4 10s 0d" records the purchase of the last parish chest. This was kept up in the church belfry.

An illustration exists of Bubbenhall church c. 1800. This is from a series of Warwickshire engravings of seats of the nobility, churches, etc. done by a Mr. Jeayes, drawing master, Coventry[12]. He was commissioned in 1792 by three Coventry businessmen, Thomas Sharp, John Nicholson, and George Howlet, to provide illustrations for their copies of Dugdale's Antiquities of Warwickshire. George Howlet, from Bedworth, was probably related to the Howletts of Old House Farm, Bubbenhall.

According to the Churchwardens' Accounts for 1857 £10 5s 0d was paid for a new ceiling for the church, and this was followed in the 1860s by an extensive series of renovations, alterations and additions – a new roof, new open pews instead of the old square box pews, new neo-medieval encaustic tiles from the firm of Minton, a rebuilding of the east end and the addition of the vestry, complete with a window enclosing an old mitre-shaped piece of painted green and black glass. In 1864 the Rev. Arthur Adolphus Fanshawe refers to planned alterations in the chancel, including a new east window and the opening of two small chancel arches. There is a faculty, or official dispensation granted by the

[11] *Warwickshire County Record Office: DR0519/1*

[12] *One set (Thomas Sharp's) of engravings was purchased by Lord Aylesford of Packington Hall in 1821. In 1885 this set was acquired by Birmingham City Library and is still in existence in the present-day Birmingham Archives and Collections: MS 3015/3/p55.*

ecclesiastical authorities for altering or making an addition/additions to the church, dated 14th September, 1865, including re-arrangement of the pews: *"It is proposed to make certain alterations and additions and particularly to build a new vestry on the North side of the chancel, to remove the Pulpit, reading desk, and Font from their present positions and to re-arrange the pews and seating in the said church and chancel thereof as shown on certain plans prepared for the purpose and deposited with the said Petition in the Registry of our said Consistory Court".*[13] The vestry meeting of 10th August, 1865, approved this and a notice was to be put up in the Church porch.

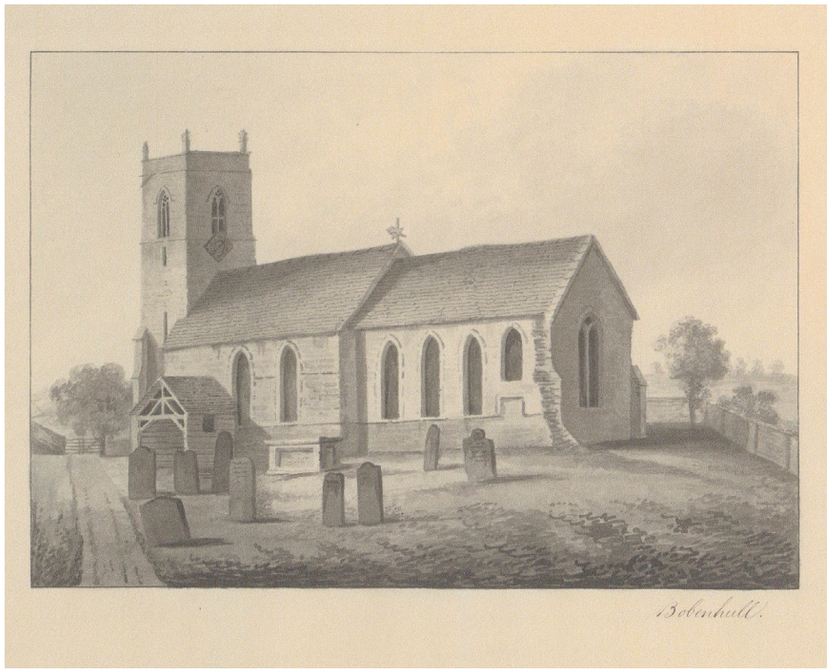


Figure 12: *Engraving of Bubbenhall Church c. 1800. Aylesford Collection, Birmingham.*

Interestingly, none of the expenses for these alterations are itemised in the Churchwardens' Accounts. Church land comprising 14 acres 3 roods 20 perches, in the Harps Field in Paget's Lane, had already been set aside in 1726 for the repair of the church. It is possible that the Rev. Arthur Fanshawe saw fit,

[13] *Warwickshire County Record Office: DR0012/12.*

in addition, to use some of the income from the former prebendal farmland, in 1863 officially gazetted as glebe land for the benefit of the incumbent. This land comprised 111 acres 2 roods 16 perches. According to the detailed article from Bubbenhall entitled "Restoration of the Church", in the Coventry Standard on 28th July 1866, the old west end gallery was taken down and the tower arch opened up to allow for the formation of a baptistry. The old flat plastered ceiling was replaced by an open timber roof of stained deal, and the blank walls on either side of the chancel arch opened up. The new vestry meant that clergy no longer had to robe in the chancel. The work was carried out by Mr. James Marriott of Coventry, to a design by Mr. George Punshon of Leamington. A large proportion of the expense however – £1,100 – was defrayed by Rev. A.A. Fanshawe out of his own pocket.

The new stone reredos, a copy of Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper", had also been put in place in 1865, and an elaborate neo-Gothic pulpit of Caen stone with marble columns was placed in front of the south arch of the chancel. Balancing this on the north side, the north arch became the entrance to the stone reading lectern walled in above the large right-angled square pew of



Figure 13: *The church interior with Victorian additions.*

the Murcott Grimes family. The original font, said to have been rescued from Bubbenhall mill, where it was being used as a drinking trough, was placed in the new baptistry.

Among the details reported from 17th July, 1866, the day the church was re-opened with a big service and many clergy and other important visitors, the Coventry Standard points out that in his first three years Mr. Fanshawe had built a schoolroom, personally bearing much of the cost, and had now turned his energies to restoring the church. At the dejeuner after the service one of the churchwardens, Mr. Sprawson, expressed the sentiment that "the Rector was the greatest friend to the parish that Bubbenhall had possessed". It was remarked by one of the clergy present that the restored building, which he understood had not been particularly beautiful, was now "quite a model village church".

In 1869 a pair of new candlesticks were bought to provide the finishing touch to the new altarpiece. In 1897 some work was done on the church porch and also around the turn of the century a number of memorial stained-glass windows by Kempe were put into the chancel windows and one of the south nave windows. The nave window, from 1902, was originally intended to commemorate William Howlett Grimes (d. 1898) and his wife, Elizabeth Murcott Grimes (1899), but then, in consideration of "poor Bob's" death in 1901, also named their son, Robert Ledbrook Grimes, who was killed in the Boer War. A faculty giving permission for the placing of a memorial tablet to Robert Ledbrook Grimes was also granted in 1902, and on March 16th, 1920 a further faculty for a memorial tablet to the dead of World War I.[14]

[14] *Warwickshire County Record Office: DR0012/13 and DR0012/14.*



Figure 14: *Inscription on memorial window on the south side of the nave. Photo: Author.*

A further renovation of the church interior was carried out in 1931 and in 1933 Mr. Cowley installed electric light in the church in memory of his mother. The original glass lampshades of frilly shape still survive in use. According to a Church Magazine entry for May, 1938, he also gave a lantern, which was placed at the church gate so that it was easy to see on dark nights the way down the church path to Evensong. He always used also to provide pots of lilies to decorate the chancel for Easter. In the 1930s and 1960s repairs and renovations took place every few years; in the early 1950s a new heating system was installed, and not quite a hundred years after the careful Victorian additions to the church, the Victorian pulpit and lectern plus additions to the chancel pillars of leaf-moulded capitals were taken out. An oak pulpit was installed by the chancel arch on the north side. Mr. Cowley also donated the oak pulpit and lectern to the church in memory of his housekeeper, Miss Hopkins, who died in 1959.

The harmonium bought in 1922 for 6 guineas from Hanson's in Leamington and located at the back of the church near the baptistry, was replaced in the early 1950s by an organ from Ryton church and choir robes were bought from

a fund from the Coventry Fire Brigade, as an act of gratitude to their wartime chaplain, Canon Bennett, from 1954-1958 Rector of Bubbenhall and a keen musician. In 1955 a programme of restoration work on the church building was started, including taking out the Victorian pulpit and lectern on either side of the main aisle. The organ was then installed where the pulpit had been. The heating system was also renewed. Much of this work was carried out by the parishioners themselves in a time of economic stringency.[15] In 1968 the old organ was replaced by a new small organ from Mr. Sheffield of Solihull (maker).

Miss Twigger, writing in 1962, as Secretary of the Parochial Church Council, about the history of the church,[16] records that, "In 1927 an examination of the tower by Mr. Chatwin (Diocesan Architect) proved that the stonework was in a bad state. A public subscription was opened immediately, and repairs were carried out by the Church Restoration Company of Nottingham. The walls were pointed and the cracks grouted. The battlements and pinnacles were taken down and re-built, the roof of the tower completely re-built, the old lead being re-cast and re-laid. The bells were re-hung, and a flag-pole and lightning conductor added, and pointing and grouting was done in the lower part of the wall of the chancel and nave. Donations and proceeds from a Garden Party totaled £353.4.6d, the actual cost of the repairs and expenses being £344.14.6d, and the balance of £8.10.0d went into the Church Repair Fund."

In 1998 work was started on the building of a new extension on the north side of the tower, to include a kitchen, toilet, and access to the tower. This was completed in 2001. In conjunction with the restoration of the bells in 2000, work was begun on the renovation and re-decoration of the baptistry and the rear of the church. The font was moved to the north-west corner of the nave. The work was made possible by a combination of grants and donations. The grants arose from the local landfill tax charged for the gravel extraction carried out by Smiths Concrete, whereby ENTRUST, a government organization, would match any donations made towards projects of benefit to the community if the community project paid 10% towards the requested grant. Smiths were

[15] *See "Volunteers to Repair Church", Coventry Evening Telegraph, 29th September, 1955.*
[16] *See F.E. Twigger, A History of Bubbenhall, 1962. Typescript.*

very keen to support St. Giles' church and kindly made two contributions themselves, of £3,000 and £2,000 respectively, to obtain grants of £30,000 and £20,000 for the project. Without this support the project for the kitchen, toilet, and disabled access would not have been possible.[17]

[17] *Information from David Hollway, Treasurer, Parochial Church Council.*

5. The War Memorial

Nine lads from Bubbenhall died in the First World War, often called the Great War, including two pairs of brothers. Harry Elliott joined up on 8th September, 1914, during the peak period of recruitment, when news of the British retreat following the Battle of Mons reached Britain. He even falsified his age by two years to get into the army. His younger brother, however, born in 1900, was recruited towards the end of the War, when a shortage of sufficiently healthy young men at this stage meant that the British government overturned their promise that no one under 19 years of age would be sent overseas to fight. In April 1918 they lowered the age to 18 after suffering a near-defeat on the Western Front. The Mills family also lost two of their sons, Arthur James, aged twenty, and Walter Robert, aged twenty-five, who was buried on the north side of Bubbenhall churchyard. He was the last of the Bubbenhall men to die as a result of the War. Posted to Salonika in Greece, he was sent home seriously wounded to Winchester in March 1918, and died of pneumonia in a military hospital there almost a year later, a few months after the Armistice.



Figure 15: *The War Memorial. Photo: Author.*

Of the eight who died across the Channel, two fell in Belgian Flanders in 1916 and 1917, in the area known as the Ypres Salient[18] where five battles took place between 1914 and 1918; four fell on the Somme between 1916 and 1918; and two fell in the Cambrai-Arras area in Picardy in 1918. Both Samuel Fellows and Howard Drinkwater joined the Machine Gun Corps, formed in October 1915, having earlier been members of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and the Warwickshire Yeomanry respectively, suggesting that they joined up before the autumn of 1915. The cemeteries where the men are commemorated, or in three cases actually buried in a known grave, vary from the huge memorials dividing up the dead of the Ypres Salient and the Somme according to when they were killed, to communal cemetery extensions of local French cemeteries such as Noyelles-sur-l'Escaut.

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Figure 16: *Inscription on memorial window on the south side of the nave. Photo: Author.*

Our own memorial in Bubbenhall Church might well have included a tenth man, Sidney William Dowell from Bubbenhall, who is commemorated on the family grave on the north side of the churchyard and also on the War Memorial in Church Street, Warwick, since he had married a Warwick girl. It was in May 1916 that conscription was extended to married men, and this may well have been when Sidney William Dowell was called up.

Of those at home in Bubbenhall, John Waring left an invalid father. By the end of the War John Darlow's family in Bubbenhall was reduced to a widowed mother and a daughter who never married. Samuel Fellows and Fred Vincent were originally from Coventry, Fred's father being the licensee at the Three Horse Shoes, whilst Howard Drinkwater, originally from Willoughby near Rugby, died just six weeks and a day before the Armistice, aged twenty-two. In the Elliott household the two younger of three sons were now dead, and their parents,

[18] *A salient is a battlefield feature projecting into enemy territory.*

devastated, struggled on for the sake of their surviving boy, Bill. The two youngest boys in the large Mills family had been killed, but at least the War Graves Commission had provided one of them with a grave that could be visited and tended at home in the village.

A further tablet was added to the war memorial after the Second World War. The gap between the two was a little less than twenty-one years. Two more young men lost their lives as a result: Roderick Kenneth Bourne, a flying officer with the RAF Volunteer Reserve out in the Far East, aged 28, and Kenneth George Athersuch, whose family had come to the village in the 1920s. They lived in the old blacksmith's cottage opposite The Malt Shovel, and his father worked as an aircraft inspector at Baginton. Kenneth George Athersuch was killed on February 24th, 1945, only months before the end of the war, and was buried at the Reichswald Forest War Cemetery in Germany. He was just 21 years old.

6. The Churchyard

In 1816 John Bayless made the "churchyard rode" – and when this was widened, re-cut and gravelled in the 1950s, a number of bones and skulls were found near the ground surface.

In 1912 Alfred Eaton, sexton, was in charge of a new church gates fund.

In 1929 the churchyard was extended on the eastern side to take in part of Mr. Hamilton Cowley's field, Town Barn. A Coventry solicitor, he was living at Church House from 1919, but early in 1922 moved to the Manor House, which he now owned. He was churchwarden in that same year. "Stone and cartage" for the surrounding wall, some of it dressed stone and moulded, presumably from the nineteenth century alterations to the church, came to £29 5s 6d. He it was, too, who had flowering almond and laburnum trees planted round the northern and eastern perimeters of the churchyard – as well as flowering cherries. His stretch of the river bank in Town Barn also contained some beautiful chestnut trees and shrubs. It was Mr. Cowley who had the chestnut trees planted down the lane to the church, probably c. 1926.

In the churchyard there are many interesting early eighteenth-century sandstone tombstones of a type found in the churchyards of the Avon valley. The raw material for these needed to be harder than that for building, since it was to be cut into slabs, which seem on average to have been some 4-5 inches thick, and were required to take incised lettering and designs and often also bold relief carving. It is considered, however, that the Enville Beds of the Stoneleigh/Kenilworth area might have provided harder and thus more suitable material.[19]

Even by the early eighteenth century it was the exception rather than the rule for people to be buried inside the church. Instead, those classed as gentlemen and/or the most substantial yeomen farmers and their wives were buried in the churchyard in large tombs in the form of a chest, or alternatively under a large slab of stone, known as a ledger. It is often said that these big heavy slabs were deliberately used to prevent the body snatching prevalent from the late eighteenth century, for which a good price was paid for the purposes of anatomical dissection. These chest and slab tombs are easy to pick out here

[19] *Letter from M.G. Sumbler, British Geological Survey, 18th August, 1986.*

on the south side of the churchyard. The earliest are three chest tombs almost opposite the church porch. Only one of them, that of Samuel Busby (1699–1758) and his wife, Elizabeth (d.1747), still has a legible inscription, but it is likely that the early-looking chest tomb – probably the earliest chest tomb in the churchyard – standing nearby on its own, belonged to his eldest brother, John (1697–1734), The other chest tomb in front of Samuel's and exactly similar in design, which I happened to witness sinking into the ground in 2003 during a long spell of exceptionally dry weather, is almost certainly that of the youngest of the three brothers, Henry Busby (1702–1761), who established the malthouse which eventually became the Malt Shovel. Samuel and Henry's young nephew, Samuel – baptised only three days before his father, John, was buried in May 1734 at the age of 36 – inherited Church House, and he, too, was classed a gentleman. Samuel and his wife, Mary, are buried under a huge slab of stone near the churchyard wall to the south of his uncles' chest tombs – she in 1769 and he in 1772.

Very close to the wall of the church, near where the nave and the chancel meet, is a large red sandstone chest tomb standing on its own. The lettering of the inscription is now no longer readable, but many years ago it could be identified as a member of the Beere family. Since there was only one member of the family officially acknowledged in the parish registers as a gentleman, it is most likely that this is the tomb of Mr. Henry Beere, who lived at the farm once standing at the foot of Pit Hill opposite The Spout and died in 1765. To the west of the church tower are chest tombs to his descendants, the Howletts, and to the Grimes family with whom the Howletts became intermarried.

The third group of status tombs can be seen to the left of the church path on the south side – three large, very thick slabs, or ledgers, of sandstone set on solid bases, with their beautiful lettering still partly visible round the sides. There are buried William and Elizabeth Clarke, and William's brother, Joshua, with his wife, Mary. The third grave slab is unidentified but may have been for one of their other brothers, John or Henry, since all seem to have been made around the same period. William's wife, Elizabeth, died in 1786. Her will indicates that she set great store by her clothes, among which are "my Lay Lock [i.e. lilac] coloured Cotton Gown", and a "purple and White cotton Gown", as well as her two silk gowns.

As for the more modest memorials on the south side of the churchyard it is as if almost all those who had a voice in the parish community during the earlier

part of the eighteenth century are represented there by those thick, red-brown sandstone tombstones. The earliest identifiable of these, near the area now set aside for cremation burials, is that of Mary, wife of William Priest, who died in 1705. Out of some forty deaths recorded in the parish register between 1726 and 1734, the period of Enclosure Award activity, some 28 tombstones of the period are known. In the Enclosure Award accounts[20] there are many references to building work by John Cotton, stonemason, an inhabitant of Bubbenhall from at least the year 1694, when he married Christian Wright of Bishop's Itchington. It is quite possible that he also turned his hand to fashioning churchyard headstones. A John Cotton is recorded as being born in Wolston in the 1670s and may well be the same person, in which case it is understandable that a number of similar tombstones from the same period, to be seen in Wolston churchyard, may have been cut by him. To the right of the churchyard path in Bubbenhall members of the Beere family are buried in rows near the chest tomb supposedly of Henry Beere, the Davis family with whom they were intermarried being in adjacent rows. Among them, for instance, is an unidentified headstone, clearly of the first half of the eighteenth century, paralleled by a tombstone in Wolston churchyard, that of Mary, wife of Joshua Lickorish, is dated 1734.

To the left of the churchyard path, the Busby family members are buried in a row near the Busby chest tombs, the first in the row being Samuel, yeoman, who was buried on March 23rd, 1728, further in that of John Busby, probably



Figures 17 and 18: *Bubbenhall and Wolston tombstones, possibly by John Cotton, stonemason. Photos: Author*

[20] *Warwickshire County Record Office: Z0413(SM)*

his brother who died in 1725, and the last being that of William Ledbrooke Murcott, infant son of William and Mary Ann Murcott, who died in 1851, the Murcotts having inherited Church House in 1772 from the last Samuel Busby. The south-western part to the left of the churchyard path appears to have been favoured mainly by the leading specialist families in the village community – the Busby and Orton families who were millers, and, a little farther eastwards, Thomas and Mary Lewis, alesellers.



Figure 19: *Thomas (d. 1729) and Mary Lewis (d. 1731), ale sellers, who also had accommodation on the site of the present-day Three Horse Shoes. Photo: Author*

The Satchwells, and Josiah Sparrow's family, nineteenth century innkeepers, were also buried to the south-west, as were Walter Ruck, butcher, and his wife Ethel Nellie Ruck, who died in the 1950s. Near the main churchyard gate, to the left of the path, are two thick red sandstone tombstones, to Robert Woodfield, who died in 1733, and his daughter, Mary, who died in 1729. Robert Woodfield's epitaph on the back of the headstone reads:

"Here Lyes Interr'd the Body of
Robert Woodfield
Who hath been in Wars,
To Man he'd never yield He
Sarv'd his Country Twenty-three years …"

Beyond the church porch and nearest the church building is a headstone to Catherine Phillips. The front of this headstone is now crumbling badly.

Her epitaph on the back of the headstone is still legible though, and reads:

"Here lyeth one that
Could take no Rest
Because her flesh was
sore opprest
But now we hope
Her Soul is sure
Of joy and Bliss
For ever more."

Catherine does indeed appear to have died in connection with childbirth on July 20th, 1732, her son James dying on July 29th in the same year. A headstone to the two dead sons of Catherine and Thomas Phillips, John, who died in 1728 and James in 1732, is next to hers. Nearby is a headstone with tulip ornamentation, still especially fashionable in the early years of the eighteenth century.

A number of tombstones with similar designs to those of Bubbenhall are to be found in nearby parishes. Thick sandstone headstones from the first half of the eighteenth century are to be found generally in many churchyards of the Avon valley. Supplies of stone may have been transported by water, by means of the river Avon and its tributary in the Coventry area, the Sowe, or loaded onto carts and wagons and transported along the roads.



Figure 20: *Old tombstones on the south side of the churchyard. Photo: Author.*

7. The Prebendal System

The Prebend of "Bobenhull" was endowed by Lichfield diocese in 1255. In 1321–22 and 1337–38 a grange is named, and in 1387 a Rectory. This, the prebendal farm with its land, plus tithes from parishioners, provided an income for the absentee senior clergyman, the prebendary (or prebend), whose priest performed the actual ecclesiastical duties in the parish. The grange or rectory land (the prebendal estate, also known as the glebe) was in the open fields and common meadows, and would have varied over time.

In the late seventeenth century the prebendal estate was administered by impropriators, gentlemen farmers who, in return for a fixed rent, farmed or sub-let the land and exacted the tithes. Most of the tithes were commuted at the time of Parliamentary Enclosure of the parish (1726), but the increased amount of land granted to the prebendary in lieu of tithe contributions continued to be farmed by lay people – Sir William Bromley of Baginton Hall, Speaker of the House of Commons, had become the new Lord of the Manor in 1717 and almost immediately took on the lease of the prebendal estate. The Bromley family continued as lessees until the 1830s. The prebendal "mansion house" as it was often called in eighteenth and nineteenth century documents i.e. an actual farmhouse, was also in the hands of the lessee.

The clergy who now served the parish as perpetual curates were, from at least the first half of the eighteenth century, from neighbouring parishes, and were constantly coming and going. They were paid a pittance, the lessee of the prebendal land being obliged to pay them on behalf of the prebendary. However, two pieces of land were acquired under schemes introduced by Queen Anne's Bounty for the augmentation and maintenance of poor clergy: in 1743 at Cogges in Oxfordshire, and in 1806 land at Tuttle Hill near Nuneaton.[21] The idea was to bring a small but regular income to the incumbent of a poor living.

In 1847 there is a report[22] on the state of the church and the chancel: "The Church is in a favourable state of repair, and the Chancel was repaired by the lessee about six years since at a cost of sixteen pounds – it is stone and tile." The upkeep of the chancel had been a part of the terms of lease of the

[21] *Lambeth Palace Library: K 7240, C. Bobenhall and K 7241, C. Bobenhull.*
[22] *Lambeth Palace Library: 13819*

prebendal lands for many years, and continued to be so until the prebendal system ended. However, in 1847 the Ecclesiastical Commissioners took over responsibility for the repair of the Chancel.

8. Church Land

By the terms of the Enclosure Award of 1726 land was set aside for the repair and maintenance of the church. This comprised 14 acres, 3 roods and 20 perches in part of the field called the Harps and was referred to as Church Land. It was mainly on the left-hand side from the beginning of Paget's Lane to roughly half way up, across a piece of waste ground where Church Barn used to be, plus a small triangle of land on the opposite side of the lane adjoining the field called Lane Harps.

Among the tenants of the Church Land named in the Churchwardens' Accounts for 1809–1937 are Joseph Mills, the parish clerk, 1811–13, at £15 per annum, and Thomas Gray, blacksmith (who was married to Hannah, sister of Moses Satchwell at the Malt Shovel), 1828–1863, at £17 per annum. In 1830 Gray built a new bay to the barn, and in 1863 are mentioned two cottages, which according to Bert Timms' information in the 1950s, used to stand beside the barn. John Satchwell of The Three Horse Shoes, who farmed a major portion of the Glebe land, had the lease from 1871 to 1873, and from 1885 to 1903 first William Howlett Grimes and then his son, Frank, continued the lease. In 1908 Bill Elliott's father, Henry, rented the land for six months, and then Bill for a while in 1923 and again in 1926, at a time when the leases appear more fragmented.



Figure 21: *Church Barn, Paget's Lane. (Note the line of elm trees in the background, a landscape feature which no longer exists because of the ravages of Dutch elm disease.)*

George Moore senior, father of the last miller and himself a miller, had a partial lease in 1923 and again in 1933, whilst Frank Glover was the last tenant mentioned in this set of accounts, in 1937 paying a rent of £10-19s-3d. He died in 1973, his funeral being on 14th September. The Church Newsletter for that month remembers how he used to farm the Church land. I might add that it was wonderful to watch his skill at laying a hedge.

Repairs to the buildings are recorded in 1923 at £29-10s and again in 1932. The Church Barn was demolished in 1969.

St Giles' church still owns the land on the left-hand side at the beginning of Paget's Lane as well as land in the Harps, farther up on the right-hand side, previously worked for gravel extraction by Smiths Concrete. In 2007 the PCC agreed the sale to Smiths Concrete of the aggregate reserves lying under the land, for which it was paid £27,822.25 in 2008 in respect of a capital payment and a payment for lost income. The fields were later restored for agricultural use with infill using inert imported material and are now rented annually for grazing – the rent bringing a small income to the church.[23]

[23] *Information from David Hollway, Treasurer, Parochial Church Council.*

9. Church Reforms and Residential Buildings

In the mid-nineteenth century a number of church reforms took place throughout the country. The prebendal system officially came to an end in 1840. In Bubbenhall, however, it continued in practice, since the last prebend, James Thomas Law, personally held the lease of the prebendal lands for a period of 21 years, which did not expire until 1856. The clergy of the parish were still perpetual curates, i.e.they were paid a sum of money but had no permanent accommodation or land, but sought, with the support and encouragement of Dr. Law, to build a house in which to reside. At almost the same time, in 1837, the parish had been transferred from the Diocese of Lichfield to Worcester, as were all the other parishes in the Archdeaconry of Coventry a year earlier. This meant that the views of the Bishop of Worcester had to be sought when any major decision was made. Furthermore, in seeking to establish a Rectory house in the parish, the Rev. Charles Joseph Penny (1841–62) had no significant regular income, and had to rely on asking for funding (or "augmentation") from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and from Queen Anne's Bounty.[24] The prebend in fact contributed £100 and Queen Anne's Bounty £200 to the building of the Rectory, with £100 being contributed by Pyncombe & Horner's Charity, whilst the incumbent himself paid £200 from his own pocket. Even then Mr. Penny seems to have had personally to bear the expense of drainage for the house, which was built by George Taylor of Coventry for £900 in 1844.

The Cedar of Lebanon just to the left of the entrance gates may well have been planted at the same time. The benefice finally had a rectory house and thus the perpetual curate at last achieved the status of Rector. Charles Penny's well-known predecessor in Bubbenhall, Frederick Denison Maurice, ordained to the curacy on 26th January, 1834, was reported to have threatened to live in a tent in the churchyard if no accommodation was provided for him, and so he lived in the cottage transformed in the 1930s into present-day Longfield until he became Chaplain to Guy's Hospital, London in 1836. From 1857 the Ecclesiastical Commissioners temporarily took charge of the former prebendal lands and received the income accruing. No doubt Charles Joseph

[24] *Queen Anne's Bounty was a scheme established in 1704 to supplement the incomes of the poorer clergy and give other forms of assistance to poor church livings*

Penny was exhausted after over twenty years of trying to cope with all the changes plus expenditure of money on the Rectory. He died in 1862 at the age of 48 and was buried on the western side of Bubbenhall churchyard just beyond the tower.

In the same year the Rev. Arthur Adolphus Fanshawe, the new incumbent, wrote a letter to the Bishop of Worcester suggesting that the augmentation from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners should be replaced by the former prebendal lands becoming glebe, or church land, for the income of the incumbent. This proposal was accepted and officially gazetted in 1863.[25] This land comprised 111 acres 2 roods 16 perches. In the same year the benefice officially became a rectory. A plea to the bishop for a proper school was also made, explaining the inadequate provision so far. The reason for the Commissioners dragging their feet with educational provision was the size of the village population (233 in 1842), but Mr. Fanshawe pointed out that there were 70 to 80 children, excluding infants – so there was a real need – *"and there is no school in the Parish – excepting that the poor women take a few of the Infants, into their own cottages, for the pecuniary help to themselves – about 15 of the children attend the school at Stoneleigh, 2 miles distant – and 8 are received into the school at Baginton, also 2 miles distant. The establishment of a school here, is a want, which is very much felt by the poor of the Parish, and is one, which, for other reasons also, I am very anxious to supply."* [26]



Figure 22: *The Old Rectory, built in 1844 by the efforts of the Rev. Charles Joseph Penny. Photo: Author.*

[25] *Lambeth Palace Library: File 13, 819.*
[26] *Lambeth Palace Library: No. 15972 2/2, 9th December, 1862*

Applications for further building were made, i.e. the extension of the Rectory in 1856 asked for by Bubbenhall PCC,[27] finances for major work on the decayed church building (Rev. Arthur Fanshawe in 1862 - *"…I have laid out from my private means, upwards of a Thousand Pounds – The Church and the Chancel both require considerable repairs"*[28], extra land for the Rectory garden in 1878 (already purchased by the Rev. Edward H. Harrison, who received no official funding until 1883[29]), and an application for the installation of electrical wiring for the Rectory in 1937 (Rev. William Sneath), all had to be made to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who administered the Queen Anne's Bounty scheme. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners, though, were not always sympathetic or swift in granting their requests, expecting the clergy themselves to lay out the money themselves.

The building of the village school had to wait another few years after the construction of the Old Rectory. Opened in 1864 and being always a Church of England School, its activities were for many years closely integrated with the work of the Church that also ran a regular Sunday School. From the early years the clergy were very active in the management of the school.[30] None more so than the Rev. Vincent Knottesford-Fortescue, rector from 1884-1906. Known for his keen interest in education, he was an almost daily visitor to Bubbenhall School, where his enlightened teaching delighted the children. He undoubtedly wished to encourage the children of the Sunday School with the medallions he had struck for them.



Figures 23 and 24: *Medallion and reverse, given to Bubbenhall Sunday School children in 1891 as a reward for good attendance*[31]*. Photos: Alan Roe.*

[27] *Lambeth Palace Library: File 18, 425, Bubbenhall P.C.*
[28] *Lambeth Palace Library: No. 15972 2/2, 9th December, 1862*
[29] *Lambeth Palace Library: Letter from the Rev. Edward H. Harrison, Rector re: K 8076, R. Bubbenhall 1883 and K 8076, R. Bubbenhall 1883*
[30] *A matter of some controversy that is discussed in detail in Kay Morison, A History of Bubbenhall Village School 1865–1975, Chapter 5. Alan Roe (ed.) (Coventry 2021).*
[31] *Photographs by kind permission of Steve Haynes.*

10. The Glebe Farmhouse and Glebe Land

An extreme example of slow and frustrating negotiations is the application for £300 by the Rev. Edward H. Harrison in 1880 to build a small house on glebe land for the tenant of the Glebe Farm. This was refused. It took until 1928 to achieve. In 1939 the Rev. William Sneath attempted to get electricity installed there, but failed ("…already out of pocket by £400-500, and not prepared to spend more if nothing forthcoming in the way of a grant. Will let the matter drop!").[32]

Theo Paget was the tenant farmer from 1933 to 1970, but he and his family had no electricity until the final years of his tenancy. Mr. Webb was the last tenant of the glebe before the farmhouse was abandoned to make way for sand and gravel extraction. Smith's Concrete purchased the land in 1988.

In 1978, following the Endowments and Glebe Measure 1976,[33] the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) became the legal owner of all glebe land vested in benefices in the diocese. Some of the glebe investment income comes from re-investment of the sales proceeds where glebe land has been sold.



Figure 25: *Theo Paget and his daughter, Rosemary, harvesting wheat with a binder at Glebe Farm, 1958. (Photo: Coventry Evening Telegraph, 8th August, 1958.)*

[32] *Lambeth Palace Library: File E 6319, R. Bubbenhall*
[33] *A Measure passed by the General Synod of the Church of England to make fresh provision with respect to the means by which the clergy and certain lay people are remunerated; to transfer glebe land to the Diocesan Boards of Finance; to make provision with respect to the powers and duties of such Boards in relation to such land, etc.*

11. The New Rectory

In 1918 the new Diocese of Coventry was created. When the Rectory became vacant on the death of the Rev. W. Sneath in 1947, the bishop soon sold it as being too big and unwieldy to manage and too costly to heat. Bubbenhall parish was instead served by the Rev. James West, Vicar of Ryton-on-Dunsmore. When Canon George Bennett was appointed to the living of Bubbenhall in 1954 (and also to be the first industrial chaplain of Coventry Diocese) the problem of finding land on which to build a new Rectory proved very difficult. Finally, the Town and Country Planning Authority allowed it to be built on glebe land facing the main Leamington Road, it being sited almost on the school boundary. The Church Council protested, and did their utmost to have the house placed at a reasonable distance from the school playground, but all to no avail. After the benefice again became vacant in 1958 the clergy of Ryton-on-Dunsmore continued in charge of Bubbenhall until 2024. The house has been used since 2022 to accommodate the priest-in-charge of Stoneleigh and Ashow following the sale of Stoneleigh Vicarage. He is now also the incumbent of Baginton and Bubbenhall.

12. Bubbenhall Parish Registers and Diocesan Archives

These are available at Warwickshire County Record Office, Priory Park, Warwick. The Births Registers begin in 1698, the Marriages and Deaths Registers in 1662. These registers can be read on microfiche at the Record Office. However, among the Lichfield Diocesan Records, Staffordshire Record Office, Stafford, are to be found Bishops' Transcripts of the earliest church registers for Bubbenhall, dating from 1558.[34]

Digitised Parish registers up to 1900, Diocese of Lichfield and Coventry wills and probate records, 1521–1860, and marriage allegations and bonds (for North and North-east Warwickshire, 1636–1847) can also be found on the website findmypast.co.uk – Staffordshire and Diocese of Lichfield Collection, 1538–1900.

[34] *Staffordshire Record Office: B/V/7*

Appendix A:

Prebendaries of Bubbenhall

? –1304 Philip de Willughby. Resigned and became Prebendary of Ryton

1304–18 William de Chadleshunt. Doctor of Civil Law

1318–22 John de Everdon

1322–37 Nicholas de Lichfield or Teynterel. Exchanged the prebend with Robert de Kirtlington for the church of Long Whatton, Leics.

1337–62 Robert de Kirtlington. He founded a chantry chapel, to pray for the souls of the dead, in Bubbenhall Church c. 1350

1362–? Robert Foljambe

1362–64 Walter Power. Foljambe appears to have resigned since Power exchanged the prebend and church of Leek, Staffs. with John de Stafford for the church of Bingham, Notts. in 1364

1364–73 John de Stafford. Exchanged the prebend with William de Crawle for the prebend of Sexaginta Solidorum, Lincoln 1373

1373–94 William de Crawle. Scholar of Civil Law. Exchanged the prebend with Thomas de Herdewyck for the prebend of Thorngate, Lincoln, 1394

1394–1411 Thomas de Herdewyck. He founded a chantry chapel in Lichfield Cathedral

1411–14 John Fulford. Became Prebendary of Hansacre, Staffs. 1414

1414–16 Henry Davyd. Bachelor of Canon Law and Civil Law. Became Archdeacon of Stafford

1416–? William Goldeston M.A.

?–1423 Major Parys. Exchanged the prebend with John Everdone for a prebend at Exeter Cathedral

1423–43 John Everdone. Exchanged the prebend with Richard Dekelan for a prebend at St. Mary's by the Castle, Collegiate Church, Leicester, 1443

1443–49 Richard Dekelan. Licentiate in Civil Law. Exchanged the prebend and church of Barnwell, Northants. with Augustine Whasch for the church of Deeping St. James, Lincs.1449

1449–64 Augustine Whasch

1464–73 Ralph Heicote. Exchanged the prebend with Thomas Reynold for the prebend of Ufton Cantoris, Warwickshire. Later he became Chancellor of Hereford Cathedral.

1473–75 Thomas Reynold. Bachelor of Canon Law and Civil Law. By exchange became Prebendary of Curborough, Staffs.

1475–97 John Radcliffe

1497–1502 John Argentyne. Exchanged the prebend with Richard Delves for the prebend of Pipa Parva (Prees, Salop)

1502–27 Richard Delves. Exchanged for the prebend of Stotfold, Staffs

1527–29 Peter Burnell

1529–49 Ralph Sneyd. Rector of Tatenhill, Staffs.

1549 Richard Weaver

1554 Richard Sutton

1563 Edmund Meyrick Ll.D. (Doctor of Law). Archdeacon of Bangor. By his will he directed to be buried either in Lichfield Cathedral or in the chancel of Bubbenhall Church. His coat of arms was once in one of the chancel windows at Bubbenhall.

1606 Thomas Mould.

Roger Fleetwood. Deprived of the prebend 1642 during the Civil War. The son of Sir Miles, Fleetwood of Thrapston, Northants, he deserted his cure (he was also Vicar of Hanbury, Staffs) and joined the Royalist Army sometime before 1646.

1660 Richard Pretty. Rector of Aldridge, Staffs. Died 1682

1685 Samuel Willes

1685 Edmund Lees A.M. (Master of Arts). Rector of Ipstock, Leics. Died 1699 and was buried in his own church

1700 Samuel Sturges A.M. (Master of Arts). Rector of Sudbury, Derbs.

1736 Matthew Horbury S.T.P. (Sacrae Theologiae Professor – the equivalent nowadays is D.D., or Doctor of Divinity) Canon Resident. Vicar of Eccleshall, Staffs. A man of learning.

1739 Nathaniel Sturges A.M. (Master of Arts.), died 1762

1744 Jeffry Williams A.M. (Master of Arts)

1757 Samuel Pegge A.M. (Master of Arts), a well-known antiquary, whose writing included a book on high-class English medieval cookery.

1763 Richard Rider Short Ll.D. (Doctor of Law). Lay vicar of Lichfield Cathedral and Vicar of Newport, Salop.

1790 Henry Carver A.M. (Master of Arts). Archdeacon of Surrey

1799 William Corne A.M. (Master of Arts), died 1818

1818 James Thomas Law M.A. Chancellor of Lichfield Cathedral, Master of St. John's Hospital, Lichfield. The prebendal system was abolished throughout the kingdom in 1840 and Chancellor Law was therefore the last prebendary of Bubbenhall.

Appendix B:

Clergy serving Bubbenhall from 1558

This list is based on the names of clergy in the church registers, and those signing their names on other documents such as wills witnessed by them. Most of them up to 1844 were perpetual curates also serving in other parishes. Some were, or eventually became, vicars of other parishes.

1558 William Cotterell

1560 John Woolton/Walton

1573 David Roberts d. 1576

1579 Thomas Phillips

1583 until at least 1586 Richard Seale. Vicar of Marton d. 1623

1562–97 Thomas Bankes

1605 John Everton.

1616 Richard Wildinge

1620 William Hreson

1627 Johannes Orme

1636 Andrew Smithman (probably Henry Smithman)

1638–39 John Lapworth. Curate of Birdingbury

1662–65 Nathaniel Wigston. Incumbent of Stretton-on-Dunsmore 1639

1676 Robert Marryott. Curate of Boughton Malherbe, Kent 1630 (seat of the Wotton family, the then Lords of the Manor of Bubbenhall.) Vicar of Walsgrave-on-Sowe 1679–1715

1679–87 Eustacius Craddock. Vicar Kenilworth 1679–84

1684–1708 Moses Macham. Curate of Ryton-on-Dunsmore d. 1712 aged 63[35]

1713 Thomas Coakley. Rector of Frankton 1716–30, Vicar of Stoneleigh 1724, Rector of Church Lawford 1724–30

1718 William Denham. Curate of Stoneleigh 1718, Vicar of Stoneleigh 1724–53, Vicar of Weston-under-Wetherley 1733–72

1736–42 William Burman. Vicar of Hampton-in-Arden 1735–41, Vicar of Maxstoke 1736–39

1742–62 Edward Horne. Vicar of Cubbington 1732–63

1748 Edward Crimes

1754–88 Robert Denham. Curate of Weston-under-Wetherley 1752, Vicar Stoneleigh1753–92

1762–86 Gilpin Ebdell. Rector of Rowington 1771

1770 John Blyth. Rector of Baginton 1766–74

1776 William Savage. Stipendiary Curate of Stoneleigh 1772, Vicar of Weston-under-Wetherley 1772–80

1780 Joseph Watson. Stipendiary Curate of Stretton-on-Dunsmore and Princethorpe 1775, Vicar of Weston-under-Wetherley 1780–1806

1780 John Smith

1782 W. Brooks. Schoolmaster Bablake School, Coventry 1779, Stipendiary Curate of Wyken 1814

1784–1828 Bernard Gilpin Ebdell. Vicar of Chilvers Coton 1786–1828.

1786–89 Charles Dodson. Vicar of Cubbington 1768–92

1789 John Thorpe

1791 John Kaye

[35] *On the south wall of Ryton Church is a small brass with the following inscription to Moses Macham, who died on 29 June 1712: "Lo here doth ly a shining light wrapped up in the shades of night the sheppard is took from his sheep but O would they his doctrine keep and practice the rules that he did give. So shall ye Pastor and ye People live." On the right of the inscription is engraved an elaborate lantern standing on a coffin, and beside it a skeleton holding onto a tree.*

1795–1808 James Roberts. Curate of Stoneleigh 1790

1808–19 Thomas Cox. Rector of Baginton 1791–1824

1818 Thomas Ward

1823 W. St. John Mildmay

1824–28 Richard Lickorish. Perpetual Curate of Ryton-on-Dunsmore 1821

1828–33 William Harding

1833 Thomas Pope

1833–35 Frederick Denison Maurice. Chaplain, Guy's Hospital, London 1836, Professor of English Literature, King's College, London 1840

1835–1841 Smith Child. Assistant Curate of Audley, Staffordshire 1834.

Rectors

1841–62 Charles Joseph Penny. In 1844 he achieved the status of Rector. He was also the incumbent at Hunningham.

1863–77 Arthur Adolphus Fanshawe

1878–84 Edward Henry Harrison

1884–1906 Vincent Knottesford-Fortescue

1907–21 Archdeacon Hardy

1922–28 Arthur Thomas Reed

1929–33 J.W. Purser

1933–35 T.H. Davenport

1936–47 William Sneath

1947–54 James West. Priest-in-Charge. Vicar of Ryton-on-Dunsmore

1954–58 Canon George Bennett. Also Industrial Chaplain, Diocese of Coventry

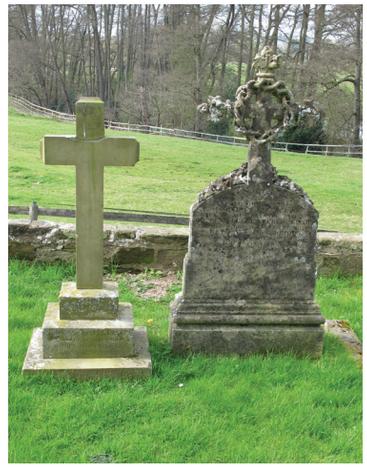


Figure 26: *Tombstones of the Rev. Charles Joseph Penny (d. 1862), aged 48, the first Rector of Bubbenhall, and his daughter, Harriett Elizabeth Haymes, who died only three years later aged 25. Photo: Author.*

1958–68 W. Meredith Lewis. Priest-in-Charge. Vicar of Ryton-on-Dunsmore

1968–99 John Trevor Sykes. Priest-in-Charge. Vicar then Rector (1977) of Ryton-on-Dunsmore

2000–23 David Wintle. Rector, United Benefice of Baginton, Bubbenhall, and Ryton-on-Dunsmore

2024 Petrica Bistran, Priest-in-Charge, Stoneleigh and Ashow (2022 –), Minister-in-Charge Baginton and Bubbenhall

Appendix C:

Churchwardens of Bubbenhall

1558 Richard Austie and Thomas Roberts

1560 Edward Draper and Thomas Roberts

1561 Edward Draper and Thomas Roberts

1562 William Smith and Thomas Robinson

1605 Thomas Deene and William Preiste

1616 Peter Atkins and John Busbie – the churchwardens' initials on the church porch beams

1620 Henry Lapworth and Peter Atkins

1634 John Beere and William Chambers

1635 John Deene and Thomas Greene

1662 Thomas Huckell and William Priest

1663 Richard Over and John Lapworth

1664 John Draper and Henry Lapworth

1677 John Lapworth and Thomas Atkins until 1681

1682 Thomas Eborne and Thomas Edwards until at least 1686

1690s John Porter, John Roberts, John Busby, John Beere, Thomas Muddiman, Francis Eborne

1701 Henry Eborne

1703 John Everton

1705 William Meadowes

1707 Andrew Murcott

1708 John Lapworth

1710 Robert Davis

1713 Robert Davis

1718 Richard Porter

1756 Andrew Murcott

1797 Andrew Murcott

1801 John Murcott

1809 John Murcott

1816 William Murcott and Joseph Grimes

1818 William Murcott and John Orton

1819 William Murcott and John Orton

1823 William Murcott and Joseph Grimes

1829 Joseph Grimes and Thomas Howlett

1830 Thomas Howlett and John Satchwell

1831 John Satchwell and John Orton

1834 Joseph Grimes and Thomas Orton

1835 Thomas Howlett and William Satchwell

1837 John Orton and John Satchwell

1839 Joseph Grimes and Thomas Orton

1850 William Busby Murcott and Thomas Howlett

1853 John Orton and Joseph Grimes

1855 William Satchwell and John Limber

1860 William Howlett Grimes

1861 John Sprawson

1866 John Sprawson and Thomas Howlett

1869 Robert Newbold

1889 A. Wise

1893 Thomas Twigger

1895 W.H. Grimes and Thomas Twigger

1914 F.E. Grimes and J.H. Mercer

1916 H.G. Wagstaff and A.J. Stidworthy

1920 H.G. Wagstaff and Henry Grimes

1922 H. Cowley

1923 T.R. Twigger (Thomas Twigger died in 1924. According to his gravestone, to the left of the church path as you enter the churchyard, he served as churchwarden for 22 years.)

1925 F.W. Walker

1936 Miss B. Clarke

1948 N. Richards

1950 K. Woodward

1954 H.B. Dunn

1957 Theo Paget (Theo Paget was also the tenant farmer of Glebe Farm from 1933 to 1970.)

1966 C.L. Gillitt and Theo Paget – until 1970

1970 C.L. Gillitt and Kathleen Grimes

1971 C.L. Gillitt and Kathleen Grimes

1972 Charles Haynes and Kathleen Grimes

1973 Charles Haynes and Florence Sayers

1975 Anthony Lloyd and Florence Sayers

1976 Anthony Lloyd and Sandra Barnsley

1977 Anthony Lloyd and Sandra Barnsley

1978 Sandra Barnsley and Nigel Liney to 1986

1987 Sandra Barnsley and D.G. Oldfield to 1997

1998 Sandra Barnsley and R. Beale to 1999

2000–20 Jackie Lloyd. With Alan Swinscoe 2013–16

2020 Craig Greenway. With Sandra Hoffman 2022 –



About the Author

Vicky's family arrived in Bubbenhall in August 1945, her father's last posting at the end of the war being the army camp at Stareton, in Stoneleigh Deer Park. She was then three years old. They moved when she was sixteen. Even so, she has never really left the village and still regards herself as a parishioner of the church where she sang in the choir and was married.

The family lived at Church House. During their first two years they shared the house with another family who had a daughter six years senior to Vicky. Next door was the churchyard. The two of them used to go round together, the older one reading out the inscriptions on the tombstones until Vicky knew them all and began to read for herself. This started her interest in the village of the past. And so, it has continued.

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