A WINDOW ON THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

The History of Wye Parish Church

by

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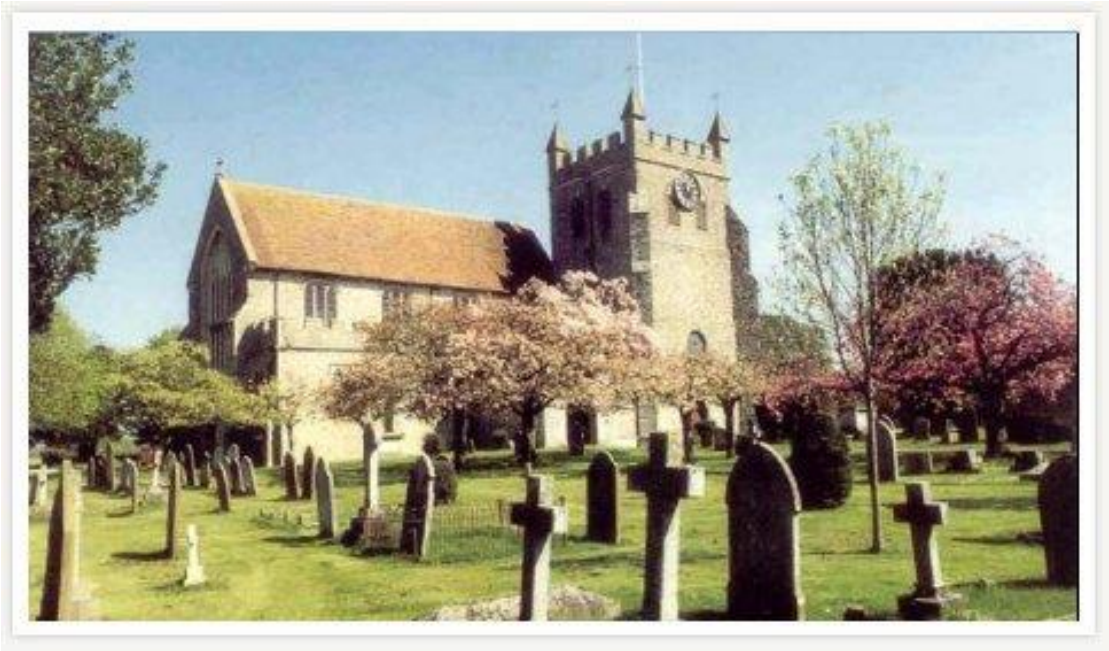

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CONTENTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The big picture of national history is inevitably made up of many interlocking local histories. This book is a local history not only for local people, but to offer a case study of an individual Christian community. The research was initiated in the year 2004 to commemorate 1400 years of Christian worship and witness in Wye. As an important regional centre of the independent Kingdom of Kent, it is highly likely that the Christian activities in Wye began in the lifetime of the missionary saint, Augustine of Canterbury, who died on 26 May, probably in 604. The year 2004 was also the 1400th anniversary of the death, on 11 March, 604, of Gregory the Great. He was the Pope who sent Augustine to England, and who is remembered by the original dedication of Wye Parish Church. While 2004 is also the 1400th anniversary of the foundation of St. Paul's Cathedral in London and St. Andrew's Cathedral at Rochester, the story of the ancient minster church of Wye probably spans an equal period, going back to the very beginning of the Church of England as we know it. This enables Wye Parish Church to be a window through which we can study the whole history of the Church of England as it affected one community.

Certain episodes in this story do little credit to some leaders in the church, but the details, as revealed for example in the Churchwardens' accounts, which go back to 1515, show the followers of Christ engaging in many acts of public spirit and kindness to needy neighbours. Alongside these, however, was a passionate adherence to what was considered right belief, often extending to what seem now to be marginal details. Only gradually, especially in the last hundred years, has Christian diversity, within limits, been recognised as a source of strength. Today we see the Christian tradition as a many stranded rope, in which some once cherished threads peter out but others re-emerge to prominence after many hidden years. Thus the ideas of St. Francis, controversial at the time, foreshadow the Christian environmentalism of today. In Wye, the pioneering Puritan House Groups and Thomas Brett's rediscovery of the Parish Communion services of the Early Church are the most obvious examples of ideas that were rejected at the time, but are commonplace today. Oddly, it is scientific thinking that has given us faith to stand back and allow time to reveal what is worthwhile. Heresies, like a flat earth or the phlogiston theory, will be perceived as such. Conversely, a diversity of good ideas enables them to interbreed, and thus richer truth can emerge from their dialectic. In this way the apparently messy and unprofitable subject of church history can have some positive outcomes.

This modern history of Wye Parish Church deliberately sets local events in the context of such wider issues, to enable its activities to form a case study contributing to the history of the entire Church of England. Thus it is very different in style from the only previous detailed history of Wye Church, published, undated but probably in 1912, by C.S. Orwin and S. Williams, two Wye academics on the staff of the South Eastern Agricultural College. For its time this was a work of considerable scholarship, and it is excellently referenced to original sources. The present book does not rehearse all the detail and references given there, but has drawn on material they did not examine, notably the Churchwardens' Accounts and the Vestry and Church Council

Minutes preserved in the Canterbury Cathedral Archives and, most important, the Parish Magazines from 1889 onwards in the archives of the Wye Historical Society. It also seeks to make links with features that survive, enabling their historical and cultural significance to be appreciated by residents and visitors alike. There is inevitably some overlap with other publications in the series sponsored by the Wye Historical Society, with the help of the Local Heritage Initiative. *Wye Parish Church: A Historical Guide* is a well illustrated booklet by Anne Findlay, published in 2006 and primarily intended for visitors. *A New History of Wye*, edited by Paul Burnham and Maureen de Saxe and published in 2003, has two chapters on the history of Wye Church, one dealing with it as a worshipping community and the other concentrating on the building. Overlap here is appropriate to an overarching summary volume. But overlap with recent, more specialised works has been avoided, and enquirers are directed to other works in the references at the end of the book for the career of Cardinal John Kempe and to Stewart Richards' book for the detailed history of Wye College. We appreciate that the affairs of the Church and the College have often been closely entwined, and that Kempe was a key figure in the history of both institutions.

2. ST GREGORY'S MINSTER

The Dedication to St. Gregory the Great

Wye Parish Church is now dedicated to St Gregory and St. Martin, but during its first seven centuries the dedication was only to St Gregory, the Great. Although it cannot be verified, it is possible that the history of Christianity in Wye goes back to his time, so it is appropriate to begin its story with him. He was buried on 12 March, 604, which was celebrated as his anniversary, although he died the previous day. In 1225, a market was granted to Wye, together with a three day fair on 11, 12 and 13 March Celebrations on 12 March continued for many years.

S. GREGORY'S DAY, 1899

March 12th, being the day appointed by the Church for the commemoration of S. Gregory, was specially observed at Wye Church, which is dedicated in part to his memory. It happened to fall on Mid-Lent Sunday; and the penitential character of the services was laid aside. The Church appeared in festal array, as on the great festivals; hymns specially appropriate to the occasion took the place of the Lenten ones; special reference was made to the commemoration in both morning and evening sermons; while "the life and work of S. Gregory" formed the subject of instruction in all the Sunday Schools. (*Wye Parochial Magazine for April 1899).*

When Archbishop John Kempe established his College dedicated to St. Gregory and St. Martin in 1447, his documentation continued to refer to 'the Parish Church of St. Gregory'. St. Martin had been added by 1475, presumably to mark the connection with Battle Abbey, which was dedicated to St. Martin, and to assimilate the dedication to that of the College. In 1980 the Church of England moved the celebration of Gregory to 3 September, the anniversary of his elevation to the Papacy.

The Greatness of Gregory

Gregory is rightly called Gregory the Great. He renounced great wealth and become a monk of considerable piety and theological expertise. But his greatness lies in his fourteen years as a very reluctant Pope. His tenure marked a major turning point in European history, for Gregory was a man of vision who brought about almost single handed a policy change that would mould Europe for more than a thousand years. Before Gregory, it was assumed that the maintenance of civilisation depended on keeping 'the barbarians' at bay by military actions. After Constantine, the maintenance of Christendom was also bound up with the defence of the Roman Empire. This policy worked, more or less, while the Empire was strong and the barbarians weak and disorganised. Now all resistance had crumbled, and the unspeakable Lombards were at the gates of Rome.

Gregory transformed the situation by developing a new policy of working with 'barbarians', which culminated two centuries later when Charlemagne was crowned as a new kind of 'Roman Emperor'. While retaining defensive forces, Gregory engaged in the most vigorous diplomacy. He flattered the Lombard dukes by treating

them as civilised nobles with whom he made peace. The Byzantine emperor was disgusted, and would not recognise the treaty, but was powerless to intervene. The Lombard dukes were very pleased, and allowed Gregory and succeeding popes to reestablish their influence over the church in Lombard territories. Their zeal for the Christian faith is reflected in some of the wonderful mosaics still preserved in Ravenna. The Lombards had been Arians, denying the full divinity of Christ, but by judicious appointments of bishops were gently weaned back to the Catholic church. Copies of about 800 letters of Gregory have been preserved. They show him making similar approaches to rulers in France and Spain, gradually strengthening their links with Rome. But even before he became Pope, he was challenged by the much more difficult task of reclaiming Britain for Catholic Christianity. This former Roman province had been invaded by Angles, Saxons and Jutes, who brought their gods of Tiew, Woden and Thor. In Scotland, Wales and Ireland Celtic Christianity survived, but Gregory knew little of this, as the invaders controlled the trading links with the Continent. In exchange for the luxury goods they sought, captives could be offered that resulted from their frequent wars. Among the Angles, the Northumbrians had lately subjugated Deira, roughly the same as modern Yorkshire, and had taken many prisoners.

The Venerable Bede retold a famous story 130 years after Gregory's death. 'One day some merchants who had recently arrived in Rome displayed their many wares in the crowded market place. Among other merchandise, Gregory saw some boys exposed for sale. These had fair complexions, fine cut features and fair hair. Looking at them with interest, he enquired what country and race they came from. 'They come from Britain', he was told, 'where all the people have this appearance'. He then asked whether the people were Christians or whether they were still ignorant heathens. 'They are pagans', he was informed. 'Alas', said Gregory with a heartfelt sigh, 'how sad that such handsome folk are still in the grasp of the Author of darkness, and that faces of such beauty conceal minds ignorant of God's grace! What is the name of this race?' 'They are called Angles', he was told. 'That is appropriate', he said, for they have angelic faces and it is right that they should become fellow heirs with the angels in heaven. And what is the name of their province?' 'Deira', was the answer. 'Good! They shall indeed be *de ira* - saved from wrath – and called to the mercy of Christ. And what is the name of their king?' 'Aella', he was told. 'Then must *Alleluia* be sung to the praise of God our Creator in their land'.

Gregory approached the then Pope, asking him to send preachers to Britain, and offered to go himself. The Pope was willing, but others in his entourage persuaded him that Gregory should be kept in Rome. Scholars presumed that this was a legendary fabrication, even though Gregory's theological writing does contain passages with a similar flavour. But then one of Gregory's letters came to light. In September 595, after he became Pope, he wrote to Candidus who was in charge of the Roman church's land in Gaul to use some of the income to purchase English slave boys to be educated in monasteries. Something must have given him this idea, and so the story may possibly be true. And we see the practical Gregory securing interpreters for a mission he was already planning. The very next year he sent Augustine to Kent, with a number of other monks and sundry letters of recommendation, books and so on. When they wanted to turn back, he ordered them to continue, so that they arrived in the year 597. Bede makes it very clear that, while Augustine was the agent, the whole impetus of the mission came from Gregory.

The origins of Christianity in Wye

After a good response, in Kent at any rate, Gregory sent further missionaries, including Paulinus and Mellitus, who would become future bishops. He sent further equipment and much written advice, including the letter which recommends the reconsecration of heathen temples as churches, with appropriate feasting and celebration. The foundations of such a temple were excavated by Hope Taylor at *Gethrin*, a royal centre in the kingdom of Northumbria, near the later village of Yeavering.

Wye may well have been one of the places that Augustine had in mind when he sought Gregory's advice on this point, for its very name is generally considered to mean a temple or similar holy place. This shrine is thought to have been on Bolts' Hill, a knoll closely overlooking the crossing place of the river Stour which was the focus of the original settlement of Wye. Thus a church established on its site following his instructions would very appropriately have been dedicated to Gregory.

As a *royal vill*, probably from before the arrival of Augustine, Christian worship at Wye may well have started even earlier. In the absence of coined money, the royal court would have resided here for part of the year subsisting on dues paid in kind. As the Queen's chaplain before the coming of Augustine, Luidhard could have celebrated mass for Bertha and a small group of fellow Christians in the royal hall or an associated building near Wye Court. So the later conjoint dedication of Wye Church to Martin of Tours is very appropriate, for it is believed that Bertha and Luidhard worshipped in Canterbury in the enlarged St. Martin's church that is still in use. Its dedication reflects the great influence of Martin (c 316-397) among the Christians of Britain and Gaul during their last years in the Roman Empire. The story of Martin dividing his cloak with a beggar appropriately reflects his concern for strenuous Christian living and social justice.

After the influx of Germanic invaders in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries, organised Christianity in the British Isles was confined to the Celtic areas in the west and north. Gregory had a plan for the reestablishment of a properly constituted church throughout Britain. The Celtic bishops were to be brought under Augustine's control. Archbishoprics were to be set up in London and in York, with twelve subsidiary bishops in each province. This plan was too grandiose by far, and, in any case, Augustine totally lacked the diplomatic skills of Gregory. The wider mission to Britain as a whole was prejudiced by Augustine's pride, yet the Angles, Saxons and Jutes became largely Christian within a hundred years, thanks to local leaders, such as Wilfrid, and to further help from Rome in the form of Theodore and Hadrian, who made Canterbury a thriving centre of Christian culture. As Canterbury is less than 20 km away, it has always exerted a strong influence on Wye. The episcopate of Archbishop Theodore (668-690) is a likely time for the erection of the first purpose built church here, for by this time Wye was an important regional centre, head of *Wiwart Lathe*, one of the administrative divisions of the Kingdom of Kent. Wye had status as a *Minster* church in Saxon times, and its dependent churches are scattered through Wyewart Lathe.

As there was a perception that England became Christian mainly because of Gregory, his ideas permeated the life of the English church in many ways. Gregory wrote a

manual on church organisation and discipline for bishops and priests, which was very influential in Britain. Years later King Alfred had it translated into Anglo-Saxon. Following Gregory's emphasis on monasticism, the early church centres were either communities of monks or nuns or both, or at least small groups of clergy living in community at a central church called a *minster*, which translates the Latin word *monasterium.* Minsters came to have subsidiary mission churches dependent on them, as was the case with Wye Minster.

The continuing influence of Gregory

Gregory was greatly concerned with liturgy. The church services at Wye and elsewhere would have followed the Roman pattern, which came to be called the *Gregorian Sacramentary*. How much of this is the work of Gregory himself is uncertain, but one of Gregory's letters defends the introduction from the Eastern Church of the *Kyrie Elieson* chant. *Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy*, which we still use. This happens to be one of the few changes in the main structure of the mass liturgy from the previous *Gelasian Sacramentary*. The *Kyrie* was undoubtedly chanted, and Bede refers to Augustine's followers chanting in the Roman manner. The precise role of Gregory in the history of church music, remains debatable, but Gregorian chant, a form of singing in unison also called plainsong, is a tradition that is still very much alive today.

But the big innovation in the *Gregorian Sacramentary* was the comprehensive provision of propers. Propers are the prayers in the mass which change in dependence on the church calendar, following the various saint's days and the Sundays in the Church year. There is the Collect, a short prayer that would often be sung. There was the Secret, prayed privately by the priest, and lastly the post Communion prayer. The Collects are marvellously concise and elegant, and some may well have been written by Gregory himself. Cranmer translated a number of them from the later *Sarum Use* for *The Book of Common Prayer*, and a few of the collects in C*ommon Worship* published in 2000, including some of those for the Great Festivals, still go back to the time of Gregory or before, translated of course and somewhat adapted. Here is living history indeed, for these prayers would have been used, Sunday by Sunday, in Gregory's minster church in Wye throughout its existence.

The season of Advent was another introduction in Gregory's time, as a period of preparation for Christmas, analogous to Lent, which is a preparation for Easter. In fact, Gregory had a vision for the Christian Year becoming a vehicle for systematic teaching about the faith. He wrote a series of 40 sermons based on the Sunday gospels, to be read in places like Wye where the priest, though literate, was often not much of a scholar. In his writings, Gregory also gave approval to pictures as a vehicle of Biblical teaching for the illiterate. He propagated improving stories about miracles and martyrdoms, and advocated the dedication of altars to those considered to be saints. There were numerous pictures and subsidiary altars in the medieval church at Wye.

The dedication of churches to Gregory

In Rome Gregory was not considered as a saint for over a hundred years, but in England he was venerated from the time of his death. The main altar in the chapel where St. Augustine and his immediate successors were buried.in what was later St. Augustine's Abbey was dedicated to Gregory. By the early 8th Century there were

other altars dedicated to Gregory in York and Whitby. The first Life of Gregory was written at Whitby in about 710, and is very much a justification for considering Gregory as a saint. At the Synod of Clovesho, held somewhere near London in 747, it was decreed that St. Gregory should be celebrated in all churches and monasteries on March 12th. The celebration of Gregory had been greatly encouraged by Archbishop Theodore, appointed to Canterbury personally by Pope Vitalian in 668. With a letter of explanation, Vitalian sent to Oswy, King of Northumbria 'relics of the blessed apostles, Peter and Paul, and of the holy martyrs, Lawrence, John and Paul and of *Gregory* and Pancras'. These relics were needed to place under altars at the dedication of a church, and consisted of pieces of cloth that had been left overnight in contact with the tomb of the particular saint. We have evidence that from about 680 churches in England were being dedicated to Gregory. One, probably originally built around this date, stood next to St. Paul's Cathedral until it was destroyed in the Great Fire. There were very early Saxon minsters dedicated to Gregory at Northampton, at Winchester and at Sudbury in Suffolk. Another was at Rendlesham, the East Anglian royal residence adjacent to Sutton Hoo. An even more interesting church dedicated to Gregory is at Kirk Newton in Northumberland. This is near Gethrin or Yeavering, a royal residence of the early 600s associated with King Edwin, the first Christian King of Northumbria, and excavated in the 1960s by Hope Taylor. He found a wooden pre-Christian temple, with suggestions in its archaeology that it had been reconsecrated as a church, just as Gregory had proposed. When King Edwin was defeated and slain, Gethrin was destroyed. After Christianity was reestablished it was replaced by a palace mile or two away at Millfield and a village called Kirk Newton. St. Gregory's church there was very possibly established by King Oswy using one of the relics recorded by Bede, although none of the early structure survives. This is a very close analogy to Wye, which was a Kentish *royal vill*, whose name suggests the presence of an important temple. There may well have been a building for pagan worship at Wye, similar to the one at Yeavering. After the Conversion this was surely replaced by a purpose built church.. Tim Tatton Brown, who has made a study of this period, writes 'It is certainly likely that your church at Wye was first built in the 7th Century, and dedicated then to St. Gregory'. If so we may presume that it would have had an altar containing a cloth sent from the tomb of Gregory the Great in Rome!

To find a St. Gregory's Minster where a Saxon church survives we have to go to Kirkdale. a valley in the North York Moors near Helmsley. St. Gregory is stated to be the original dedication in an inscription on a massive stone over the doorway, carved also with a sundial, one of the oldest in England. The inscription commemorates a rebuilding of an early Saxon church from a ruinous state in about 1060. There is evidence that the original building dedicated to Gregory dated from before 750.

Sadly we cannot knowingly visit the site of the original St, Gregory's Minster at Wye, because we do not know where it was. It was probably initially on the rising ground immediately east of the Stour crossing, known as Bolt's Hill, and the extent of the churchyard may be indicated by an enclosure shown on Moon's 1746 map of Wye. Christian burials were found in this when the 1930s houses were built on the bank overlooking the north side of Bridge Street, just opposite the Village Hall. Remains of bones were found at a depth of about a metre by augering in the allotments immediately to the north. Morris in 1842 mentioned a tradition that the earliest church building was here This is supported by a detailed rent roll of the manor from *c.* 1453 which implies that a sexton's house, an attached piece of land belonging

to the sacrist of Battle Abbey, possibly a churchyard, and a house which had formerly belonged to the vicar were all to be found on Bolt's Hill at that date. Unfortunately, the most likely site of the church at the west end of this area was heavily disturbed by building a small gas works in Victorian times. But, as no trace of worked stone has been found in the area, it is more probable that the stone church of Saxon and Norman times, which is mentioned in Domesday (1086) and *Domesday Monachorum*, was part of the unexcavated manorial complex at Wye Court. In many nearby villages, the church remains near the manor farm. The Saxon church of Wye was probably not on the site of the present Parish Church, for no trace of work earlier than the 13th Century has ever been found. Whereever it was, we owe the establishment of the first church in Wye to Gregory, and so the dedication refers not just to the favourite saint of the founder, but to a historical link, even though its nature is still uncertain.

Wye Church in Saxon Times

The existence of a prosperous Christian community in Wye during the 7th Century is suggested by the jewellery found in graves of this period. Pendants with crosses were found on Wye Downs, and a buckle with a fish and an ornament bearing three doves in Warren Wood, between Wye and Crundale. Although the Minster church in Wye was probably established in either the 7th or the 8th Century, there are no records of it from Saxon times. Domesday Monachorum (Domesday of the Monks) records the eight churches were still subsidiary to it in about 1100. They were Ashford, Crundale, Brook, Trimworth, Hinxhill, Willesborough, Hawkhurst and Brixiestun (probably Bethersden – which was originally *Baederices daenne*, although Sevington has also been suggested). The inclusion of Hawkhurst may be a surprise, but this parish was established in the Wealden wood-pastures of Wye Lathe, and was subject to the Wye Manorial Court until the 19th Century. Remains of Trimworth Church, which was about a mile (1.6 Km) north of Olantigh, survived until the 18th Century.

In Saxon times, Wye Church as an 'old minster' received two thirds of the tithes from its subsidiary churches, and was responsible for sending the annual dues to the Archbishop on behalf of all nine churches. These comprised a sestar of honey, 8 lambs, 60 loaves, 12 pence for wine and 14 pence for oil. Archbishop Lanfranc (1070-1089) commuted the payments to money, and required 9s 8d, payable at Easter, i.e.116 silver pennies as there were no larger coins. In addition seven shillings had to be sent to the Pope as Romescot. These arrangements are recorded in the so-called *Domesday Monachorum*, as they survived into Norman times.

It is possible that the Saxon church building was of wood. A Saxon wooden church has recently been excavated at Dover. But it is more likely it was of stone, possibly of material taken from derelict Roman buildings, of which there were at least two in Wye. There was a small early Saxon basilica of stone at Lydd, which, as a subsidiary church of the Lympne Minster, was a less important place than Wye. The early Saxon work at Lydd was obscured by a larger later church, but the church at Bradwell on Sea in Essex established in about 655 survives substantially unaltered, and is perhaps the best existing analogue of the early Saxon church building in Wye. Bradwell Church was built of materials from the adjacent Roman fort, and tiles which are possibly Roman are built into the walls of the present Wye Church.

3. WYE CHURCH IN LAWLESS TIMES

Wye Church under Battle Abbey

So, in 1066, Wye Church was wealthy, not only drawing the tithes (i.e. a tax of one tenth of agricultural produce) from its own large parish, but also two thirds of the tithes from the parishes of all its dependent churches. There were also other sources of income, such as *soul scot* at a burial and profits made from glebe land belonging to the church. In return Wye paid on behalf of its group of churches the levies imposed by the Archbishop and the Pope. Before 1067 the remainder was available for the maintenance of one or more parish priests. But in 1067, the control of Wye Church, including the tithes, passed to Battle Abbey, as Wye manor was part of its endowment. William the Conqueror gave it this valuable royal manor, together with much other land, saying 'I take it from my body, and give it to my soul'. Given over the years in the interest of the donors' salvation, something like a quarter of the land of Medieval Kent passed into the hands of religious bodies.

So, in the 'Domesday' survey of 1086, the manor of Wye appears in the ownership of Battle Abbey, and the church building at Wye is mentioned, even though its site is uncertain.. There were 136 peasant farmers, so the probable population was about 600. The nearby village of Godmersham was only half this size, but had an early Norman church with a tower, suggesting that the lost Norman church of Wye was a substantial building. Its foundations remain to be discovered. They do not appear to be on Bolt's Hill, so were probably part of the manorial complex at Wye Court.

From this time Wye became very much a money cow for the Abbey, and the revenues of the church were no exception. The abbot had a duty to provide a parish priest, who could be a monk of the Abbey, but was often appointed from outside, for the journey from Battle to Wye over unmade roads was long and tiresome. Such a priest, who did not receive the full revenue of the parish but was deputising for the responsible authority, was called a *vicar*. His stipend was considerably less than the revenue of a rich parish. In 1291, the income of Wye Church was recorded as £43 6s 8d, and that of the Vicar £10 13s 4d. After the Reformation the parish priest was demoted to a 'perpetual curate', and the disparity was much greater. Sadly, from 1067 until tithes were abolished in the nineteen thirties, most of the income originally intended to maintain Wye Church and its ministry has been diverted to some other person or organisation. The history shows again and again how the deposits made by the pious in the 'Bank of Salvation' were pilfered by those who were powerful and greedy.

The 12th Century was a particularly lawless period when from time to time even the Abbey was held to ransom by greedy magnates. The history of Battle Abbey during the period from1066 to 1176 is described in its monastic chronicle. In 1103, with the connivance of the Abbey bailiff, Robert de Chilton, four local war lords actually took over Wye manor for a period and let everything go to waste. During this epoch only half the tithes were being paid to Wye Church and its priest, the remainder going to 'the herdsmen of the manor', presumably employees of the Abbey.

The first parish priests of Wye known to history

The Vicars appointed by Battle Abbey head a list of the parish priests (*incumbents*) who are known to have served here during the last 850 years, which can be found to the right of the West door of Wye Church . A somewhat augmented list is given

below, as Appendix 1. The first whose name is known was called *William* who was again paid only half the tithes, the remainder now going into the funds of the Abbey. William was appointed by Abbot Walter de Lucy, who was elected in 1139 and died in 1171. On one occasion, Walter became ill while visiting Wye, and was given extreme unction, presumably by William, and then conveyed to Battle on a litter. Walter de Lucy's brother, Richard, was King Henry II's most powerful official, being chief justice and in charge of the Exchequer. William the priest died in 1173, before a new Abbot had been appointed, and Richard de Lucy persuaded the Abbey chapter to appoint his son, Godfrey de Lucy, to be Vicar of Wye. Godfrey was still a student at the time and appears to have had no intention of actually living and working in Wye, but simply wanted take an income from the post by appointing a curate at a lower stipend. During the interregnum at Battle, the King had supervision of the Abbey, so Godfrey persuaded him, presumably through his father, to award him the entire tithe income from Wye and to order Richard, Archbishop elect of Canterbury (Thomas a Becket's successor) to institute him as Vicar of Wye forthwith. The monks were disgusted to see him take at least half the income without doing any work, but nothing could be done until a new abbot, Odo, was elected in 1175. One of the conditions of the King's rehabilitation after the murder of Becket was that appeals to the Pope or the Papal Legate, which he had previously forbidden, were to be allowed once more. Odo attempted an appeal to the Legate, but had to accept a compromise by which Godfrey was recognised as *Perpetual Vicar* and took all the tithes but paid £10 a year back to the Abbey. As Perpetual Vicar he presumably retained the post until he died in 1204, even though he held various other offices in church and state, ultimately becoming Bishop of Winchester in 1189.

Even though the busy life of Godfrey de Lucy gave little time for visits to Wye, Abbot Odo no doubt came from time to time, and was reputed to be a fine preacher. Another visiting preacher of about 1200 was Eustace from the monastery of Flai in Normandy. He was sent by Pope Innocent III to encourage support of the Crusades, and to discourage Sunday markets. The chronicler Roger of Wendover records that he 'commenced the duty of preaching at a town called Wi'. This would have embarrassed the Abbot, for the Abbey ran a Sunday market outside their gate at Battle. However, when application was made to Henry III in 1225 for a market day at Wye, this was on Thursday. The tomb of Eustace can still be seen in the Abbey Church at St. Germer de Fly, about 25 km west of Beauvais. At Withersdane, about a kilometre from Wye, is *St. Eustace's Well*, to which, Roger wrote, he imparted curative properties. 'From the taste of it alone, the blind received their sight, the lame their power to walk, the dumb their speech and the deaf their hearing; and whatever sick person drank of it in faith at once enjoyed renewed health'. Until recently, St. Eustace's Well was very overgrown. The bushes have been cleared, only to reveal that lowering of the water table in the Chalk by abstraction for mains supply has turned the spring of clear water into a rather murky pond.

During the 13th Century increasing emphasis was being placed on saying mass with special intention for people who had died, and it was common for money to be left for this purpose. Endowments were built up that could support one or two 'chantry' priests at Wye additional to the Vicar, who would concentrate on this duty. The first mention seems to be one from 1252 referring to 'Geoffrey the Chaplain'. About this time William de Merse was Vicar. Later there were two chantry priests, one for each of the two chapels established in the transepts of the church.

4. THE CHURCH IN THE MARKET PLACE

The new church building

Although both the secular Domesday and the ecclesiastical *Domesday Monachorum* assure us that there was a church at Wye in Norman times, we do not know either where it was or what it looked like. The oldest parts of the present building appear to date from about 1290. At this time the Abbots of Battle had recently established a market square, rather grandly called 'The Forum', which occupied the whole block bounded by High Street and the Green. The new church was built directly facing this square, and in front of the church was built at an uncertain date a two story market hall about 25 metres long. The upper story was an assembly room called the *speche house,* the lower story was open to the square and supported on pillars, presumably to house stalls. The place where it stood seems to be marked by the section of the churchyard wall which is made of flints rather than brickwork, roughly between the war memorial and the bus shelter.

The church built about 1290 was considerably larger than the present building, and was cross shaped with a longer nave and a much longer chancel. The position of the foundations of the original chancel are outlined with flat stones in the churchyard beyond the present east end of the church . There were north and south transepts and a central tower, much as Ashford Parish Church has today. However, at Wye the tower was surmounted by a tall wooden spire, covered with lead, as in the model in the glass case at the north west corner of the nave. All these features have disappeared, only the larger part of the nave and its aisles survive together with the original arcade arches on both sides. The original church probably had no clerestory above the arches, being in this respect rather like All Saints church at Boughton Aluph.

The surviving features from c 1290 are the outside walls of the nave built almost entirely of unsplit flint nodules gathered from the fields, the big buttresses to the west wall and the west doorway . None of the original windows survive, however, and the walls were partly demolished to insert larger windows in about 1445, with the south wall almost entirely rebuilt. The larger south doorway (narrowed later) and traces of a corresponding north doorway (now blocked) seem to belong to the original church, as do the arches of the arcades on both sides of the nave. The tower was held up by four large pillars, one of which, of Bethersden marble from the Weald, still exists in the present vestry. This supported the northwest corner of the tower and represents the eastern end of the original nave. The foundation walls of the chancel were 1.2 metres thick, and built of flint and chalk on a footing of chalk blocks.

The 1290s were a period of stylistic change, and we cannot be sure what the original windows were like. They could have been simple 'Early English' lancets, like those shown in the chancel of the model in the glass case. But there might have been, at least in the vanished chancel, larger windows with tracery of the 'Decorated' style as in the contemporary chancel of Chartham church . The renewal of the nave windows in about 1445, however, suggests that the original windows here were smaller and did not give much light.

A church 55 metres long was extraordinarily large for a township of just a few hundred inhabitants. Fortunately we know a little of the Vicar who probably presided

over its building, *William de Bruneford*. His family had extensive land holdings in Wye Manor. Brunesford was mentioned as a placename in Wye in 993 (possibly the equivalent of the present Browning Bridge. One sixth of the arable land of Wye Manor was called the Bruneford wendo. William de Bruneford held land both as an owner and as a tenant during the period 1271 to 1285. But it seems likely that he was a man of deep Christian convictions who not only entered Battle Abbey as a monk, but took his vow of poverty very seriously. That he made a very substantial gift to the Abbey is suggested by an addition to the Benefactors' Roll of the Abbey document, drawn up after his death and preserved at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. This would be noteworthy at a time when many in his position would have transferred most of it to relatives before taking the monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. He was almost certainly the 'Brother William of Wye, monk of Battle', who was ordained subdeacon in the church of South Malling, Sussex, in 1286. Probably he was made Vicar of Wye not long after this. From the stylistic evidence of the earliest fabric in the existing church and the archaeological evidence from the excavation of the demolished longer chancel in 1951-2 it seems very likely that the building campaign took place while William de Bruneford was Vicar. He must have died before July 1299, when in view of his great generosity to the Abbey his name was added to their Calendar of Saints, and the large sum of forty shillings annually in perpetuity assigned to the celebration of the anniversary of his death. This would normally consist of a special mass and some kind of feast for the monks. The Abbey Chronicle mentions that white wine and pepper cake (probably resembling gingerbread) was served at such feasts. Although the document does not mention the building of the church, William's generosity would clearly have helped to make it possible. Perhaps he also engaged in teaching while he was Vicar, for John Asselot of Wye, then a clerk in minor orders, was given 2 marks (£1-6s-8d) by Archbishop Winchelsey in August 1301 for his expenses while studying at a University.

Worship in the new church

During William's Vicariate a very grand ordination service was held in Wye Church, at which Thomas Cantilupe, Bishop of Hereford from 1275 to 1292, presided with a special licence from Archbishop John Pecham, and ordained no less than 5 priests, 5 deacons, 10 sub-deacons and 24 acolytes. Thomas, son of Adam Pistor of Wye, and John of Wye were among those made acolytes, presumably for service in the newly built church. Such an event presupposes a large building, and might well have doubled as its dedication. It took place on 20th March 1291/2, 'on the Saturday on which is sung the office *Sitientes'.* In the Sarum Missal, which would have been used, this is the Saturday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent, on which the office begins *'Sitientes venite ad aquas dicit Dominus',* from Isaiah chapter 55, verse 1 'Come you thirsty to the waters, says the Lord'. The hymn *Veni creator Spiritus* (Come Holy Ghost our souls inspire), used at ordinations from the eleventh century, would have been sung, probably to the plainsong melody which still accompanies it today. As we stand today in a building used regularly for worship for over 700 years, it is wonderful to have these details, and to know that these words of scripture and this hymn are still sometimes heard here.

5. JOHN KEMPE'S CONTRIBUTION

John's father: Thomas Kempe

In 1380 or 1381 John Kempe was born in Wye, a man of the first eminence in church and state, who would transform Wye Church and found Wye College. His ancestors had been local farmers in a small way, but his father, Thomas Kempe, became a considerable landowner, who had been able to enrich himself as Royal Escheator for Kent and Middlesex. Presumably there is a connection with the modern word 'cheat', for the post involved seizing land for the king when the owner had died without an heir or had been attainted by Parliament (e.g. for treason). The escheator could often arrange to buy or lease such land very cheaply, and John Kempe was fined the huge sum of £200, for 'misprisions' in the course of his office. Even so his activities enabled him to become, after Battle Abbey, the largest landowner in Wye and its neighbourhood. Probably around the time his son, John, was born, he acquired Olantigh, about a mile north of Wye, which remained the family home for two centuries. Thomas Kempe had a marble tomb in north transept of Wye Church which was destroyed when the central tower collapsed in 1686. It had a very fulsome Latin epitaph, reputedly the composition of his son, which seems almost absurdly at variance with the historical facts. Similarly a genealogy dating from about 1600 gives him a fabricated pedigree and a fictictious knighthood. In contrast with the illustrious life claimed for him by his son and later descendants, Thomas Kempe was involved in a very extraordinary and reprehensible affair, which led Archbishop Courtenay on 23 July, 1383 to 'put the Church of Wy and the parishioners under an interdict, so that neither divine service nor burials might be celebrated in the Church'.

Thomas Kempe, and another leading citizen, John at Lese, were accused of stealing vestments, books, chalices and other ornaments of the Church. This was not simple theft, however, but related in some way to black magic. It had also provided an excuse for persecuting a supernumary priest (not the Vicar, and so presumably a chantry priest), called Thomas Brewster. The Archbishop stated that 'the parishioners of the Church of Wy, stirred by the spirit of wickedness, and deceived by certain wizards, have charged Master Thomas Brewster, a priest of honest and commendable life, with the crime of sacrilege in robbing the said Church, and on this pretext, without authority or process, they dragged him with violence to prison, and kept him straitly bound in chains'. This was presumably in the round subterranean dungeon at Wye Court, which survived until the nineteenth century. 'Not content with these misdeeds, one night with a certain wizard, the minister of the devil, they rushed on him thus bound, and horribly defiled his face, made after the Heavenly Likeness, by cruelly daubing crosses on it with scalding water mixed with sulphur and other powders, in mockery of the Crucifixion, all the company of the parishioners consenting thereto, and thus damnably incurring the sentence of greater excommunication'. Following this extraordinary episode, Thomas Kempe and John at Lese appeared before the Archbishop's Commissary and 'made their purgation'. The Vicar, and other chaplains celebrating service at Wye, together with John Raymond and five other parishioners, were summoned to answer for the witchcraft. A Denunciation of all who resort to sorcery and necromancy was appended to the summons. Those summoned appeared by proxy before the Archbishop at Otford and made their submission, whereupon the interdict was lifted on 13 August, 1383.

John Kempe's rise to eminence

John Kempe, the future Cardinal and Archbishop, was a child at the time. In due course he was educated presumably at the cathedral school in Canterbury and then at Merton College, Oxford. Specialising in church law, he took a prominent part in the prosecution of Sir John Oldcastle, a leading Lollard (ie. a supporter of the reforms advocated by John Wycliffe). Oldcastle was subsequently burnt at the stake in 1413. In 1429 the Pope issued a Bull against Wycliffite doctrines, which ordered a Crusade against Bohemia, where they had taken root and offered an Indulgence to those contributing to the Crusade. James Burbache, an official of the Archdeacon of Canterbury, was ordered to 'ride aboute and publishe hit in divers parts of the diocese and in especial at Maidstone, Tenterden, Faverisham and Wy'. This attention given to Wye, the name given to the dungeon at Wye Court (Lollard's Hole) and the involvement of Wye people in the disturbances of 1383 and later in Jack Cade's uprising of 1450, may suggest that local loyalty to the *status quo* in church and state needed some encouragement.

Meanwhile, John Kempe collected a number of church appointments, in much the same way as Godfrey de Lucy, before becoming Bishop of Rochester in 1419. He was transferred first to the see of Chichester and then to London before becoming Archbishop of York in 1426. In the meantime he served as a member of the royal council and keeper of the Privy Seal. He was Chancellor of Normandy from 1419 to 22, and was sent abroad on a number of diplomatic missions. He was Chancellor of England from 1426 to 1432. In 1439 he was appointed a Cardinal by Pope Eugenius IV. The 'Hundred Years War' with France had been intermittently in progress since 1328, and the resulting taxation was a major cause of discontent. John Kempe advocated peace, but his efforts were frustrated. Becoming Chancellor again in 1450, he quelled the Kentish rebellion led by Jack Cade. Finally, he became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1452, but died two years later and was buried in Canterbury Cathedral . When, a few years later, Bell Harry tower was constructed, Kempe's arms were placed on the interior vaulting (but you need good binoculars to see them). Overall, John Kempe made his mark as a statesman, and left most of his ecclesiastical duties to deputies. When he wrote of his vision for Wye, he showed he was well aware of this imbalance.

John Kempe founding Wye College

Throughout his long and busy career John Kempe regularly involved himself in the affairs of Wye, and was a frequent visitor, especially for the Christmas season. As early as 1431 he had a vision for enhancing Wye Church and its worship and sought a licence from King Henry VI, which he obtained in February 1432. This provided for the establishment of a College, that is a community of non-monastic priests. The intention was to take over from the Abbey and its Vicar the responsibility for the services in the church and the pastoral care of the parishioners, and with it the financial resources which had previously maintained the Vicar. Armed with this licence, he wrote to the Abbot and Convent of Battle, pointing out that Wye had a 'fair and large church, suitable for a notable number of God's ministers to be occupied therein in divine service', but at present staffed only by a Vicar, one other priest and a parish clerk. The parish was large, with a great number of parishioners needing priests to minister 'sacraments, sacramentals and other ghostly food and generally to counsel them, stir them and comfort them'. He sought their assent to 'stablish in the said church a fellowship of God's ministers, that is to say a master, six

priests, two clerks and two choristers, and of that a master of grammar that shall freely teach without taking anything from them all those that will come to his teaching'. John Kempe spent the next fifteen years assembling a portfolio of properties as an endowment, extensively rebuilding and embellishing the church and erecting a building to house the College. This was called the College of St. Gregory and St. Martin at Wye, and it seems that the double dedication was applied to the church from this time (it appears first in 1475). The addition of Martin of Tours, the patron saint of Battle Abbey, to the titles of the Church and College and the assignment to the Abbey of the right to nominate the Master of the new College were doubtless 'sweeteners' to facilitate agreement to the new arrangements.

John Kempe originally intended to build the college at Olantigh, but this would have been very inconvenient, so instead he bought three small houses to the east of the churchyard called Shalewell, Goldsmyth and Shank. His building stands there still, surrounding a little quadrangle and embedded in later buildings. There is a small pointed doorway, now blocked by a window, through which the College priests made their way to celebrate mass in the church. Also from the door a pathway of rammed flints led along the edge of the churchyard to High Street. This passed the 15th Century Grammar School room, still called the *Latin School*, which had a door opening to it, now disused. It is said that while the boys were in school they were allowed to speak only Latin, and that a sneak nicknamed *Lupus* (wolf) would report anyone heard to speak English.

John Kempe's reconstruction of Wye church

The history of the College has been discussed elsewhere; here are described only the alterations Kempe made to the church. There is general agreement with Orwin and Williams that the shape and size of the building were not significantly changed, picking up Kempe's remark that it was already large and suitable for the work of a considerable number of ministers. But the nave, at least, was very extensively rebuilt. The roof was taken down, the outer walls partly demolished and the windows removed. John Newman suggested, and Tim Tatton Brown accepted, that the arcade arches were shored up and the pillars under them replaced, hard though this is to believe. The object was to support the weight of a clerestory, which was built on top of the arches. The evidence is the different style of the new pillars compared with the one original survivor, which can be seen in the vestry. The windows, both those in the clerestory and those replaced in the aisles, were in the Perpendicular style, matching those in the College building. When the north aisle wall was rebuilt, the new work differed in having a proportion of flints that had been split to give a flat face, and was embellished with a string course bearing sundry grotesque heads.. There is a similar head on the 'Latin School'. A very fine collar and rafter roof was built, with massive tie beams. For many years this was hidden by a ceiling of wooden boards embellished by the carved arms of Kempe and his archiepiscopal pall. The ceiling was replaced in 1764, and the carvings moved to the tie beams. The original oak roof timbers were fully exposed in 1954, and the central boss and other carvings painted and gilded, so that Kempe's work can now be seen in all its glory.

The present vestry was then the north east corner of the nave, so Kempe provided a porch which incorporated a priest's room, or *parvise*, above it. The doorway to the church was made narrower at the same time, and a small spiral staircase from the south aisle was provided for access to the parvise. There is a stone carved with two

arms and a face of which the mouth made a hole for a bell rope, so that the priest would know he had a visitor. Then he could look through a little window to see who was there. The porch and parvise were given a new external front of Portland stone in 1787. Another vestry or chapel, 6.7 metres square, was added, probably at this time, to the eastern end of the south side of the chancel. The foundations were revealed by excavation in 1951. It is impossible to know what work was carried out on the chancel and transepts, for here everything above ground has entirely disappeared. We know that John Kempe's nephew, Thomas Kempe, who was Bishop of London, supplied a magnificent new high altar for the restored church. The site where it stood is now in the churchyard beyond the present east end of the church, near where the recently restored eighteenth century tomb of Chambrelan Godfrey now stands. He also put in new stalls for the choir and members of the College, and provided a new gilt table, perhaps as a side altar. The existing font also dates from this period, and may have been given by the Cardinal himself. Appropriately for the time, it decorated with roses, but it does not take sides, for the roses are not coloured.

Kempe's Church before the Reformation

The church so magnificently restored by John Kempe had many monuments in it, and others were added over the years. Only two survived the collapse of the tower. The older is a brass to Alice Palmer, who died in 1467, her two husbands, John Andrew and Thomas Palmer, who were both merchants of Wye, her three sons and eight daughters. Alice Palmer appears to have outlived both her husbands. She is shown as a tenant of two small properties in a rental of 1452-4, in which Thomas Palmer is mentioned as a former tenant, thus presumably deceased. Alice Palmer's will survives, in which she left a silver cup to the College. The brass indent can be seen on the floor of the nave, immediately on front of the pews, but the brass has been mounted on a board and fixed to the wall of the South Aisle . Much or all of the church floor was covered with tiles. Some medieval floor tiles with simple but pleasing patterns which survive in Brook Church, 2 km from Wye, give an impression of their appearance . The churchwardens frequently bought parcels of new tiles, often from the Old Nackholt kilns at Hinxhill, for reinstating the floor after the frequent burials within the church. These kilns, which belonged to Battle Abbey, were active from about 1300. Ernest Hubbard supposed that these burials would have led to a powerful smell, but this is unlikely as normal graves were dug in the natural soil under the tiles unless there was a well cemented vault. On the contrary, the churchwardens welcomed such burials in moderation, because the fee of six shillings and eight pence (one gold noble) for each burial place (*laystool*) was an important part of church income.

Wye is most fortunate in that the churchwardens' accounts, known popularly as *The Old Book of Wye*, go back to 1515 and thus give many clues to the appearance and activities of the church in the generation before the coming of the Reformation in the mid 16th Century. Many of these features had probably not changed much in the previous two hundred years. Although many of the commemorative masses would have been said without musical accompaniment, the more public services were led by a choir, whose repertoire would no doubt be much influenced by practice at Battle Abbey. The Abbey Chronicler noted that Abbot John of Thanet, who signed the document about the work of William de Bruneford in 1299, 'set the church service to music'. From 1447 lay clerks and boy choristers were part of the College establishment. Great and little organs figure in the churchwardens' accounts, for the

leather of the bellows needed renewing from time to time. The picture shows that two bellows were needed to maintain a constant flow of air, this is possibly why the accounts always speak of 'a pair of organs'. Wye church also had a tuned set of small bells, such as those in the picture, which were sold after the Reformation. The picture also shows singers, a wind instrument, possibly a cornet, and a small harp, played by a tonsured priest acting as Director of Music. One of the singers has a book; music books were used in Wye Church to which William Serlys left one (an *antiphoner*) in 1477. In 1530 Thomas Roger, Rector of Stowting, left to the College of Wye 'all my prick (part) song books, with anthems and masses, to be used there to the laud of Our Blessed Lady and the Holy Doctor, St. Gregory'. It is splendid that this rich tradition of early music has been revived by Dr. Mark Deller, the present Director of Music.

Religious drama was also important in Wye at this period, with the performance of 'passion' or 'miracle' plays. The Wye players gave performances in other places, for example in New Romney in 1491. The fee the Borough paid for this was 6s.8d. plus the entertainment of the cast. In Wye the plays were put on during the annual three day Fair at St. Gregory's tide.

The church would have been dominated by a massive wooden screen between the nave and the chancel, above which was a gallery called the Rood-loft supporting the large crucifix called the Rood. Candles were kept burning in the Rood-loft. There were many bequests in wills of the period towards these candles, which served not only to honour Christ and his sacrifice but to give light to the church.

The transepts were used as subsidiary chapels, although they were becoming somewhat encumbered with tombs. The North Transept had an altar dedicated to the Virgin, and served as the mausoleum of the Kempe family. Other well-to-do parishioners were buried in the South Transept, where there was an altar dedicated to St, James. Elsewhere in the church there were subsidiary altars dedicated to St. John the Baptist and St. Nicholas, and also endowed lamps or candles with more than twenty other dedications, often associated with statues or pictures. So the building was elaborately decorated and would have twinkled with lights. It would also have glowed with stained glass, for the churchwardens made considerable payments to the glazier. No old glass survives, but it was not all abruptly destroyed at the Reformation. In the Archdeacon's Visitation of 1581, it was reported that 'the images in the glass windows remain', and indeed some painted glass survived in the chancel in 1641. A letter addressed to Sir Norton Knatchbull in that year says that it 'had in several Panels our Saviour's betraying and carrying to be crucified, and this beginneth at the left hand beneath and riseth up unto the wider Panel where I suppose he was pictured crucified (which nevertheless hath not been seen in the memory of man that I can learn) & descendeth in other Panels at the right hand unto his burial, of which some indeed are remaining'. Sadly, the era of Parliamentary rule followed by the collapse of the tower in 1686 saw the destruction of all except some tiny remnants salvaged by the Revd. Philip Parsons in 1790 and divided between the College and Eastwell Church, which itself collapsed in 1951.

In contrast, the bells of Wye Church have always been maintained. Before 1572 there were already five 'great bells'. Until the Reformation there was also a small sanctus bell to mark the elevation of the Host during mass. But it was the great bells that were

a valued part of the fabric of village life. The sexton rang the curfew bell every day, and peals greeted royal birthdays and other notable occasions.

6. THE REFORMATION AT WYE

The College in decline

The traditional explanation of the Reformation has made much of the corruption and superstition of the late Medieval church, and these features could be exemplified from Wye as elsewhere. John Goodhewe, Master of the College from 1500 to 1519, was reported to Archbishop Warham in 1511 for declining to appoint more than one other fellow so that he could enjoy most of the endowment himself, 'to the neglect of divine service and the cure of souls'. He had had a relationship with a woman in defiance of Kempe's Statutes, which indeed he did not read aloud twice a year as was laid down. He was also Rector of Staplehurst throughout his tenure as Master, to the detriment of his ministry in Wye. Apparently John Goodhewe's excuses were accepted, and nothing was done to remove him from office, even though John Kempe's lofty aims were being entirely negated.

The ruling class strip the Church of its endowments

Despite the lax behaviour of some clergymen, the enthusiasm for the apparatus of the medieval church of most early 16th. Century people in Wye seemed undiminished. Battle Abbey was dissolved in 1538, but the lights to the saints were maintained in Wye Church until 1542, and someone left money for twenty years of memorial masses in 1543. For Wye Church, the big change came in 1545, when chantries, such as that associated with Wye College, were dissolved. The endowments were appropriated by the King, but mostly passed on to his favourites either as gifts or on easy terms. With few exceptions, members of the ruling classes could not resist the opportunity of enriching themselves. Dissent was highly dangerous to be sure, but in any case their mouths were stuffed with gold. In England the theology of Luther remained condemned and irrelevant to all but a tiny minority until the death of Henry VIII. A useful ideological justification could be drawn from those, who like St. Francis of Assisi, held that the Church should be poor, following the teaching of Jesus. The King and thousands of greedy magnates were happy to make it so, and as the ruling class they could ensure the acquiescence of most of the lower orders. From the seventh century, through times of enormous change, church and state remained closely linked. In Wye, up to the 19th Century, most people were genuinely loyal to the Christian God, to the local Christian community, to Wye, to Kent and to England. There were few political or religious dissenters, and they were given a hard time. Thoughout Europe, religious conflicts were settled on the basis of *cuius regio, eius religio,* that is the religion of the ruler determined the religion of the country, and so it was in England.

As a result of the dissolution of the monasteries and chantries, the endowments of religious institutions in Wye, as in many other places, were pared to the bone. When Battle Abbey was dissolved, the greater tithes, which in the early 19th Century were worth £1700 a year (when the parish priest was paid £50), were granted away with the manor to Henry Cary, Lord Hunsdon. He was a patron of the Globe Theatre, and, for a time, of William Shakespeare. The endowment of the College and vicarage together with the College buildings were given in 1546 to Walter Bucler, secretary to the

King's current wife, Catherine Parr. He assumed the duty of finding a grammar master and paying him £13 6s 8d a year, and providing two chaplains (parish priests), one at £9 and one at £8 yearly. In addition pensions were paid to the dispossessed Master and fellows of the College. But over time the properties were split up and leased or sold and the payments ceased. Apparently after 1560 there was never more than one ill paid parish priest (called a *perpetual curate* on the incumbents' board, as he was neither a Rector nor a Vicar). At times there was none at all, until the relatively conscientious Earls of Winchilsea, based at Eastwell Park, took over the obligation in 1638.

The financial provision for Wye church remained minimal through the following centuries until 1872, when the advowson passed to the Archbishop, and the parish priest became a Vicar, paid an annual stipend, initially of £240. Many parishioners still wished to express their Christian loyalty by appropriate bequests, some of which are commemorated on the Benefactors' Board in the vestry. After the Reformation these seldom benefitted the Church, but were generally for the poor. Until 1834 the Church was responsible for relieving poor parishioners, through the Churchwardens, or, later, through Overseers appointed by the Vestry meeting. Their accounts show that this provision, though doubtless patchy, was often surprisingly generous.

A notable opponent of the Reformation

The ideas propagated by Martin Luther and other reformers reached England during the latter part of the reign of Henry VIII, and engendered a tremendous theological ferment. Cambridge University proved relatively open to Protestant ideas, while Oxford was a traditional stronghold. One Oxford cleric, who was both born and buried in Wye, played a very dangerous part in these controversies, and was fortunate to survive to enjoy an honoured retirement here.

Robert Serles was born around 1490 to a prosperous family, which had lived in Wye for a considerable time, and was presumably educated at the Wye College grammar school. He graduated in the University of Oxford as Bachelor of Sacred Theology in 1511 and was subsequently elected to a Fellowship at Merton College,. After ordination, he remained in Oxford as vicar of St. Peter's in the East. He was a strong upholder of catholic orthodoxy, reputed as 'a zealous preacher against the heretics'. Retaining an affection for Kent, probably because he had inherited property in Wye, he was appointed Vicar of Lenham in 1535 Up to 1540, a curate performed the duties, but, from 1540 until his resignation in 1546 Robert Serles seems to have been resident there.

While at Oxford, Robert Serles became friendly with John London, a fiery character who was a Fellow of New College from 1505 to 1518, and Warden there from 1526 to 1542, when he was made Dean of Oxford Cathedral. Both were strongly opposed to the Protestant ideas of Martin Luther and his associates, which reached England from about 1524.. In 1528, John London imprisoned a Protestant sympathizer, John Quinby, in 'the steeple of New College', where he died. This qualified him to be included in Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs, where John London was described as 'puffing, blustering, blowing, like a hungry and greedy lion seeking his prey'. While this is obviously a prejudiced opinion, the modern historian, Philip Hughes, described him as 'one of the vilest men of all this vile time'. He was certainly an opportunist, for, while

he opposed changes in the Church, he was an associate of Thomas Cromwell, and acted as a Commissioner for the visitation of monasteries from 1535 to 1538.

Following the closure of Christ Church monastery in Canterbury in March 1540, the last of the great monastic houses to be dissolved, the Cathedral was provided with a Dean and twelve canons. To these were added in 1541 six Preachers, and appointments to the corps of 'Six Preachers' continue to this day. Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, who had been consecrated on 30 March, 1533, was instructed by King Henry VIII that this body should represent both the upholders of the 'old faith' and those with moderately reforming ideas. So, Robert Serles was appointed a Six Preacher, as one of the representatives of the 'old faith'.

Cranmer issued a warning that a Six Preacher 'should not use sermons to inveigh against other preachers', and required Robert Serles and his fellow Six Preacher, Edmund Shether, to appear before a court at Lambeth to recant unsound passages in their sermons. Serles was accused of erroneous teaching, e.g. 'Moses sent letters from hell to teach the state thereof, and another likewise out of heaven'. He had also misrepresented the preaching of Protestant sympathizers. 'They say'…'that only faith justifies and that it maketh no matter how we do live. Christ died for us and by His blood hath washed all our sins away; therefore what needeth us to fast and pray?' Shether backed down, and, according to Stephen Gardiner, 'cried like a child'. Serles refused to appear, and decided instead to ride to York where the Privy Council was sitting to lodge an appeal. The Privy Council upheld the authority of Cranmer, considered Serles' evidence 'malicious insinuations' and 'such that the Council thought not fit that the King should see them'. Serles was ordered to submit to Cranmer and briefly imprisoned.

Robert Serles was enraged by this treatment, and poured out his complaints to Dr. John Willoughby. He was a chaplain to the King and Vicar of Chilham, where Serles had gone to preach.in early December 1542. Serles persuaded him that Cranmer would be vulnerable if a sufficiently persuasive catalogue of his heterodoxies could be prepared. With his Oxford friend, John London, a set of articles against Cranmer was compiled. Willoughby took the articles to Canterbury and urged the prebendaries of the Cathedral to sign them, but all refused. On Passion Sunday 1543, Serles was again preaching in Chilham, and persuaded Willoughby to ride to London with him. The two went with John London to the lodging of Sir Thomas Moyle (d. 1560) of Eastwell, near Wye, with whom London had worked on the dissolution of the monasteries. Sir Thomas was a general surveyor in the Court of Augmentations, set up in 1536 to survey and administer the properties of the dissolved monasteries, and had enriched himself considerably in the process. Somewhat illogically, he was also an ardent supporter of the Roman religion. Moyle agreed to send to several other gentlemen and justices of the peace asking them to seek out priests who would take a crown for information that could be turned into articles. A few items were forthcoming, e.g. 'that a tailor in Canterbury did openly read and expound the Scripture in his own house, with open resort thither', and that this 'was suffered by the (Archbishop's) commissary'. John London, however, obtained so many others that it took two days to write them all in a book for submission to the Privy Council.

Interestingly, Sir Thomas Moyle was not only helping Robert Serles, but also keeping Archbishop Cranmer informed about what was going on, thus keeping his options open in these dangerous times.

The matter ended with John London taking the Articles to the Privy Council on his own. But the Privy Council took the side of Archbishop Cranmer, and as a result London was convicted of perjury and committed to prison, where he died. John Willoughby wrote a grovelling letter of apology to the Archbishop. As far as is known, Robert Serles simply laid low, hoping that his considerable part in the affair would escape notice. But these experiences left him with a lifelong detestation of Archbishop Cranmer.

In 1554, after the accession of Queen Mary, Cranmer was put on trial for heresy, giving Robert Serles his opportunity at last. He gave evidence at the trial at which Cranmer was found guilty of denying the doctrine of transubstantiation. In 1556 Cranmer was burned at the stake in Oxford. After the accession of Elizabeth in 1558, Robert Serles ceased to be a Six Preacher but was allowed to live quietly at Wye, where he had inherited considerable property. When he died in 1570, he was buried in the chancel of Wye Parish Church, and the churchwardens' accounts show expenditure on the bells ' before the burial of Robert Serles, clerk'. His will showed his more generous side. He left his house, called *Puntowes*, as an almshouse for the poor, left legacies to a number of Wye children to whom he had stood as godfather and gave £5 each to a number of 'poor maidens' of Wye, to be paid on their wedding day. He left ten shillings 'to the prisoners in the castle of the Westgate at Canterbury', perhaps mindful of his own imprisonment.

Changes in worship

In Wye very significant changes took place during the reign of the Protestant King Edward VI. In 1548 images of saints were removed, and in 1551 some church silver was sold to pay for repairs to the building. These items were no longer required following the introduction of the first Anglican Prayer Book in 1549. They included a cross, the *monstrance* in which the consecrated bread was shown to the congregation, for example in the service of 'Benediction', and the *pyx*, a box in which it was 'reserved' for later use, for example for sick communions. The *pax* was also sold: a silver tablet with a crucifixion scene embossed on it which was mounted on a pole, so that it could be offered for members of the congregation to kiss. This replaced the 'kiss of peace' exchanged among the congregation in the Early Church, a practice which has recently been revived in the form of a greeting and a handshake. In 1552 two chalices and a great quantity of vestments were sold, including two with gerbs (wheat sheaves) from the Kempe arms. It is good to record that recently a new red velvet cope embroidered with gold gerbs has re-established this link with our inheritance from John Kempe. Also in 1552, the stone altars were replaced by a wooden table, and a new Prayer Book was introduced under the direction of Archbishop Cranmer. However, Thomas Southby, the College Fellow who had acted as parish priest, became the first perpetual curate and continued to read services daily from his old Breviary. Archbishop Cranmer grumbled that his assistant ('Gardiner alias Sandwich') had encouraged the people to resume other Roman practices, such as

using beads in prayer. The Rood and wall paintings survived, and in the reign of Mary (1553-8) all such ornaments were in order again, and the lighting of candles was also resumed.

The Marian martyrs

Today, we cannot understand why such practices should raise strong feelings, but the burning of Protestants at the stake is a very different matter, and has indelibly stained the reputation of Queen Mary ever since. It is unclear why John Philpot of Tenterden and Thomas Stephens of Biddenden were burnt by the church gate at Wye in January 1557, and not either near their place of residence or else in Canterbury where many suffered in the 'Martyrs' Field'. Although there were a considerable number of Puritan sympathisers in Wye a few years later, there is no evidence of any during the reign of Mary. However, the account in Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* is supported by the discovery in 1958 of charred human bones just outside the churchyard, when water pipes were being laid near the church gate. There is also an ominous entry in the churchwardens' accounts for the period recording the purchase of a hundred faggots (i.e. bundles of brush wood), although no purpose is mentioned. A memorial plaque to the two men has been set in the churchyard wall by the Wye Historical Society.

Wye Church under Elizabeth

A reformed church of a very carefully regulated kind emerged in the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603). Disgust with the burnings under 'Bloody Mary' was a useful ideological buttress, and Foxe's book, by now universally called *The book of martyrs*, was bought for Wye Church in response to a general order, and like the English Bible was chained to a lectern for all comers to read. In 1559 Cranmer's 1552 Prayer Book was restored, with a few modifications. It was expected that everyone would attend Morning Prayer every Sunday and Holy Communion whenever it was celebrated, typically once a month. The churchwardens were ordered to impose fines of twelve pence on anyone who was absent without good reason. At Archbishop Parker's Visitation of 1569 the 27 Wye absentees were probably all Roman Catholic sympathisers, with the Kempe, Dryland and Clifton families prominent among them. William Clifton was the schoolmaster, and was probably the William Clifton who graduated B.A. from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge in 1530, and became Master of Faversham School in 1534. Presumably he was the son of Richard Clifton who had been a Fellow of Wye College and the schoolmaster before the dissolution.

Wye's Roman Catholic martyr

Thomas Clifton was also mentioned as an absentee from communion, and was probably William's son. Thomas went to France, and was given minor orders at Arras on 9 October, 1579. He went on to the English College at Rheims and, after brief training as a Catholic priest, was ordained at Laon on 19 December, 1579. Returning to England on 7 January, 1580, he was arrested in 1581, and charged under the statute of *Praemunire* for 'extolling the Pope's authority'. He was sentenced to forfeit all his possessions and to be imprisoned for life. He then fell upon his knees, and, with hands and eyes uplifted, said 'Alleluia, alleluia'. He was never executed, but was confined initially in Newgate, and then the King's Bench prison. In 1589 he was in the

Marshalsea prison, when the Governors appealed to Sir Francis Walsingham for resources to relieve poor prisoners, including 'Thomas Clifton, priest'. Presumably he was having no help from family or friends. A letter written in 1593 reports that he had died in prison, so Wye has a Roman Catholic martyr too.

The position of Sir Thomas Kempe was ambiguous. As the local Justice of the Peace he played a prominent part in the disposal of redundant church vestments and ornaments, not only in Wye but also throughout the lathe of Shepway, but as a private citizen he and his household consistently absented themselves from Protestant Communion services. Similarly, the Kempes gave lodging to Mary Clifton, William's widow, but apparently did nothing for Thomas. Some Catholic priests were released on condition of leaving the country, but presumably Sir Thomas Kempe dared not risk an intervention. Christopher Dryland, another young man from Wye who became a Roman Catholic priest at this time, was also imprisoned for some years, mainly in Wisbech Castle, but was allowed to leave the country in 1603, and settled quietly in Rome. It is noteworthy that the Roman Catholic minority in Wye disappeared after this generation. None were reported in the 'Compton Census' of 1670.

The Twysden family

Another leading family of Wye during Tudor times were the Twysdens. Roger Twysden the elder (died 1535) leased Wye Manor from Battle Abbey, of which one of his sons became a monk, under the name of Thomas Bede. At the Dissolution of the Abbey in 1539, Roger's eldest son, William, was able to renew and extend the lease, and Thomas Bede, given a pension on his 'early retirement', joined his brother in managing the manor and took a prominent part in parish affairs. For example, he signed the inventory of surplus church property sold in 1552 and was godfather to numerous village children, although he never married. William Twysden died in 1549, and his widow (Elizabeth nee Roydon) married a very colourful character, called Cuthbert Vaughan , in Wye Church in 1550. Cuthbert Vaughan was chief master of the games and keeper of the bears, bulls and mastiff dogs to Edward VI, and, after the death of the King was implicated in the abortive rebellion led by Sir Thomas Wyatt the younger. Sir Thomas was beheaded, but Cuthbert Vaughan, having been shriven in preparation for execution, was pardoned at the very last minute. William's eldest son, Roger Twysden the younger (1542-1603) married Sir Thomas's daughter, Anne Wyatt. The Wyatts were decisive Protestants, whilst the Twysdens shared the very cautious Anglicanism of Queen Elizabeth I and so were well fitted to guide the parish through her reign.

7. THE CHURCH BUILDING UNDER ELIZABETH

Wye steeple struck by lightning

The reign of Elizabeth I was a very difficult period in the history of Wye parish Church. From 1560 until about 1596 there was often no curate, and those who were appointed either stayed for a very short time or were reported to be highly unsatisfactory. It was during this leaderless period, on 20th July, 1572, that the steeple was struck by lightning and burned, with molten lead dripping down into the church. The tower was also damaged, and falling masonry injured other parts of the building. The luckless churchwardens were William Proude, the younger, and William Titherton. Their immediate response was splendid, as the very next day workmen were paid to begin the clearance of the debris, and were given a free supper at William Nightingale's inn at a cost of ten pence. For the reconstruction of the tower and steeple the churchyard must have become one huge workshop. Local gentry gave whole oaks from their estates, including Roger Twysden of Wye Court, Robert Edolph of Hinxhill and Sir John Tufton of Hothfield. Stone for the quoins at the corners of the tower was obtained from the foreshore at Mill Point, Folkestone, where it was quarried at low tide. Blocks of this Folkestone stone can still be seen, reused in the present tower. Lead was recovered from the debris and cast into sheets for reuse. The new spire was either shorter or less completely sheathed with lead, as there was a surplus available for sale. G. Ernest Hubbard gives fuller details of the work in *The Old Book of Wye*, using the accounts for the first few months. After this, the churchwardens got into a complete muddle, and failed to submit accounts for the next five years. The Vestry appointed a committee to investigate 'lamentable happenings', which included quarrels and lawsuits. They concluded that the effect of public discussion would be 'to breed unkindness and stir choler rather than effectually to perform anything to the benefit of the parish', and proposed that a further committee should 'hear, examine, allow and engross' the incomplete accounts and nominate new churchwardens to take over after December 1578.

It is a mystery why the church was reported in 1581 as 'in much ruin and decay…..very ruinous and lamentable to behold', when the builder in charge of repairing the steeple had received a 'final payment on completion' as recently as 1579. An unproven hypothesis is that the church was damaged by the well documented earthquake which affected East Kent on 6 April, 1580. This damaged other East Kent churches, notably at Sutton, Lydden and Sandwich, and caused a great cliff fall at Dover, which destroyed part of the castle. Buildings collapsed in London, killing two apprentices. Could this explain why further work on Wye steeple was needed between 1582 and 1584? It might also explain why in 1627 the tower was considered to be endangered, apparently by the displacement of a pillar, leading in turn to the even more disastrous collapse of 1686.

The person who completed the work on the steeple and made it possible to make a new start after the financial chaos of this period was Gregory Brett, who was Churchwarden for 1582 to 1584. His family vault is at the east end of the centre aisle of the present nave. The inscription records that 'he rebuilt the old Steeple (burnt by lightning on July 15, 1572) to wch he was a great contributor, by forgiving the Parish a debt of £92 12s 6d., besides his Sess of £30, for wch Benefaction they granted this Burial place to him and his heirs, on paymt of 6s 8d at every interment. Bur. Feb. 18,

1586.' Unaccountably the date of the disaster differs from that in the Churchwardens' book

Providing a pulpit and pews

Pews and a pulpit, features which have dominated most churches ever since, appeared in Wye at about this time. A 'comely Pulpit three or four feet higher than the pews' and a somewhat lower reading desk was demanded by Archdeacon Redman in 1580. So a pulpit, a reading seat and a set of pews, made from elms that had been felled for the purpose in the churchyard, were provided by the churchwardens. There was a separate entry for 'making the seat that Sir Thomas Kempe sitteth in' and others for 'the long pew appointed for the gentlemen of Olantigh', ' a pew appointed for serving men', 'four wainscot pews for women', a 'youths' pew' and the 'childwives' pew', reserved for mothers who had come with their midwives to be 'churched' after childbirth. Social differences were entrenched by the payment of 5s or 6s 8d for the right to sit in a particular pew. These rights became a prolific cause of disputes, and sometimes even of expensive litigation in the church courts. About this time attention was also given to the flooring of the church. In 1590, the year in which he died, Sir Thomas Kempe undertook to repave the north aisle (presumably the transept) in which his ancestors were buried, and to make the old paving tiles available for reuse in other parts of the church. The new tiles were presumably the cream and green glazed tiles found in the excavation of the north transept, while the old were the terra cotta ones still found in parts of the nave.

The church bells

A major contribution to the instability of the tower was no doubt the weight of the bells. Before 1572 there had been five 'great bells', but according to the Churchwardens' accounts the firing of the steeple had reduced these to 'heaps of bell metal' which had to be refined by Robert Dodds, a bellfounder based at Lenham, about ten miles from Wye. But the bells cast by Dodds must have been unsatisfactory for two had to be melted down and recast in London in 1577. Finally in 1593-4 the whole ring of six was again recast by Robert Mott of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry. The enormous cost (about £150) was partly funded by considerable voluntary gifts from well-to-do people from a wide area round Wye. The proceedings were led once more by Gregory Brett, and this time his colleague was John Dense. There is much detail in the Churchwardens' Accounts, summarised by Ernest Hubbard in a chapter of *The Old Book of Wye*.

8. PURITANS IN WYE

The Puritan House Meetings

When Roman Catholic sympathisers were last reported in 1595, their place as the principal absentees from church had already been taken by those who considered that the Established Church had not been sufficiently reformed. In 1578, Puritans, such as John and Thomas Titherton, were first reported to the Archdeacon for non-attendance at church, and in 1590 eighteen people were reported to be absenting themselves from Wye Church and resorting instead to other parish churches where there were more congenial ministers or to 'private conventicles', i.e. religious meetings in houses. A report of 1591 confirms that there was a Puritan conventicle in Wye, possibly the earliest documented example in Kent. 'Robert Jessup, having been inhibited, continues not only to teach children, but also to catechise, expound the scriptures, and to say or conceave prayers, and that in privat houses…especially in the house of Mr. Henry Finch, where he now remayneth and abideth'. Henry Finch (only distantly related to the Eastwell Finches) was a very substantial lawyer in Canterbury, but he had property in Wye, and the George Finches, father and son, who lived at Wye Court for much of the 17th Century were probably descended from him. Katherine Matcham, daughter of George junior is buried under a handsome slab extolling her Christian virtues in the chancel of Wye church. Henry Finch was one of 25 Kentish gentlemen who visited Archbishop Whitgift at Lambeth Palace seeking a degree of toleration for Puritans, but to no avail.

Twenty one dissentients were reported at Wye in 1608, when the conventicle had moved to the house of Isaac Nicholls, the schoolmaster, 'there to meete and to make prayer'. Isaac had been presented to the Archdeacon in 1602 for unlicensed preaching and expounding in Eastwell and Godmersham. He came from a notable Puritan family, and his son, with the magnificent Puritan name of Suretounonhie, continued to run a successful school in Wye for many years. Isaac's father, Josias, who was Vicar of Eastwell but probably had a house in Wye, published a booklet in 1596, entitled *An Order of Household Instruction by which every master of a familie may make his household to understand the chiefe points of the Christian religion.* This was probably used at house meetings in Wye, much as the 'Alpha Course', might be used today. Unfortunately Archbishop Whitgift deprived Josias of his post at Eastwell in 1604, even though he was a moderate Puritan with no thought of separating from the Church of England, This was equally true of the other Wye Puritans of this time, such as Henry Hall. Henry Hall was a well qualified lawyer, who came from a long established Wye family, a competent, scholarly, prosperous Renaissance man, whose *Notebook* has been transcribed and published. Henry Hall was among eleven parishioners, who were fined twelve pence apiece by the Wye churchwardens in 1590 on each of eleven parishioners who were attending services elsewhere, and thus absenting themselves from Wye Parish Church. In particular Henry Hall and his wife 'had taken their child to Ashford to be baptised to the great offence of the congregation'.

The Puritan Ministers

The influential group of moderate puritans in the parish saw the solution was the appointment of a like-minded minister. So, in 1596, a very cautious and distinctly timeserving Puritan, Thomas Jackson M.A., became Curate of Wye. He had been

educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, then noted for Puritans of Calvinistic persuasion. Jackson came to Wye as the protégé of Thomas Twysden (1572-1619), the current lessee of the Manor. Jackson became a considerable pluralist, beginning in 1604 by accepting the living of Milton, near Canterbury, on the nomination of Robert Honywood, and then in 1612 Boughton Aluph. He was never formally instituted as Perpetual Curate of Wye, because the arrangements for this appointment had collapsed, but in 1613 he was receiving the profits of the Vicarage endowment, of about £50 a year. He seems to have lived in Wye until 1614, very possibly in the Old Vicarage, which was already known as the Vicarage House in 1610, and was extended and refronted at about this time. Seven of his children were baptised in Wye. Thomas Jackson was widely reputed as a preacher. While at Wye, he published (in 1603) a collection of seven sermons on the Twenty-third Psalm, entitled *David's Pastoral Poeme or Sheepheard's Song*, and in 1612 a single sermon on *Peter's Teares*. Thomas Twysden bought the right to nominate to the third stall in Canterbury Cathedral, and used it to have Thomas Jackson installed as a Prebendary Canon on 30 March 1614. He then moved to Canterbury, where he had a large canonry house abutting onto the city wall. In Thomas Jackson, Wye had had for eighteen years the benefit of a scholarly theologian of some eminence, who was made a Doctor of Divinity in 1615, and published *A Treatise of the Holy Catholike Faith and Church* in 1627. His moderate Calvinism suited Archbishop Abbot, but led to a tense relationship with William Laud, who succeeded Abbot in 1633.

When, in 1614, Thomas Jackson resigned from Wye and Boughton Aluph, he continued at Milton, which he handed on to his son in 1624. Indeed he was an inveterate pluralist, for despite living in Canterbury, he became Rector of Great Chart in 1617, Chilham in 1624 and Newchurch in 1628, doubtless employing curates. He kept Newchurch, at least, until his death in 1646, when he was buried in the Cathedral. He preached in the Cathedral regularly, and continued to do so after its assets were sequestrated by Parliament in 1644. The last record of him, on August 25, 1645, is a petition to three visiting Parliamentary committee men for payment of £86 for delivering Sunday sermons, in response to which he was allowed £5 on account!

Thomas Jackson heartily detested William Laud, who was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1633. Having been reputed at one time 'his good friend', he turned against Laud to the extent of being one of than more than 150 witnesses who gave evidence against him at his trial for treason in 1644. He was one of two prebendaries who complained of Laud's conduct in Canterbury Cathedral. Laud was wont to bow towards the altar, and Dr. Jackson said that this bowing caused him grief. Laud replied 'Strange! I avow to your Lordships and the world, no man did so much approve all my proceedings in that church as he; and for this particular he never found the least fault with it to me; and if he conceal his grief I cannot ease it. He says this Bowing was not in use till within this six or seven years. Sure the old man's memory fails him. For Dr. Blachenden (the other Prebendary) says that the Communion Table was railed about and there were Bowings before it… above ten years ago. I could tell your Lordships how often Dr. Jackson hath shifted his opinions in religion, but that they tell me their Witnesses must not be scandalised.' As Laud reported it, Jackson's testimony seems a feeble basis for the capital charge of treason, but the responsible Committee of the House of Commons took a different view, and awarded Jackson a pension of £100. After hearing numerous other complaints, the Court concluded that Laud had committed many 'misdemeanours in administration', and the prosecution argued that

a large number of misdemeanours amounted to treason. However, the Archbishop's counsel cogently remarked that the matters of which he complained, such as bowing to the altar, seemed absurdly trivial. Laud pointed this out in his own defence, saying that he 'never understood that 200 couple of black rabbits would make a black horse'. Following this, the House of Commons short circuited the legal process by passing an Act of Attainder, under which Laud was beheaded in 1645. However, unlike Charles I, William Laud has not been venerated as a saint and martyr. In truth he was a sour character, probably partly because he contracted malaria while briefly Vicar of Cuxton in 1615 Nevertheless Wye has the unenviable distinction that one of its clerical residents gave evidence against each of the two Archbishops of Canterbury ever to be executed after legal process.

In 1614 or 1615, following the departure of Thomas Jackson, Richard Sheppard was established in Wye, describing himself as 'pastor' or 'minister'. He too appears to have been a decisive 'low church man', even declining to wear a surplice or to use the sign of the cross when baptising children. He clearly favoured a plain church building, much as it is today, for the churchwardens bought '32 lbs. of Spanish White to whiten the pillars'. Any remains of medieval wall paintings presumably disappeared at this time. On Whitsunday 1623, one William Howsige of Eastwell appeared in the church, and endeavoured to take over the conduct of the service from Richard Sheppard. There ensued a fight over possession of the prayer book, which 'lasted for the space of a quarter of an hour or more'. The Churchwardens complained bitterly about William Howsige to the Archdeacon. However, for reasons that are not clear, Richard Sheppard was superseded, although apparently he continued to live at Wye, where he was buried as 'late pastor and chaplain' in 1638. The probable reason for the dispute was that the portfolio of land which carried with it the right of nomination of the curate (and the responsibility for maintaining the chancel) had been split up between William Collins of Linstead, Robert Moyle of Boughton Aluph, George Hall of Maidstone (son of Henry Hall of Wye) and Henry Brockman of Newington. Somehow agreement was reached on a successor to Richard Sheppard, and Ambrose Richman M.D., was instituted on 10 March, 1624. He had been a scholar of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he graduated M.A. in 1614 and M.D. in 1619. At this time the ethos of Emmanuel College was decisively Puritan.

There is no indication that Dr. Richman practised medicine in the parish, but he was considered to be 'a man of godly life and a *painful preacher*', meaning, of course, painstaking. He had a kind heart; the churchwardens several times note that gifts to poor persons were made at Dr. Richman's request. But he had an eye to his own comfort too, as materials were bought in 1630 for a cloth, a mat and cushions for the pulpit, and a very large amount of relatively expensive communion wine was bought, at a time when the custom was for the parson to take any surplus. An appropriately large silver flagon, was bequeathed to the Church by Reynold Goatley in 1641. He was one of the Surveyors responsible for rebuilding Wye Bridge in 1638, and his name is on the inscribed stone on the bridge. The name is also perpetuated by Goatley Mere in Kennington.

The Church building in the Puritan period

In 1627 the churchwardens noted that the chancel had been 'very ruinous' for at least 14 years and prophesied, all too accurately, that if not repaired this 'will endanger the

fall of our Steeple'. Again, doubt about responsibility for its repair arose from the subdivision of the Vicarage lands.

In 1628 the wooden part of the spire was replaced, for it appears that the work done in the 1570s did not last well. In 1630 a painter was employed 'for colouring the font without and within and for the verses and other work in beautifying the church'. Stuart chancels commonly had painted boards with the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, like those that remain today in the rebuilt chancel of 1706, and these were presumably the 'verses' that appeared.

Ernest Hubbard concluded from such indications that Ambrose Richman was a high churchman and a follower of Archbishop William Laud, but he was more probably a Puritan sympathiser. A letter to Sir Norton Knatchbull from an unnamed layman in Wye describes Dr. Richman's response to two Parliamentary edicts in 1641, which begins 'We halt so, Sir, in our poor Town 'twixt two opinions and receive such thwartings from our Chaplain, Dr. Richman, that I thought it high time to intreat some satisfaction…from some such friend as yourself…' He then says that 'Dr. Richman hath loosened himself and us (as he supposed) from the laudable laws of the land by the Protestation in May'. This 'Protestation' was drawn up by the House of Commons, and, among other points, advocated 'the true Protestant religion' as understood by the Puritan party. As a result Dr. Richman had 'quite altered the form of our divine service' and spoke with some vehemence of 'the dangerous and doubtful case of the composers' of the Book of Common Prayer. Later in the year he read during the service 'the Order of September'. This was an Ordinance sent out by the Commons without the concurrence of the Lords on 'sabbath keeping and idolatry', which decreed that all images were to be removed from churches. Dr. Richman then said that 'he would never administer the Communion in that Chancel until certain glass was taken down'. This is the glass in the east window already described. The churchwardens had refused to remove it, and after that Dr. Richman had gone to London on an unspecified errand.

Dr. Richman died at Wye on 5 May, 1642. The Churchwardens' Accounts for 1642-3 include large payments to a glazier for new glass, so clearly some was replaced as a result of the Parliamentary injunction. Yet it seems probable that a considerable amount of painted glass survived until the catastrophe of 1686. Tom Wright's account of the excavation of the foundations of the medieval chancel in 1951-2 states that 'painted or enamelled glass has been found all over the site, many of the fragments having been gilded or multi-coloured'.

Rebellion and Restoration

The right to nominate the Perpetual Curate and the Headmaster of the Grammar School had passed, probably in 1638, from Sir William Brockman to Sir Thomas Finch, Earl of Winchilsea. He died in 1639, and his successor, Heneage Finch the elder, was only 14 in 1642 and, as a known Royalist, was probably unable to act before 1660. Other people connected with Wye had Royalist sympathies, for example John Pownall (died 1705), who has a floor slab in the North Aisle, and, most notably, Colonel Richard Thornhill of Olantigh. He was presumably buried in the church in 1657, probably in the transept now under the tower, for his widow, Lady Joanna, 'chose to be buried in this place out of a due regard to the memory of her excellent husband'. He raised a troop of horse for the King, and, after the estate was released

from ‘sequestration’ in 1651, Olantigh saw drinking parties of sympathisers who devised various harebrained plots for reviving the Royalist cause. Richard’s brother in law, Robert Cole, established a Trust on 11 May, 1653 for sermons to be preached near the anniversary of the execution of Charles I. The sermons were to be based on one of a specified range of appropriate scripture texts, e.g. *‘The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us for we have sinned.’* (Lamentations 5,16) or *‘Who can put forth hand against the Lord’s anointed and be guiltless?’* (1 Samuel 26.9). A fee of £2, then a large sum, was to be paid to the preacher. These sermons continued to be given. Philip Parsons (curate from 1761-1812) preached them regularly, indeed the last occasion was by Dudley Venables in the 1980s -- still for the fee of £2. Fortunately the Trust only took effect when Robert Cole died in 1663, for the Parish Minister of Wye, from 1656 (or earlier) until 1662, was the Revd. William Belke He was a relative of Major Michael Belke J.P. of Sheldwich, who was considered to be a *regicide,* as he had taken part in the trial of King Charles I.

Like Thomas Jackson, William Belke had a hearty detestation of William Laud. He was one of many people who had grudges against him. 1638 he was the plaintiff in an action before Archbishop Laud in the Court of Arches, in which he sought to recover property belonging to an uncle who had died intestate, but was awarded only £40 out of an estate worth about £2,000. Also like Thomas Jackson, William Belke was was a pluralist, having already been made Rector of Weston, Chilham and Wickhambreux. Clearly he was also a pliable cleric of the type celebrated as *The Vicar of Bray.* To be appointed to Wye in 1656, William Belke would have needed the approval of the *Triers*, a body set up by Parliament in 1654 to prevent the appointment of supporters of episcopacy. Yet he was in such favour after the restoration of episcopacy that in 1660 he was made a Prebend of Canterbury Cathedral, again in the ‘third stall’. This gave a right to a house in the Cathedral Close, to which he probably moved. William Belke died in 1676, and was buried in the Cathedral.

9. THE RESTORATION CHURCH

The Eastwell Finches take command

The Restoration also gave Heneage Finch the elder, Earl of Winchilsea, the opportunity to nominate the Headmaster of the Wye College Grammar School. He seems to have selected Jeremy Dodson M.A., who as 'clerk of Wye' conducted a wedding on 10 February, 1661. He became curate in place of William Belke in 1662. The Earls of Winchilsea presented nineteen perpetual curates between 1660 and 1872. They were moderate 'high church' men, all but one graduates. Some were also Headmasters of the Wye College Grammar School, and so were able to live in the south facing wing of the old College buildings. In 1664 Jeremy Dodson was assessed for tax on 13 hearths, which must mean he was renting the whole of the College complex as a boarding school. By then Heneage's seven year old son, Heneage Finch junior, was one of the pupils. Later he would marry Anne Kingsmill, a well known minor poet, and they would live from 1700 to 1704 in the Wye College buildings. Heneage junior was a pioneer archaeologist who excavated *Juliberrie's Grave*, a Neolithic long barrow at Chilham. In 1665, Jeremy Dodson moved to London, where he became Rector of St. Catherine Coleman until his death in 1692.

The Second Great Catastrophe (1686)

The next Perpetual Curate who should be mentioned is George Gipps, who had the misfortune to be in post when half the church was destroyed by the collapse of the tower. George Gipps, instituted in 1679, was an M.A. of Magdalen Hall, Oxford, and another pluralist, being at various times Vicar of Lympne, Vicar of Brenzett and Curate of Fairfield. But he probably lived in Wye for most or all of his 26 year tenure, for several of his children were baptised here and his wife was buried in Wye churchyard in 1697, as he was in 1707. So it was probably George Gipps who was conducting Morning Prayer on Sunday, 21 March, 1686. What happened then was described in a letter from George Oxenden, Dean of Arches of the Diocese of Canterbury, to Archbishop William Sancroft.

May it please yr Grace,

> I suppose yr Grace may have heard the sad news that the steeple of ye Church of Wye fell down abt ten daies ago and has beat great part of the Church downe, it standing in the middle of ye Church. The minister being at prayers with the congregac'on perceived the bell ropes to shake, there being no winde then, and immediately warned the congregation of the imminent danger, and they all ran out, and immediately the steeple fell down. I shall see it on my way to Ashford, and will give your Grace a More particular acct of that and all matters that occur when I shall have the happiness to see your Grace. In the meantime,
>
> I remain'
>
> Yo'r Grace's most dutiful and obliged humble servant,
>
> *George Oxenden.*

Deane (near Cantr.) April 8th (1686).

The Churchwardens recorded that almost all of the transepts and most of the chancel was destroyed, together with one pillar of the nave. John Harris, paid a visit soon afterwards, and wrote in the only volume published of his *History of Kent* (1719):

> 'When I was there, I saw Fragments of several old Tombstones lying open in the Churchyard, which formerly lay in the Isles and Chancels; and some Statues and Fragments of Monuments lay in Heaps at the lower End of the Church….In the Church were memorials of Interment of one *John Andrew*, in the year 1481; Several of the *Kemps* and *Thornhills*; and another of *Elizabeth*, wife of *Thomas Godfrey* of Lyd.'

Emergency repairs

Robert Boulding and William Andrews were the unlucky churchwardens. On 16 April 1686 they levied a cess (church rate) of 12d in the pound (normally it varied from 2d to 6d in the pound) on rental values in the parish, and this yielded £127 8s. 6d. During April they spent £50 on labour and 3s on ropes and nails, presumably for making the building safe. The next priority was to hang up a bell. Hard though it is to believe, five of the six bells had survived the collapse of the tower. They had been cast by Robert Mott of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in 1593, and in the 1750s five bells bearing Mott's name still hung in the new tower. With the church in ruins, one bell sufficed, hung at a cost of 19s 10d on 21 June, 1686, with an extra 6s for a rope. This hung down near to the reading desk used by the minister. In July, two hundred deal boards were purchased at Faversham for £12, and transported to Wye on four waggons. Using them to board up the open end of the church took 102 man days of labour at a cost of £9 14s.

On 5 October, by order of George Oxenden the churchwardens appeared before the Court of Arches, and were directed to repair the leaded roofs of the remaining part of the church, to set up a pulpit by the reading desk and remove the bellrope to a more convenient place. They should set up a communion table and repair damaged pews. The remaining debris, tiles and timber were to be removed under the supervision of Mr. Brett (Thomas Brett senior), Mr. Marsh, Mr. Rentmore and Mr. Gipps (the Curate). It appears that these things were done, although not necessarily within the four weeks stipulated. However, the churchwardens' accounts show that only £1 9s 2d was spend on further repairs to the church building between the autumn of 1686 and the end of 1692, after which the accounts are missing until 1729.

In April 1691 George Oxenden, now acting as Vicar General of the Diocese of Canterbury because Archbishop Sancroft had been deprived as a 'non-Juror' for not swearing allegiance to William and Mary, noted that he had made a personal inspection of Wye Church and that 'the churchwardens and parishioners have done nothing in order to the rebuilding the Steeple, some years since fallen down'. He ordered the churchwardens and other interested parishioners to appear before the Court of Arches to show cause why they should not be ordered to levy such a yearly church rate as would pay for the rebuilding of the Steeple, and in particular to state the sum produced by a rate of one shilling in the pound on two thirds of the full yearly rents of the parish.

On 27 May 1691, the wardens appeared, and testified that a shilling rate would yield £120. But they claimed that such a tax was not practicable because of heavy

expenditure on the relief of the poor of the parish and heavy government taxes for the prosecution of the current European war. ‘In case they should be compelled to make such a tax, most of the persons who are tenants to land in the parish would leave the same in the landlord’s hands’. So Judge Oxenden ordered that they should raise a church cess of 6d in the pound towards the necessary repairs of the church.

Their accounts show that the churchwardens obeyed, and levied a cess of 6d in the pound in 1691, which raised £56 8s 3d. But nothing was spent on repairs in that year or in 1692, when the cess was at 2d in the pound. There are no further accounts, but a memorandum attached to their account book ends ‘thus it continues to this day’ (20 January 1699/1700).

10. THOMAS BRETT AND THE REBUILDING OF WYE CHURCH

Despite the inactivity of the Churchwardens up to 1700, during the following ten years the tower and chancel were rebuilt, and in essentials the church building took on its present form. In 1711, Archdeacon Thomas Greene reported the church and chancel as 'new, exceeding handsome and clean'. It is astounding that there are virtually no documents relating to this transformation, and as there are detailed accounts of earlier and later periods, a suspicion arises that some have been deliberately suppressed. What follows is a piece of detective work, and the account of events and the motive proposed for this deliberate suppression of history, a classical *damnatio memoriae*, must be considered provisional.

The career of Thomas Brett

There is evidence that the most able and widely influential person associated with Wye Parish Church between early 1696 and the end of 1716 was the Revd. Dr. Thomas Brett (1667-1743). The sole surviving evidence are the signatures in the 'burial in woollen' register and the handwriting in the other registers, the period during which the rebuilding was planned and executed. As the son of Thomas Brett senior of Spring Grove, Wye, he came from a family long settled in Wye and Kennington. Gregory Brett, the churchwarden most responsible for repairing Wye Church after the lightning strike of 1572, was an ancestor, and this would surely have predisposed Dr. Thomas Brett to feel a vocation to rescue it from an even greater disaster. He was educated at the Wye College Grammar School under John Paris and Samuel Pratt, and admitted as a pensioner at Queens' College Cambridge on 20 March 1684. He was removed by his father for extravagance, but allowed to return, whereupon he found that his books had been 'embezzled by an idle scholar'. So he migrated to Corpus Christi College, and graduated LL.B.on 11 June, 1689. He was ordained deacon on 21 December 1690 and priest after a year as a curate at Folkestone. He then settled in London as a lecturer (i.e. preaching assistant) to the Vicar of Islington. Between 1692 and 1695 he was also Rector of Trottescliffe in Rochester, where he presumably deputed his duties to a curate.

After the death of his father in February 1696, his mother persuaded him to return home to Spring Grove, which he did in May of that year, to become curate at Great Chart. In the course of his duties there he courted and married Bridget, youngest daughter of Sir Nicholas Toke of Godinton. On the evidence of the entries in the 'Burial in Woollen' register in which the officiating minister is named, Brett immediately began to deputise for George Gipps at Wye The first entry 'Mr. Brett' certified is dated 31 May, 1696. In 1697 he took the degree of LL.D, and from 1697 until 1707 a majority of the entries are certified by 'Dr. Brett', and the handwriting of many entries in the main Wye Burial Register changes from that of George Gipps to what is believed to be that of Thomas Brett The Register also reveals that this was a very sad time for Bridget and Thomas Brett, with no less than four children dying in infancy between 1698 and 1710. They had 12 children in all, only three of which survived into adulthood. What appears to be Brett's writing records that 'Mr. George Gipps, Minster of Wye, was buryed January 7$^{th'}$ (1706/7). His tombstone is in the churchyard just to the west of the path as it approaches the south door of the church

but is not now legible. Between 1698 and 1701 entries not certified by Brett are nearly all by Henry Nicholls, who was Vicar of Boughton Aluph. From 1704 until 1715, many entries were certified by Isaac Satur, Rector of Shadoxhurst, although some continue to be certified by Brett. 'The Lady Joanna Thornhill buried January 27' (1708/9) in the main register seems to be in Brett's hand, unfortunately the corresponding entry in the 'Woollen' register is illegible. The last entries in Brett's writing are dated from 21 October to 23 November,1716. On 27 October, 1710, after an interregnum of nearly four years, William Nevar was licensed to succeed George Gipps. But he was also Vicar of Willesborough, and, at first, would have been glad for Thomas Brett and others to deputise for him at Wye. However, by 1716 Thomas Brett was in deep trouble as a 'Non-Juror' because he had refused to sign the oath of allegiance to George I, and his 'final warning' from the Archbishop ran out at the end of the year. So in large letters right across the page of the burial register is written 'Dec 31 1716 William Nevar Curate; Thomas Turner Assistant'.

There is no doubt that, in the context of the abortive Jacobite 1715 rising in Scotland and the North of England, someone with Jacobite sympathies would be deeply unpopular. Thomas Brett compounded this by accepting consecration in 1716 as a bishop in the non-Juror 'shadow church'. which looked to take over as the true succession if the 'Old Pretender' came to power. Indeed it was rumoured that the Jacobites intended Brett to become Archbishop of Canterbury! As a result, he was firmly displaced from any further activity in the affairs of Wye Parish Church. Instead Brett ministered to small non-Juror congregations in his house at Spring Grove, Wye, at Canterbury and at Faversham. Complaints were made to Archbishop William Wake that he was interfering with the duties of parish clergymen. The Archbishop wisely considered, like his predecessor, that Brett was misguided rather than dangerous and let him off with a reproof. Thomas Brett had the advantage of being a very likeable man. He was described by a friend as 'a learned, pious and indefatigable author,…a dutiful son, an affectionate husband, a kind parent and a true friend. His conversation was ever facetious, good-natured and easy, tempered by a becoming gravity without moroseness, and so well adapted to those he happened to be in company with that it rendered him agreeable to, as well as esteemed by persons of all ranks who had the pleasure of his acquaintance.' Despite these virtues, he was penalised for breaking ranks with the established church in that his great scholarship in the fields of church history and the development of liturgy was largely disregarded, and the contribution he almost certainly made to the rebuilding of Wye Church has been virtually struck from the record. The churchwarden's accounts, otherwise complete from 1515 to the present are missing from 1692 to 1729, as are the Vestry minutes before 1724.. The only documentary evidence of his dominant role in the ministry of Wye Church between 1696 and 1715 is in the 'Burial in Woollen' register, where its retention was a legal requirement.

Funding the rebuilding

We know from the final entry in the Churchwardens' book that in January 1700 the rebuilding had not started, and that they considered their resources inadequate. The population of Wye in 1690, as estimated from the Heath Tax returns and other considerations, was between 300 and 350. The only resident magnates were the Thornhills of Olantigh, but they were in much reduced circumstances, and would sell the estate shortly afterwards. Funds from outside Wye were essential for any progress to be made, so in 1695 moves were made to involve the East Kent justices of the

peace, who formed the effective county administration prior to the foundation of County Councils. Witnesses from Wye appeared at the Epiphany Sessions of 1695/6 and gave evidence about the collapse of the tower and ruinous state of the church, estimating the cost of rebuilding as £1500. On 14 January, 1696 (new style) the Justices agreed to send a petition to the Lord Chancellor asking for a Charitable Brief to be licensed, a kind of 'Week's Good Cause' appeal that would be sent to every parish in England. Before the appeal was actually made (and here perhaps the effect of Thomas Brett's arrival later in 1696 can be seen), it became evident that £1500 would be inadequate. So a request for the sum to be increased to £3,000 was brought to a meeting of the Justices on 12 July, 1698, and passed, following an adjournment, on 2 August, 1698. But there seems to have been further delay, for, according to an endorsement, the brief was not entered until July 1701. Indeed the actual collection took place towards the end of 1702, for the brief is mentioned in the Churchwarden's Accounts of a parish in which a collection was made. This was at Greenford Mayne, Middlesex, and is as follows:

> 'Collected Dec. 27, 1702 towards a Brief for Wye Church in the County of Kent the sum of five shillings and nine pence. *John Delahay* Rector.' (Wye *Parish Magazine* 1913).

The individual collections were brought together by an agent on London, who took a commission from the takings. So there would be further delay before the money actually arrived in Wye. In sum, the major reason for the twenty year delay in starting the rebulding was the lack of any assurance that sufficient funds would be available.

On the Benefactors Board in Wye vestry some of the local responses to the financial appeal are recorded.

> Lady Joanna Thornhill £50
>
> The Rev. the Prebendaries of Canterbury £10
>
> William Deedes M.D. £5
>
> The Rev. Thos. Brett LLD. £5

Today, a faculty from the Diocese would be essential before such a major rebuilding could be started, and this would include plans and specifications. Unfortunately three hundred years ago faculties for building work were rudimentary, and often do not survive. Orwin and Williams state that a faculty was obtained in 1701, but nothing can be found in the Canterbury Cathedral archives, where the earliest faculty for building work at Wye dates from 1730 and authorises a gallery in the North Aisle. According to Morris, it was 'in a year or two after' 1701 that the rebuilding was begun, but, as there is absolutely no contemporary written account of it, we have to look to the evidence of the fabric itself.

The rebuilt tower and chancel

A prime consideration is that there were two separate areas of responsibility. One was the chancel, which was for the incumbent to maintain if he was a Rector with the benefit of the tithes and glebe lands. If, however, the endowment had passed into

other hands, the responsibility for the chancel went with it. At Wye in 1701, it was the responsibility of Charles Finch, Earl of Winchilsea, to maintain the chancel. The remainder of the church was the responsibility of the lay people of the Parish under the leadership of the churchwardens. A brief examination will confirm that the new chancel and the new tower have entirely different fabric. The chancel, dated 1706, is made of flints neatly split and of uniform size, with professionally crafted stonework around the windows. But the tower, also dated 1706, is made of a great variety of stones: flints and ragstone predominate with Folkestone Stone, Pliocene Ironstone and tiles in lesser amount. Most of it is clearly reused debris from demolishing the ruined parts of the old church. The walls are of vernacular workmanship, and are five feet (1.52m) thick, partly perhaps to dispose of the large quantity of rubble on the site. *Galleting* is a prominent feature. This involved embedding small stones, generally flints, in the thicker mortar joints made necessary by the great diversity of stone shapes and sizes. Galleting is totally absent from the chancel, which is clearly made of new material, as, for the most part, is the outside wall of the present vestry, a wall made necessary to fill a former internal opening from the north aisle into the north transept. Indeed this wall and the new 'chancel arch' that continues it, must have been the first part of the rebuilding to be undertaken.

So there must have been two entirely distinct building contracts: one for the chancel and east wall of the vestry funded by the Earl of Winchilsea and one for the tower and any necessary repairs to the nave funded by the Parish through the churchwardens. Thomas Brett was very friendly with three successive Earls of Winchilsea, who were likeminded Tory high churchmen. When George Oxenden was urging rebuilding, the then Earl, Charles Finch, was but a teenager, but in 1701 he was 29 and fully in charge of the business of the estate. Major Richard Thornhill of Olantigh, who contributed the limestone pavement of the chancel (which still survives), had similar opinions in religion and politics, as did his elderly great aunt, Lady Joanna Thornhill, who gave £50. Thomas Brett, himself a well respected member of the local gentry, was the ideal person to encourage these people to open their purses, and his own contribution was generous for a young man with a modest (and encumbered) estate.

1706 is on the date stones of both the tower and the chancel, but Kempe's great Perpendicular west window in the nave was replaced in 1704. The explanation was surely the tremendous storm of November 1703, which was even more damaging than the one in 1987, with many dreadful wrecks of sailing ships. Pearman's *History of Ashford* records much damage in Wye, especially to orchards. The Earl of Winchilsea's poet auntie, Anne Finch, then resident in Wye College, wrote a poem with graphic descriptions of roofs being blown off houses which was presumably inspired by the effects she saw in Wye. Like the masonry of the tower, the new window was of the cheapest, a standard round headed 'Georgian' window, like that in the tower, and considerably smaller than the one it replaced. The ground floor of the tower was of earth until the 1950s.

The new chancel

Overall, the character of the work funded by the parish shows vividly that Wye had lost much of its previous wealth and importance. Conversely the chancel, though small, is extremely elegant. The circular apse is an unusual feature at this period, which may well have been inspired by Thomas Brett's enthusiasm for the Byzantine

church. It is on the strength of the chancel that Simon Jenkins includes Wye in his *Thousand Best Churches.* He writes:

> 'The 18th century chancel might be that of a royal chapel of ease with a three window apse and blue, white and mauve panelling. It is sumptuous, and most unecclesiastical.'

How tastes change! T.H. Oyler wrote in 1910 'the chancel was rebuilt in the worst possible style'. The datestone on the chancel bears the initials TD, but their significance is unknown. The only well known architect with these initials active at that time was Thomas Dance, who designed the original building of Guy's Hospital. Work must have been almost finished by the end of 1708, to allow for Lady Joanna Thornhill's burial. Her splendid baroque memorial (ILL) is still the most elaborate inside the church. The last part of the long inscription refers to her bequest for 'the teaching of Children to read and write'. Unusually for its time the elementary school which she endowed was for girls as well as boys. It thrives to this day and still bears her name. Sadly with the death of her grandson, Major Richard Thornhill, in 1711, the connection of the family with Wye ended. The big floor slab dated 1717 in the centre of the chancel also marks the end of a family important in Wye throughout the 17th Century. It commemorates Katherine Matcham, the daughter of George Finch of Wye Court. George was probably a descendent of the puritan Henry Finch, but only very remotely related to the Eastwell Finches. The reredos behind the altar table, bearing the Lord's Prayer and Commandments and overlooked by the Eye of God in the form of a sun, dates from 1712, for Archdeacon Thomas Greene noted on 16 March, 1711/2 that the Commandment board was missing, 'but will be gotten by the time of my parochial visit'. The date of a board painted with the royal arms of Queen Anne, fixed over the chancel arch, was 1711. The arms were removed in Victorian times, and replaced by a painted Bible text. The Archdeacon's report confirms that in other respects the reconstruction was complete.

The new tower and its bells

The bell frame, made from reclaimed timber from the wreckage, bore the inscription 'John Brovnfield made this frame 1709', so by then the tower must also have been complete. The fifth bell, broken in 1686, was replaced with one bearing the inscription of a London bellfounder: 'R PHELPS made me 1709'. Part of the 1709 bell frame was left in the ringing chamber when replaced by a steel frame in 1914. Stones on the tower bear the names of Jarman, Austen and Willets, presumably builders involved in the work. The Jarman family had a long association with Wye; William Jarman (died 1481) left a field to help pay for repairs to Wye Church, which still benefits from the proceeds. His is the earliest entry on the Benefactors' Board in the vestry. Norton Jarman (died 1720) was one of the Baptists who met in a house in Wye parish for about fifty years from 1672, while Thomas Jarman was a bellringer who participated in a notable peal in 1736, and was a churchwarden in 1754. Lawson Austen pulled a rope in 1736 too. The Austen family had been in Wye at least since the 16th Century; the 18th Century representatives were generally farmers and maltsters. We can probably conclude that the tower is the work of local builders, rather than professional masons directed by an architect. The objectives were clearly great strength, so that it would not fall down again, coupled with the utmost economy. The pinnacles and battlements which now add a more sophisticated touch were renewed in 1896.

In the absence of an incumbent, Dr Thomas Brett had a free hand to supervise the parish until October 1710, so clearly he saw the construction work to completion. Sad it was to lose the splendid medieval church and replace it with a mongrel of a building in oddly assorted styles and little more than half its size, but the result has been better suited to the needs of the village over the subsequent three centuries.

Thomas Brett: liturgical and ecumenical pioneer

Thomas Brett was a prolific writer, author of more than twenty books and pamphlets. He wrote numerous letters, many of which survive. Twenty folio volumes of his papers are in the Bodleian Library at Oxford and these include an unpublished autobiography written in 1732. Sadly, there is almost nothing that relates to Wye Parish Church Nearly all their content relates to controversies of his time. Three initiatives are of enduring interest: his work on Communion liturgies of the early Church, the attempts at a *rapprochement* with the Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches and his contention that much more attention should be given to the Greek version of the Old Testament, as this, rather than the Hebrew, was used almost universally in the Early Church.

Brett's principle was that 'Christianity is no gradual religion, but was entire and perfect when the Evangelists and Apostles were deceased, and therefore the earliest traditions are undoubtedly preferable'. Following this 'the Apostolical and Universal Traditions of the Catholick church do oblige us to an Obedience, and no particular church has Authority to cancel that obligation'. Brett defended himself with great vigour against the charge that he had 'turned Papist', pointing out the many ways in which Roman Catholicism had diverged from the practices of the early Church. He was equally hard on Protestant churches that had abandoned episcopacy, and considered that, of existing churches, the Church of England was closest to the church of the Third or Fourth centuries that he took as his model. In sum Thomas Brett was propounding a very interesting form of 'Anglo-Catholicism', which could have been immensely influential in the Church of England of a century later. As it was, he left the mainstream of the Church of England for a small and dwindling sect, who were fatally tainted with political disloyalty by their link with the Jacobites.

While Thomas Brett lies buried in the family vault in the nave, his best memorial is in the Sunday morning services of Parish Communion following Common Worship (2000). Most of the changes in this from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer service are items recovered from early liturgies by Thomas Brett, tried out in his services at Spring Grove from 1716, published in the non-Juror *New Communion Office* in 1718, and justified at some length in his *Dissertation on Liturgies,* published in 1720.

The features of the 1718 Office, which are lacking in the Book of Common Prayer of 1662 but used from 2000, begin with the initial Greeting *The Lord be with you*, and continue with the option to use Jesus's Summary of the Law, instead of the Ten Commandments. This was strongly advocated by Brett in 1720, on the ground that Jesus had modified the Old Testament law, e.g. on the observance of the sabbath. The *Kyries* (*Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy…*) as a separate item were restored by Brett, as was the Gospel Acclamation (*Glory be to Thee, O Lord*). The Peace, very widely used now in the Free Churches as well as the Church of England, was a Brett recovery, justified in the *Dissertation* by the teaching of Jesus that if there was an issue with a neighbour, one should be reconciled before making any offering to God.

The anthems *Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest* and *O Lamb of God* were restored in the 1718 Liturgy, having been discarded at the Reformation. Mixing a little water with the wine was strongly advocated by Brett, and is now the practice at many churches, including Wye. Most scholars would agree with him that it was a regular Jewish custom almost certainly followed at the Last Supper and strongly advocated in the Early Church, as conjoining the two gifts of Jesus to the believer: the water of life and the atoning blood. The blood and water which flowed from the spear wound in the side of the Crucified further underlined the desirability of the mixture.

Undoubtedly Thomas Brett would consider that the most important feature restored under his influence is the *epiklesis*: a prayer that the Holy Spirit would make the bread and wine spiritually effective as the body and blood of Our Saviour. Brett defended himself vigorously against charges that he favoured transubstantiation. But he considered that a simple reading of a Biblical account of the Last Supper was inadequate, a specific *prayer* was needed. Thomas Brett has won his point. Such a prayer is now present in all allowed variants of the consecration prayer in *Common Worship* and also in the most recent Service Books of the Methodist and United Reformed Churches.

Brett's advocacy of a Communion service weekly instead of three or four times a year was influential among contemporaries who did not separate as 'non-Jurors', such as the Wesley brothers. While a missionary in Georgia John Wesley actually used the 1718 *New Communion Office*. Brett's ideas were ignored by the Church of England of his time, but were influential in the Scottish Episcopal Church, and spread to the United States when the Scots consecrated Bishop Seabury as the first Anglican bishop there. It is by this route that they have returned to the Church of England.

11. WYE CHURCH IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Worship in the Eighteenth Century

Wye Parish Church had no early involvement in liturgical change; the Book of Common Prayer was used at all services until the late Twentieth Century. In the Eighteenth Century, Morning Prayer was read every Sunday and Evening Prayer every other Sunday, always with a sermon. Holy Communion was celebrated quarterly in 1711, but monthly by the middle of the century. This was a period when virtually every inhabitant of Wye conformed to the Church of England. There were reported to be no Roman Catholics, and only a very few non-conformists, most of whom were Baptists. As a result the truncated church building was too small, a problem addressed by building galleries, as shown in the plan . In 1730 the vestry authorised a carpenter, Stephen Bowyer, to build a gallery 35 feet long and 13 feet deep in the south aisle at his own expense. He was authorised to let or sell the pews in this gallery. In 1754 a special gallery for singers was built over the west door. A band 'including fiddles, basses and flutes' sat in the West gallery with the choir, who 'were noted for their elaborate anthems and Christmas carols', according to the Church Magazine (1907). There was much rivalry with choirs in neighbouring villages. In Wye, the last surviving member of this band was James Head (1831-1920), who played the bassoon, but music in this tradition survived long enough in Dorset to be mentioned by Thomas Hardy, and has been revived there by the 'Melstock Band', and in Kent by the 'Marsh Warblers'. In 1780 access to the West Gallery was restricted to persons who would undertake to sing in four parts, but Churchwardens and members of the Vestry were exempt from this requirement. However in 1781, a further small gallery was authorised in the south aisle, to be used by William Scudamore, the parish doctor, William Kennett of Wye Court and five other members of the vestry 'exclusive of all others'. The Wye church congregation was a well structured society where each had their appointed place. In the Eighteenth Century, the Vestry was a powerful body, which levied a rate, relieved the poor, managed the workhouse and the pest house (isolation hospital) and maintained the church, the churchyard and the roads. They appointed churchwardens, sidesmen, the sexton, the Overseer of the poor, the constable and the surveyor of highways. Neither its composition or its powers were clearly defined by statute, but by unwritten convention it was chaired by the Parish Clergyman and consisted of seven or eight substantial citizens, mostly landowners or farmers. Professor Bryan Keith-Lucas has published a detailed account of their activities.

Bellringing in the Eighteenth Century

The Eighteenth Century was the golden age of bellringing in Wye Church. Probably there was no ringing chamber in the medieval central tower, leaving the bell ropes to come down to the floor of the church itself. The new tower gave the ringers a private world of their own, which they could embellish with peal boards celebrating their most notable achievements. 'Change ringing' became popular only in the early 18th Century; the earliest recorded full peal was rung at Norwich in 1715. Most ringing methods required a peal of eight bells, whereas Wye had only six, five of them miraculously preserved when the tower collapsed. Two more were added in 1734. One of these was given by John Sawbridge, whose father Jacob had bought Olantigh about 1715. The other was paid for by subscription. William Dan, one of the

churchwardens, gave £8-5s and Thomas Gillman, a Wye bricklayer, 10s 6d., remarkably large sums. The extra bells enabled an achievement commemorated by the oldest of the peal boards.

On Munday, the 29th March 1736, was rung in this Belfry by the under written men, 5040 Grandsier Tripples in 3 hours & a half, being ye first set that ever rung it in the County without ye assisstance of Londoners or others. Thos. Hudson, Chas. Baker, Thos. Jarman, Robt. Baker, Chas. Miller, Thos. Tabraham, Laws. Austen, E. Pickenden, and Jno. Sharpe.

To commemorate the 250th anniversary, another full peal of Grandsire Triples was rung on 29 March,1986. Although several ringers from outside Wye took part on this occasion, it was a tremendous testimony to the long term durability of the bell ringing tradition here.

Connoiseurs of Dorothy Sayers' *The Nine Tailors* will be familiar with Grandsire Triples and with the enthusiasm felt by campanologists for the peculiarly English art of change ringing. There are five other peal boards in the ringing chamber dating from 1738 to 1838, when 'a splendid peal of 6048 Bob Major, in six parts, 78 bobs and two singles, was rung…composed and conducted by Mr. Silas Haycock; which was brought round in a superior style in three hours and thirty-eight minutes'. In 1774 the Wye Vestry meeting decided to have eight new bells, of total weight 88 hundred weight (about 4.5 tonnes). The approximate cost expected was £534, a huge sum at that time. This reflects the status of bellringing as not only a popular hobby, but an important focus of village pride in the 18th Century. (ILLs, box table with particulars of bells).

The Sawbridge Family

The Finch family, headed by the Earls of Winchilsea, resided at Eastwell, where was also their parish church and place of burial. From 1826 they were Finch-Hattons, Earls of Winchilsea and Nottingham, with a main residence in the Midlands. Having lost most of their fortune to gambling and unwise speculation, they leased out Eastwell Manor in 1874 and sold it in 1893. But from about 1715, Wye had a powerful new dynasty resident at Olantigh within the parish, the Sawbridge (later Sawbridge-Erle-Drax) family. After a shaky start resulting from Jacob Sawbridge's involvement with the 'South Sea bubble', the family came by 1800 to own nearly half the property in Wye parish, and to exercise a pervasive influence on the parish and its Church, which lasted in some measure until the death of John (Jack) Sawbridge-Erle-Drax (1893-1982). A much abridged family tree is given below.

Celebrating the entry of the family into the ranks of the gentry, Jacob Sawbridge was granted arms by the College of Heralds. They were *canting arms*, with a pun on the family name, as the indented edges of the charges are reminiscent of the teeth of a saw. No visitor to Wye Parish Church can escape noticing the eight *funeral hatchments*, painted boards bearing the arms of the Sawbridge family, variously impaled (halved) or quartered with the arms of families to which they were connected by marriage. The word 'hatchment' is said to be a corruption of 'achievement', meaning that the arms are accompanied by any crest, helmet, motto, heraldic supporters or insignia to which the person was entitled. Hatchments accompanied the funeral procession, and were often displayed in the church for some time afterwards.

Few churches have retained so large a collection, and this reflects the high esteem given in Wye to the Sawbridge family.

If commemorating an unmarried person, a widow or a widower the whole of the panel surrounding the armorial shield was painted black. If for a husband or a wife, the arms of each was impaled, and half of the background was painted black and half white, the black being on the right side for a woman and the left side for a man. This can be seen in the oldest hatchment, that of Elizabeth Wanley (1713-1733), second wife of John Sawbridge senior (1699-1762). She was the beautiful but delicate daughter of George Wanley, a London banker, who had four children in as many years. Two of these became very eminent. John Sawbridge junior (1732-1795) was Lord Mayor of London in 1775, and one of a small group of republican MPs, deeply opposed to King George III and his Tory minister, Lord North. He campaigned tirelessly against the corruption endemic in contemporary public life and for a more democratic electoral system. Catherine Macaulay (1721-1791) wrote a six volume history of Seventeenth Century England, also reflecting republican sympathies, so that she was more highly regarded in France and the United States than in Britain. She visited both countries, and was the guest of George Washington at Mount Vernon. John too was popular with some, with several songs composed in his honour. But their republican sympathies did not endear them to the local gentry, and Jane Austen remarked that her friends did not visit Olantigh. Sadly neither John or Catherine have hatchments or monuments in Wye church, although John was buried here. However, their father (died 1762), both of Lord Mayor John's wives, Mary Bridgeman (died 1764) and Anne Stephenson (died ?1805) and Catherine's first husband, George Macaulay (died 1766) have hatchments in the collection.

The residents of Olantigh had a reserved box pew at the front of the church where the northern set of choir stalls are now. Beneath these are two Sawbridge vaults; Morris states that one has interments dating between 1719 and 1764 and the other between 1766 and 1805. There was no associated monument, but the four hatchments mentioned above hung over the Sawbridge pew. The four remaining hatchments are from the Nineteeth Century.

Eighteenth Century Monuments

The many monuments in the chancel and transepts were destroyed in 1686, and the seventeenth century tombstones in the churchyard are generally now illegible. There are a number of eighteenth century monuments, but only a few of these are of special interest. The most important is the elaborate wall mounted monument to Lady Joanna Thornhill, which has already been mentioned. Although it is intricately carved with columns and cherubs, and has a very long inscription, it is relatively flimsy by the standards of contemporary aristocratic monuments. This reflects the impoverishment of the Thornhill family, begun by Parliamentary sequestration during the Civil War and completed by their own extravagance, and also the generosity of Lady Joanna's bequests to endow an elementary school and to relieve poverty in the village. In the event it took a considerable further bequest by her executor, Sir George Wheler, to provide an adequate endowment for the school.

In the churchyard east of the present east end of the church, stands the unusual rocket-like tomb of Chambrelan Godfrey, which has recently been repaired and made safe. The inscription is becoming weathered, so it is recorded below:

Here lies interred
Chambrelan Godfrey Esq,
youngest son of John Godfrey
Esq^{r}; of Wye in the county of Kent.
He resided many years at Leghorn;
there while he improved his fortune
by commerce he deservedly bore
the character of an honest and worthy man.
A D 1748 he returned to England,
and here, though retired from
business, was still assiduous
in the constant practice of
Benevolence, Friendship and Charity.
He died the 25th Nov^{r}, 1766, aetat. 67.

To perpetuate the memory
of so good a man, so kind a Relation,
Joseph Pinfold his first Cousin
and Executor
hath erected this monument.

Leghorn is now Livorno in Italy. A nearby table tomb, now illegible, covers the resting place of his father Joannes (died 1719, aged 52), his great uncle Joannes (died 1673) and his great grandfather, Richard Godfrey (died 1641, aged 50) who married Mary, daughter of John Moyle of Buckwell. The Latin inscription, which was reproduced by Morris implies that the stone slab atop the tomb originally formed part of the pavement in front of the High Altar in the chancel destroyed in 1686. The Godfreys are described as an old Kentish family; they were particularly associated with Lydd. Both tombs included their coat of arms (a chevron between three pelican's heads).

While Wye church and churchyard have few elaborate eighteenth century memorials, some unadorned stones commemorate citizens who contributed much to the life of the village. In the nave near the pulpit, for example, is a partially illegible floor slab which commemorates a village doctor. The inscription read:

Under this stone
Are interred the Remains of
Mr. John Beale, Surgeon.
He died the 3rd of March 1770, Aet.: 62.
His Constant Affectionate
Behaviour during the space of
thirty-four years to his Wife;
his peculiar Tenderness and
Humanity to his patients;

his Frankness and Generosity to
his Friends make him an
Example worthy of Imitation
By us who survive.

Following John Beale, William Scudamore was parish doctor for 24 years. His tombstone in Wye Churchyard describes him as 'sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience' The Vestry paid him a lump sum to attend all poor persons in the parish. One shilling a head was paid for each person living in the town, and two shillings for each parishioner living in the surrounding countryside. William Scudamore also served as family doctor to Edward Knight of Godmersham, and doubtless to his sister, Jane Austen, during her frequent visits. Godmersham is about three kilometres from Wye, and Jane and her father at one time considered living in Wye. When the house at Godmersham had been repainted, Jane wrote to her brother, Henry, that 'Mr. Scudamore is very decided as to Godmersham not being fit to be inhabited at present – he talks even of two months to sweeten it…my brother will probably go down and sniff at it himself and receive his rents'. William's eldest son, also William (died 1832) has a floor slab in the nave, with his wife Eliza (died 1842). A younger son, Charles Scudamore (1779-1849), who was baptised in Wye Church, became physician to one of Queen Victoria's uncles, Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, and was knighted.

The Revd. Philip Parsons: the longest serving Parish Priest of Wye

Philip Parsons, Curate from 1761 to 1812, was an immensely energetic and greatly loved polymath. His concerns closely paralleled that Twentieth Century character, the Revd. Canon Dr. S. Graham Brade-Birks (1887-1982), who wrote a predecessor of this history of Wye Church. Both were a conscientious parish priests (Brade-Birks of Godmersham and Crundale), well reputed teachers at Wye College, authors of books and formidable antiquarians with an encyclopaedic knowledge of local history. Most unfortunately, Philip Parsons' memorial tablet, on the outside, east facing wall of the vestry, has weathered, and become almost illegible. It is sad that it was not placed inside the church, like that of his youngest son, the Rev. Robert Parsons A.M., Vicar of Burham, which is on the north wall of the chancel and is in pristine condition.

Philip Parsons wrote a book on the monuments and stained glass in the churches of East Kent, published in 1794. He had been advised to take some exercise for the sake of his health, so he visited about a hundred churches on horseback. In it he wrote "I confess I am delighted with this beautiful ornament (painted glass) in whatsoever place I meet with it, but more especially in our churches where I think that windows *'With painted stories richly dight, casting a dim religious light'* are infinitely superior to the glaring glass of our modern churches, and much more suitable to a place of devotion". Philip Parsons was doubtless disappointed that not a scrap of old coloured glass survived in Wye Church. Fortunately he was able to place pieces of old glass from elsewhere in Eastwell Church, where he was Rector and in Wye College, where he resided and was Headmaster.

Philip Parsons' most notable achievement was the establishment at Wye on 4 September, 1785 of one of the earliest Sunday Schools in Kent. Robert Raikes, the proprietor of the *Gloucester Journal*, had established one in 1780, which was the first

to gain wide attention. The first in Kent was established on 23 January 1785 by the Revd. George Hearne, Rector of St. Alphege and St. Mary Northgate in Canterbury, and this came to be based in the ancient chapel of St. John's Hospital. He inspired the Revd. Charles Moore, Vicar of Boughton under Blean and Curate of Hernhill, to start Sunday Schools in each of his parishes on 1 May, 1785. In a letter to his brother Moore wrote 'The Dean and Chapter of Canterbury have taken up the cause as a body, and the example of Mr. Hearne has been followed by other parishes in Canterbury. Steps are being taken in Chatham for the same purpose, and the Clergy in and about Rochester are in general very desirous of their establishment. I hear likewise of several other places where they are meditating their introduction.' Moore published a sermon with a descriptive appendix which came to the attention of Philip Parsons, who was also influenced by the enthusiasm of the Dean of Canterbury, the Revd. George Horne, D.D. Philip Parsons wrote most interesting account of the establishment of the Wye Sunday School, which was published of part of an appendix to a sermon preached on 18 December, 1785, by Dr. Horne, under the title *Sunday Schools Recommended*.

Parsons began by visiting his more prosperous parishioners, and 'raised an effectual subscription'. He was particularly fortunate to approach a local farmer and maltster, Valentine Austen, shortly before his death on 21 August, 1785, at the age of 76, for he left £50 to Wye Sunday School. On the strength of this Philip Parsons 'agreed with…two masters and two mistresses for their constant attendance' at one shilling per Sunday, payable quarterly. Equal pay between the sexes was then unusual! He continued 'on Sunday the 4th of September 1785 my school began, and I had the pleasure of seeing the teachers attended to church by *a hundred and four children*.

There were two sessions each Sunday, the morning session began at ten, when the register was called, and then the children had to find the psalm and collect to be used on that Sunday. They read the order of Morning Prayer in the Prayer Book until it was time to go into the service, which was at eleven. After that they went home, returning at one thirty in the winter or in summer at two, to prepare for Evening Prayer in the same way, held, according to the season at two thirty or three o'clock. After Evensong there were two hours of instruction, ending, as the morning session had begun with a prayer read by one of the children.

In summer the Sunday School met in the unheated church, in winter 'the schoolroom hired for the purpose is the place'. This would have been the Old Hall of Wye College, which was used during the week by the boys of the Thornhill School (the girls met in the Parlour). We can picture the medieval hall crammed with children, for 'notwithstanding the severity of the winter, the attendance has been large; generally between 80 and 90'. The two masters taught the boys and the two mistresses the girls, all in the same room! Each teacher seems to have had two groups, one older and one younger, to which he gave attention in turn. Children were admitted at seven years of age, and the normal leaving age was 14, although they could stay to 15 if desired. On leaving, a copy of Crossman's *Introduction to the Christian Religion* was publicly presented to each child, his name being written in it. It would be interesting to find one of these prizes!

The youngest children were taught to read from *The Child's First Book*, published by the S.P.C.K. The teacher had to hear each stand up and read a portion before any other teaching was begun. Intermediate classes studied the New Testamant, special

attention being given to the Sermon on the Mount, the first chapter of John's Gospel and the twelfth and thirteenth of Romans. A modern Sunday School teacher would find this an austere syllabus! The highest class turned to Christian doctrine, with the aid of Crossman's book and the catechism. Parsons' 'Mission Statement' clearly aims to reassure his financial supporters. 'Nothing further than reading and the first principles of the Christian religion is thought of or intended; and humility, as the duty of their lowly station, is cheerfully inculcated'. However, the Rules for the teachers have a marvellously apt clause on discipline. 'As little severity to be used as possible; yet, if it is necessary, that little must be used'. I do not think a modern teacher could fault this as a statement of the best policy! Parsons' voice is clearly heard in another rule: 'The teachers to observe the children that misbehave at church, and punish them when they return into the school; not in the church because it disturbs the congregation'. In class, 'no child shall remove out of place without leave of the master or mistress; nor play nor talk nor whisper, upon any account'. 'About ten minutes before it is time to dismiss them; let the teachers gather the books; go to the children for them, and not suffer a child to get out of its seat to bring them; for that makes a noise and a confusion. This method I must desire the teachers to observe; as order and regularity are the life and soul of instruction.' Before we condemn these rules as absurdly restrictive, we have to picture four teachers and eight groups of ten or twelve children each, all studying different subjects or passages in the same room. Keeping the children still and minimising noise would be a matter of sheer necessity. With all their faults early Sunday Schools, like that at Wye, were among the roots from which modern education has sprung.

Phillip Parsons was far from the self indulgent country clergyman who is supposed to be typical of the Eighteenth Century. He was an omnicompetent ball of energy. He chaired the vestry meeting, and is found instructing the Overseers of the Poor to provide shoes for children, clothes and firewood for widows and apprenticeships for orphans, among many other concerns. With his arrival, vestry meetings become more frequent and the minutes more detailed. He included numerous interesting comments in the parish Registers, such as the supposed cause of death with each burial he recorded. He made a list of previous parish priests, which was useful in preparing this *History.* The subject matter of his writings extends to horseracing and astronomy! During his fifty years of Headmaster of the Wye College Grammar School, its reputation was at its highest point in its 500 year history. On his death on 12 June, 1812, still in post at the age of 81, the obituary on the *Gentleman's Magazine* testified:

> 'Of his urbanity, diligence and classical talents as master of the school there are many most respectable living witnesses, gentlemen of the first families of the county of Kent who received their education under him'.

12. WYE CHURCH IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The coming of the Wesleyan Methodists to Wye

On 4 December, 1771, John Wesley preached in Ashford to a good company of attentive hearers, and by this time there was already a strong Wesleyan society in Canterbury. But, in the following years, there is no record of organised activity in or around Ashford. It was in August 1810 that the Revd. Richard Roberts arrived in Ashford to establish a mission which, almost immediately, extended to Great Chart, Charing and Wye. In 1811 this was consolidated as the 'Kent Mission' circuit.

By early 1811 there was a 'cottage meeting' in Wye, which was the target of active persecution. The house in which they met before a chapel was built was attacked with missiles, and the doors, windows and shutters broken in pieces. At the Maidstone Assizes the defendants pleaded guilty, and were sternly bound over to future good behaviour. The Court Case resulting from the damage to the meeting place of the Wye Wesleyans was reported in the *Kentish Express* of 28 January, 1911, and summarised by Orwin and Williams,who give evidence that the intimidation was later resumed. There is no suggestion that this was encouraged by the incumbent, Philip Parsons, then a gentlemanly figure aged 80.

In 1824 the Parish Church ceased to be the only church building in Wye, with the building of a Wesleyan chapel. From 1672 until about 1710 there had been Baptist house meetings here, and during the same period a few Quakers lived in Wye. But it was the Wesleyan Methodists who built the first non-conformist chapel. It was accessed by an alley off Bridge Street, beside what was then the Swan Inn. The site now is roughly in the middle of the recent Twysden Court development. By the time of the Religious Census of 1851, the small chapel, which was only thirty feet square, must have been crammed to the doors. The afternoon service on Census Sunday was attended by seventy adults and forty nine children. Ninety were present at the evening service, and forty children at a morning Sunday School. John Wesley had discouraged Methodists from entering direct competition with the main service in the local parish church. Despite this, it is evident that Anglican antagonism continued, for no mention whatever of the Wesleyan community can be found either in 19th Century Vestry minutes or in any issue of the Church magazine from 1889 (the first extant) until 1915, and then only to mention that the Wesleyan Sunday school room had been made available as a recreational facility for soldiers billeted in Wye.

However, the Wesleyans received encouragement from an unusual source, the main local landowner, Major J.S.W. Sawbridge-Erle-Drax M.P., locally known as the 'Mad Major'. For unknown reasons he took umbrage at the Anglican clergy. The *Wide World Magazine* for April 1908 in an article on Remarkable Follies (pp.61-69) states 'There is a tradition that once, by way of a joke, he was put up at a public dinner to propose the health of "The Bishop and Clergy," etc. The company expected something racy; but they were astonished when he declared that he would be happy to cremate all the parsons in the county, dead or alive, at so much a head. He was, however, a privileged guest, and, consequently, even the "cloth" itself was not greatly shocked'. Whatever the truth behind this 'tradition', he made a prime site available on which a larger Wesleyan chapel was built in 1869, and gave it in exchange for the old chapel, as shown in the 1868 deeds of Wye Methodist Church, now in the safe of the

South Kent Methodist Circuit. Shortly afterwards a Sunday School room was built next to the chapel. The site almost faces Wye Parish Church from the other end of Church Street, and was at the focus of village life, for the communal water pump was outside it. One may contrast the nearby village of Mersham, where the opposition of the Knatchbulls led to the building of the Wesleyan chapel at Cheeseman's Green, two miles from the village centre. For nearly a century, Wye Parish Church existed alongside a significant 'Chapel' community, with its own large Sunday School. Adapting to smaller numbers, the Methodist premises were reconstructed in 1981, and now have a role complementary to the Parish Church, as will be noted later.

The Sawbridge-Erle-Drax family

In the grounds of Olantigh, one mile north of Wye Church, is a splendid equestrian statue of the 'Mad Major', commissioned by himself, which shows him raising his top hat, through which, in a crowning oddity, there is now a bullet hole. This is a continuing reminder of the local legend that when the crossing gates were shut at Wye Railway Station, the Mad Major was wont to leap over them on his fine hunter horse. Many local inhabitants wish they were able to do the same! In the chancel of Wye Church there is a reminder of a more tender side to his character: a memorial erected to his mother by 'her affectionate and attached son, John Samuel Wanley Sawbridge Erle Drax M.P.'.

This inscription refers to his other 'seat', Holnest House, about twelve miles north of Dorchester. Around this he scattered various 'follies', including a tower made famous by Thomas Hardy. Like many eccentrics he devoted much thought to his own funeral. He had a fine mausoleum of pink granite built outside the south door of Wye Church for his father Colonel Samuel Elias Sawbridge, who died in 1851, and his mother, Elizabeth, who died in 1862. Anticipating burial in this vault, he is understood to have enacted a rehearsal of his own funeral, with a coffin he had purchased years before and a hired glass-sided hearse. Using servants and gardeners as pall bearers and mourners, he is said to have driven the hearse himself from Olantigh to Wye Church. But, later, he changed his mind and had a huge mausoleum built in Holnest churchyard, in which he was buried in 1887, allegedly in his hunting coat of orange with a black collar. There was a door in the mausoleum with a letter box, through which a copy of *The Times* was to be posted daily. About 1935, this mausoleum was demolished, and his remains reinterred in the normal way. The less assertive Wye mausoleum remains, and has been used for five further burials. These include three younger children of Samuel Elias Sawbridge, his eldest daughter, Elizabeth Anne (died 1877, his youngest daughter, Caroline Streatfield (died 1882)) and a son. Commander Samuel Sawbridge R.N. (died 1881). Also buried there are J.C.W Sawbridge-Erle-Drax's nephew and heir, Wanley Ellis Sawbridge-Erle-Drax (died 1928) and his wife Milward (died 190l). Wanley and Milward are also commemorated by a tablet inside the church. This is behind the pulpit, adjacent to the two unmarked vaults containing the remains of 18th Century Sawbridges. Both 'JCW' and Wanley were active village 'squires' and leading laymen in the Parish Church. Meeting minutes often record JCW showing solid statesmanship and impulsive philanthropy alongside his occasional eccentricities, while Wanley was much quieter, remembered as 'a dear old man who knew everybody', while still able to be an effective chairman of the inter-war Parochial Church Council. In turn, Wanley's son, John C W Sawbridge-Erle-Drax ('Jack') was PCC secretary from 1926 until 1947 and

Churchwarden from 1950 to 1972. Jack (died 1982) and his wife May (died 1980) are buried immediately to the east of the Sawbridge mausoleum.

Although Major John S.W. Sawbridge-Erle-Drax is not buried at Wye, his funeral hatchment is in the church, together with that of his father, Samuel Elias Sawbridge and of his wife, Jane Frances Erle-Drax Grosvenor (died 1853), whom he married in 1827 and from whom he took the name Erle-Drax, and (for his lifetime only) inherited the Dorset properties. Jane's arms can also be seen in stained glass in the north aisle (previously in the West window before it was damaged in World War II).

Two curates cut short in their prime

There are monuments on the north wall of the chancel commemorating two notable early 19th Century perpetual curates. William Morris M.A. came to Wye in May 1817, and was instituted on 25 July following, having previously served curacies in Herefordshire and Northamptonshire. He was an active Chairman of the meetings of the Vestry, which until the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 had the unenviable task of mitigating the distress resulting from the depression which followed the Napoleonic Wars. In April 1828, he persuaded the meeting to pay the expenses of James Blackman, his wife and family in emigrating to America, then a novel way of reducing the long term burden on the parish. He himself must have known poverty, like Trollope's Quiverful, for his wife bore him eleven children, while his curacy was worth only about £50 a year. One baby boy named Selwyn died in 1825, aged 7 weeks, and is buried under the floor of the chancel. The small lozenge shaped tablet is covered by the stalls. William Morris himself died in 1832, aged 45, leaving his widow and ten orphan children to mourn an 'excellent husband and father'. However, one son, William Selwyn Morris, soon qualified as a medical practitioner and surgeon, and returned to Wye as the village doctor. He lived in a Tudor house immediately east of the Methodist chapel, which has been demolished although its medieval undercroft survives. In 1842 W.S. Morris published *The History and Topography of Wye*, which reflects wide antiquarian interests and remains a mine of useful information. It contains a drawing of Wye Bridge which shows a balloon. This is probably *Albion*, a gas filled balloon owned by his friend, Charles Green (1785-1870). W.S. Morris is known to have flown with Green on two flights over London in 1845.

In 1834 the Revd. Robert Billing became Master of Wye Grammar School, and from November 1st. 1838 deputised frequently for the Revd. William Carter, who had succeeded the Revd. William Morris as Perpetual Curate. There followed a period of great activity, which probably reflects Billing's influence. In 1841 the Vestry decided on the reconstruction of the south porch. At the same meeting it was decided that the churchwardens should not be required to have the church heated in the winter. However, at a Vestry meeting held in the *King's Head* in February 1843, it was considered 'desirable to provide a means of warming the church', and the churchwardens were directed to buy a stove 'at a sum not exceeding £35'. It was also resolved to erect an organ to be funded by voluntary subscriptions.. On 7 July 7, 1843, it was resolved to put the new organ in the West gallery, where previously a band had accompanied the singing. The organist was paid £10 yearly and the boy who acted as organ blower £1. Eventually the Rev. William Carter resigned, and on 24 August, 1846 Robert Billing was formally instituted as Perpetual Curate. As Headmaster of the Grammar School he was able to draw two incomes and also to live in Wye

College. This was a time when congregations were very large. The 1851 census recorded the population of the parish of Wye as 1,724. The church with its various galleries was said to seat 720. On Census Sunday (30 March) there were 260 adults and 113 children at Morning Prayer and 343 and 112 children at Evening Prayer in the afternoon. Robert Billing considered this afternoon congregation 'somewhat under the average'. The Grammar School was also well supported, with forty boarders together with a number of day pupils, enabling Robert Billing to employ an assistant teacher. With church and school thus flourishing, Robert Billing abruptly dropped dead while at prayer in Canterbury Cathedral on 15 July, 1854, aged only 47, leaving his widow, Ann, and seven children. His marble tablet is appropriately near that of William Morris on the north wall of the chancel, while his grave is outside the south door of the church. Ann died on 7 June, 1882, and was buried at Nottingham, but is commemorated by a brass tablet which is also in the chancel of Wye Church. Robert Billing's eldest son, the Rt. Revd. Robert Claudius Billing (1834-1898) became Suffragan Bishop of Bedford (1888-1895). Oddly, this Bishop had a special responsibility for social work in the East End, supported by the East London Church Fund. He visited Wye in May 1891, and the Parish magazine commented 'The Bishop of Bedford is a Wye Man, and so we at once became attached to the East London Church Fund'! Despite the contributions made by their distinguished sons, it was a tragedy for Wye that two such able priests died so young. Indeed after Robert Billing's death Wye College as a free Grammar School went into terminal decline.

The era of church 'restoration'.

The 'restoration' of churches was very fashionable in the later part of the 19th Century. The more famous William Morris and his friends inveighed with little effect against what they called 'scraping', which destroyed much of their character and historic interest. The pressure for such improvements was felt in Wye, but had to be balanced against the depressed state of the local community and the scanty financial resources of the church.

The decline of Wye in relation to its neighbour, Ashford, was already evident before 1800. Ashford market was better placed to deal with the livestock production of Romney Marsh and the Weald, and, unlike Wye, was on one of the main turnpike roads leading from London to the coast. When Ashford became a major railway town after 1842, Wye on its branch line lost all pretensions to importance. No new houses other than the level crossing keeper's cottage were built in the parish in the ten years previous to 1851, and ten existing houses were uninhabited.

The church also was poor. The assets originally intended for its upkeep had been ruthlessly siphoned off long ago for the benefit of the local gentry. Tithes had been commuted to money payments, and the Church Vestry meeting was involved around 1836 in a survey of land use in the parish to elucidate their assessment under the Tithe Commutation Act This was macabre, for although the parish was very large, with a good proportion of fertile land, none of the tithes came either to the clergyman or the churchwardens. To the tune of more than £1,700 per annum they were divided between Major Sawbridge-Erle Drax and the Earl of Winchilsea, having passed through various hands since the dissolution of Battle Abbey. Battle Abbey had provided a smaller endowment *in lieu* to maintain a vicar, but this had been taken into the endowment of Wye College by Cardinal John Kempe. The College endowment, in turn, had passed into lay ownership, subject to paying a minimal stipend to a curate

and to a schoolmaster. In 1851 the Perpetual Curate was paid £42-6s, and received £10 from Easter Offerings, £10 from fees and £4 from other sources, for example letting the churchyard for the grazing of sheep. The intention of medieval donors that the church should be richly endowed had been utterly negated, leaving Wye an exceptionally poor parish. The Rector of the tiny parish of Hinxhill, with about a tenth of the population of Wye, had an income in the 19th Century of £218.

In earlier years, the churchwardens were able to raise money for work on the church building through a compulsory rate or cess, although their ability was squeezed between the reluctance of ratepayers and the claims of the Poor Law Union, the maintenance of the roads and, from 1843, the payment of a Parish Constable. However, using rate income for church purposes ceased to be legal in 1868. This left the church entirely dependant on voluntary giving, apart from the rent of Jarman's Field and some other tiny endowments, amounting in all to little more than ten pounds a year.

From the local gentry the church received little help. The 10th Earl of Winchilsea died a comparatively poor man in 1858, and the 11th was a gambler who left Eastwell in 1874, and relinquished the advowson of Wye Church in 1872. Major Sawbridge-Erle Drax was extravagant in many ways, but not in his support of the church. When he died in 1887, his estate was left in trusteeship. These factors explain why the 19th Century restoration of Wye Church was modest in extent, and was accomplished by small increments and not by an intensive campaign as was common elsewhere.

In Wye the perception of a need for major refurbishment can be dated very exactly to 1869. A visitation report by the Rural Dean in 1867 had reported that the church was 'in a very excellent state', apart from dry rot in the (box) pews in the south west corner. The report of the same Rural Dean (Charles Oxenden) two years later gives an assessment so different that change in the attitude of the beholder rather than in the actual state of the church must be the explanation. Now 'the windows are dilapidated and the stonework throughout needs complete renovation'. There is a 'large, high, hideous pulpit and desk, which is not only offensive to the eye but most inconvenient for the officiating minister'. This pulpit stood in almost the same place as the present pulpit, but, as there were pews where the present organ and choir stalls stand, the preacher had his back to a significant part of the congregation. The Dean admitted that there had been small repairs, and indeed the decayed pews in the south aisle had already been replaced, but his overall conclusion was that 'the churchwardens seem to take all necessary care but it is useless to throw away money in bits while the general restoration was delayed'.

In 1871, while noting that there were new lower pews in the north aisle (most of which remain), matching those in the south aisle (which were removed in 0000), he returned to the attack. The high pews in the nave should also be replaced, as should the objectionable and unsightly pulpit and desk. The dilapidated and ugly chancel windows needed 'total reparation'. In a final blast he scarified the 'pernicious system' of grazing sheep in the churchyard 'to the injury of the graves and untidiness of the walks'. Sheep are indeed to be seen in a watercolour of the church painted in 1854. (ILL), and apparently were still to be found there in 1899.

BOX----------

RISKING LIFE TO SAVE A SHEEP

A bricklayer named Thorpe descended a deep well in Wye Churchyard on May 25, 1899, to rescue a sheep. The rescuer was let down by a rope and it was nearly two hours before he again reached the surface with the animal in his arms. Thorpe was greatly exhausted. *Daily Mail* for 26 May, 1899.

The sheep was on a ledge 100 feet from the surface. After 48 years working for the Slaughters, who were local builders, James Thorpe lived to a ripe age in one of the Bridge Street almshouses, evidently none the worse for his experience.

One obstacle to the restoration of the church was removed in 1872 when the advowson was transferred from the impecunious Earl of Winchilsea to the Archbishop, and the parish priest was given the status of a Vicar. This change meant that the responsibility for maintaining the chancel passed to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. They also paid the Vicar an annual stipend of £240. The institution of the first Vicar, who was appointed as such, the Revd. John Hulke Dixon M.A., on 3 May, 1877 proved the catalyst for more general renovation. He held the position until 1896, although from 1890 to 1895, the Revd. Walter Henry Trelawney Ashton-Gwatkin and from 1895 to 1896 the Revd. Arthur Willink M.A. deputised for him as Curate-in-Charge. John Hulke Dixon's wife died in 1887 during his active incumbency and was buried in Wye Churchyard near the south door of the church. His parents and two infant sons are also buried there, and also John Hulke Dixon himself, who died in 1919, having latterly been Vicar of Codicote in Hertfordshire. A tablet to the memory of Walter Henry Trelawny Ashton-Gwatkin and Lilian his wife is on the wall of the North Aisle.

Gas lighting had already been installed in 1875. This made it possible to move evensong to 6.30 on Sunday evening, and to have a special childrens' service at 3. At Harvest Festivals the gas standards were decorated. In 1890 the decorations included 'wreaths of clematis, corn, grasses, hops and flowers'. Bunches of grapes hung from those nearest the altar and sprays of blackberries from the others in the chancel (Parish Magazine).

It appears that a programme of comprehensive refurbishment began in 1878, the date on a plan of the church before restoration and also the date on a stone in the outside wall of the chancel apse. The plan shows the west and south galleries, which were removed, and the box pews in the nave, which were replaced with the present pews (except for the front ('Olantigh') pew on the north side). It shows a window on the north side of the chancel, subsequently blocked, and the small round headed West window, which was replaced. It shows the former access to the vestry from the west side, now obstructed by the present organ.

The most obvious structural change was the new West window, with Perpendicular style tracery probably very similar to the window lost in 1703/4. This appears to have been funded by Major J.C.W. Sawbridge-Erle-Drax in memory of his wife, Jane, who had died in 1853. Most of the glass was lost when the window was blown out by a

German aerial mine in 1943, but two panels with Jane's arms survived to be inserted into windows in the north aisle. The refurbishment of the chancel, apparently in two campaigns (1878 and 1884), did not involve major structural work, beyond the blocking of a window and opening a new doorway into the vestry from the chancel.

The offensive pulpit and desk were removed and replaced separately one on either side of the chancel arch. A new doorway was broken into the tower from the south aisle and a new coke fired heating boiler placed in the ground floor chamber.

Wye Church in late Victorian times

The organ, which had been removed from the dismantled west gallery was sold in 1880. By 1883 it had been replaced by a harmonium played by Mr. John Herbert, the village schoolmaster from 1859 until 1897, who also acted as choirmaster. Behind his back the boys called him 'Cocky Herbert'. Whereas in the 18th Century singing had been confined to psalms and canticles, together with anthems on special occasions and carols at Christmas, there were now four hymns at each of the three non-eucharistic Sunday services at 11, 3 and 6-30 (reduced to three per service in 1900). Holy Communion was celebrated at 8 a.m. every Sunday, and also at noon on the first Sunday in the month. In 1899 the average number of communicants on a normal Sunday was between 60 and 70, many fewer than the attendance at non-eucharistic services. On Easter Sunday there were three celebrations, and in 1901 a total of 150 communicants, while at Christmas there were just over 100 communicants. The harmonium was soon replaced by a small pipe organ sited against the south wall of the chancel.

In January 1889, a Parochial Magazine was started, and during 1891 included an article contributed by a visitor regretting the loss of the chancel destroyed in 1686, and advocating its restoration 'to bring the old building to its original structure'. While the Gothic revival had made the Queen Anne chancel unfashionable, there was no possibility of an impoverished parish without a wealthy patron building a church extension to the medieval dimensions, nor was this needed. An article in the July 1903 Parish Magazine proclaimed:

The Question earnest Christians are asking on all sides is 'Why are our Churches empty?' and especially 'Why are there so few men in our Churches?'…There is a secular wave rolling over England which makes even children restless and always demanding amusement…

In truth Wye Parish Church, now shorn of its galleries, was still reasonably well filled for the three principal Sunday services, but certainly no extra room was needed. Restoring the building to a uniformly Gothic style, on the other hand, was an idea that attracted support. In 1895 an architect, Mr. R. Philip Day, was commissioned to prepare plans for rebuilding the chancel. He proposed that the apsidal east end should be demolished and rebuilt rectangular with a new large East window in the Decorated style and a smaller two light window in the eastern part of the north wall. Immediately west of this an arch would have been formed in the chancel wall with a wooden screen, making the vestry into a small 'transept' which could be used as a side chapel. Replica aumbry and lavabo niches would be provided. Openings in the wall into the ground floor tower room would enable this to be divided by a thin partition into a clergy vestry and a choir vestry. There is a framed 'artist's impression' of the

proposed new chancel, which might be somewhat misleading to the uninitiated, for it is not, as one might suppose, an attempt to depict the original medieval chancel. Mr. Day's scheme was considered 'rather magnificent' and was discussed for several years, but the cost of £2,000 (almost certainly an underestimate) was considered prohibitive.

The sexton's cottage stood in the southeast corner of the churchyard, and can be seen in one of the 1854 watercolours of the church. It had been given to the Church by the Tyldens (descendants of the Twysdens) in the 17th Century, but was now very dilapidated. With the aid of a gift of £30 from Major Sawbridge-Erle-Drax, it was demolished in 1885, and in 1889 the site was consecrated as an extension to the churchyard.

Influence of current religious and social movements

In the later part of the 18th Century and the earlier part of the 19th, a powerful Evangelical revival swept the country, giving rise to several Methodist denominations, but also deeply affecting the Church of England. In the middle and latter part of the 19th Century, the 'High Church' or 'Oxford' Movement strongly influenced some Anglican churches, and excited much controversy. Neither of these movements had much effect on the life of Wye Parish Church, as far as one can tell from surviving records. For the most part, the services and rubrics of the 1662 Prayer Book continued with little innovation or challenge. An exception was the introduction of hymns. *Hymns Ancient and Modern* came into use in 1886, at about the same time as the harmonium was replaced by a small pipe organ on the south side of the chancel. More importance was accorded to preaching, and with the coming of the railway visiting preachers from a distance appeared much more frequently. But through most of the 19th Century, overt 'evangelism' in Wye was left to the Wesleyan Methodists. In November 1889, however, an Anglican mission was conducted by the Revd. H. Guildford Sprigg M.A. According to the Parish Magazine this involved 'a large mission choir and a large amount of house to house visiting to call to the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ', and was 'appreciated by many'.

About 1890 services led by one of the churchwardens were begun in a house at Naccolt, a hamlet devoted to brick and tile making about a mile south of Wye. On 19 November, 1891, a corrugated iron mission room, holding 48, was opened at Naccolt, on a site rented for one shilling a year from the Billington family, then owners of the Hinxhill Estate. Services here were initially at 3-30 on Sunday and 7 on Tuesday evenings. They were generally limited to the winter (November to May), and were taken by a curate when there was one; 24 was considered a good attendance. In 1903 regular services ceased, but they were revived in 1909 and continued with frequent changes of time and leadership until after 1945. In June 1908 a Church Army van mission was reported, including a well supported service at Naccolt. However, 'the open air meetings at Wye were poorly attended'. This reluctance to turn out for overtly evangelical occasions continued throughout the 20th Century.

The ministry of the 18th Century Church of England was almost exclusively clerical, and, apart from the ancient offices of churchwarden and sidesman, this situation prevailed at Wye Parish Church throughout the 19th Century. But, in May 1909, it was

reported that 'Mr. A.D. Nickalls, who holds the Archbishop's License for the office of a Lay Reader, has taken up residence at Silk's Farm, and his services have been gladly accepted'. In 1913, 'Mr Nickalls conducted services at Naccolt on Wednesday evenings in Lent', which were well attended. This seems to be the first example of authorised lay ministry in connection with Wye Parish Church. In October 1917 Mr. Cecil H. Cooper, Librarian of the South Eastern Agricultural College, was admitted and licensed by the Archbishop as a Parochial Lay reader. In 1926 Mr. G.J. Youngs, of Hinderton Cottage Boughton Aluph, was welcomed as a Licensed Lay Reader. He conducted fortnightly services on Friday evenings in the Naccolt Mission Room, and in Wye Church generally led the Sunday afternoon Children's Service. At this time the Sunday School classes were held in the day school premises in Bridge Street.

Before the First World War, the interest of laymen in church business meetings was at a very low ebb. The Easter Vestry meeting in 1909 was attended by only two people in addition to the Vicar and churchwardens although, technically, any parishioner could attend, a fact mentioned unavailingly by the Vicar in the Parish magazine. Only in 1917, with the establishment of a Parochial Church Council, did this begin to change. There is a contrast here with the Wesleyan chapel, which was almost entirely serviced by lay preachers and stewards, with only an occasional visit from the superintendent minister based in Ashford.

In the 18th Century the Earls of Winchilsea who nominated the parish priest of Wye had been Tory High Church men, and, and one, contemporary with Thomas Brett, was a 'non-juror'. Yet there is very little evidence that the 19th Century 'Oxford Movement' influenced Wye. The adjudication of the legitimacy of some liturgical innovations by Archbishop Benson in 1890 was printed in Wye Parish Magazine. This allowed two of the items advocated by Thomas Brett, i.e the mixture of water with the communion wine (but only if done before the service) and the singing of the *Agnus Dei*. Lighted candles were also allowed on the altar. At Christmas 1890 'the two lights recently adjudged lawful adjuncts to the Holy Table will be used and will be continued in use at all early celebrations of the Holy Communion', but it was not made clear whether the other practices were actually performed at Wye or not. In 1891 there was a service following the 'Stations of the Cross'. However, none of the first five Vicars appointed after 1872 had a special reputation for 'High Churchmanship'.

If the Anglican community in Wye were resistant to change in their attitude to worship, it responded with alacrity to other fashionable subjects for concern in the generation immediately before the First World War. For example, there are constant references in the Parish Magazine to activities linked to the Temperance movement. Between 1890 and 1918 there was a very active Church of England Temperance Society (CETS) in Wye. In 1900 there were 47 members, of whom 24 were total abstainers and 23 'General Members'; who were pledged 'both by example and effort to exert themselves for the suppression of intemperance'. There was a 'Band of Hope' for children, numbering at times more than sixty, run in close conjunction with a 'Band of Mercy', associated with the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. In 1905 there was a 'Temperance Fete' with maypole dancing and 'all the fun of the fair'. In 1910 Wye sent an impressive contingent to a CETS procession and rally in Canterbury, led by the Vicar (the Rev. Edgar Lambert) and the headmaster of the village school (William Ashby). Also in 1910 an Anti-Smoking League was

initiated, but apparently this was short-lived. It is again remarkable that there is no vestige of collaboration with the Wesleyan Methodists, despite their well-known enthusiasm for the Temperance Movement.

Before about 1890, the Parish Church had no formally organised activities for young people apart from the Sunday School, and did not seek to meet the social and recreational needs of adults. While the Sunday School continued, and in 1909 had 3 classes of boys, 3 of girls and a mixed infant class, the five years from 1890 during which the Revd. Walter Ashton-Gwatkin was in charge saw the formation of a range of other specialist groups. In addition to those devoted to temperance, there was a Bible Class and also 'King's Messengers' groups, separate for girls and boys, meeting on a weekday, to excite interest in Overseas Missions. A branch of the Mothers' Union was also formed about 1890, and from the same date a church men's social club met in Church Cottage (part of Swan House, Upper Bridge Street). This provided social evenings, lively concerts which featured parishioners with homespun talents, billiards and football and cricket teams. A small gymnasium was later built on the back land which is now part of Twysden Court. A 'Girls' Friendly Society' was provided for older girls, and a Boy Scout troop, led by men from the church, was formed in 1910, and had 28 scouts by 1913.

Another concern which emerged at this time was for overseas missions. The parish supported the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the oldest Anglican Missionary Society, and by 1890 a local Missionary Association had been formed. From 1908 to 1918, the associated junior group, the King's Messengers, paid for the maintenance of an Indian orphan girl, Hanna Dipagi at St. Monica's Lace School, Ahmednagar. This is an interesting precursor of the current activity in child sponsorship of the Wye and Brook India Trust. Over the same period, a series of visiting preachers promoted support for the Zululand Mission, which continued for some years into the inter-war period.

It will be evident that the ministry of the Revd. Walter Ashton-Gwatkin, and his wife, Frances Lilian, between 1890 and 1895 marked an important turning point in the life of Wye Parish Church. Previously it had been almost entirely concerned with worship in church and the occasional offices of baptism, confirmation, marriage and burial. Even the curriculum of the Sunday School was dominated by study of the Prayer Book, and of the catechism in preparation for Confirmation. From this time the Church became actively concerned with all aspects of the life of the community, physical, mental as well as spiritual, and vigorously promoted this involvement through the new medium of the Parish Magazine.

This was also a time when patriotic fervour was easily brought to the surface. The Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897 was celebrated in church, by a fete at Spring Grove and an immense bonfire on Wye Downs. For the coronation of Edward VII, there was a special church service, and the Crown was cut into the turf of the Downs and provided a focus for celebrations, as it has for great national occasions ever since. In Edwardian times the celebration of Empire Day began, again including a special church service. On 23 May 1914, Empire day was celebrated by a peal of 5040 changes of Stedman's Triples (Pitstone's variation of Thurston Four Part), lasting 3 hours 14 minutes. This also celebrated the rehanging of the bells in a new frame. On Empire Day 1915, under the shadow of war, there was again an extensive programme of bell ringing, children from the infants' school sang 'God of our

Fathers', prayer was offered by the Vicar, patriotic and action songs were sung by older children and a recitation given on 'The War'. The children danced prettily around the Maypole, sang 'God save the King' and saluted as they filed past 'our national flag'. After the carnage of 1916, such carefree expressions of patriotism would never be heard in Wye again.

The 19th Century was noted for a great broadening of Christian social concern. In fairness, the Anglican community in Wye has shown throughout its history a heartwarming concern for needy people of all kinds among the inhabitants of the parish. After 1834 the provision of an ultimate 'safety net' for the destitute passed to the East Ashford Union Workhouse. But loving concern for the welfare of the 'deserving poor', and for keeping them in their own homes and so out of the workhouse, continued to be the predominant call on Christian concern and generosity. For a time there was a soup kitchen, which in one seven week winter period in 1889 served the amazing quantity of 2023 quarts of soup at a halfpenny a quart. Understandably it was noted that some of the customers came from a distance. By 1900, the church itself not only had a general fund for the sick and needy but also well supported special funds for the provision of clothing, for the free distribution of coal (again in very large quantities) and for maternity needs.

However, towards the end of the 19th Century newspapers, magazines and especially visiting speakers made people aware of even greater needs elsewhere. The Mothers' Meeting sent warm garments they had made to 'our poor people in East London', and a number of parishioners held collecting boxes for the East London Church Fund.

13. RESPONSE TO CHANGING TIMES

The establishment of the South Eastern Agricultural College

The opening of the Agricultural College in 1894 quickly transformed Wye society, and brought into the fellowship of the Parish Church an abundance of talented laymen. There were some dynamic women too, although until 1945 nearly all of these were wives of staff members. The eminence of the first Principal, Daniel Hall, was recognised by his K.C.B. and F.R.S. recorded on the monument to members of his family in the North Aisle. The second College Principal, Malcolm Dunstan, became a sidesman in 1903 and served as a churchwarden from 1904 to 1908, and again from 1913 to 1918. When Archbishop Davidson visited Wye Church in 1905, thought to be the first visit by an Archbishop for 400 years, the staff of the College processed in their academic robes, and their presence changed the whole ambience of the event. The Parish Magazine noted that the reading of Ephesians chapter 4, verses 1 to 17 by Mr Erle-Drax was 'with careful and scholarly emphasis'. By 1913 there was a regular 'College Sunday', with an academic procession and a large attendance of both staff and students. Wye moved from being a village backwater into the main stream of national life, frequently welcoming distinguished visitors and having open lectures on a wide range of topics of current concern. It was appropriate that after three short and relatively inconsequential incumbencies, Canon Edgar Lambert, a very competent Vicar with wide experience, came in 1911 and stayed through the First World War and beyond until 1926. Edgar Lambert was President of the Cambridge University Boat Club in 1881, and rowed in the University Boat Races of 1881 and 1882. Appropriately he spent most of his earlier ministry as a Chaplain in Missions to Seamen, first at Sunderland and later at Liverpool.

The impact of the First World War

Within a month of the declaration of war on 4 August, 1914, thirty one men from Wye had already enlisted in the army or navy and 91 had volunteered as reservists or special constables. 106 students from the College had joined up. Oddly, the first army recruit from Wye to lose his life, Private Thomas Alick Slaughter, never saw action. He had been a member of the church choir for 14 years, and, shortly after enlisting in the Buffs, drowned in the Ashford Public Swimming Baths on 8 September, 1914. These were open air baths fed directly from the River Stour, and the water was so muddy that he remained unobserved for some while. A small brass plate to his memory was placed on the north wall of the chancel, subscriptions from his friends and fellow choristers being limited to sixpence each. Nearby, a similar plate commemorates another choir member, William C Maxted, who died of wounds in Mesopotamia in his 21st year.

By February 1915, a cavalry squadron of the 3rd. Hussars was billeted in Wye, and the March Parish Magazine commented approvingly.

> 'They have quickened the pulse of our common life, brightened our Church Services by their good attendance, both morning and evening, their hearty and reverent worship and especially by filling some of the gaps in our Choir. When Mrs. Chapman, a much loved member of our Mothers' Meeting, passed away, the soldiers billeted in her house carried her to the grave on

> Tuesday, February 23rd, and others bore a beautiful wreath to which a number of the men subscribed. Captain Cook has kindly volunteered to teach the elder lads and Boy Scouts in the Church House Gymnasium, and one or two men have helped in the belfry…'

But with the heavy casualties sadness was never far away. On Palm Sunday 1915 children were asked to bring spring flowers to the service, which were sent to a hospital for sick and wounded men from the front. From June 1915 reports of casualties began to come thick and fast, each involving a family tragedy. The effect on one family is recalled by the monument in the North Aisle, erected in 1922 by the family of Sir Daniel Hall, who had been the first Principal of the South Eastern Agricultural College

. Text in box or clear illus.

In Memory of

DAME MARY LOUISA HALL

Died September 23rd 1921 aged 58 years

Wife of

ALFRED DANIEL HALL KCB, LL D, FRS

In this parish

Where her younger son was born and her

elder son grew to boyhood she spent some

of her happier years.

To the Memory of

ROGER HOLLINSWORTH HALL

Captain Royal Field Artillery

Who died of wounds in Flanders

July 12th 1917 aged 23 years

They had understanding of righteousness

and are numbered with the

saintly company

This poignantly expresses the happiness that many people have found in Wye, and also reflects the very special quality of common endeavour that, at its best has informed the Wye College community, not least in the first ten years of its life. The loss of 127 students and staff from this small community on the killing fields of the First World War meant that, for both College and village, the previous era of joy and hope could never be fully recreated.

The hopes of the family of Canon Lambert were dashed with particular brutality. His daughter, Rachel, married Lieutenant Christopher Bushell on 24 August, 1915. Christopher Bushell's brother in law, who had succeeded Canon Lambert as Chaplain Superintendent of the Mersey Mission to Seamen, performed the ceremony. Soldiers billeted in Wye crowded the church and cheered the couple as they left. There is a photograph of the wedding guests, taken in the Latin School garden. Their names are a roll call of Wye society in its halcyon days.

Lieutenant Bushell had already suffered a serious head wound in September 1914 which required long convalescence. Nevertheless he returned to France in November 1915, and, having been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, was involved in heavy fighting on the Somme and in Flanders. Meanwhile a daughter was born and christened Elizabeth Hope in Wye Church on 24 August, 1916. For outstanding bravery when again wounded in March 1918 Lt. Col. Bushell was awarded the Victoria Cross. He was invested with the V.C. and the D.S.O. at Buckingham Palace on 13 May, 1918. The King is reputed to have said to him 'I hope you will live to enjoy the award you so deservedly won'. It was not to be: he was shot through the neck by machine gun fire in one of the last heavy engagements of the war on 8 August 1918. Grief stricken, friends and family crowded Wye Church for the memorial service on 18 August. Christopher Bushell V.C. is among the 29 names on the framed brass plaque in the porch.

There are several war graves from 1914-18 in the churchyard. Most are reminders of Wye Aerodrome, established immediately north of Bramble Lane by the Royal Flying Corps in 1916. This became the Royal Air Force in 1918; the installation was closed in 1919. Some of the personnel came from Canada and the United States. Casualties mostly from aircraft crashes were sadly frequent. For example, on 18 September, 1917, David Hogler M^{c}Gibbon, aged 20, of 42nd. Training Squadron R.A.F. Wye, who came from Sarnia, Ontario, was buried. This was just before the formal consecration of the westward extension of the churchyard by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Bilborough, Bishop of Dover on 21 September. 2nd Lieut. Desmond Macartney Tilgate, also of 42nd. Training Squadron, was buried on 4 June, 1918. He was only 18. Buried alongside them, in the short row of beautifully maintained service graves just below the opening from the 'old' churchyard to the extension of 1917, are Flight Sergeant HCL Vine and Corporal E. Blake of the RAF, Captain G. Robinson MC, of the Canadian Light Horse on attachment to the RAF, and Private HG Thornby of the Buffs. Private Thomas Slaughter, although buried near other members of his family in the old churchyard, has a similar headstone carrying the crest of the Buffs.

The presence of the aerodrome brought thrills and laughter too. One happy occasion was the marriage of Miss Constance Loudon of Olantigh, Wye, to Captain Humphrey Lloyd, MC, who, after service with the 60th Rifles, had become the Royal Flying Corps Adjutant at Wye Aerodrome. In response to signals sent from the church tower

as the wedding march began, an airborne guard of honour appeared from the sky, and pilots waved their good wishes from each cockpit.

The churches did their best to welcome the airmen. The Wesleyan schoolroom was used for recreation by RAF personnel. The Church of England Temperance Society established a refreshment hut in Harville Road, opposite the railway crossing. When the Church Cottage Club was being reformed as the Wye Men's Institute in June 1917, there was a small debt to be cleared. So personnel from the aerodrome improvised a concert party called 'The Aerial Follies' which gave a 'magnificent entertainment'. The proceeds more than covered the debt, and so gave the new Institute a 'flying start'.

Enormous relief and gratitude marked the end of the War. This is shown by the extremely generous donations to the War Memorial Fund, listed in the Parish Magazine. The Memorial Hall, whose site in Bridge Street is now part of the Twysden Court development, has been superseded by the present Village Halls. But the village war memorial in the form of a cross of Clipsham stone, dedicated by Canon Lambert in 1920, keeps its honoured place near the main gate of the churchyard. Gathered around this, representatives of the village join the church choir and congregation for the Act of Remembrance each November.

The Barnards and the Loudons

Two families, members of which were to contribute much to the life of the Church and the village, arrived in Wye just before the outbreak of the First World War. Andrew and Florence Barnard who moved into Withersdane Hall in 1912 had previously been in India, and James Hope Loudon (1868-1952) and his wife Louise Wilhelmina (1872-1964) who leased Olantigh from 1913 had lived in the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies. Both families subscribed generously to church causes, and both made their grounds available for events, fetes were held at both Olantigh and Withersdane and Sunday School treats at Withersdane. The church fete at Withersdane on 18 July, 1923 was made memorable by Dr. Whitehead Reid flying his aeroplane from Canterbury. Landing in a nearby field he gave flights to several fortunate ticket holders. Meanwhile, an agricultural engineer newly appointed to Wye College, Cornelius Davis, sat in a tent demonstrating another fascinating novelty: a wireless set. Andrew Barnard was for some years Vice Chairman of the P.C.C. He died in February 1928 and was buried in the family plot in the north west corner of the churchyard extension, which features a delightful little gazebo with a tiled roof, erected by Mrs. Barnard in her husband's memory.

Two discreet ledger slabs in the churchyard near the west door of the church commemorate the Loudons. The one to James' son, Francis William Hope Loudon (1907-1985) records that his wife, Lady Prudence Katherine Patton Loudon (1903-2000) was daughter of the First Earl Jellicoe, who commanded the British Fleet at the Battle of Jutland in 1916. 'Prudie', as she was called, was very influential in the life of the Church and village after the Second World War. She had a particular concern for the healing ministry of the Church, and had a large part in establishing the Christian nursing home at Burrswood, near Groombridge. Her husband, almost always called 'Billy', was for some years Diocesan Treasurer.

The establishment of the Parochial Church Council

The so-called *Enabling Act* of 1920 provided for the establishment of a national Church Assembly, for Diocesan and Ruri-Decanal Conferences and for an annual Parochial Church Meeting which elected the members of the Parochial Church Council (P.C.C.). In Wye, the first Annual Parochial Church Meeting was held on 13 April, 1920, and to determine its composition an Electoral Roll was drawn up with 450 names (as compared with around 200 at the end of the 20th Century). 21 men and 8 women were elected to serve on the P.C.C. This was the beginning of a new era, for there is no sign that women had ever taken part in Vestry meetings during the 18th and 19th Centuries. On the P.C.C. several women members were very active, such as Mrs. Florence Barnard who served from 1920 until 1955. However, the leadership of the meeting remained firmly in traditional hands, with the Vicar as *ex officio* Chairman, Andrew Barnard as Vice-Chairman and Wanley Sawbridge-Erle-Drax as Secretary. However, at the next Parochial Church Meeting on 21 March, 1923, the number of women P.C.C. members was increased to 11, and 'it being thought desirable that one of the members elected to the Ruri-Decanal Conference should be a lady…Mr. Lewin (one of the churchwardens) volunteered to vacate his place', and Mrs. Glossop was elected. 1929 is the first year when the composition of the electoral roll was recorded by sex: 184 men and 257 women. In that year of 22 lay members of the P.C.C. eleven were men and eleven women. These proportions did not change much over the next 75 years.

The continuing influence of the South Eastern Agricultural College

With the end of the War, staff and student numbers at the College increased. From May 1920, the Rev. S. Graham Brade-Birks was a coopted member of the P.C.C., having been appointed Lecturer in Geology and Zoology at the South Eastern Agricultural College in the previous year. He was made Chairman of the Social Service Committee of the P.C.C., and was active in preaching, in deputising for the Vicar at funerals and other services and in giving open lectures on such subjects as the relationship between science and religion. Thus began a local ministry that continued until 1977. Although 'B-B' became Vicar of Godmersham in 1930, he continued to assist or deputise for the Vicar of Wye frequently, until he became also Rector of Crundale in 1946. Over the years many lay members of staff were active members of Wye Parish Church.

A branch of the Student Christian Movement (S.C.M.) was started at the College in the Autumn Term of 1921. The Revd. F.A. Cockin gave guidance and conducted a pre-terminal retreat for nine students at the home of Mr. Headley at Challock. Well attended lectures were held, usually linked to issues of current concern, and were followed by lively discussion. The S.C.M. branch continued to the nineteen fifties, by which time the name of Wye College had been resumed. Later the S.C.M. was replaced by a Christian Union affiliated to the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship. At the beginning of the academic year, there was a special service for College Sunday, and a strong contingent of students attended on Remembrance Sunday.

A major ecumenical landmark

For over a century the Parish Church community gave no recognition whatever to the substantial body of Wesleyan Methodists in the parish. So much so that when, in 1918, the Wesleyan Schoolroom was used for a function, the Parish Magazine offered thanks not to the Wesleyans but to the R.A.F. who were using the room on weekdays for recreational purposes. However, in 1923, Archbishop Randall Davidson commended discussion with the Free Churches at the local and congregational level, feeling that 'growing personal intimacy would lead to greater mutual understanding'. This drew a remarkable response from the Canon Lambert and the Parish Church community, of which the report in the *Parish Magazine* is worth quoting in full.

SUNDAY, JULY 8TH. – This was a memorable day. With the written consent and full approval of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Rev. Norman Knock, Wesleyan Minister for Yarm, in Yorkshire, who took part in the dedication of our War Memorial, and had served under the Y.M.C.A. in North Russia, Egypt and elsewhere, preached at Evensong in the Parish Church. Mr. W.J. Spicer, local preacher, read the second lesson, and the Wesleyan congregation to whom he was to have preached came over in a body to the Parish Church, and were welcomed to best seats. The Rev. S.G. Brade-Birks, M.Sc., assisted in the Service, and Mr. W.E.S. Erle-Drax, Churchwarden, read the first lesson. We had a full choir and a very hearty service. Mr. Knock gave us an excellent sermon, remarking in his preface that the Re-union of Christendom had become something more than a subject for discussion. We saw it now as an inspiring vision, of which God says "Make this real". In the course of his sermon he dwelt upon three questions (1) What does a man's religion do for him? (2) What does it do for others? (3) What does it do for God? Being a follower of John Wesley he accepted his teaching on "The Catholic Spirit". We must have a Catholic spirit before we can have a united Catholic Church. Our immediate task is to cultivate a fellowship of the men of right heart. Referring to the forthcoming Parochial Mission, he hoped it would receive God's blessing and urged all to pray for it.

The Vicar preached at the morning service on Re-union from St. Paul's words, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in uncorruptness" (Ephes. vi., 24).

Dr. J. Malet Lambert, Archdeacon of the East Riding, spending the week-end inWye during the sitting of the Church Assembly, much appreciated our united service. The Archbishop, whose welcomed presence at the Wesleyan Conference, and address, will have been noted, wrote to say how very glad he was to hear of the success of Mr. Knock's visit, and added that he would greatly like to pay a visit to Wye towards the end of the year if he can possibly do it.

The Archbishop indeed addressed the Conference of the Wesleyan Methodists at Bristol on 21 July, 1923 on the theme of 'Reunion', suggesting that they were 'just now standing together at a junction in human history, so vast in its import, so measureless in its possibilities'. We may feel that after such a dramatic utterance the lack of any immediate outcome was disappointing, as was the failure of the Archbishop to visit Wye in 1923. However, the Parochial Mission, led by the Revd. Canon S.H. Wingfield Digby was held between 26 November and 6 December, 1923 and was considered a success. 56 cards of commitment to Christ as Personal Saviour

were signed and placed on the altar. Moreover, Archbishop Davidson did come to Wye in November 1927, just before his resignation in the next year at the age of 80. He preached at the 11 a.m. service on the first Sunday of an 'Archbishops' Week of Prayer'.

Meantime in 1925 Canon Lambert had decided to resign. He considered the Vicarage (New Kempes in Upper Bridge Street) too large to be appropriate now his family had grown up, and also too expensive to maintain. In January 1926 he left for a post in Gibraltar. Today a tablet to the memory of Canon Edgar Lambert and Norah his wife is on the wall of the South Aisle. His successor, Francis William Rucker Metcalf, M.A., was a Cambridge Mathematics graduate, who was a naval chaplain from 1900 until 1924, including service on warships throughout the First World War.

Prayer Book Revision

After 1918 the need for a revised Prayer Book was extensively canvassed in the Church of England. In Wye a meeting for all PCC electors was held on 11 May, 1923. The speaker, presumably invited by Canon Lambert, was Canon A. Robinson, who suggested that greater elasticity and comprehensiveness was needed in forms of worship. 'It is generally agreed', he said. 'that the Holy Communion office, the principal Service (of the church) should occupy a more important place in our public worship. There has been a tendency to push the Sacraments rather out of the way and substitute Mattins and Evensong, which are services of purely medieval origin.' How heartily Dr. Thomas Brett would have agreed with this sentiment! However, at a further thinly attended meeting on 20 June, a contrary resolution was carried by a small majority. 'That this meeting considers the use of Alternative Prayer Books undesirable, and, while approving of the alterations and additions suggested in other offices and in the reading of the Athanasian Creed, would regret any alteration, other than makes for the shortening of the services, in the order of Morning and Evening Prayer and of the Holy Communion'. Following his appointment to succeed Canon Lambert in 1926, the Rev. Francis Metcalf attempted once more to advocate Prayer Book reform, writing in the Parish Magazine of May 1927 that 'no-one followed the old rubrics – if they had done so there would be no congregation, for the services as ordered in the present book are very lengthy'. On the proposal of Captain A. Halsey R.N., however, the PCC voted by 14 to 9 that 'it views with grave apprehension many of the changes in the Deposited Book and for that reason hopes it will not become law'. So Wye churchgoers anticipated the sentiments that led the House of Commons to reject the revised Prayer Book in 1928.

Into the Nineteen Thirties

The fifteen years before the outbreak of the Second World War were for Wye Parish Church a period of relative stagnation and slow numerical decline following forty years which had seen many new initiatives and innovations as well as a remarkably energetic response to the crises and privations of 1914-18. The number on the Electoral Roll diminished from 441 in 1929 to 402 in 1939. Average attendance at Morning Prayer fell from 144 in 1926 to 84 in 1937, and at Evensong from 88 in 1926 to 43 in 1937. Congregations at Holy Communion were generally low at this period, apart from Christmas and Easter. Even including these festivals in the calculation, the

weekly average was only 32 in 1926 and 29 in 1937. Nevertheless, a big occasion could still draw a crowd. When in 1932 'Tubby' Clayton, the founder of Toc H, preached at a College Sunday morning service, the congregation numbered 484. In October 1934 College Sunday was also the Harvest Festival, with an aggregate attendance of over 500 at the two main services.

The economic depression around 1931 combined with lower attendances had a catastrophic effect on church finances. Free Will Offerings totalled £181 in 1927, but this fell to £73 in 1932, and recovery was slow reaching only £129 in 1938. There was frequent resort to fetes and gift days. It was fortunate indeed that the Vicar was not dependent on the parish for his stipend! However, needy causes, such as the East London Churches Fund and the Zululand Mission, were still being helped in the dark days of 1931-2, and in 1931 generous help was given to a boy at the Church Missionary Society School at Maseno, near Kisumu in Kenya. Electric lighting was also installed in the church in 1931, the cost being raised by a Bazaar. The old gas standards were removed and, after much discussion, were replaced not by standards or pendants, but by less obtrusive 'flood lighting', somewhat similar to that of seventy five years later. In 1934 Church House was given up, with an inevitable diminution of church related social activities. Its place was partly taken by the present secular main Village Hall, completed in 1937 at a cost of £2900. From 1935 the Sunday School began to meet in the Lady Joanna Thornhill Primary School at 10 a.m., the church paying the caretaker to light fires in the winter. Miss Molly Glossop was the Sunday School Superintendent, she was to teach in the Sunday School for over 50 years.

In 1933 Miss Molly Glossop was also invited to write a booklet on the history of the church. In July 1934 this was printed by Mr. Lambert free of charge and sold for three pence. History was also celebrated in 1935 by placing the collection of funeral hatchments of the Sawbridge family in the prominent positions which they still occupy. Photographs of the church before World War II show an interior more crowded than today. Below the Victorian West Window was a painted banner announcing 'Glory Be To Thee O God' and another around the chancel arch said 'Lo I Am With You Even Unto The End Of The World'. The chancel held the organ and two rows of choir stalls on both sides. The pulpit and lectern were beside the chancel arch, and there were pews right up to the chancel. Where the big organ is now, was a curtained off area for the clergy vestry.

The Church during the Second World War

With the outbreak of war in 1939 the College students moved to Reading, but the agricultural advisory work continued, and the College was used first as a training centre for the Women's Land Army, and then as the Headquarters of an Infantry Division. One of the advisory staff at the College, Joseph Tinsley, was described in the Parish Magazine as 'unremitting in his work' for the Church, teaching in the main Sunday School in the morning and at the Naccolt Mission on Sunday afternoon. He even helped to paint the doors and windows of the Mission Room. Harvest Festivals at Naccolt were big events, and Mr. Tinsley gave the address at the 'bright and hearty service' in 1941, after which the collection, together with the fruit, flowers, vegetables and jam, was given to Ashford Hospital.

On the 18th January 1943, an aerial landmine landed in Church Field near where The Forstal now joins Abbots Walk. It created tremendous blast, and the church windows took the brunt of it. The West Window was almost completely demolished, ten other windows were badly damaged, and some roof plaster came down. For about four months the church was unusable, and the congregation shared the Methodist chapel until basic repairs had been done. They much appreciated that 'a fire was lighted each Sunday in order that we might worship in comfort'. As the Methodist service was in the afternoon, evensong was held in the College Refectory. By Good Friday 1943, the Anglicans were back in a restored and spring-cleaned church, thankful that the damage had not been worse. War Damage funds paid for the immediate repairs, but processing compensation claims and shortages of materials and labour and fuel delayed the reinstatement of the ceiling and the West Window until well after the end of the war.

The Second World War had a tremendous effect on the life of the village. It was virtually under military occupation, visits from people in other parts of Britain required a special pass, many were away in the armed services and most of the remaining inhabitants were enlisted into organisations ancillary to the 'war effort', such as the Home Guard, the Observer Corps or the Air Raid Wardens. The involvement of the parish church in village life, however, was much less than it had been in the First World War. For a few months some of the evacuees sent to Wye increased Sunday morning congregations, but these were sent on to safer areas in 1940. It was difficult to 'black out' the Church, so winter Evensongs were held at 3 p.m. When the War was going badly, a National Day of Prayer was observed. But, in 1944, with victory in sight the Home Guard was 'stood down', and this was marked by a very well attended church service. Colonel Duffield, who commanded the Ashford Home Guard, was a very active Anglican Lay Reader at nearby Brook. But there were no massive church parades of regular servicemen as there had been in the First War. However, in the College Dining Hall, the Roman Mass was celebrated in Wye for the first time since the Reformation for the benefit of Catholic servicemen, and this led after the War to the establishment of the Wye Roman Catholic Church of St. Ambrose. For some time, the Rev. Joost de Blank was Anglican chaplain to the troops in Wye; he later became well known, especially for his work with the Student Christian Movement, and was welcomed back as the College Sunday Preacher in 1952.

By the end of the War the Revd. Francis Metcalf was very tired and suffering increasingly from arthritis, and so decided to retire. The Rev. Alan Michison M.A.was his successor, inducted in January 1946 by Archbishop Fisher, supported by the Rev. Ian White Thomson, then Archbishop's Chaplain but later a revered Dean of Canterbury. Forty years later, Dean White Thomson was to spend a long retirement in Wye, contributing greatly to worship in the Parish Church. However, Alan Michison had no experience as an incumbent, for after several curacies he had served for some years as a school teacher. Though he felt welcome in Wye, and liked the place and people, he found the Vicarage far too large and expensive to run. Indeed his wife declined to remain in Wye, and both Vicar and Archbishop recognised that a mistake had been made. So he left at the end of July 1947 to become Rector of Coulsdon in Surrey. Before he left he was able to take part in two very different anniversary celebrations. On 10 June Mr and Mrs G.J. Youngs of 14 Church Street celebrated their Golden Wedding. For 20 years Mr. Youngs had given devoted service as lay

reader, choirman, bell ringer and server, and for a time verger and sexton as well. On 13 June Wye College (a title it resumed in 1945) celebrated the 500th Anniversary of its founding by Cardinal John Kempe, with distinguished visitors, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, and special services in Wye Church and in Canterbury Cathedral, where garlands of flowers were placed on the Founder's tomb.

Post War Reconstruction

The Revd. John Newbery Wells was instituted as Vicar on 11 October, 1947, and took up residence in a smaller house, the Red House in Scotton Street, now called Rowan House. A great character, he had served as Vicar of Brixton and chaplain to Brixton Prison throughout the War, with hundreds finding nightly shelter from air raids in the church crypt. He was a pioneer of inter-faith dialogue, as one of three founders of the Brixton Way of Friendship, linking his parish with Brixton Synagogue and local Unitarians, and.in Wye promoted lectures in the College on Judaism and Islam, under the auspices of the S.C.M. To the village of Wye he endeared himself as an energetic pastor with a special concern for the Scout movement. He saw through the major renovations after war damage, notably the insertion of the magnificent new West Window.

During his incumbency worship adhered closely to the Book of Common Prayer. Holy Communion was at 8 a.m., with an additional celebration at 7 on Great Festivals. The main services were Morning Prayer at 11 and Evening Prayer at 6.30. Powerful voices made up for the lack of electronic amplification, notably the stentorian, quarter deck tones of Captain Halsey, R.N. (rtd.), who read the lessons from under the chancel arch. The organ, then on the right hand wall of the chancel, was played by Mr. Pembrey and manually blown by Hector Head, who kept popping his head out to see how the congregation was doing. He would have seen everyone very formally dressed, with all the ladies in hats. The notables, such as the churchwardens, John Parker and Jack Erle-Drax with his eye patch, still had allocated pews. At the front the Loudons occupied the 'Olantigh Pew'. Special it might be, placed over two vaults full of Sawbridges resting in peace, but it formed an uncomfortable perch for the living.

A strong Sunday School met at 9.45 each Sunday morning, under the leadership of Miss. Molly Glossop, who served as a teacher for over 50 years, and there was also a monthly children's service at 3 on the second Sunday of the month. A Sunday School class also continued in the Naccolt Mission Room. A small chapel was established in the Old Quadrangle of the College, and dedicated in October 1949. It was enriched by 15th Century benches, pictures of St. Martin and St. Gregory and a window with stained glass quarries looking towards the Church. Student Christian Movement meetings took place here.

In 1950 the high quality of the chancel, and the opportunity of enhancing it during the post-War refurbishment of the church was first fully recognised. The Secretary of the Diocesan Advisory Committee wrote 'Here you have a gem: it is pure Queen Anne period. All you need do is to move the organ and restore the chancel to its original appearance, and you have a specimen of which there are very few in the country.'

Also in 1950 a design by E.R.Gerald Smith was chosen for a new West Window, featuring a traditional Jesse tree with the figure of John Kempe in his glowing red cardinal's robes carrying a model of the Latin School as his offering to Christ in Majesty. In panels at the base are local agricultural scenes featuring the Crown and a Ferguson tractor. The window was made by Nicholson and Paule of St. John's Wood, and on Ascension Day, 1951, the work in progress was televised in a BBC outside broadcast. On 25 November it was dedicated by the Bishop of Dover, with the Revd. F.W.R. Metcalf, Vicar when the old window was destroyed, as the guest of honour.

In September 1950, the Vicar became Priest in Charge of the nearby parish of Hastingleigh, where he was assisted by Colonel Duffield as a Lay Reader. This link lasted only until 1955, but would be renewed in 2001. The Festival of Britain was marked by a joint service with Wye Methodists on 3 July, 1951, the first for some years, and an exhibition for which Wye schoolchildren made the splendid model of the church as it was before the fall of the tower, under the direction of their headmaster, Mr. G.W. ('Peter') Cornell. Following this, a newly formed (and short-lived) College Archaeological Society was given permission to verify the extent and nature of the old chancel and north transept by excavation. They were led by two students who would later become well known: Michael Nightingale and Tom Wright. The chancel foundations were duly found in 1952 and neatly marked by inserting small stones in the turf, but the intention to do the same for the north chancel was not fulfilled. Indeed, in 1954, the P.C.C. had to arrange for the removal of heaps of stones and earth that were left when the students' enthusiasm waned!

Meantime the refurbishment of the interior of the church progressed The chancel reredos was cleaned and regilded under the direction of Mr. Money Coutts and the nave ceiling was removed, enabling the timbers to be treated. The central boss and the shields and carvings in the spandrils of the tie beams were painted in colour and gold, as they might have been in Kempe's days. One of Mrs. Barnard's granddaughters, Bridget Barnard climbed up onto the scaffolding and made coloured drawings of the bosses, which were embroidered by Florence Brundrett onto pew kneelers. Bridget also painted the shields over the clergy stalls. As a final touch, some of the carpet used in Westminster Abbey for the Coronation ceremony in 1953 was laid in the sanctuary.

An epoch of liturgical change

During 1954, the Vicar became ill and Canon S.L. Ewell, who had been for 38 years a missionary in the Sudan, deputised for him. On 15 January 1955, the Vicar died at the age of 65, and on 1 June Alfred Edward ('Ted') Pearce was instituted in his place. The event was marred by the absence of many expected notables, due to a railway strike. Longer lasting dismay for some parishioners resulted from the most extensive changes in forms of worship that Wye Parish Church had seen since 1660.

In the first place Ted Pearce introduced changes in the service of Holy Communion in line with those proposed in the Prayer Book which had been rejected in 1928. Then he abolished the Sunday School and replaced it by a weekly Family Service at 9.45 a.m., preceding Matins at 11. This led to the resignation of Miss. Molly Glossop, the Sunday School Superintendent. He announced that in future the feasts of the Church *Kalendar* would be more extensively celebrated, such as Lammas and the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He introduced a very elaborate service for

Plough Sunday, for which an actual plough was brought into the church and later a Rogation Procession, visiting gardens, allotments and farms. Most of these seasonal celebrations lapsed after his incumbency, but the Blessing of the Crib on Christmas Eve and a midnight Christmas Eucharist, beginning with a processional hymn, were innovations whose popularity has endured.

When a substantial congregation had been attracted to the Family Service (135 on 12 August, 1956), some were given the form of a Family Eucharist, and in 1957 this happened regularly on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month. From Easter 1957, when the first stage of chancel restoration was dedicated, there were Sung Family Eucharists at Festivals. A change of outlook by the younger generation was encouraged by forming a *Young Communicants Club* in 1956. This had keen support and a wide programme of activities for a year or two until the leading members married and/or moved away. Ted Pearce was delighted that the number of communicants for 1957 was 2092 as compared with 560 in 1956, although the normal weekly number is less impressive when one deducts the 100 or so Easter communicants and nearly as many at Christmas and then divides by 50,. However, in 1957 the Family Service often had the largest congregation of the day, while Evensong was poorly attended. In the same year the leading traditionalist, Captain Halsey, died.

In the following years the changed pattern of worship was extended and consolidated. The September 1958 Parish Magazine bore a trumpet call from Ted Pearce. 'The re-discovery of family worship is one of the marks of our mid-20th Century Christianity…The Eucharist is the best service for parents and children. Therein they find their natural place in the worship of the Church and its greatest service.' In 1958 the number of communicants on an ordinary Sunday, which had been fewer than 10 in 1956, reached 80: 30 at 8; 45 at 9.45 and 10 at noon on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. On 27 September, 1958, there was one service of Harvest Eucharist, and no Matins at all.

Finally from January 1960 Ted Pearce attained what must have been his objective: there was to be Family Parish Communion every Sunday at 10 o'clock, followed by a shortened form of Matins at 11.15. He wrote in the Parish Magazine: 'The 10a.m. Parish Communion is the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist (Greek word for Thanksgiving) with music, hymns and sermon, with the communion of the people, as the chief service of the day..' Numerically this was fulfilled. Average Sunday attendances during 1960 were 17 at 8; 64 at 10; 56 at 11.15 and 18 at 6.30. The number of communicants at Christmas 1960 was a record at 223, and was contrasted with 1862, when the number was only 33. What was not noted was the collapse in attendance at non-eucharistic services. The average attendance at Matins in 1926 had been 140 and 44 at Evensong. In July 1962, services of Evensong in Wye were completely discontinued, as attendances had been very poor for some months.

In other aspects of parish life the changes introduced by Ted Pearce were less enduring. The Young Communicants Club mutated to a more inclusive Church Youth Club. The Sunday School reappeared, once more under Miss. Glossop's leadership. At a very early stage, the under 7s were taken out of most of the Family Service to follow their own activities. By 1963 other age groups were being taken out from Parish Communion, and by the end of 1964 the number of children involved exceeded 80. The paucity of ancillary rooms became a problem, leading to the refurbishment of

the Tower Room for the younger children. Older children went to rooms in the College.

The reordering of the chancel could not be completed until the organ was moved elsewhere, and it was clear that the existing instrument should be replaced. Jack Sawbridge-Erle-Drax presented a fine late 19th Century Bryceston chamber organ, and this was installed at the east end of the North Aisle. This enabled the chancel restoration to be completed and dedicated with the organ on 20 September, 1959. The choir stalls in the chancel thus became inconveniently separated from the organ, so new choir stalls, massively built of oak, were placed alongside the new organ in 1963, partly funded by Lady Prudence Loudon in memory of President J.F. Kennedy. In 1965 the choir remained exclusively male, comprising 11 boys and 8 men.

Ted Pearce was concerned that the congregation should feel part of the eucharistic action. Lay people brought up the bread and wine, and in 1964 a nave altar was brought into use. Later in the year he recommended the reading of 'Reshaping the Liturgy' prepared by the Liturgical Commission, part of a process begun in 1955 which led to the *Alternative Service Book* of 1980 and so to *Common Worship* of 2000. In 1966, as he approached the end of his pastorate at Wye, he wrote 'When the revised Prayer Book services are approved for parish use it may be possible to accommodate the few parishioners who attend Mattins (my experience over ten years is that it has never been well attended or popular and has never appealed to the young parishioner) into a parish worship which will be so lively and attractive that it will also prove to be evangelistic.' The new uniformity that he envisaged has not happened. Forty years on, matins and choral evensong survive in the regular monthly programme alongside Parish Communion and family services. But it was Ted Pearce who prepared the way for the parish to accept the coming liturgical changes with relatively little controversy.

More changes and new beginnings

In 1959 the parish experienced another change that would become commonplace: the permanent addition of another parish (in this case Brook) to the benefice. This made much sense, as the small parish of Brook was almost an enclave in the larger parish of Wye, and had not had a resident incumbent for some years. It has been in all respects a very happy marriage. The motor car enabled the Vicar to fit in a 9 a.m. service at Brook between the services at Wye, while the discontinuance of Evensong at Wye facilitated a regular 6.30 p.m. service at Brook. To assist the Vicar, Colonel C.A.W. Duffield, M.C. (who had commanded the Ashford Home Guard) was licensed as Parochial Reader for Wye and Brook from January 1960. He was joined from March 1961 by a Diocesan Reader, W.H. ('Bill') Glossop, Molly Glossop's brother. Bill Glossop, who had been licensed as a Reader in 1936, was Church Missionary Society Area Organiser for the Canterbury and Rochester Dioceses. He became very active in Wye and Brook, particularly in promoting prayer for the sick.

Several activities that would prove durable first surfaced in this period. In 1958 the first service in Wye for the Women's World Day of Prayer was held, and in 1959 the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was first observed. In 1960 there was a 'Stewardship Campaign' and books of offering envelopes were distributed. The Stour Music festival began, and first used Wye Church for a concert in 1964. From 1966 the sacramental elements have been reserved in an aumbry in a Lady Chapel formed at

the east end of the north aisle. This has enabled Readers and other authorised persons to take Communion to the sick, and more recently to administer communion 'by extension' in residential homes for the elderly.

The nineteen sixties were the high point of the 'ecumenical movement'. In 1963 the Report on Conversations between the Methodist Church and the Church of England was discussed by the Wye P.C.C., and in September of that year, the Regional Conference of the Faith and Order Department of the British Council of Churches took place in Wye College. On 8 September, a United Holy Communion was held, the first ever in Wye Parish Church. By request of Archbishop Ramsey, all present of whatever church were invited to take Communion. The Revd. J. Bates, a Methodist minister who had been chaplain at Kent College, Canterbury, was the preacher. Another memorable service was College Commemoration Service at the beginning of July, 1965, which was attended by the Queen Mother as Chancellor of the University of London.

In 1967, the Rev. Ted Pearce moved to become Vicar of St. Stephen's, Hackington. His successor was the Rev. David Marriott, who had previously been Headmaster of Canterbury Cathedral Choir School. He thus related well to G.W. ('Peter') Cornell, who was Headmaster of Wye Primary School from 1950 to 1976, and to the students of Wye College. David and Elizabeth Marriott found the house in Scotton Street cramped, and moved to the present vicarage in Cherry Gardens in 1970. This gave room for a church office, and had a large garden suitable for outdoor events, such as memorable open air Communion services for students at the end of the Wye College academic year.

14. A LONG AND PRODUCTIVE PASTORATE

The longest pastorate of the Twentieth Century begins

The Rev. David Marriott was the longest serving incumbent of the 20th Century, from 1967 to 1994, a greatly loved and much appreciated parish priest. It is remarkable how many and how durable were the innovations dating from the first ten years of his ministry. Even his first year saw great changes, not least in the Sunday services. He inherited a pattern of worship based on a weekly choral Parish Communion at 10 a.m., with a Sunday School meeting under very cramped conditions at the same time. 'Matins' followed each week at 11.30, less well attended and accompanied by an organ but no choir. David Marriott was clearly aware of divided opinions, and moved to compromise. He wrote in the Newsletter that had temporarily replaced the Parish Magazine 'Wye has already done some experimenting with different forms of service, and much of the liturgy evolved here may be adopted eventually by the Church'. But these innovations could not continue for 'we are now bound by Convocation ruling to use the Prayer Book form of service at the Parish Communion'. So the forty surviving copies of the Book of Common Prayer (many with pages missing) were augmented. In contrast, he wrote a long disquisition showing that recent changes in clerical dress were permissible. 'For several years now the priest who has celebrated the Parish Communion at 10 a.m. each Sunday has worn Eucharistic Vestments. These were in fact the property of the Vicar, and the Church does not possess any vestments at all.'… 'the Parochial Church Council decided that the practice of wearing Eucharistic Vestments should continue, and gratitude is expressed to Lady Prudence Loudon for presenting the first set'. Administration was moved back from a nave altar to the High Altar. Finally in November 1967, Parish Communion became fortnightly, alternating with Matins, with the 11.30 service abandoned; this pattern survived for forty years. Surprisingly, there seems to have been remarkably little concern in the parish about the form of the communion liturgy, with no great protest about the reversion to the1662 form in 1967 or about the change to the experimental 'Series 2' in 1969. He commented in the September 1970 Magazine that the latter 'has had a welcome wider and greater than was expected'. The prevailing sentiment at Wye at that time was to 'leave such matters to the Vicar'. There was some controversy over a year's trial of the 'Series 3' Communion Service in 1973-4, but little of this concerned shaking hands at the Peace, which so much agitated people elsewhere. The friendly folk at Wye also welcomed the serving of coffee after Parish Communion, which started in March 1976.

On his arrival, David Marriott experienced what most clergymen encounter only as an imaginary nightmare. At the end of his induction service, the regular organist handed him a letter of resignation. In desperation, he telephoned a friend, Gerald Trodd, who had just been appointed Chief Inspector of Schools for Music in Kent and Sussex, and was moving to Canterbury.. His professional leadership as organist and choirmaster made the music at Wye church widely known, especially through the St. Gregory and St. Martin Singers, which he started in January 1968. This was a considerably augmented choir for concerts in the church, often accompanied by an orchestra. The Singers were inaugurated in January 1968, and presented a fine performance of *Messiah* on 1 December. Since then Wye Parish Church has been frequently used for concerts, and is considered to be one of the best buildings in the area for the performance of music. A high standard was also achieved in choral

services, and in 1970 a musical setting for Series 2 Parish Communion by Alan Ridout was introduced.

Especially in his first five years David Marriott gave steady support to ecumenical activities, fostering links with Roman Catholics in College and Baptists in Brook, but above all smoothing the way towards greater sharing of resources with the Methodist Church in Wye. The Parish Magazine, resuming that title from November 1967, contained regular contributions from Michael Allen, the Methodist minister, and frequently noted the progress of the national *Conversations* then in progress. The first practical step was the union of the two Sunday Schools on 24 September, 1967.

Despite having the parvise room over the porch redecorated (of which he wrote that 'a feat of mountaineering is needed to get to it'), there was totally inadequate space at the Parish Church for a Sunday School concurrent with a service. The Methodists had suitable rooms, but were very short of teachers. In 1967, the united School had 55 children on roll in four classes, two of which met on Methodist premises. After a period when College rooms were used, the senior group returned to the Methodist building in 2004.

Starting also in 1967 was another very durable idea, that of *Link Missionaries*, the first being Stephen and Anne Carr, who graduated from Wye College in 1951. They were then working for the Church Missionary Society in western Uganda. Later they worked in southern Sudan, and in 2006 are still active in Malawi, despite having a 'retirement' home in Wye. Stephen has published an excellent autobiography, replete with moving incidents, called *Surprised by Laughter.* The book shows how effective was the networking among people who had been connected with Wye, even in remote parts of Africa.

Work with young people

David Marriott related splendidly to young people. For many years he formed a new Group for each year group leaving Wye Primary School, starting with a 'Thursday Group' which started in 1967, and to this work he gave much of his time. He often took youngsters to a centre at Capel-le-Ferne for weekends, and they enjoyed many memorable weeks in the Lake District, Snowdonia and other places in the summer, and walks on the South Downs in the Easter holidays. The Youth Group now meeting on a Sunday evening builds very much on these foundations. He also encouraged the formation of a 'Boys and Girls' Club' for 7 to 12 year old children on a weekday evening, which also started in the autumn of 1967, and continued for 25 years. This ended with an epilogue, and was led by Jeanne Ingram and Mike and Tessa Edge, who were formally recognised as the 'Christian Outreach Group'. In 1965, the same leaders, with others, had initiated Gannah Camp, when Wye young people enjoyed a week of holiday activities and Christian teaching, initially at a farm in Herefordshire of that name. This became an annual event for 27 years.. In January 1970 a very successful Children's Week was led by David Lewis of Scripture Union, and similar 'holiday clubs', usually called 'Secret Agents' have taken place periodically ever since. For youth and other activities, a mini-bus had been borrowed from 1967, and one was owned by the church from 1971, following a successful 'maxifete for a minibus'. Until 1989, when it was not replaced for financial reasons, the church minibus saw tremendous service, particularly in transporting the 'Vicar's Groups' to weekend and weeklong 'camps', even as far afield as the Lake District.

A remarkable guy
Is the Vicar of Wye.
He's not known to boast,
But his golden brown toast
Starts us off on our day
In the very best way.
With jobs for each one
And our sandwiches done,
We're off in the bus
with not too much fuss
To climb Scafell Pike
With a twenty mile hike,
Then a swim in the tarn
If the weather is warm;
If you think that's the end,
You're mistaken, my friend.
There are games to compete in,
Then the church to all meet in,
A prayer from our 'vic',
To the dorms double quick,
We fall into bed,
Very near dead,
But we never say die
To the Vicar of Wye.

(by an anonymous participant in a week at St. John in the Vale (Lake District). – from the Parish Magazine for October 1980.)

David Marriott felt that young people should be encouraged to relate to the wider village community. The members of the Friday night Youth Club joined with members of the Church to entertain the over 70s of the village three times a year (Christmas, Easter and Midsummer) to a much enjoyed tea party.

An era of innovations

Lenten addresses for the whole church had often been arranged, but David Marriott initiated Lent Discussion Groups in homes. In 1968 there were 10 groups for a series on 'The Church'. These took place during every Lent through his ministry, and sometimes he wrote the study notes himself. Those on 'The Sermon on the Mount' for Lent 1993 were particularly memorable. The Lent groups were so much appreciated that three permanent house groups were soon initiated with his strong support. In 1969 these had increased to five, and become interdenominational, two being led by Methodists.

In 1968 the Friends of St. Gregory and St. Martin emerged as an organisation to hold social events and to raise money specifically for beautifying the Church (not simple upkeep), and this has been very active and useful ever since. A wonderful set of pew runners in the nave commemorating aspects of life in Wye, which took more than four years (1970-74) to embroider, was an early project. The runners were designed by Miss. Florence Brundrett. Appropriately, one pew runner is devoted to the bells. It

was in 1968 that a new bellringing method, called *Wye Surprise*, devised by Colin Wyld, won second place in a national competition, and in 1975 the bells were retuned.

In 1969 Christian Aid Week was promoted in the parish for the first time, including a 'hunger lunch' of soup, bread and cheese. More recently such lunches have been organised weekly in Lent. Harvest time 1971 saw the Archbishop's appeal for one percent of personal income to be given to world development through Christian Aid advocated in the Church magazine, with instructions for calculating one's contribution. The amount collected shows that this was only partly fulfilled, though the church community was not ungenerous at this time, giving considerable sums to the Church Missionary Society, the Children's Society, Missions to Seamen and 'Help the Aged'.

In 1963, the Stour Music Festival had been established by Alfred Deller, and in its earlier years some performances were held in Wye church, where also in August 1970 a religious drama group of high calibre, led by Maurice Copus and including members from Wye, presented *Murder in the Cathedral*. Later renamed 'Group 81', they performed in Wye Church and elsewhere several works by Christopher Fry, one of their Patrons, who attended at least one of the performances. In June 1971 three memorable performances of Benjamin Britten's opera *Noye's Fludde* took place in the church, involving a team of more than 150 people, directed by David Marriott, including a large contingent of children from the village primary school under the leadership of the Headmaster, G.W. {'Peter') Cornell. In June 1976, Alan Ridout's *Creation* was performed, and in December 1977 his operetta *The Selfish Giant.*

In 1970 the church began to be concerned in a specific way with 'the ministry of healing'. There was a special St. Luke's Tide service and a talk by Dr. Edward Aubert, Warden of Burrswood,'heard with rapt attention by a fairly large audience'. Both the healing ministry and the link with Burrswood were very much fostered by Lady Prudence Loudon, with strong support from David Marriott. In 1971 a monthly Prayer Group for Healing was set up to intercede for individuals on a confidential basis under the leadership of Bill Glossop, and this continues to operate 41 years later. In 1977, monthly 'Healing Services' were started, but this activity has been less durable, although others have been held from time to time.

An interest coming to the surface in 1970 was interfaith dialogue. At a 'Comparative Religions Evening' held at Withersdane an audience of more than 30 heard talks given by a Sikh, a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Muslim and a Christian. Another 'sign of the times' was the replacement of the Mothers' Union by the 'Wye and Brook Fellowship' in October 1970.

Developments in ministry

In 1971 a retired Congregational minister, who had spent much of his career as a missionary in China, the Revd. Harold Wickings, came with his wife to live in Wye. He was fully adopted by David Marriott as a member of his team, often preaching in the Parish Church and even, on 9 July 1972, leading a service of morning worship in 'Congregational style'. In August 1972, Canon Neville Maurice Granville Sharp came to live in Wye, on his retirement as Vicar of Ashford. He was a descendant of Granville Sharp (1735-1813), who was a very powerful opponent of slavery. Canon Sharp had wide ranging interests and sympathies, but was much more concerned with

the minutiae of liturgy and vestments than David Marriott, who, very wisely, made him effectively Parish Priest of Brook. His house in Wye became the base for a very successful Study Group for Anglican Readers and Methodist Local Preachers from all parts of the Ashford area. Unfortunately, June 1972 had seen the failure of the Anglican-Methodist unity proposals to find sufficient support in the General Synod. Dismayed by this, Archbishop Michael Ramsey advocated local ecumenical partnerships. In November 1972 the Wye Methodist Leaders' Meeting invited representatives of the Parochial Church Council to discuss ways of working together more closely. With the encouragement of the Revd. William Robson, the Methodist Superintendent, a proposal was drawn up to sell the Methodist building and build a hall for joint use. This was strongly opposed by two Methodist leaders, who persuaded the Revd. Harry Williams, successor to Mr. Robson from September 1973, that the scheme should not go forward.

A welcome to the pulpit ministry of women was a more fruitful innovation from this period. In 1970, this was advocated in two articles in the Parish Magazine by Penelope Dart, and on 28 February 1971 Mrs. Pamela Lloyd, the first woman Parish Worker with general authorisation to preach did so in Wye Parish Church. In 1975, Mrs. Wendy Burnham was accepted for training as a Reader, and took her first Anglican service at Brook on Mothering Sunday 1976. In 1977 she became the first woman to be licensed as a Reader in the parishes of Wye and Brook. By the time the Church of England began to ordain women priests, the great majority of Wye parishioners graciously accepted their ministry.

The changing character of Wye College

The appointment of Dr. Harry Darling as principal in 1968, who had previously been Professor of Agriculture at Ahmedu Bello University in Nigeria was symptomatic of a radical change in the outlook of the College from the servicing of British agriculture to concern with agricultural development overseas. Soon there were around 200 students from overseas, typically from over 50 different countries. Distinguished visitors from overseas became commonplace. After graduation, students often found posts overseas, sometimes with Christian organisations, and wrote letters published in the Parish Magazine. The church responded with welcome tea parties in October, entertainment with families over Christmas and activities for the families of overseas students. Occasionally students would be effectively become refugees due to regime changes, such as Negash from Ethiopia and Enoch Rubaduka from Ruanda, calling for major financial help. Church members also assisted other students who needed to return home after the death of a close relative.

Great changes to the interior of the church

1972 saw great changes in the interior of Wye Parish Church. A large pipe organ from the Methodist Central Hall in Sheffield was installed in the easternmost bay of the north aisle. As it had three manuals but only two sets of pipes, the third manual was available for use with the pipes of the chamber organ which remained at the east end of the south aisle. In July 1973, the refurbishment of the interior of the chancel was completed, introducing the white cornice, contrasting with the very dark ceiling, which is now so prominent a feature. This work revealed that the chancel roof was in a precarious condition, so that it had to be strengthened and retiled.

The completion of the interior alterations was appropriately celebrated at Harvest Festival on 7 October 1973 by the first service to be televised from Wye Parish Church. Everyone sweated in the tremendous heat from the temporary lighting. This drew attention to the defective state of the permanent wiring, and bit by bit during 1974-6 the church was rewired by volunteers. Although lighting with inconspicuous spot lamps was adopted largely for reasons of economy, this scheme has been considered very appropriate subsequently. Faced with these heavy expenditures, it was a blessing that a stewardship campaign in 1972 almost doubled the income of the church. This also benefited from the collection of newspapers started by Dr. Lyn Garraway in January 1972. The amount collected increased from 10.3 tonnes in 1972 to 32.8 tonnes, sold for £409, in 1974. The Mission Hall at Naccolt, by then long disused, was used for storage until it was demolished in 1982. Storage was then at the College until waste paper collection by the pioneering secular recycling service '*Wyecycle'* started in 1989. In all, over 18 years, 461 tonnes was collected, with a value of £5,897.

During 1975, the ringing chamber on the first floor of the tower was moved up to the clock chamber on the second floor. This released an upper tower room for Sunday School classes and other meetings, but in practice its use has been limited by the very steep spiral staircase.

Further strengthening of the ministry team

Also in 1975, David Marriott threw himself with great vigour into a new role: that of Diocesan Warden of Readers. A two year training course was arranged, based in Canterbury, with excellent lecturers. During his seven years in office there were 13 major changes or developments in Reader ministry, while the number of Readers in the Diocese was doubled. For Wye and Brook he recruited three new Readers: John Orr-Ewing, then Registrar of Wye College, and Wendy and Paul Burnham, who were already well established as Methodist Local Preachers. To enable them to have status in both denominations, the arrangement was approved by the Archbishop, Donald Coggan, and by the Revd. Leslie Davidson, Chairman of the London South East District of the Methodist Church. This was a national 'first', and others have followed in their footsteps, including three more in the Ashford Methodist Circuit. Warmly commending the idea in the Parish Magazine, David Marriott wrote: 'it is just in this way that I see the Churches growing together'. In a similar spirit of ecumenical adventure, he appointed a nonconformist minister, Harold Wickings, as Tutor to the trainee Readers of the Deanery. Archbishop Coggan met the new 'Readers in training' when he preached in Wye on 21 December, 1975, and licensed them in Canterbury Cathedral in 1977. The ministry team was further strengthened in 1976 when the Very Revd. Ian White Thomson, who had succeeded Dr. Hewlett Johnson, the so-called 'Red Dean' of Canterbury, retired to live in Wye.

Financial problems

The December 1976 issue of the Parish Magazine reported serious financial problems. Receipts were more than £2,000 short of the £7,000 budgeted. It was decided to pay only £1,250 of the Diocesan quota of £2,500, and to hold major fundraising events in 1977. A Flower Festival in June, coinciding with the Queen's Silver Jubilee Celebration, raised £350, and a Fete in July £900. In many subsequent years a special effort has been needed to balance the books; but two recent incumbents have favoured

'Gift Days'. The Diocesan 'Share' has normally been met in full, even when by 2011 it had increased to about £70.000.

Reappraisal after ten years of ministry

The October 1977 Parish Magazine carried a letter in which David Marriott reviewed the first ten years of his ministry in Wye. He began 'When Archbishop Ramsay asked me to come to Wye I gently suggested that he should offer me something else after a short time because I thought it was altogether too small a job for me!…Now I am completing my tenth year here, continually extended in my ministry, with a growing and exciting Church, and I cannot bear the thought of leaving Wye at all.'… 'Last winter I had a very difficult decision to make as to whether I should move from Wye, and, having finally decided to stay, felt…I needed something which will give me new ideas and fresh experiences.' 'Elizabeth and I will leave for India on December 27th, and return just before or just after Easter.'…. 'I want to know whether my pattern of ministry is too fixed, and whether I should be moving on to new things'…. 'The only way I can think of to find this out is to go away and see what happens'. He explained that such a lengthy absence was only possible because of the support of Canon Sharp, Harold Wickings and Dean White-Thomson.

David Marriott's visits to India

For most of the remainder of his ministry David Marriott spent three months in India every other year. Links which continue to be fruitful sprang from these visits. One was with the Delhi Brotherhood Society, and particularly the schools they have established in poor neighbourhoods near Delhi. Many people are continuing to sponsor pupils through the Wye and Brook India Trust, founded in May 1978. The other is with the Christian Medical College and Hospital at Vellore, in South India, where he initiated a scheme enabling people in the West to pay for patients to be treated. This started in August 1978, and is still flourishing. The down side was that the latter part of David Marriott's ministry in Wye was less innovative than the first ten years, but perhaps this was likely in any case. He was wont to argue that during his absences others took up many tasks that would otherwise have been left to him, and that on his return he was able to encourage them to continue. In 1984 he wrote of his visits to India: 'I feel more and more that this is something God has given me to do'.

Nevertheless the next few years were not uneventful in Wye. In 1978, the Nave was refurbished and redecorated, and the Seventh Bell was replaced. In 1979 the area immediately west of the new organ was carpeted and equipped as a Lady Chapel. Having an altar table and a nearby aumbry with a sanctuary light, it served subsequently for early celebrations of Holy Communion on Sundays and Festivals. Strangely, it has become a play area for the youngest children without significant objection. The main altar table was provided with a magnificent frontal worked by Rita Greenstreet in 1981. Embroidered pew runners for the North Aisle depicting events in the life of Mary were completed in 1985. Further altar frontals were made from 1989, making a set of four, each appropriate to a church season. Sadly in 1979 much of the church silver was stolen.

In 1978, Miss. Molly Glossop (1901-1989) retired as Sunday School Superintendent. She had come to Wye in 1921, and started as a teacher soon afterwards, serving under five vicars. Conversely, in April 1979 Mrs. Tessa Edge became the first woman

Churchwarden of Wye Parish Church, and served for ten years. In 1979 also David Marriott was made a Canon of Canterbury Cathedral.

The Festival of Faith and its fruits

An immensely influential visitor was Cuthbert Bardesley, Bishop of Coventry, especially when he gave a week of solid teaching in church from 21 to 28 October 1979 entitled 'The Festival of Faith'. In preparation for it a half hour prayer meeting was established on Saturday morning, which has continued to meet ever since. Bishop Bardesley was supported by Canon Raymond Cyster, who spoke at a series of lunchtime meetings, and by a Roman Catholic team led by Fr. Martin Gay. Bro. Andrew Philip SSF was the Youth Missioner, and the PACE music group from Hildenborough Hall and musicians and dancers from St. George's, Deal, took part.

The Mission was an unequivocal success. Its name, the widely respected episcopal leader and the calm atmosphere of the meetings pacified the minority who would have bristled at anything overtly 'evangelical'. It resulted in a noticeable quickening of interest in further study and in deeper Christian commitment. Twelve leaders came forward for a new set of house groups, and ten Anglican and one Methodist group were established, comprising in all over 100 members. A series of eight lectures was given in January-March 1980 by Canon Anthony Dyson on 'Christian Beliefs Today'. Parish Retreats at West Malling Abbey, previously occasional events, took place more regularly, and later parties from Wye began to visit Bec, the Abbey in Normandy from which came St. Anselm and other Norman church leaders.

The buildings of Wye Methodist Church were comprehensively reconstructed in 1980-1, following the failure of one of the trusses in the roof, and the chapel became an attractive venue for occasions with small congregations. For about eight years united Lent services and some monthly services of the Anglican Wye and Brook Fellowship were held there. As the only regular Methodist service was on a Sunday evening and evensong was by now only monthly, there were also several people who attended both churches.

The ministry of Dudley Venables

From 1972 Maurice Sharp was for all practical purposes parish priest of Brook, took a major part in pastoral work in Wye, especially among the elderly, and deputised for David Marriott during his absences with youth groups, on holiday and on his three month visits to India. In July 1982 he celebrated his eightieth birthday. Harold Wickings was also feeling his age, and departed in August 1985 for a retirement home in Malvern, where he had had his last full time pastorate. He died in 1992. So it must have been with some relief that David Marriott was able to welcome a considerably younger non-stipendiary Curate to Wye.

Dudley Venables had seen wartime service with the RAMC, including surviving the sinking of the rescue ship bringing him from Dunkirk and later service in Palestine and Egypt. Later he became Head of the School of Physiotherapy at Guys Hospital until his retirement in 1980 at the age of 63. Already a Reader, he undertook ministerial training, and was ordained Deacon in 1980 and Priest in 1981, as a Curate at Holy Trinity, Ramsgate.. During David Marriott' holiday in June 1981, Dudley and Norah, his wife, resided in Wye Vicarage, and evidently met with approval, for in December 1982, they moved to Wye, where they remained until Dudley's death 22

years later. He was energetic almost to the last, ever avid for any possible exercise of his priestly office, especially in Communion and Funeral services. He rejoiced in ceremonial, notably in the Gospel Acclamations at Parish Communion. Though stocky in build, Dudley had great physical strength. He continued to cycle around the village and to act as chaplain at St. Martin's Hospital, Canterbury into his eighties. He would boast about his ability to foil attacks by deranged patients. Conversely his gentler skills as a physiotherapist were helpful to many. In 1986 and 1987 he revived the practice of preaching a special sermon on the Sunday nearest to the anniversary of the execution of Charles I. Though Dudley was an admirer of William Laud, the sermons were impressively even-handed. It is not known whether he claimed the remuneration of £2 provided by the will of Robert Cole, who died in 1663.

Dudley's arrival gave the parish another link missionary, for, at that time, Dudley and Norah's son, Gregory, was a missionary schoolteacher with the South American Missionary Society. Gregory's priesting in 1984, and advancement to become eventually an Archbishop and a leading figure in the international Anglican Communion has been both remarkable and very pleasing to his father and to the parish. Gregory has preached in Wye Parish Church on a number of occasions.

Relationships with town and gown

David Marriott was an active Chaplain of Wye College, which had a strong student Christian Fellowship throughout the 1970s and 80s. In 1984 it numbered 50 out of a total of 550 students. Although the CF is affiliated to the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship, which has a conservative evangelical ethos, Harry Darling (Principal 1968-77) insisted that it should serve Christians of all denominations. Although he was a Plymouth Brother, and Ian Paisley's mother had been his nursemaid, he rejoiced that its Secretary for a time was a Roman Catholic, Mary Powell. It remains unclear how this was squared with the UCCF! The College year began with College Sunday, the first of the academic year, marked by a gowned procession of academics, some of whom took part in the morning service. The end of the academic year was marked by another procession to the Commemoration service in church, sometimes attended by Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother in her capacity of Chancellor of the University of London (eg in 1980), and several times subsequently by Princess Anne. While David was concerned pastorally with students of all faiths, the open air Communion services for the leavers held on a midsummer evening on the vicarage lawn were particularly memorable.

Links with the secular life of the village were not neglected. David Marriott encouraged the Clerk to provide reports of Parish Council meetings and activities for the Parish Magazine. In 1981, an annual Village Sunday service was introduced, to which Parish Councillors and those concerned with village organisations and businesses were invited. Although, especially during his absences, much was left to Canon Sharp, and later Dudley Venables, David Marriott had a good reputation among those who were not regular churchgoers. A letter in the September 1984 Magazine testified to this. 'I should like to say how lucky we are to have David Marriott as our Vicar. I know very well that, even if I am not one of his "regulars", I can go to him any time with a problem and he will give practical and reassuring help. That, in my view is real Christianity.'

Liturgical Developments of the 1980s

1980 saw the publication of the Alternative Service Book. David Marriott decided that Rite B should be used at the 8 a.m. Communion Service, and Rite A at Parish Communion (alternate Sundays at 10). Evensong from the Book of Common Prayer would continue monthly. When the 10 o'clock service was Matins, the BCP would be used 'with a great deal of flexibility and gradually preparing for a changeover to ASB Matins'.

Like Dr. Thomas Brett, Dudley Venables admired the liturgies of the Greek Church, and the Liturgy of St. James was used on two occasions at Parish Communion during the 1980s. This was one of those discussed in Brett's *Dissertation on Liturgies* (1720). As previously mentioned, Brett particularly deplored the lack of an *Epikesis* in the 1662 rite. This Prayer, that the Holy Spirit would make the bread and wine effectively the Body and Blood of Christ, is included in all the variant Eucharistic prayers of Rite A, which are used at Parish Communion. David Marriott effected 'The Mixture', by adding a little water to the communion wine, another of the four early 'Usages' for which Brett so vigorously contended. The offertory procession, in which lay people bring up the bread and wine to the altar, was also revived. Appropriately the Nave altar table is commonly placed immediately above the vault in which Thomas Brett is buried. We can imagine that he is delighted

An era of big missions

Another parish teaching mission was led by the recently retired Archbishop Donald Coggan in October 1985. It was originally to be called 'Learn of Me', but this was changed to 'Rekindling Faith'. There were four training sessions for group leaders in the previous April, corresponding to the four well attended teaching sessions of the Mission: Bible, Belief, Body and Behaviour. Fourteen house groups were established, some of which continued groups which had originated in the 'Festival of Faith'. A gentle man, Donald Coggan was greatly loved, but, as a missioner, he had less impact than Cuthbert Bardesley. Interestingly, through worldwide circulation on tapes, the mission talks were appreciated by very many people outside Wye.

Around this time three laymen from Wye and Brook, Roy Leaver, Paul Burnham and John Orr-Ewing, were much involved with an interdenominational organisation, known as 'Mission Ashford'. One of its earliest ventures was an open air Sunrise Service (actually at 7 a.m.) on Easter Sunday 1984, which has been held on the Wye Downs National Nature Reserve annually ever since. Wye people in some numbers also attended meetings in Ashford, addressed by leading evangelical speakers, such as Clive Calver, Roger Forster and David Pawson. The most powerful of all was Nicky Cruz, author of *The Cross and the Switchblade*, who, in November 1985, drew an audience of over a thousand, including a number from Wye. Of seventy who came forward for commitment or recommitment, nine were from Wye and Brook. A Gospel was delivered to every house in the Borough of Ashford, including Wye, in 1985-6.
In July 1986, Mission Ashford sponsored a week of very well attended meetings led by Ian Coffey and Dave Pope with the Saltmine Band and Drama Group. In June 1989, 'Livelinks' in Ashford from the Mission England meetings addressed by Billy Graham were crowded; many no doubt supposed that it might be the last opportunity of hearing him. Wye was well represented on all these occasions.

A tremendous capital gain

By his will dated 29 October, 1481 William Jarman (alias German) of Wye gave in trust two acres and one rood of land to lay out 20 pence for the health of his soul, and the residue towards repairing the church. This land was a small paddock north of the present Vicarage, used in the 1970s for pasturing two horses belonging to the daughter of the village medical doctor. In 1984 it was sold for building 30 small bungalows for senior citizens, an estate appropriately named *Jarman's Field*. This realised about £250,000 for investment in the name of the Wye Ecclesiastical Charities (WEC). WEC also subsumes the Luxmoore Trust, set up with £2,000 by Lt. Col. Evelyn Luxmoore and his wife Ella in 1951 in memory of their son, Richard, who was killed in World War II. These investments have grown in value, and yielded interest of £18.000 in 2005. WEC made it possible to fund the retiling of the nave roof and the refurbishment of the porch in 1986. To the credit of the builders, the great storm of October 1987 damaged only one corner of the nave roof, when other buildings were stripped, leaving Church Street ankle deep in broken tiles. In 1988, the window tracery on the north side of the church was extensively renewed, and (at the expense of the Friends) external floodlighting was installed. In the same year an individual donor gave an attractive bronze of a mother and child, which was attached to a nave pillar overlooking the Lady Chapel. The sculptor was Neil Godfrey, and it was cast by Peter Newell of Ashford.

A time of comings and goings

The late 1980s saw some big changes in the 'personnel' of Wye Parish Church. Notable among these was the retirement of Gerald Trodd as Director of Music, and the succession of Mark Deller in 1989. Mark Deller has had a formidable musical career. He had been Senior Chorister at Canterbury Cathedral and a Choral Scholar at St. John's College, Cambridge, and then followed his father, Alfred, as an eminent counter tenor and as the Director of Stour Music. Mark had already become a Churchwarden in 1987, and was to give invaluable leadership during the interregnum (1994-5}.

In May 1988 the Rt. Rev. Dr. David Say KCVO and his wife, Irene, moved to Wye on his retirement as Bishop of Rochester, where he had been for 27 years. He had been Lord High Almoner to the Queen, responsible each year for the Royal Maundy Ceremony, and a member of the House of Lords for 19 years. Bishop Say became an invaluable member of the Wye Church community, taking over some of the services at Brook previously led by Canon Sharp, who had moved to Birchington in 1987. He also had oversight of both parishes when the Vicar was away, and, in due course, during two interregna. However, Canon Sharp continued to lead Evensong monthly at Brook, and to contribute to the Parish Magazine, almost up to his death at the age of 91 in 1994.

Two talented ladies moved to Wye on retirement. One was Constance Millington, previously in charge of Religious Studies at Christ Church College, Canterbury, who wrote a Ph.D. thesis on an Indian theme while living in Wye. The other was Margaret Pawley, widow of an Archdeacon of Canterbury, and herself an author and lecturer, who led several parish visits to the Abbey of Bec. The departure which most affected the College and village was the retirement of Jeanne Ingram, the Warden of Withersdane Hall, and linchpin of work with students and village young people for forty years. 'Auntie Jeanne' moved to Sussex in September 1989, although she

visited Wye from time to time up to her death in 2005, particularly to attend the tea parties for the elderly which she had initiated. Jeanne Ingram was a member of the Methodist Church, and gave the fine new Communion Table installed there in 1981, but she was equally active as a most hard working member of the Parish Church community.

The 'battlemented loos'

In 1990 the boiler for heating the church needed to be replaced; there had been crisis after crisis, with constant doubt whether there would be any heat for the following Sunday. The old underground heating chamber was deemed wholly unacceptable for housing a new boiler. There was already a plan to use the space between the porch and the base of the tower, hitherto used for dustbins, to construct toilets, something the church had always lacked. It was found possible to modify the plans to include the boiler, space for flower arranging and two W.C.s, one suitable for the disabled. It is generally agreed that the stonework of the extension, built in 1991, which is battlemented at the top, perfectly matches the older work.

Despite periodic thefts and minor acts of vandalism, Wye Church has always been left open in daylight hours, and this is much appreciated by visitors, especially those who value a quiet place with an atmosphere conducive to prayer and meditation. Unfortunately 1991 saw an act of horrendous sacrilege, when a bonfire was lighted under the High Altar and destroyed the hand embroidered altar cloth. Nothing daunted, Rita Greenstreet, helped by 15 other ladies, spent two years working a new altar cloth. They continued their work, and there are now four cloths, for Advent featuring a star, Lent with a crown of thorns, Easter with a Sun in splendour and 'After Pentecost' worked with foliage.

Conservation area or untidy mess?

For many years Wye churchyard had been neatly mown, at first by Michael Jack and then by Buddy Back for a very modest charge. When Buddy had health problems, volunteers took over, but both the mower and the strimmer broke down. About this time the Kent Trust for Nature Conservation held a study day on the conservation value of churchyards. These were considered to be the oldest pieces of old meadowland in most parishes, Wild flowers, insects and other small animals would become even more prolific if the grass was only cut once or twice a year. Arthur Winfield, then Acting Head of the Wye unit of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service, attended the study day on behalf of the PCC, and advocated leaving some areas of the Old Churchyard as meadowland, cutting them only once a year. So three areas were left unmown as an experiment in 1990. In the uncut areas twelve species of grasses were noted, together with a wide range of herbs, including vetches, lesser meadow rue, buttercups, angelica, black knapweed, star thistle, yarrow and plantains. A wider range of insects were also present, and Arthur Winfield held out the hope that these would include some parasites and predators of pests; welcome to those cultivating nearby gardens and allotments. Unfortunately the voices of those who saw the areas of long grass as 'an untidy mess' prevailed, before the rarities foreshadowed by Arthur Winfield, such as orchids and twayblades, could appear. So with the return of the ever zealous Buddy Back to reasonable health, the patches of long grass disappeared. More recently, however, a group called the 'Ecocongregation' have persuaded the P.C.C. to reinstate the 'meadow' areas to the north and east of the church building.

David Marriott's last years

Lorna ('Dickie') Cleveland began Reader training in 1991 and was licensed in 1993. For a time she edited the Parish Magazine jointly with her husband, 'Pete', and was PCC Secretary. She was to become Wye Parish Church's first woman minister.

David Marriott retired in July 1994, with extensive celebrations, ranging from a farewell party to a quarter peal of 1260 plain bob triples. His final message in the Parish Magazine noted: 'Within my own congregation there has been a spectrum of beliefs as broad as the Church of England itself, and it has been my joy to try to hold together a disparate group of people in such a way that they could worship together'. He tried to find areas of agreement with everyone he met, while remaining firmly in charge of the parish. Because the community of Wye is rich in talented lay people, he was able to devote much time to his activities in India and also to work with young people on the fringe of the church community. His annual trips with them either to Snowdonia or to the Lake District will be an abiding memory for many.

David and Elizabeth had maintained a 'second home' in Northern Cyprus for some years. He accepted a short-term chaplaincy there, and in June 1995 sustained a fatal accident, by falling from a sea wall in Kyrenia. In 1998 a handsome slate plaque to his memory, sculpted by Paul Wehrle, was fixed to the south wall of the chancel at Wye.

15. INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

The ministry of David Stuart Smith

In 10 June 1995, David Stuart-Smith, previously Vicar of St. Stephen's, Clapham Park, was installed as Parish Priest of Wye and Brook. Earlier he had been a full time travelling secretary with the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship and then a missionary in Bangladesh, He had strong family connections with east Kent, and had taken part in a Wye College Christian Fellowship Mission. A decisive evangelical, he became Chairman of the Canterbury Diocese Renewal Group. Alongside the traditional choral music of Wye Church, he established a music group to lead a monthly informal family service and also Sunday evening celebrations. As a friend of Nicky Gumbel, of Holy Trinity, Brompton, he was a keen advocate of the *Alpha Course*. He personally led a series at Brook with 14 attending, and another at Wye for about 36, of which three were confirmed after the course ended. Another innovation was an annual 'Away Day' for the PCC. The Sunday School was relaunched as 'Sunday Club' There was less anxiety about finance, with reliance on 'Gift Days' when needs arose. £3,625 was thus raised to cover the expenses of a weekend mission with Archbishop George Carey in March 1998.

Wye becomes the centre of a larger benefice

David Marriott's successors, David Stuart-Smith, and from November 2001 John Richardson, have had pastoral charge of Hastingleigh as well as Wye and Brook, and from 2003 Boughton Aluph was added to the benefice. John Richardson came from Bradford, where he was for ten years first Provost and then Dean of the Cathedral. But he had an earlier ministry in rural areas, and had edited a book entitled *Ten Rural Churches*. His vision is that Wye should resume the role it had in Saxon times, that of a minster church resourcing a group of parishes. In 2014, this was achieved with the formation of the United Wye Benefice, with its own website and lay chairman (Terry Donovan). Thus the story of Wye Church has come full circle.

With a larger benefice, a larger 'ministerial team' was needed. Two new curates in training, 'Dickie' Cleveland and Stephen Lillicrap, joined the staff of the benefice in 2002/3, together with another retired priest, the Rev. Alan Ramsay. There are now daily morning prayers in the benefice, using the churches and the College Chapel. In Wye, three services take place each Sunday, one of which is choral. The aim is to maintain a diverse tradition of worship. Two 10 a.m. services a month are Common Worship Parish Communion. Choral Matins and Choral Evensong each take place once a month., but there is also an monthly informal family morning service and a monthly evening 'celebration' at which the worship is led by a music group. There are weekday Communion services to mark major festivals. The midnight Communion Service on Christmas Eve is a specially memorable occasion. The bells are rung before every principal service. Two new bells cast to commemorate the Millenium give the tower a very fine ring of ten.

The church community continued to grow under David Stuart Smith, and more considerably after the arrival of John Richardson. The electoral roll numbered 120 in 1986, 136 in 1996 and 234 in 2005. Activities for children and young people thrived too. The annual 'Gannah Camp', giving them a week's holiday in Herefordshire, was started on an interdenominational basis by Jeanne Ingram and Michael and Tessa Edge in the early nineteen sixties, and after a move to Northamptonshire continued

until 2011. The Sunday evening youth group flourished under the leadership of Mark Curtis and John Moseling, and continues under Matthew King and Rose Burnham. The Sunday School has been replaced by 'Sunday Club', organised in five age groups. After 1992, the weeknight youth groups were replaced by 'Secret Agents', a Summer Holiday Club. Secret Agents was immensely popular, with about 90 children and more than 30 helpers involved.

With the appointment of a lively, relatively young parish priest, the Revd. Ravi Holy, in 2011 and the main service well attended by young families, Anglican Christians in Wye look forward with confidence to the future. They have learned not to fear the religious freedom that clerics of earlier centuries went to such lengths to suppress.

APPENDIX

PARISH PRIESTS OF WYE

VICARS presented by the Abbot and Convent of Battle (Note: the evidence is very patchy before 1350, thereafter – from the Archiepiscopal Registers - it is good).
William (-1172)
Godfrey de Lucy (1173-1204)
William de Merse (1263-4)
William de Bruneford (c1280-97)
Geoffrey de Horwode (1297-)
William de Nortone (1348)
John Ewan (1350-57)
Reyner de Aston (1357)
Richard de Denyngton (1357-71)
Henry Forester (1371)
Hugh de Edynham (1372)
Ancelyn Prentys (1372-78)
Oliver Watnowe (1379-1394)
John Cordelay (1394)
Silvester Baker (1394-1405)
Thomas Broun (1405-1426)
Hamo Offyngton (1425-1447)
Philip Uske Ll.D. (1447-1449)

PAROCHIAL CHAPLAINS of the College foundation (Note: this period is poorly documented)
Robert Elys (1454)
John Stack (1480)
Nicholas Garland (1499)
Thomas Pemyqoke (1511)
William Sawrley (1519)
Thomas Deykin (?1526 –29)
Richard Walker (?1529-40)
Thomas Southby (?1540-45)

PERPETUAL CURATES presented by various landowners (Note: the evidence for the Elizabethan and Commonwealth period is incomplete, it is derived chiefly from the Registers and Churchwardens' Accounts)
Thomas Southby (1545-60)
William Master (1569-?1582)
Robert Goliforde (1585-?1587)
Richard Mathues (1589-90)
William Lause M.A. (1590)
Thomas Wood (1591-?1593)
Thomas Poulter M.A. (1594)
Thomas Jackson M.A. (1596-1614)
Richard Sheppard (1614-1624)
Ambrose Richman M.D. (1624-42)
Robert Ferrers (1642)

Thomas Swan (1648)
Thomas Ferrers (1654)
William Belke S.T.P. (1556-62)

PERPETUAL CURATES presented by the Earl of Winchilsea (Generally from good diocesan records, however various assistant Curates were employed, especially when the appointee had other preferments)
Jeremy Dodson M.A. (1662-65)
Samuel Smith M.A. (1668-70)
John Warley M.A. (1670-78)
Christopher Hargreaves B.A. (1678-9)
George Gipps M.A. (1679-1707)
Thomas Brett Ll.D. (acting) **(1707-10)**
William Martinant Nevar M.A. (1710-29)
Samuel Markham M.A. (1729-30)
John Wilkinson, M.A. (1730-43)
William Whitmell M.A. (1744-53)
Heneage Dering M.A. (1754)
Johnson Towers M.A. (1754-61)
Philip Parsons M.A. (1761-1812)
William Thomas Ellis B.A. (1812-17)
William Morris M.A. (1817-32)
William Drayton Carter (1832-46)
Robert Billing M.A. (1846-54)
John Morland Rice M.A., B.D. (1854-58)
Francis Edward Tuke B.A. (1858-66)
Thomas Ensor Cato M.A. (1866-72)

VICARS presented by the Archbishop of Canterbury

Thomas Ensor Cato M.A. (1872-77)
John Hulke Dixson M.A. (1877-1896)
W H T Ashton Gwatkin (curate in charge) **(1890-95)**
Arthur Willink (curate in charge) **(1895-96)**
The Hon. Adolphus Henry Tuthill Massey M.A. (1896-98)
Henry Eden Olivier M.A. (1899-1902)
Seymour Henry Rendall, M.A. (1903-11)
Edgar Lambert M.A. (1911-26)
Francis W. R. Metcalf M.A. (1926-46)
Alan Mitchison M.A. (1946-7)
John Newbery Wells M.A. (1947-55)
Alfred Edward Pearce A.K.C. (1955-67)
David Marriott B.A. (1967-95)
David Stuart Smith M.A. (1995-2001)
John Stephen Richardson B.A. (2001-2011)
Ravi Holy (2011-)

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