

MEMOIRS
OF
ODSTOCK.

By the Rector.
Philip Edward Miles.

Odstock, Xmas 1907.

I take in hand to make some memoranda of what I know personally and what I have learnt of this Parish, thinking that as age gives increased value to wine, so will it also do for this, my unambitious narrative.

I was presented to this Living in the year 1869, and entered upon it in the autumn of the same year. I will first give a description of the Church as I found it. It consisted, as now, of a fine square tower, built in chequer work of stone and flint. The nave was without side aisles, with high walls and a high pitched roof. There was a door with a low porch before it on the north side, and a door facing it on the south side. On the north side were two double-light windows, plain early English ones; on the south side the same; just the same, I doubt not, as he who reads this may see for himself. The Chancel was a mean, low building, with a three-light window in the east, and another in the north-west. In the inside were high pews of shabby deal in shocking repair. The Pulpit stood the same height as it is now, supported by a single beam as a pedestal, very rotten. The steps up to it were of wood. Above it was a sounding board, which, I regret to say, we took away at the restoration of the Church. Around the borders of it was the scroll which was placed lower down afterwards. The writing on the Scroll is:-

"God bless and save our loyal Queen,
The lyke, on earth, was never seen."

How well might this be written of Queen Victoria, of blessed memory! Also, the Pulpit itself was cut down, and a very common door removed. On the centre panel was the inscription, "E.R. 1570." This Pulpit was originally in the Chapel of the Manor House, which belonged at that time to Sir John Webb. When he sold his property to the Radnors in 1780 (I think that is about the date), the Earl pulled down the greater part of the Manor House, and presented the Pulpit to the Church. He also built a Gallery in the Tower out of timber taken from the old Court House in Salisbury, which he rebuilt. This same gallery was the only thing in the Church in tenantable repair. There was a very dilapidated old Screen, which I regret was not restored. The Chancel was utterly mean and uncared for. The great feature in it was the Webb monument on the south-west side, which we removed to south-west of the nave, where it now stands. The bodies of the children, whose names appear on the Tomb, were buried near the Altar. The Piscina in the nave we left as we found it. The roof of the Nave and Chancel were ceiled. From top to bottom it was in a deplorable condition.

My first care therefore was to restore the Church. On consulting with my Architect (Mr. Fowler, of Louth, Lincolnshire), an old friend and connection, he advised me to pull down the Chancel, to which I agreed, and to rebuild it, putting the south wall more southwards to make it correspond with the other, and fit the Chancel arch. The east window was rebuilt with the same stones in the same shape. The windows on the south were an alteration on the old building. In pulling the walls down, the Norman window was discovered and restored. There were some curious relics of a former Chancel built into the walls which we built into the new porch. A handsome Table and Communion Rails and oak Sittings were added and the floor paved.

My sister, Letitia Miles, presented a handsome silver Communion Service, and we have also a small one in silver gilt presented by the second Lord Radnor. There is also a handsome silver Cup of which I do not know the history. My brother-in-law, Richard C. Hall, brother to the well-known Ben Hall, afterwards created Lord Llanover, presented a handsome Bible and Prayer Book to the Church.

The cost of the Church restoration was about £220, to meet which I had about £80 for Dilapidations, borrowed £100 of the Bounty Fund, and found the rest myself. For the Nave, there was nothing for it but to gut the Building, strengthen the walls with buttresses, and rebuild the tumble-down Porch.

On pulling down the old Pews we found the Piscina, and also a Tomb covering a stone Coffin, the side of which, had been cut off to let the wainscoting of the Pews come flush with the wall. There were some bones in it, which we carefully left, putting a new side to the Coffin. On it is a figure which some say, is a woman's; others maintain that the pose of the arms is that of a Priest. There is a mutilated inscription on it, which seems to be; "Dieu de s'alme aut mers." I suppose it was the usual beginning of an Epitaph praying God to have mercy on the soul of the entombed. I can find no trace of the name of the person.

The Font was so scarred that a Mason began to tool it, and as he began, I let him go on though I regret we touched it, but it was put on a new base, and the large stone foundation is also an innovation.

The Alms Box I bought in Salisbury and know nothing of its history.

The Porch was rebuilt. The Tower had but little done to it save that we removed the Gallery. The roof of the Nave was unceiled and much necessary work done to it.

THE CHURCHYARD.

This was entered by a wretched gate close to the Rectory wall but the usual entrance was by a pathway leading from the village passing by the south of my garden and so, to the south of the Church. This old pathway was stopped by Mr. Grove, my predecessor, to the great indignation of many in the village. In my time it was a thing of the past. I found the Churchyard in a very bad state, very badly fenced and badly cared for: on the south side the earth had accumulated against the Church four or five feet high. On moving it, we found it full of bones, so that we did not take the soil away but made a bank of it round the Churchyard. We did a good deal of levelling besides, and restored the mounds over the graves.

THE TREES.

It may be of future interest to know the age of these. Some few Elms and an Arbeel on the south I found biggish trees, and also a fine Elm at the N.E. corner, which was blown down but its place has been supplied by self-grown suckers; all the rest I planted with my own hands. The small Cedar at the south west, was presented by Mrs. Squarey, who got it from a gentleman who had raised it from seed which he brought home from Lebanon. The two Lime trees were planted about the same time, and also the Juniper trees fronting my garden.

JOSHUA SCAMP.

I do not know that any famous men lie in our Churchyard, but there is one humble stone to which is attached much interest. It is one on the S.E. side, to Joshua Scamp, a man who died for his friend. He was a Gipsy who often used to pitch his Camp about the Yews. He had an only daughter, married to a man whose name I forget, and which had best be forgotten. This fellow stole a horse at South Newton and left in the Stable a coat and halter which were rightly sworn to as belonging to his father-in-law. On this evidence he was condemned and hanged, for he would not explain that he had lent them to his son-in-law, and this though he was respited for a fortnight.

His brother Gipsies who knew the truth, so admired his staunchness that they put up a stone to his memory and planted a hedge round it, which they paid the Clerk to keep trimmed, and yearly made a Pilgrimage to his tomb. In time, this degenerated into such a drunken visit that the Rector, Mr. Grove, and the Churchwarden, Mr. Hodding, determined to put it down, and the strange way they did it was by breaking down the fence round the Grave. When the next anniversary came round, his daughter, and her companions, in rage and fury saw what was done, and after much complaint and abuse, the daughter left them with this curse: That the man who did this deed might die; that the Churchwarden might never prosper; that the Parson might never speak plainly. And all this came to pass!

Next Sunday, the Clerk (by name, I believe, Hackett), was taken with a fit and died at once. Hr.Hodding died in the year. Mr.Grove never spoke plain afterwards. All this happened in the forties, and was told my by Mr.Hiram Witt, who, I believe, heard the curse. There is no doubt as to the fulfilment. The stone belonging to the story is now in good preservation, and on it is inscribed: "In Memory of Joshua Scamp, Who Died April 1st, 1801. May his brave deed be remembered to his credit, here and hereafter."

I know of no history belonging to any other of the graves. But there is a curious story which I learnt from Mr.Bedwell, a relation to a former Rector, how that he had prepared a Tablet to be placed in the Church showing his pedigree, of which he was proud, but afterwards, thinking it savoured of vain-glory, he gave directions that it should be buried with him, and no Tablet be put up to his memory. Sic transit gloria mundi.

THE RECTORY HOUSE AND GROUNDS.

There was, I am told, an old thatched House where the Stable and Yard now are, but the one which I found was built by Mr.May, who held the Living a short time before going to Hale.

It, the present one, was a square House with some steps up to the door, on either side of which were two rooms; a small, comfortable house. Having a large and increasing family, I twice added to it, and may be, he who reads this, may trace the alterations and additions. The general lines of the garden I kept, but cut down a number of Fir trees which filled up the present South Lawn. Its boundary was a brick wall, which I took down and opened out the field, then an arable one. I found three fine Cedars, planted about the year 1820, one of which, near the Church, was blown down, but the two others grew and are beautiful. I planted the Yew Hedge in 1871 and the Copper Beech on the south, which is growing too large, and will probably be cut down by my successor. Lord Radnor kindly allowing me to rent his land near the House, I enclosed it with a fence, and planted many trees about it, which are now a good size.

THE VILLAGE.

Going up the Village from the Rectory just outside the gates was a hatch and pool below it, looking very pretty. I believe these hatches, which were made for the irrigation of the meadows, were built about the beginning of the century, and these works seem to have altered the look of the Village a good deal. For instance, the triangular field close to the hatch was a Fish pond in the memory of Fred Luther, the late Clerk, he told me that he had carted many tons of chalk to fill it up. Also a small mound of trees on the Lawn of the Manor was once an Island.

I fancy there was a larger Mill where the present water wheel now stands, and thus must have been very old for, I find in Domesday Book, that there was a Mill in Odstock paying 7s. 6d.

In Saxon times the lands were held by Odo. "Brictric holds Odstoke. His father held it in the time of Edward the Confessor, and it was assessed at 12 hides. Here are 6 ploughlands. The Demesne is one carucate, and three servi, and 9 villani and 16 cosen occupy two carucate and a half. There are 40 acres of meadow. The pasture is one-and-a-half miles long (as it is now). The wood is 3 furlongs square."

I believe it was measured by some Archaeologist about 50 years ago, who reported that the present size of "The Copse" corresponded to this measurement.

The assessment of the Manor in Domesday time was £10.

I find from Hoare's Wiltshire, that in Richard the First's time the family of Gerberd were at Odstock, and lived there till 1526.

In 1299 they presented to the Living, and were Patrons all their time.

In Henry VIII.'s reign, Richard Gerberd married Mary, daughter of Walter Servington, of Langford. Hence we find that a Servington was Rector about that time.

The Manor passed from them to the Webb family, who sold it about 1780 to the Lord Radnor of that time.

In 1299 the Church was rated at £6.13s. 4d. per annum. In 1535 the Rector, Thomas Bennett, made a return of £12. 7s. 7d. At present the Glebe, given by a Lord Radnor, to make his Manor Tithe free, brings in a rent of £280 a year.

The great feature in Odstock of the present day is the remains of a large Manor House, where the Webbs lived. When Lord Radnor bought their property he pulled down the greater part, leaving a substantial house for the occupant of the Farm. When I first came, Mr. Squarey held it, till he went and lived at The Moot in Downton. I am glad to say he prospered, and so did the people under him. Next came Mr. Taunton, and after him, Mr. Harding. All these farmed the whole parish, Glebe and all.

In the House there is a fine old stone Mantelpiece with the Webb Arms upon it. These Webbs would not conform at the Reformation, but I believe, were left unmolested by Government, but in Cromwell's time they were staunch Loyalists, and suffered much loss, but still kept the property together.

Some years ago, I was told by Doran Webb, the head of the family, that in pulling down a house belonging to them, they found bricked up an old tub full of Royalist Emblems, they were probably intended as Cockades for the men who were to have taken part in Penruddocke's abortive Rising; of course they were afterwards carefully hidden away. In Queen Ann's time one of the family was the famous "Fighting Webb" mentioned in Thackeray's Esmond, almost a rival of Marlborough.

Behind the House was a very fine Elm Avenue leading up to, and through the Copse. I have seen so many trees blown down that before many years I suppose there will be few traces of it. I will add, perhaps for the benefit of future generations, that there is a Right of Way through the Farm Yard and Avenue to the Down beyond. The Orchards round the House were, I believe, planted in Mr. Squarey's time, and are now most fruitful.

Passing along, we come to the cross roads where, in the memory of Luther, stood the Parish Stocks, but he does not remember any one put into them.

The other places of interest in the Parish are two Yew Woods, about whose history I can find nothing.

To the east, looking down on them, is the high hill called Clerebury or Clairbury, a Roman, possibly before then, a British Encampment, forming one of the chain of Forts in connection with Old Sarum. The lie of the ground on the north of the Little Yews suggests Entrenchments. Some Antiquaries believe that they are British. The extreme House on the Down is called Catherine Barn, so called from Lady Catherine, the daughter of Lord Radnor, the wife of General Buckley, the late owner of the New Hall, Nunton.

In the centre of the Village opposite the Public House, is a fine Yew Tree. It was an old one when I first saw it, 50 years ago, and it does not seem to have altered at all. The present Host, is Harry Ford, the grandson of Hiram Witt, a Blacksmith, as was his father before him.

THE SCHOOLHOUSE.

This is a decent brick Building having a comfortable House attached, for the Master or Mistress. It was built by the Earl of Radnor costing about £400 and is lent by him free of rent for the use of the Parish. The average number of children under instruction is about 30. When I came, a small School was held in the House next to the new School House. The Mistress was Miss Hall, who though untrained and uncertificated, did a useful work.

She was paid by a salary from the Rector, and by myself afterwards.

Before this, there was a School carried on by a Mrs. Hackett in a house near the cross roads. As neither of these Schools met the requirements of Foster's Act, almost my first work was to get the present School built. Lord Radnor liberally bore the whole expense of the Building, and I provided the Fittings for the School House. It has, I believe, done very good work, and the Parish has much reason for thankfulness to the Teachers generally, especially to Mrs. Jewell. who was School Mistress for about 16 years, at last, to our regret, retiring on a well earned pension. It owes also a debt to my wife and daughters, who have with patient labour, carried on the Sunday School. One more House deserves mention, a roomy picturesque old building at the end of the Village, the Farm House of the Glebe land. It is now made into two tenements. Tradition says that this is the place in which Lord Percy's soldiers were quartered at the Siege

of Longford. So not unlikely Oliver Cromwell has been in the Village, for he was present at the Siege, and there is a spot in the Longford Garden where a soldier was shot down close beside him. There is an entry in the Parish Register saying, "That this Book was much debased by Lord Percy's Soldiers when quartered at Odstock, 1644." The Government do not seem to have turned the Rectors out, for, William Bowerian and John Hillesdon seem not to have been disturbed.

In former times I doubt not that all this district was the scene of heavy fighting between the Saxons and Britons until the crushing defeat of the latter at Charford, after which, not being able to stand up against their enemies, they retreated to Wales.

A pleasant feature in the Village is the river Ebbble, flowing through the valley in a clear smooth stream. I remember in former days that there was most excellent fishing in it but it has sadly deteriorated, and the Trout are few and far between. Even the minnows and eels have greatly diminished, not, I think, through poaching, but probably through the frequent change in the water levels for irrigation purposes. Otters still visit the waters, and Hounds and Huntsmen too, once or twice a year, who generally find, and kill an Otter. I have heard a man named Haskell say that he has killed a Badger in the Copse, but I myself never saw one or heard of one, save from him. Of pheasants and Partridges there are plenty, but Hares and Rabbits are growing scarce; I remember when any day I might see half a dozen Hares on my field, and now I rarely see one. The common birds are more numerous than ever, but the Ring Owsel, which used to frequent my Garden, seems quite to have disappeared.

And now, what shall I say of my people, my last, but most important item in my Memoir? In number they have always been about 150. They have been so changing a population that the only families who were there when I came are descendants of Hiram Witt, the Blacksmith, viz.: the Fords and Felthams, Yeatman and his wife; Seth White and family; Scammel and his family. Luther, the old Clerk, was burnt out and is living in a House provided for him at Bodenham, and helped by a pension provided by Bishop Burgess for worn-out Parish Clerks. The other families come and go, so that there is much want of cohesion among us. I do not like to pass judgment on my Flock, at least as to their Religion. But it will probably be of interest to future times to know that we hold our Sunday Services at 11 and 6. The average attendance in the morning, children included, would be about 45. In the evening I should say about 35, almost all adults. There are two Celebrations each month, one mid-day, the other at 8.30. About the average number at mid-day, is 12. In the morning, scarce any but our family. There is morning daily Service at 8.30, but it is rarely attended save by our household. There are also Services on all the Great Days and Seasons, which are fairly attended. I should say that the chief thing from which we suffer is indifferentism more than from Dissent. As it will always be an interesting question in future times, how a Village Church was supported, I will say that the Rector bears the burden of the expense, the few Collections for the Church expenses bring in but very little.

I have, however, pleasure in testifying that all the Earls of Radnor, I know four in number, have always been liberal in helping on anything to which it was fair to ask them to contribute.

In my time the Parish has consisted of one Farm, the names of the Farmers being Mr. Squarey, Mr. Taunton and Mr. Harding.

As in after time it will be of interest to hear something about the life of the people, I will say that it is a dull one, a Village Festival at Whitsuntide being the chief break. I sometimes give a Summer Party to the Villagers with a Dance on the Lawn which they seem to like, and I try to promote Cricket and Football, but without creating much real interest and amusement.

I have now said all that occurs to me and I trust that in the course of years it may be of interest.

Militis accipias haec ultima verba Philippi,
Nunc multos annos haec loca sacra colit,
Est alius surgat Rector venientibus annis,
Qui melius vertat religione viros!

THE REGISTER.

The Odstock Register dates from 1538, the date of the Order in Council establishing Parish Registers. The only item of historial interest is the memorandum made by the Rector in 1644. That page of the register was scored all over with ink, and the memorandum is in these words:-

"Memorandum that this booke was thus abused by my
Ld Peircies souldiours when they were quartered
there in Odstock, Sept.(Oct.) 16, 1644."

The word "Sept." has been run out and "Oct." written over it in the same hand.

This was a very important day for the King. Having had a victory in the West and taken Essex's cannon, he came to Wilton and Longford to leave the captured cannon in these places, which were strongly held by a garrison. Some of his troops were quartered at Odstock, as the register shows, and some in Salisbury. They arrived on the 15th, and a rendezvous at Clarendon at 7 a.m. on the 16th was ordered, but they were late, and only arrived at 11 o'clock. That day the King met Waller outside Andover, who seeing his forces in such numbers retreated. Had the troops been punctual that day, Waller might have been beaten and Donnington and Basing relieved and London attained (see Clarendon's "History of the Rebellion," Book viii, vol. iv., 1707, octavo edition, p. 542). The circumstances are also mentioned, but not very accurately, in Colt Hoare's "Modern Wilts." Lord Peircie was a son of the 9th Earl of Northumberland, who had been created a baron at Oxford at the Queen's intercession (Clarendon's "History of the Rebellion," Book viii., vol. iv., 1707, octavo edition, p. 515).

ADDITIONAL NOTES.

Since the above memoirs were written, it may be interesting to note that Harry Ford, the Host at the Public House, died at the early age of 33 from scarlet fever. The business is in the hands of trustees for his son Harry, and at present the management is in the hands of Mr. Joseph Haskell, a former resident in Odstock, who by his thrift and industry owns considerable property in Nunton.

Also Frederick Luther, died at Bodenham on March 6th, 1906, and is buried in the Church Yard here.

On Dec. 17th, 1907, Walter Ford, one of the most prominent members of this little community, passed away at the early age of 36. He was grandson of the late Hiram Witt, and his death caused universal sorrow, not only in the village, but in the surrounding neighbourhood. His life was an example to all of us, as he was a man always ready to assist in any good work, and was exemplary in his home life, whilst full and implicit confidence was placed in him in all business transactions. There is no doubt the village has suffered a great loss, and that his place will be hard to fill.

Since the Rector was taken seriously ill in the early part of 1907, the duty has been taken by Rev. W. Symons, M.A. (St. Andrew's Mission).

A branch of the C.E.T.S. was started by Miss Miles in 1905, and is in a very flourishing condition.

In 1906, the Sanitary Authorities having condemned many of the wells in the village, Lord Radnor most generously came forward and laid water on, from the Reservoir at Alderbury, at his own expense.

The position of Clerk is held by Joseph Grant, who has been 29 years servant to Rev. P.E. Miles.

Mr. Scammell is Church Warden the late Mr. Ford having been his fellow Church Warden, a position they have both faithfully held for some years.

Miss Snelgrove is the present School Mistress.

RECTORS OF ODSOCK

A friend has kindly extracted from the Diocesan Registry the names of Rectors from 1297, but there must have been many before this time.

Ante.

- 1297 - Michael of Crokeston; resigned 1299 and went to Wickfont.
- 1299 - John of Exton.
- 1346 - Edward of Eneford.
- 1394 - John Croucheston.
- 1394 - Robert Croucheston, died 1397.
- 1397 - John Yate, exchanged with the next.
- 1403 - William Wynslawe, died 1432.
- 1432 - William Hende, died 1448.
- 1448 - John Granger, resigned 1477.
- 1477 - William Yate, alias Munday, resigned and went to Marden as vicar.
- 1480 - Nicholas Godrith, died 1487.
- 1487 - John Massey, died 1493.
- 1493 - Roger Cervynton, died 1510.
- 1510 - John Bryne, died 1526.
- 1526 - Thomas Benett, Precentor of Sarum, died 1558.
- 1582 - Giles Thornborow, sub-dean, died 1637.
- 1637 - Christopher Young, M.A., died 1643.
- 1643 - William Bowman, B.D.
- 1645 - John Hillersdon, B.D., afterwards Archdeancon of Buckingham.
- 1663 - John Skase, died 1668.
- 1668 - Richard Kent, M.A., sub-dean, died 1692.
- 1692 - John Green, B.A., died 1729.
- 1729 - John Chaundler,
George Chaundler, died 1734.
- 1734 - George Snell, resigned 1741.
- 1741 - John Bedwell, M.A., rector 73 years, died 1814, aged 103.
- 1814 - Arthur Sturt May.
- 1817 - Charles Grove, M.A.
- 1868 - Philip Edward Miles, B.A.