

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

TAUNTON MINSTER AND THE CASTLE CHAPELS

A minster at Taunton was founded in the 7th century probably on the site of the later castle where burials from that date have been discovered. From a similar period were burials at Paul's House, possibly of an early chapel linked to the minster. The date of burials found at the gas works site in the 19th century is unknown. It was said that some bodies were buried in the area during the civil war but none of the dated bones are of that period and many soldiers were buried at Bishops Hull and Taunton St Mary.¹ It is not clear when the minster and the cemeteries ceased to function but there may have been a Norman church on the site when the minster was reorganised as an Augustinian priory in the early 12th century. It was presumably demolished after the new Taunton priory was built later in that century but no trace has been found and its site may lie under the castle. The re-used 12th-century beakheads used to decorate an arch in Castle House may have come from that minster.

The castle had chapels of St Peter from c. 1160 and St Nicholas from 1219 with another short-lived chapel over the its East Gate, now Castle Bow, in the 1320s. St Nicholas had a great east window and a painted ceiling. The chapels are not named after the later 13th century except for St Peter in 1400. The dedication of the bishop's chapel in the castle's south range, which had 12 windows when it was rebuilt c.1249, is unknown. It is now the Adam Library in the museum. A new reredos was installed in 1493—4 and it was well maintained until 1540 and had a bell.² Humphrey Stafford, Constable and his wife Isabel were licensed to have divine service celebration the castle in 1461, possibly in the bishop's chapel.³ St Peter of the Castle recorded in 1174 and 1400 as belonging to Taunton priory and

¹ Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 28, 52—4, 68, 92, 151—2, 240—2; SHC, D/P/b.hl/2/1/1; D/P/tau.m/2/1/1.

² Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 15, 145—7, 222, 224, 240—2, 284—6; SHC, T/PH/win 1218—19, 1265—6, 1270—1, 1360—1, 1492—3, 1539—90; Taunton, rel. hist.

³ Dawes, *Bishop Bekynton's Reg.* I, p. 355.

independent of episcopal jurisdiction is unlikely to have been the bishop's chapel and was probably 'the castle' for which the vicar of Taunton St Mary was responsible in 1314.

Although listed as a right of the priory in 1400 it may not actually have been in use by then and possibly lay in the later Castle Green area.⁴

The chapel of Blessed Paul west of the castle is recorded from 1217,⁵ and was near the West Gate of the castle and opposite the garden ditch in 1361, and about the same time as next to the castle,⁶ which may indicate that it was closer to the castle than the later Paul's House, although the presence of an earlier Christian cemetery, possibly with a chapel, might have influenced the siting of the medieval chapel. It was described in 1400 as the chapel of St Paul without the castle.⁷ Of St Paul was a surname in 1257⁸ and the chapel gave its name to the lord's ox barton. An oxshed adjoined it in 1288.⁹ It may have been one of the castle and other chapels, which the vicar of Taunton St Mary was to serve in 1308.¹⁰ Later the castle West Gate was known as Paul's Gate¹¹ and the chapel also gave its name to Paul's Mead, Paul's Field, Paul's Bridge and in the 19th century to houses in the area claimed to be on the site of the chapel.¹² It was last recorded in 1509¹³ and its exact site, size or function are unknown. A house originally called the Banqueting House, south-west of Hunts Court in Taunton St Mary parish, incorporated medieval or later fragments including a foliated capital, triple window and arched doorway before its demolition in the 19th century but the material could have come from any medieval building including the castle.

⁴ VCH Som. II, 142; Cal Papal Letters, 1396—1404, p. 362; Bp Hobhouse, Register of Bp Drokenford, 69.

⁵ SHC, T/PH/win 1217—18.

⁶ SHC, T/PH/win 1360—1; BL, Harl. Ch. 54E19.

⁷ Cal Papal Letters, 1396—1404, p. 362.

⁸ SHC, T/PH/win 1257—8.

⁹ SHC, T/PH/win 1284—8.

¹⁰ Hobhouse, Bp Drokenford's Reg. 69.

¹¹ SHC, DD/DP/65/2.

¹² SHC, DD/SP/149, 210, 212; DD/IR/T/5/1.

¹³ SHC, T/PH/win 1508—9.

The chapel was later often confused with a supposed Carmelite friary. Walter de Meriet, prebendary of Wells, had licence to alienate 9 a. of meadow called Cokkesmede in Taunton to the Carmelite Friars and in 1343 the friars received the land to build a house and church but later that year, the project having failed the land was returned to Walter (d. 1345). There was no friary and the land was said to be in Taunton not Bishops Hull and was presumably not Taunton Deane manor land.¹⁴

ST PETER AND ST PAUL

Before 1129, possibly between 1100 and 1115, Bishops Hull church was given by William Giffard, bishop of Winchester to Taunton priory and by 1291 was regarded as a chapelry.¹⁵ The dedication to St Peter and St Paul does not appear to have been recorded before the 19th century.¹⁶ That was the dedication of Taunton priory church and of the castle chapels St Peter within and St Paul without.¹⁷ However, in 1545 the church appears to have been dedicated to St Mary perhaps because by that date it was a chapelry of Taunton St Mary.¹⁸ By the 19th century it was impossible to expect all those living in the town area of the parish to attend the village church and in 1864 a chapel of ease was built in Park Street.¹⁹ There was also a large nonconformist population in the parish from the 17th century and there was a Congregational chapel in the village for nearly 200 years.

Advowson

¹⁴ VCH Som. II, 152; Cal. Pat. 1343—5, 102, 142.

¹⁵ VCH Som. II, 142; Tax. Eccl. 198; Hunt, Cart. of Bath Priory, p. xxix.

¹⁶ Som. Co. Gaz. Dir. (1840).

¹⁷ Cal Papal Letters, 1396-1404, p. 362.

¹⁸ SHC, D/D/Vc/88; E. H. Bates, 'Dedications of the Churches of Somerset', Procs. SANHS, LI, 116.

¹⁹ Below, this section.

From the 12th century Taunton Priory held the advowson but from 1308 and probably earlier was only required to provide a chaplain to serve the church.²⁰ After the Dissolution the Crown retained the advowson but as tithe farmers had to pay the chaplain they possibly appointed them and were certainly expected to do so in the 1660s.²¹ By the 18th century, the Farewells or Farwells and their successors as owners of the tithes regarded themselves as patrons of a perpetual curacy²² and offered the advowson for sale in 1808 with the Jarman estate and tithes but apparently without success.²³ In 1824 after the death of Nathaniel Jarman his trustees sold it to Revd Henry William Rawlins, rector of Staplegrove and Fiddington and from 1825 to 1844 curate of Bishops Hull.²⁴ In 1856 he left it to trustees for sale and it was bought by Revd Wadham Pigot Williams, curate 1856—94. In 1894 he sold it to Revd Richard Raban who gave it to trustees to present his son George, to avoid a charge of simony. In 1934 they released the advowson to George Raban.²⁵ After his death in 1963 patronage passed to the Archdeacon of Taunton with whom it remains. It is a sole vicarage.²⁶

Income and Endowment

The church was not separately valued from the Taunton churches until 1536 when it was worth £16 15s. 6d. to the priory in tithes and offerings. The priory had cottage property and at least one field in the parish. But there was no clergy house and curates had to find their own accommodation. In 1438—9 William Lohyer, chaplain, paid a fine of two capons to the priory manor for a copyhold cottage in the parish.²⁷ In 1566 a former barn was described as

²⁰ VCH Som. II, 142; Hobhouse, Bp Droghensford's Reg. 69.

²¹ TNA, C 66/1136, m. 8; SHC, D/D/Ca/342a.

²² Collinson, Hist. Som. III, 255.

²³ SHC, A/DGR/1.

²⁴ SHC, DD/CH/125/8.

²⁵ SHC, DD/X/TN/4; D/D/Ra/13.

²⁶ Crockford; Dioc. Dir.

²⁷ Valor Eccl. I, 70; BL, Add. Ch. 16333, 25873.

the priest house although not occupied by a clergyman.²⁸ Nathaniel Charlton acquired his own house, which was licensed for Presbyterian meetings in 1672²⁹ and Edward Everard curate in the late 1840s lived in Milligan Hall.³⁰ The Parsonage House³¹ may have been so called because it was at some time occupied by the curate or because it was the freehold estate of the tithe owners, the Farewells. After 1808 it was divided into three houses, known as Netherclay Villas.³² In 1858 the curate lived in Taunton³³ but by 1861 the house west of the church had been acquired as a vicarage with grounds south of the church where cottages had been demolished. By that date clergy were usually resident.³⁴ The house comprised dining and drawing rooms, study, kitchen, bathroom and five bedrooms with outhouses and conservatory.³⁵ In 1966 a new house to the south was designed by Dan Olive and in 1968 the old house was demolished and the site used from 1987 for a church hall and car park.³⁶

The church and its tithes remained Crown property and were farmed out for £18 in 1539—40,³⁷ on condition that the lessee paid a chaplain to serve the church. Lessees included Nicholas Pawlet in 1561, Richard Farewell in 1576 and George Farewell in the 1600s but there were so many leases that on one occasion two men claimed the tithe. The farmers paid £6 13s. 4d. to a chaplain to maintain divine service as well as £11 6s. 8d. to the Crown.³⁸ The tithes under the name of impropriate rectory were acquired by George Farewell (d. 1691) who left them to his brother Richard (d. 1711) for life and then to Richard's son George.³⁹

²⁸ SHC, DD/SP/71.

²⁹ Below, nonconf.

³⁰ SHC, tithe award; TNA. HO 129/315/4/2/6.

³¹ The name was preserved for the farm opposite created after 1808 and a 21st century house built on the site.

³² SHC, A/DGR/1.

³³ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/6/9.

³⁴ SHC, D/D/Va/12/12, 14/12, 21/12; tithe award; TNA, RG 9/1619; OS Map, 1:10860, Som. LXX. SE (1886 edn).

³⁵ SHC, D/R/ta/24/1/467.

³⁶ SHC, D/P/b.hl/9/1/3.

³⁷ Dugdale, *Mon.* VI, 167.

³⁸ *Cal. Pat.* 1560—3, 125; 1575—8, 195; 1580—2, p. 101; TNA, C 3/18/77; C 66/1136, m. 8; C. Brett, *Crown revenues from Somerset and Dorset* (SRS 96), 53, 136, 237.

³⁹ SHC, DD/FJ/2.

The stipend of £6 13s. 4d. was still the official value of the curacy in the 1770s.

Eighteenth-century tithe owners included John Pepys Jackson and the Jarman family but by early 19th century many tithes had been sold to the occupiers largely under agreements of 1799 and 1807.⁴⁰ In 1808 remaining tithes were offered for sale with the Jarman family's customary lands and bought in 1811 by Ralph Gaby to sell on.⁴¹ Some were bought by John Buncombe (d. 1822) whose widow Mary and children held them in 1842, others in trust for several freeholders and copyholders in 1822, and some by Revd Henry William Rawlins. Rawlins also sold tithes to landowners in 1827, but retained a few in 1842 when most were in the hands of the occupiers of lands and some had been merged, presumably on freeholds. A rent charge of £74 6s. 6d. was awarded to the Buncombes, £60 13s. to Rawlins and £255 15s. to 37 owners and copyholders.⁴² Tithes continued to be bought and sold and merged with freeholds throughout the rest of the century.⁴³

The tithe lessees had charged the stipend of £6 13s. 4d. on land in the village, which became the Milligan Hall estate whose owners still paid it in 1912.⁴⁴ In 1737 Richard Smith, nephew and heir of Thomas Smith of Capland, conveyed 17 a. in Hatch Beauchamp to Queen Anne's Bounty to augment the curacy of Bishops Hull. Known as Bishops Hull Close it was exchanged for 18 a. at West Buckland in 1808.⁴⁵ In 1756 c. 13 a. in Wilton, later called Chapels Lands, was settled by John Pepys Jackson on the curates of Bishops Hull.⁴⁶ The living was augmented by £200 in 1729, £200 in 1751—2 and £200 in 1814. It was said to be worth c. £100 in 1815 and £182 in 1833 out of which the absent curate paid £71 to an

⁴⁰ SHC, D/D/Vc/88; DD/SAS/C63/2.

⁴¹ SHC, A/DGR/1; DD/BR/bs/4.

⁴² SHC, D/D/Ra/13; DD/DP/85/6; DD/SAS/C/238/37; tithe award.

⁴³ SHC, DD/CH/90/2.

⁴⁴ *Procs. SANHS* LVIII, 71.

⁴⁵ SHC, DD/X/TN/4.

⁴⁶ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/6/8; DD/HR/6. The land was developed as the Haines Hill estate.

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assistant.⁴⁷ In 1830 Revd Rawlins released customary fields in Staplegrove, of which he had bought the freehold in 1824, to endow the curacy but he appears to have remained in possession,⁴⁸ bought the Wilton lands in 1839 and gave over £84 to the curacy in 1859. However, only in 1848, by private Act of Parliament, were the Wilton lands formally exchanged for Rawlins' land in Staplegrove at Burlands.⁴⁹ His successor as patron, Revd Wadham Pigot Williams, gave over £84 to the curacy in 1859.⁵⁰ Land was bought near the Blackdowns but by 1919 all the glebe had been sold.⁵¹

Pastoral Life

The Middle Ages The canons were intended to serve their churches themselves but that system had presumably broken down by 1308 when the prior had to provide three secular chaplains to serve five churches including Bishops Hull, provide ornaments and pay the costs. The arrangement was confirmed in 1314.⁵² Thomas the chaplain was recorded in 1319—20,⁵³ Thomas Nicholas al. Sore was excommunicated and condemned to be whipped in 1419 for taking a tithe dispute to the castle constable instead of to the church courts and Geoffrey the chaplain was asked to celebrate for a soul in 1449,⁵⁴ probably Geoffrey Chaundeler recorded in 1450. In 1458 Simon Stawlinch was ordained subdeacon in 1459 and priest in 1460.⁵⁵ John Hare, chaplain in the 1530s, received a £6 stipend.⁵⁶

In 1522 there was a dispute involving the prior of Taunton and two rival masons John Bird and Philip Pytt, each supported by some parishioners, concerning which of them had

⁴⁷ C. Hodgson, Queen Anne's Bounty, 168, 230; SHC, D/D/Rb/1815; Rep. Com. Eccl. Revenues (1835), pp. 126—7.

⁴⁸ SHC, DD/KIT/9/3; Staplegrove, tithe award.

⁴⁹ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/3/3/1; 6/8; DD/HR/6; Priv. Act. 1848 c. 3.

⁵⁰ Living Augmented by QAB, HC 122 (1867), liv.

⁵¹ SHC, D/P/b.hl/5/2/1.

⁵² Hunt, Cart. of Bath Priory, p. xxix; Hobhouse, Bp Droghda's Reg. 69.

⁵³ BL, Add. Ch. 16332.

⁵⁴ Holmes, Bishop Bubwith's Reg. II, pp. 353—5; Weaver, Somerset Wills 1383—1500, 163.

⁵⁵ Dawes, Bishop Bekynton's Reg. I, p. 140; II, pp. 516, 519—20, 522.

⁵⁶ SHC, D/D/Vc/20; Valor Eccl. I, 70.

contracted to rebuild the chancel for between £10 and £13. Several leading men in the parish were involved of whom one offered wheat to Pytt at the priory before mass while the other offered earnest money to Bird, who was undercutting Pytt apparently on behalf of two free masons one of whom, John Denman had set rough masons to work on the foundations. It seems John Bird was bound to complete the work, mostly by Michaelmas but that some in the parish wanted to prevent him doing so.⁵⁷

In 1447 the churchwardens paid 1*d.* rent to the manor of Taunton Deane for a plot of waste north of the church to build a house for the use of the church.⁵⁸ The church house was equipped for social gatherings and the churchwardens hired out their kettle to Trull parish for 4*d.* a time in the 1520s and 1530s.⁵⁹ By c. 1543 a strip of highway waste adjoining had been acquired to enlarge the house.⁶⁰ Confusingly the church house was sold in 1554 as part of the Taunton priory estate but in 1566 it was part of Taunton Deane manor and was still in the tenure of the churchwardens being held by trustees on their behalf until 1646 or later.⁶¹ In the 1560s it was known as the parish or church house and a new house was built to the west before 1566.⁶² In 1590 the churchwardens sublet the cellar and maintained not only the building but the vats. Rents brought in 8*s.* 8*d.* in 1597 but they spent 26*s.* 8*d.* on tiling repairs. In 1598 the parish had four vats, a brewing trough, kettle, and a shute to carry water in.⁶³ The church house was last recorded when it was cleaned in 1737.⁶⁴

⁵⁷ TNA, REQ 2/13/95.

⁵⁸ SHC, T/PH/win 1447—8.

⁵⁹ Churchwardens accounts, 1457—59, 24, 252, 275, 287.

⁶⁰ SHC, T/PH/win 1542—3; DD/SP/325/122.

⁶¹ SHC, DD/GC/20; DD/SP/77, 91; D/P/b.hl/4/1/1.

⁶² SHC, DD/SP/71, 138, 325/122.

⁶³ SHC, D/P/b.hl/4/1/1.

⁶⁴ SHC, D/P/b.hl/13/2/1.

1550—1800 The parish acquired an Edward VI bible⁶⁵ and demolished their high altar before 1554 when its stones with the church ornaments were in the possession of Reynold Warner.⁶⁶ The farmers of the church were required to pay £6 13s. 4d. to a chaplain to maintain divine service.⁶⁷ Several parishioners did not attend church in the late 16th century although some for non-religious reasons such as debt, quarrels and imprisonment. Also as part of the town of Taunton lay in the parish residents there preferred to go to church in Taunton.⁶⁸ In the 1590s celebrations of communion were still held on major festivals including All Saints (1 Nov.), Epiphany (6 Jan.), Midlent, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Easter Eve and Easter Day as well as at weddings. Maintaining the four bells involved not only oil, clappers and ropes but candles, food and drink for the ringers. By 1598 the churchwardens received rents from the poor's land and had land at Staplegrove, probably John Burt's gift, all of which was let.⁶⁹ The parish inventory of 1598 was a mixture of books, silver cup and cover, surplices, brewing equipment and weapons.⁷⁰ In his will of 1609 George Farewell left legacies, which his son George charged on his land including 24s. for the upkeep of the church but the responsibility for payment fell on his heirs and it is not clear how regularly it was paid as it appears to have been confused with a bequest to the poor.⁷¹

Robert Ellis, licensed to serve, but not to preach, in 1597—8 appears to have been violent, a gambler and a troublemaker, besides failing to take services.⁷² The chaplain in 1606, George Blanchflower, was ordered to desist from preaching until licensed and the church was said to be in a bad state despite work on the roof and other maintenance in the 1590s. He failed to have a perambulation in 1609 and several of his parishioners had not

⁶⁵ SHC, D/D/Ca/98.

⁶⁶ SHC, D/D/Ca/23, f. 27.

⁶⁷ *Cal. Pat.* 1560—3, 125; 1575—8, 195; 1580—2, p. 101; TNA, C 66/1136, m. 8.

⁶⁸ SHC, D/D/Ca/57, 75, 86, 98; D. Shorrocks, *Bp Still's Visitation and 'Smale Bk'*, 101.

⁶⁹ SHC, D/P/b.hl/4/1/1; above, soc. hist., chars.

⁷⁰ SHC, D/P/b.hl/4/1/1.

⁷¹ SHC, DD/SP/89, 91; above, soc. hist.

⁷² SHC, DD/SAS/PR/302.

received communion including a former churchwarden and his wife.⁷³ The new reign brought changes, such as the setting up in 1607 of the royal arms, which remain in the church, and the curtailment of communions to Michaelmas (29 Sep) and Easter. The organ, of unknown origin, was repaired by John Chappington of Exeter for £3 in 1607 when the churchwardens were ordered to be make up their accounts, which they had not for several years. They were badly kept thereafter, mainly recording church repairs.⁷⁴ Antony Hope, minister in 1617 was accused of service irregularities and neglect of midweek prayers. His successor John Dicks did not catechise or go on perambulation in 1620 and owing to absence in London and illness in 1623 they often had no services. Parishioners in the town area continued problems to attend Taunton St Mary instead of their parish church.⁷⁵ Most clergy who served the parish were resident but only stayed for a few years.⁷⁶

In 1624 the parish sold a house they owned at Wilton, probably the copyhold at Shuttern taken by the parish in 1599, and the money was distributed amongst those affected by plague.⁷⁷ The Civil War brought chaos as the besieged castle lay within the parish. The registers were badly kept but a large number of soldiers were buried in 1644—5 together with the minister.⁷⁸ Nathaniel Charlton was serving the parish by 1652. He was a graduate and rector of Woodborough, Wilts. In 1656 41 parishioners petitioned for £50 to be granted to him so that he would stay being ‘holy, useful and well affected even to blood and imprisonment’. The grant was awarded as resident minister but having refused to conform in

⁷³ SHC, D/D/Ca/151, 160; D/P/b.hl/4/1/1.

⁷⁴ SHC, D/P/b.hl/4/1/1.

⁷⁵ SHC, D/D/Ca/160, 175, 206, 220, 235, 342a; DD/SAS/TN26, f. 41.

⁷⁶ SHC, D/P/b.hl/2/1/1.

⁷⁷ SHC, D/P/b.hl/4/1/1.

⁷⁸ SHC, D/P/b.hl/2/1/1.

1662 he was ejected and became a Presbyterian minister.⁷⁹ George Farwell was presented in the church courts in 1665 for failing to provide a successor.⁸⁰

Of the four old bells one survives, inscribed 'Ave Maria' and probably by Roger Semson of Ash Priors but two were recast in 1608, probably by George Purdue, and by the end of the 17th century there was a peal of five, the other two dated 1660 and 1688, the former by Thomas Purdue. The church owns a spoon dated 1688 and bearing initials probably of the churchwardens. In 1697 and 1702 Mary Brune, nee Farwell and her daughter Bridget Fowel gave plate to the church.⁸¹

In 1760 the church was filled with pews, monuments and burial vaults by leading parishioners such as Sir Thomas Gunston, who took down a south gallery and whose family was later said to 'own' the south aisle, Samuel Dewberry and John Cockerell, father of architect Samuel Pepys and baronet Sir Charles Cockerell, who does not seem to have used his vault. Pews old and new were allocated according to a schedule now lost and seats were appropriated to the larger houses of the parish like Barr, Upcott and Netherclay. The pulpit was moved, the porch converted to a vestry and a new west entrance made.⁸² There may have been already a shortage of accommodation as in 1790 a gallery of three pews was built on the north wall, unclaimed seats to be leased by the churchwardens. A christening pew was taken into a private pew in 1800.⁸³

In the 18th century the church continued to be served by curates many of whom stayed for only a few years and had other livings. James Upton, curate in the 1730s, was master of Taunton grammar school and rector of Monksilver. The provision of an endowment from the mid 18th century may have made the curacy more attractive but many still held

⁷⁹ Cal. SP. 1655—6, 339; *Calamy Revised*, ed. Matthews, 111; Gordon, *Freedom after Ejection*, 216; *SDNQ*, xiii, p. 157; below, nonconf.

⁸⁰ SHC, D/D/Ca/342a.

⁸¹ SHC, D/D/Ri/4; D/P/b.hl/5/2/1; *Procs. SANHS*, XLVI, 162—3.

⁸² SHC, DD/CH/110/1; D/P/b.hl/6/10; D/D/Ca/426; McDermott and Berry, *Rack's Survey of Som.* p. 268.

⁸³ SHC, D/P/b.hl/9/1/1; A/DQO/40/26.

other livings like James Minifie (1750) also rector of Norton Fitzwarren and Goathurst, John Farthing (1768), Nathaniel Hine or Hynde (1769) who also served Orchard Portman, and Thomas Wyndham Godwyn who also served as curate of North Curry and Stoke St Gregory. Neglect may account for only 16 communicants being recorded in the 1770s.⁸⁴

1800 to present By the early 19th century many perpetual curates employed a stipendiary curate but Richard Codrington served in 1815 although he lived in Milverton as there was no large house available in the parish. He had also served Staplegrove the previous year. There was only one Sunday service with sermon, held alternately morning and evening.⁸⁵ The pluralist curate from 1825, Henry William Rawlins, employed a stipendiary curate but in 1827 when he was rector of Staplegrove two services were held for only part of the year.⁸⁶ In 1841 he lived at Roughmoor and later in the vicarage.⁸⁷ The parish was still perambulated annually but a dinner pushed the cost up to £11, which was said to be unnecessary although the practice continued until the 1840s or later. The organ had been replaced by stringed instruments, presumably in the 18th century.⁸⁸

The tower was repaired in 1819—20 and new gates were installed in the churchyard in 1821.⁸⁹ The church was ‘enlarged’ in 1826, as there were only 38 pews, but was in fact mostly rebuilt. Following enlargement, the church held 600, about half the population.⁹⁰ In 1831—2 a platform was built for the communion table with turned banisters, possibly for communion rails,⁹¹ and the interior was whitewashed and coloured in 1838 needed repair and

⁸⁴ SHC, D/D/Vc/88; McDermott and Berry, *Rack’s Survey of Som.* p. 223, 228, 279; *VCH Som.* V, 110.

⁸⁵ SHC, D/D/Rb/1815.

⁸⁶ SHC, D/D/Rb/1827; *Rep. Com. Eccl. Revenues* (1835), pp. 126—7.

⁸⁷ TNA, HO 107/959; below this section.

⁸⁸ SHC, D/P/b.hl/4/1/3.

⁸⁹ SHC, D/P/b.hl/4/1/1; 9/1/1.

⁹⁰ SHC, D/P/b.hl/4/1/3; 9/1/2; *Rep. Com. Eccl. Revenues* (1835), pp. 126—7; below, this section.

⁹¹ SHC, D/P/b.hl/4/1/3; 9/1/2.

a subscription was raised for a new eight-day clock.⁹² In the 1840s there were two Sunday services and communion was celebrated on feast and every six weeks.⁹³ That may be why the parish acquired two parcel gilt cups and two patens in 1844, one of the latter the gift of Hannah Vanzandt of Netherclay (d. 1849).⁹⁴ About that date the sexton preceded the curate in and out of the vestry carrying a black thorn stick and also led the preacher from the reading desk to the pulpit and back but that custom had been given up by the 20th century.⁹⁵ The church was damp in the 1840s and the chancel needed repair. Given the sales of the tithes to large numbers of people and Revd Williams having relinquished all claim to the chancel in 1830 it was uncertain who was responsible although the minister and William Blake accepted responsibility for their seats.⁹⁶

On Census Sunday 1851 150 people and 60 Sunday school children attended morning service and 200 people and 8 scholars in the afternoon. Average total attendance was said to be 250 and 320 respectively.⁹⁷ An organ was bought in 1861 and a choir was in existence by 1870.⁹⁸ Private pews were retained in the 1860s and new ones built but by 1912 only the Upcott and Oldbury pews survived, the former being the south chancel chapel still furnished with fireplace, carpet and windows displaying the arms of the Maclean and Gunston families. It housed the pulpit until 1922 but later was used by the choir. Voluntary subscriptions replaced the rates and the wardens were chosen jointly by the minister and the parish.⁹⁹

In 1864 the Taunton area of the parish acquired its own church of St John as a chapel-of-ease to the parish church although people living there had already been attending Taunton churches. However, baptisms and burials had taken place at the parish church and the growth

⁹² SHC, D/P/b.hl/4/1/5; 9/1/2; SANHS topog. colln. 10304, drawing of ch. prob. 1804.

⁹³ SHC, D/D/Va/1/12, 2/12.

⁹⁴ Procs. SANHS XLVI, 162—3.

⁹⁵ SDNQ XVII, 11.

⁹⁶ SHC, D/P/b.hl/ 9/1/2

⁹⁷ TNA HO 129/315/4/2/6.

⁹⁸ SHC, D/P/b.hl/9/1/3; DD/CH/93/2.

⁹⁹ SHC, D/P/b.hl/9/1/3; Procs. SANHS LVIII, 72, 75.

of the Tangier area led to an increase in both.¹⁰⁰ Two Sunday services with sermons continued to be held in the 1870s with monthly communion and baptism was administered during Sunday services.¹⁰¹ A new reredos was installed c. 1882 and in 1891 a chancel screen and choir stalls were installed to the designs of the firm of John Dando Sedding and Henry Wilson.¹⁰² By 1894 there was a salaried organist, a new organ by Minns was installed in 1903 and by 1904 the choirboys were paid, joined by choir girls by 1931.¹⁰³ Communion was celebrated fortnightly in 1898 and baptisms at a separate monthly service.¹⁰⁴

By the end of the 19th century the perpetual curates were described as vicars, although still in receipt of their curate's stipend.¹⁰⁵ In 1913 the curate, Benjamin Marsden undertook to resign when requested to make way for the patron's son and in 1914 George Raban became vicar.¹⁰⁶ During the First World War a group of women bell-ringers was formed.¹⁰⁷

Many gifts were made to the church at the start of the 20th century including a credence table, brass cross and embroideries. A paten was given in memory of an officer killed in 1915.¹⁰⁸ It was variously said that the roodscreen panels or bench ends were used to build the pulpit and the sanctuary kneelers.¹⁰⁹

In 1920 the church council replaced the vestry and concerned itself with the church fabric. In 1922 the north and south galleries were removed and the stone pulpit base was replaced by one of carved oak. In 1923 the last high-sided private pew was levelled with the other pews and in 1941 the old font in the church porch was offered to Holy Trinity, but the

¹⁰⁰ SHC, D/P/b.hl/2/1/9, 18.

¹⁰¹ SHC, D/D/Va/12/12; 14/12.

¹⁰² Procs. SANHS LVIII, 72; SHC, D/D/cf/1891/12.

¹⁰³ SHC, D/P/b.hl/4/1/4.

¹⁰⁴ SHC, D/D/Va/21/12.

¹⁰⁵ Procs. SANHS LVIII, 71.

¹⁰⁶ SHC, DD/CH/125/8; Crockford. Perpetual curacies were formally abolished in 1968.

¹⁰⁷ C. L. Quartly, *My Memories of Bishops Hull*: www.bishopshull.org.uk, accessed 3 Feb 2016.

¹⁰⁸ SHC, D/D/Va/22/2/6; D/P/b.hl/5/2/1.

¹⁰⁹ Procs. SANHS, LVIII, 71, 74.

offer was not taken up. In 1949 the 1688 bell was recast, in 1951 electric light was installed and in 1952 the furnishings from the chapel of the late Mrs Portman at Hestercombe were given to the church.¹¹⁰ A replacement oak lectern was installed in 1972. Most box pews were removed in 1993—4 when the old underfloor heating system was taken out and the church was furnished with chairs.¹¹¹ In 2017 there were plans for a new porch with kitchen and toilet facilities and a new church hall. Two Sunday services continued to be held with one midweek communion.

Church of St Peter and St Paul

The church comprises a chancel with north and south chapels, a nave with octagonal north tower and vestry, formerly a porch, a south aisle, and a single-storey west porch almost the width of the nave. The west end and the vestry are rendered and the walls are of mixed stone including chert, limestone, and sandstone and some brick with dressings mainly of Ham stone. The 13th-century tower's position is unusual and it can only be entered from outside the church and has no stair. The lower stage is square and the rest is octagonal with the battlemented top stage added later. The 16th-century north chapel or aisle abuts it on the east and the 19th-century vestry on the west. The latter contains re-set 13th-century windows, presumably from the demolished nave and has been given a pitched roof. The 16th-century chancel and flanking chapels largely survive but the rest of the church was rebuilt from 1826 by Richard Carver. The 19th-century west gallery survives with outside door and stair beside the north vestry.

The chancel was rebuilt from 1522 when foundations were prepared.¹¹² An angel dated 1530 in the north chancel chapel may mark a stage in the work and is possibly not in its

¹¹⁰ SHC, D/P/b.hl/4/1/4, 9/1/3; D/D/cf/1922/6; 1951/10/8.

¹¹¹ SHC, D/D/cf/1972/3/5, 1993/8/4, 1994/6/10.

¹¹² TNA, REQ 2/13/95; above, this section.

original location. Similarly the other three heads on this wall, probably of similar date. The church may not have been completed until 1540 when a priest left 6s. 8d. towards its 'hallowing'.¹¹³ There were galleries in the 18th century that on the south being demolished with its stair in 1760 presumably when the porch was converted into a vestry. The west gallery was ornamented with the royal arms and images of the four evangelists in the 1780s under a painting of the fall and redemption of mankind.¹¹⁴ In 1804 the west end had three late medieval windows, the centre of three lights the others of two, no external gallery stairs, and a flat vestry roof with parapet. The porch with parapet appears to have had five pointed arches including to the sides. It was heavily buttressed and does not appear to have been altered in the 1820s.¹¹⁵

In 1826 the vestry agreed that George Herniman should enlarge the church supervised by Richard Carver. A grant of £150 was given to provide 272 additional seats, 132 to be free. The nave and south aisle were demolished and their roofs, blue and gold with gilded bosses and supported on angels bearing shields with many coats of arms,¹¹⁶ were replaced with flat ceilings to accommodate galleries. The wainscotted benches were replaced by box pews and the roodscreen was destroyed. However, some late medieval windows were re-used. In 1827 the churchwardens mortgaged the rates to cover the outstanding costs from the work, which was finally paid for in 1846.¹¹⁷ In 1837 the date 1826 was still on the gable but later in the century the datestone was replaced with a small lancet window matching one in the east gable, possibly to improve ventilation when the new west gallery was built in 1847.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ *Procs. SANHS* LVIII, 73; Crisp, *Abstracts of Som. Wills* (1887—90), IV, 115.

¹¹⁴ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/ 6/10; McDermott and Berry, *Rack's Survey of Som.* p. 268.

¹¹⁵ SHC, SANHS topog. colln. 10304, drawing of ch. prob. 1804; Pigott coll, J. Buckler, 1837; A/ACFH/4/1/163.

¹¹⁶ McDermott and Berry, *Rack's Survey of Som.* p. 268.

¹¹⁷ VCH office, list of ICBS grants; SHC, D/P/b.hl/4/1/3, 6/3/1, 9/1/2; *Procs. SANHS* LVIII, 73.

¹¹⁸ SHC, SANHS Pigott coll, J. Buckler, 1837; A/ACFH/4/1/163; D/P/b.hl/4/1/3.

In 1852—3 the bells were rehung at a cost of £53, necessitating further work on the tower.¹¹⁹ However the church needed further repair in 1870¹²⁰ and when the Somerset Archaeological Society visited in 1872 they found little to say about it noting the remains of the old chancel and a benchend of the Resurrection.¹²¹ In 1873 it was said that ‘the quicker [the nave] is taken down and the original building restored, the sooner an eyesore will be removed’.¹²² Repairs had been carried out by 1876 when the ten commandments were renovated.¹²³ The vestry was rebuilt in 1888 and in 1893 a new bell was made by Taylors of Loughborough bringing the peal to six.¹²⁴

The porch across the west entrance to the church was rebuilt, possibly in 1847, but was said to have been badly built. It was demolished after 1954 and rebuilt in identical style in 1955—6 except for creating three pointed arches instead of one flanked by two flat ones. In 1957 the west windows were rebuilt by John Hall of Bristol who in 1961 rebuilt the east window of the north chapel, which had been demolished in 1960 because of subsidence and rebuilt. The east end buttresses were underpinned and the porch was re-ceiled. The chapel was refurnished in 1968.¹²⁵ Despite that work the east gable had to be demolished and rebuilt in 1991—2 and west windows were replaced again.¹²⁶

The 15th-century font, said to be from Taunton St Mary, replaced one now kept in the porch.¹²⁷ A few benchends remain either in the north aisle or hung on the west wall including the keys of St Peter but those portraying the Resurrection and a night watchman are in the Museum of Somerset. It is possible that a 15th-century alabaster crucifix found hidden in the

¹¹⁹ SHC, D/P/b.hl/4/1/3.

¹²⁰ SHC, D/D/Va/12/12.

¹²¹ Procs. SANHS, XVIII, 46.

¹²² Procs. SANHS, LVIII, 73.

¹²³ SHC, D/D/Va/14/12.

¹²⁴ SHC, D/D/Cf/1888/9; D/P/b.hl/4/1/4; D/D/Ri/4.

¹²⁵ SHC, D/P/b.hl/9/1/3; D/R/ta/24/1/611; D/D/Cf/1956/9/15, 1960/3/19, 1961/12/8; VCH office, TS draft notes on church c. 1968.

¹²⁶ SHC, D/D/Cf/1991/7/2, 1992/1/24.

¹²⁷ Procs. SANHS LVIII, 75.

Great House in 1884 was originally in the church.¹²⁸ Fragments of medieval glass survive in the east window of the south chapel and amongst the Victorian stained glass, that in the east window dates from the 1860s. There are several monuments to the Farwell family notably that of George (d. 1609) in alabaster in the north chancel wall.¹²⁹

The churchyard was reduced by road widening before 1843, probably accounting for the expenditure on new iron railings in 1844, reducing burial space that was already inadequate.¹³⁰ An offer to use the poorhouse site as a burial ground in 1826 had not been taken up.¹³¹ By the 1860s following the opening of the cemetery on Wellington Road¹³² the churchyard was closed and special permission was required for burials in family vaults. Ornamental shrubs were planted in the 1870s. By the 1890s monuments were being levelled but among the few surviving gravestones is that of musician and composer William Crotch (d. 1847), installed by the Royal College of Music of which he was first principal. The boundary wall was lowered in 1961.¹³³

ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

The residents of the Castle area were required to attend Bishops Hull church¹³⁴ but by the 19th century despite enlargement the parish church lacked space both in the church and the churchyard. As early as 1840 a chapel of ease was planned. By 1846 the population of Tangier was estimated at 800 and increasing, mainly poor. The vicar's request to use the Nisi Prius Court at the Castle for worship does not appear to have been granted and a church of St Paul, Tangier was planned. There were concerns over raising money and finding a site, but a

¹²⁸ Procs. SANHS LVIII, 76; SWHT, HER 44057.

¹²⁹ Orbach, *S. and W. Som.* 119.

¹³⁰ SHC, D/D/Vc/2/12.

¹³¹ SHC, D/P/b.hl/9/1/2.

¹³² Below, local govt.

¹³³ SHC, D/P/b.hl/3/5/1, 9/1/3; D/D/Va/14/12; Procs. SANHS LVIII, 72; VCH office, TS draft notes on churCH/c. 1968.

¹³⁴ Bishops Hull, rel. hist.

proposal to purchase Paul's House and grounds in 1848 was not followed up.¹³⁵ By 1849 the present site had apparently been chosen although an unsuccessful request was made in 1859 to build on the Crescent field.¹³⁶ In the 1850s a new church was proposed again but this time a generous benefactor undertook the task. The Revd Frederick Jeremiah Smith, incumbent of Holy Trinity, Taunton, undertook to pay the estimated £7,000 cost for a church dedicated to St John the Evangelist,¹³⁷ designed by George Gilbert Scott and to be built by Henry Davis of Taunton. In November 1858 the foundation stone was laid on the site in Park Street. It was planned to have a peal of eight bells but only one was provided.¹³⁸ By 1859 baptisms were celebrated at the school. In 1863 the church opened and Revd Smith became the first perpetual curate.¹³⁹

In 1864 a consolidated chapelry was formed covering the whole area of Bishops Hull as far west as Long Run Lane to which was added the corner of Wilton under the church and the east side of Cann Street and Shire Hall from Taunton St Mary but it is clear that the church drew its congregation from a much wider area.¹⁴⁰ The ecclesiastical parish was enlarged to include Galmington in Wilton in 1934 but in 1969 Galmington was returned to Wilton in exchange for the northern areas of Wilton along Wellington Road and Park Street.¹⁴¹ Only in 1972 was the parish name changed from St John the Evangelist, Bishops Hull to Taunton St John.¹⁴²

Advowson

¹³⁵ SHC, Q/SR/548/45; DD/DN/4/4/45; Som. Co. Gaz. Dir. (1840); Taunton Courier, 9 and 16 Feb. 1848: BNA, accessed 8 Aug 2017.

¹³⁶ SHC, DD/SAS/C2550/12 shows outline of church on map; D/N/tmc/4/2/27, p.5.

¹³⁷ Thomas Hugo asked in vain for a dedication to St Paul: Taunton Courier, 8 Apr 1863: BNA, accessed 8 Aug. 2017.

¹³⁸ Taunton Courier, 10 Nov. 1858: BNA, accessed 24 July 2017; SHC, D/D/Va/12/12.

¹³⁹ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/1/7/1.

¹⁴⁰ SHC, D/D/ord/24/3; D/PC/b.hl/6/14; D/P/tau.jo/2/1/1.

¹⁴¹ SHC, D/D/ord/78/2, 110/2; D/P/wilt/22/3/2, 4.

¹⁴² SHC, D/P/tau.a/9/4/4.

The patronage of the new church belonged to the vicar of Bishops Hull but was transferred to the Revd Frederick Jeremiah Smith (d. 1884), the incumbent, and passed to his son Revd Frederick John Jervis-Smith (d. 1911) and the latter's son Eustace who transferred it to Balliol College, Oxford c. 1920.¹⁴³ In 1922 the then Master of Balliol transferred it to the bishop of Bath and Wells who remained the patron.¹⁴⁴

Income and Endowment

At the opening of the church the bishop appealed for an endowment fund but the church relied on having clergy of independent means and the offerings of parishioners although £200 was granted by Queen Anne's Bounty. The living was a perpetual curacy and his assistant was paid from parish funds. In 1906 the living was only worth £52 a year but by 1920 it had risen to £308 and to £381 by 1922.¹⁴⁵ In 1940 Annie Jarvis-Smith, daughter in law of the Revd Frederick Jeremiah Smith, gave the residue of her estate to Queen Anne's Bounty to augment the vicarage.¹⁴⁶

The earlier clergy had to find their own accommodation including Bath House in Wellington Road¹⁴⁷ but from the 1940s no 4 The Crescent was used as the clergy house.¹⁴⁸ The house formed part of a terrace built in 1807 with a three-storey frontage but four storeys at the back. By 1979 it was the last house in The Crescent still in domestic occupation but it was given up in 1981 and the vicar moved to Henley Road.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³ SHC, D/D/ord/24/3; Kelly's Dir. Som. (1906—19); SHC, D/P/ tau.m/2/1/37; D/P/ tau.jo/2/1/1, 2/9/1, 12; Nat. Probate Reg.: accessed 25 Aug 2017.

¹⁴⁴ SHC, D/D/ord/67/1; Dioc. Dir.

¹⁴⁵ Taunton Courier, 15 Apr 1863: BNA, accessed 8 Aug. 2017; Living's Augments Q.A.B., HC 122 (1867), liv; Kelly's Dir. Som. (1906); SHC, D/P/tau.jo/2/9/12.

¹⁴⁶ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/3/3/1.

¹⁴⁷ TNA, RG 10/2375; RG 11/2366; SHC, D/P/tau.jo/2/8/1.

¹⁴⁸ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/9/3/2.

¹⁴⁹ SHC, DD/WBF/2/155.

In 2014 the benefice was united with that of St Mary Magdalene, Taunton and St John came under the care of an associate vicar.

Pastoral Life

From 1859 local infants were baptised at St John's rather than in Bishops Hull church although until 1863 the baptisms actually took place in the school.¹⁵⁰ From its beginning the church was intended for all including the poor who might be attracted by its artistic interior, colourful ritual and music, and all seats were free, providing accommodation for 500. The organ of 1864 was by Henry Willis.¹⁵¹ In the 1870s there were two Sunday services and twice monthly communions and the church had a choir. There was no parish clerk and the churchyard was not used for burials although there was a sexton by 1887.¹⁵² In 1877 Frederick John Smith, son of the incumbent was appointed stipendiary assistant for £100 a year although he was not ordained priest until 1880.¹⁵³ He owned over 30 of the houses at Tangier.¹⁵⁴ His family and the church contributed large sums to cover the school deficit c. 1880 and St John's also supported other church schools in Taunton.¹⁵⁵ There was a surpliced boys' choir, whose members received 6d. a week, an organist and a precentor.¹⁵⁶ In 1880 it was suggested that a monthly evening communion service would enable mothers and servants to receive communion.¹⁵⁷ By the 1880s an extra early morning service was held on summer Sundays and in 1888 there were over 200 Easter communicants and over 300 in 1892. During rebuilding of the chancel in 1891—2 weekday services were held in the

¹⁵⁰ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/2/1/1.

¹⁵¹ *Taunton Courier*, 15 Apr 1863: BNA, accessed 8 Aug. 2017; SHC, D/D/Va/12/12; D/P/tau.jo/2/9/12.

¹⁵² SHC, D/D/Va/12/12; 14/12; D/P/tau.jo/4/1/1.

¹⁵³ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/1/7/1, 3.

¹⁵⁴ SHC, D/B/ta/14/6/1.

¹⁵⁵ SHC, D/P/ta.jo/4/1/4.

¹⁵⁶ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/4/1/1.

¹⁵⁷ SHC, D/P/tau.m/4/4/6

vestry.¹⁵⁸ Bible classes were held in St Saviour's boys home in 1895. By the 1890s the accounts were usually in deficit, partly because of maintaining a curate and choir but also because of gifts to local missions and charities.¹⁵⁹ The church was lit by gas until 1911 when electricity was installed.¹⁶⁰ By the late 19th century the church was very popular and well-attended and in 1898 there were three daily services, at least four on Sundays and communion was celebrated twice daily. Baptisms were held during Sunday morning services and children were catechised in the afternoons.¹⁶¹

In 1905 the parish produced a paid-for, monthly magazine, and supported a surpliced male choir, Sunday school, bible class, a young men's club in Bath Place, a confraternity of the blessed sacrament as well as up to six Sunday services and matins, communion and evensong every weekday. There appears to have been some concern that the growth of middle-class housing in the area and consequent attendance at church was deterring the poor and services were held at the parochial school specifically for the poor of Tangier. They were said to be well attended with many coming to the parish church for Easter.¹⁶² Although five Sunday services continued weekday services were reduced to one by 1911 and Easter communicants declined although still about 200.¹⁶³ During the First World War communions fell again but high church practice increased with masses, vespers and benediction from 1918. A tabernacle and sanctuary lamp were installed in 1920.¹⁶⁴

By 1921 there was an elected parochial church council¹⁶⁵ and in 1923 work began on a parish hall behind the church. The hall was well-used for social events especially in the winter months including pantomimes. The church employed a verger at £84 a year, who also

¹⁵⁸ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/2/5/1—2.

¹⁵⁹ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/4/1/1.

¹⁶⁰ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/4/1/1, 6/3/2.

¹⁶¹ SHC, D/D/Va/21/12, 22/2/6.

¹⁶² SHC, D/P/ta.jo/2/8/1.

¹⁶³ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/2/5/1.

¹⁶⁴ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/2/5/5, 4/1/1.

¹⁶⁵ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/4/1/1.

acted as clerk and sexton and a parish sister who was assisted by three volunteers. High church ritual attracted congregations from a wide area and over £50 was spent on the organist and 12 choir boys; the 21 choir men were not paid.¹⁶⁶ Much of the church plate dates from the 1920s. Attempts to replace plainsong with Anglican chants was successfully resisted by the congregation in 1924.¹⁶⁷ Unfortunately some bishops including the bishop of Bath and Wells were trying to stop Anglo-Catholic practices including benediction services and the vicar Reginald Wynter was deprived despite local support.¹⁶⁸

His successor the Revd Acland-Troyte maintained masses and also heard confessions. He wrote a mystery play which was performed in the church several times in 1930 and later. Protesters against 'idolatrous service' disrupted a service in 1931 but were pursued through Taunton by a hostile crowd.¹⁶⁹ In 1933 it was suggested that St John's should take responsibility for the Victoria Place mission, off the Crescent in Taunton St Mary, and St Michael's Galmington in Wilton. The latter was transferred to St John's parish with the Crescent area of Taunton St Mary in 1934 at a time when houses in Tangier were being demolished as part of slum clearance schemes and not replaced.¹⁷⁰ The parish sometimes struggled to meet bills such as the £200 salary of an assistant curate¹⁷¹ although in 1946—7 communions averaged over 1,000 a month at St John's.¹⁷² In 1947 an anonymous donor offered to provide a calvary as a war memorial but it was not installed, by the south door, until 1951.¹⁷³

By the later 1950s evening benediction services had been re-introduced and there were at least two masses each Sunday, one sung, morning prayer, a children's service in the

¹⁶⁶ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/57/991; D/P/tau.jo/2/9/15, 4/1/3, 9/1/1.

¹⁶⁷ SHC, D/D/Ri/4; D/P/tau.jo/9/1/1.

¹⁶⁸ SHC, DD/SVL/5/7/38.

¹⁶⁹ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/2/9/15.

¹⁷⁰ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/9/1/1; D/D/ord/78/2.

¹⁷¹ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/9/3/2.

¹⁷² SHC, D/P/tau.jo/9/1/1.

¹⁷³ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/6/1/3, 9/1/1.

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afternoon and evensong and benediction.¹⁷⁴ The Revd. Henry Easton Barnet left an income of £6,000 to the parish c. 1961 and in 1969 the Revd Cyril Ham left over £1,000.¹⁷⁵ In 1964 a new gilded high altar was made by Alan Rome,¹⁷⁶ in 1977 a columbarium was installed to hold ashes¹⁷⁷ and the church has been floodlit since 1987.¹⁷⁸

By the early 21st century services had been reduced to one sung Eucharist on Sundays with monthly evensong and benediction on special occasions as the church maintained its Catholic worship tradition. Two services were also held during the week and there was a regular programme of concerts and other activities.¹⁷⁹

The Church of St John the Evangelist

The church of St John the Evangelist, comprises chancel with north vestries, north and south chapels and south tower with spire, and nave with north and south side aisles and south porch.¹⁸⁰ No expense was spared in the construction, and the estimated £7,000 cost rose to £12,000. Several local coloured stones as well as Westleigh limestone and Ham stone were used in its construction. It is very unusual in the area in having a spire with carvings of the evangelists in columned niches at its base on the square tower. It is a grade one listed church as an outstanding mature work of Sir George Gilbert Scott. The style is broadly Early English with lancets surmounted by circular windows at the west and east ends and plate traceried two-light aisle windows. The interior is richly carved and includes both pulpit and font by Scott and east and west windows by Hardman.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁴ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/2/5/5.

¹⁷⁵ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/3/3/1.

¹⁷⁶ Orbach, Pevsner: S. and W. Som. 613.

¹⁷⁷ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/6/1/3.

¹⁷⁸ SHC, D/D/Cf/1987/5/13.

¹⁷⁹ <http://www.stjohnstaunton.org.uk>: accessed 29 Aug. 2017.

¹⁸⁰ The cardinal points are liturgical, the church is actually oriented north to south because of the constricted roadside site.

¹⁸¹ Taunton Courier, 15 Apr 1863: BNA, accessed 8 Aug. 2017; Orbach, S. and W. Som. 613.

In 1888 the vestry was converted into a sacristy and a new vestry was added to it.¹⁸² The chancel was altered in 1891—2 to the designs of John Dando Sedding, who died before the work was carried out, and a metal chancel screen installed, the gift of the incumbent Thomas Barrow, designed by Sedding and made by Henry Longden in Sheffield with silhouettes of the animals entering the ark. The chancel was furnished with carved and traceried choirstalls, by Charles Trask of Norton sub Hamdon, and marble paving.¹⁸³ A baptistery was created in 1913—14 with stained glass windows and a lady chapel was created north of the chancel c. 1921.¹⁸⁴ Later a Sacred Heart altar was dedicated. Since its opening the church has received many gifts including antique and modern candlesticks, images and paintings.¹⁸⁵ In 1963 part of the churchyard was taken for road widening¹⁸⁶ and major work on the roof was carried out in 2017.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM

In 1867 the nuns at Cannington, Sisters of the Holy Sacrament, moved to Paul's House and apparently let the two houses to the west.¹⁸⁷ There were 12 nuns in residence in 1871 most of whom were born in France or Ireland, but by 1881 there were 17, mostly English, with a resident priest.¹⁸⁸ In 1911 in addition to the superior and eight nuns there were nine lay sisters and a priest.¹⁸⁹ Falling numbers and financial problems led to the convent's closure in 1929 and the building was bought by Taunton borough council for offices. It is now commercial

¹⁸² SHC, D/D/Cf/1888/9; D/B/ta/24/1/23/943.

¹⁸³ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/6/3/1, 9/1/1; D/D/Cf/1891/12.

¹⁸⁴ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/6/3/1.

¹⁸⁵ SHC, D/P/tau.jo/5/2/1; DD/X/WBB/185.

¹⁸⁶ SHC, D/D.Cf/1963/6/1.

¹⁸⁷ *Taunton Courier*, 16 Oct 1867: BNA, accessed 8 Aug. 2017; SHC, DD/IR/T/5/1.

¹⁸⁸ TNA, RG 10/2375; RG 11/2369.

¹⁸⁹ TNA, RG 14/14341.

property known as Mitre House.¹⁹⁰ Twelve burials were moved to the cemetery in Wellington Road and the chapel furnishings given to other churches.¹⁹¹

The house, known as the Convent of Perpetual Adoration, was extended and a chapel wing with stair turret built to the south-west in Early English style in 1871, an early work of J.F. Bentley. The stained glass windows by him were installed in 1873 and he designed an alabaster and marble altar with reredos painted by N.H.J. Westlake, now in St Joseph's, Fishponds, Bristol and a chancel screen, given to St Bernard's Shirehampton, Bristol. The sanctuary was tiled and painted in 1878. The building formerly had a spire topped with a statue of the Archangel Gabriel. Bentley is said to have used stone salvaged from St James's, Taunton when its tower was rebuilt.¹⁹² The main gabled range runs north and south to the west of the original house with a subsidiary gabled range at south-east corner built of coursed rubble with freestone dressings under tiled roofs with buttresses and lancet windows.

NONCONFORMITY

There was dissent in the parish, perhaps not surprising given the poor calibre of clergy from the end of the 16th century and horrors of the Civil War in the parish. Andrew Pyne in 1642 referred to the 'beautiful feet', as preachers of the gospel, of George Newton, vicar of Taunton St Mary and later founder of Paul's Meeting and Henry James, vicar of Kingston St Mary, clearly having preferred to attend their services.¹⁹³ John, son of John Herring, maltster of Bishops Hull, while a student at Oxford in 1662 declared he did not approve of the

¹⁹⁰ P. Storer, *A History of St George's Catholic Church, Taunton* (1990), 17; SHC, D/RC/ta.g/2/5/1.

¹⁹¹ *Western Morning News*, 17 June 1929; BNA accessed 29 Nov. 2017.

¹⁹² SWHT, HER 46126; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1897); W. de L'Hopital. *Westminster Cathedral and its architect*, II (1919), 460—3, 532; SHC, D/RC/ta.g/2/5/1; Orbach, *Pevsner: S. and W. Som.* 630.

¹⁹³ TNA, PROB 11/204/51

doctrine of the Church of England and left the University. In 1672 he was licensed as a nonconformist preacher at Bishops Hull.¹⁹⁴

Presbyterians and Independents

The curate Nathaniel Charlton was ejected in 1662 and in 1663 had 30 people at a service in his house on Sunday afternoon with preaching, praying and psalm singing without using the Book of Common Prayer.¹⁹⁵ He was preaching in the area as a Presbyterian minister by 1669 including at his own house where he and George Bindon, ejected from Wilton, preached to 50 people. In 1672 his house in Bishop's Hull was licensed for Presbyterian meetings but it is not clear if it was in the village or in the castle area of Taunton.¹⁹⁶ The Congregational chapel usually dated its origins from 1662 claiming Charlton (d. 1682) as founder.¹⁹⁷

In 1689 the house of Dorothy Cooper, a former churchwarden,¹⁹⁸ was licenced for Presbyterian use and that of John Short for an unspecified congregation. Licences were later issued for the houses of Richard Farwell 1697, Joseph Putter 1699, Edward Searle 1703 and Francis Herbert 1707. A house licensed for Presbyterian use in 1746 may have been in the Taunton part of the parish and in 1747 the castle ballroom in the castle was licensed for Presbyterians.¹⁹⁹ Early ministers are said to have included Mathew Warren (d. 1706), who kept the Taunton Dissenting Academy, and some of his pupils.²⁰⁰ In 1719 a new meeting house called the Trinity was registered for worship.²⁰¹ The congregation was said to number 300 under Henry Grove, minister c. 1725—30 and a contributor to the *Spectator*.²⁰²

¹⁹⁴ SHC, Q/RLa/5; Calamy Revised, ed. Matthews, 159; Orig Recs of Early Nonconf. II, 1097; Cal. SP Dom. 1672, 236.

¹⁹⁵ Crippen, Nonconf in Som. 21; SHC, Q/SR/103/27.

¹⁹⁶ Gordon, Freedom after Ejection, 216; Orig Recs of Early Nonconf. I, 6; Crippen, Nonconf in Som. 26—7.

¹⁹⁷ Rep. Som. Cong. Union (1896), 43.

¹⁹⁸ E. Dwelly, Som. Hearth Tax Returns, II, 156, 305.

¹⁹⁹ SHC, Q/RRw/1.

²⁰⁰ SHC, D/N/bhc/4/2/2.

²⁰¹ SHC, Q/RRw/1.

²⁰² Crippen, Nonconf in Som. 39; B. Kirk, A History of Taunton URC, Bishops Hull (1996), 20—1.

Baptismal registers survive from 1733 but between 1698 and 1731 the births recorded without baptism in the church baptismal register may have been of the children of nonconformists. No burial register was kept until 1813 and many burials including those of minister Farnham Haskoll and his family took place in the parish churchyard.²⁰³ However, some burials in the church register were entered separately in the 18th century and at least one of those in 1768 was said to have been at the 'Meeting' and there were many late 18th-century painted wood and marble monuments in the chapel.²⁰⁴ In the 1770s the Presbyterian meeting house had 22 members and it was known as Presbyterian in the 1780s but as an orthodox congregation was thereafter called Congregationalist.²⁰⁵

Generous annuities were left to the Presbyterian minister in the 18th century especially by wealthy women from neighbouring parishes indicating that the chapel had a wide appeal.²⁰⁶ In 1750 John Wyatt left money to buy land to support the Presbyterian minister or if none to educate poor children. The same bequest was made by his wife Prudence (d. 1761) and kinsman Thomas Darch in 1752.²⁰⁷ The money was finally invested in stocks and consols with additional gifts and by 1896 the chapel had a total endowment income of £40.²⁰⁸ A small charity created by William (d. 1849), son of Revd Peard Jillard (d. 1799), for upkeep of the family tombs contributed surpluses to repair the chapel and provide blankets for the poor.²⁰⁹ In 1912 the two parts of the charity were separated.²¹⁰

In 1851 there were 90 people at morning and evening service and 100 in the afternoon. Average attendance at services was said to be 150 with 50 Sunday schoolchildren

²⁰³ TNA, RG 4/1542—3, 2054; SHC, D/P/b.hl/2/1/4, 6.

²⁰⁴ SHC, D/P/b.hl/2/1/6; Hist. Build. List. 1308184.

²⁰⁵ SHC D/D/Vc/88; DD/CH/104/2 McDermott and Berry, *Rack's Survey of Som.* p. 268; *9th Rep. Com. Char.* 463.

²⁰⁶ SHC, D/N/ful/1/5/5; DD/MY/29; M. Siraut, *Som. Wills*, 82.

²⁰⁷ SHC, DD/MY/29.

²⁰⁸ *9th Rep. Com. Char.* 463; SHC, D/N/bhc/4/2/2.

²⁰⁹ SHC, DD/C/44; D/N/bhc/4/2/2, 5/3/11; *Rep. Som. Cong. Union* (1898); Kirk, *URC, Bishops Hull*, 28.

²¹⁰ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/5/3/11.

and the chapel had 174 seats, nearly half of them free.²¹¹ After a decline in the 1870s William Lee raised membership to 60 in the 1880s. The church was refurbished and a west gallery added. A pipe organ was installed and the bottle and dinner plates formerly used were replaced with communion plate in 1882.²¹² In 1887 the chapel and yard were closed for burials except for a few named individuals.²¹³ The mortgage on the chapel was only paid off after the First World War when a vestry was built. Members included Wesleyans, who may have joined in the absence of a Methodist chapel in the parish and later transferred to Taunton Methodist churches.²¹⁴

From the 1920s as membership declined the minister also served Norton Fitzwarren and in the 1940s Blagdon and Fulwood chapels in Pitminster.²¹⁵ A youth club, meeting in a former carpenters' shop used as a church club by 1910,²¹⁶ had been given up by 1948 but was revived in the 1960s when the Sunday school had nearly 50 children. Communion services were held twice a month, alternately morning and evening. By 1958 the congregation had difficulty paying a stipend with only 49 members many of whom did not attend.²¹⁷ However, a new pulpit, lectern and other furnishings were given at the tercentenary in 1962.²¹⁸ In 1967 with numbers still falling it was agreed to unite with the Taunton Congregational churches and break the connection with Norton Fitzwarren. In 1972 following the union of Congregational and Presbyterian churches Paul's Meeting in Taunton and Bishops Hull formed the Taunton United Reformed Church. Elected elders replaced deacons and the chapels and their finances were administered together.²¹⁹ By the end of the 20th century the

²¹¹ TNA, HO 129/315/4/2/6.

²¹² SHC, D/N/bhc/4/2/2.

²¹³ SHC, D/N/bhc/6/15.

²¹⁴ SHC, D/N/bhc/4/2/2.

²¹⁵ SHC, D/N/bhc/3/2/1, 4/2/1.

²¹⁶ TNA, IR 58/82128.

²¹⁷ SHC, D/N/bhc/4/2/2; Kirk, URC, Bishops Hull, 57—8.

²¹⁸ SHC, Som. Co. Herald, newscutting files, 24 Nov. 1962.

²¹⁹ SHC, D/N/bhc/4/2/1; Kirk, URC, Bishops Hull, 64.

chapel was again in decline. In 2003 morning service ceased and members were encouraged to attend the Taunton services but evening service at Bishops Hill continued. After the chapel closed in 2005 the service was held in the parish church but in 2013 it was given up.²²⁰

The former Congregational chapel, now Clara House, was built in 1718 but has been greatly altered especially when it was re-roofed c. 1870 and remodelled in 1883 when the building was stuccoed and wooden-traceried ogee-headed windows were inserted. There are asymmetrical side entrance porches presumably replacing the original entrance on the road. The interior had a n east gallery and a plain windowless west end housing the pulpit and organ. The 1883 former Sunday school extension to the south is also stuccoed with plain sash windows. The buildings stand in a small burial ground.²²¹

Early ministers had lived in their own homes like Farnham Haskoll and his son-in-law Peard Jillard who lived in Bishops Hull House, opposite the chapel. However, in 1830 John Bunter for a token sum sold a house in the village, already occupied by the minister, with outbuildings and some land as a manse. The house was rebuilt c. 1870 on the same site, opposite the vicarage.²²² It was modernised in 1925 and manorial rights were bought out in 1936. The land to the south had been let in 1845 to a carpenter who built a row of four cottages including one for himself with a large workshop.²²³ One of the Chapel Buildings, later Myrtle Cottages, was used to house the chapel caretaker in the 1930s. The former carpenter's shop, later used as a youth club, were demolished c. 1957. The cottages were modernised and rendered in the 1970s, losing their chimneys. They were sold and renovated again in the early 21st century.²²⁴ As there was no prospect of a resident minister the manse

²²⁰ <http://tauntonurc.org.uk/bishops-hull-evening-service-6th-october-2013>.

²²¹ SHC, D/N/turc/4/2/18 (Report, 2004); Orbach, *S. and W. Som.* 119.

²²² Kirk, *URC, Bishops Hull*, 34; SHC, Q/REI/35/3; tithe award; D/N/bhc/4/2/2.

²²³ SHC, D/N/bhc/4/2/2; Q/RDe/165h; Kirk, *URC, Bishops Hull*, 35; TNA, HO 107/1926.

²²⁴ SHC, D/N/bhc/3/2/1, 3/2/3, 4/2/1.

was sold in 1968 and is known as The Old Manse.²²⁵ The remaining land, north of the house, was leased in 1981 for a housing project for the elderly, known as Malthouse Court.²²⁶

In 1697 Arthur Parsons of Bishops Hull, clothier, gave 5 a. of land to be used to train a young man for the Presbyterian ministry.²²⁷ He was probably the Arthur Parsons, yeoman, included in general pardon of 1688.²²⁸ The land had been vested in the trustees of the Taunton Unitarian meeting by 1842.²²⁹ The Parsons charity continued until the early 20th century when it was used to provide a maximum of three years' education. In the 1920s the land was let as allotments but as the area around became more heavily built up the trustees sold the land in 1928 and 1933.²³⁰

Other Denominations

Methodist evening services were held in the parish in the winter of 1839—40.²³¹ A request c. 1846 by the Wesleyan Methodists to use the assize courts in the castle while their Taunton chapel was repaired was declined but allowed in the 1860s and 1880s.²³² In 1871 a free church was kept in Ann Diamond's Gothick mid-terrace cottage near Rumwell farm and it was described as an Independent chapel in 1887 but there is no later record of it and by 1904 it seems to have been used as a reading room.²³³ The Exclusive Plymouth Brethren were using the Mill Lane warehouse as a Gospel Hall by 1931 with three Sunday and two weekday meetings until c. 1968.²³⁴ The Living Light Church, founded in 2003 in Taunton, opened a

²²⁵ SHC, D/N/bhc/4/2/2; D/N/scu/7/6/2; D/R/ta/24/1/1030.

²²⁶ SHC, D/N/scu/7/6/2; Kirk, URC, Bishops Hull, 66.

²²⁷ SHC, DD/SP/399/6.

²²⁸ Cal. SP. Dom. 1686—7, p. 78.

²²⁹ SHC, DD/CWCta/11/9; SHC, DD/SP/211; tithe award: possibly an error.

²³⁰ SHC, DD/CWCta/1/1, 7, 71, 77, 84—5.

²³¹ SHC, D/N/tsmc/7/2/3 (circuit plan).

²³² SHC, Q/SR/550/75; D/N/tmc/4/2/27, pp. 41, 175.

²³³ TNA, RG 10/237; OS Map 1:2500, LXXXV. 10 (1887 edn; 1904 edn).

²³⁴ Address lists 1931—62: www.brethrenarchive.org; accessed 16 July 2019; Kelly's Dir. Taunton (1957); SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/204/11617.

church in the old school in Gipsy Lane c. 2012 with one Sunday service, youth group and pre-school.²³⁵

CEMETERY AND CREMATORIUM CHAPELS

The cemetery was on the corner of Mountway and Wellington roads had two mortuary chapels designed by Edward Ashworth of Devon in 1856, demolished c. 1967 when the glass and other fittings were transferred from the Anglican chapel to local churches and chapels.²³⁶

In 1966 the Taunton Deane Crematorium opened in the parish with two chapels by the firm of Potter and Hare; one largely glass walled with stained glass and altar fittings by Geoffrey Clarke, the other of stone lit from above.²³⁷

ISLAM

The Taunton Masjid and Islamic Centre, a Sunni mosque established in Taunton in 1993, moved into Ivor House in Tower Lane in 2011 using the modern extension as a prayer room.²³⁸

²³⁵ Taunton.livinglightchurch.com: accessed 23 Nov. 2015.

²³⁶ Devon HC, P&D 15024—6; SHC, D/D/Cf/1967/3/12.

²³⁷ Orbach, *S. and W. Som.* 119.

²³⁸ BBC Somerset website 21 Sep. 2010; muslimsinbritain.org: accessed 15 Nov. 2017.