

A HISTORY OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCH STAVERTON



BY PETE LAVIS

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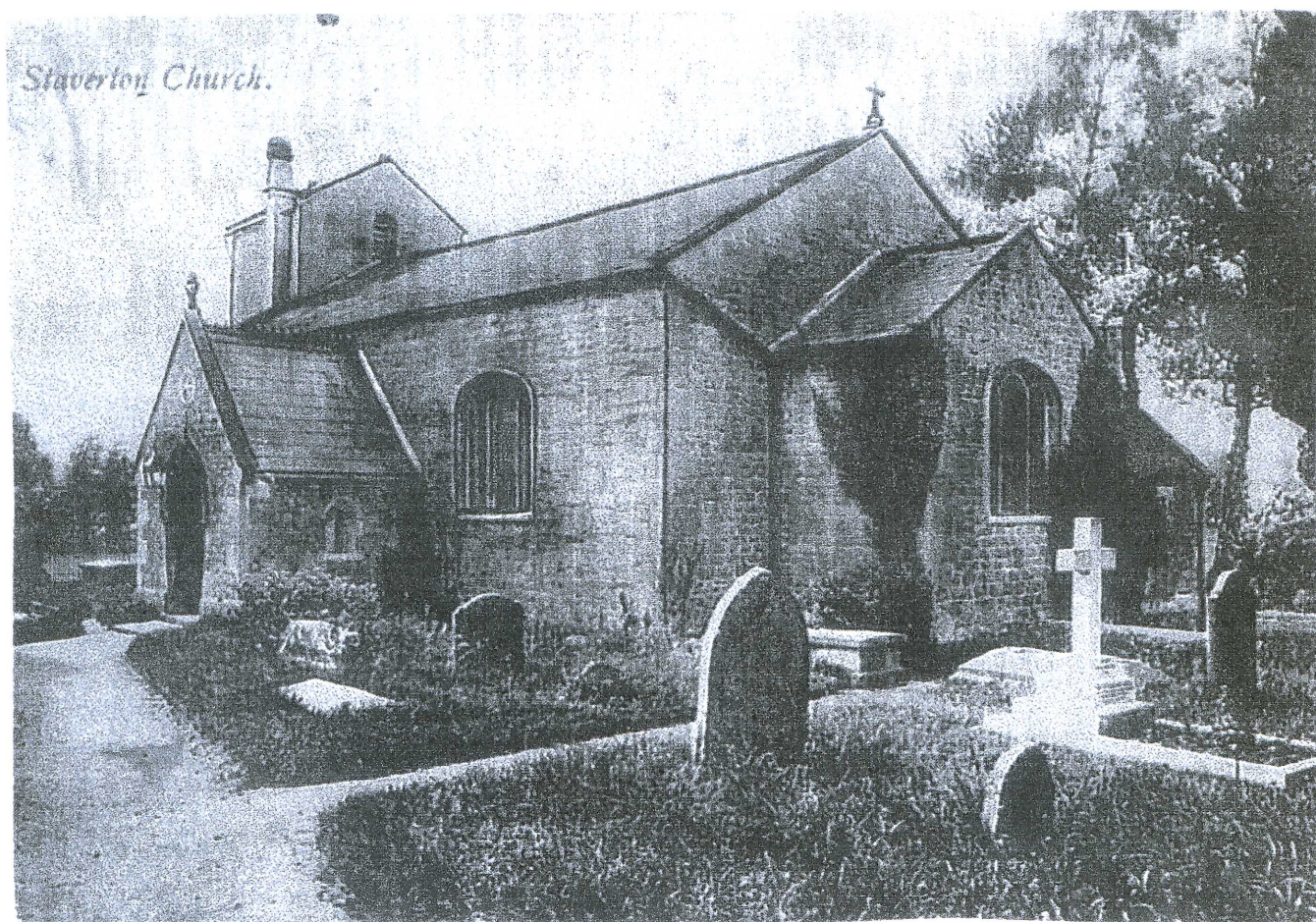
Introduction

Village Churches and the religious way of life that surrounds them are very deeply rooted in England's long established christian traditions. For many centuries local Vicars, Curates, Churchwardens and Vestry officials controlled the daily lives of villagers and the Church was looked upon as the focal point of any community. Many Churches have foundations that go back over a thousand years and through the centuries a large number of these have been altered, perhaps quite a few times, and some have been completely rebuilt.. St. Paul's was virtually reconstructed in the early 19th century and very few records survive to show what previous churches may have looked like. Hardly any architectural evidence remains of previous buildings, apart from several small areas of stonework, and because of this the tracing of St. Paul's structural history, prior to the re-building is very difficult.

Records of the life of St. Paul's are virtually non-existent before 1535, except for a number of vague references, and the available documentation between this time and the 17th century is very sketchy. Church records become more consistent after the 1670's and a fairly accurate picture can be built up from that period right up to the present day. Most of the early history of St. Paul's published in this booklet is of course conjectural, because of the lack of documentary evidence, but is based on the well researched historical facts known about English religious life through centuries past. Linking this evidence with a comprehensive knowledge of Staverton's history produces a fairly accurate account of how the village Church and it's way of life evolved.

Many village people over the centuries have volunteered their time and efforts to look after the Church, have freely given their services to carry out the duties necessary for it to function and their devotion and care has ensured that a place of worship has always been available to the community. We all owe these people a debt of gratitude and this booklet is not only a tribute to them but a record to ensure that their tireless devotion to St. Paul's is not forgotten.

Countless generations of village families have worshipped, been christened, married and buried in St. Paul's Church and it has always remained an integral part of community life. How long it will continue to serve the village depends heavily on present and future generations of Staverton people who, if they want their Church to survive, must make a commitment to support it and preserve its long standing culture and traditions.



St. Paul's Church in the early 1900's showing the Boilerhouse chimney protruding above the west end of the Nave roof.

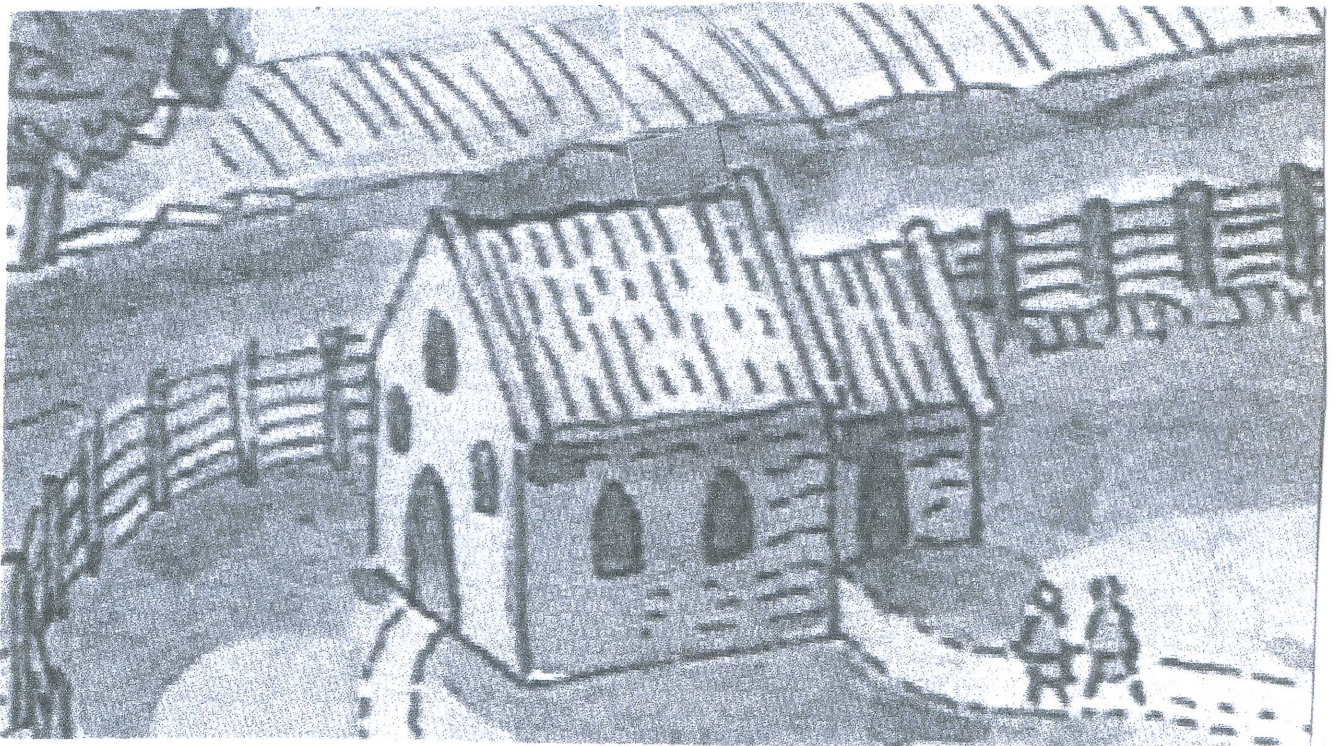
2 *Ye Chappell of Stavberton*

St. Paul's Church stands on a high bank overlooking the River Avon on the northern boundary of the Parish and to some extent is hidden from view by the houses that crown the top of the hill leading down to the river bridge. Visitors to the area would only discover the existence of a church here by finding the quaint Edwardian gateway that is sandwiched between two of the older village cottages. The narrow path that leads down from this gateway and runs between the tall hedges of the cottage gardens brings the tiny church of St. Paul's, with its pleasant churchyard, into view. The present church, almost completely re-built in 1826, is constructed of ashlar with a Welsh slate roof and replaced an earlier, and much smaller, 'Chapel of Ease' that occupied the same site.

The foundation of the very first church at Staverton is not known but there was almost certainly a religious building on this site from the 13th century. Staverton, from Anglo-Saxon times, formed part of the Trowbridge group of Manors and remained very much under the town's ecclesiastical control right up to the early 19th century. At the time of the Norman conquest in 1066 Staverton was a tiny Anglo-Saxon hamlet with a small population of farmers and a corn mill on the banks of the river. A Saxon theign, Brictric, held the estates for King Edward and it is assumed that he controlled these landholdings from the main Manor House in Trowbridge. The Domesday survey of 1086 describes 'Stavretone' in some detail but makes no mention of a church in the village although it does not necessarily mean that one was not in existence. We know from recent research that the Norman clerks who compiled the Domesday entries did not always record a settlement's religious buildings, a classic example of one of these omissions being that there is also no mention of a Saxon Church in Bradford-on-Avon, built in the early 8th century and definitely in existence at the time of Domesday, but not recorded in Bradford's Domesday entry.



St. Paul's stands on the high bank above the River Avon and occupies the site that was probably the meeting place for the open air religious gatherings, conducted by the Farleigh monks, in the 12th century.



What the wooden Church may have looked like in the 14th century.

But as no documentary or architectural evidence exists from that time it is assumed that the village did not have a church in 1086. At the end of the 11th century Staverton came into the possession of Edward of Salisbury who subsequently passed the lands down to his daughter Maud, wife of Humphry de Bohun the builder of Trowbridge castle. In 1125 Maud appropriated the tithes of Staverton to Monkton Farleigh Priory, the Cluniac monastery of St. Mary Magdalene, which she had helped found a few years earlier.¹ It is probable that when this association was formed arrangements were made for the monks of Farleigh to provide a religious service for the villagers of Staverton. The monks would travel to the hamlet and conduct services for the community, probably in the open air, and on the same high bank that now houses the present church.

As the population grew over the next few centuries a religious building would have been constructed, a small crude wooden structure with thatched roof, and sited on the same spot that had acted as the meeting place for the earlier gatherings. This first 'chapel' would have been a very primitive affair with an earthen floor, no seats, and very few decorations apart from simple mural paintings on the walls depicting such bible scenes as *The last Judgement*. A mass bell, in a small thatched bell cote, would summon the locals to church and, as they were mostly illiterate at that time, few could understand the services which were always conducted in latin during the 12th to 14th centuries.²

Trowbridge and Staverton, originally part of the Melksham Hundred, became a 'peculiar' in 1322 and this arrangement became known as 'The Honour of Trowbridge'.³ Being a 'peculiar' meant that churches in the '*Honour*' were exempt from the jurisdiction of the Bishop in whose Diocese they were located and this situation remained right up to the early 18th century. The main parish church for Staverton people would have been St. James's in Trowbridge but because it was difficult for local people to get to the town in those days the existing religious building in the village would have become a 'Chapel of Ease'.

The Rector of Trowbridge became the patron of the living and St. James's Curates were sent to the Staverton 'chapel' to conduct the worship and look after the religious education of the villagers.

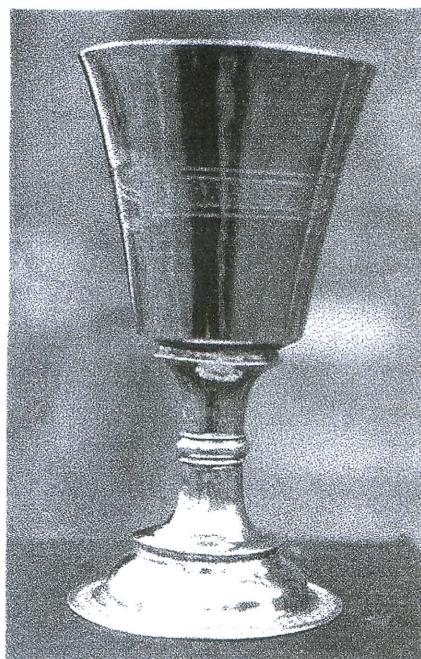
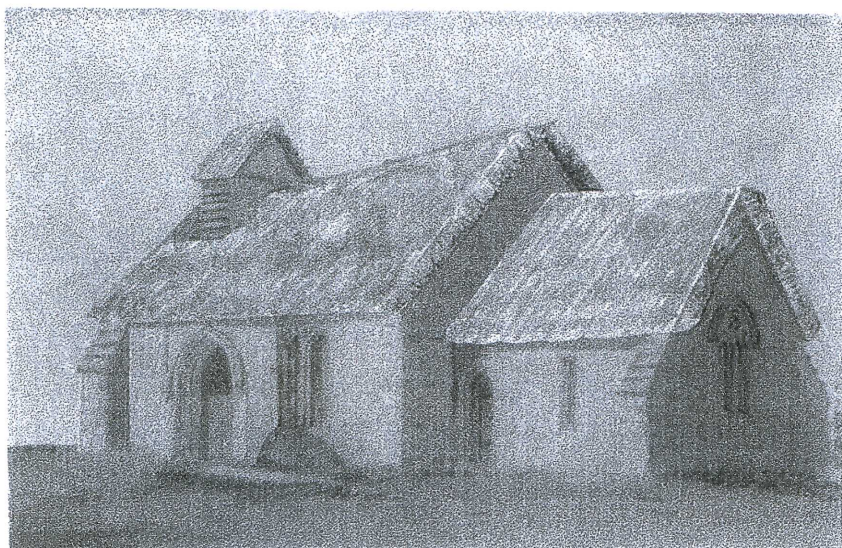
By the 15th century a more substantial church building was provided, this time constructed in stone but still retaining thatch on its roof and short bell cote. The church Vestry, which had gradually taken over the role of the old Manor Courts, began to take responsibility for all Parish matters, these including the appointment of Chapelwardens, Waywardens, and the Tithingman or Village Constable.⁴ The first documentary evidence of a Church at Staverton comes in 1535 when the '*Valor Ecclesiasticus*' refers to the '*Capella de Staverton*' (Chapel of Staverton) and notes that one of the Curates from St. James's Church was made perpetual Curate of Staverton.⁵ During this time the nation's religious establishment was in great turmoil with the 1534 Act of Supremacy abolishing the Pope's power in England, this subsequently leading to the dissolution of the monasteries between 1536 and 1539. The result of these upheavals led to the foundation of the Anglican Church and, despite later attempts by successive monarchs at papal reunion, England's religious doctrine was never to return to the authority of Rome. The effect these dramatic changes had on the villagers of Staverton must have been quite profound as worshippers suddenly found themselves faced with the introduction of the first English Prayer Book, witnessed the confiscation of their church valuables and were subjected to compulsory attendance at all church services. Those who failed to comply with the new law were punished by the Church Courts and were either fined or forced to make confessions before the Priest and the Chapelwardens.⁶

Church Vestry's also took on the responsibility of looking after the Parish poor and the 1572 Poor Law decreed that they appoint a Village Overseer to administer the new legislation. The Great Poor Law Act of 1601 went even further and ordered that the Chapelwardens and two 'substantial' villagers administer the funds raised for poor relief from the local taxes.⁷

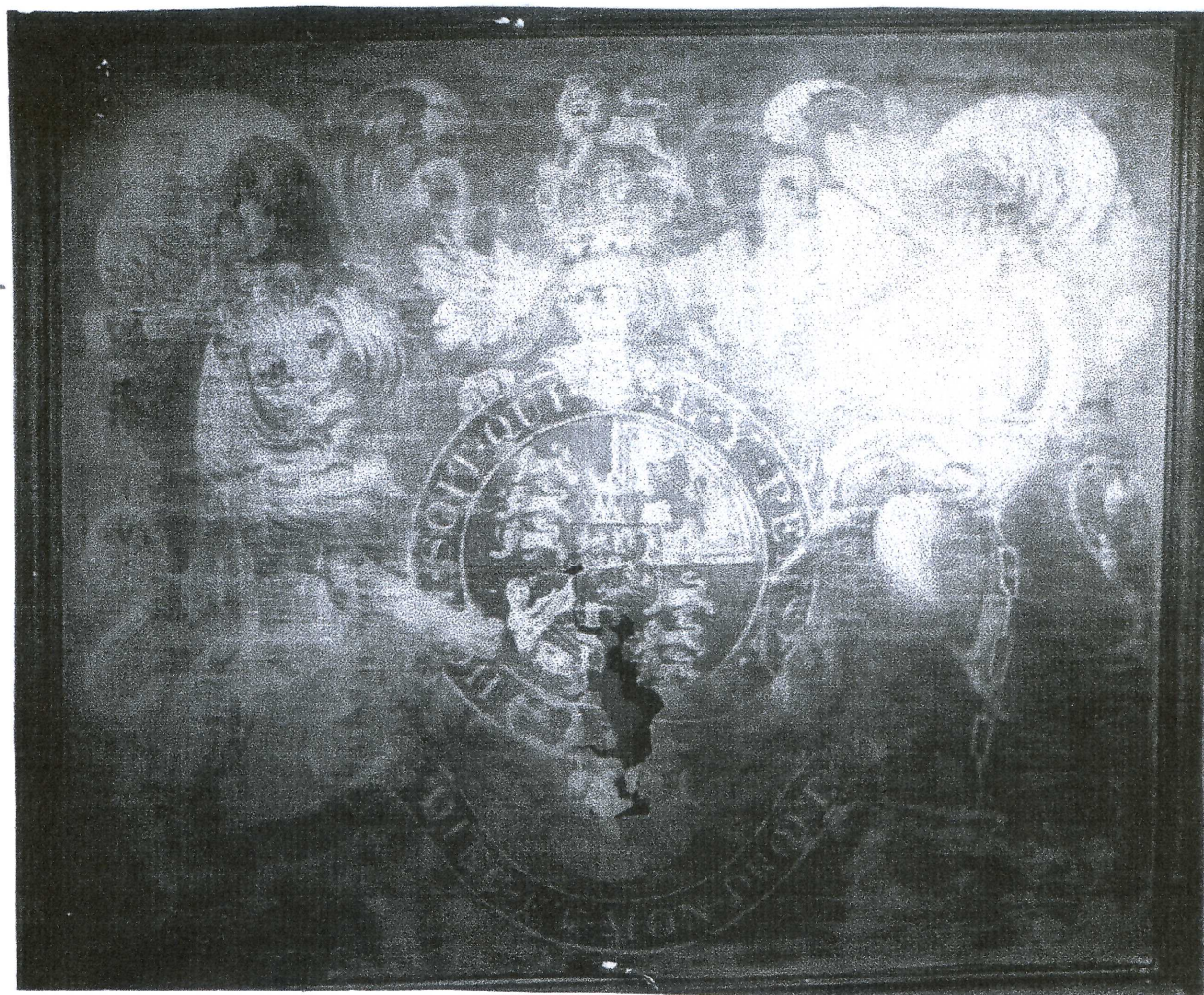
By the end of the 16th century St. Paul's Chapel of Ease was upgraded with enlarged windows and stone tiles to replace the thatch on it's roof and small bell cote. It was a tiny building, only about a third of the size of the present church, but sufficient enough at the time to cater for the small village population who were summoned to attend services by the peeling of the mass bell. The Chapel had slowly recovered from the traumatic results of Henry's purge on the Catholic Church and some of it's valuables had been replaced including the acquisition of a solid silver Elizabethan chalice made in 1577. St. Paul's still possesses this rare and priceless item of church 'plate' but because of it's great antiquity and value it is kept safely locked away in the vaults of a local Bank and only taken out and used on very special church occasions. The cup used to dispense the wine during communion services in the church today is a silver plated replica of the 400 years old Elizabethan chalice which was presented to St. Paul's by Julia Blease in 1932.⁸

Religious events again took a dramatic turn during the first half of the 17th century with village worshippers becoming alarmed by the controversial reforms being introduced by William Laud, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, changes many perceived as an attempt to restore catholicism. Puritism also began to take a hold locally forcing some Anglican Ministers to be removed much to the dismay of dedicated churchgoers, these actions stimulating the growth of non-conformity. The Puritans, with their much stricter religious doctrine, frowned on the playing of games on Sundays, had altars, murals, stained glass windows and musical instruments removed from churches, and banned church festivals including the popular 'church ales'.⁹

John Pelling is recorded as being the Curate at St. Paul's in the 1620's and, a few years later, Richard Randall, an Oxford graduate and Trowbridge Schoolmaster, was conducting the services in Staverton's tiny Chapel of Ease where the wealthier village families now sat on their own pews at the front with the poorer members of the congregation either standing during the worship or, if lucky, finding a space on the one or two hard benches provided at the back of the Nave.



St. Paul's first stone Church had a thatched roof and replaced an earlier wooden building in the 15th century. Right: St. Paul's silver Elizabethan Chalice



St. Paul's Royal Arms which used to hang above the Chancel arch. This version, painted in 1801, has eroded badly in recent years.

Public penance was still an occasional feature at church services, the Parish armour and weapons were kept in the building and the Royal Arms, introduced by Henry VIII, were hung above the Chancel arch as a visual reminder that the monarch was still the supreme head of the Anglican Church.¹¹

The English Civil War, that broke out in 1642, was to further disrupt the country's religious way of life and, after the Parliamentary victory over the Royalists, led to many more Anglican Vicars and Curates being replaced by Puritan Ministers. The rigid beliefs of the 'new Order' led to the Book of Common Prayer being banned, all church 'trappings' being removed or destroyed and the display of the Royal Arms prohibited. Many Anglican worshippers were strongly opposed to the loss of their Prayer Book and the banning of Church Festivals which, since the dramatic upheavals of 1534, had become an accepted and very important part of the Anglican religious doctrine. Village people became more and more disillusioned with the new puritanical regime and many began boycotting this strict and, to them, 'alien' religion in protest. During the 1650's St. Paul's was almost abandoned and the new Church authorities made proposals to unite the ailing Staverton Benefice with Holt and Great Chalfield. The proposal, however, never materialised and after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 plans for the merger were finally withdrawn.¹²

Anticipating the damage that the new ecclesiastical authorities could do to their beloved village church, supporters of St. Paul's managed to hide some of its property away into friendly hands before it could be confiscated by the Puritans. Some of these items later became the subject of a court case which took place at Devizes Quarter Sessions in 1658 and concerned the 'illegal' disposal of the Church's valuables. An account of the proceedings recorded that *'James Bartlett of Devizes deposes that one Bayley of Stafferton came to him and told him that he was Churchwarden (of St. Paul's) and that for a long time they had had no prayers in their church because they were annexed to another place.'*

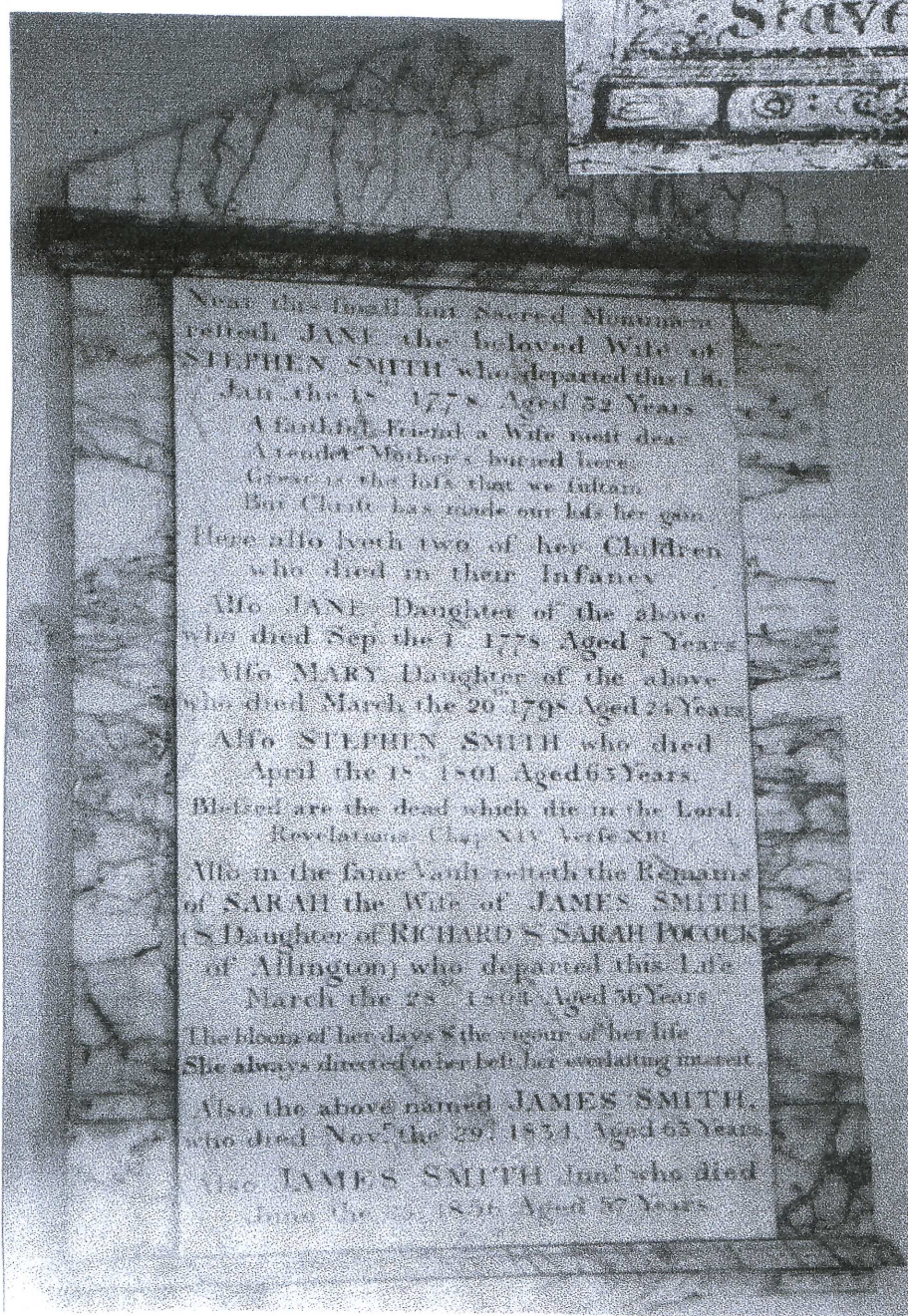
'The pulpit cloth was in one man's hand, the communion table cloth in anothers, the silver bowl in anothers, and the bell was to be sold. He desired the examinent to buy the bell promising that if it should be called into question he would buy a new bell, and in July last year (1657) the bell was brought to the informant's house who paid the said Bayley £5-3s for it'. It is obvious from this account that the Staverton Church Officials feared that St. Paul's would never re-open and had made arrangements to sell off some of it's valuables. The Puritan church authorities, trying to recover these missing items, had made enquiries and some of the 'receivers' of these goods had panicked and informed on the 'sellers' for fear of reprisals. After the Puritans were ousted from power most of these church items were returned from 'safe keeping' and St. Paul's was able to re-open and continue providing a place of worship for villagers.¹³ The Bayley mentioned in the court case appears to be William Bayley (Bailey) of Staverton who ran a Draper's business in Bradford-on-Avon and lived in a dwelling called 'The Mansion House' which stood near the gates to St. Paul's Church in the 17th century. The Bayley family enjoyed a good standard of living, ran a successful textile business, were able to issue their own tokens in 1668 and lived in a 'substantial' house in the village all this indicating that they must have been one of the wealthiest Staverton families during this period.¹⁴

The restoration of the Monarchy in 1660 led to a complete reversal of the religious policies enforced during Cromwell's brief 'reign', the Anglican doctrine was quickly restored and the disliked Puritan Ministers thrown out. The altar, removed under the Puritans, was re-instated at the east end of St. Paul's, the Book of Common Prayer was revived, and the Royal Arms, banned by Cromwell, re-hung above the Chancel arch. For ordinary villagers, however, the damage had been done and many worshippers had already moved away from the re-established church and joined other non-conformist groups that had emerged in the area.

Surviving registers of Marriages, Births, and Burials at St. Paul's Church date from 1673 about the same period that Robert Hyatt is noted as being Curate at Staverton where *'prayers and sermons are said once a fortnight in the evenings and the sacrament at Easter, Christmas and Whitsun'*. William Wayte and Thomas Bendall were Chapelwardens in 1680 when St. Paul's is described as having *'no fund or estate appropriated to it'* and John Grant was carrying out the Chapelwarden's duties with Thomas Bayley in 1694.¹⁵ Tombs and headstones were beginning to appear in the churchyard, poor boxes were placed inside the Chapel and St. Paul's Vestry began paying rewards for the destruction of 'vermin', at the time considered to be a great hazard to public health. Churchwarden's accounts right up to the middle of the 19th century carry many entries of money being paid to Staverton residents for handing in dead 'vermin' such as sparrows, hedgehogs and foxes. Payments varied from a farthing for each sparrow, one shilling for a fox, and for hedgehogs, the most numerous of creatures killed and handed in, residents received 4 pence.¹⁶ Thomas Barnard is noted as Chapelwarden in 1697 and the 'Staffordton Chappell' is mentioned again in a Terrier of 1704 and a Presentment of 1717 which described the state of the building and reported that the Chancel door was *'much out of repair'*.¹⁷

Staverton's church life continued to evolve as the 18th century dawned and St. Paul's began introducing musicians and singers to accompany the church services. The social standing of villagers was evident from the seating arrangements in the Chapel with the well to do families occupying their own private pews at the front of the Nave and the poorer residents on the hard wooden benches at the back. This social 'pecking order' is confirmed by an entry in an old St. Paul's register which records that *'In the year 1722 a seat built by Jonathon Dalmer, William Grant and Thomas Lawrenor, at their own charge, and for (use) of each family to sit in being ye second double seat in the north side of the Chappell'*.¹⁸ The front pews were being occupied by the Bythesea family, of Wyke House, the Bayley's, the Grants, and the Smith families who all appear to be the wealthiest and most prominent villagers at that time.

Right: Illustration from the front cover of St. Paul's first Baptism Register which dates from 1673.



Left:
The Smith Family Memorial tablet on the south wall of the Nave. It commemorates family members who were buried at St. Paul's between 1778 and 1856.

Interior walls of the Chapel were whitewashed and boards displaying the Ten Commandments were hung on the walls each side of the Chancel Arch. Memorials were now being allowed inside the Chapel, for those who could afford them, and a fine marble tablet commemorating the Smith family, and dated around the mid 1700's, is preserved on the south wall of the present Church building. The Parish Clerk, elected annually by the Easter Vestry, and in those days an important and prominent Church official, occupied his own special pew in front of the congregation and one of his duties during the services was to read aloud each line of the hymn before it was sung by the congregation. This 18th century church custom was known as 'lining out'.¹⁹

Many villagers, however, since the religious upheavals of the mid 17th century, had become dissenters and, although persecuted by the State for many years and later restrained, began to be reluctantly accepted when the Toleration Act of 1689 went some way towards recognising them by insisting that their activities were licensed. These groups initially met in village houses and certificates had to be obtained to make their meetings 'official'. A non-conformist meeting house is recorded in Staverton in 1791 when Peter Collier applied for permission to use his house as a 'Chapel'. The application was signed by other Staverton dissenters such as William Linzey, William Axford and William Hudd. At around the same time William Hibbard's cottage was being used as a meeting place for village non-conformists and his license application was supported by Joseph Dean, William Axford, William and Joseph Linzey and Job White. Two decades later James Bull, a Wesleyan Methodist, was granted a certificate to use his dwelling for 'Chapel' worship, his request being backed up by William Dalmour, Samuel and John Marks, James Ricketts, Thomas Richards, Stephen Gay, George Rison and James Pullin.²⁰ Relationships between Church people and non-conformists in Staverton appeared to be quite amiable during this time and indications of this can be seen from a Church record of 1820 when Wesleyan James Bull was quite happy to '*mend*' the pathway leading down to St. Paul's Church.

Many non-conformists, in fact, worshipped in both Church and chapel and most had no choice but to use St. Paul's for their weddings, baptisms and burials as the religious ceremonies amongst dissenter groups were not officially recognised by the State. St. Paul's records contain many entries of non-conformist's children being baptised in the Church in the 18th and 19th centuries. Some of these baptisms included the children of Thomas and Jude Rollings, Robert and Elizabeth Dean, Isaac and Mary Smith and John and Susannah Milsum. Marriages of Staverton non-conformists also had to take place in St. Paul's Church and entries in the 18th century registers record the names of Staverton couples of many religious persuasions who made their vows at the only officially recognised wedding ceremonies which had to be conducted by an Anglican Minister.²¹

The Church Vestry, elected annually by the village ratepayers, remained responsible for poor of the Parish and their duties further increased in 1722 when the Poor Law of that year introduced the setting up of workhouses and they had the unenviable task of deciding when to send destitute residents and their families to these infamous institutions, one of which was located in near-by Semington. Vestry officials also became responsible for appointing the village Waywarden to look after the Parish's paths and tracks a post which became much more important after 1770 when the Turnpike system of roads came to Staverton. Charles Hodgkin is recorded as Curate at St. Paul's in the 1780's when evening prayers were said every alternate Sunday, and a Mr. Reece was carrying out this duty in the 1790's when an afternoon sermon was instituted provided that *'sufficient monies can be collected to defray the Curate's expenses'*. Chapelwarden's accounts continued to report on the poor state of the building and repair work was constantly required. Nathaniel Bissey, Chapelwarden in 1798, complained that the Church roof *'was much out of repair'* and the exterior stonework badly needed repointing. The money for these repairs was normally raised from the Church Rate and in 1800 the new Chapelwarden, Thomas Bissey, reported that 13 guineas had been collected for that year.²²

The 19th century was a period of enormous social change for the religious life of Staverton and its villagers bringing with it a new Church, the first village School, the growth of Methodism, a Staverton Parish in its own right and a new Vicarage to house its first resident Preachers. At the start of the century villagers were worshipping in a very old 'Chapel of Ease' which was tiny and in a very bad state of repair. It was served by Curates from Trowbridge who were generally unfamiliar with village people and their everyday problems, services were not always regular, sermons were too long, pews were only available to the better off families and the building was cold and damp. The despair of these unsatisfactory conditions turned many ordinary families towards the alternative Methodism, which had grown in popularity through the previous century, and although conducted in village houses, the services were considered simpler and 'brighter'. Others turned away from religion altogether in the early years of the 19th century and less than half of villagers attended any sort of religious worship. An added factor to this growing discontent was, due to the dramatic growth of the village population in the early 1800's, because of the plentiful work being offered by the local cloth industry, enormous strain was being put on the tiny village 'Chapel' which began to struggle to accommodate those who wished to attend services on a regular basis. The major cause though was the declining standard of living, increase in the death rate, poverty and destitution especially amongst the 'immigrant' cloth working families who invariably blamed the Church for the situation and, as some perceived it, their 'abandonment by God'. This had the effect of driving more away from the Church, especially in the difficult years of the mid 1800's, and attendances gradually declined towards the end of the century.

Nevertheless, St.Paul's continued to be a 'going concern' for those who stuck to their faith and a number of dedicated and committed Staverton families ensured that the village church was kept 'alive' throughout the trials and tribulations of the 19th century.

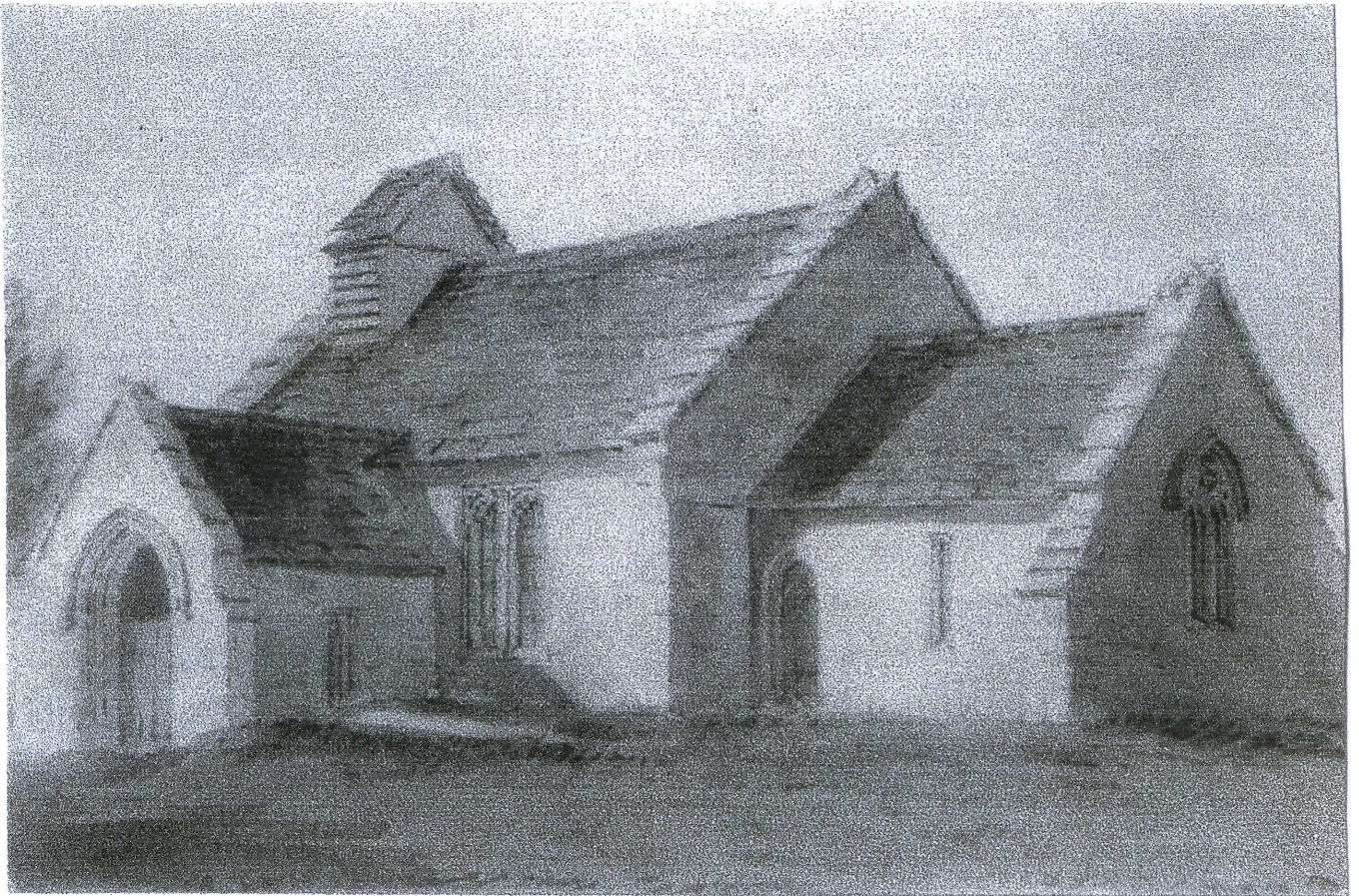


The famous Vicar/Poet George Crabbe who was Rector of St.James's Church in Trowbridge from 1814 to 1832. He occasionally preached his 'colourful' sermons at St.Paul's Church during his eighteen years Incumbancy.

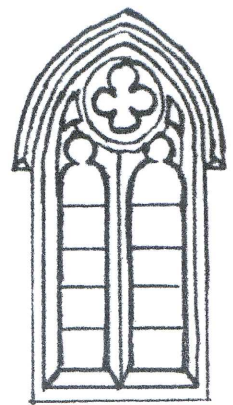
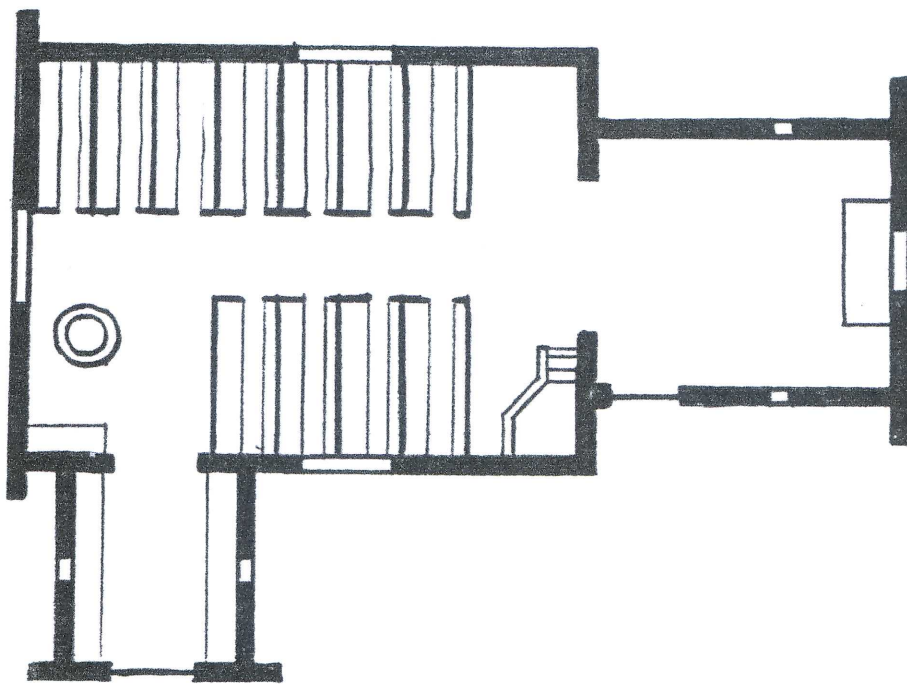
James Beaven became the Chapelwarden in 1804, when Vestry accounts still recorded payments for the capture of 'vermin', two new doors were fitted to the Chapel porch by Samuel Bryant in 1808 and a new Bible was purchased in 1810 for £4.8s, a considerable sum of money in those days and the equivalent of almost two month's wages to a village labourer. Further repairs were carried out the following year by John Deverell, a local builder, who added to his £9 bill the sum of 16s.2½d. to provide '*beer for the men*' who had helped with the work. John Brown was appointed Parish Clerk by the Vestry in 1815, with an annual salary of two guineas, and John Crabbe had taken over as Staverton's Curate. The previous year the famous Vicar/Poet George Crabbe had arrived in Trowbridge as Rector of St. James's and he occasionally officiated at St. Paul's during his eighteen years incumbancy. George Crabbe became a champion of the poor in his earlier days as a Minister and wrote many poems on the plight of the poverty stricken farm-labourers and hand loom weavers who invariably ended up in the appalling Parish Workhouses of the 19th century. One of his poems describes the conditions in these institutions and part of it read as follows:

*Theirs in yon house that holds the parish poor,
whose walls of mud scarce hear the broken door;
There, where the putrid vapours, flagging, play,
and the dull wheel hums doleful through the day;
There children dwell who know no parent's care;
Parents, who know no children's love, dwell there!
Heartbroken matrons on their joyless bed,
Forsaken wives, and mothers never wed;
Here, on a matted flock, with dust o'erspread,
The drooping wretch reclines his languid head;
For him no hand the cordial cup applies,
Or wipes the tear that stagnates in his eye. 23*

George Crabbe died in 1832 and is to be remembered locally not only for his literary works but also his colourful sermons at St. Paul's Church, some fragments of which can be found in the Church records archived in the County Records Office.



Staverton's Chapel of Ease which had occupied the present Church site in various forms since the 14th century. Painted by Wiltshire Artist John Buckler in 1806



A conjectural plan of the interior of the tiny Chapel of Ease, and above, an illustration of the building's 15th century small east window.

3 *The Re-building of St.Paul's*

Constant repairs were being made to the 'Chapel' in the early years of the 19th century with the windows receiving attention in 1819 and the Vestry reporting that James Bull had been paid five shillings for '*mending the road (path) to the Church*' in 1820. Edward Cooper, the Staverton Cloth Mill owner, became Chapelwarden in 1821 and immediately began making plans to re-build and enlarge the tiny village 'Chapel' which had been the communities place of worship, in various forms, since the 13th century. Cooper's Mill, then in it's heyday, was providing plenty of work for local people and many weaving families and other cloth trade workers had moved into the village from the turn of the century. This influx of new inhabitants had placed a strain on the tiny 'Chapel' of St.Paul's and difficulties were being experienced in coping with the larger congregations now attending the services. Another factor that had accelerated the re-building programme was the growth of Methodism in the village which had increased so much by the early 19th century that it warranted the opening of a new Wesleyan Chapel in 1824.

The 'Chapel of Ease' that was replaced by the present Church in 1826 was a tiny structure and dated back to the 15th century when the existing wooden building had been replaced by one in stone. A picture of this stone Chapel, painted in 1806 by Wiltshire artist John Buckler, shows what the building looked like and gives a good indication of it's size and style. It was constructed from local stone, roofed with stone tiles, and contained a small tiled bellcote at the west end of it's roof. The tiny Nave was rectangular in shape and led into an almost square Chancel at the east end. A small wooden door was located in the south wall of the Chancel and long narrow slit windows gave limited natural light to the Chancel interior on it's north and south sides. The larger east window was arch shaped and divided into two lights by a central column which rose into an elaborate design of carved stonework at the top.

This stonework consisted of a circular four petal shaped window below the arch point and two small triangular shaped apertures which filled the gaps on each side where the two main window openings became bottle shaped at their tops. The window appeared to contain plain glass, was crowned by a thick arch shaped stone moulding and it's style would date it to the 15th century.

A pitched roof porch, which seemed large in comparison to the size of the rest of the building, was located at the south west corner of the Chapel and was entered through an arch shaped carved stone doorway which was closed by a stable type wooden door. Small narrow slit windows were inserted centrally into the east and west walls of the porch and narrow buttresses ran off each side at the bottom half of the front wall. Located centrally in the south wall of the Nave was a small square shaped window again divided into two by a central column and terminating in a simple carved stone design at it's top where the window openings formed rounded arches. Small circular apertures, two above each window, completed the design in the stone areas created each side of the top of each arch. The design of the building indicates that a similar window was positioned centrally in the north wall of the Nave and that the porch was a later addition. Although the west end of the building cannot be seen on the painting it is probable that a window of similar size and style to the east window was situated here.

The east and west ends of the building were supported by small tile capped buttresses and the bellcote at the far west end of the roof had a pitched stone tiled covering and contained one small bell the rope of which hung down against the west wall of the interior. No records are found to indicate what the interior of the Chapel was like but a conjectural plan formulated from studies of the painting can give a good idea of how it was arranged. The floor area of the Nave was approx 432 square feet and could only have accomodated about twelve rows of pews. This would indicate that the seating capacity of the building was about 60 which seems to be confirmed by statements taken from records made during the re-building of the present church.¹

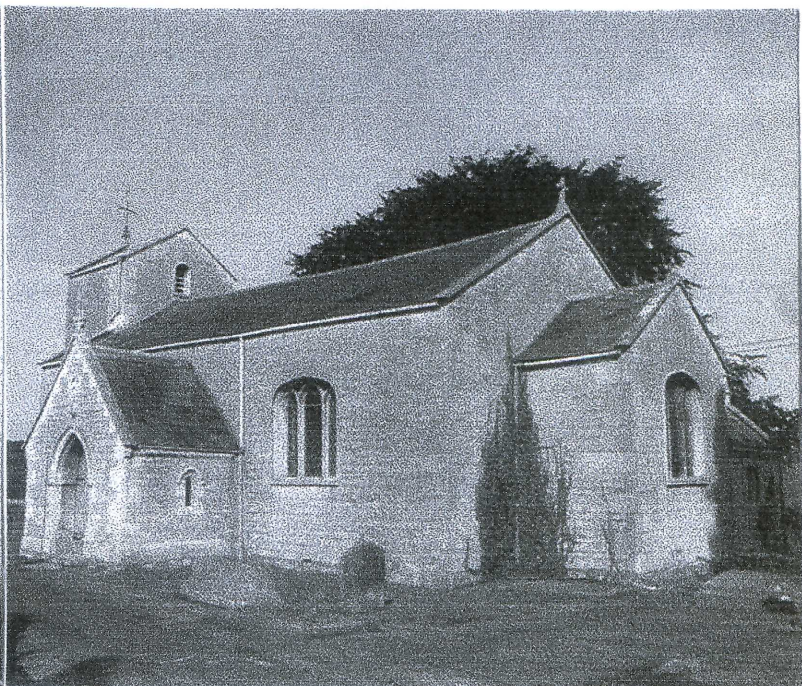
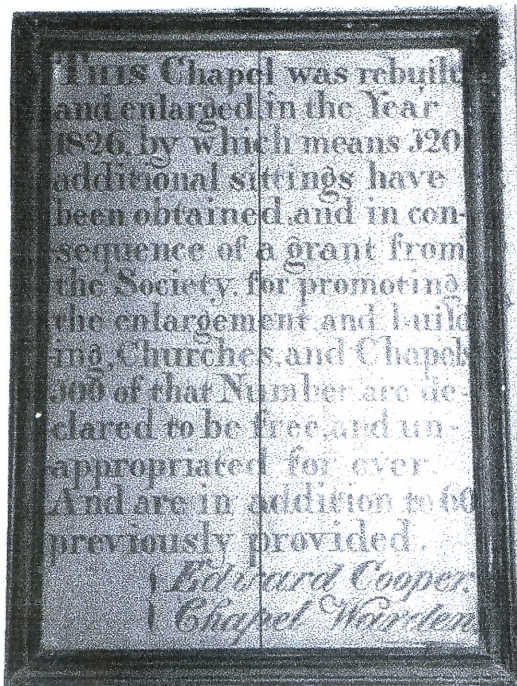
To allow access from the porch into the central aisle the south west third of the Nave could not be used for seating and probably housed the font which was situated close to the back wall. Buckler also illustrated the font in 1806 and close examination of the drawing would indicate that it is the same font which is used in the present Church.

Assuming that a pulpit was located against the east wall of the Nave this would leave only enough space for four rows of pews on the south side. The remainder of the seating would have been situated in the north side of the main building and a small space to the left of the inner porch doors could have accommodated a further few seats. The Chancel took up approx 154 square feet of floor space and was larger than the existing Chancel in the present St.Paul's. Apart from the holy table at the east end we do not know how the Chancel was furnished but, as no vestry attachment existed, must have contained a large wooden chest to keep the Chapel registers, church plate, bread and wine, candles, vestments, books and the other church essentials.²

A village rate of 6d. in the pound was collected in 1825 to help provide funds for the re-building of St.Paul's, a grant was obtained from the Society for Promoting the Enlargement and Building of Churches, and Edward Cooper provided the rest from his own finances.³ Sufficient funds were available by 1826 and the complete re-building of St.Paul's commenced. The old 'Chapel' was virtually demolished and the new building erected in it's place was more than double the original size. Local stone was used in the reconstruction and very little of the old Chapel was retained apart from various pieces of stonework which can still be seen in the present Church. To record the building of the 'new' St.Paul's a notice was displayed in the Church and can now be seen on the west wall of the porch. It reads:

'This Chapel was re-built and enlarged in the year 1826 by which means 120 additional sittings have been obtained in consequence of a grant from the Society for Promoting the Enlargement and Building of Churches and Chapels. 100 of that number are declared free and unappropriated for ever and are in addition to 60 previously provided.

Signed - Edward Cooper, Chapelwarden'



The notice provided by Edward Cooper commemorating the rebuilding and which is now displayed in the Church porch.

The 'new' St. Paul's, completely re-built in 1826.

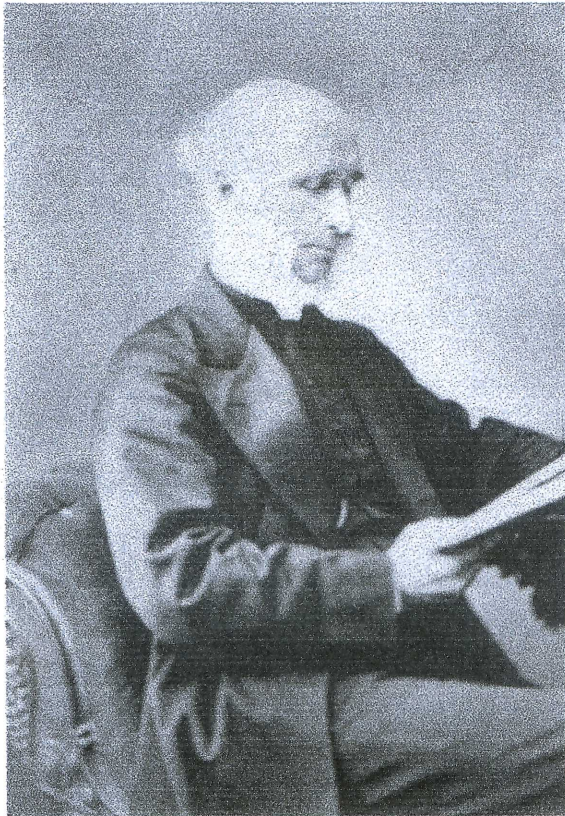


Staverton's first Church of England School was opened in 1850 in a canal warehouse building behind Wharf Cottage. Right: Walter Newth Chapelwarden in the 1850's and Founder Manager of the new School

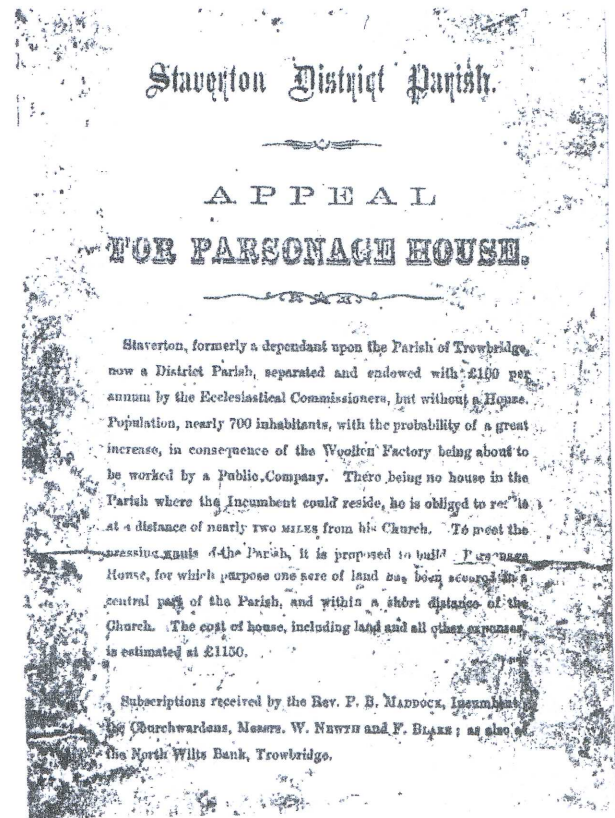
The re-built Church, at this point, consisted of Nave and Chancel only, the porch and vestry being finally added over 35 years later. St. Paul's was now a completely different building from the one it had replaced and a full description of the Church as it is today will be found in the last chapter of this book.

New gates were installed at the entrance to the churchyard in 1829, Walter Marriott became St. Paul's Curate in 1832 and by 1835 the seating capacity in the Church had been increased to 220 with the addition of tiered pews in the south west corner.⁴ In 1839 Staverton became a separate Parish in the gift of the Rector of Trowbridge and would now, for the first time in its history, have its own resident Vicar with the first one being the Rev. J.R. Prityman.⁵ He only remained for two years and once again St. Paul's was looked after by Curates, A. Douglas in 1841, J. Langhorne in 1842, C.S. Row in 1843 and L.W. Hinton from 1844 to 1847. The living was endowed for £100 in 1844, a large sum of money in those days, but the first incumbents had to live in Trowbridge until a Staverton Vicarage could be provided. George Garratt was elected Parish Clerk in 1845 and Benjamin Cooper, James Howell and Walter Newth were Churchwardens between 1846 and 1849. In 1848 St. Paul's once again had its own Vicar when the Rev. M.S. Berry became the incumbent and he was followed by the Rev. Richard Vigors in 1859.⁶

Staverton's first Church of England School was opened in the village in 1850 and occupied part of a warehouse on the canal wharf. The building, attached to Wharf Cottage, was owned by the Kennet and Avon Canal Co. and leased to St. Paul's Churchwarden Walter Newth who became one of the founder Managers of the new school.⁷ Samuel Hooper, John Cooper, William Webber and Frederick Blake are recorded as the Churchwardens between 1850 and 1857 and around this period George Garratt, the Parish Clerk, was given an increase in salary to 4 guineas provided he agreed to *'keep the Church and Church walk clean, toll the bell, and provide evergreens at the Christmas and Easter Festivals'*⁸



Rev. Philip Bainbridge Maddock
St. Paul's Vicar 1860 – 1888



The Appeal Notice for funds to
build the Staverton Vicarage



A rear view of Staverton Vicarage, completed in 1861, and which became the home of resident village Vicars for over 100 years.

The Rev. Philip Maddock became Staverton's Vicar in 1860 and his arrival coincided with the addition of the porch and vestry at St. Paul's and the building of the village Vicarage in which he became the first occupant. The need for a village Vicarage had become quite pressing by the late 1850's and an appeal was launched to provide Staverton Parish with a 'Parsonage House'. An acre of land had been secured between the railway and the canal and subscriptions were sought to finance the building costs which were estimated at £1,150. The appeal stated that the Parish now had nearly 700 inhabitants and that there was the possibility of a great increase *'in consequence of the Staverton Woollen Factory being about to be worked by a public Company'*. The village cloth factory had been closed for 18 years and reports that the Government had acquired it in the late 1850's were subsequently denied. However, negotiations had been taking place with various interested parties on the purchase of the mill site and it was on the strength of this that the exaggerated statement of *'a great increase'* was made. This, of course, did not materialise although a new business called the West of England Woollen Manufacturing Company did set up operations in the mill in 1864.⁹

Donations for the new Vicarage were given by local landowners and village people, £100 was obtained from Queen Anne's Bounty and a considerable sum from the incumbent himself, the Rev. Philip Maddock, and many local clergy. Materials and services were given by local tradesmen and businesses including the donation of 5,000 bricks from the Trowbridge Brick Company, and the building was completed and occupied by early 1861.¹⁰

Church services were enhanced in 1861 when a harmonium was purchased and placed *'in the gallery'* as a gift to the Parish. The fund raising activities to provide the instrument were organised by Miss Blake who managed to collect over £45 towards its cost. However, the financial burden on St. Paul's was ever increasing and by 1870 the situation had become so acute that collection boxes were placed by the Church door to help generate more funds.



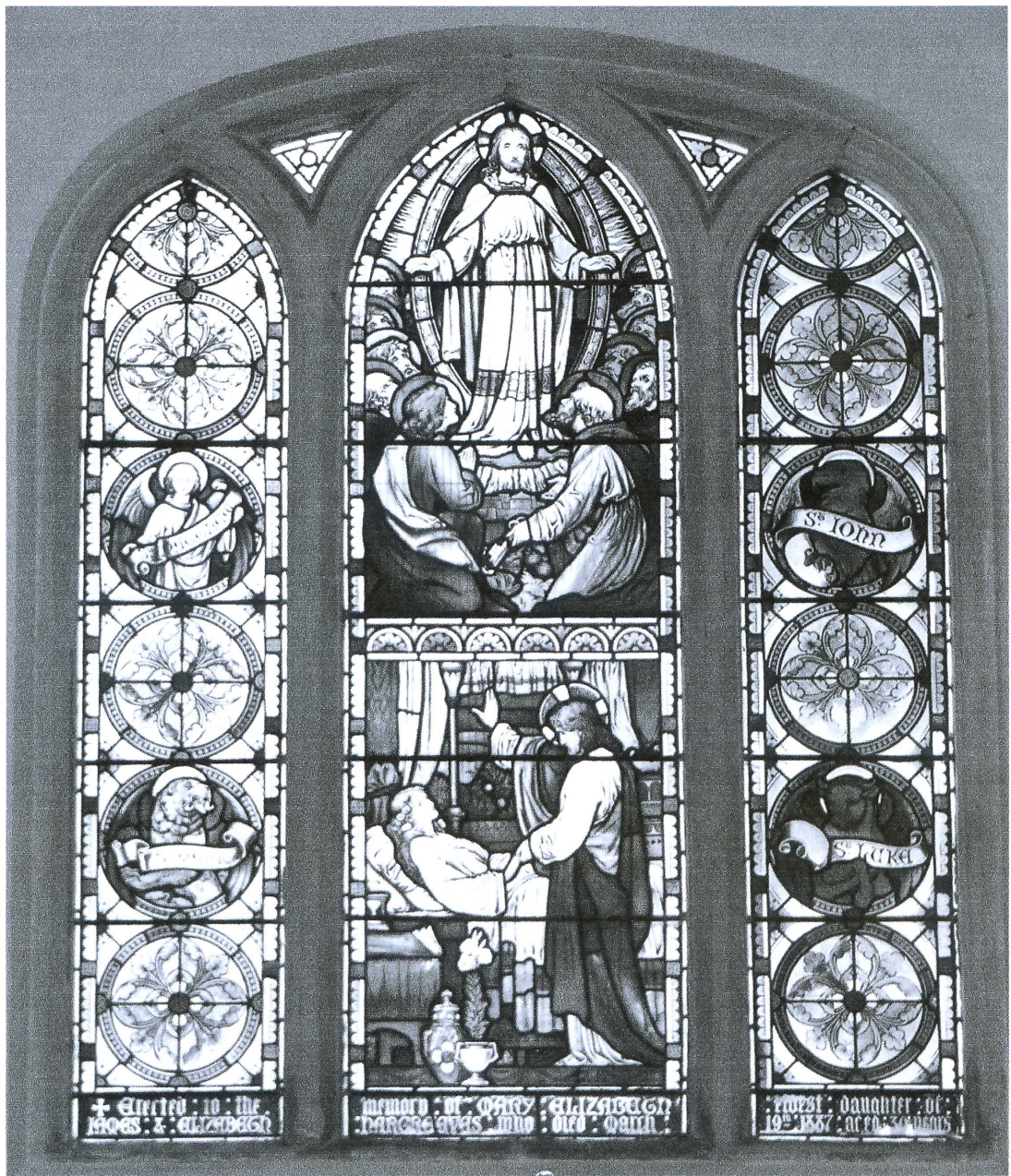
The size of Staverton Parish in the early 19th century its southern boundary reaching to Islington on the out-skirts of Trowbridge.

Left: Rev. Theodore Cavell, Staverton's Vicar 1889 to 1897

Initially, the response was favourable, twelve shillings being collected on the first two Sundays and by 1873 over £12 was being received annually in voluntary contributions.¹¹

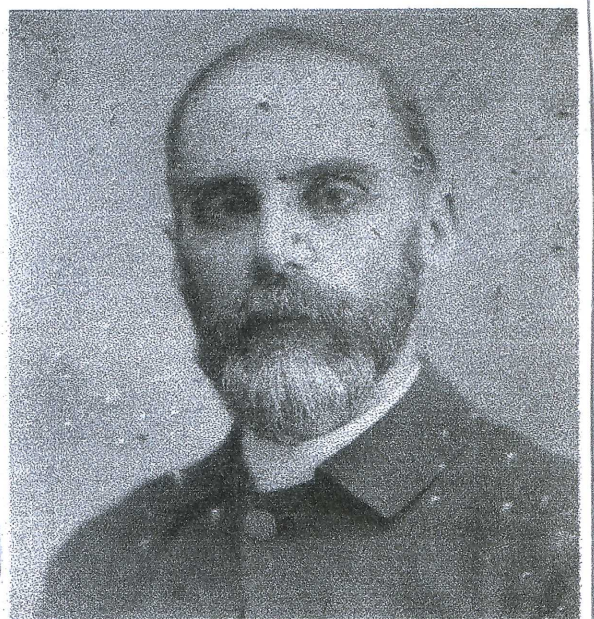
With Trowbridge beginning to expand northwards from the mid 19th century a new ecclesiastical area was needed, to look after the influx of potential new worshippers, and Staverton had to give up some of its ancient Parish area when the new Trowbridge Parish of St. Thomas's was created in 1870.¹² From the very earliest times the ecclesiastical Parish had comprised the village of Staverton and the hamlet of Staverton Wick, now Wyke, with the Parish boundaries extending to Victoria Road, a large part of the Down and Islington and stretched across the lower Wyke farmlands as far as Ladydown. Marsh Road and the land that is occupied by Queen's and Princess Gardens formed the south east section of the Parish and the northern and western parish boundaries formed a line along the Avon and the Biss. The formation of St. Thomas's Parish meant that Staverton would lose some of its Victoria Road and Down areas and this inevitably led to a reduction in the number of churchgoers, on the outskirts of the Parish, who in the past would have travelled to worship at St. Paul's.

George Garratt, Parish Clerk for the past 29 years and noted as a '*most exemplary christian*' in the Church registers, died in 1874 and was replaced by John Purnell as Clerk and Sexton in 1875.¹³ William Blake and George Woods were the Churchwardens in the 1870's and Florence Hannum played the harmonium during church services in the 1880's for which she was paid an annual fee of £2. St. Paul's Church choir is noted at this time although there may have been one in existence many years before this and probably from when musicians and singers were introduced in the 18th century. The Rev. Philip Maddock retired in 1888 after 28 years as St. Paul's Minister and the Rev. Theodore Cavell became the new village Vicar the following year. Educated at St. Bee's college, he had been incumbent at Parishes in Ipswich, London, Yorkshire and Derbyshire and had left St. Paul's in Poole to become Staverton's Vicar.¹⁴



St. Paul's fine stained glass east window installed in 1890 by the Hargreaves family, owners of the Staverton Cloth Factory, in remembrance of their daughter Mary Elizabeth.

Right: Rev. Stuart Ridley, Staverton's Vicar 1898 to 1905



He was a relative of the famous nurse Edith Cavell who was shot by the Germans in World War I for assisting the escape of British and French prisoners of war from Belgium.

The fine stained glass east window in St.Paul's was installed in 1890 by the Hargreaves family, owners of the Staverton Cloth mill from 1870 to 1891. The new window was in remembrance of Mary Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of James and Elizabeth Hargreaves, who died on the 19th March 1887 aged 30. It features the four evangelists with a central light of Our Lord raising Jairus's daughter from the dead and above it a representation of the ascension into heaven. The Rev.Theodore Cavell died in 1897 and Stuart Ridley took up the post as Staverton's Vicar in 1898. He claimed to be a direct descendent of Bishop Ridley, the Bishop of London in Queen Mary's reign, who was burned at the stake in 1555 for his opposition to Mary's Cathlocism.

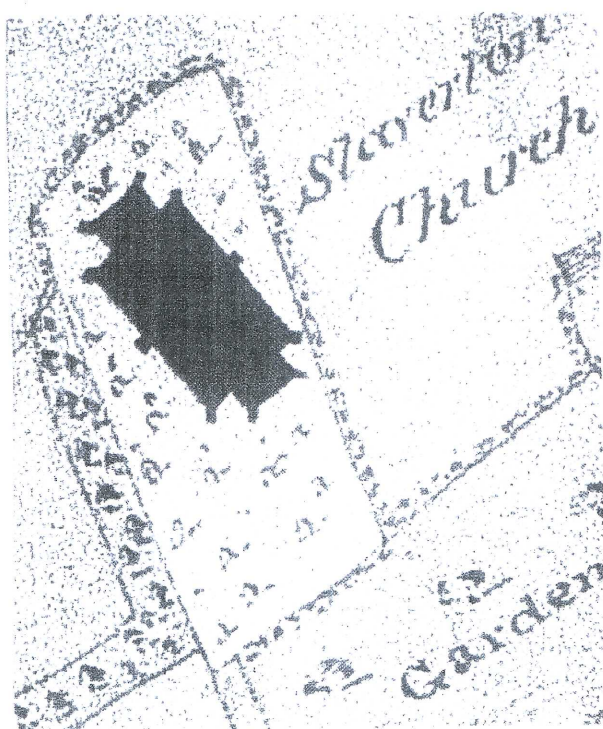
Throughout the 19th century St.Paul's and Staverton's religious life had undergone considerable changes and now faced the 20th century with a new Church building but ever decreasing congregations due to dramatic reduction in the Parish population caused mainly by the decline and eventual closure of the village cloth factory. The century had begun on an optimistic note with the village population increasing steadily and with it the number of Staverton families attending church, this prompting the re-building and enlargement of St.Paul's. The drift to Methodism had been contained and services had been enhanced with the introduction of organ music and choirs. However, this 'peak' in the fortunes of village church life was soon to be eroded as Staverton's social problems worsened, for the many reasons described earlier in this chapter, resulting in many turning their backs on religion. Although the village had it's own resident Vicars from the 1850's onwards the decline continued, not helped by the loss of part of the Parish in 1870, and by the end of the century St.Paul's was beginning to struggle financially and faced the prospect of a considerable reduction in support. One glimmer of hope at the close of the century came from the take over of the cloth mill site by a condensed milk company with the anticipation locally that this new business would create more jobs and encourage people to move back into the Parish.



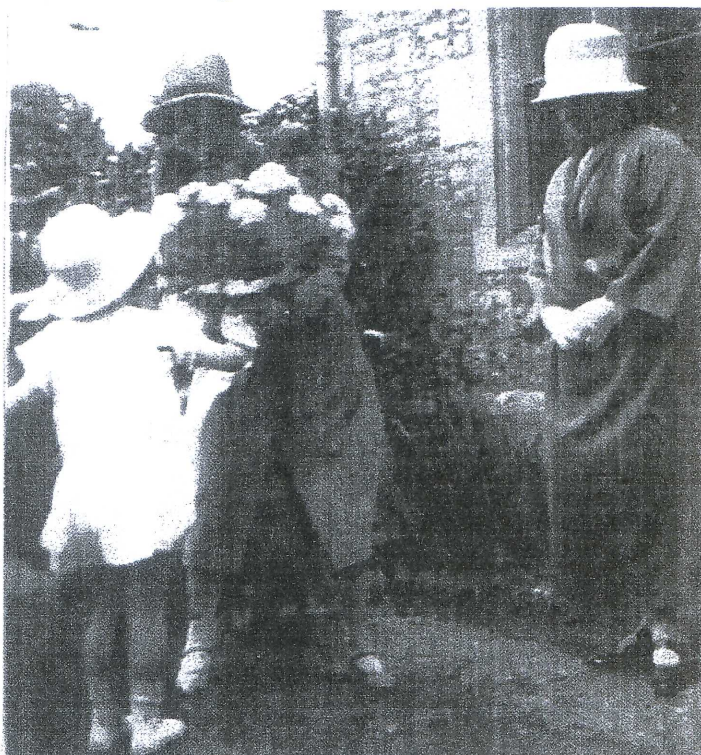
Rev. Albert Isherwood, St. Paul's Vicar for 32 years from 1905 to 1937.



Maria Endru (nee Purnell), Village Schoolteacher and St. Pauls Organist for many years



The size of St. Paul's Churchyard before it was extended in 1906. (From the 1845 village field map)



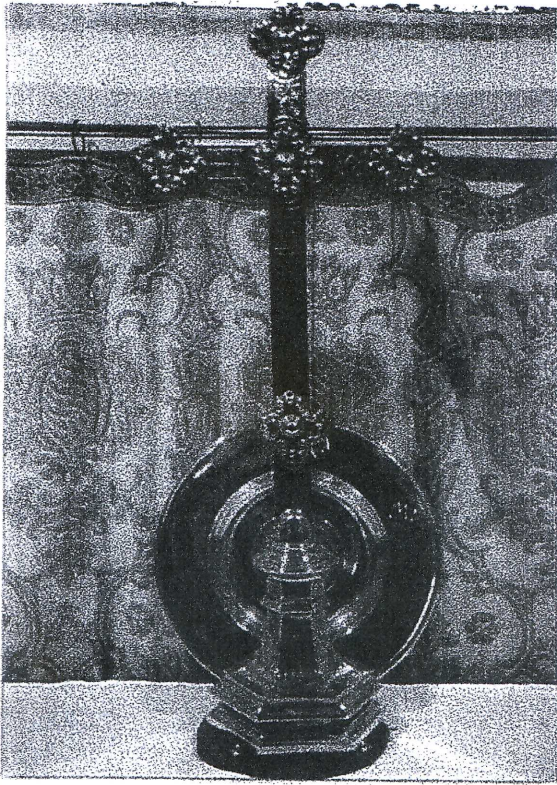
Young Mary Blake presents a bouquet of flowers to Mrs Isherwood at the Church Fete held on the Vicarage grounds in 1915

4 *St.Paul's in the 20th Century*

At the start of the 20th century Samuel Bird and William Clark were the Churchwardens, Maria Purnell was the organist and Herbert Purnell had been appointed to the position of Parish Clerk. St.Paul's tiny churchyard was reaching it's capacity by 1901 and fears were being expressed that it may have to be closed to burials unless more land could be obtained to extend it. The urgent need to find funds for a larger graveyard and the ever increasing costs of running the Church presented a severe financial crisis in 1903 and rummage sales and requests for donations were organised to help raise the badly needed extra money to clear the Church's debts.¹

In 1905 the Rev. Albert Isherwood came to Staverton as the new village Vicar. He had previously been the Incumbent at Worton and Marston and was a prominent Freemason serving as their provincial Grand Chaplain. One of his first tasks as the new Vicar was to bring the churchyard plans to a successful conclusion. The extra land needed, to the north of the Church, was obtained and a village collection raised nearly £50 to help pay for the cost of the work and to provide fencing for the new ground. A number of village men volunteered their services to carry out the work and erect the iron fencing and the job was completed in 1906. The total cost of the alterations had come to £80 and Dr.Wordsworth, the Lord Bishop of Salisbury, attended the opening ceremony and conducted the service of consecration.²

A new organ was purchased in 1908 to replace the old harmonium and gas lighting was installed in the Church in 1910. Frank Couzens, George Jacklin and Samuel Bird were the Churchwardens during the years of the First World War, Edward Drayton was the Sexton with a salary of £7 per annum and the organist, now Mrs.Maria Endru, had her fees increased to £5 per year. The hostilities that broke out in Europe in 1914 brought great anxiety to village families as many Staverton husbands, fathers and brothers were sent off to fight in the trenches of France and Belgium.



St. Paul's brass altar cross dedicated to Howard Purnell (above), a member of the Church Choir who was killed on the Somme in 1916



Donald Rogers, St. Paul's Churchwarden in the 1920's.

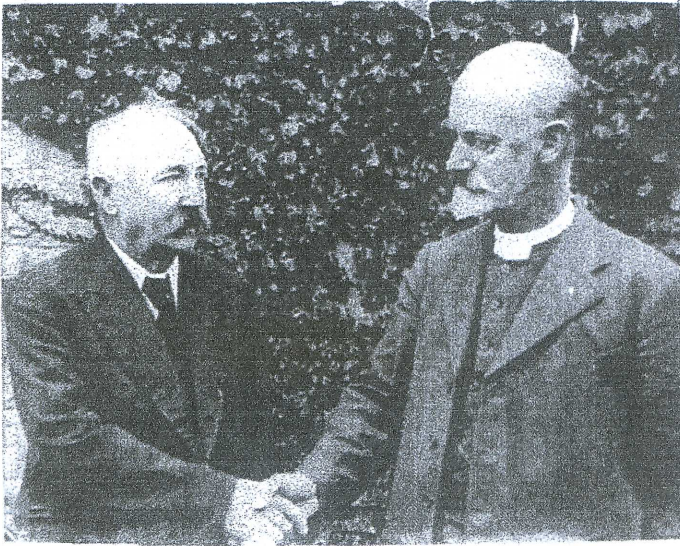


St. Paul's brass eagle lectern and village War Memorial

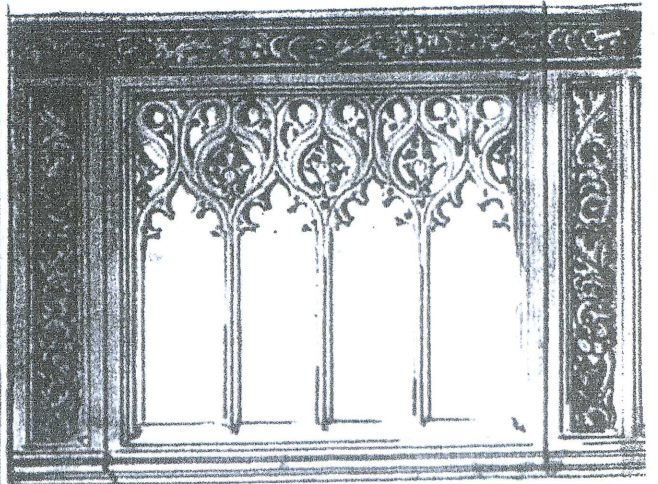
By the end of the war, four years later, seven men from the Parish had made the supreme sacrifice and their names were recorded for posterity on the Church's brass eagle lecturn which, from that moment on, became the village war memorial. Sunday School outings, organised by Mrs. Amelia Rogers and her helpers, Milly and Lily Bird, continued in the early 1920's and George Wiltshire and William Vezey took it in turns as church organ blowers. Victor Blake and Donald Rogers were the churchwardens in 1922 with Herbert Foreman taking over from the latter the following year. Vestry minutes of 1924 indicate that the church finances had improved and go on to praise the efforts of Mr. & Mrs. Fred Purnell for '*keeping the Church and churchyard in such an excellent condition*'. Proposals were made in 1925 to replace the weather vane; '*the present one is nearly 60 years old*;' and to repair the church bell which had recently become '*out of order*'.³

The present altar cross was presented to St. Paul's in 1926 by Mr. & Mrs. Donald Rogers who dedicated it to the memory of Howard Purnell, a chorister of the church, and one of the village men who lost his life in the Great War. Donald Rogers was the Manager of the Nestle and Anglo Swiss Condensed Milk factory in Staverton, formerly the old village cloth mill, where Howard Purnell had worked as a Tinsmith Fitter before being enlisted for active service at the start of the war.⁴

Church heating became a much debated subject over the next few years and proposals were made to provide gas radiators in the aisles as the old heating system was considered to be beyond repair. This scheme, however, did not materialise and the problem was temporarily resolved by the provision of a replacement boiler for the old hot air system. Mabel Vezey was the organist in the 1920's and 1930's, the fee being increased to £8.10s. in 1930, the organ blowers received one shilling for each Sunday they 'performed' and the church path was asphalted in 1931. In 1932 a unique anniversary was celebrated when James Osbourne was congratulated by the Rev. Isherwood and presented with an award for completing 50 years as a member of the church choir at St. Paul's.⁵



Rev'd Albert Isherwood congratulates James Osborne (left) for completing 50 Year's service in St. Paul's choir – 1932



Original drawing of a section of the oak communion rails that were installed in 1936.



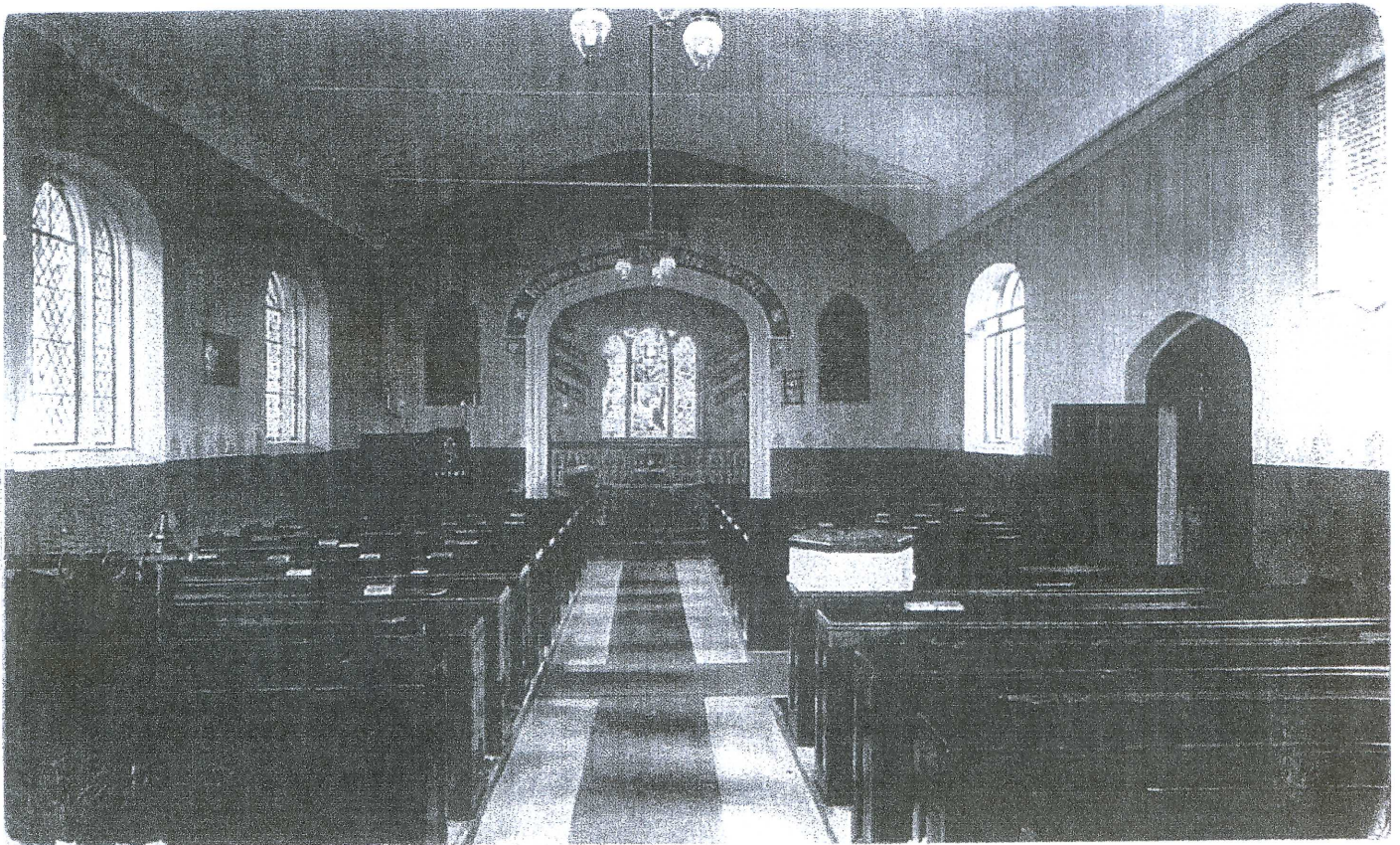
The interior of St. Paul's in 1909. The Royal Arms can be seen above the Chancel arch and the inscriptions each side of the east window read "Jesus stood in the midst and said Peace be unto you".

Also that year, the growing concerns about the security of St. Paul's priceless Elizabethan silver chalice, hallmarked 1577, which was always kept in the Vestry, resulted in the Church Council deciding that it should be deposited in the vaults of a local Bank for safe keeping. A replica was brought into use in 1932, purchased from a generous gift to St. Paul's by Julia Blease who, four years later, also provided the carved oak communion rails that were installed beneath the chancel arch. In 1937 the Rev. Albert Isherwood passed away and the village mourned the sad loss of one of its longest serving Incumbents. During his 31 years as Staverton's Vicar he had become very involved in the life of the community, had presided over the enlargement of the churchyard, major repairs to the church building and the renovation of Staverton School, a village institution in which he took a great interest and to which he was a frequent visitor.⁶

Victor Blake and Frank Couzens, the new churchwardens in 1938, welcomed the Rev. Francis Maunder as the new village Vicar and his arrival coincided with the installation of electric lighting in the church which replaced the old gas lighting system. The new Vicar, like his predecessor, also took a very active part in the life of the community, supported the School in many activities including swimming, helped to run the local scout troop, and also took on the role of Parish Clerk in 1940.

In 1941 Ethel Blease and Harry Bird were elected churchwardens and both continued in office right through the years of the second world war. As with the Great War of 1914/18, many Parish men were called up to serve in the armed forces and by the war's end the names of three more Staverton men had been added to the village war memorial in the Church.

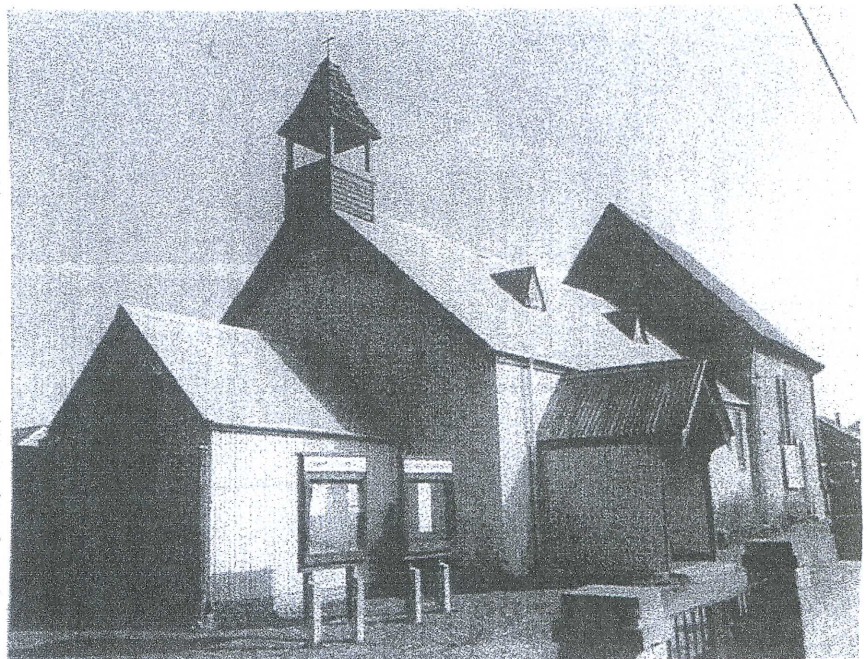
Albert Matthews succeeded Mrs. Fred Purnell as Verger in 1947 and Ernest Tasker became the second churchwarden on the death of Harry Bird in 1949. In the early 1950's John Blake, William Legg and Ethel Blease carried out the churchwarden's duties at a time when Church Council was becoming alarmed at the untidiness of the churchyard and the poor condition of some of the graves.⁷



The interior of St. Paul's in the late 1920's. The 'new' gas lights can be seen below the ceiling and the inscription above the Chancel arch reads " Holiness becometh thine house for Ever".



Rev. Francis Maunder
St. Paul's Vicar from
1938 to 1970.



St. Mary's in Hilperton Marsh joined with St. Paul's in 1954 to form the 'Staverton Churches

A churchyard committee was set up and discussions took place to decide on what actions were needed these including a proposal to level any unkempt graves. Many plots had been neglected, had become overgrown, and known relatives of the deceased were contacted to ask for their support in improving the situation.

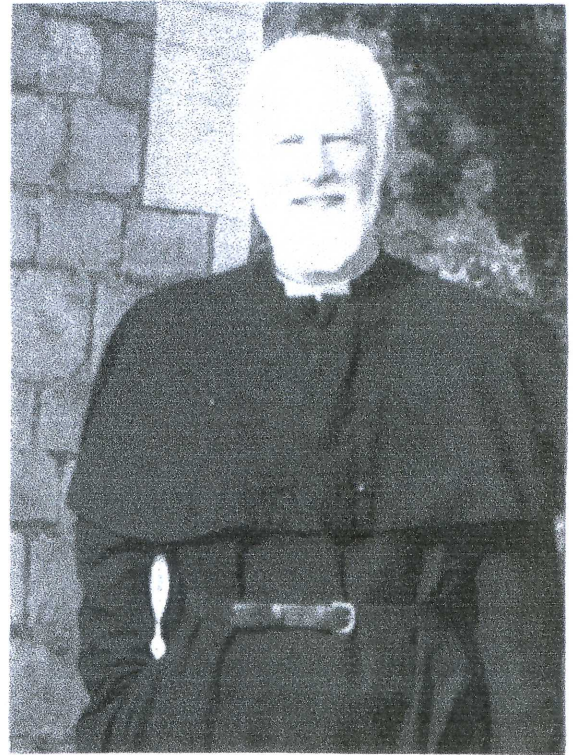
St.Mary Magdalen's Church in Hilperton Marsh, built at the behest of the Clark family of Wyke House in 1899, was merged with St.Paul's in 1954 to form the 'Staverton Churches' and in future both would be looked after by a joint PCC and the Vicar of Staverton. At St.Paul's, Vera Malyn was appointed Assistant Verger in 1956 and the following year her daughter Valerie took over as organist on the retirement of Maria Endru who had played the music at church services for over 50 years. Ceiling level gas heaters were installed in 1957 to replace the outdated warm air heating system which, in recent years, had become very inefficient and too costly to run. Repairs to the roof and bell tower were carried out in 1960 and Vera Malyn took over the role of Verger on the death of her father, Albert Matthews, who had been St.Paul's Verger and Sexton for the past 13 years. Later that year the church organ was moved from it's position in the south east corner of the Nave and re-sited the other side of the aisle in the north west corner.⁸

In the early 1960's St.Paul's Verger, Vera Malyn, also took on the role of church organist and the church registers of 1964 recorded the burial of Albert Bath '*a faithful servant of God*' and past Sexton and organ blower at St.Paul's. The very physical job of organ blower was finally phased out in 1969 when an American pipe organ with electric blower replaced the old manual organ, and the security of church valuables was improved when a modern Chubb safe was purchased in 1970 and installed in the Vestry.

The Parish came to the end of an era in 1970 with the death of the Rev.Maunder because, as events turned out, he was to be the last resident village Vicar of Staverton.⁹



Rev. Peter Matthews became St. Paul's Vicar when Staverton joined the Hilperton Benefice in 1971.



Rev. Philip Bell, the Benefice Vicar from 1978 to 1986.



St. Paul's Church gateway needed urgent repairs to it's pillars in 1980.

The future of St.Paul's was again under discussion and in 1971 proposals were made to merge Staverton's Churches with Holt. However, after long and sometimes emotional debate it was finally decided that Staverton's Churches would join with Hilperton and from now on St.Michael's Rectors would look after the needs of the Parish and conduct the services in St.Paul's and St.Mary Magdalen's. The Rev.Peter Matthews was Rector of Hilperton at the time and welcomed the two Staverton Churches as they joined with St.Michael's and St.Mary's, Whaddon to form the much larger Benefice created by the merger. Not long after the merger the empty Staverton Vicarage was sold and some years later was converted into a Care Home for the Elderly under the name of 'The Old Vicarage'.

Further alterations took place in St.Paul's in 1972 when the front pew on each side of the Nave was removed, the altar table was enlarged and a memorial plaque to 'Frank' Maunder was placed on the south wall of the Nave. John Blake and Wilfred Stone were churchwardens in the early 1970's and in 1974 a pneumatic pipe organ was purchased for £60 and replaced the old American organ in the north west corner of the Nave. The ceiling was re-painted in 1975 and the following year the tiered pews in the south west corner were removed and replaced with the two pews taken from the front of the church three years earlier. Major repairs were also carried out to the exterior of the building with the roof being overhauled, some defective timbers being renewed and the old iron guttering being removed and replaced with square section plastic piping.

The churchwarden's position was filled by Phylis Blease in the late 1970's and in 1980 a proposal was made by the new Hilperton Rector, the Rev.Philip Bell, to remove the church gates which in recent years had become unstable and unsafe due to cracked stonework on the pillars. The proposal was rejected by the Parish Council and the Local Authority, the latter subsequently placing a preservation order on the structure to ensure that it was maintained.¹⁰



Rev. Hugh Hoskins conducted many services at St. Paul's and St Mary's in the 1980's and was ordained into the Priesthood in 1985.



Phylis Blease, Churchwarden in the 1970's and 80's and a lifelong benefactor to St. Paul's

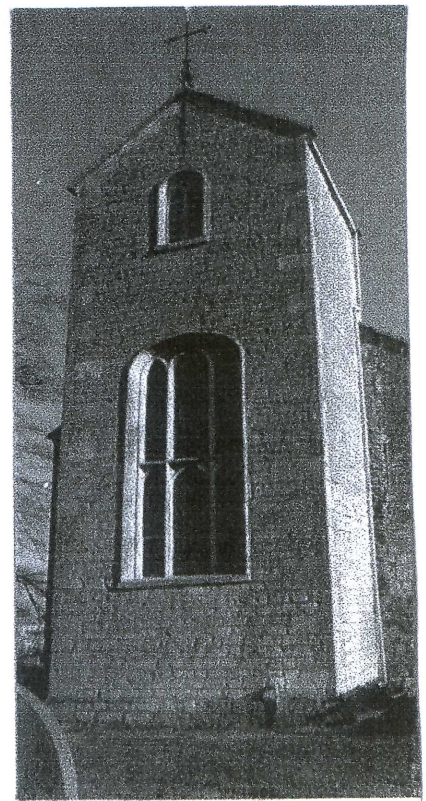


St. Paul's in the 1980's Showing the ceiling suspended gas heaters

Later that year the Parish Council arranged for repairs to be carried out to the damaged gateway by stonemasons sent up from the near-by Nestle's Factory. Peter Woodman became the new churchwarden and immediately embarked on a major programme of refurbishment to the interior of the Church. The building was completely re-wired and new lighting installed, at a cost of over £800, and the old outhouse on the north west corner of the Church, used in the past to store fuel for the boiler, was demolished. The following year the interior walls were stripped back to the bare plaster, re-coated with polyskin, re-painted with limowash, and essential repairs were carried out to the interior stonework. Floors were treated with preservative and some areas of the exterior stonework were repaired and re-pointed.¹¹

Congregations had steadily fallen and financial support had dwindled by the 1980's and this situation had run St.Paul's into another crisis by 1984. A public meeting was called in September to discuss the future of the Church and indications at the time were, that if more support was not forthcoming, St.Paul's would be in danger of closing. Many villagers at the meeting agreed to help and extra funds were promised with some pledging regular donations by covenant. The crisis had been temporarily averted but Staverton people were left in no doubt that their continued support would be vital to secure the long term future of their village church.

Janet Blake became churchwarden when Peter Woodman and family moved away from the area and the Benefice staffing was strengthened by the arrival of Deaconess Kay Holloway. The Parish Lay Preacher, Hugh Hoskins, who had conducted many services at St.Paul's, was ordained into the priesthood in 1985 at a special service held in St.Michael's, Hilperton and presided over by the Rt.Rev.John Neale, Bishop of Ramsbury. His ordination turned out to be a very timely event as he was soon to be put temporarily in charge of the Benefice whilst a replacement was sought for the retiring Philip Bell who had been Hilperton and Staverton's Vicar for the past seven years.¹²



St. Paul's large west tower window was extensively repaired in 1991.

Rev. Richard Hicks, Benefice Vicar 1986 to 1997



St. Paul's magnificent Copper Beech tree dominates the churchyard

In 1986, Richard Hicks, previously with the Swanborough Team Ministry, became the Benefice Vicar and later that year further external work was carried out at St. Paul's by a Manpower Services Team sponsored by Nestle's. The Church gates and churchyard fence were repaired and painted, the churchyard tidied up, some old graves renovated, and the lamp standard on the pathway cleaned and re-painted. Nestle's also supplied a Mason to re-point the exterior stonework of the building and repairs were made to the Vestry doorway. Peter Lavis took over as churchwarden in 1987 and made arrangements for the church interior to be re-decorated. A section of flooring in the south west corner of the Nave was repaired and a bookcase constructed from the front pew by the font. The ceiling of the Nave was cleaned and re-painted, the Chancel walls and ceiling re-decorated, and the main entrance doors stripped, treated and re-varnished.

Hugh Hoskins left the Benefice in 1987 to take up a Ministry in Calne and Christina Nunn came to the Parish as a Deacon to succeed Kay Holloway. The south east window of the Nave, damaged by storms in the spring, was repaired and in July 1988 the fine old copper beech tree, in the north west corner of the churchyard, was pruned and treated by tree surgeons, WestTree, after some of it's branches had become unstable. Ex Schoolteacher, Rev.Sue Wilkins, took over the role of Deacon in 1990 and the following year the large west window in St.Paul's, which had deteriorated badly in recent years, was almost completely replaced by Bakers, a firm of church glaziers from Weston-super-Mare, after sustaining more damage from severe storms the previous winter.¹³

A great deal of repair and redecorating work had been carried out at the church over the last twenty years and all the hard work and dedicated effort that had been put in by everybody during that period was rewarded with a very satisfactory report from the church Surveyors. The report, arising from the 1991 quinquennial inspection of the building, indicated that the fabric of St.Paul's was generally in a sound condition and no major faults were immediately evident.¹⁴

Some minor problems were listed in the report which recommended repairs to the vestry door, attend to missing slates and sections of guttering on the roof and to treat the floor and woodwork against infestation. In response to the report a brand new exterior door was fitted to the vestry and all the other tasks were completed in 1992. Damaged fence panels, on the east side of the churchyard, again caused by severe winter storms, were also replaced with new interwoven sections.¹⁵

In December 1992 the outdated gas heating system failed and was subsequently condemned by the Gas board. Temporary heating was brought into the church and investigations were carried out in early 1993, principally by St.Paul's Treasurer Ray Wickings, to find a suitable modern replacement system. A fund raising appeal was launched to raise over £2,000 for the new heating and by the end of the year sufficient money had been donated for the purchase and installation of six Electric Quartz Halogen heaters which were suspended just below the ceiling on each side of the Nave. The total cost of providing this new heating system had come to just over £2,400 most of this amount being given in generous donations from St.Paul's supporters both within and outside the Parish. The new heaters placed an added strain on the church's long established electrical system and in April 1995 St.Paul's had to be re-wired with a split phase system and new fuse boxes to eliminate the risk of the newly installed electrical equipment causing overloading, the work costing an additional £480.

By 1995 the old church organ, provided in 1974, had begun to deteriorate quite badly. Keys were sticking, some notes had become 'dumb' and it had become very difficult to play properly. The PCC launched another fund raising appeal in the middle of the year to replace this old instrument with one that had been offered to St.Paul's free although transportation and re-assembly costs would have to be met. This appeal ran through into the summer of 1996 when, again, thanks to the generosity of many local people, the fund raising target was reached.¹⁶

The previous autumn a water colour painting of the Church was commissioned by Nestle UK for use on their annual Company Christmas cards and their appreciation to St. Paul's for permission to use a picture of the Church was recognised by a donation of £1,000 and the presentation of the original painting which now hangs on the south wall of the Nave near the main church entrance. Some sections of the north west window of the Nave had to be replaced in February 1996, at a cost of £182, and the quinquennial inspection carried out in August of that year reported that St.Paul's was in a reasonably good condition and no urgent repairs were needed although some minor faults were identified with a section of the roof near the tower needing some attention and a recommendation that the Vestry should be re-decorated.¹⁷

The new organ, offered to St.Paul's by Vivien Gallaway of Poole, Dorset, was finally installed at the back of the Nave in August 1996 by Osmunds of Taunton and the remaining pews in the tower base were removed to accomodate the new instrument's electrical control boxes. A special service to bless and dedicate the new organ was held in St.Paul's on 27th October 1996, conducted by the Bishop of Ramsbury, the Rt. Rev. Peter Vaughan, when a packed congregation, including special guest Vivien Gallaway, were treated to a rousing organ recital by Alan Harwood, Director of Music at Salisbury Cathedral. St.Paul's new organ had been hand built by Miss Gallaway's late father in 1953 and was used in a Poole Boarding School until 1993 after which it became redundant and had to be found a new home. It is a two manual pipe organ with pedals, four ranks of pipes supply the stops for the keyboards and a rank of 16 foot wooden pipes to create a bourelon pedal stop.¹⁸

To coincide with the introduction of the new organ a framed remembrance scroll, beautifully inscribed by Ann Gimson, was placed on the south wall of the Nave and commemorated the past loved ones of the many people who had subscribed to the organ appeal fund.



Vera Malyn, St. Paul's Verger and Organist for over 40 years.

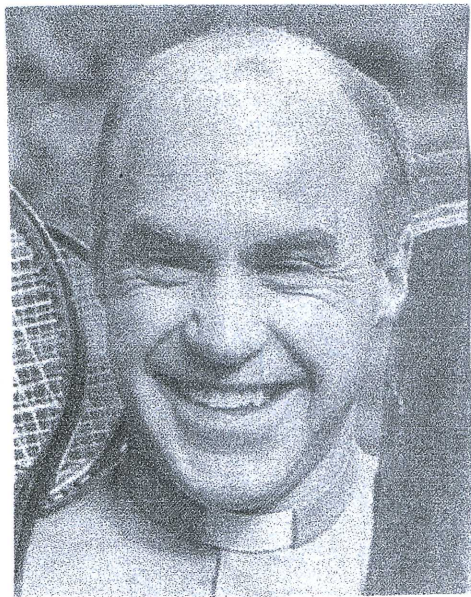


The watercolour painting of St. Paul's which featured on the Nestle Company's Christmas card in 1995.

Right: Donator of St. Paul's new organ, Vivien Galloway, with the Bishop of Ramsbury, Richard Hicks and organ builder Philip Baker.



Below: Rev. Bobby Magill, who became the Benefice Vicar in 1998



Right: The late Alice Purnell, in whose memory the new St. Paul's heating system is dedicated.



The scroll was also dedicated to the late Alice Purnell, a life long worshipper at St.Paul's, in whose honour a large sum of money had been given towards the appeal for new heaters several years earlier.

In January 1997 further repairs were carried out to the exterior of the building when the coping stones on the south west corner of the roof were repaired and re-bedded and the joint between the roof angle and the east end of the tower was sealed to eliminate water seepage.

Richard Hicks retired as Staverton and Hilperton's Vicar in October 1997 and, with wife Irene, moved north to set up a retirement home in Brampton, Cumbria. During his 11 years as the Benefice Vicar he had chaired the Governing body of Staverton School and was one of the leading campaigners in securing a new Primary School for the village. He had been the driving force behind initiatives to raise finance for extensions to St. Michael's Church and improvements to St. Paul's which was now equipped with a new organ and modern heating system. His wife, Irene, had also been very pro-active in the Benefice, was a regular helper at Staverton School and an active member of St. Paul's and St. Mary's PCC.

The new Vicar, the Rev.Bobby Magill, arrived in the Benefice in May 1998 and with wife Claire and children Ian, Flora and Annie, set up home in the recently modernised Hilperton Rectory. His previous post had been as Assistant Curate at West Moors, near Wimbourne, Dorset, and he was installed as Priest in Charge of the Staverton/Hilperton Benefice at a special service held in St.Michael's on 12th May, the service being conducted by the Bishop of Salisbury. Rev.Magill was soon active amongst his new 'flock' taking a keen interest in both village schools, becoming Chair of Governors at Staverton School in 1999, and promoting the Ministry amongst the children of both communities as well as looking after the religious and spiritual welfare of all the residents of the Benefice.¹⁹

He was instrumental in activating the next phase of improvements at St.Paul's which resulted in funds being raised to completely carpet the Nave and Vestry and to install exterior lighting along the churchyard path. These two projects were completed by December 1998, at a cost of £1,350, making St.Paul's a much brighter, safer and more welcoming Church for village worshippers to attend.

Other additions to the Church as the new millennium approached were a new frontal for the pulpit reading board, made and presented by Lesley Warne, the purchase of a new Lectionary and the provision of a new noticeboard on the wall outside the church gates, the cost of purchasing the latter being met by an anonymous, and very generous, local benefactor. The new Vicar also introduced a weekly newssheet which detailed the services being held in each Benefice Church and listing events taking place that week and other useful items of information.²⁰

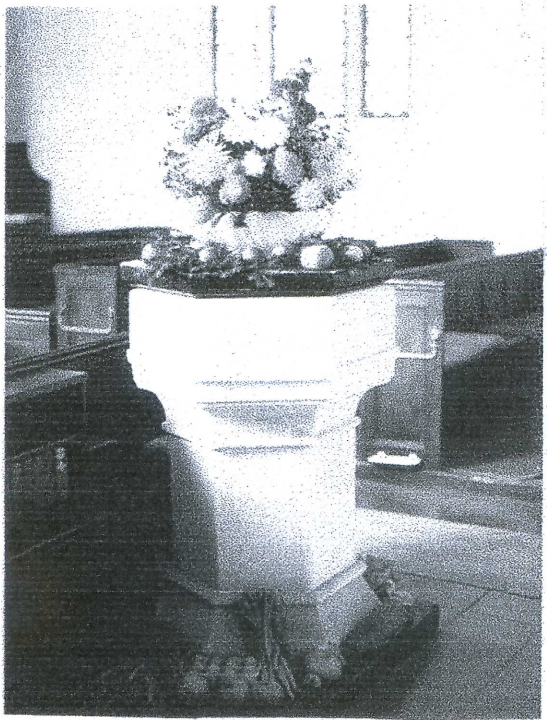
St.Paul's, with all the modifications carried out over the last few years, was now well equipped to face the challenges of the 21st century and with a positive and more determined approach starting to percolate it was hoped that the steady decline in the support of Staverton's historic village Church would start to show signs of recovery.

St.Paul's will continue to serve the community and due to the loving care and dedication bestowed on it by many people over the past years should remain a welcoming and important village institution well into the next century. If this situation is to continue the people of Staverton must make a committment now to ensure that their Church is cared for and supported in the years ahead and by doing this St.Paul's long term future will be assured.

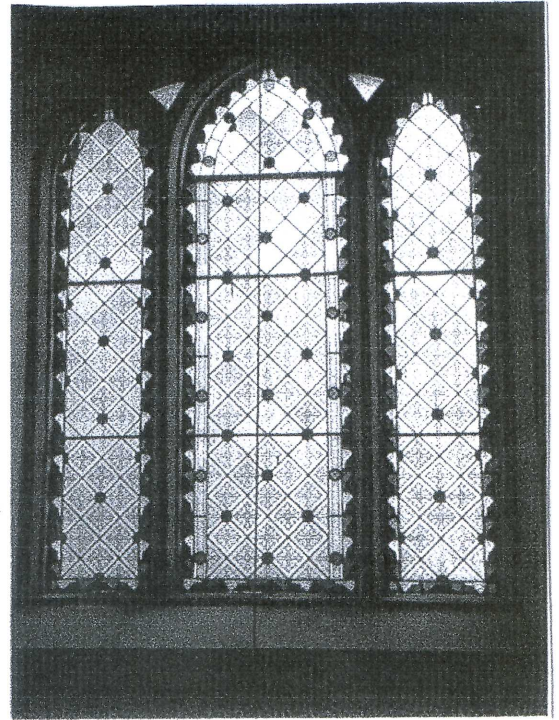
4 Description of the Present Church

The design of St. Paul's Church, a square box-like building, is often described as unspectacular but this should not detract one from the fact that it was purpose built to be functional rather than elegant and reflects the businesslike thinking of the early Victorian era. Built of ashlar and dressed limestone from the Bradford quarries of Paulton or Gripwood¹, the building comprises a rectangular Nave, small square ended Chancel at the east end and a short bell tower at the west end. The pitched roof is of Welsh slate, as is the saddleback roof on the tower, and has coped verges with cross finials². Three large windows are set at regular intervals in the north wall and one each side of the porch in the south wall. These windows are the Tudor centred arch type with lancet lights and two quarter columns³. Most of the side and west end windows are of plain glass with a thin crimson border surrounding the insides of the window arches. The exception to this is the north east window, slightly different in style to the rest, and containing stained glass made up principally of a cross pattern. This window, older than the rest, is thought to be the only one retained from the earlier building.

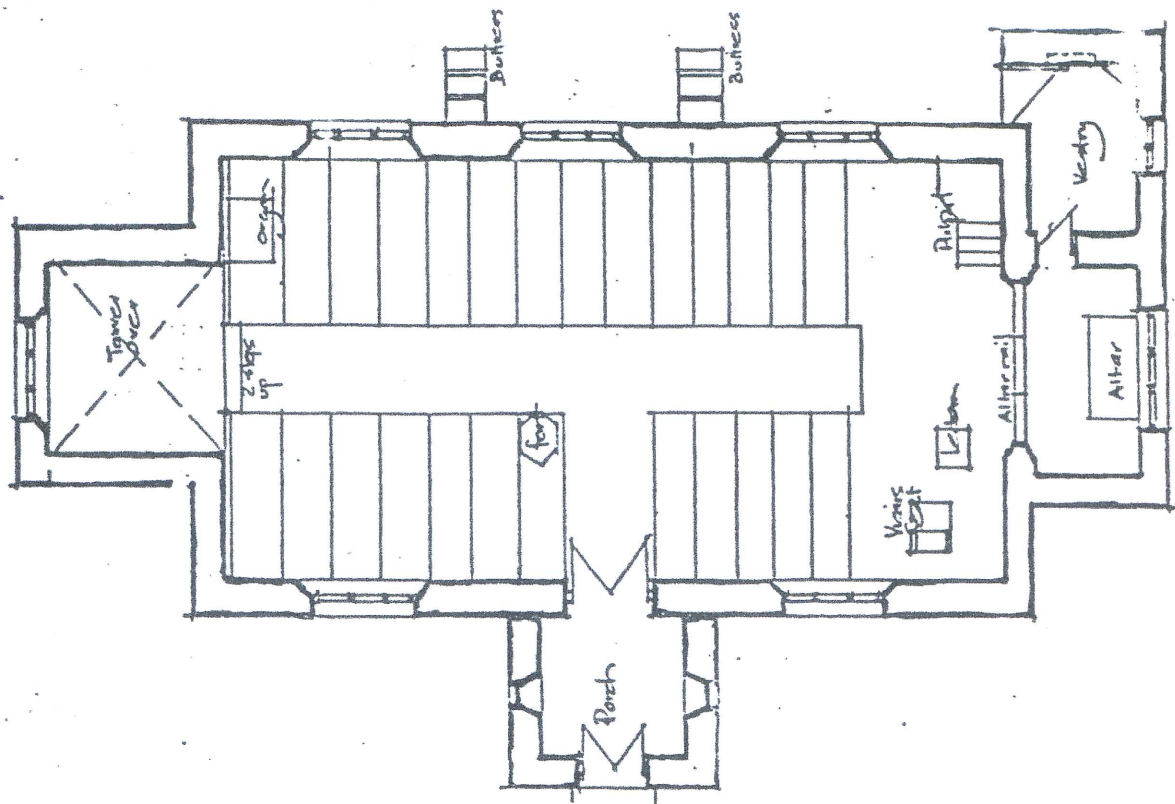
A huge double window of the same style as the rest is set in the back wall of the tower and the Chancel window at the east end is stained glass. Whether a stained glass window was installed here during the re-building is not known as the present window was provided at a later stage.



St. Paul's hexagonal Font, retained from the previous Church.



The stained glass north east window of the Nave.



Plan of St. Paul's Church with it's interior layout.

The porch was added in 1860 and is the main entrance to the Church. It's pointed double doors of pine lead into a vestibule which has stone benches to the left and right and small norman style windows of plain glass with a gold border in each side wall. Over the porch doorway is a cross set in the stone and above this a circled stone cross sits on the front apex of the Welsh slate pitched roof. The back of the porch contains a double door which leads into the Nave and the stone archway that surrounds it is older in style to the rest of the building, c 1760, and is probably part of the earlier structure⁴. Supporting the porch roof is a fine six trussed ceiling with diagonal boarding in pine⁵.

A Vestry was added, around the same period as the porch, c 1860, and this is adjoined to the main building in the north east corner. This small square construction with pitched, tiled roof has an entrance door in it's west wall and a small square double window looking out onto the east side of the churchyard. A unique chimney breast rises a few feet above the apex of the roof and is built into the north wall. Remaining external features of the church building are the two substantial buttresses which support the north wall and these were added to counter foundation movement in the area where the ground slopes away on the north side of the churchyard. A final glance upwards reveals the stone cross on the east end of the main roof, the metal weather vane on top of the bell tower and the norman style louvered light vents in the east and west ends of the tower walls.

Entry into the Church through the porch doors reveals a spacious and uncluttered interior with the large windows providing a high degree of natural light. Plain deal pews fill the northern side of the Nave and the seating arrangements on the south side are split into two by the entrance. A plain hexagonal font, made of Corsham stone, stands just inside the entrance and when not in use is covered by a heavy wooden lid which has a metal lifting ring and decorations to it's top. This font is thought to be the one retained from the earlier building as it is identical to the one painted by Buckler in 1806 ⁶.

An unusual feature of the pews are the brass umbrella hangers on the pew ends with their laquered metal troughs below them, rarely found now in English churches. On the south wall to the right of the doors is an ancient marble tablet commemorating the Smith family whom it is thought are buried in an external vault just outside the south west wall. The internal base of the tower is raised above the natural floor level and originally housed the choir. The two rows of stalls that used to occupy this floor space were removed in recent times to create a social area and room to house the new organ's electrical control boxes. The high ceiling in the bell tower contains a small access hatch to the belfry where the two church bells, one 10" and one 4", are located. The larger of these two bells used to hang in the bell tower of the Staverton Cloth Mill until 1824, the year of the disastrous fire that reduced the mill building to ashes.⁷

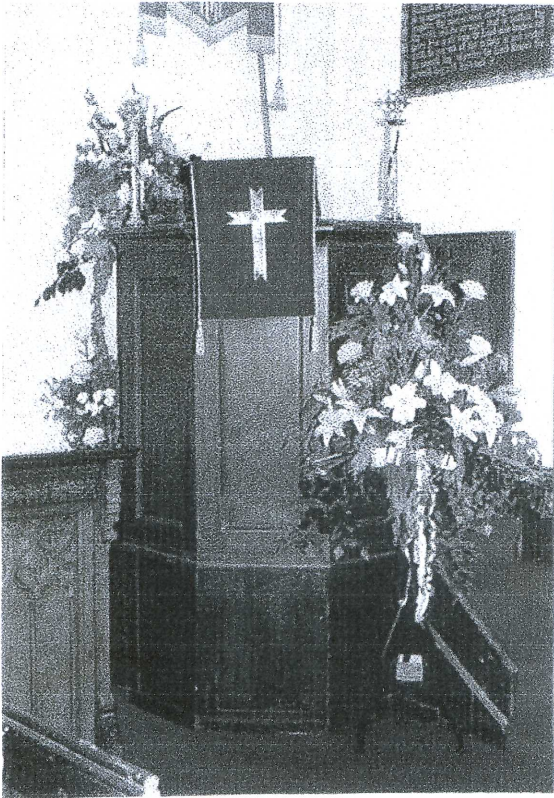
To the left of the large tower archway and on the south west wall of the Nave is a metal grill which was part of the original hot air heating system of the church. A similar grill can be found in the floor of the aisle beneath the carpeting and both became redundant when radiant gas heaters were installed in 1957.⁸ The old system was operated from an external boilerhouse located outside the south wall of the tower and traces of it's chimney can still be seen where the tower wall meets the west end of the main building. The present organ, situated on both sides of the aisle at the back of the Nave, is an electric pneumatic pipe organ donated to the Church and installed in 1996.⁹ It replaced the previous instrument, which was installed in 1974, which in turn replaced an earlier American pipe organ which had an electric blower fitted in 1969.¹⁰ Electric lighting was introduced in 1938 and replaced the old gas lighting originally installed in 1910.¹¹

A brass memorial plaque on the north wall is dedicated to the Rev. Philip Bainbridge Maddock, Vicar of Staverton from 1860 to 1888, who died at Clifton in 1899 aged 84 years.

His wife, Eliza, who died a year later, is also remembered together with their children Philip Harrington and Katherine Frances, both the latter dying at the fairly young ages of 35 and 32 respectively. They are buried in a family plot which can be found beneath the copper beech tree in the north west corner of the churchyard. Further to the west of the north wall is a brass tablet in honour of the Rev. Francis 'Frank' Maunder who died in 1970 and was the last resident village Vicar. To the east end of the Nave near the pulpit can be seen the faint traces of an old interior wall and this thought to be the remains of part of an earlier Chapel c.1600. During renovation work on the walls in the 1980's traces of red and blue paint were found beneath the plaster and these could possibly have been fragments of old mural paintings that decorated the walls of the previous building.¹² These two pieces of architectural evidence can bring one to the conclusion that parts of the north wall of the present church may well have been retained during the re-building of 1826.

The pulpit is of plain deal panels and is situated in the north east corner of the Nave. It was originally located in the south east corner but was moved in the late 19th century. Features of the pulpit are it's fine pair of hinged brass candle holders each side of the reading board and the St. Paul's Mothers Union banner in the corner above. Situated in the east end of the Nave, one each side of the aisle, are two litany desks of oak with varying types of carving. The Church's eagle lecturn, a fine example in solid brass, is located in the south east corner of the Nave and replaced an earlier, and much smaller one, made of oak. Besides it's normal church function it also represents the village War Memorial and the engraving on it reads as follows:

"In honoured memory of the men of this Parish
who gave their lives in the Great War 1914-19"
Captain Harold C. Clark
Private Howard Purnell
L/Cpl Albert E. Ash
Private William H. Gay



The plain deal pulpit situated in the north east corner of the Nave.



The Chancel of St. Paul's with its ornate communion rails.



A view of the interior, taken in 1990, looking towards the west end. The old pipe organ in the north west corner was replaced in 1996.

Cpl. Alec J. Hudd
Private Frank R. Holloway
Seaman Stanley W. Gardiner

Also in World War 1939-45

Private Reginald W. Carter, Wilts Reg.
P/O John H.D. Hammond, RAF
Sgt. Herbert F. Slatford, A/G RAF

Flanking the Chancel entrance at the east end are metal gothic shaped plaques proclaiming the ten commandments in gold lettering on a dark brown base. The dating of these tablets is unknown but plaques like these were placed in churches from the early 18th century, although probably in those days made from wood. Above the Chancel arch, until recent times, was a painted scroll with the inscription "Holiness becometh thine house for ever" and was of similar style to the existing scroll above the stained glass east window. Prior to this, a banner with the words "Holy, Holy, Holy" was painted above the Chancel arch just below the Royal Arms. Both were removed during decoration work in the early 20th century.¹³ A stone step leads from the Nave through the ornate communion rails and into the small Chancel. These communion rails, made from oak with foliage and vine carvings and open traceried panels, were installed in 1936 and are the result of a generous gift by Julia Blease.¹⁴

The altar cross, made of brass, is dedicated to one of the village's war dead and its inscription reads:

"In loving memory of Howard Purnell
A chorister of this Church
who gave his life in the Great War"

Presented by Mr. & Mrs. Donald Rogers
Easter 1926

Howard Purnell was killed at the battle of the Somme in 1916.



The interior of St. Paul's in 1990 looking from the Tower base.



St. Paul's eagle lectern in the south west corner of the Nave.



The Victorian iron lamp standard halfway along the Church path.

Plain brass candlesticks decorate the altar top and the frontal for the holy table was presented to the church by Julia Blease.¹⁵ To the side of the vestry door, on the north wall of the Chancel, is a small oak credence shelf, installed in 1936, which is used to hold the sacraments during communion services. A Bishop's chair of oak with a carved back occupies the south side of the Chancel. The fine stained glass east window was installed by the Hargreaves family, owners of the Staverton Cloth Factory from 1870 to 1891, and is in remembrance of one of the Hargreave's children. It depicts Our Lord raising Jairus's daughter from her sick bed in the lower central light with a representation of the Ascension into Heaven in the pane above. The side lights picture the four Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in roundals, two each side. (An illustration of this window will be found on Page 28). Above this window is an ornamental painted scroll, in red, blue and gold, which proclaims the words "This do in remembrance of me". In the early 1900's there were also scrolls each side of the window with the words "Jesus stood in the midst and said Peace be unto you".

The most precious item of church 'plate' in St. Paul's possession is an Elizabethan solid silver chalice with a 1577 hallmark, and because of its great antiquity and value it is kept securely locked away in a local Bank and only brought out for use on very special church occasions.¹⁶ The replica which is now used during church services was given by Julia Blease in 1932.¹⁷ Other valuable items of church 'plate' include a paten hallmarked 1855 and a plated flagon.¹⁸ The offertory plates are modern, made of brass, and inscribed with the words "Freely you have received, Freely give" in old English. Entry into the Vestry is through a small door in the north wall of the Chancel. This room, added in 1860, is small and compact and has a second doorway leading into the churchyard in its north west corner. A built-in cupboard in the north wall holds the vestments and a fireplace, provided for the Vicar's comfort in Victorian times, occupies the north east corner of the room.

Furniture in the Vestry includes a pine chest of drawers, acquired in recent times, and a small writing table with chairs. The current church registers and other documents were originally kept in a wooden chest but are now secured in a modern Chubb safe in the south east corner of the Vestry. Old photographs of some of St. Paul's past Vicars are hung on the Vestry walls and pictures of recent Clergy adorn the mantelpiece over the fireplace. Most of the older church records are deposited for safe keeping in the County Records Office and these include the earliest known register of 'Ye Chappell of Stafferton', dated 1673, and Chapelwarden's accounts and Vestry Minutes dating from 1797.¹⁹ A small china font, from St. Mary magdalene, Oxford, a Victorian illustrated John Brown Bible, and a Cambridge Press Bible, donated to St. Paul's by Philip Maddock in 1861, can be included in the church's list of 'valuables'.

A fourth memorial, in the form of an inscribed brass plate, commemorates the Rev. Albert Isherwood, Vicar of St. Paul's from 1905 to 1937, and is located on the south wall of the Nave to the left of the main church entrance. Over the Nave is a modern suspended ceiling which conceals above it a Tudor arched barrel vaulted ceiling and collar rafted roof.²⁰ A moulded stone cornice below the ceiling line runs the length of the church on each side. To the right of the inner porch doors is a framed remembrance scroll, provided in 1996, which commemorates the loved ones of those who contributed to the new organ and the new heating system. Above these doors is a framed watercolour painting of St. Paul's given to the church by Nestle in 1995.

The churchyard, a good size for a small village church, commands a beautiful view over the River Avon valley and Bradford Woods and is bounded on it's north and west sides by an iron fence. Originally only half it's present size, it retains it's older graves and headstones on the south and west sides with the oldest known tombstone dating from 1718.²¹ The enlargement in 1906 extended the churchyard to the north east and most of the modern graves are found in this area.²²

Interesting tombstones close to the church building include those of the Smith family, Cooper family, Walter Newth and past village Vicars. This peaceful little churchyard also contains several fine tree species particularly three mature yews, a holly tree and a magnificent copper beech. Entry to the ground is through an Edwardian gateway with stone pillars, iron double gates and an ornate metal archway with nameplate in green and gold above. The churchyard path is illuminated by electric lighting, installed in 1998, a glass framed lamp above the gateway and an iron Victorian lamp standard halfway along it's length.

Visitors to St.Paul's should rest for a while on the churchyard bench and take in the peace and tranquility that surrounds them in this idealic spot. They will quickly breathe in the beauty of the place and will soon understand why generations of Staverton people, and many from outside the Parish, have chosen this quiet and lovely haven as their last resting place.



6 *List of References*

Chapter 2 – Ye Chappell of Stafferton

1	Victoria County History of Wiltshire	Vol. 7	WCL
2	The Parish Chest	- W.E.Tate	WCL
3	Victoria County History of Wiltshire	Vol. 7	WCL
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5	Victoria County History of Wiltshire	Vol. 7	WCL
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9	Church and Parish	- J.H.Bettey	WCL
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14	Bradford-on-Avon	- Canon Jones	WCL
15	St.Paul's Registers	1673 - 1812	WRO
16	St.Paul's Registers	1673 - 1812	WRO
17	Bishop's Presentments	1717	WRO
18	St.Paul's Registers	1673 - 1812	WRO
19	Parish Chest	- W.E.Tate	WCL
20	Non Conformist License Applications	18th Cent.	WRO
21	St.Paul's Registers	1673 - 1812	WRO
22	St.Paul's Vestry Minutes	1797 - 1921	WRO
23	Wilts and Somerset Woollen Mills	- K.H.Rogers	WCL

Chapter 3 – The Rebuilding of St. Paul's

1	John Buckler's Painting	1806	DML
2	John Buckler's Painting	1806	DML
3	St.Paul's Vestry Minutes	1797 - 1921	WRO
4	St.Paul's Vestry Minutes	1797 - 1921	WRO
5	St.Paul's Registers	1673 - 1812	WRO
6	St.Paul's Registers	1673 - 1812	WRO
7	Victoria County History of Wiltshire	Vol. 7	WCL
8	St.Paul's Vestry Minutes	1797 - 1921	WRO

9	Wilts and Somerset Woollen Mills - K.H.Rogers	WCL
10	Staverton Vicarage Funds Appeal Notice - 1860	SPC
11	St.Paul's Vestry Minutes 1797 - 1921	WRO
12	Victoria County History of Wiltshire Vol. 7	WCL
13	St.Paul's Vestry Minutes 1797 - 1921	WRO
14	Wilts Archaeological Society Magazines	DML

Chapter 4 - St.Paul's in the 20th Century

1	St.Paul's Vestry Minutes 1797 - 1921	WRO
2	St.Paul's Vestry Minutes 1797 - 1921	WRO
3	St.Paul's Church Council Minutes 1920 - 1950	SPC
4	Nestle Co. Staverton Archives	WRO
5	Wiltshire Times and News - 1932	WTA
6	St.Paul's Church Council Minutes 1920 - 1950	SPC
7	St.Paul's C.C. Minutes 1920 - 1950 & 1953 - 1960	SPC
8	St.Paul's Church Council Minutes 1953 - 1960	SPC
9	St.Paul's Church Council Minutes - Current	SPC
10 to 13	St.Paul's Church Council Minutes - Current	SPC
14	Quinquennial Survey Report 1991	SPC
15 & 16	St.Paul's Church Council Minutes - Current	SPC
17	Quinquennial Survey Report 1996	SPC
18 to 20	St.Paul's Church Council Minutes - Current	SPC

Chapter 5 - Description of the present Church

1	Quinquennial Survey Report 1991	SPC
2	Buildings of England, Wiltshire - N.Pevsner	WCL
3	Buildings of England, Wiltshire - N.Pevsner	WCL
4	Quinquennial Survey Report 1991	SPC
5	Quinquennial Survey Report 1991	SPC
6	John Buckler Painting 1806	DML
7	Wilts and Somerset Woollen Mills - K.H.Rogers	WCL
8	St.Paul's Church Council Minutes 1953 - 1960	SPC
9	St.Paul's Church Council Minutes - Current	SPC
10	St.Paul's Church Council Minutes - Current	SPC
11	St.Paul's Vestry Minutes 1797 - 1921	SPC
12	St.Paul's Churchwarden's Report 1980	SPC
13	St.Paul's Vestry Minutes 1797 - 1921	SPC

List of References (Cont)

Chapter 5 – Description of the present Church

14	St.Paul's Church Terrier	SPC
15	St.Paul's Church Terrier	SPC
16	St.Paul's Church Council Minutes 1920 – 1950	SPC
17	St.Paul's Church Terrier	SPC
18	Trowbridge and it's Times – Goodrich	WCL
19	Wiltshire County Record Office Inventory	WRO
20	Buildings of England, Wiltshire – N.Pevsner	WCL
21	Quinquennial Survey Report 1991	SPC
22	Staverton Parish Council Minutes 1906	WRO

Key to location of Reference material

WCL – Wiltshire County Library
WRO – Wiltshire County Records Office
DML – Devizes Museum Library
SPC – St.Paul's Church Staverton Archives
WTA – Wiltshire Times Archives

Acknowledgements

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Wilts Archaeological Society Library, Devizes	
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Peter Woodman	

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Nestle and Anglo-Swiss Roll of Honour 1914-19
Nestle, Staverton Factory Archives 1897 - 1995
Wiltshire Times and News Reports - Various.
Staverton Vicarage Appeal Fund Notice and Accounts
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