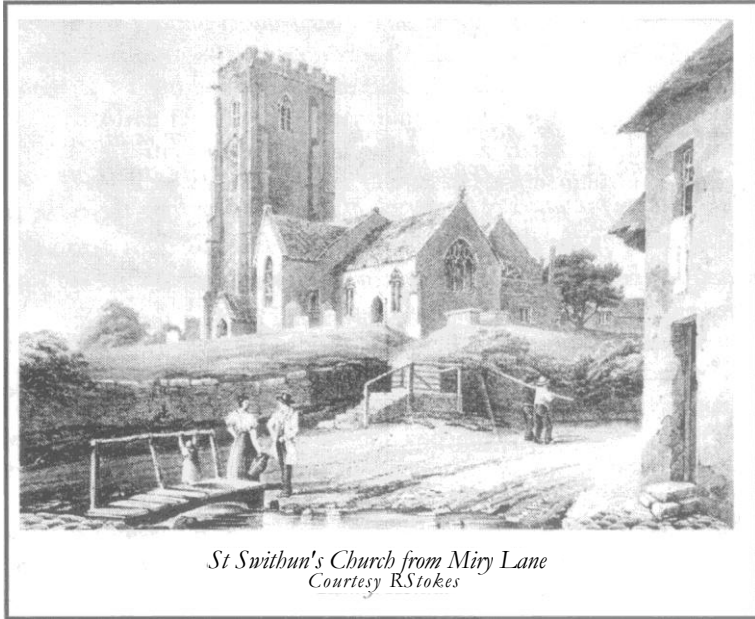


Woodbury Local History Society

2008 Newsletter



Commemoration of 600th Anniversary of St Swithun's Church

This year, Woodbury celebrates the construction and consecration of its Church tower, finished 600 years ago in 1409. The Society will devote the September meeting to this event. Details are yet to be announced but a number of short talks and exhibits are planned.

Summer visit to Whimble Heritage Centre

The centre was opened in May 2003, with an extension added in 2005. It is operated by the Whimble History Society and contains many photographs and artefacts connected with village life over the last 150 years. It is well worth a visit, as it has the quality of content of a much larger museum and shows what a vibrant history society can do if the mind is put to it! (R.S.)

Our Churches

Down what lanes, across how many, farmyards, nestling in how many valleys, topping what hills and suddenly appearing round the corners of what city streets are the churches of England? The many pinnacles of Somerset, of rough granite from the moors in Devon and Cornwall, of slate by the sea coasts, brushed with lichen, spotted with saffron, their rings of five and six bells pouring music among the windy elm trees as they have poured their sound for centuries, still they stand, the towers and spires of the West.

John Betjeman

Seldom are we ever given a glimpse of the [church] building as the historic microcosm over the centuries of a community. Their very fabric tells us of prosperity and depression, of wars and peace; extensions in site reflect rise in population; the names of the headstones reveal the families who for generations moulded the life pattern of the land around. We need to develop for a wider public our approach to churches as expressions of past human beings, everyone's ancestors over the centuries, and shift from the crudity of categorising a building on its aesthetic merits alone, ignoring all else.

Sir Roy Strong

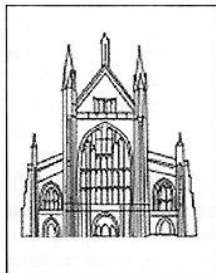
The Church Tower, The Black Death and Perpendicular Architecture

The tower of St Swithun's, finished in 1409, belongs to the architectural period known as Perpendicular Gothic (1360-1550). The change to this period, with its relatively simple, austere design, after the previously elaborate Decorated Period (1300-1360), was in large part a consequence of the Black Death, the plague that visited our shores in 1349. The Black Death had far-reaching effect. Such was the death toll and the resulting lack of craftsmanship, that it put a stop to most church building for the next 20 years. A notable exception was Gloucester Cathedral; here building went on unabated and the new English Gothic style of architecture was introduced.

Perpendicular architecture gained its name from the dominance of vertical lines in window tracery and wall panelling. In windows, stone mullions were carried unbroken from the sill to the underside of the arch. Arches grew in height and were given flatter heads; window tracery was simplified. Restraint and sophistication became the ingredients of the new style as more ingenious engineering feats were achieved. Walls became thinner, windows larger, lighter and airier, and stone vaulting even more extensive and beautiful, culminating in the innovative and wonderful fan vaulting.

Another effect of the Black Death was a return to sheep farming as opposed to the more labour-intensive arable farming. The wool trade was soon flourishing and with the increase in trade and marketing there was a new prosperity in the country, particularly in the West Country where, with this new-found wealth, money was poured into the construction of fine parish churches. Virtually no parish church was

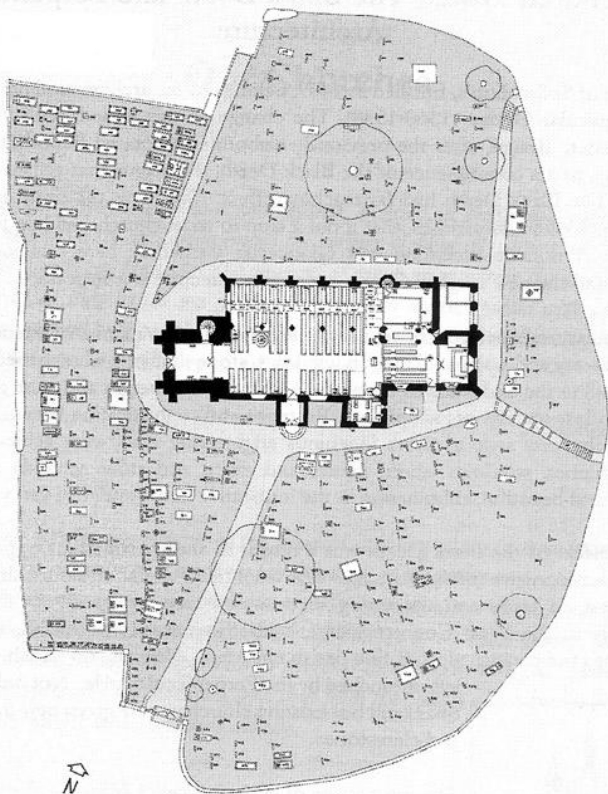
left untouched by the Perpendicular style. Not only were new ones built but existing churches were given new towers, aisles and clerestories.



The great surge of ecclesiastical building continued until the first half of the 16th century; by then it seemed that every town, village and hamlet had its place of worship. The buildings with their imposing, square towers, built by the people for the people, still dominate the English scene, pointing heavenwards and advertising the purpose of their existence. Woodbury's church was no exception.

Margaret Wilson

Adapted from: *Travelling Out - Tours to Historic Parish Churches near Bath.*
M.J.Wilson, Illustrated by J Greaves. Wilson Publications, 1981



St. Smithun, Woodbury.

 metres

MAP A SHEET 1 OF 2. O.S. REF. SY 009872.

DRAWN ARU and A.H.W. APRIL 1987

© MSC. DRAWN BY COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN CARE.

Updating of burial lists

During the course of the year I made it my task to try to update the Woodbury churchyard's burial list. This involved St Swithun's churchyard, the Lamb Park cemetery and the Christchurch burial ground. -

In 1987 the Council for Christian Care drew up plans of St Swithun's and the cemetery, and also created a burial list. This of course was now twenty years old. The burial list that I obtained was a photocopy of a copy, and was hardly readable. It had been hoped to scan it in to a spreadsheet and continue from there, but alas there was not enough detail available for the scanner to do a proper job, so a decision was made to start from scratch and create a new database.

After typing in some 1,550 odd names and burial details, dates of death etc., I got to 'square one' and could now proceed to add the data since 1987. Firstly, armed with the original plans I had to visit all the burial areas and log down all new graves and cremation spots which were not shown on the plan, and there were many! Then I had to log down all the details of the inscriptions and try to get them correct. In the process I found that many of the existing graves had had additions to them, so many of these more modern stones had to be checked also. Some family members had died twenty, thirty or even forty years after the first one. This entailed many visits to the various areas to check and cross check.

All of this data then had to be entered on to the new database, which is as up to date as I can get it at the moment. I am still awaiting some recent details from the vicar, which will be added when I get it. The plans had to be updated also with the new grave positions. All this took quite a bit of time and patience.

Luckily, the original plans of the churchyard and cemetery had been deposited within the society archives, so I had large scale copies done and added my new found graves. These I then had digitized on an industrial scanner in Exeter, which made them easier to work on in the future. A bit of colour could now be added as well to bring them to life.

There are now some 1,743 names on the burial list. Some are entered twice as the war dead names are also inscribed on the war memorial inside the church, as are the tombs and plaques of various village dignitaries. Some unfortunately have been buried without stone or inscription, so they do not appear on the current list. The plans for Christchurch had to be drawn from scratch, as no plan existed.

Having lived here all my life I found the whole exercise most interesting. I had known many of the people who I was logging into the system, and as I passed their graves I

could see them quite clearly. It was quite moving! The list may contain some errors if any are found please let me know.

All of this detail can now be seen on:

the Woodbury website www.woodburydevon.co.uk , where anyone can look up the names of their predecessors and trace where their grave is situated quite easily.

Hopefully other society members might like to do the same with the Gulliford burial ground and the Woodbury Salterton churchyard. There are many Woodbury persons buried at both. Next year I hope to do the same with the 1839 Tithe Map, and perhaps make it interactive as well, but that is a different "ball game" altogether!

Roger Stokes

The Tithe Map of Woodbury

An Act of Parliament was passed in 1836 to reform the system of tithes by commuting the payments of tenths of produce to a money payment. In order to do this fairly every landowner, lessee and tenant in every parish was recorded, together with the amount of land and its description, and an appropriate tithe rent was apportioned. To ascertain exactly what land was owned and cultivated every parish had to procure the services of a professional surveyor to value every fraction of an acre of land in each parish. The surveyor consulted with the landowners who were obliged to give details of the tithes they had given over the last few years

On 20th October 1840 the clerk to the Vestry of St Swithin's put the following advertisement in the local newspapers:

Notice to Land Surveyors: for a contract to map, measure and apportion the rent charge of the Parish of Woodbury. Sealed tenders to be sent to Mr Joseph Searle Lindsey for contract to make one map and book of reference (1st class) and two maps and books (2nd class).

The valuation of the land had already been completed by a man called George Louis by 26th September 1839 and the plotting of the information onto a map would identify all the land named. The draft of his work was affixed to the church door by the clerk to the Vestry and was left for 21 days to give parishioners a chance to question some of the awards. Several landowners did object to the awards against them but on final agreements and adjustments the information was ready to be published as a book with the map.

Devon Trolley lace — two lovely surprises!

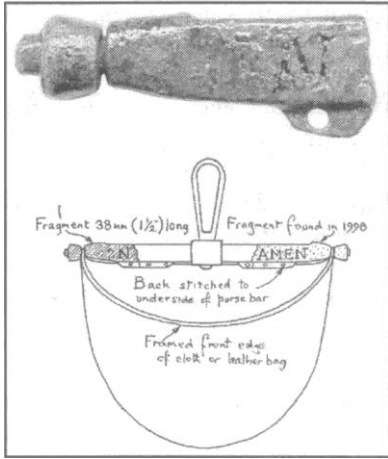


I had been invited to travel to Ithaca, NY, to teach Devon Trolley lace for the weekend at a lace Convention and give the initial lecture. The following day a lady asked to join me for lunch as she had some Devon bobbins on which she wanted my opinion. I was delighted to see a Devon Trolley bobbin and some Honiton bobbins with the most unusual designs on them. Having been given permission to photograph the Devon Trolley bobbin, which was dated 1696, had the initials SF and the inscription 'In the midst of mirth remember death' —really cheerful! I was busy snapping away when I made a surprise link with a bobbin shown in my first book. The two bobbins one in the US and one in the UK, both owned by a Shirley, were identical in date, initial and style; can you imagine the excitement of finding two bobbins made by the same person and for the same person — if only we knew who the maker was!

As I was in the US, I used the opportunity to visit my step-sister in Michigan and had promised her that I would do the talk for her Seniors Club. The Club had been selling tickets for the talk and English Afternoon Tea, organised by two ladies who were originally from Essex — we had the three tier cake stand laden with small cut sandwiches, scones, with of course, Devon Clotted Cream and petit fours, traditional English bone china and all necessary accompaniments. They were all surprised that it was the first time I had ever eaten in this manner — what an image they must have of us! However the second surprise was when I was preparing the talk and was told that the engineer from Michigan TV was late in arriving — my sister had carefully omitted this piece of information. So he came and recorded the whole one hour talk, of which they will send me a copy so I can watch it — but I know what I say!!

Carol McFadzean

A Cut Purse at Large in Woodbury?



After enduring two weeks of freezing temperatures and bone-hard ground, I am trying to recall the last occasion when I found an item of interest in Woodbury with my metal detector. It was at the end of September whilst detecting on one of my favourite fields behind the Court House on Globe Hill that I unearthed a small piece of bronze which I immediately recognised, having found its counterpart only yards away over ten years before.

The artefact was one end of a late medieval purse bar, dating from about 1450 to 1500, inscribed with the letters 'EM' on one side, and 'N' on the other, with a knob or knop at one end, joined to

the bar fragment by a narrow neck. A small flange with a hole in it hung from the lower edge of the bar.

Early medieval purses were simply cloth or leather bags tied with a drawstring and hung from a girdle, and these were fair game for the thief or 'Cut purse' who would slit the bag or cut the cord to spill the contents, usually in busy fairgrounds or wherever crowds were gathered. Towards the end of the 15th century, the thief's task was made more difficult as a different form of purse became popular with the wealthy, in the form of a bag suspended from a cross bar, edged at the top by a bronze frame to give it shape. The bag, of course, could still be slit by a determined thief, and as parts of purse bars and frames turn up occasionally in other fields in Woodbury, one wonders if the medieval inhabitants of the village were particularly dishonest or these were just the efforts of travelling vagabonds! My illustration shows what the overall shape of the purse might have looked like, with the swivelling loop at the top, which was attached to the belt by a locking buckle. Illustrations of such purses can be found in contemporary records and on effigies, but no known examples complete with bags are known to exist. As was the case with this fragment, the bar was sometimes engraved with religious symbols or inscriptions, and on the other half of the bar is inscribed OMAT...' (Oh Mother?) and 'AMEN'. These inscriptions were frequently inlaid with niello, which was a grey-black alloy of silver, copper and lead, to which an excess of sulphur was added before being packed into the engraved letter, melted at low temperature, then polished. A second incomplete purse bar and a fragment of purse frame plus other evidence suggests that this field was a gathering or work place in medieval times, but more on that in my talk on 7th May.

History . . . When?

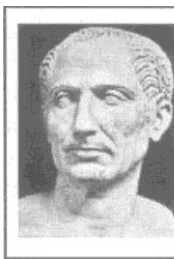
When describing events that happened in the past, historians try date to them. But this is not as easy as one might at first think.

At its simplest, events can just be put into an **order** with one event occurring after another — even if the events can not be exactly dated. A trivial example is that a church bell can not be hung before the church tower is built — whenever these events might have occurred. In geology, there is an excellent example at Budleigh Salterton. Look at the layers of soil and stones exposed on the cliffs. The layers at the top must have been laid down after the layers below. The sequence of events is there before your eyes even if the date that each layer was laid down is not known. This is the Principle of Stratigraphy proposed by William Smith in the early 19th Century.

Historians can usually manage better than this and can place events on a **scale**, using dates on a calendar. But, where does the calendar come from and are all calendars the same? The '*Day*' seems an obvious starting point for measuring time. One noon to the next is one Day'. The castaway on a desert island notches a stick to count the passage of these days. This gets out of control if waiting for rescue proves a lengthy business, so a larger unit, the '*Month*', is required. The proverbial shepherd watching his flock by night uses a month of nearly thirty days, measured from one full moon to the next.

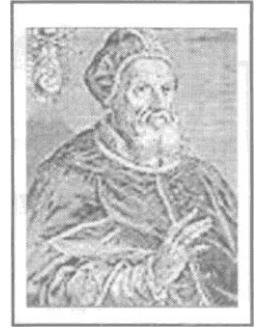
The farmer has an interest in a longer cycle for sowing and harvesting. For this, the 'Yea' from one midsummer's day (when the sun is at its highest) to the next is a useful unit of time. This is the *Solar Year*. Just to confuse you, there is a very nearly similar year (*Sidereal Year*) based on the stars as they appear to move overhead throughout the year. This once was the preferred scientific unit.

So, thirty days to the month and twelve months to the year, therefore 360 days to the year — but we know that does not work! We use 365 days to the year and even that does not work in the long run so we have to chuck in an extra day every fourth (Leap) year. The problem arises because the time that it takes for the moon to revolve around the earth, and the earth to revolve around the sun is not in simple ratio.



Julius Caesar tackled the problem by abolishing the use of the lunar year and decreed that the civil year (for tax and other administrative purposes) should be based on the sun with some months having thirty-one days and February which was to have twenty-eight days (but twenty-nine days every four years). The *Julian Calendar* was clever — but not clever enough and over the centuries things slipped with midsummer occurring earlier in the year.

Pope Gregory XIII, to get things back into place lopped ten days out of October in 1582 when his *Gregorian Calendar* was adopted by Italy, Spain & Portugal. But! Other countries adopted his calendar many years later. In Great Britain we did not adopt the Gregorian Calendar until an Act of Parliament in 1750. In the process, the 2nd of September became the 14th provoking riots because those ignorant of the astronomical niceties feared that the Government had shortened their lives by eleven days while still wanting to claim taxes for them (it is worth perpetuating this myth!) In a slow



agricultural society differences in calendars might not matter but it could be important for diplomats and foreign traders. Certainly it can cause historians confusion when relating the date of events in different countries. For example, William III left Holland on 11th November 1688 (Gregorian Calendar) and managed to arrive in Brixham to start his reign on 5th Nov. 1688 Galan Calendar)!

Worse! When different countries adopted the Gregorian Calendar there was no uniformity in starting January 1st at the same time in the solar year. The calendar is still slipping slightly compared with the solar and sidereal years. Religious calendars are bizarre — when is Easter? Other countries, especially Eastern ones have their own systems.

There is a further problem. Think of using a ruler. Length is measured with the zero placed at one end. What is the zero for time? Assuming the universe was created 13.7 billion years ago that would make a pretty long and cumbersome ruler for measuring an **absolute** date of interest to historians. Instead we use a calendar arbitrarily zeroed **relative** to some event, notably the Birth of Christ. (Pity about the bits Pope Gregory chopped out of the 'ruler') Alternatively we can date backwards as the geologists do and refer to 'BP' (Before Present).

Dividing the day into hours, minutes and seconds is another very interesting problem with important consequences for navigation but there is not time for that now.

The real enthusiast might like to know:

1. That the International Unit of time is not the year but the second. This is defined as 'The duration of 9,192,631,770 periods of the radiation corresponding to the transition between the two hyperfine levels of the ground state of the caesium ¹³³ atom'.
2. Because the rotation of the earth is slowing down, astronomers have just added an extra second as we entered New Year's Day 2009; so the BBC broadcast an extra 'pip' on that Time Signal.

Michael Wilson

2009 PROGRAMME

Feb. 5th Annual General Meeting & Society Party

Mar. 5th Carol McFadzean — *Mrs Treadwin, lace maker extraordinaire*

May 7th Nigel Tucker — *Woodbury History Beneath Your Feet*

July Annual Visit *Whimpe Museum* Date to be arranged.

Sept. 3rd *Commemoration of 600th Anniversary of St Swithun's Church*

Nov. 5th David Clement — *The Development of Waterborne Transport in Devon*



Exeter Canal Brigantine under Horse Tow
Courtesy: D. Clement