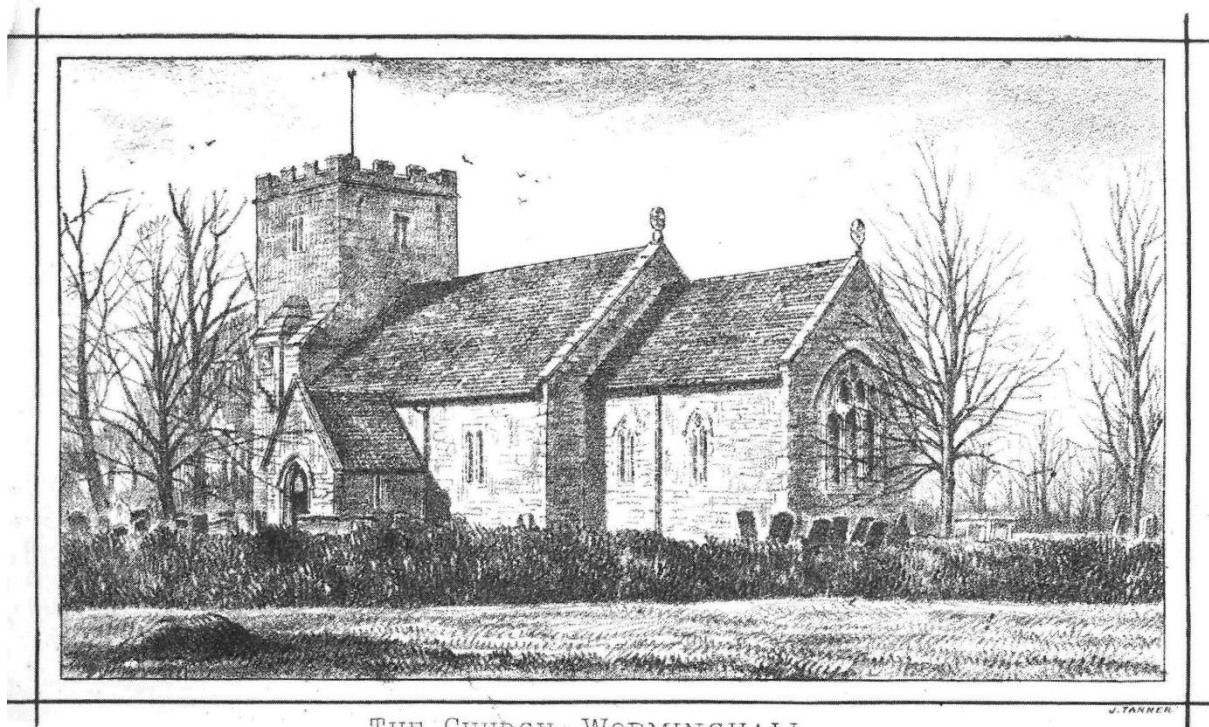


The Church



The church of St. Peter and St. Paul is situated in a sequestered spot east of the village. It is a plain and unpretending structure, some parts of which are of very ancient date. From what has been said of the history of the manor, it may safely be inferred that the place where the present church stands was the site of some former sacred edifice, where our Saxon ancestors worshipped God, perhaps from the time of the first propagation of Christianity in this part of the country.

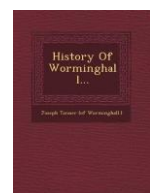
A.D. 1159. (6 Hen. II.) Pope Alexander III. confirmed to the monastery of St. Frideswide, in Oxford, the church of Wormenhall by a bull dated " Tusculani XIII., Kal. Jun.," and fulminated the wrath of the Deity, and of the blessed St. Peter and St. Paul, upon any one who might presume to infringe upon its rights and possessions. (Kenet's Paroch. Antiq., vol. i. p. 161.)

A.D. 1199. (1 John.) Some time previous to this date, William Fitz-Elys gave to the Church of St. Frideswide, in Oxford, and the priors and canons there serving God, the church of Wormehalle, with all its appurtenances in wood and in plain, in meadows and in pastures, with pence and tenths of the demesnes, and six acres of land. Jostens also gave two acres upon condition of being received into their fraternity and buried in their church. (Wyrley's MS. Ash. Mus. ap Lipscomb's, Bucks.)

A.D. 1274. (3 Edward I.) In this year took place the decease of Gervase, perpetual vicar of Wormenhall. The vicarage had been ordained by the authority of a council shortly before the presentation of his predecessor William de Estill, in the year of our Lord 1229. (The ledger book of Knights Templars at Sandford Wood's MS., 10 f. 18 b.)

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A.D. 1291. The Convent of St. Frideswide possessed the advowson ; and the valuation of their lands, rents, and fruits in Wormenhall, Thomle, and Hykeford, amounted altogether to £1 18s. per annum. (Taxat. Eccles. p. Nich., p. 46.)

A.D. 1525. (16 Henry VIII.) King Henry the Eighth gave the Rectory of Worminghall to Cardinal Wolsey. (Lipscomb's, Bucks.)

A.D. 1584. Queen Elizabeth, after the Reformation, granted to Theophilus Adams, his heirs and assigns, certain lands here formerly belonging to St. Prideswide's Monastery, and originally bestowed for superstitious uses, and unjustly detained from the Queen or her progenitors.

Like most other churches in country districts, the architecture is of different styles and orders, ranging from the Norman arch at the entrance to the chancel, through successive ages and dates to very modern times. The chancel was built in the fourteenth century. The east window is a late perpendicular insertion of about 1480.

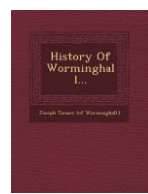
On the south side of the church is a bold Norman doorway with billet moulding over, and showing an early instance of the chamfer slay cut into the square. The font is of the thirteenth century, and in good preservation. The tower, which contains three bells, is late perpendicular, and harmonizes well with the other parts of the church. One great feature of the church in this village is, that it never had high pews, but the original open seats are still in existence ; they are of two different dates, and have been left mostly untouched since the church was first seated by them, which was probably before the Reformation.

A visitor to the church in 1820 writes : " The communion table does not stand contiguous to the eastern wall, as is usual, but has been removed forwarder, and has a seat behind it, and at each end, probably placed there in the Presbyterian times of Cromwell." The view of the exterior of the church from a distance is pleasing; the picturesque bell stair turret on the south side, with the battlemented coping of the tower, and the high pitched roof, make a good outline. Through years of neglect and religious indifference, this church had fallen into a sad condition of ruin and decay. When, however, the late Viscount Clifden attained his majority, in 1846, a proposal was made for the restoration of the building.

On Thursday, August 6th, 1846, an important vestry meeting was held in the church on the subject. Viscount Clifden was represented at this meeting by Mr. Groom, his solicitor, and Mr. Saunders, his steward ; and Mr. Clarke, the architect employed, was also present. The question of expense was thoroughly gone into, and eventually Mr. Statter, the vicar, proposed, and it was unanimously adopted, that the " restoration of the church be undertaken." To an appeal for funds, Viscount Clifden responded with great liberality ; he contributed £800, and offered to lend the parish any further sum they required, free of interest; 2200 were obtained from various sources, and £250 were borrowed, which amount was afterwards repaid, a voluntary rate of sixpence in the 1 being imposed for several years for that purpose.

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During this restoration, the north wall of the church was rebuilt, a new vestry and south porch added, three new bells were purchased from Taylor, bell founder of Oxford, an unsightly gallery was demolished, the plastered ceiling was removed, and a beautiful roof exposed to view, and, in fact, a thorough and substantial restoration was carried out, which placed this church at that time in the very forefront of churches in the neighbourhood. In addition to the fund for the restoration of the church, Mr. Statter, with the kind help of personal friends, raised a sum of 160, which was applied to the beautifying of the chancel. The altar space was considerably raised and paved with encaustic tiles, the east window of three lights was filled with stained glass, the subjects being the figure of our Lord in the centre, and the patron saints Peter and Paul on either side. Stalls in the chancel, and an oak pulpit, prayer desk, and lectern, were also added.

On the appointment of the Rev. W. H. Pochin as vicar in 1876, the trustees of the present Viscount Clifden most generously sent an architect to examine the church, and whatever he recommended was forthwith carried out, without any cost to the parish. Two new windows were put in, the church and churchyard were thoroughly drained, and the seats and walls put in proper repair. The people of Worminghall were greatly indebted to the trustees for this liberality, they being at all times most anxious to improve the material and spiritual welfare of the parishioners. The late Edmund Barlow, Esq., solicitor to the trustees, took much interest in this restoration of the church. For many years Mr. Barlow was a frequent visitor at Worminghall; he was very generous and kind-hearted, and by his many acts of kindness endeared himself to many in the parish.

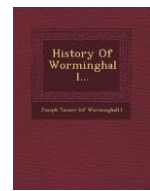
During the year 1884, the trustees spent a considerable sum of money on the interior of the church, the walls having become somewhat damaged owing to the damp, and the roof and woodwork generally required cleaning from the same cause.

The register dates from the year 1538, and is in an excellent state of preservation, the entries, which are on parchment, and in Latin, being still very distinct. The vicars of Worminghall appear to have kept this register in an admirable manner for many years. There is also an interesting churchwardens' account book from 1740. The first item is, "paid for this book, 38. 6g.," and the second, "four polecats, 18. 4d.,"—in fact, the payments for killing foxes, hedgehogs, and polecats are very numerous till the year 1758, when they ceased. Sixpence was paid for a fox, and fourpence each for a polecat or hedgehog. Sparrows' heads were first paid for in 1789, and their destruction must have been prosecuted rather vigorously, for the payments during the first three months amounted in the aggregate to 21 7s., which at a farthing per head numbered 1296 sparrows.

The first resident vicar in modern times was the Rev. James Purcell, who was appointed in 1837. Before his time the service on Sundays seems to have been conducted for very many years by a curate from Shabington, and occasionally a clergyman from Oxford. Mr. Purcell was an Irishman, and possessed in an eminent degree the proverbial eloquence of his native race. His discourses in the pulpit on Sundays attracted numerous admirers from the surrounding villages, so that oftentimes late comers could not gain admittance. He died November 7th, 1843, aged

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forty-eight years, having been vicar only six years. He was buried in Worminghall Churchyard the following Sunday afternoon, November' 12th, and a great many people attended his funeral.

The Rev. James Statter was the next vicar; he commenced his duties in May, 1844, and for thirty-one years he laboured assiduously and faithfully in the parish. The church was restored under his care and guidance. Much might be said of the good work Mr. Statter did during his pastorate. The words of Oliver Goldsmith are peculiarly applicable to him :--

" To relieve the wretched was his pride,
And e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side ;
But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all ;
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way."

Mr. Statter resigned the living at Christmas, 1875, through old age and infirmity. He died at Uxbridge, November, 1878, aged 81 years, and rests in Hillingdon Cemetery. Mrs. Statter was sister to the celebrated Rev. Dr. Whewell, late Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. There is a stained glass window in the church to her memory, with the following inscription : " In memoriam Martha Jacobin Statter, dilectae uxoris quasa obiit die vicesimo secundo mensis Januarii A.D. MDCCCLXII. anno tetatis suae LXIX. Requiescat in pace."

"His beloved wife died on the twenty-second day of January A.D. 1862 in the 69th year of his age. Rest in peace."

Near this window is an interesting mural brass, representing the kneeling effigies of Philip King (who died 1592), with his wife and twelve children. In the chancel is an oaken tablet, on which are carved the arms of the See of London, impaling those of John King, surmounted by a mitre, dated 1611.

On the pavement of the chancel, within the rails, were three memorials ; viz., a slab to

EDM: KINGE

BUR: 14: IVL:

1577.

A lozenge of black marble inscribed :

"Here lieth the body of Mary Phillips, wife of John Phillips, who died Aug. 21st, 1723, aged 89."

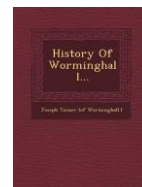
On a corresponding piece of marble was :

"Here lieth the body of John Phillips, who died the 10th day of September, 1697, aged 63."

When the chancel floor was raised, these three slabs appear to have been buried, as no trace of them can now be found. Such, however, is not the case with stones without the altar rails.

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On a blue stone : "Here lyeth ye body of ye Reverend Mr. Francis Price, late vicar of this parish, who departed this life May 15th, 1701, in ye 85th year of his age. Near unto which place lyes also ye body of his first wife, Mrs. Jane Price, who dyed Feb. 16th, 1662, aged about 45."

Adjoining this is a white stone :

" Here lieth the body of Thomas Stevens, who departed this life August 2nd, A.D. 1687.

" Since nothing is so certain as our death,
And nothing more uncertain than when breath
Expires, we ought each minute to prepare;
Death sends no summons, but comes unaware."

On a lozenge of white marble near the font :

"Here lie the remains of Anthony Coghill, who died 17 Dec., 1802, aged 13 years.

" Then down in peace lay my head,
And take my needful rest ;
No other guard, o Lord, I crave,
Of Thy defence possessed."

On a similar slab under the tower :

"Here lie the remains of John Coghill, who died June the 3rd, 1810, aged 14 years.

" My lot is fall'n in that blest land
Where God is truly known;
He fills my cup with lib'ral hand,
'Tits He supports my throne."

There are other stones to the memories of Woodbridge, Fowler, Bull, Winter, and Mrs. Winnifrid Littlepage, but the inscriptions on them are of little interest.

Viscount Clifden is the patron of the living ; Rev. W.H. Pochin, vicar; Mr. R. Kimbell and Mr. T. Bury, churchwardens ; and John Lowe, parish clerk.

LIST OF VICARS, WITH DATES OF APPOINTMENT.

William de Coles, uncertain	David St. John, 1473	John Bromwich, 1701
William de Estin, 1229	Thomas Oxford, 1498	Jas. Oldisworth, 1703
Gervase, 1274	John Tapeter, 1527	Jas. Steadman, 1718
Hugh de Faringdon, 1274	John Hayes, 1530	Josh. Bell, 1786
Robert, 1316	Jas. Martin, 1537	George Applebee, 1754
Rob. de Blewbary, 1349	Thos. Grene, 1542	Win. Cooke, 1783
Robert Gylot, 1350	Geoffrey Vaughan, resigned 1561	Master of Thame Grammar School
Richard Clement, 1361	Robert Evans, 1561	James Stopes, 1795
William Synge, 1389	Wm. Philips, 1595	Phipps Long, 1807,
Richard Astwich, 1413	Thos. Thackwell, 1606	Vicar of Shabbington & Curate of Worminghall
John Aynhoe, 1414	Richd. Ingby, 1607	James G. Purcell, 1837
Richard Garton, 1470	Simon Ellis, 1632	James Statter, 1844
Richard Ruthen, 1473	Francis Price, about 1652	W. H. Pochin, 1876