

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

There was a church at Minehead by the mid 12th century.¹ It was dedicated to St Michael by the 1430s.² High on the side of North Hill it was an important seamark with no buildings beside or above it until the 19th century. The unusual stair turret to the rood loft with its many windows is believed to have been used as a beacon. The growth of the town in the 19th century led to the building of St Andrew's church in the lower town. Holy Trinity chapel, now called Burgundy, stood on the cliffs above the sea west of the town in the 15th century. The seamen's chapel of St Peter on the Quay opened in a 17th-century warehouse in 1890.³

Minehead's position as a port town in the 17th century especially its contact with Ireland and Wales probably encouraged religious dissent. In 1618 the vicar was said to have preached against Welsh 'Calvins'.⁴ By 1667 public conventicles, held by an Anabaptist, were attended by up to 100 people, allowed it was said by local magistrates.⁵ Henry Owen, arrested at Minehead in 1683 for attending a conventicle there, was reported to have said the law against dissent had created more dissenters.⁶ Baptists, Presbyterians and Quakers were established in the town by 1700 and between 1672 and 1707 ten licences for nonconformist worship were granted.⁷ In the later 18th century both trade and nonconformity declined although the Davis family of Quakers continued to oppose the Luttrell hold on the Minehead seat in parliament but also raised £4,000 for sufferers from the 1791 fire.⁸

¹ H. C. Maxwell Lyte and T. S. Holmes (ed.), Cartularies of Bruton and Montacute Pories (Som. Rec. Soc. 8), pp. 56, 107; Cal. Doc. France, 1177—94, p. 178.

² SHC, DD/L P27/9.

³ Below, this section.

⁴ SHC, D/D/Cd 49.

⁵ Cal. SP Dom. 1667—8, p. 69; T. G. Crippen, The story of Nonconformity in Somerset (1913—14), 28.

⁶ Cal. SP Dom 1672, pp. 349, 356, 377.

⁷ *Ibid.* 1672, pp. 198, 400; SHC, Q/RRw 1; Q/SO 8, ff. 56, 62.

⁸ Above, local govt, parl. rep.; H. Binding and D. Stevens, A New History of Minehead (Minehead, 1977), 131.

In the early 19th century Lord King and Sir Thomas Dyke Acland were happy to let land for chapels but the Luttrells who owned most of the parish discouraged dissent and it was said in 1831 that no dissenting minister could get a house in the town. Later generations of Luttrells were more generous.⁹ The 20th century saw a growth in nonconformity and expansion of Sunday schools,¹⁰ possibly due to inward migration and tourism. The Minehead Free Church Association, meeting from 1903, wished to stem the multiplicity of sects as well as supporting temperance and the Sunday closure of amusements. Joint open-air services were held in the 1940s but attendance had fallen by 1948.¹¹ In 1943 ten places of worship in Minehead were recorded, besides two in Alcombe, and others have opened since.¹² Retirement homes were built for Methodist preachers in 1967 and Baptist holiday apartments were established on the Esplanade in 1975.¹³ Famous Methodist retirees to Minehead included Lewis Court (d. 1960), historian of the Bible Christian movement¹⁴ and Joseph Henry Jones (d. 1980), artist of world church architecture.¹⁵

PARISH CHURCH

Origins and Status

A rector of Minehead witnessed a mid 12th-century deed and later in the century William de Mohun gave his rights in the church to Bruton priory, the grant to take effect on the death of his brother Thomas.¹⁶ Under that gift Reginald de Mohun gave

⁹ SHC, D/N/min.b 4/2/1; A. G. Poynton, Methodists in West Somerset: the story of the West Somerset Circuit 1790—1980 (Minehead, 1982), 18.

¹⁰ SHC, D/U/m 22/1/192, 212, 629, 766, 832—3.

¹¹ SHC, D/N/fcf.m 4/2/1.

¹² SHC, Q/SO 30, p. 454.

¹³ Below, this section; baptistholidayapartments.org: accessed 25 Nov. 2011.

¹⁴ John Rylands Library, cat. of Lewis Court colln.

¹⁵ Pitts Theology Lib., Atlanta, USA, J. H. Jones colln. [pitts.emory.edu/archives].

¹⁶ Maxwell-Lyte and Holmes, Cart. Bruton and Montacute, pp. 56, 107; Cal. Doc. France, 1177—94, p. 178.

the rectory to the priory in 1237 with the bishop's consent. By 1242 a vicarage had been ordained¹⁷ and Minehead remains a sole vicarage.

Advowson

Patronage of Minehead church was exercised by Bruton priory, later abbey, until the Dissolution.¹⁸ Although the advowson was often erroneously included in the deeds of the Stewkeley family,¹⁹ it remained with the Crown whose lessee John Fry of Bratton presented in 1562.²⁰ It was bought from the Crown in 1609 by Francis Morris and Francis Phelps who immediately sold it to the vicar Nicholas Browse. In 1622 Nicholas conveyed it to his son Philip²¹ but his widow Mary presented in 1635 and 1651 and another son Nicholas left the advowson to be sold in 1665. Anne, widow of the last, presented his successor and in 1694 Nicholas's trustee Samuel Crockford was accused of failing to perform the will and ordered to sell. In 1695 the advowson was bought by the vicar Revd Robert Stone (d. 1702) whose widow Joan presented and married his two successors Tristram Chave (d. 1709) and William Moggridge. William and Joan sold it in 1717 to Dorothy Luttrell.²² Patronage descended in the Luttrell family with the manor until 1962 when it was transferred to the bishop of Bath and Wells.²³

¹⁷ Maxwell-Lyte and Holmes, Cart. Bruton and Montacute Priors, pp. 42, 59.

¹⁸ Bp Hobhouse, Register of Bishop Drokensford (Som. Rec. Soc. 1), p. 156; H. C. Maxwell-Lyte, Bishops' Registers, 1515—59, (Som. Rec. Soc. 55), p. 69.

¹⁹ TNA, CP 25/2/593/1659 East.; CP 25/2/795/1 Jas II, Trin.; SHC, DD/MY 9.

²⁰ Som. Incumbents, ed. Weaver, 401.

²¹ SHC, DD/L P30/110a.

²² F. W. Weaver, Somerset. Incumbents, 401; SHC, DD/HCK 9/1/17; DD/L P30/110a/1—13.

²³ Above, landownership; SHC, D/P/m.st.m 1/7/1; Dioc. Dir.

Income and endowment

The original endowment of the church is unknown but after 1237 Bruton priory retained a house, a 3-a. croft, and a meadow and alder grove by their mill and paid the vicar 50s. a year. In 1252 the prior and vicar exchanged land with Reginald de Mohun. The 50s. was not recorded again but in 1265 the vicarage was valued at £3 6s. 8d. In 1287 the vicar released his claim to unspecified tithes.²⁴ In 1291 the whole church was assessed at £6 13s. 4d.²⁵ The vicarage was too poor benefice to be taxed until 1468 when its annual value was £8 13s. 4d.²⁶ By 1536 it was assessed at £28 19s. 3d. gross from land and personal tithes.²⁷

In 1606 the vicar had large house, outbuildings including a pigeon house, c. 17 a., on which he grew corn in 1693. His nine tenants held 11 a. and eight houses, said in 1633 to be held of Minehead manor. However, in 1763 and 1770 the vicar claimed the vicarage was a manor whose tenants held by copy of court roll and had shares in ground called the Hemp Garden.²⁸ In 1842 the 26-a. glebe and four surviving cottages were let.²⁹ In 1899 the divided cottages suffered from water penetration and windowless rooms and were demolished or sold c.1902 except one cottage that was subdivided in the 1930s.³⁰ A house, built in 1920 on the foundations of two cottages for a curate, was sold in 1921³¹ and between the 1930s and 1960s the glebe was sold for housing.³²

²⁴ Cal. Inq. Misc. I, p. 264; Maxwell-Lyte and Holmes, Cart. Bruton and Montacute Priors, p. 59.

²⁵ Tax. Eccl. 205.

²⁶ H.C. Maxwell-Lyte, Registers of Bishops Stillington, 1496—1503, and Fox, 1492—4 (Som. Rec. Soc. 52), p. 21.

²⁷ Valor Eccl. I, 221.

²⁸ SHC, D/D/Rg 349; DD/SP Inv. 1635/97, 1693/2; D/P/m.st.m 3/1/1; DD/L 1/53/33/3, 1/54/40/21—2. 1/54/41/1; *ibid.*, tithe award.

²⁹ SHC, D/D/bbm 5; *ibid.*, tithe award.

³⁰ SHC, DD/WBF 2/96; DD/CC E3251.

³¹ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 9/3/2; D/U/m 22/1/630.

³² SHC, D/U/m 22/1/748—50; DD/WBF 2/96.

In c.1670 the living was reputedly worth £80,³³ in 1806 £140 and by the 1830s £200 net.³⁴ The tithes were paid by composition in the 1780s³⁵ and let out in 1806.³⁶ The vicar's tithes were commuted for £202 18s. 8d. in 1842 falling to £142 by 1912 before which date the living had been augmented with £978 from by Queen Anne's Bounty.³⁷

The 5-bedroom house recorded in 1606 had a study and closet added shortly afterwards.³⁸ A new chamber was built before 1693 and the house was 'very good' c.1720³⁹ but in 1828 the Revd Thomas Fownes Luttrell mortgaged his glebe and tithes to rebuild it.⁴⁰ The new house, south-west of the church in Vicarage Road, had a 3-bay central range, side entrance and two one-bay rear extensions accommodating a library and four bedrooms. In 1861 a Tudor-style range was added containing a large drawing room and servants hall on the ground floor. The entrance was moved to the front and the former hall and library were converted to a large dining room.⁴¹ Major repairs were needed in 1899 and despite having nine bedrooms there was only one toilet and no bathroom until 1902. By 1933 three bathrooms had been installed⁴² and in 1948 the house was sold and converted into two dwellings.⁴³ Whitecross house, built in 1928, was purchased but had a faulty roof. In 1960 it was replaced by 2 Warden's Road but problems with traffic noise led to its replacement in 1984 by 7 Pagenel Road.⁴⁴

³³ SHC, D/D/Vc 24.

³⁴ SHC, DD/L 1/54/40/23; Report on Eccl. Revenues (1835), pp. 146—7.

³⁵ SHC, A/AQP 8.

³⁶ SHC, DD/L 1/54/40/23.

³⁷ SHC, tithe award; *ibid.* D/D/Ri 3.

³⁸ SHC, D/D/Rg 349.

³⁹ SHC, DD/SP Inv. 1693/2; DD/L 1/52/31/3.

⁴⁰ SHC, DD/L 1/54/40/27.

⁴¹ SHC, D/D/bbm 57, 138

⁴² SHC, DD/WBF 2/96; DD/CC E3251; D/D/Ri 3.

⁴³ SHC, D/U/m 22/1/825.

⁴⁴ SHC, DD/WBF 2/96; Dioc. Dir.

Rectorial estate

The rectory comprised the great tithes given to Bruton priory in 1237 but some demesne tithes were given to Bath priory and used in 1341 to endow Dunster priory.⁴⁵ After the Dissolution the latter descended with Dunster rectory until Sir Hugh Stewkeley sold them to George Hayman in 1717. George was said to hold jointly with William Evan and Thomas Wilks and in 1753 and 1765 George's heir William Hayman bought out claims from the Jeanes family, heirs to Thomas Wilks. The tithes descended with Hayman's share of the Parks estate to Sir Thomas Dyke Acland and were commuted for £22 in 1842.⁴⁶

The Crown appears to have retained ownership of the former Bruton tithes although in 1551 and 1559 they were let to John Belmayne⁴⁷ and in 1586 to John Cely yeoman of the scullery.⁴⁸ Cely was followed by Conand Prowse of Nether Stowey. In 1609 the Crown sold the rectory with advowson but it was sold on to Prowse. A £2 rent, reserved to the Crown, was still paid in the early 19th century.⁴⁹ Conand was succeeded by his brother John Prowse who sold the rectory to the tenants James Quirke (d. 1614) and Robert Bond or Band.⁵⁰ A block of four houses in Frog Street, including the later Plume of Feathers inn, and a croft were said to be part of the rectory and were divided between the two owners. James's widow Joan Quirke was succeeded by her son John Quirke (d. 1626) with his wife Mary (fl. c. 1628), daughter

⁴⁵ Above, this section; SHC, DD/L P16/2.

⁴⁶ Above, Dunster, landownership, Minehead, landownership; Devon R.O., 1148M/add 1/59; SHC, DD/CH 13; DD/L 2/32/4; *ibid.* tithe award.

⁴⁷ TNA, C 146/8092, C 147/66; *ibid.* REQ 2/19/10.

⁴⁸ *Cal. Pat.* 1567—8, p. 153; 1585—6, p. 114.

⁴⁹ TNA, C 66/1811; SHC, D/D/Cd 62; DD/L 1/50/19, 1/52/31/3.

⁵⁰ SHC, D/D/Cd 62; C. J. Brett, *The Crown Revenues from Somerset and Dorset, 1605* (Som. Rec. Soc. 96), 18, 139.

of Robert Bond (d. c.1619) who was followed by his widow Sorority and then their son George (fl. c.1628).⁵¹

Mary Quirke was followed by her son James Quirke (d. 1653) and his son John (d. unm. 1665) and daughter Joan (d. 1673) whose daughter Mary Brook married Joseph Alloway and mortgaged her half of the rectory in 1730. In 1760 their grandson John, son of John Alloway, released his rights to John Francis, heir of the mortgagee, who sold half the rectory to Henry Fownes Luttrell in 1761.⁵²

George Bond's successor Robert Bond sold his share in 1642 to Francis Wyndham who sold it to George Farewell in 1652.⁵³ In 1661 Farewell conveyed it to Edmund Knolles (d. by 1698), a Minehead tanner and it was divided between Edmund's sisters Elizabeth Bowcher, Dorothy Williams and Deborah Bullock. In 1695 Dorothy gave her sixth share to Deborah (d. c.1720) whose two shares were settled on Hugh Payne husband of her daughter Joan Veysey in 1725. Hugh went bankrupt and the mortgaged two sixths of the rectory were assigned to Thomas Stowell to whom Hugh and Joan released their rights in 1749. In 1763 Thomas's son George sold the two shares to Henry Fownes Luttrell.⁵⁴ In 1716 Elizabeth Bowcher left her sixth share to her daughter Elizabeth, whose son George Gooding sold it in 1727 to Alexander Luttrell.⁵⁵

After 1763 the houses were absorbed into Minehead manor and the tithes were collected mostly by composition until c.1804 when tithes were increased and demanded in kind as part of an electoral dispute.⁵⁶ They brought in over £120 a year

⁵¹ SHC, D/D/Cd 62; DD/CH 13; E.H. Bates (ed.), Quarter Sessions Records, 1607—25 (Som. Rec. Soc. 23, 258).

⁵² SHC, DD/L 1/54/40/2—7, 13—14; 1/54/43/1.

⁵³ TNA, CP 25/2/480/ 17 Chas I Hil.; CP 25/2/592/1652 Hil.

⁵⁴ SHC, DD/L 1/50/14/4, 1/54/38/1, 1/54/40/11—12, 16—17, 1/54/43/1.

⁵⁵ SHC, DD/L 1/54/38/1, 1/54/43/1.

⁵⁶ SHC, DD/L 2/42/13.

before 1815⁵⁷ but were commuted for £82 12s 3d. in 1842.⁵⁸ In 1927—8 they were redeemed at 22 years purchase.⁵⁹

There was no parsonage house but the old tithe barn was recorded in 1725 and 1747, possibly in the later Tythings Court, behind the rectory houses in Frog Street.⁶⁰

Pastoral care and parish life: the Middle Ages

Godfrey, the first vicar, served until 1252 or later.⁶¹ His successor Robert was implicated in the 1265 rebellion and the church apparently served by Richard the chaplain.⁶² During the 15th century, when Minehead prospered and its church was rebuilt, and the early 16th century the vicarage was sometimes held by eminent but absent churchmen and the church was left in the care of curates and chaplains, two in 1468.⁶³ Richard Bruton (1401—7) canon and chancellor of Wells, left money to the church and poor of Minehead in 1417 with alms to be distributed for the souls of his predecessor and successor.⁶⁴ He may be the priest whose effigy is under a late 15th-century arch north of the chancel.⁶⁵ A damaged brass inlaid memorial slab to a judge's daughter (d. 1440) was, like a medieval altar slab, re-used for Quirke memorials.⁶⁶

Thomas Warre, of noble birth and an Oxford B.Cn.L., held several Somerset livings

⁵⁷ SHC, DD/L 1/53/33/3.

⁵⁸ SHC, tithe award.

⁵⁹ SHC, DD/L, box 295/24..

⁶⁰ SHC, DD/L 1/51/24/2, 1/52/31/3

⁶¹ Maxwell-Lyte and Holmes, Cart. Bruton and Montacute Priors, p. 59.

⁶² Cal. Inq. Misc. I, p. 264.

⁶³ SHC, DD/L P27/10; Maxwell-Lyte, Reg. Stillington and Fox, p. 28; Weaver, Som. Wills, 1501—30, 172, 248—9.

⁶⁴ T. S. Holmes (ed.), Register of Bishop Bowett (Som. Rec. Soc. 13), pp. 19—20, 67; T. F. Palmer (ed.), Collectanea (Som. Rec. Soc. 57), p. 88; F. W. Weaver (ed.), Somerset Wills 1383—1500 (Som. Rec. Soc. 16), pp. 91—7.

⁶⁵ Often said to be of the judge Henry Bracton.

⁶⁶ SHC, T/PH/ste 15.

but resigned Minehead in 1437 after three years and was granted a pension of £13 6s. 8d. a year, far more than the assessed value of the church.⁶⁷

Richard FitzJames, professor of theology, was a pluralist who gave up Minehead in 1497 after twelve years to become bishop of Rochester and later bishop of London.⁶⁸ His illuminated late 14th-century missal was acquired for the church in 1949⁶⁹ and a carved medieval chest bears the FitzJames dolphin. His successor Henry Sutton, canon and treasurer of Salisbury, left the church money for vestments for the high altar in 1500 and the rood screen was installed possibly at this period.⁷⁰ His short-lived successors included John Pykman and Thomas Beaumont, who left money to Minehead church and poor, both archdeacons of Taunton and William Gilbert professor of theology.⁷¹ Dr Walter Cretin, 1527—33, moved to his more lucrative living of Huntspill. However it was in 1529 that the east window of the north aisle was inserted bearing an external inscription ‘we prey to Jesu and Marie send ovr neyburs safte’ flanked by angels.⁷² In 1533 a violent quarrel arose over a seat, which was demolished for ‘quieting of the parish and to avoid murder’. There were several ‘principal pews’ but only Bratton manor possessed one the others being let out by the churchwardens.⁷³

In the early 16th century there were endowed lights dedicated to the Virgin Mary, St Michael, Our Lady of Pity, St Erasmus, St George and St Mark, a rood light,

⁶⁷ T. S. Holmes (ed.), Register of Bishop Stafford (Som. Rec. Soc. 32), pp. 166, 211; Alum. Oxon.; above, this section.

⁶⁸ Maxwell-Lyte, Reg. Stillington and Fox, p. 130; Cal. Papal Reg. XIV, p. 12; H. Maxwell-Lyte (ed.), Registers of Bishop King and Bishop Hadrian, (Som. Rec. Soc. 54), pp. 5.

⁶⁹ C. Bullivant, ‘The Missal of Richard FitzJames’ (priv. print. nd., copy in SHC, PAM 875).

⁷⁰ Maxwell-Lyte, Reg. Bp King and Bp Hadrian, 5; Cal. Papal Reg. XVI, p. 611; F. W. Weaver, Somerset Wills, 1501—30 (Som. Rec. Soc. 19), 5.

⁷¹ Maxwell-Lyte, Reg. Bp King and Bp Hadrian, 36, 49—50, 79—80, 124; Weaver, Som. Wills, 1501—30, 111.

⁷² H. C. Maxwell-Lyte Bishops’ Registers, 1515—59, (Som. Rec. Soc. 55), p. 48, 6; SHC, D/D/Vc 20; F. W. Weaver (ed.), Wells Wills (1890), pp. 104—6.

⁷³ G. Bradford (ed.), Star Chamber Proceeding, Henry VII and Henry VIII (Som. Rec. Soc. 27), 23, 121—5.

stores of the Virgin Mary and the port, and a Trinity aisle or chapel, later vestry, to which parishioners made bequests. Wealthy merchant John Butston left a silver salt and a silver girdle to the church in 1509 and gave a half share in a ship for a priest to celebrate for him for a year. Thomas Braye gave a quarter of a ship in 1513 and in 1525 Thomas Cole gave a silver salt, which he had bought from the church, possibly Butson's gift. All provided for services and prayers for their souls.⁷⁴ A fisherman left a barrel of herring to the church in 1535.⁷⁵

Pastoral care and parish life: post Reformation to 1780

The church seems have to have been neglected during the Reformation. In 1557 the chancel was in decay and there were no tapers for the altar because they had previously been provided by Bruton abbey.⁷⁶ The church continued to be served by curates who received £10 a year. In 1574 Thomas Williams admitted that he had only served the church for two years out of the fourteen he had held the living.⁷⁷ His successor Nicholas Browse, who served from 1585 to 1635, was described as 'grave in years and sober in manner, painful in his care and patient to his parish'⁷⁸ and although presented in 1606 for not giving sermons he did expound scripture so was presumably resident as were most of his successors.⁷⁹ In 1628 Henry Byam of Luccombe preached at Bishop Laud's request when a lapsed Christian, a captured seaman, returned from Algiers.⁸⁰ Several parishioners were presented to the church

⁷⁴ Weaver (ed.), Som. Wills, 1501—30, 34, 128, 172—3, 248—9.

⁷⁵ Weaver, Wells Wills, pp. 106.

⁷⁶ SHC, D/D/Ca 27.

⁷⁷ SDNQ, XIV. 64.

⁷⁸ Cal. Pat. 1584—5, p. 155; SHC, DD/SP Inv. 1635/97; D/P/m.st.m 2/1/1.

⁷⁹ SHC, D/D/Ca 151, 175, 180, 235; D/P/m.st.m 2/1/1—2; T. F. Palmer, *Collectanea* (Som. Rec. Soc. 43), 79—80, 114; D. Shorrocks, Bishop Still's Visitation 1594 and The 'Smale Booke' of the Clerk of the Peace for Somerset 1593—5 (Som. Rec. Soc. 84), 87—8.

⁸⁰ SHC, PAM 1189.

courts for immorality, drunkenness and absence from church.⁸¹ Further pew disputes, presumably due to increasing population, revealed that seats had been built in the chancel c.1600 where formerly youths sat to sing psalms and that in the 1620s more were built north and south of the chancel, where they remained until 1883.⁸² Population growth may also account for a curate in 1635⁸³ and the 26 ½ quarts of wine needed for Easter Communion in 1637. Communion was celebrated 11 times a year and in private houses at Easter and rails were provided in 1640.⁸⁴ Tales of haunting surrounding the Leakey family, related to Bishop Atherton hanged in Ireland in 1641, probably had more to do with politics and property than superstition⁸⁵ but Anne Meare was suspected of witchcraft in 1649.⁸⁶

The carved altar table is probably early 17th-century, the oldest bell is dated 1607, a silver chalice and paten date from 1624 and the Decalogue was installed in 1634, the gift of Robert Quirke, with Moses and Aaron added in 1637 to create a 7-panel folding reredos now on the north wall. A clock, with hammer jack figure preserved on the rood screen, was possibly installed at a similar date as the chimes were mended in 1637 and a new spring bought for the jack in 1641. In 1637 the church had two pewter flagons, two surplices, a pulpit cloth and cushion, and many books and purchased a new organ from John Hayward of Bath, selling the old pipes. Rice Jenkins received £10 a year for playing.⁸⁷ A Mr Serridge was paid £90 for

⁸¹ SHC, D/D/Ca 151, 175, 180, 235; D/P/m.st.m 2/1/1—2; *ibid.* PAM 1189; T. F. Palmer, *Collectanea* (Som. Rec. Soc. 43), 79—80, 114; D. Shorrocks, Bishop Still's Visitation 1594 and The 'Smale Booke' of the Clerk of the Peace for Somerset 1593—5 (Som. Rec. Soc. 84), 87—8.

⁸² SHC, D/D/Cd 62; DD/L 1/52/31/4; D/D/Cf 1883/6.

⁸³ SHC, DD/SP 1635/99.

⁸⁴ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 4/1/1.

⁸⁵ Cal. Pat. 1637--8, p. 276; Historical and Antiquarian Gleanings relating to Minehead (c.1889), 19—35; R. Norton, 'The Life and Death of John Atherton, 1641', rictornorton.co.uk/eighteen/Atherton.htm: accessed 28 Feb. 2012.

⁸⁶ J. S. Cockburn, Somerset Assize Orders (Som. Rec. Soc. 71), 30.

⁸⁷ SHC, D/D/Ri 3; D/P/m.st.m 4/1/1, 23/4; M. McGarvie, Sir Stephen Glynne's church notes for Somerset (Som. Rec. Soc. 82), 235.

building the organ and his widow received the remaining £70 in 1638. The organ, which was set on the rood loft, was provided with curtains and Mr Loosemoore, presumably John who built Exeter Cathedral organ, was paid 7s 6d a year to keep it in tune. Jenkins's successor as organist, Henry Cozens, was only paid when required to play and in 1645 the organ was dismantled. The church was well maintained at this period; in 1639 the tower was lime mortared, in 1640 the church was whitewashed inside and in 1641 the roof was retiled. The church house, west of Church Steps and rented from the manor in 1600, was retained by the churchwardens, until the 1730s.⁸⁸

In 1640 the parish wanted a lecturer and several ministers preached with the consent of the vicar Richard Knowles.⁸⁹ Distressed ministers from Ireland were in Minehead in the 1640s and in 1656 14 ministers applied for the lectureship and were fed. After ringing for the Prince of Wales and Parliamentary victories in 1650 the parish paid for all royal arms in the church and at the quay to be painted out and for the pillars to be painted in 1652. In 1660 the parish rang for the King, paid £5 for new royal arms, bought a prayer book and apparently dropped the lecture.⁹⁰ Nicholas Browse, vicar from 1651, was confirmed in the living in 1660 and remained until his death in 1665. His initials are carved above the south door.⁹¹ Although only three to five communions were celebrated annually after the Restoration the parish bought a new carpet for the table, also a hearse cloth embroidered with date, a new surplice and prayer book in 1671, Texts were painted on the walls in 1672 and the organ was set up again and painted on both sides by the former organist who received £3 a year for playing it and maintained both organ and clock. In the early 18th century organists

⁸⁸ SHC, DD/L P30/49; D/P/m.st.m 4/1/1—2; above, soc. hist.

⁸⁹ SHC, D/D/Cd 334.

⁹⁰ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 4/1/1.

⁹¹ SHC, Dd/HCK 9/1/17; DD/L P30/110a/3

were paid up to £20 a year.⁹² Alexander Ewens (d. 1675), a yeoman, gave theology books to be the basis of a parish library, still preserved chained, and all the food and fuel in his house to the poor.⁹³ In 1675 new communion rails were installed and a silver communion plate was given by Thomas Henley. The same year the great bell fell through the roof. In 1681 the 3rd bell was recast at Timberscombe and in 1686 the 4th bell was recast and five new wheels were installed. A painting of the Resurrection was retouched 1687.⁹⁴ The three-decker pulpit may date from the later 17th century.

The bells rang for the defeat of the rebels at Sedgemoor in 1685 and for the birth of the Prince of Wales in 1688. There was a bonfire when the seven bishops were released from the Tower and ringing for thanksgiving when the Prince of Orange came. The parish regularly supported travellers and castaways and collected money from communicants and Sabbath breakers to distribute to the poor. Repeated attempts to reduce the sums given, together with money spent on vermin bounties and ringing failed and in 1712 96 people had alms.⁹⁵

A new organ by Thomas Swarbrick was installed in 1713—15, apparently in the old case. Sir Jacob Bancks gave a bible, prayer books and communion cloth as well as Queen Anne's statue, which stood in the north aisle until the 1880s.⁹⁶ In 1724 the 3rd bell was shipped to Bristol for casting and in 1725 the clock was given new chimes and a dial for which a hole was made in the tower. Throughout the century the winter bell was rung at 4 am, 6 am from 1771, and 8 pm but was discontinued in 1835. There is a silver communion set dated 1731 given by Francis Whitworth M.P. In 1743 Richard Phelps painted the gallery and king's arms. The ringers rang for the

⁹² SHC, D/P/m.st.m 4/1/1—2; DD/TB 16/8.

⁹³ M. Siraut, *Somerset Wills* (Som. Rec. Soc. 89), 97—8; 'Minehead Parish Church', *PSAS*. 52 (1906), 22.

⁹⁴ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 4/1/1.

⁹⁵ SHC D/P/m.st.m 4/1/1—2, 9/1/1.

⁹⁶ SHC D/P/m.st.m 4/1/2; *ibid.* A/AQP 8; above, intro.

victory at Dettingen in 1743 and for Culloden, the king's return and the election of the Emperor in 1745.⁹⁷ Two bells were recast in 1766.⁹⁸

Leonard Herring, vicar of Minehead, where he resided, and East Quantoxhead, was a firm supporter of his patron Henry Fownes Luttrell, encouraging him to stand for Parliament, and a keen huntsman. He bound himself to resign the vicarage if Luttrell demanded it and was distressed to leave Minehead for Huish in 1774.⁹⁹ In 1766 during the incumbency of Peter Woodley (1775—80) the churchyard was extended.¹⁰⁰

Pastoral care and parish life: post 1780

In 1780 that Alexander Fownes Luttrell took the living and Luttrells held the living until 1899.¹⁰¹ There were only c. 60 communicants in the 1780s.¹⁰² The church had a west organ gallery and a singers' gallery on the roodscreen, had plaster ceilings to nave and aisle, plain glass windows, 100 box pews, the old pulpit and a new desk both wainscoted, an altarpiece with the Decalogue and 'miserable daubings' of Moses and Aaron, and an 'antique' table frame, which survives in the north aisle. The north arcade was 15 inches out of perpendicular and the north wall heavily buttressed.¹⁰³ The chancel was ceiled in 1792—3.¹⁰⁴ The church was struck by lightning in 1813 but does not seem to have suffered major damage.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁷ SHC D/P/m.st.m 4/1/2. Arms with those of 1704 on N wall.

⁹⁸ SHC, DD/SAS CH 16/2.

⁹⁹ SHC, DD/L 1/53/33/3, 1/54/43/1, 1/54/48/18—19.

¹⁰⁰ SHC D/P/m.st.m 4/1/2.

¹⁰¹ SHC, D/D/Vc 88; DD/L 1/54/40/23, 26; DD/WBF 2/96.

¹⁰² SHC, D/D/Vc 88.

¹⁰³ SHC, A/AQP 8.

¹⁰⁴ SHC, DD/L 1/53/33/2.

¹⁰⁵ SHC, DD/L 2/48/23.

In 1815 and 1827 the church was in the care of a resident curate who held two Sunday services and also served Carhampton.¹⁰⁶ The vestry agreed in 1824 to raise a subscription to maintain the organ but not to pay more than £12 a year to the organist. In 1825 the bishop ordered the organ and church to be repaired, the pews to be varnished in oak colour and the font to be scraped and painted stone. The quire was disbanded in 1831 and told to return music books and a cello. Coal was kept under the gallery stairs in 1840.¹⁰⁷ In the 1840s the church employed an organist, a blower, a sexton, a clerk and paid £3 to singers. The resident vicar held two Sunday services and celebrated communion four times a year, eight by 1870.¹⁰⁸ On Census Sunday 280 adults and 67 Sunday schoolchildren attended morning service and 420 adults and 74 children came to the afternoon service. Nearly half the 700 seats were free.¹⁰⁹

By 1855 the fabric had decayed further, the nave roof was moving and pushing out the walls and arcade, which was braced by a wooden framework, and a massive buttress supported the north wall. The church was still furnished with box pews, the three-decker pulpit next to the south door, a large west gallery and a panelled loft above the rood screen bearing the royal arms and used by school children. There were more children's seats beside the altar. The gates and tracery of the screen had been removed although the gates were recovered later.¹¹⁰ The churchyard was extended again in 1861.¹¹¹

In 1883 Minehead was said to be the only church in the area neither rebuilt nor restored. Despite pew disputes and a reluctant vicar a faculty was obtained to remove the west gallery, rebuild the arcade and chancel walls, re-roof, repave and reseat most

¹⁰⁶ SHC, D/D/Rb 1815, 1827.

¹⁰⁷ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 9/1/1; D/D/Va 1/7.

¹⁰⁸ SHC, D/D/Va 1/7, 3/7, 12/7.

¹⁰⁹ TNA, HO 129/313/1/7/6.

¹¹⁰ SHC, SANHS glass slide colln., Minehead church interior nd; McGarvie, Sir St. Glynne's church notes, 234; 'Minehead Parish Church', PSAS, 52 (1906), 20-1; SHC, D/D/Cf 1883/6.

¹¹¹ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 9/1/1.

of the church, put new tracery and glass in the windows and restore the screen to the designs of J. P. St Aubyn at a cost of £3,500.¹¹² However the church did not re-open until 1886 and the work cost over £4,570 including oak from Exebridge and stoves from Shrewsbury. The replacement of the reredos with a mural by Henry Holliday was unpopular.¹¹³ In 1888 three new bells were added increasing the peal to eight.¹¹⁴

The custom of boys holding a rope across the church entrance after weddings until the bridal pair paid to be freed was recorded c.1890 but was probably an older tradition.¹¹⁵ The Revd Charles Marson helped revive folk singing and morris dancing in Somerset having collected folk songs with Cecil Sharp in the 1900s.¹¹⁶ In 1903 a church institute was built in Bancks Street and a parish room was added at the rear c.1908. By 1920 it had a gymnasium and in 1943 the whole site was requisitioned for education use by evacuees.¹¹⁷ In 1950 part was converted into accommodation for the curate.¹¹⁸ It was disposed of c.2010.

There was a church choir in the early 20th century.¹¹⁹ In 1902 the organ was replaced by a three-manual Norman and Beard instrument with an electric blower. It was altered in 1959 and replaced in 1970 by a Heale organ from Torquay Union Street Methodist Church.¹²⁰ The clock was replaced in the early 20th century and in 1906—7 two new bells were added bringing the peal up to ten.¹²¹ They were rehung when two were replaced in 1927—8 but the 1607 bell was retained for chiming.¹²² They

¹¹² SHC, D/D/Cf 1883/6

¹¹³ SHC, D/P/m.st.m. 4/1/8, 23/4; SHC, D/D/Ri 3.

¹¹⁴ 'Minehead Parish Church', PSAS, 52 (1906), 21; SHC, D/D/Cf 1926/21.

¹¹⁵ SDNQ, II, p. 237.

¹¹⁶ PSAS (1906), 38.

¹¹⁷ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 9/3/4; above, soc. hist., educ.

¹¹⁸ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 17/5/1.

¹¹⁹ SHC, DD/X/WBB 224.

¹²⁰ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 6/3/1; D/D/Ri 3; D/D/Cf 1973/6/3.

¹²¹ 'Minehead parish Church', PSAS, 52 (1906), SHC, D/D/Cf 1907/226; D/D/Ri 3; DD/SAS CH 16/2.

¹²² SHC, D/D/Rrd 1.

were rehung again in 1993.¹²³ In 1981 a new candelabra by James Horrobin was installed to replace the original 1727 chandelier that was stolen.¹²⁴ There is a fine metal lectern of 1903.

Three Sunday services were held during the 20th century and in 1915 there were eight services on Easter Sunday and 298 communicants.¹²⁵ There were assistant curates throughout the 20th century, two in 1917 when the vicar thought it impossible to provide Sunday services at the quay chapel. The parish was already financially dependent on visitors and the wartime disruption was partly responsible for £100 deficit. A parochial church council was established in 1920 to deal with church finance including pew rents. In 1949 seating was removed from the north chancel chapel, around the font and the front of the nave and a new curtained high altar was installed.¹²⁶ Additional communion plate was given in 1924, 1930 and c.1960 and in 1975 there were 289 Easter communicants. In 1974 the church closed briefly for restoration and the rebuilding of the organ.¹²⁷ In 1991 the tower was adapted to provide kitchen and toilet facilities with choir vestry above.¹²⁸

The churchyard was closed for burials except in existing family plots when the new cemetery opened in 1907 and completely in 1956.¹²⁹ A proposal in 1954 to clear the churchyard of graves and plough it for a public open space was not carried out although it was levelled in 1979.¹³⁰ The medieval churchyard cross was restored in 1990.¹³¹

¹²³ SHC, D/D/Cf 1993/5/20.

¹²⁴ SHC, D/D/Cf 1981/9/3.

¹²⁵ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 2/5/1.

¹²⁶ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 1/2/1—2, 9/3/1—2, 6; /D/Cf 1949/100; Dioc. Dir.

¹²⁷ SHC, DD/WBF 20/320; D/P/m.st.m 2/5/5.

¹²⁸ SHC, D/D/Cf 1991/8/38, 1991/10/23—4; *ibid.* PAM 530.

¹²⁹ SHC, D/D/Ri 3;; D/D/ord 99/2.

¹³⁰ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 3/5/1; D/D/Cf 1973/6/3, 1979/4/10.

¹³¹ SHC, D/D/Cf 1990/9/19.

St Michael's church

The parish church comprises an undivided chancel and nave with north aisle and north-east chapel, a west tower and a south porch. It was built of local sandstone with a Treborough slate roof in the 15th century, although the tower may be later than the rest, and was heavily restored in the 1880s. The priest's effigy of c.1400 from the earlier church was inserted under a canopy, possibly intended for an Easter sepulchre, and is oriented to the west to face the congregation. The 15th-century font has figures sat on a ledge around the base of the bowl and a panelled stem with saints in niches. Chancel and nave are separated only by the restored screen of c.1500. The spacious and well-lit south stair was possibly intended for a lantern or brazier to be visible at sea. The chancel aisle with its 1529 window was probably a Lady chapel, the vestry is the former Trinity chapel and there is a late medieval, eight-bay arcade. The tower, topped by a 19th-century weathercock, has few windows and bears images of God the father with Christ crucified on the south and St Michael weighing souls with the Virgin Mary tipping the balance against the devil on the east side.

Burgundy Chapel

The name of this 15th-century chapel, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, is probably a corruption of Bircombe.¹³² It was possibly a private chapel of Hugh Luttrell, who made a pilgrimage there in 1405 and granted its chaplain, John Spersho, an annuity of £5 6s. 8d. in 1426.¹³³ It was occasionally recorded until 1585.¹³⁴ Graffiti from the 17th and 18th centuries indicate it was standing then but it was filled in during the late 19th century. Parts of the north and south chapel walls survive including the north doorway but the east wall, which stood in 1940 when the site was excavated, has been lost. At

¹³² SHC, DD/L P27/12/4.

¹³³ SHC, DD/L P22/11/1; *ibid.* A/CVZ 1/1 (4).

¹³⁴ SHC, DD/1 P27/12/4, P28/16/3, P29/42.

the east end was a two-roomed building, possibly a small house against which the chapel was built. During excavations coloured glazed tiles, glass and potsherds were found.¹³⁵

St Andrew

St Andrew's church south of Wellington Square was built in early 14th-century style to the designs of G. E. Street from 1877 and it was opened and consecrated on 26 August 1880. It could accommodate 400.¹³⁶ Charlotte Luttrell, wife of the vicar, financed it with funds supplied by her cousin Mr Jeremy and the font and communion plate were given by the Luttrells and others.¹³⁷ It had no parish and many people, like holidaymaker Joseph Wood in the 1880s, probably attended both St Michael's and St Andrew's.¹³⁸ There were three Sunday services during the early 20th century when the church was better attended than St Michael's, which can only be approached through steep streets. In 1915 there were 448 Easter communicants.¹³⁹ In the 1950s collections at services were twice those at St Michaels.¹⁴⁰

Due to the confined nature of the site the church is aligned north—south without a tower. The church, built of random sandstone rubble under very thick clay tiles, comprises chancel and nave with aisles and small bell turret with two bells.¹⁴¹ The east window by Kempe was installed 1889. In 1938 a Lady chapel was created in the south aisle, with a memorial by Christopher Webb, in memory of the Revd. Charles Sainsbury (d. 1915) a very popular curate of Minehead for 34 years, noted for

¹³⁵ SHC, DD/SAS C/1193/53; *ibid.* C/ENAH 4/2.

¹³⁶ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 8/3/3; DD/WBF 20/319.

¹³⁷ SHC, D/D/Rrd 1; DD/WBF20/319; plaque in ch.

¹³⁸ SHC, DD/SAS C/1193/11.

¹³⁹ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 2/5/6.

¹⁴⁰ SHC, D/P/m.st.4/1/8.

¹⁴¹ SHC, D/D/Ri 3.

his youth work. He had a saintly reputation and crowds attended his funeral.¹⁴² The organ was rebuilt in 1958—9.¹⁴³ An aumbry was installed in the chancel in 1967,¹⁴⁴ internal alterations and redecoration were carried out in 1968 and an extension to the south aisle moving the Lady chapel was dedicated in 2005.¹⁴⁵

St Peter on the Quay

St Peter's chapel occupies a 17th-century store that Robert Quirke used to endow his almshouses.¹⁴⁶ Built of lias rubble, cemented over, it has its original oak south windows and chamfered ceiling beams. It was leased by the church from 1890¹⁴⁷ as a mission to seamen with the upper floor used as a sailor's shelter and reading room.¹⁴⁸ In 1941 the upper floor was requisitioned as a dormitory. Regular church services were resumed by 1950 and in 1970 the parish bought the chapel.¹⁴⁹ A new entrance was made under an external stair to the upper room. A painting of Christ walking on the water with the last wooden Minehead sailing ship, the Emma Louise, was installed as a reredos.¹⁵⁰

Woodcombe chapel

The parish purchased an old army hut at Woodcombe before 1925 for use as a chapel and equipped it with chairs and a harmonium, replaced in 1951. From 1947 half the collections were put aside to fund a permanent building but this was discontinued in 1950 when the stipend to the officiating clergyman was increased. In 1958 the site

¹⁴² SHC, D/D/Cf 1938/107; *ibid.* A/CVZ 1/1 (4); M Kieville, Sidney's Story 1881-1967 [priv.print. nd].

¹⁴³ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 6/3/2.

¹⁴⁴ SHC, D/D/Cf 1967/12/9.

¹⁴⁵ SHC, D/D/Cf 1968/10/11; plaque in ch.

¹⁴⁶ Above, *soc. hist.*, charities.

¹⁴⁷ SHC, A/CVZ 1/1 (4); *ibid.* D/P/m.st.m 9/3/2.

¹⁴⁸ SHC, PAM 530.

¹⁴⁹ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 4/1/8, 8/3/1, 9/3/4.

¹⁵⁰ SHC, A/CVZ 1/1 (4).

was bought from the Luttrell estate and the Revd Etherington gave a chalice and paten. All the church furnishings were gifts including the altar rails from Luccombe church. The chapel closed after 1966.¹⁵¹

ROMAN CATHOLICISM

John Trevelyan of Minehead, his wife and servants were excommunicated for recusancy in 1623 as was Richard Sayer.¹⁵² The convent of St Louis was established in 1898 in the Butts, now Selbourne Place, in a former malthouse with an adjoining thatched barn, used a chapel and school.¹⁵³ Immediately a convent was built nearby in a similar style to the church with a chapel and a large laundry. It was extended in 1910. The convent housed 14 French nuns and 24 young English laundresses in 1901 and 60 nuns, laundry workers, teachers and schoolgirls in 1911.¹⁵⁴ The convent housed, educated and employed orphans and in 1926 opened a second school. Following the closure of the convent in 1998 the building became a mental health centre.¹⁵⁵

The nearby church of the Sacred Heart with presbytery in Alcombe Road was begun in 1896 to the designs of the Revd A. J. Scoles of Yeovil and a north aisle was added in 1900 to increase accommodation to 150 seats.¹⁵⁶ Lady Charlotte van Straubenzee paid to maintain two priests until 1931.¹⁵⁷ In 1910 the church comprised nave, north aisle, apse and organ gallery with finely carved marble altars and stained

¹⁵¹ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 4/1/8, 8/3/1, 9/3/3, 6, 9—10.

¹⁵² T. F. Palmer, *Collectanea* (Som. Rec. Soc. 43), 79—80, 114. The Mass house recorded in the 18th century near the quay: SHC, DD/L 1/10/35B—C, 1/46/7/58, 1/59/5/18; is almost certainly the mast house recorded in 1520: SHC, DD/L P28/16/3.

¹⁵³ SHC, A/BAZ 4/13/15; *ibid.* tithe award; TNA, ED 33/69; SANHS, glass slide colln.

¹⁵⁴ TNA, RG 13/2260; RG 14/14116; SHC, D/U/m 22/1/373.

¹⁵⁵ stlouisconvent.co.uk accessed 24 Feb 2012; above, *soc. hist.*, *educ.*

¹⁵⁶ SHC, D/U/m 22/1/10, 21, 89.

¹⁵⁷ SHC, DD/C 234.

glass with biblical scenes.¹⁵⁸ It is built of stone in early Gothic style under a tiled roof and the attached priests' house is in Tudor style. A modern flat-roofed extension now obscures the west end of the church and a hall has been built in the grounds. The church remains open and has two Sunday services.

PROTESTANT NONCONFORMITY

Quakers

In 1656 merchant William Alloway opened his home as a meeting place for Friends. He may have entertained George Fox in 1668 as Minehead meeting received part of Fox's library in 1694. Among Quakers imprisoned was Susannah, wife of William Alloway, who built a new meeting house in the 1680s probably supported by merchants and women who were attracted by Quaker beliefs. Fortnightly meetings were held by 1688. Among local members imprisoned was Susannah, wife of William Alloway, who built a new meeting house, licensed in 1689, probably supported by local merchants and women who were attracted by Quaker beliefs.¹⁵⁹ The meeting house, with burial ground, north of Market Place Lane had been converted to a school by 1723 and demolished by 1822.¹⁶⁰ In 1921 human remains were found and re-interred in the churchyard. New premises in Bampton Street on the corner of the Butts were rented for 28s a year. A debate between Anglican clergy and itinerant Quaker preachers was held there in 1736. In 1701—4 burials were recorded in the parish

¹⁵⁸ TNA, IR 58/82377.

¹⁵⁹ S. C. Morland, The Som. Quarterly Meeting of the Society of Friends (Som. Rec. Soc. 75), 57, 59, 69, 82, 137, 186, 195, 204, 233; Persecution Exposed...the sufferings of John Whiting and others of the people called Quakers, the West of England (1791 edn), 201—2, 230, 474.

¹⁶⁰ SHC, DD/L 1/10/35A, 1/46/7/19, 1/52/29, 297/2.

register but by the 1740s burials were at and births, marriages and deaths were recorded by merchant Robert Davis who also kept the meeting accounts.¹⁶¹

Two young members of the Minehead meeting were Richard Brocklesby (b. 1722), later physician to Samuel Johnson, and Thomas Young (b. 1773), grandson of Robert Davis, doctor and Egyptologist.¹⁶² However, by the 1780s there were only two Quaker families in the parish, possibly because many merchant families had left Minehead, and no later burials were recorded. William Davis, one of the last members raised £4,000 for sufferers from the 1791 fire. In 1842 the meeting house was a barn.¹⁶³

By the 1940s there was a small monthly meeting, although with only two members, and elders were appointed. In 1973 they met regularly at the Church Institute in Bancks Street and raised money for a meeting house. Many holidaymakers attended. In January 1976 the Friends moved into 9 Bancks Street, where they continue to meet, and joined the Minehead Council of churches.¹⁶⁴

Presbyterians

In 1669, 1672 and 1707 Thomas Petter or Peters had houses licensed for Presbyterian worship as did ejected minister John Willis in 1672.¹⁶⁵ An old house in Folkland Court, Middle Street was rebuilt as a meeting house after 1702.¹⁶⁶ The cause claimed 200 adherents in 1718 when Samuel Robjent was minister. His successor Arthur

¹⁶¹ SHC, DD/SFRw 33, 61; Ipswich Jnl, 15 Aug 1736 in britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk: accessed 29 Nov 2011.

¹⁶² M. V. Sully, 'Quakers in Minehead', Exmoor Review, 1997, 33—4; DNB.

¹⁶³ SHC, A/AQP 8; *ibid.* D/D/Vc 88; DD/L 287/1; Binding, New Hist of Minehead, 131.

¹⁶⁴ SHC, DD/SFRw 64, 70.

¹⁶⁵ Cal. SP Dom. 1672, pp. 198, 400; G.L. Turner, Original Records of Early Nonconformity II, 1116.

¹⁶⁶ SHC, DD/L 1/52/31/3, 1/54/39/6. Possibly the 18th-century hipped cottage of called Falkland Court.

Towell (d. 1729) had gentlemen and 75 borough voters in his congregation.¹⁶⁷

William Irwin, merchant, left an annuity to the minister George Lissant in 1733 provided his son kept a seat in the meeting house,¹⁶⁸ which was recorded until 1777 although it is not clear if services were held.¹⁶⁹

Baptists

A Minehead Baptist is said to have attended a meeting at Wells in 1656,¹⁷⁰ a house was licensed for Baptist worship in 1672 and in 1718 there were 46 adherents under Lancelot Spurrier.¹⁷¹ In 1817 Particular Baptists formed a church in Minehead with six members and built a chapel at Periton for 200. Services were not held regularly until 1826 when John Cocks became first resident minister.¹⁷² In 1827—8 he licensed a room in the town and in 1831 built a second chapel in the Parks for 300 although there were only 10 members, mostly women, and he was persecuted by ‘enemies of the cross’.¹⁷³ On Census Sunday 1851 23 people attended afternoon service at the Periton chapel. At the Parks chapel 62 adults and 38 Sunday school children attended morning service and 150 people went in the evening. William Henry Fuller, minister, claimed normal attendance was 25 per cent higher.¹⁷⁴

The Periton chapel was given up after 1867¹⁷⁵ but cottage meetings were held there in the early 20th century. The Parks chapel continued with resident ministers in the attached manse but was heavily dependent on visitors and faced competition the Church of England for young people. By 1904 costs exceeded income and there were

¹⁶⁷ Crippen, Nonconf in Som., 41.

¹⁶⁸ TNA, PROB 11/663.

¹⁶⁹ SHC, DD/L 1/10/35C, 1/52/29; *ibid.* A/AQP 8.

¹⁷⁰ D. Jackman, Baptists in the West Country (Dorchester, c.1953), 34.

¹⁷¹ Turner, Orig. Recs of Early Nonconf. II, 1124; Crippen, Nonconf in Som. 41, 45.

¹⁷² Jackman, Baptists in the W. Country, 33—4; List of Places of Meeting for Public Religious Worship certified to the Registrar General (1867), 245; TNA, HO 129/313/1/7/8.

¹⁷³ SHC, D/D/Rm 10; D/N/min.b 4/2/1; *ibid.* Q/RRw 1, 3; TNA, HO 129/313/1/7/7.

¹⁷⁴ TNA, HO 129/313/1/7/7—8.

¹⁷⁵ List of Places of Meeting for Public Religious Worship certified to the Registrar General (1867).

only 29 members¹⁷⁶ but the Revd Irvine, 1901—9, doubled in size of the chapel and had the gallery removed and a new entrance made from The Parks. The Revd G. J. Knight extended the schoolroom in 1912. The Revd Wheeler increased membership especially among the young, held summer services in the Queen's Hall on the seafront between 1928 and 1934, and took up to 80 people for walks. In 1931 the chapel had 200 members and c.150 children in its Sunday school but suffered a secession.¹⁷⁷ The chapel, extended again in 1967, remains in use, and holds two Sunday services.¹⁷⁸ In the 1970s property on the Esplanade was purchased for Baptist holiday accommodation from the estate of the W. F. Fabry and run as a charity.¹⁷⁹

The Baptist chapel is stuccoed with four round-headed windows on the 1831 elevation in Parks Lane and a Tuscan porch. The present entrance in The Parks has a Doric porch flanked by round-headed windows matching those at the rear.

In 1817 and the 1820s the Revd George Charles Smith, Baptist minister to seamen, held services at Minehead. Between 1837 and 1840 the Bristol Channel Mission Society held services on the Eirene. In 1858 the society merged with the Anglican Mission to Seamen.¹⁸⁰

Millbridge Evangelical Church

This church had its origins in a group of c.40 people who broke away from the Baptist church and held services in the Women's Institute hall from 1932 as the Millbridge Baptist Evangelical Mission. At first the Baptists refused to meet with them but in 1935 invited them to rejoin but they refused. In 1936 a chapel was built in Parkhouse Road with a baptistery but the first pastor was not appointed until 1943. The church

¹⁷⁶ SHC, D/N/min.b 4/2/1.

¹⁷⁷ SHC, D/N/min.b 4/2/2, 3/3/1; D/U/m 22/1/129; below, this section.

¹⁷⁸ Minehead Baptist Church, *Ter Jubilee Souvenir* (1967) [unpaginated]; SHC, D/U/m 22/1/129.

¹⁷⁹ Char. Com. Reg.; baptistholidayapartments.org; accessed 25 Nov 2011.

¹⁸⁰ R. Kverndal, Seamen's Mission (Pasadena, 1986).

was extended in 1949 and remains open as Millbridge Evangelical Free Church and holds two Sunday services and weekday meetings.¹⁸¹

Methodists

John Wesley is said to have preached on the shore in 1744 and visited again in 1745. Rowland Hill preached in 1771 and there was a short-lived meeting house in the 1780s.¹⁸² In 1810 services were revived in a private house but minister John Henley was driven out of town. In 1811 a Minehead circuit was formed covering an area from Holford on the Quantocks to Molland in Devon but the only chapel was at Carhampton.¹⁸³ Rooms were rented in various houses with 40 attendees but services were removed to Dunster and the circuit was renamed the Dunster circuit in 1814.¹⁸⁴ In c.1825 the Minehead membership was six and in 1831 none.¹⁸⁵ The Luttrells were said to have frustrated attempts to secure a meeting room and services were held irregularly in private houses but in 1848 there were 11 members. In 1869 the Dunster and Williton Wesleyan circuits united but it was said that the Williton circuit was rural and evangelical whereas the Dunster and Minehead circuit was urban, liberal and ecumenical. In 1876 the Luttrell steward allowed Wesleyans a site in Station Road, now the Avenue, for a combined Sunday school and chapel, in effect only the aisle of the proposed church, with 110 seats. It was enlarged in 1886 to seat 472 and a new Sunday school was added in 1906.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ SHC, Q/SO 30, p. 454; *ibid.* D/N/min.b 4/2/2; D/U/m 22/1/759, 833; millbridgechurch.org.uk [accessed 31 December 2010].

¹⁸² SHC, D/D/Vc 88.

¹⁸³ SHC, D/N/wsc 2/3/2; A. G. Pointon, Methodists in West Somerset: the story of the West Somerset Circuit 1790—1980 (Minehead, 1982), 2—3; W. Symons, Early Methodism in West Somerset (c.1898), 39—40.

¹⁸⁴ SHC, D/N/wsc 2/3/2; above/below Dunster, rel. hist.; nonconf.

¹⁸⁵ Symons, Early Methodism, 40; SHC, D/N/wsc 3/4/3.

¹⁸⁶ Pointon, Methodists in W. Som., 1, 16—17; SHC, D/N/wsc 2/1/2, 4, 8; 3/2/1—2; 4/2/4; 4/3/3, 6.

Services were held twice on Sunday and on two weekday, mainly supported by local traders such as draper Isaac Floyd and brickmaker John Marley. Open air services were held in the 1930s and in 1940—1 there were evening services and entertainments for the troops. Membership rose steadily from 71 in 1919 to 260 in the 1970s.¹⁸⁷ By 1953 monthly communion was celebrated.¹⁸⁸ In 1969 the Minehead circuit joined with the former Bible Christian circuit to create the West Somerset Methodist circuit.¹⁸⁹ In the 1990s there was one Sunday evening service but in 2000 although the membership had fallen to 107 two regular Sunday services were held, reduced to one again by 2011. The church boasts a fine organ.¹⁹⁰

Services were held in a hut at Woodcombe c.1900–16, possibly that later used by Anglicans, and a Sunday school in a neighbouring cottage.¹⁹¹ A hospital service was held monthly in 1917 and fortnightly in the 1950s.¹⁹² In 1947 a site was acquired for a new chapel at Periton as part of a housing development. Despite regular meetings a chapel was never built probably for fear it would fragment the Avenue congregation and the land was used for houses for retired ministers in 1967.¹⁹³ From 1997 a monthly weekday service was held at Westerley in King Edward Road, a home for retired preachers together with morning prayers led by staff and residents.¹⁹⁴

The Avenue Methodist church was built of rubble stone with ashlar dressings under a crested slate roof in the Gothic Revival style between 1876 and 1906. It has a cruciform aisled plan with apsidal east end and plate-traceried two-light windows with hoodmoulds, a single-storey hipped-roofed east vestry and a west porch with pointed-

¹⁸⁷ SHC, D/N/wsc 2/1/8, 7/38; Pointon, *Methodists in W. Som.*, 17.

¹⁸⁸ SHC, D/N/wsc 3/4/1.

¹⁸⁹ Pointon, *Methodists in W. Som.*, 1.

¹⁹⁰ SHC, D/N/wsc 2/3/13, 7/37

¹⁹¹ Pointon, *Methodists in W. Som.*, 17; above, this section; SHC, D/N/wsc 3/2/3.

¹⁹² SHC, D/N/wsc 3/2/3, 3/4/1.

¹⁹³ SHC, D/N/wsc 4/2/1, 27; 4/4/2; Pointon, *Methodists in W. Som.*, 18.

¹⁹⁴ SHC, D/N/wsc 3/4/2; inf. from Westerley: pilgrimpeople.org.uk/temple [accessed 2007] CHECK AGAIN?

arched doorway and cusped lancets. The arcades of polychromatic stonework have circular and octagonal piers and moulded and chamfered arches. The Sunday school is of brick with limestone bands and dressings. Both church and school have arch-braced timber roofs.

Independents or Congregationalists

An Independent minister lodging in 1851 may have preached at Alcombe.¹⁹⁵ In 1902 c.80 people attended the first two Congregational services in the Public Hall. A site was bought in Bancks Street where a chapel was built, designed by F. W. Roberts of Taunton to be used also as a school. It opened in 1904 and by 1914 there were 15 members, a stipendiary minister and four deacons. In 1918 there was a choir and a new organ was installed in 1927. By 1935 there were 33 members and in 1936 the chapel was provided with a chancel and a school hall was built alongside. In 1939 it housed Wakefield Central School on Saturdays. Membership had risen to 65 by 1952 with one Sunday service. The chapel joined the United Reformed Church c.1972 and remains open.¹⁹⁶

Plymouth Brethren

The brethren may have first met in Minehead c.1900 and before 1904 built a meeting room in Bancks Street, possibly the present Friends Meeting. They moved to Selbourne Place before the First World War and then to Grove Place chapel, Alcombe¹⁹⁷ before acquiring the old wooden Victoria Reading Room at Alcombe in 1925 and moving it to Hopcott Road where three Sunday services and a Tuesday meeting were held c.1930. They also had a meeting room in Quirke Street between

¹⁹⁵ TNA, HO 107/1920; *ibid.* RG 11/2354; Dunster, *rel. hist.*

¹⁹⁶ SHC, D/N/min.c 4/2/1, 7/2/1; D/U/m 22/1/192, 766.

¹⁹⁷ SHC, PAM 530; Dunster, *rel. hist.*

1939 and 1943. In 1949 the disused iron Gospel Hall from Shoreditch, Taunton was added as a Sunday schoolroom at Hopcott Road where a brick chapel was built in 1957. It remains in use as Alcombe Evangelical Church with two Sunday services.¹⁹⁸

Other denominations

A late 18th-century Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion chapel was said to have closed by 1831.¹⁹⁹ In the late 20th century Christian Scientists had a chapel in a 1930s covered tennis court in King George Road. It closed c.2006 and was converted into a house.²⁰⁰ Before 1996 the Jehovah's Witnesses established a congregation, which meets in the Sainsbury Community Hall.²⁰¹ The Minehead Christian Spiritualist church meets at Grove Place, Alcombe.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Kelly's Dir. Som. (1939); SHC, Q/SO 30, p. 454; *ibid.* D/U/m 22/1/832; J. Astell, Around Minehead (Stroud 1995), 59.

¹⁹⁹ SHC, D/N/min.b 4/2/1.

²⁰⁰ Inf. from H. Binding.

²⁰¹ Char. Com. Reg.

²⁰² Above, Dunster, rel. hist.