

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

By the late 16th century Timberscombe tithing included the detached areas except for Stetfold Rocks.<sup>1</sup> Biccombe was a separate tithing in the Middle Ages but thereafter only for the hundred courts, where both tithingmen were appointed, and it only comprised Bickham farm.<sup>2</sup> The parish was a prebendal peculiar but although regular visitations were held in the later 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and the prebendary exercised probate jurisdiction in the parish few records survive.<sup>3</sup>

## MANORIAL ADMINISTRATION

Court rolls survive for Timberscombe manor courts for 1568, and period 1574—1605. They were held when business required rather than at regular dates and dealt with people living off their tenements, subletting, overcrowded holdings, agriculture and a few nuisances. One woman was regularly ordered to put an adult son out of her tenement and in 1599 the court declared that reversions of reversions were invalid and that all copyholds must be granted in open court. Under the trusteeship of the Trevelyans courts were held by a steward beginning with a court of survey with a homage of nine men and six widows. Stewards seem to have chosen their successors, bailiffs were appointed in court and reeves served by rota.<sup>4</sup> A pound was recorded in 1583<sup>5</sup> and there was a Pound Close at Well in 1844.<sup>6</sup>

## PARISH ADMINISTRATION

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<sup>1</sup> E. Green (ed.), *Certificate of Musters, 1569* (Som. Rec. Soc. 20), 55; SHC, Q/REI 8/10.

<sup>2</sup> SHC, DD/L P4/66, P20/12; 1/41/2/1, 1/42/12.

<sup>3</sup> SHC, D/D/Ppb 91, 93; D/D/Pg 5.

<sup>4</sup> SHC, DD/FR 19—20; DD/SAS PD 99/19.

<sup>5</sup> SHC, DD/FR 19.

<sup>6</sup> SHC, tithe award.

The churchwardens, appointed by rota in the later 17th and 18th centuries, collected money for poor captives in Turkey in 1680, relieved poor seamen and travellers, and paid vermin bounties. By the 1730s both clerk and sexton were salaried and in 1747 the churchwardens were assisted by two sidemen. The parish had stocks in 1755.<sup>7</sup> The parish clerk was appointed by the vicar in 1791.<sup>8</sup> In the 1750s one warden had been appointed by the parish and one by the vicar but by 1778 the vestry chose both and in 1855 refused to allow the vicar to appoint one warden but had given in by 1857. In 1920 the parish again decided to appoint sidesmen.<sup>9</sup>

Many records, including those of the overseers, have been lost but highway surveyors, elected in Christmas week from 1689, the parish ways and a ford.<sup>10</sup> The parish had to provide 62 men and 22 single horse carts every day for two days in 1771 to repair the turnpike.<sup>11</sup>

A meeting of parishioners signed the list of those responsible for churchyard boundary repair in 1686.<sup>12</sup> A vestry of the vicar and four or five men met in 1751 and from 1783 recorded approval of the church accounts and set the rates. In the 1850s it met in the Lion inn but later in the schoolroom and was responsible for electing school managers.<sup>13</sup> Easter vestries, also known as taxpayers' meetings, approved accounts and appointed officers including an assistant overseer and in 1894 they

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<sup>7</sup> SHC, D/P/timb 4/1/1—2.

<sup>8</sup> SHC, D/D/Ppb 93.

<sup>9</sup> SHC, D/P/timb 4/1/1—2.

<sup>10</sup> SHC, D/P/timb 4/1/1.

<sup>11</sup> SHC, DD/L 1/52/20/2.

<sup>12</sup> SHC, D/P/timb 2/1/1.

<sup>13</sup> SHC, D/P/timb 4/1/1—2.

elected parish councillors and became a forum for sanitary and housing grievances.

Feelings often ran high and in the 1930s there were two meetings a year.<sup>14</sup>

The parish council, consisting of five men chosen by the vestry, first met on 13 December 1894. In 1895 it appointed a treasurer, two trustees to administer the charities and a woman to serve on the Rural District Council's technical committee.<sup>15</sup> In 1931 a poll was demanded for electing parish councillors<sup>16</sup> and from 1949 there were seven councillors. In the 1970s there were two candidates for every vacancy but by the 1990s there were uncontested elections and some members were co-opted.<sup>17</sup>

## LOCAL SERVICES

There was a police station in the village by 1871 and a police presence was maintained in Timberscombe until the 1920s.<sup>18</sup>

Streams probably provided water: Smethewell with running water was let in 1452<sup>19</sup> and a weir and watercourse were destroyed at West Harwood c. 1550.<sup>20</sup> A fountain and trough were erected in the village shortly after 1876 and re-sited next to the churchyard steps c.1948 but no longer supply water. A small reservoir behind Bougham was reputedly created in 1897. By 1910 a new water supply was needed, in 1917 it was extended to Cowbridge and new mains were built c.1924 and houses provided with taps. From the 1930s to 1970s the water was unfit to drink after heavy

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<sup>14</sup> SHC, D/PC/timb 1/1/1.

<sup>15</sup> SHC, D/PC/timb 1/2/1.

<sup>16</sup> SHC, D/PC/timb 1/1/1.

<sup>17</sup> SHC, D/PC/timb 2/2/4.

<sup>18</sup> TNA, RG 10/2351; RG 11/2356; RG 12/1864; RG 13/2262; RG 14/14128; SHC, D/P/timb 2/1/8; *ibid.* A/BXD 1/1.

<sup>19</sup> SHC, DD/SAS PD 99/10.

<sup>20</sup> TNA, STAC 3/4/38.

rain and in 1978 it was decided to provide a new supply from Dunster. Despite complaints about sewage in 1932 the council was against a scheme but by 1940 most houses had water and sewerage although the sewers were redundant mill leats.<sup>21</sup> Sewers were built in the 1970s and a new village system was laid in 1986.<sup>22</sup> A refuse dump was requested in 1928 and monthly collections were introduced c.1932 but were inadequate by 1949.<sup>23</sup>

Oil lamps were set up in the village in 1895 but in 1902 they were only used between November and March until 9.30 p.m. and taken down in 1931. replacement lighting was not provided until 1953 when eight lamps, later increased to 17, were lit until 11 p.m. with electricity supplied from Minehead. The council would not provide a public telephone in 1909, 1923 nor in 1954 when one was removed from the Lion inn as a nuisance.<sup>24</sup>

In 1912 there was said to be no need for workers' houses but by the 1930s they were urgently needed and one family lived in a tent. The first local authority homes were built c.1933 but the Rural District Council resisted demands for more arguing that overcrowding was no longer bad enough. However, a family made homeless in 1949 and the eviction of a family of 14 in 1951 highlighted continuing need and by 1961 specific accommodation was needed for the elderly.<sup>25</sup>

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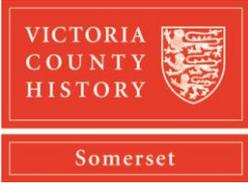
<sup>21</sup> SHC, D/PC/timb 1/1/1, 1/2/1—2, 2/2/11, 19; *ibid.* A/AGH 1/385.

<sup>22</sup> SHC, D/PC/timb 1/2/3, 2/2/11; D/DC/w.som 22/5/12.

<sup>23</sup> SHC, D/PC/timb 1/1/1, 1/2/2.

<sup>24</sup> SHC, D/PC/timb 1/1/1, 1/2/1, 1/2/3, 2/2/4; *ibid.* A/AGH 1/385.

<sup>25</sup> SHC, D/PC/timb 1/1/1, 1/2/1—3.



DRAFT

## RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Timberscombe church, in existence by 1189, is dedicated to St Petrock, a saint whose feast was celebrated in Somerset in the 13th century but surprisingly not at Dunster.<sup>26</sup>

St Petrock may have been a daughter church of St Carantoc at Carhampton. In the 1530s it was known as St Peter or St Petroc<sup>27</sup> but between 1791 and 1910 as St Michael or St Michael and all Angels.<sup>28</sup> Thereafter it was St Petrock.<sup>29</sup> Since 1980 Timberscombe has been united with Wootton Courtney, Luccombe and Selworthy.<sup>30</sup>

The relative remoteness of the parish may have enabled recusancy and dissent, possibly evidenced by refusal to pay church rates or serve as churchwarden in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>31</sup> but support for nonconformity fluctuated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## ORIGINS AND ENDOWMENT

Cecily of Timberscombe and her sisters Christina, Alice and Sara gave Timberscombe to Wells before 1189 when the king confirmed the gift.<sup>32</sup> It was used to endow a prebend, the second poorest in the diocese in 1298 worth only £10 6s 8d of which 10s was due to the prior of Dunster, and for most of its history Timberscombe was a prebendal peculiar exempt from episcopal jurisdiction. Despite its poverty several holders of the prebend held high office in the cathedral in the 14<sup>th</sup> century but many

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<sup>26</sup> N. Roscanock, Lives of the Saints: Cornwall and Devon (Devon and Cornw. Rec. Soc. 1992), 165; Muchelney Memoranda (Som. Rec. Soc. 42), 161.

<sup>27</sup> Downside Review, XIV, 20.

<sup>28</sup> J. Collinson, Hist. Som. ii. 45; C. & J. Greenwood, Som. Delineated, (1821); Kelly's Dir. Som. (1861—9); SHC, DD/SAS CH 15; TNA, IR 58/82659.

<sup>29</sup> SHC, D/P/timb 4/1/2.

<sup>30</sup> SHC, D/P/sel 1/7/4, 2/9/12.

<sup>31</sup> SHC, D/D/Ppb 91.

<sup>32</sup> HMC Wells, I, pp. 46, 309.

were pluralists including Walter Felde (d. 1499) who was also provost of King's College Cambridge<sup>33</sup> and his successor John Lugwardine who was incumbent of Axbridge.<sup>34</sup>

A vicar was appointed before 1319.<sup>35</sup> In 1536 the vicarage was worth £6 10s gross of which 13s 4d was in land, 30s in wool and lamb tithes and £4 6s 8d in personal tithes and offerings.<sup>36</sup> The living was reputedly worth £50 c.1670 when the vicar also held Stoke Pero,<sup>37</sup> but only £37 4s in 1707 of which the glebe was worth £7 and the rest came from tithes and offerings.<sup>38</sup> In 1815 the living was worth £140 gross and by 1830 the average income was £170.<sup>39</sup> In 1844 the vicarial tithes were commuted for £137; the rectorial tithes, then farmed out, were commuted for £174.<sup>40</sup> Apart from grants for house improvement the living was augmented by £6 a year in 1861 and in 1864 the ecclesiastical commissioners agreed to pay a stipend of £118, reduced by over £48 in exchange for 9 a. of former prebendal land.<sup>41</sup>

The vicarage house lay across the street north of the rectory site and in 1571 had a little barn, stable and dovecote. The glebe comprised three fields totalling 3 ½ a. and a cottage, demolished by 1915.<sup>42</sup> The house was regarded as unfit for a vicar in 1815 and was let. Although improved by the 1830s the vicar remained non-resident

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<sup>33</sup> T.S., Holmes, (ed.), Register of Bishop Ralph of Shrewsbury (Som. Rec. Soc. 9), pp. 31, 191—2; 'Precentors, Chancellors and Treasurers of Wells', T. F. Palmer (ed.), Collectanea III (Som. Rec. Soc. 57), 87, 90, 99.

<sup>34</sup> H. Maxwell-Lyte (ed.), Registers of Bishop King and Bishop Hadrian, (Som. Rec. Soc. 54), pp. 29, 47.

<sup>35</sup> Bp. Hobhouse, Bishop Drokensford's Register (Som. Rec. Soc. 1), pp. 134.

<sup>36</sup> Valor Eccl. I, 223.

<sup>37</sup> SHC, D/D/Vc 24.

<sup>38</sup> TNA, D/D/Rv 1.

<sup>39</sup> SHC, D/D/Rb 1815; Rep. Com. Eccl. Revenues (1835), pp. 156—7.

<sup>40</sup> SHC, tithe award.

<sup>41</sup> SHC, D/D/ord 21/1; D/P/timb 23/2.

<sup>42</sup> SHC, tithe award; *ibid.* D/D/Rg 362/1; D/P/timb 4/1/2.

and the house was occupied by curates.<sup>43</sup> Between 1855 and 1864 grants and a mortgage financed enlargement of the two room cross-passage house with lean-to kitchen over cellars and detached scullery. The lean-to was replaced by a large rear range containing dining and service rooms and two straight staircases. Bay windows and a loggia were constructed with a new east entrance.<sup>44</sup> The house was sold in 1962 and later divided into flats and G. C. Beech built a bungalow south-west of the church, which remained the clergy house until 1981. Most of the 9-a. glebe was lost to the bypass and housing.<sup>45</sup>

## ADVOWSON

The advowson presumably passed from the de Timberscombe family with the church.<sup>46</sup> Prebendaries were appointed by the bishop of Bath and Wells, who sometimes let the presentation to laymen,<sup>47</sup> and presented vicars although they also let the advowson to laymen.<sup>48</sup> Since the sale of the prebend in 1860 the bishop has retained the patronage.<sup>49</sup>

## PARISH LIFE

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<sup>43</sup> SHC, D/D/Rb 1815, 1827; D/P/timb 2/1/7; *ibid.* tithe award; Rep. Eccl. Revenues (1835), pp. 156—7; TNA, HO 107/936.

<sup>44</sup> SHC, D/D/Ord 15/3, 24/5, 7; D/D/Bbm 126; DD/CC/R E/1368; DD/WBF 2/125.

<sup>45</sup> SHC, DD/WBF 2/125, 3/165.

<sup>46</sup> HMC Wells, I, pp. 46, 309.

<sup>47</sup> Holmes, Reg. of Ralph of Shrewsbury (Som. Rec. Soc. 9), p. 29; H.C. Maxwell-Lyte, Reg. Bishops Stillington and Fox (Som. Rec. Soc. 52), pp. 89—90; HMC Wells, II, pp. 251—2; H.C. Maxwell-Lyte, (ed.), Bishops' Registers, 1518—59 (Som. Rec. Soc. 55), pp. 121, 146.

<sup>48</sup> Hobhouse, Bishop Droknensford's Reg. pp. 134, 155; Reg. of Ralph of Shrewsbury (Som. Rec. Soc. 9), p. 293; HMC Wells, I, p. 258; Reg. of Bishops King and Hadrian, pp. 185; M. Siraut, Somerset Wills (Som. Rec. Soc. 89), 87—8; SHC, DD/HCK 9/1/13; Rep. Com. Eccl. Revenues (1835), pp. 156—7.

<sup>49</sup> Kelly's Dir. Som. (1861), Dioc. Dir.

In 1307 Richard of Avill left 6d. to Timberscombe's bells.<sup>50</sup> In the early 15<sup>th</sup> century the rapid turnover of vicars<sup>51</sup> was possibly due to the poverty of the living. In 1446 and 1449 the bishop to prevent the appointment of a vicar with insufficient understanding of scripture or 'manifestly defective in letters'. Augustinian friar Thomas Abendon replaced the latter.<sup>52</sup> By the early 16<sup>th</sup> century vicars were graduates including John Dovell (1517—25) who also held Old Cleeve and Richard Laghwell (1525—54).<sup>53</sup> They were probably absentees and in the 1530s there was a curate.<sup>54</sup> The church was rebuilt, possibly c.1500 when it was equipped with an elaborately carved rood screen. The parish had endowments for the High Cross and St Gracian.<sup>55</sup> The church has a communion cup with cover of 1571<sup>56</sup> by which date vicars were usually resident but maintained curates.<sup>57</sup>

The scattered nature of the parish meant some parishioners attended neighbouring churches including the Franks at East Lynch and the blind tenant of Stetfold Rocks four miles from his parish church in 1613.<sup>58</sup> In 1643 a bequest was made towards church repair and the pulpit and older benches may date from this period.<sup>59</sup> The parish continued to maintain a church house, near the rectory, in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>60</sup> Many people were presented for not paying church rates or maintaining their 7 or 14 ft. sections of the churchyard boundary and allowing people to open

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<sup>50</sup> TNA, 326/9677.

<sup>51</sup> T. S. Holmes, Register of Bishop Bubwith (Som. Rec. Soc. 29), pp. 356, 401—2, 422; T.S. Holmes (ed.), Register of Bishop Stafford, 1425—43 (Som. Rec. Soc. 31), 93; (Som. Rec. Soc. 32), pp. 166, 235.

<sup>52</sup> H. C. Maxwell-Lyte, Register of Bishop Bekynton, 1443—65 (Som. Rec. Soc. 49), pp. 108, 223.

<sup>53</sup> Reg. of Bishops King and Hadrian, p. 185; Bishops Regs 1518—59, pp. 39, 133.

<sup>54</sup> SHC, D/D/Vc 20.

<sup>55</sup> Downside Review, (1895), 20.

<sup>56</sup> SHC, D/P/timb 4/1/2.

<sup>57</sup> TNA, C 1/1336/46—7; SHC, D/D/Rg 362/1—2; SDNQ, XIV, 63.

<sup>58</sup> SHC, D/D/Ca 127, 180.

<sup>59</sup> SHC, DD/HCK 9/1/13.

<sup>60</sup> SHC, D/D/Rg 362/2; D/P/timb 4/1/1.

doors or let cattle into the churchyard. By 1680 revenues from rates and seats maintained the fabric including the bells, one of which was replaced by John Sadler in 1682, and a clock, replaced in 1689. In 1700 the ruinous tower was rebuilt together with the north aisle roof with Cornish and other tiles, over 4 cwt of lead, glass, timber and ironwork. The tower carries the symbols of the four evangelists and was completed in 1703 when the bells were rehung but the tenor bell had to be recast by Mr Wroth in 1713.<sup>61</sup> In 1715—16 painting and carpentry work including a new pulpit canopy and framing the king's arms was paid for by Richard Ellsworth of Bickham (d. 1714). He also left £40, half for a gallery for the poor and half to plaster the church, adorn the chancel and provide altar and pulpit cloths, £10 to provide a parish library and £200 for books for the clergy. Many of his bequests were not fulfilled until the 19th century.<sup>62</sup>

Communion was celebrated four times year in the 1720s when the table and rails were repaired<sup>63</sup> and a flagon and almsdish may have been acquired. The chancel was out of repair and the church lacked a common prayer book.<sup>64</sup> In 1742 a new ceiling cost £15 excluding materials.<sup>65</sup> In 1746 the parish paid neighbouring clergy 10s a week to serve during a vacancy and the expenses exceeded the tithes and fees received.<sup>66</sup> George Knyfton, instituted that year, was also vicar of St Decumans but apparently lived in Minehead. In 1766 he was suspended from the ministry for

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<sup>61</sup> SHC, D/P/timb 4/1/1—2; D/D/Ppb 91, 93.

<sup>62</sup> SHC, Q/RDd 32; 11<sup>th</sup> Report of the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales (Parl Papers 1824), 385—9.

<sup>63</sup> SHC, D/P/timb 4/1/1.

<sup>64</sup> SHC, D/D/Ppb 91; D/D/Rrd 1.

<sup>65</sup> SHC, D/P/timb 4/1/1.

<sup>66</sup> SHC, D/D/Ppb 90.

immorality, drunkenness, violence, extortion and neglect of duty including failure to baptise and bury.<sup>67</sup>

In the 1780s the church contained a panelled altarpiece with arched cornice, flaming urns and tablets and a Decalogue, creed and lords prayer given by Richard Ellsworth (d. 1714). The panelled and carved pulpit had been painted stone, the railed communion table had a violet cloth fringed yellow. A singers' gallery was supported on four fluted pillars and the parish maintained a base viol and hautboy. There were no monuments and only plain glass windows.<sup>68</sup> Between 1804 and 1806 major work probably included an enlarged gallery in fulfilment of the Ellsworth bequest.<sup>69</sup>

Early 19<sup>th</sup>-century incumbents were absentees. In 1815 Isaac Knott lived in Northampton where he held a curacy and paid a Minehead clergyman £30 a year to serve Timberscombe. Warre Squire Bradley (1819—24) was also vicar of Chard but lived in Essex. In 1827 and 1833 William Whitehead was also incumbent of Chard where he lived until moving into Great House in the 1840s and his curate also served Stoke Pero.<sup>70</sup>

The bells, apart from the medieval one, were recast and a fifth added between 1821 and 1824 by William Pannell of Cullompton and a subscription was raised for a new clock in 1842 but several repair bills left the parish in debt.<sup>71</sup> By 1851 the church was furnished with a mix of box pews, mainly in the south aisle, and open benches but all 320 seats were free. The morning service on Census Sunday was attended by

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<sup>67</sup> SHC, DD/HC 5/3.

<sup>68</sup> SHC, D/P/timb 4/1/1; McDermott and S. Berry (eds) Edmund Rack's Survey of Somerset (Taunton, 2011), 90.

<sup>69</sup> SHC, D/P/timb 4/1/1; below, soc, hist.

<sup>70</sup> SHC, D/D/Ppb 89; D/D/Rb 1815, 1827; DD/SAS C/432/36; *ibid.* tithe award; Rep. Eccl. Revenues (1835), pp. 156—7.

<sup>71</sup> SHC, DD/SAS/CH 16/2; D/P/timb 4/1/2.

65 people and 49 Sunday scholars and 110 adults attended in the afternoon.<sup>72</sup> The vicar gave a paten and a flagon in 1875, possibly because of an increase in communions.<sup>73</sup> In 1881 there were only 159 seats of which 48 were in a gallery and 41 in the aisle. The parish wanted to install 16 choir stalls in the chancel aisle, which was claimed as the manor pew for the sole use of the owner of Knowle and was sold with the estate in 1916.<sup>74</sup>

The chancel was restored in 1862, reputedly by Ewan Christian with the loss of the ribbed roof and bosses, and the rest by John Dando Sedding between 1881 and 1883 at a cost of £1,120 including new floors, roofs and windows but not a planned west door, rebuilding the upper part of the south aisle, removing the box pews and gallery, rebuilding parts of the tower creating a new ringing chamber and taking the plaster off the external walls and pointing them. Meanwhile services were held in the school.<sup>75</sup> The vicar Henry Herbert Bell used his Easter offerings from 1903 to rehang the bells, which were recast as a peal of six in 1907 by Taylor's of Loughborough.<sup>76</sup> Bell, prebendary of Timberscombe and father of church photographer Stephen Bell,<sup>77</sup> gave the porch gates in 1908, kneelers in 1909, an American organ in 1910, the war memorial tablet in 1919—20 and a credence table in 1927 to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination. In 1926 two new bells from Taylor's increased the peal to eight.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> TNA, HO 129/313/2/4/9.

<sup>73</sup> SHC, D/P/timb 4/1/2; DD/WBF 20/465.

<sup>74</sup> SHC, D/D/Cf 1881/3; DD/X/LRY 3.

<sup>75</sup> ICBS files 22, p. 348; 23, pp. 2, 164, 175, 183 accessed on line; SHC, D/D/Cf 1881/3; D/P/timb 4/1/2; sanhs coll. drawings by J. Buckler and W. W. Wheatley.

<sup>76</sup> SHC, D/P/timb 4/1/2; D/D/Cf 1907/239.

<sup>77</sup> SHC, A/DEH 1.

<sup>78</sup> SHC, D/P/timb 4/1/2; D/D/Rrd 1.

In 1921 the parochial church council first met, comprising the vicar, churchwardens, sidesmen and four others including three women. Although the church was active with a choir and ringers it was in debt, generously written off by Lady Margaret Ryder and her sisters Lady Constance and Lady Audrey of Knowle House, Carhampton, daughters of Henry Ryder, 4th earl of Harrowby. The Easter vestry continued to be held and the council met in the belfry.<sup>79</sup>

In 1935 traces of wall paintings were found on either side of the nave, and paint was removed from the church screen.<sup>80</sup> A new vestry was constructed against the south wall of the tower in 1936—7 using local stone with Bath stone dressings and incorporating a heating chamber.<sup>81</sup> By 1940 the Victorian floor and roof work was giving problems and the chancel floor was reduced to its older level.<sup>82</sup>

On Christmas Day 1952 the sound of Timberscombe's bells was broadcast worldwide by the BBC.<sup>83</sup> In the 1950s new oak communion rails and a lectern were installed and a new screen made of old oak panelling was inserted in the tower arch.<sup>84</sup> William Schofield of Timberscombe was responsible for the lectern and other carved woodwork.<sup>85</sup> The tower was repaired between 1959 and 1963.<sup>86</sup> By the 1980s there was one Sunday service and one weekday communion but no Sunday school.<sup>87</sup>

## ST PETROCK'S CHURCH

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<sup>79</sup> SHC, D/P/timb 4/1/2.

<sup>80</sup> B.K.L. & G.O.E. Henderson, The Village of Timberscombe and its church (Taunton, c.1953), 28; SHC, D/P/timb 4/1/2.

<sup>81</sup> SHC, D/D/Cf 1936/37; D/R/wil 24/1/94.

<sup>82</sup> SHC, D/D/Cf 1949/53.

<sup>83</sup> Henderson, Timberscombe and its church, 8.

<sup>84</sup> SHC, D/D/Cf 1953/7/74, 1955/11/2, 1958/3/7. Panels from a resident of Ellicombe: D/P/timb 9/3/3.

<sup>85</sup> SHC, A/BJS 3/45.

<sup>86</sup> SHC, D/D/Cf 1959/3/11, 1963/6/15, 1964/8/1.

<sup>87</sup> SHC, A/AGH 1/385; D/P/sel 2/8/2.

The church comprises a chancel and nave both with south aisles, a north porch and a west tower with south vestry. The church, rebuilt in the late 15th or early 16th century, has windows, screen and font in late Perpendicular style but the ogee-headed aumbry may be older. Several carved bosses survive in the porch roof. The early 18th-century tower has a 19th-century upper section and pyramidal roof, a replica of the low spire recorded in the 1780s when the church was described as Gothic.<sup>88</sup> A medieval Exeter bell dedicated to St John survives; a few encaustic tiles surround the font a wall painting above the narrow blocked south door show David playing his harp and fragments of text. The north entrance door is early 16th-century like the door to the rood stair.<sup>89</sup>

The late medieval churchyard cross south of the church was largely rebuilt in the late 19th century. The churchyard was extended twice in the later 20th century and graves were levelled but not all headstones were removed as proposed and graves include those of a gypsy family and Judge George Farwell.<sup>90</sup>

## NONCONFORMITY

Recusants including members of the Worth family were recorded between the 1590s and 1681<sup>91</sup> and failed to pay church rate between 1689 and 1704.<sup>92</sup> The Catholic Needham family of Bickham had a chapel in which their children were baptised by priests from Leighland, Old Cleeve between 1802 and 1806. John Needham paid for

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<sup>88</sup> McDermott and Berry, *Rack's Survey*, 90; SHC, SANHS Braikenridge Colln., drawing by W. W. Wheatley 1840s.

<sup>89</sup> SHC, DD/SAS/CH 15, 16/2.

<sup>90</sup> SHC, D/P/timb 9/3/3; D/D/Cf 1971/3/4; D/P/sel 1/7/4; D/D/Rd 17.

<sup>91</sup> *SDNQ*, V, 115; 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), 159; SHC, D/D/Ca 180; DD/HCK 9/1/13; *ibid.* Q/SO 7.

<sup>92</sup> SHC, D/D/Ppb 91.

communion bread, catechisms and wax lights in the 1800s but services ceased after the family left.<sup>93</sup>

Houses were licensed for unnamed congregations in 1695<sup>94</sup> and 1799. In 1803 a house was licensed for Methodist worship<sup>95</sup> and Timberscombe children were baptised Wesleyans but the cause did not last long. The Dunster Wesleyan minister was often assaulted attempting services in the 1820s and a fortnightly service was given up before 1842.<sup>96</sup> Baptist minister John Cox reputedly preached at Timberscombe after 1826 but no congregation was established.<sup>97</sup>

### Bible Christians

In 1822 the Bible Christian preacher Mary Mason started regular cottage meetings.<sup>98</sup> Providence Bible Christian Chapel was built near the village mill alongside the millstream with a manse opposite by Edward Cording of Croydon, Carhampton and opened on 27 March 1836.<sup>99</sup> There were 29 members in 1840.<sup>100</sup> On Census Sunday 1851 there were congregations of 30 with 33 Sunday school children in the morning and 60 in the evening but the chapel seated 120.<sup>101</sup> Despite a revival in 1858 it closed although a school continued there and another revival in 1884 reopened the chapel with over 50 members.<sup>102</sup> Deserted in 1923, it formed part of the United Methodist

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<sup>93</sup> SHC, DD/FR 7, 17—18.

<sup>94</sup> SHC, Q/RRw 1.

<sup>95</sup> SHC, D/D/Rm 2—3.

<sup>96</sup> SHC, D/N/wsc 3/2/1—2, 7/52; *ibid.* T/PH/pro 65e.

<sup>97</sup> D. Jackman, *Baptists in the West Country* (c.1952), 34.

<sup>98</sup> SHC, D/N/wsc 7/52; A. G. Pointon, *Methodists in West Somerset: the story of the West Somerset Circuit 1790—1980* (Minehead, 1982), 6.

<sup>99</sup> L.H. Court, *Romance of a Country Circuit* (1921), 51, 53—4; TNA, IR 58/82661. Dates between 1830 and 1837 are given in other sources. It is erroneously said to be Wesleyan in the tithe award.

<sup>100</sup> Pointon, *Methodists in W. Som.* 44.

<sup>101</sup> TNA, HO 129/313/2/4/10.

<sup>102</sup> Pointon, *Methodists in W. Som.* 56—7.

circuit in 1930.<sup>103</sup> It closed again c.1948 but was revived by the Revd J.P. Martin in the 1950s and his successor Sister Vera Yates (1966—82). There were 15 members in 1959 and a weekly Sunday afternoon or evening service.<sup>104</sup> The split-level building, consisting of an almost windowless chapel and a meeting or school room beneath, remains open.<sup>105</sup> Bible Christians met in Clicket in 1840 and a chapel was said to have been built, but it was not otherwise recorded and may have been a room in a cottage.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> SHC, D/N/mca 4/3/1D/N/wsc 7/52; Court, Romance of a Country Circuit, 59—60.

<sup>104</sup> SHC, D/N/wsc 3/4/1, 26; 2/3/13; 4/3/49—50; 7/52; *ibid.* A/AGH 1/385.

<sup>105</sup> SHC, D/P/sel 1/7/4.

<sup>106</sup> Pointon, Methodists in W. Som. 6, 44; SHC, tithe award.