

TEXT OF TALK GIVEN BY DR ROBERT DUNNING ABOUT THE SOUTH PETHERTON DIOCESE; IN PARTICULAR THE CHURCHES OF SEAVINGTON ST MICHAEL AND SEAVINGTON ST MARY ON 24 JULY 2009 AT THE CHURCH OF ST PETER'S & ST PAUL'S, SOUTH PETHERTON

The Country was divided up into 'Hundreds' – (even before doomsday – no-one knows why hundreds, it doesn't make any sense why they were called hundreds as some of them were quite large and some were small and some were in several bits). They were areas of taxation and lasted up until end of 2nd World War. The Hundred of South Petherton tells us a great deal about when the church began. The Hundred of South Petherton is peculiar as it includes South Petherton, Shepton Beauchamp and Barrington and the Seavingtons, and Lopen (then a tiny gap – Crewkerne hundred?) Then Dinnington and Dowlish, Cudworth, Chillington, Whitestaunton, Dowlish, Cricket. No one knows why it began and continued in that shape.

Quite a lot of them in the West County which became Hundreds were units of Royal Estate and became Minster parishes. Probably 2 units, the southern bit we don't know too much about, but the northern bit we do and that is where we are. It was part of a Royal Estate. This is evidence of the close relationship between the Saxon Kings and the church because the King when he established an Estate, would put a church right in the middle of the hundred and said to the clergy who are there this is your preaching base, go out and spread the gospel.

In that area there will be people who say it's an awful long way to go to South Petherton why can't we have our own. And that's the very simple origin of the Chapels of South Petherton which are the Seavingtons, Barrington, Chillington all connected with the mother church. I can't tell you any stories about these villages but

as these daughter churches grew up, they began to challenge the superiority of the mother church, and in Crewkerne, once a year churchgoers had to go to the mother church to show their allegiance by putting the key of their church on the altar at the mother church, St Bartholomews, to demonstrate submission. The Saxon Kings, long before Doomsday owned the land at South Petherton, founded the

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Minster church here (South Petherton) and set up the mother and daughters churches which were born well before the Conquest. In their fabric we know that many of the churches are 12C. However, we also know then that it was a well established church long before the reorganisation of diocese in 909. We know very little about the Bishops in 909 who had very funny names which are difficult to pronounce. Some (4-5) were promoted to Canterbury but one of those was sent back as being unsatisfactory.

The foundation of the diocese came about because the whole of south west England was under the care of the Bishop of Sherborne for 200 years but that became crazy as more and more churches and clergy were in operation so something had to be done and in 909 it was agreed that Sherborne was made smaller, Wells was created for Somerset and Crediton (Exeter) for Devon. They didn't worry about Cornwall because that was all different anyway and probably pagan. What is important about all this is that the Church and State worked very closely together. They were part of the same government so if you look at the laws of the Saxon Kings they are all jumbled up between church and state.

Just picking out one or two: from 930 when Athelstan was King, said that all the servants of God at every Minster had to say 50 psalms for the King each Friday! Servants of God at the Minster i.e. the community of Clergy whose job it was to look after the daughters out there. King Edmund in the 940's produced some laws that made it quite clear that standards needed to be improved and reminded priests that they needed to be celibate, and that church taxes ought to be paid and that church buildings were not always as well looked after as they should be. Laws are funny things but they are very useful because they tell you what going on socially. King Edgar in 960 declared that every Sunday was to be a festival and the festival should start on Friday night and end very early on Monday morning. So you could say that King Edgar

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invented the weekend! The laws also said that when clergy quarrelled, the matter must be referred to the Bishop 'if one needs must'. Some priests took each other's flocks, were making money out of the system, some refused to do baptism and confession and some people were left un-confessed, and unconfirmed. The King wanted to know about it and put it right. So one might ask what was the Bishop doing – it sounds like he wasn't doing his job.

Time went on and Saxon Kings gave way to Norman Kings and Saxon Bishops gave way to Norman Bishops. Being a Bishop was quite political; you had to know the King or his wife so they weren't people who were pastorally concerned with their parishes.

By 1280 (it had taken them quite a long time to get round to it) it was felt that things weren't going quite as they should be and there were some reforming Bishops one of which one of our Bishops; Bishop William Bitton. He decided in 1258 that he would draw up constitutions – a whole list of laws (85) as to how the clergy should behave themselves and laity as well. As you read through them you can see who is in the wrong – its archdeacons and rural deans mostly, no surprise there – they were responsible for the behaviour of their fellow clergy and laity, there were church courts everywhere and fines were imposed if you did not attend church. It was clear that this had been seen as a money making opportunity for the archdeacons and rural deans.

Rural deans were to certify by Easter next all churches that were not dedicated. Not dedicated – how could they be used? They were not to levy money as alms. They were to take oaths to the Bishops. They were not to summon people without proper inquiry. They were not to charge excessive fees at funerals. As for the Archdeacons I had better not tell you about them! The clergy were not to keep concubines and they were not allowed to leave money to their concubines. They were not to

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be familiar with women or drink in taverns or Pot Ales (parish parties). They were not to immerse themselves in secular business at all. They were not allowed to enjoy any benefits without the Bishops permission. They were not to celebrate Mass more than once a day except at Christmas and Easter or if there had been a funeral. They were to preach against fornication and vicars were to reside or be sacked or to get a Bishop's licence. Rectors were to reside (they were a cut above) they were to think of their parishioners and they were not to hunt in forests, deer parks or warrens.

There were rules of course for congregations, rules for masses, baptisms, confirmations, confessions; the stone font should be covered. Cemeteries should be walled in. There should be 6 service books for each church (only for the use of the priest - the congregation couldn't read). The chancel is the responsibility of the Rector and the nave was the responsibility of the parish. And there are no rules as to what happens when the tower is in between. I know what happened at Dunster! The parish said it was the Rector's and the Rector said it was the parish's.

Things then were not going terribly well. In the 1330's the then Bishop came across these constitutions and proposed to his staff that they be re-issued. His staff said that nobody would take any notice so he didn't. A lot of things were left to the Bishop and that is what the history of the diocese is all about in a way. So what did the bishop get up to? There was always the question of whether the Bishop was a pastor or a judge - in fact he is both. So what did a Bishop do when faced with something fairly unusual? In 1330 this is what the Bishop Ralph of Shrewsbury did. Lady Plucknett of Hazelbury Plucknett died and left a will which said she asked to be buried at Sherborne Abbey (the church was responsible for dead people not just for burying them but to make sure that their final wishes were carried out - probate courts were until not that long ago

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church courts) and her son didn't want to know about that and quickly buried her and the Bishop got to know about it and sent a deputation, he sent the Rural Dean and two other clergy to present a writ from the Bishop to Sir Alan Plucknett ordering him to carry out his mother's wishes. .

Sir Alan was not very amused – in fact Sir Alan was very angry and squeezed the rural dean by the neck until he almost died and then forced the letter down his throat - thick parchment including the seal! The rural dean was lucky to get away with his life. And the Bishop, challenged in his legal rights, then excommunicated Sir Alan cutting him off from all the services of the church. Which brought him to his senses and he said he was very sorry and had been overcome by grieving for his mother! Another deputation was sent not to hand the letter to Sir Alan but to put the letter on the high altar of the parish church and everything was smoothed over. Sir Alan was after all a knight – he had to be forgiven, The Bishop could do almost anything as the constitution implied – he could let people off almost everything and he often did – he let clergy off doing their actual clergy work. He allowed them to go away from their parishes. Parishes became a source of University grants. They could get dispensation to go off to university – hundreds of clergy went to university, got dispensation and a grant to pay a curate and so that was fine. Off they swanned to university.

There were 3 brothers from Weston Super Mare who were away for about 15 years altogether and you ask yourself – why do people take on the job, well, the answer is in the middle ages it was a career. Licences were given for all sorts of other things. There was no pension scheme when the incumbents became very old, blind, insane or infirm – the flock did not get any attention unless a licence had been issued and a curate had been appointed. In 1311 William of Barkings became the parish priest of Seavington St Michael and Dinnington, Dinnington being

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a chapel of Seavington St Michael. But he was only a sub deacon so he couldn't say mass. So what happened? We don't know what happened but assume that someone would have been brought in to say mass for the people.

He was followed by William De Le Virgo, he wasn't a priest either and in 1313, they didn't stay long in Seavington did they!, Thomas De Brandon was appointed. In 1315, two years afterwards, he got a licence to go away and serve the Dowager Countess of Gloucester for a year. She was the Lady of the Manor.

The only kind of brake on that was that he had to provide someone adequate to take on the job and 13s 4p towards the building to the cathedral and at that time the new lady chapel was being built. He was followed by John Attlee an acolyte, someone at the bottom of the scale. So Seavington is being led by people right at the bottom of the scale who probably had no intention of being priests at all. In 1326 John of Butcombe, he's a priest by 1330 he decides he doesn't like it and exchanges with the vicar of Warminster and the vicar then uses it as his university grant for one year in 1331 and another year in 1333 and then in 1335 somebody from there, probably him who doesn't pay his taxes tut tut!

1338 another rector – William De something or other, the Bishop's clerk didn't know his name and left it blank. 1349 a new man John Sowed who didn't like it much either and left in 1353 – he exchanged with the vicar of South Petherton. You will note the date, – The Black Death, it looks as though John Sowed came to South Petherton as his predecessor had died. The Black Death caused devastation leaving vacancies and this list of parishes which received new incumbent in December to February 1338-1339 will give you some idea of the devastation when these vacancies occurred. Mudford, Lymington, the Chantry at Lymington, East Coker, The chantry at Crewkerne, South

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Petherton, Yeovil, Hardington, Ilchester St Mary Major, South Petherton, South Cary, Montacute, Hardington, Sutton Bingham, Middle Chinnock, Odcombe, East Chinnock and Yeovil again. About 1/3 of the population disappeared.. It was difficult to find people who were trained, there are fewer of those about. So what happened in the emergency?

In 1350 John Strode the rector of Seavington was allowed to celebrate masses and feasts on Sundays and feasts at Dinnington although he had already celebrated in Seavington, all against the rules but this is an emergency. If you can't get someone to be a curate at Dinnington people have their links. So he did that for 4 months. The same happened at Lydford. Then there were one or two clergy who were union minded and they withdrew their labour. They thought they could bargain and get a better deal but the Bishop banned it as he didn't care for their insatiable greed. I said that the church was very concerned about what happened when people died. Long ago I went to a lecture by an eminent historian and he described when someone died the church took over responsibility for their property and that it is in the nature of people when a neighbour dies 'to go into their garden and pull up their cabbages' ! So that is what probate is all about - the church was concerned with all that and so was the state. When a land owner dies with no birth certificate, no entry in the parish registers, because there weren't parish registers.

So when a landowner dies and is succeeded by someone who is not of age? There is a time when you have to prove someone is 18. Memory has to come in to all this. This happened in Dinnington, Joan the daughter of Thomas Chastelin, this was in the 1360's. She had been born just before her father's death. When she came to be 18 the state wanted to know and a local committee came and she had to produce a

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witness. William Wells turned up he was over 40, he said he was present at the baptism – he remembered it because he had flatly refused to be the godfather of this child. The reason was it was possible that the father might survive but not survive for very long and that his widow the might be available for remarriage and if he was godfather to the child he couldn't marry her. This is speculation. This was a case of forward thinking.

John Lydford held a court at Dinnington on the day after the baptism and visited the mother Isabelle in her childbed and she gave him a silk purse and Nicholas Cadbury came to Dinnington to the father's house on the Sunday after and was making a plan for building of his hall. Thomas gave him an axe and a cord to remember it all by. Isn't all clever. There were a lot of these. A lot of these have survived – not local ones, they were very good some very very obvious 'I remember I fell off my horse that day broke my leg' – you would remember that! One great crisis, the Black Death, and there was another local crisis too not long after the Black Death and that was called the Siege of Yeovil. Bishop Ralph of Shewsbury went on visitation to Yeovil. Something had upset the people of Yeovil, I'm not quite sure what it was - but they were so upset with the Bishop and his entourage that they shut them up in St John's church and then after a few more hours they shut them up in the rectory house instead. This was dreadful you didn't treat a Bishop and his archdeacons like this so the Bishop excommunicated the lot almost everyone in Yeovil. Shut down all the churches until he got the bottom of it. It took the Bishop some time to get to the bottom of it and in the end about 50 people are named in a great big Indictment. Most of them were glovers you understand. It was pretty practical and the one thing the Bishop could use this weapon of excommunication, wouldn't work today would it!

Shut people out of church – who'd care? But it did then because it

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meant shutting them out of the churchyard too and funerals for three or four months had to take place at Mudford or Tintinall which must have been a bit inconvenient. Then Bishop gradually said yes, he would open up the churchyard at St John's and then things got sorted out. But that was a bit exceptional. Then there was a bit of excitement around here in 1412 all to do with a man called John Bacon who was a chaplain from Stoke. What he was doing I'm not quite sure but he was preaching in a way that the Bishop did not approve. Now 1412 was when heresy was still going on in Bristol and there were a lot of people saying outrageous things in Bristol. Bristol is a convenient place to do it incidentally because Bristol was far enough away from Wells and Worcester for the Bishop not to be able to get there. It was all these cloth workers who were talking amongst themselves, and it just wouldn't do. They had the bible in English, talking about scripture which they thought they could understand it. So I think John Bacon must have got something from Bristol anyway he went round the place – he went to Crewkerne and Stoke, and Seavington and Shepton and Whitelackington, Ilminster, Kingsbury, Huish and Langport. He went to all these places and was sounding off about something and the Bishop didn't care for it and wanted to shut him up. I don't think he was able to arrest him because I don't think he could find him.

But these places Seavington and the rest were told in no uncertain terms 'don't listen to this man - if you come across him let me know. The one good thing about the church as a historian is that they keep good records and they kept copies of people's wills as they were responsible for carrying them out. This was very good until 1942 then wills, many thousands of Somerset wills which had been kept in Taunton Castle were removed for safety to Exeter – and were bombed on the following day - they had been perfectly safe in Taunton Castle but never mind. So we don't have anything like the number of wills and

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wills tell us what people thought of their church. I've got one here the will of Thomas Key from 1500 and it is kept in Canterbury and there is a complicated reason for it being kept in Canterbury. Thomas Key wanted to be buried in the churchyard of the church of St Peter and St Paul in South Petherton and he left 6p to the Cathedral. He left 2 red linen capes worth £4 to the church probably to be put on statues at particular times of the year, 3/4d to the fraternity of the church (that's the men's club) and he left 20/- to the vicar Richard.

Well he had to keep in with him, a matter of conscience really; he might not have paid all his tithes. He needed to keep him sweet. Wouldn't do to die and owe money would it! So there we are the fraternity of the church. You are the fraternity of the church now, the sorority and fraternity of the church. Now just a moment about how churches were built and maintained – each parish had its own way of doing it,. At Crocombe for instance – they divided the congregation (which is the whole population of course) into social and working groups, so in Croscombe there were the fullers and there were the ploughmen, and there were the weavers then the married ladies and the unmarried ladies and they would each challenge to raise more money than the others. Records are kept each year in the accounts by the church wardens. Sometimes the ladies would do better by putting on an enormous dance, I suspect the ladies did the dancing and the men came in and paid. But I don't know really what they did. But mostly of course, it was done by brewing holy ale and baking holy bread. Every parish had its own custom, as well as its own pubs and one custom might be that at this point in the calendar the pubs shut and the church produces the ale.

You cannot safely say that what you read in guide books, about these wonderful churches being the result of wool, and that Somerset was a rich county, is true. It's not true it wasn't wool and cloth - it was more

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to do with booze! I do have one other local will, I don't know much about it – this is for John Penny in 1543 in Broadway just before things started to go strange around the Reformation. All the monasteries are gone but he leaves money to the building of Ilton, Kingsbury and Petherton. I wonder what was being built or rebuilt at the time – we can't identify but its tantalising. Then the Reformation came along and things get lively, the changes that are being demanded are being demanded by the State. It's back to the Anglo-Saxon's and the King running the show again. Henry VIII is running the show. He's changed his theological mind and so everyone else has to. And of course some of his advisers are particularly right wing and some are particularly left wing. He's kind of in between and not quite sure as long as he's in charge. So what happens – well one of the things was that in 1539 the State said that every church should have a copy of the Bible in English which is a fine thing to say but every church has to pay for it. And it was a big volume and many churches couldn't afford it.

There would be some on the right wing who would say they didn't want it anyway but it is by Law and its 1539. Did things move? In 1547 the King wasn't sure if things had moved and he set up a kind of commission and every Bishop was told to send a delegation throughout the diocese, a visitation to enquire of every church warden the following points. We haven't got the points but you can work out what they were from the answers. Well in 1547 not many of the churchwardens replied in this diocese (I don't know what that tells us) around here there are only replies from Seavington St Michael, South Petherton, Barrington and Shepton Beauchamp. I'll start with Shepton Beauchamp where the tower was being criticised - , I suspect that the tower had not been finished, which is why it was being criticised. In Barrington the chancel was falling down and at South Petherton the chancel was falling down, and in Seavington the windows in the chancel, the rectory house and

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barn were falling down. It was all because of the diocese of Bristol who were the new rectors who had taken over after the dissolution of Bruton Priory. The diocese of Bristol, the Dean and Chapter of Bristol had only got half a church of their own and no money at all so they couldn't spare any but it explains exactly why they aren't getting the blame. Their Dean was so poor that their Bishop had to be the Dean and the Dean had to be the Bishop which ever way you like. They couldn't afford to pay both – dreadful state.

Then at South Petherton, they had no bible, by which was meant no English Bible and there were no sermons. This was a criticism you understand! The image of our saviour remained – images were not the thing anymore. As for Seavington, they did it in Latin, they were posh in Seavington. They had no English Bible. Couldn't afford or didn't want? Well 1547 was the year that Henry VIII died and he was succeeded by his young son Edward VI who was in the pocket of the left wingers. Everything changed by Law and any screen that was still in place was pulled down as it had images on it and any stone altar up there which was an altar to celebrate the mass was not acceptable. It was replaced by a table. All the fancy vestments that went with all the fancy services were all thrown out with the service books. And another curious thing all clergy could get married. And its amazing how many did! Almost immediately.

In fact if you look very carefully a lot of them had been married already for a number of years and had not told anybody. And then the poor chap King Edward VI died and was succeeded by his elder sister who was known to be a conservative and things changed again – complete revolution again and the mass came back and the orders to every church warden was we want the stone altar back, we want the vestments back we want the service books back and what had people done with them – sold them or broken them up, made money out of

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them. What are they supposed to do? They look at the Church Wardens accounts and can't afford to get them back. Those poor clergy who had taken themselves wives were deprived automatically including Thomas Hooper vicar of South Petherton . What does the congregation make of all this? Stand by what they believed in the first place, keep quiet, change? Goodness. What would we do. Well of course Queen Mary wants to know what everybody did. Another visitation, and Seavington St Mary – the church is in decay the windows in the chancel were in decay the reserve sacrament is not set up and in South Petherton the chancel is in decay and the in chancel and they should find two tapers for the high altar and doesn't. The churchyard wall is falling down, The Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments are not read and spoken in the vulgar tongue.

Agnes the wife of James Collins, a fuller, a common scold and a slanderer of her neighbours and one other woman lived commonly in adultery, another woman (the women of South Petherton!), is a common bawd and to evil disposed persons and maintains a bawdery house. A man in Martock lives with the churchwarden's wife, A man keeps women in his house who won't respect the sacraments. In Crewkerne where in the pulpit the curate declared that the blessed sacrament at the altar uttered the words of consecration spoken by the priest there in taking the very body and blood of Christ. One Hugh Simpson from Hinton St George being present said these words 'There say priest, thou sayest not well' and he ended up in jail. I have nothing to tell you about Seavington St Michael but Christopher Clement of Down Head said that his mare could make as good holy water as good as any priest could! So you would expect things to have happened but in 1557 Queen Mary is still there and in Barrington they still have at least one service book missing and at Chillington the chancel is falling apart. (That's Bristol again.) At Lopen the chancel is falling apart. At

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Martock the chancel is in decay, and the vicar lacks a priest to look after Long Load, and Tintinhull need chancel windows and chancel roof. Henry Roade of Ilchester was not at church and all the service and uncharitably said that he would never forgive any of his neighbours while he lives neither the Bishop nor the Pope.

At Seavington St Michael the chancel roof and windows were in decay and the parsonage house is quite down. Then Queen Elizabeth is on the throne and what difference does that make? Well this is grand compromise and nobody is very satisfied. I could tell you stories from every parish in the visitation records that survive from every 3 years through out Elizabeth's reign in fact that would be a good subject for research. Can I just point out that things are not that much better. In Seavington St Michael Mr John Paulett is the rector in 1558 appointed by his brother who is his patron, all vey nice and tidy and he doesn't live there of course, he lives in Jersey where his brother lives. In 1580 he is succeeded by a Mr Barrett who in 1606 was also living in Jersey! He was succeeded by Robert Clement who was thrown out by parliamentary authority in 1652. I guess there's an interesting family with a dispute there - as Robert is thrown out by parliamentary authority as he is too traditional, too Anglican and yet his brother is one of the committee who condemned Charles 1 to death. Well you've had enough I'm sure. But just very briefly.

And this is right up to date 1776 when the Bishop of the time decided that he wasn't at all sure how strong the Church of England was - he had an idea that the other churches were doing rather well. And this renegade Mr Wesley was doing particularly well and so he had better find out what's going on so an investigation took place and well what do

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you ask – you ask how many people go to communion, that's a core isn't it – and in Martock the answer to that was about 50 - not every week you understand but about 4 times a year. The incumbent says there are some Quakers but the Presbyterians are very numerous led by their minister Mr Baker. At Crewkerne there were about 70, Hinton about 20, Lopen about 10, and there are some Presbyterians there, and here in South Petherton between 70 and 90 would come to communion but there are many Presbyterians and Baptists and there were two charity schools. 20 boys and 10 girls – so that was what the church was doing here. At Seavington St Mary about 6, and 3 or 4 Presbyterian families and Seavington St Michael lumped in with Dinnington about 17. Go to the other end of the county at Kingston St Mary and you will discover that more people go to communion in Kingston St Mary than in Taunton and you think to yourself why is that?. Well the Rector at Kingston St Mary was a friend of Mr Wesley.

In 1810 – I've only got the results of an enquiry at South Petherton but Dr Robins was the vicar and there was just one church here and it contained 1,000 people and as he said – there are far too many places of worship for others in the village – half the parish are dissenters but of course once the parish caught on to what Thomas Coke had to say the enthusiasm in many ways reflected in more frequent communions in this parish. In 1851 in this parish (South Petherton) there were two services and two sermons; the morning service on March 11th was attended by 230 people in the morning and 211 in the Sunday School and 403 in the afternoon with 237 in the Sunday School. The Sunday School taught reading and writing not necessarily scriptures. In 1870 3 services on Sunday, holy communion monthly, and on Wednesdays and Fridays – it was a busy place. At Seavington St Mary in 1815, only one service alternatively morning and evening, holy communion 8 times a year. The evening congregation in 1851 was 75. And at Seavington St

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ST PETER'S & ST PAUL'S, SOUTH PETHERTON*

Michael in 1815 one service each Sunday, communion 3 times a year and in 1851 there were 100 adults in the congregation and 100 children in the Sunday School. In the afternoon 150 and 100. You went to church in 1851. Mind you these are rather round figures you notice. One minister in Somerton said that he thought there were about 200 people in the congregation but he was rather blind and couldn't see further than the first 2 rows! I came across many years ago, and I'm not sure where the original is now, at the Bishop's Palace?. The diary of a curate in South Petherton in 1870's he actually was a rather strange man he was a son of the diocesan Bishop his name was Sydenham Hervey, he'd been curate for a while in Bridgwater, before coming here and he was curate to Mr Bond. The diary doesn't tell you much about what he did, but he loved walking and he would go up to Windwhistle for a morning, or sit on Ham Hill or sit on a gate or in the very hot summer I think it was in 1874 he went swimming in the river at 6.00am every morning and then walked all over the place. I have to say he never recorded having visited Lopen or the Seavingtons. But he would go to Hinton quite often or Stoke and even visit Shepton Beauchamp even though the churchmanship was very different to his. But here we are this is Friday 14th of something or other, "Fine, cold, received sacrament privately with Mr Bond in a cottage in Little Petherton. Drove in afternoon with Mr Bond to Ilminster, very pretty drive, parked close by to the once notorious Reverend Speke's house. Took evening service preached from Luke 11.29.30. "

"Old sermon rewritten and lengthened. People think a great deal about sermons and expect long ones. I preached last Sunday evening 34 minutes, 14 minutes longer than I have ever preached before. My first Sunday here I preached about 10 minutes and a man told Mr Bond he thought it must be the shortest sermon preached by anyone. Gladstone resigned, Disraeli sent for nothing more known yet."

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It's a great diary but only for the odd thing. Well, I've spoken too long - as I think you may have noticed I am a great enthusiast of the church and I hope you have enjoyed my talk.

Q&A:

Question asking about Seavington Abbots and what Abbot would that be?

Abbots of Tewkesbury followed by Glastonbury - late 15C
Recent renovations at St Michael's had revealed the burials in the floor of the church. Question about burial within and without the church. Usually the rich were buried in the church because the fee was higher due to the floor of the church having to be disturbed rather than the grazing in the churchyard so it was the posh people inside the church and the poor outside. And of course on the south side, not on the north side that was reserved for suicides and non-conformists Depending on what period you are talking about. .

At one point in the talk you talked about Cornwall being pagan, presumably he was Celtic . Celts having come over from Wales and up the Parrett.

The Cornish do pride themselves for being different anyway. The extent of Celtic influence at the time that Roman Christianity is coming is difficult to gauge it certainly looks as if Glastonbury Abbey was Celtic. Whether Irish Celtic or what – it was Celtic. The connections between Wales and Somerset are clear – it's not just down in Cornwall. We have Celtic saints on the Exmoor coast and probably nearer here so it's difficult. But how would you tell when you excavated the church that it was more Celtic than Roman? You can't have Celtic prayers and Celtic music in archaeology that's for sure. The descendant's of Christianised Roman's were living all across southern England they will have kept their own views even if they didn't keep their own culture.

What happened here during the Commonwealth did it have an effect on

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the church services?

Oh yes, every clergyman who was not prepared to toe the Presbyterian line, and that's most of them, were given marching orders and left to look after themselves in other places. Which meant, for instance, that the church, with the change the State took over the recording of weddings and the State provided a man who was the Parish Register, so there was a change there and you find there is always a break in church registers for that reason. Some parishes made a note that nothing was entered from 1642 to 1660. So that was different and the Liturgy would be different. The churchwardens at Hinton St George decided, as many others did, that nothing much would change but they changed their titles and called themselves the Elders of the church. Very Presbyterian! But they were still churchwardens!