V Church and Parish in the Nineteenth Century

THE LYTTELTONS AND THE PARISH

With the death in 1808 of William Henry Lyttelton, first Baron Lyttelton of the second creation, there passed from the scene the last of the generation that had built the new house and created the landscaped park. The eighteenth century lingered awhile in the powdered hair, the Rector's white bands and black gown, in the high square pews of the parish church, and the gallery where musicians and singers still performed at the west end of the south aisle. Four years earlier the last of the three generations of Durant Rectors had been succeeded by the Revd. John Turner, who lived in the Parsonage, a small house at the end of the Rectory garden, perhaps because the Rectory itself was in a bad state of repair.

The new century, inspired by the spirit of Wilberforce and Hannah More, repudiated the rakish past. On the 18th of June, 1827, the foundation was laid of a village school, and on the 3rd of July the first stone of a new aisle to the church; but the Regency spirit gave a last kick on the 27th of July 1829 when the S.P.C.K. District Committee met at the Lyttelton Arms and drank too many toasts.

The village lay within a small area, roughly square, between the Stourbridge and Bromsgrove roads, what is now known as Hall Lane, and the lower part of Hagley Hill, the fourth side being completed by the farm and buildings adjacent to the Hall and its walled gardens. The parish, however, included Blakedown, and the Rector was responsible for St. Kenelm's and Frankley; hence the remote Rectory at the top of Hagley Hill. Blakedown had to wait till 1860 for a church of its own.

In the early years Hagley had no Post Office. Twice a week a postwoman walked over from Stourbridge with letters and a carrier went to Birmingham, whence on Mondays came Aris's Birmingham Gazette with news of the wider world. On a corner opposite to The Lyttelton Arms Miss Violetta Whittaker kept a shop under the sign of 'Whittaker's London Tea and Grocery Warehouse'.

Parish affairs, including such things as would after 1894 become the concern of a Parish Council, were regulated by the Church Vestry. A Vestry meeting was summoned by the incumbent, notice being affixed to the church door on a Sunday 'previously to the commencement of Divine Service', and three full days before the day of meeting. Thus, if a meeting be called for Easter Monday, the notice must be affixed on Palm Sunday morning, this being the latest Sunday which is 'three full days' before the appointed day. Anyone could attend, but only ratepayers of the parish had a right to vote; or, apparently, to speak. The Chairman was the incumbent, ex officio, whether a ratepayer or not. A Churchwarden had to be a resident householder; mere rating was not enough, but a place of business, regularly used, sufficed.

The Church Rate for the year was levied by the Vestry Meeting, which 'ought properly to be held in Easter week', though it could be held later. If a rate granted during the holding of office of any Churchwarden was not collected by the time his term of office expired it could no longer legally be demanded. In April 1855 the Vestry, having some doubt under this head, determined not to proceed with the appointment of new wardens. In February 1856 the matter of arrears, due to various parties in the parish for work done in past years and not then paid for, was under consideration. It appeared that no meeting had any legal power to enforce payment of a rate for liquidating debts incurred in any but the current year. The Vestry decided that parties to whom such debts were due be instructed that they had no legal claim upon the parish for payment. They must therefore adopt other means for recovering their money. The Churchwardens were requested to draw up an exact statement of the arrears due, in order that measures might be adopted by the parishioners, in their individual capacity, for paying the debts.

A large number of the poor were excused from the rate; others who did not pay by a certain date could be summoned. For several years Daniel Green was annually appointed collector of the rates at a salary of about £4 until he absconded in 1863. Church rates were abolished by Gladstone in 1868.

The new aisle was under consideration by the Vestry late in 1826 and early in the following year. Substantial repairs were also urgently required to the roof and the south aisle, and the Churchwardens were empowered to raise a loan not exceeding £500 by decreeing an annual rate of sixpence in the pound, at the same time accepting a donation of a hundred pounds by the Society for Enlarging and Repairing Churches. The Churchwardens and Overseers were to go round to the dwellings of 'the most respectable and substantial inhabitants of the parish' to solicit their aid in 'carrying the aforesaid desirable object into execution'. A committee was formed, of members of the Vestry present, with power to add to their number, to proceed in the matter. On 3rd May Mr. John White, of Hallows End, in the County of Stafford, entered into an agreement to build the new aisle and a Vestry room for the sum of nine hundred pounds. In July 1828 the Vestry minutes record the appropriation of pews 'situate in the new aisle'. A kneeling is valued at five guineas. Pews nos. 49 and 50 are valued at fifty pounds and appropriated to Rockingham Hall, 'for the use of the servants there'.

That the new spirit should be making itself felt about this time may in some degree be accounted for by the return to the parish of William Henry Lyttelton, second son of the first baron, and half-brother of the reigning (second) Lord Lyttelton. George Fulke Lyttelton had succeeded his father in 1808. For some years he had been an invalid, latterly of unsound mind. It had therefore been considered necessary for William Henry, the heir, to come to Hagley and take charge; but it was his wish that his brother should continue in possession of the great house, while he and his family would occupy Rockingham Hall, a smaller house gothicised in the middle years of the eighteenth century by Sanderson Miller for a distinguished, though illegitimate, member of the family known as Admiral Smith. To begin with, while Rockingham was being made ready, they were accommodated in two rooms in the back part of the Hall, overlooking the stables. When George Fulke Lyttelton died in November 1828 William Henry came into his inheritance as the third baron.

Descriptions of Hagley at this period invariably emphasise its outstanding natural beauty: 'illustrious Hagley', one writer calls it, referring of course to the fame of the Park and the Lytteltons:

> Hence let the muse to thee the strains transfer
> Do thou the rural panegyrick share!

The picture, however, was far from being uniformly idyllic. The Hall had been neglected during the reign of George Fulke and the drains and flues were beginning to cause serious trouble. Bad smells broke out and vast quantities of filth were found under the privy at the back stairs. The flue in the steward's room was found to be broken and nearly caused disaster. The link between typhoid, cholera, and bad drains was not yet convincingly established.

Cholera was a serious problem in the Stourbridge area and the new Lord Lyttelton, with the Rector John Turner, were much concerned about the widespread indifference of local people with regard to vaccination. After the death of a child in the village from the natural smallpox it had been found that nearly forty people had never been vaccinated or inoculated. In 1831 there was a meeting at the Talbot Hotel, in Stourbridge, which led the following year to the forming of the Stourbridge Board of Health. Lord Lyttelton was Lord Lieutenant from 1833 till his death in 1837 and did much public work in the county at a time when there were no public services and but a rudimentary poor law. 'A rational, ruggedly considerate kind of man', Carlyle calls him.

After his death, and particularly after the death of John Turner in 1846, ending an incumbency of more than forty years, a new generation was at hand. George William Lyttelton, the fourth Baron, was one of the finest classical scholars of his day. His High Church convictions, formed in his Cambridge days, were further strengthened by the influence of his brother-in-law, W. E. Gladstone, and their mutual in-laws, the Glynnes. The younger of his two brothers, another William Henry, known in the family as Billy, confessed himself 'sadly Low Church'. He was never physically robust and following ordination went to Germany to relax. Under the influence of German philosophy he acquired a tolerant ecumenical outlook that in the eyes of his brother verged on heresy. Lord Lyttelton bracketed Dissenters and their friends with heathens, infidels, or Socinians, though his mother could not believe him capable of looking upon any such difference in a bitter or uncharitable spirit. There was, nevertheless, nearly a year of intense, impassioned correspondence between the brothers. Gladstone was brought in, both directly and by way of frequent and lengthy quotation from his book, 'The Church in its Relations with the State'. Billy had always been intended for the Hagley living, but Lord Lyttelton began to have doubts. Might it be his duty to refuse to present Billy as Rector of Hagley? Could he allow dissent into the parish and permit the children to be mistaught without committing a great wrong? On the other hand, he had to admit that it would have been a matter of infinite distress to him for the rest of his life not to have had his brother at Hagley.

William Henry became Rector of Hagley in 1847 and eventually Canon Lyttelton. When he came home mutual affection and the obvious goodness of the younger brother put everything into a new perspective. The doctrinal arguments sank into the background, the whole controversy being, in his mother's opinion, as unwholesome to Billy as raw turnips or lemonade to a gouty alderman.

In money matters both men could be very casual, though never personally extravagant. Lord Lyttelton subscribed more generously than he could afford to good works and in the later days of John Turner he appears to have been paying the organist out of his own pocket. Billy was doing it a few years later.

The parishioners were not over-liberal with their money and in 1856 the Vestry records 'a feeling that the expenses of the church were greater than was necessary'. The only reductions, however, that were desirable and were unanimously voted appeared to be those connected with the organ and with the Beadle. In future, namely from Easter 1856, they were to be defrayed by private subscription and no longer be charged upon the Rates. The salary of £15 a year paid to the Parish Clerk was voted to be 'no more than was reasonable' and was accordingly to be continued.

By 1866 they had had a change of mind and when on the 30th November the management of the Clerk and others employed about the church was discussed, the scale laid down, to take effect from 1st December, was:

Parish Clerk	£5 per annum
Beadle	£5 per annum and clothing
Church Servant	£5 per annum.

The Parish Clerk's duties were general supervision, arranging the church for the administration of sacraments, providing the elements under the orders of the Churchwardens, and keeping the sacramental plate clean and in safety. The Beadle had to light and look after the fires and keep the churchyard in decent order. The Servant cleaned the whole of the nave and the aisles and was in charge of the lighting. Till about the mid-60's the church was lighted by candles, although it was beginning to be thought that oil lamps would be more economical. In January 1865 the Vestry accepted that funds were insufficient to finance the change. The following year Captain Harry Ridge Wolrige, one of the Churchwardens, paid for it himself.

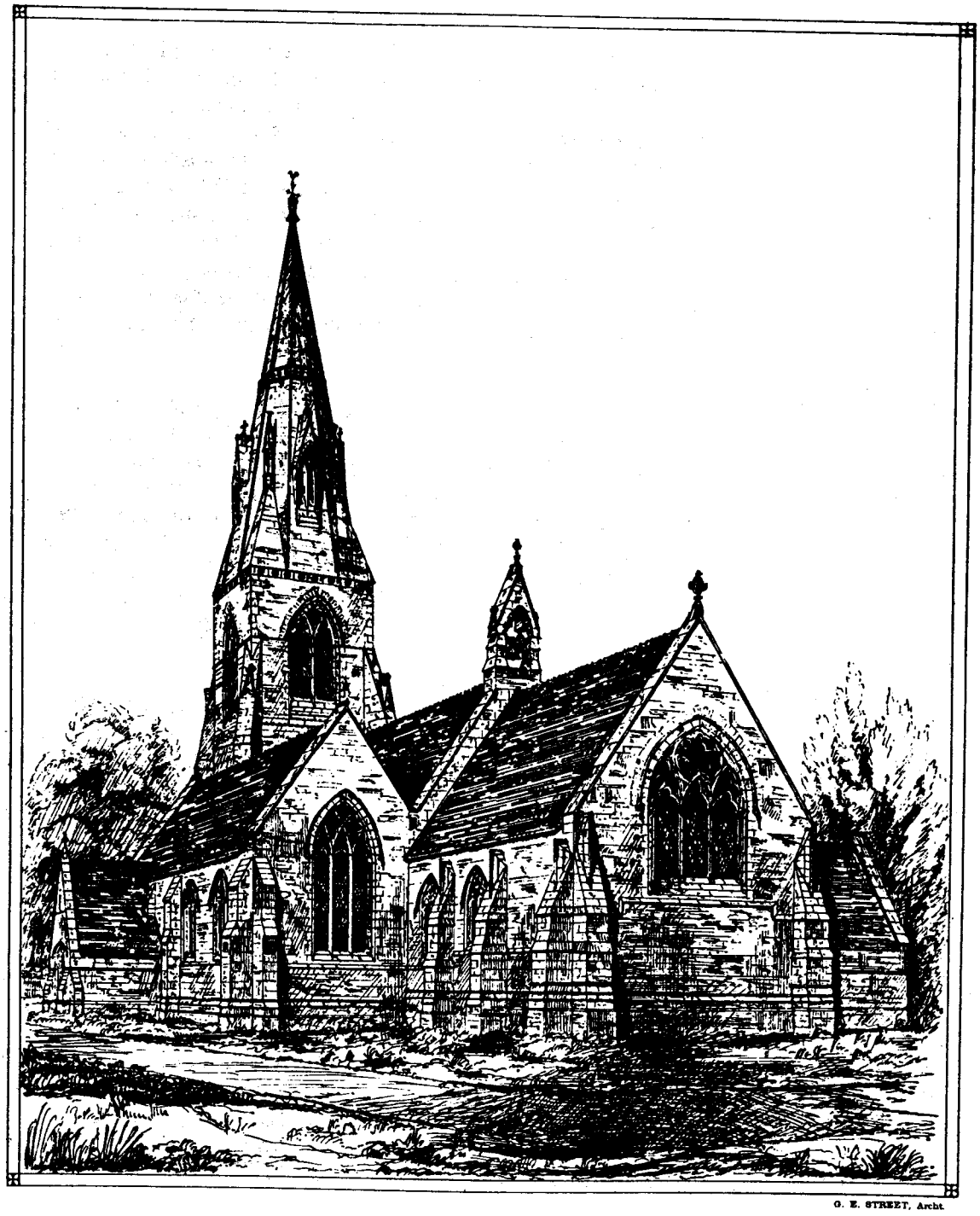
CHURCHES OLD AND NEW

Street's rebuilding of St. John's was mainly accomplished in 1857 and when Lady Lyttelton died in the August of that year the funeral procession proceeded to a roofless building. The church was re-opened on 15th April, 1858.

At the Vestry meeting on 9th November, 1856, it had been stated that a sum of £1,500 had been subscribed 'by the County and Diocese' for improving the parish church. (The money had been subscribed in appreciation of the work done by the fourth Lord Lyttelton as Lord Lieutenant and it was his wish that it be devoted to the improvement of the church). The meeting resolved that 'such money be accepted by the parish' and that the choice of an architect to execute the work be left to Lord Lyttelton. A building committee was appointed.

At the next meeting of the Vestry (26th March 1857) it was reported that George Edmund Street had been appointed and his plans were duly submitted and accepted. The building committee was empowered to carry out his proposed alterations 'as specified in reference to Mr. Howes' tender'.

Street's scheme for the rebuilt church included a tower and spire, but money was limited and for the first few years a bell-turret over the chancel arch had to suffice. Canon Lyttelton, however, was determined that the full scheme should be realised and in 1862 collections began to raise the necessary funds. They were discontinued for a few months because great distress in Lancashire and the north called for all the financial help that could be given. They were resumed late in 1863, with hopes of beginning the work in the following spring. Lord Dudley, who had been one of the principal subscribers to the County Testimony, was said to be much displeased that the work should be left in an unfinished state, and offered to double whatever the parish might raise. He gave £400 and after seven years Canon Lyttelton's efforts were rewarded. The tower was completed in 1865.



G. E. STREET, Archt.

S. John the Baptist's Church, Hagley,
With the Proposed Tower and Spire.

St. John's, Hagley, as proposed in Street's design of 1858, from 'Architectural Sketches, Vol. I' by J. S. Walker, 1862

Another building effort made about this time, again to the designs of G. E. Street, gave Blakedown its own church, at first called 'the Blakedown chapel', the village being until 1888 included in the parish of Hagley. It was completed in 1860.

At the Vestry meeting on 21st November, 1864, Mr. Lowe of Blakedown reported that the church appeared to be 'out of repair' and that in his opinion it was not originally properly finished. On 18th April, 1865, the Vestry learned that it had been found to be in many respects in bad order. In May a series of questions, some of them rather naive, were despatched to Street. It appeared that the chancel arch had 'settled', but not so seriously that the cracks could not be pointed. Some tiles had come off the roof but the worst problem seemed to be that some of the dressed stone was not up to the specified quality and Street undertook to have it replaced without cost to the parish. The warming apparatus, an old problem for the Hagley Vestry, had also given trouble. Was Street aware of the amount of coals consumed to raise the temperature to a comfortable and ordinary heat? Street was not.

The question of a new bell-turret, for which Lord Dudley had donated £100, had been deferred pending the outcome of the questions to Street, but the design which he produced by the beginning of 1866 was judged to be too expensive, Mr. Thornton the builder estimating that it would cost £290. Street was asked for a design costing no more than £150. By August his second design was considered by Mr. Thornton to be £50 up on the allocated sum. The Churchwardens (now Captain H. R. Wolrige and Mr. Abel Wilkinson) had therefore approached the Stourbridge architect Thomas Smith who had, after at first exceeding the target, stated that he could make reductions. His design was therefore unanimously accepted.

For the first twenty years after the coming of the railway, development in the vicinity of the station and Worcester Road was spasmodic. By about 1880 a new village was coming into existence, accepting the name of Lower Hagley until its more affluent inhabitants began to feel that such a prefix could perhaps imply an inferior status. They had to wait till 1911 before the village officially became West Hagley, but many older inhabitants went on using the old form.

A local place of worship became desirable and on the evening of 18th December 1882, the Mission Church, a brick building designed by the young Tom Grazebrook, son of J. P. Grazebrook, of The Court, was officially opened with a service and sermon by the Rector. It gave its name to Church Street, which remained for many years a short cul-de-sac with cottages and gardens, and survived until 1972. Another similar little street acquired the name of Chapel Street from the little Primitive Methodist Chapel which preceded the Free Church built beside the main road in 1906. Behind these new buildings and the slow-growing groups of houses, still lay an intricate network of green fields with ancient hedges, punctuated with frequent elms, rich still with bird-life and wild creatures, unthreatened as yet by the developments of the century that lay ahead.

A PEW RENT CONTROVERSY

Pew rents could often cause controversy in nineteenth-century England but it was unusual for this matter to create disagreement in a country parish. The problem arose out of the rebuilding of the church in 1858. The Churchwardens decided to re-allocate the pews, as the Vestry Minute Book records, in order to distribute 'throughout the church the free and appropriated sittings, so that all classes, in their respective pews, may be more equally mixed together'.

This perhaps sounds laudable in motive but it was difficult to achieve in practice. The objector was Mr. Samuel Cooper, not on any grounds of social

equality or concern to increase the attendance of the lower classes, but because his wife had been displaced from her former seat. The pew newly allocated to her was 'inferior' and 'unacceptable'.

Having failed to obtain redress from the Churchwardens, Mr. Cooper put the matter in the hands of his solicitors. In the correspondence that lasted throughout 1858 Mr. Cooper rested his case on the existence of a 'Proprietary Right in Pews' while the Churchwarden, Mr. J. V. Ellis, responded with 'the notorious principle in ecclesiastical law that the Churchwardens may for the proper accommodation of the parishioners place or displace at pleasure'. Mr. Ellis in his turn took advice from the Archdeacon of Worcester, but the Archdeacon's letter, while lengthy, could offer no solution. The Registrar of the Diocese was also approached and he took the advice of a Q.C. Eventually the opinion of the Chancellor of the Diocese was sought, but in no case was a clear opinion given to Mr. Ellis to enable him to proceed confidently against Mr. Cooper. It was not that he doubted his own rights. At one point Mr. Cooper's solicitor wrote to warn him not to cause Mrs. Cooper any annoyance 'by carrying out your most improper threat of sending policemen to occupy the pew'.

Meanwhile other opinions had emerged within the parish and 'A Looker On' wrote to the Churchwardens to comment 'that the seeds of dissent had already been sown in the parish ..... and will not unlikely be a reason for a Chappell being built'. The writer poured scorn on a plan whereby 'each class is so distinctly separated, not only the rich and the poor but the middle classes so completely marked out'.

The Rector, Canon Lyttelton, seems to have left the matter entirely in the hands of his Churchwardens. It would seem that he disliked the appropriation of pews in any case, since he proposed at a Vestry meeting in 1865 to make all pews free for the evening services. His views were unpopular because in a vote only one parishioner supported him.

The saga of Mrs. Cooper's pew dragged on into 1859. A Vestry Committee eventually proposed to re-allocate the pews afresh and at the second attempt the Committee's plan was accepted by the Vestry. Mr. Cooper did not write again but it is likely that he carried out his intention, expressed in an earlier letter, to 'remove his cushions' and to 'shake the dust off his feet'.

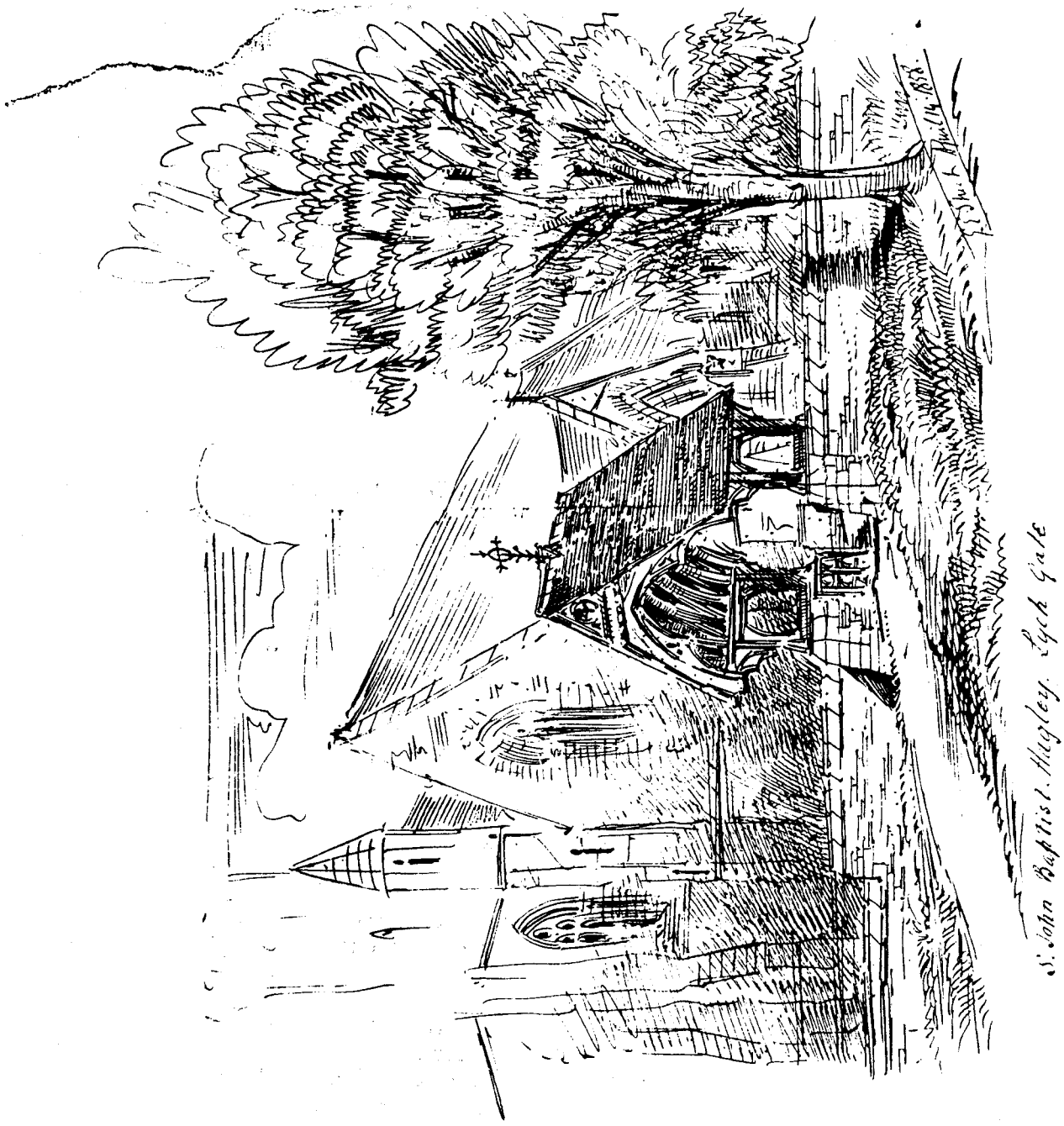
ST. JOHN'S LYCHGATE

The entrance to St. John's churchyard is through a fine Victorian lychgate, the word 'lich' meaning in Anglo-Saxon a corpse or body. It was here at the entrance to 'God's Acre' the duty of the priest to meet the deceased and commence the burial service.

It is not known if there was an earlier lychgate than the present one; nineteenth century drawings of the church certainly do not show one. The sketch of the old church by Miss Bate of The Birches, dated 1852, clearly shows the 'oak Posts & rails & red deal pales, 4 feet high', that Joseph Tanner was ordered to prepare an estimate for in April 1823, but no lychgate.

However, when the church was rebuilt in 1858, G. E. Street made a sketch for a proposed lychgate which, on blue paper, survives in the Parish Chest. This was not carried out until, following the tragic death of the fourth Lord Lyttelton in 1876, a new design by Street was executed as a memorial to Lord Lyttelton.

A Memorial Committee was formed apparently consisting of Mr. Hickman, Mr. G. K. Harrison, Captain Wolrige, Mr. B. Wooldridge, Mr. C. J. Cooper and Mr.G(?)S. Watson, Captain Wolrige acting as Treasurer. A subscription was opened



Sketch by G. E. Street of proposed Lychgate,
St. John Baptist Church, Hagley, 1858

to which friends and neighbours contributed to the amount of £86.2s.0d. The list of subscribers survives in the Parish Chest and has written across it 'Matthews £3.3.0.', William Matthews being the late Lord Lyttelton's agent.

From surviving correspondence we learn that Captain Wolrige and the Committee were to entrust or appoint a local architect, one Edwin Smith of Stourbridge, to supervise the work of construction from start to finish, for in a letter dated October 4th 1876 from Smith to Captain Wolrige, the former writes 'I am favoured by you of Plans by Mr. Street, Architect', and goes on to say 'As this business will require my supervision during the construction at the shop as also in the erection and completion at Hagley I may as well state the usual Commission on such small amounts is 5 per Cent on the amount of Contract'. The work was to be in strict accordance with Mr. Street's design.

The actual Agreement was made on 5th October 1876 between Captain Wolrige acting on behalf of the Memorial Committee, and the builder Joseph Chapman of Oldswinford, for the erection of a lychgate at a cost of £129.10s.0d., of which sum we have seen £86.2s.0d. had been raised by subscription. The Parish Chest is silent as to how the balance was attained.

The site for the lychgate was to be selected by Captain Wolrige 'in accordance with the plans and specifications of Mr. Street'. Stone was to be procured from the quarries at Bromsgrove excepting that for the flooring of the gateway. This was to be of York stone. Chapman was to provide 'all wood, iron, tiles, hinges, locks, escutcheons, and all other materials whatsoever of the best quality'. The work was to be executed 'to the satisfaction of the said Captain Wolrige or the architect to be appointed by him within (blank) months from the date hereof'.

Edwin Smith's letter states that Chapman would not bind himself to complete the lychgate before Christmas even though the work was to be commenced 'forthwith' because difficulties could arise 'in procuring oak of a satisfactory and seasoned quality'.

Twice during the progress of the work Captain Wolrige was to pay Joseph Chapman one third of the sum of £129.10s.0d. 'on receipt of a Certificate from the said Architect (Edwin Smith) of the work having been done and materials provided to his (Smith's) satisfaction'. Upon completion, if the work had been executed to his 'entire satisfaction', the Architect was to produce a Certificate to this effect and Joseph Chapman was to be paid the balance of the agreed sum by Captain Wolrige. Throughout the building of the lychgate both workmanship and materials had been subject to the satisfaction of the Committee or their Architect.

Upon completion of the lychgate or at some stage during his professional services, Edwin Smith was paid £5.5s.0d. A surviving brief letter from Captain Wolrige to Mr. G. S. Watson states:

> 'I send Mr. "Smiffs" letter, & draft. Kindly make a fair copy for signature. I think £5.5s.0d. ought to satisfy "Smiff".'

Biblical inscriptions carved on the timbers of the gate perpetuate the tradition of the priest meeting the coffin of the deceased at this point. Two facing tablets inform us:

Let us think often of death
Not as the end of our life
But as an event in our life. L.

Erected by friends and neighbours
in honoured memory of
George William 4th Baron Lyttelton
1876

PROBLEMS OF A GROWING COMMUNITY

In these middle years of the century, developments were afoot that were eventually to bring about great changes in the village. On 1st May, 1852, the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway was opened, skirting the village about a mile to the west. There was at first no station, but one stood on the grassy verge beside the track and hoped that the train would stop. In 1872 the platforms at first consisted of old longitudinal sleepers, and one had to be wary of the old bolt-holes, which could snap off the end of one's walking-stick, or umbrella. By 1875 Hagley was becoming dissatisfied. There were by this time businessmen living in the parish who could claim that their activities brought considerable business to the line in the industrial areas towards Birmingham and Dudley and who felt that their importance should not be overlooked. On the initiative of George Watson, one of the principal inhabitants of Hagley, a Memorial was sent to the Great Western Railway Company in November 1875. Its aim was to persuade the Company to finance the building of improved accommodation at the station, along with a better approach to it. The issues raised in the Memorial were to remain unresolved through almost nine years of sporadic, and sometimes acrimonious correspondence, much of which survives in the documents of the Hagley Parish Chest.

Following Watson's initiative, the matter was first presented before the G.W.R. Board in January 1876, and after this meeting, Mr. James Grierson, General Manager of the G.W.R., was able to advise Watson that: '..... provided arrangements are made by the residents in the locality for the acquisition of the land .... for construction of the proposed new approach road to the station, the Directors will be prepared on their part to construct new waiting rooms, office and other accommodation at the station....' Although efforts were subsequently made to raise the necessary sum through voluntary subscription, the Memorialists were unable to meet this seemingly generous offer.

With the battle lines clearly drawn for future conflict, the matter was now to lie dormant for almost seven years until the Company re-opened old wounds in January 1883. In the absence of the funds necessary to purchase the land for an approach road, it announced its plan to erect new station buildings on the existing bridge. As this scheme would require passengers to make a precarious descent from the bridge to platform level as a train approached, it was suggested to Watson that he should once more 'Memorialize' the Company. The result was 'The Humble Memorial of the Inhabitants of Hagley and the Neighbourhood'.

The suggestion was duly considered by the G.W.R. Board, but drew nothing from them save a repetition of the offer originally made in 1876. This entailed their undertaking to erect station buildings on the up platform with a footbridge connecting both platforms, and an approach road, 'if the land required for the purpose is obtained and conveyed free of cost to the Company'. Only six days later, on May 22nd, Watson drafted a blunt reply which made it clear that the residents expected the Company to bear the financial burden of the scheme in its entirety. Watson claimed it to be 'very unreasonable that the inhabitants shall buy land as a present to the Company', given the fact that Hagley was one of the most economically successful stations on the line. Another resident, Henry Parkes, objected that he should be required to pay, 'for the benefit of other people', particularly those who lived on the Haybridge side of the station and thus had no need for an approach road.

But these arguments obviously did nothing to weaken the Company's resolve, since Grierson presented Watson with a final ultimatum on July 12th. Given the several thousands of pounds that the Memorialist scheme would cost the G.W.R., the Directors naturally considered it only fitting for the land required to be purchased and conveyed to the Company free of charge. Should the money for this not be forthcoming, then Grierson emphasised that he would have no option but

to advise the Company to carry out its original plan - the construction of station buildings on the bridge.

This thinly veiled threat was reinforced in two further letters in early August, stating that the Engineer was prepared to begin work at any time, unless the conveyance was obtained and forwarded post haste to the Company. This proved sufficient to swing the Memorialist machine into action once more, with several hasty measurements being taken of the land required to provide the station approach.

C. R. Williams, of Tewkesbury Villa, Kidderminster, estimated that 936 square yards were needed 'to make a decent turning where it joins the existing road ... you cannot do with less'. Although his last words were later to prove most prophetic, it was decided, on grounds of economy, to accept the opinion of B. Wooldridge of Oates, Perrens and Wooldridge, Stourbridge, who calculated the requirement to be a mere 570 square yards.

One might now have expected the matter to move to its tardy, yet final conclusion, but it was set to drift through a further series of time consuming diversions - the first involving the owner of the land in question - Charles James Bate of Thorncliffe, Malvern. Bate had inherited the land in October 1846 on the death of his father, Thomas Bate, a Stourbridge banker who lived for many years in 'The Birches', a house which still stands on the edge of Haybridge High School playing fields. Although Charles Bate was now quite prepared to sell to the Company, he set down certain restrictions, including right of access to his land from the new road and a stipulation that three elm trees should remain standing in the approach.

These matters became the subject of lengthy correspondence between Charles Bate's solicitors, and Watson, throughout October and early November 1883. During November, with no further complications anticipated, the most important inhabitants of Hagley were circularised for their respective contributions towards the cost of conveyance. Lord Lyttelton, requested to provide ten pounds, was persuaded to pledge six guineas.

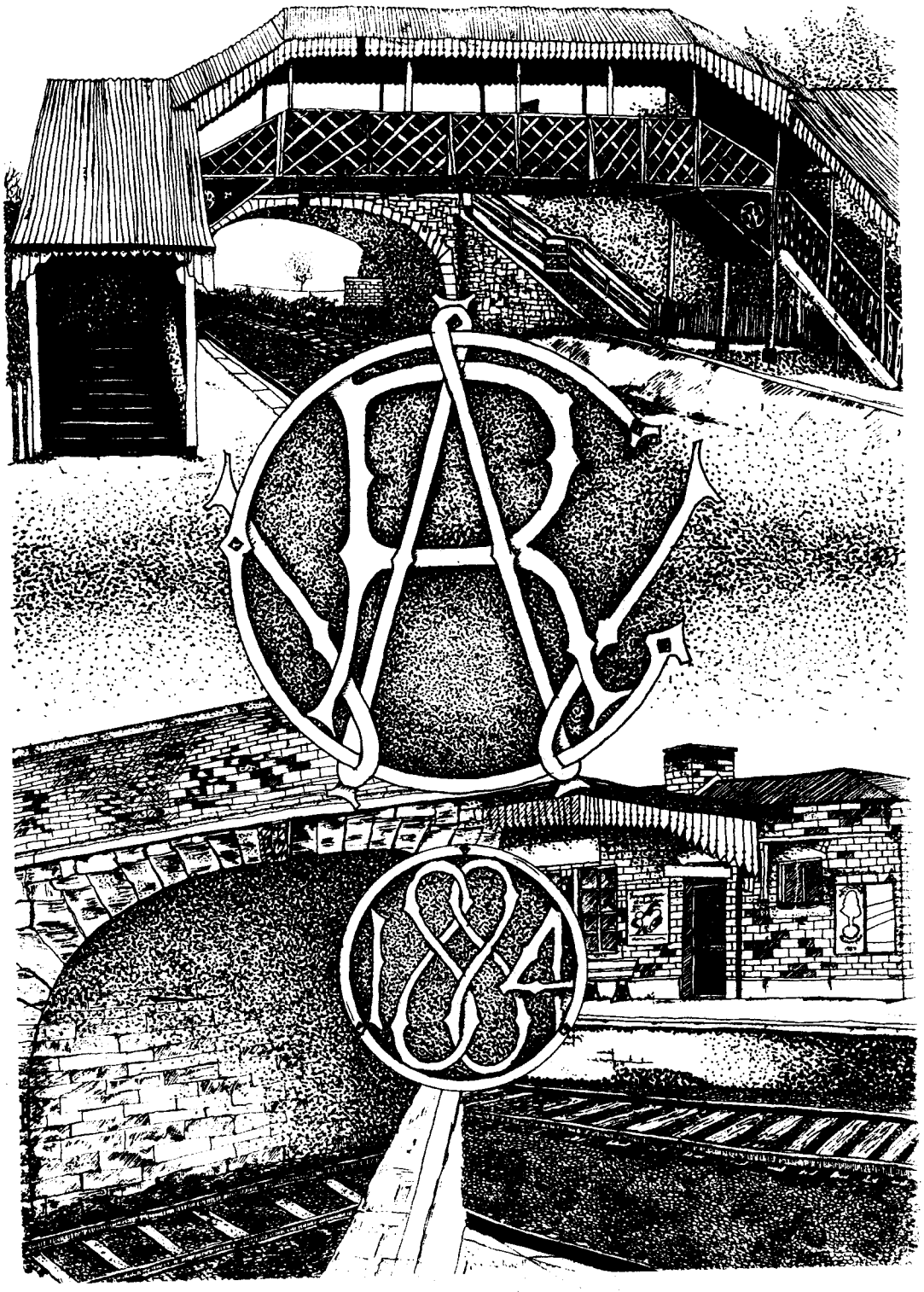
Optimistic expectations of an early solution were rudely shattered, however, when an error in measurement was found on the draft conveyance. It was now calculated that an area of 736 square yards was required, not the previously stated 570. Further delays prevented the measurement from being attached to the draft conveyance until the start of 1884. Lord Lyttelton, seeking to clarify the situation, chose to blame bureaucratic 'red tape' for the delay. Such arguments soon became spurious, since Nelson, a solicitor at G.W.R. Head Office, was able to finalise alterations to the conveyance by January 22nd, thus leaving only two obstacles in the way of the commencement of engineering work. The first was the question of Bate's rights of access to his land from the approach road; the second was the vendor's receipt of the money for the agreed purchase price. The former problem was settled in a meeting between Bate's solicitors and G.W.R. officials in late February. In the words of William King to Watson: 'All questions between Mr. Bate and the Company as to the use of the road are arranged.'

This meant that the two sides were unable to agree upon the purchase price. The Memorialists had intended to pay for the 570 square yards of land, whilst Bate argued, quite logically, that the selling price should be increased in proportion to the extra 166 square yards now required. This was dismaying news indeed for the Memorialists, since the existing demand for £42.15s.0d. was already well in excess of the money mustered at that time.

At the point when many must have feared that the Memorialist scheme would die as it had in 1876, the worthies of Hagley were persuaded to provide the extra

£15.10s.0d. Still the matter dragged on into March, since the issue of payment for the additional yardage went unsettled. An abrupt and unexpected opportunity to 'get this miserable affair settled', was offered by Grierson on March 28th. He informed Watson that if the Memorialists would pay for the 570 square yards of land (£42.15s.0d. at a cost of 1s.6d. per yard), then the Company would purchase the extra 166 square yards. The background to this initiative is unclear, but it is known that Lord Lyttelton, a Company Director, visited Paddington at the end of February.

The work was carried out in 1884 and the entwined numerals and initials of the G.W.R. can be seen in the ironwork of the footbridge today.



Sketch of Hagley Station and Bridge by David Bicknell, 1983

SOME NOTABLE RESIDENCES

The man who undertook much of the correspondence with the management of the G.W.R. was George Watson, who lived at the Glebe House. It came later to be known as Hagley Lodge and stood in the angle of the two parts of Hall Lane, opposite the Hall gates. It was an old house upon which the years had bestowed a mellow distinction and it was a considerable loss to the neighbourhood when it was demolished in 1970 and its grounds filled with smaller houses. Before George Watson, a Stourbridge solicitor named Henry Rogers, a bachelor, lived there. He was a great-nephew of the poet Samuel Rogers, whose collection of books, manuscripts, and paintings he inherited, together with china, bronzes, ivories and Greek vases, all of which, after his death in 1878, went to the salerooms of Christies and Manson, in London. The poet's brother, Daniel, lived at Wassell Grove.

Another notable man whose name appears in the Vestry Book is John Gray, F.R.G.S., geologist and naturalist, an occupant of one of the houses in Lyttelton Terrace, which acquired the nickname of Petticoat Row because of the number of widows and spinsters who lived there. After his death, at the age of 84, in 1888, the sale of his collection of plants, fossils, coins, china, books and paintings went on for five days.

Of all the vanished houses of Hagley the most distinguished and imposing was undoubtedly Holly Grove, or Hagley House as it was also called. Dated 1725 on one of the rainwater heads, it was of red brick with stone quoins and string courses, deep sash windows, seven abreast on the two upper floors of its west-facing front, the ground floor in the centre having an enclosed porch approached by three steps. Its last occupant was George Hatton, C.B.E., J.P., and it was sold at the Talbot Hotel, Stourbridge, in October 1933, as 'Ripe for Development for Building Purposes' and demolished the following year. William Robins, the Stourbridge banker, of Hill, Bate and Robins, was among its earlier occupants; he died there in 1860. He was followed by Michael Grazebrook, whose brother John Phillips Grazebrook had acquired 'the little old cottage' on the opposite side of the Stourbridge Road in 1849, married in 1855, and as his family increased expanded it into The Court, a large house that survived until 1964.

It was one of the most extraordinary architectural features of nineteenth century Hagley, the brain-child of its owners, and as different from Hagley House as the Victorian spirit was from that of the Regency. No two roofs rose to the same height, no two gables were quite the same. A curious porch, with a rounded corrugated iron roof, projected several feet towards the footpath which, rising in height with progressive road-widenings, threatened the house with flooding in its later years.

The Grazebrooks' entire married life was spent at The Court, and when they celebrated their diamond wedding in 1915 a stone drinking fountain, designed almost certainly by their architect son, Tom, was erected 'by friends and neighbours', a gesture as characteristic of the settled age in which they had lived as the subsequent fate of the fountain was of the restless, ruthless age that succeeded it: to accommodate the ever-increasing motor-traffic it was thrust aside, standing now meaningless and forlorn, far from its original position, on a grass verge near the big traffic island where the M5 feeder-road leaves the Kidderminster Road, a degraded relic of a forgotten age.

Another early nineteenth-century house, which after a period of neglect has been handsomely renovated, is Elm Lodge, on Hagley Hill. It was built about 1823 for Thomas Webb Hodgetts, another name that appears frequently in the Vestry Book and who came to Hagley from Dudley. In 1827 he engaged Thomas Rickman, the architect who had designed the new north aisle of the Parish Church, to design

for him a vault, to be located somewhere within the church. He was laid to rest in it in 1855, little more than a year before Street's virtual rebuilding of the church. The memorial tablet is now near the tower, which was not built until 1865 and is likely to be some distance from the vault. Hodgetts was a quick-tempered man and once challenged his neighbour Robins to a duel. It seems that the banker refused to take it seriously.

Standing well apart from the old Hagley is The Birches, a distinctive house the early history of which is obscure. It may have been built for the banker Thomas Bate, of Hill, Bate and Robins. He was certainly living there by 1841 and died there in 1846. His son and heir, Charles James Bate, who gave the land on which St. Saviour's Church was built, went to live at Malvern, probably shortly after his father's death, for although The Birches remained in the Bate family till 1911 it was usually let. Among its tenants were J. U. Ellis and Francis Adkins, two of the Hagley Churchwardens. The tower window of the Parish Church was a gift of the family and one of the daughters left us an attractive sketch of the old church before Street's rebuilding.

THE OLD CHURCH.

From a sketch by Miss Bate, of The Birches.
A.D. 1852

Sketch of St. John Baptist Church before the re-building of 1858, from 'The Church in the Park' by Catherine Deeley, 1948

THE SCHOOLS OF THE PARISH

The collection of papers relating to schools is limited in extent, but it does contain the Minute Books of the Managers from 1882 to 1938. The first school in Hagley was erected under the auspices of the National Society in 1827 and by 1882 this had become the Hagley Mixed School. A second school, established for the needs of infants, was built in 1857. The land was donated by Lord Lyttelton and the conveyance dated 7th January 1856 is indicative of the strong paternalism of that period. 'All buildings thereon erected (are) to be forever hereafter appropriated and used as and for a school for the education of children and adults or children only of the labouring, manufacturing and other poorer classes in the parish and for no other purpose.' The management of the school was to be tightly controlled and the conveyance made it quite clear that responsibility for management, financial matters and the appointment of staff was to remain in the hands of the Rector, Churchwardens, Overseers and Lord of the Manor.

By the 1880's, however, the expansion of the school population had so increased costs that maintaining the schools had become a considerable burden on the voluntary efforts of the parish. Although the schools received a government grant as well as the fees of the children, the increased costs were too much for the small group of 'subscribers' within the parish. In October 1882 they met to consider appointing a committee to manage the schools and, of course, to widen the circle of subscribers. Lord Lyttelton's interest had not diminished and for the first year of its operation he undertook to meet any shortfall in income.

What had also brought matters to a head by 1882 was the provision of a school in Blakedown. There must have been a school-room of some description already in this part of the parish, but the expansion of Blakedown had made the building of a proper school a matter of urgency. Improved communication, notably the railway, had begun to make Blakedown a desirable place of residence. Providing school buildings was the responsibility of the Managers and a new building would be expensive.

But what exercised the Churchwardens and the Rector was that, if they failed to provide a school, a School Board would be established. Under the 1870 Education Act shortage of school accommodation could be met by School Boards,and after the 1880 Act education had been made compulsory. Once established a School Board would run schools, at the rate-payers' expense, in any part of the parish. Not only would a new rate be levied on the parish but new and competing schools might cripple the existing Church schools.

The crisis was indicated by a circular issued by the Managers in August 1883. It warned that a new school had to be built in Blakedown at a cost of £400 in order to avoid the formation of a School Board with its compulsory rate, which they estimated at 10d in the pound. It asked that those who might be obliged to pay the rate should make a voluntary contribution of a similar sum in order to build the proposed Blakedown school. This might have seemed to be a form of 'blackmail' but the appeal was successful. The land, next to Blakedown church, was donated by Philip Williams, who had earlier promised a donation of £100. By October 1883 a sum of £308 had been raised and a contract was signed for the building of a school to accommodate 80 children at a cost of £360. The building proceeded rapidly and was opened to the accompaniment of a special tea-party in June 1884.

Some idea of the quality of education at the Hagley Mixed School is given by the Report of Her Majesty's Inspector in March 1884. It did not make particularly pleasant reading for the Managers. They were warned at the outset

not to continue with the minimum of staff. The two lower Standards were 'proficient in elementary subjects' while Standards III and IV were satisfactory. The arithmetic of Standards V to VII, however, was 'bad', and Standard V had a high proportion of bad writers. Some very good maps were produced but the Inspector felt that too much attention had been placed on geography and the recitation of poetry. Reading in all Standards was good and grammar was passable. The Inspector concluded by commenting that discipline was 'not altogether perfect'.

Inspectors were not the only unwelcome visitors. Sickness could affect attendance quite seriously. In September 1889 and again in June 1896, the school had to be closed for two weeks because of an epidemic of mumps.

The Inspector's Report had occurred in the first year of office of a new Schoolmaster. It is significant that the term 'Headmaster' was not used as there was only one trained teacher at the school. Mr. Stephens had retired at Michaelmas 1883 and the Managers had advertised for a replacement. They received 43 applications, placed 7 on a short list and proceeded for interview. In the event two were invited, but one of them had already found a suitable post. The Managers appointed Mr. George Hemming who accepted the post with a salary of £30 p.a. together with the use of house, garden and fuel. The system of 'Payment by results' was still in operation and his bonus was 12% of the government grant.

Mr. Hemming stayed at the school for 15 years, but when his successor was appointed in 1898 it was clear that a considerable change had taken place. Mr. Heywood was appointed as Headmaster with a salary of £100 p.a. together with house, coal and £2 towards the cost of gas. There was an addition of £10 for carpentry and £5 for a good Inspector's Report. Mr. Heywood seems to have had some fairly strong political opinions for the Managers felt obliged to write to him less than a month after his appointment to object to his taking part in the activities of a political organisation in the parish. Presumably he gave way but Mr. Heywood was active in many other ways in the parish, remaining as Head for no less than 33 years until his death in 1931.

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