

**A HISTORY**  
of the  
**Parish Church of**  
**ST. PETER & ST. PAUL**  
**FITZ**



## HISTORICAL

King William the first, introduced the Domesday Book in replacement of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle of all lands, buildings and properties. In the year 1086 A.D., the name of this Hamlet was recorded in that book as Witesot and in the Pipe Rolls of 1194 A.D., is recorded as Fitteshoe. A charter of Henry the first to the Shrewsbury Abbey referred to Fitz as Phitesoth and in 1253 A.D., the Memorandum of a plea of *Quo Warranto* referred to Fytteshoe. In the Charter Rolls of 1285 A.D., this place is called Fittes.

'HO' in Old English meant a spur of land and 'Fitt' could mean 'fight' or be the name of a local chieftain 'Fita'. In view of the traces of a moat or ditch fortification on the south side of the hill beyond the Manor, it would seem likely that the hill was fortified in ancient times. The position of the hill in relation to the bend of the River Severn presents a natural position for observation of any river-borne enemies. There is an ancient burial mound just beyond the farmyard to the north of the churchyard.

Fitz, with the townships of Grafton and Mytton, is in the Hundred of Pimhill, Rural Deanery of Shrewsbury, and Diocese of Lichfield. There are three books containing registers prior to 1812 :—

No. I. measures 14 inches by 5½ inches, consists of sixty — eight parchment and two paper leaves bound in parchment covers, and is in very fair preservation. It contains entries of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, from 1559 to 1774. Those dating from 1559 to 1609 are copied from an older 'paper booke' no longer existent.

No. II. measures 15¼ inches by 6½ inches, and consists of 133 paper leaves (of which only fourteen have been used), bound in parchment covers. It contains entries of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, from 1774 to 1812.

No. III. is the usual printed form of Marriage Register. It is a paper book in a parchment cover, and contains entries of Marriages from 1754 to 1812. Many of these entries are to be found in shortened form in No. II. On the fly-leaf is written:— 'Marriage Book for the Parish of Fitz, bought in the year 1754, John Drury and John Blakeway, Churchwardens.'

Before the Norman Conquest Fitz belonged to a Saxon freeman named Hunnith, but was surrendered by him to a Norman Knight, Picot de Sai, who held it under Earl Roger. The neighbouring lands of Mytton were at that time held by the Canons of St. Mary's, Shrewsbury, by whom, probably, the first Church at Fitz was built. Picot de Sai bestowed part of his tithes of the Lordship of Fitz on Shrewsbury Abbey, which, however, does not seem to have affected the patronage of the Church, for, in the thirteenth century, Robert de Girros, who then held Fitz under the Fitz Alans, gave to Haughmond Abbey 'the Chapel of Fitteshoe,' saving a 'yearly due' of 22 shillings which was owing therefrom to St. Mary's. This led to litigation at Westminster between the College of St. Mary and the Abbot of Haughmond, and about the year 1253 a plea of *Quo Warranto* was tried, the Memorandum of which runs thus:— 'Henry, Abbot of Salop, hath been attached to give answer to the King in this plea, viz., as to wherefore, prejudicing the King and his free Chapel of St. Mary, Salop (which Chapel is so exempted that neither the Pope, nor any judge eccles-

iastic has jurisdiction therein), he [the Abbot] had exercised a jurisdiction in the Chapel of Fytteshoe.' After some delay, the chapel was surrendered by Robert de Acton, who held it of the Abbot; but the dispute went on, and, at last, the question was referred to 'wager of battle.' In this the Abbot's champion was victorious, and by a writ dated October 18th, 1256, the Bishop was ordered by the King to admit the Abbot's nominee as Rector. This seems to have settled the question as to the advowson, for, in 1315, the Abbot presented Robert de Preston as Rector, his right being unquestioned.

After the Dissolution of the Monasteries the first appointment as Rector of Fitz was that of Sir Richard Wylde (or Wild), which was made in 1548 by Thos: Somerfield of Staunton and John Adney of Acton, assigns of Thos: Newnys, clk.; Ri: Prowde and Js: Ryland, assigns vice the late Abbot, etc. Later, all presentations to the living of Fitz were made by the Crown, until, in 1887, when the patronage passed, by exchange, to the Bishop of Lichfield, who, in 1890, transferred it, again in exchange, to Sir Offley Wakeman the third baronet.

Information about the early history of Fitz may be found in Eyton's *Antiquities of Shropshire*, vol. x, and in *Blakeway's MSS.* in the Bodleian Library. Blakeway's account of Fitz is printed in 'Shropshire Notes and Queries,' ii, 135 — 40.

## INCUMBENTS OF FITZ

There are records of the following:—

- 1253 Richard de Lynton (ejected).
- 1254 Robert de Acton (intruded).
- 1256 Richard de Lynton (reinstated).
- 1257 William de Kilkenny.
- 1267 Robert, Parson of Fittes.
- [?] Richard de Golden, d. 1315.
- 1315 Robert de Preston, acolyte, d. 1334.
- 1334 Sir John Mountsorrel, d. 1343.
- 1343 Hugh de Greyby.
- [?] David, son of Gregory de Pola, exchanged 1347 with
- 1347 John Trochard, late Rector of Llanwidelan.
- 1349 Thomas Banastre of Yorton.
- 1369 John de Harlescote.
- 1377 Robert de Preston.
- [?] John de Morton, Canon of Haughmond, resigned.
- 1398 Richard Payn, clericus in prima tonsura, resigned.
- 1398 Roger Ive, of Leaton, resigned.
- 1426 John de Morton, resigned.
- 1441 Sir John Leche, resigned.
- 1471 Sir Uriann Seymper, chaplain.
- [?] Walter Whoton, resigned.
- 1498 Master — Spoulsbury.
- [?] Sir Adam Coyde, d. 1504.
- 1504 Hugh Gyles, d. 1548.

Since 1559, the date at which the Registers begin, the incumbents have been:—

Sir Richard Wylde, who paid his Composition fees on March 22nd, 1548, and whose burial entry occurs in the Register, February 4th, 1577.

Robert Willton, who is not mentioned in the Fitz Register, but of whom the Register at the Public Record Office gives, 'Item xii<sup>o</sup> die Aprilis, Anno Domini, 1578, ad Ecclesiam parochialem de Fite in Comitatu predicto vacantem admissus fuit Robertus Willton, clericus.'

Gedeon Hancocks, appointed 1602. In 'An Elizabethan Clergy List' he is referred to as of 'no degree, a preacher in his own cure.' Buried 26th August, 1616.

Thomas Clerke, B.D., Fellow of All Souls', Oxford, appointed Rector 1616. He seems to have adapted himself to the times, for 'at the instance and earnest desyer' of one of his parishioners, he omitted the sign of the Cross at a baptism in 1646, and in 1647, used the 'new forme' issued by the 'Directorie,' and not the Prayerbook. Buried May 7th, 1659.

James Clerke, succeeded his father in 1659. He was suspended for a year in 1698 for having, according to his own confession, celebrated a clandestine marriage at the 'Bull in the Barn,' a public-house which once stood in Frankwell, Shrewsbury. A religious census taken of parishioners over sixteen years of age in 1676, gives Conformists, 76; Nonconformists, 8; Papists, 0. It is evident from the entry for January 6th, 1661, that this Rector restored the use of the Prayerbook. He was buried September 8th, 1702.

Thomas Clerke, of Gloucester Hall, Oxford, succeeded his father in 1703. During his incumbency the present Church (excepting the South aisle, a later addition), was built. He was buried January 21st, 1732, ending the Clerke 'dynasty' which covered some 116 years.

Adam Newling, M.A., King's College, Cambridge, appointed in 1732. He resigned in 1747, when he became Rector of Shrawardine.

James Ralph, M.A., of whom no trace is to be found in the Parish records. The Bishop's 'Certificates of Institutions' gives the following :— 'James Ralph, M.A., was Presented by the King to the Rectory of Fitz..... void by the Resignation of Adam Newling, Clerk, and instituted to it Nov. 17, 1747.' In an old note-book kept by the late Richard Middleton, Esq., of Fitz Manor, there is a pencil entry, 'Mr. Ralph died in Kent,' just before an entry relating to Mr. Hopkins.

William Hopkins, M.A., Jesus College, Oxford, appointed 1774. Buried 1820.

William Hopkins, M.A., Oriel College, Oxford, succeeded his father 1822. Died 1848.

Daniel Nihil, M.A., appointed 1848, died 1866.

Thomas Bearcroft, M.A., Queen's College, Oxford, appointed 1866, died 1877.

Ebenezer Humphrey Jones, St. Bees' Theological College, appointed 1877, left in 1880 to go to Steynton c. Johnstone in Pembrokeshire.

William Parry, D.C.L., Hertford College, Oxford, appointed 1880, died 1901.

Waldegrave Brewster, B.A., Jesus College, Oxford, appointed 1901, died 1935.

Claude Arthur Hedley Going, M.A., Pembroke College, Cambridge, appointed 1936, resigned 1943.

Horace John Hemmings, L.Th., Lichfield Theological College, appointed 1943, died 1951.

Richard Alexander Yates, M.A., University College, Oxford, appointed 1951, resigned 1958.

Thomas William Tait, M.A., Late Exhib. of St. Catherine's S., Oxford, Clifton Theological College and Edinburgh Theological College, appointed 1959, resigned 1964.

Harry Norman Ponsford, St. Boniface, Warminster, appointed 1964.

The Curates have been:—

W. Powell, 1750, d. at Fitz, 1765.

Thos. Amler, 1766 — 1771.

W. Jones, 1771 — 1772.

Edward Leighton, 1773 — 1774.

(all during the incumbency of the non-resident Mr. Ralph),

H. M. Phillips, 1820 — 1821.

Henry Ll. Oswald, M.A., 1865 — 1866.

Roger Ive, of Leaton, was Rector of Fitz, 1398, and also of Albright-Hussey, 1398 — 1447. He was a member of an old Shrewsbury family of burgesses and a staunch Lancastrian. The Battle of Shrewsbury was fought in Hatley Field in the Parish of Albright-Hussey on the Vigil of St. Mary Magdalene, July 22nd, 1403. The number of those killed in the battle was greater than any other battle fought in this country. It is said that 8,000 were slain. Roger Ive, horrified at this loss of life, obtained authority to build a church over the pit in which the dead had been buried. He was assigned two acres of land whereon he built a Chapel dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene. In 1547 the Parish Church of Albright-Hussey having fallen into ruins, St. Mary Magdalene Chantry became the Parish Church of Battlefield with Albrighton.

## THE CHURCH

There was a chapel at Fitz as early as the 12th Century, but the medieval building has disappeared. A few details survive, however, the most remarkable being a Norman respond capital, now placed in the south-east corner of the south aisle of the present building. The capital is carved with undeveloped curling foliage. A shallow basin is hollowed out above with a hole for a drain. Near the font there is a number of medieval tiles with heraldic and other devices. In a closet on the south side of the tower there are some medieval cusped stones.

The present church was built in 1722 when a brief for £1,509 was issued 'upon the petition of Thomas Clerke, Rector, recommended by the Bishop,' for a church building at 'Fittes' and the new church was built soon afterwards. According to the parish register, which begins with the year 1559, the last baptism in the old church took place on October 26th, 1722. The only monument now visible belonging to the older church is a small tablet, inserted in the south wall of the nave, bearing the inscription

'Reliquiae Doctissimi dignissimiq' Viri Johannis Wood olim Collegii Mgd.: Cantabr: Praesidis, qui per 30 annos varia passus, tandem Septuagenarius dormivit in Domino, Sept. 19, 1692, ἔμοι τὸ ζῆν ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ, κ' τὸ ἀποθανεῖν, κέρδος.'

(“The Remains of the most learned and most worthy gentleman — John Wood — once of Magdalene College — Cambridge, President, who for 30 years suffered various things, and at length fell asleep in the Lord — a Septuagenarian — on Sept. 19, 1692, “To me to live is Christ, and to die, gain.”) This John Wood was an ejected Puritan, who, after living for some years on the charity of friends, died at Mytton.

Other, more modern, tablets are also of interest in particular one on the north side of the nave in memory of ‘M. S. Edward Waring, Esqr., M.D., F.R.S., Lucasian Professor of Mathematics in the University of Cambridge and Senior Wrangler 1757. Born in this Parish 1734. Deceased 15th August, 1798.’ and another on the south side of the nave which reads ‘In affectionate remembrance of Henry Kent Denston, Commander of the ‘General Wolfe’, youngest son of the late John Denston, Esquire, of Grafton in this County. He suffered shipwreck and perished off Rio Grande in South America on the 2nd day of August, 1840, aged 22 years.’ On the west wall of the south aisle there are tablets in remembrance of the Hopkins family.

The new building consisted of a small apsidal chancel, nave and west tower. A south aisle of two bays was added later. In 1905 a new chancel was erected by Sir Offley Wakeman, third baronet, with vestry and organ chamber on the south side: the architect was Sir Aston Webb, R.A., the work was done by Messrs. Bridgeman of Lichfield.

The older part of the church is thoroughly Georgian in appearance with round-headed windows and doorways and projecting keystones. The quoins and foundations are of stone, the walls being of bricks 9½in. by 2½in. The upper windows of the tower and the lower west window are of two lights. In the north wall, and also in the south, is a circular window with four keystones. The tower has a parapet, and a square pinnacle at each corner. A windowed recess in the west wall of the nave, north of the tower, was used for notices: there are two stone steps below to enable anyone to reach it. It may have been the window of an earlier vestry. The back part of the west gallery has wooden supports and is presumably original: the front part has iron columns and the Georgian royal arms of later date than 1800. The gallery is of considerable interest for its seating was clearly designed for the minstrels before the installation of the barrel organ which is believed to be the work of Messrs. Bishop of London, (founded 1795).

The south aisle is also of brick but has no stone foundations. There are two connecting segmental plastered arches on a plastered pier. The western part was built in 1842 and the eastern a few years later. The windows seem to be the original ones moved from the old south wall.

Waldegrave Brewster became Rector of Fitz in 1901 and was here during the building of the chancel. He was an excellent woodcarver and used his talent in the carving of the pew ends as they are now. The opportunity for this to be done was the conversion of the box seats into the modern pews. The carvings are all different, the many different designs obviously required great skill and the harmony of the whole set must be

unique. (Further examples of his carving can be seen in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Middleton-in-Chirbury.) The old pew labels, indicating the different houses in the parish, may be seen on the panelling near the font.

There is a modern octagonal font in the south aisle. The previous font, under the tower, is of the 'Churchwarden Gothic' type and is probably later than 1722.

When the present chancel was built in 1902-3, the east window was lighted with 'Cathedral' glass, quite plain, and remained so until the stained glass window was fitted in 1920.

The present window was given in memory of Edward Offley Rouse Wakeman. The inscription on the window reads as follows :—

'Remember ye in the Lord, Edward O. R. Wakeman, Grenadier Guards, who fell in the battle of Festubert, May 16th, 1915, aged 26 years, to whose memory this glass is dedicated.'

The window was designed by Walter Ernest Tower who was a pupil of Charles Eamer Kempe, the well known 19th century stained glass designer, and represents Christ in Glory.

The subject of the window was chosen to illustrate the climax of Christ's work for man's Salvation. His self-offering and sacrifice is represented by the altar. His death and resurrection by the plain cross. His final victory and return to Heaven by the theme of the window. Tradition associates St. Peter with the Jewish element in the early church and St. Paul with the Gentile element. In the window they are shown kneeling before Christ and this idea is carried further with the figures of St. Aidan and St. Augustine signifying the Celtic and Roman elements in the development of the Church of England.

It was thought at the time that the screen might eventually be completed as a traditional Rood Screen, with a crucifix at the centre, but this has not been done.

The Church Plate, photographs of which may be seen in the south aisle, consists of :—

1. Plain silver waisted wine jug. London 1901. Weight 21½ ounces.
2. Plain tapered antique beaker, 3¼ inches high. Flower pot style with bead edge base. No Hallmark. Circa 1565 A.D. Engraved inscription and with cover (damaged), also no Hallmark. Probably re-modelled from a 14th Century Pyx.
3. Half fluted antique silver chalice 8½ inches high with engraved inscription. London. George III. 1819. Weight 17 ounces.
4. Victorian silver chalice 6 inches high, plain waisted on foot. Birmingham, 1857. Weight 6½ ounces.
5. Plain paten, 5 inch saucer, engraved 'Church of St. Peter and St. Paul Fitz.' London 1901.

6. Silver stand,  $8\frac{1}{8}$  inches in diameter,  $2\frac{1}{8}$  inches high. London 1695. Weight 8 ounces. Inscribed: 'Ex Dono Martha: Ward 1726.' and probably given for use as a paten.
7. Chalice,  $8\frac{1}{8}$  inches high. Gift of the Reverend & Mrs. Going.
8. Paten,  $6\frac{1}{8}$  inches in diameter. London 1935. Weight 7 ounces. Inscribed: 'In proud and loving memory of Philip Charles Going, Captain 1st K.S.L.I., killed in action in Italy 8th February, 1944. + This is Life Eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. +'

Items 1—5 are stored in a safe deposit at the Bank.

Items 6—8 are in use at the present time.

Anno Domini 1972 marks the 250th anniversary of the founding of our present Church. Plans are in hand for the landscaping of the churchyard to which fund the proceeds from the sale of this booklet will be devoted. H. N. Ponsford, Rector.  
January 1972.