

## A Word from the Chairman

It is a sure sign of old age when the years go by so quickly, yet here I am writing a few words for the Newsletter. It is a little sooner for me as I am writing this in June halfway through Wimbledon and Andy Murray is still in!! (but this is because of holidays).

### Church Alterations

As we prepare for this Newsletter the Church resembles a building site. The pulpit has been moved from its position and now rests to the left of the new confessional screen. The re-positioning of the pulpit has revealed the Norman chancel arch in all its glory. Not only can the congregation now see the Priest and the altar table but the Priest can now see all the congregation. A toddlers area has now been created at the back of the North aisle and a modern kitchen has been installed in the Tower, although we still await connection of the water supply. By the end of summer the font will have been re-positioned by the entrance and the new organ moved to the rear of the Church. This year completed the re-ordering of the Church. No doubt next year we will have to consider re-decoration.

### Church Gardens

We were again successful last year in receiving an award for the South West "Garden in Bloom" Neighbourhood Scheme. We will be entering again this year and we hope the judges on their inspection tour will overlook the ground work activity.

### Millennium Pageant

There is a separate report within the Newsletter, the Pageant itself was a

resounding success. Bernadette's conception and production led us along a clearly defined path of the history of the church on the site at St Mary's. The performance by staff and pupils of Prior Park Prep School will be remembered for a long time. Our heartfelt thanks go to everybody involved in the whole event, they can all be very proud.

### The Cricklade Show

We had planned to take part again this year but because of poor weather in the run up to the Show the organisers felt they had to cancel the event. We do however hope to take part in the 2009 Show.

### Church Organ

Sadly the organ played its final note and had to be replaced at a cost of over £8,000. The money was raised by a variety of activities - sponsored singing by the choir; sponsored organ playing; raffles, a donation from the Phoenix Trust, Parish funds and finally a donation by the "Friends of St Mary's" of £580.00. The resultant sounds are truly magnificent.

### Fund Raising Activities

Because of the hard work put in last year the committee felt there would but no major fund raising activities this year but the traditional activities of Coffee Morning at Brook House, Church Open Day, coinciding with the Cricklade Carnival and the Great Cycle Rides were all done and brought in significant funds. We have been presented with a drawing of St Mary's Church by the late David Hoad and this will be professionally mounted and framed and raffled later in

the year. To add to the value of this generous donation we will be producing a number of mounted prints and also a quantity of notelets depicting the drawing. If you would like to partake in the raffle or purchase prints or notelets please contact the Secretary - Gerry Dudley.

This year has seen tremendous activity in lots of different areas. Hopefully when we look back at the Church at the end of 2009 the results of all the changes will be truly rewarding. The "opening up" of the chancel arch has in itself been magnificent. Finally I would like to thank the committee members and Friends for all their work and support throughout the year. Hope you have a great summer.

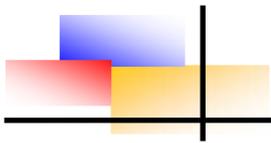
### Eddie Condon



Drawing of St Mary's Church by the late David Hoad

### Inside this issue

"The Churches One Foundation..."	2
Church Alterations	2
Stories from the Graveyard	3
Dates for your Diary	3
Millennium Pageant	4



# “The Churches One Foundation...” — by Edmund Lee

“The Churches One Foundation...”

The work this year to install the water supply to the new kitchen offered a rare glimpse into what lies beneath the turf in the churchyard. Perhaps the most interesting for the history of the church was the chance to have a look at the foundations of the tower, where the water and drainage pipes enter the tower via the back (West) wall. Looking at the thickness of the wall revealed in the tower’s West window you would expect the tower to have deep stone-set foundations. This proved not to be the case. The trench (see photo) revealed a stone kerb going down just a foot or so below the turf line, with what looks like simply compacted rubble beneath that.

In effect the water pipes went



**The Tower Foundations Were Found to be Very Small**

*under* the foundations rather than through them! The medieval builders (the tower is thought to be one of the earliest parts of the church dating perhaps from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century – the late Norman

period) presumably relied on the width of the wall rather than the depth to provide the stability they wanted. Interestingly, the fact that the tower is curiously short compared to most medieval towers, and the fact that later buttresses have been added to the tower corners may suggest that caution prevailed and they didn’t build as high as they had once planned.



**The Completed Kitchen Which is Located in the Tower**

## Church Alterations

The pulpit has been repositioned to the left of the confessional screen and the beauty of the Norman Arch can be seen in it’s full glory.



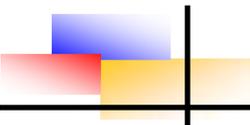
**Before**



**After**



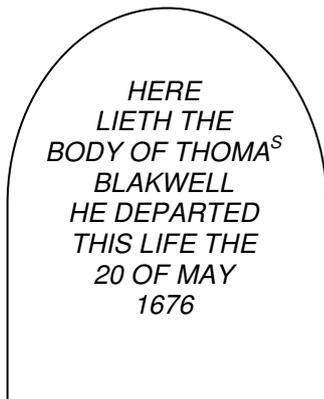
**An area has been set aside for the younger members of our congregation**



# Stories from the Graveyard — by David Tetlow

## Thomas Blackwell

Recent work clearing the churchyard revealed a few more gravestones, including one dated 1676! This was for Thomas Blackwell and the inscription simply reads:



So who was Thomas and what do we know about him? The first point to note is that the burial was before our parish registers began and so these yield nothing about Thomas and who he might have been. A search of our registers does however reveal that there was a burial for a Mary Blackwell on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1692. Could she be related?

A search of the records held by the Mormons is more helpful. There are only some 35 references to Thomas Blackwell in their Wiltshire records (but almost 300 in Gloucestershire). The ones of most interest are a Thomas Blackwell, baptised on 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1604 at Eisey, the son of Humphrey Blackwell. Humphrey had several children, all baptised at Eisey. Thomas would appear to have married a Mary Saunders under license on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1630 here at Cricklade. Thomas and Mary, who may well be the Mary that was buried in 1692,

went on to have a son, Thomas Blackwell, who was baptised on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1632. This presents us with a bit of a problem as to which Thomas the gravestone belongs to! The Mormon site also states that there is a will for Thomas, the elder, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1665.

A search of the Wiltshire and Swindon Archives reveals two wills! There is indeed one for Thomas Blackwell, senior, cordwainer of Cricklade St Mary in 1665. There is however also a will for Thomas Blackwell, shoemaker of Cricklade St Mary in 1676.

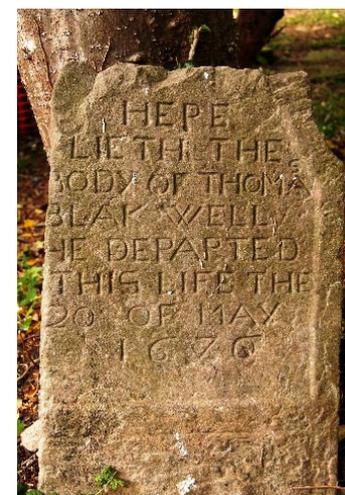
The earlier will is dated 26<sup>th</sup> Jun 1664 and was proved on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1665. Thomas, senior, left his temporal estate as follows: all his children the sum of one shilling each, his loving wife, Mary, the existing lease and in the event of her death before the end of the lease it would pass to his son, Thomas. As the will was proved in 1665, it would appear that the gravestone can only relate to Thomas Blackwell, junior.

The second will was made in May 1676, where this Thomas is described as "late of Cricklade St Mary" and all his assets, valued at some £96 10s 0d were left to his wife, Dorothy Blackwell. No other bequests were made. It seems reasonable therefore to assume that it is this Thomas, presumably brought back to Cricklade St Mary to be buried, whose gravestone has recently been found. One might ask why the cautious approach? Surely this can be the only Thomas Blackwell who fits the gravestone? An examination of the photograph of the gravestone does however raise

the slight doubt as to whether the date is 1676, 1670, or indeed even 1675! It is certainly odd that the final "6", if indeed it is a "6", differs from the earlier "6".

The will itself would appear to have been a verbal will given the day before he died i.e. the 19<sup>th</sup> May 1676. An inventory of all his goods was carried out on 20<sup>th</sup> May and the will was proved on 26<sup>th</sup> May. Unfortunately there is nothing therein to help identify where he was living at the time of his death, but it is reasonable to assume that he was running some sort of business given the inventory included such items as "three hogshead and a half of beer" and "four pigs and two fitches of bacon".

It would appear from a review of our registers that the Blackwell family did not remain long in the immediate Cricklade area as there were no Blackwell baptisms, burials or marriages at St Mary's for the next 200 years or more.



Original Gravestone

Can you decipher the date?

## Dates for your Diary

- Heritage Church Open Day and Sponsored Cycle Ride 12th September 2009
- Coffee Morning - Brook House 17th October 2009 10.00 am to 12 noon
- AGM - Brook House 10th November 2009 7.45 pm



## Millennium Son et Lumiere — Bernadette Yarnold

**M**any hours were devoted to research, writing, sewing and rehearsal.

**I**n the end it was all worth it.

**L**ots of people came to our two evening performances.

**L**ively pupils from Prior Park provided vivid images of years past.

**E**very costume was true to its era.

**N**othing was left to chance.

**N**arrators were word perfect and their diction precise.

**I**mages of sentries, stonemasons, burial party and paupers continue to delight the eye.

**U**nder the chancel arch the Prior Park choir chanted and sang.

**M**any congratulations to all participants and the supporting cast.

Millennium - thank goodness it only happens every thousand years!

## A Poem about The Pageant — by Gill Orchard, Cricklade.

We went to St Mary's Church last night.  
What a feeling of peace and an awe inspiring sight  
To see a pageant by the Friends of the church  
Thanks to the scriptwriters and their research.

Prior Park Prep. School entertained us  
The narrators were well-spoken and clear because  
We heard every word of the interesting true tale  
Of the highwayman captured and put in jail.

St Mary's Church needs lots of tender loving care  
A family church like this is really quite rare.  
It might be small, but it's cosy and snug  
When I walk through the door  
I feel I'm offered a hug.

Well done to the children, Congratulations to the Staff.  
They worked really hard – did nothing by half.  
It's really amazing how much we all learnt  
Including the time when the church was badly burnt.

I'm delighted once again for inviting us in  
Your evening of entertainment, including the singing.  
I just can't express, just how I feel,  
Being in St Mary's church doesn't seem real.



**Pupils dressed as local residents bearing the body of William Peare in the pageant**

Friends of St Mary's	
Chairman	Eddie Condon Highbank, 18 Lampeter Rd, Oakhurst, Swindon SN25 2BP
Secretary	Gerry Dudley 4 Playdells, Cricklade, Swindon SN6 6NG
Treasurer	Tony Barratt 13 Boundary Close, Stratton, Swindon SN2 7TF