

History Group notes from the meeting on 12th May 2025

Present: Brian, Ed, Ian, Peter, Margaret, Keith, Steve, Niall

Brian opened the meeting by welcoming Keith, Steve and Niall. He then presented his recent research on some topics that had arisen in recent discussions:

- Location of the Shambles
- Damage from the 1703 storm
- History of Church Cottage
- Origin of £12 annual grant from Sidmouth Consolidated Charities to Sidmouth Parish Church

Market Place and Shambles

Brian introduced his findings by recalling the references to “a house at the south end of the shambles” in several entries in the index to Sidmouth records. He had now had an opportunity to inspect the original documents, which revealed clearly that the Shambles was part of, or identical to the Market Place, and almost certainly on the same footprint as the current Market House. He referred to the following documents relating to the Shambles:

1425 compotus (manor accounts) of Walter Chenale. In middle, marked “Novus redd.” (omitted by mistake) “Ed de xxiijs de red. xij scamell p annii p scamell ijs” – i.e. 24s received from 12 meat stalls at 2s p.a. per stall.

Etymology: Latin scamillum/scamnum – stool or bench → OE scamol – bench or stool → ME schamel – vendors table → shambles – meat market. (copy in POH History on website)

1653 Indenture: dwelling house and chamber joining thereunto with their appurtenances situate at the end and over the shambles aforesaid – and garden plot – John Fford

1682 Indenture: All that messuage and dwelling house contayning two rooms and two chambers over the former and also the ... situate at the south end of the shambles or market place

1707 Indenture: all that shambles and market and chezwel ... together with a chamber over the said shambles

1728 Indenture: all that little messuage or dwelling house at the south end of the shambles or market place in Sydmouth with the chamber adjoining and lying over the said shambles together with the garden plot now enjoyed therewith lying in the marsh – to Samuel Follett

1740 Thomas Warren

1747 Samuel Follett

1755 Manor inventory: House at the end of the Shambles (copy on website)

1764 Manor inventory:

1. A Little Dwelling house at the South end of the Shambles consisting of a Kitchen Shop & Three Chambers, and a Garden in the Marsh, now rented by Landlord Cawley. Tenant Samuel Follett.
2. The Benefit of the Market place Shambles and Chezwel together with a Chamber over the said Shambles heretofore belonging to a Lydworthy at Westown. Tenant Samuel Follett.

(copy on website)

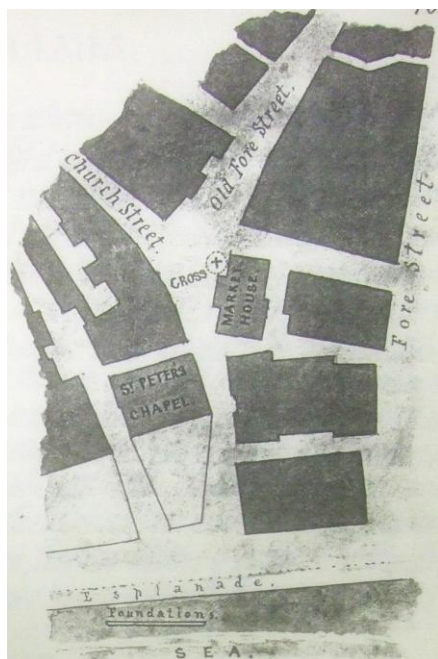
1803 Butcher: Journey from Sidmouth to Chester, “The Market House is a convenient modern erection.”

1810 Butcher: “Beauties of Sidmouth” p.47, “The Market Place is a convenient modern brick edifice surmounted by a ball and weather cock”.

1813 Manor sale: Shambles and tolls of fairs & markets – William Jenkins (copy on website)

1840 Hughes Ball, Lord of the Manor erected the present cumbrous and inconvenient building called the Market House or Town Hall. The lower storey contains the stalls and shambles used on market days and a steep stone staircase leads to only one large room, though one or two anterooms would have been very convenient. (POH History – copy on website)

In discussion, it was concluded that the house referred to must have occupied the southern end of the current market house footprint with its chamber (bedroom) actually above the market area. It is not clear whether the market area was enclosed or just an open space beneath the chamber. The meaning of “chezwel” was discussed. Ed thought it might refer to a public well. Brian commented that POH referred to the market cross being removed when a pump was installed, suggesting that there may previously have been a well in that location. Brian also remarked that he had a personal interest in the old word, Scamell, since one of his great-grandmothers was born Emily Scamell. In response to a query about Butcher’s 1803 book, Brian responded that Butcher wrote this travelogue based on a journey he took from Sidmouth To Chester, but that it also contained his earliest description of Sidmouth, which formed the basis for his later guide books.



(Left) POH reconstruction of medieval layout of market square. (Right) 1789 manor map showing market house on its current footprint, surrounded by roads. Note that blank areas are properties not owned by the manor. Note also access to the back of the church and church cottage is from the High Street end of Church Lane, with no apparent access from Church Street.

1703 storm

Brian introduced this by recalling that his talk on the 1824 storm had been prefaced by a query as to why there was no record (at least in the extracts quoted by POH) of the 1703 storm, documented by Daniel Defoe, and generally reckoned to be the worst UK storm in history. Following inspection of the original wardens' accounts for the period, he could now be quite sure that there was considerable damage, but that POH had not mentioned it because the repair costs were modest and under several different headings – not a single “cost of repairing storm damage” entry.

The accounts also revealed a great deal more about the expenses of the church (in the churchwardens' accounts) and of the feofees (in the box wardens' accounts) in that period. The following is a selection, reordered to clarify related expenses. In the following the format is £/s/d or s/d in old money with a 0 generally replaced by -.

Selected entries from the Box Wardens accounts:

Brought forward	7/9/9
Income:	
Rent from Trustram Powning	6/10/-
Rent from John Penniwell for Dawlish property	10/-/-
Agnes Podbery	10/-
Total income	24/9/9
Expenditure:	
Samuel Pearse for Mary Magdelens hospital one years rent	5/-
William Carpenter for his office	13/4
The constables for the goal and hospital	6/6
The constables for the goal and hospital	6/6
The constables for hospital money	6/6
The constables for maimed soldiers	10/-
Total expenditure	18/11/8

From these accounts, Brian noted that the Dawlish property was yielding a rent of £10, whereas in the 1642 feofees indenture, £12 of its rent was allocated to the church communion wine. He also noted the 5/- payment to Magdalen leper hospital outside Exeter (where the Magdalen Road almshouses are now). This will be referred to under the £12 grant section below.

Selected entries from the Church Wardens accounts:

Brought forward	3/6/1
Income:	
Collected for seats	8/-
Collected for rates	24/9/11
Total income	27/17/11 (sic)
Expenditure:	
For board and timber to mend ye roof of church	7/8
For 2 elms for rafters for ye church	4/-
For thatching Will; Carpenter's House	1/8
For thousand of shendles	2/12/-
Zachius Colls for a hundred of slatt	7/-
John Periam for glazing and leading	11/6
Elias Veryard for glazing ye church	1/3/-
For 35 reed sheafs to heall the church	10/6
For ye books at Honiton	7/4
The Parritor for books	5/-
For Mr Courtices dinner at Honiton	2/6
For ye old wardens and new wardens dinner	4/9
For two bottles of wine at Whitsun	5/6
For two bottles of wine at Christmas	5/-
For two bottles of wine at Easter	5/-
For bread for the sacrament	8d
The ringers the 5 th of November	7/-
Martha Calley: washing ye surplus & plate & mending ye surplus	4/10
For reding ye lake by the church wall	6d
For wetting of lime and carrying into ye church	1/6
For a hauke to carry mortar in	1/-
For roning a ladder 24 rongs	2/-
George Calley for rope to tie ye ladders	1/2½
Mr Carswell for 3 hogh; of lime & 1 bagg	8/4
For carrying lime	2/10
John Canterbury for lime & ffitching	1/8
For 1 hogh; of lime and wetting of it	4/-
For 4 collars for the bells	1/4
Total expenditure	27/7/10

From these accounts, the group of entries collected in bold appear to relate to repairs carried out after the storm, in which both the church roof and the cottage roof were evidently damaged or destroyed. Shendles is the old German word for Shingles, which could be of stone, slate or wood. Use of the word "slatts" suggests that the shendles were not slate. The small number of slates must have been for the porch or a lean-to. Why thatch was required for the church is not clear. Will Carpenter was the sexton, so the church paid for re-thatching church cottage, whereas Will's salary was paid by the feofees through the box warden. Brian noted that Will's day wage for labouring about the church was 1/-, so the Sexton's job was evidently considered one day's work per month. The Bank of England prices series suggests that prices are 150-200 times higher now, so this corresponds to £7.50-£10 in today's money. A study of wages in 1688 suggests that an average labourer's income was £15 p.a. = 25 days work per month @ 1/- per day. An average clergyman income was £45 p.a. For comparison, the current minimum wage is £100/day (x2000), or £23,000 p.a. (x767) implying that the poorest working people in 1700 were roughly 10 times worse off than today. Although not in 1703, most years included a £1 cost for the Bishop's visitation, on top of which 7/4 or more was paid for books – perhaps the lectionary for the year. Books were evidently very expensive. IN 1699, the cost of the blank account book is recorded as 5/6 – equivalent to about £50 in today's money! Several other entries are recurrent. The actual total cost of Communion wine was 15/6, paid out of the church rate (not out of the £12 grant). The payments for washing the vestments and plate occur every year, and there are similar costs for lime every year – it looks as though the interior of the church was probably lime-washed every year. Another recurrent cost was "reding" the lake, which is sometimes recorded as "clearing" the lake. This throws open a new puzzle as to what and where this lake was!



Sketch made in 1859, prior to the church rebuilding, from Rev. Clements scrapbook

Church Cottage

Since the cottage was mentioned in 1703, and its history has been a recent topic of research to inform the listed building consent, Brian had gathered together the main records that relate to it. Church cottage was sexton's tied cottage (etymology: sexton = sacristan: keeper of sacred vessels → church fabric → churchyard → gravedigger).

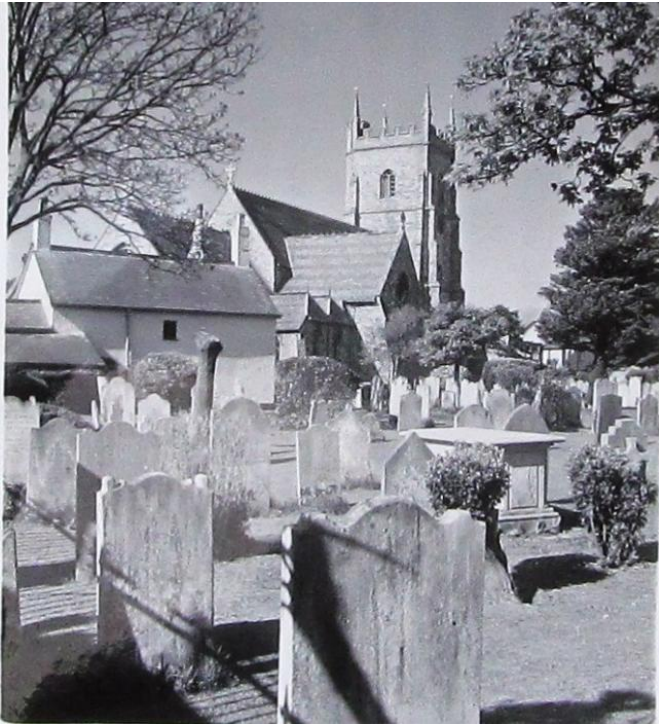
- 1631 date on door jamb (see below)– this is the first record that we have and is dated shortly after manor of Sidmouth bought from crown by Sir Edmund Prideaux; Ralph Mainwaring vicar. Prior to the dissolution of the monasteries, Sidmouth had been owned by the Abbey of Zion in Middlesex, but in 1538, the Abbess, sensing the direction of Henry VIII, had leased the manor to Richard Gosnell for 99 years. This meant that when Henry acquired the manor in 1539, it was already let and he – and his successors – could do nothing about it. Eventually, in about 1603, James I re-let it, and finally in 1628 it was sold to Edmund Prideaux, who was an absent landlord at Farway.
- 1697→ William Carpenter, sexton, paid 13/4 per year. (see above – Boxwarden's a/c)
- 1703 Will Carpenter's cottage re-thatched by the church. (see above - Churchwarden's a/c)
- 1728 Church terrier, payment of 13/4 p.a. to sexton
- 1786 Copy of answers required by Act of Parliament re house at present used as habitation for sexton (POH)
- 1789 Manor map shows access to the church & cottage from Church Lane. (see above)
- 1802 Report of the (Charity) Commissioners: Payment of £20/5/9½ to Denbigh (Mason) & £119/1/3½ to Nicholls (Carpenter) for work at the Sexton's House and Workhouse paid out of the Feoffees income, agreed by a public Vestry meeting. Report implies that the Sexton's salary was paid from the same source. [A contribution of £20/0/7 to installation of an organ for the church was paid out of the same funds]. (from Rev'd William Jenkins' accounts)
- 1810 The strip of land to the west of the cottage was incorporated into the graveyard.
- 1820 Report of the Commissioners: A house in the churchyard belonging to the parish and which has been rebuilt at the parish's expense, furnishes a habitation for the sexton.
- 1858 Consecration of churchyard extension, including the cottage land
- 1859 Sketch of NE corner of church & church cottage by Rev. Clements (see above)
- 1860 Church rebuilt, extended eastward
- 1863 Feoffees pass resolution confirming that church cottage is owned by the vicar
- 1863 Cottage reroofed in slate by church.
- 1874 Churchyard closed
- 1959 Extension proposal refused faculty permission – major repairs undertaken.
- 1964 New vestries were added at east end of church.
- 2010 Valery Dunn, the last verger, retired



The cottage without its rendering in 2013



Date inscribed on the cottage door jamb



From a photographic record of the church and churchyard made in 1941

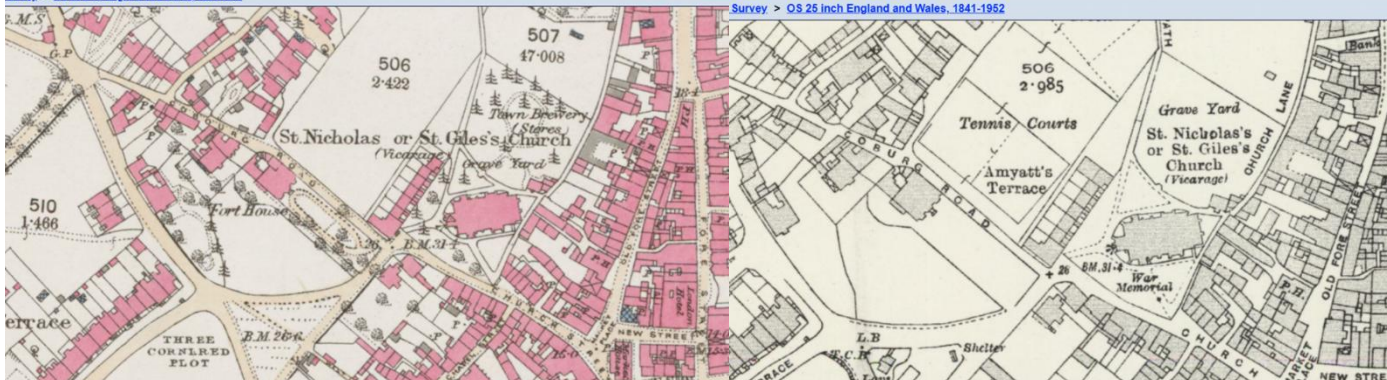
Brian commented that we do not know what the cottage looked like prior to its rebuilding in 1802, except that it was thatched. He suggested that it was probably a single storey dwelling and that the rebuilding had replaced this with the current 2-storey dwelling, reusing the stone from the old building, including the dated stone in the door jamb. The 1859 picture shows the corner of the house with its thatched roof, prior to the re-slating of the roof in 1863. The 1941 pictures confirm that the kitchen and bathroom extensions were already there, contrary to the previous opinion that they were added in 1959 when major repairs were undertaken and a faculty application for an extension was rejected. [post meeting note: Ed checked the 1888 and 1933 OS maps (copied below), which show that the extensions were already present at that date, suggesting that they may have been part of the original 1802 construction]

Devon XCIV.2
 Surveyed: 1888, Published: 1889
 Size: map 64.4 cm x 96.6 cm (25.344 x 38.016 inches), on sheet ca. 76 x 104 cm (ca. 30 x 41 inches)

Devon XCIV.2
 Revised: 1933, Published: 1934
 Size: map 64.4 cm x 96.6 cm (25.344 x 38.016 inches), on sheet ca. 76 x 104 cm (ca. 30 x 41 inches)

Survey > OS 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952

Survey > OS 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952



(Left) 1888 OS map (Right) 1933 OS map, showing the area around the church, including layout of church cottage.

Keith highlighted the difficulty of finding the occupiers of the cottage in the census. Brian said that he thought he had a list of church sextons/vergers and would let him have a copy. Ed commented on the trees shown in the aerial photograph and a discussion followed on whether any of them were still there. It was thought probably not.

£12 p.a. grant to Sidmouth Parish Church from Sidmouth Consolidated Charities for communion wine

Brian wrote an article for the church magazine exploring the origin of this annual grant, and how its value had changed over nearly 400 years since it was first made in 1642. POH identified several deeds, including those relating to this grant, in the church chest. Before he handed them over to the feoffees, he wrote a booklet containing abstracts from the deeds. This is fortunate because their whereabouts is now unknown, the properties all having been sold by the feoffees before the present Sidmouth Consolidated Charities came into being. The following is largely extracted from POH's booklet:

1338 – Juliana widow of Adam Herbard gives to Thomas at fursan and Johanna his wife, house and lands at Souwoda in the parish of Doulys rendering annually the accustomed rent and service to the lord of the fee. For which the said Thomas gives Juliana six marks.

1370 - John Rycardon gives to Gilbert Smith all his tenements and lands in Southwode in the parish of Doulych.

1386 – Gilbert Smith of Sywatton Abbat confirms to Hugo Ricardonus his houses and land at Dawlys in Southwode which he had from gift & feoffment of John Ricardonus.

1461- Peter Sturnell, John Oxenham & Roger Sely give to Hugo Reynell and Elene his wife all their lands &c in Southwode in the parish of Dawlyssh and land de east teyngmouth which was recently a gift from Dionisia Reynell, mother of Hugo Reynell.

1461 – Hugo Reynell & Elena his wife confirm to Hugo's mother Dionisia the annual sum of ten shillings paid quarterly and eight house loads of fuel accruing from their lands at Southwode in the parish of Dawlyssh.

1493 – Elena late wife of Hugo Raynall testifies that she gave and to farm let to Thomas and his wife Johanna her land at Southwood in the parish of Dowlysshe.

1505 - Richard, keeper of the Lepers of St Magdalen's Hospital near Exeter and the brothers and sisters of that house give to Peter Ricardyn their house with a ferling and a half of land at Southwode in the parish of Dawlysshe for which he pays them five shillings annually.

1523 – John Calley of Sidmouth, Harry Wheker, John Haycraft, John White, William Isak, Thomas Mutter, John Robyns and Harry Clerk the younger, parishioners of Sydemothe church hath received of Sir Nicholas Wadham Kt by the hands of Wm Vicary evidence concerning the inheritance of Peter Ricardon for lands at Southwode in the parish of Dawlyssh which evidence was delivered to Sir N. Wadham a long time since, to the use of the parishioners and church aforesaid.

1541 – Henry Clerk and others give to John Symys clerk, Edward Herlewyn, T. Purechase, J. Pomery, J. Bolle, R. Whyker, R Stocker, John Ayrhelegh, John-to-legh, R. Christofer, R. Haydon and N. Tyrille their lands at Dawlysshe and Tyngmouth &c.

1569 – Nicasius Yetsweirt and Bartholomew Brokesby for a sum paid to Edward Harlynge of Sidmouth, sell ... and land at Dawlish some time attached to the church at Sidmouth amounting to a farthing and a half of land called Southwood.

1574 – Ellis Harlinge, N. Purchase, J. Skutt, Wm Channon, P. Stocker, T. Ley and others, with the consent of the parishioners of Sidmouth transfer to George Thacher and Rose his wife and to their son John the estate of Southwood for 20s p an.

1597 – Rose Thatcher and her son John pay fine of £20 to ffrauncys Harlyng and others who lease to her the Southwood estate at Dawlish during the life of the survivor of herself and son at the yearly rent of 20s.

1599 – ffrauncys Harling and others recite that the tenure of Rose and John Thatcher is now demised to Jeaffery Coleman of Ayshcomb.

1642 - Francis Harlewin, gent., William Lee, Christopher Channon, Robert Halstafe the elder, yeomen TO John Minshull clerk, vicar of Sidmouth, John Harlewin gent., Francis Haydon, John Veriard, Steven Stocker (/Bowerwood), Henry Conant, Nicholas Lidford, John Pearse the younger, John Stocker (/Bowerwood), Abraham Carslake, John Hill, George Salter, John Channon of Bulverton & Thomas Lee, Sidmouth, yeomen. Messuage and lands lying in Southwood in the parish of Dawlish, one farthing and a half of land, (forty-five acres), to be held in free socage. Annual rent from the premises of £12 to be used to pay for the bread and wine for Holy Communion to be celebrated in the parish church of Sidmouth throughout the year, the residue to be spent as the parishioners decide at a public meeting on the common good of the church, the poor or other charitable, pious or common use. When 8 or more feofees are dead, the remainder must re-enfeof to 12 or more chosen at a parish meeting.

1856 - William Jenkins, clerk & William Gale Harris, wine merchant, Sidmouth; George Manning esq; William Nash Gale, linen draper/mercator & Richard Farrant, wine merchant, all late of Sidmouth TO William Jenkins; William Gale Harris; John Baruh (sic) Lousada, esq; Charles Millar esq; William Till esq; Charles Edmund Farrant, upholsterer; John Barratt, shoemaker; John Benjamin; Prince Webber, confectioner; Henry Joseph Hooke, hotel keeper; Richard Stone, assistant overseer & John Trump, wine merchant, Sidmouth. The 1791 feofment by which issues of a tenement at Southwood in Dawlish were to be used to purchase sacrament bread and wine for use at Sidmouth parish church and for such other charitable purposes as should be determined by a majority of the parishioners. New feofees appointed at parish meeting.

From these records, it is clear that the Dawlish property was held in trust long before it came to Sidmouth and before its proceeds were allocated to the church. The key date seems to be 1505, when Magdalen Hospital gave the property to Peter Ricardon in trust for an annual payment of 5/-. For some unknown reason, Peter bequeathed the property to the church and poor of Sidmouth when he died in 1523, but Sidmouth continued to pay 5/- p.a. to Magdalen through the 16th – 18th centuries (I have not yet found the date it stopped being paid). In 1642 it was considered to be worth at least £12 p.a. and the trustees at the time allocated £12 p.a. for church communion wine. This seems to have been forgotten by 1697, but was presumably remembered when the trustees were reconstituted in the 1791 feofment mentioned in 1856, since when I presume it has been paid continuously. The records shown earlier suggest that there was considerable confusion between church and charity accounts during that period, not just in terms of the £12 grant, but also who paid the sexton and who maintained the sexton's house, which all led to the need for the 1863 resolution of the feofees confirming that the cottage belonged to the church.

The records leave several questions open. The nature of the ownership prior to 1500 is unclear, especially any connection between the Peter & Hugh Rycardon in 1370/1386 and Peter Ricardyn in 1505, how the property came to be in the possession of Magdalen Hospital between 1493 and 1505, and the connection between Peter Ricardyn and Sidmouth. There is also a gap between 1642 when the grant of £12 p.a. was made and the box warden's accounts from 1697, in which it is ignored.

The meeting concluded with a discussion on the history of the buildings in Church Street relating to the Ebdon family, led by Margaret. In particular, a picture from 1820 showed a very different entrance to the churchyard from later pictures, and also appeared to show a cottage in the churchyard itself. Since this was shortly after the first extension of the churchyard on the North side of the church, it seems unlikely that there was a building on the old part of the churchyard. The discussion then went on to the clock. Butcher's 1810 guide mentions the recent addition of a clock face, which had aroused some opposition. Brian commented that there were references to clock repairs throughout the 18th century, suggesting that this was not the first clock face – unless the time was only indicated by chimes prior to that. In support, he mentioned a map, held at the record office, which has a date in the 1750s on it, but which has a tiny sketch of the church clearly showing a clock face. It is the only image we have of the south face of the church before the 1822 south aisle was built. On the basis of the clock face, Brian had assumed it was wrongly dated, but the new information from the churchwardens' accounts, suggests otherwise.

Next meeting, at 12, Church Street

Monday 14th July, 7pm – this will be our final meeting of the group in its current form.