

## Dinton and Stone in the Civil War Period

I like to look around old churches where sometimes you see a plaque with a list of all the clergy who have been in charge of the parish. Dinton and Haddenham churches have these details. They were probably compiled in the Nineteenth Century by people interested in local history. These lists go back hundreds of years. Do you ever stop and look at them? Some vicars and rectors were in post for generations and others just for a few years. We will never know all the personal stories behind these facts.

The Seventeenth Century is interesting as it was a period of religious and social turmoil which included the Civil Wars and the short period of the English Republic. During this time many clergy were removed from office.

How did this effect the church in this area? Buckinghamshire was a war zone in First Civil War. This parish was on the frontline between Royalist Oxford where the King had his headquarters, and Aylesbury which was a Parliamentary stronghold. There were skirmishes in the area, both sides stole cattle, "collected" local taxes and raided homes to supply troops. The roads would have been busy with refugees and displaced persons trying to get home or find work.

At that time local landowners would appoint the clergyman was and would have influence in the appointment of churchwardens. Churchwardens had a wide role in local affairs including maintenance of roads and looking after poor people, and not just church business. The parishioners in Stone and Dinton



*Oliver Cromwell*

would largely follow their social superiors in their political and religious opinions. The Dormer family owned extensive land in Stone and they were either Roman Catholic or High church Anglicans who supported King Charles.

Dinton was home to families that were on the parliamentarian side which included Simon Mayne who was one of the men who signed King Charles' death warrant. The Dinton landowners were connected by marriage to leading Parliamentarians, Oliver Cromwell and John Hampden.



*King Charles I*

What do we know about the local churches? The vicar at Stone in the early Seventeenth Century was Thomas Clever or Cleaver who in 1626 or 1627 was "presented" (appointed) by John Dormer, Sir John Curzon and William Mayne who were the trustees of the Dormer family estates. That family had the patronage or legal right to appoint a vicar. We can assume their sympathies were religiously conservative and they supported the king. When the First Civil War ended in 1646 Parliament removed some clergy who had supported the King's side. A document dated 7<sup>th</sup> July 1646 confirms that Rev Cleaver of Stone had been suspended from office.

*It is ordered that John Hale (or Gale?) John ffenner (Fenner) & Wm Clayden (?) p'ishioners (parishioners) of Stone in the Countie of Bucks doe collect & gather all tithes rents revenues and proffetts (profits) of the viccarage of Stone in the Countie of Bucks aforesaid sequestered from Thomas Cleaver to & for the satisfaction of such as shall officiate the Cure of the P'ish (Parish) Church there till Mich'as (Michaelmas) next.*

This document is an excerpt from a Parliamentary register listing clergy who had suffered during the civil war or in Cleaver's case, who were identified as a "malignant person". "Malignant" meant their views did not match Parliament's and were therefore considered to be unreliable. Three parishioners from Stone were selected to take over the parish and collect rents and tithes that the vicar had received. The money would be used to maintain the church, provide for poor people and some would be sent to the government.

Both Fenner and Claydon had contributed money 5 shillings and 3 shillings to the collection for Ireland in 1642. In early 1642 Parliament had asked local officials to obtain "voluntary" contributions from everyone who could afford it towards the suppression of the revolt in Ireland. Although the Civil War was about to break out, it was one thing which King and Parliament agreed on. The total raised for Stone was 3 pounds 16 shillings and 9 pence. Dinton collected much more, namely 50 pounds 17 shillings and 10 pence. This included money from servants, maids and poor men and women. A Mr Carter was the local minister and Mr Tray was his curate. Dinton could have raised more money because it was more politically and religiously active or the parish was wealthier.

Thomas Plummer was appointed as vicar of Stone in 1648, having been made curate in 1639, and continued until his death in 1668 when Richard Woolhouse, previously vicar of Over Winchendon, took over.

In Dinton a Rev Edward Pulton was in post for a long time from 1569 to his death in 1610. Thomas Carter took over from 1610 and served until his death in 1646. He was a leading cleric on the Puritan side and was the writer of *Prayer's Prevalence for Israel's Safety*, a sermon preached at Saint Margaret's Church, Westminster, before the House of Commons on a day of fasting on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1643. His sermon was published with an address or dedication to the House of Commons. He was one of the two clergymen representing Buckinghamshire at the Assembly of Divines appointed by Parliament in 1642. The Westminster Assembly, as it was known, was a conference set up by Parliament to reform the church. The assembly sat from 1643 to 1653 and intended to remove Roman Catholic influences from the church. It was rejected at the Restoration but was highly influential in non-conformist churches and particularly in America.

After his death he was replaced in 1646 by Rev John Shirley. He was described as a "constant reader". The meaning is unclear but may mean he was an enthusiastic student of religion. Shirley was removed in 1661 or 1662 at the Restoration of the monarchy. He used to preach at the non-conformist's Chapel at nearby Ford and was described a religious dissenter which meant he did not follow the Church of England. The Restoration of Charles II meant that parishioners had to conform to the "new normal" of the established church or keep a low profile. The church had returned to the pre-Civil War organisation, led by bishops.

In 1662 there was an inspection on behalf of the bishop which records that Dinton had no surplice (ecclesiastical robes) for the vicar nor communion tablecloth. These items would have been regarded before the war as too high church or catholic.

It is interesting to think that our neighbouring parishes were on opposite sides in the Civil War and both had clergy removed but for different reasons. Stone probably supported the King and was punished when Parliament won and Dinton was dealt with when the monarchy restored. It would have been a dangerous time to speak your mind.

1. Add MS 15670 is the second of three volumes of the: REGISTER-BOOK of the Proceedings of the Committee of the House of Commons, appointed to consider ways " for the relief of such godly and well-affected ministers as have been plundered; and likewise to consider what malignant persons have benefices, whose livings being sequestered, there may be others to supply their cures, and receive the profits;" from 30 Jan. 1644/5 to 5 Oct. 1646; and from 1 May to 30 Oct. 1647.