

**The Story of the Church and
Parish of Lydiard Millicent as
told by
The Rev D P Harrison MA
Rector dated 1936**



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(There is a monument to David Percy Harrison M.A. Rector of the Parish from 1905 to 1937 in the Chancel)

I have copied the words below from his book exactly as he wrote them:

This little pamphlet does not pretend to be anything more than an attempt to give the few facts which are now recoverable concerning the Church of Lydiard Millicent. All the earliest history is wrapped in darkness and nothing more than probability is available, based on knowledge of fact so far as it is known concerning the origin of parishes in the South of England.

This origin dates back to Saxon times, and in the South of England dates back to the regulations of Theodore of Tarsus, the great Greek Archbishop of Canterbury, 668-693 A.D. He did little or nothing directly to set up the Parochial system even in Kent, but he introduced among our ignorant Anglo-Saxon fore fathers knowledge of Roman law and methods of administration and the germs of an organised system for the Christian Church which extended over the various kingdoms of the Saxon Heptarchy.

In time Kent lost its status as a completely independent kingdom and fell under the control of Saxon kings of Wessex whose capitals were Winchester and Sherborne. Ine, or Ina one of them, was a man of mark, who under the influence of learned monks, seems to have tried to establish some sort of regular order in the districts immediately under his control, one of which was Wiltshire. Certainly a number of small country Churches were built in his time. Few or none of them were of stone, but erections of wattle-daub, or wood, with thatched roofs. Naturally these were built near the house or tun of some thane, a landowner, big or small.

These thanes were little more than yeoman farmers, their house mere farms, but farms surrounded by a moat, or in most cases a strong fence, within which their hinds, or farm labourers, had their huts, for the purposes of defence against wild beasts, or still wilder men foes.

Numberless places till end in 'ton' which we still use in the form 'town'. Although the original 'town' was nothing more than a slightly fortified farm occupied by a thane and a few of his dependants, the male members being obliged to go with him when he went out to war, when summoned by his king.

Not till we get to the reign of Egbert, commonly called the first King of all England, was there any real order. His son Ethelwulf was a devoted Christian and servant of the Church, and a man who had some knowledge of Latin. He actually left his kingdom and travelled to Rome to see the Pope, taking with him his youngest son, Alfred. In his reign we have the first rumblings of invasions of the Danes, who burned monasteries and churches partly out of hatred to Christianity, but still more because they found there more to plunder than anywhere else. Still the Danish terror was only beginning, and Ethelwulf did much to put the Church in order, especially in the West. He appears to have done his best to get the various thanes to put up Churches in their 'tuns' where they did not exist, and also to provide for Clergy to officiate. An ordinary peasant was supposed to work and live on a virgate of land, and these early Saxon Clergy were generally given two virgates. They were further supposed to work these themselves for their keep, and it was not till later that tithe was added. The Clerical glebe is the descendant of the virgate system.

Ethelwulf only succeeded in partially establishing parishes. The real starter of the parish with glebe and tithe completed was the greatest of our early kings, Alfred. He, however, was so much

hampered by his constant struggle with the Danes that he had no time to put his ideas in shape. His successors, Edward the Elder and Athelstan, did this, and by the time Athelstan died the parochial system was fairly well settled in Wessex, i.e. Hants, Dorset, Wilts, Somerset and Devon, also in that part of Mercia which was by this time completely controlled by the kings, viz, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and the country along the Thames to London. In addition there were many great monasteries established; they were in no way like the later monasteries of the middle ages, but chiefly homes of learning where many beautiful manuscripts were transcribed by the monks.

It is probable that a Church stood on the site of our present building at least as early as Athelstan's reign, as there is a trace still existing of the fortifying moat of the tun to be found on the Lydiard Manor estate, now nearly filled up and with nothing of water left but a muddy pond in a small coppice.

Antiquaries dispute much as to the origin of the word Lydiard, in all old documents spelt Liddiard. It is probably Celtic, i.e. ancient British, and means the gate by the ford. The ford in question was either that over the brook at Holborn (Hollow Burn) in this parish, or more probably that over the stream which now runs under the road at Brook House. My reason for thinking this is that we share the name with Lydiard Tregoz, and the stream at this point is the boundary between the two parishes. Insignificant now, in those days of utterly undrained land it must have been a formidable obstacle only fordable in places.

There are only two objects which connect us with the Saxon period and which can still be seen. The first is the shaft of the great cross in the Churchyard which *may* date from the Saxon period, though this is very doubtful. Some antiquaries prefer to assign it to the reign of Edward III or Richard II. The one portion which would have given us the date more or less correctly, viz, the cross at the top, has been knocked off by some ruffian at the time for the Puritan rebellion in the time of Charles I. The present top is of course quite modern, and was put on in 1854. It has been well done, and is in harmony with the shaft, but we cannot be sure that it resembles the original.

The second relic is much smaller. It consists of a stone pillar, or column, evidently part of the window of the early Saxon Church. It was dug up many years ago from the Church yard, and I have had it placed in the porch of the Church where it may be seen of all, though few, I imagine, know of what it speaks. From its structure it would seem to be late Saxon work. So much for the Saxon tenure.

When the building was dedicated to "All Saints," there is no documentary evidence to show, but if the consecration marks in various stones outside the Church be any guide it was probably so done in the time of Robert Turgis (see below), though he may only have fixed an old tradition.

The first actual incontrovertible fact we come to dates from the time of William the Conqueror, where we find the name mentioned in Domesday Book as "the lands of Alured (Latin form of Alfred) of Marlborough", thus: 'Alured himself holds Lidiar. It was assessed in the time of King Edward (the Confessor) at seven hides. Three hides of these are in demesne, where is one plough land and three servants. Eight villans and ten cotarii occupy four ploughlands. There are forty acres of meadow and thirty of pasture. The wood is a mile and a half long and three-quarters of a mile wide. It was valued at ten pounds, now at six. Seven burgesses of Cricklade pay five shillings.'

This is a very vague notice, and it only tells us that at the time Domesday Book was drawn up it was still in the hands of a Saxon, Alured, who probably lived here, as a demesne is the portion of a manor lying round the 'aula,' or hall, or tun. This is certainly nowhere else than the site of the old manor

house now burned down. The wood is Webbe's wood, without doubt, (its name in early Norman days was Clinton's wood), for the dimensions are about the same as when it was surveyed for Domesday Book in 1080 A.D.

The powerful Norman interest did not allow Alured to remain long in possession, for in 1100 A.D. we are told a certain Geoffry de Clinton was in possession of it, and from this time forward we find the de Clintons were in possession of it down to 1429 A.D. Under them, in the early eleven hundreds, the Church was probable Normanised, if the beautiful Norman font still remaining in the present Church is any evidence. The history, however, of the Clinton holding of Lydiard is a blank except for the one fact that Geoffry de Clinton, chamberlain to Henry I, left a brother, from whom was descended William de Clinton, whose wife was the Lady Milsent, or Millicent, from whom the village gets its name, it having previously been known only as North Liddiard. She must have been a very important and masterful woman, who as a widow held the property for a long time, for a deed (temp. King John) says a certain Hugh Clinton sold his vill of Lydiard to his brother Richard on the death of his mother, the Lady Mylsent.

The Clinton family gradually faded out, the members having got possession of other properties, more important, in other parts of England, and ceasing to care for Lydiard. It was finally sold in 1457 to Robert Turgis. A licence was granted to him by the King to rebuild the Manor House, so he demolished the Clinton House and built the one which was burned down in 1882, a tiny portion of this still exists with a stone mantelpiece, having carved on it fish, once the top slab of an old tombstone. Hence the fish, Greek I.CH TH.U.S, "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour." The part of the Church which Turgis built must have been the nave, the chancel and the tower, for the south aisle is of earlier date and there seems to have been some kind of claim to it by a family of Russell, who had long been established in the parish. Aubrey mentions as existing in his time 'a family pew' in the south aisle with the name, Russell, carved on it. It is thought that the Russells must have possessed property in the north part of the parish near what are called Chaddington's ponds. I do not know exactly where these are, they must be filled up. There was an Inquisition taken at Salisbury in 1473 on the death of John Russell which proves that he was possessed of property at Lydiard and other places. This was sixteen years before Robert Turgis entered into possession. The two families must have been contemporaries, and evidently Turgis would not interfere with any rights, the Russell's might have in the south aisle. This is earlier, it being in the decorated period of architecture, while the Turgis parts are in the later perpendicular style. The advowson of the living belonged to the King since 1395 but now appears in the rolls as vested in the Lord of the Manor, Robert Turgis, who in 1460 presented one William Mylton to the Rectory of Lidyrd Mylsent.

For all his activity Robert Turgis did not own the Manor long. By 1465 he was dead, and his widow married again. In that year William Mylton died and a Peter Warner was presented to the living on the nomination of William Browning, 'jure uxoris ejus Alicis, relictæ Roberti Turgis Armigeri.' Thus 1457-1464 is the whole period of the ownership of this energetic man.

As he left it, so the Church remains to this day, except for the certain changes wrought in the nineteenth century. In 1850 Dr. Warneford, rector, restored the roof. He held the living from 1809-1853. This was the only thing he ever did for the parish. He was non-resident, and also rector of a Gloucestershire living where he resided. The services were taken by an old man, the Rev. Hugh Allen, rector of St. Mary's, Cricklade, who lived at Cricklade, and used to ride over on Sundays to take the services. At his death the advowson was bought by Pembroke College, Oxford, which has appointed all the subsequent rectors.

The first was Christopher Cleobury, Fellow of the College, who built the present beautiful Rectory and occupied it in 1857, and laid out the grounds, aided by the Rev. W.E. McKnight who acted as his curate and also for many years kept a school for noblemen at the Manor House, to whom I am indebted for most of the facts recorded in this small book. He printed privately a book called Lydiard Manor, concerning which he records sundry curious facts, with which, however, I am not concerned, as I only wish to write something which will guide those who happen to visit the Church. Mr Cleobury left a large fortune and much silver plate to Pembroke College, Oxford, and £100 to the poor of this parish, the interest of which is now distributed on St. Thomas' day each year by the Parish Council as ordered modern legislation.

He was succeeded by the Rev H.R. Hayward, who lengthened the Chancel, which previously ended about where the Communion rails now are, in 1870. In my own time the bells (5) were rehung and recast in 1906, and a 6th bell has since been given by Col. And Mrs Canning, and Col. Canning, C.M.G., J.P., has since, in 1934, given a beautiful modern window, which is on the north side of the Chancel.

The Organ, originally given by Mr. McKnight and some of his pupils, has also been enlarged and rebuilt in my time, and across the base of the tower an oak screen has been placed in memory of Mrs. P. Jones, the wife of Mr. Philip Jones, churchwarden.

The original Pulpit was a Jacobean one, which was given to the little Church at Braydon when Mr. McKnight put in the present one, which was carved by some of his pupils, and is a copy of one from Flanders, with the figures of saints round it left out. In many ways Mr. McKnight was a great benefactor to the parish, which owes much to him.

But there is one incident which we cannot but regret. The Church once owned a small very battered Elizabethan Chalice. Mrs Cleobury presented to it a modern set of Communion Plate in silver. This the churchwardens and parish, decided should be given to Mr. McKnight as a memento for all that he had done for the parish and he took it away with him, and no one knows what became of it. Doubtless the churchwardens thought it old and of no value, and assumed their right to give it away. With our modern ideas concerning such matters, it seems to have been a great blunder, to put it mildly.

His little book is very interesting, and contains a great deal of information about the Manor and its owners, which does not directly concern the Church. It may suffice to state that after the death of Mrs. Turgis the place passed into the possession of a family called Baskett, of whom nothing is known. In 1576 it was purchased by one William Webbe, alias Richmond, and his descendants held it till 1714. They all were staunch Roman Catholics, and one of them fell under the stern wrath of Queen Elizabeth for hiding popish recusants in the persons of Parsons and Campian, two Jesuit priests, whom he concealed in a hut in the then impassable Webbe's Wood. For this he was heavily fined, and the family were crippled thereby. Since then it has passed to the Askew and Blunt families, from whom it passed by inheritance to the Earls of Shaftesbury, of whom the Rev. H.T. Streeten bought it, only holding it for a short time during which he was Vicar of Rodbourne Cheney, where he restored and practically entirely rebuilt the Church. In 1877, while still occupied by Mr. McKnight, it was sold by the Streeten family and bought by Mr. Edmund Story Maskelyne, whose son has sold it to Mr. J.J. Webb. Since the house was burnt down during Mr. Maskelyne's ownership its glory has departed. The gardens are used for market gardening purposes, but a charming old pigeon house remains, though no longer tenanted by pigeons.

In conclusion, I may note that the present pews were put in the Church by the Rev. H.R. Hayward.

From the outside the Church stands up beautifully to face those coming up the road from the village below, and has done so to all intents and purposes exactly the same as to-day since the time of the great builder Turgis. Its foundations were well and truly laid, and though repairs have been done since, the main building remains much the same as when it was first erected. Still through the centuries the Church stands there a silent witness to God. Still its bells summon the inhabitants to worship Him who alone is worthy of worship. It stands as a dumb symbol of the Christ the Saviour who calls to us to come after Him. Through many generations it has called, and it calls still. May we not only come, but run after Him.

One last reflection from a human point of view. The two oldest and most enduring factors and institutions in this England of ours are the Church and the King. The line of our Kings begins with Cedric, King of Wessex, the direct ancestor of Ine, of Egbert, Ethelwulf and Alfred and the Norman Kings, and ends with Edward VIII.

The Church among the Saxons goes back still earlier than the Kings, but England did not even start to exist until the Wessex Kings and the Church determined to work together, and thus began to build up a civilised state, and form a civilised population. It has been a long process; it dates long before Parliaments or even Saxon Witenagemots existed. But notwithstanding all the occasional quarrels, England's glory is derived from the age long co-operation of Church and King, and in this process each tiny speck we call a parish has had its share, including our own. May that grand co-operation for good and progress never be broken!

**Rectors of Lydiard Milcent
From 1340 to Present Time**

A.D.		Patronus	Clericus
1340	North Lidyherd	Rex pro Priore de Newent	Johannes de Lalleford
1342	Lydiard Milcent	Idem	Ricardus de Evesham
1380	Lydiard Mysland	Idem	Howel Omadok
1392	North Lydiard	Rex	Ricardus Dygyl
1392	North Lydiard	Idem	Robertus de Malton
1394	North Lidiarde	Reginaldus de Cobham	Wmus Bacon
1395	North Lidiarde	Rex	Robertus de Malton
1411	North Lydyard <i>alias</i> Lydyard Milcent	Rex	Johannes Giles
1416	Lydyard	Idem	Alanus Leverton
1417	North Lydyard Milcent	Idem	Johannes Franklyn
1417	North Lydyard Milcent	Idem	Johannes Duffield
1418	North Lydyard Milcent	Idem	Robertus Burgh
1418	Lydyard Milcent	Idem	Johannes Oughtrede
1420	Lydiyard Milsent	Idem	Johannas Bury
1422	Lydyard Milcent	Idem	Johannes Wayte
1432	Lydiyard Milcent	Rex	Wmus. Bampton
1436	North Lydyard	Idem	Ricardus Emplyng
1437	Lydyard Milcent	Idem	Wmus Ingram
1442	Lidyard Milcent	Idem	Thomas Haynes
1452	Lidyard Milcent	Idem	Wmus Warmwell
1460	Lidyard Mylsent	Robertus Turgis, Armiger	Wmus Mylton
1465	Lidyard Mylcent	Wmus. Browning jure uxoris	Petrus Warner

A.D.		Patronus	Clericus
		ejus Aliciae relictæ Roberti Turgis, Armigeri	
1477	Lydyard Milcent	Wmus. Basket, Armig	Johannes Franklyn
1479	Lydyard Milcent	Idem	Johannes Lovekyn
1515	Lydyard Mylsent	Thos. Basket, Armig	Johannas Hayes
1574	Lidiarde Millicent	Gulielmus Webbe, Generosus	Egidius Webbe
1579	Liddiard Millicent	Wmus. Richmond, <i>alias</i> Webbe	Johannes Crippe
1603	Lydiard Millicent	Thos. Booth, de Fawley, co.Berks, ex concessione Wmi. Richmond, <i>alias</i> Webbe	Griffinus Lewis
1612	Lyddiard Milsent	Wm. Locksworth de Gloucester, Generosus	Robertus Whitfield
1664	Lydiard Millicent	Johan' vel Robt. Townsend et Robt. Pauling	Thomas Whitfield
1665	Lydiard Millicent	Gulielmus James de Marston. Generosus	Robertus Jenner
1724	Lydiard Millicent	Joshua Hale de Halesowen, hac vice	Johannes Butler P.M. Roberti Jenner Timothy Burrell
1784	Lydiard Millicent	John Davis de Bapton in parish of Fisherton Delamere	Thomas Davis P.M. Timothy Burrell
1809	Lydiard Millicent	Rev Warneford, LLD.	S Wilson Warneford P.M. Thomas Davis
1853	Lydiard Millicent	Master and Fellows of Pembroke Coll, Oxon	Christopher Cleobury
1864	Lydiard Millicent	Pembroke Coll, Oxon	Henry Rudge Hayward
1881	Lydiard Millicent	Idem	Arthur Cardinal Saunders
1905	Lydiard Millicent	Idem	David Percy Harrison