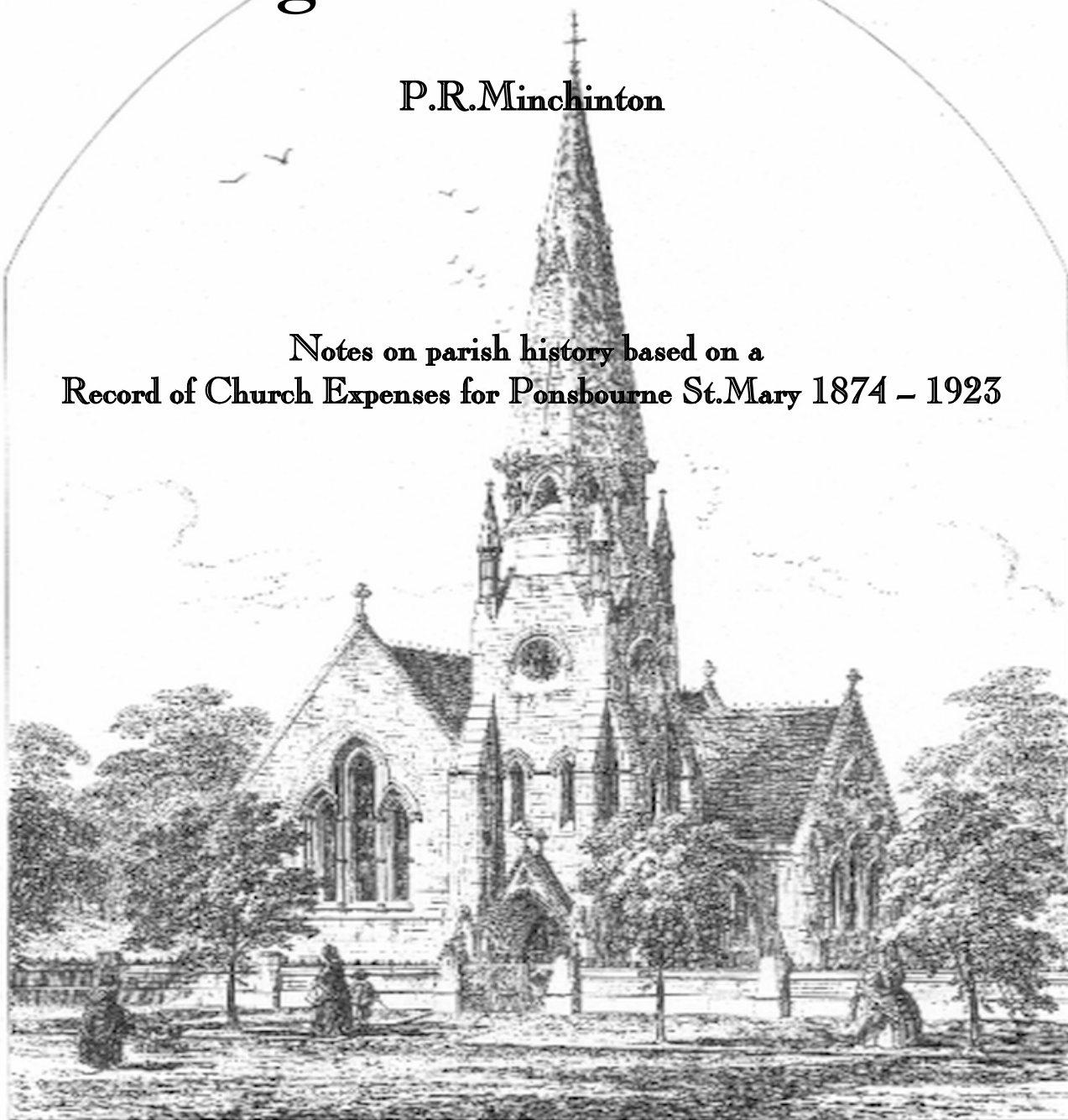


Gleanings from the Cash Book

P.R.Minchinton

**Notes on parish history based on a
Record of Church Expenses for Ponsbourne St.Mary 1874 – 1923**



THE CHURCH OF ST MARY TOLMERS, HERTFORDSHIRE.
MESSRS LANGE & SEDGLEY, ARCHT
65 James St Bedford Row

Engraving by J.E. Johnson, London, U.K.

Ponsbourne Press

Original article written in 1997, revised 2014
with further material added in 2016, 2019 and 2025

Contents, by Paragraph

Foreword & Introduction
Organists
Organ Tuning
Notes on George Kirby & Son of Hitchin
Work on the Organ
Pattern of Services
The Value of Money
Patterns of Income
Patterns of Expenditure
Organist and Choir
Clerk/Sexton
Expenditure on Changes and Repairs
Annual Expenditure
 Appendix A – Sources of information
Appendix B – Specifications

Front Cover: Builder's Advertisement, 1858
(courtesy Hertford Museum)

Back Cover: Organ Console, post 2013
(Ponsbourne Press)

Gleanings from the Cash Book St.Mary's Hatfield: Church Expenses 1874 - 1923

by Paul Minchinton

Foreword

The magazine Organists' Review published in their May 1999 issue an article based on details from a Cash Book which covered the early years of the life of the parish of St.Mary, Ponsbourne in Hertfordshire, including information about the 1858 Walker organ and the organists who played it. Since then, further details have come to light when preparing for the 150th anniversary of the consecration of the church, and even more during the restoration of the organ during 2013 and later. This, then, is a revised version, aiming to fill in a few of the gaps in the original article, while adding material from other sources.

Introduction

In the Hertfordshire Green Belt north of London there is a patch of land, triangular in shape (but with no Bermudan connections) bounded by Potters Bar, Hatfield, and Hertford. Four of the parishes in this area are the Hartford Hundred West Group, one of which, the subject of this article, was originally built as a chapel of ease for St. Etheldreda's church, so part of the parish of Hatfield, or Bishop's Hatfield. Construction of St.Mary's church was completed in 1848 and the building was consecrated in 1849. When the church was first built a barrel organ was delivered by Gray and Davison in 1848. This was replaced in 1850 by a "barrel and finger" organ made by the same firm. In 1858 it was taken in part-exchange for the present instrument, which was built by the London firm of J.W. Walker. The organ has two manuals and pedals, 15 speaking stops, tracker action and a "trigger" swell pedal. Above the console a triangular panel, with dogtooth mouldings, mimics the similar arrangement in stone above the main porch. (Until 1887, the console faced into the North Transept, so the similarity would have been much more obvious to the visitor.) The bottom octave (12 notes) of several stops (including all those on the Swell, or upper manual) is provided by Stopped Diapason pipes (a device known as a "choir bass"). The single pedal stop is a 16ft. Open Wood, the longest pipe of which has had to be mitred to fit it into the organ chamber. The voicing of the organ has a singing quality which harks back to the style of the late 18th Century. Apart from an overhaul in 1960, and replacement of the blower motor in 1992, little work had been carried out on the instrument since the changing of one stop in 1909. With the aid of a Lottery grant, Mander Organs of London completed a full restoration during 2013. The display pipe decoration was restored by Messrs Howell & Bellion.

The church now known as St.Mary's, Ponsbourne has over time been variously known also as St.Mary's Hatfield and St.Mary's Tolmers. In its early days the Cash Book in question was used by a succession of (anonymous) church treasurers to record income and expenditure each year. Whereas today the financial year for the church is the same as the calendar year, the financial year then was from Easter to Easter, so these records were usually examined at the Easter Vestry (the parish AGM). The accounts for some years bear the signature of an auditor, or the parish priest. (In other years they look to have been compiled hurriedly the night before the meeting.) As with any such source, the quality of information varies according to the compiler; it can be easy to jump to false conclusions.

Regular payments included those to the Clerk, the organist and organ blower, a sum most years to pay someone for washing the surplices (presumably all of them - just before Easter), and the church insurance. The Diocesan Quota, or equivalent, did not then exist.

In the first part of the book, the majority of the recorded income comes from no more than two or three large donations. The names Carlile, Miller, Mills and Cholmondley appear repeatedly, these being families living at nearby “big houses”. It is not until about 1910 that mentions of regular service collections appear (*Of course, this may merely be due to a change of treasurer, and therefore of accounting method*).

My primary aim, on first reading through the book, was if possible to learn more about my predecessors as organist at St. Mary’s, and also of course about the early history of the instrument itself. There are also insights to be obtained as to the way church affairs were organised at the time.

Organists

The earliest entry in the Cash Book dates from 1874. The book gives no clue as to who was organist between the consecration of the building in 1849, and late 1876. The first organist we know of (from other sources) was a Mr. William Williams. We do not know exactly when he was appointed (he does not appear in the 1851 Census). There are Cash Book entries in 1874 and 1875 for “Burch”, so Mr. Williams seems to have moved on by then (Someone of the same name is listed by Kelly in 1868 as living in Fore Street, Hatfield). From 1883 there is a series of regular entries for a Mr. Turton (with entries for “Turton and blower” or separate entries for each). It is likely that a local boy was the “Blower”. Mr.Turton was succeeded by a Miss Rough in 1883. Between 1891 and 1897 the Cash Book does not mention the name of the Organist, so it is not clear when Miss Rough left and Mr.Caines started – and of course there could have been someone else in post between the two. However, the school logbooks show that Mr.Caines was in post in October 1892. Using data from other sources the succession of organists appears to be:

1849 - 1873	Mr. William Williams/Anon
1874 – 1875	Mr. Burch
1876 - 1883	Mr.Turton
1883 - 1890	Miss Rough
1890 - 1898	Anon
(probably Mr. Caines from 1892, but may still have been Miss Rough)	
1898 - end of book	Mr. John Spelt Caines

The school teacher, living in the house built as part of the school next door to the church, was sometimes also the church organist. However, this appears not to have been so in the early years, as the organist Mr. W. Williams was probably in post when the new Walker organ arrived in 1858. The first incumbent was Rev Robert Pritchard Davies, so between the Vicar and the Organist the Welsh influence seems strong! From newspaper reports in 1849, and from the 1851 Census, we know that the school teacher then was Miss Mary Hingston, born in Devon in 1813. Given that Thomas Mills, who funded the construction of both church and school, was MP for Totnes, near Miss Hingston's birthplace, this may perhaps explain why a Hertfordshire school had a teacher from Devon?

Probably the first to combine the posts of schoolteacher and organist was Mr.Caines (he was also, for many years, the longest-serving organist). From the 1920 Electoral Register we discovered that his full name was John Spelt Caines. Thanks to a former pupil we have a picture of him, with some of the school pupils, taken in 1905 (the corner of the school where the picture was taken is now obscured by a conservatory-like additional classroom). It seems probable that he served a few years somewhere else, and married in Southampton in 1892, before coming to Hertfordshire.

The school log-books show that Mr. Caines was in post from 24th October 1892 and retired (or at least left the school) 35 years later in 1927. We also now know that he was born in Lymington, Hants., in 1865, where his father, John Henry Toravell Caines, was married in 1862. The BMD (Birth, Marriages and Deaths) records give the death of a John Caines in Surrey in 1947, at the age of 82, which would match the other information we have.

Comparing the Cash Book entries with other papers, the likelihood is that Mr. Caines took over from Miss Rough as organist at the same time as joining the school, or possibly a year or two later. It's also unlikely that Miss Rough was the schoolteacher, since Mr. Caines' predecessor at the school was one Miss F. L. (Furmage Lilian) Tooke. She left at the end of 1891 to marry George Robert Le Gruys, from Norfolk. However, there seems to have been an interregnum in 1892, when the schoolmaster between February and June is recorded as G.A. Nettleship (Entries in the School Logbook from Mr.Caines, shortly after he took over, suggest that there had been a great deal amiss in the environment he inherited). His tenure as Organist may also have started in 1892; it certainly lasted past the end of this Cash Book and on to his retirement from the school in 1927. A letter in the Bishops Hatfield Parish Magazine records his thanks for a social gathering at Ponsbourne Manor in 1917 to celebrate his then 25 years of service and apologising that he was not able to attend; the school was at that time in lockdown, due to an outbreak of smallpox. There is still a label, with his name on it (now barely legible), on the back of the vestry door above the hook where today my robes hang between services.

By comparing the school logbook with the church records we have confirmed that, unlike Mr. Caines, the previous schoolteachers were not also organists. On the other hand, some of his successors were, though none have matched his length of service. *(out of curiosity, I checked to see who had length of service next to Mr.Caines - and was shocked to discover not only that it was actually myself, but that I have now exceeded his length of service!)*

Looking at BMD records, a Jane Rough died in Sept. 1910 at the age of 80 (so was born in 1830). If the same person, she would have been 62 when John Caines took over.

BMD records, again, give us some background on Mr.Turton. Born in Huddersfield in 1853, John Turton worked as a gardener on the Tolmer estate. He married Elizabeth Shelton at her home village of Osmaston (Ashbourne) in Derbyshire on 28th March 1878. Their three children were all baptised at Ponsbourne: Charlotte in August 1879, William in September 1880 and Edith in March 1882.

There are several BMD entries for the name of the first school teacher, Mary Hingston. As usual, there is just enough information to suggest possibilities, but not quite enough to pin down the detail! However, she had apparently moved on by 1881, as the Census then shows the School House is occupied by Emily Slaughter (born in Bath in 1841) and her widowed mother.

In October 1876 the book records a quarterly payment of £5.6.0 to "Turton and blower" (i.e £5 for Turton and 6/0 for the blower).

Quarterly payments were made to the organist and the blower at the same rates for 46 years, from 1876 to 1912 (so much for inflation!). In 1913 there appears to be a payment for only one quarter, then (presumably again after a change of treasurer) there are annual payments of £21 for the organist and £1.8.0 for the blower, a pattern which continues to the end of the book.

Outside the period covered by the Cash Book, we also now know that Mr.Thomas Hughes, the organist in post just before WWII, was married in the church to a local lady. After a few years he moved to the adjacent parish of Goffs Oak. His daughter Gillian (now Mrs. Hutchinson) also became a musician. She has for some years been leading the music at St.Clements, Turnford (now, like Goffs Oak, part of the Cheshunt group of parishes).

Organ Tuning

The present organ was built for the church by J.W. Walker in 1858, at a cost of £367.15.0 (An allowance of £100 was made for the previous instrument – a “barrel and finger” organ made by Gray and Davison in 1850 - in part exchange). Its specifications then and now are given below in Appendix B.

Tuning visits by Walkers are recorded until about 1915. In 1874 the cost of a visit was £1.12.0, rising to £2.2.0 in 1876 and going to £3.13.6 between 1893 and 1912. No payments are recorded for 1913 and 1914, then a payment of £4.16.0 in 1915. Before Miss Rough took over, it seems tuning of the organ was carried out infrequently, with intervals of up to five years between payments to J.W. Walker & Son (though it is always possible they were paid directly by someone else). From 1893, there are payments for a tuning visit annually.

In 1916 there is what may be the first entry for a tuning visit by another firm, at a cost of a guinea (£1.1.0). An entry in 1918 for tuning - at the same price - identifies the tuner as "Monk"; a later entry still refers to A.Monk, but with no other details.

By 1921 the cost of his tuning visits had increased to £2.12.6. Interestingly, in late 1922 (just as the book finishes) are entries not only for the annual tuning visit from Monk, but also "repairs to the organ" carried out by J.W.Walker at a cost of £4.15.0, and then a second Monk tuning visit.

I know from personal experience that the organ generally holds its tuning very well. Even so, with only an annual tuning (usually just before Christmas) there must sometimes have been some "interesting" sounds coming from it. Despite this, there are some periods when no expenditure on tuning is recorded at all: between 1881 and 1884, for instance, and 1913-1914.

There is no information on tuning arrangements from the end of the Cash Book until 1961, but more recent contracts have been as follows:

1961 – 1965	G.P. Kirby, Hitchin
1966 – 1972	Gray & Davison
1973 – 1994	Hill, Norman & Beard
1995 – 2004	Saxon Aldred
2005	no contract
2006 – 2013	David Wells
2013 – 2014	Mander Organs (including the restoration project)
2015 -	Wintle Organs

Notes on George Kirby & Son of Hitchin

It seems to be in the nature of things that organ-builders often operate in small units, perhaps over only a limited geographical area, and leave behind little trace of their existence. A case in point is the firm of George Kirby and Son. Based in the Hertfordshire town of Hitchin, they are known to have operated in

Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire between 1959 and 1975, and possibly earlier, from the address of 14, West Hill, Hitchin.

According to the (incomplete) set of Kelly directories in the County Library in Hertford, there was one H.G.P. Kirby at the West Hill address from 1952 to 1957. By 1959 the name in the entry for this address had changed to G.P.Kirby and was still so in 1966. (There were usually about 12 Kirby family entries listed in the Kelly directories for Hitchin during this period) Ten years later, however, the Atrad trade directory has no mention of the firm at all.

If we look for work carried out by the firm, there are references to four sites:

Between 1961 and 1965, they had the tuning contract for the 1858 Walker organ at St.Mary's, Ponsbourne.

There is correspondence in the Bedfordshire County Archives regarding work to move an organ into St. John Methodist, Luton from Mount Tabor church.

The NPOR entry for Meppershall notes work done in 1975.

The NPOR entry for Ickleford notes work done in 1975/6.

(These last two places are villages just to the north of Hitchin)

This scale of work does not seem sufficient to yield a living, but no other information seems readily available, and neither is there any indication of how the necessary training was obtained. One possibility is that for the most part their work consisted of the tuning and minor maintenance of small local instruments, with possibly a "day job" of some sort as the main source of income.

Work on the Organ

I have been able to compare the Cash Book dates with extracts given to me from Walker's own archives, *(for which I am grateful to Mr. Bruce Buchanan)*.

According to the Walker records, the stages of evolution in the organ's early life were:

- 1858 built and installed. Console in N.Transept, facing West
- 1860 pedal compass increased from 20 to 29 notes
- 1867 tuning changed to equal temperament (original temperament unknown)
- 1884 clean and overhaul
- 1887 organ turned thro' 90 degrees; console in chancel, facing South
- 1909 clean and overhaul; Gamba fitted, replacing Great Mixture
- 1914 (approx.) left Walker's care

We understand that the radical change in 1887 was connected with equally drastic changes to the East end of the church itself. Originally apsidal, the chancel was apparently rebuilt entirely, and enlarged in the process. It seems that the addition of the present sanctuary and squared-off East end made it possible to put the choir-stalls and choir into the Chancel, so the sensible position for the organ console itself was then to face onto the Chancel, rather than the North Transept as previously, by having the whole instrument turned through 90 degrees. We are still hoping to confirm the exact dates of all the alterations to the building itself during this period, and the details of its original shape.

For many years the organ was of course hand-blown, with a long wooden handle connected to mechanisms moving the bellows. The organ-builders' inspection in 2013 discovered a long slit, which had been filled in, in a panel beside the console, showing that it is likely that the blowing handle originally came through the front of the case to the left of the console. This of course meant that it was

easy for the organist and his blower to communicate with each other. Today (and probably since 1887) the handle, broken in early 1999 and repaired as part of the 2013 restoration, is at the back of the organ, and communication with the blower would be more difficult!

The electric blower motor had become very worn by 1990; in recordings from the time it sounds rather like a cement mixer! It probably dated from the 1930's, as there was no electricity supply to the building before 1937. We were therefore glad ca. 1991 to take the opportunity to change it for a better one from an instrument which was being scrapped. There are four fastening knobs which hold down the lid of the blower box. It turned out that one was missing, so the organist, having access to a lathe, turned a new one from aluminium bar. Also locally designed and made was the trunking between the blower and the guillotine valve at the feed into the instrument. The "new" blower was much quieter, while the supply of air to the instrument was much improved, and is even better since it was overhauled in 2013.

There remain a few mysteries even now. One is that the Swell reed is listed as a Cornopean on the Walker order-book page, but the reed actually installed is labelled as an Oboe. We do not know when the change was made, or if indeed the Cornopean was ever installed (perhaps this name just had too many letters to fit on the stop-knob!). The Swell stop knobs all have much the same patina but the stop knob for the 1909 Great Gamba, by comparison, is obviously much newer. On the other hand the organbuilder tells us that the pipes for both Gamba and Oboe stops are made of spotted metal, and might be the same age.

The change of specification in 1909 may only partly be due to changes in musical fashion. The present organist has found that the Gamba is very useful as a foundation stop for choral accompaniment, while a Mixture would have been more useful for accompaniment of a full congregation, by giving brightness and life to the sound without necessarily adding a great deal more sheer power. By 1909 there is evidence of a large and active choir and so choral accompaniment would then, as now, be a musical priority.

As listed above, the Walker archives state that major work was carried out on the instrument in 1884, 1887 and 1909. However, the only corresponding entry in the Cash Book is for February 1885, recording payment of £25 for "Special expenditure on the Organ" (This was when the organ was cleaned and overhauled.). It is interesting to speculate on what happened on the other occasions: did the cost become hidden in with other work (as may have happened in 1887), or did someone just write a personal cheque? Some of the answers are found in the Walker archives: Thanks to the kindness of J.W.Walker & Son, I have been provided with a copy of the 19th-Century ledger entries concerning the instrument. These show that payment for major work in 1884 and 1887 came directly from the Mills family. These monies did not, therefore, go through the church accounts at all.

The church and contents, like the village school next door, were paid for by Thomas Mills, M.P. who lived at the house called Tolmers. For some years it was thought that they were built on land donated by Wynn Ellis of Ponsbourne Park, the other "big house" in the village, but recent research in the Mills family papers held by the Norfolk Record Office has showed that the land became available after negotiations between the Manor of Hatfield and Thomas Mills.

Pattern of Services

Derived from Cash Book

Collections, if taken, were rarely recorded early on, so no real clue to the service pattern then is available from the Cash Book.

Later, the pattern of collections implied a morning and an evening service on one Sunday in most (but not all) months.

Occasional Offices:

Baptisms from 1863

Weddings from 1878

Burials - not until the graveyard was available, dedicated 12 November 1913

Alternative places used were St. Mary Bayford, St. Andrew Little Berkhamsted, St. Mark Woodhill and St. Etheldreda Hatfield.

The Value of Money

There is no easy measure of the change in the value of money between the 19th Century and the 21st. However, a rule of thumb (based on published work elsewhere) is that a sum from the 19th Century should be multiplied by between 35 and 40 to give the current equivalent. Using the higher figure makes the sums easier!

Patterns of Income

Derived from Cash Book

The church was always heavily dependant on support from the inhabitants of one or more of the “big houses”; in some years a single contribution from this source is the only sum recorded as income. Some incumbents had a system where the collection at a particular service would go to a stated cause: local (like the school), national/international (i.e. the Church Colonial Society) or for church expenses.

The main support in the 19th century came from the Mills family. There was a total of 10 staff at Tolmers in 1871. Ten years earlier, Thomas Mills, with no resident family, had to struggle on with eight! By the time the Cash Book was started (1874), Thomas Mills had died and his brother, John Remington Mills is named as a contributor. By 1879 he also had died and the advowson for the living of St.Mary's passed to his sister Maria.

John Remington's daughter, Florence Sophia Mills, lived at Tolmers and continued to support the church, even after her 1888 marriage to Reginald Harry Cholmondeley, until they left the village ca. 1902 (*The imminent construction of the Hertford Loop railway line was probably a factor in their move. Land from both the Tolmers and Ponsbourne Park estates was acquired for the purpose by the railway company, and the many bricks required for the Ponsbourne Tunnel were made near Tolmers*).

Tolmers was then bought by John Henry Johnson, donations from whom are recorded (and whose three daughters were married at Ponsbourne in three successive years) until it was re-purposed as a school for girls. The change probably took place in 1916 or just before, as the 1917 P.O. Directory for Hertfordshire (Kelly's) has an entry for “Scott-Robertson Margaret (Miss), ladies' boarding school, Tolmers”. John Henry Johnson's entry in the same directory showed he had moved to Cuffley Lodge, Northaw. Also living in Northaw was James Edward Vallentin Oldham at Carbone Lodge. James' wife Beatrice Mary was one of John Henry Johnson's daughters, married in 1906. A second daughter, Florence Agnes, was married to Cyril Francis Marriner at Ponsbourne in 1907 but she and her husband are buried at Northaw. He died 28 Nov.1948, she on 26 Aug. 1961. The third daughter, Dora Kate, married George Perowne Roberts in 1905.

One E. Miller is listed from 1874 to 1883, and signs off the 1874 accounts as churchwarden. From the 1871 Census we learn a little more about him: Edward Miller was born in Ireland in 1814 and became an East India merchant. His wife Maria, also Irish, was born in 1840. He lived in a house at Ponsbourne Park with four sons and two daughters, all born in Paddington Middlesex between 1860 and 1869 (so Edward and Maria probably married in 1859-60). By 1881 he and the family were living at Tolmers. The sons had apparently left home, and he had two more daughters, born there in 1872 and 1878.

From Ponsbourne Park, Wynn Ellis gave support until Dec. 1874, when he moved to Tunbridge Wells (where he died the following year). J.W.Carlile, who had bought Ponsbourne Park, then appears. His nephew, the baronet Sir Edward Hildred Carlile, later bought Ponsbourne Park, and in about 1903 the school (when its name was changed from Tolmers School to Ponsbourne St. Mary's School) and as churchwarden he supported the church for some years until he retired to Tunbridge Wells in 1932. On 18th July, 1911 the advowson for "St. Mary's Hatfield" was conveyed to Sir Edward Hildred Carlile by Joseph Trueman Mills then by 1932 it was held by CPAS (Church Pastoral Aid Society).

Patterns of Expenditure

In the period covered by the Cash Book, lighting was by means of candles and oil lamps. Brackets for lamps can still be seen either side of the chancel arch (and more recently used for flower arrangements) and there is a hook in the chancel ceiling from which another lamp was suspended. Similar lamps may have hung from the beams across the nave, and a double candle-holder bracket is still on the wall near the south-west corner. Candle-holders on extending swinging arms are fitted either side of the organ console.

It was not until 1937 that the church had an electrical supply (interestingly, the 1901 census shows that nearby Ponsbourne Park employed an electrician at that early date!).

Before 1887 it is not clear what heating system the church had but the Cash Book records regular purchases of coke and less frequent purchases of wood (presumably for kindling). It is not known how or where this was stored.

After 1887, church heating was by a Perkins high-pressure system with a coal-fired boiler and a network of thick-walled small-bore pipes feeding radiators at the west end, in the transepts and round the sanctuary, with a fireplace in the vestry. The flues from the boiler and the vestry fireplace were fed up the south-east corner wall of the vestry and emerged as a conjoined pair of chimneys above. Coal was stored in a barrel-roofed chamber under the organ, with the boiler in a similar chamber next door. The boiler was replaced in 1920 (at a cost then of £90) and with most of the pipework and radiators it is still in situ, though not functional. Orders for coal and coke, wood or faggots are frequently seen, using a range of suppliers from around the area.

Until 1894 there was an annual fee of 18 shillings paid for the churchwarden's or archdeacon's visitation.

In the period from 1892 to 1897 the Cash Book records only expenditure, so we have no idea of income for these years. Regular expenditure includes tuning and maintenance of the organ by J.W.Walker, repairs to the church by Ekins and others, annual testing of the heating apparatus (from 1888), and most regular of all, payments to the Organist, the Blower and "Rainbow and wife" (Samuel Rainbow, a labourer resident on the Tolmers estate. He and his wife appear to have been Virger/Sexton/Parish Clerk,

and also church cleaners). Entries between late 1889 and 1891 refer to “Rainbow” alone, which ties in with Samuel Rainbow’s wife Sarah having passed away in 1889. Later, entries for “Rainbow and wife” appear again, this probably referring to Samuel’s son Albert and his wife Lizzie (they married in 1890). After a change of Treasurer he appears between 1900 and 1902 as “A. Rainbow and wife”, then entries continue in the name of “Knight and wife”. The 1901 Census has a listing for George Knight, who with wife Lizzie also lived on the Tolmers estate.

Despite the church and village being part of Hatfield, at least on paper, it is interesting to see the reliance on suppliers based elsewhere, mainly in Hertford. There is a map showing Hatfield businesses in 1900 (seen by chance in a local paper recently) and none of the names show up in the Cash Book.

Organist & Choir

Derived from Cash Book

There was certainly a singing class in place, encouraged by Thomas Mills, from very early on. His obituary states that at one point he engaged the services of Mr. G.W. Martin (1828-1881) as a choirmaster. According to one musical dictionary Mr. Martin “had an aptitude for training choirs of school children and conducted many public performances by them”.

In 1879, we see the first entries for specific expenditure relating to a choir and a Choir Fund was set up when Mr. Caines was organist after 1892, though he is only mentioned by name after a change of treasurer in 1898, when for the first time the organ blower’s name, “Williams”, is also mentioned (not seen, however, in the 1901 Census listing).

Clerk/Sexton

Derived from Cash Book

“Rainbow and wife” (Samuel Rainbow) – entries from 1874 to 1900

A. Rainbow (Samuel’s son) – entries from 1900 to 1902

George Knight - “Knight and wife” thereafter – they all lived on the Tolmers estate, according to the 1901 Census.

Expenditure on Changes & Repairs

Derived from Cash Book

1876	Rayment	for Vestry Cupboard
	Peck	repairs to pulpit
1878	Banns Book	
1887 1880	Ekins & Taylor	
1901, 1902 & 1903	Payments to “Bamford” or “W.J.Bamford”	

William J Bamford was born in Essendon in 1835 and was a blacksmith/farrier living on the Tolmers estate. The Cash Book does not specify what he did for the church (apart from “Ironwork”), but it seems possible, for instance, that he made the railings to the steps down from the outside vestry door. William is shown in the 1861 Census living in Essendon with two brothers and an uncle, all listed as blacksmiths/farriers. His mother, Ann Bamford, is also listed (at the age of 61) as a blacksmith!

Annual Expenditure

Derived from Cash Book

The expenditure shown below is an average per-annum figure over the period between 1874 and 1904,

but that period saw some changes to the structure of the church so the costs of building work, for instance, are not evenly spread. It is clear that the Organist was considered an important figure; by comparison, the Incumbent's living was worth about £100 p.a. plus his house in 1849, and by 1917 this had reduced to £76, with residence.

Most of the story has been deduced from dry entries in lists of payments. It has not yet been possible to cross-check all the facts with other sources of information, but already I have a greater sense of the continuity of events than ever before. When I started reading through the Cash Book, my main interest was to learn more about the history of the organ and my predecessor organists, but as I deciphered the columns of entries they gave fascinating glimpses into life at the time. For instance, the original heating system in the church was coal fired, and the lamps burned paraffin. Throughout the book, therefore, there are regular payments: to McMullens of Hertford for coal, and to other firms for paraffin and candles. The smell in the building, it may be imagined, would not be today's mix of flowers and wax polish!

Average Annual Expenditure 1874 – 1904 (2020 Equiv.)

Vino	25.59
Wood	5.66
Lighting – Candles, Paraffin, etc.	73.21
Coke and Coal	134.96
Other Consumables (not identified)	73.22
Organ Maintenance	99.87
Organist	853.33
Blower	80.10
Building Maintenance	98.05
	1443.99

The boiler-room and coal-hole at Ponsbourne are underground, being two adjoining chambers, each with a brick barrel-type ceiling, both actually underneath the organ! Being one of the few people to have been into them in recent years, I know how steep are the stairs going down, and can imagine how difficult it would have been to get the boiler started on a winter's morning. When one contemplates the business of keeping the boiler going (on shipments of 1/4 ton of coal at a time, carried down those stairs), and tending the paraffin lamps, the sheer convenience of the electricity supply seems miraculous. In the same way, the need for another person to work the bellows whenever the organist had to play for a service (or indeed in order to practice) suggests that there were firm limits to the time for which one would be allowed to play on any one occasion. Perhaps we may even have seen a small degree of progress in life, after all. . .

Paul Minchinton is a former PCC Member and PCC Treasurer, in addition to being Organist & Choirmaster in his small parish. He therefore has an interest in several aspects of the history of the church and its organ. The original version of this piece appeared in the May 1999 issue of Organists' Review. Since it first appeared, it has been possible to correct some errors in the original, and to add additional information. During 1999, the worth of the 1858 Walker pipe organ referred to was recognised by the British Institute of Organ Studies, who awarded it a certificate under their Historic Organs Certificate scheme. During 2013, it has undergone a thorough restoration, with the aid of a grant from the "Your Heritage" Lottery Fund. The original article, and updated versions, arose out of research in preparation for raising funds to allow work to be carried out on the organ and adjacent parts of the building.

Appendix A - Sources of Information

Purpose of Building

Chapel of ease for Bishops Hatfield St. Etheldreda

Together with the school next door the church formed a base for village activities

Initial Staff

Rev. Robert Pritchard Davies – b. Wales. ed. Corpus College Cambridge; Wrang. & BA 1845, M.A. 1848. Deacon 1846, Priest 1847. Priest in Charge of St.Mary's Hatfield, Rochester Diocese, 1849 (Crockfords 1868 says Patroness Miss Mills, the living comes with income £100 and house). After 20 years, he left to become Rector of Hatherop, in Gloucestershire. There is reason to believe he was head-hunted for the post by the baronet Sir Thomas Bazley.

Organist (1849) Mr. William Williams, origin unknown, but probably Wales

Schoolteacher (1849) Mary Hingston, from Devon

There are many aspects of life in a typical village today which differ from the past, but questions about how the Church was used, how it was funded and by what activities it interacted with the local area are not easily discovered without a considerable breadth of enquiry. For this village church we have the Cash Book used by successive Treasurers to record income and expenditure from 1874 to about 1920. Information from the book can be used to show at least some of what was going on in the period, the record being far from comprehensive. Other sources of information, of course, have been needed, particularly for the period between the building of the church and the start of the Cash Book. Some which have been found useful are:

Parish Records (i.e. Cash Book from 1874)

Local Memories, particularly those of the late Michael Sutcliffe (churchwarden for 50 years) and his wife Gillian (Chair of Governors at the School for 30 years, PCC member, including periods as Secretary and Lay Co-Chairman, and loyal member of the church choir)

Local Newspapers (Hertford Mercury & Recorder, etc.)

Crockfords Directory

Census Records & derivatives (i.e. Surname Atlas software)

BMD Records (Births, Marriages & Deaths, i.e. FreeBMD, etc.)

Trade Records, i.e. Kelly's Directories

"Music-making in the Hertfordshire Parish 1760-1870" Maggie Kilbey, pub. 2020 UH Press

NPOR (National Pipe Organ Register)

Appendix B - Specifications

St. Mary's Church, Ponsbourne
1858 Walker, in chamber on N.side of chancel.
Specification as at April 2014

Manuals : 56 notes, C to G
Pedals : 29 notes
(New straight concave pedalboard made in 2013)

Tracker action throughout

Trigger Swell pedal

3 combination pedals to Great

Great to Ped. coupler
Swell to Great coupler
NO Swell to Ped coupler

Swell

(stops TC; bottom octave from Gt. St. Diap Bass only)

Oboe	8	++
Fifteenth	2	
Principal	4	
Stop Diapason	8	
Open Diapason	8	
Double Diapason	16	

Great

Fifteenth	2	
Twelfth	2 2/3	
Flute	4	
Principal	4	
Gamba	8	(TC)
Stop Diapason Treble	8	(TC)
Stop Diapason Bass	8	(bottom 8ve only)
Dulciana	8	(TC)
Open Diapason	8	

Pedal

Open Wood	16
-----------	----

++ It is not clear when the Swell reed became an Oboe rather than a Cornopean

St. Mary's Church, Ponsbourne
1858 Walker, in chamber on N.side of chancel.
Specification as per J.W.Walker's Order Book

Manuals : 56 notes, C to G
Pedals : 2 octaves
(original pedalboard probably straight & either flat or concave)

Tracker action throughout

Trigger Swell pedal

3 combination pedals to Great

Great to Ped. coupler
Swell to Great coupler
NO Swell to Ped coupler

Swell

(stops TC, bottom octave from Gt. St. Diap Bass only)

Cornopean	8	
Fifteenth	2	*
Principal	4	
Stop Diapason	8	
Open Diapason	8	
Double Diapason	16	*

Great

Fifteenth	2	
Twelfth	2 2/3	
Mixture	III	*
Flute	prepared for	*
Principal	4	
Stop Diapason Treble	8	(TC)
Stop Diapason Bass	8	(bottom 8ve only)
Dulciana	8	(TC)
Open Diapason	8	

Pedal

Pedal Pipes	16
-------------	----

* added to specification between original order and delivery to site

