

### **REBUILDING of HIGH LITTLETON CHURCH, 1884/5.**

The only reference in Vestry Minutes to the rebuilding of the Church was on 14th April 1884, when the rebuilding was considered but no steps taken due to the small number of parishioners present. However, by this time architects plans had been agreed, a specification produced and a builder found, who was willing to carry out the work. The mastermind of the whole scheme was the Vicar, Edmund Crane STREETEN, who, according to a memorial inside the Church "when in his 71st year, undertook to obtain funds for rebuilding the parish church as it now stands."

The politics involved must have been enormous. Permission had to be obtained from the former vicar Henry Hodges MOGG, who owned the living. The daughters of the late John and Sarah Hodges REES-MOGG, who had inherited the Great Tithes of High Littleton, also had an interest in the matter. Quite a number of graves had to be cleared and remains exhumed for reburial elsewhere in the Churchyard. Memorials in and around the Church had to be moved and it was necessary to find another venue for religious services (the Schoolroom was the obvious choice), whilst the Church was being taken down and rebuilt.

Before proceeding with any work a Faculty had to be obtained from the diocesan court at Wells. This involved appointing a Proctor to appear at the proceedings on behalf of the Vicar and Churchwardens. The Court sought guarantees from the Churchwardens that they would ensure the building work would be completed but Churchwardens James COX and George COWEN were reluctant to commit themselves in this way. This was not too surprising, since STREETEN embarked on the scheme with less financial backing than was required, hoping to obtain the rest during the course of the work.

At Somerset Record Office under reference D/D/CF 1884 may be found all the documents relating to the application for a Faculty. These include a full set of Plans, deeds appointing a Proctor and application and granting of the Faculty and a large bundle of correspondence.

Reproduced below are the documents appointing a Proctor and the Granting of the Faculty.

#### **The Vicar and Churchwardens of High Littleton ag'st The Minister etc. of same. Promovents' Proxy Dated 13 March 1884.**

**Whereas** a certain cause or business is about to commence in the Consistorial Episcopal Court of Wells of granting a Licence or Faculty to the Vicar and Churchwardens of the Parish and Parish Church of High Littleton in the County of Somerset and Diocese of Bath and Wells to rebuild, enlarge and improve the said Church and, for that purpose,

To take down and remove the Pulpit, Reading Desk, Clerk's Desk, Font, Communion Table and Rails, the Gallery at the North, South and West sides and the whole of the Pews or Seats in the Church and Chancel.

To take off the whole of the roofs of the Church and Chancel and to pull down the whole, or such parts as may be necessary, of the Walls thereof, except the Tower on the West side of the Church.

To take up and remove the whole of the floors of the Church, Chancel and Tower, carefully preserving any memorial inscriptions now lying on such floors and replacing them in their present positions or as near thereto as may be.

To take in and inclose portions of ground, part of the Churchyard, on the North, East and South sides of the Church and Chancel, containing one thousand nine hundred square feet or thereabouts, for the purpose of extending the North and South Aisles, Building a Vestry and Organ Chamber and enlarging the Chancel, carefully removing any bodies now lying interred in the said portion of ground so to be enclosed, which may be necessary and any Tombstones or Monuments erected in memory of such bodies, and reintering such bodies and replacing such Tombstones or Monuments in some other portion of the Churchyard, as near as may be to their present positions.

To excavate such portions of ground in the interior of the Church, Chancel and Tower, as may be necessary for laying the new floors, and spread the earth, so to be removed, over some portion of the Church and Churchyard, carefully preserving and filling up any graves or vaults in the said ground and removing any bodies, which may be necessary to carry out such works, and reintering such bodies as near as may be to their present positions.

To rebuild the Church and Chancel on the present site, without a Gallery, and build a Vestry, Organ Chamber and extend the North and South Aisle[s] on the portion of ground so to be enclosed and cover the same with proper and sufficient roofs.

To erect and set up Communion Rails, pulpit, Lectern, Prayer Desks, Font and Pews or Seats in the Church and Chancel and place a moveable Communion Table of Wood in the Chancel.

To pave and floor or repave and re-floor the whole of the Church, Chancel, Tower, Vestry and Organ Chamber.

To plaster or replaster all the internal Walls of the Church, Chancel, Tower, Vestry, Organ Chamber and Porch and to construct an underground apparatus for heating the Church.

Which said alterations, improvements and other works are to be made and done in accordance with the plans deposited and now in the Registry of the Consistorial Episcopal Court of Wells. And to use any of the old materials which may be found suitable for any of the aforesaid works and to sell any other portion of such old materials and apply the proceeds, arising from any such sale, in providing new materials.

**Now, know all men** by these presents that, we the Reverend Edmund Crane STREETEN, the Vicar, and James COX and George Emmanuel COWEN, the Churchwardens of the Parish and Parish Church of High Littleton aforesaid, Do hereby nominate, constitute and appoint Richard HARRIS, one of the Procurators General of the Consistorial Episcopal Court of Wells, to be our true and lawful Proctor, for us and in our names, to appear before the Worshipful Charles Walter BAGOT, Clerk, Master of Arts, Vicar General and Official Principal of the Right Honorable and Right Reverend Father in God Arthur Charles, by Divine Permission, Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells, his Surrogate or lawful Deputy or some other competent Judge in that behalf to pray for a Citation, with intimation to be issued out of the said Court to proceed in the said cause or business and to pray the Judge to decree a Licence or Faculty to be granted to us for the several purposes aforesaid and generally to do every thing that shall be needful and necessary to be done for us in the said cause or business and we do hereby promise to allow, ratify and confirm all and whatsoever our said Proctor shall lawfully do or cause to be done for us and giving and granting unto our said Proctor full power and authority in the premises, with power of substituting one or more person or persons in his place or stead or in case of absence or as occasion shall require.

**In witness** whereof we have hereunto set our hands and Seals this tenth day of March one thousand eight hundred and eighty four.

Signed sealed and delivered by the above named Edmund Crane STREETEN, in the presence of Henry H. STREETEN, High Littleton. Edm'd C. STREETEN.

Signed sealed and delivered by the above named James COX, in the presence of Henry H. STREETEN, High Littleton. James COX.

Signed sealed and delivered by the above named George Emmanuel COWEN, in the presence of Henry H. STREETEN, High Littleton. George E. COWEN.

The Vicar and Churchwardens of High Littleton ag't The Minister etc. of same. Original Citation with Intimation, Dated 15 March 1884.

**Arthur Charles**, by Divine permission Bishop of Bath and Wells, To Joseph COULTHARD, our Apparitor General, also to John Henry TOOMER and Herbert Baxter JONES, his lawful Deputies.  
**Greeting.**

**Whereas** it hath been set forth and represented unto the Worshipful Robert Ernest WALLIS, Clerk, Master of Arts, Surrogate of the Worshipful Charles Walter BAGOT, Clerk, Master of Arts, our Vicar General and Official Principal, lawfully constituted by the Proctor of the Reverend Edmund Crane STREETEN, Clerk, the Vicar and James COX and George Emmanuel COWEN, the Churchwardens of the Parish and Parish Church of High Littleton in the County of Somerset and our Diocese and Jurisdiction, that it would be of great convenience if permission were granted to rebuild and enlarge the said Church and for that purpose to make and perform the several alterations, improvements and other works particularly specified and described in the Schedule hereunder written. And the said Proctor hath humbly prayed our Licence or Faculty to be granted accordingly.

**And whereas** the said Surrogate, duly considering the premises and rightly and duly proceeding therein, hath, at the further petition of the said Proctor, decreed the Rector, Vicar, Perpetual Curate, Churchwardens, Parishioners and Inhabitants of the Parish of High Littleton aforesaid, in special and all others, having or pretending to have any right, title or interest in or to the premises in general, to be cited to appear on the day at the time and place and to and for the ends, intents and purposes hereunder written, Justice so requiring.

**We therefore** do by these presents authorize, empower and strictly enjoin and command you, jointly and severally, peremptorily to cite or cause to be cited by affixing these presents against the outer door of the Parish Church of High Littleton aforesaid, previous to Divine Service there on Sunday next after the date or receipt hereof and leaving a true copy hereof there public(al)ly affixed, the Rector, Vicar, Perpetual Curate, Churchwardens, Parishioners and Inhabitants of the Parish of High Littleton aforesaid, in special and all

others, having or pretending to have any right, title or interest in or to the said premises in general, to appear before us, our said Vicar General and Official Principal, his Surrogate or some other competent Judge in this behalf, in our Cathedral Church of Saint Andrew in Wells in the County aforesaid and usual place of holding our Consistorial Episcopal Court there on Tuesday the Eighteenth day of March instant, if it be a Court day, otherwise on the next Court day following, at the hour of Eleven in the forenoon of the same day, then and there to shew good and sufficient cause (if any such, they or any or either of them have, hath or can shew) why our Licence or Faculty should not be committed and granted to the said Edmund Crane STREETEN, the Vicar and James COX and George Emmanuel COWEN, the Churchwardens of the Parish and Parish Church of High Littleton aforesaid to rebuild and enlarge the said Parish Church and for that purpose to make and perform the several alterations, improvements and other works particularly specified and described in the said Schedule hereunder written.

**And moreover,** to intimate or cause to be intimated to the Rector, Vicar, Perpetual Curate, Churchwardens, Parishioners and Inhabitants of the Parish of High Littleton aforesaid, in special and all others as aforesaid in general (to each and every of whom we intimated the same by these presents) that, if they, some or one of them do not lawfully appear on the day, at the time and place and to the effect aforesaid or, appearing, do not shew good and sufficient cause to the contrary, We, our said Vicar General and Official Principal, his Surrogate or some other competent Judge in that behalf, do intend and will proceed to commit and grant in due form of law to the said Edmund Crane STREETEN, the Vicar and James COX and George Emmanuel COWEN, the Churchwardens aforesaid our Licence or Faculty to rebuild and enlarge the said Parish Church and, for that purpose, to make and perform the several alterations, improvements and other works particularly specified and described in the said Schedule hereunder written, the absence or rather contumacy of all and every person or persons hereby so cited and intimated to the contrary thereof in anywise notwithstanding.

Dated at Wells this fifteenth day of March in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and eighty four and in the fifteenth year of our Consecration.

*[Signed in margin Rich'd HARRIS, Proctor].*

The Schedule before referred to

To take down and remove the pulpit, Reading Desk, Clerk's Desk, Font, Communion Table and Rails, the Gallery at the North, South and West sides and the whole of the Pews or Seats in the Church and Chancel.

To take off the whole of the roofs of the Church and Chancel and to pull down the whole, or such parts as may be necessary, of the Walls thereof, except the Tower on the West side of the Church.

To take up and remove the whole of the floors of the Church, Chancel and Tower, carefully preserving any memorial inscriptions now lying on such floors and replacing them in their present positions or as near thereto as may be.

To take in and inclose portions of ground, part of the Churchyard, on the North, East and South sides of the Church and Chancel, containing one thousand nine hundred square feet or thereabouts, for the purpose of extending the North and South Aisles, Building a Vestry and Organ Chamber and enlarging the Chancel, carefully removing any bodies now lying interred in the said portion of ground so to be enclosed, which may be necessary and any Tombstones or Monuments erected in memory of such bodies, and reinterring such bodies and replacing such Tombstones or Monuments in some other portion of the Churchyard, as near as may be to their present positions.

To excavate such portions of ground in the interior of the Church, Chancel and Tower, as may be necessary for laying the new floors, and spread the earth, so to be removed, over some portion of the Church and Churchyard, carefully preserving and filling up any graves or vaults in the said ground and removing any bodies, which may be necessary to carry out such works, and reinterring such bodies as near as may be to their present positions.

To rebuild the Church and Chancel on the present site, without a Gallery, and build a Vestry, Organ Chamber and extend the North and South Aisles on the portion of ground so to be enclosed and cover the same with proper and sufficient roofs.

To erect and set up Communion Rails, Pulpit, Lectern, Prayer Desks, Font and Pews or Seats in the Church and Chancel and place a moveable Communion Table of wood in the Chancel.

To pave and floor or repave and re-floor the whole of the Church, Chancel, Tower, Vestry and Organ Chamber.

To plaster or replaster all the internal Walls of the Church, Chancel, Tower, Vestry, Organ Chamber and Porch and to construct an underground apparatus for heating the Church.

Which said alterations, improvements and other works are to be made and done in accordance with the plans deposited and now in the Registry of the Consistorial Episcopal Court of Wells.

And to use any of the old materials, which may be found suitable for any of the aforesaid works, and to sell any other portion of such old materials and apply the proceeds, arising from any such sale, in providing new materials.

*[Sgd]* William DARE, Registrar.

*[Reverse]*

In the Consistorial Episcopal Court of Wells.

Appeared personally John Henry TOOMER, one of the Mandatories named in the within Citation and made Oath and said that he did, on Sunday the sixteenth day of March One thousand eight hundred and eighty four, at High Littleton in the County of Somerset, execute the within Citation by affixing the same against the outer door of the Parish Church of High Littleton, previous to Divine Service there, and leaving a true copy thereof, there public(al)ly affixed. *[Sgd]* J.H. TOOMER

The said John Henry TOOMER made oath of the truth of the premises, this Eighteenth day of March One thousand eight hundred and eighty four, Before me *[Sgd]* Rob't E. WALLIS, Surrogate.

The work was completed in two stages in 1884/5 and 1887/8 at a total cost of about £3,100. In the new Church there were 350 Sittings, of which 180 were free and 170 private.

The tower is the only part of the original Church to survive. In about 1903 Henry POLLETT carved 4 new pinnacles, which were fixed in place by William Amesbury SAGE. In 1905 a new bell-cage was erected to accommodate 6 bells. Three new bells were cast by John TAYLOR of Loughborough and these, together with the three existing bells, were hung by John SULLY of Stogumber.

Reverend STREETEN died in 1891 aged 81, after 24 years as Vicar of High Littleton. Before the old Church was pulled down he made a drawing of it for posterity. The drawing was found in about 1910 by Reverend BRADBURN, the then Vicar. On his retirement as Vicar in 1915, BRADBURN gave a photograph of the drawing to William SAGE, whose daughter Hilda allowed copies to be made.