

Memorial on St. Mary's Church, Bridgwater.



A memorial can be seen on the north-western buttress of the tower of St Mary's church. This memorial is missing its inscription, and it must be assumed the plaque, possibly of marble and/or brass or bronze, fell off and was smashed. What does survive, however, is decoration and clearly show links with the Freemasons and with Christian symbolism. The style of the memorial is best described as Regency, probably dating to the early nineteenth century.

1) At either side the two pillars represent the Pillars of Boaz and Jachin, which stood in front of Solomon's Temple, the first Temple in Jerusalem.

2) The one on the left has an anchor as described in Hebrews 6:19, saying:

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain.

3) The one on the right has a Sacred Heart.

4) In the centre is a representation of a pelican piercing its breast to feed its young with its own blood, known as a "Pelican in her Piety". It can be found in illuminations, stone reliefs, gold jewels, paintings, stained glass windows and more, from the Middle Ages to the modern era. It is held to represent Self-Sacrifice. There is a C19 window in the N Transept with this imagery. In a Masonic context this is of the Rose Croix degree, one of the oldest rites of Freemasonry. There is an early fifteenth century corbel with this motif in the north aisle of St Mary's Church.



North Aisle Painted Angel Corbels
early 15th century

4) To the left of it is a Compass and Sector, Architects tools. In Freemasonry this is of the Rose Croix degree.

5) To the right of it is a six-pointed star. It could be a Star of David or a stylised Blazing Star, sometimes held to mean Prudence.

6) At the top and obscured by the lead flashing is a crucifix with a rose turning up from the base. This can be taken as the Cross of Calvary of the Rose Croix, although in Freemasonry the turning rose signifies the Red Cross of Constantine degree.

The cross, anchor and heart together represents Faith, Hope and Charity, again symbols of the Rose Croix.

Given the urn-shape of the missing inscription plaque, suggesting funerary symbolism, this may be a memorial to commemorate a person. However, it might also, bearing in mind the location on the tower's buttress, commemorate the rebuilding in 1815 of the top of the Spire, after being badly damaged by a lightning strike on 17 November 1813. This was commemorated by John Chubb's portrait of Mr Came, the builder, where the scaffolding on the spire is shown in a window in the background.

Source. Tony Woolrich, 21/09/2020. With notes by Frank McGill and Norman Hucker

The severity of this storm can best be judged by the following letter written to The Suffolk Chronicle published on Saturday 27th November 1813, as well as three other County Newspapers.

Thunder Storm. – A Gentleman, who writes from Bridgwater, says, “On Wednesday week, about one o'clock, we were visited by the most tremendous thunderstorm that ever happened in the memory of the oldest person in this place; the lightning struck the spire of the church and shivered it to pieces; the windows were broken, and the tiles were forced off the houses in every quarter. At Weston Zoyland a short distance from this, the lightning much damaged the ancient and much admired tower of the church, the windows were broken, and the church soon filled with thick smoke, which smelt so sulphureously, that all the inhabitants throughout the town were greatly alarmed by it; the battlements were entirely thrown down, and some stone of great size, were thrown some 60 yards. At the time of the electric shock, the sexton was tolling the bell for the funeral of a person who had died about a week before, when one of the stones from the battlements came with such velocity against him, as to render him incapable of tolling the bell any longer. This circumstance created considerable apprehension

in the minds of the friends of the deceased, and attracted them to the belfry, where they found the poor man in a senseless state; he was taken home much injured by a violent contusion.”

The Churchwardens of the Parish of Bridgwater advertised to builders to tender by the 26th March next for taking down and rebuilding 35 feet of the Spire of the Church of the said Parish. In the mean time, condition of the building, plans, sections and specifications of the same may be seen by application at the offices of Mr Trevor, Solicitor, Bridgwater aforesaid. Dated. February 24, 1814.

Source. Morning Post Saturday 5th March 1814.

Whilst there is as yet no substantive report found regarding the repairs the following letter give an indication who may have had some part in the work.

Extraordinary Feat. – Saturday se`night a young man ascended the lofty steeple of St. Nicholas church, Bristol, for the purpose of taking down the weathercock, to repair its defects. The simplicity of the scaffolding, which he made use of, excited universal admiration. It consisted of two poles, carried out of two of the apertures about midway up the steeple, across which two planks were laid, and from thence he ascended by a ladder confined to the steeple by spiral ropes. The most perilous part of the performance was a leap which he was actually obliged to make, from the top of the ladder, to catch hold of the iron cross. Had he failed! –but the idea is too horrid for contemplation. He succeeded, however; and then seated himself astride, took off the cock, which he waved over his head in triumph two or three times, and then descended with his prize. We hear that his charge for this arduous undertaking will not amount to one third of the sum required by eminent master builders previously consulted. He is the same young man who performed much useful and important work on the steeple at Bridgwater. The new weathercock was put up on Wednesday last, in the presence of immense crowds of spectators. It weighs 33lbs. The name of the young man employed upon this occasion is Hutchings, marble mason of Bridgwater. He has offered to ascend the steeple again, without either scaffolding, or ladder.

Source. Taunton Courier, and Western Gazette Thursday 24th October 1816

The height of the weathercock on St. Nicholas church, Bristol is 205 feet.

Source Chilcott's Descriptive History of Bristol

Thomas Hutchings B. 1781 - 1868 Census 1841 shows him, aged 60, living in North Street, Bridgwater with wife Betsy aged 55 Occ. Builder. In 1851 at the same address as Architect and Builder born Kyenton sic, this is probably Kenton, Devon.

He carried out work on St Mary church, Bridgwater in 1848 and the presentation of his account caused some comment.

Source. The Builder 16th September 1848 & Bridgwater Heritage Group

He died 23rd September 1868 at Bridgwater leaving some £300 (about £25k at today's value)

Freemasonry in Bridgwater was first mentioned in 1757 when seven brethren formed a lodge on 28th January, and agreed to meet at the Old Angel. The lodge was then numbered 326, was warranted on 4th December 1764 and constituted on 27th December that same year. Subsequent numbers were 264, 210, 212, 181, 219, 157 and the present number, 135 in 1863. On 27th December 1774 it was unanimously agreed to call the lodge, "The Lodge of Perpetual Friendship" now the second oldest lodge still meeting in Somerset.

135 wasn't the only lodge in Bridgwater in the 1700s though as a second named Arimathea was warranted in September 1767, but lapsed soon afterwards on its removal to Dover in the early 1800s. It did meet at the Lamb Inn in addition to 135 as it was mentioned in a calendar of 1800. The name Arimathea is not surprising for that lodge due to the town's legendary association with St Joseph of Arimathea who departed on a pilgrimage to teach the gospel landing in England at Combe and passing through Bridgwater on his mission.

On 19th February 1774 a third lodge was warranted in the town, namely Liberty and Sincerity bearing the number 369 and meeting at the Kings Arms. In 1778 it removed to the market house and was erased from Grand Lodge books in 1803.

Source. Early Freemasonry in Bridgwater, Ben Batley.

This Lodge must have existed prior to this date as it was listed as Lodge 461 in 1770, 368 in 1780, 369 in 1781 and 300 in 1792 and was meeting in the Crown Inn, St Mary Street, Bridgwater in 1788. The Lodge lapsed in 1803, the last Register was dated 30th May 1800

Source. Lane's Masonic Record

John Chubb 1746 – 1818 an amateur artist, living in Bridgwater. Amongst his pictures in the local Blake Museum are:

William Came, Sn. Wine Merchant builder and stone mason with St Mary's spire under repair in pencil. BWRAB : 1977/53/ 24

William Came, Jr. Innkeeper, of the George son of William Came Sn. in pencil and watercolour. BWRAB : 1977/53/23

The Came Family of Somerset can be traced back to the early 1600's in the Huntspill area and around Bridgwater.

William Came 1731 – 1794 married Betty Young, of North Petherton, 22. 07. 1756 at St. Mary, Bridgwater, and following her death and possible burial at St. Peter & All Hallows, Huntspill, on 4th October 1771, he married Mary Laroche at St. Mary, Bridgwater, on 17th March 1773. "Mary Came of Bridgwater" was buried at St. Peter & All Hallows, Huntspill, on 26th June 1809. Her Will leaves a large part of her Estate to William and Ann Came, including land, jewellery and the residue after all other bequests.

There were 9 children born to his first marriage, some who did not survive to adulthood. Two are of interest, the eldest son William, born 19th May 1757, at Huntspill, and his youngest son, Charles Came, born 1770 at Huntspill and Baptised 12th February 1770 St. Mary, Bridgwater.

William Came 1731 – 1794 (Documents which may relate to this William.)

William Came is listed as Junior Warden of Lodge 326 Meeting at the Swan Inn, Bridgwater on the 30th November 1768. There were 16 members listed.

Source. Moderns Grand Lodge 1755-1770 Register of Members List of Members 1768.

William Came, Role Master, Occ. Apothecary, of Bridgwater, Somerset.
Date of Registration 1765, Premium £50. Apprentice Richard Parker.

William Came, Role Master, Occ. Apothecary & surgeon, of Bridgwater, Somerset. Date of Registration 1772. Premium £0(nil). Apprentice John Callen.

Source Britain Country Apprentices 1710- 1808

He was a signatory to an Address to the Kings most Excellent Majesty (George 111) concerning the "ungrateful and daring Rebellion in America". He was one

of some 120 “Principal Inhabitants of the Borough of Bridgwater” to sign, including William Came Jn. and also John Trevor, Rector.

Source, London Gazette 21. 10. 1775.

William Came Jn. 1757 – 1815 Married Ann Cook 10. 02. 1787. St. Mary Bridgwater

Listed as William Came, Gent., to be Quartermaster of the Bridgwater Volunteer Infantry. Also mentioned is Robert Codrington Esq., as Captain.

Source. London Gazette 29. 10. 1803.

In 1784 he took over the George Inn, Bridgewater sic, advertising in various local papers throughout Somerset stating that he is the son of William Came, Wine Merchant, and that there was “Neat Post Chaise and Post Coaches, with careful drivers. The best Wines and Liquors of every kind may be depended upon.”

Source. Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette Thursday 9th December 1784 & others

He was there until about 1795 when he appears to have been made Bankrupt and is listed as “William Came of Bridgwater, Somersetshire, Vintner”.

Source. Gloucester Journal, Monday 3rd August 1795

Charles Came. 1770 – 1797

From the Moderns Grand Lodge 1768 - 1813 Register of Admissions: County and Foreign, Vol. 11, Folio 1-649 for Lodge 369 Liberty & Sincerity meeting at Bridgewater sic. Charles Came is listed as 25 years of age, his profession as Navy and being made a Mason in 1791. As this document is not dated it is unclear as to whether the age given is his age at Initiation or at the time of compilation of the document. Given that the usual age that a person can become a Mason is 21, that would fit with his date of Baptism, his Will was proved in 1800 and the Lodge lapsed in 1803; this suggests that the document was compiled about 1796.

In his Last Will and Testament, written on 27th February 1797 he states that he is the Commander of His Majesty’s Ship Grampus now at Woolwich in the County of Kent. He leaves all of his estate to his “brother William Came of Bridgwater in the County of Somerset, Gentleman and William Marsh of Norfolk Street in the Strand in the City of Westminster, Esquire.” Both were Executors of his Will. The Will was Proved in London on 8th April 1800.

Source. Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills 1384 – 1858

HMS Grampus



The East Indiaman Ceres off the Spithead Depicted in Four Different Views, by Thomas Luny, 1788; Sir Max Aitken Museum, Cowes, Isle of Wight

Being short of ships the Admiralty purchased ships from the East India Company, nine in total, Ceres (launched 1787) being one of them. She was commissioned 9th March 1795 as HMS Grampus. After being “coppered” at Blackwall, in September 1795 Captain John Williamson took command.

On Tuesday 9th February 1796 HMS Grampus, 54 guns, sailed from Cork with the West India fleet, Captain John Williamson being in command of her. Three days after sailing the ship encountered strong gales and lost her fore yard and had damage to her top masts, the ship lost the fleet and returned to Plymouth to refit, arriving 15th February 1796.

Source Caledonian Mercury Saturday 20th February 1796

After a voyage to Jamaica in March 1796 HMS Grampus returned to England in September to be paid off, after capturing the French privateer Alexandra and the Portuguese vessel Nostra Signora Monte del Camo. She also took a part in the campaign to capture Saint Lucia. Two months later she was refitted at Sheerness as a store ship under Lieutenant Charles Came. The refitting lasted until February 1797.

Williamson subsequently became Captain of HMS Agincourt and was brought before a Court Martial in 1797 on charges of cowardice, disaffection and other charges, he was cleared of the first two charges but was dismissed the service on other charges.

Source Kentish Gazette Friday 5th January 1798

This was a turbulent time for the Navy as war with the Dutch Fleet was imminent and Mutiny broke out in the British fleet in April/May 1797. In early June twenty one ships were taken over by mutineers or “delegates” as they called themselves, HMS Grampus amongst them, and were at the mouth of the Thames at the Nore. The Grampus, being a store ship for the West India Fleet, was plundered by the “delegates”. Officer were sent ashore, two Midshipmen of HMS Arden were

ducked, Four Seamen of HMS Brilliant who were “disrespectful” to the “delegates” were given three dozen lashes and the Surgeon of HMS Montague was tarred and feathered and then rowed around the fleet. There were many other acts of violence towards those not wishing to join the mutiny.

Source Derby Mercury Thursday 8th June 1797

On 10th July 1797 at nine o'clock a Court Martial was convened aboard HMS Royal William at Spithead for the trial of Samuel Smart, John Taylor, John Preston, Joseph Crofdill sic Robert Hardy and Thomas Franklin for Mutiny aboard HMS Grampus. Captain Came of the Grampus brought evidence in support of the charges. On the third day all were sentenced to hang apart from Thomas Franklin who was sentenced to two years in solitude in the Marshalsea Prison.

Source Kentish Gazette Tuesday 18th July 1797

On Monday 24th July 1797 James (sic) Smart, John Preston, and Joseph Crofall (sic) were executed on board Grampus and Colin Brown (?) on board the Phoenix. Thomas Franklin is reprieved for two years solitary imprisonment.

Source Reading Mercury Monday 24th July 1797

Note. The spelling of names vary from paper to paper, Came is spelt variously as Comes or Kiames and others appear to be written as heard. Those not hanged on HMS Grampus were sent to other ships to meet their fate.

Following the Court Martial Grampus sailed to Jamaica where the crew began a Mutiny within the Jamaica Squadron. Admiral Hyde Parker, commander of the Station, concerned that the Grampus had brought out a disaffected crew, indentified one agitator whom he hanged. By 1798 Grampus was under command of Captain George Hart. On the morning of the 19th January 1799 under Captain John Hall, HMS Grampus came aground in the Thames and was abandoned.

Source Wikipedia Ceres (1787 EIC ship)

It is possible that Charles Came's date of death was 2nd November 1797 in the Dominican Republic and the cause as being Yellow Fever. Whilst not proven it does fit with what is currently known.



This document was discovered in 2002 under the floor of the attic of 32 Friarn Street, Bridgwater. Although much degraded the date May 7th 177(7)?, Day next at 7 o'clock and JP C R? Before the Printed MAS, (Master) are hand written on the card. On the reverse is written Brother Trevor. The

owner of this property at this time was Richard Codrington

Source Bridgwater Heritage Group. Tony Woolrich.

This is undoubtedly a Lodge Summons for Liberty and Sincerity Lodge, No. 369. The list of members of this Lodge which can be dated to 1789 as one of the members, James Mills, was listed as Mayor of Bridgwater. He was elected for this office in 1789, 1809 and 1813. Other members include Rev. John Trevor who was Initiated, 24th June 1775 and Richard Codrington Initiated, 27th December 1784.



Whilst this cartoon has been associated with the Rev. Dr. John Trevor DD it's provenance is, as yet, not clear, however it is similar to others produced by John Chubb.

He was born 13th August 1740, he married 1st Jane Beacher in 1759 possible in Edinburgh by whom he had four children. Jane died and was buried 31st October 1771 at All Saints, Otterhampton. He married 2nd Harriot Smith, daughter of Samuel Smith, the Collector of Customs for Bridgwater, 1st January 1773 at St. Mary Church, Bridgwater. He was Ordained in 1771 and is listed as Rector of Otterhampton between 1771 and 1794 although by this time he had moved to Hamburg and then Ostend where he died 28th January 1794 at Oostende, West Vlaanderen, Belgium.



The first of their five sons, “John William Trevor, son of the Revd. John Trevor, Rector of this Parish, and Harriot Trevor., was born 9th January 1774 and Privately Baptised 11th March 1774 and rec`ed into this church 6th October 1775”

Source Baptisms Otterhampton, Bridgwater

Became a solicitor and Town Clerk of Bridgwater.



The window in the North Transept has the inscription,

“To the glory of God and memory of Albt. Halson of this town. This window was erected by his widow AD 1903.”



And over the three bottom devises the Latin words

Fides, Chritas and Spes, implying, Faith, Charity and Hope

Albert Halson was born 1832, his parents being Joseph and Jane nee Dunn and was living in St. Mary Street, Bridgwater in 1841. His father was a plumber.

Albert was Initiated into Lodge 157 Perpetual Friendship, Bridgwater on 3rd March 1862, Passed on 7th April and Raised 6th May. 1862. Giving his occupation as being a Merchants Clerk.

Source. UGLE Freemason Membership Records 1751 - 1921

He married Hannah Murliss the daughter of Joseph Murlis, a Tailor, at Holy Trinity, Bridgwater on 12th February 1863. He gave his Occupation as Accountant.

The Western Gazette on 2nd April 1869 reported that he had been appointed Overseer for the Parish of Bridgwater.

His business was as an Ironmonger & Gunsmith. He was buried at St. Mary Bridgwater 8th May 1902 and interred at Wembdon Road Cemetery.

The purpose of this research was an attempt to find any information regarding the content of the Memorial on St. Mary church. Whilst this has not been achieved it has allowed a glimpse into the lives of some early Mason in Bridgwater, both operative and speculative.

LJFH

2020