



WINDOWS INTO CHRIST CHURCH

STORIES OF A CHURCH
THROUGH ITS STAINED GLASS

PART I

CONTENTS

Preface	3
The Sim Window (1878)	4-7
Jesus, the Good Shepherd and the Light of the World (1896)	8-12
Jesus the Risen Saviour (1899)	13-17
The Merryweather Window (1901)	18-21
Faith, Hope and Love (1907)	22-26
Tabitha/Dorcas (1908)	27-31

Preface

The story of any church is the story of its people and the way that God has worked in their lives. Christ Church, New Malden is no exception with thousands of smaller stories forming part of the overall story of a church that has now lasted for over 150 years.

Just some of these stories are represented within the ten stained glass windows within the church. Most of these were established in memory of members of Christ Church and the story of these people provides a wonderful insight into the lives of those who have worshipped in this church before us. Some of the time, we will be struck by the difference in their experience, particularly the frequency with which previous generations had to endure the sudden death of loved ones. At others points, we'll recognise themes all too common to church life today: faith, compassion and selfless service to others; alongside the less attractive ones of confusion, folly and conflict. The value of the windows and the stories that surround them is their witness to the reality of the journey of faith in Jesus Christ – with all its wonderful highs and humbling lows – that God calls us to.

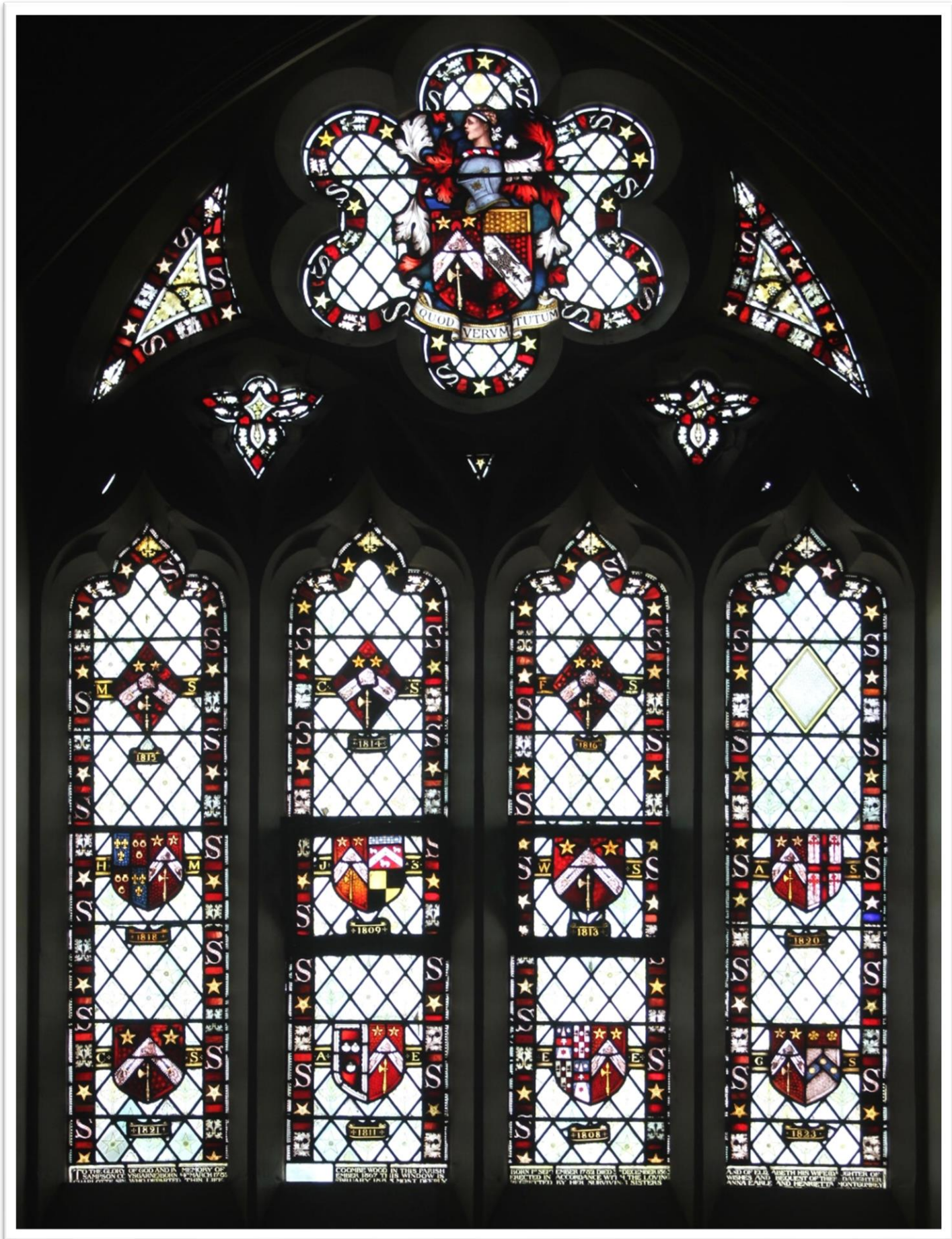
The production of these booklets has been very much a team effort. The Kingston History Centre could not have been more helpful and local historian Robin Gill has been amazingly responsive to my constant requests for him to locate reports from the Surrey Comet. The section on Monty Davison is indebted to the research of Elizabeth Manterfield of Epsom College. Graeme Ferrero and Hugh Griffiths have provided the photographs of the windows. Those who preached on the windows in our sermon series in May-June 2018 provided the contents of the final chapter and are acknowledged there. Perhaps the greatest contribution, however, has been made by our Youth Minister, Nathan Larkin, through his investigation of marriage, death, electoral registers and particularly census records. Nathan developed these skills whilst tracing his own family history following the birth of his daughter Emily in August 2017. By a lovely God-incidence, one of our windows remembers an earlier Emily Larkin who belonged to Christ Church and was 'full of faith and good works'. In view of this, Nathan's hard work and her position as my goddaughter, it seemed appropriate to dedicate this small piece of work to the second **Emily Larkin**.

Stephen Kuhrt

Christ Church, New Malden, June 2018



The Sim Window (1878)



TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN MEMORY OF
SAMUEL G. SIMMONS 1805-1878
GIVEN BY HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTERS
MAY 1878

JOHN F. SIMMONS IN THIS WINDOW IN
HONOR OF HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTERS
GIVEN BY HIMSELF AND HIS WIFE
MAY 1878

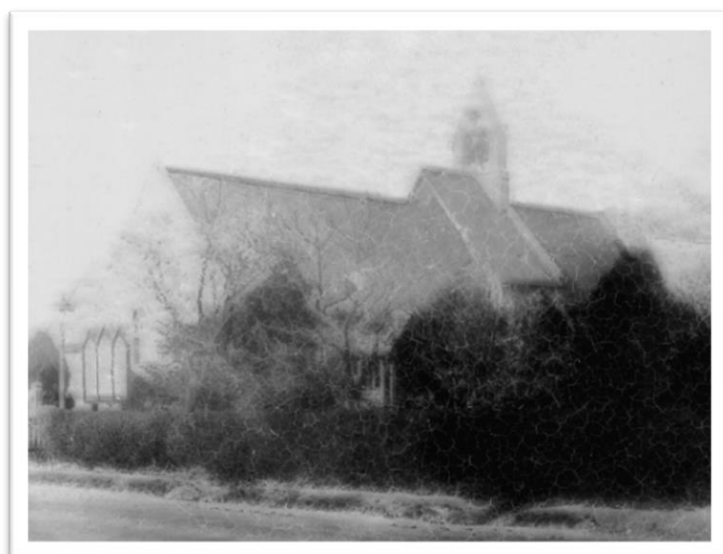
JOHN F. SIMMONS IN THIS WINDOW IN
HONOR OF HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTERS
GIVEN BY HIMSELF AND HIS WIFE
MAY 1878

AND OF HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTERS
GIVEN BY HIMSELF AND HIS WIFE
MAY 1878

After **the original Christ Church was built in 1866**, both New Malden and the congregation rapidly expanded, meaning that a larger church building was swiftly needed.

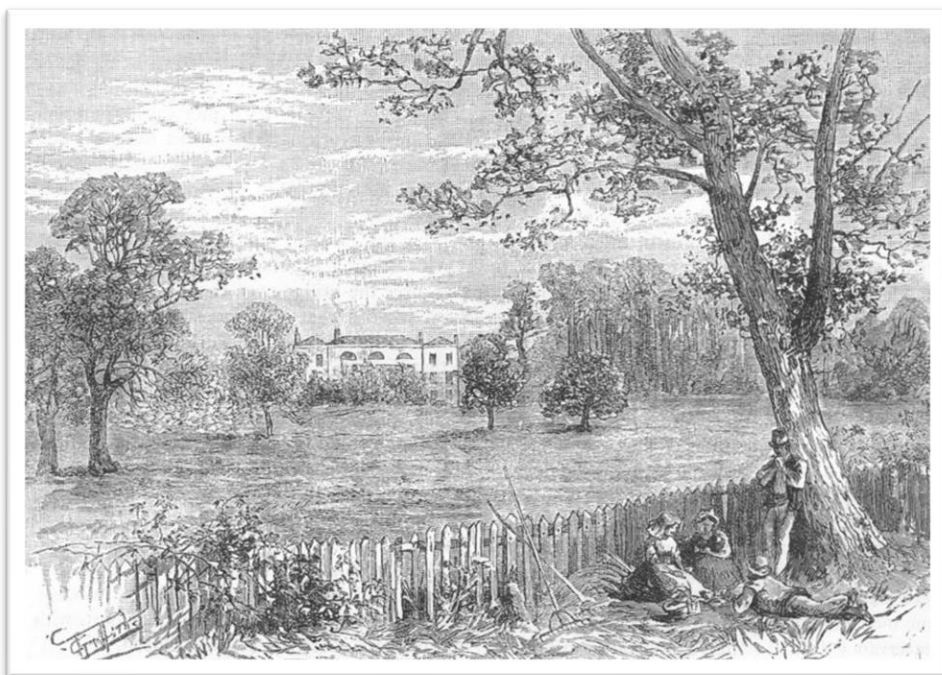


The first stage of this was the demolition of the original chancel and the construction of a larger one in 1877-78. Until the second extension that took place in 1894, **this chancel was higher than the rest of the church**. The 1878 part of the roof can be easily seen by its lighter wood, marking it out from the darker wood later used to raise the nave in 1894.



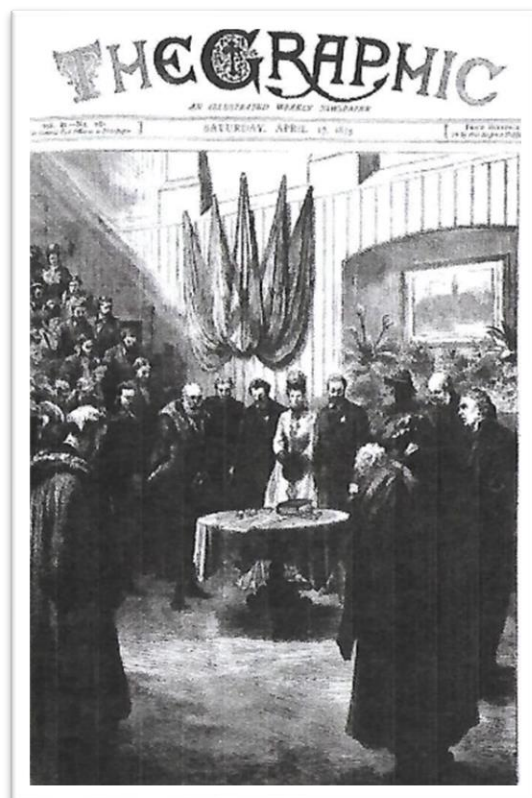
The 1878 chancel (which structurally remains today) was paid for by the Sim family. This family originated as merchants in the City of London. In the recession at the end of the Napoleonic wars, George Sim set up a partnership with Charles Churchill trading in timber and timber products such as paper. In due course, this generated substantial wealth for the partners and their descendants. A timber firm with the name 'Churchill and Sim' still exists in Sussex.

John Sim (1782-1863) was married to Elizabeth Coysgarne in 1807 at St James' Piccadilly and eventually had eight children in sixteen years. They moved to New Malden and lived at **Coombe Wood**. John Sim served as a magistrate and is reputed to have funded the building of the station in New Malden in December 1846 because he wanted to be able to get up to London more easily! The earliest surviving timetable from October 1848 shows four trains a day into London from New Malden with a journey time of 33-41 minutes. John Sim died at the age of 80 in 1863 but his family swiftly became generous patrons of Christ Church, New Malden.



John Sim's eldest son was John Coysgarne Sim. He was born on 21st November 1809 and baptised at St Anne's Soho on 4th January 1810. In 1836, he was married to Harriet Lambert at St Pancras Old Church. They had seven children. Although the franchise had been famously expanded by the Great Reform Act of 1832, those people entitled to vote in Parliamentary elections were still very limited. The 1838 electoral register for Middlesex includes John Coysgarne Sim with his property qualification described as 'freehold land, houses, warehouses, stables and sheds commonly known as the Stag Brewery in Castle Lane, Westminster. By 1845, John and his family were living at 9 Clifton Place, Hyde Park Gardens in Paddington. In April 1851, Harriet Sim died at the age of 37. Three years later, John Coysgarne Sim was married again to Margaretta Twining, a widow, at St Mary's Church in Wimbledon.

Following his father's death in 1863, John Coysgarne Sim inherited Coombe Wood and his father's share in Churchill and Sim. He was an important figure in the early years of Christ Church following its establishment in 1866. His second wife, Margaretta, died in 1871. John Coysgarne Sim served as Churchwarden of Christ Church from 1871-72 and had been very generous in his gifts to the church. In 1872, he presented Mrs Stirling, the Vicar's wife with water from the River Jordan so that their daughter Mary could be baptised with it. In August of the same year, he laid the foundation stone for the vicarage completed in 1874. He also served as a Justice of the Peace. **A photo from the cover of *The Graphic* shows John Coysgarne Sim (on the far left around the table) at the opening of the Merchant Taylors' School in April 1875.**

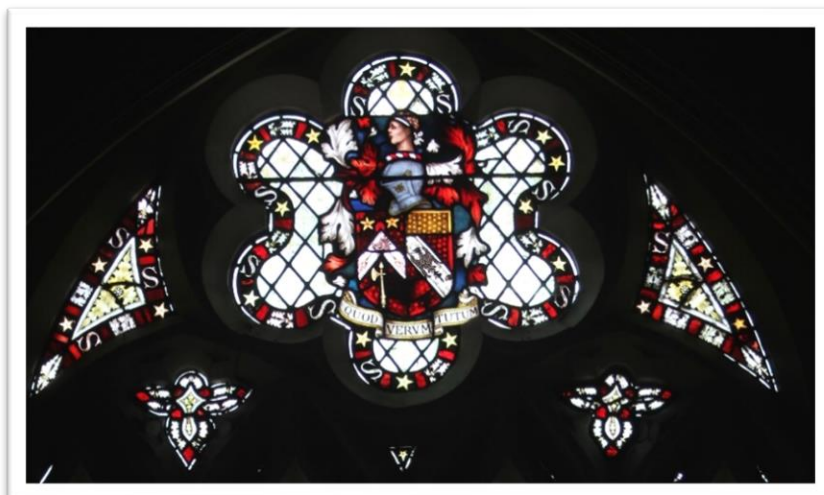


On 6th November 1875, John Coysgarne Sim died suddenly at the age of 65 on a business trip to St Petersburg in Russia. The account of his funeral in the Surrey Comet includes mention of thirty seven horsedrawn coaches taking part in its procession to Christ Church where the funeral took place. John Coysgarne Sim had expressed interest in the extension of Christ Church and it was in memory of him and his wife Margaretta that the Sim family provided the 1878 chancel for Christ Church. **A plaque with the Sim family crest is present in the chancel recording this.**



In the east wall of the chancel, a window was placed containing the crests of the Sim family. At the top is **the crest of the elder John Sim and his wife Elizabeth Coysgarne.**

Below this are the crests of John and Elizabeth Sim's many children with the years in which they were born: Eliza (1808), John Coysgarne (1809), Anna (1811), William (1813), Charlotte (1814), Maria (1815), Francis (1816), Henrietta (1818), Alexander (1820) and George (1823).



The prominence of the crests reflect the strong desire felt by many Victorian families who had made their money through trade to display their pedigree and counter any damaging assertions that they were *nouveau riche*!



The window remained in the east wall of the chancel at Christ Church for twenty one years. In 1899, it was decided to replace it with the current windows provided by Mrs Bevan and the Whitehead family. The Sim family gave permission for their window to be moved to the west wall of Christ Church and this was funded by Mrs Bevan. It seems that Charlotte Sim, who had died in 1888, had been particularly concerned to preserve the window, since the

inscription at the bottom of the window records its establishment at her bequest by her surviving sisters, Anna Earle and Henrietta Montgomery. The repositioning of the Sim window into the west wall in 1899 accounts for some of the unevenness within it and the missing sections of the dedication suggest that it suffered some later damage as well.

TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN MEMORY OF
SAMPSON COYSGARNE BORN 14TH MARCH 1785
DIED AFTER HIM WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE

COOMBE WOOD IN THIS PARISH
EMBER 1867 THIS WINDOW IS
ERECTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LOVING
WISHES AND BEQUEST OF HIS DAUGHTER
AND OF ELIZABETH HIS WIFE (DAUGHTER OF
ANNA EARLE AND HENRIETTA MONTGOMERY)

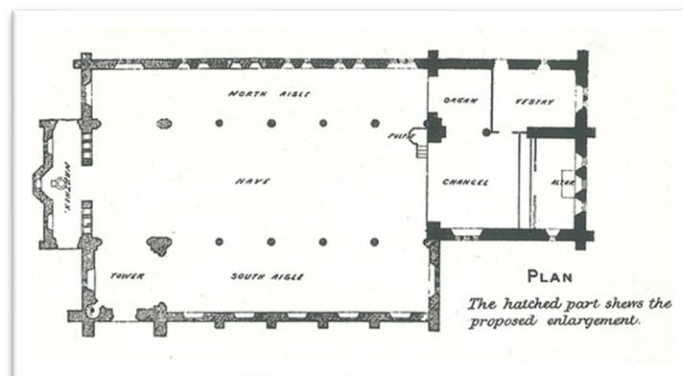
Jesus the Good Shepherd and the Light of the World (1896)



The second enlargement of Christ Church took place in 1894. This involved the addition of the south aisle, the extension of the building westward and the raising of the roof in the nave to meet the level of the roof of the 1878 chancel. A tower was also planned for Christ Church as part of this enlargement but never built because not enough money was raised to fund it.

In the same year a tragedy struck the church and community in the death of Arthur Herbert Streeter (1872-94). Herbert, as he was known, was the son of Alfred and Susannah Streeter. He was born and baptised in Rotherhithe before the family moved when he was still young to

New Malden where they initially lived in Fair Cottage in Chestnut Grove. Herbert possessed a



younger brother called Percy and a younger sister called Florence. His father served as Churchwarden of Christ Church from 1885-86 and also 1892-96. Alfred was also Headmaster of **Malden College** from 1884 and Herbert continued to live at the college after finishing his education and starting work as a bank clerk. This was work of some status at the time and only given to those able to

demonstrate that they were gifted at Maths and other subjects. At a time when only about 60% of men could vote, **Herbert was one of those qualified to do so by virtue of the rent that he paid to his father for living at Malden College.**

By 1894 Herbert was also engaged to be married to another member of Christ Church, Miss Alice Ellen Todd, known as Nelly. Nelly's parents John and Mary and her older sisters, Maud and Ethel were also committed members of Christ Church.



KINGSTON DIVISION. 458

Polling District of New Malden (E)—Parish of New Malden, in the County Electoral Division of Malden—contd.

Lodgers (Parliamentary and Parochial Electors)—contd.

No. of Voter.	Name of each Voter in full, the Surname being first.	Description of Rooms occupied, and whether Furnished or not.	Street, Lane, or other place, and number (if any) of House in which Lodgings are situate.	Amount of Rent Paid.	Name and Address of Landlord or other Person to whom Rent is paid.
E 793	Robertson, James	Bedroom, first floor, furnished	Cromwell house, Maldenroad, New Malden	£20 per annum	Mrs. King, Cromwell house, Malden road
E 794	Salter, Richard Curgenvin	Two rooms, ground and first floors, furnished	Idenholme, Cambridge road, New Malden	6s. 6d. per week	Mrs. Fearis, Cambridge road, New Malden
E 795	Streeter, Arthur Herbert	Two rooms, first and ground floors, unfurnished	Malden college, New Malden, Surrey	10s. per week	Alfred Streeter, Malden college

However in the middle of November 1894, Herbert suddenly became ill. Over the next nine days his condition worsened and he died late on the Friday evening of 23rd November. His death certificate records his cause of death as gastroenteritis (8 days), diarrhoea (5 days) followed by exhaustion and collapse. It also records that Herbert died at his home in Malden College with his father Alfred and probably other family members present.

Herbert's death was registered by Dr Edwin Child, Alfred's fellow Churchwarden at Christ Church who himself suddenly died whilst still in this office in December 1896. Dr

Child and a colleague, Dr Rogers had attended Herbert throughout the nine days of his illness but to no avail. Herbert was just 22 years old when he died.

Herbert was extremely popular, especially amongst past and present pupils at Malden College and the Surrey Comet reported that as the news of his death spread through the village on Saturday morning, it was received with sorrow everywhere. The Streeter family received more than 400 letters of condolence. The following day, the Vicar of Christ Church, the Reverend William Allen Challacombe, spoke at the Sunday services about the tragedy. He took as his text 'For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him' (1 Thessalonians 4.14). Mr Challacombe spoke about Herbert's modest, undemonstrative character and his sadness that both of his Churchwardens had been plunged into such sorrow.

Superintendent Registrar's District		Kingston-on-Thames		Parish of St. Andrew's					
Registrar's Sub-District		Kingston		Parish of St. Andrew's					
1894 DEATHS in the Sub-District of Kingston in the County of Surrey									
No.	When and Where Died	Name and Surname	Sex	Age	Rank or Profession	Cause of Death	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant	When registered	Signature of Registrar
35	Twenty three November 1894 Malden College Malden Road New Malden Surrey	Arthur Herbert Streeter	Male	22 years	Bank Clerk	Gastro Enteritis & Diarrhoea during last 8 days Exhaustion & Collapse 6 hours after death by Dr Child M.D.C.	A. Streeter Father Present at Death The College Malden Road New Malden	Twenty three November 1894	John Lewis Registrar



Herbert Streeter's funeral was held a week after his death at Christ Church on Friday 30th November and **he was then buried at Kingston Cemetery.**

It is clear that the loss of Herbert had a significant impact upon Christ Church. In an age before antibiotics, sudden death from illnesses that would be curable now was fairly common. However there is no reason to suppose that the grief was any less and this is reflected in the manner in which the Reverend

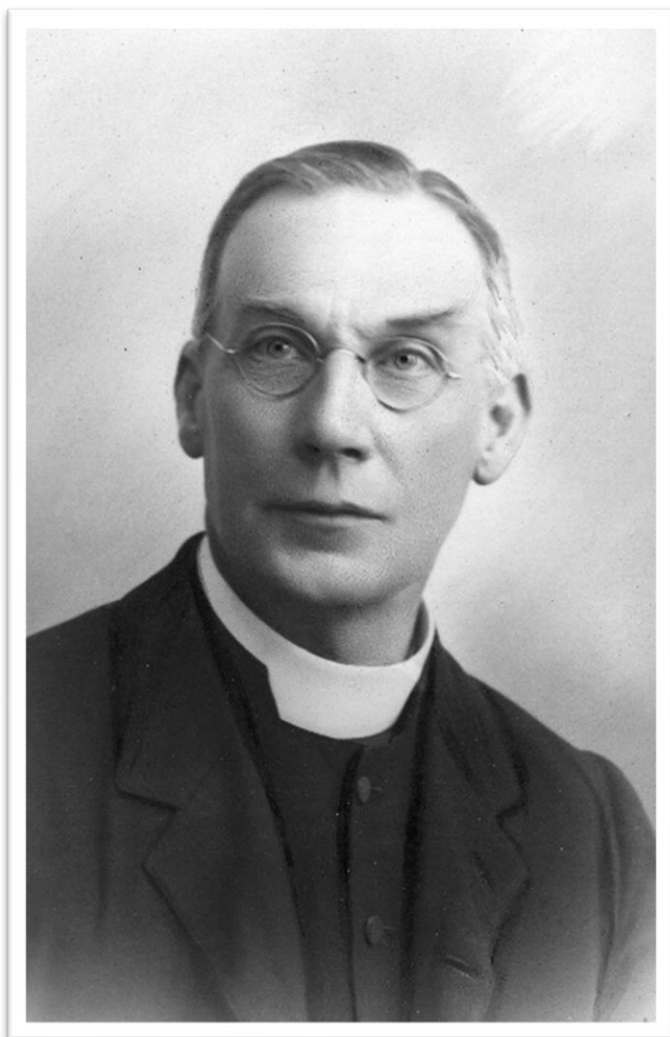
William Allen Challacombe, the second Vicar of Christ Church (1893-1920) reported his death in the January 1895 Parish Magazine:

‘During 1894 many a cloud passed across our sky... just as the year was closing, the promising earthly life of Herbert Arthur Streeter was abruptly terminated by the mysterious providence of God. Of the intense sorrow and irreparable loss thus occasioned to Mr and Mrs Streeter and family, and Miss Nelly Todd, and of the blameless life and patient resignation of him who was removed from them, I ventured to speak in another place and so need not linger here. Not only the congregation but the parish was sympathetically sorrowful with our dear friends so terribly bereaved. We pray God to comfort all the desolate hearts with the bright hope of that eternal reunion which shall be by-and-by’.

The decision was taken to place a new stained glass window at Christ Church in memory of Herbert Streeter. Its subject was two of the seven ‘I am’ sayings of Jesus from John’s Gospel: ‘I am the Good Shepherd’ and ‘I am the Light of the World’. Mr Challacombe referred to this in the April 1896 Magazine saying:

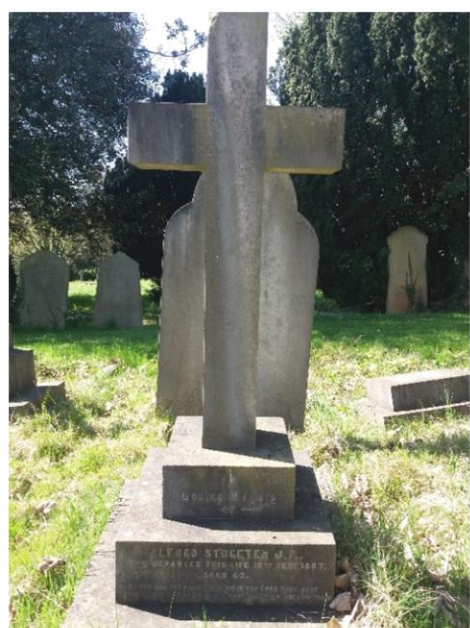
‘The Vestry sanctioned the insertion of stained glass into the first small window from the west end of the south side of the church. The windows are to be filled with two allegorical figures of our Lord – ‘The Good Shepherd’ and ‘the Light of the World’.

They will be placed in memory of Mr Streeter’s dear son, who departure from us was so much lamented. One window is paid for by subscriptions; the other being paid for by Mr Streeter. The work is in the hands of James Powell and Co. of Whitefriars, and we hope to have them completed by Whit-Sunday...’



Mr Challacombe then added some powerful words about the value of the window and his prayer for its purpose: ‘The eye is a medium of knowledge as well as the ear; and we shall pray that the Spirit of God may glorify Christ through these windows which will reveal him as Saviour and Guide’.

It is poignant to reflect on what happened to the others in Herbert’s story. His father, **Alfred, died in 1907** and another of the windows at Christ Church was established in his memory. Herbert’s mother, Susannah, had to endure another loss when her daughter **Florence died at the age of 33 in 1910**. Susannah herself died at the age of 79 in 1918.



Herbert's brother, **Percy**, had greater longevity living to the age of 80 before he died in 1954. All the family share the same burial plot at Kingston Cemetery situated fairly near the entrance.



Nelly Todd was 23 when her fiancée died. She remained single until 1905 when she was married by Mr Challacombe on 27th December to the organist at Christ Church, James Griffin. James, a widower, was 60 to Nelly's 35. Music, it seems, had been part of the common interest that has resulted in Nelly's marriage to James Griffin.

1905 Marriages solemnized at Parish Church in the Parish of New Malden in the County of Surrey

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
497	Dec. 27 th 1905	James Griffin	60	Widower	Organist	Brookside Coombe Road	Silas Griffin	Gentleman
		Alice Ellen Todd	35	Spinster	—	Chiltern Lodge New Malden	John Todd.	Gentleman

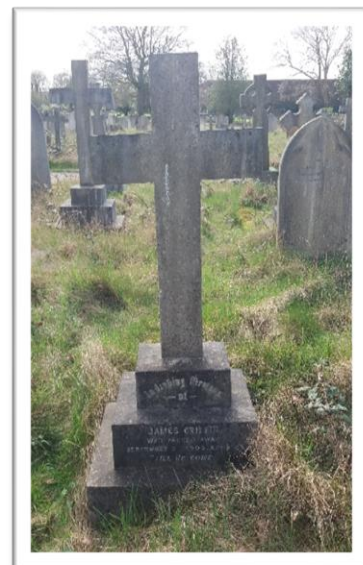
Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by W. Allen Challacombe or after Banns by me,

This Marriage was solemnized between us, { James Griffin } in the Presence of us, { Mrs. Todd }
 { Alice Ellen Todd } { John Barber }
 { Anniesell Good }

Sadly after just four years of marriage, James too died in September 1909. He was buried at Kingston Cemetery leaving Nelly as a widow for the remaining 33 years of her life. The 1911 census records her living alone at 60 Coombe Road and teaching music from home.



Nelly's parents and sisters are buried at Kingston Cemetery. Nelly, however, at some point moved to north London and died there at the age of 70 in 1942.



CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Before writing on this Schedule please read the Explanatory and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.

The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP TO HEAD OF FAMILY	AGE Sex Marital and B.A.L.	PARTICULARS AS TO MARRIAGE	PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Person aged ten years and upwards.	RESIDENCE at every census.	NATIONALITY of every Person (to be filled up by the Enumerator when asked).	INFIRMITY.
Alice Ellen Griffin	Head	39	Widow	Teacher of Music, 465	Brookside Coombe Road, New Malden	English	000

John the Baptist and John the Evangelist witness to Jesus the Risen Saviour (1899)



During the mid to late 1890's, an influential figure at Christ Church was Mrs Mary Bevan. Married to a wealthy banker called Wilfred Bevan, they possessed a house in Knightsbridge with ten servants, as well as a home in New Malden called **Coombe Court**. In the Parish Magazines of this period, the Reverend William Allen Challacombe makes numerous references to Mrs Bevan's generosity and hard work for Christ Church. This included using Coombe Court for bazaars aiming to raise funds for both the 1894 extension and the school at Elm Road built in 1896, as well as donating various gifts to the church such as a carpet for the chancel, chalices and kneelers. Her daughter Miss Lucy Bevan led one of the Sunday afternoon Bible classes for children. Mrs Bevan was also involved in visiting those who needed help causing Mr Challacombe to write in

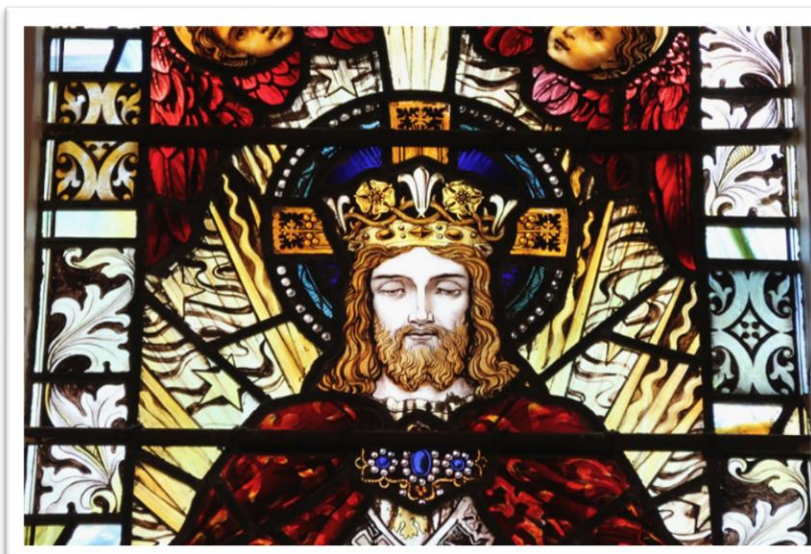


September 1898 Magazine: 'As a church worker, Mrs Bevan has been much beloved by those whom she visited. Absence of ostentation, ready sympathy, strong personal, faith in Christ, these powers have helped her to win her way into the homes and hearts of many who will never forget her kindly visits'.



In that same year, Mrs Bevan announced that she was moving away from Christ Church, although she continued to visit the church on a very regular basis. As a parting gift, she decided to give a new window for the east wall of the chancel. By this stage, the Sim window had stood in the east wall for over twenty years but it was with that

family's approval that the window was moved to the west wall instead. In its place and funded by Mrs Bevan was a new window depicting **Jesus the Risen Saviour**. The window was produced by James Powell and family, the same company that had made the window





given in memory of Herbert Streeter three years earlier and was unveiled on Easter Day, 2nd April 1899.

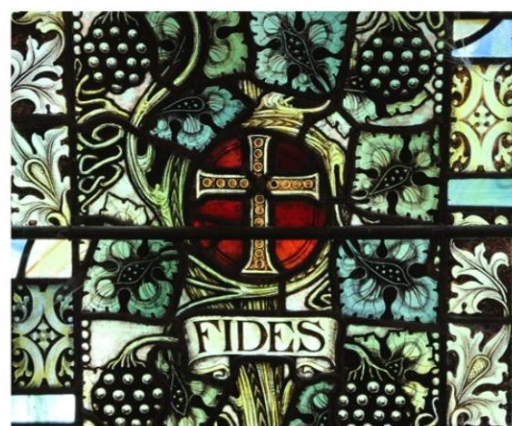
It seems that the original plan was to fill the two smaller windows either side of the central one at some point later on. However, around that time a new family called the Whiteheads had arrived at Christ Church: Mr Benjamin Whitehead, his wife Annette and his three unmarried sisters, Sophia, Ida and Kate. Their parents, Benjamin and Anne Whitehead, who had owned a pub in Holborn, had died the year before. Following the unveiling of the central window, Mr Whitehead informed Mr Challacombe the family would like to give two other windows to Christ Church in memory of their parents.

These windows, depicting **John the Baptist** and **John the Evangelist** witnessing to Christ were unveiled in a special service on All Saints Day on 1st November 1899. Reporting the event, the Surrey Comet declared: 'The two windows are figurative of St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist, respectively representing the old covenant and the Christian church, and the subjects of the three windows are in perfect harmony with one another as far as general treatment is concerned'. Mr Challacombe commented in the November Parish Magazine: 'These sacred pictures will constantly lead our thoughts to the blessed ones in Paradise, while they will speak to us of the Ascended Lord as the Lamb of God, who became the Propitiation for our sins'.



Another feature of the windows is their presentation of the three cardinal Christian virtues of faith, hope and love under their Latin words '**charitas**', '**fides**' and '**spes**'. Below the figure of Jesus in the central window and above '**charitas**' is the image of a pelican feeding her young. According to myth, the pelican does this by plucking at her own breast to feed

them with her own blood. At the time the window was commissioned, this was commonly used as a symbol of the significance of the death of Jesus Christ. It can also be seen at Christ Church in the window given just a few years later in memory of Frederick Somner Merryweather.



The other noteworthy aspect of the windows is their major use of grapevine imagery to reflect their presentation of faith, hope and love as the fruits of the new creation brought by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Similar grapevine imagery is seen in the background of the window given a few years earlier in memory of Herbert Streeter.

Mrs Bevan continued her regular visits to Christ Church and generosity to the church up until her death in 1938.



Benjamin Whitehead died in 1926 whereupon his wife and sisters moved to Devon, dying there between 1944 and 1956.

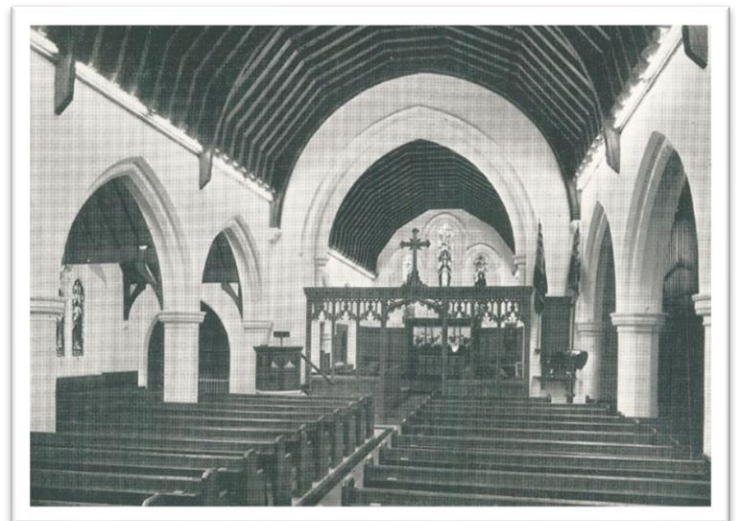
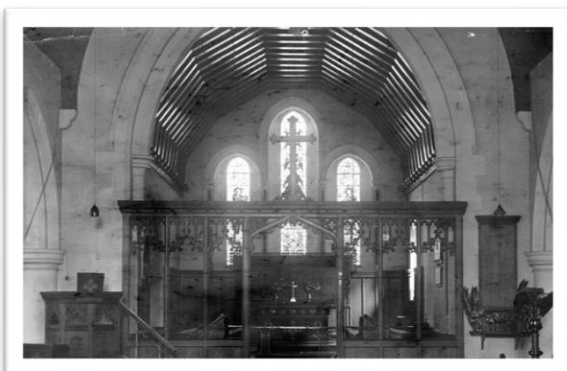
The subsequent history of these windows at Christ Church is also quite an interesting one largely due to two developments in the 1920's. Dr George Cowen was Churchwarden of Christ Church from 1897-1903 and following

his death **a large reredos was placed behind the Communion Table in his memory blocking out most of faith, hope and love!**

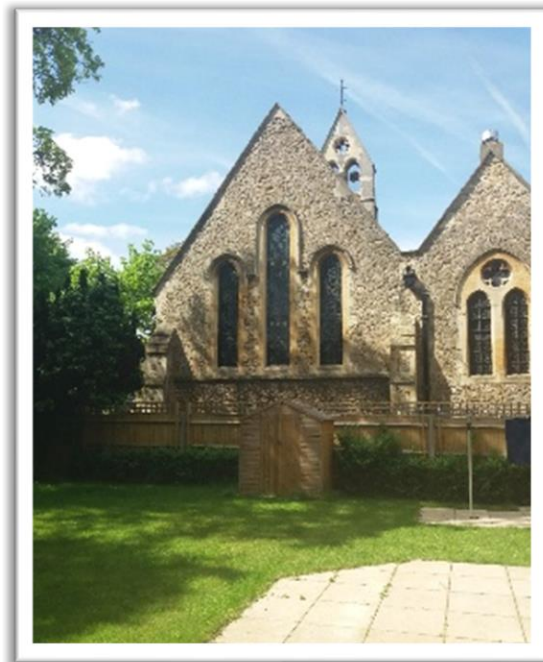


VICARAGE GARDEN PARTY
NEW MALDEN JULY 16 1910

More significantly, the surprising decision was taken in January 1920 to erect **a rood screen across the chancel**, alongside a name tablet, in memory of those who had died during the First World War. This screen remained in front of the windows until 1965 when it was transferred to the back of Christ Church before its final removal in 2006.



A further factor impeding the view of the east windows was a tree beyond them which grew to the point of almost preventing any light coming through them. **These pictures show the progress of the tree from 1953, 1966 and 2004.** The tree was finally removed prior to the new halls and vicarage being built in 2016-17. Once the tree was gone, the light shining through them has allowed the windows to be seen in all its glory. Many at Christ Church commented that they had not really appreciated the beauty in the window until that moment.



On 17th February 2022, the windows had a very fortunate escape when 'Storm Eunice' ripped through Britain. The large tree seen in the far left of some of the photos remained as part of the vicarage



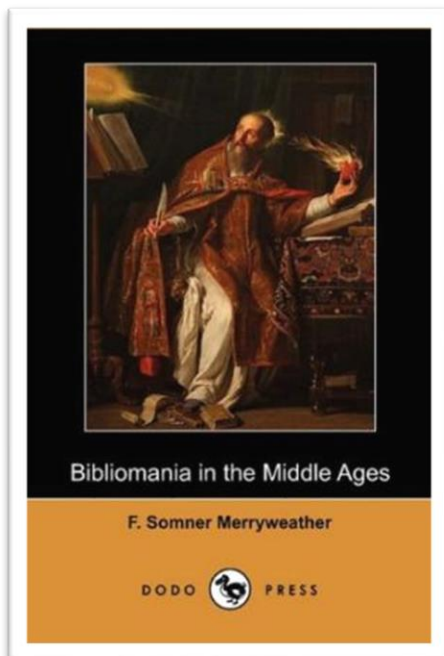
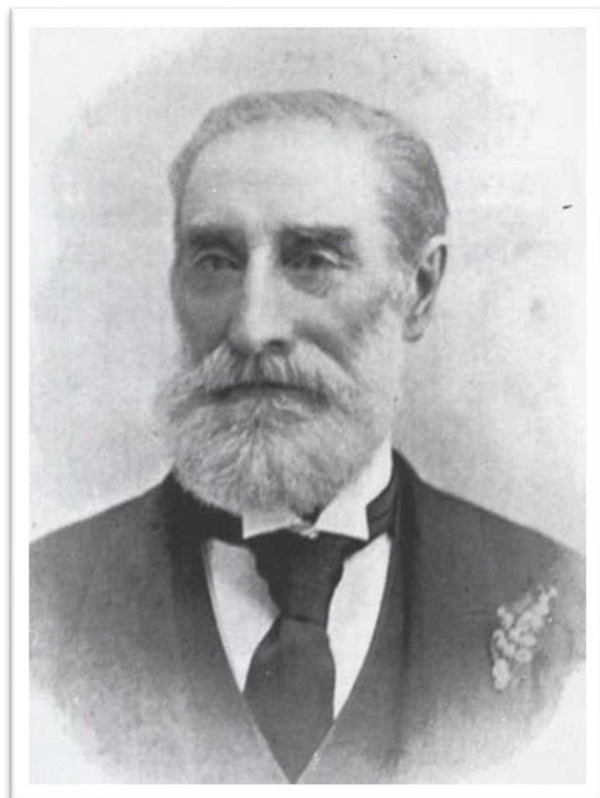
garden. On the morning of the storm, a member of Christ Church called Gill East prayed that it wouldn't cause any damage to the people or buildings at the church. The tree, which turned out to be diseased, could have fallen through the east window or the new vicarage. Instead, **it fell lengthways down the vicarage garden** in the only direction that it could have done to cause no damage at all.

The Merryweather Window (1901)



Another key figure in the early development of both Christ Church and New Malden was **Frederick Somner Merryweather** (1827-1900). Merryweather lived in Acacia Grove. He worked as bookseller and publisher in London and was an antiquarian and author of some prominence. His works included: ***Bibliomania in the Middle Ages*** (1849), *Dies Dominicae* (1849),

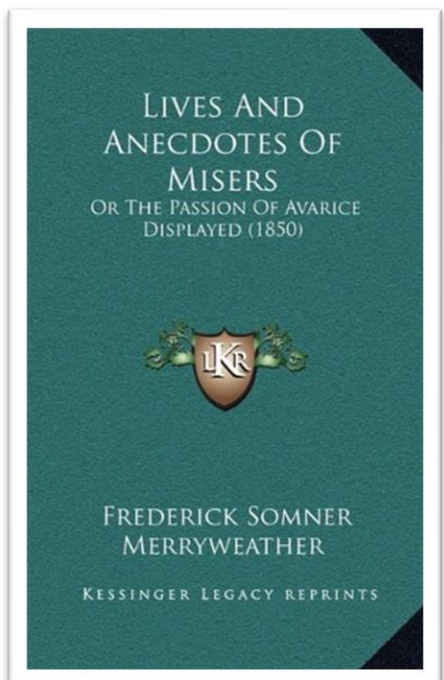
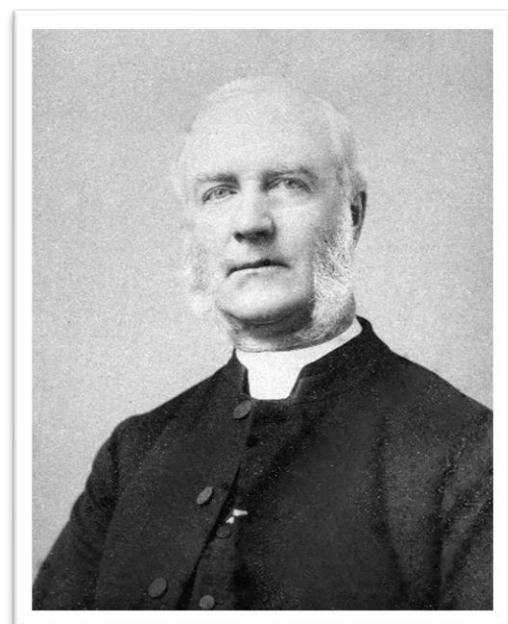
Glimmerings in the Dark; or, Lights and Shadows of the Olden Time (1850), ***Lives and Anecdotes of the Misers or the Passion of Avarice Displayed*** (1850, and referred to in Chapter 6 of Charles Dickens' 1865 book *Our Mutual Friend*), *Gilbert Wright, the Gospeller* (1877) and *Half a Century of Kingston History* (1887).



In addition to this, Merryweather had a remarkable record of public service. It was said that there was no honorary public office in the village which he had not held. This included his membership of the Local Board, the Kingston Board of Guardians, the Lower Thames Valley Main Sewage Board, the Surrey County Council and the governing body of the Kingston Endowed Schools. He was also a Justice of the Peace. The Surrey Comet said in 1895 that 'none has ever brought to the fulfilment of public office more ability, more thoroughness, or fuller experience, or a purer or more single regard to the interests of the neighbourhood than he'.

Frederick Merryweather's service included a spell as Churchwarden of Christ Church from 1867-71. This was until he became part of a serious conflict with the first Vicar of Christ Church, **the Reverend Charles Stirling**. The conflict occurred over Christ Church School. Merryweather had led the building committee which had raised the funds for **the building in Lime Grove** which was completed in 1870. The intention of the committee was that it should then

be used as both a school and a village institute. However at this point, Charles Stirling announced that he was strongly against the idea and it would be the 'work of Satan' to allow non-educational activities to take place in a Church of England School. He reputedly banned all the members of the building



committee from coming to Christ Church and set up a 'Vicar's Defence Committee' to give himself sole rights over the school.



The Surrey Comet of November 1870 reported how the conflict reached its dramatic climax by Stirling taking the school by force: 'Inside the building were three members of the Building Committee and by piling up forms and desks a stand was made for a time against the attacks of the invaders. At last the door was smashed in and the Vicar and his friends made good their entry – how far a dignified entry the reverend gentleman is best able to judge'. The conflict between Mr Merryweather and Mr Stirling continued as the election of

the School Managers (Governors) approached with the Vicar determined to ensure that his nominees were appointed: 'Votes were eagerly paid for, and so fearful was the vicar of defeat that upwards of £90 was paid in by Mr Stirling and his friends for votes purchased that day'. Merryweather's influence may have shaped the rather one sided manner in which the Surrey Comet reported these incidents, since he later became its editor from 1878. But the outcome was that Charles Stirling prevailed in his wishes for the school.

As a result of this conflict, however, Frederick Merryweather and others seceded from Christ Church and built their own church and village institute. Originally an iron building, it was named Holy Trinity and was described as 'free Church of England'. Despite strong opposition from Charles Stirling, **by 1882 the building had been replaced by a stone one.** By the early 1900's, however, Holy Trinity was fading and the building was eventually purchased by Graham Spicer as an Institute for young men. The building was finally demolished to make way for Waitrose in 1989.

Part of the reason for the decline of Holy Trinity, may have been Charles Stirling's resignation in 1892 and replacement the following year by the less belligerent William Allen

Challacombe. By 1895 Frederick Merryweather was back worshipping at Christ Church and Mr Challacombe was chairman of a group that organised a presentation to thank Merryweather for his outstanding record of public service for New Malden. Subscriptions were sought and resulted in the purchase of a solid silver tea and coffee service. Merryweather's ill health meant that this had to be presented privately by Mr Challacombe and the committee at his home in Ripley-villa.



The decision to build a **Church Room on the south side of Christ Church** (the building that became known as 'The Tin Tab') was one that Merryweather enthusiastically endorsed and may have formed a key part of his reconciliation with Christ Church. The room eventually stood on the south side of Christ Church for 81 years before its final demolition in May 1981 following the building of the Christ Church Centre.



It was before the completion of the Church Room that Frederick Merryweather died at the age of 72 on 3rd January 1900. His funeral was held at Christ Church on 9th January and **he was buried at Kingston Cemetery**. At the time of his death, Merryweather was Chairman of the District Urban Council for New Malden and was succeeded in this

role by another former Churchwarden of Christ Church remembered by a stained glass window, Alfred Streeter.

Commenting on his death in the February 1900 Parish Magazine, the Vicar wrote: 'Both as parishioners and churchpeople, we shall very much miss our departed friend, Mr Frederick S. Merryweather. What he did for the district has been told elsewhere. We have known him as an earnest worshipper in the Parish Church, and as one keenly alive to the matchless beauty and dignity of our liturgical service. We shall remember with thankfulness his last public utterance was made at our Bazaar in aid of our Church Room. When I last visited his bedside, he expressed his anxiety to know how the Church Room and other Church work was progressing. His view of the Church of England and her position would be well expressed by those memorable words of the late Archbishop Benson spoken in Belfast shortly before his death when he said: "The Church of England is Catholic, Apostolic, Reformed and Protestant." The widespread sympathy shown throughout our district goes to prove that a useful and self-sacrificing life is appreciated and missed. It is to be wished that the memory of one who has occupied so honoured a position in building up our township and its municipal life shall have some permanent recognition placed within the walls of the Parish Church.'



The recognition came in the form of a stained glass window established in the north wall of Christ Church in memory of Frederick Somner Merryweather. **A plaque stated that it was given by his widow, Ellen Jane Merryweather (1860-1941) and their daughters**. When the Christ Church Centre was built in 1980-81, the window was relocated to a lighted box on the



south side of the west wall next to the one given in memory of Rashell Montague Davison.

Faith, Hope and Love (1908)



A number of residents of New Malden have made a major contribution to her development. One of these was **Alfred Streeter**. Alfred was born in Marylebone in 1845, the son of Thomas Streeter, a bootmaker. In December 1867 he was married to Susannah Stroud (1840-1918), the daughter of a florist. The marriage produced three children: Arthur known by his middle name of Herbert (1872-94), Percy (1875-1952) and Florence (1876-1909); all of whom were born whilst the Streeters lived in Rotherhithe. In 1879, the family had moved to New Malden and lived in Fair Cottage in **Chestnut Grove**. Alfred was a teacher at Malden College, which then stood where Welbeck Close now is.



From 1884, Alfred was Proprietor and Headmaster of **Malden College** and the family lived there with him. The Surrey Comet later described Alfred as 'not only a skilful teacher but as master of the details of organisation' and that in his hands Malden College 'became the most important educational establishment in this part

of what was then rural Surrey'. A large proportion of Old and New Malden residents received their education at Malden College and Mr Streeter 'made himself personally intimate with every boy at the college and was regarded by all of them with the deepest affection'.



In 1885, Alfred Streeter began the first of his two spells as Churchwarden at Christ Church. This lasted for two years until 1887. The first Vicar of Christ Church, the Reverend Charles Stirling, was still in post and the most significant development during that period was the establishment of the '**Christ Church Mission Room**' (later St John's) on the Kingston Road.

Alfred's second spell as Churchwarden was from 1892-1895. This period included the resignation of Charles Stirling, the arrival of Christ Church's second Vicar, the Reverend William Allen Challacombe (1893-1920) and the second enlargement of Christ Church in 1894. Tragically, this period also included the sudden death of his son, Herbert. Herbert's death at his lodgings in Malden College was witnessed by his father and the doctor attending him was Alfred's fellow Churchwarden at Christ Church, Dr Edwin Child.

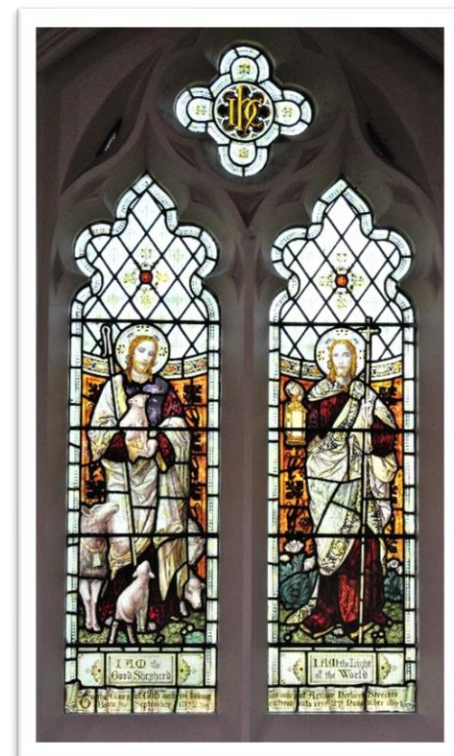
The Streeters along with Herbert's fiancée Nelly Todd, were devastated by his loss and in 1896 a stained glass window at Christ Church was established in Herbert's memory. **The window depicted Jesus as the Good Shepherd and Light of the World with one side paid for by subscriptions and the other by Alfred Streeter.**

By this stage Alfred had stepped down from the role of Churchwarden although he continued to act as one of the Sidesmen at Christ Church. This was a more formal role than now, elected by the congregation, open only to men, and which brought with it ex officio membership of the Parochial Church Council (PCC), when this was first formed at Christ Church in October 1897. With his experience in educational matters, Alfred was also a valued School Manager (governor) at Christ Church School.

Alfred also continued within other key public roles. He was a Justice of the Peace, a keen supporter of Malden Wanderers Cricket Club and, for around twenty five years, a member of the Local Board and then its successor, the Urban District Council. The Surrey Comet reported that 'he was invariably to be found on the side of those who advocated the improvement of the district', even if this alienated

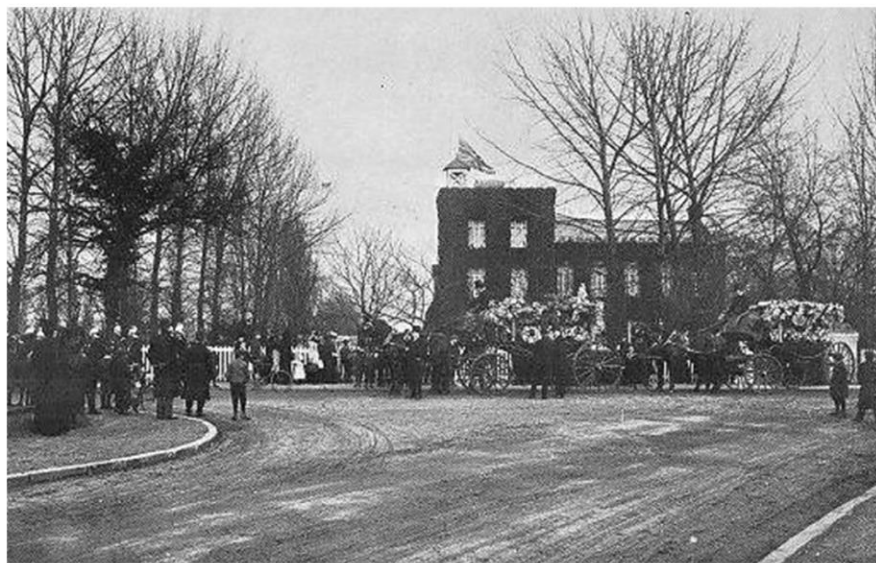
some of his fellow higher rate payers. It was in 1900 that Alfred became of Chairman of the District Council, following the death of the previous chairman, Frederick Merryweather. His

period of chairmanship was noteworthy for the improvement of drainage, lighting and paving in the district. Perhaps his most outstanding contribution, however, was the establishment of **the Council Offices in New Malden alongside stables, a mortuary and a fire station.** Alfred Streeter first advanced the idea in May 1903 and the buildings were opened on 27th April 1905. Alfred took a particular interest in the development of the fire service and so much so that New



Malden's first fire engine was named the 'Alfred Streeter'. The outside of the Council Offices remain today as a façade in the front of Waitrose.

Alfred Streeter died at the age of 62 on 18th February 1907. Whilst he had been ill, his death clearly came as quite shock to his many friends. The Surrey Comet reported: 'Mr Streeter had been absent from the last few meetings of the District Council but cheery messages were received from him and it was generally hoped and believed that his illness was of a temporary character'. Alfred had undergone a successful operation on the previous



Thursday at a private nursing institution in Surbiton but suffered a relapse on the following Monday morning and died at 10.30 am. The tributes to Alfred were immediate with the Surrey Comet giving very full accounts of his contributions to the area and describing him as 'a most genial gentleman, the soul of courtesy and honour, and held in esteem by all who knew him. He made troops of friends and we doubt if he had a single enemy'.

Alfred Streeter's funeral on 23rd February 1907 was a major event in New Malden. **A photo shows its start at Malden College (with its flag at half-mast) before proceeding down the high street towards Christ Church led by the 'Alfred Streeter' steamer and pupils from Malden College.**

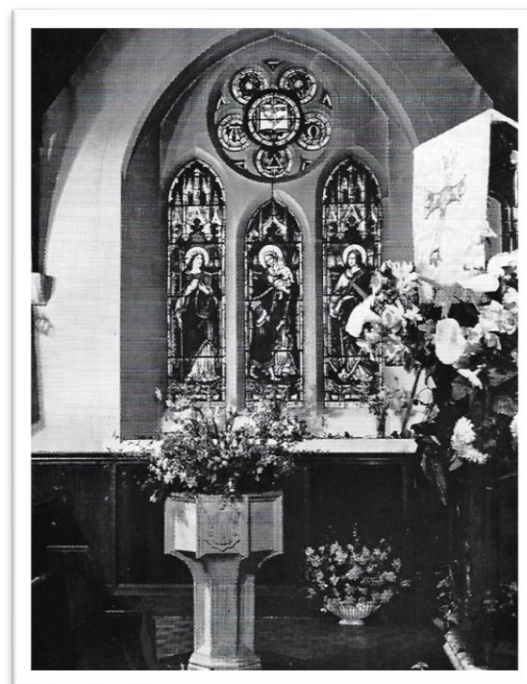
The Surrey Comet reported that it proceeded 'along a route lined on either side by large

crowds of sympathisers'. Once at Christ Church, William Allen Challacombe delivered the address that engaged with widespread grief and of how those indifferent to the responsibilities of human life 'might learn from the dignity and blessedness of work from the example of their brother'. He commented on Mr Streeter being 'always ready to see what was good in people and turn a blind eye to their failings and mistakes' and how his 'work was now in a higher sphere – in the heavenly mansions of the Father's home'. **Alfred Streeter was**

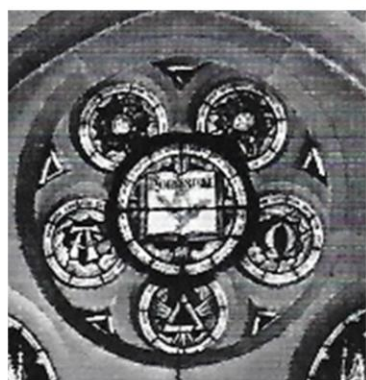
then buried at Kingston Cemetery next to his son Arthur Herbert Streeter who had died back in 1894.



As early as the following month, the idea was formed that Alfred Streeter should be remembered by the establishment at Christ Church of a memorial window. The initial thought was that this would be established alongside that of Herbert Streeter. Subscriptions were sought from members of New Malden and those who contributed to its cost of £75 were then listed in the Surrey Comet. The eventual result was **a window designed by Messrs Jones and Willis of London and Liverpool with its subject being 'Faith, Hope and Love'**. Rather than being placed in the south wall, the window was unveiled at the eastern end of the north wall of Christ Church on Saturday 7th March 1908. The window was dedicated by the Bishop of Kingston, Dr Cecil Hook who spoke on Mr Streeter and the importance of the Christian virtues presented in the window. A public clock in New Malden was the other memorial established in memory of Alfred Streeter.



One aspect of the window, seemingly uncontroversial at the time, was **the presence within it of masonic symbols**. These appeared within the circular section above those depicting faith, hope and love and alongside cherubs and the Alpha and Omega. Alfred Streeter was an open Freemason with meetings of the local lodge held at Malden College and a strong masonic presence at his funeral. William Allen Challacombe must have been, at the very least, sympathetic to freemasonry and there are elements of his sermon at Alfred Streeter's funeral that suggest he may have more than this, particularly when he referred to 'the gospel of work' that needed to 'be preached more earnestly than ever'. At that stage, evangelical Christianity remained largely uncritical in its response to Freemasonry, possibly through a shared aversion to Roman Catholicism. This attitude started to change in the second half of the twentieth century but as late as 1961, the sixth Vicar of Christ Church, Llewellyn Roberts (1958-68) not only allowed but participated in a service at Christ Church to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of the Malden Lodge.



By the 1980's, however, attitudes towards Freemasonry within the Church of England were overwhelmingly negative with the General Synod agreeing on its incompatibility with Christianity in 1987. Seven years earlier in 1980, the construction of the Christ Church Centre entailed the demolition of most of the north wall and **the relocation of its stained glass windows to lit boxes on the west wall**. These included the window given in memory of Alfred Streeter

but without the section containing the masonic symbols. John Short, the eighth Vicar of Christ Church (1976-90) was strongly opposed to Freemasonry and Graham Rushforth, who made the boxes to house the relocated windows, took delight in recounting how he had thrown the offending sections into a skip!



Tabitha/Dorcas (1908)



Like his predecessor, Charles Stirling, the Reverend **William Allen Challacombe** was Vicar of Christ Church for 27 years (1893-1920). The letters with which he began each parish magazine published during this time are a rich source of information about life at Christ Church. A particular feature of these letters is the gratitude that Mr Challacombe expresses for member of the congregation and their contributions to the church life.

One of those mentioned on numerous occasions in these letters is Miss Emily Larkin. Emily was born in December 1831 in Egham in Surrey. **She was baptised on 22nd January 1832.** Emily's father William was a bricklayer and she was the second of eight children born to him and his wife Ann. The other children were Richard (1829), Caroline (1834), William (1837), Louisa (1838), Sophia (1841), Annie (1843) and Charles (1846). In the 1851 census, the 19 year old Emily is listed as 'at home', presumably looking after the household duties with her mother. A sad blow was the death at 25 of her younger sister Caroline after just four years of marriage. Over the next few years, her other brothers and sisters got married but, by the age of 29 and the 1861 census, Emily was unmarried and living with her brother Richard who was a bookseller. However after her mother Ann died in 1870, Emily, as the only unmarried daughter, moved back home to look after her elderly father. After William's death in 1880, Emily moved in with her younger sister Annie Bourne, who had been widowed only a few years into her marriage. Up to this point, all of Emily's life had been lived in **Egham**.



With their parents gone and nothing left to tie them to Egham, Emily and Annie decided at some point in the 1880's to leave for a fresh start in New Malden. By the 1891 census, when Emily was 59 and Annie 48, they were living in a house called Linden on the Kingston Road with a 17 year old servant called Elizabeth Willis.

Both sisters had become regular and committed members of Christ Church. Amongst the references by Mr Challacombe to the service of Miss Larkin and Mrs Bourne are his praise of them for **cleaning and beautifying the sanctuary week by week**. The sisters' responsibilities included tending the delicate linens used for Communion Table and also providing seasonal furnishings for the chancel. Mr Challacombe was known for his concern regarding the

appropriateness of everything within the sanctuary and it was during this period that 'My house shall be called a house of prayer' was written in large lettering above the chancel arch.

Another aspect of Emily and Annie's service at Christ Church was their love and care for its people. Despite being childless herself, Emily

was a key leader of a group for mothers. **Mr Challacombe** also singled out his gratitude to the sisters for their support of his wife **Jesse Challacombe** when she was ill. When the Vicar and his wife took a holiday in Berkshire to aid Mrs Challacombe's recovery, Emily and Annie went with them. Mr Challacombe describing them as 'heartily welcomed companions', 'kind beyond the telling and whose 'help is doing much to quicken the convalescence of Mrs Challacombe'.

In the autumn of 1902, as she was approaching 71, Emily Larkin herself became seriously unwell. Mr Challacombe helped her to travel down to

Tunbridge Wells so that she could convalesce there. Upon her recovery, Emily wrote the following letter to the congregation which Mr Challacombe inserted into the Parish Magazine of November 1902: 'My dear friends. As I find it impossible to reach personally all my dear friends in New Malden and elsewhere, the Vicar is kindly allowing me to address you in this



Magazine. I am anxious you should know how grateful I am for all you did for me and were to me in my illness. The numerous tokens of love and sympathy which reached me almost daily, and were continued even during our stay in Tunbridge Wells, have been a source of the greatest comfort and consolation to me, and have been in a measure the means of restoring me to health and strength again. The knowledge that so many prayers were being offered on my behalf helped to strengthen my faith in my Heavenly Father's promise, 'As they day, so shall they strength be'. And I hope with His blessing and in His own good time to be able to resume my little part in the work of my Master's vineyard. Especially I would like to thank my dear, kind friends, the members of my Mother's Meeting, for the lovely tribute of flowers sent quite early in my illness, and which touched me deeply. For this, and for everything, both in word and deed, I thank you all most gratefully, and shall ever remain: Your faithful and loving friend, Emily Larkin". Mr Challacombe then added some words expressing his great joy that Miss Larkin had now rapidly improved in health.



Emily Larkin eventually died at the age of 75 on 22nd November 1906. **She was buried at Kingston Cemetery two days later on 24th November.** Her funeral was conducted by Mr Challacombe.

Following Emily's death, her friends in the parish decided that her memory should be preserved through the establishment of a new stained glass window at Christ Church. This

was agreed in at the same Vestry Meeting on October 1907 that it was decided that there should be a window in memory of Alfred Streeter. Subscriptions were raised and the eventual result in July 1908 was the production of **a window depicting the biblical character Tabitha/Dorcas** from Acts 9.36-43. Dorcas was chosen because her acts of love were seen as similar to those of Miss Larkin. The window was placed in the south wall of the chancel at Christ Church because of the particular role that Emily, together with her sister Annie, had had in looking after that part of the church.





Below the pictures it said: **'This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds in all she did': 'To the Glory of God and in loving memory of Emily Larkin who fell asleep November 22nd 1906 aged 75 years'.**

The Surrey Comet reported its dedication as follows: '...the new window was dedicated on Sunday morning by the Vicar, the Reverend William Allen Challacombe, in the presence of a large congregation. The ceremony was of a simple character, in keeping with what would have been the wishes of the deceased lady, and the Vicar afterwards preached an appropriate sermon on the life of Dorcas making fitting allusions to the labours of Miss Larkin'.

Emily's sister Annie Bourne lived until 1922 when she died at the age of 84. Fittingly **Annie was buried at Kingston Cemetery next to Emily and they share the same headstone.**



Given its position in the south wall of the chancel, the Emily Larkin window has always had less prominence than others at Christ Church. This increased with the construction of the platform, as part of the reordering of the church's interior in 2006-7. The chancel today, now containing a projector, screen and often a band, is a far cry from the orderly and quiet sanctuary that Emily Larkin and Annie Bourne cared for.





**WINDOWS INTO
CHRIST CHURCH**

STORIES OF A CHURCH
THROUGH ITS STAINED GLASS

BY STEPHEN KUHRT