

## Suckley church through the Ages

**1066**

**Suckley (Suchelie) had been in Bromsgrove but in the Domesday book was part of Herefordshire!**



1000 years ago there were 24 farmers and 22 smallholders, all under the rule of the Lord of the Manor (King William the Conqueror). Before the Conquest Suckley manor was part of Earl Eadwine's great manor of Bromsgrove. After the Conquest, William Fitz Osbern, Earl of Hereford, took five hides (1 hide approx = 120 acres) out of Bromsgrove to form part of his farm at Hereford; at Domesday Suckley was therefore surveyed under Herefordshire. **William gave the church of Suckley (Suchelie) to the abbey he had founded at Cormeilles.** The endowment was confirmed by the crown in 1074, the date at which the Earl's lands were forfeited by his son Roger. In 1086 Suckley was in the hands of the king and remained a royal manor until 1215. In 1291 the church (below) was valued at £17 6s. 8d (£20,000 today), besides the portions of the abbey of Cormeilles, £3 6s. 8d., and of the Prior of Great Malvern, 8s. Read all about it here: <http://www.suckley.net/manor.htm>



## **The 12<sup>th</sup> Century Font...A beautiful example of Romanesque sculpture**

In the time of Henry 1, or maybe King Stephen (when Owain Gwynedd was the first Welsh ruler to style himself Prince of Wales), the tub-shaped font with tapering sides was part of the life of our earlier medieval church. It is situated in the typical position by the church entrance because baptism represents entrance into the Christian family. It has been here 900 years.

*"The font bowl has a roll at the rim and a double roll halfway down the sides. Between is a double band of chevrons forming lozenges, with chip-carved decoration in the spandrels. The lozenges mostly contain a second chip-carved lozenge, with either a chip-carved geometrical motif or a motif formed from pellets in the centre. There are related motifs on the Norman font at St Edburga's, Leigh. There is a repair on the South side of the rim".*

**The domed cover is 17<sup>th</sup> Century.** The later stem and circular base with chamfered top are set on a modern octagonal plinth. The octagonal form is usual for a font as it signifies a "new creation" and alludes to the Resurrection of Christ (the eighth day). So, just as the first Creation was completed in seven days, the new Creation in Christ Jesus was completed on the 'eighth day'



## **Preaching Cross**

1300

Here is the base of our preaching cross. It is listed as: "Probably C14. Sandstone. Square base with arched niche to west, bevelled octagonal top with hollow, square centre to take cross shaft, grooved with arrow-sharpening scars". The Assize of Arms in 1252 states that English yeomen were required by law to practice archery and to maintain their skills. The Butts is where archers could practise and was located on the edge of towns or villages. The Butts in Suckley is at Stocks Farm crossroads. This stone plinth would have been the nearest suitable stone to sharpen their arrows.



In Herefordshire the most common form of preaching cross comprises a roughly rectangular base of several steps supporting a roughly square socket stone usually chamfered on top into an octagon into which is fixed a tapering stone shaft usually ending in a form of capital supporting a cross head. Surviving medieval cross heads have a variety of shapes, from the simple cross to the richly carved sculptural head, sometimes

called a tabernacle. Occasionally the socket stones themselves have sculptured niches. Generally, the Herefordshire churchyard crosses are modest structures, the steps not steep and tall as they are in some areas, the shafts not towering. Most are in sight of a porch entrance and most are on the south side though there are exceptions to all these. Good examples of more complete preaching crosses are in Colwall and Westhide.

Many crosses lost their heads at the Reformation in the later waves of iconoclasm. Some sockets may be empty because they are thought to have held wooden crosses. It is very difficult to judge without investigation whether a cross has been moved.

### **Suckley's 14th century piscina**

[1350](#)

Literally – a 'fishpond'. In the South wall this stone basin (piscina) with a drain hole (sacrarium) is typical of an earlier pre-Reformation church. It was used to wash the vessels for Holy Communion and has a shelf to hold them. They were rare in England until the 13th Century when they became usual.



Our present fundraising focus is for somewhere to wash our hands – if only it could be as elegantly crafted as this washing area!

## **Suckley Church has an Easter sepulchre**

[1400 and 1666](#)



Suckley Church has an Easter Sepulchre recessed in the North wall of the Sanctuary. Easter Sepulchres are found only in England, and generally date from the Decorated Gothic period, roughly 13th and 14th centuries. Most were destroyed in the Reformation, so they are now rare. They are typically an arched niche marking the site of a 'Founder's tomb' (although, as here, the majority of these tombs are not of the original founder, but some later benefactor of the church). In pre-Reformation times it was customary to be used between Good Friday and Easter Day recalling Christ's resurrection from the dead. Ours is an archway with corbel decoration above it and a brass to a former rector who died in 1666, Thomas Littleton, who 'receiveth the profits of Suckley, Alfrick and Lulsley, it being worth Ninety pounds by the yeare'. He was an ancestor of the present Christopher Lyttleton, Viscount Cobham.

### **Medieval History of Suckley Church**

*(from A History of Worcester Vol 4 1924)*

The large manor of Suckley included the parishes of Alfrick and Lulsley. In 1535 the rectory was valued at £18 2s., with pensions from Alfrick 40s., and from Lulsley 20s. Suckley paid a pension of 53s. 4d. to the college of Fotheringhay and 3s. 4d. to the priory of Great Malvern. Since the Dissolution the presentation to Suckley has remained in the Crown.

## The churchwardens chest

[1420](#)

The 'Wardens' chest' would have contained the Registers and Silverware and had 3 locks - so that the Rector needed both wardens with him if he wanted to open the chest!

The chests could also contain Vestry minutes, Poor and other Rates,



## **Our 'Jacobean' pulpit**

[1590](#)

Our pulpit is often referred to as 'Jacobean', because the panels are 16th century arcaded limed oak, carved with arabesque work. The main frame of the pulpit probably dates from the 19th century. With this timing, it is likely that this pulpit was taken from the earlier church and refashioned to suit the needs of the present Victorian style church and positioned where everyone could easily hear the priest. Rev John Pearson was Rector when the old church was considered in need of replacement.



**Suckley School begins – thanks to John Palmer.**  
**10 poor children of Suckley receive free teaching.**  
**Other children pay 3d or 6d weekly.**

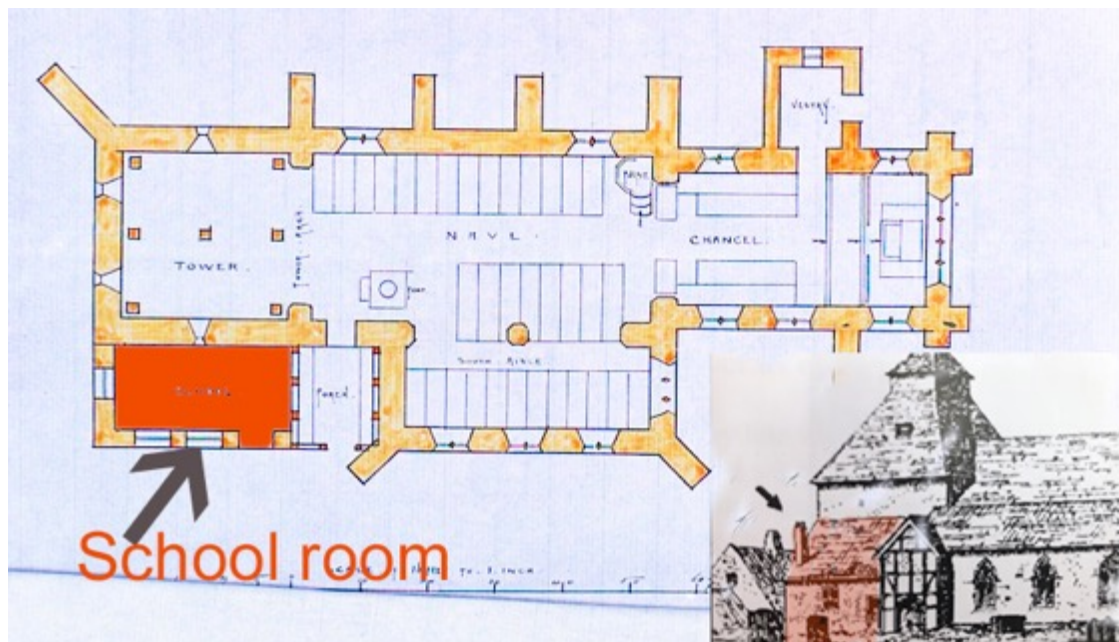
1628

*In 1628 a certain John Palmer gave £100 to be invested to pay the wages of a school teacher...“one able honest and discrete school master for teaching and instructing the children and youths in ABC matters and grammar”.*

*The free school, founded in 1628 by will of John Palmer, is regulated by a scheme of the Board of Education, 21 January 1910, under the title of Palmer's Educational Foundation. The official trustees hold a sum of £170 8s. 3d. India 3 per cent. stock, producing £5 2s. yearly, arising from investment of £140 arrears of yearly payment of £5 due from the trustees of the Worcester Municipal Exhibitions Foundation.*

*The official trustees also hold a sum of £120 6s. India 3 per cent. stock, producing £3 12s. yearly, which is applicable for educational purposes, representing the sale in 1903 of 2 acres in the parish of Whitbourne, county of Hereford, which had been the property of this school from time immemorial.*

The present John Palmer Educational Foundation is still able to help the school in small ways. began in 1628 with his legacy to provide a School master. Suckley School started in the SW corner of the earlier church. This year the school has already been enjoying the new Space in the Church for projects and activities- and pupils now have room to welcome parents to their assemblies.

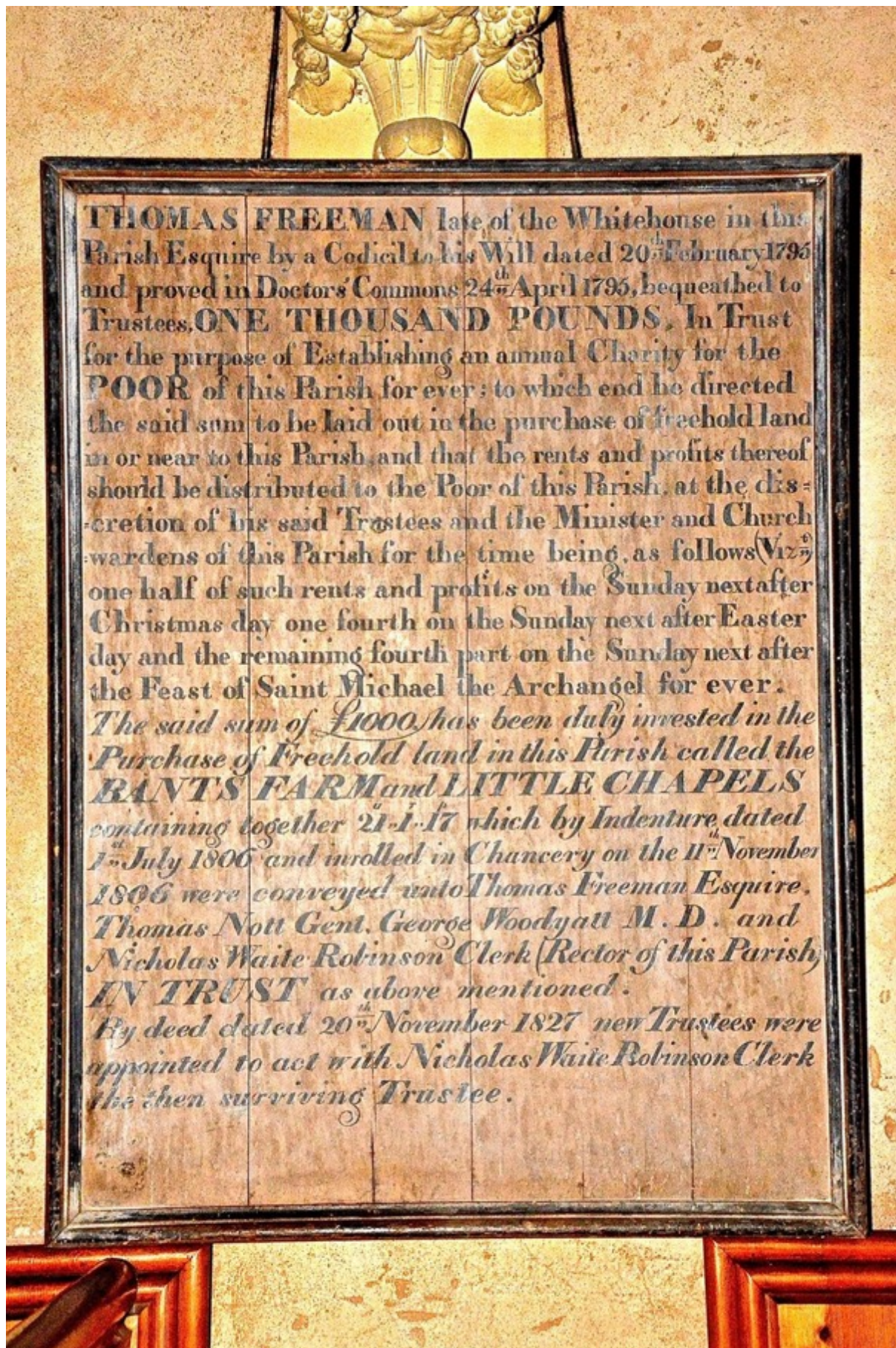




## The 'Suckley Charities' begin .... and the BMA!

[20 February 1795](#)

We have this amazing old Charities board:

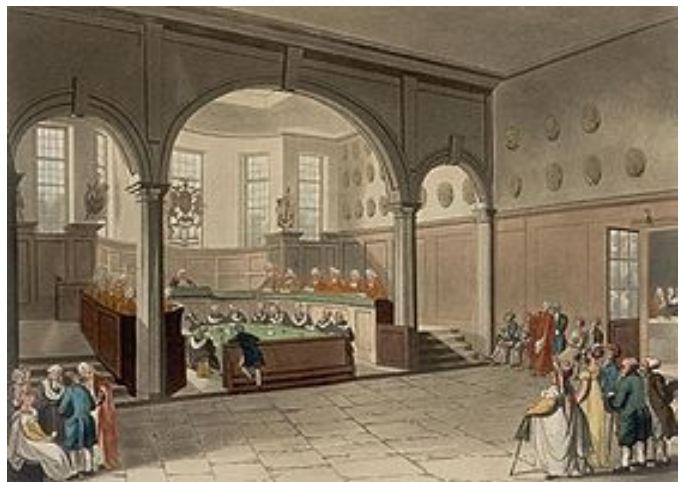


*Thomas Freeman late of the Whitehouse in the Parish Esquire by a Codicil to his Will dated 20th February 1795 and proved in **Doctors' Commons** 24th April 1795, bequeathed to Trustees, ONE THOUSAND POUNDS, In Trust for the purpose of Establishing an annual Charity for the POOR of this Parish for ever; to which end he directed the said sum to be laid out in the purchase of freehold land in or near to this Parish, and that the rents and profits thereof should be distributed to the Poor of this Parish, at the discretion of his said Trustees and the Minister and Church wardens of this Parish for the time being, as follows (Viz)*

*One half of such rents and profits on the Sunday next after Christmas Day, one fourth on the Sunday next after Easter Day, and the remaining fourth part on the Sunday next after the Feast of St Michael the Archangel for ever. The said sum of £1000 has been duly invested in the Purchase of Freehold Land in this Parish called the BANTS FARM and LITTLE CHAPELS containing together 21-1-17 which by Indenture dated 1st July 1806 and inrolled in Chancery on the 11th November 1806 were conveyed unto Thomas Freeman Esquire. Thomas Nott Gent, George Woodyatt M.D. and Nicholas Waite Robinson Clerk (Rector of this Parish) IN TRUST as above mentioned.*

*By deed dated 20th November 1827 new trustees were appointed to act with Nicholas Waite Robinson Clerk the then surviving Trustee.*

Doctors commons also called the College of Civilians was a society of lawyers practising civil law in London

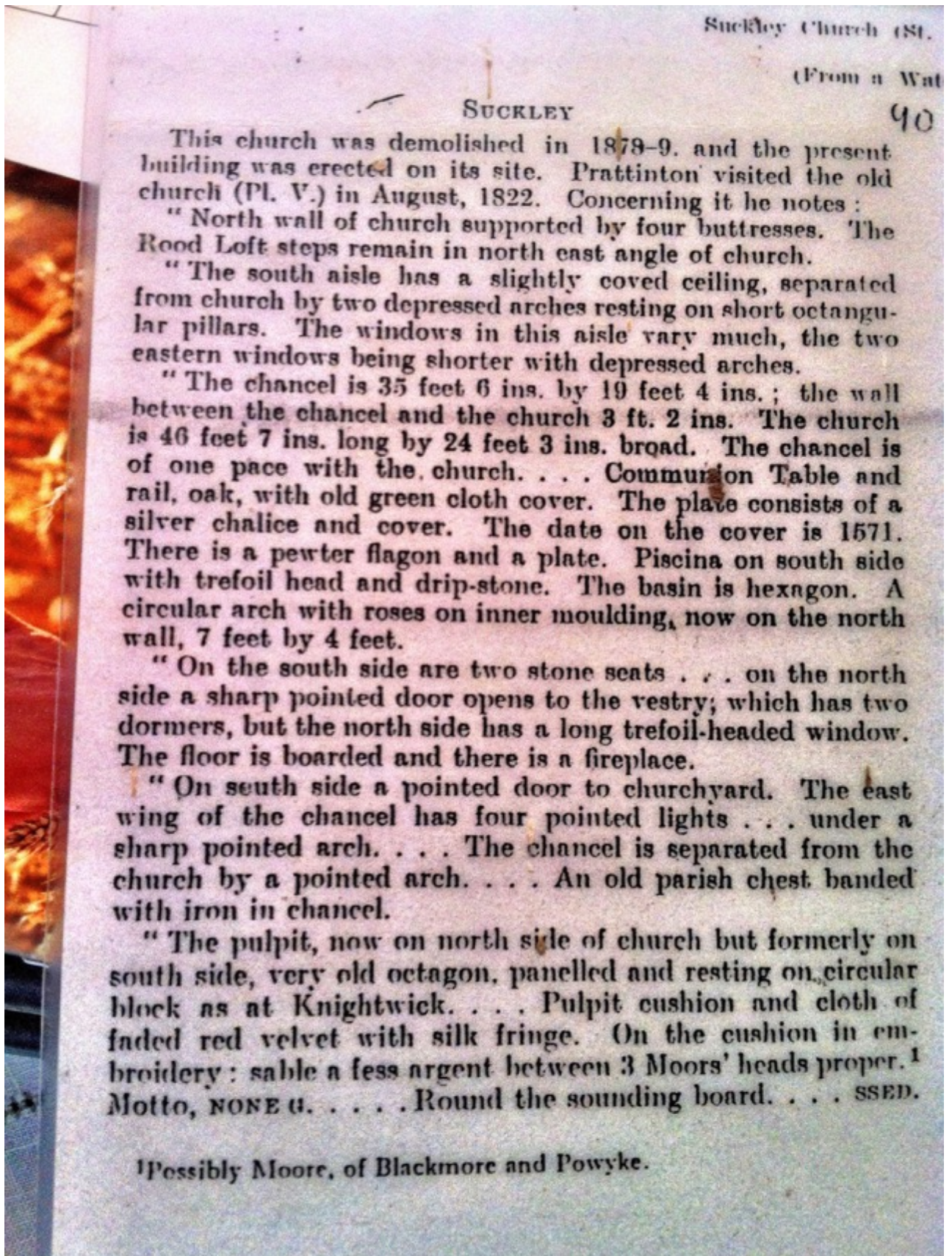


***Interesting medical note.***

Hannah (the daughter of Thomas Freeman of **the White House Suckley**) eloped with Dr George Woodyatt (physician to Worcester Infirmary). They had 11 children (8 daughters). The eldest (Hannah) became the wife of **Sir Charles Hastings (founder of the British Medical Association)**. She died age 52 in 1815.

**Prattinton writes (of the previous church) that a 'singing gallery' was being erected** (from British History Online).

1822



90

SOME OLD WORCESTERSHIRE CHURCHES AND CHAPELS 91

ARE . THAY . THAT . HEARE . . THE . . WORD . . OF . . GOD . .  
AND . KEEPE . IT . ANNO . . . .

"The font,<sup>1</sup> is ancient, of stone, circular with a carved border, circular base, leaded and large enough for immersion.

"At west end of church, which is now enclosed except a door from belfry, but used to be open by a very large circular arch, they are now (1822) erecting a singing gallery. Pews and open seats in nave. On the (pear-tree) door of a seat in south aisle is carved . . . John Palmer, 1684. . . .

"South entrance, circular arch under very large wooden porch. Door very ancient. Lock appears to be carved with an adze.

"There is a custom here of dressing the church with holly at Christmas; birch on Sunday nearest Midsummer; oak at Whitsuntide; and yew at Easter.

"The base of the tower, from two long narrow lancet windows, seems as old as the church. There was formerly a spire, now only a wooden bell turret, with six bells<sup>2</sup>. . . The small door in west wall modern. . . . The churchyard is large, a large barn at east end. . . ."

'There then follow copies of many sepulchral inscriptions the church and churchyard, together with a list of benefactions, and notes from the registers.

## **Rev John Pearson instituted Rector**

[30 July 1838](#)

Rev John Pearson, Rector of Suckley from 1838 to 1882, later Rural Dean and an Honorary Canon of Worcester Cathedral. The population of Suckley was then 575, rising to 623 by the time he left Suckley in 1882. During his 44 years in the Parish considerable changes took place- many instigated by John Pearson himself – like the Suckley Free School over the road and replacing the old church with a larger new one!



## **The Rector taught at Suckley Free School**

[1848](#)

In 1848 a brief description of the Suckley Free School was published in John Noake's book, *The Rambler, in Worcestershire*: 'The school house, which many years ago was built against the western end of the south wall of the church, was full of children of both sexes, and the worthy rector (Rev John Pearson) was sitting in the midst of them, hearing, explaining and examining them on the scriptures.' (see red room in 1628 plan).

## **Rev Pearson decides to erect a new schoolroom**

[1870](#)

In 1870, a committee consisting of Rev John Pearson, Thomas Rowley Hill MP, James Twinberrow, John H Walker, George Roper, William Ockey and James Best resolved "That considering the educational deficiencies of this Parish the undersigned regard the erection of a schoolroom and masters house as a necessary undertaking and that Mr Rowe be consequently instructed to prepare plans for approval and subsequent transmission to the Educational Department of the Privy Council...." A builder's estimate for the work was £470 for the schoolhouse, £250 for the teacher's residence.



Suckley School originally had its Victorian cupola

## The old Suckley church was demolished

[13 January 1876](#)

With John Pearson as Rector, a 'Vestry meeting' proposed and unanimously carried that "The old church being in a dilapidated condition be taken down and a new church be erected on the site of it in accordance with plans and specifications prepared by William Jeffrey Hopkins, Worcester Architect." The former Church was said to have largely burned down and was needing to be rebuilt. Prepared plans were put on the door, and people were given 15 days to lodge an objection.



The cost of £4000 was born by generous donations from Rev Pearson, Thomas Rowley Hill MP and other local landowners and inhabitants. **The new church was consecrated and dedicated to St John the Baptist on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1879.**



## **A bottle of whisky – and Suckley’s gilded cockerel has something to crow about**

1880

(a Family memory recalled by the late Barbara Phillips of Guestwick, Suckley)

### **The Suckley church Weathervane**

“Not everyone has a head for heights or is a good climber so it was not surprise that when the weather vane arrived at Suckley Church there were not many volunteers coming forward to install it. But one man did – his name was William Adams (Barbara’s Grandfather) a labourer who lived with his wife and family at The Steps, Suckley. He probably did most of his work on the land at the White House. He said he would put the weathervane on the Church top for “a bottle of whisky” and could he have it beforehand! This was refused but after a few discussions it was agreed that he would get his reward on completion of the job, and safe return to the ground. William duly fixed the piece in place and proudly sat astride the van and spun around seven times on it – one for each day of the week. We are not sure of the date this occurred, but William died at the age of 34 in 1892, leaving a widow, five children and a daughter (Barbara’s mother) who arrived three months after his death.”

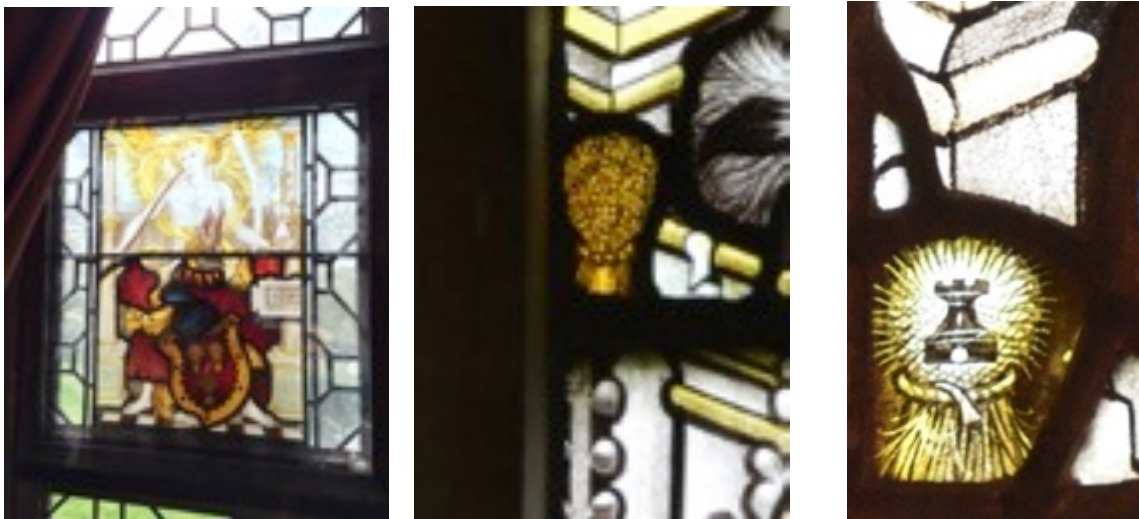


The cockerel was regilded In 2007 by former Bell Captain Ivor Bramich, who made good use of scaffolding being on the tower for repair work. He repainted and regilded the clock, (**see 2007 photograph**) and regilded the cockerel on the pinnacle at the same time.



## The Kempe Stained Glass Windows

Suckley has a fine set of four stained glass windows created by Charles Eamer Kempe (1837 – 1907) who was a Victorian stained glass designer. His studios in London produced over 4000 windows as well as designs for altars and altar frontals, furniture and fittings, lychgates and memorials. English cathedrals containing his work include Chester, Gloucester, Hereford, Lichfield, Wells, Winchester, York and Bristol. This helped to define a later 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglican style. Other fine Kempe stained glass may be seen in Wightwick Manor where the glass was taken from his own house, Old Place, Lindfield in Sussex. Kempe had a vocation to the priesthood, but a severe stammer led Kempe to decide *"if I was not permitted to minister in the Sanctuary I will use my talents to adorn it"*.



As a trademark the firm used a golden *garb* or wheat sheaf which was taken from Kempe's own coat of arms (seen on the left from Wightwick Manor). Look for this in each of the four windows. One window was made in the Kempe factory after his death, when the company was taken over by his cousin Walter E Tower, and this is signified by a tower in the wheat sheaf.

Look for the fine detail in the Kempe windows and note his love of yellow. Note the garments which are embellished with pearls, each one of which was carefully highlighted and etched before and after the glass had been fired.



**An Organ was built for Suckley by local organ builder, Nicholsons.**

[1879](#)

Read about this later - see 'Our Musical Heritage' when "this extremely valuable piece of organ history" was rejuvenated and moved in 2019

**Rev John Pearson died, and Suckley Church has its first beautiful Kempe window**

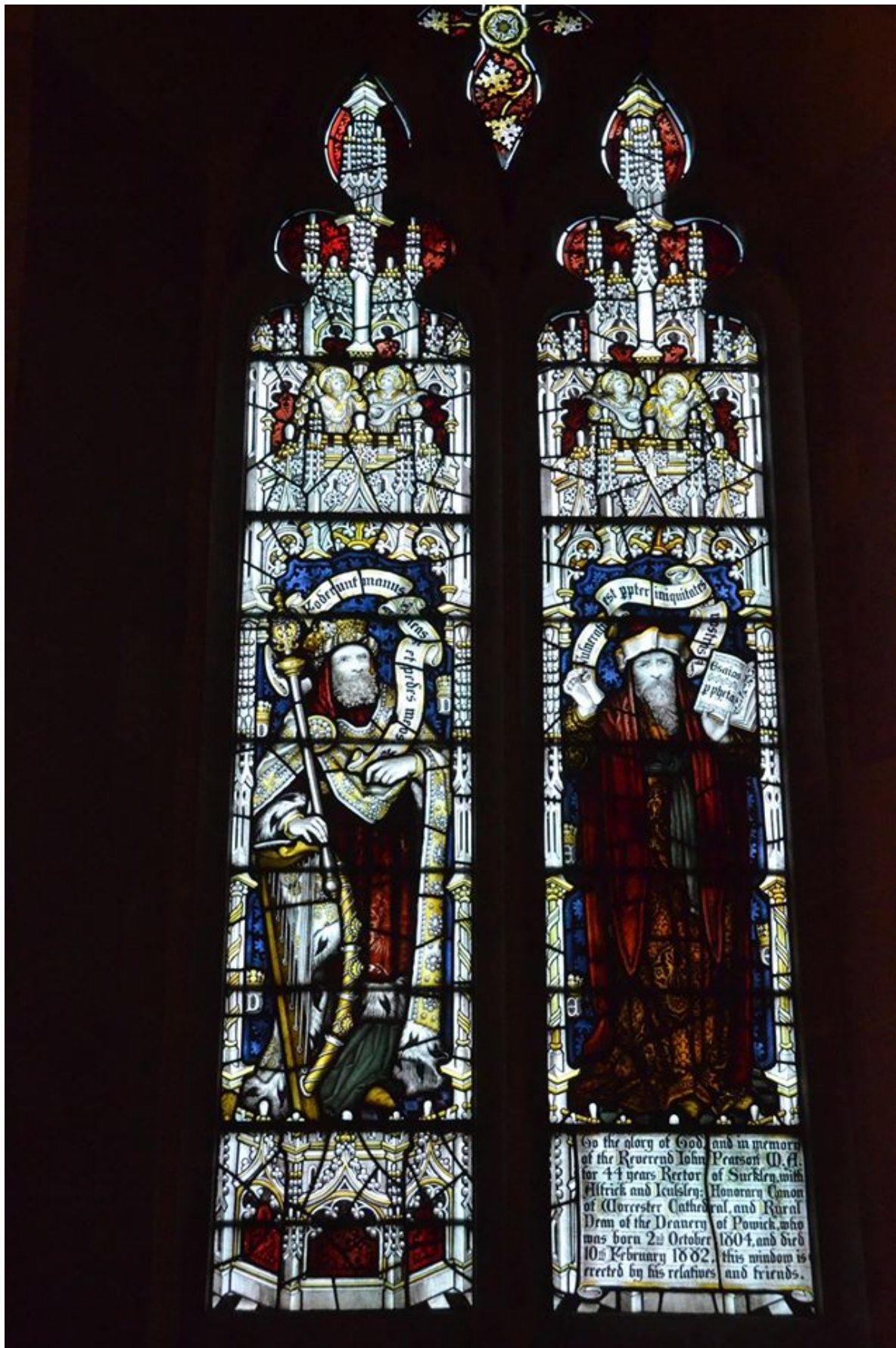
[10 February 1882](#)

After 44 years ministry in Suckley, Rev John Pearson died age 77. The gross value of his estate was £22,428.18s.10d. He left over £2,250 to various local and church charities. He was buried in Suckley churchyard alongside his wife. Our first Kempe stained glass window was commissioned in his memory by his family and friends.

Here is Kempe's signature Wheatsheaf:



This beautiful Kempe glass window was the first Kempe window in Suckley Church. What a privilege to have to have four here.



## Personal tragedies of the Rev Richard Nathaniel Kane

24<sup>th</sup> August 1835 – 13<sup>th</sup> October 1920

When the Rev Kane took up the living in Suckley in 1882, the net income of the parish was £580.11s.1d. He was Rector of Suckley for 28 years. His memorial, along with his wife Mary Evans, is a stone cross on a plinth in the north graveyard.



Items in the church indicate some of the tragedies that the Rev'd Kane experienced. The large oak lectern is dedicated to the memory of his daughter Catherine Ellen who died age 7 months in 1885. Her grave and that of her brother Geoffrey Neville Hill Kane, who died in 1889 aged 9 months, are also to be found in the north graveyard.



The great Kempe east window is dedicated to the memory of his son John Feilding Hill Kane who died of enteric fever the day after his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in 1897 – see 1897



However, the Suckley bells rang joyfully for daughters Kathleen, Mabel, Sarah and Margaret and son Richard who were all married in Suckley church.

**Rev Kane, Suckley's new Rector, loses his infant daughter. A fine oak lectern gives us cause to reflect on why families had 10 children in those days.**

[1 February 1885](#)

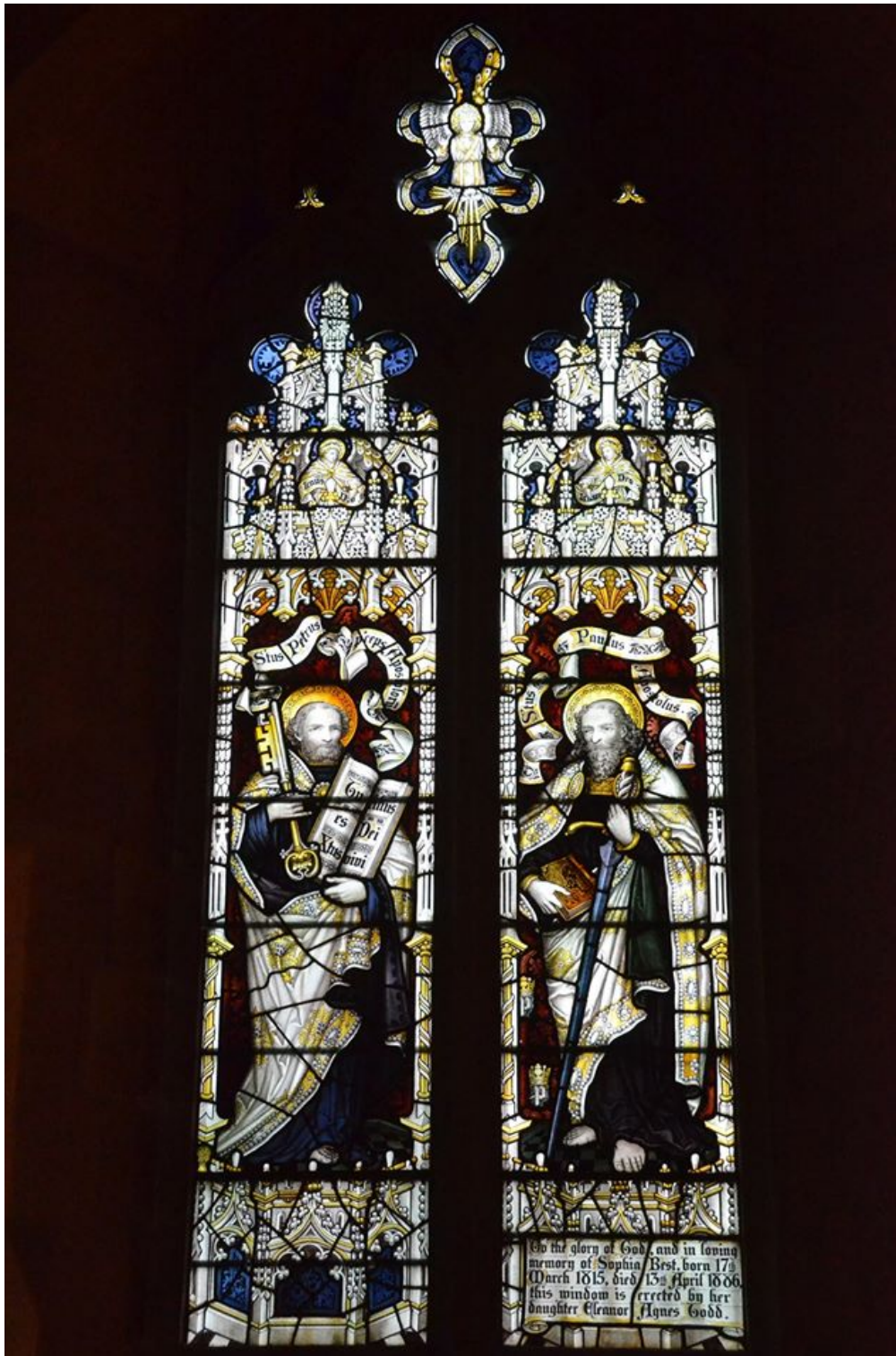
"To the glory of God and in loving memory of CATHERINE ELLEN, infant daughter of Richard Nathaniel Kane and Mary Evans, his wife. Born June 30th 1884, died Feb 1st 1885". There are several such infant deaths in the churchyard – and during a scarlet fever epidemic in 1894 carbolic soap and disinfectant was kept at the Rectory for villagers to collect.

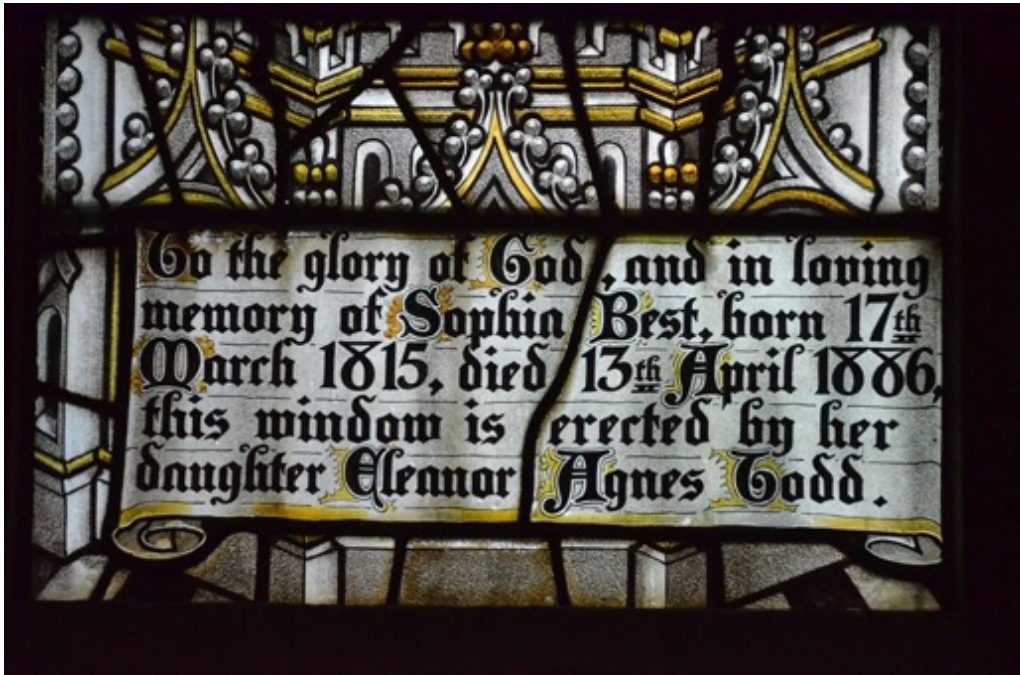


## Another Kempe memorial window for Suckley

[13 April 1886](#)

In April 1886 Mrs Sophia Best died, and her daughter, Eleanor Agnes Todd, erected this beautiful Kempe window in her memory. Here again is his 'Wheatsheaf' autograph. She lived for many years at Grove Hill and "been such a kind friend and benefactor to all in Suckley".





Above, we see again Kempe's trademark signature of the golden sheaf of wheat

### **Sophia Best at Grove Hill –**

In the first half of the 19th Century, the Best family lived at Stocks Farm, Suckley and owned the land at the southern part of the Suckley Hills. In the 1840's their daughter Sophia was to get married and the Best family financed and built Grove Hill on the Suckley Hills as a new residence for Sophia, her husband James and family to live. The tithe map from 1840 shows that there was no residence there previously. The house and outbuildings were finally completed in 1850 and Sophia and her husband James moved in. Sophia continued to live there after the death of James, with daughter Eleanor then living at Grove Hill with her husband Thomas Todd.

## Map of Suckley churchyard and nearby properties 1886

Clearly showing the 'new' church and school over the road, and the home of the Addis sisters (Chantry Cottage) and William Addis, the Blacksmith's next door. Before the Addis sisters this was an Inn.

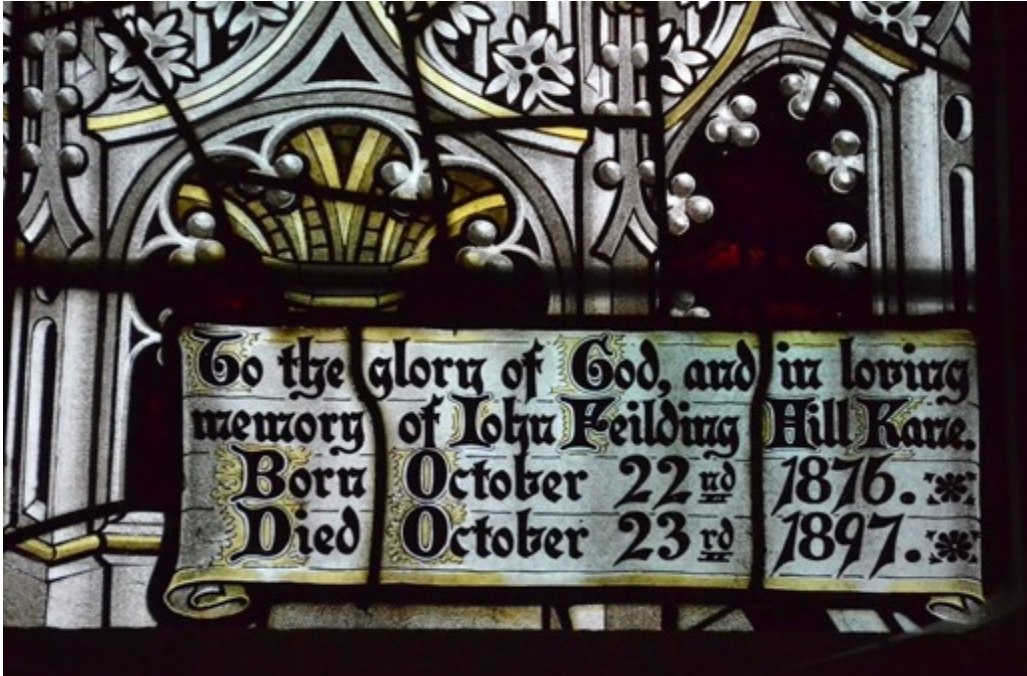




## John Fielding Hill Kane died in India

23 October 1897

Rev Kane and his wife Mary commissioned Kempe to produce this magnificent East window as a memorial for their 21 year old son. It has the wheat sheaf corner design characteristic of Charles Kempe.



2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant John Fielding Hill Kane of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Rifle Brigade who died of enteric fever the day after his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in 1897 and was buried at Miranshah. Imagine receiving such news some months after the event.

The Brigade had been involved in the Tochi expedition on the north west frontier, where " *On September 10<sup>th</sup> Kane joined us from home on first appointment*". By October 30<sup>th</sup> 71 soldiers of the Rifle Brigade had died of dysentery and enteric fever, and 100 more were too unfit to move.

September 8th, 1897. Marched to Datta Khel.

September 10th, 1897. 2nd Lieutenant J. F. H. Kane joined from England, on appointment.

September 12th, 1897. 2nd Lieutenant Hon. H. Cavendish invalided to India.

September 17th, 1897. Returned to Miranshah, where it was hoped the health of all ranks would improve.

The Battalion was employed on convoy escort duty, fatigue parties, &c.

October 2nd, 1897. Lieutenant-Colonel Hon. M. Curzon, assumed command of the 2nd Brigade, *vice* Brigadier-General W. Symons, C.B., who left to command a Division in the Tirah Expedition.

The following Farewell order was published by Brigadier-General Symons:—

"In saying 'Good-bye' to the 2nd Brigade, Brigadier-General Symons desires to thank all ranks for the soldier-like support that they have given him during his command.

"His great regret is, that he is not permitted to take the whole Brigade with him on further service against the Afridis.

"General Symons wishes each and every member of the Brigade good-bye, and trusts that it may be his good fortune on some near future occasion to command them again on service."

October 3rd. Orders received for the Battalion to return to Bannu in detachments.

October 7th. Lieutenant Hon. C. Henniker-Major and 16 Riflemen rejoined from from Datta Khel, where they had been in charge of two Maxim Guns.

October 10th. "D" and "F" Companies left for Bannu, under Major Hon. C. C. Winn.

October 11th. Lieutenant Hon. C. Henniker-Major appointed Provost-Marshal to the 2nd Brigade.

October 14th. "A," "C" and "H" Companies, under Major A. E. W. Colville, left for Bannu.

October 18th. Headquarters and "B," "E" and "G" Companies left for Bannu.

October 20th. Arrived at Bannu. Orders received for the Battalion to return to India and proceed to Umballa.

October 22nd. 2nd Lieutenant Hon. H. Cavendish died of dysentery at Rawul Pindi.

October 23rd. 2nd Lieutenant J. F. H. Kane died of enteric fever at Miranshah. The following Divisional Order was published by Major-General G. Corrie-Bird, commanding Tochi Field Force.

"Owing to severe sickness it has been considered necessary that the 3rd Battalion Rifle Brigade should return to India, and in bidding them 'Good-bye,' the Major-General wishes to place on record his high appreciation of their soldierly qualities and uniformly good discipline in the field.

"The Battalion marched up from India during the hottest time of year, and arrived at Datta Khel, a distance of 174 miles, with but few casualties, and was incessantly employed on very heavy and arduous duties during the months of August and September. Throughout this time the conduct of all ranks was most exemplary.

"The Major-General also wishes to express his appreciation at the way in which all ranks met and bore up against the epidemic that has cost the Battalion so many good soldiers, and the fortitude evinced throughout that trying time, and, in common with the whole Force, he much regrets their departure from the Field."

October 25th. The Depôt moved from Thobba to Rawul Pindi, and arrived on 28th, and were quartered in the Rest Camp until November 1st, during which time they were employed in moving and loading the baggage of the Battalion. Proceeded to Umballa by rail on November 1st, under Captain J. S. Cowans, and went into quarters.

October 27th. Authority received appointing Major

## Kempe's great East Window

I do hope you can see the detail – it is exquisite. In the centre is Christ on the cross 'INRI' (Iēsus Nazarēnus Rex Iudaeōrum – Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews), and at his feet 'Redeemer of the world'. To the left is St John the Baptist carrying a lamb with the inscription, again in Latin – 'Behold the lamb of God' and to the right is St John the Evangelist 'We see his glory' and 'In the beginning was the Word' and 'Holy, Holy'. The majestic eagle (standing above Kempe's golden sheaf of wheat) in stained glass can represent God's power, but often (as here) it represents God's love, since this bird is known for the care it provides to its young.



In the glory of God, and in loving  
memory of John Krompfort, B.A. Esq.,  
Born October 22<sup>d</sup> 1726, in  
Died October 23<sup>d</sup> 1797, in

## **A bicycle accident and 'Arts and Crafts'** 1898 in Suckley, Worcestershire, United Kingdom

In 1898 Miss Ina Murray Mackenzie, age 41, died in a bicycle accident while visiting Suckley. A hymn board was carved and presented by two fellow woodworkers from the South Kensington School of Art & Woodcarving (which eventually became the Royal College of Art) in her memory. Her initials may be seen at the bottom of the board. She was secretary of Home Arts and Industries at the Albert Hall, Kensington.

Her grave may be found towards the back of the north graveyard and is perhaps the most interesting, and certainly the most unusual grave in the churchyard. It has a "grave-board", clearly carved by her fellow workers. Graveboards are rare in England. The inscriptions are beautifully carved, and there are Celtic wooden crosses at both ends.



The board inscription reads:  
*The memorial is erected by her sisters  
and carved by her fellow workers in  
loving remembrance  
Ina Murray Mackenzie born July 12<sup>th</sup>  
1857, died August 27<sup>th</sup> 1898.  
Through the grace and gate of death  
we may pass to our joyful  
resurrection. (on one side)  
Through the grave and gate of death  
we only pass to our joyful  
resurrection. (on the other side)*

FROM THE SEPTEMBER 1898 ISSUE OF PARISH MAGAZINE  
by Rev'd Kane

I regret to have to record the sad death of a lady named INA MURRAY MACKENZIE, who was bicycling through the parish last Thursday afternoon. She was coming from the direction of Suckley Green on her way to the Stocks with a companion, Miss Editha Lyne Wolfe, when she collided with a wagon coming out of a field on the right-hand side of the road, with the result that her ribs were crushed, and she received a slight concussion of the brain. She was taken to the White House where she received every attention, but she was hurt so seriously that the doctor, Mr T H Greensill, had very little hopes of her, and she died on Saturday afternoon. Her companion was happily able to jump off her bicycle and sustained no injury. By the death of Miss Mackenzie a valuable life has been lost. She was Secretary of Home Arts and Industries, Albert Hall, South Kensington. The funeral took place on Tuesday at Suckley.



Can you read Ina Murray Mackenzie's initials at the bottom? IMM 98



1889 Arts and Crafts Grave board reads: *The memorial is erected by her sisters and carved by her fellow workers in loving remembrance Ina Murray Mackenzie born July 12<sup>th</sup> 1857, died August 27<sup>th</sup> 1898. Through the grace and gate of death we may pass to our joyful resurrection. (on one side) Through the grave and gate of death we only pass to our joyful resurrection. (on the other side)*

## **Rev RN Kane started the Suckley Missionary Association and other organisations.**

[1889 - 1898](#)

Rev RN Kane established many courses and clubs, such as a Night School "for men and youths who have left school" and Mothers' Meetings in **1889**. In **1891** he established a Co-operative Society in Suckley "to encourage thrift among the working classes". In 1892 the Rector appealed for books to create a Lending Library in the School.

**1892** 'A new and efficient heating apparatus was installed and paid for by Mr Rowley Hill' – the church had underfloor heating with hot water piping!

The first Parish Meeting was held in Suckley on 4<sup>th</sup> December **1894** when the Rev Kane became a Parish Councillor.

**1898** the Suckley Missionary Association was started "For the purpose of arousing warmer feelings for foreign missions than now exists". Members included '33 adult members and 34 juveniles'. Every March there was an Annual sermon with Missionary speakers – working in China, British Guiana, Singapore, Ceylon etc

Also - The stripping and re-roofing of Suckley church was completed (thanks to William Ranford).

Also - The restoration of the bells was finished.

## **William Ockey – a generous Neighbour**

[1900](#)

William Ockey of Lower Court bequeathed the land on which the present School is built, to "Suckley Church Vicar and Church wardens and their successors for ever".





This Draft Deed must be prepared by filling up the blanks of this printed Form. A Manuscript Draft cannot (except under special circumstances) be submitted to Their Lordships' Counsel, but will be returned to the Promoters.

B. E.

From the words in face of these two parties, strike, or the words

(I) or (WE)†

I William Okey \_\_\_\_\_  
of the Parish \_\_\_\_\_  
of Suckley in the County of Worcester Farmer —  
under the authority of the Acts of the 5th and 8th years of the reign of Her Majesty for affording facilities for the Conveyance and Endowment of Sites for Schools do hereby ~~freely~~ and voluntarily and without valuable consideration ~~or~~ † (in consideration of)

† The words printed in old English should be suitably distinguished by engraving both the D and C.

to ~~(me) or (us)†~~ paid grant and convey † unto the Rector and Churchwardens of the Parish of Suckley aforesaid and their Successors —

\* The boundaries and extent of the premises should be accurately described.

All\* that piece or parcel of Land situated in the parish of Suckley aforesaid containing by admeasurement half an acre bounded on the North & South by private occupation Roads on the East by the Road leading from Worcester to Bromyard and on the West by other property belonging to the said William Okey \_\_\_\_\_

which said premises are delineated in the Map drawn in the margin herof together with all easements appurtenances and hereditaments corporeal and incorporeal belonging thereto or now used therewith and all my estate right title and interest in or to the same premises To hold the same unto and to the use of the said Rector & Churchwardens and their Successors for ever \_\_\_\_\_

for the purposes of the said Acts and upon trust to permit the said premises and all buildings thereon erected or to be erected to be for ever hereafter appropriated and used as and for a School for the education of Children and Adults or Children only of the labouring manufacturing and other poorer classes in the ~~the~~ (Parish) ~~of~~ (District) ~~of~~ aforesaid and for no other purpose •

† The words printed in Italic are to be omitted when it is not intended to place the School in Union with the National Society.

And it is hereby declared that such school shall always be in union with and conducted according to the principles and in furtherance of the ends and designs of the National Society for promoting the Education of the Poor in the principles of the Established Church throughout England and Wales and subject to and in conformity with the declaration aforesaid such School and premises and the funds and endowments thereof in respect whereof no other disposition shall be made by the donor shall be controlled and managed

.... So that should hopefully enable Suckley to retain its school as a school for ever!

## **Rev Kane requests.....**

**May 1906**

At the age of 71, Rev Kane had been Rector for 24 years and was wishing to retire. He was 'so overwhelmed by requests not to leave' that he agreed to stay "for a time". In return he asked that his parishioners "do him the greatest kindness by attending services in the church more regularly"! For quite a while support for separation of the Parishes (Suckley, Lulsley and Alfrick) had been gaining strength.

In 1906, Mr Clarke, the Curate at Alfrick, wrote (after a men's service was attended by only 19 people) "How is it that so many men absent themselves from church? Do they think that Heaven and a life hereafter are only for women and children; or do they think that they are so perfect that they need no preparation for these?"



### **A mystery pair of throne chairs?**

Victorian? Flemish?  
Louis VI Fauteuil?  
I cannot find the story behind this pair of chairs.  
Please email ACNY or send a personal message to Suckley church Facebook Page if you can help solve the mystery.

## To the Fallen in the Great War

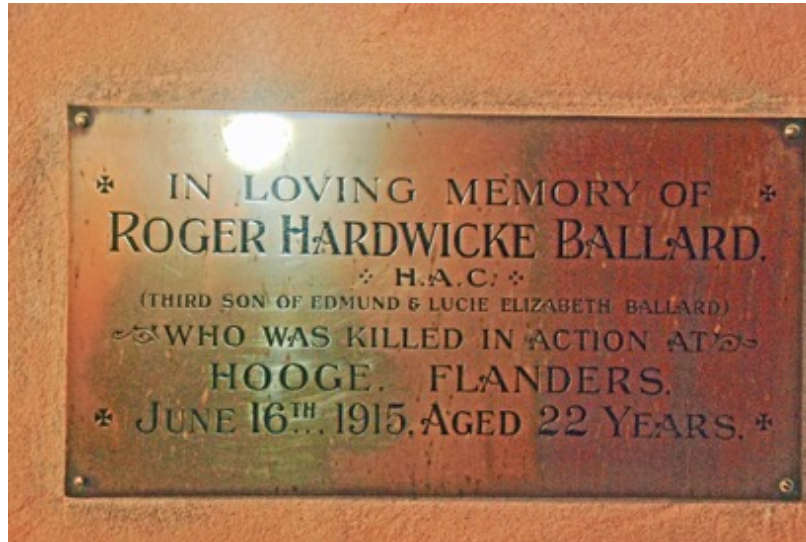
[11 November 1918](#)

"To the Glory of God and in loving memory of the men in this Parish who gave their lives for their country in the Great War. The men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt."



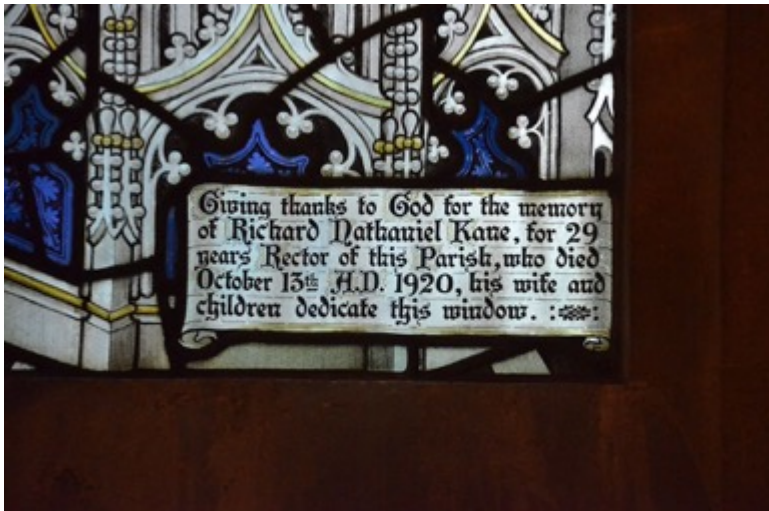
This board is in Suckley Village School





**Rev Kane died – another Kempe window –  
 now with a black tower**

[13 October 1920](#)



Rev Kane died October 13th 1920 aged 85, and was buried in Suckley Churchyard. In 1922 his wife, Mary, and his children, arranged for this classic 'Kempe' stained glass window in his memory at a cost of £130



On Kempe's death in 1907 the golden wheat sheaf was replaced with the single golden wheat sheaf with a black **tower** superimposed on the head of the wheat sheaf because the firm became Kempe & Co Ltd under the managing director Walter Ernest **Tower** and John William Lisle, designer and chief draughtsman who originally joined the firm in 1886. The last of the firm's windows had the tower laid on its side to denote the last of its line.



**Rev Charles Heather Rector**  
**1924 -1946**



It must have been difficult being the Suckley Rector through the war years. The granddaughter of Rev Charles Heather still lives locally and gave us these family photos. She pointed out a brass plate reminding us that our very useful pair of oak pedestals were given in memory of Charles Heather's wife Margaret, because of her keen interest in the church flowers. The Heather grave at the front of church is easily identifiable when in flower!

# Prayers requested for Suckley soldiers going off to war

1 September 1939

'Your prayers are asked for, on behalf of those men who are members of, or are closely related to, members of this Parish: that they may come home safely, and that God will have loving compassion on the FALLEN



## Local talent gives Suckley its chandeliers

[1950 in Suckley Church](#)

Look up and you will see a set of four chandeliers. These were made in the Bruff Engineering Works in Suckley and painted by Ron Hadley, a pupil at Suckley School at the age of 13 in 1950. He still lives locally and still works as a tree surgeon. The Hadley family were talented artists, many of them working in the Worcester Porcelain factory. His great uncle was a founder member of Worcester Porcelain.







These old bulbs have been replaced with aesthetic LED spherical bulbs, and before long we hope to 'restore' the metalwork without compromising Ron Hadley's artistic gift to Suckley church 70 years ago!

### **The warden's family gives our church the oak reredos** **[December 1956](#)**

Cicely Lechmere and her family gave the oak reredos (and festal curtains for the hinged wings) in memory Captain AH Lechmere, who had been churchwarden of Suckley Church for 18 years.

The reredos is a screen or decoration behind the altar in a church. The inscription reads: *"In loving memory of Anthony Hungerford Lechmere, for 18 years churchwarden of this parish 1868-1954"*

The fine detailing of the reredos panels (not the filigree top) may be used as the model for all the new woodwork detail in the North Transept and the Tower.



Cicely Mary (Bridges, Lupton) Lechmere and Anthony Hungerford Lechmere  
image from Coral Poolman

The Lechmere family had been settled in Hanley Castle since the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. Other members of the family include Sir Nicholas Lechmere, a Baron of the Exchequer during the reign of King William III and Member of Parliament for Bewdley, and his grandson Nicholas Lechmere, 1st Baron Lechmere, Solicitor-General, Attorney-General and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.



## The Ranford family give Suckley church a processional cross

1954

This beautiful brass processional cross bears the Inscription "In memoriam 1954 AMDG ELR WR". It was given in 1954 in memory of William Ranford and E Louise Ranford, by their family Jim and Tom, Nancy, Jane, John (in photo) and Will.

John Ranford (photo) in his youth, sang with the choir in Suckley church and remembers walking across the fields from home to get there – he remembers pumping the organ too. His father Jim was Warden and Sexton.



## The amalgamation of the parishes of Alfrick with Lulsley and Suckley

April 1974

The amalgamation of the parishes of Alfrick with Lulsley and Suckley to become a United Benefice. Patronage will be divided between the Crown and the Bishop of Worcester.

**Later, on September 7th 1977,** Suckley PCC voted unanimously to stay as an independent parish within the United Benefice of the parishes of 1) Suckley and 2) Alfrick with Lulsley & 3) Leigh with Bransford.

## **Closure of Leigh Sinton Chapel brings beautiful hand-embroidered cloth**

**May 1977**



The altar from Leigh Sinton Chapel came to Suckley Church on permanent loan when the chapel closed. At a PCC in October 1978 this altar started to be used occasionally as a Nave altar "to bring the priest nearer to the congregation". The beautiful altar cloth was embroidered by the sisters of the 'Community of the Holy Name' in Malvern Link – a convent established in

1887. In 1990 the Community moved to its present location on the outskirts of the city of Derby. The Community actively seeks to respond prayerfully to the needs of the world today.

Here in the North Transept is our Nave altar, showing the exquisitely embroidered frontal



## The Suckley Bell Ringers help the Queen Mother celebrate her 80th birthday

4

August 1980



A Quarter Peal of 1260 changes of Plain Bob and Grandsire Doubles was rung in celebration of the 80th birthday of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (by John Nunn, James Ranford, Susan Ansley, Frederick Davis, Jack Cale and Robert Browne).

Suckley's bell ringers have maintained the privilege of regularly hearing the Suckley bells – new ringers always welcome!



## **Rev Canon Michael Westall – Rector, became Bishop in Tanzania**

1993 – 2000

Rev Michael Westall had been a missionary in India, Principal of Bishop's College Calcutta and finally Principal St Mark's Theological College in Dar es Salaam before coming to Worcestershire. When he retired, Rev Michael, with his wife Punitha, left for him to become Bishop in the Anglican church in Tanzania in a rural area around Lake Malawi.



Bishop Michael has now retired and has returned to visit and take services locally on several occasions.

## **Local parishioner builds bellframe for Suckley, and a bell ringer restores the clock face**

[Frame built 1879](#)   [Bells 1710 – 1755](#)   [Clock 1911 \(face restored 2007\)](#)



Listen to our bells: <https://youtu.be/emTkPMkLUL8>

The Tower contains a ring of six bells that hang in a deal frame made by 'Mr Ranford' a parishioner – a family with generations long associated with Suckley church.

Bell 1: IOS: RACSTER & DAN: CONEY  
CH=WARDENS A R1755 30.25"

Bell 2: ABRAHAM RUDHALL BELLFOUNDER 1710  
31.75"

Bell 3: GOD SAVE THE QUEEN & CHURCH A:R  
1710 32.5"

Bell 4: ABRAHAM RUDHALL BELLFOUNDER 1710  
34.5"

Bell 5: PEACE & GOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD. A:R  
1710 38"

Bell 6: I TO THE CHURCH THE LIVING CALL AND  
TO THE GRAVE DO SUMMONS ALL 1725  
41.125"



Bell ringing and Clock winding are both physically very demanding – the bells and the clock weights are all very heavy. Join them for some great exercise!



The hour-striking clock was installed by John Smith & Sons (Derby) 1912 with separate quarter chimes added in 1919. The clock mechanism is housed in a compartment in SW corner of the Ringing Room.



Clock winding is an excellent exercise. First one climbs the winding stone steps up the tower to the ringing chamber, and then mechanically winding up the two heavy weights that keep the clock ticking and chiming. The clock is wound about 3 times a fortnight – the greater the time interval the harder it is to haul up the weights.

**The clock face was repainted and regilded by former Bell Captain Ivor Bramich in 2007**

## **Rev Andrew Bullock 2003-2014**

**13 April 2003**



Vicar Rev Andrew Bullock



Alexandra Bullock was a Lay Reader

Rev Andrew Bullock had a young family who enjoyed playing an active part in community events like riding the donkeys at the annual Palm Sunday Procession through our 3 parishes of Leigh, Alfrick and Suckley.



September 2009 was the first meeting of the Team Council of the WWRT – and the 2 Benefices became 2 groups of churches within the Worcester West Rural Team of churches. The reduced number of ordinands is beginning to have its effect on parish life in the Church of England.





2011 the first Barnyard Nativity brought nearly 300 people to Colles Place barn – and this has been a much-loved Christmas Eve gathering since.

## **Rev Anne Potter is looking after 14 different churches**

### **Palm Sunday 2015 to present day**

Rev Anne has lived in many continents and worked in many roles (most recently as a primary school teacher and later post mistress) before being ordained priest. Now Rural Dean, Rev Anne is Team Vicar for 10 parishes (14 churches) in the Worcester West Rural Team of Churches.

Covid-19 closed our nation's churches at Easter, but our local ministry team responded with innovation and rapid digital learning so that services could be streamed and shared by Zoom.



When this story began, the villages of Leigh, Alfrick and Suckley, Lulsley and Bransford each had a church and each church had a priest. Now we are a Team of 14 churches with a Rector, a Vicar and 2 Curates. The ministry team is supported by 2 retired priests, 3 'Lay Readers' and several 'Associate Lay Ministers'. They have learned to create videos, Live-stream services and find new resources to support those no longer able to attend church. The days of priest and parish living alongside each other have gone. The strict social distancing needed to prevent church communities becoming Covid-19 spreaders adds to the complications of parish life in 2020. May God give us wisdom as we seek new ways to live our lives in our communities – how best to “live together apart” in this beautiful part of Worcestershire.



Under the Hop Bines:  
Rev Anne is seen here with Lay Reader Jill Smith – they and the Ministry Team are the shepherds tending the souls in this rural community, ripe for harvest. Next is shepherd and farmer Jill Hammonds and Brewer Sarah Saleh.

The Saleh family, being church members, were instrumental in the successful setting up of the (now annual) BFG (Beer Food and Gifts) Fest in and around Suckley church. Their successful Hop Shed Brewery (on the local Stocks Hop Farm) was one of many stalls celebrating local produce at Harvest time.

### **Elgar cycled past Church Lane - I wonder if he ever visited the church or played the organ?**

Below is the view from Suckley church tower – over part of the village and beyond to the Malvern Hills not far away. Elgar's Birchwood home is nearby (where he composed Land of Hope and Glory) and his OS cycling map shows that he used to ride around these hilly lanes.

The village began as scattered farms and hamlets, and it is easy to understand that social isolation can be a problem – hence the dream that the church space will be useful to the community and can become again the beating heart of village life, like it would have been in medieval times.



Elgar's OS map (left) shows faint red lines drawn in by Edward Elgar to show where he had cycled. Here we see that he cycled past Suckley church and turned West at Stocks Farm crossroads. He outlined Worcestershire in green and Herefordshire in red.

### **View from the Tower over the BFG Fest 2019**



**SPACE**  
**(Suckley Parish Academy and Community Enterprises)**  
**bringing new life to Suckley**  
**registered as a charity [2016](#)**



**SPACE (Suckley Parish Academy and Community Enterprises)** was registered as a [Charity number 1169609](#), to help develop the space within the church for the benefit of the whole of Suckley's scattered community.

The Logo explains how SPACE intends to help bring new life to Suckley, by opening up the space in this beautiful well-situated building, to bring people together, becoming useful to all. The BFG Fest (Beer Food and Gifts Festival) of local produce and talent has exemplified this.

**The S has two hop bines;** these represent the importance of hop growing as a major farming activity in Suckley.

**The P shows a primary school age boy and a girl.** The outstanding village school next door will enjoy using the space for assemblies, dance and whole school activities.

**The A shows the tower of Suckley church,** the largest building in the village. With underfloor heating, accessible toilet, kitchen and Community Room it can offer multi-use facilities for local people.

**The C shows the profile of a young person.** The plans will provide a venue for tots, teens and tea drinkers alike.

**The E shows two stringed instruments.** The acoustic of the building is excellent for live music making and concerts, and we hope in future that the new space will host regular musical events and inspire community music making opportunities.

Suckley needs its church to be sustainable – so we have created a versatile space in the nave by mobilising the Victorian pine pews and replacing some of them with stackable chairs. It is heartening to see it being used daily (in normal times) – mainly by church and school. As soon as we have a toilet and kitchen, we look forward to working also with [Suckley's Good Neighbour Scheme](#) and become a useful gathering place for other groups in the village. In recent challenging times it seems particularly the elderly, the lonely and the vulnerable who could immediately benefit when our Community Room can function in what was the Vestry, which will be our priority after the toilet and kitchen.



Ready for a service at Christmas time.



'Open the Book' is always well received by Suckley school



A Ceilidh was the perfect way to bring together the whole community to celebrate the new floor – young and not so young, agile and not so agile! A good time was enjoyed by all <https://youtu.be/Lg9-1XZYBdM>

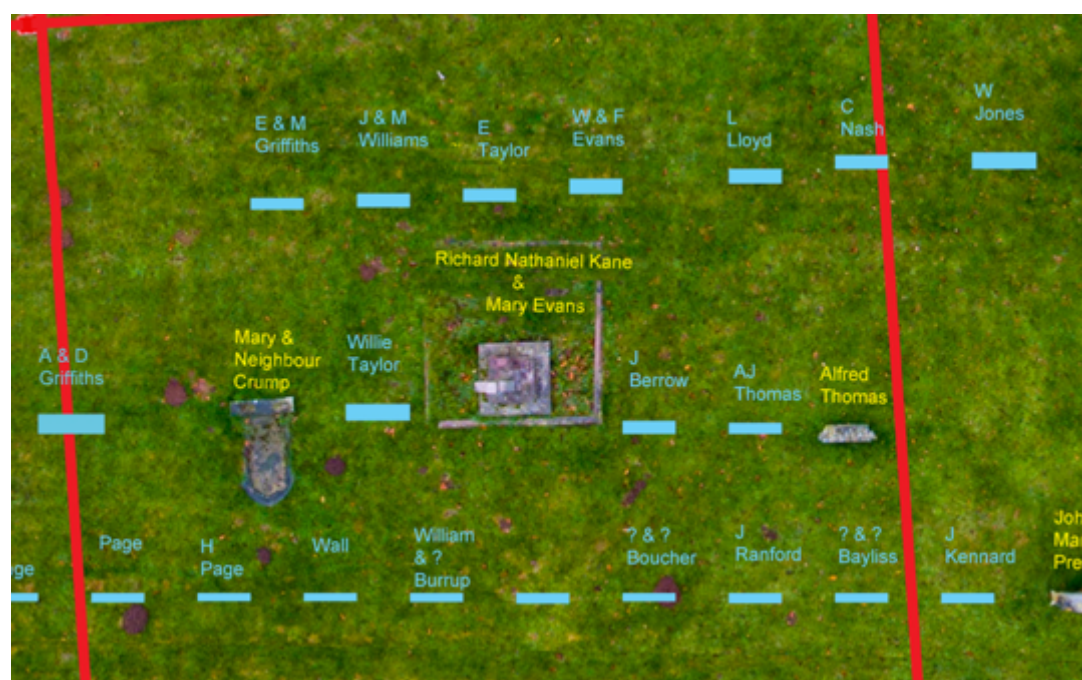
### **Drone assists accurate mapping of Suckley churchyard**

**[28 November 2018](#)**

Thanks to the invaluable offer of help with a professional drone, Suckley Church has been able to create an accurate plan of all the marked graves in the North churchyard.

This survey has enabled us to realise the value of marking a burial site, for family members who may, years later, want to know more about their forebears. All the blue lines on the plan below represent the likely whereabouts of unmarked graves based on the burial register and the known marked graves in yellow.

Requests come in each year, from all around the world, seeking information about ancestors buried here. Thanks to the very thorough survey of the memorials done by [Suckley Local History Society](#) in 2005/6, we know what was then written on the memorials (many have since become illegible). [Suckley Church](#) now hopes to create an online resource to enable people to see and read these precious family treasures relating to their ancestors.



## **OUR MUSICAL HERITAGE since 1879**

### **Former Suckley organist, Brian Willis, tells us about our 140 year old treasure!**

**Built 1879, rejuvenated and moved 2019**

“When Suckley Church was rebuilt in 1879, the organ was also built in that year (probably built for the church) by John Nicholson of Palace Yard, Worcester, where the company was based at the time. The Company is now a very successful international organ builder in close-by Leigh Sinton – ours is probably their closest original organ!



The organ has 5 stops and was built to lead hymn singing at a time when the bands of wandering minstrels, which had led singing in churches for a considerable time, were in decline. It has one keyboard for the hands (the manual) and one for the feet. The pedal board was innovative in its time and has no pipes of its own – it pulls down keys from the manual but is positioned to the side of the keys that it plays. It is therefore not easy to play but is highly respected and gives delight as one of the very earliest Nicholson organs from Palace Yard, is totally original, and still being played in its original church.

The manual is connected on to the quite complicated box called ‘the chest’ which contains a number of fine leather valves, operated through fine wires attached to thin strips of wood called ‘trackers’ and finally the keys. If one leather valve is damaged, the whole organ has to be dismantled to reach it!

The console is the means by which the organist plays the organ, and nowadays are a standard shape and size. Not so the Suckley organ! It was made pre-standardisation, so nothing is standard. Organists brought up on standard organs would find it difficult to play ... but it is an unmolested example of a small Nicholson organ, an extremely valuable piece of organ history! Above all, it was made for the Church and sounds splendid!”



In times past, choirboys like John Ranford (Left) would walk across the fields to practise – taking turns to pump the organ blower. His family gave us Suckley’s processional cross (see 1954).



In those days with a church choir it made sense that the organ was next to the Quire, despite its extending backwards and occupying a large part of the Vestry.



The earlier position of the organ beside the Quire – where the organist could not hear or see the congregation, nor they him!



The new position of the organ is appreciated by both organist and congregation. Here is a good example – after a bell ringer's funeral the organist maintains our composure while the chairs are moved, and the Wake is prepared – listen with this link. – <https://youtu.be/-u3B0BymwCY> .



Brian Willis says again “Natural wear and tear is to be expected after 140 years. Bodge the builder has existed since the dawn of time, and some examples are noticed here. If a church mouse is poor, what about the woodworm, various fungi etc? All these will take their share of any food available – and there is quite a variety of foods inside organs!”.

Our organ went for a rest-cure and woodworm treatment at Nicholson’s during the dusty work of replacing the floor, and then pipe by pipe she was put back together:

Here is a video of how Nicholson skills enable the organ to find its voice again – each pipe in turn <https://youtu.be/LpReEvmpKJs> .....



.....in time for Andrew Caskie, their Managing Director, to give us a recital (here is a video of a few moments from this <https://youtu.be/tT2ulxThs2k> )

**Suckley Concert this Saturday!**

20<sup>th</sup> April 2019 7.30pm  
Suckley Church

**Come and enjoy listening to our 140-year-old organ really showing off what it can do!**



An Organ Recital and talk by Andrew Caskie, MD Nicholson Organs

(accompanied by canapés, wine and soft drinks)



Big thank you to the team at Nicholsons for bringing Suckley's organ back home again. Centre is James Atherton, Nicholson's Head Voicer. James is also a renowned professional tenor. On the left is James' assistant Alex Fishburn. On the right is Bob Jones, a French polisher and joiner who has fed and polished the woodwork of the organ. Bob also restored our funeral bier which had been lying in the church cellar unappreciated and unused for many years. It is now our invaluable welcome table.



As well as the organ, our present music in Suckley is supported by ...

We have an excellent **digital piano** – which stays in tune whatever the temperature in church!

**The family orchestra** enjoys playing together at Christmas and Easter – we were hoping for a summer appearance this year, but it was not to be. We live in Elgar country with a strong musical heritage around us, being close to Malvern and equidistant from Birmingham, Cheltenham and Stratford. We have a good mix of instrumentalists – all ages and stages – all thoroughly enjoying the magical feel of being part of an orchestra. We want our children to grow up knowing the rich benefits that a musical heritage offers. ‘O Come all ye Faithful – Come let us adore Him! <https://youtu.be/kEyJ7v2CgCl>



We are fortunate that the **St Johns Music Group ‘Mixed Blessings’** leads our music sometimes too – it is very useful having different musicians prepared to lead our worship, because each brings their own style which appeals to different musical tastes and suits different types of service.





We are also grateful that Dave is a church member who is also a local Elim church worship leader. Dave often leads our monthly informal evening service as well as being the obvious choice for a churchyard service such as leading the way for 'This little light of mine' at the annual '**Tree of Light service**'. The Tree of Light shines out over the village each Christmas season remembering **our most precious heritage – those dear to us who are no longer with us.**



This little light of mine,  
I'm gonna let it shine,  
This little light of mine,  
I'm gonna let it shine,  
This little light of mine,  
I'm gonna let it shine,  
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

The light that shines is the light of love,  
Lights the darkness from above.  
It shines on me and it shines on you  
And shows what the power of love can do.  
I'm gonna shine my light both far and near,  
I'm gonna shine my light both bright and clear  
Where there's a dark corner in this land,  
I'm gonna let my little light shine.



In the brief video link below we look around the church and churchyard, finally gazing over to the school. Quarter past the hour strikes on the clock. Suckley Church is a priceless treasure that is here today, has been here for generations past, and we want it to remain for future generations. I hope you have enjoyed your 'Virtual Visit'. Come back and visit for real when you can.

We can't take its future for granted. If we want Suckley Church to be around for hatch, match and despatch, and to remain a place of unchanging calm and peace and a useful church for future generations, we all need to be part of that future life. Please help Suckley Church become again the vital hub of village life that it would have been in medieval times.

<https://youtu.be/NRhd-P2WhP8>

Many thanks to my many sources of information including the Suckley History Society's 2006 book 'Aspects of Suckley' and their 2005 Suckley headstone survey.