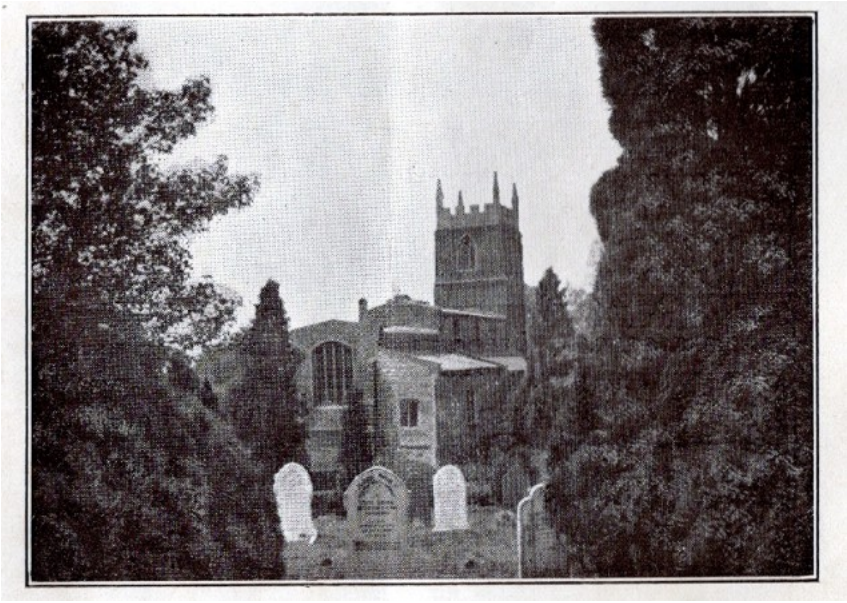
The Story of the Church of S. Guthlac at Stathern

A booklet compiled by The Revd. Ernest Peirson, Rector of Stathern in 1913

This is a complete re-typed copy of a booklet compiled by the Revd. Ernest Peirson in 1913 for distribution to his parishioners. The photographs are also taken from his booklet. In addition, there are photocopies of the tables he produced of the church building alterations from AD900 – AD1913, the names of Rectors of the Parish from AD1225 – AD1904, and the names of the Chantry Priests at Stathern AD1294 – AD1539.

To my
Old Neighbours
and
for the use
of
Visitors to this Church



Here is the Story of our Church, as I have pieced it together during several years of loving use of this little House of God

Where did I get the story from, you ask? Well, partly from our own registers, and from the series of Churchwardens', Overseers' and Constables' accounts from the year 1630 onwards, which this Parish is lucky enough to have preserved; partly from the diocesan registers at Peterborough; the diocesan registers at Lincoln; the archidiaconal registers at Leicester; the archiepiscopal registers at Lambeth; the British Museum, the Record Office, old histories of Leicestershire, the wills of old inhabitants, old deeds of conveyance of land, traditions handed down from the past, and so on, and so on. But mostly, I think, from the very stones of the Church itself

Any old building will, after a while, if you let it, tell you something of its own story; but

you mustn't be in a hurry, you must be ready to wait and be taught; and presently the Building itself will, in some measure, yield up to its story-to those who love it

This is, as you see, only a little old country Church, but there is plenty of interest here-interest which goes back to the days before England was a nation, and which continues down to the present hour. Come with me, and I will tell you something of the little that I have learned about this House of God.

First of all, why is it called the Church of S. Guthlac at Stathern? At once we are back a thousand years and more, in the days before William the Conqueror and the Norman Conquest, when the Saxons (themselves invaders) ruled the land. For “Stathern” is a Saxon word, and Guthlac was a Saxon nobleman.

You ought to pronounce Stathern as “Stat-hern,” as we who have lived here longest do pronounce it, and then you will see its meaning. For “Hern” is the Saxon word for a little cosy corner of sheltered, cultivated ground, such as I will show you. What then is “Stat” ? I could not make this syllable out for a long time, till I found, in the old papers referring to this Parish, that its name, in the days gone by, generally contained the letter C or K. The name was variously spelt Staketurna, Stakethirne, Stachedirne, Seakethorne, Stachetone, Stakethern, and Staketherne. The last spelling is the oldest that I have found, and that was as far back as the year 1290. Sometimes it is true, even in early days, the C or K was dropped out and the name was spelt nearly as we spell it now. But I felt that there must be some reason for the C or K getting into the word, and I have no doubt that it is this. Look at the name when written Staket-Hern; change the T into D and what have you? Why, “the staked hern,” that is the corner of the ground enclosed by stakes to keep out the deer and wild boars.

There is just such a corner of ground in the valley which runs up from the East end of the Church to the Keeper’s Lodge at the tip of Toft’s Hill. Down this valley comes a little stream which we call the “Gote.” “Gote” itself is a Saxon word for a watering place crossed by stepping stones. I have a wild boar’s tusk that was picked up, quite recently, beside the Gote. “Toft” again is a Saxon word meaning “an enclosure with a house standing on it.” So I have no doubt but that, when first the land in this Parish began to be tilled and enclosed, some Saxons got to work upon a bit of ground up the valley of the Gote and enclosed this “hern” with “stakes.” They spoke of the “The staked hern,” and gradually, in our lazy way, when the Normans came who didn’t understand the language of the Saxons, the word became softened down, for ease of pronunciation, and this place gained the name of “Stathern.” Don’t call it “Sta-thern”; only strangers do that.

But why is our Church named after Guthlac? Who was he?

One thousand, two hundred and forty years ago a young nobleman was born of a Saxon family living somewhere in this district. He was given the name of Guthlac after the Saxon tribe of which his father was a lord. Guthlac was an unusually gentle and refined character, but he was also very keen on learning the use of arms, and earned himself a great name as a fighter. When he was still only a lad about fifteen years old, he was misled by bad companions, who chose him as the leader of a band of other young nobleman, who for nine years led in this district the life of freebooters, and came to be feared by our forefathers far and wide. Yet Guthlac contrived to insist, that, whenever his band fell upon a village or a party of travellers, a third part of the booty that they took should be restored to the owners.

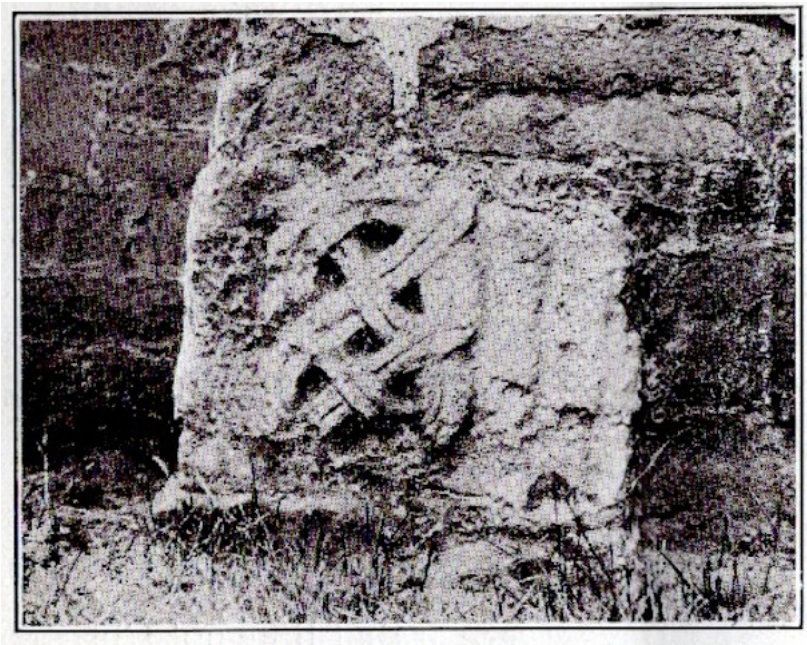
At the age of twenty-four Guthlac suddenly became horrified at the life he had been living. He saw that he was in God’s eyes. In an hour he turned his back on his old bad life, sought

the company of earnest religious people at Repton in Derbyshire, and tried, by devoting himself to learning and the worship of God, to atone for his evil past. But Guthlac found, as we all do, how difficult it is to break free from bad habits, and after a while he determined to live the life of a hermit in some lonely place where nothing could come between God and himself.

The place that he chose was Crowland (or Croyland) in South LIncolnshire, the dreariest of all waste places in a district which was in those days all fen and marsh and black wandering streams, with little islets of quaking bog-ground covered with trees, where people were afraid to live, partly on account of the agues and fevers which haunted this forsaken district, partly on account of the dreadful noises which were heard in the marshes, and partly on account of the fearful tales that were told of wild monsters in this dreary wilderness. It was into this country that Guthlac went on August 24th, A.D. 699 (he must have passed very near to Stathern on his way from Repton to Croyland), and there he built himself a mud hut, and for fifteen years, dressing only in the skins of animals, and eating only rye-bread once a day, spent his whole time in trying to draw nearer to God in thought and prayer

At first he was always alone, except for the birds and animals, which gradually overcame their fear of him and became quite tame. But soon, even in that desolate fen district, the few scattered people began to talk about him, and the talk spread far and wide. Men heard of his long striving in prayer to God for forgiveness, and the power to control the wild passions of the body, which seemed to attack him like savage beasts. That is why, in the picture of S. Guthlac, in our East Window, there is a red dragon painted under Guthlac's feet. Men heard, too, how sternly he punished himself for his past sinful life; and it was said that in some vision of the night the Apostle Bartholomew had come and given a terrible whip with which he often scrounged himself. You will see that scourge in the picture in our East Window. So the talk spread, till after a while people from all the country round began to make their way by boat into the dreary fen, where Guthlac's island lay, drawn by the power that a holy life and intense earnestness have upon everyone. Poor people went; and Guthlac, the rich nobleman's son, taught them how to drain the ferns, and till the land, and live decently. Rich people went; and Guthlac, the poor hermit, taught them how they might use their money for all, and not for themselves alone. Sick people went to ask the holy hermit to pray for them. Sinners went to learn how to find forgiveness. Good people went to learn more of the good life. And Guthlac, living always, as he did, in the close presence of God, had something to teach everyone, till, through all this part of England, men spoke of Guthlac as a saint. After fifteen years of this strange, lonely, holy life, Guthlac died on April 11th A.D 714, honoured by the whole country side; and so it came about that a Church, built in this district not so very many years later, was named after him the "Church of S. Guthlac."

Guthlac was buried in his little hermit's cell, and his tomb was visited by religious people from every part of England. Over this tomb a Chapel was built, the foundations of which were laid bare in 1908. You may see them just outside the west front of the Croyland Parish Church, which is itself a part of the great Abbey of Croyland, that was built over Guthlac's tomb, and for which Guthlac had begun to draw the plans (as you will see him doing in the little picture below his figure in our East Window) shortly before his death.



Now let us walk around and look at the Church. If you will stand, outside, at the west end of the North Aisle, you will see, in the angle of the wall, near the bottom, a stone with an interlaced rope pattern cut on it. This stone is the one trace that we have left of the work of our Saxon forefathers over a thousand years ago. The stone has had the double fluting at one side cut away to allow of its being fixed in its present place, where it must have lain a full seven hundred years ago. It was originally part of the shaft of a tall cross which was set up in our Churchyard, before the first little Church was built here by the Saxons, and when Stathern had not yet become a parish, and was known only as “the staked hern.” (You can see a cross, just such as ours must have been, and of the same date, still standing in Rothley Churchyard in this county.) There is no other trace whatever, so far as I know, of our first Saxon Church. I don’t even know if it was built of stone, or of wood, as so many Saxon Churches were. But I can tell you who built it.

By the time that the Saxon King, Edward the Confessor (A.D. 1042) was on the throne of England, there was already enough land under cultivation in Stathern to form a small manor; and this manor was held by a Saxon of some position named Leurie, who also held land at Bottesford. In Saxon days there was no middle class in England-only the Nobles and the Serfs (peasants). The Serfs were never in a position to give anything towards the building of a Church; so it seems that there was no one else who could have built out first Church, except this Saxon nobleman Leurie or some member of his family. This church must have been quite a small one-perhaps only big enough to hold thirty or forty people; for even a good many years later there were not more than 60 acres of cleared ground at Stathern-but, if small and very low and dark, it would have been built, as Saxon work always is, with care and a good deal of ornamentation. What would have struck you most would have been the tall cross (of which I have already shown you the stone that we have left) standing in the Churchyard as a sign of the Faith that was being taught here. I have no doubt that many a time a Saxon Priest (coming probably at first from some neighbouring Priory) told to our forefathers, even before the Church was built, as he stood at the foot of this cross, the Story of the Love of God

But what became of our first Saxon Church? In all probability it was destroyed by the marauding Danes, who were the next invaders of England. The Danes were at that time not Christians. They came across the North Sea, made their way up rivers like the Treat, and then robbed and laid waste the houses and Churches of the Saxons. In this invasion of the Danes, I expect that our little Saxon Church perished. If so, after the Faith of Christ had been taught for perhaps 250 years at the foot of our Churchyard cross and in our first Church, you must think of our Churchyard as deserted for a while, the Church destroyed, the cross pulled down.

But the Danes in their turn (as had the Saxons before them) became Christians or

were driven out of England. Peace returned to the land, though not for long. In the year 1066 the last of all the invasions of England took place; and the old races went down before the Norman Conqueror. England became one nation. The Normans found England already divided up into parishes and manors; and William the Conqueror's policy was to make sure of his conquest by distributing these manors among his own nobles and knights. The Saxon owners were displaced. Stathern fell to the Albini family, which had settled at Belvoir, and become the owners of a wide stretch of our country-side. The Albinis, having more land than they could see to themselves, gave the Stathern manor to the family of de Bosco Borhard, on condition that that family should provide a knight and soldiers to join the Albinis and fight for them whenever required. But by this time a second manor had been formed at Stathern, and was in the hands of a family of the name of Reignes. It was by these two families-Borhard and Reignes-that our second Church must have been built.

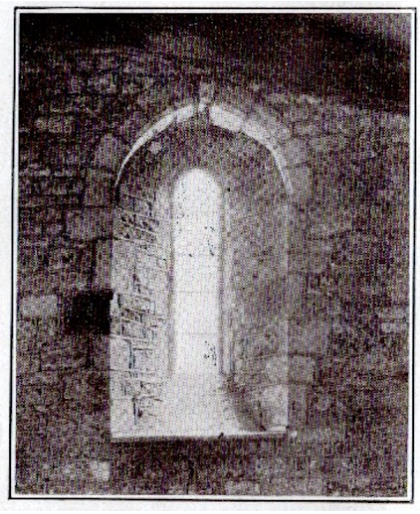
Already a large Priory Church had been built at Belvoir, and to this Church the Borhard family gave titles of their land at Stathern; while the Reignes family bestowed a part of their land upon it; in return for which the monks of the Belvoir Priory Church gave five silver marks and a bridle, and promised to send to Stathern every year a monk's dress and boots.

The gift of the bridle and the promise of an annual gift of a monk's riding habit make me think that, by arrangement with the Borhard and Reignes families, Clergy were already riding backwards and forwards from the Belvoir Priory to Stathern, and that our second Church, the Norman Church was already begun.

This must have been somewhere about the year 1130, in the reign of King Henry I; and if you allow fifty or sixty years for the building of the whole of that Church, including the Aisles and Porches, it will be safe to say that the whole of our second Church was built between the years 1130 and 1190 in the reigns of Henry I, Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I. In the Churchyard, no doubt, at that time were lying some of the remains of the Saxon cross and the Church destroyed by the Danes; and it was then that the one stone now left of the shaft of the Saxon cross was built into the Aisle wall. I am thankful to that mason of old days for saving it for us.

If you will come inside with me, I will show you what work there is of these years.

Look up above the Arch opening into the Tower, and you will see the line of an old high-pitched roof. This was the roof of the Church built by the Borhards and Reignes. The Nave must have been of the same size as our present Nave, but the appearance was quite different. For not only was there no Clerestory (the upper row of windows over the Nave Arches), but also the Arches were low and rounded, and rested upon great round pillars, which blocked the view and very much reduced the space available for worshippers. The Chancel would not have been as long as our present Chancel, and there was, of course, no Tower or Chapel then.



I take it as probable that the Church was a long time in building. It was just at the time when the Norman style of building was being given up for the new style which we are accustomed to call "Early English." You can see this change actually taking place in the Aisles and Porches. The two

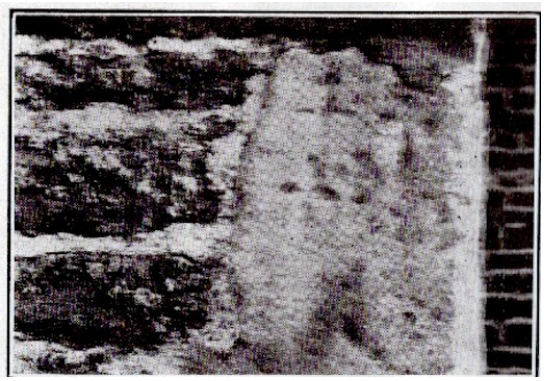
little windows at the west end of the North Aisle (which are out of date) are no longer round-headed as they would have been fifty years earlier, and though still very narrow, are wider than the little unglazed slits which were all that the earlier builders made for windows. These windows were filled with glass from the first. You see how widely they are splayed inside, so as to let in as much light as possible. The little Lancet window at the west end of the South Aisle is of the same date, but the other Aisle windows are much later.

Now look at the doorways and Porches. You will see that, though they are very much worn now-they have been standing over 700 years-there is still some ornamentation left to show what they were like when they were new. At the North door you can just make out a little simple ornamentation known as “nail-head,” and you will see this repeated upon the outer Archway of the South Porch. This ornament is common in the Norman style of building, but then ornament called the “dog-tooth,” which you will see over the South door, did not come into fashion till the Norman style of building had given way to Early English. Look at the handsome “roll” moulding (with a “fillet” raised on it) round this door. This must have been the last piece of work done for the completion of our second Church about the year 1199. Can’t you think how people came to admire this bit of carving in the new style, when it was fresh from their builder’s hands?

The principal land-owner at the time when this second Church was completed (more than 700 years ago) was Simon Borhard; and it is he whom we have to thank for our present aisles.

This work was finished just about the time that Bishop Hugh (of Avalon) was building his Cathedral at Lincoln. Look at the figure of the Bishop in our East Window. He is holding a model of Lincoln Cathedral-as it was in his day-in his hand; and in the little picture underneath you will see the tame swan that used to follow him all about Lincoln, and feed from his hand.

I like to think that perhaps Bishop Hugh himself came here to Stathern, to dedicate these Aisles to the Service of God, shortly before his death, which took place A.D. 1200. I think I can show you the very stone at which the consecration ceremony took place. Come with me out at the South door, and look at a stone in the South-west corner of the aisle wall and about halfway up the wall. You will see that five little crosses have been cut upon this stone, three on the Western face, two on the Southern face. They are just such little rough crosses as a mason might be told to cut to mark the stone upon which the consecrating oil was poured. If I am right about this, you must think of the great Bishop Hugh, and of Simon Borhard and his son Richard (who was afterwards to be Rector of this Church), and of members of the Reignes family, and of many others



(both Saxons and Normans), as gathered at this corner of the Church for its dedication to God on May 12th 1199. I dare not assert that the date of the year is exactly correct, but I have little doubt but that it was on May 12th that the Church was dedicated, for we still keep the Anniversary of the dedication, and our Feast-Sunday is fixed for the Sunday following (not on) May 12th.

Up to this time we have no record of the Clergy who served in this Church. No doubt the unsettled days that followed the Norman conquest made it impossible for any proper registers to be kept, but, from this time onward, our list of Clergy is complete. If you look at the list hanging by the North door, you will see that I am not able to put any date against the name of the first Clergyman on that list. In all probability Geoffrey Brito was the Rector here at the time of the dedication of the aisles, but for twelve years before A.D 1225 he had ceased to serve in the parish, and in that year, at Simon Borhard's request, the Bishop of Lincoln (Hugh of Wells, not the great builder of the Cathedral, but a second Hugh), agreed to accept the resignation by Geoffrey of any claim that he might still have to being Rector, and to appoint Robert Amauricius (or Amory) in his place. You will see by their names that these two Rectors were Norman Priests from the north-west of France, Geoffrey coming from Brittany and Robert from Amorica, which lay a little to the south of Normandy.

When Robert Amory died, Simon Borhard, who was now recognised as the patron of the living, nominated his own son, Richard de Bosco Borhard, as Rector. Richard held the living for forty-four years (1250-1294, in the reigns of Kings Henry III. and Edward I.) He died here over 90 years of age, and to him the Church owed a great deal.

As soon as Richard Borhard was appointed Rector, he made up his mind to found a Chantry of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Church, and to appoint and support a Priest, who should pray for his soul at the Altar of this Chantry "forever." He set the Altar at the end of our North Aisle (the Chapel eastward of this Aisle was, of course, not built then); and at the side of the Altar he placed a figure of the Virgin, which, I expect, by the time the Lady Chapel came to be built, had become so familiar to the parishioners, that, after the Alter was moved into the Chapel, this figure of the Virgin was set upon the little stone bracket, which you now see high up over the Archway opening into the Chapel, so as to be within easy sight of those who had grown fond of it. It was not till a few months before his death that Richard Borhard appointed the first Chantry Priest to serve at this Altar. You will see the list of these priests, hanging near the spot where Richard Borhard originally placed the Altar of his Chantry, from William de Okele in 1292 to Richard Symthe in 1538. You will see, too, who appointed them in later years and to what places these Priests went to meet the Bishop or his representative and be admitted to Office. Richard Borhard himself gave a sufficient endowment to maintain these Priests, besides providing them with a house. The house, I believe, stood where the King's Arms Inn now is. You will find in the dairy of that house a little bit of worked stone belonging to a window, which may possibly be a piece either from the Church or from an older house. The endowment consisted of both land and money. One piece of the land was called "The Dove-cote Close," and there were also a dove-cote and some cottages and various small rents, as well as the Chantry-House with its orchard and garden. The deeds which created this endowment were dated 1290 and 1292 in the reign of King Edward I. A year or over two before his death, when Richard Borhard had succeeded to his father's property, King Edward I. was making war against the Scotch. A demand was made upon all Knights throughout the kingdom to follow the King to the war, or, if unable, to pay a heavy contribution. This our poor old rector, as the only living representative of the family of Borhard, now 90 years of age, had to do; the sum that he paid was a very considerable one.

Richard Borhard's successor in the office of Rector was Robert Chamberleyn, who held the living for no less than sixty years, in the reigns of Kings Edward I, II and III; and it

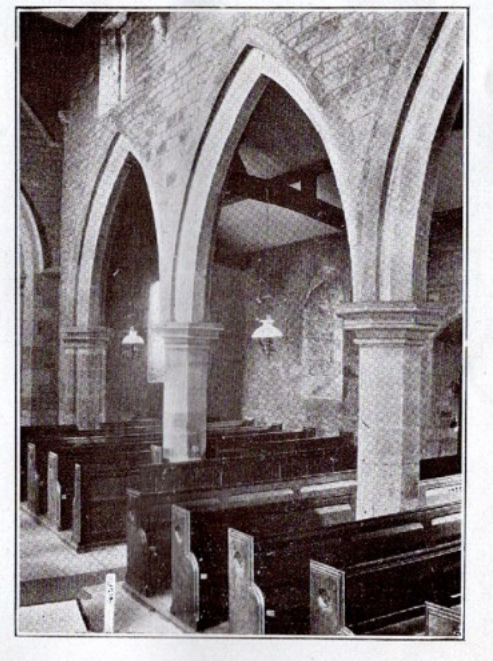
was in his time that our Church became much what you see now, except that the Lady Chapel and the Tower were not yet built.

The work that was undertaken in the time of Robert Chamberleyn was made possible by a combination of circumstances. Chamberleyn himself came, I expect, from a family of some influence and wealth. His name seems to show some connection between his family and the Court. He was quite young when appointed Rector here-indeed he was not ordained till the very day of his appointment to this parish; Bishop Sutton, of Lincoln, ordaining him and instituting him as Rector at the same time, at Stow in Lyndesey, on December 18th 1294. Then, too, the two manors of Stathern were now both in the hands of one family. For Joan, the sister of Richard Borhard, has married Thomas Reignes, a member of the other leading Stathern family; and with her, the whole of the Borhard property passed into that family. The property included not only the greater part of the land if Stathern but also the manors of Clifton in Buckinghamshire and Oakley in Bedfordshire.

Joan Reignes was married in 1275 and had one child, a son, named Ralph. Ralph Reignes had a son, Thomas, who was placed under the guardianship of Roger Tiringham (one of our Chantry Priests) in 1305, and who married in the year 1330. It was this Thomas Reignes who, I think, joined with the Rector, Robert Chamberleyn-both, apparently men of large means-in carrying out the next great alterations to our Church.

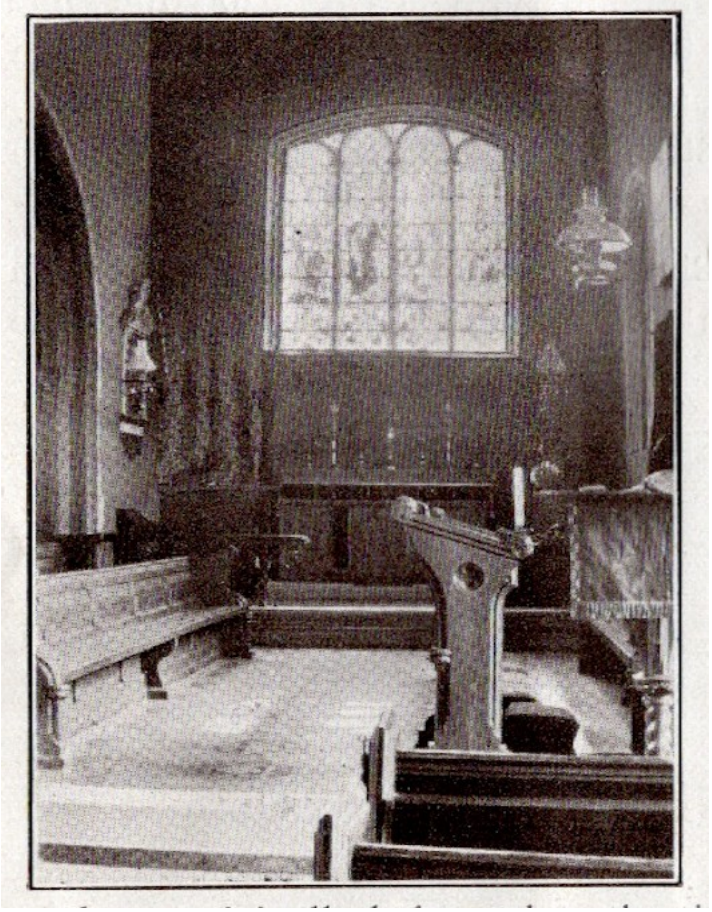
A great deal of re-building was being done about this time in England. It was the time of an outbreak of the plague, so bad that it was known by the name of the “Black Death.” The plague was at its worst in the year 1349. Probably more than half the people of our neighbourhood died from it. Men were so terrified by this outbreak that they felt compelled to do something which might appease the anger of God. They did not know that the plague, like most illnesses, was due to their own dirty habits and unhealthy food. This terror, I expect, explains much of the re-building of Churches, that was going on in neighbouring parishes at the same time as in Stathern. Quite probably the same masons and carpenters (for they often formed themselves into a guild and moved on from parish to parish as they were wanted) may have done the work at Stathern as well as at Eastwell, Eaton and Branston.

What was done in our Church was, first of all, to take down the low Norman Nave with its large round pillars, leaving the aisles standing. The small Norman Chancel was taken down at the same time. Then began the building of the pillars and arches which you see now (somewhere about the year 1350 in the reign of King Edward III). The clerestory of three windows on each side was added above the arches, and the nave was re-roofed.



Then the present Chancel was built, though much of it has had to be rebuilt since that time but the lower parts of the East and South walls, and the wall above the arches which divide the Chancel from the Chapel, are, I believe, the original work. When we were cleaning the old lime-wash off that wall several years ago, we found, underneath the lime, faint traces of old colour left. Possibly these were the last remains of the fresco-pictures with which the Chancel was painted at the time of which I am speaking.

All three of the windows in the Chancel have had to be replaced. The original East window was much smaller than, and quite different in design from, the window which you now see (which was inserted probably in the 18th Century), but the two side windows are probably reproductions of the old ones and were made in the 19th Century. The window in the South Aisle, to the right of the door, was copied from the Chancel windows, and though probably it, too, has been largely renewed, it may have originally belonged to the time of this same re-building. That part of the wall of the Aisle has certainly been re-built at some time or other; it is a good bit narrower than the older parts of the same wall.



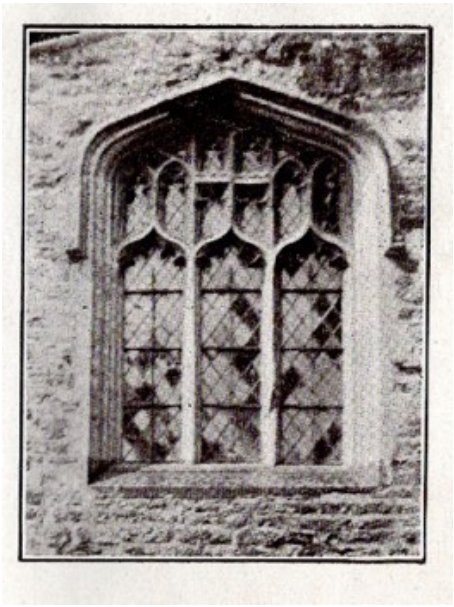
When all this work has been done to the Church, it must have appeared to Stathern people to have been transformed; the Church had grown beyond the utmost expectations of those who had known it longest, even though as yet there was no Lady Chapel, and no Tower.

Have you noticed the carved heads which support the timbers of the nave roof? The three on the Southern side look like female heads; or are they the heads of Angels? The three furthest to West on the Northern side seems to be male heads-the heads of demons with cats' ears. The larger head, with an evil grin on the face, at the Chancel Arch was found lying in some backyard thirty or forty years ago. Whether it is in its original position I cannot say; but, if so, the four heads together on that side may possibly have been intended to suggest the horrors of Purgatory; and the three heads on the other side the calm of Paradise. Whether there was ever a fourth head on the South side of the Chancel Arch, I don't know. It is worthwhile noticing also the carved head at the end of the drip-stone, outside, over one of the Chancel windows. It looks like a woman's head. Two similar heads of men finish off the drip-stone of the similar window in the South Aisle, and there is also a grinning head above this window to the left.

All this carved work (and much else which has disappeared) is of the time of the re-building of the Nave or somewhat later.

My idea is that the work upon the Church begun by Thomas Reignes, somewhere about 1350, was continued by other members of the same family at intervals; and quite possibly Thomas and John Reignes, the sons of this Thomas, and also his grand-daughter Cecily were concerned in it.

Look at the window at the East end of the South Aisle. It is our most elaborate window, and was, I think, inserted in this wall to replace one of the original narrow lancet windows somewhere about the year 1400. Under this window was placed an Altar named either after S. Margaret or S. Gregory. For there have been Altars bearing both these names in our Church in the past. You can see the remains of the Piscina and the Aumbry (a little cupboard in which to keep the Chalice and paten) in the wall beside where this Altar stood. On the other side of this Altar was a little door opening on a narrow staircase (built in the thickness of the wall) which led, through a second door at the top, to the rood-loft (or little gallery, upon which the Crucifix and the figures of S. Mary and S. John were placed). This stairway is still in the wall, though the doorways have unfortunately been built up. Underneath the loft was a carved screen, with doors dividing the Chancel from the Nave, the purpose of which was to make it safe, by keeping the Chancel locked, to leave the rest of the Church open day and night for all who wished to enter.



Above the Rood-loft and behind the Crucifix, the whole of the Chancel Arch was, I believe, filled in with woodwork, upon which no doubt was painted some picture from a Bible story. You can see on the underside of the Chancel Arch the groove into which the ends of these boards were fitted. No doubt there were other pictures on the lower part of the Screen. These pictures, together with those painted upon the walls, were “The Poor Man’s Bible.” In days when none but the Parson could read, such pictures must have been a great help to the learning of the old scripture stories

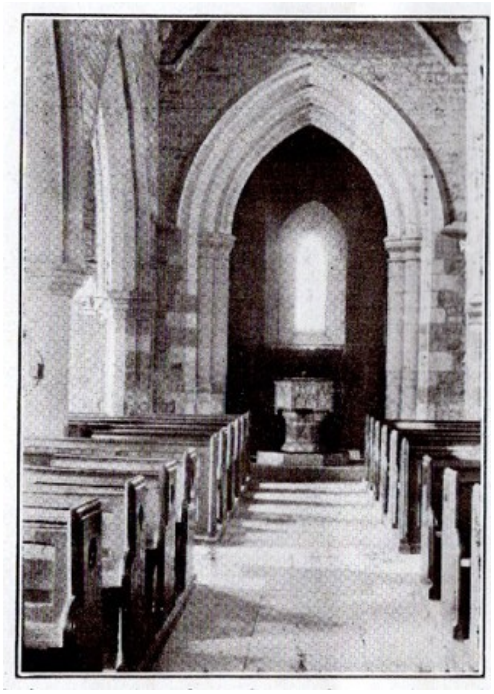
Notice how the stone work on both sides of the Chancel Arch has had to be renewed where the Rood-loft was torn away in later days.

The Altar which was placed in the Chancel at this time was of stone, and was actually one piece with the stone ledge which still runs the whole width of the Chancel. You can see where this Altar was roughly cut away in later days, when it was ordered that it should be replaced by a wooden Table. And here, too, you will see a Piscina in the wall beside the Altar

One of our Rectors, Nicholas Syward, who was appointed by Thomas de Reignes in 1361, must have seen so much of this work carried out, for he held the office of Rector for forty-two years; but then, for nearly a Century, there were constant changes of Clergy here; and only one man, William Ferr (or Fenour) remained in the parish for any length of time. Most of the Clergy in this century resigned the living to go elsewhere. I think it quite possible that Wiliam Fenour saw the completion of the work of which I have been speaking last, and which has begun, perhaps, fifty years before his time. Perhaps it was in his time that the window on

the right-hand side of the door in the South Aisle was inserted, and that that part of the Aisle wall was rebuilt.

Now we must go and look at the Lady Chapel. It had, I expect, been found awkward at times to have both the chief Altar and the Chantry Altar (and probably a third and even a fourth Altar) close together within so small a Church as ours. At all events, about the year 1447, it was decided to cut through the wall at the end of the North Aisle, and build a Chapel which should replace the old Chantry of Richard Borhard's foundation. This was done, I expect, when William Warkworth was the Rector here. A connection of this Warkworth some years later became master of Peterhouse, and left the College a sufficient sum of money to buy one of the manors of Stathern; and it was, I think, through this gift that Peterhouse first became interested in this parish. The chief part of the Stathern manors now belonged to Cecily Reignes, an only daughter, who married Henry Street, and who was, as far as I know, the last of the Reignes in Stathern. She had only one daughter, with whom the property passed to another family. It seems, then, appropriate that the Lady Chapel should be built by a woman, and not unlikely that the Warkworth family should have a special interest in Stathern, if one of their name had been concerned with the building of the Chapel. There is ,too, a gap in our list of Chantry Priests from 1420 to 1466, into which gap I can only put one name, and I cannot date even that correctly. During the building of the Chapel, the worship at the Chantry Altar would necessarily be suspended. And perhaps the Rector William Warkworth may himself have taken the post for a Chantry Priest for a time in the new Chapel. Do you notice the heads of women in the coifs carved on the capitals of the pillars of the arch? And look at the little stone bracket above the Arch to the right. In all probability it was built into the wall when the Chantry Altar was moved into the Chapel, so that the familiar figure of the Virgin, which had stood by the Altar since Richard Borhard's day, might be set upon it and remain within sight of the congregation.



The two windows in the Chapel are poor. At the East end of it you will see a Piscina built into the South wall. Of the two archways which open into the Chancel the larger was cut through the dividing wall at this time; the other, though, so similar, was not formed till the 19th century. Into this Chapel, Richard Borhard's Chantry Altar was removed, and the worship continued at it for another century. I expect that when this was done, a small lancet window, in the wall of the Aisle, near the old Altar, was replaced by the present window, similar to that in the Chapel

Last of all came the building of the Tower. I place this somewhere about the year 1500. The Patrons of the living were now William and Elizabeth Taylard, and they had appointed as Rector William Taylard, who was, I think, their son. This double interest of the same family in the Parish makes it not improbable that it is to this family that the building of the Tower is due. Also, I find in the will of William Hawston of this Parish, proved in the year 1523, that, after leaving his "soul to Almighty God, our lady S. Mary and all glorious company of Heaven," and his "body to be buried in the Churchyard of Stathern," he goes on to give four pence "to the High Altar of Stathern," and two shillings "to the building of the bell-frame." So the bell-frame was being put up in the Tower about the year 1520, when King Henry III was on the throne, and William Taylard was still Rector. One must expect that

the Tower was some years in building. Look at the beautiful arch opening from the Nave into the Tower. This is, to my eye, the most beautiful thing in the Church. The wall which had to be cut through, to form this Arch, was part of the Norman Church, as you see by the line of the old roof above it. A doorway was cut in the west wall of the Tower by order of an Arch-deacon in the 18th century, but this has been built up in modern days. The stone of which the Tower was built has, as you see, weathered badly; and many small patch-work repairs have been done to it from the 17th century onwards. This accounts for the different stone used, without any apparent rhyme or reason, in different parts of the outside of the Tower. The pinnacles may be original work, but the battlements and belfry windows have I think been renewed, without much regard to the original designs. I do not know who did this.

While I am speaking of the Tower, let me tell you about the bells and clock. There are in the Tower now four bells; on July 29th, 1533, there were three. It would be safe to conclude that these three were cast in readiness for the completion of the Tower some years before that date. The treble bell used to bear these words- “Jesus be our speede.” But in 1730, in the reign of George II, this bell was re-cast, and it now carries the words-”Thos. Barnett warden. God save his Church.” Unfortunately a bad mistake was made in the casting and the word ‘God’ is stamped upside down. I do not know what the second and tenor bells originally bore. They were re-cast in 1607; and now the second bell bears the words-”Swetely tolling, I men do call, To taste on meats that feed the sould,” while the tenor has-”My rooaring sounde doth notice give, That men cannot heare always live.”

In the year 1613 the third bell was added, and that bears the words-”Glory be to God on high.”

These last three bells also bear the letters, ‘H.O,’ which were the initials of Henry Oldfield, a well-known bell-founder of Nottingham. I cannot tell you when the clock was first placed in the Tower; but, as far back as the year 1647, the Churchwardens’ accounts show that oil was being bought for the clock, and some such mention of the clock as “for setting the clock agate-6d.” occurs almost annually. Originally the clock was set in the bottom of the Tower, just under the Tower Arch where the Font now stands. You can see where the stone work of the Arch was cut about to take the beams that carried the clock. There were no faces on the outside of the Tower, but a clock face and hands showed inside the Church, below the Tower Arch, which was in those days entirely bricked up. This arrangement continued to within living memory. At some time or other a hole was bored slantwise in each of the old deal Church doors, so that, when the Church was locked up, a child could be sent to peep through and see the time by the only clock in Stathern. There are men still living among us who were sent as boys to see the time in this way. It was not till the general repair of the Church was begun by Mr. Ray in the early part of the nineteenth Century, that the clock was moved up into the Tower chamber, and its two faces placed on the outside of the Tower.

When the building of the Tower was finished, the good days of our Church were over. For more than 300 years it fell upon bad times. The violent ‘Reformation’ of the Church in the reign of Henry VIII was followed by a long period of neglect and worse. By the order of the Lord Protector, Somerset, in the year 1549 (the 2nd year of the reign of King Edward VI) the little Chantry, founded by Richard Borhard and served in turn by 22 Chantry Priests, was deprived of all its property. Already Henry VIII had been nibbling at the little endowments. He had taken, first, the magnificent sum of fourpence a year, which had previously been paid to the Priory of Nebo, and, then, a penny a year which had been paid to the Priory of Haverholm. To both these Priories the King had put an end, taking their property for himself. And now the remainder of the property was taken away by his son. The land and the houses which belonged to the Chantry were given to a private individual named Anthony Uvedale. Curiously enough, after being sold and resold again and again,

part of this property, including the Dove-cote, now belongs to the Wesleyan Society, the Dove-cote actually forming part of the Chapel. I am thankful that at least part of this Church property has returned in the course of years to the service of God. But I often think how impossible it would be for Richard Borhard, who gave this property to the Chantry which he founded to last “for ever,” to understand how Christian people had allowed his gift to be taken from the Church by a tyrannical King, and how even now it is not yet used in connection with the Church to which he gave it

So ended our Chantry after being in existence for 340 years

Next the Church was stripped in the Reign of Edward VI of everything that Henry VIII had left in it. An order was issued that a list should be made of the goods belonging to every Parish Church, not, as you might think, to secure their being kept safe, but to see how much could possibly be taken away and sold for the benefit of the Crown. This order was not carried out in Stathern till the very year Edward VI died. But on July 29th, 1553, the King’s Officers came here and demanded the list. This list is still in existence. It is signed by “Ranffe Ayneworth, clarke pson theire,” and by “Thomas Holme and John Rychardson, Churchwardens theire.” It must have been a miserable day for poor Dr. Aynesworth and the Churchwards, when they were compelled thus to betray their trust. The King’s Officers were named “Thomas Nevell and B. Cave.” Here is the list of what they found in our Church, all of which they took away, expect the bells in the Tower:- A Sanctus Bell (that was a small bell which was stuck at the time of the blessing of the Bread and Wine in the Holy Communion), a little bell (perhaps this had been used for the same purpose in the Chantry Chapel), a cross of brass plate, a chalice of silver parcel gilt (even this sacred cup was taken), and four vestments used by the clergy, one of red damask, one of green silk, one cope of green velvet, and one of black worsted (for use at funerals).
Three bells were hanging “in the steple.”

No wonder that the Church was left after this to go to decay. It couldn’t have seemed to our forefathers to be of any use to try take care of it. And worse was to follow. For later on the carved oak Screens, which divided the Chancel and Chapel from the Church, were broken up and taken away. The figure of the Lord upon the Cross which stood above the main Screen under the Chancel Arch was removed. The stone Altar was torn out of the Chancel, and a mean little table of wood was put into its place. The other Altars disappeared. Anything was good enough for the Church. Then the whole Chancel fell into ruins. There is, in a rare old history of Leicestershire, a picture of the South side of the Chancel, which shows queer little windows of wood set anyhow in the Chancel wall.

Where the Crucifix had once stood, under the Chancel Arch, the Royal Arms had been set up by order. The Crown was trying to take the place of the Christ. These same Royal Arms were afterwards torn down by the order of Cromwell-the charge for doing this (“for puling out the King’s arms' “) is in our old Churchwardens’ accounts. They were again replaced after the Restoration of Charles II. Again they have disappeared.

Gradually decay did its work, and only patchwork repairs were carried out in the roughest fashion by carpenter, plumber and glazier. The reports made upon our Church by Officials sent by Archbishop Laud, and, later, by the Archdeacons of Leicester, grew worse and worse. Nothing was cared for; the clergy were often non-resident. The church suffered, too, from the bad custom of burying the dead within its walls. Foundations were weakened; the floors were torn up and replaced in the rudest manner. Much earth had to be carried out of the Church after burials. The Place of Worship had become an unclean, neglected, unwholesome, preaching-house. The parish plough was kept in it when out of use

In the time of the Commonwealth this district saw a great deal of fighting. On one

occasion an outlying party of Scotch soldiers, unable to join their regiment, broke open the Chancel-door and passed the night in the Church. So from one stage of decay to another our poor little Church reached in which it became merely contemptible. Perhaps its worst state was in the 18th century when the Lady Chapel was shut off from the Church, by filling up the two arches that then existed with brick, and turned into a Parish School. A door was cut into the Chapel through the North wall, as you can just see today. Boys sharpened their knives, as you can see, on the stone of the Piscina; a fireplace was built into one corner of the Chapel. The Churchyard was the school playground; the children's' dirt under the trees and bushes became most offensive; later, offices were constructed at the edge of it, by an Archdeacon's order. The Church has reached the lowest depths of neglect and abuse.

When all hope for the Church seemed to be over, a better day dawned. The Rev. George Ray was appointed Rector in 1844, and with him the work of restoration, which has been just begun by his predecessor, was seriously taken in hand. He built a parish school, and so was able to clear out the Lady Chapel, and bring the churchyard back to its proper use. It was in his time that the smaller of the two arches between the Chapel and the Chancel was built; the windows were renewed or repaired, and much else was done. This work was continued under his successor; but there is, as you see, very much still wanting, which we are endeavouring to do as means allow.

There are several still living among us who remember the state of things which I have described in the days before Mr Ray was appointed Rector. Verily Time brings its changes!

Look at our nice oak seats. These replace dilapidated old high deal pews, in which our grandfathers could sleep undisturbed, unless awakened by the man who was paid to stop snoring and to whip dogs out of the Church. Before these pews-the home of dust and fleas-were set up in the Church, the seating consisted of thick, heavy, narrow forms without backs. I expect these forms were the earliest seats placed in our Church; and they may not have been in use till after the time of Henry VIII. For in earlier days the Services, though frequent, were short, and men stood or knelt during them. In some Churches there were a few stone benches against the walls.

The glass of the present East Window was inserted in 1905. It was paid for by money collected in Church during the Rectorship of Mr Taylor, to whose memory the further window in the South wall of the Chancel was filled with coloured glass in 1908

In this same window there was, well into the eighteenth century, a figure in old stained glass of S. Guthlac. And in the largest window in the North Aisle there were at the same time the remains of figures robed in blue, and of an inscription in Latin. But all this old glass disappeared long years ago. The present doors replaced poor old deal doors in 1912.

Now come and look at our list of Clergy; and I will tell you something about some of them, and about a few notable people whom I know to have worshipped in this Church.

Of the first name upon our list of clergy I can tell you nothing beyond what I have already said. For twelve years Brito had disappeared from Stathern, before he finally resigned all claim to the Living and made way for Robert Amory in 1225. I am inclined to think that the right to present a clergyman to the Bishop for institution into this Parish was granted to Simon Borhard, the Norman Knight and Lord of the Manor, as a recognition of the work done by his family in building the Norman Church and our present aisles. I fancy that this family may have lived in the house (since much rebuilt and altered, and now occupied by Mrs Sarson) just outside the North gate of the Churchyard.

With Richard Borhard, our third rector on the list (of whom I have already spoken), the name of Borhard ame to an end in this parish, the property passing, by the marriage of his only sister Joan, into the Reignes family. With the Reignes family the right of presentation to the Living rested for the next hundred years. It must have been a great day for Stathern when Thomas Reignes, the head of one of the two leading Stathern families were married in this Church to Joan Borhard, the last representative of the other principle Stathern family, by her brother, the Rector. Both families had joined in the building of these aisles.

What a change there must have been from the old Rector of ninety-three to the young Rector, only just ordained, when Robert Chamberleyn followed Richard Borhard. You will remember that I have told you that it was in Chamberleyn's time, that all the middle part of the present Church was built. The Coats of Arms of Reignes and Chamberleyn were set up in the Church at this rebuilding, and remained there for upwards of 300 years. I have come upon an agreement dated March 3rd, 1340, which contains a promise to pay for certain wool "taken by John Amory and his fellows, appointed for the same, in the County of Leicester," to a long list of people, of whom the person to receive the most is Robert Chamberleyn, parson of the Church of Stathern, £7 10s 0d for 1 sack 7 stones. This wool formed part of the twenty thousand sacks of wool which the Parliament of this time promised to King Edward III, provided that that King granted certain demands which they were making on him. If all this wool belonged to Chamberleyn himself (and was not wool gathered by him from many others, for whom he was in some way acting as an agent) our Rector must have been running a large flock of sheep on the glebe all those many years ago.

For the next hundred years the Rectors, with one exception, stayed but a short time here. The exception is Nicholas Syward I see, by some old deeds, that he was appointed a member of a commission to deal with certain property on July 12th, 1380; and again that in 1387, in the reign of Richard II, he was giving some land to the Prior and Convent of Caldewell.

I cannot find out who the William Tresham was who presented three Rectors to this Living in the fifteenth century. I expect that he and Edward Brampton, whose name occurs as Patron just below, were trustees for the three wives who, curiously enough, were the only children in three successive generations, and with whom the Manors of Stathern, and the right to present the Rector, passed quickly into three different families. For, as I have told you, Cecily Reignes, who became the wife of Henry Street, was an only daughter and the last of the Stathern Reignes. She had an only daughter, Joan, who married John Anstey; and Joan Anstey had an only daughter, Elizabeth, who married William Taillard. This is very curious. The patronage remained in the Taillard family till, in the reign of King Henry VIII, the whole property was sold to John Lord Mordaunt, of Turvey, in Bedfordshire, who, in 1516, sold it to Dr Henry Thornby, who gave part of the Manor, and the right to name the Rector, to the College called Peterhouse at Cambridge.

I have told you that I connect William Warkworth with the building of the Lady Chapel, and Wiliam Taylard with the building of the Tower. This brings us to George Middleton, the first of the Rectors to be presented by Peterhouse. Was he also, I wonder, the first Rector to say a part at least of our Services in English? The old order was changing in his time. His successor, Ralph Aynesworth, had a chequered story. He had been chosen Master of Peterhouse, and under the altered law, had been allowed to marry. When Queen Mary came to the throne, she ejected him from the Mastership of the College, having a great dislike to the marriage of the clergy. Peterhouse ventured, despite the Queen's displeasure, to appoint Dr Aynesworth to this Parish. Aynesworth saw the Church stripped of all its old ornaments the reign of Edward VI; and Robert Cooke, his successor, held the

Living during the changes of the stormy days when Elizabeth followed Mary. His successor, Richard Howland, was appointed Bishop of Peterborough; and this appointment, by old custom, gave the right to Queen Elizabeth to nominate, for one turn, the Rector of this Parish. The Queen named Roger Rudde, who came from Trinity College, at Cambridge, and who was here for thirty-two years. He married a Miss White, daughter of the Rector of the neighbouring parish of Harby. Rudde is spoken of as 'hospitable.' The communicants of his day numbered two hundred and thirty. In his first few years at Stathern, he lost four children one after the other. His brother, Anthony Rudde, who was Bishop of S. David's in Wales, made Roger the Chancellor of his Diocese, and appointed him Prebendary of the Stall of S. Nicholas in S. David's Cathedral; but these appointments did not make it necessary for Roger to be away from Stathern for more than a few weeks now and again. It was while Roger Rudde was here, that, in the year 1597, Queen Elizabeth ordered that all Parish Registers should be kept on parchment, and that all those entries, which had previously been made on paper, should be copied out on parchment. As far as I can see, Rudde did not begin to obey that order till seven years later; and then he seems to have copied out the entries of Marriages and Burials, which had ben made since Robert Cooke began keeping registers in 1567. But the entries of Baptisms were either not copied out, or have been lost. So while our Marriage and Burials entries began in the year 1567, we have no entry of a Baptism before the year 1604. Possibly Rudde's occasional absence from home in Wales made it necessary for him to engage a Curate for Stathern. I find it mention of a "Mr Henrie Moore, cur," whose stipend was the magnificent sum of £6 a year. It is recorded of him that he did not preach. These are descendants of this Rector still living in Gloucestershire.

Dr Roger Derham, his successor, was, as you see, Rector here for 20 years. He was inducted into the possession of the Living by Daniel Gibson, the Rector of Branston; and the witnesses present were Richard Johnson, Canon of Southwell, George Roose, and Richard Dixon the Churchwarden (both of whom could write their names), and George Ashwell, and Thomas Allum (? Hallam), who was, I think, the Parish Constable for the year. Other witnesses present, on the following Sunday morning, were John Whittell, Roger Caunte, and Henry Ellis, all of whom could write their names-an unusual thing three hundred years ago. It was the custom here to speak of Dr. Derham as "The Right Worshipful." During most of his time here, a Mr Brough acted as Derham's Curate; and Derham also engaged and took into his house "a schoolmaster named Horner, to teach four youths." After Derham's death, Horner fell upon bad days. The times were unsettled; and he seems to have lost all faith; for it is recorded of him that he "maintained many atheistical opinions, dyed suddenly, and his grave is still to be seen in Stathern Churchyard, bare and sunk, without any grass ever that grew there since."

Dr Derham left most of his property to his old College, Peterhouse. I am inclined to think that it may have been he who gave our present clock to the Church, but I am not sure.

This brings us down to the time of King Charles I; and, when William Norwich was appointed by Peterhouse in 1641 (after the short tenure of George Bankes) troublous times were pressing hard upon England and upon Stathern. The struggle between King and Parliament came to its height. Norwich's position here must have been most uncomfortable. For, while he took the side of King unhesitatingly, Francis Hacker, who lived in the house that once stood in the Hall close, just above the Church, and who was then the Squire of Stathern, took the side of the Parliament with equal decision. Across the Vale, at Owthorpe, was living Colonel Hutchinson, who had been been a pupil of Norwich's, when Norwich was the Tutor of Peterhouse, and who has spoken of Norwich in those days with the utmost respect. But he, too, declared for the Parliament, and was afterwards appointment Governor of Nottingham Castle. I do not know what Norwich's relations were with his squire and his old pupil, but at all events they could not save him from trouble, when the cause of

Parliament gained the upper hand. Norwich has been here only four years, when he was fined £48 (a sum equal to £200 of our money today) for holding to the King's cause, and refusing to give up the use of the Prayer Book in Church. The following year he is reported upon as "negligent;" but, as this report was made by his political enemies, it would not be safe to rely upon it. In the next year 1648 (or possibly even before this) Norwich was deprived of the Living, and driven from the Parish. For thirteen years he was left to keep himself and his wife alive as best as he could. Meanwhile two non-conforming ministers, of the names of Frecalton and Shephardson, were put, in turn, in possession of this living. An official, appointed by the Commonwealth Government, took over the registration of marriages; but I cannot find his entries anywhere. There are only a few marriages entered in our registers during the whole time of the Commonwealth. I am inclined to think that these were entered from memory after the return of Mr Norwich to the Parish. At least one marriage was celebrated in Church without either banns or licence for some couple that was determined to be married in Church. The Baptismal and Burial registers also fail. There are entries of only three Baptisms and one Burial during Mr Norwich's absence; except, curiously enough, in the year 1654-5, when there does not seem to have been either rector or minister in the Parish.

When King Charles II was restored to the throne, in 1660, Mr Norwich returned here as Rector. But I fancy that the trying time of his expulsion, and the death of his wife Mary, soon after his return, made an old man of him, and that he was of little account in the Parish, though he lived on till the year 1674.

Nor was it political troubles only that fell upon his Rector. He saw the last terrible outbreak of plague descend upon the parish in the year 1646, just before his ejection. Seventeen people died of it between February and July in that year, and Norwich notes in the register, that it was regarded as little short of a miracle that, of those that showed the plague marks, as many as half recovered. Among those who died of the plague were Barbara and Isabel Hacker, the squire's daughters, who were buried in our Churchyard on the 29th and 30th of April, 1646.

When Norwich first came to the Parish, the parents of these children, Francis and Isabel Hacker, were living at the Hall with their five young children. Before he died the Hall had been pulled to the ground, two of the children were dead; the mother had died a victim of persecution; the father had been hung. It is a sad story-the story of the Hacker family; but as it touches the fortunes of this little Parish closely in the troublesome days of Cromwell, I will tell it to you shortly

Francis Hacker came of a family of position which had for some time been settled at East Bridgford. You will find the tombs of several members of the family in the Church of that Parish. Of the five brothers, Francis was the only one who took the side of the Parliament in the Civil War. Two brothers, Thomas and Rowland, fought for the King. Francis inherited the family lands at Colston Bassett and Stathern, and on July 15th, 1632, was married at S. Peter's, Nottingham, to Miss Isabella Brunts. He brought her to live at our Hall, and their children were baptised in this Church. When the war broke out, Francis Hacker took a prominent part in the fighting, and was soon advanced to the rank of Colonel in the army of the Parliament. He joined the Independents; and, while strongly opposed to Church people, he was equally opposed to other non-conforming bodies who did not adopt his own views. Before his death Hacker declared "that the greatest trouble he had upon his spirit was that he had formerly borne too great a prejudice in his heart towards the good people of God who differed from him in judgement." I think that his treatment of the Quakers, who, in his day, under the leadership of George Fox, had stood sturdily for freedom of Conscience was the chief thing upon his mind.

In his position as Justice of the Peace for the County, Hacker had had George Fox brought before him for holding a meeting of Quakers near Leicester. Hacker threatened to imprison Fox if he came this way again. But, of course, Fox was not to be stopped by such a threat. Strangely enough, when he did come in the following year into Leicestershire, Hacker's wife, Isabella, and Hacker's own Marshall, were present at one of the meetings which Fox held in this district. Both of them "were convinced" and threw in their lot with the Quakers. When the tide of fortune turned against the Parliament, Mrs Hacker was arrested, together with a number of Stathern and Harby people, for the offence of being present at meetings of the Quakers for worship, and was sentenced, with them, to transportation to Jamaica. Mercifully death set her free before the date fixed for her transportation. Isabella Hacker was a true martyr for the Faith.

Now and again, as opportunity offered in the course of the Civil War, Francis Hacker spent a little while at home at Stathern. You may still see his signature, well and boldly written in one of our old accounts; and there are charges in these accounts for payments made to soldiers under his command. But, outside Stathern, Hacker is most remembered for the part that he played in the last days of King Charles I. It was to Hacker's keeping that the King was committed during the trial at Westminster; and it was Hacker who was put in command of the soldiers guarding the scaffold on the day of the King's execution. On the morning of that day, Hacker, after knocking more than once at the King's door, entered the room to find the King with Bishop Juxon and Mr Herbert. The King turned to the Bishop and said "Come, let us go; Hacker has given us a second warning." On the scaffold Hacker was holding the axe in his hand, before passing it to the executioner, where the King turned to him and said "Hacker, you will take care of my body."

Cannot you imagine the terrible anxiety of Isabella Hacker, when her husband returned to the Hall here, with the news of the duty that he had been called upon to perform, and bringing with him the warrant upon which he had acted. This warrant is now in the British Museum, but, during all the years of the Commonwealth, it was kept in our Hall. It was addressed to "Colonell Francis Hacker, Colonell Huncks, and Lieutenant Colonell Phayre, and to every of them," and was signed by nearly sixty of the leading men of the Parliamentary party, including Oliver Cromwell and Colonel Hutchinson, Mr Norwich's old pupil. It runs as follows:-

"Whereas Charles Stewart, King of England, is and standeth convicted, attaynted and condemned of High Treason and other high crymes. And sentence uppon Saturday last was pronounced against him by this Court to be putt to death by the serveringe of his head from his body Of which sentence execution yet ramayneth to be done. These are therefore to will and require you to see the said sentence execute the open street before Whitehall uppon the morowe being the Thirtieth day of this instante month of January between the hours of Tenne in the morninge and five in the afternoone of the same day with full effect. And for soe doing this shall be your sufficient warrant And these are to require All Officers and Souldiers and other the good people of this Nation of England to be assisting unto you in this Service. Given under our Hands and Seales."

It seems that Cromwell had ordered Colonel Huncks to write out a further order required by the executioner before he would do his work. Huncks was afraid. So Cromwell wrote the order with his own hand, and then passed the pen to Hacker. Hacker, after a moment's hesitation, stooped and signed it. This was the last signature needed to ensure the King's execution; but it also entailed the death of poor Francis Hacker.

When King Charles II was restored to the throne in the year 1660, Hacker was ordered by General Monk to proceed to London, where he was received with apparent friendliness; but the next day he was arrested, and sent as a prisoner to the Tower of

London. When, very shortly afterwards, he was placed on his trial, and charged with the King's murder, he did not attempt to deny the part which he had played, but answered "Truly, I have been no counsellor, nor adviser, nor abettor of the act charged against me; but in obedience to the command over me, I did the act. My desire hath been ever for the welfare of my country, and that the civil power might be upheld."

On hearing of her husband's arrest, Mrs Hacker went at once from here to London, taking with her the warrant which her husband had received for the King's execution. She produced this document at her husband's trial in the House of Lords; but his judges held that this order showed that he had not acted as he did ignorantly or unwillingly, and refused to listen to his wife's plea "that he was a soldier and under command, and had done what he did by the commission that she held in her hands." Hacker was condemned to death. His execution was fixed for the 19th of October; and at nine o'clock on that morning, he and a fellow officer were drawn on a sled to the place of execution at Tyburn. There they were made to get into a cart under the gallows, and with ropes round their necks, they stood quietly waiting, while a fire was lit, which was to burn a part of their bodies after death. The second officer spoke at great length to the crowd; but Hacker, who was never quick at finding his words, read only a few sentences which he had previously written upon paper. Then the two officers turned to each other and said "The Lord sweeten our passage, and give us a happy meeting with Himself in glory." The cart was drawn from under them, and they were hanged. It had been intended to cut Hacker's body in pieces (as was one with the body of the other officer): but, by order of the King, it was given over, as it was, to his son Francis, and taken for burial to the Church of S. Nicholas Cole Abbey in London. There is, however, no entry of the burial in the registers of that Church, and our present clerk tells me that he heard a former clerk say that he had been told that "the Squire was buried just outside the Chancel door." So quite possibly Hacker's body was brought here, without attracting attention, for final burial.

All Hacker's property was confiscated; the Hall was pulled to the ground. But his brother Rowland was allowed to buy back some of the property, and the name of Hacker continues upon our registers for a good many years.

The story of Hacker's brothers, though very interesting, would take me far too away from the story of the Church. So I must content myself with saying that Thomas Hacker was, according to a tradition lingering in this village down to the present time, cut down and killed by soldiers of the Parliament in the open fields between Stathern and Colston Bassett. Rowland Hacker was concerned in much exciting fighting at Nottingham, lost a hand in the war, but lived till 1674.

The Hacker family, worshipping, baptized, buried, within these walls, must have made a deep mark upon the life of this Parish in the 17th century

Nor must I stay to tell you in detail of the troubles that fell thick upon this village in the course of the Civil War. Again and again it was taxed to supply the armies of both sides - now the forces of the King at Belvoir and Newark, now the army of the Parliament at Nottingham and Leicester. Most of the leading generals on both sides passed this way at sometime or other, and the names of all of them appear in turn in our Constables' accounts of those years. Horses and corn, carts and provisions, were freely commandeered, and, with the very figures before me, I am quite at a loss to understand how this little village was able to meet all the calls made upon it. The details of this and of much else of interest to Stathern people can be gathered from our Churchwardens'. Overseers' and Constables' accounts from the year 1630 onwards, and also from our Registers. The Constables' accounts, covering all the period of the war, have been printed, and a copy of them is placed in our Parish Chest in the Vestry. The Marriage Registers have also been put into

print. So these are now safe for the future.

It must have been with a sigh of relief that this Parish saw the end of thirty-seven years of confusion and neglect. When John Clarke followed Norwich as Rector in 1674, something was at once done to put things in order. But I think it was not till the time of his successor, Richard Cooke, that this Church began to feel the results of more peaceful days. Clarke was here during the greater part of the reigns of King Charles II and James II, while Dr Cooke held office during the reign of King William III and lived just long enough to see Queen Anne upon the throne. It was Cooke who gave to the Church the silver cup which we still use for the Holy Communion. The registers are well kept during his fifteen years in the Parish; and, at the end of one of the registers, Cooke has entered a careful list of fifty-six collections made in Church during those years. These collections, varying from a few shillings to several pounds, were for such purposes as the re-building of Churches and towns destroyed by fire in all parts of England, for Churches damaged by wind (as at Lutterworth) or by flood, or for Churches and Cathedrals under repair. Damage done by French invaders (as in Devonshire), the sufferings of Englishmen taken prisoners by pirates in the Mediterranean, and of the victims of persecution in Holland and France, were also claims to which Dr Cooke listed. But all the same I fear that it must have been with his knowledge that the harsh persecution of the Quakers continued at Stathern. Two Quaker families here at that time were Gregory and Westby, and the births and burials of those families are entered contemptuously on an odd piece of parchment. Apparently their children were not baptized, and their dead were buried at Long Clawson. Some later clergyman has written in Latin below these entries “Whoever made the above entries deserve to be cursed rather than believed,” I suppose he was enraged at the names of Quakers being entered in the registers at all. But, fortunately for the credit of Stathern Clergy, some other hand (I think it was the hand of Mr Anthony Thompson, who was Curate here in 1739) has written below this again “Whoever made the above entry deserves to be blamed, not praised.” Poor Quakers! Yet in God’s sight how rich!

You will see the monument to Dr Cooke’s memory on the wall of the Chancel. The inscription which is in Latin reads in English as follows:-

“Here lie the remains of the Rev Richard Cooke, D.D., who, after being for a long time a Fellow of the Venerable Society of S. Peter, was, by the kindness of the same Society, at length transferred, as an acknowledgment of his deserts, to this Village, where he devoted himself for fourteen years to the care of souls, with diligence and much profit, and at his death left a Charity for one shilling to be distributed every Sunday for ever in loaves of bread among the poorer of those attending the Parish Church. Dear to his friends, liked by all, hated by none, orthodox in his belief, noted for his piety, and worthy of imitation by everyone in everything, he died on October 23rd, aged 63, in the year of our Salvation, 1704.”

Andrew Perne, who followed Dr Cooke, was here for twenty-one years. He was a descendant of the Dr Perne who has been Master of Peterhouse and built the Library of that College. The Registers

are well kept in his time, but the handwriting is very poor-his last entries, just a month before his own burial, are very shaky indeed. He died on November 21st, 1725, about five in the afternoon (having been Rector here in the reigns of Queen Anne and King George I). The clergyman who makes the entry of his death and burial in the Registers speaks of him as the “learned and charitable Mr Andrew Perne.” At this time there were seventy families in Stathern-two of them being families of Quakers. There was a very small school, but no provision for the payment of a master. It was now, I expect, that the Lady Chapel was bricked off and turned into a school-house. Two services were held in the Church each Sunday. By his will Perne left to his old college, Peterhouse, one hundred pounds and forty pounds to the Parish of Stathern “to what use his successor thought most convenient.” An entry made in the Registers in Latin by Perne reads curiously to us today:-

“Joseph Goodwin, a young man of excellent disposition, a skilled musician, and-best of all-of high character, was buried in the presence of a most unusual number of weeping neighbours.”

Of Dr Christopher Wardell, who followed Perne, I have little to tell you. He was there for five years only, and had with him as his Curate a Mr Cooper. The registers show that there was an unusual number of deaths (19 and 18) in the years 1727 and 1728. By Act of Parliament the dead at this time were being buried in woollen shrouds, (this was to encourage the woollen trade and keep up the price of wool!) and you find in our Registers the word “affidavit” after many entries of burials, to show that an affidavit had been handed to the Clergyman, stating the dead body was wrapped in wool as required by the law of those days.

Dr Christopher Clarkson, the next Rector, was here for nine years, and Mr George Birkett, who followed him, for four years. The latter was helped by a Curate named Anthony Thompson. The Registers are well kept under both these Rectors. It looks, to my eye, as if Mr Birkett broke down while making an entry in the Burial Register on the last day of 1744. He died early in the following year and was buried here. There is an entry in these years of the burial of an old schoolmaster with the remarkable names of Valerius Germanicus Stephens

Mr Christopher Lonsdale was Rector for as many as thirty-eight years, in the reigns of George II and George III. I am inclined to think that he gradually lost his sight, for his writing, in the Registers, gets larger and larger, till it becomes quite extraordinarily large. Probably he did not reside here regularly. His Curates were Michael Burn, William Geldard, Thomas Clark, Richard Hardy, William Foster, Isaac Amory and John Weddred.

Lonsdale was followed by Thomas Parke, who held this Living for no less than fifty-six years (not sixty, as erroneously stated on the tablet over the Chancel door); so that, during his tenure of office, Parke saw George III, George IV, William IV, and Queen Victoria on the throne, Parke resided very little in the Parish, and the Church and Rectory fell at this time into a terribly bad condition. His Curates were George Crabbe, Thomas Baxter, Thomas Willby, William Greenwood, and John Bradshaw

The name of Mr Crabbe, who was Curate here for the four years 1785 to 1789 is known today wherever English poetry is read. He was a native of the little sea-cost town of Aldeburgh in Suffolk, and, after being ordained a Clergyman, came as Chaplain to Belvoir Castle. There he was miserable. The upper servants of the Castle heaped all kinds of indignities upon him and his young wife, and Crabbe was thoroughly glad to move to the Curacy of this Parish. He speaks of his four years at Stathern as, on the whole, the very happiest of his life. Three of his children were baptized in this Church; and it was here that he began to write his poetry.

You will see in the Lady Chapel the memorial slabs to William Greenwood and some members of his family. Formerly these stones lay in the Chancel. The old bad custom of burying inside the Church, which did so much harm to the foundations of the walls, and pillars, and which made this Church most unwholesome for the living, had continued down to this time. Greenwood was Curate for as many as thirty-nine years.

At last, with Mr Comyns Tucker, who became Rector in 1839, began the sorely-needed repairs of the Chancel and Rectory. He found everything connected with the Church in a ruinous condition.

But it was not till Mr George Ray came as Rector in 1844 that the repair of the Church was seriously taken in hand. Mr Ray was here for twenty-three years. It was he who built the Parish School, cleared out the Lady Chapel, provided the organ, and began the general repair of the Church. It is always a pleasure to me to hear Mr Ray's name mentioned, after all these long years, with real affection by those who can remember his saintly kindness; but it is sad to think that Mr Ray eventually resigned the Living under the impression that his work here was not appreciated by his parishioners. We never know the value of a thing till we have lost it.

During the thirty-seven years that Mr Taylor, who exchanged parishes with Mr Ray in 1867, was Rector here, the repair of the Church and the improvement of the Services were continuously proceeding.

You will see that for the last 100 years there are thirty-six names of Rectors of this Parish on my list. How many clergy there were here in the 400 years still further back, during which the Faith of the Christ has been preached here, I cannot even guess. Just possibly I am about the fifty-sixth clergyman who has been placed in charge of Stathern.

What I have told you about this little country Church will give you some idea of the money and care, which our forefathers lavished upon their House of God. The Church, as you have seen, was not the work of one generation, much less of one man. As it stands now it is the outcome of the self-denying gifts of our predecessors through a thousand years.

I have been able to find only a few Statherns Wills dating back to the time when the Church was still being built or enriched. But there isn't one of these Wills in which the Church was forgotten. Those that I have found are dated between the years 1516 and 1565 (when King Henry VIII and Queens Mary and Elizabeth were on the throne).

They are the Wills of Stathern Farmers. Some little gift is made in most of them "to the Mother Church of Lincoln," and then come gifts such as these-

Thomas Hyll (1516) gives six shillings and eightpence "towards the fabric of the Church of Stathern."

William Hawston (1523), gives four pence "to the High Altar of Stathern" and two shillings "to the building of the bell-frame"

Robert Kerchener (1526) four pence to the "High Altar of the Parish Church of Stathern," as well as "two brass candlesticks for wax candles," and "two torches" (for use at funerals I suppose).

John Caunt (1522) leaves sixpence "to the High Altar of Stathern," and "sixteen pence towards buying a slab of alabaster to make the front of the Altar of S. Margaret " in the Church.

Thomas Braybroke leaves twenty shillings " to the High Altar of Stathern," and twenty-six shillings and eightpence "to Stathern Church."

His wife, Isabel (1541) gives one shilling and eightpence "to the High Altar of Stathern" and twenty six shillings and eightpence "for a vestment for the Church."

In later days men were, I think, discouraged from giving to the Church when they saw the desolation that befell it, after it was stripped by King Henry VIII and Edward VI, and when they looked on its ruinous condition after the time of Cromwell. But those evil days are past, and again the Church is repaired and cared for. Now it awaits enrichment. If you should feel inclined to help to beautify this humble little House, why, you will pass an alms box as you leave the Church, and the Rector lives hard by!

Ernest G. Peirson (1913)

Note: I should like to have made room here for much of very considerable interest that I have picked up abut this Parish. But what I must confine myself to what directly concerns the church.

It must be sufficient to say that, within the bounds of this Parish, there are plain signs of the People of the Stone age (shall I say 3,000 years ago?)the men who used flints for their tools and weapons (how little did they dream of the iron under their feet!); that thr Roman armies, in the days before Stathern was a parish, passed this way, that the wild boards came down to drink at our Gote; that the deer ran wild over the land from the Belvoir Chase as late as the 19th Century, and that the system of land-tenure, introduced by the Saxons, continued here until the passing of the Enclosure act in the 18th Century. It is still possible to see many half-acre balks as they must have been ploughed in Saxon days. In the 17th Century this parish owned "one Bolke at Croylandes" that is a strip of land (probably about half an acre) at Croyland in Lincolnshire – so maintaining some slight connection with the great Abbey built at Croyland over the little cell in which our S. Guthlac died

[See next page for chronology tables of Rectors, Chantry Priests, and Building Works at the church for AD 900-AD1912]

Names of the Rectors of S. Guthlac, at Stathern.

Date of Appointment.	Name.	Patron.	Place of Admission to Office.	Office vacated by
? ?	Geoffrey Brito			Resignation
1225-6	Robert Amauricius	Simon Borhard		
1249-50	Richard de Bosco Borhard (1)	Simon Borhard		
1294, Dec. 18th	Robert de Chamberleyn (2)		Stow in Lyndesey	Death
1356, August 6th	Henry de Brochole	Thomas de Reynes	Lidyngton	Death
1361, Dec. 6th	Nicholas Syward	Thomas de Reynes	Lincoln	Resignation
1403, August 9th	John Morteyn	Richard Reynes	Lidyngton	Resignation
1406, March 27th	William Weston	Richard Reynes	Byshemade	Resignation
1408, Sept. 27th	William Ferr (or Fenour)	Richard Reynes	Sleford	Death
1439, May 4th	John Wyllyam	Trustees	London	Resignation
1444, June 11th	Robert Longe	William Tresham	Bugden	Resignation
1446, Oct. 7th	John Selby	William Tresham	Bugden	Death
1447, May 4th	William Warkworth (3)	William Tresham	Lidyngton	Resignation
1454, Sept. 21st	Richard Ovenden	Trustees		
1482-3, Feb. 19th	John Sywell	Edward Brampton	London	Resignation
1503-4, March 23rd	William Taylard (4)	Wm&ElizabethTaylard	Bukden	Death
1534, Sept. 15th	George Middleton	Peterhouse	Lidyngton	Death
1547, Nov. 7th	Ralph Aynesworth (5)	Peterhouse	London	Death
1554, Oct. 10th	Robert Cooke	Peterhouse		
1569-70, Jan. 16th	Richard Howland (6)	Peterhouse		
1584-5, Feb. 16th	Roger Rudde	Queen Elizabeth	London	Resignation
1617, July 7th	Roger Derham			
1637-8. May 18th	George Bankes			
1641, Nov. 24th	William Norwich (ejected 1648, restored 1661)			
1650	Frecalton) Ministers during the time			
1655	Shephardson) of the Commonwealth.			
1673-4, March 9th	John Clarke			
1690, Nov. 24th	Richard Cooke (7)			
1705	Andrew Perne	Peterhouse		Death
1726, April 20th	Christopher Wardell	Peterhouse		Death
1731, Oct. 22nd	Christopher Clarkson	Peterhouse		Death
1740, Sept. 1st	George Birkett	Peterhouse		Death
1745, July 22nd	Christopher Lonsdale	Peterhouse		Death
1783, Oct. 22nd	Thomas Parke	Peterhouse		Death
1839	Comyns Tucker	Peterhouse		Resignation
1844	George Ray (8)	Peterhouse		Resignation
1867	John William Taylor (8)	Peterhouse		Death
1904, Sept. 22nd	Ernest Goodwyn Peirson	Peterhouse	Peterborough	Resignation

1. The Founder of the Charity. 2. Rector during the re-building of the Nave. 3. Rector during the re-building of the Lady Chapel. 4. Rector during the building of the Tower. 5. A master of Peterhouse, ejected by Queen Mary. 6. Afterwards Bishop of Peterborough. 7. The giver of the Chalice. 8. Restorers of the Church.

Names of the Priests of the Chantry of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Church of S. Guthlac, at Stathern.

Date of Appointment.	Name.	Previous Office.	Patron.	Place of Admission to Office.	Office vacated by
1294, May 27th	William de Okele	Chaplain	Richard Borhard	Herdeby	Death
1315, April 9th	Geoffrey de Emberton	Chaplain	Roger de Trykyngham	Stow Park	
? ?	Geoffrey Baret				Death
1343, July 11th	Hugh de Trykyngham	Priest	Thomas de Reyns	Great Hale	Resignation
1349, Dec. 13th	James de Goynthorp	Priest	Thomas de Reynes	Lidyngton	Resignation
1353, May 25th	John de Wydmerpole	Priest	Thomas de Reynes	Stow Park	Resignation
1355, March 4th	Adam Lord	Priest	Thomas Reynes	Lidyngton	
1371, June 3rd	William de Ranby	Priest	Thomas de Reynes	Stow Park	
1374, Sept. 22nd	John Stevenach	Chaplain	Thomas de Reynes	Sleford	
1379, Aug. 19th	Roger de Edlyngton or Dadington	Priest	Bishop (by lapse)	Nettelham	Death
1391, Aug. 22nd	John Estwell	Priest	Richard Reyns	Sleford	Resignation
1396, Aug. 10th	John Grey	Priest	Richard Reyns	Stow Park	Resignation
1397, Nov. 9th	Roger Freman	Priest	Richard Reyns	Nettilham	Death
1407-8, Feb. 22nd	William Hardy		Richard Raynes	Sleford	
1419-20, Mar. 2nd	John Fayr	Priest	John Reynes	Lincoln	
? ?	Gabriel Joye				Resignation
146[illegible], June 30th	Robert or Gilbert Karre	Canon	Thomas Tresham	London	Resignation
1466, Sept. 14th	Thomas Chace	Clerk	Thomas Tresham	Bukden	Death
1504. April 15th	Ralph Blake	Chaplain	Wm. & Eliza. Taylard	Bukden	Death
1509-10, Feb. 21st	Richard Hubbard or Humphray	Chaplain	Robert Lestraunge	Bukden	Death
1520, May 7th	John Johnson	Chaplain	Laurance Taylard	The Old Temple London	Death
1538-9, Feb. 22nd	Richard Smyth	Chaplain	Peterhouse		Pensioned

The Circumstances of the Building of the Different Parts of the Church, A.D. 900—A.D. 1912.

Parts of the Church, with the approximate dates at which they were built.	Rectors at those dates.	Land-owners and Patrons.	Kings of England at the time.	Events which may have influenced the Building of the Church.
The Fragment of the Saxon Cross (now built into the North West corner of the wall of the North aisle); perhaps about A.D. 900.			Alfred (871-901)	The gradual clearing of the land, and the formation of the "Staked hern" (or ground enclosed by stakes) which became called the "Stact-hern" or "Stat-hern," and so gave this parish its name. This site was chosen as a preaching-station and marked by a tall stone cross.
The Saxon Church (of which no trace is left); perhaps about A.D. 1000.		Leuric (a Saxon Nobleman)	Ethelred II. (979-1016)	Great activity was shown in Church-building under the impression that the world would come to an end in the year 1000
			Edward the Confessor (1042-1066)	Possible destruction of the Saxon Church by the Danes.
The Roof Line of the Norman Church (over the Tower Arch); perhaps about A.D. 1130.		The Norman Families of Borhard and Reignes.	Henry I. (1100-1135)	The settling of the Norman Conquerors in the Land, further clearance of ground, new ideas of building.
			Stephen (1135-1154)	
The Aisles and Porches, The Two Lancet Windows at the West end of the North Aisle, The Lancet Window at the West end of the South Aisle; about A.D. 1200.	Geoffrey Brito	Simon Borhard	Henry II. (1159-1189) Richard I. (1189-1199)	Increase of population, the need for more room in the Church.
			John (1199-1216)	Consecration of the enlarged Church.
Foundation of the Chantry at the East end of the North Aisle (of which the only sign is the later bracket for a figure of the Blessed Virgin, no doubt replacing an older one); A.D. 1250.	Richard Borhard	Simon Borhard	Henry III. (1216-1272)	The wide-spread desire to make provision for prayers for the dead.
The Pillars and Arches of the Nave, The Clerestory, The lower parts of the Chancel Walls, The Font; about A.D. 1300. The Window to the West of the Door in the South Aisle, The Window at the East end of the South Aisle, The Aumbry and Piscina beneath, The Staircase to the Rood Loft; perhaps about A.D. 1410.	Robert Chamberleyn (1294-1356)	Thomas Reignes	Edward I. (1294-1307) Edward II. (1307-1327) Edward III. (1327-1377) Henry IV. (1399-1413)	Much re-building of Churches due to the terror caused by out-breaks of the Plague called the "Black Death." Probably due to the placing of a third Altar at the end of the South Aisle.
The Lady Chapel, The Two Windows to the East of the doors in the North and South Aisles; about A.D. 1450.	William Warkworth (1447-1454)	Cicely Reignes	Henry VI. (1422-1461)	The manors of Stathern were now both in the hands of a woman.
The Tower and Tower Arch, about A.D. 1510.	William Taylard (1504-1534)	William and Elizabeth Taylard	Henry VII. (1485-1509) Henry VIII. (1509-1547)	The Rector was probably the son of the Land-owners and Patrons
The smaller of the two Arches dividing the Chancel from the Chapel, The renewed Chancel Windows, The Upper Parts of the Chancel Walls.	George Ray (1844-1867)	Peterhouse, The Duke of Rutland.	Victoria (1837-1901)	Revival of the idea of Worship, and of interest in the Fabrics of the Churches.
The Benches, and Paving; A.D. 1867-1900. The Glass of the East Window, The Glass of the further Window in South Wall of Chancel, The Aisle Doors; A.D. 1904-1912.	John William Taylor (1867-1904) Ernest Goodwyn Peirson (1904-1913)		Edward VII. (1901-1910) George V. (1910-)	