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THE PARISH CHURCHES OF BARBADOS

The following brief account of the parish churches of Barbados is based largely on an excellent account of the "Parish Churches in Barbados rebuilt after the Hurricane of 1831" by E. M. Shilstone. *B.M.H.S. Journal* Vol. 4 pp. 5-8; *The Barbados Diocesan History* by J. E. Reece & C. G. Clark-Hunt; *The History of Barbados* by John Poyer 1808; and *The History of Barbados* by Sir R. H. Schomburgk, *passim*. Enquiries have been received at the Society's Headquarters about the parish churches and it has been thought desirable to collate the information so that it may be more readily available.

The early churches of Barbados were, of course, built of wood and no information is available concerning these buildings. The island was divided into 6 parishes by Sir William Tufton who was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the island by the Earl of Carlisle, the patent holder. The six parishes were St. Michael, Christ Church, St. James, St. Thomas, St. Peter and St. Lucy.

In 1637, the Rev. Thomas Lane, the first minister of St. Michael's parish, writing to the Archbishop of Canterbury (Archbishop Laud), says: "Our people within these five or six years past have built six churches besides some chapels. . ." It would appear that these chapels, named as is customary after a saint, eventually become the church of a new parish which took its name from the church. The process of separation was gradual, for after the new parish was named and recognised it remained for some time in embryo, as it was dependant upon and under

obligation towards the mother parish, prior to final separation. Thus the parish of St. George was carved out of the parish of St. Michael.

This accounts for the naming of the five additional parishes after the names of saints, a fact which has puzzled many, for 17th century Barbados was strongly anti Roman Catholic, therefore, it appears at first sight strange that the parishes, with the exception of Christ Church and St. Michael, were named after Saints. When however, it is established that the Church was first named and later the parish, further explanation is unnecessary.

The Church in Barbados was under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Canterbury, exercised by the Bishop of London according to Royal Commission, an authority not always recognised in Barbados. The first Bishop of Barbados was appointed in 1824.

ST. MICHAEL

The original church of St. Michael stood on the site of the present St. Mary's Church, Bridgetown. The parish of St. George was at this time worked with the parish of St. Michael. In 1641, the parishioners of St. Michael and St. George agreed to build a new church, but it was some time before any active steps were taken to do so. However, in 1661, the Vestry of St. Michael entered into articles with Captain Robert Collymore to build a new church. The present site was the gift of Colonel William Sharpe and the new church was dedicated to St. Michael and All Angels and was consecrated in 1665. The internal measurements of this church were, 100 feet long and 60 feet wide exclusive of the large chancel, with a capacity for over 3,000 persons. At the west end of the church was a steeple 124 feet high. Around the altar, 40 people could kneel at the same time at the communion rail.

In 1780, the church with its lofty steeple was levelled to the ground by a devastating hurricane and was rebuilt in 1789. The church was damaged by the hurricane of 1831, half the roof was blown off and the building was for some time utilised as a hospital for those injured. When a Bishop was appointed in 1824, the parish church became a Cathedral.

During Bishop Michinson's episcopate, £10,000 was raised to build a new Cathedral, but, on the Bishop's early retirement, this plan fell through and the funds were returned. In 1938, a Lady Chapel was added to the east of the main altar.

CHRIST CHURCH

The first parish church, probably of wood, was destroyed in 1669 as the result of flood caused by 4 days of rain. Part of the churchyard still remains near Dover with some tombs, but the earliest tombstone was removed a few years ago by the Barbados National Trust and deposited at the Museum. It records:

HEAR LYES
WILLIAM BALSTON
ESQ.
DE THE 26 OCTOB,
ANO DOM
1659

The second church was erected on higher land above Oistins, this church was destroyed by the hurricane of 1780. It was rebuilt and again destroyed by the hurricane of 1831. The fourth parish church had its foundation stone laid in 1835 and was built on the ruins of the previous church according to the plan of Captain Senhouse, R.N. The church was consecrated in July 1837 by Bishop Coleridge. In 1935, Christ Church parish was gutted by fire and again rebuilt.

In the churchyard of Christ Church is the celebrated vault of Hon. Thomas Chase. On several occasions the coffins within the vault were found to have become disarranged between burials there. Eventually, all the coffins were removed from the vault and buried separately.

The Rev. Penystone Hastings, Rector of Christ Church 1735 — 1743, was the father of Warren Hastings, Governor-General of India.

ST. GEORGE

The first church of St. George's parish appears to have stood on the same site as the present one. It was built before 1641 and may have been one of the churches erected before 1637. The terrible hurricane of 1780 destroyed the church and the present church was erected in 1784 at a cost of £6,000. It is one of the 4 churches which survived the hurricane of 1831 with little injury.

The reredos of the altar is an oil painting of the Resurrection by Benjamin West dated 1786 and was the gift of Hon. Henry

Frere, President of the Council. The church has some good monumental sculpture. The tower was added in 1958 and consecrated in 1959 by Bishop Mandeville.

ST. JOHN

The first church of St. John was a temporary structure. 'In 1675 the Vestry agreed with Captain Leslie to build the Church for 110,000 pounds sugar with 2 aisles. The northern one for the use of Colonel Walrond and the southern one for Colonel Codrington. These aisles were to cost each gentleman 20,000 lb. sugar and were for their sole use and that of their heirs and assigns for seats and for burying places, they being responsible for their upkeep and repair. This church was rebuilt in 1675 and was totally destroyed by the hurricane of 1831. The church was rebuilt slightly further from the edge of the cliff and consecrated on 23rd June 1836. A chancel was added in 1876.

Many well-known names in our history are associated with the church. Ferdinando Paleologus a vestryman in the 17th century, was a descendant of the brother of the last Christian Emperor of Byzantium. Having fought for the King at the Battle of Naseby, he was amongst the Royalist refugees who settled in Barbados. His mother's father, John Balls had acquired property in Barbados and at Ashford plantation, St. John, Paleologus lived until his death in 1678. Other families were Colleton, Codrington, Walrond, Hethersall, Quintyne, Estwick, Carmichael, Haynes and Sealy.

ST. PHILIP

The early history of St. Philip's parish church is unknown. St. Philip was one of the four new parishes in 1640. This fact suggests that there was a church or chapel already in existence. The church standing in 1780 was destroyed by the hurricane, it was rebuilt and again destroyed in 1831. In 1835 the foundation stone of the new parish church was laid by Bishop Coleridge and the church and new burial ground were consecrated in 1836. The large silk cotton tree in the churchyard is said to mark the site of the church destroyed in 1831.

In the churchyard is the vault of the Lord family of Long Bay, but the most notorious member of this family Samuel Hall Lord, the builder of Long Bay Castle, now called Sam Lord's Castle, was buried in England.

ST. THOMAS

The first parish church of St. Thomas seems to have been destroyed by the hurricane of 1675. The Vestry Minutes record on 14th February 1676 'that a parish church be erected in the same place where it was formerly'. The new church, erected on the same site, was completed in 1681. This church was damaged by the hurricane of 1731 and totally destroyed by the hurricane of 1780. It was rebuilt, only to be destroyed again by the hurricane of 1831. It was not until 1835 that the foundation stone of a new church was laid westward of the old church on the site of the former rectory destroyed in 1780.

The parish church of St. Thomas is the only church in Barbados to which Queen Anne presented plate. These pieces bear her arms.

ST. JOSEPH

The original church of St. Joseph was standing in 1641, but the date when it was built is not known. It was situated in Joe's River Valley and was capable of seating 200 people. This church was destroyed by the hurricane of 1831 and a mortuary chapel now stands on part of the site. Four tombstones from the graveyard which had surrounded the old church are set into the floor of the Chapel.

No new parish church was begun until 1836 when the foundation stone was laid. The reason for this was the lengthy discussions that ensued on a site for the new church. One site was at the top of Horse Hill, at Blackman's, the other was at the foot of Horse Hill, which was eventually chosen. The new church was dedicated in 1839 and originally had galleries but no chancel. In the 1870's the galleries were removed and a chancel added. The rector in 1731 was the Rev. Brian Hunt, who was the grandfather of Leigh Hunt, the poet and essayist.

ST. JAMES

This was the first church to be built in Barbados. It was built by the English settlers soon after their arrival in 1627 and was later replaced by a better building. The church was rebuilt in 1874. It contains some interesting monuments. The font bears the date 1684. In the south porch is an old bell with the inscription 'God Bless King William, 1696.' In 1882 this bell was sent to England to be recast, but Mr. Forster Alleyne of Porters Plantation promised to collect enough to defray the cost.

of a new bell if the Rector and Vestry agreed that the old bell would be kept in the church forever. To Mr. Forster Alleyne's request the Rector and Vestry agreed.

ST. PETER

The early history of St. Peter's church is obscure. Father J. M. Labat, on a visit to Barbados in 1700 mentions a 'clergyman from Speightstown at our merchant's home. Next day, he took our merchant, another of their friends and myself to his home. . . . We were graciously received by the clergyman's wife and family. . . . their mother is a Norman and their father is the son of a Frenchman. . . . On Sunday 12th (September) he was engaged all the morning at his church. . . .' This clergyman was probably a French Huguenot of whom there were a small number in Barbados. Unfortunately, we do not know his name and the name of the first known Rector of St. Peter's is given as Adam Justice 1712.

St. Peter's church escaped devastation from the hurricane of 1780, but was destroyed by the hurricane of 1831 which left only the tower intact but minus its roof. One of the four houses of Speightstown which survived this hurricane was used as a temporary church. Plans for a new church submitted by Mr. Thomas Burgess were approved by the Vestry, and the foundation stone laid on 31st December 1835, and the church consecrated on 9th February 1837. The chancel of St. Peter's was repaired after the hurricane of 1898 by Charles Joseph Greenidge, a well-known contractor who was responsible for the erection of the Barbados Mutual Life Assurance building, Bridgetown.

St. Peter's church owns the earliest piece of church plate in the island, a silver flagon of 1676 made from a chalice or standing cup.

ST. LUCY

The records of St. Lucy give little information prior to 1831. The earliest rector recorded is Rev. Thomas Gibbs 1682. The author of *The Natural History of Barbados* 1750, Rev. Griffith Hughes was rector of St. Lucy's from about 1736 until his mysterious disappearance, it is said with the parish records. The church was destroyed by the hurricane of 1831 and there was a long delay before any rebuilding took place. In January 1836, however, the foundation stone was laid by the Bishop of Barbados in the presence of the Bishop of Jamaica. After this cere-

mony there was a breakfast party for the Bishops and clergy given by the Rector of the parish followed by a dinner with Sir Reynold Alleyne, Bart., at Cabbage Tree Hall (now Alleynedale).

ST. ANDREW.

The history of St. Andrew's parish church is obscure. The church escaped the devastating hurricanes of 1780 and 1831. The church however was deemed unsafe and was therefore pulled down and rebuilt. The foundation stone of the new church was laid in 1846, the Legislature making a grant in 1841 of £500. The church was called St. Andrew Overhills, as one had to cross the central ridge to reach the parish from Bridgetown. The parish of St. Joseph once formed part of St. Andrew Overhills, or Scotland parish as it was sometimes called. Although St. Joseph's Church existed as early as 1641, the separation of St. Joseph's parish from St. Andrew Overhills did not take place until twelve years later.

BY ANDREW

The history of St. Andrew's parish church is...
The church was founded in the year 1150...
The church was rebuilt in the year 1350...
The church was again rebuilt in the year 1550...
The church was further rebuilt in the year 1750...
The church was again rebuilt in the year 1850...
The church was further rebuilt in the year 1950...
The church was again rebuilt in the year 2000...



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