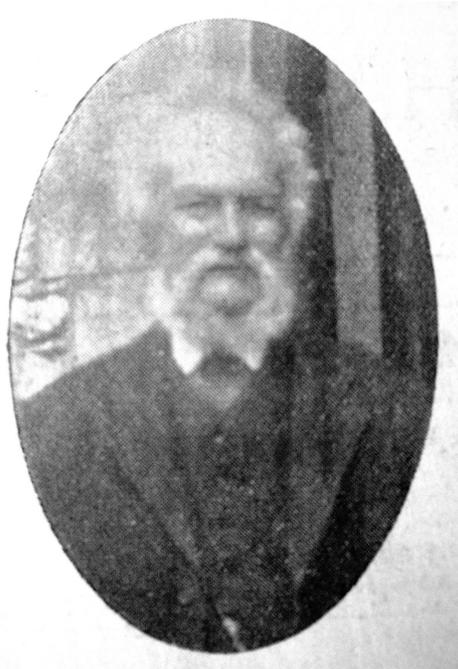


## **OUR HISTORY**

**THOMAS STONE 1849 – 1937**

**Verger at St. Michael's and All Angels for 45 years**



"It is taking us a long time to get over it. The church has become part of us" said Mrs. Stone in July 1935.

That Sunday was the first time for 45 years that Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Stone of High Street, Partridge Green had been able to leave the Parish Church after a service without having to stay to "lock up" and as Mrs. Stone said, "it is very hard". The church was built in 1890, and from the very beginning Mr. Stone had been the verger there, and his wife had started looking after the inside of the church in 1903, but now both felt, at the age of 86 and 83 respectively, that they had earned retirement. They had served no fewer than 17 rectors, during which time they had also seen the harmonium replaced by an organ, the

addition of a chancel screen and of a fine lectern.

Mr. Stone's connection with the church goes back before he was a verger, however, because he was, as foreman of a brickyard in Partridge Green, responsible for making the bricks that were used in building it. He belonged to a Bosham family, whilst his wife came from Spalding in Lincolnshire. Thomas married Sarah Susannah Wadds in St. John's Church, Burgess Hill on March 9th 1878 and moved to Partridge Green in the following year. Between 1879 and 1892 they had eight children, five boys and three girls. (Fanny, Thomas, Tamar, William, Charles, Harriet, Percy and Frederick.) It appears that at least seven of them attended Jolesfield School. Unfortunately, between 1909 and 1915, four of the children died from tuberculosis, all being in their early 20s. Thomas and Sarah moved into Maple Cottage in the High Street in 1912. All five boys followed in their father's footsteps and worked in the brick making industry. The fifth son, Charles, was for 12 months unaccounted for during the First World War and it was believed that he had been killed, but he had been held as a prisoner in Germany.

There were two things that every parishioner referred to when talking about Mr. and Mrs. Stone: the lantern which Mr. Stone carried as a warning to traffic in the winter, and the tricycle on which Mrs. Stone made numberless journeys to her work at the church, although she always walked to a service. Mrs. Stone related how two of their sons, Charles and the late William, used to sing in the choir, and Mr. Stone added: "Yes, and Percy blew the organ, but got himself into trouble once when he fell asleep and there was no wind for the hymn!"

Mr. Thomas Stone died on 17th January, 1937 at the age

of 87 and his wife Sarah died on 11th February, 1944 at the age of 90. Both are buried together in St. Michael's church yard. William †1909, Harriet †1911, Percy †1912 and Frederick †1915, are all buried in St. George's church yard.

*Adapted from an original article in the West Sussex County Times and Standard, Friday July 19th 1935 by Herbie Whitmore*