

William Watts and William Lindoe

AMONG the items lost when St. Mary's, Norwich was destroyed in the blitz in 1942 was a faded and rather ragged note-book which had lain in the vestry cupboard for more than a century and a half. It had been kept by a deacon, William Lindoe, who jotted down in it some notes of church events and of his own spiritual experiences and copied out some similar notes made by his predecessor, William Watts.

A few facts are known to us about Watts and Lindoe. On January 17th, 1705, the former was admitted a freeman of Norwich after apprenticeship to Richard Spratt, a baker. This Richard Spratt had for some years been a member of the "Baptised Church in the city of Norwich" and by 1716 was a deacon. By 1713, William Watts had also joined the church. From that date he was an active member, regularly signing the minutes in the Church Book. In due course we read:—

"At a Solem meeting on y^e 18th May 1725 Set apart for prayer and in seeking y^e Lord Mr. William Watts was chosen Deacon of this church."

Thereafter he acted as treasurer, keeping the church accounts for the next twenty years¹ about the end of which time the church bought the site in St. Mary's parish and built the first "St. Mary's Meeting." Lindoe, baptised in 1746, was also an assiduous church member. In 1762 the church unanimously gave him a "corle to the office of a deacon" which he accepted. He died a fortnight after the last entry in his note-book, leaving the church an endowment of £410 5s. 0d. in Five Percents. He was commemorated by a marble tablet in the Meeting:—

In Memory of
Mr. William Lindoe
who was an honourable member & Deacon
in this Meeting
ob: Maii 30, Aetatis 51. 1773
He adorned the Christian Profession
in every relation of Life
and his Death was greatly lamented
by all his Acquaintance
The Memory of the Just is blessed
Prov. 10. 7.
Also Ann his beloved Wife
who (after persevering in an honourable

¹ A transcript of these accounts has recently been published by the Norfolk Record Society—*Vol. xxii., A Miscellany*, 1951, p. 41.

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Profession of Religion
 near forty years in the Church
 which Assembles in this Place.)
 Died June 14th. 1782. Aged 72 Years.
 The Righteous shall
 hold in his way.
 Job. 17 .9.

The following extracts from Lindoe's note book were made by the writer of this article before the war:—

"A Peece of Experience of Mr. Watts Sen^r as rote by himself Novem^r 1729.

At the time above mention^d I was under the afflicting hand of God in my body. I was set in my room very dull and havey under douts and fears of my intrest in Crist thinking with myself whi I sat thus sturt up and took the Bible into my hand and earnestly desired of the Lord that he would direct me to some sutable word of comfort that I might have a fuller asureence of my intrest in Crist Jesus and it plased the Lord to direct me to open the Bible on these words wich came with power to my soul from the Lord Jesus. John 6 and 47. Varyly varyly I say unto you he that beleveth in me hath everlasting life which made me brake forth into tears of joy and comfort. More then this severall sutable places in that chapter whear comfortable allso. In the manewhile Satan was not wanting to inject disbeleef into my mind and I was riddy to question wether what I had just before read whear of God or no. Then those words in the 63 of the above chapter was a farther confarmation of it, The words that I spake unto you they are Spirit and they are Life, which filled me with much joy and comfort. At the same time Mr. Watts's Himn Book being thear I took it and open upon the 149 Himn of the first book and dropt my eye upon ye 2 and 3 varses wich whear at that time vary sutable which is as follows

But O what condisceding ways
 He takes to teach his heavenly grace
 My eyes with joy and wonder see
 What formes of wowe he boore for me
 The Angle of the covernant stands
 With his commishon in his hands
 Sent from his fathers milder trone
 To make the great salvation known.

I desire this might be for the Glory of God. W. Watts."
 "More belong to W. Watts found among his ritings

We should not omit the Lest duty or comit the Lest sin to gain the greatest good and I due perpose in the strength of God to follow this rule unto my life's end. W. Watts."

"The means to be used for the Living a stedy life in the Lord by faith and to enjoy much seasonable communion.

1. Prayer—at lest morning and evening
 2. Watch your heart. When you find sin rampant or the attacks of the enemy cry unto God and keep crying till help come.
 3. Be much in reading the word of God.
 4. Give yourself to much reflection as to your religious state.
- Avoid every occasion of sin and use all meanes of praching holiness.

W. Watts"

1746 (concerning the ordination of John Steane in July of that year)" Mr. Simpson from Cambridge Mr. Simmons from Beckles Mr. Dunkhorn from Ellingham whear pres^t. the former two prach^d Mr. Simpson to the people Mr. Simmons to the pastor."

1746 Mar. 15. "I [William Lindoe] was Baptised and taken into church communion. I was the first person Baptised in the Baptistry in the new meting."

1750 May 5. (He took an evening walk out of the city gates and thought of Isaac going into the field to meditate. He sought a profitable subject for meditation and thought . . .)

"if I should dye within the space of an oure what good ground have I to beleve I should be admitted into the heavenly manshons."

(This thought was a great weight on his mind. He felt himself compassed with thick darkness, but remembered the text "Let him that walketh in darkness and see little or no light call upon the name of the Lord and stay himself upon his God." These words proved "A staff to keep me from sinking" and it pleased God to bring to his mind some particular times when he had received tokens of His love and grace and so he was comforted.)

1752. "There is always good cause to trust the Lord."

1755 July. "The Rev. Mr. John Stearne departed this life. As a minister he was well qual^d. by the Holy Gost for that important Service a workman that need^d. not to be ashamed Rightly divideing the word of thurth and haveing the Glory of God and good of souls much at heart. In the affears of life he was Remarkably prudent allwais riddy to communicate to any that applyd for advice in matters Spiritual or Temporal being well able to give advice in Either respects. He was a hartly frind a courteous neighbour an indulgent husband a tender father Lived examplarily and dyed comfortably."

[The inscription of John Stearne's tablet at St. Mary's—also destroyed in 1942 was:—

In Memory of
 The Rev^d. Mr. JOHN STEARNE
 late Pastor of the Church here assembling
 All whose remains are underneath interr'd.
 He was faithful in his Office,
 prudent in his conduct,
 A ready Scribe in the Law of his God,
 well instructed in ye mysteries of ye Kingdom
 Sedulous and successful in his Work,
 amiable in every relation,
 Courteous to all,
 in fine ornamental to his christian profession.
 Who when he had finished his Generation work
 fell asleep in Jesus, July 19th 1755. Aged 43.
 Psal. CXII. 6.
 The righteous shall be in Everlasting
 Remembrance.]

1761. "How strangely hath sin defaced the whole creation."
1765. "After a work in the round of earthly concerns which had too much ingrossed both attenⁿ. & affections and left little heart for the Lord was this day sated with a virulent disorder which gave indications of my dissolution. . . . My disorder was terrible yet bless the Lord not so bad as it might have been. When the pain abated I was much affected with His great mercy and goodness. . . . In this affliction His blisssed word has been very precious to me. . . . O how sure how permanent this blisssed word is, a tried word O may I find this precious word so powerfully apply^d. to my soul by the Blessed Spirit as to fit me for every good word and work and enable me to spend my few remaining days to the glory and honour of his Great Name and at the last finish my course with joy."
- 1773 May 15. (He had been under very heavy afflictions for some time past, sin being the cause. He can say he does in part love God and trust in Him. He wants a further conformity to his dear, dear Image as long as continued in this life and a comfortable passage into that to come)—"May the Holy Eternal Spirit assist me through life and in death for Christ's sake."

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