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 "Baptist 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 ye 18th May 1725 Set apart for prayer and in seeking ye 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.
The following extracts from Lindoe's note book were made by the writer of this article before the war:—

"A Peace of Experience of Mr. Watts Sen' as rote by himself Novem' 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 heavy under doubts and fears of my interest in Christ 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 suitable word of comfort that I might have a fuller assurance of my interest in Christ Jesus and it pleased the Lord to direct me to open the Bible on these words which came with power to my soul from the Lord Jesus. John 6 and 47. Varyly varyly I say unto you he that believeth in me hath everlasting life which made me brake forth into tears of joy and comfort. More than this several suitable places in that chapter which also. In the meanwhile Satan was not wanting to inject disbelieve into my mind and I was riddy to question whether what I had just before read were of God or not. Then those words in the 63 of the above chapter was a farther confirmator 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 Hymn Book being there I took it and open'd upon the 149 Hymn of the first book and dropt my eye upon ye 2 and 3 verses which at that time vary suitable which is as follows

But O what condescending 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 covenant stands
With his commision 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 amoung his ritings
We should not omit the least duty or omit the least sin to gain the greatest good and I due purpose 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 steady life in the Lord by faith and to enjoy much seasonable communion.

1. Prayer—at least 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 means 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 where pres the former two prach the 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 admited 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 Steane 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 having the Glory of God and good of souls much at heart. In the afeares 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 harty 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 two much ingrossed both atten&lt. & affections and left
little hart for the Lord was this day sased with a virelent
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 blessed word has been very presous to me. . .
O how sure how perminent this blissed word is, a tried word
. . . O may I find this precious word so powerfully
applie to my soul by the Blessed Spirit as to fit me for
every good word and work and inable me to spend my few
remaining days to the glory and honhour of his Great Name
and at the last finish my course with joy."

1773 May 15. (He had been under very heavy afflicions 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 con-
formity 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."

CHARLES B. JEWSON.