

**COLLECTIONS FOR A
PAROCHIAL HISTORY
OF BACKWELL**

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Collections for a parochial history of Backwell by George Streynsham Master

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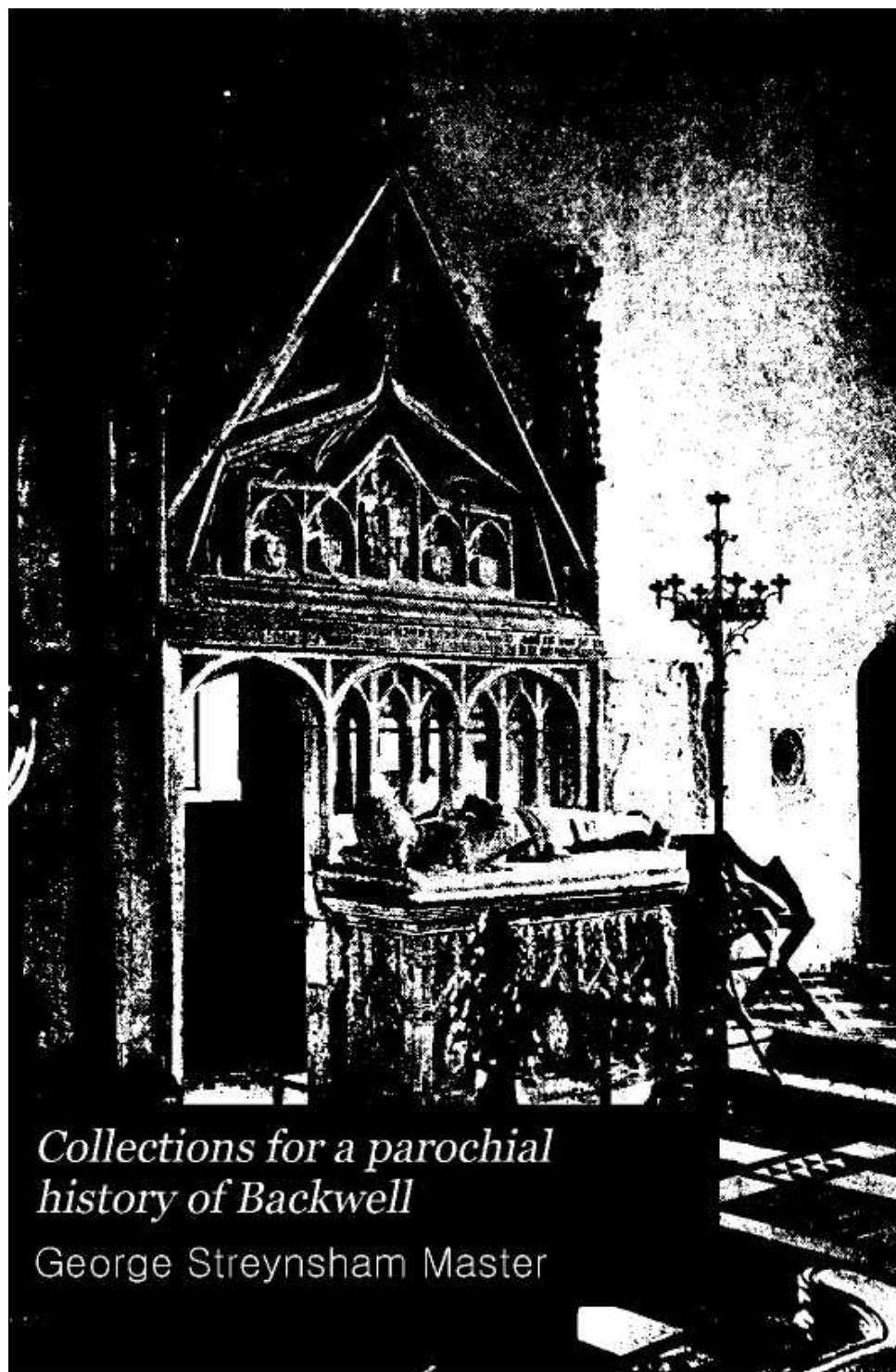
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GEORGE STREYNHAM MASTER

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BY

REV. GEORGE S. MASTER.

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1898.

These brief notices of the history of the Parish of Backwell, written at the request of its Rector, himself its proper and most competent historian but occupied by more important duties, owe nevertheless whatever of value and accuracy they possess to his able and appreciative co-operation.

For the illustration of the Rodney Chapel thanks are due to the Editors of "Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries," who have kindly permitted its reproduction, for the others to W. Hill Budgett, Esq., and the Rev. J. A. W. Wadmore, whose photographic skill has provided the excellent negatives from which they have been printed.



BACKWELL.—THE PARISH.

THE Parish of Backwell, comprising according to the Tithe Award, with rivers and roads, 2902 acres,¹ and lying about seven miles South West from Bristol, is bounded on the North by Wraxall and Nailsea, on the South by Wrington, on the East by Flax-Bourton and Barrow Gurney, and on the West by Chalvey and Brockley. It is intersected from East to West by the high road from Bristol to Weston-Super-Mare, and by the main line of the Great Western Railway, whose "Nailsea" Station lies within its limits, its Church and Church-town standing back beneath a picturesque and rocky range of hills, pierced at this spot by Cheston Combe. From hence the prospect to the North and West, including the wooded slopes of Tynesfield, the Church Towers of Wraxall, Nailsea, Tickenham, Yatton, and Clevedon, the rich meadow land of the intervening valley with its widening area towards the sea, the elevated coast-line of Woodspring and Worle, the Bristol Channel with the islands of Steep and Flat Holme, the mountains of Wales and Somerset, is of exceptional interest and variety. The rock which underlies the soil is of hard calcareous limestone, a mixture of grey and red, intersected with veins of spar and capable of polish.

From the extent of the area of its elevated down or common land, it might be expected that traces of its primæval inhabitants

¹ In the census of 1841, 2750 acres. Som: Rec: Soc: III. 320, the discrepancy perhaps accounted for by omission at that date of the impropriate, Rectorial, and Vicarial glebe, together 172 acres.

would be numerous. This however is not the case. There is a small camp of irregular shape, adapted to its position on the summit of the limestone ridge above the village, and probably of Celtic construction, its rampart rudely formed of loose stones gathered on the spot, but now unfortunately dimidiated by the encroachment of an adjoining quarry. A little further to the East is a well-defined sepulchral barrow, bell-shaped, like a cup or basin inverted in its saucer, about thirty feet in diameter. Upon opening this in July in the present year the result was altogether disappointing. Instead of the anticipated urns and other relics of a remote past, a pavement of flat stones at a depth of two feet was found to cover a layer of moist and unctuous earth, which yielded bones of pigs and smaller animals, but no human ones, fragments of glazed earthenware, tobacco pipes, and iron nails; all pointing to its recent date, and constituting a puzzle, of which it is difficult to give an explanation.

Within a stone's throw of the barrow stands a granite obelisk set upon a ponderous block of the same material, and bearing the following inscription, 'THIS STONE WAS ERECTED BY THE PARISHIONERS OF BACKWELL, TO COMMEMORATE THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF QUEEN VICTORIA'S REIGN COMPLETED 20TH JUNE, 1897. GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.'

Of persons deriving their surnames from this place we find—

Thomas de Bacuel, witnessing an Episcopal decision at Bath,
1121.²

Richard de Backwelle, instituted to the Rectory of Breane,
1318.³

Ric Bacwell, (then probably a child) to the Rectory of
Charlton-Mackrell, 1350,³ and to that of Ilchester, 1422.³

John Backwel, to the Vicarage of Dunster, 1418.³

² Bath Chartulary, Som: Rec: Soc: VII. 51.

³ Weaver's Somerset Incumbents 32, 50, 111.