

The Reverend Robert Stammers – Quorndon's Vicar – an extraordinary 55-year ministry



Robert Stammers courtesy of Quorn Online Museum

One of the interesting things about Quorn's St Bartholomew's church is just how much of what we see today reflects the ambitions of Reverend Robert Stammers, turning what was a relatively plain and often dilapidated chapel into the grand Grade 1 listed Church of today. Despite these achievements, he has a somewhat negative reputation. Here we take a closer look at the man and his time, as both a curate and vicar, based on information available from websites, articles, newspapers, books and the Quorn Village On-line Museum. A perpetual issue with Local History is knowing what to leave in and what to leave out and that is the case here because there is so much detail available, far too much for a writing such as this, but hopefully a reasonable balance has been struck.

Quorndon

Yes, it was Quorndon during this time, the name change to Quorn didn't take place until after Stammers death. We need to understand that life was very different in this time, the Church of England was established as the state religion, with the Monarch as the Supreme Governor. All Bishops and Deans were appointed by the Monarch on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. All major church rules and organisational changes had to go through the Parliament and Bishops were ex-officio members of the House of Lords, having a direct input into law making. The church also held almost total control of elementary education. Burial laws prevented non-Anglicans being buried in parish churchyards without using the Church of England burial service. Everyone was expected to contribute to the church, the Vicar and Squire ruled. Towards the end of Stammers' life in 1888, changes were starting to happen with the passing of the Elementary Education Act of 1870, Burial Laws Act 1880, Oaths Act of 1888, etc. And after his death, Quorndon became Quorn in 1890 and the Local Government Act that introduced the civil parish was not passed until 1894. The chapel, then church, in Quorndon was powerful as the local government, the vestry committee was the governing body of the parish. As well as church maintenance, the vestry handled secular duties like distributing alms to the poor, local taxation and the general community administration including maintaining the records. In Quorndon this also included responsibility for the school, fire brigade and maintenance of the 2 ½ miles of turnpike road that passed through the village.

Nationally, the 1800s saw the peak of what was known as the Nonconformist Conscience, a movement where the Free Church heavily influenced the push for social reform, temperance, and the disestablishment of the Church of England. In Quorndon, this played out practically rather than aggressively. The non-conformists tended to align with liberal views and fought against Anglicanism and the state funding of Anglican parish schools and thought that children should not be forced into Church of England religious instruction. According to the 1851 Religious Census, 80% of Quornites attended church which vastly exceeded the national average of 50%, the breakdown of worshipers revealed a dominant Baptist presence. The Baptists accounted for an impressive 43% of all churchgoers. In contrast, Anglicans made up 21%, and various Methodist groups

made up the remaining 16%. During this period the population was increasing and a much-debated issue in the village and elsewhere was the licensing of beer houses. In 1830, drunkenness was a serious problem and led to the rise in temperance and various local restrictions particularly on Sundays in Quorndon when drinking was strictly forbidden during church hours.

In the 1800s clergy positions were regarded as a 'calling' and a 'vocation', in a few cases the positions were held by 'Gentlemen', but the majority were not. A true gentleman was by birth only, but all clergy had to be capable of mixing with all, including the local gentry and have sometimes been referred to as 'gentry adjacent'. So, this is the context in which the Reverend Robert Stammers tenure in Quorndon is set.

His Early Days

Robert Stammers was born in Long Melford in Suffolk in 1804 to Joseph and Sarah Stammers. Robert was qualified as a vicar having studied at St Johns College Cambridge, graduating in 1827 aged 23, with a B.A. followed by an M.A. He was ordained by the Lord Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry at Ecclesfield at a service held on 2nd November 1828.



This engraving is titled 'Second Court of St Johns College, Cambridge University, 1814' by Joseph Constantine Stadler, is a scene, no doubt, familiar to both Richard Gwatkin and Robert Stammers. Both of whom attended the College which held the patronage of Holy Trinity Church Barrow. (copyright expired)

A strange thing happened in 1828, of which we know only a little. The County of Suffolk Sentencing book has an entry for Robert Stammers 'Uttering counterfeit hoax' to which is entered in the 'Acquittals' column 'No prosecution'. According to the Bank of England website, this crime of "uttering a counterfeit" was forgery, the illegal act of knowingly passing, circulating, or attempting to use fake banknotes, forged legal documents, or

counterfeit coins. The “hoax aspect” implies that it could have been a prank or a scam. It was considered a serious crime but luckily in Robert's case there was no prosecution.

We know from the Archdeaconry records for Sudbury and the local newspaper reports that the marriage of Robert Stammers to Sarah Dalton took place at St. Marys, Bury St. Edmunds on 16th June 1828. Sarah was born in Banstead, Suffolk in 1800 and was the eldest daughter of John Dalton, Esq. a surgeon, of Bury St. Edmunds. Robert's place of residency was entered as Ravenstone, Leicestershire. His occupation being a Clerk AB. This being the abbreviation for Artium Baccalaureus, indicating he was a clerk that held a university degree, an ordained clergyman and man in holy orders. Robert, then aged 24 and newly qualified, was the stipendiary curate assisting the resident rector of St. Michaels the Reverend Giles Powell with his tasks and as schoolteacher at the church school. This was common practice before gaining an independent parish placement.



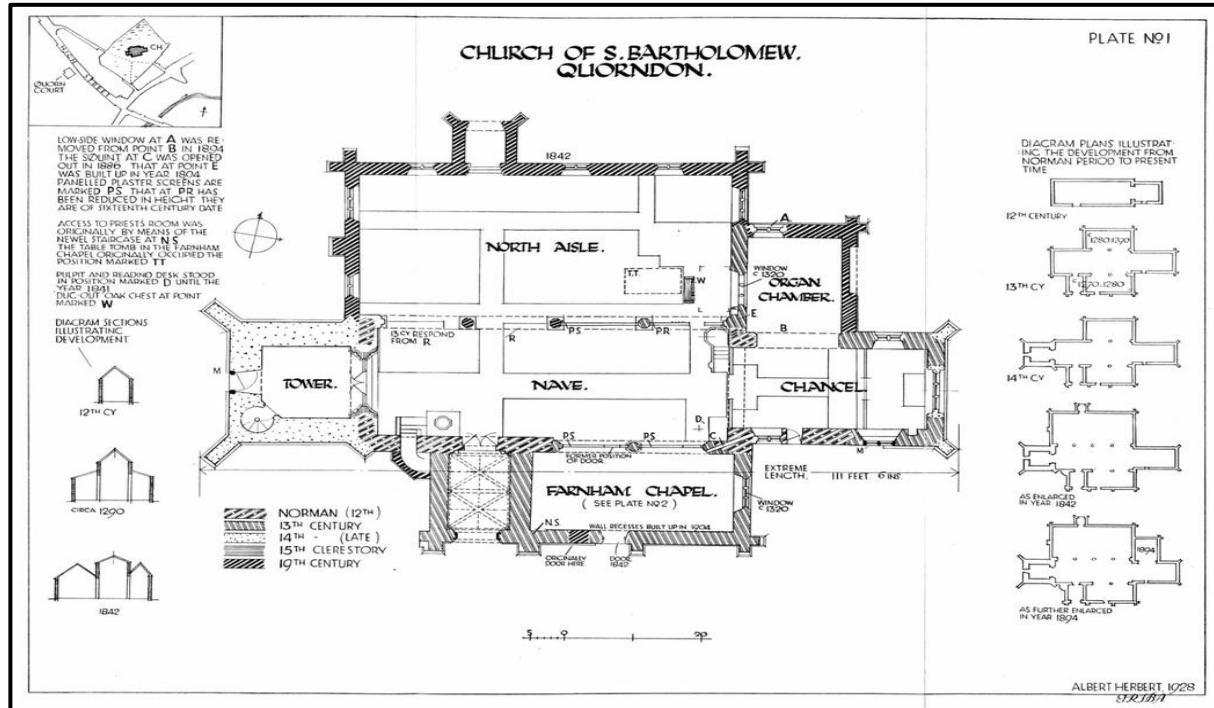
Church of St. Michael Ravenstone

We read in the Nottingham Journal of the 25th June 1831 that collected in Ravenstone, for the distressed Irish, by the Rev. Robert Stammers was £22. 1s. 10d (almost £3000 today). From the Quorndon graveyard family vault inscription, we can see that Robert and Sarah's child Edward Wilson Stammers died on June 17th, 1832, aged only 9 weeks and is buried in the Ravenstone churchyard.

Shortly after this, 28 year old Robert is appointed as Quorn's 'perpetual curate' by Richard Gwatkin, incumbent of Holy Trinity Barrow since early 1832. He had also graduated from St. Johns College, Cambridge in 1814. Gwatkin obtained his Bachelor of Divinity degree and became a Fellow of the College which held the patronage of Holy

Trinity, Barrow, the college presenting him with the parish in 1832. It wouldn't be unreasonable to assume that both men being 'Suffolkers' and having attended the same college knew each other.

St Bartholomew's Chapel



This plan is by Albert Harbert and dated 1928 gives details of St Bartholomew's evolution

The Chapel at Quorndon was known as a 'chapel of ease' which fell directly under the mother church, Holy Trinity. The chapel is of Norman origin, dating from the mid 12th century. It was established by Ranulph, the 4th Earl of Chester and built for his Norman hunting parties who often were stranded on the wrong side of the flooded River Soar and needed a nearby place to rest and pray. Much of the chapel was rebuilt in the early 14th century and is constructed of the local pink Mountsorrel granite when the battlemented west tower was added. The exact date that the chapel was dedicated to St. Bartholomew the apostle is not known, but we do know that the chapel was well positioned in the Quorndon hunting park on a granite hill, providing refuge for hunters and travellers trapped in the river Soar flood plain. Between 1270 and 1290 the Farnhams had two private chapels added to the main chapel building and in 1392, John Farnham and parishioners John Smyth and John Herbert paid 100 shillings (a large sum of money at the time) to King Richard II to secure formal letters patent. This date is considered the founding year of the Farnham Chapel marking a legal milestone as it transitioned from a

general, physical space to a private chapel. The royal licence legally allowed them to tie the income of 50 acres of land and two cottages to the chapel. This revenue permanently funded a dedicated chaplain to sing daily Mass "for ever". This chaplain arrangement was however, terminated by the Edward VI Chuntries Act of 1547. After John Farnham died in 1416, the estate passed to his grandson, Robert who married Margaret, then a legal battle ensued with his younger son, Thomas. As a result, Thomas built a new home, the Nether Hall on the north-east side of the village. Therefore, after the family split, in the 14th century the private Farnham (south) chapel became solely for the Over Hall family and the north chapel then became the private chapel of the Nether Hall Farnhams although, there is no evidence that this was formally agreed. This arrangement did, however, allow each branch of the family to have their own altar, burial vaults and monuments, and a prestigious place within what would become the parish church.

We know from correspondence found in the old village chest and addressed to Edward Farnham that he was a churchwarden and from a receipted payment that Edward Farnham contributed a large share of the costs of new church bells in 1773, indicating that Edward continued the Farnham family tradition as benefactors. When the Nether Hall line died out in the seventeenth century, their chapel ceased to be a private family chapel and gradually became simply the church's north aisle.

During these times, apart from the period as a chancery with a Chaplain, St Bartholomew's was serviced by assistant curates. These were priests subcontracted by the mother church vicar to handle clerical tasks and conduct services in the Chapel in the incumbent priest's absence.

Stammers' Arrival

It was in the spring of 1832 that Robert Stammers is appointed as Quorn's 'perpetual curate.' In this role and being fully qualified as a vicar, he was granted the same responsibilities of a vicar within the parish, except that a cash stipend was paid to him rather than an allotment tied directly to any parish tithes. So, he was able to carry out most of the functions of Vicar whilst still being a curate. One of the remarkable aspects of Stammers appointment was that he effectively guided the church through the entire transition from dependent chapel to independent parish church. Many church

improvements were also implemented during his long tenure by cultivating the village's wealthy benefactors especially the Farnhams of Quorn House, the Warners of Quorn Hall, the Cradocks of Quorn Court and the Perry-Herricks of Beaumanor Hall. Stammers had seen the village population grow, from just over 1200 in 1801 to over 1800 in 1881. The increase in non-conformists' worship and what was known as the 'Victorian restoration' a campaign to rebuilt, enlarged, or refurbished medieval churches and cathedrals in England was also underway. It is not unreasonable therefore, to think that there were ecclesial pressures, chapel benefactors and village gentry moving to establish Quorn as a Parish in its own right. We know that Edward Basil Farnham becoming a Member of Parliament in 1837 had pledged to do everything in his power to preserve the church. He attended the 'Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge' and was a major contributor to the 'County of Leicestershire Society for the Education of the Children of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church' indicating that the family continued as benefactors of Quorn Chapel.

Robert Stammers was in some quarters, considered the 'first' perpetual curate in Quorndon but there were at least two others prior to him, Thomas Hudson and John W R Boyer, both held the position for over 30 years each and covered Woodhouse and Quorndon. They do not appear to have been qualified to the level as Stammers and were not dedicated to Quorndon so, this may be why Stammers was considered the first.

The family

When the family moved to Quorn in 1832 Robert was 28 years old and his wife Sarah was 33. By 1841 when the Census was taken Robert (35) and his wife Sarah (40) had settled in and were recorded as living in New Quorn at the vicarage with sons Robert (10), Edward (5), Joseph (2) and daughters Mary Ann (7) and Mary (4). Sarah's mother also named Sarah (65) was living in the Vicarage as were two female servants.

The couple had eight children but sadly, they lost Edward Wilson in 1832 aged only 9 weeks then Roland Dalton died in 1840 also 9 weeks old. Mary Eliza Ann died aged 13 in 1851, Edward Newton 1835 dies aged 19, Joseph aged 17 in 1856 and Roland Dalton in 1861 aged 19. Sarah, Robert's wife died in 1874 and the 1881 Census records that Robert is living alone with his elder sister Susannah Ainslie a 79-year widow. The eldest son

Robert died aged 56 in 1886 and Mary Ann in 1903 aged 70. Whilst Robert lived on until 1888.

Programme of Work Starts



*The Old Quorn Vicarage a nursery school in modern times
It was built on Glebe lands*

Exactly where the family lived at the time of his appointment is not known but from directories of the time, we know that ‘a new Parsonage house, in the Elizabethan style, was built in 1837, at a cost of £1200.’ It was built on church lands and was likely financed by a combination of local benefactions such as the Farnhams, Stammers himself and with loans. Quorndon had received monies from Queen Anne’s Bounty augmentation, both in 1728 and 1762. These funds were with the benefice and not the individual but were described as substantial amounts.

In 1842, whilst still St Barts chapel, the north aisle (previously a private chapel) was the first of the Stammers initiated major projects to be undertaken. The north aisle width was doubled by noted Leicester architect and surveyor William Parsons (1796-1857). This was to cope with Quorn’s rapidly growing population, and added 167 extra seats to the church, of which 109 were rent-free.



The north aisle of St. Bartholomew's was formally a Farnham chapel and the first of the Stammers initiated major projects to be undertaken.

This was followed in 1865, when the chapel was closed for the second tranche of Church works. We read that the building had been given an extensive restoration by Ewan Christian (1814-95) of London who was Architect to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, the work was funded by William Perry-Herrick of Beaumanor Hall, Edward B. Farnham of Quorn House and Edward Warner of Quorn Hall and other subscribers. Funds, it was reported were not wanting, as subscriptions poured in most liberally. The chapel had been renovated, cleaned, and restored in a great measure to its pristine beauty. The stonework of the exterior of the church had been restored where necessary, new gable-coping fixed, and floriated Latin crosses erected on the nave, chancel, and south aisle. It was in the interior where the greatest improvements were completed, pews gave way to neat open seats, the old "three-decker", a towering, unified piece of church furniture, was replaced by a reading desk, lectern, and low pulpit, and the gallery which obscured the west window demolished. The belfry floor was elevated above the west window, and the bell wheels repaired, and the chancel floor was laid with encaustic tiles. The roof of the nave is oak, and in the chancel of deal, stained and varnished. The clerestory windows have been renewed, and the capitals restored. The font was removed to be near the south door. The clerestory windows renewed, and the capitals restored. For heating, a stove supplied by the London Heating Apparatus Company, was placed at the southwest corner.



The chancel floor encaustic tiles

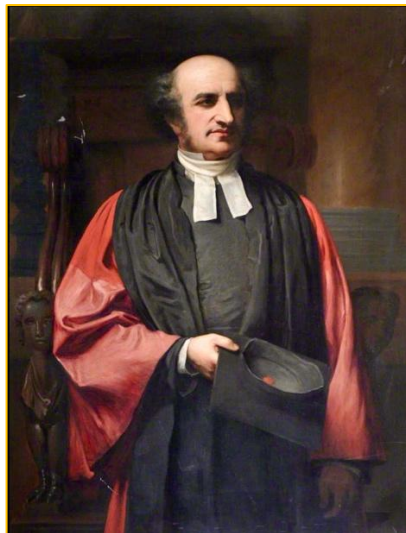
The east window, the principal object of attraction, being the first window in the church to be filled with stained glass, the gift of Edward Warner, of Quorn Hall. The altar was covered with a handsome crimson velvet cloth, with the sacred monogram, I.H.S. embroidered in the front, the gift of Mrs. Cradock, of Quorn Court. The altar rail of plain oak, with ornamental iron supports. The pulpit is of oak with open panels, the lectern also oak, with handsome ornamental pillar and the reading desk is of deal. The sittings, which are quite plain and open are of red deal, stained and varnished. No doubt, all this work was in preparation for the granting of parish status.



The 1842 works included the addition of floriated Latin crosses on the nave, chancel and south aisle, addition of the first stained glass at the east window, the gift of Edward Warner, of Quorn Hall and the relocation of the font near to the south door.

Newspapers over the country reported on the reopening, This from the Hinckley Times reads: “the re-opening of Quorndon chapel on Tuesday, the 3rd of April 1866, was a doubly festive day at the aristocratic village of Quorndon, for, in addition to its being the third day of the Church's high festival of Easter, on that day the church, dedicated to the

service of God in memory of St. Bartholomew, was reopened for public worship, after being renovated, cleaned, and restored in a great measure to its pristine beauty. Stimulated by the exertions of the incumbent, the Rev. R. Stammers, who viewed with anxiety and apprehension the decay of the edifice which the devoted Christian seal of their forefathers had erected, the parishioners bestirred themselves actively to undertake the work of restoration. A committee was formed and the services of Ewen Christian, Esq. of London, were engaged to supervise the work. The contract was entrusted to Mr. W. H. Hull, of Loughborough, for £1889-19s, Mr. W. Moss, also of Loughborough, subcontracting for the woodwork, etc. and it is but justice to these gentlemen to say that they have fulfilled their duties in a most creditable manner. Mr. R. Dick, of Ticknall, ably the office of clerk of the works.”



The Bishop of Peterborough presided and gave the address at the St Bartholomew's re-opening on 3rd April 1866. Previously Dean of Jersey and Lincoln. Master of Pembroke College Oxford. Died suddenly in 1868

The re-opening was a grand affair attended by many church and local dignitaries. It was widely reported in the press that provided detailed reports on the celebrations including the detailed address by the Bishop of Peterborough, Francis Jeune. There were both morning and afternoon services, interspersed with luncheon served to the dignitaries in the school room, whilst the choir were treated to a meal by Mr Briggs at the Blue Ball Inn. Interestingly, comments were made during the services that implied the Rev. Stammers was not well although he did read one of the lessons. The offertory collected an amazing £82.17s (£12,000 in 2026). We are told that during the day 'merry peals of bells were rung and a flag floated gally from the tower.' Also, that the musical portions of the service

were admirably rendered by the choir, under the management of Mrs. Kirbell whilst George Cooper of Sileby, presided at the harmonium in a most efficient manner.

Royal Assent

It was on 30th July 1868, that the royal assent was given by Queen Victoria at Osborne House to the severance from Holy Trinity Church Barrow was given. The 'chapelry', chapel of ease, of St Bartholomew's at Quorndon then became the 'parish church'. The Reverend Robert Stammers moved from the position of perpetual curate to be appointed the first vicar of St Bartholomew's Church, continuing in the role until his death in 1888. This transition was important because it now gave Quorn the greater independence, recognition as a parish, improved income and status that many thought was long deserved.

The creation of the ecclesiastical parish of Quorn in 1868 marked a significant milestone in the village's history. After centuries as a chapelry of Barrow-upon-Soar, St Bartholomew's became the parish church of an independent parish, and the Rev. Robert Stammers, who had served since 1832, became its first vicar. Although this was undoubtedly an important event for the village, no contemporary evidence has yet been found of public celebrations, bellringing or village festivities to mark the occasion. This may be because of the previous festivities at Easter 1866. Maybe, the Royal Assent was simply seen as a formality and therefore, it was not deemed necessary to have a separate celebration. Another factor may have been the indications of Stammers deteriorating health.



Osborne House was Queen Victoria's summer retreat on the Isle of Wight, and it was here in the Council Room that the Royal Assent establishing St Bartholomew's as a Church on 30th July 1868 was signed

Rev. Robert Stammers was staying at the Royal Hotel in Lowestoft possibly, recuperating from his illness, when on Saturday morning 3rd November 1870, whilst walking on the beach opposite the hotel, he noticed, lying a few yards from the water edge, the body of an infant. It appeared the water had gone over the body, and it was not breathing. He covered the baby with his coat and sought assistance. It was reported in the Eastern Daily Press that it appeared from the post-mortem examination that it was a fully developed child, weighed 7lb, had breathed but not fully, and presented no marks of external injury. There was no clue to the mother. An open verdict was recorded.

Stammers works continue

In 1885 to 1887, in failing health, the Rev. Stammers continued to facilitate a gradual repair and improvement programme to the church. Taking advantage of wealthy benefactors like William E. B. Farnham and Edward H Warner, he oversaw another remodelling project. Following the death of Edward Basil Farnham in 1879, his son, William E.B. Farnham, now spearheaded these changes planned since 1885 to coincide with Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887. One of the key changes was to the Farnham Chapel and the Farnham monuments. Basically, the south chapel would accommodate the family tombs and memorials relocated from the north chapel. This included the 16th century alabaster tomb of John and Dorothy Farnham. From 1587, this magnificent alabaster tomb dominated the north chapel, later the north aisle. It featured full, recumbent effigies of John Farnham (a soldier who became a Gentleman-Pensioner to Queen Elizabeth 1) and his wife Dorothy Walwyn. Crucially, the 1887 reconstruction rotated the tomb and moved the inscription panel from the foot end to the head end, breaking the original visual relationship it had with the other family tombs. The renaissance military encampment relief was also relocated and during the 1887 work, the Victorian restorers worked on the piece, completely fabricating new alabaster head, arm, and leg sections, as well as the tents and guns. Other items relocated were the large wall monument that features figures of Thomas Farnham (d. 1574), his wife Anne Eyre. Four alabaster slabs from the early 16th century featuring incised portraits of Farnham ancestors, were lifted from the top of their chest tombs, restored, and rearranged flat against the walls of the South Chapel.

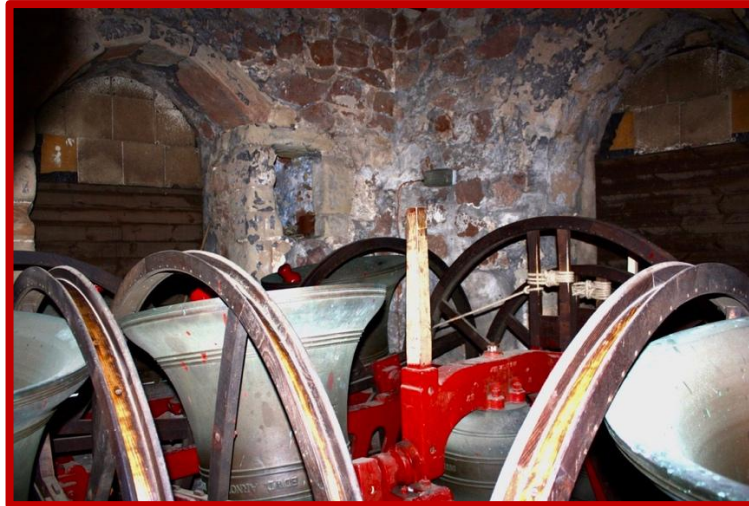
A new organ to celebrate the Jubilee was gifted and installed, this was the first pipe organ in the church, replacing the old harmonium that had itself replaced the musicians that used to play in the tower gallery, removed in 1865. The pipe organ was built by S. Taylor & Sons and paid for and presented by W. E. B. Farnham to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. Also, gifted at this time was an impressive, freestanding brass eagle lectern that was gifted and presented by the Reverend Robert Stammers, who dedicated it to the memory of his sister, Susannah Ainslie, who died in 1884. The eagle symbolising the gospel being carried to the four corners of the earth.



This impressive brass eagle lectern was gifted and presented by the Reverend Robert Stammers, dedicated to the memory of his sister, Susannah Ainslie, who died in 1884.

A handsome reredos and communion table were presented by Mr. and Mrs. E. Warner, of Quorn Hall. The reredos constructed of Caen stone and alabaster, in the early English style. The communion table also of Caen stone. In 1887, W.E.B Farnham donated both the church's first pipe organ and then the bells which, by 1885 were in a poor state. Their repair was undertaken by John Taylor & Co of Loughborough, and two new bells were added, a treble (lightest) and a tenor (heaviest). Both these bells are inscribed 'To the Glory of God and for the benefit of the Parish of Quorn, this bell was given by W.E.B. Farnham Esq. A.D. 1886'. The fifth bell was recast to make a complete octave and to its original inscription was added the names of the Vicar Rev Robert Stammers, and the

churchwardens Joseph Tacey and Spreckley Wollerton. £22 to cover the cost of the new frame and fittings was donated by Mr Warner, Mr Hole, Mrs Cradock, Mrs Perry-Herrick and Mrs J. Paget. The new peal was dedicated by the Vicar on April 27th, 1886, followed by a sale of 'plain and useful needlework' in The National Schoolroom.



The Quorn Bells – since the major works in 1886 the bells required further works in 1934 and 1965

Wealth

Robert Stammers not only pursued his aim for a better church for the village but also pushed for a Vicarage that would suit the vicar's status which of course was in the ownership of the benefice not the individual. Stammers was, however, a wealthy person himself, the benefice (or 'living') for carrying out parish duties was relatively modest at £122 per annum, not a massive amount. Newspaper reports from the time do mention his generosity toward church improvements. How he amassed his monies though is not clear. It may have been inherited from his or his wife's families. In 1851, the Stammers family had a brick-lined vault constructed in Quorn churchyard, an expensive item usually reserved for wealthy families. It was originally constructed following the death of daughter Mary Eliza Ann aged 13, sadly, several of their family were to die young. He was a Great Western Railway Shareholder from 1843 and on his death in 1888 the shares were valued at more than £7000. We know Stammers himself donated to the works and stained glass windows and financed the large brass eagle lectern.

The Bishop of Peterborough, in his 1866 celebration address, as reported in newspapers of the time, alluded to Stammers' wealth. The bishop is reported as saying he "*was often at a loss to know what their successors would think if they had to take a church in a*

miserable condition, with no school, and a living he believed which was worth the magnificent sum of £120 per annum (laughter). He did not know whether their host made £120 a year, but if he could manage schools and contribute to the various charities and educate the children, he thought he might infer from that without fear of contradiction that the clergyman endowed the parish rather than it endowed him (laughter). Herein the cue of the ministry falling into the hands of a fresh clergyman, in the vigour of life they had these schools for the infants of the parish, a parsonage and church property fitted for worship, when it never was before. Then he might venture to say that the income of the parish did not add much to the importance of the incumbent. If he chose to live at ease and live at leisure, amid pleasant scenes he might do so. But he had not done so. The next generation of clergy would come into houses which they had not built and orchards which they had not planted, and they would find things in a better condition than they were now. It was a thing to be proud of that this generation should be enabled to effect and achieve so much, seeing that such a work involved a great deal of labour, care, and anxiety, and they rejoiced at having met for their social enjoyment and spiritual benefit, and were grateful to those who had given them occasion to meet together.”

Local hosiery manufacturer Thomas Towle who lived in Quorndon, described him at the tribute service as a very wealthy man.

Dominating

Robert Stammers had a strong personality and was described as a dominating figure, liked by some but not by others and his ‘fire and brimstone’ approach was mentioned and found to be hard to accept by some. Whether he was liked or not he had a marked effect on the village and the church. It was true he was a very forceful person, some might say bullying, determined to improve the church and It was reported that he used to frequently pass up and down the path of the churchyard, and when he saw the dilapidated condition of God's house, he used to wonder whether it would be permitted for him to carry out the wishes of his heart, and make it in some measure, what a temple of God ought to be, a fit temple for the service of the Most High. Supported by the Farnham family he strongly believed and was determined that St Bartholomew's should reflect the prosperity, dignity and religious seriousness of Victorian Quorn.

It seems that like many priests of the time, he did face problems with the application of the 'Canons of 1603', these were the controlling rules and minister's duties regarding funerals to which Anglican vicars were strictly legally bound. Infants who were baptised entered the Church; however, stillborn or unbaptised babies could not. If a priest was caught performing church rites for someone who was forbidden from receiving them (such as an unbaptised infant or an excommunicated adult), the standard penalty was a minimum of an automatic three-month suspension from their ministry. Today this seems inhumane, but it was the law until 1880 and prior to then they were buried in unconsecrated ground.

Stammers' reputation was tarnished somewhat by several newspaper reports, mainly, anonymous, but did raise concerns about his compassion. In 1840, newspapers reported, under the headline 'Clerical Oppression' the case of Mr C Moor, a non-conformist, who claimed that Rev Stammers and his assistant, the Rev Slight had refused to baptise his dying four-year-old daughter however, the Revend Pruen of Mountsorrel did officiate. The exact 'ins and outs' are not known as there are no recorded follow up reports. Both Stammers and Pruen knew each other and were Quorndon and North End chapel curates respectively so, at the time, they were under the auspices of the incumbent of the mother church, Holy Trinity at Barrow. We do know that all sorts of 'go rounds' were employed at the time including bribing the Sextons to bury secretly, double burials and some vicars/curates were more lenient than others.

The Leicester Chronicle for Saturday, 29 May 1841 under the headline 'A clerical informer' we read that Daniel Webster a beer housekeeper, of Quorndon, being charged on the information provided by the Rev. R. Stammers, with permitting drunkenness in his beer house. The defendant was fined 40s and costs!!! On another occasion a Thomas Clarke of Quorndon, was fined 5s. and costs, for being drunk on a Sunday last, again on the information of the Rev. Robert Stammers.

The Nottingham Review and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties dated Friday 26th November 1852, carried the headline 'Sad death of the Quorn Parish Clerk' reporting that in Quorndon, on the 22nd, Mr. Joseph Taylor the parish clerk, aged 65 years, was found hanging in the belfry of the church. The inquest was told 'it appears that

he had for some time past been very low spirited, on account, it is believed, of not receiving salary for bell-ringing, and other duties connected with his office as clerk, being unable to work, the above salary was all he had to subsist on. In accordance with the above facts, a verdict of “temporary insanity” was returned.’ The paper went on to mention that ‘the church of Quorndon is frequented by the most fashionable, influential, and wealthy residents in the village, there is not sufficient zeal and love for Mother Church amongst the richer brethren, to constrain them to contribute of their abundance to the paying of the wages of the poor clerk. Indeed, it is fully believed by the majority of the villagers, that had his wages been paid regularly, as they ought to have been, the above melancholy suicide would have been prevented.’ At the time the clerk’s income, typically came from a combination of a fixed annual salary and fees for services such as marriages and burials. Generally, salary and fee collection were the responsibility of the Churchwardens. As the vicar and the wardens ran the church it does seem unlikely that they weren’t aware of the clerk not receiving his dues.

The Loughborough Advertiser of 29th May 1873 carried another letter about a case of a *child under one year and not baptised being refused the service*. The writer does go on to say “*it is only fair to him to say in that he was acting according to law, although the matter would have been treated in a different manner to this by 99% of the clergymen of the present day who would possess sufficient feeling and humanity to wink at this anomaly in law, and obey the dictates of their conscience.*”

Another letter appeared in the Loughborough Advertiser of October 1874 and read alleging that the Vicar assisted by his sister evicted a poor family who had arrived from Leicester and moved into an unoccupied Quorndon property. The view expressed that this gentleman (the Vicar) is greatly averse to Leicester operatives coming into the village believing the reason being that he is afraid they will lessen his power.

One thing that also upset many villagers was the National School which was run by the church and Stammers was Chairman of the Management Committee. We know from Newspaper reports of 1872 that the committee included members of the eleven trustee benefactors that included: Mr. W. E. B. Farnham, Rev. R. Stammers, E. Warner, J. D. Cradock, P. Wright, Mr Tacey, and Mr Freeman. When the Elementary Education Act of

1870 introduced the idea of local school Boards, most attendees being from non-conformists' families, the idea of the new 'Board Schools', with non-denominational (secular), and simple Bible reading with no religious instruction in the Anglican church's doctrines, appealed to them. Of course, the Vicar and other church supporters were very much against the idea and, it was suspected that underhand manoeuvres and campaigning by the vicar and church, led to the village poll to change from National to Board School being lost.

The loss of the Board School poll meant the school lost grant aid funding and the right to have mandatory attendance. As a result, problems arose with the high turnover of master's at the junior/upper section of the school. Issues included: Robert Stammers hands-on approach; his regular visits, the loss of funding and no investment. Stammers had worked as a teacher himself in the 1830's and continued to take lessons which masters saw as interference. From 1874 nine headmasters came and went within a fifteen-year period, most of them openly cited the Vicar and Miss Corlett the infant Headmistress, as the main problems, along with the lack of resources, equipment and assistance. These issues are indicated in several of their resignation entries in the school logbooks.

Record Tenure

The Reverend Robert Stammers passed away on the 7th of May 1888 having served as Curate and Vicar of St Bartholomew's Church, Quorn for 55 years from 1832 until 1888, a record that is unlikely to be broken. He was buried in the family vault. He was described in later years by Thomas Towle as *"a very wealthy man, stern in his ways, but very highly respected. I believe his housekeeper was Mrs Ainslie, and I always understood his sister. His curate was Mr Evans, a popular man and the opposite in temperament to the Rector. In those days whenever we met the Rector, we were supposed to acknowledge him. Failure to do so met with painful results at school. Thus, he visited regularly."*

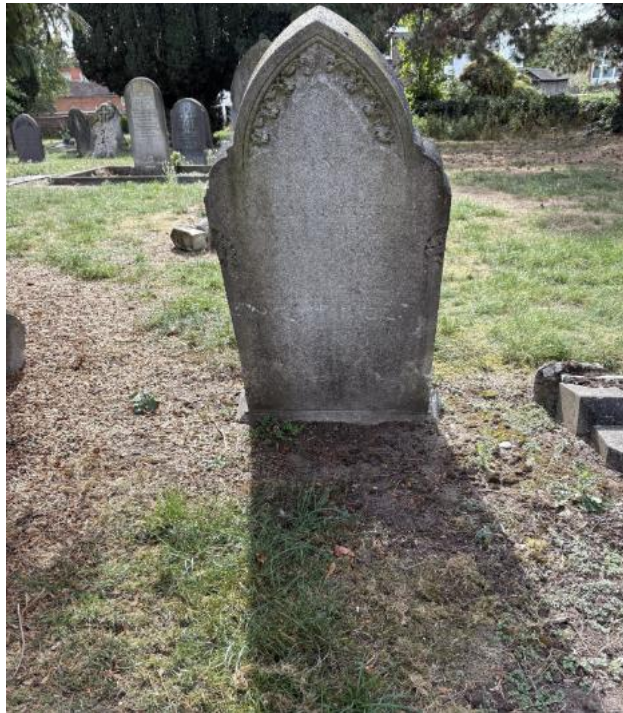
A tribute service was held December 19th, 1890, when a stain glassed window, situated in the chancel was dedicated in his honour. A large congregation, including several members of the principal nonconformist churches, attended to pay a last tribute of respect to the memory of their Vicar Rev. Robert Stammers.

Joseph Tacey, Spreckley Woolerton, and George White had been appointed at a vestry meeting to undertake to obtain funds to provide a suitable memorial. It was reported that so well was the appeal responded to, particularly by the poorer classes, that funds were soon promised. It was decided to erect a stained-glass window to the Vicars memory in the window space behind the 'Vicarage seat' in the Chancel. The inscription on the window is to the "Glory of God and in memory of the Rev. Robert Stammers, M.A., for 55 years Vicar of this Parish, a tribute from his parishioners". The ceremony of unveiling the window was performed by Mr. Joseph Tacey, of Verandah Cottage who was for many years intimately associated with the late Mr Stammers in work connected with the Church and the Parish.



The stained-glass window erected to the Vicar's memory in the window space behind the 'Vicarage seat' in the Chancel. The inscription reads "Glory of God and in memory of the Rev. Robert Stammers, M.A., for 55 years Vicar of this Parish, a tribute from his parishioners".

As there remained a balance after paying for the window, it was suggested that a memorial stone be erected in the Churchyard to the memory of William Phipps who, for many years officiated as clerk and sexton, and who will long be remembered by the parishioners for his genial zealous attachment to the late Mr. Stammers. This memorial is situated in the churchyard.



The balance in hand after paying for the Stammers commemorative window was used for this memorial stone erected in the Churchyard to the memory of William Phipps, who had died on 13th April 1887, for many years officiated as clerk and sexton, remembered by the parishioners for his genial zealous attachment to the late Mr. Stammers. Sadly, the inscription has mostly disappeared with time.

The Reverend Robert Stammers is buried in the family vault aside the church that he did so much to fashion, first as Perpetual Curate (1832 – 1868) then as the Vicar (1868 – 1888).



The Family Vault. The original inscription around the sides, has long faded but originally read:

Within this vault lie remains of Mary Eliza Ann died January 1851 aged 13.

Edward Newton died March 16, 1855, aged 19.

Joseph died February 14th, 1857, and Roland Dalton died May 7th, 1861, age 19 years.

Children of Robert Stammers M.A. incumbent of this Parish and Sarah his wife.

The Lord giveth and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Rev Robert Stammers MA incumbent and vicar of this Parish 55 years.

Within the communion rail of this Church are entered the remains of Sarah, mother of Robert Stammers died July 8th, 1848, aged 76. Also, of Roland Dalton Stammers died September 20, 1811, age 9 weeks.

In the churchyard of Ravenstone is buried Edward Wilson Stammers died June 17th, 1832, aged 9 weeks.

In Summary

There can be little doubt of just how much of what we see of that St Bartholomew's today is owed to the late Robert Stammers ambitions and his gifts and those from the Farnham family and others that helped to transform a plain dilapidated chapel of ease into the grand Grade 1 listed parish church of today.

‘Was this the most unkind man ever to have lived in Quorn?’ This is a question posed in one museum artefact and the reader no doubt will have their own view. He did suffer sadness in his personal life and did donate to charities and church and went to the aid of a drowning baby. There is no doubt that the Reverend Robert Stammers had a strong personality and was a dominating figure in Quorn for almost 56 years. It is true that he was liked by some but not by others and his ‘fire and brimstone’ approach was found to be hard to accept by some. Of course, he was a Church of England clergyman and from what we read was dedicated to his calling. The system at the time, was such that the established church were the parish administrators, school managers and rule makers. Being a wealthy man himself and close to the gentry, who between them ran a church, in the village where many residents were poor and others non-conformists must have been factious. In hindsight and, measured by today’s standards, he certainly could have been more empathetic and receptive to the wishes of villagers. His legacy, however, will always be the church that meant so much to him and stands as a striking focal point to this day.



Dennis Marchant
6 September 2026

Acknowledgements/Sources

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