

St Nicholas' Church  
Child Okeford  
Dorset

**The Bishops' Bible was stolen from this Church in  
January 2009. It has not been recovered**

**The Bishops' Bible**  
is over 400 years old



This copy was in use during the  
Reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603)  
in this parish by Rev<sup>d</sup>. William Kethe

C G Giles

*If you have any information to help improve these booklets, please advise the Churchwardens.*

- #1 St Nicholas Church; A Short History
- #2 St Nicholas Church; Visitors' Guide
- #3 St Nicholas Church; Memorials
- #4 St Nicholas Church; The Stained Glass Windows
- #5 St Nicholas Church; The Bishops' Bible
- #6 St Nicholas Church; Church Music and the Church Organ
- #7 St Nicholas Church; The Church Bells

This booklet is one of a series of seven written in 1998 by Chris Giles.

After a career in teaching, Chris took early retirement and began to devote himself to the local Church. He became a Churchwarden, the first Benefice Secretary and a member of General Synod. Chris was always interested in history, and especially local history. It was never a nostalgic pursuit for him, but just one of the ways in which he sought to unite the past and the future, those who had lived in the village for a long time and those who had arrived more recently.

In 1999, after these booklets were written, he played a key role in the establishment of the Okeford Benefice. This Pastoral Measure brought the Parishes of Child Okeford, Okeford Fitzpaine, Manston and Hammoon into one Benefice with the Parish of Shillingstone. As Benefice Secretary, Chris worked tirelessly to ensure that what we could best do together was done together, not only within the Benefice, but beyond, with the other Parishes of the Southern Blackmore Vale. He delighted in being able to assist in the training of our first Stipendiary Curate, Rev'd Michael Brierley, and in helping to foster other vocations to Ordained and Reader Ministry.

Whenever he could, he also delighted in combining his devotion to the Church with his devotion to his family - his wife Jean, son Tim, with his computing skills, and twin daughters Kate and Melanie, gifted in history and archaeology.

Chris never took Holy Orders but was, in the true sense of the word, a Deacon, utterly unstinting in his service and an exceptional guide and companion to the first Rector of the Okeford Benefice. He was tragically killed in a road traffic accident on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2002, at the age of sixty five years.

It was Chris' hope and prayer that these booklets would help you, the reader, better to understand the past of this place, that you may serve the Lord better in the future and know His presence and peace with you today. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

*Rev'd Philip Rahilly*

*Rector of the Okeford Benefice*

*(1995 – 2006)*

*Lent 2003*

## The Bishops' Bible

This copy of the Bishops' Bible is now over 400 years old. It is a first edition of a text prepared by a Committee of Bishops which included Archbishop Parker (of Canterbury) and Archbishop Sandys (of York), and was published by Richard Jugge in 1568.

The Bishops' Bible was the official translation of the Bible, and was used in this church by Rev William Kethe during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

A newspaper article of 1926 gives some details about the return of this copy of the Bible to its original parish. It is quoted in full below.

(Incidentally, the article is stuck onto the back of a card which dates from 1908. This card was advertising The Ladies Association (Workrooms Branch) of the Soldiers and Sailors Help Society, which was holding a sale of disabled men's work at The Royal Horticultural Hall, Westminster; Admission 1/- [5p]. The Ladies Association was "Under the Immediate Patronage of HRH Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein".

### *"The Old Bible"*

*It was indeed a suitable occasion for the return of "The Bishops' Bible" to Child Okeford Church just before the 2nd. Sunday in Advent when the Holy Scriptures are so prominent in our services. It is a copy of the first Edition of what is called "The Bishops' Bible" prepared by a committee of Bishops of whom the principal men were Archbishops Parker and Sandys. It was published by Richard Jugge in the year 1568, and his name and colophon appear on the last page. In its perfect state it contained 3 portraits, Queen Elizabeth, Lord Leicester and Lord Burleigh.*

*The first was on the title page with the date, but this and several pages of introduction are missing as well as the first two chapters of Genesis. But Lord Leicester's portrait in armour will be found on page CXXVIII on a separate leaf, and Lord Burleigh's at the beginning of the first psalm, his arms being on the initial D. At the beginning of the preface to the New Testament are the arms of Archbishop Parker and on the scroll is the date 1568.*

*The Bishops' Bible was in general use in Churches before the adoption of the authorized version of James I which we now use. In its perfect state it is very rare. This copy was found in Bath by Mr. John Batten father of our late Lord Lieutenant\*, and bought in 1891. He gave it to Mr. H.S. Bower\*\* who kindly gave it to the Rector. When he first had it, there was a very worm eaten cover which was beyond repair. At the beginning of the book of Joshua are written the names of the two Churchwardens who held office about 1600. Thomas Gy (Guy) and ~~Arnold~~ Philip Burbidge. It is very interesting that this Bible should be preserved and should return to the Church where it was in use nearly 400 years ago and where we hope it will long remain."*

[\*Col Mount Batten; \*\*H S Bower, father of the Rector, Canon Bower.]

NB. There are three Henry Bower's; father, son & grandson. Henry Syndercombe Bower (senior) died in 1930, aged 91; his son Henry died in Salisbury during the First World War, being run down by a motorcycle despatch rider; the grandson died at war in France December 19, 1914 Aged 20. The West Window of the Church is the memorial to the grandson.

In preparation for a report for the first edition of the School of English Church Music's "St Nicholas College" magazine, a visit was undertaken by 'H.P.C.H.' in 1928, simply because Childe Okeford was the first affiliated member.

The report includes a comment by Canon Charles Bower:

*"The present building replaced an earlier one which was also comparatively modern and was interesting neither from an architectural nor antiquarian standpoint. ..."*

*"There are, however, in the present church, two interesting features - one is the font which is reputed by some people to be of Saxon origin \*, and the other is the old Bishops' Bible, which was given to the present Rector's father by Colonel Mount Batten \*\*, and has now been placed in the church by Canon Bower. ..."*

[\*This is now a matter of some doubt; 13<sup>th</sup> Century is more likely.

\*\*according to the newspaper report of 1926, Col Mount Batten was the 'late Lord Lieutenant of Dorset' at the time.]



(The arms of Archbishop Parker; dated 1568)

### The loss of the Bishops' Bible

This copy of the Bishop's Bible may well have been removed from the church when the new Authorised King James' Bible was introduced. We have no records about this.

Interest in this old Bible is mainly a matter of historic curiosity. It marks just one significant step in the progress of translating the Scriptures and happens to relate to our own parish.

### **“Modern” translations**

Over the last hundred years attempts have been made to produce better translations. These have been made in the light of increasing knowledge and the study of the nature of language (linguistics). Translations include the Revised Version (RV), Moffatt, Revised Standard Version (RSV) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), New English Bible (NEB), Good News Bible, New International Version (NIV), the Jerusalem Bible, The Revised English Bible and many more.

Each is an attempt to create a more “authentic” rendering of language and ideas. It is the ideas which are so difficult to express because they carry so many theological, emotional and philosophical undertones. In that sense, each has its own hidden agenda. Depending on a particular definition of a word or taking a word too literally ignores the real difficulties of translating languages. It also ignores changes in the meaning of words over time.

### **Conservation of our copy of the Bishops’ Bible**

March 1998; from a report to the PCC: A Consultant to the British Library, Dr. Betty Haines, offered to contact the Bistory at the British Library with a view to obtaining advice about the conservation of our old Bible.

As a result of the invitation, and with the agreement of the Churchwardens and Priest-in-charge, this Bible was very carefully taken to London for examination. We asked for advice to be given in two parts:

1. Any vital and immediate repairs or conservation which really must be done.
2. Any further care or treatment which ought to be done.

Two aspects were immediately apparent:

- a) the Bible must have cover boards and a spine in order to preserve the binding. Some pages at the back and the front of the Bible need conservation, and wood worm needs to be eradicated. Pressed flowers (?Victorian) will be cleaned out. The effects of damp from condensation are not too serious - at the moment.
- b) a new Display Case will be needed in order to contain a special supporting stand, which the Bistory has made. The draft design for the stand is one used elsewhere by the British Library to good effect and will provide the necessary support to an open Bible and remove the strain on the binding. The case will need to provide access for regular page turning and to accommodate treated silica gel to reduce humidity.

Restoration cost £1200 plus the cost of the new cabinet; it is impractical to replace all the pages of the missing first two chapters of Genesis.

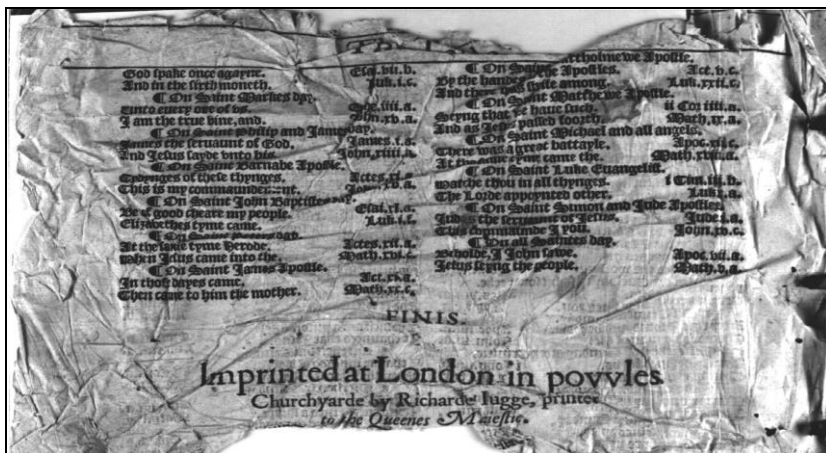
Mr Paul Slapp of the British Library Conservation Section was quite impressed with the old Bible and thought that it was in good condition considering its age and history. ‘They don’t make paper like that anymore’, he said. Having taken many pressed flowers from between the pages as he examined it, he said the rest would have to be removed page by page. We do not know the age of the flowers, but I assume they are Victorian.

The original worm-eaten wood covers were removed by the churchwarden, Henry Syndercombe Bower, and new ones will have to be made to preserve the binding. The front and back pages are in poor condition, but they can be conserved to some extent. The last existing page gives the name of the printer; part has proved too fragile to conserve.

**Easter 2000 (April 24<sup>th</sup>)**

The new Case was completed just in time for Easter so that the Bible and Case were in place for Easter morning. The design for the new case had been agreed following lengthy negotiations with the Diocesan Advisory Committee.

Built of oak by Nigel Bastable, of this village, this beautiful case does justice to its contents, and will help us to care for our inheritance.



↑

Imprinted at London in povvles  
Churchyarde by Richard Iugge, printer  
to the *Queenes Majestie*.

[ie in St Paul's Churchyard - where many Tudor printers had their businesses.  
*NB:* this was the old St Paul's, which was twice the size of Sir Christopher Wren's edifice.  
The Queen's Majesty was Queen Elizabeth (the First)]

The Bishops' Bible has many interesting woodcuts as illustrations as well as the portraits of The Earl of Leicester and Lord Burleigh, both of whom feature significantly in the history of Queen Elizabeth.



Lord Burleigh  
portrait on the page with the first Psalm



The Earl of Leicester  
page CXXVIII



The Arms of Archbishop Parker -  
showing the date of the Bible 1568

There are also Commentaries on some of the books of the Bible, such as:

A Prologue of faint Bafill the great,  
*upon the pfalmes.*

**D**AVID *that notable king and prophete, a man fingularly chosen of almightie God after his owne heart, being indued both with the knowledge of his creatour, and with the knowledge of himfelfe, and being ...*

*Saint Auften.*

**T**He fweete tunes O Lord wherto thy holy fcriptures geue fo liuely a grace, when they be fong with the moderate voyce of expert men, I do cofeffe that they do delectably ftirre me: but yet not for that I would dwell and abide ftill there, but for that my minde might rife vpward to godly affection and heauenly deuotion.

This booklet gives all the details currently in our possession about the history of this copy of this Bible.



## Translations of the Bible into English

### The Written Word

One of the marks of the Protestant movement which arose from the Reformation was the importance of the Bible as the source of “Authority”, rather than the interpretation undertaken by priests. Hence the importance of translating the Scriptures into the local languages (the vernacular) so that people could read for themselves “the Word of God”. Then people could understand what the Bible said and read the words of Jesus for themselves. Doctrinally, this removed some of the significance of a priest as an intermediary or “intercessor” between “man” and God. That had huge implications for the role and function of priests, especially in matters of Teaching, Faith and of the Sacraments, especially that of Holy Communion.

Readable and “accurate” translations therefore became essential, since words always carry particular meanings. “Preaching & Hearing The Word” then became as important as the “Celebration & Receipt of the Sacraments”.

Unfortunately, people and churches tended to go to one extreme or another and they were prepared to kill or to die for their particular view of “The Truth”.

#### 1. The first translation into English

The Oxford theologian and royal clerk, **John Wycliffe**, began a translation of the Scriptures into English. His birth date is uncertain (variously 1324, 1328, 1329) but he died in 1384 before he completed the task. His translating work was carried on by his disciples, Nicholas of Hereford and J Purvey; they completed the translation in 1388. Their Bible was widely read, even though it was officially condemned.

2. It is argued that the first complete translation into the vernacular was done by Martin Luther in 1522, ie into German. He was a monk as well as Professor of Theology and of Philosophy at Wittenburg University.

#### 3. Tyndale Bible 1525/6

The first complete translation of the Bible into English from ancient Hebrew and Greek texts was done by William Tyndale.

William Tyndale (c 1494-1536), was known for his attempt to use normal language when translating into English. Previously only the highly educated clergy who spoke and read Latin, Hebrew and Greek could understand the texts. Tyndale produced such phrases as “Filthy lucre” (money), “the salt of the earth” and “sign of the times”. Luther did the equivalent in his translation into German.

Tyndale was an English “reformer” who went to Cologne in Germany some years before Henry VIII established the Church of England. Tyndale started printing an English translation of the Bible in 1525 in Cologne, but harassment by those opposed to him, forced him to leave and go to the city of Worms to complete it.

The British Library was thought to have the only “complete” copy of the original 1526 edition of Tyndale’s translation of the Bible. The British Library also has Anne Boleyn’s own copy of the 1534 edition. Anne Boleyn was second wife of Henry VIII and mother of Queen Elizabeth I. She was closely involved in the early stages of English Protestantism.

In the autumn of 1996 a copy of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of Tyndale’s 1526 translation of the New Testament was found in a Library in Stuttgart, Germany. This was complete in its original 16<sup>th</sup> Century binding and had a unique Title Page. Only two other copies are known to exist. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition of Tyndale’s New Testament was published in 1534.

Having lived near Antwerp for some years whilst revising his translation of The New Testament, William Tyndale was captured by his enemies in 1536, and near Brussels met a dreadful fate - he was due to be burned at the Stake, but as an “act of mercy” he was strangled at the Stake first, before being burned.

## Protestantism

The Popes in Rome claimed authority over the Church in European kingdoms and states (including the right to tax people). Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk, attempted to reform the teaching and religious practices of the church. These changes had inevitable political implications. The princes of the emerging states of Europe saw that it also suited their political ends to adopt his views. Many felt the Luther had urged these European princes to throw off the authority which the Church in Rome claimed over their states. He regarded such authority as un-biblical.

In 1529, his followers in the Lutheran states and towns in Germany put their name to a “Protestation” against the Holy Roman Emperor (Frederick the Wise of Saxony) and his sponsor the Pope (Leo X).] The mixture of theology and politics involves very complex issues which cannot be properly discussed here.

## The Protestant Church of England

One of Henry VIII’s closest advisors was Cardinal Wolsey. He was Lord Chancellor of England for Henry VIII from 1515-1529, and the Pope appointed him as Papal Legate in 1518.

Cardinal Wolsey was replaced as Chancellor in 1529 by Sir Thomas More, appointed by King Henry VIII. Tyndale’s work was strongly opposed by Sir Thomas More.

In 1533 Thomas Cranmer was made Archbishop of Canterbury by Henry VIII, to deal with the problem of the royal divorce (from Catherine of Aragon, who was a traditional Catholic), and to arrange the marriage with Anne Boleyn, who was a Protestant sympathiser.

In 1534, Henry VIII declared himself independent of the Pope by the Act of Supremacy. This established Henry as the “Supreme Head” of the Church of England (effectively a Protestant church, but not in the Lutheran tradition). The divorce was agreed by Archbishop Cranmer.

But Sir Thomas More refused to sign the Act of Supremacy. This led to his imprisonment in the Tower of London in 1534 and subsequently his execution on a charge of treason. He was eventually canonised (made a saint) by the Roman Catholic church (Blessed Thomas More).

**4. Cranmer's "Great Bible"** continued the Protestant line of translating the Bible into local languages, in this case English; a process resisted by the Roman hierarchy. Cranmer promoted both the translation and use of the "Great Bible", and it was ordered to be placed in every English church in 1538/9.

When Henry VIII died (1547), he was succeeded by his young son Edward VI, who reigned from 1547-53.

Edward VI had continued the Protestant themes of his father, and with the Lord Protector, Duke of Somerset (1506-52), relaxed the laws against heretics and welcomed radical preachers from Europe. Clergy were allowed to marry.

In 1549, Cranmer introduced the first **Book of Common Prayer**, in English, followed by a new version in 1552, which was rather more Protestant. [The current BCP is 1662; the proposed 1928 version was never made "legal" although widely used.] This Protestant pattern was interrupted by the mysterious death of King Edward. The Duke of Northumberland tried to retain control through his influence over Lady Jane Grey - who reigned as Queen for only 9 days. She was deposed by Mary Tudor.

Queen Mary I, Mary Tudor (also known as Bloody Mary), was daughter of Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII's first wife. She succeeded Edward VI as monarch, but she was a traditional Catholic. She reigned from 1553-1558. She persecuted Protestants in much the same way as Henry VIII had persecuted many priests, monks and nuns who had been loyal to the Pope. Under royal pressure from Queen Mary, Archbishop Cranmer temporarily recanted his Protestantism. He later renounced this "recantation" and put the hand which signed his recantation into the flames first when he was burned alive at the Stake, as a heretic. English translations of the Bible disappeared from churches.

## 5. The Geneva Bible

William Kethe, Rector of Child Okeford, was born in Kincardine, Scotland, and brought up as a Calvinist. He was one of the translators of the "Geneva Bible".

The Reformation in the early 1500's created a broad division of Europe between northern "Protestants" and southern Catholics. The Diet (Congress) of Regensburg (1541) revealed the virtual impossibility of compromise; many fled their homelands as a religious "cold war" and persecution started. From 1541, Jean (John) Calvin established a "holy city" of some 6000 religious exiles within the city state of Geneva. These were Protestants who fled persecution in France, Italy and Spain; and, during the reign of Mary Tudor, from England. Kethe first went to Frankfurt. Protestant scholarship flourished.

The last of the Tudor monarchs; Queen Elizabeth I, was daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn. She succeeded her half-sister, Queen Mary I, in 1558.

Elizabeth took the title “Supreme Governor” of the Church of England and sought a middle way between the Catholic traditions and the Protestant ways. The return of many of the “Marian exiles” from Calvinist Geneva, (which included William Kethe), and a strongly Protestant Parliament, forced her to become more Protestant than originally intended. Puritan and Catholic plots continued for another hundred years, and more. If you have a copy of the Book of Common Prayer, it is worth reading the introductory pages, especially the first part of “An Act for the Uniformity of Common Prayer and Service in the Church and Administration of the Sacraments” Primo Elizabethae.

## 6. The Bishops' Bible (1568)

Queen Elizabeth I later appointed a relation of her mother, Anne Boleyn, as Archbishop of Canterbury. He was the Archbishop Parker who was a member of the Committee of Bishops who produced the Bishops' Bible. Our copy is a first edition, but it is damaged and incomplete. William Kethe would have used this copy of the Bishops' Bible some 400 years ago in this church.

As Rector in Child Okeford from 1561-1608, William Kethe would doubtless have seen that the Protestant doctrines embodied in Cranmer's 1552 Prayer Book would be observed.

In 1563, two years after his appointment (Induction), he would have had to accept the 39 Articles of Belief. However, these contain deliberately ambiguous assertions, and so were acceptable to most of the clergy because they could have alternative interpretations, as suited individuals from different backgrounds in that age of religious turmoil and uncertainty.

[At this stage, I have no real idea why or how William Kethe, a Calvinist, became an Anglican Rector in this corner of Dorset. However, it is known that Dorchester was a major centre of Protestantism and that the leaders tried actively to support the appointment of “Protestant” clergy in this area.]

From 1568 the **Bishops' Bible** was the official translation of the Bible in use in most churches; until the introduction of a new translation, known as the “Authorised Version” or as the “King James's Bible” of 1604, just four years before William Kethe died.

William Kethe, as Rector, was outraged by “goings on” in the village; one of his sermons says: “Where God calleth it his holy Sabbath, the multitude call it their revelling day, which day is spent in bull baitings, bear baitings, bowlings, dicing, carding, dancings, drunkenness and whoredom ... men could not keep their servants from lying out of their own houses ... at night” (Sermon, 1571).

At a much higher level, Elizabeth retained the Episcopal authority and structure of the Church of England. John Whitgift was made Archbishop of Canterbury in 1583; although a Calvinist by inclination (as was William Kethe), he strictly enforced laws against dissenters (Puritans, as they became known).

## 7. The King James Bible (1604)

The first of the Stuart kings, James I (of England), was successor to Elizabeth I who died on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1603. [He was already James VI of Scotland, son of the (Roman Catholic) Mary, Queen of Scots. James never met his mother after he was a year old, and was brought up as a Calvinist (Protestant)].

This Bishops' Bible therefore straddles an historic change in English/Scottish history. As the King of England, James I accepted his position as Head of a (Protestant) Episcopal Church - The Church of England. In Scotland, however, the established church is the non-episcopal Presbyterian Church, which has a Calvinist tradition.

King James 1 authorised a new translation of the Bible, which from 1604 became the standard version in most English speaking Churches until very recent times. William Kethe would have had to get used to yet another translation. His unmarked grave lies somewhere in the churchyard.

[The 1662 Book of Common Prayer was not universally popular or acceptable - to the extent that some 2000 Church of England clergy refused to use it. Despite being threatened with imprisonment, fined and losing their homes, they left the parishes of the Established church, and became 'Dissenters', ministering to their own local congregations. There is a powerful hidden political agenda in the BCP of 1662.]

**Acknowledgements:**

This booklet started as part of the updating a simple guide, which I wrote over a decade ago. Some Australian visitors, whose forebears had come from Child Okeford and Hammoon, wanted something to take home. We had nothing available. The outcome is a series of booklets, of which this is No 5 (Second edition).

I started with a copy of the booklet produced by Rev R F York in 1973.

In that volume he gives credit to:

Taylor, Rev, R. 1969. *Child Okeford. A Parish Panorama.* (Hand published pamphlet).

Hutchins, J. 1870. *The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset.* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). Vol. IV.

London, John Bowyer Nichols and Son.

Diocesan Records Office, Salisbury

Dorset County Archivist

Royal Commission on Historical Monuments

Notes left by Canon C H S Bower

Among additional sources to which I have referred are:

The Domesday Book.

Fraser, A. (ed). 1975. *The Lives of the Kings and Queens of England.* London, Book Club Associates.

Giles, M. C. 1996. *Between Down and Vale. A Social Archaeology of the Parish of Child Okeford, North Dorset.* Unpublished M.A. research, Sheffield University.

Hutchins, J. 1870. *The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset.* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). Vol. IV.

London, John Bowyer Nichols and Son.

Lawrence, A. 1899. *Sir Arthur Sullivan; Life Story Letters and Reminiscences.* London, James Bowden.

Marshall, M. D. 1959. *Church Bells in England.* Unpublished thesis.

Wiltshire County Records Office, Trowbridge, who allowed key records to be photographed.

Dorset County Records Office, Dorchester.

The windows and memorials within St Nicholas Church, with interpretative assistance from

Rev D Box, AKC and Rev R M Giles.

Materials in the care of St Nicholas Church.

Graveyard maps made about 10 years ago.

Many individuals who live in the Parish and beyond, whose local knowledge is a vital resource, have been kind enough to allow access to Deeds of local properties. I am sure more amendments will be made as this resource is further explored.

***C G Giles***

This series of books was the inspiration of Chris Giles who devoted an enormous amount of time and effort to research, write and produce the first editions. In memory of a dear friend, I am proud to continue his work and, with the considerable help of the churchwardens and the support of the PCC, the books have been reviewed, updated and now reprinted.

***David Pope***



