

Thomas Gilling



Just outside the vestry door at St Michael's church is a large stone tablet dedicated to a gentleman called Thomas Gilling and his wife Joanne. Thomas is recorded as "Gent". Some of the inscriptions can be read in the early morning light on a bright day. This memorial was placed in the 1660's.

There is a link with the large carved memorial inside the church to John Somerset. Somerset and Gilling were both imprisoned in Bristol after being arrested for the Easter Rising in 1642. According to an account in a booklet by Synge about this period, some soldiers of King Charles 1st were billeted in this village (then called South Brent) and behaved despicably towards the villagers and those in neighbouring villages. "On March 24th, 1645, which by the old calendar was New Year's Eve, a body of about 60 cavalry, in the service of King Charles I, marched from Bristol to Taunton under the command of Lt. Col. W. Ayscough, quartered themselves on the inhabitants of South Brent and stayed there for eleven days, pillaging and plundering the villagers not only of South Brent, but also of Berrow, Lymphsham, East Brent and Burnham.

At the time the Royalists still held almost the whole of Somerset, though Taunton itself was a Cromwellian stronghold. Bridgwater and its castle were held for the King by Col. Edmund Windham, and Bristol Castle and city were held for the King".

There is a detailed account of the thefts by the soldiers from the villagers of South Brent:

J. Somerset had broken up and carried away in lining(linen) and wollinge (woollen) and other things with two horses and money valued at £100 (£24,000 today).

T. Gilling had broken up and carried away in lining and woolling and other with three horses and money valued at £40 (nearly £10,000 today).

Somerset and Gilling were accused of organising the villagers uprising against the soldiers and while in prison they protested their innocence. There are documents which include pleas to the king and letters to their wives. They were eventually

released, but it is not known if they ever recovered their losses. It is difficult to believe that this quiet village had turbulent times!

Brent Knoll News September 2021

