

Local and Landscape History Research Group

Religion

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NONCONFORMITY IN HAVERHILL, SUFFOLK

The Reformation in Haverhill was an important part of its history. Before Henry's break with Rome the religious life of the town was no different than most other rural parishes. By the 17th century Haverhill had two puritan religious establishments (Presbyterian and Quaker) which gave the town a nonconformist character. During the reformation there were many puritan influences locally. Matthew Parker was appointed by Anne Boleyn as Master of Stoke College just a few miles down the road from Haverhill. He was a great survivor and became a rather reluctant Archbishop of Canterbury. In nearby Cambridge a number of eminent college members were puritan minded and Haverhill itself had distinguished puritan priests who were connected with St Mary's .

In 1527 a secret Lollard cell was discovered in the bordering Essex parish of Steeple Bumpstead. These were the followers of Bishop Wycliffe, whose views were almost the same as the later puritans. However, Wycliffe has died in 1384 some one hundred and forty odd years previous. It was not till 1415 that the authorities got round to condemning him as a heretic and ordering his books to be destroyed and his body dug up and burnt. It took them another thirteen years before his body was actually burnt. It seemed remarkable that the Lollards his followers were able to keep his ideas alive over those generations. James Oxley has shown *'Though his doctrines were stamped out in the University of Oxford, they had taken strong root among the people of the Midlands and Home Counties. So throughout the fifteenth century, Wycliffe's doctrines continued to be current, albeit underground, to join at last with other Protestant doctrines from other sources - the works of Tyndale, the influence of Calvin and Luther from the continent and the ferment in English University and religious circles'*

The Steeple Bumpstead cell was one of a number that stretched from Essex into London. Miles Coverdale, later to become famous for his translation of the Bible into English, said he learnt his puritan beliefs from members of this cell. Above all what the Lollards needed was a Bible translated into English so they could read and make up their own minds about what it meant. With the Lollards connection with London and the continent where these bibles were being printed, this was indeed possible. The conclusion Oxley reached was *'Thus Essex prepared for a break with Rome before such a thought entered Henry's head.'* What effects a secret sect in an adjoining parish had on puritans on Haverhill is unknown, but there must have been some interchange between like-minded people.

More directly involved was the Haverhill butcher, Thomas Cobb, who said that as far as his body was concerned it was at the command of the Queen (Mary), but his conscience was his own concern. For that he was burnt at the stake. Source Oxley.

Mary's successor Elizabeth I stabilized the Church of England with the 1558 Act of Supremacy which made the monarch the head of the church, and the Act of Uniformity which established the liturgy and the English Prayer Book. Despite this there was a ground swell of Puritans who objected to the continued ritual used in the parish churches, which they saw as verging on the Papist. In particular they objected to images and religious fittings of the churches. During the chaos of the Civil War action began to be taken against these, with the main instigator being William Dowsing.

William Dowsing

William Dowsing came to Haverhill in January 1643 and made notes of what he had done. *'We broke down about a hundred superstitious pictures; and seven fryers hugging a nun, [only Dowsing would have been able to make sexual connections of what must have been a rather worn statute] and the picture of God and Christ; and diverse others, very superstitious; and 200 had been broke before I came. We took away two popish inscriptions with ora pro nobis; and we beat down a great stoneing cross on the top of the church.'*

This is very much like the recent riot in Bristol, where the statue of a former slave owner was pulled down from its base and thrown into the harbour. A mob doing it without permission because they felt so strongly about it. Thus Dowsing went about doing a great deal of damage to these churches, but probably without any formal permission and he was allowed to do it because the Haverhill congregation, presumably, held similar views.

In David Dymond and Edward Martin's, 'Historical Atlas of Suffolk', there is a section on 'Protestant and Nonconformity', compiled by Clive Paine. In Haverhill, two religious bodies are recorded in 1669-74, Presbyterian and Quaker and by 1851 four, Independent (Presbyterian in 1669-74), Quaker, (also in 1669-74), Congregational (Market Hill Chapel 1839), and Baptist (1828). So in 1851 there were four nonconformist congregations plus the parish

church, making five separate religious buildings for a population of only 2,778. Although the Methodists had strong support their chapel was not built till 1874

Old Independent Church

The oldest Nonconformist congregation is what we now call the Old Independent Church. They trace their history back to when Stephen Scandaret, who was Master of Arts at both Oxford and Cambridge Universities, was appointed the Afternoon Lecturer of the Parish Church of St Mary's, Haverhill. In 1662 he was 'silenced' for his religious views and was banned from taking services through the Act of Uniformity. Scandaret must have been a charismatic preacher who had a number of followers, who met in secret to hold their illegal services, this was dangerous to him. He was summoned before the Ecclesiastical court for this preaching. During his second examination by Dr. King, president of the Court and Sir Gervase Elwes, Elwes got angry and told him that a cobbler or tinker might preach as well as he. Scandaret replied with a long list of his scholastic achievements in great detail and finishing up being 'solemnly' ordained to the ministry. All of this, he thought, would be more than a tinker or cobbler would acquire! He seemed to be bloody minded and also a survivor. At this meeting he managed, while the constables were being called, he make his escape to his home in Essex. He was able to make use of Haverhill's almost unique geographical position. The parish has a boundary with Essex, and in fact part of the parish lies in Essex and its western boundary borders onto Cambridgeshire. This was also the boundary of three dioceses. Suffolk comes under the Bishop of Norwich, Essex under the Bishop of London and Cambridgeshire under the Bishop of Ely. In this particular case the constables came from Suffolk and would appear to have no power in Essex. At another time, while waiting with other minsters, for passage to Bury St Edmunds Gaol, he did not answer his name and slipped out, only to be met on the road by one of his accusers, who proceeded to badly beat him and send him to Ipswich. Here he described his beatings and it was declared that he had been dealt with and was discharged.

In 1672 following Charles II Declaration of Indulgence Scandaret took out a license as a Presbyterian preacher and at the same time the home of Joseph Addy (or Alders) was licensed as a Presbyterian Meeting House for his congregation. Haverhill's established church, St Mary's, appeared to be rather puritan in its outlook as Scandaret was able to return to it and take some of the services there, despite having his own church, and when he died he was given the

honour of being buried in the Chancel of St Mary's, which seems to say a lot about his reputation within the established church.



Old Independent Church 1884-85
New Church
Architect Charles Bell
H&DLHG

In 1834 a serious disagreement occurred in the church. This was due to a 'misunderstanding' between the Minister, Mr Davies, and some of his congregation. Mr Davies kept the money that had been donated for a new church. It was felt by the businessmen of Haverhill that the money should be invested, but the minister thought his character had been called into question. The result was that a number of his congregation left to create their own chapel, the Market Hill Chapel.

The new was built in 1840 survives and is now used as Sunday School and Church Hall. In 1872 a Manse was built by Mason and Son at a cost of £673.17.4d. That also survives, although not as a Manse.

In the 1880s there was much discussion about the need for a Sunday School. With the much increased population the old Independent church was not big enough. Some of the other churches/chapels were having the same problem. On Sundays the parents liked to get their children to go to Sunday School and give them a bit of peace. They would prefer to use the church with a Sunday School, so those churches without this

vital structure were losing some of their congregations. At the Old Independent the the Sunday School, was not big enough. Some suggested that just a new school need to be built, others that a new church should be built and the old buildings converted into a large Sunday School. But inevitably a brand new church was agreed, provided the funds could be raised. Plans were submitted by five architects and Charles Bell got the job with the Haverhill builders Mason and Son who won the contract to build the church at £4,532. Memorial Stones were laid on September 23rd 1884 and the Church's first service took place on July 1st 1885.

Although Nikolaus Pevsner in the first edition, (1961), of the Buildings Of England, Suffolk, calls the Old Independent Church, "...Another Horror'. In the latest third edition, 2015, which splits Suffolk into two books. East and West Suffolk, James Bettley describes it as '*a remarkable building that shows just how prosperous a manufacturing town Haverhill had become*'. There is even a colour picture of the building in its plates'.

Quakers

There was an incident in Haverhill in 1656 which is recorded in the Quakers book of sufferings. This is quite an early reference to Quakers particularly in the Southern area of the Country.

It was early December and two Bury Quakers rode into the town and enquired the whereabouts of the home of Anthony Appleby. Tired hungry and wet, they probably had been ill-treated in Bury St Edmunds they needed shelter for the night and they knew Appleby was a Quaker. They found the house and were welcomed in. Unfortunately the town soon knew that a couple of Quakers had come into Haverhill. A mob soon collected outside Appleby's house demanding the two should be removed, George Harrison and Stephen Hubbersty. The two stayed indoors and the mob shouted and threw stones, this lasted till midnight. Early the following morning the mob reassembled outside the house and on breaking down the door, dragged the two out and preceded to beat them up. Harrison caught a chill, but they were able to ride onto Kedington to see the local magistrate, Thomas Bamardiston, to lodge a complaint about the assault. But, as was the Quaker custom they refused to doff their hats, so he refused to take up their case. They finally got to Coggeshall to find a more tolerant population. About six weeks after the event, Harrison died and the Quakers put his death at the beating he had at the hands of the Haverhill mob. It is doubtful whether the mob were from the Anglian Church. They were more

likely to have come from other nonconformist establishment in the town who were jealous about other sects trying to poach their members. The Quakers were a group that were not liked as they refused to pay their taxes and thus caused financial problems to the rest of the rate payers in the town.



Quaker Meeting House 1833

Before the building was turned into two houses. In the background is part of Gurteen and Son textile factory. H&DLHG

Because Quakers were not paying taxes, the parish officials were allowed to enter their houses and remove goods to the value of what they owned. Unfortunately they often took more than was owned, knowing that the Quakers were unlikely to get any help with the justices. In 1659, for example '...repairing the houses for national service' i.e. the church.) 1s 8d was owing from Anthony Appleby, but goods worth 12s 0d were removed. George Ewan fared much worse, 6d was demanded but he had goods to the value 14s taken.

Local Meetings were joined together to form monthly meetings. These changed over the years but in the 1680s, Haverhill was joined with the Sudbury Monthly Meeting which consisted of Sudbury, Clare, Haverhill and Boxford. There was a certain amount of social work carried out by the Quakers. It was important that Friends that should marry fellow Friends and a lot of time was spend interviewing prospective partners. The high point for Haverhill's Quakers was from about 1815 to 1835 when there was a need for extra accommodation and in 1833 a new Quaker Meeting House was built in Quaker Lane. Apart from being turned into two houses, it survives. In the grounds there are some Quaker Grave Stones, not normally allowed, but here the ground was going to be turned into a vegetable patch and the position of the graves needed to be marked.

Market Hill Chapel

As already noted (see above) serious arguments had broken out amongst Old Independent Church members and many left the church to form a new chapel, built as the Market Hill Chapel at the bottom of Quaker Lane. The breakaway was permanent and the new chapel was opened on Market Hill in 1839, just a stone's throw from the Quaker Chapel.



Market Hill Chapel 1839
As built, with porch and railing.
H&DLHG

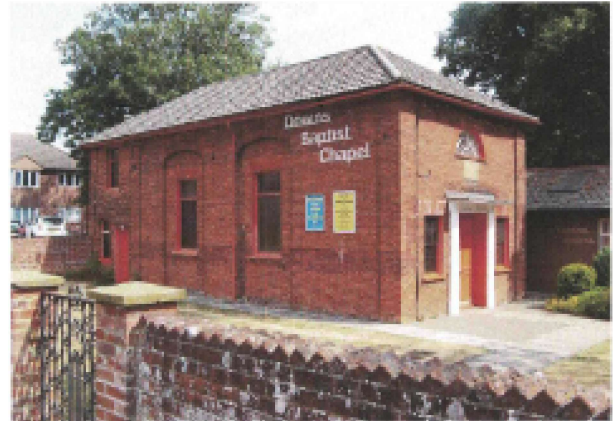
It is interesting to point out that the congregations of both these church/chapels trace their history back, not when Joseph Alders took out a license for a chapel in 1706, but to 1662 when Stephen Scanderat was 'silenced'.

The Market Hill Chapel was also having problems with its Sunday School as the building just fitted the site with no rooms for any extensions, and it was not till 1886 when a piece of ground on Withersfield Road was brought for £300 for the site of a trio of buildings, that the problem was solved. The Church now called itself the West End Congregational Church. The first structure to be built was the Sunday School/Hall (on the right hand side) this was followed by the Church itself in the middle with an internal passage on two levels joining it to the Sunday School/Hall. In 1894 the trio was completed with building of the Manse. To get the services of a good minister, there was the need to offer a good sized house. In 1899 the Old Independent Church acquired a brand new organ and gave the old one to the West End Congregational Church.

Baptist

The next of the Nonconformist chapels to be built in the town was for the Baptists and is dated 1828. Their building survives as a rather elegant Regency, structure with fine brickwork. The Baptists believed that baptism should only be given to adults when they understood the serious

step they were about to undertake. At this baptism the body was to be totally immersed in water and the immersion tank takes up virtually the entire floor area of the chapel. It also has galleries at either end of the building.



Downs Baptist Chapel 1828
H&DLHG

Barnabus Webb, Haverhill's famous diarist described in a letter the way money was collected for this building.

Haverhill, June 21st 1828

'...The site of the chapel... 'tis just at the top of our garden-I advised them not to built [Barnabus was a member of the Old Independent Church and did not want to see a watering down of the congregation] I said to them you have no money to built a place of worship, you have no parson and you have no congregation. However they paid no attention to my advice. They have began to beg in Haverhill and I have given them one guinea.

The last part was typical of Barnabus.

Methodists

John Wesley and his brother Charles, were founders of the Methodist movement. Charles was a great hymn writer and John a charismatic preacher who spend many years travelling around the country preaching often to large crowds in all sorts of venues, even in the open air.

He started a journey in Spitalfields in London on 1st January 1762 which was to take him to the South West corner of Suffolk. It is interesting to find Wesley travelling through mainly agriculture country, where even he agreed that there was little interest in Methodism. He was making for Stoke by Clare. As he writes in his journal

As we travelled through Haverhill, we were saluted by one huzza, the mob of that town

having no kindness for Methodists. '

Where the gathering was held in Stoke by Clare is not known, but it was a crowded meeting held in the dark of a winter's morning at 5.am. The following day Wesley's records

'In the afternoon it blew a storm by favour we came to Haverhill unmolested'

The following afternoon at a meeting in Haverhill he writes

'...but notwithstanding the wind and rain people crowded so fast into the preaching house [the Old Independent Church?] that I judged it best to begin half an hour before time; by which means to contain the greater part of them. Although they that could not come in, little noise. It was a solemn and a happy season.

The following morning there was another meeting

'An abundance of them came again at five and drank in every word. Here also many followed me into the house and hardly knew how to part.'

Wesley was a famous preacher and an ordained priest and his reputation must have gone before him, hence the large numbers that came to hear him were drawn from all the communities around Haverhill and possible the immediate area. Although this visit must have revived the interest in Methodism in Haverhill, it was to take over a hundred years before a Methodist Chapel was built in the town, in 1874.



Haverhill Methodist Church 1969
H&DLHG

Conclusion

Nonconformity had a lasting effect on the town of Haverhill. When it was found that the churchyard was too full of burials, it was perhaps

through the nonconformists' influence that it was decided on creating a Buried Board. The nonconformists did not want a Church of England cemetery where they would have to pay fees to the establish church. When compulsory education became law it was due to their influence that a School Board was formed and a non-denominational school built that would not be dominated by Anglian Church dogma. Then in 1878 a Local Board of Health was formed and took charge of running the town away from the Church Vestry. This Board took their job seriously and paid for sewers and a sewage farm. Then they built a waterworks which gave the inhabitants pollution free water and flush toilets. This cost a lot on money, but made the town a much more healthier place to live. It is difficult to be precise in this, but the nonconformists preference for hard work and organisation no doubt paid its part.

The most prominent nonconformist was Daniel Gurteen (1809 - 1894). The Gurteen family firm had been in business since 1784 as a textile company. In 1856, Daniel Gurteen built a factory that housed thirty two drabbit looms powered by a steam engine. This was successful and the firm expanded and with the town prospered, so much so that the town became industrialised with a high growth rate. A new late Victorian town was created. Daniel paid for the tower and spire of the Old Independent Church (see above), in memory of his wife and it is significant that the land mark that dominates the town should be a Nonconformist Church.

Perhaps the distinctive thing about Haverhill's Nonconformity is the survival of all four separate sects. It shows the independent minds of congregations who prefer to keep to their own institutions. Today they can trace their Nonconformity tradition continuously, for 360 years.

Sources

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Patrick Crouch

THE LEGACY FROM THE PAST, CHURCH AND CHAPEL: Anglicans and Independents.

THE LEGACY FROM THE PAST:

The stone that Henry VIII flung into the pool of religious practice when he broke with Rome and declared himself head of the English church, sent ripples down the centuries, leaving no-one untouched. The Reformation was a violent disruption to the religious life of lord and commoner alike. No longer was the comfort of the saints, the '*holie companie of heaven*' to be relied upon for support and protection; man had to find his own salvation by faith alone. As the years passed and the ripples grew wider, the struggle to find salvation and meaning in life also grew wider and more diverse. What the villager thought of these changes is difficult to discover; only by studying their actions and re-actions can any idea be gained of the spiritual opinions of most of the inhabitants of a community.

The reformation of the church begun by Henry VIII and continued by Edward VI and Elizabeth I, stamped out much that was corrupt and greedy within the Catholic Church. The selling of Indulgences, the principle of Purgatory, the cult of the Virgin Mary and the worshipping of images of saints were all forbidden. In 1559 Queen Elizabeth introduced an *Act of Supremacy and Uniformity* which endeavoured to tread the *via media* through

the principal doctrines of the time. Whilst outlawing the Catholic faith this act retained some catholic ritual. To many the act was unacceptable, and large numbers of clergy abandoned their livings rather than subscribe to the new articles. East Anglia had some 36% of its parishes without clergy.¹ In Elizabeth's reign she first encouraged and then forbade meetings of clergy for discussion and 'prophecy'. Many of these puritan clergy known as *Independents* held the view that people should be free to go outside their parish (which was against the law) for their spiritual nourishment. Congregations became 'Gathered' from many parishes.

During the next hundred years religious opinion swung between puritan and high Anglican. During the Commonwealth the puritans abolished anything remotely papist such as Bishops, High Altars and the use of church music, or believed to be pagan such as the celebration of May-day, Easter and Christmas. Throughout the Reformation the main weapon to attack the Catholic Church was the Bible. With translations in the vernacular, men could see for themselves the path to Salvation. The puritan's emphasis on studying the Bible and preaching the Word gave greater impetus than ever before on the ability to read. Margaret Spufford in her study of rural communities in Cambridgeshire states that yeomen, at least, could write and certainly many villagers could read.²

The Monarchy was restored in 1660, and the full panoply of state religion was reinstated, including the authority of Bishops, the Book of Common Prayer and ecclesiastical courts. Over the years the established church felt so secure in its position as a state religion that it became spiritually lethargic, in effect a lax servant of whatever government happened to be in power. By the eighteenth century the rise in the value of tithes and the plurality of many livings raised the social status of the clergy and they became more closely identified with the squirearchy than ever before, and for a time the English clergy became the least clerical of priesthods, often employing a poor curate to carry out their spiritual duties, as Anthony Trollope in his 'Barchester' novels and Parson



A drawing of Thriplow Church by R R
Rowe in 1866

Woodforde in 'Diary of a Country Parson' both depict so well.

As a result of this lethargy, the external appearance of the churches at the beginning of the nineteenth century was one of 'unparalleled slovenness and neglect'.³

Gladstone, looking back to the early days of the century, recalls that *'our services were probably without a parallel in the world for their debasement, the faculty of taste, and the perception of the seemly or unseemly, was as dead as the spirit of devotion'*.

Moreover, many people increasingly followed the charismatic, dissenting preachers that visited the villages to preach a more radical and evangelical message to the thousands that flocked to hear them. In 1685 the *Act of Indulgence* permitted dissenting ministers to become licensed to preach and the 1689 *Act of Toleration* gave recognition to non-conformity as a way of life, allowing the first chapels to be built.

With the protestant emphasis on preaching, the pulpit became the centre of the service with large three-decker pulpits being introduced and placed usually on the side of the nave and even at the west-end as at Great St. Mary's in Cambridge, surrounded by box pews with the result that congregations turned their backs on the altar and the Chancel was seen as serving little religious purpose. Instead, they were used as Vestry offices, school rooms or general lumber rooms for garden tools, flower vases, and coats and hats piled upon the altar during services. Parson Woodforde recalls



Chancel with hats on the Altar.

visiting Bath in 1769 and visiting the Octagon Church; *'It is a handsome building, but not like a place of worship, there being fire-places in it, especially on each side of the Altar, which I cannot think at all decent, it is not liked'*.⁴

THE EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT

The Evangelical movement under John Wesley in the eighteenth century (an ordained Anglican minister who always considered himself a member of the Church of England) wanted to return to the simplicity of the early Church Fathers with its emphasis on open-air preaching, personal salvation and prayer. His message of personal salvation by faith in Jesus Christ in whom all were equal appealed strongly to the labouring classes, both rural and urban, who felt themselves exploited and disenfranchised. It brought hope and cheer to a population alienated by the Anglican church of the eighteenth century, whose clergy, in the main, lived comfortable middle-class lives, supported by their tithes, and socialising with their patrons, the lesser landed gentry.



Clerical anticipation 1836

The nineteenth century saw a new and profound reformation amongst the High Anglicans within the Church of England that not only revolutionised church furnishings and church liturgy, but had a dramatic and far-reaching effect on national architecture both spiritual and secular.

Although these changes were nation-wide, they were reflected in the rise of non-conformity in most villages in South Cambridgeshire and the revivalist

movement and restoration of Thriplow Parish Church.



The Oakington graves.

Thus, two opposing factions within the Established Church, Evangelists and Anglicans, both started out with the same desire for reform; the same desire to restore what they perceived as its lost links with an earlier more devout form of Christianity. Yet, by concentrating on differing aspects of the pre-reformation church, the results were so very different that the more extreme of both movements eventually broke away from the Church of England: some of the Evangelists forming the Dissenting Churches and some of the Anglo-Catholics leaving to join the Church of Rome. The Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics who remained formed the two extremes of the Church of England, which on Elizabeth's *via media* of Protestant service and Catholic ritual, could accommodate both.

At the restoration of the Monarchy in 1660, opinion swung strongly away from the puritans and another round of ejections began. Two popular preachers the Rev Francis Holcroft (1632-1692), Clare College, and Rev Joseph Oddy (1628-1687) Trinity College were ejected from their livings in Bassingbourn, eight miles, and Meldreth three miles from Thriplow in 1660 and 1662 respectively. They were both imprisoned in Cambridge goal for their beliefs, but were occasionally allowed out by a lenient gaoler to preach in the surrounding villages, including Thriplow. They formed a 'gathered' church and drew many hundreds to them throughout the counties of Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire by

their doctrine of pre-destination, a belief that only the chosen 'elect' would be 'saved' from eternal damnation. Francis Holcroft is generally considered to '*have been the chief promoter of independency in that county*' (Cambridge) died in Thriplow in 1691.

Margaret Spufford in her study of Holcroft's influence on the beliefs of Cambridgeshire villagers, states that there is a noticeable lack of Calvinist dedicatory clauses (*'there is none that shall be saved but such as are elected'*) in Cambridgeshire wills, and that references to **election** are very rare indeed. But from a study of the 88 wills (between the years 1556-1696) from Thriplow, 37 (42%) declare general puritan beliefs, i.e. "*Trusting in the merits of Christ's blood and passion to inherit eternal salvation*", and 9 (10%) declare themselves to be '*God's Elect*'. If the figures are taken from 1639, the date in which the word '*Elect*' is first used, then the percentage rises to 20%, a sure indication of the influence of Holcroft's preaching.⁵ Although Holcroft died in Thriplow, both he and his colleague Oddy are buried in Oakington in a plot of burial ground purchased by Holcroft.

Whereas the Compton Census of 1676 shows the national average for non-conformity as 5%, and the figure for Cambridgeshire as 4%, the percentage of non-conformists in Thriplow is 30% (48 dissenters and 110 conformists). Of the villages within a five-mile radius only Shepreth with a percentage of 22% is close to this figure.⁶

On Thursday 19 July 1759 John Wesley wrote in his Journal,

"I walked from Stapleford to hear Mr Berridge at Triplow, and saw many other companies, some before, some behind, some on either side, going the same way,.....fifteen hundred or two thousand were assembled in the close at Triplow. The only unpolished part of the audience were the few gentlemen on horseback. They were much offended at the cries of those in conviction, but much more at the rejoicing of others, even to laughter; but they were not able to look them in the face for half a minute together".⁷

Wesley stayed over-night with Berridge and was persuaded to preach to the crowds the next day. John Berridge (1716-1793) was vicar of Everton, Bedfordshire from 1755-93. In 1756 he '*Fled to Jesus alone for Refuge*' and spent the rest of his days travelling and preaching in Cambridgeshire and surrounding counties.⁸ He lived until 1793 and was obviously a most influential preacher. A baulk (a path between

cultivated strips in the open field system of farming) in Thriplow where he used to preach was named Berridge's Baulk in his honour. The Return made by the Rural Dean in 1783 states that *'The Schoolmaster is a Follower of Mr Berridge's Disciples'* and that *'The greatest Part of the Parish are Dissenters'*.⁹

The nineteenth century dissenters of Thriplow:

The story of non-conformity in Thriplow in the nineteenth century is mainly the story of three men, father, son and grandson, each with the name of Joseph Ellis, who between them spanned the best part of a century. By hard work, good management, and the aid of the Act of Enclosure in 1840, the family rose within three generations from tenant farmer to become of Lord of the Manor, J.P. and owner of most of the land in the village, employing 80 men and boys.

In the late seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a village such as Thriplow, with a population of around 400, predominately agricultural on the rich soils of South Cambridgeshire, was moderately prosperous, moderately independent (most land was held by 'Copyhold' of the absentee landowners, Cambridge Colleges and the Dean and Chapter of Ely), and moderately self-sufficient. The greatest influence in a village where *'about eight ninths are of the labouring classes'* ¹⁰ would be the farmers and the vicar.

The personality of the vicar could therefore affect the whole tenor of the parish and events seem to bear out this theory. The Rev Francis Gunning, Vicar of Thriplow from 1759 to 1789 seemed capable of holding together, for the good of the community, all shades of opinion within the village.¹¹ Throughout his incumbency and for a while after, the village oligarchy ran the civil and religious life of the village, rotating their official positions and undertaking their duties with responsibility and co-operation. His successor, the Rev Butler Berry 1789 to 1832 held several livings within the area, though he lived and was buried in Thriplow and seemed to live in some style. Vinter recalls *'it is remembered of him that he used to ride round on horseback, and if he found no congregation at one church he passed on to the next, and so on'*.¹² He married twice and had nine children.

Joseph Ellis I is described as a follower of John Berridge, walking over 20 miles to Everton to hear him preach. When his father Thomas, died in 1769 Joseph then aged 24, took over the running of the farm. He became one of the first deacons of the Independent Chapel (built in 1780) in the next village of Fowlmere whilst continuing to be churchwarden of Thriplow Parish Church until his death in 1829.¹³

His name first appears as churchwarden in 1790, and he kept the churchwarden's accounts continually until his death in 1829, but they were



Heydon House, Thriplow where Wesley stayed with Berridge.

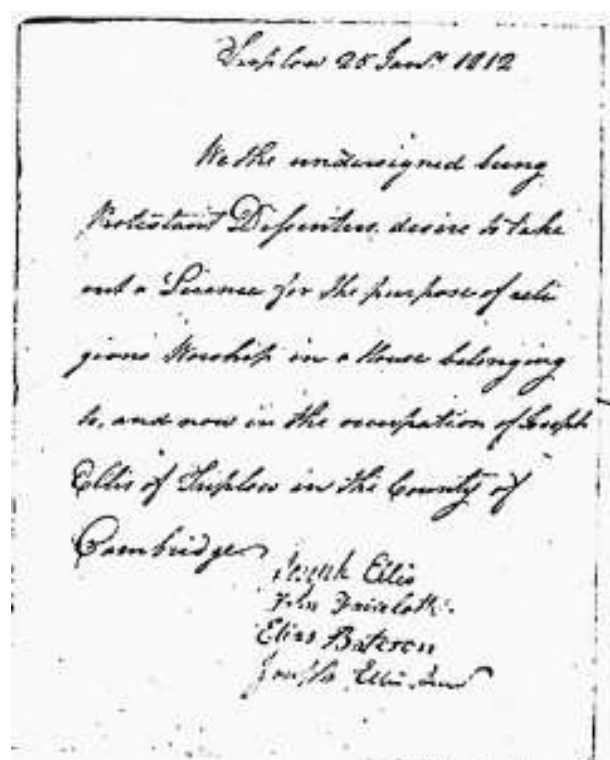
not signed by the Vicar from 1790 until 1818 a period of 28 years; indeed, during all this time the accounts were passed on only three occasions, an indication, it would seem, of a rather lax attitude towards church affairs on the part of the Rev. Butler Berry. When Joseph Ellis I died in 1829 his son Joseph Ellis II took over from him until 1832. Between them, Joseph I and Joseph II were churchwardens for 58 years.¹⁴

The surviving parish records for 1764-1832, show both Anglicans and dissenters holding parish offices. Churchwardens, overseers, surveyors and constables rotated between the same few names year after year; indeed, at the back of one of the Account Books is a list of 'Overseers by turn - Simon Purdue; Benjamin Prime; John Faircloth; Thomas Hawes; Joseph Ellis; Jacob Prime; and Bennett Cranwell'.¹⁵ Of these seven names, five were signatories to the first applications from Thriplow in 1800 for a 'licence to hold Meetings for religious Worship by a Congregation of Protestant Dissenters from the Church of England'. Of these seven, three - Bennett Cranwell, Joseph Ellis, and John Faircloth, all farmers, were Churchwardens at various times.

The first applications to set up a Dissenting 'meeting place' was made in 1800, in a room in a house in Middle Street owned by Thomas Prime known as 'Wig' Prime. As congregations grew and more space was needed, two more requests were made in 1812 and 1818 for meeting places on Joseph Ellis's I property. At least five of the names on all three documents were at some time churchwardens - what had caused them to rebel? Why should they suddenly want to leave membership of the parish church? Could it have been the pluralist and worldly character of the Vicar, the Rev Butler Berry, that encouraged these men to form their own religious centre?

In 1832 the Rev John Jenks became vicar of Thriplow and Joseph Ellis II ceased to be churchwarden. Joseph had been churchwarden since 1829 when his father had died, but the year that John Jenks took up his office, the churchwarden is named as Thomas Prime. (The same as 'Wig' Prime?)

The churchwardens' accounts consist of amounts spent on the upkeep of the fabric, communion wine and bread, and journeys connected with church affairs, and the income came from a church rate set each year and charity bequests: the difference was either owed to the churchwarden or owed by him to the parish. In 1833 Ellis claimed the amount due to him from the accounts, a sum he had never bothered to claim before. At the end of that year, he signed the Church accounts at the annual Easter meeting as Overseer, and continued to do so until 1838 when there was a gap of three years before he resumed signing the accounts until 1856 two years before he died.



Request for License to open Chapel in Thriplow
1812

That gap of three years is significant, as it was on July 25 1838 that the Rev John Jenks wrote a letter to the newspaper, *The Cambridge Chronicle* accusing Joseph Ellis of dismissing a lad in his employ for taking time off to be confirmed. He accuses Ellis of not only dismissing the lad, but of

not paying his church rates and of ridiculing the church in front of his men. Since 1794 the Ellis family had leased the 'Parsonage House' or 'Rectory', the property of Peterhouse (the lay rectors) and with it the right to the great tithes which were worth £634 13s a year.¹⁶ In comparison the vicar's income was a mere £137 15s (Jenks seems to have had no other livings and in the years 1846-1847 and 1849-1850 even had to pay Joseph Ellis rent for land on Bacon's Manor which Ellis owned.¹⁷ The vast difference in incomes coupled with the fact that the recipient of the Church Tithes was a leading dissenter must have been galling indeed to John Jenks. Ellis refuted the accusation in the *Cambridge Chronicle* of August 4 1838. Thus, it seems clear that the conflict between the Vicar and the leader of the Dissenters was not ideological but envy of his affluent and influential position.

BUILDING THE CHAPEL:

In 1835 it was reported that the congregation had grown so large that the barn put aside for non-conformist services could not hold all the people and Joseph Ellis II built a small Independent chapel in Middle Street.

In the 1851 Religious Census,¹⁸ 100 people attended the evening service there, the morning service being held at the neighbouring village of Fowlmere where a chapel had been built in 1780. This census shocked the nation by revealing that well over half the population of England and Wales did not attend church, and that of those that did, over half attended a non-conformist chapel. These figures are borne out in Thriplow - out of a population in 1851 of 521, 196 people attended the parish Church and 100 attended the dissenting chapel, excluding the children at Sunday School, a total of 296 or 56%, the proportion of non-conformist to Anglicans is 33%



Nonconformist Chapel, Thriplow, built 183

In his reply to the Bishop's Visitation Returns in 1873, the Rev Thomas Andrew states that 'there is an Independent Chapel and a Primitive Methodist', so it would seem that the Primitive Methodists took over the Middle Street Chapel for Sunday evening services sometime after 1853.¹⁹

The Rev John Jenks died in 1849, but though the rift that had formed between church and chapel became more equable, it never became as close as it had been during the last years of the eighteenth century.

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Shirley Wittering

Tithes and Tithe Records

The word tithe comes from the Saxon word *Teoda*, meaning one-tenth.¹ As this implies, the system of requiring producers in a parish to yield up to ten per cent of what they produced for the support of the local clergyman had deep and ancient roots, originating in early Jewish society and in the Old Testament, and was adopted as a Christian obligation from the fourth century onwards.² In England, tithes were paid by the end of the eighth century and specifically enforced by King Athelstan's ordinance of c. 930 AD.³ The idea was a simple one: each year the parishioners were to give 10 per cent of their profits or increase to God and their local church.

Most tithes were paid in small quantities, especially by poorer people, but in total, they provided the church with a considerable income. Tithes were renewed annually as the output of farms increased or decreased due to conditions such as the weather and the health of animals and people alike. They were levied in several categories, but there were essentially two types. 'Great' (or predial) tithes, were charged on those products which arose immediately from the earth, such as corn, hay, hemp, hops, or any kind of fruit, seed or herb; 'small' (or mixed) tithes were those which arose from the natural products of the earth as nurtured or preserved by the care of man, i. e. cows and sheep which grazed the land, the milk or wool they produced, the calves and lambs they brought forth. The great tithes were considerably

more valuable and were the property of the Rector of a parish; the Rector would also claim the small tithes unless the parish was run by a Vicar, in which case it was normal practice for these less lucrative taxes to fall to his share.⁴ At Chesterton in 1421, the Bishop of Ely made a grant to the Abbey of St Andrew, Vercelli, allowing them to appoint a vicar at St Andrews church in Chesterton. The surviving document grants the vicar some land on which to build a vicarage house, an orchard and garden, and the small tithes, a tithing of fishing and a tithe on all trees in



Figure 1. The Chesterton Agreement of 1421 (Cambridgeshire Archives)

Chesterton (figure 1).⁵

After the reformation of the church by King Henry VIII, the tithes of a parish did not

necessarily belong to either the Rector or the Vicar: the right to tithes in many areas had belonged to monasteries, and these were sold off at that time to raise money for the royal coffers. However, two-thirds of tithe income remained in clerical hands at the end of the eighteenth century, and in most areas, formed the cornerstone of the clergy's income. A survey of clerical incomes in Staffordshire, for example, found that one-half of all Rectors and a third of all Vicars received 75% of their total income from tithes. ⁶

Tithes were originally paid in kind, and the system still prevailed in many parts of Cambridgeshire in the period of parliamentary enclosure. ⁷ A good example comes from the register of the church in March where the people paid tithes to the parson of the parish of Doddington the following: ⁸

Item, Every one that keepeth hens or ducks is to pay upon Good Friday for every henn or duck that they have two eggs and for every cock and drake three eggs.

Item Every man is to paye at Easter for every foale he hath had foald alive the year before, one penny.

Item Every parishioner not having a tythe calf the fallen, nor likely to have betwixt Easter and St Mark following is to pay at Easter for the milk of every cow that he hath milked the year past, and there is the wner of, three half pence, and for every calfe, not having a tithe calfe that he hath calved alive, one halfe penny, and fore every heiforth that doth or hath given milk one penny, and every heiforth calfew alive one halfe penny.

Item Every man is to paye more in lieu of his tythe milk, the milk of all his cows that doth give milk after Whitsunday morninge, the parishioner causing it to be milked and brought to March church porch, where the parson of Doddington or his assign is to receive it.

Item Every parishioner is to paye upon St Marks daye in lieu of his tythe calfe, if he have tenn, six shillings and eight pence, if he have under ten to seaven, to pay a tythe calfe. For the which the parson is to abate of six shillings and eight pence for every cow and calfe wanting of tenn, two pence, and for all above a tythe to paye for every cove three half pence and every calfe a half penny.

Item Every man having tenn lambs fallen at Mayday and then livinge, shall for every tenn lambs he hath paye a tythe lambe upon Mayday and what he hath more than a tythe for every lamb, one half penny, and if he hath more but seaven,

he is to pay a tythe lambe and the parson is to pay him for every lamb wanting of tenne, one halfpenny.

Item Every man keeping sheep is to pay for all such sheep as he sheareth at sheardaye, and was owner of, or in his possession at Candlemas before the full tythe wools in kind, and for all such sheepe that any man doth buye after Candlemas and soe to shearday - "for every sheepe" one halfpenny, and for every sheepe by him betwixt Candlemas and shearday, one halfpenny, but for such sheepe should be sould from shearday unto Candlemas, no tythe to be paid, because the parson hath a full tythe off all such sheepew bas any man doth buy before Candlemas and sheareth them.

Item Every man is to pay the tythe hay in kinde by the cocke, every tenth cocke or thenth part when it is cocked, and no herbage to be paid for hedgerouth of after grass because the owner doth mowe and make the parsons tythe as his own.

Item Every man is to paye tythe ? and roots when he plucketh and [minceth?] them in kind.

Item Every man is to paye for every tenne younge geese he hath at Whitsuntide, a tythe goose at Whitsontide, and for all odd geese above tenne, not having seavene one halfpenny and if he have seavene, he is to paye a tythe and the parson is to allow him for every goose wanting of tenne one halfpenny.

According to the register twenty-five, parishioners paid tithes at these rates. This particular schedule of tithe payments does not include tithes of grain, fruit and smaller items such as butter, which are found in other documents. It is noticeable that some of these tithes have been commuted to a money payment. It will also be noted that the schedule followed a statute of Archbishop Boniface of Canterbury, dated 1249-60, which reveals that not only is the seventh lamb given in tithe, but because of the difference from a true tenth the rector gives $1\frac{1}{2}$ d in recompense. ⁹ In Doddington, the parson had to give back $\frac{1}{2}$ d for each lamb. The March schedule does not say what was paid for totals of six or fewer lambs, it is likely that the parishioner paid the parson in money only, at a rate of $\frac{1}{2}$ d per animal. It will also be noted that similar rates were applied to cattle, fowl and sheep wool.

A payment of tithe in money was preferable to the post-medieval incumbent for the Rector or Vicar who took tithes in kind and then had store them and he then had to dispose of them, and the market value for produce was highly volatile,

rendering the income to be gained from tithes highly uncertain. During the medieval period all tithes were usually given in kind and many parishes had huge ‘Tithe Barns’ to store produce, such as grain. The largest tithe barn known to have existed in England lay next to the parish



Figure 2. The ruins of the tithe barn, Ely, in the eighteenth century.

church of St Mary in Ely (figure 2).

The tithe system was unwieldy, and it generated a good deal of ill-feeling. Incumbents guarded their right to tithes jealously and in most parishes tithe customs were written with absolute clarity about what was owed, when, and the privileges of access to be enjoyed by the tithe owner so that all parties could satisfy themselves that justice was being done. At Stretham in the Isle of Ely, there survives a detailed agreement for Tithe Milk drawn up between the incumbent and the inhabitants of that township in 1597.¹⁰ The agreement states that it was drawn up, “that trouble & molestacion may be avoyded”, a sign that all was not well in Stetham (figure 3).



Figure 3. The 1597 agreement for tithe milk (Cambridge University Library)

Where either party felt justice was not being done the dispute was taken to court, and despite the agreement regarding milk, tithe disputes continued to occur in Stretham.¹¹ The incumbent

present in 1597 had made notes of the law relating to tithes.¹² These notes include tithes of produce such as timber, where several types of wood are named, the bark of oak trees and furze, and what should happen if the incumbent died before the feast of the Conception of the Virgin Mary. However the whole erupted in the 1660s, this time not in relation to any one item, but concerning all the tithes of the hamlet of Little Thetford. An agreement between a rector and the inhabitants of Little Thetford had been made assigning all of the tithes of the hamlet to the chapel of the township (now the parish church), provided they attended the parish church in Stretham on St James’s day.¹³ In the absence of a chaplain at Thetford, the new rector of Stretham now claimed the tithes to be his while the folk of both townships refused to pay the Thetford tithes to the rector. This was the rector trying to claim the tithes due to the chapel, without which there would be no money to appoint a new chaplain.

When disputes of this nature occurred, the incumbent turned to an ecclesiastical court for judgement, in this instance the Consistory Court of Ely. the case was heard in 1663-4 and not resolved as it went to the Court of Exchequer after 1664 and then back to the Consistory Court in 1678. In between the hearings of the various courts regarding the tithes, there appears to have been almost outright warfare between the rector and some parishioners, with liable suites and counter suites taking place.

Another case of an incumbent trying to claim what had not previously been his to claim occurred in the nearby town of Soham in 1692. Here the meer had been drained and the vicar tried to claim tithes from the owners of land in the meer. Those owners took their cases to court and won. The vicar appealed to the assizes in 1693 and was again defeated.¹⁴ A case that was successful for the incumbent was that heard at the Court of Assizes in 1698. In this instance, the rector of Gamlingay brought a case against the owner of a close known as Parsonage Close near the parish church at Waresley. The owner of the close claimed it to be tithe free. The rector won and the defendant was ordered to pay one shilling and sixpence per year in tithe payments.¹⁵ Similarly, in the fens around Emneth, in the parish of Elm, three farmers planted coleseed (oilseed rape), hemp and flax and tried to claim that tithes were not payable on such crops. The rector of Elm took them to court in 1711 and the court ruled in favour of the rector.¹⁶ These are just a few of the many tithe cases taken before the courts. In other nearby parishes such as March, these were titheable crops.¹⁷

How jealously guarded the tithe income was to incumbents can be seen in some of the surviving tithe account books. Soham has five such books

each covering one year from 1796 to 1801.¹⁸ In each are the details of what each person paid to the incumbent. Usually, the entry only gives the name of the person and the amount they were to pay. On the first page of book one (1796) are the entries for the produce of the orchards, the incumbent received £5. 13s. 9d. While from another page we see that in 1801 the incumbent received £227. 9s 0d., in tithe payments. This excluded the income from glebe land, meant to support the clergy, and offerings and other ecclesiastical dues. It is clear from the surviving tithe books of the mid and later 18th century that tithes had been commuted to a money payment, paid for cottages, gardens, mills, land and other items.¹⁹

Commutation of Tithes through Enclosure

Whether in kind or as a money payment tithes represented a major disincentive to agricultural improvement²⁰ and an unfair tax on just about every person in a parish. By the early eighteenth century, there was a widespread movement in the Midland counties (including Huntingdonshire) to extinguish tithes by an act of parliament. Simply abolishing tithes was not an option: tithes were property, protected by the law as any other property would be. It was possible, however, for the parish to buy out the tithe owner and thus set up a system in which all land was left effectively free of the charge. It has been calculated that a provision for the exoneration of tithes was included in 70% of enclosure Acts passed between 1757 and 1830: in thousands of parishes across the country, therefore, and particularly in the English midlands, tithes were simply bought out.²¹

In this period tithe owners were as we have seen, the church and the descendants of those who purchased inappropriate rectories from the crown during the reformation. How the church in particular benefitted from this can be seen if we explore the process of enclosure and tithe exoneration. The initiative to enclose land came from the local level. It was a decision taken purely on the grounds of the likely profit that would accrue to the owners of land in that parish. The owner of tithes was one of the stakeholders whose support the would-be encloser had to secure. While no tithe owner could be forced to accept commutation, the huge profits that were anticipated from the enclosure of the common fields meant that very few were inclined to resist.

The expectation of great profits from enclosure was key to the way the exoneration of tithes played out. In almost all cases, the promoters of an enclosure were willing to offer extremely generous terms to bring the tithe owners on side. This was especially the case where the tithes remained in lay hands because it quickly became

known that any enclosure bill which appeared to threaten the value of a living might expect severe opposition from the Episcopal bench and its supporters in the House of Lords. The bishops were 'admirably placed to act as watchdogs of the clerical interest': others, notably the poor, had no such guardians and their interests might suffer accordingly.²²

In most cases the redemption of tithe was effected by a grant of the land being enclosed to the tithe owner in lieu of the right to levy the tax: as such, one form of property was exchanged for another. the really contentious issue was, how much land should be given in lieu of tithe, not least because tithe was a tax on the gross rather than net yield which meant that tithe-owners gained a largely invisible benefit notably the costs associated with growing and harvesting a crop, which was borne by the farmer. Since this invisible benefit was factored into the arrangement, it had to be compensated. This was one element that drove up the scale of compensation that those seeking to extinguish tithes had to pay. In addition, there was the attitude of the clergy themselves. Many wished to avoid damaging their relationship with their parishioners, and many of these had not taken the full value of their tithes before enclosure and were therefore unlikely to surrender to terms that denied them and their successors a fully equivalent sum at enclosure. In many cases, they also sought to build into their settlement a calculation of the increased value that might be anticipated after enclosure.

After 1765, there was a greater degree of regularity entering arrangements regarding tithes and enclosure. It became much more common for an act to specify that tithes would be exonerated in exchange for land, expressed either in the form of a proportion of the whole area to be enclosed or as fixed proportions of land according to use – normally 1/9th of pasture land and 1/5th of arable. The surviving calculation sheet for the enclosure of Alconbury cum Weston in Huntingdonshire shows that these fixed proportions were used by the Commissioners enclosing that parish in 1791.²³ Between 1765 and 1801, while there was never complete uniformity, the Church interest pressed the case of tithe owners hard and ensured that the highest estimate was placed on the value of what was being given up. It says a lot for the belief in the inherent profitability of agriculture in the late eighteenth century that those effecting the enclosure believed they would still be in pocket despite giving away such large quantities of land.

The benefits to the tithe-owner did not end there, however. As important as the quantity of land exchanged were the terms on which it was given. Tithe-owners were invariably excused from bearing any share in the considerable payments associated with the enclosure. These expenses,

arising from piloting the Act through parliament, employing commissioners to survey and divide the land under its provisions, and the considerable cost of laying the new hedges and roads so that their plans could be carried into effect, could be considerable. It has been estimated that the costs associated with enclosure rose steadily throughout the period, from about £1 an acre in the 1760s to something approaching £3 in the 1790s.²⁴ In addition, the tithe-owner was invariably allowed to nominate one of the Commissioners overseeing the enclosure, thereby ensuring that his claims were championed throughout the process of division and that the land he was allotted occupied a prime position within the parish. The commissioners appointed on behalf of clerical tithe-owners were often themselves clergymen. The Revd Henry Homer and the Revd Henry Jephcott were two of the most prominent clergymen involved in enclosure and acted both on behalf of several Oxford Colleges in parishes where their interests required protection. The Revd Henry Homer also wrote a book of guidance on the process of enclosure in 1766,²⁵ in which he proposes that the compensation for loss of tithe should be equal to one-seventh of everything, a figure he believed would be acceptable to both the tithe owners and the legislators.

Enclosure greatly increased the value of agricultural land in many areas. Gooch in his survey of the county of Cambridge gives several examples of such increases, for example, in Barrington (enclosed 1796) rents rose from 5s to 20s, and at Weston Colville (enclosed 1777) arable rents more than doubled after enclosure and commutation of tithes – a scale of increase typical according to a major recent study of agricultural rents in England.^{26, 27} Clerical incomes, now tied ever more closely to the rental market for land, rose accordingly. Thomas Knowles, a land surveyor of the period, remarked, that the principle that enclosure greatly increased the value of tithes and hence the value of the living, was well known to contemporaries.²⁸

The commutation of tithes for land transformed the position of the incumbent in many areas. Naturally, many had let out their glebe land before enclosure – few clergy were themselves, farmers. However, once the tithes had been commuted, many rectors often found themselves in possession of a small estate which required letting out.

The Tithe Commutation Act 1836

In 1801, the General Enclosure Act caused the whole process of enclosure to be overhauled and one result of this was the almost total cessation of commutation of tithes through enclosure. Tithes remained a contentious issue and it was not until

the passing of the Tithe Commutation Act in 1836 that the issue was resolved.²⁹ The Commutation Act set up the Tithe Commission, which over the following twenty years supervised the transformation of all remaining tithes into a lump sum charge independent of the fertility of the land or future course of cultivation. The lump-sum was indexed to agricultural prices in general. By the law, the tithe payment for each parish was fixed as the average of the amounts paid in tithe payments during the seven years 1829-1835. That total payment was then apportioned among the various fields of the parish or township.³⁰

Benefits to the Clergy of Tithe Commutation

The Church of England and its clergy were winners in the rearrangement and redistribution of property that accompanied the process of parliamentary enclosure between 1750 and 1801. After 1801 tithes were rarely commuted as part of the enclosure process. The clergy were enriched by exchanging their tithes for blocks of prime agricultural land and by the transformation their relationship with their parishioners. The collection of tithe payments put the clergy at odds with their parishioners. Having land that could be let out was much more preferable to collecting tithes not least because it provided a more regular level of income, and because taking receipt of a regular cash payment was so much simpler than chasing up a parish full of tithe payments in kind or otherwise. Enclosure transformed incumbents into relatively substantial property holders, on a par with smaller squires, a rise in their social status. New social opportunities came their way, and with that, the opportunity to take on new social responsibilities. Many clergy began to assume a role in activities that had formerly been the exclusive preserve of the landowning class, notably by serving on the bench of magistrates. In many counties, the ranks of the magistracy quickly came to be dominated by the clergy. By 1831, 45 per cent of Cambridgeshire magistrates were members of the clergy. As well as serving as Magistrates, many were involved in the local associations set up to prosecute the theft of everything from animals to crops and chattels which sprang up in the later eighteenth century.³¹ This was work which benefitted the whole community, not just the rich.

Tithe records

The records of tithe income and tithe disputes from the medieval and early post-medieval period are useful as indicators of the types of produce grown in parishes, but unfortunately, such records are relatively scarce. The most beneficial tithe records available to the local and landscape historian are those created by the tithe commission after the passing of the Tithe

Commutation Act of 1836. The commission sent out surveyors to every parish where tithes had not been fully commuted and produced for each a map and apportionment. In some instances, the maps are the only maps of a parish to exist before the first series of ordnance survey maps of the 1880s. These highly accurate maps record the boundaries of a parish and take a snapshot of the agriculture of the parish. Frequently they are an excellent source for those studying field and topographical names, especially for those parishes unenclosed at the time of the survey. Similarly, they are a good source of data for those studying land use, especially when compared with the land use maps produced by the government in the 1930s.

The apportionments which accompany the maps (or vice versa) give valuable information about land ownership and landholding and have in recent times been found to be of particular use to genealogists. Like the maps, they can be used for comparative analysis with other sources such as land tax records.

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William Franklin

Medieval Wall Paintings: an agenda for research

A group of colleagues are currently researching the impact of the 'long reformation' on Huntingdonshire for a forthcoming publication.¹ My research for the publication has aroused an interest in medieval wall paintings, and during a welcome week's break, I visited churches in several counties to discover something of the rich heritage of surviving medieval wall paintings. A gazetteer in the second half of this paper outlines my initial findings at twelve churches. Sally Badham suggested that medieval wall paintings have not been sufficiently researched and therefore much remains to be discovered.² This brief initial survey was intended both to learn more about the subject and to determine the scope for further research. The research for this paper has already caused me to rewrite parts of my chapter for the proposed 'long reformation' volume.

Paintings on church walls did not commence in the medieval period. Earlier examples at Deerhurst, Gloucestershire and Nether Wallop, Hampshire are around a thousand years old, but this article is confined to a study of paintings from the medieval period.³ A comprehensive work on the subject is Roger Rosewell's *Medieval Wall Paintings* published in 2008, although it is at a more popular level than some predecessors.⁴ The much earlier monumental works by E W Tristram, which cover paintings from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, represent a lifetime's work and include many valuable drawings of wall paintings by Tristram, which have subsequently deteriorated. However, the volumes now suffer from the omission of so many recently discovered works.⁵

I was surprised by the sheer number of surviving and recently discovered paintings. However, estimates of total numbers of paintings and methods of counting them varied considerably. Rosewell listed nearly 500, but in my initial week's research, Rosewell's list suggested considerable variation in numbers of churches with medieval paintings by county, with Norfolk having the most (60), whereas Lancashire, Durham and Nottinghamshire had only 2 churches with wall paintings. Cambridgeshire was fifth in rank order with 25. Stephen Friar, on the other hand, suggested there could be as many as 2,000, although many were fragmentary and faded and only about 200 'well preserved'.⁶ Both Mathew Champion and Ellie Pridgeon were more pessimistic than Friar. Champion suggested that only a 'few dozen' churches still boast medieval artwork on any scale and Pridgeon argued that only a 'minute proportion' of the murals were still in existence today.⁷

Medieval church interiors were once 'entirely' covered in paintings. Athene Reiss suggested that hardly any ecclesiastical wall space was left bare.⁸ Considerable focus is placed upon the destruction of wall paintings during the Reformation and the Puritan period. However, paintings were vulnerable and would also naturally disintegrate over time. Fortunately, the deliberate 'destruction' of paintings following the Reformation was reversible and ironically the application of whitewash only served to conserve them, and this can now be removed with expert conservation methods.⁹ Many have been recovered during the 20th and 21st centuries and are now prized features of the churches. As Roberta Gilchrist pointed out, wall paintings were better preserved than stained glass, timber carvings or statuary and are also in their original position within the church.¹⁰

Rosewell suggested that because of the functions they served, subject matter was limited and embraced common themes. Apart from the Creation stories, reference to the Old Testament was relatively rare.¹¹ Particularly popular subjects were the life of Christ, predominantly events surrounding his birth (annunciation) and death (crucifixion and resurrection), New Testament figures (Peter, John the Baptist and Paul), other saints such as St Christopher, British saints, Thomas Becket and St George and female saints, St Catherine and St Margaret.¹² Saints were valued by worshippers as 'powerful intercessors' on their behalf and not just good human beings.¹³ Saints could be identified by their symbols or actions: Peter by keys, Paul by a sword, John the Baptist wearing a coat of camel's skin and baptising Jesus, St Catherine by a wheel and St Margaret being tortured.

St Christopher was usually depicted as a giant carrying the Christ child on his shoulders across a river. His image is frequently located opposite the main entrance of a church, to facilitate viewing by those entering the building. It has been suggested that the role of the saint, included providing protection against sudden death, and so his murals became popular during the Black Death.¹⁴ An image of St Christopher can be seen locally at Impington, Cambridgeshire but the Christ child on Christopher's left has now almost disappeared.

Thomas Becket's martyrdom in Canterbury Cathedral is portrayed on paintings in several English churches, including St Peter *ad Vincula* at South Newington, Oxfordshire.¹⁵ Although a British saint, Thomas Becket is also celebrated in many parts of Europe. The recent volume accompanying the exhibition at the British Museum, *Thomas Becket Murder and the making of a Saint*, highlighted one of the earliest depictions of Becket's martyrdom in continental Europe. It

was a wall painting discovered in 1917 at Santa Maria de Terrassa Church in Spain.¹⁶

Whilst surrounded by mythical stories, such as George and the Dragon, George is believed to have been historical character, martyred during the Diocletian persecution in 303AD.¹⁷ The turning point in the First Crusade was the victory at Antioch in 1098.¹⁸ Crusaders believed that they were supported by angels and saints including Peter, Andrew and St George. Divine assistance was confirmed by finding a holy lance. St George's church Fordington, Dorset celebrated the victory with a depiction of St George on the tympanum over the entrance porch.¹⁹ By 1222, George had acquired a feast day, celebrated on the 23rd of April.²⁰ Edward III's Order of the Garter, founded in 1348, adopted George as its patron and George subsequently became the unchallenged patron of England as well. A warrior knight, St George was a popular subject in painted murals, and he is often depicted defeating the dragon as at Broughton in Buckinghamshire and Hornton in Oxfordshire.²¹ The less-complete example at Barton, Cambridgeshire possibly celebrates a military victory in the Hundred Years War.

Doom paintings were very common. They depict the Last Judgement and the weighing of souls. Christ is shown as the Judge, usually accompanied by other figures such as the Virgin Mary and St John. Those that are judged are usually shown naked, anticipating the resurrection. The scriptural basis for this depiction is based upon Job chapter 19 verse 26, 'And I shall be clothed again with my skin and in my flesh, I shall see my God'. St Michael is sometimes shown weighing an individual's deeds, such as at Barton, Cambridgeshire and Wenhaston, Suffolk. The basis on which souls were weighed was fiercely contested at the Reformation. Doom paintings can be interpreted as supporting a belief in good works as the basis of salvation in opposition the Reformation cry of *sola fide* i.e., justification by faith alone. Most doom paintings appear above the chancel arch as it symbolised the division between this world and the next.²² At Trotton, West Sussex an abbreviated Doom depicting Christ in Judgement with the seven deadly sins and works of mercy appears on the west wall of the church (Church 2 in the Gazetteer). A further variation is for a Doom to be painted on a wooden board, which could then be inserted between the Rood Screen and the Chancel Arch. A well-known example discovered in 1892 is at Wenhaston in Suffolk.²³ Locally a very detailed Doom painting dating from the fifteenth century can be seen at Great Shelford, Cambridgeshire.

Gilchrist argued that imagery changed over time. For example, the image of Christ became more human, rather than the depiction of Christ in majesty, which was more common in earlier paintings.²⁴



Great Shelford Doom (courtesy Jo Sear)

The works were commissioned by patrons and executed by artists. Patrons, who usually chose the theme of medieval wall paintings, were considered their author rather than the artist. Paintings reflected the piety and social status of patrons. As the medieval economy grew, those further down the social scale, such as farmers and merchants, increasingly commissioned paintings. Patrons of many paintings can still be identified through heraldry, portraiture, inscriptions, and churchwardens accounts.²⁵ Artists worked in teams, under a master. Medieval painters joined guilds and their patron saint was St Luke. They used a grid system for wall paintings, creating the lines by snapping cords against the plaster. Wooden scaffolding was used to facilitate paintings at a height.²⁶ Both Rosewell and Binski agreed that church wall paintings in England were rarely frescoes, painting on wet plaster, but executed on dry plastered walls using the *secco* technique.²⁷ An exception is the Kempey chancel painting in Gloucestershire.²⁸

There is considerable debate about the original purpose of the murals and to whom they were directed. For Nicholas Orme, they were to encourage devotion and give instruction.²⁹ Sally Badham argued that fear of purgatory meant that patrons sought prayer for their soul, but this was problematic as donors' names were often forgotten over time.³⁰ Rosewell suggested murals were to strengthen belief, encourage devotion, stimulate curiosity, and provide an artistic complement to the liturgy.³¹ Did this apply to all social groups? If they were a means of religious

instruction, principally for the illiterate, how were they to understand the often-obscure themes of the paintings? John Goodall suggested that clergy would have provided explanations and used images to illustrate sermons.³² Were the doom paintings intended to inspire fear of hell or merely to prick the consciences of worshippers?³³ Would doom paintings encourage devotion or stimulate fear, given medieval believers' obsession and fear of purgatory? For Andrew Graham Dixon, the Wenham Doom had a simple direct message, it embraced a new commandment: thou shalt be afraid. Robert Whiting agreed that they aroused fear but added that this was to stimulate repentance.³⁵

Documentary sources for church paintings include probate records and churchwardens' accounts. Unfortunately, many references in testamentary documents are frustratingly brief. Ellie Pridgeon has written a comprehensive guide to the many sources which can be employed by the researcher into wall paintings.³⁶ Whilst they can occasionally shed light on date, patronage, identity of painters and cost of wall paintings, there are many problems with these sources. References in wills are frequently brief and are often ambiguous as they rarely describe murals in detail. However, wills can refer to bequests for lights burning before a specified image. Some churches had more than one painting of the same subject and the wall painting might have been updated or repainted. Churchwardens' accounts rarely survive before the late fifteenth century and are often incomplete.³⁷ Many images funded by individual parishioners were frequently not recorded in the accounts. Architectural drawings and watercolours can depict wall paintings but are of varying degrees of accuracy. Other sources include patent rolls, chantry foundation licences, photographs, newspapers, faculty jurisdictions, correspondence, and conservation reports.

The ideological assault on 'idolatrous' images was initiated by Erasmus' 'Praise of Folly'.³⁸ Not all the magisterial reformers agreed. Martin Luther saw little harm in them, declaring, 'they do no more harm on walls than in books.'³⁹ Indeed, for Luther, destroying sacred art was a form of idolatry for it implied that images had power when they did not.⁴⁰ However, Swiss reformers, who supported the destruction of images, influenced the English Church in a Reformed direction. The Ten Articles condemned images in 1536. Specifically, they were not to be objects of worship. The beginning of the end for medieval wall paintings was the attack on the Becket cult, including the destruction of his shrine in Canterbury, which swiftly followed.⁴¹ Becket's challenge to the King in support of the church was not likely to be welcomed by Henry VIII. The injunctions of 1538, which required the removal of images which had been 'abused with

pilgrimages or offerings', had a powerful effect and almost no images were erected until the Marian reaction.⁴² In the reign of Edward VI, instructions handed down to the churches were 'take away utterly extinct and destroy all shrines... pictures, paintings and all other monuments, feigned miracles, pilgrimages idolatry and superstition, so that there remain no memory of the same in walls, glass windows...'.⁴³ For Diarmaid MacCulloch, the instructions were carried out with gleeful destructiveness, not seen since Thomas Cromwell's earlier campaign.⁴⁴ Payments for the subsequent whitewashing of the paintings can be found in churchwardens' accounts such as Long Melford, where the cost was £1 14s 8d. The Marian Reaction was encapsulated in her religious injunctions issued in March 1554.⁴⁵ She attempted to turn back the clock and restore images. Churchwardens at Bromfield in Essex were excommunicated in 1558 because their church had no images.⁴⁶ Elimination of murals returned following the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558. In her reign, paintings were frequently replaced by printed texts.⁴⁷

In the 17th century, William Dowsing's journal referred to the destruction of 'superstitious' and 'popish' pictures throughout Cambridgeshire and Suffolk.⁴⁸ For example, on March 8, 1643, Dowsing visited Papworth Everard in Huntingdonshire and pictures of four evangelists in the chancel, and Abraham offering up Isaac were destroyed. Today the position has reversed once again, and substantial sums are spent on recovering and conserving those images that have survived.

Conclusions

This brief foray into medieval church wall paintings has identified a potential agenda for research. It poses many questions:

To what extent do wall paintings survive?
What was the purpose of medieval church wall paintings? What was their subject matter?
To what extent did depictions change over time?
What was the extent of regional variation in wall paintings? Etc.

East Anglia is a good location for further research, as many paintings survive in these counties. In writing *The origins of the Consumer Revolution*, Jo Sear and I highlighted the need for interdisciplinary research where history engages with material culture.⁴⁹ The study of wall paintings increases the need for interdisciplinary skills requiring contributions from literature, theology, archaeology, material culture, art and architectural history as well as history.

A brief gazetteer

1. Saint James the Great, South Leigh, Oxfordshire

There has been a church at South Leigh since Norman times, and there is a Norman doorway in the south wall. During the nineteenth century restoration, extensive 15th century wall paintings were discovered. They included a Doom painting over the chancel arch, the seven deadly sins, Saint Michael weighing souls, the Virgin Mary (originally part of an Annunciation scene) and a rare painting of Saint Clement. Burlison and Grylls heavily restored the paintings, re-drawing the weighing of souls at twice its original size.



St James the Great, South Leigh Doom Painting



2. St George, Trotton, West Sussex

On the West wall of Trotton church is a composition of the Last Judgment, dating from the 14th century. John Edwards argued that the doom is unique in that it does not follow the usual iconography of Dooms. Most usual features of the Doom are absent.⁵⁰ Christ is seated in judgement upon a rainbow, a symbol of pardon, with an angel at each side. Below the figure of Christ, Moses holds the tablets of the law. The Blessed, the sheep of Matthew chapter 25, are welcomed into paradise and are shown naked. The cursed (goats) are condemned to eternal damnation. Perhaps uniquely, the blessed are shown on the viewer's right and not Christ's right in accordance with Matthew's gospel, chapter 25. The seven corporeal works of mercy are portrayed in circular medallions on the left side of Christ. Six are based upon Matthew 25, whilst the seventh, burying the dead, comes from the Book of Tobit, which was part of the Bible (Vulgate) prior to its relegation to the Apocrypha by Protestants at the Reformation.⁵¹ On Christ's right is a large naked figure (the evil man) from whom dragons emerge. In their jaws, humans engage in the seven deadly sins. Only gluttony can now be identified, and this is represented by a man drinking from a leather bottle. The artist has painted parishioners rather than overeating. For Eamon Duffy, the purpose of this work was to encourage parishioners to examine their conscience.⁵²



St George's Trotton

The painting was discovered in 1904 and, after restoration, the acts of mercy survive in good condition and can be easily identified. The patron of the painting is believed to be Thomas, Lord Camoy, who commanded the English rear guard at the battle of Agincourt.⁵³ He was subsequently made a Knight of the Garter and his tomb is prominent in the church.

The north nave wall has a painting of a man with a hunting dog with dead game on the ground. On the south wall St Christopher, which literally means Christ bearer, is shown carrying the Christ child. A hermit, responsible for the river crossing, stands holding a lantern. It is an appropriate topic, for the church is located next to the River Rother. It was believed that Christopher gave protection to travellers. There is also a donor scene of the Camoys family.

3. St Mary the Virgin, Cerne Abbas, Dorset

The church dates from around 1300 and the medieval wall paintings date from early in the 14th century.⁵⁴ Four scenes from the life of John the Baptist are located on the north wall of the chancel. The painting on the left shows John baptising Jesus, whilst the one on the right depicts John being put to death. The New Testament story records that John incurred the wrath of Herod Antipas, and his second wife Herodias, by denouncing their marriage as illicit.⁵⁵ Herodias, had a daughter, Salome from her first marriage to Philip, son of Herod the Great. Salome performed a dance at a dinner and as a reward was promised anything she asked. She requested the head of John the Baptist on a platter. The painting captures the moment of John's execution in prison in the fortress of Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea.⁵⁶ To the right of the altar is a very faded depiction of the Annunciation.



John baptises Jesus



Execution of John



**Preach the Word 2
Timothy 4:2**

In the reign of Elizabeth I, the whitewashed walls of churches were adorned with scriptural texts.⁵⁷ On both sides of the nave at Cerne Abbas, painted shields contain biblical texts from the Geneva Bible. Three of these were painted in 1679 by Robert Ford for which he was paid twelve guineas.

4. St Michael, Axmouth, Devon

Two paintings survive at Axmouth and appear on pillars in the South aisle of the church. The paintings appear reasonably complete but do not appear on Rosewell's list. They are medieval but of uncertain date. They were discovered in the 19th century under limewash but after a long period of re-exposure, have now lost much of their original brilliance. The painting on the left is thought to be a representation of Christ after the resurrection, displaying his wounds made by the nails. The painting on the right is of a saint, possibly Saint Michael as he was the patron saint of the church.



Christ after the Resurrection



Possibly St Michael



Probable Doom

5. St Mary the Virgin, Axminster, Devon

Researching wall paintings makes demands on the historian for they enter the world both original painters and conservators and their specialist techniques. The wall painting at Axminster was being uncovered by a conservator at the time of our visit in March 2022 and it would appear to be a Doom painting.

6. St Mary, Charminster, Dorset

The berries or pomegranates were painted in the early 16th century and are similar to those in Seville Cathedral in Spain. It is possible that they were painted by the same artist as in Seville, for King Philip of Spain was entertained at Wolfeton House, adjacent to Charminster church. The pomegranate was an ancient symbol of fertility and Christianity adopted it as a symbol of the resurrection the Christ. The Christ child is sometimes seen holding a pomegranate in art.⁵⁸ A good example is Virgin and Child with Five Angels, by Sandro Botticelli dated 1480/1 and located in the Uffizi, Florence.⁵⁹



7. St Michael, Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire

In 1086, Stanton Harcourt was owned by William the Conqueror's half-brother Bishop Odo of Bayeux. By the mid-12th century, it had passed to Queen Adeliza, the wife of Henry the first. The chancel of St Michael's church contains the oldest surviving wooden screen in England, dating from the 13th century. The hinges, bolt and lock are original. On the right of the screen is an original painting - the identity of the figure is uncertain but is thought to be Queen Adeliza, who probably founded the church. Medieval wall paintings were discovered in the nave in the mid-19th century but subsequently destroyed.

Wooden screen

The Church at Stanton Harcourt is a reminder that wall paintings do not stand alone from other medieval devotional images which include rood screens and stained glass.

8. Broughton, Huntingdonshire

Broughton, Huntingdonshire has a fifteenth-century Doom painting over the chancel arch, which now lacks an image of Christ. That it was once present is indicated by the presence of a rainbow. In contrast to the Trotton painting, the saved, rising from their graves, appear on the left to the viewer, and the damned are depicted on the right.



9. St Mary Magdalene, Ickleton, Cambridgeshire

The paintings at Ickleton were discovered following an arson attack on the church in 1979. Ickleton has a fourteenth-century Doom over the chancel arch (left). It includes a very rare bare-breasted Virgin Mary. The passion cycle (right) is very early and dates from around 1170.⁶⁰ It follows the last supper, betrayal by Judas, arrest of Christ, flagellation and the road to Calvary, with Jesus carrying the cross. Below are depictions of the martyrdoms of Saint Peter, Andrew and Lawrence.



Bare-breasted Virgin Mary



Passion Cycle

10. St John Duxford Cambridgeshire

St John's Duxford was mercifully preserved after the amalgamation of the two Duxford livings in 1874. As a result, St John's has been little used for a century and a half and escaped Victorian restoration. However, William Dowsing visited in 1644 and the result was the destruction of 50 pictures and several inscriptions.⁶¹ The surviving wall paintings date from the 12th century. On the West wall of the chancel paintings feature the crucifixion of Christ. In the first tier at the top are two devils with a wheel. Below are the scenes of the Crucifixion: a soldier piercing Jesus' side; Joseph of Arimathea asking Pilate for the Body of Christ; the removal of Christ's body from the Cross; and the tomb with sleeping soldiers. On the north side of the third tier down, there is a female saint, possibly St Catherine, who is strung up by her hair whilst

her breasts are brutally pierced by swords. In the lowest tier is a row of heads being subjugated by figures wielding forks or sticks. This may be another scene from St Catherine's story illustrating her dispute with 50 philosophers.



Lamb of God roundel



Two Bishop Saints

At the apex of the eastern tower arch is a central roundel containing the Lamb of God, flanked by hovering angels. Lozenge patterns decorate its borders, together with the soffit of the western tower arch. This imagery probably dates to the early 12th century.

A series of 15th-century paintings once decorated the north wall. Three of these are visible. The westernmost image shows two bishop saints; one holding a staff, the other carrying what appears to be a rod attached to a circle. The staff may belong to a pilgrim saint; the other accessory could be St Leonard's manacles or St Eligius' blacksmith's equipment.

Fragmentary Paintings

The paintings at Barton and Godmanchester are too fragmentary and indistinct to be reproduced. If Stephen Friar is correct, these two churches may be rather more typical of surviving wall paintings today than Trotton and Ickleton.

11. Barton, Cambridgeshire

The paintings at Barton can at least be deciphered. There is an image of Saint Michael weighing a dead soul. The Virgin Mary, wearing a crown, places her rosary on the opposite scale in support of the deceased. A devil watches nearby awaiting an opportunity to carry off the soul to hell. Thomas Cranmer objected to such paintings for their emphasis on superstition. In 1548, he exclaimed, 'what teacheth the picture of Saint Michael weighing souls and Our Lady putting her beads in the balance? ...nothing else but superstitiousness of beads and confidence in our own merits and the merits of Saints and nothing in the merits of Christ'.⁶²

12. St Mary the Virgin Godmanchester, Huntingdonshire

St Mary's Godmanchester has only surviving fragments of painted images -dogtooth and foliage- in the reveals of the medieval lancet windows of the chancel arch. They were discovered during restoration work on the church in the 1880s. However, probate evidence reveals that Thomas Frost left 6s 8d in his will for a doom painting over the rood in St Mary's Godmanchester in 1491. The amount is broadly in line with other bequests for Doom paintings such as John Saulbryge's bequest of ten shillings 'to the paynteng of a dom' at Great Brington in 1531. Frost's bequest may have been related to the rebuilding of the church at this time.

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Ken Sneath

Mysticism and magic in a Berkshire village

*'There is one of the most eminent church-livings in this county possessed by a blasphemer, and one in whose house, I believe some here can testify, the Devil is visibly as familiar as any one of the family'*¹

Bradfield is a small Berkshire village some ten miles from Reading. In the years around 1650, in the uneasy aftermath of the Civil War, strange stories circulated about happenings at the rectory there. Angels, demons and the occasional fire-breathing dragon were regularly to be seen. The angels were transparent as crystal and sparkled like diamonds; they brought music, sweet smells and tastes, and feelings of elation. The demons were black and mis-shapen, and came with sulphurous smells, left nauseating tastes in the mouth, and subjected the spectators to flights of fiery stinging but invisible darts. They left physical traces as deposits on the bricks of the chimney, which were hard to remove². Rumours spread of the minister, John Pordage, disputing in his study with the devil in person, and of being protected by a guardian angel who resembled him even to the clothes he was wearing. Other residents at the rectory had their own guardian angels, and angels walked freely about the house, looking in on the children as they lay in bed³. And 'lately the New Jerusalem hath been seen to come down from heaven, all of precious stones; and the New Jerusalem was a globe, which globe was eternity, and in that eternity were all the Saints ... the face of God hath been seen not as Moses saw him, but the very face, as one man may see another'⁴.

John Pordage was a studious, peaceable man, intent on researching and developing his particular brand of religious beliefs, but found his rectory becoming a centre where conflicts affecting the town of Reading and its hinterland were played out. This paper aims at an understanding of the religious ideology of Pordage and his associates and the controversies it aroused. It will also suggest a rational explanation for the remarkable phenomena reported from Bradfield.

Pordage was a Londoner, Cambridge educated, in holy orders and with a medical doctorate from Leyden⁵. Under wartime conditions, he had moved to Reading, where he was intruded into the central church of St Laurence, abandoned by its royalist vicar. He was soon on terms of hostility with Christopher Fowler, intruded as he had been



John Pordage, "Philosopher, physician, theologian".
After William Faithorne.

into the nearby St Mary's, and, with some discreet bribery, was able to make a further move to Bradfield. The rectory there was spacious. He installed his family, including his wife Mary and a Mrs Flavell who was or had been his mistress, and made it a centre where local ladies gathered to amuse themselves with religious re-enactments and mystical babble that they can hardly have understood. One had been in heaven and performed the dance of the Just Man before the Trinity; another was invested with Elijah's mantle and promised a seat at the right hand of the Virgin⁶. More significantly, the rectory was always open to serious students of mystical religion who came to discuss, write, or occasionally to lie low if out of favour with the authorities of the time. Many of these were listed by Pordage's great enemy Fowler, while others made mention of Bradfield in their own publications⁷.

Pordage's religion was at the spiritual end of the Christian spectrum where the believer works towards union with the deity, a state which can be

defined in different ways. Before the war, he had been accused of holding ideas related to those of the Family of Love, a sixteenth-century Netherlandish sect (that, incidentally, had also been widespread in Cambridgeshire)⁸. Familists saw life as a pilgrimage towards a heavenly Jerusalem, where the believer would be united and his will aligned with Jesus Christ; the influences helping and hindering the journey were personified respectively as angels and demons⁹. In the 1640s, there was much interest in a later German theosophist, Jakob Boehme (or Behmen), whose principles were broadly similar but combined elements of hermeticism, Kabbalah, neo-Platonism into a comprehensive mystical doctrine. This was obviously being studied at Bradfield; later in his career, Pordage would be known as a leading English Behmenist. Oddly, Familism was generally regarded as heretical while Behmenism was not. In a letter to Oliver Cromwell from the dissenting puritan stronghold of Swan Alley in London, a devout Mr Herring proposed that a Christian student's reading should be limited to the Bible and the works of Boehme¹⁰.

Nonetheless, there was a question whether such doctrines were properly Christian or not. They left no room for salvation by the redemptive sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. Pordage preached that Christ was no more than 'a type' – an exemplar of Christian perfection – and his 'imputative righteousness' was 'sapless'. To the strictly Calvinist Christopher Fowler, this was spitting in the Saviour's face. For Fowler and those who followed his lead, the study and learning of Pordage and his circle were pointless: 'I desire to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified'¹¹.

The spiritualists' equivalent to the orthodox idea of salvation was the entry of Christ into the believer, seen as a process of gestation and birth, 'this mystery of Christ in us, the hope of glory'¹². 'The Lord ploweth in thee, sowes in thee, reapes in thee' wrote one of Pordage's most prominent associates, Abiezer Coppe, to his disciple Thomasine Pendarves, but the gender was not important. 'Male and female are all one in Christ', he wrote, 'Our Maker is our Husband,' and 'The Babe springs in my inmost wombe'¹³. Coppe was a pantheist, and his vision was of a progressive coming together of all things into an eternal joyful unity with God.

The conflict that opposed Pordage and Fowler spilled over from spiritual to earthly politics. Fowler was theocratic, and allied himself with – some said, dominated – the Reading municipal élite in the town's corporation¹⁴. In his notorious

assize sermon, Fowler's henchman Simon Ford connected his attack on Pordage with the need to preserve the existing social structure against the threat of 'levelling': 'God preserve civil distinction in England'¹⁵. This had the effect of making support for Pordage a defining issue among local oppositional politicians, many of whom were ex-soldiers, influenced by the Leveller ideology and working for social reform. Pordage's group aroused the suspicion of conservatives by maintaining (like the apostles) a common purse¹⁶. Many of his associates were vociferous in their concern for the poor. For Coppe, God was 'the mighty Leveller' and his message included 'have nothing your own, have all things common'. The prophetess Elizabeth Poole considered that Zion was for 'the poor of the people', and Mary Pordage looked forward to a time when 'what you have shall be ours and what we have shall be yours'¹⁷. The greatest of contemporary writers on behalf of the poor was Gerard Winstanley, leader of the 'True Levellers' or 'Diggers' who illegally cultivated land near Walton on Thames and hoped to make of it 'a common treasury'. Winstanley does not specifically mention Bradfield, but describes phenomena he can only have witnessed there, and it is known that his main collaborator William Everard was a frequent and influential visitor¹⁸.

More light is thrown on the Bradfield ideology by publications dating from the end of 1648 and early 1649, a few weeks of crisis¹⁹ when the whole country, and not merely the army officers who held the power of decision, debated the fate of the king. 'M.P, a Member of the Body', who may have been Mary Pordage but was more likely another local woman, Mary Pocock from neighbouring Ashampstead, took up the nuptial symbolism that Abiezer Coppe had already used and applied it to current preoccupations.

The king, in her understanding, has separated himself from his spouse, seen variously as God, the people, parliament, and his wife. She expects there to be a 'restauration' in which they will be reunited: 'Now this King is the husband of this Parliamentary *Eve*, the one in the other; the man by the woman, and the woman of the man, rising one out of another; the man ruling his wife, the wife ruled by her husband.' And she gives a rhapsodic description of the world that will result: 'Now behold a great Mystery; the King to be one in his Parliament, the Parliament to be happy in the King, God to be one in man, man to become happy in God. This is the Representative, King and Parliament, whose happy condition is bound up in the enjoyment of each other, in the union of the manhood.' It will be a general return to prelapsarian harmony²⁰. Plainly, this happy outcome would be prevented if the king were to be executed. Elizabeth Poole who, as a kind of prophetic consultant, had direct access to the

Council of Officers, made much the same argument in less ecstatic language ²¹. They were, of course, disappointed.

The trauma of the Civil War had aroused apocalyptic expectations. Jakob Boehme had made use of the idea of the Fall as a separation, and especially of the division of the primeval androgynous Adam into two distinct sexes ²². A reunion might result in a return to paradisaic bliss. Boehme described this allegorically in the language of alchemy, with the figure of the chemical wedding – sulphur and mercury as male and female principles in the reaction vessel – bringing forth the ‘*filius philosophorum*’ or Philosophers’ Stone, the alchemical salt that makes further change possible. The Stone was much discussed at Bradfield. Mrs Flavell had seen it while in a trance, and referred to it as ‘the divinity in the humanity’; Mary Pocock had actually found it, and used almost the same phrase in the title of her book ²³. Writing to a now unknown lady, Pordage described the development of the Stone as a gestation occurring in her own womb, thus implicitly identifying it with the indwelling Christ ²⁴. The confidence with which both Pocock and Poole expected the redemption of the king suggests that they may have been practising alchemy to bring it about.

Pordage was a physician as well as a minister, and, with no apothecary nearer than Reading, will very probably have had chemical equipment for the preparation of plant-based drugs. This was the time of early pharmacopeias and laboratory manuals. Many of the strange phenomena reported from Bradfield can be understood as laboratory observations described in the esoteric terms habitual in alchemical literature: the sparkling angels as crystals forming in a liquid, especially if illuminated from the side; the dark demons as gobbets of insoluble sludge, the chimney deposits as tarry matter that blows out of the vessel and hardens as it cools, the smells and stinging darts as what may escape from improperly sealed apparatus.

The more specific apparitions – the angels and demons Pordage interviewed in his study, the guardian angels that were exact resemblances of those they protected – are best explained as reflections in a glass ball or a polished stone that could be seen clearly only by a suitably qualified (i.e. imaginative) scribe. The sixteenth-century magus Dr Dee had practised alchemy, but also over many years via his assistant Edward Kelley had spoken to angels and learned from them. His voluminous notebooks were at that time being

transcribed in Oxford and Pordage will certainly have known of them ²⁵. The most likely candidate for Pordage’s scribe was William Everard ²⁶.

Pordage’s ministry could not last. The psychological trauma of the war receded, and the political changes of 1654, notably the institution of Cromwell’s protectorate, had the incidental effect of weakening some of Pordage’s supporters in Reading. New legislation enabled Fowler to set up a Commission of Ejectors to enquire into the credentials of local clergy. Pordage was subjected to a kangaroo court packed with religious conservatives who did not disguise their hatred and contempt for him. They objected especially to his formulation of ‘the fiery deity of Christ, mingling and mixing itself with our flesh’ and to the figure of God and man coming together as male and female. Questioned like a ten-year-old on the catechism, his answers failed to satisfy, and he was deprived of his living on grounds of ‘ignorance and insufficiency’ ²⁷. His ‘little society’ maintained a shadowy existence for a number of years, meeting in private houses, sometimes with Mary Pocock as its notional leader, but by about 1670 Pordage had returned to London and Behmenist circles there. The Philadelphian Society he then set up would persist well into the next century.

As I have argued elsewhere, the significance of Pordage and his Bradfield group was as an epiphenomenon of the troubled period that followed the Civil War, when the world seemed to have left its normal course and to be headed towards some cosmic transformation, a millennium. Pordage’s ‘society’ could be classified among the many groups of ‘Seekers’ that developed, but they seem to have been unique in their readiness to take action to bring about the change they sought ²⁸. They may have been naïve in thinking that alchemical procedures might have effects outside the reaction vessel, but it would be anachronistic to consider them as simply deluded. It was not yet obvious that science was a better way of working on the world than magic. But their message became less attractive as stability returned in the 1650s, and their influence came to an end as radicalism retreated equally from the political and religious arenas ²⁹.

Magic continued to be a preoccupation at Bradfield, which had Elias Ashmole, historian of alchemy, as its manorial lord, and George Wharton, producer of astrological almanacs and author of a text on palm-reading, as a resident; but they avoided controversy, and the village soon ceased to figure in the newsbooks and pamphlet literature.

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Manfred Brod.

Si monumentae requiris, circumspice: The Reverend William J Beamont, 1828-68

Quite a number of Victorian clergymen are commemorated in Cambridge, either in street names, for example Harvey Goodwin Avenue (after the Bishop of Carlisle), Mackenzie Road (after Charles F Mackenzie, first Bishop of Central Africa) and Luard Road (after Henry R Luard, Vicar of Great St Mary's), in institutions (Selwyn College, after George Selwyn, first Primate of New Zealand), or buildings (Henry Martyn Hall, after the Bible translator and missionary to India and Persia). William Beamont has no obvious memorial, yet his legacy is still very much alive

today, both in Cambridge and the Church of England.

Beamont was born in 1828 in Warrington, Cheshire, where his father (also William) was a prominent local solicitor and antiquarian.¹ He was educated at Eton, where he achieved glittering academic prizes (including the Newcastle Medal for Ancient Languages) and went up to Trinity in 1846, being elected to a Fellowship in 1852 and ordained in 1854. A gifted linguist, with a particular interest in Middle Eastern languages, he



The only known photograph of the Revd. William Beamont ²

(Courtesy of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge)

first travelled to the region in 1852, returning in 1854 to perfect his knowledge of the Hebrew, Arabian and Coptic languages: on Christmas Day 1854 he gave his first sermon in Arabic, appropriately enough in Bethlehem. In 1855 he came back to England via the Crimea, serving as Chaplain to Florence Nightingale's hospital at Sevastopol en route. He then became a curate at St John's, Drury Lane, before returning to Cambridge in 1858 to become Vicar of St Michael's Church, Trinity Street, retaining his Trinity Fellowship. He paid further visits to the Middle East in 1860 (accompanied by his father) and 1865 ³.

Beamont, Barnwell and the Church of England

Beamont took up his parochial duties at a time of challenge for the Church of England. The 1851 Census of Religious Worship had shown that in spite of its claim to be the 'national' church, it accounted for just under half of churchgoers; and it was also very evident that it was losing whatever hold it might have had on the working classes, particularly in larger towns. And it was under attack from the increasingly vociferous 'Liberation Society', founded by the

Congregationalist Minister Edward Miall of Leicester in 1843, originally to campaign against the long-standing Nonconformist grievance of compulsory church rates, but after 1851 broadening its objectives into a full-scale campaign for disestablishment. Beamont threw himself whole-heartedly into the Church's counter-attack, both nationally and locally. In 1859 he was the moving spirit, with William Emery, Dean and Tutor of Corpus, behind the setting-up of the Church Defence Association, formed at a meeting in his rooms on 21 November 1859. Its objectives were two-fold: firstly to defend the Church's position and secondly to reform its structure and governance to help it re-establish itself at the centre of national life. In particular, Beamont believed that lay people should have a role in how the Church was run. This bore fruit when the first 'Church Congress', bringing together sympathetic senior clergy and prominent lay people, was held at King's College in November 1861 (this was the first time any Cambridge college had accommodated a conference: the important role that conferences play in College finances today is perhaps one of Beamont's lasting legacies). The Congresses became annual events thereafter: by the time of the third, held in Manchester in 1863, 5,000 delegates attended. In 1864 Beamont and Emery (the latter becoming Archdeacon of Ely that year) found an enthusiastic ally in the newly-appointed Bishop of Ely, Harold Browne, who – determined to breathe life into what was generally referred to as the 'Dead See' – extended the idea to holding a 'Diocesan Conference' in 1866, followed by more local 'Archdeaconry Conferences' the following year ⁴.

At local level, Beamont believed that the Church must go all out to attract the working classes through a programme of 'church extension'. His interest in this had been aroused by his London experience: St John's Drury Lane was a new church, opened in 1855 as a chapel-of-ease to St Martin in the Fields to serve the notorious slum district of Seven Dials. The fast-growing suburb of Barnwell was Cambridge's equivalent. It had grown up after enclosure of the Barnwell Field in 1809 on both sides of the new East Road. To the west of this, much of the building development had been at least 'respectable' (for example Eden Street, 1830) or more than that (New Square, 1830-45). To the east it was a very different matter: here were the 'dens and stews of Barnwell', a confusing rabbit warren of jerry-built streets occupied by a shifting population of travellers, the semi-criminal and the near-destitute, as the Vicar of Christ Church, Newmarket Road, the Rev G.W Weldon recollected:

The name of Barnwell was not in the highest repute... The townspeople seldom mentioned the word. It was referred to in

ordinary society with a certain and apologetic hesitancy... [as] the abode of a surplus population of the most heterogeneous description. Disreputable characters abounded in certain streets, from which no honest man, and certainly no undergraduate, could have emerged without taint of suspicion.... Of all the wretched, heaven-forsaken haunts of man, I never saw anything more suggestive of degradation, and misery, than that part of Barnwell extending from Gas Lane to Nelson Street and Wellington Row. The former, from its vicious associations, was called 'Devil's Row'; and as for Wellington Street, there was not an honest house from end-to-end of it ⁵.

There was an early attempt to minister to the area by the Rev J.W Geldart, Fellow of St Catherine's and Regius Professor of Civil Law at Cambridge 1814-47, whose family had acquired quite substantial holdings in the Barnwell Field at Enclosure., and founded 'Barnwell New Church' in the 1820s. Few details of this are known, although it is shown on maps of the 1830s; it appears never to have been consecrated, for reasons which are unclear, although it was certainly being used for meetings (e.g of missionary societies) to judge by press reports of the period. By 1840 it was apparently disused, the area having been taken over for the first University Cricket ground, and the site was sold in 1847 to become part of Mill Road Cemetery ⁶.

Following a fund-raising campaign, Christ Church was opened in 1839. It was largely financed by the Rev Charles Perry, Fellow of Trinity ⁷, with a small contribution of £500 from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and quickly replaced the 'Abbey Church' (St Andrew-the-Less) as the *de facto* parish church of Barnwell. But its position, in the essentially middle-class Newmarket Road, meant that it was unlikely to have much impact on the slums of the Gas Lane area: even had the inhabitants of the latter turned up for a service, their sense of inferiority would be confirmed by their dress and their relegation to the 'free seats' (all the best pews were privately-rented, essential as pew-rents were the church's major source of income).

The stimulus to providing a church in the Gas Lane area came from the local branch of the Additional Curates Society (the Barnwell & Chesterton Clergy Fund), into which Beamont threw himself with enthusiasm as part of his broader agenda of reinvigorating the Church of England. Providing a few more clergy, he felt, was not the answer: the Church must have a physical presence in the most deprived urban areas, and it is not surprising that he became the moving spirit in the 'Gas Lane Church Committee', set up in

September 1863 at a meeting in his rooms at Trinity to 'erect a Church containing 600 sittings, all free', whose appeal for funding was issued in November of that year ⁸. In April 1864 a site was acquired and Richard Reynolds Rowe, a member of the Society and a close friend of Beamont's, appointed architect. The foundation stone was laid in November 1864 by the Bishop of Ely and the church consecrated by him on 4 December 1866. Beamont preached at Evensong the same day, a service attended

principally by the poor of the district, who seemed most attentive and entered earnestly into the simple though beautiful service of the church

and joined in the hymns (none of which would be known to today's church-goers) 'in the most hearty manner'. Beamont

reminded the congregation that although the lack of funds might have compelled the exercise of somewhat rigid economy in the erection [of the church] yet it was still a building consecrated and set aside for God's honour and glory, and in an earnest entreaty he begged them to value the privileges that were now within their reach and to let their attendance be regular ⁹.



St Matthew's Church, May 2022. The present surroundings are very different to the Gas Lane of the 1860s (Author)

Rowe's design was unusual and dictated by both the financial constraints that Beamont had referred to and the awkward site (a former

brickfield): it takes the form of a Greek cross with a central lantern (a design more usually associated with Nonconformist places of worship), and was almost certainly inspired by the Octagon of Ely Cathedral, where Rowe had worked as assistant to George Gilbert Scott in the 1850s. It is the complete antithesis to the almost contemporary (1863-64) All Saints Jesus Lane, being designed essentially as a 'preaching box' rather than for ritual, and with pulpit and altar visible to everyone in the congregation, thanks to the lack of internal columns. The similarity to Nonconformist churches is reinforced by the attached 'Parish Rooms' (added in 1888) which form an integral part of the church rather than being detached as was standard Anglican practice. All sittings were free, helped by Beamont securing an annual grant of £300 from the University to help towards church expenses ¹⁰. The Revd Weldon later paid tribute to Beamont's efforts, describing him 'as my intimate friend and companion' and added that 'He was not what would be called *an* Evangelical, but he was, in the truest and best sense of that word,

Evangelical' and a 'tireless worker among the poor' ¹¹.

The Cambridge School of Art

Beamont's other passion was art. He was a connoisseur, a patron (he brought in Holman Hunt to decorate St Michael's) and given to theatrical gestures: in 1863 he created a stir in Trinity, by taking 'Deerfoot', a Native American athlete, to dine in Hall, and in 1863 decorated the college to celebrate the wedding of the Prince of Wales. Joseph Romilly, University Registrar and also a Fellow of Trinity, who seems to have regarded his younger colleague's activities with affectionate amusement, recorded that 'Beamont fastened a huge red carpet (covered with pious texts) in front of the Master's Court: the piety was unquestionable, that taste doubtful' ¹².

Beamont's interests in art and improving the lot of the Cambridge working classes came together in 1858, when he was the moving spirit in the foundation of the Cambridge School of Art; not only would this educate artisans in the finer things of life but would also (he hoped) be the seed from which a University Department of Fine Art might grow ¹³. This hope remained unfulfilled in his lifetime (although the Slade Professorship was endowed the year after his death), but Beamont devoted himself unstintingly to the School's welfare. Officially Hon Secretary, in practice he was not the servant but the guiding light of the Committee of Management and the School's most effective fund-raiser.

By modern standards, the foundation of the School took place with remarkable rapidity ¹⁴. A series of preliminary meetings in Beamont's rooms was followed by a public meeting at the Guildhall

on 16 August 1858, which resolved that 'it is desirable to found in Cambridge a government School of Art' and set up a Committee to raise the £100 that the Department of Science & Art required as a local contribution before it would consider recognition and funding. Two weeks later, encouraging progress was reported ¹⁵, and it was agreed to lease the former Mechanics Institute at 9 Sidney Street as premises ¹⁶. This was followed by the appointment of a 'master' (Robert Harley, from the South Kensington 'approved' list) and arrangements put in train for the opening soiree, to be held at the Guildhall on 29 October, with John Ruskin as the keynote speaker. Ruskin was a keen supporter of Schools of Art, having been appalled by the low standards of British industrial design as shown at the Crystal Palace in 1851, and a close friend of William Whewell, Master of Trinity, which is probably why he agreed to come to Cambridge ¹⁷. All went off well, although there was a subsequent dispute over costs with the caterer (which eventually the Committee of Management were forced to settle on his terms) and some controversy over the Art Exhibition which Beamont had arranged in a side room, using plaster casts from South Kensington: as the Minutes record

Certain parties having taken objection to the exhibition of some of the casts in public, the Committee resolved that it was desirable to remove from public view the Torso of Venus.



Lost with the neo-Georgian redevelopment of Sidney Street in the 1920s, the original location of the Cambridge School of Art is marked by the white folding doors of Marks & Spencers (Author, March 2022)

The School of Art was never to experience anything quite on this scale again, but for many years the annual presentation of prizes in the Guildhall was a fixed point in the Cambridge social calendar and Beamont's energy and enthusiasm ensured that a succession of eminent speakers followed Ruskin (who, in spite of repeated invitations, never came again). These included Earl Granville in 1863, who as Lord President of the Council, the Victorian equivalent of the Department for Education, was ultimately responsible for Schools of Art, accompanied by another Beamont triumph, the largest art exhibition Cambridge had ever seen: among the works on display were Landseer's *Pet* ('displaying the home pride of doggish life') and Webster's *Reading the Scriptures* ('which tempers the mirth of childhood with the gravity of age') and works by Claude, Raphael and Holbein¹⁸.

Perhaps Beamont's greatest coup was persuading the Prince of Wales to present the prizes in 1864, as part of a 'Grand Horticultural Fair' held in the grounds of St John's College on 3 June; the Prince, unfortunately, did not deliver himself of any great thoughts (or indeed any thoughts at all) on art, but the event was adjudged a success by the *Cambridge Chronicle*, at least sartorially:

The ladies were elegantly and we must say most tastefully attired, and the boys from the schools with favours, clean white collars, and every appearance which we wish to see an English schoolboy display¹⁹.

A touch of the exotic was introduced the following year, when

The platform was fitted up as an oriental divan, with fabrics brought from the east by the Rev. W.J. Beamont. Upon the customary tapestry reclined the figure of an eastern beauty, gorgeously arrayed and surrounded by appropriate furniture'.

The speaker that year was the Earl of Hardwicke; perhaps it was the presence of the 'eastern beauty' that led him to remark that

The female... had very many opportunities of idle time; and the study of art afforded her the chance of cultivating her mind... and of rescuing herself from the evils which idle time might bring upon her²⁰.

There were also lectures for the general public, once again thanks to Beamont's connections. So in April 1862, for example, Signor Ermette Pierotti (formerly Engineer to the Pasha of Jerusalem) spoke on his excavations of the Dome of the Rock: at a time of intense religious debate, three years after the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, his lecture reassured at least some of his audience, as Archdeacon Emery remarked from the Chair

'...that we as Christians ought to be more thankful for the discoveries of matters recorded in Scripture... to confirm our faith in things miraculous'²¹.

Pierotti was thanked by Beamont in (inevitably) fluent Italian. Eminent architects working in Cambridge also spoke: G.E. Street and Alfred Waterhouse in 1865 (the latter had arrived to see his friend Beamont in the middle of a School of Art Committee meeting and was obviously not allowed to escape before agreeing to talk about his designs for the new Cambridge Union Society building).

Beamont also organized an Annual Excursion to a local place of interest, with prizes offered for architectural drawings and 'hedgerow studies' executed on the day. The overwhelmingly middle-class nature of the School's students (the majority were the wives and daughters of Cambridge dons) is shown by discussions on the timing of this, the Committee of Management noting in 1864 that it should be 'before the dispersal of the students to various watering places and scenes of rustication'. These were usually by wagonette or on foot: to Cherry Hinton in 1859, Cotton in 1860 and Barrington in 1861. By 1862 numbers were such that Beamont was able to hire a train for that year's excursion, to Harston, The Band of the University Rifles led the procession of students from the station and the occasion was judged a success despite what the *Chronicle* described as 'the menacing fall of Jupiter Pluvius'²².

In 1867 Beamont became Senior Fellow of Trinity, and in the same year took on the onerous task of Secretary to the Old Schools of Cambridge, the body responsible for the elementary Church Schools in the town. He approached this with his customary enthusiasm, immediately drawing up plans for 'senior' schools. On Monday 3 August the following year, he acted as Chaplain to the High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire at the Assizes (yet another of his many roles) and presented Sunday School prizes in the evening, but overnight was taken ill 'with the most violent pains and sickness, which no medical skill was able to allay' and died on Wednesday 8 August²³. His funeral took place in Trinity Chapel on 10 August.

At the time of his death, Beamont was evidently considering returning to the Middle East and entertained hopes of becoming the first Bishop of Arabia²⁴. His energy, enthusiasm and linguistic skills would almost certainly have enabled him to succeed in the role and join the long list of Cambridge graduates who played a prominent role in 19th and 20th century Christian missionary work.

Beamont may lack a street named after him (although I live in hopes), but there are three formal memorials: a brass in the Ante-Chapel of

Trinity, a memorial window in St Michael's (the inscription to his memory now sadly hidden by the reredos) and a memorial tablet in St Matthew's. Gas Lane has long disappeared ²⁵, but St Matthew's Church thrives, drawing in a congregation for all over the city and beyond.

But his major legacy, at least so far as Cambridge is concerned, is the School of Art. After Beamont's death, it appears to have stagnated: public lectures were far and few between, and the annual prize-giving was not the event it had been. Securing eminent speakers proved difficult, although the Committee continued to aim high inviting in 1871, for example, Disraeli, Lord Derby and Ruskin. None accepted, and the MP for Cambridge University, Beresford Hope, had to suffice. Increasingly the Minutes record a wish-list of the great and the good, ending with the injunction to the Secretary 'or anyone else he might think desirable' (a phrase only too familiar to despairing secretaries of local history societies today). Student numbers fell from 151 in 1878 to only 66 in 1886, and money was tight, the School being almost entirely dependent on donations from local benefactors. By 1900 the School was digging into its meagre resources, and by 1903 these were exhausted and in spite of an annual

grant of £100 from Cambridge Borough Council closure threatened. But in 1903 it was taken over by Cambridgeshire County Council and merged with the 'Technical Institute', set up in 1892 as joint venture of Borough and County Councils under the 1891 Technical Instruction Act and moved to new premises in Collier Road (shared with the Cambridge & County School for Girls) in 1909 to eventually, after many changes of name, to become today's Anglia Ruskin University ²⁶. And Beamont has another memorial: the present-day governing structure of the Church of England (the General Synod and Deanery and Diocesan Synods) is the direct result of his efforts. Sadly, he doesn't merit even a footnote in standard histories of the Church, but I suspect this would not worry him: results, not credit, were his aim.



The memorial window to Beamont in St Michael's Church (now Michaelhouse), by Hardman & Co, unveiled in March 1872 and showing St Michael, defender of the Church, and children, the former referencing his work with the Church Defence Association, the latter his educational and philanthropic activities. (Author, March 2022)



The memorial tablet to Beamont in St Matthew's Parish Rooms. Note also the commemoration of Maria Gross, a reminder of the important role women played in 'domestic missionary' work in the area and which will be the subject of a future article (Author, by kind permission of St Matthew's Church, May 2022)

References

1. His collections of books and artefacts form the basis of Warrington's Museum and Library collections on local history and archaeology.
2. Trinity College Library File FA. 138 4
3. Details from Beamont's obituary in the *Cambridge Chronicle* 15 August 1868.
4. Chadwick, O, *The Victorian Church, Part Two, 1860-1901* (London: SCM Press, 1972), pp.359ff.
5. Weldon, G.W, 'Seven Years Personal Recollections of Parochial Work in Cambridge', *The Churchman*, August 1883, pp324-25.
6. I am grateful to Elizabeth Stazicker and the late Dr John Pickles for their endeavours to find out more about the church.
7. Later to be Vicar of St Paul's, Hills Road (Cambridge's second new suburban church) and then first Bishop of Melbourne, Australia, 1847-76.
8. *Cambridge Chronicle*, 21 November 1863.
9. *Ibid*, 8 December 1866. The hymns were taken from the *Christ Church Hymn Book* (presumably produced for the Newmarket Road congregation), the tunes from the relatively new (1861) *Hymns Ancient and Modern*.
10. *Minutes of the Gas Lane Church Committee*.
11. Weldon, *op.cit* p.326.
12. Bury, M.E and Pickles, J.D (eds) *Romilly's Cambridge Diary, 1848-64* (Cambridge: Cambridgeshire Records Society, 2000), pp.397-98.
13. Schools of Art had been established since the 1830s in an attempt to promote better standards of industrial design; there were 21 in existence by 1851, mainly in large industrial towns, the only East Anglian example being at Norwich. A further wave followed in the 1850s, financed by the profits made from the Great Exhibition of 1851, receiving an annual Government grant if they achieved satisfactory results on inspection. They were intended to educate both 'artisans' and the consumers of their products to achieve higher standards. The Cambridge School of Art was part of this expansion.
14. Unless otherwise referenced, details of the School of Art's early history are taken from the Minute Books of the Committee of Management (Cambridgeshire Archives R97/29). From 1858 to 1868 these are written in Beamont's flowing hand. He gives due weight to his own failings, in particular lamenting that as a don and vicar of a small central Cambridge parish he lacked acquaintance with local employers who might encourage their workpeople to attend.
15. £118 had been raised, 40% of this came from the Colleges: Beamont was an assiduous networker.
16. This was only a temporary home: in 1862 it moved to a room in Guildhall, where it was to remain until 1909.
17. Ruskin's address, which lasted far longer than expected and addressed the theme of 'Sight' was subsequently reprinted verbatim in a pamphlet issued by the *Cambridge Chronicle*.
18. *Cambridge Chronicle*,
19. *Ibid*, 4 June 1864.
20. *Ibid*, 7 November 1865. Sadly, the identity of the 'eastern beauty' seems to have gone un-recorded.
21. *Ibid*, 5 April 1862.
22. *Ibid*, n.d (pasted in Volume 2 of the Committee of Management Minute Books)
23. *Cambridge Chronicle*, 15 August 1868. His obituary suggests that he died from the resurgence of a disease which he had contracted on his last Middle East visit in 1865.
24. *Ibid*
25. It had been largely demolished by 1939 (*Spalding's Directory of Cambridge, 1939*, p.96) and the remaining houses went with the City Council's redevelopment of the area in the 1950s.
26. Kirby, T, *Anglia Ruskin University: A Celebratory History, 1858-2008* gives full details of the rather tortuous progress by which this was achieved.

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