

Characteristics of the clergy: the Anglican  
experience in the late-Victorian transition in  
Leicestershire

©Dave Fogg Postles (2024)

God knows, and He only, how I hate patronage. It is the most anxious, thankless, and disappointing duty that any man can be called upon to perform. He is certain to disappoint nineteen out of twenty eligible men, and then it is twenty to one that the twentieth disappoints him.<sup>1</sup> (William Connor Magee, Bishop of Peterborough, to John C. MacDonnell, 14 March 1874)

This reflection by Magee was prompted on the impending collation to the vicarage of St Matthew's in Leicester. Shortly afterwards, Magee had the opportunity to present to two more livings in the county borough. To All Saints, he transferred 'old Ray' and St Leonard's he intended to offer to 'French of Kettering, a hard-working, moderate man, with some small private means and a great desire for mission work'.<sup>2</sup> The intention here is to assess the local impact of the Leicestershire clergy in the late nineteenth century, spiritual, social and cultural, and to diagnose the composition of the clerical corpus in the county.

The contours of the Anglican clergy as a whole were elucidated some decades ago by Alan Haig. His approach addressed the clergy as a whole and in general.<sup>3</sup> More detailed examinations of local clergy, down to the archdeaconry, produces a more fine-grained and intimate depiction of the condition of the clergy. In particular, Haig, in his wide-ranging analysis, was able to include only broad outlines of the economic position of the clergy. This more particular approach allows more substantive points about clerical income and wealth.<sup>4</sup>

The late Gerald Rimington considered the condition of the clergy in Leicestershire in between the Worlds Wars and the composition of the clerical cohort in Rutland in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. Importantly, he also discussed some of the actions of Bishop Magee in the diocese, particularly his reformation of religious provision in the county borough.<sup>5</sup> Below, the

---

<sup>1</sup>MacDonnell, *The Life and Correspondence of William Connor Magee Archbishop of York Bishop of Peterborough* (2 volumes, London: Isbister & Co., 1896), II, p. 3. For the background, G. T. Rimington, 'Bishop W. C. Magee and the town of Leicester 1868-91', *Midland History* 23 (1998), pp. 121-35.

<sup>2</sup>*Life and Correspondence . . . Magee*, II, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>I rely on Alan Haig, *The Victorian Clergy* (Brighton: Croom Helm, 1984) for the general conspectus.

<sup>4</sup>Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, pp. 311-319.

<sup>5</sup>Rimington. 'Late Victorian and Edwardian clerical incumbents in Rutland', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* 83 (2009), pp. 219-38; 'Edwardian clerical incumbents in Leicestershire', *The Local Historian* 35 (2005), pp. 14-15. He also contributed articles on the twentieth-century incumbents of the two counties. The composition of the county's clergy at an earlier time has also received considerable interest:

exploration is continued for the counterparts in Leicestershire in the late nineteenth century, reflecting on Rimington's analysis of the Rutland clergy, but also diverging into other aspects with different data. It is necessary, however, to acknowledge his substantial contribution and interpretation.

The date of the commencement of the discussion here is partly determined by the introduction of civil probate in 1858 which resulted in the production of the National Probate Register which coincided with the first edition of *Crockford's Clerical Directory*.<sup>6</sup> The 1851 Religious Census had, moreover, indicated the challenges which the Church of England confronted.<sup>7</sup> The returns to the census made public the level of provision by the Anglican Church: the number of sittings; the capacity of churches; the distribution of places of worship; and the competition in all respects from other denominations.<sup>8</sup> The conclusion is associated with the changes which occurred in 1902-8 which impacted significantly on the education of the clergy.<sup>9</sup>

The more significant rationale for the chronology, however, is the intention of the Church authorities to counter the advance of nonconformity, especially the strands of Methodism. Obelkevich, indeed, referred to an Anglican 'Counter-Reformation'.<sup>10</sup> In similar vein, Albion Urdank commented on 'The Revival and the Church of England'.<sup>11</sup> Both located this reformism into the third quarter of the nineteenth century. It is likely, nevertheless, to have extended further to the end of the century as a long-serving and aging parochial clergy was replaced. The policy was directed from above, but pragmatic action conducted in the parish. The movement depended on the probity and activity of the beneficed clergy, rectors and vicars.

Further transformation occurred because of significant changes in local government in the late nineteenth century which affected the role of the clergy.

---

W. G. Hoskins, 'The Leicestershire country parson in the sixteenth century', *TLAHS* 21 (1939-40), pp. 89-114; John Fuggles, 'The parish clergy in the archdeaconry of Leicester 1520-1540', *TLAHS* 46 (1970), pp. 25-44; John Pruitt, *The Parish Clergy under the Later Stuarts: The Leicestershire Experience* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1978); Nigel Aston, 'An eighteenth century Leicestershire squarson', *TLAHS* 60 (1986), pp. 34-46.

<sup>6</sup>Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, pp. 312-313 alluded to this material. I have extracted all, not just the clerical, Leicestershire probate material amounting to some 22+k data records.

<sup>7</sup>K. D. M. Snell and Paul S. Ell, *Rival Jerusalems: The Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [CUP], 2000), pp. 23-53. For the proportion of sittings by denomination in Leicestershire, p. 347 (Table 10.1).

<sup>8</sup>Snell and Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*, pp. 54-92.

<sup>9</sup>Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, p. 161.

<sup>10</sup>James Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey, 1825-75* (Oxford: Oxford University Press [OUP], 1976), pp. 104, 113.

<sup>11</sup>*Religion and Society in a Cotswold Vale: Nailsworth, Gloucestershire, 1780-1865* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 96-101.

Traditionally, as local dignitaries, some parochial clergy had served as Justices of the Peace. The Justices not only had judicial functions but also operated as the county administration in full quarter sessions and in petty sessions. The establishment of county councils in 1888 produced a conundrum for the clergy. Whereas office on the bench was by appointment by the Lord Chancellor advised by the Lord Lieutenant, county councillors were elected (see below). Secondly, the parish was profoundly affected by the formation of civil parishes in 1894. The functions of the vestry were divided now between civil parish councils and parochial church councils.<sup>12</sup>

The archdeaconry of Leicester was transferred from the diocese of Lincoln to that of Peterborough in 1839. The archdeaconry and county were more or less co-coterminous, including the anomalous boundary with Derbyshire in the north-west of the county. Between 1858 and 1903, the diocese of Peterborough was presided over by five bishops, the most longevous in office being William Connor Magee from 1868 to 1891. Magee was a reforming prelate intent on revising the patronage system to the benefit of the parishioners as a trust rather than a property right.<sup>13</sup>

Local ecclesiastical organization was in flux in the nineteenth century, not only because of the challenge of nonconformity. In particular, in the borough of Leicester, new Million Churches under the church building acts of 1818 and 1824 and new ecclesiastical districts were established under the New Parishes Act of 1843 as the population and building expanded outside the previous urban boundaries.<sup>14</sup> The parish of St Margaret was in particular dissected into new districts such as St George's, St Matthew's, St Mark's at various dates, and Holy Trinity was separated from St Mary's in 1838. The same process occurred in the smaller urban location of Loughborough, commencing with the formation of Emmanuel parish on the western suburb. New ecclesiastical districts were promoted in expanding industrial locations, such as Coalville. On the other hand, many rural parishes were combined as livings, through annexation, pluralism, or the introduction of curates in charge.<sup>15</sup> A further complication in rural parishes was 'discharged' benefices, in which absentee incumbents were intruded, usually by university colleges which were the patrons, providing income for their favoured fellows. Such was the institutional background to the induction and institution of clergy into local benefices. Several complications occurred in the later nineteenth century. As some villages expanded, separate cures were created.

---

<sup>12</sup>51 & 52 Vict, c, 41; 56 & 57 Vict. c. 73.

<sup>13</sup>*Life and Correspondence . . . Magee*, chapter XII.

<sup>14</sup>58 Geo. III c. 45 and 5 Geo. IV c. 103; 6 & 7 Vict. c.37.

<sup>15</sup>Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, p. 117.

The Church membership was divided over the role of the clergy because of the persistence of Tractarianism. The Oxford Movement has hitherto been considered in the context of the theological division within the Anglican Church, but recent research has signified the impact of the subscribing clergy in the parish at a practical level.<sup>16</sup>

In the other direction, as rural parishes became depopulated or stagnant, benefices were united. Although the Pluralities Act of 1838 (1&2 Vict. c. xvi) had been intended to restrict pluralism, there was enough exemption through sections iii and v to allow the holdings of benefices in rural Leicestershire in plurality. The provisions, with the acceptance by the bishop, allowed an additional living if the income did not exceed £150 and the population of the parish was under 2,000 and the living ‘shall be situate within the Distance of Ten Statute Miles from such first-mentioned Benefice’. Some benefices were specifically annexed or held in combination. Grimston and Wartnaby were thus held in plurality, for example (all places mentioned in the text are in Leicestershire unless otherwise stated). Moreover, some chapelries had been traditionally served by one incumbent. William Colles from his living in Melton Mowbray thus also served Freeby, Burton Lazars, Sysonby and Welby.<sup>17</sup> About thirty or so incumbents held livings in plurality in 1881. Accordingly, there obtained a wide disparity in the income of the livings, reflective of the differentiation of the Church of England parochial system in general.

The Anglican Church was, of course, increasingly under challenge from nonconformity as the century progressed, in both urban and rural contexts, although Magee professed that 77 percent of the Christian population of Leicester had been baptised in the Church of England.<sup>18</sup>

The analysis is based on two databases. The first involves nominal records linkage between the census of 1881 and *Crockford’s Clerical Directory* of 1882. The purpose is to establish the age of the incumbent at institution, when the incumbent was instituted, the incumbent’s qualifications, the status of the living (rector, vicar, discharged living, or where a curate was in charge) and the (gross) income of the living. Nominal records linkage in the second

---

<sup>16</sup>George Hering, *The Oxford Movement in Practice: The Tractarian Parochial Worlds from the 1830s to the 1870s* (Oxford: OUP, 2016); S. A. Skinner, *Tractarians and the ‘Condition of England’: The Social and Political Thought of the Oxford Movement* (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

<sup>17</sup>*Crockford’s Clerical Directory for 1882* (London: Horace Cox, 1882), p. 252. *Crockford* commenced in 1858 and the earlier and later issues have been examined for biographical information on incumbents.

<sup>18</sup>Rimington, ‘Congregationalism in rural Leicestershire and Rutland, 1863-1914’, *Midland History* (2006), pp. 91-104; *Supplement to the Ecclesiastical Gazette* 15 August 1881, p. 46 (Magee at Convocation of the Province of Canterbury).

database connects the valuation of the estate of the incumbent at death and all the relevant census enumerators' returns to provide a life-course and clerical career of the incumbent, age at death, length of service in the parish, and value of estate at death. The database is selective: it includes only those incumbents who died in their parish in Leicestershire.

### *The cohort of 1881*

The contours of the clerical cohort in 1881 are established by cross-consultation between *Kelly's Directory* of 1881, the census enumerators' returns for the county in the same year, and *Crockford's Clerical Directory* of 1882.<sup>19</sup> Allowing for pluralism, the cohort consisted of 217 individuals with clerical livings in rectories and vicarages. Approximately 116 had been instituted in rectories and a slightly smaller number, 101, in vicarages. The approximation results, indeed, from the complications of pluralism. For example, The Reverend Robert Hall combined the rectory of Congerstone with the vicarage of Shackerstone.<sup>20</sup> Hall had been inducted into Shackerstone in 1836 and Congerstone in 1842. Similarly, Frederick Hall held both the vicarage of Owston and the rectory of Withcote.<sup>21</sup> Both the rectories of Stockerston and Blaston St Giles were enjoyed by Gerald Fenwick, the former from 1845 and the latter from 1850, with a combined gross income of £430.<sup>22</sup> Saltby had been consolidated with Sproxton and Saxby with Stapleford. Wartnaby in the same vicinity had been annexed to Grimston. Such complications accounted for the lower number of incumbents by comparison with parochial units. Eliminating vicarages and rectories with dependent chapelries, probably two dozen or so benefices were held by pluralists.

Figure 1 tries to represent these combinations as they occurred permanently or transiently through the late nineteenth century. By 1881, the number of chapelries dependent on parishes had declined, as new parishes were created. Some persisted. Braunstone and Kirby Muxloe remained chapelries of the parish of Glenfield.<sup>23</sup> Holwell, Barsby, Burbage, Bagworth, Barlestone and Birstall all continued to be chapelries of mother parishes in 1881 (Ab Kettleby, Ashby Folville, Aston Flamville, Thornton, Market Bosworth, and Belgrave), although some would also emerge later as new ecclesiastical districts.<sup>24</sup> Thus, Thomas Barlow acted as curate in charge in Braunstone from his institution in

---

<sup>19</sup> *Crockford's Clerical Directory for 1882* (London: Horace Cox, 1882) (hereafter *Crockford* with the year), p. 515.

<sup>20</sup> *Crockford* 1882, p. 464.

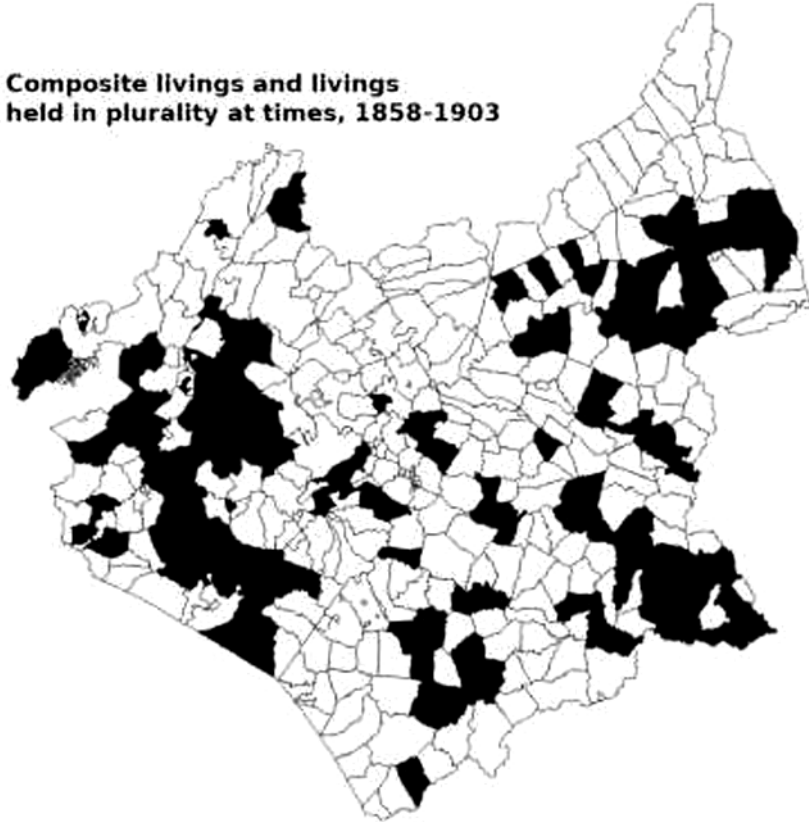
<sup>21</sup> The National Archives (TNA) RG11/3123, fo. 110.

<sup>22</sup> *Crockford* 1882, p. 367.

<sup>23</sup> *Kelly's Directory* 1881, pp. 496, 542.

<sup>24</sup> *Kelly's Directory* 1881, pp. 475, 483, 483-485, 488, 491.

Figure 1: Pluralism and composite livings, 1858-1903



1879 and John Elgood as the equivalent in Kirby Muxloe from 1874 to 1884, both in Glenfield parish.<sup>25</sup> The following account is concerned with beneficed clergy, rectors and vicars, rather than curates.

Figure 2 attempts to delineate the division into parochial livings which were vicarages and rectories in 1881, important for the consideration of income further below. Basically, rectories retained their income from tithes and glebes which in buoyant years were beneficial, but subject to erosion during the 'agricultural depression' of the 1880s. Vicarages depended on a fixed income (sometimes supplemented by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners) which were largely inflexible and might suffer from depreciation during periods of

---

<sup>25</sup> *Crockford* 1898, pp. 71, 84; National Probate Register [NPR] 1906 Abbatt-Bywell, p. 133; NPR 1908 Dabbe-Gyte, p. 124.

inflation. In fact, inflation was minimal in the late nineteenth century.

The educational and spiritual backgrounds of the Leicestershire clergy are interesting in that even in 1881 its composition consisted mainly of graduates. About 84 percent had proceeded through Oxbridge. Another thirteen had degrees from Trinity College, Dublin (TCD), three degrees from Durham, and one each from Edinburgh and Glasgow. Merely thirteen progressed from the non-graduate route through colleges of theology, including three each from St Aidan's and St Bees.<sup>26</sup> The persistent dominance of the ancient universities in 1881 was marked.

The relatively high number of graduates from TCD might have reflected a sentiment of William Connor Magee, Bishop of Peterborough, who himself had progressed through that route. Certainly, there was a close association between Magee and John MacDonnell, a graduate of TCD, who was instituted to the wealthy vicarage of Misterton in 1880 with its income of £869.<sup>27</sup> Before his death, Magee reflected on the secondary status accorded to graduates of TCD and Irish clergy and the condescension of the Oxbridge elite.<sup>28</sup> The cohort from TCD was conceived as deriving from a lower social status as well as supposed inferior intellectual quality. Even so, the curate, Thomas Disney Barlow, born in Ireland, died at Park House in Blaby in 1905 with an estate valued in 1906 at more than £6,000 which could not have accrued entirely from his role.<sup>29</sup>

In fact, the Irish-educated clergy were provided with rural livings with a wide range of income. The mean gross income of their livings amounted to £286 (standard deviation 230.781) and the median £205, with a range from £80 to £869. Graduates from TCD were presented to rectories in Wyfordby, Peatling Parva, Allexton, Walton on the Wolds, Ravenstone, Blaston, Osgathorpe, Cold Overton, and Misterton, and to vicarages in Melton Mowbray, Dunton Bassett, The Oaks, Grimston with Wartnaby, Hinckley, Holy Trinity Loughborough, and Queniborough throughout the county.

In 1801, the protestant church in Ireland, became united with the Church of England under the Act of Union (the United Church of England and Ireland). As a result, an undercurrent of Tractarianism (the Oxford Movement) with high church motives was introduced into a part of the Irish clerisy.<sup>30</sup> This

---

<sup>26</sup>For these colleges, Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, pp. 116-76.

<sup>27</sup>*Life and Correspondence . . . Magee*.

<sup>28</sup>Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, p. 119.

<sup>29</sup>TNA RG11/3128, fo. 55v; NPR 1906 Abbatt-Bywell p. 133.

<sup>30</sup>T. C. F. Stunt, 'Evangelical cross-currents in the Church of Ireland, 1820-1833', in *Studies in Church History 25: The Churches, Ireland and the Irish* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), pp. 215-21; Peter Nockles, 'Church or Protestant sect? The Church of Ireland, high



Figure 2: The structure of livings in 1881

insinuation was opposed by many of the protestant clergy, one of whom was Hugh Lefroy-Baker, a rector in county Armagh, who composed his *Protests Against the Catholic Changes in the Irish Church*. Although his career commenced as a rector in Ireland, Lefroy-Baker migrated to England, where he held three curacies in the northern parts. Having achieved a BA in 1830 from TCD (MA 1847), he remained in curacies in the 1870s until he was appointed to the vicarage of Grimston with Wartnaby in 1877, but still with a modest income of £107. He remained in office there until his death in 1895, when his estate was valued at £2,991 13s 7d.<sup>31</sup> (The Church of Ireland was disestablished in 1869).

Perhaps contrary to expectations, the presentations to livings of non-graduate clergy followed a similar pattern. The provenance of St Bees held vicarages in Woodhouse, Evington, Hungarton with Twyford and Thorpe Satchville, Old Dalby, Lockington, Hose, and the rectory of Markfield. These clergy were not confined to the urban ministry.<sup>32</sup> The smaller complement from St Aidan's was provided with vicarages in Breedon on the Hill, Theddingworth, and Worthington. Clergy from King's College, London, possibly from the two-year course, obtained vicarages in Woodville, Somerby, and Diseworth and rectories in Brooksby and Beeby. Predominantly, however, the non-graduates received livings with lower incomes, mostly under £200, with a few outliers of £300 to £500. For example, Nathaniel Bergheim, a product of the London College of Divinity, was instituted in 1879 to the vicarage of Plungar with an income of £112. Educated at the Queen's College in Birmingham, Josiah Smallwood received the vicarage of Newtown Linford in 1874 with its income of £115.

Malkin Mills, instituted to to the vicarage of Thorpe Arnold with Brentingby, represented the last of the appointments of 'literates', non-graduates who had not attended theological colleges or seminaries. He was born in Bishop Auckland (Durham) and was presented to the living in 1852, residing there for eighteen years until his demise in 1870, aged 76. Although the combined income of the benefices amounted to £648, at his death his estate was assumed to be under £100. The patron of this desirable living was the Duke of Rutland.<sup>33</sup> When Mills died, his executor was his son, a bookseller of Melton Mowbray. The 'literate' incumbent had not accumulated much wealth from

---

churchmanship, and the Oxford Movement, 1822-69', *The Historical journal* 41 (1998), pp. 457-93.

<sup>31</sup> *Crockford* 1882, p. 655; TNA RG12/2544, fo. 179v; NPR 1895 Aaron-Bywater p. 93.

<sup>32</sup> See Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, p. 117.

<sup>33</sup> *Crockford* 1865, p. 438.

his living and his associations were entirely local.<sup>34</sup>

Turning attention to the urban livings, in which missionary work might be expected, all the incumbents except at St John's (occupied by a graduate of TCD) received Oxbridge graduates: the ancient parishes of St Mary, St Nicholas, St Martin, St Leonard; but also the new ecclesiastical districts created as the population expanded: Christ Church, St Mark, All Saints, St Paul, St Andrew, Holy Trinity, St Peter, St Saviour, St Matthew and St Luke.

Illustrative of this situation is the church of St George in Leicester. Designed by William Parsons, the church was constructed between 1823 and 1827 under the Church Building Acts of 1818 and 1824 (58 Geo. III c. 45 and 5 Geo. IV c. 103), one of the Million Churches. These new districts were intended to service the expanding populations of urban centres. The first priest in charge, presented in 1827, was Robert Burnaby, a graduate of Cambridge (St John's College). Burnaby remained in the living until he died in 1863, when his estate was valued at under £5,000. His executors consisted of another cleric of Market Weighton (Yorkshire) and a gentleman of Leadenhall Street in London. The income of the living, however, amounted to merely £160.<sup>35</sup>

Burnaby was succeeded as priest in charge of St George's by another product of St John's College, Cambridge, Abraham Hill, who had previously been employed as a master at The Collegiate School in Leicester. When he died in the same office in 1876, his estate was estimated at under £7,000. As his executors, he had appointed two fellows of his old college.<sup>36</sup>

The third presentee, Hugh John Fortescue, also graduated from Cambridge (Magdalene College). Ordained in 1869, he held a curacy between 1867 and 1876, before preferment to St George's. There he remained until 1895, when he was translated to the more remunerative benefice of Honiton (Devon) with its income of £602. When he died in 1907, his estate exceeded £18,386.<sup>37</sup>

Although such Million Churches were proposed by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to meet the necessities of rapidly increasing urban populations in the competition with nonconformity, St George's was served by priests in charge with private income with graduate qualifications. Magee had the patronage of some of these new parishes, but still favoured graduates.<sup>38</sup>

Even so, almost a hundred (99) of these clergy had been instituted into their livings in Leicestershire in the 1870s and, indeed, a further sixteen in 1880-

---

<sup>34</sup> *Crockford* 1865, p. 438; NPR 1870 Maber-Mytton, p. 216.

<sup>35</sup> *Crockford* 1860, p. 90; NPR 1863 Bacon-Byfield p. 100.

<sup>36</sup> *Crockford* 1865, p. 304; NPR 1876 Habgood-Hyne, p. 306.

<sup>37</sup> *Crockford* 1898, p. 480; NPR 1907 Eacott-Gyles p. 141.

<sup>38</sup> For the increase in episcopal patronage, Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, pp. 249, 267-8; Rimington, 'Bishop W. C. Magee and the town of Leicester'.

1. The 1860s accounted for 41 institutions and the 1850s 32. Twenty-eight institutions occurred in the 1840s and 1850s. The vast majority of the clerical cohort in 1881 was thus newly instituted into their Leicestershire livings. By contrast, a small group had been introduced into their Leicestershire benefices in the 1830s and 1840s and still remained in them in 1881. (For the potential reasons, see further below). In 1881, most of the clerical complement in the county was recently introduced.

The approximate ages (within a year) of 209 of the vicars and rectors can be determined through the census enumerators' returns. By 1871, the mean age at death was just over 40. Forty-two (about 20 percent) of these clerics were aged under 40 (up to and including 39). The age of forty to fifty accounted for 48 individuals (23 percent). Less than half the cohort was thus aged fifty and below. Twenty-nine percent (61 incumbents) had attained the age of 51-60. Another 18 percent (37) fell into the age range 61-70 and 8 percent 71-80. Four incumbents had reached or surpassed the age of 80. Although a preponderance of incumbents had been instituted into their livings in Leicestershire in the 1860s and 1870s, the age cohort clustered in the later middle-aged and elderly; the younger clerics formed a minority.

Rather different was the situation in the borough of Leicester. Although 'old Ray' was appointed to All Saints by Magee, the other preferments involved much younger men. He was a committed bachelor.<sup>39</sup> The appointments to the other livings introduced incumbents aged at their institution 27, 28, 30 (three), 31, 32, 34, 36, 39, 44, 46, 51, and 56. The problem of these less mature men was that some of them moved on to other livings in Scarborough, Earls Barton, and (less distant) Market Harborough.

By a similar process, the age at institution can be calculated for 199 of the vicars and rectors, represented in Table 1 below. The date of institution is extracted from *Crockford* 1882 and compared with a date of birth calculated from the census enumerators' return of 1881. The results look somewhat paradoxical.

A wide distribution of income existed between the livings, as denoted in Table 2. The gross income is extracted from *Crockford* 1882, although some values are not provided in the volume. In total, information exists for 204 livings. The mean value of the livings approached £400 and the median a lower level of £300. The standard deviation (StD) reflects the range of values from a minimum of £80 to a high of £1,441.<sup>40</sup>

Illustrative of the lower end of the range were the 49 livings with gross

---

<sup>39</sup>TNA RG10/3289, fo. 71.

<sup>40</sup>The information is extracted from *Crockford* 1882.

Table 1: Age at date of institution to livings in Leicestershire of the clerical cohort of 1881

Age ranges	Number	Percent
24-30	47	24
31-40	86	43
41-50	42	21
51-60	20	10
61-66	4	2

Table 2: Distribution of income in livings 1882

Number	Mean (£s)	StD	Median (£s)
204	383	236.8	303.5

income valued at £200 or less, almost a quarter of the benefices. During the course of the late nineteenth century, various efforts were made to increase the income of livings in general to at least £200, which was considered a minimum for a the dignity of the clergy (above curacy).<sup>41</sup> Predictably, since the incumbents had no glebe, vicars predominated in the parishes with income assessed at £200 or less, with the exception of seven small rectories. Just over another quarter benefited from income between £201 and £300. The establishment of the church intended to raise income to £300 for benefices with a population in excess of 4,000.<sup>42</sup> At the opposite end of the scale, twenty livings accrued income between £600 and £800, six from £845 to £933, and seven in advance of £1,000.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, since they had the benefit of glebe, the most valuable livings consisted of rectories. All the benefices with income in excess of £700 were rectories. The best endowed, with gross income exceeding £1000, included Husbands Bosworth, Snarestone with Swepestone, Nether- and Overseal, Loughborough All Saints, Barwell with Stapleton and Potters Marston, Bottesford, and Ibstock with Hugglescote and Donington.<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, the last institution to these highly-prized rectories had occurred between 1846 and 1865, representing the incentive to remain in the living. The rectors in 1881 were aged between 46 and 78, five of the seven in their 60s and 70s. Although

<sup>41</sup>Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, pp. 298-9, 308-311.

<sup>42</sup>Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, p. 300.

<sup>43</sup>For Ibstock, Pamela Fisher, *The Victoria History of Leicestershire: Ibstock* (London: University of London, 2020).

Loughborough and Ibstock were being industrialized, the other parishes were predominantly rural, although some at this time were experiencing railway construction.

Apart from those incumbents with vicarages or rectories, an interesting feature of the clerical cohort of 1881 was the number of curates in charge. In some cases, the ecclesiastical unit was served by a curate simply because it was a dependent chapelry, as Kirby Muxloe in Glenfield, the chapelry served by John Elgood. In most instances, however, it seems that a curate was necessary because the living had been annexed to another or the rector or vicar was absentee. Almost two dozen (23) units, including full parishes, were serviced by a curate in charge (see Figure 3). With few exceptions (and those mostly because *Crockford* 1882 did not provide the detail), these curates consisted of university men, mostly from the two ancient English universities and three from Trinity College, Dublin. Almost to a man, they were graduate clergy.

Predominantly, the beneficed clergy (that is, vicars and rectors) were or had been married. The household and family arrangements can be determined by comparing the date of the death from the National Probate Register and the age and household formation in the 1881 census. About a dozen remained bachelors; the parishes affected included Stonton Wyville, Frolesworth, Saxelby, Garthorpe, Cadeby, Heather, Congerstone with Shackerstone, Diseworth, and Sproxtton. Many of these unmarried incumbents lived into their 60s and 70s. Exceptions were Samuel Noble at Frolesworth who died at age 33 and Herbert Lock at Diseworth whose demise occurred in his 39th year.<sup>44</sup> Both may have departed this life before the opportunity to marry. Noble, however, lived in his rectory with his mother and sister, so had female company and female assistance in his parish. Similarly, Thomas Burnaby, who died at age fifty, was accompanied in the rectory at Stonton Wyville by his mother and sister.<sup>45</sup> His sister, nephews and niece co-inhabited with George Clarke in his rectory at Saxelby.<sup>46</sup> The parishioners of Sproxtton had the the attention of the sisters and niece of Harry Burton Wade, the vicar.<sup>47</sup> Archdeacon Fearon, originally from Cuckfield (Sussex), had the company first of his sister and later of his niece and two great-nieces in the rectory of All Saints in Loughborough.<sup>48</sup> Most of the parishioners of rectories and vicarages thus at some stage had the advantage of a clerical household with female inhabitants. Fewer than half a dozen clerical households were headed by an aging bachelor.

---

<sup>44</sup>TNA RG10/3221, fo. 102v; RG13/3204, fo. 69v.

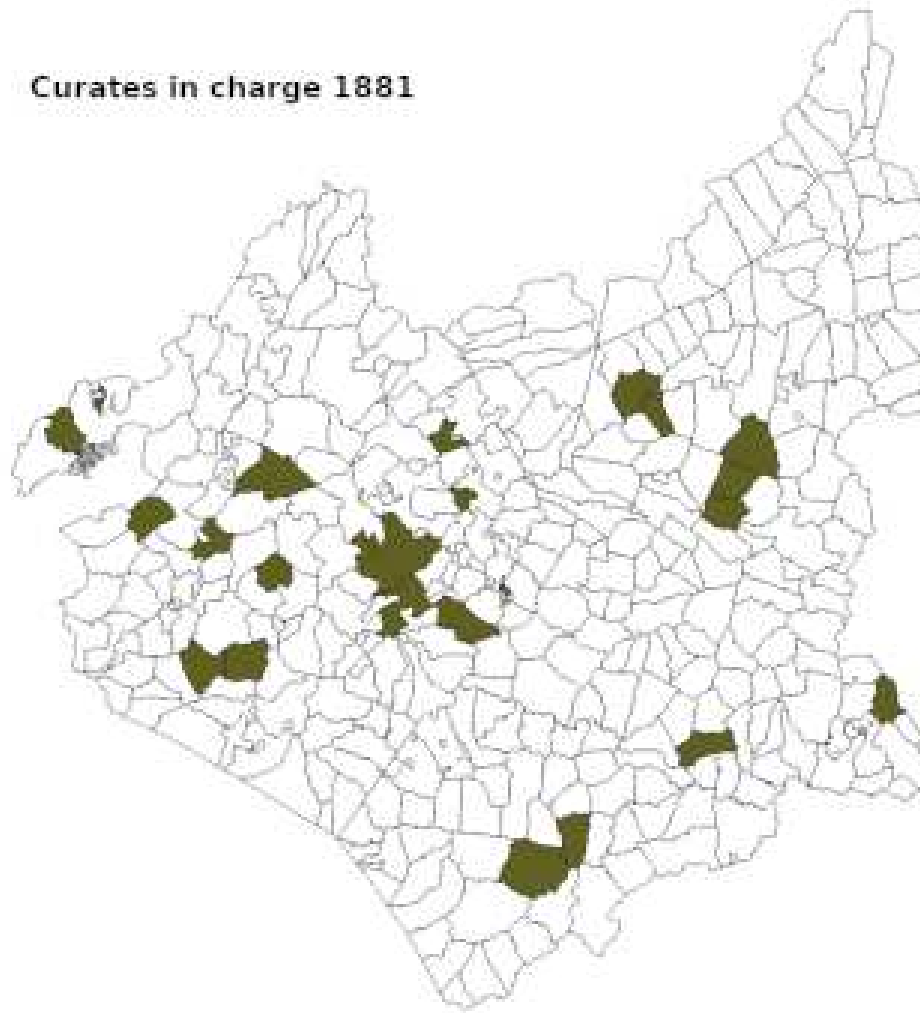
<sup>45</sup>TNA RG9/2251, fo. 24v.

<sup>46</sup>TNA RG10/3295, fo. 86.

<sup>47</sup>TNA schedule 1911.

<sup>48</sup>TNA RG9/2274, fo. 95 and RG11/3145, fo. 38v.

Figure 3: Curates in charge in 1881



George Ray, mentioned above, headed one of these bachelor households. Ray had graduated from Peterhouse, Cambridge, in 1832. From 1844 to 1867, he served as rector of Stathern in the north-east of the county. Bishop Magee directed him to All Saints with St Leonard's in the county borough as the first stage of the bishop's reorganisation there (although the patron was actually the Lord Chancellor). At this time, Ray was not only a bachelor but in his late fifties. He relinquished the rectorial income of Stathern of £620 to perform the office of curate at All Saints between 1867 and 1874. He was elevated to the vicarage in 1874, which he retained until 1881, still, however, with an income of merely £145. He died in Brentwood in Essex in 1887 with the very modest estate of £378 15s 3d and was interred at Greenstead in that county.<sup>49</sup>

The selection of Greenstead as burial location is interesting because the rectory there had been in the possession of Ray's brother, Philip William, another Cambridge graduate. Even more significantly, Philip remained unmarried. Indeed, he was co-resident in Greenstead with his brother and three sisters into old age, all of them unmarried. When Philip died at Greenstead in 1880, George was one of the two executors. Philip's estate was evaluated at under £5,000. The whole family thus remained celibate, perhaps influenced by Tractarianism in the case of the clerical brothers, since the Oxford Movement placed an emphasis on celibate officiants.<sup>50</sup>

The female relatives in some of the bachelor-headed households were more easily accommodated because the incumbent was actually born in the county and archdeaconry. The origins of the clergy can be discerned from the 1881 census, of course. Many of these clergy in 1881 were, however, transient, still involved in clerical mobility. Here, the decision has been made to concentrate on the origins of those clergy who died in their livings in the county. This deduction involves comparing the information in the National Probate Register with the corresponding data in the census enumerators' returns of 1851 to 1911. Using this methodology produces 246 eligible clergy, mostly rectors and vicars but including some curates who died in local office and whose place of birth can be established. From this analysis 24 percent (N=59) of the incumbents who died in office in the county were in fact born in the county.

Patronage influenced some circular migration of clergy who moved from their place of birth to a university and subsequently returned to their natal

---

<sup>49</sup> *Crockford* 1860, p. 512; 1882, p. 900; TNA RG10/3289, fo. 71; NPR 1887 Raban-Seymour, p. 46.

<sup>50</sup> John Boneham, 'The Oxford Movement, marriage and domestic life: John Keble, Isaac Williams and Edward King', *Studies in Church History Volume 50: The Church and Rites of Passage* (Cambridge: CUP, 2014), pp. 366-77; NPR 1880 Rabbets-Slyfield, p. 36; TNA RG10/1643, fo. 42 (all the siblings in their 50s and 60s).



parish to officiate. At least fourteen clerics followed this route, as illustrated in Table 3 (In this table, 'Age' is age at institution in this parish). Four of these incumbents received their benefice shortly after their ordination as priests. Three others obtained their preferment early in their clerical careers. A few had to attend old age before their movement to their home parish. At Barkby, Pochin had to await a vacancy.<sup>51</sup>

The influence of patronage obtained then in the preferments of Edward Pochin, but with different consequences perhaps. Edward Norman Pochin (1828-97) was a younger son of George and Elizabeth of Barkby Hall. His elder brother, William Anne (born 1820), inherited the estate and the patronage of livings. Edward was sent off to Eton and graduated from Cambridge (Trinity College) in 1851. His first position was curate of Burton Lazars with Welby and Sysonby between 1851 and 1856, under the patronage of Thomas Frewen esq., and perhaps at the bequest of the Pochins. From 1852, his career was sponsored by William Anne, first in the living at Thurmaston (vicarage, 1852-1856), then Sileby (1856-73) and finally the vicarage at his home seat of Barkby, which he held until his demise. William Anne possessed the patronage of all of the vicarages of Thurmaston, Sileby and Barkby. All livings provided only a modest income: Thurmaston £155; Sileby £152; and Barkby £250. The first two vicarages indeed would have qualified as poor and the final very mediocre. What was obviously important to Edward was not to accrue more wealth but to have a comfortable vicarage with his spouse and family near his original home.<sup>52</sup> Edward did not lack for personal finances; when he died in 1897 his estate amounted to £111,261 6s 3d.<sup>53</sup> He had not invested his funds in purchasing a high-value living.

Another, but by no means the only other, example was the Reverend (later Sir) John Frederick Halford (1830-1896). Having graduated from Cambridge (also the well-endowed Trinity College), he was appointed to a curacy at Cossington where he served from 1853 to 1855. After serving for some time as curate at Wistow, he was elevated to the living as vicar in 1867, combining the living with that at Kilby. In 1881, he assumed the vicarage at Brixworth (Northamptonshire).<sup>54</sup> In 1861, he was living, aged thirty and married, as curate of Wistow with his parents at Wistow Hall.<sup>55</sup> He was indeed a younger

---

<sup>51</sup>For these issues, Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, pp. 252-64.

<sup>52</sup>Record Office for Leicestershire Leicester and Rutland (ROLLR) DE2579/8, pp. 22 (no. 169) and 46 (no. 363); *Crockford* 1870, pp. 533, 562; 1885, p. 950; TNA RG11/3155, fo. 113.

<sup>53</sup>NPR 1897 Nabb-Ryves, p. 168.

<sup>54</sup>*Crockford* 1882, p. 461.

<sup>55</sup>TNA RG9/2254, fo. 104.

Table 3: Circular migration of clerics returning to their natal parish

Cleric	Parish	Patron	Age
C. Palmer	Wanlip	Palmer family	24
S. Noble	Frolesworth	Trustees	24
T. Fell	Sheepy Magna	Mrs Fell	80
J. Dent	Hallaton	T. Hardcastle	
G. Wilkinson	S. Croxton	D. of Rutland	24
J. Fisher	Higham on the Hill	J. Fisher esq.	34
G. Burnaby	Somerby	T. Johnson esq.	64
R. Rodgers	Gilmorton	E. Jackson esq.	
W. Humfrey	Laughton	Rev. A. Matthews	
R. Norman	Bottesford	D. of Rutland	
E. Pochin	Barkby	W. A. Pochin esq.	45
N. Gresley	The Seals	Sir R. Gresley	25
R. Story	Lockington	W. G. Curzon esq.	31

son of Sir Henry Halford, physician to the King, who had purchased Wistow Hall and its estate. In later life, after the death of his brother, John Halford inherited the title and the estate and was interred there in 1896, aged 67.<sup>56</sup>

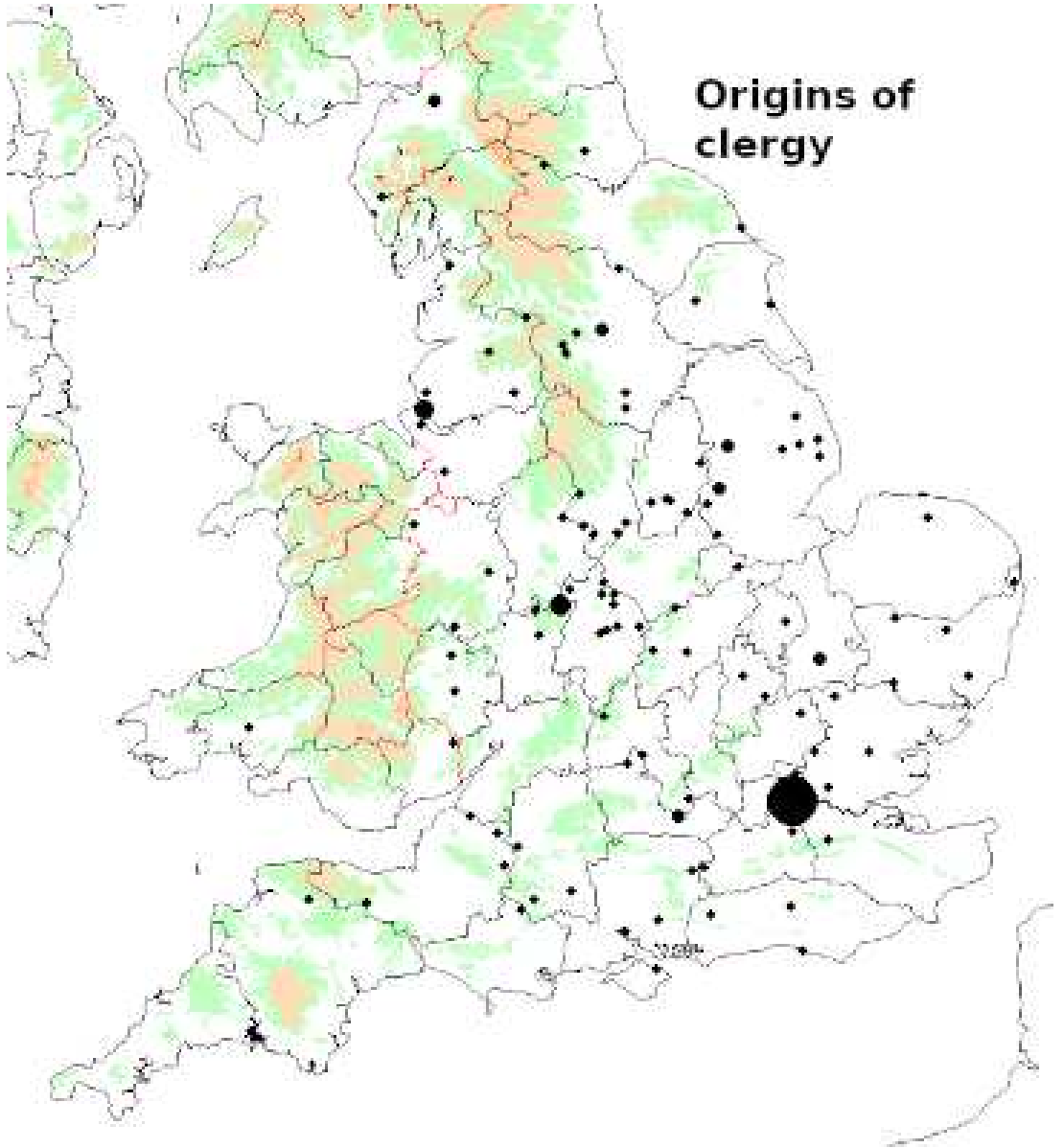
The vast majority of the clerics who acquired livings in the county, nonetheless, migrated some distance from their original homes according to the demands of clerical mobility. The diversity of the origins of the clergy is illustrated in Fig. 4.

Figure 4 excludes the clergy who were not born in England and Wales. At least nine vicars and rectors in the archdeaconry had origins in Ireland as well as five curates (as noted above, with degrees from Trinity College, Dublin). Three incumbents migrated from Scotland. The Empire furnished two vicars and a curate from the West Indies, a rector from India, and a curate from Nova Scotia. British Subjects born in Valenciennes, Würtemberg, New York, the Russian Empire, and Rome, held livings or curacies in the archdeaconry.

Within England and Wales, the distribution pattern was widespread. About ten percent of the Leicestershire clergy derived from what is now Greater London. The concentration was otherwise in a belt across the Midlands. What unified the origins and attitudes of the clergy was, of course, the experience at the two ancient universities. To some extent, that participation made for a cohesive and uniform ethos, although one still not shared by the majority of

<sup>56</sup>ROLLR DE7013, p. 45 (no. 357).

Figure 4: Origins of Leicestershire incumbents, 1858-1903



parishioners.

Although they derived from diverse parts of the country, the majority of the clergy settled in their livings in Leicestershire for an extended period. The analysis here concerns those clergy who died in their livings. From the date of their institution and the entry of their probate in the NPR, the length of their office can be determined. It is necessary to emphasize that the cohort involved is those who died in their parish. Those who moved through Leicestershire and then on to another parish outside the county are excluded. There is another caveat. Some who achieved a living as vicar or rector had already expended some time in curacies in local parishes. John Piercy, for example, who graduated from Cambridge in 1839, resided first as a curate in Pickwell (1840-3), then at Wymeswold (1843-6) before his promotion to vicar of Slawston in 1847.<sup>57</sup> (Presumably his familiarity with the county over this period facilitated his selection as a magistrate).

Pochin, of course, emanated from a gentry family, related to the Pochins of Barkby Hall. The social origins of the clergy are often elusive. Although Foster provides the status of the father of Oxford graduates, Venn for Cambridge did not.<sup>58</sup> Unfortunately, Oxford-educated clerics comprised only just over a quarter of the cohort of 1881. A much higher proportion derived from Cambridge. Examining the Oxford graduates in the Leicestershire clerisy in 1881, two belonged to the aristocracy (a baron and an earl) and two to knighted families. Seventeen belonged to what Foster designated armigerous families and twenty had fathers whom he described as 'gentlemen'. Another eighteen were the issue of clerics in post. Foster's 'gentlemen' have been associated with the middle class.<sup>59</sup> Illustrative is the father of Samuel Tidswell, vicar of Knighton, referenced by Foster as a 'gent.', who was a wine merchant in Camberwell.<sup>60</sup>

Probably the Cambridge graduates exhibited the same social origins.<sup>61</sup> Many of them are elusive, especially if born before the 1851 census. Some examples may suffice to illustrate the tendencies. The rector of Saxby with Stapleford, Peter Gorst, was an alumnus of St John's, Cambridge, and was the son of a Cheshire surgeon.<sup>62</sup> In 1841, the large family of Octavius Glover,

---

<sup>57</sup> *Crockford* 1898, p. 1069.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford 1715-1886* (Oxford: Parker & Co., 1888); John and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses* (Cambridge: CUP, 1922).

<sup>59</sup> Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, pp. 35-48.

<sup>60</sup> TNA HO107/1579, fo. 483; RG11/3126, fo. 67.

<sup>61</sup> Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, p. 121.

<sup>62</sup> HO107/125/4, fo. 4; *Crockford* 1882, p. 429. For St John's clerical cohort, Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, pp. 35-48.

resided in Silverton on independent means with four servants.<sup>63</sup> The rector of Catthorpe, Christopher Holme, was the son of a Westmorland farmer.<sup>64</sup> Another substantial landowner was the father of Jeremiah Seabrook who employed 24 men and seven boys to work his land in Springfield, Essex.<sup>65</sup> At nearby Bitteswell, Thomas Ward Goddard, the incumbent, came from the family of a master baker of Camberwell.<sup>66</sup> Son of the curate of Saxby with Stapleford, Reginald Woodcock graduated from Cambridge and returned to the vicarage of Great Dalby.<sup>67</sup>

One of the few Durham graduates to obtain a living in Leicestershire was Kingsford Sidebottom, who graduated BA in 1856, and was preferred for the benefice at Swithland. Kingsford was the son of the vicar of Buckden and had been educated at Marlborough.<sup>68</sup>

Some of the small cadre of non-graduates can also be related to their social origins. Charles Tiley, who attended St Bees, was the son of a brewer.<sup>69</sup> Also via St Bees, Wyndham Hutton was the son of the rector of Knipton.<sup>70</sup> John Brook, son of a cabinet maker in Torrington, attended St Aidan's.<sup>71</sup> King's College, London, (probably the two-year course) provided for sons of the curate of Caythorpe (Lincs.) and a single mother whose income derived from dressmaking and lace making.<sup>72</sup> This College was also the avenue to the priesthood for Nathaniel Bergheim, a German subject born in Palestine, and Thomas Britten, a British subject born in Nevis in the West Indies.<sup>73</sup> As conventionally expected, these scholars from the theological colleges had probably selected that route because of lack of means. A curacy had few emoluments. A single mother undoubtedly struggled. An inexpensive avenue was convenient for immigrants from abroad.

The analysis now turns to the length of service in the parish rather than time in the archdeaconry.<sup>74</sup> For a large proportion of the incumbents can be calculated both the length in office and their age, at death. The Spearman's rank correlation coefficient between the two variables is 0.616. This

---

<sup>63</sup> *Crockford* 1881, p. 420; TNA HO107/226/11, fo. 8.

<sup>64</sup> *Crockford* 1882, p. 532; TNA HO107/1158/11, fo. 8.

<sup>65</sup> *Crockford* 1882, p. 969; TNA RG9/1082, fo. 40r-v.

<sup>66</sup> *Crockford* 1885, p. 470; TNA RG9/387, fo. 161.

<sup>67</sup> *Crockford* 1882, p. 1211; TNA HO107/2091, fo. 708.

<sup>68</sup> *Crockford* 1881, p. 987; TNA HO107/453/2, fo. 9.

<sup>69</sup> TNA HO107/36/1, fo. 7.

<sup>70</sup> TNA HO107/587/25, fo. 8.

<sup>71</sup> Devon Record Office Torrington baptism register p. 20 (no. 154).

<sup>72</sup> Lincolnshire Archives Caythorpe baptism register p. 26 (no. 207) (Edward Woodcock); TNA HO107/2091, fo. 467v.

<sup>73</sup> TNA RG11/3381, fo. 82.

<sup>74</sup> Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, p. 118.

level suggests that length of service was influenced by age at death, but more particularly that a short time in service was associated with an early death. In other words, there was a long time in service unless truncated by early death.

Some explanation is necessary about the figure above. The number relates to the period of time in a full benefice before death in office. Of concern here are only those who died in office with a full benefice. Some incumbents in fact served in the archdeaconry for longer than the time adduced above. Edward Smythies was instituted as rector of Hathern in 1859 and died in 1891 aged 72. He had previously, however, served as curate of Bitteswell (1843-4) and of Shepshed (1844-48) before becoming assistant to the rector of Hathern (1848-59). His time as curate between 1843 and 1859 is not included in the calculation for the length of service. The rationale is that curacies were often regarded as transient positions and the 'commitment' to the local community temporary as opposed to performance of the office.

So also, Robert Hayes, a product of St Bees, was appointed to the vicarage of Woodhouse in 1882 after serving as curate at St John, Leicester, in 1861-1863, then as curate at Woodhouse Eaves between 1863 and 1868. Ultimately vicar of St Nicholas, Leicester, Jemson Davies had acted as curate there from 1818 to 1841. Peter Gorst combined the vicarages of Saxby and Stapleford from 1868. He had been curate at Saxby between 1864 and 1868 and prior to that curate at Medbourne (1863-4). For the same reason as above, these tours of service are not included in the calculation of length in service.<sup>75</sup>

The mean length in office was 28.33 years (standard deviation 14.42). Twenty-seven incumbents did not exceed ten years in office, but they were invariably those who died in their 30s and 40s. Seventy-six lived in their parish for eleven to twenty years. Twenty-one to thirty years accounted for 45 and thirty-one to forty years for 52. Forty-nine served in their parish for forty-one to sixty-seven years.

Age at death has been adduced as a determinant of length in service. In fact, 32 incumbents died before age fifty. In contrast 108 lived into their 50s and 60s. An equal number (107) continued into their seventies through to nineties. The mean age at death was 67 (standard deviation 13.02).

To some extent, the pattern of preferment was still dictated by the structure of patronage.<sup>76</sup> This pattern can be best determined from the *Clergy List of 1852*.<sup>77</sup> Some livings, however, seem not to be included and the data have

---

<sup>75</sup> *Crockford* 1870, p. 186; 1882, pp. 493, 537, 798.

<sup>76</sup> M. J. D. Roberts, 'Private patronage and the Church of England, 1800-1900', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 32 (1981), pp. 199-223; Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, pp. 112-113.

<sup>77</sup> *The Clergy List for 1852* (London: C. Cox, 1852).

been supplemented by *Crockford* for 1860. Figure 5 depicts the distribution of patronage.

In terms of number held by one patron (in this case, an office), the Lord Chancellor presented to 27 livings which were distributed throughout the archdeaconry. Significantly, the Lord Chancellor (lc) had the patronage of the ancient parishes in the borough of Leicester.<sup>78</sup> Next in the number of livings appropriated to one patron was the Duke of Rutland (rut) with sixteen. The difference was that the Rutland livings were concentrated in the north-east of the county. They consisted mainly of advowsons acquired by Belvoir Priory and later appropriated by the Manners family. Many of these livings in the gift of the Manners had modest income, but there were also half a dozen prizes with gross income near to (one) or exceeding five hundred pounds. The Hastings family (has) had the presentation to six livings. Other nobility (nob), each with one or a few livings, had 28 parochial presentations. Those described in the *Clergy List* as esquires (esq) had accumulated 44 rights of presentation. Significant among these esquires was Thomas Frewen (1811-1870), of Cold Overton, who was patron of four livings, including Melton Mowbray with its numerous chapelries. Knightly families (kt) had fewer, seventeen. Cambridge Colleges (cam) accounted for ten, with Emmanuel prominent.

The lower clergy (that is, those holding no high ecclesiastical office and designated simply reverend) themselves presented to 47 livings. In 24 livings, the rector was also patron (self), either by inheritance or by purchasing the right of presentation. In the other 23 instances, the patron of the living was a cleric who presented a different clergyman, not himself (rev; revc).

The Cambridge colleges in particular had a penchant to present their own graduates and also Fellows who were not always resident. Most were. During this time Emmanuel College presented its own fellows to Loughborough, Robert Bunch and Henry Fearon. Consecutive incumbents from Pembroke College were advanced by the college as patron to Sibson, John Cox and Thomas Page. The Fellow of Trinity College, John Echalaz, received the college's living at Appleby Magna. To the rectory of Medbourne St John's College promoted its own Laurence Baker.

In particular, discharged rectories and vicarages (those exempt from first fruits and tenths in the past) were in the hands of colleges which proposed their own colleagues. Eleven of the twenty-one were held by Cambridge colleges and five by Oxford institutions. The theological colleges, St Bees and St Aidan's, had each acquired one. Figure 6 illustrates the location of these discharged livings where the incumbent was likely to be absent.

---

<sup>78</sup>Succinctly, *Clergy List*, pp. 293-297.

Figure 5: The distribution of patronage

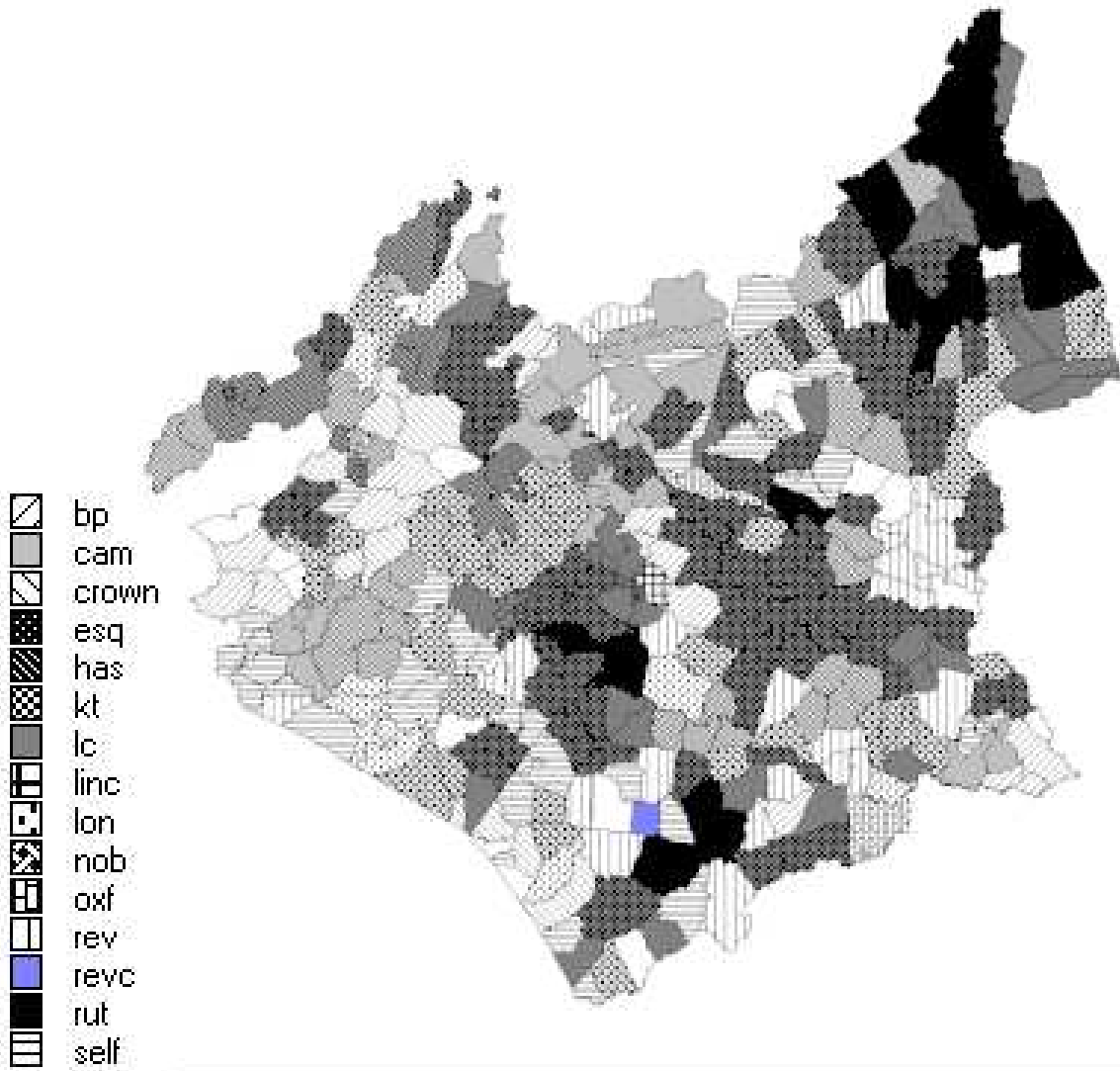
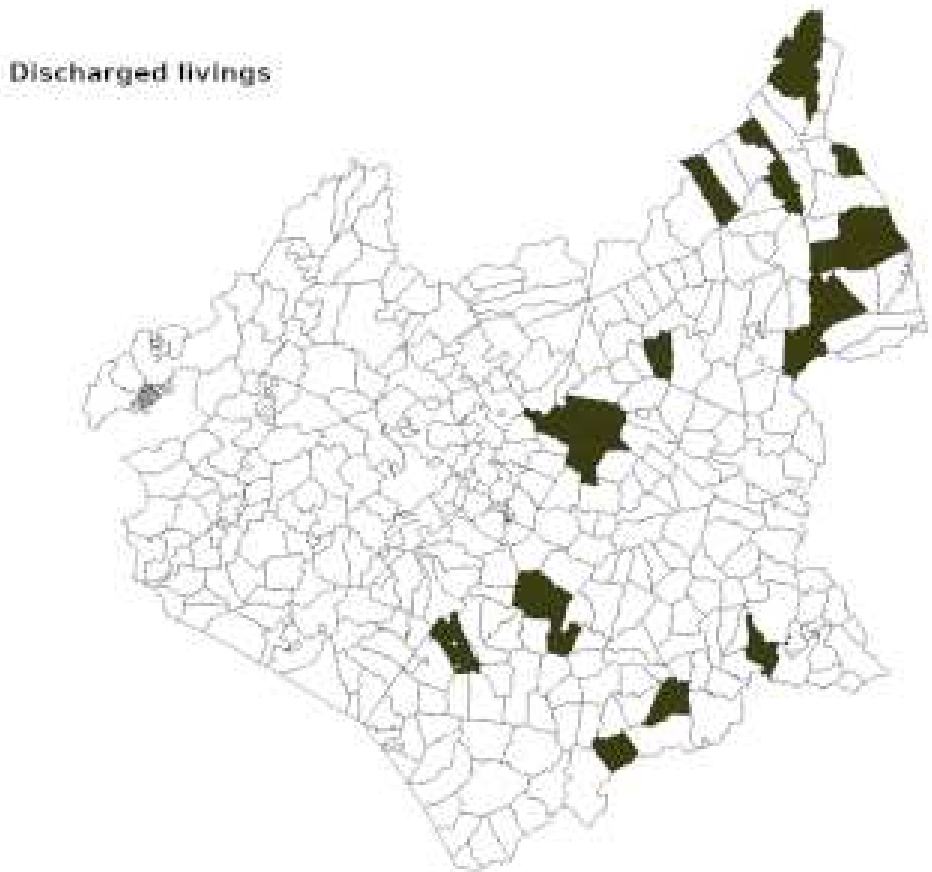




Figure 6: Distribution of ‘discharged livings’



The persistence of lay patronage is remarkably represented by the rectory of Bottesford. Richard Norman, esq. (1761-1847), married Lady Elizabeth Isabella Manners (1777-1853), the daughter of the 4th Duke of Rutland. Their son, Frederic John (1814-1888) was preferred to the rectory of Bottesford in the patronage of the Duke. In 1848, Frederic espoused Lady Adeliza Elizabeth Gertrude Manners, by whom he had issue one daughter and three sons. Their son, Robert Manners Norman (1855-1895), in 1887 married Lilia Elizabeth Drummond, eldest daughter of Edgar Drummond, banker and magistrate of London (in her widowhood, she returned to the metropolis).<sup>79</sup>

Frederic John Norman, the issue of Richard and Lady Elizabeth, graduated from Cambridge (Caius College) in 1838 and received the living at Bottesford in 1846. At that time, the glebe of 700 acres could be leased for the substantial rent of £1,100, which resulted in a gross income for the rectory of £1,103 (net income £1,000). From 1872, Frederic was appointed an honorary canon of Peterborough cathedral. His son, Robert Manners Norman, succeeded him in the rectory. Robert was another graduate of Cambridge (but the affluent Trinity College) in 1877. He received the rectory in 1889 immediately after the death of his father. By then, the glebe could be leased for the lesser rent of £800 in the midst of the 'agricultural depression', furnishing a gross income of £805 (net £555). Robert had previously served as curate of Doncaster (Yorkshire W. R.) (1877-8), then Kensington (1878, where he may have encountered his future wife's family), subsequently as vicar of Maltby (Yorkshire W. R.) (1880-6), and finally as curate to his father (no doubt from his father's income) in Bottesford (1886-9).<sup>80</sup>

When Frederic died, his estate was valued at £11,631 5s 10d. Six years later, despite the decline in the value of the rectory, Robert's estate was appraised at £25,421 8s 3d.<sup>81</sup> These familial episodes divulge the continuous importance of lay patronage for some livings. The Duke of Rutland as patron of Bottesford ensured the preferment of relations to the living, one of the most valuable in the county.

The Duke of Rutland had patronage of a nexus of churches in north-east Leicestershire which undoubtedly had some local influence. Indeed, Snell and Ell have demonstrated how intensive landownership, sometimes exercised through 'estate villages', coincided with a high degree of Anglican worship.<sup>82</sup>

An interesting example of determination by patronage was the clerical ca-

---

<sup>79</sup>ROLLR DG36/9, p. 23 (no. 177); DE4411/2, p. 39 (no. 78); DE829/15, no. 134; TNA RG9/2349, fo. 29v.

<sup>80</sup>*Crockford* 1882, p. 796; 1895, p. 981.

<sup>81</sup>NPR 1889 Ma Vius-Nye; 1895 Naden-Rynd.

<sup>82</sup>Snell & Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*, pp. 373-5 (eschewing the term 'closed parish').

reer of George Edward Bruxner. A British Subject born in St Petersburg in Imperial Russia, Bruxner matriculated at Oxford in 1832 aged nineteen. Receiving his BA in 1836 and MA in 1838, he was instituted to the rectory of Thurlaston in 1845, a comfortable living with a gross income of £440.<sup>83</sup> There he served for just over three decades.

His route to the rectory was through patronage. In 1841, he married Anne Mary Arkwright in her parish church of Latton (Essex), the usual uxorilocal venue.<sup>84</sup> She was the daughter of the Reverend Joseph Arkwright (1791-1864) of Mark Hall in Latton. The Mark Hall estate had been purchased in 1819 as an investment by Richard Arkwright of Willesley Castle (Derbyshire), the issue of the celebrated Arkwright. The Reverend Joseph, as sixth son, entered the clergy and received the living at Latton, a rectory.<sup>85</sup> When the elder son, Richard, died in 1832, Joseph inherited the estate and resigned from the living, now a cleric without cure. With the wider Arkwright estates, Joseph gained the patronage of Thurlaston. When the vacancy occurred at Thurlaston, Arkwright presented his son-in-law, Bruxner. (George Edward's son, Edward Arkwright Bruxner, entered the legal profession and became a barrister at the Inner Temple).<sup>86</sup> In 1861, George purchased from Joseph Arkwright the remainder of the term of 1,000 years in the advowson of the church with the parsonage house and the glebe of 223 acres for £4,000 (perhaps at a discount from his father-in-law, for which see above).<sup>87</sup>

#### *The wealth and consequential politics of the local clergy*

The income of the clergy through their livings has been addressed above, especially in relation to the diversity of that remuneration. It was recognized, however, that those incomes were usually insufficient for the maintenance of a clerical household. To a large extent, it was expected that most clergy would have the benefit of a private income and that the proceeds from the living were supplemental.<sup>88</sup> The wealth of the clergy is explored here, separate from their income.

The following discussion of the wealth of the clergy focuses on Anglican clergymen *who died in their livings in Leicestershire* after 1858, the date of the commencement of the National Probate Register (NPR). Despite some efforts

---

<sup>83</sup>TNA HO107/2081, fo. 460v; *Alumni Oxonienses A-D*, p. 180; ROLLR 7D55/1016/1-3 (presentation deed).

<sup>84</sup>Essex Record Office D/P 344/1/10, p. 2.

<sup>85</sup>TNA RG9/1065, fo. 76; for his demise, *Ball's Weekly Messenger* 7 March 1864, p. 7. His estate was valued at under £400,000.

<sup>86</sup>*Leicester Chronicle* 27 June 1868, p. 8

<sup>87</sup>ROLLR 7D55/1273.

<sup>88</sup>Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, pp. 307-311.

to allow for the retirement of clergy, the vast majority was compelled to continue in service until death.<sup>89</sup> Consequently, those clergy who enjoyed benefices in the archdeaconry (roughly coterminous with the county) who moved on to benefices elsewhere or died after retirement outside the county, are not included. For example, Octavius Glover, sometime incumbent of Emmanuel church in Loughborough, resided in Torquay at his demise in 1905, his estate amounting to just over £6,000. Although he presided over Emmanuel for a considerable time, he is omitted for most purposes since he transported his wealth to the south-west.<sup>90</sup> For the same reason the estate of the well-known cleric, John Edward Stocks of Market Harborough, is excluded since he died in 1926 in the Minster Precincts of Peterborough Cathedral (his estate surprisingly valued at less than £1,136).<sup>91</sup> In other respects, such as the longevity of their service or their contribution to local culture, some of the clerics who died elsewhere are integrated. For the purposes of the estimation of wealth, however, they are ignored. The wealth of the clergy is computed from the assessed value of their estate at death as recorded in the NPR.

Before 1881, the value was an estimate below a certain level, the levels being pre-certified increments (as in Table 4). From 1881, a precise valuation of the estate was calculated, down to pence. Prior to 1898, the valuation consisted only of personal estate, excluding real estate (land). From 1898, some category of real estate was included, but does not affect the quantitative data here. There are, consequently, two separate assessments of wealth: 1858-81; and 1881-1903.

For the purposes of simplification in Table 4, the increments have been aggregated. The increments in the NPR before 1881 are narrower, for example, <100, <200, <300, <450, <600, <800, <1,000 and so on. To retain these increments would produce a table which is too complex. At the highest level, the increments consist of <45,000, <50,000, <60,000 and <80,000. Comments are thus concentrated on the lowest levels (under £1,000), the median range (£1,500-£9,000), and the highest values (£10,000-£80,000). (In Table 5, 5th is the fifth percentile and 95th the ninety-fifth percentile).

It must be emphasized that the accumulation of wealth by these clergy does not reflect the income from their benefices.<sup>92</sup> More realistically, the values represent their origins and status before entering the clergy. Particularly is that the case with the valuations before 1881.

By this methodology, there are observations for 290 individual clergy who

---

<sup>89</sup>Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, pp. 319-329.

<sup>90</sup>TNA RG13/2978, fo. 55v; NPR 1905 Eabry-Gyles p. 223.

<sup>91</sup>NPR 1926 Quadlin-Szpiro p. 455.

<sup>92</sup>Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, pp. 113-114.

Table 4: NPR values of clerical estates, 1858-81

Value (£s)	N. clergy	Value (£s)	N. clergy
<20	2	<5,000 to <9,000	22
<100 to <450	26	<10,000 to <20,000	16
<600 to <1,000	19	<25,000 to <30,000	4
<1,500 to <4,000	49	<45,000 to <80,000	5

Table 5: NPR values of clerical estates, 1881-1903

Mean (£s)	StD	Median	5th	95th
7,756	14,025	3,004	137	30,447

died in their livings in the county and archdeaconry between 1858 and 1903. The numbers are more or less evenly divided between before and after the changes in the process of valuation in 1881.

There is one further statistic which recognizes the disparity in the wealth of these clergy: the Gini coefficient. This metric can only be calculated for valuations after 1881. The resultant measure is 0.661134. This coefficient is high, but could have been even more serious. The Gini coefficient ranges from 0 which signifies absolute equality to 1 representing absolute inequality. 0.661134 indicates a wide measure of inequality of clerical wealth after 1881.

Referring to the most affluent incumbents, more than fifty through the half century had estate valued at more than £10,000 at death. Three had been instituted to their livings before 1830 (1816, 1822, 1824). Eight had been inducted in the 1830s, eleven in the 1840s, and fourteen in the 1850s. Seventeen had obtained their livings in the 1860s to 1890s. It can be inferred that the private wealth of the clergy was more significant in the early nineteenth century, although still important after the 1860s. Discovering the social background of these affluent clergy is difficult. The following analysis depends on the general criteria adduced in Foster and examination of the census enumerators' returns. By this means it is possible to identify the social origin of about half these wealthy clergy. Six belonged to the categories of Foster: armigerous (five) and gentlemen (three). Four belonged to the more definite category of gentry (Moore of Evington; Pochin of Barkby; Beaumont of Coleorton; Packe of Prestwold). Seven derived from clerical families. Six emanated from defined middle-class backgrounds: three sons of doctors or surgeons, a son of a wine merchant, and two offspring of large farmers. At the apex was Edward Pochin with a probate estate of more than £111,000. Just under twenty,

however, derived from distinctly urban places, including five from eight from the metropolitan area and three from Birmingham, probably representing new affluence. These high-net-worth individuals represented about a fifth of the clerical cohort which died in office in Leicester whose estate was valued in the NPR.

At the other extreme, eleven incumbents and five curates accumulated estate worth less than £200, most of them before 1881. Rather surprisingly, seemingly the most impecunious was Henry Kebbel alias Keble, vicar of Wistow and perpetual curate of Kilby, to which livings, both in the patronage of Sir Henry Halford of Wistow Hall, he had been appointed in 1813. Wistow had 76 acres of glebe and the combined income of the two livings amounted to £180. Kebbel graduated from Cambridge (Sidney Sussex College) as LLB in 1810. When he died in 1869, aged 96, his estate was evaluated at under £20 [probate was granted to his son, the rector of Hatherdon in Hampshire].<sup>93</sup> It is possible, of course, that much of the deceased's capital had been expended on his son's education and preferment.

Addressing another section, those clerics who died with an estate extending from £201 to £500, six incumbents and three curates fell into this category before 1881 and four incumbents and two curates after 1881. Deducting these poorest of clergy, therefore, the vast majority of clergy had accumulated by their death estate over £500 and mostly in the thousands of pounds.

The graduates benefited most in this respect. Even seven of the graduates of TCD had amassed estate in the thousands of pounds (£3,000 to £6,167). With a few exceptions, it was the clergy educated at the theological colleges who had mediocre estate, if not the very poorest. Two licentiates from KCL had estate under £300, but three others much larger. Another from Queen's College, Birmingham, acquired only £184. The estate of clerics from St Bees was surprisingly high by comparison, the lowest £629, but the rest very much higher, indicating a level of private income.

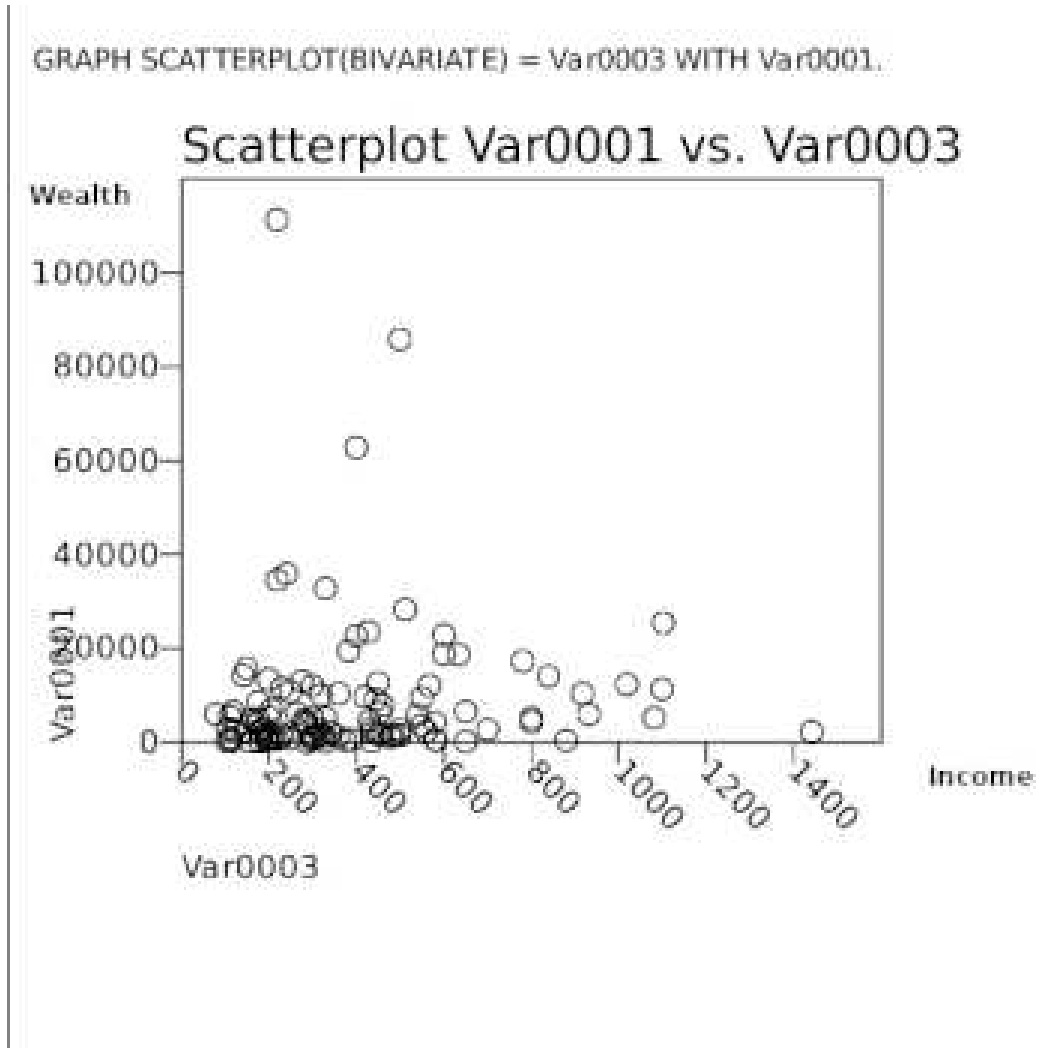
The relationship between wealth (at death) and the income from livings is a complicated one. A linear regression of wealth at death, type of living ( $V=1$ ,  $R=2$ ), and income of the living results in  $R^2 = 0.01$ . A scatterplot, nevertheless, produces a more complex picture (Figure 7).

Above, in the instance of Bottesford, there is demonstrably an association between wealth and income, which reflects that in some cases the most affluent and well-connected acquired the high-value livings. In most cases, however, there was no such association. The trend line is for modest wealth and modest livings. Other influences were, of course, important, such as the wealthiest

---

<sup>93</sup> *Crockford* 1860, p. 351; TNA RG9/2255, fo. 4; NPR 1869 Ianson-Kyle p. 387.

Figure 7: Scatterplot income/wealth



incumbent, Pochin, preferring a modest living in his family parish, redolent of the old squirearchy of the previous century.

Figures 8 and 9 illustrate the distribution of both wealth and income in those parishes in which the incumbent died in office between 1858 and 1903. The number of parishes approximates to half the ancient parishes in the archdeaconry. The parishes in the county borough and the two new parishes in Loughborough are not represented in the figures.

Quite simply, of course, rectors were landowners, if constrained by being temporary custodians of the land for successive generations of rectors. Their stewardship was transient and rectors were reminded of this situation by the Ecclesiastical Dilapidations Act 1871 (34 & 35 Vict. c. 43). There are several approaches to collect information about rectorial glebe. One method is to extract the details from *Crockford* which is cumbersome and may involve rounded figures. Perhaps a more reliable method is to acquire the information from *The Return of Landowners 1873*.<sup>94</sup> This source contains very accurate measurements to the perch. It also made public in a demonstrative manner the extent of ecclesiastical landowning. It contains comprehensive information about the landowning of the clergy which can be easily retrieved. Additionally, it provides information about land owned by clergy which was not part of their benefice. The *Return* thus gives a more accurate picture of all land held by clergy, whether as glebe or simply as landowners.

From the *Return*, it is evident that over 220 clerics residing in the county (226) owned land which exceeded an acre (the criterion of the *Return*). Additionally, 78 clerics living outside the county also owned land within the county. Some of these exogenous clergy had particularly large estates: the Reverend Fred Burnaby of Southampton possessed 435 acres 0 roods and 16 perches; the Reverend Dr Cradock of London exceeded that amount with 709 a 2r 34p.<sup>95</sup> The Ecclesiastical Commissioners, furthermore, owned 1,319a 3r 10p throughout the county and archdeaconry.<sup>96</sup>

For the purposes here, however, concentration is on the endogenous clergy. The mean acreage of clerical landowners in 1873 amounted to 142 acres (standard deviation 164.96). Thirty-seven of the 226, however, held less than twenty acres, the equivalent of a peasant holding. Another 43 had 21-50 acres and a further 45 51-100. A similar number (47) possessed 101-200 acres. Over fifty (54) owned more than 201 acres, eight of whom possessed more than five hundred acres. There was then a wide disparity in glebe sizes and in clerical landowning. Considering the distribution in another way, by taking the

---

<sup>94</sup>*The Return of Owners of Land 1873* (HMSO C1097, 1875).

<sup>95</sup>*Return of Owners of Land*, pp. 5, 9.

<sup>96</sup>*Return of Owners of Land*, p. 11.



Figure 8: The wealth of incumbents

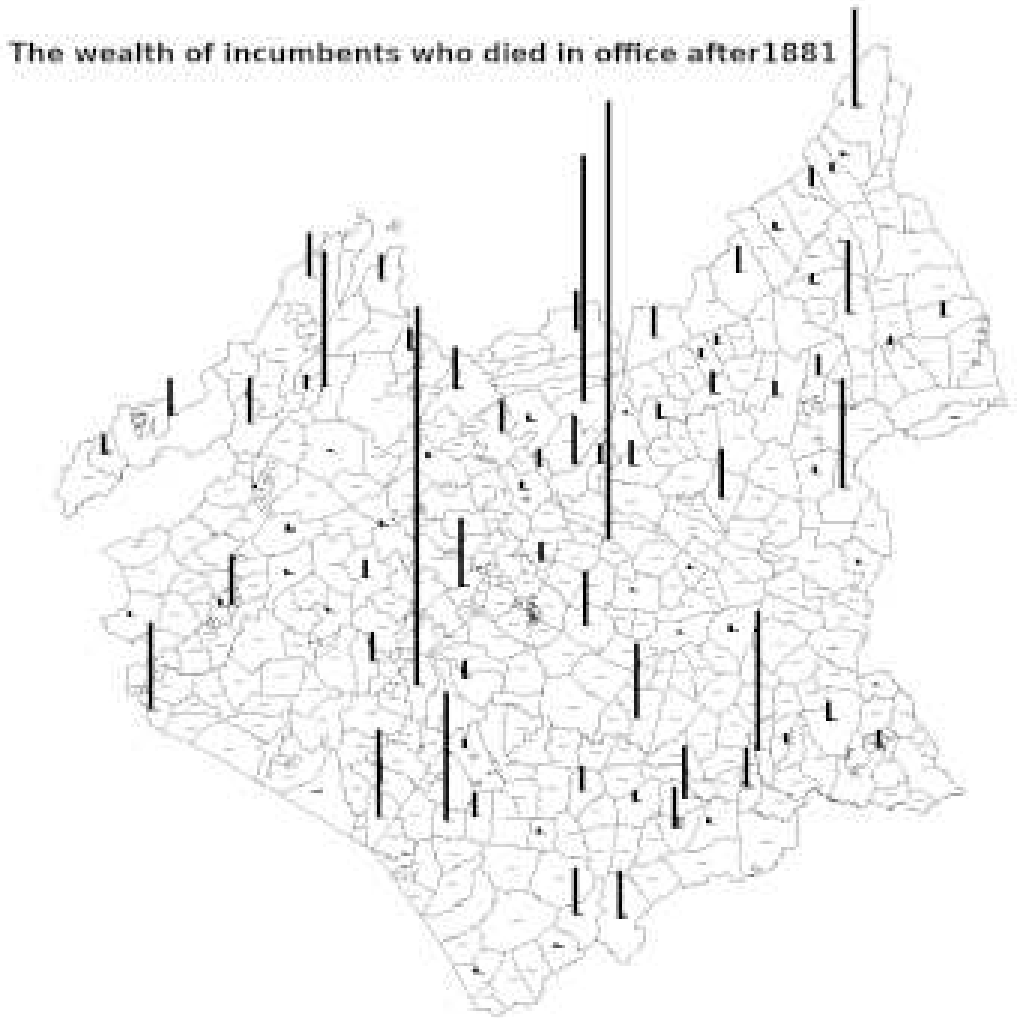
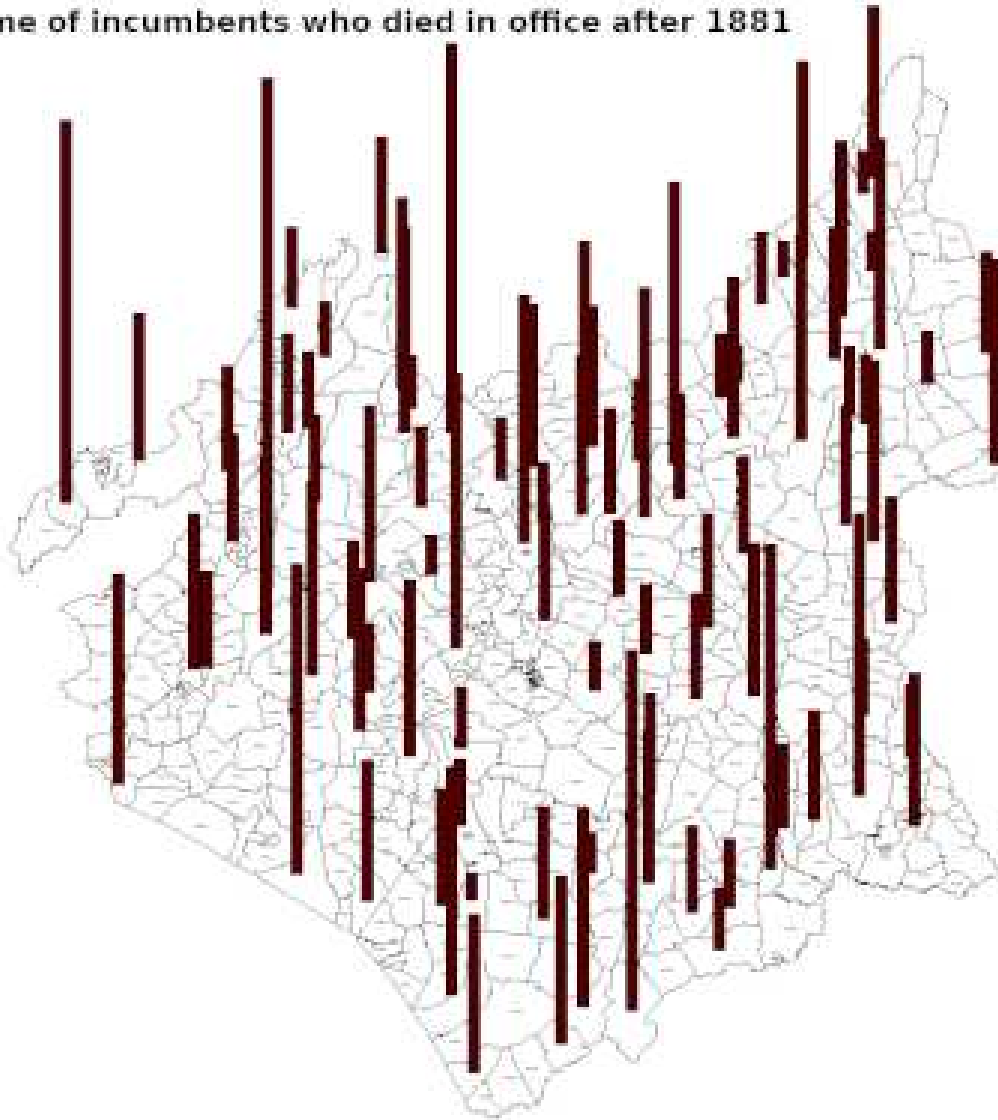


Figure 9: Income of incumbents

**Income of incumbents who died in office after 1881**



rental valuations in the Return, forty clergy possessed land with an annual valuation more than £500, nine of whom with more than a thousand pounds (several had values in the £900s). Those values were not necessarily achieved either by farming in hand or leasing out, not least because of the demands of improvement (such as drainage) reducing the net income.

Rectorial income was declining in the late nineteenth century which placed some restrictions on wealth accruing from livings rather than private resources. Rectors were particularly vulnerable because they relied to a large extent on income from their glebe, some quite substantially (as at Bottesford). The ‘agricultural depression’ of the 1880s had a serious impact on rectorial income.<sup>97</sup> The issue exercised not only the clergy but was of wider concern. In 1887, the *Hinckley News* reproduced part of a survey of the local clergy on the effects of the agrarian downturn on their resources. Concern was especially expressed by a correspondent because the diocese of Peterborough contained the highest amount of glebe land, estimated at some 74,000 acres. Although many of the rectors could not quantify the impact of reduced income from glebe, they unanimously referred to the serious situation.<sup>98</sup> Three reported depreciation of ‘over £200’, £40 and £123. The rector who advised of a loss of ‘over £200’ continued: ‘If things don’t change I must resign ...’ Another rector considered the loss: ‘Very, very considerable, but I cannot put it in figures’. Yet another responded: ‘value has depreciated by more than 50 percent during the past ten years’. The economic position of the parish clergy was alluded to by the bishop in his address at his triennial visitation convened at St Martin’s, Leicester, in 1888, as he depicted the local clergy ‘bowed down beneath the weight and the worry’ of their office by, among other causes, importunity.<sup>99</sup>

The deteriorating condition of clerical income is perhaps illustrated by the decision of John Piercy to sell his farm/glebe at Slawston in 1897. He had leased the unit, but presumably the rent was an issue. He put the land and all the livestock up for sale.<sup>100</sup>

As landowners, some of the clergy belonged to the Leicester Chamber of Agriculture. This organization was established in April 1867. The inaugural meeting was attended by Lakin, Smythies and Wood. At the meeting Smythies commented on the rating for taxation of wood and minerals and on the rela-

---

<sup>97</sup>For depreciation of tithe income, Avner Offner, *Property & Politics, 1870-1914: Landowners, Law, Ideology and Urban Development in England* (Cambridge: CUP, 1981), pp. 92-3.

<sup>98</sup>*Hinckley News* 1 October 1887, p. 3.

<sup>99</sup>*Leicester Daily Post* 19 May 1888, p. 3.

<sup>100</sup>*Market Harborough Advertiser and Midland Mail* 23 March 1897, p. 4.

tionship between landlord and tenant concerning game.<sup>101</sup> Smythies and Lakin were present also at the first annual meeting in January 1868.<sup>102</sup> Through the late 1860s and 1870s, Wood, Smythies, Halford, Piercy, Willes, Bird, Colles, Bruxner, Bridges, Green, Bennie, Elmhirst, Adcock, Palmer, Norris, Osborne, Badcock, Pownall, Byron and Bullivant attended meetings.<sup>103</sup> Bird attended assiduously while the others were present sporadically and for particular issues. Since the earlier meetings were convened in Leicester, it was probably not convenient for the rural clergy to attend regularly. Bird, nevertheless, seems not to have made any spoken contribution. Elmhirst may have attended as much in his capacity as Justice since he addressed the issue of taxation for and maintenance of highways and bridges.<sup>104</sup> Smythies contributed to the debate about imported cattle and quarantine.<sup>105</sup> Colles, although he seems to have been present infrequently, was forthright on matters of local taxation and rating affecting glebe land. In 1877 he bitterly opposed provisions in the valuation bill and its impact on tithe commutation rent charge:

He thought it was monstrous that a man with £100 tithe rent charge should be rated, and that a professional man with an income of £1000 should not be rated at all.<sup>106</sup>

Demonstrably excessive concern for their estate, however, could result in some disrespect for rectors. The *Leicester Chronicle* carried an excoriating assessment of Smythies, the rector for Hathern, who had (as described below) alienated some of his parishioners on other matters. Smythies was portrayed as ‘a divine of the “squarson” type’ who ‘divides his time between ministrations to his spiritual flock, and attention of a more substantial kind to the flocks and herds on his farm.’<sup>107</sup> When Pell proposed Smythies as vice-chair of the Leicester Chamber of Agriculture, he observed that: ‘No gentleman was a more regular attender . . .’ The rector journeyed to London to represent the Loughborough Chamber of Agriculture.<sup>108</sup> He antagonized one of his tenants by suing in the county court for damages alleging that the land had been quit ‘in a deplorable state from neglect and bad farming’. Although the arbitrator did,

---

<sup>101</sup> *Leicester Journal* 5 April 1867, p. 6.

<sup>102</sup> *Leicester Journal* 17 January 1868, p. 6.

<sup>103</sup> *Leicester Journal*, passim. Also *Hinckley News* 7 March 1868, p. 5. *Leicester Journal* 5 June 1874, p. 3 (Colles elected so); *Leicester Chronicle* 8 April 1876, p. 7 (Palmer elected a member); *Leicester Chronicle* 10 June 1876, p. 2 (Byron elected so);

<sup>104</sup> *Leicester Journal* 30 October 1874, p. 6; *Leicester Chronicle* 21 October 1882, p. 11.

<sup>105</sup> *Leicester Journal* 5 November 1875, p. 3.

<sup>106</sup> *Leicester Journal* 9 March 1877, p. 6.

<sup>107</sup> 2 April 1870, p. 6.

<sup>108</sup> *Leicester Journal* 5 April 1867, p. 3.

however, find for Smythies, bad publicity ensued.<sup>109</sup> Smythies accused another parishioner, a framework knitter, of arson, which caused an altercation and appearance before the magistrates. The Bench dismissed the parties and ordered both to defray their costs.<sup>110</sup> More acrimonious was the dispute between Smythies and the butcher/farmer of Loughborough, John Moss, the latter demanding damages of £80 from the rector for slander about livestock.<sup>111</sup>

The local obituaries adopted a more nuanced assessment. ‘He took much practical interest in farming pursuits’ and was sometime chair of the Leicester Chamber of Commerce.<sup>112</sup> He ‘was a successful grazier of a good class of stock’.<sup>113</sup> The concentration of Smythies on his farm probably contributed to the differences between him and some of his parishioners over parochial matters and office-holding (see below). By the late nineteenth century husbandry by rectors could be perceived as a diversion from the myriad new expectations of clergy as dignitaries involved not only in spiritual comfort but also as local dignitaries and trustees for secular associations.

The most contentious issue was one which affected clergy as landowners and farmers, as well as their interest in education. All of Lakin, Halford, Norris, Wood, Osborne, Willes and Badcock attended the meeting in March 1868 to discuss the bill concerning education and the employment of children and women in agriculture.<sup>114</sup> This issue caused internal dissension among the clergy at the meetings four and five years later. In 1872, Halford proposed a motion in favour of the Agricultural Children’s Bill; it was not seconded.<sup>115</sup> The meeting of March 1873 was attended by Bruxner, Willes, Smythies, Bridges, Green, and Halford. Smythies complained about the level of outdoor poor relief in the county and his perception of a dependency culture. His prognosis was reinforced by Willes who condemned ‘the utter thriftlessness which existed’.<sup>116</sup> More compassionate for the plight of the poor, Halford insisted that it was not possible for the poor to provide for old age because of the low level of agricultural wages. His lament went unheeded in this forum. ‘The motion was carried in the shape, “That in the administration of out-door relief, the closest attention and care on the part of the Guardians is requisite”’.

In a subsequent meeting, Halford moderated his approach about the restrictions on poor relief. Instead, he proposed practical solutions to the problem.

---

<sup>109</sup> *Loughborough Monitor* 5 February 1863, p. 8.

<sup>110</sup> *Leicester Chronicle* 19 April 1890, p. 2.

<sup>111</sup> *Leicester Chronicle* 1 March 1890, p. 8.

<sup>112</sup> *Leicester Daily Post* 8 October 1891, p. 5.

<sup>113</sup> *Leicester Journal* 9 October 1891, p. 2.

<sup>114</sup> *Leicester Journal* 6 March 1868, p. 7.

<sup>115</sup> *Leicester Journal* 5 March 1872, p. 6.

<sup>116</sup> *Leicester Journal* 7 March 1873, p. 6; *Leicester Chronicle* 14 June 1873, p. 5.

Since their discussion of the subject on a previous occasion it had occurred to him that some practical resolutions should be moved upon the subject and he had drawn up several.<sup>117</sup>

There was no political difference between Halford and the other clerics involved in the discussion. Where they had political opinions, the Anglican clergy tended towards Conservatism. The rationale had several strands: their opposition to disestablishment in Ireland and Wales (with a foreboding sentiment and perception of the alliance of Liberalism and Nonconformity); as landowners; as proponents of National Schools (voluntarism); and frequently in sympathy with their patrons (like the Manners family).

Thus, although his concern slightly led him astray from some other clerics, Halford was a convinced Conservative in line with his family at Wistow Hall. His interest was in working-class Conservatism, much in the mould of Disraeli. He lectured to the Oadby Working Men's Conservative Association on domestic legislation between 1828 and 1839.<sup>118</sup>

Fifty-one of the clergy in livings in 1881 (rectors and vicars) appeared at Conservative Party meetings in Leicestershire at least once each. In 1883, Bullivant of Lubenham was welcomed as 'an old and energetic friend of the Conservative cause.'<sup>119</sup> At a meeting at Great Bowden, he offered a long address, including: 'The old book taught them to fear God and honour the King (sic), and meddle not with them that were given to change. That was the reason they did not join the liberals (sic).'<sup>120</sup> At the banquet for the Leicester and Leicestershire Conservative Club, the Reverend Canon Burfield of St Mark's, Leicester, observed that he 'believed there was a great attachment to Conservative principles among the intelligent poor ...'<sup>121</sup> A regular attendee at meetings, Symonds contended at the annual dinner of the Ibstock and District Conservative and Unionist Association that 'it was only the Tories who were the true friends of the country and the constituencies. They must do their best in aid of the country by the defeat of the present Government.'<sup>122</sup> When the ceremony for the opening of Ashby de la Zouch Conservative Club took place, Green (Normanton), Gresley (Nether Seal) and Mammatt (Castle Donington) attended.<sup>123</sup> Many of the meetings convened in National Schools. In 1883, the Belgrave and Anstey Conservative Association convened in the

---

<sup>117</sup>*Leicester Daily Post* 10 May 1873, p. 3.

<sup>118</sup>*Leicester Journal* 19 March 1875, p. 10.

<sup>119</sup>*Leicester Journal* 23 November 1883, p. 5.

<sup>120</sup>*Market Harborough Advertiser and Midland Mail* 27 November 1883, p. 4.

<sup>121</sup>*Loughborough Herald and North Leicestershire Gazette* 20 April 1882, p. 8.

<sup>122</sup>*Leicester Journal* 1 June 1894, p. 8.

<sup>123</sup>*Loughborough Herald and North Leicestershire Gazette* 10 November 1887, p. 3.

National Schoolroom in Belgrave at the invitation of the incumbent, F. H. Richardson, for example.<sup>124</sup> Although they attended the meetings, the clerics did not assume office, except for Mammatt who was selected for the board of management of the Castle Donington Conservative Club.<sup>125</sup> Some of them also supported the Conservative ‘demonstrations’ with their presence.

The Conservative cause was adopted equally by rectors and vicars. The former had the prospect of the taxation of their rectorial land and the latter opposed what they perceived as the prospect of disestablishment. When they addressed the Conservative meetings, the two matters were the issues.

As mentioned, all clergy to some degree were influenced by the patrons of the livings. The clergy under the patronage of the Manners family in north-east Leicestershire conformed to the Conservative doctrine. They were no doubt presented on this basis too. In the north-west of the archdeaconry, Arthur Mammatt had acted as domestic chaplain to the Earl of Loudon before accepting one of the Hastings family’s livings. He was appointed one of the executors of the estate of Lady Egidia Hastings. He officiated at the opening of local Conservative clubs.<sup>126</sup>

On at least one occasion, the commitment to the Anglican and Tory cause exceeded the normal. In 1885, Joseph Shallcross complained to the *Leicester Chronicle* about the action of the Reverend Bruxner. Bruxner had retired as rector of Thurlaston, but still inhabited the parish. His successor, Townshend, perhaps foolishly allowed the Liberals to convene a meeting in the National Schoolroom to hear a speech by the Liberal MP, James Ellis. Bruxner attempted to disrupt and restrict the meeting. First, he demanded that no one attend from outside Thurlaston, which Shallcross described as a village dominated by the Anglican cause. Then on hearing that persons from Earl Shilton had walked to the venue (including Shallcross), Bruxner insisted that they leave and allegedly that they be ejected.<sup>127</sup>

A dissenting Anglican clergyman in this political tendency was J. O. Picton of Desford. At the local Liberal Party banquet in 1874, he addressed the assembly in a long, ecumenical speech about toleration and the ability of the Anglican Church to flourish in a plural environment.<sup>128</sup> On Picton’s demise in 1882, the *Leicester Chronicle* announced that: ‘A serious loss has befallen the

---

<sup>124</sup> *Leicester Chronicle* 7 July 1883, p. 5.

<sup>125</sup> *Hinckley News* 27 February 1886, p. 8.

<sup>126</sup> *Leicester Chronicle* 25 June 1892, p. 3; *Loughborough Herald and North Leicestershire Gazette* 25 February 1886, p. 5; *Leicester Journal* 30 April 1880, p. 7.

<sup>127</sup> *Leicester Chronicle* 12 December 1885, p. 3.

<sup>128</sup> *Leicester Chronicle* 25 April 1874, p. 7.

Liberal Party in South Leicestershire ...'<sup>129</sup> It was reported of his interment: 'It was of a plain and unostentatious description—quite in keeping with the life and character of the deceased ... [the grave] simply one of the ordinary kind.'<sup>130</sup> When curate in Leicester, Picton lived modestly on Humberstone Road with his wife, Annie, two sisters (both fundholders) and a single servant.<sup>131</sup> In Desford, he and Annie had a single servant on a slight rectorial income of £195.<sup>132</sup> Annie received his estate in 1882, a quite inconsiderable amount of £376 13s 2d.<sup>133</sup> Their existence was frugal.

Along with the Reverends David Vaughan and H. D. Millet, Picton, when curate of St George, Leicester, had assisted in the formation of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women.<sup>134</sup> Whilst curate at St George, he assiduously conducted the service at the workhouse on Wednesday evenings. When he offered more expansive services as non-remunerated chaplain, however, controversy ensued. Nonconformists objected and some of the guardians suspected that the position would be leveraged for a stipend. Mr Hames, one of the guardians, retorted that Picton had visited the workhouse fifty times in the previous year reflecting his diligence (by comparison with the nonconformist ministers), but the cause was lost.<sup>135</sup> At Desford, he acted as the treasurer of the local Sick and Clothing Club.<sup>136</sup> These activities reflect Picton's 'progressive' instincts.

*Crockford* provides minimal information about Picton's background, except that he was ordained deacon in 1847 and priest in 1848, serving as curate of Rowde in Wiltshire and St George in Leicester. Not noted by *Crockford* was that he also occupied the position of curate at Ridgway in Derbyshire.<sup>137</sup> In 1861, he was preferred to the rectory of Desford by the Lord Chancellor, the patron. The living was modest with an income of £195.<sup>138</sup> What is interesting is that *Crockford* contains no details of his education. It is possible that he was also a 'literate', inducted into the priesthood with no qualification in higher education.

This supposition is perhaps supported by what is known of his early life.

---

<sup>129</sup> 18 November 1882, p. 8.

<sup>130</sup> *Melton Mowbray Mercury and Oakham and Uppingham News* 23 November 1882 p. 6; ROLLR DE5250/6, p. 43 (no. 337).

<sup>131</sup> TNA RG9/2286, fo. 62v.

<sup>132</sup> TNA RG11/3134, fo. 48v.

<sup>133</sup> NPR 1882 Oakden-Quinton p. 244.

<sup>134</sup> *Leicester Guardian* 15 June 1861, p. 1.

<sup>135</sup> *Leicester Guardian* 3 August 1861, p. 8.

<sup>136</sup> *Melton Mowbray Mercury* ..., p. 6.

<sup>137</sup> TNA HO107/2148, fo. 371v.

<sup>138</sup> *Crockford* 1865, p. 497.



He was baptised at St Peter, Liverpool, his father (Jacob) a teacher living in Richmond Row.<sup>139</sup> The area of Liverpool was obviously populous and his early experience probably influenced his social attitude. His brother, Robert, was born in 1824. also at Richmond Row, to Jacob and Mary, when Jacob was described again as teacher.<sup>140</sup> In 1841, Jacob had become a ‘minister’, Robert, now aged 16, living in the household.<sup>141</sup> Robert was admitted to Trinity College, Dublin, in 1845.<sup>142</sup> There is no record of John having received any form of higher education. As the son of a teacher and later clergyman, he may have qualified as a ‘literate’ entrant to the priesthood.

### *Local government and the clergy*

When the Reverend Elmhirst died in 1893, an obituary noted that he had served on numerous local ad hoc boards and local administration. Above all, he had served as a justice of the peace for almost fifty years and latterly as the senior magistrate for the Lutterworth Division (attending petty sessions assiduously). Office on ad hoc boards had included the Highway Board and the Board of Guardians. His presence was also regular on the Rural Sanitary Authority. Finally he was elected to the new County Council in 1889.<sup>143</sup>

The contribution of the local clergy to local conditions was not confined to the spiritual. As dignitaries, trusted individuals and office-holders, they were recruited into other aspects of county life and administration. In particular an elite element was appointed to the bench.<sup>144</sup> Before 1888, the bench of magistrates as justices of the peace acted administratively as the county government as well as a judicial forum. A significant cohort had consisted of clerical magistrates for a very long time. In 1846, the county bench included sixteen parochial clergy.<sup>145</sup> In 1881, numerous incumbents were acting Justices of the Peace (Table 6: source *Kelly's Directory* 1881). Another four acted on the bench in the late nineteenth century

.John Piercy (born in Bedworth, Warws.) was an alumnus of Clare College, Cambridge, receiving his bachelor's degree in 1839 (MA 1845). He achieved his

---

<sup>139</sup>Liverpool Archives 283 PET/2/9, p. 156 (no. 2193).

<sup>140</sup>Liverpool Archives 283 PET/2/10, p. 307 (no. 2449).

<sup>141</sup>TNA HO107/558/2, fo. 11.

<sup>142</sup>George Burtchaell and Thomas Sadleis, *Alumni Dublinenses volume 2 Gabbett-Ryves* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2001), p. 668.

<sup>143</sup>*Market Harborough Advertiser and Midland Mail* 21 November 1893, p. 5.

<sup>144</sup>Carl Zangerl, ‘The social composition of the county magistracy in England and Wales’, *Journal of British Studies* 11 (1971), pp. 113-25; David Eastwood, *Governing Rural England: Tradition and Transformation in Local Government 1780-1840* (Oxford: OUP, 1994).

<sup>145</sup>*White's History, Gazetteer, and Directory of Leicestershire and the Small County of Rutland* (Sheffield: Robert Leader, 1846), pp. 40-1.

Table 6: Clerical Justices of the Peace in 1881

Incumbent	Parish
G. Bruxner	Thurlaston
R. Burton	Rothley
A. Byron	Kirkby Mallory
J. Echalaz	Appleby Magna
E. Elmhirst	Shawell
H. Johnson	Tugby
J. Lakin	Gilmorton
B. Ludford-Astley	Cadeby
F. Norman	Bottesford
J. Piercy	Slawston
A. Pownall	S. Kilworth
F. Richardson	Belgrave
J. Roberts	Witherley
G. Stanley	Branston
R. Titley	Barwell
H. Watson	Sharnford
W. Welby	Harston

first living as a curate at Pickwell (1840-3) and then Wymeswold (1843-6). In 1847, he accepted the vicarage of Slawston with Glooston. He had become familiar with the county by the time he was selected for the bench.<sup>146</sup> Similarly, Edward Elmhirst graduated from Cambridge in 1835; six years later, he had been appointed to the rectory of Shawell. As a justice, he compiled *Reports* on the Highway Districts in the County of Leicester.<sup>147</sup> Among other administrative matters, the justices before 1888 had responsibility for the maintenance of highways (consolidated by the Highways Act 1862 (25 & 26 Vict. c. lxi)) and bridges.

Ten of the clerical justices of 1881 remained in office in 1890, complemented by another eleven clergy on the bench. Indeed half a dozen of the cohort of 1881 still continued as justices at the end of the century, although the office was now restricted to judicial competence as administrative responsibilities had been transferred to the new county councils. At the end of the century, the clerical component on the bench numbered thirteen, all except one having held the office for at least a decade.<sup>148</sup>

Controversy over service on the bench was a constant, but erupted especially in 1879. 'A Churchman' debated with 'A Barrister' and 'An Observer' in the *Leicester Journal* in June of that year about the propriety of clerical magistrates. 'A Churchman' opposed the appointment of clergy to the bench for a number of reasons, not least its detraction from their ministry.

Public opinion is becoming much stronger against clergymen being appointed to this office, and I believe it to be a misfortune to any parish when the Pastor is a Magistrate, a member of the Board of Guardians, or a Commissioner of Taxes . . . It is also clear that the work has an unfavourable influence on the Pastor's own soul.<sup>149</sup>

Although 'A Barrister' was more sanguine, 'An Observer' retorted that the bench was laymen's business and that 'Clergymen had better mind their own business. . .', advocating a complete separate sphere.<sup>150</sup> A week later, 'A Churchman' responded in conciliation, without negating his principles.<sup>151</sup> Ap-

---

<sup>146</sup> *Crockford* 1898, p. 1069.

<sup>147</sup> *Crockford* 1882, p. 343.

<sup>148</sup> *Deacon's Leicestershire Rutland and Northamptonshire Court Guide and County Blue Book* (London: Charles William Deacon & Co., 1890), pp. 143-9; *Wright's Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland* (London: Kelly & Co., 1899), pp. xxii-xxiv.

<sup>149</sup> *Leicester Journal* 13 June 1879, p. 8.

<sup>150</sup> *Leicester Journal* 20 June 1879, p. 8.

<sup>151</sup> *Leicester Journal* 27 June 1879, p. 8.

parently the legal profession and the justices were content with clergymen on the bench, but the clergy and laity were divided on the issue.

‘An Observer’ may well have been irritated by the clerical magistrates regulating licensing, including at Brewster (Petty) Sessions. He might also have objected to the intervention of, for example, Canon Watson as justice at Michaelmas Sessions in 1883 opining about the county rate and the foot and mouth outbreak, including the assumption that ‘there was a general opinion about the county ...’<sup>152</sup> The *Journal*, like the barrister, was resolved in favour of clerical justices. On 20 June, the paper commented:

At the same time it must be borne in mind that the clergy are in one respect peculiarly fitted for the office: unlike the gentry who are frequently absent from their estates . . . the clergy are, from the requirements of their profession, usually to be found at home . . . and are more likely, we imagine, to labour for peace and resolution among their neighbours ...<sup>153</sup>

The first contention was perhaps illustrated by a meeting of the Lutterworth Division in 1874, when the bench consisted of the Reverends Pownall (Chair), Elmhirst and Lakin, and the lay justice Arkwright.<sup>154</sup> The newspaper item may have induced ‘A Churchman’ to bring the issue to a conclusion in his letter a week later. The *Journal* thus suggested a spirit of conciliation of clerical magistrates and the restoration of harmony in local society.

There was another point, nonetheless: that secular magistrates were often difficult to contact in administrative emergencies, like the outbreak of cattle plague. A number of letters to local newspapers abhorred the problem of an insufficient number of and travelling distance to local magistrates. The burden on the local clergy, reiterating the point of the *Journal*, was rehearsed in the *Hinckley News*:

It so happens, however, that in the Market Bosworth District the whole of the magisterial work devolves upon four clergymen, and of those, two really belong to the Hinckley Division.<sup>155</sup>

Indeed, one of the four clergy who were omnipresent at the Market Bosworth Petty Sessions was George Bruxner of Thurlaston rectory. He consistently appeared on the bench there, often presiding as chair, and was assiduous in his attendance.<sup>156</sup> Bruxner, moreover, regularly appeared on the bench for

---

<sup>152</sup> *Leicester Journal* 27 June 1879, p. 8.

<sup>153</sup> *Leicester Journal* 20 June 1879, p. 8.

<sup>154</sup> *Leicester Journal* 22 May 1874, p. 7.

<sup>155</sup> *Hinckley News* 18 December 1880, p. 5.

<sup>156</sup> *The Leicester Chronicle* reported his presence regularly: e.g. 29 March 1867, p. 8.

the Hinckley petty sessions.<sup>157</sup> (He also attended the biannual full sessions for the county).

When many of the administrative responsibilities of the magistracy were transferred to the new county councils after 1888, the local clergy was ambiguous about service on those new bodies. Some objected to involvement in lay government; others were concerned about the need for election rather than selection. Some of the current crop of clerical JPs expressed their willingness to take office.<sup>158</sup>

Indeed, the Reverend Henry Watson was elected (with 38 votes) as one of the aldermen of the new county council on its establishment and three other parish clergy sat as councillors: Byron, Elmhurst and Titley.<sup>159</sup> (In 1883, Watson and Woodcock had been appointed to the Finance Committee of the Quarter Sessions).<sup>160</sup> By the end of the century, Byron too had been elevated to alderman; Titley continued as a councillor and was joined in this role by O'Reilly of Whitwick and Deeming of Wigston Magna.<sup>161</sup> Despite the misgivings of some of the clergy, other parochial ministers took their place on the county council and continued to be involved in the secular affairs of local government.

The questions, however, were when and if service in these offices appeared to detract from spiritual responsibilities and when and if holding such offices, especially on the magistracy, caused resentment. In the case of the Bench, service involved sitting at petty sessions for licensing and also for reprimanding the numerous parents for children's absence from school, an especially contentious issue in agricultural districts at certain times of the year.

When conflict between some parishioners and clergy arose, moreover, it often involved office-holding. In 1891, the *Leicester Daily Post* remarked in its obituary for Smythies of Hathern: 'Of late, however, he was involved in lamentable differences with a considerable section of the parishioners, which led to legal proceedings'.<sup>162</sup> The rector was embroiled in contested elections for the representation of Hathern on the Loughborough Board of Guardians. In 1869, he defeated the parishioner Cooper. Twelve years later, the timber merchant, Burrows, stood against him and was defeated only by 139-120 votes.<sup>163</sup> Nine years after that contest, some attending the vestry meeting complained about

---

<sup>157</sup>For example, *Leicester Chronicle* 15 December 1866, p. 3; 20 April 1867, p. 3; 1 June 1867, p. 6.

<sup>158</sup>*Leicester Advertiser* 18 May 1889, p. 6.

<sup>159</sup>*Leicester Journal* 1 February 1889, p. 3.

<sup>160</sup>*Loughborough Herald & North Leicestershire Gazette* 18 October 1883, p. 6.

<sup>161</sup>*Deacon* 1890, pp. 151-3; *Wright* 1899, p. xxiv.

<sup>162</sup>8 October 1891, p. 5.

<sup>163</sup>*Leicester Mail* 24 April 1869, p. 3; *Leicester Journal* 15 April 1881, p. 3.

the conduct of the rector and the trustees of the Hathern Charity Estate.<sup>164</sup>

It was not paramount, however, for clergy to be seconded into lay government for them to influence local social conditions. The archdeacon, Henry Fearon, did not seek a formal role of local administration. He, nevertheless, engaged closely with the social conditions in his large parish of Loughborough (which was incorporated as a borough in 1888). From his institution, he was concerned about the sanitary environment of the town. In 1852, he with the other local incumbent, Bunch of the newly-established parish of Emmanuel, corresponded with the *Leicester Journal* in 1852. The local Board of Health, established under the Public Health Act of 1848 (11 & 12 Vict. c. 63), was dilatory in responding to deteriorating local conditions. In 1866, Fearon and some associates initiated a plan to supply water to the town: the Blackbrook Reservoir scheme. The local Board objected, but was stirred into action with its own Nanpanton Reservoir. Assuaged, Fearon provided funding for the construction of a fountain at the outlet of the supply in the Market Place in the town.<sup>165</sup>

Numerous local clergy acted as chaplains to the Poor Law Unions, combining a spiritual and a local administrative responsibility: vicars of Mountsorrel, Rolleston and Castle Donington to the Barrow Union, Billesdon Union, and Shardlow Union, and a rector of Lockington to the Shardlow Union. Non-beneficed clergy, Samuel Godber and Henry James, provided the same service to the Infirmary and HM Prison in Leicester.

As local dignitaries, equivalent to gentlemen, some of the clergy were also appointed to boards of governors and committees. Piercy, although in Slawston, attended the board of governors of the Leicester Royal Infirmary and the Dispensary and was occasionally appointed Visitor.<sup>166</sup> Many other clergy acted as visitors to the infirmary from distant parishes. Bruxner also served in this role. Additionally, he performed the same office for the Leicester Juvenile Reformatory.<sup>167</sup> As a Justice of the Peace, he also acted as Visitor to the Leicestershire and Rutland Lunatic Asylum.<sup>168</sup>

Non-beneficed clergy also operated as masters in the local grammar schools, at Kibworth GS (John Hildebrand), Osgathorpe GS (Theophilus Kelk), Stoke Golding GS (Thomas Bourne), Ashby GS (Thomas Masheder), and Barrow GS (William Ashbridge) and the Collegiate School in Leicester (Humphrey Millett

---

<sup>164</sup> *Leicester Chronicle* 8 February 1890, p. 5.

<sup>165</sup> Wallace Humphrey, *Henry Fearon: A Maker of Modern Loughborough* (Loughborough: Loughborough University, 1985), pp. 14-16.

<sup>166</sup> *Leicester Journal* 24 July 1863, p. 8; 31 July 1863, p. 2.

<sup>167</sup> *Leicester Mercury* 9 February 1856, p. 3; *Leicester Journal* 2 December 1859, p. 8.

<sup>168</sup> *Hinckley News* 8 February 1868, p. 8; *Leicester Mail* 8 February 1868, p. 5.

and Abraham Hill).<sup>169</sup> Although the teaching in National (Church of England) Schools was performed by lay educators, the parish clergy were intimately involved in the management. Well into the late nineteenth century, parishes outside the borough were predominantly served by denominational schools rather than Board School.<sup>170</sup> The local C of E Education Board and National School Society was administered by another non-beneficed cleric, William Fry, the honorary secretary.<sup>171</sup>

The provision of education through the National Schools became a contentious matter for the clergy as the state intervened in the regulation of schooling. The revised code of the Newcastle Commission in 1862 stirred up opposition from the local clergy. At the ruridecanal meeting for the Deanery of Framland in early 1862, the clergy drafted detailed opposition to the revised code.<sup>172</sup> At that time, of course, no publicly-funded schools existed. From 1870, Board Schools were introduced and more regulation for all denominational and Board schools. The next educational crisis for the clergy occurred after 1881 and the prospect of free elementary education. The National Schools had depended on the school pence which was now threatened. In 1889, the clergy convoked at the united ruridecanal conference for the two deaneries of Goscote and its counterpart for Guthlaxton were much exercised by these combined issues.<sup>173</sup>

Archdeacon Fearon was much exercised about the provision of education, particularly in his large, urbanizing parish of Loughborough. Shortly after his translation to the parish, he was co-opted onto the board of governors of the local grammar school and his co-resident sister to the same for the girls' section. Although he advocated a practical curriculum and the extension of education to a wider social mix, his recommendations were conventionally Anglican and aimed to protect the Church of England's position in the provision of education.<sup>174</sup>

Ostensible service for the common good and public interest was, however, a two-edged sword. Those clergy who advanced themselves were not uncritical of the poorest in society. In particular, the rectors defended their own interests as landowners. Thus the Reverends Smythies, Bruxner and Canon Willes all

---

<sup>169</sup>In general, Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, p. 52.

<sup>170</sup>Still useful is W. B. Stephens, *Education in Britain 1750-1914* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1998), pp. 1-20, 77-97, for the commission reporting in 1862 and the contention in 1881.

<sup>171</sup>Information from *Kelly's Directory* 1881, for example, pp. 480, 486 (Thomas Masheder head of Ashby GS and William Ashbridge head of Barrow GS).

<sup>172</sup>*Leicester Journal* 7 Feb. 1862, p. 8 (the meeting convened on 24 January).

<sup>173</sup>*Leicester Advertiser* 18 May 1889, p. 6.

<sup>174</sup>Humphrey, *Henry Fearon*, p. 17.

attended the meetings of the Leicester Chamber of Agriculture. There, they lamented the level of the rates and taxation. In 1873, they spoke at the Chamber's meeting against the level of the poor rate and the dependency culture of many of the poor, not prepared to save for old age but with a predilection to rely on poor relief.<sup>175</sup> Halford presided over a meeting for 'the suppression of professional begging' in 1878. He was appointed honorary secretary of the North Midland Poor Law conference in his capacity as a member of the Board of Guardians of the Blaby Union.<sup>176</sup> The concern of these clergy was to encourage thrift among the working population. As local dignitaries they thus also served on the management of local savings institutions with an interest. The Reverends Gordon (Oadby), Woodcock (Ratcliffe on the Wreake) and Syers (Syston) were co-opted as additional managers and trustees of the Leicester Savings Bank in 1872.<sup>177</sup> Their involvement was not disinterested; they subscribed to the prevailing philosophy of self-help and thrift.<sup>178</sup>

*Writing the county: the cultural impact of some of the clergy*

When he had been in his living at Cranoe for thirty years, John Harwood Hill had published his *The History of the Parish of Langton and That Portion of the Hundred of Gartree...* The incumbent rector had become deeply interested in the region around his parish. Although born in Louth (Lincs.), Hill had concentrated his attention on the history of his adopted county. He obtained his Cambridge BA degree in 1834 and was instituted as rector of Cranoe in 1837, combining it from 1841 with the vicarage of Welham, producing a combined benefice income of £552. He died in his parish in 1887, in his late seventies, with personal estate evaluated at £3,016.<sup>179</sup> His first offices were as curate of Glaston (Rutland) in 1834 and then of Corby (Northants.) in 1835. Between 1835 and 1837, he acted as librarian at Deene Park (Northants.), producing a *Black Letter Catalogue of Deene Library*. From his living in Leicestershire, he immersed himself in the history and antiquities of his adopted county and archdeaconry. His *History of Langton and a Portion of the Gartree Hundred of Leicestershire* (1867) (noted above) with etchings by the author, succeeded his initial foray into the *Family Of Langton* (1862) and *Archdeacons of Leicester* (1866). *His History of Market Harborough* (and part of Gartree Hundred again) appeared in 1875.<sup>180</sup> He had also composed *Notes on Rut-*

---

<sup>175</sup> *Leicester Daily Post*, 3 March 1873, p. 3.

<sup>176</sup> *Leicester Chronicle* 12 April 1872, p. 8; 26 October 1876, p. 7.

<sup>177</sup> *Leicester Chronicle* 8 February 1872, p. 3.

<sup>178</sup> Paul Johnson, 'Class law in Victorian England' *Past and Present* 141 (1993), pp. 147-69.

<sup>179</sup> NPR 1887 Habberley-Hitt p. 366; TNA RG11/3121, fo. 4. *Crockford* 1882, p. 515.

<sup>180</sup> (Leicester: Ward & Sons, 1875).



landshire in 1871.

The *History of Market Harborough* was delayed because of the time needed for Hill to produce his own numerous etchings. The lack of progress was also attributed in the preface to the difficulty of attracting subscribers. Ultimately some seventeen parish clergy made subscriptions, with Dent and Fenwick each ordering two. The clerical subscriptions derived mostly, of course, from the parishes in the Hundred, but Marriott (Thrussington) and Titley (Barwell) also subscribed (as well as a few clergy in adjacent parishes in Northants.).<sup>181</sup>

The volume on Market Harborough and its hinterland brought Nichols into the later nineteenth century. As interesting is the abstract at the end of the volume which relates the results from a conference in the diocese of Peterborough on 2 June 1874 to collect information about gifts to the church in the previous thirty years. Hill provided from the report a list of 65 churches in Gartree Hundred which had been restored through these funds, the enlargement of the school at Cranoe in 1874, and the construction of a new school at Lubenham in 1858.<sup>182</sup>

Hill was instrumental in the genesis of the Leicestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society and for many years its secretary.<sup>183</sup> He was not alone among the clerical membership, however. A nexus of parish clergy was instrumental in the establishment of the society in its initial eight years: Gresley (Overseal); Burnaby (St George, Leicester); Marriott (Cotesbach); Pownall (S. Kilworth); Fisher (Higham on the Hill); Burfield (St Mark, Leicester); Upcher (Allextion); Picton (Desford); Rendell (Coston); and Owen (St Nicholas, Leicester). They all rotated offices and chaired meetings, as well as offering short papers. Pownall particularly reported regularly about numismatics.<sup>184</sup> Gresley introduced the proceedings in 1855 with papers about Gracedieu Priory and Blackfordby. Stocks discussed the will of William Wolstanton of 1405 in 1882, perhaps his initial foray into local research.<sup>185</sup>

The young William George Dimock Fletcher (b. 1851; Oxford BA 1877) was induced to contribute a variety of articles in the 1880s, among some of his earliest research (although some interest in Derbyshire preceded these contributions). Then curate of Holy Trinity in Oxford, Fletcher maintained an association with the society. About this time, Fletcher established a rela-

---

<sup>181</sup> *History of Market Harborough*, pp. 3-5.

<sup>182</sup> *History of Market Harborough*, pp. 338-339.

<sup>183</sup> G. T. Rimington, 'The history of the Reverend John Harwood Hill, and his contribution to the activities of the newly formed Leicestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society', *The Leicestershire Historian* 38 (2002), pp. 20-22.

<sup>184</sup> *Leicestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society* volumes 1-8 (1855-93).

<sup>185</sup> Volume 6 (1882), pp. 223-225.

tionship with Archdeacon Fearon of Loughborough in the former's researches into Loughborough, first commenting on the parish registers of Loughborough in the Reliquary, then composing an *Historical Handbook to Loughborough* (Loughborough: H. Wills, 1881), and finally, with a dedication to Fearon, *The Rectors of Loughborough* (Oxford: J. Salmon, 1882). Fletcher's interest in Leicestershire culminated in his edition of the lay subsidy roll of 1327.<sup>186</sup> Although Fletcher organized its printing in 1888-1889 from his vicarage of St Michael's, Shrewsbury, it marked, however, the culmination of his connection with Leicestershire and its parochial clergy.

John Edward Stocks (born in Leeds in the West Riding) held the living (vicarage) of Market Harborough between 1871 and 1884, where his children, including Helen, the fifth of the progeny, were born. Helen was baptised on 15 October 1883.<sup>187</sup> Stocks had graduated from Oxford with a 3rd class degree in *Litterae Humaniores* and retained that interest. In 1884, he was translated to St Saviour's vicarage in Leicester and in 1893 appointed archdeacon. From St Saviour's he collaborated with W. B. Bragg to edit *Market Harborough Parish Records to 1530* (London: Elliot Stock, 1890). Although Mary Bateson did not die until 1906, volumes II and III of the *Records of the Borough of Leicester* were revised by Stephenson and Stocks. By the publication of volume III (1905), Stocks, still archdeacon, had assumed the vicarage of Misterton with Walcote (in 1902).<sup>188</sup> John also offered various notes to the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in 1882.<sup>189</sup> Unsurprisingly, John's involvement in the editing of the *Records of the Borough* was continued by Helen, responsible for Volume IV 1603-1688.<sup>190</sup>

The involvement of Stocks in the borough's records aside, the clerical antiquaries belonged to that rural elite which portrayed the story and identity of England as still residing in the countryside and the land. Although this picture was partial, it resonated. Whilst the landscape of urban centres was being transformed by municipal socialism, the narrative of the country and the pedigrees of the gentry presented an alternative formation.<sup>191</sup>

---

<sup>186</sup> *The Earliest Leicestershire Lay Subsidy Roll, 1327* (British Library Historical Print Collections, n.d.) (originally in *The Associated Architectural Society Reports* commencing in volume 19 (1888)).

<sup>187</sup> ROLLR DE 1587/8, p. 80 (no. 659); *Crockford* 1895, p. 1273; *Crockford* 1908, p. 364.

<sup>188</sup> M. Bateson, *Records of the Borough of Leicester Volume II 1327-1509* (London: C. J. Clay, 1901); Volume III 1509-1603 (Cambridge: CUP, 1905).

<sup>189</sup> Volume 6 (1882), pp. 93-95, 223-225.

<sup>190</sup> Helen Stocks, *Records of the Borough of Leicester Volume IV 1603-1688* (Cambridge: CUP, 1923).

<sup>191</sup> All these aspects are now encapsulated in Paul Readman, *Storied Ground: Landscape and the Shaping of National Identity* (Cambridge: CUP, 2018).

## *Conclusion*

‘They [the longevous clerics in rural parishes] were probably not the best people to minister to a rural society undergoing difficult social and economic changes’.<sup>192</sup> Indeed, profound transitions were occurring in both rural and urban contexts in the late nineteenth century. Some of those changes were being met within the Anglican church. On the other hand, numerous legacy issues were problems. Patronage and wealth still determined the clerical presence in some rural parishes in face of the competition from nonconformity. The vast difference between the income of livings persisted despite attempts to reduce the disparity. The local clergy still overwhelmingly consisted of graduates of the two ancient universities with a sprinkling of those from Trinity College, Dublin. The Irish complement may have been encouraged by the Irish bishop of Peterborough, Magee. Men from the theological colleges had only a very limited presence and often in the poorest benefices (although not exclusively). Although Magee, through the creation of new ecclesiastical districts and parishes, tried to improve the situation in the county borough, there was leakage of clergy to non-urban livings and he could not interfere in the preferment to the ancient parishes in the borough. In Loughborough, the creation of Emmanuel parish depended on the patronage of the eponymous college in Cambridge. In rural parishes, lay patronage actively decided institutions. The patronage of the Duke of Rutland, indeed, influenced a whole locality. As Haig remarked (above), the longevity of some clergy enduring in their living gave an anachronistic impression: clergy in their 70s and even 80s conducting their office. The Anglican church was moving forward, if at a glacial pace, depending on a new (but lower) recruitment of clergy.

The question then arises as to the relative attitudes of the higher and lower clergy: whether the former were reforming and the latter more reticent. There was obviously a legacy of older incumbents instituted in the first half of the nineteenth century who had a more traditional outlook. The problems assailing the Anglican church from perceived Liberal reforms possibly also caused some circling of the clerical wagons. Clergy were perhaps driven into the arms of the Tories in a local alliance of Church and Party.

The changes in local governance affected the local clergy. Their traditional role as justices of the peace was truncated by the reforms in local government. In contrast, the establishment of the ad hoc local boards provided opportunities. How they conducted themselves on those local boards reflected their ideological assumptions about the position of working people, all their parishioners. Most of these clerics had exogenous origins, although some, through

---

<sup>192</sup>Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, p. 291.

patronage, returned to the county and archdeaconry. Some, when they became established clergy, nonetheless, became immersed in their adopted county and contributed to its culture, stimulating the more intense interest in the history and antiquities of the county in both informal and formal practice. The presence of the clergy in local government may have had an ambivalent effect, even within the clerical cohort. Some clergy and many of the laity were concerned about involvement in secular affairs not being appropriate for spiritual representatives, either detracting from their profession or interfering.

There was indeed a central corps of the clergy which demonstrated a particular outlook, invoking traditional ideas in the face of contest. These clerics clung to the Tory Party. The local clergy were not totally monolithic, however, but were divided by different opinions on lay and internal administrative affairs, as in any organization. Many of these issues would only be conclusively resolved after 1903.