

THE PROGRESS OF THE REFORMATION IN
SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE,
c. 1510 – c. 1750

Ann Garfield, B.A., M.A.

**Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

April 2016

IN MEMORY OF ALL MY NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ANCESTORS
WHO LIVED THEIR LIVES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE OF THIS STUDY

ABSTRACT

The thesis follows the stages of the Reformation from the late-medieval Church to the Elizabethan Church and later Separatist groups in eighteen parishes of the upper River Tove valley. A number of ideas and assumptions about the Reformation have been tested for the area. An important finding is that even in this small area the timing and pace of the Reformation varied between individual parishes and occurred in different ways. There is shown to have been a diversity and variety of piety between and within communities across the period of the study. It is shown that changes had begun before the Dissolution, making Henry VIII's reforms easier to accept; that there was no Marian revival of Catholicism in the area; and that the main element in the timing of reform was the different influences at work in the parishes.

After an introductory chapter, evidence is presented in five more chapters that are entitled: the Study Area; the Late-medieval Church; Wills and Religious Beliefs; Influences in the Parishes; and the Growth of Dissent. These are followed by a Conclusion, outlining the main findings of the thesis, the advantages of the methodology used, and how the thesis is a new type of study of the Reformation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I thank my supervisor, Dr Robert Lutton, without whose patient encouragement, I might not have continued beyond my first two years (part-time). Importantly, Rob's comments on my work sometimes made me think in different directions, to the benefit of the whole thesis. My original supervisor, Dr David Marcombe, who inspired my interest in the Reformation while I studied for my M.A., set me on the path for this study. David was followed by Dr Sarah Speight and Gary Mills, whom I also thank, and Dr Julia Merritt my final second supervisor.

The staff of a number of libraries and record offices have been very helpful, particularly at Northampton Record Office over many years. I thank the churchwardens I met who were all interested and helpful, particularly at Stoke Bruerne, for information about the church over a number of years; at Easton Neston, for travelling a few miles to open the church at my convenience; and at Bradden for identifying the Goodman house. Mary Pryse of the new Catanger Farm told me the recent history of the outdoor baptistry. Dr Miriam Gill and Anne Marshall generously answered questions about particular wall-paintings. Sue Sinclair drew four maps for me (pp.25-27, and 40).

Special thanks go to Barbara Smith of Slapton Manor, which became a friendly base for several stays in the area, and to her father, now deceased, for a number of informative chats about the locality.

Many other individuals have contributed help and advice and I hereby thank all those who are not named above.

CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements	4
List of maps	6
List of tables	7
List of illustrations	8
Abbreviations	9
Note on the Text	9
1 Introduction	10
2 The Study Area	34
3 The Late-medieval Church	76
4 Wills and Religious Beliefs	123
5 Influences in the Parishes	163
6 Growth of Dissent	212
Conclusion	255
Bibliography	268

List of Maps

2.1	Northamptonshire and the study area	34
2.2	The study parishes and the River Tove with a main northern tributary	35
2.3	Roads in the study area	36
2.4	The extent of the Royal Forests of Northamptonshire in the thirteenth century	46
2.5	The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire indicating woodland	47
2.6	Religious houses and chapels in the study area	49

List of Tables

2.1	Villages and hamlets assessed in the Lay Subsidy, 1524-5, and other settlements	40
2.2	Approximate populations of the parishes	41
2.3	Wealth of inhabitants as assessed for the Lay Subsidy (first survey) 1524	43
2.4	Involvement of the religious orders	51
3.1	The number of pious bequests made by testators	76
3.2	Testamentary bequests for masses obits and lights	77
3.3	The nine most popular Northamptonshire gild dedications compared with the same dedications in other areas	87
4.1	Burials and wills	124
4.2	Wills declaring the testator's status	125
4.3	The status of testators, 1510-1610	126
4.4	Religious preambles, 1510-1610	131
4.5	Preambles in Peterborough diocese compared with the study area	137
4.6	Dates of the first Protestant preamble in each parish	137
4.7	Elizabethan Protestantism and the last traditionalism, 1558-1603	139
4.8	Pious bequests	141
4.9	Bequests for masses, the Sepulchre and the Rood, 1536-1547	145
4.10	Other pious bequests	146
4.11	Traditional bequests in Marian wills, 1553-1558	154
5.1	Clerical witnesses, overseers, executors, and named scribes	176
5.2	Clerical witnesses of Towcester wills, 1571-1610	201
6.1	Compton Census 1676 and Hearth Tax 1673-4	228

List of Illustrations

(Note: all photographs are by the author unless stated otherwise below the illustration)

2.1	The Helmdon mason: William Campion	48
2.2	Stoke Bruerne: the blocked exterior doorway to an unusual straight staircase to the rood-loft	71
3.1	St Gregory Mass, Slapton	84
3.2	William Sponne's monument in the church of St Lawrence, Towcester	91
3.3	St Christopher, Slapton	97
3.4	St Michael weighing souls, Slapton	99
3.5	Warning to gossips, Slapton	99
3.6	The annunciation scene, Slapton	101
3.7	St Loy shoeing a horse, Slapton, and St Anne teaching Mary to read	103
3.8	Pilgrim badge of St Loy	104
3.9	The <i>Pietà</i> from (A) Pury End Quarry, (B) Towcester, (C) Beauchamp Chapel	107
3.10	The fifteenth-century screen at Stoke Bruerne	109
3.11	The fifteenth-century screen at Stoke Bruerne	109
3.12	St Francis of Assisi receiving the stigmata, Slapton	110
5.1	The burning of John Kurde, martyr, at Northampton	181
5.2	Pedigree of the Lovetts and Shirleys of Astwell	186
5.3	Richard Fermor (died 1551) and his wife Anne Browne	193
5.4	Sir John Fermor (died 1575) and his wife Maud Vaux (died 1569)	193
5.5	Sir George Fermor (died 1612) and his wife Mary Curzon (died 1628)	194
6.1	Painted text in Syresham church	231
6.2	The Goodman house at Bradden in 2010	243
6.3	Early twentieth-century photograph of the old baptistry at Catanger Farm, near Woodend	245

ABBREVIATIONS

Arch. North.	Archdeaconry of Northampton Wills
BHRS	Bedfordshire Historical Record Society
Bridges	John Bridges, <i>The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire</i>
CCR	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i>
CIPM	<i>Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem</i>
CPL	<i>Calendar of Papal Letters</i>
CPR	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i>
CSPD	<i>Calendar of State Papers Domestic</i>
CYS	Canterbury and York Society
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
HS	Harleian Society
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
L&P	<i>Calendars of Letters and Papers Domestic of Henry VIII</i>
LL&RRO	Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Record Office
LPS	<i>Local Population Studies</i>
LRS	Lincoln Record Society
NP&P	<i>Northamptonshire Past and Present</i>
NRO	Northampton Record Office
NRS	Northamptonshire Record Society
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> (online)
ORS	Oxfordshire Record Society
PCC	Prerogative Court of Canterbury
PDR	Peterborough Diocesan Records
Pet.	Consistory Court of Peterborough Wills
QSR	Quarter Sessions Records
RCHME	Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England
RHS	Royal Historical Society
TLAS	<i>Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society</i>
TNA	The National Archives
TRHS	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
<i>Valor Eccles.</i>	<i>Valor Ecclesiasticus</i>
VCH	<i>Victoria History of the County of...</i>

Note on the Text: except in quotations, modern place-names are used; one variant is used for family-names where variants exist; years begin on Jan. 1st.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

a) Defining the study

This thesis aims to add to the understanding of popular religion in England with a localized study of the Reformation in South Northamptonshire. Reformation studies at a local level have been popular for the last 50 years and, by using local archives, have demonstrated differences in the timing and strength of the reception of Protestantism in various parts of the country. An interest in the Reformation evolved from part of an M.A. course. The area chosen for study was the result of stories from my mother and grandmother leading to research of family history in South Northamptonshire and thus to a growing knowledge of the holdings of the Northamptonshire Record Office. The area has the advantage of differing geographically and topographically from the situations of other local studies, adding another type of area to the corpus of Reformation research. Existing studies nationally appear to be one of three types: firstly, regional studies covering a large area or diocese, secondly, comparing geographically separated towns or large villages, or lastly, a study of one community.¹ This thesis appears to depart from any previously published study by researching a group of eighteen contiguous parishes. These cover an area of roughly twelve miles by six miles in the water catchment area of the upper River Tove from its headwaters to a few miles below Towcester, the small market town of the group. They were, with the exception of one parish, within Whittlewood and Salcey Royal Forests at their greatest extent, but were mainly covered by forest law rather than trees by the sixteenth century, although the southern parishes of Whittlebury, Silverstone and Syresham were in continuous woodland. The sixteenth-century topography, economy and ecclesiastical framework of the Tove valley, a rural area of small villages and hamlets

For example: (county) Caroline Litzenberger, 'Local Responses to Changes in Religious Policy based on Evidence from Gloucestershire Wills (1540-1580)', *Continuity and Change*, 8/3 (1993), pp.417-439; (five towns) Mary D. Lucas, *Popular Religious Attitudes in Urban Lincolnshire during the Reformation: The Will Evidence 1520-1600*, unpublished University of Nottingham, PhD thesis (1998); (one town) Laquita M. Higgs, *Godliness and Governance in Tudor Colchester* (Michigan, 1998).

connected by track-ways and close to drove roads, are discussed in detail in chapter two.

This study also departs from many other studies of the Reformation by researching the ‘long Reformation’, beginning with the medieval Church and following, firstly, developments through the reigns of the four monarchs from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I and, secondly, a continuation into the seventeenth century when dissent and Separatism occurred over the entire area among a small percentage of the population. Diocesan control changed in 1541 from Lincoln to Peterborough, one of Henry VIII’s new dioceses, and research involves both dioceses. The late-medieval Church is examined before progressing to reforms begun by Henry VIII in the 1530s, but where relevant there will be diversions to earlier periods, for instance, fifteenth-century Lollards.

Other Northamptonshire ecclesiastical research by William Sheils, John Fielding and Paul Morton Geldart is based on Peterborough diocese (including Rutland), or the county of Northampton.² Although the area will sometimes be treated as a unit, particularly when comparing it with the rest of Northamptonshire or other areas, the focus throughout will be on eighteen individual communities; how the Reformation progressed in each and, even in this small area, the differences between parishes. Strictly speaking there were eighteen churches situated in fifteen parishes and three chapelries, but the chapels of ease had a certain amount of autonomy and later became ecclesiastical parishes.

Having outlined the setting of the study, the following paragraphs pose the main questions that will be considered in order to interpret the progress of reform in this area of Northamptonshire and to emphasize differences from other areas.

Studies have not shown a united national feeling that the Reformation was wanted or necessary; most historians now agree that the late-medieval

² Sheils W. J, *Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough 1558-1610*, NRS, 30 (1979); John Fielding, *Conformists, Puritans and the Church Court: the Diocese of Peterborough, 1603-1642*, unpublished University of Birmingham Ph.D. thesis (1989); Geldart, Paul Morton, *Protestant Nonconformity and Sectarianism in Restoration Northamptonshire*, unpublished University of Leicester, Ph.D. thesis (2006).

church was a strong institution and that popular belief was healthy, questioning why reform was generally accepted without protest. Eamon Duffy, from a Catholic viewpoint, describes the medieval church as ‘a world of great beauty and power which it seemed to me the reformers – and many historians ever since – had misunderstood, traduced and destroyed’.³ How did the Church function as the centre of community life in the later middle ages and was it a strong institution in the study area? Were the people really satisfied with the medieval Church or were there signs of earlier questioning of traditional beliefs before Henry VIII’s reforms began?

The ‘revival of Catholicism’ in Mary’s reign reopens the question of the popularity of reform. The genuineness of revival varied over the country, although it is often assumed using will preambles, detailing the soul bequest, as the sole evidence, but the body of the will should also be considered before making a judgment. William Sheils, writing of the Peterborough diocese as a whole, believes that the growing Protestant beliefs were merely hidden by the use of ‘Catholic’ will-preambles in Mary’s reign.⁴ Was there even apparent compliance with Mary’s traditional Church in the study area where the only Northamptonshire ‘Marian martyr’ lived? Was his a lone voice, or an overt sign of a less audible trend? Did parishes vary in their response? This is discussed at length in chapter four, where it is argued that there was no revival.

Various influences in the parishes affected the timing and speed of reform. Long-serving Catholic priests probably delayed reform in their parishes and there were examples in the area; one serving for 46 years through four reigns, 1524-1570. This was an area with an exceptionally high percentage of appropriated churches (see chapter two) and reform was also influenced by the new owners of church lands and holders of advowsons, Catholic or Protestant, after the Dissolution. Considering influences on individual parishes, what reasons emerge to account for the differences between them and can any inferences be made about the popularity, or more passive acceptance, of the Protestant Church?

³ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars, Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-c. 1580* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 2nd ed. 2005), p. xiv.

⁴ Sheils, *Puritans*, pp. 16-17.

In the seventeenth century, conventicles were held at Sulgrave in the west and Towcester and Paulerspury in the east of the area. What led to them being held in these places? Dissent and Separatism spread through the parishes among a small percentage of the population. Evidence for this is presented in chapter six. Were there links between fifteenth-century heresy and these later developments and are there any hints of familial continuities from Lollards to Separatists?

b) Historiography

The historiography of the English Reformation began contemporaneously in England and has continued until the present day. Rosemary O'Day examines the way in which successive generations have written, redefined and rewritten the story; from 1525 until the twentieth century.⁵ Histories were national histories about causes and about the early Protestant groups and leaders; 'history from above'. Discussion of twentieth century historiography, where it has a bearing on this study, now follows.

The late-medieval Church and reform

To early-twentieth-century writers the degeneracy of the late-medieval Church and anticlericalism were national concerns; for instance, in 1915, G. G. Coulton thought that anti-clericalism was a main cause of the English Reformation: the people thought the Church was degenerate, they resented having to pay tithes to their priest, and they wanted change.⁶

In the early 1960s, historians were still attacking the medieval Church and claiming that people wanted change. In 1963, G. R. Elton typified the views of most historians of the time saying that traditions of protest and the need for religious reform began before Luther's 'ninety-five theses' in 1517. Conditions were right for Luther's protest to swell rapidly into a movement threatening the unity of the Church and the supremacy of the pope.⁷ Attacking the medieval Church, Elton said reassuring pilgrimages and the worship of

⁵ Rosemary O'Day, *The Debate on the English Reformation* (London, 1986).

⁶ G. G. Coulton, *Ten Medieval Studies* (Cambridge, 1906, republished Boston, Mass., 1959), pp. 137-9.

⁷ G. R. Elton, *Reformation Europe 1517-1559* (London, 1963), esp. pp. 1, 22, 181.

saints were essential to the people ‘if any religion is to be made supportable which stresses the prospect of hell as graphically as medieval Christianity did’.⁸

During the 1960s studies of the Reformation changed from national histories to regional and local histories of the Reformation; ‘history from below’. History was now revisionist; using local evidence, the degeneracy of the church, anticlericalism and resentment about paying tithes were no longer thought to have caused a desire for change among the general population. Margaret Bowker investigated anticlericalism in the diocese of Lincoln and found little supporting evidence.⁹ Northamptonshire was in Lincoln diocese until 1541 and no actual evidence of anticlericalism was found in the study area. Countering the long Protestant tradition of a change provoked, if not predestined, by the inadequacies of the medieval Church and the abuses of its power and practices, J. J. Scarisbrick and Christopher Haigh have emphasised the loyalty of the people to the orthodox faith and clergy, albeit Haigh was specifically referring to Lancashire.¹⁰ Similar to Bowker in Lincoln Diocese, Haigh opined that anticlericalism, seen by many earlier historians as initiating religious change nationally, may not have been a widespread phenomenon and that there is surprisingly little solid evidence of conflict between clergy and laity; tithe appears to have become a problem only from the 1540s.¹¹

The late-medieval church, the source of all this controversy, was the subject of Eamon Duffy’s *The Stripping of the Altars* (1992); a seminal study of belief and practice in the medieval Church that prompted much acclaim, but also received some critical reviews commenting on its lack of balance, particularly from David Aers who is concerned that Part 1 confines discussion to an exclusively rural parish setting.¹² However, Duffy’s aim was to map the range and vigour of late medieval and early modern English Catholicism using

⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 176-7.

⁹ Margaret Bowker, *The Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1495-1520* (Cambridge, 1968).

¹⁰ J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 1, 16-17; Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 63, 74-5.

¹¹ Christopher Haigh, ‘Anticlericalism and the English Reformation’, *History*, 68 (1983), pp. 391-407.

¹² Duffy, *Stripping* (1st ed., 1992); David Aers, ‘Altars of Power: reflections on Eamon Duffy’s *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England*’, *Literature and History*, 3/2 (1994), pp. 90-105.

local parochial archives for examples.¹³ The bibliography includes a considerable number of urban churchwardens' accounts from London and towns. In Part 2, Aers criticizes Duffy's neglect of the influence of the Lollards in the history of the Reformation. In the introduction to the first edition Duffy commented that there was no extended discussion of Lollards and the earliest English Protestants, not because their existence was doubted, but because he thought that Reformation historians have generally overestimated their numbers and significance.¹⁴

In his revised second edition (2005) Duffy answers the criticism by stressing the subtitle *Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580*; the chapters concerning the Reformation are 'not a general history of the coming of Protestantism, but an account of its impact on the conservative majority'.¹⁵ Concerning Lollardy, there was no intention to make it a subject of discussion.¹⁶ He also made the point that until comparatively recently, English medieval historians tended to concentrate on earlier periods and the late medieval Church has largely been studied by Reformation historians and hence through the eyes of its critics.¹⁷

Norman Jones sums up the twentieth-century historiographical disputes by relating two exaggerated and contrasting myths describing the medieval Church and its reform:

Once upon a time the people of England were happy Medieval Catholics, visiting their holy wells, attending frequent masses, and deeply respectful of Purgatory and afraid of Hell. Then lustful King Henry forced them to abandon their religion. England was never merry again.

Alternatively, once upon a time the people were oppressed by corrupt churchmen. They yearned for the liberty of the Gospel. Then Good King Harry gave them the Protestant nation for which they longed.¹⁸

These myths represent extreme views of the Reformation; the second is described by Duffy as an exaggerated version of the traditional account of the

¹³ Duffy, *Stripping*, (2005), pp. 3-4.

¹⁴ Duffy, *Stripping*, (1992), p. 6. All future references are to the (2005) edition.

¹⁵ Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. xviii-xxxvii.

¹⁶ Duffy, *Stripping*, p. xix.

¹⁷ Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 6.

¹⁸ Norman Jones, *English Reformation, Religion and Cultural Adaptation*, (Oxford, 2002), p. 1.

Reformation, while the first is a parody of the revisionist view.¹⁹ These myths are not about real people; the majority of people undergoing the Reformation were more concerned with living their lives, perhaps among younger or older generations with different beliefs from their own, while adapting to a changing culture. Jones opines that there is now broad agreement that, although some English people were excited by Protestantism in Henry VIII's reign, there was not much popular support for a change, which came slowly. Men and women living through the Reformation were not consulted about their theological opinions and had to adapt to changes. They were unknowingly founders of an evolving new English culture.²⁰ Jones's book is about these people and their adaption to changes.

Local and regional studies

In 1959 A. G. Dickens was perhaps the first historian to study the Reformation from a regional rather than a national viewpoint when he wrote an influential study of the Lollards and Protestants in the diocese of York. This discusses the question of survival of Lollard beliefs among later Protestants. Although essentially a general history of early Protestantism in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire it does seek to detect the Lollard strain among various dissenters of the succeeding decades. Dickens argues that the records of the diocese of York support the survival and revival of Lollardy: 'in substance and in name, Lollardy continued into the reign of Mary, increasingly merging with the newer Protestant doctrines, yet continuing throughout the diocese to colour the popular heresy'. He also concludes that 'the communities which displayed the most marked Lollard-Protestant tendencies before 1558 proceeded in each case to develop puritan tendencies in Elizabethan and Jacobean times' and he suggests that Lollardy and later Independency appealed to the same sorts of people.²¹ Although there is only evidence of a small number of late-Lollards in the study area it appears to agree with these ideas, which are discussed in chapters five and six. In *The English Reformation* (1964), Dickens again

¹⁹ Eamon Duffy, *Saints, Sacrilege and Sediton, Religion and Conflict in the Tudor Reformations* (London, 2012), p. 3.

²⁰ Jones, *English Reformation*, pp. 1-6.

²¹ A. G. Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York 1509-1558* (London, 2nd edition 1982), passim, esp. pp. 242-8.

stressed the contributions that local and regional researches can make to the history of the Reformation; however, this was a national history with occasional references to local events.²²

Other historians followed Dickens's lead and by the 1970s the study of 'history from below', the social history of communities, became fashionable. Local records became more accessible and historians used local research to assess how rapidly Protestantism had taken hold and to identify local factors involved in this progress. It was no longer assumed that the Reformation progressed in the same way and at a uniform speed throughout the country. This study shows that it cannot even be assumed in a small group of contiguous parishes and local influences need to be studied. Research projects using local wills from various parts of the country are compared with the study area in chapter four.²³ These projects are based on either a large area, such as a diocese, or a more localized area; an urban, rural, or mixed area; one status of society, or all the people who left wills; a sample of wills, or all the wills for a stated period. All of these differences affect results and present difficulties for anyone attempting to form a national picture. However, in 1994 Dickens claimed that the variation of localities researched meant that together they constituted a fairly representative sample of the country as a whole. Nationally, apart from London and Kent, where Protestantism increased early, signs of change were not common until around 1545, while the notable period of Protestant advance occupied the whole of Edward VI's reign. There was a predictable decline of apparent Protestantism in Mary's reign, though this partial reversion did not restore the Henrician situation. In 1559-60 a rapid resurgence of Protestantism implies that many crypto-Protestants had re-emerged once it was safe to do so. Miscellaneous information from other

²² A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation*, (London, 1967, revision of 1964 edition), p. 5.

²³ David Palliser, *The Reformation in York 1534-1553*, Borthwick Papers, 40 (York, 1971); Margaret Spufford, 'The Scribes of Villagers' Wills in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and their Influence', in *LPS*, 7 (1971), pp. 32, 40; M. L. Zell, 'The Use of Religious Preambles as a Measure of Religious Belief in the Sixteenth-Century', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 50 (1977), pp. 246-9; Claire Cross, 'The Development of Protestantism in Leeds and Hull 1520-1640: The Evidence from Wills', *Northern History*, 18 (1982), pp. 230-38; David Marcombe, *English Small Town Life, Retford 1520-1642* (1993), pp. 254, 279; Lucas, 'Popular Religious Attitudes'; Litzenberger, 'Local responses', pp. 417-439; G. J. Mayhew, 'The Progress of the Reformation in East Sussex 1530-1559: the Evidence from Wills', *Southern History*, 5 (1983), pp. 38-67; Elaine M. Sheppard, 'The Reformation and the Citizens of Norwich', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 38 (1981), pp. 44-58.

sources corresponds with the pattern to a reassuring extent. This was the average situation, which did not fit all areas. In particular, Dickens pointed out that the City of York, Lancashire, and several other counties to a lesser extent, where large sections of the people retained Catholic sympathies in 1559 and for some decades after, did not fit this pattern.²⁴

The 'Marian Revival'

Chapter four below takes issue with Duffy's opinion about the speed and generosity of endowments of articles needed for the revival of traditional religion during Mary's reign. He cites Northamptonshire as a county where this happened immediately and very generously, but it will be shown that, in Northamptonshire as a whole and the study area in particular, endowments at this time were certainly not generous.²⁵ In a more recent book, while he does not claim that there was no support for the Reformation, Duffy again argues that, many people did not welcome it, or supported it reluctantly, and 'as the rapid restoration of Catholic practice in the reign of Mary was to demonstrate, provisionally'.²⁶ As stated above, the genuineness of revival varied over the country and judging it from preambles alone provides insufficient evidence. Caroline Litzenberger and G. J. Mayhew found that the revival implied by Marian preambles was confirmed when considered in conjunction with other pious bequests in wills, but Lorraine Attreed did not find confirmation and suggests that the wills show there was no revival.²⁷ The method by which it was judged that there was no revival in the study area is explained in 'Methodology' below.

Duffy's *Fires of Faith, Catholic England under Mary Tudor* does not attempt to cover all aspects of the Marian restoration, but it aims to provide a coherent view of the intentions, competence and achievement of the Marian church and rates highly both the calibre of many of the Marian leaders of the church and their impact on the religious lives of the people. He is aware that this is still a controversial position in view of the burnings, which he cannot

²⁴ A.G. Dickens, *Late Monasticism and the Reformation* (London, 1994), pp. 126-9.

²⁵ Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 551.

²⁶ Duffy, *Saints, Sacrilege*, p. 5.

²⁷ Caroline Litzenberger, *The English Reformation and the Laity* (Cambridge, 1997); Mayhew, 'Reformation in East Sussex', pp. 38-67; Lorraine Attreed, 'Preparation for Death in Sixteenth-Century Northern England', *The Sixteenth-Century Journal*, 13 (1982), pp. 37-66, esp. 51-2.

excuse, although much recent scholarly work has led to the emergence of a more positive assessment of many aspects of Mary's regime.²⁸ Duffy refers to some local archives in this study, but does not mention Northamptonshire.

David Loades in *The Religious Culture of Marian England* is concerned with the impact of the Marian Church on ordinary people and cites Duffy's opinion about the generosity of gifts to Northamptonshire churches. The book recognizes some of the achievements of Mary's Church, for example in clerical education. Diocesan seminaries, based in cathedrals, were established by Cardinal Reginald Pole to educate boys intended for the clergy. David Pole, a kinsman of the cardinal, was Bishop of Peterborough, 1557-1559, but no register has survived of his short time as bishop.²⁹ Loades feels there is a tendency to see the Marian period in isolation and that it can only be properly understood as an aspect of the ongoing history of 'the reformation period'.³⁰

The Elizabethan ministry

Mark Curtis wrote of the extraordinary need for educated clergymen immediately after Elizabeth's accession. The succession of religious changes since Henry's changes had decimated the clergy and only a small fraction of those holding livings were qualified and licensed to preach. This was perilous in a Protestant country still in the throes of reformation. Therefore ecclesiastics urged magnates and gentlemen of England to support the universities and urged Oxford and Cambridge to double their efforts to educate a learned clergy.³¹ Christopher Haigh agreed that few of the clergy were qualified preachers and that Protestants did not control the parishes where Catholic priests and traditionalist laity were in large majorities. Finally, as Catholic trained clergy died and were replaced by Protestant educated ministers, memories faded and any 'survivalist Catholicism' in parish churches was diluted by conformity and

²⁸ Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith, Catholic England under Mary Tudor* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 2009), pp. ix-x.

²⁹ David Loades, *The Religious Culture of Marian England* (London, 2010), pp. 63, 108-9; T. F. Mayer, 'Reginald Pole (1500-1558)', *ODNB* (2008); T. F. Mayer, 'David Pole (d. 1568)', *ODNB* (2010); Geoffrey Carnell, *The Bishops of Peterborough 1541-1991* (Much Wenlock, 1993), pp. 5-6.

³⁰ Loades, *Religious Culture*, pp. vii-viii.

³¹ Mark H. Curtis, 'The Alienated Intellectuals of Early Stuart England', *Past and Present*, 23 (1962), pp. 28-9.

disappeared.³² The influence of ‘Catholic priests’ in a minority of the research parishes is discussed in chapter five.

In 1579 a new university statute prescribed Reformed theological instruction for all students and a rising proportion of Elizabethan ministers had experience of these Protestant universities. Civic lectureships were set up, including one at Towcester, in a missionary initiative within the Elizabethan Church to attract evangelical preachers who would not otherwise have come for the low stipends of impropriated benefices. The Elizabethan churches were thus gradually staffed by trained, graduate, Protestant clergy.³³

Collinson is recognised as an authority on the growth of Protestantism and Puritanism and his influential *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* argues that this stemmed from discontent with the 1559 Religious Settlement and a desire of many of the clergy and laity for further reform. The more radical wished to replace episcopacy with Presbyterianism. According to Patrick Collinson, ‘almost all Puritan leaders in Northamptonshire – the most Presbyterian of counties – were bred in Christ Church or Magdalen, Oxford’. Emmanuel College, Cambridge, founded in 1584 by Puritan Sir Walter Mildmay was known as a Puritan college.³⁴ The non-conformist influence of men from all three is demonstrated in chapter six, for instance, Edward Bagshaw from Christ Church taught at Sulgrave and Towcester conventicles; Thomas Gore from Magdalen was a Congregational preacher at Towcester; and Samuel Stone from Emmanuel, a holder of the lectureship, exerted non-conformist influence at Towcester.

Late-Lollardy and dissent

Christopher Haigh commented that ‘the fact that there was a Reformation does not mean that it was wanted: it does not imply that there was a deep-seated popular demand for religious change. But Professor Dickens found in Lollardy and anti-clericalism indications of widespread alienation from institutional

³² Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (1993), pp. 252-6.

³³ Haigh, *English Reformations*, pp. 273-6.

³⁴ Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London, 1967), esp. pp. 125, 129. Collinson’s many other works include: *The Religion of Protestants: the Church in English Society 1559-1625* (Oxford, 1982); *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London, 1983).

Catholicism... and it has been suggested that the sacramentarian views of Lollards influenced the theology of the reformers'.³⁵ Haigh thought both arguments had some force, but the numerical significance of Lollards was far from clear. A rise of heresy might simply show an increased intensity of official investigations and heresy trials. In the diocese of Lincoln by the 1540s, Bishop Longland had almost destroyed Buckinghamshire Lollardy, which had seemed such a threat twenty years earlier.³⁶ Haigh believed that

because the Reformation ultimately succeeded, there is a danger that historians will exaggerate these proto-Protestants into a powerful movement. The Lollards do show that there were dissidents from the late-medieval Church, and that some of them were organised into an underground sect. But they seem also to show that heresy was rare, and that heretics were much disliked by their neighbours. If the Lollards are our evidence of a demand for Reformation, then demand was limited – and in some places it was declining.³⁷

The study of Separatist groups and the search for continuity from Lollards to dissenters continued throughout the twentieth century. W. H. Summers, writing of the Quakers in the Chiltern Hills in 1904, said there were similarities between Lollard and Quaker doctrines. In both, marriage could be solemnized by mutual consent without any church ceremony; both objected to oaths and restricted themselves to simple affirmations, while those of Norfolk were said to have denied the necessity of baptism.³⁸

The notion that Lollard doctrines lived on was continued by K. B. McFarlane in 1952. McFarlane in his biography of John Wycliffe, stated in the prologue, 'English nonconformity owes its origins, humble though these may have been, to Master John Wycliffe'.³⁹ McFarlane was convinced that 'the first premonitory snuffle of post-Reformation Puritanism' could be heard in the voices of these heretics in the Chiltern Hills and an unbroken tradition linked them with the seventeenth-century nonconformists in that area.⁴⁰

³⁵ Haigh (ed.), *The English Reformation Revised* (1987), p. 4.

³⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 4-5, citing M. Bowker, *The Henrician Reformation: the Diocese of Lincoln under John Longland 1521-1547* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 178-83.

³⁷ Haigh, *Reformation Revised*, p. 5.

³⁸ W. H. Summers, *Memories of Jordans and the Chalfonts* (1904), pp. 2-4.

³⁹ K. B. McFarlane, *John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Nonconformity* (1952), pp. 10-11.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 185.

These late Lollards of the Chilterns continued to be the subject of study.⁴¹ William Clebsch wrote in 1964 that ‘late Lollardy provided the early English Protestants with tenacious devotees among the common folk who rallied to the Protestant emphasis on the faith of the believer’.⁴² John Thomson remarked on the two parallel lines of development of religious faith and touching on inter-related heresies, he wrote in 1965, ‘by the time that the Roman establishment was succeeded by the Anglican, Lollardy was developing into Puritanism.’⁴³

Dickens considered Lollardy to be a still vital force during Henry VIII’s reign, although denial of transubstantiation brought the severest and most frequent danger to Lollards, who were adept at concealment and did not seek martyrdom, which made statistical estimates difficult. In York’s ecclesiastical court records it can be difficult to place a person charged with heresy. Dickens thought ‘Lollardy’ had often been used as a general synonym for ‘heresy’ and he noted the similarity between Lollard principles and those of other sects. He hinted that future research might trace family continuities and his work was a forerunner of many regional and local studies based on local archives over the following decades.⁴⁴

Claire Cross also wrote of ‘Lollardy in hiding’ in the south of England, East Anglia and the Midlands, which re-emerged in the late-fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, making use of commercial communications of the woollen and cloth industries in southern England and the Midlands as one means of contact between communities.⁴⁵ There are various studies of the late-Lollards of the East Midlands and those of John Thomson and Maureen Jurkowski are particularly relevant to the study area.⁴⁶

⁴¹ For example in: Margaret Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995).

⁴² William A. Clebsch, *England’s Earliest Protestants 1520-1535* (London, 1964), p. 4.

⁴³ John A. F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards 1414-1520* (Oxford, 1965), p. 253.

⁴⁴ A.G. Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York* (London, 1982), passim

⁴⁵ Claire Cross, *Church and People 1450-1660, the Triumph of the Laity in the English Church* (London, 1976), pp. 26-30.

⁴⁶ For example: A. K. McHardy, ‘Bishop Buckingham and the Lollards of the Lincoln Diocese’, in Derek Baker (ed.), *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protests*, Studies in Church History, 9 (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 131-143; John A. F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards 1414-1520* (Oxford, 1965); Maureen Jurkowski, ‘Lollards in Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire’ in Fiona Somerset, Jill C. Havens, Derrick G. Pitard (eds), *Lollards and their Influence in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 73-95.

Joyce Youings opined that early Tudor Lollards were mostly humble craftsmen able to maintain a certain detachment from society at large, though some were prominent merchants.⁴⁷ Jurkowski studied connections between lawyers and Lollards.⁴⁸ In the study area Lollards included a honey merchant and lawyers.

The continuity from Lollards to dissenters has been proved in the Chilterns by Nesta Evans who researched families from 21 parishes in the Chilterns and using 19 of the most distinctive surnames common to Lollards and Quakers or Baptists, she made actual genealogical connections for six of the families in the male line.⁴⁹ Fewer known Lollards and lack of records resulted in this being impossible in the study area, but hints of a connection between Lollardy and later Quakerism are discussed in chapter six and a connection for one name appears likely, but unproven.

J. J. Scarisbrick wrote of the extraordinary phenomenon of Buckinghamshire, whose 'Lollardy was deep-rooted, upland semi-paganism, accounting for the remarkably non-religious tone of its surviving wills'. (It had survived Bishop Longland's campaigns). The society was 'scarcely Christianized at all and folk religion and semi-paganism still thrived under a veneer of official Christianity'. 'Lollardy on the whole remained a disparate, dispersed, non-dangerous movement'.⁵⁰ Derek Plumb and Anne Hudson commented that Scarisbrick failed to produce evidence to substantiate these ideas.⁵¹ Scarisbrick's comments are reminiscent of Christopher Hill's opinion (with no sources given) that 'the densely populated forests of Northamptonshire were centres of rural Puritanism, strange sects, and witchcraft'.⁵² There were late-Lollards in Silverstone, Quakers in Whittlebury, a Marian martyr and later dissenters at Syresham; three 'forest villages' that were still surrounded by woodland. The percentage population growth between 1524 and 1674 in these

⁴⁷ Joyce Youings, *Sixteenth-Century England* (1984), p. 180.

⁴⁸ Maureen Jurkowski, 'Lawyers and Lollardy in the Early Fifteenth Century', in Margaret Aston and Colin Richmond (eds), *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 155-182.

⁴⁹ Nesta Evans, 'The Descent of Dissenters in the Chiltern Hundreds', in Spufford, *Rural Dissenters*, p. 299.

⁵⁰ J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (1984), pp. 6, 46.

⁵¹ Derek Plumb, 'The Social and Economic Status of the Later Lollards' in Spufford, *Rural Dissenters*, p. 109, n. 25.

⁵² Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down, Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (London, 1975), p. 47.

three villages was considerably higher than in the other villages. Comparison with findings of other researchers and possible reasons are discussed in chapter six, where witches are also discussed.

In 1995, Margaret Spufford agreed with Alan Everitt that dissent was remarkably prevalent in woodland regions and dissenters everywhere were more numerous in forest parishes and she also drew attention to various trades in the dissent tradition: tailors, leather workers, Lollard butchers, tanners, and shoemakers, right through to George Foxe himself, son of a weaver. ‘Such men need not have been Separatists at all; but they were men of conviction, who were, because their shops were places where people met, waited, and talked, profoundly influential.’⁵³ John Kurde, shoemaker of Syresham and a Marian martyr, was such a man. Leather workers were linked by wholesale suppliers of skins and bark for tanning. There were also the links of the cattle trade moving along the roads as noted by Everitt.⁵⁴ In South Northamptonshire drove roads were a possible means of contact with communities in Whittlewood Forest. Evidence of possible links between woodland, drove roads, leather workers, Lollards and other dissenters is discussed in chapter six.

Religion and Magic

The Lollards and other early dissenters argued against the ‘magical elements’ of Roman Catholic ritual. Keith Thomas agreed that ‘the medieval Church appeared as a vast reservoir of magical power, capable of being deployed for a variety of secular purposes’.⁵⁵ If the Church blurred the distinction between religion and magic, Protestant propaganda strongly asserted it. The powers of holy water, ringing of holy bells, blessing with a holy candle, the relics of saints and the sign of the cross were all dismissed as sorcery and witchcraft. The main attack was on the central doctrine of the mass: transubstantiation. Infant baptism was also an issue for some early Protestants before the Reformation, when, although the ritual was simplified, many Puritans still thought it had ‘superstitious’ aspects. Presbyterian ministers were required to remind the

⁵³ Margaret Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 44.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 53; Richard T. Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism 1655-1755* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), p. 13, n.16; Alan Everitt, ‘Non-Conformity in Country Parishes’, in Joan Thirsk (ed.), *Land, Church and People: Essays Presented to Professor H. P. R. Finberg* (Reading, 1970), pp. 188-9.

⁵⁵ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, 1971), p. 51.

congregation that baptism was not essential for an infant to avoid damnation, but this is one superstition that survived.⁵⁶ Thomas said some early Separatists returned to the Anglican Church as parents lest their children should die before being christened, and even in nineteenth-century Dorset some country-folk had infants baptized quickly because ‘if a child died without a name he did flit about in the woods and waste places and could get no rest’.⁵⁷ However, in the study area, various dissenting families are recognised in chapter six by their failure to have babies baptised.

Many medieval ceremonies had taken place in the open to secure fertility and good weather. The sole survivor of these after the Reformation was the ‘Rogation perambulation’. Perhaps this survived because the parish boundaries needed to be checked. Protestant opinion was divided about May-games, church-ales, and so on; Puritans wanted them all abolished.⁵⁸ Christopher Haigh commented,

An earlier generation of English Protestant historians too often assumed that the new gospel taught by Luther was so obviously true that sensible Englishmen would abandon without hesitation the superstitions of their forefathers. But more recent scholars have adopted a functionalist approach to popular religion, and have recognised that the magical and communal rituals of the late-medieval Church met important parish needs. Rituals which were related to the harvest year and which offered protection from the hazards of agricultural life, and ceremonies which reconciled disputes in villages built upon willing cooperation, were not readily relinquished.⁵⁹

C.S.L. Davies referred to studies that had underlined the capacity of survival of traditional religion. Images, holy water, a literalistic belief in the sacrament of the altar, veneration of shrines and wells, persisted as folk-religion in Puritan England.⁶⁰ Some new celebrations, such as St George’s Day, Restoration Day, and the Accession of the current monarch, replaced old rituals.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 58-65.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 64.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 71-5.

⁵⁹ Christopher Haigh, ‘The Recent Historiography of the English Reformation’, *The Historical Journal*, 25, (1982), pp. 995-1007.

⁶⁰ C.S.L. Davies, ‘Popular Religion and the Pilgrimage of Grace’, in Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson, *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 58-91.

Ronald Hutton found that the most widely celebrated anniversary was Gunpowder Treason Day; in some parishes this was the only anniversary honoured. Bells were rung in the parish churches for these anniversaries and there might be bonfires for any of them, not just 5th November. Culworth bells were rung on the anniversary of Elizabeth's accession, November 17th, but it was still called St Hugh's Day. This was a traditional survival from much of the area of the pre-Reformation diocese of Lincoln, which had been associated with the cult of St Hugh.⁶¹

Northamptonshire

The earliest county history: John Bridges, *The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire*, was compiled by the Rev. Peter Whalley and printed in 1791 from the manuscript collections of John Bridges, who died in 1724. Arranged in parishes it covers the county in detail, but has occasional errors, particularly in genealogies.⁶² George Baker wrote another county history continuing Bridges' work, which it appears to be based on.⁶³

The Victoria History of the Counties of England for Northamptonshire provides a general survey of the ecclesiastical history in Volume Two. Volume Five, 'Cleley Hundred', includes three relevant parishes: Easton Neston, Paulerspury and Stoke Bruerne, but research parishes in other hundreds are not yet covered.⁶⁴

A study of 12 Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire parishes in the Whittlewood Forest is useful for background, but only two of the parishes, Silverstone and Whittlebury, coincide with the current study.⁶⁵

Margaret Bowker's *The Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln 1495-1520* is a detailed study of diocesan administration and its ecclesiastical courts, clerical education, the duties of parish priests, reasons for non-residence of priests and the effect on the parishes. There are specific mentions of

⁶¹ Ronald Hutton *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 148, 150, 252; NRO, 94p/21.

⁶² Bridges, 2 vols.

⁶³ George Baker, *History and Antiquities of the County of Northamptonshire*, 2 vols., (London, 1822-41).

⁶⁴ VCH Northamptonshire, 2 (1906); VCH Northamptonshire, 5 (2002).

⁶⁵ Richard Jones & Mark Page, *Medieval Villages in an English Landscape: Beginnings and Ends* (Macclesfield, 2006).

Northamptonshire, but much of the general information is also relevant.⁶⁶ Bowker shows that appropriation of churches was higher in Lincoln diocese than the average for England and higher in Northamptonshire than the rest of the diocese. The statistics are quoted in chapter two where it is shown that the number is slightly higher still in the study area, 40 per cent, which is important to the discussion of influences in chapter five. Bowker also writes of pluralism and non-residence in the diocese which are shown in chapter two to be common in the study area.

J. J. Scarisbrick and A. G. Dickens each wrote an essay about religion in Northamptonshire in Henry VIII's reign. Scarisbrick's is mainly about the politics of the major gentry families after the Dissolution and whether the Lincolnshire rising could have spread to Northampton. He decides that any discontent seems to be confined to the Knightley sphere of influence in the south west of the county, which includes the study area. The dissident Richard Fermor and his chaplain are also discussed (see chapter five).⁶⁷ Dickens states that Northamptonshire played an important role in Elizabethan Puritanism, but it did not form a prime centre of early Protestantism and that at first sight there seems more evidence of the survival of an old anticlericalism. He cites as evidence cases from the whole county of incorrect clerical behaviour from a court book which is now too fragile for production, but admits that 'most of the charges against the parsons are rather trivial and had relations between clergy and parishioners been more cordial...' many problems might have been settled at an earlier stage. He still appears to believe in anticlericalism in parishes in this study.⁶⁸

Other modern ecclesiastical research is based on Peterborough diocese and does not cover the period before Elizabethan England. W. J. Sheils' study of Puritans in the diocese of Peterborough in Elizabeth I's reign is the main printed research of the diocese and his work on will preambles is often quoted

⁶⁶ Margaret Bowker, *The Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1495-1520* (Cambridge, 1968); Bowker, Margaret, 'Non-residence in the Lincoln Diocese in the Early Sixteenth Century', *JEH*, 15, (1964), pp. 40-50.

⁶⁷ J. J. Scarisbrick, 'Religion and Politics in Northamptonshire in the Reign of Henry VIII', *NP&P*, 5/2, (1974), pp. 85-90.

⁶⁸ NRO, Archdeaconry of Northampton, Visitations and Court Book 3, 1546-1550, cited in, A. G. Dickens, *Early Protestantism and the Church in Northamptonshire*, *NP&P*, 8/1, (1983-4), pp. 27-39, at p. 32.

in general works, being the only available statistics for Northamptonshire.⁶⁹ After a brief account from Lollards to Marian England, it investigates the growth of Puritanism in the diocese and discusses opposition to the Established Church. Later chapters discuss the ministry, the Puritan gentry and Northampton as a ‘Godly Town’. Sheils concludes that by the end of the sixteenth century the Puritan concept of a preaching ministry was generally accepted and the pulpit had replaced the altar at the centre of religious life for at least the following 100 years. The Puritan gentry of the diocese replaced their Catholic peers as commissioners and justices far more quickly than in some counties and the gentry of south-west Northamptonshire were most forward in this (for example, Richard Knightley). Sheils’ work is useful for comparisons between the study area and the whole diocese.

Two theses add very little relevant information to the current research. John Fielding’s thesis, *Conformists, Puritans and the Church Court: the Diocese of Peterborough, 1603-1642*; includes a little information about preachers who evangelized in the Moreton Pinkney area; mostly already known from other sources. Paul Morton Geldart’s *Protestant Nonconformity and Sectarianism in Restoration Northamptonshire* comments on the tradition of dissent at Syresham prior to the Restoration, but gives no evidence prior to the 30 dissenters in the Compton Census (1676) other than the Marian martyr John Kurde; neither was definite evidence found in the current research.⁷⁰

Geoffrey Carnell’s *The Bishops of Peterborough 1541-1991* provides short biographies of the bishops and *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* is invaluable for information about many people involved in the study area.⁷¹

c) Methodology and sources

W.K. Jordan in 1959, writing of wills before 1640, argued that

⁶⁹ Sheils, *Puritans*.

⁷⁰ John Fielding, *Conformists, Puritans and the Church Court: the Diocese of Peterborough, 1603-1642*, unpublished University of Birmingham Ph.D. thesis (1989); Paul Morton Geldart, *Protestant Nonconformity and Sectarianism in Restoration Northamptonshire*, unpublished University of Leicester, Ph.D. thesis (2006).

⁷¹ Geoffrey Carnell, *The Bishops of Peterborough 1541-1991* (Much Wenlock, 1993); Colin Matthew and Brian Harrison (eds) *ODNB* (Oxford, online edition, 2004-14).

almost every will begins with a carefully considered and eloquently elaborated confession of faith, in which the testator earnestly strives to set out the nature of his beliefs... wills in this age of profound faith were mirrors of men's souls... and completely honest documents.⁷²

There have been many studies of wills since Jordan made this statement and probably few scholars would agree with him today. There is, however, a need to gauge people's religious convictions and, in the absence of other personal records from the sixteenth century, wills have provided the main documentary evidence for most local Reformation studies.

Some of these studies have relied entirely on the will preamble (the bequest of the soul) to categorize wills, usually into Catholic/Traditional, Neutral, or Protestant categories, but the preamble alone can be misleading. To aid comparison with other areas of the country this type of exercise was carried out for the current research, however, pious and charitable bequests were also studied to add to an impression of the testator's religious beliefs and sometimes bequests appear to contradict the preamble. Further analysis in each parish includes a table of the percentage of wills witnessed by the incumbents or other clerics, who may have influenced the soul bequest. Further tables of all pious and charitable bequests in each reign assisted assessment of the progress of reform. For the Marian period, statistical evaluation of will bequests in the whole county counted the number of Marian pious bequests for masses and of 'traditional' gifts to restore traditional church interiors using Serjeantson and Longden's listing (based only on archdeaconry wills) and an estimated number of archdeaconry Marian wills.⁷³ Only five per cent of Marian wills included these bequests and even if this is inaccurate the correct percentage cannot be much higher. A detailed table for the study area of all traditional bequests in wills with each bequest linked to the testator's preamble category led to the judgement that there was no Marian revival of Catholicism. Mary's reign is discussed in depth in chapter four.

⁷² W. K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in England, 1480-1660: a Study of the Changing Pattern of English Social Aspirations* (London, 1959), p. 16.

⁷³ R. M. Serjeantson and H. Isham Longden, *The Parish Churches and Religious Houses of Northamptonshire: Their Dedications, Altars, Images and Lights* (London, 1913). The number of Marian wills is estimated because reigns overlapped in several of the will-books.

This study uses about 700 wills for the period 1510-1610 as the main source of evidence to show religious convictions and the growth of Protestantism, together with 24 wills from 1481-1509 for comparison with the beginning of Henry VIII's reign.⁷⁴ A number of other wills of non-residents with involvement in the area have been used when relevant to discussion and a considerable number of later wills were read to find any that threw light on suspected or known Quakers and Baptists.⁷⁵ There is a good survival of wills in Northamptonshire, though wills before 1652 survive mainly only in registers of probate copies, as in other counties.

The problem exists that individual wills may not indicate the stage of religious reform in the community generally; not everyone wrote a will and extant wills may not represent the views of the whole community, although, despite general belief a few labourers did make written wills. Some historians, such as Robert Whiting, Beat Kümin, Ronald Hutton and Eamon Duffy began to use churchwardens' accounts that were annually read to parishioners for approval and, if well-kept, can give a clearer impression of certain aspects of religion in the community, for example, bequests to the church, parish customs, work on the church fabric and furnishings and changes to the interior of the church.⁷⁶ However, survival of these accounts is patchy; it is better in the south of England and Eamon Duffy used churchwardens' accounts to chart the progress of the Reformation in Morebath in Devon. These accounts cover the years 1527-1574 with brief gaps and Duffy claims they are the fullest and most remarkable of all Tudor churchwardens' accounts.⁷⁷

For much of the country, including south Northamptonshire, reliance on wills is necessary. Only two pre-1535 sets of accounts survive in Northamptonshire, including for Culworth in the research area.⁷⁸ Parallels can

⁷⁴ NRO, Arch, North., 1st and 2nd series; 'Box C' wills; 'Early wills' (before 1510); Consistory Court of Peterborough Wills: bks.1-5; TNA, Prerogative court of Canterbury wills.

⁷⁵ NRO, Arch. 2nd and 3rd series; original wills 1653-1809.

⁷⁶ Beat A. Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: the Rise and Reformation of the English Parish, c. 1400-1560*, (Brookfield, Vermont, 1996); Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 1989); Ronald Hutton *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1994), Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 2003).

⁷⁷ Duffy, *Morebath*, p. 19.

⁷⁸ NRO, 94p/21, 1531-1607; 94p/22, 1653-1742.

be seen between Morebath and Culworth and many events must have proceeded in the same way in all parishes. The second Northamptonshire set is for Peterborough St John (1467-1573); one of the ten diverse parishes used by Beat Kümin in *The Shaping of a Community* to show the parish as a vital institution that early developed secular responsibilities whereby parish officials' duties included, for instance: organizing agricultural obligations, supervising repairs of church buildings, contributing to the upkeep of roads and bridges, raising militia, poor relief, and organizing seasonal entertainment. For Peterborough, Kümin referred to a volume by W. T. Mellows.⁷⁹ Accounts generally may have years missing, or at least in part be merely totals of income and expenditure. Kümin found only totals in Peterborough for Edward's reign, as is the case for Culworth.

The Culworth accounts, starting in 1531, have undergone conservation in the past, although a number of early pages are damaged. Analysis gives a useful impression during Henry VIII's reign of the organization of the parish and sources of parish funds (see chapter two). After 'totals only' accounts in Edward's and Mary's reigns the accounts improve to a certain extent in Elizabeth's reign.

For the pre-1541 period, perhaps because the study area was on the periphery of Lincoln diocese, printed volumes of bishops' registers contain only a few relevant entries; visitations appeared to miss many parishes west of Watling Street and the rest record a perfunctory *omnia bene*, 'all is well'. However, the register of Philip Repingdon provides information about Lollardy at Towcester.⁸⁰

The main records for Peterborough diocese (Northamptonshire and Rutland) are not yet printed. Records used include some Peterborough diocesan records, although many early ones, particularly for the archdeaconry of

⁷⁹ Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, passim; W. T. Mellows (ed.), *Peterborough Local Administration: Parochial Government Before the Reformation: Churchwardens' Accounts, 1467-1573, with Supplementary Documents 1107-1488*, NRS, 9 (1939).

⁸⁰ Nicholas Bennett (ed.), *The Registers of Henry Burghersh 1320-1342*, LRS, 101 (2011); Davis, F. N., *Rotuli Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Lincolnensis, 1235-1253*, The Canterbury and York Society, 10 (1913); Rosalind M. T. Hill (ed.), *Rolls and Register of Bishop Oliver Sutton 1280-1299*, LRS, 52 (1958); W. P. W. Phillimore (ed.), *Rotuli Hugonis Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis 1209-1235*, LRS, 3 (1912) and 6 (1913); A. Hamilton Thompson (ed.), *Visitations in the Diocese of Lincoln 1517-1520*, LRS, 33 (1940) and 35 (1944); Archer, Margaret (ed.), *The Register of Philip Repingdon 1405-1411*, LRS, 57 (1963); 1414-1419, LRS, 74 (1982).

Northampton, are now too fragile for production.⁸¹ A few extracts from these are available in publications such as *Northamptonshire Notes and Queries*. Quarter sessions records were useful for the seventeenth century, giving details of conventicles held in the study area.⁸²

Other manuscript sources used include the Shirley family papers held at the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Record Office for information about Wappenham, Falcutt chapel, and the Shirley family at Astwell, including two draft wills not otherwise available.⁸³ The Angus Library, Regent's College, Oxford, holds the 'Church Book' for the Slapton, Bradden and Weston area, essential for information about the early Baptists in the study area.⁸⁴ Joseph Besse's *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers*, arranged in counties, was the starting point for Quaker history in the area.⁸⁵ Printed sources used include calendars of state papers, calendars of papal registers, and the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*.⁸⁶

The church buildings are also important sources of information and all were visited. Robert Whiting thought church furnishings and wall paintings were among the most frequently under-utilized potential sources of evidence about the Reformation in parishes.⁸⁷ Church furnishings and wall paintings are used to reconstruct community religious life and beliefs augmented by churchwardens' accounts and parish wills. Although a few churches in the research area have been heavily restored, or even rebuilt, Slapton, Syresham and a few other churches illustrate the changes in belief and practice during the Reformation. The wall-paintings in Slapton church, which were whitewashed over during the Reformation, have been conserved and present excellent evidence of early beliefs. Roger Rosewell introduces *Medieval Wall Paintings* with a description of Slapton's tiny medieval church. He says, 'opening its ancient door is like entering no other.' After a brief description of 'the delights within', he continues, 'Slapton is one of the best places in England to see how a

⁸¹ PDR, Consistory Court Proceedings: ML636, ML637; Church survey books: 2 (1611); 4 (1631); 5 (1637).

⁸² NRO, QSR 1/37, QSR 1/44.

⁸³ LLRRO, Shirley collection: 26D53.

⁸⁴ Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford, A.d.15, Church book, Slapton, 1681, *The booke belonging to the Church of God meeting in and about Slapton 1681*.

⁸⁵ Joseph Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers*, 1 (London, 1753).

⁸⁶ Caley, J. (ed), *Valor*, 2 & 4.

⁸⁷ Whiting, *Blind Devotion*, p. 3.

medieval church would have looked before Tudor monarchs outlawed its images, banned its paintings and imposed a more austere, less sensual, form of national religion'.⁸⁸ The wall-paintings in Slapton church take the viewer closer to understanding the religious beliefs of medieval people; a few depict warnings pointing out the dangers of various sins, but there are also paintings of saints who it was believed could give help in daily life. It is virtually impossible today to enter a medieval mindset, but Slapton, even without statues of saints and incense, makes it easier to imagine the atmosphere in a medieval church. The church and adjacent manor farmhouse standing together in a field emphasize the one-time link between church and manor. Paintings of saints and Bible stories were whitewashed over during the Reformation and Syresham has a few examples of the painted texts that replaced earlier paintings.

Seeking the aid of saints was also the objective of pilgrimages made by many medieval people and the study area had its own pilgrimage destination; Saint Loy's well at Weedon Lois. Wall-paintings, saints, pilgrimages and holy wells are all discussed in chapter three.

Easton Neston church contains monuments commemorating three generations of the gentry Fermor family, Richard Fermor, Sir John Fermor and Sir George Fermor, which illustrate the changes of monumental style during the period of this study (see chapter five).

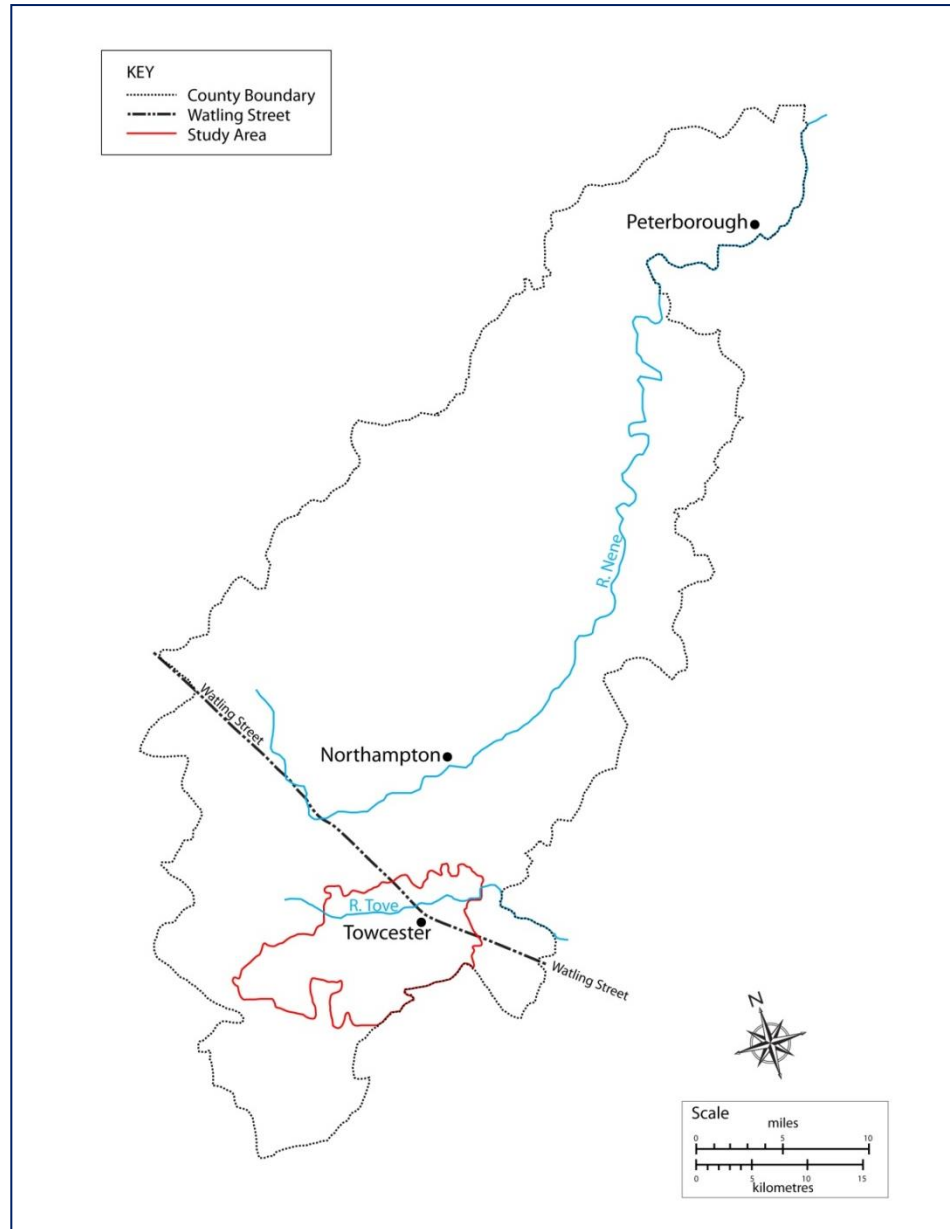
The geographic, economic and ecclesiastical background of the study area is now discussed in detail in the next chapter and any effects of this background are borne in mind throughout the thesis. This is followed by chapters discussing the vibrancy, but also signs of changing beliefs in the late-medieval Church; a detailed study of wills and what they tell us about religious beliefs; the influences in the parishes affecting the timing of reform and differences between parishes; and whether the growth of Dissent was linked with earlier religious history. A conclusion summarizes the main findings of this thesis and the questions that remain open.

⁸⁸ Roger Rosewell, *Medieval Wall Paintings* (Woodbridge, 2008), p. 1.

CHAPTER TWO

The Study Area

This chapter begins with an introduction to the study area: its geography, communications, settlement, and economy, continuing with a discussion of the ecclesiastical framework of religious houses, churches and chapels, followed by the organisation and funding of parish communities, concentrating on the period before the Dissolution.

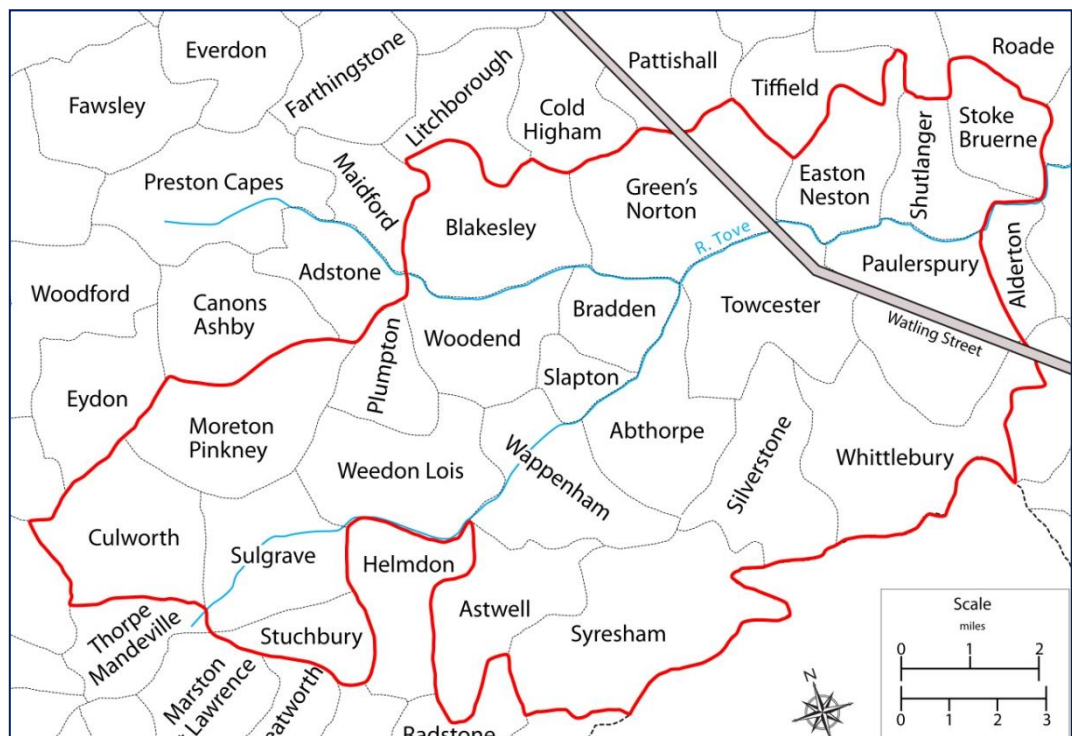


Map 2.1: Northamptonshire and the study area

a) Introduction to the study area

The pre-1974 county was long and narrow and straddled the middle of England, extending seventy miles in length from north-east to south-west, varying in width between seven miles near the northern end to a maximum of twenty-five miles (see Map 2.1). It followed the belt of oolitic limestone that runs from Dorset to Lincolnshire and the Wash, with the land falling from over 400 feet on the uplands in the west and south-west, down to below 200 feet in the east and north-east. The research parishes all lie within the valley of the River Tove

and its tributaries and the upper reaches of the Tove flow eastwards from over 500 feet near Culworth across the research area to below 300 feet at Towcester, before curving to the south to join the Great Ouse at Milton Keynes. In the study area, away from Towcester and Watling Street in the east, settlements linked by winding track-ways must have seemed really ‘off the beaten track’ in late-medieval England (see map 2.3), which could have led to the development of local variants of religious culture and belief and a society where dissent could easily establish itself among some of the population, particularly in communities influenced by an assertive person with nonconformist beliefs.

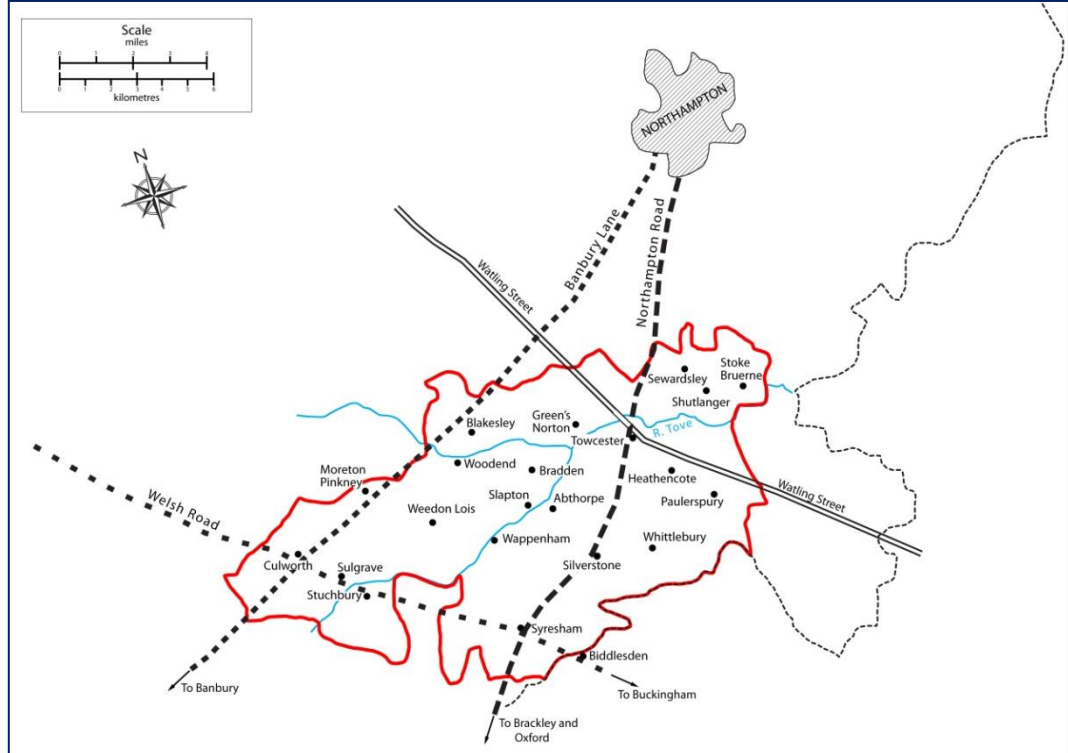


Map 2.2: The study parishes and the River Tove with a main northern tributary.

The majority of the study area is to the west of the Roman Watling Street (modern A5), which cuts off the south-west end of Northamptonshire and only Easton Neston and Stoke Bruerne parishes are entirely to the east (see Map 2.2). During the late medieval period the road provided easy access between Towcester and London, less than 60 miles away. It also passed within ten miles of Coventry, although by branching off earlier, Towcester was just 30 miles from Coventry. The position of the small town of Towcester on Watling Street, with inns for travellers and opportunities for exchange of news and views, made

it important in the area and also as a stepping-stone to and from the county town, Northampton, nine miles away from Watling Street.

Roads and communications



Map 2.3: Roads in the study area

An important medieval road ran for about 40 miles between Oxford and Northampton, passing through Brackley, Syresham and Silverstone, to Towcester after 30 miles and onwards for nine miles to Northampton (Map 2.3).⁸⁹ Travellers could bring Wycliffite ideas from Oxford University to Towcester and Northampton and most graduate clerics in the study area had attended Oxford University rather than Cambridge. Drovers and some lowly travellers would stay in inns and barns, but gentlemen and clerics sought hospitality in religious houses or the houses of gentry. The appropriation of Moreton Pinkney church to Canons Ashby priory (on the western periphery of the area) was sanctioned in 1308 on the grounds that the priory was situated next to the highway used by clerks and others going to Oxford to study, as well

⁸⁹ F. M. Stenton, 'The Road System of Medieval England', *The Economic History Review*, 7/1 (1936), pp. 1-21, esp. p. 4. Watling Street and the Oxford road are shown in: J. B. Harley (Intro.), *The County Maps from Camden's Britannia 1695 by Robert Morden, a facsimile* (Newton Abbot, 1972).

as by noblemen, so there was a heavy demand on the hospitality of the canons.⁹⁰

Two drove roads, crossing at Culworth, roughly defined the western and southern extremities of the area, staying on the drier high ground above the valley as far as possible, and carried news into isolated settlements from the outside world (map 2.3). The Welsh Road came into the area from the west and cattle-drovers passed through Culworth, by-passed Sulgrave, then through Syresham and Biddlesden and onwards to the important market town of Buckingham. A second drove road, known as Banbury Lane for the 22 mile section between Banbury and Northampton, was part of the prehistoric Jurassic Way.⁹¹ It travelled north-eastward, on high ground at first from Culworth, avoiding further villages and on towards Northampton. Culworth must have been an important overnight halting place and ‘gossip hub’ for the two routes.

Villages on the chalky boulder-clay in the valley were linked by winding roads and track-ways that could become impassable in winter. The terrain was a handicap in the exploitation of timber resources from Whittlewood Forest and movement of timber was restricted to the drier months, although the roads served to market brushwood. Wherever possible, timber was transported by water, but there was no navigable river near Whittlewood Forest.⁹²

The position of Culworth, at the junction of drove roads made it an obvious site for markets and fairs, where locals and travellers from some distance might meet and exchange news and ideas. Most market charters (granted by the king) included the right to hold an annual fair, often on the vigil, feast and morrow of a saint, as was the case at Culworth. It had a charter in 1264 for a Saturday market and a three-day fair for the Nativity of Mary (September 8th), both at the manor. In 1374 a new charter confirmed the Saturday market, but changed the three-day fair to the Feast of St Peter’s Chains (August 1st), both to be held in the town.⁹³ Culworth’s market may be

⁹⁰ *VCH Northamptonshire* 2, p. 131; *CPR*, Edward II, 1313-1317, p. 67.

⁹¹ John M. Steane, *The Northamptonshire Landscape, Northamptonshire and the Soke of Peterborough* (London, 1974), pp. 247-9, K. J. Bonser, *The Drovers, who they were and how they went: an epic of the English countryside* (Newton Abbot, 1972), pp. 194-5.

⁹² Philip A Pettit, *The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire: A Study in their Economy 1558-1714*, NRS, 23 (1968), pp. 4-5.

⁹³ Peter Goodfellow, ‘Medieval markets in Northamptonshire’, *NP&P*, 7 (1987-88), 305-323; *CCR*, 1257-1300, p. 49; *CCR*, 1341-1417, p. 229; Samantha Letters, Mario Fernandes, Derek

one of the many early medieval markets that failed before 1500 and it is not on Alan Everitt's list for 1500-1640, however, the stepped base of the market cross still remains in the centre of Culworth supporting a war memorial.⁹⁴

A second market in the study area was held by custom on Tuesdays in Towcester. The earliest documentary reference was to the market-place in 1220, but it may be much older.⁹⁵ In 1318 a charter was granted for a three day fair at the manor for the Annunciation (March 25th), to be replaced by a customary two-day fair, recorded in 1330, for St Lawrence (August 10th), to whom the church is dedicated and granted again to Richard Fermor in 1550.⁹⁶ The Tuesday market continued until modern times. Some gentry, merchants and other people from the area would go to Northampton on a market-day (Wednesday, Friday and Saturday) to meet acquaintances or to trade in the market.

The parishes and settlements

The study area covers eighteen 'parishes'. Eighteen 'settlements with a church' would be more accurate since three, Abthorpe, Silverstone and Whittlebury, were villages with chapels of ease that already had some autonomy and later became ecclesiastical parishes. Astwell and Falcutt, an ancient parish, was a chapelry of Wappenham, but lost its chapel some time after the Dissolution. Stuchbury had twenty-one tax-payers in 1301, but the church stood in a village deserted between 1350 and 1450. In the late Middle Ages single farmsteads were rare in Northamptonshire and the villages in the study area were mainly nucleated, however, in several parishes the 'church village' had subsidiary hamlets that were in the ecclesiastical parish, but independent settlements with their own small field systems. In the late fifteenth century the majority of these hamlets were deserted or very shrunken with perhaps one or two farms remaining. Charlock in Abthorpe, with its own field-system, was reduced to

Keene, Olwen Myhill, *Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516*, List and Index Society Special Series, 32/1 (2003).

⁹⁴ Alan Everitt, 'The Market Town', in Joan Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 4 (Cambridge, 1967), p. 475 (Sources are not given).

⁹⁵ G. R. Elvey, *Luffield Priory Charters*, NRS, 22 (1968), p. 210; Goodfellow, 'Markets', p. 307.

⁹⁶ *CCR, 1300-26*, p.391; Letters, *Gazetteer; CPR*, Ed. VI, 1549-51, p. 22.

one farm very early. Field Burcote and Caswell in Greens Norton were enclosed for sheep in 1499 and 1509 respectively and in 1551, together with some land in Greens Norton, were being grazed by a flock of 2,000. Richard Empson enclosed sixty-four acres for a small deer park at Easton Neston, c. 1500, and converted another twenty-four acres to pasture. When Richard Fermor bought the manor in 1531 no villagers remained, but Hulcote in the parish had become the main settlement.⁹⁷

Of the other surviving hamlets assessed for subsidy, Shutlanger in Stoke Bruerne ecclesiastical parish always appointed one of the two churchwardens and was a similar sized village to Stoke with its own field-system. It has been a civil parish since 1866.⁹⁸ Weston, hamlet of Weedon Lois, always had some autonomy and since 1935 is part of Weston and Weedon civil parish. Woodend, hamlet of Blakesley, was made a civil parish in 1866. Wood Burcote, Caldecote and Heathencote survive as small settlements.

The common place-name element ‘cote’ suggests a subsidiary status. In poly-focal villages earlier dispersed elements called ‘Ends’ seem to have fused later to make a single settlement. Silverstone has West End, Cattle End and the lost Wood End; Whittlebury has Lady Nether End; Paulerspury has Pury End, Plumpton End, Tew’s End and at least two settlements in the main village; while Blakesley has Quinbury End and Weedon Lois has Kettle End. The last three also had subsidiary hamlets, which have not all survived.⁹⁹

Table 2.1: Villages and hamlets assessed in the Lay Subsidy, 1524-5, and other settlements.¹⁰⁰

Ecclesiastical parishes and assessed chapelries (C)	Subsidiary hamlets assessed separately	Other settlements
---	--	-------------------

⁹⁷ Allinson, Beresford, Hurst, *Deserted Villages*, passim; RCHME *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northampton*, 4 (London, 1982), passim; Steane, *Landscape*, pp. 171, 192; Grenville Astill and Annie Grant, *The Countryside of Medieval England* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 79-80.

⁹⁸ Frederick A. Youngs, *Guide to the local administration units of England*, 2, RHS (London, 1991), passim. Civil parishes are a separate system from ecclesiastical parishes.

⁹⁹ RCHME *Northamptonshire* 4, passim; Allinson, Beresford, Hurst, *Deserted Villages*, passim; Christopher Dyer and Richard Jones (eds), *Deserted Villages Revisited* (Hatfield, 2010), pp. 8-15; Carezza Lewis, Patrick Mitchell Fox and Christopher Dyer, *Village, Hamlet and Field: Changing Medieval Settlements in Central England* (Macclesfield, 2001), passim.

¹⁰⁰ TNA E179/155/132; E179/155/130; E179/155/159; RCHME *Northamptonshire* 4, passim; K. J. Allinson, M.W. Beresford, J. G. Hurst, *The Deserted Villages of Northamptonshire* (Leicester, 1966), passim.

TOWCESTER	Wood Burcote Caldecote	
Abthorpe (C)	D-Foscote	D-Charlock
BLAKESLEY	Woodend	D-Foxley D-Kirby D-Seawell
BRADDEN		
CULWORTH		D-Brime D-Coten
D-EASTON NESTON	Hulcote	
GREENS NORTON		D-Field Burcote D-Caswell Duncote
Silverstone (C)		
Whittlebury (C)		
MORETON PINKNEY		
PAULERSPURY Heathencote (C)		
PLUMPTON		
SLAPTON		
STOKE BRUERNE	Shutlanger	D-Shaw
SULGRAVE [D-STUCHBURY]		
SYRESHAM		D-Crowfield
WAPPENHAM D-Astwell & Falcutt (C)		
WEEDON LOIS	Weston	D-Milthorpe

Notes: D – Deserted or very shrunken by 1540 or soon after. Hamlets are placed in the appropriate parish. Stuchbury – see below.

Population and wealth of the parishes

There has been much discussion and disagreement about calculating populations from lay subsidy figures and two methods and their disadvantages are explained below.¹⁰¹ Two surveys to assess parishes for tax were carried out in 1524-5, but not all information has survived. In the study area at least one version survives for each parish and Table 2.2 is based on numbers assessed using the higher number if two survive.¹⁰² The population figures are assumed to be very approximate; calculations involve estimates and different methods of calculation produce different answers.

¹⁰¹ For example: Stephen H. Rigby, 'Urban population in late medieval England: the evidence of the lay subsidies', *EHR*, 63/2 (2010), pp. 393-417; Julian Cornwall, 'English Population in the early Sixteenth Century', *EHR*, 23/1 (1970), pp. 32-44; Nigel Goose and Andrew Hinde, 'Estimating local population sizes at fixed points in time, Part 2: Specific Sources', *LPS*, 78/1 (2007), pp.79-80.

¹⁰² John Sheails, *The regional distribution of wealth in England as indicated in the 1524/5 Lay Subsidy Returns*, List and Index Society, Special Series, 29 (1998), pp. 236, 238, 241, 246, based on TNA E179/155/130-2; E179/155/140; E179/155/146; E179/155/159.

Table 2.2: Approximate populations of the parishes, 1524-5

Type of Parish		Number assessed	Approximate population of settlements	Approximate population of parishes
Town	TOWCESTER	118	433	513
	Wood Burcote	11	40	
	Caldecote	11	40	
Large	PAULERSPURY	74	271	311
	Heathencote	11	40	
	BLAKESLEY	39	143	
	Woodend	21	77	220
	STOKE BRUERNE	32	117	212
	Shutlanger	26	95	
	WAPPENHAM	39	143	198
	Astwell & Falcutt	15	55	
	CULWORTH	51	187	187
Medium	SULGRAVE	43	158	158
	MORETON PINKNEY	40	147	147
	ABTHORPE	33	121	139
	Foscote	5	18	
	SYRESHAM	37	136	136
	GREENS NORTON	34	125	125
	EASTON NESTON with Hulcote	33	121	121
	WEEDON LOIS with Weston	31	117	117
	SILVERSTONE	30	110	110
Small	WHITTLEBURY	18	66	66
	SLAPTON	15	55	55
	BRADDEN	15	55	55
	PLUMPTON	10	37	37

Julian Cornwall's method, used for Table 2.2, assumes that the people assessed were heads of households and ten per cent is added first to allow for missing returns and any very poor who were exempt. It is then assumed that men, women and children were in the ratio 3:3:4 to calculate the population. Although population figures are likely to be inaccurate, the method suggests comparative sizes of parishes. To demonstrate the effect of different methods, the population of Northampton (477 assessed) using Cornwall's method was 1,749. Alan Dyer adds a quarter to allow for missing people and then uses a multiplier of 4.5, which results in a population of 2,862.¹⁰³ Sheails criticizes the assumption sometimes made that assessed people were all heads of households, since a tax based on personal wealth must include many cases where father and son, or sons, paid tax in the same household.¹⁰⁴ Listed females are not always

¹⁰³ Alan Dyer, 'Northampton in 1524', *NP&P*, 6 (1985).

¹⁰⁴ Sheails, *Lay Subsidy*, 28, p. 20.

widows and in Sulgrave, for example, Widow Thomson and her seven unmarried children, including several daughters, were all assessed and one household appears to be eight households. This adds 26 (16 per cent) to Sulgrave's population, which could imply that some other figures in table 2.2 are too high.

Table 2.3 shows wealth as indicated in the surveys. Sheails frequently found membranes were stitched in the wrong order and names could appear in the wrong parish.¹⁰⁵ This may explain how 26 names at Culworth became 51 in the second survey. Some names are missing for Easton Neston and Shutlanger because a membrane is damaged and their totals are omitted.

Julian Cornwall suggests as a broad guide to status:

£100 and upwards	Knights, leading gentry, merchants in overseas trade
£40-£99	Gentry, higher yeomen, provincial merchants
£20-£39	Minor gentry, yeomen, lesser merchants
£10-£19	Larger peasant farmers, highly skilled craftsmen
£3-£9	Peasant farmers, less skilled craftsmen
£2	Smallholders, village craftsmen, senior servants
£1 and under	Artificers, labourers, servants. ¹⁰⁶

A number of parishes have names with assessments not stated, totalling 12 per cent of all names, but not all were very poor since they include Thomas Lovell of Astwell, knight, who might have been in Cornwall's first category. Richard

Table 2.3: Wealth of inhabitants as assessed for the Lay Subsidy (first survey), 1524¹⁰⁷

THE EIGHTEEN PARISHES with assessed subsidiary hamlets	£100 or more	£40-£99	£20-£39	£10-£19	£3-£9	£2	£1 or less	Number of assessments		Total named in each parish
								(a) amount stated	(b) not stated	
TOWCESTER		4	5	7	20	33	49	118		
Wood Burcote				1	2	3	3	9		

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 29, p. 3.

¹⁰⁶ Julian Cornwall, *Wealth and Society in Early Sixteenth Century England* (London, 1988), p. 29.

¹⁰⁷ NRO, 1st survey only is available: microfilm of TNA E179/155/130 (damaged membrane, some names missing); E179/155/132; E179/155/159; Stephen Swailes, undated transcript of first survey.

Caldecote			1	2	2	3	3	11		138
PAULERSPURY		1		6	17	20	27	71	2	
Heathencote			1	2	1	1	6	11		84
BLAKESLEY		1		1	6	5	5	18	21	
Woodend									21	60
WAPPENHAM					9	14	6	29	10	
Astwell & Falcutt							2	2	12	53
SULGRAVE			1	11	9	9	10	40	3	43
MORETON				2	17	4	18	41		41
PINKNEY										
SYRESHAM			2	1	8	8	13	32	5	37
GREENS NORTON			1	4	13	5	11	34		34
ABTHORPE				2	9	5	12	28		
Foscote				2	1	1	1	5		33
STOKE BRUERNE				5	9	4	12	30	1	31
Shutlanger								*	*	*
WEEDON LOIS with Weston				1	14	7	9	31		31
SILVERSTONE				3	11	6	9	29	1	30
CULWORTH			1		3	5	8	17	9	26
WHITTLEBURY				4	7	2	5	18		18
SLAPTON		1	1		4	4	5	15		15
BRADDEN			1	1	6	1	5	14		14
PLUMPTON				1	4	3	2	10		10
EASTON NESTON with Hulcote								*	*	*
Total		7	14	56	172	143	221	613	85	698
% of total 613	0%	1%	2%	9%	28%	24%	36%			

Note: * totals unknown.

Fermor (not listed) was assessed for £1,000 in the 1536 assessment.¹⁰⁸ The second category, the highest represented here, includes John Foxley of Blakesley, armiger, £54; William Knight of Slapton, tanner, £40; John Channey of Paulerspury, £47 3s 2d; and at Towcester, Davy Benet, Harry Barker, John Rokes and Richard Marriott, all at £40. No status is given for the last five, but wills describe Benet and Marriott as yeomen.¹⁰⁹

Tax was payable on the highest source of wealth: land, goods, or earnings. In every parish of the study area, without exception, people taxed on goods were in the majority. Bearing in mind that some assessments were obviously missing, only 13 per cent were greater than £9, 59 per cent were £2 or less. The latter percentage would be expected in a rural area with many

¹⁰⁸ Basil Morgan, 'Richard Fermor (1480x84-1551)', *ODNB* (2004).

¹⁰⁹ NRO Arch. North. Series 1, E160 (1535), P23 (1564).

labourers and other low-status workers. Assessments for this group were slightly higher than farming areas of Essex where at Havering, on the edge of woodland comparable to the study area, and at Terling it was 53 per cent and 51 per cent respectively. However, at Havering 19 per cent of assessments were greater than £9 and Marjory Keniston McIntosh considers that an abnormally high number of people there were in the higher categories of assessment. At Terling 12 per cent were in this category, similar to the study area.¹¹⁰ Terling was in an agricultural area bisected by a river and reliant on mixed farming similar to the Tove valley in Northamptonshire with a majority of low status workers. For tax assessments the study area appears to be average for the type of area.

The Economy

The area depended on open-field farming, sheep, small-scale iron working, royal forests, and a locally important quarry. Sheep were an important part of the farming economy and although the eighteen parishes all farmed on the open-field system, sheep could graze on their common pastures and early enclosures. St Andrew's Priory, Northampton owned some land at Sulgrave and also the land of the deserted Stuchbury, which was leased by John Thomson of Sulgrave in the early sixteenth century.¹¹¹ The priory had a grange there and would have used the church until the Dissolution. The 200 acres of pasture at the deserted Field Burcote were occupied by 2,000 sheep in 1551. 'Grounds' in a place-name indicates where the land of a deserted hamlet became sheep-pasture, for example, Kirby Grounds and Seawell Grounds in Blakesley parish.¹¹²

There were ironworks in Whittlewood Forest belonging to the king. In the Domesday survey of 1086, a smith at Greens Norton paid 120s and another at Towcester 100s to the king. In 1086 charcoal burners used woodland in the parishes to make charcoal for the ironworking; about twelve miles by nine miles at Greens Norton and six miles by three miles at Towcester. Aerial

¹¹⁰ NRO Arch. North. Series 1, E160, P23; Marjory Keniston McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community, the Royal Manor of Havering, 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 1986), p.233; Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village, Terling, 1525-1700* (New York, San Francisco, London, 1979), pp. 19, 34.

¹¹¹ TNA PCC PROB 11/21(1523).

¹¹² Steane, *Landscape*, pp. 171, 175.

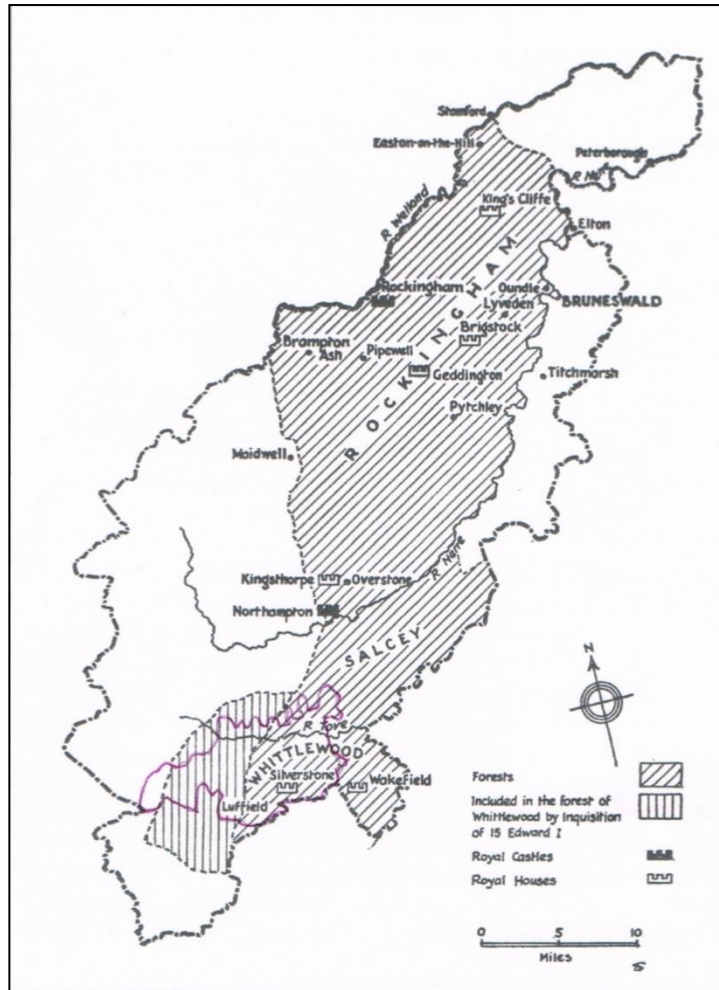
reconnaissance has yielded clear evidence of charcoal hearths in Whittlewood Forest and place-names such as Colsters in Wappenham indicate the presence of the industry, however, it is likely that the iron industry and much of the charcoal-making had gone by the end of the fifteenth century.¹¹³

The Royal Forests

Map 2.4, based on a survey in 1286, shows that a very large area of Northamptonshire was then covered by royal forests, but the areas shown were mainly covered by forest law, not woodland (Map. 2.5 shows actual woodland). At their greatest extent the entire study area, except Culworth, was within Salcey Forest (Easton Neston and Stoke Bruerne) or Whittlewood Forest. Originally Whittlewood Forest continued into Buckinghamshire, but this section was disafforested in a Buckinghamshire perambulation in 1299. In 1299-1300 a Northamptonshire perambulation further reduced the forest and became the definitive boundary of Whittlewood; the reduced area continuing under forest law into the seventeenth century. Disafforested areas might still contain woodland. The perambulation cannot be followed precisely on modern maps, but it encompassed or passed through seven study parishes south of the River Tove: Syresham, Wappenham with Astwell, Abthorpe, Silverstone, Towcester, Paulerspury and Whittlebury.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Ann Williams and D. H. Martin (eds), *Domesday Book, a complete translation* (London, 2002), p. 590; John Morton, *The Natural History of Northamptonshire* (1712), pp. 548-9; Steane, *Landscape*, p. 100; Glenn Foard, 'Medieval Woodland, Agriculture and Industry in Rockingham Forest, Northamptonshire', *Medieval Archaeology*, 45 (2001), pp. 41-95.

¹¹⁴ Mark Page, 'The Extent of Whittlewood Forest and the Impact of Disafforestation in the Later Middle Ages', *NP&P*, 56 (2003), pp. 22-33, esp. 27-29.

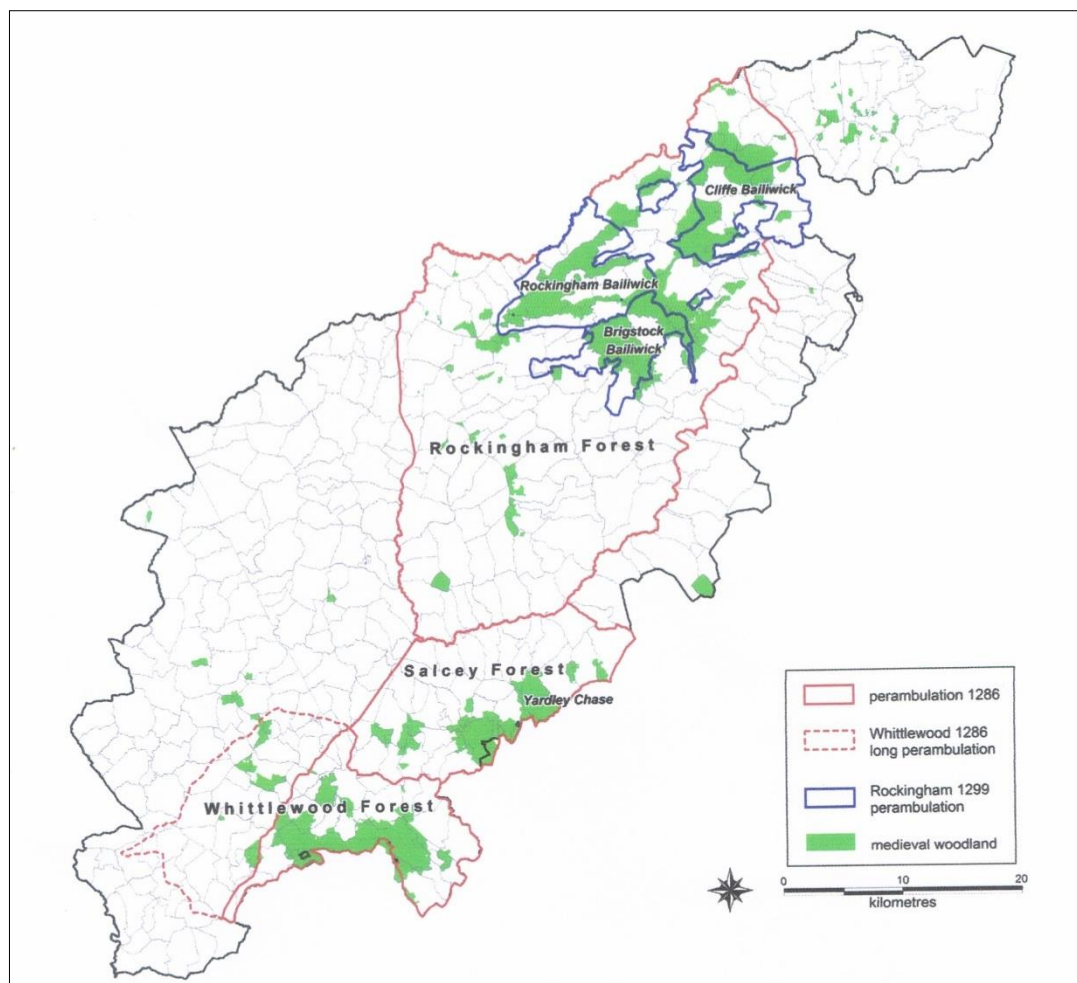


Map 2.4: The extent of the royal forests in Northamptonshire in the thirteenth century.

(Based on Steane, *Northamptonshire*, p.102, with the study area indicated in red).

The areas where forest law applied were diverse landscapes consisting of open spaces, deer-parks, enclosures and assarts as well as actual woodland. There were also the open-fields of some parishes within the forest jurisdiction. Within the royal forest deer were not allowed to be obstructed by fences or hedges enclosing fields of corn and the population had no rights against damage of arable land by deer. A writ at an inquisition in Northampton in 1369 stated that three acres of fallow land at Paulerspury held in socage (for fixed services), ‘are worth nothing yearly because they lie under the forest of Whittlewood and are destroyed by the king’s deer’.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ *CIPM*, 12, Edward III, p. 344; Pettit, *Royal Forests*, pp. 37-40; Page, ‘Extent of Whittlewood’, pp. 22-33; David Hall, ‘The Woodland Landscapes of Southern Northamptonshire’, *NP&P*, 54 (2001), pp. 33-46.



Map 2.5: The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire indicating woodland.

Source: Tracey Partida, David Hall, and Glenn Foard, *An Atlas of Northamptonshire, The Medieval and Early Modern Landscape* (Oxford, 2013), p. 23.

There were seven deer-parks within the study area: Easton Neston, Blakesley, Silverstone, Stoke Bruerne, two at Paulerspury, and the king's Handley Park, south of Greens Norton. Deer-parks often included coppices and could also be utilised for grazing cattle, but all deer were the property of the king, whose permission was needed to impark land. In Northamptonshire red deer were kept in parks, whereas the more abundant fallow deer were allowed to roam freely. In exchange for this, tenants could claim common rights of pasture in the forest for swine, cattle and horses at certain times of the year. Cottagers could put swine in the forest on payment of 3s 4d per hog.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Pettit, *Royal Forests*, pp. 152-4; Tracey Partida, 'The Early Hunting Landscapes of Northamptonshire', *NP&P*, 60 (2007), pp. 44-52; J. M. Steane, 'The Medieval Parks of Northamptonshire', *NP&P*, 5/3 (1975), pp. 211-233.

Helmdon Quarry

The underlying limestone beds provided ideal building material for the settlements. The limestone from quarries at Helmdon, on the periphery of the study area (see Map 2.2), was particularly fine and used for local churches in the medieval period. In 1355 a ‘proof of full age’ of John, son and heir of William Janekyn, stated that the church of Sulgrave had been destroyed and was being reconstructed at the time of his baptism there. Twenty carts from the town were at Helmdon at the time fetching stones for the repairs.¹¹⁷



Fig. 2.1: The Helmdon mason: William Campiun

Photograph from - <http://www.helmdon.com/four-shires-article.htm> (accessed 28/08/2010).

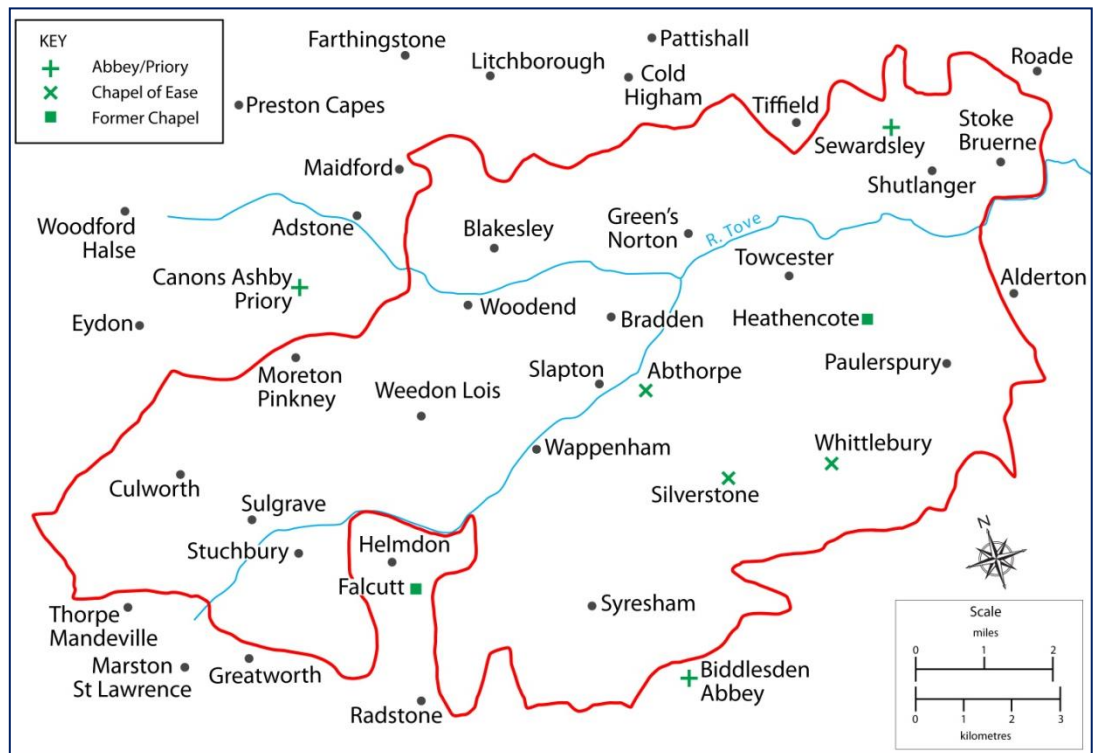
One of the builders of Helmdon Church, the master mason William Campiun, is commemorated in a tiny light at the top of a window in the north aisle of the church (Fig. 2.1). Only a few windows in English medieval stained glass depict an artisan with the tools of his trade. The inscription is *Will's Campiun fecit hoc op lapidis Anno Dni MCCCXIII*. (William Campiun made this stonework in the year of our Lord 1313).¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Richard Jones and Mark Page, ‘Characterizing Rural Settlement and Landscape: Whittlewood Forest in the Early Middle Ages’, *Medieval Archaeology*, 47 (2003), pp. 53-83; E. G. Parry, ‘Helmdon Stone’, *NP&P*, 7/4 (1986-7), pp. 258-269; *CIPM*, 10, Edward III (1921), p. 238.

¹¹⁸ Richard Marks, ‘An English Stonemason in Stained Glass’, in Alan Borg and Andrew Martindale (eds), *The Vanishing Past, Studies of Medieval Art, Liturgy and Metrology presented to Christopher Hohler*, British Archaeological Reports, International Series 3 (Oxford, 1981), pp. 105-6.

b) Religious institutions and structures

Northamptonshire was in the diocese of Lincoln until 1541 when, combined with Rutland, it formed the new diocese of Peterborough. This section examines how the ecclesiastical framework of religious houses, churches, chapels and parishes affected the lives of late-medieval people before 1541.



Map 2.6: Religious houses and chapels in the study area

Religious houses

Sewardsley Priory in Easton Neston parish was the only religious house actually within the study area. However, Biddlesden Abbey and Canons Ashby Priory were on the periphery and a few more distant houses held rectories or parcels of land within parishes, as shown in Table 2.4. This indicates that only five parish churches and two chapels of ease in the area had no link of either type with a religious house: Bradden, Greens Norton, Paulerspury, Plumpton and Slapton, plus Abthorpe and Whittlebury.

Rectories could be held by religious houses or secular patrons. When a religious house appropriated a rectory, it generally presented a vicar as

incumbent who received a fixed endowment of oblations, altar fees and most of the small tithes, or an annual stipend in lieu of them.¹¹⁹ In 1343 Pope Clement VI agreed to appropriate Culworth church, value 20 marks, to Canons Ashby Priory with the condition that a perpetual vicar's portion be reserved. This was confirmed in 1355 by Pope Innocent VI following the loss of an original document. In 1454 William Culleworth, perpetual vicar of Culworth, received a dispensation from Pope Nicholas V to hold for life, in addition to the vicarage, any other benefice with a value not exceeding 10 marks (£6 13s 4d). This was probably intended to compensate for the appropriation. In 1535 amounts had increased, but the vicar's income was still similar to that of the priory; vicar £10, priory £11 6s 8d.¹²⁰ A religious house might only hold the advowson of a church and would present a rector who paid a pension to the house. Canons Ashby priory held the advowson of Moreton Pinkney before the church was appropriated and in the early-thirteenth century received a pension of 40s from the church.¹²¹ Canons were permitted to serve as parish priests in churches appropriated to houses of regular canons, having first obtained papal permission, and after appropriation Moreton had priory canons serving as parish priests.¹²² Janet Burton and Karen Stöber describe a similar instance of Studley canons serving Aston Cantlow in Warwickshire.¹²³

Table 2.4: Involvement of the Religious Orders (in 1535)¹²⁴

<u>Religious Order</u>	<u>Religious house</u>	<u>Appropriated rector</u> <u>Value in 1535</u>	<u>Rents from land</u>	
Cluniac monks	St Andrew's Priory, Northampton	Sulgrave £9	Silverstone Sulgrave Stuchbury	6s 8d £6 18s 9½d £2

¹¹⁹ A. Hamilton Thompson, *Visitations in the Diocese of Lincoln 1517-1520*, LRS 33 (1940), p. xxv; Ulrich Rasche, 'The early phase of appropriation of parish churches in Medieval England', *Journal of Medieval History*, 26 (2000), pp. 213-237; B. R. Kemp, 'Monastic Possession of Parish Churches in England in the Twelfth Century', *JEH*, 31 (1980), pp. 133-160.

¹²⁰ *CPL* 1, *Petitions*, p. 33; *CPL*, 3, pp. 139, 575; *CPL*, 10, p. 253; *Valor*, 4, pp. 334, 337.

¹²¹ W. P. W. Phillimore (ed.), *Rotuli Hugonis Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis 1209-1235*, CYS (1909), pp. 150-1; *VCH Northamptonshire*, 2, p. 131; *CPR*, Edward II, 1313-1317, p. 67.

¹²² B. R. Kemp, 'Monastic Possession', p. 145; *CPL*, 1, p. 418; *CPL*, 5, p. 200.

¹²³ Janet Burton and Karen Stöber, *The Regular Canons in the Medieval British Isles* (Turnhout, 2011), p. 334.

¹²⁴ *Valor*, 2, p.125 and 4, passim; Bridges, 1, passim; *VCH Northamptonshire*, 2, passim.

			Stuchbury*	£1 6s 8d (pension)
Cistercian nuns	Catesby Priory		Sulgrave	£1 15s 4d
	Swardsley Priory (appropriated to Cluniac abbey of Delapre, N'ton, 1459-60)	Easton Neston £6 13s 4d	Swardsley Heathencote Shutlanger Stoke Bruerne	£2 10s £1 10s 4d 5s
Augustinian canons	Canons Ashby Priory	Culworth £11 6s 8d Moreton Pinkney £6 13s 4d	Culworth Moreton Pinkney Blakesley and Woodend Wappenham Sulgrave Weston by Weedon	£1 14s 4d £2 9s 2d £5 0s 10d £1 3s 6d 7s 8d 17s 4d
	St Mary's Abbey, Leicester		Syresham Syresham*	£6 6s 2½d 6s 8d (pension)
	St James's Abbey, Northampton		Stoke Bruerne	12s
	Bradenstoke Priory, Wiltshire		Towcester Towcester*	Part of £9 (rent)** Pension not known
	Augustinian nuns	Burnham Abbey Buckinghamshire		Silverstone
Cistercian monks	Biddlesden Abbey*** Buckinghamshire [All Souls College, Oxford from 1440]	Weedon Lois £13 6s 8d	Weedon Lois Syresham	£1 1s 9d £6 7s 2d (paid to Biddlesden) [£18 8s 4d: paid to All Souls College, not all from Northamptonshire]
Order of the Knights Templar (and on their demise) Order of the Knights Hospitaller		Blakesley £7	Blakesley	£23

*Also, the advowson of the church and a pension from the same.

**£9 is the total rent from 'Towcester with Burton' (Latimer?), Northants.

***Weedon Lois church was originally the church of a small Benedictine alien priory cell of St Lucien's Abbey, Beauvais. After the French Wars in the late fourteenth century, ownership was transferred in 1393 to Biddlesden Abbey, Buckinghamshire. In 1440 the priory, its lands and advowson of the vicarage were transferred to All Souls College, Oxford, to serve as a chantry. However, Biddlesden still held the rectory and continued to present to the vicarage until the Dissolution.¹²⁵

At the end of the pre-Reformation period the proportion of vicarages to rectories in England was 3,845 to 9,284, or 29.3 per cent to 70.7 per cent respectively. In Lincoln Diocese 33 per cent of churches were appropriated, but in Northamptonshire it was greater at 105 to 376, or 37.4 per cent to 62.6 per cent, showing that religious houses had a significant involvement in the

¹²⁵ Bridges, 1, p. 257; *Valor*, 4, p. 237.

county.¹²⁶ In the study area the proportion was even higher at 6 to 9, or 40.0 per cent to 60.0 per cent. Religious houses therefore were exceptionally involved in the area and there were likely consequences for the vicar, his church and the parishioners. Although a vicar's gross income was probably less than a rector's, the rector had greater financial liabilities and a rectory was not necessarily more lucrative than a vicarage. Rectors were responsible for the upkeep and repair of the chancel, which was their property. Religious proprietors of rectories were inevitably less thorough and punctual in this duty, having appropriated rectories to aid the constant expense of their own buildings.¹²⁷ Emma Mason found that 'as appropriation of churches by religious houses increased, so cartularies reflected increasing preoccupation with tithes and pension rights, but none with the interests of the people who were ultimately providing this finance.'¹²⁸ The high rate of appropriation in this area must have affected the upkeep of the chancels, but there are no records of church surveys until the early seventeenth century. Bowker paints a picture of general neglect in appropriated churches in Lincoln Diocese.¹²⁹ Most of the religious houses in Table 2.4 held other rectories, all with chancels to be cared for, in addition to those in the study area.

Non-residence and Pluralism

Non-residence and pluralism, meaning the practice of holding more than one ecclesiastical benefice, were two of the perceived 'evils' of the medieval Church that it had never solved and were argued against by Wycliffe and the Lollards (discussed later) as well as the orthodox.¹³⁰ Dispensations for non-residence on specified grounds, which were liberally interpreted, could easily be obtained from bishops and papal dispensations for plurality extended the custom. In such instances the 'cure of souls' was habitually deputed to a curate

¹²⁶ *VCH Northamptonshire*, 2, p.20; Margaret Bowker, *The Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1495-1520* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 130.

¹²⁷ Hamilton Thompson, *Visitations*, pp. xxix-xxx.

¹²⁸ Emma Mason, 'The Role of the English Parishioner, 1100-1500', *JEH*, 27/1 (Jan. 1976), pp. 211-233.

¹²⁹ Bowker, *Secular Clergy*, pp. 132-6.

¹³⁰ J. J. Scarisbrick, 'Criticism of the Old Order', *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984), chap. 3; A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London, 1967), passim; Christopher Haigh (ed.), *The English Reformation Revised* (London, 1987), passim; Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 53-6.

hired by the rector for an annual stipend and known as the parish priest, but who did not have the security of tenure accorded to rectors and vicars. Vicars and curates with the cure of souls were canonically bound to reside in their parish, but from the middle of the fifteenth century there was a tendency to disregard this obligation.¹³¹ Other reasons for absence from a parish, for which bishops could give dispensations, were for study at university, for going on pilgrimage, for temporary residence elsewhere for recreation, and for entering a lord's service. In all cases the cleric was required to ensure that his church was suitably served in his absence.¹³² These absences are not recorded in all bishops' registers, but a register of Henry Burghersh gives several examples in the study area. In 1336, for instance: 'Geoffrey de Sautre, rector of Syresham, to be in the service of Simon de Islep, canon of Lincoln, for one year'. In 1323 there was a licence for pilgrimage: 'To Brother John de Kelmscote, vicar of Moreton Pinkney and a canon of Canons Ashby, to visit Rome for remedy of his sins. He is to return before Pentecost or Easter and is to acknowledge the burdens belonging to his vicarage.'¹³³ These licences for temporary absence, only recorded in one register, were unlikely to have an excessive effect on parish affairs unless they occurred repeatedly. However, there may have been many more licences and repeated absences would not produce a stable relationship between parishioners and clerics. A statute of 1529, professing to be for the better service of ecclesiastical cures, dealt in detail and financial severity with absenteeism and pluralism, but the chaplains of royal households, royal councillors, prelates and nobility were exempted from penalties. Pluralism was allowed if the first benefice was worth £8 or less.¹³⁴

Margaret Bowker argues for much non-residence in Lincoln diocese in the early sixteenth century, though incomplete records, particularly from the archdeaconry of Northampton, make it difficult to find accurate numbers.¹³⁵ Fragmentary visitation returns survive for the archdeaconries of Lincoln, Stow,

¹³¹ Hamilton Thompson, *Visitations*, p. xxv; Vera F. M. Garlick, 'The provision of vicars in the early fourteenth century', *History*, 34 (1949), pp. 16-27.

¹³² Nicholas Bennett (ed.), *The Registers of Henry Burghersh 1320-1342*, 3/3, LRS 101 (2011), pp. xiii, xv.

¹³³ *Ibid*, pp. 103, 64.

¹³⁴ Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (London, 1969), pp. 49-50, citing *Statutes of the Realm*, 21 Henry VIII, 13, c. ix-xviii.

¹³⁵ Bowker, *Secular Clergy*, pp. 85-109.

Huntingdon and Leicester during 1495-1510. A more comprehensive picture survives from visitation and court books for Bishop Atwater's episcopacy (1514-1521) when a total of 1,006 parishes were visited by him or his deputies. Confusion in sources over chapels makes assessment of the total number of parishes difficult, although there were approximately 1,700. There is definite evidence of non-residence in 293 parishes; however, based on the proportion of non-residents in visited parishes, Bowker thinks that the real figure must approach 424.¹³⁶

In the study area, from institutions of clerics during 1490-1515, seven out of fifteen rectors or vicars (chapelries discounted) were pluralists.¹³⁷ In some cases where only one extra benefice was held it may have been needed to give the cleric a viable living. W. G. Hoskins studying Leicestershire country parsons during the sixteenth century found that, as elsewhere, parish clergy were mainly poor men living obscure lives in remote country parishes. In 1535, of 198 benefices in the archdeaconry of Leicester, ninety-six clerics (or almost half) had an annual income of less than £10, seventy-four had £10-£20, fourteen had £20-£30 and fourteen had over £30. The six poorest had incomes of less than £5, but Hoskins points out that country parsons were nearly always practical farmers who could provide for most of their household needs and manage on a small income as single men, before the Reformation.¹³⁸ Pluralism is mentioned, but no figures are given before 1576.

In the study area the income of seven out of fourteen clerics was £10 or below, the same proportion as in Leicestershire, though the lowest was £6 17s 4d, higher than the six poorest in Leicestershire. (Moreton Pinkney, served by a canon, has no record). Only two clerics received £11-£20, three received £20-£30 and two received more than £30. It is noticeable that the five appropriated churches (again omitting Moreton Pinkney) were among the seven benefices with an income below £11; however, the vicar was a pluralist in only two of these. The highest incomes were Towcester: £44 6s 8d, Greens Norton: £38 and Stoke Bruerne: £30.¹³⁹ Towcester also had pluralist chantry priests (see

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 89-91.

¹³⁷ Longden, *Clergy*, passim.

¹³⁸ W. G. Hoskins, 'The Leicestershire Country Parson in the Sixteenth Century', *TLAS*, 21 (1940), pp. 90-114, passim.

¹³⁹ *Valor*, 4.

chapter 5). The crown and patrons of unappropriated rectories were in the habit of regarding the more valuable benefices in their gift as suitable sources of income for clerics in their service.¹⁴⁰ Towcester and Stoke Bruerne are later shown to have been regularly used in this way leaving two churches without a resident rector for long periods. Bowker states that the higher the value of a living, the more likely it was that the incumbent would not reside.¹⁴¹ This was certainly the situation in the study area and the facts argue against pluralism being used in all cases to give poor clerics a viable living.

Collections of benefices presented by influential patrons, or indeed the pope, could quite fairly be perceived as an ‘evil’ of the Church. The anti-papal legislation of the middle of the fourteenth century marked a turning point in ‘the flooding of the best benefices in the [English] Church with foreign cardinals and officers of the papal court’. The practice did not cease, but was diminished, and by the beginning of the fifteenth century had become rare.¹⁴² The following example from 1508 involving Wappenham chantry is one of the ‘rare’ late examples, but must illustrate the worst excesses of the practice. Briefly, Master Hugh Inge, MA, MTheol, was received by Pope Julius II as a continuous member of his household, papal chaplain and minor penitentiary of St Peter’s Basilica, Rome, as a notary of the pope and the apostolic see. The pope confirmed the dispensation made by Pope Alexander VI for Master Inge to hold besides the wardenship of Wappenham any other benefice with cure. He already held a canonry and prebend of the church of Wells; a canonry of the church of Vestebury supra Trym, diocese of Worcester; the prebend of Auste, of the same; the perpetual vicarage of the church of Welew, diocese of Bath; and the perpetual vicarage of Oldestone, diocese of Worcester. In addition to this he was now dispensed to hold any other two benefices.¹⁴³ These canonries, prebends and benefices made Hugh Inge quite wealthy, but he was living in Rome. He was non-resident in all of his benefices and was depriving other clerics from holding them. However, he would have had to provide curates for benefices with cure.

¹⁴⁰ Hamilton Thompson, *Visitations*, p. xxv.

¹⁴¹ Margaret Bowker, ‘Non-residence in the Lincoln Diocese in the Early Sixteenth Century’, *JEH*, 15/1 (1964), pp. 40-50, esp. 45.

¹⁴² A. Hamilton Thompson, *The English Clergy and their Organisation in the later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1947), p. 11.

¹⁴³ Longden, *Clergy*, 7, p. 199; *CPL*, 18, pp. 185-6.

A curate replacing a non-resident rector would not necessarily be a disadvantage to parishioners. He would probably be poor, but might be very conscientious, though his length of service in the parish was often brief and constant changes of curate could affect the continuity of parish traditions and organisation. The influence of clergy in their parishes will be discussed later.

Religious houses were exceptionally involved in the area and one effect of this, and of other non-resident rectors, is that parishioners would be paying tithes to an unknown religious house, or person after the Dissolution, and many might question the practice of tithing, particularly when the rector's responsibilities to the chancels were not fulfilled. Church survey books in the early seventeenth century find faults in the chancels of fifteen churches.¹⁴⁴

Tithe disputes were common in some ecclesiastical courts during the sixteenth century, but in the study area there are no available sixteenth-century records. In the period 1601-1632 there are records of six tithe disputes from different parishes; three have clerical plaintiffs and three have lay plaintiffs.¹⁴⁵ In the ecclesiastical courts of the diocese of Canterbury in 1501-1600 there were 6,304 disputes.¹⁴⁶ Several researchers noticed that the number of tithe disputes increased after the transfer of monastic lands to lay owners following the Dissolution of monasteries, but disputes brought by lay owners against parishioners were not in the majority in all decades in all dioceses. Paula Simpson found that lay plaintiffs were in the majority in the diocese of Canterbury in only one decade, the 1560s; otherwise clerical plaintiffs were in the majority 1546-1600.¹⁴⁷ However, in the Consistory Court of the Archbishop of York, J. S. Purvis found that 76 per cent of causes in 1540-1560 were brought by lay rectors against parishioners.¹⁴⁸ William Sheils found that lay rectors in tithe disputes in the York diocese in 1550-1600 formed 71 per cent of plaintiffs in 1551 and then remained above 60 per cent until 1601, except for 56 per cent in 1591. He suggests the high percentages may be partly

¹⁴⁴ NRO, PDR, Church Survey Book 2 (1611), Book 4 (1631), Book 5 (1637).

¹⁴⁵ NRO, PDR, ML636, ML637.

¹⁴⁶ Paula Simpson, 'The Continuum of Resistance to Tithe, c. 1400-1600', in Robert Lutton and Elizabeth Salter (eds), *Pieties in Transition, Religious Practice and Experiences c. 1400-1640* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 93-108, esp. 93.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

¹⁴⁸ J. S. Purvis (ed.), *Select XVI Century Causes in Tithe from the York Diocesan Registry*, The Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 114 (1949), p. viii.

due to the high number of monastic impropriations in the York diocese.¹⁴⁹ In Mancetter, Warwickshire, some poor parishioners were excused tithes by the clergy and this may be true elsewhere.¹⁵⁰

The churches

The eighteen churches were introduced above. During the nineteenth century there was a considerable degree of complete or partial rebuilding and restoration at many of the churches, resulting in the possible loss of evidence of late-medieval religion. Abthorpe, Plumpton and Silverstone were completely rebuilt and Paulerspury and Bradden were partially rebuilt. The chancels of five churches were rebuilt: Blakesley, Culworth, Greens Norton, Moreton Pinkney and Whittlebury.¹⁵¹ All this building activity could suggest a lack of maintenance or poor repairs in earlier centuries, particularly of chancels. In Moreton Pinkney, for example, the church was in a decayed and ruinous state by the early nineteenth century, the chancel walls leaned outwards by many inches and the east end was cracked. Oriel College, Oxford, holder of the rectory, had the chancel rebuilt in 1845 and Sir Henry Dryden of Canons Ashby had the rest of the church restored and partially re-roofed in the same year at a cost of £800.¹⁵² North aisles were added to Weedon Lois and Sulgrave churches, presumably to cater for larger populations, and at Sulgrave the east wall of the chancel was also reconstructed, but these were minor alterations insofar as they affected medieval interiors.¹⁵³ This leaves just six churches with their structures largely untouched since the sixteenth century: Easton Neston, Slapton, Stoke Bruerne, Syresham, Towcester and Wappenham. Of these, only Easton Neston was appropriated, but the wealthy Fermors, later Earls of Pomfret, would have been unlikely to have allowed Easton Neston, containing family monuments, to deteriorate. There will have been other minor

¹⁴⁹ W. J. Sheils, ‘The Right of the Church’: The Clergy, Tithe, and the Courts at York, 1540-1640’, in W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood (eds), *The Church and Wealth* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 231-255, esp. 236’.

¹⁵⁰ Heath, *Parish Clergy*, p. 149.

¹⁵¹ Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Northamptonshire* (New Haven, Conn. and London, 1973).

¹⁵² Sheila C. Frewin, ‘...of Pigs and Paupers’, *bygone days of Moreton Pinkney* (the author, 2005), p. 32.

¹⁵³ Pevsner, *Northamptonshire*, p. 449; H. Clifford Smith, *Sulgrave Manor and the Washingtons*. (London, 1933), pp. 188, 195.

restorations or changes in all eighteen churches, but Slapton probably remains the closest to its medieval appearance, although ‘a low medieval clerestory with a flat pitched roof above was removed in the nineteenth century (probably because the flat roof leaked badly) and the present roof was substituted’. The south porch was also rebuilt then.¹⁵⁴ Slapton’s main treasure, discussed in chapter three, is its wall-paintings, discovered in the nineteenth century and professionally conserved in 1992 after local fund-raising.¹⁵⁵

Stuchbury church and ancient parish is generally treated as part of Sulgrave parish in this thesis. St Andrew’s Priory, Northampton, held land in Stuchbury and the advowson of the church until the Dissolution. The will of John Thomson, tenant of the Sulgrave and Stuchbury sheep-pastures, implies that in 1523 Stuchbury church was still standing and in 1605 William Barcocke MA was ‘instituted to the rectory or free chapel of Stottesburye on the presentation of the king by lapse’, possibly implying that it was still standing. In 1654 Christopher Sutton of Stuchbury requested burial in the church or churchyard of Stuchbury. From the mid-seventeenth century, the benefice was usually given to the rector of Helmdon as income and the church was probably a ruin.¹⁵⁶

Many of the minsters of Anglo-Saxon England, which housed monastic communities and owned modest enclaves of land, had by the late-eleventh century become the centres of larger secular estates that became royal or noble residences containing residually important churches. In many areas there was continuity between Anglo-Saxon minsters and parochial mother-churches of 950-1200, though the degree of continuity varied and was fairly low in Northamptonshire. Many local churches secured their independence as the parish system developed, but some local churches remained dependent upon the ‘mother churches’ throughout the Middle Ages.¹⁵⁷ There is a surviving example in the study area. The one-time royal estate centred on Greens Norton

¹⁵⁴ D. R. Mumford and T. Healy, *St Botolph’s Church, Slapton*, (1993, revised 1999), pp. 4-5.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.7; J. G. Waller, ‘On the wall paintings discovered in the churches of Raunds and Slapton’, *Archaeological Journal* (1877), 34, pp. 217-241; E. F. Leach, ‘Some notes on wall paintings of Slapton Church’, *Reports and Papers of the Associated Architectural Societies*, 29/1 (1907), pp. 121-128; fund-raising: personal contact, Barbara Smith, Slapton Manor.

¹⁵⁶ TNA PCC PROB 11/2; David M. Smith (ed.), *English Episcopal Acta, Lincoln 1067-1185* (London, 1980), p. 9; Bridges, 1, p. 202, refers to the former ‘church’; Allison, Beresford, Hurst, *Deserted Villages*, p. 46; TNA PROB 11/247; Longden, *Clergy*, passim.

¹⁵⁷ John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 296 (map), 323-4.

included the churches of Whittlebury and Silverstone, which remained chapelries dependent on Greens Norton.¹⁵⁸

Chapels

Before the Reformation many chapels existed that did not become parish churches and every new chapel had to be licensed by the diocesan bishop. Episcopal licences allowed the use of chapels for prayer and the mass, but pastoral services (baptisms, marriages, churchings of mothers, funerals and burials) required further permission because these rights belonged to parish churches. Allowing a chapel to perform these services would reduce the funds available for the parish church and its incumbent. There were many types of chapels, sometimes loosely defined, which caused problems at the Reformation when many chapels were closed, often disappearing without trace as they had few records. Nobility, gentry or high-ranking clergy might have a 'private chapel' in their houses for their family. 'Chantry chapels' were founded for the benefit of the souls of the founders and their families, and could be separate buildings or chapels within a church. 'Free chapels' were exempt from parochial, though usually not episcopal, control. 'Chapels of ease' occurred in secondary settlements, particularly in large parishes where distance, difficult terrain, or seasonal bad weather and floods might prevent parishioners from attending the parish church. They were often served by short-term curates and were mostly dependent on their parish church for pastoral services as above, although some were ancient foundations that functioned virtually as parish churches, including keeping their own registers, when these began from 1538 onwards. Whittlebury, dependent on Greens Norton, appears to be of this latter type.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Glenn Foard, 'The Administrative Organisation of Northamptonshire in the Saxon Period', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 4 (Oxford, 1985), pp. 188, 216.

¹⁵⁹ P. E. H. Hair, 'A Query about Chapelries', *LPS*, 42/1 (1989), p. 58; P. E. H. Hair, 'The chapel in the English Landscape', *The Local Historian*, 21, (1991), pp. 4-5; Christopher Kitching, 'Church and Chapelry in Sixteenth-century England', *Studies in Church History*, 16 (1979), pp. 279-281; Nicholas Orme, 'Church and Chapel in Medieval England', *TRHS*, Sixth series, 6 (1996), pp. 75-80; Nicholas Orme, 'The Other Parish Churches: Chapels in Late-Medieval England', in C. Burgess and E. Duffy (eds), *The Parish in Late-Medieval England* (Donington, 2006), pp. 78-83; David Parsons, *Lost Chantries and Chapels of Medieval Northamptonshire*, The Brixworth Lectures, Second Series, 3 (Friends of All Saints' Church, Brixworth, 2003), passim.

There were five chapels in the study area, three being chapels of ease that survived the Reformation: Whittlebury, Silverstone and Abthorpe. The former royal hunting park of Handley and part of Towcester parish lie in the four miles between Greens Norton and its chapels of ease, Whittlebury and Silverstone in Whittlewood Forest. In 1247-1250 Henry III ordered repairs and alterations to the king's chapel at Silverstone hunting lodge and also built a new chapel for the queen. Royal interest in the buildings ceased in 1317 when the manor was granted to Sir Richard Lovell.¹⁶⁰ The chapel remained as a chapel of ease and in 1530 John Lambert of Silverstone bequeathed a cow to 'St John's chapel, Silston', but requested burial in the churchyard at Whittlebury, one mile away.¹⁶¹ Silverstone burials were anciently at Whittlebury and this continued throughout the Reformation period, as shown by Silverstone wills.¹⁶² In 1653 Whittlebury began a register for marriages, births and deaths for Whittlebury and Silverstone.¹⁶³ Silverstone appeared to act as a chapelry of Whittlebury, but officially both places were chapelries of Greens Norton until 1852, when they became a new united benefice separate from Greens Norton.¹⁶⁴

Wills from Abthorpe, a chapel of ease of Towcester indicate that burials were at Towcester, three miles away, until the mid-sixteenth century when John Touswell in 1545 requested burial in the churchyard of Abthorpe.¹⁶⁵ Thereafter burial was at either place for a few years, but from at least 1557 all burials were at Abthorpe. A burial-ground at the chapel was the first step towards autonomy; the chapel had its own register from 1583 and Abthorpe was made an ecclesiastical parish in 1737.¹⁶⁶

Two other chapels in the area did not survive the Reformation. Few people in the study area lived more than two miles from their church or chapel of ease and most were much closer. Chapels judged to be unnecessary or of doubtful status, were generally dissolved with chantry chapels in 1548.¹⁶⁷ The chapel in Falcutt hamlet, part of Astwell Manor, undoubtedly acted as a chapel

¹⁶⁰ H. M. Colvin (ed.), *The History of the King's Works*, 2 (London, 1963), pp. 1002-3.

¹⁶¹ NRO Arch. North. Series 1, D346.

¹⁶² Foard, *Northamptonshire*, p. 216.

¹⁶³ NRO, 363p/1.

¹⁶⁴ Frederick A. Young, *Guide to the local administration units of England*, 2, RHS (London, 1991), pp. 308, 312.

¹⁶⁵ NRO Arch. North. Series 1, I75.

¹⁶⁶ Young, *Local Admin*, pp. 294, 310.

¹⁶⁷ Parsons, *Lost Chantries*, p.7.

of ease for the people of Falcutt, who lived about three miles from their parish church of Wappenham, but close to Helmdon church. Thomas Lovett Esquire of Astwell left 6s 8d in 1491 'to the repair of the chapel of Fawcott' [Falcutt].¹⁶⁸ The chapel was in Wappenham parish and the inhabitants paid tithes to the rector of Wappenham, who was also the warden of Wappenham chantry from its establishment. By agreement in 1407 the chapel was to be served by a chaplain from Wappenham chantry in perpetuity.¹⁶⁹ From 1522 three rectors, all Oxford graduates, appear to have provided a curate for Falcutt, or served themselves: Nicholas Small (1525-1553), Richard Barber (1553-1554) and William Symonds (1554-15).¹⁷⁰ Troubles began when Thomas Bendbowe, non-graduate Oxford scholar, became rector in 1565. The townsmen of Falcutt requested him to say divine service, to baptize, to church women and to do other rites as his predecessors did, but he resolutely refused to do so or provide a deputy. In 1567 Bishop Edmund Scambler of Peterborough (1560-1584) certified his re-consecration of Falcutt chapel after earlier pollution. Bendbowe's refusal initiated a court case in 1569 between him and the inhabitants, with Thomas Lovett of Astwell, knight, as public notary, for the restitution of the chapel. Evidence was given by William Mole, yeoman of Helmdon, John Gylberte, husbandman of Wappenham, and Thomas Drye and Edmund Burnell, husbandmen of Falcutt. They all said that the chapel was profaned, polluted and converted into a dwelling house. Gylberte alone alleged that this occurred in the late days of Edward VI. The four men all said that the rectors or their deputies performed all the sacraments and rites of the Church at Falcutt, mentioning two curates by name, Richard Hawke and George Garrett. However, Drye added that, while William Symonds personally administered communion to the old men of the hamlet, the youths went to Wappenham to receive.¹⁷¹ Bendbowe's argument may have been that although a Wappenham chantry warden was also the rector, it was as warden that he provided a chaplain to Falcutt and that the dissolution of chantries ended this duty. There is no record of the outcome of the case, but Parliamentary commissioners in 1655

¹⁶⁸ PCC PROB 11/9.

¹⁶⁹ LL&RRO, 26D53/625, 26D53/626.

¹⁷⁰ Longden, *Clergy*, 12, p.201; 1, p. 177; 13, p. 137, respectively.

¹⁷¹ LL&RRO, 26D53/625, 26D53/626.

certified that the chapel had been demolished.¹⁷² This was one of the ‘doubtful status’ cases, where the link with an earlier chantry appears to have allowed Bendbowe to win his case.

The hamlet of Heathencote, one mile from its parish church of Paulerspury, had a chapel dedicated to The Blessed Virgin and belonging to St James’s Abbey, Northampton. Probably during Henry II’s reign, Geoffrey de Lisle, for the souls of his father and mother, Maud his wife and Agatha his daughter, gave to the abbey the house that the chaplain lived in and 2lb of wax yearly, which gave Geoffrey and his heirs permission to elect a chaplain to serve the chapel. Presumably it served as a chapel of ease until its demise (perhaps at the Dissolution or earlier). Whelan in 1874 wrote that no trace of its site remained.¹⁷³

Manor houses sometimes had private chapels. In the mid-thirteenth century John Hulcote, knight, and his heirs and successors received a licence to have a private chapel at Easton Neston without a font or bells. Baptisms, marriages and burials could not be celebrated in the chapel.¹⁷⁴ In 1490 Richard Empson, nobleman of Easton Neston, and his wife Joan received an indult to have a portable altar.¹⁷⁵ In 1405 John Matthew of Astwell and Thomas Green, knight, of Greens Norton were given licences for private celebration of divine services in their manor-houses and in 1411 Ralph Parles was similarly licensed for his manor-house in Shutlanger.¹⁷⁶ The last three licences were given for three years, but presumably they could be renewed. Parles’ licence must have given rise to his medieval hall-house being later named as ‘The Monastery’, a name which persists today, illustrating how a folk-tale can originate. The house has a vaulted porch with a room overhead that may have been used as a private chapel.

There was an expectation that everyone would attend church services. Although in parts of England ‘chapels abounded on the eve of the Reformation’, mainly to provide easy access to a mass without leaving home

¹⁷² Michael Smith, ‘History from Falcutt Fields’, *Aspects of Helmdon*, 4 (2001), pp. 190-195.

¹⁷³ Bridges, 1, p. 315; *VCH Northamptonshire*, 5, pp. 245-289 passim; Whelan *Gazetteer* p. 577.

¹⁷⁴ F. N. Davis, *Rotuli Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Lincolniensis, 1235-1253*, 4, CYS, 10 (1913), p. 214.

¹⁷⁵ *CPL*, 15, p. 419.

¹⁷⁶ Margaret Archer (ed.), *The Register of Philip Repingdon*, LRS 57, pp. 57-8, 200.

for several hours, there is evidence of only the above five chapels in the study area, three of which later became parish churches.¹⁷⁷ In an area of small ecclesiastical parishes in the late-medieval period, with the exception of Towcester and Greens Norton, few people would have lived more than a mile from their parish church. This contrasts, for example, with the large parishes of Lancashire where there were numerous chapels. The distance factor indicates the need to retain Abthorpe, Whittlebury and Silverstone as chapels of ease of Towcester and Greens Norton. Heathencote was only a mile from Paulerspury church. The people of Falcutt lived three miles from Wappenham church, but less than a mile from Helmdon church, which some of them may have attended.

c) Parish Organisation and Fundraising

Whereas paying tithes to the rector was compulsory, parishioners had some choice about participation in fundraising. Episcopal mandate required parishioners to maintain the nave and churchyard and to supply various liturgical items such as mass books, candlesticks and chalices. To raise and spend money to meet these requirements the laity organized themselves into an administrative structure, which varied from parish to parish, but involved all householders in the community led by elected churchwardens.¹⁷⁸

The churchwardens and parishioners were responsible for the maintenance of the fabric of the church, except for the chancel, which was the responsibility of the rector. This section is mainly concerned with Henry VIII's reign when the churchwardens' official duties were entirely ecclesiastical: caring for church goods and supplying liturgical necessities. Duties also included the presentment of clergy or laity, who were guilty of moral delinquencies, to the ecclesiastical court. However it will be seen that they also paid for communal parish expenses from the parish funds. In later reigns churchwardens were also responsible for some secular duties. At this time wardens were elected solely by the parishioners and generally there were two wardens, but there could be more and exceptionally a single warden officiated. In the case of two wardens, either both were elected annually, or one was

¹⁷⁷ Kitching, 'Church and Chapelry', p. 279.

¹⁷⁸ Katherine L. French, *The People of the Parish – Community life in a Late-Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia, 2001), p. 20; Miller and Hatcher, *Rural Society*, pp. 107-8.

elected each year and served for two years. The practice at Boxford in Suffolk, for example, changed from the first system to the second during the 1530s, providing more continuity. Customs varied, but some parishes had other wardens for special duties, such as upkeep of the 'lights', or looking after the 'town stock'. All wardens' accounts would be read to the assembled parishioners on an arranged day of the year, which would ensure their veracity.¹⁷⁹

People believed that fundraising was a religious duty and a pious bequest could help ease a soul through Purgatory. Raising funds became a means of integrating people into the parish community, which evolved its processes and institutions for fundraising. There was variation over the country and between rural and urban communities, but funds could be gathered from five possible sources: rents, gifts, sales, collections and entertainment.¹⁸⁰ Culworth is the only parish in the study area with extant churchwardens' accounts from before the Reformation, which reveal the organisation of the parish, the sources of parish funds and how they were spent, particularly on repairs and additions to the church. In 1541 the wardens paid ½d for 'papyr for the boke'; presumably the accounts book. A large sheet of paper would be purchased and folded to make pages that were bound together with other pages later. Peter Northeast suggests that many early records were lost through the failure of officials to have loose pages bound.¹⁸¹ If the 'special duty' wardens' accounts were not written on the same pages used by the churchwardens, they could have been lost or discarded when the wardens ceased to exist, which makes it difficult to decide whether all parishes had these extra wardens. Boxford churchwardens during Henry VIII's reign only accounted for the upkeep of the church, churchyard and parish properties, and also the bridge. No special wardens are mentioned.¹⁸² At Morebath, Devon, as at Culworth, the accounts of other wardens are written on the same sheets as the churchwardens'

¹⁷⁹ French, *People of the Parish*, chaps. 1 & 4 passim; J Charles Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts from the Fourteenth Century to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1913), pp. 1-5; Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 5; Duffy, *Morebath*, chap. 2 passim; Peter Northeast, *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts 1530-1561*, The Suffolk Records Society, 23 (1982), p. xii.

¹⁸⁰ French, *People of the Parish*, p. 100.

¹⁸¹ Northeast, *Boxford*, p. xi.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, passim.

accounts and have survived. Duffy believes ‘that for such a small place, Morebath had an astonishingly elaborate internal structure’. Morebath had wardens for the stores of Our Lady, St Anthony, St Sunday, the Maidens, the Young Men and the Alms light. The churchwardens (known as High Wardens) also accounted for stores of Jesus and St Sidwell.¹⁸³ Culworth, which was a bigger parish, had slightly fewer wardens. Some of the early pages of the Culworth accounts are damaged and accounts for a few later years appear to be incomplete, but they are used here (with a few references to other parishes) as a case-study of a parish. Lack of evidence poses the question of how representative Culworth is of the study area as a whole. It was one of the bigger parishes, had a market and fair (until at least 1500), and was an overnight halt at the junction of drove roads. Some small parishes, particularly Plumpton, Bradden and Slapton, may have had simpler structures, but there is no conclusive evidence.

Case study of a parish: Culworth 1531-1547

In 1531 it was agreed at a meeting of the whole parish that the churchwardens and any other church officials should make their account on the Sunday following the feast of the Conversion of St Paul (January 25). Any absent officials were to be fined 20d apiece and all those holding church goods were to be present or forfeit 12d apiece. It was also agreed that the wardens of St Christopher should keep the anniversary of Henry Thomys annually or be fined. This was all written at the beginning of a new accounts book.¹⁸⁴ Sunday, when everyone was expected to be in church, was a convenient day for the reading of accounts.

Churchwardens served for two years and parishioners replaced one of the two wardens each year. There were also two Town Stock wardens, two Torch wardens and two St Christopher wardens, who were replaced, but not so regularly. The office of St Christopher warden only survived until 1537 and in this case Thomas Wickens served every year with a different second warden each year. Two new wardens were then appointed for 1538 only and named Rood Light wardens. Henry had banned external manifestations of the cult of

¹⁸³ Duffy, *Morebath*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁸⁴ NRO 94p/21.

saints, but the rood light was still officially allowed after saints' lights were banned. The Torch wardens (one of whom was John Gardiner for nine years) made their last accounts in 1545. Simon Adams and Nicholas Pearson were Town Stock wardens every year until 1538, after which one was replaced each year until 1555, when both wardens were discharged from the office. Thereafter the churchwardens were responsible for all accounting of parish funds.¹⁸⁵ A few of the men, for example, Simon Adams, Nicholas Pearson and John Gardiner, when leaving one post were immediately elected for another. It is also noticeable that John Gardiner and Simon Adams, both long-term wardens, appeared to be very popular choices for overseeing or witnessing wills, indicating that they were men who were looked up to as leaders in the community and were well able to read and write. Several members of the Gardiner family, brothers or nephews of an earlier rector of Culworth, another John Gardiner who died in 1531, held office as wardens.

Necessary funds were raised in various ways. In this farming community a regular source of income was rent from several strips of land communally owned by the parish. Rent from cows and the sale of wool from sheep also contributed to funds; in 1534 for example, 4s was received for hiring out two cows, probably to people who could not afford their own, and 3s 9d for the sale of wool. The parish must have owned a bull and in 1531 the wardens received money for its hire.¹⁸⁶ In 1534 the parish owned ten cattle, two cows and seven sheep. The next year 3s 6½d was received for the hide of a dead cow and 12½d for four sheepskins. Nothing was wasted: in 1536 the ends of bell ropes were sold for 7d and, in most years, between 4d and 7d were received for the swarfe from the parish grindstone, which was gritty dust that could be used for polishing metal or sharpening knives.¹⁸⁷

Income also came from bequests, for example, William Whytlocke gave a sheep to the church and Thomas Taylor gave 2d and a bullock. Henry Thomys gave a coffer and a folding table, and 20s to buy a cow, from which the income was to provide a light before the Trinity altar. He also gave 6s 8d to the

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Damaged page, amount missing, NRO 94p/21.

¹⁸⁷ NRO 94p/21.

church.¹⁸⁸ There were some bequests by people with no extant will, such as Henry Gardiner (12d in 1542) and Thomas Hawthorn (8d in 1543).¹⁸⁹ Damage to pages and gaps in some accounts make it difficult to work out the average annual receipts of the churchwardens, but a few existing sample totals are £3 7s 2d in 1533, £1 17s 1d in 1538, and £2 5s 9½d in 1540. Church ales receipts accounted for a large proportion of income and for the same years were £1 16s 3d, £1 5s 8d and £1 8s respectively.¹⁹⁰

Testators gave donations of barley to the church more frequently than cash, for example, five of the six wills from 1523 to 1530 included varying amounts of barley for the church.¹⁹¹ In Towcester in 1533 William Symkin gave half a quarter of malt for the church ale at Whitsuntide.¹⁹² Barley and malt would be used for making the ‘church ale’ which would be sold for church funds and was an opportunity for parishioners to meet socially on holy days. At one time these meetings would have been in the church nave, which acted as a church hall. Later, generally between 1450 and 1600, a ‘church house’ was often built near the church and run by the churchwardens for village meetings. The impression is often given that these were mainly an institution of south-west England (where perhaps more of the buildings have survived for other uses), but they did exist in other areas and at least five are mentioned in Northamptonshire wills, though not in the study area.¹⁹³ At Silverstone there was a ‘town house’ that must have served the same purpose. Margaret Wawkett left 10d in 1559 towards repairs of the town house, so it existed for some time before this, and John Hopkins left a black cow and one acre of barley in 1568 to the maintenance of the town stock and the town house.¹⁹⁴ Boxford in Suffolk had a house that appears variously in its accounts as ‘church house’ or ‘town house’. Payments for its use were made to the church funds.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁸ NRO Arch. North. Series 1, B99 (1522), D66 (1527), B66 (1522).respectively.

¹⁸⁹ NRO 94p/21.

¹⁹⁰ NRO 94p/21.

¹⁹¹ NRO Arch. North. Series 1, B144, D89, D103, D216, D331.

¹⁹² NRO Arch. North. Series 1, E56.

¹⁹³ Patrick Cowley, *The Church Houses, their Religious and Social Significance* (London, 1970), passim; Cox, *Churchwarden’ Accounts*, pp. 286-8; David Dymond, ‘God’s Disputed Acre’, *JEH*, 50, (1999), p. 481; R. M. Serjeantson & H. Isham Longden, *The Parish Churches and Religious Houses of Northamptonshire: Their Dedications, Altars, Images and Lights* (London, 1913), pp.40-1.

¹⁹⁴ NRO Arch. North. Series 1, Q151, S54.

¹⁹⁵ Northeast, *Boxford*, passim.

Many costs of administering the parish and the church, except for the chancel, would be borne by parish funds. Money was spent by churchwardens going to the archdeacon's visitations at one of the nearby towns. Other regular payments include: hemp bell-ropes made in the parish each year, new baldrics and wheels for bells, half a hide of white leather for the baldrics, and soap for washing the surplice. There was some land kept in hand for church barley (for making ale) and there were annual costs for the sowing and harvesting, and for ale and sometimes bread at the sowing. Ale given at sowing, carrying of wood, and other communal occasions would aid cooperation and bonding in the community. Ale was also provided for workmen doing specific jobs to the church fabric.¹⁹⁶

From the churchwardens' accounts for 1533 the vicar and Simon Gardiner were repaid money that they had 'layd owt for the bell' and the 'great bell' was hung in 1534. It may have replaced an older bell; in 1531 the churchwardens had paid an amount (missing) for taking down a bell and £3 for workmanship of the bell. The St Christopher wardens in the same year paid 20s towards the changing of the bell.¹⁹⁷

Other payments were made for buying a lantern, a candlestick to place before the Trinity, a lock for the church coffer, a key for the storehouse door, a key for the steeple door, and 26s 8d to Thomas Kymbell in 1539 for the town horse and its harness. Payments for maintenance included mending the bier, covering the antiphoner, painting the hobby horse clothes, buying and painting a veil cloth, and painting a cloth for the high altar. Payments for services included money for the coroner after the death of a drowned woman, and for a minstrel at Whitsuntide in 1531.¹⁹⁸

An English Bible was purchased. Henry VIII approved of Coverdale's Bible in 1535 and gave a royal licence to Matthew's Bible (based on Tyndale's Bible) in 1537, but in 1538 there was an injunction for the Great Bible, which was published in 1539, to be available in every church where the parishioners could read it, the cost being borne, half by the parson and half by the

¹⁹⁶ NRO 94p/21.

¹⁹⁷ NRO 94P/21. Some damaged pages.

¹⁹⁸ NRO 94p/21.

parishioners. Two instalments of 12s were paid by Culworth churchwardens in 1543 and 1544.¹⁹⁹

In a document dated 30 January 1545, covering four south-western hundreds of Northamptonshire, Culworth was expected to provide a billman for the Northamptonshire militia and his name is given as Richard Harwood. In 1559 Mrs Danvers, widow, was to provide a billman on foot and the rest of the town to furnish an archer.²⁰⁰ More information is available from churchwardens' accounts. Some archers at the time were mounted and since the accounts mention a sheaf of arrows and a horse or its equipment in several years, the Culworth archer must have been mounted. In 1536, for example, 26s 2d was spent on materials for, and the making of, a full set of clothing for the town soldier, for a horse, buying a girth, bridle and saddle and repairing the harness, and for ale at his going forth. In 1544, 14s was spent 'for a soldier going forth' (Richard Harwood).²⁰¹

The duties of the Town Stock wardens are unclear, but in addition to being responsible for animals owned by the parish and for shared items such as grindstones, they appear to have made payments for necessary work in the parish that was not directly connected with the church building. Their earliest accounts are on damaged pages, but the complete accounts for 1539, include payments totalling 40s for mowing of the town grass, for two new grindstones and for the hanging of one and a stand for the other. In some years these wardens paid 1d each in 'earnest' money to the heyward and the herd to confirm their contracts, which must have been for churchyard hedges and any livestock that was the responsibility of wardens. Receipts in 1539, totalling 18s 5d, include sale of the grass, swarfe of the grindstone, rent for a cow and for use of the town horse. There were also occasional bequests and in 1531 John Gardiner, rector and priest, gave his best table and best brass pot to the Town stock.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ NRO 94p/21; F. F. Bruce, *History of the Bible in English* (Guildford and London, 1979), pp. 53-80.

²⁰⁰ Sir Henry Dryden (ed.), 'The Northamptonshire Militia in the Reigns of King Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth', in Alice Dryden (ed.), *Memorials of Old Northamptonshire* (London, 1903), pp.69-98.

²⁰¹ NRO 94p/21.

²⁰² NRO 94p/21; TNA, PCC PROB 11/24 (1531).

The Torch wardens' funds came from the hobby horse night, probably at Whitsun, when the Morris dancers, including a hobby horse, performed. In 1534 bells were bought for the dancers. Receipts varied from 3s to 5s 5d; in some years there were also small bequests from wills and, in each of two years, 8d at the burial of a child. In 1528, Richard Grant and John Canynge each gave a sheep for the torches. Payments were made for torches, tapers for the rood-loft, and for wax and workmanship at Easter, the light for the Sepulchre being specified in 1531.²⁰³

The St Christopher wardens owned livestock. In most years they received 2s for hiring out a cow, but in 1534 they sold a cow for 8s 8d, then paid 2s for the wintering of a cow, perhaps a replacement. They also had sheep and sold the wool. These wardens arranged for Henry Thomys's obit, paying between 7d and 9d annually. They paid an average of 2s for wax and workmanship each year for the St Christopher light and in 1535 they bought 3lb of wick for 3d, suggesting that candles were made in the parish.²⁰⁴

There are no items in the accounts for alterations or building work in the church, but these were probably paid for by collections and bequests and accounted for separately. In 1531 John Gardiner, priest, bequeathed 40s 'towards the making of St Thomas aisle within the church of Culworth'.²⁰⁵ At Stoke Bruerne there were two bequests towards the building of the rood-loft stairs (see Fig. 2.2): by John Smyth in 1498 and Henry Danger in 1502.²⁰⁶

The repair of roads and bridges was the responsibility of the parish, but there are no records of the organisation and accounting for this. A number of wills, but not from Culworth, include bequests for particular sections of road,

²⁰³ NRO 94p/21, NRO Arch. North. Series 1, D89, D103.

²⁰⁴ NRO 94p/21.

²⁰⁵ TNA, PCC PROB 11/24.

²⁰⁶ NRO Arch. North. Early wills, f.57, f.149.



Fig. 2.2: Stoke Bruerne: the blocked exterior doorway to an unusual straight staircase to the rood-loft. Stairs generally spiralled inside the internal structure.

for example: John Wynkles of Caldecote, hamlet of Towcester, gave 6d to the repair of stepping stones near Caldecote; Robert Dixe of Paulerspury gave 12d to ‘the way between my house and church’, benefitting his own family, and 12d to a bridge in the village.²⁰⁷

The involvement of the church in customs such as church ales and the hobby horse, which were a source of parish funds, ended at Edward’s accession and the content of accounts changed. The last receipts from church ales were in 1546 and from the hobby horse dance in 1547.

A brief description of later changes as indicated by churchwardens’ accounts is appropriate for later discussion of the Church as the centre of community life. After ‘totals only’ accounts in Edward’s and Mary’s reigns Culworth accounts improve to a certain extent in Elizabeth’s reign and it appears that some community events still took place. Possibly the hobby horse returned, explaining income from ‘the young men’ on May Day and Whitsun each year from 1566 to 1580 at unspecified events. Culworth bells were rung

²⁰⁷ NRO Arch. North. Series 1, E206 (1537), E133 (1534).

on the anniversary of Elizabeth's accession, November 17th, but it was still called St Hugh's day, as in much of the area of the pre-Reformation diocese of Lincoln, which had been associated with the cult of St Hugh.²⁰⁸ It was first recorded by the churchwardens in 1576; 'payed to the ringers on Saynt Hewys day, iiiid'.²⁰⁹

These accounts end in 1607 and there are no mentions of surviving ceremonies and rituals in the next accounts book beginning in 1653.²¹⁰ Accounts become less useful for evidence of community life as the nature of parishes changed; income was from levies based on land, for instance, in 1604 a levy of 8d per yard-land for the bells.²¹¹ Wappenham accounts begin in 1657 and levies were based on land and animals, for instance, in 1657 for church repairs, a levy of 4d per yard-land, 4d a score of sheep and 2d per cow.²¹² In both parishes there were several levies per year for specific uses. Voluntary income from 'fun days', which held the community together, were a thing of the past.

d) Conclusion

Noticeable changes had occurred in the study area by 1500. Whittlewood Forest had contracted, iron-working had probably ceased and charcoal-making was dying out. Coppices in the remaining wooded areas were still worked by crown Woodwards through the sixteenth century and some men would be employed as woodsmen there.²¹³ A dozen or more small hamlets had disappeared, some to be replaced by sheep for the growing wool industry and the area was one of open-field farming and large sheep pastures with the populace concentrated in nucleated villages. The appearance of a stranger would have been rare on the tracks in the central area away from main roads and drove roads. This lack of contact with outside influences in some parishes would make a visit to a market or fair an important event and a means of outside contact. Social life within parishes was based on the parish church and, before reform began, the majority of parishioners attended both church services

²⁰⁸ Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, pp. 146-150.

²⁰⁹ NRO, 94p/21.

²¹⁰ NRO, 94p/22.

²¹¹ NRO, 94p/21.

²¹² NRO, 339p/19.

²¹³ Pettit, *Royal Forests*, map opp. p. 110.

and parish events organised for church funds, such as church ales and the hobby horse dance. The church was a base that held the community together. A degree of self-sufficiency within parishes could lead to insularity and might cause a disparity between parishes in parish organisation and popular religion, for example, what ‘special wardens’ were appointed in addition to churchwardens. However there would have been similarities as well as differences. The study villages are fairly close together and the parish churches generally sufficed without the need for chapels of ease. Two of the five which existed disappeared at the Reformation; the others eventually became parish churches.

Churchwardens’ accounts provide the main evidence of parish organization, but the majority of extant accounts from before the Dissolution are concentrated in the southern two-thirds of the country.²¹⁴ Culworth accounts are one of only two such sets in Northamptonshire. These show how deeply the church was involved in parish affairs and how, at least in Culworth, parishioners worked together to run the parish, where it appears the priest was supported and the medieval Church was vibrant in the 1530s. In 1531, ‘St Thomas’s aisle’ was being made within the church, known from the will of John Gardiner, priest, and the parish must have agreed to this work. Culworth churchwardens’ accounts for 1531-1547 demonstrate that the parish’s religious traditions continued for as long as possible.²¹⁵ The torch-wardens and St Christopher wardens continued to generate income to cover their responsibilities. The St Christopher wardens survived until 1537 when Henry VIII banned external manifestations of the cults of saints. These wardens were committed on the first page of the accounts to keep the annual obit of Henry Thomys who had provided 20 nobles for a new ‘great bell’. Other wardens paid until 1547 and Thomys’s request for intercession, a main precept of traditional religion, was respected and fulfilled. Parishioners must have agreed to this when accounts were read, suggesting no general wish for change at Culworth during Henry’s reign.

²¹⁴ Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England, The Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 49-50, 263-293.

²¹⁵ TNA, PCC PROB 11/24 (1531).

It was stated earlier that the study area had 40 per cent of churches appropriated to religious houses, which was exceptionally high compared with 29.3 per cent nationally and higher than 37.4 per cent in Northamptonshire as a whole. This gave rise to the possibility that payment of tithes to religious houses and absent rectors could cause anticlericalism in the study area, but Margaret Bowker questioned the reality of widespread anticlericalism in the diocese of Lincoln; ‘parishes were not neglected. The rectors, vicars and curates who served them appear to have exhibited few of the enormities described by Simon Fish’ (the author of a vehemently anti-clerical pamphlet in 1530). However, chancels may have been neglected by rectors of appropriated churches.²¹⁶ Presumably there were few complaints about clerics who substituted for absentee rectors and vicars. Six churches in the study area were appropriated by various religious houses (see Table 2.4). Early in the sixteenth century seven rectors or vicars were pluralists and until the 1530s, rectors of Towcester and Stoke Bruerne were regularly non-residents who used the benefices as income.

Lay subsidy assessments, will bequests and churchwardens’ accounts emphasize that wealth in the rural economy was held in livestock, agricultural produce and other goods, rather than cash. Lay subsidy assessments (Table 2.3), although shown in earlier discussion to be rather inaccurate, do emphasize the status of the population. A rural area would have a large number of labourers and village craftsmen and 59 per cent were assessed for £1-£2; the two lowest groups out of seven in Cornwall’s guide to status. There were no assessments in his top group, £100 and over (knights, leading gentry, merchants in overseas trade), but at least Thomas Lovell, knight, of Astwell and Richard Fermor of Easton Neston should have been in it. One per cent was assessed for £40-£99 (gentry, higher yeomen, provincial merchants), but a few were probably missing here too. Even in Towcester, a small market town, many people were farmers and the parish may have owned land that provided some income. The townspeople, however, would have included a greater number of gentlemen, merchants and tradesmen than in the other parishes, reflecting other interests and sources of wealth. It is also conceivable that the many travellers

²¹⁶ Bowker, *Secular Clergy*, pp.180, 132-6.

on Watling Street gave donations to the church with its important chantry, hoping to secure holy protection for a safe journey.

The next chapter examines more extensively the evidence for late medieval religion and has more to say about signs of change.

CHAPTER 3

The Late-medieval Church

The traditional medieval Church was changed forever by the Reformation, but were the majority of people content with the medieval Catholic Church as it was, or were their beliefs and hence their practices already changing? This chapter explores liturgical ritual and the popular beliefs and piety of people in South Northamptonshire before the Reformation. Medieval religion is studied, primarily by analyzing pious bequests in wills, but also by studying the interiors of churches and remains of medieval furnishings.

a) Pious will bequests

Table 3.1: The number of pious bequests made by testators ²¹⁷

Number of bequests	Before 1510 (21 wills)	1510-1519 (28 wills)	1520-1529 (69 wills)	1530-1535 (39 wills)
0	0	3	3	3
1	3	6	19	12
2	5	4	15	7
3	4	7	14	4
4	2	1	10	4
5	1	4	1	5
6	3	2	2	3
7	2	0	4	1
8	0	0	1	0
9	0	1	0	0
12	1	0	0	0
Average (Mean)	3.9	2.9	2.7	2.7

Table 3.1 analyzes the number of pious bequests in wills over the period 1490-1535 to investigate any changes during that time. It includes pious bequests for masses, obits, lights, charity, gifts to the parish church, church repairs, religious houses (including a few to friars), and residue for the soul. Customary bequests (to the mother church and the high altar) and gifts to other parishes are not

²¹⁷ NRO, Arch. North. Early wills and 1st Series A-E; TNA, PCC wills.

included and it should be remembered that gifts made in a person's lifetime will not figure in their will. The average number of pious bequests in wills decreased by about 25 per cent after the accession of Henry VIII in 1509, which may indicate the beginning or acceleration of changing beliefs, but the table gives no details of possible changes in the types of bequest made. The more detailed Table 3.2 investigates the individual popularity of masses, obits, and the various lights found in medieval churches.

Table 3.2: Testamentary bequests for masses, obits, and lights (or images)²¹⁸

Years:	Before 1510		1510-1519		1520-1529		1530-1535	
Total wills:	21 wills		28wills		69 wills		39 wills	
Masses	9/21	43%	9/28	32%	17/69	25%	10/39	26%
Obits	4/21	19%	1/28	4%	2/69	3%	1/39	3%
Torches	9/21	43%	12/28	43%	23/69	33%	6/39	15%
Rood	3/21	14%	8/28	29%	16/69	23%	9/39	23%
Sepulchre	10/21	48%	7/28	25%	16/69	23%	10/39	26%
Trinity	2/21	10%	1/28	4%	5/69	7%	1/39	3%
Other lights or altars:								
Our Lady	7/21	33%	6/28	21%	16/69	23%	15/39	38%
Other saints	5/21	24%	7/28	32%	10/69	16%	8/39	21%
Including:								
1 other saint	4 wills		4 wills		6 wills		6 wills	
2 other saints			2 wills		4 wills		1 will	
More saints	1 will (8 Sts.)		2 wills (4 Sts.)		1will (3Sts)		1 will (every altar)	

Only ten of the parishes are represented in the twenty-one wills before 1510, which possibly affects comparisons of this period with later periods. During the 25 years, 1510-1535, nine smaller parishes with only one to six wills cannot tell us much about variation between parishes. Even in the eight parishes with eight to twelve wills, in this short time-period they may not be representative of the ranges of status and belief. Towcester with 26 wills is possibly more informative.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

Bequests for masses, appearing in 43 per cent of wills before 1510, decreased steadily to 26 per cent by 1535. Studies in other areas group years and combine bequests differently making comparisons difficult, but trends can be seen. Robert Whiting found a marked decline in the number of ‘endowed intercessory prayers’ (masses and obits) in Devon and Cornwall, from the onset of the Henrician Reformation, from 70 per cent of wills in 1520-1529 to 51 per cent in 1530-1539 and 33 per cent in 1540-1546. He also found examples of younger men purloining financial and property support for masses and obits for their own uses in the 1530s and 1540s, which would speed the decline.²¹⁹ In East Sussex, G. J. Mayhew found 50 per cent of wills requested masses, 1530-1540.²²⁰ In Norwich, Norman Tanner found bequests for ‘masses, prayers, and religious services’ in 47 per cent of lay wills, 1370-1439, rising to a maximum of 73 per cent in 1490-1517, then falling to 68 per cent, 1518-1532.²²¹ Numbers of masses in these studies declined as in Northamptonshire, but popularity was always higher. In the study area during 1510-1535, seven parishes, mostly with very few wills, had no bequests for masses. These parishes include Moreton Pinkney with 11 wills, perhaps explained by the eight bequests (in 13 wills 1510-1536) for the ‘Brotherhood of the Rood’ that would probably have provided a chaplain and masses. Paulerspury (50%) and Stoke Bruerne (42%) requested the highest percentages of masses. Towcester with 26 wills had only two requests for masses, but it will be shown that lights were more popular. After 1535, in ten parishes, a few mass requests continued to the end of Henry’s reign. Named masses are discussed later in the chapter.

In the study area, bequests for obits, more expensive than some pious bequests, appeared in four of 21 wills before 1510 (19%), but were rare after this, appearing in just six of 136 wills up to 1535; two at Culworth, two at Stoke Bruerne, one at Towcester and one at Weedon Lois. Mayhew found more bequests and a later decline, in East Sussex where 34 per cent of wills requested an obit, 1530-1540, 18 per cent in 1541, falling steadily to two per cent in

²¹⁹ Robert Whiting, “‘For the Health of my Soul’: prayers for the dead in the Tudor south-west” (1983), in Peter Marshall (ed.), *The Impact of the English Reformation, 1500-1640* (London, 1997), pp. 121-142, esp. 126.

²²⁰ G. J. Mayhew, ‘The Progress of the Reformation in East Sussex 1530-1559: the Evidence from Wills’, *Southern History*, 5 (1983), pp. 38-67, esp. 52.

²²¹ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich 1370-1532* (Toronto, 1984), p. 222.

1548.²²² In the north of England, Lorraine Attreed found fewer arrangements for prayers and obits, 1534-5, than in the immediate past, but a clear belief that souls still needed prayers. Bequests for obits, 1525-1540 appeared in 34 per cent of wills, falling to 18 per cent, 1541-1547.²²³

There were more bequests for masses and obits in the foregoing studies than in the very rural study area, which was probably less wealthy, but belief in intercession appears to have been abandoned earlier than in some other areas. Popularity of torches for funerals, not mentioned in other studies, also declined considerably from a steady 43 per cent until 1519, to 33 per cent, 1520-1529, and 15 per cent, 1530-1535, however, during 1536-1547 popularity increased again to 35 per cent, as other possible bequests declined. In Paulerspury, shown to have high numbers of bequests during 1510-1535 for masses and saints' lights, fifty per cent of wills requested torches for the first time. Torches were particularly popular in two other parishes: Wappenham (67%) and Towcester (48%).

Other studies do not give figures for separate lights, making comparisons difficult, but Tanner, Mayhew and Robert Lutton give combined figures. In Norwich, Tanner found a growing popularity of votive lights during the late middle ages, rising from 13 per cent in 1440-1489, to 35 per cent, 1490-1517, and 48 per cent, 1518-1532. However, in East Sussex, where masses and obits were more popular than in Northamptonshire, there were far fewer bequests for lights; just seven per cent, 1530-1540. In Tenterden, Kent, 10 per cent of wills gave to lights, 1480-99, 21 per cent, 1500-19 and 15 per cent, 1520-35, again fewer than in the study area.²²⁴

The Lady Light was by far the most popular bequest to a light, 1530-1535 in the parishes combined, appearing in 38 per cent of wills (see Table 3.2), but it was not equally popular in all the parishes and it was the most popular only in Sulgrave, Towcester and Weedon Lois. Four parishes have no bequest to the light: Silverstone, Easton Neston, and Slapton, with only one to three wills respectively, and Syresham (nine wills), had no bequests for Our Lady or

²²² Mayhew, 'East Sussex', p. 52. (No records given before 1530).

²²³ Lorraine Attreed, 'Preparation for Death in Sixteenth-Century Northern England', *The Sixteenth-Century Journal*, 13: 3 (1982), pp. 37-66, esp. 46-7.

²²⁴ Tanner, *Norwich*, p. 116; Mayhew, 'East Sussex', p. 52; Robert Lutton, *Lollardy and Orthodox Religion in Pre-Reformation England* (Woodbridge, 2006), p. 56.

any other lights after 1529. However, Plumpton, with only two wills had two bequests to the Lady light. Other saints were still appearing in a fifth of wills, 1530-1535. Eight parishes had no such bequests; among the ten parishes that did, Towcester, Paulerspury and Stoke Bruerne included wills with bequests to more than two other saints. At Towcester three wills gave to four other saints (in 1518 and 1534); at Paulerspury one will (1530) gave to 'all the altars' and at Stoke Bruerne one early will (1502) gave to eight saints, but odd bequests to saints continued until 1531. The multiple bequests skewed the totals, which again suggests that parishes should be investigated individually.

There was considerable change after 1510 in the popularity of the two Christocentric lights, the Rood and the Sepulchre. From 1510 to 1519 bequests for the Rood doubled from 14 per cent, while bequests for the Sepulchre halved from 48 per cent, but both then remained fairly steady and the Rood and Sepulchre still appeared in a quarter of wills in 1535. The Sepulchre and Rood were both very popular in Moreton Pinkney, which had the fraternity mentioned earlier, and in Paulerspury. Although Culworth had no bequests for the Rood and Sepulchre lights, there was a bequest in 1530 for painting the rood-loft and making the Sepulchre, suggesting popularity.²²⁵

The Trinity, another non-saint-based light, was the least popular of lights over the whole period, but was exceptionally popular after 1500, with no obvious reason, in Stoke Bruerne, where there were seven bequests in the 15 wills between 1502 and 1540, or 47 per cent. The only other bequests for the Trinity were one in Wappenham in 1499 and one each in Blakesley and Culworth in 1522; only 2 per cent of 142 wills. In Northamptonshire outside the study area, from 1510 onwards, there were roughly 44 bequests in total to the Trinity in all the wills from 340 parishes.²²⁶ The aberrant percentage at Stoke Bruerne illustrates the importance of considering individual parishes. Testamentary bequests can only give an indication of popularity; in all the parishes there would have been support during lifetimes for lights and fraternities.

²²⁵ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, D331.

²²⁶ County figures are based on: Serjeantson, R. M. and Longden, H. Isham, *The Parish Churches and Religious Houses of Northamptonshire: Their Dedications, Altars, Images and Lights* (London, 1913). This source does not claim to be complete.

Towcester

In the market town of Towcester, where there would have been more wealth than in most parishes, more bequests for lights might be expected, but during 1510-1535 the Lady Light appeared in only ten out of the 26 wills, the Rood and torches in seven wills, and the others in two wills. Nine wills before 1535 had no requests for any type of prayers or lights. However, requests for torches increased during 1536-1547 to 10 out of 21 wills (48%). Individual wills demonstrate definite traditionalism by a few testators, or new thinking by other testators, which did not include masses, obits and lights. Possibly more was given, or arrangements made, during some lifetimes, for instance, John Day, clerk master of the Sponne Chantry had probably arranged his affairs and the dispersal of some goods in his lifetime, since the only bequest in his will of 1510 was for his executors to dispose of the residue of his goods and chattels in charitable deeds for the good of his soul and all Christian souls.²²⁷

In the 1520s three wills include bequests to a fraternity of St Mary. Two of these testators made no other bequests for masses or lights, perhaps because the fraternity looked after the Lady light and had masses for dead members, as suggested at Moreton Pinkney with its Rood fraternity. The third testator, Robert Hawke, not leaving anything to chance, gifted to torches, the Lady, Sepulchre, St Lawrence and St Anne lights, in addition to the fraternity of St Mary.²²⁸

Two of the Davy family were very conservative into the 1540s. The bequests in 1535, of Benet Davy, yeoman, include torches, the Rood, Our Lady and St Anne lights, a priest to sing in the parish church for a whole year for the souls of himself, his father, his mother, several stated relations, and all souls. He also left a house to the churchwardens to pay for a perpetual yearly obit for the same souls. Witness William Davy, gent, (brother of Benet?), made a more Christocentric will in 1543 with pious bequests for just torches and the Rood. Jane Davy in 1543, widow of Benet Davy, made bequests for torches, and to the Rood, Lady and St Anne's lights, 40s to be distributed on her funeral day, 6s 8d

²²⁷ TNA, PROB 11/16.

²²⁸ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, B33 (1522).

at her month's mind, and £5 6s 8d for a priest to sing masses for a year. Benet and Jane may have been influenced by their eldest son Benet, a cleric.²²⁹

It appears that while there was some strong support for conservative beliefs, a large section of Towcester residents did not show much support, particularly for masses. Overall throughout the area there appears to be a mixture of conservative beliefs, demonstrated by bequests including masses, obits and lights of Our Lady and the saints, alongside a movement towards Christocentrism, demonstrated by the fraternity of the Rood at Moreton Pinkney and the popularity of the Rood, and Sepulchre lights, though sometimes combined with Our Lady or saints' lights.

b) Intercession, masses, gilds and chantries

As illustrated above, much of medieval devotional belief and practice was centred on procuring the intercession of saints and the living to aid the passage through purgatory. Fear of purgatory provided the rationale behind the elaborate late-medieval cult of intercession for the dead.²³⁰ People prayed for future intercession for themselves and continuing intercession for all souls in purgatory, expecting that in their turn other people and the dead would intercede for them. Intercession was the main *raison d'être* of the cult of the Virgin Mary: 'pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death'. All saints were appealed to for intercession in most medieval will preambles, which employed the formula 'soul to almighty God, the blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints in heaven', or similar. St Christopher was particularly and regularly appealed to for help on the journey in the afterlife. People must sometimes have been terrified by 'warning paintings' and thoughts of purgatory. Many people had their own favourite saints whom they would favour in their lifetimes and to whom they made a testamentary bequest, for instance Margaret Fehewe, widow of Shutlanger, made two bequests to lights: half a pound of wax to the Lady light, but a whole pound of wax to the light of her namesake St Margaret.²³¹

²²⁹ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, E160, H27, H45.

²³⁰ Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 338.

²³¹ NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, D377 (1531).

Alms-giving, doles at funerals and bequests to other parishes were intended to gain the intercession of more people.²³² John Ward stated in his will: ‘every person of the parish of Lois Weedon young and old to have at the day of my burial to pray for me, 1d apiece’. Men who farmed land in other parishes would include bequests for intercession in those parishes. Thomas Olyver of Plumpton gave a quarter of barley and a torch to each of Plumpton and Bugbrooke requesting a whole trental of masses in each church. Thomas farmed land at Plumpton and at Bugbrooke, eight miles away.²³³ John Thomson of Sulgrave, who leased land at Stuchbury where the church stood in an almost deserted village, requested his executors to hire a priest ‘to sing at Stuttysbury for the space of one year for my soul and for the souls of the bodies of them buried there’.²³⁴ St Andrew’s Priory, Northampton, held the land and advowson until the Dissolution and John Thomson left £5 for repairs at the priory and 33s 4d to the ‘convent of the monastery to be a brother of the Chapterhouse there and to be prayed for’. He also requested a priest to sing for his soul for a year at Sulgrave (appropriated to St Andrew’s Priory) and gave 20d to each house of friars in Northampton.

In funeral masses there were prayers for the soul and these might be continued by a request for a ‘trental of masses’ (thirty masses). ‘Obits’ (monthly or yearly anniversary masses, sometimes called ‘month-minds’ or ‘year-minds’) continued the prayers and kept the person in mind. In Stoke Bruerne, Robert Bownde left 5s for a trental.²³⁵ Thomas Bosynhoe asked his wife and son to keep obits yearly while alive for the wealth of his soul, giving 4d each to three priests. After their deaths rents from the house in Shutlanger and lands in Shutlanger and Stoke Bruerne were to be divided, half towards the maintenance of Stoke Bruerne church and half to the ‘towns’ of Stoke Bruerne and Shutlanger; the latter being known as the Bosynhoe Charity.²³⁶

²³² Clive Burgess, ‘“By Quick and by Dead”: Wills and Pious Provision in Late Medieval Bristol’, *EHR*, 102 (1987), p. 838.

²³³ NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, E33 (1530), B54 (1521).

²³⁴ TNA, PROB 11/21 (1523).

²³⁵ NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, C139.

²³⁶ NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, A182. The charity still survives.

The Mass of St Gregory



Figure 3.1: St Gregory Mass, Slapton.

Inside the middle arch on the south side of the nave in Slapton church there is a rather faint painting of the Mass of St Gregory (Figure 3.1). This is rare and may be the only surviving wall painting of the subject in England, although there are a few examples on screen panels.²³⁷ J. G. Waller made the point that ‘The Last Supper’ is a very rare subject for a wall painting and, instead of using it to illustrate the doctrine of the Eucharist, a painting of ‘St Gregory’s Mass’ is preferred.²³⁸ He obviously did not realize how rare the latter is. The legend developed over time and by the later Middle Ages told the story of how Pope Gregory, dismayed at finding an unbeliever in his flock, prayed for a sign to confirm the reality of the Atonement and its re-enactment in the Mass. In

²³⁷ Anne Marshall (2001), <http://www.paintedchurch.org/slapimp.htm>

²³⁸ J. G. Waller, ‘On the wall paintings discovered in the churches of Raunds and Slapton, Northamptonshire’, *Archaeological Journal*, 34 (1877), pp. 219-20.

response, an image of Christ with the instruments of the Passion appeared above the altar.

There are now no instruments on the Slapton painting, but they may once have been painted around the figure of Christ, inside the arch. They would have included a cup, the crown of thorns, the cross, a ladder, a lance, hammer and nails, a sponge and dice.²³⁹ The parish mass was celebrated at the high altar, which was generally partially obscured by the rood screen and the priest had access to mysteries forbidden to others.²⁴⁰ ‘St Gregory Mass’ better illustrates this than the shared ‘Last Supper’. This mass was distinct from the ‘St Gregory Trental’ which was spread over a year and included masses appropriate for the various liturgical feasts.²⁴¹

Torches

Torches were considered important even at humble funerals, by the side of the body and at the requiem mass, and in some churches it was traditional to break up the paschal candle after Trinity Sunday each year to provide torches for poor people’s funerals.²⁴² It was also common for testators to request that torches burnt round their corpses during their funeral should be given to the parish church to burn around the altar at the sacring time.²⁴³ In another variation, Thomas Bosenhoe, husbandman of Shutlanger, bequeathed new candles after his funeral ‘...to be set upon the high altar while the mass is read or sung as long as [half] of wax lasteth, five candles burning at once’.²⁴⁴ In the study area some torches were given to nearby churches and this appears to be traditional in other areas. In Derbyshire, for example, of eleven wills between 1393 and 1534 that mention torches, three request distribution to local churches.²⁴⁵ At Towcester, Archdeacon William Sponne, requested that six of the thirteen torches from his

²³⁹ Rosewell, *Medieval Wall Paintings*, pp. 96-7; Anne Marshall (2001), <http://www.paintedchurch.org/slapimp.htm>

²⁴⁰ Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 110-11.

²⁴¹ Richard Pfaff, ‘The English Devotion of St Gregory’s Trental’, *Speculum*, 49 (1974), pp. 75-6.

²⁴² Rosemary Horrox, *Purgatory, Prayer and Plague, 1150-1380*, in Peter C. Jupp and Clare Gittins, (eds), *Death in England* (Manchester, 1999), pp. 90-118, esp. 103; Serjeantson and Longden, *Parish Churches*, pp. 6-8.

²⁴³ Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 96-8; Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 16-17.

²⁴⁴ TNA, PROB 11/3 (1447); PROB 11/7 (1481); NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, A182 (1510).

²⁴⁵ David G. Edwards, *Derbyshire Wills Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury 1393-1574*, *Derbyshire Record Society* 26 (1998), pp. 4, 33, 54.

funeral should remain in Towcester church and the others should be distributed to neighbouring churches most needing them. In Bradden, John Hulcote's torches were to go to poor churches 'to the honour and pleasure of God'.²⁴⁶ These requests would generate more prayers for the donor, but also hint at the parish church being part of a local community of churches.

Parish gilds or fraternities

All parishioners were bound together by various obligations to their neighbours, the parish and the church, but membership of a fraternity was voluntary. By the fifteenth century there was a clear distinction between parish fraternities and craft gilds. True fraternities were essentially communal chantries and members contributed to the cost of a chaplain and other benefits. Annual subscription, commonly 1s, might be as little as 4d, but this could debar the very poor from membership. Members might also make a testamentary bequest to the fraternity, which is the only definite evidence of their existence in the study area. Fraternities were independent and worked in slightly different ways financially and practically, but they all assisted impoverished or sick brethren and made provision for a decent burial of a deceased member, usually attended by the entire membership. Finally, they all provided for posthumous intercession for the member and it was possible to join after death for this reason. A register was kept of all members dead or alive and typically this was read out on the day of the annual obit. Some fraternities ran almshouses for their members.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁶ TNA PROB 11/3 (1447); PROB 11/7 (1481), respectively.

²⁴⁷ Caroline M. Barron, 'The Parish Fraternities of Medieval London' in Caroline M. Barron and Christopher Harper-Bill (eds), *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society* (Woodbridge, 1985), pp. 13-37; Gervase Rosser, 'Communities of parish and guild in the late Middle Ages', in S. J. Wright (ed.), *Parish, Church and People, Local studies in lay religion 1350-1750* (London, 1988), pp. 29-55; H. F. Westlake, *The Parish Gilds of Mediaeval England* (New York, 1919).

Table 3.3: The nine most popular Northamptonshire gild dedications compared with the same dedications in other areas²⁴⁸

	Northamptonshire	Norfolk	Cornwall	London	Yorkshire
Total no. of gilds	114	1229	unknown	unknown	293
Our Lady	21.0%	20.3%	14.2%	24.9%	37.1%
Sepulchre	15.8%	-	-	-	0.4%
St Katherine	10.5%	1.4%	2.5%	9.8%	4.6%
Rood	6.1%	1.8%	2.5%	2.2%	4.9%
Corpus Christi	6.1%	2.9%	1.2%	3.6%	4.2%
Holy Trinity	5.3%	8.5%	4.9%	6.7%	11.3%
St John (unspecified)	4.4%	4.5%	2.5%	3.6%	-
St John the Baptist	3.5%	11.7%	3.7%	3.1%	3.5%
St Anne	3.5%	2.2%	3.1%	5.3%	1.1%

Nearly all fraternities had a pious dedication, although a few had titles such as ‘the young men’s gild’. ‘Our Lady’ was by far the most popular dedication (see Table 3.3). There was regional variation in the second most popular gild: St John the Baptist in Norfolk, St Katherine in London, the Holy Trinity in Yorkshire, and St George (5.6%) in Cornwall, where both first and second favourites have lower percentages than in other areas. In Northamptonshire the Sepulchre was a clear second favourite. The Sepulchre’s central position in Easter ceremonies is described later and any existing Sepulchre gild might provide the Sepulchre light and pay the night-time watchers at Easter.²⁴⁹ In these areas the total percentage of Christocentric cults (Sepulchre, Rood and Corpus Christi), together with the non-saint-based Holy Trinity, is: Northamptonshire 33.3 per cent, Yorkshire 20.8 per cent, Norfolk 13.2 per cent, London 12.5 per cent, and Cornwall 8.6 per cent. In Northamptonshire will bequests indicate that 61 out of 344 parishes had at least one gild; Northampton had 8, Wellingborough 6, and Peterborough 6, but there may have been others with no extant record.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ Serjeantson and Longden, *Parish Churches of Northamptonshire*, pp. 37-8; Ken Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community in Late Medieval East Anglia, c. 1470-1550* (York, 2001), p. 38; David Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power, Religious Guilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire, 1389-1547* (York, 2000), p. 99.

²⁴⁹ Westlake, *Parish Guilds*, p. 123.

²⁵⁰ Serjeantson and Longden, *Parish Churches*, pp. 37-8.

In the study area there was a gild of Our Lady at Towcester and a Brotherhood of the Rood at Moreton Pinkney. There are three bequests to the gild in the 47 Towcester wills from 1510 to 1547: two of cash, 4d and 20d, and one of an ox-calf, aged 12 weeks.²⁵¹ This appears a poor testamentary response in an urban parish and possibly the gild was short-lived, but it was shown earlier that response to other aspects of parochial religion was not particularly enthusiastic in Towcester. In Moreton Pinkney there were eight bequests in the 14 wills, 1510-1547, again of a few pence or strikes of barley or malt, presumably to make ale to be sold for funds.²⁵²

Virginia Bainbridge describes the accounts of the gild or light of St Christopher in March, Cambridgeshire (1472-1525) as an unusual survival for a small town and describes some predominantly rural gilds, such as this one, as possibly little more than 'lights'. The March accounts variously refer to the 'gild or light'.²⁵³ The accounts of the Culworth St Christopher wardens (with no mention of a gild) survive within the churchwardens' accounts, where there are specific instructions for them to keep the obit of Henry Thomys, for which they paid. This suggests a simple form of fraternity.²⁵⁴

Chantries and intercession

Founders of long-term chantries were buried in the church, generally with an elaborate tomb. A chantry was founded and endowed by a wealthy person for one or more priests to celebrate mass regularly for their soul and any other specified souls. A chantry chapel might be built within or attached to the church, particularly for a perpetual endowment, but an altar was the only requirement and masses were often celebrated at existing altars. 'Trentals', thirty masses, were short-term chantries.²⁵⁵ There were long-term chantries at Greens Norton, Wappenham and Towcester.

Richard Middleton of Greens Norton in 1489 desired 'a chantry priest perpetually to sing and pray in the said church of Norton Davy (Greens Norton)

²⁵¹ NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, B33, B112, C91.

²⁵² Ibid, B44, D113, D124, D158, D345, E91, E184, E184 (same folio).

²⁵³ Bainbridge, *Gilds*, pp. 13, 59, 138.

²⁵⁴ NRO, 94p/21.

²⁵⁵ Simon Roffey, *Chantry Chapels and Medieval Strategies for the Afterlife* (Stroud, 2008), p. 16; Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 369-70; K. L. Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries in Britain* (Cambridge, 1965).

and also for a perpetual obit to be held in the said church for me the said Richard, my said wife Dame Anne Mawde, Thomas Greene knight her husband, our fathers and mothers and all our ancestors and for all our friends and for all Christian souls.’ To clarify this statement: Thomas Greene, Esquire, who held the large Greene estate that included the hundred and manor of Greens Norton and advowson of the church, married Maud, daughter of John Throckmorton, under-treasurer of England. After the death of Thomas, Maud married Richard Middleton. Maud held the estate for her lifetime and it then passed to her son, another Thomas Greene. Richard requested burial under the north wall of the chancel. It was seven years before Maud founded a chantry in 1496, from which the chantry house survives. The chantry certificate description is ‘founded by Maud Greene, late wife of Thomas Green, knight, to find a priest to sing for ever in the parish church’ and it was endowed with lands in Northamptonshire and Leicestershire valued at £40 17s 9d in 1548. There is no mention of Richard Middleton. Some Greene monuments survive, but that of Thomas and Maud Greene has been destroyed.²⁵⁶

Wappenham chantry was founded in 1327 by Gilbert de Middleton, archdeacon of Northampton, in the south aisle of the church in honour of the ever blessed Trinity, the Virgin Mary and All Saints. It consisted of a warden and five priests, but was expressly termed a chantry, not a college. Gilbert had purchased 52 acres of wood, meadow and pasture in Wappenham in 1323 to endow the chantry, together with the advowson of the church which was passed to the chaplains. It still functioned in 1407 (see Chapter 2), but had been dissolved before Edward VI’s confiscation of chantries.²⁵⁷

Clive Burgess demonstrates that Bristol wills were often mere summaries of intended provisions, and testators, particularly the wealthy, had made careful arrangements before they died.²⁵⁸ This is partially true of the provisions of William Sponne (c. 1380-1448), archdeacon of Norfolk, who

²⁵⁶ NRO Arch. North. Early will, f.89; Bridges, 1, pp. 240-3; Anon, Greens Norton church leaflet (undated); Longden, *Clergy*, p. 137; Thompson, A. Hamilton (ed.), ‘The chantry certificates for Northamptonshire’, *Associated Architectural and Archaeological Societies Reports and Papers*, 31 (1911-12), pp. 87-178, esp. p. 156.

²⁵⁷ CPR Edward III, 1327-1330, pp. 107-8; *CPL* 2, p. 242; Bridges, 1, p. 210; VCH Northants, 2, pp. 82-3; Thompson, ‘Chantry certificates’.

²⁵⁸ Clive Burgess, ‘Late Medieval Wills and Pious Convention: Testamentary Evidence Reconsidered’, and ‘Wills and Convention’, in Michael Hicks (ed.), *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1990), pp. 14-33.

purchased property in Towcester and lands in the open-fields of Towcester, Wood Burcote and Caldecote, in 1440 to endow a chantry at Towcester. This was founded was in 1448 and generally known as a college by Sponne's wish.²⁵⁹ He fell seriously ill in 1447 and wrote his will, which does not mention the chantry, chantry house or his monument.²⁶⁰ He had already discussed the chantry with his executors, but died in January 1448 before its foundation, detailed provisions of which are in other documents.²⁶¹ Wood-Legh considers the details exceptional, if not unique, in making specific provision for the servants of the Chantry House. His will in effect endows the chantry by asking his executors to appoint two chaplains to celebrate for his soul and the souls of his mother and father; John Wakeryng, late bishop of Norwich; King Henry VI; John Cleydon, formerly keeper of the Hanaper (a chancery office); John Spryngthorpe, Master of Chancery; John Russell and Elizabeth his wife; and finally his brothers and sisters, parishioners, benefactors and all the faithful departed for fifty years, or forever if possible.²⁶² His executors founded the chantry, which lasted for a century until the dissolution of chantries in 1548. Each chaplain was to have £6 8s 4d annually and to say daily, for all aforesaid souls in perpetuity, a *placebo* and *dirige* and a devout commendation for his soul and all the souls aforesaid in the chapel of The Virgin Mary. Further, the two chaplains were to celebrate for all souls in the church of Towcester at The Virgin Mary's altar.²⁶³ It is not written in his will, but he probably discussed his monument and its position.²⁶⁴ His body was buried in the chancel near the altar steps, but his monument is between the chancel and the Lady Chapel against the end of the chancel wall (Figure 3.2). On it, he is dressed in his canon's robes and below him is his cadaver partially wrapped in a shroud as a reminder that everyone should prepare for death. The remainder of William

²⁵⁹ VCH Northants, 2, pp. 181-2.

²⁶⁰ In the Jesus College, Cambridge, William Sponne Private Papers, referred to in, Brian L. Giggins, *William Sponne c. 1380-1448 Archdeacon of Norfolk and Rector of Towcester*, Towcester and District Local History Society (2010), pp. 25, 34 n. 74.

²⁶¹ Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries*, p. 248; Jesus College Muniments, Private Papers, Archdeacon William Sponne.

²⁶² PROB 11/3/574 (1448).

²⁶³ Chantry licence: CPR Henry VI, 1, 1446-52, pp. 204-5.

²⁶⁴ Brief description of documents, including the monument and chantry, in Pamela Margaret Lane, *Contents of the Cadaver Tomb in Fifteenth-Century England*, unpublished University of York Ph.D. thesis (1987), pp. 276-284.

Sponne's will is preoccupied with the places and people who had figured in his life; by remembering them in his will he is hoping to be prayed for.



Figure 3.2: William Sponne's monument in the church of St Lawrence, Towcester.

He was probably born in Kingsbury, near Tamworth, since he leaves £3 6s 8d to the nave of the church there, 40s to the poor, and 13s 4d to the vicar there to pray every Sunday for the souls of his father, mother, sisters and brothers. There were also 40s for the upkeep of two bridges there. He attended Gonville Hall, Cambridge, before taking various benefices around the Midlands, the South-East and East Anglia, ending his life in Towcester. His brother John was rector of Allexton in Leicestershire, three miles from the Augustinian Launde Priory (now Abbey), which Sponne is known to have attended and where he may have trained as a canon. He left £6 13s 4d to the Priory, 6s 8d to the prior and 12d to each monk. There was to be no excessive eating and drinking on his burial day, but the poor were to be fed. He requested 1000 masses to be said without music as soon as possible after his death with 2d paid to each celebrant. In Towcester, he gave £20 and books and vestments worth 40 marks (£26 13s 4d) to the church, £20 to the poor and £40 for the paving of the town. Locally, he remembered the prioress (3s 4d) and each nun (12d) of Swardsley Priory, each order of friars in Northampton (40s) the

abbots of St James, Northampton, and Biddlesden, Buckinghamshire (3s 4d each), and each canon in the same (12d). At All Saints, Northampton, he left 20d for the vicar, 4d for each chaplain, 2d for each clerk and 20s for the fraternity of the Virgin Mary. There were similar bequests for all the places he had been connected with through his life, always including a bequest for the poor.²⁶⁵ His will shows that he was a very rich man, but he requests a simple funeral feast with no music at the following masses. He concentrates on provision for the poor, probably remembering that giving alms to the poor was traditionally giving to Christ himself.

Chantries demonstrate the extent to which some landowners or clerics in high positions prepared for their deaths and passage through purgatory. Archdeacons, Gilbert Middleton and William Sponne both bought land specifically to endow their chantries. People less wealthy, both clerical and secular, were also concerned about receiving as much intercession as possible.

The will bequests of John Middleton, husbandman of Blakesley, formed a short-term chantry: 10s for a trental of masses for his soul and 20s to keep his month's mind throughout the year. He also gave to Blakesley church the price of a 'tod of wolle' (about 28lbs) and the residue of his goods to be disposed for his soul.²⁶⁶ In the same year, 1522, Joan Nansicles of Blakesley secured intercession through bequests of sheep and grain for lights. The following were to have between three and ten sheep: lights before the Blessed Sacrament, Our Lady in the chancel, St Katherine's altar, the image of the blessed Trinity and the rood. The Sepulchre light, the torches and the bells were to share half a quarter of maslin and a quarter of barley; the altar of the Nativity of Christ was to have two strikes of wheat. There was 1s each for the four orders of friars in Northampton.²⁶⁷ This will also demonstrates that a rural person's wealth was often in farm produce rather than cash.

In 1502, Henry Danger of Stoke Bruerne relied on intercession of saints and gave wax to ten lights: half a pound to Saints Edmund, Fabian, Sebastian, John the Baptist, Michael, Christopher and a quarter of a pound to St Katherine;

²⁶⁵ A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of Cambridge to 1500*, (Cambridge, 1963), p. 546; Giggins, *William Sponne*, passim.

²⁶⁶ NRO Arch. North. 1st series, B119 (1522).

²⁶⁷ NRO Arch. North. 1st series, B84. 'Maslin' was a mixture of grains, usually wheat and rye.

also half a pound each to the Blessed Mary in the chancel, Mary of Pity and the most high Trinity.²⁶⁸

In 1484, John Aleyn of Blakesley, gentleman left 6s 8d to each order of friars in the town of Northampton to sing and say *diriges* and masses in their houses on the day of his obit. (It would be interesting to know whether Robert Aleyn, Lollard lawyer of Blakesley was his ancestor; see chapter 6). He also left land to John Foxley and his lawful heirs to find for ever after his decease a reliable man to ring a bell daily in the church of Blakesley for the curfew at 8 o'clock at night and the day bell at 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning and also to look after the clock if one was put in the church, receiving yearly 13s 4d. The bell would remind parishioners of the donor and imply a request for their prayers. Profits from the land were also to be used to keep yearly the day of his obit in the parish church, the priests and clerks to sing and say a *dirige* and mass and to receive 6s 8d each annually. If John Foxley died without heirs the land was to go to the churchwardens of the parish to fulfil the same requests and also to use money to provide necessaries for the same church, charging the parish to pray for John Aleyn's soul and all his friends.²⁶⁹ Foxley was to pay a clerk 53s 4d yearly to teach the boys of Blakesley. John Foxley did have heirs and a great-grandson William Foxley founded by will a grammar school at Blakesley in 1669, endowed with Foxley land.²⁷⁰

A number of wills imply a sense of community, and probably a desire to be remembered in prayer, by the bequest of goods to a number of neighbours separate from bequests to family. Robert Bownde of Stoke Bruerne, after making ten pious bequests, left his best gown and a two year old heifer to Thomas Clare, his second gown to John Clare's wife, 20d and his third coat to Robert Clare, his fourth coat to Robert Rose, a 'rabytt', a doublet and a pair of hose to William Kingston, and his best horse to Robert Wygssay of Roade.

²⁶⁸ NRO Arch. North. Early will, f.149.

²⁶⁹ NRO Arch. North. Early will, f.88. The clock was probably an early type without a dial, which rang a bell at the hours.

²⁷⁰ Walter C. Metcalfe (ed.), *The Visitations of Northamptonshire made in 1564 and 1618-19: with pedigrees from various Harleian mss*, (London, 1887), pp. 21-2; *VCH Northamptonshire* 2, p. 279. The Foxley obit does not appear in the chantry certificates. Searches have not produced William Foxley's will.

These are valuable gifts, not just keepsakes. Finally he left 1d to each godchild and goods not bequeathed to his wife and son.²⁷¹

Place of burial

Wills gave instructions about burial and the chosen place was often linked with intercession. It was important for the living to remember the dead and pray for their souls in purgatory and this was kept in mind when requesting a burial place.²⁷² Burial inside a church, normally costing 6s 8d, was close to the constant intercession in masses and to the saints whom people believed were present in the church. Rectors were responsible for the upkeep of the chancel and normally only they, or vicars of appropriated churches, and patrons could be buried there close to the high altar. Poorer people paid 3s 4d for churchyard burial, but even there the position was sometimes specified with intercession in mind.

Wills in the study area have many examples specifying an exact place of burial. Several wills, including Alexander Hide, vicar of Blakesley, specified the north side of the chancel, presumably between the sepulchre and the altar for the Easter masses. John Aleyn, gentleman of Blakesley, was not eligible for the chancel, but asked to be buried next to it. Letitia Sutton, widow of Towcester, asked for burial in the chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose altar was second in importance to the high altar. Other people requested burial in front of a favourite altar: Thomas King of Towcester before the image of St Clement by his mother; Richard Gryffyn of Wappenham before the Trinity, to which he gave a black heifer to keep a light.²⁷³ Sometimes burial at a religious house was requested and it was also acknowledged that death might occur away from home. Thomas Lovett, Esquire, of Astwell, requested burial in ‘Biddlesden Abbey by my wife there if I die within 20 miles thereof, otherwise where it pleases God and my executors’.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, C139 (1521). A ‘rabytt’ was a wooden drinking can.

²⁷² D. M. Hadley, *Death in Medieval England* (Stroud, 2001), chap. 5; Horrox, ‘Purgatory, prayer and plague’, pp. 90-118; Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall, ‘Introduction’, in Gordon and Marshall (eds), *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 1-16.

²⁷³ NRO Arch. North. 1st series, D263 (1529), Early will f.88 (1484), Early will, f.59 (1498), 1st series, I.40 (1545), Early will f.76 (1499), respectively.

²⁷⁴ TNA, PROB 11/9 (1481); Horrox, ‘Purgatory, prayer and plague’, p. 103.

In the churchyard, by the cross or near the church door was popular, for example, Robert Dixe of Paulerspury ‘before the cross’, John Wells of Lois Weedon ‘between the cross and the church’, and Richard Warksworth, blacksmith of Weston-by-Weedon, ‘in the pathway on the west side of the church door’.²⁷⁵ They chose places where people regularly walked and might think of them.

c) Devotion to saints and other cults

Wall paintings and medieval religious beliefs

Monumental art, including wall paintings, has sometimes been described as *muta predicatio* or ‘silent preaching’, equivalent to reading and hearing God’s word. Pope Gregory justified images in churches by arguing that a picture could be ‘reading material for the illiterate’. The high level of didactic material found in wall paintings suggests that they were a favoured medium of religious instruction that crossed the barriers between the illiterate and literate.²⁷⁶ Augustinian canon John Mirk of Lilleshall in Shropshire, who composed the *Festial* (1382-90), states in his preface his intention to help simple priests who lack books and education in teaching their parishioners. He provided an annual cycle of vernacular sermons related to the church year and the feasts of prominent saints.²⁷⁷ The rood was always in view of people in church and the crucifix was a special object of veneration. Responding to Lollard hostility to images, Mirk stated *þat þer ben mony þousaund of pepul þat couþ not ymagen in her hert how Crist was don on þe rode bot as þai lernyn it in sygt of ymages and payntours* (‘There are many thousands of people that could not imagine in their heart how Christ was treated on the cross, but as they learn it from the sight of images and painting.’).²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ NRO Arch. North. 1st series, E133 (1534), E144 (1535), H16 (1543).

²⁷⁶ Miriam Gill, ‘Preaching and Image: Sermons and Wall Paintings in Later Medieval England’, in C. A. Muessig (ed.), *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2002), p. 155; Helen Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 141-4; Siegfried Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections from Later Medieval England, Orthodox Preaching in the Age of Wyclif* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 58-65; Wendy Scase, ‘St Anne and the Education of the Virgin’, in Nicholas Rogers (ed.), *England in the Fourteenth Century*, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, 3, p. 81.

²⁷⁷ Judy Ann Ford, *John Mirk’s Festial, Orthodoxy, Lollardy and the Common People in Fourteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2006), passim.

²⁷⁸ Theodore Erbe (ed.), *A Collection of Homilies by John Mirk* (London, 1905), p. 171.

Every church was under the protection of its patron saint and in the minds of medieval people religion was linked with saints, miracles and healing. Some of their beliefs had passed into Christianity from paganism. They believed in the ability of saints to help with everyday problems on earth and with life in the hereafter. The power of the saints resided in relics and even images. Saints long-dead could still employ supernatural powers to relieve the adversities of everyday life, with particular saints being efficacious for particular illnesses and problems. Each medieval trade had its patron saint that was associated with the trade.²⁷⁹ People wanting to shorten their time in purgatory pleaded for Mary and the saints, who could not help directly, to pray for them. People believed that Mary had a maternal love for mankind, but she could only intercede with her son to help them in purgatory.²⁸⁰ Explanation of paintings in Slapton church and other remains of medieval beliefs will reveal the involvement of saints in these beliefs.²⁸¹

St Christopher²⁸²

On entering the south door of Slapton church, one is faced by St Christopher on the north wall of the nave, the largest painting in the church (Figure 3.3). Anyone passing the door believed that just seeing the image of St Christopher would protect them from illness or death on that day.²⁸³ In her study of St Christopher, Eleanor Pridgeon rejects the common notion that the saint was only associated with pilgrims and travellers opining that he was primarily a protector against unprepared death, misadventure, harm and fatigue. He was not associated with miracle-working shrines; instead his cult was largely image-based and it was necessary to actually see his depiction to gain the promised rewards. Murals of St Christopher were characteristically large (as at Slapton)

²⁷⁹ Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 155-205.

²⁸⁰ Marina Warner, *Alone of All her Sex; The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London, 1990), pp. 286-8, 306.

²⁸¹ Approximate dates of the Slapton pictures in this chapter were given by Miriam Gill (personal contact); Edmund King, 'Medieval Wall-Paintings in Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 7, (1984-5), pp. 69-78.

²⁸² E. W. Tristram, *English Wall Painting of the Fourteenth Century*, (London, 1955), pp. 114-120.

²⁸³ Thomas, *Magic*, p. 29.

to ensure the saint's visibility.²⁸⁴ Medieval people believed that one needed to be shriven and to receive a final communion before death in order to enter heaven, therefore any aid in avoiding sudden death was important.²⁸⁵



Figure 3.3: St Christopher, Slapton.

The story, in late medieval England, was that a hermit who taught Christopher about the Christian faith told him that he would find Christ if he ferried people across a river. He actually carried them across on his shoulders using a long staff to steady himself in the water, but when he carried a small boy across, the water grew rougher and the child became heavier and heavier. On the far bank Christopher told the boy that he had been put in danger and carrying the whole world would not have felt heavier. The boy replied that he

²⁸⁴ Eleanor Elizabeth Pridgeon, *Saint Christopher Wall Paintings in English and Welsh Churches c. 1250-c. 1500*, unpublished University of Leicester Ph.D thesis (2008), p. 15.

²⁸⁵ Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 120.

was not only carrying the whole world, he was carrying the creator of the world, Christ his king. For proof he was to plant his staff in the earth by his house and in the morning he would find it in leaf and bearing fruit like a palm tree.

The fifteenth-century Slapton painting depicts St Christopher with the Christ child on his shoulder and a staff already sprouting at the top. A second staff planted on the bank is also sprouting. There are fish in the water, and a mermaid with a mirror that became a common addition in the late medieval period and is sometimes considered to be a warning against vanity. People would know and enjoy the story and be reminded that faith in St Christopher would help them to avoid accidents, injuries and illness through the day. He was also a curer of illness, a friend and helper, and an intercessor and mediator, both in this life and the next. Pridgeon found that wills revealed the saint had a function after death and he occasionally appeared on brasses and tomb sculpture.²⁸⁶

He is mentioned in just one of the sampled Northamptonshire wills, that of Henry Danger of Stoke Bruerne who bequeathed wax for his light, but Culworth's St Christopher wardens paid between 7d and 9d for the annual obit of a parishioner Henry Thomys, from 1531 when the churchwardens' accounts commenced to the last mention in 1547.²⁸⁷ This appears to be linked with St Christopher's function as an intercessor after death. Henry Thomys in his will (1522) bequeathed twenty nobles (£6 13s 4d) 'to find a priest to sing for my soul my friends' souls and all Christian souls to be done and sung in Culworth church and for the first half year to be sung in trentals'. Furthermore, 'to the buying of a great bell on this condition that if the bell be bought within the space of the years that my priest doth sing for my soul that the said 20 nobles shall go to the buying of the bell or else the hiring of a priest for lack of being a bell'.²⁸⁸ It appears that in Henry's mind the ringing of the bell that the parish needed would 'sing for his soul' in place of the priest. The 20 nobles, or the residue, must have contributed, to the 'great bell' that was hung in 1534 (see previous chapter), but the St Christopher wardens continued to pay for obits for

²⁸⁶ Pridgeon, *Saint Christopher*, p. 15.

²⁸⁷ NRO Arch. North. Early will, f.149 (1502); NRO, 94p/21.

²⁸⁸ NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, B66.

intercession for Henry Thomys, perhaps as a reminder of his generosity. The last St Christopher wardens officiated in 1537, but for one year only (1538) after the abrogation of saints, there were ‘Rood light wardens’ who paid 7d for Henry Thomys’s anniversary. It was not recorded for a few years, but probably occurred, and then the town stock wardens paid 6d for Henry Thomys’s ‘mind’ in 1544 and 1545 and the churchwardens 6d in 1547, after which the endowment was seized by the crown under one of Edward VI’s first Acts.²⁸⁹

Warnings on wall paintings



Figure 3.4: St Michael weighing souls, Slapton. Figure 3.5: Warning to gossips, Slapton.

At the rear of Slapton church on the south arcade wall there is a mid-fourteenth-century painting of ‘St Michael Weighing Souls’ (Figure 3.4). It is noticeable that this and two other warnings are all seen most clearly when leaving the church as a reminder about future conduct and its effect on the afterlife. Only the lower half of St Michael’s body has survived, but a scale-pan is clearly visible in the centre of the picture containing a tiny soul with hands raised in supplication towards the Virgin Mary who is standing on the right and is a large figure to emphasize her power. The soul is being weighed against its sins to

²⁸⁹ Hamilton Thompson, ‘Chantry certificates’, p. 153.

decide its future and Mary's right hand is extended towards the soul and weighting the balance, possibly by dangling her rosary into it. She is there ready to assist the truly penitent who turned to her even at this last crucial moment.²⁹⁰

On the south wall at Slapton adjacent to the south door there are faint remains of two figures from the 'Three Living and Three Dead' morality tale. Three young kings or princes out hunting meet three walking corpses or skeletons, who admonish them for their preoccupation with pleasure and worldly things. In one version of the tale this is a warning against the sin of pride.²⁹¹ In another common version the corpses state that they are the kings' forefathers and criticize their heirs for neglecting their memory and not saying masses for their souls; the dead leave them with one of various versions of, 'As you are now so once were we, as we are now so will you be'.²⁹² The living should always be mindful of their own futures.

A 'Warning to Gossips' (Figure 3.5) is at the rear of the south aisle at Slapton, on the soffit of the last arcade arch. This third warning picture, from the early to mid-fourteenth century and based on another morality tale, shows a horned devil standing behind two seated women who are indulging in gossip. He has a hand on each head, ready to knock them together. The gossips will have to pay at the day of Doom when their souls are weighed in the balance against the accumulation of minor crimes. The gossips are always female in English wall paintings and have their heads covered, showing they are married. The implicit message of the painting is that those attending mass should pray, not gossip.²⁹³

²⁹⁰ Rosewell, *Medieval Wall Paintings*, p. 81; Tristram, *English Wall Painting*, p. 246; T. Healy and D. R. Mumford, *St Botolph's Church, Slapton* (1999), p. 8; Peter Hill, *A History of Death and Burial in Northamptonshire* (Stroud, 2011), p. 125.

²⁹¹ E. W. Tristram, *English Wall Painting*, pp. 12-114.

²⁹² Healy and Mumford, *Slapton*, p. 10; Rosewell, *Wall Paintings*, pp. 82-3; Anne Marshall (2001), <http://www.paintedchurch.org/slapimp.htm>; Horrox, 'Purgatory, prayer and plague', pp. 93-5; E. Carleton Williams, 'Mural paintings of the three living and the three dead in England', *The Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 3rd Series, 7 (1942), pp. 31-40.

²⁹³ Healy and Mumford, *Slapton*, p. 9; Anne Marshall (2001), <http://www.paintedchurch.org/slapimp.htm>; Miriam Gill, 'Female Piety and Impiety, selected images of women in wall paintings in England after 1300', in S. Riches and S. Salih, *Gender and Sanctity* (London, 2002), p. 101.

Segregation in church

The ‘warning paintings’ are placed at Slapton so as to be seen by people leaving the church. We can perhaps learn more from the position of certain paintings.



Figure 3.6: The annunciation scene, Slapton.

Angel Gabriel on the left and Mary on the right are standing either side of a pot of lilies (a symbol associated with Mary). Gabriel is reading to Mary from a scroll and her right hand is raised in surprise.

There is some documentary evidence that many congregations were segregated with the women conventionally, but not invariably, on the north side of the church. The Warning to Gossips on the south side of the church may preserve a local seating pattern at Slapton. A painting of ‘St Anne teaching the Virgin Mary to read’ (c. 1350) is situated at the east end of the south wall in the south aisle at Slapton (Figure 3.7), and a painting of the Annunciation (Figure 3.6) is opposite to St Anne in the same aisle. Miriam Gill suggests that these positions indicate the probable site of a Lady Altar, since evidence from St Lawrence’s, Reading, suggests that women sat on the south side there, adjacent to the Lady

Altar. If this association of Lady Altar and female seating was followed at Slapton, it could explain the position of the Warning to Gossips at the west end of the south aisle.²⁹⁴ The less attentive women would be at the back near the painting; other women leaving the church would see the painting as a reminder.

St Eligius (Eloi or Loy) and Pilgrimage

On the south wall of the south aisle in Slapton church there is a strange picture of a horse with three legs standing in front of what is perhaps the doorway of a smithy (Figure 3.7). The missing fourth leg is being held over an anvil by a mitred bishop. An assistant is standing by the anvil. The bishop, St Eligius, was born in France (c. 560) and as a boy he was apprenticed to a goldsmith. He later became Master of the Mint to the Frankish kings and his skill with gold enabled him to make two golden thrones when King Clothar only gave him enough gold for one. In the later Middle Ages the story of this feat caused him to be adopted as the patron saint of goldsmiths. During his time as a goldsmith he became a priest and then a bishop. At first there was no mention of blacksmithing in his story, which evolved to become the depicted miracle in the thirteenth century. St Eligius shod a restless horse by cutting off one of its legs, fixing the shoe and then restoring the limb to the horse.²⁹⁵

The cult of St Eligius became very popular in England. Chaucer's mention of St Loy in the prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* where he said of his prioress, 'Hire gretteste ooth was but by Seinte Loy', implies this popularity.²⁹⁶ Two strands of devotion developed as the cult grew: people seeking individual protection for their horses and his adoption as the patron saint of goldsmiths, blacksmiths and farriers.

The Slapton painting, from the early-fourteenth century, is the oldest of only four surviving English wall paintings of St Eligius. A variety of other representations survive, including depictions of the miracle in window glass, alabaster panels, rood screen panels and roof bosses. In Scotland the seal of the 'Hammermen of Dundee', representing smiths and metalworkers, depicts St

²⁹⁴ Gill, 'Female Piety', pp. 107, 109-10; Katherine L. French, *The Good Women of the Parish, Gender and Religion after the Black Death* (Philadelphia, 2008), p. 99.

²⁹⁵ Tristram, *English Wall Painting*, p. 247; Ellie Pridgeon and Roger Rosewell, 'The miracle of the horseshoe: a 15th century wall painting at Highworth Church', *Wiltshire Archaeological & Natural History Magazine*, 105 (2012), pp. 157-9.

²⁹⁶ Larry D. Benson (ed.), *The Riverside Chaucer* (Oxford, 1988), p. 25.

Eligius. Parishioners in Kent left money for candles before the images of ‘Saynt Loye’ at more than twenty churches.²⁹⁷



Figure 3.7: St Loy shoeing a horse, Slapton. (Top right: St Anne teaching Mary to read).

The importance of horses to medieval people must have made the Slapton picture popular with parishioners, but St Loy had another presence in the area at Weedon Lois (Loys). Weedon Priory was a cell of St Lucien’s Abbey at Beauvais in France and the church had relics of St Lucien of Beauvais brought by the monks. At some time, Lucien appears to have been confused with Loy and the church and village became linked with St Loy.²⁹⁸ The Weedon Lois wills do not mention St Loy, but Belcher, writing in 1614, says: ‘In this church was the memorial of St Loys kept, whither did many resort for the cure of their horses; where there was a house at the east end thereof,

²⁹⁷ Kathleen Kamerick, *Popular Piety and Art in the Late Middle Ages, Image Worship and Idolatry in England 1350-1500* (New York and Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 78-81; Pridgeon and Rosewell, ‘The miracle’, passim; John Higgitt, ‘Imageis Maid with Mennis Hand’: *Saints, Images, Belief and Identity in Later Medieval Scotland*, The Ninth Whithorn Lecture (Whithorn, 2003), p. 13.

²⁹⁸ For confusion with St Loy see: *VCH Northamptonshire*, 2, p. 184.

plucked down within a few years, which was called St Loys house'.²⁹⁹ Presumably this was used as a pilgrim's hostel.



[Source: <http://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/29053.html> (31/08/2015)]

Figure 3.8: Pilgrim badge of St Loy. The illustration on this badge from the Museum of London (origin unknown) is reminiscent of the wall-painting at Slapton.

A second reason for pilgrimage to Weedon Lois was ‘St Loy’s Well’, which is now covered by a large buried slab in a road verge south of the church.³⁰⁰ J. Morton, writing of it in 1712 when it was cleansed and reopened, described it as the main holy well in the west of the county where, traditionally, even blind and leprous people were invariably cured. Water is essential to life; springs and wells were associated with magical healing and the pagan cult of water became incorporated into Christianity. King Edwin, baptised by Paulinus, acknowledged the importance of water to travellers by ordering posts with hanging brass bowls to be set near clear springs adjacent to the highway. Some of these were later considered to be ‘holy wells’. At a holy well in the hamlet of Holywell, east of Whittlebury parish boundary, Roman coins and other metal artefacts, apparently purposely deposited there and denoting its ancient origins, suggest a probable religious site. Water was used in Christian rites for baptism and hand washing and churches were often built near wells that were

²⁹⁹ Ibid, repeating the citation in Bridges, 1, p. 258. Belcher was probably Dabridgcourt Belchier, landowner and antiquary of Guilsborough, Northants. (Matthew Steggle, ‘Dabridgcourt Belchier’, *ODNB*).

³⁰⁰ There are now no signs of the slab.

appropriated by the churches causing them to become associated with saints. Sickness was widely believed to be a punishment sent by God and wells were visited by all classes of people hoping for healing including Henry VIII who patronized wells at both Walsingham and Binsey (Oxfordshire). Many wells (not all 'holy') were reputed to cure various eye afflictions, particularly 'chalybeate springs' containing iron. There is a line of these around the Tove valley in several of the study villages, but only one other, in addition to St Loy's Well, is actually known to have been called 'holy'. According to Morton the river Tove rises in a spring called Holywell in Sulgrave Field, but the name had been lost by the twentieth century.³⁰¹

The cult of Mary

All churches were dedicated to a patron saint and the Blessed Virgin Mary was by far the most popular dedication in England, showing that the cult of the Virgin Mary was strong at the time of building. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the growing cult of Mary resulting in many larger churches being extended to include a Lady Chapel.³⁰² The study parishes reflect this with Lady Chapels in Towcester, Paulerspury and Weedon Lois churches and ten churches dedicated to the Virgin Mary: Blakesley, Culworth, Easton Neston, Moreton Pinkney, Stoke Bruerne, Stuchbury, Wappenham, Weedon Lois and Whittlebury, and the chapel at Heathencote. A map of Virgin Mary dedications in British counties shows Northamptonshire in the middle range with 21 per cent of churches thus designated. Graham Jones indicates that the distribution is denser in the south of the county and 48 per cent in the study area

³⁰¹ John Morton, *The Natural History of Northamptonshire* (1712); Leo Sherley-Price (trans.), D. H. Farmer (ed.), *Bede: Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (London, 1990), p. 134; Beeby Thompson, 'Peculiarities of waters and wells', *Northamptonshire Natural History and Field Club*, 17 (1914), pp. 101-118, 191-197, 230-232, & 18 (1917), pp. 66-77; Janet and Colin Bord, *Sacred Waters, Holy Wells and Water Lore in Britain and Ireland* (London, 1985); James Rattue, *The Living Stream, Holy Wells in Historical Context* (Woodbridge, 1995); Alexandra Walsham, 'Sacred Spas? Healing Springs and Religion in Post-Reformation Britain', in Bridget Heal & Ole Peter Grell, *The Impact of the European Reformation: Princes, Clergy and People* (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 209-215.

³⁰² Robert Whiting, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 150; Francis Bond, *Dedications & Patron Saints of English Churches* (London, 1914), p. 29; R. N. Swanson, *Catholic England, Faith, Religion and Observance before the Reformation* (Manchester, 1993), p. 9; Warner, *Alone of All her Sex*, p. 316; Eamon Duffy, 'Religious Belief', in Rosemary Horrox & Mark Ormrod (eds), *A Social History of England 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 293-339; Richard Marks, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England* (Stroud, 2004), pp. 38-62.

confirms this with ten churches out of 21 (including Stuchbury and chapels at Heathencote and Falcutt).³⁰³ Canons Ashby and Biddlesden Priors on the periphery of the study area were also dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Other dedications were: Abthorpe and Plumpton, St John the Baptist; Bradden, St Michael; Paulerspury, St James; Slapton, St Botolph; Stuchbury, St John; and Towcester, St Laurence. The dedications of four other churches were changed over time. From mentions in wills, Sulgrave was All Saints until at least 1528 and Syresham was St Nicholas until at least 1534, though both are now St James. Silverstone in 1530 was St John, has been St Anne, but is now St Michael; dedications that possibly changed after two re-buildings; in the eighteenth century and again in 1884. Greens Norton was St Laurence until at least 1559, but is now St Bartholomew.³⁰⁴ Change of dedication would reflect changes in the popularity of some saints.³⁰⁵

In 1954, a *Pietà* pilgrim badge (Figure 3.9), showing Mary with the crucified Christ across her knees, was found during excavations at Towcester Grammar School. In 1976, a second one was found at Pury End Quarry, Paulerspury, among tipped material from Towcester. According to Paul Woodfield, who mentioned another example of an English *Pietà* badge found in the Beauchamp Chapel of St Mary's, Warwick, only three have been found.³⁰⁶ These three were made of lead, but there is a copper alloy *Pietà* badge at the Museum of London made in Walsingham, and another at the British Museum found in Surrey. These were probably found more recently, but it appears to be a rare subject for surviving badges. Brian Spencer describes a number of Our Lady badges from Walsingham, but does not include a *Pietà*.³⁰⁷

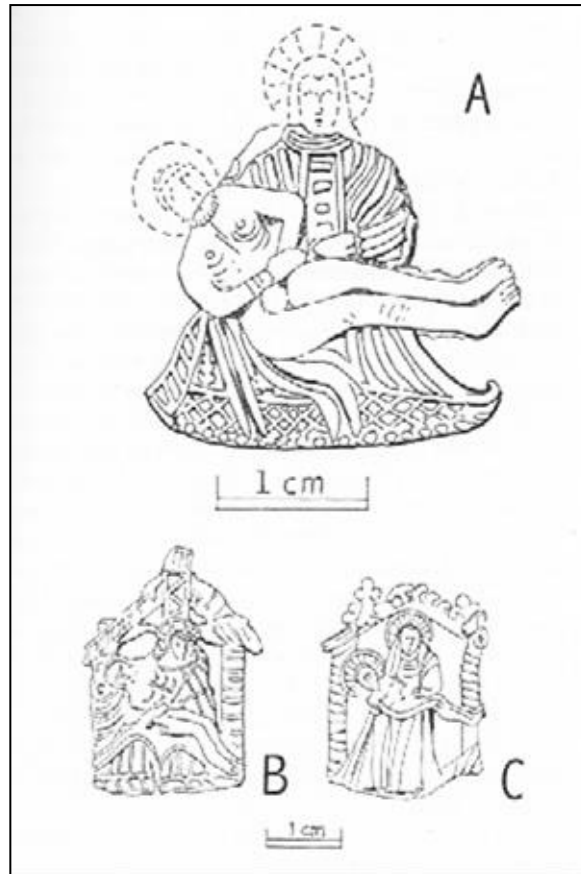
³⁰³ Graham Jones, *Saints in the Landscape* (Stroud, 2007), maps 1 & 5.

³⁰⁴ NRO Arch. North. 1st Series, passim; Francis Whelan & Co, *History, Topography and Directory of Northamptonshire* (London, 1874), p. 526; Thomas North, *The Church Bells of Northamptonshire: their inscriptions, traditions and peculiar uses* (Leicester, 1878), p. 398.

³⁰⁵ Bridges, 1, p. 246; Rev. J. E. Linnell, *Old Oak: the Story of a Forest Village* (London, 1932), pp. 30-32.

³⁰⁶ Paul Woodfield, 'A Further Pilgrim Badge of the *Pietà* or Our Lady of Pity, from Towcester', *Northamptonshire Archaeology*, 29 (2000-1), p. 205.

³⁰⁷ [http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/collections-research/collections-online/object.aspx?objectID=object- \(29/03/2013\);](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/collections-research/collections-online/object.aspx?objectID=object- (29/03/2013);)
[http://finds.org.uk/database/search/results/objecttype/PILGRIM+BADGE/description/pieta \(29/03/2013\);](http://finds.org.uk/database/search/results/objecttype/PILGRIM+BADGE/description/pieta (29/03/2013);)
 Brian Spencer, *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges*, Salisbury Museum Medieval Catalogue, Part 2 (Salisbury, 1990), pp. 30-33.



[Source: *Northamptonshire Archaeology*, 29 (2000-1), p. 2].

Figure 3.9: The *Pietà* from (A) Pury End Quarry, (B) Towcester, (C) Beauchamp Chapel.

The badges from Towcester and Paulerspury indicate that at least two inhabitants of the area (or travellers through it) had been to a pilgrim shrine with an image of the *Pietà* such as Walsingham. The increasing popularity of the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham resulted in a series of cheap pilgrim badges being made available to pilgrims in response to the demand for souvenirs and as a memento of a successful visit. They also supplemented the income of the shrine. In the fifteenth century the emphasis of the Marian cult, which had been focussed on Mary the mother of the infant Christ, shifted to focus on Mary and her sufferings over the crucified Christ, as Christocentric cults grew in popularity. One result was a revitalized Marian cult and a growing popularity of the *Pietà* image that spread through England where representations can be seen in various media in many churches, although very few wall paintings of the subject remain.³⁰⁸ There were at least three images of

³⁰⁸ Woodfield, 'Pilgrim Badge', pp. 204-6; Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 260-1; Anne Marshall (2002), <http://www.paintedchurch.org/slapimp.htm>; Christine Peters, *Patterns of Piety, Women, Gender and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 60-62.

the *Pietà* in the study area. In 1502, Henry Danser of Stoke Bruerne bequeathed half a pound of wax to the image of Mary of Pity.³⁰⁹ In Moreton Pinkney William Gudgeon's will (1528) includes a bequest to the painting of our Lady of Pity in the parish church of Morton.³¹⁰ Slapton church has an extremely faint *Pietà* wall painting, which possibly was clearer in 1877 when seen by J. G. Waller.³¹¹ This popularity in the study area is unsurprising considering the high number of churches dedicated to Mary and it is also demonstrated by the gild in Towcester and the continuing bequests to the Lady light (38 per cent, 1530-1535). The painting of St Michael weighing souls (Figure 3.2) stresses the power of Mary as the final intercessor with God. Her ability to determine the fate of souls, by weighting the scale-pan with her rosary, symbolized the saving power of devotion to Mary, and the cult of Mary remained popular alongside the growing Christocentric cults.

The Eucharist and the Sepulchre

During the history of the Christian Church the Eucharist had undergone theological reinterpretation and the emphasis had shifted away from the communion of the faithful and been placed upon the formal consecration of the elements by the priest. The congregation had become virtual spectators of the special power of the priest. The people could benefit from being present even though they could not understand the Latin. When the Sanctus bell was rung the people prayed for their own salvation and for the intercession of saints for the souls of those in Purgatory. Just before the sacring (consecration of the bread and wine) the sacring bell was rung to warn people to look up for the moment of consecration and Elevation of the Host was near. Grace was conferred upon those seeing this moment.³¹²

³⁰⁹ NRO, Arch. North. Early wills.

³¹⁰ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, D113.

³¹¹ Waller, 'Wall paintings', p. 235; Anne Marshall (personal contact).

³¹² Thomas, *Magic*, p. 36; Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 97-98.



Figures 3.10 & 3.11: The fifteenth-century screen at Stoke Bruerne.

This rood screen that divided the priests in the chancel from the people in the nave was restored during the nineteenth century. The top section above the arches is modern and the lower part restored, but the red and white paint on the close-up picture probably indicates that there were once painted panels of saints below.

Towcester church has a wall painting symbolizing Christ feeding the Church through the Eucharist. In a decorated niche on the south wall of the Sponne (originally Lady) Chapel there is a wall painting of a pelican feeding her young with blood by wounding her own breast. This is based on legend, but is in fact a misconception arising from the fact that a pelican places fish in a skin-pouch in her breast to feed her young. ‘The pelican in her piety’ became a popular image in the medieval Church.³¹³ According to Richard Marks, it was much favoured by William Sponne (whose chantry was discussed earlier), as in early seventeenth-century antiquarian notes on Towcester, shields bearing the pelican are recorded in almost every window, together with his arms.³¹⁴

From 1510 to 1535 about a quarter of all wills included a bequest to the sepulchre light. The sepulchre in a church was the place where a representation of the entombment and resurrection of Christ was enacted each Easter. It was a

³¹³ Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 310-11.

³¹⁴ Richard Marks, *The Medieval Stained Glass of Northamptonshire* (Oxford for British Academy, 1998), p. 278.

rectangular frame made of stone or wood with an arched recess. An extremely worn stone example survives at Helmdon on the periphery of the study area. Sometimes a convenient existing tomb-arch was used and this may have been the tradition at Slapton where there is an empty tomb-arch in the north wall of the chancel. On Good Friday the barefoot priest carried the cross and the host in a pyx, both wrapped in linen cloths, to the sepulchre on the north side of the chancel. There were no masses or bells on the Friday or Saturday, but a watch was kept throughout these days and nights by parishioners or parish officers until Easter Sunday, when the priest led a procession to the sepulchre and the pyx was hung in its normal place over the high altar. The cross was carried in a triumphant procession round the church, the bells were rung and the choir sang the anthem *Christus resurgens* (Christ is risen). Receiving communion at Easter was called ‘taking one’s rights’, indicating the claiming of one’s place in the community.³¹⁵

Christocentric Cults



Figure 3.12: St Francis of Assisi receiving the stigmata, Slapton.

Next to the painting of the St Gregory Mass in Slapton church there is a Christocentric painting of St Francis of Assisi receiving the stigmata (Figure

³¹⁵ Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 29-30, 94; Whiting, *Reformation of Parish Church*, p. 103-4; Serjeantson and Longden, *Parish Churches*, p. 12.

3.12). The elaborate Easter celebrations of the medieval church would have supported the growth of Christocentric cults. Christocentrism became more important in popular religion than devotion to saints and a number of different Christocentric masses developed. In many parts of the country the Mass of the Name of Jesus became popular, for instance in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, and parts of East Kent it was established in the mid-fifteenth century. It first appeared in wills of Tenterden, Kent in 1513, but remained particularly popular into the 1530s appearing in 36 per cent of wills.³¹⁶ In Norwich, where 38 per cent of wills left bequests for chantries and masses, the Christocentric masses, particularly the Name of Jesus, followed by the Mass of the Five Wounds, were the most popular. The Five Wounds was also popular in the diocese of Salisbury where it was a fashionable request among gentry testators, including Dame Anne Danvers of Dauntsey and Culworth. Bequests for obits were declining, except in northern England, while Christocentric masses increased in popularity.³¹⁷ The bequests for Christocentric masses in the study area were concentrated in the eastern parishes, particularly Stoke Bruerne.

Eamon Duffy links the Mass of St Gregory and its representation of the wounds of Christ with the Mass of the Five Wounds, which became popular during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The legend is that the Archangel Raphael revealed the text of the mass to a Pope Boniface when he was close to death telling him to write it down and then say it five times and he would recover. Relief from tribulation was promised for any fivefold celebration and the deliverance from purgatory of souls already dead. The Pope added remission of a seventh part of a person's sins.³¹⁸ Requests for the Mass of the Five Wounds occurred with certainty in just one parish in the study area, Stoke Bruerne, but it was very popular there (requested in 29 per cent of wills in the period 1510-1540). Thomas Bosynhoe (1510) requested masses of the Five Wounds, of the Trinity, and of the Holy Ghost among a long list of bequests including the Lady light and St Michael light. Later wills of Robert Bownde (1521), Thomas Bunche (1532) and Thomas Clare (1540) all requested five

³¹⁶ Lutton, *Lollardy*, pp. 71-77.

³¹⁷ Tanner, *Norwich*, pp. 84, 220-21; Andrew D. Brown, *Popular piety in Late Medieval England, The Diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550* (Oxford, 1995), p. 103; Anne Danvers, TNA PROB 11/28/13 (1939); Attreed, 'Preparation', pp. 45-47.

³¹⁸ Duffy, *Stripping*, pp. 238-246, 292-3; R. W. Pfaff, *New Liturgical Feasts in Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 84-5.

Masses of the Five Wounds and made bequests to the Rood, Sepulchre and Trinity lights, but not the Lady light or other saints lights.³¹⁹ The damaged will of Robert Dixe of Paulerspury in 1534 requested five masses, probably of the Five Wounds.³²⁰ As with the non-saint-based Trinity light (particularly popular in Stoke Bruerne) the majority of bequests for Christocentric masses were in Stoke Bruerne and although some wills show conservatism, there was a definite interest in Christocentrism. However, the earliest bequest for a Christocentric mass was in Towcester in 1498 when Letitia Sutton bequeathed six marks for the Mass of the Name of Jesus, the only bequest for this in the study area, but described by Serjeantson and Longden as popular in the county.³²¹

d) Education and the dissemination of religious liturgy and other texts

A bequest in the will (1531) of Joan Thomson of Sulgrave, ‘maid, daughter of John Thomson,’ stated ‘with 40s 10d of my money an honest priest to be hired to sing and pray for me, the which priest I will that Sir John Hynton, vicar of Sulgrave, do hire that he may teach children in the parish of Sulgrave that God’s service may be there the better maintained’. Joan probably intended that a ‘song school’ should be set up in the parish to teach the Latin liturgy by rote, in order to improve the singing in the mass. Song schools were distinct from grammar schools and Sulgrave children were unlikely to understand the words, although a singer might begin to recognise and read a few words, without knowing any grammar.³²²

Joan may have been influenced by John Gwynneth, rector from 1528 of the close-by deserted village of Stuchbury, earlier cleared for sheep, where her father leased the land from St Andrew’s Priory, Northampton (see Chapter 2). The priory held the advowsons of both Stuchbury and nearby Sulgrave and until the Dissolution it maintained a presence at Stuchbury where one or two houses remained.³²³ In the 1520s Gwynneth lived at the abbey of St Albans as a secular ecclesiastic and contributed to the musical life of the abbey and was an

³¹⁹ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, A182, C139, E38, F197.

³²⁰ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, E133.

³²¹ NRO, Arch. North. Early will, f.59; Serjeantson and Longden, *Parish Churches*, p. 32.

³²² NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, D409; Katherine Ziemann, *Singing the New Song* (Philadelphia, 2008), pp. 1-39; A. Hamilton Thompson, *Song-Schools in the Middle Ages*, Church-Music Society, 14 (1942), pp. 3-5.

³²³ Bridges, 1, p. 201.

exhibitioner at Oxford when appointed to Stuchbury, his first benefice in December 1528. Oxford was about 25 miles from Stuchbury. Conjecturally, the priory as Gwynneth's patron might expect occasional visits and musical support. While there he would surely sing in Stuchbury (and possibly Sulgrave) church. He later held livings in Caernarvonshire and successively in Cheapside and Luton. He was a priest by 1530 and Doctor of Music in 1531 when he claimed to have composed eight five or four-part masses as well as hymns and antiphons, though only one composition survives today. He did much for the standards of church music and holds a high place among Tudor musicians. Religious reform endangered his career as a composer of sung masses and between 1536 and 1557 he wrote five books on behalf of traditional religion, mainly replying to the works of the early Protestant John Frith, but he was himself imprisoned in 1560 for his adherence to the old faith and died before March 1563.³²⁴

In the south aisle in Slapton church there is a picture of St Anne teaching the Virgin Mary to read (Figure 3.7). The earliest English examples of this image date from the beginning of the fourteenth century when the Slapton version was painted. It is often juxtaposed with the Annunciation, as at Slapton, and may have been felt to be appropriate as a representation of the Virgin's preparation for the Annunciation, standing at the beginning of the story of salvation. There is no literary text in the West for the popular image of St Anne teaching Mary. Wendy Scase argues that seeing the Virgin learning to read at the beginning of her story may well have made the viewer aware of the importance of reading as a personal means of entry to the story of salvation.³²⁵

It is probable that more than half the population in London could read, though not necessarily write, by 1500. J. Hoepfner Moran arrives at 'a conservative 15 per cent overall literacy rate in York diocese from 1500 to

³²⁴ Emden, pp. 253-4; R. T. Jenkins (ed.), *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1940* (Oxford, 1959), p. 333; J. P. D. Cooper, 'John Gwynneth composer and polemicist', *ODNB* (2004); Glanmor Williams, *Wales and the Reformation* (Cardiff, 1997), passim; William H. Grattan Flood, *Early Tudor Composers, Biographical sketches of thirty-two musicians and composers of the period 1485-1555* (Oxford, 1925), pp. 108-111.

³²⁵ Tristram, *English Wall Painting*, p. 23; Wendy Scase, 'St Anne and the Education of the Virgin' in Nicholas Rogers (ed.), *England in the Fourteenth Century*, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, 3, pp. 81-96; Michael Clanchy, 'Images of Ladies with Prayer Books: What do they signify?', in R. N. Swanson (ed.), *The Church and the Book* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 106-115; Marks, *Image and Devotion*, pp. 148-150; Pfaff, *Liturgical Feasts* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 103-4.

1530' soon to be superseded in subsequent decades.³²⁶ It is unlikely that it would have been any higher in the study area; however, Nicholas Orme suggests that by 1250 at the latest, the whole population was in contact with writings and literate people. People attended church where a cleric used books. Men attended a lord's court which kept written records and they could refer to their tenancy charter with the help of educated people. Everyone knew someone in their community who could read and society was 'collectively literate'.³²⁷

M. T. Clanchy questions how the population learnt to read when few boys and even fewer girls went to school and argues that the answer depends on what was valued in reading. The emphasis in reading was put on prayer; collectively in the church's liturgy and individually at home with a Book of Hours. Godparents were exhorted to learn and teach the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Hail Mary, though perhaps by rote. Instruction in reading was typically by mother to child. In fifteenth-century western European culture the ideal of the mother teaching her little boy to read was preserved in the image of the Virgin Mary with the child Jesus and a Book of Hours, which paralleled the image of St Anne teaching the Virgin to read. Availability of texts increased during the fifteenth century and once the printing press reached England school texts could be bought for a few pence. Children began by learning the alphabet, numbers, and the Lord's Prayer in English from a hornbook, followed by the Hail Mary in English or Latin from a Book of Hours, which contained prayers to be read at certain times of day, biblical material, and saints' lives.³²⁸ Mothers, besides teaching children to read, were responsible for their moral education. There were books suitable for the middle-classes, such as *The Good Wife Taught her Daughter*, written about 1350 and giving instruction about

³²⁶ Derek Brewer, 'The Social Context of Medieval English Literature', Boris Ford (ed.), *Medieval Literature: Chaucer and the alliterative tradition* (London, 1990), p. 23; J. Hoepfner Moran, 'Literacy in Northern England, 1350-1550, *Northern England*, 17 (1981), pp. 1-23.

³²⁷ Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children*, (New Haven and London, 2001), pp. 238-240.

³²⁸ R. N. Swanson, *Catholic England: Faith, Religion and Observance before the Reformation* (Manchester, 1993), p. 9; M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record, England 1066-1307* (Oxford, 1993), p. 13; Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran, *The Growth of English Schooling 1340-1548, Learning, Literacy, and Laicization in Pre-Reformation York Diocese* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1985), pp. 33-40; Susan Groag Bell, 'Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture', Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, *Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (London and Athens, 1988), pp. 158-165.

churchgoing, almsgiving, daily life and behaviour towards husband and neighbours, running a household and education of children.³²⁹

Boys who were aiming to enter the church could receive teaching including Latin at religious houses and there was often a schoolmaster in royal and noble households to teach the lord's children and wards. Some parish clergy taught local children the alphabet and the prayer book. The growth of government, towns and trade caused an extension of literacy and people such as merchants and their clerks might teach reading to apprentices and other young people.³³⁰

Some early grammar schools grew out of collegiate churches. Towcester had a grammar school that began as a bequest of Archdeacon Sponne (see earlier in this chapter). The college called Sponne's Chantry was founded in 1449 for two priests, one a preacher and the other a teacher of grammar receiving annually £8 13s 4d and £7 6s 8d respectively. It was endowed with land and Towcester Grammar School survived until 1968, when it became the comprehensive Sponne School.³³¹ Six other Northamptonshire grammar schools were founded before the Reformation at Northampton, Higham Ferrers, Fotheringhay, Oundle, Blisworth, and Peterborough; together with six elementary schools at Aldwinkle, Barnack, Farthinghoe, Fawsley, Spratton and Thingdon, and an endowed song school at Brington.³³²

Arrangements for the guardianship of children who would be orphaned were quite often stated in wills. In 1528 Thomas Keversley of Syresham willed that the abbot of nearby Biddlesden Abbey should be his overseer and have custody of his son, who would then be educated at the abbey. The abbot was to have 40s to pray for Thomas's soul. Thomas also provided for a friend Thomas Yate to have custody of his daughters Marie and Agnes.³³³ In 1527 John Vincent, tailor of Falcutt, bequeathed the residue of his goods for Sir John Hynton, vicar of Sulgrave and executor of the will, to give to John Rewle 'to

³²⁹ Tauno F. Mustanoja (ed.), 'The Good Wife Taught her Daughter', *Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae*, Series B, 61 (Helsinki, 1948).

³³⁰ Orme, *Medieval Children*, pp. 240-242; Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers; Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London, 1984), p. 101.

³³¹ Hamilton Thompson, 'Chantry certificates', p. 155; Arthur F. Leach, *English Schools at the Reformation 1546-8* (Westminster, 1896), *passim*.

³³² VCH Northants. 2, p. 201, Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (Boston, Massachusetts, 2006), p. 324.

³³³ NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, D173.

bring up my children until they be of lawful age.’ Sir John Grymbolde, stipendiary priest of John’s own parish, Wappenham, was named as overseer and another priest was a witness.³³⁴ John Vincent possibly involved clerics anticipating that his children would be educated by clergy.

Ownership of books

Books needed by a medieval parish church were frequently gifted in Northamptonshire wills: the Missal, the Gradual, the Breviary, the Antiphoner, the Processional, and the Manual.³³⁵ In late-medieval England many holders of small rural benefices were poor, not highly educated, and would rely on books belonging to the parish church.³³⁶ Books do not often appear in wills of the laity in the study area, but two laymen left money to purchase a book for their church: John Longe in 1520, 4 marks to Sulgrave Church to buy an antiphoner, and Robert Dixe of Paulerspury in 1534, to buy the church a processional. In 1554 Robert Moxon left his Hymnal to Towcester Church.³³⁷

An undated ‘list of books belonging to the church’ appears in the back of Culworth churchwardens’ accounts (probably written *c.* 1600):

- A Bible
- An old Bible
- A Common Prayer book
- The first book of the homilies with the injunctions
- The Second
- Calvin’s Institutions
- Erasmus Paraphrases
- The book of [Articles?]³³⁸

If the above list is complete the church possessed very few books, as was also observed by Tanner for Norwich parish churches.³³⁹

³³⁴ NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, D96.

³³⁵ Serjeantson and Longden, *Parish Churches*, pp. 25-30.

³³⁶ Hoskins, ‘Leicestershire Country Parson’, pp. 91-2.

³³⁷ NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, A396, E133 (damaged will, amount unknown), M93, respectively.

³³⁸ NRO, 94p/21.

³³⁹ Tanner, *Norwich*, p. 35.

Books owned by clergy were often bequeathed to other clerics, however, the eleven wills of parish clergy before 1536 include only two who appear to have been sufficiently wealthy to have had an abundance of personal belongings, including books. Hugh Melling, a priest who died in Towcester and bequeathed six books in his will (1531), is discussed in detail in chapter five in the section ‘Lollards and Books’. In 1535 Robert Richardson, vicar of Easton Neston and rector of Hargrave left to Richard Freeman, his curate, a book of sermons and his festival; and to the prior of Blackfriars, Northampton, a book of sermons.³⁴⁰ In 1536-1600, three more clergy bequeathed books; in 1546 Thomas Langton, vicar of Culworth, left unspecified books to the parish of Chipping Norton asking the priest to pray for his soul and all Christian souls, and his other books to Sir Ralph Jackson and Sir William Hyde, curates of Chipping Warden, except for his Bible which he left to ‘Master Chaunce’; in 1584 William Saunders, vicar of Blakesley, bequeathed a dictionary to a friend; lastly, in 1600 John Anson, rector of Stoke Bruerne, left all his books to his grand-daughter Susan Rawbone.³⁴¹

Wills of widows and other independent women are the main source of information about female book ownership and the majority of wills mentioning books were made by wealthy upper gentry or noblewomen, although occasionally books appear in wills of merchants’ widows. More people could read English by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and there was a demand for books in English.

Some nuns were literate in both English and Latin and book ownership became more common among nuns during the course of the sixteenth century some of which were gifts from gentlewomen or clergy. Tanner found that in Norwich a large number of clergy and laity left bequests to religious houses, for instance, a priest William Hemming left his missal to Syon Abbey in 1486 so that the monks might pray for him and his parents. No complete catalogue survives of a nuns’ library, but many of their books survive in various libraries and some have inscriptions of their earlier nun owner and her religious house, for example, the Hunterian Library in Glasgow owns an English translation of

³⁴⁰ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, D404 and F35 respectively; Longden, *Clergy*, 5, p. 129; *Oxford English Dictionary*: a ‘festival’ (also ‘festial’) contained an exhortation for each feast day.

³⁴¹ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, K91, P276; TNA PROB 11/97, respectively.

Thomas à Kempis's *Imitatio Christi*, inscribed by Elizabeth Gibbs, abbess of Syon in 1497-1518.³⁴²

Syon Abbey, the only English abbey of the Bridgettine Order founded before the Reformation was famous as a centre of Renaissance learning. The community comprised a main body of sisters, mostly from powerful families of courtiers, gentry, lawyers and merchants, with a smaller group of brothers. A catalogue survives for the brothers' well-stocked library, but not for the nuns' library. Bridgettine nuns channelled their spirituality into missionary endeavours and played an important role in the development of vernacular spirituality in northern Europe.³⁴³

From its foundation Syon Abbey shared many benefactors with Oxford and Cambridge universities, including the Danvers family, wealthy gentry with land in several counties including at Culworth, Northamptonshire. John Danvers of Epwell, near Banbury, Oxfordshire, married Alice Verney and their son Richard was the first Danvers to make Culworth his home. Richard's son Sir John Danvers married Anne Stradling of Dauntsey (see chapter five). John Danvers of Epwell and his second wife Joan Bruley were special benefactors of Syon and All Souls College and John's lawyer sons; Robert from his first marriage and Thomas and William from the second were associated as lawyers with the foundations of All Souls, New, and Magdalen Colleges. William's wife, Dame Anne Danvers née Pury, of Calthorpe, Oxfordshire, gifted an English New Testament to Syon Abbey during Lent, 1517, referred to again in her will, 1530, asking the Confessor of Syon with his brothers to pray for her family alive and dead.³⁴⁴

³⁴² Carol M. Meale, '... alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englisch, and frensch': laywomen and their books in late medieval England', in Carol M. Meale (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 128-158; Paul Lee, *Nunneries, Learning and Spirituality in Late Medieval English Society, The Dominican Priory of Dartford* (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 138-142, 164; Power, Eileen, *Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275-1535* (Cambridge, 1922), p. 243; Tanner, *Norwich*, pp. 124-5. Virginia R. Bainbridge, 'Syon Abbey: Women and Learning c. 1415-1600', in E. A. Jones and Alexandra Walsham (eds), *Syon Abbey and its Books, Reading, Writing and Religion c. 1400-1700* (Woodbridge, 2010), pp. 82-103, esp. 84-5.

³⁴³ Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation, Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford, 1988), p. 233, n. 34; Ker, N. R., *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 3 (Oxford, 1983), p. 103; Bainbridge, 'Syon Abbey', p. 82-4; VCH Middlesex, 1 (1911), pp. 182-191; Lee, *Nunneries*, p. 165; Power, *Nunneries*, p. 240.

³⁴⁴ Bainbridge, 'Syon Abbey', pp. 95-7; Francis Nottidge Macnamara, *Memorials of the Danvers Family of Dauntsey and Culworth* (London, 1895), passim; C. S. Taylor (ed.), 'Pedigree of Danvers', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*,

The Cistercian Priory of Swardsley, in the parish of Easton Neston, was the only nunnery in the study area and was a small house that became impoverished and even obtained a bishop's licence in 1366 to beg for alms, but it survived until the Dissolution.³⁴⁵ It is unlikely to have owned many books.

f) Conclusion

Evidence in this chapter, mainly from wills, church interiors and lingering signs of pilgrimage, supports the vigour of late-medieval religion, but there is evidence of the advent of change, indicated by changes in the popularity of some aspects of belief and beginning before the Dissolution. Popularity of masses declined as in, for instance, the south-west of England, East Sussex and Norwich, but popularity was always higher in these areas than in Northamptonshire. There was a rapid decline in obits in the study area where they were never very popular. In comparison, they were very popular in the north of England and remained so after the Dissolution. Bequests for torches decreased before 1536 followed by an increase in a few parishes, possibly because this bequest was unconnected with the popularity of saints. The wills show lively support for lights, more so than in the other studies referred to, but saint-based piety became focussed increasingly on Mary whose light became the most popular of all such bequests. Bequests for other saints declined and appeals for intercession concentrated on Marian and Christocentric cults. Chantry certificates list Towcester and Greens Norton chantries and perpetual endowments to maintain obits or lights at Culworth, Towcester, Paulerspury, Stoke Bruerne and Easton Neston.³⁴⁶ Andrew Brown suggests that some chantry endowments could no longer support their priests by the 1530s, which may explain why Wappenham with its six chantry priests is not listed.³⁴⁷ Christocentric cults had become popular as in much of England. Support for the Christocentric rood doubled after 1510 and appeared in a quarter of wills in 1510-1535.

17 (1892-93), pp. 303-4; William Harvey (ed.), *The Visitations of the County of Oxford: taken in 1566, 1574, and 1634*, HS, 5 (London, 1871), p. 187; TNA PROB 11/24/66.

³⁴⁵ VCH Northants, 2, pp. 125-7.

³⁴⁶ Hamilton Thompson, *Chantry Certificates*, passim.

³⁴⁷ Brown, *Salisbury*, p. 233.

Direct comparison of parishes is made difficult by differences in types of evidence available. Culworth, from its churchwardens' accounts and the planned St Nicholas aisle in the 1530s, mentioned in the will of the rector John Gardiner (1531), appears to have remained traditional before the Dissolution. John Gardiner and his replacement, the vicar Thomas Langton, came from local families and real changes may have begun after Langton's death in 1546. In Stoke Bruerne parish the Trinity light was particularly popular, as was the Christocentric Mass of the Five Wounds. Anyone making these bequests also gave to other lights and sometimes requested masses or obits, giving the impression of a few testators having enough wealth to make good provision for their souls. A third of gilds in Northamptonshire supported Christocentric cults; apparently earlier than in some counties. The very popular fraternity of the Rood at Moreton Pinkney is an example of this support, from 1510, or earlier, to 1547. There appears to have been little testamentary support for traditional religion at Syresham (nine wills) 1510-1535. Each will has at least one pious bequest, generally two, but none for prayers or lights after 1529. After 1537 any type of pious bequest was very rare through to 1610, but this is the only parish with a Marian martyr and dissenting beliefs may have circulated very early in this forest village.

The wall-paintings, seen by every person entering Slapton church, included St Christopher, friend and helper; Mary, mother of Christ and helper through life and death; and several paintings warning of the consequences of sin. The latter were intended to put fear into the minds of sinners, but piety, aided by intercession of Mary and others, would strengthen their hope of salvation.

Two of the later paintings at Slapton *circa* 1500 are of the 'Mass of St Gregory' (Figure 3.1) and 'St Francis receiving the stigmata' (Figure 3.12).³⁴⁸ Both are Christocentric and support other evidence of a movement away from saint-based piety towards an early interest in Christocentric cults. These are both very rare subjects in England; possibly they (and other paintings) were commissioned by the de Lucy family who held the land and advowson for two

³⁴⁸ Dated by Miriam Gill, personal contact.

centuries, but this is conjecture. Fragments of medieval glass of c. 1320-1350 in the east window include the shield of the Lucy family.³⁴⁹

The Virgin Mary was particularly popular in the study area, in church dedications, Lady Chapels, lights in churches and bequests to them, and finally in representations of the Pietà showing a change from devotion to Mary and the infant Jesus to Mary and her crucified son. The Pietà thus became a partner to Christocentric cults. Pilgrimage is represented in the area by Pietà pilgrim badges, and locally by St Loy's well and supposed relics (that were actually of St Lucien). The cult of the Virgin Mary was possibly very popular because the distribution of church-dedications to Mary was particularly dense in the area and at 45 per cent was much higher than the average for any complete county, the highest being Hertfordshire at 34 per cent. The tendencies, as in much of England, of movement away from saint-based cults towards Christocentrism by the 1530s, still within the traditional church, would have made the virtual abolition of saints' cults easier to accept in the coming Reformation.

There was an increased interest in literacy in the area. A song school appears to have been endowed at Sulgrave (although the will bequest is the only evidence) and a grammar school in Towcester grew out of a chantry provision for teaching of boys. Some fathers left legacies for their children to be educated by local clergy and for one boy at Biddlesden Abbey. Culworth churchwardens' accounts show payments for a new Bible in the vernacular (enforced by royal statute) which together with other evidence would encourage thought about what was actually in the Bible. Books rarely appeared in wills of the laity in the study area, but a few clergy owned books, which they mainly gifted to other clerics. The gentry Danvers family of Culworth are representative of a movement by the wealthy to endow centres of learning at Syon Abbey and Oxford and Cambridge universities.

Church bells, besides being rung for services, gave an indication of the time of day to villagers and two men endowed bells; Henry Thomys of Culworth for a new church bell, and John Aleyn of Blakesley gave land to endow a curfew bell, a day bell, and care of the clock if one was put in the

³⁴⁹ Marks, *Medieval Glass*, pp. 172-3.

church. The Blakesley bequest eventually led to the endowment of a grammar school in the seventeenth century.

This chapter has indicated some differences between parishes: in the popularity of various pious bequests and the timing of movements towards new cults. The next two chapters will examine wills in more detail and consider influences on parishioners that may have caused differences between parishes and have affected the speed of change.

CHAPTER 4

Wills and Religious Beliefs, 1510-1610

Pious will bequests were used in previous chapters as indicators of religious beliefs before the Reformation and possible changes in these beliefs. Wills are now discussed in more detail, particularly with reference to recording the progress of the Reformation. For much of the population in the sixteenth century a will was the only personal statement left to posterity, but not everyone wrote a will and not all written wills have survived. Some areas have a good survival of early churchwardens' accounts, which have been used to map the progress of popular religion in parishes.³⁵⁰ However, wills are the main source of information about popular religion in many areas and the only source for personal pieties. In this chapter will preambles and the categories used for their analysis are discussed. This leads to discussion of the apparent religious changes in the area as shown by will preambles and whether a testator might have been influenced by the scribe, who was a priest, a scrivener, or another literate person. The possible correlation between preambles and bequests from 1510 to 1610 is investigated by tabulating bequests made by testators in each category of preamble.

a) The Testators

The number and status of testators is examined first to test the validity of using wills to represent the views of communities. One method of calculating the proportion of the population that died testate in a community is to calculate wills as a percentage of a community's burials.³⁵¹ This method does not involve estimations, but has several disadvantages: it cannot be used unless a burial register is available for the dates in question, it takes no account of any burials away from the parish church, some parish registers appear to be better

³⁵⁰ Duffy, Morebath; Clive Burgess, "'By Quick and by Dead': Wills and Pious Provision in Late Medieval Bristol", *EHR*, 102 (1987), p. 837-858; Hutton, Ronald, 'The Local Impact of the Tudor Reformations', in C. Haigh (ed.), *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1987); Kümin, *Shaping of Community*; Robert Whiting, *Local Responses to the English Reformation* (Basingstoke, 1998).

³⁵¹ Richard T. Vann, 'Wills and the family in an English Town: Banbury, 1500-1800', *Journal of Family History*, 4 (1979), pp. 346-366, esp. 352.

kept and more complete than others, and, finally, it is not always clear whether males are adults or children. In the parishes of the study area one register began in 1538, nine around 1560 and the rest in the seventeenth-century.

Table 4.1 covers a selection of parishes of various sizes from the small Bradden, the medium Blakesley and Greens Norton, the large Paulerspury and Stoke Bruerne, to the town parish of Towcester. Females were not included in the table since their eligibility to make a will, as a widow or a spinster with personal property, is often unclear in the burial registers. The registers for the selection demonstrate some of the other problems associated with this method.

Table 4.1: Burials and wills

	Male burials	Male wills	%	Male burials	Male wills	%
	1541-1570			1571-1606		
Blakesley	79	9	11%	68	15	22%
				1571-1610		
Bradden				38	5	13%
Greens Norton				72	13	18%
Paulerspury				127	21	17%
Stoke Bruerne				95	23	24%
				1591- 1610		
Towcester				118	22	19%
			Total	527	99	19%

Blakesley is the only parish register in the area starting in 1538. The years 1606-1610 are missing, but otherwise it appears complete and well-kept. Registers for 1571 onwards are complete for all the selected parishes except Towcester. The shorter period 1591-1610 was used for Towcester, because before this the register rarely distinguishes between adults and children. Even after 1591 it is likely that some boys are included in the number of male burials. However the fact that Stoke Bruerne and Blakesley registers are well-kept and male and children's burials can be distinguished makes it probable that these two results are accurate, while the others may not be. It is probably unreasonable to assume that the percentage of testate males should be the same

in all parishes, partly because some registers appear to be more accurate and easier to interpret than others and also the average status of males may differ. The figures for Blakesley, where the register began in 1538, show that the percentage of testators had doubled by Elizabeth's reign, but there are no records to show whether this was universal in the area.

Richard Vann used the same method, just six miles to the west of the study area, for Banbury parish in North Oxfordshire containing the town and surrounding hamlets. He found 80 male wills and 323 adult male burials in the period 1575-1599, giving 24.8 per cent of males dying testate.³⁵² Vann's 24.8 per cent is similar to percentages for Blakesley and Stoke Bruerne (22 and 24 per cent), but higher than the 19 per cent average (nearly a fifth) for the study area. As stated above, Blakesley and Stoke Bruerne are more likely to be accurate than the other parishes.

About a fifth of males leaving a will could give a fair representation of a community's beliefs if they represent a fair cross-section of the community. Unfortunately not all wills include the testator's status, but the number that did increased over time in the study area (Table 4.2). This lack of declared status appears usual. Motoyasu Takahashi found that 17 per cent of wills in Ely diocese had a declared status in 1540-1549, rising steadily each decade to 63 per cent in 1600-1609.³⁵³

Table 4.2: Wills declaring the testator's status

	1510-1558	1558-1610
Number of wills	355	327
Number with declared status	96	164
Percentage with declared status	27.0%	50.2%

Note: Wills of 1558 are divided at Elizabeth I's accession.

Table 4.3 shows the variety of occupations in the wills of the study area. Yeomen and husbandmen together comprise 45 per cent of the 293 wills with a known status confirming the agricultural nature of the area. The market town Towcester, situated on the busy Watling Street has the expected innholders, but

³⁵² Vann, 'Banbury', p. 352.

³⁵³ Motoyasu Takahashi, 'The number of wills Proved in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in G. H. Martin and Peter Spufford (eds), *The Records of the Nation : the Public Record Office, 1838-1988: The British Record Society, 1888-1* (Woodbridge, 1990), p. 210.

Table 4.3: The status of testators, 1510-1610

	Not known	Gentlemen	Clerics	Yeomen	Husbandmen	Tradesmen	Others	Labourers,	Females	Total
Abthorpe	17	-	-	5	3	-	1 sh	2	5	33
Blakesley	23	2	4	-	6	-	-	-	3	38
Bradden	6	2	1	-	7	-	-	-	-	16
Culworth	30	-	3	-	4	-	-	1	3	41
Easton Neston	11	1	1	3	1	-	-	-	-	17
Greens Norton	26	1	-	-	7	1	-	-	2	37
Moreton Pinkney	16	-	-	2	7	4	-	1	4	34
Paulerspury	44	3	-	2	7	-	-	2	3	61
Plumpton	4	-	2	-	3	-	-	-	1	10
Silverstone	10	-	-	-	3	2	-	1	2	18
Slapton	15	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	1	20
Stoke Bruerne	32	2	1	3	12	2	-	2	5	59
Sulgrave	20	3	1	1	6	2	-	2	5	40
Syresham	25	-	1	1	10	4	1 sh	-	4	46
Towcester	62	5	2	9	10	10	5 ih 1 sc	3	14	121
Wappenham	15	2	-	1	7	2	-	-	2	29
Weedon Lois	26	-	3	3	8	2	-	-	5	47
Whittlebury	11	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	19
Total	393	23	19	30	103	31	8	14	65	686

sh = shepherd, ih = innholder, sc = scrivener

the parish extends to surrounding hamlets and settlements and even here 32 per cent are yeomen or husbandmen. The tradesmen have not been detailed separately as numbers of each type are very low. They include trades necessary to support the village communities and other trades found in a town, including: blacksmith, miller, shoemaker, tanner, carpenter, tailor, butcher, mason, turner, dyer, glover, mercer and weaver. A. G. Dickens suggests that poor peasants and craftsmen seldom made formal wills.³⁵⁴

³⁵⁴ A. G. Dickens, 'The early expansion of Protestantism in England, 1520-1558', in Marshall, *The Impact of the Reformation*, pp. 85-117, esp. p. 105.

Labourers and servants form only five per cent of the 293 wills with a known status, but they are represented and even the poverty-stricken labourer William Guye of Sulgrave, who was ‘aged and kept upon the alms of the town’, bequeathed all the goods he had (probate value 36s 10d) to son-in-law Humphrey Hale and wife Amye, with the vicar as first witness and probably the scribe.³⁵⁵ William, a pauper, wanted to ensure his goods would go to relatives. Overall most sections of the population appear to be represented and the wills should give a fair, though small, cross-section of religious beliefs.

b) Religious preambles

A will generally began with the date of writing, the testator’s name and possibly status, and whether he or she was sick, but it nearly always stated ‘of sound mind and perfect memory’, or similar wording to avoid presenting an opening for the will to be contested. A religious preamble detailing the bequest of the soul normally followed before all other bequests and this preamble is used by most historians and in this study as an indication of religious belief. There is general caution among historians concerning how truly the preamble represents the testator’s religious opinions, but it is generally accepted that preambles show trends of change.³⁵⁶ However, the content of individual wills may alter the impression given by preambles alone, as will be shown later.

The soul was considered to be the most important bequest as the continuation of one’s being and was therefore the first bequest in a will. Richard Allybone of Weedon Lois in 1583 began his soul bequest with, ‘First and above all things’.³⁵⁷ This implies the importance of the soul as does, ‘First and principally’, also found a number of times in the area. Margaret Spufford states that, ‘the reasoning behind these preambles is made plain in the will of a

³⁵⁵ NRO, Arch. North., 1st series, X168.

³⁵⁶ Margaret Spufford, *Contrasting Communities, English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 332-334; Claire Cross, ‘The Development of Protestantism in Leeds and Hull, 1520-1640: The Evidence from Wills’, *Northern History*, 18 (1982); Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke and London, 1998), pp. 128-9; Burgess, ‘Wills and Convention’, in Hicks (ed.), *Profit, Piety*, pp. 14-33; O’Day, *English Reformation* (London, 1986), pp. 133-165.

³⁵⁷ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, V114.

maltster of Orwell in Cambridgeshire, Thomas Brocke, whose will in 1597 began, “First as thing most precyous, I commend my soule to God the father my creator”³⁵⁸. She says this phrase is not common form and she has come across it nowhere else. However, it is not unique; a few Northamptonshire wills use similar wording. Lawrence Washington, gentleman of Sulgrave, elaborated Thomas Brocke’s phrase in 1581 and implied that his soul was his representative in the afterlife and the bearer of all his sins:

First because I have nothing more precious than my soul nor anything better presentable to the mercy of God besides that, I therefore do present and bequeath the same to his mercy most humbly beseeching him of his goodness not to impute the multitude of my sins to me, but that it will please him for the merits of his son our Saviour Jesus Christ in whom my only trust and confidence is to forgive and pardon me the same and receive me into his everlasting kingdom.³⁵⁹

His son, Robert Washington, 39 years later in 1620 used exactly the same wording.³⁶⁰ As his father’s executor, he could have copied Lawrence’s will, but the words may have come originally from a formulary book. An example is Thomas Phaer’s *A Newe Booke of Presidents*, first published in 1543, which went through 27 editions up to 1675.³⁶¹

Over time historians have used different methods to analyse preambles. In possibly the earliest analysis, A. G. Dickens in 1964 divided preambles into only ‘Traditional’ and ‘Non-traditional’; the latter meaning any soul bequests that are not to God, Mary and the saints (or holy company of heaven).³⁶² David Palliser also used these two bands, but subdivided Non-traditional into undefined ‘God’ and ‘Protestant’.³⁶³ Later, preambles have generally been divided into three bands: Traditional or Catholic; Neutral or non-Traditional; and Protestant; with the addition of Mixed (or Uncertain) and No Preamble categories when necessary. Elaine Sheppard has four Bands: ‘Traditional’, ‘God’, ‘Mixed’ and ‘Protestant’. God includes ‘God and the saints’ without

³⁵⁸ Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, p. 320.

³⁵⁹ TNA, PROB 11/68.

³⁶⁰ TNA, PROB 11/137.

³⁶¹ Cross, ‘Leeds and Hull,’ p. 233; Thomas Phaer, www.ucl.ac.uk/Library/special-coll/law2006.shtml

³⁶² Dickens, *English Reformation*, p. 266.

³⁶³ David Palliser, *The Reformation in York 1534-1553*, Borthwick Papers, 40 (York, 1971), p. 32.

Mary; Mixed are the others that are not Protestant, but Protestant is not defined.³⁶⁴ Mayhew has four categories plus two mixed bands: ‘Traditional’, ‘mixed Traditional/Reformist’, ‘Reformist’, ‘mixed Protestant/Traditional’, ‘Protestant’ and ‘Neutral’.³⁶⁵ In the ‘mixed’ bands he takes account of bequests for masses and residue for the soul and classifies religious attitudes from wills, not solely from preambles as in the tables of other researchers. Where researchers have given definitions there are slight differences in the interpretation of Catholic and Protestant. A Catholic preamble asks, by word or implication, for the intercession of the Virgin Mary and the saints to shorten the time in Purgatory, but from the 1530s some preambles omitted Mary from the traditional Catholic preamble. Several researchers consider this to be traditional, including Sheils, Atreed, Caroline Litzenberger and Laquita Higgs, but Dickens, Sheppard and this study do not.³⁶⁶ Depictions of ‘St Michael weighing souls’ (see Chapter Three) illustrate Mary as an important element in ‘the soul’s journey’ in Catholic belief, demonstrating her importance in the soul bequest.

Most researchers and this study describe preambles that are not committed Traditional or committed Protestant as Neutral or non-traditional.³⁶⁷ Mayhew uses Reformist for these, except for ‘to almighty God’ and ‘to almighty God and the holy company of heaven’, which he classifies as Neutral unless masses are also requested, in which case he classifies it as Traditional. However his classification of Protestant includes some preambles that do not strictly include the notion of ‘justification by faith’.³⁶⁸ Generally to the above researchers Protestantism means clearly stated justification by faith alone, that

³⁶⁴ Elaine M. Sheppard, ‘The Reformation and the Citizens of Norwich’, *Norfolk Archaeology*, 38, (1981), pp. 44-58;

³⁶⁵ Mayhew, *Sussex*, pp. 38-67.

³⁶⁶ Sheils, *Puritans*, pp. 15-16, 21-22; Atreed, ‘Preparation’, pp. 37-66; Caroline Litzenberger, *The English Reformation and the Laity* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 169-174; Laquita M. Higgs, *Godliness and Governance in Tudor Colchester* (Michigan, 1998), p. 157; Dickens, *Reformation*, p. 266; Sheppard, ‘Norwich’, p. 56.

³⁶⁷ Other studies consulted: M. L. Zell, ‘The Use of Religious Preambles as a Measure of Religious Belief in the Sixteenth-Century’, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 50 (1977), pp. 246-249; Peter Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution, Religion, Politics and Society in Kent 1500-1640* (Hassocks, 1977), p. 58, Mary Lucas, ‘The Methodology of Will Analysis in determining the Religious Opinions of the City of Lincoln during the Reformation’, *East Midland Historian*, 1/2 (1991-2), pp. 15-22; David Marcombe, *English Small Town Life, Retford 1520-1642* (University of Nottingham, 1993), p. 279.

³⁶⁸ Mayhew, ‘Sussex’, pp. 58-61.

is, trust or faith in being saved by the death and passion of Jesus Christ. In this study ‘alone’ or ‘only’ are taken as understood, if trust or faith is clearly stated. Atreed appears to include ‘God the redeemer’, which on its own would not be considered Protestant here, as it does not include faith or trust in Christ’s passion.³⁶⁹ Higgs includes any mention of the Trinity, Jesus, or God and Jesus, in her Protestant category and her suggestion that commendation of the soul to Jesus indicates Protestant sympathies probably includes some preambles that would not be classified as Protestant according to the rules applied here.³⁷⁰ Categorisation is difficult; testators’ intentions are not always clear and it is possible that some testators would have considered themselves to be Protestant although ‘faith’ or ‘trust’ is not stated.

To allow comparison with other researchers, apart from Mayhew, Table 4.4 is compiled purely from the wording of preambles. Bequests in the body of a will that may change the impression given by the preamble are considered later. Sub-headings cover most preambles found in the study area and should assist comparison with other research. There are 27 wills with no preamble, 25 being nuncupative. ‘Saints in heaven’ was becoming uncommon in the 1520s and most traditional wills have ‘holy company of heaven’. A plea for intercession is understood, but occasionally appears in writing after 1540, as in the will of Thomas Hawle of Moreton Pinkney who bequeathed his soul ‘to almighty God, our blessed lady St Mary and to all the blessed company of heaven to be intercessors for me’.³⁷¹

The will in 1510 of John Dey, clerk master of the Sponne Chantry at Towcester, stated, ‘I bequeath and recommend my soul to almighty God, my maker and redeemer, to the most glorious virgin his mother our lady saint Mary and to all the holy company of heaven’.³⁷² This type of preamble including Redeemer or Saviour, which is included as traditional, continued to appear until early in Elizabeth’s reign and is taken to indicate reformist Catholic thinking, meaning in this study, movement from saint-based cults, towards Christocentrism within traditionalism, as discussed in Chapter Three. There were three Edwardian examples, all in wills with at least one traditional

³⁶⁹ Atreed, ‘Preparation’, p. 40.

³⁷⁰ Higgs, ‘Colchester’, pp. 157-9.

³⁷¹ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, I159 (1546).

³⁷² TNA, PROB 11/6.

bequest, and also three Elizabethan examples, one asking for intercession and one giving the residue for his soul.³⁷³

Table 4.4: Religious preambles 1510-1610

	Traditional		Ref. Trad.	Neutral						Protestant	None	Total
	GMS GM H	incs. GM H	GH and mixed	G	GMk	GMkR	incs. Sv	Trin- ity	Jesus			
Henry VIII 1510-1535	119	1		16							1	137
	88%		0%	12%						0%	1%	
Henry VIII 1536-1547	70	5	3	12	1	6				1		99
	76%		3%	19%						1%	0%	
Edward VI 1547-1553	20	3	5	9		9	3		1	2		52
	44%		10%	42%						4%	0%	
Mary 1553-1558	18	8	4	11		10	5			9	2	67
	39%		6%	40%						13%	3%	
Elizabeth 1558-1580	10	3	14	34	1	16	13	1	2	34	1	129
	10%		11%	53%						26%	1%	
Elizabeth 1581-1603				29	9	15	12	6	2	68	15	157
	0%		0%	46%						43%	10%	
James I 1603-1610				4	1	6	6	1		19	8	45
	0%		0%	40%						42%	17%	
Total												686

Traditional: GMS or GMH – God, Mary and the saints or holy company
incs. GMH – includes other elements with the traditional three

Reformist-Traditional (Ref. Trad.): GH – God and the holy company
Mixed – combination of Protestant and Traditional

Neutral: G – God
GMk or GMkR – God, my maker (and redeemer)
incs.Sv – includes Saviour with other non-Traditional elements
Trinity – may include other elements, but not as part of a Protestant preamble
Jesus – includes Jesus with other elements

Protestant: Justification by faith

It is interesting that after Henry's initial reforms, John Wynkles of Caldecote, Towcester, bequeathed his soul 'to almighty God and to our Lady saint Mary'²

³⁷³ NRO, Arch. North., 1st series, I286 (1547), H12 (1550), P252 (1552), R40 (1559), P122 (1566); Pet. 3, 112 (1565).

(sic). He made several traditional bequests, including 6d for the Lady light, suggesting traditional beliefs, but it was the only will witnessed by curate Thomas Goodchylde and the deletion was possibly his decision.³⁷⁴

The importance of Mary as a mediator and the popularity of her cult in the area were discussed in Chapter Three. ‘God and the holy company’ (without Mary) also suggests reformist Christocentric piety, since the first three occurrences in Paulerspury, in the last Henrician wills, all make traditional bequests to the sepulchre, rood and sacrament lights, but not the Lady Light, although all three were also the only wills witnessed by Ralph Estryke, priest, and it may be his ‘normal preamble’.³⁷⁵ Instances of this preamble were scattered through the parishes until 1571. The final 13 formed ten per cent of Elizabethan preambles from 1558 to 1571, with four of these being from Stoke Bruerne.

Protestant preambles often include the Trinity, but so do eight non-Protestant soul bequests; five being from Weston, in Weedon Lois parish, and one from Weedon Lois itself, for instance, in 1574 William Hawle of Weston gave his ‘soul to almighty God the father who did make me, and to God the son who did redeem me, and to the holy ghost who did sanctify me, the three persons in trinity and one in godhead.’³⁷⁶ There are also ‘mixed’ preambles which are discussed later with the Marian period.

In 1590, Simon Brookes of Towcester made the meaning of Protestantism very clear, bequeathing his soul ‘to almighty God my Creator trusting to be saved only by the merits of Jesus Christ, his death and passion, my only Saviour and Redeemer and not by any other means whatsoever’.³⁷⁷ Use of the word ‘elect’ in a Protestant preamble has Calvinistic overtones of predestination. There are 16 of these in the area, ten of which are in Towcester wills. Richard Hopkins of Towcester in 1573 bequeathed his soul ‘to the merciful hands of almighty God, the father, the Son and the holy ghost, one perfect God in Trinity, of infinite power and majesty constantly believing that I shalbe one of the number of God’s elect people, a citizen of heaven and attain eternal salvation by the only death and merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ, to

³⁷⁴ NRO, Arch. North., 1st series, E206 (1536/7).

³⁷⁵ NRO, Arch. North., 1st series, I83, I226, I140 (all 1546).

³⁷⁶ NRO, Arch. North., 1st series, T126.

³⁷⁷ TNA, PROB 11/76.

whom with the Father and the holy ghost be all honour and glory, now and forever, Amen'.³⁷⁸ Litzenberger discusses the use of 'elect', which she feels is sometimes mistakenly thought to always indicate Protestantism, but which can mean the saints in traditional preambles.³⁷⁹ For example, John Hodge of Greens Norton in 1554 bequeathed his soul 'to almighty God my maker and redeemer, to our lady St Mary the mother of Christ and to all the elect company of heaven beseeching them to be mediators and intercessors unto almighty God for the salvation of my sinful soul'.³⁸⁰ 'Elect company' here means the saints.

c) Changes in religious beliefs

Table 4.4 shows general trends of change over the whole area as indicated by preambles alone. The percentage changes of traditional and Protestant preambles are of particular interest in judging trends in the progress of the Reformation. In Henry VIII's reign before 1535, preambles were traditional or 'to God' in wills with traditional bequests. In the remaining years of his reign there were a few different preambles, mainly accompanied by traditional bequests, but there was only one committed Protestant preamble and the area appeared to be predominantly Catholic at the end of Henry's reign. Traditional preambles halved from the early years of Henry's reign to 44 per cent in Edward's reign, but instead of a Marian increase, as in many areas, they decreased further to 39 per cent. In the first half of Elizabeth's reign ten per cent of preambles were traditional, but the last one was written in 1570. Committed Protestant preambles increased steadily from the one in Henry's reign to four per cent in Edward's reign, 13 per cent in Mary's reign, 26 per cent by 1580 and to 43 per cent by the end of Elizabeth's reign, when there were no longer any traditional or Reformist-traditional preambles.

This method of looking at religious trends has given the impression of a slow, but steady change through Edward and Mary's reigns followed by a rapid growth of Protestantism in Elizabeth's reign. The study area appears to be unusual in that preambles throughout Edward and Mary's reigns do not correlate with the official doctrinal positions of the crown. Gloucestershire,

³⁷⁸ TNA, PROB 11/56.

³⁷⁹ Litzenberger, 'English Reformation', p. 173.

³⁸⁰ NRO, Arch. North., 1st series, N163.

Lincoln, Retford, Norwich, and the north of England, for example, all demonstrate a definite correlation. Among traditional areas, in Gloucestershire, Litzenberger found that preambles clearly reacted to Edward's Protestantism and numbers of traditional preambles fell by two-thirds in his reign, accompanied by a slight rise and later fall in Protestant preambles. In the Marian revival of Catholicism there was a return to the position in Henry's reign. During Elizabeth's reign a small presence of traditionalism continued throughout the reign and committed Protestantism formed only 7.3 per cent of preambles. The trend was towards a slow demise of traditionalism with a very slow growth of Protestantism, which in the second half of Elizabeth's reign was only a sixth of the percentage of Protestantism in the study area.³⁸¹ The city of York was another traditional area. Palliser's analysis of York preambles ends in 1553, but there were 95.9 per cent traditional preambles in Henry's reign and 64.2 per cent in Edward's reign. Protestant preambles first appeared in Edward's reign, forming 8.8 per cent, but Palliser maintains that the conservatism of both city and county ensured a ready acceptance of Mary's Catholic restoration in most areas and a strong passive resistance to Elizabeth for her first few years; Yorkshire as a whole stood in sharp contrast to Essex and Kent.³⁸²

In Essex Higgs, studying the Reformation in Colchester using 928 wills in 1485-1603, found traditionalism was less popular by the end of Henry's reign than in any other study consulted here. Her use of decades, rather than reigns, hinders comparison and her definition of Protestant is unclear, but her figures for traditional preambles support Palliser's comments: 1520-29, 80%; 1530-39, 57%; 1540-49, 51%; 1550-59, 3%.³⁸³ The latter decade includes part of Edward's reign, all of Mary's reign and Elizabeth's first year, and the 92 wills include the last four traditional soul bequests, suggesting lack of Marian traditionalism in Colchester.

Between these two extremes, several studies demonstrate a 'Marian revival'. In Mary Lucas's survey of will preambles in the city of Lincoln, Catholic preambles fell from a solid 98 per cent in Henry's reign to 38 per cent

³⁸¹ 'Table B2', Litzenberger, *English Reformation*, p. 182.

³⁸² Palliser, *York*, p. 32.

³⁸³ Higgs, 'Colchester', p. 157.

in Edward's reign, rising again to 81 per cent in Mary's reign, when only five per cent were Protestant. The last Catholic preambles during 1558-1564 again formed 38 per cent. During this same period Protestant preambles formed 23 per cent, which quickly rose to 50 per cent by 1570 and 56 per cent by 1600. Lincoln preambles changed quickly from four-fifths Catholic during the Marian revival to half Protestant by 1570.³⁸⁴ In Retford, Nottinghamshire, David Marcombe also finds a definite correlation with official doctrines. Traditional preambles fell from 97.5 per cent in 1520-1546, to 12.5 per cent in Edward's reign and back to 87.5 per cent in the Marian revival. Protestant preambles increased steadily to 33.3 per cent in 1580-1602. As in the study area the last Catholic preambles were in the period 1559-1579.³⁸⁵ In Norwich, in 1530-1559, Elaine Sheppard found that traditional preambles decreased from an average of 70 per cent in Henry's reign to 13 per cent during Edward's reign, before increasing to 35 per cent in Mary's reign. Protestant preambles were eight per cent, 37 per cent and 29 per cent respectively.³⁸⁶ The Marian revival occurred, but not so strongly as in Gloucestershire, Lincoln and Retford, and 29 per cent Protestant in Mary's reign is the highest of these four areas. Lorraine Attreed's findings in her study of 1,960 printed wills from northern England also demonstrate a correlation between will preambles and Edwardian and Marian policies. Traditional preambles fell from 68.3 per cent under Henry to 37.2 per cent under Edward, and then rose again to 64.8 per cent under Mary.³⁸⁷ These percentages based on preambles alone, with the exception of Essex, all demonstrated a Marian revival of Catholicism.

In Lancashire, where Catholicism is known to have had a greater survival rate than in many counties, Christopher Haigh's important regional study found a strange anomaly in Marian wills, which highlights a possible problem when using will preambles without reference to any other sources. The traditional formula actually became less common in Mary's reign when the number of wills asking for prayers for the soul fell below 60 per cent of the total for the first time.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁴ Lucas, 'Methodology of will analysis', p. 20.

³⁸⁵ Marcombe, *Retford*, p. 279.

³⁸⁶ Sheppard, 'Norwich', p. 56.

³⁸⁷ Attreed, 'Preparation', p. 40.

³⁸⁸ Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1975),

The study area appears unusual, though perhaps not unique, in being unaffected by official doctrines of the church, but how did it compare with the whole diocese of Peterborough, comprising Northamptonshire and Rutland? Comparison is limited to 12 years because W. J. Sheils's study of Puritans in the diocese only has statistics for the period 1558-1569, for which he lists annual numbers of 'Conservative', 'Neutral', 'Protestant' and a few 'uncertain' wills.³⁸⁹

It appears from Table 4.5 that the study area was committing to Protestantism more quickly than the average for the diocese. According to Sheils, 'the evidence from the reign of Mary suggests that the years from 1553 until 1558 put Protestant opinions underground in this diocese as elsewhere.'³⁹⁰ This is based on 1558 when 69 per cent of preambles in the diocese were traditional and only five per cent were Protestant. Sheils appears to suggest that many of the traditional preambles may have been based on Mary's policies rather than testators' piety, but there are no statistics given for Edward's reign, which may have clarified the situation. However the evidence shows a big decrease in traditional preambles and a corresponding increase in Protestant preambles in the decade 1559-1569. In the study area, the number of traditional preambles, 1510-1603, declined steadily, from 88 per cent to 0 per cent, while Protestant preambles increased steadily from 0 per cent to 43 per cent, with no oscillations (see Table 4.4). There were also more Neutrals in 1558: 48 per cent, as opposed to 26 per cent in the diocese, meaning more people had deserted a traditional piety, but were not committed Protestants. Sheils argues that it is clear that the Protestant Reformation only really began to take hold among the laity in the diocese in the late 1560s.³⁹¹ In the years 1566-1569, 23 per cent of the diocese was Protestant, six per cent more than the average for the decade and 18 per cent more than 1558, bearing out Sheils' statement. In the study area, 1566-1569, 28 per cent were Protestant, still ahead of the diocese, but differences were levelling out.

p. 194.

³⁸⁹ Sheils, *Puritans*, p. 22.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 16-17.

³⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 22.

Table 4.5: Preambles in Peterborough diocese compared with the study area

	Wills	Protestant	Traditional
Diocese, 1558	223	5%	69%
Study area, 1553-1558*	67	13%	39%
Diocese, 1559-1569**	1079	17%	20%
Study area, 1559-1569	73	25%	14%

*In the study area there were too few wills in the one year, 1558, to make a fair comparison and the whole of Mary's reign was used.

**Sheils' annual figures have been combined.³⁹²

d) Preambles in the study area

Preambles alone show more than a quarter of testators accepted Protestant beliefs by 1569, but this hides differences between individual communities, nine of which had still not produced a Protestant preamble. Abthorpe would wait another 23 years, showing a wide fluctuation from the average over a small area.

Table 4.6: Dates of the first Protestant preamble in each parish.

1545-1569		1569-1592	
Towcester	1545	Moreton Pinkney	1572
Paulerspury	1547	Easton Neston	1573
Blakesley	1555	Stoke Bruerne	1579
Culworth	1557	Bradden	1582
Silverstone	1559	Wappenham	1583
Whittlebury	1559	Syresham	1589
Greens Norton	1565	Plumpton	1591
Sulgrave	1566	Abthorpe	1592
Weedon Lois	1567	Slapton	1593

Whether or not the preamble truly represents the testator's opinion, the first Protestant preamble in each parish is often the first surviving secular documented and dated evidence that knowledge of Protestant belief had percolated through the community. However, it could have existed among the living for some years, particularly the young who had not known the medieval

³⁹²*Ibid*, p. 22.

Church and would be more receptive to new ideas.³⁹³ The date of the first preamble could be a wildly inaccurate indication of the arrival of Protestantism and represent one atypical person; nevertheless, a wide range of dates surely indicates differences between parishes. There is a range of 48 years, or about one and a half generations, from the beginning to the end of Table 4.6. The market town of Towcester produced the first Protestant preamble, but there is no correlation between the dates of first Protestant preambles and distances from Towcester. For example Abthorpe, penultimate on the list, is a chapelry of Towcester and only three miles away.

The dates appear to show that in Towcester and Paulerspury, on or against Watling Street, Protestantism began early and might be expected to be well advanced by 1569, but early signs in Paulerspury were not sustained.

The large range of dates indicates differences between parishes, but Table 4.7 shows that the chronological order of first Protestant preambles does not give an accurate impression of the progress of Protestantism. Some parishes were in a similar position in the two lists, but Paulerspury, for instance, was at opposite ends of the tables. Towcester was the only parish that was high in both lists. Even this table may not give an entirely accurate impression. Old beliefs faded and were replaced. The last soul bequests to God, Mary and the saints were made, which could have shown true belief or may have been automatic repetitions of what had always been written; the very last one written in his own will in 1570 by a Catholic priest, Thomas Fox of Weedon Lois, was probably true belief, but it appears to have been used automatically in Syresham, during the incumbency of Catholic Thomas Todde, 1543-1563, appearing in every will until his death (see Chapter Five for more discussion of Syresham). It is noticeable (Table 4.7) that 12 of the 13 late traditional preambles occurred in parishes with low levels of Elizabethan Protestantism, which probably indicates that rather than having a few diehard traditionalists, these parishes were generally late to desert traditionalism.

³⁹³ Pieties of the generations within a family are discussed in: Jones, *The English Reformation, Religion and Cultural Adaptation*, (Oxford, 2002), pp. 33-57; Susan Brigden, 'Youth and the English Reformation', *Past and Present*, 95 (1982), pp. 37-67.

Table 4.7: Elizabethan Protestantism and the last traditionalism, 1558-1603

	Protestant preambles		Traditional preambles
Silverstone	10/12	83%	
Moreton Pinkney	10/14	71%	
Towcester	23/37	62%	
Abthorpe	6/13	46%	
Sulgrave	6/13	46%	
Stoke Bruerne	10/26	38%	
Greens Norton	5/14	36%	1
Blakesley	6/17	35%	
Syresham	7/22	32%	
Whittlebury	2/8	25%	
Weedon Lois	3/25	12%	3
Slapton	1/9	11%	
Wappenham	1/10	10%	1
Culworth	1/12	8%	3
Paulerspury	2/25	8%	3
Bradden	2/3		
Easton Neston	1/2		1
Plumpton	2/4		1
Total	95/249	38%	

Note: Individual percentages are not given for the last three parishes where low numbers of wills would give meaningless percentages, but they are included in the final total. Wills with no preamble are excluded.

During the reigns of Elizabeth and James, recusants were fined monthly, focusing primarily on those who could pay, but others were fined too. Those who conformed, by persuasion or lack of money, and received communion according to the Book of Common Prayer, sometimes had their conformity certified to the King's Bench. In 1614-15 eight new conformists from Northamptonshire were certified, including John Seeley, a miller from Culworth, where there was some late traditionalism.³⁹⁴ There could be others

³⁹⁴ Christopher Haigh, *The Plain Man's Pathways to Heaven, Kinds of Christianity in Post-Reformation England, 1570-1640* (Oxford, 2007), p.191; Questier and Clarke, *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580-1625* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 108-9; D. M. Clarke,

from the study area with no extant certificate, or people who might appear to conform, but were ‘church papists’ like George Shirley of Astwell (see chapter 5). The question of how influences in the area caused differences between parishes will be discussed in the next chapter.

e) Pious bequests in wills

The last section assumed that preambles show trends in changes of belief. Pious bequests are now studied for indications of these changes and also for any correlation between bequests and preambles.

Before studying pious bequests in detail, three ‘customary’ bequests made early in a will, the mortuary, the gift to the mother church, and gift to the high altar, need explanation. The latter two faded out during the Reformation, while the mortuary became a charge rather than a bequest. In theory the ‘mortuary’, was a gift to offset tithes or offerings not paid to the incumbent during the testator’s lifetime, but it gradually became a regular due imposed by law in parishes where it had been the custom.³⁹⁵ To avoid abuses, Henry VIII passed an act in 1530 linking the mortuary to a person’s wealth. Sir Simon Degge in 1676 stated that mortuaries should only be paid or demanded in places where it had been the custom and he set out the scale of charges, the highest being 10s for a deceased person with goods to the value of £40 or more. Mentions of mortuaries in wills finally ceased in Mary’s reign (see Table 4.8), however mortuaries continued to be paid in some places until the nineteenth-century, occasionally being recorded elsewhere.³⁹⁶

The bequest to ‘the mother church’, meaning the diocesan cathedral, was a donation towards fabric repairs.³⁹⁷ It was not given in all dioceses, but from a survey of wills available in print for parts of the diocese of Lincoln, it appears to have been customary there. (Northamptonshire was in Lincoln

‘Conformity Certificates among the King’s Bench Records: A Calendar’, *Recusant History*, 14 (1977-8), pp. 57-63.

³⁹⁵ R. M. Serjeantson, & H. Isham Longden, *The Parish Churches and Religious Houses of Northamptonshire: their Dedications, Altars, Images and Lights* (London, 1913), p. 43; Sir Simon Degge, *The Parson’s Counsellor with the laws of tithes or tithing* (1676), pp. 251-255.

³⁹⁶ Serjeantson, & Longden, *Parish Churches*, p. 43; NRO, 303p/11, Stoke Bruerne burial register, 1776-1813, records payment of a mortuary against a few burials, e.g. ‘1785 June 28, John Clark of Shutlanger a farmer and a mortuary was paid by his son Bartholomew, 10s’.

³⁹⁷ Rosalind M. T. Hill (ed.), *Rolls and Register of Bishop Oliver Sutton 1280-1299*, 4, LRS 52 (1958); Dorothy Owen, *A History of Lincoln Minster* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 143-4.

diocese until 1541). The amount given ranged from 2d to 12d with a few higher amounts.³⁹⁸

Table 4.8: Pious bequests

	Henry VIII		Edward VI	Mary	Elizabeth I	
	1509-1535	1536-1547	1547-1553	1553-1558	1558-1580	1581-1603
Wills	137	99	52	67	124	158
Mother church	120: 88%	79: 80%	28: 54%	46: 69%	60: 48%	16: 10%
High altar	54: 39%	61: 61%	8: 15%	19: 28%	5: 4%	
Mortuary	48: 35%	16: 16%	8: 15%	3: 5%		
Obit	8: 6%			2: 3%		
Masses	22: 16%	23: 23%	2: 4%	5: 8%		
Torches	32: 23%	35: 35%	2: 4%	5: 2%		
Rood	32: 23%	25: 25%	2: 4%	4: 6%		
Sepulchre	29: 21%	15: 15%	1: 2%	1: 2%		
Lady light	24: 18%	12: 12%				
Other saints	32: 23%	8: 8%				
Charity	11: 8%	8: 8%	18: 35%	10: 15%	36: 29%	42: 27%
Parish church	53: 39%	20: 20%	7: 14%	21: 31%	20: 16%	19: 12%
Religious houses	12: 9%	1: 1%				
Church repairs	3: 2%	7: 7%	6: 12%	5: 8%	15: 12%	20: 13%
Bells	44: 32%	51: 52%	6: 12%	21: 31%	16: 12%	10: 6%
Highways/bridges	4: 3%	11: 11%	8: 15%	10: 15%	10: 8%	4: 3%
Residue for soul	44: 32%	25: 25%	9: 17%	3: 5%	4: 3%	1: 1%
No pious bequests	5: 4%	3: 3%	9: 17%	16: 24%	37: 30%	76: 48%

Note: Rood or Sepulchre may be lights or repairs.

³⁹⁸ Patricia Bell (ed.), *Bedfordshire Wills 1480-1519*, BHRS, 45 (1966); Patricia Bell (ed.), *Bedfordshire Wills 1484-1533*, BHRS, 76 (1997); A. F. Cirket (ed.), *English Wills 1498-1526*, BHRS, 37 (1957); J.R.H. Weaver and A. Beardwood (eds), *Some Oxfordshire Wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 1393-1510*, ORS, 39 (1958); Dorothy Edwards, Margaret Forrest, Jacqueline Minchinton, Michael Shaw, Beryl Tyndall and Patience Wallis (eds), *Early Northampton Wills*, NRS, 42 (2005).

A payment to ‘the high altar’ was a popular Henrician bequest in the study area and was often stated to be for ‘tithes or offerings forgotten’, although sometimes a mortuary was also given in the same will. A sudden Edwardian decline in the bequests was followed by a partial Marian recovery, but the bequest faded out early in Elizabeth’s reign. Unlike the first two bequests, these gifts do appear to be affected by religious policies. The Edwardian decline occurred when churches had a ‘communion table’ below the chancel and there was no altar. Marian congregations were instructed to replace the altar, which was important in the restored mass.

There was a clear decrease in most types of pious bequest between 1509 and 1603, although not all decreased at the same rate. By 1603 nearly half of all wills had no pious bequests and in the first seven years of James’s reign it was 60 per cent. Official policies could influence pious bequests as the Reformation progressed and the acts and injunctions of each monarch need to be borne in mind. During Edward’s reign there were fewer outlets for pious giving, but in Marian England these increased again. For some people, giving was a matter of piety, which might not correspond with official policies.

In royal Acts of 1536 and 1539 Henry VIII dissolved smaller and then, later, larger monasteries. The last monastery was suppressed in 1540, thus ending any mention of religious houses in wills. Injunctions in 1536 and 1538 outlawed pilgrimage and external manifestations of the cult of saints, which led to the demise of the popular bequest for the burning of candles before images of saints. Instead, people were urged towards works of charity, mercy and faith as prescribed in the scriptures. Lights on the rood-loft, on the high altar and the sepulchre light at Easter were still allowed. Images of saints were allowed to remain but only to represent virtue and a good example. Praying to saints as intercessors and praying for the souls of the dead was permitted, but without mention of ‘purgatory’. Bequests for masses could therefore continue.³⁹⁹ It follows that most bequests associated with the medieval church in the study area faded out with the demise of traditional religion and the Dissolution of religious houses, though other bequests such as to the high altar, the bells,

³⁹⁹ ‘The Ten Articles, 1536’, in David Cressy and Lori Anne Ferrell (eds), *Religion and Society in Early Modern Britain : a sourcebook* (1996); Walter Howard Frere and William McClure Kennedy (eds), *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation, 2, 1536-1558*, (1910), Alcuin Club Publications, pp. 4-6.

church repairs and highways and bridges increased. Bequests for saints ended in 1537, except in Towcester, where there were three bequests to St Anne's altar between 1543 and 1547.⁴⁰⁰ As the mother of the Virgin Mary, she appears to have retained some popularity. At the end of Henry's reign there were still only three per cent of wills with no pious bequests, but there were often fewer pious bequests per will, partially because most lights in churches were banned, however, Henry's Church remained quite traditional.

Edward VI completely dismantled traditional religion. Chantries were dissolved in 1547, and in 1548 all remaining images were to be destroyed, together with the Rood, the rood-loft, and the Easter Sepulchre. The High Altar was to be removed from the Sanctuary and replaced by a north-south table further down the church. The clergy were to dissuade the dying from making testamentary provision for obits, trentals and intercessions, and to encourage bequests to the poor man's box. Any existing funds from fraternities, guilds and monies bequeathed for torches and lights were also to be placed in the poor man's box, which was to be placed in every church.⁴⁰¹ Eamon Duffy says the increase in bequests for highways and bridges during the mid-sixteenth century, accompanied by the decline of more overtly religious bequests 'has sometimes misled historians into thinking they discerned the emergence of a secularizing or Protestant cast of mind', however, testators had always made no distinction between the highways bequest and acts of mercy designed to relieve the poor, the sick, or the imprisoned. Such charity was justified on 'the traditional grounds that alms to the poor were "given to Christ himself" and would be "mercifully rewarded" with everlasting life.' Charity had not become a purely secular bequest. Ringing of the bell during the Sunday services was banned except for one bell to be rung before the sermon. This was probably intended to silence the Sanctus bell, which was rung to announce the raising of the Host during the Eucharist.⁴⁰²

In the research area, bequests for the bells, masses and other prayers declined steeply in Edward's reign while giving for charity increased four-fold, but still appeared in only a third of wills. The only other bequests that

⁴⁰⁰ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, H45, I.232; NRO, Pet. 1, 97.

⁴⁰¹ Frere and Kennedy, *Visitation Articles*, 2, pp. 126-128.

⁴⁰² Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 367, p. 505, pp. 451-452.

increased were giving for repairs to the parish church, highways and bridges. The few bequests for the torches, the Rood and the Sepulchre were made at the beginning of Edward's reign before injunctions banning these elements of traditional religion were enacted in the area. Wills with no pious bequests had nearly quadrupled since the end of Henry's reign to 17 per cent.

Mary's reign was too short for a complete reconstruction of Catholic worship, but orders were given. Mary repealed Edward's statutes and restored the status quo at the end of Henry's reign.⁴⁰³ Altars, a Rood, an Easter Sepulchre, traditional vestments and all other traditional necessities were to be replaced. Some of these items were brought out of hiding or were returned by people who had bought them during Edward's reign. The Marian Church also continued the policy of encouraging testators to remember the poor, but much less was given for charity than in the reigns of Edward and Elizabeth. In the study area, bequests for masses increased slightly in Mary's reign before their final disappearance and there were two requests for obits, which had last appeared in a will in 1545.⁴⁰⁴ Gifts to the parish church appeared in a third of wills, more than double the number in Edward's reign. This was a simple way to aid the rebuilding of Catholicism, though the amount given was generally small.

In 1559 Elizabeth abolished images, including those in windows and on walls, and outlawed all vestments except the surplice and, for the communion service, a cope. Commissioners were to hunt out and burn any hidden images and vestments to prevent all chance of their re-emergence as had happened in Mary's reign. Clergy were still to encourage bequests for the poor and the highways and discourage other pious bequests.⁴⁰⁵ Charity was the most popular bequest in Elizabeth's reign when more than a quarter of all wills in the study area included such a bequest. Giving to the parish church was still quite popular in Elizabeth's reign, but noticeably less popular than early in Henry's reign and in Mary's reign.

Generally over the four reigns, giving for church repairs increased, however, a dip in Mary's reign was perhaps offset by general gifts to the church

⁴⁰³ Frere and Kennedy, *Visitation Articles*, 2, p. 322.

⁴⁰⁴ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, I33 Joan Sutton, Weston-by-Weedon.

⁴⁰⁵ Frere and Kennedy, *Visitation Articles*, 3, pp. 1-7.

at a time when items needed replacement. Bequests for the bells were very popular in Henry and Mary's reigns, but Edward had banned much of their ringing and they were less popular in the Protestant Edwardian and Elizabethan reigns. Wills in this area up to 1610 did not request funeral sermons, which were a popular Protestant bequest in some areas of England.⁴⁰⁶ Although practically all wills before 1535 contained pious bequests, the number per will decreased over time. The bequest for the executors to use the residue of goods and money for the 'health, or wealth, of the soul' was occasionally the only pious bequest and may have been thought politic in a time of changing official policies. This bequest was a tradition that had tailed off from about a third of testators early in Henry's reign to just five per cent in Mary's reign and ended in Elizabeth I's reign. It appears to have been very much a medieval tradition.

Links between bequests and preambles

The fluctuating popularity of some pious bequests appears to have been linked with official policies. Possible links between bequests and preambles are investigated in the rest of the chapter to decide whether the bequests of the growing number of committed Protestants were different from those of other testators, whether the wills of the last diehard traditionalists using a 'Catholic' preamble also contained traditional bequests, and whether official policy or piety had the greater influence in will-making.

Table 4.9: Bequests for masses, the Sepulchre and the Rood 1536-1547

Preamble	No. of wills	Masses	Rood	Sepulchre
Traditional	75	20/75 27%	12/75 16%	13/75 17%
Neutral	23	3/23 13%	13/23 57%	2/23 9%
Protestant	1	-	-	-
Total	99	23/99 23%	25/99 25%	15/99 15%

⁴⁰⁶ Cross, 'Leeds and Hull', p. 234.

Table 4.10: Other pious bequests

		Henry VIII		Edward VI	Mary	Elizabeth I	
		1509-1535	1536-1547	1547-1553	1553-1558	1558-1580	1581-1603
Preamble totals		C 120 N 15 P - n 2	C 75 N 23 P 1 n -	C 23 N 26 P 3 n -	C 26 N 30 P 9 n 2	C 13 N 79 P 33 n 1	C - N 72 P 71 n 15
Charity	C N P n	10: 8% 1: 7% - -	6: 8% 2: 9% - -	8: 35% 8: 31% 2: 67% -	1:4% 7: 23% 2: 22% -	2: 15% 18: 23% 16: 49% -	- 20: 28% 22: 31% -
Gift to the parish church	C N P n	47: 39% 5: 33% - 1: 50%	16: 21% 4: 17%	3: 13% 4: 15% - -	10: 39% 9: 30% 2: 22% -	2: 15% 12: 15% 6: 18% -	- 10: 14% 9: 13% -
Church repairs	C N P n	3: 3% - - -	5: 7% 2: 9% - -	4: 17% 1: 4% 1: 33% -	1: 4% 1: 3% 3: 33% -	- 4: 5% 11: 33% -	- 8: 2% 12: 17% -
Bells: ringing or repairs	C N P n	41: 34% 3: 20% - -	35: 47% 16: 70% - -	2: 9% 3: 12% 1: 33% -	8: 31% 10: 33% 2: 22% -	1: 8% 9: 11% 6: 18% -	- 4: 6% 6: 9% -
Highways and bridges	C N P n	4: 3% - - -	6: 8% 5: 22% -	1: 4% 5: 19% 2: 7% -	3: 12% 3: 10% 4: 44% -	2: 15% 4: 5% 4: 12% -	- - 4: 6% -
No pious bequests	C N P n	4: 3% 1: 7% - -	3: 4% - - -	4: 17% 5: 19% - -	8: 31% 5: 17% 2: 22% 1: m	2: 15% 26: 33% 8: 24% 1: m	- 36: 50% 26: 37% 14: 93%

Note: Percentages are of the total number of preambles of that type at that date.

C – Traditional/Catholic, N – Neutral, P – Protestant, n – no preamble, m – meaningless %.

Traditional bequests for prayers or lights before 1536 were discussed in the previous chapter when a decline in most of these was apparent, although the

Christocentric Rood gained popularity. There were few of these bequests after Henry's reign, but it is interesting to consider bequests for masses, the Sepulchre and the Rood in the latter part of Henry's reign when there was a growth of non-traditional preambles (Table 4.9). Bequests for masses or the Sepulchre were twice as popular with traditionalists, but a very large majority of bequests for the Rood were in wills with Neutral preambles. This appears to confirm the suggestion in the last chapter that the popularity of Christocentrism was growing.

There were so few traditional bequests in Edward's reign, all in wills with traditional preambles, that these were probably genuine traditionalists (Table 4.10). Making any valid comments for the reigns of Edward and Mary is hindered by small numbers of wills and it is in Elizabeth's reign on the whole, that reading meaning into differences is more valid. Marian wills are discussed in detail later. Elizabeth banned the traditional elements of church furnishings and, from the evidence of wills alone, the traditional Church had finally died in the area. The bequests could be made by Protestants or Catholics alike, but the numbers of wills in some categories are too small to make valid conclusions from percentages. There were few Protestants before Elizabeth's reign and few traditionalists during her reign; after Henry's reign Neutral was the largest group throughout. Some Neutrals' beliefs would have been close to Protestantism and they may have considered themselves to be Protestant although their preambles do not state faith or trust.

Giving to charity increased from a low base to a third of all testators in Edwardian wills, when testators were discouraged from making several of the traditional bequests and stress was laid on charity, which was equally popular with traditionalists or Neutrals. As stated earlier, giving to the poor was considered to be giving to Christ himself (and there were no longer any religious houses to help the poor). Marian bequests for charity were much lower, but the stress would be on rebuilding Catholicism. Early Elizabethan charity bequests, 1558-1580, were noticeably higher among committed Protestants than Neutrals. Throughout the reign more Neutrals were becoming Protestants and the remaining Neutrals either held other views, or did not care very much about religion.

The highest percentage of bequests to the parish church was in Mary's reign when giving appears slightly more popular among traditionalists than Neutrals. Protestants, who obviously did not want to support the re-growth of the Catholic Church, definitely gave less. The Church needed gifts for a Marian revival of Catholicism, but the reality of a revival is discussed further below.

In giving to church repairs in Elizabeth's reign, when repairs would be needed after eradicating any replaced Catholic furnishings, it is probably valid to say that this was more popular with Protestants who would wish to eradicate lingering signs of the traditional church. Low numbers make it difficult to make valid comments concerning bequests for highways and bridges, but bells were quite popular with all pieties.

Although Neutrals were still in the majority at first, Protestantism was gaining ground and the two were level later in the reign, when more Neutrals than Protestants were not making any pious bequests. There were therefore differences in the bequests made by categories of piety: Marian church repairs were possibly more popular with traditionalists, Elizabethan church repairs and charity were more popular with Protestants. It could be said that church repairs were linked to policy, although with small numbers of wills, differences are not really very great.

This section has shown that bequests sometimes do correlate with preambles in this area, particularly in the Elizabethan period and so give the impression that they can show more than trends in belief, however, considering individual parishes there can be reasons for traditional preambles to be misleading (see discussion of Syresham in chapter 5).

f) Edwardian Inventories of Church Goods

Confiscation of church goods is relevant to a discussion of a Marian Catholic revival. The doctrine of purgatory and the cult of intercession for the dead underlay many of the institutions and much of the funding of late medieval Christianity. The contents of churches were mainly donated by or on behalf of the dead. With the Protestant ban on purgatory and on images, the life of the parish and the appearance of the parish church were permanently and profoundly changed. The suppression of chantries in 1547 had involved the compilation of lists of recent sales of parish property by churchwardens and

other officials, probably designed to halt embezzlement of goods, but they prompted widespread suspicion of imminent confiscations. The exercise was repeated in February 1549 and parish officials were required to sign a declaration that they would not sell or alienate any church property from henceforth and they were to make inventories of the chief saleable valuables in the form of church plate or bells. Inventories were compiled by Royal Commissioners for every county in England in 1552 and compared with earlier inventories. A massive confiscation which began in the early spring of 1553 was stopped by the death of Edward in the first week of July. This was a general confiscation of all church goods, except a bare provision for worship according to the 1552 Prayer Book: a cup or chalice, a covering for the communion table, the necessary book and Psalter, and a surplice, however the 1549 Prayer Book had prescribed the wearing of copes at communion and most churches retained copes for this purpose. Linen and cloth of little value was to be distributed freely among poor people. Valuable vestments and hangings were to be sold for the benefit of the crown; the most precious vestments and hangings were to be sent to the Master of the Wardrobe and the plate to the Jewel House.⁴⁰⁷

In London, churchwardens began to strip and sell the ornaments and treasures of their churches within a year of Edward's accession and the appearance of churches was transformed.⁴⁰⁸ In the Weald of Kent some parishes sold part of their plate and ornaments before confiscation and used the proceeds for church repairs.⁴⁰⁹ Survival rates of inventories vary from county to county and returns from many counties survive only in part. The whole range of inventories from 1547 to 1552 survives for London churches.⁴¹⁰ In Cornwall the main surviving inventories are from 1549.⁴¹¹ The 1552 inventories survive in part, or not at all, in many counties. In Bedfordshire only 14 survive from about 125 parishes, and in Huntingdonshire they survive for the central and

⁴⁰⁷ Eamon Duffy, 'The End of it All: The Material Culture of the Medieval English Parish and the 1552 Inventories of Church Goods', in Clive Burgess and Eamon Duffy (eds), *The Parish in late Medieval England* (Donington, Lincs. 2006), pp. 381-399.

⁴⁰⁸ Brigden, *London*, pp. 428-9.

⁴⁰⁹ Duffy, 'The End of it All', p. 397.

⁴¹⁰ Brigden, *London*, p. 388.

⁴¹¹ Lawrence S. Snell, *The Edwardian Inventories of Church Goods for Cornwall* (Exeter, 1956), pp. ix-x.

southern parts of the county, with lists of items already sold or alienated in the northern part.⁴¹² In Northamptonshire inventories survive for about half of the parishes; distribution is uneven and is better in the western part, including the study area.⁴¹³

There are inventories for 16 of the 18 study parishes, Easton Neston and Silverstone excluded. The commissioners were John Cope, knight, Thomas Lovett and William Channcy, esquires, for 14 parishes. Stoke Bruerne and Paulerspury were in the adjacent area with commissioners Richard Wake, Francis Morgan and Francis Tanfield. Inventories were made by the commissioners and two representatives in each parish, usually the churchwardens, although at Culworth, John Danvers, gentleman, replaced one warden. Commissioners and representatives signed a certificate that the valuables were put in ‘the custody and charge’ of the two parishioners.

In Bedfordshire the inventories are not an exhaustive survey of church goods. They omit things of no pecuniary value and others which must have existed, but which had been hidden or embezzled.⁴¹⁴ Commissioners did not all list the same things and some Cornish inventories include candlesticks and crosses.⁴¹⁵ Inventories in the 14 parishes only list and briefly describe the chalices, bells, copes and vestments, ending with ‘the linen is of little worth left to the use of the church’; those for Stoke Bruerne and Paulerspury are more detailed. No candlesticks are listed, but some of value must have existed, for example, one bequeathed to Stoke Bruerne church in 1520, ‘a candlestick of five branches to be set before the Trinity’.⁴¹⁶ Crosses are only listed in Paulerspury (a latten cross) and Stoke Bruerne (a silver and gilt cross). Paulerspury also lists a latten ewer and basin, items not mentioned elsewhere. Stoke Bruerne lists a total of ten copes and vestments, which are described in detail. One of the copes was ‘of blue velvet with stars upon it’; one vestment was ‘of white and green embroidered silk [...] cross and greyhounds and hinds upon it’. Linen is described: ‘8 towels of diaper containing in length 37 yards

⁴¹² F. C. Eeles and J. E. Brown, *The Edwardian Inventories for Bedfordshire*, Alcuin Club Collections, VI (London, 1905), p. ix; S. C. Lomas and T. Craib, *The Edwardian Inventories of Huntingdonshire*, Alcuin Club Collections, 7 (London, 1906), p. ix.

⁴¹³ TNA, E117/7/2/1-12; E117/7/1, f.1; E117/7/10, f.2.

⁴¹⁴ Eeles and Brown, *Bedfordshire*, p. xviii.

⁴¹⁵ Snell, *Cornwall*, pp. xiii-xiv.

⁴¹⁶ NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, B15.

& a half, 2 old altar cloths of linen'.⁴¹⁷ Stoke Bruerne had more copes and vestments than the other parishes, which had a maximum of six, even Towcester had only four and several had only one cope and one vestment. Stoke was probably wealthier than the small parishes, but it is likely that items had been 'hidden', 'stolen', or sold, and that some inventories were incomplete.

Five parishes list items missing since the previous inventory. Paulerspury had a 'plague of thefts' and 3 vestments, 4 tunacles, 3 albs, 6 amices and one altar cloth had been 'stolen'. At Whittlebury a chalice was stolen. Stoke Bruerne sold a chalice for £5 15s to pay for 'The Paraphrases of Erasmus' and various repairs. Both Sulgrave and Towcester sold a bell and spent some of the money on highways, fords and a bridge. The bells had not been delivered and each pair of churchwardens was 'bounden by recognisance in the sum of £20 that the bell shall remain and be forthcoming at all times'.

The 1552 inventories were an assault on the autonomy of parishes. Checklists of all church property were kept in the parish chest. Many parishes had lists commemorating donors of goods and benefactors of the parish that were recited with pride; churchwardens compiled inventories for visitations and for handing over responsibility to succeeding wardens.⁴¹⁸ On just one occasion Culworth churchwardens recorded an inventory in their accounts. The date is significant.

Deliverye of chirche stufte made by Robert Watts chirchewarden of
Culworthe the viiith daie of November a^o dm m^o d^o lij [1552] & delivered to Thomas
Kymbell and John Gardiner now chirchewardens
In primis iiij towells ij of them dyaper & ij playne
vj surplices
viij table clothes
the byble, homelye booke, comunyon boke.⁴¹⁹

These were the only items needed for the Edwardian Church.

Mary, on her accession, decreed that all church goods still in regional depots would be returned to their churches of origin. What actually occurred in

⁴¹⁷ TNA, E117/7/1, f.1 (Paulerspury), E117/7/10, f.2 (Stoke Bruerne).

⁴¹⁸ Duffy, 'The End of it All', p. 384; Clive Burgess (ed.), *The Pre-Reformation Records of All Saints' Church, Bristol, Part I*, Bristol Record Society, 46, (1995), pp. xxiv, xxviii, xli.

⁴¹⁹ NRO, 94p/21.

the study area is unknown, but detailed below, Robert Brittain's will of 1558 shows that some vestments survived at Stoke Bruerne.⁴²⁰ Thomas North opines that bells generally suffered little in the confiscations.⁴²¹ On the accession of Edward VI, the majority of parishioners still held traditional views and loss of 'their' church goods would have been a major and upsetting event.

g) Marian revival of Catholicism?

When Mary's reign began in 1553, after Edward's Protestant reign and eighteen years after 1535 when Henry severed the link with the Pope, the late medieval Catholic Church and traditions would have been receding in the memories of older people who had experienced it when young, and unknown to young people, who would probably have been more receptive to new ideas. Ringing of bells had been discouraged in Edward's reign and bequests for the bells increased considerably from the beginning of Mary's reign and figured in nearly a third of all wills, nearly equal to their level early in Henry's reign. Gifts for the church (mainly monetary) would have aided the revival, but the number of testators making no pious bequests continued to grow in Mary's reign, particularly among testators with traditional preambles, which suggests these preambles were politic rather than pious.

The Marian revival of Catholicism would have entailed restoration of church altars, roods, sepulchres, images of the Virgin Mary, and the Catholic liturgy. Eamon Duffy claimed that the Marian revival of giving to the church was slow in some regions, but the laity in some counties began to endow parish churches through their wills almost immediately: 'In Northamptonshire there were literally scores of such bequests in the wills of the Marian period beginning in 1554 and becoming more common as the reign progressed.'⁴²² Duffy used information about Northamptonshire from an article by R. M. Serjeantson and H. Isham Longden, listing bequests from 8,000-9,000 Northamptonshire wills, from the fifteenth century to 1588, to gain information about the dedications, altars, images and lights of Northamptonshire churches

⁴²⁰ NRO, Arch. North., 1st series, L138.

⁴²¹ North, *Bells of Northamptonshire*, p. 27.

⁴²² Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 551.

and religious houses.⁴²³ The latter were dissolved before Mary's reign, but 344 parish churches and chapels are included. Legacies left to each church or incumbent and special masses are listed, but gifts to the high altar are only included if they are of exceptional interest and bequests for the bells and unspecified masses and gifts to the church are not generally included. The listings are not claimed to be complete. Between July 1553 and November 1558 there were about 1,250 Marian archdeaconry wills with smaller numbers from Peterborough and Canterbury courts and there are 82 'material' bequests listed from these, or about one bequest between four churches. Using a rough estimate of 1,600 wills in total, these bequests were in just five per cent of wills. They include five mentions of Our Lady: one for setting up a Lady altar, three for lights and one for 'painting Our Lady'. Other lights were given, books and small items needed in services, money towards setting up high altars and one house for use as a chantry house.

Duffy gave ten examples of bequests from the whole county, one of which was to Stoke Bruerne church, but Robert Britton's bequest for the maintenance of Stoke Bruerne's vestments and surplices was the only such bequest from the study area listed in the article.⁴²⁴ However, unknown to Duffy, wills indicate that the listings are not complete and there were nine more gifts in the study area of specific items, or to the rood or sepulchre, therefore, only one out of ten bequests was listed. Assuming that this was universal in the county (which could give an inaccurately high estimate), there would have been 820 bequests between 344 churches, or between two and three bequests per church. These bequests, together with bequests of money, show that an attempt was being made to revive Catholicism, but from the will evidence, even if incomplete, it was not a rapid success. The wills do not indicate how many other churches had retained or reinstated a Rood or a Sepulchre and there could be no bequests for these if they did not exist, except bequests towards replacement. However, an episcopal visitation in 1570 indicates a rood-loft still standing at Greens Norton, and Culworth accounts list payment for wax for the

⁴²³ R. M. Serjeantson, & H. Isham Longden, 'The Parish Churches and Religious Houses of Northamptonshire: their Dedications, Altars, Images and Lights', *Archaeological Journal*, 70, (1913), pp. 217- 452.

⁴²⁴ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, L138 (1558).

sepulchre in 1558 (neither was mentioned in wills).⁴²⁵ There would probably have been some gifts to churches, or returns of items hidden in Edward's reign, during parishioners' lifetimes, but in a significant revival of Catholicism, one would expect there to have been many more traditional legacies. The testamentary bequests do not illustrate a strong Marian revival in the county.

Table 4.11: Traditional bequests in Marian wills, 1553-1558

	Will preambles				High altar	Masses	Obits	Torches	Rood	Sepulchre	Residue for the soul	Specific gift to church
Abthorpe		3N										
Blakesley		1N	1P		1N, 1P							
Bradden		3N		1n	2N			1N	2N	1N		
Culworth	1C	3N	1P		3N							
Easton Neston			1P		1P				1P	1P		
Greens Norton	1C	1N										
Moreton Pinkney	1C					1C					1C	
Paulerspury	1C	4N	1P	1n	1N							
Plumpton	2C					1C						1C
Silverstone	1C											
Slapton	1C	1N	1P		1C, 1N	1P			1C			
Stoke Bruerne	4C	1N			1N	1N					1N	1N
Sulgrave	1C	4N			3N		2N					
Syresham	5C											
Towcester	4C	7N	3P		2N, 1P							1C, 1N
Wappenham	1C				1C							
Weedon Lois	3C	2N				1N	1N					
Whittlebury	1C											
Total	27 C	30 N	8P	2n	2C 14N 2P	2C 2N 1P	3N	1N	1C 2N 1P	1N 1P	1C 1N	2C 2N

C – Traditional, N – Neutral, P – Protestant preambles, n – no preamble

Attreed in northern England, where popularity of traditional preambles fell under Edward and rose again under Mary, found no corresponding rise in

⁴²⁵ NRO, PDR, Bishop's Visitations, Bk. 2 (1570).

Marian will bequests and concluded that there was no Marian revival there. Mayhew in Sussex and Litzenberger in Gloucestershire, however, both noted a rise in Marian bequests.⁴²⁶

In the study area Table 4.11 indicates the paucity of traditional bequests in the 67 wills. A bequest to the high altar in 28 per cent of wills is the most common. Just seven per cent of 67 testators requested masses, compared with 23 per cent late in Henry's reign (see Table 4.8), suggesting there was very little traditionalism in the area. Smaller numbers made other bequests. There were nearly equal numbers of traditional and Neutral preambles, but totalling bequests, there are 39 per cent in Neutral wills as opposed to only 12 per cent in traditional. Although possibly invalidated by very small numbers, the Neutral testators, who made some traditional bequests, appear to be those who wanted reform within the traditional Church. Among the 67 Marian wills 27 have traditional preambles, but the majority of these appear to be due to policy not piety with just five having traditional bequests. Of these, three were certainly traditionalists.

Richard Punne of Moreton Pinkney bequeathed 8d to the curate to say a mass and dirige and the residue of his goods to the pleasure of God and profit of his soul; secondly, Edward Collens of Slapton bequeathed 6d each to the high altar and the Rood and could have been a Reformist-traditional; and thirdly, Thomas Crokey, parson of Plumpton, is discussed in the next chapter.⁴²⁷ Two others may have been genuine traditionalists, but there is less certainty. Thomas Gybbyns of Wappenham gave a strike of barley to the high altar and Robert Moxon of Towcester gave his hymnal book to the church.⁴²⁸

Ten of the 30 Neutrals made traditional bequests, in several cases to the high altar, which could have been for tithes rather than piety. Other Neutrals proved the existence of a Rood and Sepulchre at Bradden and Easton Neston in addition to the Rood at Slapton mentioned above.

Three Neutral wills are definitely traditional. At Stoke Bruerne, Robert Brittain's 'to almighty God' could be used by a traditionalist and his bequests are traditional: 7d to the mother church of Peterborough; a strike of barley and a

⁴²⁶ Attreed, 'Preparation', p. 51; Mayhew, 'Sussex', p. 53; Litzenberger, 'English Reformation', pp. 161-2.

⁴²⁷ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, N79 (1558); Pet. II, 26 (1557); Pet. II, 25 (1557) respectively.

⁴²⁸ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, M103 (1554) and M93 (1554) respectively.

strike of peas to the high altar; 2 strikes of malt and 2 strikes of other corn to the maintenance of the vestments and surplices; 2s to the poor of the parish; 12d to the priest for a mass at my burial; and the residue to executors to dispose for my soul and all Christian souls.⁴²⁹

The will of John Brede of Hulcote, Easton Neston, made traditional bequests to the high altar, the bells, the rood light, the sepulchre light, the poor man's box and the highways.⁴³⁰

The Marian will of William Knight of Slapton, was written by himself in 1556 at a son's house in Abthorpe and the wording of his soul bequest 'to the infinite goodness of the blessed Trinity the father the son and the Holy Ghost with steadfast faith and hope to be saved by the merits of Christ's Passion' makes no mention of Mary and the saints, but it is undoubtedly a traditional will. The preamble may have been copied from the will of William's influential eldest son Thomas Knight (1548) who used exactly the same wording, but without making any pious bequests (see chapter 5). William Knight's pious and charitable bequests are reminiscent of Henrician wills: 12d to the mother church of Peterborough; 12d to the parish church of Slapton; 12d each to five priests to sing mass and dirige for my soul and all Christian souls; 2d each to 2 clerks; 10s for a trental to be said for my soul and all Christian souls; after my burial my neighbours to have a drinking at the discretion of my executors; 1d each to the poor people who come to church to pray for my soul and all Christian souls; 12d to the chapel of St John, Abthorpe and 20d to the poor box there; to the repair of highways 10s'.⁴³¹ Similar to the will of William Knight above, Zell found several Kentish gentlemen between 1543 and 1560 who combined what he thought were distinctive Protestant preambles with requests for masses for their souls.⁴³² Mayhew also found these in Sussex.⁴³³

Eamon Duffy observes that a comparatively large number of surviving traditional wills from the 1550s have 'mixed' preambles with Protestant and traditional elements and requesting masses. He comments that,

⁴²⁹ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, L138 (1558).

⁴³⁰ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, N211 (1558).

⁴³¹ TNA, PROB 11/42B (1556).

⁴³² Zell, 'Religious preambles', pp. 248-9.

⁴³³ Mayhew, 'Sussex', pp. 46, 60-61.

the Marian church vigorously set about reclaiming the theological high ground by encouraging preambles which did justice to the unique and sufficient saving power of Christ's Passion and at the same time the value of the prayers of saints, the celebration of Masses, and the dispensing of charity as a means of making that Passion fruitful for the living and the dead. This had been taught through the Middle Ages and reformers did not have a monopoly of faithfulness to a Christocentric Gospel.⁴³⁴

Sheils found a number of these preambles in other parts of Northamptonshire, which he described as transitional and confused statements, without considering bequests. He quotes a lengthy one from Marston Trussell written in 1549, 'I give and bequeath my soul to almighty god, through the merits of whose passion I do hope and trust to be after this the changes of this my transitory life, one of the elect children of salvation, praying to his blessed mother, Our Lady Saint Mary, and all the holy company of heaven to pray for me.'⁴³⁵ This is asking for intercession, which is definitely traditional.

There were just two in the study area, which were classified as Reformist-traditional in Table 4.4. News travelled fast from London to Towcester up Watling Street and the will of Richard West, of Hulcote, written on 18th November 1558, the second day of Elizabeth's reign, possibly reflected uncertainty about the regime.⁴³⁶ He was 'sick of body' and probate was granted 30th January 1559. He wrote his will 'perceiving the frailness of the world, wishing that love, unity, peace and concord should be had forever with my wife and children after my departure, for of death we are most sure and the hour of death we are most unsure'. This appears to be a formulaic statement and similar ones occur in several wills in the area. It stresses the function of a will to prevent later disputes. He could at first appear to be covering all possibilities for the new reign in his preamble, 'first I humbly bequeath my soul into the merciful hands of Almighty God in trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost and to our blessed Lady Saint Mary and to all the holy company of heaven, faithfully trusting to be one of God's elect and to be saved by the merits of Christ's passion', but his bequests, and possibly his beliefs, were traditional.

⁴³⁴ Duffy, *Stripping*, p. 519.

⁴³⁵ Sheils, *Puritans*, p. 15, citing NRO, Arch. North., 1st series, K260.

⁴³⁶ TNA, PROB 11/42A.

In April 1557, Nicholas Mayo of Sulgrave gave his ‘soul to God the father almighty trusting by the merits of his son Jesus Christ to be saved and by none of my own, our Lady St Mary and all the holy company of heaven’. He gifted 4d to the high altar for forgotten tithes.⁴³⁷ This sounds confused; possibly St Mary and the holy company were a politic addition in Mary’s reign. His widow Margaret Mayo in a will written in 1569, but not proved until 1578/9, bequeathed her ‘soul to almighty God my maker and my redeemer trusting unto his mercy that by his death and passion and by his precious blood-shedding that I shalbe one of the number and elect of them that shalbe saved’. ‘Elect’ could show Calvinistic belief in predestination, but she still gives her ‘goods to be disposed of by her executor for the wealth of her soul’.⁴³⁸ The couple retained traces of traditional belief, as other people probably did, mixed in with new beliefs, illustrating a transitional stage of belief.

Two of the ten Elizabethan wills with traditional preambles, had a traditional bequest; one to the high altar and one leaving the residue for the health of his soul. Both were from Culworth, where a recusant miller in 1614-15 was noted earlier.⁴³⁹ There were therefore small pockets of surviving traditionalism in the area. There are no real signs from preambles or bequests of a revival of Catholicism in the parishes and the use of traditional soul bequests in Mary’s reign appears for the majority of users to have been policy rather than piety. There was no Marian upsurge of Catholicism in the study area.

h) Protestant preambles

As stated earlier, the preamble of a will may not correlate with the body of the will and ‘justification by faith’ with no mention of Mary or the saints is labelled here as ‘Protestant’ to correlate with categories in other studies, but may not identify the testator as Protestant. Protestant preambles from 1545 to 1603 are now examined with this in mind. In 1545 the will of John Glasbery of Towcester included the first preamble in the study area which stated the Protestant belief in trust giving certainty: ‘my soul to almighty God trusting by the merits of Christ’s passion my soul to die to the kingdom of heaven’,

⁴³⁷ NRO, Pet. 2, f.310.

⁴³⁸ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, V4.

⁴³⁹ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, Q37 (1559); Pet. 3, f.112 (1565), respectively.

however, he appears to be a reformed traditionalist since his will bequests for ornamenting the high altar, for tithes forgotten, to the mother church of Peterborough and to the torches, are traditional.⁴⁴⁰

There were two Edwardian Protestant preambles. In 1549 Joan Monyng, widow of Towcester, bequeathed her ‘soul to almighty God my maker and Redeemer whom and by the merits of whose blessed passion is all my whole trust of the remission and forgiveness of all my sins’. Joan gifted 40s to the poor and needy and 20s to the highways of Towcester, but she also left the residue for the wealth of her soul and all Christian souls; a traditional bequest.⁴⁴¹ Richard Fehew, husbandman of Heathencote, used the same preamble in 1553. His will had bequests to the poor men’s box and church repairs at Paulerspury and to bridge and highway repairs within the parish, but his will contained no hints of traditionalism.⁴⁴²

Two Marian traditionalists who used apparently Protestant preambles combined with traditional bequests, William Knight and John Brede, were discussed in the last section. The other seven Marian ‘justification by faith’ preambles were in wills with no signs of traditionalism. Just one Elizabethan Protestant preamble, in addition to Margaret Mayo above, was in a will with signs of lingering traditionalism when in 1565, Richard Wincles of Burcot, Greens Norton, in addition to bequests for church repairs, the poor men’s box and the highways, gave the residue of goods for his soul’s health.

It is noticeable that in Towcester’s Elizabethan wills the 62 per cent with Protestant preambles generally have lengthy Calvinistic wording, for instance, Elizabeth Robins in 1578:

I bequeath myself wholly both body and soul unto the most merciful hands of God the father the son and the Holy Ghost, one perfect God in Trinity of infinite power and majesty by whom I am created redeemed and sanctified constantly believing that I shall be one of the number of God’s elect people, a citizen of heaven and attain eternal salvation by the only death and merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ to whom with the father and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory now and evermore Amen.

⁴⁴⁰ NRO, Arch. North.1st series, I.50.

⁴⁴¹ TNA, PROB 11/34.

⁴⁴² NRO, Arch. North.1st series, P283.

The number of these and the similarity of the wording, which rarely appears elsewhere in the area, suggest a strong influence in the parish. Only six of these wills have no pious bequests; the other 17 have various combinations of gifts for charity, church repairs, general church use, and highways and bridges. The possible influences that fostered Protestantism in Towcester are discussed in the next chapter.

Between 1536 and 1603 only five of the 114 wills with Protestant preambles have bequests that cast doubt on the Protestantism of the testators. This is not evidence that the other 109 testators were definitely Protestants; however, together with evidence from wills with traditional preambles in the previous section, the wills show that there was little remaining traditionalism in Elizabeth's reign.

i) Conclusion

This chapter has iterated the notion that the Reformation did not have the same effect on lay-piety everywhere in the country. The small study area was sometimes different from the average in the county and even within this area there were differences between parishes.

It was established that the number of testators in the study area and the variety of status were sufficient to represent religious opinions. Methods of analyzing will preambles in other areas were found to be generally compatible with that used in the study area, although there were minor differences. Several historians have argued that whatever the disadvantages of using preambles to indicate changing pieties, in sufficient numbers they do show trends and this appears to be true in the study area where the percentage of traditional preambles fell steadily through each reign from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I, while Protestant preambles increased steadily. Traditional preambles halved from the reign of Edward to that of Mary, while Protestant preambles doubled, negating any idea of a Marian revival of Catholicism. In eight studies of preambles from various parts of England, seven suggest a Marian revival, the only exception being Colchester where traditionalism had declined since Edward's reign. Comparing the study area with the whole diocese of Peterborough in 1559-1569

(the extent of Sheils' preamble statistics), Protestantism was stronger in the area than the average for the diocese and traditionalism was weaker.⁴⁴³

Inventories of church goods for the area give an impression, though probably incomplete, of the wealth of the parishes in plate, vestments and bells, most of which would have swelled Edward's coffers if he had lived a little longer. Some of this may not have left the parishes, or may have been returned after Mary's decree, but the November 1552 inventory in Culworth's accounts emphasizes the difference between the simplicity of Protestant liturgical requirements and the 'splendour' of the Catholic possessions, even in these small parishes, some of which would need replacement in Mary's Catholic reign.

There appears to have been an assumption of a 'Marian revival' among some researchers. Only three of the eight studies of preambles discussed above consider will bequests in conjunction with preambles. Preambles show trends, but are not infallible. Attreed, who found a revival in northern England from preambles, found no corresponding rise in Marian traditional will bequests, but Mayhew in Sussex and Litzenberger in Gloucestershire both found that the revival implied by Marian preambles was confirmed by bequests.⁴⁴⁴

In the study area, there was a decrease in most types of bequests between 1509 and 1603 so that by the latter date half of all wills had no pious bequests. Giving to charity and church repairs were the only bequests that increased after Henry's reign. There was no obvious revival of bequests in Mary's reign, except that bequests to the mother church and to the high altar were slightly higher than in Edward's reign, but still lower than in Henry's reign. Any attempt to link bequests and different pieties is made difficult by small numbers of wills in the reigns of Edward and Mary. However during 1536-1547 (when there was only one Protestant preamble) a very large majority of bequests for the Rood were in wills with Neutral preambles and bequests for masses or the Sepulchre were twice as popular with traditionalists. The bequests for the Rood appear to confirm the impression in the previous chapter that the popularity of Christocentrism was growing during Henry's reign. In

⁴⁴³ Sheils, *Puritans*, p. 22.

⁴⁴⁴ Attreed, 'Preparation', p. 51; Mayhew, 'Sussex', p. 53; Litzenberger, 'English Reformation', pp. 161-2.

Elizabethan wills, when traditional bequests had almost faded out, giving to charity and church repairs was more popular with Protestants than Neutrals. This could hint that while some Neutrals were committed to Christocentrism, others were indifferent to the church. Protestants making more bequests also suggests that use of a Protestant preamble indicates genuine belief in Protestantism.

The preambles in the area, by not following official policies during Edward's and Mary's reigns, suggest that piety was more important than policy, but this is not entirely corroborated by bequests. This can be demonstrated by examining individually the 27 of the 67 Marian testators who used a traditional preamble. Only five of these made at least one traditional bequest. If two 'mixed' preambles are counted as traditional, as suggested by Duffy, eight testators with traditional preambles made traditional bequests and were led by piety. The other 19 were probably led by policy, although this is not certain; a person making no bequests could have traditional beliefs.

In conclusion, the main points are that the influence of policy or piety in will-making varied from person to person; there were a few examples of traditionalism in Mary's reign, but no Marian revival; and from 1535 onwards, when some aspects of traditional religion changed, there was a steady growth of Protestant wording in preambles that reached some parishes earlier than others. The few late Marian wills that include justification by faith with traditional elements in preambles represent a transitional stage; bequests in them are the last definite signs of traditionalism, before the very few traditional bequests made early in the Elizabethan Protestant Church.

There were differences between parishes in this small area, as was also demonstrated in previous chapters, and the next chapter will look at the influences at work in the parishes and possible reasons for the differences.

CHAPTER 5

Influences in the Parishes

This chapter considers various influences on popular religion in the study area, including the dissolution of religious houses and chantries, clergy, landowners and nobility. It will be shown how all of these affected the piety of ordinary people during the course of the Reformation. The possible influence of Lollardy, significance of clergy in will-making, general discussion of clergy and scribes, and new landowners after the Dissolution, is followed by discussion of all influences in parishes.

a) Lollardy

Wycliffism was particularly strong in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire; the three counties that surrounded Oxford University, the intellectual centre of the heresy and supplied a number of insurgents for the 1414 Lollard revolt.⁴⁴⁵ Given the position of the study area between Oxford, Northampton, and Leicester, all centres of heresy, it would be surprising if Lollardy had no influence there, although evidence is sparse. The East Midlands have been included in several studies of Lollardy and although Lollard beliefs and connections with John Wycliffe are not discussed in great detail here, Lollardy is considered first as a possible element of religious thought in the study area leading into the development of Protestantism and Puritanism.⁴⁴⁶ The road from Oxford to Northampton passed through Brackley, Syresham, Silverstone and Towcester; travellers carrying news along its route possibly stayed in a Towcester inn where Wycliffe's views against transubstantiation and supporting scriptures in the vernacular may well have been discussed.

⁴⁴⁵ Jurkowski, 'Lollards in Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire' in Fiona Somerset, Jill C. Havens, Derrick G. Pitard (eds), *Lollards and their Influence in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 73-95, esp. 73-4.

⁴⁴⁶ Charles Kightly, *The Early Lollards, a Survey of Popular Lollard Activity in England, 1382-1428*, unpublished University of York Ph.D thesis (1975); A. K. McHardy, 'Bishop Buckingham 73-4 and the Lollards of the Lincoln Diocese', in G. J. Cuming and Derek Baker (eds), *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protests*, Studies in Church History, 9 (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 131-143; John A. F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards 1414-1520* (Oxford, 1965); Shannon McSheffrey and Norman Tanner (eds), *Lollards of Coventry, 1486-1522*, (Cambridge, 2003); James Crompton, 'Leicestershire Lollards', *Transactions of Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 44 (1968-9), pp. 11-44; not specifically East Midlands: Margaret Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995).

Philip Repingdon as a young priest and canon of Leicester Abbey continued his studies at Oxford. He was a supporter of John Wycliffe and in 1382 preached a sermon, upholding Wycliffe's doctrine on the Eucharist, at Brackley, appropriated to Leicester Abbey and only four miles from Syresham. However, after preaching the university's Corpus Christi sermon in Oxford Repingdon was forced to recant in October 1382 and he publically abjured all his heresies. He was Abbot of Leicester, 1394-1405, and Bishop of Lincoln, 1405-1419.⁴⁴⁷

Lollard activity had gentry patronage in Northamptonshire and quickly infiltrated the governing classes of Northampton. The principal Lollard patron in the 1380s was Sir Thomas Latimer, a so-called 'Lollard knight', who held lands in Chipping Warden, which became an important Lollard centre with inhabitants of neighbouring Byfield and Eydon being involved in the rising of 1414. Chipping Warden, Byfield and Eydon are all within two to four miles west of Moreton Pinkney and Culworth. Latimer also had lands in Braybrooke (his main estate and a well-known Lollard centre in north Northamptonshire) and in the suburbs of Northampton.⁴⁴⁸ In 1392 Northampton appears to have been in Lollard control, supported by the mayor John Fox who it was claimed had sent to Oxford and elsewhere for Lollard preachers to preach every Sunday during Lent in Northampton marketplace. Bishop John Buckingham took action against the preachers, but Fox defied the warnings and was deposed from the mayoralty in March 1393, then arrested and imprisoned at Nottingham.⁴⁴⁹ Some people from the study area must have attended these sermons. Philip Repingdon aimed to raise the standard of orthodox preaching to counteract the widespread Lollard influence. The majority of preaching licences issued by Repingdon were for the archdeaconries of Oxford, Buckingham and Northampton where the Lollard movement had

⁴⁴⁷ K. B. McFarlane, *John Wycliffe and the beginnings of English Nonconformity* (London, 1952), pp. 102-3; Simon Forde, 'Philip Repingdon, c. 1345-1424, bishop of Lincoln', *ODNB* (2008); A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to AD 1500* (Oxford, 1957-9), pp. 1565-7; Joanna Storey, Jill Bourne, Richard Buckley (eds), *Leicester Abbey Medieval History, Archaeology and Manuscript Studies*, The Leicester Archaeological and Historical Society (2006), pp. 123, 140.

⁴⁴⁸ Sheils, *Puritans*, pp. 13-14.

⁴⁴⁹ Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 80; McHardy, 'Bishop Buckingham', pp. 131-143, esp. p. 137.

many supporters.⁴⁵⁰ However support for Lollardy continued and for a few years following the 1414 uprising there is evidence in the study area, which is discussed below.

The status of later Lollards has been discussed by several historians who refute the early idea that after the failure of the 1414 revolt Lollards were almost exclusively from the lower ranks of society.⁴⁵¹ Maureen Jurkowski writes of lawyers in various counties, including Thomas Compworth junior, who were linked circumstantially or firmly with Lollardy and suggests reasons why lawyers might be attracted to the heresy: locality might be a factor as they were all found in areas where there were other supporters of the heresy; lawyers were confident in their abilities to argue and reason and to form and hold opinions, which could predispose them to concur with the Wycliffite credo that laymen were legitimately entitled to read Scripture for themselves and draw conclusions about the meaning; the Lollard plan to disendow the clergy of their land would benefit lawyers with their status as gentlemen, if they wished to build up an estate.⁴⁵²

At Oxford in 1385 Thomas Compworth, esquire of Thrupp, Oxfordshire, was the first layman convicted of heresy in late medieval England. His son Thomas Compworth was a successful Northamptonshire lawyer and the two men are sometimes confused. Compworth junior held an estate in Helmdon by 1412, on the south-western periphery of the study area, where he and his wife resided, and other land in the county. In 1427 he was elected as Northampton's Member of Parliament. He was never accused of supporting John Oldcastle, but several participants in the 1414 uprising came from areas where the Compworths possessed influence and a similar coincidence has been noted in other studies, for example, of Sir Thomas Latimer, above.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵⁰ Margaret Archer (ed.), *The Register of Philip Repingdon 1405-1411*, LRS 57 (1963), p. xxviii.

⁴⁵¹ Maureen Jurkowski, 'Lollardy and social status in East Anglia', *Speculum*, 82 (2007), pp. 120-152; Derek Plumb, 'The Social and Economic Spread of Rural Lollardy: a Reappraisal', in W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood (eds), *Voluntary Religion* (Ecclesiastical Historical Society, 1986), pp. 111-129; John Fines, 'Heresy trials in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, 1511-12', *JEH*, 14 (1963), pp. 160-174.

⁴⁵² Maureen Jurkowski, 'Lawyers and Lollardy in the Early Fifteenth Century', in Margaret Aston and Colin Richmond (eds), *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 155-182, esp. 166-169.

⁴⁵³ Jurkowski, 'Lollards in Oxfordshire', pp. 73-95.

Two other lawyers, who may have met Compworth in their work, together with a merchant, figured in the known cases of heresy in the area. In June 1414 Robert Aleyn of Blakesley, lawyer, a substantial tenant of Luffield Priory land in Blakesley and probably the same Aleyn who served as a county coroner, 1407-1444, and John Wykyn, honeymonger of Towcester, were both pardoned for heresy.⁴⁵⁴ John Oldcastle, while on the run, was in Silverstone in May 1417 with fellow insurgents Sir Thomas Talbot and John Walmesley. In July 1417, again in Silverstone, Oldcastle was sheltered by Hugh Frayn and his wife Joan and apparently had a narrow escape, since some of his goods were found at Frayn's house when the latter was taken into custody. In court, Frayn was sentenced to death, but his wife was acquitted. William Hert of Syresham, lawyer, moved to Lincoln in the 1420s. In December 1424 and in February 1425, Compworth junior and Thomas Belwode of Lincolnshire each posted bonds in Chancery guaranteeing that Hert would not disturb the peace or hold unlawful assemblies. He was also named as a Lollard sympathiser in a Chancery petition written by a precentor of Lincoln cathedral *c.* 1432.⁴⁵⁵

Lollards denied transubstantiation and the special status of priests, believing that the Bible was more important than church ritual. The chancel of a church was the priest's area where transubstantiation occurred during the mass; invasion by the laity could be viewed as the influence of Lollardy or at least anticlericalism. The following incident appears to be considered as evidence of Lollardy by R. M. Serjeantson W. Ryland and D. Atkins.⁴⁵⁶ In May 1416, Repingdon issued a mandate to clergy of the archdeaconry of Northampton to enforce the prohibition against laity sitting in chancels of parish churches, especially in Towcester parish church. Their presence interfered with services and he had heard that the practice was prevalent at Towcester, despite being contrary to canon law. In November the dean of Northampton notified the bishop that he had publicly admonished parishioners at Towcester who incurred the sentence of excommunication for disobedience. Five days later another mandate instructed the dean of Brackley and the curate of Towcester, to

⁴⁵⁴ CIPM, Henry V, 21, 1418-22, no. 883, p. 315; G. R. Elvey (ed.), *Luffield Priory Charters*, pt. 2, NRS 26 (1975), p. 18, CPR Henry V 1413-1416, p. 261-2, Jurkowski, 'Lollards in Oxfordshire', p. 92 n. 145.

⁴⁵⁵ John A. F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards 1414-1520* (Oxford, 1965), p. 14; Jurkowski, 'Lollards in Oxfordshire', pp. 92-3.

⁴⁵⁶ *VCH Northamptonshire*, 2, p. 30.

cite Joan, wife of Lawrence Mortimer, who continued to sit in the chancel of Towcester church and she incurred ‘greater excommunication’: not only deprived of the sacraments, but also expelled from the congregation.⁴⁵⁷ Andrew Brown found ‘anticlericalism’ in Wiltshire where ‘some lay people presumed to sit in chancels during divine service’ and churchwardens were required to report the offence.⁴⁵⁸ He also implies that canon law against the practice was particularly to exclude women when mass was being celebrated and in 1405 the vicar of Lyme Regis was reprimanded for allowing women to approach the high altar.⁴⁵⁹ Katherine French also cited churchwardens complaining of women in the chancel at Brilly during an episcopal visitation in Herefordshire in 1397.⁴⁶⁰ It is noteworthy that the Towcester incident involved a woman, although Repingdon’s first mandate addressed all laity.

There is a real possibility that some Lollard beliefs survived ‘underground’ into the sixteenth century in Syresham, from the time of the Lollard William Hert, until Mary’s reign when John Kurde was martyred because he denied transubstantiation and would not recant. The pious bequests in Syresham wills do not indicate strong orthodox beliefs before 1535 (see ‘Syresham and Thomas Todde’ below).

Lollards and Books

The *Wycliffite New Testament*, *Wycliffite Bible*, *Glossed Gospels*, revisions of *Rolle’s Psalter* (all in English and circulating between Lollards) and also books arguing against Lollard beliefs circulated among interested gentry and clergy in England in the early sixteenth century. Possession of the *Wycliffite New Testament*, without other evidence, is not necessarily an indicator of heresy.⁴⁶¹ Dame Anne Danvers, widow of Sir William Danvers, owned a Wycliffite version of the New Testament, but does not appear to have had Wycliffite sympathies since she gifted it to Syon Abbey during Lent, 1517, asking in a

⁴⁵⁷ Margaret Archer (ed.), *The Register of Philip Repingdon*, vol. 1, 1405-1411, LRS 57 (1963), pp. xxviii-xxxvii passim; vol. 3, 1414-1419, LRS 74 (1982), pp. 138-9, 145,155.

⁴⁵⁸ Andrew D. Brown, *Popular Piety in Late Medieval England, The Diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550* (Oxford, 1995), p. 250.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 111-2; T. C. B. Timmins (ed.), *The Register of John Chandler, Dean of Salisbury 1404-17*, Wiltshire Record Society, 39 (1984), p. 12.

⁴⁶⁰ French, *Good Women*, p. 90.

⁴⁶¹ Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 25, 231-234.

very traditional will for the Confessor of Syon with his brothers to pray for her family alive and dead.⁴⁶²

Books criticizing Lollard beliefs were clearly being discussed among clergy around the diocese of Lincoln. Hugh Melling, a priest who died in Towcester in 1531, had studied at Oxford in 1503-1513 using two rectories in Huntingdonshire and Hertfordshire as income and was awarded a doctorate of theology in 1513. He was chaplain of All Saints Oxford in 1503 and a university preacher in 1510 and 1512. He continued to be a pluralist and while being vicar and warden of the college of chaplains of All Saints, Northampton, he held the rectories of Farthingstone, Northamptonshire, and Fifield, Hampshire (where the advowson was held by Delapré Abbey, Northampton). He resigned in 1530 and retired to Towcester where he had briefly been a chantry chaplain in July 1511 to April 1512.⁴⁶³ The important chantry of William Sponne, archdeacon of Norfolk, may have attracted Melling to retirement there, since he asked for burial in the Lady Chapel between the tombs of William Sponne, founder of the chantry, and William Halle, first master of the chantry, indicating his traditional beliefs and hopes for intercession. Melling would probably have discussed Lollards during ten years at Oxford and had acquired books and read about their beliefs. The two most important books that he gifted in his will were to John Longland, bishop of Lincoln: firstly, by the prior of Boston, Roger Dymoke, *Liber contra xii errores et hereses Lollardorum*, which was in the hands of Master Kingsbury, archdeacon of St Albans, and secondly, Baldwin's *De Sacramento Altaris*, concerning the truth of the Eucharist. Anne Hudson knows of only four extant copies of Dymoke's work and a few that once existed. This may be another one.⁴⁶⁴ His will indicates other churches and clerics he had been connected with and other bequests include his psalter with antiphons that he had formerly used in the choir there, to All Saints, Northampton, also his lantern to be borne

⁴⁶² Ibid, p. 233 n. 34; N. R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 3 (Oxford, 1983), pp. 406-7. This testament by various gifts came into the ownership of John Rylands Library.

⁴⁶³ *VCH Hampshire*, 4, p. 368; Emden, *Oxford, 1501-1540*, p. 1282; Longden, *Clergy*, 9, pp. 205-7; R. M. Serjeantson, *A History of the Church of All Saints, Northampton* (Northampton, 1901), p. 197-8.

⁴⁶⁴ Anne Hudson, 'Roger Dymoke, 1370-c. 1400', *ODNB* (2011); H. S. Cronin (ed.), *Rogeri Dymmok, Liber Contra XII Errores et Hereses Lollardorum* (London, 1922); Christopher Houldsworth, 'Baldwin (c. 1125-1190)', *ODNB* (2004).

before the Eucharist and a staff with a three pound taper to the gild of Corpus Christi. He gave a breviary to Fifield church, Hampshire, which had been a present from Henry Brathwayt, rector of Fifield, and to Farthingstone church, a vestment of dornyx, a small missal and an imperfect processional.⁴⁶⁵

b) The Church and the writing of wills

The will consisted of a testament, which named an executor to dispose of personal property, and a separate document stating wishes concerning real property known as ‘the last will’. The probate of testaments came under the jurisdiction of Church courts, but the Church could not interfere in the disposal of land. The distinction was not always made and by the sixteenth century one document, ‘the last will and testament’, was coming into general use to dispose of both types of property.⁴⁶⁶ In the late-medieval Church it was usual for a cleric to attend a person’s last illness and traditionally wills were made on the death-bed. In some medieval English dioceses there had been an obligation to include the parish priest among the executors and witnesses of wills.⁴⁶⁷ If this had applied to Lincoln diocese it was no longer adhered to by all testators. It is difficult to know to what extent people were influenced by clerics and others when making their wills, particularly the soul bequest and other pious bequests. The will would be dictated to the scribe, except in the case of testators writing their own wills, but the preamble and pious bequests may have been discussed with the testator by a cleric or other persons present. If the incumbent or regular curate was the scribe, his influence over the testator may have begun much earlier. A scribe cannot be identified by the handwriting as nearly all wills used were registered copies; nor is it clear whether witnesses were literate as the copies rarely state that a witness made a mark. One of the few marks stated in this study was of a Shutlanger testator in his will in 1579: ‘in wittnesse whereof I the said testator sette my hand Edward Cawcoate [mark]’ (and his mark was

⁴⁶⁵ NRO Arch. North. 1st Series, D404.

⁴⁶⁶ Will-making is discussed in: Marsh, Christopher, ‘Attitudes to Will-Making in Early Modern England’, in Tom Arkell, Nesta Evans and Nigel Goose, *When Death Do Us Part, Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England*, pp. 158-175; Goose and Evans, ‘The Format of Wills’ in *When Death*, pp. 47-50;

⁴⁶⁷ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich* (Toronto, 1984), p. 14, citing Frederick M. Powicke and Christopher R. Cheney (eds), *Councils and Synods* (Oxford, 1964), 1, p. 512; 2, p. 1046.

copied in the register copy).⁴⁶⁸ Without handwriting to study, it is still possible to identify probable scribes when series of identical preambles were witnessed by the same person. The writer may be the first witness, but this cannot be assumed, especially when someone of higher status was present who always witnessed first in the study area. For example, a Towcester will in 1556 is witnessed by William Mattheve, esquire, then Robert Payne, gentleman, followed by Thomas Alen, curate, and finally three other men.⁴⁶⁹ There is no evidence of who wrote the will.

Two impartial witnesses to the will were necessary, although a will could be accepted for probate without witnesses if it was in the testator's handwriting and found in his chest or among his papers.⁴⁷⁰ The will of Thomas Langton, vicar of Culworth, was stated to be 'written in my own hand' on 15 April 1546 and there were no witnesses. It was proved on 10 August 1546, there is no extant burial date, but the will was probably written some weeks before his death.⁴⁷¹ The 1549 Book of Common Prayer, attempting to remove will-making from the death bed, stated 'that menne must be oft admonished that they sette an ordre for theyr temporall goodes and landes, whan they be in health' and the 1552 version ordered that the sick man should make a will and declare debts 'for discharging of his conscience and quietnesse of hys executours'.⁴⁷² This would ensure a person's own control over the process and lessen the risk of disputes after death. The plea appears to have been generally unsuccessful. If will-making was postponed until the death-bed and no scribe could be found quickly, a nuncupative will could be made by word of mouth before witnesses. These had been recognised as valid and legal since at least the eighth century for transmission of moveable goods, but not of lands.⁴⁷³

Richard Ward, labourer of Stoke Bruerne, postponed his will-making until his death-bed and spoke to five witnesses on 1 March 1600, 'in the night tyme about ten of the clocke'. He apparently expected to die in the night, but he probably lived longer and was buried on 6 March. Probate was granted on

⁴⁶⁸ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, W30.

⁴⁶⁹ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, N93.

⁴⁷⁰ Ralph Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People during the English Reformation 1520-1570* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 98-9.

⁴⁷¹ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, K91.

⁴⁷² Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion*, p. 82; Houlbrooke, *Church Courts*, p. 101.

⁴⁷³ Houlbrooke, *Church Courts*, pp. 98-9; Goose and Evans, *When Death*, p. 47-8.

26 April, perhaps later than average because the will was nuncupative.⁴⁷⁴ In this study, where both dates are known, the date of writing a will was generally followed closely by the probate date. After the commencement of burial registers it is even clearer that wills were written in the last illness. In Stoke Bruerne and Shutlanger in the ten wills between 1567 and 1599 where burial dates are known, eight testators died within three to 13 days of their will being written, all but two admitting sickness. The other two testators died after three months and five months respectively, but both admitted sickness.

Nesta Evans found that of 576 wills proved in the Archdeaconry Court of Sudbury, 1636-1638, 11.2 per cent were nuncupative.⁴⁷⁵ In the study area during the century 1510-1610 only 3.7 per cent were nuncupative (25 out of 682 wills). The majority of these were between 1590 and 1610 when 20 out of 157 wills, or 12.7 per cent, were nuncupative, similar to Sudbury. This suggests that the Church was losing its influence in emphasizing the need for early will-making by the end of the sixteenth-century.

Scribes

Occasionally scribes, who may have an official position or may be literate acquaintances, identify themselves among the witnesses. There was no evidence of a female scribe in this study, but it would have been possible. In Bury St Edmunds a female scrivener, Margaret Spittlehouse, wrote 12 wills between 1582 and 1596.⁴⁷⁶ A testator wanting secrecy from local clergy or parishioners might ask an acquaintance from another parish to write the will. Some preambles with very individualistic wording may indicate a testator's own views, particularly when they do not follow the general trend.⁴⁷⁷ In this case the testator might wish to hide his or her views from the local clergy.

William Dawlton of Towcester, whose own will in 1549 stated he was a scrivener, had no witnesses.⁴⁷⁸ He had written and witnessed three other Towcester wills between 1540 and his death. The will of John Dey in 1510,

⁴⁷⁴ NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, W176; NRO 303p/17.

⁴⁷⁵ Goose and Evans, *When Death*, p. 48.

⁴⁷⁶ John Craig, 'Margaret Spittlehouse, Female Scrivener', *LPS*, 46 (Spring 1991), pp. 54-7.

⁴⁷⁷ Margaret Spufford, 'Religious preambles and the Scribes of Villagers' Wills in Cambridgeshire, 1570-1700', in *When Death*, pp. 145-156.

⁴⁷⁸ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, L38.

clerk master of the Sponne Chantry, was also written by a scrivener, William Car[...], possibly not a local man. John Dey's executors were 'of London' and he requested burial 'in the church or churchyard of such parish or place as it shall fortune me to demise'.⁴⁷⁹ Towcester also had parish clerks who wrote a number of wills. Thomas Ketyll witnessed eight wills in total between 1522 and 1545. His status is not given, but he was named as the parish clerk in the bequests of John Addington in 1540.⁴⁸⁰ Henry Maior, witnessed seven wills from 1535 to 1554 and signed one as parish clerk.

Where a priest was present at will-making he is generally assumed to have written the will, although Christopher Marsh cautions against assuming this, citing a will with witnesses including the vicar and a Daniel Morton. Later events showed Morton to have been the scribe, but the will does not state this.⁴⁸¹ Fifteen of the 19 Towcester wills above had a clerical first witness, but the actual scribe, listed below with other witnesses, is not always stated to be the scribe. William Wickens, yeoman of Shutlanger, stated that he was 'the writer' of two wills in 1579-80.⁴⁸² Other literate parishioners, perhaps yeomen, husbandmen, tradesmen, schoolmasters or others, must have written and witnessed many of the wills without stating the fact. Robert Coles, schoolmaster of Moreton Pinkney, witnessed seven of the eight Moreton wills from 1598 to 1606 and was also instituted as vicar in 1604. He surely wrote the wills, but did not admit to this. Uniquely in the area, the will of Thomas Fawsett, yeoman of Abthorpe, was witnessed by John Macham, 'curate and writer hereof'. As he was the sole witness, presumably this phrase, his handwriting and status allowed probate.⁴⁸³

Clerical witnesses

Lorraine Attreed found the following percentages of clerical witnesses in northern printed wills: 1541-47, 54 per cent; 1547-53, 42 per cent; 1553-58, 43 per cent; 1558-1588, 19 per cent.⁴⁸⁴ In the study area percentages were: 1510-1547, 67 per cent; 1547-1553, 54 per cent; 1553-1558, 37 per cent; 1558-1603,

⁴⁷⁹ TNA PROB 11/16.

⁴⁸⁰ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, G42.

⁴⁸¹ Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion*, p. 96; Marsh, 'Attitudes', pp. 160-1.

⁴⁸² NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, V25, V45.

⁴⁸³ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, L3.

⁴⁸⁴ Attreed, 'Preparation for Death', pp. 39-40.

37 per cent. The downward trend in both areas, accelerated in Elizabeth's reign. The northern wills included many urban wills and testators not wanting clerical witnesses may have had a greater choice of other witnesses than in the study area. Elaine Sheppard found that 49 per cent of Norwich wills in 1530-1559 had a cleric among the witnesses.⁴⁸⁵ In the study area the percentage in 1510-1558 was 60 per cent, again suggesting a smaller choice of secular scribes, or a traditional desire for clerical witnesses.

Table 5.1 lists the percentages of wills witnessed by clerics during 1510-1610 in the study area and the percentages who were incumbents, to be used in discussion of the likely level of clerical influence. A high proportion of clerical witnesses, and particularly the incumbent, suggests a good relationship between Church and parishioners and a higher likelihood of clerical influence in the parish. The percentage of clerical witnesses varied from 22 per cent in Silverstone to 70 per cent in Slapton. The percentage of incumbent witnesses varied from 11 per cent in Paulerspury to 53 per cent in Weedon Lois. In the three chapelries the parish rector or vicar never witnessed wills of their inhabitants. In nine other parishes less than half of clerical witnesses were incumbents suggesting that the incumbents were unpopular or absent.

Some testators had a choice of clerics within their parish, having chantry priests or assistant curates. Ignoring chapelries, in 1526 only five parishes had just one priest, although this may not be true of the whole period of the study.⁴⁸⁶ Weedon Lois, Sulgrave, Slapton, Syresham and Easton Neston had one priest and the first three had high percentages of incumbent witnesses, suggesting they were conscientious and possibly popular. Absent clerics in 1526 are not indicated and there could be other parishes with only one priest present. 'The cure of souls' was deputed by absent incumbents to curates, hired for annual stipends and known as 'parish priests'. Rectors and vicars had security of tenure, unlike curates who often held short appointments, unless inducted as 'perpetual curates'.⁴⁸⁷ There was more chance of a strong relationship being formed and influence felt where a parish had a long-term resident rector, vicar

⁴⁸⁵ Sheppard, 'Norwich', p. 51.

⁴⁸⁶ H. Salter, *A Subsidy Collected in the Diocese of Lincoln in 1526*, Oxford Historical Society, 63 (1909), pp. 148-162.

⁴⁸⁷ A. Hamilton Thompson, *Visitations in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1517-1520*, LRS, 35 (1944), p. xxv.

or other cleric. If this cleric retained traditional beliefs, there was more likelihood of late-traditionalism in the parish, the incidence of which has been shown to vary greatly. The witness percentages and length of service of incumbents are borne in mind in further discussion of clerical influence.

Table 5.1: Clerical witnesses, overseers, executors, and named scribes, 1510-1610⁴⁸⁸

	Total number of wills	Clerical witnesses and % of total wills		Incumbents included in the last column and % of total wills		Named scribe as witness
Abthorpe	33	14	42%			
Blakesley	38	20	58%	16	42%	1
Bradden	16	7	44%	2	13%	
Culworth	41	22	54%	20	49%	
Easton Neston	17	8	47%	3	18%	
Greens Norton	37	14	38%	7	19%	1
Moreton Pinkney	34	16	47%	7	21%	
Paulerspury	61	24	39%	7	11%	2
Plumpton	10	4	40%	2	20%	
Silverstone	18	4	22%			
Slapton	20	14	70%	9	45%	
Stoke Bruerne	59	23	39%	8	14%	3
Sulgrave	40	21	53%	20	50%	1
Syresham	46	21	46%	14	30%	
Towcester	121	69	57%	17	14%	19
Wappenham	29	15	52%	5	17%	5
Weedon Lois	47	30	64%	25	53%	1
Whittlebury	19	8	42%			
Total	486	334	49%	162	24%	33

⁴⁸⁸ Longden, *Clergy*; NRO Arch. North.1st and 2nd series; PCC wills; parish registers.

c) The Dissolution and new owners of monastic estates

The involvement of religious houses in the study area either by appropriation of churches or by rents from lands that they held was established in chapter two. At the Dissolution the crown claimed ownership of monastic property and lands and much of it was sold to new owners. Most purchasers came from landed families, some being already great landowners, but others may have been younger sons who were lawyers, or in government service, creating an independent establishment for themselves. There were also prosperous yeomen who generally purchased small lots, sometimes land they already leased. There was no distinction between a 'Protestant' and a 'Catholic' attitude towards the purchase of lands that had once maintained religious communities. For all men, buying the land was a straightforward business deal.⁴⁸⁹ However, some new owners were committed Catholics or Protestants who might influence the general piety in a parish, either delaying the demise of traditionalism or speeding the onset of Protestantism, particularly where they held the advowson of the parish church. The chance distribution of patronage rights within an area was of crucial importance to the religious complexion of its clergy. The ecclesiastical courts could deprive a cleric for non-conformity, but could not deprive the patron of his presentation rights to a benefice.⁴⁹⁰

Most new owners of monastic estates in and adjacent to the study area came from outside this area and did not have a tradition of family influence in their communities, mainly because religious houses had a more than average involvement in the area. New owners of Biddlesden Abbey and Swardsley Priory, dissolved in 1538 and 1536 respectively, were Catholics, while the Protestant owners of Canons Ashby Priory, dissolved in 1536, later became committed Puritans. The purchaser of the Sulgrave and Stuchbury lands of St Andrew's Priory, Northampton, dissolved in 1538, was a Protestant, but did not hold the Sulgrave advowson.⁴⁹¹

Biddlesden Abbey held the manor of Maryland in nearby Syresham and Leicester Abbey also held part of Syresham's land until the abbey's dissolution

⁴⁸⁹ G. W. O. Woodward, *The Dissolution of Monasteries* (London, 1966), pp. 130-134.

⁴⁹⁰ Rosemary O'Day, *The English Clergy, the Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession 1558-1642* (Leicester, 1979), p. 91.

⁴⁹¹ David Knowles and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses England and Wales* (London, 1971).

in 1538. After the Dissolution the lands of Leicester Abbey passed to Magdalene College, Oxford. Edmund Clerke, who had leased Biddlesden Abbey's lands from the abbot, transferred his interest to Sir Thomas Wriothesley (see Thomas Knight below). He had been Edmund Peckham's clerk in 1529-1530 and in 1539 he conveyed the lands to Sir Robert Peckham, son and heir of Sir Edmund Peckham of Denham, Buckinghamshire, who paid £700 in 1540 for the Biddlesden estate. Sir Edmund was an administrator in the exchequer and the royal household, and treasurer of the mint from 1544 until his death in 1564, when he demonstrated his Catholicism by leaving 20 marks in his will 'unto my poor neighbours of Denham to praye for my soule'.⁴⁹² Robert Peckham attended Gray's Inn in the 1530s, represented Buckinghamshire in parliament in 1554 and was High Sheriff of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire in 1556, but travelled to Rome some time after this and died there in 1569. In his will he requested burial in the Church of St Gregory in Rome, where his memorial (translated from Latin) states: 'Here lies Robert Peckham, Englishman and Catholic, who, after England's break with the Church, left England not being able to live without the faith and who, coming to Rome, died not being able to live without his country'. It was impractical for his body to be transported to England and he asked for his heart to be enclosed in lead and sent to England to be buried in the family vault at Denham.⁴⁹³ A tablet in Denham church states 'Sir Robert Peckham, privy councillor to Queen Mary, who died in Rome in 1569, his heart only being buried in this church'.⁴⁹⁴ The executor of his will (1569), Thomas Goldwell, was a papal agent to England in 1553. He travelled to Italy in 1559, where he spent the rest of his life and was made a cardinal in 1563.⁴⁹⁵ Sir Robert Peckham must have known him at this time and there can be no doubt about the depth of Peckham's Catholicism. His Catholic brother Sir George Peckham succeeded to the

⁴⁹² Bridges 1, pp. 194-5; *VCH Buckinghamshire*, 4, p. 155; Luke MacMahon, *Sir Edmund Peckham*, *ODNB* (2004); TNA PROB 11/47.

⁴⁹³ William Browne, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Buckingham* (London, 1755), p. 16; TNA PROB 11/51; Joseph Pearce, review, *Maurice Baring: Faith and Culture*, <http://www.catholicauthors.com/baring.html>, accessed 23/09/2011; W. & R. Chambers, 'Heart Bequests', *Chambers Book of Days*, vol. 2 (London and Edinburgh, 1879), p. 416.

⁴⁹⁴ *VCH Buckinghamshire*, 3, p. 258.

⁴⁹⁵ T. F. Mayer, *Thomas Goldwell*, *ODNB* (2004-12).

Biddlesden estate, but sold it in 1577 to Arthur Lord Grey of Wilton, a Protestant.⁴⁹⁶

Richard Fermor of Easton Neston was a staunch Catholic and a younger son whose older brother lived in the main family residence at Somerton, Oxfordshire. Born between 1480 and 1484 in Witney, Oxfordshire, he was a merchant of the staple at Calais before 1509 when he was a juror in the trial of Richard Empson, speaker of the House of Commons. In 1515 he married Anne Browne, daughter of the lord mayor of London and from 1520 to 1523 he was warden of the Grocers' Company. He acquired land in several counties, including the manor of Easton Neston purchased from Richard Empson's descendants in 1531, and Swardsley Priory lands from 1541. In the early 1530s he was the earl of Derby's chief steward for Northamptonshire and his subsidy assessment of £1,000 in 1536 indicates his wealth. Having helped to victual the royal troops raised to put down the Northern Rising, he was a juror in the trial of the northern rebels in 1537.⁴⁹⁷

Sir John Cope purchased Canons Ashby estate in 1538 including the church, which was outside diocesan control allowing him to appoint ministers and worship as he pleased. The Cope family, who owned estates in the Banbury area of Oxfordshire, later became convinced Puritans. John's brother Sir Antony Cope, Member of Parliament for Banbury, was committed to the Tower of London in 1587 for presenting to the Speaker a Presbyterian revision of the common prayer book and a bill abrogating existing ecclesiastical laws. John Cope's daughter Elizabeth married John Dryden in 1551 and at John Cope's death in 1557 the estate passed to the Puritan Dryden family.⁴⁹⁸

The religious impact of these families is discussed in detail below, together with other Catholic and Protestant gentry families and their priests, but Lawrence Washington's apparent lack of influence is discussed briefly here: Sulgrave Manor, previously owned by St Andrew's Priory, was granted at the Dissolution to Lawrence Washington from Wharton in Lancashire, who already

⁴⁹⁶ *VCH Buckinghamshire*, 4, p. 155, Julian Lock, 'Arthur Grey, 14th Baron of Wilton (1536-1593), lord deputy of Ireland and soldier', *ODNB* (2008).

⁴⁹⁷ Morgan, 'Richard Fermor'.

⁴⁹⁸ Bridges 1, p. 224; Clare Jakeman, 'Cofferer Cope and the Copes of Canons Ashby', *Cakes and Cockhorse, Banbury Historical Society*, 9/6 (1984), pp. 166-7; Oliver Garnett, *Canons Ashby* (The National Trust, 2001), pp. 32-3; P. D. Mundy, 'Cope, Dryden, Throckmorton, Oxenbridge and Allied Puritan Families', *Notes & Queries*, 180/10 (1941), p. 182.

leased a house in Sulgrave from the priory. He also bought the small possessions in Sulgrave of Canons Ashby Priory and Catesby Priory and part of the land at Stuchbury. The sale did not include Sulgrave rectory and advowson of the vicarage, but Washington later acquired more land at Stuchbury and its rectory.⁴⁹⁹ He was a Protestant, but without the Sulgrave advowson he probably had little influence on popular religion.⁵⁰⁰ The percentage of Elizabethan Protestant preambles at Sulgrave was middle of the range (46 per cent).

d) The continuing influence of Biddlesden Abbey

The presence of the Catholic Peckhams probably aided the survival of Catholic priests, in Weedon Lois and Syresham into Elizabeth's reign.

Weedon Lois and Thomas Fox

The 46 years' service of Thomas Fox at Weedon Lois, 1524-1570, beginning before the Dissolution, rivals the 54 years of Morebath's Sir Christopher Trychay, 1520-1574, and must have been uncommon in the sixteenth century.⁵⁰¹ He was the only priest in the area instituted in his parish before the Dissolution who survived into Elizabethan England and was the last vicar presented to Weedon Lois by Biddlesden Abbey, when Weedon Lois church was still a chantry chapel for All Soul's College, Oxford. He arrived in Weedon Lois as a Catholic priest and almost certainly remained one at heart all his life. Many parishioners would have died having known Thomas Fox for most of their lives. In Weedon Lois 64 per cent of the 47 wills were witnessed by a cleric, which was the second highest percentage of clerical witnesses in the area and 53 per cent were the incumbent, the highest in the area. Thomas Fox was instituted as vicar in December 1524 and witnessed 13 out of the 24 wills from 1526 until his death in 1570. Several parishioners remembered him with a bequest in their wills, for example, Anne Good, widow, in 1542 gave 12d for Sir Thomas Fox of Weedon to pray for her; also a land (field strip) of barley to the church of Weedon and other uses including for the vicar and three priests to

⁴⁹⁹ Bridges, 1, pp. 128-9, 202; H Clifford Smith, *Sulgrave Manor and the Washingtons* (London, 1933), pp. 53-5.

⁵⁰⁰ TNA PROB 11/68 (1581).

⁵⁰¹ Duffy, *Morebath*.

perform a trental of masses for her soul and all Christian souls.⁵⁰² Secondly, John Grey whose Edwardian will in 1551 still has traditional elements and gave 4d to the mother church Peterborough; 6s 8d to the repair of the parish church Weedon and to be prayed for; five strikes of wheat and five strikes of barley malt at his monthly mind to be prayed for; at his burial 8d each to the parson of Plumpton and the vicar of Weedon; and to the poor men's box 12d.⁵⁰³

Plumpton is less than a mile from Weston and Weedon; its clerics are mentioned in several Weedon wills and Thomas Fox was mentioned in two Plumpton wills. Thomas Crokey was a priest before the Dissolution having been a chantry priest at Weedon Bec, eight miles north of Weedon Lois, before being instituted as parson at Plumpton in 1542.⁵⁰⁴ His Marian will in 1557 is one of the last traditional wills in the area. Following the traditional soul bequest he requested burial in the churchyard at Plumpton near the cross; he gave 4d to the mother church Peterborough; 10s to the bells or towards buying a vestment for Plumpton church; 3s 4d towards repairing highways in the town of Plumpton; 8d and his breakfast to each of six priests at his burial; and 'to Thomas Fox, vicar of Weedon Pinkney [Lois] my best side gown'.⁵⁰⁵ Fox was named as overseer and was a witness. Plumpton's first Protestant preamble was written in 1591, the third from last parish in the area.⁵⁰⁶

Throughout his incumbency Thomas Fox wrote exactly the same soul bequest: 'Soul to almighty God to our Lady Saint Mary and all the holy company of heaven'. After 46 years as vicar, he wrote it for the last time on his own will in 1570; the last Traditional preamble in the parish and in the study area. His request to be buried in his church 'in the place where St Margaret altar stode' suggests rueful nostalgia mixed with theological defiance.⁵⁰⁷ He left 6s 8d to Weedon church for his burial and 3s 4d for mending the highway and fords. Of the 11 wills he did not witness during his incumbency eight had a traditional preamble, the last in 1567, which suggests that testators were genuinely traditional. The last six not witnessed by Fox were from the hamlet of Weston. In his early years he witnessed wills from both Weedon Lois and

⁵⁰² NRO, Arch. North.1st series, H8.

⁵⁰³ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, L34.

⁵⁰⁴ Longden, *Clergy*, 3, p. 303.

⁵⁰⁵ NRO, Pet. 2, 25.

⁵⁰⁶ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, Y97.

⁵⁰⁷ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, T1.

Weston, but from 1557 when he was getting old and perhaps frail, John Atkins, yeoman of Weston, witnessed and probably wrote four wills for Weston residents and his son Henry Atkins another, all with traditional preambles. Henry and another John Atkins witnessed more wills after 1570 with various preambles. Thomas Fox, however, witnessed John Atkins's own will in 1565, which requested burial 'in the parish church of Weedon so near my father as may be in St Katherine's Aisle in the upper end of the same'.⁵⁰⁸ The saints were not forgotten in Elizabethan Weedon, but masses were last requested in 1557.⁵⁰⁹ Thomas Fox appears to have had a good relationship and strong influence with his parishioners until his death in 1570. It can only be speculated when and why the page in the register recording his burial, wording unknown, was clearly torn out.⁵¹⁰ From lack of mention in wills, injunctions to remove saints' altars, rood, and sepulchre appear to have been obeyed and outwardly Fox 'conformed' and adapted, as did Trychay at Morebath, as the Catholic Church developed into the Elizabethan Protestant Church.⁵¹¹

The first Protestant preamble had appeared in 1567, not witnessed by a cleric. There were only two more after Fox's death when all other preambles were Neutral and more than half of the wills were still witnessed by the incumbents.⁵¹² Six variously worded wills leave the soul to the Trinity.⁵¹³ Anthony Morrison, vicar 1586-1618, witnessed three of them, but arrived after two were written and there are no obvious links between them. The fact that Weedon Lois did not immediately become Protestant after 1570 could be seen as Thomas Fox's legacy.

Syresham and Thomas Todde

Thomas Todde who had been sub-prior and cellarer of Biddlesden Abbey was among those who signed the surrender and he received an annual pension of £6. Leicester Abbey held the advowson of Syresham until the Dissolution when the king as patron presented Thomas Todde to the benefice. He was instituted in

⁵⁰⁸ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, P117.

⁵⁰⁹ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, L105.

⁵¹⁰ NRO, 345p/30.

⁵¹¹ Duffy, *Morebath*, p. 190.

⁵¹² NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, S24, Y95 (1593), Y111 (1593).

⁵¹³ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, T126 (1574), V124 (1583), V289 (1588), Y9 (1591), Y95 (1593), W52 (1598).

March 1543 and died 20 years later, c. 1563, leaving no extant will. In 1549 he was also instituted as the rector of Cosgrave, ten miles distant, where he witnessed no wills and in 1561 was still holding both livings.⁵¹⁴



Figure 5.1 Source: *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online or TAMO* (1583 edition) (HRI Online Publications, Sheffield, 2011). <http://johnfoxe.org> (12.03.14).

⁵¹⁴ *L&P*, 13/2, pp. 161-2; Browne, *Buckinghamshire*, p. 152; Bridges 1, p. 195; Longden, *Clergy*, 13, p. 237.

Sir Robert Peckham's chaplain, Edward Coles, who was also Biddlesden's parish priest, requested in his will in 1557 'that two prestes do saye masse & dirige for my sowle at Betlesden every monthe by the space of one hole year of whom I will the parson of Syrisham to be one & they to have for ther paynes viiid a pece for every masse that they shalt so saye'.⁵¹⁵ Edward Coles obviously considered Thomas Todde to be a true Catholic and was recognising his link with Biddlesden.

As the sub-prior of Biddlesden Abbey, Todde may have known about the possibly heterodox views of some parishioners of Syresham, one mile away, but as their priest he was unable to counteract them. Before Todde's institution 64 per cent of wills had traditional preambles. This increased to 100 per cent of the ten wills during his incumbency, six of which were witnessed by Todde, but these were the last traditional preambles. Superficially, from the preambles, Thomas Todde appears to have exerted traditional influence, but will bequests deny this and do not indicate traditional piety. In the nine wills before 1536 (and before Todde's incumbency) the only bequest for a mass was in 1528, the last bequests for the rood light and to saints were in 1529. The final bequest for the high altar was in 1537. Only three of the ten wills during his incumbency made pious bequests; two leaving a few pence to the church, one leaving 12d to the poor man's box and one 6s 8d to the poor at his funeral. There were no bequests to Thomas Todde. It appears that traditional piety had weakened before Todde's institution and there is no evidence of a revival, nor do wills suggest that Todde was liked in the parish.

A former sub-prior, later the priest of a committed Catholic landowner, was probably rigorous in attempting to root out heresy. Possibly he was responsible for denouncing John Kurde, a Syresham shoemaker, who after a year's imprisonment was brought before Dr Bensley, archdeacon of Northampton, in August 1557 on a charge of denying transubstantiation and holding other heretical views. He was condemned to death and burnt outside Northampton's north gate on 20 September, where John Rote, the vicar of St Giles, in vain exhorted him to recant. He was the only Northamptonshire

⁵¹⁵ Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, P/A/WF/4/73.

‘Foxye’s martyr’.⁵¹⁶ Considering the lack of traditional will bequests after 1529, Kurde was unlikely to have been alone in the parish with heretical views, but may have been more vocal than most, talking unwisely in his workshop where he would have met travellers on the Welsh Road and the road from Oxford. His death should have silenced heretical talk in the village for some time. Signs of traditionalism in wills had ended before Todde’s institution and the use of the traditional Catholic preamble until the end of his incumbency in 1563 does not appear to be sincere, but it was one of the last parishes to have its first protestant preamble (1589). The soul bequest in nine of the ten wills between 1564 and 1585 was the very neutral ‘to almighty God’. There were only 15 pious bequests in the 32 wills, 1540-1603, mainly benefitting the poor. The parish appears to have been unpopular with other clerics and there were eight different rectors, 1563-1603, with three staying for no more than a year.

The Knight Family of Slapton and Abthorpe

The will of William Knight of Slapton was discussed in the previous chapter. The Knight family were wealthy tanners with connections to important people through William’s eldest son Thomas Knight. Thomas was admitted to Winchester College, Oxford, in 1521, aged 11 years, and achieved a B.A. in 1531 and M.A. in 1534 at New College. He was junior proctor of the university in 1537-1538, when he was in the service of Thomas Cromwell and directions were given for the continuance of an exhibition of 40s, previously made by an abbey. He was a clerk of Henry VIII and a parliamentary clerk from 1540 until his death.⁵¹⁷

By the 1530s Thomas Knight was acquainted with Thomas Wriothesley, earl of Southampton, and married his sister Anne. In 1543 Thomas Knight was granted the Manor of Timsbury, Hampshire, which had been held by the nunnery of St Mary of Winchester until the Dissolution. He left the manor for the upbringing of his only son John, probably with Wriothesley as his guardian, but John died under age in 1560 and was succeeded by Thomas’s brother, William Knight of Abthorpe, who also received the arms that had been granted

⁵¹⁶ *Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online; VCH Northamptonshire*, 2, p. 39.

⁵¹⁷ Emden, *Oxford 1501-1540*, p. 232; *Valor*, 2, p. 263, *L&P*, 12/1, 325.

to Thomas Knight.⁵¹⁸ The links between the Peckhams, Wriothesley and Thomas Knight suggest earlier links between the Knight family and Biddlesden four miles from Abthorpe. Possibly it was Biddlesden Abbey that supported Thomas at Oxford, but there is no evidence.

The will of Thomas Knight (1548) does not make his piety clear. He bequeathed ‘my soul to the infinite goodness of the blessed Trinity the father the son and the Holy Ghost with steadfast faith and hope to be saved by the merits of Christ’s passion and willing to be buried in such Christian sort as my executors and friends shall think convenient’. This was used by some traditionalists, but Thomas made no pious bequests. He gifted a prebend in Winchester Cathedral to his brother Hugh, who also appears to have a connection with Winchester College, Oxford.⁵¹⁹

The very traditional will of Thomas’s father William Knight (1556), written eight years later at the house of son Nicholas in Abthorpe, has exactly the same preamble and although witnesses included John Lynnell, parson of Tiffield and vicar of Easton Neston, William stated that he wrote it himself. It was one of only five Marian wills in the area that requested masses and he wanted the presence of a cleric from another parish who was almost certainly a traditional priest. Probate was granted in May 1559; this was not a last-minute will made in illness. He left £20 to Hugh and various properties to his other children, including to John, son of his deceased son Thomas. His son Edward carried on the tannery business and had been left all of his father’s leather, two houses, a cow and several items of furniture.⁵²⁰

Edward Knight’s Elizabethan will (1564) bequeathed his soul ‘to almighty God’ and has no truly traditional bequests, however, there are hints of traditionalism in his bequest of 3s 4d and half a bend of leather to Sir George Garret, priest of Biddlesden, who was a witness to his will.⁵²¹ George Garret was the chaplain of Catholic Sir Robert Peckham. Edward also made bequests of 6s 8d to the poor of Biddlesden and 3s 4d each to the maintenance of Slapton

⁵¹⁸ Michael A. R. Graves, ‘Thomas Wriothersley, first earl of Southampton (1505-1550), administrator’, *ODNB* (2008); *VCH Hampshire*, 4, p. 486; Metcalfe, Walter C., *The Visitations of Northamptonshire made in 1564 and 1618-19: with pedigrees from various Harleian mss.*, (London, 1887), pp. 30-31.

⁵¹⁹ TNA, PROB 11/32/63.

⁵²⁰ TNA, PROB 11/42B.

⁵²¹ NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, P37.

church and to the poor of Slapton, Towcester, Abthorpe and Wappenham. In 1563 William's son Nicholas, yeoman of Abthorpe, and his widow Joan in 1580 both made wills with brief Neutral preambles 'to almighty God' and one pious bequest to the mother church, but no clerical witnesses.⁵²² There is no extant will for William's son William who was married to Elizabeth, daughter of traditional John West of Hulcote. The first William Knight had traditional piety, but his sons, except perhaps Edward, appear to have accepted the changes in the Elizabethan church.

e) Catholic landowners

In considering landed gentry it is noticeable that they normally married within their own faith, Catholic or Protestant. The marriages of Lovetts and Danvers, who were in the study area before the Dissolution, and the Fermors illustrate a network of Catholic families.

The Lovetts and Shirleys of Astwell, Wappenham

Thomas Lovett I, son of Nicholas Lovett of Rushton, acquired the manors of Falcutt and Astwell, with other lands in Wappenham, in 1471 by family agreement in exchange for hereditary estates.⁵²³ The complicated descent of these lands, about 2,170 acres, is explained here to illustrate links, based on acquisition of lands, in a network of Catholic families (see the pedigree). Heirs are numbered. Thomas I was married three times and in his will of 1491 named his son from his second marriage, Thomas Lovett II, as his heir. However there appears to have been animosity between Thomas II and the third wife and the will states, 'also I charge Thomas Lovett my son and heir as he will answer before God and have my blessing that he trouble not Johanna my wife for the manor of Astwell nor for no goods being within the said manor'.⁵²⁴ He requested burial in Biddlesden Abbey beside his first wife who was buried there, but Johanna (Joan Billing, granddaughter of Sir Thomas Billing, justice, who was buried at Biddlesden) ignored the request and buried him in the church of St Alban, Wood Street, London. Joan and Thomas I also had a son Thomas,

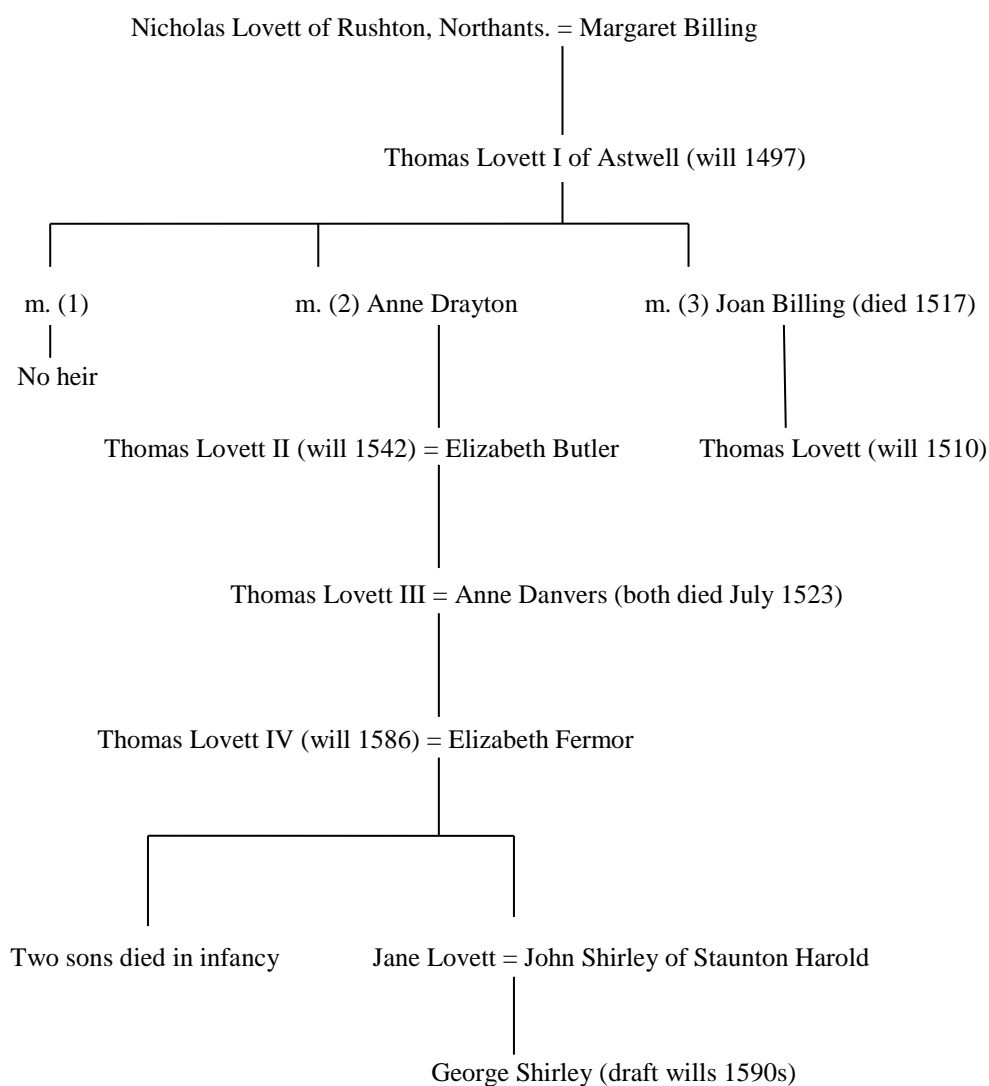
⁵²² NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, P17, V43.

⁵²³ Robert Edmond Chester Waters, *Genealogical memoirs of the extinct family of Chester of Chicheley*, 1 (London, 1878), p. 44.

⁵²⁴ TNA, PCC, PROB 11/9 (1491).

who died underage and unmarried in 1510. They appear to have lived in London and this Thomas requested burial in St Alban's close to his father. Joan died in 1517.⁵²⁵ Astwell returned to Thomas II. A sister of Joan Billing, Rose Billing, was the mother of William Tresham, priest (see Towcester below).

Figure 5.2: Pedigree of the Lovetts and Shirleys of Astwell



[Note: this simplified pedigree includes only persons appearing in the text.]

Thomas III married Anne Danvers, daughter of John Danvers, knight, of Dauntsey, Wiltshire, and Culworth (died 1514) and Anne Stradling, known as Dame Anne Danvers of Dauntsey. Thomas III and Anne both died in July 1523

⁵²⁵ TNA, PCC, PROB 11/16/332 (1510/11); Nigel Ramsey, 'Sir Thomas Billing (d. 1481), justice', *ODNB* (2008); Waters, pp. 41-46, 49-63; LL&RRO, 26D53/678.

when their son Thomas IV was aged six years. Thomas II became his guardian and held in trust estates that had descended from his grandson's mother Ann Danvers. In 1528, Thomas IV's grandmother Dame Anne Danvers of Dauntsey, made an agreement with Catholic Sir George Throckmorton of Coughton, Warwickshire, and Thomas II concerning Thomas IV's marriage to Anne Throckmorton, daughter of Sir George. Briefly all Thomas II's lands, on his death, were to descend to Thomas IV, including lands in Falcutt, Wappenham and Gloucestershire. Anne must have been one of several Throckmorton daughters who died young and Thomas IV, now of age, married Elizabeth daughter of Richard Fermor after a similar agreement in 1533 between Dame Anne Danvers, Thomas II and Richard Fermor. Manors of Astwell, Falcutt and Wappenham were to descend to Thomas IV.⁵²⁶ Dame Anne appears to have been protecting the interests of her daughter's son against other possible claimants, although they would not have had legal precedence over Thomas III's son.

Dame Anne Danvers died in 1539, followed by Thomas II in 1542, both making traditional wills.⁵²⁷ 'Cousin and heir apparent Thomas Lovett' was an executor of Thomas II's will; 'cousin' (actually grandson) meaning 'next of kin', that is Thomas IV.⁵²⁸ Jane, daughter of Thomas IV, married John Shirley from the Catholic Shirley family of Staunton Harold Leicestershire.⁵²⁹ Thomas died without a male heir and his will (1584) named George Shirley, his grandson, as heir.⁵³⁰ George continued as a Catholic until his death in 1622 and his rebuilt Astwell Castle included a family chapel. However, according to his son Sir Thomas Shirley, George was a church papist, occasionally attending Anglican services to protect the family property, but he died 'in the bosom of the Roman church'.⁵³¹ In an unfinished, undated draft will, George Shirley 'of

⁵²⁶ TNA, PROB 11/29; Marriage settlements: LL&RRO, 26D53/662 (1528) and 26D53/663 (1533).

⁵²⁷ TNA, PROB 11/28/13; PROB 11/29, respectively.

⁵²⁸ An obsolete ME law usage (OED).

⁵²⁹ Joe Johnson, *Shirley Village, Derbyshire: Ancient Home of the Noble Shirley Family, the Earls Ferrers* (Shirley Millennium Committee, 2000), p. 39; Marriage settlement: LL&RRO, 26D53/671.

⁵³⁰ TNA, PROB 11/69.

⁵³¹ Norman Jones, *The English Reformation, Religious and Cultural Adaptation* (Oxford, 2002), p. 43.

Staunton Harold', used the late type of traditional soul bequest described by Duffy in chapter four:

First I commend my sowle in to the handes of my blessed saviour and redeemer hoping to be saved by the merytts of his passion beseeching of our blessed ladie his holie mother and all the holie companie of heaven to praie for me that when soever yt shall please God to call me home I may die in the state of grace with perfect contricion and repentance for my sinnes.

He was undecided about his burial-place with both Breedon-on-the-Hill and Wappenham crossed through, but he was buried at Breedon where other Shirleys were buried.⁵³² He wrote another will in 1599, but the first few folios are missing.⁵³³ There is no extant final will for George Shirley. The influence of the Lovett and Shirley families is considered with the Fermors after the next section.

The Fermors of Easton Neston and their priests

The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Fermors lived in the original manor house with its own chapel, close to the medieval parish church.⁵³⁴ Neighbouring Swardsley Priory, which held the rectory of Easton Neston founded and endowed a vicarage in 1403, but later granted the advowson to Richard Empson who in turn assigned it to Richard Fermor. In 1537 Fermor presented John Lynnell to the living, who served 38 years at Easton Neston until 1575. He was said to be 'of Cambridge' in the will (1523) of his uncle Thomas Lynnell, husbandman of Weedon Bec, who gifted him '10s to pray for me and God fortune him to be a priest to sing a trental for me'. John's father Robert Lynnell was named as executor. John Lynnell did become a priest, being admitted to King's College from Eton in 1520 and achieving his M.A. in 1529. He was a curate in Bugbrooke, close to Weedon Bec, from 1531 until his

⁵³² LL&RRO, 26D53/1958 (1590s?); Johnson, *Shirley Village*, p. 40.

⁵³³ LL&RRO, 26D53/1956 (1599). There is no extant final will for George Shirley.

⁵³⁴ John Steane, *The Northamptonshire Landscape* (London, 1974), p. 192; F. N. Davies (ed.), *Rotuli Roberti Grosseteste, episcopi Lincolnensis, A.D. MCCXXXV-MCCLIII*, Canterbury and York Society, 4, (1913), pp. 214-216.

presentation to Easton Neston in 1537, aged 28 years and was also instituted rector of Tiffield in 1545.⁵³⁵

In July 1538 Fermor's chaplain, Nicholas Thayne, allegedly preached in support of the papal primacy and in December had interrupted John Lynnell, who in obedience to recent royal injunctions was preaching against Rome, veneration of images and pilgrimages, although he appears to have been a traditional priest, advising him not to be too hasty. (Lynnell was a priest before the Dissolution and was also a witness of one of the last wills to request masses; that of William Knight of Slapton in 1556, probate May 1559, who presumably deliberately chose a traditional priest from another parish.) Thayne also disobeyed the injunction to obliterate the word 'pope' in all liturgical or prayer books and merely covered the word with wax, wherever it appeared, which could be cracked off whenever England returned to Rome. He was charged with serious dissidence before the Justices at Northampton Castle at Michaelmas 1539 and imprisoned in Buckingham.⁵³⁶

In 1540 Richard Fermor was attainted: his lands and possessions forfeited to the crown and he lost the right to pass them to his heirs. He was sent to the Marshalsea, although the only proof against him was that he had visited his chaplain (Nicholas Thayne) in prison, taking him a gift of a shirt and eight pence.⁵³⁷ He was indicted before King's Bench on a charge of praemunire, strictly speaking, meaning the maintenance of papal jurisdiction or other alien jurisdiction in England, against the supremacy of the monarch, although in late-medieval England it was sometimes used to limit the autonomy of church courts and to transfer disputes to the King's Bench.⁵³⁸

However, the French ambassador Charles de Marillac, reporting the event in his dispatches to France, opined that Fermor had spoken too boldly in parliament in prejudice of the King's rights and prerogatives.⁵³⁹ Richard

⁵³⁵ Longden, *Clergy*, 8, p. 271; 3, p. 261; NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, B80; John and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigiensis*, 1/3 (Cambridge, 1924), p. 88.

⁵³⁶ J.J. Scarisbrick, 'Religion and Politics in Northamptonshire in the Reign of Henry VIII', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 5/2 (1974), pp. 87-8, citing TNA KB9/544, which records the complete story.

⁵³⁷ TNA KB9/544. This names Thayne as James, but elsewhere he is Nicholas; *VCH Northamptonshire*, 5, (2002), pp. 98-126.

⁵³⁸ G. W. Bernard, *The Medieval English Church: Vitality and Vulnerability Before the Break with Rome* (New Haven and London, 2012), pp. 32-3.

⁵³⁹ *L&P*, 15, 1540, p. 326.

Fermor was soon released from prison, possibly through the intervention of his brother William who was a King's attorney in the Kings Bench and was one of two sureties who were bound in £1,000 each for Richard's appearance before the Privy Council.⁵⁴⁰ He was allowed to retire to Wappenham, where his daughter Elizabeth was living at Astwell Castle, and he leased the parsonage. After being pardoned in 1541 some of his estates were returned to him.⁵⁴¹

There is a more romantic tale about Richard Fermor's pardon, which may contain a grain of truth. Will Somer, Henry VIII's court fool from 1535 and a popular figure at court during succeeding reigns, is said to have been a former servant in the Fermor family. The story says he pleaded successfully with the king for the pardon of Richard Fermor and restoration of some of his property.⁵⁴²

Richard Fermor recovered more of his possessions and acquired others during Edward's reign and in 1550 received the manor of Easton Neston and other property being held by the crown since his attainder, together with the house and lands of Swardsley Priory, ending his ten year absence from Easton Neston.⁵⁴³ He was again a wealthy man when he died in November, 1551. In his will, written in July 1551, he acknowledged 'our sovereigne Lorde kinge Edwarde the Sixt by the grace of God of Englande France and Irelande kinge defender of the faithe and in earthe of the church of England and Irelande the supreme head'. Occasionally wills at this time contained similar statements, but Richard was possibly thinking of the security of his son's inheritance. His soul bequest made his own faith clear: 'my soule unto Almighty god my maker and my redemer & to our blessed Ladye saynte Mary the virgyne mother of Christ and to all the companey in heaven beseching them to be mediators and intercessors unto Almightye god for the salvation of my synfull soule'. His only pious bequest in this Protestant reign was £40 towards the repairing of

⁵⁴⁰ 'Sir William Fermor, Knight', www.tudorplace.com.ar/Bios/William_Fermor.htm (02/12/2011).

⁵⁴¹ *L&P*, 16, 1540-1, p. 464.

⁵⁴² J. R. Mulryne, 'William Somer, court fool', *ODNB* (2004-11); John Southworth, *Fools and Jesters at the English Court* (Stroud, 1998), pp. 71-76 passim; Scarisbrick, 'Religion and Politics', p. 88, n. 11; Morgan, 'Richard Fermor'.

⁵⁴³ Morgan, 'Richard Fermor'.

highways.⁵⁴⁴ However, he could have made pious bequests that do not appear in his will.

Sir John Fermor, Richard's eldest son and heir, remained a Catholic and was only important in public life during Mary's reign, being elected to parliament in 1553 and 1555, becoming sheriff in 1557 and serving as a justice of the peace. In 1544 he married Maud, daughter of the first Lord Vaux of Harrowden, from a Catholic recusant family and continued to purchase lands, including the manor of Towcester. He died in December 1571, but there is no extant will.⁵⁴⁵

Richard's second surviving son Thomas was named as heir by Richard's childless brother William at Somerton, Oxfordshire, where the Fermors were recusants and Catholicism was strong in the parish, surviving until the nineteenth century.⁵⁴⁶

The will preambles of Richard's other son Jerome Fermor of Burcot, Towcester (1602) and his wife Jane (1606) stated justification by faith.⁵⁴⁷

Richard Fermor's daughter Elizabeth married a Catholic Lovett, but daughter Mary, who married the Puritan Sir Richard Knightley of Fawsley in 1556 after Richard's death, appears to have married for wealth and position. Anne Fermor married William Lucy of Charlecote, Warwickshire, *circa* 1530, who may have had reformist sympathies, but their son Thomas was tutored at home *c.* 1545-1547 by, among other tutors, John Foxe the martyrologist, and Thomas became 'a vigorous protestant'.⁵⁴⁸

Richard Fermor's daughter Ursula formed a second link with Dame Anne Danvers of Dauntsey, whose daughter Margaret married Edward Fiennes. Their son Richard Fiennes of Broughton Castle, Oxfordshire, married Ursula Fermor. Richard Fiennes did not share his father-in-law's Catholicism and in 1564 he was one of the gentry commended to Archbishop Parker 'as being favourably disposed in religion'.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁴ TNA PROB 11/35.

⁵⁴⁵ Morgan, 'Richard Fermor'.

⁵⁴⁶ *VCH Oxfordshire*, 6, pp. 292-3.

⁵⁴⁷ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, Y223; TNA, PROB 11/107, respectively.

⁵⁴⁸ Alice Fairfax-Lucy, *Charlecote and the Lucys* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 61-2, 318; Robert Bearman, 'Sir Thomas Lucy, gentleman', *ODNB* (2004-14).

⁵⁴⁹ <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/fiennes-richard...> (accessed 15/11/2015).

Eighty per cent of Easton Neston preambles were Traditional until Richard Fermor's death, but the only traditional bequests in Edward's reign were one to the high altar and one for the overseers 'to do for my soul and all Christian souls as by their discretion shalbe most convenient'.⁵⁵⁰ The latter sounds very traditional. The curate witnessed Richard Fermor's will and perhaps, as hinted above, by not including the traditional Lynnell, whom he had presented to the parish, and by acknowledging Edward as the supreme head of the Church on earth, Richard was exercising caution about any demonstration of Catholicism in his written will other than his soul bequest. He doubtless discussed arrangements for his funeral during his lifetime.

Sir John Fermor's son and heir, Sir George Fermor (died 1612) married a Catholic, Mary Curzon, but George's piety is uncertain.⁵⁵¹ John Lynnell died in 1575 and George Fermor presented his replacement, Edward Stoke, in 1575.⁵⁵² For an undiscovered reason Easton Neston church 'stood interdicted' in February and March of 1578-9 and two babies born in Easton Neston were baptized in Towcester church.⁵⁵³ Edward Stoke resigned in 1583 aged 35 years. After Lynnell's 38 years as incumbent there appear to have been real problems in the next incumbency.

Richard Fermor's children, John, Thomas, Elizabeth, and possibly Anne, who all married in his lifetime, married into Catholic families, unlike his other children who married later. Northamptonshire Fermors after John Fermor apparently accepted the Elizabethan Church, unlike their relations at Somerton.

During the lives of Richard Fermor and Sir John Fermor, Easton Neston church appears to have retained traditional furnishings. The sepulchre and Rood that existed in Mary's reign may have remained through Edward's reign, although there is no evidence. Although Easton Neston is adjacent to Towcester, only one will hints of Calvinistic belief; that of Thomas West who had a brother in Towcester (discussed below).

⁵⁵⁰NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, I328, K194.

⁵⁵¹ Sheils, *Puritans*, p. 113.

⁵⁵² Longden, *Clergy*, 13, p. 75.

⁵⁵³ NRO, 329p/255.

The Fermor monuments in Easton Neston Church

The monuments of the first three Fermors of Easton Neston illustrate changing monumental fashions. Unlike the brass of Richard Fermor surmounting a chest tomb (figure 5.3) the high, wall-mounted memorial to Sir John Fermor (figure 5.4) is clearly visible from a distance. The even more visible memorial to Sir George Fermor (figure 5.5) is typical of the imposing monuments of wealthy seventeenth-century people. Similarly to St Christopher in medieval churches it dominates the north wall and is immediately visible.



(Left-hand) Figure 5.3: Richard Fermor (died 1551) and his wife Anne Browne

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/52219527@N00/11131090294/in/photostream> (20/12/2015)



(Right-hand) Figure 5.4: Sir John Fermor (died 1575) and his wife Maud Vaux (died 1569)

Influence of the Lovett, Shirley and Fermor families

The Lovett, Fermor and Shirley families were part of a Catholic network of landholders formed by intermarriages explained above. They moved in a different sphere from the local parishioners and were important in local government with members of each family being High Sheriffs of

Northamptonshire: Thomas Lovett II in 1505, Sir John Fermor in 1557, Sir George Fermor in 1589, his son Hatton in 1617, and George Shirley in 1602. Richard Fermor and his sons John, Thomas and Jerome were all members of parliament at various times; John and Jerome were also justices of the peace.⁵⁵⁴

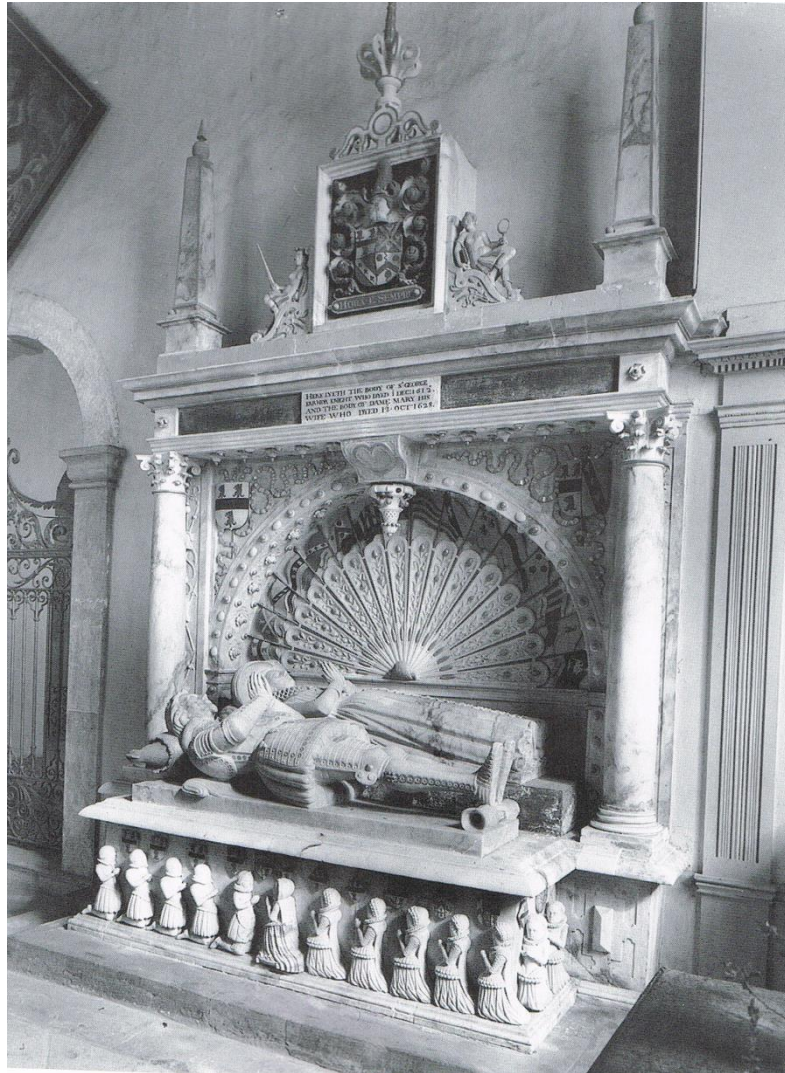


Figure 5.5: Sir George Fermor (died 1612) and his wife Mary Curzon (died 1628).

Source: Nigel Llewellyn, *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 80.

Catholic or Protestant networks could provide patronage in securing positions of influence, such as justice of the peace or election to parliament and give support in making local government decisions that favoured one or other faction. The main influence of these Catholic families on popular religion was therefore one of landholding and patronage that deterred the spread of

⁵⁵⁴ S. T. Bindoff (compiler and ed.), *The House of Commons 1509-1558 and 1558-1603* (1981-2), passim.

Puritanism to their areas of Northamptonshire from the Knightley Puritan influence around the north-west of the study area. Towcester with its Puritan lectureship is discussed below.

f) Protestant and Puritan influence

Towcester: Catholicism to Puritanism

The growth of Puritanism was important in Towcester, but earlier traditionalism is considered first. Until the 1530s the advowson of the church and some temporal properties were held by Bradenstoke Priory in Wiltshire and the priory presented rectors to Towcester.⁵⁵⁵ The parish wills had the third highest percentage, 57 per cent, with clerical witnesses, but 14 per cent, one of the lowest, witnessed by an incumbent. The reason for this is the use of the rectory as income by pluralist clerics. The non-resident rectors witnessed no wills and the 17 wills witnessed by an incumbent were from 1569 onwards when Towcester was a vicarage.

The last two rectors are unlikely to have spent much time in Towcester. From 1512 to 1538 the rector was Lancelot Colyns, who was presented by the archbishop of York by a grant from the prior and convent of Bradenstoke Priory. He was made a canon of York Minster in 1510 and was Treasurer there from 1514 until his death in 1538.⁵⁵⁶

Richard Fermor of Easton Neston held the advowson in 1539 and he presented Dr William Tresham, rector from 1539 to 1569, who was a younger son from the Catholic Tresham family in the north of the county. He studied at Merton College, Oxford, where he graduated as Doctor of Theology in 1532. At various times between 1524 and 1560 he held posts at Oxford including bursar and third dean of Merton, registrar then vice-chancellor of the university, canon of Cardinal College (later named Christ Church), vicar of St Mary Magdalen, Oxford, and of Bampton, Oxfordshire. He was also a canon of Ely, chancellor of Chichester and rector of Bugbrooke in Northamptonshire. After being committed to the Fleet Prison for 18 months during Edward's reign for his conservative religious position, he later refused to take the Elizabethan oath

⁵⁵⁵ *VCH Wiltshire* 3, pp. 279, 284; Bridges 1, pp. 275-6.

⁵⁵⁶ Bridges, 1, p. 276; Longden, *Clergy*, 3, p. 209; www.yorkminster.org/barning/the-minsters-history/who-was-who/, accessed 27/01/11.

of supremacy resulting in the loss of all preferments except the rectory of Towcester. He was allowed to retire to Northamptonshire having promised that he would not interfere in religious affairs as established by law.⁵⁵⁷ In 1565 he witnessed a will in Bugbrooke, where he had a sister, Alice Saunders and he may have spent his last years there, seven miles from Towcester. Alice's will in 1575 requests burial in the chancel at Bugbrooke between her brother Dr Tresham and her sister Kynesman.⁵⁵⁸

The important and wealthy Sponne chantry was a constantly present influence until the dissolution of chantries in 1548. The chantry had two chaplains, one the master of the chantry and the second to teach grammar, who would have had influence with the youths of the parish. However, chantry chaplains could also be pluralists. Where bishops allowed a chantry priest to hold another benefice, poverty was generally alleged to be the cause. From the mid-fourteenth century onwards a chaplain's income was from eight marks (£5 6s 8d) to, exceptionally, fifteen marks (£10).⁵⁵⁹ Towcester chantry had provisions against pluralism and absence, which would automatically deprive a priest of the chaplaincy, except in the case of one free chapel, chaplaincy, or prebend, of annual value not exceeding 7 marks; probably distinguishing between the value of a benefice requiring residence and one which did not.⁵⁶⁰ In 1497 the pope dispensed and indulged John Dey, MA, perpetual chaplain and master of Sponne Chantry at Towcester to receive and retain for life, together with this chaplaincy, one other benefice, or without the above chaplaincy, two other benefices, with the proviso that neither should be deprived of services, or the cure of souls.⁵⁶¹ Several other Sponne chaplains received the same indulgence.

Parishioners in the Henrician town would have had a choice of literate people, but only two of the 18 Henrician wills had no clerical witness. Towcester testators would on average be wealthier than those of the small rural parishes and they made generous traditional pious bequests throughout Henry's

⁵⁵⁷ Longden, *Clergy*, 14, p. 19; Gary G. Gibbs, 'William Tresham, 1495-1569, priest', *ODNB* (2004).

⁵⁵⁸ NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, T171. William Tresham is not listed in Bugbrooke burial register.

⁵⁵⁹ K. L. Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries in Britain* (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 202-3.

⁵⁶⁰ CPL, 18, p. 83, note 2.

⁵⁶¹ CPL, 16, p. 536.

reign, mainly for the many lights and for gifts for the church, but only five of the 47 Henrician wills include bequests for masses or obits, the last being in 1545. The final bequests for saints and Our Lady were Jane Davy's bequests in 1543 to Our Lady altar and St Anne's altar, with other traditional bequests including her 'month's mind' and masses for a year. Her son was a priest, Sir Benedict Davy, who witnessed his father's traditional will in 1535 and probably inspired his parents' traditionalism.⁵⁶²

Bequests to the rood, which had always been popular, continued into Edward's reign, suggesting Christocentrism was popular as a development within the traditional Church. Thirty-three per cent of Edwardian wills were witnessed by clerics, less than half the percentage late in Henry's reign, but there were only nine Edwardian wills; too small a sample for valid percentages and there is no pattern connecting witnesses and piety. The chantry was dissolved in 1548, but few wills were witnessed by chantry chaplains in the 1530s and 1540s. Three wills were written and witnessed by the scrivener, William Dawlton, who also wrote his own will, which had no witnesses, but two of these were also witnessed by Thomas Alyn. Two Edwardian wills in 1547 and 1550 demonstrate traditionalism with traditional soul bequests, and bequests to the high altar, the rood light, the sepulchre light, the torches, the residue for the soul and all Christian souls, and in one, 'to the ornaments of the parish church belonging to the hereafter'.⁵⁶³ The cryptic 'hereafter' possibly refers to the rood, as the next bequest is to the rood light. Two other testators left the residue for the soul.

Presumably Tresham approved of Thomas Alyn, curate for at least 20 years, who witnessed 22 of the 37 wills from 1538 to 1557, apparently taking seriously the medieval Church's encouragement for priests to be present at the making of all testaments, since several of these were also witnessed by a parish clerk or a scrivener, who probably wrote them. Early in Edward's reign there was still some traditionalism, but his policies eradicated lights and any remaining saints' altars from churches and there was no mention of their return in Mary's reign when they were not banned. Several Marian wills returned to

⁵⁶² NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, H45; Longden, *Clergy*, 4, p. 23; NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, E160.

⁵⁶³ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, I286, H12.

traditional soul bequests, but the only traditional pious bequests were two for the high altar.

There was an important influential change in the town in 1547 when the rectory, which had been forfeited to the crown after Richard Fermor was attainted, was granted to Thomas Bentham, bishop of Lichfield and Coventry and a graduate of Magdalen College. Thomas Bentham contributed to the Geneva Bible and was one of the bishops promoted early in Elizabeth's reign who were progressives, if not Calvinistic. Another of these bishops, Edmund Scambler of Peterborough, 1560-1584, was sympathetic to Puritanism early in his episcopate.⁵⁶⁴ Protestantism was furthered in Towcester by a Puritan lectureship established in 1572 by Sir Richard Knightley of Fawsley; a cleric being appointed to preach sermons outside normal services. Sir Richard Knightley was knighted by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, in 1565 when his religious sympathies with the puritans were already apparent. He was High Sheriff of the county in 1567 and 1581, a member of parliament four times and in the late 1580s housed the Puritan Marprelate press at Fawsley, near the study area, before it was taken to Coventry. Towcester was in a good position on Watling Street with numerous inns housing travellers carrying news and ideas to and from London, Northampton and elsewhere. Knightley shared expenses with his patron Robert Dudley and Bishop Bentham of Lichfield and Coventry. Andrew King, a graduate of Magdalen College, Oxford, later vicar of Culworth, 1583-1590, and already active in the town, was appointed.⁵⁶⁵ Many Puritan patrons shielded their parish ministers from the full effects of episcopal displeasure, in this case Peterborough where, by the 1570s, Edmund Scambler was less openly supportive of Puritans. In 1571 the earl of Leicester supported Percival Wiburn, a Puritan preacher in Northampton, against Scambler, who had to steer a difficult course during his episcopate between influential Puritans and influential recusant families such as Tresham, Vaux and Catesby. Thomas

⁵⁶⁴ Rosemary O'Day, 'Thomas Bentham 1513/14-1579', *ODNB (2004-14)*; Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London, 1967), p. 61; Geoffrey Carnell, *The Bishops of Peterborough 1541-1991* (Much Wenlock, 1993), p. 7.

⁵⁶⁵ Sheils, *Puritans*, p. 26; W. J. Sheils, 'Sir Richard Knightley (1533-1615) politician and patron of puritans', *ODNB* (Oxford, online edition, 2004-14); Longden, *Clergy*, 8, p. 95.

Tresham was High Sheriff four times; Nicholas Vaux twice and several Catesbys held the office.⁵⁶⁶

Patrick Collinson argues that the most remarkable conquests of Calvinistic Presbyterianism ‘were made in Northamptonshire, a county not hitherto especially noted for its Protestantism (it produced only one Marian martyr) and where there were a number of influential Catholic recusant families, Tresham, Catesby and Vaux’.⁵⁶⁷ All Saints, Northampton, was a centre of Puritanism from the 1570s and in the 1580s a *classis* was formed there, a board of Puritan clergy with elders along Presbyterian lines. Another was formed at Daventry, where several generations of the Knightley family were patrons until 1604 and membership included two protégés of Richard Knightley from the study area: graduates, Andrew King of the Towcester lectureship and vicar of Culworth, and John Elliston of Plumpton, 1586-1604, who appears to have been successful in influencing parishioners of his small parish, where the majority of the nine earlier wills had been traditional.⁵⁶⁸ Justification by faith preambles first appeared in the only two wills of his incumbency, although he did not witness them.

From William Tresham’s death in 1569, incumbents of Towcester were vicars who appear to have been very active Protestants, particularly Stephen Johnson, who was inducted to Towcester in 1574 and as rector of Tiffield, two miles from Towcester, in 1575. He lived in Tiffield, but he was buried in 1594 in the chancel at Slapton.⁵⁶⁹ Suddenly Towcester wills were Protestant and often Calvinistic, stating a belief in predestination. Between 1571 and 1589 Stephen Johnson witnessed ten out of 13 consecutive wills as the first witness on all but two wills, suggesting he was the scribe. All ten were Protestant and generally lengthy; six were distinctly Calvinistic, for example, Elizabeth Robins of Caldecote in 1578:

⁵⁶⁶ Paul S. Seaver, *The Puritan Lectureships, the politics of religious dissent 1560-1662* (Stanford, California, 1970), p. 50; Carnell, *Peterborough*, pp. 8-10, Sheils, *Puritans*, pp. 25-26; Bindoff, *Commons*, passim.

⁵⁶⁷ Collinson, *Puritan Movement*, p. 141.

⁵⁶⁸ R. M. Serjeantson, *A History of the Church of All Saints*, Northampton (Northampton, 1901), pp. 104, 114-117; Sheils, *Puritans*, p. 52.

⁵⁶⁹ Longden, *Clergy*, 8, p. 33; 16, pp. 80, 162.

I bequeath myself wholly both body and soul unto the most merciful hands of God the father the son and the Holy Ghost one perfect God in Trinity of infinite power and majesty by whom I am created redeemed and sanctified constantly believing that I shall be one of the number of God's elect people a citizen of heaven and attain eternal salvation by the only death and merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ to whom with the father and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory now and for evermore Amen.⁵⁷⁰

The shorter preamble of Thomas Newman of Towcester in 1588, stated justification by faith and was perhaps written by Stephen Johnson the second witness. The higher status John Anne, gentleman, signed first, and John Anne, junior, was third.⁵⁷¹ The three wills at this time without clerical witnesses also had Protestant preambles, apparently indicating a genuine spread of Protestantism in Towcester. The preambles during Stephen Johnson's incumbency indicate the success of his and Andrew King's influence in Towcester; however the initial enthusiasm for Calvinism among parishioners decreased with time (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Clerical witnesses of Towcester wills 1571-1610

Witnessed by:	Preamble		
	Overtly Calvinistic	Other Protestant	Neutral
Stephen Johnson, 1571-1590	6	4	
No cleric	1	2	
Total	7	6	
William Johnson, 1591-1599		2	
Thomas Johnson	3		
Another cleric			1
No cleric			2
Total	3	2	3
Francis Bradley, 1599-1610...		4	1
Another cleric			1
No cleric	2	4	2
Total	2	8	4

Note: there were four nuncupative wills not included in the table.

William Johnson BA was instituted in 1591 and witnessed two wills in 1593, with fairly short Protestant preambles.⁵⁷² Thomas Johnson, witnessed

⁵⁷⁰ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, V18.

⁵⁷¹ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, V123.

⁵⁷² Ibid, Y130, Y186.

three wills during May and July 1593 with identical Calvinistic preambles.⁵⁷³ There was also a John Johnson, vicar of All Saints, Northampton, 1584-1589, who was reputed to be an ardent Puritan and promoter of the *classis* system.⁵⁷⁴ It is not known whether the four Johnsons were related.

According to Patrick Collinson, almost all Puritan leaders ‘in Northamptonshire – the most Presbyterian of counties – were bred in Christ Church or Magdalen, Oxford’.⁵⁷⁵ In Towcester, vicars continued with Francis Bradley BA from Christ Church, Oxford, who was instituted in 1599, when a note in the parish register confirms that ‘Vicar Francis Bradley has read the articles of religion, 23 September 1599’ (a requirement for incumbents).⁵⁷⁶ Bradley witnessed five wills between 1599 and 1610 of which four had identical Protestant preambles.⁵⁷⁷

During Stephen Johnson’s incumbency 100 per cent of preambles were Protestant, in William Johnson’s incumbency it was 63 per cent, and during Francis Bradley’s incumbency, 71 per cent. The initial enthusiasm for overtly Calvinistic Protestantism had slowed down, but Protestant preambles were still in the majority. Anyone in the town not wishing the vicar to write their will could have found someone else to write it and 67 per cent not witnessed by a vicar were Protestant. Two of these in 1602 and 1603 indicated belief in predestination and were the first since Stephen Johnson’s incumbency when the Puritan Andrew King preached in the town. Initiated by clerical influence Towcester became a genuinely Protestant town after 1570.

The piety of the West family

Eventually in most families, parents with traditional beliefs had children who were Protestants. The wills of three generations of the West family, of Hulcote, Easton Neston, show progress through the Reformation and probable influence by Towcester clerics.

John West’s traditional will in 1543, briefly commended his soul to ‘almighty God my maker and redeemer’. His bequests to the high altar, to the

⁵⁷³ Ibid, V309, Y160, Y167, Y168.

⁵⁷⁴ Serjeantson, *All Saints*, p. 204.

⁵⁷⁵ Collinson, *Puritan Movement*, p. 129.

⁵⁷⁶ Longden, *Clergy*, 2, p. 201; NRO, 329p/255.

⁵⁷⁷ NRO, Arch. North.1st series, W150, X171, XYZ68, XYZ7.

bells, the lights of the rood, sepulchre and torches, with the residue to wife Agnes ‘to distribute and bestow for the health of my soul and her soul and all Christian souls at her pleasure’ indicate his reformist traditionalism.⁵⁷⁸

Richard West was probably John’s brother and his traditional will, dated the second day of Elizabeth’s reign, was discussed in the last chapter, including the soul bequest of the ‘mixed’ type often used by traditionalists in the 1550s:

first I humbly bequeath my soul into the merciful hands of Almighty God in trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost and to our blessed Lady Saint Mary and to all the holy company of heaven, faithfully trusting to be one of God’s elect and to be saved by the merits of Christ’s passion.⁵⁷⁹

Richard included bequests to the mother church, the high altar, the sepulchre light, the rood light and for a vestment and cross cloth for the church and two torches to be burnt at the sacring at high mass. Witnesses included John Lynnell, vicar, and Catholic John Fermor, knight.

Richard West had two sons: Thomas West the elder of Hulcote, Easton Neston, and Thomas West the younger of Towcester. Thomas the elder, yeoman, in 1573 bequeathed,

both body and soul to the merciful hands of almighty God the father, the son and Holy Ghost one perfect God in trinity of infinite power and might, constantly believing that I shalbe one of the number of God’s elect people a Citizen of heaven and attain eternal salvation by the only death and merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ to whom with God the father and the Holy Ghost the comforter be all honour and glory now and forever, amen.

Easton Neston is adjacent to Towcester and the first witness of Thomas the elder was Stephen Johnson, Calvinist vicar of Towcester. His only pious bequests were to the church of Easton Neston and the poor in both Hulcote and Towcester.⁵⁸⁰ His son, also Thomas West of Hulcote, yeoman, had similar beliefs and in 1601 bequeathed his soul ‘to almighty God trusting by the merits

⁵⁷⁸ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, H20.

⁵⁷⁹ TNA, PROB 11/42A.

⁵⁸⁰ NRO, Pet. 4, 171.

of Christ his passion to be admitted to the number of his elect'. The poor of Hulcote received his only pious bequest.⁵⁸¹

The first generation of Wests were traditionalists who favoured Christocentrism. The next two generations appear to have been influenced by the growth of Calvinism in Towcester from the 1570s.

Culworth and Moreton Pinkney

The Protestant and Puritan influence on these two western parishes is now examined. Sir John Cope's purchase of the Canons Ashby estate in 1538 did not include Moreton Pinkney rectory, which passed to Oriel College, Oxford, and after enclosures in the 1620s the parish paid £50 annually to the college in lieu of tithes.⁵⁸² In 1588 the manor of Moreton Pinkney passed from the Knightley family to the Danvers family of Dauntsey and Culworth, who had held the manor of Culworth since Henry VI's reign and the advowson from 1546.⁵⁸³

Richard Punne of Moreton in the last traditional and only Marian will, dated February 1558, requested the curate to say a mass and dirige, the only such request among the Moreton wills, and left the residue 'to the pleasure of God and profit of my soul'.⁵⁸⁴ However there was no Protestant preamble until 1572, then 12 of the remaining 18 preambles were Protestant. William Wilmore in 1582 made the most strongly worded Protestant soul bequest: 'to almighty God trusting to be saved only by the death of Jesus Christ renouncing all merits and work of man or saint whatsoever but by faith in Jesus Christ believe that my sins are done away'.⁵⁸⁵

At Culworth, John Danvers, son of Sir John Danvers and Dame Anne, died in 1556 and his Calvinistic beliefs, perhaps dangerous in Mary's reign, are shown in his soul bequest 'to immortal God, father of Jesus Christ our only redeemer to rest with his elect saints appointed forever'. His son Samuel Danvers presented Puritan Andrew King, already part of the Towcester lectureship, to Culworth vicarage in 1583, possibly just for income; from wills

⁵⁸¹ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, W300.

⁵⁸² Bridges 1, p. 252.

⁵⁸³ Bridges 1, pp. 251, 163.

⁵⁸⁴ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, N79.

⁵⁸⁵ NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, V111.

alone he does not appear to have had a strong influence, witnessing just one will in 1589 with a neutral preamble. He was followed in 1590 by Puritan Edmund Rudyard who was among the 16 non-conforming clergy deprived of their livings by Bishop Thomas Dove in 1604-1606 for refusal to conform to the canons of 1604. Rudyard, deprived in April 1605, had refused to comply with 'the conditions that he do not preache againste the Ceremonies of the Churche now established and that he do Administer the Sacrements accordinge to the booke of comon prayer'.⁵⁸⁶ (Culworth churchwardens, c. 1593, record a payment of 3s 8d to Mr Rudyard for a Book of Common Prayer.) He had also been presented by the Queen to Moreton Pinkney in 1597 and was deprived in January 1604/5.

Returning to Moreton Pinkney, a Coles family, land-holders from the time of Edward III and apparently having connections with nearby Canons Ashby priory, illustrate a family and Moreton's progress from Catholicism to Protestantism.⁵⁸⁷ Nicholas Coles was known to be a canon of Canons Ashby in 1532; in 1535 John Coles was prior, with Richard Coles as sub-prior and possibly the final prior.⁵⁸⁸ The will in 1526 of Thomas Coles, the only extant Coles will in Moreton, included 10s 'to our blessed lady of Ashby' and one of his executors was his son Sir Richard Coles, priest, who was to dispose of the residue for the health of Thomas's soul.⁵⁸⁹ He was surely Richard Coles of Canons Ashby. A curate William Coles officiated in Moreton in the 1560s.⁵⁹⁰ It seems highly probable that all these clerical Coles were related to the Moreton family.

Robert Coles was Edmund Rudyard's replacement as vicar of Moreton in 1604/5 where he had been schoolmaster at least since 1597 and conformed to the Established Church.⁵⁹¹ Between 1598 and 1606, Robert Coles witnessed five wills with exactly the same Protestant preamble and two others with a similar one: 'soul to almighty God my maker and to Jesus Christ my redeemer

⁵⁸⁶ TNA, PROB 11/38; Longden, *Clergy*, 8, p. 95; 12, p. 11; Rev. E. A. Irons, 'Northamptonshire Nonconformists', *NN&Q*, 2nd series, 2 (1907-9), pp. 79-80; Carnell, *Peterborough*, p. 13.

⁵⁸⁷ Bridges 1, p. 251.

⁵⁸⁸ *VCH Northamptonshire*, 2, p. 132; Longden, *Clergy*, 3, p. 199.

⁵⁸⁹ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, C80.

⁵⁹⁰ Longden, *Clergy*, 3, p. 211.

⁵⁹¹ Longden, *Clergy*, 3, p. 201; 16, p. 44.

constantly believing that through the merits of Christ Jesus my sins are fully and freely pardoned and that in the general resurrection I shall be accounted of among the just'.⁵⁹² He had descended from a convinced Catholic network including priests, but he was apparently a Protestant and conforming to the Elizabethan church. The parish, under the influence of Sir Richard Knightley followed by the Danvers family, had been Protestant for at least 25 years when Robert Coles became schoolmaster and then vicar.

g) Parishes without obvious influence

a) Stoke Bruerne

Stoke Bruerne did not have resident influential gentry. There were no Protestant preambles until 1579 and percentages of clerical witnesses and incumbent witnesses were among the lowest in the area, 39 and 14 per cent. A probable explanation for this was given by Richard Lightfoot, instituted as rector in 1601. In an Exchequer law-suit in 1621 against several freeholders and tenants of the Honor of Grafton, he claimed that before his incumbency there had been no resident incumbent for 200 years, which appears quite possible.⁵⁹³ There were five rectors in the period 1500-1599, but only five wills were witnessed by a rector: one by John Knightley in 1532 and four by William Warren in 1556-1559. There were at least eight different curates who witnessed nine wills at various times, but only one long-term curate. The living at Stoke Bruerne was quite wealthy at £30 a year, and was the third highest in Brackley deanery, where livings ranged from £44 down to £7.⁵⁹⁴ Pluralist rectors held Stoke Bruerne for income, but lived elsewhere for example, John Mayhoe and John Knightley.

John Mayhoe, rector 1490-1524, was also rector of Alderton, two miles south of Stoke Bruerne. In his will in 1528 he is stated to be of Alderton, he requested burial in the chancel at Alderton and his bequests were more generous to Alderton than to Stoke Bruerne. This suggests that he lived in Alderton.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹² For example: NRO, Arch. North.1st series, W73.

⁵⁹³ TNA, E112/111/299.

⁵⁹⁴ *Valor*, 4, p. 335.

⁵⁹⁵ Longden, 9, p. 193; NRO, Arch. North. 1st Series, D185.

John Knightley, rector from 1524 to 1549, was a younger son of Sir Richard Knightley, patron of Stoke Bruerne for this period only. John Knightley was also rector of Byfield, 15 miles west of Stoke Bruerne, but only four miles from the Knightley family seat at Fawsley and from 1542 he was dean of Warwick Collegiate Church. Byfield was worth £28 a year, and in 1542 his brother Sir Valentine Knightley of Fawsley (father of the later Puritan Sir Richard) granted him an annuity out of the manor of Everdon, close to Fawsley. He held all these posts until his death in 1549 and was therefore reasonably wealthy. He was the first of seven Knightley rectors of Byfield and this was probably John Knightley's home (or perhaps Warwick from 1542).⁵⁹⁶ He appears to have sent Richard Stukley, styled as curate when witnessing three wills in Byfield, to Stoke Bruerne where he witnessed a will in 1531.⁵⁹⁷ Stoke Bruerne was almost certainly just income to John Knightley.

Little is known of the next three rectors, but the one long-term curate, Maurice Jones, was in the parish from 1562 to 1599. Longden states that he was a curate, but he signed the parish register as 'minister'. He witnessed only one will in 37 years which does not suggest popularity with his parishioners, or possibly he too was often absent. Longden says he may also have been a curate of Whittlebury.⁵⁹⁸ There was other continuity from 1562 to 1599 when there were only three churchwardens; Robert Brittain and Robert Wicken, who was followed by his son Robert Wicken.⁵⁹⁹

The patron of Richard Lightfoot, rector from 1601, is listed as Sir Christopher Hatton, who supported the Elizabethan Episcopalian reaction against the most radical Protestant elements in the country.⁶⁰⁰ The few wills witnessed by Richard Lightfoot were Neutral, but his own will in 1625 had a Protestant preamble.⁶⁰¹

There is an impression of injunctions being obeyed when issued; bequests for named saints ended in 1531; bequests for masses, torches, the rood light, the sepulchre light and Trinity light continued until 1542, after which

⁵⁹⁶ Longden, *Clergy*, 9, p. 193, 8, pp. 3, 133.

⁵⁹⁷ Longden, *Clergy*, 13, p. 107.

⁵⁹⁸ Longden, *Clergy*, 16, p. 80.

⁵⁹⁹ NRO, 303p/17.

⁶⁰⁰ Collinson, *Puritan Movement*, pp. 193-4. Note: Christopher Hatton died in 1591. His heir William Hatton must have continued the patronage.

⁶⁰¹ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, AV253.

traditional pious bequests tailed off. The three Edwardian wills included two bequests of the residue for the soul. In 35 of the 36 wills from 1554 to 1610 there was one bequest for the mother church and one of the residue for the soul. The exception was one of five Marian wills. Four preambles were Traditional following official policy, though the wills had no pious bequests, traditional or otherwise. The fifth will, which had a Neutral preamble, was of Robert Brittain in 1558, perhaps a churchwarden like his son and grandson. His bequests were for the mother church, the high altar, the maintenance of the vestments and surplices, the poor of the parish, the priest for a mass at his burial, and the residue to be disposed for his soul and all Christian souls.⁶⁰² This was a genuine continuation of the Catholicism of his youth, as far as was possible.

Stoke Bruerne, with its hamlet Shutlanger, was not isolated; gentlemen and farmers would have had business in nearby Towcester and Northampton and may have attended Andrew King's lectures. A few gentry and yeoman families had sons working in London.⁶⁰³ However, wills do not show a rapid growth of Protestantism and only 38 per cent of Elizabethan wills were Protestant. Will evidence alone indicates a traditional parish slowly accepting Elizabeth's established church in the sixteenth century, although there is evidence of dissent in the seventeenth century (see chapter six).

Paulerspury

Paulerspury also appears to have had a long period with a pluralist incumbent. Roger Bull, rector for 47 years from 1512 to 1559 was probably an absentee for much of his incumbency. From 1519 he was also vicar of Stockland in Dorset, which was appropriated by Milton Abbas abbey until the Dissolution.⁶⁰⁴ He may have retained his traditionalism, which could have influenced the choice of curates at Paulerspury. As vicar of Stockland, he would have been expected to be resident and he died in Dorset.⁶⁰⁵ His occasional presences in Paulerspury

⁶⁰² NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, L13e

⁶⁰³ Ann Garfield, *Northamptonshire Yeomen: The Kingstons of Shutlanger, c1500-1850*, unpublished University of Nottingham MA dissertation (2007), passim.

⁶⁰⁴ Shipp W. and Hodson, J. W. (eds) *John Hutchins, 1698-1773, The History and Antiquities of the county of Dorset*, (East Ardsley, 3rd edition 1973). p. 251; CPR Edward VI, 1550-1553, p. 404.

⁶⁰⁵ W.H.Wilkin, 'The Vicars of Stockland 1560-1918', *Report and Transactions of the Devonshire Association for the advancement of Science, Literature and Art*, 71 (1939), p. 275.

are recorded in wills where he is overseer or witness of wills in 1528, 1532, 1536 and 1548.⁶⁰⁶ The dates of the wills could, without proof, suggest four-yearly visits to Paulerspury.

The manor of Paulerspury was granted in 1552 to Nicholas Throckmorton who was one of the few Protestant Throckmortons, but he was never able to build a country house there and did not present to the benefice, although his son Arthur did in 1602.⁶⁰⁷

The pattern of clerical witnesses and of bequests is similar to that of Stoke Bruerne. However, although Paulerspury was the second parish to have a Protestant preamble (1547), it only had six Protestant preambles in all 59 wills. It was also one of three parishes with three Traditional preambles in Elizabeth's reign. From evidence so far it appears to be another traditional parish slowly accepting Elizabeth's established church without influence from cleric or landowner, however, there was later dissent, which is discussed in the next chapter.

Whittlebury and Silverstone

Silverstone and Whittlebury, five miles from the parochial church at Greens Norton, were chapels-of-ease that shared the same curates. There were at least seven curates between 1526 and 1610 (who are named), but little is known of them. In Whittlebury 42 per cent of the 19 wills had a clerical witness, but in Silverstone it was four wills out of 18, or 22 per cent, the lowest in the survey. In Whittlebury, only three wills were Protestant. Silverstone had just five wills before Elizabeth's reign, all with Traditional preambles; then 11 of the remaining 13 wills were Protestant. This is a greater proportion than in any other parish in the survey and there is no obvious reason connected with clergy or landowners.

Conclusion

It was suggested earlier that Lollardy may have had an enduring influence in the area. Lollardy cannot be followed through the generations of families here as it

⁶⁰⁶ NRO, Arch. North. 1st series, D127, D420, E180, K136.

⁶⁰⁷ Bridges 1, pp. 311-313; Stanford Lehnberg, 'Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, 1515/16-1571', *ODNB* (2008).

can in the Chilterns and Kent; however, in chapter six it is argued that geographical continuity from Lollards to separatism occurred in parts of the area.

Landowners and clergy influenced some parishes and caused differences in the timing and type of religious changes. The Dissolution brought new landowners to an area where an abnormal number of churches were appropriated to religious houses. Networks of landowning families who retained their Catholic faith helped to sustain traditionalism on their estates, or alternatively, to delay Protestantism by retaining Catholic priests. Richard Fermor of Easton Neston presented a Catholic priest John Lynnell as vicar and Sir Robert Peckham of Biddlesden inherited Thomas Fox, who had been presented by Biddlesden Abbey, at Weedon Lois. Both priests, supported by Catholic families survived the changes of monarch and died in their parishes in Elizabeth's reign, thus delaying the appointment of Protestant clerics. Traditionalism died slowly where long-term Catholic priests survived, especially in Weedon Lois which, together with Easton Neston, was among the few parishes with residual traditionalism in Elizabeth's reign. At Wappenham, another parish with late residual traditionalism, there was no long-term Catholic priest, but William Symonds, rector 1554-1565 had earlier been the warden of Sponne Chantry, Towcester. Catholic George Shirley of Astwell had his own chaplain, as did Robert Peckham of Biddlesden.

The incidence of clerical witnesses, especially incumbents, gives an impression of the relationship between a priest and his parishioners. Weedon Lois had the highest percentage of clerical witnesses (64 per cent) of whom 53 per cent were incumbents. Thomas Fox appears to have been liked and respected in his parish, where a few wills included bequests to him. Thomas Todde of Syresham was a complete contrast. At the Dissolution of religious houses monks and their superiors were given pensions, or a benefice, or both, and Todde, who had been a sub-prior, received both. He also lived into Elizabeth's reign and witnessed six of the ten wills during his incumbency, but all ten had traditional preambles. Possibly Todde managed to insist on traditional preambles as there were no more after his death. He was instituted to a parish, where traditional pious bequests were abandoned in the 1520s and where there were few pious bequests of any sort after this. The only

Northamptonshire Marian martyr lived there. The Peckhams left Biddlesden and Sir George Fermor of Easton Neston appears to have become a Protestant; only Wappenham, including Astwell and Falcutt, continued under Catholic landownership.

Puritanism was slow to gain a hold over the area in Elizabeth's reign. There were two centres of Puritanism in the area. The Puritan lectureship in Towcester, established by Puritan, Sir Richard Knightley, achieved some success with Andrew King as lecturer combined with Puritan vicars of Towcester. Initiated by the lectureship, Calvinistic Protestantism was readily accepted in Towcester, but does not appear to have spread far outside the town. Moreton Pinkney, Protestant from at least 1572, came under the influence of the Puritan Danvers family.

The parishioners of Stoke Bruerne and Paulerspury, both subject to long-term pluralist rectors, appear to have organized their church communities without influence from landowners or clergy; they did not have resident landowners and few wills had clerical witnesses. Stoke Bruerne had an average percentage of Elizabethan Protestantism, but Paulerspury had the lowest percentage and also late traditionalism.

In most of the area, saints, masses and obits were abandoned early in favour of Christocentrism, the Rood and sepulchre and must have received outside influence at that time; its origin is not obvious, but hidden Lollardy is one possible factor in some parishes. There were few bequests for obits at any time; only five wills requested masses and four made bequests for lights or torches after Henry's reign. There were five Elizabethan bequests of the 'residue for the soul', but perhaps the donors were still forming their new beliefs.

This chapter together with chapter four leaves an impression of an area with independent-minded people who were not often influenced by the religious policies of the crown and there was no Marian revival of Catholicism. This is in contrast to other areas where there seemed to be more ready responses to official religion. It was shown earlier that Edward's policy was respected in Gloucestershire, but traditionalism returned in Mary's reign and continued into

Elizabeth's reign.⁶⁰⁸ Yorkshire was also a conservative area and traditionalism in York suffered a slow demise through Elizabeth's reign.⁶⁰⁹

The progress of Protestantism in Culworth, a parish with late traditionalism, was slow. Possibly this was the result of a strong parish community (as indicated by the wardens' accounts), still feeling the influence of past vicars who had been born into local families. A recusant Culworth miller, who may not have been alone in his beliefs, was recorded in 1614. However all evidence suggests that residual traditionalism in parishes virtually died out early in Elizabeth's reign and the reforms within the then established 'Protestant Church' were apparently accepted, though the use of Neutral soul bequests by many testators suggests a more passive than eager acceptance. Traditional parents had Protestant children and Catholic landowners died and were replaced by Protestants, except at Astwell where the Shirleys, heirs to the Lovetts, continued their Catholicism. The main Shirley seat was Staunton Harold in Leicestershire, but George Shirley spent time at Astwell.

Some landowners and clergy influenced the timing rather than the fact of the Reformation. Elizabeth's Church eventually became the 'Established Church of England', but it was not accepted by everyone in the area. Growth of separatist groups and the possibility of enduring Lollard influence are considered in the next chapter.

⁶⁰⁸ Litzenberger, *English Reformation*.

⁶⁰⁹ Palliser, *York*.

CHAPTER 6

Growth of Dissent

Changes in personal piety before 1610 were discussed in earlier chapters, but in a study of the 'Long Reformation' there should be some discussion of the development of Puritanism during the first half of the seventeenth century and of the Civil Wars, 1642-1651, before considering conventicles and the formation of separatist groups in the study area by the middle of the century.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, when generally in the study area religious content in the wills had greatly decreased and there is little useful evidence to be gained from them, it is also relevant to return to a statement in chapter one concerning Peterborough diocesan records. Many have been subjected to damp and are now too fragile for production. This reduces local evidence of the early Stuart period before the Civil War, but there is other evidence from 1604 onwards of ejected nonconforming ministers indicating a growth of Puritanism, particularly in the Culworth and Moreton Pinkney area.⁶¹⁰

a) The background to Puritanism and the Civil Wars

Protestants were against the perceived mysticism of the priest's function in the chancel. Puritans wanted further reform to a simpler Bible-based Church where individuals had direct access to God without involvement of the Church hierarchy, including bishops, which had been retained by the Elizabethan Protestant Church. They wanted complete removal of the function of the chancel by positioning a communion table in the middle of the nave. In the second half of the seventeenth-century, still unsatisfied with the National Church, some non-conforming Puritans formed or joined separatist groups.

Puritanism in Elizabethan England, as described by Patrick Collinson in 1967, involved a commitment to further reformation in the government or liturgy of the Church.⁶¹¹ In succeeding years there has been much discussion

⁶¹⁰ See below (d) Ejected and intruding ministers.

⁶¹¹ Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*.

and development of the meaning of Puritanism and types of Puritanism.⁶¹² Nicholas Tyacke considers where there is evidence of non-conformity or a variety of schemes to alter the government of the church, such as Presbyterianism, there is Puritanism; where there is no such evidence, there is no Puritanism.⁶¹³

The Elizabethan Puritans were at the vanguard of the official efforts to stimulate Protestantism among people bewildered by decades of rapid change; they were evangelicals eager to disseminate the good news of justification by faith alone, the Lutheran belief, or of predestination to election, the Calvinistic belief. However, these Puritans were convinced that the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559 had left the English Church half-reformed and its bishops had abandoned the goal of further reform. In 1586 Puritan leaders set out a model for a reformed Presbyterian Church, but even in Northamptonshire where Presbyterianism was strong it was not full Presbyterianism with a system of elders.⁶¹⁴ Ann Hughes has written about the failure of forming a Presbyterian National Church in England.⁶¹⁵ The accession of James I, a Scottish Calvinist seemed to hold out new promise for the Puritans who bombarded the king with petitions.⁶¹⁶

From the beginning of the seventeenth century the Calvinists in the Peterborough area were opposed by an Arminian movement led by William Laud. Arminians challenged the selective grace of predestination and emphasised the grace available to all who took part in the worship organized by the Church.⁶¹⁷ John Morrill believes that the Laudians caused great damage and has ‘no reason to doubt that the hotter sort of Protestants were integrated into the Jacobean Church and State’ and that Puritan magistrates and churchwardens were working with ministers to instruct the ignorant and impose Godly

⁶¹² For example by Peter Lake: Lake, Peter, ‘Defining Puritanism – again?’, in Bremer, Francis J. (ed.), *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Faith* (Boston, Massachusetts, 1993), pp. 3-29.

⁶¹³ Nicholas Tyacke, ‘Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution’, in C. Russell (ed.), *The Origins of the English Civil War* (London, 1973), pp. 119-143.

⁶¹⁴ John Spurr, *English Puritanism 1603-1689* (Basingstoke, 1988), pp. 50, 55.

⁶¹⁵ Ann Hughes, ‘“Popular” Presbyterianism in the 1640s and 1650s: the cases of Thomas Edwards and Thomas Hall’, in Nicholas Tyacke, *England’s Long Reformation* (London, 1998), pp. 235-359.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 59.

⁶¹⁷ John Fielding, ‘Arminianism in the Localities: Peterborough Diocese, 1603-1642’, in Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642* (Stanford, California, 1993), pp. 93-113.

discipline. ‘There was no incompatibility between serving God and the Crown’.⁶¹⁸

The English Puritan, first identified in the late sixteenth century, had begun to seem extinct by the eighteenth century and the Puritan heyday was in the lifetimes of the great seventeenth-century Puritans such as Richard Baxter (1615-1691), John Milton (1608-1674), Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), John Bunyan (1628-1688), Edmund Calamy (1600-1666), and others.⁶¹⁹

The British Civil Wars is too big a subject to be discussed more than briefly here. An estimated 540,000 people lost their lives in the grim horror of the Wars, which divided families and communities, and caused devastation in the countryside where soldiers from huge armies on the move were arbitrarily billeted in houses and farms, sons were press-ganged into combat, and harvests were left to rot.⁶²⁰

In the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 the English Parliamentarians gained Scottish military help against the Royalists by promising to support the formation of a united Presbyterian Church in Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland; support that did not materialize. A Presbyterian settlement was strongly opposed by Independents and some others and the final, less specific, settlement was regarded as a compromise. The Independents favoured confrontation with the king and outright military victory.⁶²¹ They advocated freedom of religion for non-Catholics and complete separation of Church and State.

John Morrill believes that ‘the English Civil War did not grow out of a gradual and inexorable collapse in the state’s ability to compel obedience.’ Monarchy itself was not criticised; complaints were very specifically about the misgovernment of Charles I.⁶²² Ann Hughes states that the first Civil War is sometimes argued to be a war of religion rather than a struggle over politics, but

⁶¹⁸ John Morrill, ‘The Religious Context of the English Civil War’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, Vol. 34 (1984), pp. 155-178, esp. 162.

⁶¹⁹ Fielding, ‘Arminianism’, p. 47.

⁶²⁰ Tristram Hunt, *The English Civil War at First Hand* (London, 2002), p. 349; Ian Gentles, *The English Revolution and the Wars in the Three Kingdoms 1638-1652* (Harlow, 2007), p. 436.

⁶²¹ Gentles, *English Revolution*, pp.246-7.

⁶²² Morrill, ‘English Civil War’, pp. 159-160.

she believes that it is a mistake to imply such a clear separation between religion and politics.⁶²³

There are three popular views about the allegiance of the English ‘common’ people in the civil wars. One long-held belief is that they had no real allegiance to either side; they were mere cannon fodder and targets for plunder. A second more recently popular view is of neutrality; the first priority of the lower orders being to protect their homes, families and communities from the armies of both sides. The third theory is based on the assumption that many of the common people did participate actively and overwhelmingly supported parliament.⁶²⁴

The need to raise revenue led both Royalists and Parliamentarians to develop ways of distinguishing friends and enemies, with the intention of making the latter pay more than the former. A Committee for Compounding was set up in London by parliament and the estates of ‘delinquent’ Royalists were sequestered until they paid a composition fine and took the oath of the Solemn League and Covenant. Petitioners to the committee might claim a change of heart, not necessarily true, hoping to have low composition fines.⁶²⁵

The first two English Civil Wars (1642-46, 1648) climaxed in January 1649 when Charles I was executed at Whitehall, and ended with the Battle of Worcester on September 3, 1651. An Act of Parliament in 1649 declared England with its dominions and territories to be a Commonwealth, which ended in 1660, but was interrupted by a Cromwellian Protectorate, 1653-1659, under Oliver Cromwell and briefly by his son Richard after Oliver’s death in 1658. The monarchy was restored; Charles II was invited to return from exile in Europe and he was acclaimed and restored to the throne in May 1660.⁶²⁶

b) Puritanism in the study area

Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales write of active Puritanism as a communal social experience demonstrated mainly by sermons and fasts. Puritans regarded preaching to be an indispensable part of Sunday worship and

⁶²³ Ann Hughes, *The Causes of the English Civil War* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 111.

⁶²⁴ David Underdown, *Revel, Riot & Rebellion, Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 1-2.

⁶²⁵ Rachel Weil, ‘Thinking about Allegiance in the English Civil War’, *History Workshop Journal*, 61 (Spring, 2006), pp. 183-191, esp. 184-5.

⁶²⁶ After 1660 all legal documents were dated as if his reign began in 1649.

they might also attend weekday sermons. If their local minister neglected preaching they travelled or ‘gadded’ about to attend sermons elsewhere, discussing, singing, and cementing ties as they walked along.⁶²⁷ Preaching and gadding, particularly in the Culworth and Moreton Pinkney area, are discussed below.⁶²⁸

Communal fasting was another important aspect of Puritan sociability. Catholics had abstained from meat or fasted at particular times, such as on Fridays or during Lent. The Elizabethan Settlement made provision for occasional public fast-days at times of particular national crises, such as plague visitations or the Armada crisis of 1588. The Puritans, however, added their own local days of sermons, prayers and psalm singing, often ending with a simple shared meal. For example, Charles Chauncey, vicar of Marston St Lawrence, from where there were later a few members of Weston-by-Weedon Baptists, presided at a fast in Marston in 1637 when he preached for six hours to 60 local Puritans.⁶²⁹ The Weston Baptists still held fasts in the eighteenth century.⁶³⁰

Puritans sought ways of distinguishing themselves from the unregenerate. Many Puritans had given their children biblical Christian names from the 1560s onwards, but by the 1580s some of them began using their own invented names with didactic overtones. This mainly occurred in the south-east of England, but it subsequently began to be adopted in a few areas of Northamptonshire.⁶³¹ There are examples of this in the study area where these names were used in research to identify probable dissenters.⁶³²

b) The effects of Civil War in the study area

Northampton was decisively Parliamentary in the war and soon became the most powerful garrison in the East Midlands controlled by the Corporation and

⁶²⁷ Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales, ‘Introduction: The Puritan Ethos, 1560-1700’, in Durston and Eales (eds.), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1500-1700* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 1-31, esp. p. 20.

⁶²⁸ See (d) below, ‘Ejected and intruding ministers’.

⁶²⁹ Francis J. Bremer, ‘Charles Chauncey, 1592-1672, minister in America and college head’, *ODNB* (2004-16); Durston and Eales, *Culture*, pp. 20-21.

⁶³⁰ See below, discussion of the Church Book in ‘The Baptist Church of Bradden and Weston-by-Weedon’.

⁶³¹ Durston and Eales, *Culture*, pp. 23-4.

⁶³² See (g) below, ‘Wills and Parish Registers’.

County Committee, which were quickly dominated by Puritans. In the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries many of the ‘nouveaux-riches’ bought estates in Northamptonshire, where large tracts of Royal Forest were sold by an impecunious Crown. These new wealthy gentry who enclosed open-fields and built country houses were often strongly Parliamentary and provided leadership in the County Committee. Sir Richard Knightley of Fawsley (1610-1661), a Puritan with influence in the western part of the study area, was an extremely active Parliamentarian during the 1640s, reaching the higher echelons of the wartime administration in 1648. The Earl of Northampton and many other Royalists left the county to join the king’s forces at Oxford.⁶³³ A number of these Royalist gentry were sequestered; for example, Sir Edward Watson of Stoke Park, who paid a total of £656 in fines in 1646-1650.⁶³⁴

During 1642-3, Parliament made two appeals for loans of money and plate, supposedly to be repaid with eight per cent interest. The ‘Civil War Monies’ document, arranged in hundreds and parishes, has survived for Northamptonshire and lists about 6000 people in the county who lent money to Parliament in July 1643. Some parishes in the study area have quite short lists or no lists at all. Stoke Bruerne’s long lists, for instance, are the exception and the parish appears to be strongly supportive of the Parliamentarians, with 34 loans from Stoke Bruerne village and 25 from Shutlanger. Amounts paid ranged from 1 to 10 shillings from widows and the less wealthy majority, and £1 to £10 from the wealthier parishioners. The Royalist rector, Emmanuel Arundel, appears to have paid £40 in total (a payment of £20, followed by another payment of £20). This suggests an attempt to avoid sequestration and probably some coercion by the collectors; however, he was sequestered in 1648 by the parliamentary committee and replaced by intruding ministers.⁶³⁵

The area suffered much unrest in the 1640s, particularly in 1643-1645. By 1643 Prince Rupert, leading the local Royalists, was based at Easton Neston with Sir William Fermor (1621-1661) who was a royalist army officer during the first English Civil War. On and off throughout 1643 and into 1644, Prince Rupert’s forces were involved in skirmishes around Northampton and

⁶³³ Everitt, A. M., *The Local Community and the Great Rebellion* (London, 1969), pp. 17-22.

⁶³⁴ Calendar of the Committee for Compounding Domestic, 1643-1660, Part 1, p. 88 and Part 2, pp. 1595-6; Sean Kelsey, ‘Sir Richard Knightley (1609/10-1661), politician’, *ODNB*.

⁶³⁵ NRO, Baker MS 703; Longden, *Northamptonshire Clergy*, 1, p. 87.

Towcester. In February 1643 they plundered Towcester and the surrounding area, taking about 1000 horses, money, clothes and linen. In December, when Prince Rupert had gone to Oxford, leaving half of his garrison at Towcester, a Parliamentary party marched against the Cavaliers and rescued plunder, restoring livestock to its owners.⁶³⁶ In June 1645 the Battle of Naseby was only 18 miles north of Towcester.

At least seven ministers in the study area signed the Solemn League and Covenant, but they did not include Rev. Lawrence Washington of Sulgrave (great-grandson of the first Lawrence Washington of Sulgrave), or Rev. William Losse of Lois Weedon, both Royalists who suffered under Parliamentarian assaults. Lawrence Washington was ejected from his living by Parliamentarians causing a fall in the family's fortunes; possibly the reason why his son Colonel John Washington emigrated to Virginia in 1656.⁶³⁷ On 2 July 1643, a Parliamentary cavalry raid from Northampton captured and wounded William Losse while he was preaching in his church. He managed to escape and took refuge in the church-tower, but soldiers then rode up and down the church spurring and twitching their horses, purposely to endanger the people.⁶³⁸

The foregoing is a short introduction to the unrest of this period. The combination of debate about church governance, the killing of neighbours and even the king, can only have combined to encourage the growth of dissent, which is the subject of this chapter.

c) Dissent in the study area

It was shown in chapter five that there were two main centres of Puritan influence: firstly, Towcester with its Puritan lectureship, and secondly, the area around Canons Ashby, Moreton Pinkney, Culworth and Sulgrave with Puritan Danvers and Dryden landowners. It is shown below that separatism began in the same areas, with conventicles at Sulgrave, Towcester and Paulerspury, inspired and led by ejected ministers.

⁶³⁶ E. T. Bradley, 'Sir William Fermor, first baronet (1621-1661) royalist army officer, *ODNB*; NRO, Baker MS 704.

⁶³⁷ Matthews, *Calamy*, p. 553; John Winston, *The Testimony of our Reverend Brethren, Ministers of the Province of London* (London, 1648); <http://www.northamptonshiretimeline.com/article/english-civil-war/>

⁶³⁸ Mike Ingram, 'English Civil War: Part 2'; *Northamptonshire Herald and Post* (23 June 2015); Matthews, *Walker Revised*, p. 282.

In the seventeenth century the majority of people in the area accepted the evolving Church of England, however, a nonconformist minority joined separatist groups, while probably only the Shirleys of Astwell, retained their Catholicism. Without discussing national religious politics in detail, this chapter explores and speculates about links, if any, between seventeenth-century separatist groups and earlier piety and influences in the area that were discussed in chapter five. Had Lollard beliefs survived underground and inspired separatism during the Puritan campaigns in the 1570s?

The World of Rural Dissenters, edited by Margaret Spufford, discusses continuity between Lollards and later dissenters, 1520-1725, mainly in Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and the Chilton area of Buckinghamshire, bringing together the research of a group of academics whose contributions each approached the subject in different ways. A main objective was to assess the social and economic status of these people and their inclusion in their communities. Considerable evidence of families was available for the area including various tax and poor relief records, wills, parish registers and churchwardens' presentments. The population of the Chiltons was sufficiently stable for some families and surnames to be followed through from Lollards to dissenters.⁶³⁹

Much less detail is available for the study area in Northamptonshire where only a few names of Lollards are known. Wills, parish registers and other documents were examined for signs of dissent, for example, infants not being baptized. For the main period of the study up to 1610, soul bequests, burial instructions and all other pious bequests were noted for all parish wills of the area, which were the main source of evidence, and used to judge religious beliefs of the testators. It was not practical to read all wills after 1610 and the majority of wills studied were of known or suspected separatists. There was little definite evidence to be gained directly from these wills. Burial instructions, lack of religious content, and very occasional mention of separatist

⁶³⁹ Margaret Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995), esp. Nesta Evans, 'The descent of dissenters in the Chiltern Hundreds', pp. 288-308, and Appendix B, pp. 401-430; Bill Stevenson, 'The social and economic status of post-Restoration dissenters', pp. 332-359, and 'The social integration of post-Restoration dissenters', pp. 332-387; Patrick Collinson, 'Critical Conclusion', pp. 388-396.

churches were noted; pieces of information from all sources needed to be combined and used as discussed below.

It has been said that ‘Northamptonshire, the stronghold of ultra-protestant activity, is closely identified with the rise of Independency or Congregationalism’.⁶⁴⁰ In the study area before the Toleration Act of 1689, there is also some written evidence of Quakers by the mid-seventeenth century and of Baptists by 1681.⁶⁴¹ The most important official evidence of dissent is the returns of conventicles made in 1669 on the instruction of Archbishop Sheldon, following the Conventicle Act of 1664, which aimed to prevent illegal nonconformist meetings for worship.⁶⁴² The Compton Census (see below) followed the Conventicle Act.

d) Ejected and intruding ministers

Culworth and Moreton Pinkney area

During a purge of sixteen non-conforming clergy by Bishop Thomas Dove in 1604-6, Culworth and Moreton Pinkney suffered the earliest ejections in the study area.⁶⁴³ Edmund Rudyard was presented by Puritan Samuel Danvers as vicar of Culworth in 1590 and was also presented by the Queen to Moreton Pinkney in 1597, but was deprived of both livings in 1604-5. Rudyard appears to have continued the strict Puritanism of Andrew King of the Towcester lectureship, whom he had followed as vicar at Culworth.

Another cleric, John Dod, a Puritan leader with national standing, was presented to Hanwell, close to Banbury, by the Puritan Anthony Cope, but when he and other hardliners rejected James I’s placation of moderate Puritans, Bishop Bridges of Oxford suspended him from Hanwell about 1604 and ejected him by March 1607. He was invited to Canons Ashby by Sir Erasmus Dryden, the Puritan owner of the church that was outside diocesan control, from where as a popular preacher he evangelized the surrounding parishes. He and Robert Cleaver (deprived from Drayton, Oxfordshire) preached in Moreton Pinkney,

⁶⁴⁰ R. M. Serjeantson, ‘Ecclesiastical History’, *VCH Northants*, 2, p. 50.

⁶⁴¹ Joseph Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers*, vol. 1 (London, 1753); Regent’s Park College, Oxford, Angus Library, A.d.15, Church book, Slapton.

⁶⁴² David L. Wykes, ‘The Church and Early Dissent: The 1669 Return of Nonconformist Conventicles for the Archdeaconry of Northampton’, *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 8/3 (1991-2), pp. 197-209.

⁶⁴³ See Chap. 5.

Sulgrave and Weedon Lois in 1607-1611. ‘Godly people’ (Puritans) who were not satisfied with sermons at their parish church ‘gadded about’ to other churches to hear godly preachers, often nonconformist ministers, who attracted people from other parishes. After John Dod had moved on, parishioners of Moreton were probably involved in gadding about to hear other Puritan preachers and demonstrate their godly zeal. Gadders travelled in groups and support networks were formed.⁶⁴⁴

During the Commonwealth, 1649-1660, a number of ‘intruding ministers’ who wanted a Presbyterian Church replaced clerics in the study area and most were ejected at the Restoration. Richard Warre, a graduate from Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where he could have known Edward Bagshaw, intruded as vicar of Moreton in 1651, but was suspended in 1662. He later conformed and was restored to his living after six months and remained until his death in 1687.⁶⁴⁵

After the Restoration the 1662 Act of Uniformity established an episcopal state church and required conformity to prescribed doctrine and the *Book of Common Prayer*, disavowal of the Solemn League and Covenant, and made it illegal to take up arms against the monarch.⁶⁴⁶ Clerics and teachers were compelled to choose between submission to episcopal authority or loss of their livelihoods. Nearly a thousand ministers in England and Wales gave up their livings and in total over two thousand clergymen and teachers were displaced or ejected in 1660-1662; a time when some separatist groups already existed outside the national church. Conformity had been linked with political loyalty since the canons of 1604 (ecclesiastical laws); Elizabethan and early

⁶⁴⁴ J. Fielding, ‘John Dod (1550-1645), Church of England clergyman’, *ODNB* (2004-12), C. Haigh, *The Plain Man’s Pathways to Heaven, Kinds of Christianity in Post-Reformation England, 1570-1640* (Oxford, 2007), p. 112; John Fielding, *Conformists, puritans and the church court: the diocese of Peterborough, 1603-1642*, unpublished University of Birmingham Ph.D. thesis, (1989); Benjamin Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans*, vol. 3 (1813), pp. 81, 154, Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and their Audiences, 1590-1640* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 190-200; Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales, *The Culture of English Puritanism* (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 20.

⁶⁴⁵ Longden, *Clergy*, 14, pp. 177-9, A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised, being a revision of Edmund’s Account of the Ministers and Others Ejected and Silenced, 1660-2* (Oxford, 1934), p. 511.

⁶⁴⁶ In the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 the English parliamentarians gained Scottish military help against the Royalists in return for supporting the formation of a united Presbyterian Church in Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland. A Presbyterian settlement was strongly opposed by Independents and some others and the final, less specific, settlement was regarded as a compromise.

Stuart statutes were invoked in the 1660s that aimed to enforce attendance at the Established Church and suppress separatist conventicles, but they proved ineffectual in enforcing conformity.⁶⁴⁷

Edward Bagshaw, who taught at Sulgrave and Towcester conventicles, was the son of Edward Bagshaw esquire of Moreton Pinkney. He was a student at Christ Church, Oxford, gaining an M.A. in 1651 and being instituted vicar of Ambrosden, Oxfordshire, from where he was ejected for nonconformity in 1661. A warrant for his arrest with his papers was issued on 30 December 1662 and he was imprisoned for ‘treasonable practices’.⁶⁴⁸

Towcester and Paulerspury area

In 1655 Puritan Robert Walwyn intruded as minister of Towcester, where he was buried in June 1659 before the Act of Uniformity and possible ejection at the Restoration. His will, describing him as ‘Minister of the Gospel’ shows him to have been well-educated and to have a large collection of books (not listed) that are left mainly to his brother Henry, together with all his sermon notes and also money to adopt Robert’s son John, to bring him up in fear of God and good literature, fitting him for university and the ministry. Robert was the author of ‘A Particular View of the Fundamentals of the Christian Religion’, which was also left to Henry and published posthumously in 1660.⁶⁴⁹ His son John Walwyn did go to St Mary Hall, Oxford, and was rector of Snodland, Kent in 1680-1713.⁶⁵⁰

Ezekiel Johnson, rector of Paulerspury from 1631, was ejected for loyalty to Charles I in 1640 and was replaced in 1646 by order of the House of Lords by Vincent Cupper of Oriel College, Oxford, and Gray’s Inn, late rector of Wolverton, Somerset. Cupper was ejected in 1662 and Johnson petitioned the Lords for restoration, but John Coles, also of Oriel College, was instituted as rector of Paulerspury and a canon of Lichfield.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁷ Wykes, ‘Conventicles’, p. 197, David Appleby, *Black Bartholomew’s Day, Preaching, Polemic and Restoration Nonconformity* (Manchester, 2007), passim.

⁶⁴⁸ N. H. Keeble, ‘Edward Bagshaw (1629/30-1671), Independent minister and religious controversialist’, *ODNB* (2004-14); Longden, *Clergy*, 1, p. 139; Matthews, *Calamy*, pp. 21-2; *CSPD*, 1661-2, p. 606.

⁶⁴⁹ Longden, *Clergy*, 14, pp. 153-5; TNA, PROB 11/295/691;

⁶⁵⁰ Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxoniensis, 1500-1741*, Early series, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1891-2).

⁶⁵¹ Longden, *Clergy*, 3, pp. 193, 319; 8, p. 31; Matthews, *Calamy*, p. 319; *CPSD*, 1660-61, p. 232.

William Tabor of Essex intruded as minister of Stoke Bruerne following the ejection and death of the rector Emmanuel Arundel in 1648. Tabor, who died 5 January 1655, was buried in the chancel as ‘late minister of this parish’. His replacement Daniel Rogers, born in Wethersfield, Essex, and having previously intruded at Greens Norton, was presented by Oliver Cromwell on 11 January 1655 and appears to have been accepted in the parish. In 1658 he was overseer and witness to the will of John Kingston, yeoman of Shutlanger, who described him as ‘my well-beloved and well respected friend’. In 1665 he was presented to the rectory of Haversham, Buckinghamshire, and died there in 1680.⁶⁵²

Culworth and Moreton Pinkney are thus shown to have been a hub of ejections and intrusions mainly by men who were teachers at conventicles, one of whom, Edward Bagshaw, also taught at Towcester. The Towcester area appears to have suffered fewer ejections, but it had a new lectureship involving two men ejected in Essex and is discussed below.

e) Conventicles

During the Commonwealth, Quakers and General Baptists held very similar beliefs and conducted their meetings in a similar way. It was not unusual for them to attend each other’s meetings and allow each other to speak at the end of meetings; some also attended the parish church and addressed the minister and people after the service.⁶⁵³

The Conventicle Act of 1664 made it illegal for persons aged 16 or over to be present at religious meetings, except of the Church of England, that consisted of more than five people besides the household. Convicted persons were to be fined up to £5 for the first offence, £10 or imprisonment for the second, and £100 or transportation to the tropical plantations for seven years for the third. Studies from various parts of the country have concluded that enforcement of the Act was dying out before it expired in March 1669 when Archbishop Sheldon ordered an enquiry into nonconformist conventicles. These returns cover a large part of the country, but the original manuscripts in

⁶⁵² Longden, *Clergy*, 1, p.87; 13, p. 141; 11, p.239; NRO, Arch. North., John Kingston, Shutlanger (proved 1661).

⁶⁵³ J. Jackson Goadby, *Baptists and Quakers in Northamptonshire, 1650-1700* (Northampton, 1882), p. 14.

Lambeth Palace Library (transcribed and published by G. L. Turner) do not include Peterborough Diocese, however, a copy of the returns made for the Archdeaconry of Northampton by Archdeacon John Palmer survives. It covers the western two-thirds of Northamptonshire, but it is evident from Quarter Sessions and other records that this was the main area of nonconformist activity. In the study area there were conventicles described as either 'Independent' or 'Anabaptist' (a term used rather loosely at this period), but none as 'Quaker', however, there is evidence of a few individual Quakers attending these meetings. Quarter sessions records for 1666 give more details about people involved in conventicles.⁶⁵⁴ A Sulgrave conventicle was a mile from Culworth and two and a half miles from Moreton Pinkney and conventicles at Paulerspury and Towcester were less than three miles apart. There were two Quaker 'Monthly Meetings' close to the area at Farthingstone and Biddlesden.

In September 1666 twenty named men in the area were fined 12d each for attending conventicles; nine at Paulerspury, eight at Towcester and three at Sulgrave. This was the second time for two at Sulgrave who had been fined in June. Residences are not given and the men would have come from a number of villages.⁶⁵⁵ The Conventicle Act was strictly enforced at first and at least four individuals in Northamptonshire were sentenced to transportation at the Easter Quarter Sessions in 1666, including two Quakers who attended the Towcester conventicle.⁶⁵⁶

At the Sulgrave Anabaptist meeting, 30 to 40 people met once a month at the house of Pitman, or of Thomas Heycock, who was lately a chief constable. They were taught by John Newman of Horley west of Banbury, John Hill of Helmdon, and 'of late', Mr Edward Bagshaw and Mr James C[arr] of Culworth. At Towcester 100 to 200 Independents, who were of 'mean estate', met every Sunday at Mr Grindon's house. Their teacher of late was Mr Bagshaw every Sunday. No details are given for a listed conventicle at

⁶⁵⁴ *CSPD*, 1668-1669, p. 481; Wykes, 'Conventicles', pp. 198-9, 205; G. L. Turner (ed.), *Original Records of Early Nonconformity Under Persecution and Indulgence* (1911-14); NRO, Fermor-Hesketh (Baker) 708, pp. 73-6, 'An Account of the Conventicles held in the 7 Western Deaneries of the Diocese of Peterborough, 11 Aug. 1669'; NRO, QSR 1/37 (1666), QSR 1/44 (1666).

⁶⁵⁵ NRO, QSR 1/44.

⁶⁵⁶ Wykes, 'Conventicles', p. 198.

Paulerspury.⁶⁵⁷ Numbers of dissenters cannot be very exact; some attended more than one meeting and some meetings may have escaped the attention of authorities. According to Wykes, many Independents also frequented their parish church, but Baptists and Quakers were true separatists.⁶⁵⁸

f) Licensed preachers

After the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672 (withdrawn in 1673) there were licensed teachers and preachers who were outside the established church. In the study area, John Harding, Presbyterian, was licensed to preach at the house of Thomas Heycock, Sulgrave, the venue of a conventicle listed above; at Greens Norton, John Maydwell, to preach at the house of Rebecca Mulson, and Thomas Perkins at the house of Ralph Pune, both Congregationalists. Robert Rogers, Presbyterian, 'Bachelor of Divinity of Abthorpe', was living in Wappenham and licensed in 1672 as a preacher at his house. He and his wife were buried in Abthorpe chancel (1688 and 1703) and his was the only will in this thesis to mention a funeral sermon: to be given by Thomas Gore of Abthorpe, Towcester and rector of Maidford.⁶⁵⁹ Thomas Gore, registered as a Congregationalist preacher at Towcester, graduated from Magdalen, Oxford, which was attended by many Northamptonshire Presbyterians, according to Collinson.⁶⁶⁰

g) Wills and Parish Registers

Conventicle returns and Quarter Sessions records give information about dissenters in the 1660s. Wills and parish registers can extend this with less definite clues combined with other sources. Seventeenth-century wills in the study area almost all have a soul bequest and burial instruction, but these gradually disappear in the eighteenth century; the last occurring before 1750 in wills studied in the area. Seventeenth-century wills without either a soul bequest or burial instruction may be Separatist wills, but there is no certainty of

⁶⁵⁷ NRO, Fernor-Hesketh (Baker) 708, pp. 73-6.

⁶⁵⁸ Wykes, 'Conventicles', pp. 207-8.

⁶⁵⁹ John B. Marsh, '1672 Licences to Preach', in John Taylor (ed.) *Antiquarian Memoranda Northamptonshire* (Northampton, 1901), 69; Matthews, *Calamy*, p. 415; Longden, *Clergy*, 11, p. 243;

Clergy, 6, p. 13; TNA, PROB 11/391/133.

⁶⁶⁰ Collinson, *Puritan Movement*, p. 129.

this. Some middle-income dissenters, such as the Baptist Stanley family, left money for the poor of their own church and sometimes the poor of the rest of the parish (see below). Before the 1697 Affirmation Act, Quakers sometimes circumnavigated the oath-swearing problem by appointing non-Quaker relatives or friends as executors, or by not bothering with probate, although the latter would leave the will open to challenge.⁶⁶¹ Only one will of a known Quaker has been found in the area (proved 1695), but it may be that others were written and not registered.

It is unclear when some burials began to take place away from churchyards. In the 1660s, 'Quaker Monthly Meetings' (main meetings in each area supported by smaller local groups) were instructed nationally to keep a record of births, marriages and burials, and to buy 'convenient burying places'. Early Quaker families sometimes used their own gardens or orchards for burials and there are examples of this among seventeenth-century Buckinghamshire burials.⁶⁶² Quakers denied the authority of the Church of England and priests to regulate their lives and they denied the peculiar holiness of consecrated ground.⁶⁶³ However, Ralph Houlbrooke states that most Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists were buried in churchyards until long after the Toleration Act, 1689.⁶⁶⁴

Parish registers sometimes record births of children who were not baptized in the parish church and were likely to be children of Baptists or Quakers, although early General Baptists held inconsistent views on baptism. A Quaker births register is available beginning in 1647 for the Northampton Quarterly Meeting, which included the study area.⁶⁶⁵ Some forenames in parish registers suggest Baptists or Quakers. Biblical names for boys occurring in the area include Job, Moses (both common), Theophilus (several), Ephraim, Jonas,

⁶⁶¹ Adrian Davies, *The Quakers in English Society* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 194-5; Bill Stevenson, 'The social integration of post-Restoration dissenters', in Spufford, *Rural Dissenters*, pp. 332-387, esp. 382-3.

⁶⁶² Eileen and John Bartlett (eds), *Buckinghamshire Digest Register of Quaker Deaths 1656-1837*, (The Eureka Partnership, Aylesbury, 2013).

⁶⁶³ Arnold Lloyd, *Quaker Social History 1669-1738* (London, 1950), passim; Walter Lowndes, *The Quakers of Fritchley, 1863-1980* (1980), p. 213.

⁶⁶⁴ Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 336, 131.

⁶⁶⁵ NRO, M250/1.

and Lazarus. Godsgift occurs and 'virtue' names for girls include Silence (several), Grace, Patience, Vertue (sic), Charity, Temperance and Discipline.

h) The Compton Census 1676

Anne Whiteman's detailed discussion of the census emphasizes that the census figures and any estimates based on them must be treated with considerable caution and that neither recusant nor nonconformist historians have found the figures in this religious census very satisfactory and believe that they underestimate the strength of the groups. Some people were partial conformers, perhaps through fear of persecution, making classification difficult; however, incumbents may also have incorrectly identified absentees or indifferent parishioners as dissenters. Incumbents did not receive the questions in the same form in every diocese and figures they provided can have different meanings. Peterborough is a diocese where the 'Conformists' column in fact represents the whole population, although mostly appearing to be rounded off; however, because it was not always clear whether incumbents included children in returns the Archdeacon of Northampton John Palmer made adjustments to some figures, possibly incorrectly.⁶⁶⁶ 'Nonconformists' in two parishes are listed as families and figures in other parishes may represent families.⁶⁶⁷ No recusants are listed for the study area; nonconformist indicates Protestant dissenters.

The evidence of nonconformity below suggests that the number of dissenters in some parishes may have been higher than census figures, but is not conclusive. These figures only apply to the year of the census and over a number of years the strength of nonconformity was unlikely to remain static. The census is the only seventeenth-century evidence found for Syresham. Although incumbents of four parishes Bradden, Culworth, Slapton and Plumpton, listed no nonconformity, it certainly existed in three of them, probably by 1676. Plumpton is the only parish where no evidence of dissent has been found. In 1681 there were 42 members of the Baptist Church, mainly from Weston, Weedon, Bradden and Abthorpe, but not all can be assigned to parishes. This group was formed before 1681 when there were at least six

⁶⁶⁶ Anne Whiteman (ed. assisted by Mary Clapinson), *The Compton Census of 1676: A Critical Edition* (London, pub. for The British Academy, Oxford, 1986), pp. lxxvi-lxxviii.

⁶⁶⁷ Whiteman, 'Diocese of Peterborough', *Census*, pp. 374-399.

named members from Bradden, two from Slapton and one from Culworth. There were probably dissenters or partial conformers in these and other parishes early in the seventeenth century indicated by children not being baptized, or by unusual forenames, and there were named Quakers by the 1650s (see below).

Table 6.1: Compton Census 1676 and Hearth Tax 1673-4

	Compton census: Population Conformists + nonconformists	Approximate population 1524-5 (see table 2.2) A	Hearth tax 1673-4 (Households)	Approximate population (Hearth tax x 4.25)* B	Compton census: Non- conformists and (% of B)	B / A
Blakesley	400	220	116	493	2 fams. (1.7%)	2.2
Bradden	90	55	28	119	-	2.2
Culworth	300	187	77	327	-	1.7
Easton Neston	120	121	27	115	1 (0.9%)	1.0
Greens Norton	306	125	86	366	17 (4.6%)	2.9
Moreton Pinkney	210	147	98	417	5 (1.2%)	2.8
Paulerspury	400	311	133	565	11 (1.9%)	1.8
Plumpton	34	37	12	51	-	1.4
Slapton	154	55	31	132	-	2.4
Stoke Bruerne & Shutlanger	450	117 + 95 = 212	51 + 52 = 103	438	16 (3.7%)	2.1
Sulgrave	300	158	80	340	13 (3.8%)	2.2
Syresham	500	136	125	531	30 (5.6%)	3.9
Towcester & Abthorpe	560**	513 + 139 = 652	276 + 79 = 355	1509	30 (2.0%)	2.9
Wappenham	163	143	74	315	1 fam. (1.3%)	2.2
Weedon Lois	260	117	71	302	17 (5.6%)	2.6
Whittlebury	650***	66	76	323	9 (2.8%)	4.9
Silverstone		110	90	383	?	4.3

* Use of multiplier 4.25: see Whiteman, *Census*, p. lxxvii.

** Whether this figure includes Abthorpe is unclear.

*** Whiteman suggests Silverstone may be included in Greens Norton, but at this date it is more likely to be included in Whittlebury— see Chapter 2).

In Table 6.1, population figures from the census and using the hearth tax are mainly similar, as Tim Unwin also concluded for Nottinghamshire.⁶⁶⁸ However, figures are significantly different for Moreton Pinkney, Paulerspury and Wappenham and wildly different for Towcester, possibly partly accounted for by the inclusion or not of Abthorpe. Noting these differences led to

⁶⁶⁸ Tim Unwin, *Late Seventeenth Century Taxation and Population: The Nottinghamshire Hearth Taxes and Compton Census*, Historical Geography Research Series, 16 (August 1985), p. 35.

populations from the 1524-5 Lay Subsidy being compared with the populations using the hearth tax (table 6.1, B/A). Bearing in mind that the subsidy figures are also estimates, most results are reasonably similar, including the four parishes listed immediately above, which suggests incorrect census figures for those parishes.

It could be significant that the three parishes with much higher than average growth, Syresham, Silverstone and Whittlebury, were the only three parishes still in continuous woodland in the seventeenth century. Philip Pettit made similar comparisons in his research of Northamptonshire Royal Forests, and noted higher population growth in the forest villages throughout the county. Pettit suggests migration to the forests was caused by evictions from enclosed villages. Forest villages had their open fields, but enclosures tended to be later.⁶⁶⁹

This paradigm only partly fits the study area where the 1299-1300 perambulation had reduced the area covered by forest law from seventeen to only six parishes, but the majority of enclosures in the whole area occurred between 1750 and 1850.⁶⁷⁰ Culworth, enclosed in 1612, was an exception and was the only parish that had never been under forest law at its greatest extent (see chapter 2). However, partial enclosures for sheep and parks continued into the early sixteenth century and deserted or much shrunken hamlets, as detailed in chapter two, resulted in displaced inhabitants who may have migrated to the woodland villages at that time. Other surveys that might have indicated steady growth in Syresham, Silverstone and Whittlebury, or pinpointed particular periods of growth, have not survived for Peterborough diocese, including, in 1563, an ecclesiastical census of numbers of households in parishes; in 1603, a return of the numbers of communicants in each parish; and finally, the Protestation returns of 1641-1642. The latter required all males over eighteen in each parish to swear an oath to maintain the Reformed Protestant religion against popery, to swear allegiance to the king and Parliament, and to defend lawful rights of subjects. Names were to be taken of those who swore the oath

⁶⁶⁹ Philip A. J. Pettit, *The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire: a study in their economy 1558-1714*, NRS, 23 (1968), pp. 142-149, 201.

⁶⁷⁰ David Hall, *The Open Fields of Northamptonshire*, NRS, 38 (1995), passim.

and those who refused: papists and others.⁶⁷¹ Although no returns survive for Peterborough diocese, names of some Quaker ‘refusers’ and their treatment do survive and are given below.

Possible migration to forest villages and its bearing on nonconformity needs consideration. The Lollard John Oldcastle twice found refuge in Silverstone in 1417 when on the run. A ‘Marian Martyr’, John Kurde of Syresham, was burnt in 1557. It is shown below that Quakers met at Whittlebury in the seventeenth century. Margaret Spufford agreed with Alan Everitt that dissent was remarkably prevalent in woodland regions and dissenters everywhere were more numerous in forest parishes.⁶⁷² Spufford also believed that tradesmen, including shoemakers, ‘were men of conviction, who were, because their shops were places where people met, waited, and talked, profoundly influential.’⁶⁷³ Kurde was a shoemaker and Syresham was on the Welsh Road; drovers’ shoes would need attention as they moved along the roads. Kurde and other craftsmen living near the drove roads would mend shoes and do other repairs while listening and talking.

Drovers and other travellers would have spread stories, perhaps exaggerated, of happenings in the forest that would become folklore in the study area. Without giving evidence, in Christopher Hill’s opinion ‘the densely populated forests of Northamptonshire were centres of rural Puritanism, strange sects, and witchcraft’.⁶⁷⁴ Other than Puritanism, the only definite information found is of witches, including one from near the study area; Ann Foster of Eastcote, about three miles north of Towcester, was hanged in 1674. Five other witches were convicted at Northampton Castle in 1612, two in the late-1660s and two in 1705, all from more distant areas of the county. The last two, from Rockingham Forest, were the only forest-dwellers.⁶⁷⁵

People displaced for sheep enclosures, if already disposed towards dissent, might find the idea of living ‘hidden’ in wooded areas attractive and possibly it was easier for outsiders to find employment in forestry work than in farming areas away from the main woodland. The parishioners of Syresham

⁶⁷¹ Anne Whiteman, ‘The Protestation Returns of 1641-1642’, *LPS*, 55 (1955), pp. 14-26.

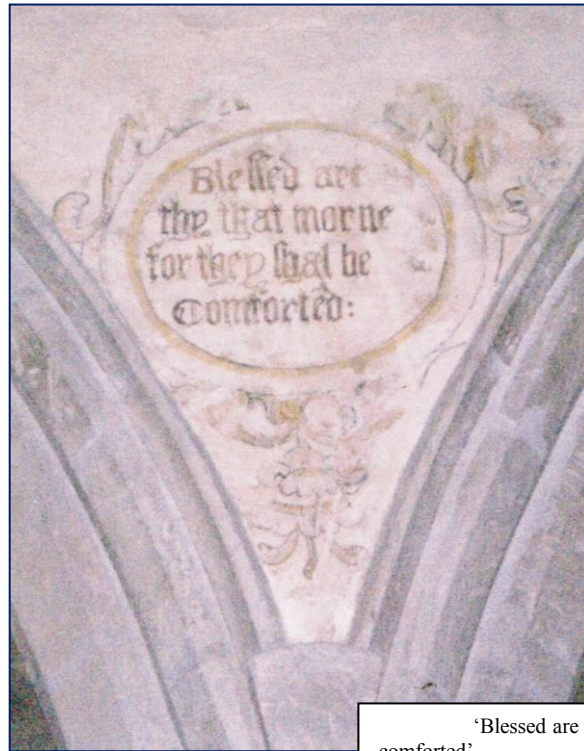
⁶⁷² Margaret Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995), p.44.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid*, p.53.

⁶⁷⁴ Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down, Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (London, 1975), p. 47.

⁶⁷⁵ Gary Poole and Karen Stokes, *Witches of Northamptonshire* (Stroud, 2006), pp. 83-93.

appear to have abandoned orthodoxy early, as shown in chapter five, possibly retaining Lollard beliefs and being particularly open to separatist influences.



'Blessed are they that morne for they shall be comforted'

Figure 6.1: Painted text in Syresham church; an example of texts which replaced medieval pictures.

i) Parishes and Separatists

Using all the sources above, the two sixteenth-century strong Puritan centres, where the seventeenth-century Separatist conventicles were held led partly by ejected ministers, are now discussed in detail; firstly, Puritans and Quakers in Towcester and 'eastern' parishes; secondly, the dissent in the western area around Moreton Pinkney, Culworth and Sulgrave, followed by Weston and Weedon Baptists, a group not based on a known conventicle.

Towcester and the 'Eastern' area

A warrant was sent to the constables of Abthorpe, parish of Towcester, on 22 March 1666, where Richard Parsons, labourer, was convicted for the third time of attending a conventicle. He was sentenced to transportation to a plantation in Jamaica for five years and his goods were to be distrained for re-imbursing the

sheriff and to pay for the transportation of Parsons. A warrant was also sent to the constables of Towcester where John Cory, carpenter, was similarly convicted and received the same sentence.⁶⁷⁶ In 1666 nine men, including Parsons and Cory, who were to be transported were imprisoned in Northampton gaol, but seven who were still there in 1672 were released, including John Cory.⁶⁷⁷ Presumably Richard Parsons had been sent to Jamaica, but in 1627-38, before the family were Quakers, he had four children baptized at Abthorpe. He would have been elderly when transported in 1666 and may not have survived to see his family again. Sibbel, daughter of Thomas Goodman, fined for attending Towcester conventicle, was among Quaker births in 1672. Thomas and his wife had Quaker burials at Whittlebury in 1702 and 1717 respectively.⁶⁷⁸

Puritanism was flourishing in Towcester early in the seventeenth century and the large 'Independent' conventicle there in the 1660s indicates that separatism may have existed for some time as the following events appear to suggest. Early in the century some English separatists sought temporary or permanent refuge in the Netherlands to escape religious persecution, including the Pilgrim Fathers who sailed to America in 1620 in the Mayflower. Refugees who remained in Leiden included Thomas Jones, say-worker of Towcester, who sailed from Yarmouth in 1619.⁶⁷⁹

In the 1630s, Towcester, where Andrew King held a lectureship in the 1570s, again had a lectureship. Thomas Shepard was born in Towcester in 1605, educated at Towcester School and in 1624 he graduated from Emmanuel College, Cambridge, which was Puritan in character. He then received pastoral training with Thomas Weld, vicar of Terling, Essex, before accepting an invitation in 1627 to Earls Colne, Essex, to serve as minister in a three-year lectureship endowed by a Dr Wilson and originally intended for nearby Coggeshall. Shepard probably did not return to Towcester, but after three years the people of Coggeshall pledged £40 a year to underwrite the Wilson lectureship and partly by Shepard's influence it was moved to Towcester.

⁶⁷⁶ NRO, QSR 1/37.

⁶⁷⁷ Besse, *Sufferings*, pp. 534-5.

⁶⁷⁸ NRO, M250/1, Quaker births 1647-1836; Bartlett, *Quaker Deaths*, p. 21.

⁶⁷⁹ Johanna W. Tammel (compiler), G. V. C. Young, Jeremy D. Bangs, *The Pilgrims and other People from the British Isles in Leiden, 1576-1640* (Isle of Man, 1989), pp. 133, 306. 'Say' is a textile made from worsted Scottish wool.

Samuel Stone, who gained his M.A. at Emmanuel College in 1627 and was curate at Stisted, Essex, for three years before being suspended for nonconformity, took up the lectureship at Towcester. It was later claimed that while at Towcester he exerted strong nonconformist influence. He was again suspended for nonconformity in 1633 and set sail for New England. Shepard was ejected from Earls Colne by Bishop William Laud and after preaching up and down the country he sailed to New England in 1635, became minister of Newtown and was involved in founding Harvard College in 1636.⁶⁸⁰

In 1638 there were disagreements about the position of the Lord's Table in Towcester church where Puritans complained to commissaries of the Bishop of Peterborough that the churchwardens failed to present 80-100 of the parish who refused to receive the Blessed Sacrament at the table in the middle of the chancel. A Laudian commissary Robert Sibthorpe claimed that the Puritans had been infected by the above Samuel Stone and misapplied scriptures to argue against the communion table standing at the east end.⁶⁸¹ In 1662-3 in Moreton Pinkney, churchwardens reported Henry Winckles five times for keeping the communion tablecloth in his possession, but it is unclear whether this is a protest connected with communion, or simply theft.⁶⁸²

Separatists of Towcester, other than Quakers, were at first an amalgamation of Baptists with allegiance to Weston and Weedon and Independents with allegiance to Potterspurty Independent Church (five miles down Watling Street) using a cottage adapted in 1723. A new Towcester meeting house was erected in 1764 by both groups, but in 1782 the Baptists decided to sever their links with Weston General Baptists and with Potterspurty Independents. The Baptists became Particular Baptists and the Independents built a new chapel.⁶⁸³

⁶⁸⁰ Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England, the Caroline Puritan Movement c. 1620-1643* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 38-39; Longden, *Clergy*, 12, p.145 and 13, pp.83-85; Michael Jenkins, 'Thomas Shepard (1605-1649), minister in America', *ODNB* (2004-14); Tom Webster, 'Samuel Stone (1602-1663), Independent minister in America', *ODNB* (2004-14).

⁶⁸¹ J. Charles Cox, *The Records of the Borough of Northampton*, 2 (Northampton and London, 1898), pp. 238, 397; *CSPD*, 1637-38, p.518.

⁶⁸² NRO, PDR X637/1.

⁶⁸³ NRO, Baptist Association, bundle 11, minute book, Towcester; Ernest A. Payne, *The Baptists of Towcester: A study of Northamptonshire Nonconformity during Two Hundred and Fifty Years* (Northampton, 1936), *passim*.

Quakers in the Eastern area

The Towcester conventicle that Palmer recorded as Independent actually included a number of Quakers and much of the early evidence about separatism in Towcester is of Quakers who would not swear oaths, including that of allegiance to the king. This did not necessarily indicate disloyalty, but was interpreted as such. In 1695 the Affirmation Act was passed allowing Quakers to affirm in civil, though still not in criminal cases, but many Quakers suffered for their refusal before this.⁶⁸⁴ Quakers appear to have been persecuted more than other separatists and Joseph Besse wrote an account of their sufferings during the seventeenth century, county by county, published in 1753.⁶⁸⁵ R. H. Evans, writing of the sufferings of Leicestershire Quakers, found it difficult to make comparisons with other counties, but points out that in 1685 numbers in prison were: Northampton 59, Leicester 37, Warwick 31 and Nottingham 6, but in Suffolk 79.⁶⁸⁶

John Hart, brazier, was particularly persecuted, but was obviously a committed Quaker who was not intimidated. He was one of the eight fined for attending the Towcester conventicle in 1666, listed above, and he was also a teacher at the Farthingstone Quaker conventicle, about seven miles from Towcester and slightly north of the study area.⁶⁸⁷ The Quaker births register records his six children, born 1649-1662.⁶⁸⁸ The 'offences' of John Hart included holding a meeting at his house in January 1655 when Henry Hall and others were stopped in the street and fined 10s each for travelling on the Sabbath to the meeting. Several had horses taken away and one was set in the stocks for four hours. In January 1659 Hart was committed to prison, with eight others from villages to the north of the study area, for refusing the oath and on 28 July 1660 he was again committed to the county gaol. On 17 August 1682, John Hart and Nicholas Reade of Towcester were committed to prison for absence from the parish church service.⁶⁸⁹ Nicholas Reade had three children recorded in the Quaker births between 1649 and 1658; John's son Joshua Hart,

⁶⁸⁴ Lloyd, *Quaker History*, pp. 80-81.

⁶⁸⁵ Besse, *Sufferings*.

⁶⁸⁶ R. H. Evans, 'The Quakers of Leicestershire, 1660-1714', *TLAS*, 28/5, (1952), pp. 62-83, esp. 80-81.

⁶⁸⁷ NRO, Fermor-Hesketh (Baker) 708, p. 73.

⁶⁸⁸ NRO, M250/1.

⁶⁸⁹ Besse, *Sufferings*, pp. 529-532, 542.

brazier, of Towcester and his wife Alice King, a Quaker whom he married at Aylesbury in 1691, had six children recorded between 1692 and 1706.⁶⁹⁰

Quaker meetings expected members to marry Quaker partners and meetings appointed representatives to vet the prospective spouses. In 1687, William Hoskins who had been a member of the Quakers of the 'Upperside of Buckinghamshire' at Hunger Hill in the Chilterns, but now lived in Towcester and wished to marry a wife from Towcester, 'desired a Certificate from the [Hunger Hill] meeting concerning his clearness and orderly walking, for the satisfaction of Friends in that county [Northamptonshire], before whom his intention of Marriage is to be laid'. Two members were appointed to inquire and report to the next monthly meeting, where a Certificate was duly read and signed by the meeting.⁶⁹¹ Residences of marriage partners demonstrate the distances that Quakers travelled to meet and become acquainted with other Quakers. In 1692, for example, at Sherington Meeting, Buckinghamshire, Joseph Marks of Newport Pagnell married Sarah Atkins of Greens Norton, about 21 miles away.⁶⁹²

The Quaker 'Biddlesden and Hogshaw Monthly Meeting' held at Biddlesden was transferred from the Northamptonshire Quarterly meeting to Buckinghamshire in 1679, but it used the burial ground at Whittlebury. Quakers buried at Whittlebury resided in a fairly large area of Buckinghamshire and a small area of Northamptonshire close to Biddlesden, including particularly, Quakers from Silverstone and Towcester with a few others from Greens Norton and elsewhere.⁶⁹³

Joshua Hart, son of John, attended meetings at Whittlebury where Quakers met and had a burial ground at least by 1656. Eight members of the Towcester Hart family had Quaker burials at Whittlebury, 1680-1715.⁶⁹⁴ At a meeting in May 1683, John Loft, a carrier from Tadcaster was arrested and imprisoned and corresponded with George Fox while in prison.⁶⁹⁵ (In addition

⁶⁹⁰ Eileen & John Bartlett (eds), *Buckinghamshire Digest Register of Quaker Marriages 1658-1837*, The Eureka Partnership (Aylesbury, 2013), p.33; NRO, M250/1.

⁶⁹¹ Beatrice Saxon Snell (ed.), *The Minute Book of the Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends for the Upperside of Buckinghamshire 1669-1690*, Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society (1937), pp. 192-3, 197.

⁶⁹² Bartlett, *Quaker Marriages*, p. 37.

⁶⁹³ Bartlett, *Quaker Deaths*, passim.

⁶⁹⁴ Bartlett, *Quaker Deaths*, p. 24.

⁶⁹⁵ Goadby, *Baptists*, p. 42; Besse, *Sufferings*, pp. 542, 546-7.

to goods, carriers took news around the country, which might leave them open to persecution). In 1684 seven men who refused to take the oath were arrested there and carried by wagon to Northampton where, the next day, they still refused oaths tendered to them by justices and were committed to prison. The seven included Joshua Hart of Towcester and John Grove.

In 1669 the rector of Radcliffe cum Chackmore, Buckinghamshire, reported at a visitation that Mary Arnatt, a Quaker of the hamlet of Chackmore, had sometimes held meetings last spring of a few people of her own sect in the house she inhabits alone, but after warnings, he had not heard of any recently.⁶⁹⁶ However, in 1689 several meeting house licenses were issued for villages around Biddlesden, including one for the house of John Grove yeoman of Chackmore, barely five miles south of Whittlebury.⁶⁹⁷ In 1685 eleven men from the Whittlebury area, including two churchwardens and a constable, pleaded for leniency towards John Grove, a Quaker who had served 18 months in prison for refusal to take the oath. This plea concurs with Bill Stevenson's proposition that local communities were not hostile to sectarian groups.⁶⁹⁸ Three Justices of the Peace also certified John Grove to be 'of a peaceable and honest conversation and not at any time guilty of disloyal practices against the government, but always behaving himself as a peaceful subject of the same' and he was set free towards the end of the year.⁶⁹⁹

John Grove and his wife Jane were buried at Whittlebury in 1695 and 1703 respectively.⁷⁰⁰ His will, the only one found of a known Quaker connected with the area, emphasizes his Quaker faith.⁷⁰¹ Quakers used numbers, not names, for months and Grove's will was written in 1691 'on the five and twentieth day of the first month called March'.⁷⁰² His soul bequest is unique among wills in this study; 'my soul and spirit into the hand of the Lord, in whom I have lived, moved and had my being'. His Christian burial was at the discretion of his executrix and overseers. £10 were given 'unto my poor

⁶⁹⁶ Broad, John (ed.), *Buckinghamshire Dissent and Parish Life 1669-1712*, Buckinghamshire Record Society, 28 (1993), p. 34.

⁶⁹⁷ Snell, *Upperside*, p. v.

⁶⁹⁸ Stevenson, 'Social integration', pp. 367-8.

⁶⁹⁹ Besse, *Sufferings*, pp. 542-550.

⁷⁰⁰ Bartlett, *Quaker Deaths*, p. 21.

⁷⁰¹ Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, D/A/WF/57/33.

⁷⁰² Lloyd, *Quaker History*, p. 183.

friends called Quakers' and 'the lease of the house in Chackmore I now live in to my friends called Quakers belonging to the meeting at Biddlesden for the service that it is now put to' (licensed meeting house). After the expiry of the lease that the Quakers have in it, any of 'his kindred who shall make profession and walk in the way of truth according to what the people called Quakers do' might live in it before any other persons. Before the 1697 Affirmation Act removed probate problems, probate was granted in 1695 to Elizabeth Allen, his 'loving kinswoman' and sole executor. Grove's wife Jane was not appointed executor as would be more usual among non-Quakers, but Elizabeth possibly was a Quaker in 1695. In 1700 Elizabeth Allen of Chackmore married Thomas Spiers of Marston St Lawrence at Whittlebury Quaker meeting.⁷⁰³

In 1680 charges for Biddlesden chapel repairs were added to the Rate for the Poor, but Francis Warre of Biddlesden paid only the part for the poor. He suffered confiscation of sheep to the value of £3 10s. In 1684-5 he was returned to the Exchequer for £20 per month for absence from the National Worship and was also to have cattle and goods seized to the value of £140. The actual value of seizures was £295, but they were sold to the public for £90 2s 6d, less than a third of their real value.⁷⁰⁴ In 1689 a meeting house licence was issued to Francis Warre.⁷⁰⁵ Elizabeth Warre of Biddlesden, wife of Francis, had died in 1677 and was buried in the Quaker ground at Adderbury, Oxfordshire, but is listed in the Buckinghamshire burials. The burial of Francis has not been found, but two other Biddlesden Warres were buried at Whittlebury.⁷⁰⁶

There were Warres, probably related, one mile away in Syresham, which had 30 nonconformists (5.6%) in 1676 according to the Compton Census. They may have been Quakers of Biddlesden meeting, but no definite evidence of dissent has been found other than the census and Syresham is not mentioned in the Buckinghamshire Quaker marriage or death registers.⁷⁰⁷ Paul Morton Geldart comments on the tradition of dissent at Syresham prior to the Restoration, but his evidence before the census is not apparent.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰³ Bartlett, *Quaker Marriages*, p. 48.

⁷⁰⁴ Besse, *Sufferings*, pp. 82-3.

⁷⁰⁵ Snell, *Upperside*, p. v.

⁷⁰⁶ Bartlett, *Quaker Deaths*, p. 48.

⁷⁰⁷ Bartlett, *Quaker Marriages*; Bartlett, *Quaker Deaths*.

⁷⁰⁸ Paul Morton Geldart, *Protestant Nonconformity and Sectarianism in Restoration Northamptonshire*, University of Leicester, Ph.D thesis, (2006).

Wappenham

At Wappenham, three miles from Syresham, Theophilus Hart (related to the Towcester Quaker Harts) and John Lambert were cited in 1662-3 for not attending the parish church.⁷⁰⁹

Farthingstone

As stated above, John Hart of Towcester taught at Farthingstone and some other Towcester Quakers may have attended the meeting. In 1654-96 fourteen Quaker births were recorded for the Adkins, Ashby and Randall families of Greens Norton. Richard Randall of Greens Norton was buried at Whittlebury in 1699.⁷¹⁰

In 1659 at a meeting in Farthingstone, three men from the village and nine others from nearby villages were arrested, possibly including Blakesley where Richard Pettifor and Richard Maior were cited in 1662-3 for not attending the parish church.⁷¹¹ At a 1682 meeting in Farthingstone, men were arrested including Benjamin Wright of Blakesley, who had 54 feet of oak boards worth 6s 9d confiscated by warrant from county sheriff Henry Benson.⁷¹² Strangely, Benson was included on a list 'of those who do not persecute, but are loving to 'friends'', however, a list of those who persecuted Quakers included a one-time colonel in the Parliamentary army, George Benson of Towcester, related to Henry Benson.⁷¹³

Paulerspury

Four of the nine men fined for attending the 1666 conventicle appear in the first parish register; Luke Parratt, his baptism only; Thomas Truss, whose two children were born, but not baptized in 1655 and 1660; Richard Boughton and William Malin. Richard Boughton was married in 1623 to William Malin's sister Margaret. They had five children baptized in 1626-1637, although two

⁷⁰⁹ NRO, PDR X637/1.

⁷¹⁰ NRO, M250/1; Bartlett, *Quaker Deaths*, p. 39.

⁷¹¹ NRO, PDR X637/1.

⁷¹² Besse, *Sufferings*, pp. 531, 541; William Pooley, *Part of the Sufferings of Leicestershire and Northamptonshire...* (London, 1683), p. 5.

⁷¹³ CSPD, 1655-1656, p. 64; Joan Wake (ed.), *QRS of the County of Northampton: files for 6 Charles I and Commonwealth (AD 1630, 1657, 1657-8)*, p. 251.

other Malin families had children born, but not baptized. In 1662 Richard Boughton was named for not attending the parish church. He does not have a burial record, but it is noted that he 'died 2 October 1670 an excommunicated person'. In 1659-1663, children of two Peake families at Heathencote, Paulerspury, were born but not baptized.⁷¹⁴

The dissenters' group probably continued until an Independent chapel was built in 1826.⁷¹⁵ In 1748-1820 the houses of five Paulerspury men and one in Heathencote hamlet were licensed as meeting houses at various times. Methodism originated in the late 1730s and these meetings could have been Methodist or Independent. A Methodist chapel was built in 1800.⁷¹⁶

There has been no Baptist chapel in Paulerspury, although the Baptist missionary, William Carey, was born there in 1761 and attended the parish church until he was apprenticed to a shoemaker in Piddington near Northampton where he became an Independent and then a Baptist, being baptized in the River Nene.⁷¹⁷

Multiple families of Pettifors at Paulerspury all appear in the parish register, but Pettifors from the isolated Pury Lodge, between Paulerspury and Potterspury, were Quakers. Three were buried and three others were married at Whittlebury during 1781-1786.⁷¹⁸

The 'Western' area

Culworth

Names in the parish register suggest dissent at least from the 1620s in Culworth, where there were several branches of the Gibbs family. All were baptized and buried there, but there was only one Gibbs marriage; Alice Gibbs to Thomas Duston in 1655. It seems unlikely that all other Gibbs marriages were in different parishes and it appears that they were not marrying in the parish church. In 1627, Temperance Gibbs was buried. Discipline, daughter of John Gibbs, was baptized in 1641; names that surely indicate dissenters.

⁷¹⁴ NRO, 255p/2; NRO, PDR X637/1.

⁷¹⁵ Thomas Coleman, *Memorials of the Independent Churches in Northamptonshire* (London, 1853), p. 373.

⁷¹⁶ Ward, *Religious Census*, p. 83; VCH Northamptonshire, 5, pp. 245-289.

⁷¹⁷ Brian Stanley, 'William Carey (1761-1834)', *ODNB* (2004); R. W. Skears, *The Church of St. James the Great, Paulerspury* (Paulerspury Parochial Church Council, undated), p. 5.

⁷¹⁸ Bartlett, *Quaker Deaths*, p. 38; Bartlett, *Quaker Marriages*, pp. 12, 42.

Moreton Pinkney

The lengthy will of Thomas Kingston, husbandman of Moreton Pinkney, written in November 1584, has no soul bequest and no burial instructions. This is unusual at this date and combined with no pious bequests or mention of religion, except the first phrase, 'In the name of God', could be an early sign of dissent. His witnesses include two Hawtens and another Kingston. Some of the later Hawtens and Kingstons in the parish were members of the Baptist Church. There is the possibility that Thomas Kingston discussed his beliefs with acquaintances in Adderbury, Oxfordshire, where he also owned land, about three miles south of Banbury and twelve from Moreton Pinkney. By the mid-seventeenth century there were organized Quaker groups in both Adderbury and Banbury and if Thomas was a dissenter he no doubt met like-minded people in Adderbury whose families later became Quakers.⁷¹⁹

Thomas's great-grandsons, John (childless) and Thomas, both made wills proved on 25 March 1745 in which Thomas's son Job inherited Moreton land, continuing the link back to the first Thomas. John's will had no soul bequest, but stated, 'My body I recommend to the earth, nothing doubting but at the general resurrection I shall receive the same again by the mighty power of God'. Thomas made a justification by faith soul bequest and committed his body to the earth by the discretion of his executors.⁷²⁰

No Kingstons or Hawtens were on the 1681 Baptist list; John and Sarah Hawten, together with 'Sister Kingston', were on the 1716 list; Job Kingston and his wife Sarah were listed in 1748 with four Hawtens.⁷²¹ There were certainly Baptists among the Moreton Hawtons and Kingstons, but probably not all branches of the families were involved. There were also a few Quakers and between 1723 and 1730 three children of William and Elizabeth Gill of Moreton were registered in the Quaker births register.⁷²²

⁷¹⁹ TNA, PCC, PROB 11/68; VCH Oxfordshire, 9, p.39.

⁷²⁰ NRO, 213p/4; NRO, Arch. North., John Kingston, Moreton Pinkney, (Nov. 1741); Arch. North., Thomas Kingston, Moreton Pinkney, (Sep. 1743).

⁷²¹ Church book, Slapton.

⁷²² NRO, M250/1.

The Baptist Church of Bradden and Weston-by-Weedon

Baptist burials

Between 1580 and 1610 the phrase ‘my body to the earth’, or similar, appeared in from one to four wills in fifteen of the parishes, but it was very common in two parishes: in Weedon Lois (including Weston) 11 of the 12 wills, 1591-1610 had this instruction and the adjacent Moreton Pinkney had rather less at eight out of 13, 1582-1610. A strong Baptist presence in both parishes by 1680 is discussed below. In the Baptist burial ground at Weston-by-Weedon from about 1709, burials were always recorded as ‘put into the ground’. This leads to speculation that before 1610 the phrase was significant and that the later usage indicates dissent by people who did not want to specify a ‘churchyard’ burial, even if it would be in a churchyard. This seems the most likely explanation of the phrase and is strengthened by the following three wills.

Thomas Mobs, shoemaker of Milthorpe, Weedon Lois, wrote in his will in 1647, ‘First I bequeath my soul to Almighty God who gave it me and my body to be buried in the ancient burying place at Weedon near unto the grave of Bartholomew Mobs my father formerly deceased’.⁷²³ In 1649, Ellen Adkins of Weston-by-Weedon also wrote in her will, ‘First I bequeath my soul into the hands of God who gave it me, next I would have my body to be buried in the ancient burial place at Weedon’.⁷²⁴ The Mobs and Adkins families were later listed as Baptists. It seems too early for ‘ancient burial place’ to mean a Baptist burial ground that was already ancient. The two wills also have the same first witness, Thomas Kenninge (of whom nothing is known) and it may be his phraseology if he was the scribe. At Bradden, Thomas Goodman wrote in 1664 ‘my body to be buried in the usual place of burial where my friends think most convenient’.⁷²⁵ If these three people were dissenters the phraseology in their wills almost certainly indicates antipathy to mentioning ‘churchyard’ in their wills, although many Baptists in the area, including the Goodmans, were buried in churchyards.

⁷²³ NRO, Arch. North., 3rd series, A192.

⁷²⁴ NRO, Arch. North., 3rd series, B12.

⁷²⁵ NRO, Arch. North., 4th series, f. 302.

The above Thomas Mobs of Milthorpe, Weedon Lois, who died childless, made provision in his will in 1647 for a possible unborn child.⁷²⁶ The given name makes it tempting to think that Godsgift Mobs (known only from the 1681 Baptist list) was his son or daughter.

Early Baptist congregations each had a pastor, or elder, and two deacons. An early church-book is inscribed on the fly-leaf *The Book belonging to the Church of God meeting in and about Slapton*.⁷²⁷ It is dated 1681, but from the first entry, dismissing a member, it is evident that this was an active, organized congregation that had been meeting for some years before this. The Compton Census (table 6.1) has no nonconformists in Bradden in 1676, but 17 at Weedon (including Weston) proving that there were dissenters before 1681 and there could have been other concealed dissenters.

The main Bradden Baptists, the Goodman family, may have been partial conformers in the 1670s or earlier, when they baptized their infants, but in 1680-1688, four children of Joseph and Anne Goodman are recorded as 'born' and in 1719-1730, six children of Job (son of Joseph) and Hannah Goodman. In 1668-1685, eight children of John and Ann Saben were all baptized at least a month after birth (usually 2-3 days at this time), suggesting some reluctance by the parents.

The object of the church book was to record beliefs and the practices that had been instituted and it includes lists of members in three separate years. Only the last states parishes of residence, but name repetition and occasionally other sources allow some of the earlier names to be attached to parishes. There were six parishes from the study area involved with this church in 1748; Weston-by-Weedon, Weedon Lois, Bradden, Moreton Pinkney, Culworth, and Blakesley, and three from the western periphery of the area around Sulgrave: Helmdon, Thorp Mandeville and Marston St Lawrence. There could have been members from other parishes during the 67 years from 1681 and there definitely were from Slapton and Abthorpe.⁷²⁸ Abthorpe parish register includes a list of 14 children from six families born 'since 24 June 1696 and not baptized up to 1705'. Two of the families definitely attended the Baptist meetings a mile

⁷²⁶ NRO, Arch. North., 3rd series, A192.

⁷²⁷ Church book, Slapton.

⁷²⁸ Church book, Slapton.

away at the Goodman house in Bradden. Earlier the register has children ‘born’ scattered among the baptisms. This applies to a Marriott child in 1660, five children from two Hopkins families in 1654-1658, and three Allen children in 1655-1658. Marriotts and Hopkins occur in the Baptist lists.⁷²⁹

In an example of inconsistency, Ruth the third child of John Mobs, Anabaptist farmer of Weston, and Elizabeth his wife was christened in the parish church in March 1710. This was listed among the Anabaptist burials adding, ‘the father knew nothing of the christening’. The next entry recorded Elizabeth’s Baptist burial in June 1710. Obviously the Baptists disapproved of the mother’s action, but perhaps, being aware of her own imminent death and fearing Ruth’s death, she wanted Ruth to be baptized as a baby.⁷³⁰



Figure 6.2: The Goodman house at Bradden in 2010

In the early years, meetings were held in different villages in various houses in this part of the county that was not easily accessed and members

⁷²⁹ NRO, 2p/76; Church book, Slapton.

⁷³⁰ NRO, M250/1.

appear to have escaped persecution. The 1681 meeting, when 42 members were listed, was held at the house of Mary Marriot in Slapton, who was dismissed at her own request to join another church (unspecified). The house of Joseph Goodman in Bradden was licensed as an official meeting house on 12 May 1689 immediately after the Toleration Act and became the principal meeting place of the church until about 1720, when Weston became the headquarters of the Church, which acquired a burial ground called ‘the Grove’.

Another Joseph Goodman, the last of his line, drove to the Weston services every Sunday morning, but the Goodman house remained an additional meeting house with meetings on Sunday evenings until 1875 when Joseph died (figure 6.2). A nonconformist minister was not allowed to conduct any part of a service in a parish churchyard and when Joseph Goodman’s funeral service was held at the house and he was buried in Bradden churchyard, Mr Lea, the pastor of Weston Church spoke the committal sentences over the fence. The house and land were then sold.⁷³¹

Accounts were kept by the deacons at the back of the Church Book, which include 1s paid for the book, payments for wine and bread, payments (usually 1s) to various people who were presumably in need, collections, and a regular 1s 6d for horse hire to and from the meeting for Mr John Stanley who was the first pastor. The last entry in the book was in 1767.

Meetings that were minuted in the Church Book were mainly, but not entirely, ‘discipline meetings’ and were held infrequently when necessary. On 21st October 1716 a meeting was held where Thomas Lovell, junior, was chosen as the new pastor, with Job Goodman and Samuel Carpenter as deacons, and 34 members were listed. Ann Ratnitt was baptised at this meeting. On 17th November 1716 the pastor and deacons were ordained. Members were dismissed if their conduct was disapproved of and not altered after admonition, for example; William and the aforesaid Ann Ratnitt, who had been warned, were dismissed on 8th January 1719 at Bradden. At a discipline meeting at Weston on 27th September 1746, it is added that because there is a great mortality among the horned cattle in many places there would be a day of

⁷³¹ Anderson, W. G., *Historical Sketch of the Baptist Churches at Weston-by-Weedon, Woodend and Moreton Pinkney, and Sulgrave, Helmdon and Culworth* (Northampton, 1930), passim; Church book, Slapton; Graham S. Ward (ed.), *The 1851 Religious Census of Northamptonshire*, NRS (2007), p. 75.

fasting and prayer on the next Friday. In this rural area the disease would be of great concern. On 6th June 1748 there was a meeting for the ordination of William Stanger as pastor and a list was made of 37 ‘members of the Church that day’.⁷³²



Figure 6.3: Early twentieth-century photograph of the old baptistry at Catanger Farm, near Woodend.

Source: Anderson, *Baptist Churches*.

It is not known where Ann Ratnitt’s baptism took place. The earliest evidence of a dedicated baptistry is of an outdoor baptistry at Catanger Farm, south of Woodend, between Blakesley and Weedon Lois (figure 6.3). The farmhouse was another early meeting house, but very little information is available. Byron Rogers of Blakesley describes a walk in 1994 to the isolated, ruined house and the pool surrounded by trees, where baptisms had been carried out in secret.⁷³³ The house has been a ruin for more than 50 years; the original brickwork of the baptistry is visible, but overgrown with weeds and trees and full of stagnant water. The Weston Chapel used to hold an annual service at the

⁷³² Church book, Slapton.

⁷³³ Byron Rogers, *The Green Lane to Nowhere, the Life of an English Village* (London, 2002), pp. 107-8.

site, but this has not happened for at least 20 years.⁷³⁴ Catanger appears to have held special significance to the chapel members and the farm could have been the first secret Baptist meeting place in the area.

The present meeting house was built at Weston in 1791, which in later years was extended over the adjacent burial ground and a new burial ground was used next to the manse across the road. Branch chapels were built at Woodend, Blakesley, in 1814, and Moreton Pinkney in 1837.

The Stanley Family

The Stanley family of East Haddon, north-west of Northampton and about 15 miles from Weston, produced two Baptist preachers: Francis Stanley and John Stanley. Francis Stanley with his wife was first reported at a conventicle in 1665 and continued to preach widely. He became a 'Messenger of the Baptized Churches in Northamptonshire', to represent them at meetings in other areas, which he did until the end of his life. On 6 September 1696, at the age of 76, he attended a meeting at Spalding as messenger and 'preached an excellent sermon'. The minute book of Bourne Baptist Church records this, with a note that 'Mr Stanley departed this life at his dwelling house in East Haddon in the spring 1697'.⁷³⁵ In his will, Francis Stanley, gentleman, gave 20s 'to the poor of that church of which I am a member' and 20s 'to such persons who are preachers of God's words in the same church', both to be distributed by his wife Jane Stanley as executrix.⁷³⁶ In Jane Stanley's will she gifted 10s 'to the deacons of the congregation with whom I have communion' for distribution to the poor, and 10s to the overseers of the poor of the parish.⁷³⁷ Both Francis and Jane 'committed their bodies to the earth'.

Francis Stanley had a cousin John and a son John. Several people were fined £2 and gaoled for seven days for attending a meeting at John Stanley's house in East Haddon in December 1664, but there was no will or death recorded for John Stanley at East Haddon.

⁷³⁴ Personal contact, Mary Pryse of the new Catanger Farm on different land.

⁷³⁵ F. J. Mason, *The Old Minute Book of Bourne Baptist Church*, Baptist Quarterly, 15/5 (1954), pp. 226-228.

⁷³⁶ E. W. Timmins, *Early Nonconformity in Yelvertoft and its Vicinity* (Yelvertoft Church booklet, 1972); NRO, Arch. North., 3rd series, V281 (1696).

⁷³⁷ TNA, PROB 11/520 (1709).

A John Stanley, pastor at Weston, travelled there on horseback from an unstated place and signed the accounts as pastor for the last time in 1708. He had had a fall from his horse some time before this and a few entries record 2s paid for a horse and man to accompany him to Weston. W. G. Anderson suggests that he died about 1708.⁷³⁸ A John Stanley, yeoman of Weston, who owned a house in both Weston and East Haddon, wrote a will on 12 July 1707 that was proved in December 1709.⁷³⁹ This John, described as an Anabaptist Elder, was put into Weston Baptist burial ground on 8 October 1709 and a mortuary of 10s was paid. His wife Susannah was put into the ground at Weston in 1736.⁷⁴⁰ There seems little doubt that this was the same John Stanley who held the 1664 meeting at East Haddon.

Stoke Bruerne

Stoke Bruerne, including Shutlanger, has 16 dissenters in the Compton Census and various documents confirm the existence of nonconformity there. Five inhabitants from Stoke and one from Shutlanger were recorded several times in 1662-3 for not attending the parish church.⁷⁴¹ Robert Wickens, husbandman, of Stoke Bruerne, surely a dissenter, absented himself from the parish church, refused to have his children baptized and their births are not recorded in the parish register. He wrote a will in 1666 with no soul bequest or burial instructions.⁷⁴²

The parish register and another will give more information about dissenters. There were many Kingstons and Kingston wills in the parish, but the majority were of Shutlanger and supported the Established Church. The fourth and last extant will of a Kingston from Stoke Bruerne village was of Robert Kingston the elder, husbandman, written 12 June 1639.⁷⁴³ He was buried 17 June 1639 and his wife Sarah, a daughter of the late Richard Lightfoot, rector of Stoke Bruerne, was buried the next day. He was the only Kingston in the parish to request 'my body to the ground from whence it was

⁷³⁸ Timmins, *Yelvertoft*; Church book, Slapton; Anderson, *Baptist Churches*, p. 8.

⁷³⁹ TNA, PROB 11/512/244.

⁷⁴⁰ 'Anabaptist burials' at back of register, NRO, 345p/35.

⁷⁴¹ PDR X637/1.

⁷⁴² NRO, PDR X637/1 Correction Book 1662-3; NRO, Arch. North., 4th series, bk. 6, f.158.

⁷⁴³ NRO, Arch. North., 2nd series, E208.

taken' and considering the following, he is likely to have had nonconformist leanings. In August 1653 at the beginning of the Commonwealth, a Parliamentary Act required parishes to appoint civil registrars to take over the registering of births, marriages and deaths. Stoke Bruerne parish register records that Robert Kingston, husbandman, son and heir of the above Robert Kingston, was chosen and elected as registrar by the majority of parishioners in December 1653.⁷⁴⁴ Thereafter, until the Restoration in 1660, the register no longer has the previous well-kept appearance and although it was signed at intervals by the rector as usual, churchwardens did not sign. In the baptism section, entries are only roughly in chronological order and baptisms are in a variety of handwritings giving the appearance of 'do-it-yourself' records, however, all births with no baptism appear to be in the same handwriting, presumably Robert Kingston's. During these years 21 out of 40 infants (53 per cent) were recorded as born, but not as baptised, and these would not all have been from dissenting families. Some babies born during this period were baptized after the Restoration, for instance, three children of Richard and Mary Whitmay, born 1653-59, were all baptized 1st November 1662, when the register was getting back to normal. Among the probable genuine dissenters, George and Elizabeth Ward had children 'born' in 1654 and 1662. Three children of Hatton and Elizabeth Cox were born in 1649-1652 and their birth years were entered again in January 1686 as if to emphasize that they had not been baptized as infants and they were still not baptized. Three children of Robert Kingston himself, presumably a genuine dissenter, and his wife Martha were born; Martha 1654, John 1656, and Sarah 1660. Possibly this Robert was buried in 1685 'and a mortuary paid by son John'. Dissenters did not refuse to pay mortuaries; a 10s mortuary was paid at Weston for the Baptist pastor John Stanley in 1709.⁷⁴⁵

There are no other parish records of Robert's family and no wills, but the best fit to known facts is that John (1) mentioned below is son of Robert. In any case, the history of Bolt Mead Close in Shutlanger links Stoke Bruerne village with Weston Baptists.⁷⁴⁶ Briefly, the close was leased in 1697 by a John

⁷⁴⁴ NRO, 303p/17.

⁷⁴⁵ NRO, 345p/35.

⁷⁴⁶ NRO, Fermor-Hesketh, U/21.

Kingston (1) of Stoke Bruerne village for three lives; his own and his sons John (2) and Joseph. Subsequent history of the close, together with a Northamptonshire Poll Book, proves that John (2) was living in Weston-by-Weedon in 1730, where the Kingstons prospered. John (2) was buried in the Baptist burial ground at Weston in 1754. In 1773, his son John (3) bequeathed several messuages 'in Weston and Weedon and elsewhere' to his eldest son Thomas, who became a deacon of the Baptist Church and described himself as a 'gentleman' in his will of 1809.⁷⁴⁷

Other parishioners from Stoke Bruerne, including Shutlanger, attended Roade Baptist Church, one mile north-east of Stoke village and said to have been founded in 1688. The first purpose-built meeting house was completed in 1737, but until the twentieth century members were baptised in a stream. In 1736 the congregation, from ten parishes and described as 'Independent or Baptist', included some people who believed in infant baptism.⁷⁴⁸

j) Licensed meeting houses

In addition to branch chapels and new chapels mentioned above, other houses later joined the Bradden Goodman house (1689) as licensed meeting houses that might be Baptist, Independent, or Quaker; at Greens Norton (1705), Moreton Pinkney (1741), Whittlebury (1744), Blakesley (1747), Paulerspury (1748 and 1759), and Towcester (three in 1763). Others followed in the 1780s onwards. By 1851 the old dissenting bodies of Baptists and Independents formed a much larger proportion of the population in Northamptonshire than in Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, or Kent and there were few counties where the Old Dissent was as deeply entrenched as in Northamptonshire.⁷⁴⁹

k) Conclusion

Continuing research beyond 1610 has shown evidence of widespread nonconformity throughout the area, albeit of a small percentage of the population. The highest percentages, based on approximate figures, were 5.6

⁷⁴⁷ Ann Garfield, *Northamptonshire Yeomen*, pp. 51-53; NRO, Will N, Thomas Kingston, Weston, 1809.

⁷⁴⁸ Eileen and John Bartlett (eds), *Roade Baptist Church, Births 1816-1837 and Members 1730-1912* (The Eureka Partnership, Aylesbury, 2013).

⁷⁴⁹ Alan Everitt, 'Nonconformity in Country Parishes' in Joan Thirsk (ed.), Supplement, 'Land, Church, and People' *Agricultural Historical Review*, 18, (1970), pp.178-199, esp. p. 183.

per cent at Weedon Lois and Syresham. One aim was to seek continuity from Lollardy, to Elizabethan Protestantism, and to seventeenth-century dissent; geographically there has been some success. Towcester figures strongly in all three of the above, as does Moreton Pinkney to some extent. A possible familial link is suggested below.

Towcester, Blakesley, Silverstone and Syresham had known Lollard links; Moreton Pinkney, with no known direct involvement, is close to Thomas Latimer's land at Chipping Warden which became an important Lollard centre.

The main Elizabethan Puritan influences were at Towcester, with its lectureship, and the western area around Moreton Pinkney, Culworth and Sulgrave, where there were Puritan land-owning families; the Danvers and Drydens. The highest percentages of Protestant will-preambles in Elizabethan wills of the area, 1558-1603, are Silverstone 83 per cent, Moreton Pinkney 71 per cent and Towcester 62 per cent. (These three parishes also had no late Catholic influence). New Puritan landowners at Canons Ashby, adjacent to Moreton Pinkney, after the Dissolution, and the early Puritanism of the Danvers family of Culworth gave Puritanism an early hold over this western area. The influential and wealthy Puritan Richard Knightley of Fawsley was involved in setting up the successful 1570s Puritan lectureship at Towcester (see chapter 5).

Known seventeenth-century conventicles of dissenters were held at Towcester and nearby Paulerspury in the east and at Sulgrave in the west. These places were early centres for dissenters in surrounding settlements. Quakers and Baptists, many of whom lived in remote areas with travel difficulties in winter, held meetings in local houses where they could be more secretive between the main meetings. There were early Baptist meeting houses at Bradden and Weston, the latter eventually becoming their main centre with a burial ground. Catanger farm was another, rather isolated, early (perhaps the first) meeting place with an outdoor Baptistry, which must have served all Baptists in the neighbourhood and appears to have retained special significance until recent times. Baptist written records, the 'Church Book', implying that they were meeting at least by the late 1670s, began in 1681 in the Slapton and Bradden area, later continuing at Weston. Quakers, including a few from the study area, met at Farthingstone Monthly Meeting, a little north of Blakesley, and at Biddlesden, which belonged to the Northamptonshire Quarterly Meeting

until 1679 when it was transferred to Buckinghamshire. Within the area Quakers met and had a burial ground at Whittlebury, which was the burial ground for the Biddlesden Meeting. Other Baptists, Independents and Quakers met in Towcester.

Ejected and intruding ministers appear to have worked mainly in the early Puritan areas, Towcester in the east and around Moreton Pinkney and Culworth in the west, explaining why conventicles appeared in these places, led and taught mainly by ejected ministers. Towcester also had a new lectureship set up by the influence of Thomas Shepard, but its first minister, Samuel Stone, was ejected. Both men fled to new lives in New England. In addition to ministers, some other people fled abroad to avoid persecution and, very early, Thomas Jones was a refugee from Towcester who fled to Leiden in the Netherlands in 1619 at the same time as the Pilgrim Fathers.

After the Restoration, refusal to swear allegiance to the monarchy or to attend the parish church and meeting in conventicles instead, was taken as action against the state and offenders were persecuted. There was severe persecution of persistent Quaker offenders at and near Towcester where early offenders, refusing oaths and caught in meetings, all appear to be Quakers. The authorities refused to understand that Quakers supported the monarchy, but would not swear oaths, and there are good national records of 'Quaker sufferings'. Some of those fined for attending a conventicle for the third time, may have included Baptists, but there are no records of the names of Baptists in the study area until 1681. People who refused to attend church or have their children baptized were sometimes recorded in parish registers or diocesan correction books and include some families known to be Baptists in 1681.

Much of the evidence of dissent found in this chapter has concerned refusal to participate in 'state religion' and has shown the determination of dissenters to follow their own beliefs. Quakers, who did not believe in swearing oaths, but were willing to affirm instead, were persecuted more than other dissenters. The fact that most evidence before the Toleration Act of 1689 is of persecution or refusal to conform, means that only places where this happened are known about and probably some dissenters remained hidden, especially if they were partial conformers. The earliest knowledge of dissent is

in parishes with Lollard or Puritan histories, but dissent spread over the whole area with varying amounts of evidence found for all parishes except Plumpton.

The Compton Census of 1676, however inaccurate, indicates nonconformity in most parishes, but all the numbers in the census are small percentages of the parish populations (see table 6.1). Bradden, Slapton and Culworth, with no dissenters listed on the census or on 'refusal' lists, probably did have dissenters by 1676. The Baptist Church Book implies there were members before 1681 and the census listing 17 nonconformists at Weedon Lois appears to prove this. A nonconforming vicar was ejected at Culworth (and also from Moreton Pinkney), in the heart of the Puritan area, in 1604-5; a teacher from Culworth taught at the Sulgrave conventicle, one mile away, in 1666; and members of the Culworth Carpenter family were Baptists at least by 1718. No dissent has been found in the very small Plumpton, although it could have existed. The census has nonconformists in all other parishes.

There was an expectation in this study that the forest villages of Silverstone, with Lollard links, and Syresham, where John Kurde was martyred, would have dissenters. Nine dissenters in the census for Silverstone and Whittlebury (probably combined) seems a low number, but these chapelries are some miles away from the parish church at Greens Norton and dissenters could have escaped detection in the forest. The census confirms expectations for Syresham with 30 dissenters, but no other definite evidence has been found. There is the unproved involvement with Biddlesden Quakers, a short walk through the forest. It may be that Syresham dissent began before the Catholic Thomas Todde became the 'unsuccessful' rector in 1538 (see chapter 5). The villages still surrounded by woodland, Whittlebury, Silverstone and Syresham, were attractive domiciles for dissenters.

Stoke Bruerne, including Shutlanger; interpreted as very traditional earlier in the study, but appearing to be content with intruding ministers in 1648-1665 (see chapter five), has 16 dissenters in the census and hosted seventeenth-century dissent.

Nesta Evans was able to demonstrate linear descent from Lollards to Baptists or Quakers with the same surname in the area of the Quaker Uppeside

Meeting in Buckinghamshire.⁷⁵⁰ In the study area one unproven example of this is a possible connection between the Lollard Robert Wykyn, honeymonger of Towcester in 1414 (see chapter five), and Robert Wickins, husbandman of Stoke Bruerne and perhaps a Quaker, who absented himself from the parish church, refused to have his children baptized and wrote a will with no soul bequest or burial instructions in 1666.⁷⁵¹ Wickens, the usual later spelling, occurs in several villages in the area, but they may have common ancestors and Stoke Bruerne is close to Towcester. There were Quaker dissenters at Blakesley, where Lollard lawyer Robert Aleyn lived in 1414. These facts imply a tenuous, unproven, connection between Lollardy and later Quakerism. The dissenters at Syresham, which also had Lollard connections, may have been members of Biddlesden Quakers, although Syresham has no listed Quaker burials or marriages. If 30 nonconformists, meaning Separatists, really existed, what meeting did they attend, if any? Nonconformists could be nominally within the church, but not conforming to the rites of the church. From lack of evidence before 1676 Syresham remains an enigma.

The evidence stresses the social interaction of dissenters, who often travelled several miles to meetings in members' houses and official meeting houses, and the Baptist Church Book shows that help was given to members when needed. The whole study area must eventually have been covered by a nonconformist support network, unlike parish churches that were supported by the immediate parish.

The geographical occurrences of Lollardy, dissent and Separatism need comment. The western and southern extremities of the area were roughly defined by drove roads; the Welsh Road, connecting with Buckingham and the south, and Banbury Lane, connecting with Northampton. Both stayed on the drier high ground above the river valley and its villages as far as possible and would probably be passable for the majority of the year for drovers and other long distance travellers carrying news and opinions about religion, who doubtless discussed and exchanged views in workshops, such as John Kurde's, and drovers' inns along their way, particularly near Culworth, a possible

⁷⁵⁰ Nesta Evans, 'The descent of dissenters in the Chiltern Hundreds', in Spufford, *Rural Dissenters*, pp. 288-308.

⁷⁵¹ NRO, PDR X637/1 Correction Book 1662-3; NRO, Arch. North., 4th Series, bk. 6, f.158.

overnight halting place and 'gossip hub' for this intersection of the two routes. Drove roads also provided suitable, fairly secret, 'escape routes' for people such as John Oldcastle, who twice found refuge in Silverstone while on the run. Syresham on the Welsh Road was the former home of lawyer and Lollard sympathizer, William Hert, before he moved to Lincoln in 1420 and the drove road could have been useful for secret visits to Hert.

The development of Lollardy and later dissent might be anticipated in villages hidden in woodland, such as Syresham, and Silverstone. Silverstone and Whittlebury chapels of ease were separated from the influence of the parish church at Towcester by several miles and Handley Chase. No evidence was found of Lollardy at Whittlebury, but for an unknown reason, Quakers found Whittlebury more receptive for the later Quaker meeting place and burial ground than Syresham, a short woodland walk from the Quakers at Biddlesden. Possibly a piece of ground was offered for the purpose by a Quaker in Whittlebury.

On the eve of the Dissolution there were six appropriated churches, which led to secular rectors, such as the Dryden and Danvers families who became staunch Puritans. Their influence together with that of Puritan Richard Knightley is commented on at the beginning of this section.

This chapter has space for no more than an outline of Separatism in the area. It has, however, fulfilled the aim of showing a possible link between dissent and early piety by showing that local circumstances allowed Lollardy, Puritanism and Separatism to occur in the same places.

CONCLUSION

The thesis has shown the importance of the local characteristics of the study area. The drove roads on higher, drier land gave access to settlements in Whittlewood Forest and aided anyone seeking to be hidden for religious or other reasons. The Oxford road and Watling Street allowed passage of people and ideas from Oxford and London. The inter-relationships and consequences of these characteristics formed a thread through the thesis as themes were developed in succeeding chapters to answer the questions posed in the first chapter.

The apparently uncommon approach of studying the 'Long Reformation' from the viewpoint of separate communities, from the Medieval Church to the Elizabethan establishment of the Church of England and beyond to the growth of Separatism, allowed time-periods to be seen in the context of the preceding and succeeding periods and events for individual communities. This was particularly relevant in considering the origins of Separatism. Analysis of wills, the main evidence for the area, has produced much information about religious beliefs and the Reformation, but with the addition of evidence from a wide variety of sources, often only available for one, or a few, of the parishes, a much broader and deeper picture of popular religion in the area has been created. A number of assumptions that have been made about the Reformation, or might be made, have been challenged and shown to be untrue for this area.

The beginning of 'history from below' meant that it was no longer assumed that the Reformation progressed in an identical way and at a uniform speed throughout the country, but it might be assumed that religion in this small, very rural area of 18 parishes including one small market-town was homogeneous. It has been shown, however, by treating parishes individually that there were differences in responses to medieval religion, in the influences at work in parishes and hence in the timing of the acceptance of Protestantism by the majority of parishioners.

a) The pace of change

It is generally accepted that will preambles show trends of change. Use of Protestant preambles (meaning 'justification by faith') increased steadily from a small base in Edward's reign to approaching half of preambles in Elizabeth's reign. This was accompanied by a steady fall in traditional preambles, including during Mary's 'Catholic' reign, until the last few early in Elizabeth's reign. Nearly half of all testators used Neutral preambles from Edward's reign onwards. About half of these used 'God my Maker and Redeemer' and may have considered themselves to be Protestant, but were not counted as such here. Some late use of traditional and 'reformist traditional' preambles ('God and the Saints' without Mary) shows reluctance to accept change, but is not entirely backed up by bequests. When compared with several studies of other areas, the study area shows a greater and steadier acceptance of Protestantism and decline of traditionalism, except in Essex where Protestantism dominated very early. Growth of Protestantism appears to have been quicker overall in the area than in the diocese generally, but the difference had evened out by the end of Elizabeth's reign. However, this conclusion is derived from totals for the area and it needs to be stressed that parishes varied.

Early Reformation research, before 'history from below' became popular, sometimes led to the assumption that, whether or not it was popular, medieval religion was unchanged until the Dissolution. Wills from the last decades before the Dissolution in Northamptonshire indicate that changes had already taken place in some parishes making Henry VIII's injunctions of 1535 and 1538, mainly concerning saints and pilgrimages, less of a shock to the population and easier to adapt to during the 12 years before Edward VI banned all remaining medieval Catholic practices.

However, changes before 1535 were not universal in the area and two particular parishes illustrate differences in the popularity of medieval religion. Culworth is the only parish with early churchwardens' accounts, which add to information available from wills and give the impression of satisfaction with a vibrant medieval Church, but it cannot be assumed that this was the case in the other parishes. Culworth also appears to have retained traditionalism longer than some other parishes and about half of the wills until 1546 request masses or obits, which is more than in any other parish. The accounts throughout the

Henrician period indicate a community working together for the common good, but the involvement of the church in customs such as church ales and the hobby horse that were sources of parish funds, ended at Edward's accession, leading to a less cohesive society. Nevertheless, until then, medieval religion does appear vibrant and little changed in Culworth.

Community events did not disappear easily in Culworth. The hobby horse appears to have returned in Elizabeth's reign and a new tradition began of ringing the bells on the anniversary of Elizabeth's accession, November 17th, which may have applied in other villages. However these were only occasional events in the year.

From wills, Syresham was at the other end of the scale of satisfaction with the medieval Church. The only bequest for a mass was in 1528 and the last bequests for lights were in 1528-9. During Thomas Todde's incumbency, 1543-1563, all preambles were traditional, giving the impression that Thomas Todde exerted traditional influence, but lack of pious will bequests deny this. It appears that traditional piety had weakened before Todde's institution, but whether this was indifference or early nonconformism is unclear, however, there is a real possibility that some Lollard beliefs survived 'underground' into the sixteenth century in Syresham.

Other parishes in Henry's reign, except perhaps Towcester, appear from bequests to be more like Culworth, although it is difficult to comment on small parishes with few wills. Overall, Towcester testators were not generous with pious bequests, although a few individuals were. Perhaps this again shows early disenchantment there with the traditional church, which allowed early growth of Protestantism and Puritanism in the town.

In Mary's reign, five parishes had one or two bequests for masses, the rood or the sepulchre, but these few Marian bequests were insufficient to suggest a revival of Catholicism. No other parish showed quite the same lack of enthusiasm for the Church shown by Syresham, but while parishes varied in their responses, so did individuals within parishes.

b) Cults and pilgrimage

The cult of saints began to lose popularity, to be replaced by Christocentrism, as in many parts of England, demonstrating changing beliefs. The Moreton

Pinkney Christocentric 'Brotherhood of the Rood' figured in a majority of wills, up to the Reformation. The cult of the Virgin Mary was popular in the area where almost half the churches and chapels, including Canons Ashby Priory and Biddlesden Abbey, were dedicated to the Virgin Mary and bequests to the Lady light continued steadily. However, there was apparently a poor response to a gild of Our Lady at Towcester, although the Lady light was quite popular. The Marian cult continued alongside Christocentrism, but in the fifteenth century the emphasis of the cult shifted from Mary the mother of the infant Christ, to focus on Mary's sufferings over the crucified Christ, as Christocentric cults grew in popularity. In this revitalized Marian cult a growing popularity of the *Pietà* image spread through England. There were at least three images of the *Pietà* in the study area; at Slapton (still faintly visible), Moreton Pinkney, and Stoke Bruerne; and two *Pietà* pilgrim badges have been found in the Towcester area. The medieval beliefs illustrated in the rich resource of medieval wall-paintings in Slapton church were discussed in chapter three. The variety of paintings, including several rare examples relating to the Marian and Christocentric cults, could suggest, but not prove, a community with a vibrant medieval Church.

Christocentric masses were requested in the mid-fifteenth century in some areas of England, for example, in parts of Suffolk and East Kent, but the few known instances in the study area began later. The earliest bequest for a Christocentric mass was in Towcester in 1498 when Letitia Sutton bequeathed six marks for the Mass of the Name of Jesus, the only bequest for this in the study area and Letitia's only pious bequest, showing the importance she attached to it. The 'Mass of the Five Wounds' occurred with certainty in just one parish in the study area, Stoke Bruerne, but it was very popular there.

The area had its own pilgrimage destination in Weedon Lois (Loys). Pilgrims came to St Loy's holy well near the church, and to the church's supposed relics of St Loy, the patron saint of horses, to pray for the cure of their horses. St Loy's House at the east end of the church was presumably used as a 'pilgrim's hostel'. Pilgrims may also have visited Slapton church, only two miles down the valley, to see the now uncommon painting of St Loy.

Manifestations of cults and pilgrimage indicate a strong attachment to medieval religion by at least some of the local population. The Reformation

outlawed pilgrimages, but the well was kept clear until at least the early eighteenth century as a source of water, although tradition and superstition would not end overnight and users may well have continued to make a quiet prayer for the welfare of their horses.

c) The evidence of wills

The methodology adopted in analyzing wills enabled some popular assumptions about the Reformation and conclusions in studies based on preambles alone to be questioned. The main assumption shown to be untrue in the area is that of a revival of Catholicism in Marian England. From preambles alone, traditional piety continued to decrease in the area during Mary's reign, which is unusual in comparison with most other studies, but Sheils, writing of Northamptonshire generally, believed that politic 'Catholic preambles' merely hid underlying Protestant beliefs. This could also have been true in some of the other areas where historians claimed there was a revival without looking at will-bequests. Attreed writing of northern England in one of the few studies of preambles that also looked at bequests concluded that there was no Marian revival there.

In each parish of the study area, by examining wills individually, categories of preambles in Mary's reign were compared with will-bequests. Monetary gifts to the parish church, usually a few pence, did increase after Edward's reign and figured in almost a third of Marian wills, nearly equal to their level early in Henry's reign. These gifts could have been made for repairs by supporters of a reformed Church who thought the Edwardian dismantling of medieval church interiors had been too excessive. There were nearly equal numbers of traditional and Neutral preambles, but three times as many bequests of gifts to the church are in 'Neutral wills' as opposed to 'traditional wills'. The number of testators making no pious bequests at all continued to grow in Mary's reign, particularly among testators with traditional preambles, which suggests these preambles were politic rather than pious. There was no Marian upsurge of Catholicism in the study area; however, there is no actual evidence of heresy at this time, other than that of John Kurde.

Eamon Duffy claimed that the Marian revival of giving to the church was slow in some regions, but that the laity in some counties began to endow parish churches through their wills almost immediately, including in

Northamptonshire where there were literally scores of such bequests in the wills of the Marian period, becoming more common as the reign progressed. Careful examination of the statistics proves that the claim is mistaken and the testamentary bequests do not illustrate a strong Marian revival in the county.

It is now generally accepted that will preambles reflect overall trends in movement from traditional medieval beliefs to Protestantism, although there can be periods or places where preambles do not entirely conform to this paradigm. In Mary's reign, politic 'Catholic preambles' might hide underlying Protestant beliefs as suggested by Sheils. In this thesis all Syresham preambles until the end of Todde's incumbency were traditional, but then immediately changed. The almost complete lack of pious bequests during his time suggests lack of traditional beliefs. The use of traditional preambles lacks sincerity, but at this distance in time there is no obvious explanation. It was found that Elizabethan bequests in the study area often appeared to correlate with categories of belief from preambles. Maybe this was because personal pieties were no longer in a state of flux; traditional beliefs were almost completely replaced by positive Protestant beliefs; actual dissent; or a neutral stance of passive acceptance of, or indifference to, the Elizabethan Church. Two-fifths of testators employed Protestant preambles by Elizabeth's last two decades, and this proportion continued steadily into the early years of James I's reign.

d) Lollardy and Separatism

Lollardy appears to have been a possible and surviving element of religious thought among a minority of the population of the area. In the Chilterns Lollardy was particularly common and there is enough evidence to make familial links from Lollards to later Separatists. This thesis is possibly the first attempt to make such links in a small area where evidence of Lollardy is insufficient for a detailed study, and it has proved to be a worthwhile exercise. The small amounts of evidence available have enabled probable geographical links to be made between early scattered heterodoxy and later Separatism and one unproven familial link has also been suggested.

Given the position of the study area between Oxford, Northampton, and Leicester, all centres of heresy, it would be surprising if Lollardy had no influence there. The road from Oxford to Northampton passed through

Brackley, Syresham, Silverstone, and by-passing Whittlebury to Towcester. Syresham, Silverstone and Whittlebury, were the only three parishes still in continuous woodland in the seventeenth century and there was early heresy in these forest villages and in Towcester.

In 1382, Philip Repingdon, as a young priest studying at Oxford, preached at Brackley, only four miles from Syresham, upholding Wycliffe's doctrine on the Eucharist. Wycliffe's heretical ideas were surely talked about along the road to Northampton in villages such as Silverstone and Syresham, where evidence of heresy later surfaced. Lollard leader, John Oldcastle, was twice sheltered in Silverstone in 1417 while on the run. Hugh Frayn, who sheltered him, was sentenced to death. William Hert, lawyer of Syresham, was a named Lollard sympathiser when he moved to Lincoln in the 1420s. There is a real possibility that some Lollard beliefs survived 'underground' into the sixteenth century in Syresham where John Kurde was denounced for heresy in 1557 and burnt on a pyre. It is possible that fear among parishioners after the event delayed open Protestantism for a generation and explains the simple 'to God' preambles after Todde's departure until 1589 when Protestant preambles first appeared in wills. This delay was not caused by traditionalism in Syresham.

In the Towcester area, in June 1414, lawyer, Robert Aleyn of Blakesley, and honeymonger, John Wykyn of Towcester, were both pardoned for heresy. Invasion by the laity of the priest's area, the chancel of a church, can plausibly be interpreted as owing to the influence of Lollardy. In May 1416, Repingdon's mandate to clergy to enforce prohibition of the practice, especially in Towcester parish church where the practice was prevalent, continued to be ignored by Joan Mortimer, who was excommunicated and expelled from the congregation.

In the study area there is one possible, but unproven, connection between the Lollard Robert Wykyn, honeymonger of Towcester in 1414, and Robert Wickins, husbandman of nearby Stoke Bruerne and perhaps a Quaker, who absented himself from the parish church, refused to have his children baptized and wrote a will with no soul bequest or burial instructions in 1666. There were also Quaker dissenters at Blakesley, where Lollard lawyer Robert Aleyn lived in 1414 and at Silverstone where John Oldcastle was sheltered.

These facts imply a tenuous, but unproven, connection between Lollardy and later Quakerism.

e) Influence in the parishes

Religious houses, local or more distant, appropriated 40 per cent of the parish churches in the area and at the Dissolution these rectories and advowsons passed to local gentry, except for Towcester, which was granted in 1547 to Thomas Bentham, bishop of Lichfield and Coventry. These new owners were a main influence in the growth of Protestantism. In other parishes, long-serving Catholic priests and their patrons delayed change until their deaths, such as Thomas Fox of Weedon Lois, 1524-1570, presented by Biddlesden Abbey and later supported by Catholic Sir Robert Peckham; and John Lynnell of Easton Neston, 1537-1575, presented by Catholic Richard Fermor and supported by the Fermors. The Catholic Priest, Thomas Todde of Syresham, 1543-1563, who had no supporting Catholic gentry, was less successful.

The Danvers family, Protestants and later Calvinists, were holders of the manor of Culworth, but they only held the advowson from 1546, thus allowing traditionalism to continue until then. They presented vicars until the end of the eighteenth century and the group of adjacent parishes of Culworth, Sulgrave and Morton Pinkney became a centre of early Protestantism. The new landowners of Sulgrave, the Protestant Washington family, could not exert religious influence by presenting priests, because the Crown retained the advowson.

Towcester had a vibrant religious life in various ways. Until the 1530s the rectory was regularly presented to non-resident pluralist clerics as income, which may have caused instability, but from 1448 it had the important chantry of the very wealthy William Sponne, archdeacon of Norfolk. The chantry attracted Hugh Melling, vicar and warden of the college of All Saints, Northampton, to retire to Towcester and request burial between the tombs of William Sponne and William Halle, first master of the chantry. Towcester was another early centre of Protestantism, but mixed with the traditionalism of a few families until Elizabeth's reign. The fact that Thomas Bentham, bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, held the rectory and advowson from 1547 enabled a flourishing Puritan lectureship, to be established in Towcester in 1572 by

Richard Knightley, sharing expenses with his patron Robert Dudley and Thomas Bentham. John Fielding found five lectureships for individual lecturers in the county, but Towcester was the only one in the western half.⁷⁵²

Overall in the sixteenth century, the influence of Catholic gentry and priests delayed overt acceptance of Protestantism in Weedon Lois, Plumpton, Falcutt and Astwell in Wappenham, and Easton Neston, while Protestant influence, particularly from the Danvers family in Culworth and the Puritan lectureship and Puritan clergy in Towcester encouraged vigorous reform. At this time there was apparently a more passive acceptance in parishes without strong influences.

f) Dissent

There was widespread nonconformity among a small percentage of the population in the seventeenth century and three conventicles at Towcester, Sulgrave and Paulerspury. Puritanism was already established in Towcester early in the seventeenth century and the large 'Independent' conventicle there in the 1660s indicates that Separatism may have existed for some time.

Edmund Rudyard, vicar of Culworth (presented by Puritan Samuel Danvers) and Moreton Pinkney, suffered ejection from both as a non-conforming cleric in 1604-5. During the Commonwealth, 1649-1660, a number of 'intruding ministers' who wanted a Presbyterian Church replaced clerics in the study area and most were ejected at the Restoration. Culworth and Moreton Pinkney became a hub of ejections and intrusions and these men were teachers at the Sulgrave conventicle and nearby western parishes. One of the men, Edward Bagshaw, also taught at Towcester. The Towcester area appears to have suffered fewer ejections, but it had a new lectureship involving two men ejected in Essex, who both later emigrated to America.

In Quarter Sessions in September 1666 twenty named men were fined 12d each for attending conventicles in the study area. The Conventicle Act of 1664, which aimed to prevent illegal nonconformist meetings for worship, was strictly enforced at first and at least four individuals in Northamptonshire were sentenced to transportation at the Easter Quarter Sessions in 1666 for a third

⁷⁵² Fielding, *Conformists, Puritans and the Church Court*, pp. 146-156.

offence, including two Quakers who attended the Towcester conventicle. The men listed were of 'lower' status, but there were Quakers of 'middle' status; were they perhaps known personally to the officials and deliberately overlooked? Willingness to risk fines or transportation shows the strength of belief held by men attending conventicles. Before the Toleration Act of 1689, there is written evidence of Quakers by the mid-seventeenth century and of Baptists by 1681. Quakers were active around Towcester and Whittlebury, but they travelled further for 'Monthly Meetings' showing that small, scattered numbers of Quakers were willing to travel some distance.

Although the accuracy of the Compton Census, 1676, is questionable, it indicates small numbers of nonconformists, but no recusancy, throughout the research parishes. The highest percentages of nonconformists were at Weedon Lois and Syresham, both approximately 5.6 per cent. This was to be expected at Weedon Lois, where Weston hamlet became the main meeting-place of an early Baptist congregation, whose members lived in several nearby parishes. The census is confirmation that the Baptist Church was active before their written records began in 1681.

Open questions

At Syresham the 30 nonconformists in the Compton Census, suggests early dissent. The only actual evidence before 1676 is of William Hert the Lollard in the early 1400s and John Kurde the martyr in 1557. Involvement with the parish church appears to have weakened by the 1520s. Despite continued searching no other evidence of early dissent has been found. Did the vicar misunderstand the question when entering 30, or were there 30 parishioners indifferent to the parish church, who had no allegiance to any other congregation either? The seemingly obvious answer is involvement with the Quakers at Biddlesden, but Syresham is not mentioned in any Quaker records consulted, however, there were Quakers named Warre in Biddlesden, one mile away, and several Warre families in Syresham. The only known fact is that Methodism was later very popular in the parish. Syresham remains an enigma.

The spread of dissent does not respect county boundaries; research for this thesis has continued a few miles into Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. Any more detailed study of dissent in this area, particularly of Quakers, would

probably benefit from looking at the Northamptonshire parishes surrounding the study area, continuing into the nearer parts of Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, where there are known strongholds of Quakerism not explored here.

* * *

The study area is probably the optimum size for the approach and methodology used here. Statistics for a larger area would be unwieldy and parishes would be unlikely to have a common factor that might lead to the expectation of similar religious experiences, which could then, as here, be tested. Here the common factor was settlement in an upper river valley, but it has been shown that any such expectation would be false and there was much variation of belief and practice between parishes and between individuals.

Christopher Marsh, in discussing the work of Reformation historians, writes of ‘the problem of explaining the majority acquiescence in an unwanted religious transformation’.⁷⁵³ Even to Patrick Collinson, the doyen of writers about Protestantism, the quiet compliance of thousands of communities ‘is more than a little mysterious’.⁷⁵⁴ Revisionist historians, Eamon Duffy, Christopher Haigh, and J. J. Scarisbrick ‘emphasize the hold of late-medieval Christianity over the people of England, while playing down the appeal of Protestantism’. Duffy’s answer to the problem includes the inevitable fading of traditionalist memories across the generations, and the continuities within the Elizabethan Settlement.⁷⁵⁵ In this thesis it has been shown that changes had begun in some parishes during the early decades of the sixteenth century; saints were already less popular and Christocentrism was strong, making Henry’s changes less of an unwanted transformation.

Analyzing wills over a long time-period has indicated the longest lasting continuity; that of bequests for charity towards one’s fellow man. Charity appears in wills from late-medieval religion (encapsulated in the Catholic seven works of mercy) through to 1603. In the first seven years of James I’s reign, 1603-1610, when other pious bequests had almost faded out, a third of the 45 wills still included charity. The bequest appears in a few of the later sampled

⁷⁵³ Marsh, *Popular Religion*, pp. 197-8.

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 198, citing Collinson, ‘England’, in Bob Scribner *et al* (eds), *Reformation in National Context* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 88.

⁷⁵⁵ Marsh, *Popular Religion*, p. 198.

wills, but by then the testators concerned had wealth or status, which was not necessarily true in earlier times.

Series of family wills, where extant, map the path from traditionalism to the acceptance of Protestant beliefs. The wills, for instance, of the Knight family of Slapton and Abthorpe (four wills 1548-1564) and the, linked by marriage, West family of Hulcote and Towcester (four wills 1543-1601), were late to reject traditionalism and illustrate the assimilation of new beliefs into family piety by younger generations.

One result of listing all known details of each testator's will is finding that many wills stress the importance of 'family'. Charity, in the sense of love and amity, was important within a family to discourage disagreements over beliefs or possessions. This was clearly the intention in some wills concerning children of second or third marriages. The traditional will of Richard West (1558), who had a son from each of two marriages who lived in different places, stresses charity in this sense in wishing that 'love, unity, peace and concord should be had forever with my wife and children after my departure'.

The use of 'tick lists' of details for each testator, listed chronologically within each parish, showed clear variation between parishes, or individuals within parishes in the diversity and timing of popular beliefs and cults, and the degree of generosity of giving for intercession. Transition from traditionalism to Protestantism was not an overnight phenomenon; a few wills have quite confused preambles and others that are more or less Protestant have a slight element of traditionalism, showing the testators could not quite let go of old beliefs. Linking bequests with will preambles, in close detail, enabled discussion of differences between the bequests in each category of preamble. Few definite differences were found, but the exercise was essential as part of the proof that there was no Marian revival of Catholicism in the area.

The study of influences in parishes was found to be of high importance in discussing the advent of Protestantism and retreat of traditionalism. Studying appropriations of churches and then the exchanges of land and advowsons at the Dissolution to secular holders, on the one hand, and the demise of Catholic landowners and long-lived Catholic priests, on the other hand, helped to explain the widely spaced timings of acceptance of Protestantism. Another factor was the apparent independence of people in the area causing some people to cling to

old ways. This was very apparent in Towcester, which had a quite lengthy period of the population holding diverse pieties.

Studying the Long Reformation proved essential to another new method for this area. Using a multiplicity of sources and following up all possible leads, led to connections being found between apparently disparate topics, including: drove roads, woodland, Lollardy, John Kurde, personnel changes at the Dissolution, exclusions of dissident clergy, and the sites of conventicles. These became a basis for the study of dissent and Separatism, from early heresy to Quakers and Baptists. Some of these different features of piety in the study area have been examined separately by scholars as discussed in the foregoing chapters, but not brought together in a concerted study. Moreover, there are also seemingly unsubstantiated statements by Christopher Hill and Alan Everitt about the densely populated forests of Northamptonshire being centres of rural Puritanism and strange sects in the seventeenth century, possibly referring more to Rockingham Forest further east. No evidence has been found in this study of 'strange sects'. Witch trials were at their peak nationally during the seventeenth century. Gary Poole and Karen Stokes presented their findings about ten 'witches' who were executed in Northamptonshire, 1612-1705; not in the study area and only two from forest villages (see chapter six). Concluding the points made in this paragraph, links over the long time period from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century and later, have not been made previously by scholars.

Overall, by looking at many different aspects of the area and popular religion over a very long period, and their interactions, this thesis has covered new ground and contributed a new type of study to writings about the Reformation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscript primary sources

Aylesbury: Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies

Wills:

Edward Coles, priest, P/A/WF/4/73 (1557).

John Grove, yeoman, P/A/WF/57/33 (1691).

Kew: The National Archives

Church Goods (1552):

E117/7/1, E117/7/2, E117/7/10.

King's Bench:

KB9/544.

Prerogative court of Canterbury wills:

PROB 11/3 William Sponne, Towcester, cleric (1448).

PROB 11/7 John Hulcotte, Northamptonshire (1482).

PROB 11/9 Thomas Lovett, Esquire, Astwell (1493).

PROB 11/16 John Day, Towcester, cleric (1510).

PROB 11/17 Isabella Lewellyn, Towcester, widow (1511).

PROB 11/21 John Thomson, Sulgrave (1523).

PROB 11/24 John Gardyner, Culworth, rector (1531).

PROB 11/25 Johan Tompson, Sulgrave, widow (1534).

PROB 11/28 Robert Monyng, Towcester (1540).

PROB 11/29 Thomas Lovett, Wappenham, Esquire (1542).

PROB 11/31 John Leyke, Abthorpe, yeoman (1538).

PROB 11/ 34 Johan Monyng, Towcester, widow (1549).

PROB 11/35 Richard Fermor, Easton Neston, Esquire (1551).

PROB 11/38 John Danvers, Culworth (1556).

PROB 11/39 Richard Wright, Sulgrave, vicar (1510).

PROB 11/40 John Cope, Canons Ashby, knight (1558).

PROB 11/42A Richard West, Easton Neston (1558).

PROB 11/42B William Knyght, Slapton, tanner (1556).

PROB 11/42B John Reve, Towcester (1558).

PROB 11/47 Edmund Peckham [of Denham, Bucks.], knight (1564).

PROB 11/48 William Arderne, Sulgrave, gent. (1564).

PROB 11/51 Robert Peckham, Biddlesden, Bucks., knight (1569).

PROB 11/53 William Cronge, Blakesley, gent. (1571).

PROB 11/56 Richard Hopkins, Towcester (1573).

PROB 11/58 Raphe Phynne, Easton Neston, yeoman (1576).

PROB 11/67/298 John Dryden, Canons Ashby, gent. (1584)

- PROB 11/68 Lawrence Washington, Sulgrave, gent. (1581).
- PROB 11/68 Thomas Kingston, Moreton Pinkney, husbandman (1584).
- PROB 11/ 69 Thomas Lovett, Wappenham, Esquire (1584).
- PROB 11/70 Thomas Warde, Weedon Lois (1587).
- PROB 11/70 Walter Parsons, Shutlanger, gent. (1585).
- PROB 11/76 Simon Brookes, Towcester (1590).
- PROB 11/85 John Mole, Sulgrave, gent. (1592).
- PROB 11/89 Roger Webbe, Culworth, yeoman (1598).
- PROB 11/90 Anthony Humphrey, Sulgrave, yeoman (1597).
- PROB 11/94 Christopher Barnes, Shutlanger (1599).
- PROB 11/97 John Anson, Stoke Bruerne, parson (1600).
- PROB 11/97 William Furley, Towcester, innholder (1600).
- PROB 11/99 James Langrett als. Robertes, Whittlebury, gent. (1601).
- PROB 11/100 Hierome Fermor, Wood Burcote, Towcester (1602).
- PROB 11/101 Richard Smithe, Towcester, shoemaker (1603).
- PROB 11/104 Thomas Folxes, Syresham, cleric (1604).
- PROB 11/107 Jane Fermor, Wood Burcote, Towcester, widow (1606).
- PROB 11/108 Edward Marsey, Paulerspury, yeoman (1606).
- PROB 11/108 William Hickling, Greens Norton, gent. (1592).
- PROB 11/110 Thomas Kingston, Shutlanger, gent (1607).
- PROB 11/110 William Greatbach als. Poole, Wappenham, yeoman (1607).
- PROB 11/113 Dionise Whitton, Wappenham, widow (1607).
- PROB 11/117 Thomas Palmer, Syresham, labourer (1597).
- PROB 11/121 George Fermor, Easton Neston, knight (1611, proved 1613).
- PROB 11/135/458 Ralphe Cobbett, Weedon Pynkeney, gent. (1620).
- PROB 11/135/663 John Ellyott, Greens Norton, yeoman (1620).
- PROB 11/137 Robert Washington, Sulgrave, Esquire (1620).
- PROB 11/145 Edward Topsell, City of London, cleric (1625).
- PROB 11/155 Mary Fermor, Easton Neston, widow (1625, proved 1629).
- PROB 11/157/550 John Adkins, Weedon Pinkney, yeoman (1630).
- PROB 11/247 Christopher Sutton, Stuchbury (1655).
- PROB 11/283/489 John Hopkins, Foscott, yeoman (1658).
- PROB 11/292 John Whalley, Cosgrove, cleric (1647).
- PROB 11/297/197 George Parsons, Slapton, yeoman (1660).
- PROB 11/301 John Kingston, Shutlanger, husbandman (1647, proved 1660).
- PROB 11/391/133 Robert Rogers, Bachelor in Divinity, Abthorpe (1688).
- PROB 11/512/244 John Stanley, Weston Pinkney, yeoman (1709).
- PROB 11/520 Jane Stanley, East Haddon, widow (1709, proved 1711).

Northampton: Northamptonshire Record Office

Peterborough Diocesan Records:

Bishops' Visitations: BV, bk. 2, 1570.

Church survey books: 2 (1611); 4 (1631); 5 (1637).

Consistory Court Proceedings:

ML636, ML637.

1524/5 Lay Subsidy Returns (microfilm of records at TNA)

E179/155/132; E179/155/130; E179/155/140; E179/155/159.

Consistory Court of Peterborough Wills: bks.1-5.

Archdeaconry of Northampton Wills: 1st series, 2nd series, 3rd series, 4th series, 5th series;

Early wills; 'Box C' wills.

Wills 1705-1810:

Will N. Grace Kingston, Towcester, widow (1705).

Will N. Robert Kingston, Shutlanger (1719).

Will N. Samuel Kingston, Shutlanger (1730).

Will N. Matthew Kingston, Shutlanger (1728, proved 1731).

Will N. Joseph Stanley, Moreton Pinkney, yeoman (1731).

Will N. John Kingston, Moreton Pinkney (1741, proved 1745).

Will N. Thomas Kingston, Moreton Pinkney, farmer (1743, proved 1745).

Will N. Mary Pilgrim, Whittlebury (1747).

Will N. Job Kingston, Moreton Pinkney (1761).

Will N. Mary Kingston, Moreton Pinkney, widow (1763).

Will N. John Kingston, Weston-by-Weedon, yeoman (1773).

Will N. John Kingston, Moreton Pinkney, yeoman (1776).

Will N. Thomas Kingston, Shutlanger, yeoman (1801).

Will N. Thomas Curtis, Shutlanger, yeoman (1803).

Will N. John Mawle, Woodend, yeoman (1803).

Will N. John Kingston, Shutlanger, farmer (1803, proved 1804).

Will N. Thomas Kingston, Weston (1809).

Will N. Thomas Kingston, Weston-by-Weedon, gent. (1810).

Churchwardens' accounts:

Culworth: 94p/21, 1531-1607; 94p/22, 1653-1742.

Wappenham: 339p/19, 1657-1675.

Parish registers:

Abthorpe, 2p; Blakesley, 33p; Bradden, 43p; Culworth, 94p; East Haddon, 146p;

Easton Neston, 112p; Greens Norton, 140p; Moreton Pinkney, 213p; Paulerspury,

255p; Plumpton, 270p; Silverstone, 290p; Slapton, 291p; Stoke Bruerne, 303p;

Sulgrave, 310p; Syresham, 313p; Towcester, 329p; Wappenham, 339p; Weedon Lois,

345p; Whittlebury, 363p.

Quarter Sessions Records: QSR 1/37, QSR 1/44.

Quaker births (Microfilm): M250/1.

Fermor-Hesketh (Baker) 703 and 704: Civil War.

Fermor-Hesketh (Baker) 708, pp. 73-6:

'An Account of the Conventicles held in the 7 Western Deaneries of the Diocese of Peterborough, 11 Aug. 1669'.

Baptist Association, bundle 11:

Minute book, Towcester.

Leonard, Patrick, *Stuchbury: The Lost Village*, ms ZB1414 (1994).

Oxford: Angus Library, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford

A.d.15, Church book, Slapton, 1681, *The booke belonging to the Church of God meeting in and about Slapton 1681*.

Wigston: Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Record Office

Shirley Family Archives:

Astwell with Falcutt: 26D53/625; 26D53/626.26D53/671; 26D53/678; 26D53/680; 26D53/681.

Draft wills of George Shirley: 26D53/1958 (1590s?); 26D53/1956 (1599).

Printed primary sources

Allen, Marion E., (ed.), *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Suffolk 1620-1624*, Suffolk Records Society, 31 (Woodbridge, 1989).

Archer, Margaret (ed.), *The Register of Philip Repingdon, 1405-1411*, Lincoln Record Society, 57 (1963), and 1414-1419, Lincoln Record Society, 74 (1982).

Bartlett, Eileen & John (eds), *Buckinghamshire Digest Register of Quaker Deaths 1656-1837*, The Eureka Partnership (Aylesbury, 2013).

Bartlett, Eileen & John (eds), *Buckinghamshire Digest Register of Quaker Marriages 1658-1837*, The Eureka Partnership (Aylesbury, 2013).

Bartlett, Eileen & John (eds), *Buckinghamshire Digest Register of Quaker Births 1645-1837*, The Eureka Partnership (Aylesbury, 2013).

Bartlett, Eileen & John (eds), *Road Baptist Church, Births 1816-1837 and Members 1730-1912*, The Eureka Partnership (Aylesbury, 2013).

Bell, Patricia (ed.), *Bedfordshire Wills 1480-1519*, Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 45 (1966).

Bell, Patricia (ed.), *Bedfordshire Wills 1484-1533*, Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 76 (1997).

Bennett, Nicholas (ed.), *The Registers of Henry Burghersh 1320-1342*, 2, Lincoln Record Society, 90 (2003), and 3, Lincoln Record Society, 101 (2011).

Botelho, L.A. (ed.), *Churchwardens' Accounts of Cratfield 1640-60*, Suffolk Records Society, 42 (1999).

Broad, John (ed.), *'Buckinghamshire Dissent and Parish Life 1669-1712'*, Buckinghamshire Record Society, 28 (1993).

Calendars of Charter Rolls, 2, 1257-1300; 3, 1300-1326; 5, 1341-1417.

Calendar of the Committee for Compounding Domestic, 1643-1660, Part 1, p. 88 and Part 2, pp. 1595-6.

- Calendars of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, Edward III, 7; Edward III, 10; Henry V, 21.
- Calendars of Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, 12, pt. 1, 13, 1538; 15, 1540; 16, 1540-1.
- Calendars of Papal Registers: Petitions*, 1342-1419; *Papal Letters*, 1, 1198-1304; 2, 1305-1342; 3, 1342-1362; 5, 1396-1404; 10, 1447-1455; 15, 1484-1492; 16, 1492-1498; 18, 1503-1513.
- Calendars of Patent Rolls*, Edward II, 1313-1317; Edward III, 1327-1330; Henry V, 1413-1416; Henry VI, 1446-1452; Edward VI, 1549-1551 and 1550-1553.
- Calendars of State Papers Domestic*, 1637-38, 1655-6, 1660-61, 1661-2, 1668-69.
- Caley, J. (ed.), *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, 6 vols. (1810-43).
- Cirket, A. F. (ed.), *English Wills 1498-1526*, Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 37 (1957).
- Clark, Andrew (ed.), *Lincoln Diocese Documents 1450-1544*, Early English Text Society, Original Series, 149 (1914).
- Clarke, D. M., 'Conformity Certificates among the King's Bench Records: A Calendar', *Recusant History*, 14 (1977-8), pp. 57-63.
- Clay, John William (ed.), *North Country Wills 1383-1558, Wills relating to Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmorland at Somerset House and Lambeth Palace*, Surtees Society, 116 (1908).
- Collins, Francis (ed.), *Wills and Administrations from the Knaresborough Court Rolls*, Surtees Society, 104 (1902).
- Cronin, H. S. (ed.), Roger Dymoke, *Liber Contra xii Errores et Hereses Lollardorum* (London, 1922).
- Davis, F. N., *Rotuli Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Lincolniensis, 1235-1253*, The Canterbury and York Society, 10 (1913).
- Davis, F. N., *Rotuli Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Lincolniensis, 1254-1258*, Lincoln Record Society, 11 (1914).
- Edwards, Dorothy; Forrest, Margaret; Minchinton, Jacqueline; Shaw, Michael; Tyndall, Beryl and Wallis, Patience (eds), *Early Northampton Wills*, Northamptonshire Record Society, 42 (2005).
- Elvey, G. R., *Luffield Priory Charters*, pt. 2, Northamptonshire Record Society, 26 (1975).
- Frere, Walter Howard and Kennedy, William McClure (eds), *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation*, 3 vols., Alcuin Club (1910).
- Gibbons, Alfred, *Early Lincoln Wills 1280-1547* (Lincoln, 1888).
- Harley, J. B. (Intro.), *The County Maps from Camden's Britannia 1695 by Robert Morden, a Facsimile* (Newton Abbot, 1972).
- Hayter, Paul, *Kings Sutton Churchwardens' Accounts 1636-1700*, The Banbury Historical Society, 27 (2001).
- Hill, Rosalind M. T., (ed.), *The Rolls and Register of Bishop Oliver Sutton 1280-1299*, Lincoln Record Society, 52 (1958).

- Irons, E. A., (ed.), 'An Episcopal Visitation in 1570', and 'Northamptonshire Nonconformists', *Northamptonshire Notes and Queries, 2nd Series*, 2 (1907-9), pp. 79-80, 115-79, 202-8.
- Lumb, George Denison (ed.), *Testamenta Leodienia, Wills of Leeds, Pontefract, Wakefield, Otley and district, 1539-1553*, Thoresby Society, 19 (1913) and *1553-1561, Thoresby Society*, 27 (1930).
- Marsh, John B, '1672 Licences to Preach', in John Taylor (ed.) *Antiquarian Memoranda Northamptonshire*, 59 (Northampton, 1901).
- Metcalfe, Walter C. (ed.), *The Visitations of Northamptonshire made in 1564 and 1618-19: with Pedigrees from various Harleian mss*, (London, 1887).
- Mustanoja Tauno F. (ed.), 'The Good Wife Taught her Daughter', *Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae*, B, 61 (Helsinki, 1948).
- Northeast, Peter, *Boxford Churchwardens' Accounts*, The Suffolk Records Society, 23 (1982).
- Northeast, Peter (ed.), *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury 1439-1474, Wills from the Register 'Baldwyne'*, Pt.1, *1439-1461*, The Suffolk Records Society, 44 (2001).
- Northeast, Peter & Falvey, Heather (eds), Pt.2, *1461-1474*, The Suffolk Records Society, 53 (2010).
- Orme, Nicholas, *Cornish Wills 1342-1540*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 50 (Exeter, 2007).
- Palmer, Anthony, *Tudor Churchwardens' Accounts*, Hertfordshire Record Publications, 1 (1985).
- Phillimore, W. P. W. (ed.), *Rotuli Hugonis Welles Episcopi Lincolnensis 1209-1235*, vols 1-2, Lincoln Record Society, 3 (1912), 6 (1913).
- Raine, James (ed.), *Wills and Inventories from the Registry of the Archdeaconry of Richmond*, Surtees Society, 104 (1902).
- Salter, H., *A Subsidy Collected in the Diocese of Lincoln in 1526*, Oxford Historical Society, 63 (1909).
- Smith, David M. (ed.), *English Episcopal Acta, Lincoln 1067-1185* (London, 1980).
- Smith, David M, (ed.), *The Acta of Hugh of Wells, Bishop of Lincoln, 1209-1235*, Lincoln Record Society, 88 (2000).
- Snell, Beatrice Saxon (ed.), *The Minute Book of the Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends for the Upperside of Buckinghamshire 1669-1690*, Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society (1937).
- Thompson, A. Hamilton (ed.), 'The Chantry Certificates for Northamptonshire', *Associated Architectural and Archaeological Societies Reports and Papers*, 31 (1911-12), pp. 87-178.
- Thompson, A. Hamilton (ed.), *Visitations in the Diocese of Lincoln 1517-1520*, Lincoln Record Society, 33 (1940), Lincoln Record Society 35 (1944).
- Timmins, T. C. B. (ed.), *The Register of John Chandler, Dean of Salisbury 1404-17*, Wiltshire Record Society, 39 (1984).

- Turner, G. L. (ed.), *Original Records of Early Nonconformity Under Persecution and Indulgence* (1911-14).
- Wake, Joan (ed.), *Quarter Sessions records of the County of Northampton, 1630, 1657, 1657-8*, Northamptonshire Record Society, 1 (1924).
- Ward, Graham S. (ed.), *The 1851 Religious Census of Northamptonshire*, Northamptonshire Record Society (2007).
- Watts, Michael R., *The Dissenters, 1: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1978).
- Weaver, F. W. (ed.), *Somerset Medieval Wills 1383-1500*, Somerset Record Society, 16 (1901).
- Weaver, F. W. (ed.), *Somerset Medieval Wills 1501-1530 and 1531-1558*, Somerset Record Society, 19 & 21 (Reprint in one volume, Gloucester, 1983).
- Weaver, J. R. H., and Beardwood, A (eds), *Some Oxfordshire Wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 1393-1510*, Oxfordshire Record Society, 39 (1958).
- Webster, Tom and Shipps, Kenneth (eds), *The Diary of Samuel Rogers, 1634-1638*, The Church of England Record Society, 11 (2004).
- Whiteman, Anne (ed. assisted by Clapinson, Mary), *The Compton Census of 1676: A Critical Edition* (London, pub. for The British Academy, Oxford, 1986).
- Wilkin, W. H., 'The Vicars of Stockland 1560-1918', *Report and Transactions of the Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science, Literature and Art*, 71 (1939), p. 275.
- Williams, Ann and Martin, D. H. (eds), *Domesday Book, a Complete Translation* (London, 2002).

Secondary sources

- Aers, David, 'Altars of Power: Reflections on Eamon Duffy's *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580*', *Literature and History*, 3 (1994), pp. 90-105.
- Allinson, K. J, Beresford, M.W, Hurst, J. G., *The Deserted Villages of Northamptonshire* (Leicester, 1966).
- Anderson, W. G., *Historical Sketch of the Baptist Churches at Weston-by-Weedon, Woodend and Moreton Pinkney, and Sulgrave, Helmdon and Culworth* (Northampton, 1930).
- An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northampton*, Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, 4 (London, 1982).
- Anon, *Greens Norton Church* (leaflet, undated).
- Anon, *Sulgrave Church* (leaflet, undated).
- Anstruther, G., *Vaux of Harrowden: A Recusant Family*, (Newport, Monmouthshire, 1953).
- Appleby, David, *Black Bartholomew's Day, Preaching, Polemic and Restoration Nonconformity* (Manchester, 2007).
- Arkell, Tom; Evans, Nesta and Goose, Nigel (eds) *When Death Do Us Part, Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000).

- Astill, Grenville and Grant, Annie, *The Countryside of Medieval England* (Oxford, 1988).
- Aston, Margaret, *Lollards and Reformers; Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London, 1984).
- Attreed, Lorraine, 'Preparation for Death in Sixteenth-Century Northern England', *The Sixteenth-Century Journal*, 13/3 (1982), pp. 37-66.
- Bainbridge, Virginia R., *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: Social and Religious Change in Cambridgeshire 1350-1558* (Woodbridge, 1996).
- Bainbridge, Virginia R., 'Syon Abbey: Women and Learning c. 1415-1600', in Jones, E. A. and Walsham, Alexandra (eds), *Syon Abbey and its Books, Reading, Writing and Religion c. 1400-1700*, (Woodbridge, 2010), pp. 82-103.
- Baker, George, *History and Antiquities of the County of Northamptonshire*, 2 vols., (London, 1822-41).
- Barron, Caroline M., 'The Parish Fraternities of Medieval London' in Caroline M. Barron and Christopher Harper-Bill (eds), *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society* (Woodbridge, 1985).
- Barron, O., *Northamptonshire Families*, Victoria County History (London, 1906).
- Bell, Susan Groag, 'Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture', in Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (eds), *Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (London and Athens, 1988), pp. 158-165.
- Benson, Larry D. (ed.), *The Riverside Chaucer* (Oxford, 1988).
- Bernard, G. W., *The Medieval English Church: Vitality and Vulnerability Before the Break with Rome* (New Haven and London, 2012).
- Besse, Joseph, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers*, 2 vols (London, 1753).
- Bindoff, S. T., (compiler and ed.), *The House of Commons 1509-1558* (1981); *1558-1603* (1982).
- Blair, John, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005).
- Bond, Francis, *Dedications and Patron Saints of English Churches* (London, 1914).
- Bonser, K. J., *The Drovers, Who they were and how they went: an Epic of the English countryside* (Newton Abbot, 1972).
- Bossy, John, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1985).
- Bord, Janet and Colin, *Sacred Waters, Holy Wells and Water Lore in Britain and Ireland* (London, 1985).
- Bowker, Margaret, 'Non-residence in the Lincoln Diocese in the Early Sixteenth Century', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 15 (1964), pp. 40-50.
- Bowker, Margaret, *The Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1495-1520* (Cambridge, 1968).
- Bowker, Margaret, *The Henrician Reformation: the Diocese of Lincoln under John Longland 1521-1547* (1981).
- Bremer, Francis J., 'Charles Chauncey, 1592-1672, Minister in America and College Head', *ODNB* (2004-16).

- Bridges, John, *The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire*, 2 vols., (Oxford, 1791).
- Brigden, Susan 'Youth and the English Reformation', *Past and Present*, 95 (1982), pp. 37-67.
- Brigden, Susan, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford, 1991).
- Brook, Benjamin, *The Lives of the Puritans*, 3 vols (London, 1813), pp. 81, 154.
- Brown, Andrew D., *Popular Piety in Late Medieval England, The Diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550* (Oxford, 1995).
- Brown, O. F. & Roberts G. J., *Passenham: The History of a Forest Village* (Chichester, 1973).
- Brown, R. J., *The English Village Church* (London, 1998).
- Browne, William, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Buckingham* (London, 1755).
- Bruce, F. F., *History of the Bible in English* (Guildford and London, 1979).
- Burgess, Clive, "'By Quick and by Dead": Wills and Pious Provision in Late Medieval Bristol', *English Historical Review*, 102 (1987), pp. 837-858.
- Burgess, Clive, 'Late Medieval Wills and Pious Convention: Testamentary Evidence Reconsidered', in Hicks, Michael (ed.), *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1990), pp. 14-33.
- Burgess, Clive (ed.), *The Pre-Reformation Records of All Saints' Church, Bristol, Part I*, Bristol Record Society, 46, (1995).
- Carnell, Geoffrey, *The Bishops of Peterborough 1541-1991* (Much Wenlock, 1993).
- Chambers, W. & R., 'Heart Bequests', in Chambers, Robert (ed.), *Chambers Book of Days*, 2 (London and Edinburgh, 1879), p. 416.
- Clanchy, M. T., *From Memory to Written Record, England 1066-1307* (Oxford, 1993).
- Clanchy, Michael, 'Images of Ladies with Prayer Books: What do they signify?', in R. N. Swanson (ed.), *The Church and the Book*, Ecclesiastical History Society (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 106-115.
- Clark, David, *Between Pulpit and Pew* (Cambridge, 1982).
- Clark, Peter, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution, Religion, Politics and Society in Kent 1500-1640* (Hassocks, 1977).
- Clebsch, William A, *England's Earliest Protestants 1520-1535* (New Haven, Conn. & London, 1964).
- Collinson, Patrick, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London, 1967).
- Collinson, Patrick, *The Religion of Protestants: the Church in English Society* (Oxford, 1982).
- Collinson, Patrick, *Godly People, Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London, 1983).
- Collinson, Patrick, *English Puritanism* (London, 1983).
- Collinson, Patrick, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Basingstoke, 1988).
- Collinson, Patrick, 'Critical Conclusion', in Spufford, Margaret (ed), *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 388-396.
- Coleman, Thomas, *Memorials of the Independent Churches in Northamptonshire* (London, 1853).

- Colvin, H. M. (ed.), *The History of the King's Works*, 6 vols (London, 1963).
- Cornwall, Julian, *Wealth and Society in Early Sixteenth Century England* (London, 1988).
- Coulton, G. G., *Ten Medieval Studies* (Cambridge, 1906, republished Boston, USA, 1959).
- Cowley, Patrick, *The Church Houses, their Religious and Social Significance* (London, 1970).
- Cox, J. Charles, *The Records of the Borough of Northampton*, 2 vols (Northampton and London, 1898).
- Cox, J. Charles, *Churchwardens' Accounts from the Fourteenth Century to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1913).
- Craig, John, 'Margaret Spittlehouse, Female Scrivener', *Local Population Studies* 46 (Spring 1991), pp. 54-7.
- Cressy, David and Ferrell, Lori Anne (eds), 'The Ten Articles, 1536', *Religion and Society in Early Modern Britain : a sourcebook* (1996).
- Cressy, David, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan England* (Stroud, 2004).
- Crompton, James, 'Leicestershire Lollards', *Transactions of Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 44 (1968-9), pp. 11-44.
- Cronin, H. S. (ed.), *Rogeri Dymmok, Liber Contra XII Errores et Hereses Lollardorum* (London, 1922).
- Cross, Claire, *Church and People 1450-1660: the Triumph of the Laity in the English Church* (1976).
- Cross, Claire, 'The Development of Protestantism in Leeds and Hull, 1520-1640: The Evidence from Wills', *Northern History*, 18 (1982), pp. 230-238.
- Crouch, David, *Piety, Fraternity and Power, Religious Gilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire, 1389-1547* (York, 2000).
- Curtis, Mark H., 'The Alienated Intellectuals of Early Stuart England', *Past and Present*, 23 (1962), pp. 28-9.
- Davies, Adrian, *The Quakers in English Society* (Oxford, 2000).
- Degge, Simon, *The Parson's Counsellor with the Laws of Tithes or Tithing* (London, 1695).
- Dickens, A. G., *The English Reformation* (London, 1967, revision of 1964 edition).
- Dickens, A. G., *Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York 1509-1558* (2nd ed. 1982).
- Dickens, A. G., 'The early expansion of Protestantism in England, 1520-1558', in Peter Marshall (ed.), *The Impact of the English Reformation* (London, 1997), pp. 85-117.
- Dickens, A. G., 'Early Protestantism and the Church in Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 8 (1983-4), pp. 27-39.
- Dickens, A. G., *Late Monasticism and the Reformation* (London, 1994),
- Duffy, Eamon, *The Stripping of the Altars, Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (1st edition, New Haven, 1992 and 2nd edition, New Haven and London, 2005).
- Duffy, Eamon, *The Voices of Morebath* (New Haven and London, 2003).

- Duffy, Eamon, 'The End of it All: The Material Culture of the Medieval English Parish and the 1552 Inventories of Church Goods', in Clive Burgess and Eamon Duffy (eds), *The Parish in Late Medieval England* (Donington, Lincs. 2006), pp. 381-399.
- Duffy, Eamon, 'Religious Belief', in Rosemary Horrox & Mark Ormrod (eds), *A Social History of England 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 293-339.
- Duffy, Eamon, *Fires of Faith, Catholic England under Mary Tudor* (New Haven and London, 2009).
- Duffy, Eamon, *Saints, Sacrilege and Seditious Religion, Religion and Conflict in the Tudor Reformations* (London, 2012).
- Durston, Christopher and Eales, Jacqueline (eds.), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700* (Basingstoke, 1996).
- Dyer, Christopher and Jones, Richard (eds), *Deserted Villages Revisited* (Hatfield, 2010).
- Dymond, David, 'God's Disputed Acre', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 50/3 (1999), pp. 464-497.
- Edwards, David G., *Derbyshire Wills Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury 1393-1574*, Derbyshire Record Society, 26 (1998).
- Eeles F. C. and Brown, J. E., *The Edwardian Inventories for Bedfordshire*, Alcuin Club Collections, 6 (London, 1905).
- Elton, G. R., *Reformation Europe 1517-1559* (London, 1963).
- Emden, A. B., *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to AD 1500*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1957-9).
- Emden, A. B., *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford AD 1501-1540* (Oxford, 1974).
- Emden, A. B., *A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500* (Cambridge, 1963).
- Erbe, Theodore (ed.), *A Collection of Homilies by John Mirk* (London, 1905).
- Evans, Nesta, 'The Descent of Dissenters in the Chiltern Hundreds', and 'Appendix B', in Spufford, Margaret (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 288-308, 401-430.
- Evans, R. H., 'The Quakers of Leicestershire, 1660-1714', *Transactions of Leicestershire Archaeological Society*, 28, (1952), pp. 62-83.
- Everitt, Alan, 'The Market Town' in Joan Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 4 (Cambridge, 1967), p. 475.
- Everitt, A. M., *The Local Community and the Great Rebellion* (London, 1969).
- Everitt, Alan, 'Nonconformity in Country Parishes' in Thirsk, Joan (ed.), Supplement, 'Land, Church, and People' *Agricultural Historical Review*, 18 (1970), pp. 178-199.
- Everitt, A., *The Pattern of Rural Dissent: the Nineteenth Century* (Leicester, 1972).
- Fairfax-Lucy, Alice, *Charlecote and the Lucys* (Oxford, 1958).
- Farnhill, Ken, *Guilds and the Parish Community in Late Medieval East Anglia, c. 1470-1550* (York, 2001).

- Fielding, John , 'Arminianism in the Localities: Peterborough Diocese, 1603-1642', in Fincham, Kenneth (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642* (Stanford, California, 1993), pp. 93-113.
- Fincham, Kenneth (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642* (Stanford, California, 1993).
- Fines, John, 'Heresy trials in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, 1511-12, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 14 (1963), pp. 160-174.
- Foard, Glenn, 'The Administrative Organisation of Northamptonshire in the Saxon Period', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 4 (Oxford, 1985), pp. 185-223.
- Foard, Glenn, 'Medieval Woodland, Agriculture and Industry in Rockingham Forest, Northamptonshire', *Medieval Archaeology*, 45 (2001), pp. 41-95.
- Ford, Judy Ann, *John Mirk's Festial, Orthodoxy, Lollardy and the Common People in Fourteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2006).
- Foster, Joseph, *Alumni Oxoniensis, 1500-1741*, Early series, 4vols. (Oxford, 1891-2).
- French, Katherine L., *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late-Medieval Diocese* (Philadelphia, 2001).
- French, Katherine L., *The Good Women of the Parish, Gender and Religion after the Black Death* (Philadelphia, 2008).
- Frere, Walter Howard and Kennedy, William McClure (eds), *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation, 1536-1558*, 2, Alcuin Club Publications (1910).
- Frewin, Sheila C., "...of Pigs and Paupers", *Bygone Days of Moreton Pinkney* (the author, 2005).
- Garlick, Vera F. M., 'The Provision of Vicars in the early Fourteenth Century', *History*, 34 (1949), pp. 16-27.
- Garnett, Oliver, *Canons Ashby* (The National Trust, 2001).
- Gentles, Ian, *The English Revolution and the Wars in the Three Kingdoms 1638-1652* (Harlow, 2007).
- Giggins, Brian L., *William Sponne, c. 1380-1448, Archdeacon of Norfolk and Rector of Towcester*, Towcester and District Local History Society (2010).
- Gill, Arthur A. R., 'Heart Burials', *Proceedings of the Yorkshire Architectural and York Archaeological Society*, 2/4 (1936), pp. 3-18.
- Gill, Miriam, 'Preaching and Image: Sermons and Wall Paintings in Later Medieval England', in Muessig, C. A. (ed.), *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2002), pp. 155-180.
- Gill, Miriam, 'Female Piety and Impiety, Selected Images of Women in Wall Paintings in England after 1300', in Riches S. and Salih, S. (eds), *Gender and Holiness, Men, Women and Saints in Late-Medieval Europe* (London, 2002), pp. 101-120.
- Goadby, J. Jackson, *Baptists and Quakers in Northamptonshire, 1650-1700* (Northampton, 1882).
- Goodfellow, Peter, 'Medieval Markets in Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 7 (1987-88); pp. 305-323.

- Goose, Nigel and Evans, Nesta, 'The Format of Wills' in Arkell, Tom; Evans, Nesta and Goose, Nigel (eds) *When Death Do Us Part, Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 47-50.
- Gordon, Bruce and Marshall, Peter, 'Introduction', in Gordon, Bruce, and Marshall, Peter (eds), *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 1-16.
- Hadley, D. M., *Death in Medieval England* (Stroud, 2001).
- Haigh, Christopher, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1975).
- Haigh, Christopher, 'The Recent Historiography of the English Reformation', *The Historical Journal*, 25 (1982), pp. 995-1007.
- Haigh, Christopher, 'Anticlericalism and the English Reformation', *History*, 68 (1983), pp. 391-407.
- Haigh, Christopher (ed.), *The English Reformation Revised* (London, 1987).
- Haigh, Christopher, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (1993).
- Haigh, Christopher, *The Plain Man's Pathways to Heaven, Kinds of Christianity in Post-Reformation England, 1570-1640* (Oxford, 2007).
- Hall, David, *The Open Fields of Northamptonshire*, Northamptonshire Record Society, 38 (1995).
- Hall, David, 'The Woodland Landscapes of Southern Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 54 (2001), pp. 33-46.
- Hair, P.E.H., 'A Query about Chapelries', *Local Population Studies*, 42 (1989), p. 58.
- Hair, P.E.H., 'The Chapel in the English Landscape', *The Local Historian*, 21 (1991), pp. 4-5.
- Harvey, William (ed.), *The Visitations of the County of Oxford: taken in 1566, 1574, and 1634*, Harleian Society, 5 (London, 1871).
- Healy, T. and Mumford, D. R., *St Botolph's Church, Slapton*, (Church booklet, revised ed. 1999).
- Heath, Peter, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (London, 1969).
- Higgitt, John, 'Imageis Maid with Mennis Hand': *Saints, Images, Belief and Identity in Later Medieval Scotland*, The Ninth Whithorn Lecture (Whithorn, 2003),
- Higgs, Laquita M., *Godliness and Governance in Tudor Colchester* (Michigan, 1998).
- Hill, Christopher, *The World Turned Upside Down, Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (London, 1975 edition),
- Hill, Peter, *A History of Death and Burial in Northamptonshire* (Stroud, 2011).
- Hindle, Steve, 'Beating the Bounds of the Parish: Order, Memory, and Identity in the English Local Community, c. 1500-1700', in Michael . Halvorson and Karen E. Spierling (eds), *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 205-228.
- Horrox, Rosemary, 'Purgatory, Prayer and Plague, 1150-1380', in Peter C. Jupp and Clare Gittins, (eds), *Death in England* (Manchester, 1999), pp. 90-118.

- Horrox, Rosemary & Ormrod, Mark (eds), *A Social History of England 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 2006).
- Hoskins, W. G., 'The Leicestershire Country Parson in the Sixteenth Century', *Transactions of Leicestershire Archaeological Society*, 21 (1940), pp. 90-114.
- Houlbrooke, Ralph, *Church Courts and the People during the English Reformation 1520-1570* (Oxford, 1979).
- Houlbrooke, Ralph, *Death, Religion and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (Oxford, 1998).
- Hudson, Anne, *The Premature Reformation, Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford, 1988).
- Hughes, Ann, *The Causes of the English Civil War* (Basingstoke, 1998).
- Hughes, Ann, "'Popular'" Presbyterianism in the 1640s and 1650s: the cases of Thomas Edwards and Thomas Hall', in Nicholas Tyacke, *England's Long Reformation* (London, 1998), pp. 235-359.
- Hunt, Arnold, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and their Audiences, 1590-1640* (Cambridge, 2010).
- Hunt, Tristram, *The English Civil War at First Hand* (London, 2002).
- Hutton, Ronald, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England, The Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1996).
- Ingram, Mike, 'English Civil War: Part 2', *Northamptonshire Herald and Post* (23 June 2015).
- Jakeman, Clare, 'Cofferer Cope and the Copes of Canons Ashby', *Cakes and Cockhorse*, 9, Banbury Historical Society, (1984), pp. 166-7.
- Johnson, Joe, *Shirley Village, Derbyshire: Ancient home of the Noble Shirley Family, the Earls Ferrers* (Shirley Millennium Committee, 2000).
- Jones, E. A. and Walsham, Alexandra (eds), *Syon Abbey and its Books, Reading, Writing and Religion c. 1400-1700* (Woodbridge, 2010).
- Jones, Norman, *The English Reformation, Religion and Cultural Adaptation*, (Oxford, 2002).
- Jones, Richard and Page, Mark, 'Characterizing Rural Settlement and Landscape: Whittlewood Forest in the Early Middle Ages', *Medieval Archaeology* 47 (2003), pp. 53-83.
- Jones, Richard & Page, Mark, *Medieval Villages in an English Landscape: Beginnings and Ends* (Macclesfield, 2006).
- Jordan, W. K., *Philanthropy in England, 1480-1660: a Study of the Changing Pattern of English Social Aspirations* (1959).
- Jupp, Peter C. and Gittings, Clare (eds), *Death in England* (Manchester, 1999).
- Jurkowski, Maureen, 'Lawyers and Lollardy in the Early Fifteenth Century', in Margaret Aston and Colin Richmond (eds), *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 155-182.
- Jurkowski, Maureen, 'Lollardy and Social Status in East Anglia', *Speculum*, 82 (2007), pp. 120-152.

- Jurkowski, Maureen, 'Lollards in Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire', in Fiona Somerset, Jill C. Havens, Derrick G. Pitard (eds), *Lollards and their Influence in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 73-95.
- Kamerick, Kathleen, *Popular Piety and Art in the Late Middle Ages, Image Worship and Idolatry in England 1350-1500* (New York and Basingstoke, 2002).
- Kemp, B. R., 'Monastic Possession of Parish Churches in England in the Twelfth Century', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 31/ 2 (1980), pp. 133-160.
- Ker, N. R., *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 5 vols (Oxford, 1983).
- King, Edmund, 'Medieval Wall-Paintings in Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Past and Present* 7 (1984-5), pp. 69-78.
- Kitching, Christopher, 'Church and Chapelry in Sixteenth-Century England', *Studies in Church History*, 16 (1979), pp. 279-281.
- Knowles, David and Hadcock, R. Neville *Medieval Religious Houses England and Wales* (London, 1971).
- Kümin, Beat A., *The Shaping of a Community: the Rise and Reformation of the English Parish, c. 1400-1560*, St Andrews Studies in Reformation History (1996).
- Lake, Peter, 'Defining Puritanism – again?', in Bremer, Francis J. (ed.), *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth Century Anglo-American Faith* (Boston, Massachusetts), pp. 3-29.
- Leach, Arthur, *English Schools at the Reformation 1546-8* (Westminster, 1896).
- Leach, E. F., 'Some Notes on Wall Paintings of Slapton Church', *Reports and Papers of the Associated Architectural Societies* 29, part 1 (1907), pp. 121-128.
- Lee, Paul, *Nunneries, Learning and Spirituality in Late Medieval English Society, The Dominican Priory of Dartford* (Woodbridge, 2001).
- Letters, Samantha, Fernandes, Mario, Keene, Derek, Myhill, Olwen, *Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516*, List and Index Society Special Series, 32, (2003).
- Lewis, Carezza, Fox, Patrick Mitchell and Dyer, Christopher, *Village, Hamlet and Field: Changing Medieval Settlements in Central England* (Macclesfield, 2001).
- Linnell, J. E., *Old Oak: the Story of a Forest Village* (London, 1932).
- Litzenberger, Caroline, 'Local Responses to Changes in Religious Policies based on Evidence from Gloucestershire Wills (1540-1580)', *Continuity and Change*, 8 (1993), pp. 417-439.
- Litzenberger, Caroline, *The English Reformation and the Laity* (Cambridge, 1997).
- Lloyd, Arnold *Quaker Social History 1669-1738* (London, 1950).
- Lomas S. C. and Craib, T., *The Edwardian Inventories of Huntingdonshire*, Alcuin Club Collections, 7 (London, 1906).
- Longden, Henry Isham, *Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy 1500-1900*, 16 vols. (Northampton, 1938-43).

- Lowndes, Walter, *The Quakers of Fritchley, 1863-1980* (Fritchley, Friends Meeting House, 1980).
- Lucas, Mary, 'The Methodology of Will Analysis in determining the Religious Opinions of the City of Lincoln during the Reformation', *East Midland Historian*, 1/2 (1991-2), p 15-22.
- Lutton, Robert, *Lollardy and Orthodox Religion in Pre-Reformation England* (Woodbridge, 2006).
- Lutton, Robert and Salter, Elizabeth (eds), *Pieties in Transition, Religious Practices and Experiences, c. 1400-1600* (Aldershot, 2007).
- Macnamara, Francis Nottidge, *Memorials of the Danvers Family of Dauntsey and Culworth* (London, 1895).
- McFarlane, K. B., *John Wycliffe and the beginnings of English Nonconformity* (London, 1952).
- McHardy, A. K., 'Bishop Buckingham and the Lollards of the Lincoln Diocese', in G. J. Cuming and Derek Baker (eds), *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protests*, Ecclesiastical History Society, 9 (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 131-143.
- McIntosh, Marjory Keniston, *Autonomy and Community, the Royal Manor of Havering, 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 1986).
- McSheffrey, Shannon and Tanner, Norman (eds), *Lollards of Coventry, 1486-1522*, (Cambridge, 2003).
- Marcombe, David, *English Small Town Life, Retford 1520-1642* (University of Nottingham, 1993).
- Marks, Richard, 'An English Stonemason in Stained Glass', in Alan Borg and Andrew Martindale (eds), *The Vanishing Past, Studies of Medieval Art, Liturgy and Metrology presented to Christopher Hohler*, British Archaeological Reports (BAR) International Series 3 (1981).
- Marks, Richard, *The Medieval Stained Glass of Northamptonshire* (Oxford for British Academy, 1998).
- Marks, Richard, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England* (Stroud, 2004).
- Marsh, Christopher, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke and London, 1998).
- Marsh, Christopher, 'Attitudes to Will-Making in Early Modern England', in Arkell, Tom, Evans, Nesta and Goose, Nigel, *When Death Do Us Part, Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 158-175.
- Marshall, Peter, *Faith and Identity in a Warwickshire Family: the Throckmortons and the Reformation*. Dugdale Society, 49 (2010).
- Marshall, Peter and Ryrie, Alec, *The Beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge, 2002).
- Marshall, Peter and Scott Geoffrey, *Catholic Gentry in English Society, The Throckmortons of Coughton from Reformation to Emancipation* (Farnham, 2009).

- Mason, F. J., 'The Old Minute Book of Bourne Baptist Church', *Baptist Quarterly*, 15 (1954), pp. 226-8.
- Mason, Emma, 'The Role of the English Parishioner, 1100-1500', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 27 (1976), pp. 211-233.
- Matthews, A. G., *Calamy Revised, being a Revision of Edmund's Account of the Ministers and Others Ejected and Silenced, 1660-2* (Oxford, 1934).
- Matthews, A. G., *Walker Revised, being a Revision of John Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy during the Great Rebellion 1642-60* (Oxford, 1948).
- Mayhew, G. J., 'The Progress of the Reformation in East Sussex 1530-1559: the Evidence from Wills', *Southern History*, 5 (1983), pp. 38-67.
- Meale, Carol M., '“... alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englisch, and frensch”: laywomen and their books in late medieval England', in Meale, Carol M., *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 128-158.
- Mellows, W. T. (ed.), *Peterborough Local Administration: Parochial Government before the Reformation: Churchwardens' Accounts, 1467-1573, with Supplementary Documents 1107-1488*, Northamptonshire Record Society, 9 (1939).
- Miller, Edward, and Hatcher, John, *Medieval England: Rural Society and Economic Change 1086-1348* (London, 1978).
- Moran, J. Hoepfner, 'Literacy in Northern England, 1350-1550', *Northern England*, 17 (1981), pp. 1-23.
- Morton, John, *The Natural History of Northamptonshire* (1712).
- Mundy, P. D., 'Cope, Dryden, Throckmorton, Oxenbridge and Allied Puritan Families', *Notes & Queries*, 180 (1941), p. 182.
- North, Thomas, *The Bells of Northamptonshire* (Leicester, 1878).
- O'Day, Rosemary, *The English Clergy, the Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession 1558-1642* (Leicester, 1979).
- O'Day, Rosemary, *The Debate on the English Reformation* (London, 1986).
- Orme, Nicholas, 'Church and Chapel in Medieval England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth series, 6 (1996), pp. 75-80.
- Orme, Nicholas, 'The Other Parish Churches: Chapels in Late-Medieval England', in C. Burgess and E. Duffy (eds), *The Parish in Late-Medieval England* (Donington, 2006), pp. 78-83.
- Orme, Nicholas, *Medieval Children* (New Haven and London, 2001).
- Owen, Dorothy, *A History of Lincoln Minster* (Cambridge, 1994).
- Page, Mark, 'The Extent of Whittlewood Forest and the Impact of Disafforestation in the Later Middle Ages', *Northamptonshire Past and Present* 56 (2003), pp. 22-33.
- Palliser, David, *The Reformation in York 1534-1553*, Borthwick Papers, 40 (York, 1971).
- Palliser, D. M., 'Popular reactions to the Reformation', in Christopher Haigh (ed), *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 94-113.
- Parry, E. G., 'Helmdon Stone', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 7 (1986-7), pp. 258-269.

- Parsons, David, *Lost Chuntries and Chapels of Medieval Northamptonshire*, The Brixworth Lectures, Second Series, 3 (Friends of All Saints' Church, Brixworth, 2003).
- Partida, Tracey, 'The Early Hunting Landscapes of Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 60 (2007), pp. 44-52.
- Partida, Tracey, Hall, David and Foard, Glenn, *An Atlas of Northamptonshire, The Medieval and Early Modern Landscape* (Oxford, 2013).
- Payne, Ernest A., *The Baptists of Towcester: A study of Northamptonshire Nonconformity during Two Hundred and Fifty Years* (Northampton, 1936).
- Peters, Christine, *Patterns of Piety, Women, Gender and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge, 2003).
- Pettit, Philip A., *The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire: A Study in their Economy 1558-1714*, Northamptonshire Record Society, 23 (1968).
- Pettit, Philip A., *Syresham: A Forest Village and its Chapel* (Syresham History, 1996).
- Pevsner, Nikolaus, *The Buildings of England: Northamptonshire* (New Haven and London, 1973).
- Pfaff, R. W., *New Liturgical Feasts in Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1970).
- Pfaff, Richard, 'The English Devotion of St Gregory's Trental', *Speculum*, 49 (1974), pp. 75-6.
- Plumb, Derek, 'The Social and Economic Spread of Rural Lollardy: a Reappraisal', in W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood (eds), *Voluntary Religion*, Ecclesiastical Historical Society (1986), p. 111-129.
- Ponting, C. E., 'The Conference', *The Antiquary*, 21 (1890), p. 222.
- Poole, Gary and Stokes, Karen, *Witches of Northamptonshire* (Stroud, 2006).
- Pooley, William, *Part of the Sufferings of Leicestershire and Northamptonshire* (London, 1683).
- Power, Eileen, *Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275-1535* (Cambridge, 1922).
- Pridgeon, Ellie and Rosewell, Roger, 'The Miracle of the Horseshoe: a 15th Century Wall Painting at Highworth Church', *Wiltshire Archaeological & Natural History Magazine*, 105 (2012), pp. 157-9.
- Rasche, Ulrich, 'The Early Phase of Appropriation of Parish Churches in Medieval England', *Journal of Medieval History*, 26 (2000), pp. 213-237.
- Rattue, James, *The Living Stream, Holy Wells in Historical Context* (Woodbridge, 1995).
- Roffey, Simon, *Chantry Chapels and Medieval Strategies for the Afterlife* (Stroud, 2008).
- Rogers, Byron, *The Green Lane to Nowhere: The Life of an English Village* (London, 2002).
- Rosewell, Roger, *Medieval Wall Paintings in English and Welsh Churches* (Woodbridge, 2008).
- Rosser, Gervase, 'Communities of Parish and Guild in the Late Middle Ages', in S. J. Wright (ed.), *Parish, Church and People, Local Studies in Lay Religion 1350-1750* (London, 1988), pp. 29-55.
- Rosser, Gervase, 'Parochial Conformity and Voluntary Religion in Late-Medieval England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, sixth series, 1 (1991), pp. 173-189.

- Rubin, Miri, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991).
- Russell, Conrad, *The Causes of the English Civil War, The Ford Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford 1987-1988* (Oxford, 1990).
- Scarisbrick, J. J., 'Religion and Politics in Northamptonshire in the Reign of Henry VIII', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 5 (1974), pp. 85-90.
- Scarisbrick, J. J., *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984).
- Scase, Wendy, 'St. Anne and the Education of the Virgin', in Nicholas Rogers (ed.), *England in the Fourteenth Century*, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, 3 (Stamford, 1991), pp. 81-96.
- Seaver, Paul S., *The Puritan Lectureships, the Politics of Religious Dissent 1560-1662* (Stanford, California, 1970).
- Serjeantson, R. M., *A History of the Church of All Saints*, Northampton (Northampton, 1901).
- Serjeantson, R. M. and Longden, H. Isham, *The Parish Churches and Religious Houses of Northamptonshire: Their Dedications, Altars, Images and Lights* (London, 1913), also in *Archaeological Journal*, 70 (1913), pp 217-452.
- Sheail, John, *The Regional Distribution of Wealth in England as indicated in the 1524/5 Lay Subsidy Returns*, List and Index Society, 29 (1998).
- Sheils, W. J., *Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough 1558-1610*, Northamptonshire Record Society, 30 (1979).
- Sheils, W. J., 'The Right of the Church'; The Clergy, Tithe, and the Courts at York, 1540-1640', in W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood (eds), *The Church and Wealth* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 231-255.
- Sheppard, Elaine M., 'The Reformation and the Citizens of Norwich', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 38 (1981), pp. 44-58.
- Sherley-Price, Leo (trans.), Farmer, D. H. (ed.), *Bede: Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (London, 1990).
- Shipp W. and Hodson, J. W., (eds) *John Hutchins, 1698-1773, The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset*, (East Ardsley, 3rd ed. 1973).
- Skears, R. W., *The Church of St. James the Great, Paulerspury* (Paulerspury Parochial Church Council, undated).
- Smith, H. Clifford, *Sulgrave Manor and the Washingtons* (London, 1933).
- Smith, Michael, 'History from Falcutt Fields', *Aspects of Helmdon*, 4 (2001), pp. 190-195.
- Snell, Lawrence S., *The Edwardian Inventories of Church Goods for Cornwall* (Exeter, 1956).
- Southworth, John, *Fools and Jesters at the English Court* (Stroud, 1998).
- Spencer, Brian, *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges*, Salisbury Museum Medieval Catalogue, 2 (Salisbury, 1990).
- Spencer, Helen Leith, *English Preaching in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993).
- Spufford, Margaret (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995).
- Spufford, Margaret, *Contrasting Communities, English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Stroud, 2000).

- Spufford, Margaret, 'Religious Preambles and the Scribes of Villagers Wills in Cambridgeshire, 1570-1700', in Arkell, Tom; Evans, Nesta and Goose, Nigel (eds) *When Death Do Us Part, Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000). pp. 144-157.
- Spurr, John, *English Puritanism 1603-1689* (Basingstoke, 1988).
- Steane, J. M., 'The Forests of Northamptonshire in the Early Middle Ages', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 5 (1973).
- Steane, John M., *The Northamptonshire Landscape, Northamptonshire and the Soke of Peterborough* (London, 1974).
- Steane, J. M., 'The Medieval Parks of Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 5 (1975), pp. 211-233.
- Stenton, F. M., 'The Road System of Medieval England', *The Economic History Review*, 7 (1936), pp. 1-21.
- Stevenson, Bill, 'The Social and Economic Status of Post-Restoration Dissenters', and 'The social Integration of Post-Restoration Dissenters', in Spufford, Margaret (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 332-387.
- Storey, Joanna, Bourne, Jill, and Buckley, Richard (eds), *Leicester Abbey Medieval History, Archaeology and Manuscript Studies*, The Leicester Archaeological and Historical Society (2006).
- Strange, Richard le, *A Complete Descriptive Guide to British Monumental Brasses* (London, 1972).
- Summers, W. H., *Memories of Jordans and the Chalfonts* (London, 1904).
- Swanson, R., *Catholic England, Faith, Religion and Observance before the Reformation* (Manchester, 1993).
- Takahashi, Motoyasu, 'The number of Wills Proved in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in G. H. Martin and Peter Spufford (eds), *The Records of the Nation : the Public Record Office, 1838-1988: The British Record Society, 1888-1988* (Woodbridge, 1990), p. 210.
- Tammel, Johanna W. (compiler), Young G. V. C, Bangs, Jeremy D, *The Pilgrims and other People from the British Isles in Leiden, 1576-1640* (Isle of Man, 1989).
- Tanner, Norman P., *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich* (Toronto, 1984).
- Tanner, Norman and Watson, Sethina, 'Least of the Laity: the Minimum Requirements for a Medieval Christian', *Journal of Medieval History*, 32 (2006), pp. 395-423.
- Taylor, C. S. (ed.), 'Pedigree of Danvers', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 17 (1892-93), pp. 303-4.
- Taylor, John, 'The Baptists in Northamptonshire in the 17th Century', *Antiquarian Memoranda Northamptonshire*, 12 (1911).
- Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, 1971).
- Thompson, A. Hamilton, *Song-Schools in the Middle Ages*, Church Music Society, 14 (1942)

- Thompson, A. Hamilton, *The English Clergy and their Organisation in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1947).
- Thompson, Beeby, 'Peculiarities of Waters and Wells', *Northamptonshire Natural History and Field Club*, 17 (1914), pp. 101-118, 191-197, 230-232; and 18 (1917), pp. 66-77.
- Thomson, John A. F., *The Later Lollards, 1414-1520* (1965).
- Timmins, E. W., *Early Nonconformity in Yelvertoft and its Vicinity* (Yelvertoft Church booklet, 1972).
- Tristram, E. W., *English Wall Painting of the Fourteenth Century*, (London, 1955).
- Tyacke, Nicholas, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution', in C. Russell (ed.), *The Origins of the English Civil War* (London, 1973), pp. 119-143.
- Unwin, Tim, *Late Seventeenth Century Taxation and Population: The Nottinghamshire Hearth Taxes and Compton Census*, Historical Geography Research Series, 16 (August 1985).
- Underdown, David, 'The Problem of Popular Allegiance in the English Civil War', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 31 (1981), pp. 69-94.
- Underdown, David, *Revel, Riot & Rebellion, Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford, 1985).
- Vann, Richard T., *The Social Development of English Quakerism 1655-1755* (Harvard, 1969).
- Vann, Richard T., 'Wills and the family in an English Town: Banbury, 1500-1800', *Journal of Family History*, 4 (1979), pp. 346-366.
- Venn, John and Venn, J. A., *Alumni Cantabrigiensis, from earliest times until 1751*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1924).
- Victoria History of the County of Buckinghamshire*, 3 (1925) and 4 (1927).
- Victoria History of the County of Hampshire*, 4 (1911).
- Victoria History of the County of Middlesex*, 1 (1911).
- Victoria History of the County of Northamptonshire*, 2 (1906) and 5 (2002).
- Victoria History of the County of Oxfordshire*, 6 (1959) and 9 (1969).
- Victoria History of the County of Wiltshire*, 3 (1956).
- Waller, J. G., 'On the Wall Paintings Discovered in the Churches of Raunds and Slapton', *Archaeological Journal* (1877), pp. 217-241.
- Walsham, Alexandra, 'Sacred Spas? Healing Springs and Religion in Post-Reformation Britain', in Bridget Heal & Ole Peter Grell, *The Impact of the European Reformation: Princes, Clergy and People* (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 209-215.
- Warner, Marina, *Alone of All her Sex; The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London, 1990).
- Waters, Robert Edmond Chester, *Genealogical memoirs of the extinct family of Chester of Chicheley*, vol. 1 (London, 1878).
- Webster, Tom, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England, the Caroline Puritan Movement c. 1620-1643* (Cambridge, 1997).
- Weil, Rachel, 'Allegiance in the English Civil War', *History Workshop Journal*, No. 61 (Spring, 2006), pp. 183-191.

- Wenzel, Siegfried, *Latin Sermon Collections from Later Medieval England, Orthodox Preaching in the Age of Wyclif* (Cambridge, 2005).
- Westlake, H. F., *The Parish Gilds of Mediaeval England* (New York, 1919).
- Whelan, Francis & Co, *History, Topography and Directory of Northamptonshire* (London, 1874).
- Whiteman, Anne, 'The Protestation Returns of 1641-1642', *Local Population Studies*, 55 (1955), pp. 14-27. Whiteman, Anne, 'The Protestation Returns of 1641-1642', *Local Population Studies*, 55 (1955), pp. 14-27.
- Whiting, Robert, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 1989).
- Whiting, Robert, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge, 2010).
- Wilkin, W. H., 'The Vicars of Stockland 1560-1918', *Report and Transactions of the Devonshire Association for the advancement of Science, Literature and Art*, 71 (1939), pp. 267-278.
- Williams, E. Carleton, 'Mural paintings of the Three Living and the Three Dead in England', *The Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 3rd Series, 7 (1942), pp. 31-40.
- Willis, Browne, *The History and Antiquities of the Town, Hundred and Deanery of Buckingham* (London, 1755).
- Winston, John, *The Testimony of our Reverend Brethren, Ministers of the Province of London* (London, 1648).
- Woodfield, Paul, 'A Further Pilgrim Badge of the *Pietà*, or Our Lady of Pity, from Towcester', *Northamptonshire Archaeology*, 29 (2000-1), pp. 204-206.
- Wood-Legh, K. L., *Perpetual Chantries in Britain* (Cambridge, 1965).
- Woodward, G. W. O., *The Dissolution of Monasteries* (London, 1966).
- Woolf, Daniel, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture 1500-1730* (Oxford, 2003).
- Wrightson, Keith and Levine, David, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village, Terling, 1525-1700* (New York, San Francisco, London, 1979).
- Wykes, L. David, 'The Church and Early Dissent: The Return of Nonconformist Conventicles for the Archdeaconry of Northampton', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 8 (1991-92), pp. 197-209.
- Joyce Youngs, *Sixteenth-Century England* (1984).
- Youngs, Frederick A., *Guide to the local administration units of England*, 2, Royal Historical Society (London, 1991).
- Zell, M.L., 'The Use of Religious Preambles as a Measure of Religious Belief in the Sixteenth-Century', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 50 (1977), pp. 246-249.
- Zieman, Katherine, *Singing the New Song* (Philadelphia, 2008).

Dissertations and theses

- D'Arcy, Joan, *Late Medieval Catholicism and the Impact of the Reformation in the Deanery of Derby c. 1520 to c. 1570*, University of Nottingham, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (1996).
- Fielding, John, *Conformists, Puritans and the Church Court: the Diocese of Peterborough, 1603-1642*, University of Birmingham, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, (1989).
- Forward, Eleanor J., *Place-names of the Whittlewood Area*, University of Nottingham, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (2007).
- Garfield, Ann, *Northamptonshire Yeomen: The Kingstons of Shutlanger, c. 1500-1850*, University of Nottingham, unpublished M.A. dissertation (2007).
- Geldart, Paul Morton, *Protestant Nonconformity and Sectarianism in Restoration Northamptonshire*, University of Leicester, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (2006).
- Kershaw, R. R., *Baptised Believers: Lincolnshire Baptists in Times of Persecution, Revolution and Toleration 1600-1700*, University of Nottingham, unpublished M.A. dissertation (1995).
- Kightly, Charles, *The Early Lollards, a Survey of Popular Lollard Activity in England, 1382-1428*, unpublished University of York Ph.D. thesis (1975).
- Lane, Pamela Margaret, *Contents of the Cadaver Tomb in Fifteenth-Century England*, unpublished University of York Ph.D. thesis (1987).
- Lucas, Mary D., *Popular Religious Attitudes in Urban Lincolnshire during the Reformation: The Will Evidence 1520-1600*, University of Nottingham, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (1998).
- Pridgeon, Eleanor Elizabeth, *Saint Christopher Wall Paintings in English and Welsh Churches c. 1250-c. 1500*, University of Leicester, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (2008).

Online sources

- <http://www.helmdon.com/four-shires-article.htm> (28/08/2010).
- <http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/collections-research/collectionsonline/object.aspx?objectID=object-> (29/03/2013).
- <http://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/29053.html> (31/08/2015).
- <http://finds.org.uk/database/search/results/objecttype/PILGRIM+BADGE/description/pieta> (29/03/2013).
- <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/fiennes-richard> (15/11/2015).
- <http://www.northamptonshiretimeline.com/article/english-civil-war/>
- <http://www.yorkminster.org/barning/the-minsters-history/who-was-who/> (27/01/11).
- Marshall, Anne (2000-2012), <http://www.paintedchurch.org/slapimp.htm> (various dates).
- Matthew, Colin and Harrison, Brian (eds) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, online edition, 2004-14).

Pearce, Joseph, review, *Maurice Baring: Faith and Culture*,
<http://www.catholicauthors.com/baring.html> (23/09/2011).

Phaer, Thomas, www.ucl.ac.uk/Library/special-coll/law2006.shtml (15/01/2011).

‘Sir William Fermor, Knight’, [www.tudorplace.com.ar/Bios/William Fermor.htm](http://www.tudorplace.com.ar/Bios/William%20Fermor.htm) (02/12/2011).

The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online or TAMO (all editions) (HRI Online Publications, Sheffield, 2011). Available from: <http://johnfoxe.org>