After 1873 English clerical incumbents in rural areas like Rutland were faced with a deepening agricultural depression that was only slightly alleviated after 1896. Many of the communities were decimated, because the heavy clay soils of the region were responsible for the tendency to turn over to less labour intensive pastoral activities. This was especially disastrous not only for farmers but also for the clergy. Clerical incomes were largely derived from glebe rents and these declined in the face of poor harvests and competition from imports of wheat from North America. C. F. K. Brown notes that ‘in 1880 the number of benefices of an annual value of over £100 and less than £200 was 2,597, but in 1892 the number was 4,173’.\(^1\)

The ending of pluralities, beginning with the Pluralities Act 1838 and strengthened by a further Act in 1850, was also a factor in reducing clerical incomes. As Peter Virgin states, ‘in 1830, pluralism had been virile, with nearly three livings for every two clergy... by 1880 it was virtually dead’.\(^2\)

Not surprisingly the number of candidates for ordination declined. By 1901 ordinations had fallen below 600 in England and Wales for the first time. In the early nineteenth century the social status of incumbents was rising. The wealthier ones were more akin to the aristocracy than the cottage dweller. Many of them were magistrates. They employed an array of servants. By the later decades of the century the social status of parsons was definitely in decline. Arthur Haig concluded that by the beginning of World War I incumbents were ‘well on the way to their modern position as rather awkward and shabby professionals’.\(^3\)

In this situation one would expect changes in the appointment system, in qualifications and in net income. This article seeks to examine the situation in Rutland, a good sample in England of a predominantly agricultural area, to discern how the clerical incumbents of the period coped with the rapidly changing economic and social conditions under which they lived and worked.

APPOINTMENTS

There had been no significant change in the system of appointments since the dissolution of the monasteries, which had thrown patronage open to wealthy landowners, who could and did nominate their friends and relatives. According to C. F. K. Brown this had ensured that there were ‘far too many livings in the hands of moneyed people who could afford to be incumbents’, an admission that to be a clergyman implied a wealthy background.⁴ There had been a number of suggestions for the alteration of the system, such as the replacement of private patronage with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, but there had been no political will to do so.⁵

There were, however, some significant movements within the system. The bishops, for instance, adopted a policy of acquiring the advowsons (the right to nominate incumbents) wherever possible. It was noted that episcopal patronage ‘more than doubled in the middle forty years of the nineteenth century and…continued to grow both numerically and proportionally for the rest of the century’. By 1878, 2,659 out of 13,380 livings experienced patronage by bishops.⁶

William Connor Magee, diocesan bishop of Peterborough during 1868–91, hoped that by acquiring advowsons it would be possible to move older incumbents from town parishes to more comfortable rural parishes, leaving the urban scene to younger men. He was very successful in urban centres like Leicester, where, by 1880, he had acquired 13 out of 17 livings.⁷ He was less successful though in rural areas like Rutland, where there were six livings in the hands of the bishop in 1846, and the same number in 1908, as Table 1 indicates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patrons</th>
<th>1846</th>
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<th>1908</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Landowners:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titled</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-titled</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbents and their families</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church officials</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Church patronage in Rutland.

Sources: White’s Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland, 1846 and 1881; and Kelly’s Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland, 1908.

Some clergymen and their families furthered their ambitions by purchasing advowsons, thus becoming patrons who could nominate themselves to incumbencies. Although this was an understandable response to a situation that denied many able men the opportunity of becoming incumbents it was clearly not ideal. The right to appoint oneself was hardly a measure of the ability to preach or engage in pastoralia. Consequently Bishop Magee and other diocesan bishops became more and more discouraging as they sought to bring appointments in line with ability. Eventually, in 1898, there was a Benefices Act which discouraged the practice, and it was finally outlawed in 1923. So that, while the purchase of advowsons by incumbents rose during early Victorian times from two in 1846 to six in 1881, it had declined to two by 1908.

At the tiny declining village of Ayston, where the population in 1881 was 108, the Reverend Sir John Fludyer, bart., MA, JP, was lord of the manor and sole landowner. He was originally nominated by his father, George Fludyer, MP, who had preceded him as lord of the manor and patron. A note in Kelly's Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland (1881) states that 'the tenor bell [in the parish church] was presented by the Rev. J. H. Fludyer, bart., in 1877, in commemoration of his having completed the fiftieth year of his ministry as curate and rector'. Earlier in his career Fludyer had also been rector of Thistleton where his father was the patron, and his mother, Lady Mary Fludyer, was lady of the manor. There were no documented complaints about his ministry, but it may be questioned whether it was possible for the wealthy resident of Ayston Hall to deal with all the demands of ministry in this situation.

At Teigh the patron and rector was Alfred Ryle Newby. It is very unlikely that a non-graduate clergymen trained at the Cumbrian college of St Bees would have been able to secure a living worth £466 if he had not been able to purchase the advowson.

At Edith Weston the rector was Charles Halford Lucas, while the patron was Richard Lucas, JP, whose seat was Edith Weston Hall. The Hall was described as 'a handsome mansion in the Elizabethan style' built by his father, the Reverend Richard Lucas in 1830. There was also a family team at Market Overton, where the patron was John M. Wingfield, Esq., of Tickencote Hall, the principal landowner and lord of the manor, while the rector was Henry Lancelot Wingfield.

By 1908 Charles William Cartwright at Seaton and Alfred Ryle Newby, who had been at Teigh since 1876, were the only incumbents who were also patrons. It is significant that both men were products of theological colleges (Lichfield and St Bees) rather than universities.

In Edwardian times patrons had begun to lose interest in livings as places where ordained relatives could be presented. As opportunities for graduates opened up in law, medicine, teaching, the civil service and the armed forces, fewer of their sons were opting for ordination. This, together with a greater concern for professionalism within the clergy, resulting mainly from the growing strength of the Oxford Movement, began to change the pool from which appointments could be made. Nevertheless, as Brian Heeney has observed, 'social status was still very important in gaining preferment and promotion, and it remained so despite the
infusion of a good many non-gentlemen into the ministry in the mid-Victorian period.\textsuperscript{8}

In an agricultural county like Rutland it was to be expected that most of the patrons would be wealthy landowners. The published county directories indicate that in adjoining Leicestershire 121 (57\%) of the advowsons in 1846 were owned by landowners. By 1877 there was a reduction to 98 (49\%). Thereafter, however, there was only a marginal decrease to 46\% in 1908. In Rutland, where there was little industrial or urban development, there was no significant decline.\textsuperscript{9} Although the number of landowners was reduced from 27 (66\%) in 1846 to 25 (61\%) in 1881, there was actually an increase to 28 (66\%) in 1908. Most of these landowners were titled people. Among them were Viscount Downe (Ashwell), the Earl of Gainsborough (Cottesmore, Ridlington, Preston, Exton and Whitwell), Sir Gilbert Heathcote (Stretton, Normanton and Pilton), the Marquis of Exeter (Great Casterton, Tinwell, Barrowden and Stoke Dry), the Duke of Rutland (Bisbrooke), and the Earl of Harborough (Glaston and Seaton). In most cases the patrons were also lords of the manor and either sole owner or principal landowner of the village and its land.

Throughout the country there was a network of benefices where the advowsons were owned by ‘Oxbridge’ colleges. These had been important in mid-Victorian times because they provided a supplementary income for academics who absented themselves from their parishes; the parishes had to make do with poorly paid curates. Before the 1870s college fellows were required to be bachelors; when they married it was possible to offer them a suitable benefice. The marriage rule was abolished by the end of the century. Moreover, since 1877, fellows no longer were expected to take holy orders, so that the pool of suitable college candidates gradually diminished and eventually disappeared.\textsuperscript{10} College presentations were few in Rutland. One notable appointment was that of Christopher Wordsworth, the second son of Bishop Christopher Wordsworth of Lincoln. The younger Wordsworth was a Fellow of St Peter’s College, Cambridge, where he served as assistant tutor and dean, from 1870 to 1878. By 1877 St Peter’s College had nominated him as rector of Glaston, where he remained until 1889. Although he was not destined to hold any other college or university position he was later described as ‘an eminent liturgiologist’ and the author of a well-received work, ‘Social Life at the English Universities’. At North Luffenham in 1881, where the patron was Emmanuel College, Cambridge, Philip Dennis, BD, a Fellow of the college from 1847 to 1862, was rector from 1862. The rector of South Luffenham at the same time was Dr James Hodson of Merton College, Oxford, even though the patron was Balliol College. By 1908 all three benefices were still in college hands, the appointments being of graduates of the colleges concerned.

\textsuperscript{8} B. Heeney, \textit{A Different Kind of Gentleman: Parish Clergy as Professional Men in Early and Mid-Victorian England} (Connecticut, 1976), pp. 6–7.


Kelsey Sterling has noted that throughout England and Wales ‘the university graduate remained the preferred ordination candidate right up to Edwardian times, and the non-graduate...continued to be considered by most of the hierarchy and laity as a parvenu and interloper’.\footnote{K. Sterling, ‘The Education of the Anglican Clergy, 1830–1914’, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester, 1982, p. 210.} One would, therefore, expect this to be reflected in the figures for Rutland. It was also to be expected that the proportions would be similar to those in Leicestershire. Both counties were in the diocese of Peterborough, where Bishop William Connor Magee (1868–1891) had stood firm in his opposition to non-graduate training. Rather than have priests who attended colleges where students were immersed in Anglo-Catholicism or Evangelicalism, Magee preferred graduates trained ‘in broad daylight and under the influence of the broad free thought and life of a great university’.\footnote{G. Carnell, The Bishops of Peterborough 1541–1991 (Much Wenlock, 1993), p. 71.} It is significant that no theological colleges were founded in the diocese of Peterborough, even though such facilities were developed in the neighbouring dioceses of Lichfield, Lincoln and Ely.

In Leicestershire this preference for graduates was clearly evident. In 1846 some 151 (75%) incumbents in that county were ‘Oxbridge’ graduates. By 1908 there were still 172 (70%). Even among the remaining 30% about half of them were from newer universities, like Trinity College, Dublin (13), Durham (13) and London (9).\footnote{Rimmington, ‘Edwardian Clerical Incumbents in Leicestershire’, pp. 44–54.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
<th>Non-graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cambridge</td>
<td>Oxford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1846</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Qualifications of Rutland clerical incumbents.
Sources: White’s Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland, 1846 and 1881; and Kelly’s Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland, 1908.
were ‘Oxbridge’ graduates, but, rather curiously, most of them, 25 (74%), were from Oxford. It is difficult to find an explanation for this turn around, except that rail travel was increasing access from Oxford to other parts of the country. By 1908 the situation had changed slightly, with Oxford and Cambridge graduates equal in number (11), but the dominance of the ancient universities was weakening. Between them they accounted for only 22 (55%). By this time there were theological graduates appearing in greater numbers from Durham and London and Trinity College, Dublin.

Increasingly bishops were demanding that incumbents should have had specific training rather than the general education that had prevailed before the 1870s. As the pool of ‘gentlemen ordinands’ diminished there was greater reliance upon the ordination of nongraduate lower middle-class or upper working-class men with experience as businessmen, clerks, board school teachers and tradesmen, who were trained at new theological colleges like St Aidan’s, Birkenhead (founded in 1847), St John’s, Highbury (1873), Lichfield (1857) and Lincoln (1874). These ordinands were regarded by some as more suitable for working-class parishes because ‘the [existing] clergy were so distinct from them in terms of their upper-class backgrounds, their education and their tendency to stress the apartness of the ordained ministry’. The difference between the two kinds of incumbents can, however, be overstated. From the 1870s specific training was being effected at both Oxford and Cambridge, and Lawrence Stone has noted that at Oxford there was a shift in student background from upper to lower middle-class in the second half of the nineteenth century. In any case it was becoming customary for graduates to follow up their university education with a period at a theological college, some of which, like Westcott House in Cambridge and Wycliffe Hall and St Stephen’s House in Oxford, specialised in the further training of graduates. Moreover there was considerable prejudice against non-graduates; as Dowland states, ‘bishops were loath to recognize the successes of non-graduates’. In 1908 58% of ordinands in England and Wales were graduates with no formal theological training.

In a conservative county like Rutland, with no significant urban centre, it was to be expected that few non-graduates would find their way to posts there. However, it should be noted that St Bees had been founded in 1816 by Bishop G. H. Law of Carlisle to provide clergy for a remote diocese which attracted few graduates. Rutland needed men trained to serve parishes where most people worked on the land. The problem was to get patrons to see that. In 1881 there were only two college-trained incumbents. Willoughby Willey at Ridlington had been trained at St Aidan’s and Alfred Newby at Teigh was from St. Bees. By 1908, however, there were eight non-graduates in Rutland. Alfred Newby at Teigh was joined by George Steer (London College of Divinity) at Ryhall, Charles Cartwright

17 Ibid, p. 2.
(Lichfield) at Seaton, Spencer Pocock (King’s College, London) at Greetham, Edward Hutchings (Lincoln), Benjamin Barrett (Hatfield College, Durham) at Braunston, and Edward Everett (St Aidan’s) at Tinwell. One suspects, however, that almost all patrons would have preferred to nominate graduates rather than non-graduates. They were quite unlike the patrons of industrial parishes, who often tried to staff the churches with clergymen from working-class backgrounds, because it was felt that they would be able to communicate easier with parishioners. 18

**NET INCOMES**

Clerical income, which was mainly dependent upon the state of agriculture, rose and fell with the vagaries of farm income. In 1846 half of Rutland’s clerical incumbents received income of more than £300 per annum, which enabled them, in the mid-Victorian period, to keep up ‘a respectable middle-class appearance…’. 19 They could look forward to a life-style that set them apart from many of their parishioners, and allowed them to acquire ‘respectability and greater social standing’. 20 Average income was in process of increasing from £344 in 1846 to £375 in 1881, by which time incomes were beginning to fall disastrously, the agricultural prosperity of the late 1860s and early 1870s giving way after 1873 to severe depression. The severity of the depression can be measured by population loss and reduction of arable land. The Census Report for England and Wales in 1891 notes that ‘the thirteen registration counties (including Rutland) in which the population declined are all agricultural counties’. Population in Rutland decreased from 22,073 in 1871 to 20,659 (−6%) in 1891. Population had still not recovered by 1911, when there were 20,346 people in the registration county of Rutland. It was also noted that Rutland’s arable land had decreased by 10,157 acres. 21 The effect on clergy was to reduce average income in 1908 to £255, with only 14 out of 41 incumbents receiving incomes exceeding £300.

Poorer clergy, however, were always more numerous than those who aspired to social positions that paralleled the sort of life-style favoured by the great landowners, on whom they were dependent for their appointments. In 1846 some 21 out of 41 incumbents had received incomes lower than £300, 12 of them less than £200. Though the average income was £344 the median was only £310. By 1881 there were only 14 incumbents with less than £300, though the median was only £277. In 1908 the proportions had changed again, with 27 out of 41 incumbents receiving less than £300. By this time not only was the average net income at £255 lower than in 1846, but the median income was only £227. In

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21 Ibid, p. 843.
some cases this was disastrous. At Ryhall, for instance, George Steer’s income was reduced from £280 in 1881 to £90 in 1908.

At Whissendine, Edwin Glasspool received only £150, whereas his predecessor had received £177. W. T. Fowke’s income at Bisbrooke was £132; his predecessor had received £258.

There was some difference between the incomes of rectors and vicars. A rector originally was entitled to both great and small tithes, though the former carried with it responsibility for the repair of the chancel of the parish church. A vicar was entitled only to the small tithes. Great tithes were received from corn, hay and wood, but small tithes accounted for anything not included among the great tithes, particularly wool and annual increases in farm stock. Even though the tithing system was largely superseded by 1846 by cash payments and glebe rental the distinction between rector and vicar was retained. The differences between the two types of tithe could be considerable. Ian Ryder notes that in the 1836 commuted tithes of Thorpe by Water in the parish of Seaton the great tithes amounted to 84% of the tithe income, leaving the vicar with only 16%.22 One would expect, therefore, that there would be considerable differences in the incomes of the two kinds of incumbents.

A calculation of net incomes, however, shows that rectors received an average of £364 (median £350) in 1846. By 1881 the average had increased to £404 (median £340). In 1908 the average net income had slipped to £269 (median £214). The 12 vicars in Rutland received even less. In 1846 they received an average of £277 (median £265). In 1881 they received an average income of £277 (median £265). By 1908 this had been reduced to an average of £219 (median £184).

There was, however, a considerable overlap between rectors’ and vicars’ incomes. One noted, for instance, that in 1881 the median rector’s income of £214 was lower than the average vicar’s income of £219, so that there were obvious inequities that related to the size of the parish and the glebe, and the agricultural value of the land. In 1908 the rector of Ayston received only £135, as has been

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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than £200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average incomes</td>
<td>£344</td>
<td>£375</td>
<td>£255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median incomes</td>
<td>£287</td>
<td>£310</td>
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Table 3. Net incomes of Rutland clerical incumbents.
Sources: White’s Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland, 1846 and 1881; and Kelly’s Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland, 1908.

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observed, while the vicar of Braunston received £250. The rector of Little Casterton received £155, while the vicar of Burley received £227.

The size of the net income, however, bore little relation to the life-styles of the clerical incumbents concerned. It was to be expected that the well-paid clergy would continue to employ an array of servants. At Oakham in 1901, for instance, where the vicar was paid £620, Frank Baggalley was able to employ three servants to look after himself, his wife and a student boarder. At South Luffenham, where clerical income was £330, George Shaw, who was 41 years old, was able to supplement his income by employment as a university extension lecturer. This enabled him to employ two servants to look after himself, his wife and son.

It was not, however, to be expected that more poorly paid incumbents would employ servants on such a generous scale. That this was so is an indication that life-styles were often at a level that was hardly commensurate with clerical income. In fact the number of servants employed by incumbents changed remarkably little. At Bisbrooke, for instance, Walter Thorpe Fowke, who was 29 years old in 1901, and whose clerical income was £132, was still able, according to the 1901 Census returns, to employ a male gardener and two female servants to attend to his wife and infant son. At Belton the 49-year-old bachelor vicar, Charles Berkeley, whose income was £184, employed a cook and a general domestic servant. At Preston, Oliver Lyne Fowke, a 38-year-old bachelor, with a clerical income of £138, employed a widowed female servant.

As early as 1854 W. J. Conybeare asserted that ‘the clergy, while poor as a profession, are rich as a class’.

Although the 1900 anonymous preface writer in Crockford’s Clerical Directory claimed that ‘most clergy have no additional income’ and was clearly aware that some clergymen lived in straitened circumstances, there were others, like the East Anglian rector, Augustus Jessop, who noted that ‘in nine cases out of ten, whereas the farmer’s losses meant a disastrous abatement which extended over his whole income, the parson felt the pinch only in the fall of the tithe or in the rent of his glebe…. In East Anglia not five per cent of the clergy are living upon the income of their benefices’. Even more conclusive was Thorold Rogers’s calculation that, for the country as a whole, ‘the Clergy receive about £3,000,000 a year in Clerical Incomes, and pay Income Tax on £9,000,000, thus bringing £6,000,000 a year to the service of the Church’. Haig was able to make the judgement that ‘what kept the clergy...afloat financially was the amount of their private means’. The truth seemed to be that some clergy lived in genteel poverty, while others, perhaps the majority, were able to continue to live in aristocratic style because of their private incomes.

It was obvious that some incumbents in Rutland avoided penury because they had private sources of income. Edwin Glasspool, for instance, who was a considerable scholar, with M.A. and B.Sc. degrees from the University of London,
was able to survive in some style because he was able, additionally, to obtain the mastership of the grammar school in the nearby Leicestershire village of Wymondham. John Fludyer, the third and surviving son of George Fludyer, MP, of Ayston Hall, became curate at Ayston, then rector of both Ayston and Thistleton, under parental patronage. The combined net incomes of these livings was £312. By 1881 Fludyer had inherited not only Ayston Hall, but also a baronetcy. He clearly lived in splendour, ministering only in tiny Ayston. He had resigned from Thistleton, where his successor, Michael Thomson, had to make do with £118. By 1908, 12 years after Fludyer’s death, the incumbents of Ayston and Thistleton received £135 and £121 respectively.

What is remarkable is that there were few complaints about the system that condemned some men to parishes where there was much work but little income, while others had small parishes with remarkably high incomes. At Ketton and Tixover, for instance, where the population in 1901 was 1,109, the net income was never higher than £312. At South Luffenham, where the population decreased from 359 in 1861 to 290 in 1901, net income was never lower than £330. At Great Casterton and Pickworth, where the population decreased from 533 in 1871 to 396 in 1901, net income was never less than £360. Where men were either satisfied with their incomes or had supplementary private incomes, and where many had a vested interest in a status quo which gave them an honourable position in society, there were not likely to be serious demands for change.

CONCLUSION

In an age when the economic basis of the countryside was changing rapidly, when society itself was reflecting greater concern for rewarding ability rather than inherited social position, and when more professional opportunities were opening up for graduates, it is remarkable that changes in the clerical incumbencies were so few. In Rutland the landed aristocracy remained firmly in control of clerical appointments, though the episcopacy had made some headway in acquiring more advowsons. Qualifications were beginning to shift. There were more non-graduates trained in theological colleges, and therefore in possession of precise theological and pastoral knowledge, by Edwardian times. Yet Oxford and Cambridge graduates, albeit with improved theological education qualifications, were still in the majority. In terms of income the Ecclesiastical Commissioners were in the process of increasing the incomes of men who laboured in large urban centres, but in Rutland, where all the livings were rural and population was sparse, the days of relatively affluent clergy were numbered.