CLERICAL INCUMBENTS
IN RUTLAND BETWEEN THE
TWO WORLD WARS

Gerald T. Rimmington

This article examines the appointments, qualifications and incomes of clerical incumbents in agriculturally depressed Rutland between the two World Wars. Comparisons are made with the situation in Leicestershire during the same period.

The inter-war years of the 1920s and 1930s were difficult for all church clerical incumbents. Many of their parishes had lost the flower of their youth on the battlefields. The expectation that men returning from the trenches would take their places in the pews again were often dashed. Anglican confirmations in England and Wales diminished from 216,888 in 1918 to 182,738 in 1936, while Easter communicants were reduced from 2,290,662 to 2,241,825. In the diocese of Peterborough, of which Rutland was, and still is, a part, the number of confirmations, following the national trend, declined from 5,976 to 4,892 (–15 per cent) between 1918 and 1936, while the number of Easter communicants was reduced by 5 per cent, from 70,434 to 66,676.¹

The clerical incumbents of Rutland, whose appointments, qualifications and stipends this article seeks to analyse, faced many problems additional to lower attendances at services. Principal among them was the state of agriculture, for after the conclusion of hostilities in 1918 there was a return to farming depression, with a gradual reduction in arable tillage. The acreage devoted to the growing of grain crops diminished from 18,808 in 1920 to 13,988 in 1933. Pastoral activities, requiring less labour, increased. The number of cattle increased from 18,840 to 20,987, while the number of sheep increased from 61,206 to 72,850. The acreage of permanent pasture increased from 52,744 to 60,669, while the number of agricultural holdings was reduced from 842 to 698.²

Consequent upon this agricultural depression was depopulation. The number of people in Rutland diminished from 20,346 in 1911 to 18,376 in 1921, and 17,401 in 1931. Depressingly, the Census Report for 1921 noted that: ‘For females, as for males, there is little industrial employment in Rutland. They are engaged in agriculture to about the average extent (65 per 1,000 in the Rural

¹ G. T. Rimmington, ‘Clerical Incumbents in Leicestershire between the Two World Wars’, TLAS, 80 (2006), p. 163. See also the author’s Bishop Cyril Bardsley and the Diocese of Leicester 1927–1940 (Leicester, 1999), p. 6. The figures for 1936 included the Diocese of Leicester, which had become independent of Peterborough at the end of 1926. To have left them out would have given an impression of greater decline than in fact occurred.

Although 21 parishes indicated some population increases during 1925–36, there were nevertheless 28 with reduced numbers of people. Oakham was reduced from 3,340 in 1921 to 3,191 (–5 per cent) in 1931, while Uppingham diminished from 2,453 to 1,703 (–30 per cent). Outside the towns, some villages were so depleted that they were hardly viable as benefices for clergymen. Cottesmore, for instance, was reduced from 589 in 1921 to 476 (–19 per cent) in 1931, while Exton diminished from 655 to 586 (–11 per cent) and Barrowden from 410 to 374 (–9 per cent).

Among other things this situation forced some rethinking about stipends, some of which were disarmally poor even in better economic times. The clerical profession was also an ageing one, with fewer young men taking it up, and therefore placing greater reliance upon older men. By 1927 the average age of existing clergy was ‘nearer sixty than fifty’ and only a thousand of them were under 35 years of age. This highlighted the need for an adequate pension scheme, for, to add to their problems, the clerical incumbents of Braunston, Great Casterton, Empingham and Hallaton were each responsible for the payment of pensions from their stipends to their predecessors. There were also adjustments to be made to working practice. The Enabling Act 1919 made it obligatory for all parishes to have elected church councils, a challenge for some incumbents, but an irritant to those of authoritarian disposition.

The increasing age of the clergy, however, and the need for change, left many clerical incumbents with problems that they found difficult to solve. Mrs Woods, wife of the bishop of Peterborough, outlined some of them in an address to the Peterborough Evangelistic Council. She stated that the ‘crying need for today was fellowship’, since the church was said to be ‘out of touch with the people’. Striking out at the older incumbents, she accused them of preaching ‘too many old sermons’, which prevented the message of the Church ‘from ringing out loud and clear’.

Because of the rapid changes, many of them outside the control of individual incumbents, the author has selected two years (rather than one), 1925 and 1936, for detailed examination. This enables comparisons to be made with Leicestershire, the statistics for which were included in the same directories.

APPOINTMENTS

The system of appointments had been contentious for more than half a century, but there had been no political will to enforce significant change. Edward Bartrum, an East Anglian incumbent, had argued in 1866 for the replacement of private patronage through the purchase of advowsons (the right to nominate

3 Census of England and Wales 1921: Counties of Lincoln and Rutland, p. xliii.
4 Crockford’s Clerical Directory, 1922 and 1936.
5 Peterborough Diocesan Calendar, 1926, pp. 133–9.
7 Lincoln, Rutland and Stamford Mercury, 28 February 1919.
8 Rimmington, ‘Clerical Incumbents in Leicestershire between the Two World Wars’, pp. 163–75.
incumbents) by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. A newspaper leader in 1919 mentioned the ‘often advocated reform of uniting benefices’, but commented that it would be slow in achievement. Within Rutland the process of uniting benefices to secure a higher stipend for incumbents could be noted in the linking of Bisbrooke and Glaston, Great Casteron and Pickworth, Market Overton and Thistleton. The rector of Normanton also became the rector of Whitwell, though there was no formal linking of the two benefices. In some cases this helped to ‘cushion’ population decreases. Glaston’s decline from 191 inhabitants in 1921 to 174 in 1931 was matched by Bisbrooke’s growth in population from 137 to 156. Casteron’s decline from 259 to 243 was balanced by its linked parish of Pickworth’s slight increase from 116 to 120.

Patronage remained largely in the hands of private landowners, as indicated in Fig. 1. There was clearly a relationship between landownership, lordship of the manor and patronage. At Bisbrooke, for instance, the Duke of Rutland was lord of the manor, principal landowner and patron. The same situation could be observed at Empingham (Earl of Ancaster), Cottesmore (Earl of Gainsborough), Clipsham (John Davenport-Handley-Humphreys, J.P.), North Luffenham (Earl of Ancaster), Lyndon (R. J. E. Conant), Ryhall (Marquis of Exeter) and Whitwell (Earl of Gainsborough).

At this time in Leicestershire the landed property owners were in process of disinvesting themselves of the ownership of villages, together with the advowsons, because of the pressure of taxation. By 1925 these disinvestments had resulted in the ownership of 101 advowsons (39 per cent), falling to 72 advowsons (30 per cent) by 1936. The process was further encouraged by a device invented by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and enshrined in a 1923 amendment to the Benefice Act 1898. This made it possible for the Commissioners to augment benefices under private patronage, but only if the advowson thereafter became unsaleable.

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</table>

Fig. 1. Church Patronage in Rutland, 1846–1936.

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10 *Lincoln, Rutland and Stamford Mercury*, 7 February 1919.
Yet in Rutland the 1923 Amendment Measure had no significant effect. In 1925 some 27 benefices (64 per cent) were in the hands of private landowners, while in 1936 there were 26 benefices (62 per cent) in their hands. It is difficult to account for this difference between the two counties, but it is possible to suggest that Rutland was a ‘heartland’ of the aristocracy, a haven from the industrialisation of the Leicester area, that they sought to maintain. It is true that iron mining was about to increase, with the development of the Corby smelter in the 1930s, but in 1921 there were only 26 iron miners in the county, whereas there were 64 farmers, 33 gardeners, 12 shepherds and 195 agricultural labourers.\(^\text{13}\)

Successive bishops of Peterborough had continued to acquire advowsons wherever possible. This policy had been particularly successful in Leicestershire, where the largest single block of advowsons was in episcopal hands. In 1925 the number had reached 65 (25 per cent); by 1936 it had reached 70 (30 per cent).\(^\text{14}\) Episcopal patronage was difficult to achieve in rural areas, but even in Rutland the numbers were gradually increasing, from six in 1846 to nine in 1925, and 11 in 1936.\(^\text{15}\)

The right of self-presentation by clergymen, who bought the advowson of a benefice in order to do so, had disappeared by 1936. The opposition of the bishops had at last been successful. It is interesting to note, however, that as late as 1925 Charles Johnson Cartwright was described as Patron and Rector of Seaton. However, he had been instituted in 1920, three years before the Amendment to the Benefices Act 1898 was enacted. This prohibition did not apply to the purchase of advowsons by people who intended to present relatives. Whereas in Leicestershire in 1925 there were still 16 (6 per cent) of incumbents who had familial relationships with patrons, and eight (3 per cent) in 1936, in Rutland even this nepotistic relationship seems to have disappeared.\(^\text{16}\)

The relationship with colleges continued, even though the original reasons for the purchase of the advowsons had lapsed. There was no longer any need for benefices to which ordained Fellows at Oxford or Cambridge colleges who had married (and therefore disqualified themselves from their Fellowships) could be appointed. Since the 1870s the marital disqualification had lapsed. Moreover, an increasing number of Fellows had not sought ordination. Nevertheless, St Peter's College, Cambridge, retained the patronage of Glaston and Bisbrooke in 1936; in 1934 the college nominated one of their own graduates as rector. Emmanuel College, Cambridge, also nominated one of its own graduates to the living of North Luffenham in 1936. At South Luffenham, however, Balliol College, Oxford, failed to nominate an alumnus, the rector appointed in 1936 being Godwyn Parmenter from Jesus College, Cambridge.

\(^{13}\) Census of England and Wales 1921: Counties of Lincoln and Rutland, Table XVII.
\(^{14}\) Rimmington, ‘Clerical Incumbents in Leicestershire between the Two World Wars’, p. 166.
\(^{16}\) Rimmington, ‘Clerical Incumbents in Leicestershire between the Two World Wars’, p. 166.
QUALIFICATIONS

In the early nineteenth century it was true to say that all the incumbents were well-educated, but only a small number of them were trained. Few were qualified in theology. Almost all of them were graduates of Oxford or Cambridge. Not until Edwardian times were bishops insisting that ministerial candidates should have specific qualifications. Canterbury decided in 1909 that all candidates should take a common ordination examination. From 1917 there was a requirement that all ordinands should attend a theological college after graduation for at least one term. To make this possible, colleges like Westcott House, Wycliffe Hall and St Stephen’s House in Oxford, and Ridley Hall in Cambridge, had developed postgraduate training facilities.17

In 1846, as Fig. 2 indicates, all but two Rutland incumbents had graduated at Oxford or Cambridge. This preponderance continued throughout the Victorian era. However, as other universities developed, graduates began to come from Durham, London, Trinity College, Dublin, and elsewhere. In Rutland, though, the majority continued to be ‘Oxbridge’ graduates. In 1925 there were 33 graduates (80 per cent), 24 (59 per cent) of whom were from the ancient universities. By 1936 the number of graduates had remained the same, but the ‘Oxbridge’ contingent had fallen to 18 (51 per cent).

It is notable that there was a marked reluctance for patrons to make nominations outside graduate ranks. In 1908 there was only one theological college-trained incumbent, while eight had been to university but failed to graduate. In 1936 there were four college-trained incumbents. At Barrowden,

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| Total               | 39   | 41   | 40   | 41   | 35   |

Fig. 2. Qualifications of Rutland Clerical Incumbents, 1846–1936.18

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18 White’s Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland, 1846 and 1881; Kelly’s Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland, 1908, 1925 and 1936.
John Kenneth Worley, M.C., appointed in 1928, had trained at Kelham College. At Braunston, George Andrew Hassel, from the London College of Divinity, had been the vicar since 1920. The rector of Stretton, appointed in 1932, was Charles Basil Wheeldon, who had been trained at Sarum Theological College, while at Tickencote there was William Saint George Coldwell, appointed in 1929 and trained at Lichfield College.

It is notable, however, that several younger incumbents were not only graduates, but were also the recipients of some training at theological college, usually just one term. Arthur Hillersdon Snowden, the incumbent at Stretton, for instance, graduated at Cambridge in 1878, and then proceeded to the Leeds Clerical School in 1879. Similarly, Richard Henry Fuller (North Luffenham), a Scholar at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, graduated in 1887 with second-class honours in the Classical Tripos, and then attended the Cambridge Clerical Training School. At Owston, incumbent Henry Stanley Tibbs graduated at Trinity College, Dublin, in 1899, but had then attended Sarum College. 19

A few of the graduate incumbents were men with scholarly pretensions. Joseph Sedgwick Barnes (Clipsham) graduated at Cambridge as Junior Optime in 1886. John Henry Woods (Glaston) was 21st Wrangler in 1888. John Francis Richards (North Luffenham), described as a ‘Late Exhibitioner of Balliol’, had gained first-class honours in Modern History and Literae Humaniores at Oxford, thereafter serving as headmaster at Huddersfield College and second master at Lancing College, before becoming a Rutland incumbent. Edwin Thomas Glasspool (Whissendine) gained a University of London B.A. in 1875, an M.A. in 1877, and a BSc. in 1889, as well as a first-class pass in the Preliminary Theological Examination. Until 1906 he had combined pastoral responsibility as Vicar of Garthorpe (1879–1906) with the headmastership of Wymondham Grammar School, before becoming the incumbent at Whissendine. George Leyburn Richardson (Uppingham), described as ‘Late Mawson Scholar of Christ College, Cambridge’, gained a B.A. (second-class Classical Tripos) in 1889, subsequently taking a B.D. degree at the University of Durham in 1913. He was the author of several books, including *The Church Lad’s Religion* (1902), *The Bible in Brief* (1904), *The Teacher’s Life of Christ* (1911), *Conscience and Development* (1920), and other works. 20

Most of the Rutland incumbents, however, were conscientious priests who were superior to their ‘squaner’ predecessors in the pastoral role. All of them lived within their parishes; there were no longer any absentee incumbents. Several of them had been missionaries early in their careers. Joseph James Wilson (Bisbrooke) had served in Australia from 1891 to 1906, while Frederick Trench Johnson (Little Casterton) served in Hong Kong from 1899 to 1912. Others had worked in difficult conditions, like John Henry Woods (Glaston), who served a curacy at Tyne Dock during 1905–07. Almost all of them had experienced

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19 *Crockford’s Clerical Directory*, 1925.
Charles Edward Ellwood (Cottesmore), a product of Gloucester Theological College, served five curacies during the 13 years ending in 1888.\textsuperscript{21}

**INCOMES**

Depressed farm incomes dictated that clergy incomes too were depressed, although this situation was alleviated to some extent by changes in the system. Since the sixteenth century incumbents had been liable for the payment of a year’s income (the ‘first fruits’) and 10ths thereafter to be paid into Queen Anne’s Bounty, the proceeds of which were given to poverty-stricken benefices. These payments were abolished in 1926. Moreover, in 1921, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners Measure authorised the payment of pension grants to ‘deserving unbefenced clergy’, and also ‘bigger and better augmentations’ to incumbents on very low incomes. The 1936 Tithe Act abolished tithe rent charge, and compensated the expropriated owners with ‘marketable 3% stock’\textsuperscript{22}.

As Fig. 3 indicates, average net income improved from a lowpoint of £255 in Edwardian times to £348 in 1925 and £420 in 1936, though these figures have to be treated with some caution. A note in the Peterborough Diocesan Calendar (1926) states that ‘the value at which tithe was commuted is given, not the amount received’, implying that the actual income may have been less than stated\textsuperscript{23}. As was the case in 1846, 1881 and 1908, the median income was lower than the average, indicating that there were more incumbents’ incomes below the average than above it.

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & 1846 & 1881 & 1908 & 1925 & 1936 \\
\hline
More than £500 & 8 & 9 & 3 & 6 & 13 \\
£300–£499 & 12 & 17 & 11 & 16 & 18 \\
£200–£299 & 9 & 6 & 10 & 10 & 6 \\
Less than £200 & 12 & 8 & 17 & 7 & 3 \\
\hline
Total & 40 & 40 & 41 & 39\textsuperscript{*} & 40 \\
\hline
Average net income & £344 & £375 & £255 & £348 & £420 \\
Median net income & £287 & £310 & £227 & £319 & £370 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{*}Income for Greetham in 1925 not available.

Fig. 3. Net Income of Rutland Clerical Incumbents, 1846–1936.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} For a fuller discussion of these changes, see Ibid., XV–XVI; G. F. Best, Temporal Pillars: Queen Anne’s Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the Church of England (1964), pp. 468–9, and Rimmington, ‘Clerical Incumbents in Leicestershire between the Two World Wars’, pp. 171–2.
\textsuperscript{23} Peterborough Diocesan Calendar, 1926, 1930.
\textsuperscript{24} White’s Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland, 1846 and 1881; Kelly’s Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland, 1925 and 1936.
Several incumbents were able to increase their clerical incomes by serving more than one parish. Whitwell (£350) and Normanton (£215) were served in 1936 by the same incumbent, who therefore received £565. Similarly, F. J. W. Taverner received income from two livings, Pilton (£120) and Wing (£340), in 1925, making his total earnings £460. The same two livings in 1936 produced incomes of £140 and £430, making a total of £570.

In most cases the income increased from 1925 to 1936. However, in the case of Market Overton (£319 in 1925) and Tickencote (£124 in 1925), which by 1936 had become a single living, the combined incomes yielded only £350, a net loss of £93. This, though, was an isolated case; elsewhere, the combining of parishes produced an increased income. The combining of parishes in order to increase incumbents’ incomes, however, was in its infancy in Rutland. In Leicestershire, because of parish amalgamations, the number of incumbents was reduced from 252 in 1925 to 232 in 1936, in all cases producing greater incomes.\(^{25}\)

It is interesting to note that there was still a differential between the incomes of rectors and vicars, even though there was no longer any basic difference in the way in which incomes were compiled. In 1925 there were 28 rectors, with an average income of £369, and a median income of £340. At the same time there were 14 vicars, with an average income of £282 and a median income of £270. Eleven years later there were 26 rectors, with an average income of £442 and a median income of £400. Thirteen vicars had an average income of £350 and a median income of £350.

There was nevertheless an overlap between the two sets of incomes. In 1925 there were four rectors who received incomes lower than £200, while one vicar received £440, and another £391, both higher than the average and median incomes of the rectors. In 1936 there were three rectors with stipends lower than £225, while four vicars received more than £500, with only one receiving less than £200. The evening up process that had been necessary in Leicester, where the heavily populated urban parishes had lagged behind country parishes, was not a possibility in rural Rutland.

CONCLUSION

The incumbents of this period were quite different from most nineteenth-century clergymen. Absentee clergy had disappeared, so that poverty-stricken curates-in-charge were no longer in evidence. All incumbents lived within their parishes. Few of them were identified with the landed aristocracy. A number of them were beginning to serve additional parishes. Crockford’s Clerical Directory (1936) noted that the union of benefices was inevitable in the long run because it was difficult to persuade men to take on small country parishes ‘principally because they cannot live on their stipends, and, unlike their predecessors, have no other source of income’.\(^{26}\) Educationally, fewer of them were ‘Oxbridge’ graduates, but


\(^{26}\) Crockford’s Clerical Directory, 1936, p. viii.
most of them were products of theological colleges with skills in theology and pastoralia. They were rapidly becoming ‘rather awkward and shabby professionals’, but at least they could claim to be real professionals with a reputable vocation.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{27} B. Heeney, \textit{A Different Kind of Gentleman: Parish Clergy as Professional Men in Early and Mid-Victorian England} (1976), pp. 6–7.