The Parochial Inspections of Andrew Burnaby D.D., Archdeacon of Leicester, in the years 1793 to 1797.

by W. Pemberton

Andrew Burnaby, Archdeacon of Leicester from 1786 to 1812, should be accorded a prominent place among his contemporaries and churchmen of succeeding generations for at least three reasons. First he continued and supplemented the important work of James Bickham, his immediate predecessor. Secondly he conducted his inspections when John Nichols was compiling his monumental work. Thirdly, his example may have inspired that most eminent of archdeacons, Thomas Kaye Bonney, to emulate the punctilious discharge of the duties of his office before Parliament had reformed the Church and before the influence of the Tractarian Movement had become effectual.

Burnaby was born at Asfordby, Leicestershire, in 1732, the eldest son of Andrew Burnaby of Brampton House, Huntingdonshire, rector of Asfordby in 1726 and vicar of the prebendal church of St. Margaret, Leicester, in 1737. This clerical family had already provided Asfordby with incumbents since 1666 in the persons of his great grandfather, grandfather and father, and his brother Thomas, rector of Ashby Folville, was to succeed to the benefice after his father's death.

Educated at Westminster school and Queen's College, Cambridge, Burnaby had received the degree of M.A. in 1757. He obviously had some scholarly pretensions being awarded the degree D.D. in 1776. His diocesan, John Thomas of Lincoln, had admitted him to the diaconate on 23rd February, 1755 and to the priesthood on 9th September, 1756. Happily the possession of ample private funds enabled him to satisfy his passionate desire for foreign travel. He toured the central colonies of North America in 1759 and 1760 and in 1762 he was appointed chaplain of the British factory at Leghorn, where he undertook the administrative duties of the consulate, with the title of proconsul, for three years. This sojourn had enabled him to explore and appreciate Italian history and art and attracted by the personality of the heroic Paoli he ventured to Corsica publishing a limited edition of this tour in 1804 and the letters which Paoli had addressed to him.

In 1769 the Crown, no doubt in recognition of his services, had nominated him to the valuable vicarage of Greenwich. Although after his father's death he had inherited the large estates at Brampton, it was Baggrave Hall in Leicestershire which, with a portion of the manor of Evington, was the inheritance of his wife, Ann, the daughter of John Edwyn, whom he had married on 20th February, 1770, that became his favourite retreat.

Thomas Thurlow of Lincoln, collated him to the archdeaconry of Leicester in 1786, a preferment for which he had not solicited and which he held unto his death. He was interred at Hungarton in whose church a distinctive chapel or chancel belonged to him by his right of the Baggrave estate. A monumental inscription, erected in Greenwich parish church, reminded his former parishioners that he had resided among them as a faithful pastor, despite the lure of his Leicestershire estates. At least one of his contemporaries

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esteemed him as 'a person of address and affable behaviour'.

His reputation, however, as an author was greater than that of an archdeacon and pastor as his writings were said to exhibit skill and fidelity, notably his, 'Occasional Sermons and Charges', printed in 1805. This edition, which included 'A Petition from the Clergy on the Slave Trade and A Letter to the Clergy on the Same Subject', clearly expressed that humane sympathy for the oppressed which had instinctively drawn him to the Corsican nationalist, and the account of his American tour, published under the title 'Observations on the State of the Colonies', had run into three editions.

The notes of Burnaby's visitation were compiled from copies of his orders by John Stockdale, the Deputy Registrar of the Archdeacon's Court. Neither full nor orderly, being intended only as memoranda for subsequent letters of directions which Stockdale was to despatch to respective ministers and churchwardens, there are important omissions in them, particularly in respect of the clergy. Thus the notes provide no information about non-residency but they confirm the effectiveness of Bickham's visitations.

The impetus of Dr Bickham's inspections from 1774 to 1779 had continued long after his death in December, 1785. Indeed, the period following his decease and prior to Burnaby's visitations in the summer of 1793 was one of notable consolidation for Bickham's instructions to the archdeaconry.

For two decades after Bickham had made his parochial inspections, his directions were faithfully fulfilled in the parishes, irrespective of their wealth or poverty, or of the number of their inhabitants. However, it is only when Burnaby's notes have been systematically examined that the truth of this statement can be appraised and demonstrated.

Stockdale entered the names and dates of the inspections of the churches and chapels inspected into his notebook in alphabetical order within the seven deaneries: Akeland, Framland, Gartree, Goscote, Guthlaxton, Sparkenhoe and Christianity; the last named deanery containing the four parishes of Leicester, All Saints, St. Martin, St. Mary and St. Nicholas. Included in this list were also those peculiars or donatives which Burnaby had also visited. Two hundred and fifty one fabrics were inspected. Burnaby visited according to proximity, a method that saved both time and travel. The state of the weather and therefore of roads which in remote areas were only mud tracks, and the size and condition of fabrics were all factors that determined the number which he visited in one day. The winter months were entirely ruled out, though he made inspections at the end of several months of March and the beginning of October. As far as was possible, he avoided July, August and September, owing to the tasks of harvesting in which incumbents and churchwardens alike would be engaged.

He visited Cossington on 26th May, 1788; but did not resume his visitation until four years later. On 31st May, 1792 he was at Twyford, Thorpe Satchville and Hungerton and in the year following at fifteen churches and chapels, mostly in the deanery of Goscote. In 1794 he inspected twenty-one, the majority being in the Gartree deanery. Not until 1795 was his inspection said to be both extensive and intensive. In that and the following two years he was visiting from two to six fabrics daily and four or five was a common number. His inspections in Leicester, on 26th May, 1787, presented no problem because of their nearness and fair state. On 30th March of the same year, he had been able to inspect Armesby, Buntingthorpe, Peatling Magna, Shearsby and Willoughby Waterleys, again all in a decent condition and in close proximity. On that day the weather must have favoured an elderly clergyman riding on horseback. It must also have been fine on 6th October 1795 when he inspected Burton Overy, Carlton Curlieu, Ilston, Church Langton and Tur Langton. The continued good weather may have induced him to extend his stay in Leicestershire longer than usual as on the following day he was in five more parishes: Great
Bowden, Brinhurst, Great Easton, Neville Holt and Medbourne, and the day after in Hallaton and Horninghold. The most intensive and exacting of his visitation was from 31st March to 25th May, 1797. On the latter date he inspected Markfield church which, with the exception of Thorpe Langton church, whose inspection he deferred until the following October, concluded his entire visitation of the parishes within his jurisdiction.

Having made his inspections, Burnaby would either, before or after his return to Greenwich, dispatch copies of his orders to Stockdale, instruct him to make copies of such orders for delivery to the ministers and churchwardens and to enter the same in his book for that purpose. This procedure, however, was less simple and more time wasting than that which Bickham had adopted; the incumbent of Shangton wrote to Stockdale:

"Sir,
The Archdeacon called here the beginning of October last & mentioned about Shangton Church. I told him it was too late till summer. I understand that he would write and send me notice about the work being done: therefore I have not ordered the Churchwarden to get it done — if you please to write to the Archdeacon to know if he required the Church to be washed. Dr Bickham when he visited wrote down the articles required and told me to certify to him when things were done according to his orders.

Shangton, July, 1st 1796
I am, Yours servant
Cha: Markham"13

Burnaby had by no means made a superficial examination of fabric and furnishings, even on those days when he had visited half a dozen churches or chapels. His knowledge of architecture, gained from his sojourn in Italy, his gift of close observation and attention and grasp of details enabled him to perform an inspection with rapid expertise. Before inspecting a fabric he would have referred to Bickham’s orders, firmly determined that if these still remained unfulfilled they should first be completed; so, inspecting Shenton chapel, he had written: ‘Wooden steeple to be taken down and rebuilt. This was ordered by the late Archdeacon, Dr Bickham but the order was not obeyed. The present churchwarden will be pleased to observe that if this second order is not complied with, measures how expensive soever to the parish will be taken to observe it’.14 These fabrics and furnishings which were in Burnaby’s opinion, either in a very good or generally bad state, may now be considered.

For the church of Narborough he had the highest praise for it was ‘in very good order within and without much to the credit of the resident minister and the parish in general’. The fabric of Great Bowden was ‘in such good repair and the parishioners have been so much expense in new pewing and beautifying the church that the Archdeacon declines giving any particular orders concerning it & only recommends to the churchwarden when the finances of the parish will admit of it to put up weather boards to guard the belfry windows & to underpin and point one or two of the buttresses which appear to want it & to underdraw the north & south aisles & a copy of the public charities to be transmitted’. He likewise commended the parishioners of Owston who had lately been at ‘very extraordinary expense in repairing & almost rebuilding their church’. No orders were necessary for the large fabric of Loughborough or for the church in Foston, which had less than a score of parishioners, nor the chapels of Quorndon and Rolleston. Newly built, the churches of Stapleford and Saxby were ‘complete in every respect’, and the chapel of Hugglescote, erected only two decades ago, evoked his pleasure, as it was, ‘extremely well
pewed, well glazed & had casements in the windows'. King's Norton, that masterpiece of classical design, built in 1771 by the munificence of the eccentric genius, William Fortrey, also aroused his undisguised admiration and profound concern for its perfect preservation. 'The church is almost new and very beautiful', he had written, 'nevertheless wet seems to have penetrated in some places through the Leads. It is therefore strongly recommended to the present and future churchwardens to have them frequently examined and to guard against every possible injury that may be likely to happen to so beautiful a fabric...'.

Other fabrics required little attention such as the chapels of Hoton and Prestwold: the former being in 'excellent repair' lacked nothing except weather boards. Loddington church only wanted weather boards, a little whitewashing and some slight repairs to chimneys. Shepshed required only a new bible and Prayer Book. The fabric of the isolated chapel of Little Stretton was 'in good repair' as, now thanks to wealthy benefactors, were those of Galby, Bl aston, Carlton Cur lield, Newton Harcourt and Packington. Sometimes a well fitted interior merited his favourable report. Of Fleckney he recorded: 'The chapel seems generally speaking in good repair, is well pewed & had had lately been whitewashed; a drain also had been judiciously laid down or opened on the north side to keep it dry'. The church of Kirby Mallory was 'very neat & well pewed', and the interior furnishings of Snibston were commendable.

So two dozen fabrics and their furnishings had merited Burnaby's praise. Of those on the debit side were only some four or five. Burnaby had conducted his examination with strict impartiality. Indeed, he had scorned to spare the church of the family living of Asfordby, held by a close relative and perhaps in the worse condition of all. There, little or nothing had been done to comply with Bickham's previous orders. Weeds and rubbish disfigured the churchyard; filth and dirt lying about the school and west door had not been removed, nor the school transferred to a more convenient place; walls, roof, leads, bell frames, floors, pulpit, font and pews, all very dirty still, wanted the most urgent attention. New bases were needed for the communicants, new cushions for the pulpit and reading desk, a new hood for the minister and a new covering for the communion table; no inventory of the communion plate had been given in; the tables of the Creed, the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer were nowhere set up and the parsonage house, which even in Bickham's time was recommended for rebuilding, remained as a visible witness to silent disobedience and unfulfilled promises.

The fabric of Stoney Stanton, where John Bold had exercised a saintly ministry in the first half of the century, now exhibited the sad and depressing consequences of non-residence. Robert Boucher Nickolls, instituted to it in 1779, had, seven years later, been presented to the deanery of the collegiate church of Middleham in Yorkshire by the Duke of Northumberland, as a reward for his services as chaplain of the Fifth Regiment of Foot in the war of American Independence. Whilst he lived at Middleham, Nickolls had written articles champions the cause of the abolition of the slave trade. But his energies were sorely needed in his Leicestershire parish whose chancel and nave were 'in so ruinous a state that it is difficult to give any specific orders concerning them; perhaps it might be advisable to advise in general that the whole should be surveyed and put into complete repair'. In Burnaby's opinion it would have been cheaper in the long term to rebuild the chancel. He directed the east end of the nave to be reconstructed and the entire roof examined. In concession to the parishioners' extreme poverty he consented to the disposal of the lead on condition that the roof was covered with 'best Westmorland slates'. A repewing was essential. The churchyard was extremely ill-kept and the steeple, damaged by lightning, lacked a lightning conductor. There were no tables of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer or the Decalogue, nor a list of benefactors publicly exhibited. The parsonage house,
‘a wretched mansion in a wretched condition’, through years of unoccupation, must be ‘completely and substantially repaired’.\textsuperscript{21}

On the following day Burnaby viewed with equal dismay another fabric. At Thurlaston, incumbents, lords of the manor and parishioners alike bore equally the blame for the most grievous state of the interior. ‘The Rector’s Chancel is in a very bad condition, floor uneven, seats wretchedly bad, walls dirty, the windows glazed with small panes of bad glass, the ceiling has never been whitewashed. The sequestrators, therefore, as the living is said to be in sequestration, must remedy these things. The Lord of the Manor’s north chancel is also in a most dirty or wretched state, windows are broken; the rains come in; birds have free entrance and render it a sight shameful to be seen’.\textsuperscript{22}

However, Burnaby had such sufficient faith in some patrons or improprors that he gave no specific orders: so he trusted Sir Charles Hudson, who had lately expended ‘a considerable sum’ in fitting new windows to Wanlip church, to fulfil his promised engagement to set in order a fabric which was ‘in very indifferent repair’ and he likewise relied upon the bountiful Sir John Palmer to prevent the beautiful chapel of Withcote from going to decay.\textsuperscript{23}

The proportion of those fabrics in ‘very good’ or ‘good condition’ to those in a ‘very bad’ or ‘bad condition’ was then about five to one. In some instances the fabric and furnishings in a parish in which substantial parishioners dwelt and a minister was resident should have been in a better condition than they were and those of a poor parish, whose incumbent was a non-resident, could have been worse. No relative criterion or measure can therefore be applied. Furthermore, the basic requisites still remained unchanged from those of the articles and injunctions of the Elizabethan episcopate and the canons of 1604; and thus any attempt by the archdeacon to enforce anything beyond those basics could be regarded as \textit{ultra vires}, and as such, either opposed or ignored.

Those fabrics which Bickham had considered to be in need of rebuilding or of thorough reparation had been between a dozen and a score at the most, a figure indicative of the great general improvement that his visitation had effected. The validity of this supposition may be substantiated by a detailed examination of the particular items of Burnaby’s inspection and an appreciation of those principles which actuated him in his inspections may be obtained.

The essential requisite of a burial ground was its sufficient protection from profane use and injury\textsuperscript{24} and the responsibility for maintaining its fences, hedges or walls rested upon the owners or occupiers of land. These, according to ancient customs, were to maintain a length proportionate to the amount of land which they owned or occupied in the parish. Inadequate protection often led to desecration. Pigs had entered in and rooted among the graves at Carlton Curiel. Animals had desecrated the churchyars of Great Dalby, Queniborough and Rearsby. At Loseby they had been wantonly turned in. There, the churchwarden prosecuted, in the ecclesiastical court, Francis Wright, a glazier, who lived in the vicarage house and rented the churchyard and glebe. Wright’s pigs and wagon horses had thrown down the fences, demolished the gravestones and trampled upon the graves. At Ashby de la Zouche, in order to keep out hogs and other nuisances deep holes or trenches should be dug at the entrance to the churchyard and covered with iron gates, ‘the bars of which should not be so wide asunder as to admit of children feet getting into them, for fear of accidents’. In forty instances Burnaby directed that only sheep should graze within the burial ground. As humans also wrought damage he enjoined the parish clerk of Enderby and the Lutterworth churchwardens to exercise their utmost vigilance to forbid children and all idle and disorderly persons from entering and breaking the windows and doing other mischief.\textsuperscript{25} He ordered some forty new gates to be fitted, the east wall of
Whetstone chapelyard rebuilt and the repair of a dozen fences.

Some burial grounds presented more difficult problems. At Owston he directed the boundaries of the churchyard to be accurately ascertained and fenced in, as it obviously invited encroachments upon it. At Snibston he heard complaints that the rector had taken some of it for his garden and Burnaby requested him to prove that he had been granted a faculty for that purpose but the oldest person in the parish could not remember any burial in the disputed ground which had original been a rookery.26

Three burial grounds were extremely ill-kept;27 and from six others heaps of rubbish, stones and bricks were to be removed,28 and bushes, shrubs and weeds in eighty eradicated and the whole made neat and seemly; thus that part at Great Dalby, where once there appeared to have been a stone quarry, was to be levelled. He asked the churchwardens of Peatling Parva whether or not there would be any impropriety in taking down the palisades as they provided a habitat for vermin, reptiles and nuisances of every sort. When a chapel had no burial ground, as at Potters Marston, he advised fencing to prevent cattle damaging the stonework.29

If his orders are compared with those issued by Bickham, in this particular, some slight improvement in general condition and maintenance had occurred, as Bickham had issued ten more orders than he had. Bickham had found five churchyards totally unenclosed and drying posts and dunghills within others, to which Burnaby now made no reference whatsoever.

But a noticable improvement had been effected in respect to the ugly growths of bushes, shrubs and weeds which protruded from fabrics. For the removal of such injurious eyesores Bickham had issued five orders, Burnaby only two, namely, at Kegworth and St. Nicholas, Leicester. Yet the lesson of keeping foundations clear of mounds of earth, the source of pervading dampness, was not so easily learned. Bickham had given thirty nine orders for their removal, Burnaby thirty eight, enjoining the laying of a trench near the foundations of the fabric of Church Langton, with drains laid from it 'which will probably remedy the damp which now so visibly affects the floor of the Tur Langton aisle', and at St. Mary's, Leicester, the opening up of a cesspool in the south side.30 In all, Burnaby ordered the making of twenty-seven drains, eight of them of brick, the excavation of eleven trenches, the thorough cleaning of gutters on four fabrics and the putting up of spouts on seventeen more.

To combat the persistent percolation of wet he took what measures he could to ensure sufficient protection against rain and snow and to provide for ventilation. The south entrance of Stoke Golding church was to be secured against 'hasty rain'.31 Most of all he insisted upon the fixing of weather boards in one hundred and thirty one fabrics, casements in twenty six edifices, including St. Martin's and St. Nicholas', in Leicester.

Apart from those few fabrics to whose bad condition reference has already been made, the stonework of the remainder appears to have been satisfactorily as he only ordered the rebuilding of the north wall of the chancel of All Saints, Leicester.32 The responsibility for the maintenance of chancels lay upon impropriators, clerical or lay, or their farmers, and some were neglectful of their duty. Ecclesiastical discipline was now very slack and processes costly and causes against negligent impropriators were almost unknown. But it may be assumed that the good state of the fabric of chancels in general indicated that impropriators had, on the whole, fulfilled their obligations.

Some unspecified repair was needed to the walls of seventeen naves and in particular only to the north wall of Whitwick's nave in which their was a 'great crack'; to the underpinning of the walls of eight churches, notably the south side of Hungarton church whence a fire
had been made, and the replacement of loose and decayed stones of thirty others. Buttresses though, so essential for support, were liable to be ignored: those of Stapleford were bad and more required attention. As the north aisle of Hoby church had been separated from the principal aisle or body of the church, Burnaby ordered the erection of buttresses to strengthen it.33

Spires and towers obviously because of their height, suffered most from exposure to the elements, or from subsidence. If they collapsed grave injury to materials and humans alike was inevitable. But only a small number demanded Burnaby’s attention; the tower and spire of Ratcliffe on the Wreak needed rebuilding, the ‘ugly, useless and ruinous’ wooden spire of Shenton demolishing, and the spires of Earl Shilton and Witherley, both out of perpendicular, were, if necessary, to be reconstructed.34 Seven towers required some unspecified repair.35 In all, however, the number of spires and towers for which Burnaby gave orders was less than half of that for which Bickham had issued directions.

Bickham had found little that was amiss with both belfries and bells and Burnaby found even less. The dangerous west point of Goadby chapel, in which ‘the single bell hung’, was to be levelled as far down as the roof and rebuilt, and Brentingby’s sloping turret cleared of moss and weeds and the bell roof and timbers completely repaired. At Kimcote the brickwork needed attention and that in Cossington’s belfry replaced by weather boards.36 Only three bell frames and three bell wheels were deficient and new bell ropes required in another.

Of all the porches, that at Thrussington alone was to be rebuilt,37 seven repaired and the fixing of gates to seven for the exclusion of children and cattle.

Leads and roof timbers were, on the whole, as satisfactory to Burnaby as they had been to Bickham, defects had occurred in some twenty cases, mostly in aisles and chancels. Those of the south aisle of Husbands Bosworth church, supported by props, appeared to be totally decayed. Light penetrated the roof timbers of the chancel of Pickwell and Peattling Magna’s chancel admitted rain. Defective chancel roofs at Blaby, Rotherby and Withoft were to be examined and ceiled, not only to keep out rain and birds but also for the sake of beauty. So the roof of the south aisle of Heather church was to be either reloaded or slated with new Westmorland slates, underdrawn with well tempered mortar, or ceiled and whitewashed. At Long Whatton Burnaby noted that a similar process there would enhance both nave and chancel. The raising of lead of both Holwell chapel and Willoughby Waterleys would, in his opinion, throw off the wet over doors more effectively.38

Burnaby paid especial regard to those exterior fixtures useful to a rural and agricultural population. ‘It is further recommended’, he noted at Great Glen, ‘to put up a clock to remind the labouring poor of going to and returning to their labours’, and advised the installation of clocks at Thurcaston and Thrussington, the provision of new ones at Desford and Ratcliffe on the Wreak, the repair of four others and the renovation of five dials, the one at Pickwell being scarcely legible. The parishioners of Houghton on the Hill alleged that an additional dial would be of little use to them on account of the unusual structure of the church and pleaded the heavy expense which they had already incurred in having all new windows in the church. At Shenton a gate was to be put to the clock porch and at Skeffington a new weather cock or vane set up.39 But clocks were optional fixtures not required by canon law.

A general improvement, too, had been effected in the appearance and cleanliness of the interiors. Within thirty four fabrics Bickham had discovered heaps of rubbish, lime and mortar left by careless and indifferent workmen, and which even clergy, churchwardens and worshippers had failed to remove. In a few instances parish ploughs, rusting away, surrounded by rubble recalled the disappearance of the ancient agricultural economy. But
Burnaby only encountered such unsightly accumulations at Hathern and Normanton. The transept of Ashby de la Zouche and the inside walls of Lubbenham were unkempt, covered with dirt and cobwebs and those of Thurcaston defaced with green and black mould.40

The most disfiguring of interior features were, indeed, walls stained with damp, and discoloured with patches of mould where once had been surfaces of clean whitewash. Bickham had ordered the whitewashing of half the number of interiors, Burnaby barely more than one third. Six interiors were to be maintained in a better and neater condition, of which Foston was the worst, and new long brushes in forty six instances for sweeping into the remotest of recesses purchased.41

More, however, than implements were required for effective cleaning, so parish clerks, whose chief duties now were the humble ones of cleaning and caretaking, deserved fair treatment. The customary fees of their freehold office had, for centuries, remained pitiable inadequate.42 The clerk of Alton chapel had less than ten shillings annually, apart from his fees from the occasional offices. At Thurlaston he had little or no salary, exclusive of that for his care of the clock. Burnaby thereupon advised that their fees should be raised to at least a minimum of forty shillings or two guineas, exclusive, as at Saddington, for his washing of the minister’s surplice. Small as the increase was it would encourage the clerks of St. Nicholas’, Leicester and Beckfordby to keep interiors in better order, induce the clerk of Orton on the Hill to wash the floor more frequently and be of some recompense to the very attentive clerk at Cadeby whose duty, ‘on the account of the non-residence of the minister, was particularly troublesome’.43

Burnaby was necessarily insistent upon the sound condition of the frames, mullions and glass of windows which should exclude the weather and permit sufficient entry of natural light so that congregations could at least worship in physical illumination. As the interior of Bruntingthorpe church was very dark he ordered either the enlarging or the reglazing of the windows.44 Five other fabrics required a better quality of glass;45 and in those edifices whose galleries obstructed the entry of light he instructed the making of additional windows.46 Dirty window panes were to be instantly cleaned.47 All windows, indeed, were to be made as aesthetically attractive as possible especially those blocked up to save the expense of glazing; so the window at the west end of St. Martin’s, Leicester was to be drawn over with mortar, ‘otherwise rendered more sightly’, and the lath and plaster which filled up half of the east window at Norton by Twycross and the west window at Bitteswell, repaired both within and without. Aware of the expense of glazing his moderation towards poorer parishes in this respect may be regretted. Nevertheless he ordered repairs to windows in some forty fabrics. Furthermore whenever curtains were affixed to windows to exclude draughts, as at Hinckley and Lutterworth, they were to be of good and even texture and preferably green in colour.48

Bickham painstakingly examined doors, which were a most important consideration in unheated fabrics. Common sense and Bickham’s directions in this particular had been most effectual as only at Holwell, Burbage and Pickwell did Burnaby specifically order their repair.49

Of little less importance were floors. Should these be uneven and badly paved they were not only unsightly but dangerous to walk upon. So, the floor surfaces of twenty five interiors were to be cleaned and made even and five levelled.50 Intramural burials had often been a cause of imperfect surfaces, notably at Orton on the Hill, St. Nicholas’, Leicester and Stoke Golding, for which the only remedy was a complete relaying. An evenly raised surface and the erection of a partition between the aisles and vestry would increase comfort and warmth in the large fabric of Ashby de la Zouche.51 Yet unspecified as were most of his orders they were far less, by almost two thirds, than the hundreds and more
which Bickham had made.

Burnaby's pursuit of symmetry and tidiness, both within and without, could amount to an almost complete rearrangement for the sake of seemliness and the benefit of worshippers. So, he directed at Kegworth: "The present vestry room to be converted into a receptacle for the bier, the town plough, ladder etc. with a door made to open into the churchyard, and a new vestry room to be made and fitted at the place where the rubbish now lies. The gallery to have two additional props... Screen to be taken down and pulpit removed and placed against the south east pillar of the nave. Creeds, Lds, Prayer and Ten Comds. to be removed to the west end of the church or any other convenient place. The school to be separated from the rest of the churchyard by a wall or rails carried in such a manner as to leave a passage entrance at the east gate". 52

First in liturgical importance were fonts, sited traditionally at the west end. 53 He ordered one to be installed in Wibtoft as its want obliged the parishioners to resort to their mother church for baptism. The font at Saddington and the font cover at Mowsley needed some repair, and the font and bason at Asfordby painted in stone colour. 54

Again little was required in respect to pulpits and reading desks. 55 Asfordby urgently needed a new pulpit. Blackfordby's pulpit and reading desk, covered with unsightly green mould, should be well washed and cleaned with soap and water. There was little dissatisfaction, however, regarding cushions or cloths for the embellishment of these soft furnishings. The sounding board at Belton was to be made 'more Commodious', and its broken fringe at Mowsley mended. Pulpits should be so placed that the preacher was audible to the whole congregation. At Market Harborough, Thrussington and Nether Broughton they were to be moved to more favourable sites. 56

A major concern was the strict seating of parishioners according to their rank and status, beginning in the front with those of substance and property. 57 Burnaby recommended new pews in fourteen interiors, 58 being urgently needed at Ibstock. 59 To poor parishes he was again considerate. At Hallaton, whose seating was in a 'bad state', he advised 'a little bit every year which will lighten the expense', 60 and some unspecified repair was needed in twenty three interiors. Officials, great and small, should be installed in seats that befitted their status; so new pews were required for the clerk and churchwardens at Saxelby 61 and for the ministers in three other interiors. 62 The disrepair of the seat of the lord of the manor at Newbold Verdon set a bad example to the congregation. 63 Some private or family pews appointed to certain estates or rented by their occupiers and often fitted up like private parlours presented an ungainly and irregular prospect. Curtains at Ashby de la Zouche, hung for protection from draughts, caused 'great inconvenience' and the churchwardens were advised to press for their removal. 64 A pew door at Twyford, belonging to Thorpe, should be raised and repaired. 65 As Bickham had issued 120, 54 and 156 orders respecting fonts, pulpits, reading desks and seating it is very likely that a revolution had occurred in these fittings following his visitation.

Regarding the decorations of the nave walls, the Royal Arms, the tables of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Decalogue or Ten Commandments and the Sentences from Scripture the situation was a less happy one. 66 Burnaby found none in three interiors. 67 Such decorations should be painted or delineated upon tables of wood or stone and hung conspicuously, so, at Kegworth they were to be moved to the west end and at Narborough erected on either side of the altar. 68 Ten others were to be freshly painted or 'touched up' and in thirty-five instances rewritten; in five the King's Arms to be repainted; in seven the tables of the Creed; the tables of the Ten Commandments in one and the renewal of the chosen scriptural passages in another. Even so, since Bickham's inspections there had clearly been some improvements as he had found none in fifteen churches and had been
obliged to issue over one hundred orders concerning them.

Bickham has also discovered that in 135 interiors the canonical tables of the prohibited degrees of marriage were wanting: Burnaby in only fourteen.

Burnaby had closely inspected monuments, tombs and burying places, ordering them, where necessary, to be cleaned and preserved; if in the chancel by the rectors or by the living descendants of the commemorated dead. When this procedure was impossible then the churchwardens were made responsible for their good maintenance. However, he issued only eight orders dealing with these items.69

Bickham's outstanding success in his inspections had been the improved condition of the communion tables, their furnishings, vessels and linen.70 In twelve interiors Bickham had found either a total or almost complete lack of all these articles. He had ordered the replacement of fourteen tables, the repair of fifty three, or of the rails surrounding them and new carpets or coverings for over eighty. An exact inventory of all the communion vessels of thirty two churches and chapels should be delivered to his court. A score of vessels were to be repaired, thirty four alms dishes renewed and the provision of many new basses. Burnaby on the other hand required the provision of only four tables, at Belton, Billesdon, Thrussington and Great Glen, the railing off of two,71 and the repair of the rails of only one.72 All the communion tables were now properly placed at the east end of the chancel; only twenty carpets or coverings were to be renewed,73 the cleaning of three silk veils74 and the provision of four new cloths or napkins.75 In two places either a new flagon or paten was to be purchased.76 Only two parishes had failed to supply an inventory of their communion plate.77 New basses were required in seven instances and in another twenty additional matting for the communicants. At Ashby de la Zouche, for the sake of seemliness, decency and neatness he instructed that large mats should cover the floor, both within and without the rails, and of the same length and material. Pride of place, within the rails, was to be accorded to the communion table so the chests at Thrussington were to be removed.78 In no single case did he need to order new alms dishes. Bickham had clearly succeeded in effecting an almost complete revolution respecting the adequate provision and decency of these items appertaining to the Sacrament of the Holy Communion.

Bickham had also strikingly effected a like reformation in the canonical attire of officiating ministers,79 ordering new surplices and silk hoods in thirty three instances, new surplices in fourteen and the repair or cleaning of twenty one. Now on only one occasion had Burnaby to enjoin the purchase of both a new surplice and silk hood and that was at Cossington. The purchase of three silk hoods, twelve new surplices and the repair of two were all that was required. Although he had been unable to inspect these vestments at the chapels of Snibston and Potters Marston he had left strict instructions regarding their decency and at Rotherby the surplice was to be washed before every administration of the Lord’s Supper, that is, three or four times during the year.80

The above articles were charges upon the parish according to canon law, as were the large Bible and Prayer Book for the use of the minister and parish clerk.81 Bickham had found many of these books to be very old and unfit for further use, ordering, in eleven instances both a new Bible and Prayer Book; in twenty eight a new Bible, and in forty six a new Prayer Book and repair to some three dozen. Burnaby ordered the provision of new Bibles and Prayers Books in but ten instances and of one of them in ten and thirteen new Prayer Books for the sole use of two parish clerks. Every church and chapel, except All Saints and St. Nicholas’, Leicester, now possessed a Book of Homilies, a pedantic conformity to the canonical requirements rather than to necessity.

Bickham had found little amiss with the extant parish chests for the canonical storing of
plate, vestments, books and alms. Every church and chapel of the archdeaconry had possessed a chest, though eight of them were able to be renewed and five others restored. Burnaby had no complaints whatsoever to make about them.

However the condition of many register books had greatly dissatisfied him. Indeed, it is to Burnaby that genealogists, local historians and succeeding generations of parishioners are indebted for his strict and conscientious instructions for the preservation, as all too often these books had been treated with scant reverence and criminal carelessness. Nichols had noted that Plungar had no register of an earlier date than 1759 as the late parish clerk, who had been the village grocer, 'having no reverence for antiquity nor probably any other idea of the use of paper than that it served to wrap up tea and snuff in he had made it answer that purpose', and Nichols had significantly continued, 'and if it were not better kept than the early part of the present one it would have answered no better'. He related that as at South Croxton the old register containing the entries before 1662 had not been presented to him he strongly suspected that it had been wilfully lost in the interests of a pretended claimant to an estate who may have rewarded the clerk for either concealing or destroying it to prevent the probable rightful claimant from referring to entries helpful to his cause; and the succeeding register had been mutilated. Unable to inspect the registers of Appleby, Higham and Snibston, owing to the absence of the incumbents, who each had one of the three keys to the chests, Burnaby again issued stringent instructions for their care. At Dadlington 'All the old Registers appear to have been lost, none being found earlier than 1734, and the most diligent search is to be made for them to recover what may eventually be of the greatest consequence to the parishioners'. Likewise a diligent search was to be undertaken for the recovery of the old registers of Fenny Drayton, Laughton and Sharnford, and at Normanton where no registers began earlier than 1697.

In 1598 Elizabeth I had approved a constitution of the province of Canterbury which directed that the entries before that date should be copied into parchment books for the sake of durability. But even by the end of the eighteenth century this injunction had not always been fulfilled. Burnaby ordered or advised the copying out of twenty two registers whose entries began before 1598 into parchment books, either on account of their sad condition or illegibility. Only those of Swepstone and Thurlaston, whose entries began in 1561 and 1588, were in a satisfactory condition.

The civil registrars of the Commonwealth had been perhaps even more careless in the discharge of the duties of registration, so he advised the copying out of six books whose entries began in this era, and those of ten others, two of the late seventeenth century, at Narborough, those covering the early eighteenth century, being incomplete, could be completed from the transcript deposited in the spiritual court to another half dozen some repair was necessary.

Bickham had discovered that fifty six parishes had not registered both banns of marriage and marriage in 'proper books of vellum or good durable paper' according to the Marriage Act of 1753. Burnaby found that all but two parishes had now complied with this provision.

Usually included in visitation articles were enquiries about benefactions or charitable donations, such as lands and doles left for the poor, almshouses and hospitals, and bequests for educational purposes and apprenticeships. Such articles required that a list of donors and the value and purpose of their donations should be prominently displayed, not only for the commemoration of the benefactors, but also to reduce the peril of loss or misuse. Embezzlement and misappropriation were all too common. Bickham had failed to find such a list in fifty six churches or chapels and in this particular Burnaby failed to find any general improvement. At St. Nicholas' in Leicester all the records of charities had been lost. As
there were instances where parishes had never benefited at all from charitable bequests, he
repeated his predecessor’s injunctions ordering complete and accurate accounts of all
benefaction to be submitted to his court for safe deposit, particularly those relating to
scholastic foundations as at Appleby and Earl Shilton, which had benefited from the
bequest of Alderman Newton. The late Mr. Jennings had made a bequest for a school at
Twycross and 40s p.a. at Saxelby for the same purpose. Some charities were of considerable
proportions such as Lord Harrington’s gift of 198 acres at Ashby Folville for the
maintenance of seven poor people, the 66 acres at Wymeswold and the twelve acres and
12s p.a. at East Norton. Two estates had been left at Broughton Astley for the upkeep of
the chapel, but it was not known by whom and when. Burnaby was intent that the best
terms for leasing charitable lands should be obtained, as the 35 acres for church repairs at
Queniborough whose value would rise on account of the recent act of enclosure and
similarly at Cadby. The unusual charitable endowment at Knossington for the relief of
four clergymen’s widows was to be preserved at all costs.93

Several charities were in danger of being lost or suppressed through recent enclosure
awards, such as the estate at Plungar for church repair. At Sproston the commissioners had
taken away ‘the church grass’. The arrears of Dr. Blythe’s charity at Freeby had remained
unpaid. Burnaby was so alive to the perils of loss and misappropriation that he instructed
that when the account of charitable donations of Croxton Kerrial was being completed, that
those of William Smith, which were specified upon his tombstone should be copied from
it lest their record perish with the inscription, a list of them displayed in the church, and
a copy submitted to his court.94

As far as linen, hearse cloths or palls were concerned the archdeacon was satisfied with
all but two biers.95 Only five churches were without palls, thirteen to be renewed, and
seven others either repaired, scoured or cleaned. It was seemly and fitting that palls should
have edgings or borders of linen or white crepe.

Burnaby, like Bickham, resolved to preserve the principal parts of a church, at least the
chancel and nave, from being used for any purpose except those of public worship. So he
was determined to remove schools from within them, and, if possible, altogether from the
prestincts. Bickham had succeeded in transferring the school at Long Clawson from the
chancel, where the pupils had stained the unique marble altar table with ink, into the
vestry.96 Burnaby wished it to be taken out altogether, or else ‘a necessary must be built
for the children, as at present their dirt is a nuisance’. He made a similar request at
Stathern. The schools kept in the churches of Asfordby, Ashby Magna and Husbands
Bosworth were to be transferred to more convenient rooms or places.97

The separation of schools from churches, at least on weekdays, was desirable on the
grounds of seemliness and for fear that familiarity bred contempt for sacred things. There
were sound reasons for conditioning juveniles with the daily associations of those edifices
that have been the centre of worship, and involve the highest and most complete function
of the human personality.

Though Burnaby’s reference to church services are scanty they sufficiently demonstrate
those two factors which determined their number, namely, the benefice value and the
population of the parish. He thus observed at Stapleton, whose benefice was ‘said to render
to the Rector £300 p.a., the parishioners amounting to near 300 complain of having divine
service only once in a fortnight. They therefore request that service may be performed every
Sunday except on those days when it is performed at Potters Marston. Burnaby solicited
on behalf of the parish clerk ‘The request appears to be so reasonable that it is hoped that
the parishioners will allow one shilling to the clerk for every day’s attendance’. Any
diminution of a customarily established number was a regressive act. The parishioners of
Norton by Twycross protested that divine service, which always used to be performed twice on Sunday, was now only celebrated once and Burnaby desired the minister to revert to the 'usual custom'. Again, services should be conducted at a time convenient to parishioners; at Dunton Basset it was never performed except in the evening at four o'clock and the incumbent was to remove the cause of complaint.98

Next in importance to the church or chapel was the parsonage house, if one existed, but less than half of the parishes in the archdeaconry, that is some hundred and twenty three, had houses of residence, most belonging to the richer benefices.99 Yet even if a parish possessed a house it was not always occupied by the incumbent who might contend that it was 'unfit for the habitation of a clergymnan' an allegation which was capable of wide interpretation. It might be described as being a poor and mean cottage, or as a once sound residence that had fallen into such a dilapidated state that it was beyond the capability of the incumbent to repair it, or as being in such a 'low, aguish situation' that its occupation was injurious to health. Above all the small value of a benefice was considered as a reasonable justification for non-residence. A non-resident incumbent could plead his own ill health, or some other cause, such as the provision for the education of his young sons. Licences for non-residence were indeed issued too freely; neither an archdeacon nor a bishop had sufficient authority to enforce an action for residence which could be resisted as infringing the clerical freehold. So the civil legislature attempted to encourage rather than to coerce residence by providing, in the acts of 1776 and 1780, for the mortgaging of benefice incomes thus enabling incumbents to obtain the financial means for either the rebuilding or repair of their houses.100

Bickham had adjudged that some thirty three houses were in 'very good' or in 'pretty good' repair and some twenty seven in urgent need of attention, of which fourteen were to be rebuilt. But the movement towards a uniform improvement in the condition of parsonage houses was slow. Those at Seagrave, Blaby, Ibstock and Sproxton had been rebuilt or repaired in accordance with the aforementioned acts101 and after Burnaby had taken office. Yet little advantage of these acts had been generally taken. Burnaby's criterion was exacting as it was only natural to be that of his own elegant mansion. In his opinion four only were in a highly satisfactory state; those of Loughborough, Market Harborough and Sapcote, all of which he described as 'very good' and the new house at Saxby, which was 'in every sense complete'. The excellent condition of the first two houses was attributed to the former archdeacon and to Dr. John Taylor, the wealthy pluralist and friend of the late Dr. Samuel Johnson. On a little lower scale Burnaby placed those of Belton and Shepshed, 'comfortable and in good repair', those of Packington and Wyndonham, which he described as 'pretty good' and Nailstone as 'generally good'. Two which though unoccupied, were structurally sound, the first, at Cadeby, had been converted into a granary by the lessee of the glebe; the second at Wigston Magna was 'extremely dirty'.102

In the second category were twenty two, to which some repair was needed,103 varying from defective tiling at Castle Donington to the rebuilding of the south wall at Foston which was supported by a prop.104 The main requisites were new thatching, repairs to chimneys, the raising of gable ends to secure the thatch and the mending of outhouses. Another five required 'more substantial repair'.105 At Desford the house was 'very indifferent, particularly the east end; roof and windows let rain in, must be new thatched; new windows and frames...'. Realising that he could not enforce repair except by a very troublesome, vexatious and costly process and upon the presentment of the churchwardens he was cautious to 'recommend' the rector of Desford to put his house into 'a more comfortable condition for his curate by completely repairing it and accommodating him with the orchard and outhouses called the Butcher's Shop, as he seems to be destitute of 'every
convenience’. He would resort to a little cajolery to expedite his purpose so he added: ‘The Rector’s liberality leaves no doubt of his doing everything in his power to remove all cause of complaint.’

Needing immediate or ‘thorough and substantial repair’ were six. Yet even worse were those sixteen to which Burnaby applied a variety of pejorative terms, such as ‘most wretched’, ‘wretched’, ‘very bad’, ‘miserable’, ‘all going to ruin’, and ‘unfit for the residence of a clergyman’. The ‘most wretched’ house at Cosby was let in two tenements that brought in a mere eighteen shillings annually. Some houses were little more than mean cottages. The parish clerk and a day labourer, respectively, occupied those of Swinford and Peckleton, whose occupation was preferable to none at all. Sharnford’s house, a spacious and decent structure was ‘all going to ruin’, all its rooms being ‘laden with grain to the certain injury and destruction of the building’.

The parsonage houses of Asfordby and Breedon on the Hill were in the worst of conditions and there was no alternative course but to rebuild them completely. Scarcely better were those of Markfield, Waltham and Whetstone, whose reconstruction would be the most economical recourse in the end. Burnaby therefore urged their incumbents to avail themselves of the provisions of the recent acts.

Lest it should be concluded that no attempt at all was being made to repair those houses which, at the time of his inspection, were in want of it, Burnaby noted that two had recently been put into ‘good repair’, and another four in the process of reparation. A lengthy unoccupation was clearly the main reason for rapid dilapidation and decay. Though much had been effected at Orton on the Hill more was needed; ‘but now that the vicar has come to reside in it, it is hoped that everything necessary will be done’. Non-residency was a real evil.

Yet in order to obtain a fair and balanced assessment of the general condition of the parsonage houses it should be observed Burnaby had made no reference at all to some sixty of them. He also noted that thirteen were in very good or good repair, that necessary repairs to twenty two were not of major proportions. In bad condition were only some two dozen, a proportion of but one in five.

With few exceptions Burnaby had stipulated that all his necessary orders should be completed by the Easter visitation following his inspection and certified to that effect by the ministers and churchwardens. But however earnest were the intentions to comply within the stipulated period many factors often caused inevitable delay. The example of the Answers to the Archdeacons of Leicester’s orders to be returned at the Easter Visitation in 1797 made by the vicar and churchwarden of Sproxton, whose parish he had visited on 29th April, 1796, clearly illustrate this point.

It is thus impossible to give any exact figure for the average time taken to complete Burnaby’s injunctions. Unfortunately, in many instances, Stockdale failed to enter the date of certified completions. All that can be stated with confidence is that at least in thirty six instances all the requirements were fulfilled within one year of the last inspection, another twenty within two years, and some eighty within four. There were eight instances, however, in which the full orders had not been certified until after a lapse of nine years and another seven after eleven. Yet all may have been completed except for one item, great or small, long before the certifying of completion. Sometimes the reparation of the chancel was delayed through the impropropriator’s reluctance to fulfil his obligations, or by an inability to find another place for the school. Most delays were occasioned by the minister’s non-residence or poverty. Ten years elapsed before the repairs to the parsonage house at Goadby Marwood were certified as completed, the incumbent, the inventor, Edmund Cartwright, being then resident in his other parish near Doncaster. Eleven years passed before the
reparation was certified as completed at Aylestone. It was even longer before some major repair to a fabric was effected: only after sixteen years was the spire of Ratcliffe on the Wreak rebuilt, and even then a new communion table had not been provided. An equally common cause of delay was a failure to complete the list of charitable benefactions which at Melton Mowbray took six years. Sometimes the list remained incomplete: after nine years the churchwardens of Stoney Stanton appear to have given up the attempt. Or there might be a delay in raising the parish clerk’s salary to the required minimum or in providing a clock. Much depended upon the zeal of the ministers and churchwardens and the willingness of parishioners to pay the rates for the estimated repairs. Instances appear in which repairs completed within the stipulated time had not been certified at the proscribed visitations as the minister and churchwardens had not attended them.

Nevertheless the general indication is one of an earnest attempt to comply with the orders. At St. Mary’s, Leicester, on 26th May, 1797, he had instructed ‘The earth to be lowered and a drain and cesspool opened on the south side of the church if practicable in order to keep the church dry. The Church and chancel to be new whitewashed, and in future to be kept clean and more free from dust. A new carpet or covering for the communion table, a new bible and prayer book for the clerk and a new surplice to be all provided. A table of Benefactions and charities to be sent into the Archdeacon’s Registry ‘to certify at East vis. 1798’. Although all these orders were not certified as having been effected until the Easter visitation of 1804, there had been no wilful attempt to disregard them as it was certified ‘that the Church has been whitewashed throughout, that a new cover has been provided for the communion table that a new Bible and Prayer Book for the reading desk and a prayer book for the clerk have been procured, that a new surplice has been made. That the earth on some of the outer parts of the Church wall has been lowered and a Drain made, and that it is proposed to consult proper workmen in what matter the whole of this work may be completed. That a printed table of marriages prohibited could not then be had, but that it was expected it would soon be reprinted, when a copy should be provided and hung up in the Church.

N.B. A list of Charities was at the same time exhibited.”

The scale of activity in the reparation of fabrics and renovations that continued throughout Burnaby’s tenure of office, may now be considered by references to Nichols’ works and to the extant faculties of the period. Over one hundred relevant references may be classified and treated under several headings, the chief and most convenient one being the personnel of the promoters of the reparations or renovations.

It should first be noted that instances of substantial reparation were few. Shenton chancel was taken down and reconstructed, the spire of Orton on the Hill rebuilt in 1797 and a confirmatory faculty sought for repairs done to the tower, steeple and pinnacles of St. Nicholas’ in Leicester. There were patrons and benefactors, both lay and clerical, who readily co-operated with the archdeacon and satisfied his requirements. Sir Charles Hudson amply fulfilled Burnaby’s trust as at Wanlip he undertook to demolish ‘the new lean to’, or south aisle which greatly obstructed the light and was ‘deemed useless and improper’ and to rebuild a substantial porch at his own expense and provide a new reading desk and pulpit in return for permission to erect a family vault. Sir George Beaumont of Coleorton, by complaining to the archdeacon, prompted the parishioners to repair the roof, aisles and parapets, fit gutters, and pave the whole church with Pentridge stone. Earl Ferrers and his tenants thoroughly restores the spire and interior at Ratcliffe on the Wreak, at a cost of £300. Catherine Palmer, a pious benefactress, gave a sum of £200 to Ilston on the Hill for improvements to floors, aisles and passages, glazing and new reading desk. A benefactress attempted to render the sorely neglected chancel of Bitteswell ‘more decent
and convenient for divine service by erecting a neat altar-piece and circuit of turned rails round it'.

Nichols had high praise for Dr Ford, the indefatigable vicar of Melton Mowbray whose fabric was 'a pattern for buildings dedicated to God. The chancel is at present not consonant with the rest but about to go some improvements in the pews and floors and made convenient for communicants'; and he later recorded that 'Dr. Ford, ever attentive to the embellishment of his truly beautiful church, had lately added a new ornament to the Consistory Court at Melton, and in the seven panels has placed the King's Arms and those of Canterbury and the Diocese and the two Universities, and of Leicester and Melton Mowbray'.

It was not only eminent individuals who inspired works of reparation and furnishing. There were parishioners who displayed a spirit, almost of lavishness, in their fitting up of interiors. Nichols observed that the interior of Wymeswold church had lately been cleaned, whitewashed and beautified, and a gallery built for singers, the whole being 'remarkably decent' and effected at 'considerable expense'. At Enderby new pews and seats were set up, the gallery enlarged, new staircase and windows made, and measures for proper ventilation carried out. Some of the work, though good in quality, was less commendable in taste: at St. Mary's, Leicester, the second and third pillars of the belfry had been removed, the arch thrown open, a new belfry or loft created for the singers, several commodious pews installed, and handsome chandeliers suspended from the centre of the ceiling in the nave; a new gallery, seventy two feet in length and twenty one feet in breadth, supported by 'substantial iron pillars'. These pews had tended to destroy the symmetry.

Some 'improvements', as they were termed, made either by parishioners or wealthy individuals, though on a lesser scale, deserve notice. The new ceiling of the church of Aston Flamville had greatly added to its general neatness. Cadeby church now presented 'a decent appearance', as did the interior of Ibstock where the alterations, undertaken by Spencer Madan, the affluent rector, had received Burnaby's personal approval.

Throughout the period many 'improvements' and additions continued to be made to seating and galleries, the erection of new pulpits and reading desks of panelled oak and the building of vestries for the transaction of parochial business. At Sapcote the new pulpit and desk cost £18.2.0., a significant sum for a poor parish. Some parishioners too had an eye for symmetry and order: the ancient loft or gallery at Long Clawson was taken down, being useless, improper and obstructive to light. That there was an active spiritual life in many parishes was illustrated by the erection of galleries and pews to accommodate the increasing congregations, notably at Lutterworth whose rector, Henry Rymer, was a devoted and effective pastor who, later as bishop of Lichfield, became the first Evangelical to sit on the episcopal bench. A new gallery was also erected at Stapleton, a smaller parish, but no less active spiritually. Improvements had similarly been effected in twenty two interiors which Nichols commended for their handsome appearance, neatness and decency.

Other fabrics were even more eminently notable, not only on account of the quality of their seating facilities, desks and pulpits, but also by the richness of their altar pieces, the excellency of their 'soft Furnishings', the well finished execution of their 'nave decorations, and the seamliness of their pavements'. Not least of these were some once neglected chapels. In Kirby Muxloe the nave was now floored with bricks, and the numbered pews were of handsome deal. Braungate chapel now possessed plastered ceilings, comely rails, a panelled altar piece of oak, a nave floored with bricks and numbered pews. In the donative chapel of Noseley the pews were neat and painted white, the pulpit elegantly
furnished with velvet cloth, the chancel handsomely fitted with seats and wainscoted, the altar piece of Moses and Aaron, with 'a glory' at the top. Similarly rich in ornamentation was Shepshed's interior with its communion table of brown marble full of shells and its altar piece distinguished by neat wainscoting and painting, upon which had been executed the Ten Commandments.\textsuperscript{126} The 'soft furnishings' of scarlet bound with black velvet were prominent at Desford. Swithland church boasted a variety of solid ornamentation, including a modern altar piece of marble, a fine organ by Snetzler and a noble service of communion plate and two candlesticks given by the Danvers. Within Eaton chapel the new gallery, erected for the use of singers attracted immediate attention, its front depicting the Lord's Prayer, the Belief and the Decalogue. Indeed, some wave decorations were the pride of the worshippers; those of Osgathorpe had commissioned Boulbee, a skilful artist, to execute the King's Arms which, with the arms of the Earl of Huntington, graced the interior.\textsuperscript{127}

The above references sufficiently indicate in this late Georgian era that spirit of elegance and pride in solid craftsmanship and skill, exemplary of Anglicanism. It was a spirit which sometimes expressed itself in the exuberant and flamboyant crimson or gold hangings of desks and pulpits, in the rich carpets of communion tables, the replacement of pewter communion vessels by ones of silver, in altar pieces of ornate classical designs and in blue painted pulpits and white painted pews. Yet, however restrained or exotic some interiors might be, they were all now displaying a living concern for spiritual matters. The fact that Nichols commended the good condition of both large churches in urban areas and also fabrics in remote and thinly populated parishes testified to the general care that parishioners were then extending to their consecrated buildings.

Among those large fabrics highly commendable was the ancient and lofty church of Ashby de la Zouche, decently pewed, and possessing a beautiful little organ and a handsome octagonal font. Unfortunately the splendour of the crimson coverings, all richly fringed with gold, the gifts of Lady Anne Hastings, had attracted the covetous attention of a thief. Market Bosworth's interior reflected the pride of its parishioners by its fitting communion table within neat rails, its chancel floor paved with black and white marble, its altar carpet and pulpit cushion of crimson and gold and its small, neat singing gallery. The modern windows, ceiled chancel and side aisles in Hinckley church were pleasing to the visitor. Wymondham's sound fabric, handsome gallery, pulpit and reading desk were all the result of public generosity. Especially neat, both within and without, were Barrow on Soar, the smaller fabrics of Long Whatton and Skeffington. Similarly Wistow was also 'a light airy building containing a handsome oak pulpit and pews and the Ten Commandments neatly printed in black'. Thurlaston, 'light and handsomely pewed and in good repair' evoked Nichols high praise.\textsuperscript{128}

In no less a better condition were smaller edifices such as that of Saxelby, a parish of only twenty houses, and the chapels of Dalington and Potters Marston. Kilby chapel, ornamented with 'a modern octagonal tower of wood', had handsome pews and Withcote 'a beautiful little fabric resembling an elegant college chapel' was 'extremely neat and clean'.\textsuperscript{129}

There were now few interiors whose state was bad, the two worst being Plungar and Frisby on the Wreak. In the former Nichols recorded that the floor was much broken, the aisles in a bad condition and noting that lands worth £10 p.a. had been given for its reparation 'which seems to be more in want of it than any other in the neighbourhood'. The latter, 'a wretched fabric', had the appearance of former splendour, and a pretty neat tower 'vilely patched with mortar', a lively spire, broad aisles, whose windows were halfway stopped up, a room ancienly used as a school was now a place for rubbish and a few books
of old Latin. Coleorton church was ‘handsome without but mean within’; at Syston the windows were small and pews bad; Reasby was badly pewed; the seats at Markfield ‘were old and open’. The chapel roof of Blackfordby, open at the top, gave the whole building a ‘barn like appearance’.

Some needful reparations had not been completed. At Glenfield the north porch had been converted into a small vestry and the nave recently pewed with deal but there were loose, open seats in the chancel, and part of the steeple was entirely open to the nave. At the west end of Birstall chapel was a deal gallery, handsomely pewed, under which were dirty and ruinous seats. In Blaby church the gallery was handsome but blocked up arches and an old blue painted pulpit called for attention.

Usually the most unsatisfactory feature of reparation was that of the re-roofing on which parishioners attempted to spare expense. In Stapleton church were a newly erected gallery, reading desk and pulpit; but the lead and roof timbers, much out of repair and sold for £134 and £30 respectively, had been replaced by slates and by oak at a cost of £235, a sum far less had the roof been entirely re-leaded. Only part of the roof of the aisle of Edmondthorpe had been coped with lead. The roof of the south aisle at Peckleton was made entirely of ‘durable timber’ and of Westmorland slate. But when a poor parish had agreed to replace defective lead it was often tempted to save the further expense of transport by using inferior ‘Swithland slate’.

The second unsatisfactory feature was the all too prevalent replacement of cracked or worn medieval fonts by new utensils or small basons for the sprinkling of infants at baptisms. Examples of cast out fonts are numerous though Bickham had attempted to retain the old type of font whenever it was possible. These newer fonts, erected for the sake of economy and in conformity to classical patterns, notably in chapels where originally there had been none, degenerated into vessels unworthy of the primary sacrament of the Church. At Gumley it was ‘a free stone bason on a clustered pillar’. Worst of all was the pot of Stretton en le Field, there ‘a bason like porringer which was kept in a drawer in the reading desk’ was used. At Wistow it was a small lead bason.

Lastly to be considered are those factors which determined the quality of the rebuilding or reparations of parsonage houses in the period following Burnaby’s inspections.

First was the new affluence of certain of the clergy. Rectors, in particular, were now holding a high position within society and the local community, having either private fortunes or marriage into wealthy families. Some were still benefiting financially from the results of enclosure and high rents received from leases of their more extensive glebe lands as the Napoleonic Wars had created a great demand for bread to feed the nation. Thomas Beaumont Burnaby, a relative of the archdeacon, rector of Asfordby and incumbent of Ashby Folville, having married well, had at last erected a spacious and comfortable rectory house at Asfordby and Henry Ryder, rector of Lutterworth, had replaced his old decayed rectory house with a new and substantial one. But some had rebuilt their houses, even though Burnaby had deemed them to be in good state of repair, for the mere sake of displaying their new wealth and status, such as Richard Pearce, rector of Market Bosworth, and Robert Leigh of Wymondham, whose new house was distinguished for its excellent oak staircase. Dr Richard Hardy of Loughborough, taking advantage of the Clerical Residences Repairs Acts and mortgaging his income of £800 p.a., had expended £1,350 on his new house. It was a sumptuous residence containing a china closet, dressing room, library, dining room, withdrawing room, a kitchen-store room, two back kitchens, six bedrooms, two dressing rooms, a store room and separate cellars for beer, ale and wine. By a similar method Dr Thomas Parkinson of Kegworth and Isley Walton had completed an even more affluent residence comprising a very large dining room, twenty seven feet long, eighteen
feet broad and eleven feet high, a bedroom and, what was then a luxury, a dressing room provided with a water closet. The estimated cost of these additions and repairs to the remaining parts of being no less than £1,250. Parkinson had certified that his net yearly income was £751.12.2, excepting only the salaries of assistant curates.  

Secondly the Clerical Residences Repairs Acts had encouraged incumbents, both rectors and vicars with low incomes, to fulfill their intentions to reside. Thomas Neale of Snibston had petitioned for a faculty to make his house ‘fit as a comfortable and sufficient place of residence for himself and for any future rector of moderate establishment in point of family and fortune’. And with the same intention, the rector of Harby desired to demolish a barn and outhouse.  

The vicar of Saxelby in particular had informed John Hodgson, the bishop’s legal secretary, that Lord Ayleford, the patron of the living, worth £150 p.a., had consented to his raising £200 by mortgaging his glebe, the mortgager being his uncle, Mr Garle of Ashbourne. Though the cost of covering the expenses was a modest £62.3.0 the vicar, without assistance, could not have met it as the house was ‘totally unfit for the residence of a clergyman, as the outer walls of two bays were studded, lathed and plastered, and only one storey high, the roof of the whole building was covered with thatch and in so bad a state as must render the house in winter seasons very cold, filthy, and uncomfortable. For many years it had been in the occupation of the tenant who rented the glebe. There was neither spring water nor cellar, pantry, stable, nor necessary fit for use’. The vicar proposed to replace the stud and mud wall with brick, take off the roof of the bays and raise the walls to a proper height.  

The vicars of Barkestone and Humberstone, with livings each worth £200, pleaded their intention of residing and petitioned to build plain but substantial houses in accord with their status and incomes. The former had originally resolved to build at his own expense but later he wisely sought assistance as the cost of even the plainest building, as at Gaddesby, was estimated at £350. The effort to obtain even this modest amount was beyond the resources of William Mounsey, vicar of Sproston, a benefice valued at only £64.5.10 p.a. He had applied to borrow £128 for completing the house which his predecessor, David Kitchen, dying insolvent, had left unfinished. Although its chamber floors had been run with plaster, stone floors laid down in the kitchens and parlour and other trifling things done, the ceilings, walls, staircases, drawing room doors, windows, passages, cellars and the like were all wanting: and the house, standing in an open field, had neither fence for garden, nor orchard of any kind. It was of very modest proportions; one room measured sixteen by thirteen feet by eight feet six inches, another fourteen by twelve feet by eight feet and a further room of like proportions. There were a kitchen, pantry, three chambers and two garrets, a small barn and coal house but no other outside offices. Therefore, unless an incumbent was assured of a moderate income, enabling him to support his wife and family in comfortable circumstances, it was hazardous for him to undertake the building of a new house, however modest and plain, by mortgaging his benefice income in a period of rising prices.

Burnaby’s inspections had shown how generally efficacious Bickham’s inspections of twenty years ago had been. This satisfactory condition, as a whole, had been maintained in the succeeding years. At the time of Burnaby’s visitations only some half dozen fabrics and interiors were in a bad state, and only some half dozen required a large scale reparation. Most of the repairs required in other fabrics were but minor items. The two most displeasing features were slated roofs and basins used as fonts introduced in the interests of economy. Though the general condition of parsonage houses had left much to be desired, there was clearly an improvement in them as the years passed. But no satisfactory solution would be found until the incomes of poorer benefices had been substantially increased and
residence made obligatory on those benefices at least which had houses of residence.

Respecting administration, much was still lacking. More than a primary visitation or inspection was clearly required, especially from an archdeacon who was not resident in his archdeaconry. There was a lack of competent surveyors and a sad deficiency in the authority of a spiritual court understaffed by qualified proctors with an adequately stringent supervision.

Nevertheless, despite the inherent weaknesses of administration, the evils of non-residency and pluralism, and so many other factors which militated against the efficiency of the Church, such as the poverty of the inhabitants, there was far more that was satisfactory than was unsatisfactory. The spiritual life of the Established Church in the later eighteenth and earlier nineteenth century was, at least in the archdeaconry of Leicester, more healthy than many writers of popular history in succeeding generations have admitted. And the contributors to this were not only devout benefactors and parishioners in general, but those archdeacons who, in their visitations fulfilled that part of their duties with conspicuous ability and conscientiousness.

Notes

1 MS LD41/18/21 in Department of Archives in Leicester Museum and Art Gallery
2 John Gough Nichols, The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester, 4 vols (1795-1815)
3 MS 245/50 (1830-42) 9 volumes
4 The Dictionary of National Biography (Vol.III p.379) gives 1734 as the date of his birth which would have made him under the canonical age of ordination; J. and J.A. Venn, Alumni Cantabrigienses Pt.I, Vol.I, 1922
5 Rectories and Vicarages in the Archdeaconry of Leicester, 1779; MS ID35/2 fol.22; D.N.B. (Vol.III, p.379) is in error again when it states that his father 'died about 1767'; Venn op.cit. states that his father was perhaps vicar of Brampton from 1755 to 1770
8 Nichols Literary Anecdotes, VIII, 394, quoted in D.N.B. Vol.III, p.379
11 MS ID41/18/22 (Hereinafter referred to as the Visitation Book); For an account of Stockdale see 'On the Offices of Commissary and Official of the Archdeaconry of Leicester' in Literary Remains of John Stockdale Hardy, F.S.A., edited by John Gough Nichols F.S.A., 1862, pp.99-102
12 Visitation Book p.207
13 Letter from Burnaby to Stockdale, Greenwich 6 July 1795, ID41/18/22 pinned to p.299; Ibid pinned to p.180
14 Visitation Book p.62
15 Ibid p.123; p.157; p.376; pp.211, 108; p.11, 143; pp.282, 277; p.56; p.174
17 Ibid pp.10, 255
18 Ibid p.200
21 Visitation Book p.130
22 Ibid, p.132
23 Ibid, p.31; p.237
24 Canon 88
25 Visitation Book p.147; p.147; p.5; pp.106, 119
26 Ibid, p.67
viz. Countesthorpe, Ratcliffe on the Wreak, Stoney Stanton
28 viz. Higham, Humberstone, Kimcote, Mowsley, Newbold Verdon, Thorpe Langton
29 Visitation Book p.219; p.114; p.46
30 Ibid, pp.19, 2; pp.149, 1
31 Ibid, p.54
32 Ibid, p.3
33 Ibid, p.33; p.213; p.281; p.210
34 Ibid, p.219; p.62; pp.58, 78
35 viz. Burton Overy, Frisby, Great Dalby, Queniborough, Rearsby, Thrussington
36 Visitation Book p.142; p.284; pp.115, 207
37 Ibid, p.228
38 Ibid, p.165, p.176; p.114; pp.93, 221, 100; p.50; p.32
40 Ibid, pp.18, 66; pp.5, 169, 29
41 Ibid, p.154: the other fabrics were those of Asfordby, Holt, St. Mary's, Leicester, St. Nicholas', Leicester and Porters Marston
42 For some account in general of the payment of parish clerks, see The Parish Chest, W.E. Tate, 1946, pp.130-132
43 Visitation Book p.61; p.132; p.178: At Sapcote the clerk was allowed 30s. for winding up the clock and had 4d. per house as his fee. Nichols op.cit., Vol.IV Pt.II, p.900; Visitation Book pp.2, 6, 69, 47
44 Visitation Book p.296
45 viz. Appleby, Hob, Peatling Magna, Peatling Parva, South Kilworth
46 viz. Billesdon, Willoughby Waterley, Ashby de la Zouche, Snareston, St. Nicholas', Leicester
47 viz. Ashby de la Zouche, Snareston, St. Nicholas', Leicester
48 Visitation Book pp.4, 60, 176; pp.52, 119
49 Ibid, pp.91, 346, 177
50 viz. Hallaton, Horningshold, Snareston, Stockerston, Wistow
51 Visitation Book pp.69, 2, 46; p.5
52 Ibid, p.19
53 For an account of the position of fonts, see Addleshaw and Etchells, op.cit., pp.64-68
54 Visitation Book pp.100, 178, 173
55 For some general account of these furnishings see Addleshaw and Etchells, op.cit., op.cit.68-86
56 Visitation Book p.200; p.6; p.7; p.173; p.170; pp.228, 273
57 For further on the subject see Addleshaw and Etchells, op.cit., pp.89-92
58 viz. Appleby, Asfordby, Barwell, Great Glen, Kilworth Beauchamp, Little Dalby, Long Clawson, Normanton, Pickwell, Saddington, Harston, Swepstone, Welby
59 Visitation Book p.55
60 Ibid, p.161
61 Ibid, p.222
62 viz. Houghton, Queniborough, Tugby
63 Visitation Book p.67
64 Ibid, p.5
65 Ibid, p.232
66 Addleshaw and Etchells, op.cit., pp.101-107
67 viz. Higham, Hugglescote, Stapleton
68 Visitation Book p.19; p.123
69 viz. Appleby, Ashby Folville, Coleorton, Peatling Magna, Normanton, Scale, Swepstone, Sutton Cheney
70 For an account of Communion tables, vessels and linen in general see Addleshaw and Etchells, op.cit., pp.148-169
71 viz. Coston and Snarestone Chapel
72 viz. at Misterton
73 viz. at Asfordby, Breedon, Broughton Astley, Bruntingthorpe, Cossington, Desford, Earl Shilton, Goadby Marwood, Hallaton, Houghton, Ilston, Keyworth, St. Margaret's, Leicester, Nailstone, Norton by Twycross, Seale, Shackerstone, Whetstone, Wibtoft
74 viz. at Appleby, Castle Donington and Ashby de la Zouche
75 viz. at Backfordby, Diseworth, Kirby Mallory and Whetstone
76 viz. at Belton and Breeden
77 viz. Ashfordby, Cosington
78 Visitation Book p.228
79 Canons 25, 58
80 Visitation Book p.207, pp.34, 46, p.221
81 Canons 80
82 W. E. Tate, op. cit., pp.35-42
84 Visitation Book pp.43, 51, 75, p.55, pp.49, 168, 127, 66
85 viz. Ashby de la Zouche (commencing in 1561), Belton (1526), Breeden (1538), Cadeby (1574), Castle Donington (1538, much mutilated), Congerstone (1593), Casby (1557), Croft (1557, very bad), Enderby (1559), Frolesworth (1538, bad), Hinckley (1553), Bystoke (1568, worn eaten, illegible in parts), Kirby Mallory (1552), All Saints, Leicester (1575), Markfield (1572), Newbold Verdon (1556), Ratcliffe Cuile (1595), Sapcote (1564, good, but perhaps should be copied out), Stoney Stanton (1558), Thornton (1569, advisable), Whetstone (1560, wretched condition), Witherley (1565, dreadful condition)
86 Visitation Book pp.27, 132
87 viz Barlestone (1651), Barwell (1651), Blackfordby (1653), NARBOROUGH (1654, imperfect), Peckleton (1654), Whitchurch (1654)
88 viz Arnesby, Broughton Astley, Catthorpe, Gumley, Lubbenham, Market Bosworth, Shadwell, Sheepy Magna (1607), Shackerstone (south Kilworth)
89 viz. Cadeby (1695), Kirby Mallory (1696, belonging to Earl Shilton)
90 Visitation Book p.123
91 viz. Desford, Thornton
92 For a general account of charitable donations, see W.E. Tate, op. cit., pp.108-118
93 Visitation Book pp.2, 43, 58, 222, 201, 235-238, 186, 47, 147, 274, 286
94 Ibid, pp.274, 286, 269, 254
95 viz. Thrussington and Peatling Magna
96 MS ID/41/18/21 p.264
97 Visitation Book pp.266, 282, 200, 113; Nichols, op. cit., Vol.IV Pt.1, p.18; Visitation Book p.167
98 Visitation Book pp.45, 68, 105
99 MS ID/14/21 passim
100 Clergy Residence Repair Acts 17 Geo III c53; 21 Geo III c66
101 Papers Relating to Mortgages, Gilberts Acts, 1779-1799 in Lincolnshire Archives Office, The Castle, Lincoln, Bundle 1, Items 2, 5
102 Visitation Book pp.21, 59, 126, 277, 7, 26, 24, 289, 65, 47, 134
104 Visitation Book pp.15, 108
105 viz. Desford, Edmondthorpe, Fenny Drayton, Misterton, Stenton Wyville
106 Visitation Book p.104
107 viz. Claybrook, Cold Overton, Gilmorton, Ashby Parva, Lutterworth, north Kilworth
108 viz. Appleby, Branstone, Buckminster, Cosby, Coton, Dunston Bassett, Gloseston, Great Glen, Oadby, Norton by Twycross, Peckleton, Sharford, Stoney Stanton, Swinford, Whitwick
109 Visitation Book pp.101, 131, 71, 127
110 Ibid, pp.200, 13, 64, 208, 107
111 viz. Eaton, Ashby Magna
112 viz. Carlton Curieiu, Congerstone, Foxton, Orton on the Hill
113 Visitation Book p.69
114 Ibid, p.280
115 Ibid, pp.221, 87, 219, 267, 130
116 Ibid, p.1
117 ID4/1/1 Item 209, 1 Sep.1809; Nichols, op.cit., Vol.IV Pt.II p.887; Visitation Book p.2

Nichols, *op. cit.*, Vol.III Pt. I p.504; ID41/41 Item 204, Item 191, 16 May 1799

Nichols, *op. cit.*, Vol.IV Pt. II p.452, 574; ID41/41 Item 187, Oct.1797


ID41/41 Item 202 17 July 1807, Item 203 14 Nov.1807

viz. Blaby, seats (ID41/41 Item 212, 28 Nov.1811); Bruntingthorpe, repewing (ID 41/41 Item 198a, 15 Aug.1806); Cottesbach, seat and regularly pewed (Nichols Vol.IV Pt.I p.139); Desford, gallery, pulpit (Nichols Vol.II Pt.I p.589); Ashby Magna, pulpit neat and handsome gallery (Nichols Vol.IV Pt.I, p.18); Grimston, peculiar of Rothley, neatly and regularly pewed (Nichols Vol.IV Pt.I, p.634); Hunsdon chapel, neatly pewed (Nichols Vol.III Pt.I, p.282); Husband Bosworth, repewing (ID41/41 Item 215, 11 Jun.1812); Kegworth, chancel neat and newly pewed (Nichols Vol.III Pt.II p.852); Kirby Bellars, pews, font, desk (ID41/41 Item 211 Jul.1810); Kirby Mallory, well pewed, good gallery (Nichols Vol.IV Pt.II, p.768); St Margaret’s, Leicester, peculiar, new pews ID41/41 Item 192, 25 Nov.1799; Newton Harcourt, modern neat pulpits of panelled oak (Nichols Vol.II Pt.II p.881); Oadby, deal gallery (Nichols Vol.II Pt.I p.322); Rotherby, pews (ID41/41 Item 206 20 May 1808); Shackerstone, desk and pulpit of modern oak, handsomely panelled (Nichols Vol.II, Pt.II p.792); Shepshed, new gallery and new vestry (ID41/41 Item 199, 20 Sep.1806; Sibson, new pulpit (ID41/41 Item 208 2 June 1809); South Croxton, new pews and new vestry (ID41/41 Item 201 28 Aug.1807); Syston, new pews of church (ID41/41 Item 24, July 1800)

Nichols, *op. cit.*, Vol.IV Pt.II p.622


ID 41/41 Item 195, 2 April 1801; Item 196, 16 Feb.1805

Papers Relating to Mortgages, Gilberts Acts, Bundle 2, Item 24, 28 Oct.1801

ID 41/41 Item 180, 9 Mar.1795; Item 186 2 June 1797; Papers Relating to Gilberts Act Bundle 2, Item 33 20 Oct.1801

Papers Relating to Gilberts Acts, Bundle 2 Item 34, 1801; Bundle 1 15 May, 1794