

THE CASE OF THE MISSING VICARS

Feedback from the last newsletter

The piece in the last Friends newsletter about Adelulf, the Pocklington nobleman who became the first Bishop of Carlisle in the 12th century, solved a mystery for Audrey Huxtable. Audrey, who was the first person to become a life member of the Friends of All Saints, had always been bemused as to why as owners of Home Farm at Kilnwick Percy she had to pay an annual tithe to Bishopric of Carlisle.

Is it the real deal?

All Saints can always throw up new surprises or questions, even for those who think they know it well. During the last Friends tour of the church Ann Harvey asked about the knight's helmet above the Dolman Memorial in the Lady Chapel. I had obviously glanced at it in passing many times, but had never looked carefully at it.

Though it has a metal collar around the base, anyone who has painted it over the years will know it is not a 'real' helmet, although I think it could well be a replica of Thomas Dolman's actual funeral helmet.

Thomas Dolman (died 1589) was a Justice of the Peace, lawyer, estate manager and land owner, but the vestiges of feudalism lived on well into the Tudor period and if you possessed land you would be still expected to do military service in time of war. Local gentry and yeoman would all have had armour (or 'harness' as it was called at the time) in case they were called up to fight. In the 16th century it was common for the important and wealthy to have special funeral armour and swords laid on the coffin then placed on the church wall after burial.

What sits above Thomas Dolman's memorial is a piece of plaster or alabaster sculpture. However, the memorial was hidden behind a organ screen for many years, and rediscovered and restored by the Dolman family in 1850. The Dolmans had ended bereft and bankrupt in the 18th century but Dr JT Dolman 'rescued' the family fortunes when he married into money a century later. It looks as though JT Dolman added extra adornments during the restoration, of his ancestor's memorial and this could have included a replica sculpture of the original helmet.

For funeral armour to survive to modern times is quite rare, particularly locally. On the wall of the sanctuary of Bubwith church is both the original helmet and sword of Thomas Dolman's brother-in-law, Sir Peter Vavasour (d 1556).

The case of the missing vicar(s)

Looking at the names and dates of Pocklington's vicars in the frame next to the main door of All Saints has always caused me a problem. It's a comprehensive list stretching right back to 1349, however, it throws up one obvious conundrum in the 15th and 16th centuries – what happened between Richard Yotton, vicar from 1451, and the next clergyman on the list, Franciscuc Parkar, who was collated vicar of Pocklington on 27 May 1541?

Clearly Rev. Yotton had not been the incumbent for the whole 90 years, but when the inventory of vicars of All Saints was put together in Victorian times they found nothing from 1453, when "Richard Yotton vicar de Poklington" was an executor in the will of parishioner, Alicia Burgh, right up to the appointment of Parkar well into the next century.

The years 1451 to 1541 were a tumultuous time for English history, and for Pocklington. It takes in the 30 years of the Wars of the Roses, with many men of Pocklington thought to have taken part in the conflict. Pocklington church is believed to have been completed by the finishing of the church tower circa 1450, and the life of the town and the church was centred around the several charitable and religious guilds based in All Saints. After the Tudors took the crown by force, Pocklington men fought in the early 16th century wars against both France and Scotland; and in Tudor times Pocklington became the East Riding's third biggest place, with farming the main occupation but malting and brewing, rope making and tanning leather and making shoes also major industries.

And from All Saints being a Catholic edifice up to 1529 it became progressively Anglicanised thereafter. Pocklington citizens played leading roles in the 1536 rebellion against Henry VIII's social, religious and political policies, and after the revolt was put down Henry took back the manor of Pocklington from the Percy family.

The Pocklington vicars list was the result of many hours of research in the York Minster archives by some noted Pocklington antiquarians of the late 19th century. And despite pouring over countless church documents, ecclesiastical court judgments and wills pertaining to Pocklington they had obviously been unable to identify any name for the 1453-1541 period (the All Saints parish registers did not start until a few years later in 1559).

So it was with some surprise that I came across a volume of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society Journal in Beverley Library that contained a survey of all the clergymen in the York Diocese in 1525 -well into the period of the 'missing vicar', and detailed not only the vicar of Pocklington but also four assistant clergy at All Saints.

The list 'East Riding Clergy in 1525-6' identifies "Mr Edmundo Salvan, vic de poklington". It goes on to name "Williamus Browne cant [cantarist = curate] apud Poklington, Williamus Shalicys capellanus [Chaplain] de Poklington, Ricardus Wrightt capellanus gilde nostris Jesu, Thomas Barsworth capellanus and Ricardus Stikeney capellanus.

To find four deacons listed as 'capellanus' at Pocklington is hardly surprising as chantries and guilds were still in vogue in 1525 and each would have had its own chantry priest (they were abolished by Edward VII in 1547). The present Lady Chapel was built circa 1300 to accommodate a chantry to Remigius de Pokelyngton, and there are references in the 14th and 15th centuries at All Saints to the Apostles, Holy Cross and St Mary's guilds, while Pocklington School's foundation in 1514 was as part of a 'Fraternity or Guild of the name of Jesus, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of St Nicholas'.

Pocklington vicars are invariably difficult to track as few went on to bigger and better things. Because the valuable church estates in and around Pocklington were owned almost entirely by the Dean of York, the vicar of Pocklington was a relatively poorly paid post and usually attracted 'minor' clergy. The 1525 list of East Riding clergy also gives the value of all the livings, and in Pocklington's case the stipend was worth £12 per annum (possibly around £7,000 in today's values - around the same time a farm labourer could earn around £5 pa). Up the road at Low Catton the stipend was £25 pa, at Holme-on-Spalding Moor £24 pa).

Nevertheless, the 1525 vicar, Edmund Salvan, was a man of independent means as the tax returns of 1524 show he is the fourth highest taxpayer in Pocklington after John Sotheby, William Dolman and William Lee. The Salvans (or Salvain) were one of the North's leading gentry families and a junior branch lived in a moated manor house at Harswell.

That should have been the end of my research and story of 'Pocklington's missing vicar'. However, history has a habit of biting you in the behind. I had written the above but decided to have one last check before printing it, when I was belatedly sent on another tangent that revealed another three vicars of Pocklington in the period 1539 to 1541. I looked at the will of Brian Higdon, Dean of York and the north's most powerful church and state administrator of the 1520s and 1530s (Cardinal Wolsey was Archbishop of York for 15 years, but he never came to York in all that time and left running the north to Higdon). Higdon had a manor house at Thornton in addition to his York residence, and when he made his will in 1539 he left instruction to be buried at All Saints if he died at Thornton and made 'Sir Robte Huyte, vicar of Poklyngton', one of his executors - so that means a 'Missing vicar No 2'.

For good measure I double checked the CCEd (the Clergy of the Church of England Database) which is a gazetteer of tens of thousands of clergy from 1540 onwards, and it listed a John Hewett as resigning at Pocklington in May 1541, with Parkar being appointed on the same day – a 'Missing vicar No 3.'.

Therefore, the current list in church states:

Richard Yotton 1451

Franciscus Parkar 1541

but this new research means it should read:

Richard Yotton 1451

Edmundo Salvan 1524

Robert Huyte 1539

Johanne Hewett 1541

Franciscus Parkar 1541

As the current list only has space for one more Pocklington incumbent we will soon need to decide what to do with the board and whether to create a new one, but I wonder how many more 'missing vicars' there are out there?

Phil Gilbank