

WHO WERE THE VICARS CHORAL OF WELLS c.1200-1380?

TONY SCRASE

INTRODUCTION

A number of scholars have commented on the gulf between what we know about medieval cathedral canons and the more numerous minor clergy that surrounded them.¹ This piece attempts to fill part of the gap by exploring the geographical origins, backgrounds and careers of the earlier vicars choral of Wells. Findings will be compared with those for the two cathedrals whose vicars have been thoroughly studied, that is York and, particularly, Exeter thanks to Orme's researches for over 30 years.²

NATURE OF THE MEDIEVAL CLERGY

Progression in the clergy was, from our point of view, complicated and commenced very young. The earliest stage was giving the first tonsure that could occur from the age of seven. At Wells the groups affected were the choristers and grammar school pupils. At 14 it was possible to advance to the status of acolyte who might assist a priest in a service or procession. Neither of these categories precluded the resumption of lay life but they did make holders subject to church courts and taxes. The irreversible step could be taken at 17 when ordination as a sub-deacon committed one to a life as a celibate cleric. From this point one could advance to deacon and, at age 24, to priest. Only a priest was able to perform the mass.

Senior priests appointed by the bishop managed the non-monastic cathedrals. These were the canons and, with the exception of Exeter diocese, they were each allocated an estate for their support. This was their prebend so they were also referred to as prebendaries. The canons together formed the chapter headed by the dean who they elected. There were other senior officers such as the precentor and treasurer. They and the dean were collectively known as the dignitaries.

Originally the canons were charged with

performing the daily round of services. But their other duties made that difficult so the practice developed of appointing vicars choral as deputies to act for them in the choir. The term vicar meant originally a stand-in or deputy. Thus in parish work a vicar is the incumbent on behalf of the rector while a vicar-general represents a bishop in administrative matters. Many cathedrals insisted that vicars choral were priests or became so soon after appointment. As will be shown Wells was rather flexible. Many vicars were deacons, some for years, and at least one acolyte was appointed a vicar.

Chaplains were priests engaged in private duties. They might serve a private chapel, an aristocratic household or, later, a ship or regiment. They had to be fully-fledged priests as they had to conduct the mass. In a cathedral chaplains were engaged in chantry chapels and commemorative services held at the various altars. They were also known as chantry priests and annuellers (from the yearly commemorative services for the souls of the dead).

The final term encountered is clerk. Originally this meant any clergyman and any grade from first tonsure upwards. However, it was often used to denote those in minor orders involved in lesser roles such as ringing the bells, supervising the holy water and performing tasks undertaken by vergers today. They might also write or copy documents. This led to the term being extended to lawyers as the first lay group with literary skills and later to its modern wide currency.

THE EVIDENCE

Vicars choral are mentioned in general terms in the earliest surviving Wells statutes dating from before 1165 and associated with Bishop Robert's re-foundation of the chapter. The first definite information comes from the years around 1200. Bishop Savaric gave Wells prebends to the abbeys of Bec, Muchelney and Athelney.³ Abbots could not take up residence so they were required to provide

vicars. Individual vicars begin to be identified in Bishop Jocelin's time. They appear first as witnesses and then some begin to acquire property in Wells. By the 1240s the dean and chapter were drawn into their regulation. At first they were concerned with numbers. In 1243 a canon was informed that he was not entitled to a vicar as he was in residence. As a result his unlucky vicar, John de Comp(ton) was forced to resign.⁴ From 1246 they began to concern themselves with discipline. Writers have often referred to sexual peccadilloes but there were also problems with absenteeism, bearing and financial probity. This concern with discipline faded after mid-century but 1251 provides a valuable source, a list of vicars. The reason was chapter indignation with Bishop William Bytton I. He was trying to install a nephew as vicar of Congresbury without regard to their rights. To bolster their protests and intended appeal to Canterbury the vicars were summonsed and their names are listed after those of the canons.⁵ This is valuable revealing names of those who neither became involved in administration nor were guilty of misconduct. Twenty-four vicars are named and they seem to be arranged in some order of seniority as is the 1377 list discussed below. In each case the dean's vicar is first and the most recent recruit last. By the 1270s the chapter was housing some of the vicars in its smaller properties around the cathedral so surviving leases identify more vicars. Then from *c.*1285 the chapter returned to the conduct of the vicars. But now their concern broadened from straightforward discipline to matters of performance of the liturgy. In 1295 they revived a system established in 1273 whereby new vicars were allocated to a senior who was to examine them on reading and their command of the chants after a year. Five senior vicars were now appointed to examine 20 of their colleagues.⁶ Even after this the chapter had to return to the matter in 1298 informing seven vicars that they did not have a 'pleasing voice' and must improve within a year. At broadly the same time the chapter dealt with absenteeism ordering six offenders to return within 15 days and keep residence or face dismissal.⁷

After 1300 the chapter again turned away from discipline but new sources begin to be available. Firstly, there are the surviving bishops' registers although, as we shall see, bishops varied in the interest they took in the vicars and the use they made of them. Secondly, accounts survive from cathedral administrators, the communal, the escheator and what is variously described as the warden, keeper or master of the fabric. Vicars generally held these

posts and other vicars were employed in tasks arising. Vicars continued to appear spasmodically in the chapter's records but the occurrence depends on both the focus of interest at the time and what individual clerks thought important. For example, appointments must always have been announced but few were recorded. But the more random references do show vicars filling an increasing number of roles. They were executors, often for canons. They were also involved in the work of the church courts. Most commonly they were sent to cite people to appear. Sometimes they served as proctors representing the chapter or were sent to lift sentences of excommunication.

The grant of corporate status in 1348 did not change the chapter's role but added a new tier of government within the vicars. Unfortunately, the vicars own records do not survive from the period covered. The registers exist from 1394 and the act books from 1541. However, the vicars did begin to acquire properties. Initially, they were then granted to a group of vicars to manage. The last survivors of a group would then convey the premises to a new group. A number of these transactions survive. Finally, at the end of our period we have another list, the Clerical Poll Tax of 1377. This lists 38 vicars.⁸

From all these sources it is possible to identify 208 individuals. For some it is possible to reconstruct a brief biography as will be shown in what is said about the two Williams de Bathonia below. But with some 40% the name is the main evidence. Now it is generally held that in southern England by-names hardened into inherited surnames by around 1350. So it might seem to risk distorting findings by continuing studies to consider the 1377 list. However, the change in naming practice was actually drawn out. Some Wells families had inherited second names from the thirteenth century as will be shown. A few cases of changes between the generations or in references to an individual continued into the fifteenth century. It will therefore make minimal difference and offers strong advantages in a comprehensive list and other lists of cathedral staff from whom vicars might be appointed. As a result the scope of the study takes in all vicars first documented by 1380.

The names differ sharply from what Barrow found at York.⁹ Firstly, only seven Wells vicars are documented without a by-name. They all had unusual names (Benedict, Clement, Luke, Malger, Miles, Serlo and Vincent) so presumably no further identification was considered necessary. There is

also a single reference to Ralph the dean's vicar¹⁰ but he can be identified with Ralph de Chyu who was listed first in 1251. Secondly, there seems to be less confusion between the vicars and the chaplains. Where it is possible to crosscheck the terms are used accurately. There are some thirteenth century references that combine the terms as in 'Walter de Caticote chaplain vicar' while Malger is described as priest vicar.¹¹ This, in part, reflects the fact that vicars performed similar functions to the chaplains as will be explained. It may also be an attempt, particularly in Malger's case to establish the status of the vicar. This was necessary because of flexibility at Wells over progression. It could be a lengthy process in contrast to Exeter where vicars had to be priests (and therefore over 24 years of age) or become so very quickly.¹² Other Wells documents show concern to establish the distinction. Thus the delegation sent to Bath in 1242 to announce the death of Bishop Jocelin included four vicars, two of them are described as chaplains and two as deacons.¹³ Again the 1295 list of examinees begins with 11 who are stated to be priests. The contrasts with York probably reflect lack of twelfth century records and different traditions amongst the clerks.

The seven vicars without a by-name are partly balanced by five others where we are given an extra piece of information as in Robert of Wells called the Dyer. So we have a total of 206 pieces of information from the names. Table 1 shows their types. The majority (68%) are from place-names. To explain some other categories locational names describe where a person came from but only in terms of either a physical feature as with Hill or Pool or a position as with Hope that signified somebody living in an enclosure. Occupations are straightforward while status makes distinctions as between Franklin signifying a freeman and Coterel indicating a cottar, a lesser peasant tied to the manor.

More generally, it needs to be understood that working with by-names involves constant acts of judgment. Thus, in 1317, a group of vicars included Roger called Sell'. Now the abbreviation mark probably means a full name of Seller.¹⁴ This could signify either a person dwelling in a crude hut more often associated with animals, a saddler or somebody working in a cellar. As the first seems the least likely it has been classified as an occupational name. It also raises the possibility that Roger's father worked for the bishop. This is hinted at by another name, William Bissopp.¹⁵ The name

TABLE 1 TYPES OF BY-NAME

TYPE	NO.	%
None	7	3
Place name	147	69
Location	8	4
Occupation	13	6
Status	2	1
Characteristics/ appearance/nicknames	21	10
Ancestor's name	8	4
Religious	2	1
Unknown/problematic	5	2
TOTAL	213	100

Note: these figures include extra piece of information from five names with forms such as John called Treute of Highworth.

Bishop is usually taken to imply somebody with the manner or appearance associated with a bishop. In addition it can mean either somebody employed by a bishop or who had been a boy bishop on Holy Innocents' Day. Both of these are real possibilities at Wells.

One last point is necessary on methods. The vicar for the stall of Biddesham is not included. This is because the holder of that prebend was St Andrew and the funds were used for church purposes. His vicar was the schoolmaster. Obviously his duties precluded him from many of the vicars' normal activities. He was recruited on different criteria, was paid differently and lived apart in the schoolhouse. He had no relationship of patronage with his canon.¹⁶

WHERE DID THE VICARS COME FROM?

As we have a considerable number of by-names giving place-names it is possible to give a reasonable picture. However, care is needed in dealing with the data. Thus the names Gilbert and William de Bruges¹⁷ should not excite thoughts of Flemish connections. Bruges, Brugg or Brug' here are variations of brigg meaning bridge. So they probably came from Bridgwater. In the same way William de Hoyland who was forced to resign in 1248¹⁸ was not a womanising Yorkshireman but probably came from Zoyland. Matters are further

complicated as only about 40% of place-names are unique. The rule is then to select the nearest place.¹⁹ So Stephen de Bradeford²⁰ came from Bradford-on-Avon rather than Bradford-on-Tone and certainly not from Yorkshire. This means that the spread of places discussed will be the minimum possible.

Given what was said about some names being inherited from the mid-thirteenth century it is obvious that by-names must give place to other evidence. Two examples will be given. The first concerns a family called de Surrey. The 1251 list has two such names, Henry de Surreya and Stephen de Surreya. Henry is not recorded elsewhere but Stephen had a long career. He was still alive in 1299 when he sold his house in The Liberty to two other vicars.²¹ He must have been very old by then and probably unable to support himself alone. That would explain why he was not employed as an examiner in 1295. However, John de Surreye was. He is well known from the property records as he had interests in five houses (as many as the more affluent town burgesses). One property transaction in Union Street gives a family tree.²² It shows that John's father was Thomas de Surreye who had married into a prominent Wells family, the Bouches, that can be traced back to the 1240s. Thomas was still alive in 1310 and by 1317 another layman had appeared, Roger de Surreye, who was occupying the Chamberlain Street property that John intended to charge for his obit.

The simplest explanation is that Henry arrived first. His reports encouraged kinsmen (younger brothers or nephews) to follow. Stephen was a recent arrival in 1251 as his appointment was noted in that year and he was at the bottom of the 1251 list. Thomas, a layman, followed and made a good marriage. One of his sons, John, followed the family tradition and joined the vicars. So Henry and Stephen are listed as coming from Surrey while John was a local. That leaves one question. One of the purchasers of Stephen's house was Robert de Chedyngfold. Now Chiddingfold is in Surrey so was he a kinsman?

The second example is more straightforward. By November 1348 a vicar, Phillip Swansee was dead. But before he is allocated to Wales his mother's will needs to be studied. She left goods to both the cathedral and the vicar's new hall and asked to be buried near her son. The will reveals her to be a wealthy widow of Bristol and that presumably is where her son came from.²³

With these points in mind we can turn to Table 2. The results are very different from what

TABLE 2 ORIGINS OF VICARS

LOCATION	NO.	%
City of Wells	6	4
Manor of Wells	4	3
Rest of Somerset	72	49
TOTAL FOR DIOCESE	82	56
Gloucestershire	13	9
Wiltshire	6	4
Herefordshire	6	4
Shropshire	5	3
Surrey	4	3
Hampshire	3	2
Kent	3	2
Berkshire	2	1
Devon	2	1
Dorset	2	1
Essex	2	1
Oxfordshire	2	1
Buckinghamshire	1	0.7
Cornwall	1	0.7
Derbyshire	1	0.7
Lincolnshire	1	0.7
London	1	0.7
Northamptonshire	1	0.7
Nottinghamshire	1	0.7
Staffordshire	1	0.7
Wales	1	0.7
TOTAL ELSEWHERE	59	40
TOTAL IDENTIFIED	141	96
Place-names not identified	6	4
GRAND TOTAL	147	100

Barrow reports of the York vicars. She writes of the identifiable names as being invariably local to Yorkshire and some local to York itself. Exeter was fairly similar. Orme writes of the Exeter contributing a large proportion of all types of minor clergy as did south and east Devon. North Devon and Cornwall provided fewer while those from outside the diocese were rare.²⁴ In contrast Somerset accounts for just under 60% of Wells vicars while Wells itself provided at most six. Only two of these are identified by name. Most are known from property and family records. The obvious links of Thomas Curteys and the reasons for thinking Walter de Hulle a local will be given below. While Barrow reports York vicars named for local streets there is only one such possibility at Wells. By-names such as de Pole or atte Poole are common and indicate somebody living near a pond. Now Wells records have both Robert de Pola and Richard de la Pole.²⁵ The later may reflect better Norman French usage but it could relate to the old name of South Street which was La Pole because it led to the horse pond at its junction with Mill Street. Enlarging our study area to the surrounding manor of Wells adds only four more. One was from a farm, Garsilade,²⁶ between Polsham and Upper Goldney, and, on the proximity rule, one came from Milton and two from Coxley Wick. Obviously one reason for the contrast with York is that it had over seven times the population. It had 7,248 payers of the 1377 Poll Tax compared with Wells' 901. Again Exeter was almost twice as large as Wells with 1,666.

The distribution around Wells does not show a regular grouping falling off with distance. Instead it reflects the landscape. The Mendip plateau and much of the Levels was little settled. Instead the pattern is linear reflecting better ground. The Mendip-foot bench is well represented. To the east there were vicars from Croscombe (as the nearest Combe name), Dinder and Shepton Mallet while to the west there were recruits from Westbury (3), Rodney Stoke, Cheddar, Axbridge, Winscombe and Uphill. Similarly the ridges of higher ground in the Levels were sources with men from Henton, Wedmore (2), Meare and Cossington (these last two are rare recruits from the core territories of Glastonbury Abbey). More generally the pattern shows a bias to the east of Wells.

The distribution beyond Somerset is hard to quantify but the discussion on patronage and appointment explains it. As a result Table 2 just lists counties by numbers sent. No attempt is made to set out numbers in McClure's favoured method

of distance bands.²⁷ This can mislead as the Bristol Channel makes closer bands incomplete. It also makes calculating distances difficult. Would the recruits from the Hereford area have followed the long land route via Gloucester? Would they have come down the Wye and crossed near Chepstow or would they have used a Welsh port and crossed to Bridgwater or one of the minor ports and anchorages on the rivers of the Levels? We cannot know.

It is striking that two counties adjoining the diocese, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, provided a good number of recruits while the other two, Dorset and Devon, provided less than many more distant places. If wider patterns can be found there seem to be two concentrations. One is along either side of the Thames from its sources in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire to its mouth between Essex and Kent. The other is up the English side of the Marches through Herefordshire into Shropshire. There is also a bias towards other dioceses with secular chapters although there is nobody from Chichester. All this will be explained in the next section.

THE APPOINTMENT OF VICARS

Individual vicars were nominated by the canon for whom they were to deputise. From 1273 a new vicar had to serve a probationary year. After that they had tenure subject to the right of the dean and chapter to remove them for disciplinary reasons. So a new canon could not appoint a vicar of his choice. He had to wait for a vacancy. Only five thirteenth century records link a vicar to his canon or prebendal stall. Things only slowly changed after 1300. An early example is from 1317. A vicar, Richard de Pencriz, had (unusually) been appointed vicar of St Cuthbert's. Thomas de Merksbury was then admitted to succeed him as both vicar choral and sub-treasurer on the nomination of the treasurer.²⁸ Then in 1329 Alan of Nottingham was appointed on the nomination of chancellor Thomas de Retford (so both were from Nottinghamshire).²⁹ But such references only become more common after 1350. Thus in 1360 we are informed that Canon John Beneyt presented William Janne and Canon Robert atte Sloo presented Nicholas Spicer of Bridport.³⁰ In 1375 John Hull is identified as the dean's vicar.³¹ Identification with the stall is more common if the vicar was leaving whether temporarily or permanently. Thus in 1383 John Wyke was told that he must surrender his vicarage of the stall of Cleeve as he now had the rectory of Bowrcler (Burghclere,

Hampshire) but if he was ousted through no fault of his own he could have his vicarage back.³² This more complete record is full of interesting information. To begin the replacement vicar was William de Cammel, the namesake and, presumably, kinsman of the precentor. Furthermore, the transaction took place in the precentor's chamber. The Cleeve prebend belonged to Cleeve Abbey so John was an abbot's nomination. So should the Wick he was associated with be sought around Cleeve or the lands it held rather than in proximity to Wells? Another stall reference followed in 1384. Thomas Tark' was described as vicar of the stall of Yatton when granted 7 years' leave of absence to study at Oxford. He was to provide 'at his own costs of the services of a chaplain in the priest's office as the said prebend requires'.³³ A final reference shows the personal links that might be involved. In 1396 Canon John de Upton left a legacy to Robert de Burgh 'his vicar'.³⁴

So the canons had the power of patronage but they themselves were subject to influence by their seniors, the bishop and the dignitaries particularly the dean and precentor. So it is convenient before considering the doings of individual canons to look at the activities of bishops notorious for nepotism. The first is Bishop William Bytton I (1248-64). He was so successful that his nephew, William Bytton II followed him after only three years. Other kin, Byttons and Thomas de Mora, became canons. His mark on the vicars began while he was a dignitary. Richard de Bytton then appears amongst the vicars. He was being pushed to the front by 1242 when he was one of four vicars in the delegation to Bath. Ralph de Bytton also makes a single appearance in these years. But Richard went on to better things. He was still a vicar in 1248 but by 1251 he was a canon and subsequently advanced to precentor.³⁵ Later Richard de Mora was amongst the vicars to be examined in 1295 and told he must improve in 1298. He was probably a last vestige of Bytton influence when another family member, Thomas Bytton, was dean 1284-92. By then Bishop Robert Burnell (1276-92) was having a bigger impact. Like William Bytton I he filled the canons' stalls with his kin. One nephew, William Burnell, became dean and continued the family influence for three more years. Bishop Burnell was willing to use a vicar's appointment as a temporary expedient. Walter Burnell is recorded twice as a vicar before becoming a canon. He obtained one of the nine houses the chapter could provide for vicars.³⁶ However, there were two other Burnell vicars who

remained at that level. Were they more distant kin, less able or just unlucky in having careers truncated by the end of family influence? One, Reginald Burnell, only appears as a 1295 examinee. The other, Robert Burnell, seems to have been a man of some ability. In 1295 he was an examiner and in 1316 he was one of the vicars in a group of canons and vicars who examined the state of chapter properties used to house clergy.³⁷ Another native of Shropshire was listed in 1295. He was from Clun some way from the Burnell heartland at Acton Burnell. Nevertheless, it seems likely that he was connected. A final vicar from Shropshire is not documented until 1339. He was William Laualee (Lawley near modern Telford).³⁸ It is even further from Acton Burnell but only 16km (10 miles) from Shrewsbury. So he is more likely to be a protégé of Bishop Ralph of Shrewsbury (1329-63). In contrast the other notorious nepotist Bishop John de Drokenford (1309-29) seems to have had no direct impact on the appointment of vicars. But besides obvious kin he appointed a canon from Alresford some 16km (10 miles) north of his birthplace Droxford. The canon's links to the vicars are described below.

We can now turn to the actions of individual canons. The appointment of their vicar provided an opportunity for patronage. Inevitably they might favour kin, neighbours or other protégés. Some would be from their home area. So we begin to see the roots of the spread described. It was intensified as Bath and Wells was both one of the dioceses with most canons and with the best-endowed canons. This attracted all of the papacy, kings and great lords to exert influence for their favoured candidates. This tended to increase the geographical spread squeezing out Somerset candidates. Also, if senior canons particularly a precentor were sought they were found at the other secular cathedrals giving the bias already mentioned.

The first example is a certain link. One of the vicars disciplined in 1248 is identified as Roger nephew of the late chancellor who was William de Lincoln.³⁹ Other examples depend on a canon and a vicar first documented somewhat later sharing the same by-name. What follows is not exhaustive but shows the pattern. To begin a near contemporary of William de Lincoln was Henry of London.⁴⁰ Then in 1251 Alexander of London is listed amongst the vicars. Canon Peter de Avebury is mentioned in 1295 and went on to be archdeacon of Taunton. Vicar Robert de Avebury quickly followed.⁴¹ More links are apparent early in the next century. Vicar Richard de Bray followed Canon Henry de Bray

(dead by 1312).⁴² Another obscure canon, Richard de Alresford seems linked to two vicars, John and Hugh de Alresford.⁴³ Canon Hugh de Pencriz (Penkrige, Staffs), 1305-20, was far more active being busy in Bishop Drokensford's administration. No doubt he explains the arrival of Richard de Pencriz amongst the vicars choral and perhaps his movement to St Cuthbert's.⁴⁴ The final canon-vicar pairing in the period studied gives an Essex link. Henry Bocking became a canon in 1360 and was followed by vicar John Bocking in the 1370s.⁴⁵

Apart from family connections and links with home, it is difficult to discover where canons found their vicar. Some may have come from their prebend. Others may have been recommended to them. The use they made of those already at St Andrew's will be considered below.

However, there seem to have been other factors at work besides the acts of individual canons. Vicars were sometimes recruited from a particular area for several generations. This is most noticeable in a pattern of recruitment from an area straddling the upper Thames where Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire and pre-1974 Berkshire met. The connection began when the bishops were still at Bath. A Ralph of Lechlade regularly appears in their households. He is twice described as archdeacon of Bath but there is a problem in that another man is so named in the same period. Greenway suggests he might have been archdeacon of Taunton from the transactions he witnessed.⁴⁶ In Bishop Jocelin's early years Canon Peter de Inglesham makes a brief appearance.⁴⁷ So does Ralph de Lechlade who became dean 1216-9 and accompanied Jocelin into exile. Greenway treats these two Ralphs entirely separately while Ramsey has them as one man.⁴⁸ In 1239 another Ralph of Lechlade, a vicar, appears in a list of witnesses.⁴⁹ In addition William of Lechlade appears as a witness 1243-8.⁵⁰ Others from the area were also appearing. The first of two Johns from Shrivensham is mentioned in 1248.⁵¹ At about the same time Walter de Lechlade appears as a witness. In 1251 he was listed amongst the vicars and in 1256 he was one of a group empowered to act regarding the deanery. By 1268 he was succentor and later moved to be precentor at Exeter where he was murdered.⁵² His seems an example of promotion due to musical skill rather than kin. Around the turn of the century the vicars included Thomas de Kelmscote⁵³ and the second John from Shrivensham. He was less satisfactory being one of the vicars noted as long absent in 1298.⁵⁴ The final two certain vicars from the area were Thomas de

Lechlade and John de Treute of Highworth who both had long careers.⁵⁵ Two further vicars might relate to this group. John de Wyttenye and Jordan de Wittenye are separately mentioned in 1295 while the latter was another of the 1298 absentees. They could come from Witney, Oxfordshire or from Whitney-on-Wye, Herefordshire (and belong to the next group). The two place-names have the same origin and early spellings. Given a route involving water transport Whitney has a small advantage by the proximity rule. But whether they belong to this group or the next does not detract from the general point.

The second group is from the Hereford area. A first Adam de Hereford appears c.1214 concerning a property transaction when he is described as a chaplain but he subsequently witnessed three documents of Jocelin's time (two of which can be securely dated to 1230 and 1239) when he is described as a vicar.⁵⁶ A second Adam de Hereford was one of the examiners in 1295. John of Hereford had been a canon in the years between the two.⁵⁷ Also in 1295 we have references, as mentioned, to John and Jordan from Whitney or Witney. Later in 1320 there was a vicar from Bowley⁵⁸ just north of Hereford and finally in 1370 one from Eardisley⁵⁹ near Whitney. The Surrey group already discussed may be a third cluster. Another unsatisfactory vicar, William de Cobbeham, may complete that group. He was suspended in 1248.⁶⁰

These groups suggest that traditions emerged in certain localities that kin, friends or neighbours had gone to Wells and flourished. As a result those with a good voice and, usually, an inclination to piety were encouraged to follow. But it is difficult to know how they then proceeded. Did they rely on recommendations or lobbying by those already in Wells? Or did they try to work their way up via the choristers or school. The choristers offered limited opportunities. Wells had only six choristers although some were allowed to stay on (presumably after their voices broke) to act as altarists and tabulars. There were six of these. Exeter had 14 choristers and 12 secondaries (their better organised equivalent of altarists and tabulars) who seem to give a better feed to their 24 vicars.⁶¹ Certainly the 1377 returns show that only two of the 12 choristers, altarists and tabulars may have become a vicar. One was Robert Hawe. In 1388 he was rebuked with another vicar, Richard Turnedyk for saying the litany carelessly. The second depends on Thomas Taket being the same as Thomas Tark whose study leave has been mentioned (but there is

another possible candidate). The scholars provided even less. Thirty-four paid the poll tax but only one may have become a vicar. He was John Taillor but that is a rather common name. The poll tax also lists 10 personal assistants living in canon's households. In view of what has been said about patronage it may seem strange that none became a vicar. But a good singing voice was unlikely to be the ideal feature of such assistants. In fact the one member of the group with a well-documented subsequent career was Richard Horsford. He was already a notary and went on to be diocesan registrar for both Bath and Wells and Exeter. He also had a considerable private practice in Wells and built up an estate of houses there.⁶²

The chaplains do not provide a significant source of vicars. Indeed fewer chaplains became vicars than vicars became canon. Only three examples are known. The first Adam of Hereford has already been mentioned. The 1214 property transaction where he was called chaplain shows he was already involved with the Wells musical establishment. Witnesses include both the precentor and succentor. The house afterwards passed to John of Hereford and the chancellor John called Fortis. He granted it to Walter de Lechlade and it became the succentor's house.⁶³ Thus Adam might be an example of early imprecision with terms. The next, John de Comba, was a temporary expedient being appointed for three years while William de Cobbeham was suspended.⁶⁴ Finally, in 1251 Walter the chaplain was admitted as the vicar of William de Huniton.⁶⁵ So he might have been a chaplain at Honiton rather than Wells.

So lobbying and personal contacts may have been the main routes. Certainly it is hard to think why Robert de Marisco should have appointed Stephen de Surreya his vicar unless Henry de Surreya and perhaps Henry's patron approached him. Robert was a pluralist but his interests were in the Midlands not Surrey and he was to rise to be Dean of Lincoln.⁶⁶ He does not seem to have been personally involved acting by letter when away pursuing his other interests.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE VICARS

Table 1 showed that occupational by-names are far less common than those derived from places. So we have less information on the vicars' families. Most of the names found show families engaged as skilled artisans for example dyer, tucker, smith,

baker and locksmith. References to mercer and spicer suggest richer tradesmen. Two by-names from 1251 are more puzzling. Firstly, there was Isaac the Sacrist. Does that mean he had been a sacrist previously, did he combine the roles or did he have the manner of a sacrist? Secondly, there was Ralph son of Simon the painter. One would need to know the sort of painting Simon did to assess Ralph's background. The range is vast from illustrations on manuscripts to wall paintings or colouring domestic equipment.

Orme summed up the Exeter minor clergy as coming from the families of prosperous peasants or substantial craftsmen and shopkeepers.⁶⁷ The latter two elements certainly characterise Wells but the prosperous peasants are less apparent. Only John of Garsilade fits this category. Instead there is evidence that vicars came from lower rural strata. John Coterel's second name indicates that he came from a family of cottars. Simon Cotyn came from a settlement of cottars.⁶⁸ There is further evidence that Wells vicars included the unfree. In 1248 John de Scryuenam (Shrivenham) was, in effect, given unpaid leave to attend his lord.⁶⁹ Conversely, the Bytton and Burnell kin amongst the vicars came from at least the fringe of the landowning classes.

We know more about some of the vicars from Wells. As explained, John de Surreye came, on his mother's side was a long-established and prosperous family. He came to hold a substantial estate. He owned 54 High Street and less desirable houses in Union Street and Southover, while he held a Chamberlain Street house from the dean and chapter and he had an interest in 15 Sadler Street but the tenure is unknown.⁷⁰ Thomas Curteys also came of a long established local family. They owned property, particularly in St Cuthbert Street. In the 1327 Lay Subsidy the then head of the family, Richard Curteys, paid 4s (20p). This puts him on the fringe of the elite. Sixteen burgesses paying between £1 and 4s contributed nearly 70% of the tax yield. A further 48 citizens paid the rest. They included Richard Curteys junior who paid 1s (5p).⁷¹

Lastly, it should be noted that 31 vicars were involved in property transactions. Many were only providing themselves with a home before 1348 but others had a wider involvement as illustrated with John de Surreye. A few vicars continued to buy and sell or rent houses after 1348. Thus in 1376 John Bocking took a lease from the dean and chapter of a Chamberlain Street property that had decayed to a toft after the plague. He undertook to rebuild on the site and hold it for 40 years paying 10s (50p) p.a.⁷²

Such activities show that a proportion of vicars had inherited wealth.

WHERE DID THE VICARS LIVE BEFORE 1348?

By the 1270s the dean and chapter were leasing a number of their properties around the cathedral to vicars. They had to pay any obit rents due and keep the house in good repair but nothing else. Generally vicars and chaplains received smaller or older houses so there were shifts to better premises if available. Thus in 1329 the chapter granted the vicar Richard de Tychemersh a house in the area of 14-22 St Thomas Street. He was replacing the chaplain Richard de Marchesley who was in turn moving to a Tor Street house vacated by the death of another vicar, William de Ymmer.⁷³ Cycles of building, decay and rebuilding also resulted in switches between occupation by canons and minor clergy. In 1316 Thomas de Lechlade succeeded another vicar from his home area, Thomas de Kelmescote, as tenant of 17 The Liberty.⁷⁴ But later in the century after rebuilding the sub-dean lived there. In contrast three successive canons occupied the house by the Torgate (approximately 20 & 21 Tor Street) but then it was granted to the vicar John called Treute in 1342. He was to rebuild it at his own cost as it had fallen.⁷⁵

A general picture can be obtained from a survey of the state of chapter properties used for clerics made in 1316. Nineteen houses were examined. Eight were occupied by canons, nine by vicars and two by otherwise unknown men, William de Esdene and William de Bourne, who could be vicars but are probably chaplains.⁷⁶ What is unclear from most of this is the extent to which the injunctions (repeated after each fresh sexual indiscretion) that vicars must share their dwellings were obeyed. We are told that Richard de Bray was appointed to live with Thomas de Lechlade. In 1319 Robert de Avebury and Ralph de Bergh were to have Thomas de Benhangre's house that had stood vacant for three years after his death. Also in 1340 Hugh de Alresford was given permission to share with John de Middleton provided that John's existing companion, William de Walton, was not defrauded.⁷⁷ In contrast, John called Treute was told he need not have a companion, no doubt as a reward for rebuilding the house by Torgate.

So the chapter owned houses only accommodated around 18 vicars. Some of the others may have lodged with their canon but most bought or rented

their accommodation. Several, like Stephen de Surreye, acquired small houses in the Cathedral Liberty in The Liberty, College Street and the western end of St Thomas Street. But others lived in the eastern fringe of the borough, several in the properties at the eastern end of Chamberlain Street with others in New Street and Sadler Street.⁷⁸

THE CAREER OF A VICAR

For most it was a career for life. Long spans in post can be found although we have few records of appointments and even less of deaths. So what is given here is generally less than the full period just the time between first and last reference. Nevertheless, two vicars served for over 40 years. As mentioned Stephen de Surreye was appointed in 1251 and was still alive in 1299. William de Bathonia, junior, was an examinee in 1295 and was given a new role (discussed below) in 1335. Two more were close behind. Richard de Avebury was told he must improve in 1298 and in 1337 was sent to absolve somebody from excommunication.⁷⁹ Thomas Fyfhyde was first recorded in 1338⁸⁰ and was still alive in 1377. Another six served for over 30 years, 18 for over 20 years and 15 for over 10 years.

The checks on this long career seem slight. The year's probation and the dean and chapter's disciplinary powers seem to have removed few. As regards the former, none of the 20 to be examined in 1295 seems to have been rejected and a number of those told they lacked a pleasant voice in 1298 went on to have long and useful careers notably Robert de Avebury. In fact, the probationary process seems to have become more demanding after 1348. The vicars, as a group, were now invited to consider the new recruit and give their opinion. In 1360 Stephen Ferror was said to have acceptable knowledge of reading and chanting but had 'so borne himself' that he was dismissed.⁸¹ Ability to get on with your fellows may have become an issue.

Turning to disciplinary action, few were dismissed. This was partly because the chapter always gave vicars a chance to resign before coming to a formal judgment. Even these enforced resignations were rare. Generally offenders were warned as to future conduct and given some penance. With sexual offences (usually described as incontinence) the vicar might also be warned that he could still be dismissed if the current matter gave rise to scandal.⁸² In the first major actions on behaviour 1246-8 the first to be

forced out was William de Hoyland found guilty of incontinence, violence towards his woman's father and, as the last straw, backsliding.⁸³ Next a group of five were accused of 'grave offences' and the worst of them, William de Cobbeham and Geoffrey de Praulles, were suspended for three years.⁸⁴ But the most intractable case was that of Henry de Mertok who was accused of having sex with three women, running up debts and taking money from the treasury. He delayed matters by denials, non-appearance and asking for the matter to await the return of the bishop or failing that the dean's presence. But in 1249 he was forced to resign. Even then he was allowed to stay in place until after Christmas subject to good behaviour and reduced commons. Then in 1251 he was given a testimonial stating that he had left with the chapter's permission.⁸⁵

This gentle approach to discipline and attempt to avoid scandal continued. In the next episode of disciplinary action 1290-1300, it is seen again. Nicholas de Plescy was one of the 1295 examinees when he is identified as a priest. In 1297 he was disciplined for intercourse with Christina de Bristol with whom he had children. He received the usual warnings and was still a vicar in 1316. By then he was living in a chapter owned house next door to that occupied by Canon Robert de Derby who could presumably monitor activities. Previously he lived in Chamberlain Street.⁸⁶ Later Robert Ros was disciplined, first in 1335 for incontinence with Christina Coteners, but again in 1337 for incontinence with Cecily Pountfrett (who had been denounced previously by the bishop as of evil repute and too much in the company of some canons). This time he was sentenced to forfeit the first fruits of Clutton church. Even this was switched to another penance on his request partly justified as the sin had been in Wells not Clutton.⁸⁷

One would like to know what were the 'manifest faults' that led to Richard Tydofishide/Tydulside's dismissal in 1299. This happened one day after the appointment of a new canon, Thomas de Cobbeham, to his stall.⁸⁸ Either the previous canon had protected him or the incomer was anxious to be rid of him, no doubt, to replace him with a protégé of his own.

Voluntary resignations were even rarer. In 1259 John Brether left to further his studies 'while youth remains'.⁸⁹ Subsequently, arrangements for study leave were developed and stopped recurrences. Leave was also sometimes granted for pilgrimages to the Holy Land or Rome. The terms were

always similar to those set for Thomas Tark'. The vicar given leave was responsible for providing a substitute to fulfil his duties. As a result there was not another voluntary resignation until Thomas Wareyn left in 1361/2.⁹⁰

A vicar untouched by these matters could live comfortably on his stipend. Furthermore, it was automatically augmented. Requiems and annual commemorative services frequently involved distributions of money to those present. Indeed this was so attractive that the 1295 regulations banned vicars and chaplains from just turning up for the distribution.⁹¹ Vicars also performed prayers for souls in chantries in the same way as chaplains. Indeed some posts were redistributed annually. But the vicars were particularly concerned with devotions to the Virgin. This dated back to Jocelin's time. He set up arrangements and funds so that 13 vicars would perform the mass in the Lady Chapel off the cloisters. The number was increased to 15 under Ralph of Shrewsbury.⁹² Jocelin provided that three of the group, who had to be priests, were to be in charge (suggesting that most were then in minor orders). Gradually one of these three emerged as leader. In 1260 Richard de Clutton was described as warden of St Mary's Chapel. He was involved in a dispute with the treasurer over expenses that dragged on until the bishop intervened in 1269.⁹³ In the next century the senior is termed prior of the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin. Thomas de Benhangre was appointed in 1316 but died soon after. Richard de Bray replaced him but after a year John de Alresford superseded him (although Bray lived another 20 years).⁹⁴ In his 1376 lease John Bocking grandly described himself as vicar and 'Prior of the Priory of St Mary's Chapel'. There was also an altar of the Virgin by the entrance to the choir and this too was placed in the hands of a vicar. For example, Roger de Colyford was appointed to this post in 1316 following another vicar, John de Sancto Edwardo.⁹⁵ When a chantry for Bishop William Bytton I was established at that altar it too was put in a vicars hands beginning with John de Tanton who was followed by John de Bogeley.⁹⁶

For vicars who wanted to go further it was necessary to write as well as read. For many roles competence at arithmetic was also desirable. Opportunities to move into pastoral care in the diocese were few. Furthermore, it seems that bishops varied in their attitude and most appointments came under Bishop Drokensford. The first known grant of a parish was that of Richard de Pencriz who was appointed to St Cuthbert's in

1316. Initially he was coadjutor with the old and blind vicar. But he succeeded him and later moved on, by exchange, to Radstock.⁹⁷ The next example was less successful. William de Bathonia the elder was first mentioned in 1284. In 1316 he was still a vicar and living in Tor Street. But the next reference of 1318 is a license for him to lease his benefice, the rectory of Swainswick, for two years and return to his duties as a vicar choral due to the ill-will of some of his flock. Perhaps he was set in his ways and demanded too elaborate a liturgy for a rural parish but he may have been old and infirm and an easy butt for the ill disposed. In 1319 Cecilia de Beauchamp was permitted to employ him as house chaplain provided his other duties were performed. Perhaps this was a way of caring for him. Certainly in 1324 he was old and blind and a coadjutor was appointed to look after him and the parish. He was still described as vicar and rector. He finally died in 1328.⁹⁸ His is the only clear case of a Wells vicar holding a parish in plural. In 1321 Richard Bake/Baak was given the living of North Curry although he was still a deacon.⁹⁹ In 1328 John de Tanton followed him.¹⁰⁰ Like John Wyke half a century later he claimed the right of restoration if he was ousted on this occasion specifying by the papal courts. There were risks in taking a parish. Rights of presentation were often disputed between heirs and procedures could be carefully scrutinised.

Bishop Drokensford also used the vicars in other ways. In 1310 Thomas de Benhangre was appointed bishop's penitentiary, that is he was delegated all decisions on penance excluding those for perjury. In 1327 Ralph de Bergh was similarly appointed. In 1325 Robert de Avebury was licensed to hear confessions throughout the diocese.¹⁰¹

Ralph of Shrewsbury initially maintained these subsidiary roles. Robert was granted a fresh licence in 1331 when Robert de Olveston was similarly licensed. Subsequently Hugh de Alresford was granted annual licenses in 1343-5.¹⁰² But Ralph granted no benefices to vicars. Even in the aftermath of the plague, when he appointed minor clergy down to men with first tonsure to churches and chapels, vicars were not used. The significance is unclear. It could be that he thought the crisis demanded the full force of prayer from the cathedral including a full and correct liturgy. Again the vicars, as a group in constant contact, may have been particularly hit by the epidemic. Certainly, the most active vicars of the pre-plague years, Hugh de Alresford, William Laualee and Richard de Tychermerish, all drop out of the record after 1345. Conversely, only John de

Fyhyde and John Hull can be demonstrated to live through the outbreak. Finally, Ralph may have thought the vicars unsuitable for parish work.

This is a sharp contrast with Exeter, where vicars regularly moved into parish work and often held parishes in plural with their cathedral post. There were a few examples before 1348 but this was largely a post-plague development. Initially it was difficult to staff the small (and lowly paid) Exeter parishes so they were given to vicars to hold in plural. But later vicars were given larger parishes well away from Exeter and probably staffed by curates.¹⁰³

There was far more scope in administrative work. Some was in the diocese. This is shown in 1335 in an order of Ralph of Shrewsbury addressed to William de Bathonia the younger. It states that from 'a time whereof memory is not to the contrary' the bishop could place two vicars in his service. They could still take the fruits, rents and issues of their vicarages as if in residence excepting only daily distributions and anniversary services. William was now appointed one of these. It is likely that Nicholas Spicer and William Whyte who witnessed acts of the bishop at Wiveliscombe in 1361-2 were later examples of this secondment. They were both recent appointments as vicars, the bishop having nominated Whyte as the relevant prebend was vacant. He was only an acolyte at the time.¹⁰⁴

Far more administrative roles were available in the cathedral. The number of canons meant that fewer Wells vicars had to assist their canon. In Wells the precentor's deputy, the succentor, was a canon. Elsewhere the senior vicar or the precentor's vicar had the role. There was a post of sub-treasurer that was held by a vicar on the few occasions it is mentioned. It is also shadowy because no accounts survive although we know they existed as Richard de Pencriz's were audited when he moved on to St Cuthbert's and found to be in order. Presumably the sub-treasurer assisted with accounts and handled cash while the sacrist helped the treasurer with the care of the cathedral's possessions. It also seems that the dean's vicar stood in for the dean on occasions. Thus in 1349 it was John Hull rather than the sub-dean who allocated a new canon his stall. Later, in 1375, he presented to the chapter a paper from the dean.¹⁰⁵

However, the main administrative roles for vicars were in what can anachronistically be termed middle management. These comprised: the communal who administered the funds supporting the residential canons and the vicars; the escheator

who initially administered holdings that reverted to the chapter by death or surrender but also came to deal with most obit rents; and the keeper of the fabric who controlled the funds for maintenance of the cathedral building. Accounts survive from the fourteenth century, the communar's from 1327, the escheator's from 1369 and the fabric accounts from 1390. The vast majority of holders of these posts from those dates to 1500 were vicars. But this was a long running situation. Miles the communar who had to be excused the debts in his accounts in 1245 was presumably Miles the by-nameless vicar. Certainly Roger de Wynesham who had followed him by 1247 was a vicar.¹⁰⁶ In 1295 both communar and escheator were vicars, Thomas de Benhangre and Phillip de Odiham respectively.¹⁰⁷ William de Bathonia (probably the elder but the record does not specify) may have been master of the fabric at about that time. He was certainly heavily involved in the work. In 1298 it was ruled that he would lose his stipend and have only 2 marks (£1-33p) allowance until his debt to the fabric fund was cleared. A subsequent arbitration found that Jordan de Wottoneye was responsible for most of the shortfall.¹⁰⁸

Remuneration varied sharply. The escheator received 6s-8d (33p) and had an increasingly stressful role. Properties charged with obit rents became lost first as they were subdivided in the boom years and later as they fell into ruins and became gardens after the plague. Householders also refused to pay. There was no right to repossess. The only remedy was to try to seize goods. By 1369 it was accepted that the books would not balance and residential canons and the vicars had to contribute to cover the deficit. The communar was paid £1 but also received a series of payments of 2s (10p) for organising some of the larger and older commemorative services. The master of the fabric received £1-10s-4d (£1-52p) plus an expenses paid tour of the diocese. Large sums could be involved but it was certainly the best job. This explains why John Hull held it in 1369 and 1372.¹⁰⁹

Other vicars were drawn in to assist in the work. In 1343-6 the communar's accounts show William Laualee receiving 6s-8d (33p) p.a. for 'his labour over the account roll and preliminary copy each year'.¹¹⁰ In 1343 Richard de Tychemersh received 18d (9p) expenses for a trip to Stowey and Dunster.¹¹¹

But there were potential problems in taking these posts as the example of William de Bathonia shows. The official was responsible for debts, errors and shortfalls apart from the accepted difficulty of the

escheator. Collecting money could also drag on into subsequent years. Thus the communar's accounts for 1343-4 state that Richard de Tychemersh owed £3-12s-2d (£3-61p) for arrears from the previous year (when he was communar as the following line refers to the present communar).¹¹² John Jene was assessed by his fellows and accepted in 1360. In 1369 he owed the escheator £9-5s-6½d (£9-27½p) presumably from service as the previous year's escheator. In 1370 he and Canon Auger were condemned for a £20 debt to be paid in instalments.¹¹³ These roles offered extra remuneration and chances to travel the county but they also had their risks.

Incorporation added another layer of administration. The vicars now elected their own officials for the year. The most significant were the two principals and the two bursars. Also, as mentioned, property holdings built up and each acquisition was placed in the hands of a group of vicars. A limited number of vicars filled administrative roles for both the chapter and the vicars. It is striking that no attempt was made to build up expertise in property management. Those involved in administration generally feature in just one such group. This can be related to the vicars' long term poor performance as estate managers.¹¹⁴ Trouble could flare within groups if problems developed. In 1370 Richard Brere, Phillip Erdsleigh and John Stawyll were put in charge of two Southover tenements. Then in 1372 Brere and Erdsleigh had to be reconciled and the church purified after the shedding of blood that was held to be Erdsleigh's fault.¹¹⁵

The life of John Tintenhull illustrates the career of a bureaucrat vicar. He is first documented in 1369. By that time he was well established acting as a witness and serving as escheator. Then when a new communar, Thomas Curteys, was appointed John was made his deputy probably filling a role similar to that earlier undertaken by William Laualee. In 1382 he was a canon's executor and in that and the following year he, John Baryngdon and Richard Wynchecombe were trying to acquire land and advowsons for the vicars. He was communar 1384-5 and in 1386 was one of five vicars managing their best property, 35 High Street. In 1390 he was probably communar again as he purchased freestone from the keeper of the fabric. He was also a guardian meaning that he held one of the pair of keys opening one of the collection boxes in the cathedral.¹¹⁶ His colleagues in 1386 were John Bocking, John Baryngdon, Thomas Newman and Thomas Ellewell. Bocking has been mentioned

already. Baryngdon besides co-operating with Tintenhull in 1382-3 was communar in 1392. Newman was involved in chapter administration from 1375 and in 1388 he was sent to cite Canon Spicer for striking a vicar.¹¹⁷ Ellewell was one of the vicars two principals in 1385.

The gulf that existed between the minor clergy and the canons has often been stressed. Certainly, at Exeter, Orme found that only four of the cathedral's minor clergy became canons in the period 1250-1548. Two of these had been vicars choral but one of them attained that rank in the sixteenth century.¹¹⁸ Wells offered slightly more hope. Between 1250 and 1500 eight vicars became canons. Three from the thirteenth century have already been discussed. The most dramatic rise might seem to be that of Walter de Hulle. In 1325 he bought for £10 from Hugh de Lymington the southern portion of Stephen de Surreye's old house. He is then described as Master Walter de Hulle vicar. The 'master' indicates that he had a degree. In 1325/6 he acquired the pear orchard to the south. Then in 1329 a grant by the dean reveals the underlying situation. Walter was to be allowed to keep the profits of his vicarage and need not learn the services because of 'his diligence for the chapter'. Other references show this diligence was as a lawyer and he is most commonly referred to as a notary. So the dean and chapter were acting in a similar way to Bishops Bytton and Burnell. They were using a vicar's post as a temporary expedient until something more appropriate became available. In this case they were at least accommodating a valuable servant rather than nephews. In 1335 Walter was found a canon's stall and appointed sub-dean. He exchanged this for the archdeaconry of Bath in 1344. So he rose successively to the second tier in cathedral and diocesan administration. There was one unique feature to his later years. He acquired properties in Priest Row and granted them to the town guild in return for prayers for his soul in the parish church, St Cuthbert's. The reason must be that he was from Wells.¹¹⁹

Later, in the fifteenth century, four more vicars rose to be canons. Three achieved this through administrative ability having served as combinations of keeper of the fabric, communar or escheator. They were John Bouyngdon, William Hopere and John Menyman. The fourth, and more interesting rose through education. He was John Orum and was first given study leave in 1388. It was generally similar to other such grants but did specify that he could receive his stipend. This leave

was for three years to study 'wherever general studies flourish in England'. He was granted a further three years in 1391 specifically to study at Oxford. He obtained a doctorate and went on to be a canon of Wells and then Exeter where he rose to be chancellor.¹²⁰

However, away from the sinners, administrators funded with a vicarage and bishops' kin, the majority of vicars were content and quietly spent their lives in the cathedral's service. Some may have been men of considerable piety. It is interesting that two had names reminiscent of monastic practice, Robert Maria and John de Sancto Edwardo. Also the majority of vicars known by first name only are named for saints, Benedict, Clement, Luke and Vincent. It may be that some were sent by the monasteries with prebends who re-directed novices to Wells. But it could be a mark of renunciation of the world and devotion to life in the cathedral. Again it is striking that the majority of vicars who bought themselves a house left it or a rent from it to the cathedral. An obit might be involved but there could be other purposes. Richard de Chepmanslade left his house to provide candles for the altars.¹²¹ Another sort of piety presumably inspired Luke de Herpetre. He was accepted after his year's probation in 1317. He was escheator in 1320. Then in 1323 he was given leave of absence to go to the Holy Land.¹²² He is not heard of afterwards. Presumably he fell victim to one of the hazards of the journey, disease, shipwreck, bandits or war.

CONCLUSIONS

The Wells material shows striking contrasts with what we know of Exeter and York. Given the varying sizes of medieval English dioceses and other sharp differences such as in the number of canons, this should not surprise us. It is likely that further studies elsewhere will show more local variations.

The Wells system seems to have been considerate for its vicars and relatively flexible. It also shows that individual bishops could adopt different attitudes to the vicars and what they could usefully do besides sing.

The piece also reflects on the use of by-names as evidence. They have their problems. Care is certainly needed. But that is not meant to dismiss them. A single example may be suspect but a good number can reveal interesting patterns. It is hoped that is the case here.

ABBREVIATIONS

Acta F. Ramsey (ed.) *English Episcopal Acta X: Bath and Wells 1061-1205* Oxford, 1995.

Communar's Accounts L.S. Colchester (ed.) *Wells Cathedral Communar's Accounts 1327-1600* Wells, 1984.

Fasti 1066-1300 D.E. Greenway (ed.) *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1066-1300 VII Bath and Wells* London, 2001.

Fasti 1300-1541 B. Jones (ed.) *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1300-1541 VIII Bath and Wells* London, 1964.

HMC Cal. I W.H.B. Bird and W.P. Baildon (eds.) *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Dean and Chapter of Wells Volume I* Historical Manuscripts Commission, London, 1907.

HMC Cal. II W.H.B. Bird and W.P. Baildon (eds.) *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Dean and Chapter of Wells Volume II* Historical Manuscripts Commission, London, 1914.

SRS Vol. 1 E. Hobhouse (ed.) *Register of John de Drokenford, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1309-29* Somerset Record Society Vol. 1, Taunton, 1887.

SRS Vol. 9 T.S. Holmes (ed.) *Register of Ralph of Shrewsbury, 1329-63 part 1* Somerset Record Society Vol. 9, Taunton, 1896.

SRS Vol. 10 T.S. Holmes (ed.) *Register of Ralph of Shrewsbury, 1329-63 part 2* Somerset Record Society Vol. 10, Taunton, 1896.

SRS Vol. 46 D.O. Shilton and R. Holworthy (eds.) *Wells City Charters* Somerset Record Society Vol. 46, Taunton, 1932.

Vicars Choral R. Hall and D. Stocker (eds.) *Vicars Choral at English Cathedrals* Oxford, 2005.

work' *Vicars Choral* 147-63; N. Rogers 'Wine, women and song: artefacts from the excavations at the College of the Vicars Choral at The Bedern, York' *Vicars Choral* 164-87; N.J. Tringham 'At home in the Bedern' *Vicars Choral* 188-91; S.R. Jones 'God and Mammon: the role of the city estate of the vicars choral in the religious life of York Minster' *Vicars Choral* 192-9.

³ W. Rodwell and F. Neale 'Begun while the Black Death raged.....the vicars' close at Wells' *Vicars Choral* 112-3; *Acta* 148-9, 180-1, 187-9.

⁴ *HMC Cal. I* 74.

⁵ *HMC Cal. I* 132.

⁶ *HMC Cal. I* 162.

⁷ *HMC Cal. I* 158, 256.

⁸ The National Archives E179/4/1.

⁹ Barrow 'The origins of Vicars Choral' *Vicars Choral* 16.

¹⁰ *HMC Cal. I* 92.

¹¹ *HMC Cal. I* 18, 29, 142.

¹² Orme *Exeter Cathedral: the first thousand years* 100.

¹³ *HMC Cal. I* 92.

¹⁴ *HMC Cal. I* 176.

¹⁵ *HMC Cal. I* 132.

¹⁶ L.S. Colchester 'The Grammar School' in L.S. Colchester, D. Tudway Quilter and A. Quilter *Wells Cathedral School* Wells, 1964, 5-6, 9.

¹⁷ *HMC Cal. I* 92, 96, 453; *HMC Cal. II* 569.

¹⁸ *HMC Cal. I* 75, 82, 83.

¹⁹ P. McClure 'Patterns of Migration in the late Middle Ages: the evidence of English place-name surnames' *Economic History Review* Second Series, Vol. XXXII (2), 1979, 168.

²⁰ *HMC Cal. I* 29.

²¹ *HMC Cal. I* 131, 132, 373-6; *HMC Cal. II* 578.

²² *SRS Vol. 46* 29, 30; *HMC Cal. I* 166, 186-7, 373, 375.

²³ *HMC Cal. I* 215.

²⁴ Barrow 'The origins of Vicars Choral' *Vicars Choral* 16; Orme *The Minor Clergy of Exeter Cathedral: biographies 1250-1548* 11.

²⁵ *HMC Cal. I* 162, Winchester College archives MS19402.

²⁶ *HMC Cal. II* 560, 579.

²⁷ McClure 'Patterns of Migration' 174-182.

²⁸ *HMC Cal. I* 187.

²⁹ *HMC Cal. I* 217.

³⁰ *HMC Cal. I* 264.

³¹ *HMC Cal. I* 270-2, 274, 498; *SRS Vol. 10* 632, 670.

³² *HMC Cal. I* 258.

³³ *HMC Cal. I* 293.

³⁴ F.W. Weaver (ed.) *Somerset Medieval Wills 1383-1500* *SRS Vol. 16*, Taunton, 1901, 293.

³⁵ *HMC Cal. I* 84, 92, 202; *Fasti 1066-1300* 14-5.

³⁶ *HMC Cal. I* 114, 148; *Fasti 1066-1300*

³⁷ *HMC Cal. I* 157, 161-2.

³⁸ *HMC Cal. I* 240, 242-3.

ENDNOTES

¹ H. Millet 'Les Chanoines des cathédrales du Midi' *La Cathédrale (XIIe-XIVe siècle)* Toulouse, 1993, 140; B. Dobson 'The English Vicars Choral: an introduction' *Vicars Choral* 1-10; J. Barrow 'The origins of vicars choral to c.1300' *Vicars Choral* 11-6.

² N. Orme *The Minor Clergy of Exeter Cathedral 1300-1584* Exeter, 1980; Orme 'The medieval clergy of Exeter Cathedral 1 the vicars and annuellars' *Reports Transactions Devonshire Association* Vol. 113, 1982, 79-102; Orme *Exeter Cathedral: the first thousand years* Exeter, 2009; Orme (ed.) *The Minor Clergy of Exeter Cathedral biographies: 1250-1548* Devon and Cornwall Record Society, New Series Vol. 54, Exeter 2013; Barrow 'The origins of the vicars choral' *Vicars Choral* 16; D. Stocker 'The Vicars Choral of York – a summary and interpretation of recent archaeological

- ³⁹ HMC Cal. I 82; *Fasti 1066-1300* 17.
⁴⁰ *Fasti 1066-1300* 19.
⁴¹ *Fasti 1300-1541* 16; HMC Cal. I 158.
⁴² *Fasti 1300-1541* 81; HMC Cal. I 225, 239. The vicar's name has been transcribed as Gray in a minority of instances e.g. SRS Vol. 1, 136.
⁴³ HMC Cal. I. 222, 226; SRS Vol. 1, 14; SRS Vol. 9, 75, 98.
⁴⁴ *Fasti 1300-1541* 32; HMC Cal. I 187.
⁴⁵ *Fasti 1300-1541* 54; HMC Cal. I 279.
⁴⁶ *Fasti 1066-1300* 28, 36, 91; *Acta* 217, 219-20.
⁴⁷ *Fasti 1066-1300* 93.
⁴⁸ *Fasti 1066-1300* 9, 23; *Acta* 1-li.
⁴⁹ HMC Cal. I 135.
⁵⁰ HMC Cal. I 76, 98.
⁵¹ HMC Cal. I 256.
⁵² HMC Cal. I 132, 133, 137; *Fasti 1066-1300* 24, 107; *Orme Exeter Cathedral: the first thousand years* 31.
⁵³ HMC Cal. I 157.
⁵⁴ HMC Cal. I 225.
⁵⁵ HMC Cal. I 157, 225. Treute and its variations have twice been transcribed as Trente. The name probably translates as trout implying fishmonger or more likely 'fish-face'.
⁵⁶ HMC Cal. I 29, 135, 162.
⁵⁷ *Fasti 1066-1300* 89, 122.
⁵⁸ HMC Cal. I 208, 231.
⁵⁹ HMC Cal. I 273, 277, 283-4, 287, 292.
⁶⁰ HMC Cal. I 82, 85, 127.
⁶¹ Orme *The Minor Clergy of Exeter Cathedral biographies: 1250-1548* 5-6.
⁶² HMC Cal. I 276, 277, 282, 284.
⁶³ HMC Cal. II 550, 568-9.
⁶⁴ HMC Cal. I 85.
⁶⁵ HMC Cal. I 131.
⁶⁶ HMC Cal. I 131; *Fasti 1066-1300* 53-4.
⁶⁷ Orme *Exeter Cathedral: the first thousand years* 104.
⁶⁸ HMC Cal. I 162, 195.
⁶⁹ HMC Cal. I 84, 256.
⁷⁰ HMC Cal. II 573; SRS vol. 46, 29; Winchester College documents MS19403.
⁷¹ Wells Cathedral Archives AH45; F.H. Dickinson (ed.) *Kirby's Quest for Somerset, etc* SRS Vol. 3, Taunton, 1889, 272.
⁷² HMC Cal. I 279.
⁷³ HMC Cal. I 217.
⁷⁴ HMC Cal. I 157, 225, 441.
⁷⁵ HMC Cal. I. 157, 239, 247.
⁷⁶ HMC Cal. I 157.
⁷⁷ HMC Cal. I 183, 225, 239, 241, 535.
⁷⁸ HMC Cal. I 105-6, 509-11; Winchester College documents MS19402, MS19403.
⁷⁹ SRS Vol. 9, 252.
⁸⁰ HMC Cal. I 226.
⁸¹ HMC Cal. I 262.
⁸² HMC Cal. I 126.
⁸³ HMC Cal. I 84, 85.
⁸⁴ HMC Cal. I 82.
⁸⁵ HMC Cal. I 75, 82, 83.
⁸⁶ HMC Cal. I 157, 162, 509, 511.
⁸⁷ HMC Cal. I 541, 542, 544, 545.
⁸⁸ HMC Cal. I 162.
⁸⁹ HMC Cal. I 140.
⁹⁰ SRS Vol. 9, 68.
⁹¹ HMC Cal. I 252-3.
⁹² HMC Cal. I 254, 377; at Exeter, at broadly the same time as Jocelin, Bishop Brewer set up similar arrangements but with five vicars, five secondaries and four choristers, Orme *Exeter Cathedral: the first thousand years* 42.
⁹³ HMC Cal. I 132, 452.
⁹⁴ SRS Vol. 1, 14, 109, 136.
⁹⁵ SRS Vol. 1, 116.
⁹⁶ HMC Cal. I 208, 231; SRS. Vol. 1, 221.
⁹⁷ SRS Vol. 1, 106, 204, 242.
⁹⁸ HMC Cal. II 575; SRS Vol. 1, 10, 139, 233, 285.
⁹⁹ HMC Cal. I 162, 195, 206, 208.
¹⁰⁰ SRS Vol.1, 299
¹⁰¹ SRS Vol. 1, 156, 229, 241.
¹⁰² SRS Vol. 9, 71; SRS Vol. 10, 493, 512, 524.
¹⁰³ Orme *The Minor Clergy of Exeter Cathedral biographies: 1250-1545* 15-6.
¹⁰⁴ SRS Vol. 9, 246; SRS Vol. 10, 754, 762, 767, 768, 772; HMC Cal. I 264, 292.
¹⁰⁵ HMC Cal. I 274.
¹⁰⁶ HMC Cal. I 81, 98, 123.
¹⁰⁷ HMC Cal. I 153, 157.
¹⁰⁸ HMC Cal. I 159, 161, 162.
¹⁰⁹ HMC Cal. I 270, 271.
¹¹⁰ *Communar's Accounts* 11, 13, 16.
¹¹¹ *Communar's Accounts* 10.
¹¹² *Communar's Accounts* 13.
¹¹³ HMC Cal. I 262, 273; L.S. Colchester (ed.) *Wells Cathedral Escheator's Accounts 1369-1474* Wells, 1998, 11.
¹¹⁴ A.J. Scrase *Wells: the anatomy of a medieval and early modern property market* Bristol, 1993, 130-4; R.G. Hill 'The Somerset estates of the Vicars Choral of Wells' *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society* Vol. 142, 1998, 287-309.
¹¹⁵ HMC Cal. I 273; HMC Cal. II 631, 632.
¹¹⁶ HMC Cal. I 270-2, 280, 282, 296, 380; HMC Cal. II 643; L.S. Colchester (ed.) *Wells Cathedral Fabric Accounts* Wells, 1983, 3.
¹¹⁷ HMC Cal. I 276-7, 280-1, 283, 287, 299, 356, 384, 488.
¹¹⁸ Orme *The Minor Clergy of Exeter Cathedral biographies: 1250-1548* 18.
¹¹⁹ HMC Cal. I 222, 225, 236, 245, 373, 375; HMC Cal. II 592-3; *Fasti 1300-1541* 11, 15, 24; SRS Vol. 46,
¹²⁰ HMC Cal. I 298, 302.
¹²¹ HMC Cal. II 587.
¹²² HMC Cal. I 158, 191, 208