

PLAYFORD CHURCH - A HISTORY

1086-1537: FROM DOMESDAY BOOK TO THE REFORMATION

Four out of five of Suffolk's surviving medieval churches were established by 1086 but most, including that of Playford, have since been rebuilt leaving no trace of any earlier structure. Domesday records 418 churches in the county, the highest total of any like administrative region in England.¹ Such early places of worship were provided by landowners with priests being supported by tithes, a tax equating to a tenth of local farm produce. They were also supplied with houses (parsonages) and land of their own (glebe). They were, and in many cases still are, presented by the lord of the manor as patron and instituted to the benefice by the Diocesan Bishop or his deputy. But in medieval times the spiritual life of the church had a



A picture by Henry Davy (1793-1865) showing the former chancel which was demolished in 1872. Note the Clarkson obelisk which was newly erected in 1857 and that the Biddell, Clarkson and Airy railings are already in place. A scattering of headstones and coffin tombs date from the 1830s

wider focus in monasteries and many parish churches, about a third of those in the county were given to these institutions for the income that they generated.²

Playford was one such church where the religious house became the rector receiving the greater or rectorial tithes (the produce of the arable fields) while many also acquired the advowson or right of presentation at the same time. The prior or abbot, rather than the lord of the manor, would then present not a rector but a replacement termed a vicar, *vicarius* being the Latin for substitute, and the bishop would then institute the

¹ There were 274 churches recorded in Norfolk although it is now believed that its Domesday total was incomplete. Churches close to Playford not set up by 1086 include Grundisburgh, Hasketon and Little Bealings.

² Dymond, D. & Martin, E. (eds.), *An Historical Atlas of Suffolk* (3rd. edn., Lavenham, 1999), 72. There were about 60 religious houses of which slightly more than half lay outside the county. The rector could be a lay person, a priest in another parish or an institution such as a university college or, as in Playford's case, a religious house.

priest to the parish concerned.³ In such instances tithes would be reapportioned with the rector retaining the greater tithes, raised on corn, hay and wood, while the parish priest, that is the vicar, would receive the lesser or vicarial tithes which were generated by animals, wool, meat and eggs, labour and the profit from

Hundred of CARLFORD
112 Unfrid son of Robert holds PLAYFORD from Robert Malet; Godwin son of Alphere held (it) under the Queen before 1066 as 1 manor; 3 carucates of land.
Then 8 villagers, now 4; then 3 smallholders, now 23; 1 burgess of Ipswich; then 6 slaves, now 1.
Then 3 ploughs in lordship, now 2; then 8 men's ploughs, now 4.
Woodland for 20 pigs; meadow, 20 acres; 1 mill. Then 3 cobs; then 15 cattle, now 1; then 69 pigs, now 25; then 160 sheep, now 26; then 6 beehives, now 1.
Value then £8; now 100s.
1 church, 10 acres; value 20d.
In the same (Playford) 12 free men under the patronage of the same Godwin except for two, Aethelric and Blackman, over whom Haldane, G(eoffrey) de Mandeville's predecessor, had patronage; 100 acres of land. Then 3 ploughs, now 2.
Meadow, 2½ acres.
Value 20s.
Robert (has) full jurisdiction; a customary due.
It has 1 league in length and ½ in width; 9d in tax.

315 a

Transcript from the Little Domesday Book of 1086. Set up by William the Conqueror, Robert Malet is seen to hold Playford where there was 1 church. The original is held at the National Archives in Kew

mills and fishing. Such institutions of both rectors and vicars in the Diocese of Norwich, of which Playford was then part, are recorded in the Diocesan Institution Books that are held in Norwich and begin in 1299.⁴ There were however a few instances when the parish church had already been given to a religious house and where the bishop had granted a 'special concession' that allowed the prior or abbot to appoint secular, that is non-monastic, chaplains. While a vicar was in receipt of a regular stipend and was able, if he so wished, to stay in post for life, a non-monastic chaplain worked on a casual basis for cash and more cheaply and could if necessary be removed at will.⁵ These stipendiary priests were in every sense parish priests though they were never technically appointed to a cure. Their names never appeared on any list of incumbents and written records of their appointments are very 'thin'.^{6 7} It is for this reason that many of

³ A priest can be defined as a clergyman with authority to administer the sacraments and pronounce absolution, the forgiveness of sins.

⁴ N & NRO, DN REG. From 1299 to 1914, when the Diocese of St. Edmundsbury & Ipswich was formed, these records are in the Norfolk & Norwich Record Office, from 1914 to 1961 they are in the Bury St Edmunds Record Office (FE 500/2/4/1-2) and from 1961 to the present day they are in the care of the Diocesan Registrar, 24-26 Museum Street, Ipswich. Records for the Archdeaconry of Sudbury, which was part of the Diocese of Ely from 1836 to 1914, are in Cambridge University Library. The Institution Books were copied and recorded parish by parish under their respective deaneries by Thomas Tanner (1674-1721) an English antiquary, Chancellor of the Diocese of Norwich and later Bishop of St Asaph in North Wales. They cover from c.1300 to c.1600 and are available on microfilm in the Ipswich Record Office (JC1/5/1,2).

⁵ Harper-Bill, C., former Director of the Centre of East Anglian Studies. ex. inf.

⁶ Northeast, P., Atlas, 70.

⁷ See Appendix I. An incomplete list of priests, drawn up by the Revd Dr Harry Baylis, vicar of Playford from 1929-36, in which the reason for the missing names is clearly explained in his introduction.

the early names for Playford, and other like parishes, are missing About a third of all livings in Suffolk were given to such institutions of which about 40, or eight per cent, had this special dispensation.

The Normans: father and son, William and Robert Malet

Such irregular histories can often be traced back to the Norman Conquest. William Malet, close friend of the Conqueror, fought with distinction at Hastings and is reputed to have been entrusted with the burial of the body of King Harold.⁸ Malet's image is depicted on the famous tapestry in Bayeux. For his valour and support he was rewarded with vast areas of land in Norfolk, Suffolk and six other counties and at his death in 1071, considered to be while fighting Hereward the Wake, some but by no means all of his holdings passed to his son Robert (c.1050-1106).⁹ In the Domesday Book of 1086 Robert is credited with estates in no fewer than 137 of Suffolk's 500 or so parishes, owning 47,000 acres in the county and being its second largest landowner after the Abbot of Bury St Edmunds.¹⁰ Among his inheritance was the Honour of Eye, a widely scattered grouping of manors and landholdings spread over eight counties which in pre-Conquest days had belonged to Edric of Laxfield. One of the largest estates in England, it lay mainly to the south and east of Eye its individual holdings ranging from as little as a few acres to entire townships and those with

much smaller populations such as Playford. Robert Malet was killed in Normandy in 1106 at the battle of Tinchebrai and his property passed out of his family. For the next 200 years no title can be established.

The Malets were Norman gentry and lords of the manor of Graville, now Graville Sainte-Honorine a suburb of Le Havre, where they had built a castle in the early C11.¹¹ It was Robert Malet, through his tenant Humphrey, who granted Playford church to the Priory of Benedictine monks which he had founded in his town of Eye in



Robert Malet's manors in Suffolk are to be found almost exclusively in the north-east of the county and include the then expanding port of Dunwich

⁸ Harold, the last Anglo-Saxon king of England, reigned from 6 January 1066 until his death at Hastings on 14 October.

⁹ Hereward the Wake (c.1035-c.1072) was an Anglo-Saxon nobleman who, as a leader of local resistance to the Norman Conquest, was based in the Isle of Ely.

¹⁰ Domesday Book states that in 1086 Unfrid son of Robert held Playford from Robert Malet but by around 1100, at the time of the foundation of Eye Priory, Humphrey had taken over the tenancy.

¹¹ <https://www.mallettfamilyhistory.org/> After the Conquest some Malets remained in England while others returned to France. English Malet names are to be found in the South-West (as in Shepton Mallett, Curry Mallett and Sutton Mallett in Somerset) while in France the family are still to be found in Normandy. *The Independent*, 17 April 2004, obituary of Mary Mallett, châtelaine of the Lutyens designed Le Bois des Moutiers, Varengeville-sur-Mer, five miles west of Dieppe. Now a Protestant banking family, their 12-hectare park is 'one of the most visited gardens in France'.

around 1100.¹² ¹³ The grant was confirmed in 1138 by King Stephen. The Priory was established as a cell or daughter house of the Abbey of St Mary at Bernay, now a town of 10,000 people, lying some 50 miles to the south-west of Rouen.¹⁴ The Priory was richly endowed with income from 28 churches in Suffolk, Norfolk and Lincolnshire with those in Suffolk lying mainly to the south and east of Eye. Among those joining Playford in the foundation charter are the churches of Badingham, Benhall, Bedfield, Brundish, Eye, Laxfield, Stradbroke, Thorndon, Thornham Magna and Thornham Parva, Wingfield and nearer home those of Hollesley, Shottisham and Sutton.¹⁵ Of particular interest is that the list includes of the churches of Dunwich 'which are made or shall be made', evidence not only of the rapid development that the town had undergone as a port since 1066 but also of the Normans' longterm plans for its future. In Edward the Confessor's time (1042-1066) Dunwich had just the one single church but by the time of Domesday Book in 1086 there were three and by the middle of the C12 that number had increased to eight.¹⁶ The town therefore had become a rich source of income for the monks but their good fortune was not to last as from about 1300 its churches were successively lost to the sea. By the time of the Priory's suppression in 1537, only four remained.¹⁷

Money raised from all these churches however amounted to less than half of the Priory's total income, the remainder coming from secular sources notably from 20 different manors or parishes that Robert had also given to the undertaking. In a Taxation Roll of 1291 these spiritualities, mainly tithes but also offerings from church services, amounted to £58 14s of which Playford's contribution was a significant £8. The temporalities, mainly land but also houses and proceeds of markets and fairs, amounted to £65 10s 9¼d.¹⁸ By the mid C12 the monks, whose numbers were never more than ten, had retained a majority of these endowments but during the Hundred Years War with France (1337-1453) the income of the Priory, which was regarded as an alien institution, was confiscated by the Crown whenever the two countries were at war. At such times the revenue fell from some £160 to just £20 and in 1379 for example money received could support only the Prior and three monks.¹⁹ However by the eve of the Dissolution, the Priory was receiving the full income from the 29 churches that remained in 1535.

From 1247 secular, or non-monastic, priests were authorised to serve the parish

Institutions of monastic candidates (vicars) to serve Playford church continued until the middle of the C13. Presentations were made by the Prior, who had the advowson, and institutions by the Bishop of Norwich in whose Diocese both Eye and Playford then lay. But they ceased in 1237 when a disagreement arose with one of the incumbents over money. Only two names survive from this early period: that of William de Bec or Bech and his successor John of Bredfield. William de Bec, who would have come from the Benedictine Abbey of le Bec-Hellouin some 12 miles north-east of Bernay was instituted sometime between 1195 and

¹² Brown, V. (ed.), *Eye Priory Cartulary and Charters I*, Suffolk Charters XII, Suffolk Record Society, (Woodbridge,1992), 12. In the foundation charter Robert Malet announces that he is constructing a monastery at Eye in which he will install a community of monks. He provides a long list of properties that he intends to confer on them for their maintenance, a total that includes 'the tithe of Playford with the church of that vill with its lands and tithes...'.
¹³ <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/suff/vol2/pp72-76> *British History Online*. Houses of Benedictine Monks: the Priory of Eye.

¹⁴ Paine, C., *The History of Eye* (Diss, 1993), 12.

¹⁵ Brown, V. (ed.), 12.

¹⁶ Brown, II, 44.

¹⁷ *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (1535) vol. 3, 476-7. The Valor was commissioned by Henry VIII in 1535, the year after his break from Rome. It gave the government 'a solid understanding of the wealth of the Church' particularly that of the monasteries whose dissolution was to begin the following year in 1536.

¹⁸ *British History online*, 72-76.

¹⁹ Paine, 12.

1200.²⁰ He was installed by John of Oxford Bishop of Norwich from 1175 to 1200. But in 1227-28, when William vacated the Playford living, the monks claimed the advowson yet failed to present any further candidate whereupon the right of presentation devolved to the bishop.²¹ It then fell to Thomas Blundeville, bishop from 1226 to 1236, to collate John of Bredfield to the living in 1232 after a four year vacancy.^{22 23}

The disagreement in 1237 involved the monks bringing a case against John of Bredfield for non-payment of their pension for the previous five years and because he had been in occupation contrary to their right of patronage.²⁴ Following this dispute, all records of institutions cease. There can be little doubt that it was these difficulties as well as other financial burdens that led the monks to appropriate the church in 1247.²⁵ From then until suppression in 1537 Playford became one of about a quarter of all impropriated livings to be granted special permission to be served by secular (non-monastic) chaplains and joined between 40 and 50 other churches in the county as a whole. Playford church remained attached to the Priory and continued to pay the monks their dues but it now became the obligation of the parish to find and employ its own priests. In many ways they were not at all like the properly instituted vicars who had preceded them. They were by and large poorly educated with many living lives indistinguishable from members of their flock. They were 'essentially laymen many of whom worked on the land. Others travelled from parish to parish administering to the spiritual, social and medical needs of the poorest in society, lodging in ale houses and mingling with the locals'.

And unlike the earlier beneficed clergy who received a regular stipend and enjoyed security of employment, these priests worked more cheaply and their services could be terminated on a whim. Working in such a freelance and casual manner outside the authority of the Church (non-monastic) chaplains and joined between 40 and 50 other churches in the county as whole. Playford church remained attached to the Priory and continued to pay the monks their dues but it now became the obligation of the parish to find and employ its own priests. In many ways they were not at all like the properly instituted vicars who had preceded them. They were by and large (non-monastic) chaplains and joined between 40 and 50 other churches in the county as whole.^{26 27} Playford church remained attached to the Priory and

²⁰ Michelin Guide, Normandy (1998), 88. Bec, a small village some 12 miles north-east of Bernay had its own more important abbey. It was a medieval religious and cultural centre that nurtured two great Archbishops of Canterbury: Anselm from 1093 to 1109 and Theobald de Bec from 1138 to 1161. Interestingly, Theobald was followed as Primate by Thomas à Becket. The monks were driven out and the abbey demolished during the Revolution in 1789.

²¹ In a process known as collation, a bishop nominates his own candidate to a living if a presentation is not made within six months. Ex. inf. C. Harper-Bill.

²² The name Blundeville derives from the present day Normandy seaside resort of Blonville-sur-Mer next to Deauville.

²³ <https://archive.org/details/asupplementtosu00kirbgoog/page/n82/mode/2up> A Supplement to the Suffolk Traveller, by J. Kirby compiled by Augustine Page (Ipswich 1844), 65. In 1227 Bishop Blundeville purchased lands in Playford.

²⁴ Brown, I, 76 and Brown II, (Woodbridge, 1994) 48.

²⁵ Brown, I, 12. But if the church had already been given to the Priory, how could the monks appropriate it? The answer lies in what was originally meant by 'confers upon them' in the foundation charter. Many of the early documents are not clear on such detail and, at least by taking the action that they did, the monks ensured that the arrangement was on their terms. Ex. inf. C. Harper-Bill.

²⁶ Dymond, Atlas, 201. Of the impropriated livings listed in 1535, roughly three quarters were vicarages and the remainder had salaried priests. In 1835 Suffolk contained 334 rectories, 98 vicarages, 69 perpetual curacies and 15 others. The 182 non-rectories then formed 35 per cent of the total.

²⁷ SROB, J 510 Vol. 2, 897. Thomas Tanner (1674-1735). See fn 4 above. His entry for Playford confirms that 'the Prior of Eye has the church for his own use and that he determines that the church is served by a secular chaplain'. A complete absence of names from 1299, when the Institution books start, is further evidence that the priory had no involvement in the appointment of Playford's priests. Kesgrave church which was given to Butley Priory, a house of Augustinian canons, shows a similar lack of names suggesting that it too had a similar concession from the bishop. A potent reminder of Playford's Catholic past can be seen among Tanner's MSS: the church was levied 9d a year for Peter's Pence, a payment that began in Saxon times and continued until the Reformation. The money was paid direct to the Holy See in Rome.

continued to pay the monks their dues but it now became the obligation of the parish to find and employ its own priests. In many ways they were not at all like the properly instituted vicars who had preceded them. They were by and large authority of the Church, it is unsurprising that the names of such individuals survive only by chance.

1537 - 1774: FROM THE REFORMATION TO THE RETURN OF INSTITUTIONS BY THE BISHOP

At the Reformation all monastic property passed into lay hands. Eye Priory was suppressed on 12 February 1537 and, together with its 10 acre site, was granted to Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk and Lord of the Honour of Eye.²⁸ William Parker, its last Prior, was awarded a pension of £18 a year while his subordinate



The magnificent rood loft in Eye church built on the remains of the medieval screen in the 1920s. Simon Knott

monks presumably received nothing. With ownership of the tithe and glebe went rights of presentation which in Playford eventually came to the Feltons, new owners of the parish and lords of the manor who had inherited in 1506. These rights remained in the family's hands until 1980 when the then Patron of the Living, the 6th Marquis of Bristol, moved to Monte Carlo.²⁹ There are however differing views on the immediate fate of the Priory's property with Kirby stating that on suppression all its tithes, glebe and other possessions were granted to Edward Bedingfield while David Elisha Davy in a manuscript note says that, having been granted to Charles, Duke of Suffolk, they then passed to Ann of Cleves and Thomas Seckford.^{30 31} The two conflicting accounts are however agreed on one thing: that ownership did not pass immediately into Felton hands despite the family having held possession of the parish for some 25 years before the Reformation.

²⁸ Paine, Eye, 4.

²⁹ When a multi-parish benefice is created, individual patrons take turns in making presentations. Thus in 1881, when Playford was joined with Culpho, Lord Cranworth took turns with the Marquis of Bristol and when the Benefice of Gt & Lt Bealings w. Playford and Culpho was established in 1970 the bishop, to whom the Bealings patronage had already passed, took turns with the other two patrons. In 1980, following Lord Bristol's move away from the area, Playford's patronage was also transferred to the bishop. It is of note that Lord Bristol retained the advowson for the best part of 30 years after he had sold the Playford property and no longer showed any interest in it.

³⁰ Hervey, A., 1864. 'Playford and the Feltons', *Proc.Suffolk Inst. Archaeol.*, IV, 19, a talk given to the Institute at Playford Hall by its President Ven. Lord Arthur Hervey on 24 October 1860.

³¹ John Kirby (1690-1753) and David Elisha Davy (1769-1851) were Suffolk antiquarians. Kirby was born in Halesworth, lived in Wickham Market and died in Ipswich. In 1735 he published his much respected *Suffolk Traveller*. Davy (1769-1851) was the son of a Rumburgh farmer, educated at Cambridge and lived and died in Yoxford. His manuscripts, which include genealogical histories of Suffolk families, were bought by the British Museum in 1852.

The arrival of the Feltons from Shotley

Having passed through three generations of Felbriggses followed by three generations of Sampsons, the Playford property devolved through marriage to the Feltons. It was on the death of Sir Thomas Sampson in 1512 that it passed to Robert Felton of Shotley who had married Sampson's daughter Margery although there is no firm evidence that they actually lived in the house until 1578 when Robert's son Thomas made his will in the parish. Had they been resident in Playford before 1537 they would have seen the figure of the Virgin Mary before its removal from the niche on the south face of the tower and, inside the building, the destruction of the rood and loft which had separated the chancel from the nave. The figure of Mary on the south face of the tower would have been in place for little more than 100 years and, following its removal, the niche remained empty until the year 2000.³² The remains of the rood inside the church however can still be made out by a discerning eye. While Davy in 1823 could see the remnants of the staircase that gave access to its upper levels, all that can be seen at the present time are the marks left by the wooden boards high up on the chancel arch itself.³³ But if Playford ever had a screen to complete the whole, it would have survived the destruction and allowed to remain.

The Feltons' continued employment of secular priests and the possibility of a chapel in the new Playford Hall of c. 1589

Following the break with Rome it became the responsibility of the lay tithe owner to provide a clerk to serve the church and to find the money with which to pay his wages. Names of three such priests employed in the second half of the C16 were found fortuitously by the Revd Dr Harry Baylis, vicar of Playford from 1929 to 1935, as witnesses to wills. His finding suggests that the Feltons not only employed clerks to serve the parish but who ministered to their family as well.³⁴ At a later unrecorded date William Auder is found as chaplain to Elizabeth Felton (who died 'sometime before 1657') who in her will written in 1639 directs that 'to him that shall be Minister at Playford at the tyme of my death [I bequeath] the sum of three pounds above what then shall be due unto him' confirming, if any such confirmation was needed, that the Feltons paid the priests' wages out of their own pockets.

Playford Hall, built c.1590, is reputed to have had its own chapel although this has been challenged by some on the grounds that by the late C16 private houses no longer had them.³⁵ Joseph Hustleton (1738-1817) however remembered that as a boy, before the east wing was demolished in the mid C18, a

³² SROI HD2448/1/1/339. Will of Margery Felbrigg who died in 1419, second wife of Sir George Felbrigg, left five marks [£3 6s 8d] for the 'making' of the tower showing that it was still being built at the time of her death.

³³ A Doom is a medieval wall painting of the Last Judgement, the usual placing of which was above the chancel arch where it was highly visible to the congregation at the time of the weekly service. It is a depiction of Christ judging souls and sending them either to Heaven or to Hell. The arch in Playford church however provides insufficient space above it and the Doom was therefore placed within the apex of the arch itself.

³⁴ In 1552 William Ide, clerk, witnessed the will of Margaret Elms of Playford, James Tythirington, minister, witnessed the will of Thomas Norton of Playford while John Collett was recorded as clerk to Sir Anthony Felton in 1613 the year in which he died.

³⁵ Martin, E., 2003, 'Excursions 2002'. *Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeol.* XL, 379-387. Following the death of the last baronet, Sir Compton Felton, who died childless in 1719 ownership of the Playford property passed to John First Earl of Bristol who in 1695 had married Sir Compton's niece Elizabeth, heir to the estate. With possession having moved to Ickworth and the house now let to tenants, the eastern half of the house was pulled down. Some commentators suggest that it was not uncommon to demolish the living quarters rather than the service wing of a large house so that the tenants could not enjoy the same grand style of living that they had once done. The Revd E J Moore of Great Bealings was told by Mrs Clarkson in 1847 that 'Old Hustleton had told her that he remembered the chapel being taken down'. Old Hustleton was most likely Joseph Hustleton, baptised in Playford in March 1738 and buried there aged 80 in February 1817. The Clarksons, from whom this story derives, came to Playford in February 1816 so that their conversation with Hustleton would have taken place very soon after their arrival. Hustleton's evidence has been dismissed by some as 'an old man's tale'.

chapel 'being attached to the east of the present dining room which completed the north side'.³⁶ More recent research however into the post-Reformation period provides ample evidence to the contrary.³⁷ The wording of Elizabeth Felton's will would also suggest that, at least by this time, these priests, who 'could be removed at will', were not as 'casual' as might have been thought and that many were attached to the parish for a number of years rather than just for a few weeks or months. Evidence from the registers supports this showing that by the end of the C17 Edward Thompson served the parish for ten years from 1697 to 1707, William Sherman for just one year from 1708 to 1709, William Coyte for eight years from 1709 to 1717, Charles Burwell for 27 years from 1717 to 1744, Thomas Bolton for 26 years from 1744 to 1770 and William Dobyn Humphrye for four years from 1770 to 1774. C M Haynes filled a two year gap from 1772 to 1774 at which point the Church stepped in finally installing its own candidate, the Revd. William Layton.³⁸ Whether such long service existed in the C17 is not known. All entries in the registers over an extended period of time were not only transcribed by a single hand but any trace of a signature that might have been present in the original paperwork was not copied in.

The Feltons rebuild The Hall changing its orientation from facing west to facing south

In their early years in the parish the Feltons lived in the original Hall reputed to have been built by Sir George Felbrigge on his arrival in Playford in the second half of the C14.³⁹ But towards the end of the 1500s the Feltons had risen to new heights and had good reason for building something a little more impressive. Sir Anthony was made High Sheriff of Suffolk in 1597, he was knighted by James I in 1603 having previously married into the nobility in 1590, his wife being a daughter of Lord Grey of Groby.⁴⁰ Despite his fame and high social standing, there is no record in the parish of the year in which he died, the date 1613 coming from a talk given at Playford Hall by Lord Arthur Hervey in 1860.⁴¹ Nor, in marked contrast to some later Feltons, is there any indication as to where in the church he was buried. Lady Elizabeth, his widow, is buried with him but the precise year of her death is also unknown. That it is 'before 1657' is taken from the date on a plaque in the chancel placed there by their daughter Dame Anne Everard commemorating her parents. Playford burial registers do not commence until 1660, a later start than those in many other churches though not at all uncommon. In Playford's case this could be due either to the lax system that prevailed in the parish around this time or that at some time they had been lost or destroyed.⁴²

³⁶ The Suffolk Chronicle, 27 October 1860.

³⁷ Ricketts, Annabel, *The English Country House Chapel: Building a Protestant Tradition* (Salisbury, 2007). Passim.

³⁸ SROI, FC22/D1/1, Playford Registers, 1660-1812. After Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1754 (q.v.), the officiating priest is obliged to sign his name on a special pro forma document at every wedding. Only one 'casual' priest is known to have been buried in the churchyard. Thomas Bolton, who served the church for 26 years, retired in 1770 and died two years later. He is buried with Martha his wife who died in 1765. Their grave is no. 49 on the plan and is by the west facing vestry window on the north side of the church.

³⁹ In 1316 the manor of Playford Hall is recorded as being held by Robert de St Quentin followed by John de Playford. In the late C14 it was acquired by Sir George Felbrigge, it is presumed by purchase, and for the next 600 years, until the death of the 4th Marquis of Bristol in 1951, its ownership remained in the same family's hands.

⁴⁰ Paine, C., 2003. 'Excursions 2002', 383.

⁴¹ The Right Hon. and Ven. Lord Arthur Hervey (1808-1894) was the fourth son of Frederick Hervey (1769-1859), 5th Earl and 1st Marquess of Bristol. Arthur Hervey obtained a First at Trinity College, Cambridge, was Bishop of Bath and Wells from 1869 to 1894 and President of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology.

⁴² SROI, EG94/B1/2, letter from George Biddell Airy to his cousin Manfred Biddell of Lux Farm transcribed and inserted into the Minute Book of Playford Parish Council, 1948-71 in which he describes John Cutting's second wife as 'an abandoned woman with a violent temper, reputed to have burned by accident or design her husband's papers on Playford's history and other parish documents'. Cutting was a tenant of Playford Hall Farm from 1792 to 1815 and a one-time churchwarden.

The introduction of Parish registers during the Felton's time in the parish

Parish Registers were first introduced in 1538 when clergy had to record all baptisms, marriages and burials. Early entries were usually made on paper but were easily mislaid. A further edict in 1597 ordered entries to be made in a parchment book and earlier information copied into it. During the Civil War (1642-46) and for some years after, many records in England suffered neglect and in some parishes such a situation prevailed until the Restoration in 1660. However, in Suffolk a majority of parish records start in the C16 as for example Great Bealings in 1539, Little Bealings in 1558 but at Culpho, a church similar to Playford in that it was given to a religious house in Norman times, the registers do not begin until 1700.⁴³ Apart from an entry in Dowsing's Journal on 30 January 1643 itemising the destruction he wrought within the church, Playford has no record of what happened during the Commonwealth.⁴⁴ But by employing priests in an irregular way, the parish managed to avoid the discipline imposed on conventional churches during those turbulent years. In Suffolk as many as 100 incumbents were ejected from their livings for their anti-Puritan views. Such ministers were designated as either scandalous, that is following the ideas of Archbishop Laud in trying to 'impose his Popish ways'; malignant, that is Royalist; or, like the rector of Great and Little Bealings, simply immoral.

Lady Elizabeth, widow of Sir Anthony Felton

Lady Elizabeth lived on in the new Hall for some 40 years after her husband's death and, in her will of 1639 expressed a wish to be buried in 'a decent manner in the church of Playford neare the bodie of my dear husband'. It was her wish that '£20 be layd out upon a monument to be made in the chancel... for me' but the request was never carried out. It is a cause for great regret that the actual burial place of two such eminent individuals is not marked in any way. But conscious of the oversight, their daughter Anne Everard went some way to put matters right. In her will of 1653 she writes: '... my bodie to be buried in Playford church as near the place where Sir Anthony and his Lady my dear father and mother were buryed as conveniently as may be and desyr it to be done without other solemnities but decently laid in a grave with some of my friends and servientes to see it done and I appoint that a fayre stone be laid over the grave and the like over the grave of my dear father and mother, but if not, as I fear it is not done, with our armes and such inscription as myn executors shall think fit'⁴⁵. In the event neither Anne Everard nor her parents had any such stone on their graves and only the plaque that she set up on the north wall of the chancel soon after her mother's death pays tribute to her parents adding: 'Desirous to be layd here wth My Parents, have erected this Memorial As wel for them as for Myselff'. A. Dmi 1657.

An Archdeacon's Visitation in 1692

Although Playford church operated outside the strict authority of the Church throughout these times it underwent an Archdeacon's Visitation just as more conventionally run churches did. A solitary snapshot survives that throws light on the state of church affairs in the parish at the end of the C17 and comes from a Visitation to the Carlford Deanery on 8 August 1692 at a time when Sir Adam Felton, the 3rd Baronet, was

⁴³ The manor of Culpho together with the church was given in 1280 to the Premonstratensian Abbey of Leiston which, like Playford at the Dissolution, was given firstly to Charles Brandon Duke of Suffolk.

⁴⁴ Cooper, T., (ed.), *The Journal of William Dowsing: Iconoclasm in East Anglia During the English Civil War* (Woodbridge 2001). The entry for Playford on 30 January 1643 is: We brake down 17 popish pictures, one of God the Father; and took up 2 superstitious inscriptions in brass; and one Ora pro nobis [pray for us] and Cujus animae propitiatur deus, [upon whose soul may God have mercy] and a second Pray for the soul.

⁴⁵ Browne, A. L., 1935. 'Lady Elizabeth Felton and her daughters', *Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeol.* XXII, 175. From the date on the plaque it has to be assumed that her mother had died only a little while before it was placed on the chancel wall.

lord of the manor.⁴⁶ Kesgrave, another parish church given to a monastery, was also subject to the inspection. But the scrutiny employed must have been far less than at present times as, in calling on as many as 11 churches in a day by horse drawn carriage, the examination could at best have been only cursory.⁴⁷

However the stop at Playford was long enough to uncover the sorry state that the church was in. Firstly, the visitors were held up because ‘the sexten who kept the key did not appeare soe we could not gett into the church’ while Richard Fox, one of the churchwardens, informed them that ‘there hath been noe preaching for above a yeare last past... that there is a howse called the parsonage howse in good repair such is now



The ‘parsonage howse’ stood to the east of the village hall. The ‘new’ vicarage, built in 1845, can just be made out on the skyline

made a farme by layeing much land there to by Sir Adam Felton who hath all the tythes...’.⁴⁸ It is apparent from this short interview with the warden that the Feltons not only paid the wages of these casual priests but that they provided them with accommodation as well.

The house concerned would have been the one that was demolished in the 1960s to make way for Spring Meadow and stood on the eastern side of where the Village Hall now stands. In the 1830s or ‘40s when other properties in the village were being split into smaller accommodation the ‘parsonage howse’ was divided into three farm cottages. It was still referred to by older residents in the village as The Old Vicarage though by 1900, at least for official purposes such as the Census or postal address, it went by the name of The Meadows. It is of note that it belonged to the Feltons rather than to the Church as would have been the case in mainstream parishes and like many other cottage properties in the village remained in the land owner’s possession until the 4th Marquis of Bristol died in 1951. But in making it into a farmhouse and putting some land with it shows just where Sir Adam Felton’s priorities lay.

⁴⁶ SROI, FAA/6/14. Liber Visitationis Decanato, 1692.

⁴⁷ The programme to visit the 11 churches was Tuddenham between the hours of 6 and 7, Rushmere 7-8, Playford 8-9, Kesgrave 8-10, Martlesham 8-10, Little Bealings 9-11, Great Bealings 9-11, Hasketon 10-12, Grundisburgh 12-3, Burgh 3-4, and Clopton 4-5.

⁴⁸ The ‘parsonage howse’, later known as the Old Vicarage when it was divided into three farm cottages most likely in the 1830s, was later called The Meadows. It was demolished in the early 1960s to make way for Spring Meadow.

Although throughout the C17 the names of priests appear only by chance, there does appear from Baylis's list to be a particular dearth dating back to the 1660s and the time of Lady Elizabeth's death. But after Sir Adam died in 1696 matters seem to have improved considerably though it cannot be said whether this was due to the stimulus provided by the Visitation or to the arrival of Sir Adam's younger brother, Sir Thomas, as lord of the manor. Whatever the reason, for the next 70 years there is always a minister who signs the register on a regular basis with one individual priest doing so for as long as 25 years.⁴⁹ A degree of stability had finally caught on such as had not been seen in the parish since the C13.

According to their political biographies, Sir Thomas appears far more capable than his elder brother Sir Adam who comes over as a man of small achievements.⁵⁰ Sir Thomas, when head of the family, did much to update the appearance of The Hall and to improve the access to it. In around 1700 he constructed a piazza or verandah in front of the house, altered the south end of the west wing (and most probably the east wing as well) and fitted the new work with large new windows. And for greater privacy, he closed the 'common horse-way' to Rushmere. He was a man who got things done. On his death in 1708 he was followed by his younger brother Sir Compton, the 5th Baronet, who took little interest in Playford and who in fact had a house in Ipswich where he died in 1719. Married but with no children, the estate passed to Elizabeth, the only daughter and heir of his elder brother Sir Thomas, who had married John 1st Earl of Bristol in 1695. Ownership of the Playford estate then passed to Ickworth but Sir Compton's widow Elizabeth retained a life interest in the house.

With such lack of interest shown by the last of the Feltons and with ownership having moved away to the west of the county, church activity in the parish could well have taken another dive. But this was not the case as throughout the 60 or 70 years that followed Sir Thomas's death in 1708 the registers were signed on a regular basis by priests who remained attached to the church for many years at a time. Who then was in control? Was it the Bristol family acting remotely from Ickworth or was it the Church, unhappy that parishes like Playford should retain such autonomy, starting to 'tighten up'. All such churches that had been granted these special concessions to employ secular priests back in the C13 were eventually brought into line.

1774: THE CHURCH 'TIGHTENS UP'⁵¹

It must not be assumed however that the Church's new-found authority brought overnight success. While it introduced greater order and men of good education and social standing, its closer involvement came at a time when many clergy did not exert themselves as might have been wished. 'A lay patron was free to present someone congenial to himself, almost regardless of aptitude or sense of vocation and many a young man took holy orders with little of either. Once installed, a beneficed cleric could shelter behind his legal freehold since his bishop had no control over the sources of benefice income and but little effective sanction against neglect of office'.⁵² The frequency of services in some of their churches often reflected this lack of effort, pluralism was rife and many rich and idle rectors employed others to do their work for them at very little pay. But such neglect was not always seen as an abuse and indeed on many occasions it allowed a parish to have a priest that it might otherwise not have been able to afford. The greatest charge against them was perhaps that they were seen as part of the Establishment, the ruling class, and as such

⁴⁹ The original list of priests serving Playford, prepared by the Revd Dr Harry Baylis vicar from 1929 to 1936, has been incorporated into the church guide.

⁵⁰ Sir Adam stood for the Tories at Thetford in 1690 but failed to get in. In 1699 he stood successfully with his brother Sir Thomas for the Whigs at Orford.

⁵¹ A phrase used by the late Peter Northeast.

⁵² Michael Stone, *Suffolk 1775-1845: Conflict and Co-operation* (Cambridge 2015), 14.

were responsible for driving away the very people they were paid to serve and often into the arms of the non-conformists.⁵³

George Biddell Airy first came to Playford as a young lad in 1810 or 1812, staying with his uncle Arthur Biddell at Hill House. Almost 40 years after the Church had reasserted control he was not impressed with its performance. He reported that the clerical part of the parish was in a very poor state with services being held only on alternate Sundays and that there was no priest resident in the parish. Fortnightly services continued to be held well into the 1820s by which time the parish was cared for, or as Airy puts it, 'not cared for' by the rector of Little Bealings to whom Layton the licensed incumbent had delegated his responsibilities. Airy concluded that: 'Verily, if Grundisburgh Meeting House had not existed, the country would have become heathenish'.⁵⁴

1774-1826: Playford comes under the wing of St Matthew's church in Ipswich

The Church's first move was to join Playford with the parish of St Matthew in Ipswich. Accordingly the Revd William Layton, rector there, was installed to the living then described as 'legally vacant'. Layton was licensed in 1774 to the perpetual curacy, a term used where a parish was supported by a cash stipend, usually maintained by an endowment fund, and which had no ancient right to income from either tithe or glebe.⁵⁵ The new incumbents's remuneration therefore, just like the casual priests before him, came as a cash payment provided not by tithe owners as in times past but by Church.⁵⁶ Such priests enjoyed one benefit that their predecessors never had: that their employment, being 'perpetual', could be ended by the bishop and by no one else. But after 1868 such curates were legally entitled to style themselves vicars whereupon they enjoyed the freehold and the greater security that went with it. In Suffolk 60 such parishes out of a total of some 500 in the county were restyled vicarages, Playford being brought up-to date in 1871 when Edward Houchen was instituted to the living.

William Layton was very much a priest of his time. Educated at St Paul's School in London and Trinity College, Cambridge, he was ordained deacon in 1773 and priest the following year. In 1774, when only 24, he was appointed perpetual curate both of Playford and of Hemley; Walton followed in 1775. In 1775 also he was also instituted to the church of St Matthew's in Ipswich, where his father had also been rector, and was to remain there for 56 years.⁵⁷ Typical of the period, Layton's family had money being descended from an ancient family of that name from West Layton in Yorkshire. The family also owned land in Winston, Suffolk.⁵⁸ In 1775 too he was promoted to rector of Hemley and put forward as a candidate for the

⁵³ John Beresford, ed., James Woodforde, *The Diary of a Country Parson, 1758-1802* (Oxford, 1978). Beresford's introduction paints an informative picture of the life and times of a country parson whose years in office overlap with those of the Revd. William Layton, the first of the new ministers to be installed in Playford by the Church in 1774.

Michael Stone, ed. *The Diary of John Longe, Vicar of Coddenham 1765-1834*, (Woodbridge, 2008). Stone's introduction (xv-lviii) gives a much fuller account of the workings of the Church in Georgian England.

⁵⁴ SROI, EG94/B1/2. Playford Parish Council Minute Book, 1948-71. Transcript of a letter written by George Biddell Airy to his cousin Manfred Biddell of Lux Farm, 8 February 1882, and inserted in the Parish Council Minute Book. Grundisburgh Baptist Chapel was built in 1797 to seat 800 worshippers. See Branson's in this series for details of its rising popularity.

⁵⁵ SROB, HA507/3/745. Christopher Hodgson, perpetual curate 1857-71, in a letter dated 8 August 1859 to Lord Bristol his patron confirms that 'as your Lordship receives both the great and small Tithes... Playford is neither a Rectory nor a Vicarage... but a Perpetual Curacy'. However, Lord Bristol paid a rent charge of 12 guineas a year on Playford Hall to the curate, a sum that is recorded in the Church Census of 1851 as tithe.

⁵⁶ Layton was nominated by George, 2nd Earl of Bristol (1721-75), whose father John the 1st Earl had married Elizabeth Felton heir to the Playford estate. The Bristol family continued as Patrons until 1980 following the 6th Marquis's move to Monte Carlo.

⁵⁷ Layton's father was rector of St Matthew's for 28 years from 1744 to 1772 and, concurrently, vicar of far away Chatteris in the Isle of Ely. From 1767 he also held the curacy of Culpho.

⁵⁸ Haslewood, F., 1890. '*Saint Matthew's Church, Ipswich*', Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeol., VII, 129-209.

perpetual curacy of St Lawrence in Ipswich.⁵⁹ In Playford a stable was built for his horse presumably in the hollow opposite Airy's Cottage where facilities were later made available for him to robe prior to taking services in the church, two minor benefits that were doubtless unavailable to his casually employed predecessors.⁶⁰ Taking a service every Sunday in St Matthew's and on every other Sunday at his outlying parishes, where it is presumed he did little if any pastoral work during the week, he was not overstretched as country priests are today. But by 1814 when he had completed 40 years in the parish and by now 75, he delegated his Playford duties to a neighbouring priest. Still retaining the post and the title of rector, he persuaded the Revd Meadows, rector of Great & Little Bealings, to look after the parish for him for his last 12 years in office. At a time before the Victorian rectory was built in Holly Lane, Little Bealings, Meadows lived at Valcot close to the river bridge in Bealings Street but Meadows too came only on alternate Sundays. Playford was therefore still no better cared for. Layton resigned the Playford living in 1826 while retaining those in Ipswich and Hemley until his death in 1831.⁶¹ He died a bachelor at 'the ripe age of four score years' at his residence in St Mary Elms and is buried in the family vault in St Matthew's churchyard.

Many clergy in the Georgian period, with little priestly work to do, applied themselves to at least one absorbing interest. Befitting their education this was usually of a scholarly nature and in Layton's case he 'devoted much of his time to topographical and genealogical enquiry especially into his native county of Suffolk'. He possessed 'a very valuable and extensive library... his manuscript collections were most ample and of great value from their extreme accuracy and minuteness of research'.⁶² As perpetual curate of Playford for 52 years from 1774 to 1826, it is unsurprising that these included investigations into the Felbrigg family and their descent from the Bigods, Earls of Norfolk. And in a history of Walton church, Layton is described as a 'colourful figure' and a noted eccentric adding that he had all the simplicity of character that usually accompanies gifted minds.⁶³

There were two immediate changes that resulted from the Church's intervention in 1774 both coming about during Layton's early years in office: the churchwardens' account book was started in 1792 and the royal arms were introduced, or just possibly, reintroduced into the church. Although there had been two churchwardens a hundred years earlier at the time of the Archdeacon's Visitation, no paperwork survives from their time in office and it is not until the very end of the C18 that the first glimpse is seen of the day to day running of the church.⁶⁴ As for the royal arms, they come from the time of George III (1760-1820) and can be more accurately dated by the arms of France in the second quarter.⁶⁵ France was first declared a republic in 1792 causing the British sovereign to abandon all claims to the French throne and in 1800 the fleur de lys was finally removed.

⁵⁹ Ipswich Journal, 9 June 1775.

⁶⁰ SROI FC22/E1/1. Playford churchwardens' account book, 1793-1845. John Martin was paid 6s 0d in 1794 for 'Drowsing the stable at the church with whins' - Revd Robert Forby, *The Vocabulary of East Anglia, 1830*. Reprinted by David & Charles, 1970. meaning a hearty drubbing possibly using gorse, which was freely available on the heath. Stiff bristled brooms made with Bahia bass were not generally available until the 1840s. (Christine Clark, *A Brush with Heritage, The History of Hamilton Acorn, Norfolk Brushmakers since 1746* (Norwich, 1996), 97. In the same year Edward Baker was paid 14s 0s 'for thatching the stable at the church' with straw. In 1818 Carpenter Mann was paid £1 3s 4d for 'building a [new] stable at the church' and, in an upgrade of its roofing, 'Mr Gooding' of Brick Kiln Farm within the parish was paid £1 8s 3d for Tyles.

⁶¹ Ibid. 23 February 1831.

⁶² http://bigenealogy.com/suffolk/sproughton_parish.htm British Isles Genealogy, Sproughton parish where he was born.

⁶³ Wakefield, E., *The story of Walton near Felixstowe and its church* (Privately published, 1996). Canon Wakefield was vicar of Walton for 29 years from 1959 to 1988.

⁶⁴ But see footnote 43. It has never been established which records, if indeed any, are reputed to have been destroyed.

⁶⁵ Fynn-Lark News, December 2020.

1826-1848: Playford is joined with Rushmere St Andrew

After Layton's retirement in 1826 the link with St Matthew's church in Ipswich was broken. Playford was joined with Rushmere where the Marquis of Bristol, owner of much of the land in that parish, was also patron. The Revd Charles Day, the vicar there, was licensed to the 'chapelry' of Playford early in 1827. Philip Meadows, rector of the two Bealings, was relieved of his Playford responsibilities and replaced by Thomas Forster Maynard as stipendiary curate. Charles Day resigned in 1834 to be replaced by Thomas West and, with a curate now an established member of the living, Maynard was replaced in 1836 by Hervey Saunders. Both men were assigned specifically to Playford but while Maynard was given the latitude of living within five miles of Playford, Saunders' licence directed that he had to reside in the parish.⁶⁶ There had been no resident priest in the parish since the C17. It was a large step forward but had taken the Church more than 50 years to get there. The amount and type of help that the curates provided varied according to the appointment. Charles Day for example took practically all the Playford baptisms, marriages and burials leaving Maynard with very little to do in that regard while Saunders, resident in the parish and therefore assumed to be more heavily involved in pastoral work, was delegated all such services by Day's successor. And, just like those casual priests of earlier years, employment of these curates could be ended 'at will' or, in the harsher language of the C19, they were 'to continue only during our pleasure and revocable summarily without process'.

It may be wondered where in the parish Maynard or any of his successors might have lived. Such curacies were likely to have been first-time postings for unmarried candidates who could well have found lodgings in the village as William Dickinson did in 1841. Dickinson boarded with Jonathan Fordham, a farm labourer and his family, but a house of his own would have been required for a married man. That house would most likely have been The Meadows in Hill Farm Road, referred to earlier in connection with Sir Adam Felton who converted what had once been a parsonage in the C17 into a farmhouse and had added some land to it. At some later point that house, in the ownership of the Estate, was converted into three farm cottages ruling it out as accommodation for a clergyman. It is of note here that Sir George Biddell Airy relates that at some time before he bought his property at the foot of Church Hill in 1845 that, with no clerical residence in the village, one of the clergy 'for occasional visits built a room (now my bedroom) on the south end of the previous owner's cottage'. But this seems to be merely a sort of changing room where, having stabled his horse in The Hollow on the other side of the lane, the visiting priest could change into his clerical robes.

1848-1857: The Revd William Willoughby Dickinson, Playford's first resident incumbent

Thomas West had succeeded Charles Day in 1835 and, following Henry Saunders' departure in 1839, the new stipendiary curate, William Willoughby Dickinson, was licensed in 1841 immediately after coming down from Oxford. He remains one of the better known priests of the Victorian period because of his marriage into the Clarkson family. His license and therefore the terms of his employment are unfortunately missing but, like Saunders, he covered all baptisms, marriages and burials as curate and, although working under West's watchful eye, was in all but name the parish priest. In 1845 the new vicarage near the church was built and Dickinson, who had married in 1843, was the first to take up residence there. Following West's premature death in 1848, Rushmere and Playford were split leaving Playford on its own for the first

⁶⁶ SROI, FC22/C1/1-2. Stipendiary curates' licences. Revd Forster Maynard 8 June 1828, Revd Henry Saunders 23 March 1836 both at £80 p.a. On 27 May 1861, Revd Walter Elliott Browne was licensed but at only £70 p.a.

time since 1774. Dickinson, previously termed a ‘subcurate’ while reporting to West, then became perpetual curate in his own right and was to remain in the parish for a further ten years.

His marriage was to Mary Clarkson, the third daughter of Thomas Clarkson’s brother John. Having previously married Thomas Clarkson’s only son Thomas II, Mary was not only Clarkson’s niece but also his daughter-in-law. She had been widowed for some six years when her then husband, a London solicitor,

was fatally thrown from his gig when with a lady ‘not of good character’. Their son, Thomas III, was five years old at the time and the two took immediate sanctuary with her in-laws at Playford Hall. Old Thomas Clarkson died in 1846; his widow Catherine stayed on running the farm for a further ten years until her death in 1856. Dickinson and Mary had promised that they would not leave Playford while she was still alive and so a year after her death they moved first to Martlesham where they stayed for two years before relocating to Wolverton on the Sandringham Estate. William was rector there for over 20 years and on his retirement in 1883 the couple moved to Leamington Spa, a popular place for retired people at the end of the C19. They did however choose to be buried back in Playford close to the Clarkson graves. Mary died in March 1886, William the following year. Mary’s son Thomas III, ‘whose life in manhood was a sore trouble to his mother’ predeceased her. He had led a dissolute and spendthrift life: marrying a commoner, blowing his grandparents’ inheritance, having to sell the contents of The Hall and finally running away to Jersey where he died in 1872 at the young age of 41. He was buried in the family grave in Playford while his wife, who was never accepted by the Clarkson family, was interred separately in the churchyard at Campsea Ashe. Only William



William Dickinson’s stepdaughter Sarah was not buried with her husband in the Clarkson family vault in Playford

Dickinson in the Clarkson family was still alive when she died in April 1886 and it has therefore to be him who paid for the expensive headstone that marks her grave.⁶⁷

1850-1914: HIGH POINT IN CHURCH ACTIVITY

At the start of the C19 the Church of England had a monopoly in Christian beliefs but by its end new Protestant denominations had established themselves that spurred the Church into action. Across the country between 1845 and 1871 clergy numbers increased by as much as two thirds many assigned to the new conurbations that were rapidly developing in the Midlands and the North. Many parishes provided new accommodation in which to house them. But within and across the Church there was no standard set of beliefs. There were for example the Evangelicals who focused on the teaching of the Gospels

⁶⁷ Fynn-Lark News, November 2020, 27. In this series Church Corner Cottage, 5-7 and Playford Hall, 8, for more on Thomas Clarkson III and his wife Sarah Bloomfield.

emphasising preaching and study of the Bible and there were also High Churchmen from the Oxford movement who sought a renewal of Catholic thought and practice. Whatever the persuasion of the clergy appointed to a parish, such renewed interest in church liturgy brought about change to the furnishing within the church itself. Few churches escaped their zeal and Playford was no exception. 'Victorianisation', despised by many, changed the interior of a majority of churches in the second half of the century.

Unlike those at the time of the Reformation and the Commonwealth, the Victorians can be forgiven for the destruction that they caused to the interior fittings of many churches. They did so with good intent not only replacing many items that they had destroyed but more importantly by keeping rainwater out of buildings - the only necessary protection required to maintain the life of a medieval structure. In Playford's case the chancel was entirely rebuilt in 1873-74 and the nave re-roofed in commemoration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897.

Music

The gallery at the west end of the church was taken down in 1859 'on the recommendation of the Rural Dean'. The move stemmed from a campaign within the Church to extend the singing of both psalms and hymns to the congregation rather than restrict it to a small select choir which had traditionally performed there. The national move to congregational singing had begun in the early C18 and was led by the non-conformist minister Isaac Watts (1674-1748) and the Methodist church headed by John Wesley (1703-1791) whose brother Charles (1707- 1788) was among the greatest hymn writers of them all.⁶⁸ West gallery music continued to be sung and played in both English parish churches and nonconformist chapels until around 1850 suggesting that Playford was somewhat slow in making the transition.

West galleries were popular in churches from about 1700 and provided not only additional seating for the 'lower orders' but a stage on which a choir or group of musicians might perform. In Playford it is known that from 1848 it was from the 'singing gallery' that John Woby played his violin and that, in line with many other churches at this time, was taken down in 1859. West gallery music continued to be played in independent chapels, many of which were spared the zeal of the Victorian reformers, long after the Oxford Movement had introduced *Hymns Ancient & Modern* in 1861. It should be borne in mind here that with occupants in the box pews facing in all four directions the west gallery singers and musicians could be seen by at least some of the congregation.⁶⁹

Such choirs were exclusively male and initially unaccompanied.⁷⁰ They were later augmented by instruments such as the violin to help maintain the tune and here Playford possessed considerable talent. Herman Biddell, who in 1860 followed his father Arthur as churchwarden, reckoned that William Sheldrake junior, the bailiff at Playford Hall Farm, played the violin 'exquisitely'. He had been taught by Nursey of The Grove in Little Bealings and on his early death in 1848 at the young age of 48 was succeeded by John Woby. Nursey had been trained as a doctor and an architect where he put his skills not only to enlarging The Grove where he lived from 1795 to 1824 but to designing Kesgrave Hall which was built in 1812. His musical talent had been encouraged by the study of the violin in Italy.

⁶⁸ Many hymns written at that time remain popular to this day: 'O God our help in ages past' and 'Jesus shall reign where'er the sun...' for example were written by Watts and 'Christ, the Lord is risen today' and 'Christ whose glory fills the skies' by Charles Wesley.

⁶⁹ <http://www.wgma.org.uk/Articles/intro.htm> for the history and origins of West Gallery Music.

⁷⁰ West gallery music is the name given to the sacred music (metrical psalms with a few hymns and anthems) sung and played in English parish churches and nonconformist chapels from 1700 to around 1850. Victorians disapproved of such Georgian galleries and most were removed during restorations in the C19.

It was considered that Woby ‘could play the violin as well as Sheldrake at The Hall’. He was employed on Lux Farm as a stockman; his wife Mary ran the dame school down at The Brook. He was taught not by Nursey but by Cullingford who was later to become leader of the Woodbridge Orchestral Band. In those days it was not at all uncommon for working people to be able to read music, and to read it well, while at the same time being unable to read a single page in a book.⁷¹ In Anna Airy’s church leaflet she states that the musician played a kit, a small violin that fits easily inside the pocket. She later mentions the introduction of a portable hurdy-gurdy which played six tunes but she may have meant a barrel organ as a hurdy-gurdy, looking much like and being not much bigger than a violin, was of course a portable instrument. Whatever the correct detail, by 1862 Woby’s services as an accompanist were no longer required as the church had obtained an organ, quite possibly the barrel organ that Anna had alluded to in her leaflet.^{72 73} The singing of hymns by Playford congregations took off in the 1860s neatly coinciding with the introduction of the classic English hymnal *Ancient and Modern* which was first published in 1861 and which remains in print to this day.

In the following decade according to a parishioner’s letter to the local press Edward Houchen, vicar from 1871 to 1874, had ‘so successfully trained the congregation that the singing became second to very few other village choirs in the county’.⁷⁴ Bolstered by such success and enthusiasm, the present two-manual organ made by Dixon of Cambridge was installed in 1883 at the considerable cost of £160 funds for which were raised from within the village.^{75 76}

It is known from village folklore involving tales of bad behaviour among choir boys and from Dorothy Bowdren whose parents James and Florence Read ran the shop from 1923-27, that a proper choir existed in the 1920s and ‘30s when its annual outings were usually made to Yarmouth. It was active into the post war years and was well supported although mainly by female voices which included both Amy and Rachel Biddell, Mrs Keeble from Branson’s, Thelma and Jean Coles from Crossing Keeper’s Cottage and two women from Culpho. According to the then organist, they were later joined by Anna Airy who ‘wore enormous hats decorated with ostrich feathers’ and, from another source, who recalled that Anna ‘drowned out the rest of the choir’.⁷⁷ There was also a choir of sorts in the 1960s whose organist and leader had ambitions beyond its capabilities, and it was not until around 1980, quite some time after the parish had been joined with Bealings, that a very talented group of singers got together. Led by Gill Peck of Little Bealings, a one-time joint top soprano in the county, it used to rotate around the four benefice churches on Sundays but broke up in 2018 when the priest-in-charge resigned over re-ordering problems in Little Bealings church and the Benefice foundered.

⁷¹ Amy Biddell (1880-1959), notes. Private possession. Her records were gathered from information provided not only by members of her family who had lived in the village since 1808 but also from David Amoss (1843-1930) who had worked for three generations of Biddells from the time that he was a boy.

⁷² SROI, FC 22/E1/13. Playford churchwardens’ accounts, 1816-1960. An 1862 entry records ‘repairs and tuning organ, £1 1s 0d’.

⁷³ Anna Airy, Playford Church (1956). The information given in this short church leaflet would have come from her grandfather Sir George Biddell Airy (1801-92) who acquired the family home opposite the church in 1845 and from his uncle, Arthur Biddell of Hill House, sole churchwarden for 44 years from 1816 until his death in 1860.

⁷⁴ Ipswich Journal, 14 April 1877. One of many money-raising events was held in the grounds of The Hall when no fewer than three marquees were erected on the lawns.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 16 August 1877. The church was open on 19 August for a special fund raising service with the preacher coming from Trinity College, Cambridge.

⁷⁶ EADT, 5 May 1883. Money was still being collected six years later at another bazaar at The Hall.

⁷⁷ Reminiscences of Brian Beecroft, organist and choirmaster from the late 1940s to early 1950s. 5 September 2003. Private possession.

The church census of 1851

On the day appointed for the decennial population census of 1851, Sunday 30 March, a unique census of places of worship also took place though the wet and stormy weather might have adversely affected the outcome. Neither is any account taken of those who attended more than once on the day. The initiative for the survey came not from the churches themselves as might be assumed but from Parliament where there had been a growing feeling that 'information on the national provision for religious worship was needed'. Accordingly, the Registrar-General was ordered to 'endeavour to procure information as to the existing accommodation [or available space] for Public Religious Worship'. The enquiry had been prompted by concern as to whether each denomination had adequately coped with the rapid rise and shift in population growth during the previous 50 years. Forms for both Anglicans and Nonconformists enquired how many free and appropriated sittings each establishment had, the size of congregations on the morning, afternoon and evening of 30 March as well as the average numbers attending over the previous months. The same enumerators took both civil and ecclesiastical forms around the parishes but it was the clergy whose duty it was to complete and return those that concerned the church.

The results shed a fascinating light on church attendance in the early Victorian period and provide interesting information on how the congregation was accommodated.⁷⁸ The total number of sittings in Playford was for 136 people. There were four box pews 'appropriated by custom to certain houses and farms' which might be assumed to have been The Hall, Hill House, Lux Farm and the vicarage where the incumbent's family would have been seated during services.⁷⁹ The survey informs that between them the four box pews provided accommodation for 47 people, an average of some 12 a piece so they were large, while the 'free' sittings at the rear of the church, presumably benches in part under the west gallery, provided seats for a further 89 others.

A guess as to where two of the four 'attached' pews were located in the church can be made from churchgoers' more recent behaviour. When the pews were removed in 1874 and their occupants compelled to sit on the oak benches like the villagers, they would have opted to retain their seats at the front of the church and are likely to have chosen a pew more or less where they sat before. After the First World War Sam Sherwood of Lux Farm had the memorial to his two sons placed on the north wall next to his pew while in the 1950s Mrs Cobbold and her daughter Mrs Batt of Playford Hall sat by the south window as did the Cardiffs who followed them in the '60s.

Such social distinction carried over into attendance at actual services all of which faithfully followed the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. Most churches had two every Sunday: one in the morning and the other in the early afternoon and it was the afternoon service that was the better attended. They were held at 2.30 or 3.00 pm rather than at the more modern time of 6.30 pm and were attended mainly by the 'lower orders'. Women, particularly those in service in the 'big houses', were busy in the mornings preparing the main meal of the week so that labourers and their wives were more in evidence in the afternoons.

⁷⁸ T C B Timmins, ed., *Suffolk Returns from the Census of Religious Worship*, 1851 (Woodbridge, 1997). Suffolk Record Society, Vol. 39. See <http://www.wgma.org.uk/Articles/intro.htm> for further information on West Gallery Music.

⁷⁹ In making alterations to the pulpit in 1837 'Mrs Airy's pew' was specifically mentioned. The 'Mrs Airy' would have been George Biddell Airy's mother rather than his wife as it was not until 1845 that he bought his property in the village. His mother Ann (1761-1841) was the much older sister of Arthur Biddell (1783-1860) and would have been living with him at Hill House following her husband's death in 1827. It is surprising however that she was accorded her own pew and did not join her brother in his family's enclosure. Ann Airy died in 1841 when her pew quite possibly passed to her son but, because of his continual absences, was likely to have been used by the incumbent's family.

Morning services were held at 10.30 am or 11.00 am and were attended by the more 'substantial' members of the parish such as the local gentry, farmers and their families and perhaps some of the more affluent tradesmen. Services started with Matins which was followed without a pause by the Litany and, if there was to be communion, by a shortened version of that service. If there was no communion there would be a sermon usually of about 20 minutes so that either way the service would last for some two hours, double the time of Evensong. Holy Communion was celebrated infrequently in the county with half of all parishioners receiving the Sacrament no more than four times a year: at Christmas, Easter, Whitsunday and around harvest time. In his reply to the census, the Revd Willoughby Dickinson, perpetual curate, replied that at Playford communion was offered eight times a year and that an average of 15 to 20 communicants received the Sacrament..

Children, always referred to as 'scholars' in terms of church and Sunday School attendance, would usually be at both morning and afternoon services and account for about a quarter of all attendances. Sunday school would precede one or other of the two services. They would have joined at the age of four or five and remained until they started work: girls at around the age of 12 while boys, who were required for work on the farms, left much earlier at eight or nine.

Attendances at Playford on that late March day in 1851 were 28 in the morning with 29 'Scholars' making a total of 57 and for the afternoon 62 with the same number of 'scholars' making a total of 91. Average attendances over the previous 12 months were 37 plus 30 'scholars' in the mornings making a total of 67 and in the afternoons 61 plus 32 'scholars' making a total of 93. The 31 March was a cold wet day and a time of year when some of the young boys might well have been out scaring birds in the fields. Furthermore, congregations were larger in summer than they were in winter. Inevitably with some double counting when the same individual attended both morning and afternoon services, attendances nevertheless totalled 148 on the day against a yearly average of 160. With a population of 260, almost two thirds of people in the village regularly attended church.⁸⁰

While congregations at Church of England services across the country drew worshippers exclusively from within their own parishes, dissenting congregations tended to come from further afield. Dickinson's final entry in the Playford census return was that there were 'many Baptists' in the parish and a quick look at the figures for the chapel at Grundisburgh confirms other sources in that it held more services and enjoyed attendances over and above what could possibly have been provided from within its own parish. The Grundisburgh Baptist chapel return bears out the claim that it was built to seat 800 and that it held three services on Sundays rather than the two in the majority of Anglican churches. On census day the morning service was attended by 327 worshippers and 42 scholars, the afternoon service attended by 479 and 45 'scholars' and the evening service by 98 a grand total just short of 1,000 with the minister thinking that attendees came from 'nine or so' surrounding parishes. After a 224 year history the chapel finally closed on 13 February 2022 due to lack of support. The last pastor, Colin Grimwood, had served there for 28 years.⁸¹

⁸⁰ For comparison, 343 attended at Great Bealings on the day (90% of the parish population) where there were 'not many Dissenters', 198 at Little Bealings (two thirds of the parish population) with an average attendance over the year of 220 and, interestingly, only 'eight to ten' at Culpho (15% of the population) with the comment: 'a very great majority are Dissenters'. Culpho Hall was the home of John Thompson junior who built the Baptist chapel at Grundisburgh in 1789 and became its first pastor. See Hilda Tuck, *Pernicious Dissenters*, a biographical novel on the life of John Thompson and *200 years of God's Work at Grundisburgh Baptist Church*, both books available from the pastor.

⁸¹ The Grundisburgh and District News, Spring 2022, 17.

CLERGY INCOMES: STIPENDS, PARSONAGES, TITHES AND GLEBE

The 1851 Census also enquired into incumbents' pay but, as the subject was so hugely complicated, it was considered ill-advised to have been included as an additional item in a more general survey and required a systematic study of its own. Indeed, just three days before the census was due to be completed, the government agreed to withdraw the item but, in the event, while a majority of incumbents did make a response, another quarter refused to do so and, even when the information was forthcoming, it remains difficult to tell how much money a parson was actually receiving.

As stated above, since early times priests were supported in three main ways: from tithes, from housing and from glebe. Tithes were a tax of a 'traditional tenth' on the mainly agricultural output of the parish and had been payable to the incumbent since Saxon times. At the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s they often passed to private owners who then became lay rectors with legal responsibilities for repairing the chancel. While the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836 replaced the ancient system of payment in kind with monetary payments, tithe rent charges were not extinguished until 1936. Tithes were divided into 'greater tithes' which were levied on principal crops and 'lesser tithes' which were levied on the rest. A rector enjoyed the full endowments of a living that included both the great and the small tithes while a vicar was entitled only to the lesser tithes, the greater tithes having been appropriated by a religious house or an Oxford or Cambridge college. It was for the income that it produced that a church such as Playford was given to the Benedictine Priory at Eye. The Priory then became the rector who appointed a substitute (Latin *vicarius*) called a vicar as the resident priest in the parish.

When the Church eventually 'tightened up' and regained control in 1774, William Layton the first priest appointed was licensed by the bishop as a perpetual curate. Perpetual curacies were common in the first half of the C19 where a parish was served by neither a rector nor a vicar and, though a perpetual curate held the cure of souls, he received neither the greater nor the lesser tithes but a small stipend in return for his duties much in the way that casual priests had been paid before him. Neither did he undergo institution or induction but was merely licensed to the cure. Such a means of payment was understandable for a clergyman who took services only every other week and did not live locally. The title perpetual curate fell out of use from around the middle of the C19 as priests increasingly were living in church accommodation within the parish. It was however not until 1868 that the term formally fell out of use and such incumbents were allowed to call themselves 'vicar'. In Suffolk 60 perpetual curacies were restyled vicarages, the change in Playford being made in 1871 when the Revd Edward Houchen was instituted to the living.

It was only after the Reformation, when clergy were allowed to marry, that there was a need for the church to provide a family home. Many had to make their own arrangements either because the house provided was inadequate or because one had not been provided at all. While many were supplied with imposing Georgian rectories others, particularly in the period after the Napoleonic Wars, were accommodated more modestly yet still in keeping with their then social standing. From the early C19 much new housing was built; some paid for by the Church, some by local benefactors and some by well-to-do clergy themselves. The building of Playford vicarage in 1845 at a cost of £500 was largely funded by Thomas West vicar of Rushmere.⁸² He was at the time also perpetual curate of Playford⁸³ and his contribution of £200 covered

⁸² Locally Rushmere vicarage was built in 1827, Great Bealings rectory in 1845, Little Bealings rectory in 1847 and Tuddenham vicarage in 1860.

⁸³ Dickinson moved to north Norfolk at an interesting time. Within two years of his arrival the 7,700 acre Sandringham Estate, of which Wolferton parish formed part, was bought by Queen Victoria as a 21st birthday present for the Prince of Wales, the future Edward VII. The station at Wolferton, the nearest to Sandringham House, was opened in the same year and was last used by the Royal Family in 1966. It closed three years later.

almost half of the money required while Lord Bristol donated the site on which it was to stand. Willoughby Dickinson, the first priest to occupy the new Playford vicarage in 1845 and who followed West as perpetual curate, moved to Wolferton near Sandringham in 1860 immediately setting about 'the enlargement and re-modelling' of the rectory there at his own expense.

But in the C19 not all clergy by any means were the younger sons of the aristocracy or gentry as used to be thought and many could ill afford to live in the accommodation that was provided for them. With a good education and time on their hands, many sought to take on additional employment. Others sought additional sources of income: a few took on poorly paid workhouse chaplaincies while others found a lifeline in pluralism by holding two poorly paid perpetual curacies. The Revd Christopher Hodgson, perpetual curate of Playford from 1857 to 1871 and only the second incumbent to occupy the vicarage, had taken on responsibilities for Culpho some 20 years before more permanent arrangements had been formalised. He also boarded four 11 year old pupils from Essex, Coventry, London with only one coming locally from Trimley. The boys would have created additional work but the extra income they brought in allowed him to employ more than the usual cook and housemaid. He was able to double up on staff by having one other young woman as well as a nurse to look after his own three young children.⁸⁴ By 1871 however he has just one pupil in his care and his staffing levels have reduced accordingly.

Such houses however were later to become an encumbrance. By the 1930s live-in domestic staff had become increasingly hard to find and, as employment opportunities increased after the Second World War, even daily help became restricted to farm houses and The Hall. While the bachelor Dr Harry Baylis (vicar from 1929-1935) understandably employed a housekeeper, his successor Daniel Ambrose (1936-1940) was the first occupant of the vicarage not to employ resident staff. As in other middle class homes up and down the country it was the wife who had to knuckle down and perform the functions that had previously been carried out by servants but the husband was not immune from the changes either. Fewer men and boys were becoming gardeners and the parsonage grounds, which had formerly given so much pleasure to the occupants, had now become a liability with one Suffolk incumbent in the 1960s complaining that it took him seven hours on his one day off a week just to cut the grass. Fortunately for the clergy, the Church of England was becoming increasingly concerned at the cost of keeping such large old houses in good repair and up-to-date and from the 1950s and '60s began selling them off moving their tenants into modern accommodation 'more appropriate for the social role and status of a modern Anglican clergyman'. But sales could only be made with the consent, voluntary retirement or death of the sitting incumbent who held the parson's freehold and were therefore not conducted at a speed the Commissioners might have wished. Tuddenham vicarage for example was sold following the death of the Revd Frederick Keightley in 1956 after 45 years there as vicar there while the vicarage at Playford was sold in 1973 when the Revd Cyril Stevens moved briefly back to New Zealand.

1873-1908: 'VICTORIANISATION' OF THE INTERIOR OF THE CHURCH AND RESTORATION OF THE FABRIC

After centuries of neglect, by 1873 the old chancel, with its south and east walls heavily buttressed, had become so dilapidated that it was razed to the ground and totally rebuilt.⁸⁵ The architect was Richard Makilwaine Phipson (1827-84) best known for his numerous church restorations in the county and in particular for the complete rebuilding between 1850 and 1870 of St Mary le Tower in Ipswich. In 1871, just prior to his Playford church project, he had been responsible for the refurbishment and re-gentrification of

⁸⁴ 1861 Census. Hodgson styles himself Perpetual Curate of Playford and Culpho.

⁸⁵ SROI HD 484/2. There were no buttresses when Davy visited in 1818 but were in place on a later visit in 1842.

Playford Hall following the hasty departure to Jersey of its then tenant Thomas Clarkson III. By the time that Phipson was commissioned to rebuild the chancel of Playford church, he had become Diocesan Surveyor. He rebuilt the chancel in the Early English style of around 1250-70 with its lancet windows having wide splays and set either singly or in groups.⁸⁶ An angle piscina, a stone basin used in pre-Reformation Catholic churches for draining the water used in the Mass, and a windowsill sedilia, a stone



The new chancel of 1874, its Early English style contrasting sharply with the nave and tower

seat for the clergy in the south wall, are in true medieval fashion. The cost of £600 was borne by the Marquis of Bristol who, as impropiator of the tithes, was responsible for chancel repairs. The new chancel was built on the foundations of its mediaeval predecessor and much of the flint masonry was re-used. A vestry was added on its north side but within just ten years practically all its space had been taken up by the new organ. The very limited room that remained was hardly sufficient for the officiating priest to robe but it was not until 1983 that pews were removed from the south-west corner of the nave and a new curtained vestry made available there. That in turn was quickly converted into a kitchen allowing coffee and biscuits to be served after services.

From the 1870s: Victorian ‘upgrading’ of the interior

The following year ‘the high deal pews’ were removed and replaced with the present oak benches⁸⁷ and in 1875 the new pulpit by Thomas Stopher of Ipswich was installed. As was common it had previously been positioned midway along the north wall of the nave to ensure that the preacher could be heard by all the

⁸⁶ In his notes on Playford church, the Revd Dr Harry Baylis states that the chancel was built ‘from designs by E C Hakewill who died two years before the chancel was rebuilt’. Hakewill, an eminent Victorian church architect had built Playford Mount for his own occupation in 1867, is buried in the churchyard and Baylis reveals here for the first time that he was not overlooked for the rebuilding as might have been thought. He had lived in Brompton, London, and moved to Suffolk when his house was acquired by the Metropolitan Railway. E C Hakewill is not to be confused with his brother J H Hakewill, another well respected church architect at the time with a number of Suffolk church restorations to his credit. See Cynthia Brown, 1989. *The Hakewills...*. Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeol., XXXVII, 45-54.

⁸⁷ SROI FC22 E1/13, Playford churchwardens’ accounts, 1816-1960. An 1848 entry records ‘repairing pews and places under the gallery’ suggesting that the box pews did not extend to the west end of the church.

congregation, but what its appearance was like is not known. By 1810 when Davy visited it was 'in the north-east angle of the nave'.⁸⁸ If Playford ever had an elegant pulpit like the splendid two decker example in Great Bealings church, it was replaced in 1821 doubtless by something less flamboyant.⁸⁹ Because of its date it can be assumed that nothing of any great historic merit was destroyed in the 1870s but its replacement was positioned at the foot of the magnificent chancel arch diminishing its full grandeur as well as blocking the view of the altar for all those seated on the north side of the church. Perhaps the latter offence was deliberate in that it was done to show that the Word had taken precedence over the Sacrament. A prominent pulpit gives visual representation of the idea.

As for seating, in pre-Reformation churches it was rare. The few seats that were available were positioned against the walls and it was only later when congregations were required to listen to lengthy sermons that there was somewhere for a majority of the people to sit. Box pews were first introduced in the C16. Initially they were highly personalised in style, height and size but later were standardised in appearance as can be seen in a few surviving places today. In those early years such pews had to be paid for, the most expensive being at the front nearest the pulpit. The congregation therefore was seated according to social rank, a one-time Christian perception of a divinely ordered hierarchy of creation.⁹⁰ Such seating arrangements continued in many churches well into the C20 by which time payments for them might well have stopped while the display of social ranking had not. The Incorporated Church Building Society, founded in 1818 to provide new churches for the towns and cities that were developing rapidly as a result of the Industrial Revolution, wanted as many people as possible to attend church and not just those those who could afford it. In allocating grants they gave preference to those churches with the largest numbers of free seats and free seating remained a continuing requirement in grant allocation for fabric repairs until well after the Second World War. A notice that hung in Playford church porch for many years and which is now in the vestry, states that 'the church was awarded a grant in 1952 for repairs 'upon condition that all sittings should continue to be free'.

The Victorians may well have had liturgical reasons for doing away with the old box pews and for repositioning their pulpit but it is difficult to understand why in 1894 the then vicar, the Revd. John Freeman, should have disposed of the font and donated the present one by Watts of Colchester while leaving its original base. And while it is possible to visualise the old box pews, it is not possible to tell the age of the original font or to have any idea of what it looked like. Many splendid examples of early fonts survive including ones supposedly damaged by the Puritans in the C17. Dowsing's *Journal* however is no help here for while the term font is referred to many times in his *Journal* there is no such mention of one being damaged in Playford.

1897: The nave is re-roofed

In 1897 the entire nave was re-roofed in commemoration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Made of open trussed rafters, as in the chancel of 1873, it replaced a plaster barrel vaulted ceiling. The work was carried out by Mr A. E. Kersey of Great Bealings. At the same time new stone crosses, given by Mr Crisp

⁸⁸ SROB J400. David Elisha Davy's papers are available on microfiche in Bury St Edmunds Record Office.

⁸⁹ Ibid. Originally put in place in 1821, the new pulpit had cost £1 12s 6d including 'cloths and cushions'. A terse entry in the churchwardens' accounts for the year 1836 states that the new clergyman [Thomas West of Rushmere] within a year of his taking office, 'wishes to have the pulpit removed'. A less expensive compromise was perhaps arrived at for the following year it is learned that 'alterations' to the pulpit had cost £2. 0. 0 and had 'taken in part of Mrs Airy's pew'.

⁹⁰ Another well known example of the acceptance of such social distinctions within the Church appears in the second verse of the popular children's hymn 'All things bright and beautiful' first published in 1848. Its familiar words 'The rich man in his castle, The poor man at his gate, He made them high or lowly, And ordered their estate' have only in recent years been removed from hymn books.

of Playford Hall and made by Stephenson of Woodbridge, were placed on the tops of the gables but their mediaeval bases were retained. The Bishop of Norwich preached at the reopening service on 3 November.^{91 92}

The Revd. John Freeman died a bachelor in November 1902 after 22 years in the parish. His unmarried sister, who had lived with him in the vicarage, died two years earlier leaving him with no living relative. He was replaced in the following June by the Revd. Clement Wright who, although born in this country the son of a clergyman, was ordained deacon in Madras immediately on coming down from Cambridge spending the next 23 years in a multitude of short-lived postings in India before returning home.

1904: A disagreement between incumbent and churchwarden

Herman Biddell the churchwarden had had an undoubtedly good relationship with Freeman but this was not to continue with Clement Wright his successor. Like his father before him, Biddell took great pride in having been the sole churchwarden for 44 years but Wright was quickly to put a stop to that. Wright was licensed in June 2003 and at his very first vestry meeting in April the following year, he made the provocative move of appointing F S Stevenson as his [vicar's] warden. In doing so he said 'that as a matter of principle he desired two wardens and that it was the order of the Church that it should be so' adding that 'when he called upon the parishioners to elect their [people's] warden they would no doubt (and the vicar hoped that they would) elect as their representative Herman Biddell who had been warden for so many years'.⁹³ But Biddell said that he would decline to stand if any other warden was appointed beside himself. Being pressed by both George Fiske, the tenant of Hill Farm, and the vicar to reconsider his decision he refused to do so and said that his decision was final. Sam Sherwood, the tenant of Lux Farm, was nominated Parishioners' Warden and was elected. Herman Biddell took no further part in church affairs.

Father and son each completed 44 years as churchwarden. Arthur died in 1860 and lived long enough to witness only a small part of the Victorian refurbishment while Herman, with a succession of approving incumbents, oversaw the majority of the alterations. Nationally it is estimated that some 80% of Church of England churches were affected in some way, the two main driving forces for change being the Camden Society and the Oxford Movement. The Camden Society had a strong preference for Gothic architecture and the Oxford Movement was intent on moving the centre of importance in the church from the pulpit to the altar. But the destruction of the former font and pulpit in Playford served no liturgical purpose and served only to add to the bad name of Victorian restoration. However, against a background of badly maintained church buildings, those responsible for making these changes locally are to be thanked for constructing new roofs to both nave and chancel thereby keeping water out of the fabric and saving the building for generations to come.

Care for the fabric continues after the turn of the century

Changes and repairs did not come to an abrupt halt on Freeman's death and Biddell's departure and a momentum seems to have built up which carried over into the new century. At the same vestry meeting in 1904 it was announced that Frederick Arthur Crisp, formerly of Playford Hall but who some 20 years earlier had moved away, had offered a stained glass memorial window to his father and mother at the east

⁹¹ As was common among village builders well into modern times, Kersey was also the local undertaker providing coffins and superintending arrangements of many funerals in the district.

⁹² East Anglian DailyTimes, 4 November 1897. The reopening by the Bishop of Norwich is described in detail.

⁹³ SROI, A1/5. Vestry minutes 1904-20. Stevenson, Liberal MP for Eye since 1885, had bought Playford Mount in 1893. For more on Stevenson see Village Hall in this series, passim.

end of the church which the new vicar Clement Wright said should be accepted. But Biddell, who had not walked out of the meeting, disagreed saying that ‘as the inside of the church is only in a plain chaste style, a coloured window would be out of character with the rest of the fabric and it would therefore be inadvisable to accept Mr Crisp’s offer’.⁹⁴ Biddell’s amendment was not seconded. The chairman then put the original motion forward and a majority of hands were held up for it. He declared the motion carried. Biddell then immediately requested that those opposed to it should be allowed to record their votes in opposition but the chairman declined to accede to his appeal ‘as being unusual’.

But although a Faculty was acquired, for some reason the work was never carried out. It could well have been that, on learning of Herman Biddell’s strong yet rational disapproval and not wishing to upset him even though he was no longer having anything to do with the church, Frederick Crisp withdrew his offer. Seemingly instead, the following year he donated a ‘handsome chancel carpet’ which remained in the church for 120 years when it was finally thrown out without consultation by a headstrong Priest-in-Charge and compliant churchwarden. The possibility that Crisp withdrew his offer gains credence when, at the first meeting of the War Memorial Committee in early 1919, just short of two years after Biddell’s death in 1917, a stained glass east window was voted the preferred choice of commemoration of those who had lost their lives in the war. Significantly, the meeting was attended by one of Frederic Crisp’s two sisters, either Rosa or Emma, who together were later to become the largest financial contributors to the project.

Frederick Augustus Crisp, a retired surgeon from Walworth, then in Surrey, and his wife Sarah had moved to Playford Hall in 1878 but were not to live for long. Sarah died within three years of their arrival when only 59 years old and Frederick died three years later at just 63. With them had come their six grown-up children, all in their 20s or early 30s, two of whom, Frederick Arthur and George Edward, were soon to move away. In 1884 they bought Little Wenham Hall near Colchester, a Grade I C13 fortified manor house regarded as one of the most important medieval domestic buildings in the country. But they continued to support Playford church: Frederick offering the new east window while George made the gift of the nave gable-crosses as part of the new roof project of 1897. Rosa and Emma continued to live on at The Hall until their deaths in the 1930s with Rosa continuing the family’s generosity by setting up the Crisp Bequest in memory of her sister who had predeceased her.⁹⁵ The name Crisp continued in the church’s annual accounts until 2015 after which time income from the fund was included with other bequests.⁹⁶

So ended the Biddells’ 88 year hold on church affairs. The acceptance by Clement Wright of F S Stevenson as his warden had been a particular blow as Stevenson, Liberal MP for Eye, stood at the very opposite end of the political spectrum to Herman Biddell. In setting up the village’s first Parish Council some ten years earlier and making himself the chairman, Stevenson had taken over many of the secular aspects of the work that the Vestry had previously handled. The church had lost stature and so too had the sole churchwarden. But in that personal squabble Biddell was to have the final smile for in 1906, as chairman of the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway, Stevenson was declared bankrupt with personal liabilities amounting to £250,000 (£30m in 2020 money) and had to resign his seat in Parliament. While he had

⁹⁴ SROI, FC22/E1/13. Playford churchwardens’ accounts, 1816-1960.

⁹⁵ At the same time as their brother Frederic gave a carpet for the chancel, the sisters donated eight oil lamps to the church: four standards for the choir stalls, two for the chancel and two for the sanctuary.

⁹⁶ Six members of the Crisp family are buried in the vault to the north of the nave: Frederick Augustus, his wife Sarah and four of their six children: Rosa and Emma, William Henry who lived in Great Bealings and who died aged 47, and George Edwin who lived at Little Wenham Hall and who died aged 50. Only three of the six married: William Henry whose wife came from Somerset; Marian, the youngest, who married Arthur Hunt from Culpho (whose father farmed 3,100 acres and employed 95 men and 31 boys) and Frederick Arthur who became a nationally renowned family historian and antiquarian who earned his living as a ‘patent medicine vendor’ and is buried in Little Wenham churchyard. For more on the Crisps see Playford Hall in this series, 10-11.

remained chairman of the Parish Council for just two years after its inception in 1895, he continued to take an active interest in its affairs but attended no further meetings after 1905.⁹⁷

In 1905 the Royal Arms of George III were restored and three years later in 1908 the upper part of the tower was practically rebuilt. The repair work extended to the restoration of the striking stone cross in flush work between the two-light Perpendicular belfry windows, the total bill amounting to £138 4s 11d which was paid for by the Misses Crisp. The two bells were rehung and, at the same time, a new bell frame was made and flooring of the bell chamber renewed costing a further £22 17s 6d. By the outbreak of the Great War therefore, after many years of spasmodic replacement and repair, the church building was at last in good condition.

But the newly formed Church Council then appears to have sat on its laurels for no further work is recorded as having been done on the building for the next 50 years. Two major repairs then followed in quick succession. The first in 1952, described by the Archdeacon as ‘the result of neglect of generations’ concerned dry rot in the timbers under the pews in the nave that had been installed in 1874 and the second, more urgent, in 1955 when it was reported that ‘rain is coming through the roof in several places’ affecting both the chancel, rebuilt in 1873, and the nave which was re-roofed in 1897.⁹⁸ Water had also got into the church above the main entrance door as debris had been allowed to build up in the gully behind the tower. By 1975 further problems had developed with those parts of the roof that had not received attention 20 years earlier and in 1982 the scale of the problem was finally confronted when both chancel and nave were entirely re-tiled. Half of the original tiles were discarded with new hand-made replacements used on the north side of the building.

THE MODERN PERIOD

The death of Thomas West in 1848 had been a major turning point in Playford’s church history. Not only did the parish have a Church appointed priest to itself for the first time since 1774 but, with the minor exception of joining with Culpho in 1881, there were no further organisational changes for 100 years. Throughout that time incumbents came and went, responsible for the care of never more than 300 souls, but it was not until after the Second World War with fewer priests coming forward for ordination and declining faith throughout the country, that the Church of England was forced to spread its clergy more thinly.

The long period of stability that stretched from the mid C19 to the mid 20th had many distinct characteristics. A majority of incumbents, like their immediate predecessors after 1774, had been to Oxford or Cambridge but an increasing number had also attended one of the new theological colleges that had been set up by the Church because the cost of a traditional university degree was proving prohibitive to many from less affluent backgrounds. Christopher Hodgson (perpetual curate 1857 -1871) for example went to St Bees the first such college to have been established in 1816 while John Major Freeman (1880-1902) attended Hatfield Hall a theological institution attached to Durham University.⁹⁹ And unlike today when many candidates enter the Church in later life or indeed on retirement, candidates at the time did so immediately on graduation.

⁹⁷ Two years before his death in 1917 Herman Biddell was however elected to serve with F S Stevenson and A R Hunt as ‘Parochial Representatives for the united parishes of Playford & Culpho on the Ruridecanal Conference for the ensuing 3 years’.

⁹⁸ Incorporated Church Building Society, Playford file no.13027. The Society’s records are held in Lambeth Palace Library.

⁹⁹ St Bees, on the Cumbrian coast, closed in 1895. Hatfield Hall, founded in 1846 as ‘affordable to those of limited means’, is now Hatfield College and one of the constituent colleges of Durham University.

1850-1920: a surprisingly mobile priesthood

Thomas Cooper (1874-1879) was curate at Blackburn in the year that he came down from Cambridge while Willoughby Dickinson's (1848-1857) first curacy was at Playford in 1841 when he was just 24. Although reporting directly to Thomas West, the vicar at Rushmere, he was the sole priest then resident in the village and, as a single man, lived in lodgings with an agricultural labourer. Neither did incumbents stay for any great length of time as might be supposed. Only John Freeman (1880-1902) and Clement Wright (1903-1926) exceeded 20 years while others such as Edward Houchen (1871-1874), Thomas Cooper (1874-1879), George Kirkpatrick (1926-1929) and David Ambrose (1936-1940) remained in post for just three or four years before moving on. It is of interest too to learn not only where some of these clergy came from but where they went after their time at Playford.

No doubt aided by the new railway network that had swept across the country, Edward Houchen had served in turn not only in Norfolk, Clapham and North Yorkshire but after his time in Suffolk went to far away Cornwall in 1874. Thomas Cooper after Playford went first to Yorkshire and then to Co. Durham followed by Lancashire and finally Berkshire before taking retirement. And at the height of Empire it should be no surprise to come across a former missionary from the British Raj. Clement Wright (1903-1926), son of a Nottinghamshire parson, went straight to Madras on graduating from Cambridge where he was ordained deacon in 1879. After many postings within the sub-continent, he returned to the UK in 1902. But despite a one year's furlough before taking up work, the traits of a former colonial seem not to have left him for within months of his arrival in the parish he had clashed head-on with his sole churchwarden of 44 years. While Herman Biddell. Biddell stood down and ended all associations with the church, Wright stayed the course becoming Playford's longest serving minister in the hundred year period after 1850.

1920- 1950: Playford & Culpho's last years on their own

Between the wars Harry Baylis (1929-1935) exemplified the scholarly nature of many a country parson. Educated at Trinity College, Dublin, he researched the original list of priests serving Playford, a copy of which is included with each church guide. He wrote a book on Marcus Minucius Felix (died *c.* 250 AD) one of the earliest of the Latin apologists for Christianity and, throughout the years that he was in Playford, was Editor of St Edmundsbury Diocesan Magazine. Away from such learned pursuits, his more visible legacy is the huge paved and curbed area in the middle of the north side of the churchyard where his father, and no one else, is buried. The grave runs north-south rather than the conventional east-west and on the plinth of the north facing cross are the initials A M D G, abbreviation of the Latin '*Ad maiorem Dei gloriam*' - 'For the Greater Glory of God', the motto of the Jesuits, an order of the Catholic church.

Baylis was followed by Daniel Ambrose (1936-1940) who stayed for just four years. He had been ordained in Ely and, after serving several curacies in the area, took positions in Manchester and Bristol before spending 13 years as vicar of Kersey. The first intimation that he had resigned the Playford living came from an announcement in a July issue of the *Church Times* that was read by a churchwarden's sister who lived in the village and, in the same unorthodox vein, the wardens only learned of his successor's acceptance from a post card that had been sent to Ambrose. The Revd Basil Stephen Maine, the new vicar, duly moved his furniture into the vicarage and, after a month's lodging in the village and at Tuddenham Fountain, he took up residence in the vicarage in the October. Once installed, he immediately travelled up to Norwich to be with his father who was ill but returned to take two Sunday services at Playford after

which he was never seen again. The Church was indignant that Maine, as incumbent designate, had been allowed to assume parish duties without being instituted while Maine himself threatened legal proceedings against the wardens in their refusal to meet his demand of three guineas a week for the three services that he had already taken. The bishop and archdeacon had offered the maximum sum of three guineas for all three services.¹⁰⁰ Maine (1894-1972) was in his forties by the time that he was ordained prior to which he was the author of many books some of which are still available on the internet. His portrait is in the National Gallery. But in the Church he never settled, moving from living to living staying not once longer than two years in any one place.

Charles Houghton (1941-51) succeeded him. His father, the vicar of Imber on Salisbury Plain, died when he was just one year old.¹⁰¹ Despite such a setback, Houghton found his way to Oxford where he graduated in 1899 going into teaching firstly with London County Council from 1900 to 1905 and then to Woodbridge School. After a little over 30 years there he was ordained deacon in 1937 and priest in 1938. He became firstly curate of St John's, Woodbridge, and then of Eyke w. Bromeswell and Rendlesham before moving to Playford and Culpho in 1941. Here he is best remembered in the village as a member of the Home Guard from which he had to retire two years later when he became 65. He died in Playford vicarage in 1951 aged 73.

While there had been a steady lessening of the hold of Christianity within the country since its peak in Edwardian times, it was not until the years immediately after the Second World War that the church's influence started to fall away dramatically. The decline was marked not only by smaller attendances at services but, for example, in the number of infant baptisms and in the support for Sunday schools. More critically, fewer numbers were coming forward for ordination and the Church was compelled to rethink its age-old policy of having a parson in every parish. However, because incumbents had lifelong security of tenure, the amalgamation of livings proceeded at an erratic pace as priests had either to resign, die in office or, rarely, be evicted through failing to meet minimum standards of activity or moral behaviour. It was on the death of Charles Houghton in 1951 that it was decided that the parishes of Playford w. Culpho unite with that of Tuddenham St Martin, the scheme to be effective when the living at Tuddenham became vacant. The vicarage there was to be sold and the incumbent of the new benefice would continue to live in Playford. But, despite the age of the Tuddenham incumbent together with his 44 years service there, it was to be another five years before progress could be made. Frederick Keighley died in 1956 when the parish of Tuddenham was already united with that of Westerfield.

In those intervening five years no fewer than four curates-in-charge were licensed to look after the original Playford benefice. The first was Reginald Darley, chaplain at Woodbridge School, and while the governors consented to his continued help in the parish, they insisted that he continued to reside on school premises. He was soon followed by David Warburton, a former rector of Bedingfield and Rishangles and later of Scole. Within six months he was replaced by his son Robert then rector of Dallinghoo who stayed for two years before moving away to spend the remainder of his ministry in Nottinghamshire. In his very short time in office it was David Warburton who initiated repairs to the dry rot problem in the nave and his son

¹⁰⁰ SROI FC22/C6/4. Correspondence between Col. Freeland, churchwarden, and the rural dean regarding the appointment of Basil Maine and his taking services without being instituted. 1940-1941. Maine's name does not appear on the list of priests serving Playford and his CV is as follows: Queens' College, Cambs. Deacon 1939. Priest 1940. Curate St Mary le Tower, Ipswich 1939-40; St Andrew's, Norwich 1940-41. rector Wacton (Nfk) 1941-43; Chedinton (Dorset) 1943-45; Beaumont-cum-Moze (Essex) 1945-47. Lecturer Royal School of Church Music 1947. Rector Warham (Nfk) 1948-50; Bramerton with Surlingham (Nfk) 1956-58. Author: *Life and Works of Elgar*, 2 vols., 1933, *Life of Franklin Roosevelt* 1938, *New Paths in Music*, 1940, *Maine on Music*, 1946, *Life of Chopin*, 1950 and *Twang with our Music*, 1957. Crockford's 1965-66.

¹⁰¹ The isolated village of Imber, together with its surrounding farm land, was commandeered by the military in 1943. Unlike Sudbourne and Iken it was never returned to its rightful owners and remains the property of the MoD to this day.

Robert who saw the work through to completion. Following Robert's departure Ernest Broadbent from the Diocese of Bradford filled the vacancy. Broadbent had been suffering from ill health for some years and, looking for a less demanding living, had approached an old friend, Clement Ricketts, the Bishop of Dunwich for help. Broadbent was licensed as curate-in-charge of Playford w. Culpho in October 1954 and, on the death of Frederick Keighley two years later, to the new benefice of Playford w. Culpho & Tuddenham St Martin. Sadly, Broadbent was not to last long either. He died of a heart attack aged 60 in September 1959 when attending a conference less than three years into his new post¹⁰² and was replaced by Paul Biddlecombe previously curate-in-charge of Boxford in West Suffolk. Biddlecombe stayed for five years leaving to become chaplain of Felixstowe College, a girls' boarding school that was to close in 1994. He in turn was followed by Cyril Stevens from New Zealand who returned to that country after only two years in the UK. Within a year he was back but this time as rector of Rendham where he stayed for the best part of 30 years, becoming rural dean of Saxmundham. In the short while that he was out of the country the decision had been taken to sell the Playford vicarage and to appoint Denis Spencer, rector of Great & Little Bealings, as priest-in-charge.

1972: The Benefice of Great & Little Bealings w. Playford and Culpho

After just a couple of years Spencer moved to Gloucestershire and was replaced in 1971 by Gordon Steven who had been rector of Penicuik in the Diocese of Edinburgh.¹⁰³

The following year the new benefice of Great & Little Bealings w. Playford and Culpho was formed with Steven being its first rector.

Ordained priest in 1936, his previous service before, during and after the war as an R A F padre returning to civilian life only in 1962. A blunt outspoken man, in the five years that he was in the benefice he upset many people most notably the management of the Village Hall who, with inflation then at 16%, he rightly considered to be slow in spending money on repairs that had been raised over the course of many annual fetes. In 1974 he retired to live in Felixstowe.

Gordon Steven was followed by Frank Hollingsworth, a Suffolk man who had initially trained under Munro Cautley, the Diocesan Architect, before going into the Church.¹⁰⁴ Affable and in the mould of Parson Woodforde, he was described by the Hon. Jill Ganzoni, a lay reader in the benefice, as having 'delusions of grandeur'. After 15 years he retired early through ill health moving next door to former Diocesan bishop John Waine in Grundisburgh. Michael Skliros succeeded him but his term of office was cut short by his adultery with a parishioner from his previous parish. A Cambridge man and another one-time chaplain in the RAF, he could readily be visualised enjoying the stimulation of academia as well as the banter of an officers' mess yet at the same time not appearing out of place as a parish priest. Of great intellect and energy, he did much to stimulate and inspire but sadly will be remembered only for the reason of his leaving. Excommunicated by the Church of England, he remarried and spent the remaining eight

¹⁰² His widow Catherine was, unusually, allowed by Bishop Leslie Brown to stay on in the parish. She bought Copyhold in Church Lane from Owen Goldsmith where she lived for 42 years playing an active part in village life notably in the Women's Institute and Village Hall. A slight stroke in 2001 prompted a return to her family in Yorkshire where she died in 2004 at the age of 96. Her obituary is in the Benefice Magazine, March 2004.

¹⁰³ Ipswich Journal, 9 September 1893. The four parishes had worked together before. In 1893 'the annual show for the produce grown in cottage gardens and allotments in the parishes of Great and Little Bealings, Playford and Culpho was held at The Grove, Little Bealings'.

¹⁰⁴ Henry Muro Cautley (1876-1959) was the son of Richard Hutton Cautley, curate-in-charge of the then new All Saints church in Chevallier Street, Ipswich. Trained as an architect, he set up in business with Leslie Barefoot later becoming Diocesan architect for St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. His *Suffolk Churches and Their Treasures*, published in 1937, is still regarded as a classic.

years of his ministry as assistant to the Bishop of Brandon in Manitoba retiring to Oundle in Northamptonshire where he helped out at his former school.

1996: The arrival of women priests

In 1994, part way through Michael Skliros's time in the benefice, Little Bealings rectory was sold and new accommodation found at the top of Hill Farm Road in Playford. When he left in 1996, the churches were in good heart and the benefice had remained together. On Christine Everett's arrival to replace him she was told that it was the church that provided all the initiatives within the community such as fetes, meetings with the Clarkson and Airy families and 50 year commemorations for the end of World War 2. However, changes were made in the way that clergy were to be deployed as it was no longer considered viable for a full time priest to care for fewer than 1,000 souls, albeit in four separate parishes.

Skliros was the last full time incumbent, benefitting from the freehold of the property and enjoying security of tenure until he either died, wanted to leave of his own accord or simply misbehaved. But following his departure the benefice was deemed to be only half a living and future priests were no longer to enjoy the security that their predecessors had done but instead were licensed to serve for periods of only five years at a time giving the Diocese much tighter control over the deployment of their staff. Priests were to be employed only half time for which they would receive only half pay. The post therefore no longer attracted the main bread winner in a household and women in middle age became the sole applicants for the job.

Christine Everett aged 50, whose husband was vicar of St Francis in Ipswich and who had served there as curate, stayed four years before moving to the full time living of Creting St Mary.¹⁰⁵ Pauline Stentiford aged 52, whose husband was a professor in pattern recognition, had been a music teacher at Woodbridge School. She joined as a non-stipendiary minister before becoming priest-in-charge in her own right. For six of her ten years in the benefice she was rural dean of Woodbridge. On retirement in 2014 she was followed by Celia Cook, aged 49 whose husband was a former army officer. She had been ordained priest in 2011 when aged 45, following which she was curate at Aldeburgh and then team vicar in a multi-parish benefice near Colchester.

At interview she was implored by the churchwardens to 'bring the benefice up to date' and, on asking about the timescale, was told: 'immediately'. In Little Bealings, with strong support from the Diocese, the plan was to make the church into a multi-use building by incorporating a shop or café that would draw in people other than those who used it once a week for worship. The village already had two other general purpose buildings, the village hall and the Angela Cobbold Hall, and at the same time were attempting to purchase the Admiral's Head pub for the community which had lain empty for some years. The speed of change was however far too fast for the different factions and the village tore itself apart. Celia Cook resigned becoming hospital chaplain at the East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust and, following her departure, the Diocese decreed that such a part-time benefice had once again become an anachronism. After very nearly 50 years together, the four parishes were split and attached to larger churches in the vicinity. Culpho chose to go with Grundisburgh, Great Bealings with St Mary's, Woodbridge, while Little Bealings and Playford opted to join Kesgrave despite its being in the adjoining deanery of Colneys. The furore had provided an opportunity for the Diocese to act, something that it would doubtless have had to do at some point in the future.

¹⁰⁵ Her new benefice also had four parishes: Creting St Mary, Creting St Peter and Earl Stonham w. Stonham Parva.

MAINTENANCE TASKS

Although the registers date from the middle of the C17, no daily routine of any sort survives in the records until shortly after the Church's renewed intervention in 1774. Such items are to be found in the churchwardens' account books whose entries are understandably repetitive, many of them frustratingly insubstantial while other items raise more questions than they do answers. Nevertheless, taken as a whole they paint a broad picture of the church in action over a period of some 200 years. Changes can be followed, customs noted and contemporary priorities compared with those of the present day. Churchwardens were the foremost officials in the parish and were chosen by both priest and people at the annual Vestry. Certainly in the C19, they were 'men of good standing', their chief responsibilities being the upkeep of both church and churchyard and the maintenance of services.

The churchyard

It was usual to have two wardens, one an incumbent's warden and the other a people's warden, but Playford at least from the early C19 had only one. Until 1817 when Arthur Biddell took office, farmers at Lux Farm and, before Thomas Clarkson's arrival in the parish in 1816, farmers at Playford Hall Farm also served as wardens. Among their wide ranging duties was the churchyard which was extended to the north in 1911, the former boundary being on a line with the two large lime trees on that side of the church. In their application to Lord Bristol asking if they might expand on to the adjoining arable field, the church wrote that there 'was already a footpath that runs through it and also a cart track which forms the only access to the churchyard for any wheeled traffic...'. Such access was fairly new for when the Clarkson obelisk was erected in March 1858, the difficulties of getting the heavy blocks of granite close to the church door were such that Arthur Biddell, the churchwarden and tenant of the adjoining arable field, considered hauling them up the steep bank from the road.¹⁰⁶ His nephew George Biddell Airy, however, who was working with him on the undertaking, preferred the route across Church Field even though it entailed spanning the deep ditch that separated the two properties as on the eastern side of the churchyard and many graves had to be crossed as well before the church could be reached. In the event it is not known whose preferred route was taken. Working from Greenwich '70 or 80 miles off', Airy felt at a great disadvantage and, in his inability to be present on site, was happy for his uncle to haul them up the bank as he did not doubt that he would 'manage it better and more cheaply'.



One of the two lime trees that marked the pre-1911 northern limit of the original churchyard

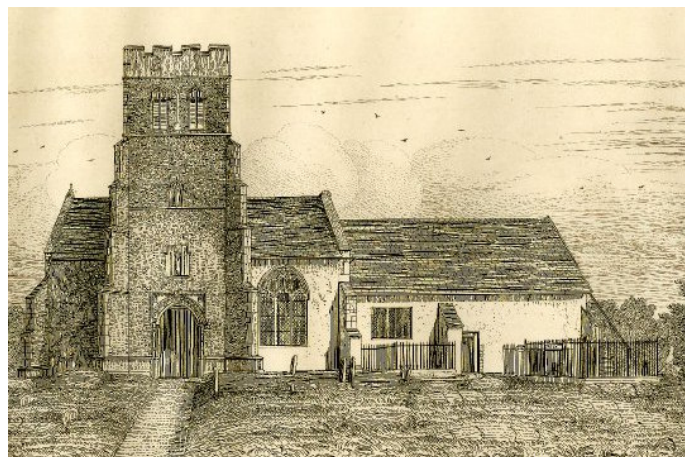
The 1881 OS map clearly shows the problem that George Biddell Airy and his uncle faced: there was no wheeled access into the field from the top of Church Hill. The entrance to the field in fact was from the

¹⁰⁶ Letter from George Biddell Airy to Arthur Biddell, 11 December 1857. Private possession. The stones were delivered to Ipswich Dock from Aberdeen in December 1857; the smaller piece of polished granite bearing the inscription came by rail in March 1858. The lettering, which states 'erected 1857', is therefore not strictly correct. See also Airy's in this series, 8-12.

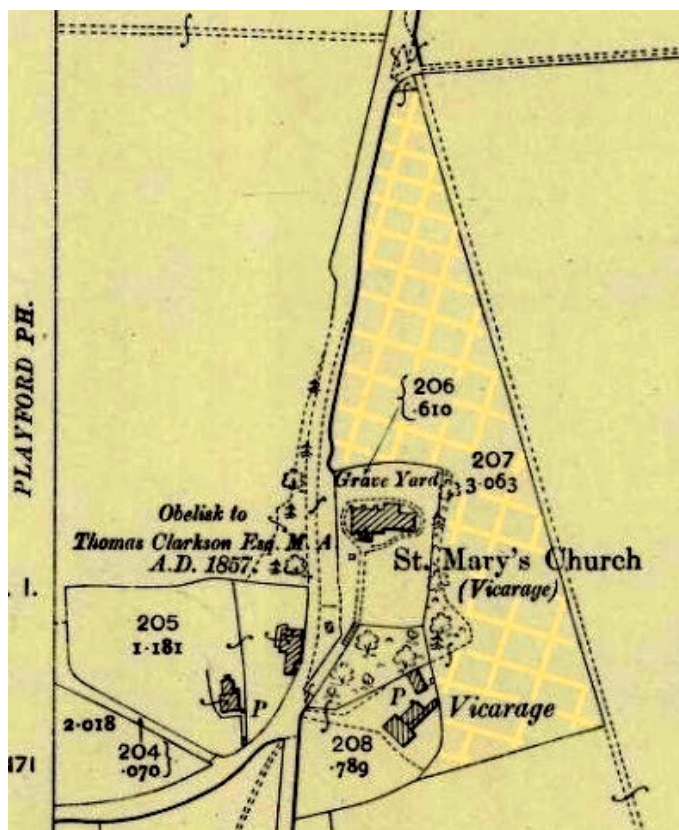
track leading north from Hill Farm past Dairy Cottage, a route to that part of the farm still used in the 1940s when carting muck with horses because of its more gradual incline.¹⁰⁷ By 1900 however, well before thought had been given to a churchyard extension, the problem had been resolved for the terrier states that ‘where there had been a small hand-gate there is now a nine feet cart-gate’.¹⁰⁸

The extensive bank on the east side of Church Hill contained many sizeable trees that became victim to Dutch elm disease in the 1970s and ‘80s. They were taken down, the bank entirely cleared and replanted over the course of the following decade with a mix of other species. Money for the project was provided by the Fiske family. It was given in memory of Peggy and by extension her father George, tenant at Hill Farm from 1896 until his death in 1946, highly active in Village Hall affairs and churchwarden for over 40 years.

Churchyards were historically fenced to prevent the intrusion of farm animals. In Playford’s case, to the north and east there was a deep ditch, on the south side a laurel hedge had been planted in 1845 when



Davy’s drawing of 1842 showing early headstones beginning to thwart reburial



1902 OS map showing how the former Church Field (hatched) completely enveloped all church property

the vicarage was built (but had gone by 1886 presumably when the plantation had grown up and overshadowed it) while to the west there was the very steep drop to the road. In 1793 John Martin was paid for 11 rods of hedging and 25 rods of ditching and hedging plus an allowance for beer. Until the early 1960s grass was cut once a year with a scythe and allowed to dry before raking it up and burning. To facilitate the annual clearance, the southern part of the churchyard was levelled in 1937-38 clearing it of the many mounds that had been made by successive burials as well as mole and ant hills. A mower was bought in the early 1960s and later in the ‘70s a strimmer used around the gravestones. A Ransome’s lawn mower had been bought as early as 1905 but this was merely to cut the verges and the footpath to the south chancel door.

¹⁰⁷ ex inf. Basil Dunnett, employee on Hill Farm.

¹⁰⁸ SROI, FC22/E1/13, Playford churchwardens’ accounts, 1816-1960, 109.

The churchyard extension to the north of the church¹⁰⁹

The area to the south of the church would have been used and re-used for burials for centuries while the area to the north had traditionally been reserved country-wide for outcasts from society, suicides or those who had not been baptised. Such feelings of disgrace however were in decline by the early C19 while at the same time reburial on the south side had been made harder by the new practice of erecting tombstones and other memorials to the dead.¹¹⁰ Instead of the churchyard being covered by large numbers of unmarked graves, burials particularly of the better off, were rendering the area impossible for reuse. Such memorials began to appear on the south side of Playford churchyard in the 1810s with numbers increasing as the century progressed so that by the 1880s the Crisps of Playford Hall as well as second generation Biddell family members were now being buried at the rear of the church.

In 1909 the Marquis of Bristol was approached with a view to acquiring part of Church Field, the then arable field behind the church and which was then part of Hill Farm.¹¹¹ Much work was needed to convert it to a burial ground. A thorn hedge had to be planted, the dividing ditch between the church and field filled in, grass seed had to be sown, a new wicket gate made and the former 'pathway [to the church] widened into a road'.¹¹² The ash and conifer trees which divided the extension into three sections as well as the 'quicks' for the new hedge were provided by Notcutt's who had bought their Ipswich Road property in Woodbridge in 1897.

Some notable burials

Apart from Thomas Clarkson, Sir George Biddell Airy and numerous members of the Biddell family, there are a few lesser individuals caught up with world events who are also interred in the churchyard:

Philip Sherwood (1900-1977), grave no. 31, youngest child of Sam Sherwood tenant at Lux Farm from 1895 to 1928.¹¹³ Enlisting in the Essex Regiment in 1918, he was posted first to Malta and then Istanbul (now Constantinople). Demobbed in 1921 he followed his brother Basil who, just before the Great War, had gone to Malaya to become a



Philip Sherwood worked on the Burma Railway

¹⁰⁹ Interestingly, Martha Bolton was buried on the north side in 1765 close to the vestry that was added some 100 years later. It is likely that she was the wife of Thomas Bolton, 'late Minister of Playford', who was buried in the churchyard seven years later though there is nothing to indicate that he was buried with her. See also fn 40 above.

¹¹⁰ Henry Davy's sketch of 1842 shows the churchyard in transition with Clarkson, Airy and Biddell graves enclosed by railings while lesser families have erected headstones. Hummocks cover the rest of the churchyard. These levelled off over time when coffins gave way and the earth had settled.

¹¹¹ On 21 April 1910 the vicar, the Revd Clement Wright, wrote to Lord Bristol thanking him for 'the piece of land of about half an acre for the extension of St Mary's churchyard as a burial ground for the parish'. The precise area donated by the Marquis was 2 roods and 6 perches.

¹¹² SROI FC22/A1/5. At a Vestry Meeting on 17 April 1906 approval was given for 'a small gate to be erected between the road and path that gives access to the church on the north side'. While there had been pedestrian access to the church and churchyard for a long time, admittance for wheeled vehicles was only made possible some little time before 1900. The new gate was made by Henry Dickinson of Little Bealings whose son Arthur, when in his late 80s, made the chest in the church porch. See Airy's in this series, 9-10, for options considered in 1857 for moving sections of the Clarkson obelisk into position.

¹¹³ A copy of the churchyard plan is kept in the church safe. Philip Sherwood is buried next to his sister Ruth, who had died the previous year, and close to both his brother Basil, who had died at Lux Farm in 1926 while home on leave from Malaya, and their parents Sam (d. 1948) and Mary (d. 1949).

rubber planter. There the younger Sherwood served in the Kedah Volunteer Force with the rank of Captain, was taken prisoner at the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942 and worked on the infamous Burma Railway. From prison camp in Siam (now Thailand) he returned to Malaya where he became senior manager of a 10,000 acre rubber estate. In 1960 he retired back to the UK living firstly in Hampshire and then Surrey but, after an interval of over 50 years, chose to be buried in Playford close to other members of his family.

Peter Wilkinson (1923-2004), unmarked grave, a native of Bournemouth he joined the Royal Marines and, at the age of 21 as a lieutenant, was attached to the Canadian 3rd Division landing in the first wave at 0735



Peter Wilkinson landed on Juno Beach in the first wave at 0735 hrs on D-Day 6 June 1944

hrs on Juno Beach D-Day 6 June 1944. A month later the Canadians were the first troops to enter Caen. He later returned to England before being despatched to Bombay to await the takeover of Singapore from the Japanese. Demobbed in 1946, he went tea planting first in Assam where he stayed until 1955 followed by time in Uganda and Malaya. On leave from Assam he met his future wife at her family home in Clopton, the couple returning to UK in 1965. He then moved into the tasting and packaging side of the business in London living first at Wyverstone and then at Playford by which time he had taken a job in general duties at Felixstowe Docks. By personal choice his ashes are buried in an unmarked spot to the south of the church.¹¹⁴

Arthur Ward (1896-1917), grave no. 100, is the only one among the nine Playford men killed in the Great War to be commemorated on a headstone in the churchyard. An only child, he was a gardener at The Hall where his father was the groom. The family lived in The Stables there, the Victorian addition to the C16 barn that was inserted by Phipson the architect as part of The Hall's 1870's refurbishment. Both his parents had died in their early 50s when Arthur was in his mid-teens but he continued in his employment until enlistment. An elaborate headstone in the far south-eastern corner of the churchyard, brimming with Biblical texts, pays tribute to all three family members. So obviously paid for by Emma and Rosa Crisp, tenants at The Hall and generous supporters of the church, shows the extent of their grief.¹¹⁵ Arthur Ward is of course not buried with his parents but at Étaples Military Cemetery 27 kms south of Boulogne having died of wounds at the age of 21 in a local hospital. The cemetery is the largest of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in France containing over 10,000 Commonwealth burials from World War I. The town itself was home to 16 hospitals and a convalescent depot.

Ernest George Dunnett (1914-1918), unmarked grave, a four year old boy, victim of the 1918 Spanish 'Flu epidemic which is thought to have killed as many as 50m people worldwide. He was the son of Ernest Dunnett (1871-1967), a farm labourer who had been born in Little Bealings and moved to Playford as a

¹¹⁴ Magazine of the Benefice of Gt & Lt Bealings w. Playford and Culpho, September 2004.

¹¹⁵ SROB GB554/G/4/3, The Suffolk Regiments See also page 40 below where Ward's name is included on the alabaster plaque north of the chancel arch together with the eight others who also lost their lives. A similar list on a wooden board hangs in the Village Hall but with the additional 41 names of those who also served but were 'mercifully spared'. The list includes names from both Playford and Culpho together with the units to which they were attached.

child. Had he lived he would have been the great-uncle of brothers Basil (1934-2003) and Geoffrey Dunnett (b. 1936) of more recent times.¹¹⁶

Also of note are Edward Charles Hakewill (1816-72), grave no. 75, prominent Victorian church architect who built Playford Mount in 1867 for his retirement,¹¹⁷ Sir William Traven Aitken (1903-64), grave no. 12, nephew of Lord Beaverbrook who was Minister for aircraft production in WW2, Conservative MP for Bury St Edmunds from 1950 until his death in 1964 and first owner of Playford Hall to live in the house after its sale by the Bristol family. And Francis Seymour Stevenson (1862-1938), grave no. 35, Liberal MP for Eye from 1885-1906 and builder of Playford parish hall in 1897.¹¹⁸

General maintenance

Windows required frequent repair. In the days long before the provision of facilities for youths, windows were far more likely, as evidenced in other parishes, to have been broken by young lads when playing ball games in the churchyard than they were to have been damaged by storms.¹¹⁹ Very few, if any, gravestones would have interfered with their activities but nevertheless the ground would have been a mass of hummocks. In 1801 an entry states 'sent some coal up to the church for Glazier when mending the windows 0s 6d'. In 1805 a major repair cost £2 11s 1d, another in 1812 cost 14s 1½d and in 1828 'church windows two years £1 15s 4d'. No doubt it was while on a Visitation in 1853 that the Archdeacon ordered the replacement of a whole new window that cost £11 0s 0d. Throughout the C19 much effort was spent on maintaining the church path both in terms of brickwork for the steps as well as replacing gravel for its upper and lower sections. Both materials came from within the parish, the bricks from Kiln Farm (then known as Brick Kiln Farm) and the gravel it is presumed from Playford Heath. An entry in 1811 records damage done to half an acre of oats in 'Digging Land' for gravel while another in 1832 itemises the 'expense of harvesting the Parish Oats on the Heath'. Transport to the churchyard was provided by a farmer and charged to the church, the farmer most likely being Arthur Biddell of Hill Farm who from 1816 was also churchwarden.

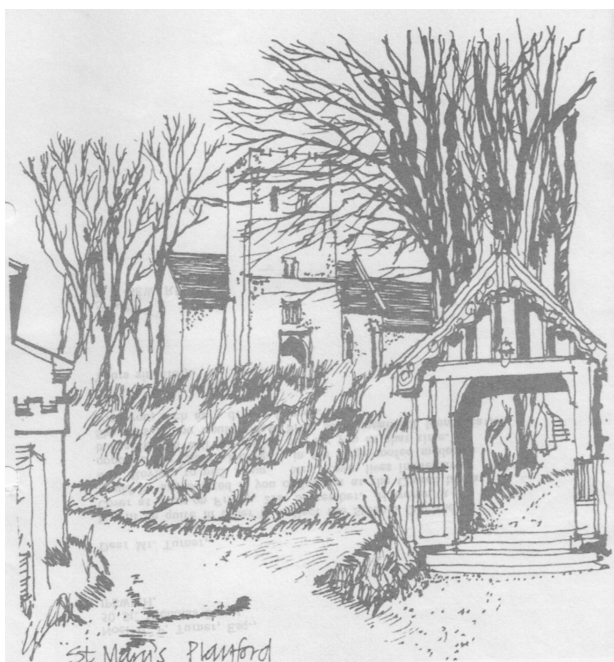
Throughout the century there was always some form of maintenance work going on that went far beyond the mere sweeping up of leaves. In 1828 there was a major refurbishment. Three horses and a man were employed for 3½ days carting gravel from Lucks Walks at a cost of £1 0s 5d on top of which Isaac Rush was paid a total of 3s 9d 'for filling 15 loads of gravel at the Pit'. At the same time Henry Gooding was paid for 7 days work at the path. Two years later in 1830-31 570 bricks were bought for the steps which Gooding seems to have laid. But three years later, in 1834, much of his work was undone by a 'great flood' when, it has to be assumed, a great deal of the gravel was washed into the lane. In the spring and summer of 1836 a further 500 white bricks were invoiced suggesting that damage to the steps had been extensive. Twenty years later in 1853 the exercise was repeated all over again when another 1,050 'white lumps' were required for the steps. Three men and two boys spent two days fetching and spreading gravel as before. And again in 1888. Just like the broken windows, the path required constant attention but the root cause of the problem never seems to have been resolved.

¹¹⁶ He is buried at the west end of the church in an unmarked grave between the old shed, now a toilet, and grave no. 45, that of Francis and Eliza Coates. Vera Dunnett, (b. 1919), a sister, ex. inf.

¹¹⁷ Cynthia Brown, 1989. *Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeol. & History*, XXXVII, Locally E C Hakewill worked on Rushmere and Grundisburgh churches. See also fn 85.

¹¹⁸ See Village Hall in this series for more on F S Stevenson. He lived at Playford Mount from 1890 until his wife's death in 1934 when he moved to Felixstowe.

¹¹⁹ David Dymond, *The Business of the Suffolk Parish*, (Needham Market, 2018), 59. The ball games played could have included cricket or 'camping - a form of football-cum-handball'.



Lychgate of 1948 in memory of Mary Ann Mann, licensed victualler of the Kicking Donkey EADT

proclaims, ‘worshipped at Playford church and was interred in the churchyard in July 1887’. Mary Ann Mann ran the Kicking Donkey beer house, the last of three such establishments in the village. It stood in the south-east corner of Archway Field, part of a five house terrace that faced east on to Butts Road immediately opposite the turn into Church Lane. Beer houses came about as a result of government attempts in the early C19 to wean the population off cheap gin and curtail the widespread drunkenness that went with it. The Beer House Act of 1830 was introduced by Wellington’s Tory government. It abolished the tax on beer and, for a fee of just two guineas paid to the local excise officer, permitted anyone to sell it. It also made a distinction between a beer house, where beer was permitted to be consumed on the premises, and a beer shop which permitted off-sales only. The success of the Act was immediate and as many as 24,000 such licenses were granted nationwide in the first few months. Playford was quick off the mark, the first such property was already up and running in one or other of the two halves of Copyhold when Arthur Biddell bought the property in 1833. The second beer house was the White Horse Inn, later known as the Eel’s Foot, which stood in Church Lane where the council

In 1841 1,500 red bricks were bought for the building of a new ‘privy’ at a cost of £9 0s 8½d.¹²⁰ Interestingly, it was sited not in the churchyard as would be expected but deliberately just outside its boundary immediately opposite the north-east buttress of the chancel.¹²¹ While it can only be imagined why this was so, it is tempting to speculate what prompted the project in the first place. Could it have been an increase in the length of services influenced by the Tractarian Movement which was active at the time with their ‘great oratory’ and who elevated religious discussion and the importance of the pulpit in the 1830s?¹²²

The lychgate

At the foot of the path stands the lychgate which, despite its earlier appearance, was not built until 1948 since when it has become an iconic feature in the village. It was erected by James Mann in memory of his mother Mary Ann some 60 years after her death who, as the plaque



Mary Ann Mann (1829-87)

¹²⁰ SROI FC22/E1/13. Churchwarden’s accounts, 1816-1960.

¹²¹ 1881 OS map where it is marked in red denoting brickwork. It is also shown in black, though far less clearly, on maps of 1902 and 1925.

¹²² See the ‘Church Census of 1851’ above.

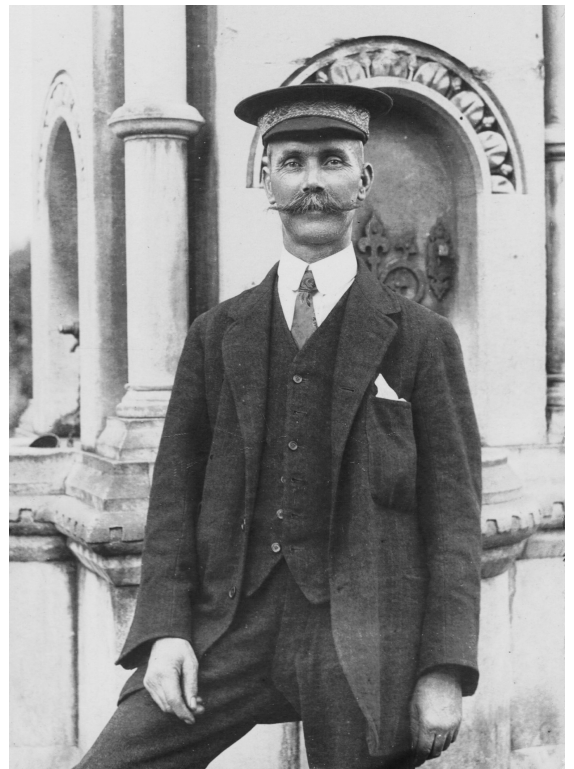
houses now stand and immediately opposite the entrance into The Courts. It might well have closed its doors before being demolished in 1872 as the Kicking Donkey is known to have been open for business by 1870 and it is unlikely that the village had two such establishments operating at the same time.

Mary Ann and her husband James were already occupying the lowermost house in the terrace nearest The Green at the top of Brook Lane and her immediate neighbour, George Page, moved out to New Buildings so that the two dwellings could be knocked into one. Mary Ann continued to live in the bottom house while the pub itself occupied the next one up. It remained open for some twenty years and, after Mary Ann's death in 1887, was run briefly by her husband who sadly ended his days in the Woodbridge Union Workhouse at Nacton a year after the pub's demolition.

For 34 years the terrace, originally built as a pair of semi-detached cottages but sub-divided in the 1830s, had been in the ownership of the Waller Bates family, farmers and incumbents in the village of Blaxhall. They had allowed it to fall into total decay and, 'dilapidated and beyond repair', it was knocked down in 1892 when Herman Biddell built Archway House for his retirement. The terrace was known Barrack Cottages as, like The Old Post Office on the corner of Hill Farm Road and Foxboro' at the top of it, it was built out of materials from the old barracks on the Woodbridge Road at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. But with a life of just 70 years, it was clearly not constructed to the same standard as the other two which remain (2022) standing, a fact that did not go unnoticed by those who witnessed its building at the time.

Mary Ann had moved down from Yaxley near Eye in her early 20s to be in service in one of the big houses in the village. Here she soon met and married James, a local farm worker, in 1854 and it was their youngest son, also James, who donated the lychgate. Born in 1869 the sixth of seven children he was brought up in the beer house and, while still living at home, started out at work as a gardener at Playford Hall for the Crisps. In 1894 he married a girl from Ashfield and by 1901 the couple had moved to St Edmund's Road in Ipswich where he first worked as a coachman. It was later that year that he was appointed to take over the supervision of the Upper Arboretum and by 1911 they were living in Arboretum Lodge with James as a gardener for the Corporation. Many postcards from the period show his magnificent floral and carpet bedding displays.

In 1927 James Mann became the Corporation's Parks Superintendent with responsibility for all Ipswich's parks and open spaces and moved from Arboretum Lodge to the lodge on the other side of Christchurch Park, 53 Bolton Lane.¹²³ In retirement he lived on Valley Road and died in 1954 aged 84. His wife had predeceased him in 1946; there were no children of the marriage. Living on his own and, with his mother in an unmarked grave in Playford churchyard, he went ahead and built this impressive entrance gateway to the church which was officially opened by his younger sister, also called Mary Ann, on 25 July 1948. The two siblings had been brought up in the Kicking Donkey. Mary Ann junior (b. 1871) married a George Whitman from Tuddenham. Their son Cyril became Company Secretary at Ransome's, the world renowned Ipswich engineering company and his only



James Mann (1870-1954), her son

¹²³ David Miller, *Ipswich Arboretum, A History and Celebration* (Crewkerne, 2014), 84-87.

child, Lyn Smith of Marlborough Road, became Secretary of the Ipswich Institute in Tavern Street. In turn Lyn Smith's son taught music at Amberfield School in Nacton which closed in 2011 and which in its earlier history had been the Woodbridge Union workhouse where his great-great-grandfather had died in 1893.

Church heating and lighting

Inside the church the churchwardens' tasks could be as onerous as the broken windows and the troublesome footpath, whose demands were unceasing. It had always been a difficult church to heat partly because of its position on top of a hill but also because its height was made worse when the barrel roof was removed at the time of Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 to be replaced by the present open trussed construction. On 3 April 1785, in spring rather than the depths of winter, William Layton recorded beside an entry in the baptism register: 'The same day the Frost was so intense that the Bason of Water in the Font was frozen over during the Morning Service'.¹²⁴ And in 1818 Kersey the builder from Great Bealings was employed to 'stop the wind from gitting into the church' most likely by way of the eaves. By the time that the churchwarden's accounts start in the late 1700s congregations were already seated making the task of keeping worshippers warm even more difficult than before. And prior to the introduction of pews, and particularly if there were tiles or bricks rather than bare earth, bracken or other vegetable matter was often strewn on church floors to keep feet from freezing.

A variety of fuels and stoves were used over the years but it was not until 1979 that a successful form of heating was finally employed: low level tubular electric heaters in the pews. Prior to that, stoves were lit on Saturday afternoons for Sunday morning services but following the fuel crisis of 1973 the cost of such extravagance became prohibitive. In 1818 'old Baker' was paid £1 3s 6d for 'drawing whins into the church shed' for use as kindling which would have been found in abundance on the heath. Coal was used in 1835. A few years after this a delivery of 'firewood' would have been for the stove underneath the nave and accessed down steps on the north side of the church. In 1842 a Mr Ransome was brought in to 'carry out an experiment for an open fireplace which failed... new and enlarged pipes were wanted to keep the present stove from smoking'. A chimney, that is still in place, rises through the south-west corner of the tower emerging at the top but it is not known if it is the original or whether the suggested increase in size was ever taken up. In 1853 a new stove was bought (with 8s 0d credit on the old one for scrap which weighed in at over 16 stones) and in 1856 and 1859 deliveries of cleaner burning coke were made. Both coal and coke were purchased through William Woby, the market gardener and shopkeeper who rented from Arthur Biddell the four acre field behind Copyhold and who sold his produce through the brick shed on Butts Road that has only recently been pulled down.

At some point around 1871 Woby and his wife disappeared from the records and he is next found as a widower in 1881 in far away Wolferton on the Sandringham Estate working as a gardener for Willoughby Dickinson the one-time perpetual curate in Playford. The tenancy of the shop and its trade with the church had passed to Elijah Amoss. Amoss had married a Sarah Garrod who ran a shop from Bridge Cottage and, with the addition of the four acres of land in Church Lane, increased the size of their combined businesses substantially such that Amoss became a 'pork butcher and retail grocer'.

¹²⁴ SROI, FC 22/D1/1, Playford Baptism Register. Baptism of Rebecca daughter of John Garwood from a prominent and long-standing Playford family that also went by the name of Garrod. A Ben Garrod (1790-1872) was Manfred Biddell's farming bailiff who lived in Lux Farm House for 15 years until Manfred married in 1854. A grandson, Ben Garwood, died in South Africa in the Boer War and is commemorated on the memorial in Christchurch Park. A Sarah Garrod (1819-1884) ran the village shop, then at Bridge Cottage, from the early 1840s. A Bessie Garwood was a grandmother of Geoff Dunnett, gardener at Hill House until 2020. And C20 descendants of Playford's Ben Garrod became managers, father and son, of the large maltings on the quayside at Mistley which were ultimately owned by the brewers Ind Coope.

Another new stove was bought in 1905 and yet another in 1931. This was ‘an underground heating stove with grating in the nave’. As heat from this did not reach the choir stalls, ‘a small heating oil stove’ was purchased to heat the chancel and explains why oil at that time was bought in such quantities over and above what would have been required for the lamps. In the 1930s oil was bought 40 gallons a time from wholesalers in Ipswich but during the war it is known that the churchwarden purchased just six gallons at a time from the village shop. The use of oil however does not appear to have lasted long as, just before the end of the war in March 1945, ‘the derelict heating system’ was replaced. By 1953 an emergency meeting was called to discuss the poor condition of the chancel stove chimney pipe with the decision being taken to buy two new Tortoise solid fuel stoves for which coal was stored either in the shed in the churchyard or in the one in The Hollow opposite Airy’s Cottage at the foot of Church Hill.¹²⁵ Whether this actually went ahead is not recorded as only two years later in 1955 a new 200 gallon oil tank was bought and placed on the north side of the nave. Such a small tank required frequent re-filling. The delivery lorry would park on Church Hill and the hosepipe dragged up the bank from the road. It was not a popular job with drivers. What burner or burners were initially used is not known but within five years, by 1960, two ‘Coleman’ burners were placed in the church, one in the chancel behind the pulpit and the other to the west of the south door of the nave. In order to properly warm the church the heating was turned on on Saturday afternoons but in the 1973 oil crisis the rector, the Revd J Gordon Steven, brought the time of Evensong forward from 6.30 pm to 4.00 pm in order to save fuel.¹²⁶

Electricity had been connected in 1949 but only for lighting.¹²⁷ In 1979 when tubular heaters were first fitted in the pews, they were very underpowered drawing only 19 kW and reaching to only half the choir stalls. Their output had to be supplemented by numerous portable bottle gas heaters around the church and it was to be another 20 years before the system was satisfactorily updated. For the first time heating could be switched on and off remotely without the need for human attendance. The vicarage was connected to the mains at the same time but no power points above 5 amps were fitted.

Public Announcements

Churchwardens’ regular responsibilities included the supply of Communion bread and wine for ‘The Sacrement’, the wine being bought from Ridleys. They also saw to minor repairs, both inside and outside the church, whitewashing the interior, washing the parson’s surplice and attending Visitations at Woodbridge held by either the archdeacon or the bishop. The accounts also show payment of 1s 0d each for ‘Thanks Given Prayers’ for Admiral Nelson’s victory at the Battle of the Nile in 1798 and in the same year for Admiral Warren’s success in heading off a French fleet intent on invading Ireland. In 1801 there was a ‘procklination on the Recovery of the King’ which regrettably was premature for George III’s recurrent illness returned and by 1811 he had become permanently insane living out the rest of his life in seclusion at Windsor Castle.

¹²⁵ Both coal and coke were supplied by Last & Dunnett of Little Bealings who had a coal yard at Bealings station. As a major item of recurring expenditure, fuel is unlikely to have been overlooked by the bookkeepers and a reason for its absence from the accounts could well be that it was given to the church by one of the parishioners.

¹²⁶ East Anglian Daily Times, November 1973.

¹²⁷ SROI, FC22/E4/6. The PCC wanted wall brackets but the Diocesan Advisory Committee insisted on pendants hanging from ‘the tips of the hammer-head projections of the lowest beams’. The chancel had been lit by six wrought iron standard lamps and two further lamps in wrought iron brackets on each side of the chancel arch.

THE ANNUAL VESTRY

Recorded in the churchwardens' account book are minutes of Vestry meetings dealing with three key secular matters in the parish around the years 1870-72 before civil powers were handed to parish councils.¹²⁸ Until that time, Vestries were the sole governing body within a parish making use of Church chairmanship as well as church property in which to hold meetings. It is of interest to see them at work in their final years dealing with what today would be emotive subjects. The first item concerned the diversion of footpaths that were deemed to be too close to Playford Hall, the second concerned the replacement of the level crossing with a bridge over the railway line as too many trains were crashing into the gates while the third concerned the setting up of a Board School in either Playford or one of the Bealings following the passing of the Elementary Education Act of 1870.¹²⁹ The Vestry's first responsibility was for the poor of the parish closely followed by the repair of the roads. They paid the salaries of the Parish Clerk and the sexton and for the expenses incurred at the Rogationtide beating of the bounds.¹³⁰

These meetings were not well attended. Always present were the vicar, who in the early 1870s was the Revd Christopher Hodgson who was in the chair, and the brothers Manfred and Herman Biddell farmers of Lux and Hill Farms respectively. Only two or three others usually joined them most probably because they were held on weekdays during working hours. Voting was by show of hands but was somehow meaningless. In the case of the footpath diversions at Playford Hall the two tenants proposed and seconded acceptance and voted in favour while the other three present voted against but the motion still went ahead. A second meeting was held at which J H Turner, Lord Bristol's agent, was present as was E C Hakewill of Playford Mount, George Biddell Airy, Elijah Amoss the shopkeeper and William Howell the miller. The resolution that Lord Bristol be allowed to divert the two paths was proposed by Manfred and seconded by Herman Biddell and passed unanimously. This was in complete contradiction to what Herman was to write some 45 years later when he said that: 'It is painful to bring to remembrance what the path in its superb beauty was like. The trees which bordered it met over the path. It was a sylvan tunnel and what added to its intense interest was it was made on a slight curve so that from neither end could you see the other. Suffice it to say there was no piece of rural landscape which would compare with it'. Tellingly he added: The parish made no objection, for the Marquis the parishioners would have suppressed any feelings they might have had...'¹³¹

The replacement of the level crossing was uncontroversial and passed unanimously but a vote of whether to erect a school room for the parish or to unite with Bealings for a District School did not at first go the Biddells' way. Great Bealings had invited Playford to a meeting to discuss the matter but a meeting in Playford agreed, on the casting vote of the chairman, that their invitation 'should be respectfully declined'. The Biddells, being the principal rate payers in the parish, did not want to be burdened with the full cost of having their own school and preferred the cheaper option of sharing the expense with other parishes. The Biddells had lost - for the moment - but fully two years later Great Bealings, conscious that Playford had made no progress in erecting their own school, sent a second invitation. By now the chairman who made the casting vote had left the parish and another keen advocate of Playford having its own school had recently died giving the Biddells a clear run. A meeting was quickly arranged within two weeks of receipt of the Bealings letter. Only Herman Biddell as churchwarden and David Mann the sexton and parish clerk

¹²⁸ SROI, FC22/A1/3, FC22 A1/4 and FC22 E1/13 76-77, 80.

¹²⁹ See in this series Playford Hall 9-10 also SROI, FC22/A1/3 and SROI, 276/242b for footpath diversions; Glenham 11 for the railway crossing and Foxboro 12-14 for early discussions on the setting up of a Board School.

¹³⁰ See in this series Hill House, 9. Manfred Biddell, as a lad of 13, attended the last such occasion in 1835.

¹³¹ Private possession. Herman Biddell, Playford Hall - as it was and as it is, Typescript, 1915.

appear to have been present but the proposal for forming a school board for the parishes of Great and Little Bealings, Playford and Kesgrave was passed.¹³²

The Vestry was soon to come to an end

The Vestry as a governing body was to last another 50 years but was soon to have its secular powers stripped from it and given to the newly created Parish Councils. Gladstone's 1888 Local Government Act had carried out reforms at county level while a subsequent Act in 1894 introduced elected councils at both district and parish levels. Thereafter there was no further change until the years immediately after the First World War. The Church, no doubt greatly influenced by the General Election of December 1918, when not only women over 30 but all men over 21 regardless of their means were allowed to vote for the first time.¹³³ New 'Rules for the Representation of the Laity' were adopted by the Church in 1919 and in 1921 all remaining functions of the old Vestry Meetings were transferred to Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) membership of which was now by election, rather than by invitation, at Annual Parochial Church Meetings (APCMs). The last meeting of the old Vestry held, jointly with Culpho, was on 8 February 1922 in the Parish Hall when undoubtedly the new arrangements were discussed. The only item documented however was that 'under the new ruling' the church accounts were to close on 31 December instead of at Easter the following year. There is then a gap in the minutes and the first recorded meeting of the new PCC is not until 21 February 1927, a full five years after the new group was first set up. At a later APCM the vicar, the Revd. George Kirkpatrick, helpfully left a note saying that 'minutes of meetings between 1927-28 and 1931 will be found in the small red book'. But that red book is now missing and no account therefore exists of the first nine years under the new system of governance. The old Vestry had met just once a year at Easter whereas the new church council was to convene on two occasions, usually one in late summer or autumn preparatory to an APCM that was open to all members on the Electoral Roll in February or March. But during the war years of 1939-45 such orderliness went awry and in many years meetings reverted to one single annual occasion. While such matters were put right in the immediate post-war period, it was not until the early 1970s that meetings were held quarterly with dates, including that of the APCM, agreed a year in advance.

While Miss Emma Crisp from The Hall had previously been the only woman to have been invited to the old Vestry, in the mood of the changing times, the new PCC was made up almost entirely of female members. Apart from the vicar and his two churchwardens, there were in fact 11 out of a total of 14 with Emma Crisp being the only member to have transferred from the old committee to the new.

It would have been of interest to know more about these years of transition and what in particular caused an incumbent of the time to write rather mockingly on the inside of the new minute book. Quoting from the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) measure of 1921 he wrote: '... the primary duty of the Council in every parish [is] to co-operate with the incumbent in the initiation, conduct and development of Church work both within the parish and outside...'. Underneath in pencil slightly mis-quoting the German playwright Friedrich Schiller he added: 'Mit der Dummheit Kampfen gotten selbst' which translates as: 'With stupidity the gods themselves struggle in vain'.

¹³² See Foxboro in this series, 12-13.

¹³³ Women, however, had to wait until 1928 before they could go to the polls at the same age as men.

Is this disdain for the new democratic structure and a yearning for former times when the Vestry was selected by those who were already in power?¹³⁴

Deprived of its secular responsibilities, the Vestry had comparatively little to do and its meetings between the years 1895 and 1922 consisted in the main of a very brief record of what had happened in the preceding 12 months. While in 1904 the appointment of a second warden is given comprehensive coverage (see above), other events received only superficial treatment. In 1914 for example the minute states that ‘a letter was read from the Bishop of St. Edmundsbury & Ipswich’ with no mention at all of what was in it. A new Diocese had in fact been created only three months earlier in part from that of Norwich (in which Playford had been since records began) and also of Ely. In 1915 a shortage of people to do things received more thorough coverage. It was noted that William Frost, deputy church clerk, had died and for 25 years was ‘never once was absent from his duty’. A replacement had been found in David Garwood. The rate for the job was 1s 0d per service ‘whether on a Sunday or a weekday and when there is a fire but otherwise 6d’. The post was subject to three months notice. The meeting also noted that an organ blower was required for which the pay was 3d for services as well as for weekday choir practice.¹³⁵ Four years later in 1919 Francis Seymour Stevenson, always a fighter for the underprivileged, declared that ‘in view of the present enhanced cost of labour [due to wartime inflation] the sexton’s fees... should be amended by such percentage as may be fitting’ and accordingly remuneration for both clerk and verger was raised by 50%.

An ecclesiastical decision: the Vestry agrees to renew the nave roof

There is a record of one other Vestry meeting among the churchwardens’ accounts but, unlike the three earlier ones, this concerns church rather than civil property. At a meeting on 11 June 1897, little more than a week before Victoria celebrated her Diamond Jubilee, it was agreed that the existing barrel roof of the nave be replaced by one similar to that which had been built into the new chancel some 25 years earlier. The roof was in need of total repair and at some earlier point it had been mooted to have the work done to mark the forthcoming celebrations. Within a month a quote for £150 had been given by Kerseys of Great Bealings and while the work was in progress church services would be held in the newly opened parish room. Work was completed by the end of October. On 3 November the church was re-opened with a thanksgiving service for the harvest and the sermon preached by the Bishop of Norwich in whose Diocese Playford then formed part.

The speed, from inception to completion, at which the project was carried out has to be marvelled at. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners were approached for funds but could not help and there was no time to be spent in money raising. The total cost of £175 was paid for by a handful of people, Willoughby Dickinson, who had left the parish some 40 years earlier, and Francis Seymour Stevenson providing half of the money that was needed. And although the plaque on the west wall of the nave states that ‘the expense incurred was defrayed... from every household in the parish...’ the ‘small sums from cottages’ amounted to just 12s 0d.

¹³⁴ In the early part of the C20 regular members of the Vestry were the two churchwardens with the vicar in the chair. Also invited were one of the Miss Crisps from the Hall, William Threadkell her coachman and choir member, George Mower one of her gardeners, Henry Barnes Mendham shop keeper (from 1908 to 1923) and church organist and David Garwood a gardener in the village who took on the duties of deputy church clerk following the death of William Frost in 1915. Meetings were held variously in either the church, village hall or the vicarage.

¹³⁵ SROI FC22/A1/5. PCC Minutes 1927-54. By 1937 the organ blower’s salary had been increased to 4d for each attendance and was to receive a further 50% increase raising it to 6d.

THE FREQUENCY OF CHURCH SERVICES AND CHANGING LITURGY

It was not until 1902, with the introduction of a Register of Services, that any idea is known about the type and frequency of Sunday services held in the church. With a priest covering just the twin parishes of Playford and Culpho throughout the 1920s and '30s a two-weekly rota was more or less maintained consisting of three services one Sunday (8.00 am Holy Communion, 11.00 am Matins and 6.30 pm Evensong) followed by two services the next (11.00 am Matins followed by Holy Communion and Evensong at 6.30 pm). There was a sermon at both morning and evening prayer but on the retirement of the Revd Clement Wright in 1926 it was his successor George Kirkpatrick who introduced an additional 8.00 am Holy Communion a practice that was continued by his successor the Revd Dr Harry Baylis. Later, during Baylis's incumbency and that of the Revd Daniel Ambrose who followed him, the frequency of the 8.00 am service was reduced.¹³⁶

The outbreak of war on 3 September 1939 however brought changes. Judging by the size of the collection that Sunday morning, only 4s 6d instead of the more usual 10s to £1, the 11.00 am service was poorly attended as, presumably, many had stayed away to hear Prime Minister Chamberlain make his fateful announcement at 11.15 am on the Home Service. Evensong that day was cancelled, the Revd Daniel Ambrose entering in the Register: 'War Declared'. And because of the subsequent blackout, all such further evening services were brought forward to 3.00 pm. except in the bitterly cold winter of 1940 when they stopped altogether. They resumed in the spring when the former cycle of three services followed by two services each Sunday was resumed.¹³⁷ Evensong returned to its traditional time of 6.30 pm from the end of March to early October but, later in the war, was dropped in favour of a service at 8.30 am.¹³⁸

In the immediate post war years and well into the 1950s village life continued from where it had left off in 1939. Activity in the Village Hall resumed at its 1930's rate, young couples still restricted by a lack of transport, married within the village and the church returned to three services on each and every Sunday.¹³⁹ But on the death of the Revd Frederick Keighley of Tuddenham in 1956, Playford was united with that parish and the number of services reduced. Evensong was immediately dropped for the winter months. The Revd Ernest Broadbent was the first vicar of the new Benefice but on his sudden death in 1959, Playford became the responsibility of the rector of the Bealings and the frequency of services was reduced again. In Playford these were at either 9.30 am or 11.00 am for morning service and at 6.30 pm for Evensong but by 1969 the frequency had fallen yet again to a single service each week. This one morning service was maintained, with occasional help from retired priests and Lay Readers, for the next 25 years until the Revd Michael Skliros's departure in 1995.

Skliros's unscheduled departure brought forward a change that would in any case have happened on his retirement seven years later. The four parishes of Great & Little Bealings w. Playford and Culpho, with fewer than 1,000 parishioners between them, were deemed by the Diocese to be only half a benefice and were to be served in future by a priest working half time and therefore receiving half stipend. The living

¹³⁶ SROI, FC22/C9/1-4, Playford Register of services.

¹³⁷ January 1940 was the coldest month in southern England for 100 years and was the month that an RAF Hurricane crashed into the council house No. 1 Hill Farm Road.

¹³⁸ Daylight saving was first introduced in the UK in 1916. At the end of the summer in 1940 clocks were not put back an hour as was usual but were still put forward an hour in the following spring. Double Summer Time ran from April to August rather than to October and continued until 1945.

¹³⁹ Those married in this period were Cyril Gardiner, son of Arthur Gardiner postmaster and boot maker, who lived at The Meadows in Hill Farm Road and Audrey Cole who lived at Crossing Keeper's Cottage; Jim Woods of New Buildings, tractor driver on Lux Farm, and Annie Page from The Meadows; Basil Dunnett, pig man on Hill Farm also of The Meadows and Joyce Francis in service at Archway House and Cyril Winearls of Dairy Cottage and Thelma Cole.

no longer attracted the main breadwinner in a clergyman's household and for the next 22 years was served by a succession of three married women in middle life who, in order to give the Diocese the flexibility it wanted, were licensed for just five years at a time rather than given the freehold until they either died or retired. Dairy Cottage was initially made available for use as an office but was little used and only one of the three female priests ever lived in the actual Benefice and then only briefly. The Playford rectory in Hill Farm Road was sold and a replacement bought at the top of Warren Lane but, when not let out commercially, was used to house other Diocesan staff. Unsurprisingly, frequency of services were subjected to further change. Skliros had been the last full time priest and had invariably held one service a week in Playford throughout the five years that he was in office but, after he left, this decreased sharply with fortnightly services becoming more and more frequent as the years went by.

After the Revd Celia Cook's resignation in October 2018 two services a month became the norm but from Christmas 2019, when the parish was joined with Kesgrave, that frequency was halved yet again. In January 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic took hold in the UK and, while there was one service in March, all churches in England were closed until July. On re-opening that summer, the congregation had to follow a strict protocol that included the wearing of face masks, hand sanitation and the maintenance of a two metre distance between individuals. Additionally, while access to the church was through the south tower porch in the usual way the exit had to be through the chancel door. It was not until February 2022 that a regular pattern of two services a month was set up, both at 10.00 am on the first and third Sundays in a month.

Updating the liturgy and monitoring attendance

In 1980, the Church of England updated its liturgy with the introduction of the Alternative Service Book (ASB) so called because it was introduced as an alternative rather than a replacement for the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. Evensong was the first to go, although the last such service to be held in Playford was in 1979 before the ASB was introduced. Matins, with or without the singing of psalms, continued until 1992 specifically to allow a Lay Reader to conduct services without communion while the 8.00 am communion service using the Book of Common Prayer remained ever popular with a loyal minority and continued as part of the regular cycle until the break-up of the Benefice in October 2018.¹⁴⁰

Analysing attendance numbers is more difficult. No such records exist before 1973 other than those of communicants and no records of any sort exist before 1902. Earlier turnouts can only be distinguished by the varying size of the collection bag.¹⁴¹ But when three services were on offer each Sunday in a village of little more than 200 souls, numbers at any one service would not have been great. From the time that a single Sunday morning service was established in the late 1960s, numbers held up fairly well varying between 20 and 40 later dropping away in the 1980s and early '90s to around 20, a figure that was maintained until the break-up of the Benefice in 2018. Two services that were always well attended, attracting some 90-100 people, were the annual carol service and the Christmas midnight mass. From the 1980s onwards all services were boosted by an excellent benefice choir. They robed, they processed and invariably sang an anthem which they sang well. Congregations would have been much smaller and services much less colourful without their regular attendance.

¹⁴⁰ The Book of Common Prayer, much loved for the beauty of its language, was a product of the Reformation following Henry VIII's break with Rome in 1531. Several editions were published but that of 1662, printed two years after the Restoration, remained in general use until recent years.

¹⁴¹ SROI FC22/C9/1-4, Registers of Services. The first of these from 1902-20 contained no provision for numbers attending services and only those who took communion were written down. Later registers dated 1920-37, 1937-55 and 1955-73 included columns for total numbers present but, for some reason, they were never filled in.

Thereafter numbers fell by about half due to the combined effects of the collapse of the Benefice in the autumn of 2018 that was swiftly followed by the outbreak of Covid-19 in the spring of 2020. A few key supporters had moved away, deaths among the elderly were not replaced by a younger generation but the main reason was probably that Covid had broken people's habit of attending church on Sunday mornings. It was a national problem.

Special services

That the church was central to village life is made clear from the fact that all royal occasions, notably coronations and marriages of successive Princes of Wales, began with a service in the building. All such celebrations followed the same established format. From Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, the printed programme-cum-invitation laid down that 'The Company' will assemble at Playford Hall or other venue and 'walk in procession for a SERVICE at the church and on return DINNER will be served in the Marquee'. For more recent jubilee occasions the church service has been cut back to a 'short open air' gathering and indeed for the Diamond Jubilee in 2012 this was reduced even further to a 'Blessing by the Vicar'.

The church of course held special services at the end of both World Wars. At 7.00 pm on Tuesday 12 November 1918 there was a 'special service of thanksgiving for the 'Armistice concluding war with Germany' on the previous day and at 7.00 pm on Tuesday 8 May 1945 a 'Spontaneous Thanksgiving' for the defeat of Nazi Germany. A full 'Thanksgiving for Victory in Europe Service' was held at 11.00 am on the following Sunday but celebrations in the village for VE Day were somewhat subdued as thoughts remained focussed on the four Playford men still held prisoner by the Japanese.¹⁴² There was however a well attended 'Thanksgiving Service' in the church on the following Sunday. For VJ Day, 15 August 1945, a 'Thanksgiving Service' was held in the church at 11.00 am on the following Sunday with another for children at 6.30 the same evening. No observance whatever took place in the village for VJ Day itself.

The largest attendance in the church in recent times was the Commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act on 25 March 2007 in honour of Thomas Clarkson, resident at Playford Hall from 1816 until his death in 1846. It was Clarkson who amassed all the necessary evidence for the Act while Wilberforce was given the task of seeing it through Parliament. Some 225 people attended including 49 members of the far-flung Clarkson family as well as County, District and local Council chairmen together with Church leaders and representatives from St John's College, Cambridge, Clarkson's old alma mater. The black Ipswich Adventist Gospel Choir from Rope Walk in Ipswich together with the Bealings benefice choir were in attendance and sang a selection of anthems. The collection for Anti-Slavery International fell a few pennies short of £500.

THE CHURCH'S ARCHITECTURE

Nothing survives of the earlier church recorded in the Domesday Book but it can be said with some certainty that the present building would have stood on the same site. Although much of the soil in the parish is light, there are a number of clay outcrops that would have provided the cob from which the

¹⁴² Fynn-Lark News, June 2020, 28-30, for a full report on how D-Day, 8 May 1945, was celebrated in the village. The four men still held prisoner by the Japanese were: Stanley Grimsey, who lived at 1 Council Houses, Hill Farm Road and was a chauffeur/gardener at Playford Mount. He worked on the Burma-Thailand railway; Tom Dunnett, a gardener and uncle of Geoffrey Dunnett who lived at The Meadows, Hill Farm Road; Freddie Broom whose father and brother worked on Hill Farm but whose stay in the village was very short and little is known about them; and Philip Sherwood, youngest son of Sam Sherwood of Lux Farm who had left the village 17 years earlier to go rubber planting in Malaya. Returning to UK in retirement, he chose to be buried in Playford churchyard. He too had worked on the Burma railway.

original walls would have been made.^{143 144} The roof would have been supported by locally grown timbers and covered with either straw or thatch but, if any imported stonework had been used in the earlier building, that would have been saved.

The church is Grade II* mainly of C15 date but with a chancel that was rebuilt in Victorian times. As well as the chancel there is a nave and a south tower-porch. The walls are of flint rubble and the roofs plain tiled. The building, which stands high above the village and the attractive valley of the river Fynn, is approached through an iconic lychgate, an avenue of limes trees and a steep flight of steps. The path takes the visitor through the southern part of the churchyard where Thomas Clarkson, the slavery abolitionist and George Biddell Airy, 7th Astronomer Royal, lie buried. An obelisk in memory of Clarkson, erected by a few surviving friends in 1857, stands near the church door.

Outside the building

The nave (12m x 7m) is the oldest part of the building, its blocked north door Pevsner dates to c. 1300. A surviving and well-preserved corbel face peers out - one of an original pair



The corbel face on the north doorway could date from c. 1300



It can be seen that the nave was extended before the tower was built in c. 1400-20

originally supporting the dripstone framing the arch. The missing face was destroyed some time after the nave was extended by some 12 feet when a buttress had to be built to restrain the movement between the two buildings. Remedial work was not a total success as, despite having been painted over many times, the break between the two differing ages is still clearly apparent in the internal plasterwork and allows the size of the extension to be clearly seen. North doorways are found in medieval and older churches and are reputed to have been incorporated into the north walls of the buildings in order to let the devil out; they were later supposed to have been

¹⁴³ The water mill is also mentioned in Domesday Book. That too, as in so many other cases, remained on the same site until its closure in 1874. The mill stream, of which only a short sections remains in Alder Carr Meadows, is the parish's only testament to pre-Conquest times.

¹⁴⁴ There is of course clay at Brick Kiln Farm near the former A12 trunk road and, before the hedges were ripped out in the 1950s, there was a field near New Buildings called Clappets, a name that is a corruption of Claypits. Nearer the church, in the south-west corner of Common Field adjoining Butts Hill are five acres of very heavy land. Clay would also have been required for lining the pre-Conquest millstream.

blocked up to prevent the devil from re-entering. It was not until many centuries later that the north side of a churchyard ceased to be set aside for suicides, the unbaptised and wrongdoers.

The nave's south and west windows are Perpendicular, 1370-1430, each with three lights and are particularly fine. The roof was replaced in 1897 in celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and new gable-crosses given by G E Crisp of Playford Hall were placed on the original carved bases which have been there for 600 years. The chancel (11m x 5m) is almost as large and, being totally decayed, was completely rebuilt in 1873-74, the cost of £600 being borne by the Marquis of Bristol lord of the manor and lay rector. In Early English style of 1180-1275, it is a grand reproduction of C13 work. R M Phipson the architect was the Ipswich born and recently appointed Diocesan Surveyor whose previous assignment had been the re-gentrification of Playford Hall from 1867-72.¹⁴⁵



Felbrigg lion impaling chevrons of his wife Margery who left 5 marks to the tower in 1419

From the north it can clearly be seen that the enlargement of the nave came before the building of the tower which can be accurately attributed to the years 1400-20. There are 21 other south tower porches in the county mostly in the south-east and, had the nave not been lengthened, there would have been adequate space to have built a more conventional tower at the western end.¹⁴⁶ Placed against the south nave doorway, the tower was built by Sir George Felbrigg who died in 1400. He was a descendent of the Bigods, the Norman family who in the C12 became Earls of Norfolk. He acquired Playford it is thought by purchase some time before 1384 and could therefore have contributed to the building of the nave extension though there is no firm evidence to substantiate this.¹⁴⁷ Clearly though it was built before the tower and if Felbrigg was not responsible for it then who was? But Felbrigg is famed only for the tower to which Margery, his second wife, who died in 1419, left five marks to its 'making'

showing that construction had not then been completed.¹⁴⁸ The splendid outer doorway to the porch, which goes largely unnoticed, has repeated crown motifs at the jambs and the borders of the square hood-mould are studded with little florets. These are the signature of Master Mason Hawes of Occold, a leading craftsman of his day who worked on Suffolk churches in the period 1415-40.¹⁴⁹ Among the ornamentation, on the keystone an angel holds the Arms of Felbrigg supported by lions while in the spandrels between the hood-mould and the arch are the arms of Sir George Felbrigg himself. There are two hanging shields: the one to the west has the rampant lion of Sir George impaling the Arms of his first wife Avis daughter of Sir Roger de Hales and widow of Edmund de Redisham while on the east - Felbrigg impales the chevrons of Margery his second wife daughter of Sir John de Aspal and widow of Sir Thomas Naunton. The stone base

¹⁴⁵ See Playford Hall in this series, 8-10.

¹⁴⁶ Locally Little Bealings. Culpho and Grundisburgh also have south porch towers.

¹⁴⁷ Hervey, A., 1864. 'Playford and the Feltons', Proc.Suffolk Inst. Archaeol., IV, 19, a record of a talk given to the Institute at Playford Hall by its President Ven. Lord Arthur Hervey on 24 October 1860. Sir George Felbrigg is also considered to 'have rebuilt or repaired a large part of the church'.

¹⁴⁸ A mark was worth 13s 4d or two-thirds of a pound. It was never a physical amount of money represented by a coin but was a common amount that was used for accounting purposes. Church towers were erected at the rate of no more than 10 feet a year giving the masonry ample time to settle.

¹⁴⁹ Birkin Haward, *Master Mason Hawes of Occold*, (Ipswich, 2000), 27-28. Note the little florets around the top of the columns in Debenham church, a design known to have been used by Hawes.

of a medieval holy water stoup, now supporting a later brick pedestal, lies to the east of the nicely-moulded inner entrance arch.¹⁵⁰

The diagonal buttresses of the tower - which Scarfe considered one of the most distinguished designs in the county - are faced with flushwork, both of stone and flint. Above the doorway is a contemporary canopied niche flanked by flushwork panels terminating in a beautifully carved stone canopy. Inside, its ceiling is an exquisite piece of stone vaulting in miniature. The modern figure of Mary, the original having no doubt been removed at the Reformation, was placed there at the time of the Millennium. Beneath the tower battlements, two-light belfry windows with late C14 tracery let out the sound of the bells on the east, west and north sides but the south is more grand. Here a pair of slender two-light Perpendicular windows with a stone cross in flushwork between them present a handsome arrangement for the main approach to the church. A small two-light window lights the ringing chamber on the south side.

The bells

Above hang two bells, contemporary with the tower itself, that have been sounding out over the village for 600 years. Cast by Brayser's of Norwich c. 1450, the tenor weighs 7½ cwt and is inscribed *'Jungere Nos Xpo Studeat Nicholaus in Alto'* (May Nicholas strive to join us with Christ on high) while the treble which was intended for the Angelus, a Catholic prayer of Devotion for the Incarnation, weighs about 6 cwt.¹⁵¹ It is inscribed *'Hac in Conclave Gabriel Nunc Pange Suave'* (In this chamber, Gabriel now sound sweetly). In 1908 the bells were rehung, a new oak frame was made and repair work carried out to the top of the tower, but little if anything has been done to them since that time. According to the many early entries in the churchwarden's account book dating back to the late 1700s, in times past they received regular attention but in more recent years they have had none. In a 1784 Terrier, ten years after the Church had 'tightened up' and taken back control, it was stated that there were three bells only two of which were hung in frames. The third was on the ground having been broken 'time out of mind'.¹⁵² By computation, the total weight of the two bells in use was declared at 18 cwt. That there were 'three great bells' was also mentioned in a Return of 1553 and later in 1752 that three pieces of a broken bell, amounting to about 90 lbs in weight, had been stolen.¹⁵³ In 1798 'a man, two horses and a Tumbrell' were used to 'carry the old bell to Woodbridge at a cost of 4s 6d. In addition a further four more men were paid 6d each for loading it but, with no wheeled access from the north of the church, it has to be wondered how far it had to be carried.

The bells were inspected in 1955 and again in 1980 by R W M Clouston, doyen of Suffolk and Scottish



Norman Scarfe: 'One of the most distinguished tower designs in the county'

¹⁵⁰ *Playford Church: a Brief History and Guide*, Roy Tricker, 2003. Tricker, a leading authority on Suffolk churches, is author of over 200 church guidebooks in the county.

¹⁵¹ The Angelus is recited as versicle and response: Versicle - The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary. Response - And she conceived of the Holy Spirit. Hail Mary full of grace... &c.

¹⁵² SROI, FC22/E2/1.

¹⁵³ The Return of 1553 was passed in the year that Mary came to the throne and England rejoined the Church of Rome.

church bells who was awarded an MBE for research into their history and advice on their restoration and care.¹⁵⁴ ¹⁵⁵ Ranald Warren Montieth Clouston was a Suffolk man whose paternal forbears came from Orkney so explaining his liking for Scotland. Born in Lavenham in 1925, he died at Hartest in 2002.

Despite their rehangings in 1908, a note dated June 1912 states that the tone of the bells was badly impaired by the condition of the clappers. The report added that the bells were ‘worn and their tone is harsh through the constant beating of the clapper in one place’. They were also liable to crack if allowed to continue in their present condition. ‘The largest bell has been quarter turned many years ago and now requires one eighth turning’. The work was carried out in 1913 by Alfred Howell a bell founder of Wykes Bishop Street, off Duke Street, in Ipswich when it seems that both bells were quarter turned. The cost of £10 was again paid for by the Misses Crisp.

Inside the building

The interior, which is light and airy, was drastically re-ordered in the second half of the C19 and most of what is now seen is Victorian. The most striking architectural feature is undoubtedly the chancel arch, a moulded elegant, tall and dignified work of c. 1370. The nave windows date from the late 1300s and the triple Perpendicular south window is particularly large and handsome. The inner south doorway is of a similar date. High in the tracery of one of the north nave windows is a very faded shield in medieval glass with the Felbrigg arms. In the C17 Weever recorded that there were stained glass portraits of both Felbrigg’s son John (d. 1423) and Margery his wife occupying an entire window and this small fragment is thought to be a part of that. Weever also records another window commemorating Thomas Sampson (d. 1439) who married Margery Sir John Felbrigg’s daughter but no trace of that remains.¹⁵⁶

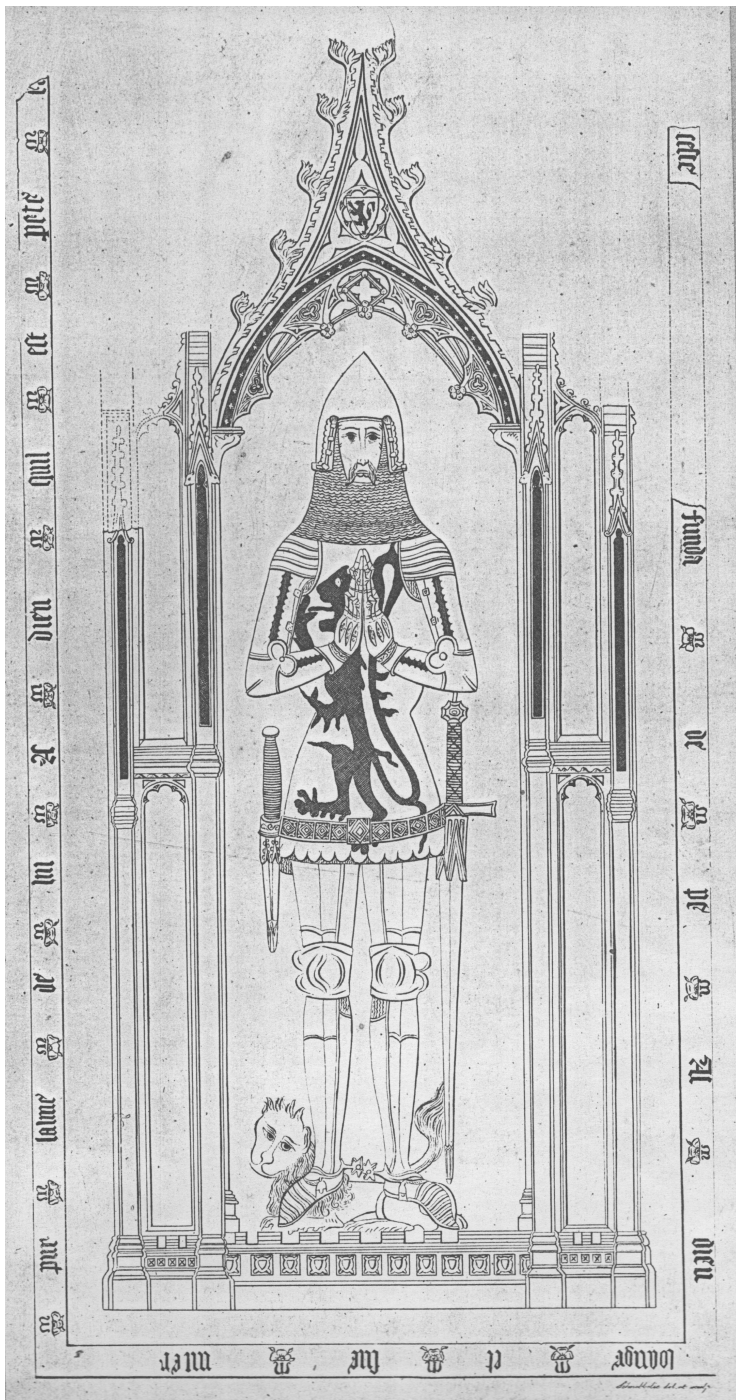
In the early C19 boards hung on the north side of the arch reciting the commandments while on the south side was the Lord’s Prayer. In late Victorian times the arch was surrounded by a curved board covered in crimson flannel with white paper letters proclaiming ‘Worship the Lord in the beauty of Holiness’.¹⁵⁷ New communion rails were fitted in 1842, the first of many changes that followed as the century progressed. They replaced rails that had previously surrounded the altar on three sides, an arrangement quite common in East Anglia where many exist to this day though the design was rarely taken up outside the region. The new rails run north to south stretching the entire width of the chancel isolating the entire sanctuary, an area especially reserved for the use of ordained clergy. They are in C18 style with large balusters and were carved from an oak tree grown on Hill Farm where Arthur Biddell the long-standing and sole churchwarden was tenant. Altar rails appeared only after the Reformation and were not installed in English churches until after 1630 when William Laud was Archbishop of Canterbury. One of Laud’s particular interests in his drive to restore the ‘beauty of holiness’ of the church building was the positioning of the altar. He decreed that it be placed against the east wall of the chancel surrounded by railings with the laity having to kneel instead of stand, as in Catholic countries today, to receive the sacrament.

¹⁵⁴ SROI, FC22/E4/10.

¹⁵⁵ Raven, Revd. J. J., *The Church Bells of Suffolk* (London 1890), 225. A Return required by Edward VI in 1553 informs that there were then three bells in the tower. However, a terrier of 1784 states that the third bell had been on the ground ‘time out of mind’. Clouston says that the third bell was ‘clearly larger’ than either of the two that remain. John Biddell (1866-1932), younger son of Manfred Biddell of Lux Farm and a noted antiquary in his own right, assisted Raven in the compilation of his classic book. Biddell, who later came to live at Gayfer’s in Church Lane, had attended Yarmouth Grammar School at a time when Raven was headmaster there and kept in touch with him until his death in 1906.

¹⁵⁶ *Weever’s Funeral Monuments*, (London, 1631), 783. Also notes considered to be written by the Revd Dr Harry Bayliss vicar of Playford 1929-36.

¹⁵⁷ *Playford Church*, dated 1956. A small leaflet written by Anna Airy (1882-1964) who well remembered the proclamation when a young girl.



Felbrigg Brass (c. 1400) before the destruction of both the canopy and surrounding text in 1837-38. Reproduced by kind permission of the National Trust

A former reredos, given to the church in 1953, was removed to the west end of the church in 1980 following a change in liturgy.¹⁵⁸ Prior to its removal, the altar had stood hard against the east wall of the chancel with the officiating priest conducting the service from its western side with his back to the congregation.

ITS MONUMENTS

The Felbrigg Brass

Sir George Felbrigg was buried in the north-east corner of the nave in a ‘chapel or chantry’ that had been founded by him. The canopy over his tomb was still there when Gough visited in the latter half of the C18 but later fell into decay. The grave was opened in 1784 and five feet down bones, a scull and a rusty nail in wood were found. The brass, which had lain exposed on the floor, was later covered with a moveable pew by Arthur Biddell acting as churchwarden.¹⁵⁹ George Biddell Airy had witnessed Biddell remove it around the year 1817 to show an enquiring visitor but in 1837-38 the Revd Mr West, the incumbent of Rushmere and Playford and the Revd Mr Sanders, the resident curate of Playford, went to the church with tools and ‘with their own hands’ ripped off the canopy covering the figure together with the whole of the inscription which surrounded it. The two had imagined foolishly that the commercial value of the few ounces of metal thus torn off was so great that it would enable them to mount the brass in a more splendid manner.¹⁶⁰

Airy had always taken a keen interest in antiquarian matters and it was he rather than Biddell who complained to the bishop about the mutilation of one of the finest military brasses in the county. Biddell was no doubt grateful for such intervention especially as only three years earlier Airy had been made Astronomer Royal so giving him greater

¹⁵⁸ The reredos was given by Capt. Charles E Boyle Jr. of the American Army. It is thought that he served with the 356th Fighter Group of the United States Army Air Force when based at Martlesham Heath from October 1943 to May 1945. Pilots of the 360th Fighter Squadron, part of the 356th Fighter Group, were billeted at Playford Hall at this time.

¹⁵⁹ Richard Gough (1735-1809) was a prominent English antiquarian whose *Sepulchral Monuments in Great Britain*, covering the period between the Norman Conquest and the C16, was published in 1786.

¹⁶⁰ SROB 941/79/2. Airy wrote up notes on the brass that included its desecration by the local clergy.

influence. Additionally, unlike himself, he did not have to work with the two individuals concerned. It was no doubt due to the bishop's involvement that an effort was made to repair the brass. No attempt was made to restore the canopy but some of the inscription formerly at the sides was placed at the foot and other fragments were inserted in other places but all the bases of the letters, instead of being inwards, as they originally were, were turned outwards. Although some words and letters are missing, the legend in Anglo-French is thought to read: 'Sir George Felbrigge, knight, founded this chapel to the glory of God and of the Holy Mother. Pray for his soul to God that He may have mercy...'. The figure of Sir George is shown standing on a lion, his armour made up of an open-faced military helmet (bassinet) with chain mail attached to protect the neck and shoulders (cmail) and a close-fitting jupon bearing his heraldic rampant lion under which lay a suit of armour. His sword belt has hinged decorated plates, and scabbards (sheaths) of both sword and dagger are richly worked with Gothic tabernacles in relief.

As a direct result of the vandalism the slab carrying the brass was moved to within the communion rails to be 'more visible'. It was placed in a north-south manner where it was seen by Boutell but after the rebuilding of the chancel in 1872 was transferred to the new vestry where it was mounted on a table.¹⁶¹ It did not remain there for long as in 1883 when the present organ replaced a portable barrel organ all available space was taken up and it was then set in the north wall of the new chancel. Airy, with the permission of the British Museum who held a copy of Gough's engraving taken before the mutilation, had a photograph taken of it by the carbon process and returned it to them. For the records Airy left an account both of the brass's destruction and its subsequent positioning concluding that: 'I shall be happy if by this step I have contributed to preserve a record of this interesting Monument'.

Herman Biddell, who followed his father as churchwarden, later added a footnote: 'When the chancel was rebuilt in 1874, the architect left the monument leaning endways against the west wall of the church porch. Here it remained for some time. To secure it from accident I had it mounted as described above. When the room in the so called vestry was required for the new organ, the Revd Freeman had the monument inserted in its present unsightly vertical position in the north wall of the chancel'.¹⁶² Neither was Herman's brother, Manfred, happy with where the brass had been placed, expressing his 'disgust' in a letter to his son away at boarding school.¹⁶³ In ignoring the feelings of the two Biddells one of whom was sole churchwarden, the Revd John Freeman was showing a wilful neglect of consultation after just three years in post.

A craze for rubbing medieval brasses using rolls of thick paper and cobbler's wax to obtain their impressions swept the country in the 1970s. It ended abruptly in Playford in 1993 when the American air bases at Woodbridge and Bentwaters closed. The activity brought in very little money for the church with income declining further when the existence of facsimiles in Westminster Abbey became known. That the interest quickly stopped was no loss to the church particularly as not all brass rubbers were as well behaved as might be expected. Some were found locally enjoying a fry-up on a primus stove and smoking in the building, conduct that found its way into the local press at the time.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Charles Boutell (1812-77) was an English archaeologist, antiquary and clergyman who published books on brasses and heraldry. His *Monumental Brasses and Slabs* was issued in 1847 and his *Monumental Brasses of England* in 1849.

¹⁶² SROI FC22/E1/13, 117. Playford churchwarden's accounts.

¹⁶³ Letter from Manfred Biddell to his 17 year old son John, 29 October 1883, then boarding at Framlingham College. Private possession. He writes '...much to my disgust Mr Freeman has put the old Brass in the Church upright against the wall... and all to make room for a screeching organ...'

¹⁶⁴ East Anglian Daily Times, 15 September 1973.

A grossly mutilated slab east of the font is thought to have once held the brass of Thomas (d. 1439) and Margery Sampson.¹⁶⁵ Margery was the daughter and heir of Sir George Felbrigg's son John and it was her marriage to Thomas Sampson of Brettenham that brought the Playford property into that family.

The War Memorial

A 'preliminary' meeting with reference to the war memorial was held in the vicarage on 13 February 1919. Present were the vicar, the Revd Clement Wright and Mrs Wright, George Fiske and Sam Sherwood the two churchwardens, Miss Crisp and Miss Rachel Biddell. It was agreed that the memorial should be a thank-offering to God, a memorial to the fallen [for which] a window in the church would be most suitable if it were generally approved of. An alternative suggestion was made for a memorial cross in some prominent position. But if a window were decided upon, a tablet should be placed in the body of the church recording the names of those who had fallen and the erection of a window as a memorial to them and a thanks-offering. It was also agreed that a small committee should be formed to arrange details and that care should be taken not to commit to any particular plan. A public meeting in the Parish Hall was called for. The meeting, held a week later on 20 February, was well attended with over 50 villagers present. F S Stevenson, who was not present at the preliminary meeting the week before but had clearly been well briefed, took a leading part, speaking at length and proposing the following resolution:

That the Parishioners of Playford being desirous of recording in a permanent form their thankfulness to God for the mercies vouchsafed during the Great War and for the final victory as well as to commemorate those who have given their lives for the country, hereby appoint a Committee (with power to all their members) to arrange the erection of a suitable stained glass window at the east end of Playford church together with a commemorative tablet and such further memorial as may be considered feasible and appropriate; and that they have power to collect subscriptions and appoint a treasurer for the purpose.

David Amoss, the Biddell family's manservant for three generations covering 80 years, acutely aware of the dire housing situation in the village, made an alternative proposal that an alms house or alms houses of a simple character be built [as a memorial] but his suggestion was dismissed on grounds of cost and the fact that the question of housing was being taken up by the state. The chairman, the Revd Clement Wright, made some sympathetic remarks stating that he thought that the amount of money available would be insufficient. George Fiske and F S Stevenson spoke to the same effect.



Stevenson's resolution was put to the vote: 17 were in favour and 13 against with a large number of abstentions. The suggestion of having a memorial cross in some prominent position in the parish, that had been mooted at the initial meeting in the vicarage on 13 February, was never taken up. Playford therefore decided by a very small margin on an indoor memorial that few today realise is really the east window rather than the plaque on which are commemorated the names of those who

Overlooked by many today, the east window forms only part of the Playford war memorial

¹⁶⁵ Paine, C., 1984. 'Excursions 1983', Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeol.,XXXV, 332. Visit conducted by Norman Scarfe.

died. Frederick Crisp had withdrawn his earlier offer of a stained glass east window in memory of his father that he made in 1904 it was thought because of Herman Biddell's objections to it. But Herman Biddell had died in 1917 and Playford was free to acquire what it had originally voted for.

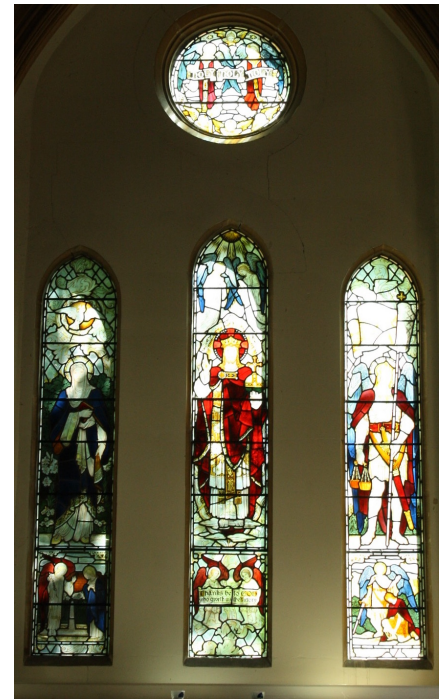
The War Memorial Committee met in the Parish Hall on 3 April 1919. George Fiske, churchwarden and treasurer, was unable to attend; those present were the Revd Clement Wright in the chair, Miss Crisp, F S Stevenson, Sam Sherwood and William Threadkell. The money raised was expected to amount to £215, the Marquis of Bristol as lay rector had agreed to the east window being the memorial, the design had been agreed and the work was to be entrusted to James Powell of the Whitefriars Glass Works, EC4.¹⁶⁶ It was also at this meeting that the committee agreed the eligibility of two of the names that had been put forward, those of William Prime and Charles Prendergast.

James Powell's bill for the window, tablet and fixing came to £226; the money in hand amounted to £240 18s 10d with Rosa and Emma Crisp of the Hall being the major contributors each giving £50. Francis and Mary Kate Stevenson gave £52 10s 0d and the Revd and Mrs Clement Wright £25.¹⁶⁷ The names on the tablet are in the order in which they died with the exception of three in the middle which are not. The text below gives not only the correct dates but details of where they died and where they are commemorated as well as where they lived in the village and what employment they had at the time of their recruitment.

And those who died

Frank Hill, Private, 2nd Bn Coldstream Guards. Died 1 February 1915, aged 22.¹⁶⁸

Frank Hill answered Kitchener's call to arms and enlisted at Woodbridge in August 1914. It is not known when he was sent to France but he may well have there for the Christmas Truce in that first year of the war. He was killed only a month later at a time when a war of movement had ceased and trench warfare had begun. His section of the line near Béthune was subject to heavy shelling and savage attacks were directed on to British lines that resulted in heavy losses. He has no known grave but his name is on the Memorial in Le Touret Cemetery, NE of Béthune. As the first Playford casualty of the war, there was understandable shock and sympathy within the village and a collection was made to place a plaque on the north wall of the nave. To the dismay of his family it had been removed when they visited in the early 1950s and replaced with another.



First offered in 1904 by Frederick Crisp in memory of his father but later withdrawn, the installation of a stained glass east window was not realised until 1919 when it was agreed that it be part of the war memorial

¹⁶⁶ The window contains three lights filled in 1919 with stained glass by James Powell of Whitefriars. The central light shows Christ in glory, while beneath angels hold a scroll on which are the words: 'Thanks be to God Who giveth us the victory'. The north light recalls the dedication of the church to the Virgin Mary. The Annunciation is the announcement of the Incarnation by the angel Gabriel to Mary and is represented underneath. The church festival commemorating the Annunciation is held on Lady Day, 25 March. The south light shows the Archangel Michael holding the banner of St George and carrying his balances for the weighing of souls while beneath he is seen blessing a Roman soldier.

¹⁶⁷ SROI, FC22/E4/5.

¹⁶⁸ Family contact 1987: Judith Pinkham of Carlisle, a great-niece.



Frank Hill

Frank Hill lived at Branson's where he helped his parents on their market garden.¹⁶⁹ His father had been a coachman in south Norfolk but by about 1900 had become foreman with a firm of nurserymen in Woodbridge, quite possibly Notcutt's who had arrived in the town in 1897. The family were living in the Thoroughfare in 1906 but soon after that came to Playford. His father George died in 1927 and is buried in an unmarked grave in Playford churchyard and following his death his wife Eliza moved away.

Frederick & Harold Sherwood, Troopers, 1st Australian Light Horse. Died 7 August 1915, aged 29 and 25.¹⁷⁰

Frederick and Harold Sherwood enlisted in the 1st Australian Light Horse in New South Wales where they had been sent by their father Sam of Lux Farm. There they too set up as farmers. Their youngest brother Philip wrote:

Victoria, [their father] grew up as a strict disciplinarian... He knew not what to do with five unruly sons but to put one in the bank and

send the rest abroad'. Two other sons enlisted in the Army: Robert in the Grenadier Guards and Philip in the 2nd Bn Essex Regt. A fifth son, Basil, went out to Malaya on a rubber estate in c. 1913 and was not allowed to leave the country during hostilities.



Frederick Sherwood



Harold Sherwood

The 1st Australian Light Horse sailed from Sydney on 19 October 1914 and disembarked in Egypt on 8 December. From there they were deployed to Gallipoli without their horses and landed on 12 May 1915. There are 16 identified burials of Australian Light Horsemen who died in a diversionary attack that was launched from Quinn's Post on 7 August that year and, of the 200 men involved in the offensive, 147 became casualties. Of 473 burials at Quinn's Post Cemetery, as many as 294 are unidentified.

Frederick Manning, L/Cpl, 2nd Bn Suffolk Regt. Died 23 August 1916, aged 19.¹⁷¹

Frederick Manning was killed on the Somme. Despite his family being told to the contrary in a letter from the hospital chaplain, like thousands of other parents, they preferred to believe that their son had been

¹⁶⁹ See Branson's in this series for a fuller history of Frank Hill and his family.

¹⁷⁰ Family contact 2010: Robert le Rougetel of Halesworth, a great-nephew.

¹⁷¹ Family contacts 1998: George Manning of Earls Colne, a half-brother; Faith Dickerson of Beaumont, Essex, a half-sister; Joe Goodchild of Kesgrave, a nephew.

killed instantly. In the first paragraph of the chaplain's letter to Fred's mother the chaplain wrote: 'By now you will have heard the sad news of your son's death in this hospital from wounds about the head. He got every care from us all but the end came rather suddenly and quite peacefully'. The 2nd Bn reached the Somme on 6 July and on the 20th were engaged in action in the area of Delville Wood where casualties were high and where it is assumed that Fred Manning was wounded.¹⁷² He was taken to the British Hospital in Abbeville, many miles to the north, where he died of his wounds and is buried in the Communal Cemetery there.

Fred's father Horace was a horseman on Lux Farm for over 30 years; the family of six children lived at Mill Cottages. On first leaving school he was a back'us boy - doing odd jobs about the house and garden - for Mrs Sherwood but by the age of 14 he had followed his father on to the farm.

Arthur Ward, L/Cpl, 1st/4th Bn Suffolk Regiment. Died 29 April 1917 aged 21.¹⁷³

Arthur Ward is buried in Etaples Military Cemetery 27 kms south of Boulogne. Etaples was a centre of reinforcement camps and hospital. In 1917 100,000 troops were camped among the dunes and its 16 hospitals and convalescent depot could deal with 22,000 sick or wounded which, because of the town's good rail connections, could come from both the northern and southern battlefields.

Arthur Ward was a gardener at Playford Hall, one of five who worked there before the war. His father was the groom. The Crisps also employed a full time coachman, William Threadkell who worked there for over 40 years, besides five resident domestic staff. Since their arrival at The Hall in the 1890s, the Ward family had lived in The Stables, the gardener's cottage that had been added to the barn in Phipson's 1867-72 refurbishment.

Arthur's parents had met while they were in service with the Venns at Freston Lodge, a house built for them in 1841 and which later came into the ownership of the Paul family, maltsters and provender millers in Ipswich. Arthur's mother died in 1911 aged 54 and his father the following year at a similar age. Just 16 and an only child, Arthur stayed on as gardener until enlistment. A lone headstone in the south-east corner of the churchyard records his parents' deaths and 'also of Stephen Arthur (sic) their son who died in Hospital in France April 29 1917 from wounds received while serving his country aged 21 years'.

John Scarlett, Private, 2nd Bn. Norfolk Regiment. Died 15 March 1917 aged 22.¹⁷⁴

John Scarlett is buried in Basra Memorial Cemetery, Iraq, which was moved by Saddam Hussein in 1997 in an act of preservation but the desert winds are eroding many of the names. The memorial commemorates 40,682 members of the Commonwealth forces who died in operations in Mesopotamia (approximating to present day Iraq) from 1914 to 1921 who have no known grave. The British, supported by troops from India and Australia, were in the



John Scarlett

¹⁷² SROB, GB554/C1/5. Diary of 2nd Bn Suffolk Regiment, 182-184. Murphy, Lt Col C C R, The History of the Suffolk Regiment, 1914-27. Reprint of 1928 original edition.

¹⁷³ SROB, GB554/G/4/3, 4th Battalion, The Suffolk Regiment, list of NCOs and men killed in action, died of wounds or missing 1915-17.

¹⁷⁴ Family contact 2014: Sandy Spalding of Ipswich, a great-niece.

country to defend their interests in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. They were also in neighbouring Kuwait, then a successful centre of trade, whose allegiance was to the Ottoman Empire and hence to Germany. The Kuwait oilfields were not discovered until 1937.

John was the third generation of Scarletts to work on Lux Farm, his grandfather Sam having moved from Rushmere in the 1840s. The family moved first to Kiln Farm, then divided in two, from the early C19 until the Second World War, and was the first to occupy the new red brick cottages on Playford Corner that were built in 1884. Until perhaps the 1990s, older Playford residents referred to Scarlett's Corner rather than Playford Corner on the road into Ipswich and, interestingly, Kesgrave residents referred to the other end of Dr Watson's Lane as Old Scarlett's Corner. The so-called Dr Watson lived in the small cottage, only recently demolished c. 2020, on that corner close to The Bell and was a horseman for William Fison at Bell Farm.¹⁷⁵

William Prime, Gunner, 90th Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery. Died 31 October 1917, aged 20.¹⁷⁶

William Prime died at Passchendaele, one of the bloodiest battles of the First World War which raged for three months from July to November 1917. He is buried at Solferino Farm, a cemetery north-west of Ypres in Belgium. Of 160 cemeteries in the Ypres Salient, Solferino Farm contains just 296 Commonwealth burials. It was begun in October 1917 during the Third Battle of Ypres more widely known as Passchendaele. British losses of killed and wounded in that battle have been put at 250,000. One hundred of the graves in Solferino Farm are from artillery units, the others being from the Royal Army Service Corps and engineers showing that the area was always well behind front lines.

William Prime's father, also called William, had moved from Haddiscoe in south-east Norfolk in 1895 to work as a horseman on Lux Farm and the family of seven children lived at Kiln Farm next to Sam Scarlett, John Scarlett's grandfather. William Prime junior worked on the farm as a shepherd before he enlisted but his father was sacked by Sam Sherwood because he had volunteered a year before he would have been conscripted. At the time of his son's death the family was living in Hall Road, Little Bealings, at Osierbed Cottages from where William senior travelled daily into Ipswich to work for a coal merchant. But as William junior was at Lux Farm at the time of his enlistment, the Playford War Memorial Committee agreed that his name should be included on the Playford memorial according to his parents' wishes 'but not to be on both lists'.

John Barker, Private, Machine Gun Corps. Died 8 November 1916, aged 20.

John Barker has no known grave and is commemorated on the Ploegsteert Memorial 12 kms south of Ypres. The Memorial commemorates more than 11,000 UK and Commonwealth soldiers who died in this sector and who have no known graves. Most were killed in the course of day-to-day trench warfare which characterised this part of the line rather than in major offensives such as those around Ypres to the north or Loos to the south.

John Barker's family lived at New Buildings. His father Ellis was the engine driver for the steam threshing set on Lux Farm. He was also the thatcher of the many stacks that were scattered around the farm. The family had come from Weybread in the north of the county where Ellis had a similar job. Sam Sherwood,

¹⁷⁵ Ponting, Gerald and Margaret, *The Story of Kesgrave: stability & growth in a Suffolk parish*. (Privately published, 1981), 143.

¹⁷⁶ Family contacts 2010: the late Mrs Ivy Ling of Ipswich, a sister, and her son Richard of Rushmere.

the farmer on Lux, did threshing work on a contract basis and Ellis Barker would have driven his threshing machine many miles around the lanes of East Suffolk.

The family did not stay long in the village. John had enlisted at Framlingham so it is presumed that he was still living at Weybread after war broke out and that when he came home on leave it was to Playford after the family had moved. Nothing is known about him and the family had left by 1922.

Charles Prendergast, 2nd Bn. Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment). Died 22 August 1918.¹⁷⁷

Charles Prendergast died as a prisoner of war and is buried in Berlin South-Western Cemetery which contains the graves of some 1,100 combatants - a majority of whom are Commonwealth forces - who died in captivity. In 1922 it was decided that the graves of servicemen who had died all over Germany and which were scattered among 140 burial grounds should be brought together in four permanent cemeteries of which Berlin South-Western was one. Recent research has uncovered that POWs of the First World War were treated worse under the Kaiser than prisoners of the Second World War were under Hitler and that they had a higher chance of dying in captivity than on the battlefield. It is known from his family for example that Prendergast was used as forced labour in the salt mines which may well have contributed to his early death.

Charles Prendergast's grandfather came from County Cork in the 1840s and worked as a costermonger and chimney sweep in London. His father had been born in Covent Garden. Charles was born in 1887 and enlisted with his brother, who survived the war, in the Middlesex Regiment. How come that a man with such a background has his name on Playford's war memorial? The answer is that in 1917, little more than a year before he died but already a serving soldier, he married Annie Threadkell daughter of the coachman at Playford Hall, William Threadkell. That they married in Camden rather than in Playford, where her father was an active churchman, suggests that Annie was working in London and most likely in service there. After the war she approached the Playford War Memorial Committee asking that her late husband's name be included and, having been born and brought up in the village and her father an upstanding and active member of the community particularly of the church, her request was granted.

Philip Hatch, Lieutenant/Acting Captain, 6th Bn. The Buffs (East Kent Regiment). Died 7 October 1916, aged 24.

Charles Prendergast may well never have set foot in the parish yet it is understandable how his name came to be among the Playford list of names. One further outsider has been added here to highlight the grief suffered during the war on Lux Farm. Of the nine names on the memorial, two were sons of Sam Sherwood, the farmer, both of whom died at Gallipoli and a further four had followed their fathers in working on the farm. Another name that should not be forgotten is that of Philip Hatch. Philip Hatch was a farm pupil before the war and his name might well have slipped from history had he not 'formed an attachment' to Sam Sherwood's youngest daughter Ruth. It is not known if the couple were formally engaged but he had, all too briefly, become one of the Sherwood family. Ruth's younger brother Philip wrote of her that, following his death, she 'kept his letters always and had a sad, uneventful life spending most of it in a strict home'. In a parallel with Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth*, she had lost two older

¹⁷⁷ Family contacts 1998: the late Hamilton 'Boy' Sherwood of Tongham, Surrey, a grandson of William Threadkell, coachman at Playford Hall. c. 1886-1926 whose daughter Annie married Charles Prendergast and Martin Prendergast of Cardiff, a great nephew.



Philip Hatch

brothers and a very close male friend. And, like thousands of other women of her generation, never married and lived with her parents until they died.

Philip Hatch had an unusual background for an agricultural student. He was the eldest son of Dr Frederick Hatch of St James's Square, Pall Mall in London. As a boy Philip had had a French governess and was educated at Oundle and Christ's College, Cambridge, where he took a Diploma in Agriculture. He continued his studies in Denmark but left in August 1914 to enlist. He was killed on the Somme at Guedecourt five kms south of Bapaume, one of the most distant objectives in the drive that came to be known as the battle of Flers-Courcellette. With no known grave his is one of the 72,194 names that are commemorated on Lutyen's Memorial to the Missing at Thiepval. The names are of men of the United Kingdom and South African Forces over 90% of whom lost their lives in the battles of the Somme between July and November 1916.

And two who died in the Second World War

Two young men from the village, both from Lux Farm, died in the Second World War. Their names are not commemorated in Playford church nor on the plaque in the Village Hall but are nevertheless read out on every Remembrance Sunday and have been included here in the hope that they will be more widely remembered. They are those of William Rush of Heath Cottages and Ernest Frost of New Buildings.

William Rush, Able Seaman on H M Submarine *Traveller*, died 12 December 1942 aged 27.

William Rush was the son of Bill Rush, gamekeeper on Lux Farm. He had signed up as a regular some seven or eight years before war broke out and served on H M S *Exeter* at the Battle of the River Plate in December 1939. H M S. *Exeter* was badly damaged in the battle with the German pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spee* and had to retire. The German captain, falling for the ploy that an overwhelming British force was being assembled, scuttled his ship and took his own life. Rush later transferred to H M Submarines and was killed in action in the Mediterranean. His name is commemorated on Chatham Naval Memorial.

Ernest Frost, Gunner 152 Bty., 51 H A A Regt., Royal Artillery, died 12 May 1941 aged 22.

Ernest Frost was a labourer on Lux Farm as was his father; his older brother also worked there as a cowman. A younger brother Ronnie was disabled but was given jobs around the farm and village. On Sundays, before electricity had been connected to the church in 1949, he was the organ blower where, because of his deafness, he met with varied success. Working on a farm, Ernest Frost was in a reserved occupation but when Frank Mann of Church Cottages resigned his gardening job in Great Bealings, which was not a reserved occupation, and applied to George Stennett the farmer for a job on the farm, he was taken on and Ernest Frost was sacked. He was promptly called up and, like his father in the Great War, joined the Royal Artillery. He was killed at Tobruk in May 1941, four weeks into the siege that went on for eight months and is buried in the War Cemetery there.

The Royal Arms

Royal Arms are to be found in some 20% of English churches, their existence dating mainly from the Reformation and Henry VIII's rift with Rome.¹⁷⁸ They were hung in prominent positions, often on the rood loft that stretched high across the chancel arch making the bold statement that he and not the Pope was now head of the Church of England. Few survive from that early period. Many were destroyed by Cromwell who often replaced them with those of the Commonwealth (1649-60). The sovereign's Arms returned once again at the Restoration in 1660 though most that survive today are from the Hanoverian period in the C18. The Arms in Playford church are those of George III (1760-1820) and can be dated more precisely by their detail to around 1780 - the timing of their appearance neatly corresponding with the Church's resumption of institutions by the bishop in 1774. As discussed above, Playford had not been included in mainstream Church practices since 1247 but, at the end of the C18, when the Church at last 'tightened up', a perpetual curacy was established and Playford joined with St Matthew's in Ipswich. William Layton, the rector there, was instituted to the living and responsible for bringing Playford into line, one small part of which was the introduction of the Arms of the ruling monarch.

By the end of the C18 the rood loft had long gone and, as there was insufficient headroom above the church's magnificent chancel arch, the Arms were probably placed above it. Later however they were moved to above the south doorway of the nave where they largely went unnoticed. They were restored in 1905 and again in 2020. On replacement they were positioned above the priests' board on the south wall of the nave where, because of incoming light, they are best viewed obliquely from the font.

Royal Arms date back to the C12 when they were used to identify the King's troops in battle. But it was not until the Reformation that Henry VIII saw merit in placing them in front of congregations where they would be seen Sunday after Sunday by significant numbers of the country's population. Their intrigue lies in that they change as royal households change and they can often be fairly accurately dated by the detail in their heraldry than by the regnal years of the monarch whose Arms they are. A schematic shield is shown here for reasons of clarity and is an exact imitation of the one in the church.



Royal Arms of George III from 1760 to 1800 after which the fleur-de-lis was omitted

An interpretation of what is to be seen can be briefly summarised. In the first Quarter are the arms of England - three golden lions *passant* and the arms of Scotland - a red lion *rampant*. In the second Quarter are those of France signifying the English monarchy's claim to the French throne. It is from this Quarter that the Playford Arms can be more accurately dated. France was first declared a Republic in 1792 causing George III to abandon all long-standing royal claims to the French throne and in 1800 the fleur-de-lis was no longer included. The third Quarter are those of Ireland signifying James VI of Scotland's (later, of course, also James I of England) inheritance of the English and Irish thrones in 1603. The harp remains to the present day standing for Northern Ireland despite partition in 1921. And when Queen Anne died in 1714, the Elector of Hanover was her nearest Protestant relative who, on becoming George I, brought with him the Arms of Hanover which are displayed in the fourth Quarter: two golden lions of Brunswick, the blue lion on a gold background spattered with red hearts of Lüneburg,

¹⁷⁸ H. Munro Cautley, *Royal Arms and Commandments in our Churches* (Woodbridge, 1974), *passim*. Cautley was Diocesan Architect for the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich from its inception in 1911 until the early 1950s.

the white horse of Hanover on a red background and the Crown of Charlemagne representing the Elector's high office in the Holy Roman Empire.

Incumbents' Board

The board was erected in memory of Pam Hollingsworth, wife of Canon Frank Hollingsworth rector of the parish, who took her own life in 1987. It is the second attempt at trying to draw up an uncomplicated yet informative list of priests whose history, as has been seen above, is far from straightforward. The first attempt was to copy the Revd Dr Harry Baylis's table but, because of early complexities, this was found to be unsuitable for public display. In the event it was decided that the list should start in 1774 when the Church regained control and when regular proven institutions by the bishop returned. At the same time readers were informed that: 'Known early names dating from 1100 are recorded in the church guide'. Baylis's list, with its succinct introductory explanation as to why his list is incomplete, can also be found as an appendix at the end of this article.

The Felton memorials

The manor of Playford came into Felton hands through marriage to the Sampsons in the late C15, the Sampsons in turn having inherited by marriage to the Felbriggs a hundred years earlier.¹⁷⁹ Sir Compton Felton, the 5th and last Baronet, died childless in 1719 when ownership passed to John 1st Earl of Bristol who had married Sir Compton's niece Elizabeth, daughter of his elder brother Thomas, in 1695. The Feltons, landed gentry from Shotley, were to rise to greater heights. In the 1590s Robert Felton's great-grandson, Sir Anthony, married into the nobility his wife being a daughter of Lord Grey de Groby. He was High Sheriff of Suffolk in 1597 and knighted by James I in 1603. And, as if in preparation for such aggrandisement, in 1589 he razed the home in which three earlier generations of his family had lived and built the present Elizabethan manor house on the site changing its orientation from west to south. Following his death in 1613, his widow Lady Elizabeth remained in the property outliving him by some 40 years.

With five Felton ledger slabs in the chancel, it is something of a surprise, not to say disappointment, that not one of them relates to either Sir Anthony or his widow Elizabeth, probably the only two family members whose names have any meaning for Playford people today: Sir Anthony for having rebuilt The Hall and Lady Elizabeth for the gift to the church of the silver communion cup that is still in use at Christmas and Easter. There is a possible explanation for this. Arthur Hervey, in his talk at Playford Hall in 1860, identifies 20 members of the Felton family who were buried in the chancel and, no doubt for reasons of a lack of space on the page on which he drew up a family tree, it is likely that he left out many more. Only a very small proportion of Feltons who are buried in the church are therefore commemorated but, more pertinent, is that the ones who are are from a later date when the practice had become fashionable. It is of note that neither Sir Anthony's son Henry the 1st Bart (d. 1624), his grandson the 2nd Bart (d. 1690) or his great-grandson Adam the 3rd Bart (d. 1697) are remembered in any way.

In her will of 1639, Lady Elizabeth (who died 'before 1657') asked 'to be buried in a decent manner neare the bodie of my deare husband... and my desyr is that £20 be layd out upon a monument to be made in the chancel of Playford church for me'. But her wishes were never carried out maybe because 'her usual common-sense was lacking' when she appointed her grandchild John Hobart a minor to be one of her

¹⁷⁹ Sir George Felbrigg's granddaughter Margery (d.1439) married Thomas Sampson.

executors, the other being her nephew Robert Bernard (d.1666), a lawyer, whose family home was in far away Abington, in Northamptonshire.¹⁸⁰

ANN EVERARD (d.1672)

Ann Everard, Sir Anthony and Lady Elizabeth's eldest daughter, married a widower Anthony Everard of Much Waltham in Essex. Everard was a barrister who was knighted also in 1603 'in the garden of Whitehall' just prior to the coronation of James I. He died young in 1609 and is commemorated in Great Waltham church. Predeceasing his father, he never inherited the family estates and Ann returned to Playford Hall, possibly not immediately but after the death of her own father four years later in 1613, and lived with her mother until she died.

According to the custom of the age wills were usually made at a time when a person was or was believed to be 'sick unto death'. Sir Anthony for example wrote that 'I am nowe somethinge visited with sickness yett of good and perfect memorie' and died within days. Anne by contrast 'being in reasonable good health and sound of mind and memorie' lived on for another 20 years after she had written hers and, in doing so in the prime of her life, demonstrated a total lack of faith in her relatives who had failed to carry out her parents wishes regarding their memorial.

Convinced that they might well disregard her own wishes as well, she put up her own plaque on the north wall of the chancel 'as well for them as for myself'. But it was not on the chancel floor and the mystery of where exactly Sir Anthony and Lady Elizabeth are buried remained. The lozenge-shaped memorial dated 1657, obviously placed there after her mother had died and most likely fairly soon after her death, is however the only surviving evidence, even though only approximate, of the year in which her mother passed away.

For her own burial Ann asked for it to be as near to her parents 'as conveniently as may be... with some of my friends and servientes to see it done' and continues: 'and I appoint that a fayre stone be laid over the grave and the like over the grave of my dear father and mother, if it be not, as I fear it is not done, with our armes and such inscription as myn executors shall think fit'. While a stone in her memory was indeed made for Ann in the centre aisle of the chancel, no such memorial was ever, even at the second time of asking, made for her parents.¹⁸¹



The Everard plaque on the north wall of the chancel

The hatchment-shaped marble plaque memorial, erected in 1657, was 'clearly one of a group of that date by Nicholas Stone's son John' whose father was the most important mason-sculptor of the early C17 being master-mason to both James I and Charles I.¹⁸² It reads:

¹⁸⁰ Browne, A L , 1935. 'Lady Elizabeth Felton and her daughters', *Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeol.*, XXII, 170-77.

¹⁸¹ But who laid the stone and when they did so remains a mystery for Ann Everard, who died in 1672, is buried with Mrs Elizabeth Felton who died a full 50 years later in 1723 and Felton Playters Esqr who died in 1729.

¹⁸² Scarfe, N, 1984. *Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeol.* XXXV, 332. Excursion to Playford church.

To the ppetual memory of my deare deceased parents. I Dame ANN EVERARD, ye relict of Sr. ANTY. EVERARD of Much Waltham in Essex, Knt. daughtr. to Sr ANTY. FELTON of Playford in ye county of Suffolke Kt. of ye Bath and ELIZI his wife, daughtr. to ye Ld. GRAY of Grooby in ye county of Leistr. they being buried in this Church; desirous to be layd here with my parents have erected this memorial as wel for them as myselff. Ao. Dn. 1657

Nearer the sanctuary are four more Felton slabs, in black marble rather than in stone, which from north to south belong to:

SUSAN HOWARD (née Felton), 1650-1726.

She was the eldest daughter of Sir Henry Felton 2nd Bart and Susan, daughter of Sir Lionel Tollemache of Helmingham Hall. Sir Adam, Sir Thomas and Sir Compton, the 3rd, 4th and 5th Baronets, were her brothers.

Here lieth the body of the Right Honble. SUSAN Eldeft daughter of Sir HENRY FELTON [second] Bart. of this place, who was firft married to PHILIP HARBORD Efqr. of Stanning Hall in the county of Norfolk and whose second husband was the Right Honble. FRANCIS Lord HOWARD of Effingham.¹⁸³ She departed this life the 11th of December in the year of our Lord 1726. 'Here piety with vertuous beauty joynd to form the faireft body nobleft mind'.

SIR THOMAS FELTON, 4th Bart., 1649-1709..

He married Lady Elizabeth Howard daughter of the 3rd Earl of Suffolk and was a high-ranking courtier being Comptroller of the Household to Queen Anne. From 1690 to 1709 he sat in the House of Commons variously for Orford and Bury St Edmunds. His only daughter Elizabeth married John, first Earl of Bristol, and so took the Playford property into the Bristol family when his brother Compton died childless in 1719.

It was Sir Thomas who in 1708 diverted access to The Hall from the west side of the house to the east side as it is today by the closure of the track to Rushmere.¹⁸⁴ And it was Sir Thomas who in c. 1700, to be fashionable, rebuilt the south end of the west wing in a different bond to the rest of the house. Very likely also the south end of the east wing was similarly rebuilt but was of course demolished in the middle of the century. Sir Thomas also built an impressive colonnade with a flat lead roof in front of The Hall of which no sign now remains.

Here lieth the body of Sr. THOMAS FELTON Bart. who married the Lady ELIZABETH HOWARD, one of the daughters and coheirs of JAMES Earl of Suffolk, by whom he left one daughter and heir married to JOHN Earl of Bristol. He was Comptroller of the Household to QUEEN ANN at his death which happend on the third day of March 1708/9 having liv'd below'd and dyed lamented by all who knew him.

MARY PLAYTERS, (1721-1802).

She was a granddaughter of John Felton, a younger brother of Sir Adam, Sir Thomas and Sir Compton.

Underneath this stone are deposited the remains of MARY PLAYTERS late of Ipswich, Spinster, who left this world on the 26th of October 1802 aged 87. She was the daughter of Sir JOHN PLAYTERS Bart. and Dame ELIZABETH his wife (late ELIZABETH FELTON) formerly of Sotterly in the County.

¹⁸³ Susan Felton's second husband, Francis the 5th Baron Howard of Effingham (1643-1695), was a great-grandson of the second Baron Howard who, as lord high admiral, commanded the English fleet against the Spanish Armada in 1588. Predeceasing his wife by some 30 years, Francis is buried in the couple's home village of Lingfield in Surrey; the widowed Susan returned to Playford Hall to live with her family. Present-day Howards are Dukes of Norfolk who live at Arundel Castle in West Sussex while another branch has lived at Castle Howard in N. Yorkshire for over 300 years.

¹⁸⁴ SROB HA507/3/759.

SIR COMPTON FELTON (1650-1719).

Sir Compton was the 5th (and last) Baronet and, dying childless, the title became extinct. The heir to the Playford property then became Elizabeth, only daughter of his elder brother Thomas, who in 1695 had married John first Earl of Bristol. From 1719 until the death of the 4th Marquis in 1951, the Playford



John first Earl of Bristol (1665-1751) who, on marrying Sir Compton's niece, took Playford into the Bristol Estate in 1719

property belonged to the Bristol Estate but only a few years later was sold to the tenants: Hill Farm to Charles Lofts and Lux Farm, together with Kiln Farm across the road, to George Stennett. The Hall was sold a few years after that to a Mrs Margaret Duff from Fornham St Martin near Bury whose tenants, Felicity Batt and her mother Cicely Cobbold of the Ipswich brewing family, lived on in the house. The first of the new owners to actually occupy The Hall was William Aitken, MP for Bury St Edmunds, in 1959.¹⁸⁵

Sir Compton appears to have taken little interest in Playford, preferring instead to live in Ipswich where he died. His widow Elizabeth retained a life interest in the property and in 1721 the house was in her care when it was badly damaged by a storm. Like her husband, she too soon tired of the place and appears shortly afterwards to have been bought out by his niece Elizabeth and her husband the first Earl of Bristol.¹⁸⁶

Here resteth the body of Sr. COMPTON FELTON Bart. He being the son and last male heir of Sr. HENRY FELTON [second] Bart. of Playford. He departed this life the 18th of November 1719. In the 69 year of his age. Here also lieth interred Dame FRANCES FELTON relict of the above mentioned Sr. COMPTON FELTON who depd. this life June ye 14th 1734 aged 77 years.

The Clarkson medallion and profile

While the Clarkson graves and obelisk in the churchyard are well known, his medallion and profile by *H Thornycroft* on the south wall of the chancel, that was commissioned in 1877, attracts far less attention.¹⁸⁷ This is unfortunate as the profile encapsulates the full Clarkson family history and helps explain the present-day absence of direct descendants. It was put there by Mary, Clarkson's niece and daughter-in-law, primarily in memory of the great man himself but also to commemorate her first husband and their son who both predeceased her. Space was also found in the wording to include that she married secondly W W Dickinson a former incumbent of the parish.

Clarkson had married Catherine Buck, daughter of a wealthy yarn maker from Bury St Edmunds and co-founder of today's Greene King Brewery.¹⁸⁸ It was in Bury that he befriended the 5th Earl of Bristol a

¹⁸⁵ See Playford Hall in this series, 14-15.

¹⁸⁶ SROB HA507/2/462.

¹⁸⁷ Sir William Hamo Thornycroft (1850-1925) was a sculptor responsible for some of London's best-known statues including that of Oliver Cromwell outside the Palace of Westminster and William Ewart Gladstone in The Strand.

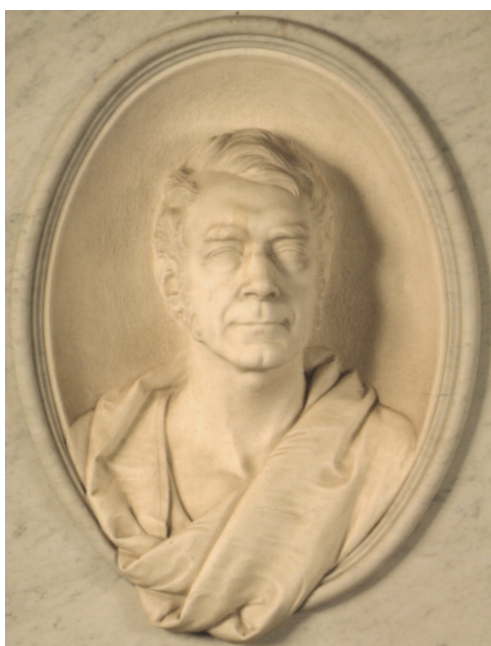
¹⁸⁸ Ellen Gibson Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson, a Biography* (York, 1989), passim. See also her church leaflet, *Thomas Clarkson, Friend of Slaves*

landowner and fellow Whig who had also attended St John's College, Cambridge.¹⁸⁹ It was through Lord Bristol that Clarkson came to Playford in 1816 as a tenant of the 340 acre Playford Hall Farm. The Clarksons had only one son, Thomas, who was killed aged 41 when thrown from his gig in London where he worked as a solicitor. He had married his cousin Mary, daughter of his father's brother John and hence niece and daughter-in-law to Thomas senior. And it was Mary who was responsible for placing the profile in the medallion in the church. Mary had one son who was just six years old when his father died. She remarried five years later to Willoughby Willey Dickinson the curate, the couple being the first occupants of the vicarage that was built in 1845. From there her son went to Rugby and, like his father, to Trinity College, Cambridge. But he turned out to be a waster, married a village girl, squandered the money that he had inherited from his grandparents and ran away destitute to Jersey where he died at the age of 40. There were no children of the marriage and present day members of the wider Clarkson family are in the main descended from Thomas Clarkson's younger brother John. Contact with the



Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846) lived at Playford Hall from 1816 until his death

village however, principally over maintenance and upkeep of the external memorials, has been by even more remote family members descended from Thomas Clarkson's uncle Henry. Richard Clarkson (1904-1996), an aeronautical engineer with de Havilland then Hawker Siddeley, fulfilled that role for over 50 years and on his death was followed by his nephew Thomas who is unmarried.¹⁹⁰



Sir George Biddell Airy (1801-92) spent many of his school holidays with his uncle Arthur Biddell at Hill House

The Airy plaques

George Biddell Airy (1801-92), whose marble medallion by the sculptor *F J Williamson* of Esher (1883-1920), reputed to have been Queen Victoria's favourite, is on the north wall of the nave. Airy was Astronomer Royal for 46 years from 1835 to 1881 and is probably best known for laying the foundations of Greenwich Mean Time and for setting the Prime Meridian of the World which to this day goes through the Royal Observatory at Greenwich.¹⁹¹ He first came to Playford as a schoolboy little more than ten years old to visit his uncle, Arthur Biddell, who had moved to Hill Farm from West Suffolk in 1808. His mother Ann was an older sister of Arthur

¹⁸⁹ Michael De-la-Noy, *The House of Hervey, a history of tainted talent*, (London, 2001), 170. Louisa, sister of the 5th Earl of Bristol, was married to the second Earl of Liverpool who became Prime Minister in 1812. And 'to do a little something for his wife's family' he advised George III to advance his brother-in-law to a marquessate and in 1826 the 5th Earl of Bristol became the 1st Marquess of Bristol.

¹⁹⁰ *The Independent*, Richard Clarkson, obituary 9 December 1996: 'He was one of Britain's outstanding aeronautical engineers and made a leading contribution to British technical air supremacy in the Second World War'. Responsible for the aerodynamics of the de Havilland Mosquito, a highly successful fighter-bomber of which nearly 8,000 were built, he later headed the design team for the wing of the Trident features of which were subsequently used for the Airbus A300.

¹⁹¹ See <https://mathshistory.st-andrews.ac.uk/DNB/Airy.html> for an article in the Oxford DNB by Dr Allan Chapman of Wadham College, Oxford, an authority on Airy.

and his father William was employed in the Excise. He had at one point been posted to Bury St Edmunds where he formed an acquaintance with the Biddell family and a little later he was transferred to Colchester. It was while he was there in 1813, following allegations over a missing sum of money, that he lost his tax collector's job and went into obscurity. From then on the young Airy was largely brought up by his uncle Arthur and it was while attending Colchester Grammar School that he used to spend much of his summer holidays at Hill House. Noting the boy's intelligence, Biddell introduced Airy to his friend Thomas Clarkson, who had an MA in mathematics from Cambridge, who arranged for him to be interviewed by a fellow from Trinity. Airy entered that college in 1819 and was set on a meteoric career his progress being well documented in numerous articles and obituaries on the internet. A concise outline of his life, written by a cousin James Airy, is available in a brochure at the back of the church.

Although Airy lived at Greenwich as Astronomer Royal for 46 years from 1835 and stayed on there in retirement, he never forgot the happy days of his youth that he had spent in Playford and he regarded the village as home. In 1839 two of his young sons died: Arthur aged five of scarlet fever at Greenwich, George aged eight some little time earlier had suffered severely from an attack of measles and was taken ill on his way to his brother's funeral and died at Lux farm house. Both were buried in Playford some six years before Airy owned his property in the village. It was in about 1845 when, in the words of his granddaughter Anna, he was 'able to acquire in bits and pieces the little property where she now lived'. A busy man, he made little use of the house staying in it for only two or so weeks at the turn of each year. He therefore took little part in village life though he remained in close contact with his uncle. He did however become involved in the scandal of the mutilation of the Felbrigg brass in 1837-38 and, more noteworthy, 'he honoured his debt to Thomas Clarkson for his help on becoming the eminent mathematician and astronomer that he was by organising the raising in 1857 of the granite obelisk in the churchyard'.¹⁹²

Richarda Airy (1804-1875). It was on a walking tour in Derbyshire that Airy met Richarda, daughter of the Revd Richard Smith incumbent at Edensor near Chatsworth. The couple married at Edensor in 1830. Richarda was an amateur artist and made the well known pencil drawing of their Playford home in 1850 and was the mother of Annot, Christabel and Hubert all three of whom are styled as Suffolk artists. Richarda was stricken with a paralytic stroke in about 1870, was nursed by her unmarried daughters Annot and Christabel and died at the White House, Crooms Hill, Greenwich in 1875.¹⁹³

Wilfrid Airy (1836-1925), George Biddell Airy's eldest surviving son, was largely overshadowed in his career by that of his illustrious father and by his only daughter Anna who by the age of 30 had become one of the leading artist's of her generation. Few will therefore have heard of Wilfrid yet he became an eminent civil engineer and publisher of scholarly articles that are deposited at Harvard University. After five years at Trinity, his father's old college, he served a further seven year 'gentleman's apprenticeship' at the Ipswich engineering firm of the then named Ransomes & Sims. In 1881 he married Anna, younger daughter of Professor Listing, a friend of his father from the



Wilfrid Airy (1836-1925)

¹⁹² See also Airy's in this series, 6 - 12. Ipswich Journal 5 December 1846. It was however Robert Newton Shawe of Kesgrave Hall, landowner and MP for East Suffolk, who instigated the first attempt within months Clarkson's death in September that year.

¹⁹³ G. B. Airy, *Autobiography of Sir George Biddell Airy*, ed. W. Airy, (2008), 287.

Göttingen Observatory in Germany. Their daughter Anna was born the following year but, tragically, his wife died two weeks after giving birth. Wilfrid never remarried. He finally retired in 1916 by which time he was 80 and moved to The Cottage at Playford where he died in 1925. He is buried on the north side of the church beside his daughter Anna and her husband Geoffrey Buckingham Pocock.

Hilda Airy (1840-1916), eldest daughter of George Biddell Airy, married Edward Routh FRS (1831-1907) the eminent Cambridge mathematician. The couple had met when Hilda's father had invited Routh to Greenwich with a view to enticing him to work at the Royal Observatory but did not succeed.

Hubert Airy (1838-1903), a younger son of George Biddell Airy, followed the family tradition in going to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he read medicine and later became a pioneer in the study of migraine. In 1865 his father was the first to describe his own experience of a certain aspect of the phenomenon and he followed five years later when he recorded his own experience of it. The topic was immediately taken up by the profession in particular by two of Airy's Cambridge contemporaries making it a well-recognised entity in the medical world. Hubert lived in Woodbridge where he worked as a doctor and was Medical Inspector to the Local Government Board. In his leisure time he was, like five other members of his family, an artist and in 1887 he exhibited four water colours including one of Playford Hall.

Osmund Airy (1845-1928), George Biddell Airy's youngest son, also went to Trinity, Cambridge, following which he became a teacher at Wellington College. He left in 1876 to become an Inspector of Schools in Birmingham and in 1904 became a divisional inspector retiring in 1910. Apart from his mathematical interests, he was a noted historian and writer of many books and pamphlets especially on the Stuart and Restoration periods. He edited for example Gilbert Burnet's *History of His Own Time* covering the reign of Charles II in two volumes and was a contributor to both the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB).

James Osmund Airy (1884-1920), was the son of the 'historian' Osmund Airy. He was educated at Repton and the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst graduating into the British Indian Army in 1903. While in India he played first-class cricket for the 'Europeans' against home teams before he resigned with the rank of lieutenant in 1909 and joined the Canadian army. When war broke out in Europe in the summer of 1914, he joined the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force and saw action in France. At some point he transferred to the Essex Regiment where he held the rank of captain and moved yet again to the Manchesters where in December 1917 he was promoted to major and in March the following year to acting lieutenant colonel while in command of a battalion. He relinquished his temporary wartime commission but stayed with his regiment and in October 1919 he was posted to Ireland during the Irish War of Independence where he was in command of 50 men. Airy was badly wounded in an ambush by about 30 armed rebels while travelling from Ballyvourney to Macroom on 20 July 1920 and died the next day.¹⁹⁴ ¹⁹⁵ He was alleged by Volunteers to have criminally assaulted a girl on her way home from school three days earlier and, enraged by this, he had been killed by members of the Fermoy Sinn Feiners in an act of revenge. Some also considered him to have been associated with an intelligence unit within the Black and Tans. His funeral took place at the Military Barracks Cemetery in Cork where 'all available men from the Battalion marched from Ballincollig to be there'.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Wylly, Col. H C, *History of the Manchester Regiment*, Vol. II.1883-1922, (1925), 206-208.

¹⁹⁵ Tameside Local Studies & Archive Centre, Ashton-under-Lyne, *The Manchester Regiment in Ireland*, MR1/1/2/4.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, MR1/1/2/2.

The West family

Two small brass plaques on the south wall of the chancel near the clergyman's reading desk are tributes to two sons of Daniel Kemp West (1838-1916) who lived very briefly in the parish in the 1880s. Kemp West was a London based civil engineer, as was both his father and his father's brother, who in 1887 bought Playford Mount as a country retreat but, just three years later on the premature death of his wife Amelia at the age of 45, he sold up and returned to the capital. He remarried but, on his death in 1916, he was buried with his first wife in Playford.¹⁹⁷ In the three short years that he lived at The Mount somewhat surprisingly he bought three cottages down at The Brook and spent a considerable sum of money upgrading them into more habitable accommodation. More amazingly, these humble properties were to remain in the family's possession for the next 80 years until bought by Charles Lofts in the 1970s prior to their demolition.¹⁹⁸

The memorials to his two sons, teenagers at the time of their residence in the parish, were put up after the death of their father and show the strong attachment that the family had for the village years after they had left it. Just nine months after his mother's death in 1890 and still only 19 years old Dudley Gordon West, the elder of the two, headed straight to India. What work he did is not known but he stayed there until he died in Delhi in 1918 at the age of 47. The younger son, Gilbert Witter West, led a more chequered life. He returned to London with his father initially living in some comfort in Kensington before moving out to Watford with two of his sisters where he became the manager of a cabinet factory. He served as a major in the Royal Lancaster Regiment in the First World War and in 1930 is known to have been employed by Winsor & Newton the well known manufacturer of fine art products. He died in nearby Barnet in 1936 aged 64.

Daniel Kemp West died in August 1916. The funeral service in Playford church was taken by the rector of East Horndon in Essex but it is unlikely that either of his sons were able to attend. While Dudley Gordon is on record as having come home on leave from India from time to time, nothing has been found to indicate that he returned to England in the summer of 1916. And Gilbert Witter, serving in the army in the middle of the war is also unlikely to have been able to attend.

CHURCH PLATE AND OTHER TREASURES

Steeple Cup

Given to the church by Lady Elizabeth Felton in her will of 1639, the Playford communion cup remains a much valued treasure within the parish and a tangible connection with the Felton family.¹⁹⁹ Now kept in safe custody and used only at Christmas and Easter, it is thought to have previously been a secular standing cup given to Penelope, probably the youngest of Sir Anthony and Lady Elizabeth's children, when she was ill. In turn Penelope, in her will of July 1626, bequeathed the cup to her sister-in-law Lady [Dorothy] Felton who had married her brother Henry the first baronet from whom it eventually passed to her mother.²⁰⁰ Penelope had been living with her mother at Playford Hall as had Henry and Dorothy but on Henry's early death in 1624 Dorothy had taken their son also Henry (b. 1619), the next heir to the Felton baronetcy, to Shotley for Playford Hall was part of her mother-in-law's jointure. Lady Elizabeth bequeathed the cup to Playford church: 'I give one gilt silver cup standing with a cover and the armes of

¹⁹⁷ The couple are buried near the Crisp family vault on the north side of the church. grave no. 42.

¹⁹⁸ See Brook Cottages in this series, 11-14.

¹⁹⁹ The cup warrants a photograph in Munro Cautley's *Suffolk Churches*. The original of Lady Felton's will is held in the Bodleian Library.

²⁰⁰ Allen, M. E. (ed.), 2015. *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Suffolk, 1627-1628*, Suffolk Records Soc., Vol. LVIII. (Woodbridge), 33. Letters of Administration were granted at Ipswich to Mary Felton, a sister, on 27 November 1627.



PLAYFORD.
Standing cup.

my late husband upon the same' stressing that it be 'used at the tyme of ye communion of ye Bodie and Blood of our Saviour & not otherwise being bought for that purpose alone'.²⁰¹

In an article on church plate in Suffolk in 1895, the Revd Edmund Hopper describes the Playford cup and cover as the finest in the Carlford Deanery stating that it is a good specimen of an English standing cup that was possibly given later as a chalice.²⁰² The cup stands 9¼ inches high and has the Felton arms of two lions *passant* inscribed upon it though they are not immediately apparent. The hall marks on the rim of the cup are a small italic *b* for 1619, a lion *passant* for silver assay, a leopard's head crowned for London and a maker's mark which is illegible. The cover has no hall marks and may not originally have belonged to the cup. The finial on tripod legs resembles garden ornaments of the period.²⁰³ There is a photograph of it in Munro Cautley's *Suffolk Churches* where it is captioned a standing cup but better images of it can be seen in *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Suffolk 1627-1628* (fn. 130), under will no. 68.²⁰⁴

Pewter Flagons

The church is also in possession of two pewter tankards that date from the reign of Charles I (1626-1649). Their provenance is unknown. A Canon of 1604 confirmed that communion had



The smaller flagon of c. 1630

to be taken 'at least thrice in the year, whereof the feast of Easter to be one'. At this time parishes needed communion cups larger than their previous chalices because the wine was now given to the laity whereas previously it was not. In 1603 parishes were ordered to provide themselves with flagons to contain the larger quantities of wine that were now brought to the altar.²⁰⁵ Previously only silver was allowed but permission was later granted that pewter could also be used.

The larger of the two flagons is 12 ins. tall with a heart-shaped thumb piece and a flat foot and dated c. 1640 while the smaller one is 9 ins. tall with a plain thumb piece and a knob on its lid is dated a little earlier c. 1630. The initials ESPC and WL could well be those of the churchwardens. Pewter from before 1666 is difficult to date precisely as all the

²⁰¹ Browne, A.L., 1935. 'Lady Elizabeth Felton and her daughters', Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeol., XXII, 172-3. Will of Lady Elizabeth Felton, dated 8 July 1639, transcribed from Bodleian Charters No. 1369.

²⁰² Hopper, E.C., 1896, 'Church Plate in the Deanery of Carlford', Proc. Suffolk Inst., Archaeol., IX, 166.

²⁰³ Additional notes by John Blatchly.

²⁰⁴ Cautley, H Munro, *Suffolk Churches and Their Treasures* (Woodbridge 1987), 313. Wills, 34.

²⁰⁵ Dymond, D., *The Business of the Suffolk Parish, 1558-1625* (Needham Market, 2018), 42.

plates were destroyed in the Fire of London in 1666.²⁰⁶ Now in safe custody, they had been held in the vicarage until its sale in 1973.²⁰⁷

Church plate ²⁰⁸

A silver patera dated 1774 inscribed: *Playford Church 1838. This do in remembrance of me. Presented to Playford Church by W W Dickinson, who resigned the perpetual curacy 1837, and by Arthur Biddell, sole Church Warden upwards of 40 years, 1859.*²⁰⁹

A silver Victorian chalice

A 7½ ins. silver salver, 8 oz. London 1858.

A 7 ins. silver salver with Gadroon edge and three hooped feet, 9½ oz. by Robert Jones, London 1774.

Electroplate 20 ins. tray with two handles inscribed *In Memory of Ernest William Shaw Broadbent, Vicar of Playford 1954 to 1959*

Small electroplate tray inscribed *José Booker; 15. 11. 1924 - 02. 07. 2002*

Electroplate wafer server in the shape of a shell

Two silver 7½ ins. hexagonal shaped alms bowls designed and donated by Anna Airy, 1961.

Church chest

Plain and nondescript in appearance, it is nevertheless regarded by experts as 'like the Elizabethan ones but with its lid chamfered all round'. Made of elm, it is presumed to be of James II's reign (1685-88) with a purse or small internal compartment and a single lock. Small in size, it measures just 36 ins. long by 12 ins. broad and 12 ins. deep and stands on legs that are not quite 6 ins. high.²¹⁰

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

While a handful of clergy and other well intentioned individuals had introduced a Sunday school into their parishes by 1760, it was not until 20 years later in 1780 that Robert Raikes (1736-1811), editor of the *Gloucester Journal*, took up the cause. Through the auspices of his newspaper he was able to reach out to the clergy in his county who he found to be most supportive. Word soon spread more widely and by 1800 200,000 children countrywide had been enrolled in Sunday Schools, by 1830 the number had risen to 1¼ million and by mid century it is estimated that 2 million children attended weekly religious classes. Using the Bible as their text book the children learned to read



Robert Raikes (1736-1811)

²⁰⁶ Visit to Playford church 2 February 2001 by Dr Roberts of Ipswich, a former President of the Pewter Society, and Glyn James of Woodbridge.

²⁰⁷ Parish leaflet of Great & Little Bealings with Playford and Culpho, February 1973.

²⁰⁸ SROI FC22/C5/5. Playford church terrier compiled by Anna Airy, 1962.

²⁰⁹ Hopper, 166.

²¹⁰ David Sherlock, *Suffolk Church Chests* (Ipswich, 2008), 86. Steven J Plunkett, 1998. 'The Suffolk Institute of Archaeology: its Life and Times.' *Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeol.*, XXXIX, 185-206 in which he writes of Claude Morley, 1874-1951. Morley was principally an entomologist but also a much respected antiquarian. His typescript notes dating from the 1930s, list 293 Suffolk church chests and are held in the Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich, (HD 1316/1-4).

and write. Robert Raikes' schools were seen as the precursors of state education.

Playford's first step into the realms of teaching came with Thomas Clarkson's arrival in the village in February 1816. His wife Catherine established a Sunday School in the chancel for about 40 or 50 boys and girls who entered at the age of four or five and left at about twelve or fourteen. A 'small stove' was kept there. There was no endowment and it appears that Catherine Clarkson supported it herself paying a 'superintendent', who acted under the direction of the incumbent at an annual salary believed to be 50s or £3.²¹¹ A Visitation by the Archdeacon in 1820 confirms this and that the school was 'under the superintendence of a charitable lady'. There can be no doubt that Catherine was the instigator and driving force behind the school, a pity therefore that when Davy visited in 1824 and confirmed the arrangements, he noted that 'the whole was very dirty and ill kept'.²¹²

Unlike the Sunday School which took both boys and girls in equal numbers the weekday school, first recorded in 1833 and attended by 12-14 pupils, was made up mainly of girls. Boys from as young as six were wanted on the farms: the farmers wanted cheap labour and the parents wanted the meagre wages that they earned. Nothing was taught at school that would in any way enhance a boy's earnings in later life whereas girls were taught useful, practical skills such as needlework that would stand them in good stead in adulthood. Girls therefore often stayed on until the age of 10 or 12. Such was girls' dominance that modern-day villagers whose grandparents attended the school remained convinced that weekday education was reserved only for them.²¹³ It is of note that while the weekday school in Playford closed in 1877 with the opening of the one in Little Bealings, the Sunday School kept going until well into the 1960s.



Playford Sunday School outing 1930s with the Rev Dr Harry Baylis well wrapped up on Felixstowe beach

For many boys therefore the only education they received was on a Sunday, the only day in the week that they had off work.²¹⁴ A fact that tends to be forgotten in the present age is that Sunday observance was strictly followed and that no work, apart from tending to livestock, was done on farms on the sabbath not only in the era before weekday education became compulsory in 1880 but on a majority of farms right up to the 1950s. Unsurprisingly therefore in the early days this had a beneficial effect on the numbers that attended Sunday School as parents were keen to see that their sons received some sort of education especially one that was free and did not affect the

²¹¹ SROI HD 436/3, Manfred Biddell, 1883. *Extracts from the books and papers of the parish of Playford and other notes relating to its history*, 17.

²¹² SROB J400/4, D E Davy MSS rolls, Carlford and Colneis. B L Add MSS 19086-7. David Elisha Davy (1769-1851) was a Suffolk antiquary and collector. His manuscripts were purchased by the British Museum in 1852.

²¹³ See Foxboro in this series for weekday schooling in Playford throughout the C19, 5-14. <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/download/bl/0000071/18830505/010/0006>

²¹⁴ The Saturday half-day holiday was still a long way off and, although agreement had been made in 1924 that Wages Committees should specify a weekly half day holiday 'as far as is practicable', it was never really enforced and it was not until 1951 that the half-day holiday was enshrined in law whereby the employee 'was not required to work after one o'clock p.m.'. A week's holiday with pay for working class employees was introduced in 1938 but, where Wages Committees so chose, employees could not take more than three consecutive days off.

family income. But no records of any sort were kept and the only information there is on their activities comes from the occasional newspaper article, a few photographs and, for the C20, by the odd word of mouth.

As an aside, in a long and cloying article on a two-day bazaar held at Playford Hall in 1883 to raise money for a new church organ, it mentions in passing that a room in the barn had been turned into a Sunday School-room by Mr Crisp who had found that on his coming to Playford [in 1879] there was no Sunday School in the parish.²¹⁵ The Crisps had arrived during an interregnum between the cession of the Revd Thomas Cooper in 1879 and the licensing of the Revd John Freeman in 1880 during which time the Sunday School had foundered.²¹⁶ Crisp had taken matters into his own hands and put matters right but over the years there must have been other such occasions which have gone unrecorded.



Playford Sunday School outing 1906 at Archway House

The Revd John Freeman was licensed in April 1880 by which time it would seem that Crisp had got the Sunday School back to full strength. He was just in time for the celebrations of the Sunday Schools Centenary in July of that year an event that was hosted in Playford by Herman Biddell in the grounds of

²¹⁵ Ipswich Journal, 5 May 1883.

²¹⁶ East Anglian Daily Times, 25 May 1879. It is of passing interest that the Revd Thomas Cooper had moved to New Shildon in the Durham coalfield where he was presented by the patron, the Earl of Beaconsfield better known as Benjamin Disraeli. Disraeli was still serving as Prime Minister at the time and had been made Earl of Beaconsfield by Queen Victoria that year. In the days before equalisation of clergy stipends, Cooper had moved from a living worth just £80 a year, one of the poorest in the country, to one valued at £300.

Hill House and attended by nearly 50 Sunday School 'scholars'. Biddell did these things well and revelled in playing host. After a short church service at 3 o'clock, the children proceeded to Hill House for a sumptuous tea followed by games and sports. At 5 o'clock a 'considerable party' arrived from Burgh where his father-in-law was rector and at half past six it appeared that 'the entire population of the village' were attending when the 'working men of Playford' arrived and 'attacked huge joints of beef and numerous steaming plum puddings &c.'. With Herman's military connections, music was provided by the Suffolk Artillery Militia Band. It was altogether a grand occasion and on a par with any coronation or royal jubilee.

Other evidence for the continued existence of a Sunday School comes from a few photographs taken some time after the turn of the century and before the First World War. The annual Sunday School outing was undoubtedly the highlight of most children's year and seems to have involved unvarying trips to the beach at Felixstowe. They were taken to Derby Road station by horse and waggon provided in turn by George Fiske of Hill Farm and Sam Sherwood of Lux Farm, the two churchwardens, and for young children it was an adventure as enjoyable as the train ride itself. Such day trips to Felixstowe continued into the '20s and '30s and were also popular Sunday outings for working people in Ipswich until after the Second World War. For Playford children however the war curtailed such adventures and the outing took them no further than Playford Heath.²¹⁷ The Sunday School itself continued after the war, the last teacher being Yvonne Waller who had moved to 2 Hill Farm Road from Ipswich in 1958 when she was 10 years old. In the few years before she married and moved away in February 1969, she took confirmation classes as well as the Sunday School. But by this time numbers had drastically fallen away to only four or five children and some of those came from surrounding villages.

TERRIERS

Terrier is the name given to a detailed list of land, goods and ornaments belonging to a parish church which is scrutinised by an archdeacon or bishop as part of his Visitation commonly known in East Anglia as the General or Generals. Its contents include all the appurtenances involved in the day to day use of the church down to kneelers for the congregation and falls for the altar, pulpit and lectern. The earliest surviving example for Playford dates from 1784 and is probably the first ever produced for the parish following the appointment of William Layton by the Church ten years earlier. Compared with later editions it contains very little. It does however inform that the third bell had been removed and had been lying on the ground 'for time out of mind'. It also reported that the Felton chalice, a 'silver cup with cover', was held in church custody. The document was signed off by Layton and the churchwarden of the time.²¹⁸

On Layton's retirement in 1826, Playford ceased its association with St Matthew's church and instead was united with Rushmere St Andrew. In those early years there appears to have been little communication between incumbent and warden for in 1834 it was Arthur Biddell as churchwarden rather than the incumbent who signed the form. Biddell, already in post for 18 years and resident in the parish for 26, knew little about the document that he had been asked to witness or what the church had in its possession. On Layton's departure, there had apparently been five 'register books' (recording baptisms, marriages and burials) which Biddell wondered if 'by now might have been added to by others...'. Their whereabouts he did not know but 'supposed they were held by the Revd Day' who had succeeded Layton at Playford. Day had been licensed as vicar of Rushmere in 1826 and of Playford the following year. Contact between the two appears not to have been good and shines an interesting light on the working of the parish at that time.

²¹⁷ One such outing on Wednesday 15 July 1942 provides further evidence that, despite the war, much of the heath was still to be ploughed up.

²¹⁸ SROI FC 22/E2/1. Terriers between 1784-1827 are catalogued under Visitations. Subsequent issues are to be found under Terriers (below).

Biddell 'could merely declare that he had heard of an estate lying at or near Badingham that belonged to the church' and similarly reported that he had heard of 'augmentations made to the curacy of Playford by the Commissioners of Queen Anne's Bounty but knows nothing about them'.²¹⁹ He was however conscious that the Marquis of Bristol [as lay rector] repaired the chancel, 'had the churchyard' and that he paid a stipend of 12 guineas or thereabouts to the curate finally adding that it was the parish which repaired the church.^{220 221} Beyond the Felton chalice and a bier, no other item belonging to the church is mentioned.

Charles Day was followed at Rushmere and Playford by Thomas West in 1835 whose first surviving Playford terrier, dated 1845, gives great detail of the new parsonage house that had been completed that year and to which he had been the largest financial contributor. Most significantly the terrier states that it had been 'built partly with red and partly with white bricks' quashing all consideration that the differing colours indicated that the main building had been put up and later extended. The cost, it is learned, was £500 and not £800 as in the church guide. West donated £200 towards its building while a further £200 grant came from the Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty which also provided additional money 'out of appropriate funds'. Capital was also raised by subscription. Added to the terrier for the first time was a silver paten 'recently presented by Thomas West' and, since the previous terrier, a 'stove and pipes' had been added 'to warm the church'. The terrier also states that the only glebe land within the parish is the site recently given for the new vicarage but what was the piece of land on the heath where the parish oats were grown in 1832? The terrier continued: 'there is at Badingham a farm house and buildings together with about 22 acres of land belonging to the perpetual curacy of Playford and occupied by John Eagle.

The 1886 terrier, the next to be found, informs that the farm at Badingham had changed hands and 'was now in the occupation of William Beaumont'. Following the Church's attempts to remedy extreme disparities in stipends, the terrier also recorded that the perpetual curacy had been in receipt of interest totalling just over £12, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners had made an annual grant of £20 and that in 1880, by Order in Council, Sproughton Benefice, where the Marquis of Bristol was also Patron, made a payment of £50 which was to be disbursed annually.

By 1908 the farm at Badingham had changed hands yet again and was now in the occupation of Arthur Dunnett. Added in pencil by Clement Wright, vicar from 1903 to 1926, was the comment that 'this smallholding was sold to the tenant by private treaty 1st December 1919'. At around the same time in 1912 the £12 12 0 annual tithe rent charge on Playford Estate was redeemed. Other sales of land were soon to follow. The terrier of 1908 states that on the adjoining small arable field to the north of the church (part of Hill Farm and not church property on which the churchyard was later to be extended) 'a small shed of wood roofed with [galvanised] iron 10 feet long by 7 feet broad... belonging to the church is used as a tool

²¹⁹ Queen Anne's Bounty was a scheme established by Parliament in 1704 to augment the incomes of clergy in the Church of England whose livings yielded less than £80 a year. In 1947 its assets were merged with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to form the Church Commissioners.

²²⁰ SROI FC 22/C5/1-6. All other surviving Terriers are held under this reference. The Marquis of Bristol also had the fees for making vaults in the chancel.

²²¹ SROB HA507/3/745. In one of his letters to his patron Lord Bristol, dated 28 July 1859, Christopher Hodgson perpetual curate (1857-71) confirms that his lordship holds possession of the churchyard ('I suppose from custom') and that it is let to the tenant of Playford Hall [Farm presumably for grazing]. This, he states, is contrary to usual practice, all other churchyards forming part of the incumbent's freehold giving them control of the area surrounding the church. He continues, that as things stand 'he has no power to refuse or consent to any grave being dug, any monument or tablet being erected or any obelisk raised...'. In a following letter of 8 August 1859 he writes: The obelisk erected to the memory of the late T. Clarkson esq in the churchyard was raised in the last year. I had not the slightest intimation that such a work was contemplated nor was my permission asked, nor has any notice been taken of the Fee since that time.

and coal shed'.²²² It added that 'the main approach to the church is from the south but that there is another footway that enters the churchyard on the north side that passes through an enclosure of land... where now is a hand gate to the side of a nine foot cart gate' so further confirming that there had been no vehicular access to the church or churchyard until about 1900.

In 1968 a new set of iron gates complete with brick pillars was given by Mrs Gilmour, an admirer in memory of her friend Dorothea Biddell (1876-1965), the eldest of Herman Biddell's five children. Dorothea had spent her life working among the poor in London but returned to Playford for her final years living in modest accommodation at The Brook.²²³

In 1928 the Revd Dr Harry Baylis added Stevenson's two brass candle sticks and altar cross to the terrier that had been drawn up in 1908, the stained glass east window inserted as a memorial to the Great War and an 'underground heating stove with accompanying grating in the nave' evidence of yet another attempt at heating the church. Following his appointment as churchwarden in 1904, Stevenson had held no further office in the church until after Herman Biddell's death in 1917. Thereafter he played a leading part in the choice of the parish's war memorial, both he and his wife attended the 1921 Vestry, the year in which democratic church councils or PCCs were established, and in 1927 with the arrival of a new vicar he was present at the recently introduced Annual Parochial Church Council. He was elected Rural Deanery Representative and his wife was co-opted on to the PCC. The following year she took over Deanery responsibilities and both were thanked for their work in connection with the church fete which had been held in the grounds of The Mount. Gratitude was also expressed for their gift of a pair of brass candlesticks and an altar cross that are still in use to this day.²²⁴ The couple were re-elected to the PCC in the spring of 1931 but, having been received into the Roman Catholic church in August of that year, were removed from the list of Playford church members. That same year they made a gift of a stained glass window to the new Catholic church in Kesgrave.²²⁵

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²²² The shed was demolished in the 1990s and the present toilet built in its place. In its final years it was used to house a lawn mower, a heavy wooden bier of C19 date and a much smaller one used to carry young children to their graves. The toilet stands in the corner of the 'old' churchyard just to the south of the line of the two large lime trees meaning that the trees were part of Hill Farm and not the church.

²²³ For more information on Dorothea Biddell see Archway House in this series, 4. Mrs Gilmour was an American but had never lived in Arizona as stated on the plaque.

²²⁴ The three items are marked with the initials COS standing for [Lady] Caroline Octavia Stevenson, Francis Stevenson's mother.

²²⁵ The Catholic church was built in 1931 in memory of Squadron Leader Michael Rope and the 47 others including the Secretary of State for Air, Baron Thompson of Cardington, who died with him in the wreck of HM Airship R101 at Allonne near Beauvais in northern France on 5 October 1930. The window was painted by Marga Rope (1882-1953), a sister of Michael Rope, who was a stained glass artist in the Arts and Crafts movement tradition and who became a Carmelite nun initially at Woodbridge and later at Rushmere. The inscription on the window reads: 'The gift of Francis Seymour Stevenson and Mary Kate his wife in thankfulness for their conversion to the faith for which the blessed martyrs Thomas More and John Fisher gave their lives'.

responsibilities and both were thanked for their work in connection with the church fete, which had been held in their grounds at The Mount, and for the pair of brass candlesticks and altar cross. The couple were re-elected to the PCC in the spring of 1931 but, having been received into the Roman Catholic church in August of that year, were removed from the list of Playford church members. That same year they made a gift of a stained glass window to the new Catholic church in Kesgrave.

A gift that the church received but had to renounce was the Gayfer property in Church Lane. The four acre area between Butts Hill and The Courts had been bought by Arthur Biddell in 1833. In 1923 it descended to his grandson John Lyall Biddell, a bachelor and devout churchman, who lived there for nine years. In his will he bequeathed 'the double tenement in which I am now living together with the upland at the back hoping that the property may be of some use to the church...'. It was gratefully received by the vicar and churchwardens who set to work tidying up the site behind the double cottage only to be told by the Charity Commissioners that they were not in a position to accept it and that it had to be sold. While Biddell had left the eastern half of the four acre site to the church, he had left the western half to his sister Lucy Wolton who, being five years his senior, quickly passed it on to her daughter Margaret Goldsmith. And it was Margaret Goldsmith, mother of Owen, who bought the eastern half as well. The £400 that she paid for it was used to set up The John Lyall Biddell Trust in the same way that The Crisp Trust had been set up some few years before. Both names continued to appear in the annual accounts until 2012 when they became merged with other bequests.²²⁶

No further terriers have survived until 1962 when it was completed by Anna Airy, a regular churchgoer, who had been elected to the Church Council in 1936 soon after her arrival in the village from London. It was the fullest list of the church's possessions that had been made and thereafter was updated on a regular basis.

GLEBE

As stated above, the parish priest was supported by both tithes and his own farmland, known as glebe, the latter being recorded in the regularly updated inventory or terrier. The incumbent could have farmed the land himself or, more likely, let it to a tenant and taking the rent as income. It is known that such land existed for the benefit of Playford's clergy, its history going back a long way, yet there are scant references to it in the records. In the introduction to his list of priests serving Playford, the Revd Dr Harry Baylis states that the church was originally endowed with 10 acres of land some time before 1086 but there is no mention of where this is or where the information might have come from. In the C19 there is a vague reference to it in 1834 when Arthur Biddell the churchwarden recorded in the terrier that he had 'only heard of' an estate at or near Badingham.²²⁷ In the Suffolk Returns of 1851 it is recorded that the church was 'endowed with land, £35' and that the glebe and parsonage were worth a further £30. As with the parsonage house, which the incumbent had to maintain with his own money, glebe was the parson's property. He held the freehold and glebe was not a matter for discussion within the parish.

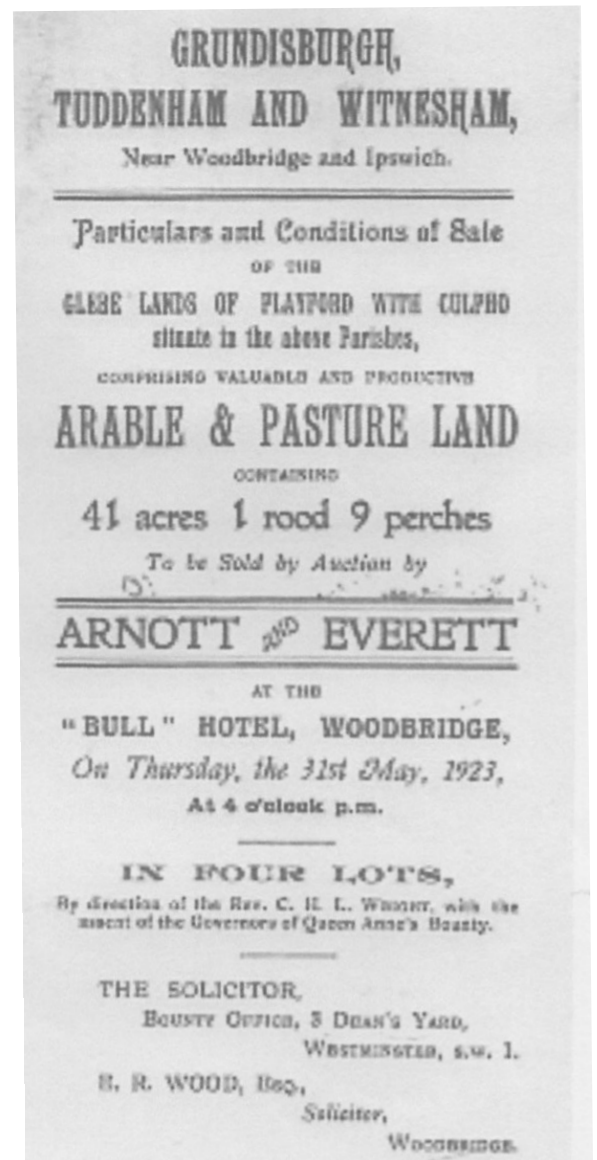
Under the Glebe Lands Act of 1888 the government was keen to facilitate the sale of such land primarily, in the mood of the times, to promote the acquisition of small plots of land by cottagers and labourers in rural districts. Francis Stevenson, for ever keen to press for the availability of smallholdings and

²²⁶ SROI FC22/L1/3. Also merged in 1976 with the Biddell and Crisp bequests was a legacy of £100 made in 1909 from Miss Lucy Mann. Born in a cottage above Barrack Cottages on Butts Hill in 1827, she worked in service in various upmarket parts of London, one of thousands moving into the capital at that time. See Archway House in this series, 18.

²²⁷ It is of note that the church of Badingham was listed with that of Playford and 26 others in the foundation charter of Eye Priory in around 1100. Does the association between these two parishes go back this far or is the existence of Playford glebe land in that parish just a coincidence?

allotments, spoke enthusiastically in the debate. Perhaps surprisingly he stressed that the land should not be given away but that it should be sold at the highest price attainable for the benefit of the clergy. The sale of glebe land by incumbents had the blessing of the Church though it stopped short of them selling off parsonage houses and grounds. Owning the freehold, they were able to cash it in and pocket the money to the detriment of their successors without reference to any authority. Many an unworldly incumbent was fleeced by an unscrupulous developer and it is of note that two of the Playford glebe lands in Grundisburgh were, in the days before planning permission, advertised as having building potential. Clergy had every inducement to sell as returns made from invested cash was worth significantly more than it made either from farming the land themselves or from its being let to tenants.

It was not until the 1960s that glebe was brought under Diocesan control where it could be better managed. The 22 acres at Badingham together with its farm house produced a rent of £17 a year and made an important contribution to the vicar's stipend of £80. How much the farm made is not known but the sale money had to be invested in National War Bonds 'which are still most ungently needed'. Yet it was not until December 1919 that the land was sold and another four years, in May 1923, that yet further glebe first appears in the records when it was put up for sale 'by the Direction of the Revd Clement Wright with the assent of the Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty'. It is the notice of sale that confirms not only the incumbent's authority to dispose of such property but that it was money from Queen Anne's Bounty that originally bought it. Part of the land lay in the parishes of Tuddenham and Witnesham where four enclosures of arable land amounting to 26½ acres made £250. The remainder was in Grundisburgh where an arable field of a mere acre and a half made £20 while a three-quarters of an acre plot of pasture land sold for £40 and a 12 acre arable field fetched £240, the last two with building potential, the smaller one 'commanding a pretty view'- hardly in the spirit of the Act where target buyers were cottagers and labourers rather than developers.²²⁸ The timing of the Badingham sale was most likely prompted by the favourable land prices that prevailed as the Great War came to an end while the later sales in 1923 can be attributed more confidently to the summary removal in 1921 of wartime farm price controls when the price of wheat dropped by half and the collapse of British agriculture soon followed. By the end of 1922 almost 25% of English farm land had changed hands.



Playford glebe land was not sold until land prices collapsed after the First World War

²²⁸ SROI FC22/C4/1-3. Papers relating to the sale of glebe.

CLERGY STIPENDS

It is only in comparatively recent times that the Church has regarded the stipend of parochial clergy not as pay in the normal sense but as a 'maintenance allowance'. It has though never followed the path of some other denominations and based it on individual family circumstances such as the number of children or a partner's earnings.²²⁹ As has been stated above, a clergyman's income depended on endowments left to his parish together with the value of its tithes and glebe, a system that led to huge variations in income between livings and which was not put right until well into the C20. In 1834, just prior to the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836 that required tithes in kind to be converted to more convenient money payments, the Playford churchwarden reported that 'all tithes were rectorial', a throwback to Norman times when in c. 1100 Robert Malet gave 'the tithe of Playford together with the church of that vill...' to Eye Priory.²³⁰ The Priory then became the rector and received the great tithes while the vicar appointed to the living would have received the lesser tithes but these latter payments would have come to an end in 1247 when, following a dispute, Playford was granted a special concession to employ secular (that is non-monastic) priests who were paid in cash on a casual basis. At the Dissolution in 1537 tithes were granted to laymen with those from Playford eventually passing to the Bristol family.²³¹ Playford continued to employ these casual priests up to the time of Layton's appointment by the Church in 1774 and, as they received no income from tithe, neither did the Church appointed clergy who followed them. Although the lesser tithes would not have amounted to much, Playford clergy were entirely reliant on endowment income bolstered by Queen Anne's Bounty which the 1851 Church Census values at £14 0s 6d. The churchwarden continued that 'Playford is a perpetual curacy. The emoluments to the curate amount to about £40 or £50 a year partly from a rent charge upon Estates, partly from land purchased from Queen Anne's Bounty and I believe there is a grant the source of which is not yet invested'.²³²

In 1851 half of all clergy livings were valued at less than £85 a year and in 1844 the Playford living was £53 the same as Culpho which had been given to Leiston Abbey. By contrast Great and Little Bealings, both being rectories, had incomes of £250 and £140 respectively while in 1859 Playford's gross income was 'not more than £60 per annum'.²³³ By 1871, while the Playford living had risen to £84 a year, that of Rushmere St Andrew and Little Bealings were worth double that amount and Great Bealings worth three and a half times.²³⁴ A further example of such variation was that of the Revd Thomas Cooper who in 1879 moved from Playford to a parish in the Durham coalfield increasing his income to £300 a year. Such situations were not uncommon with 'plum' livings, filled by clergy with the right connections, frequently lying cheek-by-jowl with parishes where the incumbent lived in penury. Nor was it uncommon for an incumbent to earn more than his bishop. Clergy incomes could be enhanced by the unpredictability of

²²⁹ <http://www.stgitehistory.org.uk/media/stipends.html> The fortunes of the clergy, an article on the history of the stipend written by an incumbent of St George-in-the East Church, London.

²³⁰ SROI, FC22/C5/1. Playford Terrier 1834. Prior to the Act of 1836 Playford, and doubtless many other parishes, had already stopped paying tithes in kind for in answer to the question 'What proportion of tithes has been taken up in kind on average over the last three years' the churchwarden's reply was none.

²³¹ As Lord Bristol was both land owner and tithe owner, a situation was created in which he was effectively entitled to pay tithes to himself. In such cases the tithes were deemed to be 'merged' that is to say the liability to pay them was extinguished by virtue of being also entitled to receive them. None of Lord Bristol's land in Playford parish was therefore surveyed and only privately owned property, both freehold and copyhold, was recorded.

²³² John Biddell, Church notes. Unpublished. Private possession. Biddell quotes Hodgson (presumably Christopher Hodgson, perpetual curate of Playford 1857-1871) when he states that Playford was in receipt of five such augmentations each of £200 the first, interestingly, being in 1752 at a time when the parish was still being served by casual priests. Further payments were made in 1786, 1792, 1817 and 1819.

²³³ Hodgson, 28 July 1859.

²³⁴ Population figures of the parishes in 1871 in brackets. While Playford (258) was valued at £84, Rushmere (613) was £200, Great Bealings (341) £300 and Little Bealings (245) £157.

wedding and funeral fees, pew rents and the 'Easter offering for the parson'.²³⁵ ²³⁶ However in the 1851 Church Census Playford fees were valued at 'not £1 a year'. With at least one priest in every parish in England many clergy had time on their hands. Those on lower incomes could augment their earnings by teaching, as did the Revd Christopher Hodgson who boarded four 11 year olds in Playford Vicarage during his time in office from 1857-1871. The better off however had no need of additional money and could continue, like Layton, who was described as 'a gentleman who devoted much of his time to topographical and genealogical enquiry'.²³⁷

It should be borne in mind that many clergy, certainly up to the time of the First World War, came from that social class who enjoyed the benefits of inherited wealth.²³⁸ For those, the value of their living was obviously less critical. In 1774 William Layton for example, the first priest to be licensed in Playford by the bishop, had inherited 'lands in Yorkshire' from his father while his mother owned an estate in Winston near Debenham in Suffolk. On completion of 40 years as perpetual curate in the parish and then aged 75, from 1814 to 1827 he delegated all his parish duties to the Revd Philip Meadows rector of Great & Little Bealings while still retaining nominal responsibility himself. It is assumed that Layton would have paid Meadows for his efforts but there were many instances of rich and idle incumbents paying curates very little to do their work within their own parishes leaving them with hardly anything to do.

When Charles Day became vicar of Rushmere in 1827 he was also licensed to the 'chapelry of Playford' and from 1828 to 1836 the Revd Forster Maynard became his resident curate in the subordinate parish.²³⁹ Similarly on Day's resignation, Thomas West became vicar of Rushmere, the Revd Henry Saunders became resident in Playford. He was followed by Willoughby Dickinson who, on West's death in 1848, became perpetual curate in his own right. These curates had day to day responsibility for Playford receiving their remuneration of £80 p.a. from the Diocese. Dickinson considered that he had no need of a curate yet his successor Christopher Hodgson, who used the vicarage as a fee-paying school, thought that he had and, surprisingly, for a short while in the 1860s the Church was paying for two full time priests resident in the parish.²⁴⁰

The Revd. Thomas West, when in charge of the combined parishes of Playford and Rushmere was the main contributor to the cost of building Playford's new vicarage in 1845 while the Revd Willoughby Dickinson, its first occupant, on his move to Wolferton in 1862, not only jointly presented with Arthur Biddell a silver paten to Playford church but extended the newly built rectory in his Norfolk parish at his own expense. And not long into his ministry there he again paid out of his own pocket for the complete reglazing of the east window of the chancel.

²³⁵ Bennett, J C., *The English Anglican Practice of Pew-Renting, 1800-1960*, PhD Thesis, University of B'ham, 1960.

The renting of pews was not uncommon in Anglican churches until as late as the early or even mid C20. It was a means of raising money ostensibly for the church but which on occasions found its way into the incumbent's pocket. The system brought about a social status in seating within the building with the most expensive seats being at the front, an hierarchical arrangement that was to continue long after renting had been abolished. With the introduction of the standard stipend in the 1970s clergy assigned their fees for weddings and funerals to the Diocese or, if they preferred, they declared the amount which was then deducted from their stipend. Now all fees have to be assigned. As a result of social changes in recent years, fee income from weddings and funerals has dropped markedly.

²³⁶ HA507/3/318. See also reference to pew renting in the Vestry minutes.

²³⁷ https://www.bigenealogy.com/suffolk/sproughton_parish.htm British Isle Genealogy, Sproughton Parish.

²³⁸ Michael Stone, ed. *The Diary of John Longe, Vicar of Coddendam 1765-1834*. Woodbridge, (2008). In reply to a Church enquiry asking for names or numbers of 'resident families of social note', Longe replied that 'apart from himself and his family there were none'.

²³⁹ Maynard and subsequent curates would have lived in the Old Vicarage in Hill Farm Road.

²⁴⁰ SROI, FC22/C1/1. The Revd Walter Browne was licensed on 27 May 1861 but at the reduced rate of £70 p.a.

Attempts to remedy the worst of the income disparities went on until after the Second World War. Queen Anne's Bounty had been set up in 1704 to augment the income of poorer clergy on less than £50 p.a. but it was not until 1796 that the minimum annual stipend for a curate was raised to £75.. The money was not paid directly to clergy but instead used to purchase land the income from which augmented the living starting with those with an annual income of less than £10. By 1836 the situation had improved considerably for the lowly paid but inequalities remained. Of some 12,500 parishes 300 had an annual income of less than £50 and 1,600 of between £50 to £100 placing Playford among the lowest 15% in the country. Commuting the payment of tithes into a money payment in 1846 proved a long drawn-out process and little progress was achieved until an Act of 1918. A later Act of 1936 gave powers to vary the amounts 'after the next vacancy' which in some cases led to significant reductions in income.

In 1948 Queen Anne's Bounty and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners were merged to become the Church Commissioners who were charged not only with improving the income of the clergy but working towards national consistency. Stipends were definitely improving at this time as can be seen from the fact that in the space of three years between 1952 and 1955 the value of the Playford living increased from £300 to £550 which was '[shortly] to be £580'.²⁴¹ No proper pension scheme however existed until 1926 prior to which, if an incumbent wanted to retire, he would negotiate with his successor to be paid a pension for life out of the receipts of the living which in the case of low income benefices such as Playford and Culpho was of course an impossibility.²⁴² Compulsory retirement at age 70 was not introduced until 1975.

Such disparity in incomes became increasingly unacceptable as the C20 progressed but it was not until 1953 that the Diocesan Stipends Funds was created to augment the income of poorer clergy and not until the 1970s that parish endowments went to the Church Commissioners and glebe land to the appropriate Diocese. It was at this point that stipends were finally equalled.

FROM EDWARDIAN TIMES TO THE PRESENT DAY: THE DECLINE OF THE CHURCH

The diminishing authority of the Church from the beginning of the C20 to the present is well documented nationally and has been keenly felt at local level. In terms of attendance at services, as has been seen above, only figures for communicants exist prior to 1973 but even these betray a steady decline in interest. In the period before and during the First World War communion in Playford was available on every other Sunday with 15-20 attending, a figure that rose to some 30-40 at Christmas and Easter. But between the wars by 1931 when it was available on every Sunday only some five to ten would regularly take part. Three services on Sundays had been introduced, that is 8.00 am communion, 11.00 Matins and 6.30 pm Evensong, or, more precisely, four services if a special 'children's service' is included in the totals, a schedule that continued right into the 1950s. With only one early morning communion service a week and with no shortage of alternatives to attend, it is perhaps unsurprising that the number of people taking the sacrament showed a decline. Just occasionally the incumbent noted total numbers of those at the evening service which showed it to have been particularly popular. In many churches there was a sharp class divide here with gentry, larger farmers and the well-to-do attending the morning service with the working classes

²⁴¹ Incorporated Church Building Society, Playford file no. 13027.

²⁴² Many clergy therefore died in office. In C20 Playford John Freeman died in 1902 when aged 70 and Charles Houghton in 1951 aged 73. Only the well-to-do enjoyed retirement. Willoughby Dickinson, who moved to Wolferton in 1862, retired to Leamington, which 'in the C19 had become a spa resort attracting the wealthy and famous', when he was 67. He died four years later and, having married Thomas Clarkson's niece Mary, chose to be buried in Playford where he had been perpetual curate from 1848-57.

and lesser trades people preferring to do so the evenings, a reminder that until the demolition of the old farm cottages in the 1960s, Playford was very much a working class village.

All denominations have shared in this downward trend but they have not done so equally, the Baptist chapel at Grundisburgh for example, built to seat 800, having closed through lack of support earlier this year (2022). And even within the Church its evangelical wing has actually gained in strength with churches such as St John's in Woodbridge having been particularly successful. In attracting younger members however many have depleted attendances in the surrounding villages where a more traditional liturgy is maintained. St John's in fact has been so successful that in recent years it has had to double up on morning services in order to accommodate the growing numbers. From the early 1900s until the end of the Second World War, the church in Playford prospered under the strong and active leadership of three well respected churchwardens: Francis Seymour Stevenson the local MP and man of the people who built the village hall, Sam Sherwood the nationally acclaimed tenant of Lux Farm and George Fiske his counterpart at Hill House who lived in the heart of the community. Fiske was well regarded as much by his employees as by his social equals. He was the main employer in the parish and both he and his wife Irene led from the front, both highly active not only in church affairs but in all local activities from regular socials in the village hall to royal occasions.

The years immediately following the Second World War continued much as before but, with prosperity returning to the UK in the 1950s, life was to change dramatically. Numbers on the farms were greatly reduced, mechanisation lessened the need for labour and wages increased throughout the economy. Working men began to buy cars and, following the Coronation in 1953, many households acquired televisions. A means of escape from the village and home entertainment had arrived. Regular village socials fell away as did attendance at Sunday church services. The leadership that had provided such strong cohesion in earlier years had gone and not been replaced. Both Lux and Hill Farms no longer provided the authority that they had previously done. Neither farmer took an interest in the church nor for that matter in general village life. Small wonder then that the Revd Broadbent, incumbent from 1954-59, constantly bewailed the lack of men taking part in church activities.

Many of the old farm cottages in the village centre were demolished in the early to mid-1960s to make way for Spring Meadow heralding a major social change in the community. The new development was to bring in a different class of resident with new ideas and money from which both church and village hall were to benefit. Demolition of The Brook followed a decade later. Church activity received a big boost. There were 18 members on the Church Council at the beginning of the period whereas now (2022) there are three. Attendances at the annual Christmas carol services as well as the Midnight Mass, which rotated around the parishes, were usually in the 90s. Sunday services attracted in the region of 30 while now on a good day there are only ten with half of those from Kesgrave. With the exception of the churchwarden, members of the church council are rarely to be seen. Throughout the 1970s and '80s a thrifty church treasurer managed to stow away over £40,000 into the Fabric Fund while church income now will scarcely pay the bills.²⁴³ In addition the church used to give away some £1,000 or more a year to charities, organise the annual fete the proceeds of which were invariably shared with the village hall and be responsible for the royal jubilees. It also held two evenings of carol singing around the parish raising money for local, rather than village, causes that took in houses on the former A12 then part of Playford and always finishing on the last night with mulled wine and mince pies at Hill House. Within the community the church was undoubtedly dominant.

²⁴³ The Fabric Fund was opened in 1961 with a deposit of £16 4s 1d.

There was always a little rivalry between the two major organisations in the village, a situation that changed abruptly in 1998 when David Heard became chairman of the hall. The old guard, who had been in office since the 1950s, had finally retired. They had stinted on expenditure on the fabric to the extent that grass grew inside the building and Heard, with a doctorate in physics who had spent his working life with the Dutch electronics firm Philips, launched into a full scale appraisal of reconstruction. While he was fortunate indeed to obtain a grant of a quarter of a million pounds from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the village had until then excitedly concentrated its efforts raising money for such a major project.

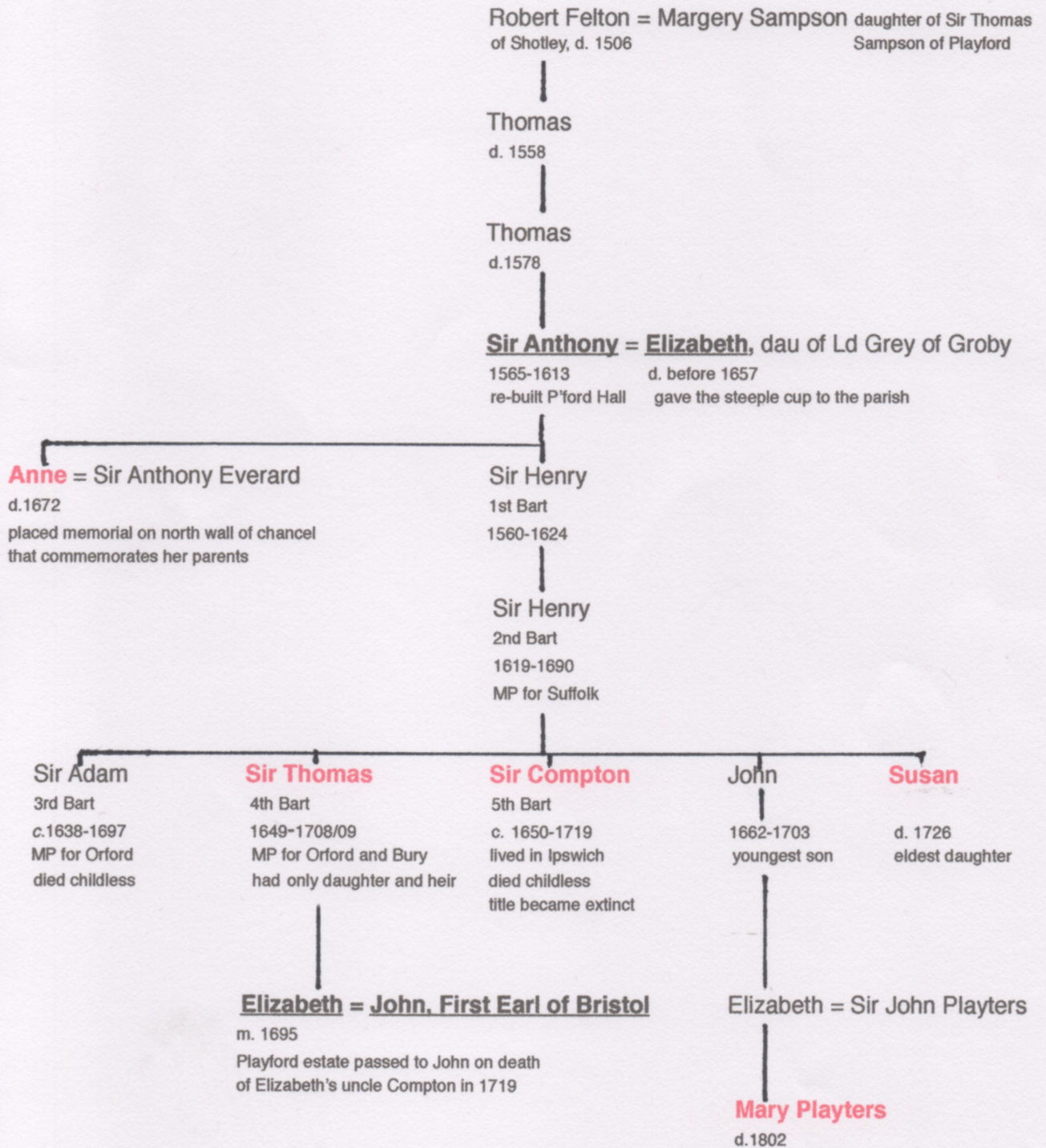
By contrast the church had only a very few years previously been through the sudden and embarrassing loss of its rector Michael Skliros, who was then resident in the parish, and the living had been reduced from a full time incumbency to one of only part time status. The three succeeding priests did sterling work in maintaining services but they did not live within the community and neither did they take much part in its non-church activities. The focus remained very much on the new village hall, its rebuilding and subsequent customer base. After many long years in the wilderness, the village hall was in the ascendant. To remain competitive in attracting custom from outside the village, its interior has been maintained in immaculate condition while the grass and hedges of the adjoining playing field are kept neat and tidy at parish council expense making it an attractive venue to outsiders. Fifty years earlier, as part of the general apathy at the time, the grass was cut just once a year when the field was required for car parking when fetes were held at Archway and Sevenoaks.

The benefice of four churches maintained healthy support throughout the 20 years from 1996 that they were ministered to by the part time priests until a row within Little Bealings parish resulted in its final disintegration. The churches had been together for 50 years from 1970 and such was the bond between them that the parish magazine continued, and still continues, to be published on a monthly basis despite the four parishes being re-accommodated with three separate churches. Many in Little Bealings, who had previously given strong support to Playford, broke with the church entirely so that their help was no longer available when both parishes moved in with Kesgrave. Within 18 months Covid struck. Churches were closed quite unnecessarily and not even incumbents or churchwardens were allowed to enter. When services resumed strict prevention measures were enforced but numbers had fallen away. The habit of attending church on a Sunday morning had been broken. Two crucial regulars had left the parish. In our parents' lifetime there were invariably three occasions when everyone went to church: for their christening, their marriage and finally for their burial while today any form of religious involvement at any point in their lives is irrelevant for a great majority of people.

At the outbreak of war in 1939 still as many as 75% of babies born in England were baptised into the C of E, a number that has now declined to between five and ten in a hundred. Only 20% of all marriages are now religious ceremonies held in a church, a drop of one half since the year 2000 while only 25% of funerals are now held there. Until the year 2000 one half of all services held at crematoria were led by Anglian priests while now 75% of cremations are led by professional civil celebrants. And as for Sunday Schools introducing the Christian faith to the next generation, it is nearly 60 years since the village last had one, a situation that is likely to be repeated up and down the country. It is against such a national background that Playford and the majority of the country's churches are struggling to survive.

THE FELTONS IN PLAYFORD - AN ABBREVIATED FAMILY TREE

names in bold and underlined are of particular note in Playford's history
 names in red have ledger slabs on the chancel floor



PRIESTS SERVING PLAYFORD

The Norman lord of Playford, Robert Malet, gave the 'tithes of Playford with the church of that vill...' to the Priory of Benedictine monks which he founded in his town of Eye around the year 1100. The monks took the endowments and appointed chaplains to serve the church but after a dispute in 1247 Playford was granted a special concession to employ non-monastic priests on a casual basis. The arrangement continued after the Reformation until 1774 when the Church 'tightened up' and, after a gap of over 500 years, returned the parish to orthodox ways. Very few names of the Priory appointed priests survive nor was any record kept of their casual replacements who were installed by the parish. A few names do however survive often as witnesses to local wills but, from 1697 until 1774, for the first time their signatures appear regularly in the registers. Despite the church's long history, the list that follows begins with Church appointed clergy in the C18 as so much more is known about them. It should be read in connection with the text above, pages 13 and following.

1774 - 1826 * Playford is joined with St Matthew's, Ipswich. No priest was resident in the parish neither were any curates employed.

William LAYTON 1774 - 1826

Trinity College, Cambridge. B.A. 1773; M.A. 1776. Son of the Rev. Andrew Layton, vicar of St Matthew's, Ipswich. Born 1750 at Sproughton Rectory. St Paul's School, London. Deacon 1773. Priest 1774. Curate Hemley 1773; rector Hemley 1775-1831 and Walton. Perpetual curate Playford 1774-1826. Rector of Hemley 1775. Rector of St Matthew's, Ipswich, 1775-1831. Frequent contributor to Nicholl's *Illustrations of Literary History*. Died Ipswich 1831. Buried St Matthew's churchyard.

1827 - 1848 * Playford is joined with Rushmere St Andrew. A succession of curates (not recorded here) reported to the vicar of Rushmere and lived in a house in Hill Farm Road that was demolished in 1964 to make way for Spring Meadow.

Charles DAY 1827-1835

St John's College, Cambridge; LLB 1824. Deacon 1823; Priest 1824. Vicar of Rushmere St Andrew 1826-1835. Perpetual Curate Playford 1827-1835. Perpetual Curate Theale 1835-1842. Vicar of Mucking, Essex 1842; Author of *Sacred Songs* composed and arranged for three or four voices.

Thomas WEST 1835-1848

Christ's College, Cambridge. Deacon 1824; Priest 1827. Curate Barrow (Suffolk) 1824. Perpetual Curate Rushmere St Andrew 1835-1848; value £156. Perpetual curate Playford 1835-1848; value £53. Died 1848 aged 45.

1848 - 1881 * Playford has a priest of its own resident in the new vicarage built in 1845.

Willoughby Willey DICKINSON 1848-1857

Brasenose College, Oxford, B A 1838, M A 1841. Deacon 1841, Priest 1842. Curate Playford 1841-1848. Perp curate Playford 1848-1857. Married Mary Clarkson, niece of Thomas Clarkson, 1843. Rector of Martlesham 1859-1861; rector of Wolferton, Norfolk, 1862-1883. Retired to Leamington Spa aged 67. Died 1887 aged 71. Buried Playford churchyard east of Clarkson graves.

Christopher HODGSON 1857-1871

St Bees 1853 (Cumberland) founded 1816, the first Church of England theological college to be established outside Oxford and Cambridge. It was to transform clergy training in England and Wales attracting many ordinands for whom the cost of a traditional university degree would have been prohibitive. Deacon 1855; Priest 1856. Curate of Burgh (Sfk) where Henry Barlow was rector. In 1870 Barlow's daughter Harriet married Herman Biddell farmer and sole churchwarden of Hill House, Playford. Perpetual Curate Playford 1857-1871 (income £179) and of Culpho from 1860 (income £55).

Edward HOUCHEN 1871-1874

Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. From Auckland (N Z). B A 1854; M A 1860. Deacon 1856; Priest 1858. Curate of Mautby (Norfolk) 1856-1859; Clapham (then in Surrey) 1861-1862; Sherburn (Yorks) 1862-1863; Farnham (Yorks) 1864-1869; Tuddenham St Martin 1869-1871. Vicar Playford 1871-1874. Curate St Sampson's (Cornwall) from 1877.

Thomas COOPER 1874-1879

Christ's College, Cambridge. B A 1860; M A 1863. Deacon 1860; Priest 1861. Senior Curate St Peter, Blackburn 1860-1863. 'In charge' of Clayton-le-Moors (Lancashire) 1863-1871. Curate in charge St Lawrence, Ipswich, 1872-1874. Maths master at Queen Elizabeth School, Ipswich, (the name by which Ipswich School was then known), 1873-1874. Vicar of Playford 1874-1879. Curate of St Sampson's, York. Vicar of New Shildon, Co. Durham 1879-1883. Perpetual Curate of St Stephen's, Southport, Lancs 1883-1897. Vicar of Cholsey, Berks, 1897-1906. Died 1911 at Lytham, Lancs.

1881 - 1956 * Playford is joined with Culpho in 1881

John Major FREEMAN 1880- 1902

Born Eye 1832. Hatfield Hall, a partly theological institution attached to Durham University; Licentiate of Theology 1869. B A 1872; M A 1875. Deacon 1869; Priest 1870. Curate of St Andrew, Deptford, 1869-1872; Dalton-le-Dale (Co. Durham) 1872; Haddenham (Bucks) 1874-1878; Fornham (Suff.) 1878-1880. Vicar Playford with Culpho 1880-1902. Died Playford vicarage 1902.

Clement Henry Lakin WRIGHT 1903-1926

Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Born 1856. Son of the Rev Henry Henton Wright. Nottingham., B A 1879; M A 1884. Deacon (Madras) 1879; Priest 1880. Church of Christ in India (Inc.), Cochin, Madras 1879-1883; chaplain Trivundrum, South India, 1883-1886; Bolarum, Madras 1886-1887; Secunderabad 1891-1896; Bangalore 1898-1900; North Georgetoen 1900-1902. Furlough 1902-1903. Vicar of Playford w. Culpho 1903-1926.

George KIRKPATRICK 1926-1929

London College of Divinity. Deacon 1924; Priest 1925. Formerly lay missionary, China. Curate St Helen's, Ipswich, 1924-1926. Vicar of Playford with Culpho 1926-1929. Rector of Copdock with Washbrook 1929-41.

Henry James BAYLIS 1929-1935

Trinity College, Dublin. B A 1904; M A 1907. B D 1920. Deacon 1904 (Cheshire); Priest 1906 (Dublin). Curate Wallasey 1904-1906; St John's, Sandymount, Dublin 1906-1908; St George Tilehurst (Berks.) 1908-1911; St Peter's, Regent Square 1911-1916; rector of Lower Gravenhurst and vicar of Upper Gravenhurst (Beds.); vicar of Playford with Culpho 1929-1935. Editor of St Edmundsbury Diocesan Magazine 1930-1935; rector of Wouldham (Kent) from 1935. Author: *Minucius Felix and His Place among the Early Fathers of the Latin Church*, 1928.

Daniel AMBROSE 1936-1940

Downing College, Cambridge. B A 1893; M A 1896. Deacon 1895 (Ely). Curate Teversham (Cambs.), 1895-1896; St Andrew's Whittlesea (Cambs.) 1896-1897; Exning (Suffolk) 1899-1904; St George Altringham (Manchester) 1904-1909; vicar Stockland (Bristol) 1909-1922; Kersey (Suffolk) 1922-35; Playford with Culpho 1936-40. Chaplain Active Militia, Nova Scotia from 1939.

Charles Edward James HOUGHTON 1941-1951

Oxford University. M A 1899. Son of Revd Edwards Houghton. Teacher London County Council 1900-1905; Woodbridge School 1905-1937. Deacon 1937; Priest 1938 (St Ed & Ips.). Curate St John's, Woodbridge, 1937-1939; Eyke with Bromeswell and Rendlesham 1939-1940. Vicar Playford with Culpho 1941-1951. Died 1951 aged 73.

Reginald George DARLEY 1951

Lincoln College, Oxford. B A 1921; M A 1925. Wells Theol. Coll. 1923. Deacon 1929; Priest 1930. Asst master City of Oxford School 1922-1929. Curate Highfield Oxford 1929-1932. Succentor St Peter's Cathedral, Dublin; 1932. Headmaster Christ's School. Minor Canon and Precentor of Chester Cathedral 1932-1933. Incumbent Rathmolyon w. Laracor (Co. Meath). Treasurer and vicar St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin 1933-1936. Chaplain and Lecturer St Mark's College, Chelsea, 1936-1937. Perpetual curate of Braywood (Windsor) 1938-1939. Vicar of Forest Hill w. Shotover (Oxford) 1939-1941. Rector of Corkbeg (Co. Cork) 1941-1944; Hacketstown w. Clonmure Union (Co. Armagh) 1945-1947. Asst Master Woodbridge School 1947-1954. Licence to officiate Diocese of St Eds. 1949-54. Diocese of Dublin from 1960.

David WARBURTON 1952

London College of Divinity 1922. Deacon 1924; Priest 1925. Curate St Mary Magdelene, Belfast 1924-1929. Curate-in-Charge Ballyscullion (Co. Londonderry) 1929-1935. Deputation Secretary Mission to Jews 1935-37. Rector of Bedingfield 1937-44, Rishangles 1943-44, Scole w. Billingford and Thorpe Parva, Diocese of Norwich 1944-52. Priest-in Charge Playford w. Culpho 1952.

Robert Tinsley WARBURTON 1952-1954

Jesus College, Cambridge. B A 1947; M A 1952. Son of Revd David Warburton (above). Born 1923. Oak Hill Theol. Coll. 1947. Deacon 1947; Priest 1948. Curate St Margaret, Ipswich, 1947-1950. Rector Dallinghoo 1950-1954. Curate-in-Charge Playford w. Culpho & Tuddenham St Martin 1952-1954. Asst Sec St Edmundsbury Board of Finance 1950-1954. Vicar Attenborough w. Bramcote, Chilwell, Toton and Ingham Nook (Notts) 1954-1967. Rural Dean Beeston (Southwell) 1960-1967. Chaplain to the Forces 1955-1964. Senior chaplain to the Forces from 1964. M B E (Military) 1966. Territorial Decoration 1969. Rural Dean Mansfield (Notts) 1967-1992. Priest-in-Charge Teversal (Notts) 1968-1972. Diocesan Inspector of Schools, Diocese of Southwark from 1956. Chaplain Mansfield General Hospital from 1967. Hon. Canon Southwell Minster 1972-2002. Vicar Mansfield 1997-2002. Died 2002 aged 79.

1956 - 1970 * Playford and Culpho are joined with Tuddenham St Martin

Ernest William Shaw BROADBENT 1956-1959

Queens' College, Cambridge. B A 1923; M A 1927. Ridley Hall, Cambridge. Deacon 1924; Priest 1925. (Bradford). Curate St Clement's, Bradford 1924-1930. Vicar Holy Trinity, Wibsey, 1930-1934; Eccleshill, 1934-1942; Morton 1942-1946. Bolton, Diocese of Manchester, 1946-1952; Batley Carr, Diocese of Wakefield, 1952-1954. Curate-in-Charge Playford w. Culpho, Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich, 1954-1956. Vicar Playford w. Culpho and Tuddenham St Martin 1956-1959. Rural Dean Carlford 1959. Died September 1959 aged 60.

Paul Holman BIDDLECOMBE 1960-1965

St John's College, Oxford. B A 1934; M A 1943. Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, 1934. Deacon 1936; Priest 1937 (Southwark). Curate, Lee 1936-1939; Holy Trinity, Fareham 1939-1944; Polstead 1952-1960; Curate-in-charge, Boxford w. Hadleigh Hamlet 1956-1960. Vicar, Playford w. Culpho & Tuddenham St Martin 1960-1965. Chaplain, Felixstowe College 1965-1970. Retired 1977. Died 1986 aged 75.

Cyril David Richard STEVENS 1965-1967

New Zealand Board of Theological Studies. Deacon 1959; Priest 1960 (Wai). Curate Wairoa 1959-1961; Tauranga 1961-1962. Vicar Gate Pa 1962-1965; Playford w. Culpho and Tuddenham St Martin 1965-1967; Belfast-Styx 1967-1968. Rector Rendham w. Sweffling & Cransford from 1969-1973. Rural Dean Saxmundhan 1972-1974. Rector Rendham w. Sweffling 1973-1995. Retired 1995. Died 2014 aged 89.

Denis John SPENCER 1968-1970

King's College, London. A K C 1949. St Boniface College, Warminster. Deacon 1950; Priest 1951 (Glos.). Curate, Tetbury 1950-1952. Chaplain Royal Navy H M S *Ocean* 1953-1955; H M S *Ganges* 1955-1956. Rector, Great w. Little Bealings 1956-70; Curate-in-charge, Playford w. Culpho & Tuddenham St Martin 1968-70. Vicar Wotton-under-Edge from 1970.

1970 - 2018 * Playford and Culpho are joined with Great & Little Bealings

James Gordon STEVEN 1971-1974

University of Birmingham, 1929. A L C D 1935. Deacon 1935; Priest 1936 (Liverpool). Curate, St Mary Bootle 1935-1937; Chilwall 1937-1939. Chaplain to the Forces 1937-1938; T A 1938-1944. Hon. Chaplain to the Forces 1944. Curate, All Saints, Bedworth 1944-1945. Rector, Wolverton w. Norton Lindsey and Langley 1945-1949. Chaplain R A F 16 M U Stafford 1949-1950; M E A F 1950-1953; Radio School 1953-1958; Gibraltar 1958-1960; Cottesmore 1961-1962. Vicar, Greatham w. Stretton & Clipsham 1962-1963. Rector, Penicuik, Diocese of Edinburgh, 1964-1970. Rector Great & Little Bealings 1970; Great & Little Bealings w. Playford and Culpho 1971-1974. Died 1992 aged 84.

Gerald Frank Lee HOLLINGSWORTH 1975-1991

London University. B A 1953. Oak Hill Theological College 1949. Deacon 1954; Priest 1955. Curate, St Nicholas Sutton (Merseyside) 1954-1957; All Hallows Ipswich 1957-1959. Vicar, Yoxford 1959-1964. Ptiest-in-Chage Sibton 1959-1962. Vicar, Sibton 1962-1964. Bishop's Industrial Advisor 1964-1975. Vicar, Holy Trinity Ipswich 1964-1972. Rector, St Clement w. Holy Trinity Ipswich 1972-1975; Great & Little Bealings w. Playford and Culpho 1975-1990. Rural Dean Woodbridge, Woodbridge 1976-1984. Retired 1990. Died 1999 aged 73.

Michael Peter SKLIROS 1991-1996

Clare College, Cambridge. B A 1957; M A 1962. Ridley Hall Cambridge 1957. Deacon 1959; Priest 1960. Curate, Hornchurch (Chelmsford) 1959-1961. Asst. Chaplain Denstone College Utttoxeter 1961-1965. Royal Air Force Chaplain 1965-1977. Priest-in-Charge St Peter and St Mary Stowmarket 1977-1978. Curate, Great Finborough w. Onehouse and Harleston 1985-1991. Rector, Great & Little Bealings w. Playford and Culpho 1991-1996. Hon Asst to Bishop of Brandon, Manitoba 2003-2011. Died 2018 aged 85.

Christine Mary EVERETT 1996-2002

St Osyth College of Education. Westcott House, Cambridge, 1990. Wife of Revd Colin Everett. Parish Deacon St Francis Ipswich 1992-1994. Curate St Francis Ipswich 1994-1995; Great & Little Bealings w. Playford and Culpho 1996. Priest-in-Charge Great & Little Bealings w. Playford and Culpho 1996-2002; Creeting St Mary, Creeting St Peter and Earl Stonham w. Stonham Parva 2002-2011. Retired 2011 aged 65.

Pauline Cecilia STENTIFORD 2003-2013

East Anglian Ministerial Training Course 1998. Deacon 2000; Priest 2001. Non-stipendiary Minister Great & Little Bealings w. Playford and Culpho 2000-2003. Priest-in-Charge Great & Little Bealings w. Playford and Culpho 2003-2013. Rural Dean Woodbridge 2005-2011. Retired 2014 aged 66.

Celia Jane Cook 2015-2018

Anglia Ruskin University B A 1988; Anglia Ruskin University B A 2013; Dipcot 1994; Eastern Region Ministry Course 2007. Curate, Aldeburgh w. Hazelwood 2010-2014. Team vicar, Thurstable and Winstree comprising Birch w. Layer Breton, Copford, Easthorpe, Great Braxted, Inworth, Layer de la Haye, Layer Marney, Messing and Tolleshunt Knights w. Tiptree 2014-2015. Priest-in-Charge Great & Little Bealings w. Playford and Culpho 2015-2018. Hospital Chaplain East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust from 2018.

2021 * Playford and Little Bealings are joined with Kesgrave

Gary JONES 2021- Deacon 2018; Priest 2019. Non-stipendiary minister, Kesgrave 2018-2020. Non-stipendiary minister Kesgrave w. Little Bealings and Playford from 2021.

Sources: *Alumni Oxoniensis*, 1815-1886; *Alumni Cantabrigiensis*, Part 2, 1752-1900; Crockford's Clerical Directories, 1858-2022

