

## North Luffenham

*Transcribers Note [The Irons note for North Luffenham is in a different form to the rest of the notes. Instead of listing the notes he obtained from various sources, Irons has written an account of church affairs in the parish in the period 1574-1625, presumably based on individual notes. His collection of North Luffenham documents and notes is held at the Northamptonshire Record Office.*

*In the website copy of this note the pages of the original have not been presented in the right order. The pages are not numbered, but there are twelve in total on the website. The first two and the last are correctly placed but the third to the eleventh are in the reverse order. For the convenience of the reader the sheets have been transcribed in the correct order so that the text makes sense. The pages on which each part of the text appears have been given in the first column of the transcription.*

*The first four paragraphs of the note appear twice in the website copy but have only been transcribed once.] Peter Tomalin*

Page 1. Sir Wm Parker was R. [Rector] from 1555 to '73 on presentation of Philip & Mary : he was also V. [Vicar] of Warmington nr [near] Oundle 1546-73 to which Queen Katherine Parr had presented him.

The Cur. [Curate] in '62 was Thos Thickepenye who became V. [Vicar] of Oakham in '65. His successor Sr Edward Wa###e distinguished himself by becoming entangled with a village woman named Margaret Archer ; the woman had to do penance and the Curate to produce six honest men of his own order to be his compurgators. He was still Cur. [Curate] in 1570, when the visitor states omnia bene.

In 1567 the Govt. discovered that the Church & Parish possessed lands worth 15s 8d a year for the maintenance of a Cantarist & certain lights ; this gave Elizabeth the opportunity of appropriating the property.

In 1570 a Court was held in the Church to deal with the conduct of the R. [Rector] of Teigh which will be dealt with later on.

Page 2. Church Affairs in North Luffenham, 1574 to 1625.

Robert Johnson became Rector of North Luffenham on 16 April 1574, and continued to hold the living until his decease which may in all probability be fixed for 21 July 1625. The glimpse which is here given of the state of the parish during this long incumbency has been derived mainly from the Diocesan Archives of Peterborough and specially from the records of the Archdeaconry of Northampton, but there are still a great many MSS of this period which have not yet been searched for this purpose.

If it be objected to this method of dealing with the history of a parish that only the misdeeds of the villagers are recorded whereas their good characteristics are left unmentioned the answer is a simple one :- the age commonly misnamed the Reformation was a destructive one, it was more occupied with pulling down the work of preceding centuries than in restoring the ancient structure ; there is indeed nothing to record at this time but the decay of the material as well as of the spiritual elements of Church life : the building and its services alike neglected with the consequent effect upon the life of the community, that the religious fervour of medieval times albeit accompanied by a modicum of superstition had its place taken by the fanaticism of puritanism whose constructive efforts must be sought elsewhere than in the ecclesiastical sphere. It may be safely said of Robert Johnson that the good he did lives after him and that the evil was interred with his bones.

In what condition was the fabric of the church and chancel during this long incumbency ? The accounts which have come down to us are not very reassuring. In 1581 we learn that " ij of the churche windowes are decayed and the south church porche is ready to fall ". In 1586 the church is in decay and in 1587 the church walls also : the next year the church is reported as "owte of repair" : in 1592 the church porch (which one is not stated but probably that on the south side) is oute of repair as is also the church itself in 1593. Some effort seems to have been made to remedy this carelessness, for two surveys of the building were made, one in 1605 and the other in 1619 : these show that the fabric was in a very uncared-for condition. In 1605 the window in the west end of the church is almost dawbed up with mortar, all the seats in the church are unpaved in the bottom, the west end of the church and the bellfrey all unpaved and lyeth very unseemly. But little seems to have been done to improve matters for it is again recorded in 1624 that the church is out of repair and the walls of the church are not whited.

The chancel which was more particularly under the Rector's care does not appear to have been better looked after than the church : in 1581 its windows are in decay through the default of Mr Johnson, parson there ; the same complaint is repeated two years later with the addition that the chancel itself is in decay : the parson is presented in 1584 regarding two of the chancel windows on the north side, which from another presentment in 1586 it appears were not all glazed. From the survey of 1605 it seems that the chancel was unpaved towards the east end (this was no doubt due to the ancient altar having been removed and its site left in desolation) and that one of the

windows on its north side was dawbed up with mortar and stone, the south chancel door being somewhat in decay. The chancel still remains unpaved at the east end in 1619, a window on its north side is daubed up, and the top of the roof needs some pointing. In 1624 the chancel is uneven and not paved in parts the walls not being pargetted (that is plastered) the walls and buttresses are broken and mouldered away in the foundation, two of the windows being closed up, the great east end window was chipped and full of holes, and the Rector is declared to blame for not having mended the chancel windows and floor.

The Church furniture was in no better condition ; in 1581 defects in the poor box and in the locke for the chest wherein the sermon book and other documents were kept are recorded, also that certain seats in the church are decayed. In 1605 they want Jewell's Apologie and have not the two tomes of the homilies, the Communion cup is kept with the churchwardens and the carpet of the Communion Table is of coarse buckram very unfit, and there is no pewter stoop pot for the Communion. In 1619 their pewter flagon is like an alequart : the book of Common Prayer pieced and patched very much : the Register book not subscribed and a book for his Majesty (James 1) co###ing and one for his deliverance from #owry wanting : the chest wherein the Register Book lies had but one lock and the Clerk keeps the key ; besides which certain seats at the nether end of the church in the north alley are very indecent. In 1624 a cushion for the pulpit is wanted as well as a carpet for the Communion Table which is stated not to be decent, the partition betwixt the church and the chancel is out of repair and the seats in the chancel are unhandsome and in need of repair at the charge of the Rector.

As regards the churchyard it appears that in 1583 the churchyard wall is unfenced and in decay in the default of Mr. Johnson and the church gates are broken : in 1584 the parson is presented for annoying our churchyard for stones lying undecently : in 1605 part of the south churchyard wall is in great decay and in 1619 there lies a muckhill in the south side of the chancel.

Robert Johnson always had so many projects in hand as well to further the Puritan cause as to increase his own private fortune, beside the duties of several offices whose performance even in a limited degree must have needed his presence in various parts of the country, that it became absolutely necessary for him to have regular clerical assistance at North Luffenham : it will therefore be interesting to put on record the names of such of his colleagues as have come down to us. The first one of whom mention exists is

William Ireland who came from Preston near Uppingham : he was ordained deacon 27 July and priest 4 October, 1577 : in 1580 he was cited before the Archdeacon for officiating without a license, but on producing his letter-of-orders was dismissed.

Thomas Tookey, another cleric, was in 1578 accused of serving the cure without a license and taking upon him to be "official for church deacon": he admitted that occasionally he helped Mr. Johnson at divine service.

William Laicocke, A.B. of Clare Hall, Cambridge, the third on this list was ordained deacon on 10 October 1585 and priest 27 March 1586 by Richard (Howland) bishop of Peterborough. The churchwardens complained in 1587 that William Laicocke preached without a lawful license so far as they knew, and further stated that he had no need of any license thereto for that he was made Minister by his Ordinary in giving of the Bible unto him he bidd hym goe and preach : to meet this complaint William Laicocke received a license from the bishop of Peterborough on 7 February 1587 to preach the Word of God in the church of North Luffenham. He was still Curate in 1589.

Mr Drurie, the next Curate, was unlicensed in 1590 and remained so for at least two years. In 1593 complaint is made that he provided no services on work days.

Mr Grey, the fifth Curate occurs as shewing his Letters of Orders at the Bishop's Visitation in 1597.

Mr Turner acted as Curate from 1598 to 1600.

William Larret, a Minister from Lincolnshire, acted as assistant in 1602.

Thos Baker then acted as Reader and following the example of the Rector, as the Parish Register tells us, never set down his name in the Register according to order.

Robert Ffarrington, A.M. ordained deacon 9 September 1604 by Richard (Vaughan) bishop of Chester and priest 4 April 1605 by George (Lloyd) the next bishop of Chester, occurs as Curate from 1608 to 1612, during which period he was also Master of North Luffenham School. He had been instituted to the Rectory of Pilton in 1607, and severed his connection with North Luffenham soon after being instituted to the Rectory of Lyndon in 1611. In 1610 John Shred was presented for being a common swearer, he has to produce a certificate signed by Mr. Johnson and Mr. Ffarrington to the effect that he is "no common swearer" - a somewhat ambiguous requirement. Robert Ffarrington died in 1617 in possession of both Pilton and Lyndon Rectories. It is also recorded of Mr. Ffarrington that he never set down his name in the North Luffenham Register.

Jonathan Tooqué was the tenth and last Curate who served during Robert Johnson's time : he graduated as M.A. from Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and was ordained deacon 11 June and priest 24 September, 1609, by Thomas (Dove) bishop of Peterborough. He received a general license to preach from the bishop on 16 March 1612. The Wardens complained in 1613 that Jonathan Tooqué did not wear the surplice every day as he should do, and that he did wear a wrought cap of his head in prayer time, contrary to the Canons. He remained Curate until the death of Robert Johnson in 1625, and succeeded him as Rector in 1640.

The Churchwardens, Questmen, and Sidesmen had a very uneasy time of it in those days : these officials in ancient times reported occasional derelictions on the part of their neighbours, and in this were supported by the public opinion of the village, but in the later Tudor and earlier Stuart times these reports came to be used for police purposes as a cheap and effective way of keeping the parishioners well in hand and their action came to be much resented. So a certain want of harmony may be observed between

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the Diocesan Authorities, the Parson, and the lay parochial officials. The Wardens of North Luffenham were called to order in 1578 for making no presentment, that is they reported none of the misdoers of the parish to the Bishop through the Archdeacon : a similar occurrence marked the years 1592 and 1606. In 1582 the Wardens lacke a Register Booke which John Hurd it appeared was keeping away. Having presented their Rector in 1583 for a dereliction of duty they are ordered finally to support the charges they have made against him. In 1586 the parish tries to evade these disagreeables by neglecting to appoint churchwardens and sworn men : but on no presentments being made the Archdeacon sends for four leading villagers (John Bassett, Simon Goodman, Thomas Hunt, and John Odam) and orders them to see that these officials are duly elected. The following year the Rector presented these Wardens saying that the Communion is not ministered so often as it ought to be by reason they would not make provision for it.

And what used to happen when people were gathered together in church for public worship ? - Simon Goodman set a bad example in 1579, he 'useth to go forth of the church commonly after the pistle [epistle ?] is read and very often useth to go away before service is done and especially at the expounding of the catechism \* as it \* unto the churchwardens in contempt in the expounding of the said catechism'. Next year the same man is presented for 'not having received the Communion this twelvemonth notwithstanding that there hath been three Communions at North Luffenham in that space' but he gives as a reason that there is a matter of controversy betwixt him and the churchwardens :

yet we still hear of him as a non-communicant in 1582. Other instances of parishioners who seldom or never communicate occur in later years, five in 1582, one in 1593, one in 1595, two in 1614, two in 1615, one in 1617 and one in 1621 : this leaves out of consideration Mr James Digby and

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his household who from 1586 onwards ceased to attend the church services and gradually drifted into membership with the English Romanists then becoming organised as a separate religious body. His property in North Luffenham, worth about £90 a year, was confiscated by the Elizabethan Government in 1601 and he was allowed to keep £30 a year only for his own needs. This action can only have embittered his feelings towards the authorities for in 1605 we are told that James Digby had daily resort of papists and kept 'warrenholes' and had winded his horn in the churchyard during service time. - Attention is drawn in 1586 to the carelessness of the Rector in ministering the Communion with both hands together, and to the fact that Mr. Rushbrooke, schoolmaster at Oakham, with his wife used to leave his own parish church oftentime to communicate with Mr. Johnson in North Luffenham, as he did at other times with Mr. Gibson (another like minded Rector) at Ridlington. Evidently North Luffenham had become a centre of Puritan influence. Mr. Johnson was also reported in 1583 for absenting himself from the saying of Morning Prayer - it was a favourite device with the Puritan clergy to disparage the Church Service by causing it to be taken in their absence so that greater importance might be given to the Sermon when they came in to preach. In 1586 the wardens report that their Rector is thought unmeet to preach for that the bishop would not make him minister : a canard which, although it was untrue (for Robert Johnson was ordained priest by bishop Edmund Scambler on 24 June 1568 and has also been licensed to preach) yet was formally pleaded in the Arches Court in the suit of Johnson v. Hunt which caused so much stir in the parish in 1588. All this commotion shows that Robert Johnson's ministry was not acceptable to people in the parish.

As regards Evening Prayer we find Simon Goodman and Thomas Hood absenting themselves on the Sabboth and Holy Days of 1587. It appears that it was the custom during this period for penance (when it was adjudged) to be performed after the Second Lesson at

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Evening Service for in 1612 Brian Norden was presented for his abuse in the church on the sabboth day after the Second Lesson was read in prating and threatening speeches when there was a penance in doing. In 1624 Abel Hainsworth behaved disorderly in the church in the tyme of divine service.

By 1586 the services on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays had been stopped. In 1620 Thomas Munton was drunk at Midsummertime last past and came to church in Evening Prayer time and in the middle of prayers he spewed in the church, and then Rowland his father, being churchwarden, did take him out of the church and lead him home, he not being able to go alone : for this offence Thomas Munton had to perform penance. The same year we find Robert Ffalkner brawling and railing against the Wardens and Sidesmen in the church. Offenders of a different type were Thomas Wheatly in 1611 sleeping in the church in the time of divine service and John Andrews in 1624 for unseemly sleeping in the church. The Rector, in 1586, doth not in time of baptism use the sign of crossing the children :

in 1583 for some reason unexplained he refused to church Margaret Wyngge, and in 1593 Elizabeth wife of Fanstin Sculthorpe refuses to give God thanks after her child birth. We find John Luffe and Wibdrowe Odam getting married without the banns being thrice asked, in 1586.

At a Court held in the church on 9 July 1611 the Rector of Wakerley was accused before the Archdeacon of not being resident there as he ought to have done but hath been at Glenfield in the county of Leicester (where it would appear he was also Rector) : as a result he is ordered to preach every Sunday in his parish according to the Canons.

There are 38 presentments regarding immorality of various kinds during this incumbency and these must have been but a small proportion of the whole number of cases as the records are far from being complete. The next charge to which most importance is attached is that of profaning the Saboth on the Lord's Day as it is called indifferently. In 1585 five men are presented for amusing themselves at some pastime before Evening Prayer on the Saboth Day : in 1593 three men mowed grass on this day : in 1614 William Ireland set his servant to thack upon Michaelmas Day at Lyndon in Evening Prayer time : John Munton is accused of going hedging in 1616, but explains that 'he did but cut a few

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few sticks on the Saboth day'. Thomas Freeman did come to church as he ought in 1617 but frequented Feast towns upon Saboth days and was guilty of drunkenness. In 1624 Abel Hainsworth and George Andrew committed the indiscretion of running a race upon the Lord's Day in the morning, for which they might have quoted apostolic precedent, had they been wary enough. All this savours of the Puritan scrupulosity which caused the Presbyterian barber to hang his cat for Sabbath mouse-catching :- 'Poor puss must suffer on the Monday for catching mice upon the Sunday.'

The next serious charge recorded is that of slander. In 1581 Thomas Reddall, a North Luffenham man, was guilty of open railing at Uppingham : in 1583 William Andrew is presented for blaspheming the name of God and for being a scolder or curser. Andrew Tyler and Isabel Griffin are each accused of defaming John Lyon in 1589 : but the Parson seems to have come in for the greatest share of abuse, three instances of this may be given (1) in 1576 Elizabeth Lion, (possibly the wife of John Lyon, a family connected by marriage with the Bassetts, lords of the town of North Luffenham) uttered slanderous words against Mr. Johnson the parson there, as in cursing of him, saying 'The devil gnaw thy bones' and 'The devil take thee' with such like : she has to beg pardon in the form 'I ask Mr. Johnson's forgiveness and I pray God to forgive me for speaking of such rude words against him'. (2) In 1592 Mary Bradfield, Dorothy Hunt, and Elizabeth Hunt spread a slanderous libell tending to the defamation of Mr Johnson, for neglecting to make amends for this offence they were excommunicated and found it hard to regain favour. (3) Clement Colson and Kenelm Earle abused the minister Mr. Johnson in slanderous speeches in 1611, and it cost them much both in pocket and vexation before they were received back. Besides these three instances, the details of the Tithe Suit which have already been set forth in a separate paper (Rutl. Mag. 1. 2,4,5.) shew what friction existed between the Rector and his influential parishioners about the year 1588. In 1612 John Shred whose name has already been mentioned was charged with blaspheming of the Name of God and for not coming to the divine service orderly.

Another character of the same kind was Christopher Bickerdyke a great swearer and blasphemer of the Name of God when he is in his ale or full of drink, he too was declared excommunicate in the year 1612, following that when the offence was committed. On 12 March 1623 Daniel Gibson, brother to Ann Gibson who had married Jonathan Tooque the Curate, was seen drunk in Stamford St Martins by three witnesses who accordingly reported him. In those days excommunication was not a sentence to be trifled with, the mere fact of a person remaining excommunicate as exemplified by the case of Anthony King in 1604 was an offence as was also having dealings with any such person : John Odam, keeper of the village alehouse, is cited for knowingly entertaining John Shredd, when excommunicate, in his house in 1610 : and a third instance is in 1618 when Ffanstin Sculthorpe an excommunicate has dealings with several others, one of whom pleads that it was upon necessity, for he only sold his ewes unto Sculthorpe to the intent to be kept of him. Four cases of refusing to pay levies for the repair of the church ; and one charge of breach of trust occurs.

The *Gretna Green* of Rutland in those days was *Stowe* in Lincolnshire, probably the chapelry in the parish of Barholme ; there are numerous instances of irregular marriages taking place there from other parts of the county but that of William Charles and Sibil Blackburne in 1588 at which John Bolland was present is the only one on record from North Luffenham. Couples were not always married at their own church for John Parkins of North Luffenham and Mary Sharman of Empingham daughter of Robert Sherman of Gretham were granted a license in 1608 to get married at Pilton. In 1611 William Tomson of Langham and Ann daughter of Clement Colson and Margery his wife of North Luffenham had entered into a marriage contract which the parents of Ann Colson for some reason hindered after the banns had been asked although they had previously given their consent : a suit was therefore brought against them to overcome their obduracy but apparently this effort was unsuccessful as Ann Colson was wedded to Thomas Coale in 1616.

A fight in the Churchyard between Anthony whose master was named Ward and Nicholas Walgrave, in which the said Walgrave seriously damaged the said Anthony's head in 1581 is the last item of this kind of ancient news to be noticed.

[This page contains a short list of what appear to be references. However few of the words are readable and they have therefore not been transcribed. According to the introduction to the Notes of Archdeacon Edward Irons by Dr Andrew Hopper (University of Leicester), Iron's collection of North Luffenham documents and notes is held at the Northamptonshire Record Office where they can no doubt be consulted.] Peter Tomalin

R personal

see Alrah. 86 (10).

Reh prob 74 (2) 88(10)

Summ 88(7)

Aubeed 89 (2)

91(5)

2002 (2) Jes C.O.

20 (5) Red Tailor

Aut 23 (2)

25 (10)

Car of Pet 71 (16) 70(9)

Preb 72(2) + 72 (10) X

Rector sup. 16 (9)

Vent 94(5) X 97 (5) 97 (7) 02 (7)

91 - 94 (5)

Staw R

Eliz, Wen slender 76 (7)

Doc Hunt pe 92 (4) XX

Cl. C. p R E 11 (3)