

**Keeping the Faith: Church and Community in Alresford
c. 1780-1939**

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Doctor of Philosophy in English Local History

30 June 2017

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Trinity Term 2017

ABSTRACT

The Religious Census of 1851 revealed the registration district of Alresford in Hampshire to be a particular bastion of the Church of England. This study considers the basis of this Anglican strength and how the established Church managed to retain its dominance against the challenge from Nonconformity in the context of an apparent waning of religious commitment nationally. Starting from c.1780 to pick up the roots of any early signs of local dissent, the thesis considers the evolving relationship between church and community in this rural part of southern England which comprised a small but prosperous market town surrounded by a variety of agricultural parishes. The study is positioned in the national context of the major political, social and economic upheaval of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, concluding with the period between the two world wars. The research consists primarily, but not exclusively, of qualitative analysis, which draws on a rich variety of primary sources including clerical service registers, vestry minutes, churchwarden and overseer accounts, school, court and parish records, enclosure and tithe agreements, parish magazines, local and national newspapers and private correspondence. The general historiography to which the work contributes is around secularisation and denominational rivalry, and regular reference is made to this and more specific sub-themes throughout the thesis. I will argue that the enduring local dominance of the Church of England was due to its enormous financial strength, its central involvement in the provision of charity and welfare, a re-invigorated commitment to pastoral care and the absence of any senior local sponsorship for Nonconformity. Underpinning everything was the formation of a particularly tight nexus between church and parish elites which served to preserve effective Anglican hegemony well beyond the First World War. It was not until the 1920s and 1930s, when the church started to lose its social relevance in welfare and education nationally, that the cracks in the façade of local dominance became irrefutable.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Mark Smith for his help and support in producing this study. Thanks are also due to the staff at the Hampshire Record Office, the Church of England Record Centre, Lambeth Palace Library, the British Library, the Bodleian Library, Harris Manchester College Library and the Hartley Library at Southampton University for their advice and help locating books and materials. The photographs taken from the Alresford Heritage website (www.AlresfordHeritage.co.uk) in Figs. 4, 6, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33 and 34 are reproduced with the kind permission of Godfrey Andrews and Fig. 5 is included with the permission of the Hampshire Record Office. I am also grateful to the UK Data Service at the University of Essex for allowing me to use the GIS for the Ancient Parishes of England & Wales to produce and include the parish maps in Figs. 3, 23, 24 and 25 in this study. The photographs shown in Figs. 1, 26 and 27 were taken by the author between April 2012 and August 2014. Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues Jonathan Healey, Grant Masom and Gary Crossley for their comments and advice, Maggie Kilbey for permission to refer to her research and Sue Jones for her help preparing the maps of the registration district.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACS	Additional Curates Society
BL	British Library
CERC	Church of England Record Centre
CETS	Church of England Temperance Society
CMS	Church Missionary Society
EHR	English Historical Review
FWO	Free Will Offering
HJ	The Historical Journal
HRO	Hampshire Record Office
JBS	Journal of British Studies
JEH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
JRH	Journal of Religious History
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library
NATT	New Alresford Town Trust
NAUCT	New Alresford United Charities Trust
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
Parl Pap	Parliamentary Papers
PCC	Parochial Church Council
QAB	Queen Anne's Bounty
SCH	Studies in Church History
SPG	Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts
TNA	The National Archives
TRC	Tithe Rent Charge
UMCA	Universities' Mission to Central Africa
VCH	Victoria County History

I INTRODUCTION

The Reverend William Brodie, MA (Cantab)¹ had every reason to be content with his situation in life. His father was Sir Benjamin Brodie, baronet, of Brome Park, Surrey, who had been appointed by the bishop of Winchester to receive and administer a £1,000 loan from Queen Anne's Bounty to build a parsonage and offices for the recently created independent parish of New Alresford in September 1851². The bishop of Winchester at the time, Charles Richard Sumner, formerly the private chaplain of George IV³, was the brother of John Bird Sumner the archbishop of Canterbury, and the bishop's son, George Henry Sumner, was Brodie's neighbouring incumbent at Old Alresford after the ancient Liberty of Alresford was split⁴. Although not explicitly mentioned, it seems possible that Sir Benjamin's reward for administering the loan and overseeing the construction was the appointment of his son to the newly created parish over which the bishop held patronage. Brodie was also well connected through marriage: his wife Maria was the daughter of Vice Admiral William Waldegrave, 8th earl Waldegrave⁵, and her sister Laura married Roundell Palmer, 1st earl of Selborne, who was to be appointed Lord Chancellor under Gladstone's government in 1872⁶. Brodie's connections through his family network of acquaintance and friendship stretched wider still. Palmer, his brother-in-law through marriage, was acquainted with Marianne Dyson who was a close friend and neighbour of the Sargent family who lived at Lavington in Sussex⁷. Two of the Sargent daughters, who were like

¹ J.A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses 1752-1900* (6 vols, Cambridge, 1940), i, p. 389.

² Bermondsey, CERC Deed D203805: Mortgage regarding parish of New Alresford, 1 September 1851.

³ I. Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (London, 1976), p. 35.

⁴ [Exhibit Book 14, Orders in Council], HRO, 21M65/C4/16, 12 December 1850; [Diocesan Act Books], HRO, 21M65/A2/6, 21 December 1850.

⁵ 'Lady Maria Waldegrave' <http://www.thepeerage.com/p1335.htm#i13347> (4 July 2013).

⁶ Lambeth, LPL MS 1881, fo. 87: Letter from Maria Brodie to her sister Laura, Countess of Selborne, 14 September 1872.

⁷ [Sturges Bourne-Dyson correspondence], HRO, 9M55/F21/12; HRO, 9M55/F45/10.

sisters to Marianne, married into the Wilberforce family; including Emily who married Samuel Wilberforce who later became bishop of Oxford before succeeding Charles Sumner as bishop of Winchester in 1869⁸. In short, Brodie came from the ranks of the gentry and the nobility and his family, kinship and neighbourly ties gave him connections in the highest echelons of the clergy, the military, the law and the government itself. Presumably the townsfolk of New Alresford were proud to have had someone of such prestigious social rank and connections installed as the first incumbent of their independent parish.

But the feeling of appreciation must have been mutual since Alresford was certainly an attractive proposition for a Church of England clergyman. At the time of the Religious Census in March 1851 the registration district of Alresford in Hampshire, dominated in size and influence by the market town of New Alresford itself, was undeniably an Anglican stronghold. Out of the 624 census registration districts in the country, Anglicans in Alresford had the fourth highest share of total church attendances, amounting to some 90 per cent⁹. In terms of the Anglican Index of Attendances, the other popular measure of strength which assessed total attendances as a percentage of population, Alresford was tenth in the country at 62.7 per cent¹⁰. The Church of England also provided three quarters of the places of worship in the district and 90 per cent of the total church and chapel sittings¹¹. The town of New Alresford mirrored the district position and the neighbouring mother community of Old Alresford provided no alternative to Anglican worship whatsoever. Whatever the limitations of the religious census as a reliable historical source,

⁸ HRO, 130A08/1-5. Background to the related correspondence and family trees.

⁹ K.D.M. Snell and P.S. Ell, *Rival Jerusalems: The Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 58.

¹⁰ H. McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914* (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 254.

¹¹ J.A. Vickers, *The Religious Census in Hampshire, 1851* (Winchester, 1993), p. 156.

it is clear that this part of rural Hampshire was a mid-nineteenth century bastion of the Church of England.

The early seeds of Nonconformity in terms of the small Congregational chapel (Fig. 1) established in 1825 had been largely contained or, as some evidence suggests, vigorously opposed by the rector of the mother church at Old Alresford, part of the ancient Liberty which included New Alresford and neighbouring Medstead as chapels of ease¹². As will be discussed later, there was aggressive physical hazing of the early dissenters who dared to challenge the monopoly of the Church of England and its place at the heart of the established social order¹³.



Figure 1 - Alresford Congregational chapel, built 1825.

¹² J. Adams, 'Non-Conformity in Alresford', *Alresford Displayed* 14 (1989), p. 7; [Congregational Church Book], HRO, 127M94/66, p.5.

¹³ Ritson, *Romance of Primitive Methodism*, quoted in J. Briggs and I. Sellers (eds), *Victorian Nonconformity* (London, 1973), pp.122-3.

The situation inherited by William Brodie appeared rosy indeed; funding for new buildings, a substantial and loyal congregation largely untouched by dissent and a parish situated in a prosperous and peaceful part of rural Hampshire with neighbouring villages of a similar persuasion. Total attendances at the parish church of St John's and the Union Workhouse chapel were estimated at 1198 on census Sunday in the context of a total population of Alresford of 1618¹⁴. The people continued to show their public commitment to organised religion; and that religion was Anglicanism. As the Brodies settled in to their house with their two young daughters and five domestic servants, they were perfectly positioned, literally, to monitor how their parishioners responded to both the distractions of drink (one neighbour was *The Running Horse* public house) and the appeals of dissent (they were also close to the Congregational chapel)¹⁵. Socially they were unquestionably part of the town's elite; they could look forward to a productive ministry, a comfortable lifestyle and the respect of their community. The position of the Church of England in Alresford in 1851 looked very secure indeed.

Despite the lack of robustness in the data emanating from the religious census, it served to illustrate a crucial issue: that the struggle for denominational supremacy in the second half of the nineteenth century would take place against a backdrop of increasing pressure on religious commitment. Near universal attendance at the parish church which stood at the heart of a largely rural society could no longer be assumed. Victorian enlightenment and rationalism, theories of evolution and the urbanisation which came with industrial expansion were all to combine with biblical criticism to create an increasingly sceptical secular environment in which the public practice of religion was challenged. The Church

¹⁴ Vickers, *Religious Census in Hampshire*, p. 160; 'Ecclesiastical Census Returns', TNA, HO 129/113.

¹⁵ '1851 England Census for William Brodie'

http://interactive.ancestrylibrary.com/8860/HAMHO107_1677_1678-0570/3489868. (4 July 2013).

of England not only lost many of its natural audience – those habitually inclined towards religious observance – it also faced competition for its ‘market share’ of those who remained from an increasingly confident Protestant Nonconformity, buoyed by the removal of previous legal restrictions¹⁶, and a resilient Catholic church. The historiography around this decline, involving both secularisation and denominational rivalry, is rich, contested and still developing but it provides important context for this study of rural Hampshire. We need first to consider the evolving academic discourse around secularisation before reflecting how the historiographic themes relating to both Anglicanism and Protestant Nonconformity interact within this grand narrative.

The Secularisation Debate

The American sociologist, Robert Wuthnow, summarised the current academic consensus on the secularisation debate as it swings back from the old pessimistic paradigm of decline; ‘Scholars have had it with talk of secularization. They earn their spurs by telling what’s good about churches’¹⁷. Fellow sociologist Jay Demerath agreed with him; ‘for a long time there was a notion that society would just become secularised over time, that this was part of modernisation and westernisation, and that religion would disappear due to the legacy of the Enlightenment. I don’t know any sociologists of religion worth their salt who really believe that’¹⁸. Yet despite these confident words, the debate continues and supporters still defend the secularisation thesis as more empirical evidence becomes

¹⁶ E.J. Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain 1783-1870*, 2nd edn (Harlow, 1996), pp. 187-90.

¹⁷ Quoted in Putnam, *Bowling Alone* in D. Erdozain, *The Problem of Pleasure: Sport, Recreation and the Crisis of Victorian Religion* (Woodbridge, 2010), p. 1.

¹⁸ Quoted in ‘Religious Change in an American city. A conversation with Jay Demerath’ in J. Cox, ‘Master narratives of long-term religious change’ in H. McLeod and W. Ustorf (eds), *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750-2000* (Cambridge, 2003), p 201.

available, new concepts are considered and explanations are offered and challenged. That the academic debate has been so vigorous for sixty years, with much deeper roots, reflects the fact that the secularisation paradigm seeks to explain one of the greatest changes ever seen in social structure and culture: the displacement of religion from the centre of human life¹⁹. Having explored the critical importance of the issue and the historical evolution of the debate, I will reflect on recent developments on the timing, speed, nature and causes of secularisation and assess the current state of the argument. I will suggest that elements of common ground are starting to emerge on the thesis itself as positions are modified, and that a new institutional case study in rural southern England, focusing on denominational rivalry, will further enrich the debate and help inform efforts to construct a new master narrative.

The historiography of secularisation has produced many versions of a definition, both succinct and elaborate, but in common understanding secularisation has two aspects. Firstly, the marginalisation of religion from the centre of public life or, as Charles Taylor puts it in *A Secular Age*, the emptying of our public spaces of God so that the principles that we follow in the economic, political, social, educational and recreational spheres have no reference to religion but instead are replaced by purely rational considerations. Secondly, and the aspect which has provoked most debate, secularisation means the decline of personal religious belief, practice and participation, in whatever form this took²⁰.

¹⁹ S. Bruce, *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory* (Oxford, 2011), p.1. For an argument against secularisation theory see J.C.D. Clark, 'Secularization and Modernization: The failure of a Grand Narrative', *The Historical Journal* 55/1 (2012), pp. 161-94.

²⁰ C. Taylor, *A Secular Age* (London, 2007), p. 2; See also B.R. Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford, 1982), p. 9 in Bruce, *Secularization*, pp. 1-2. Bruce also considers the definition of 'religion' here.

The roots of historical enquiry, which originally focused on this second aspect, go back to 1851 when the national religious census shocked the Victorian establishment by appearing to reveal that more than five million people, mainly the urban working class, neglected public worship. As early as 1874, W.N. Molesworth's *History of England* noted that, in the first half of the nineteenth century 'great masses of the working classes, especially in the large manufacturing towns, were already lost to Christianity'²¹. Similarly, the analysis emerging from the earliest research was that the collective strength and influence of the Church as an institution peaked around the middle of the nineteenth century²²; this was the end of what E.R. Wickham in his pioneering study of Sheffield called the 'religious boom', a boom which he saw as an overwhelmingly middle class phenomenon²³. Wickham's work has been adapted and developed by other scholars²⁴ but although they differed in emphasis and occasionally modified his conclusions they generally revealed a common view of the churches which has been summarised by Callum Brown as the pessimistic thesis²⁵. This suggested that a sustained population rise from the middle of the eighteenth century began to embarrass an established Church whose resources had been concentrated in the south to match a very different population structure. The removal of its legal monopoly had weakened the Church of England's position and its problems accentuated as industrialisation and urbanisation freed people from the bonds of traditional society and brought them together in significant numbers; the existing facilities for public worship and religious supervision could not cope and hampered by legal restrictions,

²¹ Quoted in Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind* in M. Smith, *Religion in Industrial Society: Oldham and Saddleworth 1740-1865* (Oxford, 1994), p. 1.

²² HRO, MHC/26, *Hampshire Chronicle*, 26 January 1850, p. 7; advances in religion to 1850.

²³ E.R. Wickham, *Church and People in an Industrial City* (London, 1957), p. 214.

²⁴ For example; A.D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England, 1740-1914: Church, Chapel and Social Change* (London, 1976); McLeod, *Religion and Society*.

²⁵ See Smith, *Oldham and Saddleworth*, pp. 2-3 for an overview of the thesis.

complacency and abuses the Church could only respond slowly²⁶. Centrally directed reform came in the 1830s but, by then, Anglicanism had lost its hold and this encouraged the development of Nonconformist churches which appealed to the new urban middle class and respectable artisans. It was the urban working class who were squeezed out altogether and this was the foundation of church decline; the pessimistic thesis²⁷.

In parallel with the work of historians, the pessimistic theory of church decline was linked in to the sociological theory of secularisation by sociologists such as Steve Bruce, Tim Glendinning, Bryan Wilson and Taylor. The essence of the thesis is that the decline in power, popularity and prestige of religion across the modern world is not a short term, localised or accidental trend. It is a consequence of the subtle but powerful forces of ‘modernisation’ which encompass not just urbanisation and industrialisation but also rationalist and scientific reasoning, biblical criticism and macro considerations relating to globalisation, consumerism and social mobility²⁸. The subsequent historiography encompasses revisionist challenges on many different aspects of the thesis, all of which are woven together in what Jeffrey Cox calls a ‘master narrative’ exercising significant subliminal influence on historical research: as we shall see, the timing and pace of decline, the nature of religion, and the inevitability and linear characteristic of change have all been examined and contested²⁹.

Identifying the timing of the transition from boom to crisis in Victorian religion has fundamental implications for the interpretation of many religious developments in the

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Bruce, *Secularization*, pp. 24-56.

²⁹ J. Morris, ‘Secularization and Religious Experience: Arguments in the Historiography of Modern British Religion’, *HJ* 55/1 (2012), pp. 195-219.

period and hence has been widely researched. This local study will contribute to that debate and I will argue that many factors, in particular the remarkably tight nexus between church and parish elites, served to preserve Anglican dominance in Alresford until well after the First World War. Historians such as Alan Gilbert, Robert Currie and John Kent regarded the theme of increasing secularisation as dominating Victorian religious history³⁰. Gilbert in particular argued that the boom belonged to the first half of the nineteenth century when there was spectacular growth in the membership of Nonconformist chapels and that by 1850 the peak of religious influence on society had already passed: it was industrialisation, he argued, which led to urbanisation and ultimately the increased prosperity and material security which produced a dependence on the worldly and the secular³¹.

Revisionists of the Wickham and Gilbert view – that decline had already started by the mid-nineteenth century – included Cox and Brown who believed that the religious crisis came much later, between 1890 and 1914, both rejecting Gilbert’s implicit assumption that there was a connection between secularisation and ‘modernisation’, and Brown in particular contesting the view that urbanisation was connected with religious decline³².

The work of K.D.M. Snell and Paul Ell in *Rival Jerusalems* supported Brown’s argument, at least until 1851; their substantial data set for census registration districts and parishes shows religious attendance actually *increasing* as levels of population density rise.

Although extreme urbanisation in the largest cities was associated with lower attendances,

³⁰ McLeod, *Religion and Society*, pp. 1-5; Gilbert, *Religion and Society*, p. 205; R. Currie, A.D. Gilbert and L. Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford, 1997); J. Kent, *Holding the Fort* (London, 1978).

³¹ McLeod, *Religion and Society*, pp. 3-4; Gilbert, *Religion and Society*, p. viii.

³² McLeod, *Religion and Society*, pp. 3-4; J. Cox, *English Churches in a Secular Society: Lambeth, 1870-1930* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 265-76; C.G. Brown, ‘Did Urbanization Secularize Britain?’, *Urban History Yearbook* 15 (1988), pp. 1-14; C.G. Brown, ‘The Mechanism of Religious Growth in Urban Societies’ in H. McLeod (ed.), *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities* (London, 1995), pp. 239-62.

as the churches were overwhelmed in their attempt to match resources to people, their general findings were not consistent with the secularisation theory³³. Both Cox and Brown also stress the enormous social role of the churches throughout the Victorian period, of which there was much evidence in Alresford, in terms of overseas mission, charity and philanthropy, education and popular recreation, and also the continuing commitment of the public to the formal religious rites for baptism, marriage and burial³⁴. Ultimately the loss to the state of this pre-eminent social role in welfare and the rise of competing sources of leisure and recreation were to contribute significantly to the decline of the church in the twentieth century. It lost much of its social relevance³⁵.

The observation of formal religious rites and the impact of recreation on Christian belief and practice have both been developed further in the historiography. Holscher, whilst primarily focusing on Germany, argues that religiosity and piety are defined and understood very differently over time: they cannot be systematically defined but only evaluated within a specific contemporary theological and social context. In other words, it is not feasible to measure the decline of religion over time because it is constantly changing and what was considered religious in the past may not be today³⁶. Similar principles were extended by Grace Davie and others to develop the concept of ‘believing but not belonging’ in which, in the second half of the twentieth century, high levels of personal belief could exist without active church membership and participation in regular public services; there was a move from ‘obligation’ to ‘consumption’. These principles

³³ Snell and Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*, pp. 395-420.

³⁴ C.G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* (London, 2001), p. 169; Cox, *Lambeth*, pp. 48-89.

³⁵ Erdozain, *Problem of Pleasure*; F. Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit* (Oxford, 2006).

³⁶ L. Holscher, ‘Secularization and Urbanization in the Nineteenth century’ in McLeod, *European Religion*, pp. 263-88.

have since been challenged by D. Voas and A.D. Crockett who produced a large body of survey evidence to show that belief has eroded in Britain at the same rate as both religious affiliation and attendance³⁷.

The secularisation thesis proposes that society has moved inexorably from a very religious to a virtually *non*-religious world. As well as challenging the contention that we are not religious now (or at least more religious than is apparent) and that the concept of being 'religious' is so fluid as to make any analysis of change meaningless, critics of the theory have also suggested that previous ages were not as committed as some would believe; and hence the change or decline is not as significant as secularisation theory suggests. Bruce disputes this vigorously and argues that all the thesis requires, in terms of contrasting past and present, is that there is an 'identifiable difference between then and now in the popularity and salience of beliefs, actions and institutions which assume the existence of supernatural entities ...'. The world which has been lost, he argues, was undoubtedly a religious one³⁸.

The impact of recreation and leisure on belief and religious practice has been considered by Brian Harrison, Dominic Erdozain and Hugh McLeod. Erdozain in particular has been dismissive of attempts to homogenise religion and define it in ever more implicit terms; he maintains that religious change needs to be viewed through the context of its dominant nineteenth-century tradition, evangelical Christianity, and that it was the internal

³⁷ G.R.C. Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford, 1994); D. Edwards and G.R.C. Davie, 'Zeal for Reform as Numbers Slide' in H. Chadwick (ed.), *Not Anglicans but Angels: a History of Christianity in the British Isles* (Norwich, 2000), pp. 263-73; D. Voas and A.D. Crockett, 'Religion in Britain: Neither Believing nor Belonging', *Sociology* 39/1 (2005), pp. 11-28; Bruce, *Secularization*, pp. 9-10.

³⁸ S. Bruce, 'The pervasive world-view: religion in pre-modern Britain', *The British Journal of Sociology* 48/4 (1997), pp. 667-80.

secularisation of evangelicalism itself, as ethics and morality superseded belief in the spiritual and supernatural, that caused the decline of Christianity. Sport and leisure were at the heart of this ‘secularisation of sin’³⁹. McLeod agrees that by the 1880s and 1890s a more relaxed view of Sundays was taking hold as tennis, golf and cycling became popular alternatives to church attendance and, as we shall see, visitation returns from local clergy expressed unease at this development⁴⁰.

In terms of timing and the nature of transition, Brown revised his own findings in his later study on *The Death of Christian Britain* in which he argued that, despite some decline in attendances and membership in the twentieth century, there was no fundamental collapse of Christianity in Britain until the ‘Swinging Sixties’ revolutionised social attitudes and morality which undermined many of the basic Christian principles on which society had been based. Moreover, the change was sudden and dramatic rather than gradual and evolutionary⁴¹. McLeod then builds on this theme; focusing on the ‘long 1960s’ (1958-1974) he highlights the enormous increase in the range of accessible beliefs, changes in the nature of religious identity and the weakening of the process by which children were socialised into membership of a Christian society⁴². Whilst Brown stressed the impact of immediate social changes to femininity and piety and sexual liberation⁴³, all underpinned

³⁹ B. Harrison, ‘Religion and Recreation in Nineteenth Century England’, *Past & Present* 38 (1967), pp. 98-125; D. Erdozain, ‘The Secularisation of Sin in the Nineteenth Century’, *JEH* 62/1 (2011), pp. 59-88; Erdozain, *Problem of Pleasure*.

⁴⁰ H. McLeod, ‘The ‘Sportsman’ and ‘The Muscular Christian’: Rival Ideals in Nineteenth-Century England’ in P. Pasture, J. Art and T. Buerman (eds), *Beyond the Feminization Thesis: Gender and Christianity in Modern Europe* (Leuven, 2012), pp. 85-105; H. McLeod, ‘Sport and Religion in England, c.1790-1914’ in N.J. Watson and A. Parker (eds), *Sport and Christianity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (London, 2013), pp. 112-30.

⁴¹ Brown, *Death of Christian Britain*, p. 169.

⁴² H. McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 1-2.

⁴³ C.G. Brown, ‘Women and Religion in Britain: The Autobiographical View of the Fifties and Sixties’ in C.G. Brown and M. Snape (eds), *Secularisation in the Christian World: Essays in Honour of Hugh McLeod* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 159-74.

by legislation relaxing abortion, contraception, divorce and homosexuality, McLeod argues that the religious upheaval of the Sixties needs to be seen in the context of much longer term developments in western societies; the growth of religious toleration and intellectual criticism, movements for political emancipation and changes in thinking about sexual ethics⁴⁴. Brown's most recent work considers masculinity, identifying the male loss of faith with a willingness to embrace reason and science⁴⁵. Despite these differences of emphasis, both Brown and McLeod viewed the 1960s as a 'hinge decade'; interrupting the smooth linear decline of the secularisation thesis and substituting a short dramatic shock. They certainly both agreed that the broad concept of 'modernisation' was too generalised to account for so much change at one time⁴⁶.

This research produced a robust response from Bruce and Glendinning who argued that Brown had both misinterpreted his data – the twentieth century declines in membership and communicants were significant – and also failed to appreciate that the roots of any decline in attendance and commitment lay in disaffection a generation before; Christian Britain did not fall off a cliff in the 1960s, the decline was gradual and culminated a generation earlier⁴⁷. As part of his thesis Brown suggested that there was actually a religious revival in the 1950s and he condemns conventional historians for 'never coming to terms with the growth of institutional religion in Britain between 1945 and 1958'.

Simon Green takes issue with Brown on this point, arguing that there was growing mutual

⁴⁴ McLeod, *The Religious Crisis*, pp. 257-8.

⁴⁵ C.G. Brown, 'Masculinity and Secularisation in twentieth-century Britain' in Y.M. Werner (ed.), *Christian Masculinity: Men and Religion in Northern Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Leuven, 2011), pp. 47-60; C.G. Brown, 'Men Losing Faith: The Making of Modern No Religionism in the UK, 1939-2010' in L. Delap and S. Morgan (eds), *Men, Masculinities and Religious Change in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 301-25.

⁴⁶ McLeod, *The Religious Crisis*, p. 259.

⁴⁷ S. Bruce and T. Glendinning, 'When was secularization? Dating the decline of the British churches and locating its cause'. *The British Journal of Sociology* 61/1 (2010), pp. 107-26.

indifference between believers and those without faith and disputing Brown's small increase in Sunday school enrolments which actually took place against a significant decline in attendance over a longer period. He summarises his thinking in what he terms as *The Passing of Protestant England*: a fundamental process of political, intellectual, cultural and social change complete by 1960⁴⁸. Whilst it is difficult to be precise, this thesis provides some support for Green's argument that the Christian (essentially Protestant) nature of English society starts to 'pass' c.1920, or certainly after the First World War; although assessing Brown's possible revival and subsequent shock of the 1960s is outside the scope of this study and a possible focus for future research.

Green had offered a different perspective to Brown before; he also argued that Brown was wrong to dismiss urbanisation as an explanation for the crisis which befell mainstream religious organisations during the last decade of the nineteenth century: this was before Brown's subsequent work pushed the timing of decline back until the 1960s. Green, based on his own research in Leeds, Halifax and Keighley just before the First World War, argued that the cumulative impact of the dispersion of the local industrial-urban society, the fragmentation of its residential bonds and the pluralisation of its cultural norms all undermined the ability of voluntary religious organisations to maintain their social standing and cultural prominence; this was 'secularisation by default'⁴⁹. In a further development, Peter Yalden, focusing specifically on institutional Nonconformity, argued that the roots of secularisation lay in the movement's tendency to become more associational and less communal in character; as the emphasis switched from adherents to

⁴⁸ S.J.D. Green, 'Was there an English Religious Revival in the 1950s?', *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society* 7 (2006), pp. 517-38; S.J.D. Green, *The Passing of Protestant England: Secularisation and Social Change c.1920-1960* (Cambridge, 2011).

⁴⁹ S.J.D. Green, 'Secularisation by Default? Urbanisation, Suburbanisation and the Strains of Voluntary Religious Organisation in Victorian and Edwardian England', *Hispania Sacra* 42/86 (1990), pp. 423-33.

members so meetings revolved increasingly around the chapel community rather than spirituality and evangelism⁵⁰.

Robin Gill in *The Myth of the Empty Church* and his updated sequel *The Empty Church Revisited* took a different perspective. Secularisation, he argued, was not an inevitable process and it was more accurate to think, as Brown does, of Britain being 'De-Christianised'⁵¹. Based on some surprisingly complete census data from newspapers, Gill argued paradoxically that there are so few Christians now in Britain because there are too many churches. The established Church of England wanted capacity for all to attend; its goal was universal compliance and attendance. More churches were therefore built closer to the people but in reality there was never any prospect of them being filled. This over-capacity was a drain on resources creating cold empty churches which lacked atmosphere, dilapidated buildings, overworked clergy and financial struggles. This situation in turn then led to further declines in churchgoing and the advance of secularisation. The myth of the empty church had been created⁵². Some analysis of attendance relative to capacity over time as churches were renovated and redesigned is included in later chapters. Cox develops this theme by identifying the comparative importance of the burden of institutional maintenance as a key research question in his progress report towards developing an alternative master narrative⁵³.

⁵⁰ P. Yalden, 'Association, Community and the Origins of Secularisation: English and Welsh Nonconformity, c. 1850-1930', *JEH* 55 (2004), pp. 293-9.

⁵¹ R. Gill, *The Myth of the Empty Church* (London, 1993), p. 8; R. Gill, *The Empty Church Revisited* (Aldershot, 2003).

⁵² Gill, *Empty Church Revisited*, pp. 26-37; R. Gill, 'Secularization and Census Data' in S. Bruce (ed.), *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians debate the Secularization Thesis* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 90-117.

⁵³ J. Cox, 'Towards Eliminating the Concept of Secularisation: A Progress Report' in Brown and Snape, *Secularisation in the Christian World*, pp. 13-26.

New concepts in the secularisation debate have emerged as new phases of research have been prepared, published and digested. In his seminal work, *A Secular Age*, Taylor also seeks to explore secularity in terms of the conditions of belief, which he articulates as a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and unproblematic to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and often not an easy one to embrace. The numbers attending church services in the US on a Sunday may be similar to those attending mosque on Friday in Pakistan but there is a big difference in these societies in *what it is to believe* in terms of the opportunities to participate, the moral compulsion to do so and the competing temptations and distractions. Taylor seeks to explain the transition from a society in which it is virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith is but one human possibility amongst others. Secularity is a matter of the process of change and the whole context of understanding in which moral, spiritual or religious experience and search takes place⁵⁴. The implicit assumption that the path to secularity is not linear and that its outcome is neither universal nor binding draws support from Erdozain as a basis for future study, even if he would prefer the approach to be more historical than conceptual and focused on Christian evangelicalism itself⁵⁵.

Alongside Taylor's new way of thinking, McLeod referenced a different historical concept in his introduction to *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe*: the concept of 'Christendom' as a social order in which there were close ties between the leaders of the church and those in secular power, where the laws were based on Christian principles and where most members of society were Christian. An important theme of this local study is the tight connection between church and parish elites which, I will argue, deferred the

⁵⁴ Taylor, *Secular Age*, pp. 2-3.

⁵⁵ D. Erdozain, 'Cause is not Quite What it Used to Be: The Return of Secularisation', *EHR* 127/525 (2012), p. 379.

process of secularisation. Christendom is not the same as Christianity; it is merely a phase in its history but in western society it lasted for more than a thousand years⁵⁶. Although elements of Christendom remain visible through participation in religious rites, church schools and church provision in welfare and charity, the decline of Christendom has been a long phased process: state toleration of different Christian denominations, open publication of anti-Christian ideas, separation of church and state and the gradual loosening of ties between church and society⁵⁷. Whilst sociologists like Bruce, Wilson and Peter Berger seek to portray this as the secularisation thesis – the ‘irreversible trend’ towards individualism in modern societies causing religion to fragment and lose its social force – others argue that the thesis is an inadequate explanation of cause, and that it fails to account for continued strong religious feeling in the US, and for growing religious sentiment in Africa, South America and parts of east Asia⁵⁸. There are distinct geographical challenges which secularisation theorists have yet to adequately address⁵⁹.

Two overlapping alternatives to the secularisation thesis are those which focus on pluralism and competition as defining characteristics of the modern world. Pluralists believe that all overarching institutions and systems of belief are vulnerable in the modern, increasingly individualistic, world – religion no more than others – and the nature of social change in the nineteenth century meant that no one institution or social group could play such a central role as the church had historically done⁶⁰. Another alternative way of understanding religious change is to focus on the ‘supply side’; the kind of religion

⁵⁶ H. McLeod, ‘Introduction’ in McLeod and Ustorf, *Decline of Christendom*, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

⁵⁹ See Bruce, *Secularization*, pp. 157-76; H. McLeod, ‘Secular Cities? Berlin, London and New York in the later Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries’ in S. Bruce (ed.), *Religion and Modernization*, pp. 59-89.

⁶⁰ McLeod and Ustorf, *Decline of Christendom*, pp. 15-16.

available and how it was being promoted. Denominational rivalry and competition directly affected the strength of religious feeling and the problems faced by Christianity in Europe can partly be attributed to the undue prominence of inflexible, monopolistic state churches⁶¹. Such denominational rivalry and the struggle for supremacy in a local context, unfolding as it does against the backdrop of waning religious commitment, will be an essential part of this thesis. The evolution of the dominant position of the Church of England will be examined and its strength, both relative and absolute, assessed as the challenge of secularisation takes place. There is a particular focus on the liturgical response to indifference and apathy, alongside the restoration and re-design of churches and facilities.

Revisionists like Cox and Brown have now sought to take the challenge to secularisation theory to a new level. Having disputed its timing, speed, nature and causes, and having outlined alternative explanations to the thesis, their aim now is to demolish the familiar orthodoxy which has become the prevailing master narrative of modern religious history. Secularisation has dominated the field because, as yet, there is no other master narrative available⁶². Whilst Cox accepts that the secularisation theory has some value as a description of change, it lacks a convincing causal explanation; however, as a master narrative it represents a persuasive and all-pervasive background to research on the social history of religion. The secularisation story, Cox argues, is too complex to be ‘verified’ or ‘falsified’ – it can only be compared in its persuasiveness to an alternative master narrative which must emerge from the research, writings and discussions of scholars. Brown has started work on conceptualising an alternative. He proposes, amongst others, that the social

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., p. 21.

significance of religion can rise and fall in any social and economic context; that decay does not automatically follow growth of rationality or technology; and that significance is not dependent on unity of belief or adherence⁶³. Discussions of an alternative master narrative will therefore revolve around various themes: the emergence of the possibility of a decline in the social significance of religion; the importance of a change in character of religion as it transitions from a 'confessional' to a 'voluntary' settlement; the relative competitiveness of European religious institutions; and the distinctive impact of social class. The defining characteristic of religion in the modern world is not its decline, but the *possibility* of its decline⁶⁴. This becomes a subject for historical enquiry, not an inevitable outcome⁶⁵.

In reviewing progress towards building this alternative master narrative and the current state of the secularisation debate, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the momentum has swung away from the original articulation of secularisation as a progressive, inevitable consequence of modernity and individualism which will eventually lead to a total eclipse of religious influence on public life, at least in western Europe. The views attributed to Wuthnow and Demerath above have been subsequently backed by a succession of challenges to the received wisdom of the secularisation theory. David Martin has attacked it conceptually by positioning Pentecostalism, characterised by its revival in South America, as an alternative meta-narrative to modernity based on empowerment, release and personal discipline; he argues for the plurality of national and regional trajectories and waves of successive 'Christianisations' followed by recoils⁶⁶. As we have seen, Brown

⁶³ Cox, 'Master Narratives', pp. 209-11.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ D. Martin, *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 3.

attacked secularisation theory empirically, and others like Cox, Jeremy Morris and Mark Smith have looked at the church as an institution in a local urban context; this research will add a rural case study in southern England to challenge the theory of decline. McLeod now prefers not to use the word ‘secularisation’ at all, sympathising with Cox’s concern that the term is weak causally and conveys a sense of inevitability which is not appropriate for robust historical enquiry⁶⁷. The champions of secularisation theory themselves acknowledge that the tide has turned, whilst still continuing to defend it. Bruce acknowledges it as an ‘unfashionable theory’ whilst still seeking to rebut the challenges of Christian vitality in the US, parts of South America and Asia, and religious fundamentalism in the Middle East⁶⁸. There is certainly a contextual contrast. One argument is that in most western European states the church historically enjoyed a virtual monopoly as part of a confessional state whereas from around 1780, in a different setting to this thesis, there has been genuine denominational pluralism in the US providing energy, strength, vitality and resilience. Bruce also acknowledges that the secularisation paradigm is not like a law of science, capable of empirical proof, which must apply to all societies but expresses ‘some expectation’ that as other societies go through the experience of modernisation they too will experience secularisation⁶⁹. Turner accepts that the conventional thesis of sociologists was too narrow in its focus but still manages to conclude that the concept of secularisation, provided we recognise the diversity of modern religions, can still be safely applied to the contemporary world⁷⁰. In a further narrowing of the gap, Brown accepts that secularisation accurately describes what has been happening in

⁶⁷ Cox, ‘Towards Eliminating Secularisation’, pp. 13-26; C.G. Brown, ‘A Revisionist Approach to Religious Change’ in Bruce, *Religion and Modernization*, pp. 31-58.

⁶⁸ Bruce, *Secularization*, pp. 157-76.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

⁷⁰ B.S. Turner, *Religion and Modern Society: Citizenship, Secularisation and the State* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 148-50.

Britain for the last fifty years but his insistence that this is not necessarily permanent and irreversible, McLeod's refusal even to use the term any longer and Brown's attempts with Cox and others to build an alternative master narrative demonstrates that, whilst still contested, current received wisdom is that secularisation, as an inevitable consequence of modernity, does not adequately explain the complex process of religious change.

As indicated above, the evolution of the historiography of secularisation and religious decline has been both contested and complex with many strands of research developing around timing, speed, geographical focus, causes and the nature of 'religion' itself. However, most of the local studies published to date as part of this historiography have had a distinctly urban or industrial focus: for example, Wickham on Sheffield, Cox on Lambeth, Stephen Yeo on Reading, separate studies undertaken by Rob Lee and Robert Moore on Durham and D.A. Reid's work on Birmingham. The studies have been predominantly urban for two reasons; first, Horace Mann had identified the main challenge for the church in his report on the 1851 religious census as the disinterest and indifference of the urban working poor⁷¹ and second, most of the late nineteenth century attendance and membership data which could be used as a comparative was urban⁷². Whilst there have been some rural local studies these are either very old, such as E.N. Bennett's generic *Problems of Village Life* (1913) and W.K. Lowther's *Facing the Facts* (1912), which drew on his own experience working in an East Anglian village⁷³, or they do not focus on quite the same period or issue, or are based on a very distinctive locality. James Obelkevich

⁷¹ H. Mann, *Census of Great Britain, 1851: Religious Worship in England and Wales* (Abridged) (London, 1854), pp. 389-94.

⁷² See McLeod, *Religion and Society*, p. 27, pp. 169-71 and Gill, *Myth of the Empty Church* for research on churchgoing patterns in 28 large towns in the 1880s.

⁷³ E.N. Bennett, *Problems of Village Life*, 2nd edn (London, 1924); W.K. Lowther-Clarke (ed.), *Facing the Facts: An Englishman's Religion* (London, 1912).

looked at the rural area of South Lindsey in Lincolnshire in 1976 but focused on the ‘golden age’ of agriculture up until 1875, before arguably the full extent of the crisis in Victorian religion had set in⁷⁴. Lee’s research on Norfolk focused on the way the clergy encountered and managed the poor and the Vale of Nailsworth studied by Albion Urdank was an area of industrialisation, growth and evangelical dissent; it was a study of change, whereas this thesis is a study of continuity⁷⁵. In his work on *The Myth of the Empty Church*, Gill also looked at a remote community in Wales, Glan-Ilyn, and rural north Northumberland but these were very different communities from this small market town in Hampshire⁷⁶. The main focus of the historiography is also on secularisation and religious decline in terms of its timing, nature and causes rather than denominational rivalry in the context of that decline either as a retardant or growth factor. Obelkevich’s study of South Lindsey is an exception, considering the challenge of Methodism to the Church of England and the role of religion within the community⁷⁷. Gilbert’s pioneering work on *Religion and Society in Industrial England* also considered evolving denominational rivalry and the interaction of this with industrialisation and secularisation: his broad thesis identified the Church of England accepting the serious challenge from Nonconformity around 1830 when it started on its own programme of reform which led to the re-emergence of a resurgent Church of England until the end of the century. He argued that this denominational rivalry was played out in a context of declining religious commitment. Ironically, Gilbert claimed, it was industrialisation, which had inspired early Nonconformity and then led to an Anglican response, which helped produce after 1850 a

⁷⁴ J. Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey 1825-1875* (Oxford, 1976).

⁷⁵ R. Lee, *Rural Change and the Anglican Clergy, 1815-1914: Encountering and Managing the Poor* (Woodbridge, 2006); A.M. Urdank, *Religion and Society in a Cotswold Vale: Nailsworth, Gloucestershire 1780-1865* (Oxford, 1990).

⁷⁶ Gill, *Myth of the Empty Church*, pp. 35-51, 52-71.

⁷⁷ Obelkevich, *South Lindsey*.

mood of entrenched secularism which neither Church nor chapel could break. It was the competitive edge of the Church-chapel rivalry which helped delay the onset of secularisation⁷⁸.

The Church and Nonconformity

Against this backdrop of creeping secularisation the relationship between the Church of England and Protestant Nonconformity continuously evolved. As the campaign for the relaxation of civil disabilities progressed throughout the nineteenth century, accompanied by a revived High Churchmanship and a zealous evangelicalism which touched both Anglicanism and dissent, so the relationship between the denominations progressed through toleration, competition, acceptance and grudging co-existence until the challenge of public indifference in the twentieth century led them to focus as much on what united them as what set them apart. Such co-operation, though, was a long time coming and any local study needs to be set against a national context based on the historic pre-eminence of the established Church.

In late 1833, the young Congregational preacher, Thomas Binney, announced his conversion to the 'Voluntary' cause of disestablishment in a sermon in London. He had come to a 'deep, serious religious conviction' that the established Church of England was 'a great national evil' whose end was 'most devoutly to be wished by every lover of God and man'⁷⁹. For the political radical James Mill, writing two years later, the established Church was also a prop of the corrupt political order. 'The Church of England exists in no

⁷⁸ Gilbert, *Religion and Society*, p. 205.

⁷⁹ Binney, *An Address*, quoted in S.J. Brown, *Providence and Empire: Religion, Politics and Society in the United Kingdom 1815-1914* (Harlow, 2008), p. 87.

other character than that of a state engine; a ready and ever-willing instrument in the hands of those who desire to monopolise the powers of government – that is, to hold them for the purpose of abusing them’⁸⁰. Such sentiments were indicative of a wider sense of crisis which pervaded the Church of England in the early 1830s as it came under attack for perceived abuses and apathy, faced a constitutional challenge which weakened its dominance, and struggled under the weight of resurgent evangelical dissent. Yet the fact that the Church survived this crisis and was to retain a position of relative strength in the religious, social and cultural life of the nation well into the twentieth century, despite a waning commitment to public expression of Christianity, indicates its underlying durability and adaptability to change. During this time the Church escaped from the apparent neglect of the late Hanoverian period and experienced a recovery on the back of structural transformation and a spiritual revival, fuelled by evangelicalism on the one hand and on the other by the campaign of the Oxford Movement to position the national Church as the *Via Media* between the abuses of Rome and the errors of Protestantism. This evolving identity has been considered by both Peter Nockles and Nigel Yates⁸¹. Having set out the historic position of the Church I will review the relevant historiographical themes relating to the turbulent period of change which saw it move from a monopolistic state Church to a competing denomination in a pluralist society⁸². I will suggest that its wealth and deep establishment roots, combined with an ability to tolerate difference and reform from within, enabled it to survive theological controversy, bureaucratic inefficiency and growing secularism. At the end of the 1930s it remained by far the largest denomination

⁸⁰ Mill, ‘The Church and its Reform’ quoted in Brown, *Providence and Empire*, p. 86.

⁸¹ P. Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship 1760-1857* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 270-306; N. Yates, ‘Historical Anglicanism: Changes in the Concept of a *Via Media*’ in N. Yates (ed.), *Anglicanism: Essays in the History, Belief and Practice*, (Lampeter, 2008), pp. 1-17.

⁸² See F. Knight, *The Nineteenth-Century Church and English Society* (Cambridge, 1995) for the transformation in relationship between church and state.

commanding a mixture of committed formal allegiance and tacit support; it remained the established Church of England in law.

In the late eighteenth century the position of the English Church in the life of the nation seemed secure. The co-identity of church and state, which had existed since the Reformation, could still be held. The Church was a national institution and a rallying point for national sentiment; a source of social stability. Parliament functioned as its national assembly, its bishops sat in the House of Lords with considerable influence on national affairs and the monarch was the Supreme Governor. I will argue that Alresford represented this integration of church and state in miniature. Parish clergy were often men of considerable influence in local society and most people assented to the general truth of Christianity⁸³. The Church of England was episcopal in organisation with the bishops responsible for maintaining ecclesiastical discipline, ordaining new clergymen, administering confirmation and conducting regular supervisory visits among the clergy⁸⁴. The parish clergyman was to provide regular Sunday services, administer the sacraments, help enforce ecclesiastical discipline and provide pastoral care⁸⁵. His main responsibility was the moral and spiritual well-being of his parishioners and examples of such pastoral care, such as that of George and Mary Sumner in Old Alresford, are considered later. Financially, parish clergy were supported from tithes, rentals of church property and pew rents. Clerical incomes rose steadily during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and enabled many parish clergy to associate more closely with the lifestyle of the

⁸³ B. Worrall, *The Making of the Modern Church: Christianity in England since 1800* (London, 1988), p.1.

⁸⁴ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, pp. 10-11.

⁸⁵ See F. Knight, 'Parish Preaching in the Victorian Era: The Village Sermon' in K. Francis and W. Gibson (eds), *Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon, 1689-1901* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 63-78 for the importance of the sermon.

landed gentry⁸⁶. In their sermons and pastoral visiting, clergymen generally emphasised the virtues of passive obedience to those in positions of authority, deference to social superiors and acceptance of the existing social order as part of the providential plan. From about 1760, the clergy were increasingly appointed to the magistrate's bench in England and Wales and by 1815 around a quarter of all magistrates were clergymen; a source of social stability⁸⁷. Carl Zangerl's analysis of magistrate returns reveals how this clerical representation was reduced later in the nineteenth century as part of a gradual recast of the social composition of the county magistracy; and this trend is considered for Hampshire later in the thesis⁸⁸.

But this appearance of settled stability was deceptive and in much of England and Wales the social and religious order represented by the established Church of England had become severely weakened by the end of the eighteenth century; its place in the establishment partly obscured its spiritual, pastoral and intellectual weaknesses⁸⁹. The old ideal of the parish system was breaking down and, for many, the parish church had ceased to be the centre of their lives. The parish boundaries had been largely fixed in the later middle-ages and reflected medieval patterns of population; mostly rural and mostly in southern England. While the number and size of parish churches had remained largely unchanged the population in England and Wales had almost doubled in the eighteenth century and had become more urban. Much of the growth was in London and the industrial and manufacturing districts of the midlands and north and the existing parish system was

⁸⁶ For the transition of the clergy from gentry status to professional occupation see; A. Russell, *The Clerical Profession* (London, 1980); B. Heeney, *A Different Kind of Gentleman: Parish Clergy as Professional Men in early and mid-Victorian England* (Hamden, 1976).

⁸⁷ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, pp. 11-13.

⁸⁸ C. Zangerl, 'The Social Composition of the County Magistracy in England and Wales, 1831-1887', *JBS* 11/1 (1971), pp. 113-25.

⁸⁹ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, p. 14; Worrall, *The Modern Church*, p.2.

totally inadequate for dealing with such demographic expansion; in 1815 the parish of St Pancras in London had a population of 50,000 and a parish church with a capacity of just 200. Moreover, sub-dividing parishes and creating new churches to address the problem required an Act of Parliament which was unwieldy and time-consuming. The Church had a major structural problem⁹⁰. This thesis will show a different kind of England in terms of Alresford's demographics and society; this was a settled, stable, autonomous, compliant, law-abiding community within which the Church of England continued to flourish. Drew Gray argues that changes in society can be viewed through the prism of changes in crime and the criminal justice system and, in an earlier study, David Jones highlights the destruction of property, arson and rural unrest which affected southern England and led to the creation of the Hampshire Rural Constabulary in the nineteenth century. Consistent with Gray's argument, I will show that the settled society of Alresford experienced comparatively and consistently low levels of crime⁹¹.

The Hanoverian Church was not generally corrupt, and there were many deeply spiritual, energetic and learned clergy, but in the eyes of later viewers its religion had become dry and formal and was lacking in spiritual vitality and depth. There were more concerns with physical needs than with spiritual well-being. Brian Heeney describes how the Victorian clergy enthusiastically developed a myth of eighteenth century ecclesiastical worldliness, of pastoral apathy, incompetence and inefficiency. This was a parish clergy who lacked any theological training, identified with the gentry and squires and spent their time hunting, riding and drinking rather than ministering to their flocks; in Peter Virgin's words

⁹⁰ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, p. 14; Smith, *Oldham and Saddleworth*, pp. 2-3.

⁹¹ D. Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1982), p. 5; D. Gray, *Crime, Policing and Punishment in England, 1660-1914* (London, 2016), p. 5; R.E. Foster, 'A Cure for Crime? The Hampshire Rural Constabulary 1839-1856', *Southern History* 12 (1990), pp. 48-67.

they were ‘increasingly rich and aristocratic’⁹². Donald Spaeth in *The Church in an Age of Danger* drew on the evidence of Consistory court cases in Wiltshire to illustrate the feelings of resentment and anti-clericalism which he suggested provided evidence of such shortcomings⁹³. However, a revisionist view is gradually being developed. Smith in his work on Oldham and Saddleworth showed that structural problems did not necessarily prevent pastoral effectiveness and that the Victorian perspective may be overstated⁹⁴. Michael Snape in his work on Whalley in Lancashire seeks to counter this revisionism and argues that Smith’s claims are not inconsistent with a picture of decline when other factors, such as changing attitudes to morality and dwindling philanthropy are taken into account⁹⁵. This study does not directly address this historiography, although the controversy around the non-residence and pluralism of clergy such as Francis North in Old Alresford may be considered relevant.

In contrast with a typical Anglican service offering which was often dry, formal and non-participatory, the eighteenth century witnessed a resurgence of vital, evangelical religion based on an intense conviction of sin and mankind’s inability ever to satisfy the demands of divine justice through its own efforts. Leaders of the evangelical awakening initially sought to keep the movement within the Church of England but Methodist itinerant preachers refused to allow parish boundaries to limit their calling to preach the gospel to all people and this created tensions between them: many parish clergy saw this invasion as

⁹² Heeney, *A Different Kind of Gentleman*, p. 8; P. Virgin, *The Church in an Age of Negligence: Ecclesiastical Structure and Problems of Church Reform 1700-1840* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. iii-iv.

⁹³ D.A. Spaeth, *The Church in an Age of Danger: Parsons and Parishioners, 1660-1740* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁹⁴ Smith, *Oldham and Saddleworth*; M. Smith, ‘The reception of Richard Podmore: Anglicanism in Saddleworth 1700-1830’ in J. Walsh, C. Haydon and S. Taylor (eds), *The Church of England c.1689-c.1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 110-26.

⁹⁵ M. Snape, *The Church of England in Industrialising Society: The Lancashire Parish of Whalley in the Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2003), p. 199.

divisive and impertinent. The social hierarchy was under threat⁹⁶. David Hempton argues in *The Religion of the People* that Methodism made its fastest progress in areas least amenable to paternalistic influence (in contrast, as will see later, with Alresford) and discussed the historiography, developed by Reg Ward and others, that places the success of Methodism in the wider context of structural change in the generation overshadowed by the French Revolution⁹⁷. Alan Everitt has analysed rural dissent in several counties, although not Hampshire, and showed the importance of the economic and social structure of local communities to religious adherence. He argued that rural Nonconformity was strong in decayed market towns, boundary settlements, industrial villages and in parishes where the land was sub-divided to give an unusual degree of freedom from paternalistic control. As we shall see later, Alresford was a remarkably stable market town and the town and surrounding villages were dominated by a few landed families and members of the social elite; the Rodneys, Ashburtons, Onslows and Tichbornes, who combined with others, including the incumbents and officers of the established Church, to produce a degree of *de facto* oligarchic influence, if not absolute control. Methodism thrived in areas of Anglican parochial weakness; not parishes such as Alresford⁹⁸. By the 1780s Methodists were being forced out of the Church of England as local magistrates required them to register their society meeting houses as dissenting places of worship under the Toleration Act of 1689. John Wesley's move to ordain Methodist preachers in North America was also seen as a challenge to ecclesiastical authority which had to be resisted⁹⁹.

⁹⁶ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, pp. 22-4.

⁹⁷ D. Hempton, *The Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion c.1750-1900* (London, 1996), p. 7.

⁹⁸ D. Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society 1750-1850* (London, 1984), pp. 15-16; A. Everitt, *The Pattern of Rural Dissent: The Nineteenth Century* (Leicester, 1972), pp. 20-44; see C. Binfield, *So Down to Prayers: Studies in English Nonconformity 1780-1920* (London, 1977), pp. 10-12.

⁹⁹ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, p. 24.

The growth of Dissent was significant. In the 1790s, probably 90 per cent of the population in Britain were at least nominal adherents to the established churches. By the early 1820s, however, this had fundamentally changed; perhaps a third of the population of Britain was now outside the established churches, embracing a broad spectrum of beliefs from Wesleyan Methodism to Owenite socialism. Methodist membership increased from 56,600 in 1791 to 213,500 in 1821, and for every member it was estimated that a further five attended services. Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians, the ‘Old Dissent’, also experienced considerable growth in membership. There were 738 dissenting places of worship registered in the 1780s; 2,065 in the 1790s and 5,671 registrations between 1811 and 1820¹⁰⁰. There was fierce denominational rivalry in the competitive market for souls but sectarian disputes were moderated by the existence of an established Church from which they all dissented. The theological divide was articulated by J.J. Taylor in a sermon he preached at Upper Brook Street chapel, Manchester, in 1858: Anglicanism was too narrow and too stringent; God’s truth was evolving and could not be restricted by creeds and articles¹⁰¹. Generally, the Church of England with its grand pretensions and sinister sacerdotalism was the preferred common target. There was some co-operation between Evangelicals within and without the Church of England but suspicions of Anglicanism, which came to a head with the bicentenary in 1862 of the Great Ejection, generally reinforced Nonconformist solidarity¹⁰². Some, such as David Bebbington, see this growing Nonconformity, particularly the vibrant Evangelicalism which embraced much of it, as movements which had a huge impact on Victorian society as a whole; those who followed

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 29-30.

¹⁰¹ J.J. Taylor, *English Nonconformity: its Principles and Justification: A Sermon Preached at Upper Brook Street Chapel, Manchester on December 12th, 1858* (London, 1859).

¹⁰² D. Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 15-17; T. Larsen, ‘Victorian Nonconformity and the memory of the ejected ministers: the impact of the Bicentennial Commemorations of 1862’, *SCH* 33 (1997), pp. 459-73.

the distinctive way of life, pious morality and energetic commitment to outreach, mission and philanthropy defined the age in which they lived as well as, in turn, being shaped by the society they were part of¹⁰³. One thing was clear: the challenge to the established Church was gathering momentum.

The wealth of the Church of England was based on its huge financial endowments backed by the income from glebe and property, pew rents, tithes and church rates. I will suggest throughout the thesis that, in this local context, the financial advantage which the established Church had over Nonconformity was an important reason for continued Anglican hegemony. This wealth and its legal position as part of the establishment, as an integral and inseparable part of the state, meant that its fortunes were inevitably aligned with the landed interest who exercised social and political hegemony. In the English society dominated by agriculture and the village community, power belonged to property and inherited social position; the Church of England and its parish structure was integral to this social framework, but it was ill-prepared for the rapid rise in population, the growth in towns and cities and the rise of the new industrial magnate with his workers living in inner-city slums beyond the reach of the established Church. The onset of radicalism and liberal thinking brought increasing anti-clericalism in its wake, although Frances Knight has questioned how much of this was directed at clergymen *as clerics* rather than their other roles as landlords, collectors of tithes and magistrates¹⁰⁴. Looking from a class perspective, E.P. Thompson felt that the New Dissent of Methodism actually sat alongside

¹⁰³ D. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989); D. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Leicester, 2005); Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*; Bradley, *Call to Seriousness*.

¹⁰⁴ Worrall, *The Modern Church*, pp. 3-4; F. Knight, 'Did Anticlericalism exist in the English Countryside in the early Nineteenth Century?' in N. Aston and M. Cragoe (eds), *Anticlericalism in Britain, c.1500-1914* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 159-78.

the established Church in putting a brake on radical social attitudes; he saw Methodism as the antidote to revolutionary spirit in its support of the established social order and its emphasis on hard work, frugality, morality and philanthropy. They were part of the enslavement of working people¹⁰⁵.

By the late 1820s the Church of England was in trouble. Its historically privileged position as part of the establishment, with its associated wealth, power and prestige, had led to complacency in assessing the need to respond to the huge social and demographic changes associated with the industrial revolution. Structural weaknesses came to the forefront, and with them came disaffection with the clerical abuses of non-residence and pluralism, and discontent with a degree of apathy in pastoral care and a dry and uninspiring style of worship. Shorn of the need to respect the squire-parson stranglehold on the rural village community, many turned towards vibrant evangelicalism which offered engagement, participation and inspiration, often in the shape of Dissent rather than within the established Church. Arthur Burns describes how ‘church reform’ became wrapped up in the wider reform of the age which embraced the law, medicine, culture and other aspects of society as people began to challenge the *status quo* in a spirit of utility, rationality, enlightenment and a growing degree of political radicalism¹⁰⁶. It was enough to provoke the liberal Anglican headmaster of Rugby, Thomas Arnold, to write to a clerical friend in June 1832 that ‘The Church as it now stands, no human power can save’¹⁰⁷. Prospects looked bleak indeed as the Church stood on the precipice of either fundamental reform or complete disestablishment. Yet in shaping a response to its shortcomings the Church of

¹⁰⁵ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 2nd edn (London, 1968), pp. 385-440.

¹⁰⁶ A. Burns, ‘English ‘church reform’ revisited, 1780-1840’ in A. Burns and J. Innes (eds), *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780-1850* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 136-62.

¹⁰⁷ Stanley, *Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold*, quoted in Brown, *Providence and Empire*, p. 88.

England was to demonstrate its inherent strength and resilience; it was a response which was to lead to a revival.

Conventionally, the seeds of the Church of England recovery are seen to be in the series of constitutional measures which parliament (still then an Anglican parliament) took from 1828 to 1832 to address some of the political disabilities and grievances of dissenters¹⁰⁸. These were, to some extent, imposed measures, even if they had a degree of support from within the Church. However, Burns in his re-thinking of church reform has identified that the chronology of reform actually starts much earlier; it also has its roots *within* the Church¹⁰⁹. Structures intended to connect the diocese with the parish were ineffective, poorly designed and lacking leadership. However, by 1870 the diocesan organisation had been extended, dormant institutions had been revived, new elements introduced and a new ‘diocesan consciousness’ had been created, reflecting new opportunities for clergy to participate in the collective life of the diocese¹¹⁰. Burns argues that the ‘Diocesan Revival’ supports the case for internal gradualist reform from the 1790s which needs to be seen alongside constitutional reform, the Ecclesiastical Commission and the Oxford Movement. Changes were not just imposed; the reforms commissioned from the centre could only be implemented effectively alongside the changes which the Church of England had itself initiated long before the public calls became a clamour¹¹¹.

Those popular calls for reform found expression in the ‘Voluntary’ movement; a campaign to end the established churches in the United Kingdom and sever all ties between church

¹⁰⁸ Knight, *Nineteenth-Century Church*, p. 201.

¹⁰⁹ A. Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England c. 1800-1870* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 6-7.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

and state. Deryck Lovegrove identified the threat from voluntary religious associations which Anglicans had felt since the end of the eighteenth century; the proliferation of religious conventicles, Sunday schools, charitable organisations and itinerant preachers represented ‘unauthorised religious activity’ and their intentions seemed subversive and hostile to the established Church. Such unease led to the aggressive physical hazing of dissenters, sometimes with tacit Anglican consent, of which there were several examples in Alresford in the early nineteenth century¹¹². Encouragement for reform had been provided by what Geoffrey Best has termed the ‘constitutional revolution’ of legislation between 1828 and 1832. The repeal of the Test and Corporation Act (1828) enabled dissenters to hold crown and municipal offices; the Catholic Emancipation Act (1829) gave British Catholics the right to vote if they otherwise qualified and the Reform Act (1832) extended the parliamentary franchise to many of the middle class, thereby increasing the political power of Dissent¹¹³. But this was not enough for those in the ‘Voluntary’ movement; such a reformed parliamentary state, they argued, should no longer promote any particular religious beliefs and practices – this should be the ‘voluntary’ decision of individuals¹¹⁴.

But supporters of the Church of England rallied to resist this voluntary onslaught. Church leaders realised that they would need to continue to reform; to reduce non-residence, pluralism, pastoral neglect and show that they were efficient stewards of tithes, endowments and church rates. Alan Haig in his work on *The Victorian Clergy* explains how the Church retained a dominant position within the universities, at a time when they

¹¹² D. Lovegrove, ‘Idealism and Association in early Nineteenth-Century Dissent’, *SCH* 23 (1986), pp. 303-17; D. Lovegrove, *Established Church, Sectarian People: Itinerancy and the Transformation of English Dissent 1780-1830* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 115, p. 151.

¹¹³ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, pp. 79-83.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

were becoming larger and more active, and that clergy were also preponderant in the public and grammar schools and in private tutoring thereby linking the Church to government through public education¹¹⁵. In addition to the work on diocesan reform, legislation raised the upper limit on curates' salaries and sought to address non-residence, and the Church Building Commission administered major government grants towards church construction. The Church of England had to demonstrate that it was committed to conducting a home mission among the poor. The Association of Friends of the Church was formed in 1833 with an initial focus on the need to strengthen the parochial system by building additional parish churches and providing more parish clergymen, especially in the industrial towns and cities¹¹⁶. In 1836 the bishop of London set up a Metropolis Churches Fund which aimed to build 50 new churches in the London slums; 667 established churches were built in England and Wales in the 1830s compared with just 276 the decade before¹¹⁷. This building effort also provided more pastoral care. Alongside the diocesan reforms, church evangelicals set up district visiting societies with lay visitors offering tracts, advice and charity; J.B. Sumner set up such a society in the diocese of Chester in 1832 and several local parishes reported their existence in visitation returns. The church's crucial role in administering charitable endowments and delivering welfare is a central theme of this study; it bound the people to the church. Much of the historiography on welfare considers how the church lost this vital connection as its previous role was gradually replaced with the emergence of the welfare state; it lost its social relevance. Lynn Hollen Lees in *Solidarities of Strangers* looks at the changing attitudes and policy perspectives of the twentieth century as the thinking which underpinned the old and new poor laws was superseded. Frank Prochaska in *The Disinherited Spirit*, similarly identifies

¹¹⁵ A. Haig, *The Victorian Clergy* (Beckenham, 1984), p. 351.

¹¹⁶ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, pp. 88-9, 92; Burns, 'English church reform', pp. 141-2.

¹¹⁷ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, pp. 95-6.

a transformative shift in British values. For much of the period of this study the importance of Christianity as an inspiration for political and social behaviour was largely unchallenged; by the end of it the religious link to philanthropy had been weakened as the state took on responsibility for social provision¹¹⁸.

The Church demonstrated its new confidence by efforts to expand its role in primary education; the National Society soon raising enough money to win over 70 per cent of the state grants available to build and maintain new schools¹¹⁹. As discussed later, education was to be an emotive battleground from the 1870s onwards, reflecting both denominational rivalry and the creeping encroachment of the state¹²⁰. Surveying the shifting alliances between church and state in education, Priscilla Chadwick saw the roots of the problem in the conflicts and compromises of the past with the state system being brought in originally to supplement (not replace) existing church schools. D.R. Pugh stressed the vigorous Nonconformist campaign against the Balfour Education Act of 1902 because it placed denominational (primarily Anglican) elementary schools ‘on the rates’, to be supported equally with the old Board schools¹²¹. Attendance at Sunday schools may have peaked in the 1880s but Doreen Rosman argues that they remained substantial organisations throughout the period of this study; they were resilient because they catered for children of parents who did not necessarily attend public worship, and visitation returns confirm that they remained popular and active; an analysis of attendance percentages is included in later

¹¹⁸ L. Hollen Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 310-42; Prochaska, *Disinherited Spirit*, pp. 1-27.

¹¹⁹ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, pp. 97-8.

¹²⁰ See M.R. Watts, *The Dissenters II: The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity 1791-1859* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 535-57 for how circumstances and denominational rivalry delayed a national state education system.

¹²¹ P. Chadwick, *Shifting Alliances: Church and State in English Education* (London, 1977); J. Huxtable, *Church and State in Education: Another Look at a Familiar Story* (Wallington, 1960); D.R. Pugh, ‘English Nonconformity, education and passive resistance 1903-6’, *Journal of the History of Education Society* 19/4 (1990), pp. 355-73.

chapters¹²². Not only did the Church demonstrate resilience in adversity and an ability to respond when under attack; it also showed that it could still command significant levels of public support.

But momentum and urgency were still needed. The Ecclesiastical Commission, appointed by parliament with both clergy and lay members, was intended to encourage and support the Church's efforts and pastoral mission by recommending reforms to both structure and resources. There were insufficient parish clergy and churches¹²³, especially in the growing industrial towns and cities, and there were vast inequalities of wealth within the parish organisation; many parish clergy were very poorly paid but, in contrast, some livings were rich enough to attract the attention of the ambitious and idle¹²⁴; a charge effectively levied against Francis North¹²⁵. Reports produced by the Commission confirmed inherent weaknesses and legislation followed to redistribute the income of bishops, to redraw diocesan boundaries, to require a dispensation to hold more than one living and to gradually divert investment from cathedrals to parish ministry¹²⁶. Whilst the assessment of this work has been generally positive, Owen Chadwick in *The Victorian Church* is less generous towards the work of Charles Blomfield, bishop of London. Chadwick stressed the enormity of the challenge in effectively correcting a system unchanged for four hundred years, but points out that no stipend was reduced or canonry suppressed until the death or departure of the occupant. The money came into the Commission in a trickle, not

¹²² D. Rosman, 'Sunday Schools and Social Change in the Twentieth Century' in S. Orchard and J.H.Y. Briggs (eds), *The Sunday School Movement: Studies in the Growth and Decline of Sunday Schools* (Milton Keynes, 2007), pp. 149-60.

¹²³ Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, pp. 351-61 shows the increase in clergy lagged behind population expansion.

¹²⁴ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, pp. 92-4.

¹²⁵ See below, pp. 175-7.

¹²⁶ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, pp. 92-4.

in the much needed flood, and it remained relatively impoverished for many years¹²⁷. The Church had the courage to act but not the ambition to fully implement its difficult decisions; the pain was left for the next generation.

Collectively the repeal of the Test and Corporation Act (1828), the Catholic Emancipation Act (1829) and the admission to parliament of the atheist Charles Bradlaugh in 1886 fundamentally altered the Anglican character of parliament. But Knight in *The Nineteenth-Century Church and English Society* argues that there were other aspects to this journey from state church to major denomination in a pluralist society. In 1824 the final parliamentary grant was made for church building, leaving Anglicans to raise future amounts themselves; at the local level the Municipal Corporations were reformed in 1835; and the Civil Registration Act (1837) gave people the freedom to opt out of Anglican rites of birth and marriage. In 1853, in a further effort to weaken the links between crown and church, Palmerston ended the issuing of royal letters in support of the National Society, the SPG and the Incorporated Church Building Society¹²⁸.

As the links with the state, which once underpinned social stability but now threatened it, were gradually weakened so the disabilities and grievances of dissenters were addressed. In his polemical account of *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century*, C. Silvester Horne gives a vivid portrayal of what he regards as ‘the struggle’¹²⁹. Public office could now be held, the electoral franchise had been extended, marriages could now be solemnised by dissenting or Roman Catholic chapels and the registrations for births, marriages and deaths could now take place in a civil registration office. In 1836 Parliament reformed the tithe

¹²⁷ O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, Part I*, 2nd edn (London, 1970), p. 138.

¹²⁸ Knight, *Nineteenth-Century Church*, p. 201.

¹²⁹ C. Silvester Horne, *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1905).

system which had long been a cause of resentment, allowing tithes to be commuted for a discounted cash sum, and in the same year a charter was granted to the non-denominational University of London which allowed dissenters to access a university education; although efforts to remove the religious tests from Oxford and Cambridge where, as Haig has said, the Church was dominant, continued to be resisted¹³⁰. In a major symbolic gesture, compulsory church rates – which required qualifying dissenters to contribute to the maintenance of the parish church – were finally abolished in 1868¹³¹. Financing was theoretically now on an even footing, although in practice, as will become evident, Anglicans still found it easier to attract financial resources than their Nonconformist neighbours¹³².

Alongside the campaign for the removal of civil disabilities, a distinctive ‘Nonconformist Conscience’ developed which characterised the movement for much of the nineteenth century and transcended denominational boundaries. Helmstadter argued that Nonconformity flourished between 1830 and 1880 because its religious, social and political perspectives were mutually reinforcing based on *individualism*: for example, the personal obligation to seek salvation, a reliance on individual self-help for economic prosperity, and equality and personal choice in matters such as church rates, marriage and burials, university access, political office and suffrage. After 1880, the thesis goes, this unity of purpose diminished under the weight of biblical criticism and Darwinism (which caused compromise on theology), the adoption of more collective principles in terms of social and employment rights, and the removal of political disabilities, short of

¹³⁰ Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, p. 351.

¹³¹ Knight, *Nineteenth-Century Church*, p. 201; Brown, *Providence and Empire*, pp. 95-6.

¹³² See C. Brooks, ‘Building the Rural Church: Money, Power and the Country Parish’ in C. Brooks and A. Saint (eds), *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 51-81.

disestablishment¹³³. Bebbington, whilst acknowledging the general argument, seeks to demonstrate that behaviour was more collective (and less individual) than Helmstadter suggests, that such change came much earlier than 1880, and that the principle of freedom of choice was compromised with respect to various campaigns where the cause seemed to justify it; abstinence, free trade, Sabbath observance and even war¹³⁴. As will be discussed, it is hard to identify such a 'Nonconformist Conscience' in Alresford.

One impact of the gradual erosion of Anglican supremacy was a sharpening of identity and thinking about what the Anglican faith meant and how it was differentiated from the beliefs of Nonconformists. Knight has described this process as a move from diversity to sectarianism¹³⁵. The eighteenth-century Church of England was sometimes seen as being dull and formal in worship in poor contrast with the inspirational and vibrant faith of dissenters. In the brave new world of denominational competition the Church of England needed to do more than amend its structures and re-direct its resources: it needed to redefine its spiritual being and reassert its status as part of the 'true' Christian Church. This thesis looks at many examples of different churchmanship, its links to ministry and how it was influenced by patronage.

Part of this renewed energy and spiritual re-awakening came in the form of the Oxford Movement, traditionally launched by John Keble's Assize Sermon in 1833. Coinciding with the period of Best's 'constitutional revolution', the sermon particularly attacked state

¹³³ Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, pp. 43-51; G. Parsons (ed.), *Religion in Victorian Britain: I Traditions* (Manchester, 1988), pp. 87-8; R.J. Helmstadter, 'The Nonconformist Conscience' in G. Parsons (ed.), *Religion in Victorian Britain: IV Interpretations* (Manchester, 1988), pp. 61-95.

¹³⁴ Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, pp. 43-51.

¹³⁵ F. Knight, 'From Diversity to Sectarianism: The Definition of Anglican Identity in Nineteenth-Century England', *SCH* 32 (1996), pp. 377-86.

interference in the affairs of the established Church in Ireland. The Tractarians, as they came to be called, viewed the authority of the church as divinely inspired, not state dependent, and they sought to assert its spiritual independence as the ‘true’ branch of the one holy, catholic and apostolic church in these islands. In doctrine they referred back to the teachings of the ‘fathers’ of the first four centuries and the crucial significance of apostolic succession as the legitimation of a church. They stressed the corporate and confessional nature of the Church of England, the importance of the sacraments and the role of the priest in worship and salvation¹³⁶.

Initially this leadership and messaging was welcomed by the old orthodox ‘high and dry’ group within the Church of England. But as the movement gathered momentum it became apparent that they saw it as crucial that the faith of the Church was reflected in what they regarded as the beauty of holiness; in the music, symbolism, ceremonial and ritual of worship and liturgy, and the distinctiveness of clerical dress to underline the pre-eminent nature of the priest¹³⁷. This was also accompanied by a sincere and devout commitment to pastoral work¹³⁸ which lent appeal to many younger clergy who, fresh from ordination, were buoyed by a movement which overtly recognised the importance of their holy calling. Simon Skinner in his work *Tractarians and the ‘Condition of England’* seeks to focus on the ways in which Tractarians applied the essentials of their theology into a distinctive parochial programme; they were genuinely concerned about social injustice and the conditions of the labouring poor. George Herring offers a similar argument in *The*

¹³⁶ For summaries see; O. Chadwick, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement: Tractarian Essays* (Cambridge, 1990); G. Rowell, *The Vision Glorious: Themes and Personalities of the Catholic Revival in Anglicanism* (Oxford, 1993); Worrall, *The Modern Church*, pp. 15-35.

¹³⁷ Chadwick, *Spirit of the Oxford Movement*, pp. 41-2; Nockles, *Oxford Movement in Context*, pp. 270-306.

¹³⁸ See Chadwick, *Spirit of the Oxford Movement*, pp. 256-88 for Edward King; P.G. Cobb, ‘Thomas Chamberlain: A forgotten Tractarian’, *SCH* 16 (1979), pp. 373-87; K. Tiller, ‘Religion and Community: Dorchester to 1920’ in K. Tiller (ed.), *Dorchester Abbey: Church and People 635-2005* (Witney, 2005), pp. 61-83 for Charles Macfarlane and Nathaniel Poyntz.

Oxford Movement in Practice; the practical reality of their churchmanship was committed pastoral care. Although none of the Tractarian clergy identified by Herring were in the parishes of the Alresford registration district, we will see evidence later to confirm the view that a more sacramental High Churchmanship often co-existed with committed ministry and pastoral care¹³⁹.

As the movement developed and views became more entrenched, there were fears from the evangelical and broad church wings within the Church of England that the Tractarians were taking them dangerously close to Roman Catholicism. Distinct factions or parties developed as public statements and private behaviour became ever more dogmatic. Some senior members of the movement, including John Henry Newman, seceded to Rome, and as Grayson Carter points out, there were also Evangelical secessions (some from within the district) which further underlined the sense of schism¹⁴⁰. Tensions between the High Church and Evangelical parties came to a head with a series of theological controversies which, for a time, threatened to break up the Church of England¹⁴¹.

Knight in her essay ‘A church without discipline is no church at all’ explores the historical roots of the problem the Church of England had in enforcing discipline and the consequences of failure. The machinery which was originally intended to apply to clerical issues such as neglect of parish, immorality and drunkenness was now being applied to doctrinal and theological issues, such as George Denison’s insistence on the real presence

¹³⁹ S. Skinner, *Tractarians and the ‘Condition of England’: The Social and Political Thought of the Oxford Movement* (Oxford, 2004), p. 142; G. Herring, *The Oxford Movement in Practice: The Tractarian Parochial World from the 1830s to the 1870s* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 151-2, Appendix.

¹⁴⁰ G. Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals; Protestant Secessions from the Via Media, c.1800-1850* (Oxford, 2001).

¹⁴¹ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, p. 176.

in the Eucharist¹⁴². Such disputes evolved into a full blown crisis over ritualism which witnessed public discord and prosecutions of individual clergymen (by their fellow clergy or lay parishioners) under the terms of the Public Worship Regulation Act (1874). Such open antagonism damaged the social influence of the Church of England, making it seem that many of its clergy were more concerned with their own internal affairs than with pastoral ministry. When it slipped into introversion and self-examination, the Church lost a sense of its true vocation and mission¹⁴³.

The theological controversies of the nineteenth century perfectly illustrate some of the strengths and shortcomings of the established Church. At a time when it was badly needed, the Oxford Movement injected a real sense of spiritual dynamism and energy into the theological and spiritual life of the Church of England. This vitality and commitment in turn led to a sharpening of identity, and a response from the evangelicals within the Church, as it collectively came to focus on what differentiated it from Protestant Dissent. Compared to the dullness of the Hanoverian era the spiritual life of the Church was reinvigorated. But this energy dissolved into dogmatism, faction and schism as the Church became wrapped up in its own internal affairs and distracted from its true purpose. None the less, the Church of England did retain wide appeal well into the twentieth century.

The structural reform and spiritual revival of the Victorian period was brought to life by a parish clergy who had transitioned from gentry generalist to clerical professional. Both Heeney and Anthony Russell, based on their review of contemporary handbooks, diaries and correspondence, argue that the clergy became more specialised, focused and

¹⁴² F. Knight, ‘‘A Church without discipline is no church at all’’: Discipline and Diversity in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Anglicanism’, *SCH* 43 (2007), pp. 399-418.

¹⁴³ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, pp. 403-10.

committed and received new levels of theological training to equip them for spiritual leadership and effective pastoral ministry¹⁴⁴. Haig notes that, to fill increased demand, the clergy had to compete with an increasing number of occupations which conveyed ‘professional’ status; more rigorous training was essential¹⁴⁵. The committed pastoral care of the Tractarians, already referred to above in a rural parish setting, was also witnessed in the urban slums. Geoffrey Rowell in *Vision Glorious* describes the devotion of Robert Linklater and Charles Lowder in the east end of London and Robert Dolling in Portsmouth who delivered ornate ritual and worship alongside far reaching pastoral and social care¹⁴⁶. It was individual clergy such as these, from the Evangelical as well as High Church party, who underpinned the survival and continued appeal of the Church of England into the twentieth century, and we shall see many examples of such service throughout the thesis.

The results of the 1851 religious census have traditionally been interpreted as a failure for the Church of England. This interpretive tradition is now being reversed as we have become more sensitive to the achievements represented by results historically presented as evidence of failure; not just in the religious census, but in subsequent data as well¹⁴⁷. By 1870 Knight suggests that the Church of England ‘could no longer claim to be the Church of the English nation’¹⁴⁸ but its pre-eminence as a denomination was still impressive: Anglican attendance growing faster than that of Dissent in large towns between 1821 and 1851; the sustained growth in the number of Easter Communicants until the 1920s; an increase of over 25 per cent (5,406) in the number of clergy and 30 per cent (3,639) in the number of churches and chapels built between 1830 and 1870; ten per cent more Sunday

¹⁴⁴ See Russell, *Clerical Profession*; Heeney, *Different Kind of Gentleman*.

¹⁴⁵ Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, pp. 353-5.

¹⁴⁶ Rowell, *Vision Glorious*, pp. 116-40.

¹⁴⁷ Burns, *Diocesan Revival*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁸ Knight, *Nineteenth-Century Church*, p. 201.

school scholars than the Wesleyans, Primitives and Congregationalists combined in 1914¹⁴⁹. In total, the established Church still commanded the support of around one in four of the adult population in England in 1851; no other organisation could come close to commanding this type of allegiance¹⁵⁰.

It took time to grasp that at a practical as well as at an institutional level Anglican hegemony had passed away¹⁵¹. It did so in the context of a creeping secularism, manifest in declining observation of formal worship and the growing marginalisation of religion in public life. But the influence of the Church lived on, partially preserved and respected in the ‘diffusive Christianity’ which Cox saw in his work on Lambeth, and which Davie would continue to trace after 1945¹⁵². I will suggest that Anglican hegemony was certainly slow to fade in Alresford.

The Church of England at the end of the eighteenth century is routinely criticised for its ‘inflexibility’ and failure to adapt to industrialisation and urbanisation. However, compared to other denominations the established Church was severely hampered by its long history, by anachronistic geographies of settlement, by estate churches built by landowners for their own convenience, by emoluments, fees and advowsons which were regarded as perquisites to be legitimately traded, by canon law, by impropriations, by common incumbencies until death and by clerical responsibilities for dilapidations on their houses. The Church faced inherent, fundamental problems of an historic and legal nature

¹⁴⁹ Currie, Gilbert and Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers*, pp. 184-92.

¹⁵⁰ Burns, *Diocesan Revival*, p. 5.

¹⁵¹ Knight, *Nineteenth-Century Church*, p. 210.

¹⁵² See Cox, *Lambeth*; Davie, *Believing without Belonging*.

which did not apply to any form of Dissent¹⁵³. Paradoxically, this history and longevity also brought with it enduring sources of strength; establishment by law, with its consequent place at the centre of political, social and cultural life – the Church of England was ingrained into the very fabric of the nation – and huge wealth and resources. Ultimately though, quite apart from these tangible considerations, it was the ability of the Church to adapt, to tolerate differences of view and perspective, and to allow itself to evolve with the times through structural and constitutional reforms which enabled it to successfully transition from monopolistic state church to the largest and most popular denomination in a pluralist society¹⁵⁴.

Overview

This study of Alresford in Hampshire will contribute to the historiographies of secularisation and church strength in several ways: by adding a local rural case study in southern England; by considering religion and denominational rivalry in the context of both the community in which they sat and the national backdrop of declining religious commitment; and by covering the period of transition from religious boom to crisis. The distinctive nature of the area in terms of its geography, demographics and economy are considered first to explain the depth of Anglican roots: the stability of population and occupations was remarkable, with no natural Nonconformist constituency, no population growth from which to draw, and with church and local government tightly controlled by the same small parish elite. From this position of Anglican dominance, reflected in the census, the relative strength of the Church of England and Nonconformity up until the

¹⁵³ Snell and Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*, pp. 54-5.

¹⁵⁴ J. Morris, 'George Ridding and the Diocese of Southwell: A Study in the National Church Ideal', *JEH* 61/1 (2010), pp. 125-43.

outbreak of the Second World War is explored using primary church and chapel records, financial and membership data, local newspapers, Consistory court cases, parliamentary reports and personal correspondence. By the end of the period Nonconformity had expanded its tangible physical presence. Despite this, I will argue that Anglicanism remained dominant and was actually resurgent towards the First World War, before indifference and inertia caused a crack in the Anglican hegemony which sat at the heart of the established social order. Adrian Hastings argues in his synthesis *History of English Christianity* that there was no doubt that the established Church was crumbling in many respects by the 1920s and that this continued in the 1930s; the Church of England was no longer central to the affairs of the nation¹⁵⁵. Although it is difficult to be precise, the evidence from this case study supports, to some extent, Green's assertion that *The Passing of Protestant England* commenced in the 1920s when ecclesiastical institutions entered decline, accepted moral norms were eclipsed and attempts to reverse the trend failed¹⁵⁶; locally this period saw the withdrawal of the clergy from local government, the loss of church schools and restrictions on the ability to raise finance. I will establish that the reasons that Anglicanism stayed so strong for so long were the authority, standing and leadership of its ministers, especially relative to Nonconformist shortcomings in this respect¹⁵⁷; the financial strength of the Church and its central involvement in charity and welfare; the lack of sustained senior sponsorship of Nonconformity within the district; a reinvigorated commitment to pastoral care and the 'upgrading' of the Anglican service, in terms of its setting, facilities and style of worship, to which many responded. Religion may

¹⁵⁵ A. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1990*, 3rd edn (London, 1991), pp. 193-220, 253-4.

¹⁵⁶ Green, *Passing of Protestant England*, pp. 310-15.

¹⁵⁷ See D.A. Johnson, *The Changing Shape of English Nonconformity 1825-1925* (Oxford, 1999) for an assessment of training for the ministry; see K.D. Brown, 'An Unsettled Ministry? Some Aspects of Nineteenth-Century British Nonconformity', *Church History* 56/2 (1987), pp. 204-23 for an argument that the Nonconformist ministry lacked authority, status and financial strength.

have been marginalised from the centre of public life and personal expressions of commitment may have fallen relative to the mid-nineteenth century, but Anglicanism remained the dominant religion in Alresford; the ‘first among equals’. The foundations of this dominance, though, lay in the character and nature of the town and its community: and it is to this that we turn first.

II AN ANGLICAN PLACE

The census registration district of Alresford comprised 17 parishes situated in southern England, in a rural part of central Hampshire. The focus of the district was the market town of New Alresford which was some eight miles east and slightly north of Winchester and approximately ten miles west of the larger market town of Alton. There were no major urban centres in the immediate proximity, Southampton and Portsmouth being around twenty miles south-west and twenty five miles south-east respectively (Fig. 2). This was a distinctive part of Hampshire; remote from the old city of Winchester, no big urban centres, no large rural parishes like the New Forest, not close to the coast, no history of Nonconformity. This study is of a small thriving market town and its rural hinterland.

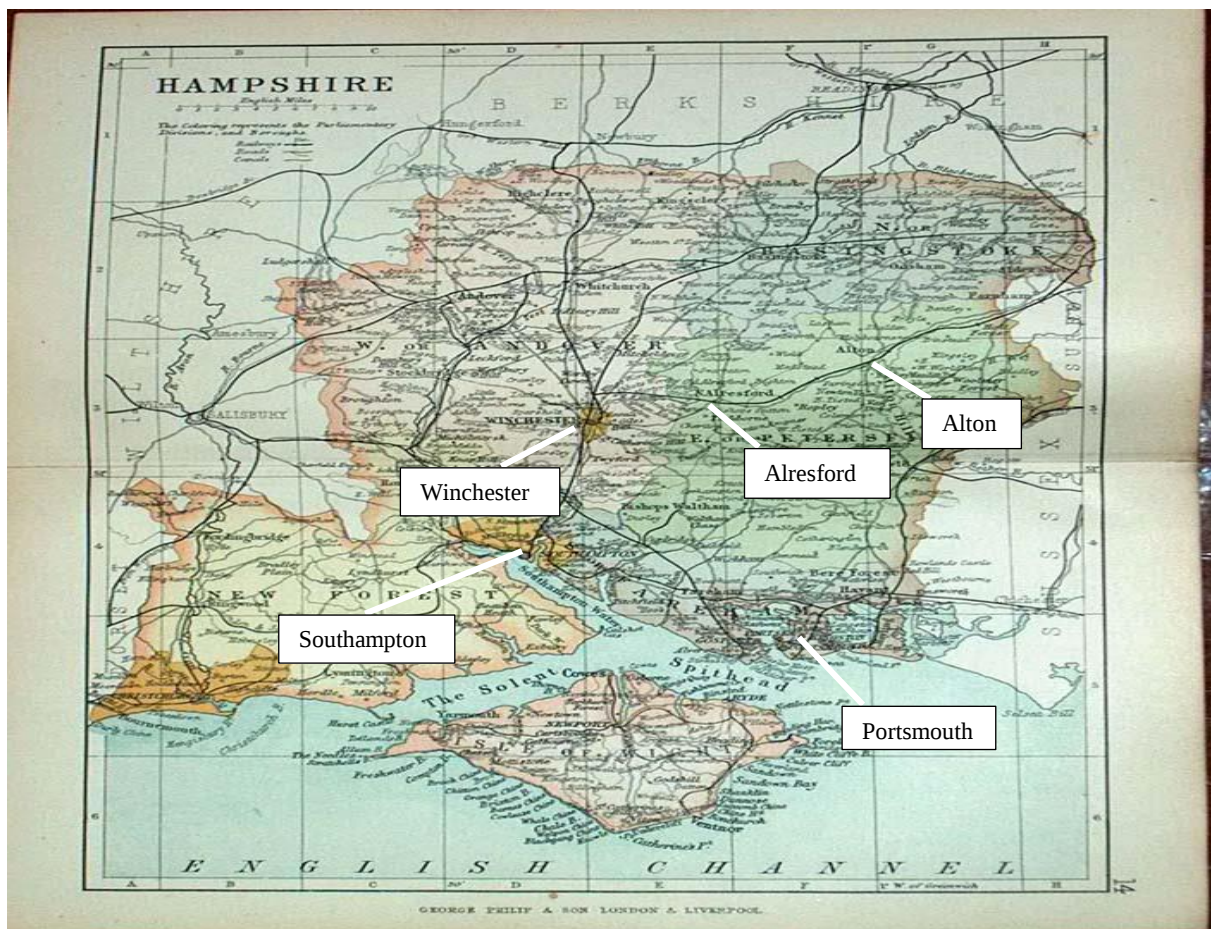


Figure 2 - Hampshire, 1892: George Philip and Son in Phillips Handy Atlas

The parishes were merged, split and re-formed for ecclesiastical purposes on several occasions during the period². Indeed, New Alresford itself was a chapelry of Old Alresford until it became an independent parish in 1850. The focus of this study is therefore on the 17 parishes of the Alresford registration district which made returns for churches or chapels in the 1851 religious census: Old Alresford, New Alresford, Ropley, West Tisted, Bramdean, Hinton Ampner, Kilmeston, Beauworth, Cheriton, Tichborne, Bishops Sutton, Ovington, Itchen Stoke, Bighton, Swarraton, Northington and Brown Candover. The tiny parish of Godsfield (population less than 20) was classified as ‘extra-parochial’ and hence has been disregarded, as has Chilton Candover whose church was shut up when it was annexed to Brown Candover where a new church serving both communities was built and consecrated in 1845. Basic information for each of the parishes (Beauworth is combined with Cheriton for this purpose) in terms of physical size, geography, population and local crops is summarised in Table 2.1³.

Table 2.1: Parish Data (Populations in 1911, other data from 1908)				
Parish	Acres	Population	Crops	Geography
New Alresford	693	1706	Wheat, oats, turnips, watercress	Small parish, sloping down gradually from the town to the valley of the River Arle. Mostly arable and pasture land. Road from Southampton to London cuts through centre. Soil is chalky loam, sub-soil chalk.
Old Alresford	3671	566	Wheat, oats, turnips. Principal industry is watercress.	Long sweep of rolling country, rises from the village in the south near the valley of the River Arle to the north. Soil mainly gravel at lower levels with loam of chalk higher up. Arable and pasture land in the west, woodland in the north.
Ropley	4684	1371	Wheat and oats	Large parish. Village built on a ridge rising from west to east, between Petersfield and Alton roads. Light soil, sub-soil chalk. Mostly arable and permanent grass.

² See HRO, 27M82/PR17 for the separation of Ropley from Bishops Sutton, 1882; [Benefice], HRO, 32M69/PB2-4 for the union of Ovington with Itchen Stoke, 1932; Lambeth, LPL Davidson 70, fos. 315-58 for the unsuccessful campaign by Augustus Legge to unite Bramdean with Hinton Ampner.

³ *Parl Pap.* (1912-13), cxi (1), Census of England & Wales 1911, p. 291; *VCH* 3, ed. W. Page (London, 1908), pp. 37-62, 303-54, 389-400.

Table 2.1: Parish Data (Populations in 1911, other data from 1908)				
Parish	Acres	Population	Crops	Geography
West Tisted	2356	195	Wheat, oats, turnips, barley	Small, triangular parish lying on high ground. Mostly arable and permanent grass. Thinly populated; rough, narrow lanes. Clay and chalk soil.
Bramdean	1237	243	Wheat, oats, turnips, barley	Small parish, ground falls westwards from the village which lies in a gravel valley on the main Petersfield to Winchester road. Flinty loam on a sub-soil of chalk.
Hinton Ampner	2378	411	Root and green crops	Land rises gradually from west to east; the whole of the north west is occupied by Hinton Park. Agricultural parish. The soil is clay loam with a sub-soil of chalk.
Kilmeston	1670	238	Wheat, oats, barley	Small parish lying on chalk downland, rising from north to south. Long straggling village. Mostly arable and permanent grass. Soil is clay with sub-soil chalk.
Cheriton with Beauworth	3264	690 (C) 164 (B)	Wheat, oats, green crops	Cheriton is in the valley of the River Itchen, surrounded by high downland in every direction. River produces fertile land. Beauworth covers a sweep of high country. Soil is chalk and clay, sub-soil chalk.
Tichborne	3049	286	Wheat, oats, barley	Rises from the valley of the River Itchen to high downland in the far south. Dominated by Tichborne Park. Large proportion of permanent grass and woodland. Soil is clay, sub-soil chalk.
Bishops Sutton	3739	439	Wheat, oats, turnips, barley	Irregular shape, in low ground by the head water of the River Arle, dissected by main road from Alresford to Alton. Rich meadows and friable loam soil, inferior land on outskirts.
Ovington	1288	137	Wheat, oats, barley	Stretches south from valley of the River Itchen and becomes part of ridge of downland towards Winchester. Long and narrow, not as much arable as other parishes. Clay soil, sub-soil chalk.
Itchen Stoke	2717	235		Partly along the valley of the River Itchen, sloping up to Itchen Common. Mostly arable and permanent grass, well wooded.
Bighton	2095	200	Wheat, oats, turnips, barley	Village on northern slope of valley, mostly arable land. Harsh, flinty loam soil resting on chalk.
Swarraton	755	110		Small parish in valley of the River Itchen, rising to the east. Mostly arable land.
Northington	2414	241	Wheat, oats, turnips	Village on hillside of Northington down, sloping down to the River Itchen. Dominated by Grange Park, mostly arable land. Chalk soil is thin and weak, better tracts on the hills. Water meadows drained for pasture.
Brown Candover	2810	178	Wheat, oats, turnips	Village in the valley of the River Itchen from which ground rises steeply. Mostly arable and grassland. Soil is chalky loam and gravel, sub-soil chalk.

In 1911 the total district comprised a population of around 7,400 and just over 28,000 acres, much of it in the valleys of the Rivers Arle and Itchen, with most of the parishes having a chalk and clay based soil with a chalk sub-soil which was suitable for growing wheat, oats, turnips, barley and watercress; the latter being farmed commercially after the railway came to Alresford in 1865 (Fig. 4)⁴. Most of the land was devoted to arable farming, with smaller amounts of grass and woodland. The richer, fertile land was in the parishes in the river valleys like Bishops Sutton and Cheriton, with harsher conditions in those that were situated higher up on hillsides, ridges and downland, like Bighton, Beauworth, Kilmeston, Ropley and West Tisted. As most parishes had varied geography, crop types were quite uniform across the district, although watercress particularly flourished in the clear chalk streams and, apart from Ropley, village populations tended to be higher where there was fertile soil and better road access. In addition to the railway, the main roads from Winchester to Alton and Petersfield passed through the district and the large estates at Tichborne, Grange Park and Hinton Park provided much local employment and housing.

The parish of New Alresford was geographically at the centre of the district; it was physically small but the most densely populated, as might be expected of a market town which provided services and employment. The road from Southampton to London cut through the parish, forming the main street of the town: this position on the coach route from Southampton to London led to the considerable provision of hotels and inns in the town centre⁵. There were actually many similarities with Hook Norton which Kate Tiller

⁴ HRO, MHC/41, *Hampshire Chronicle*, 6 May 1865, p. 5.

⁵ VCH 3, pp. 348-54.

describes as a classic ‘open’ village: similar size population, a wide range of rural industries and crafts, many shops and pubs, a large housing stock in diverse ownership and an absence of large estates. The one exception was religion; Hook Norton had a strong tradition of religious Nonconformity whereas the Church of England was dominant in Alresford⁶. This study will explore why that was.



Figure 4 - Alresford station yard c.1914. Watercress being sent to London.

The rural parishes had many similarities but they were not homogenous; and the pattern of landholding demonstrated this. The identity of the major landowners, as revealed by enclosure and tithe commutation, is summarised in Table 2.2⁷, along with details of advowsons and endowments.

⁶ K. Tiller, ‘Hook Norton, Oxfordshire: An Open Village’ in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Rural England: An Illustrated History of the Landscape* (Oxford, 2000), p. 280.

⁷ See VCH 3, pp. 37-62, 302-54, 389-400; VCH 4, pp. 182-196; J. Chapman and S. Seeliger, *A Guide to Enclosure in Hampshire 1700-1900* (Winchester, 1997); HRO, 81M75/5: notes on proposed enclosure of Bramdean common; HRO, 11M52/324: Itchen Stoke enclosure agreement 1787; [Enclosure awards and maps], HRO, Q23/1/2: Ovington, 1813; HRO, Q23/2/93/1-2, New Alresford, 1807; HRO, Q23/2/104, Old Alresford, 1805; HRO, Q23/2/72, Kilmeston, 1805; *Act for enclosing Stankham and Soldridge commons in the parish of Old Alresford, 1736*; [Tithe awards and maps], HRO, 21M65/F7/15/1-2, Beauworth, 1837; HRO, 21M65/F7/19/1-2, Bighton, 1839; HRO, 21M65/F7/22/1-2, Bishops Sutton, 1847; HRO, 21M65/F7/30/1-2, Bramdean, 1839-40; HRO, 21M65/F7/37/1-2, Brown Candover, 1842; HRO, 21M65/F7/46/1-2, Cheriton 1838, 1841; HRO, 21M65/F7/117/1-2: Hinton Ampner, 1839, 1841; HRO, 21M65/F7/130/1-2, Itchen Stoke, 1839; HRO, 21M65/F7/131/1-2, Kilmeston, 1838, 1840; HRO, 21M65/F7/172/1-2, Northington, 1850; HRO, 21M65/F7/167/1-2, New Alresford, 1842-3; HRO, 21M65/F7/178/1-2, Old Alresford, 1839, 1841; HRO, 21M65/F7/183/1-2, Ovington, 1851; HRO,

Table 2.2: Advowsons, Enclosure and Tithe Commutation in the Alresford Registration District						
Parish	Advowson (1908)	Enclosure	Major landowners (allotted > 10%)	Tithe Commutation	Major landowners (>10% of TRC)	Endowments
New Alresford	Bishop of Winchester	By Act 1807; 346 acres of open field and common marsh; 23 allottees. No remaining common reported in 1874 Return of Tithe Commissioners (RTC).	William Harris 175 acres; Sir Henry Tichborne 38 acres.	Approved 1842; 635 acres subject to tithe; glebe 72 acres. TRC £249.	Lord Ashburton; John Rawlinson. Approximately 30 landowners in total.	James Withers; John Pink; Susanna Coney; Henry Perin; William Todd; Jenny Harris; John Dunn; William Wilkinson; Christopher Cooke.
Old Alresford	Bishop of Winchester	By Act 1737; 635 acres of Stankham and Soldridge common; 33 allottees. By Act 1805; 104 acres of Nythen common; nine allottees. Nil RTC 1874.	1737 John Shackleford 111 acres; John Bernard 86 acres; John Budd 76 acres; other John Budd 73 acres. 1805 Thomas Bulpett 25 acres; trustees of William Shireff 19 acres.	Approved 1841; 3265 acres subject to tithe; glebe 35 acres. TRC £755.	Bishop of Winchester; Lord Rodney; Harry Bulpett. About 28 landowners in total.	John Pink and John Edgar; Christopher Perin; Miss Onslow (for Primitive Methodist Orphanage).
Beauworth	See Cheriton	Common fields were probably enclosed by 1700. Nil RTC 1874.	Not known.	Approved 1837; 1178 acres subject to tithe. TRC £159.	Henry Mulcock; Bishop of Winchester. Few others.	See Cheriton.
Bighton	Lord of the Manor	Common field system probably reorganised with severalty by major landowners. Nil RTC 1874.	Duke of Buckingham and successors.	Approved 1839; 2055 acres subject to tithe; glebe 25 acres. TRC £405.	Duke of Buckingham owned 1864 acres. Few others.	Trust endowed by Duke of Chandos.
Bishops Sutton	Peaches Trustees	By Agreement 1685; 300 acres of common. No award exists. Various unauthorised enclosures of common fields in eighteenth century. Nil RTC 1874.	No award for 1685 but common enclosed and cultivated with the consent of the Bishop of Winchester.	Approved 1847; 3430 acres subject to tithe; glebe 21 acres. TRC £864 (£197 Vicarial, £667 to lay impropiators)	Caroline Hopkins; Arabella Howe; Charles Pain. Lots of other small landowners.	Land awarded to parish by Private Act of Enclosure (1796). Rent used towards church expenses.

21M65/F7/198/1-2, Ropley, 1836, 1840; HRO, 21M65/F7/228/1-2, Swarraton, 1842; HRO, 21M65/F7/232/1-2, Tichborne, 1844-5; HRO, 21M65/F7/247/1-2, West Tisted, 1845.

Table 2.2: Advowsons, Enclosure and Tithe Commutation in the Alresford Registration District						
Parish	Advowson (1908)	Enclosure	Major landowners (allotted > 10%)	Tithe Commutation	Major landowners (>10% of TRC)	Endowments
Bramdean	Crown: Lord Chancellor	No known enclosure of fields. Bramdean common 160 acres still referred to in tithe apportionment 1839 as 'common'.	Some reference to <i>proposed</i> enclosure of Bramdean common by Magdalen college, 1888.	Approved 1839; 1171 acres subject to tithe. TRC £227.	William Greenwood; John Cooper; Magdalen College, Oxford. Few others.	James Turner; Honora Legge; Louisa Bishop; Honora Cowper-Coles
Brown Candover	Lord Ashburton	By Agreement 1737; 474 acres of common fields; six allottees. By Agreement 1792; 1183 acres of open field, pastures and exchange of old enclosures; five allottees. Nil RTC 1874.	1737 Sir Robert Worsley 274 acres, William Locke 76 acres. 1792 Lord Carteret 819 acres, William Moth 141 acres.	Approved 1841; 2088 subject to tithe; glebe 59 acres. TRC £368.	Lord Ashburton owned approx. 1918 acres. One other contributor.	
Cheriton	Crown: includes Beauworth	Fields and common historically enclosed in 1537, 1602 and 1635. Still 90 acres 'common' in tithe apportionment.	Open land was probably enclosed by the Lord of the Manor.	Approved 1841; 2980 subject to tithe; glebe 150 acres. TRC £497.	William Earle; Walter Taylor; William Bailey. Approx. 55 landowners in total.	Reverend Morgan Jones; Elizabeth Goodrich.
Hinton Ampner	Dean and Chapter of Winchester Cathedral	No known enclosure of fields. Woodlands common thought to have been enclosed in 1785. 28 acres still open in RTC 1874.	Not known.	Approved 1841; 2195 acres subject to tithe; glebe 75 acres. TRC £469.	Lord Sherborne; William Greenwood. Approx. 29 landowners in total.	William Blake (School); William Blake (Charity for the Poor); Honora Legge; Honora Cowper-Coles

Table 2.2: Advowsons, Enclosure and Tithe Commutation in the Alresford Registration District						
Parish	Advowson (1908)	Enclosure	Major landowners (allotted > 10%)	Tithe Commutation	Major landowners (>10% of TRC)	Endowments
Itchen Stoke	Lord Ashburton	By Agreement 1787; 775 acres of open field, meadow, down and waste. By Act 1812; enclosure of 185 acres of Itchen Stoke common; 13 allottees. Nil RTC 1874.	1787 no award so no details of allottees. Signed by dukes of Bolton and Chandos and many others. 1812 Robert Bird 44 acres; Baroness Bolton 24 acres; Marquis of Buckingham 23 acres.	Approved 1839; 2921 acres subject to tithe. TRC £329 (£191 to Vicarage of Itchen Stoke; £138 to Rectory of Abbotstone).	Lord Ashburton owned 2467 acres; Duke of Buckingham owned 329. Few other small landowners.	Unknown donor
Kilmeston	Crown	By Act 1805; 797 acres of common field and down; eight allottees. Nil RTC 1874.	Robert Westley Hall 315 acres; trustees for algebra lecture fund 247 acres.	Approved 1840; 1861 acres subject to tithe. TRC £350.	Walter Long; George Dichdall and Charles Ward as trustees. Approx.13 landowners in total.	Dame Mary Sadler
North'ton	Lord Ashburton	References to early possible enclosures. By Agreement 1792 with Brown Candover (see above); 1183 acres of open fields, five allottees. Nil RTC 1874.	1792 Lord Carteret 819 acres, William Moth 141 acres.	Approved 1849; 3062 acres subject to tithes. TRC £50.	Lord Ashburton owned 3056 acres and virtually all the tithes; he merged his tithes into his freehold.	George Harding; now held on trust
Ovington	Lord Chancellor	By Act 1812; 877 acres of fields, common, down and waste; four allottees. Nil RTC 1874.	George Lowther 604 acres, Reverend John Richards 254 acres.	Approved 1851; remaining 100 acres after 1812 enclosure. TRC £7.	Sir Edward Doughty Tichborne; Earl of Northesk (sheep pasture).	Sir Thomas Dyer contributes 40s to church expenses; Church owns rented lands
Ropley	Private hands: Revd E.J. Woodhouse	Common fields enclosed by informal means; no record. By Act 1709; enclosure of Ropley common; 500 acres.	Not known. No award for common so no details of allottees.	Approved 1847; 4595 acres; TRC £1007 (£251 Vicarial; £756 lay impropiators)	Abraham Hancock; George Hetherington ; Ann Budd. More than 100 landowners.	Henry Mulcock (Ropley Trust Fund); Lord of the Manor (Charity for the Poor); Rosa Onslow

Table 2.2: Advowsons, Enclosure and Tithe Commutation in the Alresford Registration District						
Parish	Advowson (1908)	Enclosure	Major landowners (allotted > 10%)	Tithe Commutation	Major landowners (>10% of TRC)	Endowments
Swarraton	Lord Ashburton	300 acres of sheep down enclosed by 1662. No remaining common fields in tithe apportionment of 1842. Nil RTC 1874.	Lord Ashburton owned virtually all the land by 1842; probably reorganised when fell into sole ownership.	Approved 1842; 743 acres; glebe 15 acres. TRC £112.	Lord Ashburton owned all the land except glebe and two small cottages.	George Harding; now held on trust
Tichborne	Crown	Common fields of this parish apparently enclosed by informal means. Nil RTC 1874.	Not known.	Approved 1845; 3299 acres; glebe 2 acres. TRC £495.	Sir Henry Tichborne; Bishop of Winchester; George Godwin.	Chantry in manorial chapel maintained by Tichborne family
West Tisted	Magdalen College, Oxford	No known enclosure of fields. Suggestion of some type of formal enclosure of commons but no evidence found. Nil RTC 1874.	Not known.	Approved 1845; 2268 acres; no glebe. TRC £410.	Sir Edward Doughty Tichborne. Few others.	

There were traditional ‘closed’ parishes, such as Swarraton, Northington, Itchen Stoke and Brown Candover, which were dominated by the Baring family⁸. Lord Ashburton owned the vast majority of the land in these parishes and kept tight control of those who worked on the estate, those who lived in the estate cottages, and the finance and patronage of the respective parish churches⁹. These were among the most sparsely populated parishes in the district, measured in terms of acres per head. There was also a particular influence in neighbouring Tichborne, but the leading family there, the Tichbornes, were Roman Catholics who worshipped at their own private chapel whilst at the same time maintaining

⁸ VCH 3, pp. 394-7. Alexander Baring was created Lord Ashburton in 1835; J. Kelly et al, *Northington and Swarraton: 100 Years of Parish History 1890-1990* (Northington, 1996), p. 25. Alexander Baring bought Grange Park in Northington in 1817.

⁹ HRO, 21M65/F7/37/1. Lord Ashburton owned around 90 per cent of the land in Brown Candover according to the tithe apportionment of 1841.

their place at the heart of the established social order of which the parish church was part¹⁰. The annual 'Tichborne dole' of flour to local residents continued throughout the period; the family took an active role in vestry discussions over levels of poor relief¹¹ and in the 1870s they were at the centre of the major court case over the identity of the heir to the Tichborne estate¹². These noble families did not just dominate their own parishes though; their influence extended throughout the area as Lord Ashburton also owned significant parcels of land in Old and New Alresford and the Tichborne family had interests in West Tisted, Ovington and New Alresford. In some other parishes the major landowner was an absentee. The Bighton tithe apportionment of 1839 showed that almost 90 per cent of the land in the parish was owned by the duke of Buckingham, although with local lessees such as the Reverend George Deane and William Carpenter¹³.

Other rural parishes had a slightly more dispersed landholding structure, with a few major landowners drawn from the nobility, the gentry, the military, the clergy or successful businessmen. For example, in Old Alresford the major payers of the tithe rent charge after commutation included Lord Ashburton, Lord Rodney, Cranley Onslow, the bishop of Winchester (who leased to Lord Rodney) and Henry and William Bulpett – nobility, gentry, church and commercial interests coming together¹⁴. Morris in his study of the more urban area of Croydon focused on the religious beliefs and practices of the 'middle class'; he argued that these were the people the church depended on for finance and active

¹⁰ R. Chambers, *True to my Roots* (Alresford, 2014), pp. 96-106.

¹¹ [Vestry], HRO, 139M82/PV1, 21 November 1799. Discussions led by Sir Henry Tichborne about the parish poor, the high price of corn and other necessities.

¹² [Tichborne claimant papers], HRO, 72A04/C1/24-26, 29, 35, 37; 72A04/C4/1, 7-9; 37M48/74/4; 49M50/B57.

¹³ HRO, 21M65/F7/19/1.

¹⁴ HRO, 21M65/F7/178/1.

voluntary lay support¹⁵. In contrast, the middling sort frequently united with the social elite in Alresford, particularly in various fund raising initiatives and local governance. Some major parcels of land in other parishes were held by corporate absentees although, as in Bighton, there were often local lessees acting as effective owners on the ground. For example, the bishop of Winchester owned around 28 per cent of the land in Old Alresford but leased it to Lord Rodney; and the bishop owned a similar proportion in Beauworth where it was leased to Mr Henry Mulcock, who also owned over 57 per cent himself. Similarly Magdalen College in Oxford owned almost a quarter of the land in Bramdean but leased this to James Barnard¹⁶. This core of landowners from the social elite was supplemented in some parishes by smaller holdings. The parish of Bishops Sutton, where around 94 per cent of the land was subject to tithe, provides further evidence that the rural agricultural parishes were not homogeneous. There were 15 lay impropiators of tithes in Bishops Sutton, four of whom were also major contributors to the (much smaller) Vicarial tithes; in the latter they were joined by a large group of small landowners each making their respective contributions. The tithe apportionment in Bishops Sutton was far more complex than elsewhere¹⁷.

In some parishes, tithe commutation and enclosure created significant concentrations of land in the hands of a few. These exchanges between landowners usually involved the local clergyman: for example, the vicar of Itchen Stoke, Peter Smith, committed his entitlement to small tithes and diverse pieces of glebe as part of the Itchen Stoke enclosure agreement of 1787; Francis North was a minor participant in the enclosure of Nythen common at Old Alresford in 1805 and Robert Wright exchanged plots as part of the

¹⁵ Morris, *Croydon*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁶ Ibid; HRO, 21M65/F7/15/1; HRO, 21M65/F7/37/1.

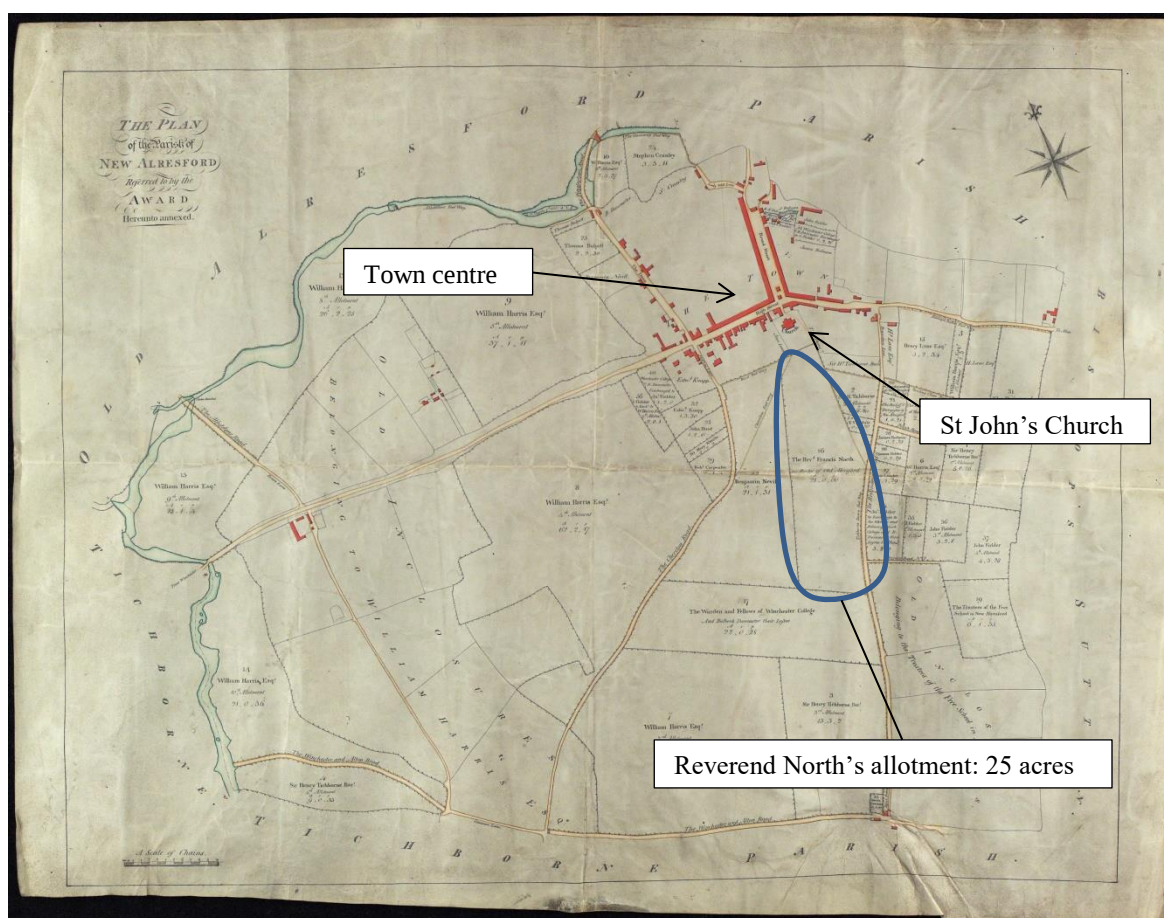
¹⁷ HRO, 21M65/F7/22/1.

enclosure of Itchen common in 1814 shortly before he was appointed as rector at Ovington; although the Reverend Edmund Ferrers was *not* party to the enclosure at Kilmeston in 1805¹⁸. Whilst the rationale for these enclosures was ostensibly to consolidate holdings and enable the land to be improved and farmed more efficiently, an additional consequence was sometimes to make the rector a major local landowner and confirm the position of the church at the heart of the parish. Numerous landowners had an interest in the 326 acres of open fields and 84 acres of common pasture in New Alresford, including Sir Henry Tichborne, William Harris, a wealthy agricultural merchant, and the Reverend Francis North, when a plan for enclosure was agreed in 1807¹⁹. Mr Harris had a total of 175 acres allotted, but also held large swathes of land under the previous enclosure, so was by far the largest landowner in the town overall. However, as part of the award North, as landowner rather than as a result of commuting tithes, was allocated 25 acres *right in the centre of town*, behind St John's, enhancing his tangible, physical presence in the main shopping and business area. Subliminally at least, the standing of North and the church at the literal heart of the parish was secured (Fig. 5).

¹⁸ HRO, 11M52/324; HRO, Q23/2/104; HRO 11M49/E/B6/3; HRO, Q23/2/72.

¹⁹ HRO, Q23/2/93/1 (map), 2 (award).

Figure 5 - New Alresford Enclosure Map 1807 (HRO, Q23/2/93/1)



The effect of consolidation was greater still in neighbouring Ovington. The Reverend John Richards was entitled to glebe and tithes on all the lands of the parish as well as having an interest, with other landowners, in the open fields, common and waste land. The commissioner allotted lands to the rector as ‘full equivalent and compensation for all tithes, dues and payments (except Easter offerings and surplice fees)’. As a result of the award Reverend Richards was allotted 237 acres, turning him into a major landowner, second only to George Lowther²⁰. Approval for the award came from the bishop of Winchester, as patron, Richards as incumbent, magistrate Robert Wright who would succeed Richards as rector in 1817, and the other major landowners. The Anglican Church, through its rector, cemented its position at the heart of the community. Haig in *The*

²⁰ HRO, Q23/1/2, pp. 601-18.

Victorian Clergy suggests that many country livings benefitted enormously from similar enclosure and that this, along with other reforms, was the background for the revival in Church and clergy in the second quarter of the nineteenth century²¹.

As suggested by the 1807 enclosure, in contrast to most of the rural parishes, the market town of New Alresford had a more diverse landowning structure, consistent with a more complex pattern of interest and influence. The tithe apportionment of 1842 showed that there were then 72 acres of glebe and 635 acres subject to tithe rent charge; similar to some of the other parishes the award placed major obligations on Lord Ashburton, Winchester College and a few other wealthy individuals, but in contrast there was a total of around 30 landowners who were required to contribute to the tithe rent charge²². The pattern of landowning in the market town was therefore different to that of the villages; rather than total control, or at least dominance, in the hands of a few there was a marginally diluted form of influence, still significant, in the hands of a slightly bigger number, underpinned by a wider landowning interest. The church and its officers were very much part of this broader interest and, as I shall suggest later, the influence derived from this landownership was supplemented by the influence acquired through involvement with charity, welfare, education and local government. This mutuality of interest was characterised by a tight nexus between local church and state which cemented, and prolonged, the role of the church at the heart of the established social order.

The returns to visitation enquiries in 1899 provide some further indications of the loyalty to the established Church which the type of closed parish outlined above tended to

²¹ Haig, *Victorian Clergy*, pp. 351-2.

²² HRO, 21M65/F7/167/1.

produce. At Brown Candover Reverend Noble estimated a total average attendance across both Sunday services of 170 (the combined population with Chilton Candover was only about 300) and confidently asserted that there was ‘virtually no dissent in the parish’ and a good moral tone amongst the parishioners²³. Similarly no dissent was reported in Itchen Stoke and the vicar recounted the strong religious sense and neighbourliness of those in his care; he went so far as to say that the peasants who lived in the parish included ‘some of the finest characters I have ever met with’²⁴. A few years later at Itchen Stoke, in the 1915 visitation return, Reverend Skrine presented not just a compliant community but an enthusiastic one; the small population of 205 were offered Holy Communion every Sunday (with participation of 20 or more not unusual, and 40 or 50 at Easter and Christmas) as well as morning and evening services every weekday; there was also a thriving church day school, a Sunday school, a large confirmation class, an active Mothers Union bible study group and a popular parish magazine. Tellingly, perhaps, the vicar also reported that, apart from the Baring family ‘there is no one in the parish above the position of a labourer or domestic servant. No houses of a better class being allowed on the estate’²⁵; the parish was ‘closed’ in every respect. Such compliance and engagement contrasted with the challenges Morris identified for the church around the same time in the large town of Croydon: worldly distractions and amusements, a lowering of spiritual character and a spirit of the age against church attendance²⁶. The control and influence which Lord Ashburton exerted in his parishes was considerable. His manor and estate at Grange Park in Northington encompassed 530 acres and he also possessed the manors at Brown Candover, Itchen Stoke and Swarraton as well as holding the right to appoint to the livings at each of the

²³ [Bishop’s Visitation 1899], HRO, 21M65/B4/5/80.

²⁴ HRO, 21M65/B4/5/266.

²⁵ [Bishop’s Visitation 1915], HRO, 21M65/B4/6/2/10; [Incumbent], HRO, 12M70/PI2, service register 1911/12 to 1915/16.

²⁶ Morris, *Croydon*, pp. 179-80.

parish churches. St Peter's in Brown Candover was built in 1845 at his lordship's expense, so presumably he had some say in its design, and St Mary's was built in Itchen Stoke in 1864 to replace the previous place of worship. The parish church at Swarraton was pulled down in 1849 when a new one was built at Northington²⁷. Lord Ashburton recognised that financial obligations came with this level of control. At Swarraton with Northington the incumbent noted in his return that all the expenses of the church, as well as the costs of maintaining both the day and Sunday schools, were met by Lord Ashburton²⁸. We can only speculate as to how closely the relationship between his lordship and his clergy resembled that between Sir John Boileau and his vicar William Andrew in Chadwick's *Victorian Miniature*²⁹ but church demolition, re-building and major alterations did take place and it seems difficult to suggest, since he paid for everything, that Lord Ashburton did not play a major role. These were compliant communities under patriarchal influence; but the apparent levels of engagement suggest that the parishioners were accepting of the social order. In terms of relative importance within the district, the 'closed' and 'semi-closed' parishes of Lord Ashburton and the Tichbornes comprised over 40 per cent of the area but just 14 per cent of the population; the small market town of New Alresford made up 23 per cent of the population but only two per cent of the area; and the balance, approximately 60 per cent by both size and population, was provided by the other rural 'open' parishes.

The Clergy

The patronage of some livings changed hands over the years but the overall pattern remained fairly stable; in 1908 there were six livings in the hands of the Crown or Lord

²⁷ VCH 3, pp. 182-96, 394-7.

²⁸ HRO, 21M65/B4/6/2/15.

²⁹ O. Chadwick, *Victorian Miniature* (London, 1960).

Chancellor; three with the bishop of Winchester or the Dean and Chapter of Winchester Cathedral; five with the Lord of the Manor (specifically Lord Ashburton in four of the parishes), one in private hands, one with Magdalen College and one with the evangelical Peache Trustees. This pattern of patronage had an impact on the churchmanship of the particular clergy. Bishops often appointed from their family or kinship network when a living became vacant, for example Francis North and George Sumner, as did Lords of the Manor, and Oxbridge colleges frequently appointed fellows or alumni. The Baring family were ennobled as Lords Ashburton in 1835 and had historic evangelical connections; it was ‘the Baring party’, some of whom seceded, who led the Western Schism against some of the articles and doctrines of the Church of England in the early nineteenth century³⁰. A full list of incumbents, many of which are referred to in this study, is in Table 2.3³¹.

Table 2.3: Parish Clergy, c.1780-1939	
Parish, Benefice or Chapel	Benefice History and Incumbents
New Alresford	Chapelry of Old Alresford with same incumbents until 1851, then independent Rectory. Benefice united with Bighton in 1938. William Brodie (1851-1868); William Sealey (1868-1879); William Newnham (1879-1889); Alexander Headley (1889-1915); Frederick Jellicoe (1915-1922); Walter Colchester (1922-1925); Andrew Robertson (1925-1942).
Old Alresford	Rectory. Benefice included chapelries of New Alresford and Medstead until 1851. William Buller (1776-1797); Francis North, earl of Guildford (1797-1850); George Sumner (1850-1886); Sir Frederick Currie Bt (1886-1894); Frederick Middleton (1894-1904); George Pardoe (1904-1913); George Preston (1913-1936); Edmund Morgan (1936-1942).
Ovington	Ancient parish and Rectory. Benefice united with Itchen Stoke with Abbotstone in 1922. Michael Terry (1776-1798); John Richards (1798-1817); Robert Wright (1817-1851); Henry Plow (1851-1852); Arthur Stogden (1852-1872); William Stocker (1872-1889); Arthur Stocker (1889-1893); Hugh La Mothe Stowell (1893-1925); Hugh Atkins (1925-1957).
Cheriton	Ancient parish and Rectory. Benefice included chapelries of Tichborne, Kilmeston and Beauworth until 1879 when Kilmeston and Beauworth separated to become an independent ecclesiastical parish. Edmund Ferrers (1780-1825); Henry Hubbard (1825-1878); Alexander Orr (1878-1892); Alfred Cachemaille (1892-1894); Henry Barber (1894-1904); Harold Brownlow (1904-1943).

³⁰ Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, pp. 105-51.

³¹ ‘Clergy of the Church of England Database’ www.theclergydatabase.org.uk (12 November 2016); *Clergy List* (London, 1845); *Crockford’s Clerical Directory* (London, 1858, 1860, 1865, 1870, 1877, 1882, 1889, 1890, 1900, 1903, 1926, 1933, 1937, 1947, 1949/50, 1959/60); HRO, 21M65/A2/3-6.

Table 2.3: Parish Clergy, c.1780-1939	
Parish, Benefice or Chapel	Benefice History and Incumbents
Hinton Ampner	Ancient parish and Rectory. Benefice united with the parish of Bramdean in 1918. William Airson (1780-1789); John Hawkins (1789-1791); Robert Lowth (1791-1822); Henry Hubbard (1822-1878); John Heberden (1878-1900); Edward Peake (1900-1929); Alfred Milner (1929-1945).
Bramdean	Ancient parish and Rectory. Benefice united with the parish of Hinton Ampner in 1918. Thomas Durnford (1741-1792); William Gomm (1792-1831); Charles Walters (1831-1845); Helier Touzel (1845-1866); Alfred Bishop (1866-1886); Edward Rudge (1886-1887); Henry Hussey (1887-1901); Henry Hoskin (1901-1909); Richard Kennaway (1909-1916); Edward Peake (1918-1929); Alfred Milner (1929-1945).
Bishops Sutton	Ancient parish and Vicarage. Benefice included chapelry of Ropley until 1882. William Howley (1757-1798); William Howley (1798-1811); William Evans (1811-1818); Samuel Maddock (1818-1871); Thomas Woodhouse (1871-1882); Charles Wilson (1882-1883); Donald Wilson (1883-1890); William Leake (1890-1892); George Ohlson (1892-1898); Arthur Santer (1898-1907); Hector McNeile (1907-1923); Lindsay Foster-Browne (1923-1949).
Northington	Chapelry of the Vicarage of Micheldever until 1847 then added to the Rectory of Swarraton. Benefice of Swarraton and Northington united with the benefice of Brown Candover and Chilton Candover in 1936. Peter Smith (1773-1797); George Chapman (1797-1814); Thomas Snow (1814-1816); Thomas Clark (1816-1846); Henry Salmon (1847-1874); William Eyre (1875-1914); John Jenkins (1915-1935); Arthur Wade-Gery (1936-1949).
Itchen Stoke	Ancient parish and Vicarage with chapelry of Abbotstone. Benefice united with the parish of Ovington in 1922. Peter Smith (1767-1796); Charles Powlett (1796-1817); John Orde (1817-1829); Frederick Baring (1830-1845); Richard Trench (1845-1856); Charles Ranken Conybeare (1857-1885); Charles Henry Conybeare (1885-1903); John Skrine (1903-1908); Vivian Skrine (1908-1922); Hugh La Mothe Stowell (1922-1925); Hugh Atkins (1925-1957).
Beauworth	Chapelry of ancient parish of Cheriton. United with Kilmeston as a separate ecclesiastical parish in 1879. Edmund Ferrers (1788-1825); Henry Hubbard (1825-1878); Thompson Thackeray (1879-1891); Herbert Scott (1891-1897); James Lister (1897-1905); William Clark (1905-1915); Claude Trimble (1915-1927); Robert Hitchcock (1927-1930); Samuel Lovett (1930-1934); Henry Carden (1934-1953).
Kilmeston	Chapelry of ancient parish of Cheriton. United with Beauworth as a separate ecclesiastical parish and Vicarage in 1879. Edmund Ferrers (1788-1825); Henry Hubbard (1825-1878); Thompson Thackeray (1879-1891); Herbert Scott (1891-1897); James Lister (1897-1905); William Clark (1905-1915); Claude Trimble (1915-1927); Robert Hitchcock (1927-1930); Samuel Lovett (1930-1934); Henry Carden (1934-1953).
Tichborne	Chapelry of ancient parish of Cheriton. Edmund Ferrers (1788-1825); Henry Hubbard (1825-1878); Alexander Orr (1878-1892); Alfred Cachemaille (1892-1894); Henry Barber (1894-1904); Harold Brownlow (1904-1943).
Bighton	Ancient parish and Rectory. Benefice united with New Alresford in 1938. John Harrison (1770-1811); William Barnard (1811-1814); Thomas Bromley (1814-1827); George Deane (1827-1872); Alfred Cooke (1872-1920); John Leonard (1920-1930); Robert Hartley (1932-1935); Edward Day (1935-1937); Andrew Robertson (1938-1942).
Swarraton	Ancient parish and Rectory to which chapelry of Northington added in 1847. Benefice of Swarraton and Northington united with the benefice of Brown Candover and Chilton Candover in 1936. John Lewes (1768-1815); Spencer Drummond (1815-1831); Henry Salmon (1831-1874); William Eyre (1875-1914); John Jenkins (1915-1935); Arthur Wade-Gery (1936-1949).
Ropley	Chapelry of Bishops Sutton until 1882, then an independent Vicarage. Incumbents as for Bishops Sutton until 1882. Thomas Woodhouse (1882-1891); Francis Baring (May 1891-December 1891) William Leake (1891-1912); Herbert Kelsey (1912-1915); Solomon Cambie (1915-1916); Henry Geldart (1916-1937); Peter Were (1937-1954).

Table 2.3: Parish Clergy, c.1780-1939	
Parish, Benefice or Chapel	Benefice History and Incumbents
Brown Candover	Benefice included chapelry of Woodmancote until 1847 when the separate ecclesiastical parish of Woodmancote and Popham was created and the benefice of Brown Candover was united with Chilton Candover. Benefice of Brown Candover and Chilton Candover united with the benefice of Swarraton and Northington in 1936. Richard Burleigh (1766-1798); John Starky (1798-1807); Charles Willaume (1807-1848); Francis Thornton (1848-1864); Barre Dowling (1864-1888); Lionel Wallace (1888-1895); William Noble (1895-1906); Hugh Nelson-Ward (1906-1909); Cuthbert Castley (1909-1923); Claud Skene (1923-1924); Edward Gough (1925-1930); Arthur Wade-Gery (1930-1949).
West Tisted	Perpetual Curacy until c. 1880, then Vicarage. Richard Chandler (1779-1810); Thomas Butler (1810-1823); Thomas Lowndes (1823-1860); Charles Deane (1860-1863); George Branson (1863-1880); William Stewart (1880-1883); Herbert Cruickshank (1883-1898); Louis Wynne (1898-1904); Samuel Udny (1904-1911); George Lacey May (1911-1920); Eliot Iredell (1920-1924); Henry Ostrehan (1924-1928); Victor Duncan (1928-1935); Charles Peacock (1935-1938); Frederick Tansley (1938-1956).

In the context of the national theological controversy at this time, it is difficult to obtain much reliable information about the churchmanship of the various incumbents in and around Alresford. I refer below to the censure, both local and national, which Francis North endured until his resignation in 1850 and the challenge that his parishioners were ‘without the gospel’, which may refer to his theology. In contrast, Sumner, the evangelical bishop of Winchester, exercised the right to appoint to both Old Alresford and New Alresford on North’s resignation and it seems reasonable to suppose that his son George Sumner and William Brodie, the respective appointees, were broadly sympathetic with the bishop’s theology. Later evidence of pastoral activity from family memoirs, parish records and newspapers support this conclusion³². Similarly the evangelical Peache Trustees held the advowson at Bishops Sutton which might lead us to suppose that Samuel Maddock (1818-1871) was an evangelical, and his highly committed pastoral work as chaplain of the Workhouse chapel in Alresford is consistent with this³³. Maddock’s neighbour and contemporary at Swarraton, Spencer Drummond, had particularly strong theological

³² M.E. Sumner, *Memoir of George Henry Sumner* (Winchester, 1910); HRO, 45M83/PW26, memorial subscriptions for William Brodie 1898; *Hampshire Telegraph*, 19 November 1859, p. 8; *Hampshire Telegraph*, 2 March 1861, p. 5.

³³ HRO, TOP266/1/1.

convictions. His four page letter of resignation to Bishop Sumner in 1831, alongside more detailed private reflections to his sister Eliza Portal, reveal some very Calvinistic views, particularly around predestination and baptismal regeneration, which, he accepted, ‘are totally at variance with the creed of the Church of England’³⁴. Grayson Carter identifies in *Anglican Evangelicals* well over one hundred similar secessions from the Church of England at this time, although not Drummond, and outlines the role of some members of the prominent local Baring family in the short-lived ‘Western Schism’³⁵ referred to above. In contrast, the High Church convictions of George May at West Tisted were demonstrated by an article he wrote in 1914 called *The Sign of the Cross*, in which he defended various acts of ceremonial and symbolism which caused offense to others, as well as the regular collections St Mary’s made during his incumbency for the UMCA³⁶. Whilst some embraced controversy, others avoided it; the newspaper report announcing the appointment of the rector of Itchen Stoke, Richard Trench, as bishop of Gloucester and Bristol described the previous curate and chaplain of Samuel Wilberforce as having strong feelings for all church parties whilst being identified with none³⁷. There was a range of theological opinion among the local clergy in the nineteenth century.

From around 1875 records are available from service registers, offertories and church accounts. These reveal that, although the focus of most giving was on the maintenance of the church and the local poor, support was also provided for external outreach. Local hospitals, diocesan societies and the temperance movement were all popular, as was overseas missionary activity through groups such as the SPG or the more distinctly

³⁴ MS 4863, p. 29.

³⁵ Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, pp. 105-51; Appendix.

³⁶ Lambeth, LPL Douglas 82, fo. 149; HRO, 67M76/PI1.

³⁷ *Hampshire Telegraph*, 21 June 1856, p. 8.

evangelical CMS³⁸. The frequency of commitment and the combination of societies supported through the church could be suggestive of the incumbent's church 'party', although contributions made in a personal capacity were more persuasive. At Ropley under Henry Leake large and regular contributions were made to CMS up to 1907; George Sumner was the rector at Old Alresford when large donations were made to both CMS and the SPG in 1882 and William Sealey supported the CMS mission meeting at New Alresford in 1879; all suggesting an evangelical leaning. However, John Skrine at Itchen Stoke and Richard Kennaway at Bramdean combined support for the SPG with offerings for, respectively, the ACS and the UMCA, both popular with High Church sympathisers, although at Bramdean they supported the CMS mission as well!³⁹ Reverend Stocker at Ovington (1889-1893) was particularly committed to the SPG cause, supporting it with collection boxes, subscriptions and sales which culminated in an annual meeting with guest speakers and a substantial contribution to the society each year⁴⁰; but without any other evidence of external outreach it is hard to deduce anything about his affiliation. Stocker's neighbour at Cheriton at this time, Reverend Alfred Cachemaille, expressed his evangelistic and pastoral commitment in a different way. His 'annual report' of 1893 documented his huge effort to 'connect the gospel with daily life': his tools included a reading room, parish magazine, lectures, debates, classes, a clothing club, Mothers' Union, a Girls Friendly Society, boy's recreation class, district visitors, a Sunday school, a village library and access to the rectory grounds in the summer⁴¹. We will consider later how this evangelistic and pastoral activity gradually came to coexist around the turn of the century

³⁸ [Service registers, offertories, church accounts], HRO, 45M83/PI1; HRO, 27M82/PI1; HRO, 43M74/PI1; HRO, 12M70/PI1; HRO, 16M80/PI1; HRO, 1M77/PI1; HRO, 42M78/PI2; HRO, 140M82/PI1; HRO, 35M69/PI1; HRO, 67M76/PI1; HRO, 27M69/PI1.

³⁹ HRO, 27M82/PI1; HRO, 43M74/PI1; HRO, 45M83/PI1; HRO, 12M70/PI1; HRO, 1M77/PI1.

⁴⁰ HRO, 32M69/PI7.

⁴¹ [Miscellaneous], HRO, 138M82/PZ2.

and beyond with a higher church style of ministry in some parishes, which was manifest in the physical restoration of churches and a growing acceptance of sacramentalism and the importance of the Eucharist to the corporate life of the church.

The local elites generally recognised their charitable responsibilities. Table 2.2 shows bequests for the poor and needy in almost all the parishes of the district, and surviving records provide an insight into the workings of several of these charities. Eligibility for some of the endowments was dependent upon Church of England attendance or membership and, even where there was no such formal link, the fact that the local incumbent or churchwardens often determined eligibility must have encouraged compliance. New Alresford moved to the heart of the official provision of poor relief in the area when a Poor Law Union and workhouse were established there in 1837 (Fig. 6). The parishes of the poor law union were virtually identical to those of the registration district and this legislative change created a new internal dynamic. The rural parishes transferred responsibility for the care of their parish poor to Alresford which became a ‘supplier’ of poor relief to the parishes of the Union: as we shall see later, this relationship did not always run smoothly. Cox in his study of Lambeth, highlights the crucial importance of ‘church work’ for staying in touch with the community; the coal and clothing clubs, direct relief of the poor, and the provision of recreation facilities, medical and education services⁴². The role which charity played in cementing the place of the established Church at the heart of the accepted social order in Alresford is explored in detail in chapters III and IV.

⁴² Cox, *Lambeth*, pp. 268-9.



Figure 6 - Alresford Union Workhouse, 1907.

Historically, the major industry in the area had been based on wool; the old fulling mill on the banks of the River Arle still survives today, and major sheep fairs were held just outside the town centre. However, as the nineteenth century progressed the economic focus of Alresford broadened into a thriving and largely self-sufficient market town providing employment for local people and hospitality and refreshment for travellers, particularly those on route from Southampton to London. The arrival of the railway improved connections to Winchester and hence, via the main line, to London; this facilitated the commercial production of watercress which grew naturally in the clear chalk streams and rivers. Outside of the town, though, the people of the rural parishes mostly made their living from agriculture and arable farming. But before considering how these general features translated into individual occupations and communities, it is first necessary to examine the overall population of the district and how that developed in the nineteenth century.

Population and Employment

An analysis of the population trends for the period shows that the situation in Alresford was very different from that for both Hampshire and for England & Wales. Table 2.4 below shows population totals for England & Wales, Hampshire, the registration district of Alresford and the market town from 1801 to 1921⁴³.

Table 2.4: Populations from Decennial Census Returns													
	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
England & Wales (m)	8.9	10.2	12.0	13.9	15.9	17.9	20.1	22.7	26.0	29.0	32.5	36.1	37.9
Hampshire (000s)	218	244	281	312	352	402	481	544	593	690	799	951	1005
Registration District	5362	5220	6113	6975	7094	7418	7182	7270	6967	6628	6983	7531	7355
Alresford (town)	1132	1044	1219	1437	1578	1618	1546	1623	1550	1464	1540	1706	1709

Table 2.5 then rebases the populations (1801: 100) to allow an indexed comparison to be made of relative increases over the period; the tabular information is then displayed graphically in the line graph of comparative indexed populations (Fig. 7).

⁴³ Totals for Hampshire and England & Wales for 1801-1851 taken from: *Parl Pap.* (1851), xliii (73), Census of Great Britain, 1851, p. 4. Totals for Alresford and the registration district for 1801-1851 taken from: *Parl Pap.* (1852-53), lxxxv (1), Census of Great Britain, 1851, pp. 6, 58, Division II. Totals for Hampshire and England & Wales for 1861-1911 taken from: *Parl Pap.* (1861), l (855), Census of England & Wales, pp. 5, 7; *Parl Pap.* (1871), lix (659), Census of England & Wales, pp. iii, ix; *Parl Pap.* (1881), xcvi (1), Census of England & Wales, preliminary report, 1881, pp. 1, 3; *Parl Pap.* (1893-94), cvi (629), Census of England & Wales, general report, 1891, p. 4; *Parl Pap.* (1901), xc (1), Census of England & Wales, preliminary report, 1901, pp. viii, 3; *Parl Pap.* (1911), lxxi (479), Census of England & Wales, 1911, pp. iv, vii. Totals for Alresford and the registration district for 1861-1921 taken from: *Parl Pap.* (1862), l (1), Census of England & Wales for the year 1861, pp. 231, 260; *Parl Pap.* (1883), lxxix (1), Census of England & Wales 1881, pp. 46, 69-70; *Parl Pap.* (1902), cxix (95), Census of England & Wales 1901, p. 32; *Parl Pap.* (1912-13), cxi (1), Census of England & Wales 1911, p. 291; *Parl Pap.* (1921), xvi (257), Census of England & Wales 1921, preliminary report, pp. 1, 28, 57; *Census of England & Wales, 1931, Hampshire, I* (London, 1933), p. 5.

Table 2.5: Indexed Population Increases													
	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
England & Wales	100	115	135	156	179	201	226	255	292	326	365	406	426
Hampshire	100	112	129	143	161	184	220	250	272	317	367	436	461
Registration District	100	97	114	130	132	138	134	136	130	124	130	140	137
Alresford (town)	100	92	108	127	139	143	137	143	137	129	136	151	151

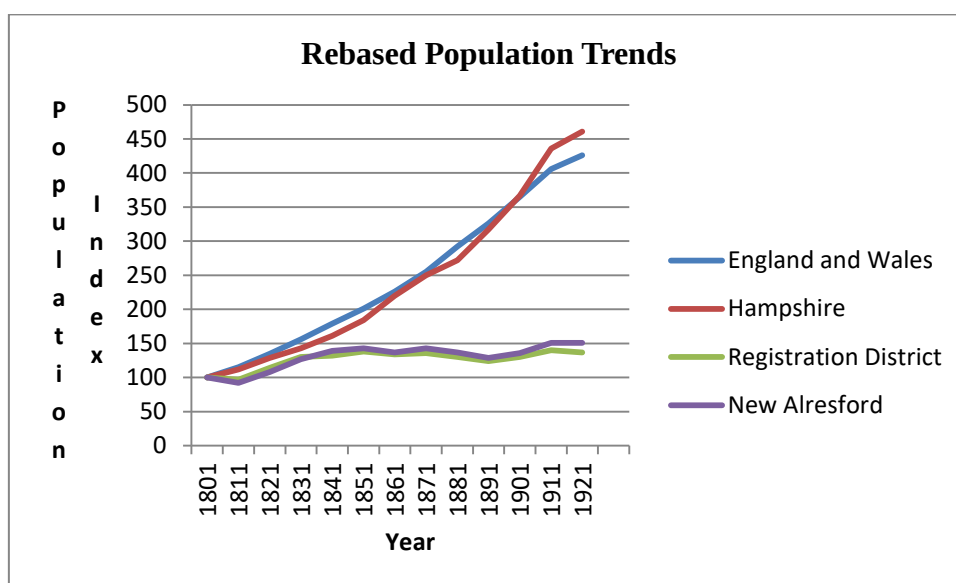


Figure 7 - Comparative Indexed Population Trends

Whilst the population of England & Wales more than quadrupled between 1801 and 1921, and that of Hampshire increased by 361 per cent, the populations of Alresford and the registration district were far more stable; the registration district grew by a modest 37 per cent and the town of Alresford by 51 per cent over 120 years. Moreover, from 1841 to 1921 there was virtually no growth at all in either the market town of New Alresford or the district. Alresford comprised a steady 20 per cent or so of the district population and their population trends over the period were virtually identical. The rapid industrial expansion of urban centres such as the major commercial port of Southampton and the crucial naval base of Portsmouth led the Hampshire growth and was also reflected in other large towns and cities throughout the country; in contrast, the largely independent and self-sufficient

small market town of Alresford and its surrounding villages remained very stable by size – a small increase in population after the railway arrived in 1865 and a decline of ten per cent between 1871 and 1891 which corresponded with the national agricultural depression but was then quickly reversed through the turn of the century. This stability in Alresford contrasted with the decline at Dorchester in Oxfordshire, a similar market town also on a coach route to London but with no railway to compensate for the loss of coach traffic⁴⁴. In a period of rapid population growth nationally, the small market town of Alresford appeared remarkably insulated from the fortunes of agriculture, growing urbanisation, industrial expansion and advances in technology. Quite simply, there was insufficient *overall* population growth for Nonconformity to target or to stretch the resources of the Church of England. However, a static population total does not necessarily imply a stable population *per se*. We need now to consider the extent to which the population changed; was there any social mobility which had the potential to undermine the Anglican dominance?

One measure of population stability was the extent to which people still lived in the parish of their birth and this can be assessed by considering the summaries in *Ancestry* and the original entries in the Census Enumerator Books (CEBs) for a sample of residents. The place and approximate year of birth is identified for each inhabitant recorded in the census. A total sample of 500 was selected, comprising 100 from each of five parishes in the registration district: Bighton, Northington, West Tisted, Old Alresford and New Alresford. To ensure a degree of representation the parish of the market town was chosen along with one of the closed parishes (Northington) and three other rural parishes selected at random. The first 100 entries for each parish were selected in *Ancestry* and then categorised

⁴⁴ Tiller, 'Dorchester to 1920', p. 62.

according to whether the individuals were born in the parish of residence; born in another parish of the registration district, or born outside the district⁴⁵, which could have been elsewhere in Hampshire, in another county or even in another country. Table 2.6 shows the results taken from the 1851 census, which are then summarised in the pie chart (Fig. 8).

Table 2.6: Birthplace of residents in 1851 census (sample of 500)				
Parish of residence	Born in parish of residence	Born elsewhere in registration district	Born outside the district	Total
Bighton	50	27	23	100
Northington	37	20	43	100
West Tisted	73	9	18	100
Old Alresford	46	21	33	100
New Alresford	64	10	26	100
Total	270	87	143	500
Percentage of sample (500)	54	17	29	100

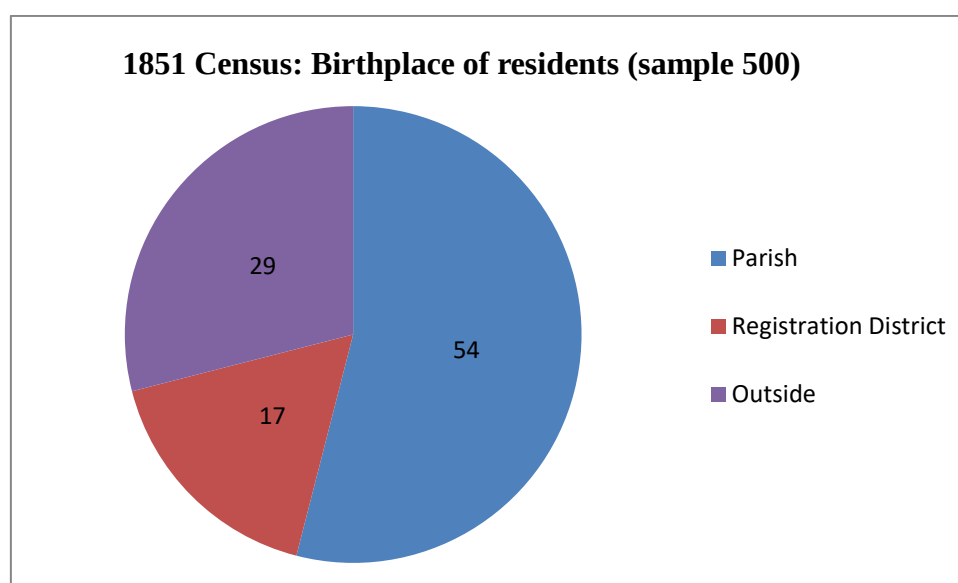


Figure 8 - Birthplace of sample of residents from 1851 census

Based on the sample selected, 54 per cent of residents still lived in the parish of their birth and over 70 per cent were born locally i.e. in their place of birth or a neighbouring parish of the registration district; they had not moved far. This suggests that in the middle of the nineteenth century there was a large degree of population stability in this part of

⁴⁵ '1851 UK Census Collection' <http://www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/group/1851uki> , selecting each respective parish name for place of residence.

Hampshire and, whilst mobility was not uncommon, it was far more usual for people to have local roots. Comparing local 'urban' centres, 64 per cent of the New Alresford residents were born in the parish compared with 52 per cent in Alton, 43 per cent in Bishops Waltham (neighbouring market towns of comparable size) and 36 per cent in Winchester⁴⁶; more born in Alresford found reasons to remain. However, drawing meaningful comparisons between town and villages is difficult. New Alresford had a significantly higher percentage of residents born in the parish than Old Alresford, Bighton and Northington, perhaps suggesting that the greater opportunity, autonomy and independence of a market town meant that there was less need to move away; but West Tisted, one of the least densely populated parishes in the district, ran counter to this with 73 per cent of residents born there.

A similar exercise was then undertaken using the 1901 census to assess whether this pattern changed over time. The same sample size was taken from the same parishes using the same basis of selection to ensure comparability⁴⁷. Table 2.7 shows the results when the same analysis is applied to 1901 data, again summarised in the pie chart (Fig. 9).

⁴⁶ '1851 UK Census Collection'; samples of 100 residents living in Alton, Bishops Waltham and Winchester.

⁴⁷ '1901 UK Census Collection' <http://www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/group/1901uki>, selecting each respective parish name for place of residence.

Table 2.7: Birthplace of residents in 1901 census (sample of 500)				
Parish of residence	Born in parish of residence	Born elsewhere in registration district	Born outside the district	Total
Bighton	24	12	64	100
Northington	18	26	56	100
West Tisted	18	11	71	100
Old Alresford	28	22	50	100
New Alresford	50	7	43	100
Total	138	78	284	500
Percentage of sample (500)	28	15	57	100

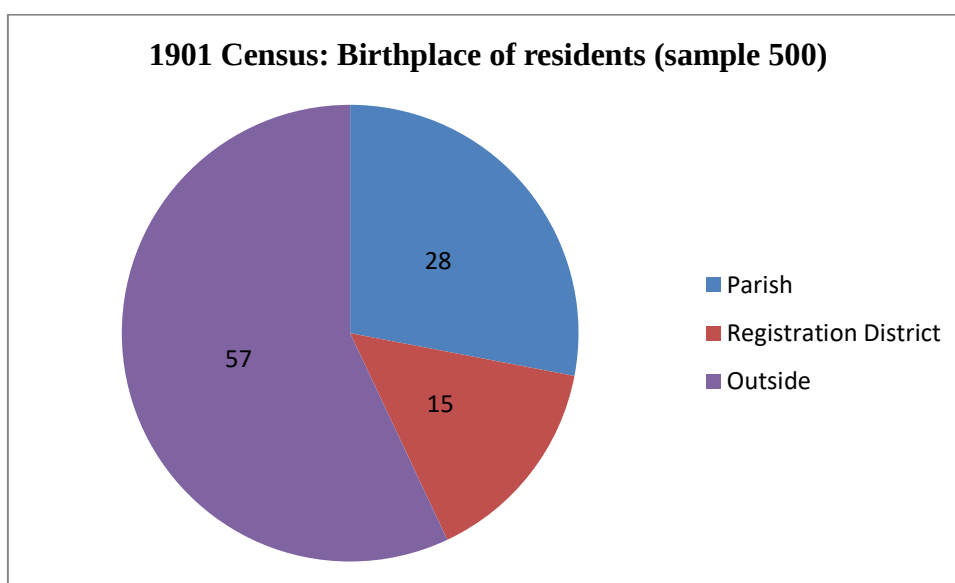


Figure 9 - Birthplace of sample residents from 1901 census.

The main conclusion is that fifty years later the results for the ‘parish’ and ‘outside’ have swapped i.e. in 1901 the majority, 72 per cent, of residents were born outside the parish. In the second half of the nineteenth century population mobility came to Alresford; at least to some extent. But the point should not be exaggerated. In the market town of New Alresford half of the residents in the sample for 1901 still lived in the parish of their birth and for Old and New Alresford together the majority of residents were still born ‘locally’ – in the parish or a neighbouring parish of the registration district. Looking at the sample as a whole the picture had undeniably changed but a substantial minority (43 per cent) still lived very close to where they were born. There is a clear difference in 1901 between the results for the market town and the villages; 50 per cent of Alresford residents were born

in the parish but only 22 per cent of those living in the four villages in the sample were born there. This may reinforce the tentative suggestion above that the greater facilities and opportunities of the town provided less incentive to leave but it also suggests that if more people were leaving the villages they were *not* moving to New Alresford. Perhaps there was little incentive for the unskilled, with a background in agricultural and manual labour, to move to the town where the employment opportunities were different and accommodation was potentially more expensive?

Another way of assessing population stability is to look at a sample of the population over time; were the people who were living in a place still living in the same location a number of years later? People could have moved away or died, and this only considers the ‘departures’ rather than the ‘arrivals’, but since we are considering a time period over which the population totals were very stable an analysis of departures will still contribute towards our understanding of population dynamics. The same base sample in terms of size and parishes as for the birthplace analysis was used to assess continuity. Specifically, the 1851 census sample was re-selected (500 people across the parishes of Bighton, Northington, West Tisted, Old Alresford and New Alresford) and the 1871 census for each parish was then reviewed to establish whether those sampled were still living in the same parish 20 years later⁴⁸.

Continuity was considered at two levels. Firstly, whether the specific individuals identified in 1851 were still living in the same parish and, secondly, whether their ‘family’ were still represented in the parish. For this purpose ‘family’ has been defined as simply having the

⁴⁸ ‘1871 UK Census Collection’ <http://www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/group/1871uki> for the results of the 1871 census, selecting each respective parish name for place of residence.

same surname so the results are focused on the male line. So a sister or daughter who married between 1851 and 1871 and still lived in the parish would be regarded as having ‘left’ for this purpose, whereas a woman who moved to the parish and married into the family would provide evidence of family continuity. In addition, one family member was sufficient to ensure continuity for this purpose, although the reality could have been significant ‘change’: for example, in Bighton there were 18 Butchers in 1851 and only 6 in 1871; 16 Cannons in 1851 and only 3 in 1871, and ten Chandlers in 1851 but only two in the 1871 census. The results for the ‘family’ need therefore to be treated with a degree of caution but, for different reasons, so do the results for individuals. The *Ancestry* summaries are transcribed from the CEB entries which were probably prepared by different enumerators. There is therefore scope for human error in identifying specific individuals. For example, ‘Canon’ may have become ‘Cannons’ or ‘Cannone’ or ‘Canon’ when transcribed. Similar names were therefore traced back to the original CEB entries to check for consistent birthplace and birthdate to establish as far as possible that particular individuals were indeed the same person. Allowing for the extreme caution which is therefore required in terms of interpretation, the results of this analysis are set out in Table 2.8 and the bar chart (Fig. 10).

Table 2.8: Population Continuity: Individuals and Families (sample 500)			
	Still living in same parish	Family still living in same parish	Total considered
Bighton	17	71	100
Northington	16	48	100
West Tisted	29	85	100
Old Alresford	24	74	100
New Alresford	21	83	100
Total	107	361	500
Percentage (of sample of 500)	21	72	

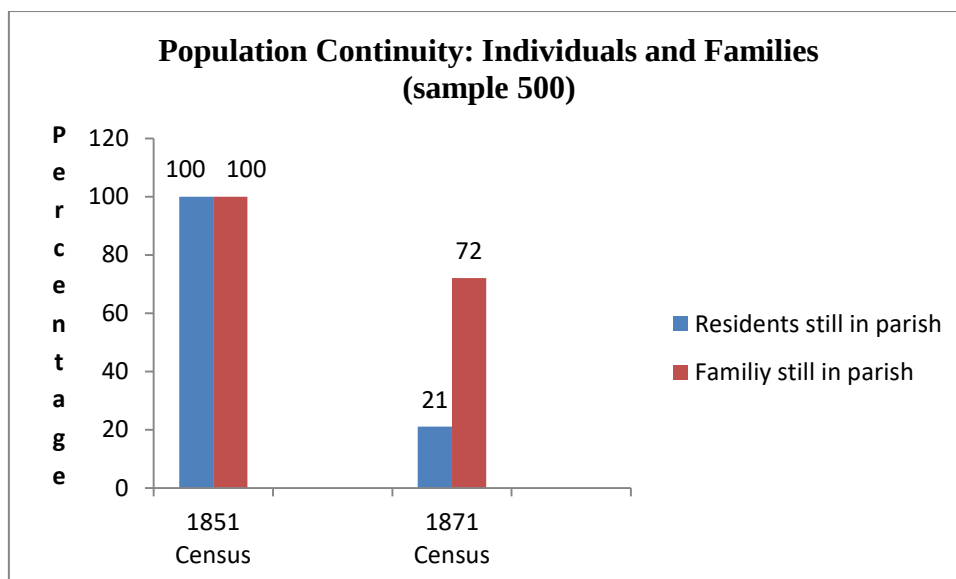


Figure 10 - Population Continuity: Individuals and Families (sample 500).

Of the 500 people identified across the five parishes in the 1851 census 21 per cent were still living in the same parish 20 years later. This may not sound very high, but it also implies that around 80 per cent of the 1851 population ‘left’ over a 20 year period; an average annual rate of departure (through death or choice) of only four per cent per year⁴⁹. Change would not have happened in a smooth linear fashion of course but this suggests a population with a large level of stability and continuity; especially when viewed alongside the tentative observation that 72 per cent of the 1851 population still had ‘family’ members present in the same parish 20 years later.

As well as looking at broad trends of arrival and departure, we also need to consider change and continuity in the context of occupations and employment. The general nature of industry, and how it differed between town and village, was discussed above but to gain a more precise understanding of the nature of employment, occupations and business ownership, a more detailed analysis is required. Consistent with the above approach,

⁴⁹ Ibid. For neighbouring Avington, Alton, Bishops Waltham and Winchester, only 12 per cent (compared to 21 per cent) were still living in the same place 20 years later.

change is assessed by considering the position in both 1851 and 1901. The population of the market town of New Alresford in 1851 was 1618; of these 332 were described as 'head' of household giving an average household size of 4.9; and 222 inhabitants were identified as 'wives'. If we make the broad assumption that the average household was made up of two adults of working age and three children (infants or scholars) then there would have been an adult working population of around 664 less the 222 wives; so approximately 442 individual occupations. From this total a sample of 164 occupations were selected for analysis, representing more than a third of the available occupations and more than ten per cent of the total population. Starting alphabetically, individual entries for New Alresford residents in *Ancestry* were traced to their individual CEB source to identify occupations; the relevant page in the CEB was then reviewed to identify occupations of other individuals. This enabled a random sample of occupations to be gathered, taken from different census enumerators covering different areas of the town (including the workhouse), and a sample of sufficient size to enable inferences to be validly drawn. There was some inconsistency in both identifying and documenting occupations by individual enumerators, so the results need to be treated with caution, but some high level observations are still possible.

The occupations identified were initially categorised broadly as follows: professional and clerical; farmers; crafts and trades; servants; labourers; and paupers and tramps. The results are set out in Table 2.9 and then summarised in Fig. 11⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ '1851 England Census for ...' <http://ancestrylibrary.com/interactive/8860> for the relevant individual CEB entries showing occupations of the selected residents of New Alresford.

Table 2.9: Sample of Alresford Occupations in the 1851 Census		
Occupation	Number	Percentage (%)
Professional and clerical (clergyman, solicitor, doctor, teacher etc.)	18	11
Farmers (owners and occupiers)	5	3
Crafts and trades (tailor, grocer, draper, baker, Innkeeper etc.)	70	43
Servants (domestic – housemaid, cook, gardener, groom etc.)	28	17
Labourers (manual – agricultural, building, general etc.)	25	15
Paupers and tramps (those in the workhouse and the ‘Peaceful Home’)	18	11
Total	164	100

These are not definitive categorisations. Some descriptions could legitimately fall into more than one category, some *worked* in crafts and trades rather than owning their own business (considered further below) and those in the workhouse would typically be described as general or agricultural labourers if they were not referred to as ‘pauper’ or ‘pensioners’. In general, though, a three tier society emerges. At the top were the elite of professional and white collar workers, farmers and those of independent means. In the middle were the shopkeepers, traders and craftsmen of a small self-sufficient market town (see Figs 12, 13, 14 and 15), and at the bottom were the servants, labourers and paupers.

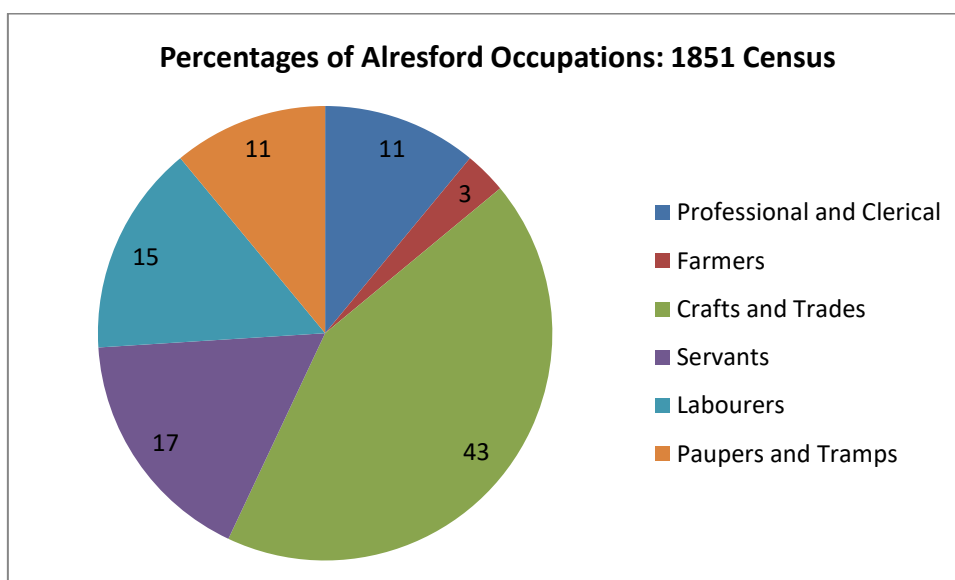


Figure 11 - Percentage of Alresford Occupations: 1851 Census

Martin Dauntton has mapped the existence of paupers in England by county for 1837-39. The range for Hampshire averaged nine per cent of total population, slightly less than in this sample⁵¹. But the Union Workhouse which covered 16 parishes was in Alresford, and its inmates (108 in 1851) as well as the 21 'tramps' from the *Peaceful Home* lodging house were all included as residents of Alresford in the census. If Union paupers were allocated to the town in proportion to population and those visitors lodging at the *Peaceful Home* were excluded, Alresford's 'pauper percentage' was just over four per cent, significantly below the county average. Moreover, this difference might be understated. Ted Royle suggests that wages for urban workers were on average double those of rural workers throughout the nineteenth century so, despite higher costs, we might expect proportionately more of Hampshire's paupers to be in the country rather than the large towns and cities⁵²: Alresford was not a poor town.

A similar exercise was completed for comparative purposes using the 1901 census data. The population of Alresford in 1901 of 1540 was almost unchanged from 1851 so a comparable sample size was sought. The first 350 census entries in alphabetical order were examined and the occupations of 167 adults identified from these; so a similar number of adults were identified from a similar population size as for 1851. Assuming a broadly representative sample, and general consistency of identification and allocation, a comparison is informative. The results are shown in Table 2.10 and summarised in Fig. 16⁵³. Based on this limited exercise, not only had Alresford's population remained

⁵¹ M. Dauntton, *Progress and Poverty: An Economic and Social History of Britain 1700-1850* (Oxford, 1995), p. 459 (Fig. 17.2).

⁵² E. Royle, *Modern Britain: A Social History 1750-1985* (London, 1987), p. 161.

⁵³ '1901 UK Census Collection' for New Alresford; '1901 England Census for ...' <http://www.ancestrylibrary.com/interactive/7814> for the relevant individual CEB entries showing occupations of the selected residents of New Alresford.

relatively stable throughout the period, but its distribution of occupations was also remarkably consistent.



Figure 12 - Broad Street. The *Horse & Groom* Inn, the Mid-Hants supply stores, a saddler and a watchmaker.



Figure 13 - Mr Henning was the local plumber, decorator and glazer. The sailor is outside the stationers.



Figure 14 - Lambourne the grocers, at the bottom of West Street.



Figure 15 - West Street. A butchers and greengrocers trading from the Town Hall.

Table 2.10: Sample of Alresford Occupations in the 1901 Census

Occupation	Number	Percentage (%)
Professional and clerical (clergyman, solicitor, doctor, teacher etc.)	24	14
Farmers (owners and occupiers)	3	2
Crafts and trades (tailor, grocer, draper, baker, Innkeeper etc.)	77	46
Servants (domestic – housemaid, cook, gardener, groom etc.)	33	20
Labourers (manual – agricultural, building, general etc.)	22	13
Paupers and tramps (those in the workhouse and the 'Peaceful Home')	8	5
Total	167	100

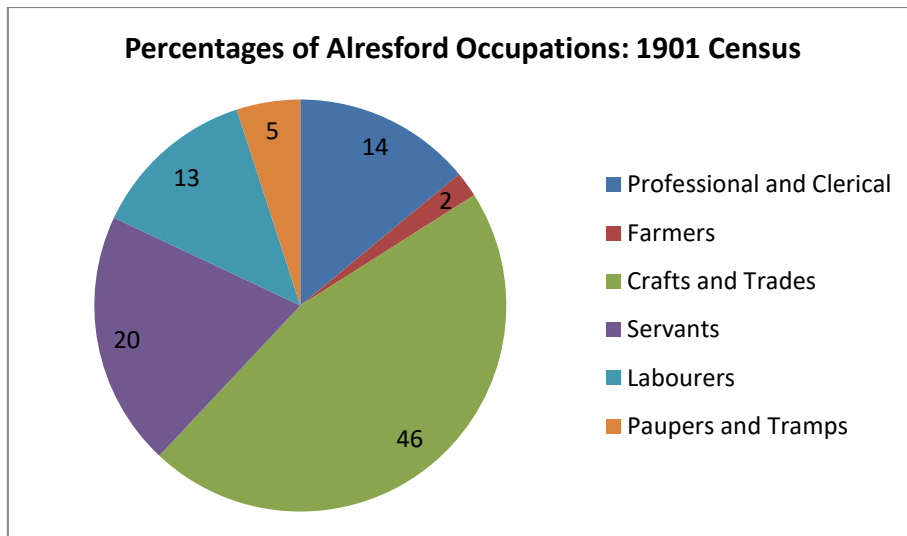


Figure 16 - Percentage of Alresford Occupations: 1901 Census.

The two charts look extremely similar; the employment pattern very consistent. There were no factory workers, few artisans, and no rising population for Nonconformity to tap into. If Parsons was correct in asserting that ‘Victorian Nonconformity was dominated by families belonging to the urban middle classes’, Alresford was not an obvious centre⁵⁴. But to confirm the position we need deeper analysis; were those identified with ‘crafts and trades’ skilled workers, still dependent on others, or were they entrepreneurial owners of their own businesses and employers of other? Those who had the initiative to work on their own account might be attracted to the independence and autonomy of Nonconformity.

Of the 164 adults selected in the 1851 census 70 were identified as working in a variety of ‘crafts and trades’: grocer, tailor, cabinet maker, carpenter, victualler, shoemaker, painter, baker, milliner etc. Beyond that the information is limited. The census enumerator sometimes embellished the description by reference to the individual as being a ‘master’, a ‘journeyman’ or an ‘apprentice’ but most entries just described the trade undertaken. The apprentice was learning his trade; the journeyman was fully trained but had not yet reached

⁵⁴ Parsons, *Religion in Victorian Britain IV*, p. 77.

master level and may have been travelling around picking up experience; and the master was accredited at the highest level. The masters probably employed other men and worked on their own account; the journeymen may have worked under a master or directly for themselves and it seems reasonable to assume that the apprentices and all those without further classification were being supervised by others⁵⁵. The 1901 census is more helpful in that enumerators classified individuals as working on their own account; as an employer; or as a worker, with the occasional reference to being a journeyman or an apprentice. The results of this analysis are in Table 2.11:

Table 2.11: Analysis of Alresford crafts and trades in 1851 and 1901 censuses					
	1851 Census			1901 Census	
	Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage
Master	12	17	Own account	13	17
Journeyman	14	20	Employer	10	13
No information, worker or apprentice	44	63	Worker (including apprentices)	54	70
Total	70	100	Total	77	100

It is very difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions when the two censuses did not provide the same information. However, if we make the very tentative assumption that masters would probably have employed others or worked on their own account, and journeymen *may* have worked on their own account as well, then the percentages of ‘entrepreneurs’ and ‘workers’ are probably not too dissimilar in 1851 and 1901; especially if we acknowledge that at least some of the journeymen in 1851 would probably have been working for masters. There is no substantive evidence from this analysis to disturb the general contention that the activities of the working population in the market town of New Alresford were consistent and stable.

⁵⁵ F. Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, 2nd edn (London, 2008), pp. 368-9. Flora Thompson recalls a conversation with Dorcas Lane whose father had come to Candleford Green as a journeyman blacksmith; his lack of master status originally resulted in a refusal of permission for him to marry her mother.

But was the distribution of occupations any different in the rural parishes compared to the town; and did the nature of employment in the villages remain just as stable? To consider these questions a similar approach was followed as before. A large random sample was again selected and analysed based on data from five rural parishes for both the 1851 and 1901 censuses; this was then supplemented by more detailed analysis of both ‘trades and crafts’ and ‘labourers’. Bighton, which was also used for the birthplace and continuity analysis, was selected again but this time it was supplemented by four different rural parishes; the relatively ‘closed’ parish of Tichborne together with Cheriton, Hinton Ampner and Beauworth. Six consecutive census enumerator sheets were selected for each year for each parish, other than for Beauworth in 1901 where there were only five available. This enabled a sample of occupations for 238 individuals to be identified for 1851 (from 567 heads) and occupations for 358 individuals to be identified for 1901 (from 793 heads); both substantial representative samples in the context of the respective populations. The categorisations used were similar to those for the market town with two additions: a separate category for agricultural labourers and a separate category for pensioners and those of independent means. The results of the analysis are set out in Tables 2.12 and 2.13 (and Figs. 17 and 18)⁵⁶.

⁵⁶ ‘1851 UK Census Collection’ for the respective rural parish residents; ‘1851 England Census for ...’ for the relevant CEB entries detailing occupations; ‘1901 UK Census Collection’ for the respective rural parish residents; ‘1901 England Census for ...’ for the related CEB entries detailing occupations.

Table 2.12: Sample of Rural Parish Occupations in the 1851 Census		
	Number	Percentage (%)
Pensioners and those of independent means	13	6
Agricultural labourers and farm workers	101	42
Professional and clerical (clergyman, solicitor, doctor, teacher etc.)	8	3
Crafts and trades (tailor, grocer, draper, baker, Innkeeper etc.)	43	18
Servants (domestic – housemaid, cook, gardener, groom etc.)	56	24
Manual labourers (building, general, bricklayers etc.)	0	0
Farmers (owners and occupiers)	9	4
Paupers, tramps and those receiving parish relief	8	3
Total	238	100

Table 2.13: Sample of Rural Parish Occupations in the 1901 Census		
	Number	Percentage (%)
Pensioners and those of independent means	13	4
Agricultural labourers and farm workers	97	27
Professional and clerical (clergyman, solicitor, doctor, teacher etc.)	21	6
Crafts and trades (tailor, grocer, draper, baker, Innkeeper etc.)	72	20
Servants (domestic – housemaid, cook, gardener, groom etc.)	118	33
Manual labourers (building, general, bricklayers etc.)	23	6
Farmers (owners and occupiers)	9	2
Paupers, tramps and those receiving parish relief	5	2
Total	358	100

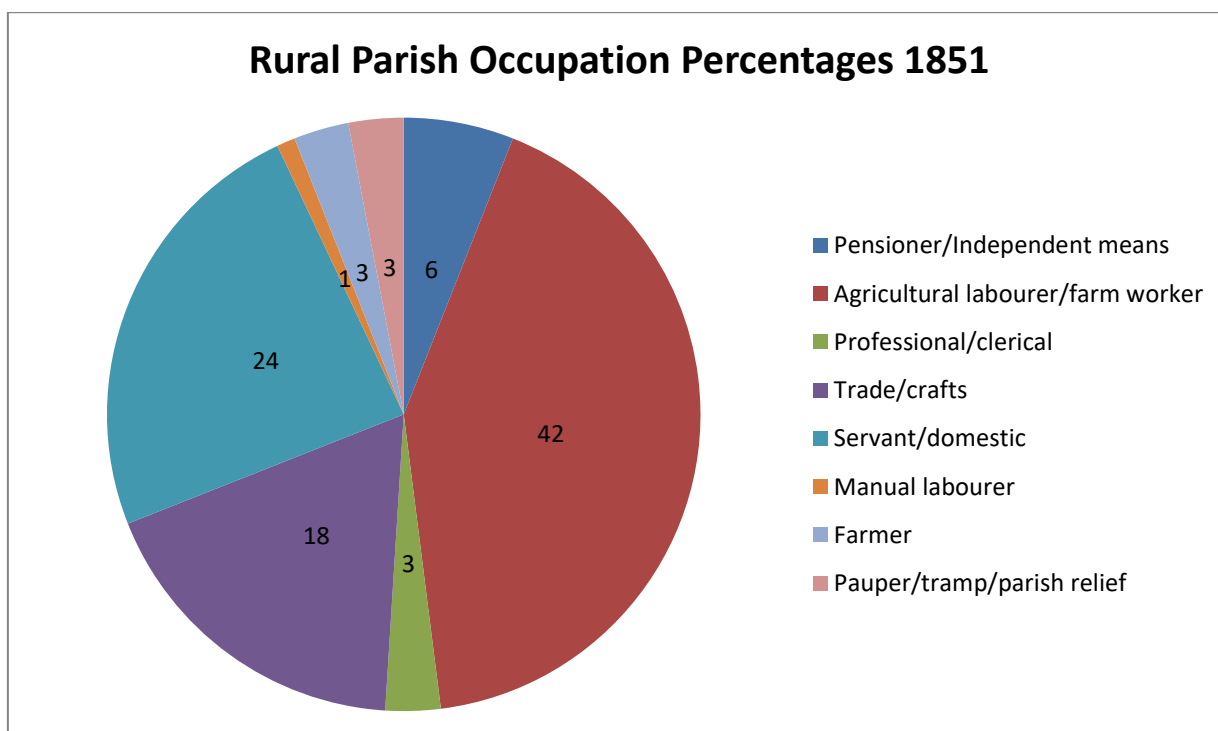


Figure 17 - Rural Parish Occupation Percentages 1851.

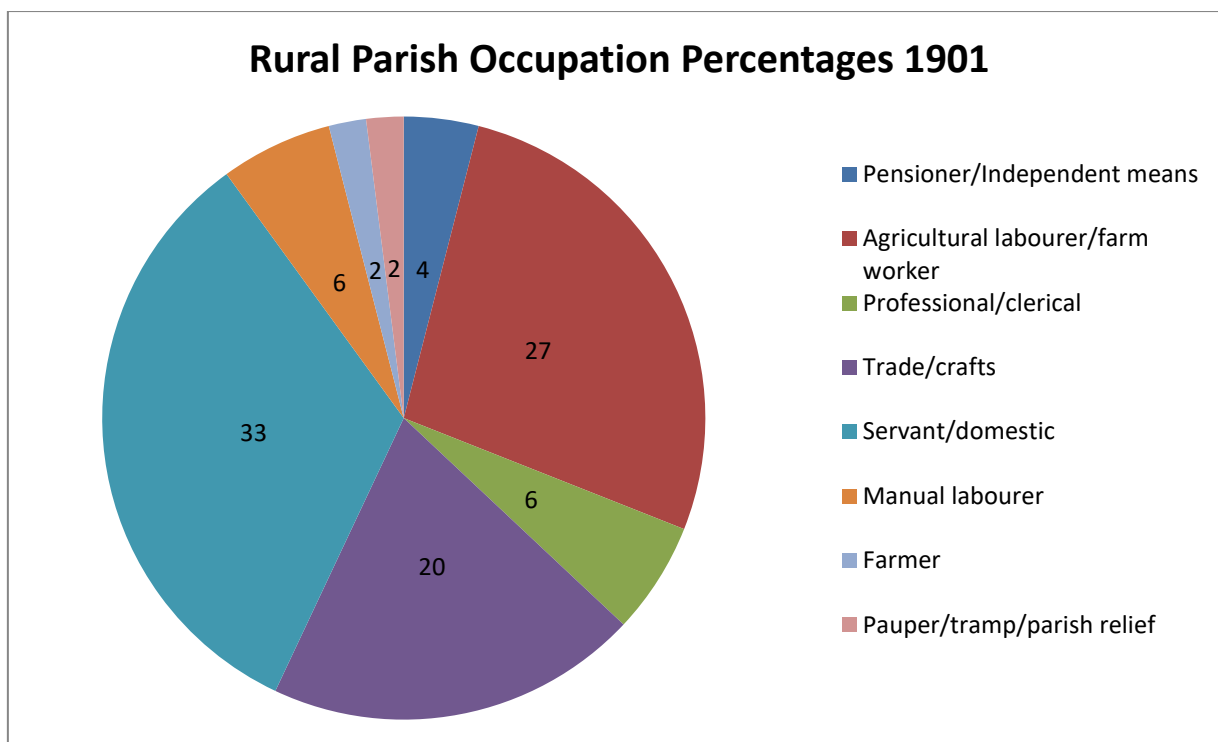


Figure 18 - Rural Parish Occupation Percentages 1901.

In 1851 by far the most common occupation amongst those living in the rural parishes was that of agricultural labourer and farm worker (42 per cent)⁵⁷. Figures 19, 20 and 21 show such occupations in Tichborne, Bighton and Northington. The next most popular employment was domestic service with 24 per cent of workers earning their living by supporting the major houses (at Tichborne, Hinton, and Bighton etc.), the rectories and farm houses. Between them, agriculture and domestic service employed almost two-thirds of the working population of the rural parishes; they were dependent upon the landowning social elite for their livelihood and such dependence must have underpinned popular acceptance of the established social order. A substantial minority was employed in trades and crafts (18 per cent; Figs. 17 and 22) including a mixture of masters, journeymen and apprentices, but even here some practiced their crafts substantially on the local estates and

⁵⁷ This increases to 45 per cent if those described as ‘shepherds’, ‘herdsmen’ and ‘drovers’ are re-classified as farm workers. In Table 2.12 they are treated as ‘craftsmen’. There would be a corresponding decrease in the ‘trades and crafts’ percentage.

were just as dependent on the social elite for their livelihood as those working on the farms and in domestic service. Attempts to further analyse those involved in rural crafts and trades was hampered by the same census limitations as those referred to for New Alresford. If we regard shepherds, drovers and herdsmen as farm workers then, of the remaining 36 'trades', only three can be identified as masters or employers, three as journeymen, and three as apprentices: I have assumed the remaining 27 to be regular employees or workers. We can tentatively suggest that in 1851 the overwhelming majority of those practicing crafts and trades in the villages were doing so as workers or employees, whereas there was a significant minority in towns probably working on their own account or employing others. There was also a distinction in terms of labouring. Of the 25 labourers identified in New Alresford, and adjusting for some who were perhaps more accurately regarded as paupers or servants, around half were agricultural or farm labourers and the rest were general manual labourers of some other description. In the villages *all* labourers worked on the farms. In essence, then, at mid-century the rural employment pattern was different from the town. In Alresford trades and crafts were just as dominant as a source of employment as agriculture was in the villages, and a greater proportion of those exercising their trade in the market town were more likely to be working in an entrepreneurial capacity. The rural labouring classes were almost exclusively employed in agriculture whereas those living in the town were just as likely to find unskilled manual work in a brew house, a bakery or with a bricklayer. But did this change over time?

The main observation when analysing rural occupation data for 1901 compared to 1851 is a decline in the proportion of those earning their living as agricultural labourers: there was an increase in the percentage of those occupied in domestic service (+9) and manual labour (+6) at the expense of agricultural labourers and farm workers (-15). The proportions in

the other categories of occupation remained very stable; the percentage of those working in trades and crafts remained around one fifth and, in the villages, only a few were engaged in professional or clerical roles, acted as farmers, were supported by the parish or lived off their own means. The agricultural depression of the 1870s and 1880s meant that some labourers had to look elsewhere for employment and the coming of the railway to Alresford in 1865, with the related need to improve the condition of parish highways, created opportunities for manual work on the railways, roads and bricklaying, as well as more professional and clerical positions for engine drivers, plate layers and letter carriers. But if the social elite could not support as many families on their farms and land, they still fulfilled their social responsibility by employing them on their estates and in their houses; there was a significant increase in the second half of the nineteenth century in those employed in domestic service in this district. Work was found for most of those who were able: those regarded as paupers or requiring parish relief remained few.



Figure 19 - Harvesting maize at Tichborne.



Figure 20 - Working the watercress beds in Bighton.

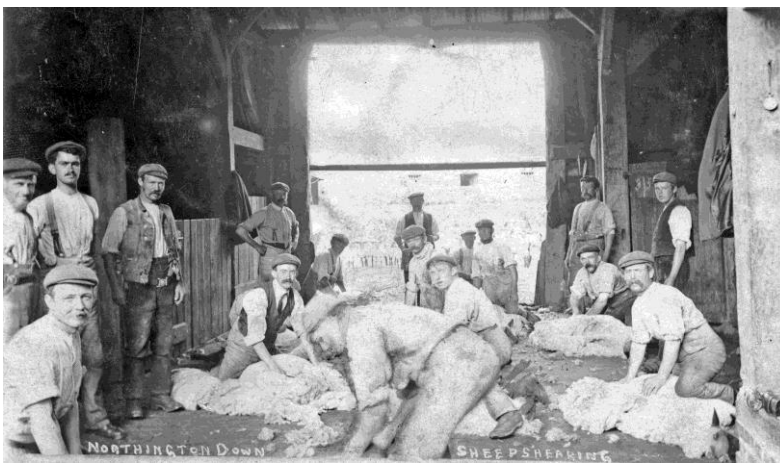


Figure 21 - Sheep shearing in Northington.

We can further challenge the stability of employment patterns by analysing trades and crafts and labourers to compare the rural parishes with the town, as has already been done for 1851. If we make the same assumption as before and exclude shepherds, herdsmen and drovers from ‘crafts and trades’⁵⁸ then around 28 per cent of those working in crafts and trades in the villages were in business on their own account, a further 11 per cent were journeymen (who could have been either employers or workers) and the remainder, at least 61 per cent, were apprentices or employees. Comparing these results with those in Table 2.11 for Alresford in 1901 the position is not dissimilar: 30 per cent working on their own

⁵⁸ As for 1851, this re-classification would increase agricultural labourers and decrease trades and crafts by three per cent and thus has no impact on the comparison over time.

account or as an employer in Alresford and 28 per cent in the rural parishes⁵⁹. Given the lack of precision in definition, in particular the nature of a journeyman's work, we cannot be certain that craftsmen in the town had more entrepreneurial roles than those in the countryside. Finally, let us compare town and country in 1901 in terms of labourers. In Alresford the ratio of general manual labourers to agricultural labourers and farm workers was just in excess of two to one whereas in the villages there were more than four farm workers for each manual labourer; the profile of workers between town and rural parishes was different. But although over the half century the nature of labouring in both town and country moved away from agriculture, the differences in these samples were not large.



Figure 22 - Baker at work in Cheriton.

The general suggestion from all of this demographic and occupational analysis is one of settled stability. Total population levels for both Alresford and the registration district were fairly static for well over a century; internal 'churn' occurred at an average rate of only four per cent per annum; families remained represented in the same parishes for long

⁵⁹ '1851 UK Census Collection'; '1851 England Census for ...'; '1901 UK Census Collection'; '1901 England Census for ...'.

periods and a general reliance on trades and crafts in the town and agriculture in the rural parishes persisted throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. But against this stable background there were subtle changes. Social mobility did come to Alresford, but slowly. By the end of the century people were more likely than not to be living in a parish *other* than the one they were born in; the substantial reliance on agriculture in the villages was diluted by alternative opportunities in other manual trades and domestic service, and the proportions of unskilled work in both town and village gently evolved. But these were subtle changes indeed. The social elite – gentry, landowners and clergy – along with the farmers, continued to provide most of the work opportunities for their rural parishioners through their land, estates and houses, and most who worked in trades and crafts did so as employees rather than on their own account. Patriarchal influence remained strong in the villages, more so in some than others; and even in Alresford the independent shopkeepers were dependent on the custom of their rural parishioners and the patronage of the social elite. John Chapman, churchwarden at St John's, was an ironmonger in the town and his journals and account books from the 1860s detail clients from most of the parishes of the registration district as well as the clergy and influential local families: Reverends Brodie and Sealey from Alresford, Reverend Mann from Bighton, the Onslow family and regular supplies (to the butler, footman, maid or gardener) for the estates of Lord Ashburton and Lord and Lady Rodney⁶⁰. In November 1868 Lord Ashburton's gardener ordered seven gates for his lordship's Grange Park estate at Northington; the cost represented a whole month's takings for Mr Chapman, who also supplied the schools, the gasworks, other local businesses and a wide range of private individuals⁶¹. Income was very stable. The 'middling sort' of the market town, people like Mr Chapman, generations of whose family

⁶⁰ [Chapman account books and journals], HRO, 302/M87/1; HRO, 119M83/1-3.

⁶¹ HRO, 119/M83/2; purchase 4 November 1868.

served the local parish church as churchwarden, sidesman, Sunday school superintendent and lay reader, had just as much interest in preserving the established social order as his social elite customers and their estate labourers⁶². The Chapmans were typical of the ‘petty capitalists’ described by Morris in the context of Croydon; the retailers and small employers who shared both a working class localism and a middle class taste for organisation, and who defined ‘community’ in broad terms. These were a distinctive social cadre, active in local government, occupying important posts in charities, leisure and churches; their role in the development of the religious organisations was enormous and Alresford had its fair share⁶³. The local community evolved slowly, but the established social order was tolerated by most and accepted by many.

Local Governance and Dissent

Alongside the social and economic means of exercising influence and control was the formal machinery of local government. The market town of New Alresford had a distinctive governance structure. Under a charter of 1572 the bishop of Winchester, in return for a fixed annual rent, granted the borough of Alresford to a governing corporation consisting of a bailiff and eight burgesses. The burgesses derived an income from operating the town’s market and holding sheep fairs and the surplus after expenses was spent on the maintenance of the parts of the town for which they were responsible⁶⁴. In practice, membership of the corporation was an exclusive club and effectively it became a self-selecting body with generations of the same family serving as burgesses: from 1572

⁶² Davidson 47, fos. 320-1.

⁶³ Morris, *Croydon*, pp. 7-10. Morris himself draws on H. McLeod, *Class and Religion in the late Victorian City* (London, 1974) and McLeod’s overlapping circles of urban community-consciousness.

⁶⁴ B.J. Rothwell, ‘The Impact of the 1883 Municipal Corporation Act on Local Government in New Alresford’ (PhD. thesis, University of Winchester, 2011), pp. 14-16.

through to 1886 an unelected borough corporation governed Alresford. But the burgesses were at least men who had an interest in the town's success; they were Alresford men dealing with Alresford affairs, without recourse to other bodies, and this included supporting the established Church. It was the burgesses who launched the appeal for St John's church clock in 1811 and the burgesses who donated the full £150 for the new organ in 1836⁶⁵. The church was the other major provider of nineteenth-century governance and a key foundation of Anglican strength lay in the fact that church and local government were so closely bound together through a small local elite who dominated proceedings; Alresford was a microcosm of the integration of church and state.

A distinctive feature of local government in Alresford was that another body sat alongside the democratically elected town council which succeeded the corporation at the end of the nineteenth century. The NATT was founded on 28 March 1890 as a registered charity to receive the rights and assets of the corporation and the first town council meeting was in April 1895⁶⁶. The four surviving burgesses in 1890 – John Ridley Shield, William Hunt, Charles Hunt and Dr Covey – were all appointed to the NATT and, following an election at a vestry overseen by Reverend Headley, they were joined by James Gladstone, John Hall, John Chapman, John Richardson and William Willis⁶⁷. The church connections represented by Shield (solicitor and former churchwarden) and William Hunt (former churchwarden and clerk to the vestry) were strengthened; Gladstone later became a churchwarden as did John Hall's brother James, and, as already indicated, the Chapman family had a long and committed history of church service. As discussed below, Mr Chapman was later to petition the bishop of Winchester alongside another town notable,

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 16-18.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

⁶⁷ P. McKerracher, 'New Alresford Town Trustees', *Alresford Displayed* 19 (1994), pp. 24-6.

Colonel Stratton-Bates, against the planned restoration of St John's in 1898 on the grounds that it failed to preserve the existing level of free sittings but his commitment to the Anglican Church could not be questioned⁶⁸. The incumbent himself was also integral to local government: the Reverend Headley served as town trustee from 1912 to 1915 and was elected second in the ballot to the first town council in December 1894, along with Herbert Walford, the first council chairman, who was to provide virtually all the funding for the major restoration of St John's in 1898 and James Hall, another churchwarden and brother of John referred to above⁶⁹. The effect of the reform of local government on the church was not nearly as significant in Alresford as the impact detected by Morris in Croydon; he highlights the role of reformed local government, in the shape of the new town corporation, in re-defining the sphere within which the church was deemed to be effective. In Croydon this alternative method of local control drew local leaders away from active church government whereas in Alresford the incumbent and church officers slipped seamlessly, at least initially, into the new town trust and parish council structures⁷⁰. In the rural parishes too the church vestries met regularly to appoint parish officers, set church and poor rates, review expenditure and deal with matters relating to highways, welfare and the general wellbeing of the local communities: the rector was often in the chair and, as is considered in more detail in chapters III and IV, there was longevity and multiplicity of office holding which bound the church and parish elites together.

But it was not just church and local government that were joined through the same people: the links into the daily life of the community went deeper as the same names appeared frequently in a social context as well; school governor, magistrate, chair and vice-chair of

⁶⁸ Davidson 47, fos. 326-48.

⁶⁹ Rothwell, 'Local Government in New Alresford', pp. 49-50.

⁷⁰ Morris, *Croydon*, p. 177.

social and welfare committees, honorary secretary and treasurer of every grouping with a social, leisure, charitable or outreach objective. Cox in his study of Lambeth argues that church growth and decline depended crucially on the particular circumstances governing the relationship between religion, society and other social institutions⁷¹. In Alresford all were tightly connected: Tiller also sought to root her religious analysis of Dorchester in the local community⁷². These themes will be developed in more detail in subsequent chapters but suffice to say here that two things were clear: the social elite played a dominant role in administering, organising and running most aspects of the town's life (and that of the surrounding villages) and, secondly, even as late as the early twentieth century the Church of England, its incumbents and principal officers, were deeply embedded in the whole governance process. Nonconformity was not entirely excluded but it is hard to avoid the sense of stability, continuity and Anglican strength which emerges from the records. Such a picture contrasted with the position encountered by Obelkevich in the two hundred agricultural parishes of South Lindsey; in *Religion and Rural Society* he describes how, between 1825 and 1875, the old united parish society of landowners, farmers and labourers, unequal but accepted, transitioned amid social conflict into a class based identity where individualism came to the fore⁷³. As can be seen from the maps below, the Methodism which helped foster the social independence and autonomy in South Lindsey just did not exist in sufficient strength at this time in the parishes of the Alresford registration district⁷⁴. Whereas Obelkevich describes rival strategies around intense denominational rivalry, in Alresford the Church of England had very little threat to

⁷¹ Cox, *Lambeth*, pp. 1-7.

⁷² Tiller. 'Dorchester to 1920', pp. 61-3.

⁷³ Obelkevich, *South Lindsey*, p. 321.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 321-2.

respond to; at least by 1875 when Obelkevich's study ends. The challenge was to come later; in the form of indifference.

The corollary of the integration of the Church of England into the established social order was the comparative lack of dissent; at least in terms of the apparent absence of the formal presence of Nonconformity in the area. Figures 23, 24 and 25 below⁷⁵ indicate the parishes in the registration district where formal dissent was recorded at three points in time: the returns to enquires for the bishop of Winchester's visitation of 1765; the religious census of 1851 and the returns to visitation enquiries for 1899. Whilst the maps seem to indicate the gradual spread of rival denominations, which cannot be disputed, this is too simplistic; any growth, such as there was, came from a very low base. The start point, based on the admittedly incomplete returns for 1765, was minimal: the private Roman Catholic chapel at Tichborne House and reference to a handful of dissenters meeting in a private house in Ovington. As will be analysed in detail below, the Anglican dominance suggested by the 1851 religious census was such as to make the Church of England's share of total attendances in the Alresford registration district the fourth highest in the country and by the end of the nineteenth century there was still no formal Nonconformist place of worship in ten of the 17 parishes in the district. Further, visitation returns in 1899 suggested that several dissenting meeting houses registered in the early nineteenth century or places of worship recorded in the 1851 census, such as the Primitive Methodists at Kilmeston and the Congregationalists at Ovington, were by then non-existent or much diminished. Reverend Hugh La Mothe Stowell in Ovington went so far as to comment that 'Dissenters by degrees going over to the church. Three adults brought up in dissent confirmed in years

⁷⁵ See footnote 1.

'97-99'⁷⁶. Even where the existence of dissent was acknowledged, such as the Wesleyan chapel at Hinton Ampner, the incumbent estimated the congregation as only about eight, chiefly non-parishioners who were led by a minister who usually came from Winchester⁷⁷. This picture contrasts sharply with Lee's analysis of the Durham coalfields between 1810 and 1920; religious commitment here was generally expressed in the form of dissent which sat alongside the hard edge of political radicalism and growing class consciousness; Anglicans were 'them' rather than 'us'⁷⁸. In Norfolk, too, Lee found that the Church of England slipped behind Nonconformity in the parishes which experienced serious tithe unrest in the 1830s⁷⁹. The limited growth of Nonconformity in Alresford, and the challenges it encountered in the face of Anglican strength, will be a major theme of this study but, superficially at least, the Church of England was dominant.

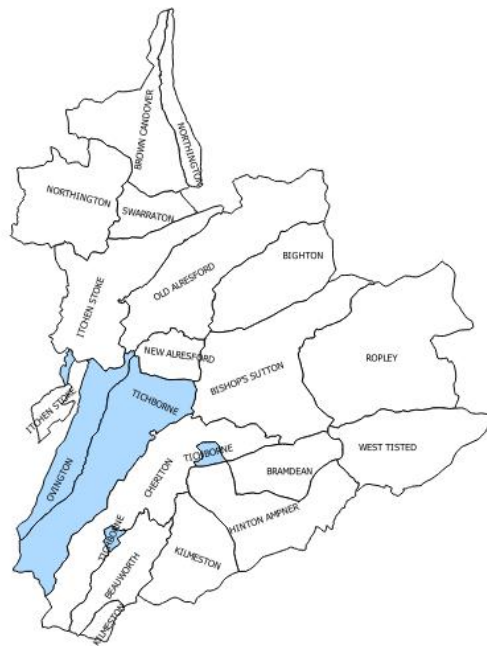


Figure 23 - Parishes with dissent based on 1765 Visitation enquiries.

⁷⁶ HRO, 21M65/B4/5/354.

⁷⁷ HRO, 21M65/B4/5/247.

⁷⁸ R. Lee, 'Rebuilding the diocese in the Industrial Age: the Church of England and the Durham Coalfield, 1810-1920' in R. Collis (ed.), *Northumbria: History and Identity 547-2000* (Chichester, 2007), pp. 220-38.

⁷⁹ Lee, *Rural Change*, p. 29.

Part of the pre-eminence of the established Church in this part of the country came from the social standing, connectivity and networks of its clergy. Not all of the livings were rich but, by national standards, most were comfortable, especially when held in plurality or together with other offices. For example, Reverend Henry Hubbard was rector of Cheriton, Tichborne, Kilmeston, Hinton Ampner and Beauworth for many years and agreed an aggregate rent charge of £1968 when all the tithes were commuted⁸⁰; Francis North enjoyed a rent charge of £754 for Old Alresford which he supplemented with his income as master of St Cross in Winchester and rector of St Mary's in Southampton⁸¹; and, as discussed above, John Richards acquired 254 acres in Ovington in lieu of his right to tithes as part of the enclosure of 1812⁸². The clergy are profiled in more detail in chapters III and IV, along with the value of their livings, but many were wealthy individuals, members of the social elite who were favoured with patronage and connected through family and kinship to high office in the church, state and government. Such lucrative livings, situated as they were in such a compliant and stable part of the country, were much cherished by those who had the right to appoint to them; this may explain why bishops of Winchester such as Benjamin Hoadly, Brownlow North and Charles Sumner all appointed their sons to the living at Old Alresford. This new generation of clergy, people like George Sumner and his neighbour William Brodie at New Alresford were young, energetic, resident and wealthy; they were to play their part reasserting Anglicanism with their persistence, understanding and pastoral commitment. Tiller noted similar qualities in William Macfarlane at Dorchester: he took people with him⁸³.

⁸⁰ HRO, 21M65/F7/15, 46, 117, 131, 232.

⁸¹ HRO, 21M65/F7/178/1.

⁸² HRO, Q23/1/2.

⁸³ Tiller, 'Dorchester to 1920', p. 72.

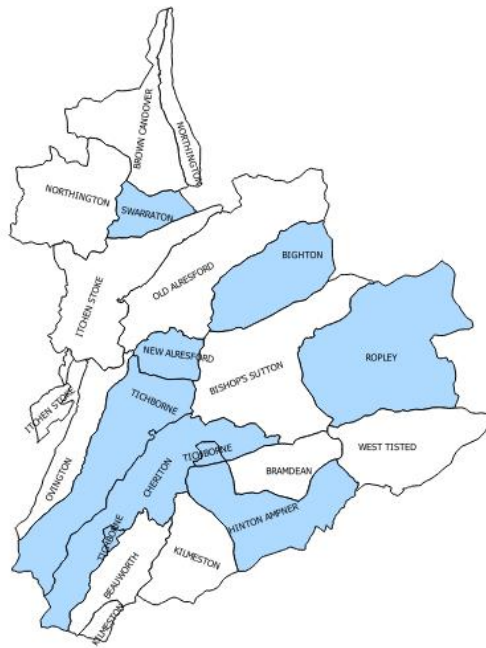


Figure 25 - Parishes with dissent based on 1899 Visitation returns.

This part of rural Hampshire, with its mix of market town and agricultural villages, had an identity all of its own. It was not suburban like Croydon; it was not inner-city like Lambeth; it was not northern and industrial like Durham; it was less dependent on agriculture than South Lindsey and, relatively speaking, it had a small, dispersed and stable population with a long history of independent local government in which the church was closely involved. We turn now to consider in more detail the roots of Anglican strength in the market town of New Alresford and the neighbouring rural parishes which it both served and supplied. We need to consider why in particular the Church of England was so strong and why Nonconformity struggled to appeal here as it did in other parts of the country? Above all, what was the basis of the enduring settled stability in Alresford when there was so much change elsewhere?

III SETTLED STABILITY C.1780-C.1830

The religious census of March 1851 suggested that, even allowing for reservations around accuracy and completeness, the 17 parishes making up the registration district of Alresford were, in a national context, a bastion of Anglican strength. But the census itself was only a snapshot; a picture emerging at a moment in time which resulted from a lengthy administrative process susceptible to error. To test, substantiate and understand this perspective of strength we need to look further back to find the basis of Anglican hegemony in the late Hanoverian period. For this there are earlier points of reference for at least some of the parishes in terms of visitation returns, parliamentary enquiries and petitions for non-residence. Having confirmed this starting point, both in terms of apparent Anglican strength and the limited Nonconformist presence, I will go on to examine the local basis of the pre-eminence of the established Church in terms of its financial resources, its central involvement in the provision of charity and welfare and its accepted position within the established social order. I will suggest that the apparent stability in this part of rural Hampshire was largely a reality and that it had, at its heart, a tight nexus between church and parish elites; a *status quo* for which there was compliance and general acceptance, if not quite universal endorsement.

As noted above, the 1765 visitation returns, used because no records for the 17 parishes survive for the 1788 visitation, suggest very little evidence of dissent in the district's parishes. Whilst it would require an individual clergyman of some honesty and character to admit to his bishop that his pastoral supervision had failed to prevent the arrival of dissent, and hence the natural tendency was to downplay any Nonconformist presence, the position

seems clear. Apart from the private Roman Catholic chapel at Tichborne House¹, the only exception for the 12 parishes for which records survive was Ovington, although even there dissenters had no public place of worship². It is thought that the Nonconformists met in a private house and there are references to dissenters based in Ovington in the Congregational church book for Alresford where a chapel was eventually established in 1825³. Interestingly, the rector for Ovington was non-resident (living in Winchester) and the curate responsible for Ovington did not live in the village either – although he was close by in Itchen Stoke⁴. The visitation revealed lots of non-resident incumbents, although provision was made for service by a resident curate or a neighbouring rector. Duties were swapped, covered and held in plurality but the local Anglican leadership worked together. For example, William Sealey senior was rector of Bighton and Swarraton⁵; his son was curate of Bighton and Northington⁶; Ellis Jones served Itchen Stoke and Ovington as curate⁷; Robert Thomas did the same for Old and New Alresford⁸ and although the Reverend Wingfield was resident at Hinton Ampner he was ill and so paid his neighbour at Bramdean to cover for him⁹. But this fluid arrangement did not necessarily evidence pastoral neglect, at least by the standards of the late eighteenth century. Heeney in *A Different Kind of Gentleman* describes how the Victorian clergy enthusiastically developed a myth of eighteenth-century ecclesiastical worldliness, of pastoral apathy, incompetence and inefficiency, but the evidence for the parishes of the Alresford registration district does

¹ M. Smith (ed.), *Doing the Duty of the Parish: Surveys of the Church in Hampshire 1810* (Winchester, 2004), pp. 25-6.

² [Bishop's Visitation 1765], HRO, 21M65/B4/2/13.

³ HRO, 127M94/66, pp.10-12; Adams, 'Nonconformity in Alresford', pp. 9-11.

⁴ HRO, 21M65/B4/2/13.

⁵ HRO, 21M65/B4/2/2, 14.

⁶ HRO, 21M65/B4/2/2, 129.

⁷ HRO, 21M65/B4/2/9, 13.

⁸ HRO, 21M65/B4/2/12, 188. Robert Thomas does not appear to be related to John Thomas, bishop of Winchester (1761-1781), who had three daughters; see W.R. Ward, 'Thomas, John (1696-1781)' in H.C.G. Matthew and B. Harrison (eds), *ODNB* 54 (Oxford, 2004), p. 346.

⁹ HRO, 21M65/B4/2/182.

not necessarily confirm this¹⁰. Virtually all the parish churches provided two services on a Sunday and a minimum of three opportunities to take Holy Communion every year; parsonages and churchyards were kept in good repair and enclosed; registers and terriers were well maintained; charitable endowments were properly administered and church officers performed their duties¹¹. Typical of the period, as Smith has argued, the basics were carried out¹². But clerical priorities and lay expectations changed over time and this theme of ‘religious change’ is considered further in later chapters.

The returns to parliamentary enquiries and non-residence petitions in 1810 show a similar picture. Ovington still had neither a resident rector nor a resident curate; the latter not being licenced and paid only a modest £40 to serve the parish population of around 100¹³. Other parishes were also without a resident clergyman, particularly where populations were small or where a mother church was combined with chapels of ease. There was no parsonage for Reverend Butler to occupy in West Tisted and the curate lived in nearby Kilmeston¹⁴. There was no rector or curate resident in Northington, Brown Candover or Swarraton either, although all lived within a mile or two, and there was no evidence that the lack of physical presence had provided dissenters with enough reason to meet together in worship, as they did in Ovington, whatever the parishioners thought about it¹⁵.

In the heart of the district, though, the clerical provision in Old and New Alresford appeared enhanced under the guidance of Francis North, 6th earl of Guildford. North

¹⁰ Heeney, *Different Kind of Gentleman*, p. 8.

¹¹ HRO, 21M65/B4/2.

¹² M. Smith, ‘The Hanoverian Parish: Towards a New Agenda’, *Past & Present* 216/1 (2012), pp. 91-101.

¹³ Smith, *Doing the Duty*, p. 90.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 117-18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 76-7, 111.

actually resided in Old Alresford himself, in the large and comfortable vicarage, and the patronage of his father as bishop of Winchester ensured that he enjoyed a substantial income from the parishes of Old Alresford and St Mary's in Southampton, as well as being appointed master of St Cross in Winchester¹⁶. However, he had at least appointed three curates, resident in the parish, to look after the needs of Old Alresford and its chapelries at New Alresford and Medstead. These were substantially paid (at least compared to Ovington) – with £70 plus considerable fees for the Alresford roles and £60 plus fees and a parsonage house in Medstead¹⁷. This may provide some support for Smith's argument that structural problems did not necessarily prevent pastoral effectiveness¹⁸. Although Snape offers a contrasting perspective based on his research in the large industrial parish of Whalley in Lancashire, the setting of that study bore little resemblance to rural Hampshire¹⁹. Alresford was very different to Whalley; smaller, rural, agricultural and stable, with much stronger church links in philanthropy and education. The 1810 returns also suggested the continued absence of dissent, the only exceptions being Ovington and the private Roman Catholic chapel of Sir Roger Tichborne on his estate; church capacity which was generally sufficient for its population and a sense of duty in parochial service: the Reverend Robert Lowth insisted on living in Hinton Ampner whilst his curate was absent through ill health²⁰.

The close connections of the local Anglican clergy with the national establishment were also evident. Francis North, rector of Old Alresford, was the son of Brownlow North, the bishop of Winchester and the nephew of Frederick North who was prime minister from

¹⁶ HRO, 21M65/A2/3, 28 January, 21 July 1797; HRO, 21M65/A2/4, 4 January 1808.

¹⁷ Smith, *Doing the Duty*, p. 87.

¹⁸ Smith, *Oldham and Saddleworth*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁹ Snape, *Whalley*, pp. 193-9.

²⁰ Smith, *Doing the Duty*, p. 63.

1770 to 1782²¹. The vicar of Ropley, William Howley, who succeeded his father as incumbent in 1796, was soon to become the bishop of London and then archbishop of Canterbury in 1828, in which role he presided at Queen Victoria's coronation²². Howley was clearly wealthy, trusted and respected; his father's estate at his death was worth some £5,000-£6,000 and William was the sole executor and residual beneficiary who honoured his father's wishes in terms of providing for his mother and sister even though this diminished his ultimate inheritance²³. The rector of Cheriton in the early nineteenth century, Edmund Ferrers, was a chaplain in ordinary to the king²⁴ and he was succeeded by Henry Hubbard who was domestic chaplain to his uncle George Tomline, the bishop of Winchester²⁵. The father of Robert Lowth at Hinton Ampner was archdeacon of Winchester and later bishop of London²⁶. As already discussed, Francis North was later succeeded in Alresford by George Sumner, the son of Charles Sumner, chaplain to George IV and bishop of Winchester, whose brother John Bird Sumner became archbishop of Canterbury²⁷. The parishes of Alresford and its surrounding villages were attractive propositions for the social and ecclesiastical elite; prosperous, stable, settled and loyal to the Church of England. They were the best parts of the bishop's patronage in Hampshire.

²¹ N. Aston, 'North, Brownlow (1741-1820)' in Matthew and Harrison, *ODNB* 41, pp. 72-4.

²² J.R. Garrard, 'Howley, William (1766-1848)' in Matthew and Harrison, *ODNB* 28, pp. 537-9.

²³ Lambeth, LPL Howley MS 2212, fos. 58-82.

²⁴ Smith, *Doing the Duty*, pp. 25-6.

²⁵ 'Hubbard, Henry (1818-1829)'

<http://db.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/persons/DisplayPerson.jsp?PersonID=65526> (6 May 2017).

²⁶ Smith, *Doing the Duty*, p. 63.

²⁷ W.P. Courtney and W.R. Ward, 'Sumner, Charles Richard (1790-1874)' in Matthew and Harrison, *ODNB* 53, pp. 327-9.

Finance and Wealth

These returns and enquiries provide evidence of the state of the Church of England at a particular date but they need to be seen alongside the available parish records. Finance and wealth were important factors underpinning the strength of the Church of England at this time. The relative wealth of many livings, considered below, was indicative of the social standing of ministers, and the church's ability to generate money for routine maintenance and raise substantial sums for renovation and improvement both reflected and reinforced its social standing; the great and the good were the major contributors.

Although the 1765 visitation return for Old Alresford stated that the fabric of the church building was in good condition, the vestry minutes three years later revealed that major repairs were required to the church tower at St Mary's; indeed, the local craftsman Thomas Pargent said that the tower was 'in so ruinous condition that he could not undertake the repair'²⁸. The rector, John Hoadly, son of the former bishop of Winchester²⁹, took charge of the problem, leading numerous vestry meetings. The parish and supporters were marshalled to address the considerable expense of around £500; the bishop of Winchester donated 80 tons of timber from his woodland, leading parishioners Henry Bullpett, Benjamin Whitear and James Rodney made their carriages available for transportation and Hoadly increased his personal benefaction towards the tower and bells to £50. But wider contributions were required and a one off church rate for ninety-six times the usual amount was assessed which produced only two refusals for payment, both of which were pursued

²⁸ [Churchwardens], HRO, 43M74/PW1/1, 20 June 1768.

²⁹ N. Aston, 'Hoadley, John (1711-1776)' in Matthew and Harrison, *ODNB* 27, p. 350.

to prosecution³⁰; the churchwardens cited William Froude and John Goffe in the Consistory court and obtained judgement against both, with costs, and orders for settlement of their respective contributions³¹. Goffe was an important parishioner who was eligible to serve as surveyor of highways; he was also responsible for ten per cent of the rate so securing his contribution was important. The community, when called on, responded. A degree of complacency and neglect may have contributed to the situation arising but when the problem became apparent the rector engaged, led from the front and the social elite and church ratepayers responded to secure the fabric of the church for themselves and future parishioners.

Each generation accepted its responsibility for the care and maintenance of its parish church and buildings; following the extensive repairs to St Mary's in 1768, much more work was required in the early nineteenth century. The minute of vestry on 24 April 1835 states that 'In consequence of the very decayed and dilapidated state of the flooring under the pews a new floor be immediately laid'. It was also resolved to alter the pews³². In 1843 the churchyard had to be fenced and walled and further substantial work was required on the church tower two years later³³. A variety of techniques to raise the funds were employed. An additional church rate was raised for the new floor, voluntary contributions were offered for the pews, the churchyard work was paid for by subscriptions from the village elite and the £60 for the tower was met by a loan which was then repaid over the

³⁰ HRO, 43M74/PW1/1-2; minutes 4 April 1768 to 14 July 1772.

³¹ [Consistory court cause papers, 1700-1858], HRO, 21M65/C9/670, 671.

³² HRO, 43M74/PW2, 24 April 1835.

³³ Ibid., 25 August 1843, 27 March 1845.

following five years³⁴. The preservation of the parish church was accepted as an important obligation; part of the legacy for future generations.

Settled stability was also suggested in neighbouring New Alresford. Routine parish business continued each year under Reverend Hoadly – setting and collecting rates, approving accounts, appointing wardens, carrying forward small surpluses; the impression is of efficient control and good management with well-maintained records. Failed rate collections were few, and usually due to death rather than dispute. This too was a compliant community. New Alresford faced its own major fundraising challenge from 1811 to 1812; a significant project which involved the recasting of the church bells, the erection of a new church clock and associated repairs and expenses which totalled some £786³⁵. The bells and clock were communal assets and their restoration was a physical representation of the central involvement of the church in the community. Once again the ability of the Church of England to call on considerable financial resources was demonstrated. A total of over one hundred subscribers contributed £375 including the bishop of Winchester, his son the incumbent Francis North and leading parishioner William Davis. Three special rates and other income raised just over £200 across the community and the balance of £200 was raised by a bond from the same Whitear family who had provided the carriage to transport wood in support of the appeal at Old Alresford some thirty years earlier³⁶. Once again, a loyal community supported the established Church when it was most in need. In fact, some leading parishioners also showed their patience and understanding. The debt the church owed for the bond had been transferred between wealthy individuals but in April 1820 most of it, £150, was still outstanding as the

³⁴ Ibid., 24 April 1835, 25 August 1843, 27 March 1845.

³⁵ HRO, 45M83/PW1; minutes 1811 and 1812.

³⁶ Ibid., subscribers on 16 November 1810, minutes 15 April 1811, 30 March 1812.

erection of a new gallery and work on the north aisle in 1815 had prevented the additional funds being raised to liquidate it. It was resolved to assess and collect rates to redeem it in three £50 instalments³⁷.

The community of St John's remained committed to their church and developing their facilities for worship. In 1821 a new plan for parish pews was presented to enable the families of every inhabitant to sit together; this was enlightened behaviour for the early nineteenth century and within two weeks of recognising the need for change the churchwardens had produced a plan and presented it to vestry where it was unanimously agreed and adopted³⁸. Although not certain, it seems likely that these were free (rather than rented) parish pews to be allocated by the churchwardens; there was no suggestion of charging for occupation. Maggie Kilbey has identified similar efforts in Hertfordshire, although a little later³⁹. In 1832 it was resolved to erect a gallery on the south side of the church with funding to be raised from contributions which would be made in return for the assignment of particular seats; effectively parishioners 'purchased' the seats and detailed provisions were set out for future disposal with the churchwardens having first refusal. The total cost of £142 was covered by contributions from 15 parishioners thus demonstrating both their individual commitment and the social standing of the church in the community; St John's, and the new south gallery, was the place to be seen⁴⁰.

Generally, the Anglican Church in Alresford in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century presented a picture of undisturbed strength and stability. Surviving church records

³⁷ HRO, 45M83/PW2, 13 April 1820.

³⁸ HRO, 45M83/PW2, 28 February 1821, 14 March 1821.

³⁹ M.J. Kilbey, 'Music-making in the English parish church, with particular reference to Hertfordshire' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2017), p. 314.

⁴⁰ HRO, 45M83/PW2, 14 November 1832, 2 January 1833.

were organised, efficient and well maintained. Regular rates were assessed, raised and typically collected, usually resulting in a small surplus being carried forward each year. When major funds for repairs were required the incumbents showed leadership and were able to call on senior parishioners and the rest of the community. Money was raised by subscription, by rates, by donation or loan and the infrastructure of the church was maintained and improved for future generations; bells were recast, clocks were added, towers repaired, galleries were built, pews redesigned. Occupation of a prime position in the parish church retained important social cachet; something which many were prepared to pay for.

This financial strength extended to the villages surrounding the market town. Some of this was manifest in routine care and maintenance. In the small parish of Bramdean church officials made sure that there were new bibles and a surplice when needed and that the pulpit was in good repair⁴¹; the expenses at Ovington demonstrate that there was always coke for the stove, that the bell ringers were paid, the buildings insured and the linen washed⁴²; the process of assessing, raising and collecting rates worked smoothly without dissent in Kilmeston⁴³ and at Cheriton there was no problem funding new bell ropes, prayer mats and enough bread and wine for communion⁴⁴. Given the lack of dissent, financing extra *ad hoc* amounts – an additional £37 between 1832 and 1834 – was not an issue⁴⁵ and their neighbours at Ovington coped with larger than expected outlays in 1770,

⁴¹ HRO, 1M77/PW1. See £2 12s paid to William Jones in 1793/94 to make a surplice, £2 13s to repair the pulpit in 1796 and £3 for a new bible in 1826.

⁴² HRO, 32M69/PW2.

⁴³ HRO, 16M80/PW1.

⁴⁴ HRO, 138M82/PW1

⁴⁵ Ibid.

1820 and 1828 with help from the rent of parish land and some enclosure compensation⁴⁶. Significant repairs were required in Bishops Sutton in 1815; however, whilst recording the debts due to Mr Harvey (£27 12s 7d) and John Freemantle (£28 17s 7d) there is a note in the vestry minutes that the bills were ‘not to be paid till the work is done better’. Michael Rivers Junior and John Eames Waight were diligently doing their duty as churchwardens in caring for their church⁴⁷. Larger fundraising for urgent specific needs was more of a challenge but the records show that even the smaller communities could rise to it.

When the villagers of Kilmeston were required to find £160 between 1772 and 1774 they simply raised 35 church rates without any problem; no doubt helped by the fact that two of the major contributors, the Honourable John Luttrell and Thomas Ridge, were sitting or future churchwardens⁴⁸. The Reverend Edmund Ferrers presented a formidable list of 17 resolutions to the Tichborne vestry on 30 July 1806 outlining the work required to St Andrew’s parish church; they needed to make safe the tower, repair the belfry windows, mend the roof, work on the church porch, paint the church door, repair the reading desk and mend some seating as well as whitewashing, cleaning and supplying numerous mats, brooms, buckets and a water butt! There was no mention of the cost, which must have been considerable, but the resolutions were all agreed without question⁴⁹. A similarly challenging list of repairs and alterations was presented by the rector John Harrison to the Bighton vestry on 5 June 1781. They needed new windows, repairs to the belfry and arches, whitewashing, painting, ornamental work and gilt inscriptions. The funding of the

⁴⁶ HRO, 32M69/PW2; see Sir Thomas Dyer’s agreement on 24 April 1820 to pay 40s per year towards church repairs as enclosure compensation and the rent of ‘Parish Acre’ to Joseph Smith for £5 per annum from 29 September 1828.

⁴⁷ HRO, 42M78/PW1; minutes of 1815.

⁴⁸ HRO, 16M80/PW1.

⁴⁹ HRO, 139M82/PV1, 30 July 1806.

work is a little unclear but the rector was personally involved with an initial payment being secured on a future rate⁵⁰. Additional work was required on the churchyard fence and wall in 1839 and this was funded by a loan of £76 which was repaid over the ensuing ten years⁵¹. Even where resources were limited, the Church of England had no difficulty persuading its ministers, officers and congregations to provide for its maintenance and upkeep; rates were set and collected, subscriptions were invited, contributions made, lands rented out, loans taken on and repaid. The routine and exceptional requirements of financial obligation were accepted and embraced and, by doing so, the parishioners of this part of rural Hampshire were supporting a major part of the established social order.

Occasional disputes about seating arose around the district over this period, emphasising its importance as an expression of social status, and Bill Jacob has examined the tension between Christian unity and social hierarchy which contributed to such disagreements⁵². John Guy explained in 1771 that, in consequence of the fact that he possessed lands of ‘considerable value’ in the parish and paid ‘great sums of rates’ he needed appropriate seating for his large family at the parish church in Northington; he had identified a suitable space, not much more than five square feet, and undertook the construction at his own expense when there were no objections⁵³. The matter was far more contentious in Ovington in 1804 when Thomas Bignell was cited by James Standerwick to answer a suit of perturbation of seat. Thirty years of history were examined, there was a lengthy deposition from the local carpenter, the seat was claimed to ‘belong’ to nearby Lovington House and aged residents Rechab Thorn and Hannah Barton were called to share their

⁵⁰ HRO, 35M69/PW1, 5 June 1781 viewed on miscellaneous fiche 502.

⁵¹ Ibid., minutes for 1839 viewed on miscellaneous fiche 504.

⁵² W.M. Jacob, ‘...This Congregation Here Present ...’: Seating in Parish Churches during the Long Eighteenth Century’, *SCH* 42 (2006), pp. 294-304.

⁵³ HRO, 21M65/C9/378.

recollections of custom and practice. In the build up to the suit the pew in question had been locked, forcibly broken into, and then re-locked before Mr Bignell clambered over the side to occupy the hallowed space. The case was certainly contentious: the court papers actually contain two versions of the sentence. One in favour of Bignell appears to be in draft with several crossings out and is not signed or stamped; the other is on crested paper, stamped, signed and dated by the Vicar General pronouncing that Bignell was guilty and finding in favour of Standerwick. The costs were almost £22⁵⁴. John Hunt, baker and maltster, had the temerity to take on John Eames Waight, gentlemen, at Bishops Sutton when the latter intruded on the seat which the Reverend William Evans had allowed Hunt and his family to use in 1814. He proved his case to the satisfaction of the court and costs were awarded against Waight⁵⁵. Following the assessment in 1817 that there were insufficient sittings in St John's, New Alresford it was agreed at vestry that John Freemantle and Robert Waight (perhaps related to John above) would fund the erection of a new gallery and that the sponsors, along with the rector, could then agree how the additional seats would be occupied. The gallery was actually built at the sole expense of Freemantle and, as a result, he claimed personal right of use for himself and his family⁵⁶. The final outcome is not certain but there is no indication of any objection to the citation with intimation that the faculty request should be granted. What is clear, however, from these cases is that although the issue of seating was contentious, this dissent and argument was expressed *within* the context of maintaining the existing social order and the role of the church as part of that. It was precisely because attendance at church and where you sat was so important that people went to the time and expense of litigating. The church also provided the means for them to do so and, in that respect, it reinforced its position.

⁵⁴ HRO, 21M65/C9/737.

⁵⁵ HRO, 21M65/C9/463.

⁵⁶ HRO, 21M65/C9/315.

The obligation to maintain other parish buildings was a further area of potential discord and litigation. In Bishops Sutton the wealthy William Howley, father of the future archbishop of Canterbury, was sufficiently concerned about the state of the vicarage that he took over from his predecessor Phillip Hewitt that he filed suit against his executors. Although dealing with normal dilapidations was a settled part of the system, when Howley was presented to the vicarage in 1757 he found that it needed significant work on the roof, ceiling, floor, the front wall, windows, thatching and external work on the barn, stable, gates, fences and ditches. Howley argued that the income of the living was sufficient to both support the incumbent *and* keep the property in good order; his action seemed uncharitable, but the principles of respect for property, legacy and justice drove him to act against the family of his fellow clergyman⁵⁷. Snell and Ell argue in *Rival Jerusalems* that such clerical responsibility for dilapidations on their houses was one of the historic structural problems of the Church of England alongside anachronistic geographies of settlement, the tendency to hold incumbencies for life and the practice of trading advowsons⁵⁸; this case was certainly a distraction.

The relative wealth or poverty of beneficed livings was also an important reflection of the Church's social standing and position within society. The income and accommodation provided needed to reflect the profile and reputation of those taking on responsibility not just for the cure of souls, but also for many aspects of the daily lives and material wellbeing of their parishioners. As Smith has explained in *Doing the Duty*, the most common reason given by contemporaries for pluralism and non-residence was that of

⁵⁷ HRO, 21M65/C9/453.

⁵⁸ Snell and Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*, pp. 54-5.

clerical poverty, although this was hardly a credible motivation for the bishop of Winchester to exercise his patronage in favour of Francis North. It is difficult to arrive at reliable and complete income figures for the c.1780-c.1830 period but some partial information for some of the parishes included in the 1851 Alresford registration district can be derived from certificates of value recorded in the relevant bishop's act books, the 1810 QAB return for livings valued at less than £150 and the figures collected for the Ecclesiastical Duties and Revenues Commission between 1829 and 1831 (Table 3.1)⁵⁹. The Reverend Hubbard's rectory at Cheriton could not have been considered commensurate with the richness of the living since, in 1837, he disposed of part of the tithe barn, which was no longer needed, and commissioned extensive work to build cow houses, tile the granary, fence the yard and alter the chimney and coach house. Presumably he had no problem financing the £86 15s 6d cost⁶⁰.

Table 3.1: Value of Livings			
Parish	Certificates of value	1810 QAB returns	1829-31 average (gross/net)
New Alresford			Not returned
Old Alresford	680 (1797)		Not returned
Beauworth			Not returned
Bighton	500 (1814)		330/310
Bramdean	100 (1801)		210/201
Bishops Sutton	200 (1801)		360/350
Brown Candover	500 (1809)		500/482
Cheriton	1000 (1825)		1280/1192
Hinton Ampner	500 (1825)		425/402
Itchen Stoke			379/379
Kilmeston			See Cheriton
Northington			

⁵⁹ Smith, *Doing the Duty*, pp. 171-7, Appendix 3; HRO, 21M65/A2/3,4; Bermondsey, CERC QAB/3/2/1; *Parl Pap.* (1835), xxii (67), Royal Commission into Ecclesiastical Revenues, pp. 858-85.

⁶⁰ HRO, 138M82/PB3.

Table 3.1: Value of Livings			
Parish	Certificates of value	1810 QAB returns	1829-31 average (gross/net)
Ovington	220 (1817)		245/219
Ropley			See Bishops Sutton
Swarraton		63-4-0	110/110
Tichborne			See Cheriton
West Tisted			58

Cheriton, like Old Alresford, offered a lavish level of income, especially since both were held in plurality with curate support, and other livings like Bighton, Brown Candover and Hinton Ampner also offered a very comfortable financial existence. By contrast, the incumbents at Swarraton and West Tisted must have struggled to maintain the dignity of their office unless they too held livings in plurality or had private income. Such vast inequalities of wealth within the parish organisation, consistent with the detailed analysis of Virgin in *Age of Negligence* and highlighted by Stewart Brown in *Providence and Empire*⁶¹, were the focus of the QAB report in 1810 and one of the reasons for the major constitutional change, considered in Chapter IV, which the Church of England went through in the 1830s; change which Virgin regards as more than gradual but less than cataclysmic⁶². In at least one case personal action was taken. Ropley was a chapelry of Bishops Sutton until 1882 but an earlier holder of that living was party to a sizeable transaction with the governors of the QAB, the purpose of which was to supplement the value of St John's, Winchester, which was recorded as £82 in the Ecclesiastical Commissioners figures. In 1782 the governors acquired property in the parish of Ropley from William Howley senior which he then rented back to create an income for 'the

⁶¹ Virgin, *Age of Negligence*, pp. 254-5; Brown, *Providence and Empire*, pp. 92-4.

⁶² Virgin, *Age of Negligence*, pp. 264-7.

perpetual augmentation' of St John's⁶³. Mr Howley, in a reflection of his personal wealth as well as his public spirit, entered into a bond to indemnify the governors against any possible claim relating to the transaction which might arise as a result of any infringement of his marriage articles which contained detailed instructions relating to the future provision for Mrs Howley in the event of his death⁶⁴.

We cannot be certain, but it seems possible that monetary constraints could have affected pastoral care. The rector at Ovington was sufficiently interested in his financial position to keep detailed accounts from 1760 to 1785. The value of the living rose to about £100 by 1770 with a net profit after all expenses, curates salary, taxes and servants of around £56 in the mid-1770s after tithes had been increased. The rapid turnover of curates in his employ – five between 1760 and 1770 – could perhaps have been due to low pay and overwork, especially as he was also responsible for the parish of Itchen Stoke⁶⁵. A de-motivated curate could help explain why Ovington was the only parish in the area with evidence of a dissenting presence at this time. With some clear exceptions, however, such as West Tisted and Swarraton, the general picture emerging from the records is that the parishes comprising the Alresford registration district were generously endowed and their incumbents were financially comfortable. Moreover, as can be seen from Table 2.2 in Chapter II, this financial position was consolidated and secured by tithe commutations in *all* parishes by 1851 which converted entitlement to variable payments in kind to a fixed cash rent charge and reduced tithes as a source of potential anti-clerical feeling and controversy. Tithe collection could be difficult; the Reverend John Newell of Tichborne even cited his fellow neighbouring gentleman John Barnard from New Alresford to appear

⁶³ QAB/7/5/K7094.

⁶⁴ Ibid; MS 2212, fos. 58-82.

⁶⁵ HRO, 32M69/PB1.

before the Consistory court over non-payment⁶⁶. Commutation eased such potential for acrimony.

Welfare and Charity

Alongside its financial strength, the Church of England also derived power and authority in the late Hanoverian period from its central role administering local welfare and charity. The ecclesiastical parish as a unit, and the church within it, was at the heart of local government and formed the basis of the identity, loyalty and sense of belonging of many parishioners. The rate books of the overseers of the poor and the vestry minutes for New Alresford collectively cover the funding, provision and administration of poor relief in the town for much of the first half of the nineteenth century⁶⁷. The church was involved through the churchwardens, who assessed the poor rate alongside the overseers, and many of those who considered the relief of the poor in vestry also dealt with the churchwardens on matters relating to pews and seating; a small elite had broad interests. Although we have no record of the overseers in 1832/33, four of the 15 parishioners who purchased seats in the newly erected south gallery at this time – Messrs Bennett, Moody, Gammon and Dunn – also attended the vestry meetings at which the decisions were made about relieving the local needy⁶⁸. As with church rates, the process of raising money to care for those in need was the epitome of order and settled stability. Meticulous surviving records show consistent levels of rates being raised, perhaps five or six times per year, with very little being uncollected; disputes were rare, but not unknown. Alresford was a test case for a crucial clarification of the obligation of ministers of dissenting meeting houses to

⁶⁶ HRO, 21M65/C9/589.

⁶⁷ [Overseers], HRO, 45M83/PO1, 2; HRO, 45M83/PV1.

⁶⁸ HRO, 45M83/PW2, 2 January 1833; HRO, 45M83/PV1, 2 and 16 November 1832.

contribute to parish poor rates. Reverend Robert Blessley, minister of the new Congregational chapel in Alresford, appealed against his assessment to poor rates by parish officers in 1828. The evidence suggested that there was no profit from pew rents to which the rates could attach and that all collections and subscriptions went to the County Treasurer of the Association which sent him as minister. By a majority of ten to one, with six abstentions, the bench agreed with the chairman's assessment and the rate was quashed, with costs to Reverend Blessley; a national precedent had been set with respect to the rating obligation, at least for poor rates, of dissenting meeting houses⁶⁹.

The parish used the money to care for its widows, children and the sick through regular and one off payments; the entire process of raising money, deciding on expenditure and approving it ran like clockwork in the hands of the various parish officers. The overseers and churchwardens assessed and requested the rate; two JPs consented to it, the money was spent and presented and the accounts were approved at vestry⁷⁰. By the 1830s meetings regularly took place every couple of weeks. The parish were concerned to care for their impoverished and they were attentive; there were awards of shoes, coats, clothes and cash but the 'public spirit' of those who could have called on the parish for support but declined to was recognised and publicly acknowledged. On 25 March 1820 there was a voluntary donation to William Smith 'for the industry he has shown in maintenance of his wife and eight children without approaching the parish for relief' and on 25 March 1822 a donation of 25 shillings was given to Thomas Pullinger 'as a reward for his industry in

⁶⁹ *Hampshire Telegraph*, 21 January 1828, p. 3.

⁷⁰ HRO, 45M83/PO1,2; HRO, 45M83/PV1.

maintaining a large family with very little aid from the parish⁷¹. Such independence and reluctance to be a financial burden to fellow parishioners was appreciated.

Sometimes, though, the parish took a firmer line. On 30 March 1827 they declined to pay the bill Miss Finch had presented for clothes for Miss Gregory and they refused to permit the relatives of deceased paupers to embellish the coffins supplied by the parish⁷²; on 31 August 1832 they sent a parish girl to look after the children of the parish clerk in the day time so that she was usefully employed⁷³. The claim by the medical officer for reimbursement of costs in March 1830 was also denied on the grounds that all disbursements had to come out of his agreed annual salary⁷⁴. Only occasionally was the appearance of settled order and consensus broken. On 27 July 1812 there was reference to the 'improper conduct of persons residing in the poor house' and the rector and curate were appointed to the committee assigned to investigate the matter⁷⁵. The influential Henry Redman appealed against his poor rate assessment in February 1827 and again in May 1828, this time involving his solicitor, and then again in September 1829 after which he appealed the refusal to the quarter sessions. However, to demonstrate that he was disputing the quantum of the assessment rather than his obligation to contribute to relief, Mr Redman agreed in August 1832 to take on surplus labourers without work and to pay them fairly at agreed rates⁷⁶. The parish of New Alresford took its obligations to care for the poor and needy seriously and the church was very much involved in this effort alongside other parish officers.

⁷¹ HRO, 45M83/PV1, 25 March 1820, 25 March 1822.

⁷² Ibid., 30 March 1827.

⁷³ Ibid., 31 August 1832.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 26 March 1830.

⁷⁵ HRO, 45M83/PO2, 27 July 1812.

⁷⁶ HRO, 45M83/PV1, 14 February 1827, 2 May 1828, 18 September 1829, 31 August 1832.

There is also evidence of effective church involvement in poor relief in other villages. In Old Alresford the overseers worked diligently in the first part of the nineteenth century assessing and collecting funds and administering relief; they paid for rent and lodgings, bought shoes and clothes, provided thatch and other materials and made payments to those nursing their fellow parishioners. Although the rate collected and the disbursements made more than doubled from £347 for 1802/03 to £708 for 1816/17, there was no indication of any rate collection problems⁷⁷. This was a parish which took its obligations to the poor seriously. The records of relief were ordered, efficient and well maintained, the office of overseer was rotated and the burden shared; even Lord Rodney was nominated to serve in 1804⁷⁸. The church was an integral part of the system of welfare; the churchwardens set the rate with the overseers, they were major contributors along with the rector, and ministers and officials usually attended vestry to approve expenditure and allocations.

At Ovington a large rate of over £126 was raised on 18 May 1810 with almost 90 per cent being contributed by the two churchwardens William Agate and James Standerwick⁷⁹. The rate varied considerably suggesting that a proper assessment was made each year. In addition to rate books and overseers' accounts, many other early nineteenth century poor law records have survived for Ovington. These records demonstrate the critical importance of the parish to poor relief and the sense of identity, belonging and entitlement which existed. The parish elite preciously guarded their borders since belonging meant entitlement to relief which had to be administered and funded by the parish elite themselves. As Snell has argued in *Parish and Belonging*, such outdoor relief and a close

⁷⁷ HRO, 43M74/PO2.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ HRO, 32M69/PO1, 18 May 1810.

sense of parish identity and entitlement remained the dominant features of welfare provision even after the new poor law was introduced in 1834; the impact of this legislative change, and what Hollen Lees has identified as a theoretical shift from an individualistic to a collective approach to welfare, is considered in more detail in Chapter IV⁸⁰. Removal orders were issued to and from parishes, apprenticeships were closely examined, relief was refused and appealed and public meetings were held. There were fifteen removal orders from Ovington between 1804 and 1829, most locally to places such as Old Alresford, Bramdean, Tichborne and Hinton Ampner but some further afield to Chesham and Chelsea⁸¹. The penalties for inhabiting without legal settlement and becoming a charge on the parish were harsh. George Brown was charged, convicted and imprisoned for seven days in Gosport on 6 October 1804 for being a ‘rogue and vagabond wandering abroad and lodging in the open air and not giving a good account of himself’. A constable returned him to Ovington, his last legal place of settlement⁸². Young Thomas Crooke ‘aged about five years and upwards’ was, despite his age, removed the other way and delivered to Tichborne⁸³. Ann Hockley was removed from New Alresford to Ovington on 7 December 1809 but remained a problem for the parish; she surfaced in the records again on 20 August 1812 appealing to the local magistrate that, although very poor and impotent and not able to provide for herself, she had been denied relief by the overseers in Ovington. The complaint was at least taken seriously as the magistrate ordered the parish constable to summon the overseers to appear before him to explain the refusal⁸⁴. The authorities must have been very disappointed indeed to see the return of William Elliott

⁸⁰ K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 211; Hollen Lees, *Solidarities of Strangers*, p. 315.

⁸¹ [Removal orders], HRO, 32M69/PO8/1-15.

⁸² HRO, 32M69/PO9/1.

⁸³ HRO, 32M69/PO8/4.

⁸⁴ HRO, 32M69/PO9/2; HRO, 32M69/PO6.

from Odiham in 1815; coming with his wife and nine children he must have potentially represented a significant drain on resources⁸⁵. Vagrancy at this time was such a major social problem that the overseers and churchwardens at Ovington received notice that a public meeting was to be held in New Alresford on 13 February 1818 to discuss the ‘necessity of completely effecting the law relating to vagrants’. Some were slipping through the net⁸⁶. Perhaps such concern was behind the questionnaire, preparatory to the national census, delivered to the overseers in 1831 requesting detailed population information about ages, sex, occupation, houses and families. More than half earned their living from agriculture⁸⁷. The church, through the churchwardens, was right at the heart of this process with the overseers. Removal orders were issued to churchwardens and overseers, both sending and receiving, and those without settlement were delivered into their hands for transfer. In Ovington the Reverend Robert Wright was also the local magistrate who heard the complaints and appeals and passed judgement⁸⁸. Technically the JP heard the case presented by the overseer but, in many cases, this was also the rector hearing a case presented by the churchwardens!

Details of the overseers’ expenditure at Kilmeston from 1831 to 1834 revealed a steady spend each year of around £225, more than half of which was directly paid towards the support of children, the old and the infirm. The balance was for clothes, fuel, medical expenses and other necessities⁸⁹. In Hinton Ampner the annual rate at a similar time was more than double, £540, but there were the familiar hallmarks of a system which delivered

⁸⁵ HRO, 32M69/PO9/4.

⁸⁶ HRO, 32M69/PO10.

⁸⁷ HRO, 32M69/PO11.

⁸⁸ HRO, 32M69/PO8/4, 7-13. Reverend Robert Wright signed many removal orders from Ovington as JP, 1804-1828.

⁸⁹ HRO, 16M80/PO1.

conscientious care. The list of overseers revealed continuity as the same families repeatedly served in office – the Barnards (James, William and Ian), the Bakers and the Fords; the records were meticulous, the rector was a major contributor on the vicarage, glebe and tithes and the rector at Ovington, Robert Wright, approved the setting of the rate as the local magistrate⁹⁰. Things did not always run smoothly, however, and leading parishioners sometimes required patience. Following the creation of the Alresford Poor Law Union it was agreed in 1838 that the premises previously used to house the poor in the village would be sold and the Alresford Guardian would use £400 from the proceeds to repay the debt relating to the house due to John Holden, which had been secured by a bond from several leading parishioners: any surplus after this transaction would pass to the Union as a contribution towards care of the village poor. A year later they were still struggling to sell the house to repay Mr Holden and it was resolved to raise a poor rate to clear the debt if the eventual proceeds were insufficient. Five years after the original decision to dispose of the property the debt had still not been cleared. The amount raised was only £222 so the vestry of 16 February 1843, chaired by Reverend Hubbard, directed the overseers to borrow £200, to be repaid in ten instalments, so that the £400 debt of John Holden could be immediately discharged. There was undoubtedly some embarrassment because the parish had not managed to repay the debt during Mr Holden's lifetime; the sum was now due to his widow⁹¹.

The process of poor relief, with the parish church intimately involved, also appeared to operate smoothly in both Bighton and Bishops Sutton. In 1764 it was John Merish and John Waight, the churchwardens, who approved the overseers' accounts in Bishops Sutton. Mr

⁹⁰ HRO, 40M80/PO2.

⁹¹ Ibid., minutes 23 August 1838-16 February 1843.

Waight, as the outgoing overseer, was actually approving his own accounts and John Mersh was due to take over from him. Needless to say, they were both major contributors to the funds in the first place, as was the wealthy Reverend William Howley senior, and Mr Waight was also the local magistrate. A few people of appropriate education and social standing had to wear many hats: segregation of duties was not always possible in small rural villages⁹².

This is not to suggest that relief was always provided, and the poor took exception when they felt that their just entitlement was denied. On 7 November 1803 John Hopkins, a labourer in Brown Candover, was convicted of the theft of hedge wood and rod hurdles and ordered to pay a fine of 2s 6d; six weeks later, however, Hopkins was denied poor relief and made a complaint against the parish officers. In the hearing Hopkins complained that he had a large family, including a young disabled son, and had not been ‘sufficiently or regularly relieved’. No doubt the imposition of the fine for theft had drained the family resources but the overseers, as protectors of the established order, felt little sympathy⁹³.

Anne Colwell made a similar complaint against the overseers in Northington on 28 August 1794, protesting under oath that she was ‘very poor and impotent, and not able to provide for herself’⁹⁴. The poor were not always afraid to speak out but, equally, the ruling elite did not fail to act where the integrity of the parish unit was compromised and lapses in morality threatened to undermine the established social order. John Sawkins of Brown Candover was adjudged the father of the illegitimate child of Leah Willis in 1789 but, on his refusal to meet his maintenance obligations, a warrant was issued for his arrest so that

⁹² HRO, 42M78/PO1.

⁹³ HRO, 44M69/G3/894.

⁹⁴ HRO, 44M69/G3/427.

he may be ‘further dealt with’⁹⁵. Elizabeth Rumbold also proved a troublesome case in Northington. A settlement order to remove her from Preston Candover on 17 January 1795 was immediately followed by a bastardy examination and the decision on 31 December 1795 to remove her and her child to Northington as her last legal place of settlement⁹⁶. John Harfield, Thomas Merritt and William Westbrook were all removed back to Swarraton from neighbouring parishes between 1815 and 1818⁹⁷ and Henry Merrett was removed from Winchester to Brown Candover in 1834, although only after his time in prison as a debtor had finished⁹⁸. The detailed settlement examination of Robert Ruffell, undertaken under oath by two county JPs, shows how seriously the matter was taken; Ruffell was eventually judged to be settled in Northington, where he was married, rather than in Swarraton where he was born and the urgency of the examination may have come from the birth of his second child five days before⁹⁹.

The incidence of crime also suggested that some did not regard the level of official relief provided as ‘sufficient’. Both J.G. Rule and Roger Wells have identified the prevalence of ‘social crime’ in the early nineteenth century in rural southern England motivated by poverty, hunger and unemployment¹⁰⁰. R.E. Foster suggests that it was the perception of increased levels of criminality in the county, backed up by a large increase in the number of cases coming before magistrates in the 1830s, which led to the introduction of the Hampshire Rural Constabulary in 1839¹⁰¹. As summarised below, most reported crime in

⁹⁵ HRO, 44M69/G3/690.

⁹⁶ HRO, 44M69/G3/774.

⁹⁷ HRO, 27M69/PO1.

⁹⁸ HRO, 88M81W/PO5/66

⁹⁹ HRO, 25M84/PO12/15.

¹⁰⁰ J.G. Rule, ‘Social Crime in the Rural South in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’, *Southern History* 1 (1979), pp. 135-53; R. Wells, ‘Popular Protest and Social Crime: The Evidence of Criminal Gangs in Rural Southern England 1790-1860’, *Southern History* 13 (1991), pp. 32-81.

¹⁰¹ Foster, ‘Hampshire Rural Constabulary’, pp. 52-4.

the Alresford registration district involved petty theft or burglary, often of food, fuel or clothing, which may have been motivated by survival as much as greed. Justice was swift; Richard Hall received six months in prison and a public whipping for stealing two shirts from Thomas Knight in 1803¹⁰²; William Foster was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment for stealing a calf skin from James Redman in New Alresford¹⁰³; James Commons received six months for deserting his wife and family in 1802 and leaving them chargeable on the parish of Bighton¹⁰⁴ and, in an extreme case, William Rose was convicted of stealing a great coat from Robert Reeves of Cheriton in 1804 for which he was sentenced to seven years transportation to Australia¹⁰⁵. Presumably this was not his first conviction. The existence of petty theft, despite such extreme risks, may indicate that the provision of charity and welfare through the established social order was not as effective as the church and parish elite either wanted or expected. The churchwardens and overseers worked together to ensure that relief was only available to those considered genuinely entitled to it; and the church set the moral framework from which lapses were dealt. Such removals and prosecutions were not necessarily evidence of dissent from the established social order; they also indicated its dutiful enforcement for the greater good.

At the turn of the nineteenth century the village of Tichborne provided a specific insight, behind the smooth process of raising and spending rates, into how the church and parish elites combined effectively for those in need. The major local landowner was Sir Henry Tichborne and he led the discussions in vestry on 21 November 1799 about the state of the poor of the parish given the high price of corn and other necessities: it was recognised that

¹⁰² *Hampshire Chronicle*, 17 January 1803, p. 4.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 20 July 1807, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 2 August 1802, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 23 July 1804, p. 4.

their earnings were often insufficient to support their maintenance and accordingly the decision was made to allow the price of a half-gallon loaf, each week, for every child above two in a family. This was to continue whilst prices were considered unusually high. In further exercises of discretion it was resolved to make a payment of 15 shillings to John Adams with respect to his pregnant wife and the same for William Batchelor: the overseers were given authority to support as they considered necessary given the high price of provisions¹⁰⁶. Present at the vestry with Sir Henry were the curate and several farmers. Six months later it was felt necessary to increase the weekly payments to 19 ‘large’ families from 3s to 5s 6d, to continue for three months. In January 1801, by order of the local magistrate, one gallon loaf was to be provided to every poor family of the parish, plus 3s 6d to each family: if their earnings fell short of this level the difference would be made up. Masters were also instructed to support their labourers up to two children, with those above two to be supported by the parish. Those originating from outside the parish had to either work in the parish or otherwise support themselves: they would not be entitled to relief¹⁰⁷. Around the same time, in 1800, the expenses of almost £31 were met for the repair and rebuilding of Tichborne Down House for the parish poor¹⁰⁸. This exceptional concern for the poor in adverse times was driven by Sir Henry Tichborne, in partnership with the local farmers, the Godwin, Goodrich and Whitear families, and the church; however, the Tichborne family were Roman Catholics who worshipped in their own private chapel in Tichborne House. The willingness to spend additional funds, though, did not imply a lack of professionalism. The accounts of the overseers presented by Edward Goodrich and Francis Whitear for 1801/1802 showed total expenditure of over £400. However, it was noted that ‘in the above expenditure one charge for attending magistrates

¹⁰⁶ HRO, 139M82/PV1, 21 November 1799.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 7 May 1800, 5 January 1801 and 16 July 1801.

¹⁰⁸ HRO, 27M92/96.

of 3s 1d and another charge for parish business of 2s 6d are not allowed': the vestry minutes were signed by, amongst others, Sir Henry Tichborne, Mr Dods the curate, William Godwin and Francis Goodrich who was probably Edward's brother¹⁰⁹. The church and parish elites cooperated together, held each other accountable for the greater good, and the majority of the funding for these exceptional measures came from within their ranks, either by direct contribution or by agreeing to 'excuse' small amounts of rates otherwise due from those who might struggle to pay.

Whatever the adequacy of official levels of poor relief, the amount of petty crime this may have inspired and the relative stability of the community, the people of Alresford thought that crime was a problem. A meeting at the George Inn on 28 January 1788 established an association for the prevention of robberies and theft, the preservation of private property and the protection of persons. Each individual joining was to subscribe ten shillings and sixpence to fund rewards for those providing information leading to convictions, and a group of five or more members could take decisions on whether to pursue individual prosecutions¹¹⁰. An article in January 1827 stated that there were so 'many depredations committed in the neighbourhood of Alresford' and suspicions that stolen property was being conveyed to London that a warrant was issued to search the road wagon which travelled from Alresford to the capital. When the wagon was detained it was found to contain the turkeys from Reverend North's poultry house which had recently been broken into¹¹¹.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 23 April 1802.

¹¹⁰ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 4 February 1788, p. 2.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 29 January 1827, p. 1.

But the church's involvement in the provision of welfare was not just manifest in the formal process of poor relief: parishes, such as Tichborne, also facilitated personal giving through sacramental alms as a supplement to poor relief payments and they also sponsored, supported and administered self-help arrangements such as clothing clubs to ease the lives of the needy. Other parish churches in the area administered private endowments to respect the wishes of former parishioners. Blake's School was a privately endowed free school in Hinton Ampner with accounts dating from 1823. The endowment consisted of two farms at Sheet and Noah Hill and rent from the farms plus income from land and some consolidated stock was used to fund the purchase of a school room, pay schoolteacher salaries, purchase books and stationery and to support individual students. The accounts suggest that the funds were well managed and the buildings well maintained. This was not a church school as such but a Sunday school was established there in the 1880s to supervise children who were in church and the school was paying out scholarships in the early 1900s¹¹².

A charitable endowment whose origins dated back to 1642, the Pink and Eager charity, also existed in Old Alresford. These two gentlemen left £20 for the benefit of the parish poor, the interest on which was to be given to the needy each year at the discretion of the churchwardens and overseers. There must have been some gaps in the distribution because the amount stood at £30 in 1822 and, according to the churchwarden accounts, this was then used to build two tenements which were rented out and the equivalent of the interest on the £30, that is 30s, was distributed by the churchwarden Thomas Bulpett in accordance with the benefactors wishes; this practice was continued by the churchwarden every year, choosing the recipients and the amounts, continuing the church's role at the centre of

¹¹² HRO, 56M79/J1.

charity and welfare¹¹³. The seriousness with which the parish took its obligations may be reflected in the pre-census survey of adult male heads, believed to have been undertaken by the Reverend Preston in 1792. This survey identified the number of households, widows, family size, number of children etc. Perhaps this was drawn up for pastoral or visiting purposes; but an ancillary benefit may have been to help ensure that none of the poor and needy were missed in terms of charitable relief¹¹⁴.

Although there was a strong sense of localism reflected in the parish structure and the distribution of aid, parishioners, encouraged by the church, were not beyond responding to appeals on behalf of wider needs. The benefice in Swarraton was the poorest in the registration district, so poor that it obtained exemption from Land Tax in 1814, but the 80 or 90 souls who lived there still raised £2 2s 6d for the SPG in 1819 and they were invited to contribute to the financing of the National Society in 1823¹¹⁵. At the back of the churchwardens' accounts in Bramdean there is a schedule of collections made on behalf of other parishes affected by fires. The parish donated three shillings and six pence on behalf of the parish of Easingwood in Yorkshire in 1779 and a far more generous £1 3s 6d for a parish in Staffordshire in 1783. Such Christian charity did have some limits though: similar appeals in 1780 and 1785 drew a complete blank¹¹⁶.

However, the involvement of the church in private endowments was not always successful; standards of governance sometimes fell short of those which ran at Tichborne, Hinton

¹¹³ HRO, 43M74/PW2, p. 2. The bequest is dated 1792 but *VCH* 3, p. 306 suggests that 'John Pinth' gave £10 in 1642 and 'John Edgur' gave another £10 at an unknown date before the two gifts were subsequently amalgamated.

¹¹⁴ HRO, 43M74/PZ1.

¹¹⁵ HRO, 27M69/PB1, PI1 and PI2.

¹¹⁶ HRO, 1M77/PW1; see back for collections for other parishes.

Ampner and Old Alresford. In Kilmeston Lady Mary Sadler bequeathed £100 in her will in 1706 to the ministers and churchwardens of the parish church for educating the poor. In addition, the rent from Cottage Farm was to be used to fund an annual anatomical and algebraical lecture at Cambridge. The bequest was split into two £50s, each earning interest, but one amount seems to have been lost as ‘Mr Taylor had the other £50 but he died insolvent’; Mr Taylor was a former churchwarden. As a result only half of the money was available between 1772 and 1803 when the other churchwarden at the time, the Honourable John Luttrell, invested the remaining £50 plus interest. The balance of £82 was finally passed to the rector, who appears to have replaced the ‘missing’ £50 before purchasing, a few months later, £113 18s 7d of Consolidated three per cent annuities. There were many years when Lady Sadler’s wishes were not respected and money was lost, but at least the Reverend Edmund Ferrers did his best to remedy the situation¹¹⁷. The result was not quite so bad in Bighton. In 1740 the Reverend Christopher gave a bond of £50 to the ministers, churchwardens and overseers for the poor of the parish. The interest from the bond was to be distributed to the poor by the churchwardens each year and all was in order until 1764. However, there is then a gap in the records with a reference to a double payment being made in 1802; then nothing again until the decision in 1862 to pass the accumulated amount of just over £93 to the charity commissioners. Clearly many payments had been missed and the church felt unable to continue administering the charity and honouring the wishes of the donor¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁷ HRO, 16M80/PW1. Legacy for Lady Sadler’s charity, p. 102; bequest and related administration, pp. 126-8.

¹¹⁸ HRO, 35M69/PW1. See miscellaneous fiche 505 and ‘The Account of the Poor Money’ inverted at back of the fiche.

Whilst some charities had been administered with zeal and some neglected there were others for which no detailed records have survived. For example, in 1828 Elizabeth Goodrich from Cheriton willed her trustees to purchase sufficient stock to produce an annual income of £20 which was to be used for the benefit of the parish poor but we have no information as to how this generosity was honoured¹¹⁹. The desire to make personal bequests to be administered by the local church was both widespread and, as will be shown in more detail in Chapter IV, continued throughout the nineteenth century. In some parishes such bequests took on a more tangible and public expression as the donor's generosity was recorded on charity boards which were prominently exhibited in the parish church. These boards are still on display in St John's at New Alresford, although relegated now to a dark corner of the passage leading from the nave to the church hall. The bequest of Jenny Harris (Fig. 26) in 1831 was for a sum sufficient to produce ten pounds per annum and the church, in the form of its churchwardens acting alongside the overseers, was responsible for administering the legacy to the poor in the form of the distribution of bread and other provisions on New Year's Day. Such boards served a dual purpose; they reminded the parish elite of their paternal obligations to care for those in need, but they also created a sense of expectation and entitlement in those less well off. The boards both illustrated and reinforced the existing social order; they were a tangible expression of the obligation of paternalism and charity, but they were also expected to invoke feelings of deference and respect in those who read of these acts of generosity. Whatever the poor thought there is nothing to suggest that distributions were ever refused. But if gratitude was not enough of an inducement, some donors also received more tangible 'reward'; as a member of the powerful landed Harris family, a memorial to the death of 85 year old Jenny Harris (Fig. 27), two years after her bequest, is prominently displayed with other

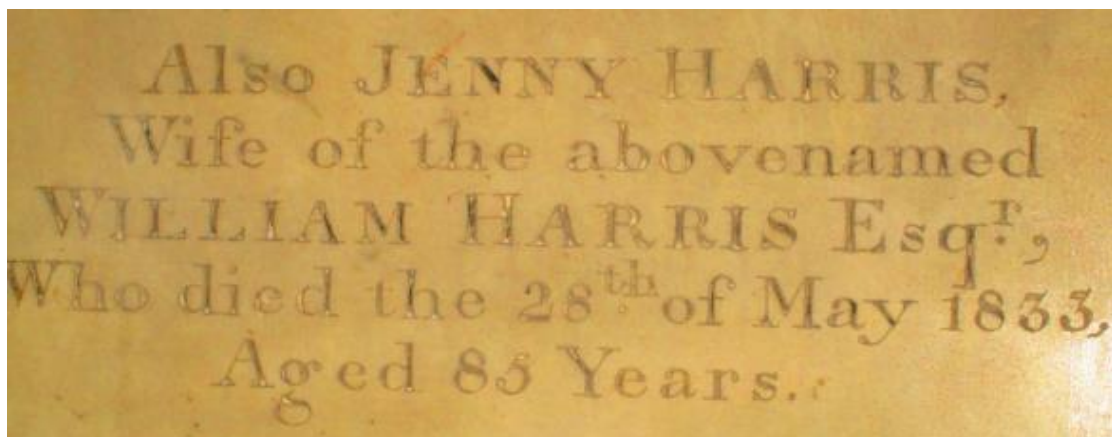
¹¹⁹ *VCH* 3, p. 314.

family memorials in the Lady Chapel. By displaying these boards and memorials and administering such gifts, the church located itself at the heart of the established social order.

Figure 26: Gift of Jenny Harris, St John's, New Alresford (photographed 30 August 2014)



Figure 27: Memorial to Jenny Harris in the Lady Chapel, St John's (photographed 30 August 2014)



We have established that the general picture emerging from the administration of welfare and charity in this part of rural Hampshire up to c.1830 is that of settled stability: funds were raised, amounts were spent, payments were approved, judgements were made,

officers were appointed, and this cycle continued year after year, with very little disturbance or dissent, overseen and implemented by the church and parish elites who were often inextricably linked. The Church of England was at the heart of the maintenance of the established social order. But what of the individual ministers and officers of the church? Their contribution to this settled community came in the form of longevity of office tenure, the performance of multiple roles which bound the church and parish together, and in the individual energy, commitment and engagement which preserved the established order; stability had to be worked at and maintained, it was not effortless.

Service and Society

The records are full of examples of outstanding longevity of service: having the same people doing the same things in the same place ensured stability. In Old Alresford Thomas Bulpett served as churchwarden for 30 years (1802-1832)¹²⁰ whilst his successor William Beare managed 20 years of service¹²¹; in Bighton William Carpenter and William Grant served as churchwardens *together* for almost 40 years (1812-1852)¹²² with just a brief gap when George Dumper and then George Smith stood in for Carpenter; only a few attended vestry and there were not many alternatives. In Ovington the 25 years served as churchwarden by Edward Easton (1840-1865) was followed by an identical term in the same role for Captain Hewson (1867-1892)¹²³. In Cheriton Henry Whitear and Thomas

¹²⁰ HRO, 43M74/PO2; Thomas Bulpett was the churchwarden distributing the Pink & Eager charity money in 1802; HRO, 43M74/PW2, 12 December 1832, records Bulpett's death. His service was apparently unbroken over this period.

¹²¹ HRO, 43M74/PW2.

¹²² HRO, 35M69/PW1; see miscellaneous fiche 503 and 504.

¹²³ HRO, 32M69/PW2, 25 March 1840 for Easton's appointment and subsequent minutes thereafter.

Baker managed a 'mere' ten years together (1816-1826)¹²⁴ but to compensate the Reverend Henry Hubbard was the incumbent from 1825 until 1878¹²⁵. William Whitear, Samuel Andrews and Chris Hodges all served as warden for many years at Bramdean¹²⁶ but the award for longest service has to go to William Godwin who served in Tichborne an almost unbroken tenure from 1788 until 1830, over 40 years: and if anyone doubted the family commitment, his relation John Godwin took the post in 1836 and was joined two years later by another relative George¹²⁷. Such close family involvement and service was not unusual; in 1800 two Michael Rivers, 'senior' and 'junior', served together as churchwardens in Bishops Sutton and three years later these offices were held by John Eames Waight and John Waight¹²⁸. Local dynasties were part of the early nineteenth century church dominance in this part of rural Hampshire.

But longevity of service was not the only way to ensure stability: it also came from combining multiple offices. Thomas Bulpett combined the office of churchwarden with that of overseer in Old Alresford in some years¹²⁹; in Ovington in 1816 George Lowther was churchwarden and surveyor of highways, whilst his fellow warden Thomas Winkham was also the other surveyor of highways *and* the overseer of the poor¹³⁰. Robert Wright was rector of Ovington in the early nineteenth century as well as being the local JP¹³¹ and in Bishops Sutton John Waight was at various times churchwarden, overseer and

¹²⁴ HRO, 138M82/PW1.

¹²⁵ 'Hubbard, Henry (1818-1829)'; *The Hampshire Advertiser*, 20 February 1878, p. 2.

¹²⁶ HRO, 1M77/PW1.

¹²⁷ HRO, 139M82/PW1.

¹²⁸ HRO, 42M78/PW1; see minutes in 1800 and 1803.

¹²⁹ HRO, 43M74/PO2. Thomas Bulpett was both churchwarden and overseer in 1802 and 1803.

¹³⁰ HRO, 32M69/PO1, 25 March 1816.

¹³¹ HRO, 32M69/PO8.

magistrate¹³². The picture was similar in Northington where in the late eighteenth century William Hewitt, Christopher Lockyer and William Budd all served as churchwarden and overseer, as well as being major ratepayers and attending vestry¹³³. Such combined roles, church and secular, were efficient given the overlap of shared responsibilities and they served to reinforce commonality of perspective and purpose. The holders of multiple offices also invariably sat in vestry, scrutinised and approved expenditure and were major contributors to both church and poor rates. In most parishes a handful of people controlled church and local government, often in a remarkably consensual manner. With a small elite some overlap was inevitable.

In terms of the church influence on local affairs the active participation and engagement of rector or curate, or both, was important. Participation in vestry, relationships with the local elite and personal leadership of the church in matters of finance and pastoral support all helped cement the position of the church at the heart of local government and society. The Reverend Edmund Ferrers, rector of Cheriton with Tichborne and Kilmeston in the early nineteenth century, took his obligations so seriously that he drew up formal agreements in 1803 and 1810 with his three curates James Baynes, Charles Peters and John Coles; he was anxious to ensure access to full service provision for all his parishioners and to optimise their pastoral care. Cheriton was at the exact mid-point between Kilmeston and Tichborne, both being one and a half miles away, so Mr Baynes was to continue managing Kilmeston whilst Mr Peters assumed responsibility for Cheriton and Tichborne. Given this dual responsibility the agreement specified service times such that Reverend Peters had an opportunity to travel between his two congregations: morning service at Tichborne at

¹³² HRO, 42M78/PO1. John Waight was churchwarden and overseer in the 1760s and approved the overseers' accounts as JP on 21 April 1770 and 9 May 1772.

¹³³ HRO, 26M69/PW1; see minutes from 1779 to 1789.

9.30am followed by Cheriton at 11.30am; then evening prayer at 2.00pm in Tichborne and 3.15pm in Cheriton; so four and a half miles of arduous country travel and four duties on a Sunday¹³⁴. The agreement also set out estimates for the numbers of marriages, baptisms and burials at each church, specified arrangements for fees and revenues and set out the obligations for Good Friday and Christmas Day. The salary for the Tichborne curacy, with the occasional duty for the whole parish, was £60 per annum plus parsonage house and land and Mr Ferrers also confirmed that he would be responsible for any repairs to the parsonage: he was certainly thorough; it had been he who had sorted out the problems relating to the Lady Sadler charity¹³⁵. As a further indication of co-operation, a list of officiating clergy at Ropley for the first half of the nineteenth century suggests that many services were taken by ministers who were neither the incumbent nor the usual curate; they were visiting from other parishes, as and when required, to ensure that the expected duty was performed¹³⁶. The alternative interpretation is that the incumbent was less than fully committed!

Other ministers appeared determined to stamp their individual authority on the parish; by personally attending vestry, by chairing meetings, leading finance campaigns, recording and signing minutes etc. Francis North engaged three curates in Old Alresford, New Alresford and Medstead but, when George Sumner took over the rectory of Old Alresford in 1851 his presence and leadership, as discussed in Chapter IV, were immediately apparent¹³⁷; he had no distractions from other parishes and his wife, who later founded the

¹³⁴ HRO, 139M82/PI1.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ HRO, 27M82/PR5; see fiche 8/9 roll M76.

¹³⁷ HRO, 43M74/PW2. Minutes after 1850.

Mothers Union, was fully engaged alongside him in his pastoral efforts¹³⁸. In Bramdean the rector Charles Walters was present in vestry, reviewing and approving expenditure year after year in the 1830s¹³⁹. The commitment of Reverend Hubbard to this part of rural Hampshire cannot be questioned; rector of Hinton Ampner from 1822 to 1878 and for Cheriton with the chapelries of Kilmeston and Tichborne from 1826 to 1878, he led the provision of worship to four sets of parishioners for over 50 years, as well as being the chaplain at St Cross Hospital from 1865 to 1878 and domestic chaplain to Sir George Tomline, bishop of Winchester from 1820 to 1827. Hubbard, despite being a pluralist, led the vestry meetings at Kilmeston, contributed to the clothing club at Tichborne, improved the rectory at Cheriton and made major contributions to the poor rates at Hinton Ampner. Mr Hubbard personified the importance of active engagement with parishioners, longevity of service, continuity of office, and the importance of personal connections¹⁴⁰.

It has been suggested so far that the society produced by such close co-operation between church and parish elites, the local manifestation of integrated church and state, was largely settled, stable and compliant, and that there was widespread acceptance of the *status quo*. But was that the reality? We have already noted evidence of disputes relating to emotive issues such as seating and tithes and the Consistory court provided a forum for dealing with these as well as issues relating to defamation, brawling, morality and church discipline¹⁴¹. Some of these disputes focused more on the pursuit of different aspects of justice rather than necessarily indicating dissatisfaction with the church or some element of the established social order of which, as we have seen, the church was an integral part.

¹³⁸ Lambeth, LPL MU/MSS/1/2.

¹³⁹ HRO, 1M77/PW1. Minutes 1833-1839.

¹⁴⁰ 'Hubbard, Henry (1818-1829)'; HRO, 16M80/PW1; HRO, 139M82/PV1; HRO, 138M82/PB3; HRO, 40M80/PO2.

¹⁴¹ See HRO, 21M65/C9 for the individual cases.

Whilst many cases saw a member of the establishment, for example a rector or churchwarden, opposed to one or more parishioners – in one example a successful claim against a rector led to his resignation - other disputes were ‘internal’ to the elite, usually involving attempts to assert power or establish precedence. Together the cases provide some insight into the extent of dissent from the established social order and the role of the church therein.

Throughout the period the church was active in enforcing the accepted standards of morality which underpinned the existing social structure. Neighbourliness and good behaviour were necessary outcomes of a society based on respect, deference, duty and paternalism. When complaints of defamation or poor discipline were made, usually involving sexual misconduct, the church through its Consistory court pursued the accusation, investigated the matter, examined the evidence, indicted the accused, passed judgement and sentence and ensured that the sentence was carried out. Guilt of infidelity in the Consistory court could be established both by actual proof of the indiscretion or by showing that there was a ‘common report’ that the accused was guilty. The cases contain evidence of some parishioners falling short of what society expected of them.

Churchwarden Thomas Budd from Kilmeston pursued both Thomas Mansbridge and Sarah Spencer in separate actions in 1771 when, on the death of Mr Spencer, Mansbridge, who had been the lodger, continued living in the same house as Mrs Spencer as her ‘bailiff/manager’. Both were found guilty of fornication and adultery and sentenced to a fine and public penance, intended to reinforce the authority of the church and norms of the community, although both refused to undertake the latter despite being threatened with

excommunication¹⁴². The churchwardens at Old Alresford also pursued Mary Andrews on a charge of cohabitation and adultery with John Ewens in 1760; she had stepped outside the accepted bounds of moral and social behaviour¹⁴³. There was more tangible evidence of Elizabeth King's infidelity in that this single woman from Ovington had an illegitimate child in 1770. In another show of defiance she 'was thrice called but did not appear' to answer the charges¹⁴⁴.

Cases of defamation were slightly different in that the charge was usually made by one parishioner against another, rather than by an officer of the church, and the accusation – often, again, of a sexual nature – was contested such that its expression defamed the innocent party. Andrew Edney of Cheriton was accused of defaming Hannah Smith by calling her 'a stinking whore and stinking bitch' in 1755; a year later Elizabeth Wright, also of Cheriton, had to perform penance before the minister and churchwardens after asserting that Rachel Tull '... had a bastard when your husband was in gaol'¹⁴⁵; the intention of this less public sanction was to provide restitution to the injured party. Similar assertions made by Thomas Cole against Anne Atkinson of New Alresford in 1757 were also found to be baseless with the same consequence: penance performed before the minister and churchwardens, and Robert Lipscombe was held to have defamed Sarah Miell of Northington by his suggestion that 'John Bull laid with her under a gooseberry bush' when coming from Maudlin Hill Fair in 1765. In addition to his penance he faced costs of almost £6¹⁴⁶. When Charles Gregory of Cheriton spread the word that Richard Webb 'had lain with Sarah Cooper in a saw pit' and gave her half a crown for so doing in 1781 he was

¹⁴² HRO, 21M65/C9/125, 126.

¹⁴³ HRO, 21M65/C9/129.

¹⁴⁴ HRO, 21M65/C9/295.

¹⁴⁵ HRO, 21M65/C9/709, 788.

¹⁴⁶ HRO, 21M65/C9/21, 561

held to have injured her good name and Ropley experienced a defamation case within a family in 1786 when Nicholas Wilkes failed to report to defend himself against a charge of defamation made by his relative Mary¹⁴⁷.

Brawling was categorised as a separate offence and included verbal argument and altercation as well as physical confrontation. It can, however, be viewed alongside other disciplinary offences and defamation as anti-social behaviour and a threat to community peace and established order. Curate Charles Powlett brought a suit for brawling against Thomas Bignell in Ovington in 1804; the same Thomas Bignell who broke locks and clambered over pews in his seating case against James Standerwick of the same year in the same parish. The term ‘brawling’ could have referred to such physical disturbances. Interestingly, the schedule of costs to this case contains a note to the effect that these proceedings would be stayed until judgement was given in the perturbation of seat case. A second note suggests that this cause was dismissed with costs on 21 March 1806 so perhaps the judgements were linked in some way¹⁴⁸? In the neighbouring parish of Avington, just outside the Alresford registration district, relations between the rector, John Heywood, and a group of his parishioners deteriorated to such an extent that both sides indulged in retaliatory litigation following an acrimonious exchange in church. Heywood pursued disciplinary proceedings against a group of his congregation and they in turn pursued a charge of ‘quarrelling, chiding and brawling’ against the rector. From the pulpit during service Rector Heywood admonished them ‘... you all crept into the church like a set of pilfering thieves as you are – you have your amusement tonight and I hope I shall have mine ... by this day month if the law is in my favour you will be snug enough in

¹⁴⁷ HRO, 21M65/C9/189, 839.

¹⁴⁸ HRO, 21M65/C9/647.

Winchester gaol'¹⁴⁹. Such public accusation was not the best example of Anglican pastoral care and Heywood was found guilty of brawling, suspended from conducting one service and condemned to costs; perhaps not surprisingly, he resigned the living a few months later¹⁵⁰. As Spaeth argues in *The Church in an Age of Danger*, it was hard to reconcile disputes with parishioners at court with the minister's pastoral responsibility; at best such conflict was distracting, at worst undermining¹⁵¹. This case, just outside the boundaries of the district, seems at odds with the largely undisturbed peace suggested elsewhere. Perhaps the incumbents within Alresford were a little less confrontational than Reverend Heywood, or more socially exalted and so less easy to trifle with?

Some caution is required when assessing how this evidence from the Consistory court impacts the picture of Anglican settled stability; many of the disruptions of daily life did not make it to the courts. Although the instance act books are complete they contain only the barest details of court proceedings, often omit the parishes of the parties and, after 1857, are concerned almost entirely with faculties. Spaeth makes the point that, by this time, the authority and effectiveness of church courts had greatly diminished as litigation was felt to be costly and time-consuming and prolonged ill-feeling¹⁵². The substance of the cases is contained in the instance cause papers which exist, to some level of completeness, for over 880 cases in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There are certainly examples of dissent and acrimony, but what is perhaps remarkable is that there are actually *so few* surviving cases for the Alresford registration district; around 20 cases between 1750 and 1850 in the context of a population of about seven thousand. When the details are

¹⁴⁹ HRO, 21M65/C9/141/1-8; HRO, 21M65/C9/406.

¹⁵⁰ HRO, 21M65/A2/4, 17 July 1806.

¹⁵¹ Spaeth, *Age of Danger*, p. 255.

¹⁵² *Ibid*; pp. 59-82, 254-9.

examined it is also apparent that many cases do not actually represent dissent against ‘the Church’ or ‘the establishment’. Certainly some defied the system by non-attendance or refusing penance, and disputes as to rates and tithes suggested rebellion against the settled order (although feelings of inequity or financial hardship could motivate as well), but other categories of action were arguably within the context of the existing social structure and the role of the church within it. When individual parishioners pursued defamation cases they did so, not just because their reputation was besmirched, but because they accepted that society required a certain standard of social interaction and moral behaviour. Taking action indicated tacit consent and acquiescence, even to the extent of using the church courts to pursue their own rector when necessary. Similarly, the numerous disputes as to seating were no doubt driven by the desire to demonstrate self-importance and prestige but the need to do this, to be seen every week at the front of the parish church giving their tangible endorsement to the established social order, shows just how integral the church was to everyday life and just how powerful its hold was. The church, through its courts, provided the means of enforcement; both for churchwardens, rectors and curates to enforce discipline and for parishioners to seek relief.

In addition to the role of the church and its teaching within society, we also need to consider more secular aspects of compliance. If the church was deeply ingrained with the state at the local level, and if there was widespread acceptance of the system of local government, welfare, charity and education which it produced, then we might expect this consent to be generally reflected in a close-knit community and minimal levels of secular crime. Local newspapers provide some insight in this respect and although we cannot be sure of reporting accuracy, completeness or editorial bias, their coverage helps to assess the reality of stable Anglican hegemony in this part of rural Hampshire. Issues of the

Hampshire Chronicle (c.1772-c.1830), the *Hampshire Telegraph* (from 1799 up to c.1840) and the *Hampshire Advertiser* (1830s) were reviewed online¹⁵³. As a result of this review of reports of proceedings at quarter sessions, accidents, incidents and local community and church events, a total of 137 articles were identified and examined relating to the parishes of the Alresford registration district; the relevant subject matter can be summarised (Table 3.2) as follows:

Table 3.2: Subject of local newspaper articles c. 1770-c.1840				
	<i>Hampshire Chronicle</i>	<i>Hampshire Telegraph</i>	<i>Hampshire Advertiser</i>	Total
Petty/non-violent crime; theft, burglary etc.	24	3	4	31
Violent crime; murder, assault etc.	2	2	1	5
Social crimes, misbehaviour etc.	6	4	3	13
Suicides.	2	1		3
Community events and celebrations.	9	1	6	16
Church events and services.	7	6	9	22
Major controversies; rates, pluralism etc.		5		5
Other e.g. fires, accidents, workhouse etc.	33	1	8	42
Total	83	23	31	137

The crime figures are taken from the regular reports of the Hampshire quarter sessions which usually included brief details of the accused, his or her parish, the crime and where the offence happened. As discussed above, most crime related to petty theft and burglary, and was potentially motivated more by the perceived inadequacies of poor relief than greed. But more hardened criminals existed too and there is some evidence of violent crime. John Hall and his son were attacked and brutally beaten as they were returning home from Alresford in 1810¹⁵⁴ and a group of labourers working on the new turnpike road between Alresford and Petersfield in 1825 found some human remains near Ropley which suggested a violent death¹⁵⁵. In June 1836 the elderly letter carrier was attacked and murdered on his way from Bramdean to Alresford for his postage money; three weeks later

¹⁵³ 'British Newspaper Archive' www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk.

¹⁵⁴ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 5 November 1810, p. 4.

¹⁵⁵ *Hampshire Telegraph*, 13 June 1825, p. 1.

the impoverished culprit was executed in Winchester gaol¹⁵⁶. Several instances of suicide were also recorded, the inquests invariably attributing the tragic event to the ‘lunacy’ or deranged mind of the individual; an elderly man named Bullock cut his throat with a razor in a particularly gruesome case in 1797¹⁵⁷ and Simon Miles, a labourer from Northington was found hanged to a tree in 1810¹⁵⁸. Given the Church’s view on suicide this was, perhaps, the ultimate act of defiance and dissent.

More ‘social’ crimes and misdemeanours, a direct affront to the established social order, also took place and were punished as part of the criminal justice system. Michael Bailey placed an angry advertisement in June 1810 for the return of James Hall his apprentice wheelwright who had eloped from his master’s house without provocation; he offered a two guinea reward for his return whilst reminding anyone tempted to employ his escaped apprentice that they would be prosecuted if they did so¹⁵⁹. A similar effort was made by Mr Samuel Stubbington to recover his deserted servant William Knowles; his notice included a detailed description, accusations of theft and the offer of a half guinea reward¹⁶⁰. John Baker and John Lacey had the temerity to disturb Reverend Samuel Maddock during divine service at Ropley and were forced to publicly acknowledge their misconduct in return for the rector withdrawing his prosecution against them¹⁶¹.

Misbehaviour in the workhouse was particularly frowned upon and usually resulted in a spell in the Bridewell or House of Correction; Lilo Gillet received seven days in 1838,

¹⁵⁶ *Hampshire Advertiser*, 25 June 1836, p. 3, 16 July 1836, p. 3.

¹⁵⁷ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 27 May 1797, p. 4.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 5 November 1810, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 4 June 1810, p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 11 March 1793, p. 2.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 18 January 1819, p. 1.

James Ellye 21 days in 1844 and Mary Ann Tee the same in 1845 for this offence¹⁶².

Noncompliance from those at the bottom of the social order could not be tolerated.

We have already seen that the social elite occasionally clashed on issues of seating, tithes and dilapidations, but disputes also occurred in a more secular context. In 1802 William Harris, the dominant local landowner in Alresford, was involved in a public dispute with James Standerwick of Ovington House (the same James Standerwick, above, who battled with Thomas Bignell over seating in 1804) over the treatment of his neighbours when their cattle inadvertently roamed onto his unenclosed land. Standerwick claimed that Harris had subjected him to ‘false and invidious’ accusations as to the treatment of his neighbours and that this was merely part of Harris’s plan to influence the opinion of other landowners and obtain their agreement to enclose Alresford common land¹⁶³; a plan that was to be successfully implemented a few years later.

Brian Worrall in *The Making of the Modern Church* argues that parish clergy were often men of considerable influence in local society in the late eighteenth century when most people assented to the general truth of Christianity¹⁶⁴. The Church, through its clergy, played a major part in the administration of secular justice, in passing judgement on their fellow citizens and generally ensuring the continuity of the established social order; they did so by their membership of the bench of magistrates sitting alongside their peers in the parish and county elite: baronets, knights, esquires and members of parliament.

Proceedings at quarter sessions, including justices in attendance, were regularly reported

¹⁶² *Hampshire Advertiser*, 13 January 1838, p. 3; *Hampshire Telegraph*, 9 November 1844, p. 4, 12 April 1845, p. 3.

¹⁶³ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 2 August 1802, p. 1.

¹⁶⁴ Worrall, *The Modern Church*, p. 1.

and indicate the extent of clerical representation on the bench in Winchester (Table 3.3)¹⁶⁵. These numbers are not taken from the court records themselves, so need to be treated with a degree of caution, but printed magistrate lists for Hampshire only survive from 1852 and the *nomina ministrorum* in session rolls and papers before that are limited, so these newspaper records provide the best general indication of clerical involvement¹⁶⁶.

Table 3.3: Composition of magistrates bench in Winchester quarter sessions			
Session	Clergy	Bench	% Clergy (approx.)
Michaelmas 1819	6	31	19
Epiphany 1821	6	26	23
Midsummer 1821	5	25	20
Epiphany 1822	5	40	13
Michaelmas 1823 (vote for chair)	8	71	11
Easter 1824	7	35	20
Midsummer 1825	4	26	15
Epiphany 1828	2	20	10

This limited sample suggests that in the 1820s clerical representation as Justices of the Peace in Winchester was between ten and 25 per cent; a significant minority, which demonstrates that, at the time, the clergy were an integral and accepted part of the parish and county elite. This is entirely consistent with Brown's assertion in *Providence and Empire* and Virgin's in *Age of Negligence* that around a quarter of all magistrates were clergymen by 1815¹⁶⁷. Moreover, a member of the clergy often chaired the bench; for example, Reverend Herbert chaired the Michaelmas 1821 and Easter 1824 sessions and Reverend Wright led the meeting in Midsummer 1828; clerical influence depended not just on numbers, but also on activity and engagement. At a local level, the incumbents of the 17 parishes in the Alresford registration district were checked against the magistrate

¹⁶⁵ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 25 October 1819, p. 3; 15 January 1821, p. 4; 16 July 1821, p.4; 21 January 1822, p.4; 20 October 1823, p.4; 3 May 1824, p. 4; 25 July 1825, p. 2; 21 January 1828, p. 1.

¹⁶⁶ [Quarter session records], HRO, W/D3/312; HRO, W/D3/217; HRO, W/D3/221.

¹⁶⁷ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, pp. 11-13; Virgin, *Age of Negligence*, p. 256.

listings for the various quarter sessions reported in the period¹⁶⁸. This analysis suggests that the Alresford parishes were indeed represented on the Winchester bench but, perhaps surprisingly, not in significant numbers; Robert Wright (Ovington, 1817) and John Orde (Itchen Stoke, 1817) appear to be the only representatives. However, a review of the reports of proceedings indicates that both were very frequent attenders, active participants in deliberations and, as mentioned above, Reverend Wright chaired the bench on some occasions. Given the local networking of clergy in this part of rural Hampshire it seems likely that the established Church was sufficiently connected with this aspect of local government. The historiography and local evidence on the subsequent decline in clerical involvement on the bench is considered in Chapter IV.

It is apparent, therefore, that there *was* crime, unrest, argument, dissent and debate in the parishes of the Alresford registration district in the late Hanoverian period. However, there was also evidence of neighbourly spirit and a tight, close-knit community. Mr Bell was so grateful for his Alresford neighbours' help in putting out the fire at his premises in 1809 that he took out a notice to thank them¹⁶⁹; virtually everyone in Ovington contributed to raising £8 for the relief of distressed manufacturers¹⁷⁰; donations and subscriptions poured in to improve the Hampshire County Hospital in 1828¹⁷¹; the poor of Northington were relieved with bread and beef¹⁷²; the whole town of Alresford came together to celebrate Queen Victoria's coronation in 1838, with special provisions provided for those in the workhouse¹⁷³, and we have already noted instances of outreach and support outside of the

¹⁶⁸ The names in Table 2.3 were checked against the court reports in the *Hampshire Chronicle*.

¹⁶⁹ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 6 February 1809, p. 4.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 29 January 1827, p. 1.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 18 February 1828, p. 4.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 5 February 1776, p. 3; 7 February 1803, p. 4.

¹⁷³ *Hampshire Telegraph*, 2 July 1838, p. 4.

parish. Such examples actually suggest a substantially compliant community. Was the level of crime really that great? Reviews have been based on newspaper reports rather than actual court records but, given the minute detail with which matters were reported it seems reasonable to assume that most crimes before the court were made public. Over a period of approximately 50 years, and across a population of some six to seven thousand covering 17 parishes, a total of barely 50 felonies were reported in the available newspapers, most of them petty theft and minor misdemeanours. This does not seem enough to alter the view that church and parish elite combined together to deliver a settled, stable and cohesive community. County crime data and comparative statistics became available later in the century and this point is considered further in Chapter IV.

Dissent

It was suggested above that there was very little evidence of organised religious dissent in the district before c.1820, despite a huge national increase in the registration of dissenting places of worship. For Hampshire, A.J. Willis analyses dissenters' meeting house certificates up to 1844 in *A Hampshire Miscellany*¹⁷⁴. However, care is needed when considering such registrations as evidence of dissent. The granting of a certificate was a legal requirement which provided protection from prosecution (but not necessarily persecution) for the owner and minister. The certificate could relate to 'premises' of varying kinds; a purpose built building, a dwelling house or even a room in a private house or public building. The mere granting of a certificate tells us nothing about the extent to which the venue was actually used, nor about continuity of usage; discontinuity could have

¹⁷⁴ A.J. Willis, 'Dissenters Meeting House Certificates 1702-1844', *A Hampshire Miscellany, Part III* (Folkestone, 1965), pp. 109-200.

been due to success (the premises were outgrown), failure (lack of support), or simply because the owner of the property died or moved away. The religious census of 1851 gives us a reasonable amount of confidence on which meeting houses existed at that date, although Clive Field found evidence of many missing returns in Shropshire¹⁷⁵: the exercise was well publicised and Nonconformists had an interest in ensuring that their chapel and adherents were identified if the commissioners inadvertently overlooked them when circulating the blank returns for completion. It seems likely, then, that active congregations did not survive through to mid-century at many of the meeting places which were registered in the 1820s and 1830s.

No dissenting places of worship at all were registered in eight of the 17 parishes of the Alresford registration district before 1844. Elsewhere, though, there were at least some signs of attempts to establish a Nonconformist presence. On 1 August 1800 the dissenting minister Richard Densham registered both the front parlour of Edward Knapp's house in Broad Street, Alresford, and the house occupied by Sarah Wareham in Ropley as places which would be 'occasionally used for religious worship'¹⁷⁶ and the Congregational minister Robert Blessley, who had resisted attempts by the parish officers of New Alresford to subject his chapel to poor rates, applied with Mr Mills to register his house in Tichborne as a Congregational meeting place in September 1827¹⁷⁷. In other villages John Goodwin registered his house in Ovington (1818), as did George Green (1833)¹⁷⁸; William Newman applied for a certificate for his home in Old Alresford (1822)¹⁷⁹ and similar

¹⁷⁵ C.D. Field, *Church and Chapel in Early Victorian Shropshire: Returns from the 1851 Census of Religious Worship*, Shropshire Record Series 8 (Keele, 2004), pp. li-liii, xiii.

¹⁷⁶ [Dissenting meeting house certificates], HRO, 21M65/F2/3/152; HRO, 21M65/F2/3/157.

¹⁷⁷ HRO, 21M65/F2/4/283(1), (2).

¹⁷⁸ HRO, 21M65/F2/3/469; HRO, 21M/F2/5/72.

¹⁷⁹ HRO, 21M65/F2/4/35.

applications were made by Joseph Newell (Beauworth, 1827), James Compton (Ropley, 1837) and Benjamin Carpenter (Kilmeston, 1844)¹⁸⁰. Certificates were also sought for various houses in Cheriton; those occupied by William Mears (1827), Thomas Newell (1831), Henry Dale and John Batchelor (both 1836)¹⁸¹. Whilst this impressive list suggests that significant Nonconformist momentum was building, the reality appears different. Despite all the individual registrations of the 1820s and 1830s no dissenting place of worship at all was recorded in the 1851 religious census for Cheriton, Beauworth, Tichborne or Old Alresford¹⁸²; little dissent had grown beyond a domestic setting. Working back from the census we can see the roots of the Congregationalist presence in Ovington in the registration of John Goodwin's home in 1818 and there were forerunners to the Baptist presence in Ropley (both were still based in a domestic dwelling rather than a chapel in 1851). Benjamin Carter made the census return for the Primitive Methodists in Kilmeston; since this was described as 'not a separate building' and 'not used exclusively for worship', this was probably his home, which had been registered as a place of worship in 1844. Apart from the private Roman Catholic chapel in Tichborne House though, there were only two other purpose built dissenting chapels which were used exclusively for worship in the 17 parishes of the Alresford registration district in 1851; one was the Primitive Methodist chapel in Swarraton registered by James Green (who became the steward) in 1831 and the other was the Congregational chapel established in New Alresford in 1825¹⁸³.

¹⁸⁰ HRO, 21M65/F2/4/280; HRO, 21M65/F2/5/245; HRO, 21M65/F2/7/64.

¹⁸¹ HRO, 21M65/F2/4/251; HRO, 21M65/F2/5/3; HRO, 21M65/F2/5/193; HRO, 21M65/F2/5/224.

¹⁸² Vickers, *Religious Census in Hampshire*, pp. 157-62; TNA, HO 129/113.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

As already indicated, the early seeds of Nonconformity in Alresford were vigorously opposed. The Congregational Church Book records the ‘holy zeal for the welfare of others’ of Reverend Densham of Petersfield who made regular incursions into the surrounding towns and villages to enlighten and convert his fellow man¹⁸⁴. It was Densham who signed the applications to set up rooms and houses as places of religious worship in Alresford and Ropley in 1800 and Densham who was quoted in the *Evangelical Magazine* (1804) when he commented that ‘There is a considerable town near Winchester, called Alresford, totally without the gospel. I expect to make an attempt there soon ...’¹⁸⁵. Early efforts at preaching and the distribution of tracts met with resistance and the minister claimed to have been insulted, stoned and chased out of the town as the hoses from the fire engines were played on him. The keeper of the Inn where they were renting a room told them not to return and there were allegations that Francis North preached a sermon against them and called a general meeting in the town to prevent them coming back¹⁸⁶. Various other attempts were made to ‘introduce the gospel’ and instruct children in ways contrary to the established Church before the Congregational chapel was opened as a permanent place of worship with financial support from denominational friends in Gosport and Portsea; the leaders of these initiatives were from Alton, Petersfield and Ovington, not from Alresford itself. After a period of calm, the violent persecution of the early century resurfaced in 1831 according to the writings of Reverend William Shepherd Ford who also served as a minister of the chapel; one dark Sunday evening handfuls of flints were thrown in at the congregation as they engaged in prayer, the glass and stones showering those inside. Continued attacks meant that it became necessary to lattice all the upper windows

¹⁸⁴ HRO, 127M94/66, pp. 3-4.

¹⁸⁵ *Evangelical Magazine*, May edn (London, 1804), p. 194.

¹⁸⁶ HRO, 127M94/66, p. 5.

and brick up the lower ones¹⁸⁷. Mr Batchelor was living in Alresford in 1836 and attended religious service at the house of Mr Baker, a draper, having been taken there as a child from Ovington by his grandmother. He remembered live sparrows being tossed into the room during services. One Sunday morning in the 1830s as he left his lodgings he came across a noisy mob chasing a respectable looking man up Broad Street after he attempted to preach in the street. When Mr Batchelor gave him shelter a large stone was thrown through his window from the churchyard and the magistrate ordered that he be escorted to and from his lodgings for his own safety¹⁸⁸. Bebbington makes the point in *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* that such obstruction and intimidation of dissenters was common and had deep roots; he refers graphically to the mobbing and violent assaults on Wesley and his followers in the 1740s and suggests that resistance was sometimes encouraged or even led by members of the elite¹⁸⁹. Lovegrove in *Established Church, Sectarian People* explores how, at a time of great political sensitivity, the development of early itinerant evangelism both alarmed and provoked the established Church. With specific reference to Alresford, Lovegrove suggests that the popular ferocity encountered was such as to delay preaching until a room could be secured and registered and, whereas apathy and indifference were effective barriers elsewhere, in Alresford developments were held in check by the ‘unprovoked hostility of the populace’¹⁹⁰. The various applications made to register dissenting meeting houses in Alresford in the 1820s and 1830s reflect the struggle to establish dissent in the town; the application to register a building erected by Erasmus Jackson, gentleman, resident of Lake Lane, Portsea on 17 October 1825 was probably for

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 10-12; Adams, ‘Non-Conformity in Alresford’, pp. 9-10.

¹⁸⁸ Adams, ‘Non-Conformity in Alresford’, pp. 10-11.

¹⁸⁹ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 23.

¹⁹⁰ Lovegrove, ‘Idealism and Association’, pp. 303-17; Lovegrove, *Established Church, Sectarian People*, pp. 115, 151, 162.

the Congregational chapel itself¹⁹¹. Until the middle of the nineteenth century the opposition to Nonconformity in Alresford was therefore robust and sustained, all with the tacit consent, perhaps even the active encouragement, of the long standing Church of England incumbent Francis North, earl of Guildford. The hazing of dissenters *both* reflected and reinforced the popular support of the Anglican Church at the time.

The overwhelming impression of local society in this part of rural Hampshire in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is that of settled stability. The Church of England was part of that reality and, in turn, reflected it: the Church remained a crucial and integral component of the established social order. The parish elite combined with the rectors, curates and churchwardens to oil the wheels of local government, welfare and charity; key roles were undertaken and combined, often by the same people or different members of the same families, for extraordinary periods of time. Financial contributions were assessed, collected and disbursed and, when they were needed, significant sums were raised to maintain and enhance the physical manifestations of this *status quo*. The boundaries of the parish, with all that they meant for financial protection, identity and well-being, were jealously guarded. Records were generally ordered, efficient and well-maintained and major landowners, even non-Anglicans like the Tichbornes, stood alongside their fellow social elite in the Church of England. The web of control even extended to the administration of justice; Robert Wright, rector at Ovington, John Orde, rector of Itchen Stoke and John Waight, churchwarden at Bramdean, were also justices of the peace. Alresford and its neighbouring parishes around 1830 were a miniature ‘Christendom’ with close ties between church and secular powers; a degree of alignment described by

¹⁹¹ HRO, 21M65/F2/4/207.

McLeod¹⁹². The churchwarden accounts for 1774 at Kilmeston provide an illustration. Some major repairs required the raising of 35 church rates for £78. This did not prove a problem with most of the money coming from John Luttrell, Thomas Ridge and Thomas Budd. Luttrell was churchwarden and Ridge was then appointed churchwarden to succeed him by Luttrell and Budd. A handful of people, including in this case John Yalden the curate, were at the heart of everything¹⁹³. The Church of England had considerable financial strength and deep social relevance, being central to the provision of charity and welfare. Signs of dissent up until the 1830s, either overt or subtle, were limited; there were moral failures, arguments between the elite, petty criminal activity, some disputes over entitlement to poor relief and the occasional problem collecting church rates but nothing on a scale to disturb Anglican hegemony. The establishment of the Congregational chapel in Alresford in 1825 and the Primitive Methodists in Swarraton in 1831 as part of the Micheldever circuit seemed like relatively isolated aberrations. The Church of England was at the centre of local life; and that integration was at the heart of its longevity and strength.

But the national landscape in which this settled stability sat was about to fracture. As discussed above, the half-century from the 1830s was to witness Best's 'constitutional revolution' as the basis of Church of England monopoly was undermined¹⁹⁴; there was also to be pressure for disestablishment alongside a campaign to remove civil and religious disabilities from Nonconformists; the Oxford Movement would respond to the growing challenge from Evangelicalism, to first re-invigorate and then divide the Church of

¹⁹² McLeod and Ustorf, *Decline of Christendom*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁹³ HRO, 16M80/PW1.

¹⁹⁴ G.F.A. Best, *Temporal Pillars: Queen Anne's Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the Church of England* (Cambridge, 1964); Brown, *Providence and Empire*, pp. 79-83.

England; structural change would proceed at pace as the churches, collectively, struggled to respond to growing indifference as society became more secular. Knight in *The Nineteenth-Century Church and English Society* argues that these and other measures were to characterise the transition of the Church of England from state church to major denomination within a pluralist society¹⁹⁵. It is against this national context, this challenge to Anglican hegemony, that we turn now to consider the local response to both denominational rivalry and growing disbelief; it was to be the response of a church with deep roots of power and strength, hitherto unchallenged.

¹⁹⁵ Knight, *Nineteenth-Century Church*, pp. 201-10.

IV CONTINUED DOMINANCE C.1830-C.1914

Writing in 1976 Gilbert suggested that, starting from a position of Anglican dominance in 1740, both Church and chapel were shaken by two powerful forces that determined their future relations for the next two hundred years: one was the coming of industry, the other was the emergence of an Evangelical Nonconformity motivated by missionary zeal¹. But Alresford was not swept along by this tide. As a predominantly agricultural and rural district, the area around Alresford was not affected by ‘the coming of industry’ as much as other parts of the country. Not only was Alresford a small market town but it was surrounded by agricultural villages and situated more than 20 miles from the nearest ‘industrial’ cities of Southampton and Portsmouth. Located on the through route from Southampton to London, Alresford was a service centre full of inns, butchers, bakers, cafes, drapers, tailors, solicitors, banks and the post office. The nearest activity to industry was watercress and that only developed commercially after the railway arrived in 1865. Thus, by 1830 Alresford was not full of artisans and the growing class of factory outworkers and others who were drawn to the emerging industries – those most attracted to independence and dissent. Alresford and the surrounding villages never had a Nonconformist boom for the Church of England to respond to: the remainder of the nineteenth century was to see the continued strength of Anglicanism, re-energised by the establishment of both Old and New Alresford as independent parishes, and led by engaged, hard-working and well-connected rectors whose main local competition was a Congregationalist chapel small in numbers, suffering from internal dissent and poor discipline and lacking the funds, leadership and local sponsorship to grow. Only in the 1890s did Methodism come, and then only as a ‘mission’ from Winchester, not in response

¹ Gilbert, *Religion and Society*, pp. 51-68.

to local demand². Having briefly considered some of the challenges faced by the established Church nationally in the early part of this period, I will reflect on the local evidence provided by the results of the 1851 religious census; and then suggest possible reasons for the continued strength, albeit evolving, of the Church of England in this part of rural Hampshire. This was to be a period of continued Anglican dominance.

Anglicanism, though, came in different forms. Smith in his analysis of Hampshire clergy based on returns to the 1810 enquiries of Bishop Brownlow North suggests that Hampshire was something of a High Church stronghold in the early nineteenth century; none of the Hampshire curates or incumbents of 1810 could with certainty be identified as an Evangelical³. Moreover, this old High Church tradition came with powerful patronage networks within the establishment and the tendency for incumbents in the district to be linked through patronage and family connections with senior office holders in both Church and state has already been identified in previous chapters. As a break with this well-established style of High Churchmanship though, Charles Richard Sumner, an Evangelical, was appointed bishop of Winchester in 1827; his brother John Bird Sumner, also an Evangelical, was appointed to the diocese of Chester the following year before being elevated as archbishop of Canterbury in 1848 and Charles's son, George Sumner, succeeded Francis North as rector of Old Alresford in 1851. The Sumner family therefore played a significant part in both national and local church in the nineteenth century. As we shall see, George proved a diligent and conscientious parish priest, committed to the pastoral care of his parishioners and broader outreach on behalf of the church; in this

² John Wesley referred to Hampshire audiences as 'slow of heart and dull of understanding' in 1765; see W. Gibson, 'A happy fertile soil which bringeth forth abundantly': the diocese of Winchester, 1689-1800' in J. Gregory and J.S. Chamberlain (eds), *The National Church in Local Perspective: The Church of England and the Regions, 1660-1800* (Woodbridge, 2003), p. 107.

³ Smith, *Doing the Duty*, p. xlii.

mission he was ably supported by his wife Mary who established the Mothers Union later during her husband's incumbency at Old Alresford. The bishop's influence with individual clergy was greatest where he also held the patronage of their living, such as at Old and New Alresford, but it seems reasonable to suggest that through visitations, charges, ordinations, sermons and his approach to diocesan administration, as well as more personal advice and support, the bishop set the tone in the diocese in terms of his expectations of Christian ministry. As set out in more detail below, Burns has argued that this was a diocesan structure which had been reinvigorated and revived and was now better placed to facilitate such leadership⁴. Bishop Sumner's audience may have been increasingly receptive as well. Russell in *The Clerical Profession* and Heeney in *A Different Kind of Gentleman* both explore the transition of the clergy role in the nineteenth century from gentry amateur to professional occupation; such professionalisation resulted in raised expectations of pastoral care and commitment. Whatever the influence of the 'tone from the top' in terms of Sumner and his successors as bishop of Winchester, the Anglican Church was able to retain its pre-eminence in this part of rural Hampshire well into the twentieth century.

The flavour of Charles Sumner's visitation charges was unmistakably evangelical. In his primary charge of 1829, having positioned himself as the 'fellow servant and friend' of the assembled clergy, he stressed that their religion must be 'the religion of the Bible' and that ministers must call on it for guidance and inspiration: he also regarded the National schools as a crucial branch of pastoral care (the clergy needed to teach in schools, not just inspect them) and expressed concern that dissent was becoming more open and confident; souls were at stake and he urged his fellow clergymen to preach Christ Jesus simply,

⁴ Burns, *Diocesan Revival*, p. 2.

earnestly and affectionately⁵. The early departure of children from formal education was also a preoccupation of Sumner's fourth visitation charge in 1841 and he asked his colleagues to re-double their efforts with the young; but, alongside education, his main instruction to all of his clergy was to increase the efficiency of their pastoral superintendence. Their emphasis, he said, must be on the exclusive supremacy of the Word, not in the traditions overvalued by Rome⁶. The energy and urgency of pastoral commitment exhorted by Sumner was evidenced in the ministry of his son George, his neighbour William Brodie at New Alresford and in the work of many of their fellow clergy in the parishes of the Alresford registration district throughout the nineteenth century. They lived among their flocks, led fundraising initiatives, worked diligently on committees, chaired societies and worthy causes, encouraged outreach to those in need and took 'doing the duty' to a higher level. Sumner gave his time to provide educational lectures to the working class, and not just in the parish; he served in the House of Convocation alongside his parish duties, preached at the National school and spoke in support of the CETS⁷. William Brodie was similarly committed; he lectured in Alton on the laxness of the previous age, chaired the Alresford Institution lecture, led the anniversary service for the Modern Order of Foresters, joined with his fellow social elite (including George Sumner) to recognise the many years of community service of local guardian John Huggins and travelled to Romsey to support the annual appeal of the CMS⁸. They worked hard; they lent respectability to the societies they supported and their involvement helped integrate them into the local community: engagement was mutually

⁵ C.R. Sumner, *A charge delivered to the clergy of the diocese of Winchester in August/September 1829 at the primary visitation by Charles Richard Sumner, DD, Bishop of Winchester* (London, 1829), pp. 1-39.

⁶ C.R. Sumner, *A charge delivered to the clergy of the diocese of Winchester at the fourth visitation in September 1841* (London, 1841), pp. 1-45.

⁷ For George Sumner's activities see: *Hampshire Telegraph*, 19 November 1859, p. 8; 13 August 1864, p. 7; 21 February 1874, p.8 and *Hampshire Advertiser*, 3 February 1855, p. 6 and 19 November 1859, p. 12.

⁸ For Brodie see: *Hampshire Telegraph*, 2 March 1861, p. 5 and *Hampshire Advertiser*, 8 November 1856, p. 7; 30 May 1863, p. 11; 24 June 1865, p. 11 and 15 July 1865, p. 11.

beneficial. Their successors also came highly recommended. When the Reverend Arthur Headley resigned as chairman of the Portchester School Board on accepting the rectory of New Alresford in 1890 the *Hampshire Telegraph* published a warm tribute to ‘such an able chairman and vicar’ who had consistently displayed a ‘generous and kind manner’⁹. When Headley was himself succeeded by Frederick Jellicoe in 1915 the bishop of Southampton described Jellicoe in a letter of recommendation as one of their best incumbents, earnest and hardworking, who had done much for his populous town parish¹⁰. Whilst it is difficult to be certain that the level of pastoral care provided by Alresford incumbents in the post-North era was superior to that delivered by either the earl of Guildford himself, or his curates, there is certainly evidence that those who succeeded him were young, energetic and committed, and that the Church of England largely retained its important role in local society during their tenure.

Charles Sumner became bishop of Winchester in 1827 at a time when, nationally, a sense of crisis had started to pervade the Church of England as it came under attack for perceived abuses and apathy, faced a constitutional challenge which weakened its dominance and struggled under the weight of resurgent evangelical dissent. As discussed in chapter I, it had failed to respond to social and demographic changes and address structural weaknesses until a response was fashioned in the shape of legislative and diocesan reform, the work of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to re-direct resources and the energising impetus of passionate doctrinal and theological debate¹¹; the effect was to counter calls for disestablishment, but at the cost of eroded Anglican supremacy.

⁹ *Hampshire Telegraph*, 4 January 1890, p.2.

¹⁰ Bermondsey, CERC ECE/7/1/43580 (parts 1 and 2), Ecclesiastical Commissioners: Augmentation File, 1870 onwards.

¹¹ Burns, *Diocesan Revival*, p. 2.

The impact of this repositioning, in terms of the sharpening of identity and spiritual re-awakening of the Oxford Movement, was sometimes significant at the local level.

However, the parishes of the Alresford registration district appear to have survived largely unscathed from such controversy, with incumbents focusing on the engagement and pastoral support which was highly valued by both evangelical and Tractarian parties. The Hampshire social elite appreciated the significance of the debate; they also demonstrated different views on the controversy. Anne Sturges Bourne and Marianne Dyson were leisured, educated and well-connected ladies who were committed to the Church of England. They had kinship and neighbourly ties with the Alresford registration district and were also connected to John Keble (who became vicar at nearby Hursley), the Wilberforce family, and through them to other leaders of the Oxford Movement¹². They wrote to each other weekly throughout a friendship of 48 years (1823-1871) and commented frequently on the Church and its theological controversies: the letters have been summarised, edited and archived and provide an excellent contemporary insight into the internal struggles of the Church of England.

Anne was the child of William Sturges Bourne, the MP for Christchurch who became Home Secretary in 1827, and lived at Testwood House near Southampton; her paternal grandfather was the chancellor of the diocese of Winchester. Marianne Dyson was the only child of the second marriage of Jeremiah Dyson, also an MP; her two half-brothers from her father's first marriage were both clergymen (Charles became rector at Dogmersfield in Hampshire and was a close friend of John Keble) and her mother was the daughter of Reverend F. Newbolt of Winchester. The Dysons lived at Lavington in Sussex and were

¹² HRO, 130A08/1-5.

close neighbours of the Sargent family, whose daughters were like sisters to Marianne. Caroline Sargent married Henry (later Cardinal) Manning; Mary Sargent married Henry Wilberforce and Emily Sargent married Samuel ('Soapy Sam') Wilberforce who would later become bishop of Oxford and then bishop of Winchester¹³. There was also a connection with Alresford; there is reference in the ladies' correspondence in 1845 to Roundell Palmer, the first earl of Selbourne who became Lord Chancellor in 1872. Palmer was married to Lady Laura Waldegrave whose sister, Maria, married William Brodie, the first rector of the independent parish of New Alresford. Marianne certainly seems acquainted with Palmer – enough to describe his character and manner of speech to her friend – and Palmer is related by marriage to Brodie¹⁴. The two families were therefore well connected in church and state. Major controversies feature regularly in the correspondence: the publication of Froude's *Remains*; Newman's secession to Rome; the appointment of Dr Hampden as bishop of Hereford, the dis-establishment of the Church in Ireland and the 1868 Reform Act¹⁵. Both friends were also involved in building new churches; Dyson at Dogmersfield and Sturges Bourne at Netley Marsh¹⁶. The personal qualities of the various leaders of the Oxford Movement are discussed and assessed but the overall theme emerging from the correspondence is clear: Marianne is very supportive of the Oxford Movement and all they have done to 'raise standards and improve discipline', no doubt influenced by her close connections with Keble, Newman and the Wilberforces, whereas Anne rues the divisions which have been created and is upset by some of the Tractarian publications¹⁷. The controversy and splits were real, bringing anguish and confusion to those who loved the Church, but whilst such tensions were geographically

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ HRO, 9M55/F21/12; HRO, 9M55/F45/10.

¹⁵ HRO, 9M55/F42/7; HRO, 9M55/F45/15; HRO, 9M55/F33/3; HRO, 9M55/F45/15.

¹⁶ HRO, 9M55/F24/16; HRO, 9M55/F24/23.

¹⁷ HRO, 9M55/F45/8; HRO, 9M55/F45/13.

close there is nothing in the correspondence to suggest theological unrest in the Alresford district. George Herring in *The Oxford Movement in Practice* does not identify a single Tractarian clergyman in this area¹⁸. The churchmanship of the local clergy, already considered, revealed minimal public discord.

The Census and Dissent

We have already seen that the Church of England, through its incumbents and officers, was intimately involved with the maintenance and oversight of the social stability which existed in this part of rural Hampshire up until c.1830. This stability, and the Church's place within it, survived the twin onslaught of 'constitutional revolution' and 'theological controversy' and the continued strength of the Anglican Church locally was reflected in the mid-century numbers. The religious census of 1851 was only a snapshot, and one with many shortcomings in terms of accuracy and completeness, but as already discussed the district of Alresford still stood out as an Anglican beacon (Table 4.1)¹⁹. Alresford had the *fourth* highest Anglican share of total church attendances in the country, amounting to some 90 per cent²⁰ and the *tenth* highest Anglican Index of Attendances (IA), which assessed total attendances as a percentage of population, at 62.7 per cent²¹.

¹⁸ Herring, *Tractarian Parochial World*, Appendix. The closest were in Hursley, Dogmersfield, Alton and Basingstoke.

¹⁹ B.I. Coleman, 'Southern England in the Census of Religious Worship, 1851', *Southern History*, 5 (1983), p. 183; Vickers, *Religious Census in Hampshire*, p. xviii; TNA, HO 129/113.

²⁰ Snell and Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*, p. 58.

²¹ McLeod, *Religion and Society*, p. 254.

Table 4.1: Attendances in Alresford in national and county context				
	Index of Attendance (IA)	Percentage Share of Attendances		
	All Churches	Church of England	Protestant Dissent	Roman Catholic
England	58.1	49.5	45.9	4.3
Hampshire	67.6	58.0	40.0	2.0
Alresford	70.7	90.3	6.8	2.7

The congregational breakdown is set out below (Table 4.2)²² and shows that the Church of England also provided three quarters of the places of worship in the district and almost 90 per cent of the total church and chapel capacity in terms of sittings. The full analysis of the

Table 4.2							
Registration District 113: Alresford							
Population 1851: 7,418							
	Number of places of worship	Number of Sittings			Number of Attendants		
		Free	Appropriated	Total	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Total	24	2182	1620	4503	2345	2185	651
Church of England	18	1872	1400	3973	2122	2028	500
Independents	2	100	190	290	116	..	90
Baptists	1	40	..	40	30	30	..
Primitive Methodists	2	130	..	130	12	72	61
Roman Catholic	1	40	30	70	65	55	..

Alresford registration district by place of worship (Table 4.3)²³ shows the position for the town of New Alresford itself and all the surrounding parishes. Within the overall picture of Anglican dominance there were some subtle differences; the parishes were not homogeneous. The parish church at Swarraton had been demolished in 1849 when Northington was added to the rectory and its new church used to cater for both small neighbouring communities. As a result Swarraton had a nil return in the census, but overall 11 parishes were ‘Anglican only’ with just five hosting Nonconformist places of worship.

²² Vickers, *Religious Census in Hampshire*, p. 156. There are several small inconsistencies noted for the Anglican data between the summary tables and the aggregation of individual returns.

²³ Ibid, pp. 157-62; TNA, HO 129/113.

Apart from Swarraton, there were Anglican monopolies at all the ‘close’ communities dominated by the Ashburton estates where Lord Ashburton held the advowson to the parish church: Northington, Brown Candover and Itchen Stoke. Interestingly, though, whilst virtually everyone seems to have attended church in Brown Candover the IAs at both Northington (58.9 per cent) and Itchen Stoke (36.2 per cent) were significantly below the overall IA for the district of over 70 per cent: as small agricultural communities there may have been work or family commitments which kept the people away but clearly there was no compulsion to be seen to pay deference to their landlord by attending Sunday worship. Northington seems particularly low since the church was also hosting Anglicans from neighbouring Swarraton although the IA is only calculated on the Northington population. Evidently some of the local Anglicans in Swarraton preferred to attend the Primitive Methodist chapel in their own village rather than walk over to Northington. An IA for the Primitives in Swarraton of 122.6%, comfortably the highest in the district, suggests that there may have been such a protest, although they could also have drawn on other local denominational supporters. Swarraton was unique in the district as the only example of Anglican disengagement; they effectively pulled out of the village and the Primitives filled the vacuum. Kilmeston and Hinton Ampner also had low attendance, although lacking the same dominant land ownership pattern.

The town of New Alresford can be compared with the villages. With dispersed land ownership and a densely populated parish, it might be expected that the Anglican grip would be weakest in the town but the data does not suggest this. New Alresford had the largest Nonconformist presence. However, compared to other parishes with Anglican alternatives the established Church still had almost 87 per cent of attendances, just behind Ropley, and the mother community at Old Alresford was another Anglican monopoly.

New and Old Alresford together had an IA of 90 per cent, significantly more than all the villages apart from Ovington and the noted exception of Swarraton; the people of Alresford were still committed to the public observance of religion and they were still loyal attenders at the Church of England. The church was at the heart of the established social order, and attendance was, *inter alia*, part of the obligation to ensure continued stability.

Table 4.3 Registration District: Alresford Returns of Individual Places of Worship								
Place of Worship	Sittings			Attendants				Population
	Free	Approp'd	Total	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Total	
Ropley (CE)	200	164	364	201	241	..	442	818
Ropley (B)	40	..	40	30	30	..	60	
West Tisted (CE)	..	..	..	65	76	..	141	268
Bramdean (CE)	..	..	140	88	90	..	178	223
Hinton Ampner (CE)	45	130	175	41	116	..	157	384
Kilmeston (CE)	65	52	117	75	..	..	75	239
Kilmeston (PM)	30	..	30	12	..	19	31	
Beauworth (CE)	64	42	106	..	100	..	100	167
Cheriton (CE)	249	22	271	209	186	..	395	668
Tichborne (CE)	55	59	114	68	84	..	152	378
Tichborne (RC)	40	30	70	65	55	..	120	
Bishops Sutton (CE)	200	100	300	175	75	150	400	529
Ovington (CE)	50	75	125	60	79	..	139	163
Ovington (Ind)	30	..	30	..	..	25	25	
Itchen Stoke (CE)	140	40	180	60	66	..	126	348
New Alresford (CE)	330	550	880	400	150	400	950	1618
New Alresford Workhouse (CE)	150	..	150	124	124	..	248	
New Alresford (Ind)	70	190	260	116	..	65	181	
Old Alresford (CE)	..	..	300	250	300	..	550	523
Bighton (CE)	119	98	207	80	124	..	204	285
Swarraton (CE)	Nil Return							93
Swarraton (PM)	100	..	100	..	72	42	114	
Northington (CE)	104	120	224	95	87	..	182	309
Brown Candover (CE)	320	..	320	141	130	..	271	272
Chilton Candover								127
Total	2401	1672	4503	2355	2185	701	5241	7412
Key: CE Church of England B Baptist Ind Independent RC Roman Catholic PM Primitive Methodist								

The physical presence of Nonconformity, as recorded in the census at least, was limited. The Primitive Methodist chapel in Swarraton, established 20 years before, recorded a total of 114 attendances, but apart from this and the private Roman Catholic chapel at Tichborne House, the only other significant presence was the 181 attendances at the Congregational chapel in Alresford which had its roots earlier in the nineteenth century. The lowest Anglican share of attendances in the whole district was at Tichborne where the presence of the estate of the influential and respected Tichborne family, who cooperated with and supported the local Anglican elite, ensured that nearly half the attendances there were to the Roman Catholic chapel. However, part of the explanation of Anglican dominance, contrary to the example of Tichborne, was the resistance to such dissenting roots taking hold. Ward, writing in a national context but drawing on local sources, primarily from the north of England, suggested that the Church of England lost ground to an aggressive dissent in the first half of the nineteenth century and further, that the constitutional and other changes of the period engendered considerable denominational hostility²⁴. There were certainly signs of such denominational conflict in Alresford in this period but not, however, that the Church of England 'lost ground' in any meaningful way. The vigorous opposition to Protestant dissent described in chapter III, and indeed Roman Catholicism, had an earlier precedent in Hampshire. In his work on the diocese of Winchester in the long eighteenth century, William Gibson identified a combination of complementary strategies by successive bishops and clergy to preserve Church supremacy, both aggressive opposition such as that underwritten later in Alresford by North, and a more inclusive approach adopted by Latitudinarians such as Benjamin Hoadly, which combined with high standards of diligence and pastoral care to produce a widespread

²⁴ W.R. Ward, *Religion and Society in England 1790-1850* (London, 1972).

acceptance, even submission, to Anglican hegemony²⁵. Ward agreed when he argued that ‘in 1788 Hampshire Christianity was still overwhelmingly that of the Church of England’; sixty three years later the census suggested that this remained the case in the Alresford registration district²⁶.

The opposition to dissent attributed to North seemed feasible based on reports of his motives and attitudes. In 1797 Bishop North of Winchester appointed his son Francis to the ancient Liberty of Alresford, comprising the mother church at Old Alresford with the chapelries of New Alresford and Medstead, with the vast income of £680 per annum plus glebes, houses and fees. Six months later he was additionally appointed as rector of St Mary’s in Southampton where, as a non-resident, he appointed two curates to look after the parish at an annual salary of £50 each. In 1808 he was also appointed master of St Cross²⁷. Some estimated his total income was over £5,000 per annum towards the end of his incumbency in Alresford and he appeared more interested in personal wealth and influence than serving his parishioners²⁸; he did not co-operate with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to disclose his income in 1831. Smith describes how both Francis North and his brother Charles were fast-tracked as deacons before being ordained to the priesthood by their father after serving just eight and three months respectively in the diaconate; somewhat less than the contemporary average for Hampshire²⁹. Such outward signs of wealth and family preferment, though by no means exceptional for the time, invited the opportunity for local censure and, in an Alresford context, North was also

²⁵ Gibson, ‘A fertile soil’, pp. 99-119.

²⁶ W.R. Ward (ed.), *Parson and Parish in Eighteenth-Century Hampshire: Replies to Bishops’ Visitations* (Winchester, 1995), p. xxvi.

²⁷ The clerical controversy in Anthony Trollope’s *The Warden* is believed to be based on the public outcry over the mastership of St Cross during North’s tenure which ended in 1850.

²⁸ *London Daily News*, 15 November 1851, p. 4.

²⁹ Smith, *Doing the Duty*, p. xli.

criticised for doing nothing to stop the bull baiting on Pound Hill, the pugilism in the open fields and the resumption of cock-fighting in *The Bell*; perhaps there was some truth in Densham's claim that Alresford was 'without the gospel',³⁰. Parliamentary scrutiny around this specific case of non-residence and pluralism eventually led to the dissolution of the ancient Liberty and the creation of Old Alresford, New Alresford and Medstead as independent parishes.

Part of Gilbert's broad thesis was that the emergence of Evangelical Nonconformity in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries created a serious rival to the Church of England, forcing it to embark upon reforms in the 1830s which lead to its revitalisation³¹. At the heart of the perceived abuses and inefficiencies of the established Church were inequalities of wealth and the pluralism and non-residence epitomised by North and others. On 19 June 1849 Bishop Sumner was called to give evidence before the parliamentary commission charged with looking at the subdivision of parishes; of specific concern to the commissioners were the conditions of the livings in St Mary's, Southampton and in Alresford, the two extremely lucrative and populous parishes held for over 50 years by Francis North³². In response to questioning, the bishop conceded that the increased population of St Mary's required a fair subdivision of income but that no alteration was desirable to the living of Alresford, other than separating the outlying parish of Medstead: in other words, Old and New Alresford should remain united and the population of the whole parish of Alresford was manageable by the rector. When pressed, the bishop conceded that the area was large but he was adamant that the population was sufficiently

³⁰ Adams, 'Non-Conformity in Alresford', p. 11.

³¹ Gilbert, *Religion and Society*, pp. 125-43.

³² *Parl Pap.* (1854), lxix (313), Minutes of evidence taken before the Subdivision of Parishes Commission, pp. 98-9.

concentrated to remain as one parish³³. But the power of the press was great in the nineteenth century. On 20 May 1850 when reporting the resignation of Francis North from the livings, the liberal *Daily News* published a stinging rebuke to the Sumners, claiming that it was ‘indispensable to apply the pressure of public opinion to the cases’, dreading the appointment of another bishop’s son in response to the vacancy at Alresford. The value of the combined livings of the Liberty including glebes, fees and offerings were now estimated at £1,800 per annum, leading the newspaper to suggest that ‘The union of these benefices appears to have arisen partly from their richness and compactness, but more from the affection of the successive bishops of Winchester, in whose patronage they all are, for their sons ...’³⁴. Not only were the livings rich but the fishing in the River Itchen was excellent and the parsonage at Old Alresford was a very desirable mansion: the charge was one of nepotism. The *Daily News* contended that the parishioners of Alresford had been poorly served by the historic union and that, despite the exertions of a praiseworthy curate ‘the people of New Alresford are in a most depraved condition’: a restoration of independence was required³⁵. Six months later, on 12 December 1850, the bishop of Winchester retreated from his previous assertions to the parliamentary commission and an Order in Council to separate the chapelries of New Alresford and Medstead from the Rectory of Old Alresford was approved³⁶. The infrastructure to support the separation was initially lacking so, to complete the split, a deed to secure a £1,000 mortgage from QAB to finance a parsonage, offices and other facilities to fully establish the independent parish of New Alresford was signed on 1 September 1851³⁷. But the damaging publicity for the Church did not end there. Legal proceedings to gain compensation for misappropriation of

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ *The Daily News*, Monday May 20, 1850.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ HRO, 21M65/C4/16.

³⁷ Deed D203805.

the St Cross income were initiated against Lord Guildford and extensively reported in the *Hampshire Telegraph* and the national press³⁸, and further highly critical coverage, repeating all the former accusations of nepotism and abuse, followed when the death of Francis North was announced in 1861³⁹. Whilst bowing to public pressure over the division of parishes though, it was not a complete climb down by the bishop. The Order in Council divided the income of the former parish and chapelries, not on the basis of population, but according to where the glebe, tithe rent charge obligations and other payments were physically situated: the bishop's son George was appointed to the far richer and more sparsely populated parish of Old Alresford whilst William Brodie took over the reins at St John's in New Alresford⁴⁰. Just as the census underlined its strength, underpinned by a rector hostile to dissent, a remarkably stable population with little appetite for Nonconformity, and the iron grip of the parish elite on local governance, a new era was about to begin for the Church of England in Alresford. The next half century would see challenges from an increasingly confident and tolerated Nonconformity, as well as from the apathy of indifference: so how did the established Church maintain its dominance?

Finance and Wealth

Finance was at the heart of the Church of England's local pre-eminence. The wealth of the church, its ability to raise funds from the social elite and command financial support from wider congregations both demonstrated and cemented its place at the heart of local society: the value of its livings, relatively generous in this part of rural Hampshire, ensured an

³⁸ *Hampshire Telegraph*, 28 August 1852, p. 3.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2 February 1861, pp. 6-9. Article attributed to the *Morning Post*.

⁴⁰ HRO, 21M65/C4/16. The net values were Old Alresford £617; New Alresford £220.

elevated social status for many incumbents which reflected the accepted importance of their institution. As will be shown, the young rectors of the newly independent parishes of Old and New Alresford, and their neighbouring incumbents, worked tirelessly with the support of their congregations to ensure that routine expenses were met, repairs were carried out, improvements were made and, when needed, major restorations were undertaken to ensure an appropriate structural legacy for future generations. In particular, substantial renovations were carried out at both New Alresford and Ropley which demonstrated not just the financial resources the church was able to command, but also the loyalty and support it inspired and the energy and commitment of the clergy and laymen leading the various projects: they showed effective clerical leadership. Such re-building was ultimately to form part of a resurgence of Anglican appeal alongside a re-shaping of the provision of services in this part of rural Hampshire at the end of the nineteenth century and beyond.

There was still evidence of widespread financial support for the church and its ministers in the smaller parishes of the Alresford registration district in the second half of the nineteenth century. As can be seen from the analysis of the value of livings in Table 4.4 below, some parishes and clergy needed support. The parish church at Ovington received a major benefaction from Captain and Mrs Hewson in 1892 which, together with a payment from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, resulted in £47 6d being paid ‘for the services of the rector while holding the living’: a welcome supplement to his income⁴¹. At the corporate level, a proposal was passed at vestry on 17 May 1875, following approval from the archdeacon, to proceed with substantial alterations at Kilmeston church⁴². The work

⁴¹ HRO, 32M69/PW2, March 1892.

⁴² HRO, 16M80/PW1, 17 May 1875.

involved building a south aisle and vestry, lengthening the pews, improving the accommodation for schoolchildren and repairing the turret. The majority of the projected cost of £150 was met by personal contributions from wealthy parishioners Walter Long, Mr Codington and Charles Stone, soon to be churchwarden, supplemented by two specific collections and part of a church rate. The Reverend Ridley chaired the meetings, the parish elite provided the funds and energy and the parishioners contributed the shortfall according to their means⁴³. A few years later, in the 1880s following the abolition of compulsory church rates, those who had previously paid the rates at Kilmeston simply assumed the obligation to pay ‘subscriptions’ in lieu: virtually the same people paid the same amounts; what had been an obligation had continued as an expression of commitment and loyalty to the established Church⁴⁴.

Finance was, ostensibly, one of the considerations underpinning the campaign by Augustus Legge of Bramdean House to persuade the bishop of Winchester to unite the parishes of Bramdean and Hinton Ampner in 1901 following the resignation of the elderly rector of Bramdean⁴⁵. Legge suggested that the modest valuation of the Bramdean living (£102) and the poor quality of its accommodation meant that it was difficult to get a satisfactory clergyman but that the incumbent at Hinton, Mr Peake, was ‘excellent’. Peake, however, could not afford to hold both parishes in plurality and appoint a curate given the expense of that and repairing the house so Mr Legge suggested that the parishes be united with Reverend Peake in sole charge⁴⁶. Although Legge assured the bishop, Randall Davidson, that the villagers were all behind him, separate enquiries revealed something of

⁴³ Ibid., August 1875.

⁴⁴ Ibid., minutes 1877 and 1880s.

⁴⁵ Davidson 70; fos. 315-58.

⁴⁶ Ibid., fos. 315-20.

the opposite and it seems likely that Legge was motivated, as squire, by the prospect of having to work with someone whom he considered ‘inappropriate’. The correspondence reveals a genuine concern on the part of the bishop to maintain the existing level of service provision and pastoral support in such a rural area and eventually it was agreed to retain separate parishes; within six weeks the Lord Chancellor was able to appoint Henry Hoskins, a ‘capable and good’ man from Stepney to the vacancy⁴⁷. The church and local elite were not initially aligned, but they still reached agreement: the views of the parishioners were sought and ultimately respected and the importance attaching to pastoral considerations was demonstrated. Augustus Legge, a retired clergyman himself, backed down graciously and even refused the offer by the bishop to take the living personally: at well over sixty years of age he felt that the responsibilities would be too onerous⁴⁸.

The financial situation of individual clergy had been radically affected by the Tithe Commutation Act (1836). Initially this seemed appealing to the clergy; agreement meant they would no longer have the trouble and expense of obtaining valuations, storing payments in kind and selling contributions. Commutation of a higher gross figure into a smaller cash sum, the tithe rent charge, had lots of merit. However, *Virgin in Age of Negligence* argues that tithe commutation inadvertently sowed the seeds of clerical financial decline. The reform effectively abolished those aspects of tithe which made it a tax on increases in agricultural production. Growth in tithe income could now only come about through rises in cereal prices and not, as before, through higher crop yields, expansion of areas under cultivation and enclosure. Following competition from North America, cereal prices collapsed during the agricultural depression of the 1870s and 1880s

⁴⁷ Ibid., fos. 359-62.

⁴⁸ Ibid., fo. 338 and fos. 347-50.

and the value of the tithe rent charge plummeted by something approaching 40 per cent between 1881 and 1901, which is why gross incomes reported in the 1899 visitation returns are so much lower than the tithe rent charges which were agreed in the 1830s and 1840s⁴⁹. Although many commuted their tithes for a rent charge, some clergy chose to commute their tithes for land to change the nature of their income and cement their social position, often as part of a broader enclosure agreement, and we have already seen in the previous chapter how John Richards did this to great effect in Ovington. George Deane in Bighton also exchanged parcels of land under the Tithe Commutation Act to improve his holdings in 1846⁵⁰. An incumbent's financial position was also dependent on income from glebe, fees and offerings, as well as the level of required expenses which came with the living, but some were significantly affected; for example, the tithe rent charge agreed for Francis North for Old Alresford in 1841 was £755 whereas the gross income reported for the living by his successor in 1899 was only £548, which after a curate's stipend, repairs and rates was reduced down to just £140 net⁵¹.

Although there were some rich livings in the area, such as those at Old Alresford and Cheriton, not all parishes were similarly well endowed. Captain Hewson may have come to the aid of the rector at Ovington but William Sealey, the successor to William Brodie in New Alresford, had to fight his own battle. In 1870 he appealed to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for an augmentation of income: he lacked the personal means of Brodie. Not only was the gross income low, around £300, but very high deductions including interest on the QAB mortgage meant that his net income was only about £200 per annum.

⁴⁹ Virgin, *Age of Negligence*, p. 262; HRO, 21M65/B4/5.

⁵⁰ HRO, 219M87/E/T5; HRO, 92M95/NP2/S16/1/95; [Statutory Deposit], HRO, 139M82/PD1; HRO, 16M80/PD2.

⁵¹ HRO, 21M65/F7/178/1; HRO, 21M65/B4/5/10.

He therefore appealed for any additional income or a reduction in charges⁵². Five days later the Commissioners replied that they were ‘not at present in a position to deal generously with the local claim’⁵³. Although Royle makes it clear that there were many livings more impoverished than New Alresford⁵⁴, when comparing the position within the registration district it is hard not to sympathise with Sealey’s request (Table 4.4)⁵⁵. At this time Ropley was a chapelry of Bishops Sutton, and Hinton Ampner was held in plurality with Cheriton and its chapelries of Tichborne, Kilmeston and Beauworth; Sealey therefore had one of the least attractive livings in the district, especially when the large deductions and high population were taken into account⁵⁶. Based on this table it is easy to see why the bishop of Winchester kept Old Alresford for his son and gave New Alresford to William Brodie when the Liberty was split!

Table 4.4: Relative Gross/Net Value of Livings in the Alresford Registration District				
Parish	Ecclesiastical Commission 1829-31 average	1851 Religious Census	1899 Visitation	1915 Visitation
New Alresford	Not returned	275	304/244	315/267
Old Alresford	Not returned	766	548/140	630/485
Beauworth	Not returned	160	See Kilmeston	No return
Bighton	330/310	320	381/304	No return
Bramdean	210/201	233	192/138	205/169
Bishops Sutton	360/350	160	218/167	246/197
Brown Candover	500/482	499	386/314	380/288
Cheriton	1280/1192	660	822/466	921/696
Hinton Ampner	425/402	480	385/265	434/364
Itchen Stoke	379/379		223/136	244/115

⁵² ECE/7/1/43580.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Royle, *Modern Britain*, pp. 284-342.

⁵⁵ *Parl Pap.* (1835), xxii (67), *Royal Commission into Ecclesiastical Revenues*, pp. 858-85; Vickers, *Religious Census in Hampshire*, pp. 157-62; HRO, 21M65/B4/5-6; The 1829-31 averages do not include any deduction for curate salaries, where applicable, whereas the net figures in the visitation returns often did.

⁵⁶ The small perpetual curacy of West Tisted was valued at just ‘£58 with residence’ in the *Hampshire Telegraph*, 25 April 1860, p. 7.

Table 4.4: Relative Gross/Net Value of Livings in the Alresford Registration District				
Parish	Ecclesiastical Commission 1829-31 average	1851 Religious Census	1899 Visitation	1915 Visitation
Kilmeston	See Cheriton	360	325/237	No return
Northington		50	See Swarraton	See Swarraton
Ovington	245/219	149	105/95	205/195
Ropley	See Bishops Sutton	197	191/109	290/252
Swarraton	110/110	110	300/300	242/209
Tichborne	See Cheriton	503	See Cheriton	See Cheriton
West Tisted	58		253/204	370/244

Sealey's pleas became increasingly desperate. On 2 March 1877 he again appealed for relief from the burden of the interest payments on the QAB mortgage; in 1875 his health failed from overwork and he was forced to appoint a curate at a stipend of £150 per annum, and with this charge and repairs to the rectory he was left with virtually nothing. Once again, help was refused⁵⁷: the de-motivating effect of being overlooked and the impact of his failing health on the care of parishioners must have been considerable. In a final appeal, Sealey requested an allowance towards the stipend of his curate⁵⁸. Eventually the commissioners grudgingly looked into the matter properly, but too late for Sealey who was succeeded by William Newnham in 1879. After a lengthy investigation the commissioners finally recommended redemption of land tax, a grant from the common fund and discharge of the remaining mortgage balance⁵⁹. Not surprisingly, Reverend Newnham was very grateful. It is difficult to assess the impact on St John's of Sealey's poor health and financial difficulties, but it seems likely there was one. No vestry meetings at all were recorded in 1875, the year he fell ill⁶⁰, and the register of services was poorly

⁵⁷ ECE/7/1/43580; 2 and 20 March 1877.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 11 October 1878.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Ecclesiastical Commissioners Report, 13 January 1881.

⁶⁰ HRO, 45M83/PW3.

maintained. In November and December 1875 the curate Reverend Horne officiated a lot more than Sealey did and mid-week services were sporadic⁶¹. Was this the opportunity that Nonconformity had been looking for? Did they have the settled, committed, energetic leadership to challenge Anglican hegemony? For various reasons, as discussed later, they were not able to take advantage.

Apart from ad-hoc appeals and subscriptions, which were capable of raising vast sums, the main source of church income up until 1868 was church rates: the compulsory obligation of *all* parishioners with property, including Nonconformists, to contribute towards the maintenance of the parish church. Amongst all the peaceful stability which has been described this was the mid-Victorian financial issue which *did* provide evidence of a degree of local dissent from the established social order, or at least the Church's pre-eminent position within it. As we have seen, part of the history of Nonconformity for much of the nineteenth century was a campaign against the removal of civil disabilities. Building on the image of Best's 'constitutional revolution', E.J Evans in *The Forging of the Modern State* tracks what he terms as the 'crucible of reform' as the prohibitions and restrictions on Nonconformists around public office, the franchise, tithes, civil registrations of births, marriages and deaths, education and university access were gradually relaxed, culminating in church rate abolition in 1868⁶². Whilst this removed a serious area of dissension between the established Church and Nonconformity, it complicated the finances of the Anglican Church: any future rate set by the vestry was voluntary and the Church would have to fill any gaps. Not only was the door opened for those with genuine objections of conscience, but also for those less committed to the Church.

⁶¹ HRO, 45M83/PI1.

⁶² Evans, *Forging of the Modern State*, pp. 187-90.

Ward, as part of the discussion in *Religion and Society* of what he saw as ‘the defeat of the establishment’ in the first half of the nineteenth century, cites the battle and unrest over church rates in Rochdale as being illustrative of the inflamed disputes which this issue provoked⁶³. Francis North certainly regarded it as an important matter. An article in the *Hampshire Chronicle* in 1849 reported a vestry meeting at St Mary’s in Southampton, presided over by his curate, at which a resolution was passed that ‘Church rates ought to be at once and for ever abolished’; he asked his curate to explain his conduct, pointing out the great outcry in the neighbourhood the report had caused and asserting that abolition would be a direct robbery of the Church since rates were its legal and legitimate property. After an uneasy exchange of correspondence, in which the curate clarified his actions, re-assured North but expressed the view that repeal would be a useful tactic in removing any motivation for dissent, a full clarification was published in the *Daily News*⁶⁴. Jacob Ellens in *Religious Routes to Gladstonian Liberalism* argues that, although opposition to compulsory rates was driven by the religious principles of dissent, the state, in acceding to the campaign and becoming more liberal, lost much of its religious influence. Paradoxically, opposition to church rates actually contributed to a desacralized state and society⁶⁵.

It has been argued above that, in general, the parishes of the Alresford registration district were compliant and respectful of their rating obligations; what contrary evidence is there after rates ceased to be compulsory? In Itchen Stoke in 1870 George Budd, one of 13

⁶³ Ward, *Religion and Society*, pp. 54-69, 183-4.

⁶⁴ *The Daily News*, 27 March 1849, p. 6.

⁶⁵ J.P. Ellens, *Religious Routes to Gladstonian Liberalism: The Church Rate Conflict in England and Wales, 1832-1868* (Pennsylvania, 1994), pp. 2-3, 264, 271.

contributors, refused to pay his 6s 9d but this only represented about three per cent of the £10 16s 3d due⁶⁶. In Bishops Sutton they moved to a voluntary rate in 1869 and three of the 28 from whom contributions were requested the following year refused to pay; Thomas North (at £4 19s the fifth largest potential contributor), John Childs and Charles Gregory, in total more than ten per cent by number and amount. The reason was unclear and a similar sum was not collected in 1871⁶⁷. Thomas North consistently refused to pay, which made quite a hole in church finances, and by 1875 the church had moved to voluntary subscriptions to clear outstanding debts; with income from church lands and the rent of cottages they just about managed. By the mid-1890s the church had moved to a mixed rent/collections/rates model and finances stabilised⁶⁸. In Northington the issue also appeared significant, particularly as it surfaced before the legislative change. Mr Atkins and Mr Bailey both refused to pay their share of the rate set at Easter 1863, which comprised more than 15 per cent of the total, and the rate was not requested of them the following year. However, a note on 29 March 1865 states ‘Received two years rates from Mr Atkins not accounted for last year’, and both Atkins and Bailey were reinstated in the rating list for 1865. Following a period of compliance there is a note that Mr Bailey’s rate was not collected in 1870 but in 1872 there was still some hope that both would eventually pay. The majority, including Lord Ashburton, remained loyal but a shortfall of over £15 had built up by 2 April 1874 as collection became more problematic⁶⁹.

The issue of rates even ruffled the calm Anglican waters at New Alresford. William Sealey not only lacked the means and connections of his predecessor Reverend Brodie but he also

⁶⁶ HRO, 12M70/PW1; minutes 1870.

⁶⁷ HRO, 42M78/PW1; minutes 1870s.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ HRO, 26M69/PW1; minutes 1860s, 1870s.

had the misfortune to take over from him at a particularly contentious time: just as compulsory church rates were abolished in 1868⁷⁰. In 1869 the Alresford vestry proposed that ‘the principle of the church rate be adhered to’ but a year later the churchwardens’ reported that certain occupiers had declined to pay and it was resolved that they be contacted by the rector and churchwardens and ‘reminded of their obligations’: not a tactic likely to endear Sealey to the wider community⁷¹. Financing the church was becoming more difficult. In 1871 the vestry requested that the rector have periodic collections to supplement the voluntary rate⁷² and a few months later the church was dependent on a donation of £50 from the bailiff and burgesses to repair the church heating and external footways⁷³. When the accounts revealed a deficit of £5 9s 3d in April 1876 due to more rate collection problems, a special collection was arranged to make up the deficit: finance was now definitely raised by a mixed rate/collection model⁷⁴. Incumbents and vestries needed a more flexible approach and some people undoubtedly expressed their dissent from the way the Church of England managed its funds by withholding their financial support for its upkeep. However, Anglicans largely continued to manage, compulsory rates were substantially replaced with voluntary subscriptions and when the need was urgent, as it was with the major restorations at New Alresford and Ropley, the social elite (and the wider communities) rallied to support the church enabling large sums to be raised. In the parishes of the Alresford registration district the financial capacity of the Church of England remained largely unchallenged throughout the nineteenth century; it certainly dwarfed anything which could be mustered by the local Nonconformists.

⁷⁰ J. Foster, *Alumni Oxoniensis 1715-1886* (4 vols, Oxford, 1888), iv, p. 1270. Sealey was born in Barbados, the son of a gentleman, but his trading family were without title.

⁷¹ HRO, 45M83/PW3, 2 April 1869, 22 April 1870.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 4 May 1871.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 28 October 1871.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 20 April 1876.

Charity and Welfare

Alongside its powerful financial strength, the church's continuing central role in charity and welfare played a major part in securing the loyalty of parishioners. St Mary's at Old Alresford provides a good example. We have already seen that St Mary's, through its churchwardens, administered the Pink & Eager and Perrins charitable endowments to the deserving poor of the parish and this practice continued throughout the nineteenth century. In addition to this, and its roles in administering formal poor relief and providing outreach and support for those in need through its regular collections, the church also played a significant role in administering the stock of parish cottages which were intended to provide shelter for some of the poorest in the parish. Snell describes in *Parish and Belonging* how, under the old poor law, every parish had its own housing stock. Much of this parish housing was sold off under a permissive Act in 1835 which was designed to facilitate the conveyance of workhouses and other parish property. There were advantages for the parish from disposal; maintenance costs were avoided, overseers could then rate the houses thus lowering the general rate, and money could be raised for workhouse building. Nevertheless, many properties remained in the hands of parish officers who had to obtain rents, account for them, make repairs and maintain inventories in accordance with official circulars. That countless such assets remained with the parish is part of Snell's argument that, even after the new poor law in 1834, there was a continued local focus on welfare: Old Alresford was an example of this⁷⁵.

⁷⁵ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, pp. 350-1.

In Old Alresford the parish cottage committee was a formally appointed sub-committee of the vestry. The committee was originally appointed in March 1833 and tasked with implementing a three part strategy to accommodate the parish poor which encompassed the existing parish cottages, six additional dwellings relating to the estate of the late Mr Bulpett and the acquisition of land for construction of a further six cottages to be ‘forthwith erected at the cost of the parish’. The committee managed the acquisition and construction, ensured the cottages remained in good repair, considered applications for improvements, awarded and terminated tenancies, set and collected rents and pursued any instances of non-payment⁷⁶. The rector at the time, Francis North, the earl of Guildford, was largely absent from any discussions around poor relief, although he was present when the decision was taken in 1835 that Old Alresford should join with neighbouring parishes in a Poor Law Union and contribute to the cost of the construction of a common workhouse⁷⁷. Church involvement in this crucial aspect of local welfare originally came through William Savage Beare, churchwarden throughout the 1830s and 1840s. Mr Beare personified the local integration of church and state at this time; as well as being part of the cottage committee and churchwarden, he was also appointed to the committee formed to consider improvements to the church pews and the group responsible for assessing the new poor rate. Mr Beare was also formally elected as the guardian to represent the parish in the new Alresford Poor Law Union in 1835 (with the support of Reverend North, Lord Rodney and Colonel Onslow – very much the ‘establishment’ candidate) and by 1841 he had started chairing full vestry meetings as well⁷⁸.

⁷⁶ HRO, 43M74/PV1, 25 March 1833.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 20 February 1835.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 28 March 1839, 25 March 1841.

Church involvement with the parish cottages, though, took on a completely different dynamic after the youthful George Sumner⁷⁹ was appointed rector in 1851 following the resignation of Francis North and the creation of Old Alresford as an independent parish, separate from its former chapels of ease at New Alresford and Medstead. Sumner immediately assumed the chair, as rector, of both the full vestry and the parish cottage committee, with regular meetings being held at the rectory; he approved and signed all the relevant minutes⁸⁰. The churchwarden and overseer joined the rector on the cottage committee, along with two other members of the social elite, in 1881; by this time the rector had been chairing the committee for over 30 years⁸¹. So entrenched had the church become in the administration of this crucial component of social welfare that when George Sumner finally left the parish, his successor the Reverend Sir Frederick Currie, immediately assumed the chair on 30 July 1887 with meetings at the rectory as normal. The church remained at the heart of local affairs; particularly where the pastoral welfare of parishioners was concerned⁸². As Snell has identified, this was an example of where local relief continued *alongside* full participation in the Alresford Poor Law Union established under national legislation.

The propensity of the wealthy and charitable to make bequests for the benefit of those less fortunate has already been discussed in the previous chapter; and the church was right at the centre of this practice throughout the nineteenth century. However, as Lee points out in *Rural Change and the Anglican Clergy*, his study of how the Church of England both encountered and managed the poor in rural Norfolk, the interaction between charity and

⁷⁹ 'Rt. Rev. George Henry Sumner' <http://thepeerage.com/p30948.htm> (15 December 2014). Sumner was only 27 when appointed to Old Alresford; two years younger than Brodie at New Alresford.

⁸⁰ HRO, 43M74/PV1, 3 April 1851 onwards.

⁸¹ HRO, 43M74/PV2, 28 January 1881.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 30 July 1887.

poor relief before 1834 was significantly different after that date. A whole range of items were made available under the Old Poor Law – shoes, boots, clothes, furniture, fuel, medical expenses – but, to the extent that they survived, most of these were delivered as private charity after 1834: a broad system of assistance was replaced by one that had to goal of reducing poor rates⁸³.

The context of charitable giving varied in formality and blurred with self-help; for example, the provision of sponsored coal or clothing clubs where savings were matched and bonuses added. Shaun Morley has argued that such clubs were common in rural Oxfordshire in the new Poor Law era⁸⁴. Charity might prevent the poor from requiring relief, but it was not technically delivered *as* relief⁸⁵. In Bramdean in 1862 James Turner left £100 for the rector and churchwardens, the income to be distributed to the three most deserving poor families who were members of the Church of England and resided in the parish; and in 1863 the Honourable Mrs Honora Legge left £200, the dividends from which were to be distributed to the minister to buy soap and candles for the wives and widows of the labouring poor of the parish⁸⁶. In Ropley in 1875 Henry Mulcock left £500, the income from which was to be used for gifts to distribute to the poor and in 1890 Miss Rosa Onslow left the rector and churchwardens £300 to be invested in government securities with the income to be applied for the benefit of the parish⁸⁷. In 1879 George Harding bequeathed £200 to the rector and churchwardens of Swarraton and Northington, the income from which was to be used each year to provide the poor with bread on the

⁸³ Lee, *Rural Change*, p. 82.

⁸⁴ S. Morley, 'Community, Self-Help and Mutual Aid: Friendly Societies and the Parish Welfare System in Rural Oxfordshire, 1834-1918' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2012), pp. 264-99.

⁸⁵ Lee, *Rural Change*, p. 80.

⁸⁶ *VCH* 3, pp. 45-50.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 55-8.

anniversary of his burial day⁸⁸. At Hinton Ampner, Mrs Honora Augusta Cowper-Coles bequeathed £120 of annuities in 1898, the income from which was to be applied by the officiating minister in the distribution of warm winter clothing to poor women. Such practices bound the people to the church. At Bramdean it was actually a specific requirement to be a member of the established Church to be eligible to benefit from the Turner endowment. Similarly, a clothing and coal club was in operation at Ropley and, when a fall off of private subscriptions made funding the bonuses more difficult, a decision was taken to limit membership of the club to *regular* members of the parish church congregation⁸⁹. Whilst the other bequests were less specific as to qualification it seems reasonable to suggest that the relevant minister and churchwardens would look more favourably on loyal members of their flock in preference to absentees or dissenters. A word of caution however. Although the established Church often played a central part in such giving, bequests like these did not *always* endorse the Church of England's denominational dominance; in 1886 another Miss Onslow conveyed land and buildings in Old Alresford for the establishment of a Primitive Methodist orphanage⁹⁰.

But the church's involvement in the provision of welfare was not just manifest in the formal process of poor relief and the administration of private charitable endowments: it also facilitated personal giving, effectively from one parishioner to another, as a supplement to poor relief payments. This role reinforced local connections, consistent with Snell's argument for the continuing vitality of the parish as a unit in people's lives throughout the nineteenth century⁹¹. The Tichborne vestry minutes contain details of

⁸⁸ VCH 4, pp. 195-6.

⁸⁹ [Parish Magazines], HRO, 27M82/PZ5.

⁹⁰ VCH 3, p. 306.

⁹¹ Lee, *Rural Change*, p. 82; Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p. 336.

sacrament collections and disbursements up to 1864. Sacramental alms were received from communicants and distributed by the church as additional poor relief; this was a traditional use of communion collections. Payments were made to relieve those who were ill or bereaved, or to pay for hospital treatment. The schedules from 1852 to 1858 show that there were regularly 15-25 communicants who gave in this way generating a few supplementary shillings to be distributed to those in need⁹². Another form of sponsored self-help which was operated in Tichborne was the clothing club. The poor subscribed what they could for clothing, in individual accounts, and the parish elite made major contributions which matched or exceeded those of the poor to encourage them to save for clothes. The Tichborne/Doughty family, the Reverend Hubbard, the Godwins (longstanding churchwardens) and the curate all contributed. Amounts were paid out to supply clothes and pay shoemakers. In 1846 there were 72 families contributing eight shillings and five contributing four shillings. The church acted as treasurer and the accounts sat in its books as another way in which Christian charity was organised and dispensed⁹³. In 1865 the coming of the railway to Alresford provided a further opportunity for charitable support. The church, which was opposite the station, rented some land to the railway company and the surplus, after expenses, from the £44 2s received was distributed to good causes within the parish⁹⁴. Whilst it is difficult to conclude with certainty that the role of the church in charity and welfare in the Alresford registration district was such as to ensure its continued supremacy over other denominations, it seems reasonable to regard it as a contributory factor; especially given the small size and relatively closed nature of many of the parishes. In an uncertain world where hardship could strike anyone at any time it must have taken a family of determined faith and conviction to do anything to limit

⁹² HRO, 139M82/PV1, schedules 1852-58.

⁹³ Ibid. Separate records for clothing club towards the back of the vestry minute book.

⁹⁴ HRO, 45M83/PW3, 18 November 1865.

their potential access to the various means of support influenced by the church. Whether this dependence was welcomed or resented we cannot be sure but, as we shall see, the reality was that Anglican dominance continued well into the twentieth century.

Nexus, Governance and Leadership

Just as the financial strength of the established Church and its prominent role in charity and welfare continued in this district largely undisturbed throughout the nineteenth century, so too did the tight nexus between local church and state. The integration of responsibilities and the longevity of office holding which combined to produce the settled social stability described in chapter III continued throughout the nineteenth century and beyond and was represented in the loyalty and service of particular individuals. For example, Charles Stone in Kilmeston not only contributed financially to the major restoration of the parish church in 1875 but for seventeen years between 1877 and 1893 he was churchwarden, poor law guardian, overseer of the poor and way warden: he personified the integration of church and parish elite and his loyalty and devotion must have been much appreciated by Reverend Thackeray⁹⁵. The vestry meeting at Bighton had broadened to embrace all forms of parish business between 1872 and 1878⁹⁶. The vestry inspected the accounts of the overseers and appointed new ones; it appointed the way warden (the parishioner elected to take care of parish highways), examined and approved the churchwardens' accounts and made new appointments, and appointed the parish clerk. Life was made much simpler by the fact that Mr Mollett followed the example of Charles

⁹⁵ HRO, 16M80/PW1, August 1875 and minutes 1877-93.

⁹⁶ HRO, 35M69/PW1; miscellaneous microfiche 505.

Stone and served as overseer, way warden and churchwarden⁹⁷: in their own individual ways, Stone and Mollett, and others like them, perpetuated the influence and position of the Church of England in this Anglican bastion of rural Hampshire. In Itchen Stoke the integration of church and parish was also demonstrated financially; the church rate for 1861 was for £20 11s but it was agreed in vestry that one third of this rate should be applied to discharge unspecified liabilities against the parish which were not included in the church expenditure⁹⁸. To some at least, church and parish remained inextricably linked.

The church also continued at the heart of all aspects of local government in Ovington. Among the six people signing the vestry minutes for 11 March 1875 were the rector, the churchwardens and the sidesman (a churchwarden's assistant); moreover, the churchwarden was also the overseer of the poor and the way warden, and the sidesman was the assistant overseer⁹⁹. The rector chaired the meeting and supervised the appointments; the church here was integral to the established social order. The church and parish elite were also bound together in a similar fashion at nearby Tichborne. Around 1860 the largest property owners in the village were Sir Henry Tichborne, a Roman Catholic, and George Godwin and they were also the major contributors to the poor rate along with the Reverend Hubbard, John Godwin and William Lipscombe. John Godwin was a churchwarden and his brother George was an overseer, along with Bridges Budd. George Godwin collected the rates as overseer and only a very small percentage (less than five per cent) were either legally excused or irrecoverable¹⁰⁰. Although the overseers ran the process of poor relief the church was intimately involved through its minister and

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ HRO, 12M70/PW1, minutes 1861.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 11 March 1875.

¹⁰⁰ HRO, 27M92/98.

officers; the churchwardens jointly assessed the rates with the overseers, the rector was a major contributor, the churchwarden and overseer were related and the same family, the Godwins, were major landowners.

Reference has already been made in the previous chapter, and above, to the twenty years of service as churchwarden at Old Alresford of William Savage Beare (1832-1852) which he combined with broader involvement in parish welfare and charity. His supporter in the Poor Law Guardian elections of 1835, Colonel Onslow, was another committed member of the parish elite; in addition to also chairing vestry meetings he received a vote of thanks in 1838 for the ‘measures he has taken regarding commutation of tithes’; he served as overseer of the poor and surveyor of highways in 1841 and he endowed the village with a training centre for girls entering domestic service, an alms-house and the village school, which was later designated as the National school under the control of the Church of England. The close integration of church and state continued to express itself in Old Alresford in the shape of individuals such as William Beare and Colonel Onslow¹⁰¹. Others, like the Christy family, followed in their footsteps well into the twentieth century.

But the continuing tight nexus between church and social elite was perhaps at its most prevalent in the thriving market town of New Alresford. We have seen that the town was largely immune to the rapid population growth at the county and national level which took place during the nineteenth century and, as already discussed, this autonomy and independence was reflected in the town’s governance structure. But it was not just church and local government that were bound together through the same people: the links into the

¹⁰¹ HRO, 43M74/PV1, 25 March 1833, 2 April 1835, 24 April 1835, 25 March 1841; V. Pemberton, ‘Southdowns: The National Children’s Home, Old Alresford and the Onslow Connection’, *Alresford Displayed* 7 (1982), p. 20.

daily life of the community went deeper. John Ridley Shield was captain of the golf club and chairman of the Alresford Waterworks Company¹⁰²; Herbert Walford and Colonel Stratton-Bates were listed as magistrates and governors of Perins Grammar School in the Alresford trade directory of 1906; the Reverend Headley also chaired the town's education committee and was vice-chair of the Alresford branch of the Hampshire Friendly Society which was chaired by Colonel Stratton-Bates!¹⁰³ Mr Headley did not, however, sit alongside the Colonel and Herbert Walford on the magistrates' bench; the age of the clerical magistrate outlined in Chapter III, in Hampshire at least, was largely over by 1830 and there was just a single clergyman among the 257 members of the Hampshire bench in 1894 (Table 4.5)¹⁰⁴.

Table 4.5: Proportion of Clerical Magistrates in Hampshire				
Year	No. of Magistrates	Clergy Magistrates	% Clergy	Local incumbent/Parish
1831	150	19	12.7	No details in report
1842	123	5	4.1	None (see Note)
1855	234	15	6.4	Richard Trench/Itchen Stoke
1861		14		No details in report
1873		11		None
1875	248	8	3.2	None
1888	278	5	1.8	None
1894	257	1	0.4	None
Note: This return is of justices appointed between 1836 and 1842 and is not necessarily a full list like that reported for other years.				

In terms of the district parishes for these years, only Richard Trench at Itchen Stoke served in this way in 1855, although the magistrate lists were still full of prominent local church sympathisers, patrons, financial supporters and churchwardens such as Lord Ashburton,

¹⁰² Rothwell, 'Local Government in New Alresford', pp. 59-60.

¹⁰³ *Hampshire Herald Directory and Yearbook for Alton, Alresford and 46 neighbouring villages* (Alton, 1906 and 1908), pp. 91-103.

¹⁰⁴ [Magistrates lists], HRO, 78M86/1 (1855), 2 (1875), 3 (1894); *Parl Pap.* (1831), xxxv (39), Return of Justices of the Peace, p. 14; *Parl Pap.* (1842), xxxiii (524), Return of Justices of the Peace, p. 17; *Parl Pap.* (1861), li (198), Magistrates in Holy Orders, p. 198; *Parl Pap.* (1873), liv (388), Clerical Magistrates, p. 16; *Parl Pap.* (1888), lxxxii (356), Return of Justices of the Peace, pp. 124-9.

Sir Frederick Baring, John Dutton, William Bulpett and Joseph Christy, as well as Onslow and Walford. Hampshire was not unique; a similar picture of decline and withdrawal has been noted both nationally and in Norfolk¹⁰⁵.

The Church of England incumbent was seen elsewhere in Alresford, too – as the honorary secretary of the Coal Club, as the treasurer of the Alresford & District Cottage Gardeners Society, as Vice President of the Alresford Institute which provided facilities for reading, billiards, cards and games, and as President of the Boys Recreation Club. Mrs Headley also presided over the Mothers Union with its 89 members¹⁰⁶. Without question, the social elite played a dominant role in most aspects of town and village life and, well into the twentieth century, the Church of England, its incumbents and principal officers, were deeply embedded in the overall governance process. As we shall see, Nonconformity was not excluded from this process, but it is hard to avoid the sense of stability, continuity and Anglican strength which emerges from the records. Hempton argues that Methodism made its fastest progress in areas *least* amenable to paternalistic influence; so not in areas like Alresford where the nexus between church and state was tightly enforced through longevity, continuity and connectivity of the parish elite¹⁰⁷. In this part of rural Hampshire the population remained remarkably stable; an efficient system of charity and welfare, overseen by the church and social elite, protected those in need from the vagaries of war time conditions and the increasing price of bread; the services of a prosperous market town hedged the dependence of the surrounding villages on agriculture; and the local Anglican clergy, with their powerful connections through family and patronage, were not the same

¹⁰⁵ Lee, *Rural Change*, p. 105; Zangerl, 'Social Composition of the Magistracy', p. 118.

¹⁰⁶ *Hampshire Herald Directory*, pp. 91-103.

¹⁰⁷ Hempton, *Methodism and Popular Religion*, p. 7.

agents of change as some of their colleagues elsewhere. The raw materials to challenge Anglican dominance were simply not in place.

We have demonstrated the continuing financial strength of the Church of England, its ongoing involvement in charity and welfare and the tightening bonds between church and state locally. But what of the Anglican clergy themselves; those charged with the cure of souls who represented the Church amongst its people? We have seen that Francis North, the Anglican incumbent for Old and New Alresford up until 1850, was wealthy, absent and distracted, with perhaps questionable personal commitment. Paradoxically, though, his vigorous opposition to the early seeds of Nonconformity helped secure the Anglican dominance suggested by the census. But North's was a different era, one which started in the eighteenth century, and the Church itself recognised that issues such as non-residence, pluralism and self-interest needed to be addressed to maintain public confidence and support. In New Alresford the independent parish provided the new framework; William Brodie, although from a familiar privileged background, provided the new face of the Church of England. It was the clerical and pastoral leadership of successive Anglican ministers like Brodie and his neighbours which cemented the continued Anglican dominance in the district.

The circumstances surrounding the separation of the Alresford parishes have already been discussed. Following the resignation of Francis North, an Order in Council on 12 December 1850 formally separated the chapelries of New Alresford and Medstead from the parish of Old Alresford. George Sumner was collated and admitted to the rectory of Old Alresford on 21 December 1850 and William Brodie was installed at New Alresford

on 27 January 1851¹⁰⁸. Following his appointment Brodie immediately took a house in the town and lived amongst his parishioners with his wife and young family whilst the new rectory was built using money from a QAB loan¹⁰⁹; he was 29 years old, which was young for an incumbent at the time¹¹⁰, and determined to engage with his new community. Whereas a churchwarden or the curate John Harris usually chaired the vestry meetings when North was the incumbent, Brodie personally chaired his first vestry meeting on 24 April 1851 and regularly did so until 8 July 1867¹¹¹. The routine business of church rates, clock repairs, appointing officials and approving accounts all received his close scrutiny but it was the larger, more strategic projects which best demonstrated his leadership. Following years of neglect, there was an urgent need to repair St John's with the estimated cost being £736 (around ten times the typical amount raised by the annual rate). It was testament to the standing of the church under Brodie that, within six months, the finance committee was able to report 'very liberal promises of support' in May 1857 and pledges of £850, more than enough to cover the work, architects and legal fees¹¹². Just over a year later, the church raised a further £184 for the enlargement and fencing of the parish churchyard. The list of contributors included £20 from the bailiff and burgesses, showing tangible support from local government, and seven gifts of £10 each from various members of the local nobility and gentry: perhaps Brodie's connections were helpful in securing these contributions from his social peers? This considerable support still left more than half the funds to come from the wider community, and that after the vast fundraising

¹⁰⁸ HRO, 21M65/C4/16; HRO, 21M65/A2/6, 21 December 1850, 27 January 1851.

¹⁰⁹ Deed D203805.

¹¹⁰ Smith, *Doing the Duty*, p. xlii; less than six per cent of the incumbents in Hampshire in the returns whose date of birth was known was aged under 30.

¹¹¹ HRO, 45M83/PW3.

¹¹² Ibid., 18 December 1856, 4 May 1857.

of 1857¹¹³; only a well-respected and supported local church, with a popular leader, could have had the energy and commitment to both mount the campaign and collect the funds. Here was a man with the qualities of William Macfarlane, the energetic, resident and wealthy incumbent at Dorchester who created a fresh start for that parish in the 1860s¹¹⁴. But more was to come. Brodie continued the drive to further improve the physical facilities which underpinned the spiritual worship and wellbeing of the community. In November 1862 he led a proposal to provide increased church accommodation, presumably in response to demand although the minutes are not clear, with more seating between the north aisle and the chancel, and three years later there was discussion of how to fund the enclosure of the churchyard. A voluntary subscription was considered inappropriate after recent demands but, rather than defer the expenditure, an additional voluntary rate of 3d was voted through: an increase of at least 50 per cent on the typical rate at this time¹¹⁵.

No service registers survive from the Brodie incumbency to assess attendance and communicant numbers, but the ability of the modestly endowed parish to regularly raise significant funds suggests a strong, pastorally committed leader. The surviving correspondence of his wife, Maria, demonstrates her piety, affection and faith, particularly when comforting her brother-in-law Roundell Palmer in response to his wife Laura's illness and later death in 1885, reflecting that 'I know so well the lonely feelings from which you must suffer'¹¹⁶; her husband William had died on 5 June 1882¹¹⁷. In a final act of affection, thirty years after his resignation as rector, Maria commissioned a pulpit to be erected in St John's in memory of her late husband as the first incumbent of the

¹¹³ Ibid., 16 September 1858, 5 October 1858.

¹¹⁴ Tiller, 'Dorchester to 1920', pp. 72-3.

¹¹⁵ HRO, 45M83/PW3, 13 November 1862, 18 November 1865.

¹¹⁶ [Maria Brodie correspondence], MS 1879, fo. 243; MS 1880, fo. 198.

¹¹⁷ 'Reverend William Brodie' <http://www.thepeerage.com/p1335.htm> (23 July 2013).

independent parish. The citation states that Brodie built the rectory, assisted by the QAB loan, and that this contribution was part of his legacy: 15 members of his family subscribed to the cost of the pulpit¹¹⁸. We have little firm evidence to confirm the style of Brodie's churchmanship, although his father's connection with Bishop Sumner and his willingness to give time to the CMS tentatively suggests an evangelistic persuasion. What seems clear is that the Brodies were a sincere, committed couple with a real Christian faith who were liked and respected by their parishioners.

We have already seen that Brodie's immediate successor, William Sealey, who was rector from 1868 to 1879, faced financial and health challenges which may have hampered his ministry. But most of the Alresford rectors in this period made a real difference. The next incumbent William Newnham (1879-1889) provided intellectual leadership. In an era when the High Church and Evangelical wings were competing for pre-eminence within the Church of England, Newnham's *Alresford Essays for the Times*, written shortly after he left the parish, gives an insight into the theology of one of St John's incumbents. This was a devotional book dedicated to Newnham's close friend John Ridley Shield, churchwarden, town trustee and chairman of the school governors. Based on Newnham's sermons from the pulpit, and in an age of biblical criticism and scientific reasoning, this was an attempt to reassure the doubters over the story of creation, miracles, eternal punishment and the resurrection. Newnham had sympathy with the authors of *Lux Mundi* (published a few years before) which sought to engage with contemporary views on evolution and biblical criticism, and regarded the Anglo-Catholic faith as entirely consistent with these developments: 'I think, with them, that the nineteenth century requires a re-setting of the jewels of the 'Catholic' faith'. Newnham's teaching was a new

¹¹⁸ HRO, 45M83/PW26.

more liberal brand of Anglo-Catholicism, cherishing a Catholic heritage and challenging justification by faith alone¹¹⁹. We cannot be certain what parishioners thought, but Easter Day communicants increased by 30 per cent during his tenure and such theology would later be reflected in the fabric of St John's and the nature and style of worship¹²⁰.

Newnham, as discussed below, also fought hard in the late 1880s to maintain the pre-eminence of the Church of England in the crucial denominational battleground of education: he appreciated the importance of future generations to Anglican hegemony. It was the antiquarian Reverend Headley, active throughout his community, who fought through political and financial challenges to ensure that St John's was fully restored at the end of the nineteenth century and fit for future worship; and, as will be shown below, his successor Frederick Jellicoe, like Brodie before him, showed impressive drive, energy and commitment; a real passion to serve and leave a legacy. As Headley transitioned to Jellicoe though, the collective, corporate commitment to pastoral work at St John's was perhaps most tangibly expressed by the fact that in 1915 the congregation had 13 district visitors determined to engage with the sick, the bereaved, the lonely and the poor; to bring, as they saw it, the love of Christ into the homes of the parish¹²¹.

It was not just New Alresford that enjoyed effective pastoral leadership. As we have already seen, George Sumner at Old Alresford, like his neighbour William Brodie, worked tirelessly in his parish and beyond, leading vestry, serving on committees, preaching sermons, delivering lectures and supporting outreach and worthy causes. In Sumner's last charge as bishop of Guildford in 1901 he stated that his time at Old Alresford had taught

¹¹⁹ W.O. Newnham, *Alresford Essays for the Times* (London, 1891), preface.

¹²⁰ HRO, 45M83/PI1-3.

¹²¹ HRO, 21M65/B4/6/2/2. District visitors were also in Bramdean, Hinton Ampner, Itchen Stoke and Northington.

him the value of ‘incessant parochial and pastoral visitation’ amongst his parishioners: it involved labour, weariness and discouragement, he said, but was invaluable¹²². Sumner visited every home within the parish, making special journeys in the evening to meet the men who had been out working, and offered to take house prayers where it was welcomed¹²³. As we have seen, he was also closely involved in the administration of the parish cottages. The letters of condolence after his death showed a man much loved, admired and respected. In his pastoral efforts he was ably supported by his wife Mary Sumner. Mary not only founded the Mothers Union in 1876 to support mothers in the awesome responsibility of bringing up children but she also supplemented the pastoral work of her husband by running a men’s meeting, a ‘most delightful gathering of 35 men who came regularly up to the rectory every Sunday evening’. This was effective female leadership in an adult male context. Mary’s surviving papers describe how the men entered heartily into the bible reading and suggestions she offered on religious and home duties, and how the men became ‘excellent fellow workers for the church’. Her motive was to create homes of ‘love and peace’, bound together in what she regarded as the sanctity of holy marriage¹²⁴. Apart from the Mothers Union, the Sumners also set up a local CETS, a Young Men’s Association, a Girls Friendly Society and a Cottage Garden Society¹²⁵. This was pastoral care and evangelism centred on the parish. Moreover, by 1915 such structured outreach and pastoral support was common throughout the district, supplemented by bible and communicants classes, missionary groups, and widely circulating parish magazines¹²⁶. Although not its primary purpose, such outreach and encouragement must have done much to re-inforce the central position of the Church of England in the local community.

¹²² Sumner, *Memoir of George Henry Sumner*, pp. 108-24.

¹²³ J. Coombs, *George and Mary Sumner: Their Life and Times* (London, 1965), pp. 60-3.

¹²⁴ MU/MSS/1/2.

¹²⁵ Coombs, *George and Mary Sumner*, p. 63.

¹²⁶ HRO, 21M65/B4/6/2/2, 4-8, 10, 12, 14-16.

Dedication and pastoral commitment were also evidenced elsewhere; for example, in the heroic efforts (which included personal funding) of Thomas Woodhouse to maintain the local Church of England school in Ropley in the 1880s¹²⁷ and the determined campaign of his successor Henry Leake to find the funds to re-build the parish church in 1897¹²⁸.

Whilst we cannot be certain that the level of pastoral care provided by the local Victorian clergy was superior to their predecessors, there is certainly evidence that many of the area's incumbents were hard-working, sincerely motivated and effective in their ministry. As such they served to cement the local pre-eminence of the Church of England based on its financial strength, central involvement in parish life and close connections between church and state. The church enjoyed active sponsorship from the parish elite as well as the tacit acquiescence, if not unequivocal support, of many parishioners. This rosy picture, though, was not without challenge and we turn now to consider the evidence of dissent from the central role that the church played in the established social order.

Dissent

We have already explored the controversy over church rates. There was certainly some resistance to the principle of mandatory contribution; but not much. Moreover, once mandatory rates were abolished many parishes were able to collect similar amounts on a voluntary basis and campaigns to raise large sums when required through appeals and subscriptions were generally met. The Church of England in this area continued to demonstrate financial reach well beyond anything that Nonconformity could aspire to. Another emotive battleground though in the struggle for denominational supremacy was

¹²⁷ Bermondsey, CERC NS/7/1/10532. National Society records.

¹²⁸ Davidson 49, fos. 427-40.

education: Alresford was no exception to this. This struggle gathered pace after the First World War and the legislative roots, related historiography and local evidence are considered in detail in Chapter V; however, some of the earlier encounters are considered here to illustrate the pressures the Anglican clergy were under. The Reverend William Newnham appreciated the importance of future generations and fought hard to secure and maintain the pre-eminence of the Church of England in New Alresford in the 1880s. On 2 July 1886 Newnham informed the National Society that the committee of the National school had received a formal communication from the British and Foreign school intimating that they intended closing their school as a result of their building and site being condemned: they were unable to fund the building of another school for their 70 pupils. Newnham submitted plans and an estimate of £500 to acquire land and buildings to enlarge the National school (currently 140 children) to meet the increased need resulting from the closure and appealed to the National Society for help¹²⁹. If this sum could not be found a School Board would have to be formed to replace them both since the ratepayers would not continue with both a rate paid and a voluntary school at the same time and they would miss the chance to ‘...be rid of the dissenting incumbent’. The British school proposed a compromise: incorporation of the British school into the National, but with separate religious instruction, but this was considered impractical. Following much correspondence the British school closed in 1887 and a School Board was appointed to which the National school was transferred in 1888¹³⁰. The imposition of a Board school, which could not be avoided, led to non-denominational education and was a blow to Anglicanism; but at least the Anglicans were better off than the Nonconformists who were

¹²⁹ NS/7/1/205: papers regarding school, transfer to School Board and closure in 1889.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

financially weak and had only half as many children in their school as the Anglicans had in theirs¹³¹.

Around the same time in neighbouring Ropley a similar struggle took place relating to the running of the local Church of England school. The Reverend Thomas Woodhouse acted as the school's treasurer and issued a bleak report to his parishioners on 28 January 1887¹³². Despite good inspection reports, good attendance records, increasing numbers on roll and an improvement in grants received, the school continued to run at a financial deficit which was not sustainable. Reverend Woodhouse had personally funded the shortfall, which stood at £15 13s 10d, but could not continue to do so and planned to resign as treasurer that Easter. A voluntary rate of five pence in the pound was required to keep the school going and he reminded his parishioners that the alternative was a Board school which would require larger buildings and more expense. His appeal fell on deaf ears: at the subsequent parish meeting the consensus was to form a School Board without delay and in an appeal to the National Society for support he wrote that 'I stand almost alone in the parish'¹³³. The parishioners of Ropley, at least, did not think highly enough of the established Church to support its continuing control of the provision of education for their children; or perhaps they just did not see a Board school as undesirable.

The Reverend John Leonard also corresponded with the National Society about the school in Bighton when persistent rumours surfaced about its imminent closure in 1922; he acknowledged that it had been 'much neglected during the latter years of my predecessor'

¹³¹ *Hampshire Advertiser*, 7 May 1887, p. 8; despite the National school continuing to show satisfactory results the voluntary rate and government grant were insufficient to meet school expenditure.

¹³² NS/7/1/10532.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 23 February 1888.

but resolved to do his best to support the school in future¹³⁴. Captain Nicoll, the patron of the living and owner of the school, had borne all the expenses for years but could do so no longer as the local authority demanded structural improvements, enlargement and improved sanitation, as well as the resignation of the headteacher, following an adverse inspection in 1924. With such operational difficulties an appeal was made to the National Society for help with buying the school from Captain Nicoll as the only way of keeping it as a church school¹³⁵. Towards the end of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth (more recent examples are considered in Chapter V), Anglican incumbents in the district fought to maintain the influence of the established Church on the education of the children of their parishes; but support was dwindling as the appeal of non-denominational education took hold.

Apart from rates and education, other small cracks appeared in the smooth edifice of Anglican control. In the neighbouring village of Ovington there was a background of rumbling discontent on minor administrative issues¹³⁶. The major dispute, however, arose with the Alresford guardian about the care of the parish poor. At a vestry on 24 March 1888 the ratepayers demanded to inquire ‘why the aged and infirm poor of the parish are habitually neglected in the administration of outdoor relief, in exceptional contrast to the published returns of the other parishes in the union?’ Tensions ran high as the plight of specific parishioners was discussed; George Shadwell and his wife received no parochial aid whatsoever and lived in such squalor that the nurse from London was unable to attend them for more than three days and ‘the aged widow Ivey is never able to leave home and has no other means of support than a meagre weekly wage from a grandson whilst the

¹³⁴ NS/7/1/1168, 16 March 1922.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 12 February, 12 November and 14 November 1924.

¹³⁶ HRO, 32M69/PW2, 23 March 1871, 20 March 1876, 24 March 1887, 20 March 1890, 20 March 1891.

granddaughter is near starvation'. At the conclusion of what appears an angry vestry Captain Hewson, the long-serving churchwarden and later benefactor of the benefice, was instructed to write and inform the guardian at Alresford that 'if outdoor relief is to be withheld in future from the aged and infirm when due then our contribution to the common fund ought to be immediately reduced'¹³⁷. Disquiet there was, but this did not necessarily imply waning support for the church. Most of the matters documented in vestry were minor, took place over a twenty year period and were readily accepted and addressed by the established order to protect the interests and rights of parishioners. The interaction with the Alresford Poor Law Union actually showed how determined the local elite were to protect the interests of those who inhabited their village; it seems likely that such energy and commitment were appreciated and that the church was very much part of that collective response.

Opposition was more specifically anti-clerical in Kilmeston. The Reverend James Lister reported to the bishop in his 1899 visitation return that, following complaints and a petition to the bishop from parishioners, which resulted in his predecessor's resignation, the people now had no respect for their parish priest and a precedent had been set for the removal of any rector they were unhappy with: this, he argued, amounted to Congregationalism. He also reported that 'the people at the manor house' (the Long family) who were bitter enemies of the church were leaving the parish, which would help, but it would take a generation to restore peaceful order¹³⁸. There were occasional exceptions to the general pattern of settled stability.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 24 March 1888.

¹³⁸ HRO, 21M65/B4/5/288; *VCH* 3, pp. 323-7.

There were also murmurs of social discontent in Bishops Sutton. On 4 April 1872 the vestry appointed Thomas Childs (presumably related to John Childs who refused to pay his rates) as Sexton to ‘keep the church more neat and clean than it has been lately’ but also to ‘keep order in the gallery’, although this was probably just children. He was re-appointed the following year¹³⁹. Concerns about public health forced the closure of the burial ground in the parish churchyard at Swarraton in 1886 and four years later Reverend Eyre disputed his liability to pay the poor rate on tithes to the overseer at Chilton Candover. A legal opinion confirmed that, as the land on which the tithe was payable was in Chilton Candover, liability was indeed due there rather than in Eyre’s parish of Swarraton; presumably it was concern to ensure the maximum relief of his own parishioners in Swarraton rather than any attempt to reduce his overall liability which motivated the incumbent¹⁴⁰? As Snell contends in *Parish and Belonging*, parish identity and entitlement remained important concepts in Victorian England¹⁴¹.

There was also some reference to dissenters in Ropley in the late nineteenth century. According to Reverend Leake they sought to take advantage of the discomfort caused by the major re-building work at the Anglican church as some parishioners went to other parishes, to chapel or absented themselves altogether. In response to the cramped accommodation and cold schoolroom the vicar shortened services but still received complaints and attendances dropped; the regular churchgoers were not so loyal when their comfort was compromised. Reverend Leake drove the restoration project with energy and

¹³⁹ HRO, 42M78/PW1, 4 April 1872; Kilbey, ‘Music-making’, p. 280.

¹⁴⁰ HRO, 27M69/PB2; HRO, 27M69/PI3.

¹⁴¹ Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p. 336.

commitment between the original vestry in October 1894 and the re-opening in March 1897¹⁴².

Such small indications of local dissent and ‘unrest’ seem minor. We could even go further and suggest that the fact that such instances were deemed worthy to be captured in the records at all could be taken as an indication of just how compliant the *status quo* was. Moreover, the local community within which the Anglican Church was situated remained very stable throughout the second half of the nineteenth century; the context for continued dominance was undisturbed. Levels of social unrest and crime in the area, based on reports in the *Hampshire Telegraph* and the *Hampshire Advertiser*, continued to be minimal with incidence of violence exceptionally rare. Table 4.6 below provides an overview¹⁴³.

Table 4.6: Crimes and Misdemeanours Reported in the Alresford Registration District		
	Hampshire Advertiser 1840-1900	Hampshire Telegraph 1850-1900
Social crime/misdemeanours	10	9
Crime	20	12
Violent crime	5	2
Total	35	23

Given that the population for the district was in excess of 7,400 in 1851, that the population remained relatively stable and that the period covered was 50 or 60 years, the level of reported crime, even accepting that much probably went unrecorded or was dealt with summarily, was remarkable. Further contextualising evidence, albeit from a single year, was provided by a government paper reporting the crimes committed nationally in

¹⁴² Davidson 49, fos. 427-40.

¹⁴³ See the *Hampshire Advertiser* 1840-1900 and the *Hampshire Telegraph* 1850-1900. Table based on an analysis of all articles appearing in these newspapers for the parishes of the Alresford Registration District.

each police district for 1872. The data relating to Hampshire was reported in the *Hampshire Advertiser* on 10 January 1874 and is summarised in Table 4.7 below¹⁴⁴:

Table 4.7: Crimes in Hampshire Police Districts, 1872					
Police District	Population 1871	Indictable Crimes	Summary Offences	Total	Offence rate (head of population per offence)
Hampshire	338,569	391	4,384	4,775	71
Basingstoke	5,574	10	175	185	30
Southampton	54,057	34	1,540	1,574	34
Winchester	14,705	14	171	185	79
Newport (Isle of Wight)	6,744	35	155	190	35
Ryde (Isle of Wight)	11,234	9	174	183	61
Portsmouth	112,954	250	1,453	1,703	66

The offence rates in a selection of other provincial town and city districts were: Newbury (62); Reading (45); Windsor (30); Barnstable (58); Plymouth (57); Bristol (29); Dorchester (59); Hereford (25); Maidstone (81); and Gravesend (33). There were other districts with similar or ‘better’ (more head per crime) rates than Winchester but comparing it with other police districts within Hampshire and with districts in other counties the incidence of indictable and summary crime was low.

If the 1872 figures for Winchester, population 14,705, were a typical average for the period 1840-1900 (although David Jones argues in *Crime and Protest* that, especially after the 1860s, there was a national decline in the number of offences against person and property so the average may be lower¹⁴⁵) that would be over 11,000 indictable and summary offences over the 60 year period. Across that same time-span, the number of crimes reported in the *Hampshire Advertiser* for parishes of the Alresford registration district, population 7,270, was just 35. Whilst there would undoubtedly have been

¹⁴⁴ *Hampshire Advertiser*, 10 January 1874, p. 3; *Parl Pap.* (1873), xxxi (16), Report of Inspectors of Constabulary, pp. 191-286.

¹⁴⁵ Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police*, p. 4.

significant amounts of undetected and unreported crime, Drew Gray contends in *Crime, Policing and Punishment* that, as the popular press became more accessible in the second half of the nineteenth century, the reporting of crime was at the centre of a new form of journalism¹⁴⁶. So if the local criminal justice system was dealing with offences in the 1870s it seems likely that they would have been reported. Allowing for inevitable omissions and inaccuracies, and that the estimate for the Winchester district may be overstated, it is hard to avoid the conclusion, with any reasonable margin for error, that the parishes of the Alresford registration district were a very peaceful, settled and law-abiding community.

In addition to the lack of crime and social unrest, there were also plentiful reports of neighbourly cohesion, community events and public-spirited behaviour. All shops in Alresford closed on 28 June 1865 to celebrate the anniversary of Queen Victoria's coronation; concerts were held and subscriptions were raised to support fellow citizens in distress; the learned gave their time for public lectures; balls were arranged, societies met and significant events in prominent local families led to days of celebrations which were enthusiastically supported. In an indication of their willingness to get involved some 30 parishioners were present at the preliminary meeting in May 1887 to plan for the Royal Jubilee¹⁴⁷. The established Church remained an integral part of this outward expression of social stability; by its activities it both demonstrated its hegemony and illustrated the virtues of the social structure to which it was central. The clergy undertook their share of talks and lectures; sermons were preached in support of the sick and wounded in war; the

¹⁴⁶ Gray, *Crime, Policing and Punishment*, p. 34. In 1866 the *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* and the *Daily Telegraph* devoted 50 per cent of their content to crime.

¹⁴⁷ *Hampshire Advertiser*; 17 June 1865, p.12; 31 January 1863, p. 11; 31 January 1852, p. 5; 20 April 1861, p. 12; 8 November 1873, p. 7; 11 February 1865, p. 11; 7 September 1887, p. 3, 14 May 1887, p. 8.

choral society performed; entertainments took place in the National Society schoolroom and annual festivals, such as those of the Hampshire Friendly Society and the Hand in Hand Benefit Society, involved both church services and prominent displays of clerical support¹⁴⁸. The Reverend Horne may have been the personification of pastoral service which inspired the loyalty and affection of the community for the Anglican Church; in a testimonial to the long-serving Alresford curate his parishioners presented him with a marble clock, a bronze candelabra and a coffee pot to mark their appreciation of ‘his spiritual and neighbourly qualities and services’¹⁴⁹. But whilst the Anglicans dominated they did not have a monopoly on community interaction. In a sign of easing tensions and growing acceptance, or perhaps because the threat of dissent was not regarded as significant, the Nonconformist chapels also played their part in visible Christian activity offering a parallel selection of tea meetings, talks and public gatherings. There were lectures in the chapel and the British schoolroom on diverse topics such as India, Palestine, astronomy, the English country mansion and the origin of British schools¹⁵⁰; Reverend Penn addressed the Hampshire Congregational Union on the chapel’s work with local children and was sanguine about their Sunday school teaching¹⁵¹; and annual tea parties and festivities took place at Mr French’s meadows and on John Godwin’s common in Ovington¹⁵². Although such events were not generally on a scale to match the Anglicans, there was report of a Primitive Methodist camp meeting in 1860, with an attendance estimated at one thousand, at which ‘very little if any sectarian feeling was expressed’ and

¹⁴⁸ Ibid; 3 February 1855, p. 6; 24 September 1870, p. 7; 29 March 1862, p. 11; 11 February 1865, p. 11; 3 April 1880, p. 7, 18 July 1868, p. 11.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid; 5 May 1877, p. 7.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid; 10 March 1860, p. 12; 17 March 1860, p. 11; 24 March 1860, p. 12; 8 November 1873, p. 7.

¹⁵¹ *Hampshire Telegraph*, 12 April 1873, p. 8.

¹⁵² *Hampshire Advertiser*, 2 June 1860, p. 11; 30 May 1863, p. 11.

in which the inhabitants of Alresford apparently felt ‘a great interest’¹⁵³. In a local sign of denominational solidarity, ladies organised a tea for the parish poor in the British schoolroom in 1871 which included ‘evangelical addresses’ by clergy of different denominations as well as the wife of a Church of England minister¹⁵⁴.

But whatever official records or the newspapers suggest the prime evidence for dissent and Nonconformity is that produced by the chapels themselves: and the largest and most active of these was in New Alresford. The regulations in the Church Book make it clear that those drawn into membership at the Congregational chapel in Alresford were committing themselves to a life of moral discipline and propriety; this had a greater emphasis and focus than for Anglicans. Potential members had to be proposed and interviewed by the minister, those absent from the Lord’s Supper for six months were to be expelled and any brother ‘that speaks evil or seeks to injure his brother in any way ... shall be dealt with as any church meeting may direct’. All were expected to work in harmony with the church and the minister. Power over church affairs rested with the members themselves, with authority delegated to a management committee¹⁵⁵.

Initial membership and attendance was modest when they were subject to Anglican ‘resistance’ under North; there is reference to ‘a mere sprinkling of persons’, a membership of 17 being recorded in 1829 and only 14 in 1831¹⁵⁶. From this point the congregation was gradually augmented and a small Independent day school was opened in

¹⁵³ Ibid; 18 August 1860, p. 11.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid; 11 November 1871, p. 7.

¹⁵⁵ HRO, 127M94/67.

¹⁵⁶ HRO, 127M94/66.

June 1852¹⁵⁷. An analysis of the occupations of 80 members between 1830 and 1900 shows that approximately half were involved in skilled manual trades or businesses (usually working for others rather than on their own account or as a ‘master’), 40 per cent provided unskilled manual labour and the remainder lived independently or performed administrative, clerical or professional duties. Interestingly, only 56 per cent of the sample lived in Alresford itself, the remainder coming in from the surrounding villages; Congregationalism had some appeal but needed to draw widely to create a sustainable membership¹⁵⁸. There were other ‘subscribers’ who attended services but were not members (approximately equal in number in the 1830s) but overall membership growth was steady rather than spectacular being regularly between 60 and 80 during the 1870s and 1880s¹⁵⁹. If the proportions of members and subscribers remained as it was in the 1830s this suggests that attendance at services in this period was probably similar to census Sunday in 1851 (Table 4.3: 116 in the morning, 65 in the evening), possibly a little lower. So there was stability, but no major breakthrough to challenge Anglican dominance. The minutes of church meetings suggest a possible reason.

Discipline and authority can bind a group together, and even foster growth, but if perceived as excessive it can also create disaffection. Members were not just admitted, despite the desire for growth: careful enquiries were made, absences were investigated, objections were raised and rejections issued¹⁶⁰. Mr Baines was only admitted after he had given up membership of a shoemaker’s club in Ovington¹⁶¹; Mrs Baker was requested not to come to the Lord’s Table for a time following charges of unfaithfulness and

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ HRO, 127M94/67, 68.

¹⁵⁹ HRO, 127M94/67.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., August 1852.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., February 1855.

inconsistency¹⁶² and Mr Cameron was questioned as to why he absented himself from communion on three occasions¹⁶³. Such strictures may not have been to everyone's taste; it was easier in this period for the Anglican Church to maintain its numbers because it placed fewer demands on its community. There was controversy and scandal as well. The circumstances surrounding Reverend Ford's resignation were not for public consumption; when aspersions about his character were allegedly recorded in the Church Book the pages were blotted and removed¹⁶⁴. A major scandal broke in February 1854 with the public excommunication of one of the deacons, John Adams, and a member Mary Anne Greenaway; their child was born only a week after they were married. Their removal from the Church Book was announced in a service with the conclusion 'may the Lord have mercy on their souls'; the meeting to discuss the matter and challenge the accused was deemed so sensitive that only male members were permitted to attend to discuss 'the disgrace you have brought upon yourself and the consequent dishonour reflected on the Holy cause'¹⁶⁵. In this case the censure worked, at least in part, as a penitent, humble and consistent Mr Adams was invited back to the church seven years later, although the resolution made no mention of his wife¹⁶⁶. Relationships with the wider community were also sometimes difficult: Mrs Gibbs was refused permission to use the frontage of the chapel as a daily entrance to her school and could only convey wood and coal for heating on payment of rent¹⁶⁷.

¹⁶² Ibid., April 1859.

¹⁶³ Ibid., October 1874.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 19 April 1852.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., February 1854.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., October 1861.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 6 October 1862.

But the Congregationalists also lacked what the Anglicans had in plenty: financial strength and settled leadership¹⁶⁸. These issues were sometimes linked. After the controversy over Reverend Ford various other pastors stood in temporarily, but none were local. In May 1863, after much effort raising pew rents and donations and with £20 promised from the Hampshire Association, Mr Gooby was invited to be pastor on a stipend of £80 per annum, the need for a settled ministry being paramount. The invitation was refused¹⁶⁹. Pastor Otty accepted shortly afterwards but resigned less than a year later and when the Hampshire Association withdrew their previous offer of financial support a quarterly collection was proposed to make up the shortfall¹⁷⁰. Another visiting preacher, Reverend Barr, offered his services ‘for a few months’ at £1 per week but there was still no continuity. When Reverend Collins accepted a permanent position in October 1865 things finally looked more promising; but something then happened at the Congregational chapel. Between 1866 and 1870 there are no records in the Church Book *at all*. Meetings, if they occurred, were never documented and the records on the resumption suggest that all was not well. The Congregationalists had suffered a major setback.

When Pastor Thomas Penn accepted a reduction in his stipend to take up full time ministry his comment that ‘...the cause of Alresford having been for some length of time in a very low and unsatisfactory condition’ confirmed that the fortunes of the chapel had been suffering for the previous four years¹⁷¹. He immediately set about reviving its prospects. Affairs became more organised; there were full church meetings, deacons’ meetings, sub-committees, proper notes and the issue of finances was addressed as nearly £60 was raised

¹⁶⁸ *Hampshire Telegraph*, 12 October 1872, p. 7. The Hampshire Congregational Union were unable to further fund local evangelists without higher financial contributions.

¹⁶⁹ HRO, 127M94/67, May 1863.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, June 1863, October 1863.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, minutes 1870.

for urgent repairs, the schoolroom was improved and outreach and missionary support was organised. Penn's letter to the Hampshire Union of 30 September 1871 read like a visitation report in which he suggested the 'low state of the church and long, [was] now past'¹⁷². But in the period of neglect membership had slumped, falling back to 34 in September 1871. Whilst this had nearly doubled by the time of Sealey's illness in 1875 valuable momentum had been lost: if Penn's energy and commitment had been applied to a healthier base, at a time of relative Anglican weakness, then a more serious challenge may have occurred¹⁷³. Whilst some new members came from Alresford, many others came from the surrounding villages – from Cheriton, Bighton, Bishops Sutton, Ropley, Ovington, Tichborne and Old Alresford. Nonconformity still lacked strong support in the town itself: it also lacked any sustained sponsorship from the local elite, and that proved crucial to its failure to break Anglican dominance. The Onslow family provided their greatest hope.

The Onslows were one of the largest landowners in the Alresford area and one of its most influential families. Thomas Cranley Onslow, second son of the 2nd earl of Onslow and Colonel of the 2nd Surrey Militia, married Susannah Elizabeth Hillier in 1813 and moved to Old Alresford, residing in Upton House by 1830. They had eight children and collectively the family was prominent in the social life of rural Hampshire¹⁷⁴. They also had a national profile. Colonel Onslow's second son Guildford James Hillier Onslow, the Liberal MP for Guildford, was a major supporter of the 'Tichborne Claimant', the national

¹⁷² Ibid., 30 September 1871.

¹⁷³ Ibid., Church Members Register.

¹⁷⁴ Pemberton, 'Southdowns', pp. 19-25; W.D. Rubinstein, 'William Hillier Onslow, fourth earl of Onslow (1853-1911), politician and colonial governor', in Matthew and Harrison, *ODNB* 41, pp. 884-6; G.F.R. Barker and Revd E.A. Smith, 'George Onslow, first earl of Onslow (1731-1814), politician', in Matthew and Harrison, *ODNB* 41, pp. 876-8; *Burke's Peerage and Baronetage*, 105th edn (London, 1970), 4th Impression (London, 1980), p. 2039.

cause celebre of the 1870s: Onslow even hosted a rally for him at *The Swan* in Alresford on 14 May 1872 after his arrival in England to claim his estate¹⁷⁵. Guildford Onslow was prepared to publicly support a cause to which many of his social rank were opposed: other members of his family were also prepared to support the minority cause of Nonconformity.

The Congregational Church Book for 26 May 1886 records that ‘Colonel Onslow’ (probably the 2nd earl’s third son Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Onslow) desired to make a gift to the church of a modern rostrum to replace the existing pulpit: a design was approved and a vote of thanks made to the Colonel after a formal opening ceremony. Here was public recognition from the social elite¹⁷⁶. There was more. When discussing finances at the chapel’s 74th anniversary tea meeting in 1899 it was noted that the reduction in Miss Onslow’s subscription from £20 to £5 had had an impact: it is not clear how long the subscription had been going but it represented significant financial support at the time¹⁷⁷. But the Congregationalists were not the only Nonconformist denomination to receive tangible support from the Onslows. In 1875, perhaps sensing an opportunity due to the illness of Reverend Sealey, the Primitive Methodists had taken a small room then used as a carpenter’s workshop to rent on a 21 year lease for a few pounds per year. The contracting representatives were the Primitive Methodist minister at Winchester, two others from Alresford and two outsiders¹⁷⁸. No records survive relating to the meetings which must have taken place in the room: the Primitives had a presence but they were not to grow sufficiently to justify the construction of their own chapel until 1896 when they managed

¹⁷⁵ HRO, 72A04/C1/24-26, 29, 35, 37; HRO, 72A04/C4/1, 6-9; HRO, 37M48/74/4; HRO, 49M50/B57; HRO, MHC/48 (1872) for papers relating to the case; HRO, MHC/48 *Hampshire Chronicle*, reports in various editions 1872.

¹⁷⁶ HRO, 127/M94/68, 26 May 1886.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 25 October 1899.

¹⁷⁸ [Nonconformist papers and correspondence], HRO, 79M72/NMS9.

to gather £800 from a mortgage, donations and offerings to build their chapel in The Dean¹⁷⁹ (Fig. 28).



Figure 28 - Primitive Methodist Chapel, The Dean. Site purchased 1893, chapel constructed 1896.

The site for the chapel was purchased in 1893 from Mr John Chapman with the aid of a loan from Colonel Onslow at 4 per cent per annum, secured on the premises¹⁸⁰. But the Onslows had already supported the Primitives in Old Alresford. The property now known as ‘Southdowns’ was built by the Onslow family on their estate as a home and school for training girls in domestic service. In 1886 the property was conveyed to the trustees of the Primitive Methodist church by Miss Arabella Onslow and was then subsequently re-opened as a Primitive Methodist Orphanage in 1889¹⁸¹ (Fig. 29).

¹⁷⁹ HRO, 79M72/NMS12.

¹⁸⁰ HRO, 79M72/NMS18, 1894-1933.

¹⁸¹ Pemberton, ‘Southdowns’, p. 20.



Figure 29 - Primitive Methodist Orphanage, Old Alresford, c.1920.

Just after the Primitives acquired their site in 1893, the Wesleyan Methodists followed a year later. The total cost of the site in Jacklyns Lane and the construction of the chapel was £350¹⁸² (Fig. 30). The bulk of the funding came from private loans with the shortfall being made up from smaller subscriptions from 15 people, including two pounds from Colonel Onslow¹⁸³. It is tempting to conclude that the Onslow family, having offered tangible support to the Congregationalists, the Primitives and the Wesleyans were the senior local sponsorship which should have produced a breakthrough for Nonconformity in Alresford. But the reality was different. As indicated above, not only had the Onslows built ‘Southdowns’ in 1838 as a training centre for girls entering domestic service but they also built the alms house in Old Alresford in 1843 and the village school, which was later designated as the National school.

¹⁸² HRO, 79M72/NMS18.

¹⁸³ HRO, 79M72/NMS1.



Figure 30 - Wesleyan Methodist Hall, Jacklyns Lane, c.1960.

In 1855 Miss Matilda Onslow, younger sister of Arabella, started the Patriotic Orphan Home in Broad Street, New Alresford for the children of soldiers killed or maimed in battle¹⁸⁴. Nor were the Onslows averse to supporting the Anglican cause: memorial plaques to Guildford, Arabella and Matilda are still in the parish church of St Mary's in Old Alresford where the family worshipped and when St John's appealed for contributions to enlarge and fence the parish churchyard in New Alresford in October 1858 Miss Matilda Onslow contributed three pounds: she was supporting the parish church of her neighbours¹⁸⁵. The Onslows therefore supported the Congregationalists, the Primitive Methodists, the Wesleyans, their own parish church and that of their neighbours as well as funding a school, two orphanages and an alms house. They were Christian philanthropists

¹⁸⁴ Pemberton, 'Southdowns', p. 20.

¹⁸⁵ HRO, 45M83/PV3, 5 October 1858.

in the broadest sense, not zealous and influential sponsors of Nonconformity in particular; Alresford had none of those.

Limited by this lack of senior support there were cursory attempts at co-operation within the Nonconformist ranks as the Methodists sought to establish themselves: ‘friends from other local free churches’ were present at the Congregationalists anniversary tea meeting on 26 October 1898, permission was granted for the Primitives to use the Congregational chapel for a service of song and the Winchester district of the Evangelical Free Church Council combined a business meeting in the Primitive Methodist chapel with a tea and public meeting in the Congregational schoolroom¹⁸⁶. But despite co-operation there was no concerted strategy to challenge the dominance of the established Church. Perhaps this was never their intention and Anglican strength depressed their expectations; they were confronted not just by the Church of England but by the whole nexus of local governance and power personified by the social elite who entwined the church with social clubs, committees, charity and local government. The Congregationalists experienced controversy and scandal, and they lacked strong and stable leadership. The Methodists came to Alresford late; very late. As Gilbert points out in *Religion and Society*, by 1885 the struggle for religious equality was virtually complete and the energy provided by injustice had gone. In 1897 the eminent Congregationalist theologian, Andrew Martin Fairbairn remarked that ‘It is perhaps harder to be a Nonconformist today than it has ever been in the history of England. The very decay of the disabilities from which our fathers suffered has made it harder for us than it was for them to dissent’. The Methodists had just

¹⁸⁶ HRO, 127M94/68, 26 October 1898, 4 February 1903, 16 September 1903.

established themselves in Alresford at a time when the appetite for dissent was weakening¹⁸⁷.

In his return for the bishop's visitation in 1899 the Reverend Headley estimated that the average combined congregation at St John's for morning and evening worship, excluding school children, was 500¹⁸⁸. When actual congregation sizes were recorded for morning and evening service over a seven week period in October and November 1893, just before the Methodists established themselves, the result was the same: a regular combined attendance of 450-500¹⁸⁹. The estimate for the same services on census Sunday, again excluding scholars, was 650. So by the 1890s, attendances at the parish church in Alresford were at about 70-75 per cent of mid-century levels, declining from 40.1 per cent to 34.2 per cent of the respective populations. This is larger than the reduction suggested by Gill's work on 28 large towns in *The Myth of the Empty Church* (from 13.8 to 12.7 per cent), although this comparison only went to 1881 and Gill argued that attendance declined sharply from the 1880s onwards¹⁹⁰. With Congregational membership increasing and two new Methodist denominations since the census, the Nonconformists may have narrowed the huge attendance gap somewhat. The fact that Reverend Headley acknowledged in his visitation return that the chapels now had half the children attending Sunday schools, even though swelled by attendance from the Primitive Methodist orphanage, suggests that the threat was recognised; but he saw the problem as indifference rather than actual opposition¹⁹¹. Anglican dominance was largely preserved on the back of strong clerical

¹⁸⁷ W.B. Selbie, *The Life of Andrew Martin Fairbairn* (London, 1914), p. 257; Gilbert, *Religion and Society*, p. 206.

¹⁸⁸ HRO, 21M65/B4/5.

¹⁸⁹ HRO, 45M83/PI2.

¹⁹⁰ Gill, *Myth of the Empty Church*, pp. 129-35, 305-8.

¹⁹¹ HRO, 21M65/B4/5.

and pastoral leadership, Nonconformist weakness and the lack of any elite appetite for dissent: what is more, as we shall see, something of the early twentieth century resurgence in the Church of England identified by Gilbert would later take place in Alresford¹⁹².

The establishment of two new Nonconformist chapels in Alresford in the 1890s was potentially a sign of their growing strength and confidence, and a corresponding weakness in the established Church. But the reality was more complex. The original application to erect the Wesleyan chapel stated that it was necessary ‘...to meet the spiritual destitution of the neighbourhood’ and claimed 90 regular hearers¹⁹³. The original trustees were six Winchester businessmen and only one local Alresford resident – John Millet, the manager of the gas works¹⁹⁴. Initial funding came from the London & County Bank and the church immediately had need of an overdraft facility¹⁹⁵. With a small congregation and interest to cover on the initial loans as well as running expenses, the chapel struggled financially; in its formative period income averaged about £15 per year with only ten regular subscribers, and even Colonel Onslow stopped giving by 1896. The neighbouring chapel at Hinton Ampner was closed in 1903, the property sold, debts paid off and the balance transferred to Alresford. The loans from the principal creditors were continually refreshed¹⁹⁶. Sporadic financial initiatives helped the chapel manage its overdraft but the major financial supporters came from ‘outside’ and changed frequently¹⁹⁷. In the South Hampshire Wesleyan Mission Plan of 1904 Alresford was part of the Winchester circuit and in the three months covered was scheduled to receive, as was fairly typical, eleven different

¹⁹² Gilbert, *Religion and Society*, p. 206.

¹⁹³ HRO, 79M72/NMS18.

¹⁹⁴ E. Sanderson, ‘Alresford Methodist Church 1893-1993: The Story so Far’ (unpublished pamphlet, HRO TOP 5/1/31,1993), pp. 1-3.

¹⁹⁵ HRO, 79M72/NMS1.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

circuit preachers; Alresford also had just one service each week, on a Sunday at 6.30pm, and only one weekday service per month – 6.15pm on the third Wednesday. Other neighbouring centres at Winchester and Eastleigh were far more active, as were many smaller villages and only one of the circuit preachers lived in the town¹⁹⁸. Wesleyan Methodism in Alresford was a ‘mission’ from Winchester: local demand and involvement was small and its presence did not constitute a serious threat to the Church of England.

The Primitives were in a stronger position: they had received more financial support from the Onslows, had rented a room in the town for twenty years, four of the original seventeen trustees were from Alresford, they were able to support two services each Sunday and, crucially, they had an orphanage in Old Alresford to swell attendance at their Sunday school and potentially provide new adult members¹⁹⁹. The annual reports of the Orphan Home showed it to be thriving in the early twentieth century: the number of children housed was consistently over 50 from 1909 to 1912, donations came in regularly, two boys obtained scholarships, and letters of thanks confirmed that at least some of the children received a good education which included their spiritual welfare²⁰⁰. The Primitive Methodists also had public visibility; the procession down West Street, songs and public prayers on the way to the camp meeting referred to above must have made quite an impact²⁰¹. It is not clear who initiated the gathering but their local presence had enough substance to justify the venue. The account of their tea and public meeting in the town hall on Good Friday 1880 also suggested that the denomination ‘was doing much good here’;

¹⁹⁸ HRO, 19M73/NMC/C10.

¹⁹⁹ Sanderson, *Alresford Methodist Church*, pp. 3-6.

²⁰⁰ HRO, 35M84/429.

²⁰¹ *Hampshire Advertiser*, 18 August 1860, p. 11.

they were not without a sympathetic audience²⁰². But although better placed than the Wesleyans, the Primitives still lacked the substance for a major denominational breakthrough. The hoped for evening meetings on week nights did not materialise²⁰³ and they became embroiled in a major legal dispute with their neighbour, Mrs Fowler, over their right to light in their new chapel. Solicitors were involved and, after much acrimony, the trustees were advised not to pursue the matter further²⁰⁴. The Alresford Directory of 1906 suggests they had only 40 members, with the circuit records showing a further small reduction to 37 by 1929²⁰⁵.

The Primitives also had a presence in the surrounding villages, but not a significant one. The chapel at Swarraton, established in 1831, was part of the Micheldever circuit, and was still in existence in the early twentieth century. The surviving records suggest a committed, loyal but dwindling membership: 30 pounds of cake and two and a half gallons of bread were ordered for the Sunday school anniversary tea in 1895²⁰⁶. Membership of the Sunday school itself in 1910 was probably around 25 since the accounts show that two dozen hymn books were purchased and 25 scholars' letters were written. After the war there were still socials in the reading room, harvest festivals, concerts and an anniversary tea in Bournemouth but the seeds of decline had set in and between 1915 and 1922 membership averaged just ten. By 1931, when the financial record ends, income was in decline, the surplus had been eliminated and the accounts had moved into a deficit of four shillings²⁰⁷.

²⁰² Ibid., 3 April 1880, p. 7.

²⁰³ Sanderson, *Alresford Methodist Church*, pp. 3-6.

²⁰⁴ HRO, 79M72/NMS18.

²⁰⁵ *Alresford Directory*, pp. 91-113; [Methodist circuit plan] HRO, 79M72/NMC24.

²⁰⁶ [Sunday school books] HRO, 96M72/NMS/A25.

²⁰⁷ Ibid; HRO, 96M72/NMC/B55.

The Primitive Methodists had also established themselves in neighbouring Ropley in 1867 with an original loan of £100 from Mr George Harding, which they had to re-finance twelve years later on his death²⁰⁸. Along with Alresford, it was part of the Winchester circuit. There are references to memories of camp meetings, Sunday school anniversaries and happy services. In 1908 the denomination was strong enough to raise £600 to purchase a more central site and build a new and improved chapel and schoolroom. The schedule for the Jubilee celebrations in 1958 states that the chapel enjoyed a large congregation, strong choir, flourishing Sunday school and warm fellowship before decline set in and closure was only averted when new volunteers were found, a youth club was set up and an evening service revived to ensure they reached their fiftieth anniversary in 1958²⁰⁹. Ironically, as will be shown below, Ropley also had a flourishing Church of England over the same period; perhaps the sharp edge of denominational rivalry galvanised the energies of the faithful?

As already discussed, the long established Congregationalists in Alresford had been hampered by internal dissension, financial difficulties and a lack of settled leadership: all these continued in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In October 1902 a serious fire broke out in the chapel causing £250 worth of damage and considerable disruption whilst the repairs were made²¹⁰. Members continued to fall short of the high expectations the chapel had of them and the arrangement for harvest services caused a ‘great amount of dissatisfaction’ in 1903, requiring a special meeting and a split vote to resolve the matter²¹¹. Although not entirely clear, adult membership was about 66 at this

²⁰⁸ HRO, 79M72/NMS69-70.

²⁰⁹ HRO, 79M72/NMS73.

²¹⁰ HRO, 127M94/68, 2 October 1902.

²¹¹ Ibid., 16 September 1903.

point; a reduction of almost 20 per cent from the peak of 1879. The Hampshire Congregational Union reports actually showed a steady decline in both membership and Sunday school enrolment; respectively in 1880 (80/123); 1900 (60/80) and 1920 (49/64)²¹². The Congregationalists may well have raised their profile in the town – the trade directory of 1906 showed that Pastor Baker-Row was a parish councillor, a guardian of the Union, vice chair of the Temperance Council and president of the Young People’s Society of Christian Endeavour²¹³ - but perhaps Fairbairn was right in suggesting that the high point in the appetite for dissent had now passed? Or perhaps dissenters had just been out-competed?

Indifference and Resilience

So although there was dissent in the district in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was limited: small patches of enthusiasm sat alongside a few determined outposts of individual expression. As far as the Anglican incumbents responsible for the cure of souls were concerned their biggest challenge was not dissent: it was indifference. The 1899 visitation enquiries asked general questions about the extent of Nonconformity, the moral condition of the people, Sunday observance and barriers to ministry; and growing indifference to church and religion, more than dissent, was a consistent theme in the replies. Reverend Headley at New Alresford wrote of a ‘ministry impeded by indifference rather than actual opposition’; Reverend Barber in Cheriton, in a comment which suggested that the tight nexus between church and parish elites may have slipped, bemoaned ‘the usual indifference of the country labourer and the tendency of the rich to

²¹² [Hampshire Congregational Union Reports], HRO, 127M94/62/27, 45, 64.

²¹³ *Alresford Directory*, pp. 91-113.

work too much apart from the clergy'; John Heberden at Hinton Ampner said 'I think there is a growing indifference to religion, evidenced by a falling off in attendance at church; but I don't see that dissent of any form is gaining ground'. The vicar at West Tisted thought the challenge was the same commenting that 'there is little sense of the obligation of ... worship among the middle aged agricultural labourers. They come when they feel inclined'²¹⁴. Distractions came from the public house and sport, along with a general decline in morality and Sabbath observance. In contrast, the problem of dissent was not considered so great. Whilst in Ropley it was acknowledged the 'Primitives are fairly numerous', elsewhere – in Old Alresford, Bighton, Bishops Sutton, Bramdean, Brown Candover, Cheriton, Hinton Ampner, Itchen Stoke and Ovington - dissent was claimed to be non-existent, contained or shrinking²¹⁵. In Ovington the rector reported that three dissenting adults had recently been confirmed into the Anglican Church and the few attending the small Wesleyan chapel in Hinton Ampner were mostly non-parishioners²¹⁶. Falling attendance, though, was a concern and a sense of that comes from comparing Sunday attendances reported in the 1851 religious census with those estimated in the 1899 visitation returns (Table 4.8) below.

²¹⁴ HRO, 21M65/B4/5/9, 98, 247, 483.

²¹⁵ HRO, 21M65/B4/5/10, 40, 44, 70, 80, 98, 247, 266, 354, 397.

²¹⁶ HRO, 21M65/B4/5/247, 354.

Table 4.8: Comparison of total adult parish church attendances in 1851 and 1899				
	1851 Religious Census		1899 Visitation Returns	
	Attendances	Population	Attendances	Population
New Alresford	700	1618	500	1464
Old Alresford	350	523	170	469
Bighton	160	285	75	315
Bishops Sutton	250	529	220	465
Bramdean	140	223	123	227
Brown Candover	204	272	130	300
Cheriton)	295	668	265	897
Tichborne)	116	378	70	Combined
Hinton Ampner	129	384	96	386
Itchen Stoke	66	348	120	303
Kilmeston)	136	406	80	302
Beauworth)	Combined	Combined	Combined	Combined
Ovington	100	163	70	114
Ropley	360	818	300	875
Swarraton)	135	402	110	400
Northington)	Combined	Combined	Combined	Combined
West Tisted	141	268	82	187
Total	3282	7285	2211	6704

Detailed analysis of this attendance data by parish, and extended up until 1931, is included in Chapter V; here the focus is on the broad trend, although caution is required. The inherent inaccuracies of the 1851 religious census are well documented but, in addition, most places of worship provided three opportunities to attend religious worship on census Sunday 1851 whereas two services, morning and evening, was more typical in 1899. Since we are measuring total attendances, not attendees, this could inflate the apparent gap, although several parishes claimed in the census that their average attendance was actually higher than that recorded, suggesting the ‘real’ gap was actually smaller. Half of the parishes in the Alresford registration district disclosed average attendances which were 22 per cent higher than actual. With those reservations in mind we can see that total attendance fell over the second half of the nineteenth century by around one third. However, since population over the period also declined by around eight per cent the reduction was less in ‘real’ terms (attendance as a proportion of population). The data

tentatively suggests a reduction in adult Sunday attendances of 30 per cent in real terms over the period which is broadly consistent with the 30 per cent from 1851 to 1881 suggested by Brown below; a similar decline but over a longer period. Whatever the precise quantum, it seems indisputable that attendances were falling. The second half of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of Darwin's theory of evolution, increasing biblical criticism, discord over ritualism and theology and the continued Nonconformist struggle against grievances. Whatever was driving the people from the pews, the Anglican Church locally needed to address the problem.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the 'service offering' at St John's – the nature and style of worship, the buildings and facilities – were changed and upgraded, a transformation given real energy and momentum by Frederick Jellicoe. Collectively the evidence points towards a revival in Anglican fortunes which, together with the relative weakness of Nonconformity, went some way towards re-asserting Anglican dominance, even if the context was a community less committed to public religion than the one of 1850.

The improvements in church infrastructure driven through by William Brodie had addressed an immediate need; by the end of the century, however, more fundamental action was required to give the people of Alresford a parish church which was fit for purpose; it was to be a structure which reflected the High Church theology of William Newnham. In Gill's *The Myth of the Empty Church* and *The 'Empty' Church Revisited* he stresses the economic impact of over-capacity – debts, absent incumbents, cold and unwelcoming buildings, sparse congregations – which in turn then leads to a decline in

attendance and commitment²¹⁷. A church needs to be attractive to its congregation.

Although William Sealey had secured an enhancement in the financial value of the living, the physical facilities at St John's needed urgent improvement if they were to encourage the maintenance (and recovery) of high levels of attendance and membership. The intention may have been universally accepted: its implementation, though, proved controversial.

Lambeth Palace Library holds the correspondence relating to the restoration of St John's in 1898, and the associated faculty granting approval²¹⁸. The implementation of the design by Sir Arthur Blomfield, which was to include major reconstruction, renovation and repair as well as aesthetic alterations²¹⁹, was estimated to cost £5,000. By comparison, a few years earlier the total outlay on the Wesleyan chapel, including the cost of the site, was £355 and the Primitive Methodist chapel was purchased for £265²²⁰. Moreover, whereas the Nonconformists had to borrow these amounts the Anglican finance was donated: there was a staggering difference in the financial resources available to the different denominations. There were, however, two objections from parishioners to the planned improvements: they had a common cause but perhaps different motives.

Mr Chapman of East Street, an ironmonger, had been a sidesman at St John's for 20 years as well as a Sunday school superintendent and a lay reader: his father before him had been churchwarden for 27 years. He was devoted to St John's parish church. Part of the plans for renovation involved the removal of the west gallery which would reduce the free

²¹⁷ Gill, *Empty Church Revisited*, pp. 26-37.

²¹⁸ Davidson 47, fos. 318-48.

²¹⁹ HRO 45M83PW9; HRO, 45M83PW25.

²²⁰ HRO, 79M72/NMS18, 1894-1933.

sittings available in the church. Mr Chapman felt very strongly about this writing that ‘surely at the present time when the hold of the Church of England seems to be weakening (so far as the poor are concerned)’²²¹ it would be much wiser to make all seating free: at a minimum he wanted a commitment to provide the same level of free seating in the restored church²²². The rector, Arthur Headley, and the churchwardens maintained that there would still be enough free seating at current attendance levels and a debate ensued about the average size of congregation (275 in the evening, 180 in the morning), the peak accommodation requirement (398 once for a harvest festival) and the impact of the recent reduction in the town’s population. The churchwardens were adamant that the free seats were never more than half full²²³.

The bishop of Guildford (George Sumner, former incumbent of Old Alresford) was asked to arbitrate. The other objector, along with Mr Chapman, was Colonel Stratton-Bates and they proposed closing the gallery for a time to test the impact. The bishop suspected that the Colonel was jealous of the kudos and influence which would accrue to Herbert Walford as the major financial sponsor of the restoration: they were rivals as the most influential figure in the town. The trial was rejected because there were fears that Chapman and the Colonel would get their supporters to fill the seats artificially and also because any seats under the gallery, if it remained, would be unpopular therefore reducing the space for good seats. The work would also be more expensive if the gallery was left initially and then subsequently removed. Tensions then increased: Mr Chapman contacted the Society for Promoting the Enlargement, Building and Repairing of Church and Chapels

²²¹ HRO, MHC/75, *Hampshire Chronicle* 14 January 1899, p. 2, indifference of working men towards the church.

²²² Davidson 47, fos. 320-1.

²²³ *Ibid.*, fos. 334-8.

to voice their objections and remind the planners that a previous grant had been dependent on the number of free seats being maintained: Mr Walford and others then indicated that they would withdraw their financial sponsorship completely unless the gallery was pulled down as part of the renovation. The bishop and chancellor recommended granting the faculty and, as a further inducement, Mr Walford promised to meet the whole £5,000 cost personally if the plan was implemented (he had originally promised half). The ability of the church to call on the backing and enormous wealth of the town's elite to such an extent was a remarkable endorsement of the continuing dominance of the Church of England; the order of magnitude simply dwarfed the financial reach of the Nonconformists. The faculty was finally granted in 1897 with a small concession to the objectors: the bishop directed that 150 sittings (rather than the 130 proposed) in the restored church remain unappropriated: the existing amount was 270. Colonel Stratton-Bates should not have worried about the kudos attaching to his rival: in 1910 he donated land to the town trustees for use as a free recreation facility. Today the memorial plaque to Herbert Walford is tucked away in a corner of the chancel at St John's, seen by a few: but virtually everyone in the town knows where the Stratton-Bates recreation ground is!

Controversial as it was, the upgrade in church accommodation was stunning. The transformation from the internal and external restoration (Figs. 31-33) was spectacular. The chancel now had ornate stained glass windows, a high altar, choir stalls, an elaborate reredos and a pulpit in the front: there was also a new organ chamber and vestry²²⁴.

²²⁴ HRO, 45M83PW9-10, faculty papers; HRO, 45M83PI16, account of restoration by Reverend Headley, p. 22. The church had an organ from 1832.



Figure 31 - Exterior during restoration.



Figure 32 - Exterior post-restoration.



Figure 33 - Interior post-restoration.

The use of chairs rather than fixed pews to provide greater flexibility and a sense of space was typical of the contemporary trend noted by Yates in Shorne, Kent (1875) and Kingston, Dorset (1880)²²⁵. This was a comfortable, beautiful and welcoming environment: it also lent itself well to a higher style of worship which was to be favourably received. The re-consecration of the parish church finally took place on 17 August 1898. The great and the good of the Church of England assembled to show their approval to this resurgent Anglican response to emerging Nonconformity; it also represented 'new money' funding, an alliance of the church and professions of the kind identified by Chris Brooks in his work on south Devon²²⁶. Not only was the service led by the bishop of Winchester, attended by his chaplain and the Registrar of the Diocese, but the Lay Clerk of Winchester Cathedral conducted the choir and the clergy from every neighbouring village attended²²⁷. We cannot be sure what the poorer people thought about it but if there was any unease it was not reflected, at least initially, in non-attendance; as mentioned above, the congregations reported by Arthur Headley six months after the restoration in his 1899 visitation return were at the same level as those recorded in late 1893 before the changes took place.

Impressive as this was, a similarly daunting financial commitment was required elsewhere. The neighbouring parish church at Ropley also underwent a major renovation in 1896-1897, just before St John's. They were virtually contemporary projects. Correspondence relating to this work, particularly the financial aspects, sheds further light on the strength

²²⁵ N. Yates, *Buildings, Faith and Worship: The Liturgical Arrangement of Anglican Churches 1600-1900*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 2000), p. 169.

²²⁶ Brooks, 'Building the rural church', pp. 72-5.

²²⁷ HRO, 45M83/P14.

of the local Anglican Church at this time²²⁸. Once again, the established Church demonstrated its ability to connect with the social elite, mobilise resources and raise significant sums under strong parish leadership. The total required was £2,500; half of the £5,000 raised in New Alresford but for a parish with a population little more than half the size. Whereas the funding in Alresford came from one major donor, Herbert Walford, the financial support in Ropley was drawn from a much wider circle which made the fundraising and campaigning effort even more impressive. Donations came from the bishop of Winchester, the bishop of Guildford, the local MP, the occupiers of Ropley House and Basing Park, Miss Onslow (the Onslows were major supporters of many philanthropic causes in this part of Hampshire), Magdalen College, Oxford, the dean of Ripon, a baronet, an earl and wealthy local families²²⁹. The incumbent, Henry Leake, even consulted the bishop about approaching Her Majesty for support as his predecessor as vicar of Ropley had officiated at her coronation; ‘just how does one approach Her Majesty’ he wondered!²³⁰ The bishop of Winchester was fully engaged in the project; replying to letters, agreeing to re-open the church post restoration, licencing the schoolroom for temporary use whilst the work was being undertaken, allowing regular services to be performed in a tent supplied by a parishioner when the schoolroom became too hot and cramped and supporting the subscription campaign²³¹. Lee argues that restorations of parish churches like these should be understood in their broadest sense; they were not just architectural refurbishments but deeply symbolic events which created icons

²²⁸ Davidson 49, fos. 427-40.

²²⁹ Davidson 49, fo. 431. Magdalen had no obvious connection with Leake or Ropley, although they were the patrons at neighbouring West Tisted.

²³⁰ Davidson 49, fos. 427-8.

²³¹ Davidson 49, fos. 434-40.

of control and imposed order²³². In these Anglican bastions, the facilities were now worthy of the established Church: but how would the people respond?

In *The Death of Christian Britain* Brown assesses the difficulties of measuring religious commitment. Evidence from a handful of local censuses in major cities suggest a decline of between 20 and 30 per cent in attendances between 1851 and 1881 and the isolated data discussed for Alresford above is broadly consistent with this. The evidence for the decline in churchgoing after the 1880s is stronger, but some of this may be individuals attending church less frequently rather than a rise in the number of non-churchgoers²³³. The pattern of the decline in church membership, though, is different to that of churchgoing: church membership per capita grew from the 1840s to reach a peak in England and Wales in 1904. The Wesleyans peaked in 1840, the Congregationalists in 1863 and the Church of England (in terms of baptisms, and possibly Easter Day communicants) around 1904²³⁴. What Brown and others such as Cox in his work on Lambeth also point out is that religious commitment is not just shown by attendance and membership: we also need to consider the popularity of the traditional rites of passage like marriage, baptism and confirmation and the support of religious philanthropy. In short, we need to consider the total engagement of church and community²³⁵.

The selective information discussed above from service registers and visitation returns for the end of the nineteenth century suggest that combined adult morning and evening attendances for St John's were regularly between 450 and 500. As the century progressed

²³² Lee, *Rural Change*, pp. 31, 54.

²³³ Brown, *Death of Christian Britain*, p. 162.

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 163; Currie, Gilbert and Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers*, pp. 65, 128, 167; Gilbert, *Religion and Society*, p. 37. No national electoral roll data was available for the Church of England until 1924.

²³⁵ Brown, *Death of Christian Britain*, p. 169; Cox, *Lambeth*, p. 7.

more opportunities were gradually offered to take Holy Communion: 21 in 1876; 37 in 1885 and 43 in 1895²³⁶, although still not particularly numerous. Major liturgical change came later. There was a steady flow of new confirmation candidates presented. Between 1879 and 1888 there was an average of one new candidate presented every month²³⁷ and this was still the rate in 1904: it was two per month in 1906. The number of communicants at Easter was regularly over 100 and rising (101 in 1901, 129 in 1906 and 138 in 1909)²³⁸ considerably faster than the ten per cent population increase between 1901 and 1911. Surviving parish magazines show a church socially and spiritually engaged with its community – a parish quiet day, church lads’ concert, horticultural lectures, prayer notes, daily lessons and serial stories with a moral message²³⁹. The report in the *Hampshire Chronicle* of the garden fete in support of the organ repair fund in August 1898 describes teas, concerts, songs, recitals, a large attendance and substantial amounts raised²⁴⁰. Outreach was also in evidence with offertories for CMS, the CETS and alms for the poor: collections remained stable and then peaked in 1911. The increasing importance of Holy Communion, consistent with offering more opportunities to participate in the sacrament, was also self-evident: not only was a communion service now available every week in 1906 (although not yet the main service of the day) but specific prayers were offered as well as quiet thoughts for communicants²⁴¹. Religious change was taking hold; the service structure was becoming higher church, and the people were responding.

²³⁶ HRO, 45M83/PI1-3.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ HRO, 45M83/PI4-5.

²³⁹ HRO, TOP/5/1/19; HRO, 45M83/PZ12.

²⁴⁰ HRO, MHC/74, 27 August 1898, p. 8.

²⁴¹ HRO, TOP5/1/19; HRO, 45M83/PZ12.

But the conversion of this continued Anglican strength to powerful resurgence was made possible by the leadership of Frederick Jellicoe, appointed in 1915: he came highly recommended. Although the parish church had been restored, the rectory had not – it needed much structural work and modernising, and was dark and dull (Fig. 34). The Ecclesiastical Commissioners were grudging in their support, and the size of the task and the financial shortfall caused the chosen successor to Headley to withdraw. Jellicoe was then offered the living and in a letter to the Commissioners urging their support the bishop of Southampton said that ‘Mr Jellicoe is one of the best of our incumbents – an earnest and hardworking man, who has done much for his populous town parish here in Southampton during the last 12 years’. Not only was he accepting the living in spite of the difficulties with the accommodation, he was also taking on a mortgage and accepting a pay cut to do so²⁴². He was highly motivated.

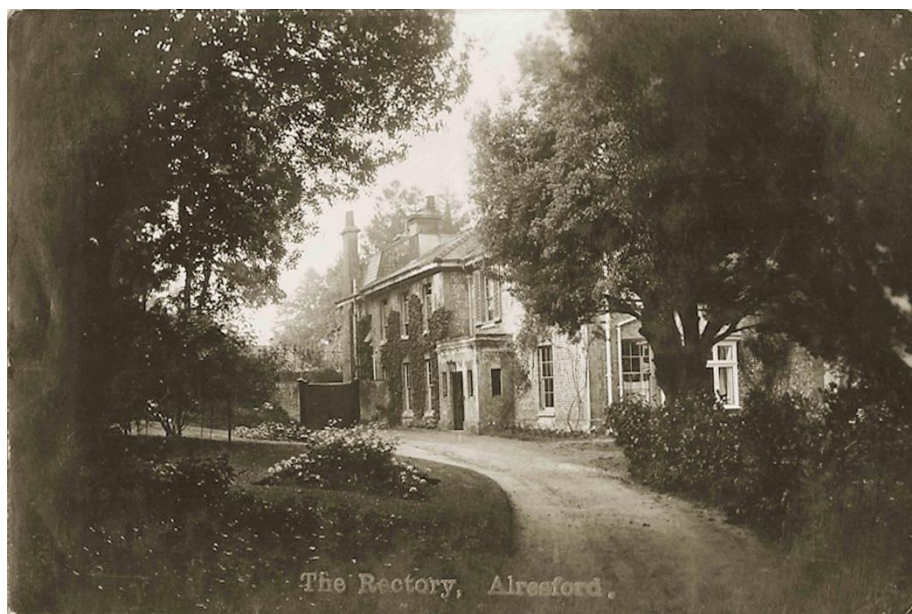


Figure 34 - The Rectory, off Sun Lane, c.1900.

Towards the end of Reverend Headley’s incumbency the clerical records became sporadic and untidy, and there were no entries at all in the service register from June 1912: whether

²⁴² ECE/7/1/43580.

this was a sign of poor health, age or the problems with the rectory we cannot be sure but the transformation under Jellicoe was remarkable. The service register was in a new format, much larger and meticulously kept, revealing much about the man and his mission. More services were introduced; at least three and often four on a Sunday (five at Whitsun) and children's service every two weeks. Communion was offered multiple times per week – including 13 times in May 1915 – and the number of communicants on Christmas Day increased dramatically; 131 received the sacrament in 1915, as well as 117 at Harvest Thanksgiving and 221 on Easter Day 1916. Occasionally Jellicoe recorded the number of both attendees and communicants at services with smaller congregations, and over six dates the average ratio of attendants to communicants was approximately two to one. On this basis the attendance on Easter Day 1916 may have exceeded the highest recorded at the time of the restoration²⁴³. At the end of his first year in office, Jellicoe had trebled the number of communion services (to 123), trebled the number of communications (to 2376), administered the sacrament a record number of times on Easter Day, virtually trebled the offering from 1911 to £220 and presented 41 candidates from New Alresford for confirmation²⁴⁴. The visitation return for 1915 showed a solid foundation to build on: an average attendance at Sunday school of 78, healthy levels of giving to outreach and charity, and a vast army of lay helpers including 18 Sunday school teachers, 13 district visitors and 23 choir members²⁴⁵. The parish magazine from March 1920 showed a church fully embracing its community: detailed instructions on Easter services and the importance of grace at meals, a vast array of clubs and societies, the choir boy's tea and social fund-

²⁴³ HRO, 45M83/PI6.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ HRO, 21M65/B4/6/2.

raising events²⁴⁶. There was resurgence at St John's in Alresford; and the people responded to strong leadership.

The parish register for neighbouring St Mary's at Old Alresford provides further evidence of resilience for the period 1894-1902 with information relating to baptisms, confirmations, communion services, communicants, Sunday school enrolments, voluntary contributions and the number of lay helpers²⁴⁷. Although the period is relatively short and the data comes from 'within' the church there are lots of suggested positives about the state of the Church of England locally in this period (Table 4.9):

Table 4.9: Data from the Parish Records for St Mary's, Old Alresford 1894-1902									
	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901	1902
Population	469	469	469	469	469	482	482	570	570
Acreage	3608	3608	3608	3608	3608	3608	3608	3608	3608
Baptisms	19	13	11	9	16	13	17	10	10
Confirmations		1	15		12		10	3	1
Communicants	60	75	70	75	80	80	80	82	79
Holy Communion (per month)	2	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
Sittings in church	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270
Sittings in school	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
National school	44	41	50	44	44	45	50	60	60
Sunday school	20	38	57	37	66	54	66	76	62
Helpers (choir, Sunday school)	25		31	32	32	35	37	37	38
Sunday services	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Bible class			5	11	8	12	15	18	17
Voluntary contributions (£)	59	80	48	60	61	64	56	65	74

The number of communicants on the roll increased by 30 per cent; there was a steady flow of baptisms and confirmations; celebrations of Holy Communion were up from two to five per month; the number of children enrolled at the National school increased by 40 per cent; the number of children on the books of the Sunday school more than trebled; the number of helpers in church (Sunday school teachers, choir etc.) was up by 50 per cent; a Bible class was established with almost 20 members by the turn of the century and voluntary

²⁴⁶ *Alresford Parish Magazine*, March 1920.

²⁴⁷ HRO, 43M74/PI2.

financial contributions increased by between 10 and 20 per cent over the period. The surviving churchwardens' accounts from 1891-1916 reinforce the view of a vibrant and confident church embedded in its community. The churchwardens oversaw the annual gifts to the poor from the endowed Pink & Eager and Perins charities, and complete schedules survive for careful distributions to named individuals from 1891 to 1894²⁴⁸. As for St John's at New Alresford, outreach was varied and generous and showed a church which took its Christian responsibilities seriously; collections were sent to Winchester Hospital, the bishop of Winchester's charitable fund, Winchester cathedral, the clergy fund, the CETS, the National Society, the ACS, and there was financial support for the Home Mission and for Waifs and Strays. Whenever they were called upon by their minister to support some worthy cause the congregation responded. The printed church accounts for 1914/15 showed that St Mary's gave away around 20 per cent of its gross income in the year; an impressive doubling of their biblical responsibility to tithe²⁴⁹. But it was not just the amount of giving which was impressive; the social elite may have led from the front but raising finance at St Mary's was the collective effort of virtually an entire community. When vestry decided in November 1890 to seek subscriptions towards the considerable cost of more than £79 for a new church heating apparatus there were 59 subscribers ranging from the wealthy Mr Christy (£30), the rector Reverend Currie (£15), the bishop of Guildford (previous incumbent, George Sumner) who gave two guineas, through to many poorer parishioners who gave anything from two shillings to two pence as their means allowed²⁵⁰. A few years later there were 92 subscribers, which must have been practically one per family unit, who contributed to the £18 raised for the Bier Fund in

²⁴⁸ HRO, 43M74/PW3.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

1909; the church and parish elite once again led from the front and the people responded with sixpence if they could afford it and three pence if they could not²⁵¹.

The collection records show that, by 1913, St Mary's typically had three services on a Sunday – early morning, matins and evensong – each with a solid following, and probably some multiple attendances. As well as funding major repairs, improvements and outreach, the community took care of the routine church expenses of oil, candles, weeding the churchyard, washing the church linen and blowing the church organ; the abolition of compulsory church rates appears to have had little impact on the ability of the church to raise the funds it required. Church officers and the social elite took the lead: rector, curate, past incumbents and churchwardens among them. Mr Christy, churchwarden in the 1890s, was particularly generous: as well as giving £30 for the church heating he gave another five pounds a few months later, covered the entire cost of £161 for a new oak lych-gate and other re-building in 1893, gave a further four pounds in 1896 and a £25 donation to cover the cost of repairs and cleaning in 1910²⁵². Such generosity underpinned the financial standing and social pre-eminence of the Church of England and was recognised by future generations: the village hall today bears the Christy name.

In Ropley too, the Church of England at St Peter's showed its resilience as it responded to tangible dissent from the local Primitive Methodist chapel. The service register around the turn of the century, meticulously kept, provides evidence of the committed ministry of the Reverend Henry Leake who had overseen the huge fundraising efforts and successful restoration of the parish church in 1897. Leake believed that he had 120 communicants on

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

the roll in 1901 (out of an estimated adult population of around 350); he noted that 24 were present at the vicarage for a New Year's Eve prayer meeting in 1907; and at the confirmation service in 1910 he reported with some satisfaction the 'church packed with very large congregation. Porch full also; and people in vestry as well': he was supported not just by the presiding bishop of Guildford, but also by his neighbouring clergy from Itchen Abbas, New Alresford, Bighton, Tichborne, Bentworth and Cheriton. He presented 20 candidates for confirmation from Ropley and had offered one more the previous year: an impressive supply of new members for his congregation²⁵³. Table 4.10 shows more evidence of religious change; between 1892 and 1913 Leake more than trebled the number of services of Holy Communion; increased the number of communications administered by 260 per cent; secured an almost four fold increase in the number of communicants on Easter day and saw the offering on that same occasion rise by a factor of almost eight. A larger proportion of the congregation may have taken the sacrament, and their giving could have been more sacrificial, but it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that the general congregation may well have increased too²⁵⁴.

Table 4.10: Service Data for the Parish of Ropley					
	Communion services	Number taking communion	Easter day communicants	Easter day offering (£ s d)	Approx. Avg regular Sunday offering (£ s d)
1892	26	443	42	1 5 7	0 9 8
1895	30	566	50	1 18 9	0 12 8
1898	47	856	60	1 18 1	0 18 1
1901	50	951	85	2 0 1	0 19 0
1904	42	690	80	1 16 14	0 12 8
1907	52	1148	144	3 3 6	1 3 8
1910	29	1050	103	2 5 4	0 17 8
1913	83	1187	157	9 2 2	1 7 2

In the middle of his incumbency, Reverend Leake's response to the 1899 visitation enquiries presents a consistent picture of commitment and enthusiasm. The National

²⁵³ HRO, 27M82/PI1-2. Seven parishes were represented at the confirmation service on 4 May 1910 which would have swelled attendance.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

school had 141 children on its books and 50 were enrolled for the Sunday school; 108 parishioners were signed up for bible classes and there were large memberships of the Scripture Union, Mothers Union and the CETS, as well as cottage meetings, an active coffee room and extensive lay help. The rector estimated total attendances on a Sunday (although presumably there was an element of multiple attendance) of around 300, plus schoolchildren, and attendances at weekday services of up to 60²⁵⁵. Demand for the parish magazine, which commenced in 1893, was ‘greater than anticipated’ and distribution was over 140 in 1893, which constituted ‘the very large majority of homes in the parish’. The parish was alive with meetings, lectures, concerts and classes²⁵⁶.

As the First World War took hold, the responses for the bishop’s visitation in 1915, whilst not explicitly asking for comment on compliance and Nonconformity, also suggest a healthy church confident of its place at the heart of the existing social order (Table 4.11)²⁵⁷.

Table 4.11: Parish Data, 1915					
Parish	Parish Magazine	Communicant/ Bible classes	Voluntary Societies	Sunday school	Church Day school
Old Alresford	Yes	Occasional	Yes	Yes	Yes
New Alresford	Yes	Planned	Yes	Yes	
Bishops Sutton	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Bramdean	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Brown Candover	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Cheriton		Yes	Yes	Yes	
Tichborne	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Hinton Ampner	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Itchen Stoke	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ovington	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ropley	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Swarraton/Nor’ton			Yes	Yes	Yes
West Tisted	Yes	Yes			Yes

²⁵⁵ HRO, 21M65/B4/5/397.

²⁵⁶ HRO, 27M82/PZ4-7.

²⁵⁷ HRO, 21M65/B4/6/2.

There were thriving bible studies, communicant classes and numerous religious and charitable societies; volunteers supported well-attended Sunday and day schools and full choirs, as well as filling the various church offices; virtually every parish had a parish magazine to share news and create a sense of community; voluntary contributions to church expenses and outreach remained healthy and in some cases were entirely underpinned by the social elite: the return for Swarraton with Northington indicates that *all* expenses of the church along with the maintenance of both day and Sunday schools were met by Lord Ashburton; further affirmation of the *de facto* integration of church and social elite in this part of rural Hampshire²⁵⁸. Moreover, hard-working and committed clergy were offering more and more opportunities to worship on both Sundays and during the week, and to receive the sacrament. A typical schedule included weekly Holy Communion, at least two services on a Sunday and a mid-week service, and some parishes exceeded this²⁵⁹. The liturgical response of the church to the challenges it faced and the changes it made to the pattern of ministry, particularly after the First World War, are considered in more detail in Chapter V. Reverend Hugh Stowell in the tiny parish of Ovington, with responsibility for the cure of just 114 souls, offered Holy Communion every week, two Sunday services at 11am and 6pm, a daily 8am service and a separate service of Intercession on Wednesday and Friday evenings. There were 41 communicants on the church roll, probably about half of the adult population, as well as 37 members of the CETS and a bible class of 16. As an indication of community endorsement, voluntary contributions to church work during the year totalled £115; more than one pound for every man, woman and child in that small agriculture parish. It was impressive that Reverend Stowell delivered such a committed and apparently popular ministry in return for a net

²⁵⁸ HRO, 21M65/B4/6/2/15.

²⁵⁹ HRO, 21M65/B4/6/2.

income of just £195 per year²⁶⁰. However, even this income must have seemed like riches to the incumbent at nearby Itchen Stoke who, after deducting considerable repairs and expenses, reported a net surplus of just £115 as his reward for ministering to a population of 205. This did not prevent Reverend Skrine offering Holy Communion every Sunday, along with matins and evensong, and morning and evening services every weekday. The average reported attendance at the church day school was 42 and there were regularly 19 at Sunday school. There were also 30 members of the Mothers Union bible class and 22 in the communicant classes as well as a missionary society and the boy scouts under church leadership. Voluntary contributions, including restoration of the church day school, totalled £151; impressive in the context of the rector's note that, apart from the Baring family (of Lord Ashburton) 'there is no one in the parish above the position of labourer or domestic servant. No houses of a better class being allowed on the estate'. Tight patriarchal influence may therefore have affected both the style of ministry – Lord Ashburton was also patron of the living just as he was at Swarraton – but also tangible expressions of support for the church. Compliance in such a context did not necessarily imply enthusiastic support; but such tight aristocratic control of a closed community did make expressions of religious dissent less likely, and hence underpinned the dominance of the Church of England²⁶¹. Field, based on analysis of church attendance and membership, suggests that Britain was still a 'religious' society in the Edwardian era and estimates that regular Anglican churchgoers comprised almost a quarter of the adult population c.1914²⁶². The very informal survey in rural Oxfordshire by Bennett in *Problems of Village Life*²⁶³ supported this but in parishes such as Old Alresford, Bramdean, Itchen Stoke, Ovington

²⁶⁰ HRO, 21M65/B4/6/2/12.

²⁶¹ HRO, 21M65/B4/6/2/10.

²⁶² C.D. Field, 'The Faith Society'? Quantifying Religious Belonging in Edwardian Britain, 1901-1914', *JRH* 37/1 (2013), p. 62.

²⁶³ Bennett, *Problems of Village Life*, p. 122.

and West Tisted the share may have been considerably higher. According to the 1911 census, adults comprised approximately 70 per cent of parish population in the registration district; and attendance data from the Ropley service register for 1892, 1895 and 1898 suggests an average attendance to Easter Day communicants ratio of 1.8:1. On this basis we can tentatively suggest the following c.1914 (Table 4.12)²⁶⁴. Accepting that the extrapolation to identify churchgoers is debatable, there is still some support to argue that these remained, at least in relative terms, very committed Anglican parishes.

Table 4.12: Approximate Anglican adult churchgoers as a percentage of adult population c. 1914					
	Population	Estimated adult population (70%)	Easter Day communicants	Assumed total adult churchgoers (1.8:1)	Anglican churchgoers in adult population (%)
Old Alresford	512	358	93	167	47
New Alresford	1750	1225	117	211	17
Bishops Sutton	439	307	35	63	21
Bramdean	224	157	82	148	94
Brown Candover w. Chilton Candover	300	210	24	43	20
Cheriton with Tichborne	620	434	94	169	39
Hinton Ampner	336	235	51	92	39
Itchen Stoke	205	144	53	95	66
Ovington	114	80	30	54	68
Ropley	1371	960	148	266	28
Swarraton with Northington	351	246	39	70	28
West Tisted	187	131	42	76	58
Total/Average	6409	4486	808	1454	32

The estimated adult Anglican attendance in the parishes of the registration district was 32 per cent, significantly higher than Field's national estimate, with particularly high percentages in the smaller parishes mentioned above which had virtually no Nonconformist presence. Only in New Alresford, in particular, and in Bishops Sutton and Brown Candover was the estimate below the national average and local factors may well have had an impact. By 1915 St John's in New Alresford was competing against the Congregationalists, the Wesleyans and the Primitives, and the incumbent, Arthur Headley,

²⁶⁴ HRO, 21M65/B4/6/2; *Census of England & Wales 1911*; HRO, 27M82/PI1.

had been suffering from a long period of illness which would shortly see him depart. Overall, there were signs of a healthy, resilient and flourishing church, perhaps even a resurgent one, well into the early twentieth century. These parishes were very much part of the Anglican ‘settled stability’ at this time. As we have seen, the historiography around church strength and decline is contested and evolving. Gilbert and others regard the peak of religious influence on society as being the middle of the nineteenth century²⁶⁵ whereas Cox and Brown, whilst stressing the enormous Victorian social role of the churches in terms of mission, charity, philanthropy and education (for which Alresford provided plenty of evidence), still see a crisis for the church around the turn of the twentieth century²⁶⁶. Knight in *The Nineteenth-Century Church and English Society* describes the Anglican journey from state church to major denomination in a pluralist society but, although this may have been the case nationally, in these 17 parishes in rural Hampshire the Church of England remained largely integrated with the local state in the early twentieth century – still active in local government, charity, welfare and outreach, and still struggling (with mixed success) to remain pre-eminent in education²⁶⁷. The integration of church and state was personified by longevity and multiplicity of office holding, and by the energetic ministry of a succession of talented incumbents who took their pastoral responsibilities seriously. Continued influence and acceptance was demonstrated by widespread financial support from parishioners, and conspicuous generosity from the social elite. Moreover, this continued local influence was achieved despite a comparative lack of what Gilbert described as the competitive edge of Church-chapel rivalry to help delay the onset of secularisation; whilst there was admittedly a growing Nonconformist presence in this part

²⁶⁵ Gilbert, *Religion and Society*, p. viii; McLeod, *Religion and Society*, pp. 3-4.

²⁶⁶ Cox, *Lambeth*, pp. 48-9, 265-76; Brown, ‘Did Urbanization Secularize Britain?’, pp. 1-14; Brown, ‘Religious Growth in Urban Societies’, pp. 239-62.

²⁶⁷ See Knight, *Nineteenth-Century Church* for a detailed discussion of the transformation in relationship between church and state.

of rural Hampshire, it remained very much in the shadow of the established Church²⁶⁸. As suggested by the 1899 visitation returns, the real challenge was to come from growing indifference as much as denominational choice. We have already discussed how Brown (in his later work) and McLeod argued that church decline was effectively deferred until the dramatic collapse of the 1960s, whereas others like Green and Bruce saw the development as much earlier, gradual and linear. Considering this debate, we turn now to assess the evidence for the continued strength and influence of the established Church in this part of rural Hampshire in the inter-war period of fundamental social change.

²⁶⁸ Gilbert, *Religion and Society*, p. 205.

V FIRST AMONG EQUALS C.1914-1939

The First World War changed everything with respect to religion; or at least some people who lived through it thought that it had. Believed to be speaking in the 1970s, Eldred Harfield, who was born in 1891 and went to St Michael's parish church in Cheriton twice on a Sunday as a young boy commented that; 'You could always depend on the church being pretty full for both services. When I got old enough to choose for myself I stayed away. The First World War changed everything. There wasn't the same belief in religion after that'¹. In the neighbouring parish of Old Alresford, at the outbreak of the Second World War, the Reverend Edmund Morgan reported in the parish magazine on the passing of some elderly parishioners and reflected that Fred Dorey had told him shortly before he died 'of the crowded church in the old days', the inference being that this was no longer the case². But the general sentiment of a decline in the public expression of religion in the early twentieth century was far more widespread. McLeod quotes from an article in the *Sunday School Chronicle* on 10 July 1924 when the writer claimed that 'Our congregations have largely deserted us, and have migrated to the playing fields, the golf course and the river'³ and Stephen Orchard, noting the fear the churches had in the late nineteenth century that they were losing influence, recalls a conversation with an elderly Welshman in 1968 who said that 'I grew up in a world where when you stepped out of your door on a Sunday

¹ P. Culpin, *Cheriton Now and Then: The Story of a Hampshire Village through the Ages* (Cheriton, 1999), p. 24. The quote appears to have been taken from the undated source 'A Transcript of the Recorded Memories of Eldred Harfield and Mrs Terrill – by courtesy of Edward Roberts of Cheriton'. There are audio tapes of similar interviews with other locals recorded by Edward Roberts in the 1970s under HRO, AV1269/1/51.

² HRO, 43M74/PZ19, *Old Alresford Parish Magazine*, August 1939.

³ McLeod, 'Sport and Religion in England', p. 125.

evening to go to church you noticed those few doors on a street that remained closed. I now live in a world where you notice the few doors that open'⁴.

Hastings assesses the national position of Christianity before the 1920s. He makes the point that Anglican statistics for the thirty years before the First World War are susceptible to two contradictory interpretations with an element of truth in each. The proportion of marriages solemnised in an Anglican church was continually falling and, between 1890 and the war, there is evidence for considerable decline in church attendance, at least in town areas. However, baptisms, confirmations and Easter communions were all rising, and the increase in communicants has already been highlighted for New Alresford and Ropley. These increases may have been due to greater efficiency of the clergy or a greater acceptance of sacramentalism as the nature of Anglicanism changed, but the rise in Easter communions at least (from 1,255,000 in 1881 to 2,293,000 in 1911) is also an index of greater lay participation⁵. The evidence is mixed.

It seems clear, however, that over *some* period in the twentieth century, and for some confluence of reasons, church influence on society diminished alongside a waning of public religious expression and commitment; a new, more secular, social structure was established. The general debate in the historiography between Brown, Green, Bruce and others about the timing, pace and nature of this change has already been considered. This chapter will set out the evidence for change from this local case study, and then examine the reason for it by reference, primarily, to changes in the factors which underpinned the long period of Anglican strength and influence which preceded it. I will argue that, as the

⁴ S. Orchard, 'Sunday Schools: Some Reflections' in Orchard and Briggs, *The Sunday School Movement*, p. xiv.

⁵ Hastings, *English Christianity*, pp. 35-6.

state encroached on the church's previous responsibilities in education, charity and welfare, and as opportunities for travel and leisure broadened, the influence of the Church of England in this part of Hampshire was diminished and this was reflected in reduced attendance and commitment. This provides local support for Prochaska's argument in *Disinherited Spirit* that nationally, over the period of this study, the traditions of Christian service were gradually sacrificed in exchange for rights and entitlements from government; that parish life once dominated by voluntary religious associations was transformed into a mobile and materialist society⁶. However, I will also suggest that the deep Anglican roots in the Alresford registration district enabled the established Church to actively resist these changes, to maintain an influence of sorts in society and to remain as 'first among equals' relative to other denominations.

I have argued above that, around the outbreak of the First World War, many of our parishes were displaying signs of vitality as an indication of what could eventually be regarded as resistance to the onset of secularisation. Frederick Jellicoe had led something of a High Church revival in New Alresford; Henry Leake had vigorously responded to the challenge from the Primitive Methodist chapel in Ropley; virtually the whole community continued to support church fund raising in Old Alresford; half the adult population in Ovington was on the church electoral roll and Reverend Skrine oversaw a very active church day school and Sunday school as well as thriving communicant and bible classes in the tiny parish of Itchen Stoke. There were other examples too. We have good attendance data for Bramdean around the First World War, although it is not clear whether children were included; in 1913 the average attendance for the main morning service was 74 with

⁶ Prochaska, *Disinherited Spirit*, pp. 27, 148-76.

64 coming to worship in the afternoon, giving a total of 138⁷. The equivalent in the 1851 religious census was 178 representing a decrease of just over 22 per cent, assuming a comparable basis, whilst Brown suggests that the evidence from censuses in major cities indicated a decline of 20 to 30 per cent between 1851 and 1881, so a much earlier reduction, with stronger evidence of decline after the 1880s⁸. The village population was about ten per cent higher across this period (223 to 243) but, as we have seen, urban population growth was much greater than this so the relative difference in real terms is more significant. On occasion attendance was substantially higher; an aggregate of 206 attended the two main services on Easter Day but over 100 also attended individual services in July and October suggesting that, up until 1913 at least, the parishioners of Bramdean continued to demonstrate their faith with their feet⁹. Given that capacity at this time was 150 the church was regularly between half and two-thirds full; pleasantly occupied rather than empty¹⁰. In Kilminster (capacity 146) we also have some attendance data from October to December 1904 supplemented by comments from the vicar that the church was ‘full’ on 6 November and ‘very full’ on 20 November. The very limited data suggests an average morning attendance of 41 with 70 in the evening¹¹ whereas only 75 (all including children) attended the single morning service on Census Sunday in 1851; the combined population for Kilminster and Beauworth across the period was around 25 per cent lower. Whilst we cannot be certain that we have a consistent basis for comparison, especially as parishes had merged, it seems reasonable to suggest that church attendance was holding up well in Kilminster (although on average less than half of church capacity

⁷ HRO, 1M77/PI1. Bramdean register of services, 1912-1935.

⁸ Brown, *Death of Christian Britain*, p. 162.

⁹ HRO, 1M77/PI1.

¹⁰ HRO, 21M65/B4/6/2.

¹¹ HRO, 16M80/PI1. Kilminster preacher’s book, 1904-1915.

would have been utilised) and that, occasionally at least, a significant proportion of the community still attended their parish church in the early twentieth century¹².

The case for relative Anglican strength *circa* 1914 also comes from finance, community work and outreach. Only a few years after their major restoration efforts, the parishioners at Ropley worked hard in 1909 to raise £300 for a new organ organising concerts, fetes, sales and bazaars and generating over 50 individual subscriptions; the social elite could still be relied on to contribute as donations poured in from the Bishop of Winchester, Archdeacon Fearon, Canon Valpy, Captain Holyrood, Colonel Vernon and many others alongside corporate contributions from the Hampshire Hunt and Winchester college¹³.

What made these efforts even more impressive was that the campaign took place alongside a similar initiative to raise funds for a parish hall to hold concerts, lectures and entertainments. The committee included some of the prominent contributors to the organ fund, messers Holyrood and Vernon, and was chaired by the local MP¹⁴. There was similar co-operation between the church and parish elites on other community projects in Old Alresford in the years immediately before the First World War. The Christy family (Mr Christy had been churchwarden for many years) subscribed £125 to build a memorial hall with a further £179 coming from other local notables on the understanding that a village gymnastics club would be formed which would have free use of the hall on two evenings per week. Donors included the incumbents at Old Alresford, Cheriton and Northington as well as members of the Baring family, and Reverend Pardoe contributed to the initial funding for equipment. By 1913 the gym had up to 18 local boys paying small monthly subscriptions to engage in healthy exercise; this was a project driven by the community,

¹² Vickers, *Religious Census in Hampshire*, pp. 157-62; HRO, 21M65/B4/5/288.

¹³ HRO, 27M82/PW33-34.

¹⁴ HRO, 27M82/PW35. Ropley organ and village hall funds, 1908-9.

but the church supported it to help cement its place at the heart village life¹⁵. The project was an example of what Erdozain would regard as the secularisation of youth ministry whereby, in its efforts to get alongside people, the church inadvertently promoted involvement in sport and leisure which may have eventually challenged the commitment to Sunday worship¹⁶. McLeod has also argued that both within and outside the churches the late Victorian and Edwardian eras were an age of sportsmen who made far reaching claims for the moral, religious and physical benefits of sport¹⁷. Although there is no suggestion here of the gymnasium operating on a Sunday, I shall consider below reports of how such leisure activities took hold to undermine the church's mission.

Confirmation of the cautiously optimistic outlook came from comments in some of the other visitation returns for 1915, although the enquiries were more about fact than opinion. There were church day schools and Sunday schools in most parishes with healthy membership rolls and attendances; lots had parish magazines and there were some very large Mothers Union memberships (New Alresford 88; Bishops Sutton 46; Hinton Ampner 41; Itchen Stoke 35). Cheriton had a bible class with 22 members and a communicants' guild of 20; Hinton Ampner had its own missionary working party as well as an active Girls' Friendly Society and the tiny parish of West Tisted, with a falling population of 187, reported spending £700 over the last four years restoring the church roof and walls for future generations¹⁸. At the outbreak of the First World War, although the Church of England seemingly faced the challenge of dwindling attendances, there was still much

¹⁵ HRO, 43M74/PX1-2; Old Alresford gymnasium accounts, 1900-14.

¹⁶ Erdozain, *Problem of Pleasure*, pp. 199-229.

¹⁷ H. McLeod, 'Sport and the English Sunday School, 1869-1939' in Orchard and Briggs, *The Sunday School Movement*, p. 122.

¹⁸ HRO, 21M65/B4/6/2/1, 2, 4-8, 10, 12, 14-16.

cause for optimism; in this part of rural Hampshire it remained closely connected with the parish elite and secure at the heart of the established social order.

Seeds of Decline

So when and why did the changes alluded to in the quotes above occur in the Alresford registration district? Hastings argues that there was no genuine religious revival during or after the war, nor was there a pastoral or theological revival. The war unleashed bewilderment and hate which the churches did little to address; it shattered the social and political role of the church and unveiled the truth of ecclesiastical near-irrelevance¹⁹. The situation at Bramdean was revealing. Whilst attendances up until 1913 had held up well they did not survive the war. Combining average attendance at the main morning and evening services for every week through to the end of 1917 the average attendances at Sunday worship were: 138 (1913); 129 (1914); 131 (1915); 102 (1916) and 89 (1917). Over five years average attendances declined by 36 per cent²⁰, but this needs to be put in the context of a wartime population subject to voluntary enlistment in 1914 and conscription in 1916. The population of Bramdean in 1911 was 243, including 52 males who would have been of military service age in 1914, with 17 of these working in reserved occupations, primarily on the land. Nationally, about a third of the eligible pool of volunteers had joined up by mid-1915 and, applying the same percentages to Bramdean, around 12 may have volunteered; the 1915 visitation actually estimated the population at 224, a reduction of 19 or eight per cent. Around 35 of the 1911 population would have been eligible for conscription in 1916, subject to reserved occupations, so perhaps a further

¹⁹ Hastings, *English Christianity*, pp. 45-8.

²⁰ HRO, 1M77/P11.

23 (ten per cent of the 1915 population) may have been away from the village on active military service. The average decline in attendance therefore needs to be viewed in the context of a decline in population of *circa* 18 per cent; the reduction relative to population was half the absolute rate, but still significant²¹. Far from the war drawing people to the church for spiritual comfort, disillusionment with the struggle and exhaustion may have undermined belief, or at least their capacity to express it physically by attendance.

In Alresford and the surrounding villages, the mood of quiet optimism and settled stability before the war was transformed during the 1920s; the visitation returns of 1931 reported a wave of indifference and apathy which the clergy were struggling to counter. Populations had declined in many of the smaller parishes and the incumbents reported that mission and ministry were threatened by the distractions of leisure, travel and the wireless, as well as a lack of support from senior members of the community; the tight nexus between church and parish elites was not as apparent as it once was. Andrew Robertson admitted that congregations were going down steadily and that people were using new means of transport to get about rather than coming to church in New Alresford; he complained that ‘The well to do set a very bad example ... Sunday golf is popular, church going is not!’. Whilst taking the opportunity to pass on favourable feedback on his own efforts, he also commented on the dwindling core of the committed congregation; ‘But service is given only by a very few – when it is given it is very wholehearted ... the people who give [to missionary work] are the ones who keep everything else going’²².

²¹ ‘1911 England & Wales Census Collection’ <http://search.ancestrylibrary.com/search/group/1911uki> for Bramdean residents; ‘Recruitment to the British Army during the First World War’ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/recruitment_to_the_British_Army_during_the_First_World_War, (3 June 2016); P. Simkins, *Kitchener’s Army: the Raising of the New Armies 1914-1916* (Manchester, 1988), pp. 148-57.

²² [Bishop’s Visitation, 1931], HRO, 21M65/B4/8; New Alresford.

Outside of the market town, in the surrounding villages, the general picture was the same. Matins and evensong were not offered daily in Old Alresford because ‘There would be none to attend’ and the reported decline in adult attendances on a typical Sunday was gathering pace: 350 in 1851; 170 in 1899; 80 in 1931. Population had fallen around ten per cent since the religious census but the halving of typical attendance in the first three decades of the twentieth century support the recollections of Fred Dorey. In response to such challenge Reverend Preston’s approach to pastoral visiting seemingly lacked energy and conviction; he restricted his calls to ‘those who seem to need and value it more than others’²³, although this may perhaps have indicated respect for those of a different theological persuasion. The incumbent at Bighton bemoaned the decreasing population and empty houses which he linked to the fact that the two main landowners in the village, Captain Nicholl and Sir Gilbert Heathcote were ‘now no longer able to employ as many farm hands, due to very heavy taxation, on their estates’. In this context ‘The sin of the village appears to me to be religious indifference’. Attendances here had also halved since 1899 which was attributed to the ability to have a service at home though the wireless as a result of which ‘most have got out of the habit of coming to church’²⁴. The negative impact of the broadcast of religious services on Sunday worship was also emphasised in West Tisted, alongside the need for physical rest after a week of strenuous agricultural employment²⁵. The distraction of leisure was also noted at Bishops Sutton where now there was ‘... tennis played in one or two houses’. The expectations of the clergy and the indifference of the people were both growing; the gap was widening. McLeod argued that by the 1880s and 1890s a more relaxed view of Sunday was taking hold in the middle and

²³ Ibid., Old Alresford. See Table 4.8 for 1851 and 1899 attendance and population data.

²⁴ Ibid., Bighton.

²⁵ Ibid., West Tisted.

upper classes; Sunday tennis was becoming popular in the gardens of the wealthy, golf clubs were opening on Sundays and cycling was becoming the favourite alternative recreation to church; the evidence from Alresford is consistent with this²⁶. The decrease in population at Brown Candover, which was attributed to the increase in agricultural land put out to pasture, meant that 'There is an almost complete absence of young people over school age as the absence of local openings leads them to seek work elsewhere'. As a result Reverend Wade-Gery commented that membership of the local branch of the Girl's Friendly Society had dropped to four and really needed to be closed. The population was also decreasing at Cheriton with Tichborne where, as at Bighton, fewer labourers were required on the farms; a much smaller family now resided at Tichborne House which meant less work on the estate²⁷. A similar scenario existed at Kilместon and Beauworth; both the 'Big Houses' and cottages attached to them had recently 'weakened' affecting employment for those remaining and the population had decreased as a result²⁸. Not only were the social elite setting a bad example, parents were as well. At Hinton Ampner and Bramdean the incumbent Alfred Milner reported to the bishop that his parish 'Would have more confirmation candidates if parents were not so lax, think they know better than the parish priest and hold their children back'²⁹. If there was one Church of England clergyman whose feedback summarised the mood of despondency in 1931 in this part of rural Hampshire it was the vicar of Ropley, the Reverend Henry Geldart, whose incumbency started in 1916. Despite an increasing population with new housing in the Four Marks area, which made it very different to elsewhere, an established church infrastructure and an able curate to support him, he found it 'Difficult to convey to the

²⁶ McLeod, 'Sport and Religion in England', p. 125.

²⁷ HRO, 21M65/B4/8; Bishop's Sutton, Brown Candover with Chilton Candover; Cheriton with Tichborne.

²⁸ Ibid., Kilместon and Beauworth.

²⁹ Ibid., Hinton Ampner and Bramdean.

bishop one's impression of the prevalent indifference and inertia'. There was a nucleus of devout church people, he said, and a few who are recently interested in the church's work 'but one is bound to admit that the church's hold is slight, except on a fringe of the population'. He continued that many who describe themselves as 'Church of England' are so in name only and that the visit of a bishop sees things at their best with an above average congregation and a hearty welcome from parishioners; the incumbent, Geldart asserted, was better placed to judge the spiritual condition of the parish³⁰. Across the registration district the population was aging, making it more difficult to attract new members; the average age increased from 30.5 (1911) to 34.8 (1931) with the proportion under 20 decreasing from 38 per cent to 31.4 per cent across the same period³¹. Perhaps Geldart's expectations were higher than most being, in all probability, a committed Evangelical; he was appointed by the Peache Trustees and was secretary of the CMS for the Alresford deanery, for which Ropley raised more than half the funds in 1930-1931 with a personal contribution of ten pounds from Geldart himself³². However, as can be seen from Table 5.2 below, nowhere had a faster decline in proportionate attendances over the first three decades of the twentieth century than Ropley, with its growing population; he was perhaps anxious to convey his perspective on that to the bishop.

In many parishes an ever tightening circle of decline had set in; falling population led to lower attendance and lower attendance made running the groups, events, clubs and societies which might attract the young and bind the people to the church more difficult. But perhaps Reverend Lovett at Kilmeston was not an enthusiastic adherent of such

³⁰ Ibid., Ropley.

³¹ *Census of England & Wales, 1911, County of Hants: Area, families, Separate Occupiers and Population* (London, 1914), p. 36; *Census 1931, Hampshire*, p. 53.

³² *Church Missionary Society Report and Lists, 1930-1931* (London, 1931).

attempts to unite church and community together in any event; in response to the bishop's enquiry as to how to make the church more effective he stressed a more faithful adherence to the teaching of the church and the duties of a parish priest; he commented dismissively that 'New organisations no use – too many new things being started – time wasted in endless societies, guilds, conferences and committees which usually ends in talk and statistics'³³. Whilst by no means universal, there was frustration and disillusionment among the local clergy and no clear vision as to how to re-fill their pews. Gill argued in *The Myth of the Empty Church* that a cold, empty church was itself a disincentive to attend worship and this over-capacity contributed to decline³⁴. Attendances therefore need to be considered in the context of both the population of the parish *and* the capacity of the church to fully understand waning commitment to public worship. I suggest below that falling population also undermined (and sometimes closed) local church and day schools which further damaged the church's ability to attract new worshipers.

³³ HRO, 21M65/B4/8; Kilmeston and Beauworth.

³⁴ Gill, *Myth of the Empty Church*; Gill, *Empty Church Revisited*.

Table 5.1: Total adult Sunday parish church attendances reported in 1851, 1899 and 1931

	1851 Religious Census		1899 Visitation Returns		1931 Visitation Returns	
	Attendances	Population	Attendances	Population	Attendances	Population
New Alresford	700	1618	500	1464	170	1624
Old Alresford	350	523	170	469	80	524
Bighton	160	285	75	315	46	211
Bishops Sutton	250	529	220	465	130	470
Bramdean	140	223	123	227	60	With Hinton
Brown Candover	204	272	130	300	30	131
Cheriton)	295	668	265	897	115	821
Tichborne)	116	378	70	Combined	20	Combined
Hinton Ampner	129	384	96	386	35	574
Itchen Stoke	66	348	120	303	63	304
Kilmeston)	136	406	80	302	113	372
Beauworth)	Combined	Combined	Combined	Combined	Combined	Combined
Ovington	100	163	70	114	With Itchen	With Itchen
Ropley	360	818	300	875	100	1599
Swarraton)	135	402	110	400	67	255
Northington)	Combined	Combined	Combined	Combined	Combined	Combined
West Tisted	141	268	82	187	59	162
Total	3282	7285	2211	6704	1088	7047

If we extend our previous comparison up to 1931, the full extent of the decline in church attendance becomes evident in Table 5.1³⁵. As stressed above, caution is required when attempting such analysis. In addition to the caveats set out in chapter IV, the definitions of the attendance numbers were also inconsistent. The census returns usually identified the general congregation and Sunday scholars separately, but occasionally just showed the general congregation; the 1899 visitation excluded Sunday scholars but gave the numbers for schoolchildren separately so that the total could be calculated; and the 1931 visitation just gave the adult attendance with no request for information about schoolchildren. The best direct comparison between 1851, 1899 and 1931 is therefore of total *adult* attendances, as above. Even allowing for these reservations the general picture seems

³⁵ Vickers, *Religious Census in Hampshire*, pp. 157-62; HRO, 21M65/B4/5, 6, 10; *Census 1931, Hampshire*, p. 5.

clear, and there is a lot of consistency between the parishes. We have already referred to the declines in attendance at Old Alresford and Bramdean; they were not alone. Looking at the Anglican parish churches in aggregate, adult attendance decreased by roughly a third between 1851 and 1899, and then halved again by 1931; the seemingly low attendance in 1851 may have shocked the Victorians but eighty years later adult attendance at the parish churches was estimated at less than a third of that level³⁶.

The market town of New Alresford and the large village of Ropley were amongst the most affected; particularly since they both had an *increase* in population over the period. The number of adult attendances declined by 76 per cent in New Alresford and 72 per cent in Ropley, with a proportionately greater decline from 1899. Some of the traditional ‘closed’ parishes under the influence of the Baring family fared a little better; Swarraton with Northington was ‘only’ down 50 per cent over the period and Itchen Stoke managed to maintain its attendances against a background of stable or declining populations; but it is hard to generalise without reference to specific context. The other parish with a particular family influence was Tichborne but the shrinking of the family presence at Tichborne House after the war, the consequent reduction in employment opportunities on the estate and the declining population meant that only 20 were estimated to attend Sunday worship in 1931; a proportionate reduction even greater than that experienced in the market town. The severest case of relative decline appeared at Brown Candover where Lord Ashburton held the advowson and was the major landowner; despite the closed status of the parish, the decline in public adherence to worship was remarkable; adult attendance in 1931 was 85 per cent below 1851. Against a background of declining population since 1899 the

³⁶ *Census 1931, Hampshire*, p. 53. Adult attendances in 1931 were not depressed by a particularly high 0-4 year age cohort (7.6 per cent) which might have resulted in more adults staying at home to care for infants.

visitation return perhaps revealed some of the explanation; no evangelicalistic practices, no preaching about church mission, no church school, no council school, no secondary school, a GFS class too small to continue, an almost complete absence of work opportunities for young people and a rector desperately trying to sell his house to mitigate the heavy cost of dilapidation³⁷.

There were, however, at least in relative terms, more optimistic parishes from an Anglican perspective. The remote parish of West Tisted experienced one of the biggest falls in population in the district; a reduction of 40 per cent between 1851 and 1931 and the devastating closure of its church school in the 1920s. Despite this, adult attendance ‘only’ declined by 58 per cent which meant that the reduction in attendance per head over the whole period was significantly better than most other parishes. The vicar estimated that, after a hard day in the fields, adult attendance at evensong was 47; a high proportion of the adult population, and impressive indeed in 1931. Reverend Duncan and his wife had a keen sense of the importance of youth ministry; as well as impressive adult attendance he claimed that *all* the children in the parish came to church on Sunday for catechism and that every child also came to either scouts, cubs or brownies; the vicar was the scout master and his wife led the brownies³⁸. At first sight, the most remarkable example of long term Anglican resilience (since 1851) seemed to be at Kilmeston with Beauworth where, against the trend, adult attendance actually *increased* by over 40 per cent between 1899 and 1931. But close inspection of the 1899 visitation return sheds some light on this anomaly. We have already discussed in chapter IV the forced resignation of Herbert Scott following difficulties with both the squire and congregation. The lord of the manor was Walter Long,

³⁷ HRO, 21M65/B4/8; Brown Candover.

³⁸ HRO, 21M65/B4/8; West Tisted.

and the estate had been in his family since 1820. Reverend Scott had clearly had a difficult relationship with Mr Long and in correspondence relating to ownership of the village school described him as ‘not an easy man to approach on any business subject’ and as ‘rather imperious and short tempered’; he complained that even his agent displayed the ‘least possible courtesy’ to me³⁹. There had clearly been a break in the generally tight nexus between church and parish elite, perhaps similar to the power struggle between Sir John Boileau and Reverend Andrew in Ketteringham recounted by Chadwick in *Victorian Miniature*⁴⁰. Such disharmony perhaps explains the unusually low attendance at the parish church in 1899, and hence the consequent appearance of an increase to 1931.

In terms of what this adult attendance data tentatively suggests about the timing and pace of decline, we have observed that across the whole registration district there was broadly a 33 per cent decline over the 48 years between 1851 and 1899 and a further 50 per cent over the next 32 years between 1899 and 1931; so an increased percentage reduction per year from 1899. Moreover, there was an eight per cent decrease in population in the first period and a five per cent increase in population over the latter period, so the ‘real’ increase in pace of decline since 1899 was even more pronounced. Table 5.2 gives the Index of Attendances (adult attendances as a percentage of population) in each year and the annualised percentage reduction for both periods for all parishes. Parishes have been combined where appropriate to allow a full comparison across the whole 80 year period⁴¹; such combinations may themselves have been indicative of the need to consolidate and focus resources in response to declining numbers.

³⁹ VCH 3, pp. 323-7; NS/7/1/7150, letter dated 27 January 1896.

⁴⁰ Chadwick, *Victorian Miniature*.

⁴¹ Indices have been calculated from the data in Table 5.1 above.

Table 5.2: Index of Adult Attendances (IA) in 1851, 1899 and 1931 (%) and annual change					
	1851	Avg. Reduction % p.a.	1899	Avg. Reduction % p.a.	1931
New Alresford	43	0.44	34	2.21	10
Old Alresford	67	0.96	36	1.82	15
Bighton	56	1.19	24	0.26	22
Bishops Sutton	47	0.00	47	1.26	28
Bramdean and Hinton Ampner	44	0.38	36	1.65	17
Brown Candover	75	0.89	43	1.45	23
Cheriton with Tichborne	39	0.11	37	1.77	16
Itchen Stoke and Ovington	32	(0.91)	46	1.70	21
Kilmeston with Beauworth	33	0.44	26	(0.48)	30
Ropley	44	0.48	34	2.57	6
Swarraton with Northington	34	0.37	28	0.22	26
West Tisted	53	0.35	44	0.57	36
Total	45	0.56	33	1.70	15

The table, which measures the decline (usually) in attendance relative to population, confirms the comments above. The average annual rate of decline after 1899 was nearly three times higher than it had been before (increasing from 0.56 per cent per annum to 1.70), with the largest increases in the more populous areas of New Alresford and Ropley. It can be seen that for some – Old Alresford, Bighton and Brown Candover – the habit of church going was already losing appeal before 1899; the reduction for these parishes in this period were well above average, although all started from a particularly high base in the religious census.

Recognising all the caveats about the reliability of the data and the need for extreme caution in interpreting it, what conclusions can we tentatively suggest about attendance at the parish churches of the Alresford registration district since 1851? Whilst the circumstances of each parish are different we cannot avoid the evidence for a significant reduction in adult attendance across the whole district between 1851 and 1931. Moreover,

this decline gathered pace in the twentieth century. Attendance was not the only expression of church commitment, of course, and I consider below how some congregations, led by dedicated and committed incumbents, tried to keep the church at the heart of their local community. It is unfortunate that the 1915 visitation returns contained no question on attendance to enable us to assess how far the twentieth century decline had set in before the First World War. There were certainly comments in service registers which suggested that sparse congregations were not unusual, particularly for early services. In Old Alresford there was only one parishioner present at the 8am service on 25 January 1912, and no congregation at all at the same service on 24 February, 25 April, 28 April, 1 May, 2 June and 29 June⁴². On 28 December 1915 the 10am service at Kilmeston was abandoned as there was 'no one present' and in early 1915 it was common to number communicants in single figures at the 11am service in Ovington⁴³. There were also frequent comments about poor weather affecting attendance. Despite this, the very limited information referred to above from Bramdean in 1913 and Kilmeston in 1904 (which both show attendance higher than in 1899), together with other examples from New Alresford and Ropley, provide some tentative support for the argument that, in some parishes at least, the church was having some success in resisting decline in the Edwardian period.

But if numbers were falling in both absolute and real terms, what did it actually *feel* like in church; did changes in capacity highlight the fact that congregations were dwindling or mask it? Caution is needed when seeking to compare church occupation levels as a percentage of capacity across time as figures come from different sources and are not directly comparable. The 1851 census and the 1899 visitation returns have *both* capacity

⁴² HRO, 43M74/PI7.

⁴³ HRO, 16M80/PI2; HRO, 32M69/PI1.

and attendance data. The 1915 visitation returns (for which Bighton, Kilmeston and Beauworth are missing and Tichborne is incomplete) have capacity figures but no attendance data, whilst the 1931 returns have adult attendances but no information on capacity. To enable a full comparison it has been assumed that the capacity in 1915 remained unchanged in 1931. In assessing levels of church occupation and comparing these over time, a single service has been used – the main morning service (as most parish churches did not have an evening service in 1851) – although there was no such service in Beauworth in 1851, and sometimes the afternoon or evening worship had a higher attendance; for example, in 1899 attendance at the evening service at New Alresford, Ropley and West Tisted was some 50 per cent higher than in the morning⁴⁴. Full attendance, general congregation plus Sunday scholars, has been used in 1851 and 1899 and, to enable comparison, it has been assumed that the proportion of schoolchildren to adults for 1931 was the same as for 1899 and the adult totals for 1931 have been increased proportionately to provide an estimate of the total congregation attending. As the proportion of school age children in the population actually fell from 22 to 16.5 per cent between 1901 and 1931 this estimate may be generous⁴⁵. The results are in Table 5.3⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ HRO, 21M65/B4/5/9, 397, 483.

⁴⁵ *Census 1901 England & Wales: Southampton; Area, Houses and Population* (London, 1912); *Census 1931, Hampshire*, p. 53.

⁴⁶ Vickers, *Religious Census in Hampshire*, pp. 157-62; HRO, 21M65/B4/5, 6/2, 8.

Table 5.3: Sunday morning total parish church attendances and capacity						
	1851 Religious Census		1899 Visitation Returns		1915 Visitation Returns	1931 Visitation Returns
	Capacity	Attendance/%	Capacity	Attendance/%	Capacity	Attendance/%
New Alresford	800	400/50	455	200+/44	400	90/22
Old Alresford	300	250/83	270	125/46	270	53/20
Bighton	207	80/39	130	55/42	Not available	28
Bishops Sutton	300	175/58	154	150/97	164	83/51
Bramdean	140	88/63	144	70/49	150	46/31
Brown Candover	320	141/44	400	90/23	300	22/7
Cheriton)	271	209/77	300	135/45	230	53/23
Tichborne)	114	68/60	150	45/30	Not available	12
Hinton Ampner	175	41/23	165	62/38	165	27/16
Itchen Stoke	180	60/33	167	75/45	180	42/23
Kilместon)	117	75/64	146	45/31	Not available	86
Beauworth)	106	Nil	155	As above	Not available	Combined
Ovington	125	60/48	130	45/35	130	With Itchen/32
Ropley	364	201/55	240	125/52	370	86/23
Swarraton)	Parish church demolished and replaced with church at Northington					Combined
Northington)	224	95/42	200	80/40	200	38/19
West Tisted	Not given	65	180	32+/18+	120	12+/10+

Recognising these uncertainties, the general picture, with some exceptions, is of declining attendance and church occupation levels over time; churches were becoming more ‘empty’ in a visible and tangible sign of waning religious commitment and growing indifference. Whilst the majority of churches for which we have data were at least half full on the morning of census Sunday in 1851, by 1931 the majority were operating at less than one quarter of capacity, with particularly low occupation levels at Brown Candover (seven per cent), West Tisted (ten), Hinton Ampner (sixteen) and Northington (nineteen). Church restorations which also removed galleries and pews served to mitigate the impact of falling numbers; for example, the major reductions in capacity at New Alresford and Ropley in the 1890s meant that occupation levels remained broadly similar; both were about half full in 1851 and 1899, despite significant falls in numbers attending⁴⁷. In Alresford they ensured that the essential structural work left adequate free seating relative to average and

⁴⁷ Davidson 47, fos. 318-48; Davidson 49, fos. 434-6.

peak attendance and at Ropley it was felt essential to address the aesthetically ‘grotesque’ interior⁴⁸. The dramatic decline in attendances was not therefore visibly apparent until 1931. Similarly, a slight fall in the congregation at Bishops Sutton from 1851 to 1899 was accompanied by a halving of capacity which meant the church appeared virtually full. Elsewhere, increased capacity at Brown Candover, Cheriton, Tichborne and Kilmeston between 1851 and 1899 all came in conjunction with reduced attendance which must have accentuated the sense of decline. For these parishioners, their empty church must have appeared a reality not a myth on Sunday mornings.

But towards the end of our period there were signs that the decline in attendance at public worship was slowing; the position was stabilising a little. The parish of Swarraton with Northington did not reply to the bishop’s visitation enquiries of 1936 because of its imminent union with Brown Candover but the others parishes did⁴⁹. In aggregate, attendance for the remaining parishes was down by less than five per cent compared to its 1931 level. In New Alresford, Old Alresford, Bighton and Ropley, the latter driven by the evangelical success of the Four Marks mission church which had been set up to serve that rapidly expanding part of the parish, attendance had actually increased and it was stable at Brown Candover and Cheriton with Tichborne. Only at Bishops Sutton (down 30 per cent) and West Tisted (down 70 per cent) were there further significant falls⁵⁰. At Bishops Sutton the Reverend Lindsay Browne suffered from poor eyesight which affected his ability to prepare sermons, but he still managed to instruct regularly in the church day school and oversaw a branch of the Bible Reading Fellowship. In addition to failing health,

⁴⁸ Ibid., Davidson 49, fo. 429.

⁴⁹ [Bishop’s Visitation 1936], HRO, 21M65/B4/10.

⁵⁰ Ibid. See returns for New Alresford; Old Alresford; Bighton; Ropley; Brown Candover; Cheriton with Tichborne; Bishops Sutton and West Tisted.

the other challenges he faced were great; overcrowding in the village cottages, declining Sunday school numbers, 'a considerable amount of indifference to religion', 'a lack of parental control' and a lack of 'suitable helpers'. Charles Peacock had only been in post at West Tisted for two weeks so perhaps his return should be treated with caution; it is hard to reconcile very strong Easter Day communicant numbers with an almost total collapse in the apparent level of the average congregation⁵¹.

Other factors support the argument for a slowing of church decline. Doreen Rosman has argued that, although Sunday schools reached their peak in terms of attendance in the 1880s, they remained substantial and influential organisations long after that, and well into the 1930s annual festivals and processions of Sunday School Unions were a common sight⁵². Having a child baptised and sending it to Sunday school were regarded as proof enough of religious commitment; attending church services was not seen as an important religious observance. The teachings of the Church were not rejected but sending your child to Sunday school was just felt to be the right thing to do; what Sunday schools failed to do was to provide replacements for declining congregations⁵³. The evidence from Alresford is consistent with this. As the decline in church attendance continued, albeit at a slower pace, membership of the local Sunday schools remained stable and even increased in many parishes. For the fourteen parishes for which comparative data is available the average Sunday school attendance increased by eight per cent between 1931 and 1936, with particularly large growth in Bighton, Cheriton with Tichborne and Ropley, again driven by the Four Marks expansion⁵⁴. In New Alresford we can compare further back; in 1915

⁵¹ Ibid. Bishops Sutton; West Tisted.

⁵² Rosman, 'Sunday Schools and Social Change', pp. 149-50.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 151-2.

⁵⁴ HRO, 21M65/B4/10.

membership of the Sunday school reached 78 which, despite all the upheaval of the post war years, then reached 80 by 1936⁵⁵. However, as discussed below, these attendance numbers were not nearly so impressive in the context of the relevant school age populations and any nominal Sunday school growth failed to arrest congregational decline.

As mentioned above, Hastings referred to the contradictory national picture of declining Church of England attendances but increasing Easter Day communicants between 1890 and the war. This combination also occurred in the Alresford registration district, but continued towards the end of our period. For the three parishes where a comparison between 1931 and 1936 was possible the average number of Easter Day communicants increased by five per cent when attendances were static and actually declined by five per cent across the whole district⁵⁶. It is worth reflecting specifically on the example of St John's in New Alresford. As already discussed, Frederick Jellicoe administered the sacrament a record 221 times on Easter Day 1916; in 1934 that total had risen to 231 despite the decline in attendances over the period. At the end of his first year Jellicoe had trebled not only the number of communion services but also the number of communications, and he offered Holy Communion every day during Easter week in March 1920; it seems reasonable to presume that his teaching and pastoral care stressed the importance of the sacrament for everyone, not just the 'worthy'. Anglo-Catholic sentiments were also apparent elsewhere as perceptions of what it meant to be an 'Anglican' evolved; Reverend Lacey May at West Tisted published an article in 1914 explaining the spiritual significance of using the sign of the cross and the Wade-Gery family left a substantial trust fund in support of the ACS in the same year. Arthur Wade-

⁵⁵ HRO, 21M65/B4/6/2; HRO, 21M65/B4/10.

⁵⁶ Ibid., HRO, 21 M65/B4/8; New Alresford; Hinton Ampner and Bramdean; Itchen Stoke with Ovington.

Gery became the incumbent at Brown Candover and then Swarraton with Northington and commented in 1931 that although, like his colleagues, he used the 1662 prayer book his personal view was ‘much prefer 1928’⁵⁷. Focusing on the period after 1945, Davie argues in *Believing without Belonging* that there is a mismatch between statistics relating to religious practice and those which indicate levels of religious belief; lack of participation, she argues, does not necessarily imply lack of belief which is dependent on experience and feelings⁵⁸. In Alresford it seems that there was enough belief to compel large numbers to take the sacrament on the most holy day in the church calendar – well over 80 per cent of those on the electoral roll took their communion on Easter Day in 1936 – but not enough sense of belonging to attend Sunday worship on a regular basis. Sparser congregations showed a greater commitment to communicate.

An increase in the number of opportunities to take communion and more widespread participation in the rite itself reflected a gradual change in religious practice in the early twentieth century; the Church made a liturgical response, of sorts, to the challenges it faced. The Church of England reacted to the specific national crisis of the First World War by calling its congregations to prayer. Regular intercession services became a feature of many parochial service schedules during the conflict; the faithful gathered specifically for this purpose every week at Kilmeston and Bishops Sutton, and twice a week at Cheriton⁵⁹. There was a degree of consistency to religious practice in 1915. Parishes typically offered matins and evensong most Sundays with an early opportunity to receive Holy Communion. There would sometimes also be an alternative opportunity to receive

⁵⁷ HRO, 45M83/PI6; *Alresford Parish Magazine*, March 1920; Douglas, fo. 49; *Annual Report of the Additional Curates Society* (London, 1913, 1914); HRO, 21M65/B4/8.

⁵⁸ Davie, *Believing without Belonging*, pp. 4-5.

⁵⁹ HRO, 16M80/PI2; HRO, 42M78/PI3; HRO, 138M82/PI1.

communion after matins twice a month (for example, in the larger parishes of New Alresford and Ropley), although some parishes only offered Holy Communion once on a Sunday; *either* at 8am *or* after matins, but not both (for example, Hinton Ampner, Ovington and Itchen Stoke). At Brown Candover the sacrament could only be taken on the first, third or fifth Sundays and at Swarraton with Northington only on the first or third⁶⁰. Weekday services, apart from festivals and feast days, were more varied. Old Alresford offered Holy Communion every Thursday; New Alresford offered matins and evensong on Wednesdays and Fridays and Itchen Stoke offered them every day, as did West Tisted; there was daily matins at Cheriton and Tichborne and an early service at Ovington. No weekday services were provided at all in Bramdean, or in Bishops Sutton or, apart from in lent or advent, at Brown Candover but most parishes provided opportunities for the faithful to gather throughout the week⁶¹.

The position was subtly different by 1931. Hastings regarded the 1920s as a time of renaissance of worship and culture stimulated by Anglo-Catholicism, illustrated by the replacement of full matins by a solemn Eucharist; the way that communion was offered and positioned as part of the service changed⁶². In terms of the main Sunday service there were signs that the sung Eucharist was becoming more prominent. There was a sung Eucharist at 11am once a month at St John's in New Alresford and at 11.15am on the last Sunday of the month at St Mary's in Old Alresford. There was also Holy Eucharist at 10am every Sunday in accordance with the 1662 prayer book at West Tisted, with matins said beforehand. At other parishes, replies to visitation returns suggested that sometimes communion would be offered after matins at midday (for example, at Kilmeston with

⁶⁰ HRO, 21M65/B4/6/2.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Hastings, *History of English Christianity*, pp. 196-8.

Beauworth, Hinton Ampner with Bramdean, Bishops Sutton and twice monthly at Ropley) whereas in others it would constitute the main 11am or 11.30am service (Itchen Stoke with Abbotstone and Ovington, Brown Candover with Chilton Candover and Bighton). The sacrament of communion was moving towards the centre of Sunday worship but had not yet taken over. Change in the Church of England came slowly⁶³.

Other changes in religious practice were apparent by 1931; daily services were increasingly rare. As noted above, at Old Alresford Reverend Preston did not offer daily services as he believed no one would attend them, whilst in neighbouring New Alresford Andrew Robertson said that Holy Communion was available every day ‘if anyone comes’, which perhaps implied that this was not very often. Apart from Cheriton with Tichborne, which only offered daily services during lent and advent, the only other parish where this office was provided was West Tisted where the vicar Victor Duncan claimed an average daily attendance of three⁶⁴. Whether through lack of demand or lack of supply, or a mixture of both, public worship at the parish churches of the Alresford registration district had largely become a Sunday affair by 1931. Children’s services, baptisms, lantern and other special services all featured regularly in an attempt to be inclusive and provide variety but these efforts did not translate into improved regular attendance⁶⁵.

Reflecting on the huge challenge the church faced to arrest this decline in participation in public worship the Reverend Edmund Morgan used his leader in the Old Alresford parish magazine in February 1937 to remind his flock of their obligation. He assured them that he

⁶³ HRO, 21M65/B4/8.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid. HRO, 21M65/B4/6/2; see also HRO, 27M82/PI3; HRO, 138M82/PI2; HRO, 32M69/PI2; HRO, 42M78/PI3.

knew the difficulties that they faced and he sympathised that sickness, bad weather, the need for rest or the attraction of wireless services might keep them at home. But we 'cannot hope to worship God without *cost* to ourselves. The most practical test of our desire to put God first in our lives is to turn out regularly each Sunday to worship Him in church. It cuts into our convenience, our comfort and our leisure. That is the cost God asks of us ... it is the only way to prevent God from being crowded out of our lives'⁶⁶. Most of his neighbouring clergymen faced a similar challenge. This decline in support both reflected and contributed to a withdrawal of the church from the centre of public life. It was not exactly marginalised, it still had some influence, but it was no longer as central to the established order and local society as it had been for centuries. Confirmation of the change and an explanation for it comes from considering the roots of Anglican hegemony.

The financial strength of the Church of England had long been at the heart of its continued pre-eminence in this part of rural Hampshire. As discussed, up until the turn of the century the established Church was able to rely on the support of wealthy individuals, depend on the collective backing of the social elite and call on the loyal support of local congregations. Routine expenditure was met, occasional repairs were seen to and, when necessary, funds were raised for major restorations to ensure that the current inhabitants of the community met their obligation to leave an appropriate physical legacy. The local elite were, generally, willing supporters of the parish church as they were both part of the established social order. Comfortable livings attracted new incumbents who were themselves part of this elite; they were well-connected and the beneficiaries of appropriate patronage. This financial strength was even more effective as it existed alongside a comparative lack of wealth for Nonconformity. The Congregationalists and Methodist had

⁶⁶ HRO, 43M74/PZ17; *Old Alresford Parish Magazine*, February 1937.

to borrow for major capital projects, any unusual level of expenditure was a challenge and they struggled to attract and retain ministers of sufficient quality who could make a sustained difference to their local appeal and standing. But the decline in Church of England attendances was accompanied by a tightening of the financial belt; the parish of Tichborne provided an example. A high level of co-operation and support had historically characterised the relationship between the Roman Catholic Tichborne family and their Anglican parishioners. We have already seen that the family played a leading role in vestry to help shelter the needy from the impact of rising bread prices and they also made land at their local estate available to stage fundraising efforts on behalf of the parish church. However, the 1931 visitation return shows that the village population had been decreasing, there was a smaller family on the estate and less labour was required on the farms. In this context the average attendance at St Andrew's had fallen to just eight in the morning and 12 in the evening⁶⁷. As a consequence, the financial resources of the church were understandably limited. Whereas in the late 1890s a single individual had willingly provided £5,000 for major church restoration in New Alresford and the social elite had come together to quickly find £2,500 in Ropley, in 1924 the curate at Tichborne, Charles Conybeare, saw no way of raising locally the £850 he required to repair the parish church. Instead, he wrote a letter of appeal to *The Times*⁶⁸. Reverend Conybeare explained that the east wall of the south aisle was in a ruinous condition; the west wall showed signs of movement and the old oak Elizabethan pews were sadly dilapidated. 'In this tiny agricultural parish it is quite impossible to raise such a sum [£850] without help from outside, for which we now venture to ask'. We do not know whether the curate sought help locally and was rebuffed or simply concluded that it was unrealistic in the context of a

⁶⁷ HRO, 21M65/B4/8; Tichborne.

⁶⁸ 'Saxon Church in Danger', *The Times* [London] (24 May 1924), p. 10.

falling population and declining estate⁶⁹. But, if raising significant sums was harder than before, it was not impossible. A year later another letter from Mr Conybeare appeared in the newspaper thanking the readers for their help in making the appeal, which eventually raised £900, a remarkable success. ‘Gifts were sent to me, large and small, from old friends and neighbours, and from complete strangers, from the length and breadth of England, from the United States, from the high seas and from China; these donations, together with liberal grants from the Incorporated Church Building Society and the Diocesan Fund, and, not least, sums raised by the willing effort of many Tichborne folk have enabled us to carry out ... the works advised’⁷⁰. The Church of England needed to look further afield for its finance, and it took it longer to raise smaller amounts, but it could still inspire loyalty and support from those who felt that they ‘belonged’.

The same theme applied to more routine matters of finance; the church could still meet its objectives, but dwindling congregations made it more difficult. Financial concerns about buildings and maintenance became a regular distraction and caused congregations to face inward rather than focusing on outreach, pastoral support and spreading the gospel; if they could not find new adult members or convert Sunday scholars into adult attenders, the church risked an ever increasing spiral of decline, particularly in the parishes where population was not increasing. Routine finances after the war certainly caused some concern in New Alresford. In 1926 St John’s struggled to repay the £650 advanced for a new organ; the treasurer Mr Lines reported to the PCC ‘that the church finance is in a bad condition’ and the following year they decided to discontinue production of the Church

⁶⁹ HRO, 21M65/B4/8; Cheriton with Tichborne.

⁷⁰ ‘A Saxon Church Restored’, *The Times*, [London] 6 June, 1925, p. 8.

Year Book as it was ‘not a paying concern’⁷¹. The stone coping of the church was falling off, the boys’ surplices were in rags and application had to be made for help from QAB to improve the drainage system at the rectory⁷². All aspects of church work came into question. It was not felt to be necessary to appoint a full time paid youth worker to replace part time volunteers when the need arose; the Boys Club was closed because other arrangements were being made in the town and the parish room was let out as a gym one night a week. When the possibility of converting the church to electric light was discussed it was rejected on the grounds that there was ‘no prospect of being able to raise the £60 or £70 probable cost in the near future’ and it was agreed to contract with the gas company to keep the present lamps in order for another six months. There was even talk of diverting some of the money donated to the Earl Haig Fund to cover urgent church expenses, but the line was drawn here⁷³.

Tensions surfaced on occasion. In 1925 the rector had made a proposal to add to the endowment of the living to augment the stipend. If the congregation made a special effort to increase their Easter offerings, he would add from his own pocket in proportion to any amount collected over £20, the whole sum to be invested as a permanent addition to the income from the living. Since then, however, the rector reported that the Easter offerings had not increased and, given this lack of congregational support, he felt released from his side of the offer; the PCC therefore agreed that the scheme be cancelled⁷⁴. Whether the congregation’s failure to respond was due to lack of means or indifference we cannot be sure, but Reverend Robertson was not prepared to be generous on his own. An intervention

⁷¹ [Parochial Church Council], HRO, 45M83/PP1, 21 October 1926, 28 December 1927.

⁷² Ibid., 1 February 1928.

⁷³ Ibid., 24 October 1929, 13 February 1933, 25 April 1933, 11 December 1933.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 13 April 1928.

from the archdeacon of Winchester was eventually required in 1931 to resolve the impasse. The archdeacon proposed that if £100 could be raised in Alresford the diocese would allocate £300 and then apply to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for a further £400: the combined capital sum would then be invested to produce a yearly increase of £34 to the stipend. However, they needed to act quickly. Having debated the proposal on 13 November 1931 the Alresford share had to be promised by 1 December and physically paid over by May 1932. The PCC concluded that it would look badly on the parish to turn the offer down and a small sub-committee was formed to raise the money⁷⁵. A letter was sent to parishioners and a house to house collection organised; by 9 May 1932 the full amount had been raised⁷⁶. Once again the people of New Alresford had responded generously to the needs of their church; but it was much harder than it used to be.

Daunton's study *Wealth and Welfare* analyses the major changes in the British economy between 1851 and 1951 as it transitioned from manufacturing to professional services. Whereas the church had previously been able to call on many (the local nobility, gentry, politicians, senior clergy and ex-military etc.) who had their own capital through inherited wealth or family business interests, there was now a growing professional service sector which had access to large disposable incomes but not necessarily significant capital⁷⁷. In Alresford, financial support in the 1920s and 1930s was more likely to come from Dr Hodgson and the local solicitor Mr Ridley Shield than it was from retired bishops or the gentry. This was the period of the general strike and the great depression, the break-up of large landed estates and increasing levels of taxation to fund welfare and service the public debt created by the First World War; as Prochaska points out, families living on earned

⁷⁵ Ibid., 13 November 1931.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 17 December 1931, 9 May 1932.

⁷⁷ M. Daunton, *Wealth and Welfare: An Economic and Social History of Britain 1851-1951* (Oxford, 2007).

income of £10,000 per year paid over 500 per cent more tax in 1918/19 than in 1913/14⁷⁸.

The increasing difficulties of church finance may have been due as much to inability as unwillingness; the effect was the same, it was much harder than it used to be.

The perennial problem the church faced was how to ensure a sufficient reliable income for regular requirements so that collections (which varied enormously) could be used for alms, charity and external outreach. Parishioners risked failing in their duties to maintain their physical facilities for future generations, to support those in need and to share their faith. The FWO fund was designed to address this, requiring a regular financial commitment beyond anything put in the Sunday collection plate. Support for the idea came slowly which frustrated the churchwarden Dr Hodgson. There was a need, he felt, to 'waken some people up to a sense of their responsibilities in the matter' and he was in favour of publishing the names of subscribers and the amounts pledged on the church door or in the parish magazine. He saw it as a 'healthy spirit of friendly rivalry in the good work of keeping up the church'⁷⁹. Regular discussion and written circulars produced no increase and the rector suggested dividing the parish into districts and appointing visitors: personal appeals were required. It took a long time for the message to get home though: it was not until more than three years later that the treasurer was able to report a total of 41 subscribers and even this group were only able to pledge half of the amount required to meet the general running expenses⁸⁰. The report of the commission on the staffing of parishes, which concluded that amalgamations were almost inevitable given shortages of money and clergy, was seriously considered in 1932 and there were specific proposals debated to merge with both Old Alresford and Bighton; the latter was briefly united with

⁷⁸ Prochaska, *Disinherited Spirit*, pp. 142-3.

⁷⁹ HRO, 45M83/PP1, 3 April 1929.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, February 1930, 15 May 1933.

New Alresford for a short period from 1938⁸¹. When discussing Sunday observance and the decline in attendances which contributed to their monetary problems the PCC also agreed with the views set out at the start of this chapter: ‘the war was responsible for making Sunday a working day’ and had therefore played its part in breaking the habit of attendance at worship⁸². Hastings has argued that, nationally, the Church’s position was steadily slipping in the 1930s. There were over 500,000 Anglican baptisms annually in the 25 years before the war but in 1932 that level fell below 400,000 and remained there throughout the decade. Confirmations had been well over 200,000 almost every year until 1928 but by 1939 they were down to 157,000⁸³. There were signs of a weakening of commitment; Alresford was not immune.

In New Alresford the tightening of the financial belt coincided with the passing of some of St John’s most influential and generous lay supporters. We have already seen that Herbert Walford was the main financier of the £5,000 restoration of St John’s in 1898. Thirty years later, at the age of 93 and just a few months before he died, he paid for the much needed repairs to the church path. Although a tiny amount in comparison it was much needed. A few months before the Rural District Council had agreed to take over responsibility for maintaining the church path but only after it had been thoroughly repaired: the PCC had declined this offer as its only objective in approaching the council had been to avoid the initial cost. By his generosity Herbert Walford allowed the church to avoid both a current expense and a future obligation and, in light of this, it seemed a little ungrateful of the PCC to insist that his memorial plaque be amended: instead of saying ‘to whom the restoration

⁸¹ Ibid., 13 November 1931, 11 April 1932, 4 February 1935; *Crockfords* 1947.

⁸² Ibid., 13 June 1932.

⁸³ Hastings, *English Christianity*, pp. 253-4.

and rebuilding of this church is due' it became 'is *mainly* due'⁸⁴. On 30 January 1933 the PCC also reported with great sadness the death of Mr Thomas ('Charlie') Hankin, a 'tower of strength in all things connected with the church'. Mr Hankin, a successful local businessman in the town, was a long standing member of the PCC as well as a town trustee, town councillor (and later chairman), and rural district councillor. Hankin was also the Chief Officer of the Fire Brigade and an active member of the Alresford Choral Society: he sang in the church choir for many years, where his sister was the organist, and performed in several of the Missionary Pageants which took place in the rectory gardens: he was at the centre of the town's commercial, social and church life and played a leading role in its local governance. In many ways Thomas Hankin typified the once tight nexus between church and parish elites and, in some respects, his passing and that of Herbert Walford, who was himself a town councillor as well as a major financial supporter of the parish church, marked the end of an era⁸⁵.

Marginalisation in Education and Welfare

Whilst financial difficulties forced the established Church to look inwards and reduce its commitment to outreach and charity, its ability to attract new members was also affected by its reduced role in education. The Church of England hoped that attendance at church day and Sunday schools, at which clergymen and sympathetic lay teachers taught, would help foster a lifetime of allegiance to the established Church. This was not necessarily the case: as Orchard points out, only a very small proportion of Sunday school attenders became communicants. School leaving age was also Sunday school leaving age and the

⁸⁴ HRO, 45M83/PP1; 12 July 1928, 24 July 1930.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 17 February 1926, 30 January 1933; HRO, 35M84/412/26, 28 March 1926; HRO, 108M82/PX1, 16 March 1925; A. Hankin, 'Thomas Charles Hankin', *Alresford Displayed* 16 (1991), pp. 3-7.

resilience of Sunday schools owed more to their extensive social role in the community than any effectiveness in developing new church members⁸⁶. Schools were a battleground in two respects: denominational rivalry and secularisation. If the Church of England could maintain a monopoly of educational provision in a parish it was much better placed to inspire continued loyalty and adherence: but, as Hastings points out, education was not immune to the process of contraction referred to above. Forty per cent of elementary school children were in Anglican schools in 1900; only 22 per cent by 1938⁸⁷. Ultimately the state's encroachment on the Church's central role in education, along with the challenge from other denominations, played a crucial part in the marginalisation of the Church of England from the centre of public life. The historical context is important in understanding the local struggles which followed.

Chadwick sets out an overview of the evolving relationship between the church and the state in English schools in *Shifting Alliances*. The state system was brought in, from 1833, to supplement rather than supplant what already existed through the church; hence the 'dual system'. The state built schools where the church was not already providing them and gradually, with the impetus of tax revenues, came to possess schools and buildings that were better than the old church foundations. The whole approach was a pragmatic partnership with church schools operating in parallel with state maintained schools. As the bishop of Durham said in 1939 'the dual system as it now exists obstructs the complete triumph of the secularising tendency'⁸⁸. The state offered its first grants towards school buildings in 1833; £11,000 to the National Society (founded 1811) and £9,000 to the British & Foreign School Society (founded 1807). Following this initial involvement a

⁸⁶ Orchard, *Sunday Schools*, pp. xvi-xvii.

⁸⁷ Hastings, *English Christianity*, pp. 253-4.

⁸⁸ Chadwick, *Shifting Alliances*, pp. 1-2.

proposal in 1843 to give the Church of England control over the provision of education in factory schools provoked strong objections from dissenters, but by 1870 the government was convinced that more direct intervention was necessary⁸⁹. School boards were established in local districts where elementary education was not sufficient to provide schooling for five to 13 year olds. The state accepted its responsibility to run schools; Forster's Education Act of 1870 established the principle of local education funded by local rates and central government grants⁹⁰.

But what kind of religious instruction would be provided in rate-aided Board schools? John Huxtable in *Church and State in Education* describes how the Nonconformist position had shifted. Having previously resisted the state's right or duty to provide education, by 1867 the principle of government interference was accepted: the Congregationalist R.W. Dale wrote then of the right of every child to receive elementary education and how the state should enforce that right⁹¹. Attempts by both the dissenters and the Church of England to provide sufficient voluntary schools had failed; but state involvement meant that the controversial issue of religious education had to be addressed. Should the state support denominational schools or leave religion out of the curriculum altogether? The Nonconformists now wanted free, rate supported non-denominational elementary schooling but Anglicans did not want to use their funds to maintain their own parish schools if they were not allowed to teach the prayer book and catechism. The compromise was the Cowper-Temple clause to the 1870 Act: whilst allowing state capital grants for denominational schools, there was to be no denominational teaching permitted

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 6-7, 9-10.

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

⁹¹ Huxtable, *Church and State in Education*, pp. 3-4.

in rate funded schools⁹². The compromise of the dual system – some state aid for denominational schools but no denominational teaching in state established schools – papered over the cracks of a society divided by sectarianism and religious defensiveness; church and state operated parallel systems, distinctive in both their religious teaching and management structure⁹³. After 1870 there were repeated attempts to improve the financial position of church schools and the state provided substantial support for its Board schools. The valiant but unsuccessful local struggles to retain church schools led by William Newnham in New Alresford and Thomas Woodhouse in Ropley have already been discussed above. The issue provoked strong feeling among conservative Anglicans. The Reverend J.L. Roberts published a sermon preached at Peterborough cathedral in 1892 in which, in emotive language, he urged his fellow churchmen to cling to the schools they had erected and still maintained, and demanded the constitutional right to teach in those schools the elementary truths of their faith. It was secularised education that he feared, an education that cherished the intellectual but starved the spiritual⁹⁴.

By 1902 the position of voluntary schools had become untenable; they were educating half the nation yet the condition of those school buildings and facilities was poor. The Local Education Authorities established under the 1902 Balfour Education Act which supported church schools with local rate aid would appoint one third of the managers to voluntary schools and Her Majesty's Inspectors would have the right of inspection over all schools. Teachers would also be paid from the public purse. The considerable cost to the ratepayer caused an outcry: Nonconformists did not want to contribute to the cost of Anglican and Roman Catholic schools and there were protests at what they saw as 'Rome on the

⁹² Chadwick, *Shifting Alliances*, pp. 10-13.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 14.

⁹⁴ J.L. Roberts, *Church Education, a Sermon* (London, 1892).

Rates⁹⁵. Pugh outlines the organised campaign of passive resistance which developed between 1903 and 1906 involving Nonconformists who were quite satisfied with the ‘plain Bible teaching’ provided by the former Board schools. There was a National Passive Resistance Committee and local resistance leagues that were united in their resolve to refuse the rate. Defaulters came from all walks of life and there were mass summons, the forced sale of goods and personal possessions and, by the end of November 1905, 176 persons had been imprisoned. The resistance continued until 1914 when the war diverted public attention⁹⁶.

Although the state was now providing financial support through the rates, the involvement which it received in return meant that other local church schools came under pressure for different reasons in the early twentieth century. The 1902 Act had given the Board of Education power to declare a school ‘unnecessary’ if average attendance was below 30 and the threat of closure at West Tisted for this reason was real in 1921. The vicar Eliot Iredell, who was both incumbent and school manager, urgently sought advice from the National Society on 18 December 1921. He wrote that to ‘close a church school in a remote country district lessens the church’s hold on the children but also imperils the life of the village – labourers will not settle in a place if their children have to go 2-3 miles in all weathers to another village school’. In the event of closure the proposal was to send the children to the neighbouring village of Privett but the managers were determined to oppose the decision and felt moving would not advance the education of the children as the headteacher at West Tisted was ‘extremely efficient’. Iredell wanted to inspire support and requested

⁹⁵ Chadwick, *Shifting Alliances*, pp. 16-17.

⁹⁶ Pugh, ‘Nonconformity, education and passive resistance’, pp. 355-73.

someone from the National Society to come and speak at a public meeting⁹⁷. Whilst sympathetic, the assistance from the National Society was limited. They pointed out that although the school had accommodation for 33, average attendance was only 24 and the school was therefore ‘too small’; they advised arguing that as the Board had not exercised their powers of closure for so long they must have tacitly accepted the need for the school, which still existed. They should also argue that the younger children would not be able to get anywhere else, the distance to Privett being too far, and that if the children had to travel that distance it would not be possible for them to have a proper mid-day meal and they would be badly fed. Parents and managers should make the strongest possible protest, but the National Society could not come to their meeting⁹⁸. Whilst the campaign may have caused the decision to be deferred, the issue resurfaced a few years later. By 1926 there were only 18 children on the register with an average attendance of 15 and the cost of operating the tiny school was almost £316 per annum; the Education Committee proposed closure and sending the children to Ropley. The managers objected on the grounds that it was impossible to expect the children to walk that far, the cost of conveying them would significantly reduce any savings and they could not return for lunch to get a proper meal. The managers did obtain some concessions: the children would be transferred to Privett instead of Ropley, they would receive a meal at Privett school and the younger children would be taken there and back. But there was to be no further postponement: the closure of the school was confirmed on 2 July 1926⁹⁹.

The argument by Reverend Iredell that closing the school ‘imperils the life of the village’ appears to have been borne out: in 1931 the population of West Tisted was 125; when the

⁹⁷ NS/7/1/12716; West Tisted School, 18 December 1921.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2 January 1922

⁹⁹ [Schools], HRO, 67M76/PJ1, 27 February 1926, 2 July 1926.

school had opened in 1862 it had been 268¹⁰⁰. But the closing of the school did not end the controversy between religious and secular education. In 1942 there was a proposal to sell the old school site with a consequent debate about how to use the funds which would result. The Board of Education had to authorise the sale but insisted that the proceeds go towards secular education although ‘regard shall be had towards the promotion of religious education’ and there was acceptance that a small proportion of the proceeds go towards Sunday school expenses. Reverend Tandsley had ‘no intention’ of letting the Board of Education have the money if it could possibly be avoided and devised plans for religious instruction in evening classes, the purchase of books and equipment and the repair and redecoration of the church¹⁰¹. Lawyers were involved. Clergymen were still resisting the growing secular influence in education but it seemed they were losing the battle.

A similar challenge was faced by the church school at Tichborne. The school had weathered many financial difficulties with respect to its accommodation and equipment since it was established in 1841, but when its average attendance dropped below 30 it too faced the prospect of closure. On 4 March 1923 Reverend Conybeare (who had appealed to readers of *The Times* with respect to the parish church) received a government memorandum in his capacity as school correspondent. The letter proposed closure of the small school and the transfer of the children to the Church of England school at Itchen Stoke. The managers were completely opposed and advice was sought from the National Society. Average attendance here was just 17 but although the annual cost of the school (and hence the potential saving) was only £192 the Board clearly had the power to deem it ‘unnecessary’. The National Society advised that access to the alternative facilities at

¹⁰⁰ NS/7/1/12716; application to National Society, 1862; HRO, 21M65/B4/8; West Tisted.

¹⁰¹ NS/7/1/12716; correspondence from 4 August 1942.

Itchen Stoke would be central to any public enquiry; the Board were obligated to take account of the need for secular instruction, the wishes of parents and the impact on local rates. The objections were successful in the short term but the school finally closed on 15 October 1944¹⁰².

Problems were created at Kilmeston because the original gift of land on which the school had been built around 1853 was not formally conveyed. The land had apparently been a gift from the squire and the villagers had provided most of the materials and undertaken the construction. No rent had ever been paid for the school and everything rested on tradition and custom. The church and incumbent had been at the heart of running it. In 1895 Reverend Scott was keen to get the church's rights to the building onto a firmer footing but he did not have the unanimous backing of the school managers and staff, and the present owner (the son of the squire who had made the 'gift') had put the site, including the school, up for sale and then withdrawn the part relating to the school following protest claiming that it had been a mistake. Walter Long, the squire, clearly felt though that he still had some claim on the property. As already discussed, Reverend Scott, the school correspondent and treasurer, had a particularly difficult relationship with his squire and against this background of acrimony it is perhaps not surprising that it was reported on 18 March 1926 that the Local Education Authority had made the decision to close the school; the buildings were in disrepair and the managers had not seen fit to keep it for the church. Poor legal practice and acrimonious relationships meant that the village was deprived of its school¹⁰³.

¹⁰² NS/7/1/12652; 2 March 192, 8 March 1923.

¹⁰³ NS/7/1/7150; Kilmeston National school, 1895-1951. See 18 March 1826, 29 August 1927, 3 October 1927.

There was also confusion about the school's status in Bramdean. Although land was twice conveyed from Magdalen College, Oxford to the rector and churchwardens for a school for poor persons and a playground, the conveyances were for educational purposes and neither required the property to be used as a 'church school', although the Board of Education recognised it as a church school 'by usage'. From 6 January 1947 though, the school ceased to be recognised as a voluntary school, although the ministry of education continued to allow the site to be used as a Sunday school, on weekday evenings for bible and confirmation classes and for church clubs, gatherings and societies¹⁰⁴. There were rumours about the imminent closure of the National school in Bighton in 1922 following neglect towards the end of Alfred Cooke's 48 year tenure, and there were demands for the resignation of the long serving head teacher after an adverse inspection two years later. The 1931 visitation return suggests that the church school was still operating with conscientious teachers, although the return five years later explicitly states there was none: it seems that Bighton, too, had lost its church day school by the end of our period¹⁰⁵. In many parishes there was a general decline in the infrastructure of rural life in which the church participated; it was able to resist these pressures for as long as it did because of the size of its endowments, which were conspicuously lacking in Nonconformity.

There were still instances of the Church of England being intimately involved in the successful provision of education towards the end of our period. The parish magazine for Old Alresford reported regularly on the progress being made. In March 1925 the examination in religious knowledge in the day schools revealed that the Inspector was 'very pleased with their [the children's] knowledge' and the 'intelligent way they

¹⁰⁴ HRO, 1M77/PJ1-5. Conveyance of Magdalen gifts and National Society correspondence.

¹⁰⁵ NS/7/1/1168; HRO, 21M65/B4/8, 10.

answered questions'; in June 1925 the rector reported what a great encouragement it was to have so many parents present at the school open day and prize giving, and that so many were there from the Primitive Methodist Orphan Home; and there were regular reports of the schoolchildren's Christmas tea, the annual Sunday school treat, school entertainments provided for the adults and children's concerts. The Inspection report in 1934 commenting on the whole educational offering stated that 'the enthusiasm of the Head Mistress and the Assistant Teacher makes a pleasing impression ... the management of the Infants continues to be marked by kindness and thoughtful understanding of their needs ... steady progress is being made'¹⁰⁶. It was with great sadness, therefore, that the rector reported the passing of the head mistress of 14 years, Miss Finnigan, in October 1934. She was much loved and respected and a 'faithful servant of the church which mourns her loss'¹⁰⁷. Rather than falling numbers the problem at Old Alresford was that the school was outgrowing its accommodation. In 1931 the decision was taken to transfer all children over the age of 11 to the Board school in The Dean, New Alresford. Transport would be provided for those in Armsworth and for the girls to New Alresford. The village school became a junior school. However, so that church children attending the Board school could continue to have religious instruction on church lines, a room had been built near the school to enable the rector to instruct the children of those parents who wished it. There was an appeal for the £70 the room cost. The village school still had 45 children on its books, significantly more than the minimum level required under the 1902 Act¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰⁶ HRO, 43M74/PZ5, March; June: PZ14, May

¹⁰⁷ HRO, 43M74/PZ14, October.

¹⁰⁸ HRO, 43M74/PZ11, January, April, July.

The position for Sunday and church day schools in 1936 is summarised in Table 5.4¹⁰⁹.

Table 5.4: Sunday Schools and Church Day Schools in 1936 Visitation Return			
Parish	Sunday School Attendance [estimated percentage of 5-14 year old population]	Church Day School	Notes
New Alresford	Yes: 80 [30]	No	Incumbent teaches children at Board school in separate room. Youth league running.
Old Alresford	Yes: 25-28 [31]	Yes	Incumbent instructs regularly. No follow up for confirmation candidates.
Bighton	Yes: 40 [100]	No	Some religious instruction offered.
Ropley	Yes: 50-60 [21]	Yes	Incumbent teachers one morning per week. May be original Ropley school or new one for Four Marks area.
Cheriton with Tichborne	Yes: 60 [44]	Yes (Tichborne, but closed in 1944)	Incumbent does not instruct. School closed in 1944.
Itchen Stoke with Abbotstone and Ovington	Yes: 16 [32]	Yes	Incumbent teaches regularly.
West Tisted	Yes: 8 [30]	No	
Hinton Ampner with Bramdean	Yes: 22 [23]	Yes	Incumbent instructs regularly. Sunday school meets in Lady Caper's house.
Kilmeston with Beauworth	Yes: 47 (K 25, B 22) [77]	No	
Bishop's Sutton	Yes: 36 [46]	Yes	Incumbent instructs regularly.
Brown Candover with Chilton Candover	Yes: 20 [61]	No	Incumbent teaches in Sunday school.
Swarraton with Northington	No return	No return	No return. About to merge with Brown Candover.

Sunday schools continued to be universally available and relatively popular, consistent with the work of Rosman which suggests that they were still resilient in the 1930s, largely because of their broad social role, although this participation did not translate into new regular worshippers¹¹⁰. There was little formal support for elder scholars. However, if we

¹⁰⁹ HRO, 21M65/B4/10.

¹¹⁰ Rosman, 'Sunday Schools and Social Change', pp. 149-51.

consider the reported attendances as a percentage of the relevant school age populations the position is not so impressive; high attendance percentages at Bighton, Kilmeston with Beauworth and the Candovers but more absentees than attenders everywhere else, with often less than a third of eligible schoolchildren attending. Given that in 1931 Rosman suggests that, nationally, there were around two-thirds of five to fourteen year olds in England and Wales on Sunday school registers it is actually remarkable how *low* the Anglican attendance levels in the registration district were, unless there was a large difference between numbers enrolled and those actually attending¹¹¹. In terms of church day schools, by 1936, these were only operating in Old Alresford, Ropley, Itchen Stoke with Ovington, Hinton Ampner with Bramdean, Bishop's Sutton and Tichborne, and the latter closed eight years later. The church, whilst still involved in education, had lost the central role which it once had. This was further evidence, perhaps, of the progressive marginalisation of the church from the centre of parish life.

If the Church's role at the heart of education had been diminished, the same pressure was applied to its role as the core provider of charity and welfare. There were two catalysts for change; the first was theological. In her autobiographical book *Lark Rise to Candleford*, Flora Thompson recalls her early church going days in rural Oxfordshire at the end of the nineteenth century, and in particular the sermons of Mr Ellison: 'Another favourite subject was the supreme rightness of the social order as it then existed. God, in His infinite wisdom, had appointed a place for every man, woman, and child on this earth and it was their bounden duty to remain contentedly in their niches' and he stressed 'the bliss reserved for those who worked hard, were contented with their lot and showed proper

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp. 150-1.

respect for their superiors'¹¹². The Church was at the heart of this settled order and social stability which fostered feelings of mutual obligation and dependence; the elite had obligations of paternalistic care and generosity whilst those dependent on them had expectations of entitlement and support, for which appropriate deference was offered. But, although the Church continued to be involved in charity and welfare, this Christian perspective evolved throughout the twentieth century. The career of William Temple, archbishop of Canterbury from 1942 to 1944, was marked by efforts to modernise the institutions and liberalise the theological attitudes of the Church of England as he campaigned for greater social and economic equality. Temple argued that 'all are linked together with bonds of mutual sympathy and influence' and this mutuality of interest drove his thinking on social justice, causing him to support the creation of the welfare state and reject any social system based on dependence, willing givers and grateful receivers¹¹³.

The second catalyst was the social, political and legislative changes of welfare reform. Hollen Lees tracks the evolution of the poor laws into a fully-fledged welfare state in *Solidarities of Strangers* and points out that two major new approaches to the problem of poverty emerged in the early twentieth century. The first strategy used a combination of knowledge of individuals and families with personal interventions to solve their problems; they became 'cases' to be managed by professionals. The second approach was that of statistics, economics and actuarial science: poverty was created by a lack of income and the aim was to raise that income to a minimum standard through either contributory insurance or a state funded payment. Entitlement was through age, gender and occupation,

¹¹² Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, pp. 211-12.

¹¹³ J. Kent, *William Temple: Church, State and Society in Britain, 1880-1950* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. ix, 46; Temple, 'The divinity of Christ', quoted in Kent, *William Temple*, p. 46; W. Temple, *The Church Looks Forward* (London, 1944), pp. 140-57.

not the moral worth of the ‘deserving’ poor. The vision was that citizens, backed by the state, stood together to maintain the weakest: the solidarities of strangers would strengthen the whole. It was the perceived failures of the poor laws, which treated the poor as defective members of society, which prompted politicians to look at other approaches to social welfare¹¹⁴. In this changed landscape in which intervention from the state was both encouraged and expected there was a reduced role for the Church to play.

Older ways of thinking about society came under pressure: *laissez-faire*, competition and individualism were challenged on the grounds of social justice. Accepted wisdom moved from voluntarism to professional interference and former principles were left behind. The able-bodied pauper, the villain in 1834, was superseded by the unemployed worker and there was a desire to move away from marginalising the dependent poor by demonising them. Although the moral failings of excessive drinking, gambling and spending were still articulated, there was an acceptance that destitution had its roots in the human life cycle and the industrial economy. The National Insurance Act (1911) specified that, in return for weekly payments from employed workers, employers and the state, those covered received a flat benefit in the event of sickness, invalidity and unemployment. Eligibility came from employment and contributions; the rest remained dependent on charities and the poor law¹¹⁵.

After the First World War the poor laws survived of necessity, not because of any ideological commitment, until they were finally replaced by the National Assistance Act of 1948. The end of the wartime boom brought massive unemployment and hundreds of

¹¹⁴ Hollen Lees, *Solidarities of Strangers*, pp. 310-11.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 318-27.

thousands were drawn to the guardians for support, with nearly 2.5 million receiving assistance at the time of the general strike in 1926. The Church was still involved in the formal process of relief but this association with the perceived humiliation of pauperism provoked resentment. Stella Davies, who grew up in Lancashire, remembers the popular response in the 1920s to the vicar's wife who was also a guardian. When she denied relief to a local man who had a piano, lecturing him on his behaviour and resources, workers threw stones at her after church and greeted her for days with taunts and boos¹¹⁶. In 1929 the government finally remodelled poor law institutions as part of a more general revamping of local government and taxation. Boards of guardians were abolished, their responsibilities moving to county and borough councils, but the emerging network of insurance, public services and voluntary societies was slow to evolve. 'The dole', crafted by political expediency and funded by taxation was the centrepiece of official welfare strategy between the wars. It was carefully means tested during the 1930s and was intended to maintain the wages of a largely male industrial labour force. However, to supplement this, the vast array of charities, voluntary societies, religious and church groups that had championed 'good works' before the First World War continued to provide help as they were able. Expanding from its origins in Old Alresford, thousands of branches of the Mothers' Union offered poor women advice, cheap sewing materials, Christmas treats and free tea, and church groups continued to supply applicants with coal and clothing as they had done at Ropley. Welfare practice in Britain remained very much a mixed system, combining efforts by charities, families, the churches and the state¹¹⁷.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 328-34; Stella Davies, *North Country Bred*, quoted in Hollen Lees, *Solidarities of Strangers*, p. 334.

¹¹⁷ Hollen Lees, *Solidarities of Strangers*, pp. 331, 337-9.

As the state claimed the lead role in the provision of welfare, so the relative importance of the local church contribution diminished. On 9 February 1927 the New Alresford town clerk informed the council that the office of overseer of the poor, for so long held by churchwardens or other church officers in the district, and the means by which relief in money, food and clothes was administered to the needy, was to be abolished. The Rating and Valuation Act (1925) had passed all their powers and duties in relation to the making, levying and collection of local rates to the rural district council¹¹⁸. Poor law unions with their hated workhouses, and the boards of guardians which managed them were abolished by the Local Government Act (1929), although some of the buildings remained to provide relief in a less harsh form. In New Alresford after 1930 the workhouse became known as the Alresford Public Assistance Institution and the site later became Tichborne Down House Hospital¹¹⁹. Welfare was now firmly in the secular hands of the county and borough councils and, although church officers or supporters could stand for public office, the role of the church in state provided welfare was much looser than it had once been.

The central importance of the church role in voluntary relief also diminished, or at least took on a different character. As has been shown, up until the end of the nineteenth century the churchwardens in Old Alresford administered the Pink & Eager and Perrins charitable endowments and the payments they produced for the parish poor, and at New Alresford the rector and churchwardens controlled the William Wilkinson bequest and the churchwardens worked with the overseers to administer the gift of Jenny Harris. However, by the end of the century the parish meeting – the body which evolved into the town council, which dealt with rates, lighting, the town fire engine and the election of

¹¹⁸ HRO, 108M82/PX3, 9 February 1927; 'Rating and Valuation Act, 1925 Part I, para 1(2)' http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1925/90/pdfs/ukpga_19250090_en.pdf.

¹¹⁹ 'The Workhouse in Alresford, Hampshire' <http://www.worhouses.org.uk/Alresford/> (19 March 2016).

councillors – also had a formal role reviewing and approving the accounts of these and other charities¹²⁰. Prominent churchmen were certainly present in these meetings but there was now an element of secular control. When the Mayor of Winchester launched an appeal for the British League of Help for France ‘God Parent’ Scheme in 1921 it was the parish council who asked St John’s to take a collection and it was the Congregationalist minister Reverend Archer, not the Anglican successor to Frederick Jellicoe, who was elected with George Payne as trustees for the administration of the NAUCT in 1923; charity and welfare was now a broad partnership¹²¹. The charity commissioners had approved the creation of the NAUCT because the real capital value of the various historic bequests administered by the parish church and its officers had diminished as the income was distributed each year; what was once a significant incentive for compliance became less important and the only effective way forward was to combine the gifts. The new trust consisted of one ex-officio trustee, the current rector of New Alresford, two others appointed by the parish council and two by the NATT. Anglicans still had a permanent role in administering the local bequests, but not necessarily a dominant one¹²².

The church still contributed as part of the broader welfare partnership with charities, societies and the state; but its contribution became more remote, less personal and arguably had less impact. Money was collected for the sick and the poor, the county hospital, temperance societies and the Red Cross as well as overseas missions but the financial difficulties referred to above and the need to work harder at maintaining

¹²⁰ HRO, 108M82/PX1; minutes of 25 March 1896 and subsequent meetings.

¹²¹ HRO, 108M82/PX3, 18 April 1921, 26 November 1923.

¹²² J. Adams, ‘The New Alresford United Charities Trust’, *Alresford Displayed* 20 (1995), pp. 15-23.

buildings and facilities meant that choices had to be made¹²³. The direct connection between the parish church and the parish poor had been greatly diluted; people now looked to the state and secular institutions as much as they looked to their church for relief from hardship.

Breaking the Nexus

I have suggested that at the heart of Anglican longevity and strength, binding everything together, was a particularly tight nexus between church and parish elites which served to preserve the established social order. But as the Church of England's ability to raise finance was challenged, and as its central role in education and welfare was diluted by the state, so the church struggled to maintain this nexus as local governance structures evolved in the twentieth century. However, before examining the evidence for the waning of church influence on the vehicles of local government, it is worth examining in more detail the strength of the connection at the turn of the twentieth century. Brian Rothwell has looked at the impact of changes in local government, specifically the 1882 Municipal Corporations Act, on governance in New Alresford. The last members of the ancient Corporation of the Bailiff and Burgesses of New Alresford are set out in Table 5.5¹²⁴.

¹²³ HRO, 16M80/PW1; HRO, 27M82/PI1; HRO, 43M74/PI1; HRO, 12M70/PI1; HRO, 16M80/PI1; HRO, 1M77/PI1; HRO, 42M78/PI2.

¹²⁴ B. Rothwell, 'Shock Result at First Parish Council Election', *Alresford Articles* 1 (2012), p. 14.

Table 5.5: The Burgesses of New Alresford (1882)			
	Name	Occupation	Appointed
1	John F. Adams	Solicitor	1860
2	William Benson	Gentleman	1865
3	William H. Hunt	Architect	1865
4	John C. Moberly	Solicitor	1869
5	Charles E. Hunt	Brewer	1873
6	Edward Blackmore	Solicitor	1873
7	Dr Charles E. Covey	MD	1874
8	John Ridley Shield	Solicitor	1879
9	Captain George F. Marx	Gentleman	1879

Historically the burgesses were exclusively representatives of the landowning classes but following agricultural depression, and in the absence of industrialists, the landowners had largely been replaced by professional men in 1882. The corporation had always been a self-electing body; an exclusive club of nine where sons replaced their fathers, nephews replaced their uncles and professional men nominated their business partners to serve with them. Burgesses were appointed for life, or until debilitating illness prevented attendance at meetings¹²⁵. Although there were no clergymen on the list, the church still had its ‘representation’. The Hunts were a long established Alresford family. William and Charles were brothers and business partners and their father and grandfather had both served as burgesses before them. Their grandfather John had served as churchwarden and their father Edward was also an active member of the church. William was himself churchwarden for many years as well as being the clerk to the vestry and later the auditor of the parish church accounts from 1892 to 1913. William’s wife Carolina was also a keen churchwoman and was particularly well connected with the family of New Alresford’s first rector William Brodie, as well as being a close friend of George and Mary Sumner. In William’s professional capacity as an architect he continued to support the churchwardens

¹²⁵ Ibid.

as he carried out surveys, repairs and restorations as required¹²⁶. Mr Hunt was also a member of the Alresford School Board, the Alresford Education Committee and then governor of Perins Grammar School; he was chairman of the Alresford Gas Company, Secretary to the Alresford Market House Company, member of the Flower Show Committee and the Alresford and District Cottage Gardeners Society. Following his service as burgess he became a town trustee and later a member of the parish council¹²⁷. John Ridley Shield was also a former churchwarden at St John's and close friend of Reverend Newnham. Mr Ridley Shield was not reluctant to serve either; he chaired the town trust for almost 50 years as well as being a PCC member at St John's and clerk to the county magistrates, the rural district council and the Alresford Union¹²⁸.

As already discussed, the nature of local government changed with the 1882 Municipal Corporations Act which abolished the self-selecting corporation and replaced it, after a transition, with the part appointed, part elected NATT and the fully elected (with a recently enlarged franchise) parish council. The church connections with the NATT have already been discussed but when the elections to the first (more powerful) parish council were held in December 1894, to take office in April 1895, the church strengthened its influence further: the results for the 11 seats were as in Table 5.6¹²⁹.

¹²⁶ R. Elliott, 'William Henry Hunt, Alresford 1834-1914', *Alresford Displayed* 8 (1983), pp. 2-9.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Rothwell, 'Shock Result', p. 21; *Kelly's Directory of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (London, 1927), pp. 32-5

¹²⁹ Rothwell, 'Shock Result', p. 17.

Table 5.6: First election to the Alresford Parish Council, December 1894							
Successful				Unsuccessful			
Position	Name	Title	Votes	Position	Name	Title	Votes
1	Batchelor, F.C.	Mr	120	12	Shield, J.R.	Mr	69
2	Headley, A.A.	Rev	105	13	Hunt, W.H.	Mr	67
3	Cooper, H.	Rev	99	14	Covey, C.E.	Dr	54
4	Shepherd, J.	Mr	95	15	Wheeler, E.	Mr	43
5	Richardson, J.H.	Mr	92	16	Gladstone, J.G.	Mr	40
6	Walford, H.H.	Mr	87	17	Purvis, J.	Mr	40
7	Willis, W.	Mr	87	18	Fry, F.W.	Mr	29
8	Merryfield, A.	Mr	81	19	Spencer, T.	Mr	27
9	Hemming, H.W.	Mr	77	20	Crook, R.	Mr	16
10	Hall, J.	Mr	74				
11	Hunt, C.E.	Mr	73				

The Church of England, through its incumbent Reverend Headley, now had a seat at the heart of local government with the rector impressively elected second in the ballot. Moreover, Herbert Walford, a loyal supporter of the church who largely funded the restoration of St John's in 1897 also secured a place, as did churchwarden James Hall. However, somewhat surprisingly, neither Mr Shield nor William Hunt was elected. Rothwell suggests the reason for this 'shock result' which saw three of the four surviving burgesses – Shield, Hunt and Covey – rejected by the electorate, with the other one, Charles Hunt, scraping through in eleventh place, was due to the town trustees making a poor initial impression during their first five years in office. There were major public relations failures with respect to the town's water supply and reluctance to repair the road sidings in Broad Street; the town blamed the former burgesses and, after their humiliation at the ballot box neither Mr Shield nor Dr Covey ever stood again for election to the parish council¹³⁰. In another warning sign for the established Church, the Congregationalist minister Henry Cooper was also comfortably elected, polling just six votes fewer than

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp. 18-21.

Headley. The broadening of the electorate created an opportunity for Nonconformists to play a part in local government; and they had popular support.

However, from this apparent highpoint of Anglican involvement and influence the Church of England was slowly displaced from the centre of public life; not eliminated, it still had influence and connectivity, but it moved to the fringes. An analysis of the composition of the town trust, the parish council and the PCC provides some insight. The council election in March 1896, with fewer candidates and a much smaller turnout (the novelty of the first election had worn off) produced the same result: Reverend Headley was still second, Herbert Walford was comfortably elected and James Hall was also returned¹³¹. In March 1901 the council moved to three year nominations with retiring councillors applying for re-election; the meetings dealt with routine business and the rector and his Nonconformist counterpart both played an active role. In 1910 there was a contested election with 14 candidates for 11 places. James Hall was re-elected; Mr Hankin was returned, as was Dr Harold Hodgson who later became a churchwarden. What was noticeable, however, was that both clergymen only just scraped in: the rector had slipped to ninth in the poll and pastor Baker-Row was tenth. Those with church sympathies had other qualities to commend them: they were landowners, professional men or prominent local employers, but the relative popularity of the clergy, or the sense of obligation to vote for them, had started to slip¹³².

Arthur Headley continued to play an active part until his departure from St John's in 1915, regularly chairing council meetings despite his low position in the poll. His replacement

¹³¹ HRO, 108M82/PX1, 9 March 1896.

¹³² Ibid., 14 March 1910.

Fredrick Jellicoe was nominated and elected in 1919 along with messers Hall and Hankin and several other prominent tradesmen in the town – Eddolls, Hasted and Jesty – whose families all played an active part at St John’s. Both Reverend Jellicoe and the Congregationalist Reverend Archer were nominated and elected in 1922 and Thomas Hankin, that great friend and servant of the established Church, was the council chairman. The churches, especially the Anglicans, continued to be linked to the main medium of local government up until the 1920s. But things changed. As church schools closed and the state took on the main responsibility for welfare so clergymen, whether due to indifference, other priorities or the fear of rejection at the ballot box, withdrew from local government. On 16 March 1925 there were 15 candidates for the council; these included the aging Reverend Archer but not the Anglican successor to Mr Jellicoe. Perhaps, as a different aspect of religious change, the Anglican clergy were losing energy; whereas Brodie and Sumner had been in their twenties when appointed in Alresford in the 1850s, the average incumbent age in the registration district in 1925 was 54¹³³. No clergymen at all stood in the 1928 elections to the parish council; and none put themselves forward in the 1931, 1934 or 1937 elections either, the latter being contested by 18 candidates. The clerical withdrawal from council business was complete.

The waning influence of the church becomes apparent when we consider the individual membership of the town trust and parish council and assess the links that those members had with the church, both informally and through the PCC. There were plenty of churchgoers and church supporters who were *not* on the PCC of course, but the

¹³³ *Crockfords* (1926).

composition of these bodies can still reveal something about the local connection between church and state. The position c.1925 is set out in Table 5.7¹³⁴.

Table 5.7: New Alresford Local Governance c. 1925/1926			
Town Trust (28/3/26)	Parish Council (16/3/25)	Parochial Church Council (17/2/1926)	
J. Ridley Shield (chair)	Rev Archer (Cong)	Rev Robertson (chair)	Mr Monck
G.E. Ridley Shield	G. Payne	Dr Hodgson (warden)	Sgt Carter
Dr H. Hodgson	A.H. Hasted	Mr Lines (warden)	Capt. Pring
T.C. Hankin	H.W. Billingshurst	Mrs Hodgson	Mrs Parsons
A.J. Hall	E. Jesty	Mrs Kingdom	Mrs Jollye
C. Gates	H.J. Phair	Mr Hankin	Mrs Eddolls
H.W. Billingshurst	T.J. Ellingham	Mr J. Ridley Shield	Mrs Baker
T.J. Ellingham	A.J. Hall	Mr Jesty	Miss Baker
H. Hunt	T.C. Hankin (chair)	Mr Knight	Miss Robertson
	C. Gates	Mr G. Dorey	Miss Knight
	A. Picken	Mr C. Gates	Miss Hasted
		Mr J. Dorey	Miss Howes
		Mr Hewitt	Mr Cray
Bold = connection or overlap between PCC, NATT and parish council.			

The church still had significant representation on the formal channels of local government in the mid-1920s; and presumably some influence too. The chairmen of the three main forums were the rector himself who led the PCC; John Ridley Shield, who chaired the NATT until his death in 1939 and Thomas Hankin, who chaired the parish council for many years as well as being a town trustee. Both Hankin and Ridley Shield were PCC members and loyal church supporters. The churchwarden Dr Hodgson was also a town trustee and Cyril Gates was an active member of all three groups. Councillor Jesty was a

¹³⁴ HRO, 35M84/412/26, 28 March 1926; HRO, 108M82/PX1, 16 March 1925; HRO, 45M83/PP1, 17 February 1926.

PCC member and there were family connections as well: Dr Hodgson's wife was on the PCC as were relatives of councillor Hasted and the rector. As noted above, the Church of England minister was no longer on the council, which may have related to confusion around the change of incumbent in 1925 (from Walter Colchester to Andrew Robertson) at around the same time as the council elections were being held, but church sympathisers were still visible and active at this time. However, just six years later the situation looked very different as can be seen from Table 5.8¹³⁵. At the PCC meeting on 8 October 1931 Reverend Robertson read out to the assembled gathering three letters notifying the council of the retirement from the PCC of Mr Ridley Shield (chairman of the town trust), Dr Hodgson (town trustee) and Mr Hankin (town trustee and parish councillor). It was a tangible sign of the passing of an era. Mr Hankin died the following year as did John Ridley Shield in 1939 and Herbert Walford had passed away in 1928¹³⁶.

¹³⁵ HRO, 35M84/412/32, 28 March 1932; HRO, 108M82/PX1, 9 March 1931; HRO, 45M83/PP1, 14 March 1932.

¹³⁶ HRO, 35M84/412/32, 8 October 1931.

Table 5.8: New Alresford Local Governance c. 1931/1932			
Town Trust (28/3/32)	Parish Council (9/3/31)	Parochial Church Council (14/3/1932)	
J. Ridley Shield (chair)	C.E. Asler	Rev Robertson (chair)	Mr Monck
G.E. Ridley Shield	J. Ursell	Mr Newnham	Mr Simmonds
Dr H. Hodgson	H. Hunt	Mr Middleton	Mr J. Dorey
T.C. Hankin	W. Curtis	Mrs Jollye	Mr Knight
C. Gates	C. Gates	Miss Robertson	Mr Woodward
T.J. Ellingham	H.J. Phair	Miss Kingdom	Mr Loveridge
J. Ursell	A. Picken	Miss Baker	Mr Lines
J. Dorey	T.C. Hankin (chair)	Mr Baker	
Vacancy	E. Jesty		
	T.J. Ellingham		
	G.H. Woodward		
Bold = connection or overlap between PCC, NATT and parish council			

In his work on Croydon, Morris links the decline of the church to the new local government structures and suggests that the church lost its relevance as the local elite found new and more effective forums to exercise influence and power. In Alresford we have seen that, initially at least, the parish elite, including those connected with the church, slipped neatly across to occupy the new secular organs of government¹³⁷. But a similar change to the one identified by Morris in Croydon did come later: Anglican strength delayed it. The rector and churchwardens had not been represented on the town council since 1922; Cyril Gates had resigned as a PCC member to focus on his continued involvement with the NATT and the council, appointments he had taken over from Frederick Jellicoe; and Ernest Jesty, whilst still a councillor, no longer served on the PCC either. Even Dr Hodgson, churchwarden for many years, and Mr Ridley Shield had now resigned from the PCC whilst remaining town trustees. The retirement of Mr Hankin marked the loss of the last direct link between the PCC and the two main bodies of local

¹³⁷ Morris, *Croydon*, pp. 172-4.

government. Only two members of the much smaller PCC which met on 14 March 1932 had any connection: John Dorey was a town trustee and George Woodward was a councillor¹³⁸. This is not to say that incumbents, church officers and supporters were not involved elsewhere in society. Dr Hodgson was a county magistrate, as was Lady Capper from the Bramdean PCC, who also hosted the Sunday school, and Lord Templemore the former churchwarden at Old Alresford¹³⁹. Reverend Peake at Hinton Ampner was chairman of the board of guardians of the Alresford Union and Reverend Preston was the correspondent of the school at Old Alresford; John Ridley Shield also clerked the county magistrates, the Alresford Union and the rural district council¹⁴⁰. In 1921 Reverend Jellicoe was appointed as local authority manager for schools for a further three years but, on his departure, this role was taken by the Congregationalist minister rather than his successor and Reverend Archer was also appointed as trustee of the NAUCT along with Mr George Payne, and became a governor of Perins School. Right up until his resignation and departure from Alresford due to age and ill health the Nonconformist minister was busy dealing with unsatisfactory gutters, the level crossing in West Street and a new board for parish notices. He left with a vote of thanks: things had moved on since the physical hazing of dissenters a century before. At least Reverend Robertson took on the role of governor at Perins, where Ernest Jesty was the master, although he resigned that in 1930 and was not considered to replace Mary Baker as councillor or as trustee of the Alresford charities¹⁴¹. Perhaps the Anglican parish elite were too busy, or their faith was weakening? Or perhaps the Church of England was no longer seen as an effective forum for those with ambition to serve in local government? Between 1890 and 1934 the visible involvement of

¹³⁸ HRO, 45M83/PP1, 14 March 1932.

¹³⁹ *Kelly's*, 1939, pp. 30-3.

¹⁴⁰ *Kelly's*, 1927, pp. 32-5.

¹⁴¹ HRO, 108M82/PX3, minutes 1921-1930.

the Church of England with local governance had gone from dominance to strong influence to liberal representation to marginal participation. In this local context the church had separated from the state: the Anglican hegemony at the turn of the previous century had seemingly passed.

One of the factors contributing to the longevity of the Anglican position at the heart of the established social order had been the comparative weakness of Nonconformity: they had a small constituency, no population growth to tap into and no senior social sponsorship. As the Church's position weakened they had a chance to respond. Bebbington has pointed out that, nationally, Nonconformist expansion fell behind population growth from the 1880s and membership began to fall in absolute terms from 1906, soon after the Methodist chapels were built in Alresford¹⁴². Binfield argued in the 1970s that it was no longer required to fill the spiritual vacuum of an industrialising society and had become part of an outdated middle class establishment, and was thus poorly placed to respond to any Anglican weakness¹⁴³. As discussed above, Congregationalist ministers such as pastors Cooper, Baker-Row and Archer played an active part in the community as trustees, councillors and governors; and Thomas Ellingham, grocer in West Street and a trustee of the Methodist church (Wesleyan and then united) until his resignation in 1937 was also both a town trustee and parish councillor between 1925 and 1932¹⁴⁴. But, contrary to the historiography, did this Nonconformist presence in local government represent growing strength and a challenge to Anglican supremacy?

¹⁴² Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, pp. 18-19, 59-60.

¹⁴³ Binfield, *So Down to Prayers*, p. 20.

¹⁴⁴ HRO, 79M72/NMS13, 31 July 1933-1 July 1937.

There were some positive signs. The Congregationalists in New Alresford enjoyed leadership which was a little more settled and stable than before. Mr Llewellyn Roberts served for six difficult years which included the war; Thomas Archer, very active in the wider community, succeeded him for four before ill health forced his resignation in 1925 and, after a 12 month vacancy, Reverend Newman was appointed in 1926 and still in post in 1940. Such longevity among Nonconformist ministers was unprecedented in Alresford¹⁴⁵. Mr Newman also came highly recommended by the County Union; not only was he young but he was also ‘a really hard working and successful man at East Cowes, Isle of Wight’¹⁴⁶. The centenary celebrations of 1925 fostered a sense of pride and the church united to ensure that the required renovations to their facilities were completed ‘most excellently’; the roof was thoroughly overhauled and the path and entrance step repaired. Beyond the normal round of social events and fundraising there were attempts at outreach and expansion; Thomas Archer introduced a service specifically for young people on the third Sunday of each month and a Young People’s Guild, and lectures were held to attract outsiders¹⁴⁷. There was a large Sunday school, although numbers enrolled declined sharply around the turn of the century (1880: 123, 1900: 80, 1914: 46)¹⁴⁸. The Congregationalists were also a sincere, spiritual and close knit group: when news spread of Deacon Collis’s heart condition and failing health the members recorded gratitude for long service and ‘sincere wishes for a quiet and peaceful passing’, and there was much regret at the ‘homecoming’ of their esteemed chapel keeper Mr Paice who had served them for 34 years: a letter of condolence and appreciation was sent to his daughter¹⁴⁹. Elsewhere in the district in this period, as already discussed, there was a Primitive Methodist chapel at

¹⁴⁵ HRO, 127M94/69, 9 June 1920, 29 July 1925.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 19 July 1926.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 9 March 1921, 26 October 1921, 15 March 1923, 23 October 1923.

¹⁴⁸ HRO, 127M94/62/27, 45, 59.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 9 June 1920, 11 March 1925.

Swarraton which had an active Sunday school, but with progressively declining membership and income after the war; presumably related to the fortunes of the chapel itself. The Primitive Methodists had also prospered in the early twentieth century in Ropley with large congregations, a strong choir, a flourishing Sunday school and warm fellowship. The dissenters sought to take advantage of the challenges the parish church faced when it was closed for restoration and when it struggled for financial support to maintain the National school; the Anglican growth was in Four Marks, a geographically distinctive part of the parish. However, this chapel also fell into difficulty as members died or moved away, and closure was actively considered before concerted efforts were made to reinvigorate the fellowship¹⁵⁰. Following the Methodist Union of 1932 the Wesleyans and Primitives formally combined in New Alresford in 1935 and, after the difficulties of amalgamation, it was reported that the ‘united church was getting on very well and it was hoped that still further progress would be made’. Whatever the benefits were they were not immediately financial; a deficit of almost £12 was reported in 1936. The new trustees included a caretaker, matron, dairyman, grocer, farmer, builder and shop assistants; whilst they had some appeal, this was not the church of the social elite, nor was it entirely local; the majority of the trustees came from London, Medstead, Winchester, Chandlers Ford and the surrounding villages, not from Alresford¹⁵¹.

But beyond any limited positive signs it seemed that the fundamental weaknesses of Nonconformity remained; they lacked financial means, they lacked senior social sponsorship, they lacked critical mass and they were prone to disagreement. The Congregationalist church in Alresford illustrates this: it was also responsible for the chapel

¹⁵⁰ HRO, 79M72/NMS73; Davidson 49, fos. 434-6; NS/7/1/10532; HRO, 27M82/PP1, 8, 36; HRO, 27M82/PZ7.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

in Cheriton which was built in 1862 and regularly ran at a financial deficit. The connection created tension. The chapel at Cheriton owned a cottage, which had required considerable repair, and two thirds of the rents from this were due to Alresford in return for conducting services and providing pastoral support. However, neither congregation had the critical mass to make this arrangement viable and the distance of four miles between the communities was an added complication¹⁵². The church struggled to pay an appropriate stipend, to provide accommodation and transport and to meet the suggested war bonus and removal expenses; as a result tenure was often short. This in turn led to a difficult relationship with the Hampshire Congregational Union. Grants and aid were frequently requested but rarely met in full. It caused an exasperated Reverend Archer, at the end of his ministry, to bitterly complain that the Executive Committee were laymen, generally businessmen, who seemed to be focused on ‘materialism’ and value for money, and that ‘where that predominated the highest spiritual condition of communities could never be reached’¹⁵³. Finances deteriorated to such an extent that by the end of 1930 it was predicted that the church should be ‘practically bankrupt’ with nothing left by the end of January 1931 to carry on its work; a special meeting was called on 7 September 1933 ‘owing to the grave financial position of the church’ and the projected financial deficit in 1937 was, in the view of the pastor, ‘quite unsatisfactory’¹⁵⁴.

The financial struggles arose partly because the Congregationalists still lacked senior social sponsorship. As it was, their finances were substantially underwritten by the Crockford family, local builders and furniture makers. Albert and Alan Crockford were both deacons and without their regular financial support the church may not have survived.

¹⁵² HRO, 127M94/69, minutes 1917-1922.

¹⁵³ Ibid., minute 29 July 1925.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., minutes 12 November 1930, 7 September 1933, 28 October 1937.

They donated two new stoves; loaned money for the pipe organ; funded the Christmas tree and tea for the Sunday school; settled the outstanding coal account and contributed to other unpaid bills. Mr Crockford also paid for the repairs to the chapel cottage, met the Union's request for a contribution, paid for the painting, varnishing and colouring of the schoolroom, vestry and church entrance and made another substantial donation to add to the proceeds from a sale of work¹⁵⁵. The chapel was very dependent on the whole family; when Mrs Crockford was ill and unable to mobilise the ladies for the church bazaar no one else stepped in and the event had to be cancelled¹⁵⁶.

Such challenges led to tensions as the Congregationalists came under pressure to compromise their independence and autonomy in return for financial security. Unease at the insistence of the County Union that they retain oversight for Cheriton came to a head when Reverend Archer's health declined as a result of the travelling required to serve the scattered congregation and he was forced to offer his resignation. Against their minister's advice members resolved to write to the County Union secretary and point out that 'if the work of the Alresford Church and the Free Church work of the town was to be done effectively it was desirable that our minister should be relieved of the oversight and responsibility of Cheriton'¹⁵⁷. There were then disagreements about how much to pay their new minister and the respective contributions of Alresford, Cheriton and the Union; deadlock ensued and after various votes Mr Woodward had to retire from the meeting to ensure a unanimous vote to invite Reverend Newman to lead them under the financial

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 15 January 1923, 2 December 1926, 13 January 1927, 10 January 1928, 30 April 1934, 13 January 1936, 24 February 1937, 13 December 1937.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 17 April 1929.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 18 June 1925, 2 and 29 July 1925.

terms imposed by the Union¹⁵⁸. The distance to Cheriton resurfaced as an issue in 1930; due to ill health the pastor found it impossible to continue to walk there and a request was made for a grant from the Union ‘for some kind of conveyance for our pastor’. The pastor, however, wanted to resign rather than place this financial burden on the church. The controversy continued as the members insisted on allocating some of the funds raised from the annual church bazaar to purchase a car for the minister’s use¹⁵⁹. The decision, whilst well intentioned, imposed an impossible financial burden. In response the church was forced to seek amalgamation with the chapel at Medstead to share resources and spread costs. The decision was controversial and within four weeks Mr Albert Crockford resigned as both a deacon and member of the church, although he did agree to retain his sitting¹⁶⁰. The car, which had to be replaced, was now definitely required but deciding who paid what towards capital and running costs was highly contentious and a huge commitment. Frosty letters were exchanged. Medstead refused to help with expenses in the short term and pointedly wrote that ‘If another car required in future ... [we] expect to be consulted before a purchase or exchange was made’. Alresford replied that they would now have to borrow to meet the expenses and ‘on the part of a Christian Church we felt this [Medstead’s response] most deplorable’¹⁶¹. The church survived but everything was difficult; they went from the relative optimism of the 1920s under Archer to really struggling by the 1930s. The congregation debated ‘how to beef up the interest of the church and bind the people together’ but the critical mass was lacking and some stayed away when the pastor was not present. As they explained to the Union there was a

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 1, 19 and 29 July 1926, 26 August 1926.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 10 January 1930, 4 June 1930.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 20 May 1931, 1 and 18 June 1931, 14 and 22 July 1931.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 21 September 1933.

‘Limited number of workers ... very heavy duties generally fell on the few’¹⁶². The Nonconformists in Alresford were not able to take advantage of the waning influence of the Church of England; they actually faced similar challenges themselves. Hastings argues that, nationally, the impression given by Free Churches in the early twentieth century was one of great confidence, growing numbers and increased wealth¹⁶³ and that at their heart was a refusal to be dictated to in matters of religion by the state, by bishops or by the rich and powerful of any sort¹⁶⁴. In Alresford, still in the Anglican shadow, they had neither growing numbers nor increased wealth and the lack of both created a dependence on others within their denomination.

As well as combining churches, the Nonconformists also pursued a degree of ecumenical cooperation as part of their response to creeping indifference and secularisation. Unity was strength when numbers and finances were under pressure. Bebbington argues that evangelical unity was broken in the 1920s as sharp divisions in doctrine and attitude emerged after the First World War; but this was not readily apparent in Alresford¹⁶⁵. At the denominational level there were the first seeds of ecumenical advance, something which Hastings describes as ‘still in the 1920s something new, marginal and fluctuating’ until it came suddenly to centre stage in the thirties¹⁶⁶. The Congregationalist Reverend Roberts consulted with the Wesleyans and Primitive Methodists about using an empty house in West Street to brighten the evenings of the soldiers recently drafted into the town in 1917; plans to hold a united Free Church service in 1918 were agreed in principle but postponed because the Primitive Methodist minister was leaving the circuit and the Wesleyan was

¹⁶² Ibid., 19 July 1926, 18 June 1931, 14 October 1935.

¹⁶³ Hastings, *English Christianity*, p. 106.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 113.

¹⁶⁵ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 181-228.

¹⁶⁶ Hastings, *English Christianity*, p. 302.

indisposed; every effort was made to avoid clashing harvest thanksgiving services amongst the churches, and Wesleyan, Primitive and Baptist ministers were all invited to a meeting to plan the Congregationalist church anniversary¹⁶⁷. The new Baptist minister was invited to speak at the following anniversary service and, in an act of sensitivity, the Congregationalists refused to ask Mr Small, a Wesleyan, to be their chapel keeper because his attendance at services might have caused him to sever his connection with the Methodists¹⁶⁸. When Reverend Archer announced his intention of organising a united mission between the three Nonconformist churches of the town he held off when he found that the Wesleyans were already planning something similar¹⁶⁹. In October 1929 Reverend Ridley from the Primitive Methodists suggested a united communion service once every six months, rotating between the two churches, which was unanimously accepted; the Primitives were given permission to use the Congregational church in 1931; the newly united Methodists borrowed the church and organ again in 1936, meeting the costs of the organ blower and chapel keeper; and as an indication of improved relationships with their sister church at Medstead, the Congregationalists of Alresford resolved to attend the concert being held there by the Alton Methodist church in 1938¹⁷⁰. There were also references in the 1930s to ‘Brotherhood’ and ‘Sisterhood’ meetings seeking to hire the Methodist church hall. In some cases this was a Nonconformist ecumenical initiative¹⁷¹, although as early as 1924 the Anglican incumbent at Bishops Sutton had commented in the parish magazine on his hopes of forming a local branch to build on the excellent attendance at the recent ‘service for men’, suggesting it may have been viewed locally as

¹⁶⁷ HRO, 127M94/69, 22 November 1917, 2 January 1918, 21 August 1918.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 22 October 1919, 16 June 1920.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 14 September 1921, 26 October 1921.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 16 October 1929, 12 January 1931, 15 June 1936, 5 October 1938.

¹⁷¹ HRO, 79M72/NMS13, 5 October 1936, 24 February 1937.

more non-denominational¹⁷². Such ecumenical cooperation among the Free Churches did not readily extend to the Anglicans. In his return to visitation enquiries in 1931 the Reverend Robertson of New Alresford, in answer to the question about parish visiting, explained that he had visited all his parishioners once and had also visited newcomers and the sick and other faithful from time to time; his response, however, concluded ‘Don’t usually visit Nonconformists unless there is special reason for it’¹⁷³. Mr Robertson was probably showing respect for those committed to other denominations but the effect was still a failure to engage with his Protestant neighbours. At the St John’s PCC meeting on 8 May 1939 members considered a paper entitled ‘Problems of Re-union’; it was the outline of a re-union scheme issued by a joint conference of representatives of the Church of England and the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches¹⁷⁴. We cannot be sure from the minutes how much of the discussion was devoted to the opportunities rather than the problems, or even whether any viewed closer cooperation as a necessity if the decline in Christian influence and church attendance was to be arrested.

But if ecumenical cooperation did not feature highly on the Anglican agenda, either because they were excluded by the Free Churches or ignored it themselves, it would be wrong to suggest that the decline in attendances and loss of influence outlined in this chapter went unchallenged. The trend was actively resisted, not entirely without success. The population of the Four Marks district in the parish of Ropley increased rapidly and, counter to the earlier tendency for a higher church style of worship, the evangelical Anglican mission church there grew alongside it; there were increases in Easter and regular communicants, confirmation candidates, Sunday school attendances and the

¹⁷² HRO, 42M78/PZ12, October 1924.

¹⁷³ HRO, 21M65/B4/8; New Alresford.

¹⁷⁴ HRO, 45M83/PP2, 8 May 1939.

amounts raised for overseas mission¹⁷⁵. By 1937 the church had a healthy balance on its main financial account and also had £86 on deposit; £26 in its school account and over £128 in a New Church Building Fund. There was a children's service every week. They supported the Jerusalem Mission, Winchester Hospital, CMS, SPG, Waifs & Strays and the UMCA. Congratulations on their progress frequently came from Ropley PCC¹⁷⁶.

Although the parish church itself in Ropley was struggling, a bequest in 1934 enabled the creation of a Coffee Room to be used as a social space by the men and boys of the village on winter evenings, as well as being a venue for Sunday school, Mothers Union and Boys Brigade meetings. The church was at the heart of the management of this charity; the trustees were the Diocesan Board of Finance; the vicar was an original member of the management committee and all other members were elected annually by the PCC; the church still had a central role to play¹⁷⁷. The parishioners of Ovington received a huge boost when Mr Elton, late of Ovington Park, left £1,000 in trust in 1921 to be invested for the benefit of the church. The initial distribution immediately covered various churchyard expenses and enabled them to increase payments to the organist, clerk, sexton, cleaner and organ blower; in future it generated an additional income of £50 per annum¹⁷⁸. Henry Dutton of Hinton House in Hinton Ampner was a JP and still the rector's churchwarden at the age of 85. His family were the major financial supporters of the church and he donated half an acre of land in 1931 to extend the churchyard, and also provided the fence, gateway and shrubs¹⁷⁹. Not only did the local Church of England still have support from the wealthy, it also retained some connections with the social elite; Lord Templemore was a

¹⁷⁵ HRO, 21M65/B4/10; Ropley.

¹⁷⁶ HRO, 27M82/PP8; HRO, 27M82/PP9; HRO, 27M82/PP36; HRO, 27M82/PZ1; HRO, 27M82/PP2, 14 January 1924, 13 January 1927, 17 January 1928.

¹⁷⁷ [Charities], HRO, 27M82/PK1; HRO, 27M82/PP33.

¹⁷⁸ HRO, 32M69/PP1, 3 October 1921.

¹⁷⁹ HRO, 40M80/PP1, 24 February 1931, 16 March 1931.

major landowner in Bighton and churchwarden at Old Alresford; Lady Edith Capper hosted the Bramdean Sunday school and her husband Major General Sir John Capper served on the PCC along with Major Tahourdin and Captain Heyman; Sir Francis Lindley and Lady Hadow were financial supporters of St Mary's in Old Alresford¹⁸⁰. The links may not have been as extensive or tight as they once were but right up until the 1930s many senior members of society, those with wealth, rank and position, still associated themselves publicly with the Church of England. Local Nonconformity simply did not command the same support.

There were also examples of resilient and determined leadership by the clergy. In the tiny parish of West Tisted, with a population of 125, Victor Duncan increased the acts of communion by 17 per cent between 1928 and 1930, consistent with the changes noted above in Alresford and Ropley. He also administered the Eucharist in the homes of the sick; persisted with a daily service (with an average attendance of three) and, as already discussed, claimed that a large proportion of the adult population attended evensong and that the spiritual and social needs of the parish children were well catered for by himself and his wife. Reverend Duncan previously held a city parish and did everything he could to raise interest and increase membership; he encouraged the congregation to participate in church music, invited intercession requests, evangelised by lantern services and asked his flock to submit questions on their lent course in a question box which he then answered the following Sunday from the pulpit¹⁸¹. The parish magazine at Old Alresford suggested a church in the 1920s and 1930s still playing an active part in a strong community with reports of a men's club, League of Youth, needlework group and family services; there

¹⁸⁰ *Kelly's*, 1931, p. 67; HRO, 43M74/PP2, 1934; HRO, 21M65/B4/10, Hinton Ampner with Bramdean; HRO, 1M77/PP1, 28 April 1926;

¹⁸¹ HRO, 21M65/B4/8; West Tisted.

was recognition that the future of the church lay in its youth and that the success of children's services lay in talking to them in understandable language to get them interested and engaged. In a sign of ecumenical cooperation, every effort was made to include the children from the Primitive Methodist orphanage in all the Sunday school and village treats and activities¹⁸². There were signs of post war resilience in New Alresford as well. Income and expenditure at St John's increased almost five fold between the start of the war and 1923; offertories went up by two thirds; in 1923 over £130 was pledged as part of the FWO scheme; sales of work raised significant sums and large amounts were pledged to support charitable offerings. Adult confirmations became more acceptable and frequent: Mabel Kingdon (age 58, 1926), Sam Whitehead (57, 1929), Mary Ann Todd (69, 1931) and Jane Baker (73, 1933); there were many others. Between 1924 and 1939 there were on average 16 new confirmations per year at St John's¹⁸³. This was a steady flow of new 'members' even if they did not translate into regular attendance; evidence of Davie's 'believing without belonging' after the Second World War¹⁸⁴. Reverend Robertson even continued the struggle on education. As already discussed, he taught the children of church parents in a purpose built off-site classroom two mornings a week, but he reported to the bishop in 1931 that he was also endeavouring to get access to the secondary school to provide a similar service, despite opposition from the head teacher¹⁸⁵.

In 1887 an account of the celebrations at Old Alresford to mark Queen Victoria's golden jubilee appeared in the *Hampshire Chronicle*. Virtually the whole community gathered in front of the schools and processed, accompanied by a band, past the village green to the

¹⁸² HRO, 43M74/PZ5-19; for example, PZ5(4); PZ5(5); PZ6(1).

¹⁸³ HRO, 45M83/PI13. Occasionally addresses appear outside the parish; some services were also held at Old Alresford or Winchester Cathedral.

¹⁸⁴ Davie, *Believing without Belonging*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁸⁵ HRO, 21M65/B4/8; New Alresford.

parish church. After an appropriate service and sermon from the rector, a large party assembled on the rectory meadow where 320 sat down to a dinner presided over by the rector Sir Frederick and Lady Currie. The rector gave the closing speech and proposed the loyal toast, followed by an afternoon and evening of sports, music and dancing. The committee organising the event comprised most of the village notables, including former churchwardens, and was chaired by the rector. The whole community came together and the church was at the heart of everything: the rector chaired the committee, led the service, preached the sermon, gave the speech, proposed the toast and hosted the dinner and entertainment which was held in the rectory. The event produced funds for the parish and resulted in a new clock in the church tower; a good time was had by all and it seems reasonable to assume that the event cemented the position of the church at the heart of the established social order in the eyes of those present¹⁸⁶. Some fifty years later attendances had dwindled, finance was more problematic, the state had taken over significant responsibilities for education, charity and welfare, and local government had a secular feel. It is harder to imagine the church being quite so central to such a major community event at the end of our period. In Peter Laslett's phrase, the article depicted 'the world we have lost'. Green locates the start of *The Passing of Protestant England* in the 1920s¹⁸⁷. The lack of sufficient meaningful attendance data between 1899 and 1931 makes it difficult to be that precise, but it seems reasonable to conclude that the evidence from this study is broadly consistent with a picture of early twentieth-century decline; attendances dwindled at an accelerating rate, the Church's liturgical response was ineffective, Church day schools closed, Sunday school attendance fell behind the national average, and the clergy largely vacated the various forms of local government after 1925. The liturgical and

¹⁸⁶ HRO, 43M74/PI1; article from the *Hampshire Chronicle*.

¹⁸⁷ Green, *Passing of Protestant England*, pp. 310-15.

sacramental response, whilst initially attractive to many, may actually have contributed to longer term decline. More was seemingly expected of those who came; greater commitment and participation were required, which may have discouraged some from attending at all. Institutional focus shifted internally to fund-raising and the preferences of the existing core rather than reaching out to those on the periphery. In cementing its appeal to the committed, the church may have shut itself off from potential newcomers. The Church of England still managed; it still commanded loyalty from some of the social elite and it still, somehow, found money when it needed it. But how dispiriting it must have been for the rector and PCC at St John's in New Alresford in January 1937; having spent two years working hard to raise £486 to restore the church bells, putting on whist drives, fetes and concerts, and having arranged for the bishop to dedicate them at a thanksgiving service, they received two months later a letter from a solicitor on behalf of a parishioner complaining about the excessive ringing of those same church bells¹⁸⁸. The nature of faith had changed; many no longer felt the need to express it through physical attendance at Sunday worship and there was a growing expectation gap between clergy and parishioners. Reverend Geldert, who had taken over at Ropley in 1916, expressed it thus: 'The difficulty of getting people to attend church is ever present. They come in large numbers on special occasions, but attendance on ordinary Sundays leaves much to be desired'¹⁸⁹. But Nonconformity suffered from the same challenges of secularisation and indifference; it had lost the energy it derived from discrimination and failed to close the gap. The established Church, with its ancient roots in the very fabric of the nation, was resilient, particularly in Alresford. Knight argues that between 1800 and 1870 the Church nationally moved from a uniquely privileged relationship with the state, one in which the two were bound closely

¹⁸⁸ HRO, 45M83/PP1; HRO, 45M83/PP2, 11 January 1937.

¹⁸⁹ HRO, 21M65/B4/10, Ropley.

together, to being one denomination among many, albeit still the most powerful one¹⁹⁰. In Alresford the deep bases of Anglican strength, manifest in the 1851 census, ensured that, despite legislative and structural changes, the tight nexus between the local church and parish elites did not break until the 1920s. The Church of England remained throughout our period the dominant denomination; it remained the 'first among equals'.

¹⁹⁰ Knight, *Nineteenth-Century Church*, p. 1.

VI CONCLUSION

It seems likely that the parishes of the Alresford registration district would have appeared ideal to the post-Reformation Church of England; settled, stable, compliant and loyal, with an established Church accepted by the community and very much at its heart. These parishes represented the rural, agricultural country, mostly located in the south, which the national Church was structured to serve; and they would not have been untypical. Three hundred years later this world had changed, but the Church of England had not kept pace. The twin forces of the Industrial Revolution and Evangelicalism brought urbanisation, modernisation and new methodologies. An expanded population increasingly coalesced around urban areas in which the Church was poorly represented and the break-up of traditional communities centred on the squire and parson starved the Church of England of much of its natural constituency. But while the relationship between church and community fundamentally altered in many parishes, in Alresford it remained remarkably stable. This is not a case study of change; it is an examination of continuity, Anglican resistance and hegemony, although within this the nature of Anglicanism itself changed as expectations were raised and focus shifted from the wider community to those who already 'belonged'. The central issue is not why Alresford was as it was, but rather why Alresford did not change as much (or as quickly) as many other places did. I have argued that the basis for this longevity was the significant financial resources of the church; its central role in the provision of charity, welfare and education; the reinvigorated pastoral care of a hard-working, committed and well-connected clergy and, by contrast, the lack of any local senior social sponsorship for Nonconformity. Underpinning everything was a particularly tight connection between church and parish elites which meant that the Church of England, and its interests, were well represented in local government, leisure, recreation and

practically all aspects of communal life. Collectively these factors combined to delay change and preserve the distinctly Anglican nature of the town and district. It was not until after the First World War when, eventually, alongside the major social upheaval of the age, economic depression, the birth of the welfare state and the diminution of the Church's role in education, the Church lost much of its social relevance; only then did the local nexus break, finance became harder to raise, the clergy withdrew from local government and the decline in attendance at public worship accelerated. To some extent this breakdown was a consequence of generational change. The fear of denominational rivalry, implicitly apparent for much of the nineteenth century, was replaced by the harsh reality of indifference. Whilst it is hard to be precise or definitive, this study lends *some* support to those who argue that the fundamental decline in the influence and standing of the established Church did not occur until the second quarter of the twentieth century; that *The Passing of Protestant England* articulated by Green had its origins around then.

However, there are many respects in which this research could be extended to make a fuller contribution to the historiography. Space restrictions have meant that this is not a comparative study and I have not suggested that Alresford is typical or representative; often the opposite. Such analysis would facilitate any meaningful extrapolation. The study could be extended by comparing Alresford to neighbouring market towns in Hampshire of a similar size, such as Alton or Bishops Waltham; or to the larger cities of Winchester, Southampton or Portsmouth; or to other neighbouring rural districts which were also distinctive Anglican strongholds in 1851, such as Droxford. Extension in any of these geographic areas would enrich the conclusions drawn from the thesis. Similarly, the timespan of the study, which is already broad, currently stops before both the Christian revival of the 1950s suggested by Brown and the collapse of the 'Swinging Sixties' argued

for by both Brown and McLeod. Continuing the study through to the 1970s would enable these theses to be tested against the data available for this Anglican stronghold. In one other later respect, too, the work could be enhanced. In terms of the marginalisation of religion (essentially Anglicanism) from the centre of public life and the waning of personal religious commitment, this case study provides clear evidence of ‘secularisation’, albeit deferred and resisted. What it does not consider is the extent to which this actually represents a rejection of ‘institutional religion’, and that personal belief, Davie’s ‘Believing without Belonging’, persists in the post-war period in a less identifiable and tangible form.

This research adds to the historiography by providing a case study of a distinctive Anglican area in rural, southern England, distinguishable from any studied to date in the context of this issue; but there remains much to be done to improve our scholarly understanding of one of the most fundamental developments of modern times.

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