

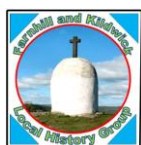
Chapter 7 – The Problems of the Church (c. 1580 – 1640)

1. Elizabethan times

The first vicar to be appointed after the 1565 visitation had purged Oxford of all its Roman Catholic fellows and turned Christ Church into the most puritan college in the entire university was Alexander Horrocks.¹ One side effect of the Elizabethan reforms was that they created a chronic temporary shortage of ministers who could preach, so all the colleges at both Oxford and Cambridge found it necessary to look outside their walls for incumbents. Horrocks was therefore a typical product of the time. He was a puritan but not apparently a University graduate.

Horrocks soon realised that he would have to tread carefully. In the year of his arrival it was noted that someone unnamed had kept 'monuments of superstition', so that they would not fall victim to the iconoclasts² and there is a tradition that the stone altar table in the North chapel is the one that graced the high altar in pre-Reformation times. The chapel also contained other elements that hinted at a residual Catholicism. As late as 1621 Roger Dodsworth noted two memorial windows there. In the east window were the figures of a man and woman kneeling. Behind the father were ten sons and behind the mother four daughters with the inscription 'pray for William Scarbrough, armiger, and Alice, his wife and their children who have had this window made.' John Scarbrough had been Dame Margaret Blaid's chaplain and the family was influential in both Glusburn and Cowling. On the north side of the chapel was a window containing another family group with an inscription asking the viewer to pray for Peter Scott, (who held two thirds of the manor of Kildwick in the 1530s,) his parents, his wife and their sons and daughters. Prayers for the dead of this sort were anathema as a relic of the doctrine of purgatory, which all Protestants rejected.³ Echoes of these beliefs can be heard in the 1586 visitation where the churchwardens accused John Garforth of 'being willed to hold his peace during prayer time, would not and he says that it is lawful to pray for the dead and that children unbaptised shall not have so full a part in heaven as they that are baptised.' It is noted that he recants the part about prayers for the dead and has been discharged after being admonished to behave more reverently.⁴

The chancel and choir also retained relics of the past. Dodsworth noted that in the east window there was the figure of an ecclesiastic in a gown (probably the habit of a canon of St. Augustine) kneeling before the figure of Christ. A scroll identified him as Robert Whixley, vicar of Kildwick who had it installed in 1533. The Church Recorders have identified three different Tudor styles of woodwork adorning the back of the sanctuary and the sides of the sanctuary, chancel and choir. The oldest is probably pre-Reformation and is best represented in the door of the present choir vestry, which may well have been originally the entry to the old quire.



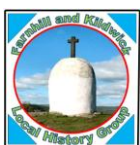
Even the nave had its echoes of the past. The preservation and use of the magnificent 15th century font cover, reputedly brought from Bolton Priory at the time of its dissolution, could be easily justified as baptism was one of the two sacraments still accepted by Protestants but it still spoke to an older generation who could meditate on the symbols of Christ's passion around the late medieval font itself while the ceremony was being performed.

Horrocks was probably a local man. He married Ann Curren, the 3rd daughter of Henry Curren of Hamblethorp as his 2nd wife, which suggests that he may have been related to the Rev. E. Horrocks, who married the widow of the same Henry Curren. Another possible relation was the vicar of neighbouring Broughton, another Christ Church parish, the Rev. Thomas Horrocks, but that would have been a connection Alexander would have been reluctant to acknowledge. Thomas was inducted in 1557 when the college was still controlled by the Roman Catholics. He had been prosecuted by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners at York for unlicensed preaching and exorcism and subsequently for suspicion of immorality and claiming to recover stolen goods by witchcraft, echoes of a Bingley case of 1508 and perhaps a foretaste of what was to come.⁵

The need to persuade his parishioners to make a complete break with the past was not the only problem that Horrocks faced. In Whixley's time the vicar had a cantor to assist him at Kildwick and three chaplains scattered round the parish, who helped him in administering it and providing pastoral care. All these men had disappeared and he now found himself entirely dependent on lay assistance – a parish clerk and a sexton to look after the church and churchwardens representing each of the townships. Worse still the manor of Kildwick previously owned by Bolton Priory had been sold on its dissolution to two Halifax clothiers, Thomas Drake and Richard Wilkinson. The sale did not affect St. Andrew's directly but it left the parish church without any glebe at all, so Horrocks was exposed to the full force of the inexorable rise in prices. A later case brought in 1683 suggested that he had made no effort to have the tithe agreement of 1539 updated because it would have increased the amount of tithes he himself would have had to pay, which suggests that he had another source of income perhaps through his Curren in laws.⁶ The issues of an insufficient stipend and a divided parish may well have been at the root of the problems which afflicted it after the death of Horrocks in 1588.

The next vicar was the Rev. Hugh Newbury. By this time the supply of qualified graduates had filled the gap created by the 1565 reforms. Now all Christ Church livings were filled by university graduates usually from Christ Church itself. Newbury was a typical example. He went up to Christ Church in 1573, graduated BA in 1578 and MA in 1582. He then spent six years at Cambridge before accepting the living at Kildwick. He remained there for only six years resigning in September 1593.⁷ Reading between the lines it seems likely that his decision to seek pastures new may have been related to his impending marriage and the belief that the Kildwick living was insufficient to support a family.

His designated successor was the Rev. John Lant. He may have been the son of Bartholomew Lant, the organist at Christ Church, a supposition strengthened by John's first connection with the college being as a chorister. He then received his education at Westminster School, before returning as an under graduate in 1572, gaining his BA in 1576 and his MA in 1579.



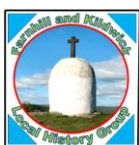
Lant came, he did not like what he saw, and left after only four months. Newbury was still there preparing for his marriage to Maria Hole, which took place in Kildwick Church in January 1594, and he may have agreed to stay on until a replacement was found. Sadly the marriage did not last long because he appears to have died later in the year.⁸

The next vicar was the Rev. John Hicks. Like Lant he was a product of Westminster School. He went up to Christ Church in 1583, graduating BA in 1586 and MA in 1589.⁹ He must have been a considerable scholar because in the same year he was appointed lecturer in Greek. He seems to have been persuaded to accept the Kildwick living because he was simultaneously made Vicar of Carleton, which increased his income. Nonetheless he was presented by the Kildwick churchwardens at the 1596 visitation for non-residence.¹⁰ This may have been partly due to studying for a degree in Divinity which he obtained in 1596 and neglecting to obtain a license to preach until 1597. He resigned in 1599, becoming Rector of Whitburne, in county Durham and eventually a Canon of York Cathedral in 1615.¹¹

Hicks was followed by Henry Bradshaw, who described himself as of county Radnor, gent. After sampling Lincoln and Jesus colleges, he settled down at Christ Church, graduating in 1584 and obtaining his MA in 1587. He took an instant dislike to Kildwick. The administration of the living was confided to a curate, William Harrison, while he continued to reside at Oxford. This unsatisfactory arrangement only lasted eight months, Bradshaw resigning as vicar in November 1600.¹²

Kildwick's last Elizabethan vicar was Thomas Chatfield. He was born in Hampshire around 1564, the son of a cleric and went up to Christ Church in 1581 aged 17. He graduated BA in 1586 and took his MA in 1589 when he was made lecturer in dialectic. His first parochial appointment was as Vicar of Budworth in Cheshire but he only stayed there briefly, returning to Oxford to take his Bachelor of Divinity degree. He was instituted Vicar of Kildwick on 15 April 1601.¹³ Like Hicks he was only persuaded to accept by being preferred to another vicarage at the same time, in this case, Broughton. As William Harrison was retained as curate-in-charge at Kildwick it seems likely that Chatfield resided at Broughton. This arrangement may have been due to a belief that his presence there was needed to counter the influence of the Roman Catholic Tempest family in its parish. Chatfield's ministry was brief because he died in 1603, aged around 39, after only two years in charge.

In the circumstances the surprise must be, not that the visitations show that some people were failing to attend church services regularly, but that there were not more of them. The 1586 and 1590-1 visitations each note five individuals who did not communicate at Easter but those for 1594-5, 1596 and 1600 are without lists of non-attenders. Even Edmund Eltofts was cited for suspected incontinence with his housekeeper, Margaret Duckett, not for being a Roman Catholic.¹⁴

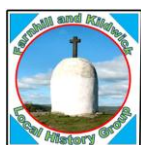


By 1590 the Church of England was far more worried about radical sectaries than closet Roman Catholics, so we cannot assume that those who failed to attend were adherents of the old faith. Trouble had already been experienced with sectaries who wanted a more thorough going reformation and who were reluctant to accept the Anglican episcopal hierarchy. When John Wilson, the vicar of Skipton, another Christ Church living, was expelled from his parish in 1587 Horrocks allowed him to preach in Kildwick Church. Both men were summoned to appear before the Court of High Commission at York. Wilson admitted having refused to wear a surplice, leaving out some of the prayers and neglecting to make the sign of the cross in baptism, all typical radical puritan omissions, but he denied preaching without authority. When the Court established that Wilson was only licensed to preach at Skipton and when he refused to apologise for his actions he was imprisoned in York Castle. After vainly pleading that he allowed Wilson to preach at Kildwick, because he was born in the parish, Horrocks too joined him there. Both men were eventually released, Horrocks after making a public recantation and Wilson when he undertook not to preach again within the Archbishopric of York.¹⁵

2. The Reign of James I

The first Kildwick vicar of the new reign was the Reverend John Foote. Foote was born around 1565 in the county of Middlesex. He went up to Christ Church in 1585. He graduated BA in 1588 and was appointed a lecturer in dialectic the following year. He took his MA in 1591 and obtained a degree as Bachelor of Divinity in 1600. This was probably a preliminary to his appointment as Vicar of St. Mary, Magdalene in Oxford where he served as parish priest until 1603. He was presented to the parishes of Kildwick and Broughton on 20 April of that year and inducted as Vicar of Kildwick on 5 May.¹⁶ Foote seems to have been an absentee for the first three years of his incumbency, because William Harrison remained as Curate-in-Charge until his appointment as Vicar of Otley in 1606.¹⁷ Nevertheless he seems to have created a good impression and was popular with his congregation.

Imagining what the services were like in the early seventeenth century is very difficult because no descriptions of the interior of the church as it was at this period have survived. There would have been no main altar. The old quire would have been taken down and the middle of the chancel filled with pews. The tomb of Sir Robert de Stiverton occupied the space where the organ is now placed and on the opposite side was a mortuary chapel dedicated to the Spencer family of Malsis, otherwise we are in the dark about the church's internal arrangement. There was probably some accommodation for the officiating minister and there would have been a three-decker pulpit positioned usually on the north side, which would place it roughly where the present pulpit is sited. The parish clerk would have occupied the ground floor and the minister would have conducted the service from the middle level, only ascending to the top for his sermon.¹⁸ There was, of course, no rood screen at the crossing and there were no steps either, the floor level sloping gradually upwards. In Foote's time there would have been a communion table, probably placed length wise in the middle of the church.



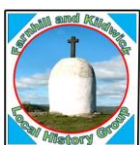
There would also have been placard sized copies of the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Creed placed prominently where the congregation could easily see them plus a copy of the Bible in English chained to a reading desk. When Foote arrived it would probably have been the Bishops' Bible of 1559 but during his tenure that would have been replaced by what is now known as the Authorised Version which was first issued in 1611.

What the seating was like is difficult to reconstruct because many of the dated pieces of wood actually come from dower chests and were inserted into the pews in the nineteenth century by the Rev. John Fawcett. What evidence we have suggests fairly solidly constructed pews, like the one dated 1624 in the North Chapel and the better off ones seem to have had doors to them. This is interesting because many churches of this time separated the men from the women which would have made family seating impossible. A pew door dated 1627 with the Scarbrough arms on it supports the present litany desk. Some even had a separate cage like family pew such as the one belonging to the Eltoft family dating from 1633 and now residing in the north chapel, which is a rather modest example of the genre. It and the pews of the important families would have been in the middle of the chancel facing the pulpit which was the centre of interest.

The Book of Common Prayer divided the service into roughly three parts – Prayer, Preaching and Communion. It is difficult for us today to grasp the impact that the Prayer Book service had. For the first time the congregation heard the Bible read to them in English, a language which they could understand. The prayers may have been of the set form rather than the extempore type favoured by the more rigid puritans but they were intelligible and became familiar through repetition each Sunday. The congregation was also expected to affirm its faith by reciting the Creed and the Lord's Prayer instead of remaining inert listening to the priest droning on in Latin.

The pre-Reformation choir disappeared but that did not mean that the services were without music. Calvinists would have objected to most of the hymns now in use because they insisted that the texts should be drawn from the Bible but they had no objection to metrical versions of the psalms. These were deliberately designed for congregational singing and the words were more important than the music. Out went the elaborate melismas of the old Roman Catholic Church. They were replaced by tunes, in which there was one syllable for each note, so that what was being sung could be understood both by the singer and the listener. The tunes were often deliberate adaptations of popular contemporary songs with the idea of trying to wean the congregation away from the secular texts.

The earliest were translations from the book used in Geneva by Calvin himself and the name Louis Bourgeois its editor figures as the author of a number of hymns still sung today, notably 'All People that on Earth do dwell'. Entirely English versions of all 150 soon followed. Kildwick would almost certainly have used the psalter of Sternhold and Hopkins. First issued in 1562 it became a best seller and soon eclipsed all its rivals. While organs were not unknown (Bradford had one) musical instruments were frowned on by strict puritans so the singing had to be unaccompanied. Kildwick had no instruments until 1750 and the organ was not installed until 1873.



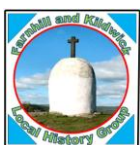
Outside cathedrals singing would have been in unison. It was usual for the parish clerk to give out the words two lines at a time and it helped if he was capable of setting the pitch at which the psalm was to be sung. There was a Scottish version edited by Thomas Ravenscroft where the melody was in the tenor part.

Preaching was more difficult because unlike the rest of the service it was not set so what you got depended entirely on the preacher. Good ministers were not always good preachers only the best were inspiring but most were capable of expounding a text from the reading for the day and making it relevant to those who heard them. Sermons were often the way the congregation learned of political events and ministers were sometimes hauled before the Court of High Commission when they became too critical of government policy. Books of sermons by the great preachers of the time circulated widely. Hugh Currey of Kildwick Hall for example possessed enormous volumes of printed sermons by both William Perkins the leading puritan preacher and of his rival, the Arminian, Lancelot Andrewes.

With a large and attentive congregation the result could provide a satisfying religious experience but as Alec Ryrie observes in his recent book 'the practicalities are worth noticing.' The noises: psalms, groans, and stray dogs and 'perhaps, God forbid, snoring; and the subtler noises the whispering and muttering as the minister or clerk straining to be heard in a cavernous building without microphones or hearing aids. Children who had not yet learned to conceal their boredom could add another layer. And then there were the smells. In summer cramming unwashed human bodies into a confined space had consequences, even in a less fastidious age.'

Winter could be rather different 'with shared bodily warmth being one of the attractions of church attendance. On a cold Sunday evening you might keep warm more cheaply and effectively in a solid stone building full of people than sitting at home watching your winter's fuel stock burn away.' Ambrose Fisher wrote that 'the variable delight which cometh by hearing, singing and answering' was the chief attraction of the Prayer Book service. His opinion, that this was one of its great strengths, is confirmed by the way it lasted largely unchanged for over 450 years.¹⁹

The third element of the service – Communion – did not share this popularity. Provision for its regular celebration was made in the Prayer Book and a simple musical setting soon appeared by John Merbecke (a particular favourite of my father, who was a church organist and choirmaster) but regular weekly Communion soon disappeared. Easter was the only time when the whole congregation took the bread and wine and even the most pious did not communicate more than four times a year, the other three being celebrated usually at Whitsuntide, Michaelmas and Candlemas. A number of reasons have been suggested for this decline. The first is simply habit. In the pre-Reformation church the Mass had been performed by the priest alone with the congregation taking no part in it except at Easter. The belief that Communion was something for the minister to celebrate not for them carried over into the post Reformation church. I commented in an earlier chapter that Lady Margaret Beaufort, the mother of Henry VII, who took the bread four times a year, was considered a most pious lady and this seems to have passed over into Anglicanism as a convenient yardstick.



Another reason was its positioning at the end of either Morning or Evening Prayer. Today in Common Worship the whole service of the Word and of Communion lasts approximately one hour. In the early seventeenth century the liturgical element alone took an hour and the minister would have come in for criticism if his sermon had not occupied another hour. After two hours the congregation would usually have had enough and even if the sermon had been received with enthusiasm the atmosphere would rarely have been conducive to the reflective nature of Holy Communion. Conscientious pastors also stressed the importance of proper preparation before receiving the bread and wine and warned that those who took part while unregenerate or not in love and charity with their neighbours could end up being completely damned. The 1586 visitation for instance reported that Hugh Smith, Agnes, his wife, and Jane Fox have not communicated since last Easter because they are not in charity with their neighbours 'and if they be reconciled they are willing to come if they are enjoined.' Such citations disappear from later Visitations. The net result was that the Communion element was largely abandoned.²⁰

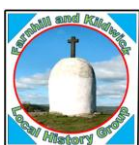
3. Arminians versus Puritans

In the United Provinces a split occurred in the Calvinist Church in the 1590s. The dissidents were led by Dr. Jacob Arminius whose teachings toned down the more forbidding of its doctrines such as predestination. This development coincided with the appearance of a new generation of divines in England, much influenced by Thomas Hooker's book, *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, still regarded as the foundation text of the Church of England today. Hooker taught that while scripture was still the most important element in belief, modifications introduced by church tradition had a place and changing political, social and economic conditions had also to be taken into consideration. The divines, who took advantage of these currents, used them to justify the 'divine right' of the King to be head of the church, the retention of an ecclesiastical hierarchy, modifications of the doctrine of predestination and a reassertion of the value of the sacraments.

James tried his best to temporise, patronising both Arminians and Calvinists in his church appointments but his death in 1625 brought a sharp change. The new King Charles I proved to be an enthusiastic supporter of the Arminians. In 1630 he had both Oxford and Cambridge purged of those with Puritan leanings and embarked on a policy of promoting only Arminians to bishoprics.

In 1628 Toby Mathew died to be replaced as Archbishop of York first by Thomas Harsnett and then in 1631 by Richard Neile, who was an even more zealous Arminian than William Laud, with whom the doctrines are usually associated. This sequence of events led to a break with the Calvinists, who dominated the House of Commons, so Charles resolved to try and rule without calling Parliament again which politicised the split.

Puritanism had struck deep roots in the parishes and digging them out in the West Riding proved difficult. In many of them the priest was non-resident and the congregations frequently preferred curates of a puritan cast of mind. Kildwick was typical and the course of events there shows the problems Archbishop Neile faced and how far he was successful in overcoming them.



Sixteen months elapsed after the death of Foote before Christopher White was presented to the parishes of Kildwick and Broughton on 13th June 1623. He was inducted as Vicar of Kildwick on 25 July. White was born in Worcestershire and was a graduate of Christ Church. He graduated BA in 1610, MA in 1613 and gained his Bachelor of Divinity degree together with his license to preach in 1621. He does not appear to have lived in Kildwick and resigned after only a year in 1624. This may have been because he got a better living as Vicar of Hainton in Lincolnshire but he did not stay long there either being appointed as Rector of Fyfield in Hampshire in 1626, moving later to Lethley in the same county where he died and was buried in 1637.²¹

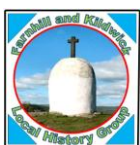
White was followed by the Rev. William Bennet, who was presented as Vicar of both Kildwick and Broughton on 19 November 1624. Two men of that name came up to Christ Church in the same year and both matriculated in 1611. The first was the son of Sir John Bennet of Yorkshire. He graduated BA in 1615 and MA in 1618. He was then entered at Gray's Inn in 1620 which indicates that he was having the customary education of someone who was expecting to inherit property, rather than a career in the church. Little is known of the other. Whichever one of the two it was he did not stay long resigning in 1627.²²

Bennet was followed by the Rev. John Gifford. He was born in Essex and went up to Christ Church in 1610 aged 15. He graduated BA in 1613, took his MA in 1616 and was made a Doctor of Divinity in 1619. He began his career with two curacies at Newnham and then Newton, both in Northamptonshire. He was inducted as Vicar of both Kildwick and Broughton either in late 1627 or early 1628 but he was non-resident, because in 1629 he was also made Rector of Eynesford in Kent. His connection with Kildwick ended in 1631 when he became the Rector of St. Michael's Bassishaw in London. Unlike his predecessors Gifford was an Arminian.²³

Gifford was succeeded by the Rev. Francis Little, Kildwick's last pre-Civil War vicar. He was born around 1596 in Berkshire. He went up to Christ Church in 1612 aged 16, graduated BA in 1615 and MA in 1618. He was closely identified with William, Lord Paget and he may have been his chaplain because at the 1632 Visitation he exhibited his qualification under the seal of Lord Paget and a dispensation of 1 July 1631 which allowed him to preach despite not having the degree of Doctor of Divinity. Like all his three predecessors he was non-resident and he was so anonymous that older church histories date his incumbency from 1660!²⁴ The result was that the parish was administered by curates for the whole period of 1622-40.

4. Roger Brearley

Roger Brearley was born in 1586, the fourth son of Thomas Brearley, a farmer at Marland in the parish of Rochdale, Lancashire. We hear of him first in 1615 as perpetual curate of Grindleton in the parish of Mitton, where he soon gained a reputation for infectious personal holiness with a pronounced mystical streak. This led to the foundation of a group within the Church of England known as the Grindletonians which believed that now faith had come to them, they were in a state of grace which allowed them to interpret the scriptures in their own way often termed Antinomianism.



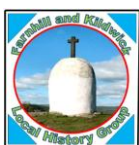
In 1617 Brearley was cited before the Court of High Commission at York for a whole string of offences. He was accused of not using the Book of Common Prayer and not receiving communion in his parish church. He had also preached without license at Gisburn in the absence of the vicar and had baptised a child there without making the sign of the cross. Evidence was then entered alleging breaches of the articles of faith and 50 erroneous propositions mostly connected with the Grindletonians.

Brearley was a member of a Craven group of ministers led by the Rev. Christopher Shute which met regularly, with the permission of Archbishop Mathew, to stimulate the study of the Scriptures and improve pastoral ministry. All the ministers in the group supported Brearley's contention that the propositions were those of a minority of extreme members of the Grindletonians which he repudiated. In the end the ministers' evidence was accepted and charges of heterodoxy were dropped but Brearley was found guilty of irregularities at Gisburn. He was forbidden to preach outside his chapelry without license and when he made a declaration to conform in future, the case against him was dropped and he was even excused payment of his costs.

The divisions within the chapelry of Grindleton made it undesirable that he should remain there. In 1618 he moved to the neighbouring chapelry of Waddington and then to Kildwick in 1622 which was hardly surprising because both Foote and Harrison had been among the Craven group of ministers called as witnesses in the 1617 case.

In 1627 as part of a general tightening up of the regulations Brearley was again called before the High Commission when it transpired that he had been holding conventicles, that is religious gatherings outside the church, and preaching outside Kildwick at Grindleton and elsewhere without license. There are no accusations presented this time of heterodox opinions and after promising that there would be no more conventicles and being banned from preaching outside Kildwick without license he was once more restored to his curacy. This time, however, he had to pay the costs of the hearing and the parish registers show that the churchwardens were obliged to accept new restrictive articles, which suggests that the congregation had seen nothing wrong in what he had been doing. He remained at Kildwick until 1631 when he accepted the living of Burnley in Lancashire.²⁶ The parish was a rectory which must have put him in possession of a much larger income and it was within the diocese of Chester whose bishop, Bridgeman, was a much milder character than Richard Neile, who had succeeded Harsnett as Archbishop of York in that year.

Brearley was replaced as curate by Samuel Wright. We have no information about him but he might have been related to the Adam Wright who appears to have been the perpetual curate of Haworth from 1607 to at least 1640.²⁷ This would be interesting if true because during the Civil Wars there were to be links between what happened in Kildwick and at Haworth.



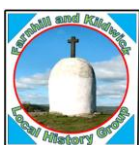
It was during Wright's curacy that Archbishop Neile conducted his Primary Visitation. It can hardly be a surprise that the vicar Francis Little was cited before it 'for suffering the vicarage house to be in decay' because he was not living in the parish. The position at Broughton was even worse. Not only was the vicarage house in decay, the chancel of the church was unpaved and the fences round the churchyard were not properly maintained. Little, as the vicar, was also rapped over the knuckles for Samuel Wright's failure to read prayers upon Wednesdays and Fridays except in Lent and together with the churchwardens for not going on perambulation.²⁸

Perhaps more striking are the omissions. There are no citations for failure to wear a surplice, or not making the sign of the cross in baptism or about the positioning of the altar, that figure in accounts of the disputes which Arminian innovation stirred up elsewhere. So it may well be that the communion table had been removed from the body of the church and an altar was once more placed at the east end within a railed off sanctuary. The woodwork at the east end is a mixture of Tudor and early seventh century styles and its arrangement in 1632 is uncertain. At the present time there is a screen in Tudor style across the entrance to the choir. This is an imitation erected in 1913 but it was a careful copy of an earlier screen taken down in 1897 which was placed across the chancel near the entrance to the present choir vestry, so it seems that much of the wood from the previous century had been preserved. The screen of the pre-Reformation quire would have been solid but this replacement had no rood and the elegant tracery allowed the congregation to see what was taking place. Inside it was the railed off sanctuary and pews for the vicar's family, for the owners of the manor of Kildwick in which the church lies, the farmer of the tithes and for the representative of the rector (i.e. Christ Church) should he care to attend. Ironically the change may have made the administration of the eucharist even more remote for most of the congregation than it had been before, with the celebration taking place in the misty distance beyond a screen and partly obscured by the pews inside it.

5. John Webster

We know little about the years Samuel Wright was the curate in charge but they must have been ones of considerable tension because his successor was John Webster. He was born in 1611 the son of Edward Webster of Thornton in the parish of Coxwold in the East Riding. He is said to have been to Cambridge but there is no record of his stay there. He was ordained by Dr. Thomas Morton, the Bishop of Durham in 1634 at the age of 24 and Kildwick was his first appointment. Morton was such a noted opponent of the Arminians that Archbishop Neile had a spy set on him.²⁹ Those who were responsible for Webster's appointment must have done what they did as an act of defiance of the authority of the Archbishop. What happened next therefore must be considered in the context of the disputes which were going on in the background.

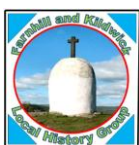
Belief in witches had been a feature of peasant life since pre-Christian times and generally was not treated as more than a venial sin by the Roman Catholic Church but cases seem to have mushroomed after 1450, reaching a peak during the sixteenth century and then declining steeply after 1650. The three most dramatic prosecutions in England were the two Pendle cases of 1612 and 1634 and the celebrated Chelmsford case of 1645.



In the second of the two Pendle cases a young boy of 12, Edmund Robinson, claimed that he had chanced upon a witches' gathering in Pendle forest. His evidence was no more than a rehash of the first case of 1612 but with the encouragement of the local magistrates, his father and others took him from church to church to 'detect' the witches he had seen. This was a blackmailing scam. Women who paid protection money were ignored, those who refused were fingered. One Sunday morning the boy and his supporters appeared in Kildwick church almost certainly at the invitation of the curate's critics. The inspirers of the visit by Robinson and his handlers may well have been the Scarbrough family. Roger Nowell, the magistrate, and the prosecutor of witches in both cases was Nicholas Scarbrough's father-in-law. If Webster's opponents had hoped that he would be embarrassed by having female supporters accused of witchcraft they were to be disappointed. As soon as Edmund and his handlers appeared Webster separated the boy from them and interrogated him alone, forcing him to confess to the fabrications.³⁰ The result was that the whole case against the witches collapsed. For this action alone Webster deserves to be remembered by those who worship in Kildwick Church today.

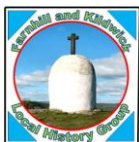
When Webster left Kildwick is not known. He may have been there as late as 1637 when he was cited before the Ecclesiastical Court for officiating at a clandestine marriage.³¹ Whether this was the reason for his departure is unclear because the Act Book covering the years 1634-8 is missing. His later account implies that there was a deliberate campaign to force him out. Writing in 1653 Webster attributed it to his conversion to the 'more spiritual religion' of Roger Brearley which took place 'about eighteen years ago' that is in 1635, he wrote – 'This no sooner appeared in me and others whom it pleased the Lord to reveal his son in, but the power of Babel in the ministers of Satan, transforming themselves into Ministers of Righteousness, then in Episcopal and Prelatical Form, poured forth all their malice and spite against the Truth, and against all those in whom it appeared: then throwing dire (sic), and hotly raging in persecution against us, in and under the terms of Puritans, Separatists, Grindletonians and Antinomians.' How times had changed. Doctrines which had been acceptable in 1617 were now outlawed.³²

By the time of the 1640 Visitation Hugh Curren was reading the works of Peter Heylin, the apologist of Archbishop Laud, and the parish had been more or less brought to heel. Complaints about the vicarage being decayed, the omission of reading the liturgy on Wednesdays and Fridays and the lack of perambulations have all disappeared. Who was conducting services, whether it was Little or yet another curate, we do not know but he was not always present because the churchwardens reported a Christopher Horne for reading part of Divine Service on a Sunday or Holy Day in the absence of the minister.³³ The same uneasy silence had fallen over neighbouring parishes. The vicar of Bradford, John Okell, who had sheltered his perpetual curates from criticism, had died and by 1640 the vicar was Francis Corker, a convinced Arminian. Richard Favour, for long the vicar of Halifax and a confidant of Archbishop Toby Mathew had died in 1629 and by 1638 the incumbent was Richard Marsh, a known supporter of Archbishop Neile.



Footnotes

1. Brereton 1909 pp53-5
2. Aveling 1963 p282
3. Whitaker p212
4. BI Visitation 1586 Craven f73v-f75r
5. Tyler Paul – York Witchcraft Prosecutions, Northern History IV p93 gives BI HC 6 f87v & 9 f203v as his source.
6. Gulliver, David – A South Craven History: The Tillotson Family and its Neighbours, Kiln Hill, p13
7. Christ Church Archivists Database (CCA)for members of Christ Church between 1525 and 1660 ID 001959 information supplied to me by Robin Greenwood: Book of Estates (BOE) p759. BOE p759 not mentioned in Brereton
8. CCA ID 001659 and Alumni Cantabrigensis
9. CCA ID 001353
10. Visitation Craven f45-6
11. CCA ID 001353
12. BOE pp746 and 759; Brereton 1909 p57; CCA ID 001017: for Harrison see Marchant 1960 p253
13. Brereton 1909 p57; BOE p746 & 759, CCA ID 000549
14. Visitation Craven 1590-1, f 268 and f270r
15. Dawson, W.H. – History of Independency in Skipton 1892 pp3-4; Marchant, Ronald – The Puritans and the Church Courts in the Diocese of York 1500-1642, 1960, pp255, 292
16. Alumni Oxoniensis; CCA Database ID 00107;BOE pp746 & 759 & Brereton p57. As in Chapter 6 I am indebted to Robin Greenwood for the references from the Christ Church CCA Database and the Book of Estates
17. Marchant p253
18. The estate church of St. Mary le Gill still retains its three-decker pulpit but I must admit that I never used the top deck for my sermons.
19. Ryrie, Alec – Being Protestant in Reformation Britain, OUP 2013 p328
20. BI Visitation 1586 Craven f73v-f75r



21. BOE pp746 and 759 CCA Database ID000298, Brereton pp58-9 and 108, Robertshaw, William, A Yorkshire Clergy List of the Seventeenth Century, Bradford Antiquary, New Series Vol. V (1933), p167.
22. BOE pp746 and 759, CCA Database ID000239
23. BOE pp746 & 759, Brereton pp58-9, Alumni Oxoniensis; CCA ID 001112
24. BOE pp746 & 759; Alumni Oxoniensis; CCA Database ID 001710, Exhibition Book 1632-3 f44 1 July 1631)
25. Marchant pp31, 40, 233-4, 245-8, 253, 257, 268, 278, 290, 292; David Foss – Grindletoniansim, YASJ 1995 p148-9
26. Marchant p40; a previous Kildwick curate William Harrison was among those prosecuted at the same time.
27. Baumber p46
28. Borthwick, Primary Visitation of Archbishop Neile, Craven f103r, 104v, 109v and 111v
29. Cust, Richard and Hughes, Ann (eds.) - Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics 1603-42, the essay by Andrew Foster on Church Policies in the 1630s pp211-2
30. Grindletonianism op. cit. p152
31. Marchant op. cit. p128
32. Marchant op. cit. p128
33. Craven Visitation 1640 f69-70

