

**Presentation given as part of
PADS module 14 June 2004**

Introduction (300)

[handout 'Barchester Extracts.doc' – (see page 5)]

If we can just have a look at the two short passages on the handout, can people tell me what strikes them about the subject, and if possible, identify the book and author? In fact, could you just read them both for us please _____?

Yes, indeed: they are very substantial sums of money, and both come from Anthony Trollope's *Barchester Towers*. By the way, I chose the picture of Salisbury Cathedral as it was apparently while sitting looking at it that Trollope was inspired to write the Barchester Chronicles.

Ecclesiastical Commission (240)

Although Barchester is a fictional city, [CLICK] the reforms of the Ecclesiastical Commission, a body founded by Prime Minister Robert Peel in 1835 [CLICK], were real and far-reaching. It was inevitable in a period following the reformation of British Parliament that other institutions would also be subject to scrutiny.

The first new legislation to be enacted was in 1836 and started at the top of church [CLICK]. It abolished the practice of holding a see along with livings that had an income but no duties associated with them. It created new Bishoprics in Manchester and Ripon and also new Archdeaconries. And Dr Grantly alludes to the equalisation of Episcopal income in the first extract we read.

[CLICK] Before this reform the diocese of Durham received around £19,000 per annum, whereas Llandaff only £924 [CLICK]; for comparison in today's terms they are [CLICK] £1.15 million and £56,000 respectively. The £5,000 [CLICK] that the Barchester see would receive was in line with the new legislation. This money would have to pay the cathedral clergy, and for the upkeep of all the buildings. These reductions explain

the reduced Bishop's stipend and the warden's revised income in the passages from *Barchester*.

[CLICK] [CLICK] After an initial flurry of legislation Cathedrals took the onus on themselves to address their roles within the religious life of the country. [CLICK] There followed the revision of individual Cathedral's statutes in line with [CLICK] recommendations from the Commissioners following surveys in the 1850s and 1880s.

The reforms had weakened the Cathedrals to allow the main focus of religious life to move from them to the Parish churches. It could be argued that Cathedrals are still suffering the effects of the reforms today, but at the time the legislation served to address what has been described as the corrupt state of the church.

Lichfield (210)

[CLICK] This Cathedral has been the shrine of St Chad since 672 [CLICK], and the current building pictured here dates from 1195 [CLICK]. It is one of nine secular Cathedrals [CLICK], and was categorised as an "old foundation" Cathedral by Henry VIII's reforms [CLICK]. Can anyone tell me where it is?

Indeed, it is Lichfield Cathedral [CLICK].

At old foundation cathedrals [CLICK], the junior clergy were incorporated into colleges of vicars choral in the late Middle Ages [CLICK]. This is unlike new foundation cathedrals where junior clergy were fully under the Dean and Chapters' auspices.

[CLICK] The colleges of Vicars Choral had their own property, endowments, rights and privileges [CLICK]. Because of this they formed a distinct corporation within Cathedral life [CLICK] and were often in dispute with the Dean and Chapter.

As an old foundation cathedral Lichfield had its own college of vicars choral (their seal is shown on the current slide). This body was no different: they were serious land owners, and were frequently arguing with the Dean and Chapter.

The Vicars Choral consisted of the Cathedral's minor canons and the men who sang at the daily services at the Cathedral. The corporation at Lichfield was formerly disbanded in 1934, [CLICK] nearly a century after the Ecclesiastical Commissioners had recommended abolishing the colleges. But the roles remain today and in Lichfield's most recent statutes drawn up after the Cathedrals Measures Act 1999 provision is made for the continuation of an enlarged Choral Foundation. [CLICK]

Me (230)

Having been part of the Choral Foundation in various guises since I was 6 (no, I'm thankfully not on that picture) I became interested in its colourful history a few years ago. [CLICK] [CLICK] I started doing some basic research into the former vicars choral, tracing the stalls' holders back [CLICK] and I currently have information from around 1800 published on a web site [CLICK].

It was because of this that my dissertation project seemed an obvious choice. I intend to look briefly at the causes behind the Acts passed by the Ecclesiastical Commission – looking at the state of Cathedral life in general at the start of the nineteenth century, and then consider the effect of the Acts on Lichfield Cathedral, with specific reference to the Corporation of Vicars Choral and the Cathedral Music. Although much ink has been expended on the Ecclesiastical Commission very little relates directly to Lichfield – something which, in my own little way, I hope to change.

To do this my primary sources are the Cathedral's Chapter Act books which contain reports, copies of letters, records of installations and dismissals, and mundane details about the daily life of the Cathedral.

The letters range from those written to the House of Lords objecting to new proposals by the Ecclesiastical Commission, to discussing new designs for the ordering of the Cathedral with the cathedral architect Sir George Gilbert Scott.

As a little digression, one of the more scandalous entries is concerned with the admonishment by the Dean and Chapter of a lay vicar (one of the

singers) who tried to convict both a friend and a relative of assault and robbery by means of *false evidence*, when the Dean and Chapter apparently *had too much reason to suppose the lay vicar not innocent and therefore highly reprehensible*.

[CLICK] The Act books are all meticulously hand-written, in various styles of copperplate script, and, although slightly out of focus, the photographs give a good idea of the bulk of the documents I will be dealing with over the next few months [CLICK].

I hope that gives a background to my project and explains my personal interest in it; but are there any questions [CLICK] please?

References & Bibliography

- Barrett, P (1993) *Barchester: English Cathedral Life in the Nineteenth Century*, London: SPCK
Economic History Resources – How much is that? (<http://eh.net/hmit/ppowerbp/>)
Lichfield Cathedral Chapter Acts Books 9 to 29 inclusive (1795 – 1985)
Lichfield Cathedral Web site (<http://www.lichfield-cathedral.org>)
Lichfield Cathedral Choir Web Site (<http://www.cathedralchoir.org.uk>)
Trollope, A (1996) *Barchester Towers*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Dr Grantly was his father's only child, and his father had left him great wealth. His preferment brought him in nearly three thousand a year¹. The bishopric, as cut down by the Ecclesiastical Commission, was only five². He would be a richer man as archdeacon than he could be as bishop. But he certainly did desire to play first fiddle; he did desire to sit in full lawn sleeves among the peers of the realm; and he did desire, if the truth must out, to be called 'My Lord' by his reverend brethren.

¹ £3,000 in 1835 has the spending power of approximately £180,000 today

² £5,000 in 1835 has the spending power of approximately £300,000 today; this would have to pay the Bishop and all of the cathedral canons

Mr Harding had come to tell his daughter that the place of warden in Hiram's Hospital was again to be filled up, and that in all probability he would once more return to his old home and his twelve bedesmen.

'But,' said he, laughing, 'I shall be greatly shorn of my ancient glory.'

'Why so, papa?'

'This new act of parliament, that is to put us all on our feet again,' continued he, 'settles my income at four hundred and fifty pounds³ per annum.'

'Four hundred and fifty,' said she, 'instead of eight hundred!⁴ Well; that is rather shabby. But still, papa, you'll have the dear old house and the garden.'

³ £450 in 1835 has the spending power of approximately £28,000 today

⁴ £800 in 1835 has the spending power of approximately £50,000 today