

 <p>VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY</p>		<p>Welby</p> <p>Alan Fox</p>
<p>Leicestershire</p>		<p>2017</p>

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

There was a record of a chapel of ease at Welby in 1220, which was supplied with a priest from Melton Mowbray twice a week.¹ It may have been founded as a chantry chapel, but there is no documentary evidence to support a suggestion that it was built by Roger de Mowbray, who died in *c.*1188.² The present building appears to date from the 14th and 15th centuries.³ Originally, the chapel did not have burial rights, and Welby residents were buried in the churchyard of St Mary's church in Melton Mowbray;⁴ the earliest gravestones in Welby churchyard are from the 19th century. The medieval dedication was to St Giles,⁵ but this appears to have fallen out of use after the Reformation. No dedication is recorded by Nichols, in the 1851 religious census, trade directories or diocesan directories until 1998, when a dedication to St Bartholomew is first recorded.⁶

There is no evidence of recusancy or of any dissenting religious meetings in Welby.

¹ W.P.W. Phillimore (ed.), *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles*, I (Lincoln Rec. Soc. 3, 1912), 269—70.

² L. Elliott, *Church of St Bartholomew, Welby* (desk-based assessment, Trent and Peak Archaeology Nottingham, 2014), 8.

³ The National Heritage List for England (<http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>), no. 1075115, Church of St Bartholomew, accessed 17 Feb. 2017.

⁴ For example, ROLLR, W & I 1530/17 (Thomas Payn of Welby, 1530); W & I 1623/129 (Robert Dricke of Welby, 1623).

⁵ ROLLR, W & I 1520/7 (Rowland Dygby of Melton Mowbray), W & I 1530/17 (Thomas Payn of Welby), W & I 1531/19 (William Hyndman of Welby).

⁶ Nichols, *History*, II, 285; TNA, HO 129/418; trade directories; *Peterborough Dioc. Cal., Clergy List and Almanac; Leicester Diocesan Directory* (1998), 52.

Parish Organization

The seat of the ancient diocese of Leicester moved to Dorchester on Thames (Oxon.) in the 870s,⁷ and was translated to Lincoln in c.1072.⁸ Parishes in Leicestershire were transferred to Peterborough diocese in 1837,⁹ and to the new Leicester diocese in 1926.¹⁰

Welby was one of five chapels of ease to St Mary's church in Melton Mowbray in 1220, the other four being Burton Lazars, Eye Kettleby, Freeby and Sysonby.¹¹ All four chapels were described as chantries in 1294.¹² The chapel at Eye Kettleby may have closed at the Reformation; the chapel building disappeared between 1622 and 1795.¹³ In 1846, Freeby and Welby were described as chapelries, presumably dependent upon clergy from Melton, while Burton Lazars and Sysonby were curacies annexed to Melton.¹⁴

The Melton Mowbray benefice, including Welby, Burton Lazars, Freeby and Sysonby, was expanded in 1959 by the addition of Thorpe Arnold church and its chapelry at Brentingby.¹⁵ The church at Brentingby was declared redundant and converted to a house shortly after 1978.¹⁶ In 1987, Frisby-on-the-Wreake and Kirby Bellars joined the benefice to create the Melton Great Framland Team Ministry.¹⁷ This was dissolved in 1993, when Melton Mowbray Team Ministry was established, containing Melton Mowbray, Burton Lazars, Freeby, Sysonby, Thorpe Arnold and Welby.¹⁸ It continued in that format in 2016.

⁷ A.W. Haddan and W. Stubbs (eds.), *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, III (Oxford, 1871), 129.

⁸ D.M. Owen, 'Introduction: the English church in eastern England, 1066—1100', in D.M. Owen (ed.) *The History of Lincoln Minster* (Cambridge, 1994), 10.

⁹ *London Gaz.*, 12 Sep. 1837, 2397—8.

¹⁰ *London Gaz.*, 12 Nov. 1926, 7321—2.

¹¹ W.P.W. Phillimore (ed.), *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles*, I (Lincoln Rec. Soc. 3, 1912), 269—70.

¹² *Cat. Ancient Deeds*, IV, 240, A7935.

¹³ Burton, *Description*, 133; Nichols, II, 278.

¹⁴ W. White, *Dir. Leics. & Rutl.* (Sheffield, 1846), 244.

¹⁵ *Leicester Diocesan Calendar, Clergy List and Year Book* (Leicester, 1958), 126; *Ibid.* (Leicester, 1959), 128.

¹⁶ P. Liddle and S.R. Hughes, 'St Mary's chapel, Brentingby – excavations and observations', *Trans. LAHS*, LIV (1978—9), 1.

¹⁷ *Leicester Diocesan Directory* (1987/8), 52.

¹⁸ *Leicester Diocesan Directory* (1994 onwards).

Patronage

Because Welby was only a chapel of ease to Melton, it had no patronage of its own. By 1220, the advowson of Melton Mowbray was held by Lewes priory (Sussex), as two distinct medieties.¹⁹ The priory successfully defended their medieties against the widow of Roger de Mowbray in 1299, who claimed the advowson as part of her dower.²⁰ The priory was dissolved in 1537, and the following year the advowson was acquired by Thomas Cromwell.²¹ It reverted to the crown following his execution in 1540. The advowson was still held by the crown in 1577, when Elizabeth I presented Edward Turnor as vicar of Melton.²² It was granted by the queen to Edward Downing and Peter Ashton in 1581.²³

The advowson was acquired by William Digby before 1599,²⁴ presumably by purchase. It remained with the manor, and was held by the Godfrey family in the early 19th century.²⁵ It appears to have become separated from the manor soon after 1839, and in 1846 it was held by C.H. Frewen,²⁶ of Northiam in Sussex. It remained with the Frewen family until 1888, when it was taken over (presumably purchased) by the Peache Trustees,²⁷ a religious charity which owns a number of advowsons.²⁸ The trustees continued as sole patrons of St Mary's Church until 1987, when the Great Framland Team Ministry was formed.²⁹ For the six years of the Great Framland Ministry the Bishop of Leicester had three votes in the selection of new incumbents, the Peache Trustees had two votes and Major

¹⁹ W.P.W. Phillimore (ed.), *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles*, I (Lincoln Rec. Soc. 3, 1912), 269—70.

²⁰ P.E. Hunt (ed.), *Notes on Medieval Melton Mowbray* (Grantham, 1965), 27, citing De Banco Rolls, 27 Edw. I, 126 Hilary, m. 126d.

²¹ L&P Hen. VIII, XIII(1), 139.

²² *Cal. Pat. 1575-78 (Eliz. I, VII)*, 483.

²³ *Cal. Pat. 1580-82 (Eliz. I, IX)*, 5.

²⁴ CCED citing Lincs. Arch. Episcopal Register XXX.

²⁵ Nichols, *History*, 250.

²⁶ W. White, *Dir. Leics. & Rutl.* (Sheffield, 1846), 244

²⁷ *Kelly's Dir. Leics. & Rutl.* (London, 1881), 680; *Peterborough Diocesan Calendar, Clergy List and Almanack for the Counties of Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland* (1888), 47.

²⁸ <http://opencharities.org/charities/289803> (accessed 22 Feb. 2017).

²⁹ *Leicester Diocesan Directory* (1987/8), 52.

F.R.D. Fisher-Burdett had one vote.³⁰ When this team ministry was dissolved and replaced by the Melton Mowbray Team Ministry in 1993, the Bishop of Leicester and the Peache Trustees became the only patrons.³¹

Income and Endowment

St Mary's Church in Melton Mowbray, including its five chapelries, was valued at £118 3s. 4d. in 1291, the highest assessment in Leicestershire.³² It was clarified in 1294 that the chapels were to be maintained at the cost of Melton's vicar, and not the rector.³³ Welby chapel was appropriated to Lewes priory before 1325, when the prior received a pardon for both the acquisition of the advowson, which he claimed was given to his predecessor Prior John in the reign of Edward I, and for the subsequent appropriation of the church to the priory.³⁴ This is at least partially incorrect, as the advowson had been held by the priory in 1220,³⁵ but the appropriation may have been in the reign of Edward I. There were three priors named John between 1276 and 1301.³⁶

In 1535, the annual gross income of St Mary's parish was £41 3s. 4d. Deductions of £24 14s. 4d. included £5 for a curate at Sysonby and Welby, and two further payments of £5 for curates at Burton Lazars and Freeby. The net value was £16 9s. 0d.³⁷ On the sale of the advowson by the crown in 1581, the stipend for the vicar of Melton was £11.³⁸ The vicarage was worth £40 in 1650, which was regarded as sufficient.³⁹ In 1716, St Mary's vicarage (i.e.

³⁰ *Leicester Diocesan Directory* (1987/8 to 1993).

³¹ *Leicester Diocesan Directory* (1994 onwards).

³² *Taxatio*.

³³ *Cat. Ancient Deeds*, IV, 240, A7935.

³⁴ *Cal. Pat.*, 1324—27, 158. In 1336 the prior claimed that the advowson had been transferred to the priory by Roger de Mowbray in 1287: P.E. Hunt (ed.), *Notes on Medieval Melton Mowbray* (Grantham, 1965), 42, citing De Banco Rolls, 10 Edw. III, 308, Michaelmas, m. 289.

³⁵ W.P.W. Phillimore (ed.), *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles*, I (Lincoln Rec. Soc. 3, 1912), 269—70.

³⁶ *VCH Sussex*, II, 70.

³⁷ *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, 155.

³⁸ *Cal. Pat. 1580-82 (Eliz. I, IX)*, 5

³⁹ Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 250.

office of vicar) in Melton Mowbray was valued at £109 2s. 6d., including £16 relating to Welby.⁴⁰ Of this £16, £6 was specifically for the cure of souls rather than the fabric of buildings.⁴¹

The vicarial tithes in Welby were commuted in 1838, and the vicar of Melton Mowbray received £90 rent-charge annually from Peter Godfrey, who owned all the land in Welby.⁴² In 1901, Sir Charles G. E. Welby-Gregory paid £43 10s. 1d. for c.541 acres,⁴³ and Holwell Works paid £13 8s. 7d. for c.158 acres.

RELIGIOUS LIFE

The Middle Ages

Little is known about religious life in the village before the Reformation. St Mary's church in Melton supplied Welby with a priest twice a week in 1220.⁴⁴ By 1377 it is possible that each of Melton's chapels had a priest of its own, as sixteen priests paid the clerical poll tax.⁴⁵ In 1535, a single curate served both Sysonby and Welby.⁴⁶ An inventory of the possessions of Welby chapel in 1552 lists vestments, a cope, altar cloths and towels, and pewter and latten plate.⁴⁷ It is said there was some 'ancient glass' in Welby church, which was later included within an assemblage of early glass in St Mary's church, Melton Mowbray.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 250.

⁴¹ ROLLR, DG36/108, glebe terrier for St Mary's Church, Melton Mowbray.

⁴² *Tithes commutation* (Parl. Papers 1838 (393), xxxviii.213), 11.

⁴³ ROLLR, DE 748/3 Altered tithe apportionment 1901.

⁴⁴ W.P.W. Phillimore (ed.), *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles*, I (Lincoln Rec. Soc. 3, 1912), 269—70.

⁴⁵ A.K. McHardy, *Clerical Poll-Taxes of the Diocese of Lincoln 1377-1381*, Lincoln Record Society, 81(Woodbridge, 1992), 14.

⁴⁶ Caley and Hunter, *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, 155.

⁴⁷ TNA, E 117/11/43.

⁴⁸ P.E. Hunt, *The Story of Melton Mowbray* (Grantham, 1959), 59.

Carved stones at Welby Grange Farm suggest that Garendon abbey may have had its own chapel within its grange.

After the Reformation

Bartholomew Gundesone was appointed vicar of Melton Mowbray in 1515,⁴⁹ and remained vicar until his death in 1546.⁵⁰ He was replaced by Walter Darkenall, but it is not clear whether he stayed in post throughout the reigns of both Edward VI and Queen Mary.⁵¹ Surviving churchwardens' accounts record the changes made to St Mary's church in consequence of the Reformation, Counter-Reformation and the Elizabethan settlement,⁵² but little is known of the impact at Welby chapel. St Mary's had many chantry priests,⁵³ and their loss would have had a major impact on religious life and pastoral care across the whole parish. Miles Bennes was appointed vicar of St Mary's in 1562 and stayed in post until 1578, when he was relieved of it because of his absenteeism.⁵⁴ In 1572 William Halley was appointed as curate at St Mary's,⁵⁵ but which chapelry he served is not recorded. The absence of the vicar would have put a heavy work load on him and any fellow curates.

In 1662, churchwardens Solomon Plummer and Richard Hughes of 'Welby cum Sisonby' said that their chapel was pulled down, but they were building it up again.⁵⁶ The fabric of these churches suggests they were not referring to Welby. Burton noted two coats of arms within Welby church, for Ashby and Porter,⁵⁷ but the connection between these families and the village is not known; their arms were no longer there in 1795.⁵⁸ The plain octagonal

⁴⁹ P.E. Hunt, *The Story of Melton Mowbray* (Leicester, 1979), 31.

⁵⁰ P.E. Hunt, *The Story of Melton Mowbray* (Leicester, 1979), 31.

⁵¹ <http://db.theclergydatabase.org.uk/> (accessed 13 Apr. 2017), citing Lincs, Arch., Bishop's registers XXVII.

⁵² ROLLR, DG 36/140/1-4.

⁵³ P.E. Hunt, *The Story of Melton Mowbray* (Leicester, 1979), 20—21.

⁵⁴ P.E. Hunt, *The Story of Melton Mowbray* (Leicester, 1979), 32.

⁵⁵ <http://db.theclergydatabase.org.uk/> (accessed 13 Apr. 2017), citing Lincs, Arch., Bishop's registers XXVII.

⁵⁶ A.P. Moore, 'The primary visitation of Robert Sanderson, Bishop of Lincoln in 1662, for the Archdeaconry of Leicester', *Antiquary* 5, 12 (1909), 464.

⁵⁷ Burton, *Description*, 281.

⁵⁸ Nichols, *History*, II, 265.

font is probably of the 17th century,⁵⁹ as is the polygonal oak pulpit and reading desk with Jacobean round arch-headed panels. There were no communion rails in Welby church in 1778, but although it was certified that rails had been erected in 1779, that is unlikely to be true,⁶⁰ as there were no rails in 1832.⁶¹ The churchyard was unfenced in 1794.⁶² Church rates for repairs were set at 3*d.* in the pound in 1841, raising £12 7*s.* 9*d.*, and doubled the following year, although only five guineas was spent.⁶³ It was recorded in 1856 that Welby residents had never refused to pay the church rates over the last 15 years.⁶⁴

In 1851, services were held at Welby every Sunday morning and on alternate Sunday afternoons, which attracted 20 people in both morning and afternoon on Sunday 30 March, slightly above the stated average of 15 for each service. There were 80 sittings in total. Of these 30 were free, but the other 50 were paid for by pew rents.⁶⁵ No record was made of the size of congregations during the 1890s, but the number of communicants ranged from four to nine. Weekly attendance in 1905 ranged from ten to 35, with an average attendance of 23, excluding the harvest festival, which was attended by 100 people. By 1914, attendance ranged from two to 25, with a mean value of nine. Between 1939 and 1945, the number of communicants varied from two to 18, and remained similar in the 1950s. The chapel was served by curates and the vicar. Of the 27 services in 1894, for example, John W Crowther took 12, George Alfred Crawshay took seven and the vicar of St Mary's, Richard Blakeney, took two. The officiating clergy who took most of the Welby services in the late 19th and early 20th centuries seem to change after about two years in office.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ The National Heritage List for England (<http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>), no. 1075115, Church of St Bartholomew, accessed 17 Feb. 2017.

⁶⁰ ROLLR, 1D 41/18/21, 269.

⁶¹ ROLLR 245'50/2, 87.

⁶² ROLLR, 1D 41/18/22, 271.

⁶³ *Abstract of Returns Relative to Church Rates* (Parl. Papers 1845 (428), xli.51), p. 126

⁶⁴ *Church Rates, Abstract of Returns* (Parl. Papers 1856 (319), xlviii.1), p. 90.

⁶⁵ TNA, HO 129/418, ecclesiastical census 1851.

⁶⁶ Register of services 1894-1984 in possession of Welby churchwardens.

A re-opening service was held on 4 March 1962, after the restoration of the building. During the 1960s the number of communicants at the services varied from five to 28.⁶⁷ In 2015, services were held twice monthly, on the first and third Sundays at 3 pm.⁶⁸ The church was closed for a major restoration in 2015—16, and re-opened with a special service on 18 October 2016.

St Bartholomew's Church



Figure 6: *St Bartholomew's Church, Welby, from the south-east*

⁶⁷ Register of services 1894-1984 in possession of Welby churchwardens.

⁶⁸ Oral testimony of churchwardens.

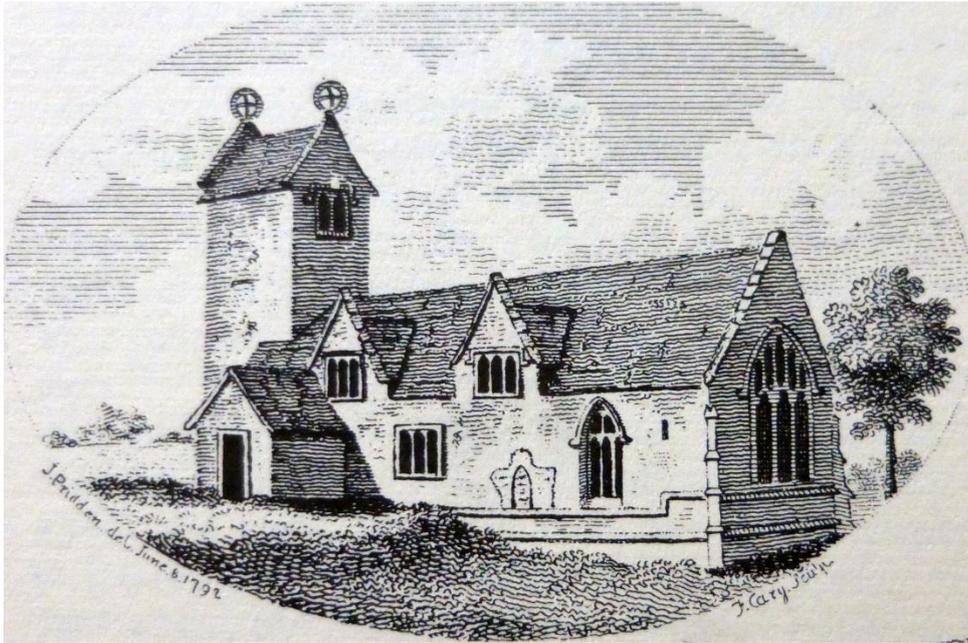


Figure 7: *Welby chapel in 1792, from the south-east*

The small grade II listed church stands on ground which slopes from west to east. It is built of ironstone, with limestone dressings and stands at least in part on rubble foundations (Fig. 6).⁶⁹ In 2016, the church was remote from any other buildings, but the platforms of the deserted medieval village lie immediately opposite.⁷⁰ Unusually for a church with medieval origins, the nave and chancel are one; the junction between them can only be discerned on the exterior, by the string course on the outside of the chancel and lack of it on the outside of the nave. This may be partly due to the slope of the land, rather than a deliberate feature (Fig. 7). There are no aisles or clerestory, and the church is topped by a steeply-pitched slate roof. Additional light was formerly provided by dormer windows in the roof on the south side, and possibly the north (Fig. 7).⁷¹ These have been removed, probably at the Victorian restoration, when the roof was replaced.⁷² The church has a saddleback west tower, a south porch and a

⁶⁹ The National Heritage List for England (<http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>), no. 1075115, Church of St Bartholomew, accessed 17 Feb. 2017.

⁷⁰ R.F. Hartley, *The medieval Earthworks of North-east Leicestershire* (Leicester, 1987), 46.

⁷¹ Nichols, *History*, II, between 268—9.

⁷² *Leic. Jnl.*, 27 Jun. 1862.

modern extension at the north-west. Two bells were noted in 1552,⁷³ and again in 1795,⁷⁴ but only one remained in 1846.⁷⁵

Pevsner does not suggest a date for the building,⁷⁶ but it is listed as being of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁷⁷ It is difficult to discern a building chronology, and with the exception of the porch and modern extension, it may be of one period, although there is a possibility that the two-stage tower may be older than the remainder of the building. The tower has a single lancet window in the bottom stage on the west side, and the east and west gables have small two-light bell chamber openings, but the round-arched heads to the lights look to be from the 19th-century restoration. The 1792 sketch (Fig. 7) is not sufficiently detailed to provide clarity on the earlier belfry fenestration.

There is a chamfered piscina with an ogee arch on the north side of the altar, perhaps of the early 14th century. To the south of the altar, another chamfered opening was probably an aumbry. The easternmost window on the south side of the building is probably of the early 14th century, and is of two lights with a quatrefoil to the head. The low side window at the west end of the 'chancel' area was probably added in the late medieval period. The east window is of three lights and Perpendicular in style, but was added in the 1860s.⁷⁸

The south door, within the porch, has a flattened arched head.⁷⁹ There was probably also a door on the north side, opposite the south door. The addition of the original south porch, the insertion of a rectangular mullioned window on the north side of the chancel and

⁷³ TNA, E 117/11/43.

⁷⁴ Nichols, *History*, II (1795), 285.

⁷⁵ W. White, *Hist., Gaz. and Dir. Leics. and Rutl.* (Sheffield, 1846), 247.

⁷⁶ Pevsner (rev. E. Williamson), *Leics. and Rutl.* (1984), 419.

⁷⁷ The National Heritage List for England (<http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>), no. 1075115, Church of St Bartholomew, accessed 17 Feb. 2017.

⁷⁸ *Leics. Merc.*, 31 Jan. 1863.

⁷⁹ The National Heritage List for England (<http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>), no. 1075115, Church of St Bartholomew, accessed 17 Feb. 2017.

the insertion of the previous dormer windows were perhaps the final change to the fabric of the building before the 1860s.

The south porch was rebuilt at the restoration of the 1860s.⁸⁰ The two other windows on the south of the church, flanking the porch, and a window on the north, are similar in style and probably date from the Victorian restoration, perhaps replacing earlier windows which had decayed. Electric light was installed in 1948, the gift of Stanton Ironworks Company.⁸¹ A major restoration in 2015, largely financed by the Heritage Lottery Fund, included strengthening the walls, improving the drainage, re-plastering the interior, re-slating the nave and chancel roofs and improving the heating and electricity supply. An extension was built on the north-west, to provide toilet facilities. A car park was added in 2016, on the opposite side of the road.

Protestant Nonconformity

No nonconformist conventicle was noted in 1669,⁸² and Bishop Wake noted no nonconformity in 1709 or 1715.⁸³ As a small community, there was probably never any organised nonconformist worship, but there were several congregations within a few miles, especially within Melton Mowbray. Margaret Hill (born Garfoot) says that her family, formerly of Welby Lodge Farm, were Methodists and helped to run the chapel at Ab Kettleby in the mid-20th century, where she attended Sunday school.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ *Leic. Jnl.*, 27 Jun. 1862.

⁸¹ Register of services 1894-1984 in possession of Welby churchwardens.

⁸² R.H. Evans, 'Nonconformists in Leicestershire in 1669', *Trans LAHS*, 25 (1949), 143.

⁸³ J. Broad (ed.), *Bishop Wake's Summary of Visitation Returns from the Diocese of Lincoln 1705-15: vol. II Outside Lincolnshire* (Oxford, 2012), 768.

⁸⁴ Oral testimony of Margaret Hill (born Garfoot).