

VCH Leicestershire

Online Texts-in-progress

Oadby: Post-Reformation Religious History

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VICTORIA
COUNTY
HISTORY

Leicestershire

Introduction

Dissent was strong in Oadby, although it is interesting to note how the nature of Oadby's nonconformity is complementary to that at Wigston: Wigston had a very early Independent congregation, while the Baptists were strong at Oadby. The Baptists benefited from some generous patrons, and forged links from the 19th century with the Methodists.

Oadby's population has ballooned in recent decades, and since the 1950s a Roman Catholic church, a second Anglican church and several evangelical churches have opened. Oadby is also home to many people of other faiths; there is now a Gurdwara and a Mosque, and also a large Hindu community, although they do not yet have a place of worship.

Advowson, Income and Property by Luke Stanley

Advowson

Immediately prior to the Reformation, the advowson of St Peter's Church was held by the prior and convent of Launde abbey.¹ In 1544 the advowson was granted to Richard Andrewes and Nicholas Temple. By 1559 it was owned by John Waldron, the lord of the manor.² In 1607 it was sold, without the manor, to Sir John Lambe.³ By the later seventeenth century it had been reunited with the manor through purchase by Sir Nathan Wrighte, and passed to his son and grandson.⁴ In 1846 to at least 1855 the advowson was in the hands of the two daughters of the late George Wyndham,⁵ and passed from there to Lord Paget by 1863, who was still patron in 1881.⁶ By 1888, the advowson was held by trustees.⁷ This may have been in connection with the asset purchase necessary to create the new racecourse on the edge of the parish in 1883,⁸ for by 1937 the patron is recorded as the New Leicester Club and County Racecourse Co. Ltd.⁹ The advowson is now held by the Bishop of Leicester.¹⁰

¹ J. Nichols, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester* (1810), IV, 324.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, 322.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 324.

⁵ W. White, *Hist. Gaz. & Dir. of Leics.* (Sheffield, 1846), p. 413; Post Office, *Dir. of Leics.* (1855), 101.

⁶ White, *Hist. Gaz.* (Sheffield, 1863), p. 763; *Kelly's Dir.* (1881), 692.

⁷ *Kelly's Dir.* (1888), 698. The *Peterborough Diocesan Calendar* for 1926 also simply says 'trustees', with no indication of the beneficial ownership.

⁸ *Kelly's Dir.* (1895), 306.

⁹ *Leicester Diocesan Calendar, Clergy List and Year Book, 1937* (Leicester, 1937), 111.

¹⁰ *Leicester Diocesan Directory, 1999* (Leicester, 1999), 64.

Income

In 1535, the vicarage was valued at exactly £8.¹¹ The great tithes were then paid to Launde abbey, and to a lay rector after the dissolution.¹² The vicar received the small tithes, but also had a modest glebe. A terrier of 1638 records glebe land held in 37 arable strips of differing sizes and eight ley lands.¹³ In 1650, the vicarage was said to be worth £30.¹⁴ In 1674 the glebe remained unchanged from 1638 other than the conversion of one ley to arable.¹⁵ By 1690, only two out of 43 strips were described as leys.¹⁶

As part of the revaluation of livings under Queen Anne, the vicarage of Oadby was assessed as a poor living, worth £20 per annum, and discharged from the future payment of first fruits and tenths.¹⁷ In 1715, a benefaction of £240 cash from Sir Nathan Wright, lord of the manor and lay impropiator of the rectory, enabled £200 to be awarded from Queen Anne's Bounty.¹⁸ Sir Nathan also gave three yardlands to the vicarage, increasing the annual value to approximately £40 per annum.¹⁹ Two separate allotments were made upon enclosure of the open fields in 1759: 17 acres 1 rood and 19 perches in respect of the old glebe land and a further 69 acres 2 roods and 2 perches for the augmentation. No land was awarded in lieu of small tithes, but instead the vicar was awarded an annual cash sum of £25 for the first seven years and £35 per annum thereafter.²⁰ A further augmentation of £200 by lot from Queen Anne's Bounty was made in 1779.²¹

Vicarage income increased from £210 per annum in 1831²² to £280 by 1863,²³ £360 in 1877²⁴ and £400 in 1881.²⁵ In 1895 the living was valued at £400 per annum, net £232, with 110 acres of glebe and an average tithe rent-charge of £22.²⁶ In 1908 and in 1916, the living was valued at £240 per annum net, with 110 acres of glebe.²⁷ Net income increased to £605 in 1928,²⁸ £635 in 1932²⁹ and £735 in 1941.³⁰

Parsonage House

The first mention of the parsonage is in a 1638 glebe terrier in which it is described as consisting of three bays of building, with an upper floor, a barn of three bays and a backside

¹¹ *Valor Eccl.*, IV, 183,

¹² Nichols, *History*, 324.

¹³ ROLLR 1D41/2/495

¹⁴ Nichols, *Hist.*, 324.

¹⁵ ROLLR 1D41/2/496

¹⁶ ROLLR 1D41/2/497

¹⁷ J. Ecton, *Liber valorum & decimarum*, 178,

¹⁸ C. Hodgson, *An Account of the Augmentation of Small Livings by "The Governors of the Bounty of Queen Anne"* (1845), cxxx.

¹⁹ Nichols, *Hist.*, 324.

²⁰ ROLLR, EN/A/241/2, m. 4. 9.

²¹ Hodgson, *Account*, p. cccxxv.

²² White, *Hist. Gaz. & Dir. Leics.* (Sheffield, 1846), 413

²³ White, *Hist. Gaz. & Dir. Leics.* (Sheffield, 1863), 763-4

²⁴ White, *Hist. Gaz. & Dir. Leics.* (Sheffield, 1877), 563

²⁵ Kelly's *Dir. of Leics.* (1881), 692

²⁶ Kelly's *Dir. of Leics.* (1895), 306

²⁷ Kelly's *Dir. of Leics.* (1908), 544; Kelly's, *Dir. of Leics.* (1916), 596-7.

²⁸ Kelly's *Dir. of Leics.* (1928), 703

²⁹ Kelly's *Dir. of Leics.* (1932), 742

³⁰ Kelly's *Dir. of Leics.* (1941), 1055

containing a rood of ground, approaching the churchyard east.³¹ In 1674, the parsonage is described as having four bays, and a one-bay barn,³² but in 1690 it is described as having three bays again, and a two-bay barn.³³ By 1818 the parsonage was being described as ‘a mean cottage’, unfit for a residence.³⁴ Plans were drawn up for a new house in 1836 alongside the existing building. It would have three reception rooms, five bedrooms, a stable and a coach house. It was built in 1856 with the assistance of a mortgage of £750 from Queen Anne’s Bounty against the benefice income.³⁵

The Anglican Church by Luke Stanley

St Peter’s Church

Building



St Peter’s church, Oadby

The parish church of Oadby, dedicated to St. Peter, dates from the very early 14th century and has a fine broach spire built in around 1300.³⁶ The church underwent several repairs and renovations in the 19th century. The interior was cleaned and repaired in 1832,³⁷ and the interior walls ‘coloured’;³⁸ it was found to be in good order at the archdeacon’s visitation in 1838, although he commented that it needed re-pewing.³⁹ In 1842 he recorded that there were some good pews, but the open seats were ‘old and irregular’ and the

³¹ ROLLR 1D41/2/495

³² ROLLR 1D41/2/496

³³ ROLLR 1D41/2/497

³⁴ *Account of Benefices* (Parl. Papers 1818 (005) xviii), p. 126.

³⁵ ROLLR, 1D 69/23/1-4.

³⁶ N. Pevsner (rev. E. Williamson), *Leicestershire and Rutland* (Harmondsworth, 1984), 338.

³⁷ White, *Hist. Gaz. & Dir. Leics.* (Sheffield, 1846), 413

³⁸ ROLLR, 1850’245/50/8, f. 79.

³⁹ ROLLR, 1850’245/50/6, f. 113.

chancel rood needed repairing – the latter was immediately attended to on receipt of his letter.⁴⁰ Plans were drawn up for a restoration in 1848, although this was not executed until 1853-4. The rood was replaced and new pews were added,⁴¹ creating an additional 140 seats; 160 seats were to be free. A grant of £90 was made by the Incorporated Church Building Society towards this work.⁴² Work was done on a south porch in 1874.⁴³ In 1882, a three-day bazaar began to raise funds for another restoration, undertaken in 1887-8,⁴⁴ when the chancel was re-roofed and repaved, a reredos was added and a south aisle and vestry built, costing a total of £2,250.⁴⁵ The south porch was rebuilt in 1907, at a cost of £188,⁴⁶ partially covered by a bequest of £100 from the estate of Ann Emberlin.⁴⁷ The church was again restored in 1927.⁴⁸

Repairs were made to the four bells and their fittings in July 1876 for £5, against a donation for a similar sum from H. Emberlin.⁴⁹ In 1900 'one or two' of these bells were said to be 'broken or cracked and out of tune' and G.H. Hodges agreed to donate five guineas to have them melted down and cast into a new heavier ring of six bells in the key of G, subject to a subscription being started for repairs to the church windows, floor and clock.⁵⁰ The new bells were cast and hung in 1901, with two more added in 1987 to make the octave.⁵¹ The tower is now home to Oadby Ringing Centre, which provides regular training sessions to bellringers from across Leicester diocese.⁵²

Religious life

Oadby was a populous parish, with 350 communicants in 1605.⁵³ Vicar Robert Bayley, who held office from 1634, was a Royalist. During the Civil War he was charged by the county committee in 1646 on six counts, including neglecting the Directory and observing ceremonies, suggesting he might still have been using the Book of Common Prayer, letting his children play on the Sabbath and persecuting 'Godly men'. He was ejected from his living in 1649, but allowed to return in 1652.⁵⁴

Vicar William Drake was licensed to live outside the parish between 1827 and 1839 due to the poor condition of the vicarage 'and being engaged in duty elsewhere'.⁵⁵ Although

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⁴¹ *Post Office Dir. Leics.* (1855), p. 1011; G.K. Brandwood, 'Church Building and Restoration in Leicestershire' (unpub. PhD, University of Leicester, 1984), 136-7, 426.

⁴² Brandwood, 'Church', 479.

⁴³ White, *Hist. Gaz. & Dir. Leics.* (Sheffield, 1877), 563

⁴⁴ Brandwood, 'Church', 263-4.

⁴⁵ Kelly's *Dir. of Leics.* (1895), 306

⁴⁶ ROLLR DE 2477/52/1

⁴⁷ ROLLR DE 2477/52/2

⁴⁸ Kelly's *Dir. of Leics.* (1928) 703

⁴⁹ ROLLR DE 2477/31

⁵⁰ ROLLR, DE 3434/8.

⁵¹ <http://oadbyrc.org.uk/tower/oadby.htm> accessed 7 Sept. 2012.

⁵² <http://oadbyrc.org.uk/index.htm#Facilities> accessed 7 Sept. 2012.

⁵³ W.D.G. Fletcher, 'Leicestershire documents in Lincoln Episcopal Registry', *Assoc. Architect. and Archaeol. Soc. Rpt and Papers*, 22, 142.

⁵⁴ A.G. Matthews, *Walker Revised, being a revision of John Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy during the Grand Rebellion, 1642-60* (Oxford, 1948), 231.

⁵⁵ ROLLR, 1D 41/32/1, 17, 32, 58, 73.

no licence survives for 1842, the vicar was then living in Thurnby, due to the poor condition of the vicarage.⁵⁶ In 1838 the archdeacon recorded that the 'same old man' was still parish clerk and aged 83.⁵⁷

On Mothering Sunday 1851, 75 people attended morning service and 150 attended in the afternoon.⁵⁸ A growing population resulted in some expansion of these numbers, with around 150 said to attend Sunday morning services and 250 in the afternoon in 1872.⁵⁹ The numbers were broadly similar in 1881, in a parish where there were said to be 900 to 1,000 dissenters among a population of 1,700.⁶⁰ By 1910 the vicar was reporting a congregation of 300, including a branch of the Church of England Men's Society.⁶¹

St Paul's Church

The busy A6 dual carriageway effectively bisects Oadby, cutting off the new housing estates from the historic core and from St Peter's church. With assistance from the Leicester Anglican Board of Extension, a site was purchased in Hamble Road in the late 1970s for an additional Anglican church.⁶² St Pauls' church opened in 1982, to serve the north-eastern part of the parish. The church has its own vicar and vicarage, funded jointly by the two Anglican congregations.⁶³ St Peter's remains the parish church.



St Paul's church, Oadby

⁵⁶ ROLLR, 1850'245/50/8, f. 79v.

⁵⁷ ROLLr, 1850'245/50/6. f. 113v.

⁵⁸ TNA: PRO, HO 129/411/2

⁵⁹ Northamptonshire RO, ML 594.

⁶⁰ Northamptonshire RO, ML 601

⁶¹ Northamptonshire RO, Box X926.

⁶² B. Belcher, 'The story of the Christian church in Oadby', in D. Wills (ed.), *Oadby 2000* (Oadby, 2000), 45.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Protestant Nonconformity by Danielle de Simone

Five nonconformists were recorded in Oadby in 1676.⁶⁴ One Quaker is mentioned in a visitation report of 1718, although not in 1721.⁶⁵

Presbyterians

Ten Presbyterians were recorded by the vicar in 1718, more than for any other denomination.⁶⁶ Just three years later their number was said to have risen sharply to 15.⁶⁷ They may have formed the Calvinist chapel with 35 worshippers that was one of three nonconformist chapels in Oadby in 1829, the other two being for Particular Baptists and for Primitive Methodists.⁶⁸ The chapel was not recorded in the religious census of 1851.⁶⁹

Baptists

Four Baptists were recorded in Oadby in 1718,⁷⁰ and three in 1721.⁷¹ The Baptists registered meeting houses in 1758 and in 1795.⁷² The latter was at the house of Elizabeth Waldren, who had a barn on her premises converted into a place of worship in 1800.⁷³ A new Baptist Chapel was built in 1815 in what became Chapel Lane, at the expense of Mrs Waldren.⁷⁴ It had room for 210 worshippers.⁷⁵ In 1825, 13 members of that church, including Elizabeth Waldren, formally formed themselves into a Particular Baptist Church.⁷⁶ In 1829 around 200 people attended that chapel, by far the largest nonconformist group in the parish.⁷⁷ On 30 March 1851, 150 people attended the afternoon service, and 200 attended in the evening.⁷⁸ In 1877 their invitation to hold the Baptist Association meeting there the following year was cordially accepted.⁷⁹

⁶⁴ A. Whiteman, *The Compton Census of 1676: A Critical Edition* (London, 1986), 336.

⁶⁵ Lincs. Arch., Gibson 4, 475-8; Gibson 12, 457-60.

⁶⁶ Lincs. Arch., Gibson 4, 475-8.

⁶⁷ Lincs. Arch., Gibson 12, 475-60.

⁶⁸ ROLLR, QS 95/2/1/23.

⁶⁹ TNA: PRO, HO/129/411.

⁷⁰ Lincs. Arch., Gibson 4, 475-8.

⁷¹ Lincs. Arch., Gibson 12, 475-60.

⁷² ROLLR, QS 44/2/29 & QS 44/2/105

⁷³ P.V. Powell, *The Baptist Cause in Oadby: The First 200 Years, 1795-1995* (2nd edn, Oadby, 1995), 3-4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 5; White, *Hist. Gaz. & Dir. Leics.* (Sheffield, 1846), 413.

⁷⁵ TNA: PRO, HO 129/411/12

⁷⁶ Powell, *Baptist Cause*, p. 11, citing the first church membership book.

⁷⁷ ROLLR, QS 95/2/1/23

⁷⁸ TNA: PRO, HO 129/411/12

⁷⁹ *Leic. Chron.*, 9 June, 1877, 7.



Oadby Baptist Church

Membership of Oadby Baptist church increased from 66 in 1881 to 88 by 1898,⁸⁰ and 'The growing needs of the Nonconformist population at Oadby have made a new Baptist Chapel at the village an absolute necessity'.⁸¹ The chapel was rebuilt in 1898 at a cost of approximately £2,350 on land donated by Mrs Rachael Ellis.⁸² The building was in the Gothic style and could hold 400 worshippers. It had a gallery at the east end, lighted by a 'handsome tracery window', which provided seating for a further 80 worshippers.⁸³ At the opening ceremony, Rev. W. G. Branch recounted that it was over one hundred years since Baptist ministers had first preached in the village, and Oadby looked to this Chapel as sustaining and furthering the cause of the Baptist Church, and religious freedom.⁸⁴ The congregation continued to grow, reaching 100 by 1903 before stabilising for the next decade.⁸⁵

A family service was introduced in 1960 and the Boys' and Girls' Brigades were formed that year.⁸⁶ In 1979, the church raised £33,000 and gave the building a complete overhaul, attending to the windows, lighting, heating and organ.⁸⁷ In 2012 the church continues to thrive, with two services each Sunday and seven different organisations to appeal to children and young people of all ages.⁸⁸

Evangelical Free Church

⁸⁰ G.T. Rimmington, 'Baptist membership in rural Leicestershire, 1881-194', *The Baptist Quarterly*, 37 (1998), 394.

⁸¹ *Leic. Chron.*, 19 March, 1898, 8.

⁸² Powell, *Baptist Cause*, 25-6.

⁸³ *Leic. Chron.*, 19 March, 1898, 8.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ G.T. Rimmington, 'Baptist membership in rural Leicestershire, 1881-194', *The Baptist Quarterly*, 37 (1998), 394.

⁸⁶ Powell, *Baptist Cause*, 46.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁸⁸ http://oadbybaptist.churchinsight.com/Groups/150089/Oadby_Baptist_Church/Whats_on/Children_and_Youth/Children_and_Youth.aspx accessed 8 Sept. 2012.

This church opened in 1975 and was an offshoot from a congregation in Knighton.⁸⁹

Grange Church

Grange church developed from joint services held each month at Woodland Grange School by St Paul's Anglican church and Oadby Baptist Church.⁹⁰ 'The Grange recognizes itself as part of Anglicanism's Evangelical wing with strong leanings to the Charismatic movement.'⁹¹

Methodists

Primitive Methodists

The first record of Methodists in Oadby is in 1822, when a meeting is recorded in a Primitive Methodist preaching plan.⁹² A return of 1829 noted 'one Chapel' in Oadby for 'Primarty Mettherds', which about 26 people are said to have attended.⁹³ It is doubtful that this was a separate chapel, as in 1851 Francis Warner of Oadby recorded that the Primitive Methodist meeting place, at the 'Side of Turnpike Road & Opposite Nat[ional] School' was not a separate building used exclusively for worship (he doesn't describe what it was), although it had room for 50 worshippers; 25 people attended both the afternoon and evening services.⁹⁴ By 1855 it appears that a separate chapel had been built.⁹⁵ No records have been found for this congregation after this date.

Wesleyan Methodist Association

The Wesleyan Methodist Association opened a chapel in Oadby on Sunday 13 June 1838. It could hold up to 160 worshippers, and at the opening ceremony it was said to have been 'overflowing'.⁹⁶ Yet the chapel may have proved too large, or too expensive, for by March 1851 the congregation was worshipping in a smaller chapel that had only been opened the previous month. This new chapel contained 60 free seats and 45 'other' sittings. Afternoon attendance on 30 March 1851 was estimated at 30, and there were 43 worshippers that evening.⁹⁷ Through national Methodist amalgamations, the church became part of the United Methodist Free Church in 1857 and the United Methodist Church in 1907.

⁸⁹ Belcher, 'The story of the Christian church', 45.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 46

⁹² S.M. Orbell, *The Methodists of Oadby*, (Leicester, 1981), 41.

⁹³ ROLLR, QS 95/2/1/23.

⁹⁴ TNA, HO 129/411/19.

⁹⁵ Post Office, *Dir. Leics.* (1855), 1011.

⁹⁶ Orbell, *Methodists*, 2.

⁹⁷ TNA HO 129/411/13.



Trinity Methodist Church, Oadby

In 1908, the church purchased a plot of land for a new chapel on Sandhurst Street.⁹⁸ The old chapel was sold in 1915, following which the congregation met in the village hall for worship, and the Baptists lent their chapel for weddings.⁹⁹ Fundraising proved challenging, and at first the church could only afford to purchase an Army hut, which opened for worship in 1921.¹⁰⁰ Intentions to build a permanent chapel on that site were then thwarted by county council plans for road widening, and a new site had to be found.¹⁰¹ Finally in 1931, and with the help of a £2,000 donation from Hill Street Methodist Chapel in Leicester, Trinity Methodist Church opened.¹⁰²

The church has benefitted from the growth of Oadby, and from its central site. Membership grew from 146 in 1965 to 239 in 1972.¹⁰³

Salvation Army

An Anglican visitation questionnaire of 1887 mentions the Salvation Army in Oadby.¹⁰⁴ No other records of this group have been found. The nearest Salvation Army church is now in South Wigston.¹⁰⁵

United Reformed Church

When a housing estate was planned in the 1970s on what is now Rosemead Drive, a plot of land was allocated for a church. The Church of Christ in neighbouring Evington purchased the land

⁹⁸ Orbell, *Methodists*, 9.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 31

¹⁰⁴ Northamptonshire RO, Box X922.

¹⁰⁵ http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/emd/Leicester_South accessed 8 Sept. 2012.

for a daughter church. A baptistery was added to the building in 1977. In 1981 the association of Churches in Christ became part of the United Reformed Church.¹⁰⁶



Oadby United Reformed Church

Roman Catholicism – to come

Non-Christian faiths – to come

¹⁰⁶ Belcher, 'The story of the Christian church', 45.