

## RELIGIOUS HISTORY

The Church of England remained dominant in the period 1714 to 1815. The medieval church of All Saints, Dovercourt, supported the chapelry of St Nicholas in Harwich, with a vicar appointed to cover both. Protestant nonconformity chiefly comprised the Congregational church which was particularly prominent in the second half of the 18th century and into the 19th century. Methodist meetings were held in Harwich in the late 18th century, but a licensed meeting house is not recorded until 1810.<sup>1</sup> The Society of Friends (Quakers) had their own meeting house up to 1800, but attendances were low and formal meetings had ceased altogether shortly before that date. No organised Catholic worship was recorded. There was a limited Jewish presence in Harwich between 1768 and 1818, including Nathan Raphael, who had originally come from Holland.<sup>2</sup>

### CHURCH OF ENGLAND

#### *Endowment, glebe and vicarage houses*

The living of Dovercourt with Harwich in 1719 arose from the rent of a small tenement.<sup>3</sup> A farm and 52 a. of land in Tendring were purchased the following year to provide a regular income for the church.<sup>4</sup> The value of the living was £40 p.a. when it was granted to Thomas Gibson in 1738.<sup>5</sup> By 1772 it had fallen to £31.<sup>6</sup> In addition the church of All Saints benefitted from an endowment for its repair, via the Strought and Baylam's Charity, while St Nicholas' church received an income for repairs originating from the 1627 bequest of William King and also £2 10s. gift from Sir Thomas Davall II.<sup>7</sup> In 1751 the glebe measured 42 a. 2 r. 20 p. in total, mostly comprising Vicarage farm in Dovercourt.<sup>8</sup>

In 1723 Dovercourt and Harwich each had their own vicarage, but by 1738 the Dovercourt vicarage was reported to have 'gone to ruin' and by 1766, and probably long before, there were no vicarages at all.<sup>9</sup> By 1778 there was apparently again a vicarage house in Harwich but it was not occupied by the vicar Revd Thomas Gibson as he considered it 'too small', while Revd William Cowper lived in the schoolhouse in 1790 as he was also headmaster at the Free School.<sup>10</sup>

### *Religious life*

There were several long-serving vicars of Harwich with Dovercourt. Revd William Curtis, snr, vicar from 1706 to 1731, was also corresponding member of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and chaplain to the Right Honourable Lady Howard of Effingham.<sup>11</sup> He was replaced in 1731 by Revd William Curtis, assumed to be his son and previously curate of Harwich with Dovercourt.<sup>12</sup> Divine service and two sermons were preached every Sunday at the Harwich chapel in 1738 by Revd Thomas Gibson, who served as vicar from 1738 until 1779 and also held the vicarage of Ramsey. He was appointed chaplain of the Ordinary in 1745 to minister to the Royal Navy ships in Harwich harbour.<sup>13</sup> By 1763 divine service was performed once at Dovercourt church and twice at the Harwich chapel on Sundays.<sup>14</sup>

Later vicars were Revd John Jones, from 1780 to 1785, and Revd William Cowper, from 1785 to 1809; both were also vicar of Ramsey, while Jones was previously curate of Dovercourt with Harwich.<sup>15</sup> Revd William Whinfield was instituted as vicar in 1810 having previously served as curate; he was also domestic chaplain to the duke of Manchester and to the HEI Co.'s factory at Fort Marlborough, Sumatra, as well as headmaster at the Free School.<sup>16</sup> It appears that Whinfield had effectively replaced Cowper after the latter was bankrupted in 1791 and fled to France.<sup>17</sup> Other curates appointed were John Elliston in 1731, Henry Creek in both 1732 and 1742, and David Fitzpatrick Pryce in 1810.<sup>18</sup> In 1790 the chapel at Harwich was attended by upwards of 100 communicants on a monthly basis, with twice that number reported attending festivals.<sup>19</sup> In 1799 the bishops of London and Gloucester confirmed 386 people at Harwich.<sup>20</sup> Divine service was performed once only at the Dovercourt church and twice at the Harwich chapel on Sundays in 1810 and there were 20 to 30 communicants in Dovercourt and 80 to 120 in Harwich at the time.<sup>21</sup>

### *Church of All Saints, Dovercourt*

The small parish church of All Saints was built in the 12th century. There were apparently no improvements carried out to the building between 1714 and 1815.<sup>22</sup> Inscriptions in the church recorded in 1893 included on the graves of surgeon John Gibson and his mother and father, who was Revd Thomas Gibson.<sup>23</sup> The church plate included a pewter flagon marked 1773

and inscribed with the names of churchwardens James Clement and William Chaser.<sup>24</sup> Some of the soldiers lost in the 1809–10 Walcheren expedition during the Napoleonic Wars were buried in the churchyard as they died after returning to Harwich.<sup>25</sup>

### *Chapel of St Nicholas, Harwich*

The chancel of the chapel was repaired some time before 1722. A long-running dispute between the churchwardens and Sir Isaac Rebow over the cost of the repairs was not resolved until 1728.<sup>26</sup> It was decided by the corporation in 1734 that public money would be used to pay for the pulpit cloth and cushion.<sup>27</sup> There were six church bells in the mid 18th century, each bearing the date 1752 and cast by Thomas Gardiner of Sudbury.<sup>28</sup>

In 1775 the chancel was repaired and new pews fitted, the cost covered by subscriptions, including £100 from George III, and £50 each from General Harvey, Charles Jenkinson, Lord North, Augustus George North and John Robinson, all of whom except Augustus George North served as MPs for Harwich borough.<sup>29</sup> In addition Robinson gave £100 towards a ‘good clock’ but the money was invested instead with the interest paying for clock repairs.<sup>30</sup> A silver plate marked 1776 and inscribed with the names of churchwardens Charles Cox and Cyprian Bridge is recorded as part of the church plate.<sup>31</sup> In 1782 the sum of £20 was given by the corporation towards the ‘preparation’ of church pews and their repair in 1810 was also paid for by the corporation.<sup>32</sup> The St Nicholas burial ground was enlarged and consecrated in 1786 and extended further when two houses owned by the corporation were demolished in 1798.<sup>33</sup>

The steeple of St Nicholas’ chapel was taken down in 1810 after it was found to be in a ‘ruinous and dangerous’ state.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, the church remained in a ‘dangerously dilapidated’ condition in 1812, with the removed bells also no longer fit for purpose. In the same year the corporation petitioned to have the steeple rebuilt and the bells hung again, but eventually a new church was built as a replacement, opening in 1821.<sup>35</sup> Many memorials were transferred to the new church, the most notable being to Philip Deane the elder, his wife Martha and son Philip William Deane, to another Philip Deane (1753–1806) and his wife Bridget Rachel and son, also Philip Deane, to Henry Pelham Davies, to Revd John Jones and his wife Sarah, and to John Phillipson.<sup>36</sup>

## PROTESTANT NONCONFORMITY

### *Congregational*

Harwich contributed to the Congregational or Independent church revival that occurred in the second half of the 18th century.<sup>37</sup> A meeting house, described as 'Presbyterian' by Revd Thomas Gibson, existed in 1766 but had apparently not been used for 'several years'.<sup>38</sup> Possibly the same meeting house in the west of Harwich was licensed in 1778.<sup>39</sup> Revd Nevill Maud preached there for 20 years until his death in 1799, when he was succeeded by Revd William Hordle.<sup>40</sup> There were only six members at the time of Maud's death, but Revd William Whinfield estimated there to be between 500 and 600 Independents in Harwich in 1810.<sup>41</sup> A new Congregational chapel on Harwich's Bathside was built in 1799 and opened in 1800.<sup>42</sup> The chapel had its own burial yard.<sup>43</sup>

### *Methodist*

Revd Thomas Gibson reported that there were some Methodist preachers in Harwich c.1778.<sup>44</sup> The earliest evidence of a licensed meeting house was in 1810, with meetings taking place in a private house in 1790.<sup>45</sup> John Hickling and Duncan Kay were the two preachers stationed at Harwich in 1795, at which time there were 193 local members. By the following year John Cricket had replaced Duncan Kay as one of the preachers.<sup>46</sup> There were up to 100 members in 1810.<sup>47</sup>

### *Religious Society of Friends*

A burial ground was given by Robert Grassingham in 1668 and a house in Newhaven Lane, Harwich, was converted to a meeting house c.1694.<sup>48</sup> The meeting house was granted a licence by the corporation in 1709.<sup>49</sup> In 1759 Harwich became part of Colchester monthly meeting.<sup>50</sup> By 1764 the Harwich meeting was reported to be in a 'Low State' and though attendances did increase, by 1781 meetings for worship had become irregular.<sup>51</sup> In 1785 the meeting house was being used as a warehouse and two years later it was replaced by a new meeting house on the same site.<sup>52</sup> However, the meeting did not thrive and the last Quaker

was said to be Samuel King, who died in 1790.<sup>53</sup> The meeting house was in a ‘very indifferent condition’ by 1795 and was sold in 1800, but some Quaker public meetings were held in Harwich in the early 19th century.<sup>54</sup>

### *Other*

A meeting house in Watergate Street, Harwich, was granted a licence by the corporation in 1706.<sup>55</sup> The house of James Boyden was also registered as a place of worship for dissenters in 1788.<sup>56</sup> In each case it is not clear which denomination worshipped there.

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<sup>1</sup> Lamb. Pal. Libr., FP Randolph 10/8.

<sup>2</sup> HTC, 179; F.W.S., ‘Jews in Essex’, *ER* 60 (1951), 112; C. Roth, *The Rise of the Provincial Jewry: The Early Hist. of the Jewish Communities in the English Countryside, 1740–1840* (1950), 17, 19.

<sup>3</sup> ERO, T/P 86/18, citing Bodl. Libr., MS Rawlinson B. 376, f. 318.

<sup>4</sup> *32–Pt I. Rep. of the Com.* (Parl. Papers 1837–8 [108], xxv), p. 566.

<sup>5</sup> ERO, T/A 676/1, p. 101.

<sup>6</sup> *Hist. Essex by Gent.*, IV, 96.

<sup>7</sup> TNA, CHAR 2/84; *32–Pt I. Rep. of the Com.* (Parl. Papers 1837–8 [108], xxv), p. 566; Guildhall Libr., MS 25750/1; ERO, T/A 645/1. For Strought’s charity: above, Tudor Harwich and Dovercourt, Soc. Hist., Chars.

<sup>8</sup> ERO, D/DU 2590/1/3, pp. 36, 41.

<sup>9</sup> Guildhall Libr., MS 25750/1, MS 25753/1; Lamb. Pal. Libr., FP Terrick 14, f. 425.

<sup>10</sup> Lamb. Pal. Libr., FP Lowth 4, f. 389, FP Porteus 27/21; HTC, 98.6 F, mins, 14 Feb. 1786.

<sup>11</sup> ERO, D/P 170/1/3, bur. 23 Sept. 1737; W. Curtis, *The Peace-offering: Or, Samuel Brought into the Sanctuary* (1713); William Curtis (CCed Person ID 124628), The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540–1835 <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk> (accessed 22 July 2022).

<sup>12</sup> Gulielmus Curtis (CCed Person ID 162317), The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540–1835 <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk> (accessed 22 July 2022).

<sup>13</sup> TNA, ADM 106/1003/110; Guildhall Libr., MS 25753/1; ERO, T/A 676/1, p. 101; Thomas Gibson (CCEd Person ID 163356), The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540–1835 <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk> (accessed 22 July 2022); *IJ*, 24 Dec. 1779.

<sup>14</sup> Lamb. Pal. Libr., FP Osbaldeston 5, f. 145.

<sup>15</sup> John Jones (CCEd Person ID 67666) and William Cowper (CCEd Person ID 5787), The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540–1835 <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk> (accessed 22 July 2022); *IJ*, 17 Sept. 1785, 2 Dec. 1809.

<sup>16</sup> HTC, 98.7 G, mins, 6 July 1792; William Whinfield (CCEd Person ID 80007), The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540–1835 <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk> (accessed 22 July 2022); *IJ*, 24 Feb. 1810.

<sup>17</sup> *IJ*, 7 May, 26 Nov., 24 Dec. 1791; Weaver, *Harwich Papers*, 96.

<sup>18</sup> Johannes Elliston (CCEd Person ID 162856), Henry Creek (CCEd Person ID 162235) and David Fitzpatrick Pryce (CCEd Person ID 47938), The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540–1835 <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk> (accessed 22 July 2022).

<sup>19</sup> Lamb. Pal. Libr., FP Porteus 27/21.

<sup>20</sup> *IJ*, 1 June 1799.

<sup>21</sup> Lamb. Pal. Libr., FP Randolph 10/7, 10/8.

<sup>22</sup> The upper part of the tower was rebuilt in the 19th century, some time after 1807: ERO, I/Mb 120/1/1; below, Harwich, Dovercourt and Parkeston, 1815–1914, *Relig. Hist., CoE, All Saints, Dovercourt*.

<sup>23</sup> J. H. Bloom, *Heraldry and Monumental Inscriptions in the Chs, Nonconformist Chapels and Burial Grounds of Harwich, Dovercourt, and Ramsey, in the Hundred of Tendring and County of Essex* (1893), 88.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*; W. J. Pressey (edited, with an intro., by), *The Ch. Plate of the County of Essex* (1926), 234.

<sup>25</sup> Below, Military and Naval Defences.

<sup>26</sup> ERO, T/P 195/8/20, [p. 54]; HTC, 98.5 E, mins, 15 Oct. 1719, 26 June, 17 July, 23 Oct. 1721, 22 June 1725, 26 Feb. 1728.

<sup>27</sup> HTC, 98.5 E, mins, 3 Feb. 1734.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Harwich bells’, *ER* 2 (1893), 188.

<sup>29</sup> ERO, T/P 86/18; *The Harwich Guide* (1808), 11–12.

<sup>30</sup> *The Harwich Guide* (1808), 12.

- <sup>31</sup> Bloom, *Heraldry and Monumental Inscriptions*, 31; Pressey, *Ch. Plate*, 235.
- <sup>32</sup> HTC, 98.6 F, mins, 7 Dec. 1782; 98.7 G, mins, 16 Jan. 1810; 99.3, 17 Dec. 1782.
- <sup>33</sup> ERO, D/P 170/6/4; HTC, 98.7 G, mins, 3 Dec. 1798; *IJ*, 27 May 1786.
- <sup>34</sup> *IJ*, 10 Feb., 10 Mar., 20 Oct. 1810.
- <sup>35</sup> HTC, 98.7 G, mins, 18 Sept. 1812; below, Harwich, Dovercourt and Parkeston, 1815–1914, *Relig. Hist.*, CoE, St Nicholas, Harwich.
- <sup>36</sup> Bloom, *Heraldry and Monumental Inscriptions*, 9–10, 12–13, 16–17, 19, 27.
- <sup>37</sup> A.R.J. Ramsey, ‘The Congregational chs of Essex: An hist. survey’, *ER* 53 (1944), 115.
- <sup>38</sup> Lamb. Pal. Libr., FP Terrick 14, f. 428.
- <sup>39</sup> HTC, 98.17, 27 Apr. 1778.
- <sup>40</sup> *HDFP*, 5 Dec. 1903; *IJ*, 2 Mar. 1799.
- <sup>41</sup> Lamb. Pal. Libr., FP Randolph 10/8; ERO, D/NC 65/4, p. 1.
- <sup>42</sup> ERO, D/NC 65/4 [p. 84].
- <sup>43</sup> Bloom, *Heraldry and Monumental Inscriptions*, 81.
- <sup>44</sup> Lamb. Pal. Libr., FP Lowth 4, f. 372.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* FP Porteus 27/21; FP Randolph 10/8. It is possible that these are the same premises.
- <sup>46</sup> Anon., *An Extract of the Mins of Several Conversations held at Manchester, July 27, &c. 1795. Between the Preachers, Late in Connection with the Rev. Mr. Wesley* (1795), 7, 15; Anon., *An Extract of the Mins of Several Conversations held at London July 25, &c. 1796. Between the Preachers Late in Connection with the Rev. Mr. Wesley* (1796), 6.
- <sup>47</sup> Lamb. Pal. Libr., FP Randolph 10/8.
- <sup>48</sup> ERO, C1519, Box 1, indenture, 15 Dec. 1694; Univ. of Essex Libr., special collns, bk ‘SPM5’.
- <sup>49</sup> HTC, 98.16, 1 Dec. 1709.
- <sup>50</sup> Univ. of Essex Libr., special collns, Society of Friends Essex quarterly meeting mins, 4 Oct. 1759.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* Society of Friends Essex quarterly meeting mins, 25 June 1764, 11 Sept. 1781.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* Society of Friends Colch. monthly meeting mins, 18 July 1785, 17 July 1786, 20 Aug. 1787, and lease, 1 Oct. 1787.
- <sup>53</sup> *Gent. Mag.* 60, pt 1 (Mar. 1790), 282; *IJ*, 20 Mar. 1790.
- <sup>54</sup> Univ. of Essex Libr., special collns, Society of Friends Colch. monthly meeting mins, 19 Oct. 1795, 17 Dec. 1800, 18 Mar. 1801; S.H.G. Fitch, *Colch. Quakers* ([1962]), 33.

<sup>55</sup> HTC, 98.16, 28 Mar. 1706.

<sup>56</sup> LMA, DL/C/1377/031.

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