

## **Married at the Coll. And Parish Church of Manchester**

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One of the first marriage certificates I purchased was that of my 2 x great grandparents, James Shimwell Mottershead and Louisa Rayner. They were married at 'the Cath & Parish Church' of Manchester on 16 September 1871. Some months later I obtained the certificate of the marriage of the parents of James Shimwell Mottershead, Edmund Mottershead and Alice Shimwell. They were married on 12 May 1847 at the 'Coll & Parish Church' of Manchester.

As my research progressed I learned to save some money by searching the microfilm copies of the marriage records of Manchester Cathedral available through the local LDS Family History Centre. Fortunately, the IGI can be used as an index to those voluminous records. Eventually I learned that three sets of my 3 x great-grand parents and two of my 2 x great-grandparents were married at the church now known as Manchester Cathedral. In addition, many of their brothers and sisters and cousins were also married there.

The direct line families were all working class with occupations such as labourer, brewer, confectioner, dyer, joiner and carder. While members of related lines married at the Cathedral added more middle-class occupations such as bookkeeper, manufacturer and artist, my curiosity was aroused at the notion of a labourer being married in a cathedral. Cathedral: the very word conjures up Salisbury's magnificent spire or huge edifices like York Minster. The combination of such architectural splendour and the realities of 19th century working class poverty do not sit easily together.

Over the years I did sufficient research on the matter to provide an explanation of this seeming contradiction. A recent bout of e-mails on the M&LFHS list server about the same issue suggests that others might find the results of my research interesting. An important part of the story rests in the size of the ancient parish of Manchester. It covered about 60 square miles.<sup>1</sup> The parish was originally in the see of Lichfield, but was transferred to the diocese of Chester when that was created in 1541. While Manchester became the . first city of the industrial revolution, in medieval times it was an unimportant township. Between the 15th and 18th centuries it developed into the regional capital of south-east Lancashire. Its importance was based on its economy. However, in spite of its leading position in the industrial revolution it retained the manorial form of government into the 19th century.

The population of Manchester was around 2,300 in 1543. By 1773, it had grown to 43,000, the greatest growth having taken place in the century following 1660. In the early 19th century the population exploded. Based on the municipal boundaries of 1838 the population according to the returns of the censuses was as follows: 1801 - 76,788; 1811 - 91,136; 1821 - 129,035; 1831 - 187,022; 1841 - 242,983; and 1851 - 316,213. In the first half of the 19th century Manchester's population increased more than four-fold That increase was in part the problem. While the population in 1841 was 242,983, the established church had seating capacity of only 24,000. Church building had lagged behind the need.

Part of the reason for this tardy response to the need for additional churches lay in the administration of the parish church. While there had been a parish church in Manchester arguably since at least the Conquest, it was established as a Collegiate Church in 1422. The founder was Thomas de la Warre, Baron of Manchester. The difference between a parish church and a collegiate church is suggested by the provisions subsequently agreed to by Thomas de la Ware and his fellow feoffees. The church was to have one warden, eight fellows, four clerks and six choristers. It was ordained that divine service was to be celebrated in the church every day for the good health of the King, the bishop and Thomas de la Warre, for the souls of their ancestors, and for the souls of the faithful departed for ever. It was also agreed that the said master or warden and his successors shall be called for ever the master or warden of The College of the Blessed Virgin of Manchester and that he and his successors were to be perpetually incumbents, and hold the benefices, lands, tenements, and other possessions and emoluments.

The history of the Collegiate Church is a fascinating story itself. Its charter was dissolved in 1

547 by Edward IV and its lands demised to Edward, Earl of Derby. It was re-established and most of the deeds of alienation abrogated in 1554 on the marriage of Queen Mary to Philip of Spain. Following a period of animosity between the members of the college and the inhabitants of the parish, a renewed charter for the college was granted by Elizabeth I in 1578. Among other things this charter changed the name of the Collegiate Church to Christ's Church.

As a result of an attempt to get rid of a particularly unpopular warden, Richard Murray, DD, Charles I issued a new charter on 30 September 1635. It had been drawn up by Archbishop Laud. The first warden under the new charter was Richard Heyrick, BD. He proved to be Manchester's answer to the Vicar of Bray. Appointed warden by Charles, he continued as the parish priest during the interregnum, became warden again on the Restoration, and remained warden until his death in 1667.

Because the benefits of the endowment of the collegiate church were to go to the members of the college, i.e. the warden and fellows, a confusion arose over the control of church revenues. The members of the college claimed the revenue belonged to them, while various worthies in the parish claimed they should be treated as parochial funds and used, among other things, to provide the funds to pay for additional incumbencies needed to serve the growing population.

Under Lord Hardwicke's Act (1753) only marriages celebrated in the established church were valid. The Act applied to marriages in England and Wales, but did not apply to the Royal Family, Quakers and Jews. Thus even nonconformists were married at the parish church.

Not only was there an insufficient number of churches for the ever-growing population, only a few of them were licensed to conduct baptisms and marriages, Even where they were so licensed, the literal interpretation of the warden and fellows of the college required the payment of a double fee; one to the officiating minister and a second to the Collegiate Church. Our ancestors found shoe leather was cheaper alternative and elected to walk to the Collegiate Church and save the fee for baptisms and marriages.

The combination of the stand of the warden and fellows on fees, and the growing population of Manchester, resulted in an extraordinary number of marriages at the Collegiate Church. The multiple marriages at Manchester became something of a tourist attraction.<sup>2</sup> In 1821 there were 2,191 banns published at the Collegiate Church. At the going rate of 3s 6d, this brought in a total of £383 8s 6d. The fee was payable at the time banns were to be published, regardless of whether the wedding occurred or not. (There were 1,924 marriages solemnized during the same year). The fee was divided as follows: 10d to each of two chaplains; 9d to each of two clerks; and 1d to each of four choristers.<sup>3</sup> By the 1840s around 180 banns were read on an average Sunday, with one Sunday reaching a total of 350.

For some years the Collegiate Church also followed a practice of doubling the marriage fee during Lent. Presumably, this kept the festivities associated with marriages to a minimum. One result of this was an unusually large number of weddings at Easter and the period immediately following.

By 1839 there were 27 consecrated churches and chapels in the parish other than the parish church. Of these only three, other than the parish church, had districts assigned to them and thus acted as parish churches. They were St George's Hulme, St Philip's Salford, and St Matthew's Campfield. In the London Gazette of 29 March 1839 districts were assigned to the other 23 churches and chapels, and the boundaries of those districts described Unfortunately, at the same time a clause appeared reserving the fees to the Collegiate Church. At this point the fee for marriage was 5s. Although people could now be married at their local churches, they would still have to pay a double fee, i.e. 10s rather than 5s. The walk to the parish church continued.

The Ecclesiastical Duties and Revenues Act of 1840 provided that the titles of warden and fellow be changed to dean and canon. It also provided that any revenues remaining after paying the dean £2,000 and each canon £ 1,000 should be paid into the common fund of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, to be applied according to their discretion. Few of the chapels and churches in the area were adequately endowed. Many of them afforded the incumbent with incomes of between £30 and £126.<sup>4</sup>

A major result of the agitation for better use of parochial fees was the creation in 1847 of the Diocese of Manchester. The collegiate and parish church became Manchester Cathedral. While its name was changed, the structure of the building remained more or less as it is today, a parish church built in the 15th and 16th centuries. The tower was rebuilt in 1867. Major renovations took place in 1815 and 1884. Restoration work was needed to repair bomb damage in 1940. Modifications were also made in 1960.<sup>5</sup>

James Prince Lee was consecrated as the first Bishop of Manchester. He proved to be an energetic administrator. According to Shercliff, Bishop Lee 'consecrated 110 new churches providing 77,000 new sittings for the Diocese' during his term of office. Shaw reports that 'during [his] episcopate, it is recorded that no less than one hundred and sixty-three new parishes were formed and churches built, a work the necessity of which is not so apparent now, but which was pressingly urgent in that day'.<sup>6</sup>

In 1850 'an Act to authorize the division of the parish of Manchester into several parishes, and for the application of the revenues of the collegiate and parish church, and for other purposes' was enacted. Among other things it provided the revenue of the collegiate and parish church was to be divided as follows: yearly incomes of £1,500 for the dean, £600 for each of four canons, £250 for each of two minor canons. A further change was that on the death of the incumbent office holder, the canonries would attach to incumbencies in the immediate vicinity of the city.

With the old collegiate establishment finally brought under control, the revenues straightened out, a new see, and a bishop whose energy helped to spur the creation of needed parishes and parish churches, the domination of the collegiate and parish church over the ancient parish of Manchester gradually faded. The half century of double fees did appear to create a habit of marrying at the Cathedral, a habit that continued for some time after the original impetus - the double fee had been removed.

The fight for control of parish finances and to build new churches was an important battle in 19th century Manchester. Religion occupied a centrality in life hard for many contemporaries to imagine. Arguably, the failure to provide the needed churches was partly responsible for the movement of the working classes away from religion. Today the battles are curiosities of times forgotten. But the answer as to why great great grand dad got married at the Cathedral is written in those forgotten battles. © Stuart Cunningham (3130)

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<sup>1</sup> According to Eckwall the following 30 townships were in the ancient parish of Manchester: Ardwick, Beswick, Blackley, Bradford, Broughton, Burnage, Cheetham, Chorlton cum Hardy, Chorlton on Medlock, Cn.uqlsa11, Denton, Didsbury, Droylsden, Failsworth, Gorton, Harpurhey, Haughton, Heaton Norris, Hulme, Levenshulme, Manchester, Moss Side, Moston, Newton, Openshaw, Reddish, Rusholme, Salford, Stretford, Withington.

<sup>2</sup> Hind, pages 82-83. The description of the service is from Head, pages 70-71, although no direct attribution is made.

<sup>3</sup> Manchester Historical Recorder, (Neil Richardson: 1984) page 21.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the revenues from fees, the collegiate church was well endowed with lands. In 1871, during the time of the second major movement for reform, it was estimated that the lands 'if let and managed in a business-like way', would fetch anywhere from £50,000 to £80,000. (Shaw, volume 1, page 42).

<sup>5</sup> Creighton, pages 11-12. He reports that The tower was rebuilt in 1887 to the same design as the previous one but with an extra six feet on top of the old height of 124 feet'. Shaw claims that The tower which was rebuilt in 1867, and differs from its predecessor, is the only part of the fabric that arrests the eye, and that without any very imposing suddenness.' Shaw, volume 1, page 34.

<sup>6</sup> Shercliff, page 27. Shaw, volume 1, page 43. The difference in counts probably depends upon the strict interpretation of 'churches consecrated' and 'new parish formed'. (Editor's note: See also Terry Wyke's article The Diocese of Manchester: An introductory Bibliography', pages 276-369). This article lists the churches in the Diocese and gives many useful details about them. *The Transactions of the Lancashire & Cheshire Antiquarian Society, volume 92-3 (1996-7)*.

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