

GREAT MIGRATION TOUR TO ENGLAND
5 TO 15 AUGUST 2008

TOUR TALK

Issue #9

July 2008

FEOFFEES FOR IMPROPRIATIONS

As Christopher Hill pointed out in a volume that we discussed in the last issue of *Tour Talk* (and which is referenced again below), many of the differences between the Puritans on the one hand and William Laud and King Charles on the other revolved around the manner in which the clergy were supported. The Arminian faction in the church, which was eventually headed by Laud, placed great emphasis on ceremonies and the sacraments, and thus had no great need for educated ministers. In consequence, they were not so troubled if the tithes available for the rector or vicar were not sufficient to attract a clergyman with this qualification.

The Puritans, on the other hand, saw the sacraments and the ceremonies as Popish survivals, not sanctioned by a close reading of the Bible. They wanted learned clergy in each parish, capable of delivering a well-prepared sermon once a week or more. To attain that goal, they needed to find additional sources of revenue to support such men.

After many unsuccessful attempts under Queen Elizabeth and King James to repair the situation through parliamentary enactment, the Puritan party hit upon a new strategy which they put into effect just as King James was dying. They formed a committee, known as the Feoffees for Improvements, to gather funds and to buy up lay improvements, that is, to purchase from laymen rectorial tithes. Many of these tithes had been collected at the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries and had been diverted to private uses. Their intent was to use these purchased improvements to support clergymen of their choosing. The Feoffees were a self-perpetuating group of twelve men, much like modern trustees, comprising four ministers, four lawyers and four merchants. One of the ministers was Rev. John Davenport, vicar of St. Stephen, Coleman Street, London, who eventually came to New England, ministering to churches at New Haven and Boston.

The first of these purchases was made in 1625, and the pace of gift and purchase grew steadily during the late 1620s. The first beneficiary of this project was Rev. Zechariah Symmes, a graduate of Emmanuel College, who was set up in 1625 as rector of Dunstable, Bedfordshire, where he remained until 1632, after which he came to New England in 1635 and became minister at Charlestown.

Much of the money raised by the Feoffees was used to support Puritan lecturers in parishes in London and Essex. These activities came to the attention of Laud, even before he was elevated to bishop of London. Eventually he was able to bring legal pressure on the Feoffees, until in 1632 Attorney-General William Noy brought suit against the group

in the Exchequer Court. The Feoffees were charged with acting as a corporation without having first obtained a royal charter. The real fear, of course, was that the Puritan Lords and merchants were becoming so successful that they might soon gain so much control over ministerial placement and compensation that they would become a serious threat to both the royal and ecclesiastical hierarchy.

The eventual victory of the Laudian party in this legal proceeding turned out to be hollow. As Hill observed, “Laud proposed not merely to destroy the Feoffees, but to collect money to buy in impropriations himself; but he succeeded only in the negative part of his programme” [Hill, p. 264]. In further alienating the Puritan party, he drove many of them to New England and Holland, and speeded his own demise in the following decade.

Recommended Reading (all of these sources were written some decades ago and can be difficult to find):

Isabel M. Calder, “A Seventeenth Century Attempt to Purify the Anglican Church,” *American Historical Review* 53 (1947-48):760-75. The best brief summary and introduction to the topic.

Christopher Hill, *Economic Problems of the Church, from Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament* (Oxford, 1956), Chapter XI, “The Feoffees for Impropriations,” pp. 245-74. Hill places this episode in English church history in the wider context of the many problems of financial maintenance of the ministry. He cites Calder’s article as the source of his understanding of the Feoffees.

Isabel M. Calder, ed., *Activities of the Puritan Faction of the Church of England, 1625-33* (London, 1957). Transcripts of the documents from the lawsuit in the Court of the Exchequer which terminated the Feoffees, with commentary by the editor.

Shipps, Kenneth Wayne, “Lay Patronage of East Anglian Puritan Clerics in Pre-Revolutionary England” (unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Yale, 1971). Shipps covers much of the same ground already examined by Hill, but with emphasis on Puritans and on East Anglia, with glancing references to the Feoffees. In the process Shipps investigates many of the Puritan Lords of Essex, and many of the same ministers and parishes that we will be visiting on the Great Migration Tour.

MINISTERIAL OFFICES IN EARLY NEW ENGLAND

In the last issue of *Tour Talk*, we described the variety of ministerial offices found in the English church at the time of the Great Migration, including rectors, vicars and curates. When the Puritans reached New England, they organized their churches in a quite different fashion, according to Calvinist Reformed principles.

The ministers were to be chosen by the congregation and established over their parishes by the laying on of hands by the ruling elders of the congregation and by previously established ministers from neighboring parishes. There were to be two types of ministers ordained in this fashion, the pastor, who was to “have the oversight and charge of the whole parish, to instruct, to admonish, to exhort . . . and to minister the sacraments,” and the teacher, who was to “teach and expound, ‘so that he ought to be an exquisite and mighty man in the scriptures’” [Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London and New York, 1967), p. 335].

In addition, there were two types of officers drawn from the laity. The more senior were the ruling elders, who supervised church discipline and directed the process of selecting the pastor and teacher, eventually taking part in the ordination of these clerical officers. The deacons handled the financial aspect of church government, collecting the ministerial rates and disbursing church funds. In New England, the deacons were often seen taking the probate inventories of deceased members of the congregation.

GARDENS AND MAZES

Our tour will, quite by inadvertence, provide us with the opportunity to experience many gardens, and in a number of these there are either mazes or labyrinths. We provide a brief list of gardens we will visit.

1) Bishops Stortford (5 August): In the grounds of what remains of Waytemore Castle the city maintains acres of public gardens. After lunch and our visit to the church, there will be some time to stroll the castle and garden grounds.

2) Hatfield House (6 August): The grounds surrounding this grand house contain many acres of gardens. We will be visiting on the only day of the week when all the gardens are open to the public. In one area near the old section of the house are a knot garden and a low hedge maze, which may be viewed but not entered.

3) Cambridge (8 August): Both of the colleges on our tour, Emmanuel and St. Johns, incorporate gardens on their grounds.

4) Saffron Walden (12 August): After we visit Saffron Walden church, one of the options will be to walk the nearby Bridge End Gardens, which are well into the process of restoration. There are about half a dozen different gardens within this complex, including a tall hedge maze, which we can enter and lose ourselves in. At the center, should you reach it, is a viewing platform high enough to permit you to look down into the alleys of the maze and make fun of your friends who are still lost. On the other side of town, on the green, is an ancient turf maze (really a labyrinth).

5) Cressing Temple Barns (13 August): Near the 12th and 13th century barns is a large 17th century flower and herb garden, which includes a knot garden. An aerial photograph shows a labyrinth cut into the grass not far away, but this may no longer exist.

6) Little Baddow (14 August): The churchyard at Little Baddow has won awards for the quality of its flowers and its design, and we will have a lecture on this activity of the parish. We will also visit the Manse Garden, attached to the 18th century chapel.

(We had hoped to include a tour of the newly restored gardens at Fulham Palace during our trip to London on Sunday, 10 August. However, the combination of the performance of King Lear being in the afternoon, and running for four hours, and the actual hours of opening at Fulham Palace have caused us to cancel this part of the day's activities. We regret this change in the program, but hope that a few additions we have made elsewhere will in part compensate for this change.)

MARKET DAYS

We will have the opportunity to experience two market days during our tour. Market day at Braintree is on Wednesday, and we will arrive there at 9:30AM on Wednesday, 6 August. An hour or so will be available to us in the morning for exploring the market, while the fishmonger and greengrocer stalls are still open. We may also have a little time for further wandering in the market in mid-afternoon, before we head back for Chelmsford.

In Saffron Walden we will experience a larger market, on Tuesday, 12 August. Immediately upon arrival at Saffron Walden, we will visit the church. We should be finished there by about 11AM, and from then until 3PM you will be free to wander the town, have lunch, visit the many antique shops and boutiques in the old section of town and explore the market, in any order you like.

VICARS ON THE WEB

A massive online database for English clergy has been under construction now for about a decade and is an excellent resource if you are interested in members of this profession, which is so central to the theme of our tour. The whimsical name for the website which heads this section was one I heard applied to the project about ten years by Dr. Kenneth Fincham, one of the driving forces behind the website, when he lectured at the Winthrop Conference at Millersville, Pennsylvania. The proper name for the website is Clergy of the Church of England Database Project.

www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/index.html

The purpose of the project is to “construct a relational database containing the careers of all clergymen of the Church of England between 1540 and 1835.” The user may search by parish (or other jurisdiction, such as chapel) or by clergyman. Under each name there may be many individual extracts of original records mentioning the given clergyman.

The database is far from complete, but, largely because of the interests of Dr. Fincham, has a multitude of entries for the period of the Great Migration. Time spent browsing through this website can be highly productive.

GREAT MIGRATION IMMIGRANTS FROM BRAINTREE

On Wednesday, 6 August, we will spend the day in the market town of Braintree. The vicar at Braintree throughout the period of interest to us was Rev. Samuel Collins. He was a man of moderate Puritan tendencies, who found Rev. Thomas Hooker too ardent for his tastes, especially when Hooker came to town to preach. Collins eventually wrote some letters in 1629 and 1631 to Dr. Duck, one of Laud's subordinates. These letters provided Laud with the ammunition he needed to silence Hooker and drive him out of England [Bernard Davies, *Samuel Collins of Braintree: Some Events in The Life and Times of a Seventeenth Century Essex Vicar* (Braintree, 1997). This pamphlet is available in the gift shop at Braintree District Museum.]

Hooker's influence encouraged a number of residents of Braintree to emigrate to New England, some of them sailing in 1632 on the *Lyon*, along with several families from Nazeing and other parts of Essex. In the summer of 1632, Gov. John Winthrop noted that "The Braintree Company (which had begun to sit down at Mount Wollaston) by order of Court removed to Newtown [Cambridge]. These were Mr. Hooker's company" [WJ 1:104-5]. On this basis, the name of Mount Wollaston was later changed to Braintree, even though the settlers from Braintree had moved on.

Many claims have been made for the Braintree origin of early settlers of Cambridge and Hartford, but most of these claims cannot be accepted, largely because the Braintree, Essex, parish registers do not survive before 1660. For example, many sources state that Henry Adams was from Braintree, presumably because he settled in Braintree, Massachusetts. Henry Adams was actually from the parishes of Barton St. David and Kingweston, Somerset [J. Gardner Bartlett, *Henry Adams of Somersetshire, England, and Braintree, Mass.* (New York, 1927)]. We will include here only those immigrants for whom we have reasonably strong evidence for a Braintree origin. Please let us know if you have solid evidence for other Braintree immigrants.

1) **William Goodwin** sailed for New England in 1632 on the *Lyon*, settled first in Cambridge and then moved to Hartford in 1636 [GMB 2:790-94]. He later resided at Hadley and Farmington. He was born about 1591 and married Elizabeth White at Shalford, Essex, on 7 November 1616. Her father was Robert White of Messing, Essex [NEHGR 55:24]. William Goodwin had been a sidesman [assistant to the churchwarden] of the church at Braintree in 1622 and a churchwarden in 1630 and 1631. His brother, Ozias Goodwin, settled at Hartford by 1639.

2) **John Talcott** was born about 1594 and came to New England in 1632 on the *Lyon*, settling first at Cambridge and then moving to Hartford by 1636 [GMB 3:1794-97]. The

immigrant's father, John Talcott, was a pewterer at Braintree [Hale, House 746-52]. The immigrant's sister Rachel married New England immigrant JOHN STEELE at Fairstead, Essex, on 10 October 1622.

3) **William Wadsworth** was born about 1601 and sailed for New England in 1632 on the *Lyon*, settling first at Cambridge and then moving on to Hartford by 1636 [GMB 3:1892-96]. His first wife, whom he married about 1626, was Sarah Talcott, another sister of John Talcott.

4) **Edward Stebbins**, who had settled in Cambridge by 1633 and then went on to Hartford by 1636, is probably the man of that name baptized at Black Notley, Essex, just to the south of Braintree, on 24 February 1594/5, son of William Stebbins [GMB 3:1750-53]. William Stebbins had probably moved to Braintree by 1610, and his son Edward is probably the man of that name who was sidesman at Braintree in 1625 [TAG 31:191-201].

5) **Joseph Loomis** "late of Brayntree in the County of Essex, woollendraper," sailed to New England in 1638 on the *Susan & Ellen* and settled at Windsor [Lechford 137-8; Dawes-Gates 2:566-72]. His wife was the sister of JOHN WHITE of Messing, Essex, who came to New England on the *Lyon* in 1632 and resided at Cambridge, Hartford and Hadley [GMB 3:1976-79].

Bob Anderson <proband@comcast.net>
Sandi Hewlett