

Religious History

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Patronage and Incumbents

A canon of the abbey, William Phelippes or Phelpes, was made rector of St. John the Baptist after the dissolution.¹ John Hooper, the evangelical Bishop of Gloucester, recorded in his 1551 visitation that Phelpes' minister William Badcoke knew where to find the Commandants but could not repeat them, could repeat the articles of faith but could not prove them in scripture and could recite the Lord's Prayer. Phelpes was conversant with all three.² Hooper later had Phelpes sign a denial of all doctrines of transubstantiation, but after Hooper was deposed in 1555, Phelpes reverted to professing his earlier beliefs.³ The rectory and advowson (although not the great tithes of the rectory) were granted to Sir Thomas and George Tresham in 1551.⁴ It appears that Tresham never exercised his right of appointing the minister.⁵ The rectory soon passed to the heirs of Anthony Bouchier and during his son Thomas' minority, custody of the rectory was granted to William Thomas in 1553.⁶ Phelpes died in 1558/9.⁷ After Phelpes, Cirencester experienced a period of instability as 11 ministers served the parish before the turn of the century.⁸

Thomas Marshall became curate in 1558.⁹ A return made by the Bishop of Gloucester then showed the rectory impropriated to Sir Thomazin Thomas and Sir Thomas Perpointe.¹⁰ John Perpoynt was curate in 1564.¹¹ John Adams was rector in 1566.¹² The next curate William Aldsworth was complained about by parishioners for his excessive doctrinal radicalism and refusal to administer communion according to the Book of Common Prayer.¹³ Aldsworth was dead by January 1575, when his inventory was valued at £83 11d.¹⁴ He was succeeded by Thomas Woodlande, who was called before the consistory court in 1575 for his refusal to wear a surplice, although his case was deferred, and he was still curate in 1576.¹⁵ Upon the death of Thomas Bouchier in 1579, no

¹ Hockaday Abs. CLV, 12 Feb. 1540; GA, D2525/R5.

² J. Gairdner (ed.), *Bishop Hooper's Visitation of Gloucester* (London, 1904), 111.

³ J. Strype, *Memorial of the Most Reverend Father in God Thomas Cranmer, Sometime Lord Archbishop of Canterbury*, vol. II (1812), 902–4; GA, D10820/B7-1-j; F.D. Price, 'Gloucester Diocese under Bishop Hooper, 1551-3', *Trans. BGAS* 60 (1938), 125.

⁴ Cal. Pat. 1550-53, 202; Baddeley, *Cirencester*, 228n; Rudder, *Cirencester*, 245.

⁵ GA, P86/1/IN/3/6.

⁶ Cal. Pat. 1553, 4.

⁷ Hockaday Abs CLVI, 13 Feb. 1559.

⁸ D. Rollison, *Commune, Country and Commonwealth: the People of Cirencester, 1117-1643* (Woodbridge, 2011), 113.

⁹ TNA, E179/28/2.

¹⁰ Baddeley, *Cirencester*, 296–7.

¹¹ TNA, E179/28/3.

¹² GA, GDR 22.

¹³ F.D. Price (ed.), *The Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes Within the Dioceses of Bristol and Gloucester, 1574* (1972), 37, 65; Rollison, *Commune, Country and Commonwealth*, 111.

¹⁴ Hockaday Abs CLVI, 23 January 1575.

¹⁵ GA, GDR 37, 25; GDR 39.

specific provision was made in his will for the rectory and advowson of Cirencester and it passed to the Crown.¹⁶

John Mortimer appeared as curate at a visitation in 1580.¹⁷ John Stone was later said to be curate in 1581, but certainly was in 1584, when the Gloucester Consistory Court would not grant him a marriage licence until Ann Bearde of 'Bodbourne' was called to prosecute him in a matrimonial cause.¹⁸ Nicholas Kecke was recorded as curate in a subsidy list of 1585.¹⁹ During the late 1580s the fiery preacher Philip Jones was probably curate in Cirencester (preacher and minister were used interchangeably, although he was possibly unlicensed), delivering sermons which celebrated poor men and excoriated the rich for their ungodliness.²⁰ Jones was brought before the Gloucester Consistory Court several times in 1586-7 for offences including preaching without a licence. He was excommunicated and then reinstated early in 1587.²¹ He was then accused of not following the Book of Common Prayer and refusing to baptise two children. By the end of the year he had left Cirencester.²² Henry Bishop was named in a subsidy list as curate in 1588 and was also vicar of Down Ampney from 1590 to 1603.²³ Henry Butler appears in the burial register as minister, having died in 1592.²⁴ Heymo Leigh was curate in 1594, followed by Richard Dyer in 1599.²⁵ John Burgoyne was appointed curate in 1612, with the unlicensed John Smith as his assistant.²⁶

Cirencester was recorded as a rectory impropriate in 1603. It was farmed by Mr Butcher (presumably Bouchier) of Barnsley and the curate lived on 'the courtesy of the inhabitants' as there was no stipend.²⁷ In 1626 some part of the rectory at Cirencester, including several tithes, was bought for £350 by a group of London Puritans dedicated to promoting Calvinistic doctrine known as the lay feoffees, who made it one of their earliest purchases.²⁸ Their purpose was to establish lectures in market towns like Cirencester where they would have the greatest reach.²⁹ However, the feoffees had difficulty in removing John Burgoyne from his post, as they needed the consent of the bishop of Gloucester, who had the right of presentation to the living. They consequently tried to make him quit by 'wearying' through lack of funds, or by harassment, and eventually offered him £30, the cure until Michaelmas 1627 and the Easter book to leave.³⁰ They later argued that Burgoyne was a legitimate target for removal as he had made 'a factious Sermon

¹⁶ GA, D2525/R6.

¹⁷ Baddeley, *Cirencester*, 297.

¹⁸ GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, II, f.36; Hockaday Abs CLVI, 13 June 1584.

¹⁹ TNA, E179/28/28

²⁰ GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.43; P. Jones, *Certaine sermons preached of late at Ciceter ... By Philip Iones, preacher of the word of God in the same towne*. (1588).

²¹ Hockaday Abs CLVI, 4 Oct. 1586, 11 Jan.1587.

²² Hockaday Abs CLVI, 28 June 1587, 11 Nov. 1587.

²³ TNA, E179/28/31; GA, GDR 27a.

²⁴ GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.43.

²⁵ TNA, E179/29/43; GA, GDR 73.

²⁶ GA, GDR 115.

²⁷ *Eccl. Misc.*, 93.

²⁸ I.M. Calder (ed.), *Activities of the Puritan Faction of the Church of England 1625-33* (1957), xv, 9, 37, 126, 147; E.W. Kirby, 'The lay feoffees: a study in militant Puritanism', *Journal of Modern History*, 14:1 (1942), 11.

²⁹ Calder (ed.), *Activities of the Puritan Faction*, 53; Kirby, 'The lay feoffees', 12.

³⁰ Calder (ed.), *Activities of the Puritan Faction*, xix, 55, 56, 80-1; Kirby, 'The lay feoffees', 15.

against the then Acts of State', as well as being more generally unfit for office.³¹

Alexander Gregory was installed in his place and received all of the profits of the office, as well as £60 in extra payments. However, the revenue of the church was small, he was not provided with a house and he had to find a curate to serve under him at a chapel belonging to his cure.³² It is likely that the Cirencester lecture was instrumental in bringing down the lay feoffees. After a court case precipitated by opposition from Church and king, and concern about the political implications of Puritan lectures having influence in parliamentary boroughs, several impropriations including Cirencester were turned over to Thomas Turner and John Juxon, who administered them for the King.³³ Gregory was in any case appointed rector in 1640, when the taxable value of the church was set at £5 per year.³⁴ Gregory was kidnapped by the Royalists in the civil war and taken with a large contingent of prisoners to Oxford in 1643.³⁵ He resurfaced later in the year when he was made vicar of Camberwell (Surrey), where he was visited by three Cirencester parishioners at least twice in 1647 or 1648.³⁶ He was also made minister of Lambeth in 1646.³⁷ A rate was made in 1647 by the Cirencester vestry for Gregory's maintenance and one of the churchwardens was paid to collect his tithes.³⁸ By 1650 Gregory was back in Cirencester where he received the annual profits of £20, later augmented by £30 taken from the rents and profits of the rectory of Berkeley and another £12 from the rectories of Kempsford and Welford.³⁹ John Stone (presumably the man who became MP for the town in 1654) received £10 for the use of the minister of Cirencester from the sale of dean and chapter lands and £75 from the sale of bishops' land for the same, but named as Alexander Gregory.⁴⁰ A report on augmentations of 1655 lists £30 going to the minister of Cirencester.⁴¹

Gregory died in 1666, but had been succeeded in 1663 by Thomas Carles, who remained in his previous post as rector of Barnsley.⁴² A terrier of tithes from 1666 noted that all the Baunton tithes in the parish of Cirencester were allowed to the rector of Baunton.⁴³ The vestry granted Carles £4 per year towards the rent of his house in 1665, but urgently wished to provide him with a house in 1673.⁴⁴ William Jackson was assistant curate to Carles from 1674 and after Carles' death in 1675 was paid £5 for acting as curate and the parish covered the rent of Carles' widow.⁴⁵

³¹ Calder (ed.), *Activities of the Puritan Faction*, 89.

³² Calder, *Activities of the Puritan Faction*, 13, 40.

³³ Kirby, 'The lay feoffees', 22.

³⁴ *CSP Dom.* Apr – Aug 1640, 80.

³⁵ *A particular relation of the action before Cyrencester (or Cycester) in Gloucestershire, taken in on Candlemas day, 1642, by part of His Majesties army under the conduct of His Highnesse, Prince Rupert ... written by an eye-witnesse* (1643), 13.

³⁶ *CJ*, III, 31 Aug. 1643, 222–224; GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.64.

³⁷ *LJ*, VIII, 5 June 1646, 358–360.

³⁸ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.63.

³⁹ Hockaday Abs. 66; Lambeth Palace Library, MS 972, f.513 & MS 995, f.610.

⁴⁰ W.A. Shaw, *A History of the English Church During the Civil Wars and Under the Commonwealth II* (1900), 531, 565.

⁴¹ Shaw, *History of the English Church During the Civil Wars and Under the Commonwealth II*, 502.

⁴² GA, P86/1/IN/1/2, f.253; GDR 208, 72; *VCH Glos.* VII, 13–21.

⁴³ GA, P86/1/IN/3/9.

⁴⁴ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.75 and 81.

⁴⁵ GA, GDR 208; P86/1/IN/6/3, f.44; P86/1/VE/2/1, f. 82–83.

Jeremiah Gregory, born in Cirencester in 1650, was the son of the minister Alexander Gregory.⁴⁶ Jeremiah was appointed curate by the bishop of Gloucester in place of Carles and also given £4 towards his rent by the vestry, as well as a further £4 for reading morning prayer.⁴⁷ By 1681 the various donations made for the minister to give annual sermons amounted to £13.⁴⁸ In 1690 the vestry paid £20 towards defending a suit against Gregory brought by Charles Badham.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, that year Gregory left Cirencester in ill health for the vicarage of Berkeley at the behest of his friend the earl of Berkeley and died in 1691.⁵⁰

Joseph Harrison was educated at Oxford and was assistant to his relation and predecessor Jeremiah Gregory before becoming minister in 1690.⁵¹ Another candidate was suggested by the nonjuring Bishop Frampton of Gloucester, but the dependence of the curate on the vestry led John Hough, the bishop of Oxford who was administering the diocese, to appoint their preferred candidate.⁵² The vestry continued to pay Harrison, as they had Gregory, £4 for reading morning prayer and £4 towards his rent, with an extra 40s.⁵³ Donations for sermons continued to augment the minister's earning further, particularly the £100 donated by John Master in 1695 for saying morning prayer.⁵⁴

There was still no house belonging to the minister, so in 1695 the churchwardens purchased and repaired a house previously belonging to John Webb for just over £204 which the minister rented for £1 6s. 8d. Harrison was asked to forego the £6 per year previously given to the minister for rent.⁵⁵ In 1698 Mrs Winifred Master gave £50 towards augmenting the living of the minister.⁵⁶ Sir Robert Atkyns gave another £30 a year arising from rent of Oakley wood in 1699 for the same, on which the minister did not have to pay the poor rate.⁵⁷

A terrier of tithes from 1704 set out the income of the curate, stating that there were no glebe lands and the abbey lands remained tithe free, which Atkyns estimated to be worth £300 in 1712.⁵⁸ From 1710, the money laid out on the minister's house was recorded in the churchwardens' accounts.⁵⁹ In 1712 the curacy, with augmentations and perquisites, was worth £150 a year. An impropriation within the tithing of Chesterton worth £60 a year belonged to Mr Coxwell and an impropriation within the tithing of Wiggold worth £20 a year belonged to Mr Georges, but the tithe of hay and tithes arising arising out of both tithings belonged to the curate. The tithes and legal dues owed to Cirencester were worth £30 a year. Gift-sermons had a yearly value of £12 13s. 4d. and John Master gave £5 for reading morning prayers. A further £15 a year was available from

⁴⁶ GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.44.

⁴⁷ GA, GDR 208; P86/1/VE/2/1 f.82.

⁴⁸ GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.5.

⁴⁹ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.99.

⁵⁰ GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.44 and 108.

⁵¹ GA, GDR 226a; P86/1/IN/6/1, f.5.

⁵² GA, P86/1/IN/4/1.

⁵³ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.100.

⁵⁴ GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.7.

⁵⁵ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.102.

⁵⁶ GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.18.

⁵⁷ GA, P86/1/IN/3/1; P86/1/VE/2/1, f.104.

⁵⁸ GA, P86/1/IN/3/5; Atkyns, *Glos.*, 342.

⁵⁹ GA, P86a/CW/2/1.

a fund set up by Dr Clarke, late Dean of Winchester, for improving the ecclesiastical benefices in market towns, provided matching local contributions were raised. A £30 annuity was thus purchased by a group led by the Masters and charged on the tithing of Oakley.⁶⁰ Dean Clarke's trust continued to pay an annuity to the minister of Cirencester until at least 1893.⁶¹ The curate had to pay a fee farm rent of 5s. 4d. to the Crown.⁶²

Harrison spent the rest of his life in Cirencester but accumulated several more positions; he was made rector of Daglingworth in 1729, chaplain to Lord Bathurst in 1732 and rural dean of Cirencester in 1739. He died in 1753, having served as curate for 63 years. He published several works including an address to the dissenters of Cirencester upon the death of their minister in 1697 and an exposition of the catechism for the use of his parishioners that ran to at least four editions. He was buried with his wife Catharine in the chancel of the parish church.⁶³

Samuel Johnson was appointed in 1753.⁶⁴ He was soon plunged into a series of disputes, firstly with a parishioner about the burial of his child in the graveyard, and then concerning the election or appointment of various officers including the gravedigger, churchwardens and combined offices of vestry clerk and sexton.⁶⁵ These disputes were part of a wider struggle between Lord Bathurst and a group coalesced around the church that extended into local and national politics. Johnson's association with Bathurst and the bishop of Gloucester, both courtiers who secured him his appointment, set him at odds with the anti-court townspeople.⁶⁶ He was adjudged by a contemporary curate Joseph Kilner to have been prone to 'a hurry and confusion of spirits' which made him unfit to deal with the contentions he became embroiled in, although his 'worst defect . . . was his reading and preaching'.⁶⁷

The ongoing disagreements eventually led to the removal of the minister. Martin Stafford Smith was inducted into the vicarage of Cirencester in June 1778, made void by lapse.⁶⁸ He was joined by an assistant curate, John Collinson, in 1781.⁶⁹ Stafford Smith had been perpetual curate of Maisemore since 1776 and resigned the curacy of Cirencester in 1789, when he was made rector of Uphill and Breane.⁷⁰ William Shippen Willes was made perpetual curate in 1789.⁷¹ Another assistant, James Buckoll, was appointed in 1797.⁷² By 1800 the curacy was worth around £200 a year.⁷³ Willes was given a piece of plate by the vestry to mark his retirement in 1806.⁷⁴ Willes donated a velvet cloth for the communion table and two prayer books, prompting the vestry to

⁶⁰ Atkyns, *Glos.*, 344.

⁶¹ GA, P86/1/IN/3/7.

⁶² GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.2.

⁶³ GA, D10820/B7-1-h, W.J. Cripps, *Pedigree of the Family of Harrison* (1881), 12; P86/1/IN/6/3, f.109.

⁶⁴ GA, GDR 282a.

⁶⁵ GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, II, ff.3–7.

⁶⁶ GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, II, f.39.

⁶⁷ GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, II, f.40.

⁶⁸ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1 f.178; GDR 292a.

⁶⁹ GA, GDR 307.

⁷⁰ CCEd 40605.

⁷¹ TNA, E 331/GLOUC/40.

⁷² GA, GDR 333.

⁷³ Rudder, *Cirencester*, 254.

⁷⁴ TNA, E 331/GLOUC/44; GA, P86/1/VE/2/1 f.207.

acknowledge, not for the first time, his ‘exemplary’ service.⁷⁵

Henry Anthony Pye leased a messuage adjoining the parsonage for £75 a year from Thomas Master in 1806 and just over two weeks later was made perpetual curate of Cirencester by patronage of the bishop of Gloucester.⁷⁶ James Grooby was master of the grammar school and an assistant curate from 1810.⁷⁷ Pye, who was made a prebendary of Worcester cathedral in 1818,⁷⁸ employed two curates from the 1820s and considered himself as non-resident.⁷⁹ The curates were Thomas Keble, appointed in 1823 and enjoined to reside in Cirencester, and Lawrence Latham, appointed in 1824, when he was also made curate of Baunton. Both men were paid a salary of £105 a year.⁸⁰ The churchwardens agreed to exchange the house occupied by the vicar for lands owned by Jane Master in the parish of Stratton in 1824.⁸¹

Religious Life

Following the dissolution of the abbey, Cirencester’s religious life continued to be catholic in its practices and the local oligarchy has been described as ‘survivalist’ in their outlook.⁸² The evangelical bishop of Gloucester, John Hooper, visited Cirencester in 1551. He aggressively pursued the transgressions of all classes of people in the consistory court and had the vicar, William Phelpes, sign a denial of all doctrines of transubstantiation.⁸³ Penances were usually performed in two places, one secular (including Cirencester market), the other ecclesiastical.⁸⁴

Following the dismissal of Hooper by Mary I, indifferent administration was an ongoing problem both locally and throughout the diocese, particularly under ‘the pathetically weak, irresolute and impoverished Bishop Richard Cheyney (1562-79)’.⁸⁵ Spiritual decline was reflected in the physical decay of the church, the quire being in a poor state in 1563.⁸⁶ In 1567 parishioners complained that they only had one priest serving them, where there used to be two priests and a deacon for the rectory alone.⁸⁷ By 1570 the roof and glass windows in the choir of the chancel were so ‘ruinous’ that no one could sit there if it was raining. Giles Selwyn had purchased the tithes of the rectory making him responsible for the repair, which the consistory court commanded he carry out by the feast of St Michael.⁸⁸ Soon afterwards Selwyn was excommunicated after showing contempt for

⁷⁵ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1 f.208.

⁷⁶ GA, P86/1/IN/3/2; TNA, E 331/GLOUC/44; GDR 334b.

⁷⁷ GA, GDR 333.

⁷⁸ T.D. Hardy and J. Le Neve (eds.), *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae* III (Oxford, 1854), 83.

⁷⁹ GA, P86/1/IN/8/3.

⁸⁰ GA, GDR 341 and 342.

⁸¹ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.234.

⁸² Rollison, *Commune, Country and Commonwealth*, 98-101.

⁸³ F.D. Price, ‘Gloucester Diocese under Bishop Hooper, 1551-3’, *Trans. BGAS* 60 (1938), 93-4, 125; John Strype, *Memorial of the Most Reverend Father in God Thomas Cranmer, Sometime Lord Archbishop of Canterbury II* (1812), 902-4; GA, D10820/B7-1-j.

⁸⁴ Price, ‘Gloucester Diocese under Bishop Hooper, 1551-3’, 90.

⁸⁵ F.D. Price, ‘Bishop Bullingham and Chancellor Blackleech: a diocese divided’, *Trans. BGAS* 91 (1972), 175.

⁸⁶ Hockaday Abs CLVI.

⁸⁷ Rollison, *Commune, Country and Commonwealth*, 108.

⁸⁸ GA, GDR 26, 135.

the judge and court, and for contumacy.⁸⁹ A choir window was still or newly broken in 1572.⁹⁰ The late 1580s saw a revival in the parish of Cirencester, not least because of the death of the long-serving bailiff Robert Strange, who had avoided conflict by not enforcing Sunday observance.⁹¹ After the church was again described as in a poor state of repair in 1585, some repairs were carried out.⁹² There was also a financial resurgence, beginning with Philip Marner's bequest in 1587 of a tenement with two gardens in Abbot Street, worth an annual rent of £3 13s. 4d. Money was to be distributed to the poor on the first Friday of Lent, with 6s. 8d. reserved for a sermon on the same day.⁹³ Prior to 1587, the parish was left with only the bequests of Alice Avening and John Weobly worth £3 6s. 8d. and donated in 1498.⁹⁴ In 1599 Margaret Roades of Cirencester was found guilty of witchcraft and was excommunicated.⁹⁵

From the first records of the Cirencester vestry book around 1614 there were indications that the vestry was determined to keep the church in a better state of repair, with regular inspections of the fabric stipulated and a plumber engaged to renew the lead on the roof.⁹⁶ During the early 17th century, greater social segregation, discipline and religiosity were a concern for the congregation. According to the churchwardens' orders of 1615, no seat in the church was to be given to a new occupant until the minister and six of the better sort of the parish had decided that they were of equal status to the previous occupant.⁹⁷ In 1618 the instructions for the beadle stipulated that he should warn parents not to bring noisy children to church and offer correction if they did.⁹⁸ Three gates were installed around the seats in the aisles in the body of the church, presumably to separate off parishioners of higher social standing.⁹⁹ The vestry ordered that unruly boys should be prevented from disturbing the sermon by locking them in the vestry or belfry in 1641 and decided that the church account could no longer be published on a Sunday in 1642.¹⁰⁰

Vestry holdings continued to grow, to 13 houses and allocations of £420 a year by 1630 and £661 by 1645.¹⁰¹ Three church inventories of 1614, 1633 and 1673 show that the amount of church plate remained the same throughout the century, consisting of two silver flagons, two silver cups used for communion, and a further lesser silver cup. Additions included Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* and a velvet pulpit cloth.¹⁰² Disruption to the religious life in Cirencester was evident during the civil war, when the church was used to house Parliamentary prisoners before the Royalists took them to

⁸⁹ GA, GDR 26, 139.

⁹⁰ Hockaday Abs CLVI, 22 October 1572.

⁹¹ Rollison, *Commune, Country and Commonwealth*, 190.

⁹² E.A. Fuller, *The Parish Church of St. John Baptist, Cirencester* (rev. edn., Cirencester, 1932?), 17.

⁹³ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.2; Hockaday Abs CLVI, 1587.

⁹⁴ Hockaday Abs CLVI, 1598.

⁹⁵ GDR 87, 13 February 1599/1600.

⁹⁶ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.42.

⁹⁷ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.43.

⁹⁸ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.40 and 44.

⁹⁹ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.46.

¹⁰⁰ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.60 and 61.

¹⁰¹ Rollison, *Commune, Country and Commonwealth*, 192.

¹⁰² GA, D10820/L3-1-b, S.E. Harrison, *The Cirencester Vestry Book During the 17th Century* (1914), 19–23; W.J. Cripps, 'On the ancient church plate at Cirencester', *Trans. BGAS* 2 (1877–8), 92–103.

Oxford.¹⁰³ The standing in the south porch was leased early in the 17th century and then in 1678 to Edward and William Evans for 20s. a year, with a fine of two leather buckets.¹⁰⁴ The 'Vice' (probably the parvise although the word's derivation may relate to a newel staircase) was assigned for use by the vestry clerk in the 17th century and the upper floor for use as a town hall in 1672.¹⁰⁵

The organ was erected in 1683, funded by contributions from the inhabitants, and was extensively repaired and improved in 1717.¹⁰⁶ The first seat book for Cirencester church began in 1685, by which time there had probably been few changes in seating since the Reformation.¹⁰⁷ In 1704, the vestry described the church as 'out of repair' and introduced a new rate to fix it.¹⁰⁸ In 1706 a gallery was erected on the north side of the chancel by Allen Bathurst to replace a 'lesser' one. An earlier gallery stood to its east which was erected by Sir Anthony Hungerford. The font was erected thanks to contributions from the women of the town.¹⁰⁹ The seats were numbered in 1718 with the erection of a gallery and wainscoting, and no longer claimed by customary right to avoid future controversies.¹¹⁰ Mrs Powell left the grant of the churchyard and adjoining gardens to her husband's nephew Robert George in her will of 1722, reserving the right of burial to Cirencester residents.¹¹¹

In September 1734 the vestry agreed to raise a rate equal to the poor rate for 25 weeks to pay for the casting of an eleventh bell for the church.¹¹² In January 1738 the vestry met to consider a proposal to add bell towers to the parish church. After taking a month to consult with the parish the vestry decided that, as the church was in good repair and that no bell towers had been in place in living memory other than one which was blown off by the wind, none need be added.¹¹³ In November 1747 a rate of 6d. in the pound was set for repairing the church and organ.¹¹⁴ In March 1752 £7 10s. was set aside for repairing the organ.¹¹⁵ In 1765 a poor rate for repairing the decaying church was set at 5d. in the pound.¹¹⁶ Changes were made to the seating plan and approved by bishop's faculty in 1780.¹¹⁷ A new organ was installed in the church in 1790, paid for by the subscription of several inhabitants.¹¹⁸

New regulations were occasionally introduced to manage the graveyard. In 1791 the minister and churchwardens set a new fee of £5 5s. for obtaining a grave for anyone who did not purchase a

¹⁰³ Rollison, *Commune, Country and Commonwealth*, 236.

¹⁰⁴ Fuller, *The Parish Church of St. John Baptist, Cirencester*, 19; GA, P86a/CW/2/1, f.8.

¹⁰⁵ Fuller, *The Parish Church of St. John Baptist, Cirencester*, 20.

¹⁰⁶ GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.5.

¹⁰⁷ GA, P86/1/IN/6/4, ff.1–6.

¹⁰⁸ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1 f.106.

¹⁰⁹ GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.5.

¹¹⁰ GA, P86/1/IN/6/4, ff.1–6; P86/1/IN/4/2.

¹¹¹ GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.16.

¹¹² GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.118.

¹¹³ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.121.

¹¹⁴ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.139.

¹¹⁵ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.146.

¹¹⁶ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.161.

¹¹⁷ GA, P86/1/IN/6/4, ff.1–6.

¹¹⁸ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.191.

plot when they were living.¹¹⁹ The churchyard was extended 45 ft. into the surrounding gardens in 1792, to remedy the long-standing complaint that there was not enough room for burials.¹²⁰ The new piece of ground was consecrated in 1793.¹²¹ The church had a revenue of around £67 in the late 18th century, largely from the rent of houses in the town, and for the most part spent on church repairs.¹²²

In 1803 the vestry petitioned for a bishop's faculty, giving permission to build the gallery on the south side of the church. There were to be no family seats in the gallery, unless the minister wished to exchange his present seat for one there. The new gallery was to be modelled on the existing one at the north side of the church and would cost £230.¹²³ To increase the number of free sittings in the church, a new gallery on the south side of the church was planned in 1822 with room for 130 people. The west gallery was also to be extended over the belfry, with £150 supplied by subscription and the rest by the Society for Promoting the Enlargement and Building of Churches and Chapels, with any shortfall being made up by the parish.¹²⁴ A Bible Association began in 1813 and continued to meet, with its thirty-first anniversary held in 1844.¹²⁵

Dissent and Recusancy

Protestant Non-conformity

This section is not yet available for comment.

Catholics [by Jan Broadway]

In 1676 no papists were returned for Cirencester in the Compton census¹²⁶, although Bishop Benson recorded there being 5 Catholics in the town in the second quarter of the 18th century¹²⁷ In 1715 Giles Harding, a tailor who held a fourth share in the Swan Inn for life, was listed as a non-juror.¹²⁸ A moiety of the manor of Wiggold was held by the catholic Talbot family, but the property was leased.¹²⁹

¹¹⁹ GA, P86a/VE/4/2.

¹²⁰ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.192.

¹²¹ GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.16.

¹²² GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.3 and 8.

¹²³ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.204.

¹²⁴ GA, P86/1/VE/2/1, f.232.

¹²⁵ GA, P86/1/IN/8/4.

¹²⁶ *Compton Census*, 541.

¹²⁷ *Bishop Benson's Survey of the Diocese of Gloucester 1735-1750*, ed. J. Fendley, (Gloucestershire Record Series 13, BGAS 2000), 149.

¹²⁸ E.E.Estcourt & J.O. Payne eds., *The English Catholic Nonjurors of 1715* (1885), 69.

¹²⁹ See manors and estates.