

Chapter 26

People from the Parish Records

The Parish Registers

From 1537, by law, the established Church has been required to keep records of all baptisms, marriages and burials that take place within the parish boundaries of its churches. Technically, that included people of all denominations or of no faith at all. Dissenters and Roman Catholics tended to ignore the baptisms, and later kept their own records. In the case of marriages, at some stage, the only legal registrars were the Anglican parish priests, (Quakers and Jews were later granted an exemption). Therefore all legally valid marriages according to the law of the land at one time were conducted in Anglican parish churches. In effect, the civil state used the parochial clergy as unpaid civil servants, not just primarily to save money, but because the parish priest was often the only person who was literate. The use of the word 'parson' (the old pronunciation of 'person') dates back to well before 1537, to the times when even the aristocracy, as primarily soldiers, were often barely literate. The parish priest was a 'clerk-in-holy orders', hence the reason most of the old parish records are still in the care of the local church.

In 1837, Civil Registration of births, marriages and deaths, and marriage by civil ceremony became both possible and legal. Parish churches are still required to keep records of all baptisms, marriages and burials that take place on their premises. Although some of the older records have been deposited at Northampton County Record Office (NCRO) for safe custody, the legal records still exist as follows:

Castor: from 1538 – baptisms and marriages; from 1547 – burials.

Sutton: from 1758 – marriages; from 1763 – burials; from 1770 – baptisms.

Upton: from 1770 – baptisms and marriages; from 1855 – burials.

Note: In the case of Sutton and Upton prior to these dates all records were made and kept at Castor.

Marholm: from 1538 (The first 33 years having been re-written, the originals being lost).

However, the records kept by parishes are far more extensive than just those of baptisms, marriages and burials. The parish system was used to administer nearly all local matters including the making of Militia Lists and Muster Rolls, updating the Tithe Rolls and administering The Poor Law. The churchwardens were not just parish church officers, but also Bishops' officers in the parish and had additional civil, non-religious responsibilities. Other records include manorial court records; the church was Lord of the Manor in Castor, Ailsworth and Sutton for most of their history. Furthermore, all inscriptions about people, and therefore memorials in churches and on gravestones, can be seen as part of our parish records, as they all provide sources of information for historians.



Fig 26a. Thomas Dove Rector of Castor 1613.

Records of Baptisms, Marriages and Deaths

At first the details recorded were quite scant, merely a name and a date, and the event. For example: in the reign of Queen Mary Tudor in 1556 '*Robert Wyldbore was baptised on 16 October*'. By the next century more detail is included. In 1613, we read that '*John Fitzwilliam son of William Fitzwilliam was baptized 24 February*'. In 1677 '*Dorothy the baseborn daughter of Susannah Wilson was baptised 31 March*'. In 1744, we read of an historic marriage entry in Castor records which was to unite the Milton Fitzwilliams with the descendants of Thomas Wentworth, Lord Strafford, (Charles I's general who was impeached and executed by Parliament). It brought the name Wentworth into the Fitzwilliam family, as well as considerable estates in Yorkshire and ownership of the largest private house in Europe. '*The Right Honourable William Earl Fitzwilliam of the Kingdom of Ireland and Baron Fitzwilliam of Milton in the County of Northampton married the 22 day of June 1744 the Right Honourable the Lady Anne Wentworth, Eldest Daughter of Thomas, Earl of Malton*'.

These records are signed on each page by the priest and churchwardens. For example in 1607 '*Thomas Sryorhy Curate and Thomas Bate and Eusebius Catesbie, gent Churchwardens*'. In addition the name of the monarch and the year of

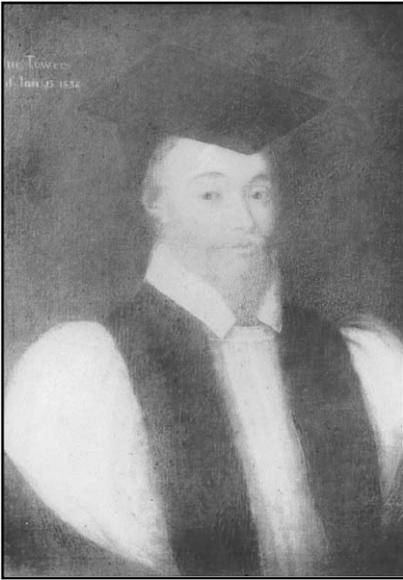


Fig 26b. John Towers, Bishop of Peterborough and Rector of Castor, who was charged by Cromwell with High-Treason in 1646, and committed to the Tower London where he died 10th January 1648.

his reign are included on every page. '30 January 1649. King Charles II begins his reign'. So wrote the curate at Castor, although it was not actually the case. The 30th January 1649 was the day King Charles I was executed - the day England became a republic under Cromwell and his Parliament. The curate was showing his own political sympathies and continued to annotate records with the year of King Charles II's reign throughout the period of the republican Commonwealth. This showed some courage, especially when one recalls that the Rector of Castor, Bishop John Towers, had already been imprisoned under Cromwell's orders for High Treason and died in the Tower of London.

Later, more details are included, and records of marriages came to contain not just the name, age and condition of the bride and groom, but also their address, and the name and occupation of their fathers, as well as the names of the witnesses. Similarly, baptism records include not only the name of the child, but its parents' names, addresses and occupations.

In addition to the Registers, we also have extracts of the old manor court and abbey records covering the routine administration of the church and manors. For example, in 1295 a fine was levied on John de Assforthby, the Rector of Castor, for taking hunting dogs into the royal forest without warrant [1]. We know from John Hales' lecture he was by no means the last hunting parson! In a letter of 1308, Abbot Godfrey wrote to John, Bishop of Lincoln, requesting him to institute William of Melton, chaplain, to the church of Castor, to which the Abbot had right of presentation [2]

Parish Officers' Local Records

In the year 1999, while clearing out the vestry at Castor, an old candle box was found, containing records primarily to do with the Poor Law, Resettlement Orders and Bastardy Orders, going back to 1714. These not only provide information for people researching family trees, but also a valuable social record of life in those days. They have been transcribed and indexed. The originals have been placed in the care of NCRO, but copies are kept in the Parish Archives.

Settlement Examinations

Settlement Examinations provide a great deal of information for historians and family tree researchers. Here is an extract from one example: 'On 17 July 1794 William Brown of Castor, cordwainer was examined. He was born at Castor. When he was about 13 years old his father let him to Thomas Bate of Castor, a farmer for 1 year. ...The next year he served Mr Pauling of Castor, farmer... after serving Tho Gibbins at Nunton in the parish of Maxey for one whole year, he went again to Eye... he was then bound apprentice to James Hanger, cordwainer in the parish of Castor...he has never gained any legal settlement since. He has a wife Elizabeth, a daughter Elizabeth aged 11, a son Samuel aged 9, a daughter Frances aged 4, and a daughter Rachel aged 1 year. Signed by JPs Rev Christopher Hodgson (Rector of Marholm and Curate of Castor), John Weddred Clerks, William Brown made his mark.'

Bastardy Orders

It is quite clear that in agrarian societies bastardy was not so much a moral issue but an economic one. If an unmarried mother had a child, their upkeep became the responsibility of the parish. In order to reduce costs, the local court would attempt to establish the name of the father of the child based on an allegation by the mother. The alleged father was questioned on oath (and to be fair, it seems they readily came clean). A



Fig 26c. Sam Brown, born 1835 died 1925, farm bailiff and churchwarden at Sutton; what changes he must have seen.

court order would then be made for maintenance. These records can be useful for people researching their ancestry. Until recently it was not permitted to put the name of the father of an illegitimate child on birth or baptism records, even if he wished it. The Bastardy Orders can go some way towards remedying such a genealogical dead-end.

Footmen at Milton seem to be in court more frequently than some to answer such allegations (maybe it was their smart uniform that attracted the girls). But the records show that such activity was spread across all social classes, and before the respectable times of the late Victorian period, it was not a matter of shame so much as a fact of life. For example, the Filiation Order made in the case of Anne Hallam (having admitted on examination the name of the father) 20 April 1822 reads as follows:

'Anne Hallam was delivered of a female bastard child at the house of William Hill in Castor on 15 Feb 1822, which child is living & chargeable on the parish of Castor. The JPs, the Rev William Strong & the Rev Christopher Hodgson (Rector of Marholm and Curate of Castor) adjudged John Gascoigne, a married man, servant man of Milton in the parish of Castor to be the father. They ordered him to pay 10s for the relief of the child up to the date of the order, 2s for the keeping of the said child as long as the child is chargeable to the parish, £2 to the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor of Castor for expenses incident to the birth, and 11s costs.'

The village doctor was just as human. *'On 12 July 1834, Susannah, wife of Thomas Barr, late Susannah Fitzjohn, was delivered of a male bastard child on 10 Jul 1819, chargeable to the parish'*. The JPs adjudged *'Thomas Edward Baker, surgeon, to be the father'*. He had to pay *the Churchwardens 14s 6d for relief to date, 8s costs, and 2s a week for upkeep of the child'*. The system dealt with people without fear or favour it seems; footmen, farmers, squires, labourers and doctors, clergy and churchwardens. The Abbot of Peterborough had previously to issue a public apology for the number of women he had entertained at his Brig-mill in Castor parish. On 26 February 1791, Thomas Bate (from a well-established farming family in the village, as were the Wrights and Serjeants) was *'bound over in the sum of £40, before William Walgrave, Churchwarden of Castor, and Robert Wright, Overseer of the Poor'*, after Mary Sewell claimed that Mr Bate was the father of her son. The court case did not seem to affect Mr Thomas Bate's standing in the community.

Other Local Court Records

One of the oldest court records found in the collection was a settlement certificate for *'William Jackson and his wife Florence of Alesworth'* dated 18 Oct 1714. This was signed by *'Wm Tomson Churchwarden, Willm Setchell Overseer of the Poor and JPs W Fitzwilliam and T Fitzwilliam'* – presumably of Milton. The records also include Indentures for Children as Pauper Apprentices. This was to ensure that orphans and paupers' children learnt a trade and were able to support themselves as adults. Here is an example from 30 November 1744:

'Francis Procter, a poor child of Castor apprenticed to Athanasius Goodwin, miller of Castor, to serve until full age of 21 years, instructing in trade and occupation of a miller.' This would have been at Castor Mill, which still exists. It not only tells us the name of the miller, but also those of other dignitaries in the parish. It was signed by *William Bate and John Wright, Churchwardens of Castor*, and also by *JPs Henry Dove* (a descendant of Thomas Dove of Upton, Bishop and Rector of Castor, whose son William was Lord of the Manor of Upton) *and Wm Ash*, with witnesses *Danl Popplewell* (Popple is an old Castor name) and *John*

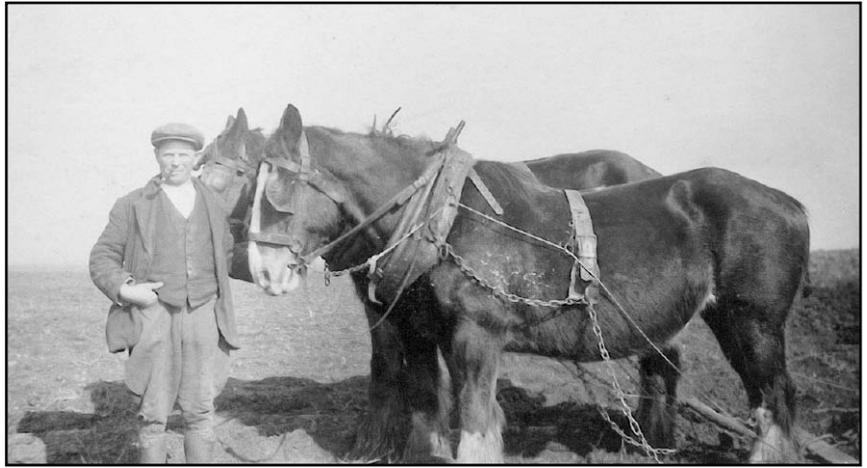


Fig 26d. Carlo Hill (father of Reg Hill) at rest while ploughing on Castor Heights c1935.

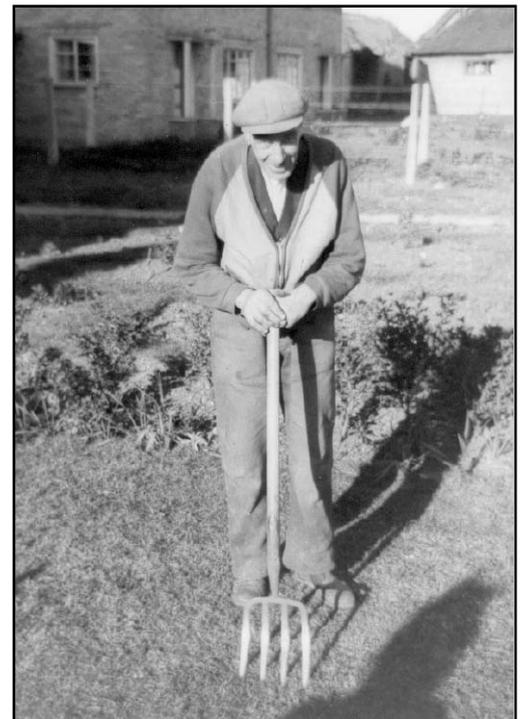


Fig 26e. Fred Hornsby, uncle of Lyn Bell, in his garden at Upton - the last man in our parishes to work a horse-drawn plough.



Fig 26f. 'A fine old gentleman' Len Sharpe, farmer and churchwarden, whose family have farmed here for centuries.



Fig 26g. Three winsome village girls outside 12 High Street Castor c1933: l-r Vera Gross née Hammond, Hazel Marsh nee Mann, Margaret Sharpe née Bell. The old lady second from the left is 'Grannie' (Elizabeth) Bell who was born in the 1860s.



Fig 26h. Vic Griffin with a Taylor's Transport lorry, before he set up on his own. The Griffins are an old village family.

Dunston. On another indenture, the witness is a *John Wyldebore* as JP - one of the oldest Castor names. Betsy Wyldebore of Ailsworth who died in September 2003 was the widow of the last Wyldbore still living in the village.

Returns and Other Records

Population Returns and Censuses

The populations for Castor, Ailsworth, Sutton and Upton are at Appendix 14. The figures show us how the villages remained remarkably static over the years. For example, in 1672 Upton's population was 58. It was at its largest in 1831 at 122, and today is 67. Castor and Ailsworth achieved their largest population in 1851 (772 and 381); by 1951 they were down to 546 and 248, only starting to rise again with the building of new houses in the late 1960s. Throughout the 19th century, Sutton's population remained fairly static, being 122 in 1831, and approximately the same today (It was 125 in 1451!). In 1801 the Government ordered all parish clergy to provide a breakdown of the numbers of births, marriages and deaths in each parish by gender for the whole of the 18th century. There is still a copy of that return in the parish records. (Appendix 15). From 1841, the Government ordered a census of the whole population by parish, the names of every individual and their age, address and occupation. This has carried on at ten-yearly intervals ever since, the only gap being in 1941 because of the war. An analysis of the 1881 census for Castor and Ailsworth is at Appendix 21.

Muster Rolls and Militia Rolls

The Muster Rolls give us the names of able bodied men in a village, and the weapons available for call-up in an emergency. They were forerunners to the later Militia Lists. They give some indication of the wealth of a parish, as well as the names of some of the male inhabitants. In 1536, Castor had to provide 'two archers Robert Curtes and Thomas Marshall, and four bylmen' (a bill-hook was a farm tool, basically a curved knife on a long pole), 'Henry Mosse, William Barnewell, John Wilson and Will Tyte, and to provide a horse and harness for one man'. Upton only had to provide three 'bilmen', and a harness. The complete roll for 1536 is at Appendix 8.

The Militia Lists give us much more information than the Muster Rolls. They include the names and occupations of all able-bodied males between the ages of 18 and 45 in the villages, as well as the names of the Parish Constables, who were responsible for compiling the lists. They also include comments, such as marital status, number of dependant children, and sometimes personal details; for example, in the 1762 list for Marholm, John Pacey, a victualer, was noted as 'very full shouldered' and John Read in the Sutton list as 'a cupper (cooper), lame'. We also learn from this list that John Stimson, maternal grandfather of John Clare, the poet, was a town shepherd in Castor. (Clare's mother was born in Castor.) The complete lists for the villages are at Appendices 9-13.

Tithe Rolls

The Tithe Rolls give us the names of all those eligible to pay tithes. The 1844 roll lists about 120 householders in Castor and Ailsworth, many of whom still have descendants in the village today for example Boyall, Coulson, Darby, Gibbons, Hornsby, Harris, Jakes, Kingston, Longfoot, Mossendew, Newborn, Popple, Sismey, Sharpe, Wildbore, and Winsworth. The 1847 Tithe Register includes the names of householders, whether tenant or landlord, and a description of the property. Extracts are at Appendices 16 and 17.

Inscriptions

The oldest inscription is that of 17th April 1124, recording the dedication of the rebuilt church at Castor, but the oldest inscription referring to a specific person is the 13th century gravestone of Roger de la Hide at Marholm. This was originally inside the chancel but was later moved outside to the North of the tower. Other old memorials include those of the Fitzwilliam family at Marholm church, the Dove family at Upton and the Hopkinsons in Sutton. The oldest named internal memorial at Castor church is that of Guilfridus Hawkins, priest, died 1672. Grave-stone inscriptions and memorials were unusual for most people until the 18th century. One of the more curious early inscriptions is in the North West corner of the Lady Chapel at Castor which reads: *'Here lyeth the Body of William Newman whose days on earth was but a span. Upon ye 15 Day of May His Body ny ws laid in Clay. In the Year of Our Lord 1695. This you may read that are alive.'* Gravestones give not only dates and names of those commemorated, but often much other information about several generations of families and their relationships.

Other Published Works and the Parish Archives

Some published works contain valuable records about our villages:

Reminiscences of Mr John Hales (1883); the Revd Kennet Gibson's *History –The Antonine Itinerary* (1769). Gibson was Rector of Marholm, and at the same time the parish priest for Castor, Sutton and Upton; The Revd W Sweeting's *History of Peterborough Churches* (1868); *The Victoria County History for Northamptonshire of 1901* (VCH); Arthur Mee's *The King's England – Northamptonshire* (1945); and more recently Pevsner's series on *The Buildings of England (Beds, Hunts and Peterborough)* (1968) and the Historic Buildings Listings. For those pursuing further historical research Gunton's *History of the Church in Peterborough*, (1686) and transcripts of ancient chronicles all give valuable information about our villages and their people. These include *The Peterborough Chronicle* by Hugh Candidus (12th century), *The White Book of Peterborough* (13th and early 14th century), and the Journals of the Northamptonshire Records Society. See also the 18th and 19th century Gazetteers and Trade Directories, as well as The Parliamentary Commissioners Survey of the Manor of Castor in 1649, and Mr Landen's Survey of 1765, both of which give detailed descriptions of manor properties in the villages, their inhabitants and land holdings, as do the Tithe Rolls. Copies of all these documents and references are in the Parish Archives, as are many others too, including recent interviews with farming families, reminiscences by those born or raised in the villages, and many records of World War II servicemen, as well as a record of all the men on the war memorial at Castor. The purpose of this chapter is merely to give an idea of the thousands of records kept in the parishes which refer to tens of thousands of people through the centuries.

William Burke

Notes

1. *The White Book of Peterborough*, ed Sandra Raban, Northants Record Soc 2001, p 78 (1295-6) *'Memorandum from the rolls of the Exchequer concerning a fine levied on John de Assforthby for taking hunting dogs into the royal forest without warrant, which the abbot falsely claimed under terms of his own liberty...Et quia idem attornatus prius dixerat quod debitum predictum levare posset et idem Johannes clericus ets et beneficiates in ecclesia de Castr' et plura habet bona ecclesiastica ibidem de quibus debitum etc...'*
2. *The White Book of Peterborough*, ed Sandra Raban, Northants Record Soc 2001, p 228 (1308) *'Letter from Abbot Godfrey and the convent to John, Bishop of Lincoln, requesting him to institute William of Melton, chaplain, to the church of Castor, to which the abbey has right of presentation and which is vacant de jure. Presentatio domini Willemi de Melton' ad ecclesiam de Castr' etc...'*. Comment: This did not actually happen until 1314!

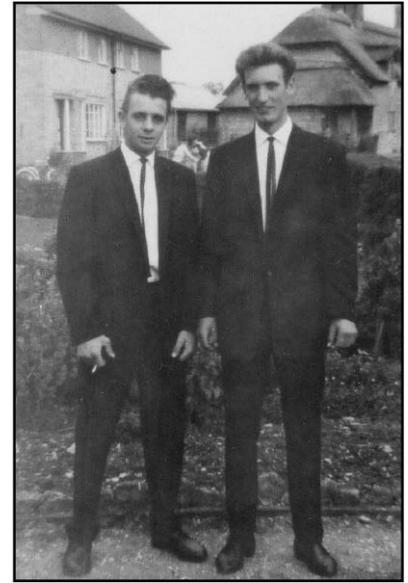


Fig 26i. Two Upton Teddy Boys, Tony Ladds and Barry Hornsby.



Fig 26j. Mary Neal, who came here as a Land Army girl, worked at Home Farm Castor for the Longfoots and married into the Neal family of Marholm. She was the Castor and Ailsworth post-lady in the 1980s.



Fig 26k. The christening of Sam Burton at Upton Church 2003. Sam has both sets of grandparents and one set of great-grandparents all living in Upton within 100 yards of each other. l-r back: Stan and Ann Cunnington (great-grandparents), Mrs Burton (great-grandmother); middle: the four grandparents David and Ellie Burton and Sandra and Alan Marshal; front Robert Burton and Michelle Marshall (parents and Sam).



Fig 26n. John Truss, Bill Harris, Jim Harris, c1920.



Fig 26l. Banner Party Patronal Mass 2002; l-r: Amber Gryns (candle), Linda Drury, Angela Hudson-Peacock, Chris Remnant, Joyce Clarke, Tasmin Brown (in front), Monica Pollard, Jenny Hammond, Adam Brown (candle), Grace Gibbs, Alison Brown, Audrey Boyman, Alice Castle (in front), Chris Brown, Eric Jinks (cross), Edmund Burke, Rector.



Fig 26o. In the 'Dickies' (paddock behind the Old Smithy) l-r: Flossie Coulson (daughter of farm foreman), Wilf Mossendew (son of stonemason), Jim Harris (farmer's son), Henry Gibbons (son of neighbour), Evelyn Mossendew (sister of Wilf) c1924/5.



Fig 26m. A parade in Castor during World War I.

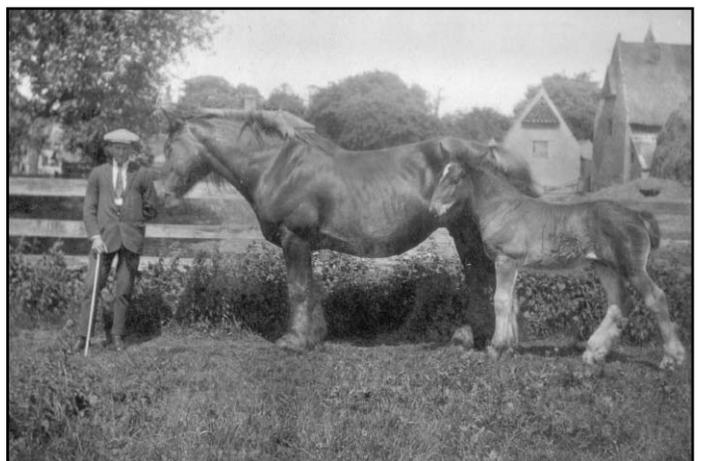


Fig 26p. Shire and foal in field behind the Old Smithy 1920s.