

CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO THE APPOINTMENT OF THE PARISH CLERK AT RIBCHESTER
1679-1753

THE three documents printed below are preserved in the Hoghton archives (Ribchester Church Nos. 210-226) at the Lancashire County Record Office, Preston. I am indebted to Sir Cuthbert de Hoghton for permission to transcribe and publish them.

1. *Petition of the Inhabitants of Ribchester (circa 1679).*

To the Rt. Honll. Sr. Charles Houghton of Hoghton the humble petition of the Inhabitants of the Parish of Ribchester sheweth:

That Roger Dewhurst our late clerke is deceased and he hath a son about of the age of 17 yeares who hath been educated att the schoole till within ye space of 2 or 3 moneths of his fathers decease. And he is of a civil and honest deportment and there is great hopes that hee will prove a good man and will bee servisable unto the Church.

And therefore wee do humbly pray that yr. honr. would consent ye Clerkshipp upon him so long as he shall cary himselfe civilly as beseems his place.

And wee shall pray for your health and happiness both hear and hereafter.

2. *Letter from Rev. George Ogden, B.D. to Sir Charles Hoghton (28 October 1696).*

Right worthy Sir:

My humble request to you att this time is in behalfe of one Josiah Peele born in this town who is very desireous to be Clerke here, Arthur Dewhurst being in soe great weakness of body yt there appears but small hope of his recovery.

Wherefore for ye Glory of God, ye good of this Parish and my own comfort and quiet I intreat you not to present to us either a Drunkard or one yt keeps a Publick Hous, for both these oft drown that reason which should distinguish them from beasts and a sober person can scarce be free from their derisions.

But ye said Josiah Peele is a very sober hopefull youth, not headstrong but capable of instruction and of giving content

to all sober honest persons in ye Parish. He is known to me to be of honest conversation sufficient for his reading, writing and also for his competent skill in singing.

And I conceive that in worth hee will out-weigh any of his competitors for ye place therefore I humbly request yt he may have your consent and nomination to ye next vacancy and in ye interim dureing ye clarke's weakness yt he may officiate in his seat ye next Lord's Day.

Hands could be procured as many or more than any who are candidates for it, but I think not fit to make it soe publick whilst he [Dewhurst] is alive.

Your nomination will free me from great trouble, tho ye concern bee but little, yet it will be very acceptable to ye deserving young man and highly oblige

Your most obsequious Servt.,
George Ogden.

Ribchester,
Octob. 28. 96.

To ye Honble. Sr. Charles Houghton, Knight and Baronett.

3. *A further letter from Mr. Ogden to Sir Charles.*

Sr.,

I understand yt ye Clark of Ribchester lyes a dying, past all hope of recovery. I once more recommend to you Mr. Sagar's friend, Josiah Peele, brother-in-law to ye dying clark, whose earnest desire it is yt he should succeed him, in regard he is fitt for ye place and officiates for hym in his weakness and in that he will be acceptable to the whole Parish. If you favour me in this request you will greatly oblige.

Your most affect. servt.
George Ogden.

[Endorsed] for ye honble. Sr. Charles Hoghton at Hoghton Tower in Lancashire. [Seal.]

In spite of this somewhat premature appeal, Peele was passed over, and one William Carter was appointed. He died in 1699 and his successor was Richard Parkinson, although Peele again applied for the post. According to a petition (1701-2) Parkinson was "visited wth. so violent a distemper yt he is not able to officiate". In consequence Peele was ultimately appointed. He did the work until November 1753, when a note from the Parishioners stated that "the ould clark of Ribchester is dead".

G. C. MILLER