

TROUBLE AT TOCKHOLES IN 1765

BY THE VEN. R. V. H. BURNE, M.A.

AMONG the documents preserved in the Consistory Court in Chester Cathedral are some twenty Visitation Call Books in which are entered the names of those presented by the churchwardens and the offences with which they are charged. The usual offence is fornication or adultery, which occurs in monotonous profusion, but now and then there is a welcome exception as is illustrated in the letter printed below. It is written on a sheet of foolscap and, as the rest of the book is composed of sheets of foolscap too, it has been bound up with them. It is addressed on the back to "Mr. Hugh Speed, Proctor, at his office in Chester, this." Mr. Speed was the Deputy Registrar of the Diocese.¹ The "Honourable Court" was the Consistory Court which then took cognizance of a wide range of moral and ecclesiastical cases, including wills, divorces, and actions for libel, as well as the enforcement of church dues, and the upkeep of churches and parsonage houses.

17th September 1765.

John Hadwen Curate of Tockholes

Humbly presents to this Honourable Court the Persons whose names are under written to be taught their Duty (all other means proving ineffectual to reduce them to order and obedience) in time of Divine service.

When I admonish and endeavour to reduce them to Order and Uniformity, they give it out that I have no business with ye Chapel or the Government of it, also that (notwithstanding anything to the contrary) they will pursue their own resolutions.

Our Clark is a regular sober man, well qualify'd for ye office, both as to reading & singing; He has now a set of very promising scholars under his care as a Singing Master. This Clark, who is to assist the people and give out Psalms proper for their use and improvemt. and appoint tunes suitable for that purpose, they oppose in everything; He orders one tune and they boldly and obstinately take a contrary one, so that two tunes are sung, or rather

¹ For information about Hugh Speed see TRANSACTIONS, Vol. 98 (1946), pp. 102-105.

skreamed, at the same time, which creates such a shameful dissonancy and disordr. amongst the people that I am obliged to stop ye Clark from proceeding and dismiss ye Congregation.

They are exalted in the vanity of their minds to that Height of assurance, that they are very busy about introducing a new kind of instrument into our publick worship, I think they call it a basoon, which I declare against, as being unusual, & in no wise agreeable to ye ears & understood of our congregation.

I am not concerned how much soever they may disregard or despise my advice or authority, but I wish and desire that we may be unanimous and uniform in our public worship, and that, if these persons will not conform, they would keep out of our church and trouble us no more. Their example may infect others.

The names of ye persons presented are

WILLIAM WARD

PETER WARD

THOMAS HOGG

JAMES BAINFORD

JOHN CUERDEN

EDWARD CUERDEN

all in Tockholes.

I desire you to return their names amongst the other criminals at the next Visitation.

We attest ye truth of this charge.

GEO. MORRIS

JAS. PICKOP

BANNISTER PICKOP

JNO. RAWSTONE.

(In another hand)

29th Oct., 1765 They appd. & confd. they had sung in different tunes to what the Clark gave out and promised not to do so for the future, but denied their introducing any musical instrumt. in the Chapel. Whereupon the Surt. admond. them to behave more orderly for the future and not to introduce any such instrument into the Chapel and not to frequent public Houses on the Sabbath day and decreed them for this time to be dismd.