

Rectors of Carlton before the twentieth century

For many years leading into the nineteenth centuries the 'Greater Parish of Market Bosworth' consisted of the market town itself and several other surrounding villages. Carlton was one such village and was classified as a township with its own 'Chapel of Ease' within the overall parish. Spiritually, the Rector of Market Bosworth oversaw the entire parish and claimed all the income due. The tithe apportionments for Carlton in 1849 show the Reverend Nathaniel Pomfret Small, Rector of Bosworth, received £6 in tithes from the forty-three acres of glebe land in Carlton.

As one might expect, the incumbent of the day lived in the rectory in Bosworth, conducted most of the services in St Peter's and generally provided for the spiritual needs of the town. He employed several curates to provide similar functions in the outlying villages. National records demonstrate most rectors retained much of the parish income and enjoyed a very good standard of living, whilst curates were poorly rewarded. Not surprisingly, curates were keen to move for advancement with a view to an appointment as a rector.

Generally, parish records improved in later years and recorded the name of the officiating clergyman at baptisms, marriages, and burials. Clearly there was some flexibility in task allocation within the clergy of the day. A series of names appear in the Carlton records as follows - Cave, J Leadbrooke, J Richardson, F Bradford, T Forest, Homer, R Coulson, T Hale, F Simpson, J Warden, J Nicholson, J Moby, T Wright, J Wright, H Wright, J Glover, C Wright, J Taylor, W Paull, N Small, and W Maimin. Unfortunately, not everyone provided an initial; some were more formal using the title Reverend and degree abbreviation to which most if not all were entitled. Perhaps the one name in the list of particular note is that of N Small, the rector himself officiating in Carlton.

In terms of religious administration, the situation changed when the Greater Parish of Market Bosworth was broken up, many of the outlying villages becoming separate parishes in their own right. Carlton became a separate ecclesiastical parish in 1868 but there is no obvious change in procedures at that time. Until it became a parish, Carlton Church was called "A Chapel of Ease" but was used for baptisms marriages and deaths before and after the change. There was 43 acres and 36 poles of glebe but no rector or rectory. The tithes continued to be paid to Market Bosworth. The change of status was marked by the gothicisation of the church in 1867, and then the promotion of Frederick Fowler Bradford, one of the curates then based in Market Bosworth, to Rector of Carlton in 1868. The Bosworth Vicar Nathaniel Pomfret Small was his patron. This may have been done on a temporary basis as by 1869 the Revd. Bradford had been replaced by Revd William Townson and the building of a rectory got under way. The rectory was built on part of the glebe land.

William Townson was born into a farming family living in Crosthwaite, Cumbria, in 1833. He attended the local grammar school before he gained an honours degree at Trinity College Cambridge. He then spent some years as a curate, including a post in Belgrave near Leicester where he met his future wife, Sarah Harrison. She was from a wealthy family which had prospered from the development of Leicester. After they married they moved to a curacy in Wakefield where Mary Elizabeth (Lizzie), their first child was born in 1869. In the same year he was appointed as Rector of Carlton, initially living in a wing of Measham Hall until the rectory was completed. William's son, George Harrison, was born in Carlton in 1875, both children then spent their childhoods and early adulthood in the rectory.

The family threw a lavish celebration for George's coming of age in 1896 which attracted the attention of the local press. A marquee was erected in the adjacent field and after games and a tea party for children from the village and the Bosworth workhouse, some 200 people including many villagers sat down to a hot meal. There were several types of meat on offer and some alcohol and tobacco, also Barlestone band was playing music throughout the meal. The reverend Townson made a short speech and thanks were given by local residents. The whole gathering was supported financially by the Townson family.

George opted for the army as a career, and after initial training was commissioned and posted to India in 1900. Unfortunately he suffered from fever and the climate to such an extent that he returned to England in March 1902 and resigned his commission soon after.

William was entitled to the income from the glebe, some 40 acres, which, in all probability, continued to be rented on a tenancy basis. Thomas Thompson was certainly the occupier in the early years of William's residence. However, William was to become a significant landowner in his own right.

He had a particularly good standard of living as demonstrated by the electoral rolls:

- 1871 William his wife his daughter a visitor and 2 servants
- 1881 William, his wife, son and daughter, a governess and 3 servants
- 1891 William his wife, son and daughter, a visitor, and 2 servants
- 1901 William, Robert a visitor, William's daughter, and 2 servants.

The Bosworth estate had unsuccessfully attempted to sell Carlton Farm (now Stud Farm) at auction in 1884 and again in 1885. The 1885 sale consisted of the farmhouse and buildings and a strip of land sandwiched between that of Carlton House Farm and the parish boundary with Barton, but also included much of the land, now Bank Farm, and beyond on the southern side of Congerstone Lane. William bought this farm of 96 acres probably by private treaty sometime after the 1885 auction (it was registered to him in 1886). He also bought a series of roadside gardens from Sir William James Farren in 1901. Starting near Bank Farm, these extended around the Old Chapel and School corners to the boundary of the School House. There were a surprising number of such roadside gardens rented out to the villagers in the nineteenth century; most, as in this case, have since been incorporated into the adjacent fields. George Townson sold those bordering the Home Farm land to Harry Oldacres in 1920. At some point the remainder extended Townson's own fields with no requirement for legal transfer.

In buying Stud Farm William automatically owned land adjacent to the Carlton Charity ground. This amounted to two fields each of 5 acres which were remote from the village and thus not readily accessible as grazing land. This may have prompted William to suggest an exchange of land. He offered three small roadside fields opposite the glebe land whilst integrating the two original Charity fields into Stud Farm. This was agreed and formally settled in 1889. However, William later decided that the exchange was a little inequitable and donated an additional small paddock which bordered the new Charity Land. Unfortunately, this transfer was not recorded officially thus causing a misunderstanding many years later. One of the new charity fields became allotments, lending its name to the adjacent hill. The other two adjoining fields had a barn and a drinking water pond and were very suitable for lease as a package to a local farmer.

Sarah his wife died in 1898 leaving only her husband and daughter as the principal occupiers of the rectory supported by two live-in servants. William considered Lizzie a difficult child and she experienced ill health throughout her life. His opinion worsened when she married a man, 17 years her senior in October 1902 at Market Bosworth. Perhaps in this, William was mistaken since the husband prospered and became a JP and a pillar of society in Bournemouth where they lived.

After his coming of age, George must have spent much of his time away on military training before service in India. Conversely, he was registered to vote in Carlton over the period 1898-1900, qualifying based on land ownership and was listed in the Trade Directories of that period as the farmer of Stud Farm. This may suggest that George already owned a share of the Townson land in Carlton.

In 1900 an article appeared in the Leicester Chronicle advertising an auction sale of stock and equipment being sold by Gorge Harrison Townsend and said he was giving up farming. On his return in 1902 it seems likely that, as a single man, he lived in the rectory with his father. He lived in several places in the north west of the county as a car dealer and in 1908 in Measham

described as a farmer. However, in the 1939 census he was recorded as living in Romsey and was a farmer with a wife and one daughter.

In the 1885 sale the description of Stud Farmhouse does not match the description of the present house. The 1904 map of Carlton shows the present farmhouse so presumably the new one was paid for by the Rector. In the 1841 polling lists, it was farmed by William Bailey (various spellings) and his wife. Mr Bailey died in 1850 but his wife continued in the farm with her son in law David Tebbett, running the farm jointly. It is not clear when they left Stud Farm but by 1891 they had moved to Stone House Farm still in business together. It is possible when William bought Stud farm the tenancy was terminated but with the long-term intension that his son would run the farm. However, the situation changed dramatically when George married Violet Birkin in 1904. William resigned his post as rector and in partnership with George rented the Manor house at Barrow on Trent with the intention of developing a business in farming the 250-acre estate. However, these plans collapsed when William died. He was buried in Carlton alongside his wife, Sarah in 1906. The land in Carlton was not sold for many years, it could have been because George retained the land or sorting out William's affairs was complicated.

However, in 1920 when the affairs were being dealt with, probably when he sold the land, the exchange of the charity land arose again. George pointed out to the solicitors he did not own that acre of land because it was part of the charity land. Consequently, it was passed over to the charity. That acre along with some of the land was rented by a farmer who owned the adjacent land, so he carried on renting the extra acre. In the 1970's when one of the Charity land trustees died his daughter handed over the details of the extra acre of land being passed to the trustees. This knowledge had been lost over the years, but now caused a problem. The acre of land had been bought along with the farmer's land by another villager, and the hedges had been removed. The owner was approached by the trustees and explained the situation and said he did not want to deprive the charity of the land and agreed to pay the cost of transfer and market value of the land he had bought several years before. That was the only possible solution to the problem.

Returning to the Townson family, George abandoned the venture in Barrow and moved to Appleby, setting up a business in the motor trade in Ashby de la Zouch. At the outbreak of war, he was re-commissioned into the army as a captain and retired as a major in 1920 having served throughout in England. He then returned to the motor trade in London.

William's estate was not finally settled until 1926 but it seems likely that George formally inherited the land in Carlton before then. As owner of a house and land, he qualified to vote in Carlton from 1911 until such recording was suspended due to the war. It is not clear how the farm was managed after 1900. George may have been involved in his years as a single man. Alternatively bailiffs may have been employed or the farm leased on a tenancy basis. The property was sold in 1920 by the executors of William's will, or by George, when the Ortons bought the farm.

On the 1891 census Samuel Townshend was described as a "Farm Bailiff" and is positioned in the census list to possibly be at Stud Farm. He continues to appear on the census records but in 1901 he is recorded as a Coach man (possibly for William) and in 1911 as a servant at the age of 65. In the 1901 census John Kettel was listed as a farmer and could have been at Stud Farm but is only registered for 2 years. George Harrison Townson is registered as a house owner after 1911 but not living in Carlton. Finally, in 1916 and 1919 and in the sales literature when Stud farm was sold in 1920 the occupiers were Grant and Nichols, and their wives. By 1921 the farm had been sold to Mr and Mrs Orton.

The sale in 1920 also included the old chapel and what was known as the schoolhouse. That was the cottage (now 10 Main St) opposite Frederick and later Burt Alcock's farmyard which later was used as a barn conversion. The schoolhouse has since been replaced by a much larger residence. The old chapel was situated very close to the northern side of Congerstone Lane on the first right-hand bend after leaving the village. It was originally a Primitive Methodist chapel built in 1852 but was no longer in use as a chapel by the 1920s. Even c1883 it was described in a trade directory as

almost disused. Since the 2 properties mentioned in this paragraph were sold in the 1920 sale William must have bought them at some stage.

William was the longest serving rector in Carlton and there is a plaque in the church in his memory: he was rector for thirty-four years. The plaque was erected in memory of William by his daughter Mary Elizabeth who it is rumoured he did not get on with particularly well. Perhaps this was to reconcile their differences. His son George Harrison did not appear to be involved with the plaque.

Carlton Rectory was built in the mid-Victorian period when the clergy was close to the top of village society and William sat well in that regime. However, it is probable that he had private income to support his status. What is certain is that he had the lifestyle of a Victorian Rector, but future rectors' standard of living reduced progressively in Carlton. One could think the Townson family had left Carlton for good, but not quite: the next Rector was William's nephew.

There is a website with more information about the wider Townson family: enter William Townson into a search engine for more information.

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