



Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Problem Reports

2015

Parishioner Labor in the Late Medieval Parish of Ashburton

Lacey Bonar

Follow this and additional works at: <https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/etd>

Recommended Citation

Bonar, Lacey, "Parishioner Labor in the Late Medieval Parish of Ashburton" (2015). *Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Problem Reports*. 5231.

<https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/etd/5231>

This Thesis is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by the The Research Repository @ WVU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you must obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in WVU Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Problem Reports collection by an authorized administrator of The Research Repository @ WVU. For more information, please contact researchrepository@mail.wvu.edu.

Parishioner Labor in the Late Medieval Parish of Ashburton

Lacey Bonar

Thesis submitted
to the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences
at West Virginia University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in
History

Kate Kelsey Staples, Ph.D., Chair
Matthew Vester, Ph.D.
Janet Snyder, Ph.D.

Department of History

Morgantown, West Virginia
2015

Keywords: parishioner, parish, labor, churchwardens' accounts, Ashburton
Copyright 2015 Lacey Bonar

ABSTRACT

Parishioner Labor in the Late Medieval Parish of Ashburton

Lacey Bonar

Parishioners in the late medieval parish of Ashburton used physical labor to create, maintain, and repair their parish church itself and its contents. Of the fourteen men featured in this study some worked on the church's seating, book collection, and organs while others labored on two extensive projects concerning the repair of the church's spire and the construction of the roodloft. The parish's extensive set of churchwardens' accounts provides record of the labor that these men completed and their compensation, allowing for a detailed analysis of their contributions. With most parish studies focusing on parishioner participation through fundraising efforts, monetary donations, or deathbed bequests, a study of parishioner labor reveals another significant method of individuals' contributions to their parish community. Through their labor, these fourteen parishioners helped to establish and enhance the visual culture of their own parish church.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|--|
| Chapter 1 – Introduction...1 | |
| The Parish of Ashburton...4 | |
| A Key Source to Tracing Parishioner Labor...7 | |
| Historiography...9 | |
| Using Churchwardens' Accounts to Investigate Parishioner Labor...15 | |
| Source and Methodology...17 | |
| Chapter Previews...26 | |
| | |
| Chapter 2 – Objects within the Parish Church...30 | |
| Seating...31 | |
| Books...39 | |
| Organs...45 | |
| Conclusion...52 | |
| | |
| Chapter 3 – Parish Church Projects...53 | |
| Spire...54 | |
| Roodloft...65 | |
| Conclusion...70 | |
| | |
| Chapter 4 – Parishioner Labor and the Reformation...71 | |
| Organs...77 | |
| Roodloft...78 | |
| Conclusion...80 | |
| | |
| Epilogue...82 | |
| | |
| Bibliography...84 | |

List of Figures

- Figure 1. St. Andrew's Church, Ashburton...5
- Figure 2. Attributed vs Unattributed Labor from 1500-10...24
- Figure 3. Expenditure for 1513-14 in shillings...35
- Figure 4. Expenditure for 1493-94 in shillings...57
- Figure 5. Expenditure for 1521-22 in shillings...67
- Figure 6. Expenditure for 1525-26 in shillings...69

Chapter 1 – Introduction

In the late Middle Ages, parishioners used their parish church for many purposes. This building served as a center for worship for the congregation who collected in this location to hear mass, and as a central location for members of the community to gather for various activities such as markets, ales, and plays. In addition to these religious and communal purposes, the parish church also served as a job site for some parishioners. The individuals who provided the labor for their own parish churches experienced these buildings as an outlet for their labor and a generator of compensation in addition to a center for worship and community activity.¹

In the fourteenth, fifteenth, and early sixteenth centuries, communities throughout England began to rebuild their parish churches. As many as three-fifths of all English parish churches saw substantial rebuilding or alteration in the 150 years before the Reformation.² Parish communities could enhance or establish their church's visual culture to communicate their shared devotion to God and their collective affluence through these efforts regarding the parish church building itself and its contents. As Eamon Duffy states in his groundbreaking book concerning pre-Reformation parish communities: "The maintenance of the church and the provision of its furniture and ornaments became the principal expression of their mortuary piety...in the two centuries before the Reformation."³

Equally as important as functionality, the physical appearance of the parish church and its objects were vital to the parish community, so parishioners spent large sums of money on the upkeep of these aspects of their community.⁴ Parishioners were financially responsible for the

¹ The usage of "labor" and "work" as interchangeable terms requires some explanation. Hannah Arendt argues for sources analyzed for this study.

² J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 13.

³ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 133.

⁴ Many historians have explored parishioners' pious efforts as motivating factors for parish church construction and improvement projects. For a general background, consult chapter four in Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). The fifth chapter in Andrew Brown's book *Popular Piety in Late*

maintenance and care of the parish church's nave and churchyard. Due to this obligation, parishioners conducted fundraising efforts in order to pay for the activities necessitated by this responsibility. They organized their own special collections and communal events such as ales and plays to raise money for these improvements and additions to the nave and churchyard.⁵ The main focus of this parishioner fundraising activity was the maintenance of the parish church building and the liturgical objects it held. Parishioners collected money to pay various laborers from both within and without the parish to carry out construction projects, which often included both structural and ornamental work in the parish church.

The parishioners who worked to create, maintain, and repair their parish church and its contents are the focus of this study. An analysis of the labor of these parishioners sheds light on the symbiotic relationship that existed between laboring parishioners and their parish church. This specific building and its contents not only provided these individuals with a place where they could carry out religious and communal activities, but it necessitated maintenance and repair that also provided certain parishioners with a notable compensation. In turn, the laboring parishioners gave their time and efforts to ensure the upkeep and successful functioning of this central building of their parish community.

Examining the individuals who had a direct impact on the enhancement of the parish church and its objects expands our understanding of the roles that individuals played in their parishes. Commensurate with charitable donations and fundraising initiatives, parishioners could have an impact on their parish community by providing physical labor to this building. Instead

Medieval England: The Diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) explores this phenomenon for the diocese of Salisbury and Katherine French emphasizes piety as a motive in the fourth and fifth chapters of her *People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001) concerning Bath and Wells.

⁵ A detailed discussion of parishioners fundraising efforts can be found in chapter four of Katherine French's *The People of the Parish*.

of imagining parishioners as passive recipients of the liturgy and religious guidance within the parish church, an emphasis on parishioner labor highlights the parishioners' roles as active participants who ensured the wellbeing of this community building. Through the analysis of instances of payments to individuals for physical work in their parish, my thesis sheds light on the ability of active, laboring parishioners to directly impact their parish church. By providing the labor needed to create, maintain, and repair the objects and projects commissioned by the churchwardens of their parish church, laboring parishioners played an important role in establishing and maintaining the visual culture of their parish.

This thesis analyzes parishioner labor through a study of the individual's ability to contribute labor to objects and projects that represented their community's values and affluence. The importance of parishioner contribution through physical labor is a complex matter that reveals not only the ability to contribute to the physical appearance of their parish, but also the symbolic choices that the parish made to represent the ideals and values of the community. We do not have the words of these laboring parishioners themselves to provide us with firsthand knowledge of their experiences with working in the parish church. However, the records of their labors and subsequent compensations allows us to reconstruct the work completed by these parishioners and reveals the significant roles that they played in the creation, maintenance, and repair of their parish church and its contents.

The Parish of Ashburton

The parish of Ashburton in the late Middle Ages serves as a good example of a lay community where parishioners participated in their parish community through labor. In the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries, Ashburton was a relatively wealthy parish in comparison with other parishes in the agricultural county of Devonshire.⁶ Ashburton benefitted from the success of the tin trade of Dartmoor, becoming one of four official stannary towns in 1305.⁷ In this capacity, Ashburton served as the center for tin production in the area southeast of the Moor. As a market town, Ashburton also benefitted from the cloth trade and agricultural advantages the fertile land surrounding the River Ashburn.

⁶ Alison Hanham, *Churchwardens' Accounts of Ashburton, 1479-1580*, Devon & Cornwall Record Society, New Series, vol. 15 (Torquay: The Devonshire Press Ltd., 1970), xii, hereafter referred to as *Ashburton CWA*. For general information on Ashburton in particular and Devonshire in general, consult John M. Wasson, ed., *Devon* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986) and W.G. Hoskins, *Devon* (Chichester, West Sussex: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 2003). For an emphasis on Ashburton throughout the medieval and early modern periods, see Charles Worthy, *Ashburton and Its Neighbourhood; Or, the Antiquities and History of the Borough of Ashburton in the County of Devon, and of the Parishes of Buckland-in-the-Moor and Bickington* (Ashburton: L.B. Vaedee, Printer and Publisher, 1875).

⁷ Hoskins, *Devon*, 320.



Figure 1. St. Andrew's Church, Ashburton. Photograph from <https://upload.wikimedia.org>.

The exact population of Ashburton in the late medieval period is unknown, but a rough estimation can be made from the lay subsidy rolls of 1524 and 1525. The total number of taxpayers assessed in Ashburton in 1524 was 148 while the number assessed in 1525 was 229.⁸ This large discrepancy between the numbers of taxpayers assessed for these two years further complicates the goal of achieving a possible total population of the parish, but it is still possible to attempt a calculation. Using the multiplier of 6.0 recommended by Alan Dyer to account for the members of Ashburton's population who were not assessed in 1524, the subsidy data indicate

⁸ T.L. Stoate, ed., *Devon Lay Subsidy Rolls, 1524-27* (Bristol: T.L. Stoate, 1979), 231-232.

an estimated population of 888.⁹ Using this same multiplier for the 1525 data produces a population of 1,374. These totals should also be compared with Julian Cornwall's more conservative multiplier of 5.0 to account for the unassessed members of the population.¹⁰ With this multiplier, Ashburton's population in 1524 would have been 740 with a population in 1525 of 1,145. Although neither Dyer's nor Cornwall's multipliers can be deemed indisputably valid, they do provide an estimate of Ashburton's population being between 740 and 1,374 in 1524-25.¹¹ In comparison, using the same multipliers on the tax records of Exeter puts this city's population between 5,095 and 6,114 in 1524-25.¹² These populations suggest that Ashburton's population was around a sixth of the size of that of Exeter, the largest city in Devonshire.

In addition to being parishioners of the parish of Ashburton, these individuals may have also been involved in the parish guilds within their church. The churchwardens' accounts feature twenty one guilds, referred to as "stores" in Ashburton, in addition to the "Store of St. Andrew" which was the name given to guild for the churchwardens themselves.¹³ Alison Hanham provides a list of these stores in her introduction to the accounts:

There were stores of the High Cross..., three stores of the B[lessed] V[irgin] M[ary] (St. Mary at the Font, St. Mary in the Aisle, alias the Hogen Store, and the 'Wiven' store), the stores of Sts Clement, George, James and Eligius [Eloi or Loy], John the Baptist, Julian, Nicholas, Peter (briefly), Thomas of Canterbury, William, Catherine and Margaret, and Mary Magdalene, probably founded to maintain lights before the relevant altar or image, and more mysteriously, the stores of the Green Torches, Yellow Torches, Young Men's Torches..., Young Men's Taper, and two stores described in Latin as 'Junior' 'Rural' 'Tortices' and 'Junior' 'Rural' 'super Terram'...¹⁴

⁹ Alan Dyer, "'Urban Decline' in England, 1366-1525," in *Towns in decline AD 100-1600*, ed. T.R. Slater (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 266-88.

¹⁰ Julian Cornwall, "English population in the early sixteenth century," *Economic History Review* 23, no. 1, (1970): 32-44.

¹¹ Stephen H. Rigby problematizes both of these approaches in his article "Urban Population in late medieval England: the evidence of the lay subsidies," *The Economic History Review* 63, 2 (2010): 393-417.

¹² The number of Exeter's taxpayers is located on Rigby, 415.

¹³ The expense data for 17 of these guilds first appears in Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 56.

¹⁴ Alison Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, xiii.

These guilds within the parish church allowed the population of Ashburton to supplement their activity in the parish church through participating in the fundraising efforts carried out by these fraternities.

A Key Source to Tracing Parishioner Labor

Wills, guild records, and churchwardens' accounts reveal parishioner activities within and contributions to their parish. Wills are a valuable resource for the study of parishioner concerns at the end of their life, but these sources can limit the historian to a focus on parishioners who were near death, providing only a synchronic view. Guild records are also limited due to their restrictive nature of recording matters that pertain only to members of the guild. These two types of primary sources may exclude many members of the parish community. Additionally, wills and guild records do not necessarily represent the symbolic choices of the larger parish community because they focus on individual parishioners. Churchwardens' accounts, however, offer a more inclusive view of parishioner labor as they concern monetary compensation for contributions to the parish by numerous parishioners of varying social statuses.

Churchwardens, elected parish officials in Ashburton, kept track of payments to laboring parishioners and a detailed record of their contributions to their churchwardens' accounts. Members of the laity composed and maintained these religious records for ecclesiastical leaders to reference during visitations. An extremely extensive collection of these lay financial records survives for England compared to other European countries that have not experienced such a positive survival rate for their medieval records.

The churchwardens recorded the parish church's yearly expenditures and revenues in these accounts, providing an excellent source for the study of lay participation through parishioner labor. These accounts contain details regarding income resulting from parishioner activity including gifts and donations from members of the congregation, fundraising activities, and renting parish property. These accounts also feature expenses including general materials purchased for church use and supplies necessary for the liturgy and religious celebrations. Although these expenditures are found throughout the accounts, the expenses regarding materials and supplies were often less than those allotted for construction and maintenance. As Alison Hanham states in the introduction to her edited set of churchwardens' accounts, the "expenditure throughout the period was very largely concerned with repairs, the adornment of the church and the upkeep of the church property."¹⁵

The parish officials who recorded these accounts lived and worked alongside parishioners who made these repairs, and some of them served their parish as laborers themselves. Four churchwardens served the parish each year. Of these four wardens, two were senior wardens who had also served the previous year while two were junior wardens who learned about record keeping from the senior wardens. This rotation of senior and junior wardens existed throughout the fifty-two-year period featured in this thesis. These churchwardens were elected annually to keep these detailed records and then to present them to the parishioners at the year's end. The involvement of four churchwardens and the process of recording and presenting the accounts to parishioners kept the churchwardens responsible to one another and to the lay community. Through the process of reading the accounts aloud to a congregation of the parish's parishioners, the churchwardens were encouraged to keep honest and detailed records.

¹⁵ Alison Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, ix.

Although the churchwardens themselves maintained the duty of keeping records of the parish's revenues and expenditures, they often hired an educated man to serve as a scribe to combine these records into the cumulative churchwardens' accounts that they read annually to the parish.¹⁶ In some parishes, these scribes were members of the clergy such as the parish priest, but most scribes held business-related occupations such as attorney or clerk.¹⁷ Because scribes composed the churchwardens' accounts, researchers must be aware of the possibility of the accounts being skewed by a scribe's personal preferences or objections. These scribes likely came from the higher socioeconomic levels of parish society where advanced education was available to them, so it is important to beware of the possibility of a skewed representation of parish society. Because scribes were held responsible for these accounts by the churchwardens and the parishioners alike, it is likely that they endeavored to remain truthful and honest with their compositions.

Historiography

Using churchwardens' accounts to study late medieval and early modern parish communities has interested historians since the early nineteenth century. Historians have debated the power of the parishioner, with some arguing for a lack of autonomy prior to the Reformation and others insisting that the laity exercised extensive independence in their individual parishes. Historians have turned to various types of primary sources to reach these interpretations and reflect lived experiences.

¹⁶ For general information regarding churchwardens' accounts, one should consult chapter three in Kümin's *The Shaping of a Community* and chapter two of Katherine French's *The People of the Parish*.

¹⁷ The scribe for the Devonshire parish of Morebath from 1520-74 was the parish priest, Sir Christopher Trychay. Trychay's accounts are analyzed by Eamon Duffy in his *Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). These common occupations of scribes are noted by Alison Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, vii.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the study of churchwardens' accounts emerged as a means to investigate medieval parish life. Many early twentieth-century historians transcribed and translated existing churchwardens' accounts for use by local historians and historic societies. Cardinal Francis Gasquet pioneered the study of churchwardens' accounts when he published his *Parish Life in Mediaeval England* in 1906.¹⁸ Similarly, J. Charles Cox examined parish life and compiled the first comprehensive list of existing churchwardens' accounts in his *Churchwardens' Accounts: From the Fourteenth to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* in 1913.¹⁹ Cox and Gasquet began the process of analyzing parishioner involvement in the life of the parish. These works, however, focused on the parish as the foreground for modern democracy and memorialized an idyllic parish life of peace and tranquility among the parishioners. Charles Drew's 1954 study *Early Parochial Organisation in England: The Origins of the Office of Churchwarden* took a more procedural overview than the descriptive works by Gasquet and Cox.²⁰ Drew's in-depth description of the complexity of the office of churchwarden and the responsibilities that accompanied this job revealed the power that these parishioners held within their community following the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. By drawing attention to the laity's responsibilities and actions involving the nave, Drew influenced many social historians and they began to utilize these accounts to shed light on parishioner experience.

In the 1970s, as social historians began to focus on the everyday lives of the non-elite, scholars utilized churchwardens' accounts as a supplemental source to wills to ensure that a reliance on testamentary documents would not limit studies to a focus on the wealthy and the elite. Churchwardens' accounts offered a more inclusive view of the parish and the actions of

¹⁸ Francis Aidan Gasquet, *Parish Life in Mediaeval England* (London: Methuen & co. Ltd., 1907).

¹⁹ John Charles Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts: From the Fourteenth to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1913).

²⁰ Charles Drew, *Early Parochial Organisation in England: The Origins of the Office of Churchwarden* (London: St. Anthony's Press, 1954).

the parishioners who participated within it. Instead of the antiquarian focus on churchwardens' accounts for their descriptive purposes, social historians used churchwardens' accounts to analyze parishioner responsibility and participation.

The first social historian to use churchwardens' accounts to investigate parishioner involvement was Emma Mason in her 1976 article "The Role of the English Parishioner, 1100-1500."²¹ Although Mason touched on the fact that the custodial and maintenance responsibilities of parishioners varied from parish to parish, she did not elaborate on the influence that parishioners had within the parish due to these responsibilities. Instead, Mason focused the majority of her article on the suppression of parishioners by the clergy who saw each member of the laity as a "dutifully programmed automaton with a limitless purse."²² She emphasized the importance of the payment of tithes for the general functioning of the parish and only quickly touched on physical labor duties in an undetailed discussion of parishioner responsibilities concerning the parish church.

In the four decades since the publication of Mason's paper, social historians have used churchwardens' accounts to investigate parishioner participation in the parish from many different angles. Two historians, Gervase Rosser and Clive Burgess, used churchwardens' accounts as supplementary material to their study of wills and chantry records in their investigation of individuals' concerns and desires upon their deaths. These sources helped both Rosser and Burgess to explore the ways in which individuals sought to ensure their own salvation by providing for their parish communities in Westminster and Bristol, respectively.²³

²¹ Emma Mason, "The Role of the English Parishioner, 1100-1500," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27 (January 1976): 17-29.

²² Mason, "The Role of the English Parishioner," 17.

²³ Gervase Rosser, "The Essence of Medieval Urban Communities: The Vill of Westminster 1200-1540," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, 34 (1984): 91-112 and Clive Burgess, "'For the Increase of Divine Service': Chantry in the Parish in Late Medieval Bristol," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985): 46-65.

Burgess also wrote a second article entitled “‘By Quick and by Dead’: Wills and Pious Provision in Late Medieval Bristol” in which he used the information found in churchwardens’ accounts to investigate the effects that benefactors had on their larger community through the provisions featured in their wills.²⁴ Through the churchwardens’ accounts, he showed that Bristol’s parishes benefitted from these bequests by maintaining priests, receiving church materials such as vestments and candles, and providing for the poor through pious donations. He further used the evidence found in churchwardens’ accounts to argue against the assumption that parishioners gave to their parishes solely for the benefit of their own soul. Instead, Burgess showed that parishioners were well aware of the impact that their actions had on their fellow parishioners and the larger parish. Burgess extended his analysis of these particular sources when collaborating with a fellow social historian, Beat Kümin, by exploring further individuals’ penitential acts of providing for their parish communities upon their deaths.²⁵ While expanding the scope of parish studies, these scholars restricted their use of churchwardens’ accounts as supplemental information to a more concentrated analysis on testamentary evidence.

Churchwardens’ accounts came to the fore in the late twentieth century as a prime tool for social historians to use to investigate the lives of individuals in the parish community. These historians placed churchwardens’ accounts front and center to reconstruct the late medieval parish and the role of the parishioner in parish activities, celebrations, and matters of daily life. Ronald Hutton compiled a list of every possible extant set of churchwardens’ accounts in 1994 in his intensive study of parish celebrations and holy activities.²⁶ Hutton recreated the parish

²⁴ Clive Burgess, “‘By Quick and by Dead’: Wills and Pious Provision in Late Medieval Bristol,” *The English Historical Review* 102, No. 405 (Oct. 1987): 837-858.

²⁵ Clive Burgess and Beat Kümin, “Penitential Bequests and Parish Regimes in Late Medieval England,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44 (October 1993): 610-630.

²⁶ Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

calendar by detailing each and every ritual celebration and tracking the changes in these celebrations from the late medieval period to the eighteenth century.

Using churchwardens' accounts also allowed Hutton to examine these changes on a local level to argue that the Reformation had a disruptive impact on ritual celebrations in the parish community. Likewise, Beat Kümin used churchwardens' accounts to reveal the changes experienced by the parish community before, during, and after the Reformation. Kümin conducted an extremely detailed study of the surviving churchwardens' accounts for ten parishes geographically spread throughout England to argue for the independence and power that the laity maintained in their parish communities.²⁷ Kümin extended his argument past the Reformation to conclude that the parish community survived and thrived through religious reforms.

Social historians continued to use churchwardens' accounts in the early twenty-first century. In 2000, Katherine French's book *The People of the Parish* analyzed the communal and fundraising efforts of the parishioners in the diocese of Bath and Wells to argue that local identities played a large role in the activities of the parish.²⁸ By limiting her study to a defined geographical area, French closely compared sets of churchwardens' accounts for evidence that lay participation, specifically in the areas of fundraising and the commissioning of objects, reflected community identity and economic status. Eamon Duffy took a similar approach as Kümin and French as he investigated parishioners' involvement in the communal life of one especially well-documented parish in his 2001 book *The Voices of Morebath*.²⁹ The small geographical scope of his microhistory allowed Duffy to produce an extremely detailed study that recreated parish life in this particular area. Duffy's study emphasized the disruptive effect

²⁷ Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish c. 1400-1560*, (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996).

²⁸ French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese*.

²⁹ Eamon Duffy, *Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village*.

that the Reformation had on this previously active, close-knit traditional community through an analysis of the income and expenditure in the churchwardens' accounts. Duffy effectively used these sources to illustrate the resistance that this parish showed to the changes brought on by the Reformation. Although these studies vary on their subject matter and approach to churchwardens' accounts, they all use these records to recreate the parish as a cooperative entity where the wellbeing of the community was of utmost importance to the parishioners living within it.

Churchwardens' accounts have also proven valuable to explore the different experiences of men and women in late medieval and early modern England. Christine Peters used women's activities found in churchwardens' accounts to enforce her argument that the Reformation benefitted women by deemphasizing the negative role that gender played in the pre-Reformation parish in her 2003 book *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England*.³⁰ In her 2008 book *The Good Women of the Parish: Gender and Religion After the Black Death*, Katherine French used churchwardens' accounts to argue against the assumptions brought forth by Peters.³¹ In this book, French emphasized the existence of strict gender roles and misogynistic assumptions that affected women's experiences in the parish both before and after the Reformation. She further extended her study of gender as an influential factor in parishioners' lives through an article analyzing the fundraising activities and charitable contributions found in the churchwardens' accounts at the time of major rebuilding for a particular parish church in Westminster.³²

³⁰ Christine Peters, *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

³¹ Katherine French, *The Good Women of the Parish: Gender and Religion After the Black Death* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

³² Katherine French, "Rebuilding St. Margaret's: Parish Involvement and Community Action in Late Medieval Westminster," *Journal of Social History* 45, no. 1 (2011): 148-171

In 2010, Robert Whiting used churchwardens' accounts to recreate the contents of the late medieval and early modern parish church for his book *The Reformation of the English Parish Church*.³³ Influenced by the cultural turn, Whiting set out to examine the relationship that parishioners had with this central place of worship by analyzing existing artifacts and the description of church objects found in churchwardens' accounts. Whiting used a wide variety of these sources, including Hanham's edition of the Ashburton accounts, to provide the reader with a detailed description of the parish church itself and the objects it contained. Through this research, Whiting discussed the involvement of parishioners in the creation of liturgical objects for their parish church, but his focus remained on the objects themselves and their uses instead of roles that these parishioners played in their creation and maintenance. This largely descriptive study used the information found in churchwardens' accounts to trace the existence of a large range of church contents to show how parishioners' experiences in this space, and with the objects that this space contained, changed with the Reformation. Whiting used this recreation of the parish church to show that parishioners largely supported the changes brought about by the Reformation as evidenced by the churchwardens' willingness to destroy and create liturgical items to obey royal commands.

Using Churchwardens' Accounts to Investigate Parishioner Labor

For all the valuable work conducted using churchwardens' accounts, historians have yet to examine them for their contents regarding parishioners' performances of physical labor. Past studies have investigated the parishioner's role in fundraising efforts, deathbed donations, and administrative service, but have neglected to explore the physical labor that some parishioners used as another outlet of participation in their parish community. Just as they contain valuable

³³ Robert Whiting, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

information regarding other methods of community participation, churchwardens' accounts provide insight into the labor that parishioners performed at the expense of their parish church.

This thesis uses churchwardens' accounts to uncover the significant role that parishioners had in the creation and maintenance of their parish church's visual culture through their physical labor. In respect to community activity, this thesis resembles Kumin's and French's efforts to explore both individual and collective involvement through service and fundraising activities. Instead of centering service and fundraising in this study, however, these methods of parishioner participation supplement this study's focus on the individual's role as laborer within their parish community. This thesis also shares an interest with Whiting's work on the parish church and its objects. Instead of recreating the visual culture of this significant aspect of a parishioner's life, this study seeks to investigate the ability of the parishioner to have a significant role in the very creation of their parish community's visual culture.

The approach that this thesis takes in analyzing the funds spent by the parish church differs from the approaches that the aforementioned historians utilized in their studies of churchwardens' accounts. Kumin and French relied heavily on the revenue side of churchwardens' accounts while this study focuses predominantly on the expenditure allotted as commission to laborers for their creative and reparative efforts within the parish church. The labor expenses featured in churchwardens' accounts provide invaluable information concerning this type of participation with regard to the visual culture of the parish church and its contents. Labor-related expenditures often include the name of the parishioner receiving the payment, the amount included in the payment, and the job completed. This information allows for a recreation of the duties and actions of some of the workers who gave their time and energy to the creation and maintenance of their parish community's visual culture.

This study also differs from Whiting's recreation of the parish church by focusing on the individuals who created, maintained, and repaired the building and objects that are the focus of this historian's recent book. By turning the focus to the laborers who were responsible for these objects, the themes of parishioner contributions and the construction of this significant building and its contents unite. Whereas Whiting's work focuses on the significance and survival of various aspects of the parish's visual culture through the church and its contents, this thesis investigates the individuals who were responsible for the creation and maintenance of this visual culture. By concentrating this study on those responsible for the physical upkeep of the church building and its contents, this thesis complements Whiting's object-centered work.

The lack of studies concerning parishioner labor has left a gap in our understanding of the significant roles that laboring parishioners played in their parish community. By focusing on the church's expenses regarding its laboring parishioners, this study emphasizes the parishioners' abilities to use their own physical labor in service to their parish. The parishioners who appear in the accounts for acting as churchwardens, donating money and goods throughout their lifetimes, establishing chantries, attributing expenses for their burial, or paying for the usage of the best cross upon their deaths are oftentimes the very same parishioners who labored in their parish. Instead of being supplemental to these other forms of contribution, these parishioners regularly used their labor to enhance and maintain numerous aspects of their parish church and the objects within it.

Source and Methodology

To achieve a thorough analysis of parishioner labor, this study uses a small-scale version of prosopography to trace the activity of fourteen parishioners throughout their lives in

Ashburton.³⁴ Larger prosopographical studies seek to follow a large set of people, perhaps hundreds or thousands of individuals, throughout their lifetimes to determine how a specific set of shared characteristics may manifest themselves through these individuals' lives.³⁵ Due to the limitations of using one particular set of sources, this study focuses on a much smaller group of people. An emphasis on a smaller group of people should not be seen as a setback, but instead as a chance to closely examine the lives of these fourteen laborers.

Approaching this analysis of labor through a methodology largely influenced by prosopography allows for an exploration of the many ways that an individual could participate in the late medieval parish community throughout the span of their lifetimes. This approach allows for a person-centered study that illuminates parishioner labor as a key component in establishing the visual culture of a parish church. The fourteen individuals who feature in this study were particularly active in enhancing their parish's visual culture, with some men working consistently for the parish church for decades and other performing large-scale and expensive labor. Tracing their names throughout the churchwardens' accounts reveals the significant roles that they played in their parish community. The accounts reveal a symbiotic relationship between the parish church and these laboring parishioners. The church not only served as a center for worship and community for these individuals, but these men also created and maintained the visual culture of this very building through their labor.

Using a small-scale prosopographical approach by tracking parishioners' names reveals the influence and extent of individual laborers in a way that other approaches may not provide.

³⁴ The seminal study of the use of prosopography as a valuable historical approach is Lawrence Stone's "Prosopography," *Daedalus* 100, no. 1 (Winter, 1971): 46-79. In this article, Stone emphasizes the usefulness of large-scale prosopographical studies in uncovering patterns of particular groups and the ways they interacted with larger society. For an article that warns about the possible downfalls that may accompany such a study, consult T.F. Carney, "Prosopography: Payoffs and Pitfalls," *Phoenix* 27, no. 2 (Summer, 1973): 156-179, especially 173-176.

³⁵ Judy Ann Ford uses a large-scale prosopographical approach to compare the roles of parishioners in parishes across the late medieval diocese of Kent. Judy Ann Ford, "The Community of the Parish in Late Medieval Kent," PhD diss., (Fordham University, 1994).

Establishing a collective biography for these fourteen men and the contributions that they made to their parish church throughout their lifetimes serves to illuminate their roles as key components in the enhancement of their parish church's visual culture. Between them, these men provided labor for a wide range of the church's physical features and its contents.

Investigating the work that these particular individuals provided for various aspects of their parish church provides us with a glimpse into roles of laboring parishioners in this particular parish.

If we examined only the labor that these five men provided to their church, however, we would risk forming a distorted interpretation of their contributions. For example, the records of labor in the churchwardens' accounts do not include specifications that these laborers were indeed members of the parish. Instead, they merely record the individuals' names, the labor that they provided to the parish, and the compensation that they received for their labor. By tracking these men throughout the set of accounts, however, it becomes apparent that they were active members of their parish. A one-dimensional analysis of laboring contribution could skew our view of these laborers.

To avoid this limited view of laboring parishioners, this study analyzes the multiple instances in which these men appear throughout this set of churchwardens' accounts by contextualizing their labor with the other methods of participation that they chose to embark upon. The men who provided this consistent labor to the parish church's objects also gave donations, served in various warden positions, and purchased seats in the church's nave. Through this analysis, a fuller picture of their lives emerges. It becomes clear that these parishioners cannot be seen simply as laborers working for compensation. Instead they must be

examined as active members of the parish community who gave the service of their physical skills and strengths to their parish to participate in this community.

An extremely detailed set of accounts is required to achieve this prosopographical approach. Such a set exists for the aforementioned parish of Ashburton. Alison Hanham's edited set of churchwardens' accounts from this Devonshire parish, entitled *Churchwardens' Accounts of Ashburton, 1479-1580*, includes wide-ranging examples regarding the work of dozens of parishioners in the late Middle Ages.³⁶ Having been originally composed in mostly Latin, Hanham translated the large majority of these records into English for her edition while retaining some Latin and Latinized versions of English words that she deemed worthy of inclusion based on the importance of their meanings to medieval society.³⁷

Instead of using Hanham's edition of Ashburton's accounts in their entirety, my thesis will examine the accounts for the years 1483-1547. This end date allows for the inclusion of possible changes in labor that occurred as a result of the early Reformation reforms while limiting the scope of the analysis with the death of Henry VIII. I chose the opening year of 1483 for this study because the accounts run consecutively from this year to the end of the accounts. Although the churchwardens' account exists for the year 1479-80, the accounts for 1480-82 are missing. This source allows for a qualitative analysis of consecutive accounts when the record for 1483-84 is the starting point. The year 1547 serves as a convenient concluding date to limit the study of parishioner activity to prevent the possibility of parishioner labor being affected by the rigorous reforms imposed in Edward's reign.

To safeguard against the possible dangers of relying too heavily on one edition of this source, I will supplement my usage of Hanham's collection with John Henry Butcher's older

³⁶ Alison Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*.

³⁷ Alison Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, xix.

edition of these accounts published in 1870. This fifty-page book, entitled *The Parish of Ashburton in the 15th and 16th Centuries; as it appears from extracts from the Churchwardens' Accounts, A.D. (1479-1580), with notes and comments*, features a selection of this set of accounts that Butcher found particularly interesting.³⁸ Although Butcher does not include each and every account in his edition, using his book to ensure there are no discrepancies between his featured accounts and Hanham's helps to uphold the validity of the records.

As is the nature of prosopography, the results yielded from this study of a group of laboring parishioners reveals trends of individual and collective labor that would not likely appear from a study limited to one single parishioner's efforts. Although the study of an individual's participation in the parish church could provide detail about that person's life and actions, it would not reveal larger patterns of labor that existed in the parish community. For example, studying one individual's consistent labor to the parish church's organ along with his participation as a collector in the parish's annual fundraiser provides an interesting view of an active parishioner who was regularly involved in his parish. But this example alone cannot hope to investigate the trends and patterns of the activity of a larger group of similar laboring parishioners who supplemented their labor in their parish through additional service. By examining a larger group of parishioners who simultaneously served and worked in the same parish church, however, these experiences can be analyzed to uncover similar practices.

Because the types of projects and tasks necessitated within the parish and recorded in the churchwardens' accounts varied, the contributions of the laborers needed for this work was similarly assorted. Nearly all men, some laboring parishioners featured in the Ashburton accounts worked within their parish on a regular basis by providing a certain type of labor on

³⁸ John Henry Butcher, *The Parish of Ashburton in the 15th and 16th Centuries; as it appears from extracts from the Churchwardens' Accounts, A.D. (1479-1580), with notes and comments* (London: Yates and Alexander, 1870).

multiple occasions throughout their lives. Others, however, gave their labor to more rare projects, which resulted in their contributions appearing on a more limited basis. Whether these laboring parishioners worked in their parish often or only once throughout their lifetimes, an analysis of their contributions sheds light on the ability of parishioners to use their physical labor as a means of actively contributing to the visual culture of the building that served as a central feature of their communal and religious experiences.

There are many instances of certain parishioners who appear consistently throughout the accounts featured in this research. The churchwardens turned to these particular men when specific objects located within the parish church necessitated the attention of their skills. These men often performed a particular type of labor on these objects for years, with some contributing a specific type of labor for decades at a time. By performing this particular work consistently, these men seem to have established a cycle of labor that came to be expected by the members of the parish community. Even though the churchwardens in charge of the laborers' payments changed from year to year, the same laborer was often hired for a specific task regardless of the parish official in charge of commissioning the work.

There are other laboring parishioners, however, who gave their labor to large construction projects that occur in only one or two years of the accounts. When compared with the other expenses featured in their given years of the accounts, these projects required at least a third of the parish's expenditure. These expensive projects required the labor of skilled parishioners; the payment that these parishioners received for their work reflects this necessity of skill. Payments to laboring parishioners for large projects nearly always exceeded the payments received by those who labored on the aforementioned objects on a more regular basis.

Although a small-scale prosopographical approach allows for the close examination of the contributions made by the fourteen laborers featured in this analysis, there are many instances of unattributed labor that are not discussed in this thesis. Because the churchwardens' accounts do not record the names of those responsible for these instances of labor, they are not featured in this study. Some examples of unattributed labor include repairing the roof of the church, mending the pavement in the churchyard, and repairing the church's stained glass. These acts were undoubtedly important to the appearance and functionality of the parish church, but the laborers who carried them out remain unknown.

Unattributed labor appears in every year of this set of accounts. Figure 2 compares the instances of attributed and unattributed labor in the Ashburton accounts for the decade of 1500-1510. Out of a recorded 225 instances of labor in the accounts for this decade, 124 of them were attributed to particular people while the remaining 101 instances were unattributed to any particular person. These instances of unattributed labor may indicate that because a particular parishioner consistently carried out these tasks, the church expected this labor and therefore his or her name did not need to be included in the accounts. Conversely, this may also indicate that the churchwardens hired a non-parishioner unfamiliar to the congregation to carry out this labor and therefore decided that the individual's name did not need to be included in the accounts, but that the task itself would suffice instead. Unattributed labor should not be viewed as any less important than attributed labor, but the lack of names with these instances of unattributed labor make them unable to be used in this prosopographical study.

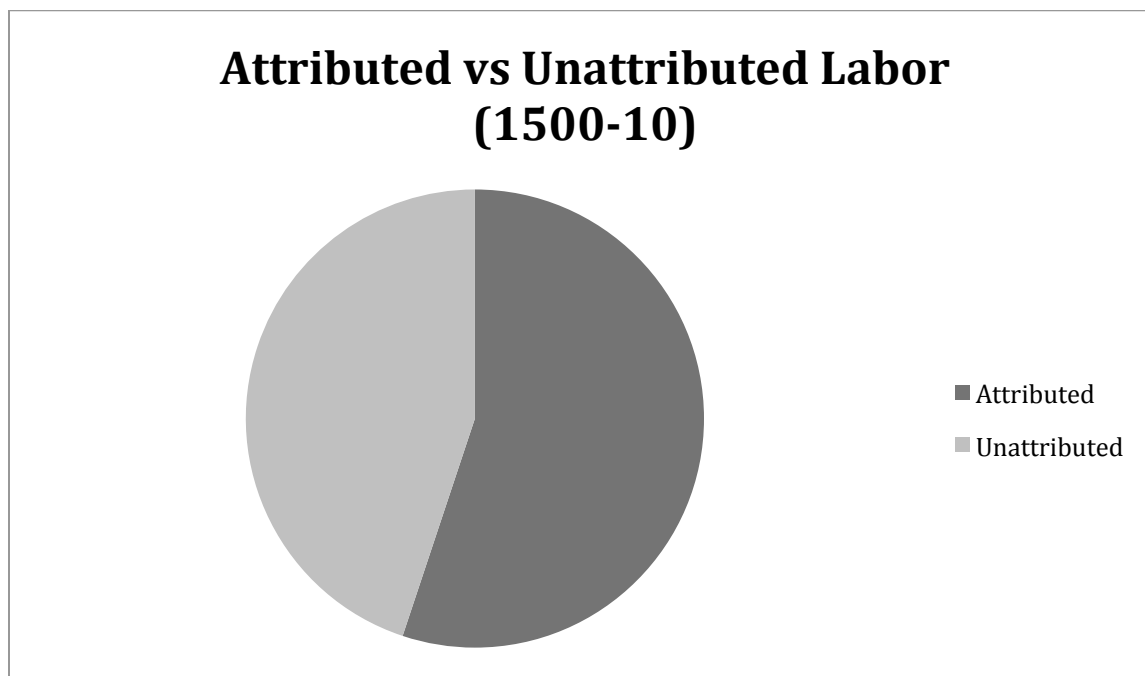


Figure 2. Attributed vs Unattributed Labor from 1500-10.

Another drawback of this particular set of churchwardens' accounts is its lack of female laborers. The churchwardens' accounts record only one female parishioner, Alice Alford, as having contributed labor to the parish church from 1483 to 1547.³⁹ The churchwardens paid Alford on three separate occasions for her work with the liturgical vestments. If one took this set of accounts as the sole authority for parishioner labor in Ashburton, they would conclude that women simply did not provide labor for their parish church. The silence of these accounts concerning laboring women, however, is not likely representative of the reality of Ashburton's parishioners. Because these accounts neglect half of Ashburton's population, this study is devoid of the contributions made by the female parishioners of St. Andrew's Church.

Although these shortcomings exist for the Ashburton accounts, this particular set includes detailed information regarding other methods of parishioner participation in the parish

³⁹ Alison Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 17, 19, and 25, respectively. Alford received 7 pence in 1491-92 for washing and mending a cope, 2 shillings in 1492-93 for making surplices, and 23 pence in 1497-98 for mending a surplice.

community. The churchwardens' accounts reveal that the fourteen men featured in this study often took the lead in parish fundraising activities, provided service to their community through serving as a churchwarden, gave gifts to St. Andrews, purchased seats within the nave, and further funded their church upon their deaths through donations, the use of the best cross, and burial payments. The inclusion of these activities in the churchwardens' accounts shows that the laboring parishioners featured in this study played varied, active roles in their parish communities. Not only laborers, these men serve as dynamic examples of individuals who sought various means of communal participation. To successfully examine the roles of these laboring parishioners within their parish, their labor must be contextualized alongside these other contributions. If this study solely focused on the labor of the individual, the contributions of these men may be mistaken for just a narrow desire of payment instead of also for pious participation in their community.

Although Ashburton's churchwardens' accounts are an ideal source for a prosopographical investigation into the labor of these fourteen men due to the consecutive nature and thorough descriptions in the accounts, this study has other possible shortcomings that should be addressed. A study focused on one particular parish should not necessarily be applied to the experience of parishioners in every parish throughout England. Instead, this study should be appreciated for its geographical restrictions as it joins the conversations of area studies similar to those of French, Burgess, and Kūmin above. Larger conclusions may then tentatively be drawn from this geographically restricted analysis. Another possible drawback is the fact that this study relies heavily on the usage of churchwardens' accounts for the examination of parishioner participation. Whereas historians have previously relied heavily on other documents such as wills and inventory records while using churchwardens' accounts as supplemental material, this

study places churchwardens' accounts at the center of the analysis. Although some sets of churchwardens' accounts would not be suitable for the basis of a study due to their incompleteness or lack of useful information, Ashburton's churchwardens' accounts present invaluable information through their great attention to detail regarding parishioner labor.

Chapter Previews

This analysis is divided into three additional chapters following this introduction and a short epilogue. The second and third chapters focus on two main types of parishioner labor regarding the visual culture of the parish church in the decades leading up to the Reformation. The fourth chapter investigates the state of this labor following Henry's break with Rome while the epilogue serves as the conclusion for this study.

Chapter two begins the analysis of parishioner labor in the creation and maintenance of objects located within the parish church. Because the objects in this chapter feature in multiple churchwardens' accounts, they are useful to investigate the ways that particular parishioners could provide labor to certain objects throughout the span of multiple years. Because this chapter seeks to investigate recurring labor on certain objects, nonrecurring instances of general labor on material objects are not featured in this study. For example, the year 1514-1515 records a payment of 1 penny for the cleaning of the church.⁴⁰ This general charge is not a recurring charge that can be attributed to a specific parishioner, so it is not featured in this study. While these unattributed or nonrecurring tasks were undoubtedly contributed to the successful functioning of the parish church, they do not serve the purpose of investigating the labor of individual parishioners. Conversely, the account for this year also features a recurring expense

⁴⁰ Alison Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 52.

of 49 shillings to an individual parishioner, John Mayne, for the construction of church seats.⁴¹

A discussion of this charge is included in this study because it allows for an examination of this parishioner's significant role in the creation of church seats for his parish church and the possible indications of the importance of church seating for the parishioners of Ashburton.

This chapter on objects features laboring activities completed by individual parishioners instead of multiple parishioners working together on one activity, as is the case in the next chapter regarding large projects. These solitary acts of parishioner contribution give glimpses into the ways laborers completed necessary work for their parish without the help of other members of the community. This chapter focuses on the work of five parishioners to create, maintain, and repair three types of objects in particular: church seating, books, and organs. Although these items may seem mundane upon first glance, the constant inclusion of these objects in the accounts for regular maintenance indicates both continuous use and parishioner knowledge of necessary repairs for these objects. These notable objects stand out in the accounts because they can be viewed as symbolic items that the parish likely prided themselves on owning and maintaining. Some items were used for specific purposes while others likely denoted a certain ideal that the parishioners wished to espouse about their wealth or devotion. The instances of parishioner labor featured in this chapter highlight the parish church's dependence on these five particular men to provide the necessary labor for these religiously significant objects. Analyzed alongside these parishioners' other contributions to their parish, their acts of physical labor serve to illuminate the reciprocal relationship that existed between the parishioner and parish.

The third chapter explores parishioner labor on two large, costly projects that were intended to enhance symbolic aspects of the parish church. The two projects featured in this

⁴¹ Alison Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 52.

chapter stand out in the accounts due to the large expenses they each incurred. The first project, undertaken in 1493-94, required the labor of seven parishioners to successfully repair and improve the parish church's spire. This project consumed more than one-third of the total yearly expenses for that particular year with the majority of those expenses attributed to parishioner labor. The second project featured in this study, the construction of a roodloft in the parish church in 1521 and its completion in 1525, required the work of two laborers and amounted to over half of the year's expenses. These costly projects and the parishioners who were entrusted with the work shed light on the roles that laboring parishioners played in the large-scale rebuilding and construction initiatives at Ashburton.

Although these large projects occurred in isolated instances instead of in recurring accounts like the objects of chapter two, they still offer an interesting analysis of parishioner labor within the parish. These projects required the work of multiple men whereas the labor regarding objects in chapter two required only the labor of one parishioner. The collective efforts that resulted in the completion of these projects indicate the ability of these individuals to work collectively with other members from their parish community. Additionally, the men who performed this labor feature elsewhere in the accounts in both service and charitable capacities. Especially in the instance of the spire, two of the seven laboring individuals were simultaneously serving their church as churchwardens. Investigating this service and other contributions that these individuals made to their parish before, during, and after their labor on these projects helps to stress their roles as active parishioners.

The fourth chapter in this thesis discusses the continuance and disturbance of different types of parishioner labor after the Reformation. While the post-Reformation churchwardens' accounts continue to feature some types of parishioner labor, most instances of labor are either

vaguely described or left unattributed to a particular individual. Because the Ashburton accounts quickly transition from containing numerous yearly instances of parishioner labor expenses to barely noting laboring parishioners at all, they offer an interesting analysis of the impact of the Reformation on parishioners' lives. Although Ashburton's parishioners rarely appear in the post-Reformation accounts by name, several of the symbolic aspects of the parish church that they had labored upon before the Reformation continued to receive care and enhancement. To investigate these instances of continued parishioner labor following the Reformation, this chapter focuses on the alterations and repairs made to the church's organs and roodloft that occurred after this religious shift.

Finally, the epilogue acts as a short summary of the findings in this thesis and the implications that these findings have on the study of parishioner contribution to the parish. This summary contains a quick recapitulation of parishioner labor both before and after the Reformation. The epilogue concludes with potential possibilities for future analyses of lay labor within the parish church through the study of churchwardens' accounts.

Chapter 2 – Objects within the Parish Church

Parishioner labor on liturgical objects serves as a valuable starting point to investigate the impact that laboring parishioners had on their parish church and its contents. By working on these objects with their own hands, parishioners could use their labor to enhance the experience that they themselves and their fellow parishioners had in St. Andrew's Church. Similar to participating in their parish community through monetary means or voluntary service, these individuals were able to contribute to their parish by working on these symbolic liturgical objects. The churchwardens commissioned these laborers to create and maintain some of the symbolic pieces that they, and the congregation, chose to express their collective ideals. Because the churchwardens paid these laboring parishioners with the funds raised by the parishioners as a whole, and because the parishioners could hold the churchwardens accountable for how they spent this money, their labor reflected the desires of their parish community.

By utilizing the prosopographical approach explained in the introduction to this study, this chapter examines five laboring parishioners of Ashburton who provided for their parish church by working on various objects on a regular basis. These men used their skills and expertise to create, maintain, and repair the pews, books, and organs belonging to St. Andrew's Church in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. These laborers contributed to their parish church and community through the enhancement of these symbolically and functionally significant objects.

The laborers featured in this chapter provided labor to these significant objects on a regular basis throughout their lives. One of the objects in this chapter, the parish church's pews, provides an example of the ways in which one single parishioner held influence over a specific aspect of the parish church for an extended period of time. The other types of objects, the

church's books and organs, provide a slightly different example of consistent parishioner labor. Instead of one parishioner maintaining these objects over an extended period, two parishioners consecutively maintained both the books and the organs over a 50-year period. In each case, as soon as the first parishioner was no longer able to maintain the object due to their death, a second parishioner took over the required service. An examination of the contributions of these laboring parishioners reveals the importance of this work that they performed for their parish.

The five individuals in this chapter are analyzed according to the symbolic object that regularly required their labor. To fully appreciate the work that these laborers contributed, the symbolism of these objects must also be discussed. The individuals featured in this chapter also participated in their parish community through caring for other objects, leading fundraising opportunities and serving in wardenship positions, and making monetary donations. By contextualizing their labor alongside these other contributions, these individuals emerge as five men who had the ability to alter and enhance their parish community by their various methods of contribution.

Seating

Aside from the possible exception of parishioners who were infirm or old, members of the congregation were expected to stand or kneel throughout services until the introduction of pews into parish churches.⁴² The installation of seating for the laity began in the early fifteenth century and became more widespread by the close of the century. Ashburton's lay seating likely existed prior to the opening date of the churchwardens' accounts. The earliest purchase of a seat recorded in the accounts dates to 1483 when a parishioner purchased a seat for 8 pence.⁴³ The

⁴² Margaret Aston, "Segregation in Church," *Studies in Church History* 27 (1990): 250.

⁴³ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 3.

churchwardens' accounts steadily feature revenue generated from seat purchases throughout the late middle ages and the Reformation.

The seating in St. Andrew's church undoubtedly served as a place for the congregation to rest while they attended services, but they also likely served as a signifier of the wealth of the parishioners and the community's socioeconomic hierarchy.⁴⁴ Financially capable parishioners paid a one-time purchase fee for their seat in the parish church that they likely kept for their lifetime. These fees ranged from 4 to 12 pence according to the position of the seat in relation to the chancel. Because physical proximity to God in the church was important to the parishioners, the seats closest to the altar were likely the most expensive. The location of one's seat determined the order in which they received the Eucharist from the priest, resulting in those seated closest to the altar being served first.⁴⁵ The price that one paid for their seat in St. Andrew's church, therefore, carried with it symbolism of one's piety and, as a result of the varying prices associated with each seating location, affluence. As Katherine French explains, seating location "shaped the laity's experience of the liturgy and showed that they did not consider themselves to be an undifferentiated or homogeneous group."⁴⁶ The wealthy members of the parish could afford the best seats while those less well off purchased seats farther away from the host. The poorest parishioners likely never purchased a seat in their parish church and instead remained standing throughout services.⁴⁷

When parishioners looked around St. Andrew's during mass, it was likely that they could see the wealth of their fellow members as a result of their location in the church seats, which

⁴⁴ Aston, "Segregation in Church," 251.

⁴⁵ Katherine French provides a detailed discussion of proximity to the pax on page 84 of her *The People of the Parish* and an additional analysis concerning the hierarchy and gendering of parish seating arrangements on pages 162-170.

⁴⁶ French, *The People of the Parish*, 162.

⁴⁷ French, *The People of the Parish*, 162.

created a visual representation of the parish community's social hierarchy. According to the accounts, it seems that the overwhelming majority of parishioners purchased seats for an average price of eight pence, which indicates that perhaps this visual hierarchy of seating was not as prevalent at Ashburton as it was elsewhere. The income generated from the sale of seats was never substantial when compared to the revenue from rents and fundraising activities. Instead, the 8 pence average cost per seat was a small percentage of the church's income. In 1508, one of the most prosperous years for seating purchases, the accounts show that the sale of seats constituted just 9 shillings and 6 pence of the £16 9 shillings and 9 pence total collected in revenue for that year.⁴⁸ Just three years later, in 1511, the accounts do not feature the sale of a single seat.⁴⁹ The churchwardens must have seen the enhancement of the seating as a worthwhile expense, however, because they began commissioning costly seating construction that took a total of fifteen years to reach its full completion.

The churchwardens initiated this seating construction in 1511-12 by paying a parishioner, John Mayne, 13 shillings and 4 pence to construct the seating of the church.⁵⁰ This expenditure appears to be a modest expense when compared with the total expenditure of £25 12 shillings and 2 pence for that year. The expenditure total of this year, however, is an anomaly. The churchwardens purchased a new house to use as a rental property and paid for its renovations in 1511-12 at a total of £12 15 shillings and 5 pence, which causes Mayne's compensation to pale in comparison to this large expenditure. However, Mayne's total compensation for his work on the parish's seating extended over multiple years. Analyzing Mayne's multi-year compensation reveals the significant role that this particular parishioner played through constructing his parish church's pews.

⁴⁸ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 37.

⁴⁹ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 43.

⁵⁰ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 44.

Mayne spent five consecutive years building new seating for his church for a combined compensation totaling £11 from 1511 to 1516. Mayne received a payment of 46 shillings and 8 pence in 1512-13 for his work on the seats, and a similar 49 shillings in 1514-15.⁵¹ Each of these expenses far outweigh all other single expenses of any kind for these two years, including the churchwardens' purchases of material objects to supplement the parish church such as wax for the candles. The magnitude of Mayne's service is further exemplified by the churchwardens' record of payment regarding the seating for the intervening year. In 1513-14, the churchwardens paid an astounding £4 16 shillings and 9 pence to Mayne for his labor on the seats.⁵² This amount far exceeds any other payment made to a parishioner for this year. The next highest amount paid to a laborer was £3 14 shillings and 5 pence paid to the church's glazier for extensive work on St. Andrew's stained glass.⁵³ When compared with the other expenses of this particular year (Figure 3), Mayne's compensation indicates the value that the churchwardens placed on his work. This parishioner's labor surpasses the church's expenditure on rents and the purchase of materials needed for both the liturgy, like wax and book repair supplies, and for construction purposes, such as timber and metal. The only expense in this account that exceeds Mayne's compensation was a total charge of £6 7 shillings and 1 penny to the unnamed laborers who installed a new bell in the parish church.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 48 and 52, respectively.

⁵² Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 50. The only expenditure to cost more than Mayne's payment was an expense of £6 7 shillings and 1 pence for exchanging a bell of the church for a new bell from Exeter weighing 1339 lbs found on Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 50.

⁵³ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 50.

⁵⁴ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 50.

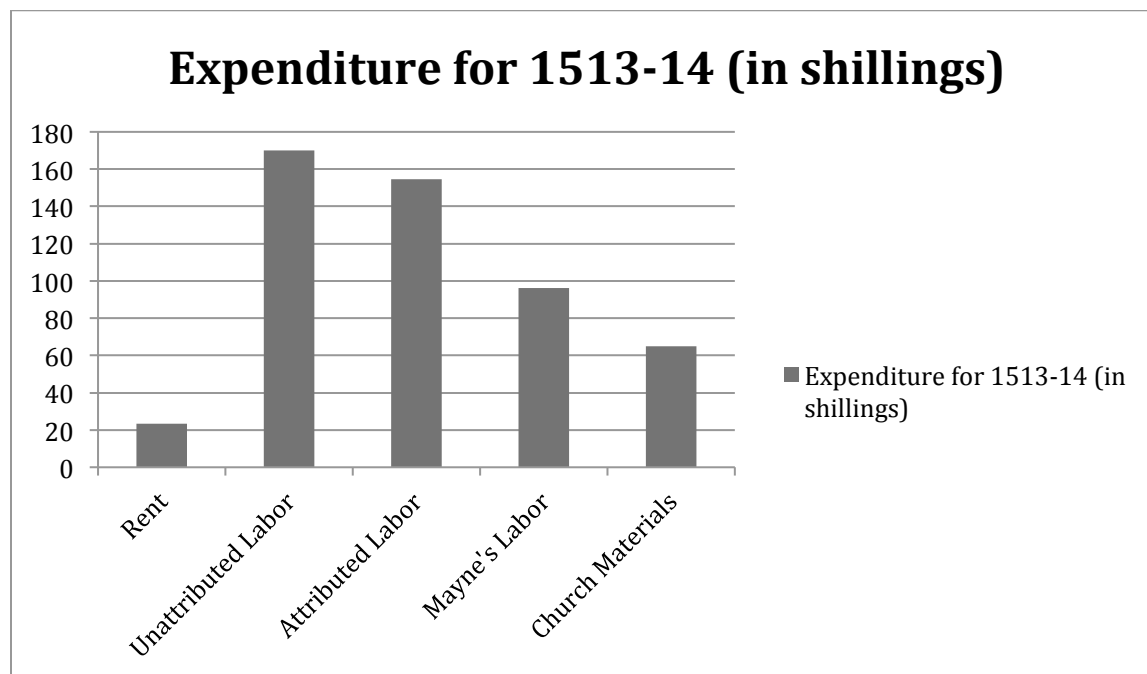


Figure 3. Expenditure for 1513-14 in shillings.

The churchwardens allotted 5 pence of Mayne's payment for felling the timber used for the construction of the seating. This additional charge indicates that Mayne was put in charge of every aspect of the seating construction. He not only constructed the seats, but he also secured the materials necessary for their creation. Mayne concluded this five-year span of consecutive work on the church seating in 1515-16 with a final payment of 3 shillings and 4 pence.

Although the accounts do not specify the amount of seating that Mayne constructed and the regularity with which he worked on this seating throughout the span of construction, the sizable payments he received indicate that this was a large-scale project compared to similar pew construction in other parish churches. Robert Whiting compares the £11 total spent on this construction at Ashburton with the slightly smaller charge of £8 12 shillings and 2 pence spent on similar seating construction by the churchwardens at St. Laurence Reading in 1522.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Whiting, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church*, 191.

Whiting uses these examples to exemplify the large-scale seating construction efforts that swept across England in the decades preceding the Reformation, but he misrepresents the contents of Ashburton's accounts. Whiting presents the £11 expenditure as the expenses for one year of pew construction to argue that Ashburton replaced the old pews in a single year, instead of the reality of the £11 payment being the combined total for a five-year span of construction. By presenting the pew costs in this manner, Whiting's analysis neglects to reveal the extent of Mayne's labor.

The misinterpretation of Mayne's work fails to acknowledge the consistent labor that this parishioner completed for his community for five consecutive years. Aside from this discrepancy with the sources, Whiting's example of Ashburton's seating expenses serves his goal of exemplifying large-scale construction efforts. Since the churchwardens only compensated Mayne for this labor, the accounts indicate that this particular parishioner single-handedly built much, if not all, of the seating in his parish church by providing this labor for an extended period of time. If Mayne's occupation was that of a skilled carpenter as is indicated by his work and large compensation, he could be expected to earn around 6 pence per day of work, which would align with national statistics for the work of one skilled carpenter alone.⁵⁶

Mayne's efforts were further extended when the churchwardens again called on him to construct additional seating in 1526-27. In this year, Mayne received a total of 12 shillings and 6 pence "for making seating in the aisle of Blessed Mary in the church."⁵⁷ The churchwardens note that 10 shillings and 1 pence of this payment was allotted for Mayne's labor while he received the remaining 22 pence for boards and 7 pence for nails. This inclusion of specified payments to Mayne for supplies indicates that Mayne secured his own materials needed for the

⁵⁶ Christopher Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain 850-1520* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 310.

⁵⁷ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 78. The aisle of Blessed Mary in the church was likely a supplemental chapel located within the nave of St. Andrew's. A proposed plan of the interior of this church can be found in Nicholas Orme's *Unity and Variety: A History of the Church in Devon and Cornwall* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1991), 59.

seating construction instead of the churchwardens themselves purchasing the materials separate from the labor, as is the case in other records of construction projects. Although it is likely that Mayne knew the churchwardens would refund him for the purchase of these materials, this action shows that Mayne was willing to not only provide the skilled labor necessary for the construction of the church's seating, but to also personally secure the materials necessary for this construction.

As an active member of his parish, Mayne likely knew firsthand the driving factors of piety and socioeconomic status that could accompany the purchase of the seats that he created. The churchwardens recorded Mayne's own purchase of a seat in St. Andrew's in the accounts for the year 1499-1500, eleven years before the commencement of his regular labor to the church's seating.⁵⁸ Having made a payment of 10 pence to the churchwardens, Mayne paid 2 pence more for his seat than the average sum of 8 pence paid by his fellow parishioners. Because Mayne spent an above average sum on his own seat in the church, it is likely that he knew the social importance of the seating that he would go on to create for his parish church.

Mayne's service to his parish community through labor was not confined to the church's seating. In addition to this work, Mayne was one of three parishioners who regularly cared for the church's bells in the early sixteenth century. This work did not produce as large of an income for Mayne as he never received a payment higher than 5 shillings and 1 penny for his work with the bells.⁵⁹ Although his bell-related income does not compare to the large sums he received for the seating construction, Mayne's dedication to supplying labor to the parish church for both the seating and the bells shows his devotion to his community. Similar to the seating of

⁵⁸ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 26.

⁵⁹ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 52. Mayne received this payment for ringing the bells of the church in 1514-15. Aside from other general repair and upkeep work to the bells, Mayne also led a collection for new bells in 1501-02 where he raised 18.5 pence. This collection record is found on page 29 of Hanham's edition of the accounts.

a church, the bells often served as symbols indicating community piety and wealth.⁶⁰

Parishioners sought distinctive tones in their bells since these objects represented the parish church through their sounds. Because some people visiting the parish would have heard the bells before seeing the parish church itself, the sounds emitted from the bells had the ability to influence these individuals' first impressions of the church and its parishioners. The individual who repaired and maintained the church's bells had direct impact over their ability to impress or disappoint visitors.

His regular service to seating and the bells allowed Mayne to have a hand in the creation and maintenance of two important physical and symbolic objects. Every parishioner would have experienced Mayne's seating when they entered into their parish church and likewise his bell labor when they heard the bells ringing throughout the town. Because medieval parishioners viewed the parish church as the physical embodiment of their love of God, they had a vested interest in the quality and upkeep of such significant objects as the seating and the bells. As discussed above, the seating of St. Andrew's indicated social position and allowed the parishioners to be closer to the Eucharist. Mayne's creation of this symbolically important aspect of the parish church, and the great expense paid to him for this labor, was not likely to be taken lightly by his community. In addition, the quality of a parish's bells was important to the parishioners; the sound of the bells often became a source of communal pride and could even come to symbolize a parish. Mayne's consistent labor on these bells allowed for the successful functioning of this symbolic communal pride. By laboring simultaneously on these two aspects of St. Andrew's church, Mayne contributed to both his parish church and his larger community.

⁶⁰ Katherine French provides an excellent discussion of the significance of bells in her *People of the Parish*, 142-147.

The churchwardens' accounts do not provide a record of any donations or funds allocated for Mayne's death expenses as exists for other parishioners, but Mayne's labor to his church's seating and bells throughout his life shows that he played a key role in the expression of the piety of the larger parish community. Mayne's example of consistent labor to two important aspect of St. Andrew's Church shows the means by which one parishioner actively participated in his throughout his life. The churchwardens' willingness to hire Mayne for these significant tasks further exemplifies the important work that this man performed for his church. Instead of striving to improve his community through the donation of funds or objects upon his death, Mayne played a key role in the improvement of Ashburton's parish community through his physical work.

Books

Books were required liturgical objects that contributed to the successful functioning of the parish church. As Robert Whiting explains, a parish church's mass books "provided its priests with the words and gestures for the most highly revered and dramatic of its sacraments."⁶¹ Ashburton's collection of these important liturgical texts required frequent upkeep. Although the exact number of books that Ashburton owned is unknown, each parish church was required to have a collection of essential books for the liturgy including:

a lesson-book (legend) for matins, an antiphonal (the book containing most of the musical parts of the services), a gradual, containing the choir music for the Mass, a psalter, a book of sequences, an ordinal or book of instructions on the administration of the liturgy and sacraments, a missal, [and] a manual, containing the occasional services such as baptism, burial, marriage, and the various blessings.⁶²

⁶¹ Robert Whiting, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church*, 85.

⁶² Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 133.

In addition to these texts, affluent parishes such as Ashburton often commissioned the creation of additional books to supplement the collection or new versions to replace the older, mandatory texts.⁶³ Because the priests often depended on these books to serve as guides for services, the parish church's book collection was essential to the successful performance of the mass and other activities

In addition to their practical uses, the parish church's book collection also served to symbolize the affluence and piety of Ashburton's parishioners. The size of book collections along with the books' physical appearances indicated the ability of a parish church to afford to expand and properly maintain their books. The parish church's books not only served to guide the priests through services, but they were also the symbolic homes for the words and commands of God. As such, their physical upkeep was of great importance to the parishioners of Ashburton. The Ashburton accounts indicate that the churchwardens took the wellbeing of the book collection very seriously. Nearly every year of the churchwardens' accounts includes expenses regarding laborers hired to perform regular creation, upkeep, and repair of the parish church's books. Since they were members of the church and often served as churchwardens themselves, the parishioners whom the churchwardens hired to complete these tasks likely understood the significance of the objects they were working on.

The men who worked on Ashburton's book collection had to have the necessary skills to physically construct, maintain, and compose these liturgical objects.⁶⁴ In their accounts, the churchwardens often included payments for materials such as binding and skins for these books

⁶³ For information on how texts were used in the liturgy, one should consult Margaret M. Manion and Bernard J. Muir, eds. *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998).

⁶⁴ For information on book production, see Alexandra Gillespie and Daniel Wakelin, eds., *The Production of Books in England 1350-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); P. R. Robinson and Rivah Zim, eds., *Of the Making of Books: Medieval Manuscripts, their Scribes and Readers* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997); and Barbara A. Shailor, *The Medieval Book: Illustrated from the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library* (New Haven: Yale University, 1988).

in the same years that specialists from the parish were paid for their book-related labor. Because book specialists were responsible for writing, binding, and keeping these liturgical objects, they often received sizable payments for their services.

The first parishioner to appear in the accounts for consistently working on the parish church's books was William Kempston. Initially appearing in the set of churchwardens' accounts for the year 1492-93, Kempston contributed specialized labor to his parish's books until his death at the turn of the sixteenth century. This particular parishioner was responsible for the maintenance and repair of several books in Ashburton's collection. The first mention of Kempston notes that the churchwardens paid him 18 shillings for the "byndyng & mendyng of ye grete boke."⁶⁵ This payment of 18 shillings is the largest payment that the churchwardens made to an individual in the account for that year. When compared with the 4 shillings and 7 pence that another parishioner received for laying a floor in the church house and the 5 shillings and 10 pence divided between two additional parishioners for paving within the church, the 18 shillings that Kempston received for his labor on the binding and mending of the great book stands out as a sizable expense.

The willingness of the churchwardens to allocate such a large payment for the repair of one single object indicates the importance that this great book held within the parish community. Although the role that this particular book played in the liturgy is not explicitly stated in the accounts, it is probable that such a large sum would be spent on a missal due to its centrality to the liturgy. Because this essential Latin text contained all the services that the priest performed throughout the liturgical calendar, it guided the priest through the mass and special feast days. It is likely that the physical upkeep of the missal's binding was important for both functionality and decorative purposes. When the priest read from this important book, he communicated the word

⁶⁵ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 19.

and will of God to his flock. Although the accounts do not specify if this “grete boke” contained illustrations that the priest may have displayed to the parishioners during mass, the payment that they allocated for its binding and mending in 1492 indicate this book’s importance to the congregation. By paying to keep it in good repair, the parishioners showed their pious devotion to God through the physical upkeep of the book that held his words. Kempston would have experienced this book regularly in the services and he would have likely known all that it stood for both religiously and symbolically. Through his labor, Kempston ensured the wellbeing of the very text that his priest used to communicate the word of God to Kempston himself and his fellow parishioners.

Ashburton’s “grete boke” was not the only text that the churchwardens commissioned Kempston to repair and maintain. In 1495-96, the churchwardens made the expensive payment of £5 to Kempston for the construction of a new book for the parish church. The total amount of expenditure for 1495-96 was only £10 3 shillings and 9 pence; nearly half of these expenses went to Kempston’s £5 commission. Although the churchwardens’ accounts do not reveal the nature of this book, it can be assumed, as with the book commissioned in 1492-3, that it was considered significant to the parish because of its large cost. Following the creation of this book, Kempston did not have to wait long for the churchwardens to give him another job. The very next year, they paid him an additional £4 for writing and mending various books and allotted 8 pence for skins to line the new book that he had created. These charges show that Kempston had creative power with his parish’s book collection. Instead of paying him only to make repairs like they had done with the “great book,” the churchwardens paid Kempston to physically create new books for the parish’s collection. The large payments Kempston received in 1495 and 1496 reflect the value with which the churchwardens held his labor. Kempston’s constant

involvement in the repair, maintenance, and creation of the parish's books shows the significant duties that he carried out for his parish church through his labor on these important liturgical objects.

After Kempston's death in 1499,⁶⁶ the churchwardens paid 8 pence to a different parishioner, Simon Bullock, for carrying out necessary repairs to some of the parish church's books.⁶⁷ Bullock took over Kempston's role as the go-to parishioner for all things book-related. For nearly every year from 1500 to 1515, the churchwardens made a payment to Bullock regarding the church's books. Although Bullock never received a sum as large as Kempston's £5 for creating a book for the parish church, he did receive £2 6 shillings and 4 pence in 1506-07 for the "makyng of a new boke."⁶⁸ The language that the churchwardens used in describing these charges is significant. By differentiating between mending a book and making a book, the churchwardens' accounts show that there were multiple men in the parish of Ashburton who were capable of carrying out the specialized task of book creation. Bullock's seemingly instantaneous assumption of Kempston's duties following his death indicates that Ashburton had a steady supply of book specialists available to work for the parish church. Although mending and maintaining these books involved the knowledge of book binding and physical construction, the skills that accompanied the actual writing of a book would have required at the very least a basic level of literacy or copying skills. The payment indicates the worth of Bullock's work concerning this new book. The £2 6 shillings and 4 pence that they paid Bullock for this book was nearly a third of the £6 13 shillings and 7 pence total spent on labor and materials in the 1506-07 account.

⁶⁶ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 27.

⁶⁷ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 27.

⁶⁸ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 35.

This routine creation of books attributed to both Kempston and Bullock show the regularity with which the churchwardens relied on fellow parishioners to enhance and maintain the parish church's book collection. Between the two of them, Kempston and Bullock provided the parish church with at least six new books that feature in the accounts from 1492 to 1515. Aside from these new books, both parishioners also mended and maintained the church's collection of existing books. This constantly evolving collection allowed these skilled laborers to contribute to this aspect of their parish church on a regular basis. The books they crafted were central to worship and could also serve to communicate the piety and wealth of the members of the parish church through the size of the collection and the books' physical appearances. By delegating one third to one half of funds in many years to maintain and improve their collection, the parishioners of Ashburton showed the value that they placed on these particular objects. Both Kempston and Bullock would have understood the significance of their contributions to the church's book collection because, as parishioners, they would have experienced these books on a regular basis.

Kempston's and Bullock's community participation was not limited to their work on their parish church's book collection. The accounts do not indicate that these two men left bequests or donations to Ashburton when they died, but instead, like Mayne, they actively participated in their parish community throughout their lives through fundraising efforts and wardenships. Each man served their parish by being a collector for the annual waxsilver fundraiser, in which two male members of the church raised money to purchase the wax needed to make candles for the parish church.⁶⁹ Kempston also served his church as a churchwarden in 1498; due to his death this same year, Kempston was only able to serve one term in this position.

⁶⁹ Kempston served as a waxsilver collector in 1493 while Bullock served in 1506. Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 21 and 35, respectively.

Instead of viewing Kempston and Bullock as individual laborers who solely worked on the parish church's books, we can see that they combined their specialized efforts with fundraising and administrative service to enhance their parish community throughout their lives. Analyzing the varied ways in which these two parishioners participated in their church shows that the roles they played in their parish community were dynamic and influential. The churchwardens regularly depended on these two individuals when the church's book collection necessitated the attention of a specialist.

Organs

St. Andrew's maintained at least one organ throughout the late Middle Ages until the mid-sixteenth century. Organ music accompanied the priest's plainsong and both the congregation's and the choir's singing during liturgical services.⁷⁰ The churchwardens' accounts include payments to various individuals for playing the organ during mass or on special occasions.⁷¹ The strategic location of the parish church's organs upon the roodloft ensured that the music emitted throughout the church for all in attendance to experience. As Magnus Williamson explains, even though "spatial and structural practicalities no doubt governed the choice of location in many cases, the physical position of instruments and the sound they made are likely to have had symbolic, liturgical significance."⁷² The organ's music supplemented the church services and raised "the spirits of both hearers and performers to their creator's praise."⁷³

⁷⁰ For more information on the usage of music to supplement singing, see Clive Burgess and Andrew Wathey, "Mapping the Soundscape: Church Music In English Towns, 1450-1550," *Early Music History*, vol. 19 (2000): 1-46 and Nicholas Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

⁷¹ For example, the churchwardens allotted 3 shillings and 4 pence "to Mr. Prediaux for his reward for playing the organ" in 1511-12 found on Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 44.

⁷² Magnus Williamson, "Liturgical Music in the Late-Medieval Parish: Organs and Voices, Ways and Means," in *The Parish in Late Medieval England: Proceedings of the 2002 Harlaxton Symposium*, eds. Clive Burgess and Eamon Duffy (Donington, Lincolnshire: Shaun Tyas, 2006), 177-242.

⁷³ Whiting, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church*, 167.

In addition to the practical usage of organ music to supplement the singing at mass, the presence of organs in a church also held symbolic significance. Like the aforementioned pews and books, a parish church's organ indicated the financial prosperity of the parish community that purchased it. Organs were not commonly found in most parish churches until the 1530s.⁷⁴ Prior to this time, wealthy congregations could afford to provide organ music in their parish church. The presence of an organ indicated that the church's parishioners were willing and able to pay for such an extravagance to enhance their church services.

The initial purchase of an organ was a large expense, and ownership of this instrument incurred additional costs, as it required the churchwardens to regularly allot funds for upkeep and repair. Expenses for labor regarding St. Andrew's organ appear fairly regularly in the churchwardens' accounts. Although there are occasional mentions of organ repair expenses that do not include the name of the individual who completed the work, most of the charges concerning this expense include the name of the parishioner who provided this service to St. Andrew's organs. The parishioners who labored on the church's organs throughout the accounts needed to know how to properly tune the instrument. Further, they had to possess the skillset needed to maintain and repair the organ's keys and pipes in order to keep the instrument functioning correctly. The accounts indicate that one particular family dominated this type of work concerning this particular instrument.

From the first record of organ repair in 1483 to 1539, eleven accounts feature payments to a member of the Gye family for the care of this important aspect of their parish church. Investigating the labor of a father and son pair on one particular liturgical object provides interesting insight into the ways that a specific type labor could be passed down through generations within a parish. The span of time covered by this family's labor to the organ allows

⁷⁴ Whiting, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church*, 168.

for an extended study of the Gye's activities within their parish community. The Gye family likely lived and worked in Ashburton before the accounts open in 1479. John Gye appears in four accounts for completing service to the church's organ from his first appearance in 1483 to his death in 1510. Following John's death, his son, William Gye, immediately assumed the repair and maintenance issues concerning the organ. The younger Gye maintained this role from 1511 until his own death in 1540.

The service that the Gyes gave to St. Andrew's through work to the organ over this 56-year period shows the dependence of the churchwardens on one particular family to provide the necessary labor to the church's organs. The accounts do not give any indication as to why the churchwardens consistently turned to the Gyes for this type of work, but it is possible that the Gye family was in the business of producing and repairing organs for a living. Although town records do not exist to be able to confirm that the Gyes ran such a business in Ashburton, the services that they provided to their parish church concerning the maintenance of existing organs and the selling of multiple sets of new organs indicates that the Gyes specialized in this particular object. A closer examination of the Gye's service concerning both the organ and other aspects of their parish church illuminates the extensive work that this particular family performed for their parish church.

Most of the expenses regarding John Gye's labor on the church's organ are small amounts that likely indicate minor repairs such as the 5 pence allotted to him in 1483 and the 7 pence he received in 1494.⁷⁵ The language in the accounts is too vague to determine the type of work that John performed on the organ, but his payment of 5 pence was a small fraction of St. Andrew's £5 12 shillings and 7.5 pence expenditure for 1483. Although this payment amount is small in comparison to the total expenses for that year, John's work on the organ should not be

⁷⁵ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 4 and 21, respectively.

discounted as unimportant. He went on to earn a more sizable sum of 3 shillings the very next year for yet more unspecified labor to the organ.

The highest payment made to John for work regarding the organ occurred in 1501 when the churchwardens paid him 14 shillings and 8 pence for general labor.⁷⁶ This was the second largest amount that the churchwardens paid to an individual for labor in this year. John's payment was only exceeded by the 26 shillings and 8 pence that the churchwardens paid to another parishioner, John Soper, for his work on the church gate.⁷⁷ Gye's largest payment was the last he would receive for his service to St. Andrew's organ. The churchwardens do not record any further expenses regarding the organ for this decade, and it is not mentioned again in the accounts until John's son William takes over its maintenance.

John's participation in his parish was not limited to his work regarding the organ. In 1484-85, the accounts record John's purchase of a seat in the church for 8 pence.⁷⁸ This seat purchase serves to anchor John as an active parishioner who likely took a vested interest in his parish church since he sought to purchase a permanent seat there. As analyzed in the aforementioned section on church seating, John's purchase of a seat for the price of 8 pence conformed to the average price of a seat at St. Andrew's. In St. Andrew's congregation, Gye would have been seated behind Mayne, who each purchased his seat for 10 pence. Nevertheless, John Gye's seat would have been located alongside the majority of his fellow parishioners, which likely indicated that Gye possessed a modest socioeconomic standing in his parish community. From this seat, John would have experienced the music of the organ that he labored on throughout his life.

⁷⁶ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 29.

⁷⁷ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 30.

⁷⁸ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 5.

John further participated in his parish community with the donation that he left to his parish church upon his death in the accounts for 1510-11.⁷⁹ When he died, John gave 12 pence to his parish as a gift and allotted a further 12 pence for the rental of the church's best cross at his burial.⁸⁰ By donating and renting the cross upon his death, John ended his life with his parish community on his mind, much like it must have been when he gave his time and energy to the repair and upkeep of the organ that he experienced when worshipping in his church.

The language used in the accounts indicates that the parish church owned only one organ when John performed his service to his parish church. The churchwardens specifically describe John's work as labor to "the organ" in each record of his work. When John's son William took over the organ maintenance, it seems that the church initially continued to retain only one organ. In 1511 and 1513, William received payments of 4 shillings and 3 shillings respectively for mending the organ of the church. In 1519, however, the churchwardens recorded a major expense resulting from the purchase of a pair of organs from William, who received a total of £4 6 shillings and 8 pence for this new set.⁸¹ This particular parishioner's ability to create a pair of organs for his parish church further indicates that the Gye family may have had their own business of manufacturing and selling organs. As Whiting explains, "the traditional organs...were manufactured – chiefly in London and the regional centers – by a body of professional organ-makers."⁸² Gye's sizable compensation likewise implies that it was not common for a parishioner to have the ability to construct such a complex instrument for their parish church, but that these organs were instead the work of a specialist.

⁷⁹ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 41.

⁸⁰ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 41.

⁸¹ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 62.

⁸² Whiting, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church*, 180.

The large payment William received for the creation of the organs was over a third of the £11 16 shillings and 10 pence that the churchwardens spent on expenses regarding the parish church in 1519. With the next highest expense amount of this year being £3 paid to John Vyne for his services as a chaplain to one of Ashburton's fraternities,⁸³ the churchwardens' payment to William is significantly higher than every other payment for that year. William's compensation for selling the organ to the churchwardens expands his service to his church even further as he now provided his community with new versions of the very same objects for which he simultaneously provided with labor.

After selling these new organs to the church, William maintained his organ-related service to St. Andrew's by continuing to repair the organs for 19 years. Although the promise of a large payment and continued labor on these organs may have encouraged the sale, William may also have been driven to enhance his parish church's musical abilities through the provision of the organs. Instead of keeping the entirety of the churchwardens' payment for the new set, the accounts state that William returned a portion of it to the church in a donation of "3 shillings 4 pence received from William Gye from the price of an organ bought from him."⁸⁴ William's act of giving part of his payment back to the churchwardens, in addition to his persistent service to the organs, exemplifies William's dedication to the enhancement of the music of his parish church.

Two years prior to this sale, in 1517-18, William expanded his service to St. Andrew's by acting as an alewarden.⁸⁵ This position served as a common outlet for the young men of the church to become involved in the parish's fundraising efforts. As Charles Worthy explains:

⁸³ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 62.

⁸⁴ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 62.

⁸⁵ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 58.

It was at one time the custom for two young men of the parish to be yearly chosen to the office of Ale Wardens, and their duty was to make collections amongst the parishioners of whatever voluntary contributions they might be pleased to bestow, and to employ them in brewing and baking before Whitsunday; upon which feast the neighbors were wont to meet together at the Church House... When the feast was over, the wardens laid a statement of their accounts before the parishioners, and the money in hand was devoted to defraying any extraordinary charges arising in the parish.⁸⁶

This position required William to take responsibility for making and selling the ale for the parish's annual ale fundraiser. William's service as an alewarden shows a different kind of participation in his parish community. Because this position did not reward alewardens with compensation, William's role in this fundraiser can be viewed as an attempt to increase the revenue of his parish church or to raise funds for his fellow parishioners. William furthered his service to his parish church when he served two consecutive terms as a churchwarden beginning in 1520. Similar to his service as an alewarden, William's service as a churchwarden shows that he supplemented his paid labor with other unpaid methods of participation in his parish community.

William's participation in his parish community persisted even upon his deathbed. The churchwardens' accounts for 1540-41 states that William left a gift of 20 pence after his death along with 3 shillings and 4 pence for death expenses.⁸⁷ Although these expenses are not specified in the accounts, the common price for a burial in St. Andrew's church at this time was 3 shillings and 4 pence, so it is probable that William was providing the funds for his burial. When William's service in wardenships and his contributions upon his death are contextualized alongside his labor on the parish organs, William Gye emerges in the accounts as a parishioner who sought various methods of participation in his parish community. Through his time and

⁸⁶ Worthy, *Ashburton and Its Neighborhood*, 44-45.

⁸⁷ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 107.

effort, William helped to enhance the culture of his parish through music while simultaneously serving in administrative wardenships.

Through their work on their parish church's organs, John and William Gye enhanced the music of the very services that they attended as parishioners of St. Andrew's Church. By doing so, they helped to create and maintain an aspect of the environment that they and their fellow parishioners experienced regularly. The churchwardens utilized the specialized skills of these two parishioners on a steady basis and their consistent appearances in the accounts indicates the significance of the work that they performed for their parish church.

Conclusion

The five parishioners featured in this chapter provided consistent labor for St. Andrew's Church. By working on such objects as the church's seating, books, and organs, these parishioners helped to create and maintain these symbolic aspects of their parish church's visual culture that they would come to experience regularly. In addition to their labor, these five men pursued other methods of participation in their parish community through wardenships, fundraising efforts, and monetary donations. Through these efforts, the five parishioners featured in this chapter were able to have a direct hand in the enhancement of their parish community.

Chapter 3 – Parish Church Projects

Construction must have been a common sight among the parishioners of Ashburton. The churchwardens' accounts contain expenses concerning a pricey repair project or new addition to the parish church at least once per decade in the late medieval period including the remodeling of rental properties belonging to the parish church, the construction of symbolic structures inside the parish church, and the installation of new features on the church building. The large-scale nature of these projects consumed much of the parish church's funds, requiring Ashburton's parishioners to hold fundraisers or donate money specifically for the completion of these construction projects. Although the purchase of building materials also loomed large for these projects, the churchwardens allotted the majority of the expenses for the compensation of laborers.

An analysis of the parishioners who received payments for working on these large projects reveals another way in which Ashburton's parishioners participated in their parish community through labor. Continuing the prosopographical approach used in chapter two, this chapter examines the work of nine laboring parishioners who gave their time and effort to two of Ashburton's large-scale construction projects. The first project featured in this chapter concerns extensive work on the parish church's spire in the last decade of the fifteenth century. The churchwardens' accounts name seven parishioners who participated in this project by providing physical labor. The second project is the construction of the parish church's roodloft in the mid-1520s, which required the skills of two main laborers and their assistants.

In contrast to the solitary labor analyzed in chapter two, these projects required the collective work of multiple parishioners for their successful completion. Analyzing projects that required the labor of many parishioners from the same parish community extends this study to

include collective labor. The collective efforts expended in the completion of these projects show the abilities of individual parishioners to work together for the benefit of their shared parish church.

The parishioners who worked on these large projects exemplify the wide variety of contributions that parishioners could make to their parish. Like those who labored on objects, the overwhelming majority of the men who feature prominently in the churchwardens' accounts for their physical contributions to Ashburton's projects served the parish in other capacities. Some of these men held office, others participated in fundraisers, and others still performed specialized work on various objects of the parish church throughout their lifetimes. Although these men sought to participate in their community through this wide variety of actions, they all came together to provide labor to these two symbolic projects. Analyzing their contributions to these projects along with examples of their other methods of involvement shows that these laboring parishioners were very active in the enhancement of their parish church.

Spire

The churchwardens recorded the expenses concerning labor and materials for the extensive work performed on the parish church's spire in the year 1493-94.⁸⁸ Because the scope of this project required the work of a diverse group of laborers, the accounts include payments made to a total of seven parishioners for their work concerning this decorative aspect of the church building. The parishioners who labored on this project were all working in the parish in various capacities in the years immediately preceding the spire repair. By contextualizing their labor to the spire alongside their other methods of service to their parish, we can reach a fuller

⁸⁸ All of the expenses concerning the spire work, including labor, are found on Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 20-21.

impression of how these parishioners used their physical labor to enhance the visual culture of their parish community.

Much like the men who worked on the objects featured in chapter two, the parishioners who provided labor to the spire project were integral to the maintenance of this symbolic feature of their parish church. The scale and import of this particular project required a team of specific parishioners to combine their individual skillsets to see this project through to completion. The churchwardens trusted these parishioners with essential tasks and often rewarded them with sizable payments when they fulfilled these duties. By carrying out the necessary repairs to such a significant aspect of their parish church, these men had a hand in ensuring that the spire successfully served as a visual representation of the piety and affluence of the church's parishioners.

Congregations throughout England proudly displayed communal ideals through their parish churches' spires. Robert Bork illuminates the symbolic significance of a spire:

With their rich iconographical heritage, great spires were effective carriers of sacred symbolism, but their expense and prominence made them powerful symbols of worldly interests as well. As expressions of both religiosity and pride, the great spires of Gothic Europe stand as supreme monuments of an age in which art was used to link the city of man to the city of God.⁸⁹

Because this structure had the ability to symbolize such significant communal ideals, parishioners paid large sums to ensure its welfare.

A spire's height helped to communicate the pious devotion of those who commissioned its construction and financed its upkeep. The piercing point of a parish church's spire stretched toward the sky to symbolize the parishioners' desires to reach closer to God in Heaven. Bork explains the historical significance of a spire's height: "[S]pires were heirs to ancient traditions

⁸⁹ Robert Bork, *Great Spires: Skyscrapers of the New Jerusalem* (Düsseldorf: Köln, 2003), 23.

associating height with sacredness. Spires were in this sense vertical bridges, linking the city of man to the city of God.”⁹⁰ Although the churchwardens’ accounts do not reveal the height of St. Andrew’s spire, the parishioners likely intended for it to have this same customary symbolism.

In addition to symbolizing the piety of the parishioners, spires could also communicate the wealth of the community to visitors. As Bork explains, the presence of spires evoked awe from onlookers: “With their tremendous height and prominence...great spires acted as visual public address systems for an age without mass media.”⁹¹ Spires were expensive to build and costly to maintain. Instead of serving a liturgical purpose, spires were decorative aspects of a parish church’s exterior that were indicative of a congregation’s ability to finance this example of conspicuous consumption. Whereas the objects featured in chapter two signified the community’s wealth to those who experienced them inside the church, the spire allowed the parishioners to communicate their wealth to anyone who visually experienced the church’s exterior. The simple act of seeing St. Andrew’s spire would inform the viewer of the prosperity of Ashburton’s parish community. For this reason, it was important for the parishioners to keep this symbolic aspect of the parish church in good condition.

The churchwardens allotted more than a third of their yearly expenses to the spire repair project (Figure 4). When compared to the year’s total expenditure of £6 7 shillings and 5 pence, the spire’s construction cost of £2 9 shillings and 2 pence of this total shows the magnitude of the repairs. With the exception of 9 shillings and 4 pence allotted for “castyng of ledde [and] sawdyng abowte ye saide spire,” the churchwardens attributed all labor expenses regarding this project to particular parishioners. Although the churchwardens did not attribute this labor to a specific individual in the accounts, someone had to carry out this work. By paying someone to

⁹⁰ Bork, *Great Spires*, 17.

⁹¹ Bork, *Great Spires*, 2.

work with the lead upon the spire, the accounts indicate that the structure itself, which was likely made of stone,⁹² also had elements of lead and iron. It is possible that the individual responsible for the lead work remained unnamed because he provided labor to one of these other elements of the spire, too.

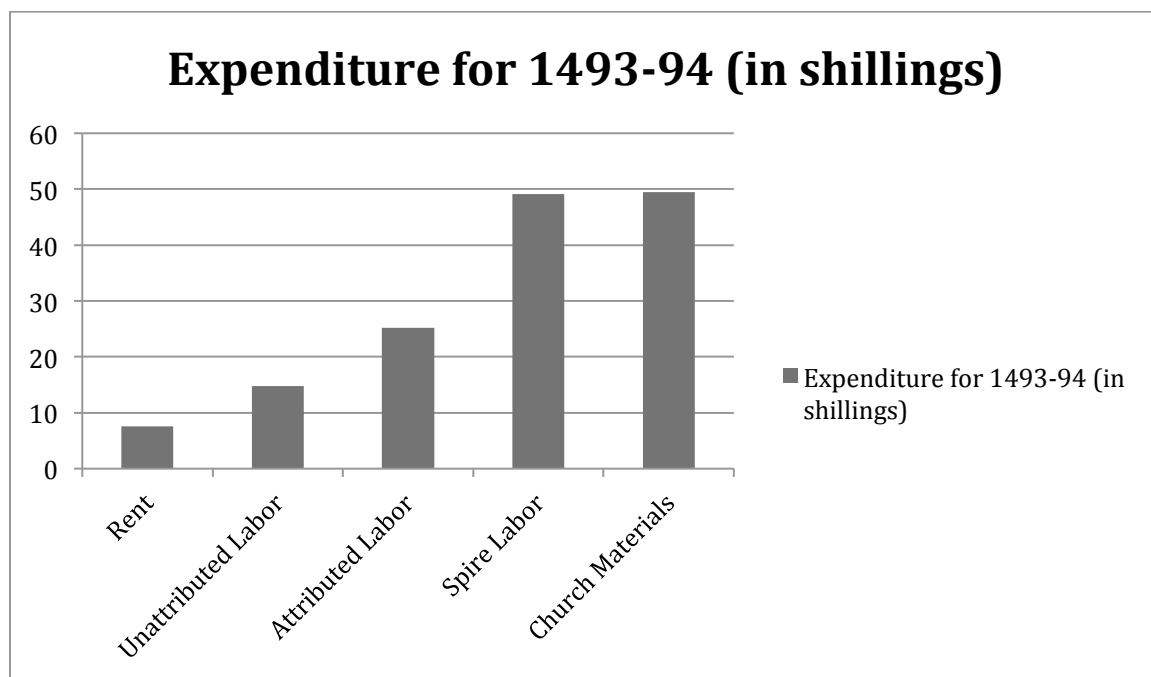


Figure 4. Expenditure for 1493-94 in shillings.

The amount of work that the spire required is also implied by the efforts of the parishioners to fundraise specifically for the spire's repair. Whereas the accounts never feature funds explicitly raised for the objects featured in the above chapter, the account for the year of the spire project includes a record of 3 shillings and 8 pence "of the yefft of men to mende the

⁹² Stone spires were common among Gothic churches, but the accounts do not specifically if St. Andrew's spire was made from stone or timber. The accounts do note, however, that the churchwardens paid 14 pence for the delivery of stone to the parish the year before the spire repair began, and an additional 22 pence of more stone in the same year as the repair. These charges are located on Hanham, *Ashburton Churchwardens' Accounts*, 19 and 20, respectively.

spire ther with.” Because the churchwardens do not attribute this “yefft,” or gift, to a particular parishioner, the accounts indicate that the collective parishioners raised this sum themselves.⁹³

The first mention of the spire project exemplifies the collective nature of the labor on these large projects. The churchwardens paid five men, John Bullocke, John Russell, Walter Antoney, Will Clynche, and Will Derte, 5 shillings and 10 pence for “worke a bowte the spyre and making of skaffotis.”⁹⁴ The language used in the accounts is too vague to determine the specific type of work that these five men performed aside from their contributions of the scaffold construction, so it is likely that they performed general, unspecialized labor. Even though their labor cannot be expanded upon due to the vagueness of the accounts, the labor that these men performed helped with the completion of this project.

The contributions that these five parishioners made to their parish before, during, and after the spire project show that they were active members of St. Andrew’s who chose to enhance their parish community through a wide variety of efforts. The parishioners who provided this general work to the spire project and constructed the scaffolds chose a wide variety of other ways to contribute to their parish. Two of these men contributed primarily through monetary contributions, another served as a wage laborer, and the remaining two provided regular physical labor to their parish community. This wide range of experience shows that the men who labored on this particular aspect of the parish church had very different histories of participating in the community; nevertheless, they came together to ensure the successful completion of this symbolic project.

⁹³ In other instances of monetary gifts made to the parish, the churchwardens generally specified the individual parishioner responsible. For example in this same year of the accounts, located on Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 20 the churchwardens record “4 [pence] gift from the daughter of John Harrell. Gift of John Underhaye – 7 [pence]. Gift of Thomas Torryng – 16 [pence].”

⁹⁴ The accounts do not specify how the churchwardens divided up the lump sum between these five men, but an equal division of 1s 2d per laborer is possible. If the churchwardens did compensate these men equally, their payment of 1s 2d for their work and the construction of the scaffolds was considerably less than the payments others received for their work on this particular project.

The accounts record that three of these five parishioners served as churchwardens at some point in their lives, with two of them serving as churchwardens during the spire project's undertaking.⁹⁵ Adhering to the four-man rotation in Ashburton, John Russell served as a senior warden in 1493-94 while John Bullocke served as a junior warden.⁹⁶ As churchwardens, Bullocke and Russell oversaw the financial aspects of the parish church. Because Ashburton's churchwardens were in charge of compensating laborers for their work within the parish, Bullocke and Russell occupied the roles of both the compensator and the compensated in the case of the spire project. By simultaneously holding the positions of churchwarden and laborer, these two men show the ease with which Ashburton's parishioners performed various duties for their parish church.

It was not unheard of for Ashburton's churchwardens to be directly involved with the large projects that were completed during their terms.⁹⁷ In addition to paying laborers and purchasing the materials necessary for these projects, the accounts show that some churchwardens compensated themselves for various responsibilities such as travel and the sale of materials, like timber or glass, that projects required. It was rare, however, for the churchwardens to be compensated for providing physical labor.

Contributing physical labor to their parish community seems to be out of character for both Bullocke and Russell. Instead, these parishioners gave back to their parish community by making multiple monetary donations to the parish throughout their lives. The accounts reveal that Bullocke gave monetary gifts to Ashburton on three different occasions. In 1487, Bullocke

⁹⁵ Bullocke's service as a churchwarden is recorded on Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 20-21, while Russell's service can be found on Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 18-20.

⁹⁶ The other two churchwardens serving at the time of the spire work, John Ollysborne and William Ollisborne, did not provide any labor to this project.

⁹⁷ For an example of churchwardens traveling to ensure the completion of a parish project, see Ashburton's purchase and installation of a new bell on Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 32.

gave 4 pence to the parish, followed by an additional gift of 6 pence in 1501, and a final gift of 4 pence in 1534.⁹⁸ This parishioner gave an additional 2 pence, specifically for the purchase of candles, to his parish in 1498.⁹⁹ Likewise, Russell gave a monetary gift of 6 pence to Ashburton in 1490.¹⁰⁰ He also served his parish as a collector for the parish torch fundraiser in 1485 by raising 17 pence for this particular fund.¹⁰¹ Finally, just four years after his work on the spire, Russell purchased a seat in the parish church for 8 pence.¹⁰² These two parishioners' prior actions suggest that the work they performed on the spire may have been administrative instead of physical. Nonetheless, their contribution to the spire project must have been viewed as necessary as indicated by their inclusion in the compensation.

Another of these five laborers, Walter Antoney, regularly appears in the accounts for his willingness to contribute to his parish community through an assortment of service and labor. Prior to his work on the spire, Antoney held the position of churchwarden in 1484-86 and served as a collector for the waxsilver fundraiser in 1483-84.¹⁰³ He also received several small payments for repairs he made to various lead objects around the parish church and washing the linen clothes of the church.¹⁰⁴ Unlike the other parishioners featured in this study, however, Antoney would go on to hold a salaried position when he occupied the office of sexton for two years from 1513-15.¹⁰⁵ As sexton, Antoney dug graves in the parish church's cemetery maintained the graveyard. For his work in this position, Antoney earned a salary of 10 shillings;

⁹⁸ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 10, 29, and 94, respectively. Bullocke's gift in 1534 is the last mention of Bullocke in the accounts which indicates that this gift may have been made upon his death.

⁹⁹ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 25.

¹⁰⁰ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 15.

¹⁰¹ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 7.

¹⁰² Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 24.

¹⁰³ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 5-7 and 4, respectively.

¹⁰⁴ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 9-13.

¹⁰⁵ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, xvii. The accounts are unclear as to who served as sexton

this was further supplemented by a payment of 4 shillings and 5 pence for keeping the church's clock and bells and an additional 4 shillings for ringing the bells.¹⁰⁶

Antoney's wide assortment of participation shows that he used a variety of methods to enhance his parish community. When the churchwardens were in need of someone to complete a specific task, it was not uncommon for them to hire Antoney to ensure its completion. Because Antoney was more experienced with providing physical labor to the parish church than either Bullocke or Russell, it is likely that he and the remaining two parishioners were responsible for providing the necessary physical labor to this particular project.

These remaining two parishioners attributed with performing general labor for the spire project, Will Clynche and Will Derte, participated in their parish community primarily through physical labor. The accounts feature both parishioners regularly in the last two decades of the fifteenth century for providing labor to diverse objects and buildings within the parish. Clynche received 3 shillings for helping with work on the parish church's weathercock in 1488 and an additional 2 shillings and 4 pence in 1492 for repairs done to the belfry when this structure that enclosed the parish church's bells necessitated maintenance.¹⁰⁷ Derte likewise received 10 pence for working on the church's belfry in 1486 and 1 penny for mending one of the parish church's sepulchers in 1483.

Will Derte further expanded his participation prior to the spire project by providing labor necessitated by numerous buildings in the parish community. In 1487 Derte received 14 pence in compensation for setting up the roof on a new house that the churchwardens had purchased to remodel and use as a rental property.¹⁰⁸ Since the parish church rented out these properties to garner revenue, Derte's labor on these rental homes should be viewed as a further extension of

¹⁰⁶ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 50.

¹⁰⁷ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 13 and 18, respectively.

¹⁰⁸ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 11.

his participation in his parish community. Additionally, Derte provided labor to the parish's community building, referred to as the church house. Derte received 5 shillings and 1 penny for his work on the church house in 1490 and an additional 3 pence for constructing a stall in front of this building in 1491.¹⁰⁹ By providing physical labor to a number of buildings within the parish, Derte played a significant role in his community's construction efforts.

The accounts provide more detail concerning the contributions of two additional parishioners, John Clyff and Will Schaptor, who provided specialized labor to this symbolic piece of their parish church. The churchwardens' accounts state that John Clyff received 8 shillings and 4 pence for providing the necessary ironwork repair while Will Schaptor received 25 shillings and 8 pence, the largest compensation to an individual for this project, for "brasse and makyng [it] to the spire."¹¹⁰ In contrast to the general labor recorded for the five parishioners discussed above, the work completed by Clyff and Schaptor provides insight into two parishioners who provided specialized labor for their parish community.

As a smith who was active in Ashburton throughout the span of this set of accounts, John Clyff lent his ironworking skills to his parish community on a regular basis. His contribution to the spire's iron likely did not surprise anyone in Ashburton. He first appears in Ashburton's accounts for the year 1482 for making a chest for the churchwardens and mending a baking iron that belonged to the parish church.¹¹¹ Various churchwardens continued to compensate Clyff for his work concerning the church's iron, but they neglected to include much detail about his efforts. Instead, the accounts label most of Clyff's labor simply as being "ironwork" instead of including the specific type of object that necessitated his labor. Nevertheless, the persistent

¹⁰⁹ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 16 and 18, respectively.

¹¹⁰ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 20.

¹¹¹ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 3. It is possible that Clyff had been performing ironwork duties in the parish before this date.

hiring of this particular parishioner indicates that the churchwardens depended on his work and he was willing to continue providing it. Clyff received payments for iron-related labor nearly every year until 1515, when the churchwardens stopped attributing ironwork to a particular parishioner. Considering Clyff's extensive record of labor to his parish community's iron for the decade preceding the spire project, his fellow parishioners and the churchwardens likely expected his participation in this project.

His history of labor to the parish's ironwork was not Clyff's only method of participation in his community. Following the spire project, he began to increase his involvement in service-related activities. Clyff brewed and sold ale as an alewarden in 1499 and then took control of the parish's finances as a churchwarden from 1500 to 1502.¹¹² He went on to purchase a seat in his parish church for 8 pence in 1525 and he gave 1 shilling as a gift just five years later in 1530.¹¹³ Clyff's final appearance in the accounts occurs in 1534 when he left another gift, of 4 pence, to his parish church.¹¹⁴ Because Clyff supplemented his specialized labor concerning the parish's ironwork with these other methods of participation, he serves as a good example of a parishioner who sought out numerous ways to contribute to his parish community.

When compared with Clyff's consistent labor to the iron around the parish, Will Schaptor's large compensation for his work on the spire's brass appears to be more out of place. Whereas it seems likely that Clyff's skills as a smith were well known throughout the parish and regularly utilized by the churchwardens, Schaptor's work with the brass is one of only two records in this set of accounts regarding physical labor by this particular parishioner. Instead of implying that Schaptor was not regularly involved in his parish, however, this may simply indicate that the only task that required Schaptor's attention was the brass on the spire.

¹¹² Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 28-30.

¹¹³ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 86.

¹¹⁴ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 94.

Schaptor's other recorded contribution of physical labor to his parish came in the form of mending a bell in 1503, which earned him 8 pence.¹¹⁵ Although Schaptor features in the accounts for multiple contributions until his final contribution in 1530, he does not receive another compensation for labor at the hands of the churchwardens.

In addition to his work with the spire, Schaptor used both conventional and unconventional methods of participating in his parish community. Schaptor remained active in his parish community throughout his lifetime through service, fundraising, and monetary donations. Like Clyff, Schaptor raised money for his parish church by conducting the ale fundraiser in 1496 and served as churchwarden from 1504 to 1506.¹¹⁶ He also chose to donate money for particular causes: he gave 4 pence towards the renovation of a parish-owned building in 1490 and was one of five parishioners who gave a lump sum of 2 shillings toward the purchase of a cross and candlesticks in 1497.¹¹⁷ Unlike other parishioners, Schaptor also participated in his parish community by purchasing old or left over materials from his parish church. The churchwardens note that they received nearly 2 shillings from Schaptor in 1519 when he purchased the leftover metal from a new bell that the churchwardens had purchased and installed that year.¹¹⁸ Five years later, in 1524, Schaptor paid the church an additional 7 shillings and 5 pence for lead ashes from the churchwardens.¹¹⁹ Schaptor's capability to purchase these materials from the churchwardens and his willingness to participate in the fundraisers show that he was a parishioner who used a variety of methods to contribute to his parish community.

The seven men who worked together to complete the spire project combined their strengths and abilities to repair this symbolic aspect of their parish community. By working

¹¹⁵ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 32.

¹¹⁶ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 23 and 32-34, respectively.

¹¹⁷ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 15 and 24, respectively.

¹¹⁸ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 62.

¹¹⁹ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 73.

together, these men were able to ensure that this structure could communicate the collective piety and affluence that it was designed to display. Their labor allowed them to have a physical hand in the repair of an aspect of their parish church's exterior that they would visually experience every time they approached the building. When their work is analyzed together with their other contributions, these parishioners emerge as seven men who actively sought to participate in their parish community in a variety of ways.

Roodloft

The other project analyzed in this chapter is the creation of the parish church's roodloft. The roodloft was a wooden gallery that served to separate the parish church's chancel from its nave. This structure held much symbolic significance that represented the piety of the parishioners. The location of the roodloft allowed individuals to adorn the area surrounding the church's depiction of the crucifixion of Christ, the rood.¹²⁰ Parishioners could climb the roodloft in order to surround the rood with candles or other decorations. Ashburton's roodloft also featured a large platform that served as the new home for the parish church's organs upon the roodloft's completion in 1525. By moving the organs onto this platform, their music could be heard throughout the church. Roodlofts could also contain altars and room for the church's choir to stand while singing.¹²¹

Begun in 1521 by one parishioner and completed in 1525 by another, this project serves as another example of collaborative labor even though the two parishioners worked independently to complete this symbolic aspect of the parish church's interior. Because the initial laborer hired by the churchwardens died within two years of the start of his work on the

¹²⁰ Whiting, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church*, 199.

¹²¹ Whiting, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church*, 200.

roodloft, the project had to be completed by a second parishioner. Although these parishioners did not labor on this project simultaneously as was the case with the spire project, the successful completion of the roodloft still necessitated the expertise of these two men.

Ashburton's roodloft project demonstrates the ability of wealthy parishioners to give their parish church money to help pay for large, costly projects. At the onset of this project in 1521, a wealthy Ashburton parishioner named John Ford gave a £10 gift to his parish to serve specifically "in part payment for making le Rodeloft in the south part" of the church.¹²² Although other parishioners in Ashburton feature in the accounts as having donated sizeable sums of money to their church upon their death, Ford's gift of £10 for the roodloft is the largest sum given by a living parishioner. Ford's decision to finance such a large portion of the roodloft also serves to indicate the significance of this structure to Ford in particular, and to his larger parish community in general.

When recording the total expense of the project, the churchwardens referenced Ford's gift as part of the £13 6 shillings and 8 pence that they paid to William Somer and his assistant, Geoffrey Dunpayne.¹²³ Through his gift, Ford was able to finance this large portion of the roodloft's required labor. This further complicates Somer's work; in addition to receiving payment from his own parish community for this labor, he also received compensation from one of his fellow parishioners. Although the accounts do not state that Ford was directly involved in overseeing this project, Somer likely knew that his work had to satisfy not only his parish community, but also the prominent parishioner who paid for the majority of his compensation.

¹²² Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 67.

¹²³ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 68. Aside from working on the roodloft and stripping the bark from the timber alongside Somer in this initial year of the roodloft construction, the accounts are silent on Dunpayne's activities in the parish. His name is mentioned neither before nor after these contributions to the roodloft project. This lack of presence in the accounts and the fact that there is no other mention of anyone with the last name Dunpayne in the entire set indicates that he was brought in from outside the parish to work with Somer.

Somer also likely knew the magnitude of the roodloft's construction. The costs spent on labor and materials for this project exceeded all of the other expenses for 1521-22 (Figure 5).

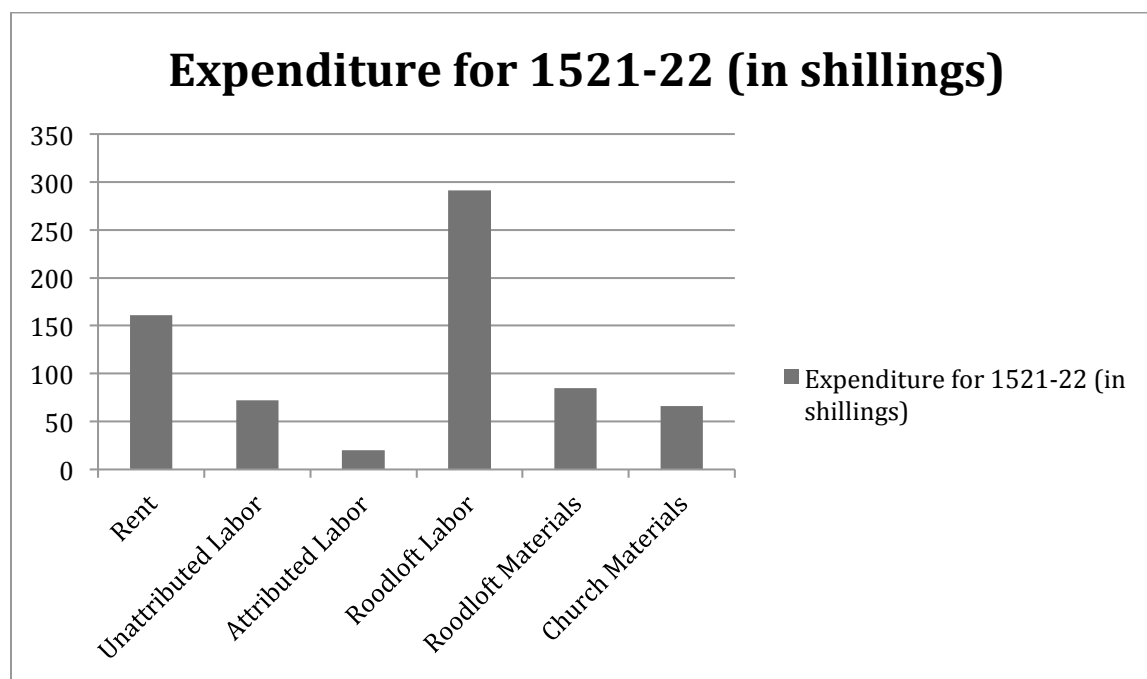


Figure 5. Expenditure for 1521-22 in shillings.

Somer, like Bullocke and Russell who worked on the spire, participated in his parish through gifts of money and the purchase of objects. His first appearance in the accounts dates back to 1496-97 when he purchased a seat in the parish church for the parish's average expense of 8 pence.¹²⁴ After his purchase of this seat, Somer does not appear again in the accounts until 1521 with his work on the roodloft. The reward of £2 6 shillings and 8 pence that Somer received at the hands of his fellow parishioners the very next year for his work on the roodloft was the third and final mention of this parishioner in the accounts during his lifetime.¹²⁵ He further contributed to his parish church through his death. The churchwardens record a gift of 4

¹²⁴ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 23.

¹²⁵ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 70.

pence from Somer and an additional payment of 8 pence for use of the church's best cross and candles in 1523.¹²⁶

By limiting his physical labor to the roodloft and instead manifesting his community participation through monetary means, Somer's actions indicate that he was likely of a higher socioeconomic status than some of his fellow parishioners who primarily used labor to show their communal participation. The large payments that Somer received for his labor to the roodloft and his usage of an assistant further indicate that the work he performed was highly specialized labor.

Following Somer's death, the roodloft project remained incomplete until the churchwardens commissioned Peter Kerver and his assistants to finish the work in 1525. The churchwardens' accounts do not detail where Somer left off and Kerver picked up on this project, but a comparison of their payments indicates that the churchwardens saw their work as being roughly of equal value to the project. Somer's total payment of £16 13 shillings and 4 pence from his two years of labor is little more than Kerver's £16 payment for his single year of labor to this project.¹²⁷ Like Somer's payment, Kerver's compensation far exceeds any other expense for 1525-26 (Figure 6).

¹²⁶ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 71.

¹²⁷ All of the expenses regarding the roodloft project in 1525 are found in Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 76.

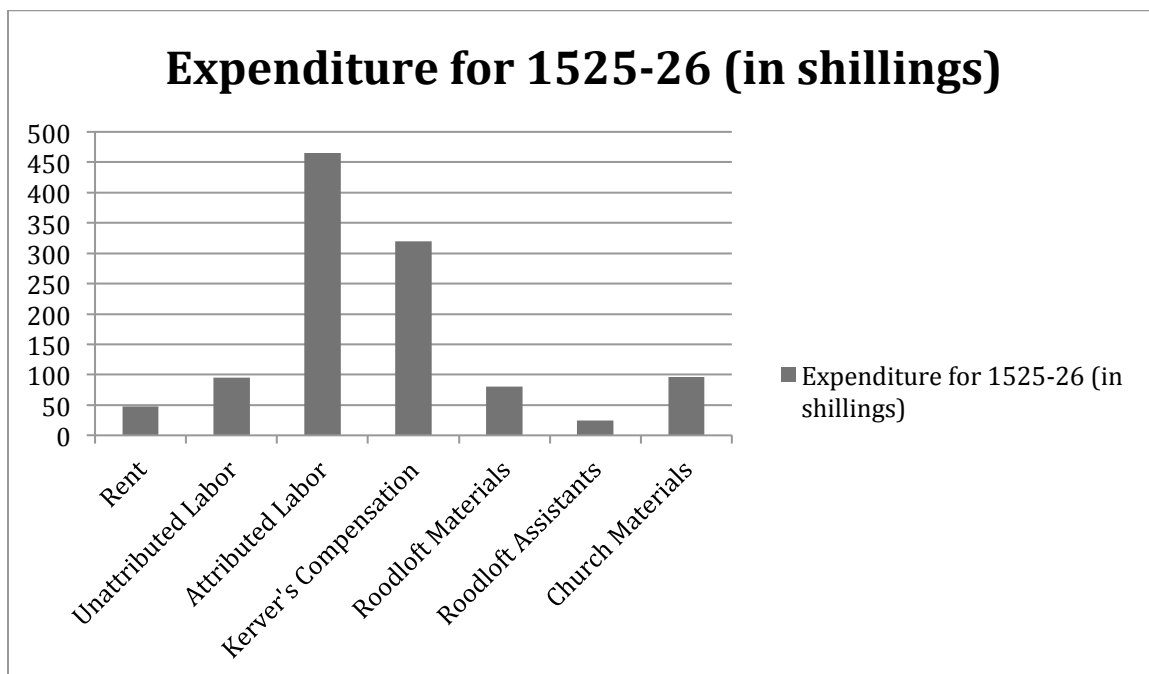


Figure 6. Expenditure for 1525-26 in shillings.

Unlike Somer, Kerver provided physical labor for his parish both before and after his work on the roodloft. In 1523, the year that Somer died, the churchwardens recorded a payment of 8 shillings and 4 pence as a reward to Kerver for his work on a tabernacle in the parish church and later paid him an additional 10 shillings for repairing the door to the chancel.¹²⁸ After the completion of the roodloft in 1525, Kerver's work on this particular structure still was not entirely complete. The churchwardens went on to compensate him with an additional 5 pence in 1535 for performing the repairs that the roodloft had necessitated within its ten years of existence.¹²⁹

These two parishioners seemingly chose very different ways to contribute to their parish community aside from their work on the roodloft with Somer participating primarily through monetary means and Kerver using physical labor. Although these two parishioners did not work

¹²⁸ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 72 and 78, respectively.

¹²⁹ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 97.

on the roodloft simultaneously, the churchwardens needed their combined efforts for the successful completion of this symbolic structure. The value that the parishioners placed upon this project, and upon the labor of those who labored upon it, is indicated the total expenditure of £33 7 shillings and 5.5 pence that this project incurred.

Conclusion

The nine parishioners featured in this chapter used an assortment of methods to enhance their parish church and community. Some parishioners contributed to their parish through monetary donations, others with fundraising efforts, and others still with additional acts of physical labor. In addition to these methods, the parishioners featured in this chapter labored on costly projects that consumed a large portion of their parish church's funds. Although their costs were high, both structures played vital roles in the community by communicating the parishioners' ideals of religious devotion and wealth. By detailing the collective labor required to ensure the successful completion of these two symbolic features of the church, the accounts reveal the significance of both the spire and the roodloft to the parish community. These parishioners combined their skills by working together to ensure the successful completion of these two symbolic aspects of their parish church's visual culture that they and their fellow parishioners would experience consistently.

Chapter 4 – Parishioner Labor and the Reformation

The religious beliefs that Ashburton's parishioners held and worked so fervently to manifest through the objects and projects discussed in the last two chapters were threatened when King Henry VIII initiated the Reformation in the 1530s. Motivated by the money that he could make from dissolving profitable aspects of the old religion, such as Peter's pence, monastic communities, and chantries, and the desire to annul his marriage to his first wife so he could marry a second, Henry forced his reforms on his subjects. When the Act of Supremacy passed in 1534, Henry successfully placed himself at the head of the Church of England and repudiated the power that the pope previously held. The dissolution of England's monasteries from 1536 to 1541 and the disendowment of religious guilds, initiated in 1541, changed the landscape of religion that had existed in England throughout the medieval period.

The debate among historians concerning the laity's level of acceptance of the Reformation indicates the complexity that surrounded Henry's break with Rome and the limitations he imposed on the traditional religion of the realm. Previously historians believed that the Reformation was approved, if not welcomed, by the laity.¹³⁰ Recent studies by revisionist scholars, however, have argued that parishioners preferred the traditional religion of Catholic England and did not want to see their practices altered.¹³¹ Although the Reformation clearly changed the religious landscape of England through its reforms and commands, the impact that it had on individual parish churches was far from standardized.

¹³⁰ The seminal work that promotes this interpretation is A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964). See also Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) for an account that argues for the general complacency of the English people and their willingness to conform to royal orders

¹³¹ The pivotal works from Reformation revisionists include Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Christopher Haigh, *The English Reformation Revised* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People*; Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*; and Duffy, *Voices of Morebath*.

During the early years of the Reformation, Ashburton's parishioners would not have experienced many changes in the appearance of their parish church or its contents aside from those brought about by the Injunctions of 1538. As Ronald Hutton explains:

[The Injunctions] instructed each parish to purchase a Bible; to extinguish all lights in the church except those on the altar, in the rood loft and before the Easter sepulcher; to remove any images which had been 'abused with pilgrimages or offerings'; to regard the surviving representations of saints simply as memorials and to be prepared for the removal of more later; and to reject the veneration of relics.¹³²

Hutton contends that, in most parishes, these commands served only to diminish the significance of saints and the usage of candles to venerate their images. Instead of experiencing any abrupt changes resulting from Henry's commands, parish churches continued to function much the same as they had prior to the break with Rome. Following his analysis of all available sets of churchwardens' accounts at the time of his study, Hutton emphasizes that "the surviving accounts show that most of the rituals and ornaments of the 1520s remained in English churches in Henry VIII's last years."¹³³

Even though it is likely that the parish church and its contents did not change much with the onset of the Reformation, Ashburton's churchwardens' accounts show a noticeable alteration in their descriptions of laborers. Although the churchwardens continued to attribute a few parishioners with providing labor to some of the liturgical objects analyzed in the previous two chapters, much of the work that occurred after the Reformation was not attributed to a specific person. Instead, the churchwardens provided generalized descriptions of payments to unnamed plumbers, painters, and masons for various work around the parish. In 1536 the churchwardens paid 10 pence "to the playsterre and to the plommer" but neither the plasterer nor the plumber

¹³² Ronald Hutton, "The Local Impact of the Tudor Refomations," in *The Reformation Revised*, ed. Christopher Haigh (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 116.

¹³³ Hutton, "The Local Impact," 119.

are ever identified by name.¹³⁴ Ten years later, in 1546, the churchwardens similarly paid 3 shillings and 4 pence to “the roofer and his mate.”¹³⁵ Whereas the pre-Reformation accounts would have generally named the laborers who provided these services, these accounts neglect to provide any personal identification. The Reformation accounts continued to include compensation to a few parishioners each year for their labor, but the contrast to the earlier accounts is striking. While the pre-Reformation accounts often included the names of over a dozen laboring parishioners, the post-Reformation churchwardens regularly attributed physical labor to only three or four parishioners per year.

There are a few possibilities for this abrupt change in the recording of parishioner labor in the churchwardens’ accounts. It is possible that this change is the result of a series of new scribes taking over the task of composing the final copy of the churchwardens’ accounts. Prior to the Reformation, two named scribes and two anonymous scribes were responsible for composing the accounts: William Erle wrote them from 1485 to 1507 and John Ford composed them from 1509 to 1532.¹³⁶ After Ford’s death in 1532, a series of four scribes composed the accounts until the closing date of this study in 1547. The four scribes who served during this fifteen-year period may have simply made the decision to keep less detailed accounts than Erle and Ford did. By attributing work using the general descriptors of labor-specific titles such as roofer, mason, painter, and smith, these accountants provide a much less detailed record of parish activity of individual laborers than their predecessors.

Another possibility is that the post-Reformation churchwardens began to hire out necessary labor to people from outside the parish instead of paying Ashburton’s own

¹³⁴ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 100.

¹³⁵ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 118.

¹³⁶ Prior to Erle and between Erle and Ford, two anonymous accountants wrote the churchwardens’ accounts. Hanham includes information on all of the parish’s accountants on page vii of her edition.

parishioners for this work. Perhaps the accountants did not include many names of laborers after the Reformation because they were not members of the parish but instead only operated within the parish in a laboring capacity. If this is indeed the case, the accountants may not have felt that it was necessary to include the names of these individuals but instead keep track of their payments by only noting the labor that they were compensated for. There is no evidence in the accounts to indicate that the churchwardens began to hire laborers from outside the parish at the onset of the Reformation. The revenue and expenditure generated by the parish church remains consistent throughout the decade immediately preceding and following the Reformation, so a change in finances is unlikely to have sparked an alteration in the hiring of labor. Because there is no evidence to suggest post-Reformation churchwardens stopped hiring Ashburton's parishioners in exchange for commissioning outside laborers, it should not be assumed that the silence from these accounts indicates that parishioner labor in the parish largely disappeared due to the Reformation.

Similar to the changes witnessed in the Ashburton accounts, historians have found that other sources, which were detail-oriented records prior to the Reformation, began to feature significantly less personal information following this religious shift. Eamon Duffy shows this abrupt modification of record keeping reflected in church inventories.¹³⁷ He explains that for many churches, the majority of their possessions were donated or commissioned by parishioners upon their deaths. Prior to the Reformation, churchwardens meticulously recorded these items in their inventories for the use at visitations. Much like churchwardens' accounts, Duffy explains that these records served as much more than a list of possessions:

¹³⁷ Eamon Duffy, "The End of It All: The Material Culture of the Medieval English Parish and the 1552 Inventories of Church Goods," in *The Parish in Late Medieval England: Proceedings of the 2002 Harlaxton Symposium*, eds. Clive Burgess and Eamon Duffy (Donington, Lincolnshire: Shaun Tyas, 2006), 381-399.

[Inventories] commemorated the donors and benefactors of the parish by linking their names to their gifts: in the process they held up a pattern of generosity for others to follow. Lists of this sort were a powerful expression of parochial identity and pride, a complex social map of the parish pecking order, a recitation of the names of the beneficent dead, and a form of exhortation to commitment and generosity by the living.¹³⁸

After the Reformation, the detailed information that churchwardens had previously included in inventories all but disappeared.

Duffy uses inventory records for a church in London called St. Margaret Pattens to show the stark differences between pre- and post-Reformation inventories. He includes an excerpt of this church's inventory records from 1486 to 1511 that reflects this parish's ability to denote pride and identity by including parishioners' names alongside detailed summaries of their material contributions:

All these items reappear in the 1552 inventory, but shorn now of their particularity, and especially of their personal associations and the names of their donors. Once again, there are prices attached to them, not now as the measure of the piety of their donors or the eagerness of wardens 'laboring to have' desirable devotional accoutrements, but as the knock-down price in a series of auctions precipitated or decreed by Royal religious policy.¹³⁹

Duffy argues that this change in record-keeping practices simply shows the churchwardens' desires to prove that they were following Reformation guidelines: "The emphasis on legitimacy is in most cases not so much a sign of mass enthusiasm, as a nervous insistence by the responsible officials that they had done nothing wrong in selling ornaments rendered redundant by official enforced religious change."¹⁴⁰ The lack of personal detail in this church's post-Reformation inventory records does not necessarily indicate that the parishioners stopped participating in their parish community through providing these goods. It does, however,

¹³⁸ Duffy, "The End of It All," 384.

¹³⁹ Duffy, "The End of It All," 385.

¹⁴⁰ Duffy, "The End of It All," 388.

provide a possible mirror to the change in record-keeping practices that occurs in Ashburton's churchwardens' accounts.

The lack of parishioner labor in Ashburton's churchwardens' accounts may reflect a similar desire to conform to Reformation standards. With the Ten Articles of 1536 deemphasizing the necessity of good works and instead stressing the salvific power of faith alone, the appeal that had previously accompanied the identification of laborers within church records may have lessened accordingly. Because good works no longer held the same sway over an individual's salvation, it is possible that the churchwardens, and the parishioners themselves, no longer felt the need to attribute labor to specific parishioners. Although this does not necessarily mean that parishioners discontinued their work in the parish church altogether, the relative silence of the post-Reformation churchwardens' accounts on the issue of parishioner labor indicates a change in its practice.

Even though Ashburton's churchwardens' accounts largely stopped including the names of laboring individuals, the parishioners did not stop caring for symbolic aspects of their parish church that had occupied their labor and money prior to the Reformation. Instead, they continued to maintain and enhance the objects and projects that were popular outlets of parishioner participation before the religious shift. Two of these features of the parish church included in the previous chapters, the organs and the roodloft, continued to receive parish funds for their maintenance and enhancement following the onset of the Reformation. By examining these instances in the later accounts, we can see that members of the parish community continued to communicate their piety and affluence through their parish church's organ and roodloft even if the church's records did not directly identify those responsible for their care.

Organs

After the Reformation, the churchwardens continued to compensate William Gye, discussed in chapter two, for his labor concerning the parish church's organs until his death in 1540. Gye's labor remained as consistent as it had been prior to the Reformation. He even sold a second set of organs to the churchwardens. Nineteen years after he sold the first set, as featured in chapter two, the churchwardens paid Gye the sizable sum of £7 and 10 shillings for two new organs in 1538.¹⁴¹ By repairing the church's older set of organs and selling them this new pair, Gye serves as an example of one of the only parishioners featured in the accounts for continuing to participate in his parish community throughout the Reformation.

Ashburton's churchwardens continued to record expenditure for the organs' repair and upkeep until they were destroyed in 1579.¹⁴² Although the churchwardens neglected to name those responsible for these acts of repair, their inclusion in the accounts nevertheless indicates that the organs continued to serve an important purpose to the congregation. Some of these instances of organ repair were relatively small, such as the 6 pence allotted for mending an organ in 1540, but others, like the 10 shillings and 11 pence paid for enhancing them with new organ plates the very next year, indicate someone continued to work with these organs to keep them in good repair.¹⁴³

Although the churchwardens' accounts fail to specify the individual responsible for taking care of the church's organs following Gye's death, they continued to funnel money into these instruments. Further enhancing their organ collection, the churchwardens purchased a "great organ" in 1540 for £15.¹⁴⁴ Following this purchase, the parish church contained at least

¹⁴¹ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 104.

¹⁴² Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 189.

¹⁴³ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 107 and 109, respectively.

¹⁴⁴ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 108.

three organs: one pair of standard organs, and one “great” organ. By continuing to provide the funds for the organs and their upkeep, Ashburton’s parishioners continued to express their piety and affluence through these instruments even after the onset of the Reformation.

Roodloft

Ashburton’s roodloft serves as another example of a symbolic feature of the parish church that the churchwardens continued to openly enhance following the Reformation through the commissioning of parishioner labor. Although Peter Kerver finished the construction of the roodloft in 1525, featured in chapter three, the churchwardens sought to further beautify this structure throughout the post-Reformation accounts until they paid a parishioner to destroy it in 1579.¹⁴⁵ In 1534, the churchwardens’ accounts record an expense of 10 shillings to an unattributed laborer for painting the roodloft and an additional 5 pence the very next year to Peter Kerver for performing general work.¹⁴⁶

In the following years, the churchwardens’ accounts include sizable expenses concerning the enhancement of the roodloft, but Kerver’s work in 1535 was the last parishioner that the accounts attribute with providing labor to this structure. Following Kerver’s work, the churchwardens’ accounts include expenses regarding the alteration of the roodloft through costly additions for the next three years. Beginning in 1536, the churchwardens spent 4 shillings and 8 pence for a cloth to hang on the north end of the roodloft and another 1 shilling and 4 pence for the yarn and rings needed to hang the cloth.¹⁴⁷ The churchwardens purchased another addition to the roodloft in 1537 in the form of 2 partitions of alabaster that the wardens acquired for 10

¹⁴⁵ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 189.

¹⁴⁶ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 95 and 97 respectively.

¹⁴⁷ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 99.

shillings and 4 pence.¹⁴⁸ The next year, the churchwardens paid the massive expense of £16 13 shillings and 4 pence for the painting of the south half of the structure.¹⁴⁹ Even this large payment remains unattributed to any specific individual.

The parishioners of Ashburton were not alone in their post-Reformation enhancement of their roodloft. Because this particular structure retained approval throughout the remainder of Henry's reign, parish churches continued to use roodlofts as outlets of their communal funds. Whiting gives the example of new decorative additions commissioned for a roodloft in 1535 and the importation of a roodloft from a dissolved monastery in 1538 as proof that these structures retained their importance throughout the 1530s.¹⁵⁰ Even though the Ashburton churchwardens did not specify who was responsible for the enhancements made to their roodloft, they likewise ensured the upkeep and enhancement of their roodloft throughout the remaining years of Henry's life.

Ashburton's churchwardens also paid for the physical reinforcement of this particular structure, most likely so it could hold the newest addition to the church's expanding organ collection. Upon the purchase of the great organ in 1540, the churchwardens spent 9 shillings and 1 pence for one "barre of iron in the choir beneath le rowdeloft."¹⁵¹ This same year, the churchwardens paid 4 shillings and 2 pence to unknown laborers for "putting in and fixing the great organ in le rowdeloft with nails and beams."¹⁵²

By including these large sums spent on this particular structure each year, the churchwardens' accounts show that Ashburton's parishioners continued to hold the roodloft in high regard through the early years of the Reformation. The churchwardens ensured the roodloft

¹⁴⁸ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 102.

¹⁴⁹ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 105.

¹⁵⁰ Whiting, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church*, 201.

¹⁵¹ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 106.

¹⁵² Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 106.

was kept in good repair and beautified through the addition of decorations and paint. They also ensured its general upkeep by allotting 6 shillings and 8 pence to an unnamed individual to clean this structure in 1543.¹⁵³ Although the churchwardens did not record the names of the people who carried out any of its enhancements, the parishioners continued to pay for the embellishment of their roodloft well into the Reformation.

Conclusion

Ashburton's churchwardens may not have felt the need to feature the names of laboring parishioners in the accounts as prominently as they had when church doctrine held good works in high regard, but this does not necessarily mean that the congregation neglected the very objects and structures of the parish church that they had ardently labored on prior to the Reformation. Although the records may appear drastically different due to a lack of specific names, many of the same objects and structures occur in both the pre- and post-Reformation accounts. The churchwardens continued to provide for the maintenance and enhancement of these symbolic aspects of the parish church because they continued to represent the parish community.

St. Andrew's organs and roodloft enjoyed their prominence in the parish church throughout the period featured in this thesis. Although Ashburton's post-Reformation churchwardens' accounts lack the detail concerning parishioner labor that the pre-Reformation accounts abounded with, they still offer insight into these possessions that the churchwardens and parishioners continued to spend time and money on. The churchwardens' accounts reveal that the levels of expenditure allotted to these possessions were similar to the amount demanded by these objects prior to the Reformation, which indicates that they retained a steady level of importance to the parish even in the midst of religious reform. Ashburton's parishioners

¹⁵³ Hanham, *Ashburton CWA*, 112.

maintained these symbolic aspects of their parish community by continuing to care for the roodloft and organ up throughout Henry VIII's reign. Even with the increasing amount of religious reforms imposed on the laity during this period, they continued to care for the symbolic aspects of their community that they had fought to create, repair, and maintain with their own physical labor.

Epilogue

This thesis aims to expand our knowledge of the individual's experience in the late medieval parish at the intersection of laborer, parishioner, and community member. The parishioners featured in this study had the ability to contribute to the visual culture of their parish community through the creation, repair, and maintenance of many aspects of their parish church and its contents. The churchwardens often depended on the skills of these parishioners to successfully complete symbolic objects and projects in their own parish church.

The parishioners who provided the labor to St. Andrew's Church participated in their parish through both labor and other methods. By contextualizing instances of physical work alongside the laborers' other contributions to the parish community, these individuals emerge from the churchwardens' accounts as dedicated parishioners who sought to enhance the culture of their parish community through the work of their hands. Instead of providing this work solely for the monetary compensation, these individuals used their labor to communicate their community's ideals of piety and affluence. The churchwardens provided the funds for both the necessary materials and the laborers' compensations, which further served to strengthen the connection between the parish church, the laborer, and the object or project he was responsible for. These objects and structures were commissioned by - and became a part of - the very community that these laborers lived, worshipped, and died in.

The parishioners continued to provide for the maintenance and enhancement of some of their parish church's symbolic aspects throughout the religious disturbances brought about by the Reformation. Even when Henry VIII commanded that traditional beliefs be replaced by his reformed religious practices, the parishioners of Ashburton continued to express their community ideals by allocating funds to the organs and the roodloft, two symbolic aspects of their parish

church that featured heavily in the accounts prior to the Reformation. Although the accounts do not specify the particular parishioners who may have provided this labor to the organs and roodloft, the desire of the parishioners to continue to provide for their upkeep and enhancements indicate that these objects remained a source of pride to the parish community.

Churchwardens' accounts offer valuable insights into the late medieval parishioner's ability to use labor as a method of community involvement. Historians have produced studies concerning parishioner involvement in the parish community through other methods such as fundraising efforts, donations, bequests, and the establishment of chantries, but they have left parishioner labor largely unexplored. Like studies concerning these other methods of contribution, investigations of parishioner labor would require a detailed set of sources that researchers could analyze for consistent instances of such work. If researchers use a set of accounts that spans the Reformation years, this could provide further analyses of other parishes' collective reactions to this religious shift.

By studying parishioner labor through churchwardens' accounts, we can obtain glimpses into the lives of these parishioners and their efforts to enhance their parish church through their creative and reparative skills. Analyses such as these would not only improve our knowledge of the laborers themselves, but can also serve to supplement our understanding of the parish church and the people who experienced it regularly.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Hanham, Alison. *Churchwardens' Accounts of Ashburton, 1479-1580*, Devon & Cornwall Record Society, New Series, vol. 15. Torquay: The Devonshire Press Ltd., 1970.
- Butcher, John Henry. *The Parish of Ashburton in the 15th and 16th Centuries; as it appears from extracts from the Churchwardens' Accounts, A.D. (1479-1580), with notes and comments*. London: Yates and Alexander, 1870.

Secondary Sources

- Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.
- Aston, Margaret. "Segregation in Church." *Studies in Church History* 27 (1990): 237-94.
- Bork, Robert. *Great Spires: Skyscrapers of the New Jerusalem*. Düsseldorf: Köln, 2003
- Brown, Andrew. *Popular Piety in Late Medieval England: The Diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
- Burgess, Clive. "'By Quick and by Dead': Wills and Pious Provision in Late Medieval Bristol." *The English Historical Review* 102, No. 405 (Oct. 1987): 837-858.
- . "'For the Increase of Divine Service': Chancies in the Parish in Late Medieval Bristol." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985): 46-65.
- Burgess, Clive and Andrew Wathey. "Mapping the Soundscape: Church Music In English Towns, 1450-1550." *Early Music History*, vol. 19 (2000): 1-46.
- Burgess, Clive and Beat Kümin. "Penitential Bequests and Parish Regimes in Late Medieval England." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44 (October 1993): 610-630.
- Carney, T.F. "Prosopography: Payoffs and Pitfalls." *Phoenix* 27, no. 2 (Summer, 1973): 156-179
- Cornwall, Julian. "English population in the early sixteenth century." *Economic History Review* 23, no. 1 (1970): 32-44.
- Cox, John Cox. *Churchwardens' Accounts: From the Fourteenth to the Close of the Seventeenth Century*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1913.
- Dickens, A.G. *The English Reformation*. New York: Schocken Books, 1964.

- Drew, Charles. *Early Parochial Organisation in England: The Origins of the Office of Churchwarden*. London: St. Anthony's Press, 1954.
- Duffy, Eamon. "The End of It All: The Material Culture of the Medieval English Parish and the 1552 Inventories of Church Goods." In *The Parish in Late Medieval England: Proceedings of the 2002 Harlaxton Symposium*, edited by Clive Burgess and Eamon Duffy, 381-399. Donington, Lincolnshire: Shaun Tyas, 2006.
- . *The Stripping of the Altars*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.
- . *Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.
- Dyer, Alan. "'Urban Decline' in England, 1366-1525." In *Towns in decline AD 100-1600*, edited by T.R. Slater, 266-88. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000.
- Dyer, Christopher. *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain 850-1520*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.
- Ford, Judy Ann. "The Community of the Parish in Late Medieval Kent." PhD diss., Fordham University, 1994.
- French, Katherine. *The Good Women of the Parish: Gender and Religion After the Black Death*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.
- . *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.
- . "Rebuilding St. Margaret's: Parish Involvement and Community Action in Late Medieval Westminster." *Journal of Social History* 45, no. 1 (2011): 148-171.
- Gasquet, Francis Aidan. *Parish Life in Mediaeval England*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1907.
- Gillespie, Alexandra and Daniel Wakelin, eds. *The Production of Books in England 1350-1500*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Haigh, Christopher. *The English Reformation Revised*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- . *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- Hanham, H.J. "The Suppression of the chantries in Ashburton." *Devonshire Association* 99 (1967): 111-137.

- Hoskins, W.G. *Devon*. Chichester, West Sussex: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 2003.
- Hutton, Ronald. "The Local Impact of the Tudor Refomations." In *The Reformation Revised*, edited by Christopher Haigh, 114-138. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- . *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Kümin, Beat. *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish, c. 1400-1560*. Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996.
- Manion, Margaret M. and Bernard J. Muir, eds. *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998.
- Mason, Emma. "The Role of the English Parishioner, 1100-1500." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27 (January 1976): 17-29.
- Orme, Nicholas. *Unity and Variety: A History of the Church in Devon and Cornwall*. Exeter: University of Exeter, 1991.
- Peters, Christine. *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Rigby, Stephen H. "Urban Population in late medieval England: the evidence of the lay subsidies." *The Economic History Review* 63, 2 (2010): 393-417.
- Robinson, P.R. and Rivah Zim, eds. *Of the Making of Books: Medieval Manuscripts, their Scribes and Readers*. Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997.
- Rosser, Gervase. "The Essence of Medieval Urban Communities: The Vill of Westminster 1200-1540." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Fifth Series*, 34 (1984): 91-112.
- Scarisbrick, J.J. *The Reformation and the English People*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Shailor, Barbara A. *The Medieval Book: Illustrated from the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library*. New Haven: Yale University, 1988.
- Stoate, T.L., ed. *Devon Lay Subsidy Rolls, 1524-27*. Bristol: T.L. Stoate, 1979.
- Stone, Lawrence. "Prosopography." *Daedalus* 100, no. 1 (Winter, 1971): 46-79.
- Temperley, Nicholas. *The Music of the English Parish Church*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Uebel, Michael and Kellie Robertson. "Introduction: Conceptualizing Labor in the Middle Ages." In *The Middle Ages at Work: Practicing Labor in Late Medieval England*, edited by Michael Uebel and Kellie Robertson, 1-15. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Wasson, John M., ed. *Devon*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986.

Whiting, Robert. *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

---. *Local Responses to the English Reformation*. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998.

---. *The Reformation of the English Parish Church*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Worthy, Charles. *Ashburton and Its Neighbourhood; Or, the Antiquities and History of the Borough of Ashburton in the County of Devon, and of the Parishes of Buckland-in-the-Moor and Bickington*. Ashburton: L.B. Vaedee, Printer and Publisher, 1875.