



# Library Newsletter

Living Faith - Living Community - Living History

Autumn 2013

## Dear Friends of Carlisle Cathedral

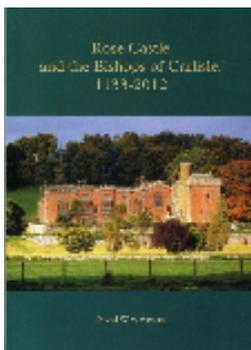
This edition takes a slight departure from cathedral libraries and instead examines the history of parochial church libraries, specifically in Cumberland and Westmorland. I have always been intrigued by a small wooden cabinet of books labelled *Burgh-by-Sands* in the top library, which it turns out is one of two local parochial libraries that have been lodged at the Cathedral for safe keeping. Crosby Ravensworth's library is the other collection; it is much larger and does not have its own bespoke cabinet. Both collections are typical of 18th century small church libraries which in many cases were the only source of learned writings available to rural clergy and their communities. Sadly many historic parish libraries have disappeared as the result of neglect, theft and ignorance, a fate that belies their importance in social as well as Church history. As usual, a full bibliography is available on request.



### Donations

The following books have recently been donated to Carlisle Cathedral Library by Peter Strong:

- **Pugin, Augustus Welby Northmore, 1812-1852.** Glossary of Ecclesiastical ornament and costume: compiled from ancient authorities and examples. 3rd edition. London: Bernard Quaritch, 1868.
- **Nutter, M.E.** Carlisle in olden time: a series of ancient public buildings. Carlisle: Charles Thurnam, 1835.



Just a reminder that Canon Weston's recently published book about Rose Castle is now available from the Cathedral Bookshop priced £15.

### Do you wish to receive future copies of the Library Newsletter?

The newsletter is available to read on the Cathedral's website. If you prefer to have a printed copy or even an emailed copy, please leave your contact details with either the Cathedral Office or the Library.

### Parochial Libraries

There have always been church libraries, even before the Reformation. They will mainly have contained handwritten manuscripts, Latin bibles and works such as the medieval parish priest's handbook *Oculus Sacerdotis* or, *The Priest's Eye*. Virtually none of the collections survived the Reformation and efforts to re-establish Church libraries after the Reformation were hampered due to the return to Roman Catholicism in Mary's reign. Edward's 1547 decree that every church provide a copy of the Bible in English and the *Paraphrases of Erasmus* had to be reinstated by Elizabeth I and James I. The list of titles to be held was also increased and included, for example, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. These repeated decrees are the reason why so many copies of certain 300 to 400 year old books are still to be found today.

The reinstatement of church libraries post-Reformation also benefited from private bequests but benefactors tended to favour town rather than rural parishes. It was not until the late 17<sup>th</sup> century that the crisis facing poorer clergy was acknowledged.

In so far as Westmorland and Cumberland are concerned, the original champion of rural parochial libraries was the Reverend Barnabas Oley (1602-1686). A fellow of Clare College and a Royalist, Oley outwitted Cromwell's troops in 1642 by smuggling college plate to the King to fund his campaign. Subsequently ejected from the University and his parish at Great Gransden, Oley lived in poverty until reinstated in 1660. Oley is remembered for his many charitable works. He was a renowned scholar who was also appointed Bishop of Ely for a year. In his will he left books and funds to set up a number of libraries, including money for the "Lord Bpp of Carlisle" to purchase books for "ten poor vicarages". Oley lists the titles to be bought and that they should be in English but he does not specify

which parishes were to receive them. That seems to have been left up to Thomas Smith, Bishop of Carlisle at the time. The parishes chosen to receive Oley's books were Crosby-on-Eden, Isell, Dalston, Thursby, Wigton, Askham, Aynstable, Dearham, Crosby Ravensworth and Burgh-by-Sands.

It is difficult to know for sure why Oley chose poor parishes in Cumberland to benefit from his endowment. A possible connection with the area is through his association with Dean John Barwick (1612-1664) and his brother Peter Barwick (1619-1705), originally of Witherslack in Westmorland. Both Barwicks were staunch Royalists with Cambridge University connections and Dean Barwick helped Oley to smuggle out the plate in 1642. He too was evicted from his position in 1644.

The Diocese took Oley's bequest and the books' care very seriously. Bishop William Nicolson, appointed after Bishop Smith, carried out regular inspections of the local parishes between 1704 and 1713. He recorded his findings in his *Miscellany Accounts of the Diocese of Carlisle*. In addition to inspecting buildings, land and finances, Bishop Nicolson demanded to be shown Oley's books. He was not always impressed by what he found. After the first inspection at Thursby he writes "*I complain'd to Mr Waite, the Vicar, that I had seen one of Mr. Oley's books ... at Rose; And, upon Enquiry, had found that himself had lent it, contrary to ye Engagement of his Predecessor and his own present Obligation, to Mr Wybergh. He confessed his fault in it ...*" Suspecting that he would find a similar situation elsewhere, Nicolson went armed with a full list of Oley's donations when he visited the rest of the parishes.

The next significant chapter in the history of parochial libraries was the work of the Reverend Thomas Bray (1658-1730). A graduate of Oxford University, in 1696 Bray was appointed by the Bishop of London to be his commissary in Maryland and establish the Church of England there. Bray found that the only clergy who were willing to go out to America were very poor, certainly too poor to buy books. In 1699 he helped found the SPCK (Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge), today a well-known Christian publisher, but initially intended to set up parochial libraries in England and abroad.

The SPCK initially established 52 so-called "Bray libraries". The collections were religious in content and whilst a core set of titles were common to all of the libraries, they did vary slightly in size from parish to parish. Five Cumbrian parishes received an SPCK library – Bampton, Kirkoswald, St. Bees, Wigton and of course Burgh-by-Sands. The parishes were also presented with a small, lockable book case in which to keep the books safe. It is this Bray library collection and book case that is in the Cathedral's top library. It is marked No. 52, the last of the initial set of SPCK libraries to be distributed. The notice missing from the bottom door turned out to be a copy of the *1709 Act for the better Preservation of Parochial Libraries*.

The *1709 Parish Libraries Act* required clergymen in charge of parochial libraries to sign a bond declaring the library was in good order. If books were found to be missing then warrants could be issued by a Justice of the Peace to recover them. Lost items could be recharged at three times their value plus legal costs and regular inspections of the libraries were to be included in parish inspections. In fact Bishop Nicolson's records provide evidence that, at least in the Diocese of Carlisle, parish clergy and church wardens were already required to sign undertakings to care for the libraries and were inspected regularly.

The Burgh-by-Sands SPCK library is in good condition although some of the books are missing. Two different book plate designs were originally inserted into the volumes, some of which are also now missing. The plates were designed by French line engraver Simon Gribelin (1661-1676). One bookplate depicts the conversion of



St. Augustine (354-430) praying in front of the Bible with the words "*Tolle Lege*" ("*Take up and read*") coming down to him in a shaft of light. If you look closely at the second bookplate, you can see the book case is a replica of the SPCK book cabinet.

Nothing stands still. Whilst on the one hand parochial libraries continued to benefit from charitable legacies, by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century most eventually succumbed to disinterest and neglect. So great was this neglect that the *1849 Select Committee on Public Libraries* even recommended surviving parochial libraries be deposited in a room in towns "and made the commencement of a town library".



Intended to bring learning to clergy living in the poorest parishes, parochial libraries were championed by private benefactors, led to the founding of the third oldest publishing house in Great Britain, - the SPCK - and were protected by an Act of Parliament.

**Tel: 01228 548151 or Email: [Library@Carlislecathedral.org.uk](mailto:Library@Carlislecathedral.org.uk)**