

# Norfolk Record Office Information Leaflet 11

## Researching a Clergyman

These notes indicate the various sources useful for tracing the career of a clergyman in the Diocese of Norwich or for compiling a list of parish incumbents. All sources are held by the Norfolk Record Office unless otherwise stated as 'not NRO'. The searchroom lists must be consulted for the availability of individual documents.

### 1. General biographical works

The *Dictionary of National Biography* (not NRO) includes entries with biographical details and sources for the more notable Norfolk churchmen. By 1700, at the latest, nearly all Anglican clergy attended an Oxford or Cambridge college. Lists of graduates are published in A.B. Emden, *Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500* (not NRO) and his *Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500* (not NRO); J. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses* (not NRO); and J. and J.A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses* (not NRO). Entries generally provide educational and career details including dates of ordination and the name of the ordaining bishop (very useful for tracing ordination papers - see 5 below); usually a father's name is given and, very rarely, a place and date of birth. For the period 1643-1660, see A.G. Matthews, *Walker's Sufferings Revised* (not NRO) and his *Calamy Revised* (not NRO) which contain biographies for Anglican clergy persecuted in 1642-60 and the puritan clergy ejected from their livings in 1660-2 respectively. E. Darroch and B. Taylor, *A Bibliography of Norfolk History* and B. Taylor, *A Bibliography of Norfolk History II* indicate what is in print for particular Norfolk parishes and individuals.

### 2. Institutions

The Bishop's registers of institutions survive from 1299 and record the institutions made by the Bishop of Norwich giving the date and place of institution, the benefice and the name of the clergy and patron. Later registers often note the cause of the vacancy such as the death or resignation of the previous incumbent. The registers 1299-1608 (except 1425-45) are indexed by parish and subject in DN/REG 17. An index of institutions arranged by archdeaconry, deanery and then by parish was compiled by Dr Tanner, chancellor of the diocese 1700-31, and also includes a list of archdeacons and priors and deans of Norwich, DN/REG 30-31 : it is not complete for every parish. Tanner's index was used by F. Blomefield, *History of Norfolk* to which there is a personal names index. T.H. Bryant, *Norfolk Churches* (not NRO) includes incumbents overlooked by Blomefield, and E.H. Carter, *Norfolk Incumbents for the period 1660-1720* corrects and adds to Blomefield and Bryant.

For the period 1643-60 see Matthews above; the *Catalogue of Ecclesiastical Records of the Commonwealth 1643-60 in the Lambeth Palace Library*; and

E.H. Carter, *The Norwich Subscription Books* which lists clergy not mentioned in Blomefield and Bryant above.

The 'Diocese Book' takes Tanner's index up to c. 1968, ref. DN/REG 35, available on microfilm MF/RO 307/1. It is arranged by archdeaconry, deanery and parish, but with a parish index and has an accompanying personal names index for incumbents and curates, DN/REG 36.

Unfortunately the 'Diocese Book' does not always overlap with the end of Tanner's index and there is sometimes a gap between c. 1700-c. 1770. This gap can be filled by consulting the original Bishop's registers, each of which contains a parish index. Later incumbents can also be found in Dawson Turner, *List of Norfolk Benefices* which covers c. 1730-c. 1847; the *Clergy List* (not NRO) first published in 1841; Crockford's *Clerical Directory* (not NRO), 1855 to the present; and the Norwich Diocesan Directory (not NRO), 1858 to the present : these contain lists of incumbents and parishes. The *Clergy List* and Crockford's cover the whole of the Anglican Communion and make it possible to trace a clergyman's career outside Norfolk.

Curates are licensed, not instituted, by the bishop and do not appear in the Bishop's registers. Grants of licences to curates were sometimes recorded in other registers however and survive for 1516-33, 1586-7 and 1768-1810; see DN/SUN 2a, Norwich Consistory Court administration act books 1586-8 and DN/DIS 1/2 respectively. Curates' licences are filed from 1782 onwards see list DN/CUR; and are indexed for 1809-1938 in DN/CUR 1/2. Curates are also entered in the 'Diocese Book' and are included in the index volume to it : see above.

### **3. Visitation and parish records**

The consignment books 1555 onwards used at the Bishop's visitation sometimes record the date of ordination, the name of the ordaining bishop (very useful for tracing ordination papers - see section 5 ordinations below), the date of institution or licence to serve the cure, as well as benefices held in plurality, of all clergy appearing before the visitor: see lists DN/VIS and DN/VSC. The episcopal visitation was held every few years. In the intervening years the archdeacons visited their own jurisdictions and their consignment books survive for various dates from the sixteenth century onwards: see lists ANF and ANW. For (incomplete) lists of clergy compiled for various reasons and various dates see DN/VAL 2-3, 4/1; DN/VIS 1/4, 3/3, 9/3, 17/3; and list DN/VSM. Incumbents are very rarely listed in the parish registers and a signed entry in the register or Bishop's or Archdeacon's Transcript only indicates who the officiating minister was, not the incumbent.

### **4. Appointments**

Appointments of archdeacons and deans are recorded in the Bishop's registers, mentioned in section 2. For other diocesan officials such as the chancellor, registrar or steward and other members of the bishop's household see list DN/ADR 19. These appointments were not entered in the Bishop's registers but were often confirmed by the Dean and Chapter and recorded in

the patent books 1541 onwards: see list DCN 93 and microfilm MF/RO 198/1. Appointments of Cathedral officials are entered in the Dean and Chapter ledger books 1538 onwards and recorded in the Chapter act books: see list DCN 47 and DCN 24 respectively. For a list of bishops, archdeacons and other dignitaries see John Le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1541-1857: VII*, compiled by Joyce M. Horn.

## 5. Ordinations

The medieval church had several orders of clergy, the most important of which were priest, deacon, sub-deacon, acolyte and sub-acolyte. After the Reformation, only the priesthood and diaconate were retained. Only a bishop, or his suffragan, could ordain, but before proceeding, the bishop had to satisfy himself of a candidate's literacy, good character and possession of a title, that is, a post in which the ordinand could fulfil the duties of his new order. A year was to pass before a deacon could be ordained priest. A candidate for holy orders could be ordained by any bishop regardless of his 'home' diocese. Any records relating to his ordination should be found with the archives of the ordaining bishop. Sources for finding the name of the ordaining bishop are given in sections 1 General biographical works and 3 Visitation and parish records.

Ordinations by the Bishop of Norwich or his suffragan are recorded in various registers, books and rolls in the Norwich diocesan archives and survive from 1413, though there are gaps: see list DN/ORR for details. All entries record the date and place of ordination and the name of the ordaining bishop; the examination of literacy, testimonials and title are included haphazardly. Ordination notices stating the candidate's age, place of birth, college and title are entered in the subscription books 1662-1728: see list DN/SUB. From 1738 onwards, the ordination registers systematically record a candidate's age, testimonials and title and, from 1762, his place and date of birth: see list DN/ORR.

Ordination papers survive from 1713: see list DN/ORD. Until about 1748, they consist largely of letters of testimonial. Thereafter the papers usually consist of five documents: a *signification*, giving the candidate's name and place of abode; a *si quis* or notice of application for ordination which usually included a reference to his parish of residence; proof of age, usually a baptism certificate; letters of testimonial from a college and persons in or near his parish of residence; and proof of title. Such documents can be useful when trying to trace the whereabouts of a deacon during his year prior to ordination as a priest.



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