

# BAD WEATHER AFFECTS CHURCH SURVEY - SHOCK RESULTS!

## A snapshot of life in Burton in 1851

By Gordon Hickmore



It was Sunday evening 30<sup>th</sup> March 1851, the Reverend **Edmund Larken**, Rector of the Parish of Burton, retired to his study to complete his Ecclesiastical Survey of the church attendance for that day. This was the first time the church authorities had carried out such a survey, to be completed on the same day as the National Census and covering the whole population of the United Kingdom.

It had been a harsh winter and as the season changed into spring, there were gales, storms and torrential rain across the country on Saturday night, replaced by thunderstorms with hail and rain on Sunday afternoon. It was not as bad as the great storm a year earlier that brought down almost 50 trees in Burton Park, but it gave the windows in the Rectory a severe rattling.

Burton hill was awash, with the rutted surface channelling the storm water into dykes at the bottom of the hill. The Saxilby turnpike road was in terrible condition and there were many grumbles from the local farmers about the tax on the parish to repair the road. The Fosdyke canal, now owned by the Great Northern railway, remained a very busy waterway with huge barges taking sand timber and corn to Yorkshire bringing coal, rape cake and guano back. The journey by boat from Lincoln to Hull taking just 24 hours.

It was not surprising that many villagers chose not to attend church on that day, not only because of the weather, but it was also the lambing season and few farmers could afford to leave livestock unattended even for a few hours. Larken recorded 35 adults attending at morning service with 16 scholars at Sunday school.

Only 16 people attended the afternoon service when the thunderstorms were at their worst, and he noted on the form that the congregation was often swelled by 12-15 girls from the Penitent Girls Home on Carline Road - a charitable trust he had set up to save young girls who had plied their trade in the Lincoln brothels. He also recorded that when the Monson family were in residence at the Hall, there would be an additional 15 people at the morning service which would include his Lordship and all his household staff.

A mile away, the **Revd William Kaye**, Perpetual Curate of South Carlton, chose to stay the night with **Samuel and Susanna Beech** at the School House, rather than risk the weather and ride back to his residence at Riseholme. He'd had a very busy day; he was the curate for both the Carltons, holding a service in the morning at St Luke's and in the afternoon at St John the Baptist church in South Carlton. Attendances were well down with only 31 people attending the morning service and 27 in the afternoon, against an average of 50 during the year. His income from the two parishes was complicated, receiving £200 per year from South Carlton and £82 from North Carlton made up by tithes, income from glebe land and other endowments. However, he had no accommodation costs as he lived in some comfort at Riseholme Palace with his father, who happened to be Bishop of Lincoln.

The visit gave him the opportunity to discuss the state of the school building with the headmaster and he resolved to write to Lord Monson about the inadequate buildings and the state of the toilets that the school shared with the adjoining cottages. Hygiene was not helped by the effluent flowing along the ditch from the pigsty that shared the boundary with the school. The school at South Carlton had been endowed by the Monson family to provide free education for children aged 5-12 in Burton and the Carltons. Currently there were 78 on the school roll, with 44 boys and 34 girls. Reading and writing were taught free but arithmetic was 2d per week extra. Attendance varied with the seasons, but with farming in a severe depression since the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, many children were used as cheap labour in the fields to supplement the parents' income.

Edmund Larken had been appointed Rector of Burton in 1843 by his Patron, William John Monson, the 6<sup>th</sup> Lord, who succeeded unexpectedly to the title in 1841 when Lord Frederick Monson died without issue, aged only 31. One of his first actions on inheriting the title, was to offer the living at Burton to his brother-in-law, worth a comfortable £500 a year. With income tax set at 7d in the pound, and a property tax which included a tax on the rectory windows, he would be paying around £25 to the Exchequer.

The Larken and the Monson families were well acquainted as 50 years previously; their respective fathers were based at the Madras station with the East India Company. Colonel Monson served with the Army in India for 20 years, ending his career commanding the 76<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot, and Larken (Senior) was employed as an administrator for the East India Company. In 1828 the families were united in marriage when Edmund's sister Eliza married William Monson, born in 1796 in Madras.



*Colonel Monson and his wife c1800*

**The Revd Larken** was a scholarly man, who belonged to the “Black Gown” clergy of his day, but his views were seen by some as left wing and his support for the Penitent Girls Home received much criticism from the burghers of Lincoln. Probably he knew a little too much for comfort and that their traffic was far from being confined to people of inferior breeding and station. His involvement with a periodical called “The Leader” led the ubiquitous **Harvey Gem**, a lawyer and adviser to Lord Monson, to call him a communist and recommend his removal from his post as Rector. Fortunately, Lord Monson ignored the advice and the Rev Larken continued to serve the parish for over 50 years.

He then turned to the second task of the evening – completing the national census return which was to be collected by the Enumerator the following day. It was a large household with 12 residing in the house overnight - Mary his wife, 5 daughters and a son, their ages ranging from 11 down to 1, a visitor **Kathleen Francis**, a cook, a housemaid and a nursemaid. His two elder sons were away at boarding school otherwise it would have been a very tight squeeze if all the family were at home. It was, he reflected, almost petticoat government and for that reason he may have absent-mindedly recorded his son **Francis Roper**, aged 6, in the “F” column – an error that would have little effect on the statistics which recorded 18 million people living in England and Wales in 1851.

Across at Burton Hall, the estate steward, **David Middleton** and his wife shared the huge 68 roomed building with just one servant, Mary Pickering.

For 3 years from 1846, Lord Monson and his family had occupied the Hall as their main residence, but his Lordship with his household had now moved back to Gatton Park in Surrey, a magnificent stately home which had been rebuilt by the 5<sup>th</sup> Lord Monson at enormous expense. The marble hall was lined with imported rare Italian mosaics in many colours and on the walls hung valuable paintings by Raphael and Constable. Expenditure on Gatton Church was equally lavish. Frederick Monson was only a few months old when in 1809 he assumed the title of the 5<sup>th</sup> Lord Monson, and in 31 years he rarely visited Lincolnshire, preferring to live at Gatton or in Florence for health reasons.



The Trustees neglected the Lincolnshire estates, selling off 12,500 of the 20,000 acres to fund the Gatton Park purchase and for 30 years, the remaining estates which included Burton, South Carlton and Croft near Wainfleet, were starved of investment. Almost nothing was spent on the maintenance of the Hall or the tenanted farm properties so the whole estate was in terrible condition. In 1841, the only occupants of the Hall were the old retainers, Thomas Turnbull aged 70 and Mary his wife, aged 60. In 1851 she was now a widow, living at Kennel Cottage on an annuity from the estate.

On inheriting the title, **William Monson** leased Gatton Hall to Frederick’s mother, Lady Warwick, to save the expense of maintaining two large homes, and planned to reside at Burton when restoration work was completed. Between 1841 and 1846 he restored and modernised the hall including the installation of WCs, supervising the work from the Continent where he could live more cheaply.

Despite the improvements in the sanitation, Middleton reported in a letter to his master that his dog Pincher had killed 4 rats but had received a severe bit on its leg in the process. On another occasion he came down to find that all that remained of his caged bird was a pile of feathers, presumably eaten by rats.

**Middleton** was an inspired choice as steward for he was conscientious, loyal, honest, energetic and enthusiastic. He was also ruthless. He kept his Lordship well informed on everything that happened, often writing 3 or 4 times a week with details of expenditure, problems and general tittle-tattle about the “goings-on” within an almost feudal community.

**Arthur Larken**, younger brother of the Rector, who is described in the 1851 census as a “Fund holder”, came under severe criticism from Middleton when he was seen walking out with his housekeeper, **Sarah Smith** and visiting his brother at the rectory. Arthur was a man of independent means and possibly a bit of a lad.

Rumours abounded and Lord Monson was informed by letter that it was believed he had actually married the girl. The Revd Larken kept well out of the argument, but later in the year, Arthur left his tenanted cottage, presumably at the bidding of his Lordship. While in fiction, the marriage of Mr Rochester to his Governess was just acceptable, a liaison with your cook was not.

**John Cooling**, a groom, was immediately paid off when his unmarried niece became pregnant, and Middleton was deeply shocked when a housemaid at the hall suddenly gave birth to a child. He would have turned her out of her cottage that night but for the intervention of the midwife who attended the birth. In a letter to Lord Monson detailing the incident, he dismissed the event almost scornfully, pointing out that both the girl and her boyfriend were Wesleyans.

Despite the outright opposition to the railways by the Lincoln MP **Colonel Sibthorpe**, the Lincoln St Mark’s station opened in 1846, at last connecting the city to the outside world. The railway network was fast and very efficient and Middleton regularly sent game and garden produce to Gatton by rail. A package sent on the 11.10am train from Lincoln could be at Redhill station 4 hours later at 3.10pm. One hamper he sent included 9 partridge 4 snipe and vegetables grown in the walled garden; another contained two pineapples grown in the heated greenhouse. Sometimes goods were lost in transit and on one occasion Middleton extracted 3/- in compensation for the loss of a brace of pheasants. It was probably fortunate that they were not found and returned to sender later.

In the farming community life had become very difficult since the repeal of the Corn Laws. Incomes had halved with a drop of 50% in the price of all farm products including cereals. **John Evens**, aged 37, who lived at the Manor House, was a man of some substance. As a tenant he farmed 508 acres of land and employed 9 men and 2 boys. His census form recorded 13 people residing at the Manor that night - his wife Ann and daughter Betsy, 4 visitors including the Beavens who farmed in Wiltshire and the **Jacksons** from South Carlton. He also had 6 servants including 2 waggoners, a shepherd a housemaid and a kitchenmaid all living within the household.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> December he had written to Lord Monson pointing out for the past 3 years his income from the farm did not meet the rent. Of the 205 acres of arable fields he farmed on the Fen, 92 were undrained and yields of corn were poor. His buildings were dilapidated and even by the standards of the day, uninhabitable. Corn had dropped in price from 76/- shillings a quarter in 1846 to 41/- or even lower, so he was seeking a permanent reduction in rent. He was aware that the Estate had been unable to let a farm at Cammeringham despite a drop in the rent from £750 to £650 per annum, so he hinted in his letter he would give up his tenancy if rents were not reduced.

**Mrs Mary Greaves**, aged 40, who farmed 250 acres herself on Burton Cliff following the death of her husband, was in dire straits. She was behind with the rent and had borrowed heavily to pay for seed corn and feed for the stock. In all 10 farmers in Burton and South Carlton had signed petitions requesting a reduction in rent and for investment in their farms to drain the cold, unproductive fenland. William Brown, the Monson land agent living at South Carlton and a farmer himself, collected the rents on behalf of his Lordship so he was well aware of the plight of the tenants. There was also "trouble at mill". William Holden the miller had given notice to quit as he could no longer pay the rent and make a profit on milling wheat.

**Harvey Gem** was unsympathetic and he penned a draft reply for his lordship's consideration. He was hostile to tenants, who he thought should know their place and he regarded Lincolnshire farmers in particular, as backward peasants. However he conceded that land should be drained but as the estate was in poor financial state, he sought to arrange a loan of £10,000 to carry out the work. He also conceded that rents should be abated by 10% until conditions improved. The ebullient Sir Charles Anderson, a hands-on landowner at Lea near Gainsborough and a friend of Monson, wrote occasionally offering his advice. "Go out into the fields" he suggested "and talk to the farmers" but his Lordship was not a farmer and although sympathetic, relied on the advice of his advisers.

Larken awoke – he must have dozed off in the chair by the fireside. The storm had abated and the pressure was rising; tomorrow we may see the beginning of spring. He would be awakened in the morning by the noise of the rooks repairing their nests in the trees above the Rectory. He had many things to ponder, he had his Easter sermons to prepare and he needed to discuss the arrangements for services with **James Olivant** the Parish Clerk.

Possibly the Revd Kaye would call for a glass of sherry on his way back from Carlton to Riseholme. He made his way up the stair as the church clock struck midnight.

He looked forward to the summer months where he could enjoy a little rook shooting and a game of cricket on the estate pitch, sitting in the sun by the new pavilion. He and the family planned to visit the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park which would be opening in a month's time – life at Burton may be insular, he thought, but it has its compensations.

**To be continued.....**

What happened to **Arthur Larken**? Who lived at the **bedehouses**? Who was **Mary Fuller** whose headstone in the churchyard records such a sad epitaph?

More in the **Spring** edition of the **Journal**

#### Notes:

1. The 1851 census recorded 187 people living in Burton in 40 houses. Other than children under 16 years of age, only 8 adults were born and bred in the village. These included Mary Greaves (40) farmer, Daniel Ormsby (64), John Wistow (79) and George Cook (51), agricultural labourers, Samuel Cooling (66), groom, John Cooling (33), gamekeeper, Ann Stimpson (73), pauper seamstress and Mary Turmbull (69) the retired Burton hall housekeeper.

2. The wage of an agricultural worker was around 10/- a week or less. The head gardener earned 21/- a week with a house and free coal. (He also sold surplus produce in Lincoln, much to Middleton's annoyance) Middleton recruited 2 coachmen for Lord Monson's household at Gatton Park, at a salary of £14 a year.

2. The church survey revealed that just 17% of the population attended Church of England services on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1851 (probably less, as many would have attended 2 or more services) but a larger number (17.5%) attended catholic and nonconformist services.

3. The Revd Kaye, Perpetual Curate of the Carltons, became the Archdeacon at Lincoln Cathedral, but remained as curate until he eventually retired in 1901. He continued to have a great interest in the South Carlton School throughout his life.

4. Wheat was sold by volume, the bushel being the smallest measure and weighed 40-60lbs depending upon the type of grain. 3 bushels equalled 1 quarter. A loaf of bread in 1851 cost 7d.

5. Members of the Burton Cricket team included, Lord Monson, Waldo Sibthorpe of Canwick Hall and Joseph Shuttleworth who by 1856, was employing 600 people at his engineering works in Lincoln manufacturing agricultural machinery.

#### Sources:

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