

**VCH OXFORDSHIRE:**  
**ONLINE TEXTS IN PROGRESS: BROADWELL PARISH: KELMSCOTT**  
 This version May 2005  
 © University of London



## RELIGIOUS HISTORY

### Kelmscott Chapel<sup>1</sup>

In the 10th and early 11th century, Kelmscott was served probably from a putative minster at Broadwell or Langford.<sup>2</sup> A chapel at Kelmscott, dependent on Broadwell, existed by the late 11th or the 12th century, the date of the earliest surviving fabric, and from the Middle Ages was served by vicars of Broadwell, or by chaplains or curates appointed by them.<sup>3</sup> It was dedicated to St George by 1430, when the churchyard was consecrated on the saint's feast day;<sup>4</sup> the dedication is unusual in Oxfordshire, and perhaps derived from association with the Knights Templars, patrons and appropriators of Broadwell church.<sup>5</sup>



*Kelmscott chapel in the late 19th century*

*(Oxfordshire County Council Photographic Archive, Oxfordshire Studies)*

The chapel had baptismal rights probably from its foundation: the font is apparently of the 12th century, and baptismal records were kept from 1538.<sup>6</sup> Burial rights may not have been granted

<sup>1</sup> For the bldg, below, buildings.

<sup>2</sup> Blair, *A-S Oxon.* 70, 136; above, Broadwell, relig. hist.; above, intro.

<sup>3</sup> Below.

<sup>4</sup> P. Heylyn, *Hist. St George of Cappadocia* (2nd. edn 1633), 295--6, printing an indulgence of 20 Feb. 1429/30 granted by Abp Chichele. The indulgence does not appear in *Reg. Chichele*, I--IV (Cant. & York Soc.), and the original has not been located.

<sup>5</sup> Above, Broadwell, relig. hist.

<sup>6</sup> COS, Kelmscott par. reg. transcript; for font, below, buildings (church); cf. *Valor. Eccl.* II, 178, charging the chaplain with dispensing the sacraments.

until the churchyard's dedication in 1430, and marriages were recorded from 1548.<sup>7</sup> Inhabitants in the 16th and 17th centuries occasionally called it a church,<sup>8</sup> though its subservient status as a chapel of Broadwell seems never officially to have been in doubt. The chapel's only independent endowment was £7 left by Anne Turner in 1621, the interest from which was to pay for two annual sermons on St Stephen's Day and Whit Monday, and which was still received by the vicar of Broadwell in the late 18th century.<sup>9</sup> In the late 17th century members of the Stephens family paid 1s. 3d. a year towards the cost of holy water, perhaps following a similar bequest or endowment.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1850s the bishop contemplated making Kelmscott a separate parish,<sup>11</sup> but it remained a dependent chapelry of Broadwell until 1960, when it was annexed to Clanfield.<sup>12</sup> In 1976 it was reunited with Broadwell and Kencot, and from 1995, following further amalgamations, formed part of the extensive Shill Valley and Broadshire ministry.<sup>13</sup>

### Pastoral Care and Religious Life

In the early 13th century the vicarage ordination for Broadwell ruled that Kelmscott chapel should be served daily, and apparently envisaged that it should have its own chaplain, though no stipend was laid down and no house provided.<sup>14</sup> A few chaplains or clerks mentioned in various contexts during the 14th century may have served the chapel, among them John at flood, owner of half a yardland in Kelmscott, but no formal appointments are known, and none were university graduates.<sup>15</sup> In the early 16th century, when both Broadwell and Holwell churches were neglected, the vicar failed to provide a chaplain for several years, though the fact that he was still expected to do so suggests that this may have been untypical:<sup>16</sup> certainly medieval additions and

<sup>7</sup> COS, Kelmscott par. reg. transcript; above.

<sup>8</sup> ORO, MS Wills Oxon. 185, ff. 438--9; *ibid.* 66/1/11.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* MS Wills Oxon. 65/4/33; COS, Broadwell par. reg. transcript, vol. I, f. 3; *Secker's Visit.* 23--4. Land said in 1851 to belong to Kelmscott chapel was actually glebe belonging to the vicar of Broadwell: *Ch. and Chapel, 1851*, no. 242; PRO, Kelmscott incl. award.

<sup>10</sup> COS, Broadwell par. reg. transcript, vol. I, f. 3. The payment was charged on Thos. Stephens of Eaton Hastings (Berks.), but fam. members lived also in Kelmscott.

<sup>11</sup> ORO, MS Oxf. Dioc. d 178, p. 81.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* c 1773, Order in Council 12 Sept. 1960.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* c 1713/2, Order in Council 12 Apr. 1976; *Crockford* (1977--9), 1167; *Oxf. Dioc. Year Book* (2000), 80--2; above, Broadwell, relig. hist.

<sup>14</sup> *Liber Antiq. H. Welles*, ed. A. Gibbons, p. 3; *Rot. Welles*, I (LRS 3), 183.

<sup>15</sup> 'Arch. Queen's Coll. Oxf.' (typescript in Bodl. and Queen's Coll., 1931), II, nos. 2068--9: copy in Bodl.; PRO, E 179/161/8 (*dominus* Thos.); *Cal. Pat.* 1354--8, 368--7. John presumably belonged to the local at water (*ad aquam*) fam.

<sup>16</sup> *Visit. Dioc. Linc.* I, 132, 134.

embellishments to the fabric<sup>17</sup> imply local patronage, and there is no evidence for long-term religious neglect. From the 1520s to the mid 17th century Kelmscott was served by a succession of resident and long-serving stipendiary curates, who witnessed local wills, and who appear to have fulfilled their duties adequately;<sup>18</sup> among them was Richard Turner (d. 1552), one of a yeoman family subsequently prominent in Kelmscott, who bequeathed sheep and other livestock and who was evidently closely involved with the local community.<sup>19</sup> During the Reformation, there are signs of religious conservatism in Kelmscott, perhaps in part reflecting Turner's long curacy: in 1546 there were still three lights in the chapel, and during Mary's reign two inhabitants left bequests towards purchasing a new cope and cross. One of them, the wealthy farmer and landowner Elizabeth Turner (d. 1558), also left a cow to fund a chantry for herself and other family members.<sup>20</sup>

Ann Turner's endowment for sermons in 1621 envisaged them being delivered 'as the pastor and curate there shall ... appoint',<sup>21</sup> but from the late 17th or early 18th century vicars of Broadwell ceased to employ chaplains for Kelmscott, serving the entire parish themselves or, in the 1730s and 1740s, through a hired curate resident in Broadwell. Services were reduced to once a fortnight, alternating with those at Holwell, and the sacrament was administered three times a year compared with monthly at Broadwell.<sup>22</sup> In the 1750s the vicar sometimes catechized at Kelmscott, and reported that popular support had encouraged him to continue communions, though as he was unfamiliar with the needs of Kelmscott's poor, offertory money was distributed by the churchwarden.<sup>23</sup> A curate of Lechlade (Glos.) was briefly appointed to serve Kelmscott and Holwell in the 1780s and 1790s, but fortnightly services seem to have continued and, though there seems to have been no religious dissent, numbers of communicants fell reportedly from around 90 in 1801 to 54 in 1805, and to only 20 by 1817.<sup>24</sup> In 1831, when Kelmscott's population was 140, the average congregation in summer was around 40, though a Sunday school had recently been established, and the vicar visited the sick.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Below, buildings (church).

<sup>18</sup> *Subsidy 1526*, 262; *Valor Eccl.* II, 178; *Protestation Rtns and Tax Assess.* 2--3, 25; Pearce, 'Clergy', 202; ORO, MS Wills Oxon. 180, ff. 114, 165v., 204v.--5; *ibid.* 185, ff. 364, 438; *ibid.* 190, ff. 49--50v.; *ibid.* 30/3/51; COS, par. reg. transcript, s.a. 1643.

<sup>19</sup> *Subsidy 1526*, 262; ORO, MS Wills Oxon. 179, ff. 145v.--146; *ibid.* 180, ff. 114, 165v.; above, manor; econ. hist.

<sup>20</sup> ORO, MSS Wills Oxon. 179, f. 145v.; 181, f. 202; 182, f. 126v.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 65/4/33.

<sup>22</sup> *Secker's Visit.* 4--5; *Secker Corresp.* 199--200; ORO, MSS Oxf. Dioc. b 12, ff. 45--7; c 327, p. 136; d 555, ff. 77--80; d 558, ff. 85--8; above, Broadwell, relig. hist.

<sup>23</sup> ORO, MS Oxf. Dioc. d 555, ff. 77--80.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* b 12, ff. 45--7; c 327, p. 136; d 561, f. 194; d 568, f. 200; d 572, f. 53; d 576, ff. 51, 167; d 580, f. 149; below (nonconf). The fig. of 93 perhaps represented the whole congregation.

<sup>25</sup> ORO, MS Oxf. Dioc. b 38, ff. 120--3; *Census*, 1831.

The separation of Holwell and Filkins from Broadwell parish in the 1850s<sup>26</sup> allowed more attention to be given to Broadwell and Kelmscott, producing some improvements. Before 1851 employment of a curate allowed re-introduction of weekly services at Kelmscott, held alternately in the morning or afternoon, though attendance still averaged only 33--40, which the vicar believed would be almost doubled by the presence of a moderately diligent resident priest.<sup>27</sup> In 1854, when the vicar again served both places alone, the congregation averaged 54, thought to be an acceptable proportion of the population in contrast to that at the mother church, and the Sunday school had 25 pupils.<sup>28</sup> Alternate morning and evening Sunday services continued, with a monthly communion, in the late 19th century, when the vicar identified his chief difficulties as apathy and indifference;<sup>29</sup> the remark may, however, have referred to Broadwell rather than to Kelmscott, where leading inhabitants seem to have vigorously supported restoration of the building in the 1880s.<sup>30</sup> During the 20th century the chapel continued to be served from elsewhere: in the early 20th century there were usually between 5 and 7 services a month including evensong and children's services, and leading farmers continued to be actively involved as churchwardens sometimes for several decades.<sup>31</sup> Attendance nevertheless declined as in most places, and in the 1990s seldom reached double figures.<sup>32</sup>

### Nonconformity

Despite indications of lingering Roman Catholicism in the mid 16th century, by the 17th century all of Kelmscott's adult inhabitants professed to be Anglican conformists.<sup>33</sup> A non-resident Catholic family owned a few acres in Kelmscott in the early 18th century, but the land was let to the local Bradshaws, who seem to have been Anglican.<sup>34</sup> In the 1850s the principal farmers were 'all church people',<sup>35</sup> and though eight dissenters, presumably a single family, were noted by the vicar in 1878,<sup>36</sup> no other evidence of religious dissent in the township has been found.

<sup>26</sup> Above, Broadwell, Filkins, and Holwell, relig. hist.

<sup>27</sup> *Ch. and Chapel, 1851*, no. 242.

<sup>28</sup> *Wilb. Visit.* 21--2.

<sup>29</sup> ORO, MSS Oxf. Dioc. c 332, c 344, c 353, c 356, c 365, s.v. Broadwell.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* c 2208, no. 13; below, buildings (church). For a family of Dissenters in 1878, below (nonconf.).

<sup>31</sup> ORO, PAR 148/01/R7/1, passim; *ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. c 1773, archdcn.'s certs. (incl. mem. to R.H. Maughan d. 1973); V.J. Hollands, *Kelmscott, a Village Hist.* (priv. print. 1990), 110.

<sup>32</sup> Hollands, *Kelmscott*, 109.

<sup>33</sup> *Protestation Rtns and Tax Assess.* 25; *Compton Census*, ed. Whiteman, 423--4; above (pastoral care).

<sup>34</sup> ORO, QSD E.1, pp. 111--12, 163--4; cf. Bradshaw monuments in church. For Roman Catholicism elsewhere in the parish, above, Broadwell; Filkins; Holwell.

<sup>35</sup> ORO, MS Oxf. Dioc. d 178, p. 81; cf. *Wilb. Visit.* 22.

<sup>36</sup> ORO, MS Oxf. Dioc. c 344, s.v. Broadwell.