The Implementation and Impact of the Reformation in Shropshire, 1545-1575

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Abstract

Most English Reformation studies have been about the far north or the wealthier south-east. The poorer areas of the midlands and west have been largely passed over as less well-documented and thus less interesting. This thesis studying the north of the county of Shropshire demonstrates that the generally accepted model of the change from Roman Catholic to English Reformed worship does not adequately describe the experience of parishioners in that county.
Acknowledgements

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I wish to acknowledge the valuable assistance of various Shropshire and Staffordshire clergy, the staff of the Lichfield Heritage Centre and Lichfield Cathedral for permission to photograph churches and church plate. Thanks also to the Victoria & Albert Museum for access to their textiles collection. The staff at the Shropshire Archives, Shrewsbury were very helpful, as were the staff of the State Library of Victoria who retrieved all the volumes of the Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society.

I very much appreciate the ongoing support and love of my family. They have been supportive throughout the whole process, knowing when to respect my self-imposed solitude and when to offer comfort and advice.
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Abbreviations

CCEd Clergy of the Church of England database
CWA Churchwardens’ Accounts
DNB Dictionary of National Biography
LHC Lichfield Heritage Centre
OED Oxford English Dictionary
SA Shropshire Archives
TSAS Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society
VCH Victoria County History

Note on Place Names

Outside of direct quotes, Shropshire is used to indicate the county, Salop or North Shropshire to indicate the archdeaconry and Shrewsbury to indicate the town. The parish of Worfield in the county of Shropshire and the archdeaconry of Stafford is included in North Shropshire. Names of places are given in the modern spelling according to A. D. Mills, *A Dictionary of British Place-Names* (2003).
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Introduction

It gets overlooked that much of what is said about the progress of the Reformation in England is applicable almost only to the most highly developed areas of the south and east.¹

Forty years on from Glanmor Williams’ observation, this is still the case. With many local Reformation studies being conducted in the last fifty years, broad statements about the English Reformation are more locally grounded than once they were, but still apply to the south and east because these areas have been studied in the most detail. Extensive surveys of the available documents have resulted in detailed analyses and clearer pictures of how the reformation impacted many localities at the various levels of diocese, county, city and parish. These local studies complement general surveys of the Reformation throughout England, such as *Reformation in Britain and Ireland* by Felicity Heal, *The Stripping of the Altars* by Eamon Duffy, and *English Reformations* by Christopher Haigh.² The local studies illustrate how national trends, such as popular support for traditional Catholicism and the rate of Reformation throughout England, relate to local religious expression. The areas already studied in greatest detail include: London (Susan Brigden), Devon and Cornwall (Robert Whiting), Lincoln diocese (Margaret Bowker), Gloucestershire (Caroline Litzenberger), Suffolk (Diarmid MacCulloch), East Anglia (Eamon Duffy), and the wider south east (John F. Davis).³ Christopher Haigh’s work on York and Lancashire helps to carry the story north, but the Reformation in the west remains an under studied area.⁴

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Whilst none of these historians claim that their area of concern is representative of the whole of England, the picture they have drawn has become dominant. Doreen Rosman’s *The Evolution of English Churches*, is a synthesis of many Reformation histories which demonstrates this south-eastern focus.\(^5\) There is a notable gap in the history of the Reformation in the west and midlands. This is in part an issue of sources. In comparison to some other counties there is, for example, a relatively small amount of extant documentary evidence for Shropshire which might account for its obscurity in the historiography. There are still useful sources available however, and when studied in detail these can reveal much about how the Reformation was experienced by the parishioners and clergy of a comparatively poor western county.

This thesis addresses this historiographical gap. Its focus is on the Archdeaconry of Salop in the north of Shropshire from 1545-1575. The thesis begins by outlining the situation at the end of the reign of Henry VIII, and then charts the impact and reception of the protestant reforms under Edward VI, the Roman Catholic reign of Mary and the early decades of Elizabeth I’s reign. This was a period of change in religious policy determined by the monarch and those appointed to positions of authority. 1575 was not the end of the English

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Reformation: the focus of this thesis is the times of transition from one religious policy to another. By 1575 local records, or at least those of Shropshire, had settled into routine recording and the actions initially taken with some sense of urgency continued in more measured ways.

The geographic area of focus is the area of overlap between the county of Shropshire and the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield. The English Reformation was a religious and political movement and the various elements of the Tudor regime, church and secular government, were used together to transmit the reforms throughout England. The effectiveness of these systems has been tested by the number of parishes disinclined to take up the reforms in a timely manner. The ways in which the structure of church and state authority were used to enforce the religious changes are amply demonstrated in this area. The shift in who had control of religious policies from the clergy to secular authorities is here explored and articulated in a way not previously charted for that region.

This thesis explains, through material culture and historical soundscapes, how the Reformation was implemented and enforced in a poor western county by investigating the various ways that Tudor governments attempted to change the religious beliefs of parishioners. Material culture encompasses all elements of church fabric and buildings. In this thesis, ‘soundscapes’ refers to the auditory world, the sounds of history. Alain Corbin’s article on bells is particularly

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relevant to a study of death and funerals during the Reformation: this thesis draws
on the idea that there is a full range of sounds to examine in the past, not just
those involved with speech.\textsuperscript{8} Material culture and the soundscape of the past are
accessed through documentary evidence such as town chronologies and church
inventories. Throughout this thesis, there will be descriptions of the materials and
sounds that surrounded those who lived and died during the Reformation. This
fuller description is a means of further analysing the impact of the Reformation on
all aspects of parish life.

The first two chapters chart the changes to the exteriors and the interiors of church
buildings during this period of Reformation. There were changes to patterns of
bell ringing, one of the loudest aspects of the religious soundscape. These changes
were part of the attempt by reformers to transform attitudes towards and beliefs
connected with death. Ringing for the souls of the dead was connected to the
doctrine of purgatory, so changes in ideology had auditory consequences: the use
of bells was changed in an attempt to enforce ideology. The overall physical
appearances of the church exteriors did not change dramatically, but instead of
representing the reach and power of popes in Rome, the buildings became part of
the institutional church under the control of the English monarch. Throughout,
they remain a focus of community life. By contrast, the Reformation greatly
affected the appearance of the interior of the churches. Images were removed from
the walls, and vestments, plate and altars were removed from the sanctuary. The
sanctuary was the focal point of the Mass and any changes to the way Holy
Communion was celebrated affected parishioners during the Reformation. Altars

\textsuperscript{8} Corbin, "The Auditory Markers of the Village." p. 117; Smith, "Tuning into London c. 1600." p.
132.
became tables, and pulpits were installed, as words, scripture and vernacular prayers, were exalted over the Mass.

Chapter one focuses on how the Reformation was experienced by the parishioners in the town of Shrewsbury. The wealth of the town is reflected in the church property and goods. The model of a lavish and sumptuous Roman Catholic faith, so familiar in English Reformation historiography of the south-east, is found in Shrewsbury and the removal of those items by the reformers is clearly illustrated. The shift of power from the church to the state, from clergy to laity, is highlighted in the context of the town through the use of bailiffs and past and present sheriffs. This provincial town was not removed from any part of the various changes that were implemented under various monarchs, distance from London proving little impediment to those responsible for ensuring conformity to the new doctrine. The religious experience in Shrewsbury, at most levels, offers few surprises.

By way of contrast, chapter two explores the parishes beyond the town wall, in a largely rural context. The parishes in the rest of Salop were generally poor. They did not have anything like the range of vestments and church goods seen in Shrewsbury. The poorer rural context did not, however, isolate people from the reformation as Edward VI’s commissioners for Shropshire visited throughout the county, asking questions of clergy and representative laity. The rural parishes had less than those in the town, but it was confiscated all the same. The importance of objects for religious worship and doctrinal reform is here explored in a new context largely unfamiliar to the student of the English Reformation. The reformation in the rural Shropshire context and the impact on worshippers in those parishes illustrates another side of the history of the Tudor Reformations.
Chapter three places these two stories of Reformation in the national context. It examines the leading men of the Shropshire church: bishops and parish clergy; how they were affected by the Reformation, how they participated in national events and the local context. The diocese of Coventry and Lichfield was large and the politics of the Reformation became a part of the bishops’ experience. Popular rebellion or religious zeal of either protestant or catholic faith does not mark the history of the Reformation in Shropshire. What, in the Shropshire context, led to the absence of large scale action? The concern of central government during this period was a shortage of qualified clergy who also supported the official religious policy, whatever it happened to be at the time. Parishes in North Shropshire did not have a high turnover of priests during these uncertain times. Most clergymen remained in their cure until they died, but there are cases of resignations and deprivations. These demonstrate that all members of the communities of North Shropshire, whether lay or cleric, were affected by the policy of central government or the diocese.

Although this thesis is a survey and analysis of the Reformation in North Shropshire, examples from outside the diocese and county are used to place what happened in Shropshire into the context of the Reformation throughout England. This thesis describes how the Reformation was sent to and received by the parishes of Shropshire. It discovers what was happening at the parish level and explains how the various aspects of objects, sounds, society and people affect the history of the Reformation in England in small but significant ways.
Chapter One: The Town of Shrewsbury

This yeare in Adam Myttoon and Roger Popes tyme the pycyte of o’r Lady owt of St. Mary’s in Shrosbery and the picture of Mary Mawdelen and the pycyte of St. Chaddes owt of Saint Chadds churche in the same town were weare all three burnyd in the market place there commonly callyd the corne marcket. (1546-7)9

1546-47 is the first year that a reference to iconoclasm is made in the Shrewsbury Chronicle. Adam Mitton and Roger Popes were bailiffs of the town that year and laymen of the town. The Chronicler would use the names of those who held the position of bailiff at the start of each year’s account. Not only did this distinguish one year from another, but it showed the recurring holders of authority in the town over the years. The same men exercised secular authority during periods of different religious policy. The town of Shrewsbury had five parishes: Holy Cross, previously the Abbey church, with a chapel at St Giles, St Julian, St Alkmund, St Chad and St Mary. Adam Mitton occasionally appears in the St Mary churchwardens’ accounts in his capacity as bailiff.

The chronicler tells us that three pictures were taken from the churches of St Chad and St Mary to the corn market and burnt. ‘Picture’ formerly also referred to a sculpted likeness.10 What does this description tell us about the objects themselves and the people of Shrewsbury? We know that this action took place after ‘Images were commaundyd to be put downe and owt of the churches,’ by implication in response to such a command.11 These images must have been made of combustible material, most likely wood. We know where the images came from: one picture came from the parish of St Mary and two from the parish of St Chad.

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10 OED.
We also know that at least one parish in Shrewsbury had an image depicting a figure other than the saint to which the church was dedicated. This may demonstrate the past role of guilds within the church.

Guilds were dedicated to God, Christ or a saint and their primary function was usually intercessory. Images owned by guilds were used for devotion and this was one of the reasons they were dissolved during Edward’s reign. Was this a sign that a guild dedicated to Mary Magdalene which had been in the parish of St Chad no longer existed? We know which guilds existed in the town of Shrewsbury at the end of the reign of Henry VIII. A certificate describing each chantry, hospital and guild in the counties of Shropshire and Staffordshire was compiled in 1546 by Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, Richard Sampson, Sir Philip Draycot, knight, Edward Littleton, esquire, Anthony Bourchier, gentleman and William Sheldon, gentleman. Four of the Shrewsbury parish churches hosted guilds. The Drapers Guild at St Mary used the altar of the Trinity. Holy Cross parish was the base for the Guild of St Winifred. The Shearmen’s Guild used the altar of Our Lady in St Julian parish church. The parish with the most guilds was that of St Chad: the Mercers’ Guild at the altar of St Michael, the Tailors’ Guild at the altar of St John the Baptist, the Shoemakers’ Guild at the altar of St Katharine, and the Weavers’ Guild used the parish church, although no altar was specified. Unless the Weavers Guild was dedicated to Mary

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14 Ibid. p. 305.
15 Ibid. p. 312.
16 Ibid. p. 311.
Magdalene, it appears that the image of the saint taken to the burning was not overtly connected to the guilds in the parish of St Chad.

We may attempt to reconstruct the scene of the public image burning. The market would have been a public place where tradesmen and customers conducted business. We are not told what day the event took place or at what time of day; this would affect the impact of the spectacle. During trading time would be the most public demonstration if the iconoclasts made a point of drawing attention to themselves. The market site does not exist today as it did in 1546, when it was surrounded by buildings and open air. It would be possible for some folk to be separated from the event by obstruction of sightlines and the ambient noise of a busy market. All present would know something was burning from the smell created. If it was a day other than market day, the spectacle would be obvious to all within the space. Another option would have been evening or night time, attention grabbing in a different way, with the noise and smell of a bonfire at night attracting interest at what might otherwise be a time of rest. Presumably, it was a bonfire to be able to burn the images properly, but the size of the blaze cannot be determined from the chronicler’s account. Bonfires ‘were dangerous and exciting’ and formed a traditional part of celebrations both secular and religious. Roger Martyn of Long Melford, Suffolk, recalled village bonfires to mark the eves of St James, Sts Peter and Paul and St Thomas, as well as on Midsummer Eve. Parishes throughout England were accustomed to organising large fires in public places and ‘wood was a valuable commodity, sometimes in short supply, but

19 Ibid. p. 80.
people were willing to burn it for festive or political purposes. The burning of images in the corn market of Shrewsbury was a political statement, but what was the meaning of the message?

There are many questions raised by this event, a number of which cannot be answered. The knowledge is lost to history, a lost voice in the story of the Reformation in Shrewsbury. While many of the answers may be lost to us, the questions still need to be asked and considered to appreciate the impact of this event on the people of Shrewsbury.

How did the images get from the churches to the corn market? Were they processed from the churches to the place of their burning? Were they simply brought to the market at the appointed time? It is no more than an eight minute walk to the market from each parish with a two-three minute walk between St Chad and St Mary. They may not even have come directly from the churches. The pictures may have already been removed and stored elsewhere, as happened in London when books were collected then burnt. Coming from two churches suggests a planned action rather than spontaneous iconoclasm. The corn market was a central location in the town. The choice of venue means that this action was not intended to be covert in any way. A public place was chosen for a public message. This is not the same as the two Lollards in Leicester who burned an image of St Catherine when they ran out of fuel to cook their supper. The public burning of images was not incompatible with protestant reformers’ ideas nor was it new in the 1540s. When the iconoclastic fires were lit in 1538 Hugh Latimer,

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21 Cressy, Bonfires and Bells, p. 80.
later bishop, was closely involved,’ even ensuring that the image of the Virgin removed from his own church, ‘perished in the flames along with other notorious ‘idols’’. An earlier example of iconoclasm by fire was recorded in Rickmansworth in the 1520s when people set fire to images while they were still in the church!  

Illustration 1.1: Lady Chapel, Old St Chad, Shrewsbury. In the background, from left to right, the towers of St Alkmund, St Mary, and St Julian.  

Who brought the Shrewsbury images to be burnt? The description does not say who did the burning. The ‘who’ affects the nature of the event. If it was by the clergy in those parishes, then they show themselves to be protestant reformers and supportive of the actions of the late-Henrician and Edwardine reformers. If it was the churchwardens or other parishioners, this becomes an act of popular iconoclasm performed by the laity, possibly in defiance of their clergy, but given

23 Ibid. p. 173.  
24 Ibid. p. 211.
that the curate of St Chad was later a married priest, we have at least a hint that he might have supported some of the ideas of the reformers. This does not mean that anyone who accepted one ideal of the reformation automatically accepted all reformation actions.

Another possibility behind the public burning of likenesses of saints in Shrewsbury is that the images were forcibly removed and taken to the market by local or even outside secular authorities. It is not definitively stated whether the burning was instigated by those in lawful authority or the people of Shrewsbury.

Finally, given that there were five parishes in the town, what can be understood from the fact that the chronicler only mentions two parish churches? Were these congregations acting in defiance of the majority of the town? The focus on the two parishes could be explained if the chronicler lived in one of these parishes and the event was of particular concern to him. It may have been the only public burning he knew about. Perhaps the other churches did not have images, or if they did, perhaps they just disposed of them quietly or sold them, as was done in the parish of Ludlow in south Shropshire in 1548. The royal and episcopal commands about images only demanded that they be taken out of the churches. There was no mention of the means of disposal. The fact that any images were publicly destroyed in Shrewsbury demonstrates that an iconoclastic zeal of some sort was present in the town even if it did not exist in all the parishes. Regardless of how it was organised, the burning of images in the market was a noisy and open display of iconoclasm by some people in Shrewsbury.

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The Churchwardens’ Accounts for St Mary parish 1550 give an indication of how the Reformation was affecting the churches in Shrewsbury, ‘payd for takynge downe yª autore & pavyng of the graueas’.\(^{26}\) It is not specified which altar in the church was removed, but probably this refers to the high altar. The Reformers wanted to change the nature of Holy Communion. Removing the altars and installing tables was the physical manifestation of the change in the doctrine of the Eucharist.

The next dramatic event in Shrewsbury connected with religious reform was the commission to make an Inventory of Church Goods. In May 1552, men of note in each county were called to be commissioners to survey the goods, jewels, ornaments and bells in every church and then return those items deemed necessary and confiscate the rest.\(^{27}\) The commissioners chosen for the survey of church goods in the county of Shropshire were Andrew Corbet of Moreton, George Blount of Kinlet, Richard Mainwaring of Ightfield, Richard Newport of High Ercall and Eyton-on-Severn, and Richard Cornwall of Burford. The first three were knights and the last two esquires. All these men served as Sheriff at various times during the Tudor period.\(^{28}\)

This mass inventory of church goods is a striking example of authority and power shifting from the clergy to the laity in church matters. In the same way that bishops were replaced by noblemen as presidents of Councils,\(^{29}\) the

\(^{26}\) Shrewsbury – St Mary CWA. SA P257/B/3/1. 12r.
\(^{28}\) ibid. p. 342-3.
\(^{29}\) VCH Shropshire III. p. 59.
commissioners were under royal authority and did not answer to any ecclesial powers. These inventories were taken by the cleric of the parish (whether called curate, vicar, or pastor), the churchwardens and other honest men of the parish. The inventory would be presented by anywhere between three to six laymen and one cleric. In Shrewsbury the parishes of St Mary, St Chad and St Alkmund made their presentments before the bailiffs of the town, the secular authority.30

It is unlikely that the commissioners visited every parish in Shropshire. Instead they called for inventories to be taken which would then be presented to them. The inventories presented to the commissioners in 1552 would give the name of the cleric in the parish, the churchwardens and usually other “honest men” of the parish. In Shrewsbury, the parishes of St Mary, St Alkmund and St Julian made their presentments on 24 August 1552 before Sir Adam Mitton, knight, and the bailiffs of the town. Adam Mitton was one of the men who was serving as bailiff when the images were burned in the corn market a few years earlier and although he was not one of the serving bailiffs at the time of the inventory, still held a certain standing in the community. The parishes of St Chad and Holy Cross made their presentments on 26 August 1552. The inventory for St Chad parish tells us that the presentment was made by Edward Stephens the curate with at least four churchwardens being Thomas Hosier, Richard Clerk, Roger Allen and Morgan (last name unknown) and four esquires of the parish namely Humphrey Onslow, Thomas Sturrey, Nicholas Purcell and Edward Hosier. The signatures also include Thomas Ireland, Richard German, John Mokewoth, and Richard Evarett. These

These honest men of the parish would have been well known in their community, trusted with the task of presenting the church goods. This is the only mention any of them receive in extant historical record. Their inclusion in the inventory process does not illustrate their doctrinal or religious beliefs, but it does demonstrate being prepared to participate in official actions. Those to whom the presentments were made are slightly better remembered. The Chronicle records Roger Luter and Richard Whitacres as bailiffs for the year 1551-2 and Sir Adam Mitton and Roger Lewis as bailiffs for ‘1552-3 (I Mary).[^32] None of the commissioners are named in the inventories themselves, but they are mentioned as ‘the kynges comysyonners assyngnened for the tyme’ and it is noted that the inventories were made in response to their charge.[^33]

From these inventories we learn the state of church bells, plate and vestments in August that year. The indentures listing which goods could remain in the churches were issued between May and June 1553. What does the information gathered during the 1552-1553 commission tell us about the soundscape and material culture of Reformation Shrewsbury?

Churches were prominent buildings in the towns and villages. In sixteenth-century wills, people were said to be of the parish and diocese, not the town and county. The church was ever present in the community and even when the building was

[^31]: Ibid. p. 403.
[^33]: “Shrewsbury Church Goods.” p. 401.
out of sight, the presence of the church in the soundscape continued. Church bells were among the loudest noise makers in early modern England. Bruce R. Smith notes that, ‘as a soundscape, early modern London was far too diffuse to be contained by parish boundaries.’ Shrewsbury was not as large as London, but the town context is a valid framework for a discussion of the soundscape of that place.

The proximity of the five parish churches would lead to an overlap of their auditory reach. Residents of the town would have been able to distinguish between the bells of each parish. There was a vocabulary for bell ringing. Those who lived in the soundscape would learn what the different patterns of ringing signified: worship, marriage, birth, death; each event had a distinct sound pattern. These patterns had different meanings for different people, ‘like other forms of communication it was susceptible to prompts and crossed meanings.’ What people understood the ringing of bells to signify was of concern to the Edwardine reformers.

How many bells made up the soundscape of Shrewsbury? In 1552, the parish of Holy Cross recorded, ‘iiij ringinge belles, with a bell whiche the clocke goethe upon.’ The parish of St Chad also recorded a bell for the clock along with, ‘iiij. gret bells.’ St Mary parish recorded, ‘a rynge of belles of v. with that that the cloke strykes on,’ and St Alkmund and St Julian recorded four and three bells

35 Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*. p. 68.
37 Ibid. p. 404.
respectively with no mention of clocks.\textsuperscript{38} The bells for the clocks would be the most likely to ring at the same time. St Mary, St Alkmund and St Julian are all at a higher elevation than St Chad’s. Holy Cross is down in the river valley which carries the sound.

We know that the parishes had these bells because the clergy and churchwardens were asked to record the number of bells along with the other details of church plate and fabric. Why were the commissioners interested in the church bells? The aim was to collate all church plate, jewels and goods that were in the parishes and confiscate those considered by the reformers as unnecessary. The Edwardine reformers were against bell ringing, most particularly because of the superstitions that surrounded it. In one of his sermons, Hugh Latimer said that the belief that ringing bells would fend off storms and the devil, ‘was the teaching of the devil’.\textsuperscript{39} Given such criticism of ringing bells, their inclusion in the inventory of church goods was probably with the intention of confiscating them. The logistics of such action was known to the commissioners. In the original summons to the church of Bedingfield, Suffolk, officers were instructed to bring before the commissioners at Ipswich, ‘All and everye suche p’cell of plate jewells metall or other ornamente (whatsoever they be)’ with the statement at the end that ‘The grete Belles and Saunce Belles in the Steples only excepte.’\textsuperscript{40} The practicalities of removal and transport of all bells from the steeples of England made the exception a logical one.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid. pp. 402, 400, 401.
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As the commissioners were never presented with the actual bells, the visual aspect of their role in worship was not scrutinised. Bells could be inscribed, setting in metal prayers and ideas contrary to the Reformed notions of what was acceptable worship, particularly if they were forged when England still held to Roman Catholic worship and doctrine. Some inscriptions personified the bells, giving them agency to affect the spiritual and temporal worlds. Examples of such inscriptions Europe-wide include:

- DAE MONES ANGO - I torment demons
- FLEO MORTUA - I cry for the dying
- ROGOS PLORO - I weep at the burial
- LAUDO DEUM VERUM - I praise the true God
- PLEBEM VOCO - I call the people
- EXCITO LENTOS - I arouse the lazy
- CONGREGO CLERUM - I collect the clergy

As the bells were out of sight of the parishioners anyway, what would it matter if the bells were inscribed or not? The corporate memory of what was inscribed on the bells would affect the belief in what the bells were doing when they were rung.

The town of Shrewsbury had the potential of 21 bells ringing at once including three different clocks. As the loudest noisemakers in the parish, ‘None could escape their clamour . . . ringing above the routine noises of urban or village life’. The regular ringing of bells was an example of the church affecting secular life. Bells were not a means of private devotion; their use could not be secret or hidden. Bell ringing was the most public display by a church extending beyond its physical presence. It was experienced by all within range who could hear. No one

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42 Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, p. 69.
could escape the sound of bells in the town, but changing what people thought when they heard the ringing was not a simple matter. One way for the reformers to save the people from their superstitious thoughts was to stop the ringing of bells. The most permanent way to silence was removal, so why were the bells permitted to remain? In this instance, practicality appears to have outweighed religious zeal.

The indentures of 1553 reveal that Holy Cross parish was granted custody of four bells and a clock bell. St Mary’s kept its five bells. St Alkmund was permitted three bells which would appear to be a reduction, but three bells would still make much noise. St Julian was permitted to keep three bells in its Indenture with the direction:

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whiche . . . belles the sayed commyssyoners on the Kynges majestes behalf starytly chargeth and commandyth them saveley and surely to kepe unsold ne otherwise imbessylyd, untill suche tyme as the Kynges majesties plesure be unto them further signifiyed and declared.43
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There were uses for the bells which reformers could not replace. Bells were rung to summon people to worship.44 No superstitions attached to that action. Bells rung at weddings and funerals could be more problematic, particularly funerals due to the traditional connection between the ringing of bells and protection of souls. In general, before the Reformation, bells would be rung when a person was dying, at the time of death and at burial. They could be rung for hours at a time, day or night.45 According to Percival Price, ‘The fathers of the Protestant

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44 Cressy, Bonfires and Bells. p. 69.
Reformation found that they could not do without church bells, but in their zeal to purify Christianity they took the ‘magic’ out of them.  

In two parishes the bells are listed as being in ‘one accord’. This suggests that the bells were a set, intended to be rung together, either at the same time or in a pattern of different tones. Why were they listed in such a way? This is how the parishes thought of their bells, as an integrated set. The bells were probably made by the same maker in order to be properly tuned, if they were different tones. Each neighbourhood would know their own bells: the locality does not change when the patterns are altered. The bells were permitted to stay, they had to be cared for and they were not to be employed as weapons of the devil. Bells continued to be a problem for protestant reformers as they attempted to educate the people and remove belief that bells would affect the souls of the dying or dead.

Ringing at the elevation was also a target for the Reformers. Sacring bells were used just before the Elevation of the Host at Mass and a great bell might also have been rung at that time. The elevation was prohibited in 1549. It is impossible to know if individual parishes adhered to the ban. The physical presence of the bells meant that the practice could continue, but if the 1549 Book of Common Prayer was followed, there would be no elevation and the sacring bell would be silent.

46 Price, Bells and Man. p. 129.
49 Ibid. p. 464.
What of the other goods listed in the inventories? How did they affect the experience of those who worshipped in the churches? In 1537-8 the abbeys were suppressed and their goods taken. The Benedictine Shrewsbury Abbey became Holy Cross parish, also referred to as Foriet Orient (East Fored or Gate). As goods were taken when the abbey was suppressed, the goods recorded in 1552 either represent what was left behind at that time or a combination of what was left and any items acquired in the interim. The Inventory of 1552 listed the following vestments and paraphernalia:

- A chalice with a patent parcel gilt, 12 oz.,
- A cross of wood, covered with silver latten plate and gilt,
- A pyx of maslin,
- A censer of aslin, [maslin]
- A pair of cruets of pewter,
- A cope of white damask,
- A vestment of green satin Abridges, and an alb of the same
- A vestment of blue silk with gold, and an alb,
- A vestment of white fustian with an alb,
- A vestment of red silk with a blue cross bordered with gold,
- A vestment of white fustian with a black cross of velvet,
- Three corpus cases of silk,
- Two altar clothes,
- One pax of glass,
- Four ringing bells, with a bell which the clock goes on,
- Two sacring bells,
- A little chapel used for burials called St Giles chapel, with three small bells in it.  

That was a lot for this parish to have confiscated. The 1552 Book of Common Prayer prohibited the use of copes and vestments that had been permitted in 1549.

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50 “Shrewsbury Church Goods.” pp. 400-1.
for the celebration of communion. The allowance of vestments in 1549 was a concession on the part of the reformers, but with no compulsion to discard these items, the parishes in Shrewsbury still had copes and vestments in 1552. The items described as ‘vestment’ in the documents would include stole and chasuble. The detailed description of the vestments was to distinguish them from each other, but if they were all to be taken away, what did it matter? Why not just say a vestment of green, a vestment of blue etc.? The parish valued these items and the type of material indicated cost. Vestments are a valuable commodity and expensive to replace. The detailed list may betray an expectation that the goods would be returned, or that appropriate compensation was expected.

From the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries, the English textile industry was very strong, including exports to Europe. Shrewsbury was one of the centres for the cloth trade. This meant that the town had access to the materials to make the vestments locally as well as access to complete imported vestments. Woollen textiles accounted for most of those produced and used however, ‘massive expenditures to purchase precious textiles were incurred for royal or ecclesiastical investitures, and for the matrimonial and funerary requirements of medieval society’s elite.’ Special purposes and occasions called for the use of valued fabrics. Holy Cross parish had a vestment of green satin Abridges, a product of the town of Bruges, “satín of Bridges”, ‘originally had a silk warp and a linen weft, and was therefore relatively inexpensive’ when compared to other satins

54 Ibid. p. 214.
Fustian was a napped fabric, a mixture of linen and cotton or wool. Fustian was originally produced in Naples and later in the Netherlands. An attempt was made to produce fustian in England, but ‘Norwich fustians enjoyed only limited commercial success,’ so the fabric used to make the vestments was most likely imported from Europe.

Various factors added value to textiles. The closer to the finished product and the more people who had worked on an item by the time it was purchased, the higher the cost and purchase price. This is particularly true for coloured vestments. Quality colour was complicated and costly:

. . . natural dyes were limited by seasonal availability, strength, and consistency, and did not, for instance, include a direct, bright green - this color had to be achieved by top-dyeing yellow over blue. The original textile substrate also had to be available in as pure a state of whiteness as possible.

We are not told the shade of green of the vestment at Holy Cross parish, but as the fabric was of a high quality, the dyeing probably was as well. The materials used in the making of vestments demonstrates how expensive to buy and valuable to own these items were. A parish with many vestments in a range of colours had made a major investment.

What can we discover about worship in Holy Cross parish church from this list of vestments? Although the colours of the vestments are given, there is no indication here of which colours were worn during a particular season. A Lichfield Sequence

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57 OED.
59 Ibid. p. 50.
60 Koslin and Snyder, eds., *Encountering Medieval Textiles*. p. 234.
62 The nature and properties of less expensive green dyeing will be explored in the next chapter.
from the thirteenth century makes no mention of green or blue vestments. After indicating when white, red and varied coloured vestments are to be worn, it states that ‘All these things must be modified according to the means of the church,’ as an acknowledgement that a full set of coloured vestment may not be affordable for all parishes. 63 Therefore, while Holy Cross parish may have followed the sequence, there was space for local variation. The parish had vestments of green, blue, white and red, a wealthy parish for the county. To have all these taken away would remove much of the colour from the sanctuary, particularly as the altar cloths were taken too, although Holy Cross parish did not list decorated frontals as other parishes did.

The inventory recorded other items that decorated the church. A wooden cross was covered with latten plate and gilt. While latten today refers to an alloy the colour of brass and made from thin sheets, historically it referred to any metal made in thin sheets, especially tin plate. 64 As the plate was initially described as silver, the colour of the metal probably resembled silver. The plate and the gilt was the reason the cross appeared on the inventory for there is no mention in the Shropshire inventories of items made only of wood. The size of the cross is unknown as is its location in the church. It could have been a processional cross, an altar cross or a wall decoration, to list just three possibilities.

The remaining items in the inventory give an indication of actions performed in the church at some time in its history. The censer made of a type of brass suggests that incense was used. The chalice indicates that wine was blessed and the pair of

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64 OED.
cruets was most likely used for pouring water and wine. The pyx and corpus cases show that bread was blessed and reserved. The two sacring bells would have been used as a signal within the church to indicate the approaching consecration of the host. The fact that the parish possessed all this equipment does not mean the vicar Sir William Hordley did not follow the 1549 service, only that the church kept these goods.

Illustration 1.2: Examples of Medieval censer and pyxes of the types that may have been found in Shrewsbury parishes. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Of the items in Holy Cross church listed and discussed above, all that was permitted to remain in the parish in 1553 was the 12 oz. chalice and paten, five bells and the three bells in St Giles chapel.65 This sudden and large deprivation is very much in line with the view of the impact of reform outlined by Eamon Duffy.

Duffy describes the richness of Catholic worship in England before the Reformation and then describes the removal of images, altars and roods and the mass confiscation of church goods with the more tangible examples coming from

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the county of Essex.\textsuperscript{66} There is an important point made that many parishes sold their goods to pay for the work required by the demands of the Reformation.\textsuperscript{67} In the records examined, he found many examples of sales of church plate in the late 1540s, ‘as parishes shed particularly valuable second or third chalices, crosses, pyxes, paxes, and monstrances’.\textsuperscript{68} Such goods could have been sold within the parish, removing them from the building but not separating them from the community. Duffy also explores the possibility that parishes concealed goods from the commissioners, ‘provided they submitted a reasonably complete-looking inventory and the wardens could keep their nerve before the commissioners.’\textsuperscript{69} Whether sold, hidden or confiscated, the impression that the churches during the time of Catholic worship were richly decorated and then stripped during the Henrician and Edwardine reforms is a powerful one and seems to fit with the experiences of the parishioners of Shrewsbury. However, as will be demonstrated later, once we move out of the town of Shrewsbury the parishes of Shropshire look very different.

The parish of St Julian in the town of Shrewsbury recorded the following goods in their 1552 Inventory:

One cope of cloth of gold,
One chalice silver gilt weighing 10 oz.,
Three bells of one accord,
One velvet cope of silk,
Two copes of tawny silk,
Cope of red silk with lines of gold,

\textsuperscript{66} Duffy, \textit{The Stripping of the Altars}.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid. p. 484.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid. p. 484.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid. p. 491. The relevance of this to the Shropshire context will be explained in the discussion of rural parishes.
Green cope of silk,
Cope of blue and red silk,
Vestment of velvet silk,
Vestment of red silk with lines of gold,
Vestment of red velvet,
Vestment of ray silk,
Vestment of silk blue and red,
Vestment of green silk,
One pair of organs,
Three altar cloths,
Four altar cloths painted,
One towel,
A cross copper and gilt,
A pyx copper and gilt,
Three corpus cases.  

The cloth of gold cope was definitely on the commissioners’ list of items to be removed. On 29 May 1553, they declared:

70 “Shrewsbury Church Goods.” pp. 401-2.
Apart from the cope of cloth of gold, most of the vestments at St Julian were silk. Silk cannot be cultivated in England’s climate so ‘full-size silk fabrics were imported at considerable expense. . . Some raw fibre was also brought in from the Mediterranean.’72 The vestments themselves may have been made in England or imported complete. The silk vestments would have cost more than those made from locally produced woollens, but it appears that the parish of St Julian preferred and could afford the vestments made of silk. Who brought such items into the country? Did individual clergy, churchwardens or another private person have to import these fabrics? Perhaps the religious orders organised for the material to come to England and then arranged for the manufacture of complete articles.

The four painted altar cloths were probably frontals in the colours to match the sets of vestments. We are not told what design was painted on them or what colour they were. Was this lack of detail because the clerk and parishioners knew they would not be permitted to keep the frontals? As St Julian was the only parish in the town to list painted altar cloths, the detail is not required to distinguish them from the goods of other parishes. These frontals would have added colour to the sanctuary of St Julian when they were in use. Along with the coloured vestments it would have been a visually striking scene and all the more noticeable once they were removed as parishioners remembered what was missing.

The chalice, pyx and corpus cases show that wine and bread was blessed and that
the bread would be kept as the blessed host. The inventory does not describe what
the corpus cases were made of. There was a range of materials used so why is the
detail not given? It may be an indication of the relative value placed on these
items by the people of St Julian. The corpus cases were smaller items than
vestments, although apparently made of similar materials, silk for example. The
finished fabric and work that went into making church vestments made them
costly and a precious commodity. The colours and types of textile affected their
value and were important when making a list of the church goods.

On 23 May 1553, the parish of St Julian was permitted to keep one chalice with
paten weighing 12 oz. and three bells.\textsuperscript{73} Why was there a difference in the weight
of the chalice from that recorded in the inventory? Either the clerk, wardens and
parishioners got the weight of the chalice wrong, or they were permitted to keep a
chalice that was not the one originally from the parish. Given that chalices were
sometimes bought by estates in memory of family, what would be the affect on
the parish of the removal of such an item? The details of where plate and
vestments came from and who had paid for them were not given in the inventory.
Such information would be of little or no interest to the commissioners, but was
probably part of the corporate memory of the parish. Being granted a different
chalice and having all vestments taken away not only reduced the material wealth
of the parish, but removed mnemonics of the generations that had gone before.

\textsuperscript{73} “Shrewsbury Church Goods.” pp. 404-5.
With masses and prayers for the dead prohibited, the dead were becoming less and less a part of the devotional lives of the living.\textsuperscript{74}

What property did the neighbouring parish of St Alkmund present to the commissioners?

One chalice with paten parcel gilt,  
4 bells of one accord \textit{and one saunce bell},  
A cross of brass,  
A pyx of copper,  
A censer of brass,  
Two candlesticks of brass,  
Three corpus cases,  
One pair of organs,  
One cope of cloth of gold,  
A cope and a vestment of purple velvet \textit{and gold together},  
One cope of blue velvet,  
\textit{One cope of tawny velvet},  
Two copes white coloured silk and gold,  
Four copes broken to make a carpet to the lord’s table,  
One vestment with two tunicles of blue velvet,  
One vestment with two tunicles of tawney velvet,  
One vestment with two tunicles of white silk,  
One vestment with two tunicles raised with velvet,  
\textit{viii. vestments of sundry colours},  
2 alter clothes and 2 towels.\textsuperscript{75}

There are two aspects of this inventory that are of particular interest: first, the erasures and second, the carpet to the Lord’s Table. The erasures cannot be a sign that the parish was trying to hide goods from the commissioners. If it was for the

\textsuperscript{74} Duffy, \textit{The Stripping of the Altars}. p. 482.  
\textsuperscript{75} “Shrewsbury Church Goods.” p. 399.
The clergy, churchwardens and other honest men were present to provide witness to the veracity of the account and be interrogated by the commissioners. The four vestments of sundry colours may have been questioned, ‘Are you sure there are four?’ This apparent uncertainty suggests a list made from memory rather than by counting every piece of vestment in the church. The tawny cope was written down, then erased, perhaps because it could not be found when it came time to present the goods or someone had forgotten that it was no longer in the church. It may have been one of the ‘iiij coopes broken to make a carpett to the lorde’s table’.

The entry about the copes which were broken to make the carpet tells us two things. Material was reused in St Alkmund parish and the term Lord’s Table appears in the parish record. The colour of these copes is not known, but we know that the textiles once used as copes were put to a different purpose within the church. Was the reference to the Lord’s Table an indication of the parish’s acceptance of the reformed notion of communion at the table replacing sacrifice at
the altar? Later in the inventory there were two altar cloths, not table cloths; an illustration of the problem of vocabulary during the early decades of the English Reformation. The use of different terms to describe the same items could be a sign of religious affiliation, or a sign of confusion. Altars became tables by physically removing the altar and installing a table instead. The cloth that had been on the altar may have been used on the table, but it was still called an altar cloth because that is what it had been and what it remained in the minds of those writing the inventory as a means of identifying the object. The cloth may not have been used since the altar was removed and that was why the name did not change. However, the presence of a table demonstrates conformity with the reformers’ demands in this parish.

The longest and most detailed inventory of Shrewsbury churches came from St Chad parish. In addition to giving the colour and material of the vestments and other church goods, the inventory also says when some of these vestments and items were used. A suite of silk vestments was ‘for sondays’. One of the green copes was ‘callyd the Sonday cope’ and one of the white vestments was specifically for Lent. There were two violet copes called chantry copes and a suite of vestments called the nones vestments and three towels of silk for Corpus Christi day.76

The colour of the silk vestments for Sundays is not given, but perhaps they matched the green Sunday cope as was the case other parishes which tended to have vestments that matched the copes. The use of white vestments at Lent is not in keeping with the Lichfield sequence which says, ‘in Advent and Lent and

76 Ibid. pp. 403-4.
offices of the dead they must use black silk copes’. St Chad parish had black vestments, but they, like St Mary parish, specify white vestments for Lent. The Chantry copes were presumably used in the chantry and may have been bought with the bequests of those souls prayed for there. How does this image of the parish with all the necessary vestments and linens for Roman Catholic Mass and an extravagant celebration of Corpus Christi sit with the image of the parish that had two “pictures” burned in the corn market? The parishioners do not appear to be hiding any goods from the commissioners and may have been glad to hand over these popish items. There is no extant indenture for the parish, so it is speculation to say that St Chad parish was left with its six bells and the lighter (13¾oz.) of their two chalices, but this would be consistent with what happened in the other Shrewsbury parishes which saw all textiles and paraphernalia removed from the church.

Did the commissioners take all these goods away in August 1552 and then return the chalices in May 1553? From a public worship perspective, it does not make sense to deprive a parish of its chalice and hence prevent the performance of Holy Communion over Christmas and Easter. The reformers were not opposed to Holy Communion. The language of the Inventories used by the clerk, wardens and honest men of the parish who ‘presented and delivered’ the items has the implication that the commissioners saw the goods at some point. It does not mean they deprived the parish of the items in the interim. As was discussed earlier, steeple bells did not have to be physically brought to the commissioners, so

77 “Shropshire Church Goods.” p. 344.
78 “Shrewsbury Church Goods.” pp. 403, 402.
perhaps the smaller goods were also left in the churches until the commissioners decided which goods were to remain.

The documents connected with inventories taken in other counties state explicitly that church goods were taken away. ‘The Inventory of Church Goods and Ornaments taken in Staffordshire’ has the parish of Bloxwich saying at the end of their inventory that a certain Richard Forsett, surveyor, ‘had the reste of the ornaments belongynge to the sayd chappell,’ and a number of parishes make similar statements.79 Richard Forsett was identified in these records as an earlier surveyor who took inventory of goods in the county of Staffordshire and further information about his actions will be discussed in the next chapter. The inventories for Shrewsbury say that the goods were presented to the commissioners on 24 and 26 August 1552, they do not state that those goods were taken away. As mentioned above, the indenture made 23 May 1553 between the commissioners and St Julian parish says that the commissioners, John Griffiths the curate, churchwardens and other parishioners witnessed that the goods remained in the church and that the curate, wardens and parishioners were to keep the goods unsold and unembezzled.80 It is not explicit whether these goods were returned to the church, but they were permitted to remain and any items not listed in the indenture were not to be present in the church after May 1553.

The churchwardens’ accounts for the parish of St Mary show evidence that the parishioners may have some sense that action like the confiscation of church

79 F. J. Wrottesley, "The Inventory of Church Goods and Ornaments Taken in Staffordshire in 6 E. VI (1552)," Collections for a history of Staffordshire VI New Series (1903). pp. 165-190.
goods may take place. In 1551, the year after the altar was removed, the following note appeared:

In the hands of John boltrey the best coppe of clothe of gold
In the hands of Ed byston clark achallic of sylr’ & gylt

These were valuable church items of vestment and plate. Why were they handed over to parishioners? These items were not sold they were handed into the care of these men. The motivation for the removal of these items from the church may have been to protect them from royal confiscation or because the parish did not wish to use these items anymore. However, if it was the latter, then the items would probably have been sold to help pay for activities such as removing the altar or the cost of having the inventory of church goods made or the purchase of Erasmus’ paraphrases.

These entries suggest that the parish wanted to conceal these items. In the 1552 Inventory the parish listed the following items before all the vestments in the parish:

one cope of clothe of gold,
a chalice parcel gilt with paten weighing xij ounces,
another chalice parcel gilt with a paten, in the hands of sir Edward Ryscou,
a cross of copper and gilt,
a box covered with red velvet, with a little cup in it.
2 brass candle sticks.

The parish of St Mary handed over a cope of cloth of gold to the commissioners. Was it the same cope handed to John Boltrey? Was the other chalice the one handed to Edward Byston (aka ?Ryscou) two years earlier? The twelve ounce

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81 Shrewsbury – St Mary CWA. SA P257/B/3/1. 12v.
82 "payd for a padfrase peraferas of erasmus – xij s . . . payd for the makynge of a ymytory of the churche gods (goods) – vj d". Shrewsbury – St Mary CWA. SA P257/B/3/1. 14v.
chalice was returned to the parish in 1553, but as the other chalice was already in private hands (even if it was the priest) before the inventory and confiscation, it may already have been absent from regular worship in the parish church. Given the expense, would the parish have owned more than one cope of cloth of gold? It is not specified if the cope was being held by an individual member of the parish or being held with the other vestments. It appears that the parish did not give a cope and chalice to individuals to conceal them from authorities; they presented all goods to the commissioners, fully cooperating with the royal commissioners.

The widespread action of the commissioners came toward the end of Edward VI’s reign, but at the time it was happening, it was only a beginning. Edward VI died in June 1553, a few months after the confiscation of church goods. The Edwardine reformers did not get the time to finish educating the people of Shrewsbury, or the rest of England, about the reformed religion. With Edward VI’s death and Mary’s accession to the throne, official religious policy returned in large measure to how it was at the end of Henry VIII’s reign. On 1 October 1553, Mary I was crowned queen. She renounced the title ‘Supreme Head of the English Church’ on 5 December that same year. In 1554, the churchwardens of St Mary Shrewsbury spent 2s., ‘for wyne at the taverne when Quene Marie was proclaymed.’ How did the new monarch and the change of religious policy affect the people of Shrewsbury?

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85 Shrewsbury – St Mary CWA. SA P257/B/3/1. 19r.
‘This xxvijth daye of August the serveys began in Latten at Poules churche in London after the use of Sarum’. 86 The chronicler of Shrewsbury was aware of the changes in London. In April 1554, an order came from the Pope that married clergy be deprived and Bishop Sampson of Coventry and Lichfield was actively involved in carrying out this policy. 87 It was noted in the year 1546-7 that priests were ‘grauntyd to marry in England,’ and in 1551-2 their children were made legitimate. 88 In the first year of Mary’s reign:

and the daye aforesayd (4 September) on Edward Stephen beinge curate of St. Chadds church in Shrosbery beinge marieed and all other maryed preists of the dyoses were forbydden to selebrate any more uppon they’re perrells by the ordynarye. 89

The next year, the chronicler reported that all statutes concerning religion and the administration of sacraments made during Edward’s reign were reversed, ‘and masse and Latten serveys and all the olde relygyon was wholly restored agayne’. 90

It is difficult to know what happened with the soundscape and material culture during the years of Mary’s reign.

As the bells had remained in the churches, if the parish wanted to ring them for masses they could do so immediately. The use of clock bells in the town would have continued regardless of the changes to the liturgical used of bells. The collective memory would recall bells being rung to announce the elevation of the host. Most of the clergy in the town were the same men, trained in the performance of Catholic liturgies. All the bells were the same bells. The

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86 Leighton, "Early Chronicles of Shrewsbury." p. 263.
87 O'Day, The Longman Companion to the Tudor Age. p. 19; DNB.
89 Ibid. p. 263.
90 Ibid. p. 263.
Edwardine reforms did not leave any physical impediment to the use of bells in Catholic-style worship.

The return to the use of vestments was more problematic than the resumption of bell ringing in Catholic Masses. Linens were to have been given to the poor and this may have included various items of vestments.\(^91\) If they were given away, they may have been put to other uses and not be able to be returned. If the vestments were confiscated outright they would need to be replaced and if the items were sold, then there was the possibility they could be bought back. However, as discussed above, fabric and vestments were expensive. The Shrewsbury parishes may have been wealthy enough to commit their resources to the refurbishment of their churches. If the textiles were bought from the commissioners by local people, they may have simply returned the vestments to the parish. There were no countywide inventories made during the reign of Mary. We have to wait until the accession of Elizabeth before we can gain insight into what may have happened between the death of Edward and the death of Mary.

‘The xxij daye of November hyr grace [Queen Elizabeth] was p’claymyd in this towne of Salop.’ (1558-9) \(^92\) In May 1558-9, ‘Parlyme’t reioornyd and the serveys apoyntyd in Englishe agayne throughowt all Engla’d the olde byshopps depryvyd and other placyd, howses or relygyon suppressyd sutche as were & Imags burnydy.\(^93\) Thus the religious policy of the new monarch was recorded in Shrewsbury.

\(^92\) Leighton, "Early Chronicles of Shrewsbury.” p. 265.
\(^93\) Ibid. p. 265.
How does the soundscape and material culture of the Elizabethan reforms compare with that of the Edwardine? The next reference to the bells in the Shrewsbury Chronicle is in 1558-9. Some time after May, the chronicler recorded that John Hallywell, a bailiff of Shrewsbury and a resident of the parish of St Julian, ‘ordaynyd . . . that the bell in the sayde churche shuld ringe ev’y morninge at iiiij of the clocke,’ and again at six in the morning, noon, and six at night.94 These times could correspond to hours of devotion, or it demonstrates that the bailiff was able to get the church to perform a secular function of time keeping. As St Julian parish did not list a clock bell in their 1552 inventory, this would appear to be a new function for the bells of the parish.

In the parish of St Alkmund, the use of bells to keep time had a long tradition. A note from 1458-9 records payment to the keeper of the clock.95 In 1536, the Corporation ordered, ‘payment of 40d. half-yearly to the clerk of St. Alkmund for ringing the watch bell at 4 a.m., to give notice to the night-watchmen that their duties were at an end,’ and in 1554 the bailiffs paid 11s. 8d. ‘for tolling the morning bell.’96 Did the task of ringing the morning bell for the nightwatchmen shift from the parish of St Alkmund to St Julian in 1558? The use of church bells to keep time is a continuity in the town of Shrewsbury, although not for individual parishes.

With the reign of Elizabeth I religious policy changed again. As Edward VI before her, Elizabeth sought to limit bell ringing for the dead to reduce the opportunities

94 Ibid. p. 265.
96 Ibid. p. 31.
for belief that souls could somehow be helped after death. One short peal at the time of burial was to suffice at the funeral services because it was not to be believed that the bells drove away the devils that might attack the recently departed soul. References to bell ringing in official documents suggest a tendency for parishes to continue to ring bells more than the one peal that was prescribed. This suggests a persistence in the old ideas that were associated with the ringing of bells for the dead. Article 23 of Bishop Bentham’s instructions to the clergy of his diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in 1565 outlined that clergy were not to ring bells for the dead except for the knoll of a bell at the hour of death for half an hour and one short peal a little before burial. The bell ringing after death was not for the soul of the deceased, rather as a means of informing those in the parish that one of their fellows had died.

The churchwardens’ accounts for Holy Cross parish survive intermittently from 1565. From these records, patterns of bell ringing, Holy Communion and church repairs in the parish during the early years of Elizabeth I’s reign can be charted. We begin with bell ringing. In 1565, money was paid for ringers for Easter and Whitsuntide. In 1568, liquor was provided for ‘the bells agaynst Whitsontide’ and Allhallowtide, and money was also bestowed on the ringers for Whitsuntide. These were not the only times the bells were rung. These were times of peculiar bell ringing for special occasions. The accounts for 1569 record

97 Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, p. 422.
100 Shrewsbury - Holy Cross CWA. SA P250/C/1/1.
102 Ibid. p. 58.
payment to the ringers, ‘for ye Q. M’ties reynge’. 103 This would have been the 17 November in commemoration of Queen Elizabeth’s Accession. 104 The item in 1569 is the first explicit mention in the accounts of this reason for ringing the bells, but this use of bells was by no means new. This is also the first year that the parish of St Mary in Shrewsbury has the entry, ‘payd spent one the Ryngres the xvij day of november In the honer of ouer quy’e – iiij s ix d’. 105 This is not a discontinuity within the soundscape brought about by the Reformation, rather a continuity for the people of Shrewsbury. The bells which were being used for religious purposes were occasionally used in the service of the state: to mark the death, birth and accession of a monarch, for example. Using the bells for the celebration of the Queen’s reign linked the church and the state. It reminded people, either consciously or unconsciously, that churches were a part of the state authority because the monarch was the head of the church. The reason for the apparent delay between Queen Elizabeth taking the throne in 1558 and the parishes paying to have the bells rung to celebrate the anniversary of the event is unclear, but it still demonstrates the use of church bells to celebrate royal events.

The bells of the Abbey church of Holy Cross were given particular mention in the Chronicle for 1569-70:

This yeare uppon Easter daye at eveninge serveis in the abbey of Shrewsbury were ij men kylled w th the clapper of the thridd bell fallinge owt of the steeple and chancyd to fall upon those ij meen beinge w th other ringinge at the greate bell 106

103 Ibid. p. 58.
104 Cressy, Bonfires and Bells. p. 50.
105 Shrewsbury - St Mary CWA. SA P257/B/3/1. 46r.
There is a corresponding item in the parish churchwarden accounts: ‘Itm per y\textsuperscript{e} newe clapper of y\textsuperscript{e} thirde bell – xvj s’.\textsuperscript{107} The Holy Cross accounts also list all monies received before listing amounts paid. There is an item, ‘rec’ for y\textsuperscript{e} old clapper – iiij s’.\textsuperscript{108} There is no mention of the circumstances that require the replacement of the old clapper and the purchase of a new. This highlights that all repair work to church buildings have further stories of parish life behind them.

While the event was misfortune for Hayward and Bradley, this record in the chronicle tells us that an Easter service was held in the evening in Holy Cross parish and that the bells were rung for the occasion, extra detail not found in the parish accounts.

What other aspects of worship can be found in the churchwardens’ accounts? The various purchases of bread and wine offer an insight into the celebration of Holy Communion in the parish. In 1565, Holy Cross parish bought bread and wine for Easter, Christmas and All Saints.\textsuperscript{109} In 1568 it cost 4d. to buy wine for communion on Christmas day.\textsuperscript{110} The accounts refer to both communion bread and singing bread. As singing bread was consecrated wafers, communion bread was probably actual baked bread.\textsuperscript{111} The type of bread to be used during Holy Communion was a matter of controversy during the early years of Elizabeth’s reign. The 1559 \textit{Book of Common Prayer} specified that, ‘it shall suffice that the Bread be such as is usuall to be eaten at the Table, with other meates, but the best

\textsuperscript{107} Shrewsbury - Holy Cross CWA. SA P250/C/1/1. 27r.  
\textsuperscript{108} Shrewsbury – Holy Cross CWA. SA P250/C/1/1. 26r.  
\textsuperscript{109} Leighton, ”Abbey Estate.” pp. 57-8.  
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid. p. 58.  
\textsuperscript{111} Wright, \textit{Ludlow CWA}. p. 5 n.4. The \textit{Account for Pray Priory}, contains the entry “Paid for howseling brede, syngyn brede, and wyne, v d.” for the year 1487. It has been suggested that the ‘singing-bread’ was the large wafer used by the priest and ‘howseling-bread’ was used for the communion of the people. William John Thomas, ed., \textit{Notes and Queries: A Medium of Inter-Communication for Literary Men. Artists, Antiquarians, Genealogists, Etc.} (London: George Bell, 1852). p. 389.
and purest Wheat bread, that conveniently may be gotten." In the 1559 Royal Injunctions, the following instruction was given about the use of bread in communion:

. . . that the same sacramental bread be made and formed plain, without any figure thereupon, of the same fineness and fashions, round, though somewhat bigger in compass and thickness, as the usual bread and wafer heretofore named singing cakes, which served for the use of the private mass.

This discrepancy between the Prayer Book and the Royal Injunction was a source of confusion for bishops, clergy and communicants. Other parishes in England that specifically ordered “singing bread” during the 1560s included Great St Mary in Cambridge, St Martin in Oxford, Betrysden in Kent and St Ewen in Bristol. Whether the parish of Holy Cross used normal baked bread or unleavened wafers, communion was received in both kinds, bread and wine, during the 1560s-70s at Christmas, Easter and sometimes All Saint’s day. All communicants were directed to receive communion at least three times a year, of which Easter was to be such a time. The parish of Holy Cross appears to have chosen these feast days to make communion available to the whole parish.

What of the other parishes of Shrewsbury during the early years of Elizabeth I’s reign? There are no further published churchwardens’ accounts and they do not appear explicitly in the early chronicles. A document dated 20 December 1571 gives information about various church goods, supposedly held by private persons from some of these parishes. The list was either composed by or sent to a Mr.

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115 Ibid. p. 395.

Fanshewe and after addressing the issue of lead pipes from church lands, it lists various men of Shrewsbury and what items of church plate and vestments they held. The parishes mentioned in this document are St Chad, St Alkmund and St Mary. Although there are 18-19 years between them, it is worth comparing the information in the 1571 list with the information gathered from the documents of 1552-53, starting with St Chad.

Thomas Burnell, described as a bailiff of Shrewsbury is said to have forty-eight ‘peces of Coapes vestiments perteyning to St Chaddes’. 117 The list of church goods made in 1552 lists individual copes and suites of vestments, so the exact number of pieces is not known, but the following is known: sixteen copes, three individual vestments and seven suites of vestments were held by the parish of St Chad, so it is possible that the parish had forty-eight pieces that could have come into Burnell’s possession by 1571. 118 He may have purchased the goods legitimately. The return to a policy of religious reform would have reminded people of the actions taken by Edward, and while the Elizabethan reforms were not as protestant in character, the parishes may have sold goods in anticipation.

Thomas Stirry (Sturrey), heir of Thomas Sturrey, gentleman, deceased, ‘standyth chargeable with a Chalice belonging to the County Parishe in St Chaddes in Shrowsburye, delivered to his said father by Edward Betton, gent., and Richard Lanchashere.’ 119 Thomas Sturrey was one of the parishioners of St Chad at the time of the 1552 commission and the chalices mentioned in the inventory are, ‘one chalys, weyng xxxij. onces and iij. quarters,’ and ‘another chalys, weyng

118 Ibid. pp. 403-4.
xiiij. onces and iij. quarters.” There is no mention of a chalice from elsewhere being in the church’s possession, but it may have been borrowed or given in the intervening years.

William Alowe and Richard Powell were said to have detained obligations of £140, ‘made of the Ornaments and Jewells of the Churche of St. Chaddes’. Also, Robert Ireland the elder and Roger Luter ‘detayne the Inventorye of the churche goodes of St. Chaddes.’ A Thomas Ireland was one of the signatories to the inventory and Roger Luter was a bailiff of the town. Was the inventory named the actual 1552 inventory or a subsequent list taken during the reign of Mary? The commissioners did not compensate the parishes for goods taken. The items could be sold by the commissioners with the proceeds going to the crown. Were these monies in the hands of men in the town a case of money embezzled or the result of confusion during a time of change?

Richard Thornes was listed as having one silver parcel gilt chalice with cover, 13 oz. and seven pieces of copes and vestments belonging to St Mary parish as well as obligations of £100 from the jewels of that parish. The chalice recorded in the 1552 inventory and 1553 indenture weighed twelve ounces, and the weight of the second chalice in the inventory is not specified, though it is also described as parcel gilt. It is not clear from the document whether these are accusations or just statements of fact. These could be signs that the ideals of the reformation had

120 Ibid. p. 404.
121 Ibid. p. 407.
122 Ibid. p. 407.
123 Ibid. pp. 403-4.
not been wholly accepted by the people of Shrewsbury and that, for some at least, commercial interests were stronger than religious zeal.

The last entries concerning religion found in the Shrewsbury chronicle for the timeframe chosen, suggest that there was a lack of dedication to the reformation of religion as envisaged by Elizabeth I.

This yeare the mynysters in the churches of Shrewsberye against X’ras dyd all were theire crosse capps and whyte syrplesys w\textsuperscript{ch} longe tyme befor dyd leave them of contrarie to the queenes iniunct’ons. (1573-4)\textsuperscript{126}

Did this mean all ministers in the town? Which churches in Shrewsbury? Why this delay in conformity? It would appear that after the initial Elizabethan activity around reintroducing the reformed religion after Mary’s reign, follow up of adherence was less rigorous. It is not known if this incident went anywhere beyond the chronicler’s observation, perhaps no one beyond Shrewsbury knew as there is no entry about reprimand. Some time before Easter 1574, parishioners from Holy Cross parish were called to Lichfield to appear about a book.\textsuperscript{127} There are regular entries listing expenses incurred at visitations, but none that mention cross caps specifically.

Some time after the 1575 anniversary of the Queen’s accession, the parish of Holy Cross paid to have the rood loft removed and levelled.\textsuperscript{128} Rood screens are a favoured topic of Reformation historians because they were a target of Protestant reformers. They are not specifically mentioned in the injunctions, but they were mentioned in laws and royal orders and therefore they can be used as an indicator when determining the impact of central government decisions throughout the

\textsuperscript{126} Leighton, "Early Chronicles of Shrewsbury." p. 273.
\textsuperscript{127} Shrewsbury - Holy Cross CWA. SA P250/C/1/1. fol. 30v.
\textsuperscript{128} Shrewsbury - Holy Cross CWA. SA P250/C/1/1. fol. 31r.
parishes. It was most likely, given that the parish had submitted its goods to the commissioners in 1552 that any directions concerning the roods were also observed. There are distinctions made between the rood screens and the rood lofts to which they were attached. During Mary’s reign, there were cases in Suffolk where parishioners sued former churchwardens for ‘over-zealous attention to the Edwardian reordering of the church, including the destruction of the rood loft’ and orders were then issued by the Lord Lieutenant ‘to make uppe agayne the same roodeloftes’ at the personal expense of those who pulled them down. The work on the loft in Holy Cross could be the final phase of the removal of the rood after waiting to be sure that such work, which cost 6s. 7d., was necessary under this religious regime. Was there a particular prompt for this action? There was no change in clergy that we are aware of and the churchwardens’ accounts for that year are grouped in one set of accounts for the years 1574-77 and there is no entry that gives an overt reason explaining why the rood loft would be removed at that time.

The impact of the English Reformation was definitely felt by the people of Shrewsbury. The material culture of the church was dramatically altered with the removal of many vestments from use and from the buildings. The soundscape of religion changed as services were held in English, then Latin, then English again. Bell ringing for the dead went from hours to one half hour at death and one short peal at the time of burial. The church bells were rung to keep time and summon people to services, no longer used together with prayers for the dead, to ward off storms, or to announce the consecration of the host. Whatever the religious beliefs

of those who worshipped in the town, the impact of the reformation was experienced by all.

The story of Shrewsbury fits well, albeit in varied ways, with the portrayal of the impact of Reform detailed by Eamon Duffy and, indeed, Christopher Haigh. The experience of the town of Shrewsbury equates well enough with the experience of towns in East Anglia or even York. Once we move outside the town, however, we soon discover that the *rape of merry England* was very differently felt and understood in the poorer West Country.
Chapter Two: North Shropshire Outside the Town

How did the rural congregations of northern Shropshire experience religion and the changes in religious policy? What form did the Reformation take outside of the Town of Shrewsbury? The geographical scope of this chapter will include the Franchise (Greater Liberty) of Shrewsbury and the Hundreds of Condover, Bradford, Purslow, Brimstree and Oswestry. The impact of the Reformation must be measured against what existed before. The rural parishes of Shropshire do not fit the model of rich Catholicism that existed in the south-east of England as described by Duffy and others. As is detailed below, traditional Roman Catholic worship in rural Shropshire was not as lavish as in other parts of England, or even in the relatively wealthy Shrewsbury. Despite this, the English Reformers attempted to change the religious beliefs of parishioners by changing the environment in which they worshipped: altars were replaced with tables and popish vestments were prohibited. Change of mind and heart was to be brought about by changing what people heard and saw inside and outside their local churches.

Evidence of the Edwardine Reformers’ preoccupation with prayers for the dead is found in an investigation into the use of parish resources for obits, lights or lamps. The survey performed in 1548-9 identified which parishes used funds from lands and rents to pay for ongoing maintenance of the objects and rituals connected with active remembrance and prayers for the dead of the parish. The only North Shropshire parish that funded both an obit and lights was Market

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131 ‘Parishioners who had been used to highly decorated churches and liturgical drama were expected to worship in a more austere and cerebral way.’ Rosman, *The Evolution of English Churches 1500-2000*, p. 38.

Drayton which used the 15s. 6d. from rents for ‘certen lyghtis to be maynteyned & for obbyttis to be kepte ther’.\textsuperscript{133}

Table 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Annual Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albrighton</td>
<td>lights</td>
<td>4d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condover</td>
<td>obit</td>
<td>8s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellesmere</td>
<td>lights</td>
<td>2s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kynnersley</td>
<td>lights</td>
<td>8s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Drayton</td>
<td>obit &amp; lights</td>
<td>15s. 6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitchford</td>
<td>lights</td>
<td>16d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodington</td>
<td>lights</td>
<td>16 (d.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruyton-xi-Towns</td>
<td>lamp</td>
<td>6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryton</td>
<td>lights</td>
<td>6s. 8d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifnal</td>
<td>Thomas Howle’s service</td>
<td>£6 (for a priest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smethcott</td>
<td>lights</td>
<td>4d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(West) Felton</td>
<td>lights</td>
<td>6d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrewsbury St Julian</td>
<td>obit</td>
<td>3s. 4d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most expensive component of these remembrances was a priest, if the parish decided one was required. Most of the amounts raised in rent were used on the objects, such as the material and labour for the making of candles. The main asset within these parishes was land. Agricultural communities also controlled livestock and would used the funds raised from produce or hire to fund worship within the parish.\textsuperscript{135} The value of the stock was not an annual income, but the total value of the cattle owned or the money held. These funds were used to pay for parish priests, not just extra services.

Table 2.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Stock value and source</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baschurch</td>
<td>£15 cattle</td>
<td>Stipendiary Priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berrington</td>
<td>£8 14s. 8d. cattle</td>
<td>Parish Priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condover</td>
<td>£10 cattle</td>
<td>Stipendiary Priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellesmere</td>
<td>£4 6s. 8d. cattle</td>
<td>Priest for Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Ercall</td>
<td>22s. cattle</td>
<td>Trinity Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hodnet</td>
<td>32s. cattle</td>
<td>Parish Priest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid. p. 374.
\textsuperscript{134} Compiled from Ibid. pp. 374-379.
\textsuperscript{135} Cheswardine CWA. SA P58/B/1/1/1. Entries in each year for amounts received from hire of cows.
\textsuperscript{136} Compiled from Thompson ed., "Certificates of the Shropshire Chantries." pp. 379-382.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ryton</td>
<td>73s. 4d.</td>
<td>Stipendiary Priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wem</td>
<td>£14 10s.</td>
<td>Our Lady Priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wem</td>
<td>£15 cattle</td>
<td>Edstasdon Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitchurch</td>
<td>70s. cattle</td>
<td>Whixall Chapel Priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrewsbury St Chad</td>
<td>£6 18s. money</td>
<td>Weaver’s Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After making inquiries into the resources used for these services, the Reformers began to examine all worship and all objects connected with religious life. The documents connected with the 1552-53 national action to inventory and confiscate church goods provide snapshots both of which goods remained in the churches after the reforms of the 1530s and which goods were taken in a short space of time between August 1552 and May 1553. Also connected with church goods in the county is the Certificate of the Justices of the Peace. This document was presented to the King and the Privy Council as, ‘an abstrack or abredgement of all such plate and belles wthi (sic) eu’y church and chappell wthin the com’ of Salop’. Although the dating of this source is problematic, it is used to supplement the information found in the inventories and indentures.

We have seen that the Reformation in the town of Shrewsbury took a good deal of power in church matters from clergy and gave it to laity. This certainly reflected what was also the case at the top of the institutions of the church and secular governance, but what do we see at the rural parish level? The organisation of populations by parish puts the church in a prominent position, so who were the leading men in a given community? Was it the priests or the prominent laymen of the area? Bishops get entries in the Dictionary of National Biography, but

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137 "Shropshire Church Goods." p. 325.
138 For a useful study of the clergy in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield before the Reformation, see Tim Cooper, The Last Generation of English Catholic Clergy: Parish Priests in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield in the Early Sixteenth Century (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999). 'The area chosen was the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield which, despite being
unless an historian takes a particular interest or the cleric does something rebellious or extraordinary, the voices of rural parish priests are rarely heard in the narrative of Reformation history.¹³⁹

How then do we learn about the clergy of North Shropshire? Even when the only source for a parish is the 1553 Indenture, the name of the cleric is given. A list of the clergy in Shropshire in the 1550s, with their status as vicar, rector, parson or curate, could easily be made, but unless we study their wills or find other documents that mention them, we can learn nothing more about these men who were the spiritual leaders during a time of political and religious change. We do not know, for example, if they were supporters of Edwardine reforms or celebrated the Mass joyfully when Mary succeeded the throne.¹⁴⁰ The same uncertainty surrounds the laymen of the parish.

The Reformation in England relied on the cooperation of lay people. While the priest was the leader of religious life in the parish, he was only one man within the community. The official visitors went travelling and asked the questions of clergy and laymen alike acknowledging the interconnected nature of parish life. As the ones to whom the priests were to minister, laymen were involved in the mechanism that monitored the behaviour of clergy. In this way, clergy were accountable to their parishioners. The men of the visitation would ask parishioners if they knew of priests behaving badly just as priests were asked if they knew of immoral behaviour of other clergy or parishioners. Even if we cannot discern the

¹³⁹ One striking exception being Sir Christopher Trychay, vicar at Morebath, Devon. Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath.*
¹⁴⁰ There will a discussion of church personnel in Chapter Three.
religious allegiance of the clergy and laymen, the impact of the Reformation on
the residents of Shropshire can be examined. One of the most widespread
coordinated actions of the Reformation was the 1552-1553 catalogue and
confiscation of church goods. The material aspects of this nationwide action in
North Shropshire will be explored more fully later; here the focus is on what this
action reveals about the place of people in the process.

The 1552 Commission referred to in chapter one, was instigated by the king and
carried out in each county (not diocese) by trusted and prominent laymen. Each
parish made a list of goods present in their church. The list was presented by the
eric of the parish, the churchwardens and other honest men. No one man could
take responsibility and most of the witnesses were laymen. During the 1552-53
Commissions, these men of Shropshire became involved in national events,
sharing the experience with other parishioners all over England.

No parish from Shropshire was exempt from the Reformation. Parishes that were
not personally visited by the commissioners still had to make a presentation of
their inventory. Although inventories do not survive for all parishes, they were all
collected and grouped together by Hundred and checked by the commissioners.141
In this way, all parishes were aware of the actions connected with the Reformation
and had their physical experience of religion affected. As a social unit, the parish
was very much a part of English life: ‘The parish was one of the basic units of

141 ‘Hundred’ was an Anglo-Saxon land division which was later used for taxation purposes and
definition of legal jurisdiction. Joseph R. Strayer, ed., *The Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, vol. 6
public worship and was the shared responsibility of the laity and the clergy.\footnote{142} The parish connected the community and provided a shared identity. As elsewhere, so in Shropshire, the parish was used to identify place of residence in wills and other legal documents.

In addition to its social place, the church had an audible and physical presence.

But I tell you, if the holy bells would serve against the devil, or that he might be put away through their sound, no doubt we would soon banish him out of all England. For I think if all the bells in England should be rung together at a certain hour, I think there would be no place, but some bells might be heard there.\footnote{143}

If bells were the loudest noisemakers of the sixteenth century, this was especially so in a rural context. The concentration of parishes in the town meant that none could escape the ringing, but once outside the city walls was there any place that a church bell could not be heard? How far was Latimer’s comment rhetorical exaggeration? Without the modern day background of road-noise or aircraft overhead, a peal would ring through valleys and over fields as a distinct sound. In a rural context, ‘the acoustic horizon within which these sounds were made and heard was even wider and deeper than in the city.’\footnote{144} There could still be overlap between the audible reach of parishes, but not as concentrated as in the city. Bells were powerful signals and communicators. Except for one small bell, various churches in Devon were ordered to remove their bells, ‘since it was by the bells the people had been called to rebellion. In practice, this meant the removal of the clappers and the committal of the bells to the notional custody of selected ‘honest
men’ of the parish. This would appear to have only happened in the parishes involved rather than a widespread action against the whole region. As communicators, in the eyes of Protestants Reformers, the bells could be dangerous messengers. Therefore they had to be controlled.

The patterns of bell ringing were changed during the Reformation and, as seen in the town of Shrewsbury, bell ringing could never be a secret religious devotion. The bell ringing during the Catholic Mass involved people in the liturgy when they were not physically in the church. The bed-ridden believers or the non-attending parishioners became part of the worship, whether they wanted to or not.

The physical church buildings were part of the parish and community. The church was often the only public building in an area, a place where farmers and villagers would come together.

The church itself became the physical reminder of a shared past, present and future. The community’s priorities and history literally became inscribed in the building’s shape, furnishings, and decoration.

Shropshire churches were heavily renovated during the Victorian period, but the histories of some of these structures remain accessible. Which parishes had old buildings and which were relatively new builds during the Reformation? One example of a parish which most likely would have experienced physical changes to its worship space regardless of the Reformation is Lilleshall.

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Illustration 2.1: Plan of Lilleshall Church.\textsuperscript{147}

The parish of Lilleshall on the eastern border of the deanery, Bradford Hundred, had a church on the site from the twelfth century.\textsuperscript{148} Building of the north aisle took place in the early fourteenth century. The short Perpendicular tower and the chancel were built during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries bringing the total length of the church to approximately 37 metres, the layout being what Sir Stephen Glynne described as ‘long church.’\textsuperscript{149} The font is still the late-Norman font with a circular bowl. The church building was being renovated before and during the Reformation. The physical worshipping environment was already changing independently of the Reformation. A parish already engaged in maintaining and updating the fabric of its church may have had to change its plans to suit the religious reforms. For example, the rood may have been completely

\textsuperscript{147} \textit{VCH Shropshire} XI. www.british-history.ac.uk [6\textsuperscript{th} December 2006]

\textsuperscript{148} \textit{VCH Shropshire} XI. www.british-history.ac.uk [6\textsuperscript{th} December 2006]

removed instead of relocated within the building. If the space was already changing, what affect would further modifications have?

A number of churches in Shropshire during the sixteenth century were on the sites of Norman churches, and were continually being renovated. The church as a physical reminder of the community history is a powerful notion. The church building would contain the names and remains of family and friends who had died, as would the churchyard. The church was where people were baptised and married. Even when the exterior of the church building was altered by extensions, the site was the same. The place of shared experience was ever present, even when the changes were made to the internal space.

In the church interior, the material culture of the church was also an integral part of religious life. The windows and images surrounding worshippers would influence them. The saints chosen to be depicted in glass, stone, wood or paint may have aided devotion and provided direction for prayer. The images of saints would define the way people remembered the geography of their church. Although outside the area of study, an example is found in southern Shropshire. In the Ludlow churchwardens’ accounts, the spaces left by the old chapels and areas near windows within the church were identified by the saints’ names well into Elizabeth’s reign, after their images had been removed.150 Similarly, in the town of Shrewsbury, the Our Lady chapel of St Chad retains its name, even after the images were removed and burned.

150 Wright, *Ludlow CWA.*
An important part of changing people’s minds is to change their environment of worship. Just as the changes in patterns of bell ringing were meant to change the way people thought about the souls of the dead and the nature of protection against evil, the removal of images and objects by the reformers was intended to save the people from superstition. Worship of idols was sinful, therefore the idol must be removed. The physical separation had an effect more tangible than the words of sermons or decrees. Words were a key part of the Reformation. Doctrine was being challenged and the word of God in a vernacular Bible was paramount, but the question arises as to which has the greatest impact on a person in the initial stages or times of ongoing change: a new doctrine read by the priest, or the construction of the pulpit from which the doctrine will be preached? Being told that prayers to Mary for intercession are worse than useless was one blow to people’s belief and practice, but the lack of an image of Mary to pray to emphasises and enforces the point. ‘Reformers of both persuasions were faced with the difficulty of translating intellectual formulations into the language of parish practice,’151 and the ‘language’ of objects was the means of communicating ideas to congregations: removal or installation of items spoke of ideological changes. The Edwardine reforms impacted parishioners’ physical religious experience and the visual parts of worship were also altered.

In the sanctuary, the vestments worn by the clergy were integral to parishioners’ experience of worship. Beyond the town of Shrewsbury, parishes record fewer goods, especially the number of vestments. It is usually the case that the shorter inventories are also the less detailed lists. They fail to note colour, fabric,

additional decoration, and so on. There are various reasons why the men of rural parishes were not as comprehensive in their description of the items present in their church. As the smaller parishes had fewer items there was less detail required to distinguish one object from another. Omission of the type of textile from which a vestment was made may also reflect a lack of knowledge or lack of concern. Ultimately, the detail of the inventory would depend on the discretion and knowledge of the men who compiled it. Through these documents we have access to a snapshot of the material culture of Shropshire’s churches during Edward VI’s reign.

Table 2.3
Vestments of Shrewsbury Town 1552

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Presenters: Clerk, Churchwardens, Parishioners</th>
<th>Vestments (summary)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holy Cross</td>
<td>William Hordley, vicar, Hunfrey Butler, Thomas Lye, Richard Hatton, John Prynce, Thomas Ofeley, Thomas Fraunce</td>
<td>1 cope white damask; vestment of green satin abrides with alb; vestment of blue silk ‘brothered’ with gold; with alb; vestment of white fustian with alb; vestment of red silk with a blue cross ‘brothered’ with gold; vestment of white fustian with a black cross of velvet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Alkmund</td>
<td>George Crane, clerk, Robert Helyn, Richard Jukes, Edward Sherer, Humfrey Arosmyght, Robert Hobbys, Thomas Adderton</td>
<td>one cope of clothe of gold; a cope and a vestment of purple velvet and gold together; one cope of blue velvet and one cope of tawny velvet; 2 copes white silk and gold; 4 copes broken to make a carpet to the lord’s table; vestment with 2 tunicles of blue velvet; vestment with 2 tunicles of tawney velvet; vestment with 2 tunicles of white silk; vestment with 2 tunicles with velvet; 4 vestments of sundry colours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Chad</td>
<td>Edward Stevens, curate, Thomas Hosyar, Rychard Clerke, Roger Allen, Morgan [__], Humfrey Onyslow, Thomas Sturry, Nycolas [Purcell] and Edward Hosyar, Esquires. (other signatories) Thomas Yrland, Richard Germyn, John Mukeworth, Rychard Evared</td>
<td>1 cope of cloth of gold; a cope; cope of old red velvet; 2 violet copes called chantry copes; 2 green copes; a red cope; 2 green copes, one called the Sunday cope; 4 white copes; cope of dornix; green cope; suit of vestments with cope of red raised velvet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St Julian</td>
<td>St Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>suit of vestments of red velvet with cope.</td>
<td>a suit of vestments of blue velvet satin sarenet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>suit of vestments of blue velvet with cope.</td>
<td>a suit of vestments of black worsted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>suit of vestments of silk for Sundays</td>
<td>a suit of vestments of white fustian for lent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 suits of vestments of white with gold</td>
<td>8 suits of copes and vestments of diverse sorts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>suit of black vestments.</td>
<td>2 pair of vestments, with albs and all thereto belonging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>white vestment for lent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>suit of green vestments, lacking the subdeacons.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>single vestment of black worsted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vestment of violet worsted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>suit of vestments called the none vestments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>one cope of cloth of gold,</td>
<td>a suit of vestments of blue velvet satin sarenet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>one velvet cope of silk,</td>
<td>a suit of vestments of black worsted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>two chantry copes of tawny silk,</td>
<td>a suit of vestments of white fustian for lent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a cope of red silk with lines of gold,</td>
<td>8 suits of copes and vestments of diverse sorts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a green cope of silk,</td>
<td>2 pair of vestments, with albs and all thereto belonging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a cope of blue and red silk,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a vestment of velvet silk,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a vestment of red silk with lines of gold,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a vestment of red velvet,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a vestment of ray silk,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a vestment of silk blue and red,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a vestment of green silk,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most notable difference between the list above of church goods in Shrewsbury town and those in the rest of North Shropshire is the range of colour and the number of vestments. Compare, for example, the parish of Battlefield, which listed only two vestments and made no mention of colour. This was very different from the parishes located within the city walls. For example, the parish of St Alkmund had many copes and vestments coloured blue, purple, white and one made of cloth of gold. Battlefield church only one hour walk from Shrewsbury town and surrounded by fields, was altogether different. The total lack of colour in the description is unusual for the area. Why did the curate Edward Shorde and the wardens Richard Tysdall and William Owen not record the colour of the two vestments?


The preamble of the presentment to the commissioners contains the details of the recent history of the Battlefield College.

A present mad by ye Curatt of ye batellfelde . . . of all syche goods as ys belogyn to ye same p’ysche aff’ ye s’vay of ye late desolvyd College of ye Batellfelde. Further more ye Inve’tory made by ye Mastf and hys brethern of y’e late desolvyd college of ye Batellfelde to ye Kyng’s maies syrveyers of all such goodds & Juells as was belong’g to ye foresayde late suppressed College aff ther s’vey they toke ye Inve’tory w’ ye goods awey w’ the’ & chargyd me Edward Shorde clerke and curat there put in by y’ Kyng’s maies s’veyars chargyd w’ theses goods ther me’conyd that they sholde be forthe comy’g at all tymys whe’ they sholde be req’ryd154

Illustration 2.2: Battlefield Church, Shropshire.

The college of St Mary Magdalene was established ‘to provide intercession for the souls of those slain in the battle of Shrewsbury (1403), on the site on which the church was built.’155 Praying for the souls of the dead was unacceptable to the Edwardine reformers and made the college a target. The master of the college at the time of its dissolution was John Hussey. Although the college was probably dissolved early in 1548, the master and five chaplains were still in residence in

155 VCH Shropshire II, p. 128.
November. The college church replaced Albright Hussey chapel as the parish church. Edward Shorde was retained as curate with a stipend of £5 a year.156

From the time the college was dissolved and it became a parish church, Shorde may have realised that the goods would be required one day and probably expected most of the goods would be taken away. This meant that the colour of the vestments was immaterial for the purpose of the inventory. This is not to suggest that all the parishes recording the colour of the vestments expected them to be returned. The degree of detail varies from parish to parish and was the results of a number of factors. The details of the inventories in North Shropshire parishes help recreate the scene of worship there.

Copes were listed separately from sets of vestments as were (apparelled?) amices. Albs were occasionally mentioned, usually in connection with a set of vestments. These albs may have been appareled with decorations to the hem and sleeves and thus matching each vestment set. Albs are not mentioned in all inventories which raises the question, what did the priest wear for services? Why are albs not listed in all the parishes? The most likely reason is that the priest of the parish owned his own alb which meant that it was not part of the church property to be included in the inventory. Some parishes may have included albs, particularly if appareled, in the description ‘vestment’ and not considered it necessary to list them separately. All the seventeen extant inventories from the parishes in the Salop archdeaconry outside the town of Shrewsbury listed vestments. Even though the record is torn, we know that the parish of Acton Burnell had at least two vestments, one of ‘blow

156 VCH Shropshire II, pp. 130-1.
Rossell a nother of Red’ in a fabric beginning with ‘s’.\textsuperscript{157} The 1552 \textit{Book of Common Prayer} prohibited the use of copes and vestments for the celebration of communion that had been permitted in 1549,\textsuperscript{158} and as in the town, the parishes in Shropshire still possessed copes and vestments at the time of the commission.

After the wealth of vestments in the town, what would a visitor to the other parishes of Shropshire before 1552 find?

Table 2.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Presenters: Clerk, Churchwardens, Parishioners</th>
<th>Vestments (summary)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Battlefield</td>
<td>Edward Shorde, clerk, Richard Tysdall, William Owyn</td>
<td>2 vestments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broughton</td>
<td>John Howell, curate, John Prydey, Robert Weston Thomas Pitchforde, James Hancokes</td>
<td>1 old cope red 1 black vestment 1 red vestment 1 alb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grinshill (All Saints)</td>
<td>Thomas Newyns, clerk</td>
<td>1 green cope 4 old vestments – 1 green 1 red 1 dornix 1 ‘cru dyst’ work 2 albs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadnall [Myddle] (St Mary Magdalene)</td>
<td>Hugh Reynolds, curate, John Tailer Richard Tylar and Umfrey Paynt’n</td>
<td>1 vestment of tawny chamlett, with 1 alb and all thereto belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston Gubbals (St Martin)</td>
<td>John Sommerfield, curate, John Haynes, William Symmons William Lopynton, John Haywards</td>
<td>1 cope 4 vestments – 2 green, 1 white fustian, 1 chamlet 2 albs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How does this compare with rural parishes elsewhere in England? In Morebath, a parish in Devon, linens and vestments were given in secret to various parishioners. From Duffy’s account of the movement of these items in 1549, it would appear that the parish possessed the following vestments: an old surplice (divided), black vestments, red vestments with a matching altar cloth of satin, blue Lenten vestments, cope of blue satin, more blue vestments (the best), and white

\textsuperscript{157} “Shropshire Church Goods.” p. 100.
\textsuperscript{158} Duffy, \textit{The Stripping of the Altars}. p. 492.
vestments. The concealing of goods was suspected by the commissioners and the vicar and parishioners were required to visit Exeter to answer questions.

The parish of Morebath finally surrendered two copes (blue satin and red velvet), and two tunicles. Although the other vestments were not surrendered to the commissioners, they were no longer in the church. Their loss was felt because they were hidden and no longer being used. Was this also the case in Shropshire? Is concealment by the parish the reason for fewer vestments in the rural parishes than in the town? Morebath parish hid their vestments in 1549, and the vicar Christopher Trychay made notes. No such document survives for the Shropshire parishes. While it may have happened in isolated parishes, plots to prevent vestments being confiscated cannot be presumed for all Salop.

Illustration 2.3: View of Moreton Corbet Castle from church yard, Shropshire.

Concealment would have been particularly difficult in the parish of Moreton Corbet. The castle of Moreton Corbet belonged to Sir Andrew Mitton, one of

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159 Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath*, p. 126.
160 Ibid. p. 145.
161 Ibid. p. 145, 149.
King Edward VI’s commissioners. He built the great hall during the sixteenth century, suggesting that he was present in the castle at least from time to time. The parish church is adjacent to the castle. Perhaps Sir Andrew extended hospitality to the other commissioners when they were investigating that part of the county. Whilst not suggesting that it would have been impossible for parishioners to conceal items from the commissioner simply because he lived next door, proximity would certainly make it difficult. Given that it was his parish and he would have had relationships with the people who worshipped there, it is most likely that the parish would have cooperated with the commissioners to preserve the relationship with their local notable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Presenters: Clerk, Churchwardens, Parishioners</th>
<th>Vestments (summary)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Acton Burnell (St Mary) | Harry Baxter curate Thomas Lee, Hugh Hosburne Thomas Buckenell, Raufe Hancocks, William Monslow | 1 vestment blue ‘rossell’
1 red. (torn inventory) |
| Acton Pigot | Harry Baxter, cleric William Farmer, David Counde | 1 vestment red
1 vestment ‘Rossett’ |
| Cound (St Peter) | Richard Boyden, curate Harry Crompton, John Benet Fowke Crompton and Thomas Wood | 2 copes: 1 silk various colours, 1 crewe
3 vestments: 1 red silk, 1 crewe, 1 white ‘tycke’ |
| Cressage (Christ Church) | Robert Turvyn, curate, John Chenchar, Richard Synar M Bartley, Thomas Mapas | 1 cope green ‘tecke’
3 vestments: 1 silk, 2 ‘tecke’
2 albs
1 amice |
| Frodesley (St Mark) | George Longmer, parson, Lawrence Sherer, Thomas Dodd Homfrye Burnell, Rafe Madocks | 2 pair of vestments: 1 cruel white and red, 1 of white fustian |
| Harley (St Mary) | Edmund Bachelor, curate, William Smith Humfrey Deakyn, Thomas Carter, John Taylor | cope of white satin of Bruges
2 pair of vestment for holy days: 1 pair damask and 1 pair chamlett
2 pair of old vestments for work days |
The different coloured vestments had various levels of monetary value. Although, a bright green could be expensive, Richard Hakluyt commented in 1582 that, ‘yellowes and greens are colours of small prices in this realme by reason that Olde[weld] and Greenweed where with they died be naturall here, and in great plenty.’

The final colour of the cheaper method was a duller green than the result of the more expensive method of overdying. The descriptions of the vestment colours are simply red, blue or green. Even with this amount of detail we cannot recreate the exact array of colours involved in religious worship.

Illustration 2.4: Sample of colours. Although not fragments of church vestments, these are examples of fabrics used in such garments.

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The richer colours were more expensive. Brazilwood used to make reds and purples had problems with holding fast in light and had to be used with care.  

Black could be made through ‘repeated dyeing with woad and then ‘saddening’ the colour . . . a costly process.’ There were cheaper blacks made with tannin based dyes, but the quality was poorer, the results not holding as fast as the more complex method. The colour of cope or vestment found in more parishes than any other was red, then white, green and blue with a few possessing black. Although no Inventory survives for the parish of Worfield, there is record of black cope and vestment in the churchwardens’ accounts for 1535. There appear to be a number of undyed vestments with only the type of fabric listed in the inventories. There is also mention of ‘another vestment of say of changeable colour’ and a silk cope of ‘divers colours.’

Black vestments were certainly among the more costly. In Morebath, July 1547, after it had been running for twenty years, a fund established to raise money for the purchase of black vestments was spent for the purpose, a total in excess of £6. Sir Christopher collected the vestments from Sir Thomas Schorcum the maker, a vicar in Dunster. The suit consisted of ‘chasuble, fanon, stole and cope of black ‘fustian knapis’ to be used for funerals and the Palm Sunday dirge for benefactors.

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163 Ibid. p. 334.
164 Ibid. p. 335.
166 "Shropshire Church Goods." pp. 100, 98.
167 Duffy, The Voices of Morebath.p. 115.
168 Ibid. p. 116.
Say (woven wool) with braid and fringing lined in linen.

Coverlet of dornix (woven cloth of linen, wool and gold thread).

Quilt of saracenet (silk)

Illustration 2.5: Sample of fabric types. These were used in wealthy domestic settings and are examples of fabrics found in the Shropshire parishes in 1552. Display at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

What can we learn from the detail of the fabric from which vestments were made?

*Dornick* described any of the fabrics originally manufactured in Doornik [Tournai] especially ‘a silk or wool fabric formerly used for hangings, carpets, vestments etc.’ Other common fabrics in the archdeaconry include say and worsted. Say was ‘a cloth of fine texture resembling serge originally containing silk, now usually of wool.’ It has been likened to worsted ‘woollen fabric made from closely twisted yarn’ which in England mostly came from Norwich. While the rural parishes of Shropshire do have silk vestments, most of them have

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169 There are examples of such fabrics in the churches being converted to domestic uses when the vestments were prohibited. Gerald A. J. Hodgett, *Tudor Lincolnshire*, vol. VI (Lincoln: History of Lincolnshire Committee, 1975), p. 171.
171 OED.
vestments made of the less expensive woollens and blended fabrics. While these may have cost less than satin, silk or velvet, any vestments were still costly items and probably precious to the parishes that used them.

There are other details in the inventories that are of interest. The parish of Grinshill describes its vestments as ‘iiij olde vestments’: one green satin, one red silk, one dornick and ‘on[e] cru dyst werke’.173 Could this have meant that they were no longer in use? Or was it to indicate to the commissioners that they had been in the parish a long time and were valued? Perhaps it described their condition. Someone chose the word ‘old’ for a reason which has now been lost. The parish of Harley included another interesting detail. Without any mention of colour, the curate, warden and three other men of the church listed two vestments for holy days (damask and chamlett) and two pair of old vestments for work days.174 This is an indication of when the specific vestments were used in parish life. The number of holy days that were allowed to be celebrated was reduced by the reformers, so the number of times the vestments were worn was also reduced before they were prohibited completely.

With some parishes only recording one vestment, in the case of Leebotwood, ‘a vestment of saten brygs the colour ys blewe,’ it would appear that seasonal colours were not universally worn in Shropshire and that there was no one colour of vestment considered essential or necessary.175 It is unlikely that parishes omitted vestments from the inventory for fear of losing them. If it was unusual for a parish to have only two or three vestments, then the commissioners would have

175 Ibid. p. 99.
made further inquiries. This was especially so for the parishes in Shrewsbury Franchise which were also inspected by the town bailiffs. As noted in an article by Barbara Coulton, while most of the rural parts of the west midlands and the borders of Wales were conservative in matters of religion, Shrewsbury was home to a number of strong Protestants, particularly in the prominent families.\footnote{176 Barbara Coulton, "The Establishment of Protestantism in a Provincial Town: A Study of Shrewsbury in the Sixteenth Century," \textit{Sixteenth Century Journal} 27, no. 2 (1996). pp. 308, 309, 311-12.} The thirteenth century Lichfield Sequence accepted that a full set of vestments may not be affordable. The commissioners being men of Shropshire were most likely aware of the relative wealth of parishes throughout the county and the cost of vestments. In 1545, the parish of Worfield paid 3s. 4d. to a vestment maker and 6d. in 1549 to William Border for making a ‘lordes coat’ and a surplice.\footnote{177 Walters, "Worfield CWA IV." p. 232; H. B. Walters, "The Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of Worfield - Part V., 1549-1572," \textit{TSAS} IX 3rd series (1909). p. 115.}

Some of the parishes listed other church linens in their inventories. Pitchford presented three altar cloths with no mention of colour so it is unclear whether they were frontals or table cloths. The parish also presented ‘ij or iij towells’.\footnote{178 “Shropshire Church Goods.” p. 98.} The lack of precision in this item is curious given the great detail of the rest of the inventory. This is further evidence that the inventories were not made while the men stood in the church looking at all the parish possessed. Two or three towels sounds like an entry made from memory, as discussed in the previous chapter. The inventories were presented in front of the commissioners away from the parish church. How reliable are these inventories? The burden of proof lay with the churchwardens and other honest men of the parish and the reliability of the inventories would depend on the relationship between the laity and clergy in each
parish, what religious attitudes they held, and how vigorously the commissioners examined each parish.

Two other parishes recorded towels in the inventory, two each. Three parishes listed tablecloths, in the case of Leebotwood, one tablecloth of housewife making.\textsuperscript{179} They are not listed in addition to altar cloths so the use of the word table could indicate acceptance of altars becoming tables. However, there could be other tables in the church in need of cloths and the parishioners thought the cloths valuable enough to be listed in the inventory. The removal of popish vestments and decoration by the reformers is understandable in an effort to demystify the communion, but why confiscate towels and table cloths? It could have been thought these materials would be better used in service to the poor rather than used in the ceremony of Holy Communion.

The fate of the vestments and linens is unclear. They are not listed in the indentures so they were not permitted to remain in the church. The certificate of the commissioners stated that they were directed:

\begin{quote}
. . . as by owre dyscrecyon shuld' seme most expedyent to distrybute and geyve frely to the pore people in eu'y p'yshe whear the said Churches & Chappelles stand & be The Resydue of the Ornament’ & Implement’ beyng lynnen of the sayd Churches & Chappell’ in such Order & forme as maye be most to the glorie of god and the kyng’ mas\textsuperscript{180} honor . . .
\end{quote}

It would appear that any linen not deemed necessary for the proper administration of the Holy Communion, anything other than surplices, was to be given away to the poor. It is not clear whether ‘linen’ included all vestments, or was limited to altar cloths. Pitchford was the only parish to mention surplices in the inventory
\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{179} Ibid. p. 99.
\item \textsuperscript{180} Ibid. pp. 339-340.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
and there is no mention of the ‘ij olde serpelesses’ in the later indenture.\footnote{181} And given the absence of vestments of any sort in the indentures, it would appear that they were all confiscated. Some of these costly items were included with the sale of plate and jewels.\footnote{182}

Christopher Haigh identified ‘vestments, a cope, a chalice, an altarcloth, bells and a handbell’ as the minimum requirements for a pre-Reformation service. He excluded other essential items such as pyxes and candlesticks from his analysis as their small value saw them omitted from lists.\footnote{183} A number of Shropshire parishes listed such items, obviously of value to them. Battlefield, Frodesley and Smethcott each listed two candlesticks without specifying the material of which they were made. Presumably they were made of metal or at least covered with plate to rate mention in the inventory of jewel and plate.\footnote{184} In 1531, Sir Christopher of Morebath bought, ‘two pair of timber candlesticks: one pair before the high altar and the other pair upon St Sidwell’s altar, 20d.’\footnote{185} These were not surrendered to the commissioners in 1553, most likely because they were made of wood, although the parish had a history of hiding items. Some parishes in Shropshire had crosses made of brass, lead or wood covered in metal.\footnote{186} Other items found in North Shropshire include a lead holy water stock in each of the parishes of Berrington, Broughton and Harley.\footnote{187} Hugh Latimer described belief in the power of holy water as ‘phantasies and delusions of the devil’ so these stocks made of

\footnote{181}{Ibid. pp. 98, 319.}
\footnote{182}{Ibid. p. 341.}
\footnote{183}{Haigh, \textit{Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire}, p. 21.}
\footnote{184}{“Shropshire Church Goods.” pp. 108, 101, 100.}
\footnote{185}{Duffy, \textit{The Voices of Morebath}, pp. 79-80.}
\footnote{186}{“Shropshire Church Goods.” pp. 98, 99, 101, 106.}
\footnote{187}{Ibid. pp. 101, 107.}
valuable lead were definitely going to be confiscated by the commissioners.\textsuperscript{188} Broughton had a pax of glass and Grinshill had a censer of copper.\textsuperscript{189} Cound had a corpus case although the material is not specified so it could be plate or fabric.\textsuperscript{190} All these items of plate, and the vestments for that matter, had a value to the parishes that listed them in the inventories, monetary and emotional. These items may have been left to the church by former parishioners or families in memory of the deceased.

The parish with the most items outside the town of Shrewsbury was the parish of Pitchford in Condover Hundred.\textsuperscript{191} Pitchford church is described by Glynne as a small church with only one chancel and nave.\textsuperscript{192} Pevsner describes a number of monuments inside the church including four alabaster couples of Pitchford families with the dates 1529, 1534, 1578, and 1587.\textsuperscript{193} After bells, vestments and linen the parish listed:

\begin{quote}
. . . a pex of cop’, & a crose off ode cou’yd w詹姆 plate, & a sensar off brase, & a cruett off ponce, & a paxe off ode the fare syde of glase, & ij olde serplesses.\textsuperscript{194}
\end{quote}

This is comparable to the goods at St Alkmund’s in Shrewsbury which before 1552 still had a large number of vestments, the means to have incense and the pyx. This is in contrast to Battlefield which had already had goods confiscated earlier. In 1548, Battlefield parish did not have the equipment to conduct a Roman Catholic mass, even though it was still in place before the publication of the 1549 Book of Common Prayer. The parish had experienced a preview of the reforms to

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{188} Corrie, ed., \textit{Sermons by Hugh Latimer}. p. 498.
\textsuperscript{189} “Shropshire Church Goods.” pp. 107, 106.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid. p. 99.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid. p. 98.
\textsuperscript{192} Cox, ed., \textit{Sir Stephen Glynne’s Church Notes for Shropshire}. p. 11.
\textsuperscript{193} Pevsner, \textit{Shropshire}. p. 277.
\textsuperscript{194} “Shropshire Church Goods.” p. 98.
\end{flushright}
come that Pitchford had not. The pax of glass is one of only two instances of that (expensive) material in the inventories for North Shropshire.

The most important aspect of the goods of Pitchford parish is the lack of a chalice. The chalice was an essential component of any celebration of Holy Communion. What happened in Pitchford? There is evidence that at their ordination, priests in Coventry and Lichfield diocese were invested with chasuble, paten and chalice.\textsuperscript{195} If this was the case, then the parson at the time, Roger Otley, may have had his own chalice and used that in the parish. In his study of Lancashire, Haigh found that by 1548, a small number of parishes had sold their chalices and other plate to help pay for upkeep of the church buildings.\textsuperscript{196} Many items of church goods were sold in Morebath as the parish finances dwindled in 1548. Before September of that year, the one remaining warden sold:

\begin{quote}
... the Lent cloth, the painted hangings the Easter Sepulchre, the frontals for the high altar and St Sidwell’s altar, the painted cloth which veiled the High Cross in Holy Week, some of the church’s streamers and banners, the basins in which tapers had burned before the high cross, and a quantity of brass candlesticks.\textsuperscript{197}
\end{quote}

All these items were made redundant by the Edwardine reforms. The parish of Pitchford, for similar reasons, may have sold their chalice prior to the commission, but without access to churchwardens’ accounts we cannot be certain if there was a chalice that the parish then sold, lost or had stolen.

The indenture dated 6 May 1553 charged the parson of Pitchford and churchwardens with two bells and one sacring bell. One chalice of silver was

\textsuperscript{195} Cooper, \textit{The Last Generation of English Catholic Clergy}. p. 134.
\textsuperscript{196} Haigh, \textit{Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire}. p. 22.
\textsuperscript{197} Duffy, \textit{The Voices of Morebath}. p. 124.
recorded then scored through. The intention was to give the parish a chalice, that decision was reversed and the chalice was crossed off the indenture. The Justices of the Peace certificate may provide an explanation for the change of mind. According to that document, Pitchford had in its possession two bells and a chalice which they said they were borrowing. The source of the borrowed chalice is not known. It may be Roger Otley or another parish. If it was another parish we do not know which one or how long the loan was supposed to last. Presumably the parish lending the chalice had enough for its own needs and would not require the return of the chalice.

The parishes surrounding Pitchford were Acton Burnell, Cound, Berrington, Condover and Frodesley. Acton Burnell’s inventory is torn, but shows that the parish was returned one chalice of silver, as was Berrington. Cound recorded one gilt chalice and was charged with the care of one of silver. There are no extant records for Condover. Frodesley had a chalice of silver with pewter paten in the inventory with no surviving record of indenture. The Pitchford chalice may have come from one of these parishes or a non-neighbouring parish that had a link of family or friendship.

As stated above, the chalice was, and still is, an integral part of the Eucharist. The Edwardine reformers considered a chalice an essential item of parish property and it was left to the discretion of the commissioners to determine how many chalices

199 Ibid. p. 336.
were required to meet parish needs. Looking at the archdeaconry as a whole, in August 1552 most of the parishes had at least one silver or gilt chalice with a matching paten, although a few had to arrange to borrow a chalice.

Preston Gubbals of Shrewsbury Franchise inventoried two little bells, four vestments, two albs and a cope in 1552. The curate and other men were later charged with the keeping of two little bells. This means either that the commissioners did not make provisions for the communion to be celebrated in the parish of Preston Gubbals or that the chalice of another parish was being used. In his church notes, Sir Stephen Glynne, writing in 1864, describes the church of St Martin in Preston Gubbals as a small church with a single nave and an undivided chancel. Why did this small church not have a chalice? It could have been for economic reasons, indicating that the vestments were a higher priority than a parish owned chalice.

Illustration 2.6: Preston Gubbals, Shropshire. Church exterior and interior, east elevation. [19 March 2007]

202 Ibid. p. 108.
203 Ibid. p. 110.
204 Cox, ed., Sir Stephen Glynne’s Church Notes for Shropshire. p. 79.
Two parishes reported borrowing chalices: Uppington and Eyton on the Weald Moors, both in Bradford Hundred with no extant inventories. The Justices of the Peace certificate records a chalice in Uppington, but notes that it is said to be borrowed.\textsuperscript{205} For Eyton on the Weald Moors the indenture dated 4 May 1553 charges the parson John Gryse with just two bells remaining in the chapel.\textsuperscript{206} The Justices of the Peace document records only one bell and a chalice of silver with paten, ‘whiche the saye the b’rrowed of Mast’ Eyton’.\textsuperscript{207} Why did Master Eyton, a layman, have a chalice with a paten?\textsuperscript{208} Did he have his own chapel equipped for communion? Had he taken it into his possession when the inventories were being made? Did he purchase one in the sell off of church goods? The scarcity of extant churchwardens’ accounts makes finding definite answers to these questions difficult, but even if the records did survive the answer may not have been there. Eyton on the Weald Moors has never been large, recording six households in 1563.\textsuperscript{209} Its description as a chapel may indicate an uncertainty of status. The parishioners were buried at Wellington, four kilometres to the south, so perhaps the status of the parish did not warrant a chalice.\textsuperscript{210}

Lack of chalices was certainly not unique to Shropshire as there are a number of examples from other counties. The first set of examples comes from the county of Staffordshire. The parish of Stretton did not record a chalice amongst their church plate in the inventory taken 3 October 1552.\textsuperscript{211} A number of the parishes in

\textsuperscript{205} "Shropshire Church Goods." p. 332.
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid. p. 322.
\textsuperscript{207} Ibid. p. 333.
\textsuperscript{209} VCH Shropshire XI. p. 136.
\textsuperscript{210} VCH Shropshire XI. pp. 143, 136.
\textsuperscript{211} Wrottesley, "Church Goods Staffordshire." p. 174.
Staffordshire state that Richard Forsett, ‘Surveor to the King’s Majestie’ had in his possession many articles of plate.\textsuperscript{212} For example, the parish of Bloxwich recorded, ‘ij belles onely remayn there. Mem. – That Rychard Forsett Surveor had the rest of the ornaments belongynge to the sayd chappell.’\textsuperscript{213} The majority of the parishes represented in the extant inventories that are without chalices mention that Richard Forsett took them into his possession. He was in Staffordshire during the second year of Edward’s reign.\textsuperscript{214} This means that these parishes had been without a chalice for four years!

The parish of Castle Church does not list a chalice in the inventory of goods in the church but does not mention Richard Forsett. There is a memo attached that gives a list of items stolen from the church at Christmas in the fifth year of Edward’s reign: one chalice silver parcel gilt, one corpus with case, two altar clothes, two albs, a surplice and 2 towels.\textsuperscript{215} Church Eyton reported their silver gilt chalice as being stolen on the Wednesday after Michaelmas 1550.\textsuperscript{216} The churchwardens of Swynford parish reported, ‘that ij challeses were stolen out of the churche aboute bartholmowe tyde which was in the seconde yere of the Raygne of our Soveraygne Lord Kinge Edward the Syxt’ suggesting that theft of church goods was happening for years and around the time that the King’s surveyor was visiting the county.\textsuperscript{217} Several parishes in the county reported goods stolen; others explained which goods had been sold to pay for church upkeep and renovation, such as the removal of altars.

\textsuperscript{212} Ibid. p. 179.
\textsuperscript{213} Ibid. p. 180.
\textsuperscript{214} Ibid. p. 188.
\textsuperscript{215} Ibid. p. 175.
\textsuperscript{216} Ibid. p. 174.
\textsuperscript{217} Ibid. p. 190.
At least five parishes in Kent were without chalices in 1552. Of the parishes missing chalices, Deptford had theirs stolen, Dymchurch and Capel sold them, and while Crayford does not record a chalice in the inventory, there is a note that a silver cup was bought since an inventory was taken in 3 Ed VI on which they based the 1552 inventory. Some parishes in Surrey were also lacking chalices at the 1552 inventory. While a couple of the parishes do not mention chalices at all, most of the parishes lacking chalices reported them stolen, along with other items of church property. The remainder listed them amongst goods sold. Each of these claims was investigated by the commissioners, ‘and founde to be trew’. The 1552 inventories for Shropshire, as published, do not mention the theft of church property or the sale of items.

Illustration 2.7: Chalice and paten. Parcel gilt, circa 1360.

221 Ibid. p. 24.
There is a known example elsewhere in the diocese of an old chalice that was hidden. A fourteenth-century chalice and paten was excavated by a farmer, Mr Jaggard, in the late nineteenth century and restored to the parish on 1 April 1875.\textsuperscript{222} They were carefully wrapped and buried in a field adjacent to parish lands in the parish of Hamstall Ridware, Staffordshire.

The care with which the items were treated and buried seems to indicate an attempt to conceal the items which were then forgotten. There are no known examples of such things taking place in Shropshire, but there could have been many buried chalices around England that were later discovered and never returned to the parish for a variety of reasons. The chalice pictured, and whose interesting history has been described, is just one example of plate from the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, showing the type of chalice and paten used in the area before the Reformation.

What happens in a parish without a chalice? The absence from the record may not indicate a total lack in the parish. The priest might own a chalice and use that in his celebration of the Eucharist. The commissioners were interested in jewels, plate and ornaments: treenware would not be of interest to them and parishes may have used more affordable wooden chalices or cups. When a comparison is made between examples of chalices before and during the reformation and examples of sixteenth-century wooden drinking vessels such as loving cups or standing cups, there are many similarities. There would be no physical impediment to using a

\textsuperscript{222} Notice at the Lichfield Heritage Centre, Lichfield, visited 28 March 2007.
wooden standing cup as a parish chalice and unless it was covered with plate of some kind it would not come to the attention of the commissioners. 223

A chalice missing from the inventory may be the result of theft. Its ongoing absence could be an indicator of parish poverty. Perhaps the chalice was sold to pay for other church works. If, for whatever reason, a parish did not have access to a chalice, did that mean that Holy Communion was not celebrated in the parish? While that sounds highly unlikely, this investigation has demonstrated that no part of church plate or property can be taken for granted. Just as we cannot make assumptions about the colour of vestments in any given church, particularly in the rural parishes, neither can we assume that every parish had a chalice, nor that communion was celebrated in that place.

In the space of months, what little the parishes in North Shropshire had was taken away. At the end of the 1552-53 process of investigation and confiscation, most of the parishes in Salop archdeaconry were left with bells and one chalice of silver with a paten. The rest of the church plate was handed to Sir Edmund Peckham, knight, master of the jewel house. 224 The sale of copes, vestments and items confiscated by the commissioners from all of Shropshire totalled a mere £68 4s. 1/2d. In a matter about the will of a clerk residing in Shrewsbury when he died, two copes of black velvet were valued at four pounds. 225 This not only tells us the


225 Thomas Fyssher of Shrewsbury v. Lewis Smarte of Warrick. National Archives C 1/1219/49 and C 1/1219/50.
value of the vestments, but also indicates that such property could be in private hands and therefore may have been exempt from the confiscation process.

The loss of property would have been felt greatly by the congregations. In Preston Gubbals they were only left with two bells; all the vestments and the cope were taken away, with no compensation and no source of colour to replace them. What little colour the sanctuary had was thus removed. Familiar aspects of services connected with rites of passage were removed by the reformers seeking to change people's minds by changing the environment in which they worshipped, lived and died.

This exploration makes problematic the history of church goods and decoration. The sources from rural Shropshire illustrate another type of religion in England before the Reformation in contrast to the well-documented, lavishly decorated churches in Shrewsbury, the towns and cities of the south and east, or wealthier villages such as Long Melford in Suffolk or Morebath in Devon.\footnote{226 Duffy, The Stripping of the Altars. p. 489; Haigh, English Reformations. p. 1; Duffy, The Voices of Morebath. pp. 126-7.} Shropshire parishes were not disconnected from the English Reformation. If commissions and visitations did not visit the parish itself, representatives from the parish would be sent to them in larger villages or towns.\footnote{227 1547: 'Item for ryddynge to stafforde for bisynes of the paryshe,' Walters, "Worfield CWA IV." p. 235.; 1552: 'Item spend at Sallope for to answere to a melius inquarendo,\textquoteright; 1553: 'Item spent at brugnorth for leynge before the Kynges commyssoners for a melyus inquirendi about oure church goodes – vs. viijd.' Walters, "Worfield CWA V." pp. 119, 121.} Rural congregations may have taken longer to conform to changes in religious policy than their town counterparts if the lines of communication were slower. Whatever the rate of change during the Edwardine reforms, parishes did not have time to fully implement the changes that surrounded the 1552\textit{ Book of Common Prayer} before Edward died 6 July 1553
and religious policy changed when he was succeeded by his Roman Catholic sister Mary.

With the reversal of reforms announced by the new queen, did the needs of the parishes revert to pre-Reformation religious requirements? Was there a concerted move to purchase or recover vestments and church plate removed during the 1550s? The churchwardens’ accounts for the parish of Cheswardine provide evidence of some of the activity parishes may have experienced when Roman Catholic practice was permitted. The extant accounts begin in 1554. An undated entry at the start of the book gives a list of goods belonging to the church:

\[ \text{ijd p~ thomas alport & Jhon butt' have goten thees thyngs belonging to y^e church whych were owt} \]
\[ \text{In p'mis j vestement of whit sylke w^t all thyngs y to belong} \]
\[ \text{It j alb w^t a pair of elarke tawny velvet} \]
\[ \text{Alamed for a holy wat' fatt of brass - iiij s iiiij d} \]
\[ \text{It for ij ca'delstycks of bl brass - iiiij s} \]
\[ \text{[.] In unpaid p’mysed to be paid by y^e hande of thomas Grintt} \]
\[ \text{[jj]d y^t these be vestments remaynyngth in y^e church at y^w p'sent} \]
\[ \text{In p’mus vj for the hole yere & j whyt for the good fridai} \]
\[ \text{It iiij amys & albs p[urs] It j alb not pure} \]
\[ \text{It iiij Altare cloths It vi towells It ij coopes} \]
\[ \text{It j qwychyon (cushion) It iiij ca’delstycks maslen} \]
\[ \text{It j surplee (surplice) i rochet It a pair sensurs} \]
\[ \text{It kyne belongyne to y^e stocke j in y^e hands of thomas alport j in y^e hands of Ryc’ g’gory & an other in y^e hands of Ihames boyden} \]
\[ \text{It books in the churche i mass book j portehowse} \]
\[ \text{j manuell j p’se’ftronarie It j dogg’ of yron} \]

Compare this list with the Indenture dated 4 May 1553, ‘1 chalice of silver with paten, 2 small bells and sanctus bell’.

The vestments may have been recovered from hiding or returned to the parish by those who bought them. There is no

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228 Cheswardine CWA. SA P58/B/1/1/1. 1v.
extant 1552 inventory for the parish of Cheswardine, only the indenture. This list in the churchwardens’ accounts confirms that some items were taken out of the church, but that they were not all removed from the parish.

The accounts for 1554 and 1555 have a number of purchases that are evidence of a return to Catholic practice:

- Itm x for the makynge of ye Judas & the tymbre of the same & for iij quartars of fustyan...
- Itm a buckett for holy wat’ – iij d...
- Itm paid for ℃ yarde of satyn of bruge for the canapie – iij d iij s
- Itm for iij cheynes ij turrets for the sensor – viij d...
- Itm for frankynsence – j d.

The Judas was a seven branched candlestick. In this case it would appear to be made of wood. This may have been the traditional material or it was chosen so that if they did ever have to give up church plate again, the Judas would be exempt. Fustian was used in the making of church vestments and decorations. The satin is specifically itemised for the making of a canopy. The record does not say what the canopy will be used for, although everyone in the parish would know. It was most likely connected to the celebration of Corpus Christi either within the church or in procession outside the building. The parish of Morebath in Devon also spent money on textiles to make up new banners and vestments as well as a new pyx and a makeshift crucifix. The repairs to the censer in Cheswardine demonstrate that an old censer was in need of repair and the parish did not need to purchase a new one. The purchase of frankincense strongly suggests that the censer was actually used to burn incense.

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230 Cheswardine CWA. SA P58/B/1/1/1. 3r.
231 Cheswardine CWA. SA P58/B/1/1/1. 3v.
Worship in the parish of Worfield before the Reformation included incense, paschal candles, and candles at Christmas.\textsuperscript{234} The following entries in the churchwardens’ accounts for the first year of Mary’s reign reveal the small ways that the parishioners of Worfield demonstrated their obedience to royal religious policy:

\begin{quote}
Item payd for the mendynge of the cross – xij d . . . payd for ij tapers to ser(ve) the altar ayaynst(e) the fest of the natyvy(tie of our) lord \textsuperscript{235}
\end{quote}

The use of lights and candles around the sepulchre was a return to pre-Reformation practice.\textsuperscript{236} The churchwardens also resumed purchase of incense.\textsuperscript{237}

Apart from mending a surplice, there are no costs associated with vestments during Mary’s reign. Visitations continued and it would appear that Worfield parish, like Cheswardine, embraced the return to Catholicism although they did not make as many material investments.

Mary succeeded to the throne after her Protestant brother. There is a view that after early attempts to persuade the population back to the early religion through preaching were apparently ineffective, preaching was banned as part of the August 1553 Royal Proclamation.\textsuperscript{238} Although this may have been the reason, another possibility is that it was impossible to control the preaching of clergy nationwide. There was enough of a risk that despite support in various localities for the Roman Catholic tradition, Protestant ideas could still be promulgated. The queen sent a letter with Articles to the bishop of London in 1554 outlining her wishes for action in the church. Injunctions were later issued by the bishop of

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item H. B. Walters, "The Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of Worfield - Part III., 1523-1532.," TSAS VI 3rd series (1906). pp. 2, 7, 9, 15.
  \item Walters, "Worfield CWA V." p. 122.
  \item Frere and Kennedy, eds., \textit{Visitation Articles and Injunctions II} (1910). p. 322.
\end{itemize}
London and also by bishops in the dioceses of St Asaph, Gloucester, Lincoln, Hereford and Canterbury in early 1555.\textsuperscript{239} Ralph Baynes was consecrated bishop of Coventry and Lichfield 18 November by the bishops of London, Norwich and Bath and Wells.\textsuperscript{240} There are no published Injunctions for his time in the diocese, but as a Marian appointment and a man actively involved in examinations of Protestants, it is reasonable to expect that he supported Marian religious policy and the ideas of the Articles.

What aspects of the 1554 Articles would have affected the worship of congregations in North Shropshire had bishop Baynes sought to enforce them after his installation? Article five called for the suppression of heresies.\textsuperscript{241} If priests in the parishes were preaching reformation ideas, they would have been expected to change their behaviour. If preaching was prohibited altogether, then the absence of sermons would have been noticed by the congregations.

Article seven addressed the issue of clergy marriage. Mary asked that bishops:

\begin{quote}
\ldots deprive, or declared deprived \ldots all such persons from their benefices and ecclesiastical promotions, who contrary to the ate of this order, and the laudable custom of the Church, have married and used women as their wives \ldots \textsuperscript{242}
\end{quote}

We know that a married clergyman was deprived in Shrewsbury, we do not know if there were any other married clergy in the region. If there were, they would most likely have been deprived as the curate of St Chad, Edward Stephen, was by Baynes’ predecessor.\textsuperscript{243} Such parishes would be in need of a new priest. Article

\textsuperscript{239} Ibid. pp. 322-392.  
\textsuperscript{241} Frere and Kennedy, eds., \textit{Visitation Articles and Injunctions II}. p. 326.  
\textsuperscript{242} Ibid. pp. 326-7.  
\textsuperscript{243} Leighton, "Early Chronicles of Shrewsbury." p. 263.
ten instructed bishops to provide curates to service vacant parishes or direct their congregations, ‘to repair to the next parish for Divine Service’. North Shropshire parishes could cover large areas and the next parish church could be many miles away. All the 67 parishes with extant Inventories and/or Indentures had priests or curates in 1552-53, so this may not have affected the parishioners of the region unless the curate was later deprived for marriage or heresy.

Article eleven states:

...that all and all manner of processions of the Church be used, frequented and continued, after the old order of the Church in the Latin tongue. Church law as it existed at the end of Henry VIII’s reign was restored, and it would appear the liturgical requirements were also restored. A return to Latin was to be enforced after less than a decade of government decreed English services. Most congregations would remember having Latin services and probably still remembered the familiar phrases and any responses. After having said services in English, the experience of the Latin would not be the same as before. If the people had not understood Latin, they could probably work out which parts of the English service were translations of Latin, and would now be able to make the association between Pater Noster and Our Father. Any attempt to restore Roman Catholicism, within the same generation that lived through Henrician and Edwardine reforms, would be coloured by the previous protestant actions. The people living through these times would know that the political and religious situation was uncertain.

244 Frere and Kennedy, eds., Visitation Articles and Injunctions II. p. 327.
245 Ibid. p. 327.
Parishioners of Market Drayton demonstrate the uncertainty of living through the religious changes in an Indenture, ‘made the ixth daie of June in the fourth and fyte yeres of the reignes of o’ Sovaryne Lorde and Lady Philipp and Mary’.

The indenture made provision for a Catholic Mass to be said by the vicar or curate of Market Drayton with the saying of a dirge, use of tapers and ringing of bells. Towards the end of the Indenture,

... if the said dirige or divine Service Rengyne of the belles and burnynge of the tapers aforesaid maie not lawfully be done or observed duelu and truly according to the said Indenture and devyses, ...

then the money should be spent for relief of the poor in the parish. The end of Mary’s reign put an end to the official revival of Roman Catholicism in England, a possibility clearly foreseen by those in Market Drayton.

While the parishioners of Cheswardine may have shared the same uncertainty, they still embraced the return to Roman Catholic practice. Processions were again permitted and did resume in this parish. The bells were rung in Cheswardine at the procession on Corpus Christi day in the first year of Mary’s reign. Throughout the reign of Mary, members of the parish paid to have lights at the burials of their loved ones and there are regular purchases of incense. The lights were probably for the dead, to aid prayer for their soul. Money was taken for the making of the Paschal candle each year. There were also regular visitations that the churchwardens would go to and incur expenses, but there are no records of fines that had to be paid. The Marian regime continued to use the mechanisms of church governance to ensure conformity to religious policy. It is not always stated

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246 Market Drayton (Drayton Hales) Parish Records: 9th June, 4&5 Phillip and Mary, 1558. SA P97/299/10/25.
247 Ibid.
248 Cheswardine CWA. SA P58/B/1/1/1. 4r.
where the visitation took place. Two locations listed are Lichfield and Uxeter, later adding Eccleshall and ‘new castle’. If Cheswardine itself had been visited, there would be a record of the costs of hosting their guests. No such entries exist: the village of Cheswardine did not host visitations but sent representatives to answer questions.

The parish of Cheswardine spent money on vestments and other church linen. Cloths were painted, church clothes were regularly washed. In 1556 Isabell Tascar was paid 3s. 1d. for an altar cloth.\textsuperscript{249} The table was again called an altar and the parish required a new cloth. In 1557 the parish received 2d. from two pardoners for two surplices. In the same year, ‘It for aparrynye of too albes and too amesis – j d . . . It payd for the clarke surpeles – ij s vij d ob.’\textsuperscript{250} Was the 2 d. from selling two surplices or given towards the cost of new ones? One surplice cost over 2s. so the amount received would not cover the cost. If the surplices were sold, it would appear to demonstrate that these items did not retain their value. The maintenance of the church was ongoing. The bells in particular required regular work and repair. The money for this came from hire of property and livestock, mainly cows, collected annually. It is not known why the pardoners bought the surplices; Cheswardine parish probably sold them to help pay for the re-equipping of the church. In the same year, the parish paid £5 to Mr Southly ‘for the chailes & the paxe,’\textsuperscript{251} unaware that a new religious policy would be introduced the next year.

With the accession of Elizabeth in 1558, many parishioners would recall the reforms of five to six years earlier and would have been prepared in some sense

\textsuperscript{249} Cheswardine CWA. SA P58/B/1/1/1. 7r.
\textsuperscript{250} Cheswardine CWA. SA P58/B/1/1/1. 10v.
\textsuperscript{251} Cheswardine CWA. SA P58/B/1/1/1. 11r.
for the Elizabethan reforms. Again people’s minds and beliefs were going to be reformed by changing the form of worship and enforcing the outward appearance of adherence to uniformity.

Towards the end of the Cheswardine churchwardens’ accounts for 1558 is the entry ‘Itm for the Expenses at the quenys vesettacyon’ most likely referring to a royal visitation that was meant to inform congregations about and enforce the Reformed religious policy. The change of monarch again had a material affect on the parish. In 1560, the bible was repaired. There is no mention of a purchase, suggesting this bible was bought before the extant records began, during the reign of Edward (or earlier). The references to “charity money” appear for the first time in the accounts for 1562.

1562 was also the year that the rood loft was pulled down and in 1573 the parish received 4s. for the boards of the rood loft from Thomas Hunt. The removal of the rood loft to which the rood screen would be attached is usually the final sign that the parish has accepted there will be no return to worship in the Roman Catholic manner. Why did the wardens wait over ten years to sell the boards? Did they hope/expect to reinstall the loft? The sense of uncertainty surrounding religious policy during the early years of Elizabeth’s reign was created by the fact that Edward VI and Mary each had different religious policies and reigned for relatively short periods.

252 Cheswardine CWA. SA P58/B/1/1/1. 14v.
253 Cheswardine CWA. SA P58/B/1/1/1. 15r.
254 Cheswardine CWA. SA P58/B/1/1/1. 15r, 24v.
The parish of Worfield had their rood loft taken down and the altar stones carried away in 1560.\textsuperscript{255} The churchwardens bought a communion book and Psalter that year, in addition to spending money on candles, incense and the Judas at Easter.\textsuperscript{256} The apparent mix of Reformed and Catholic demonstrates how the parish perceived Elizabeth’s religious policy. By the 1570s, the parish settled into Reformed language when referring to the objects used in worship:

\begin{itemize}
  \item 1570-72: It’m for carpet for the communion table - 20d.\textsuperscript{257}
  \item 1572-74: Itm for a Byble and a communion boke - 44s. 7d. Itm for a cover to the communion cuppe – 24s. 2d. . . . Itm for a boke of prayer – 6d. Itm for mendymnge the communion cuppe – 20d.\textsuperscript{258}
\end{itemize}

There are no more references to incense after 1562. Communion bread and wine were purchased for services at Christmas and Easter, and although there was 12s. spent, ‘at Lychfield for our excommunication,’ in 1560, the parish of Worfield appears to have complied with official religious policy by the late 1560s.\textsuperscript{259}

Any clergy with overt Marian loyalties who did not agree with Elizabethan religious policy would not be able to stay in prominent ecclesiastic positions. Thomas Bentham was consecrated bishop of Coventry and Lichfield on 24 March 1560, nine months after Baynes was deprived.\textsuperscript{260} There are two copies of Injunctions from the bishop for the year 1565. The state of the diocese was ‘a source of complaint at Court’ and Bentham was being reproved.\textsuperscript{261} The letter dated 28 April 1565, written in Bentham’s own handwriting, provides instructions

\begin{footnotes}
\item 255 Walters, "Worfield CWA V." p. 134.
\item 256 Ibid. pp. 131, 133.
\item 257 Ibid. p. 140.
\item 259 Walters, "Worfield CWA V." pp. 133-5.
\item 260 Le Neve, \textit{Fasti X}. p. 1.
\item 261 Frere and Kennedy, eds., \textit{Visitation Articles and Injunctions III}. p. 163.
\end{footnotes}
'for Mr Sale for his better proceeding in visitation.'\textsuperscript{262} The particular concerns in the letter appear to be in response to particular criticisms.

\textit{Imprimis, where as I and my diocese are accused of disorders used of my clergy, these are will you charge them all to behave theirselves . . . for pains which may ensue for transgressing the Queen’s injunctions.}\textsuperscript{263}

The particular complaints appear to be on the issues of communicants at Easter, confirmation of children, Rogation and register books. This indicates that there were enough parishes in the diocese disregarding the injunctions to be noticeable. How many of these were in North Shropshire is not known, but the rural parishes that welcomed the return to Roman Catholicism would be likely to resist aspects of the Protestant regime quietly without outright rebellion. Bentham wanted a list from clergy of all the children in their parishes, ‘being full seven years of age, and not yet confirmed,’ the youngest age for confirmation mentioned in the collection of Articles and Injunctions.\textsuperscript{264} Any child seven years old at the time of this direction would only have experienced Elizabeth as their queen and the 1559 \textit{Book of Common Prayer} form of worship. They were among the first of a generation with no experience of Roman Catholicism as the official religion in England.

The complete Injunctions for 1565 used in the diocesan visitation were not written by Bentham personally and grew from his initial five items of concern to twenty-five items to be investigated throughout the diocese. Most of the Injunctions relate to clergy behaviour. Item eight requires clergy to say Divine Service on Holy

\textsuperscript{262} Ibid. p. 163.
\textsuperscript{263} Ibid. p. 163.
\textsuperscript{264} Ibid. p. 163, n. 1.
days, ‘distinctly with an audible voice . . . and not to mumble nor tumble all things without devotion, as you did at such time you had the service in the Latin tongue.’ This Injunction reaffirms the practice of conducting services in the vernacular so that is is comprehensible to all, including the clergyman leading the service!

There are two items in the Injunctions that affected bell ringing. Item twenty-three clearly sets out that bells are not to be rung for the dead and that clergy should only, ‘knoll a bell at the hour of death for the space of half an hour and ring one short peal a little before burial.’ Despite the attempt to counteract traditional beliefs, there was, as has been said earlier, no way to control how people interpreted the ringing of the bells. The members of the congregation who remembered the traditional doctrine could still believe that the ringing of the bells when a parishioner died, even if it was for only half an hour, was able to protect the soul. During the late 1550s and through the 1560s, the parish of Cheswardine paid for the bells to be rung on Holy Thursday and on the night of All Hallows. These entries do not mean that the bells were only rung on those occasions. They do indicate times of peculiar bell ringing still connected with religious celebrations. All Hallows or All Souls day is more problematic than the other occasions in relation to the reformers’ beliefs about purgatory and prayers for the dead.

Item three of the Injunctions instructs clergy to hold services according to the 1559 Book of Common Prayer every morning and evening and instructs them to

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266 Ibid. p. 170.
267 Cheswardine CWA. SA P58/B/1/1/1. 14r, 20r, 20v, 22r.
‘knoll a bell before you go unto it.’ The bell ringing let everyone in earshot know that the priest was holding a service at that time. It could not be a secret activity and bell ringing before the office carried the expectation that lay people could/should participate. Unable to abolish bells, the Reformers adapted their use to inform people at a distance that something was happening in the church. Through restriction of use and through education, the reformers wanted to change the use of bells from devotion to simple communication of information. The success of such action would have been difficult to measure. People taught a set of beliefs and doctrine for most of their lives are unlikely to change unless convinced by the new teaching. The process of restriction and education would have been most effective upon the new generation growing up in a Church in England that had separated from Rome decades before.

The Elizabethan reforms were to characterise her long reign. It would appear that during the 1560s-70s, parishes in Shropshire became accustomed to the reformed religion. There is evidence in the Cheswardine accounts that they were confident enough to spend money on new communion plate that better served the Holy Communion as set out in the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer*.

In 1571, the Archbishop of York decreed, ‘Ye . . . shall minister the holy communion in no chalice nor profane cup or glass, but in a communion cup of silver, and with a cover of silver appointed also for the Communion bread.’ The chalices/cups from Shropshire reflect this description and confirm the national dissemination of the idea.

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268 Frere and Kennedy, eds., *Visitation Articles and Injunctions III*. p. 165.
The design of these cups support the action of Holy Communion shared in both bread and wine by all members the congregation. The size of cover used as paten indicates bread used in the form of wafers. The new doctrine of the Eucharist was reflected in the material culture. The old form of chalice, the final reminder of the Roman Catholic celebration of the Mass was replaced. In 1563, Cheswardine parish spent 18d. ‘for the cupp for the Comunyon’ and this was also the first year that large orders for bread and wine appear.\(^{271}\) In 1570 the parish received 7s. 2d. ‘at the change of the cupp wth the challes’ and spent 11d. for the fetching of it.\(^{272}\)

\(^{270}\) A, B – Part of the Treasury at Lichfield Heritage Centre, Lichfield [28 March 2007]; C – On loan to Lichfield Cathedral [26 March 2007]; D On loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum [30 March 2007].

\(^{271}\) Cheswardine CWA. SA P58/B/1/1/1. 17r.

\(^{272}\) Cheswardine CWA. SA P58/B/1/1/1. 22r.
There would have been a market for exchange of chalices for cups as the silver could be reworked.

After converting to the new church plate, Cheswardine parish sold various items of old vestment:

1572: Itm for one table cloth sold to m's braddock by wyllya'Ellerton xx’or virger xx’or [mu]llers & v s the churchwardens – vj s iiiij d
Itm for on’ old albe sold to the sayd m's braddock at the same tyme – ij s
Itm sold to antonye bayly[s] one vest coope two vestments one sylke banor & one corporasse case – xxvj s viij d

1573: Itm of xx’or virges for one alb one old coope – ij s vi(i)j d
1574: Itm of Robert handson for an old vestment – iiij s ²⁷³

The term ‘old’ here would appear to mean obsolete. The items are being sold as pieces of fabric not as sacred objects. It is not known what the material will be used for, but it would be useable for a wide variety of purposes and would be valuable. The money paid to the parish contributed to the upkeep of the building and bells.

The Shropshire parishes also had to conform to the administrative requirements of the state controlled church. In 1572, the parish of Cheswardine had the following expenses:

Itm at the archdeakens visitation for our costs and our boake – iiij s ij d
Itm for payde to the Queenes Comyssioner for that our regester book was unperfect – x – vs²⁷⁴

The register book was to record christenings, weddings and funerals. How was the parish’s register imperfect? The fine (if that is what it was) was 5s. not insignificant in the context of parish finances. The requirements for parish

²⁷³ Cheswardine CWA. SA P58/B/1/1/1. 24r, 24v, 26v.
²⁷⁴ Cheswardine CWA. SA P58/B/1/1/1. 25r.
registers were introduced during the reforms under Henry VIII. The administrative aspects of the Reformation of the Church in England did not have the same impact on the lives of parishioners as the material requirements of the reformed worship which was noticed by all who worshipped in the churches.

The congregations of North Shropshire experienced the comprehensive confiscation of what little valuable church cloth and plate they had under the Edwardine reformers. The moves by Mary to reinstate the Catholic faith were accepted in parishes and reflected in their material culture and the resumption of bell ringing and processions. The actions of the Elizabethan reformers were again intended to change people’s minds by changing the physical and audible environment in which they worshipped and lived. All these changes took place in the space of a single generation. There was a sense of uncertainty among the congregations, but that did not prevent them adapting their churches to the religious policy of the day. The timing of their conformity could be affected by the degree of uncertainty or by the capacity to pay for the costs of changes. The people were affected by the alterations in the material and audible, the tangible manifestation of ideological change.
The previous chapters illustrate the various ways Shropshire is demonstrably unlike the south and east in connection with the ritualistic aspect of the Reformation. The surprising lack of chalices in a small number of rural parishes, the general lack of censers, pyxes, paxes and plate candlesticks, the presence of few vestments across all the rural parishes: this is a challenge to the assumption that all congregations were fully equipped for sumptuous worship in the Roman Catholic manner before the actions of the reforming governments. Beyond the ritualistic, what else of the character of the Reformation in the south-east is missing from this western county? This final chapter explores patterns of continuity and discontinuity in the personnel who oversaw the Reformation in North Shropshire.

** A Bishop is a minister of God, unto whom with permanent continuance there is given not only power of administering the word and Sacraments, which power other Presbyters have, but also a further power to ordain ecclesiastical persons and a power of chiefy in government over Presbyters as well as Laymen a power be by way of jurisdiction a Pastor even to Pastors themselves. (Richard Hooker)\textsuperscript{275}

Bishops were the administrative and spiritual head of each diocese and were an important link between the government and the church in matters of religious policy and polity, even while laymen were becoming the implementers and enforcers of government religious policy. Although they may not always have had a personal relationship with congregations, they ordained the priests that served them and were responsible for discipline once the priests were in place.

North Shropshire was part of the geographically large diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, a challenge for any bishop. Christopher Haigh has highlighted that the problems of governing a large diocese were not so critical during politically quiet times. The cracks appeared when the machinery was called upon to enforce radical or significant changes in practice and belief. Coventry and Lichfield diocese contained many individual parishes that were outside the areas of the bishop’s governance. Lichfield, the cathedral town, with four hundred households was one such peculiar. Sections of Shrewsbury were also answerable to the cathedral chapter, instead of the diocesan bishop.

Coventry and Lichfield diocese was within the province of Canterbury which was held by Thomas Cranmer, a leading English Protestant during the Edwardine reforms. Who were the bishops responsible for the people of North Shropshire during the early decades of the Reformation? Coventry and Lichfield had three bishops during this time: Richard Sampson, Ralph Baynes and Thomas Bentham representing three different religious attitudes. How did the administration of the three bishops influence the way North Shropshire experienced Reform? And how was that experience different from the rest of England?

Christopher Haigh’s study of Lancashire highlights the problems of administration in areas of a diocese distant from the cathedral.276 There were problems involved in travelling to the parishes to facilitate communication between the bishop and the parish clergy: a rugged countryside and lack of good roads were the main obstacles. The cathedral for North Shropshire was Lichfield in Staffordshire, but the cathedral itself was a separate body from the bishop being

a peculiar, with a dean and chapter which had its own authority over a number of parishes in the diocese. The bishop could summon people to appear before him at any of his residences which were at Eccleshall and Hanbury in Staffordshire and Coventry palace, although Bishop Sampson had granted a ninety-nine year lease on that property.277 There was no Episcopal residence in Derby or Shropshire.

The structures of dioceses in the north and west were sufficient in times of political and doctrinal stability. The systems of church governance did not become manifestly inadequate until the reformers attempted to use them to enforce changes in policy and doctrine.278 Coventry and Lichfield was a large diocese, and has been used as an example by Haigh in an investigation of Lancashire: ‘the problems posed by the unwieldy dioceses of York and Lichfield had merely been repeated in the creation of the equally unwieldy diocese of Chester [in 1541].’279 Did distance from the seat of ecclesiastic power affect the way parishioners of North Shropshire lived their religious life or was it more of a concern for those charged with implementing the changes? The parish of Morebath in Devon, part of the diocese of Exeter was not a huge distance from Exeter, but it was difficult to access and the churchwardens’ accounts demonstrate active resistance to the Protestant reforms with the concealing of church goods.280 This may have been the case in other isolated remote parishes throughout England, but just as they were physically difficult to access in the sixteenth century, their pasts are now often inaccessible to historians. There is a case, in the early 1570s, of a well-known recusant, Richard Greenham, continuing in the parish of Dry Drayton. This

279 Ibid. p. 7.
280 Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath*. p. xii.
was not because it was difficult to reach, but because the bishop of Ely, Richard Cox, was more concerned with having priests in parishes than with removing an educated non-conformist priest.\textsuperscript{281}

What other characteristics of Coventry and Lichfield contributed to the lack of rebellion against religious policy? Although the diocese of Lincoln was made geographically smaller than Coventry and Lichfield in the early years of the Reformation, it did have a history of rebellion against Protestantism. In October 1538, before the diocesan reorganisation, the bishop of Lincoln’s steward was caught up in the uprising apparently sparked by the fear of certain parishioners that crosses were to be removed from their churches and the church bells were rung to call the people to action.\textsuperscript{282} Although rebellion could be seen as the result of the inability of the local institutions to assert control, the matter became one of government authority. It is argued that later bishops of the diocese (Henry Holbeach, 1547-52, and John Taylor, 1552-53) alienated a largely Catholic population and were not well liked, but this discontent did not develop into open rebellion on a large scale.\textsuperscript{283} The lack of uprising may be attributed to the moderate bishops who followed: John White, 1554-56, and Thomas Watson, 1556-59.\textsuperscript{284} Lincoln experienced more changes in bishop than Coventry and Lichfield, producing a less settled environment and probably an increased reliance on diocesan administrators and parish clergy for continuity. Bishops were responsible for the whole diocese covering many parishes, and while they could influence, they could not personally control the daily activity in every parish.

\textsuperscript{282} Hodgett, Tudor Lincolnshire. p. 26.
\textsuperscript{283} Ibid. p. 168.
\textsuperscript{284} Ibid. p. 168.
The character of the bishop affected the overall reform in a diocese. As bishop of Gloucestershire, John Hooper actively pursued a Protestant agenda. This did not result in complete reform across the diocese, but it did limit the scope for outspoken individuals and public resistance. It did create a specific and distinct rise in the use of Protestant preambles to wills. A similar effect was seen in the diocese of Rochester under Bishop Nicholas Ridley, but with their deaths and the appointment of new bishops by the Marian regime, the general support of the traditional religion would resurface. At the beginning of the Edwardine Reformation, most of the bishops in England were characterised as Henrician Catholics, ‘supporters of royal supremacy, but believers in purgatory and transubstantiation.’ The bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, Richard Sampson, fitted into this category.

Richard Sampson was translated to the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield as bishop in 1543 and also held the presidency of the secular Council of the Marches of Wales until 1548. He was ‘in great favour of the king,’ supporting his divorce and royal supremacy against papal authority, but on other religious matters he was characterised as a conservative. Bishop Sampson’s occupation at the council meant that he was absent from the diocese during the times when the council met, and although Council did meet in Shropshire, the southern part of the county was

286 Ibid. p. 270.
288 DNB Sampson, Richard.
part of the diocese of Hereford. Bishop Sampson appointed David Pole as vicar-general in his times of absence. Pole was the Archdeacon of Salop at that time and he was also the Archdeacon of Derby. While Bishop Sampson was officially in charge of administration of the diocese, David Pole was, in theory, closer to the area of concern for this thesis.

In 1548, Richard Sampson was replaced as President of the Council, but retained the bishopric for the rest of Edward’s reign. While he would remain vague on religious matters he did support royal policy. He endorsed the first Book of Common Prayer and would implement religious changes when they were passed into law. There are no extant copies of any Injunctions issued by Bishop Sampson during Edward VI’s reign. Although Shropshire did not have the same physical barriers to access as Lancashire, this distance from the county to the seat of ecclesial power meant that with the archdeacon being absent from Salop, acting as vicar-general for the absent bishop, Salop archdeaconry would have been left in the care of further subordinates and more on the margins of diocesan concerns.

Richard Sampson died 25 September 1554 and was succeeded as Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield by Ralph Baynes who had been living abroad during the protestant reign of Edward VI, only returning after Mary’s accession. At least twelve bishops died in office during Mary Tudor’s reign and they were replaced with men like Baynes who had demonstrated loyalty to Roman Catholicism.

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289 Ludlow, a town in the south of Shropshire and the diocese of Hereford was one of the meeting places for the Council of the Marches.
290 DNB Pole, David.
291 Le Neve, Fasti X. p. 12.
292 DNB Sampson, Richard.
293 Frere and Kennedy, eds., Visitation Articles and Injunctions II.
294 Doran and Durston, Princes, Pastors and People. p. 128.
While there is not much extant evidence of Baynes’ actions in the diocese or Shropshire during his time as bishop, he was involved in the examination of Protestants including John Hooper, Robert Glover, John Philpot and Joan Waste, who all went to the stake.\(^\text{295}\) Another active persecutor of Protestants was the Archdeacon of Salop, David Pole.\(^\text{296}\) He served on the panels that condemned Hooper, Rogers, Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer, and on the general heresy commission of April 1556.\(^\text{297}\) In 1557 Pole became the Bishop of Peterborough, but was deprived before 6 June 1559 after refusing to take the oath of supremacy under Elizabeth I.\(^\text{298}\)

Bishop Baynes voted against religious reforms and was part of the Roman Catholic contingent at the abortive Westminster conference in 1559. He was deprived 26 June 1559 and died at Islington in November of that year.\(^\text{299}\) During Mary’s reign, the churches in Salop were within the oversight of active supporters of the Catholic regime. Both Baynes and Pole were involved in high profile persecutions, so perhaps the smaller parishes of Shropshire were not closely examined. As a county, Shropshire is not particularly known for religious zeal of either persuasion. Protestantism appeared to have support in the town of Shrewsbury, but such open support does not appear in the rural parishes.\(^\text{300}\) The oversight of an openly Catholic bishop in the diocese meant that it was possible to return to Catholic practice, as seen in the parish of Cheswardine, without fear of reprisal from the ecclesiastic authorities. Other parishes in Salop may have felt safe

\(^\text{295}\) DNB Baynes, Ralph.
\(^\text{296}\) DNB Pole, David.
\(^\text{297}\) DNB Pole, David; Davis, Heresy and Reformation in the South-East of England, 1520-1559. p. 22.
\(^\text{298}\) DNB Pole, David.
\(^\text{299}\) DNB Baynes, Ralph.
\(^\text{300}\) Coulton, “The Establishment of Protestantism in a Provincial Town.” pp. 308-335.
when retrieving and reinstating the objects of Roman Catholic worship, provided that the action was supported by both priest and congregation.

There is explicit mention of the bishop’s support of the parish of Cheswardine in the churchwardens’ accounts for 1556 made 4 January 1557: ‘Ite Re’d of the geft of my lord bishop a corporas case of tawni vellet’. 301 This entry is among other donations of goods (including another corpus case) and money to the parish for burials and work on church plate. The Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield gave the parish of Cheswardine in North Shropshire a corpus case of tawny velvet, probably matching the vestments already there. While this is a small contribution to the resupply of the parish for Catholic worship, the choice of object is significant. The corpus case was for the keeping of the consecrated host as the real body of Christ, the material expression of the doctrine of transubstantiation. It is possible bishop Baynes gifted similar items to parishes across the diocese, demonstrating his support of their return to worship in the Roman Catholic tradition in tangible ways.

The next Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield was Thomas Bentham who held that position from 1560-1579. 302 Educated at Oxford, Bentham was removed from there along with five other fellows in 1553 by Bishop Stephen Gardiner of Winchester for an act of sacrilege. 303 During the Marian reign, he lived in exile on the continent where he was a member of John Knox’s congregation for a time and where he married. He returned to England in August 1559 after Elizabeth took the throne. He was one of the visitors who took part in the Royal Commission to

301 Cheswardine CWA. SA P58/B/1/1/1. 11v.
302 Le Neve, Fasti X. p. 1.
Lichfield, Oxford, Lincoln and Peterborough to implement the 1559 settlement.\textsuperscript{304} As bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, he inherited financial problems and these seem to have occupied much of his time in the diocese and at London, particularly concerning the properties at Hanbury and Eccleshall.\textsuperscript{305} These were not the ideal circumstances in which to bring religious reform to a large area.

We have already examined Bishop Bentham’s Injunctions for his diocese, demonstrating a desire and willingness to reform the religious practice. Bishop Bentham’s Letter Book for 1560-61 demonstrates the matters he dealt with in his first year in the diocese and the short time after the 1559 settlement. While in a diocese away from London, Bentham was still making and maintaining links with central government and people of influence, usually to ask for financial assistance or for friends to speak on his behalf.\textsuperscript{306} The first item in the book is much more interesting from a religious policy perspective. On 20 June 1560, Bishop Bentham wrote to Edmund Grindal, Bishop of London to advocate on behalf of three Spaniards: Cyprianus Valera, Franciscus Cortes and Ferdinadus de Leon, the first of whom was a renowned scholar who translated the Bible into Spanish. Bentham passes on the recommendations of two other Marian exiles and assures the bishop that these men fled ‘ther countree for religions sake’ and are deserving of Grindal’s help.\textsuperscript{307}

\textsuperscript{304} Ibid. p. 115.
\textsuperscript{305} Ibid. pp. 125-129; DNB Bentham, Thomas (1513/14 – 1579).
\textsuperscript{306} O’Day and Berlatsky, “The Letter-Book of Thomas Bentham.” p. 125. This Letter (4) to Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, July 1560 outlines the problems with the properties. Later letters complain about hardship caused by his inability to collect rents/obligations.
Despite the problems with the properties and finances related to first fruits and tithes, there are a number of letters that illustrate relations between the bishop and parishes in his diocese, including some in North Shropshire. A request written to Mr Lever, the archdeacon of Coventry, dated 4 August 1560, instructed him to deal with the priest of Solihull for ‘disorder about the communion’ and then requested that he ride to Salop ‘to preache yf he can’.308 The issue of authorised preachers was very important to those in charge of religious policy. It was important for the words from the pulpit to match the words of official government policy.

There are arguments in Reformation studies that, during the sixteenth century, print was more effective in persuading people than speech or images.309 However, the examination of the material culture of North Shropshire in the preceding chapters demonstrates that objects were an effective means of communication. During the Henrician reforms, Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, was against iconoclasm, ‘not on the grounds of sacrilege but on the need to keep open the lines of communication’ with most of the population.310 While the Reformation in England opened the Bible to the people in the vernacular and increased levels of literacy, the belief in the effectiveness of printing is based on an historical perspective. Even while learning to read and with a new generation growing in a church where the words were paramount, the language of the visual and the culture of listening to information would have persisted. On 8 August, Bishop Bentham wrote to the Dean of Lichfield to instruct him to go and preach.

308 Ibid. p. 144.
in Seckington in Warwickshire, so the protestant Bishop still thought it was important that people in the parishes hear the right kind of words.\textsuperscript{311}

It has already been shown that the protestant reformers used county and secular authority to implement physical changes in religious policy. However the bishops still had a role investigating the beliefs of clergy and leading men. The church, as an institution, was still responsible for monitoring moral behaviour. In Lincoln in 1564, Bishop Nicholas Bullingham reported on whether leading men in the shire were, ‘earnest in religion’ or ‘hinderers’.\textsuperscript{312}

As the following discussion of letters demonstrates, Bishop Bentham was also responsible for judgements about the behaviour of various parishioners in his diocese. Parts of Shrewsbury were considered a peculiar, but the Bishop was still able to exercise authority in the town. A letter was sent on 5 August 1560 to the Summoner of Shrewsbury instructing him to call David ap Edward and Margaret Wendlock before the Bishop on the following Friday (9 August).\textsuperscript{313} The entry does highlight one of the problems of the letter book in that there are often only summaries and it is only a record of outgoing correspondence. When we look at this summary alone, we do not know why these two were called before the Bishop. There is a letter dated 22 September: 'Item to Doctor Weston in the behalfe of Margaret Wendlocke to be holpen agaynst her husband who is a perverse man.'\textsuperscript{314} Perhaps this was on the same matter. The earlier entry does demonstrate the speed of communication across and within the diocese.

\textsuperscript{311} O'Day and Berlatsky, "The Letter-Book of Thomas Bentham." p. 145.
\textsuperscript{312} Hodgett, \textit{Tudor Lincolnshire}. p. 173.
\textsuperscript{313} O'Day and Berlatsky, "The Letter-Book of Thomas Bentham." p. 144.
\textsuperscript{314} Ibid. p. 157.
bishop expected that David and Margaret could travel from Shrewsbury to him at Eccleshall four days after he sent the letter. This speed of communication explains how the people of Shrewsbury were promptly aware of changes in church policy and diocesan Injunctions and how the bishop could be kept informed of how reform was proceeding throughout the diocese. The case of Margaret Wendlock, alias ap Edward, was ongoing in January 1561. Bishop Bentham was not impressed with David ap Edward at their first meeting in Eccleshall and describes him as a wilful man who ‘dyd greatly abuse me’ and had also since received a letter from Margaret outlining the wrongs done to her.315

Visiting the bishop of the diocese at his residence in Eccleshall was not an innovation under the oversight of Bishop Bentham. His predecessor had parish representatives visiting him there regularly throughout his time as bishop.316 The mechanism which allowed for churchwardens or other members of a congregation to be summoned before the bishop existed before the Reformation and was employed by both Catholic and Protestant authorities. The ongoing use of such visits argues for their effectiveness, perceived if not real, in transmitting information and ensuring obedience to diocesan authority. Visitations were held at various locations in the diocese and for rural parishes in particular, this often meant travelling, so while a bishop may not physically enter the parish, he had regular contact with people of those parishes.

A letter from Bishop Bentham to the chancellor on 25 September 1560 deals with the matter of John Marchland of London who got Maud Ashelake pregnant and

315 Ibid. p. 195.
316 A number of examples are found throughout the Cheswardine CWA. SA P58/B/1/1/1.
then ran away. Because ‘he (?Marchland) wyll not gett god fathers to christen yt,’
the bishop wants the issue dealt with. Rather than asking for the parties to appear
before him, Bentham asks the chancellor to pursue the matter.317 We do not know
where Maud Ashelake is from, but given that Marchland is from London, she is
most likely from somewhere in the diocese. A number of such marital cases came
to the bishop’s attention in the one year of which we have a record. In the same
month, Bentham had written a letter to ‘Margaret Eisworth of Uttoxeter’
commanding her to live with her lawful husband, ‘or els to come and shewe some
lawfull & good reason why she shold not do’.318 The bishop either acted in the
matter personally or referred it to the chancellor. These concerns of moral
behaviour and the fate of a young soul became the responsibility of the bishop
when they were beyond the control of the parish priest either by the activities
being investigated moving beyond the borders of the parish or being matters
traditionally heard in the church courts.

In a letter to London on 2 October 1560, Bishop Bentham writes to Ralph Egerton
assuring him that the money owed will be paid shortly, ‘In the meane tyme, I pray
you put none of the bibles nor psalme bookes awaye for I wold have theym all . . .
bound as hansomly as may in paist, withe some gold letters.’319 Although he was
against decorating churches with paintings, images and banners, it was important
to the bishop that the books required be of good quality and well presented: these
books were intended to be seen and used.

317 O’Day and Berlatsky, ”The Letter-Book of Thomas Bentham.” p. 158.
318 Ibid. p. 156.
319 Ibid. p. 160.
A letter to George Torperley of Shropshire, 12 October 1560, articulates the Bishop’s frustrations with the state of religious practice in his diocese. He found that most of the parishes, ‘within this part of my diocese (Shropshire?)’ not only had altars, but had also preserved images in the hope they may be permitted in the future. He asks that Torperley go around to the parishes near him, with the summoner, call for the images and prohibited books and take the names of any who resist so that they may appear before the bishop.320 The bishop states that hope for another change in religious policy, ‘owght neither to enter in to any true Christiane or faythefull subjects hart,’ but as this generation had already seen a number of changes to religious policy, it was not an unrealistic hope. As a returned exile, Bentham was a committed Protestant and does not appear to be open to comprise, determined to reform his diocese. He had earlier acted on behalf of Torperley and his wife in a pew dispute and would continue to do so as the matter dragged on to at least January of the following year.321 The bishop trusted Torperley to enforce the changes to the worshipping environment required by Royal Injunction.

On the same day, 12 October, the bishop wrote,

Itm a letter to my somner to somne and cause William Corbett in the parish of Shuffnall and Agnes his wyffe from the parishe of Dawley to appere before me upon Thursday next, and also one Beadmaker of Shrewsbury.322

The bishop dealt with tradesmen in Shrewsbury on non-religious business, such as the making of bedcovers and blankets for his household by Mr Lee.323 The summoning of a bead-maker was not for such domestic reasons. In the

320 Ibid. p. 168.
321 Ibid. pp. 166, 194. There are other letters referring to disputes about pews and forms throughout the letter book, including a case in West Felton, Shropshire.
322 Ibid. p. 169.
323 Ibid. p. 165.
Reformation context, beads could refer to rosaries, an aid to private devotion used by Roman Catholics.\textsuperscript{324} The bead-maker may have been suspected of providing prohibited religious objects. A rosary was and is, ‘both a material object and a set of prayers’ and the fact that they were portable and easily concealed increased their importance for devout Catholics living in Reformation England.\textsuperscript{325} Protestant authorities prohibited the possession of such beads, an acknowledgment that they were useful in supporting Catholic devotion even when the altars, icons and relics were removed.\textsuperscript{326} They were an obstacle to the persuasion of the population to abandon the Roman Catholic forms of prayer and appeals to Mary for intercession, but much harder to control than the public objects that had been in parish churches. The bishop may have wished to see the bead-maker about a different matter, but he is referred to by trade and not name, suggesting a connection between his work and the reason the bishop wants to see him.

Bishop Bentham was good at delegating tasks to people throughout the diocese, a means of exercising control in areas distant. On 10 October 1560, he wrote to Thomas Eaton, the vicar of Wellington in Shropshire to investigate a case of alleged slander between two women in that area to issue punishment if Alice Johnson was found at fault.\textsuperscript{327} The bishop was also prepared to use laymen in church discipline matters. He wrote to Simon Harcourt 15 November 1560 instructing him to send the clerk of Whitchurch (Shropshire), John Kroke, to prison, ‘for speakyng sedicious woordes agaynst the lawes of religion.’\textsuperscript{328} This did not end the matter, for Bishop Bentham received a letter from Thomas Sampson, a

\textsuperscript{325} Ibid. pp. 161-2.
\textsuperscript{326} Ibid. p. 166.
\textsuperscript{327} Ibid. p. 167.
\textsuperscript{328} Ibid. p. 178.
fellow returned exile, apparently criticising a lack of action in the matter. The bishop replied on Christmas Eve of that year, defending his decisions and stating that he had done all he could within the law and had sent his servants to deal with the matter.329 This type of delegation will also be seen later in the case against the priest at Montford. Delegation was not always as effective as the bishop may have hoped. In a letter to the chancellor, Doctor Weston, on 13 January 1561, it appears that the clerk sent to Whitchurch was unable to find the curate in order to summon him, ‘but he haith the woman withe whome he ys suspected’.330 Was the curate purposely avoiding the bishop’s representative, or did he simply happen to be absent when visited? There are no further extant letters relating to Whitchurch, so while the end result of the matter remains a mystery, sedition in North Shropshire did concern the bishop and it was not limited to the clergy.

Another of Bishop Bentham’s agents was Thomas Aston, a preacher based at Shrewsbury. In May 1561, the bishop had reason to examine the priest Richard Sherer. For reason of the parson’s age and infirmity, the bishop organised for the hearing to take place in Shrewsbury, rather than for Sherer to travel to Hanbury.331 The matter is not specified, but it concerned Hereford as well as Coventry and Lichfield.

Parishioners from Shrewsbury would also be called to Lichfield for visitations during the 1570s, most likely by the dean and chapter.332 This was more than an afternoon visit. Such a planned journey would mean that the representatives were

329 Ibid. p. 190.
330 Ibid. p. 195.
331 Ibid. p. 236.
332 Entries throughout Shrewsbury - St Mary CWA. SA P257/B/3/1, and Shrewsbury - Holy Cross CWA. SA P250/C/1/1.
most likely carefully chosen. Were these visits a regular way for the cathedral to check on the parishes, or were they only in response to particular citations? How did the cathedral know what was happening? Were the citations on matter of religious practice or administrative? There is evidence that the Bishop visited the town to ensure that the parishes were reformed. The Shrewsbury Chronicles record such a visitation at the end of 1573:

about the later end of thys moonthe [October] there cam to Shrewsbery the Lord Presydent wth the Byshopp of Covetrie and Lytchefeld as speciall commtshion’ for to see an order & reformac’on in the churches acordinge to the queens m[iss] inunctions.333

Thirteen years into his time as bishop, it would appear that Bentham was still finding recusants in his diocese. The exact concerns of this particular visitation are unknown, but it is likely the concerns are the similar to those found in his correspondence in 1560-61. More than a decade after the settlement, the Elizabethan reformers could not say that the whole of the country had eschewed Roman Catholicism completely, or more accurately had not fully embraced Protestantism, and those who had been exiles during the Marian reign probably found the time it was taking for the beliefs of parishioners to change frustrating.

The views of the bishops affected the way the diocese as a whole was administered and disciplined, but it was the parish clergy who mattered in the daily lives of the congregations. They were the men with the cure of souls and were the face of religion for the parishes. After the dissolution of the monasteries, the vicars and curates were the only religious with authority and position in local communities. What were the clergy of North Shropshire like and how do they compare with clergy elsewhere in English parishes?

The general model of pre-Reformation clergy is that they were un- or under-educated, socially and geographically immobile, and sometimes absent as they were responsible for a number of parishes which meant that most had curates. They were definitely the point of contact between the church as an institution and the flock of lay people. These men were involved during the emotional times of peoples’ lives: mourning death and grieving, celebrating birth, and presiding at weddings as the church rather than the state was the official administrator of marriage.

Through a comparison of the information about clergy in the 1552/53 Inventories and Indentures and the Clergy of the Church of England Database from the 1540s onwards, trends across Salop emerge. There are nine parishes where we know that the incumbent clergyman there in 1552/53 was there prior to the national Inventory:

- Parish of West Felton: Lewis Williams was appointed Rector in 1547 (after the death of Thomas Gronowe) and remained until his death in 1560.
- Montford: Harry (Henry) Tecka was appointed vicar in 1546 after the death of John Brome.
- Loppington: James Allen was appointed vicar in 1546 after the death of Humphrey Cley and was replaced in 1579.
- St Alkmund, Shrewsbury: George Crane appointed vicar in 1550 after the resignation of William Cuerton who went to be rector at Berrington. Crane remained in that parish until dispensation in 1584.

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335 The CCEd records when priests are mentioned in the records. This does not always include a year of death or precise end date in a parish. The term ‘until at least’ is used when an end date in the parish is unspecified.
- Kynnersley: Anthony Downes was appointed rector in 1548 after the death of William Golburne and was there until at least 1561.
- Frodesley: George Longmer was appointed rector in 1551 and was there until at least 1561.
- Fitz: after the death of Hugo Gyles, Richard Wilde was appointed in 1548 and remained there until at least 1561.
- Eyton on the Weald Moors: John Gryse was appointed rector after the death of Roger Gervise in 1548 and remained until at least 1561.
- Preston on the Weald Moors: Thomas Fox was appointed chaplain in 1540 after the death of Henry Charleton and was deprived in 1554.336

These men were involved in the parish life before the national action to change the material culture of the churches. Most of these men were appointed to these parishes during Edward’s reign. It is not known if these were their first parishes or whether they came after serving elsewhere. None of these men had served in the parish under official Roman Catholic policy before the split from Rome which suggests a generational change of clergy in the region taking place while religious policy was changing. Most of these men remained in the parish into the reign of Elizabeth I and were thus a point of continuity during the changes in monarch.

There are 20 clergy who appear in 1552/53 and then disappear from the official extant record of the Shropshire parishes. These ‘lost’ men had participated in a national action to change the worshipping environment and remove the objects of the Roman Catholic faith, but beyond that snapshot, their role in the communities of North Shropshire is lost to history.

336 Deprivations will be discussed below.
Many of the parish lists start after 1553. From those sources there are a further twenty-three parishes where the priest is known to be in a parish during the Inventory/Indenture and after. This survey demonstrates one of the main characteristics of personnel turnover in Shropshire (and nationally). The most common way for a parish to become vacant was by the death of the clergyman. There was a new appointment made in the same year, despite the shortage of clergy nationwide during the early decades of the Reformation. Nationally, a decline in the number of recruits to the priesthood has been traced to the beginning of Edward VI’s reign.\textsuperscript{337} This was an understandable reaction given the unsettled nature of the church and uncertainty during a time of doctrinal change. This national shortage does not appear to have had a negative affect on the parishes of Shropshire in terms of having a vicar or curate to serve the parish, although the quality of the incumbent cannot be judged. Whether or not recruitment was down, there are no long term vacancies according to the bishops’ register: appointments are recorded in the same year as the resignation, deprivation or death of the priest.\textsuperscript{338}

Seven parishes experienced resignations - the parish of Longford became vacant on 7 August 1554, 21 June 1558 and 9 August 1574 due to the resignation of the priest.\textsuperscript{339} These records do not specify the reasons why each priest resigned. These dates are not closely linked with any dramatic national events. Resignation rather than deprivation implies a certain agency on the part of the priest to leave. The

\textsuperscript{338} CCEd. [accessed 23 May 2007, 12 June 2007].
\textsuperscript{339} CCEd. [accessed 23 May 2007, 12 June 2007].
affect of resignations on any parish would depend on the reasons the priest had for leaving.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Outgoing priest</th>
<th>Date of Resignation</th>
<th>Replacement</th>
<th>Served until</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harley</td>
<td>William (Dyson)</td>
<td>29 October 1563</td>
<td>Michael Ball</td>
<td>(1584)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td>Alan Charleton</td>
<td>7 June 1552</td>
<td>Thomas Eyton</td>
<td>(1562)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellesmere</td>
<td>Roger Legh</td>
<td>28 July 1547</td>
<td>Philip Edwards</td>
<td>(?1554)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quatt</td>
<td>Thomas Tyrer</td>
<td>5 March 1546</td>
<td>William Sale(Bale)</td>
<td>1569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newport</td>
<td>Roger Salter</td>
<td>28 July 1543</td>
<td>John Moreton</td>
<td>(1558)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acton Burnell</td>
<td>John Oswen</td>
<td>25 May 1542</td>
<td>Thomas Gardiner</td>
<td>(1561)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>also Acton Pigot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are four cases of deprivation in the timeframe of this thesis. Thomas Fox was deprived of the parish of Preston on the Weald Moors 18 August 1554 and replaced that year. 23 July 1554, Henry Cockowe aka Tecka was deprived of the parish of Montford, and replaced by Richard Allett. The next recorded deprivation was 17 March 1561 when Richard Key was deprived of Condover. On 6 April 1563, Moreton Corbet was deprived of their priest and although the name is not given, William Asheley had been the vicar there since at least 1553. Reasons for deprivation are not given, but the dates may be revealing.

The two deprivations in 1554 took place after the Pope declared that married clergy should be deprived and before the death of Bishop Sampson, a political conservative on religious matters. There are two items in Thomas Bentham’s Letter Book that mention the vicar of Montford, there spelt Henry Techoo.\textsuperscript{341}

\textsuperscript{340} Complied from \textit{CCEd}. [accessed 23 May 2007, 12 June 2007]. Dates in brackets indicate that the priest served until at least that year.

\textsuperscript{*} No further reference made to Philip Edwards in that parish, but a new priest was appointed in 1554.

To Henry Techoo, vicar of Montford, Shropshire, 4 Oct. 1560

89. Item a letter to Sir Henry Techoo vicar of Manford to come and answere whye he servethe not his cure as he ought to do and whye he hayth hyd iii of theyr images with theyr cases or tabernacles which I have charged hym to brynge with hym to be some part of his satisfaction.

To George Lee of Shrewsbury, 12 Oct. 1560

102. Item a letter to Mr George Lee of Shrewsbury signifying that upon hope I am contented to differ the correction of Sir Henry Techoo, howe be yt I can not suffer those that beare ii faces in one hood, to marrye & love images etc. Henry Tecka/Techoo was deprived for being married and apparently reinstated to the same parish before 1560. He remained in that parish until at least 1579, despite the bishop’s concerns that Techoo was hiding images. Was he tolerated because there was a shortage of clergy and rather than leave the parish uncared for, keep a man who at least supported the marriage of clergy? What was actually meant by ‘servethe not his cure as he ought’? Was it a case of absenteeism or persisting with Roman Catholic worship after the Elizabethan Settlement?

There were other vicars in the diocese investigated by Thomas Bentham in the beginning of his time as bishop. In December 1560 he asked the summoner to call Robert Morris, the vicar of Upton Magna and ‘divers others’ to the court at Eccleshall the 13th of the month. It is not known why Robert Morris should be singled out or why he was being summoned. He is known to have remained in the parish until at least 1579, as Henry Tecka did.

One of the recorded resignations and two of the deprivations in North Shropshire coincide with the early years of the reign of Elizabeth I, a time noted for many

343 CCEd. [accessed 23 May 2007]
345 CCEd. [accessed 23 May 2007]
vacancies nationally, a situation described by Thomas Bentham as, ‘this greate scarcitye off good and lerned ministers,’ apparently caused by deprivations, resignations, and an unusually high death rate in the years 1556-60s, partly the result of the influenza epidemic in 1561.\textsuperscript{346} A survey of the North Shropshire clergy demonstrates both the presence of priests in the parishes for many years before their death and a generational change of clergy 1550s-60s, most likely for the same reasons as the national shortage, however this did not result in any extended vacancies.

Clergy in other dioceses experienced the effects of national religious policy in varying degrees. During Mary’s reign, at least seventy priests were deprived of their livings and eleven resigned in the diocese of Lincoln, the main reason being that they had married.\textsuperscript{347} Compared with the overall figure of between a quarter and a third of clergy marrying in the south-east of England, in Lancashire, 95 percent of the parish priests are known to have remained single during Edward VI’s reign.\textsuperscript{348} There were again deprivations and resignations in Lincoln when Elizabeth I reigned, mainly connected to the taking of the Oath of Supremacy.\textsuperscript{349} As the reign of Elizabeth continued, the proportion of married clergy increased, most likely in line with the national rates.\textsuperscript{350}

As the Reformed policy continued and new men were trained for the priesthood, the clergy as a whole became better educated than before. In the dioceses of

\textsuperscript{347} Hodgett, \textit{Tudor Lincolnshire}. p. 168.
\textsuperscript{348} Doran and Durston, \textit{Princes, Pastors and People}. p. 146.
\textsuperscript{349} Hodgett, \textit{Tudor Lincolnshire}. p. 170.
\textsuperscript{350} For a numerical breakdown and fuller discussion, see Hodgett, \textit{Tudor Lincolnshire}. p. 176-177.
London, Durham, York, Chester, Lincoln, and Winchester there were regular checks on the biblical instruction of clergymen without MAs by archdeacons.\textsuperscript{351} During the 1570s, 73 percent of recruits to the ministry in the diocese of Ely were university educated: a benefit of its proximity to Cambridge University.\textsuperscript{352} This is a contrast to the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield which recorded that only 24 percent of the clergy were graduates by the end of the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{353}

An additional point to be made about the clergy of North Shropshire during the Reformation is their age. In response to an Act of Parliament issued in the first year of Edward VI’s reign, a survey of all colleges, chantries, guilds, free chapels, fraternities and brotherhoods was performed.\textsuperscript{354} George Blount, knight, Reynold Corbet, Richard Forsett and Richard Cowper, gentlemen were responsible for surveying the counties of Shropshire and Staffordshire and presented a certificate dated 20 November in the second year of Edward’s reign.\textsuperscript{355} As already noted in Chapter Two, Richard Forsett as the king’s surveyor confiscated various church goods. Usually the Certificates for Shropshire parishes state that the chantry had nil plate and nil goods. Of the questions asked by these surveyors, the one of interest here is the age of the priests connected with the chantries. Eighteen parishes from North Shropshire were recorded in this section of the certificate, totalling 54 individual clergymen. Five priests, all in Shrewsbury, were 36 years old which was the youngest in this list. The oldest priest was 92 [4 score 12] years old, John Parson in Battlefield parish, most likely connected with the college church. The most common age was 60 years and the most common age group was

\textsuperscript{351} Doran and Durston, \textit{Princes, Pastors and People}. 148.
\textsuperscript{352} Ibid. p. 147.
\textsuperscript{353} Ibid. p. 148.
\textsuperscript{354} For the purposes of this discussion, ‘chantries’ will include all guilds etc.
\textsuperscript{355} Thompson ed., "Certificates of the Shropshire Chantries." p. 335.
men 45-54 years old. The priests in their thirties grew up with the Catholic Church in England and were then trained to serve in a church separated from Rome. The priests in their sixties, after performing worship according to Roman Catholic practice and doctrine would see their parishes through the changes in religious policy until the long reign of Elizabeth I, if they chose or were able to remain parish priests. These were the men who would eventually be replaced by the reformers’ first cohort of educated clergy.

Overall, the parishes in North Shropshire experienced stability in their parish clergy. The area experienced two stages of numerous changes in personnel in the 1540s and then in the late 1550s through to the early 1560s, but once the priest was placed in the parish, he was there for many years. Although this delayed the uptake of educated clergy and may also explain the frustrations of a bishop who found many parishes that did not fully reform, it provided continuity for the congregations during this period of turbulent changes.

How did parish clergy in North Shropshire cope with the changing of their official role, from mediator of the divine to preacher of God’s word? Having the same man ministering to a community while official doctrine shifts could make a general acceptance of the change of role difficult: it was the same man blessing the bread, he may be dressed differently, but what really changed? The words have changed, but does that mean the priest never had the power to channel God’s grace? A number of North Shropshire priests appointed in the 1540s served until the 1560s. Some of the appointments made during Mary’s reign stayed in the

356 Ibid. pp. 335-367. 54 priests: median age, 53 years; mean age, 52.78 years.
parishes until at least the 1580s.\footnote{Apparently Ralph (Randolph) Shawe served the parish of Cound from 1553 until at least 1605. \textit{CCEd}; [12 June 2007].} The ideology behind the role of these men changed during those decades, but they were still the parish priests. The official role changed, but the reality of the personal relationships would require time for adjustments to be made.

Although no guarantee for parish conversion, if a new man came in conjunction with the new words, look and ideas, the changes came in a package. While the new ideas may not be liked or accepted, if they came with a new priest, the congregation was more likely to the acknowledge that something was different from before and cope with the change. The continuity of clergy during a discontinuity of official religion may sound contrary for the capacity of that new doctrine to be accepted into parish life, but if clergy along with lay people can accept the religious reforms, then conversion may follow. Tensions may arise, but there is no explicit evidence of this in North Shropshire. The resignations of clergy may be evidence of conflict within the parish, but they may also have been the result of their unwillingness to continue to minister under a certain doctrine or the inability to continue due to ill health.

The character and belief of the bishop affects the diocese as a whole, determining which actions can be performed publicly and what behaviour must be concealed. The clergy in the individual parishes could help a parish continue in traditional Roman Catholic worship or help them learn how to worship in the Protestant manner. This would depend on both the priest himself and the people of the congregation, but the bishop still had the ability to act if he did not approve of the
priest’s behaviour. North Shropshire slowly acquired clergy educated and trained under the Protestant doctrine, still not completely embracing the new worshipping style over a decade after settlement. Shropshire clergy did not openly incite resistance to secular or church authority, apparently content (or resigned) to serve their cure and obey authority. The clergy lived through the changes with the laity, experiencing the same alterations to the worshipping environment and acceptable beliefs, required to both implement and be impacted by doctrinal changes.
Conclusion:
Most Reformation studies have focussed on the far north or the wealthier south-east of England. The poorer areas of the midlands and west have been largely ignored in projects about Reformation in the sixteenth century. This thesis studying the northern region in the county of Shropshire has demonstrated that many aspects of the generally accepted model of the change from Roman Catholic to English Reformed worship adequately describe the experience of parishioners in Shrewsbury, but not those outside that major town.

Before the Reformation, Shrewsbury had the full wealth of Roman Catholic religious paraphernalia. The wealth of the town made possible sumptuous worship of the kind seen in the south-east. The worshipping environment, physical and aural, was manipulated by the Reformers to transmit and support doctrinal change. Many objects involved in worship were removed from churches and were then destroyed, sold into private hands, hidden or confiscated. The overlapping soundscapes produced by the town church bells changed from a medium of prayer to a communicator of time, information and the call to gather the people.

The rural parishes of North Shropshire, however, only had a few vestments, often no more than two colours. Few had the necessary paraphernalia for burning incense; some even lacked a chalice of their own. General assumptions around pre-Reformation worship are challenged by the evidence of the situation in North Shropshire.

As throughout England, the uncertainty of the period is reflected in parish records, the expectation surrounding the return to Catholic worship is illustrated in the
purchase of items during Mary’s reign, and later, the material uptake of
Elizabethan reformed worship progresses slowly. All Shropshire congregations,
town and rural, felt the impact of the Reformations of the Tudor monarchs in their
parish churches.

The bishops with oversight of North Shropshire parishes conformed to the royal
will. A return to Catholic practice under Mary was supported by a Marian bishop
and compliance to the policies of the Reformed church of Elizabeth was
encouraged by a Marian exile. But the local clergy for the most part remained in
their parishes throughout the changes until they died. The priest or curate was
usually a point of continuity for the parish as the environment of worship and
doctrines were changed around them. The immobility of clergy in Salop slowed
the uptake of a new cohort of educated clergy: this only happened later with
generational change.

Reformers of the mid-sixteenth century altered the environment of worship, the
material culture of religious expression, to communicate their policy and doctrine
in an attempt to educate parishioners nationwide. Changing minds by changing
the environment worked once the Reformed religious policy was in place for a
generation, once those who remembered the traditional beliefs connected with
objects had forgotten or died. This thesis has demonstrated that though the people
of North Shropshire sometimes experienced religion and Reform in different ways
from those in the south and east of England, they nonetheless physically and
audibly experienced the transformation of ideologies.
Appendix


Inv = Extant 1552 Inventory of Church Goods, Yes/No
Ind = Extant 1553 Commissioners’ Indenture, Yes/No
JP = Extant Certificate of the Justices of the Peace, Yes/No
CCEd = First year parish is mentioned in *Clergy of the Church of England Database*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Hundred</th>
<th>Inv Y/N</th>
<th>Ind Y/N</th>
<th>JP Y/N</th>
<th>CCEd</th>
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<td>Acton Burnell</td>
<td>Condover</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>1542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acton Pigott</td>
<td>Condover</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>1541</td>
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<td>Bradford</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td>Albrighton (near Shrewsbury)</td>
<td>Shrewsbury</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
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358 There is a discrepancy between the Hundred of Purslow as described in “Shrewsbury Church Goods” and as defined on the map on *The Parishes and Townships of Shropshire*.
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<sup>359</sup> Archdeaconry of Stafford, Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield.
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