

Lacking churchwarden's accounts, we must use other, much less satisfactory, evidence for how the ecclesiastical changes affected Butley and the adjoining parishes. Evidence from wills reveals that Butley canons were regularly witnesses to local wills, and were asked to sing masses for the souls of the dead, right up to its closure. Indeed Nicholas Palmer, previously Oxburgh, who wrote his first will for Thomas Grey in 1529, was still around writing wills a year after the closure of the Priory. He carried out this service for William Barfote of Boyton in May 1539. Subsequently he became rector of Sternfield.

After this, apart from Richard Nicholson, rector of Boyton from about 1540 until his death in 1557, none of the incumbents of the parishes of Butley, Capel, Chillesford or Wantisden appeared in wills in any capacity until 1567. By this time Robert Forth, son of William, was probably resident in Butley, having appointed Thomas Agas as clerk, and making sure no residual Catholic practices were permitted. Surely this gap of nearly thirty years speaks volumes about confusion over, or resistance to, religious change. It would be rash to infer religious beliefs from preambles to wills, but with little or no clerical influence on testators nearing death during this period, some inferences can be made. The first local will after the Edwardine reforms was that of Thomas Cosyn of Chillesford, dated 23 December 1549. His will peters out with no witnesses, so that administration was granted to his widow because his copyholds had been lawfully surrendered and his goods were of little value. Thus the preamble referring to the 'laudable custom used in the congregation of this Church of England' in connection with his funeral service, may have been inspired by his local, conforming rector.

Next was John Loues, whose will was written by Augustine Brook. It would be interesting to know how Augustine, who had been a boy at the Priory school, felt about all the changes he lived through. Loues was the man who had the Easter sepulchre preserved in his house, so it is not surprising that his preamble is short and to the point.

In the year of the most gracious reign of our most dread sovereign lord King Edward the Sixth. I bequeath my soul to God my saviour and redeemer and my body to be buried in the holy burial of Butley.

William Lanman's will, written towards the end of Edward's reign, may well reveal the name of an incumbent who replaced Richard Nicholson temporarily during that reign, or a minister of another local parish. Unfortunately the Induction Books are incomplete about this time, and in the cases of Butley, Capel and Wantisden they do not list perpetual curates, who were not instituted by bishops. The clerk in question was Henry Johnson, and he was appointed supervisor to the will. A 'clerical hand' is apparent from the script and he probably composed the preamble. He may have been a 'missing' curate of Butley, but this unique reference to him is all we have.

During Mary's reign Augustine Brooke was able to write the Catholic preambles his forbears had been brought up to use, with the references to 'Our Blessed Lady St. Mary and all the blessed company of heaven'. He wrote his father-in-law's will, John Bass, and that of the widow Elizabeth Kensye, both of Butley. He was still writing the wills of parishioners up until his own death in 1575. Perhaps he had his own formula for the introductions, because Robert Myne's will (1567), **Margery Fattur's** (1571) and Rose Dawson's will (1574) all contained the phrase, 'I bequeath my soul into the hands and tuition of Our Heavenly father'. The use of the word 'tuition' may be a clue that he also wrote the long will for Agnes Mawlinge back in 1558.