

LOCAL LAD MAKES GOOD!

Richard Brearley, 1568-1636, Minister of Colne 1599-1636

An amateur family history researcher for over forty years, I've spent the last few years converting files and files of data into user-friendly, illustrated 'stories'.

Of course, it's when you come to write everything up that you discover how little you know! Much is missing: but why did they do that; how did the farm pass to that branch, etc, etc..

Even so, I really thought I could write up my final 'story' in a spare weekend! Maybe I even left it to the last because I thought there'd be nothing more to find, on this rather unexciting line. How wrong could I be, and what an amazing story emerged!

The line is BREARLEYS¹ of Rimington, one of my husband's lines; and our grandchildren have Brearley ancestors back seventeen generations, being descended, in fact, from two of three grandsons of William and Elizabeth Brearley, the latter, at least, of Rymington Meare² at her death in 1586.

Over the years, I've had the privilege of working on common interests with Rimington's Local Historian and Archivist Brian Stott, and he, too, is descended from William and Elizabeth. A significant factor in our recent delightful discovery is that whilst I look at things from a 'family' angle, Brian researches as a local historian, with particular in-depth knowledge of the village of his birth. At the risk of over-simplifying, the work that Brian was doing on the Brearleys' family home, Mutta - see his piece on this website on Wood Farm, subtitled *What's the Matter with Mutta?* - and my noticing sons named in the wrong order in a will, came together and led to the story you'll read below.

There were inconsistencies, contradictions, errors in normally-reliable works; at one point I exclaimed that it was *like plaiting sawdust*, and Brian began an email, *Well here we are 35 years or so on from starting researching the Brearleys and they are still causing confusion*. But there were also the wonderful unexpected explanations and insights from just a little phrase in one of the hundreds of wills and other documents Brian has studied, and my 3am inspirations as to where to look next!

Read on, to enjoy the fruits of our labours!

¹ Brearley, Briarley, Breeley, Brerely, etc., all rendered throughout as BREARLEY, whatever the source material has

² See Brian Stott's *Notes on Rimington Meare/Mere, In Meare/Meer/Meire and Out Meare/Meer/Miere* on the website

Richard Brearley's grandparents, William and Elizabeth Brearley, are his earliest known family. The family home was Mutta, close to the parish and county boundary with Downham, and described in 1586 as a *mansion house*, with an item *in the west end*: this suggests a several-roomed property, though not a *mansion* in today's terms. Elizabeth died in January, 1587, appointing as executors her grandsons Richard and his younger brother, James, and, after small bequests to big brother William, dividing her estate between the younger two: William, as the eldest son, would inherit the small family farm from his father Hugh, who had inherited it from his father William.

Richard's parents, Hugh Brearley and Agnes Spencer, married at Gisburn in 1565. Baptisms are recorded for two children, Jenet, probably baptised in 1567 but dying in 1572, and Robert, baptised in January, 1569, but dying young – that is, unless there was an error in the parish register, and Richard was recorded as 'Robert', which is certainly not a Brearley family name?

Summarising,³ whilst Gisburn's surviving Baptism Registers begin in 1558, William's baptism is not recorded, Jenet's probably is, but she is not named, Richard's is not recorded or is recorded as Robert, and James' is not recorded.

Sigh.

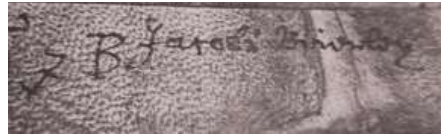
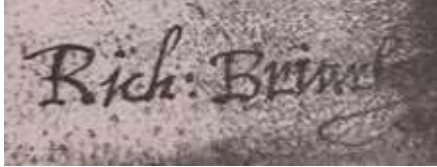
And later in life, Richard would need proof of his baptism! I subsequently found that Richard was aged twenty-eight in January, 1597: he had, almost certainly, been wrongly recorded as 'Robert' in January 1569.

Agnes died in 1606 and was buried at Gisburn. Hugh's will, drawn up in October, 1609, identifies him as a husbandman (small-scale farmer). In it, he doesn't follow the norm of naming his sons in order of their birth, and therefore status, but in the order Richard, William and James: how come was Richard, by then, of a higher status than his brothers? Hugh's residual estate is divided between the three, but William and James are appointed executors, perhaps because Richard was living in Colne.

A look at the Online Parish Clerk website for Lancashire, which gives easy access to transcripts of parish registers, quickly revealed a Colne marriage for Richard and burials there of himself and his wife; but there was no indication of his occupation.

³ and drawing attention to the unreliability of the earliest Gisburn registers

However, Brian located a 1612 deed of which we'd only previously seen a transcript. It was signed by Richard and his brother James, and not only did Richard sign in a confident, educated script, whilst James managed only his initials, he was described as of Colne, and a *clerk*.



This word was slightly ambiguous then: it could describe an ordained priest - about whom we might today use the term *cleric* or, more formally, *clerk in Holy Orders* - or it might be an abbreviation of *parish clerk*, a layperson employed to keep parish paperwork, and especially the registers, in good order; today, perhaps, the vicar's PA!

Had Richard really been educated to the level where he might become a parish clerk?

Colne is outside my areas of particular interest; but I remembered that I had an old guide book to the church:⁴ dated 1949, it had belonged to my mother (I'm a hoarder).

Oh, my goodness!

There, on a list of Colne 'incumbents' - was Richard!

THE COLNE INCUMBENTS		
1	Sir John Hychyn or Hegyn	Living 1500
2	Sir William Fairbank	1520
3	Sir Robert Blakey	1535
4	Sir John Fielden	1551
5	Roger Blakey	1592
6	Sir Lawrence Ambler	1596
7	Richard Brierley	Died 1635
8	Thomas Warriner, A.M.	Living 1645
9	Thomas Whalley	Died 1646-7
10	John Horrocks, A.M.	1669
11	James Hargreaves	1693
12	Thomas Tatham	Resigned 1708-9

⁴ MACVICAR, J. Ross, *Colne Parish Church*, 1949

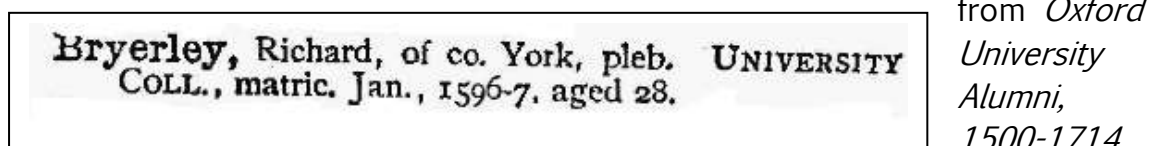
I'll say more later on the legal term 'incumbent': Richard might have been described as the minister, pastor or curate; today we'd think of him as 'the vicar'. He was certainly an ordained priest.

And here I must confess a particular interest: I'm a priest myself! To find one in my family history was so exciting!

But how could this have come about? His father, Hugh, after all, was little more than a subsistence farmer, with no money to spend on luxuries like education.

The explanation suggested by a leader in this field of research⁵ is that Richard might have had some physical disability preventing his earning a living on the land, and received an education beyond that of his brothers to enable him to pursue a less physical occupation; and clerical and legal careers offered that rare opportunity for social mobility within the rigid class system of Tudor England.⁶ No evidence has been found to prove that Richard had a physical disability; but the theory would explain a lot.

And, in fact, in January, 1597 Richard *matriculated* at, that is, began attending, University College, Oxford.



pleb refers to his father's status as an 'ordinary' man, not a nobleman or gentleman.

And the added bonus to this 'find'⁷ was his age!

Unlike other Alumni records, however, Richard's doesn't indicate that he graduated. I was to find one good piece of evidence that he didn't, and another implying that he did!

But he certainly started University - so what was it like?

⁵ O'DAY, Rosemary, *The English Clergy: The Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession, 1558-1642*, p1

⁶ the suggestion of physical disability takes us back to his baptism, and the thought (admittedly pure speculation!) that Agnes might have given birth to weak, premature twins, naming them Richard and Robert; Robert had died unbaptised, and Richard, not expected to survive, had been baptised hurriedly, in the midst of domestic confusion about which son had survived

⁷ which took a while - I only tried about six (!) variants of the surname and abandoned the search. I returned to it in desperation, and there he was!!

University College claims to be the oldest Oxford College, but none of the Tudor buildings remain, major rebuilding having taken place in the early 17th century. Until the early 19th century, all undergraduates, and therefore Richard, read for a Bachelor of Arts degree, which included the study of Latin and Greek texts, mathematics, geometry, philosophy and theology. Considering that, at the end of the 16th century, the main purpose of the universities was the *training of men for ministry*,⁸ it seems strange that divinity, the preparation for a spiritual leadership role, wasn't taught until post-graduate level, and that Richard missed this! But universities did have a highly spiritual ethos: another scholar⁹ quotes Paul Hentzner¹⁰ who visited Oxford in 1598: *The students live a life almost monastic*, with appointed times for prayer and study, scriptural reading during mealtimes, and the wearing of *habit ... almost the same as that of the Jesuits*.

This is an important indicator of Richard's spiritual 'formation' as a priest. At twenty-eight, he was also a mature student, with some life experience, when most undergraduates were sixteen to twenty.

But how he spent the decade up to entering Oxford, we can only speculate. His early education must remain speculation, too, but a school is recorded in Gisburn in 1570 - exactly the right time for Richard.

Colne was in the Diocese of Chester, formed in 1541 from the enormous Diocese of Lichfield; but the Brearleys lived in the Diocese of York. However, an education at one of their nearest grammar schools, five miles away in Clitheroe, eight miles away in Whalley, ten miles away in Colne, or thirteen miles away in Burnley would all place Richard in Lancashire, and, significantly, as we'll see, in each case in the Parish of Whalley, of which Colne was a chapelry. After all, just crossing Ings Beck from Mutta into Downham would take him into the Parish of Whalley and Chester Diocese!

Sadly, no 16th century records survive for any of these grammar schools; but, as it would be almost impossible to enter university without a grammar school education, we must presume it for Richard. The predominant subject taught in them was Latin, leading to study of the Classics and eventual university entry; often scholars were expected to converse in Latin.¹¹

⁸ BULLOCK, FWB, *A History of Training for the Ministry of the Church of England in England and Wales from 1800-1874, Introduction 1539-1799*, pp3-4

⁹ BUSSBY, Frederick, *A History and Source Book on Training for the Ministry in the Church of England, 1511-1717*, p 142, <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/9739>

¹⁰ a German lawyer who published an account of his travels in England during the late Elizabethan era

¹¹ GOMEZ, Francis Gerald, *The Endowed Schools of Lancashire From The Seventeenth to the Early Eighteenth Century*: <https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/30041/1/381021.pdf>

What then happened around 1586, when he and his peers left Grammar School, and many of them entered university, but he didn't? I've found no trace of him between then and Oxford. Perhaps he did try to work on the Mutta farm; perhaps he earned a little as the local scribe; perhaps he was 'saving up' to go to university; perhaps he was too ill to work at all; the possibilities are endless.

But, wherever he'd been in the previous ten years, in 1597 he was living in the County of York - probably at home at Mutta; and, despite following a very different path, he appears to have remained close to his brothers, William and James. What must they have thought of him going such an unimaginable distance from home, especially if they felt that he was particularly vulnerable!

Once in Oxford, how long did he stay? Did he, indeed, graduate?

The chart of Incumbents in the Guide Book had come from the 'go-to' history of Colne, James CARR's *Annals and Stories of Colne and Neighbourhood*, and clearly suggests that Richard was a graduate. In the 16th century, 'Sir' was a respectful title for clergy without university degrees. The term 'Dom', previously used for graduates, was dying out. Carr's unsubstantiated list suggests that Richard was one of just three graduates out of the eight clergy serving between 1500 and 1650.¹²

But had he had time to graduate? As respectable a source as the *Victoria County History*¹³ seems to assume - and Carr accepts it without challenge - that Richard began the earliest extant Colne 'parish' registers on 27th March, 1599, at the start of the then new year. Two years to graduate and be in post?

Finally, proof was found in the online CCEd: the *Clergy of the Church of England database*. This recent and ongoing project is a curious, perhaps over-ambitious, and very cumbersome, attempt to list all Church of England clergy since the Reformation, and, drawn from Ordination records, its accuracy can be relied upon. They're making progress - he hadn't been on a few months previously. But I don't think they'll get to me for a long time!

¹² Warriner's post-nominal indicates a master's degree. A protégé of Archbishop Laud, appointed a couple of months after Richard died, in 1645 he was dragged from a church service by two Roundhead soldiers, but escaped when the congregation intervened: CARR, *Annals*, p151. He lay low in Yorkshire thereafter, his patron having been executed in January of that year.

¹³ 'Townships: Colne', in *A History of the County of Lancaster: Volume 6*, ed. William Farrer and J Brownbill (London, 1911), pp552-536, f.note 165; <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/lancs/vol6/pp522-536#fnn165>

It lists Richard not as a graduate, but as a *literatus* - a cleric without a degree, but judged by a bishop to possess sufficient learning to qualify for ordination. It also gives the dates and places of his two ordinations, as deacon and priest, enabling me to obtain a copy of the entries in the Ordination Book, held at Chester Record Office: what a challenge - almost illegible writing and in Latin, but what a wonderful find!

We mustn't assume that Richard's failure to graduate was due to academic weakness: the Church, at that time, didn't pay for a prospective cleric's education, even though a degree was becoming a national requirement. ... *if the ordinand had not the family resources to pay for his education he must depend either on wealthy relatives or friends of the family ... Sometimes the poor student was obliged to come down from the University.*¹⁴

So what was the next step?

A candidate for ordination had to either find a patron who might have several posts at their disposal, or identify a particular vacancy and approach the relevant patron. He could, of course, have found favour with a patron at any time before entering university, and been encouraged to proceed.

When a patron supported an applicant, they 'presented' him to the bishop, who would examine him on scripture, Latin, aspects of Canon Law and his theological position, and, if satisfied,¹⁵ agree to his ordination and appointment. At this point, evidence of baptism was required: the Gisburn registers being unhelpful, testimony would be sought from people present at the ceremony. He couldn't be ordained without a post to go to, and most bishops preferred the candidate to have met and been approved by parishioners before ordination. To be ordained deacon, a candidate had to have been resident for six months in the relevant diocese,¹⁶ and, from 1575, to be ordained priest, a cleric theoretically had to have served at least six months as a deacon, although this rule was often disregarded.

¹⁴ BUSSBY, p163

¹⁵ it was the bishop's personal decision - there were no set standards

¹⁶ apart from time at university

The Bishop of Chester was, at this time, Richard Vaughan, a convinced Calvinist¹⁷ in active opposition to growing Arminianism which rejected it.¹⁸ He was, however, in his next post as Bishop of London, generally sympathetic to moderate Puritan clergy, who were content to abide by the rules of the Calvinist Church of England (rather than extreme Puritans who sought to abolish bishops in favour of elders, and establish a form of Presbyterianism).



Bishop Richard Vaughan, Bishop of Chester and Richard's ordaining bishop.

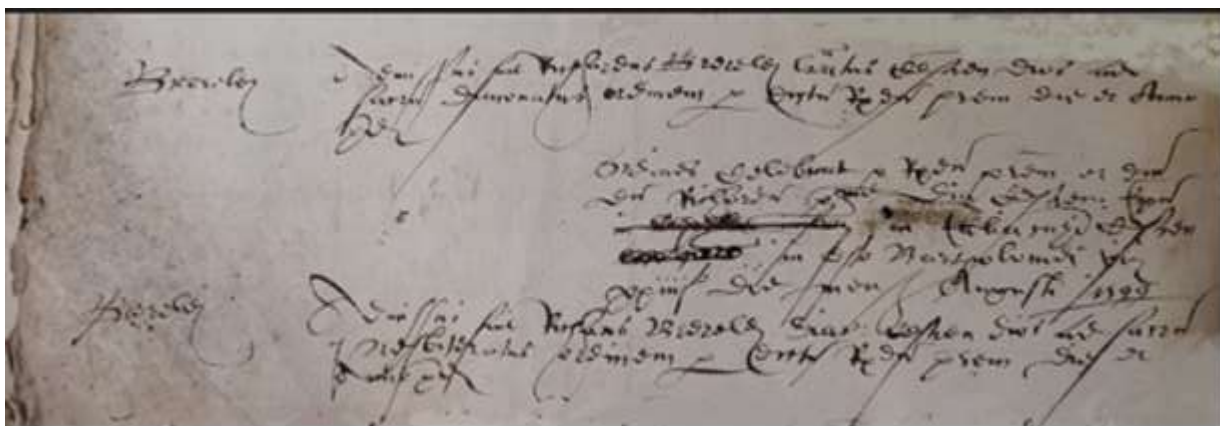
We can't know if Richard was known to the Bishop prior to university, or if a patron's favour was influential, but, despite the urgency for more graduate clergy, Bishop Vaughan was willing to ordain and appoint Richard, albeit to a poorly-paid chapelry curacy rather than a parish. As only graduates were authorised to preach¹⁹ - and not all graduates - Richard would read out 'set' sermons. In tension with the drive for more graduate clergy, there was a desire for more pastorally-gifted clergy: perhaps it was in this area that Richard impressed the bishop.

Whatever the arguments for or against him, he was ordained deacon in the Bishop's private chapel at his palace at Haward the 8th August, 1599 and, only sixteen days later on 24th, St. Bartholomew's Day, ordained priest in Chester Cathedral. Whether by intent or happy co-incidence, the date coincided with the Colne annual holiday and fair, St. Bartholomew being the church's patron saint.

¹⁷ in very broad terms, Calvinists believe that humankind is wholly sinful, and that salvation is by grace alone, but is predestined, so limited; they hold to the sovereignty of God and the authority of the Bible; unlike Lutherans, they deny the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. A modified Calvinism is articulated in the Seventeenth of the Elizabethan Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563, which states that God's purpose is the salvation of all.

¹⁸ Arminianism emphasises human free will: individuals have the choice to accept or reject God's grace

¹⁹ BULLOCK, p5



Richard's Ordinations as Deacon and Priest

Bishop's Act Book c.1562-1611 (EDA 1/3), courtesy of Chester Record Office

Because Colne wasn't a parish, but one of the most northerly chapelries in the huge Parish of Whalley, he was licensed as curate. Today, the term 'curate' refers to a recently-ordained cleric in a training position; then it referred to the person with responsibility for a parish or chapelry – and the the 'cure (care) of souls' within it. Richard is also referred to as the 'incumbent', meaning 'post-holder'.²⁰

He held the post for thirty-six years until his death in 1636, and thus served during the final years of Elizabeth's reign, the whole of James I's, and the first ten years of Charles I's.

Lay patrons might have a variety of reasons to favour a candidate, but clerical patrons presented like-minded people. *One probably cannot overestimate the effects of talent-spotting by many preachers and incumbents.*²¹ Nothing, beyond names, is known of the Gisburn clergy of Richard's youth and early adulthood, apart from Richard Simpson, minister and schoolmaster of Gisburn in the early 1570s, through whom we know of the existence of the school.

His story illustrates the complexity of influences on Richard and, indeed, the whole local area: although a Protestant minister, Simpson converted (or reverted) to Roman Catholicism and, for this, was imprisoned in York. On his release, he became a Catholic Priest, ministering in various parts of Lancashire, and in hiding from time to time. He suffered imprisonment, banishment and, finally, in 1588, martyrdom.²²

²⁰ Colne is described as *neither a Rectory nor a vicarage. But ... held ... in such a manner as is deemed equivalent to an Institution* ie an incumbency: WALKER, *Sufferings of the Clergy*, quoted by CARR, James, p151 (footnote)

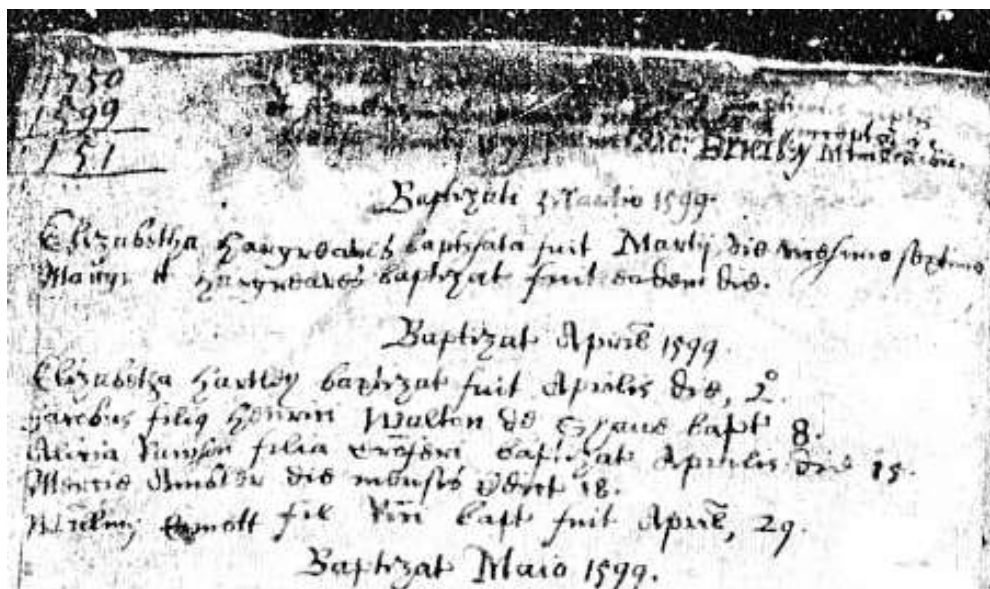
²¹ O'DAY, R, p 141

²² <https://www.gisburn.org.uk/index.php/gisburn-history>

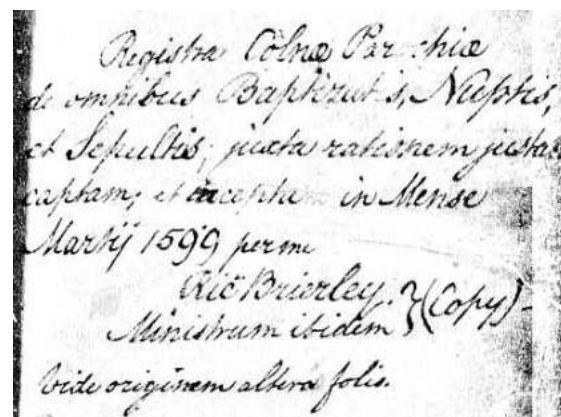
However, the Vicar of Whalley in the 1590s, Robert Osbaldeston, the patron of Colne, was a Calvinist, and his own patron, the Archbishop of Canterbury,²³ was highly intolerant of Puritans;²⁴ this, and Bishop Vaughan's position, suggest that, at least at ordination, Richard was a Calvinist, conforming to the 'Elizabethan Settlement', which defined the Church of England under this queen.

There may also have been any number of social connections at play on Richard's behalf, furthering his advancement; for example, John Nutter, of the Goldshawbooth family living seven miles from the Brearleys at Rimington, was appointed Dean of Chester in 1589.

But what about those Colne registers, started in March, 1599, before Richard was ordained or in post? Brian took one look and immediately saw that the heading identifying Richard had been squeezed in later!



The subsequent deterioration in the register makes us grateful for a later transcription, still within the register:



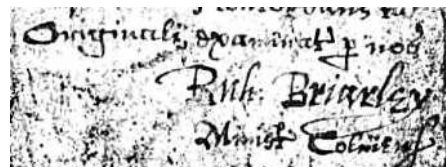
²³ John Whitgift

²⁴ HAIGH, Christopher, *Reformation & Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p 326

It would appear that Richard simply endorsed the record as official and correct. The handwriting of the original doesn't change when Richard is appointed: it seems that Colne had a parish clerk. Clergy were directed to keep registers in 1538, but few have survived, not least because they were on loose sheets of paper and kept in damp conditions. In 1597, it was decreed that they should be kept on parchment and this the clerk introduced in 1599.

Carr also comments that Richard *wrote a good hand*, but he may have been looking at the clerk's writing! Although multiple spelling variants were still common, in the first years of the 17th century Richard seems to have settled on the spelling *Briarley* for his surname.

Here, he certifies some Bishop's Transcripts²⁵ identifying himself as *minister* of Colne.



Richard is in post, and to all appearances a conforming Calvinist. But it's very difficult to try to place him in context as incumbent of Colne, or to be certain about his theological position, at any particular time.

Skip the following, in a smaller font, if this aspect of local history doesn't interest you; but it would give you helpful background for understanding Richard.

The English Church was in a state of flux following various upheavals. Firstly, the Henrican Reformation (1527-1547) brought the break with 'Rome' (i.e. Papal authority) and the Dissolution of the Monasteries, but the English Church remained, like Henry VIII, Catholic in worship and doctrine; the extreme Edwardian Reformation (1547-1553) imposed Reformed Protestantism along Genevan and Calvinistic lines; the Counter-Reformation under the Roman Catholic Queen Mary (1553-58) tried to return to pre-1527; the Elizabethan Settlement (1559-63) heralded a more inclusive, but still Calvinistic, church; the Jacobean church (1603-1625) attempting to re-incorporate both Catholics and extreme Protestants, satisfied neither, leading to polarisation under Charles I.

²⁵ copies of church registers submitted annually to the Diocese

Therefore, unless there's specific evidence about a parish/chapel or cleric, at no point between 1527 and 1640 is it possible to state what sort of worship was taking place anywhere, let alone in Lancashire, where records are particularly sparse. Widely regarded - with truth - as backward, violent and ill-educated,²⁶ Lancashire clung to the 'old religion' not least because it knew no other: large parishes, neglected church buildings and poor communications attracted few clergy; the more attractive - richer - parishes attracted 'absentee clergy', holding multiple posts and leaving their parishes to poorly-educated curates.²⁷ Furthermore, until 1541 the area was part of the Diocese of Lichfield, and largely ignored because of the sheer impossibility of governing it at a distance.

The new Diocese of Chester, created from the Chester Archdeaconry of Lichfield and the Richmond Archdeaconry of the Diocese of York, was no better: its administrative centre in the far south had little contact with areas north of the River Ribble, and it was almost impossible to communicate with the far north. Furthermore, although the principle, in 1541, was to use the riches of dissolved monasteries to establish five new dioceses, the funds were not forthcoming: the new Chester Diocese was one of the poorest in England - so poor that the first bishop could no longer afford the archdeacons who had at least been attempting to control the Archdeaconries of Richmond and Chester!²⁸



On the whole, Lancashire maintained the *status quo* - catholicism overlaid with superstition and folk religion - muddling along under the care of clergy who were Catholic at heart²⁹ and locally-educated assistant clergy who knew nothing of Reformed religion. Nationally, the Elizabethan age saw a determined rise in educational standards for ordinands and clergy, but still, by 1592, Lancashire had only 103 graduate clergy, compared to 273 *poorly learned*.³⁰

By the time Richard took up his Colne post, four years before the death of the Queen, the emerging Church of England was settling into the *via media* of reformed catholicity. Elizabethan policy and Prayer Book sought outward conformity - without asking too many questions! Concessions to Catholics included the use of wafers rather than bread, and permission to bow to the altar. *The laity were more concerned with ceremonial than doctrine and ... the ceremonial emphasis of the services was left largely as a matter of local option.*³¹

Puritans were discontent, but pinned their hopes on the accession of James I & VI, whose initial encouragement, quickly withdrawn, undermined the *via media* of the Elizabethan Prayer Book, to the extent that by 1633 the Archbishop of York, Richard Neile, could say that, in Chester Diocese, the Prayer Book was *so neglected and abused in most places by chopping, changing, altering, omitting and adding at the ministers' own pleasure ... [and] so unregarded that many knew not how to read the service according to the Book.*³²

²⁶ HAIGH, p27

²⁷ in 1590, a third of all Lancashire benefices were held by absentees: HAIGH, p238

²⁸ HAIGH, p8

²⁹ John Fielden, curate of Colne in 1551, who had left by 1565 but continued as Rural Dean of Blackburn, was arrested in 1570 as a *recusant [catholic] priest*. HAIGH, p212; of George Dobson, Vicar of Whalley to 1580, HAIGH writes, *Though he had served the Church of England for more than twenty years, Dobson's contribution to the survival of traditional religion was probably as great as that of any recusant priest.* HAIGH, p218

³⁰ USHER, R.G: *Reconstruction of the English Church*, vol 1, 1910, p242, quoted by HAIGH, p240

³¹ HYLSON-SMITH, K, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II, Volume 1, 1558-1688*, p80

³² RICHARDSON, RC, *Puritanism in north-west England: a regional study of the diocese of Chester to 1642*, 1972 p39

And so to Colne, which was, by Richard's time, no longer an agricultural community, but a growing woollen (kersey)³³ textile town with a population of 1,500. Along with Burnley, it had served the home-based woollen industry in its locality with a water-driven fulling mill since, at least, the 13th century. But, serving the farming communities from an even wider area, there were also cattle markets on 24th February, 1st May (May Day) and 29th September (Michaelmas). The prominent Norman Church of St. Bartholomew was largely rebuilt in 1515 and was the social and economic, as well as the religious, centre of the town, the weekly markets being held in the unenclosed churchyard.

There were some small gentry families, the leading one being a branch of the Townleys of Burnley, but no single leading family like the Bolton-by-Bowland Pudsays who owned much of Rimington. By the time of the 1642-51 Civil War, the town was overwhelmingly Parliamentary: but we have no political information for earlier years. Details of Colne chapelry³⁴ itself are sparse until after the Civil War, even the comprehensive *Victoria County History*³⁵ providing nothing more than a list of somewhat random dates and events.

Carr, the author of *Annals, etc.*, writing in 1878, expands on the difficulties:

The living of Colne ... is not, and never has been, a rich one. Offering no special attraction, and situate somewhat apart from the great highways of the country, it would doubtless, in bygone days, be viewed with disfavour by men who had won, or were likely to win, a share in the world's applause, and be tolerated only by unambitious ones, the memory of whose life-work would quickly fade away. Little wonder, then, that, with few exceptions, contemporaneous records are searched in vain for information respecting its occupants.

Was Richard, then, one of the *unambitious ones, the memory of whose life-work would quickly fade away*? Certainly, he's been virtually forgotten, but this may be due to prevailing historical, religious and political circumstances, rather than a reflection on his own service and character.

Even if Richard spent only a short time at University his exposure to Reformed ideas there would set him apart from the numerous unreformed, catholic-leaning traditionalists of Lancashire, and make his candidature acceptable to the bishop: Oxford University was *uniformly Calvinist until 1607*.³⁶

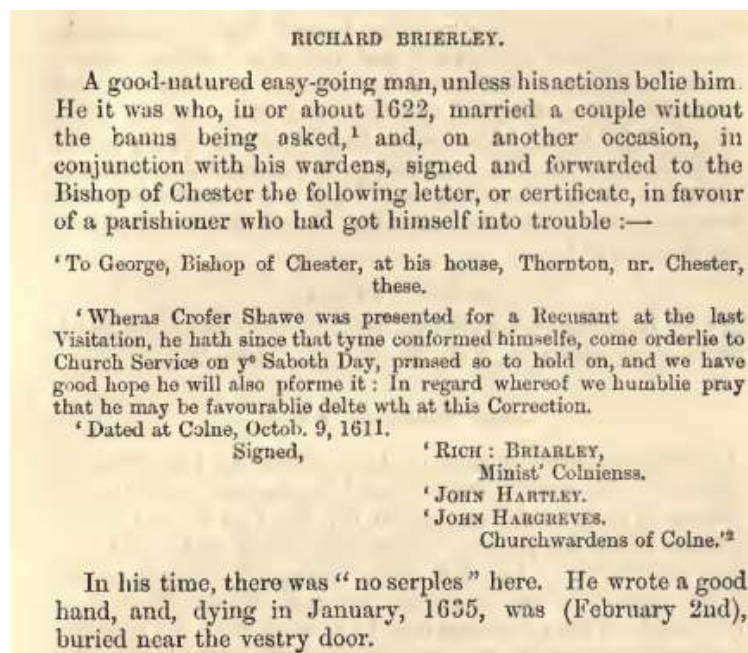
³³ a thick, sturdy cloth made with poorer quality wool; the back of the cloth was napped and shorn after fulling, producing a dense, warm fabric with a smooth back.

³⁴ which also included Barrowford, Foulridge, Trawden and Great and Little Marsden

³⁵ pp. 522-536. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/lancs/vol6/pp522-536>

³⁶ HYLSON-SMITH, K, p129

Despite acknowledging his lack of information, Carr makes quite sweeping judgements on the qualities of Colne incumbents! Richard, he imagines, was:



There could be any number of explanations for his marrying someone without calling the banns - compassion when there'd been an administrative slip-up or one of the parties had lost the banns certificate from a second church, a pastoral emergency (e.g. one party was dying), the clergy of another parish had been unco-operative - or, that Richard himself had forgotten to call them!³⁷

Carr's final paragraph is more significant: *In his time, there was “no serples” here*, i.e. no surplice was worn (although the statement, covering a thirty-six year period, is completely unsubstantiated).

By Canon (ie Church) Law, clergy were required to wear, for all church services, white surplice, black tippet (scarf) and (if appropriate) academic hood, over a long, often fur-lined, black cassock or gown.³⁸ However, many Reformed clergy, especially Puritans, refused to wear the surplice, seeing it as a relic of ‘Popery’ which, they felt, the Elizabethan Settlement should have removed: they led services in everyday clothes.



³⁷ such a marriage, was, nevertheless, invalid, but usually ‘rectified’ as soon as possible.

³⁸ the clerical collar was a later development

This may have been Richard's position: the church did possess a surplice,³⁹ but, Carr maintains, he didn't wear it. It seems a rebellious way to begin a first post if he'd been appointed as a conformist, although his immediate predecessor refused to wear a surplice in his next parish,⁴⁰ so presumably had refused at Colne. And, unlike many who refused, he never seems to have been disciplined for the offence; in fact, in 1610 he's described as *well-affected*, i.e. loyal and conforming.⁴¹

A further clue to his theological position can perhaps be inferred from his friendship with Roger Brearley, the (perhaps-inadvertent) founder of the Grindletonians, regarded by many historians as a forerunner of the Society of Friends (Quakers). Despite both groups now being classed as extreme non-conformists, they were bitterly opposed by the Puritans, who held the Bible to be the prime authority, whereas the Grindletonians and Quakers rejected obedience to the Bible as 'legalism', and focused on the Holy Spirit's working within individuals. Roger, however, self-identified as a conforming, mainstream Calvinist and, as such, probably held common ground with Richard.

It's possible that the two were distantly related, but no connection's been found, and Roger hailed from the Rochdale area. He came to Gisburn - the Brearleys' family church - in 1613 as assistant to the Puritan vicar, Henry Hoyle. In Hoyle's absence, in 1615, he caused an outcry when he preached without showing the churchwardens a licence, and baptised a child without making the Sign of the Cross on its forehead.

He was moved to Grindleton, a chapel-of-ease in Waddington parish, as perpetual curate,⁴² and, under his leadership, the congregation there grew at the expense of surrounding parishes; unsurprisingly, those with Puritan clergy, including Gisburn and Giggleswick, protested! He was, nevertheless, cleared of all charges by the Diocesan authorities at York, who would be well-aware of Puritan bias. After a time at Kildwick, his wife's home parish, he moved to Burnley - and into the Diocese of Chester: although movement between York and Chester wasn't unusual, one wonders if Richard had some influence in his being offered this post, Colne and Burnley being adjacent chapelries. Roger spent the last nine years of his life as incumbent of Burnley, dying in 1637.

In February, 1636, Roger assisted Richard's widow in obtaining probate: he was clearly a trusted family friend. The religious preamble to a will often indicates a particular theological position: although there's no indication that Roger was present when Richard dictated his will - he wasn't a witness - the preamble to their wills is almost identical.

³⁹ see later

⁴⁰ Lawrence Ambler, in Whitworth, *VCH*

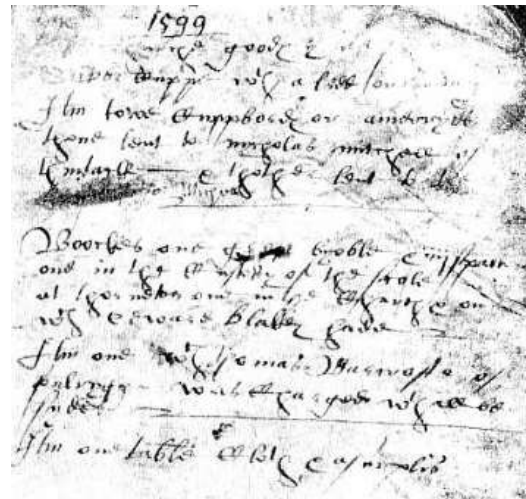
⁴¹ *VCH*, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/lancs/vol6/pp522-536#fnn165>

⁴² it is often said that he 'took over' the 'disused' or 'redundant' church there, but this is incorrect, and would, of course, have been illegal

As a final reflection on Carr's statement that *contemporaneous records are searched in vain for information respecting early Colne clergy*, the impression grows that Richard was very good at 'keeping under the radar'! There were thirty-one market towns in Lancashire in his time, and in twenty-one, *signs of Puritanism have been discovered*:⁴³ Colne isn't among them, although Burnley and Padiham are. There's no record of any complaint to Diocesan authorities against him or the chapelry. If he had Puritan tendencies, the alleged rejection of the surplice is the only hint which has come down to us. Personally, I believe the evidence points to his being a conforming Calvinist; but – I note the warning that *The unostentatious, conforming puritan minister who did not publish is an elusive figure who can escape the notice of the historian as he did that of the Church governors in his own day*.⁴⁴

Back to Richard's early years in Colne, he probably received the same stipend as his predecessor-but-one, Roger Blakey - £4 per year⁴⁵ paid by the Vicar of Whalley - and the use of glebe land.⁴⁶ With, at least at first, no dependents, a 1609 inheritance from his father, perhaps some rental income,⁴⁷ and his housing provided, Richard probably survived without needing to augment his income with farming, as did many of his contemporaries – or, like Blakey, by performing clandestine marriages!⁴⁸ No details exist of the housing provided, which varied greatly from post to post: he may even have been in lodgings.

A church inventory of 1599, perhaps taken as a matter of course when he was appointed, survives in the registers:



⁴³ RICHARDSON, R.C., p 13

⁴⁴ RICHARDSON, R.C., p 23

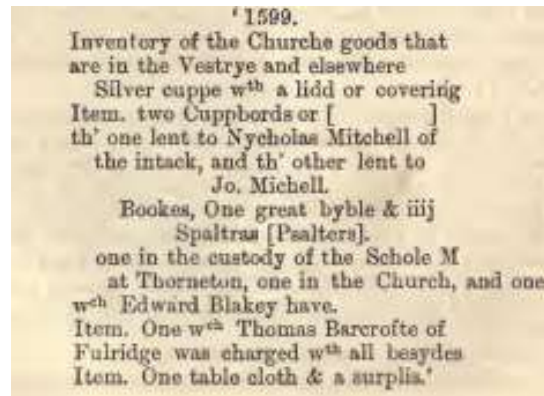
⁴⁵ in 1597 a Lancashire farm bailiff earned £2-8s per annum, and a farm labourer £1-5s: HAIGH, p 228

⁴⁶ regarded as the incumbent's own property

⁴⁷ see his will, later

⁴⁸ a practise continued by his successor (Richard's immediate predecessor): HAIGH, p238-9

Carr, following a later transcription within the registers, suggests:



The lidded silver cup is a ciborium for consecrated or unconsecrated wafers; this disappeared in Cromwell's time. There's no mention of a chalice or Communion cup. The cupboards are identified as aumbries, where the Reserved Sacrament had been kept in Roman Catholic times, and which were now obsolete, the word not even recognised by a late 19th century historian!

The table-cloth would, at Services of Holy Communion, cover a wooden table, although there's always the possibility that the original stone altar had never been removed under Edward VI, and that this was unacceptable to Richard. Whatever he found in use in 1599 was replaced, probably early in Richard's incumbency, in the reign of James I, 1603-25.⁴⁹

The new, dark oak Table probably stood lengthways down the nave, bare except during services of Holy Communion. At the Restoration, in 1660, it would be moved to the chancel (the east end of the church), remaining there until the major restorations of 1889, when it was moved to the South (now Memorial) Chapel (known as the Barnside Chapel in Richard's time⁵⁰) along with part of the chancel screen.

In early 2024, as a result of this research, its history was revealed to the current Vicar, the frontals were removed, and it's hoped it might be used in the future as originally intended, covered only by a *fayre whyte linnen cloth*.⁵¹ Why not go and see it!

⁴⁹ It is referred to as a *Jacobean Communion Table* by MACVICAR, p18 and (presumably following MACVICAR, as no other references have been found) by HARRISON, Dorothy (ed), *The History of Colne*, p100

⁵⁰ and belonging to the Towneleys of Barnside, Colne

⁵¹ as specified in the Elizabethan Prayer Book



Richard's Communion Table, intended to stand alone, in simplicity.

The reredos may have been moved to the chapel from the chancel around 1898, when a new one was installed there; the stained glass is late 19th century.

The font was given by a Lawrence Towneley, of Barnside, but opinion is divided about the date,⁵² probably due to confusion between various so-named family members.

Whatever its true date, Richard used it, as has every incumbent since.



The earliest surviving gravestone, dated 1606, is from Richard's time.

Early in his incumbency, a problem arose with non-payment of burial fees. The churchwardens and others met on 3rd June, 1601 to draw up a memorandum clarifying the obligations of those seeking burial for loved ones. Carr reproduces it from a copy in the registers:⁵³

⁵² National Heritage Listing and *Victoria County History*, which has early 16th century & *Annals* which has 1519, versus Wikipedia and WikiTree, which have 1590; an almost identical font at Bolton-by-Bowland was regarded by Pevsner as *early 16th century*.

⁵³ pp 137-8

'Foreasmuch as there be [complaints] in this pyrish of Colne that, whereas the friends of those who depart this life are willinge and deayrous to commit their Bodies to Cristian buryall within the church [1 yard], yet [are] afterwards verie negligent, and shirke to pay that which is of right the customary due for the same to the use of the church, so that the Churchwardens are greatlie troubled with the notinge of it, and oftentimes it will not be paid without [] or sitting.

Therefore wee the Churchwardens of Colne for the time being, and others the most substantial in the parish, whose names and hand markes are heereunder writne, doo Apoint, Order, Deem, and Award that whosoever, from henceforth, shall Bury their dead within the church, shall pay *for a childe that is brought uppon a woman's heead* Twenty-pence, and for every other person upon a beare, whether it be man or woman, or sine woman dying in childbeed, for such person or persons whatsoever, shall pay to the Churchwardens of that Circuit before the Burial, *iii. iiijd.* And that every such Churchwarden shall make a true account of all such receipts to his fellow-Churchwardens and the minister, and such others of the parishioners as shall willingelie come to heere their accounts. And, for the better Observation of this our Order, wee do Will and Require that the Gravemaster, upon payne of presentment and also our displeasure, doo not Breake the Soyle before hee be certified from the said Churchwardens of the same Circuit from whence the dead body shall come. . . . Dated and subscribed this third day of June, 1601.'

Carr explains the italicised words:

Interesting, and very curious, is that expression, "*Uppon a woman's heead.*" It carries us back in fancy to other days—days when coffins were rarely used, when entire parishes united to buy a bier, and when even a priest's body was carried to the grave in a sack on a man's back. The meaning of this burial phrase is obvious when read in conjunction with the context. Colne mothers, by adopting the plan of bringing their dead children on their heads, or perhaps, more strictly speaking, on their shoulders, avoided the necessity of a bier and the payment of the higher fee its use entailed. Little wonder, then, that the practice found favour, especially amongst the poor and parsimonious. In such a case no coffin would be used, but enveloped only in some decent covering, the little bodies would be laid to rest.

Richard not being a licensed preacher, in the same year, the churchwardens complained that the Vicar of Whalley had not fulfilled his obligations to the chapelry to provide a sermon once a quarter.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ VCH

After ten years in post, on 6th November, 1609, at the age of forty-one and eleven days after the burial of his father, Richard married Ellen Fenton at Colne.⁵⁵

It's tempting to ask if this was a co-incidence, or if he waited for his father to die? Perhaps he didn't previously consider his income sufficient to support a wife; perhaps his father disapproved of clerical marriage. However, no licence has been found for the marriage, and if the marriage took place 'after banns', the first 'calling' would be at least three weeks before the wedding, pre-dating Hugh's death. Indeed, if Richard was, as we've surmised, physically disabled, he may have relied heavily upon his family, and been urged by his ageing father to marry.

Nothing's known for certain of Ellen, but she may have been the daughter of Richard Fenton whose wife was buried at Colne the following January. The surname's quite rare in the Colne registers: there seems to be just one family. If the James Fenton who married a few weeks before Ellen is her brother, it suggests that she was a younger woman, and a spinster.

They were married for 24 years, but there were no children.

It's not often realised that the infamous story of the 'Pendle Witches' begins in Colne - at Colne Fields, just two fields east of the church, where pedlar John Law was accosted by Alizon Device, *en route* to Pendle in March, 1612. Did Richard minister to him as he lay, paralysed by a stroke, at a local inn? What, indeed, was it like to minister amongst a people whom, today, we widely think of as in abject fear of devils and witches' curses, and looking for anyone to blame for sudden illness and death or even minor misfortunes?

A modern, wide-ranging study of the Lancashire Witches⁵⁶ includes an essay⁵⁷ suggesting that witchcraft thrived in areas where Protestantism had never fully triumphed over Catholicism, which had then, in untaught, undisciplined and superstitious minds, degenerated into a 'religion' of magic charms and curses. The essay's author argues strongly that this was the case across the whole Parish of Whalley - some 180 square miles, with a population around 10,000.

⁵⁵ Lancashire Online Parish Clerk: Colne registers

⁵⁶ POOLE, Robert (ed.), *The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories*, 2012

⁵⁷ MULLETT, Stephen, *The Reformation in the Parish of Whalley*, 2002, in POOLE

He has, of course, writing of the 1612 ‘witches’, a particular interest in Pendle chapelry, which adjoined Colne, but was, in comparison, quite diverse, if not chaotic; and the story, now so much a part of Pendle’s folk-lore, actually moved swiftly away from Colne, despite the fact that one of the accused, Katherine Hewitt (‘Mouldheels’) was the wife of Colne cloth dealer John Hewitt.⁵⁸ Puritans believed in and deplored witchcraft,⁵⁹ not least because it kept alive (distorted) elements of Catholicism; but moderate Calvinists tended to view witchcraft accusations with scepticism;⁶⁰ was Richard a steadying influence in his chapelry, preventing the hysteria which took hold elsewhere, in some cases actually fomented by local leaders with political, religious and personal agendas?

Colne’s Towneleys had no such agendas; the town’s wool-trade kept the inhabitants busy throughout the year, without the quieter seasons of farming when witchcraft accusations surfaced in Pendle;⁶¹ many other factors might be noted, if records had survived; nevertheless, had Richard succeeded in consolidating a Calvinist chapelry free of superstition, where eradication of both true and perverted Catholicism were prioritised, overcoming the fear which pervaded surrounding chapelries? We’ve seen⁶² his appeal to the Bishop on behalf of a reformed ‘recusant’ just five months before John Law fell ill; but must be wary of thinking of him as a ‘soft touch’ or a 21st century inclusive liberal!⁶³ To a Calvinist, the conversion of individuals from ‘false religion’ was a priority, and Richard’s personal knowledge of the man perhaps suggests intensive effort!

And ‘witchcraft’ was the other ‘false religion’ to defeat.

On the other hand, Richard would be sensitive to corruption and miscarriages of justice. One of the ‘witches’ convicted and executed just weeks before the Lancashire ‘witches’ was Jennet Preston, who was tried at York because she lived at Westby, just over the border from Rimington into Gisburn.⁶⁴ And the single accusation against her was very different.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ and some activities attributed to James Device took place at Carr Hall, Barrowford

⁵⁹ their position laid out by William Perkins in *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft*, 1608

⁶⁰ PUMFREY, Stephen, *Potts, plots and politics*, 2002, in POOLE

⁶¹ March of 1612 and February of 1634

⁶² page 13, re Christopher Shaw

⁶³ like me!

⁶⁴ Jennet was née Balderstone, and married William Preston at Gisburn in 1587

⁶⁵ POTTS, Thomas, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster*, with appendix *The Arraignment and Triall of Jennet Preston, 1613*, pub by the Chetham Society in 1845, quoted by LUMBY, Jonathan, ‘Those to whom evil is done’, 2002, in POOLE

What's more, not only was she probably known to Richard and his family - marrying in 1587, she was likely to have been around the same age as him - the man she was accused of killing by witchcraft in 1607 was an actual contemporary of Richard.⁶⁶ Sensationally, he was one of the leading gentry of Craven, Thomas Lister of Westby Hall, Gisburn, and the charge was brought by his son - as was an earlier charge of the murder by witchcraft of a child, of which she was acquitted. Former Vicar of Gisburn, the Rev'd. Jonathan Lumby, has revealed a story of high emotions, false accusations and corruption on Lister's part;⁶⁷ indeed, at the time, local people voiced great indignation at the unjust verdict - a brave move against a gentry landlord. The following year, Thomas Lister Junior, still only 22 years old, bought the 1611 'She' Bible⁶⁸ for Gisburn parish church, then under the hard-line Puritan Henry Hoyle, who so resented Roger Brearley. Remorse? Or had the ultra-Puritan, perhaps with Hoyle's help, managed to convince himself that he was virtuously following his religious principles?

Had all this occurred today, Richard would certainly have had the press on his doorstep!

Yes - he would be fully aware of the political and religious under-currents behind the events of 1612, and must be allowed some credit for keeping Colne untainted by them.

Along with William, Richard is mentioned in brother James' 1615 will as one of his *loving bretheren* and is appointed a supervisor of the will.

From 1614, there was a depression in the cloth trade due to a variety of factors, including foreign wars: no longer a mixed economy, Colne was badly affected and recovery did not begin until the 1630s. In fact, registers show that in Colne, Burnley and Padiham, burials more than doubled in 1623; plague and typhus can be ruled out: the former strikes in summer and autumn, and the latter in winter, but this crisis lasted much longer; there are several indicators that this was famine: deaths were spread over a wide area and not limited to population clusters; there was a corresponding drop in baptisms, therefore births; and we know that cereal prices also doubled.⁶⁹ Richard was ministering to a parish in crisis.

⁶⁶ baptised at Gisburn in November of the same year

⁶⁷ LUMBY, Jonathan, *The Lancashire Witch-Craze: Jennet Preston and the Lancashire Witches*, 1995

⁶⁸ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-32705720>

⁶⁹ SWAIN, John, *Witchcraft, economy and society in the forest of Pendle*, 2002, in POOLE

He would also be deeply worried about changes in the Church of England, with Charles I's appointment of William Laud as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. The Arminian king and archbishop despised both Calvinism and Puritanism, believed the church should be ruled by bishops answerable only to the monarch, and sought to impose ritualistic liturgy and uniformity throughout the Church. Rather than champion the Reformation, they emphasised the continuity of the English Church with the pre-Reformation Church. Laud was regarded by Calvinist and Puritans alike as a strong and dangerous opponent.

Then, in 1634 came the second witchcraft trials, involving at least one of Richard's parishioners, Margaret Johnson of Marsden.

Fortunately, Richard was not to see the country descend into religious and political civil war. On 29th January, 1636, he dictated his will; but we could well have missed this important document! After months of fruitless searching, Brian found it by chance, indexed under 'Brurely' (!) and in the York Will registers, because, although Richard lived in Lancashire, he held land back in Yorkshire.

No longer able to sign in his usual firm hand, he 'made his mark'. Nevertheless, the will didn't use one word where two would do! (Some say it's a clergy trait, but I couldn't possibly comment!)

Two parcels of land in Rimington were his to dispose of. The first, Gilles, *under the Edge Wall*⁷⁰ of *Rimington Moore*, he bequeathed to his *Cousen* - actually nephew - Hugh Brearley of Muttah, the son of his brother, William.

The second was two acres at Skellerne (now Skeleron). Richard mentions that the land is *meared in severall places* - that word *meare* again! We know that parts of Skellerne were lead-bearing; and Richard's wording suggests that the system which applied in other local areas had, at least at one time, applied to parts of his land: in exchange for a share of the smelted lead, miners were granted leases of plots around 30 by 15 yards, which gave them room to extract the lead and collect the spoil at the surface. Plot boundaries were marked by 'meer (boundary) stones'. However, had Richard's land been lead-bearing at the time he wrote his will, this would surely have been mentioned. He bequeathed it to another nephew (also described as *cozen*) Richard Brearley, the son of his brother James.

⁷⁰ the northern edge of the walled-in moor. (Higher) Gills land goes as far as the wall.

+



Newby,
brother James'
home

Wood/Mutta,
where Richard
grew up

Skeleron

Gills

It would be of great interest to know how Richard came to hold this land, whether it had been in his family for some time, or he had acquired it himself, and, if so, when.

Yet more local folklore combining 'wicked' Catholics and superstition relates that a contemporary of Richard, a member of the Pudsay family, owned lead mines at Skeleron, illegally extracted silver from them, and minted scores of counterfeit coins. Escaping the authorities with the help of fairies, he fled to London and appealed to the Queen for clemency, which was granted because she was his godmother - extremely unlikely if he was baptised a Catholic!

Skeleron is an ongoing line of research: new information discovered by Brian in January, 2024 reveals that it stretched towards Rimington Moor, which was also larger in the latter half of the 16th century than it is now.⁷¹ There's also a lost Skeleron homestead where several generations of Calverleys lived.

The land dealt with, Richard's will left James' married daughters Anne Robinson and Jennet Bedford 40/- each, and the unmarried daughter, Elizabeth, received £3. Elizabeth Bannester, daughter of James Bannester, received £10, Jane Fletcher received 20/-, and the parish clerk, Robert Bailey, received his *middlemost* suite of apparel, which included *hatt, coate, doublett, hosen* and *stockens*. Bailey was one of the will's witnesses, who all seem to be local men, with no family members included.

The remainder of Richard's estate went to his widow Ellen, whom he also appointed executrix.

⁷¹ Will of John Oddie of Gaisgill (1572)

Brian obtained a copy of the will, but it is very faint in places. His transcription follows.

*The will of Richard Brurely [Briarley/Brearley] of Colne, Clerk
Dated 29th January 1635 Probate granted 24th February 1635*

In the name of God Amen the xxix day of January in the year of our Lorde God one thousand sixe hundreth thierty and five I Richard Brurely of Colne in the county of Lancaster clerke something infirme of but whole of minde and of very p[er]fect remembrance praise God I herefore doe make constitute and ordaine this my p[re]sent will, conteyninge my last will and testament in manner and forme following revokinge and making void hereby all former wills and testaments by me heretofore made whether the same be by words or by writing And first and principally I Comitt and Commend my soule into the hands of Almighty God my Creator and maker trusting assuredly to be saved and to have full and free remission of all my sinnes by and through the death and passion of my alone mediator Jesus Christ and by none other meanes and my body to Christian burial at the sight and discretion of all my friends when it shall please God to call me And as touching my worldly goods, chattells, debts, duties, substances, rights & demands whatsoever to me belonginge, I doe hear by this my last will and testament devise, give bequeath, limitt and appoint the same as followeth And first I will and my mind is that all such debts duties or rights as I owe to any person or persons be well and truly contented and paid by my executor hereafter named as also my funerall expenses and probate of this my said will be likewise paid out and forth of my whole goods Itm I give and bequeath unto Hugh Breereley of Mutton [Muttow – Wood Farm] my Cussen [nephew] all my estate interest goodwill and terme of yeares yett to expire of, in and to one p[ar]cell of ground to me granted by lease of William Pudsey Esquire for [faint] yeares yet to expire thereof lyeing and being under the Edge wall of Rimington Moore within the Lordshipp of Rimington and County of Yorke commonly called Gilles and all my right title and interest of or into the same belonginge or apperteyinge. Itm I give bequeath and assigne unto Richard Breerley my Cozen [nephew] sonne of James Breerley my brother deceased All my estate right title interest tenant right terme of years and demand whatsoever where I have of and into one parcell of meare ground lyeing and being in Skellerne [Skeleron] as the same is now meared in severall places containing by estimation two Acres of ground be it more or lesse. Itm I give unto Anne Robinson my Cosen [niece] daughter of James Breerley my brother aforesaid deceased the some of forty shillings. Itm I give unto Jennett Breerley sister of the said Anne wife of John Bedfordth of Netherton the some of forty shillings. Itm I give unto Elizabeth Breerley likewise daughter of the said James Breerley my brother three pounds

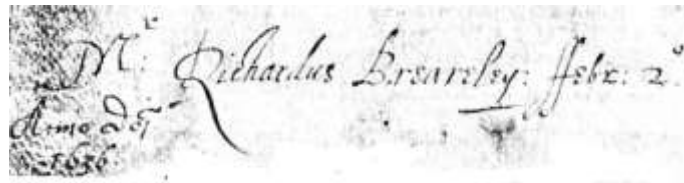
RICHARD BREARLEY, Curate of Colne

Itm I give unto Elizabeth Bannester daughter of James Bannester the some of tenn pounds Itm I give unto Robert Baily Clerke of Colne my midlemoste? [faint] suite of apparell hat, coate doublett, hosen, stockens [next word ?] Itm I give to Jane Fletcher xx^s Item the rest and residue of all my goods, debts, duties, substances moveable and unmoveable w[h]atsoever I wholly give and bequeath the same to Ellen Breerley my wife whom also I doe nominate and appoint Sole exectrix of this my last will and testament trusting she will truly p[er]forme and execute the same and have hereunto put my hand and seale the day and yeare above said and have requested that these persons to witness the same: Richard Breeley [his mark]; Witnesses here of (sic) Nicholas Whitaker [his mark]; Leonard Breathead [his mark] William Greene [his mark] Robert Baily Cler' Alexander Hartley [next word?]

The registered will is held at the Borthwick Institute, York. Volume 42 Folio 697

Richard was buried at Colne on 2nd February, 1636, *near*, says Carr, *the vestry door*. The church has been much altered since, so the location is uncertain, but the door referred to may now lead from the sanctuary to the North Chapel.

Incidentally, his burial was entered twice in the register, once as just another entry in the list: this is the entry which had been transcribed by Online Parish Clerk. However, it was noted a second time, with a little more ceremony:



Earlier sight of this would have suggested his status.

Ellen would lose her home to the new incumbent, and, with no known income, may have had to return to her family. She remained a widow for eleven years, but was surely relieved that Richard was not caught up in the violence and disruption of those last years. She was buried (as Ellena Briereley of Colne) on 25th January, 1647. Her will might have told us more than Richard's, but none can be traced.

I disagree strongly with Macvicar's statement about Colne clergy that *so far as incumbents are concerned it is the later ones who were the greater men.*⁷²

Lack of historical record doesn't mean lack of merit, especially in a context where records are largely disciplinary. Richard, perhaps physically challenged, served the extensive Colne Chapelry, on foot and horseback, for thirty-six religiously and economically turbulent years, kept the church there free from scandal and dissent, and died in post.

Does he not merit the same respect as shown to Francis Duckworth by those who love Rimington and its people?

*Well done, thou good and faithful servant.*⁷³

Enid Briggs, July 2024.

⁷² MACVICAR, J. Ross, p30

⁷³ Matthew 25.21