

STATE FORMATION I: THE PARISH

Chapters 5 and 6 consider the effect of state building on manorial office. They examine the interactions between the manorial courts and their officials which have been described in the past four chapters and other local institutions which were given new powers by the state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What effect did the strengthening of the relationship between locality and central government have on the governmental structures created by manorial officeholding?

This chapter examines the parish, the local administrative unit which has been seen as vital in the process of state formation and the incorporation of a middling sort into the state. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a raft of legislation transformed this unit from being one centred on religious organisation to being what has been termed the ‘civil parish’, a unit vital in royal governance in the locality.¹ Thus, many interpretations have argued that the civil parish displaced the manor and vill from the fifteenth century onwards.² Hindle sees the parish as ultimately replacing the manor court in the form of the oligarchical vestry but acknowledges that process of replacement was complex, noting that although the late sixteenth century was the period of the development of the secular parish, it was also a time of a flourishing of courts leet which were being given new powers by Tudor legislation. Significantly, he argues that the relative strength of the two institutions was largely locally specific; parishes fragmented between multiple manors might not see a vestry becoming dominant until the eighteenth century, while where manor and parish boundaries were coterminous, the vestry

¹ Hindle, *State and Social Change*, 1–36; Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, 247–58

² Ault, ‘Vill in medieval England’, 211; Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, 123–4; P.D. A. Harvey, ‘Initiative and authority in settlement change’ in M. Aston, D. Austin and C.C. Dyer (eds.), *The Rural Settlements of Medieval England: Studies Dedicated to Maurice Beresford and John Hurst* (Oxford, 1989), 31–43, at 41–3; Dyer, ‘Village community’, 428–9; Dyer, ‘Poverty and its relief’, 74; Dyer, ‘Political life’, 149–53; Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, 64.

could flourish a lot earlier. Similarly, where manor courts were weak as a result of enclosure removing the need to regulate communal agriculture, the vestry might rise in prominence far more quickly.³

Hindle further suggests that while vestrymen and manorial jurors were of broadly similar status and both parish and manor had a *de facto* tendency towards oligarchy, there were qualitative differences between these institutions. Manorial courts expressed an ascending concept of political authority, with jurors having standing independent of the demands made by their lords, while vestrymen's status was derived from above, as they wielded authority on behalf of the state over which they had little influence. This led to vestries being more oligarchical than manor courts, as state incorporation made parochial-elite vestrymen more self-conscious of their special status, reflecting a trend emphasised by other parish historians that vestries became more exclusive over time. This in turn restricted the possession of parochial office to the middling sort, allowing them to become invested in the early modern state.⁴

French similarly presents the parish and manor as adversarial, suggesting that middling tenants sought to shift authority away from courts leet to parochial structures in order to reduce gentry interference through manorial lordship. He notes, however, that the two bodies could act more harmoniously when lords were non-resident.⁵ For Earls Colne, French and Hoyle suggest the court leet was replaced by parochial institutions that did not rely on common consent, and better allowed a narrow elite including the lord to carry out moral reform.⁶ Thus the literature generally presents a narrative of replacement of the manor court by the parish as an important step in early modern state formation and the increasing power of local elites.

Parishes operated with a wide variety of governors and officials in the early modern era, including select vestries and overseers of the poor. However, the focus of this chapter is on the churchwarden, an office which was transformed in this period. Unlike overseers of the poor, which were an innovation of the late sixteenth century, churchwardens long pre-dated the rise of the civil parish. Investigations of churchwardens before the Reformation have emphasised the importance of these officials in the Middle Ages, seeing this as a key correlate of the rise of the parish as a unit of local identity and organisation.⁷ Over the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, churchwardens in many communities became

³ Hindle, 'Political culture of the middling sort', 126–8; Griffiths, 'Kirtlington manor court', 281.

⁴ Hindle, 'Political culture of the middling sort', 128–47; Kūmin, *Shaping of a Community*, 258.

⁵ French, *Middle Sort of People*, 229–34.

⁶ French and Hoyle, *Earls Colne*, 163–74.

⁷ Hindle, *State and Social Change*, 209.

responsible for managing increasingly large bequests of property and cash, using this income to coordinate significant building projects, maintain communal infrastructure and distribute local charity.⁸ Before 1500, however, churchwardens were undeniably officers of the locality rather than the crown; while they might be used by communities to meet state requirements such as raising taxation, this was not mandated by royal government.⁹

Change occurred in the sixteenth century, as churchwardens, along with the parish, were increasingly delegated roles by the crown, and thus received local authority as organs of the state. The Reformation played a key part in this. As beliefs were progressively more subject to monitoring for conformity, churchwardens became, whether willingly or otherwise, agents in this process, representing the parish before commissioners and visitations, and presenting nonconformity in archdeacons' courts.¹⁰ Beyond religious policy, the increasing concern about managing poverty led to the pre-existing poor relief functions of wardens being extended and formalised by new legislation, and subject to oversight by county magistrates, although the creation of collectors and later overseers of the poor could lead to this role being performed by other officials.¹¹ This was combined with a variety of other secular functions imposed by successive Tudor governments, which increasingly changed churchwardens from important officials locally to important officials for the exercise of state authority.¹²

This process of transformation means it is possible to compare how the office of churchwarden interacted with manorial officeholding structures both before and after they became important agents of royal government. In turn, this allows for the investigation of how state formation impacted on the pre-existing village governing structures

⁸ W.O. Ault, 'Manor court and parish church in fifteenth-century England: a study of village by-laws', *Speculum*, 42 (1967), 53–67, at 61–7; Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, 114; E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400–c.1580*, 2nd edn (New Haven, 2005), 132–3; Byng, *Church Building*, 172–3, 281; Dyer, 'Poverty and its relief', 72–3; Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, 43–8, 52–64, 183–95; Kümin, 'Secular legacy', 105; Schofield, *Peasant and Community*, 200–1; Hindle and Kümin, 'Spatial dynamics', 152.

⁹ Dyer, 'Taxation and communities', 186–7; Schofield, *Taxation under the Early Tudors*, 43–5.

¹⁰ Sharpe, *Crime*, 85–7; Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 73; Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, 155–7; Braddick, *State Formation*, 59; Carlson, 'Office of churchwarden', 170–80; Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, 243–5; Gaskill, 'Little commonwealths', 92.

¹¹ McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, 232–52, 280–3; Hindle, *On the Parish*, 10–13; Houston, 'People, space and law', 56.

¹² Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, 131; Wrightson, 'Politics of the parish', 25–8; Houston, 'People, space and law', 57; Braddick, *State Formation*, 59; Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, 247–58; Kümin, 'Secular legacy', 105; Carlson, 'Office of churchwarden', 170; Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, 125, 150; Hindle, 'Political culture of the middling sort', 136–7; Gunn, *English People at War*, 32–4, 51–2, 115; Hindle and Kümin, 'Spatial dynamics', 153, 168–9.

which have been outlined in earlier chapters. Is it possible to see a process of replacement, with the increasing state authority of churchwardens leading to a decline in the relevance of manorial officeholding as a governance structure, reducing its attractiveness to local elites? This chapter answers in the negative, arguing that even as the role of churchwardens was transformed by a more interventionist state, the same 'chief inhabitants' continued to serve in both parochial and manorial office. Rather than shifting activity from manor to parish, these elites blended both organs of local governance together to achieve their objectives, although the extent of this varied depending on the relationship between manorial and parochial boundaries. Thus, state formation through the parish does not seem to have dramatically changed village socio-political structures, which were deeply rooted in a long history of governance through the manor.

This investigation narrows the focus to Worfield and Cratfield where churchwardens' accounts and manorial court rolls survive in parallel. At Worfield, churchwardens' accounts survive for 1500 to 1648, with only small gaps for longer than a year for 1537–40 and 1563–5. At Cratfield, churchwardens' accounts survive for 1490 to 1650, although the published edition used in the following analysis only includes a sample of these. The two case studies represent different types of community and geographical relationships between manor and parish. While at Worfield parish and manorial boundaries were coterminous, the parish of Cratfield was split between three manors.¹³ Cratfield was also a considerably smaller community, with an estimated population half the size of that of Worfield in the early sixteenth century.¹⁴

This chapter considers the relationship between state incorporation of churchwardens and manorial governance structures in three sections. Firstly, the internal evidence from the churchwardens' accounts is investigated to examine the chronology of the shift in churchwardens' responsibilities from being solely local officials of the parish to having significant obligations to the state. Secondly, the identities of those serving as churchwardens and as manorial officials are compared to see whether elites shifted from serving in manorial to parochial office as the latter gained new authority and responsibilities from the state. Finally, the last section examines evidence from court rolls and accounts to examine the way churchwardens and manorial officials blended their responsibilities and powers to meet common problems.

¹³ Hindle emphasises the importance of a coterminous manor and parish in the early development of vestries. See Hindle, *State and Social Change*, 208.

¹⁴ See Table 0.1, p. 24.

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Churchwardens' accounts for both Worfield and Cratfield reveal that the functions of this office drastically changed across the sixteenth century thanks to the increasing intervention of monarchs. This process is seen in four phases in the surviving accounts. The first pre-1541 phase illustrates the active parochial communities typical of many late medieval parishes.¹⁵ Both parishes managed large annual expenses, which were met by bequests of money and land, in combination with sub-parochial institutions, namely an attached Chapel of the Virgin Mary at Worfield and a Guild of St Thomas at Cratfield.¹⁶ The parishes supplemented this core income in different ways. At Worfield, churchwardens on two separate occasions also levied a rate, or 'lewn', on land within the parish, at 4d and then 8d a virgate, for the specific purposes of repairing the churchyard walls and bell tower, respectively.¹⁷ They were expressly made by common assent of the parish. At Cratfield, wardens instead relied on substantial sums raised through church ales and Plough Monday celebrations, although the amounts raised by the latter declined across the early sixteenth century until they disappeared in 1535.¹⁸

The majority of expenditure was devoted to the church fabric. This created commercial exchanges which meant churchwardens engaged in networks that extended well beyond the parish.¹⁹ However, wardens were subject to little extra-parochial oversight, with neither parish recording payments for attending visitations, and only two for unspecified citations in Worfield's accounts.²⁰ At Worfield, churchwardens themselves seem to have provided no relief for the poor, although the chantry did manage almshouses which appear in virtually all accounts down to 1533. However, Cratfield distinguishes itself through its early attention to poor relief. An initial payment recorded in the town book for 1534 'for the relefe of Kempe hys wyfe and ther chylderene' represented the start of a series of intermittent payments to the poor until around 1540 when this 'trickle of assistance swelled into a stream of relief.'²¹ This parish also saw some responses to secular royal requirements in the form of payments of the lay subsidies. This is seen both in allowances on farms

¹⁵ Worfield CWAs, parts I–IV.

¹⁶ L.A. Botelho, *Old Age and the English Poor Law, 1500–1700* (Woodbridge, 2004), 31–2; Cratfield PPs, 24–5, 38–40, 48–51; Worfield CWAs, Part I, 106, 132–4; Part II, 93, 96; Part III, 2. An account reveals that Worfield's chapel had been in existence from at least 1345: SA, P 314/W/1/1/1359, 1344/5

¹⁷ Worfield CWAs, Part II, 95; Part III, 17. ¹⁸ Botelho, *Old Age*, 30.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 30; Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community*, 133; Cratfield PPs, 20, 22, 24, 29, 31; Worfield CWAs, Part II, 85, 93, 100, 102, 106, 113; Part III, 9.

²⁰ Worfield CWAs, Part I, 104; Part II, 113. ²¹ Botelho, *Old Age*, 26.

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of church land specifically for the payment of fifteenths and in an interesting entry of 1536 in which the collector of the tax made a memorandum that he had received the 41s 8d owed by the 'parysche of Cratfeld'.²² The latter hints that the churchwardens were already utilising parochial structures to meet taxation purposes in the early sixteenth century, in a way that has been demonstrated for other communities from the fifteenth century onwards.²³

The second phase dates from 1541 to 1552, covering the beginning of the Reformation under Henry VIII and its continuation under Edward VI. At both manors, the first sign of the break from Rome occurs in 1540–1 when bibles, presumably the Authorised version of 1539, were purchased.²⁴ However, following the norm outlined in other local studies, the real changes took place after the far-reaching Royal Injunctions of 1547.²⁵ In this year and 1549, the churchwardens and other parishioners of Worfield were called before the king's commissioners, in the latter case to make an inventory of church goods and lands.²⁶ The Cratfield accounts record a payment in 1547 to make an inventory at Blythburgh as well as the sale of the church's plate in 1549 'by the consent of the hole Towneshyp'.²⁷ These were accompanied by the purchase of a number of new religious books, the whitewashing of walls, and the pulling down and defacing of images. In 1545, Cratfield's gild was dissolved, while in 1549 Worfield's chantry was turned into a school.²⁸ At Worfield, the Reformation also changed the role of the churchwardens in their extra-parochial network. While commercial requirements linked to the church fabric connected wardens to Bridgnorth and Lichfield in this period, annual visitations from 1549 onwards saw churchwardens attend at Lapley and Bushbury.²⁹ Payments for attending visitations were not seen at Cratfield, although of course they may still have taken place.

Worfield also began to look more like Cratfield in terms of meeting secular royal requirements. Payments for the lay subsidy were recorded in every surviving account for 1541 to 1547. A hint that some poor relief was being organised through the parish by 1551 is revealed by a payment of 4d 'for the mendynge of the lockes of the power menes box', although no records of the alms collected or distributed from this box were made in

²² Cratfield PPs, 53.

²³ Dyer, 'Taxation and communities', 186–7; Schofield, *Taxation under the Early Tudors*, 43–5.

²⁴ Worfield CWAs, Part IV, 228; Cratfield PPs, 58.

²⁵ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 409; Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 79–88.

²⁶ Worfield CWAs, Part IV, 234. ²⁷ Cratfield PPs, 72–3, 81.

²⁸ Worfield CWAs, Part V, 115, 117–18; Botelho, *Old Age*, 32–3; K. Farnhill, 'A late medieval parish gild: the gild of St Thomas the Martyr in Cratfield, c. 1470–1542', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History*, 38 (1995), 261–7, at 265–6.

²⁹ Worfield CWAs, Part IV, 235, 239; Part V, 117, 119.

the accounts.³⁰ Meanwhile, royal requirements intensified at Cratfield. The parish recorded 15s towards the lay subsidy in 1547.³¹ However, a key change in this phase was the parish's role in meeting the state's military requirements, with it paying for armour and weapons in 1546 and for soldiers going to muster in 1547, following a wider trend of increased parochial spending on provisioning armed men for the crown from the 1530s.³² This greater focus on working for the state was also seen in payments made to aid constables in their work, including in 1548 a sum of 20d 'for there payns taken this troublus yere'.³³

The third phase, dating from 1553 to 1598, saw churchwardens become officers of the secular Tudor state. Trends continued from the second stage, with the religious policies of the Reformation, and briefly Marian Reformation, present in the churchwardens' accounts.³⁴ Similarly, monitoring of conformity continued to place churchwardens in a greater extra-parochial network. Worfield's churchwardens attended commissions at Bridgnorth, Lichfield and Wellington, and visitations took them to seventeen different named places across the archdeaconry.³⁵ Similarly, Cratfield's accounts recorded expenses for attending visitations, including one at Bungay.³⁶

However, a clear contrast with earlier periods was the secular responsibilities placed on parishes in a raft of new legislation. The earliest example at Worfield was a payment of 7d 'for the makyng a booke for the provcyon for the poore' made in 1553, a response to a statute of 1552 which called for parishes to make registers of the poor.³⁷ Poor relief beyond this point seems to have been intermittent, however, although payments for raising children, an activity which grew in the sixteenth century, were seen.³⁸ Meanwhile, at Cratfield the churchwardens continued to develop the poor relief system, which included occasional pensions to individuals from the mid-1550s and annual pensions from 1570.³⁹ This was combined with the operation of an almshouse and payments for paupers' burials, medical expenses and other distributions.⁴⁰ While undoubtedly these practices reflected the earlier pre-Reformation efforts of Cratfield's churchwardens, that poor relief was evolving in response to new legislation is seen in payments made to

³⁰ Worfield CWAs, Part V, 117. ³¹ Cratfield PPs, 70.

³² Cratfield PPs, 71–2; Gunn, *English People at War*, 32. ³³ Cratfield PPs, 71.

³⁴ Worfield CWAs, Part V, 122, 127, 133–4; Cratfield, PPs, 83–5, 91–5, 107.

³⁵ Worfield CWAs, Part V, 120–1, 136; Part VI, 66, 68.

³⁶ Cratfield PPs, 85, 98, 104, 112, 125.

³⁷ Worfield CWAs, Part V, 121; McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, 130–1; 5 and 6 Edward VI, c.2, SR, vol. 4 part I, 131–2.

³⁸ Worfield CWAs, Part VI, 62, 67, 74; McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, 136.

³⁹ Botelho, *Old Age*, 27. ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 33–4; Cratfield PPs, 96, 103, 116, 119, 122–4.

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collectors of the poor in 1555 and 1557, as well as payment for two men's 'chargis when they rid to Sir Francis Boldinge givinge the account for the colectinge of the pore'.⁴¹ Choosing collectors was a key part of the 1552 poor law legislation.⁴²

Other legislation also changed the role of the churchwardens at both communities. At Worfield from 1569 to 1592, churchwardens paid out sums for the destruction of vermin, with payments also seen at Cratfield, following a 1566 act for the preservation of grain.⁴³ At Worfield, from 1579 onwards, churchwardens annually surrendered 6s 6d to the high constables at Bridgnorth for the relief of prisoners, presumably as a response to poor relief legislation in 1572, while from 1595 onwards they paid a further 13s yearly for maimed soldiers according to an act of 1593.⁴⁴ Cratfield's location on the east coast meant even further intensification of military requirements at the parish. The churchwardens made constant payments of sums ranging between 3s 6d and £5 10s from 1577 to 1597 to provide soldiers at musters. Military responsibilities, such as making various charges before the commissioner of bows and providing payments for the maintaining of the beacon at Sizewell, made the parish respond to various external authorities such as the high constable and commissioners of bows and artillery.⁴⁵ The churchwardens also supported the constables in their peacekeeping obligations, paying for the transportation of prisoners to gaols and their attendance at the petty sessions and the assize.⁴⁶ At Worfield, new outlays affected the income generation of the parish. While in 1556 a rate was still made through the 'agreement of the parochau[n]ce [parishoners] at the . . . acopes' and specifically for 'the use of the reparacion of the said churche', rates from 1572 onwards were annually levied at 1–3s a yardland, a formalisation that is reflected by a 1574 expense of 4d to write a book through which to gather the lewn.⁴⁷

The final phase stretches from 1598 to 1649. In terms of religious policies, this period saw further continuation of earlier trends. The churchwardens continued to purchase mandated religious texts, including at Worfield replacing the Book of Common Prayer with the parliamentary-approved Directory of Worship in 1645–8.⁴⁸ Cratfield's accounts now record frequent attendance at visitations alongside Worfield's, and at the latter community, churchwardens also made

⁴¹ Cratfield PPs, 84, 96, 101.

⁴² McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England*, 130–1; 5 and 6 Edward VI, c.2, SR, vol. 4 part I, 131–2.

⁴³ Cratfield PPs, 104–7; 8 Elizabeth I, c.15, SR, vol. 4 part. I, 498. This legislation was also enforceable through leets.

⁴⁴ 14 Elizabeth I, c.5, SR, vol. 4 part I, 597; 35 Elizabeth I, c.4, SR, vol. 4 part II, 847.

⁴⁵ Cratfield PPs, 101, 104–5, 122, 125. ⁴⁶ Cratfield PPs, 103, 112, 114–15.

⁴⁷ Worfield CWAs, Part V, 128; Part VI, 60–1.

⁴⁸ Worfield CWAs, Part VII, 35, 54; Cratfield PPs, 132, 150, 154, 170, 172.

reports about recusants.⁴⁹ Similarly, accounts record responses to a range of secular legislation as they did in the late sixteenth century. These include continuing payments for prisoners, maimed soldiers and vermin eradication at Worfield, and payments for military levies and policing obligations at Cratfield.⁵⁰ In 1633, both manors purchased the reissued *Book of Sports*, and at Cratfield in 1635 the townsmen met to make the rate for ship money according to the Privy Council writ.⁵¹

While churchwardens at both manors continued to make ad hoc payments to help the poor, the poor law of 1598 triggered a structural change in parochial responses to the state. At Worfield in 1599, 4s 2d was laid out when the churchwardens and four men of the parish went before the justices at Bridgnorth concerning 'the reliefe of the poore'.⁵² This led to continued outlays in the early seventeenth century as churchwardens and the overseers of the poor attended these justices.⁵³ At Cratfield, the first reference to the new system comes in 1606 when an outlay was made for making the overseers' book, and in 1616 John Filby was paid for giving a 'booke of collection for the poor . . . to the Justices'.⁵⁴ By 1625 at the latest, from which date the overseers accounts survive, Cratfield had a well-managed poor relief system which relied on rating inhabitants.⁵⁵ Beyond this, Cratfield responded to dearth in 1630, expending £10 7s 4d to attend the JPs 'about corn' and then purchase wheat that was sold to the poor, responding to legislation ordering this type of response which had been regularly issued since the late sixteenth century.⁵⁶ The formalisation of attempts to control poverty is also seen at Worfield in payments occurring from 1611 onwards to various paupers travelling through the parish who were carrying passports and letters from government authorities.⁵⁷ This reveals how both parishes' churchwardens were increasingly pulled into a nationwide system for controlling vagrancy.⁵⁸

At Worfield, responding to these changes also triggered a few instances when the churchwardens exercised the authority of external powers to pressure their fellow villagers. For instance, on 17 April 1616, the

⁴⁹ Worfield CWAs, Part VII, 34, 38, 47–8; Cratfield PPs, 132, 138, 140, 157, 171–2.

⁵⁰ Worfield CWAs, Part VI, 82–3; Part VII, 29–33, 42–4, 50–1; Cratfield PPs, 126–7, 131, 136, 138–9, 144–6, 148–50, 155, 157–9, 161–2, 167–9, 176–7.

⁵¹ Worfield CWAs, Part VII, 51; Cratfield PPs, 169, 171; H. Langelüddecke, "'I finde all men & my officers all soe unwilling": the collection of ship money, 1635–1640', *JBS*, 46 (2007), 509–42, at 512–13.

⁵² Worfield CWAs, Part VI, 83; Part VII, 36, 45–6. ⁵³ Worfield CWAs, Part VII, 25–31, 37.

⁵⁴ Botelho, *Old Age*, 37; Cratfield PPs, 147. ⁵⁵ Botelho, *Old Age*, 37–49.

⁵⁶ Cratfield PPs, 166; J. Walter, 'The social economy of dearth in early modern England' in J. Walter and R.S. Schofield (eds.), *Famine, Disease and the Social Order in Early Modern Society* (Cambridge, 1989), 75–128, at 119–20.

⁵⁷ Worfield CWAs, Part VII, 42–53, 48–9; Cratfield PPs, 140–63.

⁵⁸ Beier, *Masterless Men*, 154.

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churchwardens spent 12d for dinner when they ‘had a warrant from mr iustice Kinnersley concerning housholders comming to church every saboth day and holy daye’, and also went before the justices in the following accounting year to present absences in church attendance.⁵⁹ This reflects a wider pattern of increasing enforcement of church attendance legislation by justices and churchwardens in the early seventeenth century.⁶⁰ Gathering the lewn also seemingly required external support, with the churchwardens making payments in 1604, 1619 and 1626 for ‘a warrant that we had from the Justices of peace to distraine them yt would not paye their Lewne for the mayntenance of the poore’.⁶¹ In this way, the churchwardens of Worfield were acting like the archetypal middling sort, using their access to the higher authority of the state to bolster their authority in the local community and potentially reduce their own rates as the expense of their neighbours.⁶²

While similar examples are not seen in Cratfield’s records, the existence of a middling sort exercising power through parochial institutions can be seen through the emergence of a vestry dominated by a few wealthier tenants.⁶³ This change to a more self-consciously select elite is also reflected in linguistic changes in the churchwardens’ accounts. While sixteenth-century decisions concerning the parish’s property are typically made by ‘the whole consent and assent of the Townsmen then present’ and the ‘hole Towneshyp’, thus at least giving the impression of being a popular decision, a later example of 1616 notes that the decision was ‘agreed by the chief Inhabitants’, showing the shift to a more select body of decision-makers.⁶⁴

The sixteenth century saw the transformation of churchwardens at Worfield and Cratfield from being local officers for managing lay religious bequests and the church fabric, to being officers enforcing both religious and secular royal legislation, as well as raising wealth from the parish to spend locally and to transfer to royal officials. As can be seen in Map 5.1, this drastically reconfigured the geography of being a churchwarden at Worfield. While commercial requirements had always meant wardens had business beyond the parish, the sheer number of visitations and appearances before commissions placed wardens in a far greater regional network by c.1650, as they regularly went with their fellows from

⁵⁹ Worfield CWAs, Part VI, 42.

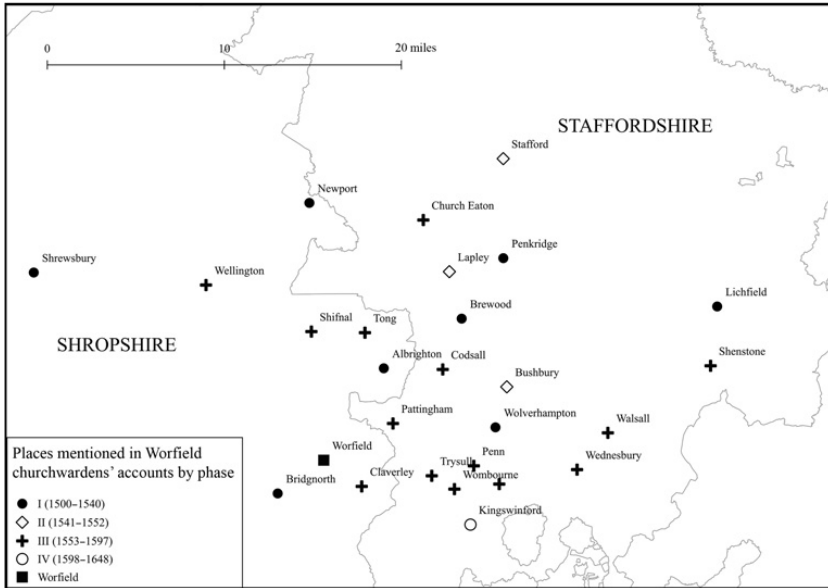
⁶⁰ C.D. Field, ‘A shilling for Queen Elizabeth: the era of state regulation of church attendance in England, 1552–1969’, *Journal of Church and State*, 50 (2008), 213–53, at 218; C. Haigh, *The Plain Man’s Pathways to Heaven: Kinds of Christianity in Post Reformation England, 1570–1640* (Oxford, 2007), 10.

⁶¹ Worfield CWAs, Part VI, 27, 44, 47. ⁶² Hindle, *On the Parish*, 365–78.

⁶³ Botelho, *Old Age*, 21; *Churchwardens’ Accounts of Cratfield*, ed. Botelho, 7.

⁶⁴ Cratfield PPs, 81, 108, 147.

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Map 5.1 Places mentioned for the first time in Worfield's churchwardens' accounts by phase

Note: Boundary data from Satchell et al., 1831 *Hundreds*.

Source: Worfield CWAs, Parts I–VII.

neighbouring parishes to locations chosen for the convenience of royal and ecclesiastical representatives.⁶⁵ This made churchwardens accountable to authorities beyond the parish, putting them at the forefront of interactions between state and locality.

How far this transformation was willingly accepted by the pool of men who served as churchwardens, or was simply a response to pressure from above, cannot easily be explored through the neutral accounts. In terms of religious conformity, Worfield seems to have generally responded quickly to censure. In 1579 wardens accounted 2s 11d 'in mercements and our charges at Stafforde for defaulte of homelyes', presumably being fined by the archdeacon for this failure. This punishment seems to have elicited a response, with the same account recording the purchase of two tomes of the homilies.⁶⁶ A very similar case occurred in 1631, with a payment to the apparitor for 'admonition concerning the degrees of marriage', a charge that was rectified by at least 1634.⁶⁷ Cratfield was

⁶⁵ P. Marshall, *Heretics and Believers: a History of the English Reformation* (New Haven, CT, 2017), 438–9.

⁶⁶ Worfield CWAs, Part VI, 67. ⁶⁷ Worfield CWAs, Part VII, 50–1.

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seemingly less attentive, with a similar presentment 'for want of no Homily Book in our town' in 1606 seeing no obvious response in the records and a longer-running series of penalties for failure to repair desks and churchyard fences at visitations from 1609 to 1614.⁶⁸ However, these represent isolated incidents and Lynn Botelho has argued that, while the parish may not have been responsive to Laudian reforms, it generally imposed religious change within the bounds of conformity.⁶⁹

A similar picture of isolated failures to fulfil centrally mandated responsibilities is seen in secular cases. In 1577 Worfield's wardens were amerced 30s 10d by the commissioners at Bridgnorth for 'not destroying foules and varmynt accordinge to the Statute in that behalf', a sum far in excess of any annual payment for this work, but well below the £5 named in the royal legislation for every defaulting warden.⁷⁰ This punishment again led to an immediate response, with the accounts including a separate section specifically for destroying vermin, recording thirty-four individual payments totalling 15s 1d.⁷¹ Cratfield's churchwardens reimbursed Robert Keable for a payment 'he laid out in the behalf of the town to excuse their negligence in not working in the ways in Anno 1622' (presumably a reference to road repairs) and the next year the town was indicted 'for want of a Butts' by the hundred bailiff.⁷² However, again these were rare, and payments were regularly made both to maintain archery butts and to repair local infrastructure.⁷³

More generally, whether these censures reveal resistance or broad compliance does not affect the fact that the transformation of the office of churchwarden is in stark contrast to the pattern of little legislation-driven change in the work of manorial officers in these localities.⁷⁴ This could suggest a narrative of replacement, with manorial office becoming increasingly less important as it was not adapted to new political requirements. However, the impact of the development of parochial office cannot be seen in such simplistic terms, which ignore the interaction of parochial and manorial office in terms of both the men serving and their duties.

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A first area of investigation is to look at how far the individuals who served as churchwardens also served as manorial officials. This reveals a strong relationship, with the vast majority of those accounting as churchwardens also acting as manorial officials. At Worfield, of 116

⁶⁸ Cratfield PPs, 135, 138–45. ⁶⁹ *Churchwardens' Accounts of Cratfield*, ed. Botelho, 11–14.

⁷⁰ Worfield CWAs, Part VI, 63; 8 Elizabeth I, c.15, SR, vol. 4 part 1, 499.

⁷¹ Worfield CWAs, Part VI, 64–6. ⁷² Cratfield PPs, 153, 155.

⁷³ Cratfield PPs, 56, 103–4, 148. ⁷⁴ See pp. 57–8.

individual churchwardens, it is probable that 113 (97%) served as manorial officers. Only three men seemingly never served in manorial office.⁷⁵ Two of these men could not be identified in any officeholding capacity, while the other man, John Wannerton, who served as churchwarden 1534–5, was also liable to serve as beadle. Interestingly, while Wannerton's status as a 'gentleman' seems to have precluded him serving as beadle, or in any other manorial office, his service as churchwarden suggests a different attitude to parochial office, suggesting it may have held a higher status, perhaps because it was not linked directly to being one of the lord's tenants. His son-in-law and grandson, however, did not serve as churchwarden, suggesting that they were viewed, or viewed themselves, as having too high a status thanks to their service in regional and national office.⁷⁶ Cratfield saw a similarly close identification between churchwardens and manorial officials, although a less complete list of churchwardens obscures these trends. Of forty-five wardens, it is probable that forty (89%) served as manorial officials. Only five men, including the vicar who acted as a churchwarden in 1537–8, never acted in any manorial capacity.⁷⁷

Table 5.1 breaks these connections down by types of office and by the four phases of transition from purely parochial to state office described above. At Worfield, only a very small percentage of churchwardens served as beadles, a situation undoubtedly caused by the fact that beadles were only drawn from the township of Halon.⁷⁸ Other patterns seem to have been linked to the status of offices. Fewer churchwardens acted as affeerors and tasters at both manors owing to these positions perhaps being less desirable than acting as juror baron, juror leet/capital pledge and constable. These latter three offices were the most commonly held by churchwardens. The pattern is particularly strong for jurors baron, with 84–85% of churchwardens serving in this office in both communities, and especially for jurors leet at Worfield, with 97% of churchwardens serving in this office. For capital pledges at Cratfield, the relationship is slightly weaker, but 75% of wardens still served in this office. What is perhaps more telling than the general correlation between manorial officeholding

⁷⁵ Eight individuals were men who from their names could be identified with two or more individuals who served in manorial office, making a one-to-one match impossible.

⁷⁶ Wannerton's son-in-law, George Bromley, served as an MP and JP among other roles, and his grandson, Francis Bromley, served as an MP. N.M. Fuidge, 'Bromley, George (c.1526–89), of Hallon in Worfield, Salop and the Inner Temple, London' in P.W. Halser (ed.), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons, 1558–1603*, 3 vols. (London, 1981), vol. 1, 489–90; W.J. Jones, 'Bromley, Francis (c.1556–91), of Hodnet, Salop' in Halser, *History of Parliament*, 490–1.

⁷⁷ Two individuals were men who from their names could be identified with two or more individuals who served in manorial office, making a one-to-one match impossible.

⁷⁸ See p. 75.

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Table 5.1 *Careers of churchwardens in manorial office at Worfield and Cratfield*

	Phase I (1500–40)		Phase II (1541–52)		Phase III (1553–97)		Phase IV (1598–1648)		All phases		Fifteenth century (1419–20)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
A Worfield												
Total churchwardens	25	9			35	39			108		2	
Beadle	3	12	0	0	3	9	3	8	9	8	1	50
Taster	6	24	0	0	14	40	26	67	46	43	1	50
Reeve	10	40	3	33	14	40	21	54	48	44	1	50
Affeeror	12	48	5	56	14	40	15	38	46	43	1	50
Constable	17	68	4	44	22	63	29	74	72	67	1	50
Juror baron	16	64	9	100	32	91	35	90	92	85	2	100
Juror leet	24	96	9	100	34	97	38	97	105	97	2	100
No recorded office	1	4	0	0	1	3	1	3	3	3	0	0
B Cratfield												
Total churchwardens	23		0		11		9		43		–	
Taster	8	35	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Reeve	8	35	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Affeeror	2	9	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Constable	9	9	–	–	10	91	8	89	27	63	–	–
Capital pledge	16	70	–	–	8	73	8	89	32	75	–	–
Juror baron	18	78	–	–	10	91	8	89	36	85	–	–
No recorded office	5	22	–	–	0	0	0	0	5	12	–	–

Notes: Churchwardens who could not be linked securely to a single individual have been excluded from the analysis.

Sources: Worfield CWAs, Parts I–VII; SA, p 314/w/1/1/253–5, 499–83, 5586/1/257–306; Cratfield PPs; *Churchwardens' Accounts of Cratfield*, ed. Botelho, 148; Vanneck Box/3–4.

and being a churchwarden is the lack of change over time. While the responsibilities of churchwardens and their interaction with the state was transformed in this era, this did not drastically change the identity of the people holding this office, or indeed their service as manorial officeholders. At Cratfield, the proportion of wardens who also served as constables grew over time, perhaps as this office became more state-focused in the sixteenth century, but also perhaps as other offices such as taster, affeeror and reeve ceased to be filled on the manor.⁷⁹ This suggests that there was no separation of an elite of parochial officeholders from manorial officeholders; the two types of officeholding worked in tandem.

⁷⁹ See Table 0.2, p. 25.

It is clear that elites exercised power through manorial office even after being a churchwarden became an important state office. Before 1500, slight evidence for Worfield allows for the identification of two fifteenth-century churchwardens. These men, Roger Gerbod and John Jannes, are seen in five courts in 1419–20, in which they brought a plea of debt against the executors of William and Agnes Toward for a coverlet left by the deceased to the fabric of the church.⁸⁰ Gerbod and Jannes were manorial officers much like later churchwardens, with both serving as jurors and jurors leet, Gerbod serving as beadle and taster, while Jannes served as affeeror, reeve and constable.⁸¹ Therefore the connection between manorial officeholding and being churchwarden seems to have been a consistent phenomenon over both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that did not shift with the changing role of the wardens. This in turn suggests that manorial officeholding was no less attractive to the men who served as churchwarden in 1650 than to those in 1500 or even 1420, evidencing that they still saw the value in serving in manorial office.

The similarity of personnel between churchwardens and manorial officers has been noted in several studies.⁸² However, the reconstruction of manorial officeholding careers allows for a greater consideration of the kind of officeholder who would also serve as churchwarden. This was necessarily a subset of all the tenants who served in manorial office, as only two churchwardens served per year at each community. For example, at Worfield, 669 individuals were recorded as serving in at least one manorial office in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but only 113 of these also served as churchwarden, an inevitability as there were simply not enough openings for all to serve in the latter position.⁸³

Table 5.2 compares the mean and median number of services as jurors leet, capital pledges and jurors baron by men serving in these roles to those of the subset of these men who were also churchwardens. The men are placed into cohorts by the date they first appear as a juror. These show that at Worfield churchwardens tended to be the greater serving jurors, with every cohort seeing the churchwarden subset having greater mean and median service values than the full cohort. The pattern for the early fifteenth century is more variable, with both churchwardens being above average in their cohorts as jurors baron, but being below the average as jurors leet, although it is likely many of the other prominent jurors of this decade also served as unrecorded churchwardens, thus presenting a misleading picture. At Cratfield, churchwardens were less consistently

⁸⁰ SA, P 314/W/1/1/253–5. ⁸¹ SA, P 314/W/1/1/208–92.

⁸² French, *People of the Parish*, 90; Byng, *Church Building*, 160, 163; Hindle and Kumin, 'Spatial dynamics', 158.

⁸³ SA, P 314/W/1/1/499–838.

Table 5.2 Comparison of careers of churchwarden-presentment jurors with all presentment jurors at Worfield and Craffield

Decade	Jurors leet/capital pledges				Jurors baron			
	No. churchwardens cohort	Mean services churchwardens cohort	Median services churchwardens cohort	No. all cohort	Mean services churchwarden cohort	Median services churchwardens cohort	No. all cohort	Median services all cohort
A Worfield								
1480-9	2	16	4	2	62	62	25	5
1490-9	8	16	3	8	55	55	37	3
1500-9	5	20	3	4	37	26	18	9
1510-19	7	19	2	3	70	63	22	23
1520-9	7	7	3	2	11	11	20	11
1530-9	2	5	1	4	22	10	24	9
1540-9	10	23	5	9	90	65	31	16
1550-9	3	10	3	1	51	51	27	1
1560-9	8	18	5	9	107	123	35	2
1570-9	5	20	3	10	85	62	34	7
1580-9	10	16	7	6	113	136	19	17
1590-9	5	24	5	5	72	49	21	9
1600-9	11	16	4	10	102	97	23	30
1610-19	9	21	6	7	55	48	20	14
1620-9	9	10	8	7	65	44	29	30
1630-9	1	10	4	1	1	1	21	7
1640-9	-	-	-	1	31	31	33	2
1390-9	-	-	-	1	78	78	47	4
1400-9	-	-	-	1	49	49	21	13
1410-19	2	17	13	-	-	-	-	-
All cohorts	102	17	4	88	74	60	439	7
(1480-1649)								

Table 5.2 (cont.)

Decade	Jurors leet/capital pledges						Jurors baron											
	No. all cohort			Mean services cohort			Median services cohort			No. all cohort			Mean services cohort			Median services cohort		
	churchwardens	cohort	all	churchwardens	cohort	all	churchwardens	cohort	all	churchwardens	cohort	all	churchwardens	cohort	all	churchwardens	cohort	all
1480-9	2	15	20	16	20	14	3	28	19	22	18	20						
1490-9	5	11	11	10	13	8	4	19	19	15	17	11						
1500-9	6	17	11	8	11	6	8	24	15	14	15	12						
1510-19	1	4	15	15	15	11	1	10	42	18	42	19						
1520-9	2	11	28	14	28	14	2	15	37	13	37	7						
1530-9	2	18	18	9	18	5	2	13	9	12	9	11						
1540-9	2	17	4	4	4	2	1	19	59	10	59	5						
1550-9	1	7	19	13	19	9	-	-	-	-	-	-						
1560-9	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	13	31	9	31	6						
1570-9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-						
1580-9	1	9	19	11	19	10	3	15	15	12	11	10						
1590-9	1	10	32	12	32	7	5	22	19	8	16	5						
1600-9	1	7	7	8	7	4	1	9	26	5	26	1						
1610-19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-						
1620-2	3	20	6	6	4	3	1	7	11	5	11	4						
1630-9	3	24	6	4	7	3	3	16	10	5	8	4						
1640-9	2	33	1	2	1	2	1	9	1	2	1	1						
All cohorts	32	231	12	8	12	4	36	245	19	11	16	7						

B Craffield

(1480-1649)

Notes: Churchwardens who could not be linked securely to a single individual have been excluded from the analysis. The totals for 'all cohorts' are larger than the sum of the preceding rows as the totals include decades for which no churchwardens could be identified as first serving as presentment jurors and court sessions which could not be securely dated to a specific decade.

Sources: Worfield CWAs, Parts I-VII; SA, p314/w/1/1/253-5, 499-83, 5586/1/257-306; Craffield PPs; *Churchwardens' Accounts of Craffield*, ed. Botelho, 148; Vanneck Box/3-4.

Replacement or Mutuality?

the most prominent jurors, with values in several decades being less or equal to whole juror cohorts. However, these still represent a minority of values, and in general churchwardens had active careers as jurors. The evidence for both manors demonstrates that not only were churchwardens overwhelmingly manorial officeholders, but they also tended to be the greatest serving, and so presumably most influential, officials.

This trend is not perfect, and it is important not to overstate the pattern and conclude that greater service in manorial office, and particularly as a juror, was a prerequisite for serving as churchwarden. While, at Worfield, the top two greatest-serving jurors leet of the cohorts examined, Humphrey Barrett and Richard Haselwood, who served sixty-three and fifty-three times respectively, accounted as churchwardens, another six churchwardens only acted as jurors leet once. Similarly, the fourth highest-serving juror leet, William Haselwood, never served as a churchwarden. An analogous pattern can also be seen in juror baron service, with six churchwardens serving only once or twice in this office, and the top-serving juror baron, John Rowley, not serving as a warden. It is worth noting, however, how far the men who served as churchwardens provided a large proportion of those who served in other manorial offices. For Worfield, looking just at those who served in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, churchwardens accounted for 71 (38%) of the 185 men selected as constables and 44 (38%) of the 115 men selected as reeves.⁸⁴ For Cratfield, churchwardens accounted for 25 (22%) of the 115 men selected as constables, although the limited list of churchwardens available means this is a minimum value.⁸⁵ While these numbers do not suggest domination of these offices, this is in part a result of the very low instance of repeat service. This is a picture of correlation rather than causation; serving as a manorial officer or churchwarden was not necessary to serve in the other office, but similar factors seem to have been in play in determining who served across these roles.

REPLACEMENT OR MUTUALITY?

Not only did the same men who served as churchwardens continue to be the most dominant manorial officers, but they also blended their responsibilities and powers to meet wider objectives. This challenges the argument that parochial officers replaced manorial institutions. The only example of replacement can be found at Worfield. In 1549 the wardens' accounts report 2s 2d paid to William Billingsley and Thomas Garbot 'for the stockes', which suggests a shift since 1393, when the reeve was

⁸⁴ SA, w/1/1/499–838. ⁸⁵ CUL, Vanneck Box/3–4.

ordered to make a new set of stocks, cuckingstool and tumbrel from the lord's timber and at the lord's cost.⁸⁶ This perhaps represents prominent members of the community taking more responsibility for monitoring behaviour, although the two references to these punishment devices in both sources across the whole 350 years studied seem unlikely to be giving the full picture. Even if this does represent a shift from manorial to parochial office, there is a slight possibility that while the parish rather than lord was taking on the cost, the devices were still being procured via a manorial office, as William Billingsley was beadle in 1548–9.⁸⁷ Potentially, Billingsley's role as beadle gave him access to timber, and hence he was chosen by the parish to perform this task.

A more profitable way of thinking about the relationship between churchwardens and manorial officers is in terms of interaction and joint responses to problems, an approach that better reflects the fact that while these were different types of offices, broadly the same individuals served in them. One area where manorial officers met the needs of churchwardens, or were at least triggered to act at their instigation, is seen in the enforcement of legislation about caps. This law was ostensibly an economic measure designed to help sustain the 'laudable Science and Trade of Cappyng' and demanded the wearing of caps by all persons over six on Sundays and Holy Days.⁸⁸ At Worfield, this law was enforced by jurors leet via presentment in 1581–4, thus ten years after the law was made in 1571. However, enforcement was preceded by entries in the churchwardens' accounts of 1580, when the wardens spent money at Shifnal and Tong before the 'commissioners about cappes', this sum potentially being an amercement for not prosecuting this legislation.⁸⁹ As the 1571 statute was enforceable by both JPs and stewards in leets, the calling of the churchwardens before the justices thus may have been a trigger to enforce this legislation locally, either owing to concern about being punished by justices for failure, or because of the attractive prospect of profit for the lord and community. Further evidence for this is given in the identity of the jurors leet who prosecuted these offences. Thomas Guldon, one of the 1579–80 churchwardens, served as a juror leet in the first caps prosecuting jury of 1582, while Richard Yate, the other churchwarden, served in all three juries leet that prosecuted these cases.⁹⁰

The same phenomenon is seen at Cratfield. After paying a relatively large sum of 11s to the 'com(m)yssoners for cappes' at Blythburgh in

⁸⁶ Worfield CWAs, Part V, 114; SA, P 3 14/w/1/1/187, 29 Oct. 1393.

⁸⁷ SA, P 3 14/w/1/1/670, 4 Oct. 1548. ⁸⁸ 13 Elizabeth I, c.19, SR, vol. 4 part I, 555.

⁸⁹ Worfield CWAs, Part V, 68.

⁹⁰ SA, P 3 14/w/1/1/803, 27 Sep. 1582, 23 Mar. 1583; P 3 14/w/1/1/806, 7 Apr. 1584.

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1578, the churchwardens went on to make eight additional payments to the queen's bailiff of 1–2s between 1580 and 1592 for not wearing their caps.⁹¹ This period coincides with the enforcement of this legislation in the manor court, with the capital pledges presenting the inhabitants of the vill for failing to wear their caps on an annual basis between 1580 and 1597.⁹² The explanation for this relationship appears to be financial. The ameracements charged in the manor court correspond with the sums paid by the churchwardens, so it seems likely the wardens used the manor court to raise the sums they were required to pay to the crown to meet this legislation, remembering that in this period the manor lay in crown hands. Again, the correspondence of personnel supports this interpretation, with four of the ten identifiable churchwardens who accounted between 1578 and 1592 serving as capital pledges in sessions where failure to wear caps was presented.⁹³

There is more evidence of churchwardens meeting the needs of manorial officers, or at least those of the manorial tenants. At Cratfield, the parish itself was a significant tenant of land held of the lord, which necessitated regular payments by the churchwardens to the lord's bailiffs for rent and fines, as well as copies of the court roll as evidence of the parish's title.⁹⁴ However, beyond the role of the parish as a tenant of the lord, the accounts suggest that the churchwardens played an active role in facilitating the holding of the manor court. Payments are recorded between 1608 and 1637 for wine, sack, beer and sugar for the lord's court.⁹⁵ These seem to have been related to Edward Coke and his son's occasional appearances at the court, as seen in an 1608 entry in which the wardens 'paid for 5 pints of claret and half a pound of sugar at such time as my Lords coming was expected to our Town'.⁹⁶

Occasionally the parish seems also to have played a role in the gift economy between tenants and lords, again especially once the manor had been granted to the Cokes after previously being in aristocratic and royal hands. In 1608, 2s 8d was expended in carrying wine to the Cokes' seat at Huntingfield Hall, in 1609 Richard Aldous was paid £3 4s for six wethers he bought for the lord, and in 1633 £3 4d was spent on sack for the lord.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Cratfield PPs, 101–3.

⁹² CUL, Vanneck Box/3, Elizabeth I roll (1), m.17, 19 May 1580, m.19, 7 Jun. 1582; Elizabeth I roll (3), m.1, 23 Jun. 1583, 11 Jun. 1584, m.2, 27 May 1585; Elizabeth I roll (4), m.1, 17 May 1592, m.3, 7 Jun. 1593, m.4, 23 May 1594, m.5, 2 Aug. 1595, m.7, 30 Jun. 1596, 18 May 1597. It is important to remember that Cratfield's court rolls are lost for 1585–92, so these findings are based on partial evidence.

⁹³ CUL, Vanneck Box/3, Elizabeth I roll (1, 3–4).

⁹⁴ Cratfield PPs, 36–7, 48, 60, 101, 103, 106, 129, 155–6, 158, 173.

⁹⁵ Cratfield PPs, 136, 155, 164, 173. ⁹⁶ Cratfield PPs, 135.

⁹⁷ Cratfield PPs, 136–7, 169; A.D. Boyer, 'Coke, Sir Edward (1552–1634)', *ODNB*.

The parish was also seemingly used to distribute gifts made by the lord to the tenants, or at least a subset of them, with the churchwardens paying John Filby for a banquet that 'certain of the inhabitants, had by consent . . . whereat the vendicine that my Lord Cooke gave to this town of Cratfield it was spent'.⁹⁸ How these gifts are interpreted is open to question: they may simply have been made by the churchwardens as tenants on behalf of the parish for the lands it held. However, gifts were a way for larger landholders who held official positions to consolidate their relationships with the local gentry, and therefore it seems plausible that the local elites who held both manorial and parochial office at Cratfield used the revenue-raising apparatus available to churchwardens to help secure their position in both types of governing institution.⁹⁹

Similar payments may have been made at Worfield, although here the evidence is less conclusive. In 1562 the churchwardens accounted for a bottle of wine for the lord's officers, while in 1574 they paid 3s 8d to make a book of customs and for wine for its scribe, although it is hard to conclusively link these to the manor.¹⁰⁰ On one occasion, the churchwardens seemingly expended parish money to mark the court leet, paying 12d 'to the steeplemen at the great leete holden at Wortfield vth of Maie'.¹⁰¹ In 1615, the churchwardens also held a ladder which was to be given to the lord as a deodand.¹⁰²

A stronger connection is seen in an order to the churchwardens recorded in a court of 1579. In this instance the jury presented 'that the house in which the court of the lord is held ought to be repaired and sustained by the parishioners of Worfield. Thus it is ordered to the churchwardens that they immediately amend and repair the aforesaid house now ruined in accordance with their liability'.¹⁰³ The response to this order can be seen in the wardens' accounts. In 1582 an outlay of 12s was recorded for three tonnes of timber to board the court house, with further expense for bricks to make its hearth, while another 2s 4d was spent on timber in 1583.¹⁰⁴ Why the parish was responsible for the court house is not clear, although as parish and manor at Worfield were coterminous, the jury may simply have been utilising the churchwardens' ability to levy a rate to collect this money, with parishioners and tenants being effectively the same individuals. Jane Smith suggests that the

⁹⁸ Cratfield PPs, 139. Venison had a particular status as a food gift. See F. Heal, 'Food gifts, the household and the politics of exchange in early modern England', *P&P*, 199 (2008), 41–70, at 57–62.

⁹⁹ J. Whittle and E. Griffiths, *Consumption and Gender in the Early Seventeenth-Century Household: the World of Alice Le Strange* (Oxford, 2012), 82–3; Heal, 'Food gifts', 54.

¹⁰⁰ Worfield CWAs, Part V, 134; Part VI, 61. ¹⁰¹ Worfield CWAs, Part VII, 26.

¹⁰² SA, 5586/1/273, 20 Apr. 1615. ¹⁰³ SA, p 314/w/1/1/794, 8 Jan. 1579.

¹⁰⁴ Worfield CWAs, Part VI, 69–71.

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parish's grammar school and court house were held in the same building, which would imply an even closer connection between parochial and manorial resources.¹⁰⁵ Richard Yate appears both in this jury and as a churchwarden for 1581–2 when the timber and bricks were purchased.¹⁰⁶ Thus, at both manors, the role of churchwardens as revenue managers was used to facilitate the holding of the manor court and to manage relations with the lord.

At Worfield, the manorial jury also had a role in monitoring the work and powers of churchwardens. This is revealed in a presentment by the jury leet in 1533 in which it was stated that

Roger Catstre assumed to himself to guard the key, or *acoffer kei*, [of the chest?] in which the rolls and [lost] of the lord are kept, and that the said Roger at the time in which he was guardian of the key was himself not a churchwarden, and at the same time *on lokon* was broken, which pertained to the said key, and the wax pertaining to the key of the lord was [?] etc., and the rolls were interlineated, and diverse rolls were carried away, but who did this thing, the 12 do not know.¹⁰⁷

This again shows that the duties of churchwardens were linked to the manor. Presumably the coffer being referred to was the parish chest in which it seems the manorial court rolls were kept at Worfield, thus making the wardens responsible for the documents. It also reveals why the wardens were being monitored by the manorial jury; the lapse that had allowed the documents to be damaged affected both the lord and tenants rather than only the parish, as far as these identities can be separated. Connections between personnel suggest this was an example of churchwardens monitoring their own office through manorial structures. While Catstre, the censured former churchwarden for 1531–2, was not on the jury leet making this presentment, of the two churchwardens for 1533–4 (when this presentment was made), one, Roger Barker, was certainly a juror leet, while the other, William Rowley, may well have been.¹⁰⁸ That churchwardens remained responsible for manorial documents is potentially suggested by a further entry in the churchwardens' accounts of 1631, when 12d was 'layd out when order was taken w(i)th

¹⁰⁵ Smith, *Worfield*, 24. ¹⁰⁶ SA, P314/W/1/1/794, 8 Jan. 1579.

¹⁰⁷ SA, P314/W/1/1/645, 8 May 1533. As this case is unusual, the Latin is provided without correction: 'Rogerus Catstre assumpsit super se ad custod' clavem aut acoffer kei in qua Rotull' et [lost] domini custodintur et quod predictus Rogerus tempore custodit clavem ipse non erat gardianus ecclesie et in eodem tempore cassa fuit on lokon pertinent' eodem clavis et quod cera pertinent' clavo domini funct' fuit etc. Rottula interlineat' erat et diversa Rottull' elongat', set quis hec fecit XII ignorantur.' I am grateful to Chris Briggs for help with this transcription and the above translation.

¹⁰⁸ SA, P314/W/1/1/645, 8 May 1533. Unfortunately there were two William Rowleys serving as manorial officers in the year 1533–4, making it impossible to identify this churchwarden with a single individual.

Mr Stewarde to looke the roles in London'.¹⁰⁹ Potentially, these 'roles' were the court rolls and 'Mr Stewarde' was the lord's steward. The 1533 presentment again highlights the interrelations between churchwardens and manorial officeholders, showing that these offices cannot be treated as distinct.

Another example of the interaction between manorial officers and churchwardens at Worfield is revealed in a set of jury presentments made in 1465, long pre-dating the surviving churchwardens' accounts. The steward and jury issued a pain ordering that three sets of former constables 'should come into the presence of the guardians of the church of Worfield before the next feast of All Saints and render appropriate accounts of the money by . . . each of them received . . . by virtue of their office'.¹¹⁰ This presentment reveals not only the important role of churchwardens in monitoring the constables, but also how manorial juries could use them for this purpose. Again, it seems likely that the churchwardens were used to monitor the making of the constables' accounts owing to their role in maintaining the documents utilised by the manor. The other intriguing aspect of this presentment, and the one made in 1533, is that they pre-date the secular use to which the crown put churchwardens in the post-Reformation period. They reveal that local elites were using parochial officers for responsibilities other than maintaining parish property long before the state systematically put them to this task.¹¹¹

There is less evidence at Cratfield for the use of manorial office to monitor the work of churchwardens and vice versa. The only potential example is in 1648 when the capital pledges presented the village's churchwardens for not repairing a set of butts.¹¹² However, in this case it seems less likely this was specifically about monitoring churchwardens through manorial structures, and more about the fact that churchwardens at Cratfield held land and were therefore subject to the same monitoring of infrastructure as any other tenant.

A smattering of evidence suggests how manorial and parochial office were used in conjunction at Worfield and Cratfield to achieve aims linked to their responsibilities to state and lord, and to help monitor both types of office. The manorial court, staffed by local elites as jurors, provided a type of 'coercive power' as a result of its ability to levy amerancements, and therefore could be utilised to collect payments owed to the state and censure churchwardens who failed to perform their office. Similarly,

¹⁰⁹ Worfield CWAs, Part VII, 51. ¹¹⁰ SA, P314/W/1/1/326, 15 Oct. 1465.

¹¹¹ Evidence of the interaction of parochial and manorial office is given by Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, 53–4; Ault, 'Manor court and parish church', 61–4, 66–7.

¹¹² CUL, Vanneck Box/4, Charles I roll, m.29, 24 May 1648.

Replacement or Mutuality?

manorial officials could use the fundraising and accounting structure offered by the churchwardens to organise the court, manage their relationship with the lord and monitor the behaviour of other officials like the constable. Neither the powers of parish officials nor those of manorial officials were alone sufficient to meet the needs of local government; it was through combination that effective management could be maintained. There were differences between these manors: a stronger relationship is visible at Worfield, where manorial officials actually monitored the role of churchwardens, while there are no clear examples of this at Cratfield. This could be linked to the differing geographical relationships between manor and parish, with the weaker relationship at Cratfield a consequence of the parish's division between several manors. However, even in this context, the manor court can still be seen to have enforced legislation based on the activities of churchwardens in terms of the capping statute, while churchwardens had a vital role in helping hold the manor court and in fostering relationships between tenants and lord.

The interaction of parochial and manorial officials seen in these records drew on a wider practice visible in the court rolls of using the coercive power of the manor court presentment to maintain parochial funds and infrastructure. At Worfield, this is seen clearly for the seventeenth century, when manorial officials frequently presented residents for hosting individuals who they were concerned could become a burden to the parish.¹¹³ Juries were helping to meet concerns which were also articulated in parochial documents. For instance, in 1535, the churchwardens' accounts recorded a manorial bylaw, stating that 'at yis accowntes it is agreyd by alle the hole paresche that no persun shalle bring no owt cummer no go with them in the churche nor in the peresche to gether nother come nor money a pon the peyne of 10s to the churche as ofty n as he so doys'.¹¹⁴ This measure was designed to ban mendicants from outside the parish seeking charity within the community. The jury's role in maintaining parochial infrastructure also stretched back to the late Middle Ages. In the late fifteenth century, Thomas Prystes was amerced 8d for ringing the church bell of Worfield at night 'in affray of the parishioners' and another offender was placed under pain not to disturb the tenants with 'le pangys [pangs]' of his beasts in the cemetery of the parish church.¹¹⁵

Unfortunately, the lack of evidence about churchwardens for Downham, Horstead and Fordington prevents a comparative perspective. Yet, much like at Worfield, officials at Horstead were used to protect

¹¹³ See pp. 152–3. ¹¹⁴ Worfield CWAs, Part IV, 222.

¹¹⁵ SA, P3 14/W/1/1/427, 10 Apr. 1482; P3 14/W/1/1/492, 2 Oct. 1494.

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parochial property. In 1490, the jury presented the rector for cutting down trees near the church of Horstead for his own use, 'without the licence of his parishioners and against the ancient custom of the vill'.¹¹⁶ Similarly, at Fordington the manor court was used in the seventeenth century to ensure parochial decisions were followed. In 1634, a bylaw stated that only the agent appointed by 'the Parishoners' should burn the moor and that anyone else who did so would pay a pain of 3s 4d upon presentment in court, while in 1643 parish officials (potentially churchwardens, although this term is not used) were ordered to produce their accounts in court for sums received and dispersed.¹¹⁷ These examples suggest the interaction between parish and manorial roles was not specific to Cratfield and Worfield but was instead a wider phenomenon.

CONCLUSION

Examination of the relationship between churchwardens and manorial officers reveals a picture of interaction rather than replacement. While the sixteenth century undoubtedly saw drastic change in the role of churchwardens, allowing the extension of the state into local life in a way that was never true of manorial office, the elites involved in this change were largely the same people who had been serving as manorial officers, and meeting their needs through their service, in the medieval period. This early stage of transformation, moreover, does not seem to have drastically affected the personnel of manorial office, or how the elites who served as churchwardens viewed manorial office. The connection between serving as a manorial officer and as a churchwarden remained broadly similar across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and perhaps even back into the fifteenth century. There was no move among prominent local tenants away from manorial to parochial office.

Of course, noting that similar individuals filled manorial and parochial offices is not a revelatory breakthrough. Historians have long argued that offices were occupied by similar groups, as is revealed in the celebrated commonplace book of Robert Reynes, which contains information relevant to manorial, parochial and state office.¹¹⁸ However, this study has demonstrated that these groups were more than similar, they were virtually identical, and this did not change with the increasing incorporation of churchwardens into wider county structures resulting from the innovations of central government. It also reveals interaction in functions

¹¹⁶ KCAR/6/2/87/1/1/HOR/41, m.5, 10 Sep. 1490.

¹¹⁷ TNA, SC 2/170/14, m.5, 27 Mar. 1634; SC 2/170/16, m.9, 4 Oct. 1643.

¹¹⁸ *Commonplace Book*, ed. Louis.

Conclusion

stretching back to the fifteenth century, reinforcing the revisionist position raised by Smith about the level of incorporation of late medieval villages into the state.¹¹⁹ Johnson has highlighted how in the late Middle Ages communities made use of the 'fluidity' between manorial courts and ecclesiastical jurisdictions to 'mould idealized communities' and this flexibility in the combination of manor and parish continued into the early modern period.¹²⁰ The manor provided the vital 'real power' over villages which Hoyle suggests the middling sort lacked.¹²¹ The ability of jurors to control presentments, amercements and the placing of pains provided a mechanism by which to coerce other members of the community besides reporting offenders to royal commissioners or church authorities. Therefore, even with the expansion of state authority via the office of churchwarden, local elites were surely reluctant to abandon manorial office which allowed them direct authority over their fellows.

The interaction between manorial officials and churchwardens did differ owing to varying relationships between manorial and parochial boundaries. Interestingly, the limited evidence here gainsays Hindle's suggestion.¹²² Rather than coterminous bounds leading to parish replacing manor, instead the example of Worfield suggests this led both structures to remain important. By contrast, Cratfield, where boundaries did not match neatly, seems to have seen parish becoming more significant than manor, especially with the early rise of the vestry and the formation of a separate 'town book'. Essentially, the weakness of manorial institutions led local elites to seek alternatives, again suggesting that manorial structures were a vital tool that middling sorts sought to utilise where possible. Yet, even at Cratfield, the same individuals continued to serve in manorial office alongside acting as churchwardens, and these offices were combined to meet churchwardens' obligations to royal justices and tenants' obligations to their lord.

The consequence of these insights is to extend but also challenge recent formulations of early modern state formation. The focus on how local standing and authority conditioned the position of local officials, creating a complex relationship between the state and village elites, is reinforced. As such, the study endorses the view of state formation as occurring through a decentralised process of development in English localities. However, such a picture reveals that local authority was exercised via the more formal structures of the manor as well as informal, though intimately connected, conditions of social standing and credit. It also

¹¹⁹ Smith, 'Modernization', 161–77. ¹²⁰ Johnson, *Law in Common*, 21.

¹²¹ Hoyle, 'Wrightsonian incorporation', 23.

¹²² Hindle, 'Political culture of the middling sort', 126–8.

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questions models that see manor and parish government as somehow different, or that the latter replaced the former. In fact, the social structures which early modernists often associate with the incorporation of parochial officeholding into the state, look to have been formed through the selection of manorial officeholders, which helped create a set of chief inhabitants who slid relatively neatly into service to the state via parochial offices they had also long held. Of course, contentions that have seen the Civil War as marking a point of departure cannot be fully examined by an analysis that ends in 1650.¹²³ Similarly, the growth of subtenancy, which likely increased over the seventeenth century, may have led to an increasing separation of tenants who could serve in manorial office but were largely non-resident, and ratepaying-occupiers who could serve in the vestry and parochial office but were excluded from manorial institutions.¹²⁴ However, an exploration of the relationship between manorial officeholding and state reveals a further complexity in the transition from the medieval to the early modern. The local parochial elite that the developing state is often seen to have created was deeply rooted in the governing structure of the medieval manor.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 127; Kent, 'State formation and parish government', 403–4; K. Wrightson, 'The social order of early modern England: three approaches' in L. Bonfield, R.M. Smith and K. Wrightson (eds.), *The World We Have Gained: Histories of Population and Social Structure* (Oxford, 1986), 177–202, at 201; French, *Middle Sort of People*, 108–9, 263; Hindle and Kümin, 'Spatial dynamics', 164.

¹²⁴ French and Hoyle, *Earls Colne*, 295.