

5: Cathedrals: An Historical Note[†]

1. Cathedrals have a diverse history which has strongly influenced the diversity in the roles and responsibilities of their deans (and provosts) and residentiary canons. This note aims to offer a (necessarily highly selective) overview of that history.

Old Foundation Cathedrals

2. Before the Reformation, the following nine English cathedrals were staffed by ‘secular’ clergy (i.e. clergy who were not members of religious orders): Chichester, Exeter, Hereford, Lichfield, Lincoln, London (St Paul’s), Salisbury, Wells, York. These cathedrals survived the Reformation intact and came to be known as ‘Cathedrals of the Old Foundation’.
3. The canons of Old Foundation cathedrals were also prebendaries – i.e. their income came from individual endowments (‘prebends’), consisting of lands and the right to collect rents, fees and tithes from parishes. The number of prebends ranged from 22 (Wells) to 58 (Lincoln). The chief dignitaries in each cathedral – the *quattuor personae*, ‘cornerstones’ of their spiritual and material fabric – were the dean, the precentor (who ranked next after the dean), the chancellor and the treasurer. Each of these commonly had a deputy (respectively, the sub-dean, the succentor, the vice-chancellor and the sacrist). Archdeacons were sometimes also prebendaries and commonly also had stalls in choir next to those of the great officers. A small number of the prebendaries (varying from four to eight, but generally six or seven) were designated as residentiary canons and required to reside at the cathedral for part of the year; these had a share in the common funds of the cathedral in addition to their individual prebends.¹⁴³

Former Cathedral Priors

4. The other ten pre-Reformation English cathedrals were monastic foundations – cathedral priories. Nine of these were Benedictine priories and one (Carlisle) a priory of Augustinian canons. The priories were headed by a prior, with a sub-prior to perform his duties when he was absent (at Durham there was a third and at Canterbury and Winchester a third and a fourth prior). Responsibility for various aspects of the cathedral priory’s life rested with up to twenty-five ‘obedientaries’ including the sacristan or sacrist, precentor and receiver, and their assistants or subordinates such as the sub-sacrist and the succentor.¹⁴⁴
5. Two of the cathedral priories – Bath and Coventry – were simply dissolved in 1539, since the Bishop of Bath and Wells and the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield each had a second, secular cathedral (at Wells and Lichfield respectively), but in 1538 Norwich

[†] Reproduced from *Talent and Calling. A review of the law and practice regarding appointments to the offices of suffragan bishop, dean, archdeacon and residentiary canon* (GS 1650, 2007), Appendix IV.

¹⁴³ S. Lehmborg, *English Cathedrals: A History* (London and New York, 2005), pp. 81-84.

¹⁴⁴ Lemberg, *English Cathedrals*, pp. 92-95.

Cathedral and 1541-2 the other seven were transformed into secular cathedrals: Canterbury, Carlisle, Durham, Ely, Norwich, Rochester, Winchester, Worcester.

Other New Foundation Cathedrals

6. Henry VIII also founded six new dioceses in 1540-2: Bristol, Chester, Gloucester, Oxford, Peterborough and Westminster (suppressed in 1550). Chester, Gloucester, Peterborough and Westminster had as their cathedrals former Benedictine abbeys which had been dissolved in 1539-40. Bristol Cathedral was a former Augustinian Abbey, dissolved in 1539. Osney Abbey, another Augustinian abbey, was replaced by Christ Church as the cathedral for Oxford in 1546.
7. The thirteen cathedrals founded or re-founded by Henry VIII are known as ‘Cathedrals of the New Foundation’.

The Reforms of 1840

8. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners Act 1840 abolished non-residentiary prebends and limited the number of residentiary canons to eight (Christ Church, Oxford), six (Canterbury, Durham, Ely), five (Exeter and Winchester) or four (all other cathedrals). In some cases, these numbers were later further reduced.

Modern Cathedrals: 1836-1877; Liverpool and Guildford Cathedrals

9. The cathedrals of the two new dioceses founded in the first half of the nineteenth century were both already collegiate churches. The church of SS Peter and Wilfrid, Ripon, which had belonged to a house of Augustinian Canons until the dissolution of the monasteries, had been refounded as a collegiate church by James I in 1604. In 1836 it became the cathedral of the new diocese of Ripon, its dean and prebendaries becoming the first dean and chapter. The parish church of Manchester was a collegiate church from 1422. The college was dissolved in 1547 but refounded in 1578. In 1847 it became the cathedral of the new diocese of Manchester, its dean and prebendaries becoming the first dean and chapter. These two churches were both parish churches.
10. St Mary’s, Truro was constituted as the cathedral for the new Diocese of Truro, founded in 1877, but in fact a new cathedral was built. This incorporated, as an additional side-aisle, the south aisle of St Mary’s, which continued to be the parish church. A dean and chapter were created, though the Bishop of Truro was dean until 1960. Also in 1877 St Albans Abbey, which had become a parish church in 1553, became the cathedral for the new Diocese of St Albans. A deanery (but not a chapter) was erected by the Crown in 1900.
11. A new cathedral was also built for the Diocese of Liverpool, founded in 1880. As in Truro, the bishop initially acted as dean – in this case, until 1931. A third newly-built cathedral is that of Guildford, completed in 1961, when the first dean was appointed. As completely new buildings, Liverpool and Guildford Cathedrals are not parish churches.

‘The Parish Church Cathedrals’

12. The other fourteen English cathedrals (all of them cathedrals of dioceses created in or after 1882) are commonly known as ‘parish church cathedrals’. The Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban also fell within the definition of a ‘parish church cathedral’ in the Cathedrals Measure 1963 (now repealed), and falls within the corresponding provision in the Cathedrals Measure 1999, in that although it had both a dean and a chapter before the 1999 Measure it did not have a corporate body known as ‘the dean and chapter’.
13. The description of these churches as ‘parish church cathedrals’ is misleading; on the one hand, not only St Albans but also the other cathedrals established between 1836 and 1877 – Manchester, Ripon and Truro – all have parishes, whereas, on the other hand, the Newcastle parish has no residents and eight of the other thirteen parishes have very small populations of less than 750 (in 1993: 10, 20, 72, 150, 250, 354, 456 and 637), the proportion of the regular congregation drawn from the parish being negligible in all cases but one.¹⁴⁵ However, these fourteen cathedrals continue to be distinct from the others in a way that is related to their status as parish churches, in that in each case the parish has an incumbent who is dean of the cathedral by virtue of being the incumbent of the parochial benefice.
14. The cathedrals concerned are: Newcastle (1882), Southwell (1884), Wakefield (1888), Southwark (1905), Birmingham (1905), Sheffield (1913), St Edmundsbury (1913), Chelmsford (1914), Coventry (1918), Bradford (1919), Blackburn (1926), Derby (1927), Leicester (1927), Portsmouth (1927).
15. Of these parish church cathedrals, Southwell Minster is perhaps the most distinctive historically speaking, in that it was a collegiate church, dissolved in 1540, re-founded in 1585 but again dissolved under the Ecclesiastical Commissioners Act 1841.
16. The *Report of the Cathedrals Commission* (1927) gives the following information about the clergy of the first ten ‘parish church cathedrals’ in 1927:¹⁴⁶
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|-----------|---|
| Newcastle | four canons (the vicar, the archdeacon and two others) |
| Southwell | rector and two curates |
| Wakefield | four canons (the vicar, two archdeacons and a canon missionary) |
| Southwark | dean (the bishop) and six canons
(only the rector and diocesan missionary being stipendiary and only the rector actually resident) |

¹⁴⁵ *Heritage and Renewal: The Report of the Archbishops’ Commission on Cathedrals* (London, 1994), p. 59 (Bradford reported that 10% of its regular congregation was drawn from its parish population of 354).

¹⁴⁶ *Report of the Cathedrals Commission appointed in pursuance of a Resolution of the National Assembly of the Church of England* (London, 1927), ii, 21-326.

Birmingham	acting dean (the rector, also assistant bishop) and 24 honorary canons
Sheffield	vicar and two assistant clergy
Bury St Edmunds	vicar
Chelmsford	sub-dean (the rector) and three curates (one called ‘the precentor’)
Coventry	dean (the bishop); sub-dean (the vicar) and 24 honorary canons
Bradford	vicar and two curates

17. In 1927, therefore, most of these cathedrals were essentially run by an incumbent, supported by one or more assistant curates.

The Cathedrals Measures

18. Under the Cathedrals Measure 1931, constitutions were established and statutes made by 1942 for all cathedrals (except Christ Church, Oxford). In the case of parish church cathedrals, the establishment of a chapter was optional. In line with a recommendation of the Cathedrals Commission,¹⁴⁷ the Measure required that the incumbent of a parish church cathedral should be styled ‘the Provost’, whether or not there was a chapter).
19. Most of the Cathedrals Measure 1931 was replaced by the Cathedrals Measure 1963. This perpetuated the differences in the governance of ‘dean and chapter’ and ‘parish church’ cathedrals (all of which were now to have a chapter). It also provided that in each cathedral the holders of two residentiary canonries should be engaged exclusively on cathedral duties, though the constitution and statutes could provide for this to be reduced to one ‘until such time as the bishop may determine after consultation with the administrative body’.

The Cathedrals Measure 1999

20. The Cathedrals Measure 1999 resulted from the work of the Archbishops’ Commission on Cathedrals, chaired by Lady Howe of Aberavon, which reported in 1994. This recommended that ‘the distinction between “dean and chapter” and “parish church” cathedrals should be ended and a single broad system of governance for all cathedrals introduced, capable of flexible adaptation to suit local circumstances’ and that the senior clergy member of all administrative chapters should in future be known as ‘the dean’.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ *Report of the Cathedrals Commission*, i, 43.

¹⁴⁸ *Heritage and Renewal*, p. 179.

21. The Measure applies to all English cathedrals (other than Christ Church, Oxford) without distinction and provides that ‘the principal dignitary of the cathedral, next after the bishop, shall be known as the dean’. The effect of the Measure’s provisions regarding deans was generally to increase the powers of the deans of the former ‘dean and chapter’ cathedrals; the dean is to have a casting vote in chapter meetings and ‘as chairman of the Chapter to govern and direct on its behalf the life and work of the cathedral’, and without his consent the cathedral’s services cannot be altered, its budget settled or chapter decisions taken in his absence implemented. These powers are, however, less than those that were generally enjoyed by provosts (who, as indicated above, had – at least in the fairly recent past – been incumbents assisted by assistant curates). Where the parochial church councils of parish church cathedrals had not previously been abolished, they were abolished by the Measure.
22. Although there is now a common framework for the governance of all cathedrals, within that framework there remains scope for a significant degree of diversity. This makes it possible for many of the historic differences between the different types of cathedral to continue to exist. The Measure also provides that where the constitution of a cathedral provided for the appointment of a dean to be by Her Majesty, the constitution shall continue to so provide, but that in any other case the incumbent of the benefice which comprises the parish of which the cathedral is the parish church shall be the dean. It would therefore not be correct to say that the Measure completely removed the distinctions between the different types of cathedral.

Right of Appointment to Deaneries[†]

23. The position regarding the right to appoint to deaneries may be summarized as follows. The Crown appoints the deans of all the cathedrals of dioceses founded before 1882, together with the Deans of Liverpool and Guildford (the only cathedrals of more recently founded dioceses which are not parish churches) – 28 deans in all.¹⁴⁹ The Bishop appoints the dean of twelve cathedrals which are parish churches, and the deans of two other parish church cathedrals, Bradford and Sheffield, are appointed by independent trustees.

[†] This section is adapted from *Talent and Calling*, sections 2.4 and 2.5.

¹⁴⁹ Before the Reformation, deans were elected by the cathedral chapter, as were the priors of cathedral priories, though the chapter was required to elect the candidate nominated by the Crown. This system was retained by Henry VIII in the case of the Old Foundation cathedrals, but the deans of New Foundation cathedrals were appointed by Letters Patent. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners Act 1840 abolished the election of deans of Old Foundation cathedrals; in future, they too were to be appointed by Letters Patent.

Cathedrals whose Deans are appointed by the Crown

24. With regard to their origins, the cathedrals whose deans are appointed by the Crown may be grouped as follows:
- ❖ Old Foundation cathedrals:
Chichester, Exeter, Hereford, Lichfield, Lincoln, London (St Paul's), Salisbury, Wells, York (9)
 - ❖ New Foundation cathedrals which were formerly cathedral priories, re-founded as non-monastic cathedrals in 1538, 1541 or 1542:
Canterbury, Carlisle, Durham, Ely, Norwich, Rochester, Winchester, Worcester (8)
 - ❖ New Foundation cathedrals of dioceses established in 1541 or 1542:
Bristol, Chester, Gloucester, Oxford, Peterborough (5)
 - ❖ Cathedrals of dioceses founded between 1836 and 1877:
Ripon, Manchester, Truro, St Albans (4)
 - ❖ Modern non-parochial cathedrals: Liverpool, Guildford (2)

The Cathedrals Measure 1999 established a common framework for the governance of all cathedrals except Christ Church, Oxford (to which the Measure does not apply), but within that framework there remained scope for a significant degree of diversity. Some of the variations between the cathedrals reflect their different histories and traditions.

25. The Cathedrals Measure also requires that 'Where, immediately before the relevant date, the constitution of a cathedral provided for the appointment of the dean to be by Her Majesty the constitution shall continue so to provide.'¹⁵⁰
26. None of the cathedrals founded before the nineteenth century is a parish church as such, though parts of several of them have at some time been used as parish churches, and in some there were small parish churches in the close. (The parish of St Mary-in-the-Marsh, Norwich, which covers the cathedral close, still exists, though without a separate parish church, and one of the residentiary canons of the cathedral is its priest-in-charge.)
27. Ripon and Manchester Cathedrals are parish churches and Truro Cathedral incorporates the south aisle of St Mary's parish church, which continues to be the parish church of St Mary's parish. The Deans of Ripon, Manchester and Truro are appointed as such by the Crown and are *ex officio* incumbents of the parochial benefices concerned, so that the provisions of the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986 do not apply to their appointments.

¹⁵⁰ Cathedrals Measure 1999, s. 9(2)(a).

28. The Constitution of St Albans Cathedral states that the rector of the ecclesiastical parish of the Abbey Church of St Alban is appointed by the bishop, and continues ‘The offices of dean and rector may be held in plurality and have invariably been held by the same person.’ The provisions of the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986 apply to the appointment of the rector by the bishop. Because before 1999 the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban, though it had a dean, did not have ‘a corporate body known as the dean and chapter’, under Cathedrals Measure 1999 the functions of a parochial church council are exercised by the Chapter and accordingly the two ‘parish representatives’ are replaced by two lay members of the Chapter appointed by the Chapter.¹⁵¹ The fact that the Crown and the bishop appoint to two offices that have invariably been held by the same person makes the appointment of the Dean of St Albans more of a joint undertaking than is formally the case with other deaneries.

Cathedrals whose Deans are appointed by the Bishop or by independent Trustees

29. Of the dioceses founded after from 1882 onwards, only Liverpool and Guildford have a cathedral purpose-built on a new site. In the other fourteen cases, an existing parish church became the cathedral. These cathedrals were commonly called ‘parish church cathedrals’. That term is misleading, since (as indicated above) the cathedrals of the four dioceses founded between 1836 and 1877 are also either parish churches or (in the case of Truro) include a parish church.
30. However, there is a distinction between these fourteen cathedrals and the others in the way that their deans are appointed, and that distinction derives from their parochial status. In these fourteen cases, the incumbent of the cathedral benefice is appointed under the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986. The Cathedrals Measure 1999 requires that ‘the constitution [of the cathedral] shall provide that the incumbent of the benefice which comprises the parish of which the cathedral is the parish church shall be the dean’.¹⁵²
31. The bishop is the patron of the relevant benefice in the following twelve cases: Birmingham, Blackburn, Bury St Edmunds, Chelmsford, Coventry, Derby, Leicester, Newcastle, Portsmouth, Southwark, Southwell, Wakefield. This is either because the bishop of the diocese from which the new diocese was created was already the patron, or because the patronage was transferred to the bishop from a non-episcopal patron after the parish church became the diocesan cathedral.¹⁵³
32. In the other two cases, the patrons are independent trustees: Simeon’s Trustees in the case of Bradford and Simeon’s Trustees and the Sheffield Church Burgesses Trust alternately in the case of Sheffield.

¹⁵¹ Cathedrals Measure 1999, s. 12.

¹⁵² Cathedrals Measure 1999, s. 9(2)(b).

¹⁵³ The Bishop of Rochester purchased the advowson of St Saviour, Southwark in 1883, anticipating that it would in time become the cathedral for South London (Morrish, ‘Parish Church Cathedrals, 1836-1931’, p. 442). The patronage of St James, Bury St Edmunds, was transferred to the Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich (which became St Edmundsbury Cathedral in 1914) from a private patron in 1922. An exchange of advowsons in 1922 put the patronage of All Saints, Derby (which became Derby Cathedral in 1927) into the hands of the bishop, leaving Simeon’s Trustees with St Werburgh’s instead.

33. Because the deans of these fourteen cathedrals are in fact the incumbents of the cathedral benefices who become dean by virtue of being the incumbent, their appointment is governed by the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986.¹⁵⁴ Under the Cathedrals Measure the functions of the PCC are exercised by the Chapter.
34. In the case of Bradford and Sheffield, where the bishop is not the patron, he additionally has limited powers under the Benefices Act 1898 and the Benefices Measure 1982 to refuse to institute for certain reasons set out in those statutes.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ For details of the process, see *Talent and Calling*, para. 2.5.5.

¹⁵⁵ For details, see *Talent and Calling*, para. 2.5.6.