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Early Baptists in Leicestershire and Rutland

(IV) PARTICULAR BAPTISTS; LATER DEVELOPMENTS

Kilby-Arnesby

The origin of the Kilby-Arnesby church in south Leicestershire owes little if anything to the Baptist churches described so far.¹ It was led by Richard Farmer of Kilby, and seems to have been organised in the wake of the Act of Uniformity of 1662. It quickly became widespread, and maintained congregational church government, believers' baptism, personal election, and the final perseverance of God's people.

Farmer's father Richard was for some years a Kilby churchwarden,² as was his own son Richard.³ How often did families that produced churchwardens also produce Nonconformist leaders at critical times like 1662? Other instances among seventeenth century Midland Baptists are the Curtises of Haringworth, Northamptonshire, and Nathaniel Locking of Asterby, Lincolnshire.⁴

Our Richard, a "yeoman"⁵ and "gent.,"⁶ traded in silk.⁷ He was a keen student,⁸ and left "unto my Sonne Isaack all my Books Except Phisick and Schirorgury Books", which went to his daughter Anne. Whatever theological works he owned went to the only child to join their father's church.⁹ Richard was buried in July, 1688, in Kilby parish churchyard.¹⁰

Farmer's influence was such that he spent three weeks in the county gaol during Monmouth's rebellion,¹¹ and distraint of goods for breaches of the Conventicle Act cost him £110 one year.¹²

Although his meetings were called "Anabaptist" in 1669, his first licences, in November, 1672, as teacher at his own house in Kilby, were as "Congr[egationalist]".¹³ Houses at Wigston Magna, Fleckney, Tur Langton, and possibly Leicester, were licensed similarly at the same time. The 1651 *Faith and Practise* churches never called themselves this. It showed the rock from whence Farmer the Baptist was hewn, rather than a lack of clear conviction.¹⁴

The 1659 Savoy Declaration defined congregational order:

"For the avoiding of differences that may otherwise arise, for the greater Solemnity in the Celebration of the Ordinances of Christ, and the opening a way for the larger usefulness of the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghost; Saints living in one City or Town, or within such distances as that they may conveniently assemble for divine Worship, ought rather to joyn in one Church for their mutual strengthening and edification, then to set up many distinct Societies".¹⁵

Such centralisation rather than local village independence was a feature of Farmer's Baptist network.

Some parish ministers during the Commonwealth formed paedobaptist Congregational churches in which admission to communion was for those who entered a church covenant, constituting a regenerate and doctrinally sound membership. One such church at Rothwell, Northamptonshire, formed on this basis in 1655, still exercised a wide influence after the Restoration had severed its ties with the parish church. The Kilby church backed it up in a case of discipline in 1699. Farmer's colleague Henry Coleman felt its Antinomian influence around Kilby before 1694.¹⁶

Similarly William Barton, vicar of St. Martin's, Leicester, in 1657 "declared himselfe for a Congregationall Church onely which hee saith hee will inlarge unto all parts of the Towne and that he will admitt none to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper but such as will enter into a Church Covenant . . .".¹⁷ Barton conformed in 1662 when pressure was applied, but that does not mean that "Congregationalism . . . seems to have had little appeal in Leicestershire . . .".¹⁸ It not only appealed, but when believers' baptism was added, there was still a widespread number of people willing to associate with Farmer.

Locally the more vigorous ejected ministers after 1662 were Congregationalists. Farmer parted from them only over baptism. He is said to have been friendly with two of them, Matthew Clarke (ejected from Narborough, only 5½ miles from Kilby) and John Shuttlewood (ejected from Ravenstone).¹⁹ Along with them he preached at the Kibworth Presbyterian-Independent conventicle in 1669.²⁰

With Richard Adams these three "frequently kept days of prayer, at Mr. [Richard] Woolaston's at Loesby. They preached often one for another, and kept up a meeting at Loesby-hall, taking their turns".²¹ Lowesby continued to have a Presbyterian meeting,²² but the Twyford General Baptist church met only two miles away, and links with the Kilby Baptist church are found there by 1697, when a Kilby member licensed his house in Twyford.²³

The link with Adams may have been important for Farmer. Adams had belonged to Tombes' church at Bewdley, Worcestershire, which practised believers' baptism.²⁴ During the 1650s he became vicar of Humberstone, three miles east of Leicester, until 1661.²⁵ For 1653 to 1660 the parish register records "births", those "borne", and none "baptized", though the same feature occurs in registers kept by paedobaptist Puritans during the Commonwealth. Adams was at Mountsorrel by 1664, where he kept a school and set up a meeting in his house.²⁶ In the 1669 return he should be attached to the Independent conventicle there,²⁷ and in 1672 he was licensed as a Congregational teacher at his own house in Mountsorrel.²⁸ His Baptist convictions seem to have been a private matter, while his conventicle was the start of what became the Mountsorrel Presbyterian church. Adams left Leicestershire towards the end of Charles II's reign, first for the Shad

Thames church, Bermondsey, which he represented at the 1689 Particular Baptist Assembly, and then for the Devonshire Square church, London, in 1690.²⁹

Whatever Adams did at Mountsorrel, he was not wavering on the General-Particular question,³⁰ for he was distinct from the General Baptist church there; and later he was appealed to by Farmer's colleague and successor, Henry Coleman, as one well known at Kilby, and known to be doctrinally sound, who would support a moderate Calvinism as opposed to high Calvinism.³¹

We do not know when Farmer arrived at his personal convictions about Calvinism, congregational church order, and believers' baptism, but he appears to have made a public secession from the Church of England in the months after the Act of Uniformity. His congregation in Joseph Blythe's house at Arnesby, two miles from Kilby, had met "since these six yeares last past" by 1669,³² i.e. since 1663, when so many Leicestershire parish churches were losing adherents because of the 1662 Prayer Book and the loss of Presbyterian and Congregational incumbents. No one was ejected at Arnesby or Kilby; but it is Farmer, head of a leading local family, who secedes, with a number of local people.

In addition to being a man who studied theological books and the Scriptures, and who was befriended and encouraged by the more radical Puritan ministers, Farmer had opportunities for wider contacts. His trade in silk would take him far more to Coventry than anywhere,³³ which Knollys and Kiffen had visited in 1646, and where there was a Calvinistic Baptist church by 1652.³⁴ Kilby's earliest membership list included nineteen Coventry people.³⁵

The resulting network of Particular Baptist meetings was recorded at six places including Arnesby in 1669, and at five including Kilby in 1672, all with attendances of twenty to forty. Farmer and Joseph Blythe, a weaver, taught at Blythe's house at *Arnesby*.³⁶ *Kilby* was the normal place of church meetings until Benjamin Winckles built a meeting-house at Arnesby in 1702 (later the manse garage).³⁷ In 1669 Farmer taught at John Foxon's house in *Blaby*, licensed for "Congregationalists" in 1672.³⁸ Baptist interest continued here, particularly in the Dorrand family, and meetings recurred throughout the eighteenth century until the present church was established in 1797. Farmer also taught at the house of William Cave, a tailor, of *Countesthorpe*. Cave himself was a Baptist preacher, and was reported with John Kitchin at *Whetstone*, a meeting-point between a second generation representative of a 1651 *Faith and Practise* church and someone associated with Kilby.³⁹ In 1672 Farmer was licensed at Henry Fox's house in *Wigston Magna*, a place of considerable Nonconformity altogether.⁴⁰ At *Fleckney* George Borfert licensed his house for "Congr:" at the same time as Farmer, Fox, and Henry Coleman. Later Richard Iliffe (died 1697) was licensed here as a Baptist teacher.⁴¹

These villages are all within four miles of Kilby. A little further away to the east at *Tur Langton* Henry Coleman licensed himself as

a Congregationalist at his own house, in the vicinity of the longer-lasting Langton General Baptist church, though proof of any links is lacking.⁴² Tradition says Coleman was an original member of the Kilby church.⁴³ He will come into unhappy prominence when we consider post-Toleration developments among Leicestershire Baptists.

Leicester

In 1669 Farmer taught one of the *Knighton* Anabaptist conventicles. It had arisen before the Kilby church, first appearing in the 1659 *Further Testimony* as "Knighthen", quite separate from William Inge of Knighton's General Baptist church at Leicester, yet in this political appeal at least associated with them. The Knighton names begin with William Wells senior and junior.⁴⁴ The younger William also taught in 1669, and his mother Anne of Knighton (died 1684) was fined in 1680 for being at a conventicle.⁴⁵ We hear no more of Baptist meetings in Knighton, although the Lincoln Diocese *Speculum* c. 1709 has "Conv'la Anab'—none used".⁴⁶

No name listed in 1659 recurs in the Kilby-Arnesby records which begin in 1697.⁴⁷ William Mugg (1634-1707) of Knighton, another teacher in 1669, is missing in 1659 but appears prominently in the Arnesby church minute book, e.g. signing business in 1700.⁴⁸ This church's outcome is as uncertain as its origin in the 1650s. It must have accepted the Calvinistic teaching that the Kilby church "was led into in our brother farmars time".⁴⁹ It may have coalesced with Kilby's Wigston members, one mile away. It may have become the Oadby Baptist conventicle of c.1709.⁵⁰ Or it may have merged with Inge's Leicester church which in 1715 was "Gen^{rall} & Particular, mixt".⁵¹

In *Leicester* itself Richard Coleman took out the only licence for Baptists in 1672: "The house of Richard Coleman Leicestersh. Congr: No: 18th", at the same time as Farmer's first licences; and "The house of Rich Coleman in the Burrough of Leicester Baptist December ye 9th 1672".⁵² Years before, Coleman had subscribed to the town preacher's salary.⁵³ Like Farmer, he probably broke with his parish church, St. Martin's (where the vicar had tried to form a covenanted Congregational church), with the Act of Uniformity. He was one of forty who disappeared from the Borough's Common Hall after the Restoration, but continued as an apothecary.⁵⁴ He, and Jonathan and David Coleman,⁵⁵ perhaps helped to make the older Leicester General Baptist church a mixed one by 1715.

John Bunyan preached in Leicester on Sunday, 6th October, 1672. The Borough records note: "John Bunnyons License beares date the ninth day of May 1672 to teach as a congregational person . . .".⁵⁶ The only house suitably licensed by October was Nicholas Kestin's.⁵⁷ Not only did Bunyan not come to the congregation that gave rise to the Friar Lane General Baptist church, he could not have preached to a Calvinistic Baptist congregation. Kestin's congregation was paedobaptist, and eventually joined the Presbyterians. Tradition says Bun-

yan lodged in a house in St. Nicholas Street, nearly opposite St. Nicholas' church.⁵⁸ Coleman was not even involved in hospitality: he lived in another parish.⁵⁹

North Leicestershire

Coventry's influence appears in 1669 when "_____ King of Coventry" taught an Anabaptist conventicle at *Castle Donington*, along with General Baptist Elias Boyer of Rempstone.⁶⁰ This was most likely Manasseh King (died c. 1690), perhaps a relation of Daniel King, a Particular Baptist in the Midland Association records, 1655-8.⁶¹ Crosby says Manasseh was many years at Coventry, and for some time a preacher in Leicestershire.⁶² He may have preached elsewhere in Leicestershire, but there is no evidence of his residence here. In 1672-3 Daniel and Manasseh King sought licences as Congregational teachers in other people's houses in Derby.⁶³ Castle Donington looks like an outpost of the Derby Calvinistic Baptist church, which appears in 1654 as one church with Burton-on-Trent and was in the Midland Association records, 1655-8.⁶⁴

A Baptist from Derby visited *Barkby* in 1669, only four miles northeast of Leicester and two miles north of Richard Adams' old parish, Humberstone: "Three conventicles kept on Sundaies within this pish about halfe yeare since consisting of anabaptists about 20 in number meeting at George Muggs weaver Robert Simkin a chaundler & James Darbishire sheppd of the vulgar sort of people their speaker a shoemaker of Darby but his name I know not".⁶⁵ James Darbyshire of Barkby Thorpe died in 1675,⁶⁶ and George Mugg senior of Barkby died in 1693.⁶⁷ However, the earliest dated entry in the Arnesby church book, 5th September, 1697, records the marriage of Thomas Palmore of Syston (one mile from Barkby) and Ann Wright of Barkby, members at Kilby-Arnesby c. 1700. He is probably the Thomas Palmer who signs the same book c. 1700, and licensed his house at Barkby in 1699.⁶⁸ The south Leicestershire church had an increasingly wide influence, with distant groups drawn into the organisation of a single church.

Baptist Distribution

In the returns for the 1669 Sheldon Survey Baptists all together were between the Presbyterians-Congregationalists and the Quakers in strength. Over 650 people attended 21 Baptist conventicles. 1,500 people attended 27 Presbyterian and Independent conventicles; 320 people attended 13 Quaker conventicles. By comparison Leicester's population in 1670 has been estimated at 4,600 or 4,850.⁶⁹

The Lincoln Diocese *Speculum* of c. 1709 for Leicestershire gives 205 Baptist families and 34 individuals, i.e. about 955 people, 1½ per cent of the whole population recorded. Later amendments make it 1,190 people, but the proportions remain static. The Presbyterians and Independents had 3,900 rising to 4,050, a much greater increase on 1669. The Quakers had 595 dropping by amendments to 520.⁷⁰

Similarly, Evans's List made in 1715 gives nine churches (omitting Knipton) meeting at twelve places, attended by 935 people. In Rutland 80 attended one church with four congregations, and another 80 met at Harringworth, involving Rutland people.⁷¹

The churches listed in 1651 and 1659 were scattered throughout the county. It cannot be said that Leicestershire's rural eastern uplands or Charnwood Forest were completely unaffected by Protestant Nonconformity, for there was Twyford in the east, and Markfield, Thornton, Whitwick, Shepshed, Quorn and Mountsorrel all reach into Charnwood. Indeed George Fox reports a Baptist, Captain Brown of Barrow-on-Soar, taking refuge in "Barnet Hills" (Bardon, in Charnwood) in 1662.⁷²

Nor can a clear division be made between Baptist support in "industrialised" areas and its absence in rural areas.⁷³ In fact, in 1651 Leicester was the only town mentioned, yet it was not necessary to leave towns for secret worship. Later the numbers at the town of Loughborough were small. Whereas most local towns and large villages developed Presbyterian churches, the more rural areas seem to have responded a little more to the less autocratic and more homespun Baptist teachings given by men from among the local working population, originally influenced in the Army or by itinerant preachers. This was all the more so when, unlike the Presbyterians, the Baptists were against the system of tithes that caused strong feelings in rural areas at the time.

Thus in the *Speculum* the proportion of Baptists in places of over 200 families is trivial, often nil, except at Shepshed (which included a large tract of Charnwood Forest). On the other hand the highest proportion is sixteen Baptist families (out of 160) at Arnesby; several south Leicestershire villages have proportions reaching 10 per cent as has Knipton in the remoter rural northeast.⁷⁴

Baptist status in 1669 was "meaner sort", "meanest", "poorer", "vulgar", "inferior", "less substantial"; only at Mountsorrel was it "the better sort". Teachers and leaders before 1690 included Inge and Farmer who were above yeoman status. Several were yeomen and/or husbandmen, interchangeable terms, as for Henry Hartshorne of Lubenham.⁷⁵ The independent man's trades, with opportunity to talk as well as think, were well represented: apothecary, chandler, grocer, baker, hempdresser, ironmonger, carpenter, joiner, turner, shoemaker, maltster, miller, weaver and especially tailor. However, the shepherd, the agricultural husbandman, the farmer and his labourer, and labourers in general (including a gardener) were also leaders.

Later Developments

Although the reigns of Charles II and James II are popularly summed up as a time of bitter persecution for Nonconformists, only three Leicestershire justices were energetic against them. The 1670 Conventicle Act did give scope to John Smith, a notorious informer, in the county from 1679 to 1686. Crosby records real hardship for

Adams, Farmer, and William Stanger, Stephen Curtis, and Robert Bringhurst of Harringworth,⁷⁶ and four local Baptists were interned during Monmouth's rebellion. William Pardoe, a General Baptist from Tenbury, Herefordshire, wrote from Leicester gaol in August, 1675, though how he came to be hereabouts is unknown.⁷⁷

The good standing, and sometimes the local prominence, of Baptist leaders resulted usually in presentments for nothing more than not going to their parish churches. Sometimes the constables were Baptists (Ashby Parva, Earl Shilton, Whitwick) or refused to act (Empingham, Langton).⁷⁸

Unlike some Presbyterians, Baptists readily flouted laws that forbade their worship. Large numbers met several times a week at Rempstone. The conventicle nearly caught at Frolesworth in 1682 began very early in the morning and was intended to continue till night, as they were used to do.⁷⁹

Toleration after 1689 meant settling down in regular church life, with Association life and permanent meeting-houses acquired at Mountsorrel and built at Sutton-in-the-Elms and Arnesby. Henry Treen, a Leicester hosier, elected as alderman in 1687, attended the national General Baptist General Assembly in 1692.⁸⁰ But the Assembly soon fell upon controversy about the person of Christ, concerning Caffin's views. In 1696 a separate General Baptist General Association was formed, supported in the Midlands, and feeling that the existing Assembly was protecting Caffin in heresy.⁸¹

But did the new Association stand clearly enough for the truth? It was to the Association in May, 1700, that the first considerable shift towards Calvinism was recorded among General Baptists.⁸² Boyer (of Rempstone but not Elias Boyer who had died in 1674⁸³) had preached Calvinism strongly at Wymeswold, part of his own church, claiming it was supported by Thomas Monk and others. The Association called this a slander on Monk, asked the church to read the 1679 Orthodox Creed with which Monk had been involved, and declared Boyer unfit to be their elder.⁸⁴

The Wymeswold church was split. Part remained General, one church with Mountsorrel in 1715. The Calvinistic adherence was considerable. In 1712 in Wymeswold itself Baptists were for the first time in Leicestershire records distinguished between eighteen "Anab' Univ'" and seven "Anab' Partic'" families.⁸⁵

Evans listed the new church twice in 1715, "Loughborough & Rempston", Independent, and "Shipshead & Remston", Anabaptist, both with 100 attenders, under Thomas Matthews and William Christian.⁸⁶ The Shepshed (Charnwood Road) Baptist church book, begun in 1765, notes that "The people were mix'd with some General Baptists who used to meet at Wym'shold & Remson; and occasionally heard The Rev^d. M^r. Boyer, of Remson, and the Rev^d. M^r. Moor of Sutton".⁸⁷ Matthews was a Shepshed man, a hempdresser, presented for not attending church in 1686-7.⁸⁸ Christian lived at Markfield, where he licensed his house in 1724, moving to Shepshed in 1731 where he

died 34 years later.⁸⁹ Shepshed drew dissentients from the General Baptists over a wide area. It is the one place that becomes an important Baptist centre soon after 1689, yet with no apparent Baptist life previously. By 1651 a church was at nearby Whitwick; another more lasting one in Loughborough by 1659⁹⁰ probably followed Boyer and others into Calvinism and formed one church with them in 1700 or soon after.⁹¹ The Calvinistic congregation which Elias Boyer had visited at Castle Donington merged with the local Presbyterians.⁹²

Benjamin Moore's church at Sutton-in-the-Elms became Particular Baptist without splitting, being admitted to the Midland Association in 1707. Early in 1706/7 Arnesby could dismiss four members to the Sutton church "under y^e care of M^r. Townsin",⁹³ still alive. Moore (1659-1739), co-pastor since c. 1699, is credited with the new alignment. After Townsend's death a church covenant was signed by 62 members in 1709, a break with the past, for General Baptists did not use such covenants.⁹⁴ Nor did they sing in their services, which Arnesby did.⁹⁵ This came later at Sutton.

It was not only among General Baptists that a theological shift took place. Henry Coleman of Tur Langton succeeded Farmer as pastor at Kilby,⁹⁶ but was charged in 1694 by Benjamin Winckles and a majority of the church with teaching the offer of God's promises to all, not just the elect, and making man's choosing effective in becoming Christ's. Winckles' party parted company with the rest and continued meeting at Kilby and then Arnesby. Coleman and a minority met at Mowsley. The majority published a "Paper", which does not seem to have survived. Coleman could not get it for two years. He published his *True Narrative Of A Sad Schism Made in a Church of Christ, at Kilby*⁹⁷ as a defence in 1696, and this may have had another reply from Winckles' side.⁹⁸

It was not just a struggle for leadership. The preface to the *True Narrative*⁹⁹ calls Coleman's opponents "Antinomians", linked with Richard Davis's church at Rothwell. Some claimed they had "nothing to do with the Law", especially Davis's disciple David Culy: "The Law was of no use either to the Conviction of Sin, or as a Rule of Life . . . A Believer in Christ was as Righteous as God himself . . . He had nothing to do with Christ's imputed Righteousness . . ."

But Davis agreed with the 1689 Confession (which Winckles also signed), that the elect are under condemnation by the law until they believe. "What is it we say more or less? Why then does this man make this Stir, and Division in Churches?" asked Coleman.¹⁰⁰

There was no reconciliation. About 1700, 28 articles of faith were drawn up at Kilby "Because of Sume amongst us that we believe not to be Sounde in the Docterrain of grace", claiming to continue Farmer's original teaching.¹⁰¹ Fourteen articles expounded high Calvinism. This set of articles formed a test of orthodoxy, available to exclude different or vaguer viewpoints.¹⁰²

The people under Coleman developed quite differently in this matter. Benjamin Boyce (1686-1730) succeeded Coleman (died 1712),

and moved the meeting-place to Foxton in 1716. He used a brief covenant, without explicit Calvinism or detailed doctrines, and with an emphasis on "giving ourselves".¹⁰³

Arnesby's membership list for 1706, with 104 names and 24 added later, shows how thorough Calvinism had spread.¹⁰⁴ Three members at Oakthorpe (near Measham) were to be visited quarterly in 1700; one, Moses Hair, licensed his house in 1695.¹⁰⁵ One of Arnesby's four members at Foxton, Henry Drake, licensed his house the year Boyce settled there!¹⁰⁶ The nineteen members at Coventry, with their own ministry since at least 1700, became a distinct church in 1710, separate from the existing mixed General-Particular church.¹⁰⁷ Eight members at Lutterworth were to have preaching in 1705.¹⁰⁸ In 1713 Winckles was to break bread with Arnesby members at Northampton, quite separate from the mixed communion College Street church from which Strict Baptists seceded c. 1726.¹⁰⁹ Eight members in Somerby and Twyford included three who licensed their houses, 1697-1734, separate from the General church. Foxton also had members there!¹¹⁰ Finally, 26 members at Ramsey and the Fens, where Winckles lived for a time in the 1690s, continued as part of the church, though listed separately.¹¹¹

Shepshed, Sutton, and Arnesby show trends towards or within Calvinism. Leicester shows General and Particular Baptists growing together for a period. In 1715 "Leicester and Earl Shilton" was "Gen^{ral} & Particular, mixt", an instance of Stinton's information of 1717:

"Some societies consist of two churches united, who, before their union, one were truly termed generals, and the other particulars. But upon the principle of charity, and for the sake of the public good, agreed, to throw away these marks of distinction and to walk together in love, as for instance, the church at Reading" and at Coventry.¹¹²

Leicester's Particular section probably derived from the Knighton church of 1659 and from Richard Coleman. Kestin's Congregational church joined the Presbyterians in Leicester after his death in 1686, and together they built meeting-houses in 1704 and 1708.¹¹³ This may have encouraged Baptist co-operation with a meeting-house in mind. Property was leased to trustees in 1719 after the Friar Lane meeting-house had been built upon it, simply for "Baptists". One trustee was Joseph Coltman, whose wife was baptised at Leicester yet received into the Foxton church, 1726.¹¹⁴

The mixed character of this church is clear in the choice of trustees for an assignment in 1725:¹¹⁵ Samuel Durance (a deacon when this church was solely General again in 1750); John Halladay (General Baptist pastor, Tur Langton); George Eaton (pastor of the Nottingham Baptist church, once General, by this time Particular);¹¹⁶ Benjamin Boyce (Foxton, but originally from Coventry with its mixed church); and "Josiah", i.e. Joel, Streeton (Denton, Lincolnshire, and

Boyce's successor at Foxton). The last two preached at Shepshed, 1715-30, a church of seceders from the General Baptists!¹¹⁷

The union did not last. One leader, Thomas Davye (fl. 1709, died 1747), supported the General Baptist Assembly, attending in 1732 and 1735,¹¹⁸ and wrote against Calvinistic views of the covenant in 1723 and against particular reprobation in 1740.¹¹⁹ A 1759 deed refers to a division of the church since the erection of the meeting-house, which remained with those holding "the Universal Redemption of Mankind". The rest had built a meeting-house elsewhere.¹²⁰ A new Friar Lane church book begins in 1749, using a traditional General Baptist text, Hebrews 6: 1f. None of its names occurs at the Harvey Lane Particular Baptist church in 1760.¹²¹ So separation had occurred by 1750. The catalyst was Sutton-in-the-Elms members who were in Leicester for better employment and were dissatisfied with the preaching in town. They bought a barn in Harvey Lane from Joseph Coltman (who still remained at Friar Lane, however), where they built a chapel in 1756 and formed a Particular Baptist church in 1760.¹²² The period of growing together was over.

The Link with Today

The Leicestershire General Baptist Association ceased in 1776.¹²³ The churches around Markfield, Thornton, Ratby and Barlestone cannot be found after 1710. Their probable successor, Desford, ceased when Thomas Storer, its pastor in 1715, moved to Leicester, where he licensed his house in 1721 and died in 1733.¹²⁴ Twyford and Somerby disappeared next. In 1747 Oakham, with only nine members, joined Morcott.¹²⁵ Mountsorrel and Wymeswold seem to have ceased meeting after 1762, though meeting-houses remained.¹²⁶ Smeeton, to which the Langton church moved in 1743, only met two or three times a year by 1798.¹²⁷ Declining Knipton joined the Lincolnshire Association in the 1760s.¹²⁸ Only Earl Shilton retained any vigour, with a new meeting-house in 1758.¹²⁹

One by one they needed ministers or were grinding to a halt. The New Connexion, whose churches had been in the county since the 1740s, and were growing strongly after 1770, was ready to supply preachers. So Leicester joined the New Connexion in 1783;¹³⁰ preaching was begun at Wymeswold in 1771 and Mountsorrel in 1788.¹³¹ Earl Shilton joined the New Connexion church in Hinckley in 1808; Morcott joined in 1816, Knipton in 1801, and Smeeton as part of the new Fleckney church in 1819.¹³² This did not solve all their problems, especially for the last two churches, but all survived to be in the East Midland Baptist Association, and only in the past 25 years have any been lost. None ever became Unitarian.

Did the old General Baptists contribute to the start of Barton-in-the-Beans church, to which so many New Connexion churches traced their origin? Indeed the biggest collapse of old General Baptists was west of Leicester, where the Barton group began. Ratby, albeit with no Baptists left in the *Speculum* c. 1709, had Samuel Deacon senior's

first preaching, and a congregation continued here from his work.¹³³ Barlestone became the largest congregation in the Barton group. But no family links can be found.

Particular Baptists survived with more vitality, perhaps because of greater doctrinal precision. The breach between Arnesby and Foxton ended when Robert Hall senior overcame the Winckles' tradition in the 1750s. In 1764 Arnesby, Sutton-in-the-Elms, and Foxton helped found an Association, generally called now the "Northamptonshire Association", although no geographical term was used in the early years. In fact Leicestershire provided more foundation churches than anywhere else. They were joined by Shepshed (1768), Harvey Lane (1770), and a new church at Oakham (1773).¹³⁴

By the 1790s new evangelistic and missionary zeal arose among these Particular Baptists. From then on there was a slow growing together of the New Connexion and the Particular churches, leading to the uniting of the New Connexion and the Baptist Union, while their local counterparts, the Leicestershire part of the Midland Conference and the Leicestershire Association, became the Leicester County Union within the East Midland Baptist Association in 1892.

NOTES

¹ "Sutton-in-the-Elms and Arnesby", *Transactions, Baptist Historical Society*, vol. I (October 1909), pp. 183f., speaks of Kilby-Arnesby not being content with General Baptist doctrines, implying it was General Baptist originally. I believe that, unlike Sutton-in-the-Elms, it was never anything but Calvinistic.

² J. Nichols, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, London: 1798, vol. II, part II, p. 878; Leicester Museum, Kilby parish register transcripts 9, 42.

³ Kilby p. r. t. 38, 40, 46, 58, 67a, 144a. The youngest Richard was churchwarden 1687-8; was married (1684) and buried (1695/6) at Kilby parish church, where all his infants were baptized. This Richard is confused with his Baptist father in Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, London: 1814, vol. II, pp. 255f.

⁴ *Baptist Quarterly*, vol. XXIV (January 1971), p. 23; vol. XXV (October 1974), p. 359.

⁵ R. H. Evans, "Nonconformists in Leicestershire in 1669", *Transactions, Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, vol. XXV (1949-50), p. 132.

⁶ Leicestershire Record Office, Will 78.

⁷ He bequeathed "unto my Sonne John all the Stock of Silk that is or shall bee used or imployed in that trade of Silk wch I shall have att the time of my decease".

⁸ T. Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, London: 1738-40, vol. III, p. 118.

⁹ Arnesby church book, vol. I, pp. 23, 36 (in Leics. R. O.).

¹⁰ Kilby p. r. t. 58.

¹¹ Leics. R. O., LM 2/1, f.168v.

¹² Crosby, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 119. There is no reference to this in the Quarter Sessions Order Books.

¹³ G. L. Turner, *Original Records of Early Nonconformity under Persecution and Indulgence*, London: 1911, vol. I, p. 574.

¹⁴ *Contra Transactions, Baptist Historical Society*, vol. I, p. 184.

- ¹¹ p. 26, article XXIV.
- ¹² Arnesby church book, vol. I, p. 37; *A True Narrative Of A Sad Schism Made in a Church of Christ, At Kilby in Leicestershire*, London: 1696, p. 8.
- ¹³ H. Stocks (ed.), *Records of the Borough of Leicester, 1603-1688*, Cambridge: 1923, p. 436; cf. pp. 437, 444.
- ¹⁴ C. E. Welch, "Early Nonconformity in Leicestershire", *Transactions, Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, vol. XXXVII (1961-2), p. 41.
- ¹⁵ Crosby, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 119; A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, Oxford: 1934, pp. 118, 441f.
- ¹⁶ Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 132. Crosby says that Farmer is said to have preached often among the Independents, another term for followers of men like Clarke.
- ¹⁷ Crosby, *loc. cit.* Richard Woolaston was a major in Cromwell's Army; came from a junior branch of a Leicestershire gentry family; bought the lordship of Lowesby; and survived to William III's reign: Nichols, *op. cit.*, vol. III, part I, p. 339.
- ¹⁸ A. Gordon, *Freedom after Ejection*, Manchester: 1917, p. 44.
- ¹⁹ Leics. R. O., QS 5/1/1.
- ²⁰ Ivimey, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 256.
- ²¹ E. Calamy, revised by S. Palmer, *The Nonconformist's Memorial*, London: 1775, vol. II, p. 115; A. G. Matthews, *op. cit.*, pp. 1f; Crosby, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 37. The parish registers (Leics. Mus., 2 D 60/1) have no signatures of vicars until Roger Chapman arrives in 1661.
- ²² Crosby, *loc. cit.*; Matthews, *op. cit.*, p. 359.
- ²³ *Baptist Quarterly*, vol. XXV (October 1974), pp. 365f.
- ²⁴ G. L. Turner, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 570.
- ²⁵ Ivimey, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 508f; vol. III, p. 322.
- ²⁶ As claimed in *Transactions, Baptist Historical Society*, vol. I, p. 184.
- ²⁷ *A True Narrative Of A Sad Schism*, p. 21: "one should have thought Mr. Richard Adam's Letter might have satisfied you, which answered the Charge of False Doctrine you laid to my Charge . . ."
- ²⁸ Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 132.
- ²⁹ *Victoria County History, Warwickshire*, vol. VIII, p. 168.
- ³⁰ N. Stephens, *A Precept for the Baptisme of Infants*, London: 1651, preface; B. R. White (ed.), *Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales, and Ireland to 1660*, London: 1971, pt. I, p. 39 (note); Ivimey, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 14f., 573f., 576f.
- ³¹ Arnesby church book, vol. I, pp. 213, 226.
- ³² Evans, *loc. cit.*
- ³³ Arnesby church book, vol. I, p. 41.
- ³⁴ Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 133; G. L. Turner, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 564 (one entry gives "Presbyterian" but this is mistaken).
- ³⁵ Evans, *op. cit.*, pp. 133, 134. For Kitchin, see *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. XXV (October 1974), p. 361.
- ³⁶ G. L. Turner, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 574, 581.
- ³⁷ *ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 574, 579, 584; Leics. R. O., Will 64.
- ³⁸ *ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 574, 575.
- ³⁹ Anon., *A Brief History of the Baptist Churches in connection with the Leicestershire Association*, Leicester: 1865, p. 9.
- ⁴⁰ Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 124; *Baptist Quarterly*, vol. XXV (April 1974), p. 281; (October 1974), p. 364.
- ⁴¹ Leics. R. O., Letters of Administration 13; QS 6/1/2/1, f. 30.
- ⁴² *Reports and Papers, Associated Architectural Societies*, vol. XXII, p. 207.
- ⁴³ A Thomas Wells joined the Arnesby church in 1703: church book, vol. I, p. 49.
- ⁴⁴ *ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 25, 36, 38, 210, 219.
- ⁴⁵ *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 23.
- ⁴⁶ Recorded in the *Speculum*. There are Carthrights in the 1659 *Further Testimony* under Knighton, and Cartwrights licensing their homes in Oadby in 1704 and 1730; Leics. R. O., QS 5/1/1; QS 44/1/1.

- ⁸¹ Dr. Williams's Library, MS.34.4., "Evans's List, 1715", p. 66.
- ⁸² G. L. Turner, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 575, 581.
- ⁸³ Stocks, *op. cit.*, p. 296. The Puritan John Angell was town preacher. Other subscribers included some Inges.
- ⁸⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 544, 605. Cf. pp. 420, 601, 606.
- ⁸⁵ Leics. Mus., 1 D 41/13/82. Jonathan and David were presented for not going to church in 1687. They were also apothecaries.
- ⁸⁶ Stocks, *op. cit.*, p. 531.
- ⁸⁷ G. L. Turner, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 517; G. L. Turner, "Bunyan's Licence under the Indulgence", *Transactions, Baptist Historical Society*, vol. VI (1918-9), pp. 133-5.
- ⁸⁸ Mrs. Fielding Johnson, *Glimpses of Ancient Leicester*, Leicester: 1906, pp. 249f., with an illustration of the house, demolished for street widening in 1899. John Wesley lodged in the same house in 1753, then occupied by John Coltman.
- ⁸⁹ In which he was presented for not attending church, 1670: Leic. Mus., 1 D 41/13/78, p. 28.
- ⁹⁰ Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 122.
- ⁹¹ White, *op. cit.*, pt. I, pp. 20, 24, 25, 32, 33, 39f.
- ⁹² Crosby, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 115.
- ⁹³ G. L. Turner, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 583.
- ⁹⁴ E. B. Underhill (ed.), *Confessions of Faith and other Public Documents*, London: 1854, p. 334; White, *op. cit.*, pp. 20, 24, 25, 40.
- ⁹⁵ Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 137. Evans reads it as "Barsby cum membris", but Barsby has never been a parish on its own, let alone with dependent villages, while Barkby had Barkby Thorpe and part of Thurmaston in its parish.
- ⁹⁶ Leics. R. O., Will 100.
- ⁹⁷ *ibid.*, Will 77.
- ⁹⁸ pp. 7, 27, 266; Leics. R. O., QS 5/1/1.
- ⁹⁹ J. E. O. Wilshere, "Plague in Leicester, 1558-1665", *Transactions, Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, vol. XLIV (1968-9), p. 47, allowing 4½ persons per family.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Reports and Papers, Associated Architectural Societies*, vol. XXII, pp. 207ff. The *Speculum* has entries from 1705 to 1723. It is deposited with the Lincolnshire Archives Committee, Lincoln.
- ¹⁰¹ "Evans's List, 1715", pp. 88, 96.
- ¹⁰² *The Journal of George Fox*, pp. 428f.
- ¹⁰³ Contra Welch, *op. cit.*, pp. 30f., of Nonconformity in general.
- ¹⁰⁴ Cf. town and rural proportions of Baptists in mid-Lincolnshire at the same time: *Baptist Quarterly*, vol. XXIV (January 1971), p. 26.
- ¹⁰⁵ The Hartshornes were well-to-do, judging by the bequests made in Henry's grandfather's will, proved in 1672: Leics. R. O., Will 79.
- ¹⁰⁶ Vol. III, pp. 37, 119, 128.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Baptist Magazine*, vol. II (February 1810), pp. 56f.
- ¹⁰⁸ Leics. R. O., QS 7/1, f.16. The Langton constable has the same surname, Wright, as one of the Langton Baptists in 1659.
- ¹⁰⁹ Nichols, *op. cit.*, vol. IV, part I, p. 184. Cf. Baptists at Atherstone, just over the Warwickshire border, meeting 11 a.m. till 5 p.m. in 1669: G. L. Turner, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 79.
- ¹¹⁰ Stocks, *op. cit.*, p. 587; Leics. Mus., 1 D 41/13/78, p. 28, and 82, p. 21; W. T. Whitley, *Minutes of the General Assembly of the General Baptist Churches in England*, London: 1909, vol. I, p. 36, misreading "Treen" as an unknown Leicester "Green".
- ¹¹¹ Whitley, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 53, 63, etc.
- ¹¹² This was before those shifts to Calvinism that made additional Congregationalists out of Presbyterians, and Particular Baptists out of Congregationalists in the early 18th century: G. F. Nuttall, "Calvinism in Free Church History", *Baptist Quarterly*, vol. XXII (October 1968), pp. 421-3. The phenomenon in Leicestershire in the 1700s adds another point to the line of movement towards Calvinism.

⁸⁸ Whitley, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 64; F. M. W. Harrison, "The Life and Thought of the Baptists of Nottinghamshire" (M. Phil. thesis, Nottingham University, 1972), vol. I, p. 14.

⁸⁹ Whitley, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 64.

⁹⁰ *Reports and Papers*, vol. XXII, p. 207.

⁹¹ "Evans's List, 1715", pp. 65, 66.

⁹² p. 19.

⁹³ Leics. Mus., 1 D 41/13/82, f. 24.

⁹⁴ Leics. R. O., QS 44/1/1; Shepshed Charnwood Road church book, Vol. I, p. 19. Five children of William and Ann Christian are recorded in the Markfield parish registers between 1718 and 1728 as "born", not the usual "baptized".

⁹⁵ *Baptist Quarterly*, vol. XXV (October 1974), pp. 366f.

⁹⁶ There is no evidence for the specific dates in the 1690s claimed for the Shepshed church.

⁹⁷ *Reports and Papers*, vol. XXII, p. 207. One conventicle at Castle Donington was "Presb' Indep' Anab' junctim".

⁹⁸ Arnesby church book, vol. I, p. 75.

⁹⁹ *Transactions, Baptist Historical Society*, vol. I (October 1909), pp. 183f. The destroyed Sutton records included Midland Association annual letters for 1708-25.

¹⁰⁰ Arnesby church book, vol. I, p. 21: article 24 of the c. 1700 covenant, calling singing in worship an ordinance. For Sutton's silence, see *A Brief History of the Baptist Churches in connection with the Leicestershire Association*, p. 7, but attributing it to the need for silence under persecution, notwithstanding that the custom of singing could have begun in freedom during the Commonwealth.

¹⁰¹ Coleman attended the 1689 Particular Baptist Assembly as "pastor", with Winckles.

¹⁰² *Actual Justification Rightly Stated, Containing A True Narrative Of A Sad Schism Made in a Church of Christ, At Kilby in Leicestershire. Proving None of the Elect are Actually Justified before Faith*, London: 1696, pp. 13, 15. Copy in Leicester Reference Library, pamphlet 32 (13).

¹⁰³ The Arnesby church book, vol. I, in which the earliest date is 1697, begins with an account for "the printing of the vindication" written by "mr creswell", including 8d for a box to collect the money and to keep "mr coleman's book": pp. 5, 272.

¹⁰⁴ Attributed to Benjamin Keach: Ivimey, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 385.

¹⁰⁵ *A True Narrative*, pp. 8, 10.

¹⁰⁶ Arnesby church book, vol. I, pp. 11-27. It is undated, but signed by one married in 1700 using her married name.

¹⁰⁷ Despite E. A. Payne, "Our heritage of freedom", *Baptist Times*, 9 December 1971, p. 2: "The Baptist Confessions of the 17th century, the Covenants of local churches . . . have never been intended for use in this fashion (as a test of discipleship or even of orthodoxy). They offer corporate testimony . . .".

¹⁰⁸ Foxton Baptist church book, pp. 1, 3, 13. This is a transcription of the original, made in 1830, but the sixty signatures to the covenant, 38 added during Boyce's ministry, have been left out.

¹⁰⁹ Arnesby church book, vol. I, pp. 210-3. There were 50 male and 78 female names.

¹¹⁰ Read as the impossible "Oeltharp" in *Transactions, Baptist Historical Society*, vol. I, p. 185: licence in Derbyshire Quarter Sessions minutes (entered for "Presbyterians").

¹¹¹ Leics. R. O., QS 44/1/1.

¹¹² Arnesby church book, vol. I, pp. 210-3.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 63.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 95; cf. R. F. Chambers, *The Strict Baptist Chapels of England*, London: 1963, vol. IV, p. 82.

¹¹⁵ Leics. R. O., QS 5/1/1, QS 44/1/1.

¹¹¹ Arnesby church book, vol. I, pp. 221, 228 (1709). Thomas Palmer of Ramsey, Huntingdonshire, was a trustee of Arnesby meeting-house under Winckles' will, 1732.

¹¹² B. R. White, "The Baptists of Reading 1652-1715", *Baptist Quarterly*, vol. XXII (January 1968), pp. 249ff.

¹¹³ Gordon, *op. cit.*, pp. 66, 356.

¹¹⁴ D. Ashby, *Friar Lane: the story of three hundred years*, London: 1951, pp. 19-21; Foxton Baptist church book, p.2.

¹¹⁵ Ashby, *op. cit.*, p. 24, which erroneously goes on to take the widespread distribution of trustees as evidence that most of the rest of the county's Baptist meetings were at this time part of Friar Lane church.

¹¹⁶ In 1713 Eaton reprinted a book by the General Baptist Francis Stanley. In 1720 he ordained a Particular Baptist, and in 1730 commended Andrew Gifford to a Particular Baptist Church: W. T. Whitley, "Early Baptists at Nottingham", *Baptist Quarterly*, October 1931, p. 366; Ivimey, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 576.

¹¹⁷ Shepshed Charnwood Road church book, vol. I, pp. 1, 19.

¹¹⁸ Whitley, *Minutes of the General Assembly*, vol. II, pp. 6, 31.

¹¹⁹ *A Discourse Of The Covenant of Grace: wherein the Definition, Nature, Excellency, Seals, Mediator, and Perpetuity thereof, with several other Things concerning the same, are briefly considered*, Leicester: 1723; preface to Job Burt, *The Doctrine Of Eternal Reprobation Justly exploded and refuted, by the Sacred Scriptures And Sound Argument*, London: 1741 (preface from Leicester, 1740).

¹²⁰ Ashby, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

¹²¹ Friar Lane church book, vol. I, p. 1 (Leic. Mus., 15 D 66/1), quoted in Ashby, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

¹²² *A Brief History of the Baptist Churches in connection with the Leicestershire Association*, pp. 7, 15.

¹²³ J. H. Wood, *A Condensed History of the General Baptists of the New Connexion*, London: 1847, pp. 149, 205. Its records do not survive. It was represented as an Association at General Assemblies from 1733 until 1766: Whitley, *Minutes of the General Assembly*, vol. II, pp. 12, 131.

¹²⁴ "Evans's List, 1715", p. 66; Leics. R. O., QS 44/1/1. He was a trustee for Friar Lane in 1719.

¹²⁵ Morcott Baptist church book, vol. I, preface (Leics. R. O., N/BR5/1).

¹²⁶ A. Taylor, *A History of the English General Baptists*, London: 1818, vol. II, p. 233.

¹²⁷ Nichols, *op. cit.*, vol. II, part II, p. 644.

¹²⁸ Taylor, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 383.

¹²⁹ Whitley, *Minutes of the General Assembly*, vol. II, pp. 111, 113.

¹³⁰ Ashby, *op. cit.*, pp. 33f.

¹³¹ Taylor, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 162, 233; Leics. R. O., QS 44/2/79.

¹³² *ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 210, 355, 384, 430.

¹³³ *ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 3, 220. Cf. *Baptist Quarterly*, vol. XXV (October 1974), p. 377, note 120.

¹³⁴ T. S. H. Elwyn, *The Northamptonshire Baptist Association*, London: 1964, pp. 11f., 15, 27f.

ALAN BETTERIDGE.