Thomas Bentley and ‘Monumentes of Antiquities worthy memory’: History, Memory, and Identity in Early Modern England

by

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Abstract

In 1584, Thomas Bentley, a wealthy gentleman and lawyer from the parish of St. Andrew Holborn, compiled his ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’, a manuscript of selected extracts “worthy memory” drawn from the churchwardens’ accounts and other records of St. Andrew Holborn from the reign of Henry VI to 1584. This study argues that that Bentley wrote a chronicle of the parish’s history for a variety of reasons. Chief among them was the desire to preserve the past for posterity, to cultivate piety in the community, to guide future churchwardens in their responsibilities, and to enforce conformity to the Elizabethan settlement in the parish. The ideals attached to Bentley’s social status as a gentleman, his occupation as a lawyer, and his conformist faith defined how he lived and what he determined was important to record in his manuscript. His identity shaped how he perceived and remembered the past.

Keywords: Thomas Bentley; St. Andrew Holborn; History; Memory; Identity; Early Modern England
For Eunice, because she was right.
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List of Acronyms

BBIH    Bibliography of British and Irish History
EEBO    Early English Books Online
LMA     London Metropolitan Archives
ODNB    Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
OED     Oxford English Dictionary
STC     Short Title Catalogue
A Note on Dates and Transcription

When specific dates are provided, for instance 10 July 1554, I have kept the day and month that Bentley has written but I have assigned years with the assumption that the beginning of the year starts on January 1st in the interest of clarity for the reader. In all instances where specific dates could be determined I have provided them. Bentley rarely used numerical years. He preferred to use the regnal years of monarchs to date his entries, so the majority of dates provided will be the years which correspond with the regnal year. For example, 26 Elizabeth is 1583-4.

In my transcriptions of Bentley's manuscript I have expanded all contractions, replaced the thorn symbol with the conventional “th” and replaced i’s with j’s where appropriate for the convenience of the reader. I have retained all original spelling to allow Bentley to speak for himself.
Figure 1: LMA MS 4249, fol. 221r – ‘Sume Monumentes of Antiquities’
This is the first manuscript page of ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’. Image used with the permission of the London Metropolitan Archives.
Introduction

“Sume Monumentes of Antiquities worthy memory collected and gathered out of sundry old accomptes”

In 1584, Thomas Bentley, a wealthy gentleman and lawyer from the parish of St. Andrew Holborn, compiled his ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’. This was a manuscript of selected extracts “worthy memory” drawn from the churchwardens’ accounts and other records of St. Andrew Holborn from the reign of Henry VI to 1584. Bentley’s compilation consisted of a selective but diverse array of entries. He took note of important events in parish history, such as the changes brought about in the church to conform to the Edwardian Reformation, the re-introduction of Catholic worship in the reign of Mary Tudor, and the restoration of Protestantism under Elizabeth I. Concerning the events of 1558-1560, Bentley writes:

Memorandum that in the fyrst & second yere of her majesties reigne all the alters & supersticious things in the church set up in Queen Maryes tyme wer now agayne to gods glorye pulde [i.e. pulled] downe & by litle & litle al the reliques of Rome utterly turned out of the church.

He recorded payments made to repair the church’s roof, porch, pews, gates, and bells. He recorded church finances, such as rents and debts owed to the parish, and the names of notable parishioners and churchwardens in detail. He also recorded his own contributions to the parish as a churchwarden, including his organization of a celebration to commemorate Elizabeth’s accession, and the repair of pages torn from the church’s

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1 ‘The Bentley Register’, a remembrancer containing notes of vestry proceedings, commenced by Thomas Bentley (churchwarden) in 1584 and continued after his death to 1614; with extracts from other records relating to the church and to parish affairs, Saint Andrew, Holborn; Holborn Circus, City of London, P82/AND/B/008/MS04249, London Metropolitan Archives, London, fol. 221r. All manuscripts are cited from the St. Andrew Holborn collection unless specified. For ease of citation, I will use the old Guildhall Library reference numbers, so I will refer to this document as MS 4249.

2 LMA MS 4249, fol. 229v.
copy of John Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments* (1576) with funds out of his own pocket. His highly detailed record is methodically selective, numerically precise, chronologically organized, and at times, strongly opinionated.

Bentley’s 38 folio manuscript account is remarkable for a variety of reasons. First, the churchwardens’ accounts that Bentley consulted are no longer extant. The parish registers from St. Andrew Holborn date back to the late 1550s, so Bentley’s account is essentially our only surviving source of information for the late medieval and Tudor parish of St. Andrew Holborn. Secondly, his ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ follows an equally detailed survey of parish administration, by-laws, and elections composed by Bentley, which I will refer to as the book of precedents. Thirdly, Bentley was a layman, not a cleric. Clerics that used parish accounts to write histories, such as Thomas Fuller in the seventeenth century, had easier access to the records. Bentley, as a layman, only appears to have had access to the parish accounts after he was elected churchwarden in 1582. He likely did not take advantage of the wealth of information held in the documents until he became senior churchwarden in 1583.

In the last fifty years of scholarship, there has been renewed interest in documents such as churchwardens’ accounts. As John Craig has pointed out, A.G. Dickens’s “call for an account of the Reformation that sought to address the concerns of ordinary men and women was taken up by a generation of researchers who combed through wills, probate inventories, parish registers, church court cases and parish

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3 LMA MS 4249, fol. 236v. The specific edition of Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments* is unknown, but the book’s purchase in 1581-2 suggests that the parish purchased the 1576 edition.

4 LMA MS 4249, fol. 221r.


6 Bentley refers to it as his “book of precedence” but I will refer to it as the book of precedents to avoid confusing the reader, since Bentley’s book is indeed concerned with precedents rather than precedence.

7 In his section on the history of the church from the dissolution of the abbey to the death of Henry VIII, Fuller writes: “Having perusal of the Churchwardens accounts, wherein their Ancient expences and receits are exactly taken, fairly written and carefully kept, I shall select thence some memorable Items to acquaint us with the general devotion of those dayes.” Thomas Fuller, *The History of Waltham-Abby in Essex founded by King Harold* (London: 1655), 13. Wing F2442.
accounts." Churchwardens’ accounts in particular have provided a wealth of information about the past and access to voices long lost in obscurity. For example, Eamon Duffy analyzed the churchwardens’ accounts of the rural parish of Morebath in Devon to tell the history of the parish from 1520 to 1570 through the conservative voice of the parish priest, Sir Christopher Trychay, who transcribed the accounts of the parish into fair copy. 9 Ian Archer used parish accounts to re-construct Elizabethan social relations in early modern London. 10 John Craig examined churchwardens’ accounts to explore political, religious, and social change in the parish of Mildenhall, Suffolk. 11 The appreciation of the historical possibilities of parish accounts is not a twentieth-century phenomenon; the seventeenth-century ecclesiastical historian Thomas Fuller used Waltham Abbey’s churchwardens’ accounts to construct a history of the parish, published 1655, and seems to have been the first to do this. ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ however, provides compelling evidence that Bentley realized the historical potential of accounts seven decades earlier. There was a natural affinity between clerics and parochial history, so Bentley’s historical enterprise is rather remarkable given that he wrote as layman.

Bentley is best known to historians for his work as the literary compiler and author of The Monument of Matrones (1582). 12 Colin and Jo Atkinson have studied The Monument of Matrones, which was written for both sexes but was particularly directed at a female audience, and contains prayers, biblical extracts, and some religious writings by women such as Queen Catherine Parr. The Atkinsons have used Bentley’s text to investigate sixteenth-century attitudes toward women, particularly in regards to

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12 Thomas Bentley, The monument of matrones conteining seuen seuerall lamps of virginitie, or distinct treatises whereof the first fiue concerne praier and meditation: the other two last, precepts and examples, as the woorthie works partlie of men partlie of women; compiled for the necessarie vse of both sexes out of the sacred, scripture, and other approoued authors by Thomas Bentley of Graies Inne Student (London: printed by Henry Denham, 1582). STC (2nd ed.) 1892–94.
childbirth, motherhood, and widowhood. However, little attention has been paid to Bentley’s historical writing and his reflections on the past. This dearth of scholarship is surprising given how unique Bentley’s accounts are in comparison with other parish records of the sixteenth century, and this study is the first to investigate ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ in depth.

Thus, Bentley’s text offers a window into the past, an opportunity to comprehend the history of a particular parish, and a chance to become better acquainted with an Elizabethan author and gentleman. I began with many questions. What kind of history did Bentley write? How did he write it? What sources did he use? Why did he write it? Who was Thomas Bentley? How did he perceive the past? How did his community remember the past? This study attempts to answer some of these questions using ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ as well as other existing documents we know Bentley compiled, such as the parish registers and his book of precedents. I argue that Bentley wrote a chronicle of the parish’s history for a variety of reasons. Chief among them was the desire to preserve the past for posterity, to cultivate piety in the community, to guide future churchwardens in their responsibilities, and to enforce conformity to the Elizabethan settlement in the parish. The ideals attached to Bentley’s social status as a gentleman, his occupation as a lawyer, and his conformist faith defined how he lived and what he determined was important to record in his manuscript. His identity shaped how he perceived and remembered the past. The accounts also give us a glimpse into the community memory of the parish. Bentley’s text, after all, was made for the community, not simply for himself.

While Bentley’s exact birthdate is unknown, it is probable he was born sometime between 1543 and 1546. His father, Richard Bentley, was the owner of Bentley’s Rents, lodgings for the students of Gray’s Inn, one of the Inns of Court that trained young men to become lawyers. We know that Thomas Bentley was admitted to Gray’s Inn in 1563.

but a lack of surviving records from the Inn obscures his legal education after that date.\(^{14}\) He married heiress Susan Maynard around 1572; her father was John Maynard of Poplar, Middlesex, a wealthy and influential mercer in London. She bore Bentley a daughter and two sons, but died in childbirth with their last son Nathaniel in 1581. Bentley published *Monuments of Matrones* in 1582, and the Atkinsons have attributed two other books to Bentley, one of which was published in 1580, although neither are extant.\(^{15}\) Bentley was elected junior churchwarden of the parish of St. Andrew Holborn in 1582, and served as senior churchwarden from 1583-4. Churchwardens were elected parish officials responsible for the church’s finance, some day-to-day administration and maintenance of the church, and regulation of parishioners’ behaviour.\(^{16}\) In 1584, he compiled his book of antiquities and died the following year around the age of forty, probably from a sudden illness.\(^{17}\) He was buried on 14 December 1585.\(^{18}\)

Bentley was a lifelong resident of the parish of St. Andrew Holborn. The parish was semi-rural and suburban; much of the west bank of the now non-existent Holborn River was home to vineyards, orchards, and small gardens.\(^ {19}\) It was one of the wealthiest parishes within the City of London’s jurisdiction with one of the largest

\(^{14}\) There is no evidence that Bentley attended one of the universities before entering Gray’s Inn.


\(^{16}\) For a fuller exploration of the office of the churchwarden, see John Craig, “Co-operation and Initiatives,” 359.

\(^{17}\) Colin B. Atkinson, Jo B. Atkinson, “Bentley, Thomas (c.1543x6–1585),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed 19 February 2013, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/61662. A sudden Illness is suggested by the abrupt change of hand in an entry recording the election of the new junior churchwarden in 1585 in the book of precedents. Bentley recorded the date of the election (6 December 1585) and named the new churchwarden, Thomas Assher, in the margin, but the actual tally of votes was recorded by a different hand. See MS 4249, fol. 34r.

\(^{18}\) LMA MS 6673/1, fol. 57r.

benefices for the incumbent rector. Many of the prominent landowners in St. Andrew Holborn in the late medieval period were ecclesiastical. The bishops of Ely, Lincoln, and Bangor all had estates in the parish that served as their London homes, and the Templars and the Blackfriars had also been established in St. Andrew Holborn for short periods of time prior to 1500. The parish was also home to two Inns of Court: Lincoln’s Inn and Gray’s Inn, and four Inns of Chancery, making the parish a centre for legal education and practice. The Inns attracted wealthy young men from the city as well as from outside of London to study law, and led to the establishment of many taverns and “dancing schools” to provide food and entertainment for the young students.

Over the course of the sixteenth century, St. Andrew Holborn, and the city of London in general, experienced enormous change. The population of London increased by 500% in the sixteenth century as foreigners immigrated to escape the conflicts on the continent and as people from other parts of the British Isles came to the largest city in Britain to find work. The suburban areas outside the ancient city walls expanded rapidly and developed as people sought accommodation, and Bentley would have lived to see part of St. Andrew Holborn’s transformation from a semi-rural, suburban parish into a densely populated and commercialized extension of the city of London. The religious changes of the sixteenth century led to the seizure of some ecclesiastical lands in or near the parish, and many of medieval estates, both secular and ecclesiastical, were converted into housing developments in an attempt to accommodate, and profit from, the influx of people into London.


21 Barron, St. Andrew Holborn, 11–14.


23 Ibid., 22–25, 54–55.

24 Ibid., 46.

25 Ibid., 46.

26 Ibid., 46, 51–58.
St. Andrew Holborn did not just change demographically and spatially with the intensification of residential development, but also culturally and politically with the advent of the Reformation and the parish’s proximity to the heart of Tudor politics. The Reformation changed religious practices, rituals, and community participation. The confraternities of the parish, St. John and St. Sythe, were dissolved during the Reformation and their lands were confiscated. The church altars were taken down and replaced with a communion table. The characteristics of a Protestant church were familiar to Bentley, but as he investigated the old churchwardens’ accounts and vestry books of the parish, he was faced with a religious world that was alien to a man who had no personal memory of the pre-Reformation church. As a zealous conformist Protestant, Bentley struggled to make sense of the record of pious practices found in his reading of the earlier parish accounts.

Thomas Bentley’s ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ has been used for three purposes over the last half century of scholarship. Caroline Barron used it as a source to detail the late medieval and early modern periods in her account of the parish of St. Andrew Holborn. Since the churchwardens’ accounts prior to the Great Fire (1666) are no longer extant, Barron relied heavily on Bentley to write her history. Ian Archer briefly examined Bentley in an article on John Stow, comparing him to the London chronicler as a conservative antiquarian concerned with the posterity of the past. More recently, Colin and Jo Atkinson used the manuscript to fashion a rough sketch of who Bentley

29 The parish church of St. Andrew Holborn was spared in the fire of 1666, so this cannot account for the destruction of the old account books. It is not known when the accounts were destroyed, but we do know that at the turn of the nineteenth century, James Peller Malcolm mentions that the churchwardens’ accounts of St. Andrew Holborn were no longer extant. He relied on “Bentley’s Book” (misidentifying Bentley as John Bentley) in his *Londinium Redivivum or an Ancient History and Modern Description of London* in 1803. *James Peller Malcolm, Londinium Redivivum or an Ancient History and Modern description of London* (London: John Nichols and Son, 1803), 186.
was in the course of identifying him as the author and compiler of *The Monument of Matrones* (1582). Neither Barron nor the Atkinsons have examined ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ on its own terms, and Archer has primarily used the manuscript as a complementary source to support his investigation of Stow. Historians interested in the development of historical writing in England have focused on Holinshed, Stow, Foxe, Camden, and other English historians. John Stow, an authoritative source on the history of sixteenth-century London, has continued to captivate the interest of historians of early modern London. Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, one of the most important texts in Tudor historiography, has recently been explored in depth by 40 scholars in *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed’s Chronicles* (2012). Camden’s *Britannia* and *Annales* have been extensively studied in the formation of the history of British historiography. Bentley’s ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ makes a significant contribution to the discussion of early modern historical writing because it allows historians to examine the uses of history outside of the well-known published chronicles or chorographies. Furthermore, the richness of the detailed manuscript allows for an in-depth study of the text as a piece of historical writing on its own terms, rather than utilizing it as supplementary evidence for other arguments.

In a recent comprehensive anthology on the uses of history in early modern England, Paulina Kewes called attention to the need for “a wide-ranging study of the uses of history over the *longue durée*” which would “build on, but ultimately transcend,

the contextual-specific and subject-specific investigations, and recreate the functions of
history in early modern England across a broad spectrum of genres, settings, and
users.”33 This study is by no means exhaustive or transcendent, but we can apply
questions regarding how and why history is constructed and what it tells us about
individuals and communities to ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ in order to contribute to
the discussion of historical writing in England. Fundamentally, this study seeks “a better
appreciation of the varied, often baffling and unexpected, and always intriguing, uses to
which contemporaries put their own and other nations’ pasts.”34

33 Paulina Kewes, “History and its Uses,” in The Uses of History in Early Modern England, edited
by Paulina Kewes (San Marino, CA: the Huntington Library, 2006), 12.
Chapter 1.

HISTORY

This chapter will discuss how ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ was written and what sources Bentley used, and it will explain the reasons why Bentley wrote his manuscript. Close study of the manuscript reveals that Bentley wrote a chronicle of the parish. He used a diverse array of sources such as the churchwardens’ accounts and the parish registers. He also had access to other sources, such as the parson’s account book and wills. The types of entries recorded in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ suggest that Bentley had several reasons for writing; the preservation of the past for posterity was not the only motivation for compiling the manuscript. The preservation of the record of pious activity in St. Andrew Holborn was essential to the promotion of contemporary practices within the parish. Legal precedent and the role of history in establishing precedent under common law further motivated Bentley to write. Bentley’s chronicle also served as a guidebook to good churchwardenship, instructing future churchwardens in the ideals and responsibilities of their office through examples. Finally, ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ used the history of the parish as a way to promote strict conformity to the Elizabethan settlement, in light of the perceived threat to the church from puritans and Catholic recusants in the 1580s, and in 1584 in particular. Bentley’s espousal of conformity was not only driven by his own religious beliefs, but also by encouragement from the “Antipuritan” Richard Bancroft.
When did Bentley write ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’? How did he compile the manuscript both in form and content? Answering these questions is essential to understand how Bentley engaged in historical writing. The Atkinsons have argued that Bentley “began his Book several years before he was elected warden in 1583.”

35 Atkinson and Atkinson, “The Identity and Life of Thomas Bentley,” 343. Bentley was actually elected churchwarden in 1582.
However, an examination of the manuscript tells a different story. First and foremost, Bentley provides a date on the first page of the manuscript: 1584. Secondly, Bentley's manuscript is written in the same ink, a lighter black, with the same pen. There is no change in the quality of the pen’s writing or ink colour which might suggest different stages of writing. This is in contrast to Bentley’s book of precedents that comes before ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ in the book in which they are now both bound. Bentley’s book of precedents is written in a much darker ink. Thirdly, there is no change in the colour and darkness of the ink from the intended end of the manuscript to Bentley’s demographic entries.

There is evidence that suggests that he had intended to end the manuscript with an entry on alms-giving in 1584, but he added more information about the parish’s christenings, marriages, and burials as an afterthought. The entry on alms-giving in 1584 starts with “To conclude nota.” It is the only time that Bentley uses the phrase “to conclude” and explicitly states his intent to finish the manuscript. He then ends the entry with the following prayer:

God be honowred therefore & increase the charitable myndes & compationate hartes of his people to persevere & continue in wel doing to the end: that men seeing their good woraks to proced from a lyvely fayth in Christ Jesu the woorker & the rewarde maye gloryfie hym in veritie that is to be worshiped and praysed in all eternitie: Amen.

It is also clear Bentley wrote quickly, suggesting that Bentley compiled his manuscript in a short period of time. His hand, while relatively neat, has a sense of urgency to it; his r’s and e’s are generally incomplete, his h’s are sometimes a mere squiggle as the they fall past the baseline, his o’s generally resemble e’s, and his n’s,

36 The Atkinsons have heavily cited Edward Griffith’s nineteenth-century transcript of what he calls “Bentley’s Book” in the appendix of his Cases of Supposed Exemption from Poor Rates, Claimed [by the Inns of Court] on the Ground of Extra-Parochiality (1831), rather than citing the manuscript. They were given access to “a copy and a transcription” by the St. Andrew Holborn archivist. Griffith’s transcript is unreliable on many points. He often mistranscribes names and other words. For example, in transcribing the removal of the font he rendered “vayn fantasyes as “very fantasy”(xxviii-xxix; MS 4249, fol. 232r.). These errors might be multiplied.

37 LMA MS 4249, fol. 221r. See the introductory image above, p.xi.

38 LMA MS 4249, fol. 238v.

39 LMA MS 4249, fol. 238v.
particularly in the word “in” resemble a tilde more than proper minims. The manuscript is a fair copy, but one of a more functional nature; there are no elaborate initials starting the text and it is well organized for the most part.

Is it possible to know when exactly Bentley finished his manuscript? This question can be answered through an examination of different dates used by Bentley in his calculations of the number of christenings, marriages, and burials within the parish. In his entry summing up the number of marriages within the parish from 1538–1584, Bentley ends his count at “the 17 day of January 1584 at what tyme my offic of Churchwardenship determy ned.” The churchwardens of St. Andrew Holborn surrendered their accounts for approval by the parson, vestry, and parish on the first Sunday one week following the feast of the Epiphany. In the year 1585, that Sunday was 17 January. Bentley counts the total number of burials, however, from 30 September 1538 to 31 December 1584. The count of marriages, which comes before the entry on burials in the manuscript, ended at 17 January 1585. Thus the dates in the demographical memoranda are not in chronological order. The difference between these dates can be explained by examining the register book; there were no burials between 31 December 1584 and 17 January 1585 and the first burial in January 1585 took place on 26 January. Bentley likely copied his notes on burials – which were

40 On the last three folios of the manuscript, fols. 238v–239v., Bentley tallies the number of christenings, marriages, and burials under Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth to 1584 respectively, and then adds the numbers to achieve a total of each rite of passage up to the end of his churchwardenship. In 1538, parishes in England and Wales were required to start keeping records of christenings, marriages and burials. W.H. Frere and W.P.M. Kennedy, eds., Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation, vol. 2, 1536–1558 (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1910), 39–40; G.R. Elton, Policy and Police: The Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 68.

41 LMA MS 4249, fol. 239r. The date would be 17 January 1585 if the year is assumed to start on 1 January.

42 According to Bentley’s book of precedents, St. Andrew Holborn’s churchwardens were elected on the Sunday following St. Andrew’s Day (30 November), and were to present “most perfect and true accompts” to a vestry on the Sunday seven-night following the feast of Epiphany (6 January) which most commonly was the Sunday after the feast of St. Hilary of Poitiers. LMA MS 4249, fols. 5r–5v, 8r.


44 LMA 4249, fol. 239v.

45 LMA MS 6673/1, fol. 55r.
completed on the 31st with no need for revisions because no one else had died, thus retaining the original phrasing – into the book in fair copy after 17 January but before 26 January. From all of this it is clear that ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ was finished no later than 26 January 1585.

The fair, but rushed hand with which Bentley wrote, the consistency in pen and in ink, and the timing of the completion of the accounts before 26 January 1585, suggest that Bentley probably wrote his ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ in the two months between the election of the new churchwardens in early December and his audit in January, adding the demographic entries after 17 January but before 26 January 1584. He may well have started looking at the older accounts earlier in the year, but most likely no earlier than when he became senior churchwarden on 1 December 1583 and thus the individual primarily responsible for the accounts and the administration of the parish. Confident and commanding, invested with authority and seniority, but conscious he was ending his term as churchwarden, Bentley seized the opportunity to write his manuscript.

In form and organization, Bentley’s manuscript of 38 folios most closely resembles a chronicle. A chronicle is “an account of events of the past or present organized according to year and written to preserve those events for the benefit of future readers.” While there are occasional deviations from chronology, ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ is organized by regnal year of the monarch, which is often indicated in the right margin of the folios. The heading “Memorable antiquities” appears on every page, sometimes accompanied with the name of the monarch at the time. The use of the heading, and the very title of the document itself suggest that preserving the past for posterity is a primary intent of the manuscript; it is a compilation of “things worthy memory.”

46 Over the course of Bentley’s tenure and senior warden, from 1583 to 1584, there is a marked flurry of reform and activity and a more commanding presence of him and his actions as churchwarden in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ and the book of precedents; most of the vestries recorded in the manuscript took place under his leadership. LMA MS 4249, fols. 33v, 137r–141v.  
48 LMA MS 4249, fol. 227v.  
49 LMA MS 4249, fol. 221r.
the text and remember its content and hopefully achieve its purpose. In form, Bentley’s text is written in the “dry, abrupt narrative style” “tied to the calendar year” that characterises chronicle writing.\textsuperscript{50} Bentley’s text is not written in the itemized style of the accounts he consulted; it is written as a narrative, but it is not written in the flowing, narrative style that characterize histories. In form and style, Bentley’s text resembles other chronicles, like the mislabelled “diary” of the Tudor London merchant-tailor Henry Machyn.\textsuperscript{51}

\textbf{Bentley’s Sources}

Daniel Woolf suggests that the chronicle became an artifact in England by 1600, made redundant by other literary forms and the printing press.\textsuperscript{52} For Bentley, a conservative, suburban churchwarden writing in a vestry book however, the chronicle genre was not only a familiar form of writing, but it was also a genre of historical writing conducive to writing history with the kinds of sources available to him. Bentley relied heavily on information gathered from the old churchwardens’ accounts to construct his manuscript. He mined the accounts in a systematic manner, repetitiously directing his reader to “see the accounts” or referring to the accounts of specific churchwardens. When the south wall of the church yard fell down and was repaired during the churchwardenship of Roger Smith (1568-9), Bentley notes that the details surrounding the repair of the wall “apers in his aucompts.”\textsuperscript{53} He probably read through the accounts chronologically, distilling the information he deemed worth remembering and recording it in the manuscript. He further selected entries in his text by preceding some entries with “memorandum”, directing his reader to remember, or with ‘note’, drawing the reader’s attention to what are often entries of curiosity for Bentley. For example, Bentley uses ‘note’ when he wrote that Henry VIII accepted an invitation to dine at the Serjeant’s

\textsuperscript{50} Woolf, “Genre into Artifact,” 329.
\textsuperscript{52} Woolf, “Genre into Artifact,” 354.
\textsuperscript{53} LMA MS 4249, fol. 231r.
Feast at Ely Palace in 1510-1. It was on this occasion that the parishioners submitted a supplication for their church lands to the king. Bentley identified the two churchwardens who served at the time by name, confirming that this entry came from the churchwardens’ accounts.

In addition to the churchwardens’ accounts, Bentley also had access to the accounts of the lightwardens and the “brotherhood rolls” of the parish’s fraternities of St. Sythe, and St. John and St. Christopher. Bentley explicitly states in his preamble of ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ that he gathered his information “out of sundry old accompltes had & made by the Churchwardenes lightwardens & such like officers of this parische.” From the second year in the reign of Edward VI, 1548-9, he notes that “the brotherhood rolle had continuance this yere.” From the St. Sythe wardens’ account he took note that they received £10 per annum in rent from 15 or 16 houses in the parish between 1526 and 1538.

The kinds of things Bentley recorded and his interest in numbers were influenced by the sources he used. Bentley’s text is overwhelmingly concerned with the physical maintenance of the church and with the amounts of money spent on this upkeep. While there was a great deal of variance from parish to parish, it was not uncommon for churchwardens’ accounts to record the cost of repairs and materials in great detail down to the last nail in individual entries. Bentley summarizes what could be pages of expenditure into one entry. For example, when the London parish of St. Mary Woolnoth repaired the floors of two chambers in the parsonage house on 13 July 1566, they hired a bricklayer to pave the chamber, purchased the necessary supplies for paving such as lime and sand, and paid the mason and a labourer for their work. The churchwardens then employed a carpenter to fix the floor, a plumber for a lead pipe, labourers to clear

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55 LMA MS 4249, fol. 223v.
56 LMA MS 4249, fol. 221r.
57 LMA MS 4249, fol. 227v.
58 LMA MS 4249, fol. 222r.
59 LMA MS 1002/1A, fol.126v.

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out waste and rubbish, and a bricklayer again to repair the “vant” or front portion of the chamber. Then a carpenter was hired again and boards were purchased to fix the stairs that were broken while cleaning up, and finally the wardens paid someone to repair the tiles in another chamber, not to mention other repairs made in the church elsewhere. Bentley, on the other hand, simply provides a summary of the work done; when the church wall was repaired in 1556-7, he merely lists the churchwardens who oversaw it and that it cost “as I can gather” £7 5s.10d. The chronicle genre, with its list-like composition and organization by year, was well suited to the documentation of the constant repair and maintenance of parish churches and Bentley’s reliance on annual churchwardens’ accounts.

There are, however, other sources that Bentley used that suggest he had greater access to other documents of the church than the average parishioner. He had access to the parish registers, for example. Writing about the death of twenty gentlemen from the Inns of Court and Chancery from the plague between 1563 and 1565, Bentley states that this “apereth in the register book of Burials.” At the end of ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’, Bentley tallies all the births, weddings, and funerals in St. Andrew Holborn from 1538. Bentley states that these tallies are things he has “observed in writing out the booke of Weddings, Christenings and buryalls.”

There is evidence within the registers themselves that confirm that Bentley was the compiler of the registers. In the register of burials, the death of Bentley’s mother is recorded in 1578. The entry reads, “Alice Bentlie, Widow, mother to the first colector and writer of this booke, Was buried within the chauncell dore the 24th daie of december beinge Christmas Eve.” Bentley is identified as the compiler on the register in two separate documents, strengthening the connection. Moreover, an examination of the extant Elizabethan registers shows that Bentley was not a common name in the parish of St. Andrew Holborn, so the Atkinsons have correctly identified Alice Bentley as his

60 LMA MS 1002/1A, fol. 136v.
61 LMA MS 4249, fol. 228v.
62 LMA MS 4249, fol. 230v. Note: “book of burials” has been modernized in the spelling since the image of this folio cuts off the bottom of the page with this entry.
63 LMA MS 4249, fol. 238v.
64 LMA MS 6673/1, fol. 43v.
mother. It is important to note that the registers, as they exist today, are early seventeenth-century transcripts of Bentley’s original book, so there is no possibility of palaeographical analysis of the hand to prove Bentley’s involvement further. While the original registers Bentley kept are no longer extant, we can still see his mark on the existing transcribed registers in their organization and some of the details included in entries, particularly in the register of burials.

A striking and unusual feature of Bentley’s involvement in compiling the parish registers is his decision to provide a tally of each event. Each christening, marriage or death is numbered by year, as well as cumulatively. For example, Bentley’s mother was the 159th death to occur in the parish in 1578, but the 2682nd death to occur in the parish since 1558, when the register of burials starts. The tendency to count is echoed in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’, where Bentley tallied the number of baptisms, marriages, and burials since 1538, both within the reign of a given monarch, and cumulatively from 1538 to 1584. Bentley also counted the number of people who died of the plague between 1 June 1563 and 1 March 1564. Each death by plague is identified by a ‘p’ in the right margin in the register. This kind of counting is a quintessential Bentley quirk, and tallying the entries as he was recording them into a register book would have simplified his method of counting considerably. The tallies within the registers are, however, imperfect at times. While the burials of Rowule and Robert Butler on 8 November 1571 as burials 82 and 83 of that year respectively, and the burial of John and Jone Smyth on 31 October 1560 individually as well, he does not count the burial of his wife and son separately on 18 August 1581, nor the burial of twins Dorothy and Mary Stowl on 11 May 1583. It is uncertain whether the mistakes in the register are the work of Bentley or the later transcribers of the registers.

66 The London Metropolitan Archives catalogue for St. Andrew Holborn identifies the registers as transcripts. London Metropolitan Archives, St. Andrew Holborn: Holborn Circus, City of London, accessed 1 November 2013, http://search.lma.gov.uk/LMA_DOC/P82_AND.PDF.
67 LMA MS 4249, fols. 239r–239v.
68 LMA MS 4249, fol. 239v.
69 LMA MS 6673/1, fols. 30r, 8r, 48r, 53r.
There are also discrepancies in the numbers presented in the registers and in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’. For example between 17 November 1558 and 31 December 1584 Bentley states that there were 3575 people buried in the parish in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’.\textsuperscript{70} Within the same period, the register records 3636 burials, albeit imperfectly.\textsuperscript{71} There is a similar discrepancy with the count for the number of deaths from the plague. In ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ the count is 468.\textsuperscript{72} In the register, a note at the end of 1563 states that “four hundred four score and ten” (490) people died of the plague.\textsuperscript{73} I counted 465 deaths in my perusal of the register. The sixteenth-century transcribers may have adjusted the numbers if they encountered mistakes in Bentley’s register, or made the mistakes themselves. Regardless of the accuracy of Bentley or his transcribers, the action of recording the number of baptisms, marriages, and burials or lives lost to the plague was a preoccupation of Bentley and set a precedent for record keeping in the parish; the practice carried on well after Bentley’s death into the seventeenth century.

The registers also reflect Bentley’s preoccupation with rank and his interest in any affiliation with the Inns of Court or Inns of Chancery, which is mirrored in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’. If a man was associated with one of the legal Inns, it was written in the register. It is impossible to know, however, if the details of these associations were first written by Bentley or by his predecessors since the records Bentley transcribed are no longer extant. Further, Bentley states in his final tally of deaths from each Inn and gentlemen that he identified their rank or affiliations “if I cold have found them so registered,” raising the question of whether or not Bentley was the first to record rank in the register or if he was following a precedent established earlier.\textsuperscript{74} Regardless, the recording of rank was a practice continuous throughout the register so Bentley was clearly interested in keeping track of these associations. Moreover, the register entries become much more personal and detailed towards the end of 1583 when Bentley was head churchwarden; familial relationships and master-servant relationships

\textsuperscript{70} LMA MS 4249, fol. 239v.
\textsuperscript{71} LMA MS 6673/1, fol. 55r.
\textsuperscript{72} LMA MS 4249, fol. 239v.
\textsuperscript{73} LMA MS 6673/1, fol. 17v.
\textsuperscript{74} LMA MS 4249, fol. 239v.
are stated within the burials register. This suggests once again that Bentley introduced or adhered to practices of record keeping in the register that continued after Bentley’s term as churchwarden, and that he consulted and used the parish registers to construct his ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’.

Bentley also had access to at least two wills of departed parishioners. In 1559-60, Mr. Wilks was buried in the church and left a £5 legacy to the poor.\(^{75}\) Mr. Richard Hunt left a 20s. legacy to the parish “in his wyll apereth” in 1569-70.\(^{76}\) While only Hunt’s will is explicitly mentioned in ‘Monumentes of Antiquites’, both Wilks’s and Hunt’s wills are transcribed within Bentley’s book of precedents.\(^{77}\) The use of wills as sources reflects Bentley’s interest in the law as a lawyer and his concerns about the lengthy legal battle with Richard Hunt’s nephew to get the legacy from him. Hunt was buried 11 August 1569.\(^{78}\) His nephew was called to report to the churchwardens regarding his failure to paid his uncle’s legacy in 1572-3, and a vestry held 28 October 1584, when Bentley was churchwarden, was still trying to deal with the problem of the withheld legacies, threatening to have Hunt the younger called before the Lord Chancellor “by Suppena” if he still refused to hand over the money.\(^{79}\)

Another source Bentley used in addition to the churchwardens accounts was the parson’s accounts. In an entry dating from 1560-1, Bentley writes:

Memorandum that the 4 Inns of chauncery wer accustomed to paye unto the parson of this parishe quarterly 4s. 4d. that is a 1d. a house for every Sundaye in the yere which cometh to 4s. 2d. or therabotts for every hous a yer besides their offerings on al hallou daye Christmas day & candelmas day which also they wer accustomed to paye to the sayd parson as apereth by the books of his reckonings & accompts of casualties which I hav sene.\(^{80}\)

\(^{75}\) LMA MS 4249, fol. 229v.
\(^{76}\) LMA MS 4249, fol. 231v.
\(^{77}\) LMA MS 4249, fols. 219v, 220r.
\(^{78}\) LMA MS 6673/1, fol. 24v. Bentley incorrectly recollects that Hunt died in 1568 in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’. LMA MS 4249, fol. 231r.
\(^{79}\) LMA MS 4249, fols. 232v,139v.
\(^{80}\) LMA MS 4249, fol. 230r.
The parson’s books of reckonings or accounts were kept by the parson of the parish and were not necessarily documents stored with the registers and churchwardens’ accounts in the parish chest. They were his personal account books. Bentley would have required the cooperation of the parson to gain access to the accounts of the benefice, and the context of this parson’s books has several implications. Raphe Whitlyn served as parson for the church from 1559 to 1578. James Proctor replaced him, and upon his death he was replaced by Richard Bancroft in 1584, who eventually became the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1604. The Atkinsons have argued that Proctor or Bancroft likely encouraged Bentley to write ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’, stating that Proctor was the author of *The Historie of Wyates Rebellion* and thus suggested that given his own historical interests, Proctor supported or encouraged Bentley to write his chronicle. However, the Atkinsons have confused James Proctor with John Proctor, a schoolteacher and author who died in 1558. It is more likely that Bancroft granted Bentley access to the parson’s accounts. The diversity of sources that Bentley used and the length of the manuscript show a great deal of effort and research was required to construct ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’, leaving the question: why did Bentley write it?

**Why Write a Chronicle?**

Caroline Barron has given one explanation of why Bentley decided to spend a great deal of time sifting through old accounts and musty documents to construct a chronicle kept in a rather obscure vestry book. In her investigation of St. Andrew Holborn, she writes:

> Like his more famous contemporary, John Stow, Thomas Bentley wrote in order that he might record, not without nostalgia, the fabric and customs of his parish church while they were being eroded by the building of the New Jerusalem in Elizabethan London.  

Ian Archer in a corresponding vein of comparison maintains:

Bentley’s purpose is similar to that of Stow albeit executed on a much smaller scale...like Stow he looks back nostalgically to the time when church repair was financed by means of plays, shooting matches, ales or drinkings, and is critical of churchwardens who seek to finance the church repair by such dubious expedients as the sale of lead in 1579.85

Archer, Barron, and the Atkinsons are not mistaken in arguing that Bentley wrote with nostalgia and with the purpose to preserve the past for posterity very much like John Stow. He admired the devotion of his Catholic predecessors when they erected a new steeple.86 He criticised his predecessors for the sale of gravestones and defacement of monuments and thus the defacement of posterity.87 Bentley was an antiquarian, curious about the past, but historians have painted him with too broad of an antiquarian brush in a vivid hue of Stow that reveals a rather superficial understanding of why Bentley wrote ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’. To label him simply a nostalgic antiquarian Elizabethan is to ignore much about what Bentley actually wrote and what he thought was “worthy memory.” Even the form that Bentley’s manuscript takes implies purpose. As Daniel Woolf has written, a chronicle could be written for a variety of reasons, including:

for the moral edification of the reader or for his entertainment; to preserve information or documents which might otherwise be lost; to demonstrate the hand of the divine in past times; or to communicate the news of recent great deeds to a select group of readers and commemorate them for posterity.88

Bentley wrote for posterity with a purpose, not simply to collect the past in a material form or artifact. He intended his manuscript to serve as a kind of record of precedent in the parish, to foster charity and piety in a parish, and to serve as an example, not only for parishioners to emulate to be better, conforming Protestants, but also as a guide to good churchwardenship for the benefit of the parish. These purposes must be

86 LMA MS 4249, fol. 221r.
87 LMA MS 4249, fol. 233r.
88 Woolf, “Genre into Artifact,” 323.
considered within the context of the religious debates of the 1570s and 1580s, and Bentley’s relationship with the formidable Richard Bancroft.

**Posterity and Piety**

One purpose of Bentley’s manuscript is to preserve an account of piety for posterity to be emulated and remembered in the future. Bentley’s account is only limited in its scope by the documents he had at hand; his purpose for reaching back until the 1440s was to preserve the parish’s memory of its piety, devotion, and good works. Good works were more than just maintenance of, or provision for, the church. The donation of money and good deeds were an *active* expression of faith. Piety was not simply an attitude; it was good works in action. One needed to *demonstrate* one’s zeal and devotion, be it through prayer or through benefactions to the church; this is an obvious point of continuity with the pre-Reformation past. Active faith could be expressed at the individual level through individual donations or benefactions but the record of individual acts cumulatively also showed the active nature of devotion of the community as a whole. Discussing the building of the new steeple and new north and south side aisles in Henry VI’s reign, which took two decades to complete, Bentley writes:

> And not [i.e. note] that al this as many things els in the church in those days even when the Church had most landes wer nevertheless builded by the money given of devocion of good people then used to be gathered by the men & women of this parishe in boxes, at ales, shootinges & common meetinges for the onely purpose thorow [i.e. through] the parishe, weekly durante the tyme of those works as by theyr accompltes yet remayng may & doth appere.89

Bentley writes fondly of a time when parishioners were so devoted to the parish as a community that they raised money to pay for church works through social events, even though the ecclesiastical holdings of the time might have covered the cost of the new church-works undertaken to beautify the church. Parishioners gave out of their “good devocion” for the betterment of their parish. The little organs of the parish were also

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89 LMA MS 4249, fol. 221r.
bought by the “devotion of good people” in 1517-8.\textsuperscript{90} Notably, Bentley uses the word “devotion” only five times in his manuscript, and in every instance in connection with pre-Reformation initiatives.\textsuperscript{91}

The manuscript is teeming with examples that demonstrate Bentley’s determination to preserve acts of piety. During his term as senior churchwarden in 1583-4, the total charitable alms distributed by the wardens to the poor was £15 16s.10d.\textsuperscript{92} Bentley concluded this entry with a prayer that God would “increase the charitable myndes & compationate hartes of his people to persevere & continue in wel doing to the end.”\textsuperscript{93} He wanted to inspire greater charity and active piety within his parish. He recorded, in great detail, two “memorable feasts” held in the parish for the commemoration of the queen: one for Elizabeth’s 52\textsuperscript{nd} birthday on 7 September 1584 and the other for the 27\textsuperscript{th} year of her reign on 17 November 1584. Bentley was the first organizer of these royal commemorative celebrations, and probably wrote the prayers and modified the psalms to be said in the church.\textsuperscript{94} The feasts commemorated the reign of the queen as well as England’s deliverance from popery, replacing some of the celebration and merriment that had been reserved for saint’s days before the Reformation.\textsuperscript{95} For the celebration of Elizabeth’s birthday, 52 elderly women of the parish were assembled for a service of thanksgiving and prayer for the queen after which they each received a spice cake, a draft of wine and 2d. A similar event took

\textsuperscript{90} LMA MS 4249, fol. 224r.
\textsuperscript{91} LMA MS 4249, fols. 221r, 222v, 224r, 226v. Devotion is used to discuss the building and patronage of the steeple and the two middle aisles in the mid-fifteenth century, donations on holidays to the poor box, the purchase of the little organs in 1517-8, and the construction of the church-house in 1538-9.
\textsuperscript{92} LMA MS 4249, fol. 238v.
\textsuperscript{93} LMA 4249, fol. 238v.
\textsuperscript{94} For the specific prayers and psalms see Thomas Bentley, \textit{Monument of Matrones}, Lamp 3. St. Andrew Holborn was a surprising latecomer to the celebration of queen’s ascension; St. Botolph without Bishopsgate and St. Peter Cheap first celebrated the accession day in 1568, and it was a widespread holiday by the 1580s. David Cressy, \textit{Bonfires & Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England} (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), 52, 55.
\textsuperscript{95} Cressy, \textit{Bonfires & Bells}, 53–54.
place on Elizabeth’s coronation day, this time with 27 of the most elderly women of the parish and 27 young maids.\textsuperscript{96} Bentley recorded:

“…with joyfull hartes & thank & devout myndes they all departed in gods pras home to ther houses./ expecting (if it so pleas God) the continuaunc of so good an exercise to the glory of God. the parish credit & theiry relief: that by this meanes many prayers & thanksgiving vnto God may be continually made of manye for the continuaunc of his manifold & great blessings many yeres to endure upon his Church our Quene & Realme.\textsuperscript{97}

The women and young girls acknowledged God’s blessing and celebrated the queen’s supremacy and the parish’s generosity.\textsuperscript{98} The community’s devotion was active in prayer and in the giving of alms. Bentley permanently memorialized this communal piety on the page not only to foster pride in the parish’s history of devotion, but also to serve as an example for parishioners to emulate and remember. Further, Bentley wanted the parish to be remembered as a conforming parish to the Elizabethan settlement, demonstrated in its celebration of the queen. Puritans and Catholics alike criticized the accession day celebrations.\textsuperscript{99} Bentley and other conformists, however, believed that celebration and veneration of the monarch was central to their faith; the conformist cleric Thomas Rogers even stated that he preferred to call Sundays the Queen’s Day, stating that those who held contrary views were “Sabbatarians and dominicans.”\textsuperscript{100}

The remembrance of piety for posterity was not only parochial; it was also personal. Bentley wrote of his own pious contributions to the church. He wrote about his replacement of the lost or stolen copy of \textit{Sermons of Maister Iohn Caluin, vpon the}

\textsuperscript{96} LMA MS 4249, fols. 238r–238v.
\textsuperscript{97} LMA MS 4249, fols. 238r–v.
\textsuperscript{98} This is clearly demonstrated in Lamp 3 of \textit{Monument of Matrones}, which features psalms and prayers to thank God for making her queen. Bentley styled Elizabeth as David using the psalms of David from Theodore Beza’s paraphrases on the Psalms (first translated into English in 1580) but also drew upon other Biblical figures, particularly the Old Testament prophets to assert her divinely invested place at the head of the Church. See Bentley, \textit{The Monument of Matrones}, Lamp 3, 262. For a recent examination of the prayers for Elizabeth, see Ströbl, “Institutionalized Adoration,” 199–221.
\textsuperscript{99} Cressy, \textit{Bonfires & Bells}, 54.
booke of Job (1580) with Bishop Jewel’s ‘Works’ when he was senior churchwarden.\textsuperscript{101} Bentley also bought the table of the Ten Commandments, the Law, and the Gospel for the church to be hung in the high chancel according to Elizabeth’s Royal Order of 1561.\textsuperscript{102} As a parishioner, he gave the church the tables of injunctions and ecclesiastical laws that were set up in the church in 1582.\textsuperscript{103} While Bentley’s actions need to be considered in the context of the benefit of the parish church and actions of community piety, there is an aspect of self-memorialization. Bentley devoted his time and money for his parish’s benefit and he wanted that to be remembered as well. Personal memorialization was also extended to other individuals in the parish; Bentley lists the names of the main patrons for the steeple’s construction, and often mentions legacies and other good works committed by other parishioners.\textsuperscript{104} The manuscript preserves the good deeds of the parish, as well as the piety of individual parishioners at large. Bentley reflected on the past, particularly the past beyond living memory, with a great deal of nostalgia, but he also wrote to show continuation of this piety in the recent past.

Bentley took note of what he perceived to be impiety in his parish across time and space. Looking back over the accounts, he saw such a rapid return to Catholicism under Mary in the accounts that it was “wonderfull to read or he re [i.e. hear].”\textsuperscript{105} Mid-

\textsuperscript{101} LMA MS 4249, fol. 236r. Bentley must mean The defense of the Apologie of the Church of Englanede, which included Jewel’s Apologia, Thomas Harding’s confutations of the Apologia and Jewel’s response to Harding. Jewel’s Works, a posthumous anthology of Jewel’s writings, was not published until 1609. The first edition of Calvin’s sermons appeared in 1574, but the parish probably bought the 1580 edition. John Calvin, Sermons of Maister John Caluin, vpon the booke of job, translated out of French by Arthur Golding (London: Thomas Dawson for George Byshop and Thomas Woodcocke, 1580), STC (2\textsuperscript{nd} ed.) 4446a; John Jewel, The defence of the Apologie of the Churche of Englanede Conteininge an answere to a certeine booke lately set forth by M. Harding…by Iohn Jewel Bishope of Sarisburie (London: Henry Wykes, 1571), STC (2\textsuperscript{nd} ed.) 14602.


\textsuperscript{103} LMA MS 4249, fol. 235r. It is not clear what Bentley meant by ‘the injunctions and ecclesiastical laws’ but it is probable that the reference is to the Royal Injunctions of 1559 or the Canons of 1571. See Gerald Bray, ed. The Anglican Canons, 1529–1947, the Church of England Society, vol. 6 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1998), 172–215.

\textsuperscript{104} LMA MS 4249, fol. 221v.

\textsuperscript{105} LMA MS 4249, fol. 228r.
Tudor parishioners were not as committed to the reformed faith as Bentley expected them to be. Churchwardens charged with the management and maintenance of the church actively destroyed it in Bentley’s eyes. He read of the sale of gravestones in 1575 and thought it did “great injury to the dead” and “doth utterly discourage many otherwise wel mynded to bestowe mony largly that waye, when they see such abuse and defacyng of monumentes.” He also knew first-hand the nearly two decades long dispute with Richard Hunt the younger and his refusal to pay his uncle’s legacy to the church. This was an impious act because Hunt denied the church what rightfully belonged to it, and blatantly disregarded a dead man’s last request.

The devotion to church works “in old tymes” portrayed the pre-Reformation era as an idyllic time of harmony and piety in the parish compared with the impious acts committed by parishioners and churchwardens alike in more recent years. Instead of bemoaning a perceived loss of charity as Stow, Bentley’s account demonstrates that he took action to reform his parish during his lifetime. For example, Bentley was the first churchwarden to make an account of money received of penalties levied against the parishioners for misdemeanours such as absenteeism. He was also responsible for organizing the celebrations commemorating Elizabeth’s life and reign. Bentley was not only a man of words, but also a man of action in the expression of his own devotion. Inspired by the events of the past and present, he recorded personal as well as communal acts of piety in order to preserve the spirit of these acts for present and future generations to emulate in the hope that St. Andrew Holborn’s devotion and zeal would continue for centuries to come.

**Posterity and Precedents**

‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ served as a way to record and to establish precedent in the parish as a record of written law and custom. In light of Bentley’s legal profession, this is unsurprising. In a century of increasing awareness of the passing of time and a

106 LMA MS 4249, fol. 233r.
107 Ian Archer has argued that Stow’s nostalgic reflection on the past not only celebrated the past, but also criticized the present and a perceived decline in charity and hospitality. See Archer, “The Nostalgia of John Stow,” 23.
108 LMA MS 4249, fol. 236v.
growing recognition of the limits of human memory alone, the need to write down laws, wills, deeds and other records necessitated a growth of written documents. This growth supported the increasing hegemony of the written document over oral testimony in legal disputes. Unaided memory provided proof in the absence of written documentation; if no one could remember if or when practice was different, custom was assumed. Entries concerning the law are common in the manuscript. Bentley took note of times when new documents were drawn up, and when laws and customs were broken. This should all be considered in light of the lesser known part of the register in which ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ is bound: Bentley’s book of precedents.

Bentley was interested in the creation of local legal documents. While there are a few references to fifteenth-century documents, his legal record of the parish really starts with the reign of Edward VI and proliferates during the reign of Elizabeth. In 1559-60 the churchwardens were required to draw up inventories of all the church goods. In 1560-1, Alban Leveret and John Melton’s churchwardens’ accounts were the first to be written within an actual account book, speaking to the growing need of better organization of documents in the parish. In the same year, Leveret and Melton made a lease with a man named Brookes for St. Andrews Alley, as well as with a Mr. Tatum and with a Mr. Foxe. Bentley notes that an “Instrument of decrees for good order” was drafted and confirmed with the consent of the vestry in 1569-70. He recorded these legal documents to be remembered in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’.

Unsurprisingly, Bentley was personally responsible for the creation of many legal documents just before and during his churchwardenship. Bentley bought the table of the Ten Commandments in adherence to Elizabeth’s Royal Order 1561. He wrote out the

110 Ibid., 276.
111 LMA MS 4249, fol. 229v.
112 LMA MS 4249, fol. 230r.
113 LMA MS 4249, fol. 230r. Mr. Foxe could have been Robert Foxe, one of the vestrymen elected in 1570. Mr. Tatum could have been Oliver Tatum who was churchwarden in 1547, but there’s no certainty in identifying these men beyond their last names.
114 LMA MS 4249, fol. 231v.
115 LMA MS 4249, fol. 234v; Frere and Kennedy, eds., *Visitation Articles and Injunctions*, vol. 3, 109.
table of injunctions the following year. In 1581-2, the way in which the parish paid for the communion bread changed. Instead of paying for the bread and wine out of the church box, each parishioner was rated and assessed and had to make a contribution based on income in accordance with the Book of Common Prayer. Bentley was the first to keep several records in the parish. He was the first to keep a book of taxation and an account of penalties for misconduct in the parish. He recorded the appointment of new feoffees, and he was the first to copy the parish registers into books. Bentley's term as churchwarden marked a high point of documentation to date in the parish.

Bentley was concerned with unlawful activity. Of particular interest are the lawsuits for church lands which Bentley alleged were wrongly confiscated in 1549-50, Richard Hunt's unpaid legacy, and rogue churchwardens acting contrary to law and custom. Part of the church's property had been confiscated under Edward VI on the premise that property with the purpose of maintaining superstition should be confiscated. However, in the process, land bequeathed to the parish for the church's maintenance and not for "superstitious" practices, in particular John Tavy's land bequeathed to the church in 1348, also faced the threat of confiscation from royal officials. This started two decades of sporadic legal battles either to get back or secure the church's lands. Finally, in 1572, the courts decided in favour of the church, eliciting a prayer of thanks from Bentley. Richard Hunt's refusal to pay his uncle's legacy was another example of a nearly two-decade conflict traced by Bentley in his manuscript. This case was of such great concern for Bentley that he transcribed Hunt Senior's will into the book of precedents to provide proof of the church's entitlement to the legacy.

Bentley was cognizant of the customary, if not legal, framework in which church administration operated. It was a system he strongly respected given his outbursts of criticism when churchwardens acted contrary to law or custom. For example, a

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116 LMA MS 4249, fol. 235r.
117 LMA MS 4249, fols. 236v, 237v–238r, 239r.
118 Barron, “The Medieval Parish Church of St. Andrew Holborn,” 40.
119 The parish initiated a suit for the church lands after they had been confiscated in 1549-50 and again in 1556-7. The remaining lands were called into question by the brother of Lord North in 1570, and cost the parish £23 14s. 2d. LMA MS 4249, fols. 227r, 229r, 232r.
120 LMA MS 4249, fol. 232r.
churchwarden named Laughton sold the church organs in 1571-2. According to Bentley, this was done “without leave of the parishoners or consent of the vestry yea clean against the mynd of the parson & most parishoners” and thus against the custom of communal consent in the parish. Laughton also replaced the baptismal font with a small basin and Bentley also emphasized that this was done without the support of the parish. Moreover, Bentley noted that Laughton’s accounts were “not wel lyked off [i.e. off]” by the parish or the parson. Initially, the vestry refused to approve the accounts. When churchwardens Ladyman and Bradley sold gravestones in 1575, Bentley wrote that “I doubt whyther the Churchwardens by the Law may sell any such stones or no out of the church” and argued the churchwardens were acting contrary to their oathes as churchwardens since churchwardens “shold seke to maynteyne the same ever by her majesties speciall comandment as apereth in hyr proclamation for that caus specially published.” According to Bentley, the sale of these gravestones was against the special proclamation issued by Elizabeth in 1560 to curb iconoclasm. The courts acknowledged the dubious legality of some actions undertaken by the churchwardens. Price and Ricard were brought before the bishop of London in 1577-8 to answer for the parish for the removal of the font by Laughton six years earlier. These examples demonstrate the importance of legal and customary proceedings and precedents in the parish of St. Andrew Holborn.

121 LMA MS 4249, fol. 232r.
122 LMA MS 4249, fol. 232v.
123 LMA MS 4249, fol. 233r.
The location of ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ within the “Bentley Register” alludes to its legal purpose. Bentley’s book of precedents precedes ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’. The book of precedents outlines the customs and laws of St. Andrew Holborn’s parochial administration. It outlines when vestries should be held and when churchwardens, overseers for the poor, and highway surveyors should be elected. Tallies and the results of parochial elections to the aforementioned offices were recorded in the book by Bentley as well, and he left pages blank so his successors could add their election results and vestry decisions in the future. Bentley’s works are not isolated; they complement each other; ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ provides the historical proof that corroborates the book of precedents.

‘Monumentes of Antiquities’: How to be a Churchwarden

If ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ is a chronicle of parish history, a source of legal precedent, and an example of St. Andrew Holborn’s piety, it was also a conduct guide for churchwardens, outlining how (according to Bentley) they should and should not act.
Underpinning what he believed to be good churchwardenship was the concept of good or ill husbandry and the roles that churchwardens played in parish administration.

Churchwardens were lay officials. In St. Andrew Holborn, they served terms of two years as junior and senior churchwarden respectively. Since the parish fell both within the jurisdiction of the City of London and the county of Middlesex, each year the parish alternated electing a man from “above bars” and “below bars” to be churchwarden. While theoretically any man in the parish could serve as churchwarden, it was a position generally held by St. Andrew Holborn’s wealthier and more powerful parishioners such as gentlemen, lawyers, and artisans.

For Bentley, good husbandry of the church was an essential qualification for a churchwarden, and Bentley always used the term “husband” in reference to the management of the parish. Accompanied with a qualifying epithet, the word ‘husband’ can refer to “one who manages his household, or affairs, or business in general, well or ill, profitably or wastefully etc.” In the early modern English context, “good” was the most common qualifying epithet to use with ‘husband’ and a “good husband” refers to a man who “manages his affairs with skill and thrift; a saving, frugal, or provident man.” However, Bentley prefers to use the word “husband” with the epithet “ill”.

There are four instances when Bentley uses the term “husband” or “husbandry”. In 1537-8, churchwardens John Hogg and William Viney made £34 from the sale of church plate. Hogg and Viney were ordered to reimburse the parish 11s.4d. at the audit of their account, and then they paid a further £34 2d. to their successors, William Moody.

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125 LMA MS 4249, fol. 5v. “Beneath bars” or “within bars” referred to the part of the parish that fell under the jurisdiction of the City of London, delineated by the Temple bar which marks where Fleet Street becomes the Strand in Westminster, at the junction of Fetter Lane and Fleet Street, and by Holborn Bar which was situated at the junction Gray’s Inn Road and High Holborn (which today becomes the Hoborn Viaduct). Today, the Chancery Lane underground station is situated under the junction. “Above bars” or “without bars” referred to the part of the parish outside the City of London’s jurisdiction which fell under the administration of Ossulstone Hundred. Only the south part of the parish fell under the city’s jurisdiction after Farringdon Ward Without was created in 1394. It was the vestry that largely made decisions for the parish, which would explain why St. Andrew Holborn had a long history of a select vestry. Barron, *The Parish of St. Andrew Holborn*, 11–12.


and John Fisher.\textsuperscript{128} Bentley labelled this "ill husbandry." In 1575, Ladyman and Bradley sold two gravestones out of the parish, and were labelled "ill husbands to the church."\textsuperscript{129} Ladyman is once again associated with bad husbandry in 1578-9, but this time under the senior churchwardenship of Mr. Ricard. The roof of the vestry was repaired but instead of being covered in lead, it was covered with tile. Tile was less durable than the lead and Bentley remarks that "this was not the best husbandry as well hath appered synce & more hereafter will to the further charges [i.e. charges] of the parisishe."\textsuperscript{130} Bentley further accuses the carpenter Ladyman, who had been hired to oversee the renovation of the vestry roof, of providing shoddy workmanship on purpose to secure employment in future. Bentley writes: "but more happy is he that can lyve by the church & hold by the Steeple: the tenure is goode, & the maintenance maketh merry."\textsuperscript{131} Again, Bentley is critical of a lack of prudence and a failure to secure the longevity of the roof, but he seems to place greater responsibility for this on Ladyman, whom Bentley clearly did not like, than on the senior churchwarden, Ricard.

One final example of ill husbandry is indicated by a marginal heading beside an entry from 1580, regarding a vestry that was called without the consent or presence of the parson or his deputy to forgive a parishioner's debts.\textsuperscript{132} This was ill husbandry because it violated the proper procedure of calling a vestry, which must be done with the parson and the churchwardens' consent. This precedent was established by the parish's instrument of decrees for good order decided at a vestry and ratified in 1570.\textsuperscript{133}

Ill husbandry was the very antithesis of good husbandry. Tiling the roof with bad workmanship or less durable materials was wasteful. Similarly, when large gravestones were sold, Bentley claimed that they were replaced with smaller, less durable stones.\textsuperscript{134} Breaking the law by defacing monuments, like Ladyman and Bradley, or the sale of church plate by Hogg and Viney, displayed a lack of foresight and planning. Finally,
subverting proper procedure by calling a vestry without the parson’s permission showed a lack of respect for order and hierarchy. By labelling these acts as acts of “ill husbandry” Bentley suggests what should be avoided to be a good husband of the church from his perspective.

Were the actions of these churchwardens justified? Did Bentley misunderstand their intent? Would the churchwardens Bentley criticized have considered themselves good husbands of the church? The ability to answer these questions is limited by the nature of ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ and the absence of the original churchwardens’ accounts. Perhaps the church was in dire financial straits and the sale of church plate or gravestones was necessary for the survival of the church. If Ladyman and Bradley had puritan inclinations regarding church interiors, then the sale of gravestones may have been in the best interest of the church’s spiritual well-being in their eyes. Ricard tried to be a good husband by replacing the roof to ensure the vestry was properly maintained. However, St. Andrew Holborn was one of the wealthiest parishes with influential associations; money was not likely the issue. Bentley’s main justification for applying the label “ill husbandry” is generally based on clear violations of law and/or custom within the parish. The sale of gravestones violated the royal proclamation “Prohibiting Destruction of Church Monuments” issued 19 September 1560. The calling of a vestry without the consent of the parson violated the instrument of decrees for good order ratified in 1570. The sale of the church plate by Hogg and Viney clearly violated a previous instrument of decrees for good order because they were fined for the sale.

135 LMA MS 4249, fol. 233r. Bentley refers to the gravestones as monuments given for the “profit and bewty of the church.” These sentiments would have sat rather uneasily with the “hotter sort” of Protestants. The suggestion that Ladyman and Bradley had more puritan religious sympathies is conjecture but there is convincing evidence that other churchwardens did have puritan leanings, especially John Laughton and John Cooper who sold the organs and the font in 1571-2. Interestingly Bentley does not label these acts as ill husbandry, which further suggests that he viewed ill husbandry to be related to unlawful acts or violations of custom. For the entries pertaining to Laughton and Cooper, see LMA MS 4249, fol. 232r.


137 The parish’s first instrument of good order was issued in 1491-2 and ratified in 1494. LMA MS 4249, fol. 16v.
Bentley clearly accused Ladyman of placing personal profit before the financial and physical well-being of the church. If Bentley is to be believed, then Ladyman had a history of placing self-interest ahead of the parish. From 1573-4 to 1574-5 the vestry was enlarged and Ladyman had been hired as the carpenter by the churchwarden John Melton; Ladyman was junior churchwarden at the time. Ladyman was then the senior churchwarden the following year during which he claimed an “od [i.e. odd] reckoning” worth 17s. 3d. for his workmanship within his own accounts. This comment is squeezed into a marginal comment beside the initial entry regarding the general enlargement of the vestry. Ladyman’s financial reasons may have impelled his actions. In 1573-4 Ladyman, as a junior churchwarden, and John Bromley were lent £8 out of the church-box to be paid back the following Christmas. Regardless of motivations, Bentley believed that Ladyman’s actions during his two year service to the parish exhibited an abuse of power. For Bentley, ill husbandry was a blatant disregard of the law and a history of questionable ethics in a position of power.

Alongside examples of ill husbandry, Bentley recorded examples of good husbandry to demonstrate ideal or proper churchwardenship. Ensuring that the communion bread was paid out of rates and taxation not only showed that Bentley was dutifully adhering to the guidelines of the Common Book of Prayer, but in doing so he ensured that the cost of the communion bread was shared fairly among the parishioners and kept more money in the church box for the poor. Recording the rates and taxation for communion showed organized management of funds, loyalty to the church and crown, and leadership in the cultivation of piety within the parish. Often churchwardens would pay for shortfalls in finances out of their own pockets, particularly after large maintenance projects, or donate time and resources to the parish without expectation of reimbursement. For example, Bentley notes:

Memorandum that the Church hath divers tymes upon an occasion of great reparations done therupon, bene [i.e. been] indebt to the Churchwardens especially: as namely to Nicholas Wyline & Rowland

138 LMA MS 4249, fol. 233r.
139 LMA MS 4249, fol. 233r.
140 LMA MS 4249, fol. 233r.
141 LMA MS 4249, fol. 236r.
Atkynson Churchwardens anno 24 Henry VIII [1532-3] in 51s. also to
8d. also to John Hog & Wylliam Corney Churchwardens anno 28 Henry
VIII [1536-7] in debt 16s. 2d. And to John Fisher Churchwarden at the
buylding of the Churchhous anno 30 Henry VIII [1538-9] it was in his debt
45s. beside 7 od [sic.] money to other parishioners all which debt was
truly repayed unto the said Churchwardens eyther by waye of reteyner in
theyr own handes the next yere being agayne chosen wardens to pay
themselves, or els by payment therof duly made by theyr Successors as
appereth were playnely in theyr several accomptes.142

These churchwardens placed the repair of the church and the payment of the bills before
their own financial situation. They made temporary financial sacrifices for the greater
good of the parish, showing foresight and demonstrating piety. This was also, in part,
why the position of churchwarden was generally held by elite members of the parish.
The position increased the rank and prestige of someone in the community, but to be
churchwarden one also had to be relatively financially secure to ensure that the church
box did not empty, or worse, go into debt. Good husbandry also extended to gifts like
Bentley’s replacement of *Sermons of Maister John Caluin, vpon the booke of lob* (1580)
with Jewel’s ‘Works’.143 Bentley replaced the book “of his own good will” so that it might
be read and “looked unto” in the parish, reflecting the Tudor insistence upon the
importance of lay access to works of theology.144 Bentley replaced a book that was
stolen, and did so gladly for the benefit of the parish, a mark of a dedicated “good
husband” of the church that put the parish’s physical and spiritual needs above his own.

It is easier to observe Bentley’s criticisms of bad churchwardens than to see
praise of good wardenship. However, his criticisms of the breaking of the law, the sale
of monuments and frivolous spending inversely demonstrate what he believed to be
good churchwardenship. Good churchwardens were frugal, prudent, provident, pious
men who put the parish’s needs before their own. Bentley chose to emphasize certain
passages for a reason, to serve as an example of good and bad churchwardenship for
generations to come.

142 LMA MS 4249, fol. 225r. Bentley probably means 7s. ‘od money’.
143 LMA MS 4249, fol. 236r.
144 LMA MS 4249, fol. 236r. See John Craig, ”Erasmus or Calvin? The Politics of Book Purchase
Bancroft and Bentley

Bentley had, at the very least, cooperation from Richard Bancroft to access the parson’s accounts, if not encouragement to write ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ and the connection is worth exploring in the context of the motivation behind Bentley’s text. Bancroft and Bentley shared a crucial commonality: both men were Protestants that zealously conformed to the Elizabethan Settlement, and they were weary of the “hotter sort” of Protestants, the puritans. The timing of Bentley’s manuscript – and his term as senior churchwarden – within the context of the religious and political climate in England, particularly in London and at Westminster in 1584 and the Bancroft connection suggest that Bentley’s chronicle did not simply exhibit a broad picture of idealistic piety and churchwardenship in the parish but pressed the importance of enthusiastic parochial conformity to the royal supremacy.

When Elizabeth ascended to the throne and restored Protestantism as the national faith, there was a great deal of religious uncertainty among English Protestants. The Elizabethan settlement had restored the Act of Supremacy, the Act of Uniformity, the Edwardian prayer book of 1552, and had also retained some conservative ceremonies or practices such as the wearing of the surplice by the priest. Many Protestants were happy to see the overthrow of popery and the restoration of the true faith again, but others felt further reforms were needed. Inspired by Calvinist doctrine, many of these “hotter sort” of Protestants, or puritans, wanted to see greater destruction of images in churches to ensure that there was no possibility for idolatry and challenged ecclesiastical episcopal structures. At the core of the beliefs of the godly was the belief in the importance of a well-trained, preaching ministry. Some puritans were more moderate than others, but tensions over controversies such as the wearing of the surplice generated a lot of friction and debate among ecclesiastical officials from the 1560s to the 1580s.

When the conservative John Whitgift was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 1583, he launched an attack on puritans in October 1583 with the queen’s approval, enacting a series of articles and disciplinary articles to enforce conformity among the clergy. Whitgift’s conformity campaign required the clergy to subscribe to the Act of Supremacy, the theology of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, and the Prayer Book “as
containing nothing contrary to the word of God” with the promise to use the prayer book, and only the prayer book, in parish churches. The requirements of subscription, particularly the unquestioning adherence to the Prayer Book struck a nerve among a great number of moderate puritan clergy and many were concerned that they would be suspended or deprived of their livings. Whitgift was inflexible on the issue of subscription and by January 1584 nearly 300-400 ministers had refused unqualified subscription. By the summer, Whitgift and the bishops had relented under public outcry and many clergy were allowed to subscribe with diocesan terms that allowed them to maintain clear consciences as well as their livings. Whitgift switched tactics and attacked radical, separatist puritans using the ecclesiastical commission for the province of Canterbury, or ‘High Commission’, to deal with all matters of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. This court was controversial because it required clergymen to present themselves to the commission and swear an oath to give evidence to any question asked, which led to self-incrimination. It was commonly used to suspend or deprive extreme puritan clerics who refused the subscription of 1583. Richard Bancroft served as a member of the commission in addition to his duties as parson for St. Andrew Holborn.

In the background of Whitgift’s subscription crisis was Bishop Aylmer’s attempts to quell puritanism within the diocese of London and Edward Freke’s crackdown in the diocese of Norwich, resulting in what Patrick Collinson called “the outbreak of the most extensive and serious movement of separatism yet experienced in the Elizabethan Church.” Separatist Brownist factions were responsible for serious religious conflict like those that had occurred in the “Bury stirs” of Bury St. Edmunds in 1583. Another

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146 Collinson, Elizabethan Puritan Movement, 245, 248.
147 Ibid., 253.
148 Ibid., 263.
150 Collinson, Elizabethan Puritan Movement, 202–204.
result of the official crackdown on puritans was a surge in puritan writings and propaganda in 1584.151

The church was not only threatened by puritans on the inside, but also by a perceived increase in the threat to the English Church from Catholics. The Protestant William of Orange, or William the Silent, was assassinated in Delft in 1584 by a Catholic for his involvement in the Dutch uprisings against the Hapsburgs in the Netherlands. There was also an influx of Jesuit missionaries to Ireland in 1581 which was another potential source of concern.152 In England, Francis Throckmorton’s treasonous plan to place the Catholic Mary Stuart on Elizabeth’s throne was discovered at the end of 1583.153 Fear of radical puritans and militant Catholics hung in the air in the early 1580s.

In the autumn of 1584, Elizabeth called the scheduled parliament and despite repeated warnings from the queen not to discuss matters of religion, parliament was preoccupied with the worship and polity of the English church. Puritans, seeing Whitgift’s weakness from two ecclesiastical controversies and the Catholic threat, seized the opportunity to address their concerns, and elected puritan, or at the very least sympathetic, M.P.s to the parliament that year.154 Parliamentary backbenchers called for more reformed, learned ministers and preachers in response to Whitgift’s subscription campaign and the High Commission.155 More radical reformers led by John Beale, feeling confident they “had Whitgift on the ropes,” pursued an aggressive campaign calling for no subscription, no self-incriminating oath in the High Commission, and the restoration of deprived or suspended ministers.156 This was effectively a resurrection of the 1581 Commons proposals at the previous parliament.157 These backbenchers petitioned the Upper House, and Whitgift, fearing the potential religious outcome if his programme was scrapped, forwarded Beale’s notes to his ally, Sir

152 Ibid., 200.
156 Ibid., 55.
Christopher Hatton, through Hatton’s chaplain, Richard Bancroft. As a privy councillor and active parliamentarian, Hatton was able to dissuade parliament from giving Beale’s controversial, puritan “Bill and Book” a reading, quelling puritan parliamentary action until 1586.\textsuperscript{158} In 1584, the conformist factions feared that puritanism could legally challenge the Elizabethan settlement, and worried that Catholics would rise up and destroy the English Church.

Did Bancroft encourage Bentley to write his manuscript as a means of enforcing a conformist narrative of St. Andrew Holborn’s history? Bancroft had first-hand experience with dealing with puritanism at the community level; he was one of the preachers brought in to deal with the divide between Catholic and puritan factions in Bury St. Edmunds, during the “Bury stirs” in 1582, to quell religious dissent and to enforce conformity. Busy with his duties with the High Commission and his services to Christopher Hatton, a thinly spread Bancroft may very well have asked Bentley to help him enforce conformity in St. Andrew Holborn in his capacity as churchwarden and to try to work with the select vestry. The portrayal of Elizabeth as David, the divinely selected ruler, in \textit{Monument of Matrones} (1582) made clear Bentley’s support for the royal supremacy long before Bancroft came to the parish. Bancroft likely saw – with great relief, no doubt – a conformist ally in Bentley in the management of the internal politics of the parish.

A conformist history of the parish could be used to nip dissenting views in the bud by dictating how the past was perceived. Bentley conscientiously recorded the scrupulous, conformist actions he undertook as churchwarden, such as drawing up the first register to record fines for absenteeism and misbehaviour in the parish, a possible early sign of non-conformity.\textsuperscript{159} Bentley’s elaborate celebrations of Elizabeth’s reign demonstrated his active promotion of the royal supremacy through the celebration of the monarch’s power and glory at the parochial level.\textsuperscript{160} Bentley condemned parochial initiatives that were puritan in nature such as the sale of the organs, and the

\textsuperscript{158} Collinson, \textit{Richard Bancroft}, 55–56.
\textsuperscript{159} LMA MS 4249, fol. 236v.
\textsuperscript{160} LMA MS 4249, fol. 238r.
replacement of the font with a small basin. If we consider Bentley’s conservative view of the history of St. Andrew Holborn in light of the motivations and purpose of his manuscript, namely that he meant it to be read by successive churchwardens in later years, it becomes clear that he was attempting to establish a precedent of the Bentley-Bancroft brand of conforming piety and administration in St. Andrew Holborn in the face of more aggressive puritan undercurrents in Elizabethan society in the 1580s.

Conclusion

Bentley most likely wrote ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ at the end of his churchwardenship in 1584. He used a variety of sources including the accounts of the churchwardens, lightwardens, parish fraternities, the parson’s accounts, wills, and registers. He wanted to record the events of the past for a variety of reasons such as the cultivation of communal piety and charity, the establishment and preservation of parochial precedents, the demonstration of good and bad churchwardenship, and the assertion of a past and present that conformed to the Elizabethan settlement. All of this was also done for posterity. He was impelled by his own interests in the past of the parish, as well as by the current political and ecclesiastical tensions in 1584, and an alliance, at the very least, with Richard Bancroft. We now have a better idea of what ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ is and what its purpose was. The next question that needs to be asked is: who was Thomas Bentley?

161 LMA MS 4249, fol. 232r.
Chapter 2.

IDENTITY

Scholars currently understand identity as a matter of social construction, dynamism, and fluidity. In a now famous work, Stephen Greenblatt argued that the sixteenth century was a time of greater “self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process.” Individuals had some control over how they shaped themselves. One’s place in society, especially in a stratified society like early modern England, was heavily dictated by one’s status in relation to other people and other social groups.

Who was Thomas Bentley and how did he fashion his identity? Answering this question can further explain why he wrote ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ and how he perceived the past. An analysis of his manuscript shows that he was a man of ideals who sought to emulate archetypes with an ardent earnestness that shaped all facets of his identity. He constructed his identity through his relations with other groups of people, and he drew upon commonwealth ideals in the construction of his identity. In particular, he aspired to ideals such as mutual obligation between ranks of society and the duty of the gentry and aristocracy to maintain order and civility. The ideals of obligation, duty, and order explain why Bentley was preoccupied with status, which defined one’s place in society, and the law, which created and enforced order; this dictated how he fashioned his identity as a gentleman. His zealous pursuit of the ideals

164 “Commonwealth ideals” refers to the ideal function of a commonwealth aspired to in contemporary works such as Sir Thomas Smith's *De Republica Anglorium* (1583).
of his status defined how he perceived and fashioned other roles he held in life, particularly as churchwarden, a role that was intimately connected with his status and its ideals. Bentley’s zeal was not limited to his pursuit of social ideals; he was also a zealous conforming Protestant. His conformity was crafted by his strict scrupulous adherence to Elizabethan proclamations and ecclesiastical injunctions, his commitment to the royal supremacy, his concern for the poor, and his insistence on the beauty of the church buildings. His conformity was fuelled by the religious crisis of 1584 and by his relationship with some of England’s most influential conformists. The values and social relations that gave Bentley the tools to fashion himself also lie behind his motivation to write down things “worthy memory”.

**Gentleman Bentley**

Bentley used gentlemanly ideals to fashion his identity. The status of “gentleman” in early English society was distinct and characterized by a variety of factors. First, the gentry were a group definitively different from their social betters, the aristocracy, and the plebeian society or “common folk” below. Their status, in the strictest sense, was defined by their ownership of land, a qualification that excluded the majority of “common” people and the mercantile elites. They did not have the legal status and privileges of the aristocracy established by birth such as hereditary titles or seats in the House of Lords. Many entered professional fields like the law, medicine, and the church. Significant and stable income was required to pay tuition at the universities or Inns of Court, which consequently provided men with the skills necessary to earn enough income “to get ahead.” While the gentry made up only a small percent of the population, they wielded a great deal of wealth, power, and social influence.165 Capital enabled many gentlemen to pursue humanist studies and endeavours.

Gentlemanly status was also characterized by the virtues or behaviours expected of the gentry; as Anna Bryson has pointed out, wealth was “only the means to the

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presentation of the right social image.” The time spent studying philosophy, theology, rhetoric, politics, law, and deportment, among other disciplines, allowed gentlemen to cultivate the virtues and behaviours associated with their station in life. Good manners defined gentlemen as an expression of their “possession of inner virtues perfected by education” which “required a visible embodiment and social 'representation'.” These inner virtues included “the cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice and the scriptural values of piety and religious leadership.” The gentleman was also responsible for the maintenance of order and civility, and had a duty to serve his community as a community leader and as a civil example to be emulated.

There are problems with the principles upon which gentle status were based. The unstable nature of wealth, and the immense expense needed to maintain a genteel and leisurely lifestyle sometimes turned gentlemen into paupers. The wealth amassed by merchants, professionals, and yeomen also enabled men of humbler origins to purchase land and move up the social ladder. Similarly, while the aforementioned virtues were to be emulated, many gentlemen spent their leisure time misbehaving as early modern playboys without losing their social status. The status of gentleman was thus dynamic, allowing for social fluidity and for both praise and social criticism.

Bentley is careful to identify himself and others within his manuscript as gentlemen. He states his status explicitly at the start of ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’, writing that “sundry old Accompts” were “collected and gathered” “by Thomas Bentley, Gentleman.” The self-reference as a gentleman implies a number of things. First, it suggests he was wealthy and a landowner. Since Bentley was churchwarden for a suburban parish that was semi-rural, this is entirely plausible. Furthermore, Bentley was

168 Ibid., 145.
170 LMA MS 4249, fol. 221r. See the introductory image on pg. xi.
elected as churchwarden “without bars”, meaning that he was elected as churchwarden from the part of the parish outside the jurisdiction of the city of London in Middlesex which was sparsely populated.\textsuperscript{171} We know Bentley was also able to marry advantageously; his wife, Susan Maynard, was the heiress of John Maynard, sheriff of London, and a member of the powerful Mercer’s guild.\textsuperscript{172} Bentley may have assumed his gentle status after the death of his father. The Atkinsons have argued that his father was Richard Bentley, the owner of Bentley’s Rents which leased houses with gardens to students of nearby Gray’s Inn.\textsuperscript{173}

His conscientious assertion of gentleman status in his manuscript and in parish registers supports Wrightson’s assertion that this social group, gentlemen, had a kind of “collective consciousness, which was attributed to no other single group.”\textsuperscript{174} Bentley noted genteel status when he tallied the deaths of approximately 60 gentlemen within the parish since 1538, underlining the sense of exclusive corporate belonging among these individuals.\textsuperscript{175} When a new door was built in Lincoln’s Inn’s chapel in the church in 1583-4, it was built “for the ease of the parishioners gentlemen & gentlewomen & others.”\textsuperscript{176} By identifying gentlemen and gentlewomen separately from the parishioners and the very generally labelled “others”, he clearly separated the gentry from other people in the parish. Bentley perceived the landed elites to be a different, distinct group within his community, and one in which he strongly asserted his membership.

Bentley usually mentioned gentlemen and members of the aristocracy in tandem with their contributions to the betterment of the church. Bentley lists 38 benefactors of

\textsuperscript{171} LMA MS 4249, fol. 35r.  
\textsuperscript{172} Colin and Jo B. Atkinson, “The Identity and Life of Thomas Bentley,” 340–341.  
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., 340. This fact is questionable however since the Atkinsons received their information from Edward Griffith’s nineteenth-century transcript of what he calls “Bentley’s Book” in the appendix of his Cases of Supposed Exemption from Poor Rates, Claimed [by the Inns of Court] on the Ground of Extra-Parochiality (1831). Griffith bewilderingly misidentifies Richard Bentley as the author of ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ despite the fact that Griffiths correctly transcribed Bentley’s name in the appendix.  
\textsuperscript{174} Wrightson, English Society, 23. The Atkinsons have misread the registers of St. Andrew Holborn, arguing that Bentley was the only person in the register to be explicitly identified as a gentleman. Atkinson and Atkinson, “The Identity and life of Thomas Bentley,” 342.  
\textsuperscript{175} LMA MS 4249, fol. 239v.  
\textsuperscript{176} LMA MS 4249, fol. 237r.
the steeple and bells in the mid-fifteenth century, all of whom were magnates, gentry, bishops, or members of the Inns of Court and Inns of Chancery. He noted that Mr. Byrk made a substantial financial contribution to the repair of the middle roof of the church in 1511-2, and that Mr. Martin was a gentleman who donated a long cushion to be used on festivals to the parish in 1582-3. He noted his own contributions to the church, such as when he drew up and dedicated the table of injunctions and ecclesiastical laws for the church in 1582.

Donations of money, objects, or services to the church were forms of public expression of gentlemanly virtues. Such donations to the church were charitable and demonstrated leadership within the community, and patronage of the church. Good works expressed each man’s individual piety, but also made them virtuous examples to be emulated by the community. In early modern English society, it was believed that one’s demeanour or one’s public behaviour was an expression of inner virtues – or vices. Civility was public honesty that reflected “the virtuous condition of the soul.” Characteristics of a gentleman’s status inherently relied on relations with other people. Charity involved benevolent relations with the immediate community and asserted hierarchy. In the process of identifying gentleman not only does Bentley suggest certain characteristics about these men, including himself, but he also reaffirmed genteel ideals.

**Bentley: Writer and Churchwarden**

Genteel ideals dictated the identity that Bentley would fashion for himself in the office of churchwarden and as a writer. The exemplary gentleman was expected to provide religious leadership for his community. The elites, with their natural virtues of civility, also had the time, and literacy, necessary to devote themselves to religious study; reading in particular became a keystone of Protestant devotion. Many gentlemen were not only well-read, but many also engaged in the creation of devotional

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177 LMA MS 4249, fol. 221v.
178 LMA MS 4249, fols. 223v, 235v.
179 LMA MS 4249, fol. 235r.
180 Bryson, “The Rhetoric of Status,” 144.
literature because they had the education, and time, to pursue the contemplation and writing of religious books. Bentley has been convincingly identified as the author of *Monument of Matrones* (1582).\(^{182}\) He compiled sundry devotional texts written by women for women to guide them in prayer, and to outline the ideals of the pious, genteel, Protestant woman. The texts Bentley reproduced demonstrate how well-read he was: the tome includes devotional works by prominent, devout women such as Queen Catherine Parr, and from esteemed theologians such as Theodore Beza.\(^{183}\) It was thought that the natural virtues and piety cultivated through reading made the gentry examples of proper devotion to be emulated by the rest of their parish. Moreover their erudition, at least in theory, made the gentry more aware of their social and religious responsibilities. In turn, reading and writing raised the expectations of educated men to be pious and charitable. As a father and husband, Bentley was expected to guide his wife and children spiritually, which may explain his preoccupation with the faith of women at various stages of their lives. Much of Bentley’s motivation to write *The Monument of Matrones* (1582) and ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ stemmed from social expectations of his social and familial status.

The guidance of one’s home and family was not much different from the management of the church. Gentlemen were among the most suitable candidates for lay religious leadership for several reasons. The gentry not only had the income to potentially cover any financial shortfalls incurred in the maintenance of the church, but they were often naturally invested with the responsibility to enforce order within their community by their status. Their extensive education at various institutions or through

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\(^{182}\) Atkinson and Atkinson, “The Identity and Life of Thomas Bentley.”

reading and writing gave them the practical skills to administer the day-to-day bureaucracy of the parish and hopefully ensured that they were some of the most morally respectable men in the community. The office of churchwarden was also commonly used as a starting point and often as a prerequisite for serving higher civic offices, particularly in London.\textsuperscript{184}

Although the lay offices of the church technically could be held by any male parishioner, they were generally held by the gentlemen of the parish, or the wealthy members of the 'middling sort'. In many cases these men would hold several offices in the parish from vestry men to collectors for the poor, and some would hold vestry appointments for life, at least in St. Andrew Holborn.\textsuperscript{185} For example, of all the vestrymen elected in 1570, all but one also served as churchwarden between 1559 and 1579.\textsuperscript{186} When new feoffee commissioners were selected in 1573, all but two of the thirteen men appointed were vestrymen.\textsuperscript{187} Of the men elected to the vestry by 1583, we can identify the status or occupations of ten of twelve men. There were three gentlemen, a leather-seller, a carpenter, a boyer, a baker, an innholder, a marble, and a cord-winder. All of these men held multiple appointments within the parish during their lives and had some capital that separated them from the rest of the parishioners. In the case of gentlemen, like Bentley, these lay positions reinforced their genteel virtues. For the middling sort, these positions enabled them to increase the prestige of their families


\textsuperscript{185} In Bentley’s book of precedents, vestry elections are only held when one of the assistants has died. For an example, see LMA MS 4249 fol. 17v.

\textsuperscript{186} The men who were elected to the vestry in 1570 were: Roger Smith (gentleman), John Wygan (gentleman), Hugh Wadelow (dismissed for misbehavior in 1573, replaced by John Campion, gentleman), John Bromley (cord-winder), Robert Fox, John Cox, Robert Ladyman (carpenter), William Ricard (boyer in the bow trade), Andrew Tucker, George Brice (died 1570, replaced by John Melton, baker), Richard Whittworth, and Richard Bacon. See LMA MS 4249, fol. 17r.

\textsuperscript{187} LMA MS 4249, fols. 18r, 28r.
and allowed them to actively emulate the values associated with the rank and prestige of their social betters.\textsuperscript{188}

Although the lay offices of the church were seen as a mark of local honour, it was not easy to balance the demands of the ecclesiastical and state authorities and the needs, complaints, and problems of parishioners. Churchwardens were often accused of corruption, perjury, and other sins.\textsuperscript{189} Fulfilling one’s duties could even lead to civil litigation. Humphrey Parks, a sideman who helped the churchwardens make presentments to the bishop, was arrested and faced a suit from the Earl of Bath for giving a presentment that his mother, Lady Fitzwarren, was living “uncharitably asunder” from her husband in 1580-1.\textsuperscript{190} Bentley recorded instances where men had been fined for refusing to serve their term as churchwarden. He notes that several people were fined for refusing the office, including James Noble turned down the office in 1503-4, Richard Hunt refused to serve his second term in 1549-50, and as many as seven or eight men were fined for declining the office between 1535 and 1537.\textsuperscript{191} Hunt’s refusal to take his second term is the last time that Bentley mentions refusals to take office, suggesting that parishioners had been more amenable to serving since, but nonetheless it demonstrates that the potential problems associated with holding a parish office were not worth the honour for some parishioners.

An ideal churchwarden, according to Bentley, was a man who managed the affairs of the parish with foresight, thrift, and in adherence to custom and law in the parish. Yet several churchwardens failed to live up to these ideals. Ladyman and Bradley sold two gravestones illegally in 1575, defying the queen’s 1560 proclamation against the defacing of monuments.\textsuperscript{192} Bentley levelled similar criticisms against

\textsuperscript{188} In other parts of England, the office of churchwarden was rarely held by the gentry. The higher number of gentlemen in office in St. Andrew Holborn likely reflects the prosperity of the parish and residence at the legal Inns. For detailed social analysis of the rank of churchwardens, see Craig, “Co-operation and Initiatives” and Carlson, “The Origins, Function, and Status of Churchwardens.”


\textsuperscript{190} LMA MS 4249, fol. 234v.

\textsuperscript{191} LMA MS 4249, fols. 223v, 227v, 225r.

\textsuperscript{192} LMA MS 4249, fol. 233r; Hughes and Larkin, eds. \textit{The Tudor Royal Proclamations}, vol. 2, 146–147.
Laughton, who sold the beloved church organ and dismantled the font in in 1571-2.\textsuperscript{193} Hugh Wadelow was the only vestryman that was suspended from his position for “misbehaviour.”\textsuperscript{194} Perhaps years of chronic offenses committed by churchwardens propelled Bentley to instigate reforms to administer the parish more efficiently to emulate the values of foresight and thrift. In successfully emulating these ideals himself, he also fulfilled the gentlemanly ideals of instilling order and providing religious leadership.

Bentley was the first churchwarden to rate and assess the parishioners by a book of taxation for the communion wine and bread, which had previously been paid for out of the poor box, which Bentley said was “flat against the lawe” outlined in the Common Book of Prayer and that it “defraud[ed]…the poure.”\textsuperscript{195} This showed foresight to better provide for the poor, upheld the laws concerning the financing of the communion, and strengthened the parish’s position to give charity sustainably. Bentley and his partner Cowper were also the first churchwardens to make “accomptes of mony receyved for distresses or penaltyes levied of such parishioners as wer absent from Church or otherwise misbehaved themselves in tym of comon prayr & Sermons at home or in the Churche according to the Lawes.”\textsuperscript{196} This is a clear instance of Bentley’s assertion of his authority over the parish to instill religious order, and exercising religious leadership. Fines not only punished absenteeism and potentially profane behaviour; they also provided funds for the poor of church. It seems Bentley made a clear departure from the precedent set by some of his predecessors by fulfilling his duties as a churchwarden in such a way that allowed him to emulate the ideals of the office. Writing his history enabled him to fashion his identity by sharply contrasting his (idealistic) success and the failures of his predecessors.

Genteel status was also shaped by unequal relations of power and through exclusion. Stephen Greenblatt has noted that self-fashioning is crafted in opposition to something or someone perceived as alien, strange or hostile. Generally, the perceived
“alien” usually challenges or presents a false sense of order in the eyes of authority. The general demographic trends of the sixteenth century can explain the growing need to assert gentlemanly status. While the gentry were more socially flexible in general, greater social mobility led to more claims to gentlemanly status, sometimes through falsified lineages to bear coats of arms. This greater social mobility and the perceived threat of ‘common’ behaviour on the virtues of civility were thus a danger to order in the commonwealth, and potentially made the existing gentry uneasy about the threat to their social rank.

**Bentley and the Law**

Bentley was a lawyer educated at Gray’s Inn in the parish. Bentley’s aspiration to the gentlemanly ideal also extended to his vocation and its virtuous aspirations. He considered it his responsibility to make the law accessible and legitimate to his community in the interest of promoting order and authority within the realm. When he made the table of injunctions and ecclesiastical laws for the church in 1582, it was not just his gentlemanly duty to provide this for the church as one of the parish’s elite. It was also part of his responsibility as a lawyer to make these laws accessible to promote knowledge of it and, by extension, adherence to the laws surrounding religious conformity within the parish. Bentley provides a more explicit example of the use of the law to provide awareness and thus adherence. When Richard More and Andrew Tucker sold some of the copper or brass from gravestones and tombs in 1559-60 they were not ordered to pay a fine, but Bentley states:

> “…in this parisme & els where in other was at the length complaned of to her maiestie wherupon she presently after complaynt therof made caused a very godly proclamation to be published through her Realme against defacing of monumentes in the church which is extant & meet to be sett

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201 LMA MS 4249, fol. 235r.
up in all churches that therby men may understand her graces pleasure
how fair theye shal proced in these actions in the churche.”

The proclamation was set up so people could know what was allowed and what was not
under the law.

Bentley made laws accessible in other ways. His book of precedents outlined
the proper procedures for parish administration. This not only made the laws accessible
to encourage adherence, but procedural precedent provided the grounds for legitimate
and just authority within the parish. This promoted order since resistance to
commandment was only legitimizied if the authority was unjust or a tyrant. Bentley’s
initiatives to create records of precedents demonstrate his serious attempt to emulate
the ideals of the law and of his status.

Enforcing order through the law was achieved not only by making the law
accessible, but also through the identification of disorder or illegal activity and the
application of the law. In 1531-2, the churchwarden Alexander Kervinall was “arrested
about the parish affayrs.”

It was not the only incident of a lay official who faced legal
action in office. In 1492-3, churchwardens Skelton and Herd summoned Thomas Davis
regarding parish affairs “twic or thrice into the Arches,” the ecclesiastical court of appeal
for the province of Canterbury. Churchwardens John Hogg and William Viney were
ordered to pay 34s. 2d. for selling some of the church-plate without the consent of the
parish. Later, in 1577-8, churchwardens Price and Ricard were summoned before the
Bishop of London, John Aylmer, “for the old foont puld down & other such like things don
contrary to the Queen’s Injunctions.” Parsons and priests were not saints either.
Bentley records that the parish priest, Sir Henry Walman, was taken into the Arches in
front of the Lord Chancellor Cardinal Wolsey in 1518-9. Under these circumstances, the

202 LMA MS 4249, fol. 229r.
203 LMA MS 4249, fol. 223r.
204 LMA MS 4249, fol. 223r. ‘The Arches’ or Court of Arches was held in the church of St. Mary-le-
Bow.
205 LMA MS 4249, fol. 234r.
churchwardens broke with custom and surrendered their accounts to the archdeacon rather than the priest.\textsuperscript{206}

Bentley recorded examples of the application of law to demonstrate a return to order, and to illustrate genteel and legal ideals. In a prosecution under the law, the ideals that defined both the gentleman and the lawyer were formed in opposition to those who broke the law and their challenge to order and authority. This is especially the case in the examples listed where churchwardens of the parish — men invested with lay authority over parishioners, its finances, and its piety — were breaking the laws intended to create order on the local level that they are responsible for maintaining. An even sharper division was created between those that are to uphold order and those that purposely reject that responsibility, than the division between the gentlemen and their socially inferiors who broke the law.

Lawyers were defined separately within ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ and Bentley divided them by the Inns of Court or Inns of Chancery at which they studied. For example, Mr. Copston, slain on the Fleet Bridge in 1571-2, was a “gentleman of Gray’s Inn.”\textsuperscript{207} The explicit statement of association was also seen within the burial register which Bentley compiled as well; for example, Tristram Tiflley, a “graies Inn gentleman” was buried 17 February 1581.\textsuperscript{208} Association with a particular Inn could also be implied by place of burial or patronage. For example, the location of Mr. Augustine Steward’s coat of arms in Lincoln’s Inn chapel in the church hints at Mr. Steward’s legal affiliation.\textsuperscript{209} Membership to the Inns was an important part of social and vocational networks. Lawyers were not only identified as separate and further up the social hierarchy by rank and skill from the rest of society, but they were also further divided by

\textsuperscript{206} LMA MS 4249, fols. 223r, 224r. Bentley also notes that the churchwardens surrendered their accounts to the archdeacon rather than the parson in 1492-3, and in 1564-5. This implies that this breach of custom happened before under similar circumstances, and is further supported on fol. 230v. Fox and Whitworth called Mr. Whitlyn, the parson, to appear before the bishop in 1564-5. Bentley does not label these entries as ill husbandry. Given that the parson faced legal action, the churchwardens were probably ensuring that their accounts wouldn’t be questioned later.

\textsuperscript{207} LMA MS 4249, fol. 232v.

\textsuperscript{208} LMA MS 6673/1, fol. 49v.

\textsuperscript{209} LMA MS 4249, fol. 235v.
Inns. Their place in society was defined by the structures of law as those who enforce and interpret the law and those who break the law. The nature of the law meant that the creation of identity relied inherently on opposition to other people. The ideals of justice and the responsibility and authority to maintain social order, both as lawyer, but also as a gentleman, fashioned Bentley’s identity.

Bentley and Conforming Protestantism

Bentley’s adherence to Protestantism is perhaps the most dominant feature of his identity in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’. His faith was not starkly different from that of puritans in matters of doctrine or day-to-day practice, but Bentley’s strict, scrupulous adherence to the Elizabethan settlement and ecclesiastical injunctions distinguished him from other Protestant camps within the English church. His zealous conformity stands out in a variety of ways. He scrupulously conformed to the Elizabethan settlement and ecclesiastical injunctions. He strictly upheld the royal supremacy. His concern for poor relief reflected his dedication to charity as a Christian and as a paternalistic gentleman. He was preoccupied with the comeliness of the interior and exterior of the church. Bentley revered some of the more ceremonial or ritualistic aspects of the Elizabethan church.210 His conformity is amplified by his relationship with some of England’s strictest and most powerful conformists: John Aylmer, Bishop of London, Richard Bancroft, the hammer of puritans, and Sir Christopher Hatton.

Bentley’s Scrupulosity

Bentley’s strict adherence to the Elizabethan settlement, established by the Royal Injunctions for Religion (1559) as well as subsequent injunctions and proclamations is a strong marker of his strict conformity. This is most apparent in several of the examples of what Bentley deemed unlawful in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities.’ Bentley objected to the removal of the font in 1571-2 and its simple basin

210 I use the terms ‘scrupulous’ and “scrupulosity” to characterize Bentley’s near-obsessive, rigid adherence to the Elizabethan settlement.
substitute. Removal of the font was in direct violation of the Royal Order of 1561. The defacement of monuments in the church, which included gravestones in Bentley's opinion, was prohibited by Elizabeth's proclamation in 1560. Bentley was clearly concerned with the maintenance of Elizabethan ceremonial legislation.

Bentley's reports of absenteeism and the assessed taxation for the communion bread and wine demonstrate his commitment to ecclesiastical law. As Bentley noted, Cowper and he were the first wardens to record the fines paid by parishioners for absenteeism or misbehaviour in a register in 1582–1584. Parochial officials were required to report absenteeism on Sundays in the church to their ordinaries and to fine those who absented themselves from services. The 1559 Injunctions required parishes to appoint “three or four discreet men” who would survey the parishes for absentee parishioners as well as maintain order during the service. While Eric Carlson's observation that “this procedure exposed more card players and alehouse haunters than Roman Catholics,” it was nevertheless a tool that was used to root out non-conformity.

The aforementioned assessed tax to pay for communion adhered to the Common Book of Prayer, and the St. Andrew Holborn vestry approved of this new tax on 5 June 1584. Bancroft's approval of the assessed taxation shows that he endorsed Bentley's reforms. The prayer book not only outlined how parishes should pay for communion, it also dictated how often parishioners should receive communion. It stipulated that people should receive communion from their assigned parish minister at
least three times a year, including at Easter.\textsuperscript{217} Taxation of communion highlights the legal commitment of the parish to provide alms for the poor, but it also suggests the parish needed to provide regular financing for a more regular communion.\textsuperscript{218} It is intriguing to note that the fines for absenteeism and the strict adherence to the prayer book’s guidelines for communion are first mentioned by Bentley in the early 1580s, when the tension between the puritan and conformist factions in the church came to a head when John Whitgift introduced his subscription to conformity. The timing of Bentley’s reforms in light of his faith suggest that Bentley disagreed with his more moderate predecessors and that his scrupulosity was fuelled by the political-religious tensions of the 1580s.

\textbf{Bentley and the Poor}

Bentley’s preoccupation with the communion taxation and absenteeism illuminates the importance of poor relief to him. In addition to breaking the law set forth by the Book of Common Prayer, the parish’s previous custom of paying for bread and wine from the collections gathered at communion deprived the poor of significant amounts of potential alms. In 1582-3, for example, the cost of communion amounted to £3 16s. 2d.\textsuperscript{219} Collections at communion were supposed to be given to the poor, and considering that St. Andrew Holborn was one of the wealthiest parishes within the City of London’s jurisdiction, it was reprehensible to deny the poor their customary rights to support from the better sort. Under Bentley’s senior churchwardenship in 1583-4, there were twenty-eight public communions which collected over £8 for the poor.\textsuperscript{220} The focal point of the accession day and queen’s birthday feasts Bentley organized was the charity given to the poor women of the parish in money, food, and drink.\textsuperscript{221} Fines for absences from service or misbehaviour were also paid into the poor box. Bentley needed to record fines to ensure that the poor were getting the money that was rightfully

\textsuperscript{218} Collinson, \textit{The Elizabethan Puritan Movement}, 205.
\textsuperscript{219} LMA MS 4249, fol. 235r.
\textsuperscript{220} LMA MS 4249, fol. 236v.
\textsuperscript{221} LMA MS 4249, fol. 238r.
their. He was also concerned with provision for the poor within the space of the church. He noted that the poor box was first set up under Edward VI in 1547-8. He recorded that the pews for the poor were first built in 1553-4, but were removed the following year. The pews for the poor were rebuilt in 1577-8 when Ricard and Price were churchwardens.

Concern for the relief for the poor was universally shared by Christians, regardless of confession. While Bentley's concern for the poor was by no means definitively confessional in nature, the ways in which he secured relief for the poor demonstrates his conformity. The fines for absenteeism that went to the poor box and the assessment for the communion bread and wine strictly adhered to the Book of Common Prayer. Collections at communion stressed the Elizabethan thought that provisions should be given in public rather than in private. The generous alms given to the poor women of the parish on the queen’s accession day and birthday followed the traditional customs of the giving of alms during festivities, although these two “memorable feasts” celebrated and reinforced of the royal supremacy.

In the book of precedents, Bentley recorded the election of the overseers of the poor “within bars” at a vestry held 5 August 1582, according to orders issued by the “Lorde Mayor” based on “the statute” issued 1562-3, the same year “the homily of alms-deeds and mercifulness towards the poor and needy” was reissued. The homily stressed that God required the faithful to give liberally to the poor, and charity was thought to be an outward sign of one’s faith and assurance. In addition to demonstrating one’s faith, poor relief also reflected the paternal ideals of the gentry who were responsible for providing charity for the poor. Bentley, living in a very wealthy parish, ensured that his peers and social betters fulfilled their duties. Perhaps Bentley

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222 LMA MS 4249, fol. 227r.
223 LMA MS 4249, fol. 228r.
225 LMA MS 4249, fols. 76r–v; Hindle, On the Parish, 99.
found his community to be cold and slack because of what he perceived to be lack of charity in spite of the parish’s affluence. This is suggested by his prayer that

God be honowred therefore & increase the charitable myndes & compationate hartes of his people to persevere & continue in wel doing to the end: that men seeing their good woorks to proced from a lyvely fayth in Christ Jesu the woroker & the rewarde maye gloryfie hym in veritie that is to be worshiped and praysed in all eternitie: Amen.  

He certainly was not alone in his perception of a decline of charity. Rather than lament the past like John Stow, Bentley sought to warm the alleged cold hearts of his fellow parishioners through the scrupulous actions he undertook as churchwarden to provide for the poor.

**Bentley and the Royal Supremacy**

One defining pillar of conformity in the Elizabethan church was support for the royal supremacy. During her reign, Elizabeth continuously reaffirmed her position at the head of the realm and church, particularly at times of religious controversy. During the religious debates in the parliament of 1584-5, Elizabeth repeatedly told M.P.s and the House of Lords that matters of religious grievances were to be directed to the bishops rather than debated in parliament and that religious innovations were strictly prohibited. Following the precedent set by her father, Henry VIII, Elizabeth was the head of the English Church, a role invested in her by the grace of God, asserted by the Act of Supremacy, and confirmed by the Elizabethan settlement. Bentley’s admiration for the queen is apparent. He dedicated *The Monument of Matrones* (1582) to her. In the marriage registers, first compiled by Bentley, he refers to his monarch as

Soverane Lady Elizabethe by the grace of God of England Fraunce & Ireland Queene defender of the old Auncient and Catholique Fayth & supream Governor of all causes aswell Ekleasticall [i.e. ecclesiastical] as

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227 LMA MS 4249, fol. 238v.
temerall withen [i.e. within] these her majesties dominiones of England and Irelan
de.\textsuperscript{230}

He asserted her temporal authority and her role as the defender as the ancient, true faith. By referring to the English church as “the old Auncient and Catholique faith” Bentley suggests that his church is the true descendent of first church of the apostles, giving the current church doctrine and polity a historical precedent that might protect it from Catholic and puritan criticism respectively. This is not to say that puritans did not acknowledge their queen’s supremacy; to reject it would be treason. In the context of both puritan and Catholic criticism however, Elizabeth became increasingly assertive of her place at the head of the Church and demanded adherence to the polity she wanted. She saw opposition to and criticisms of her desired church polity as attacks on her princely rights. The strictest of conformers were thus the queen’s strongest supporters.

The royal injunctions (1559) encouraged parishioners to offer up prayers of thanks to God for Elizabeth in her role as the savior of English Protestantism upon her accession to the throne.\textsuperscript{231} Parish bells were ordered to be rung to mark accession days, or to mark when monarchs passed through parishes. Bentley, reflecting on how the pre-Reformation parish rang the bells at the accession of Pope Paul III in 1534, writes, “howe much rather ought they to be ronge and ronge agayne for our christian prince.”\textsuperscript{232} This shows Bentley’s adherence to Protestantism in general – ringing for the pope was, after all, popery – but support for the ringing of bells for the monarch was reverent civic ceremonialism.

Support for the royal supremacy was also seen in the accession day celebrations organized by many parishes throughout England in the late-sixteenth century on 17 November. Bentley was the first warden in St. Andrew Holborn to organize a celebration of the anniversary of the queen’s reign. As David Cressy has stated, these holidays were traditionally celebrated with bell-ringing and prayers of thanksgiving, although local

\textsuperscript{230} LMA MS 6673/1, fol.43v.
\textsuperscript{231} Frere and Kennedy eds., \textit{Visitations and Articles}, vol. 3, 28.
\textsuperscript{232} LMA MS 4249, fol. 224r.
customs also developed as well.\textsuperscript{233} The timing and the purpose of these celebrations reinforce Bentley’s conformist zeal for the royal supremacy and poor relief. The purpose of the celebration of the queen’s accession was more than a commemoration of her reign, it also “signified a turning point in England’s religious history, a providential divide between the nightmare of popery and the promise of the development of God’s true church.”\textsuperscript{234} In 1584, however, these celebrations were also a blatant reminder that Elizabeth was the prince and the head of the church. Bentley commemorated his queen with a spectacular display of charity. On 17 November 1584, to mark the twenty-seventh year of her reign, twenty-seven maidens and children and twenty-seven elderly women in the parish were given spice cakes, a draught of wine, and a penny and three pence respectively after prayers of thanks were given.\textsuperscript{235} In alms alone the parish gave at least £1 15s. on these two occasions, excluding any other costs such as the purchase of prayer books specifically written for the accession day celebrations, widespread by the 1580s, and the food.\textsuperscript{236} While not a miserly churchwarden, Bentley valued frugal, prudent use of church funds. Yet he spared no cost for the celebration of his queen at a time when the English church polity came under heavy criticism in a city that was a stronghold for puritan, and in some cases, presbyterian views. The focus on poor women of the parish also highlights the importance of poor relief. Bentley loved his queen, and spending a significant amount of money not only to assert her authority but also to promote a better public perception of the queen in a time of perceived crisis emphasizes his conforming faith through support of the poor and the royal supremacy. This was not a waste of funds, but rather money very well spent.

\textit{Bentley and the Beauty of the Church}

Elizabethan puritans, both moderate and zealot, wanted to see the church purged of what they saw as the vestiges of popery. For conformists such as Bentley,
there was a greater sense of pride in the devotion of previous generations of parishioners. He was happy to see superstition and idolatrous practices buried with Mary Tudor, but he was an admirer of the past while there is “coldnes and slackness of some now in the tyme of the gospell.” A strong feature of Bentley’s conformity expressed itself in his concern for beauty of the parish church and the preservation of some ceremony in worship and rites.

The beauty of the interior and exterior of the church was very important to Bentley. He uses the phrase “beauty of the church” three times in his chronicle. When the gravestones were sold in 1575, he writes that they were initially installed for the “profit & bewty of the church.” New pews were also built “for the bewty of the church” in 1582-3. The north side of the church and its porch, “sore battered with weazr [i.e. weather]” was repaired “for the better safegard therof & bewtie of the church” in 1584. Bentley also wished “that ther were som convenyent shoppes made round about the walls” of the church yard so the rents from said shops could pay for the paving of parish roads, “which by such extraordinary chargs the church “cannot com [i.e. come] to such perfection of bewty and comlyness.” The need to maintain the church’s beauty also explains why Bentley was relieved to record that “the great heape of dead mens bones & skulls that lay unseemly & offensy vely at the East end of the church” was buried “in a pytt” in 1582-3. Beauty also extended beyond the walls of the church; a vestry held 28 October 1584 agreed

that certeyn of the assistantes shold take a viewe of the Churchyarde for the better inclosing the same from common therowfayr [i.e. thoroughfare] & passing to the great prophaning of the same by dunge and fylth to the annoyance & lothseness [i.e. loathsomeness] of all people & to the offence of God in contemp so reverent a place.

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237 LMA MS 4249, fol. 228r.
238 LMA MS 4249, fol. 233r.
239 LMA MS 4249, fol. 236r.
240 LMA MS 4249, fol. 237v.
241 LMA MS 4249, fol. 233v.
242 LMA MS 4249, fol. 235v.
243 LMA MS 4249, fol. 139v.
The beauty of the church also extended to parish monuments. Bentley condemned the defacement of monuments, a phrase he uses three times in the manuscript: when Ladyman and Bradley sold the gravestones in 1575-6; when Richard Moore and Andrew Tucker sold 7s. 6d. of brass from tombs and gravestones in 1559-60 – which Bentley directly connected with Elizabeth’s proclamation against the destruction of monuments. He asserts that Mr. Byrt’s coat of arms were “to the grete offence and discouragement of divers wel mynded gentlemen cler [i.e. clear] defaced & utterly taken awaye.” Bentley condemned the unlawful defacement and neglect of monuments because the gravestones, the brass embellishments, and the coat of arms commemorated the dead and beautified the church.

Beauty was also to be found in music and in the use of the old standing font. Bentley was upset when Laughton and Cooper sold the church’s “Fayre Orgayns” to the dean of Westminster and replaced the font with “a little Salt seller or thing” in 1571-2. While there was no formal prohibition against the playing of organs during the service, accompaniment sat uneasy with puritans because it risked giving precedence to the music rather than to the words being sung. For conformists such as Bentley, music lent ceremony to the service and further sanctified the psalms. The larger, more elaborate stone font generated a sense of ceremony and sanctity to christening, marking an infant’s entrance into the Christian community. The standing font also fixed the sacrament to a particular point in the church, creating order within the sacred space.

The reverence towards sacred space expanded past the bounds of ceremony to the interior of the church, beyond the exterior of the church and into the churchyard which held the graves of the dead. It is important to stress that Bentley did not refer to the church as a “sacred” space himself, preferring to refer to the church use the reformed phrase “the house of the Lord,” but implicitly Bentley believed that there

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244 LMA MS 4249, fols. 233r, 229r, 223v.
245 LMA MS 4249, fol. 232r.
246 LMA MS 4249, fol. 221r.
should “beauty of holiness” in the church. While Bentley was concerned about the cost of maintenance, much of his interest in the maintenance of the church from past to present was based upon his belief in the sanctity of a given space expressed in the beauty and ceremony, a view that was not always shared by puritans.

**Conclusion**

Bentley’s identity was deeply informed by his social status, profession, and faith. As a gentleman, he was distinct from the rest of society. The values of leadership attributed to genteel status laid the groundwork for the ideals of order and authority in his role as church warden and in his vocation as a lawyer. These values also motivated Bentley's writing of ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ in the first place. The importance of the values of order and leadership compelled Bentley to record precedent within the parish, and the need to record examples of bad churchwardenship was integral to the fashioning of his identity as a good churchwarden. Bentley wrote the history of St. Andrew Holborn to cultivate faith, but he also documented the ways in which he executed his obligation to lead his community religiously through reading and public worship. Against the backdrop of the 1584 crisis during his term as senior churchwarden, Bentley's zealous conforming faith is seen in his scrupulous actions as churchwarden to enforce conformity to the Elizabethan settlement, in his attachment to royal supremacy, his support for the poor of the parish, and his belief in the need for a comely church. Bentley would have us believe that he met the ideals to which he aspired with relative success. Whether or not that was actually the case we will never know, but, as we will see, it had a profound impact on how he perceived the past.


248 See Andrew Spicer, “‘What Kind of House a Kirk is’” for an in-depth discussion of British views of sacred space. While Spicer’s chapter focuses on Scotland in the 1630s, the tensions between Scottish presbyterians and the “Laudian” religion of the early Stuarts share some commonalities with the conflict that arose between English puritans and conformists half a century earlier.
Chapter 3.

MEMORY

As a Protestant lawyer and gentlemen who wrote ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’, how did Thomas Bentley remember the past? It is a truism to observe that historical writing is a physical manifestation of memory. Daniel Woolf has argued for the significance of three levels of memory: (i) personal memory, or “the immediate memories, recollections, and learned behaviours of individuals,” (ii) community memory, consisting of “the aggregate of individual memories, conveyed in oral discourse about the immediate or remote past and often given permanency in communal customs, rituals, and written documents or texts,” and (iii) social memory, which is “the mediated ordering of the past of an entire nation or ethnic community, its political and social life, into some sort of chronological account, often expressed in narrative form.”

This chapter will adopt Woolf’s categories and apply them to ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’. It will examine how Bentley’s identity shaped his personal memory and perception of the past, how the community memory of St. Andrew Holborn preserved and utilized the past, and how national historical processes embedded in social memory, such as the Reformation, influenced personal and community interpretations of the past. Applying Woolf’s definitions, I will demonstrate that in the 1580s, social memory was limited at the personal and community levels to influencing interpretations of the past; it had not yet overthrown local memory’s predominance and legitimacy within historical culture. By the end of the early modern period, social memory had supplanted local and personal memory’s predominance in historical culture. These three levels of


memory are inherently intertwined; not only do they fit inside each other like Russian nesting dolls as parts of a whole, but they act upon and influence each other. There are different circles of relationships within which an individual may place his or her memory and self. Community was integral to the conceptualization of identity and local history, and the events and people of St. Andrew Holborn and London superimposed themselves upon Bentley’s own personal experiences. Events that affected England as a whole, such as the Elizabethan settlement, imposed themselves upon memory, penetrating through the experience of communities to the experiences of the individual. The divisions between these levels of memory are artificial, but useful in understanding memory in early modern society.

Bentley and Personal Memory

Bentley’s personal remembrance of the past can be divided into three parts: recall, interpretation and selection. Recall manifests itself in the manuscript in what I will call first person remembrance, or the use of the first person singular followed by a remembering or recall verb. Bentley’s interpretation of the past was coloured by his own beliefs informed by his identity and manifested in his opinions, particularly criticisms, about certain events and individuals within the manuscript. While the entire text is inherently selective, Bentley’s use of the term “memorandum” to precede entries further selects and privileges entries in the text.

As always with categorization, it can be difficult to find categories that are perfect fits. Woolf’s terms are by no mean perfect, and in this instance one must ignore the format or genre aspects of Woolf’s definitions. However, Woolf’s definitions are more suitable for early modern England because they are crafted within the context of examination of memory in early modern England. As Maria G. Cattell and Jacob J. Climo have pointed out, there is no consensus among scholars of memory studies regarding terminology for social memory. Maria G. Cattell and Jacob J. Climo, “Introduction: Meaning in Social Memory and History,” in Social Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives edited by Maria G. Cattell and Jacob J. Climo (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 4, cited in Andy Wood, Memory of the People: Custom and Popular Senses of the Past in Early Modern England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 26.
The First Person: Writing and Recall

The first person memory and indications of Bentley’s opinion about a certain event or person are clearly the most direct link we have to his memory because they show his reflection on the past. Bentley uses first person remembrance three times in the manuscript and suggests that two kinds of personal memory are at work in the manuscript: he recalled previous entries that he has read in the accounts as he compiled ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ as well as his living memory. Referring to the churchwardens Leverett and Melton in 1563-4, he writes that “they were the fyrst that I fynd to my remembranc that wer asked alowanc [i.e. allowance] for the 6 or Sydemens dynner at the archdecons visitacion which stood therin 5s. & at or for the geving up of their presentmentes to the officiell.”

Bentley made no other mention of the sidemen’s dinner except when the churchwardens and sidemen had a dinner at the Bishop of London’s visitation at Christ Church Newgate Street the next year. Subsequent sidemen’s dinners were not important enough to record beyond this point, suggesting that it was the act of establishing a new custom within the parish that was important, rather than the actual dinners themselves. Bentley may be reflecting back on the past within his living memory, but he also accessed a memory much longer than his own within the accounts themselves which enabled him to study past customs within the parish. Similarly, the next instance where Bentley refers to a first-person remembrance is a new legal suit for the church lands in 1570-1, remarking that the total cost of the suit over a two year period cost “as I can guess by rud collection [i.e. recollection]” £23 14s. 2d. The legal suit for the lands was a long, expensive process and summarizing it in one entry in the manuscript would have required arithmetic and cross-referencing accounts. Bentley had to recall the information he had previously read within the account.

The last entry in which Bentley uses first-person remembrance dates from 1571-2, when “one Mr. Copston a gentleman of Gray’s Ine being slayne at flote bridge or Lutgate hill was this yere buryed in Grays In [i.e. Inn] chappell at whose buriall & Sermon

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252 LMA MS 4249, fol. 230v.
253 LMA MS 4249, fol. 230v.
254 LMA MS 4249, fol. 232r.
ther was assembled so many people as I never saw the like in this Church to my remembrance.” Rather than drawing up his recollections of the accounts, Bentley supplemented the reading and recording of this event from the accounts with his living personal memory. He wrote that he saw the crowds that had gathered for Copston’s funeral and used his personal memory of every other funeral he had even seen in the parish or to claim that it was the best-attended funeral held in St. Andrew Holborn in his memory. Considering that Copston was affiliated with Gray’s Inn, Bentley likely knew him, or knew of him. Bentley’s use of the first person remembrance provides insight into how he wrote ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’. He was not simply transcribing accounts; he was actively engaged. His chronicle required his mind to continuously move forward and backward in time, and across layers of knowledge and memory, from his memory of reading, to his living memory, and to the memory preserved in the accounts.

**Criticism and Interpretation of the Past**

Bentley’s personal memory also consisted of his interpretation of the past. His account, unsurprisingly, was deeply coloured by his Protestantism, by his concern for custom, law, and prudent fiscal management. Bentley’s criticisms of some events and his use of judgmental words such as “superstition” illustrate his engagement with interpretation of the past. He criticized the Principals of the Inns in his manuscript for failing to pay their rents for the pews since 1555-6. In an entry dated 1559-60, he criticised the churchwardens More and Tucker for the “great cost bestowed about repaying al the pues in the church,” stating, quite caustically and not without a note of sarcasm: “I thinke becaus Moore one of the Churchwardens was a carpenter & knew best how to bestow the church mony to the best advantage & set hymself a work: but to how little purpose it is yet to be sene [i.e. seen].” Bentley was also shocked by the expenditure accumulated under the rule of Mary Tudor when Catholicism returned to the English state. He carefully stated, with Protestant hindsight, that raising a new rood and loft cost the parish over £6 and “shortly after was burt [i.e. burnt] to ashes as shal

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255 LMA MS 4249, fol. 232v.
256 LMA MS 4249, fols. 222r, 228v.
257 LMA MS 4249, fol. 229v.
His own beliefs regarding prudent and frugal financing influenced how he perceived and remembered the past, particularly the actions of his predecessors.

Bentley's concern for custom and law shaped his interpretation of the past as well, and appears in his critical language and in his explicit statement that particular event is against custom, or law. As previously discussed, the "great Orgayns" were sold in 1571-2. According to an impassioned Bentley, the churchwarden Laughton, sold "these fayre Orgayns & excellent Instrumente" to the dean of Westminster "without leave of the parishoners or consent of the vestry yea clean against the mynd of the parson & most parishoners." While Bentley was clearly attached to the instrument, he stressed that their sale was not approved by the rest of the vestry or the parish at large. His objection is attributed less to his love of the organ, and more to the breach of custom. He explicitly stated that the removal of the font the same year was "contrary to Lawe." Bentley's interpretation could be subtler in some cases. Instances when Bentley used the term "ill husbandry", such as when the vestry was called without the parson's consent on 8 March 1580, demonstrate that Bentley interpreted activities as unlawful or a breach of custom. When Bentley referred to the sale of copper and brass from gravestones by Moore and Tucker in 1559-60, he used the phrase "defacing of monuments" which shows he was interpreting the actions of his predecessors.

Bentley's zealous, conformist Protestantism influenced how he remembered and re-remembered the religious changes in his lifetime. The most obvious example of this is his use of the term "superstitious" to characterise Catholic worship. However, Bentley refrains from using the word "superstition" to refer to religious practice dating from before the reign of Edward VI. In fact, he usually used the word 'devotion' to describe pre-Reformation demonstrations of piety, such as the building of the steeple in the fifteenth century. This implies that Bentley did not hold his forefathers accountable for their

258 LMA MS 4249, fol. 228v.
259 LMA MS 4249, fol. 232r.
260 LMA MS 4249, fol. 232r.
261 LMA MS 4249, fol. 232r.
262 LMA MS 4249, fol. 234v.
263 LMA MS 4249, fol. 229r.
264 LMA MS 4249, fol. 221r.
perceived religious ignorance until after they had been enlightened by the true faith during the Edwardian Reformation. In the first year of Edward VI’s reign, 1547-8, “all the alters Images & superstitious things in the church wer taken awaye,” and the church lands “geven to the maytenance of any supersticion” were confiscated in 1549-50. This is the first time Bentley uses the term in his account. When Bentley wrote about the first year of Mary’s reign, 1553-4, he recorded the following entry:

This yere without a gret urgyng by comandment the parishioners were at great charges upon the proclamation made for Queen Mary to reigne, to erect & set up al maner of Supersticious things agayne in the Church not long before pulld downe: so ready they were to maynteyn idolatrous service & forward to further Supersticion & in so short a space that it is wonderfull to read or here & shall condempne the coldnes and slackness of som now in the tyme of the gospell.

This entry employs strong confessional language; he uses words such as “superstitious” or “idolatrous” to characterize Marian Catholicism. Bentley was also astonished at how quickly Catholicism returned to the parish; it came without much encouragement and quite quickly, a sign that even sixteenth-century people clearly acknowledged as an indication of parochial religious conservatism. When Protestantism returned with the Elizabethan settlement, he wrote that “all the alters & superstitious things in the church set up in Queen Maryes tyme wer now agayne to gods glorye pulde [i.e. pulled] downe & litle by litle all the reliques of Rome utterly turned out of the church.” Bentley’s wonder at the speed of the return of Catholicism, and the use of strong confessional language show how his faith affected how he interpreted the parish’s past.

Memorandum: To Be Remembered

Bentley also demonstrates the selective nature of his remembrance of the past by using the term “memorandum” which means “to be remembered.” He uses the term “memorandum” in just over half of the entries, 136 in total, in his manuscript. Given the

265 LMA MS 4249, fol. 227r.
266 LMA MS 4249, fol. 228r.
267 LMA MS 4249, fol. 229v.
number of entries that start with the word, it seems Bentley employs it to emphasize certain entries, and suggests some conclusions about his personal memory and perception of what was important from what he tells his reader to remember for future consideration directly. Bentley seemed particularly interested in emphasizing physical changes in the church, such as the building of the steeple, or the renovation of the windows in Gray’s Inn chapel, located north of the nave in the church. Bentley’s interest in emphasizing the physical maintenance of the church also extended to financial expenditure. Given Bentley’s preoccupation with finances and sums, it is unsurprising that both positive and negative entries pertaining to money and the church funds are preceded by “memorandum”. The time the principals of the Inns paid the churchwardens for their pews in 1555-6 and another occasion when Richard Hunt refused to pay his uncle’s legacy to the church after repeated appeals to do so in 1572-3 were both “to be remembered.” Bentley also used “memorandum” to begin entries concerning legal matters such as the creation of the instrument of decrees for good order in 1569-70 and the church’s aforementioned suit for the church lands in 1571-2. Prominent men in the parish were also “to be remembered” such as Lord Broughe who was interred in Lincoln’s Inn chapel in the church in 1550-1.

Surprisingly, Bentley used “memorandum” sparingly in entries pertaining to religious changes. He does not use the term to start entries related to religious change before the Elizabethan Settlement. With the exception of a few later entries regarding things such as new communion pots only the removal of the rood and other “superstitious” things in 1559-60 are worth special remembrance. Considering Bentley’s strong conformity to the Elizabethan settlement, and the growing intra-confessional tensions in the 1570s and 1580s between conformists and “puritans”, Bentley’s emphasis on the remembrance of the religious outcomes after 1559 reinforces his conformist perceptions of the past. The use of “memorandum” privileged some entries over others, which shows that Bentley’s remembrance of the past was selective.

268 LMA MS 4249, fols. 221r, 234r.
269 LMA MS 4249, fols. 228v, 232v.
270 LMA MS 4249, fols. 231v, 232r.
271 LMA MS 4249, fol. 227v.
272 LMA MS 4249, fols. 232v, 228v–229v.
Personal Memory: The Sale of Gravestones

One entry that exemplifies Bentley’s personal memory is the aforementioned sale of gravestones by churchwardens Ladyman and Bradley in 1575. Bentley wrote:

Memorandum Ladyman & bradley like il husband es for the church sold 2 Gravestones out of the Church for 33s. 4d. which if every Churchwarden shold use to do ther wold be but a few fayre stones left in the church & the next way to put the church still to greate charges for paving with smal stones that wil never last so long. Yea I doubt whyther the Churchwardens by the Law may sell any such stones or no out of the church: sure I am they do great injury to the dead at whose charges they were dedicated for the profit & bewty of the church: & truely it doth utterly discourage many otherwise wel mynded to bestowe mony largely that waye, when they see such abuse & defacyng of monumentes used by those that most shold seke to maynteyne the same ever by hyr majesties special comandment as apereth in her proclamation for that caus specially published.273

Bentley interpreted this event in several ways. First he condemned the sale, likening Ladyman and Bradley, to “il husbandes for the church.”274 By emphasizing the pejorative ‘ill husband,’ Bentley accused Ladyman and Bradley of acting wastefully, and without foresight. The removal of the larger gravestones left the church to be paved “with small stones that will never last so long”, demonstrating the concern he had for the fiscal management of the church.275 Second only to the lack of durability of smaller gravestones, the law is the main reason Bentley gave to support his condemnation of the sale. He writes: “yea, I doubt whyther the Churchwardens by the Law may sell any such stones or no out of the church” and he finishes the entry by stating that monuments in the church were to be maintained “by her majesties special comandment as apereth in hyr proclamation for that caus specially published.”276 Furthermore, Bentley writes that the churchwardens “do great injury to the dead at whose charges they were dedicated

273 LMA MS 4249, fol. 233r.
274 LMA MS 4249, fol. 233r.
275 LMA MS 4249, fol. 233r.
276 LMA MS 4249, fol. 233r.
for the profit and bewty of the church. Bentley’s concern for the beauty of the church and the commemoration of the dead was inspired by his conformist, Protestant faith.

Finally, this entry pertaining to the sale of gravestones in 1575 starts with the word “memorandum”. The term emphasizes the selective importance Bentley placed on it for further generations to come. The entry on gravestones shows how Bentley interpreted the past based on his concern for the fiscal management of the parish, respect for custom, and reverence for the beauty of the church and the memory of the dead. In addition to selection and interpretation, Bentley also exhibited recollection in the creation of ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’.

The Community Memory of St. Andrew Holborn

When Bentley read through the churchwardens’ accounts of his parish in 1584, he engaged with a 150-year record of the community memory of St. Andrew Holborn. His access to community memory was limited by the surviving written records, his own memory, and those of other parishioners. While he had his own motivations for writing his manuscript, and his own individual opinions of what should be remembered, it is important to recognize that Bentley was a member of a community, and a particularly devoted parishioner. What Bentley chose to record demonstrates how memory was stored within the parish and reveals the nature of community memory in an Elizabethan suburb of London. The community memory of St. Andrew Holborn was inherently material and served to commemorate the exemplary memory of benefactors of the church. In doing so, community memory conserved and legitimized the hierarchy of the

277 LMA MS 4249, fol. 233r.
natural social order and encompassed the remembrance of local historical events.\textsuperscript{278} Since literacy was still a skill limited to a few, the history of the community was best preserved and understood within the contexts of the parish’s physical world for the majority of people.

**Community Memory and the Material World of St. Andrew Holborn**

The physical world of the parish, the nucleus of Elizabethan society and most people’s immediate community, was saturated with community memory in the form of monuments. According to Daniel Woolf, coats of arms reached their zenith in the “genealogical craze” of the late sixteenth century. Arms were not only a display of one’s genealogical history, but they were also symbols of rank within society; only certain people with proof of genealogy could have them.\textsuperscript{279} Power and duty accompanied rank in society. Every person had a place and social obligations to uphold for the good of all according to sixteenth-century commonwealth ideals. The coat of arms became a symbolic centre of authority, piety and rank in the parish church in Elizabethan England.

The parish of St. Andrew Holborn erected Elizabeth’s coat of arms in the high chancel window in 1578-9.\textsuperscript{280} There are several implications attached to the setting up of royal arms in the church. First, the Protestant Tudor rulers were asserting their supremacy over the English Church and their guardianship over the piety of the realm. Second, the arms replaced pre-Reformation religious imagery such as the iconography in the church windows, the statues of the saints, and the rood. Instead of being watched over by the figure of Christ, the Virgin, or the saints in church, congregations were


\textsuperscript{280} LMA MS 4249, fols. 227r, 234r.
symbolically guarded by the monarch who was divinely charged with the duty of overseeing God’s flock. This asserted monarchical control over the most basal unit of English society, the parish, and at its centre, the church. Secular images garnered new meaning in the image-vacuum created by the Reformation and the destruction of religious imagery. Monarchical heraldry became increasingly important in the Reformed church and enforced their supremacy in the church.

The presence of lay coats of arms in the church also carried significance before and after the Reformation. The erection of heraldic arms in the church marked the identity of donors of church works, such as in the case of Mr. Byrt who paid to repair the middle roof of the church on the condition that his arms were erected in the window in 1516. The display of arms thus demonstrated personal piety and devotion through the up-keep of the house of God and communal involvement. Coats of arms often adorned tombs or monuments within the church. In addition to Mr. Byrk’s coat of arms, the arms of a Mr. Morton, a Mr. Richard Goodrich, and a Mr. Steward are recorded by Bentley. The arms of these parishioners would have been seen at parish services. Heraldry perpetuated its bearer’s memory within the parish and in doing so emphasized the bearer’s piety as an example for other parishioners to emulate. Rank also permeated community memory. The upper echelons of society that could bear heraldic arms had a duty to serve as examples of Protestant piety and to support the realm. In addition, the gentry were the source of financial support of the parish. On the other hand, it was the duty of the poorer members of the parish to live by the example set by their social betters and to graciously remember the gentry’s good deeds and charity. It was not enough to be remembered by one’s immediate relations; memory was a collective and communal enterprise. In a century of rapid socio-economic change that altered the social order of many communities, the risk of forgetting was feared by men like Bentley who increasingly felt the need to write things down to preserve memory,

281 LMA MS 4249, fol. 223v.
despite the fact that monuments such as coats of arms were already visual sites of remembrance.

Bentley also recorded the physical commemoration of the dead in the church. He noted the building of a tomb in 1563, and the sale of gravestones in 1547, 1575, and 1579. Tombs and gravestones operated as reminders of piety within the community, much like coats of arms. These monuments perpetuated the memory of the departed, and reflected their status. To destroy or deface monuments, or to sell gravestones in 1575, for example, was to “do great injury to the dead.”

The location of one’s final resting place emphasized communal commemoration of the deceased and their status. Thomas Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton, for example, was buried in the high chancel of the church in 1550-1. This was a reflection of Southampton’s piety, status, and wealth. The high chancel was at the heart of the church both physically, located at the intersection of the nave and the side chapels, and spiritually as well. Before the Edwardian Reformation and during the reign of Mary Tudor, the high chancel was the location of the high altar, the stage upon which the drama of the Mass was carried out. During the reign of Edward VI, when the Earl of Southampton was buried, and during the reign of Elizabeth I, the high chancel was the location of the communion table, the site of the ritualized commemoration of the Lord’s Supper. This final resting space was highly coveted, not only because it located one’s remains at the heart of one’s religion, but also the heart of one’s community. When the congregation gathered, the high chancel, regardless of confession, was the centre of everyone’s attention. Its great visibility and socio-spiritual importance perpetuated the memory, the pious example, and the social rank of the deceased.

284 LMA MS 4249, fols. 230r, 227r, 233r, 234r.
286 LMA MS 4249, fol. 233r.
Burial in the side chapels, which were reserved for the two Inns of Court, emphasised an individual’s ties to these legal institutions. A Lord Broughe was buried in Lincoln’s Inn chapel in 1550-1, and a Mr. Allington, esquire was also interred there in 1553-4.\(^{288}\) The gentleman named Copston, who was murdered at Fleet Bridge, was buried in Gray’s Inn chapel in 1571-2.\(^{289}\) These individuals were likely wealthy and prominent associates of the respective Inns. Burial in the side chapels among one’s peers and comrades was also a mark of rank in society and solidified community bonds in life and in death.

As a conformist gentleman and lawyer, Bentley believed it was important to preserve the physical manifestations of the memory and rank of his departed peers and social betters. The very visible and public aspect of both burial and coats of arms in the church reinforced community memory of the departed. On the other hand, Bentley was concerned about the defacement of monuments. He sought to preserve the memory of these men on the page for community posterity and precedent.

Privileged Commemoration in Writing: Rank in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’

The privilege of commemoration in community memory of the upper ranks in society seen in the material culture of the church is reflected in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’. Bentley concluded his manuscript with an account of parochial demography from 1538 to 1584, stating that a total of 6233 people had died, but he was much more interested in the death and commemoration of individuals of higher ranks than the average humble folk that lived in St. Andrew Holborn.\(^{290}\) His interest reflects the commemorative trends in monuments; his preoccupation with rank and the preservation of order, particularly in death, was a concern experienced individually as well as socially. The majority of the deceased mentioned by name and title in the parish by Bentley were gentlemen of the Inns of Court or Inns of Chancery, such as Mr. Sherrard of Staple’s Inn

\(^{288}\) LMA MS 4249, fols. 227v, 228r.
\(^{289}\) LMA MS 4249, fol. 232v.
\(^{290}\) LMA MS 4249, fol. 239v.
and aristocrats, such as the Earl of Southampton.\textsuperscript{291} Bentley identified only 25 parishioners by name in his records of burials throughout the manuscript. All deceased parishioners named save two were gentry, aristocrats or former churchwardens. The names of two illegitimate girls who died after birth were also given.\textsuperscript{292} Bentley’s last entry in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ lists the numbers of deceased individuals by rank, including a complete breakdown of how many men from each Inn of Court or House of Chancery were buried in the parish, coming to a total of “172 gentlemen, besides: 3 Lordes or barons, 2 Ladyes, 2 knightes 6 Squyers & 60 other gentlemen.”\textsuperscript{293} These higher-status parishioners would have been the parish’s most prominent benefactors. Their financial contributions to the maintenance of the church and its poor exhibited their piety and devotion in the church and earned them commemoration in death. Rank then was worthy of memory because in sixteenth-century society the wealthy were responsible not only to look after their social inferiors financially, but also to provide examples for the parish because of their education, civility, and public piety. Social rank influenced community memory within historical writing and the material visual world of heraldry, monuments, and space.

\textbf{Community Memory, Religion, and the Physical World}

Bentley stressed the importance of remembering the physical evolution of the church and its material culture. The church and its artifacts served as a physical history of parochial piety, as a record of events such as the Reformation, and as a repository of memory of the dead at the heart of the community. This is most clearly demonstrated by the presence of tombs and other monuments and also through physical changes to the church, such as the whiting-out of images on the walls of the church. The need to remember the physical world and the maintenance of the building itself suggests that maintenance of the church was an expression of piety.

\textsuperscript{291} LMA MS 4249, fols. 224r, 227v.
\textsuperscript{292} Aminita Andrea and Agara Zubabilime were left in the churchyard and the doorstep of Mr. Peryn in 1584, see LMA MS 4249, fols. 236v, 238v.
\textsuperscript{293} LMA MS 4249, fol. 239v.
The first page of ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ demonstrates the importance of the memory of the physical space of the parish very clearly. The construction of the church’s steeple began in 1446-1447 during the reign of Henry VI. The bells were hung in 1457-8, but the entire project was not completed until around 1467-1469. Bentley starts this entry with the word “memorandum”, to stress its importance. The renovation and re-building of the two aisles of the church were also carried out during that twenty-year time-span. In the margin, Bentley notes the “great devotion and zeal of people in old tyme” and that all of this building was possible the donation of “money geven of devocion of good people.” The communal support of building the steeple and the side aisles through fifteenth-century fundraising at “ales, shootings and common meetings” was a reflection of the parish’s devotion to God and to their community. Bentley respected and admired the support that parishioners gave to their church in the time before the Reformation. While some “hotter Protestants” contemporary with Bentley vehemently rejected the sanctity of space, for conformists like Bentley there was nothing superstitious about what their predecessors had done. These “good people” were the ancestors of Elizabethan Protestants, and the preservation of their devotion is, for Bentley, an important mark of continuity between the pre- and post-Reformation parish church.

Legacies and gifts given to the parish for the maintenance of the church or its poor not only preserved memory physically within the parish but also demonstrated piety publicly. Henry VII left a legacy for the parish that was paid in 1509, and Richard Hunt left a 2s. legacy to the church, though the church had troubles enforcing his nephew to comply with his bequest. Bentley himself provided Bishop Jewel’s ‘Works’ to the parish in 1583-4 “of his own good will” and drew attention to his own pious example by preceded the entry with “memorandum”. Monetary or material gifts expressed one’s

294 LMA MS 4249, fol. 221r.
295 LMA MS 4249, fol. 221r.
296 LMA MS 4249, fol. 221r.
297 LMA MS 4249, fol. 221r.
299 LMA MS 4249, fols. 223v, 232v, 233r.
300 LMA MS 4249, fol. 236r.
piety publicly and in turn one’s piety was remembered within the community memory either through the annual bequest of a legacy, represented by the physical object that was given, and of course within the churchwardens’ accounts themselves. Legacies and gifts yet again encouraged the remembrance of social superiors by their inferiors, particularly in the case of legacies where the survival of the “meamer sort” may have depended on alms. More generally, the acts of piety of individuals added up and projected the spiritual prosperity of the parish as a whole. It provided a model example to inspire the community.

Local History: Tales of Extraordinary Events

Community and personal memory converged when local, extraordinary events occurred. The preservation of local memorable events in Bentley’s manuscript demonstrates that local history and memory continued to enjoy a primary place in community memory in 1584, despite growing trends that favoured social memory and national history as argued by Daniel Woolf. This aligns this thesis in some regard to Andy Wood’s recent monograph, in which he argues that “national historiography developed alongside rather than in place of enduring local memory.”301 In ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’, the rarity of occurrence, the scale on which events occur, and the connection to death or violence highlighted the memorable nature of certain events.

Bentley recorded that around 10 July 1554 a “gret fraye” broke out between the Lord Warden’s men and the gentlemen of Gray’s Inn and resulted in the death of two of the wardens’ men.302 This event was so extraordinary that it was recorded and remembered outside the parish as well. Henry Machyn also mentioned the fray in his chronicle.303 Unfortunately, the cause of the violence is unknown, although its location in the document is intriguing. This entry is a marginal note squeezed between two others pertaining to the return of Catholicism under Mary. Considering how well organized Bentley was and the overall coherence of the manuscript, this is most probably an event remembered by Bentley. He read the churchwardens’ accounts chronologically. This

301 Wood, Memory of the People, 12.
302 LMA MS 4249, fol. 228r.
303 The Diary of H. Machyn, 68.
entry has been inserted into the text chronologically, but Bentley did not leave space for it. This is a local event he remembered later, either personally, through talking with older parishioners, or from sources other than the churchwardens’ accounts. If we consider Bentley’s association with Gray’s Inn, and his youthfulness in 1554, he may well have been an eye-witness of the fray.\textsuperscript{304}

\textbf{Figure 4: LMA MS 4249, fol. 228r}
Bentley’s marginal note concerning the ‘gret fraye’ of 1554. It is squeezed into the left margin on fo. 228r between the entry regarding the return to Catholicism, and the whiting out of the scriptures on the church’s walls. Image used with the permission of the London Metropolitan Archives.

The plague of 1563-4 in London was another extraordinary event. Bentley noted that 468 people were buried in the parish in that time.\textsuperscript{305} Reflecting his preoccupation

\textsuperscript{304} It is also possible that Bentley may have read about these deaths in the register and then recorded them in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’.

\textsuperscript{305} LMA MS 4249, fol. 230r.
with status within the parish, he recorded that “ther was a gret death of the gentilmen of
the Ines of court & chancery of the which then dyed in this parish to the number of 20
or more which wer buryed in this parish the next 2 yeres after the gret plague,” between
1564 and 1566.306 On an equally if not more melancholy note, a coroner was called for
an inquest when the body of a child was found on 13 February 1581.307 Bentley
mentions that the parish bore the charges of the inquest, which amounted to 13s. 4d.
and states that this was a “rare precedent.”308 The fact that the church paid for the
inquest and that it was “rare” stresses the extraordinary nature of the event and the
community’s commitment to understanding how the child died. This death is not
important to the grand narrative of English history, but it clearly mattered to the
community. One final example of an extraordinary local event was the explosion of the
shed storing gunpowder in Fetter Lane in July 1583 which destroyed most if not all the
windows in the church, many of the tenements around it, and resulted in “the death of
one or too [i.e. two] men.”309 The event is surprisingly absent from texts like Stow’s
Survey of London.

With the exception of the entry regarding the plague, these local events are all
dated specifically to the day or to the month. Bentley generally did not give specific
dates in his manuscript, and relied on regnal years to date entries. He also prefaced
each of these events with the term “memorandum” with the exception of the fight in
1554. Bentley did not use the phrase “note” to precede these entries, a term he
generally reserves for points of curiosity, or wonder. For example, he uses “note” in the
entry regarding Mr. Copston’s murder and well-attended funeral.310 However, Bentley
explicitly writes that these local, extraordinary events are ‘to be remembered’, alluding to
their importance in the community’s memory. The word “memorandum” and the specific
dates emphasize how memorable these events were to the community and to Bentley.

306 LMA MS 4249, fol. 230v.
307 LMA MS 4249, fol. 234v.
308 LMA MS 4249, fol. 234v.
309 LMA MS 4249, fol. 235v.
310 LMA MS 4249, fol. 232v.
The nature of community memory in St. Andrew Holborn was one that was physical, hierarchical, and purposeful. Monuments, coats of arms, and final resting spaces within the church preserved the memory of the dead. Their commemoration preserved them as examples of piety, charity, and civility for the entire parish. The physical changes and maintenance of the church also served as a record of the devotion of the parish, which Bentley found commendable even if he found their religious rituals to be superstitious. Financial and material gifts to the church also served to highlight community memory which was centred in the parish church. Finally, while historical writing was to leave local events to be forgotten in favour of grander narratives, in 1584 one gentlemen and his community remembered the extraordinary events within their parish.

**Bentley and the Birth of Social Memory: Reformation**

While memories of gunpowder explosions and skirmishes continued to be remembered within St. Andrew Holborn, community memory and personal memory were not immune to the increasing impact of social memory. The influence of events and individuals that came to dominate the national historical narrative was beginning to emerge by 1584. The Reformation shaped how the parish of St. Andrew Holborn and Thomas Bentley interpreted historical events and what was to be remembered. Local memory, however, remained in a position of privilege in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’.

Bentley’s confessional description of Catholic worship as “superstition” and “idolatrous” is a clear indication of the influence of social memory on the interpretation of the past. Bentley was a babe when Edward VI came to the throne, a boy when Mary was made queen, and an adolescent when Elizabeth began her rule. He was not born with the idea that Edward VI’s religious changes were ending superstitious practices; his interpretation of these events was shaped by adult reflection on the past and was a result of his upbringing in an increasingly state-controlled Protestant faith. If we consider Bentley’s interpretation of the past, alongside the increasing presence of the state in the church through the erection of the queen’s coat of arms in the church which reinforced the Act of Supremacy, and state-sanctioned visitations, for example, it becomes clear that the state was metaphorically sitting with the congregation in the pews on Sundays.
English nationhood was deeply connected with the Protestant faith, and already by the 1580s, the Reformation was shaping perceptions of the past and building a Protestant narrative.

The influence of Protestantism in the perception of both the past and present demonstrates that English social memory was developing and influencing community and personal memory. Even though these events were a part of British social memory, their influence and importance emerged in localized ways in an interpretation of events within the parish. 1584 was not an time of national historic hegemony over local memory. The limits of social history’s influence in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ are seen when we compare Bentley’s account to the chronicles written by his (relative) contemporaries: the London merchant-tailor Henry Machyn and Robert Parkyn, the crypto-Catholic curate of Adwick-le-Street near Doncaster, Yorkshire.

For the first year of Mary’s reign, Bentley only recorded the burial of Mr. Allington, the purchase of the organ, the building of a pew for the poor, the restoration of “superstitious things”, and the fray between the Lord Warden’s men and the gentlemen of Gray’s Inn.311 The only entries that extend beyond the memory of the parish are the return to Catholicism and the Gray’s Inn fray. Machyn, as I have mentioned, recorded the fray as well, but his record of 1553-4 is preoccupied with other matters. Where Bentley dedicates five entries to the whole year, Machyn dedicates far more than five entries in his account to Wyatt’s Rebellion, a popular uprising led by Thomas Wyatt in protest of Mary’s betrothal and marriage to King Phillip II of Spain.312 Considering that three rebels were hanged at Holborn bar on 14 February 1554 in the parish of St. Andrew Holborn, the absence of an event like Wyatt’s Rebellion from Bentley’s manuscript is surprising.313 Furthermore, even Robert Parkyn, the curate in Yorkshire, nearly 250 kilometres from London, noted the “grett commotion in the sowth partts of suche as was of hereticall opinions, specially aganst the tholly [i.e. the holy] masse,

311 LMA MS 4249, fol. 228r.
312 Diary of Henry Machyn, 52–55.
313 Diary of Henry Machyn, 55.
whos capitan was Sir Thomas Wyett, Knyghtt, for wiche causse thay wolde have subdewyde and made away the gratius Quene Marie."\textsuperscript{314}

St. Andrew Holborn was near the very heart of English politics and yet very few larger historical events, beyond those directly associated with religious change, penetrated Bentley’s manuscript. The kinds of sources Bentley used may be responsible for this limitation, but there are other absences from the text that could have been in the accounts Bentley used. Many parishes recorded prayer books purchased after earthquakes in 1575 and 1580 or after the Northern Uprising in 1569-70. Bentley’s chronicle is silent on these events that affected parishes across the country. The absence of many of the larger historical events that define social memory in his record, in comparison to his contemporaries, suggest that Bentley’s urban, privileged perception of the past was perhaps not so different from that of the popular masses.\textsuperscript{315}

\textbf{The Convergence of Memories: The Case of Two Richards}

Personal memory is a part of community memory, which is, in turn, part of English social memory. They are all intimately connected, though the influence of the social memory usually manifested itself in localized ways. There is one entry in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ that demonstrates how personal, community, and social memories influenced each other in St. Andrew Holborn. Bentley noted “many of the best & auncient parishioners" died in 1568-9. He listed six parishioners who “departed this life” “with others” and then named three that died the year following “as thogh that [i.e. though they] wuld lyve no longer when al their good fellows & friendes wer gone.”\textsuperscript{316} Bentley discusses their deaths with nostalgia; they were “many of the best.”

\textsuperscript{314} A.G. Dickens, “Robert Parkyn’s Narrative of the Reformation,” \textit{The English Historical Review} 62 (1947), 81.

\textsuperscript{315} In his monograph, Andy Wood has tentatively suggested that urban communities and the elite may have had greater interest in a “national” perception of the past in comparison to rural England and humbler folk. This thesis by no means asserts that Wood’s hypotheses are incorrect, but merely suggests that Bentley’s perception of the past may complicate Wood’s preliminary thoughts. Wood, \textit{Memory of the People}, 12.

\textsuperscript{316} LMA MS 4249, fol. 231r.
Of the eight ancient parishioners named by Bentley, only three were churchwardens in the parish: Richard Hunt, Richard More, and Christopher Smith. Hunt and Smith died in 1568-9, while More passed away the following year. Of these three men, Hunt and More stand out not only because there are more entries from their tenures as churchwardens in Bentley’s accounts but also because of when these men held their positions as churchwardens and what they did.

Richard Hunt was a churchwarden in 1548-9. During his tenure, religious reforms continued, building upon the changes made the year before in the first year Edward VI’s reign. On 21 January 1549, the Act of Uniformity was issued which, among other changes, introduced the Book of Common Prayer to the English church and trimmed the ritual calendar.\(^\text{317}\) When Hunt was churchwarden he sold goods necessary to Catholic worship such as censers and a broken chalice, he built a tomb in Gray’s Inn chapel to perpetuate the posterity of some unknown individual, and he initiated the suit for the church lands that had been acquired through bequests in a secular manner rather than ecclesiastical holdings.\(^\text{318}\)

Richard More was churchwarden during the first two years of Elizabeth’s reign from 1558 to 1560. He was responsible for executing the directives from the royal commissioners to re-introduce Protestantism as the national faith with the Elizabethan Settlement. More oversaw the removal and defacement of “superstitious” things, such as the burning of the rood loft.\(^\text{319}\) Ironically, he was the carpenter paid to oversee the construction and erection of the new rood loft only a couple of years before his iconoclastic activities.\(^\text{320}\)

Richard Hunt was a “good husband” of the church in Bentley’s eyes. Not only did he assist in ridding the parish of superstition, but he was also responsible for building a tomb and for starting the suit for the church lands. Hunt was the churchwarden who oversaw some of the most important reforms of the Edwardian Reformation in St.

\(^{317}\) Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 464.
\(^{318}\) LMA MS 4249, fol. 227v.
\(^{319}\) LMA MS 4249, fol. 228v–229r.
\(^{320}\) LMA MS 4249, fol. 228v.
Andrew Holborn. Building a tomb showed his respect for the dead and his recognition of the importance of commemoration. Instigating the suit for the church lands lost demonstrated Hunt’s foresight regarding the church’s finances because rents made the church self-sustaining. Bentley of course was fiercely protective of the importance of monuments and the maintenance of the church and Hunt demonstrated many aspects of exemplary churchwardenship.

In contrast, Bentley would have found Richard More to be an ill husband. As churchwarden, More sold 7s. 6d. worth of copper or brass from gravestones and tombs in the church. Bentley accused him of defacing monuments. More engaged in the impulsive, wasteful behaviour that Bentley believed to be ill husbandry. Bentley also implied that More sought personal financial gain in office when he decided all the pews needed to be replaced in the church, and then hired himself to do the job. While Bentley does not explicitly criticize More for overseeing the building of the new rood loft under Mary, the entries pertaining to More suggest that Bentley thought he may have prioritized opportunity over piety. Considering Bentley’s conviction that a good churchwarden was frugal, pious, and prudent, More appears to have been found wanting of the characteristics of a good churchwarden in Bentley’s eyes.

Yet both Hunt and More are labelled as “best” parishioners and “good fellows” despite evidence that Bentley would not have looked kindly upon More’s behaviour. This may simply refer to their status as some of the “better” or “middling” sorts, but I offer another, albeit tentative, argument. These men share one characteristic in common: both Hunt and More oversaw the Protestant Reformation in two acts. Hunt was responsible for executing the conversion of St. Andrew Holborn to Protestantism at the start of Edward VI’s reign, and More oversaw its return and ultimate overthrow of Catholicism when Elizabeth became queen. Despite More’s personal shortcomings, he ultimately helped to save the parish’s souls from false religion, an act that Bentley, as an ardent conforming Protestant, was compelled to respect. While the religious convictions of the Richards are unknown, these two men secured themselves within community memory for their cooperation in implementing Protestant initiatives in St. Andrew

321 LMA MS 4249, fol. 229r.
322 LMA MS 4249, fol. 229v.
Holborn. Did the Reformation trump good husbandry in Bentley’s Protestant interpretation of the past? The answer is perhaps.

**Conclusion**

It can be difficult to understand how memory operates using a document that is as selective as Bentley’s. Nonetheless, Woolf’s three categories of personal, community, and social memory allow for some analysis of the memory of St. Andrew Holborn in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’. Social memory, particularly the influence of the Reformation, influenced the perception of the past of the parish, but in 1584, local history and events dominated the memories of men like Thomas Bentley. For example, the Reformation’s impact on memory at this time was limited to the remembrance of localized events like the sale of gravestones, or the erection of “supersticious things” in the church. Local memory was preserved in the material culture of the parish, particularly in the form of monuments, which not only preserved the memory of benefactors for posterity, but also exhibited status and prestige that were encoded into personal memories that cumulatively make up community memory. Local events, like the fray at Gray’s Inn, were also preserved in the personal memory of men like Bentley. The memory of local events, preserved by the churchwardens’ accounts, was distilled by Bentley’s personal perception of the past. His distillation, culminated in his ‘Monumentes of Antiquities,’ was shaped not only by his own experience as a lawyer and churchwarden. It was also shaped by his identity as a conservative, conforming Protestant, an identity crafted by the processes of the English Reformation both past and present.
Conclusion

Paulina Kewes’s call for “a better appreciation of the varied, often baffling and unexpected, and always intriguing, uses to which contemporaries put their own and other nations’ pasts” led me to explore the relationship between history, memory, and identity in an attempt to understand how Bentley perceived the past and used history.\textsuperscript{323} The answer to one question will remain elusive, however. What might have happened if Bentley had not died suddenly in December 1585? *The Monument of Matrones* (1582) and his connection with the prominent printer Henry Denham, who published the second edition of Holinshed’s *Chronicles* in 1587 could have opened doors of possibilities for Bentley as a writer had he lived. Perhaps Bentley intended a different fate for ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ on the printed page. Would historians be writing on Bentley’s uses of history as prolifically as they write about Holinshed, Camden and Stow? This may be whimsy, but there are striking similarities between Bentley’s obscure manuscript, and the work of the celebrated seventeenth-century ecclesiastical historian Thomas Fuller.

Seventy years after Bentley’s death, Thomas Fuller wrote *The Church History of Britain*, published in 1655. It was the “first comprehensive English Protestant account of Christianity in the island from the earliest times” and incorporated a brief history of Waltham Abbey, located in Essex.\textsuperscript{324} On the first page of *The History of Waltham-Abby* he writes that he hopes his “endeavours herein may prove exemplary to others (who dwell in the sight of remarkable Monasteries) to do the like, and rescue the observables of their habitations, from the teeth of time and oblivion.”\textsuperscript{325} This could very well have been Bentley writing a history of the abbey.

\textsuperscript{323} Paulina Kewes, “History and its Uses,” 30.
\textsuperscript{325} Fuller, *Waltham Abby*, 5.
In form, Fuller’s text shares a remarkable number of similarities with ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’. Both Fuller and Bentley used churchwardens’ accounts to construct history of their respective parishes, though Fuller also consulted secondary sources such as Foxe’s Actes and Monuments. Fuller limited his use of the accounts from 1542 to 1563, at which point he states that it is “high time to knock off” and discuss other matters.\(^{326}\) Both parochial histories are organized by regnal year. Fuller may call his history a “Comographie [sic.], or description of a Country-town” but it is not much different from Bentley’s chronicle.

Fuller and Bentley shared a common interest in the types of entries they recorded. Fuller recorded changes to the abbey’s exterior and interior. In 1556, the steeple, decayed beyond repair, fell down and its reconstruction began the west end of the church. He noted the cost of repair of the steeple, remarking that at 33 feet tall, the danger and difficulty involved in rebuilding the steeple cost the parish 40s. the foot.\(^{327}\) Like Bentley, Fuller recorded the removal of the rood-loft, adding that “if then, there living and able, I hope I should have lent an helping hand to so good a work as now I bestow my prayers that the like may never in England be set up again.”\(^{328}\) He also was keen to record the “general devotion of those days.”\(^{329}\) For example, the construction of the new steeple was paid for from sale of goods which formerly belonged to the parish’s fraternities and from voluntary contributions of parishioners, which “soundeth not a little to the praise of this parish.”\(^{330}\) He wrote a history of Waltham Abbey for some of the same reasons that Bentley wrote ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’: for posterity and to provide a record of piety in the parish. Bentley was motivated to record the past to inspire future generations to act piously and to administer the parish lawfully and wisely, while Fuller wanted to inspire budding antiquaries to take up the pen to preserve the past.

\(^{326}\) Fuller, Waltham Abby, 20.
\(^{327}\) Ibid., 18.
\(^{328}\) Ibid., 19.
\(^{329}\) Ibid., 13.
\(^{330}\) Ibid., 18.
Fuller and Bentley fashioned their identities in similar manners. Fuller was a godly conformist and a royalist, just like Bentley. Fuller publically criticized radical presbyterians in his *Truth Maintained* (1643), arguing that any religious reform needed to adhere to "the laws and customs of the land." As a royalist, he acknowledged the royal supremacy of Charles I. In his call for others to record the history of former monasteries for posterity, he refers to the monasteries as "remarkable" suggesting that Fuller saw value in sacred space. Fuller was also a member of the gentry; he owned an estate in Dorset. While Fuller was a cleric like his forefathers before him, as a curate he shared some responsibilities with churchwardens as invaluable cogs in the machinery of parochial administration. Bentley and Fuller probably would have shared similar values shaped by the ideals of their gentleman status and their conforming Protestantism. While their careers were remarkably different, they were community leaders with duties and responsibilities to the parish.

In their interpretations of the past, Bentley and Fuller came to similar conclusions. Writing about the accession of Edward VI, Fuller writes: "Old things are passed away, behold all things now are become new. Superstition by degrees being banished out of the Church, we hear no more of prayers and Masses for the dead." In Fuller's mind, vestments were "rags of Popery." Fuller used confessional language in his interpretation of religious change in the parish, which was coloured by his Protestant faith. Fuller also criticized waste in the past. Noting the sale of silver plate, he writes "Guess the gallantry of our Church (presuming all the rest in proportionable equipage) when the desk, whereon the Priest read, was inlaid with plate of silver." Clearly Fuller had a sarcastic sense of humour not unlike Bentley's. He was selective like Bentley, "selecting some particulars of the Church-wardens accounts" to write his history.

332 Ibid.
333 Ibid.
334 Fuller, *Waltham Abby*, 15.
335 Ibid., 15.
336 Ibid., 15-16.
Fuller commemorated men of rank, recording notable natives of the parish and prominent figures who were interred in the abbey.\textsuperscript{337} He noted extraordinary local events. Just as Bentley noted the “gret fraye” of 1554, Fuller recorded that a servant of Queen Mary died in the parish while the queen was in residence nearby to “take air” and was buried at the abbey.\textsuperscript{338} Finally while larger events like the Reformation affected the history of the abbey, Fuller’s record is largely silent on the historical events that affected the entire country much like Bentley’s ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’.

The considerable number of similarities between this cursory sketch of Thomas Fuller and his history of Waltham Abbey and the in-depth examination of Thomas Bentley and his chronicle demonstrate that this study engages with Paulina Kewes’s call for an understanding of the use of history that transcends “genres, settings, and users.”\textsuperscript{339} It raises multiple questions surrounding how parochial history fits into our conceptions of history and its uses and shows that there is diversity in historical genres, settings, and users that historians have yet to explore. Despite the differences between Bentley, an urban sixteenth-century lay chronicler, and Fuller, a rural seventeenth-century clerical self-proclaimed “comographer”, these men were similar in many ways in their use of history. Understanding Bentley and the relationship between history, memory, and identity in ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ not only allows for study of the manuscript on its own terms, but also provides a point of useful comparison in the examination of other sources to attempt to understand some general observations about perceptions of the past in early modern England at the most basic unit of early modern community: the parish. While we cannot assume that parish history is English history-writ-small, it is a useful starting point to work toward the goal of a transcendent understanding of the uses of history. Men like Camden and Holinshed rightly occupy privileged positions in the historiography, but the study of men such as Bentley and Fuller shows that our current narrative needs greater appreciation of the place of the persistence of the privilege that local history occupied in the lives of contemporaries.

\textsuperscript{337} Fuller, \textit{Waltham Abby}, 20.  
\textsuperscript{338} Ibid., 16.  
\textsuperscript{339} Kewes, “The Uses of History,” 12.
History, memory, and identity are inherently intertwined. Memory is composed of the personal, communal, and social experiences of individuals. It can be held within the mind of the individual, in material culture and landscape, or artificially preserved on the page. Bentley gained access to the memory of his community in a variety of documents. While Bentley read the accounts, his interpretation of the past was informed by his identity as a gentleman, a lawyer, and as a conforming Protestant. No matter how objective one tries to be, one’s identity and experiences will always affect one’s perception of the past. Thus, how Bentley interpreted the past and what he deemed “worthy memory” had as much to do with his identity as it did with the writing of history. Identity motivated Bentley to write ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ to uphold beliefs shaped by the ideals of his status as a gentleman, his career as a lawyer, his role as churchwarden, and his conformist Protestant faith.

The writing of ‘Monumentes of Antiquities’ was also motivated by posterity, which brings us full circle to the quotation that opened this study – “Sume Monumentes of Antiquities worthy memory collected and gathered out of sundry old accomptes.” Every entry in the text is a monument of antiquity to commemorate the past. Bentley’s text itself is a commemorative act, a monument to St. Andrew Holborn, fixing its history within time and space. It commemorated the very best of parish life: custom, charity, order, duty, obedience, piety, beauty, and community. Intentionally or not, it also commemorated Bentley. While we have no way of knowing what he would have thought about this study or its accuracy, I like to think that as a man deeply concerned with posterity, he would be happy that Fuller’s so-called “teeth of time and oblivion” have not chewed his memory to dust.

340 LMA MS 4249, fol. 221r.
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