

Henry Tacy's Years at Swanton Morley

Introduction

In my last article I talked about Henry Tacy's mission to the Maoris, and in particular about the foundation of a mission station at Kerikeri and the birth there in November 1825 of Henry Tacy Clarke, second son of George Clarke. This was, incidentally, just after Henry Tacy was appointed rector of Swanton Morley. Here, for completeness, I shall tell you a little more about what happened to Henry Tacy's protégés, James Kemp and George Clarke in New Zealand, before returning to Henry Tacy himself.

George Clarke and others decided to build a new mission station and farm at Waimate North, which was not far away from the original station at Kerikeri. However, it required a major effort involving the building of 15 miles of road through rough country, and the bridging of two rivers. The first families moved in in June 1832. Charles Darwin visited the new mission in December 1835, when the *Beagle* spent 10 days in the Bay of Islands, but overall the mission was not a great success. In 1840 George Clarke reluctantly left the mission when he was appointed by Governor Hobson as 'Protector of the Maori People'. However, it soon became clear that Clarke was faced with the impossible task both of protecting Maori interests and of acting for the government in land-sale negotiations. He resigned in 1846 and went to live with his son Henry Tacy Clarke at Waimate.

Two of George Clarke's sons had a joint wedding at Waimate

On 28 April 1852, two of the Clarke brothers married two of the Kemp sisters.

Henry Tacy Clarke married Sarah Yates Kemp
William Clarke married Mary Anne Kemp

They farmed adjoining properties at Waimate, but both families lived in Henry's house because William's house had been destroyed during the battle of Ohaewai in 1845 - at which the British forces suffered heavy losses and Henry (acting as interpreter) was wounded. But, in about 1858, Henry Tacy Clarke left his brother to manage the two properties and joined the civil service. In 1860 he was appointed Resident Magistrate at Tauranga, and in 1873 he was made Civil Commissioner. His final appointment was in Wellington, as permanent head of the Native Department, so he had a distinguished career.

Returning to Henry Tacy, rector of Swanton Morley

I can only assume that, after Henry Tacy became rector of Swanton Morley in September 1825, he continued to keep in touch with all these exciting events through his correspondence, but I have not yet managed to get copies of any relevant letters. It would be surprising if he did not try to persuade some of his new parishioners to join the mission in New Zealand. However, I have found nothing so far.

What we do know is that, for a time (March 1818 to Feb 1826) before he was appointed rector of Swanton Morley, he was appointed "Perpetual Curate" of Bylaugh. This term does not mean that he held the post in perpetuity. It is used for a priest who serves as parish priest of a small or sparsely occupied parish, and is of higher standing than a curate. Unlike rectors and vicars, their income did not derive from tithes, but was paid by the diocese.

Also, during the time when he was rector, he was appointed an honorary canon of Norwich Cathedral (1841-63). He was also appointed to the newly-revived post of rural dean.

The 1861 census shows him living in Swanton Morley rectory, aged 78, together with three servants. Carthew, in his *History of the Hundred of Launditch*, which was published in 1879 was lavish in his praise of him, saying:

“He was well known and highly esteemed, and was well read in most subjects, and had evidently moved in the best society; indeed he was fitted for a much higher station than the rectory of a country village, to which, however, he admirably settled down and adapted himself. He was also an eloquent and earnest speaker; but, unfortunately his religious school was that of the lowest and narrowest Puritanism; notwithstanding that, he was a very genial companion and in short one of the most polished gentlemen it has been my privilege to associate with.”

There is certainly evidence to show that Henry Tacy had Calvinist views, but it seems unlikely that his views were too extreme if he was appointed both a rural dean and an honorary canon.

Now, the Rev. Benjamin Armstrong, vicar of Dereham, who wrote the famous diaries, was high church in his views (he was a Tractarian) and he and Henry Tacy were hardly on speaking terms. However, he was about 34 years younger than Tacy, and his diaries only mention a couple of events that occurred in the last few years of Tacy's life. The first was a visit to All Saints' Church in October 1861 when Armstrong was horrified to find a dead sparrow caught in a rat trap which had been laid on the "Table". The other was a visit that he paid to Tacy in March 1863, when he was dying of cancer.

His curate, William Millett

The name of his curate, and close friend, William Millett, appears frequently in the Parish Register and it would appear that he was content to remain with Henry Tacy and not to seek promotion elsewhere. It was only after Tacy's death on 10 April 1863 that we find Millett's name occasionally appearing as officiating minister in the Swanton Morley register under his new title of rector of Lyng. The first entry was for a baptism on 26 May 1863, and the last entry was for a burial on 4 Dec 1864. After this the new rector of Swanton Morley, Edward Lombe, had arrived, and Millett's services were not required. However, Millett's period as rector of Lyng did not last very long for we find that he was buried in Swanton Morley on 6 March 1867.

Henry Tacy rebuilt the rectory in Swanton Morley

Bryant in his *Norfolk Churches*, which was published in about 1901, says that Tacy "was a man of great learning and a polished gentleman", and he adds that Tacy re-built the rectory house. Now, the Archive Centre in Norwich holds plans of the rectory which are dated 1896, and which show full details of major rebuilding work which Rev. A. J. Hunter commissioned at that time. Included are plans of the rectory prior to this work and it would appear that Tacy had already added a substantial eastern extension onto an original 4-bedroom house. He created an impressive porch and hallway, together with a kitchen and scullery, on the ground floor, and three extra bedrooms on the first floor. Also shown, is a W.C. upstairs, which complements the earth closets in the yard, but this could well have been a later addition.

You might like to note that there is a memorial window to Andrew Johnston Hunter in the south wall of the chancel.