

Dioceses and Episcopal Sees in England

A Background Report for the Dioceses Commission

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Foreword

On 1 September 2008 a new Dioceses Commission will come into being. It will be under a duty to

‘keep under review the provincial and diocesan structure of the Church of England and, in particular, –

- (a) the size, boundaries and number of provinces,
- (b) the size, boundaries and number of dioceses and their distribution between the provinces, and
- (c) the number and distribution of episcopal offices [ie diocesan and suffragan bishoprics] and the arrangements for episcopal oversight.’¹

The term of office of the Commission’s initial members will last until 30 April 2016.

Before embarking on this review work as Secretary of the Commission, it seemed advisable to familiarize myself with the history and boundaries of England’s dioceses and of the counties to which most of them have traditionally related, with the history of suffragan sees, and with the various attempts to reform county and diocesan boundaries over the centuries. This report is the fruit of that research, and it is offered to members of the Commission as background information. It includes, as section 4, reflections by my predecessor David Hebblethwaite OBE, who was Secretary of the Dioceses Commission from 1984 to 2002. An historical note on Cathedrals which I wrote for the Pilling report *Talent and Calling* (2007) is also included as section 5.

I am grateful to have been granted four weeks’ study leave in order to be able to pursue this research, and to have been allowed to spend two of those weeks in Oxford, at Pusey House. This had a number of advantages. Not only was I able to make use of the Bodleian Library, but I also had full access to the excellent church history collection in Dr Pusey’s Library. Perhaps even more importantly, I was free not only from the burden of commuting but also from the distractions of London. Moreover, the initial research and writing could be done in the context of a congenial Christian community rather than in isolation, fortified by worship each morning and evening in the Chapel of the Resurrection, as well as by good fellowship, stimulating conversation and conviviality. I am deeply grateful to the Principal and Chapter of Pusey House for their warm welcome and generous hospitality and for the use of Dr Pusey’s Library.

C. J. PODMORE
Secretary of the Dioceses Commission

26 July 2008

¹ Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007, s. 3(1).

Note

This report is about the 42 English dioceses.

The history of the Diocese of Sodor and Man is quite distinct from that of the English dioceses. Originally part of the Province of Nidaros (Trondheim, Norway), it has been formally part of the Province of York only since 1542. Its territory is entirely outside the United Kingdom, and as an island it has no land boundary.

The Diocese in Europe is a non-territorial diocese consisting of recognized chaplaincies within a certain geographical area. The Diocese in Europe is not part of the Province of Canterbury, which is a territorial province covering a different geographical area. However, the Diocese in Europe Measure 1980 provides that certain Measures ‘shall have effect as if the Diocese were a diocese in the province of Canterbury’, and the Canons and the Church Representation Rules also provide that for certain purposes ‘the Diocese in Europe shall be deemed to be a diocese in the Province of Canterbury’.

The Diocese of Sodor and Man (as a territorial diocese in the Province of York but outside the United Kingdom, with no land boundary) and the Diocese in Europe (as a non-territorial diocese deemed for certain purposes to be in the Province of Canterbury but covering a geographical area outside the United Kingdom) are not included in this survey.

1: Secular Boundaries

Since the inception of the Church of England, its diocesan structure has related to the structures of secular society – first the kingdoms which made up Anglo-Saxon England and later the counties into which the unitary Kingdom of England was divided.

Kingdoms

The kingdoms of the Anglo-Saxons began to take shape around 600.² Their number and extent varied, but the following is a very rough summary:

- in the South: the kingdoms of Kent, the South Saxons (Sussex), the West Saxons (Wessex), and the East Saxons (Essex, Middlesex and part of Hertfordshire – the Diocese of London as it was before 1846);
- in the Midlands: the kingdoms of Mercia, the Middle Angles (roughly, Leicestershire), the East Angles (East Anglia) and Lindsey (roughly, Lincolnshire);
- North of the Humber: Northumbria, consisting of Bernicia in the north and Deira in the south, with a borderland roughly corresponding to the modern County Durham.

Mercia had two sub-kingdoms on the border with Wales:

- the sub-kingdom of the Hwicce (roughly, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire), planted by Penda after driving out the West Saxons in 628;
- the sub-kingdom of the Magonsaetan (roughly, Herefordshire and south Shropshire), similarly planted by Penda, probably as the result of a treaty with Cadwallon of Gwynedd.

There were also smaller, fluctuating sub-kingdoms, such as the Isle of Wight. In some cases, the boundary between these kingdoms was a river, but in others it was a wilderness (the Weald between Kent and Sussex, Wychwood between the Hwicce and modern Oxfordshire, the Fens between the Middle Angles and East Anglia). It was to serve these Anglo-Saxon kingdoms that the original dioceses of the Church of England were created.

In time, these kingdoms came to be merged into the super-kingdoms of Wessex, Mercia and Northumbria. In the later ninth century, the Danish Vikings conquered Northumbria, the eastern half of Mercia and East Anglia. In the early tenth century, however, Wessex absorbed what remained of Mercia and gradually gained control over the ‘Danelaw’. The submission of Northumbria to Athelstan of Wessex in 927 marked the formation of a single Kingdom of

² This account is based on H. Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1972), pp. 15-17, 119 and F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd edn: Oxford, 1971), pp. 54-55.

England. Athelstan also brought Cornwall definitively under English control, and fixed the Tamar as the boundary between Cornwall and England.

Counties

Within the unitary Kingdom of England the dioceses came to consist, in most cases, of one or more English counties.

Ancient counties

In the South and the Midlands, the ancient counties generally represent entities that existed before the Norman Conquest:

- Kent was a kingdom, as was Sussex. Essex and Middlesex formed the Kingdom of the East Saxons, while Norfolk and Suffolk were historic divisions of the Kingdom of East Anglia.
- The counties of central southern and south-west England south of the Avon and the Thames belonged to the original Kingdom of Wessex, while those of the West Midlands, which disregarded the ancient internal boundaries of Mercia, seem to have been imposed early in the 10th century, after West Mercia was absorbed by Wessex.
- The counties of the East Midlands each represented the area settled by a Danish army in the ninth century.
- Cheshire is first mentioned in 980.

Most of the Midlands counties are named after a county town. The names of some of the original Wessex counties are also (but less obviously) related to those of towns (Wiltshire relating to Wilton, Somerset to Somerton and Hampshire to Hamwic, now in Southampton).

The counties of Northern England date from after the Norman Conquest. Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire, County Durham and Northumberland date from the twelfth century. The border with Wales was fixed in 1535 and Hexhamshire, formerly considered a separate county, became part of Northumberland only in 1572.

The boundaries of these ancient counties were fairly static between the sixteenth century (when some of them had already been established for five hundred years or more) and the nineteenth century. Some counties had divisions within them (the ridings of Yorkshire; the three parts of Lincolnshire – Lindsey, Holland and Kesteven). Kent and Sussex were divided respectively into East Kent and West Kent, East Sussex and West Sussex. Some counties included areas that were administered separately, such as the Isle of Ely in Cambridgeshire and the Soke of Peterborough in Northamptonshire.

The idea that counties – or indeed dioceses – should consist only of contiguous territory is a modern one. Until the mid-nineteenth century, many counties had within them enclaves which were exclaves of other counties. The Counties (Detached Parts) Act 1844 provided that most enclaves within counties should belong to the county in which they were situated. Twenty-seven counties were affected by the changes. Seven English counties continued to have exclaves within other counties, however. Most of these were dealt with in the later nineteenth century, though those of Warwickshire and Worcester remained until 1931 (when their boundaries with Gloucestershire were realigned) and that of Huntingdonshire until as late as 1965.

Counties and Administrative Counties (1889-1974)

The Local Government Act 1888 created from 1889 new ‘administrative counties’ and ‘county boroughs’ (unitary authorities for certain cities and towns). The administrative counties were, for the most part, the ancient counties minus those parts of them which had become county boroughs, but some of the ancient counties were subdivided, with the following becoming administrative counties: the three ridings of Yorkshire; the three divisions of Lincolnshire; East Sussex and West Sussex; East Suffolk and West Suffolk; the Isle of Ely (in Cambridgeshire) and the Soke of Peterborough (in Northamptonshire). The metropolitan areas of Middlesex, Surrey and Kent became a new County of London. The Local Government Act 1894 empowered the councils of administrative counties to exchange areas in order to create more coherent units of local government, a process which was completed by 1898.

The 1888 Act also recognized for various purposes, including the lieutenancy, ‘counties’. These consisted of one or more administrative counties together with the associated county boroughs. The ‘counties’ thus approximated more to the ancient counties than did the ‘administrative counties’. They existed from 1889 to 1974 and were the forerunners of the present ‘ceremonial counties’ (for which, see below). When people today speak of the ‘historic counties’ of England, it is often these 1888/98 counties (which approximated quite closely to the ancient counties without the enclaves and exclaves) that they have in mind.

In the second half of the nineteenth century ecclesiastical and civil parishes diverged. Under the Poor Law Amendment Act 1866, all areas that levied a separate rate (including extra-parochial places, townships and chapelries) became civil parishes. The Local Government Act 1894 established separate civil parishes across the country and its tidying up of county boundaries also involved changes to civil parish boundaries to ensure that every civil parish was entirely within one county. From this point, the boundaries of civil and ecclesiastical parishes diverged. It is not uncommon for ecclesiastical parishes to straddle county boundaries.

In 1965 a new county of Greater London was created, incorporating most of what was left of Middlesex (small parts being allocated to Hertfordshire and Surrey). Huntingdonshire and the Soke of Peterborough (into which the northern part of Huntingdonshire, forming part of the borough of Peterborough, had been incorporated in 1889) were united in a new county and administrative county of Huntingdon and Peterborough.

Late 20th-century Changes (1974-1997)

The Local Government Act 1972 abolished, with effect from 1 April 1974, the previous counties, administrative counties and county boroughs and created new counties of two types – six ‘metropolitan counties’ and 39 non-metropolitan (‘shire’) counties. Several counties disappeared (including Cumberland, Westmorland, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Rutland) and several new non-metropolitan counties were created (including Avon, Cleveland, Humberside, and Tyne and Wear).

The Post Office did not alter most postal addresses to take account of the creation of Greater London in 1965 or Greater Manchester in 1974. Those areas of Greater London which were not part of the London Postal District (an area somewhat larger than the pre-1965 County of London) therefore continued to have postal addresses referring to Hertfordshire, Essex, Kent, Sussex and Middlesex (and eventually a non-London postcode), and the same was true of the parts of Cheshire included in Greater Manchester from 1974. There were therefore *postal counties* of Cheshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent and Sussex which were larger than the modern counties of those names but smaller than the historic counties. In 1996 the Post Office ceased to use counties at all in the direction of mail, but many people still include the former postal counties in their addresses and refer to ‘Bromley, Kent’, ‘Hounslow, Middlesex’ etc.

Some of the most dramatic of the 1974 changes did not endure. The Local Government Act 1992 set in train a review of the non-metropolitan counties. This resulted in the abolition of the new counties of Avon, Cleveland and Humberside, and the restoration of Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Rutland. Unitary authorities (akin to the former county boroughs) were created, and some county councils were abolished (as the metropolitan county councils had been in 1986), being replaced by unitary authorities covering their entire area. It has been pointed out that whereas the 1969 Redcliffe-Maud Royal Commission (whose recommendations led to the 1974 changes) based its conclusions on ‘effective communities’ (employment, leisure and shopping patterns), in the 1990s the Local Government Commission was more influenced by ‘affective community’ (sense of identity) – hence the restoration in a number of cases of historic counties (which still defined identity).³

The Lieutenancies Act 1997 restored the 1888 distinction between what are now called *ceremonial counties* on the one hand and administrative units on the other. The ceremonial counties are, essentially, the City of London, Greater London (excluding the City), the six 1974 metropolitan counties, and the 1974 shire counties as subsequently amended, including any unitary authorities that formerly belonged to them. Arguably, these ceremonial counties are now the primary expression of county identity, though in Outer London and Cheshire the postal counties are also relevant. While the most unpopular of the 1972 changes have been undone, most have endured. In some areas there are still loyalties to the former historic counties (where these are different), but after 34 years such loyalty is probably diminishing in many cases. Ceremonial counties may be altered by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, but as yet there have been no changes.

³ This point is made by W. K. D. Davies and D. T. Herbert, *Communities within Cities. An urban social geography* (London, 1993), as reported in M. Chisholm and G. Dench, ‘Community Identity: Literature Review and Analysis for Periodic Electoral Reviews’ (unpublished report for the Electoral Commission, 2005).

Ceremonial Counties

The Lieutenancies Act 1997 defines the Ceremonial Counties in terms of local government areas created by the Local Government Act 1972 as amended. Schedule 1, paragraphs 2-5 defines them as:

Bedfordshire (including Luton)
Berkshire
Bristol
Buckinghamshire (including Milton Keynes)
Cambridgeshire (including Peterborough)
Cheshire (including Halton and Warrington)
City of London
Cornwall (including Isles of Scilly)
Cumbria
Derbyshire (including Derby)
Devon (including Plymouth and Torbay)
Dorset (including Bournemouth and Poole)
Durham
(including Darlington, Hartlepool, and Stockton-on-Tees north of the River Tees)
East Riding of Yorkshire (including Kingston-upon-Hull)

East Sussex (including Brighton and Hove)
Essex (including Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock)
Gloucestershire (including South Gloucestershire)
Greater London (excluding the City of London)
Greater Manchester
Hampshire (including Southampton and Portsmouth)
Herefordshire
Hertfordshire
Isle of Wight
Kent (including Medway)

Lancashire (including Blackburn with Darwen, and Blackpool)
Leicestershire (including Leicester)
Lincolnshire (including North Lincolnshire, and North East Lincolnshire)
Merseyside
Norfolk
North Yorkshire
(including York, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland,
and Stockton-on-Tees south of the River Tees)
Northamptonshire
Northumberland
Nottinghamshire (including Nottingham)
Oxfordshire
Rutland
Shropshire (including Telford and Wrekin)
Somerset (including Bath and North East Somerset, and North Somerset)
South Yorkshire
Staffordshire (including Stoke-on-Trent)
Suffolk
Surrey
Tyne and Wear
Warwickshire
West Midlands
West Sussex
West Yorkshire
Wiltshire (including Swindon)
Worcestershire

Regions

Before 1994 various government departments had regional offices but the regions used by the different departments were not the same. In 1994 the Government divided England into ten regions for all administrative purposes. These were reduced to nine in 1998 by the incorporation of Merseyside into the North West region.

In 1998, a Regional Development Agency was established for each region. Regional assemblies were also established. Of these, only the Greater London Assembly is an elected body. The others will be abolished in 2010, their powers being transferred to the RDAs. Each region has a Government Office, representing each of eleven government departments at regional level, and since 2007 there has been a Regional Minister for each region.

Since 1999 the English regions have also been used as multi-member constituencies for elections to the European Parliament.

In 2006 Strategic Health Authorities were established. Each comprises a government region, except that the South East region is divided between two (western and eastern).

The English Regions

and the ceremonial counties which they comprise

North West

Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Cheshire

North East

Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham, part of North Yorkshire (Stockton on Tees south of the Tees, Redcar and Cleveland, Middlesbrough)

Yorkshire and the Humber

South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, East Riding of Yorkshire, most of North Yorkshire (York and the shire county of North Yorkshire), part of Lincolnshire (North Lincolnshire, North-East Lincolnshire)

West Midlands

Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands, Worcestershire

East Midlands

Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire, most of Lincolnshire (the shire county of Lincolnshire)

East of England (Eastern)

Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk

South West

Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire

South East

Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Surrey, West Sussex, East Sussex, Kent

London

City of London, Greater London

The Boundary Commission for England

County boundaries are the responsibility of the Boundary Committee, but before looking at its work it will be convenient to consider that of the Boundary Commission for England, which is responsible for reviewing parliamentary boundaries.⁴

The Boundary Commission was established in 1944 and is required to keep the parliamentary constituencies in England under review and periodically to conduct a general review of all English constituencies. Since 1992, it has been required to conduct such a general review every eight to twelve years. The last general review (the fifth since 1944) was conducted from 2000 to 2006 and the report was published in 2007. Hence the next general review is unlikely to be concluded before 2015 at the earliest. The Boundary Commission has no responsibility for county or local government boundaries, which are the concern of the Boundary Committee (of the Electoral Commission). Between general reviews, interim reviews due to changes in local government take place.

The Commission is formally chaired by the Speaker and consists, in addition, of a Deputy Chairman (a high court judge) who presides over the meetings, a QC and a member of the Boundary Committee. It is an independent body, but its staff are civil servants (from 1 September, within the Ministry of Justice). At present it has a staff of five, but this rises to 15-20 during a general review.

Rules

The redistribution of seats is governed by rules set out in Schedule 2 to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986. Rule 1 limits the overall number of constituencies, Rule 2 requires a single member for each and Rule 3 requires the whole of the City of London to be in one constituency whose name shall refer to it. Rules 4 to 7 are crucial:

- (4) Constituencies not to cross county or London borough boundaries.
- (5)
 - Constituency electorates to be as close as practical to the electoral quota (the total number of electors divided by the current number of seats), and
 - [rule 4 takes precedence over rule 5, as the High Court confirmed in 1982-3, but] the Commission may depart from strict application of rule 4 in order to avoid an excessive variation from the electoral quota or disparity between the electorates of neighbouring constituencies.
[in practice, the Commission is extremely unlikely to cross ceremonial county boundaries]

⁴ This section is based on information given to me by the Joint Secretary of the Boundary Commission for England, Mr Robert Farrance, when I visited the Commission's office, on its booklet 'The Review of Parliamentary Constituencies in England' (3rd edn, 2004) and on R. Johnston, D. Rossiter and C. Pattie, '“Far Too Elaborate About So Little”: New Parliamentary Constituencies for England', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 61 (2008), 4-30.

- (6) The Commission may depart from strict application of rules 4 and 5 due to ‘special geographical considerations, including particular the size, shape, and accessibility of a constituency’
[This is taken as referring primarily to physical (not human or social) geography. It is chiefly of relevance with regard to mountains (in Northumbria and Cumbria), islands (in particular the Isle of Wight) and wide estuaries (the Commission treats the Humber, Thames, Severn and Mersey estuaries as natural boundaries that are not to be crossed).]
- (7) The Commission must ‘take account so far as they reasonably can’
- of the inconveniences attendant on alterations of constituencies other than alterations made for the purpose of rule 4, and
 - of any local ties which would be broken by such alterations.

Rule 7 means that the Commission is not starting with a ‘clean sheet’. Disruption of existing boundaries, other than to take account of changes to county and London borough boundaries, is to be kept to a minimum. ‘Local ties’ are of overriding importance (and are the dominant factor in inquiries), but it should be noted that the reference is a negative one to not breaking existing local ties (rather than a positive one requiring attention to the restoration of local ties that were previously broken).

The rules have been summarized thus: ‘New sets of constituencies must be defined within the constraints of the local government map, and should be as equal as is practicable in their electorates, so long as changing constituencies does not create inconveniences and break local ties.’⁵ The High Court pointed out in 1983 that the Commission was required to exercise judgement, not to apply ‘scientific precision’. Often there would be more than one answer permissible within the rules, and the Commission was expected to balance subjective opinions on the relative importance of the various criteria. The Commission has also pointed out that the rules are such as to make it likely that different solutions will be arrived at in different areas.

Other considerations

Where different schemes are of equal merit as far as the rules are concerned, the Commission takes into account features such as rivers, motorways, main roads and railway lines (understood as physical boundaries). Factors such as school catchment areas, travel to work areas, libraries and swimming pools may also be taken into account (and may be relevant to the issue of ‘local ties’). Growth in the electorate which is certainly going to take place in the very near future may also be taken into consideration in choosing between schemes that are of equal merit as far as the rules are concerned.

⁵ Johnston, Rossiter and Pattie, ‘“Far Too Elaborate About So Little”: New Parliamentary Constituencies for England’, p. 6.

The Commission uses borough or district wards as its smallest unit. These are never divided, so constituencies are described as consisting of certain boroughs or districts and wards of boroughs or districts.

It was noticed during the fifth general review (conducted from 2000) that fewer references were made to the historic (pre-1974) counties. The most controversial issue proved to be the names of constituencies.

Process

The Commission develops its own proposals and publishes them on a county by county basis. A notice is placed in newspapers and a press release is sent to the media, political parties and local authorities. The public have one month to respond. (It is recommended that in future this should be extended to eight or even twelve weeks.)

If an objection is received from a local authority or more than 100 local electors there must be an inquiry. In practice an inquiry is held if an MP or a regional party headquarters objects, or if the evidence submitted suggest that it is necessary. During the fifth general review, inquiries were held for 66 out of 81 areas. Half of these resulted in some change to the composition of the provisionally recommended constituencies, though in most cases the changes were very minor. Submissions often take the form of counter-proposals. The inquiry is conducted by an Assistant Commissioner (an independent, non-local barrister), supported by a member of staff, with hearings in the main town hall and sometimes in more than one town. All who have made representations are invited and advertisements are placed. All those present are entitled to speak, and the Assistant Commissioner may identify subjects so that all the contributions on that subject are taken together. Hearings are of variable length. (One took two days, one three weeks.) A full transcript of the evidence is made. One difficulty that has been encountered is that those who agree with proposal are unlikely to write in. This can make it difficult to judge how representative the objections are.

The Assistant Commissioner reports to the Commission. The Commission considers this report, together with the evidence and transcript, and in response it may revise its proposals – and did so in 75% of cases during the fifth general review. (A reason for not doing so would be that the Assistant Commissioner was mistaken as to the facts.) Objections may be made to the revised proposals. (The Commission attempts, often in vain, to limit these to new points not previously made.) There is a discretion to hold a further local inquiry, but this is done only in exceptional circumstances. The end of the process is a single report covering the whole of England, which is submitted to the Secretary of State. He has power to modify the proposals but no Secretary of State has ever done so.

The Boundary Committee for England

Local government boundaries are the responsibility of the Boundary Committee for England, which is a statutory committee of the Electoral Commission (a body corporate which is not sponsored by a government department but reports to a committee of MPs chaired by the Speaker).⁶ It consists of a Chair (who is an Electoral Commissioner) and six Deputy Commissioners. The Committee's staff comprises 12 people.

The Committee undertakes three main types of review:

- administrative boundary reviews (of the external boundaries of districts and counties),
- electoral reviews (of the wards or divisions within local authorities), and
- structural reviews (to consider whether one or more unitary authorities should be established in a particular area).

In mid-2008 there are no administrative boundary reviews in progress. The Committee is primarily engaged in electoral reviews.

It is, however, conducting a structural review of Devon and a structural review of Norfolk and Suffolk, triggered by bids for unitary status by the Exeter, Norwich and Ipswich city councils. Draft proposals for each of these counties were published on 7 July 2008. They envisage a unitary authority for Devon (covering the whole of Devon outside the existing unitary authorities of Plymouth and Torbay), a unitary authority for Norfolk plus the town of Lowestoft and the parishes that immediately surround it (i.e. the north-eastern part of the Waveney District of Suffolk), a unitary authority for Ipswich and Felixstowe, and a unitary authority for the rest of Suffolk (apart from the Ipswich, Felixstowe and Lowestoft areas). There is a twelve-week period in which representations can be made (concluding on 26 September) and the Committee will submit its final proposals to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government by the end of the year.

Criteria

There are a number of statutory criteria which the Boundary Committee is required to take into account when conducting an electoral review. These include:

- the need to secure effective and convenient local government,
- the need to secure equality of representation,
- the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities (also expressed as a requirement to have regard 'to any local ties' which would be broken).

The latter is regarded as a subsidiary consideration.⁷

⁶ This section is primarily based on information given to me by the Director of the Boundary Committee, Archie Gall, and on information on the website of the Electoral Commission. I am grateful to Prof. Michael Clarke (a former member of the Committee) for comments on an earlier draft.

⁷ Chisholm and Dench, 'Community Identity: Literature Review and Analysis for Periodic Electoral Reviews', paras 2.2-2.4.

With regard to council size, the Committee's view is that 'each local authority is unique and needs to reflect the area it serves in the way thought best'. Similarly, '“benchmarking” of the number of electors each councillor represents across authorities is neither appropriate nor practicable'. Within each council, however, there is an attempt, subject to the other criteria, to achieve an broad equality in the number of electors represented by each councillor. 'Effective and convenient local government' involves avoiding wards that are either too extensive or cover too many parishes for a councillor to represent them effectively or too small to provide scope for a councillor to contribute effectively to the council's work. Perhaps the most difficult criterion to define is 'community identity'. While it is often easy to say where the centre of a community lies it is more difficult to locate its boundary with the next community. The location of public facilities is one factor in community identity. History and tradition are relevant, but their importance is greater in some areas than in others.⁸

In 2005 the Committee commissioned an academic literature review and analysis on the subject of 'community identity' to support the work of periodic electoral reviews. The communities under consideration are primarily ward-level communities, rather than, for example, communities of district, county or regional size and much of the paper is therefore of limited relevance to the work of the Dioceses Commission. One statement that is relevant to the Commission's work is that 'the idea of a local community implies some sense of shared identity, that people who live in an area are more than simply its “population”'. The report concludes that 'In combination, the use of the three criteria – community cores, local ties and easily identifiable boundaries – would provide a reasonable approximation to communities for the purpose in hand.'⁹

Method

Each review is conducted by a review team consisting of a review officer and a review manager, overseen by one of the Deputy Commissioners (members of the Committee). In conducting its reviews, the Boundary Committee's philosophy is that 'people locally tend to know best'. Unlike the Boundary Commission, therefore, after identifying the problem (a boundary or electoral anomaly) it begins not by formulating its own proposals but by inviting proposals for change (to be submitted within a period of twelve weeks). The Deputy Commissioner is briefed on the issues and reads all the proposals.

In the light of the proposals submitted, the officer reaches conclusions which are considered in turn by the review manager and the director, resulting in a paper for the Committee. The individual Deputy Commissioner overseeing the review may or may not agree with the recommendations. Decisions are taken corporately by the Committee and when the Committee discusses the paper the Deputy Commissioner concerned with the Review is at liberty to voice an opinion contrary to that of the Review team. The draft recommendations agreed by the Committee as a whole are then published.

⁸ Electoral Commission booklet: *Electoral reviews: what they are and how you can get involved* (2007), pp. 10-15.

⁹ Chisholm and Dench, 'Community Identity: Literature Review and Analysis for Periodic Electoral Reviews', paras 3.2, 6.9.

A period of public consultation on the recommendations (again lasting twelve weeks) follows. (Guidance for ‘stakeholders’ is published on the Electoral Commission’s website.) Another difference from the methodology of the Boundary Commission is that there are no public hearings. (It is considered that those present may not be representative of opinion within the area – not least because those in favour of the recommendations tend not to appear.) All representations are published, and the outcome is determined on the basis of these written submissions, together with a site visit lasting a couple of days. In considering representations, the Committee finds it important to distinguish between assertion and evidence. In the light of the representations the draft recommendations may change. If the change is substantial (for example reflecting a new issue not previously mentioned), there will be a further period of consultation.

The Electoral Commission has a formal role in relation to both electoral boundary reviews and structural reviews carried out by the Boundary Committee. The recommendations go from the Boundary Committee to the Electoral Commission. The Commission may then draft an order if it agrees with the proposals, but can either add additional evidence into their own consideration or send the proposals back to the Committee for further review.

2: The Dioceses of England: An Outline History

Origins (597-669)

Though there were Christians and indeed bishops in what is now England long before the seventh century, it was with the mission sent by Pope Gregory the Great to England that the Church of England as an organized structure originated. Its leader, Augustine, founded the See of Canterbury in 597 and Justus became Bishop of Rochester in 604. Also in 604 the See of London was re-established by Mellitus as the see for the Kingdom of the East Saxons. The extension of Christianity took time. Further sees were gradually established: in York (by Paulinus, 626), for the East Angles (by Felix, at Dunwich, 630/631), and for the West Saxons (by Birinus, in Dorchester-on-Thames, 634). Some sees were insecure; Mellitus was expelled from London in 617, for example. Though the Roman mission was the main source from which the Church of England's diocesan structure flowed, it was not the only one. It was the Irish missionary Aidan who founded the Northumbrian see of Lindisfarne in 635 and Cedd, a missionary from Lindisfarne, who re-established the bishopric of the East Saxons c. 653 with its focus in two monastic centres – one of them at Bradwell-on-Sea. A bishopric was also established for Mercia, Lindsey and the Middle Angles (by Diuma, after 655). Those bishoprics with Irish roots were essentially tribal in nature, while those of the Roman mission, though related to the kingdoms, had sees in former Roman cities (Canterbury, Rochester, London, York, Dorchester). Though the significance of the Synod of Whitby (664) can be exaggerated, it symbolizes the confluence of these two streams.

Theodore of Tarsus (669-690)

If Augustine can be regarded as the founder of the Church of England as an organized ecclesial structure, then Theodore of Tarsus (Archbishop of Canterbury from 669 to 690) was its second founder. On his arrival there were only five bishops in England – one each in Rochester, East Anglia and Wessex (a simoniac) and two in Northumbria. Theodore's policy was to combine the Roman principle of specific sees in urban centres with the Irish practice of allocating bishoprics with regard to political or tribal divisions. His first step was to appoint bishops for Mercia and Wessex – Chad and then Wynfrith for the Mercians, with their see at Lichfield, and Eleutherius for Wessex, with his see at Winchester. Hitherto, there had been only one diocese for each kingdom (apart from Rochester, as a subordinate bishopric within Kent). Theodore favoured smaller dioceses than this, but in dividing the large kingdom-dioceses he had regard to political or tribal divisions within them. In 672 he divided East Anglia into two dioceses: Dunwich became the see for Suffolk and a new see for Norfolk was established at Elmham. In Mercia he founded new sees in addition to Lichfield: Hereford (676) for the Magonsaetan, Worcester (680) for the Hwicce. Lindsey (678) came under Mercian dominion in 681, and Leicester became the see for the Middle Angles. Within Northumbria, Bernicia was divided between Lindisfarne and Hexham (678), with York as the see for Deira. The Synod of Hertford (672) helped to define the relationships of the bishops with each other and with monasteries.¹⁰

¹⁰ H. Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1972), pp. 130-132.

Dioceses in England in 690 (death of Theodore of Tarsus)

Kent:	Canterbury (East Kent) Rochester (West Kent)
East Saxons:	London (Middlesex, Essex and part of Hertfordshire)
East Anglia:	Elmham (Norfolk) Dunwich (Suffolk)
Wessex:	Winchester
Mercia:	Lichfield (Mercia) Leicester (Middle Angles) Lindsey Hereford (Magonsaetan) Worcester (Hwicce)
Northumbria:	York Hexham Lindisfarne

1300 year later, though many more dioceses have been created, the boundaries between the dioceses created by Theodore of Tarsus are still recognizable on the map of English dioceses. Henry Mayr-Harting commented,

‘Theodore established a working principle of diocesan organization in England, however vicissitudinous the subsequent history of some of the sees. He showed a grasp of the kind perhaps only possible to the complete outsider.’¹¹

Theodore, whose feast day is 19 September (the date of his death), would be an appropriate patron saint for the Dioceses Commission.

¹¹ Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 132.

Developments between 690 and 1066

At the beginning of the eighth century the huge diocese of Winchester was divided. Aldhelm became Bishop of Sherborne in Dorset c. 705 and Eadberht Bishop of Selsey in Sussex (founded by Wilfrid) c. 706. Two hundred years later the Diocese of Sherborne was in turn subdivided, the Dioceses of Crediton (Devon), Wells (Somerset) and Ramsbury (Wiltshire and Berkshire) being created c. 909.

In 735 the Bishop of York became an archbishop and metropolitan, fulfilling Pope Gregory the Great's original intention that York should be the centre of a second English province. In 787 King Offa of Mercia, at the time the most powerful English king, was able to secure the elevation of the see of Lichfield to metropolitan status, with a province covering Mercia and East Anglia. However, Offa died in 796 and the new arrangement did not long outlive him. By 803 the new province had been reintegrated into the Province of Canterbury.

In the ninth century the Danish incursions caused the transfer of some sees and others were temporarily or permanently extinguished. The Northumbrian see of Lindisfarne (which in 854 had re-absorbed part of the diocese of Hexham, the rest becoming part of the diocese of York) was transferred to Chester-le-Street (883) and ultimately Durham (995), the Middle Angles' see of Leicester to Dorchester-on-Thames (869). The see of Dunwich was extinguished and for about a century there were no bishops of Elmham or Lindsey.

In the mid-ninth century the Cornish bishop Kenstec submitted to Canterbury and Cornwall became part of the Province of Canterbury. An episcopal see was established at St Germans by Athelstan in the 920s, and this was united with Crediton in 1027. The united see was transferred to Exeter in 1050 for greater safety against Viking raids. Ramsbury was reunited with Sherborne in 1058.

Dioceses of England in 1066

Canterbury	(East Kent)
Rochester	(West Kent)
Selsey	(Sussex)
Winchester	(Hampshire and Surrey)
Sherborne	(Dorset, Wiltshire, Berkshire)
Wells	(Somerset)
Exeter	(Devon and Cornwall)
London	(Middlesex, Essex and part of Hertfordshire)
Elmham	(Norfolk and Suffolk)
Worcester	(most of Worcestershire, south-west Warwickshire, Gloucestershire east of the Severn)
Hereford	(Herefordshire, Gloucestershire west of the Severn, Southern Shropshire)
Dorchester-on-Thames	
Lichfield	
York	
Durham	

Norman Reforms

The main development in the years after the Norman Conquest was the transfer of six more of these fifteen sees to more convenient, and fortified, urban centres. The see of Elmham was moved to Thetford in 1072, and in or about 1075 Selsey was moved to Chichester, Sherborne to Old Sarum, Dorchester-on-Thames to Lincoln and Lichfield to Chester. The see of Wells was moved to Bath in 1090. Thetford in turn moved to Norwich in 1094, and Chester to Coventry in 1102. No changes in diocesan boundaries were involved.

In the first decade of the twelfth century a new county of Hexhamshire was created within County Durham. It was removed from the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Bishop of Durham and annexed to the Diocese of York. (Hexhamshire was incorporated into Northumberland in 1572 but remained in the Diocese of York until 1837.)

Also in the twelfth century, two new dioceses were created (the first since the sub-division of Sherborne in 909). Ely (consisting of the ancient county of Cambridgeshire with the Isle of Ely) was created in 1109 to reduce (slightly) the area of the vast Diocese of Lincoln, which stretched from the Humber to the Thames, covering the former dioceses of Lindsey and Leicester/Dorchester. Ely's Benedictine Abbey had already functioned as a sort of sub-cathedral.¹² In 1133 Carlisle was founded as the see for the area of northern Cumbria which William II had added to England in 1092. It became the third see (after York and Durham) in the Province of York.

The only other changes before the Reformation, which concerned cathedrals and did not involve boundary changes, came in the first half of the thirteenth century. The See of Sarum was moved from Old Sarum to Salisbury in 1219. In two dioceses whose see had been transferred from one church to another the original cathedral church was restored to joint cathedral status. In 1228 Coventry and Lichfield were recognized as joint sees of the diocese which thereafter took that name, and in 1245 the Diocese of Bath became the Diocese of Bath and Wells (Wells having been restored as a secondary cathedral to Bath in about 1140).

¹² J. Cannon, *Cathedral: The great English cathedrals and the world that made them* (London, 2007), p. 499, n. 9.



Figure 1
The Dioceses of England, 1133-1540
from A. L. Poole, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta, 1087-1216*
(2nd edn: Oxford, 1955), p. 168
[NB exclaves other than Hexham are not shown]

Dioceses of England, 1245-1540

(Six sees transferred between 1072 and 1102; two dioceses added: 1109 and 1133.)

Province of Canterbury

Canterbury (East Kent)

Rochester (West Kent)

Chichester (Sussex)

Winchester (Hampshire and Surrey)

Salisbury (Dorset, Wiltshire, Berkshire)

Bath and Wells (Somerset)

Exeter (Devon and Cornwall)

London (Middlesex, Essex and part of Hertfordshire)

Norwich (Norfolk and Suffolk)

Ely (the original Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely) – *in Lincoln until 1109*

Worcester (Worcestershire, west Warwickshire, Gloucestershire east of the Severn)

Hereford (Herefordshire, Gloucestershire west of the Severn, Southern Shropshire)

Lincoln (roughly: Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire,
Huntingdon, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire,
part of Hertfordshire)

Coventry and Lichfield (roughly: Lancashire south of the Ribble, Cheshire,
Staffordshire, Cheshire, Shropshire north of the Severn,
Derbyshire, east Warwickshire)

Province of York

York (Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, northern Lancashire, southern Cumbria)

Durham (County Durham and Northumberland)

Carlisle (northern Cumbria) – *added in 1133*

The Henrician Reform (1540-42)

Although, as we have seen, a number of sees had been transferred for various reasons, only three new dioceses were established in England between 909 and 1540. Two of them were for areas which had been annexed by England (Cornwall and northern Cumbria), and the first of these (St Germans) lasted only a century. In over six hundred years Ely (1109) was the only new diocese created by subdividing another, while Ramsbury was reintegrated with Sherborne in 1058 to form what became the Diocese of Salisbury. Under Henry VIII six new dioceses were added in 1540-2 to the seventeen mediaeval dioceses, and all but one of them lasted. This represented a net increase of just under one third in the number of dioceses. More new dioceses had been created in a single period than at any time since the archiepiscopate of Theodore of Tarsus 850 years earlier. Like those of Theodore, Henry VIII's new dioceses respected secular boundaries. They were either secular units carved out of existing dioceses or, in two instances, conformed diocesan boundaries more closely to county boundaries by uniting parts of counties which had been formed after the original dioceses.

The new Diocese of *Chester* (1541) was initially in the Province of Canterbury, but was transferred to York in 1542. Formed by uniting the Archdeaconry of Chester (from the Diocese of Lichfield) with that of Richmond (from the Diocese of York), it comprised Cheshire, Lancashire (formerly divided between the Dioceses of Lichfield and York), southern Cumbria and the Yorkshire part of the Archdeaconry of Richmond (basically the western half of the North Riding). Its cathedral was the former Benedictine Abbey of Chester.

Broadly speaking the new Diocese of *Gloucester* (1541) comprised the County of Gloucestershire. It united most of the county (which had been in the Diocese of Worcester) with the area west of the Severn (which had been in the Diocese of Hereford), but excluded the rural deanery of Bristol (which went to the new Diocese of Bristol). Its cathedral was the former Benedictine Abbey of Gloucester.

Two new 'county' dioceses were created out of the vast Diocese of Lincoln. The Diocese of *Peterborough* (1541) consisted of Northamptonshire (including the Soke of Peterborough), with Rutland. The former Benedictine Abbey of Peterborough was its cathedral. The Diocese of *Oxford* (1542) consisted of the original county of Oxfordshire, with first the former Augustinian Abbey of Oseney and then (from 1546) Christ Church, Oxford, as its cathedral. These changes left the Diocese of Lincoln divided into two parts, with Lincolnshire and Leicestershire separated by Peterborough from Buckinghamshire, Huntingdon, Bedfordshire and Lincoln's portion of Hertfordshire.

The new Diocese of *Westminster* (1540), with Westminster Abbey as its cathedral, covered the county of Middlesex, excluding the vill of Fulham (where the Bishop of London had his rural palace). In 1550 the new diocese was suppressed and its territory returned to the Diocese of London.

The new Diocese of *Bristol* (1542) consisted of the city and county of Bristol (whose parishes were formerly in the Dioceses of Worcester/Gloucester and Bath and Wells) and the county and Archdeaconry of Dorset (from the Diocese of Salisbury), which (like the southern part of the

Diocese of Lincoln) was now detached from the area containing its cathedral (the former Augustinian priory of Bristol).

As a result of these changes there were now 22 dioceses in England. Since the twelfth century the Province of Canterbury had also included the four Welsh dioceses, and in 1542 the Diocese of Sodor and Man (formerly in the Norwegian Province of Nidaros) became the fifth diocese in the Province of York. From 1550, therefore, the Church of England consisted of 27 dioceses – 22 in England, 4 in Wales and one on the Isle of Man.

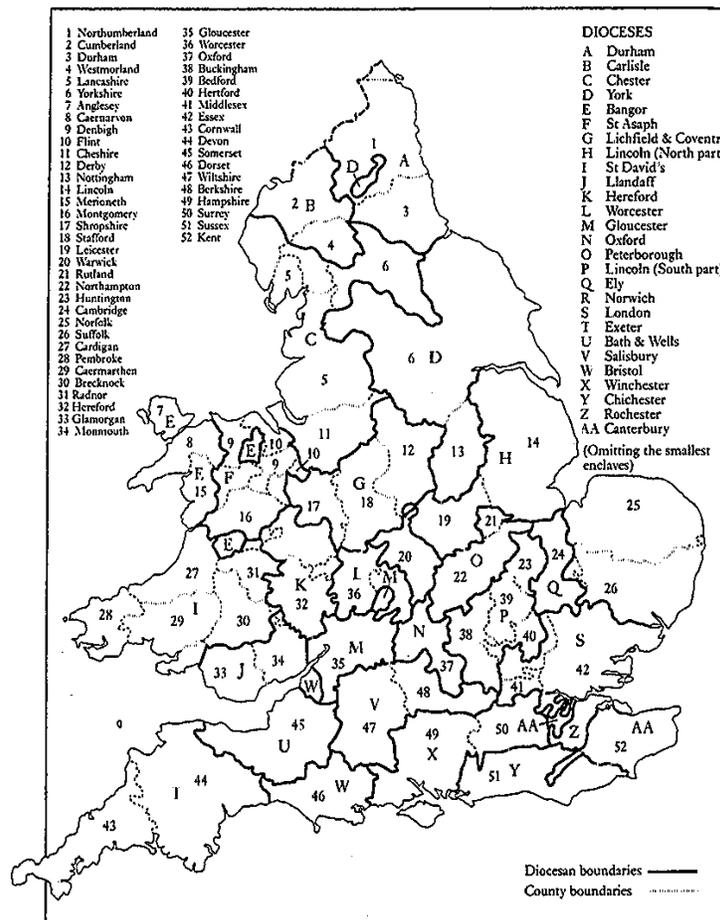


Figure 2

The Dioceses of England and Wales, 1550-1835

from A. Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England, c. 1800-1870* (Oxford, 1999), based on G. F. A. Best, *Temporal Pillars*: (Cambridge, 1964)

[NB English exclaves other than Hexham and Croydon are not shown]

The Ecclesiastical Commissioners (1835-1849)

The Commissioners and their approach

It was to be another three hundred years before the boundaries of dioceses were altered further or additional new dioceses created. When the reform finally came, between 1835 and 1849, it was on a vastly greater scale than those of Theodore of Tarsus, the Normans and Henry VIII. Although only two new dioceses were created, the boundaries of every diocese were changed – a few only in minor details but most quite dramatically.

The reforms were the outcome of proposals by the Ecclesiastical Duties and Revenues Commission established by Sir Robert Peel in February 1835. Peel and some ministerial colleagues were themselves members of the Commission until June 1835, when they were replaced by Lord Melbourne (Peel's successor as Prime Minister), Lord John Russell and other ministers. The five clerical members were all bishops – the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Bishops of London, Lincoln and Gloucester. The Commission was dominated by the Bishop of London, C. J. Blomfield, who could be said to have been the main architect of the reforms. (Archbishop Harcourt of York famously remarked, 'Till Blomfield comes we all sit and mend our pens, and talk about the weather'.¹³) But by 1836 Archbishop Howley had come to believe in reform. Geoffrey Best commented, 'The Howley who came so regularly to the Commissioners' meetings and spoke so well [in the House of Lords] on their behalf was not just a puppet pulled by Blomfield's strings. He believed in what he was doing.'¹⁴

One of the Commission's most important recommendations was that its thirteen members should become a permanent corporate body with a reforming agenda, empowered to propose schemes changing diocesan boundaries which would be given effect by Order in Council without the need for primary legislation or indeed parliamentary approval in any form. This body, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, was established by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners Act 1836 (originally known as the Established Church Act 1836). (In 1948 the Ecclesiastical Commissioners were merged with Queen Anne's Bounty to form the Church Commissioners for England.) The Commissioners' ability to effect changes by Order in Council was subject only to the need for consent by the bishops of the dioceses concerned. This meant that some schemes had to wait until a bishop had died or been translated to another see before they could be brought forward. In some cases the delay gave an opportunity for further reflection – or for local opposition to be mustered – with the result that the original proposals were either adapted or not pursued at all.

An important part of the background to the establishment of the Ecclesiastical Duties and Revenues Commission was the unpopularity of the unreformed Church of England in general and of its bishops in particular. This was manifested during the agitation that led up to the Great Reform Act of 1832, most notably by the destruction of the Bishop of Bristol's palace, which was ransacked and burned down by a mob. Other bishops suffered lesser indignities, being variously burned in effigy, insulted or mobbed in the streets; one had his carriage stoned.

¹³ W. O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, vol. 1 (London, 1966), p. 133.

¹⁴ G. F. A. Best, *Temporal Pillars: Queen Anne's Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the Church of England* (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 346-347.

Archbishop Howley himself was heckled at an SPG meeting in Croydon and menaced by a crowd outside. Even after the passing of the act, when arriving in Canterbury to hold his primary visitation he was met by a hissing crowd. Hats, caps, brickbats, and cabbage stalks were thrown at his carriage, breaking one of the windows.¹⁵

Those who agitated for reform contrasted the great incomes and aristocratic lifestyles of many of the bishops with the poverty of many of the inferior clergy. They also criticized the holding in plurality by the bishops of poorer sees, deaneries, prebends and benefices in order to boost their incomes. A key aim of the Ecclesiastical Duties and Revenues Commission was therefore to moderate the highest episcopal incomes, allowing the Archbishops, the Bishops of London, Durham and Winchester and the bishops of five other lucrative sees incomes on a scale between £15,000 and £5,000, and use the balance to increase the incomes of the others (who would no longer be allowed to hold other offices in plurality) to between £4,200 and £5,000.¹⁶ This equalization of incomes was to be matched by at least a degree of equalization of duties, to be achieved by reducing the disparities between their dioceses with regard to size, population and number of benefices.

The Diocese of Ripon (1836) and the united Diocese of Gloucester and Bristol (1836), the Diocese of Manchester (1847) and the expanded Diocese of Carlisle (1856)

A need for two additional sees in the Northern Province was recognized. This would reduce the vast dioceses of Chester and York to more manageable proportions. Collegiate churches in Manchester and Ripon, which had been turned into ordinary parish churches at the Reformation but re-founded by Elizabeth I and James I respectively, were suitable for designation as cathedrals. (Before the Reformation, Ripon had served as a sort of pro-cathedral for the Archdeaconry of Richmond,¹⁷ which included not only the north-western segment of Yorkshire but also the immense district ‘beyond the moors’, whose western boundary was the sea from the mouth of the Derwent in Cumberland to the mouth of the Ribble in Lancashire.) These two cathedrals each had a dean and chapter but they continued to be parish churches. Locating bishops in Manchester and Ripon would also provide episcopal ministry in or close to the new industrial areas of Lancashire and Yorkshire. The distance of Ripon from the industrial area of West Yorkshire was problematic, however. Had Ripon Minster not been a collegiate church of cathedral proportions which had served as an episcopal see in the seventh century and effectively as a pro-cathedral in the middle ages, and had the later revival of Leeds Parish Church under W. F. Hook already taken place, Leeds might have been chosen instead.

Given the unpopularity of bishops, it was politically impossible to increase the number of bishops in the House of Lords, but an episcopate which saw its status and dignity threatened and had even begun to fear disestablishment was not willing to concede the possibility of non-parliamentary bishops (fearing that to do so might fuel demands for the exclusion of the episcopate as a whole from the House of Lords).¹⁸ The creation of new sees in the Northern

¹⁵ Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, pp. 27-29, 32.

¹⁶ Best, *Temporal Pillars*, pp. 320-322.

¹⁷ Cannon, *Cathedral*, p. 23.

¹⁸ A. Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England, c. 1800-1870* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 192-193.

Province therefore needed to be balanced by the merging of sees elsewhere, so that the number of bishops in the House of Lords would remain at 26. Such was the Commissioners' hostility to 'non-parliamentary bishops' that they even proposed the abolition of the see of Sodor and Man because its bishop did not sit in the House of Lords (even though the reason for this is that the Isle of Man is not part of the United Kingdom but has its own parliament, Tynwald, in which the bishop does sit).¹⁹ The 1836 Ecclesiastical Commissioners Act therefore provided for the creation of the sees of Ripon (with a countervailing union of Bristol with Gloucester) and Manchester (with a countervailing union of Bangor with St Asaph), and the union of Sodor and Man with Carlisle.²⁰

The new united *Diocese of Gloucester and Bristol* was formed swiftly, the Bishop of Bristol having been translated to Ely in order to make way for this. As part of the same operation, Dorset was returned from Bristol to the Diocese of Salisbury, while Berkshire was transferred to the Diocese of Oxford. This created, initially, three two-county dioceses: Gloucester and Bristol, Salisbury (Dorset and Wiltshire) and Oxford (Oxfordshire and Berkshire). The cathedrals of Bristol and Gloucester became joint cathedrals of the new diocese, the chapters electing the bishop alternately.

This merger of the sees of Gloucester and Bristol enabled the new *Diocese of Ripon* to be created later in 1836. It consisted of the Yorkshire part of the Archdeaconry of Richmond (from the Diocese of Chester) and a new Archdeaconry of Craven covering part of the West Riding. The boundary with the Diocese of York was adjusted in 1838, leaving the Diocese of York covering the Eastern half of Yorkshire and the southern area around Sheffield. The Diocese of Ripon was problematic from the outset for a number of reasons. Contrary to the dictum enunciated by the Council of Sardica in the fourth century and often reiterated subsequently, its see was not a town of importance. Furthermore, Ripon was located not in the industrial area of what is now West Yorkshire but in its rural hinterland. (There was no rail link between Ripon and Leeds until 1849.) The diocese also failed to correlate with secular boundaries (containing as it did the western half of the North Riding and the north-western part of the West Riding).

By contrast with the immediate success in abolishing the Diocese of Bristol to found that of Ripon, the attempt to abolish the Diocese of Sodor and Man failed. Protests stressed the island's geographical, ethnic and constitutional distinctness and the pastoral implications of the lack of a resident bishop. There was local pride in its reputation as having been a model diocese in the previous century under the saintly Bishop Thomas Wilson, with a diocesan synod surviving from before the Reformation.²¹ The strength of local opposition forced the repeal of the provision for abolition of the diocese as early as 1838.

The proposed union of the Dioceses of Bangor and St Asaph would have created a single diocese covering the whole of North Wales, its coastline stretching from Aberystwyth to the edge of

¹⁹ P.S. Morrish, 'The Manchester Clause', *Church Quarterly*, 1 (1968-9), pp. 319-326 at p. 320-322; 'History of the Isle of Man and Diocese of Sodor and Man' (review article), *British Critic*, 29 (1841), 173-200 at pp. 187-188.

²⁰ Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, pp. 135-136.

²¹ Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England*, p. 194.

Chester. Unlike the ailing Bishop of Sodor and Man, who successfully whipped up opposition within his diocese to its abolition, causing the provision for it to be repealed before his death later in the same year, the Bishop of Bangor prevented the abolition of his diocese for more than ten years by the simple expedient of remaining alive and continuing to occupy his see. This in turn prevented the creation of the new see of Manchester. From 1843 onwards the Earl of Powis introduced bills in the House of Lords at least once each year to repeal the provision for the union of the two Welsh sees. These retained the provision for a see of Manchester but limited the number of bishops in the House of Lords to 26 (the holders of the five senior sees, plus the next 21 most senior by length of service). Gradually the leading bishops came to acknowledge the need for an increase in the number of dioceses and abandoned their attachment to the principle that all diocesan bishops should sit in the House of Lords from the beginning of their episcopate. In 1846 Peel's government was replaced by that of Lord John Russell, for whom the Commission's original principles were less sacrosanct. A further Commission of enquiry was appointed, and when its unpublished report recommended the creation of additional sees the Government introduced a bill to allow the creation of the Diocese of Manchester without a countervailing merger.²²

The *Diocese of Manchester* was duly created in 1847 out of the Diocese of Chester. It consisted of most of Lancashire, the two exceptions being the Hundred of West Derby apart from the parish of Leigh, ie the area around Liverpool in the south-west of Lancashire, which remained in the Diocese of Chester, and the Deanery of Furness and Cartmel north of Morecambe Bay. The latter area was transferred by the same Order in Council from the Diocese of Chester to the Diocese of Carlisle, together with the remaining part of the old Archdeaconry of Richmond (southern Cumberland and southern Westmorland), the transfer taking effect in 1856 on the death of the Bishop of Carlisle. In this expansion of the Diocese of Carlisle the Church of England was for once 'ahead of the game': the Order in Council anticipated by over 125 years the creation of the county of Cumbria in 1974.

The campaign for new dioceses

In 1831 the Church of England had the smallest ratio of bishops to people of any episcopal church in western Europe. From the early 1830s onwards there had in fact been widespread and increasing calls for the creation of additional dioceses. Many of these came – from high churchmen especially – in the context of the revival in the understanding and practice of diocesan episcopacy to which Arthur Burns has pointed in his book *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England, c. 1800-1870* (1998), though others came from liberal and evangelical churchmen. Thomas Arnold called for a see in every major town and the Evangelical Walter Shirley for a bishop in every county.²³ The successful defence of the Diocese of Sodor and Man in 1836-8 was later acknowledged to be a turning point: a church periodical commented in 1856, 'The political attempt to destroy the bishopric of Sodor and Man aroused a feeling for episcopacy which has never since subsided.'²⁴ Whereas bishops had been the subject of vilification only a few years earlier, now there had been a successful campaign to save an historic episcopal see from extinction. Evidence of 'church extension' in the new Diocese of

²² Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England*, p. 196.

²³ Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England*, pp. 192-193.

²⁴ *Literary Churchman*, 2 (1856), p. 311, quoted by Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England*, p. 195.

Ripon suggested that new sees would tend to be advantageous for the Church's mission rather than a burden.²⁵ The 1847 commission of enquiry which recommended an increase in the number of sees went so far as to propose new dioceses of St Albans (Hertfordshire and Essex), Bodmin or Truro (Cornwall) and Southwell (Nottinghamshire), though the enabling provisions for these were struck out of the Manchester bill by the House of Commons.

Redrawing the Diocesan Map

Important as it was, the creation of just two new northern dioceses in twelve years, increasing the number in the Province of York from five to seven but at the cost of the loss of the separate Diocese of Bristol, may seem a modest achievement when compared with Henry VIII's creation of (initially) six dioceses in two years three centuries earlier – especially when the context of growing calls for additional dioceses from 1830 onwards is taken into account. The Commission's real and remarkable achievement was the general redrawing of the diocesan map, implemented over a period of fifteen years between 1836 and 1849 in order to achieve dioceses of more equal size with more rational boundaries, as shown in the table on the following pages.

It will be seen that, in addition to the two new dioceses, no fewer than thirteen of the English dioceses gained significant areas of territory. Of the remaining nine, Bristol was abolished while four (York, Chester, Lichfield and Norwich) gave up significant areas, as Winchester would have done if the Commission's proposals had been implemented. As we shall see, Chichester gained a relatively small area from Canterbury and the other two dioceses (Exeter and Bath and Wells) both lost or gained parishes. Thus no English diocese was left untouched by the reforms.

²⁵ Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England*, p. 195.

Changes to English Diocesan Boundaries proposed by the Ecclesiastical Duties and Revenues Commission (1835-1836)²⁶				
<i>NB only dioceses receiving additional territory are listed below.</i>				
Province of Canterbury				
Diocese	Territory	Transferred from	Order in Council	Date of Transfer
Canterbury	Kent; Parish of Croydon, Lambeth Palace and district	—	—	—
	(including territory of Rochester, except Deanery of Rochester and Rochester parishes transferred to London)	Rochester	1845	1 Jan. 1846
	plus Parish of Addington	Winchester	1845	1 Jan. 1846
London	Middlesex plus 10 Essex parishes ²⁷	—	—	—
	plus 9 Kent parishes ²⁸	Rochester	1845	1 Jan. 1846
	plus 5 Surrey parishes ²⁹	Canterbury	1845	1 Jan. 1846
	plus Borough of Southwark and 11 other Surrey parishes ³⁰	Winchester	1845	[<i>repealed 1863</i>]
Ely	Diocese of Ely	—	—	—
	Huntingdonshire	Lincoln	1837	30 May 1837
	plus Suffolk Archdeaconry of Sudbury (excluding the Deaneries of Stow and Hartismere ³¹)	Norwich	1837	30 May 1837
	plus Bedfordshire	Lincoln	1837	13 May 1837
	plus part of Cambridgeshire	Norwich	[<i>not implemented</i>]	
	plus Norfolk Deaneries of Lynn and Fincham	Norwich	[<i>not implemented</i>]	

²⁶ Sources: *Third Report from His Majesty's Commissioners appointed to consider the State of the Established Church, with reference to Ecclesiastical Duties and Revenues* (Parliamentary Papers, 1836, xxxvi), pp. 7-9; *First General Report to Her Majesty from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England* (PP, 1846, xxiv), pp. 11-12; *Second General Report to Her Majesty from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England* (PP, 1847, xxxiii), pp. 7-8; *Third General Report to Her Majesty from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England* (PP, 1851, xxii), pp. 48-50.

²⁷ Barking, East Ham, West Ham, Great Ilford, Little Ilford, Low Layton, Walthamstow, Wanstead St Mary, Woodford, Chingford.

²⁸ Charlton, Lee, Lewisham, Greenwich, Woolwich, Eltham, Plumstead, St Nicholas Deptford, St Paul Deptford (including part in Surrey).

²⁹ St Mary Newington, Barnes, Putney, Mortlake, Wimbledon.

³⁰ Battersea, Bermondsey, Camberwell, Christchurch Southwark, Clapham, Lambeth, Rotherhithe, Streatham, Tooting Graveney, Wandsworth, Merton.

³¹ The Commission had also proposed that the Deanery of Sudbury be excluded.

Diocese	Territory	Transferred from	Order in Council	Date of Transfer
Gloucester and Bristol	Diocese of Gloucester	Gloucester	1836	8 Oct. 1836
	City and Deanery of Bristol	Bristol	1836	8 Oct. 1836
	Wiltshire Deaneries of Cricklade and Malmesbury ³²	Salisbury	1837	18 Aug. 1837
	Parish of Bedminster	Bath and Wells	1837	22 Sept. 1845
Hereford	Diocese of Hereford (minus parts of Worcestershire, Montgomery and Monmouth)	—	—	—
	Deanery of Bridgnorth	extra-diocesan peculiar	1846	25 Dec. 1846
Lincoln	Lincolnshire	—	—	—
	Nottinghamshire	York	1837 1841	1 May 1839 8 June 1841
Oxford	Diocese of Oxford ³³	—	—	—
	Berkshire (incl. insulated parts of Wilts)	Salisbury	1836	10 Oct. 1836
	Buckinghamshire	Lincoln	1837	12 Nov. 1845
Peterborough	Diocese of Peterborough	—	—	—
	Leicestershire	Lincoln	1837	1 May 1839
Rochester	City and Deanery of Rochester	—	—	—
	Essex (except 10 parishes retained by London)	London	1845	1 Jan. 1846
	Part of Hertfordshire	London	1845	1 Jan. 1846
	Rest of Hertfordshire	Lincoln	1845	1 Jan. 1846
Salisbury	Wiltshire (minus 2 deaneries transferred to Gloucester and Bristol)	—	—	—
	Dorset ³⁴	Bristol	1836	14 Oct. 1836
Worcester	Diocese of Worcester ³⁵	—	—	—
	rest of Warwickshire (Archdeaconry of Coventry)	Lichfield and Coventry	1837	24 Jan. 1837

³² One Gloucestershire parish went to Worcester and one Gloucestershire parish went to Oxford. One Worcestershire parish went to Gloucester and Bristol.

³³ One Gloucestershire parish went to Oxford in 1837 (see above).

³⁴ One Dorset parish insulated in Devon went to Exeter, one Somerset parish to Salisbury and one Devon parish to Salisbury.

³⁵ One Gloucs. parish went to Worcester and one Worcs. parish to Gloucester and Bristol in 1837 (see above).

Province of York				
Diocese	Territory	Transferred from	Order in Council	Date of Transfer
Durham	Diocese of Durham	—	—	—
	Hexhamshire (part of Northumberland) ³⁶	York	1837	24 Jan. 1837
Carlisle	Diocese of Carlisle	—	—	—
	rest of Cumberland, rest of Westmorland, Lancashire Deanery of Furnes and Cartmel ³⁷	Chester	1847	[1856]
	Isle of Man	Sodor and Man	[repealed 1838]	
Chester	Cheshire ³⁸	—	—	—
	<i>Deanery of Warrington (apart from the Parish of Leigh)</i> ³⁹	—	—	—
	northern Shropshire ⁴⁰	Lichfield	[not implemented]	
Manchester (<i>new diocese</i>)	Lancashire, except the Deanery of Furnes and Cartmel and the Deanery of Warrington (apart from the Parish of Leigh) ⁴¹	Chester	1847	10 Aug. 1847
Ripon (<i>new diocese</i>)	Yorkshire part of the Archdeaconry of Richmond	Chester	1836	13 Oct. 1836
	Part of Deanery of the Ainsty, Part of Deanery of Pontefract, Parish of Aldborough	York	1836	13 Oct. 1836
	Deanery of Craven	York	1837	24 Jan. 1837
	6 parishes ⁴²	York	1838	16 Feb. 1838

³⁶ One parish was transferred to York at the same time.

³⁷ The Commission had also proposed that the parish of Aldeston be added from Durham.

³⁸ The Commission had also proposed that Chester's portion of Flint be retained. In the event, seven parishes and an extra-parochial place in Cheshire, Denbigh and Flint were transferred to St Asaph in 1849, in accordance with a recommendation of the 1847 commission of enquiry (following the decision not to merge St Asaph with Bangor): *First Report of the Commissioners appointed to consider the State of the Several Bishopricks in England and Wales* (PP 1847, xxiii), p. 1.

³⁹ The Commission had proposed that this area form part of the new Diocese of Manchester, but the 1847 commission of enquiry recommended that it remain in the Diocese of Chester.

⁴⁰ Following the decision not to merge St Asaph with Bangor, the 1847 commission of enquiry recommended the retention of the Welsh-speaking area of northern Shropshire in the Diocese of St Asaph and of the rest of it in the Diocese of Lichfield.

⁴¹ The Commission had proposed that the whole of Lancashire apart from the Deanery of Furnes and Cartmel should be transferred to the Diocese of Manchester, but the 1847 commission of enquiry (p. 2) recommended the retention of the Liverpool area in the Diocese of Chester.

⁴² At the same time, four parishes were returned to York.

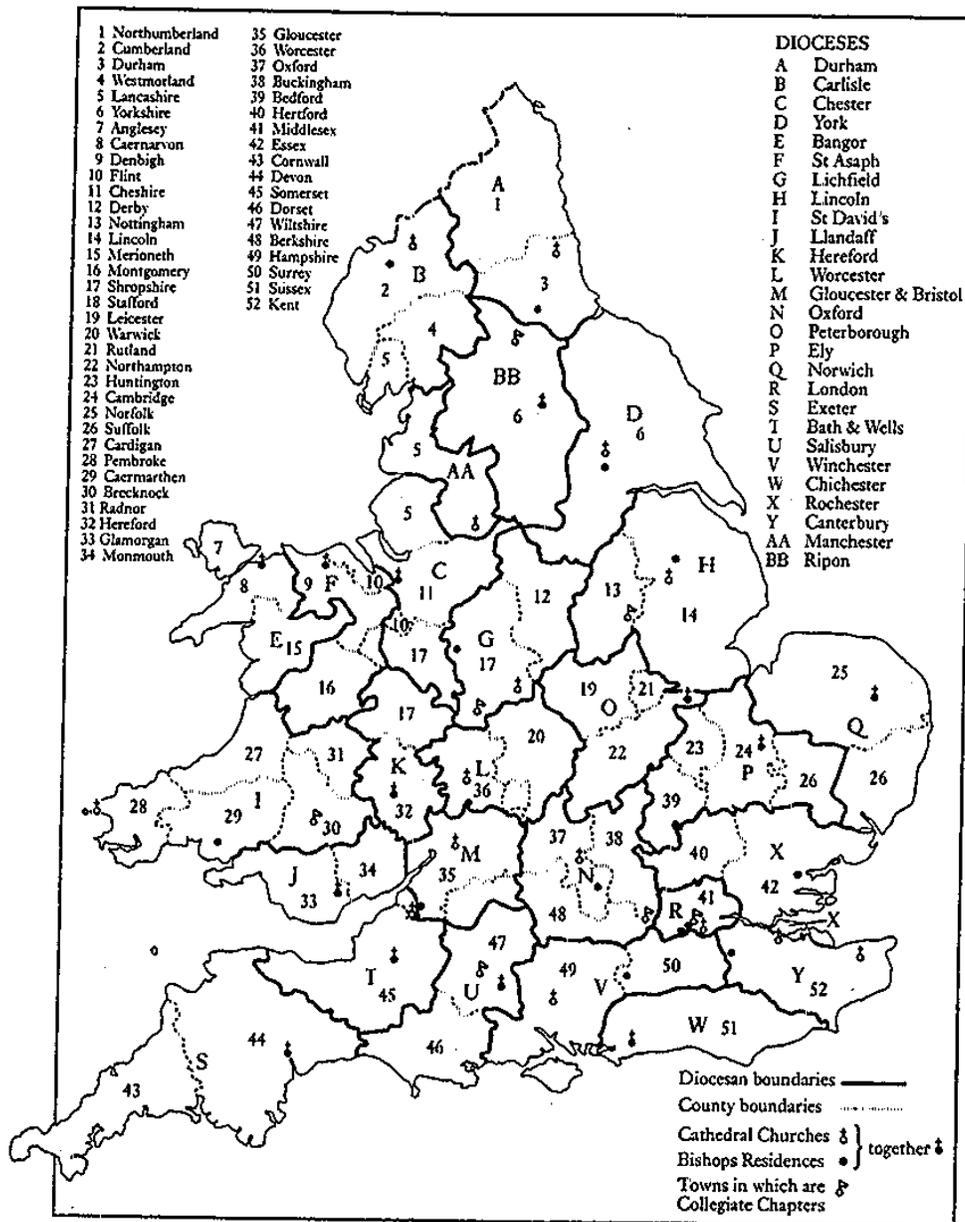


Figure 3

The Dioceses of England and Wales, 1850

from A. Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England, c. 1800-1870* (Oxford, 1999),
 based on G. F. A. Best, *Temporal Pillars*: (Cambridge, 1964)

NB some details are incorrect:

- ❖ Underneath the letter G the number should be 18 (Staffordshire) not 17 (Shropshire).
- ❖ The Diocese of Chester (C) should consist only of the Liverpool area (5) and Cheshire (11).
- ❖ The smaller part of Flint (10) should be within the Diocese of St Asaph (F), and the larger part of northern Shropshire (17) should be in the Diocese of Lichfield (G).

Assessment of the Early Victorian Reforms

Though the scale of the changes was remarkable, their wisdom varied. Many of those which proved unwise and did not last may be said to have resulted from the Commissioners' unwillingness to contemplate an increase in the number of diocesan sees. For example, the Commissioners rightly identified a need to relieve the Diocese of London of most of Essex (apart from the parishes which already de facto formed part of East London) and its half of Hertfordshire, and also to bring the latter together with the Lincoln half of Hertfordshire in a single diocese, but their unwillingness to create a new diocese in order to achieve this led them to place that whole area under the Bishop of Rochester, relieving him in turn of all of his Kentish parishes apart from the Deanery of Rochester itself. This was effectively a new diocese, albeit with an existing diocesan see, and could be called the second Diocese of Rochester. The changes (which meant that the Bishop of Rochester had to travel across London in order to visit most of his diocese) took effect from 1846, but as early as the following year the 1847 commission of enquiry proposed a see of St Albans for Hertfordshire and Essex.

Similarly, the need to reduce the Diocese of York to manageable proportions was rightly addressed by detaching Nottinghamshire from it, leaving York comprising just over half of Yorkshire. If the creation of new dioceses could be contemplated, Nottinghamshire was an obvious candidate. Southwell Minister, like Ripon, had served as a sort of 'pro-cathedral' for Nottinghamshire before the Reformation and it had been refounded as a collegiate church by Elizabeth I.⁴³ But instead of proposing a new Diocese of Southwell, or leaving things as they were until a new diocese could be contemplated, the Commissioners transferred Nottinghamshire apart from the Deanery of Southwell to Lincoln (and hence from the Province of York to that of Canterbury) with effect from 1839, dissolved and disendowed the collegiate church in 1841 and transferred the Deanery of Southwell to Lincoln in 1844. The two largest dioceses in 1835 in terms of the number of benefices had been Lincoln and Norwich, with 1,234 and 1,021 benefices respectively.⁴⁴ After these changes the Diocese of Lincoln, though relieved of its southern counties, was still left with the impossibly large number of around 800 benefices. Only three years after the new Diocese of Lincoln was completed the commission of enquiry called for the creation of a see of Southwell.

The logical solution to the excessive size of the Diocese of Norwich might have been the restoration of Theodore of Tarsus's division of the East Anglian diocese into two – one for Norfolk and one for Suffolk – which had not been replicated when the see was re-established after the disruption caused by the Danish Viking invasion. Instead, the Archdeaconry of Sudbury (the western half of Suffolk) was transferred to Ely in 1837. This left Norwich (like Lincoln) with around 800 benefices, four times as many as the new Diocese of Manchester, for example.

Similarly, the fact that the Diocese of Lincoln included no fewer than four-and-a-half counties south of Peterborough might have suggested a need for at least one new see there, but instead these counties were divided between neighbouring dioceses. Buckinghamshire was transferred to the Diocese of Oxford, the move taking effect on Bishop Bagot's translation to Bath and Wells

⁴³ Cannon, *Cathedral*, p. 23.

⁴⁴ *First Report from His Majesty's Commissioners appointed to consider the State of the Established Church, with reference to Ecclesiastical Duties and Revenues* (PP, 1835, xxii), p. 12.

in 1845.⁴⁵ Though the resulting diocese comprised three counties (Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire), it was compact and has endured to the present day. Also in 1837, Huntingdonshire went to Ely (a move which anticipated the creation of the present county of Cambridgeshire in 1974 and has likewise lasted to the present day), and Bedfordshire also went to Ely. The proposal to add two Norfolk deaneries was not pursued at this point, but even without that addition the changes increased the size of the Diocese of Ely from 149 benefices to over 500. It now comprised three whole counties and half of a fourth, was triangular rather than square in shape, and stretched from the borders of Buckinghamshire through to the middle of Suffolk. The areas which made it up in no sense formed a natural unit. E. H. Browne, who was Bishop of Ely from 1864 to 1873, pointed out that his diocese encompassed an excessive variety of parochial environments, its cathedral was poorly located (on one of the short sides of the diocesan triangle) and travelling from Ely to Bedford involved six changes of train.⁴⁶ All of that being so, it may be thought surprising that in its new form the Diocese of Ely lasted as long as it did (a period of 77 years).

The other county transferred from the Diocese of Lincoln was Leicestershire, which in 1839 was joined with Northamptonshire and Rutland in the Diocese of Peterborough. The complaint of Francis Jeune, its bishop from 1864 to 1869, that the new diocese ‘was in the shape of a pear, and that he lived at the end of the stalk’⁴⁷ arguably said more about the unsuitability of the see’s location in Peterborough than about the unsuitability of pairing the counties of Leicester and Northamptonshire: the southernmost tip of Northamptonshire is actually further from Peterborough than any part of Leicestershire is.

Some of the reforms helpfully consolidated counties that had formerly been divided between more than one diocese. The unification of Hertfordshire was one example of this. Another was the division of the Diocese of Lichfield and Coventry in 1836 so that the archdeaconry of Coventry could join the rest of Warwickshire in the Diocese of Worcester. As will be seen from the maps on pages 27 and 36, the boundary between the Dioceses of Worcester and Hereford was adjusted to reflect the boundaries of the two counties concerned, as was Hereford’s boundary with the Dioceses of Llandaff and St Davids.

By contrast, a few changes divided counties that had formerly been united. For example, in 1837 the Wiltshire Deaneries of Malmesbury and Cricklade, north of Salisbury Plain, were transferred from Salisbury to Gloucester and Bristol, where with four deaneries from the Diocese of Gloucester they formed a new Archdeaconry of Bristol. The transfer was effected despite objections from Bishop Burgess (whose death in 1837 made it possible) and his successor Bishop Denison.⁴⁸ Though it disrupted an ancient unit (the county and archdeaconry of Wiltshire), it was probably the addition of North Wiltshire to the Archdeaconry of Bristol that eventually made possible the restoration of the Diocese of Bristol. The Parish of Bedminster was also transferred from the Diocese of Bath and Wells to that of Gloucester and Bristol, so as to unite the then urban area of Bristol. This was a rare example of the reform prioritizing the unity

⁴⁵ Best, *Temporal Pillars*, p. 325.

⁴⁶ Quoted by Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England*, p. 161.

⁴⁷ Quoted by Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England*, p. 161.

⁴⁸ Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England*, p. 157.

of an urban area over adherence to county boundaries, and it was done at the suggestion of an official deputation from Bristol.⁴⁹ (The transfer took effect in 1845.)

As will be seen from the table on pages 33-35, most of what the Commissioners proposed in 1836 was implemented. The main exceptions were that the abolition of the Diocese of Sodor and Man and the merger of Bangor with St Asaph were rejected and the transfer of two Norfolk deaneries to Ely was not pursued. In accordance with recommendations of the 1847 commission of enquiry the Liverpool area was left in the Diocese of Chester and Lichfield retained its portion of northern Shropshire. (Bishop Lonsdale of Lichfield thought that northern Shropshire belonged with Staffordshire, but would have been glad to lose Derbyshire.⁵⁰)

London proposals

Perhaps the most significant of the Commission's proposals which were not realized were those for South London. Blomfield's vision was for a Diocese of London coterminous with the newly-defined metropolitan police district.⁵¹ To this end he retained ten large and populous Essex parishes that were now de facto in East London (broadly equating to the modern London boroughs of Waltham Forest and Newham, most of Redbridge [Ilford, Wanstead and Woodford] and the western half of Barking and Dagenham [Barking]). He took on nine similarly populous Kent parishes in South-East London (broadly equating to the modern London boroughs of Lewisham and Greenwich) and five Surrey parishes in South and South-West London which were peculiars under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Canterbury. To the latter were to be added the Borough of Southwark and 11 further Surrey parishes from the Diocese of Winchester. The Surrey parishes would have broadly equated to the London boroughs of Southwark, Lambeth, Wandsworth, together with significant proportions of the London boroughs of Richmond and Merton. The Diocese of London would thus have included the whole of the metropolitan area recognized by the Metropolis Management Act 1855, which became the County of London in 1889, together with the East London area of Essex and the suburban areas of Richmond and Merton.

The plan was frustrated by Bishop Charles Sumner of Winchester, who objected to giving up to the Diocese of London 18 Surrey parishes, which contained 40% of his diocese's population, 15% of its clergy and 10% of its churches.⁵² He remained in office until 1869 – a third of a century after the proposal was made, 23 years after the Rochester and Canterbury parishes were transferred to London and 13 years after Blomfield retired. By then the provision for the transfer had been repealed – by an act of 1863 which also provided for the transfer of the East London Essex parishes and the return of the South-East London Kentish parishes to the Diocese of Rochester at the next vacancy in that see (which came in 1867). One wonders whether, if Blomfield had succeeded in creating a single diocese for the metropolitan district, a single structure for the Church in London – or at least a more coherent division of the metropolis into dioceses than now exists – might have been achieved.

⁴⁹ P. S. Morrish, 'County and Urban Dioceses: Nineteenth-century Discussion on Ecclesiastical Geography', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 26 (1975), pp. 279-300, at pp. 284-285.

⁵⁰ Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England*, p. 161.

⁵¹ Best, *Temporal Pillars*, p. 318.

⁵² Best, *Temporal Pillars*, p. 318.

Peculiars

The final recommendation in the Ecclesiastical Duties and Revenues' Commission's First Report was

‘That all Parishes not specified in this Report, which are locally situate in one Diocese, but under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of another Diocese, shall become subject to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of the Diocese within which they are locally situate.’⁵³

Hitherto, the map of the Church of England had been rather like a Swiss cheese. Most dioceses had ‘holes’ in them which were called ‘peculiar jurisdictions’ or ‘peculiars’ – parishes or districts geographically situated within the boundaries of one diocese but under the jurisdiction of the bishop of another diocese, the archbishop of the province or indeed the Crown. There were nearly 300 of these, and the Archbishop of Canterbury alone had around 100 peculiars in other dioceses. One of the most notable of these was the rural deaneries of Pagham and South Malling, which formed a corridor 25-30 miles long, extending deep into the Diocese of Chichester in a south-westerly direction, towards Lewes. (This peculiar was the result of the grant of the Manor of Old Malling to the See of Canterbury in the early ninth century.)⁵⁴ The Commissioners proposed to rationalize this mediaeval patchwork of jurisdictions away. Though one of the least noticed of the changes that they proposed, it was arguably one of the most radical, since it produced consolidated dioceses consisting of contiguous parishes for the first time since the Saxon era. There were some exceptions to this: the royal peculiars remained; the Archbishop of Canterbury kept the Lambeth Palace district and the parish of Croydon and received in addition the parish of Addington (where his country palace was now situated); a small number of other peculiars and enclaves continued. The largest enclaves (such as Hexhamshire in the Diocese of Durham) were specifically transferred by Orders in Council, but the Ecclesiastical Commissioners Act also gave the Commissioners power to propose in any scheme

‘that all parishes, churches or chapelries, locally situate in any diocese, but subject to any peculiar jurisdiction other than the jurisdiction of the bishop of the diocese in which the same were locally situate, should be only subject to the jurisdiction of the bishop of the diocese within which the same were locally situate.’⁵⁵

The great bulk of the peculiars were abolished by a series of Orders in Council in the 1840s.⁵⁶

⁵³ *First Report from His Majesty's Commissioners...*, with reference to *Ecclesiastical Duties and Revenues*, p. 4.

⁵⁴ G. Hill, *English Dioceses: A History of their Limits from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London, 1900), pp. vii-viii.

⁵⁵ Ecclesiastical Commissioners Act 1836 (6&7 Will. 4 c. 77), s. 10. See also P. Barber, ‘What is a Peculiar?’, *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*, 3 (1993-1995), 299-312.

⁵⁶ *Second General Report... from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners*, p. 8 (dates of abolition of peculiar and exempt jurisdictions in thirteen dioceses, 1846-1847); *Third General Report... from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners*, p. 49 (dates of abolition of peculiar and exempt jurisdictions in four further dioceses, 1847-1848).

Overall assessment

The number, scale and relative speed of the changes made by the Ecclesiastical Commission were nothing short of remarkable, but, as has already been suggested, the desirability of the changes varied. In the Northern Province, the seven dioceses eventually became thirteen, but the new dioceses were each formed within the boundaries of a single 1830s/40s diocese. In the Southern Province, by contrast, there were half a dozen changes that proved to be very short-lived, and in most cases it was – or should have been – apparent from the outset that the new arrangement was very unlikely to last:

- Rochester lost its Kent hinterland in 1846 but regained it in 1905, less than sixty years later;
- Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire were separated in the 1830s-40s (Bedfordshire going to Ely in 1837 and Hertfordshire to Rochester in 1846) but re-united as the Diocese of St Albans in 1877;
- West Suffolk went to Ely in 1837 but was re-united with the rest of Suffolk as the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich in 1914;
- Nottinghamshire was transferred to the Province of Canterbury and attached to Lincolnshire as the Diocese of Lincoln in 1839/41, but gained its own see in 1884 and was returned to the Province of York in 1936;
- Essex was transferred twice in 31 years – to Rochester in 1846 and St Albans in 1877 – before gaining its own see in 1914;
- the union between Gloucester and Bristol lasted only 61 years (from 1836 to 1897).

As already indicated, in at least some of these cases the Commissioners ought to have seen that an additional diocese would be essential or at least desirable. Would it have been preferable to postpone some of these changes until a solution that was likely to endure could be achieved?

If some of the Commission's 'failures' resulted from excessive timidity and a preference for a 'quick fix' (however disruptive and improbable) over a lasting solution that might take longer to achieve, it was ironic that where it was at its boldest (the plan to create a single diocese for the London metropolitan area, despite the large population that would have been involved) the intransigence and longevity of one bishop resulted in a rare failure to bring its proposals into effect. Though such a large diocese would probably not have lasted, its existence might have meant that it would be succeeded by more coherent arrangements for the Church's oversight of and mission to the metropolis.

Late Victorian Dioceses (1877-1888)

As we have seen, there had been calls for additional dioceses in the 1830s. From the 1840s onwards high-church bishops such as Edward Denison (Bishop of Salisbury, 1837-1854), John Lonsdale (Bishop of Lichfield, 1843-1867) and Samuel Wilberforce (Bishop of Oxford, 1845-1869) raised the expectations of what bishops would do. They visited the parishes to confirm and to institute incumbents, instead of holding mass confirmations in the cathedral and institutions in their own chapels. But such a style of episcopacy would only work – in a church whose only bishops were diocesans, many of them old men who would die in office – if the number of parishes in a diocese was sufficiently small and the territory of the diocese sufficiently small and compact that the bishop could travel round it with ease. The new model of episcopacy, which very quickly became standard everywhere, necessitated smaller dioceses as well as assistant bishops.

From the 1840s onwards calls there were calls for new dioceses in addition to those of Ripon and Manchester for which the Ecclesiastical Commissioners Act 1836 had made provision. An early proposal was that made in 1842 by Bishop Henry Phillpotts of Exeter for the division of his diocese, because of its unmanageable extent.⁵⁷ (Once the 1836 proposals for the division of the sees of Chester, York and Lincoln had been implemented, the distance from the Eastern boundary of Devon to Land's End would be greater than that between two points in any other English diocese.) As we have seen, the 1847 commission of enquiry proposed sees of Bodmin or Truro (for Cornwall), St Albans (for Hertfordshire and Essex) and Southwell (for Nottinghamshire), although these were struck out of the resulting bill by the House of Commons. The Royal Commission on Cathedrals, whose 1854 report advocated a larger diocesan role for cathedrals, again recommended an increase in the number of sees, proposing – in addition to a Cornish see (for which it preferred the more centrally-located St Columb, whose living was offered as an endowment, to Bodmin and Truro) and a diocese of Southwell – a newly independent Diocese of Bristol and a new diocese with Westminster Abbey as its cathedral.

In the 1850s some Evangelicals and Liberals began to oppose additional sees, however, arguing that modern communications made them unnecessary, but Canterbury Convocation committees renewed the call in 1857, 1861 and 1863. In 1865 an address to the Crown from both Convocations once again called for bishoprics in St Albans, Southwell and Cornwall. During the 1850s and 1860s petitions of laypeople, clergy and parliamentarians were presented. A bill presented by Lord Lyttelton in 1860 and 1861 that would have permitted the creation of additional sees failed. However, by 1866 there was an enthusiastic primate (Longley) and the Prime Minister was Lord John Russell, under whose auspices the 1847 report had been compiled. In 1867 Longley got Lyttelton to introduce a further bill. Though arguments over the details meant that it did not complete its course, the fact that it received a second reading in both Houses indicated support at last for the principle.⁵⁸

Most prominent in the campaign for additional dioceses was the case of Cornwall, advanced on the grounds not only of geography (Penzance is 109 miles from Exeter) but also of ethnic, cultural and historical distinctiveness. A campaign committee established in 1854 under the

⁵⁷ Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England*, p. 196.

⁵⁸ Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England*, pp. 150, 198-204.

leadership of the Archdeacon of Cornwall was reconstituted in 1859, and petitions were presented in the 1860s.⁵⁹ In the earlier 1860s Archbishop Longley approached the government for a bishop in Cornwall but was told by the home secretary that modern means of communication rendered an additional bishop unnecessary. However, as Owen Chadwick commented, ‘It was obvious to nearly everyone but the home secretary that if the Church of England was episcopal Cornwall needed a bishop.’⁶⁰

Gladstone was unable to convince his party to support additional bishoprics, so it was the home secretary in Disraeli’s conservative government, R. A. Cross, who at last piloted through Parliament bills to increase the number of bishoprics. Acts of 1875 and 1876 paved the way for the establishment of the sees of St Albans and Truro in 1877, and an act of 1878 provided for sees of Liverpool (1880), Newcastle (1882), Southwell (1884) and Wakefield (1888). Whereas the Ecclesiastical Commission had not intended to increase the number of dioceses and ended up increasing the number by one (creating two but abolishing only one), action by Disraeli’s Conservative government resulted in the creation of six sees over eleven years. This raised the number of English sees from 23 to 29. (In old age, Cross was able to claim, in a light-hearted moment but with justice, that only Henry VIII and he had been concerned in the creation of six new sees.⁶¹) The bills specified that the sees could only be established when an endowment had been raised to provide in the cases of St Albans and Truro an income of £2,000 a year for the bishop (which in each case was raised fairly quickly) and for the others £3,500 a year (hence the delays of four, six and ten years before the founding of the sees of Newcastle, Southwell and Wakefield).

Cathedrals

As there was no church in Truro of anything approaching cathedral proportions, a new cathedral was built, incorporating, as an additional aisle, the mediaeval south aisle of St Mary’s (the ancient parish church). St Mary’s aisle continues to be a parish church. The Truro Dean and Chapter Act 1878 constituted a cathedral chapter and authorized the eventual creation of a deanery. A second statute, the Truro Dean and Chapter Act 1887, made the bishop the acting dean and the incumbent of St Mary’s (the advowson of which had been given to Bishop Benson, the first bishop) the sub-dean. These arrangements lasted until 1960 when, the necessary endowment having been raised and the bishop having passed the advowson to the Crown, a separate dean was appointed. Thereafter, the dean was *ex officio* rector of the parish (as in Ripon and Manchester).⁶²

In Liverpool there was similarly no church suitable for designation as a cathedral. St Peter’s church was initially designated as the pro-cathedral, and a private act of 1885 permitted the endowment and incorporation of a chapter. The experience of Truro had shown that it was difficult to appeal both for a new cathedral and for the endowment of a chapter at the same time,

⁵⁹ Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England*, p. 201.

⁶⁰ W. O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, 2 (London, 1970), p. 343.

⁶¹ P. T. Marsh, *The Victorian Church in Decline. Archbishop Tait and the Church of England, 1868-1882* (London, 1969), p. 207.

⁶² P.S. Morrish, ‘Parish-Church Cathedrals, 1836-1931: Some Problems and their Solution’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 49 (1998), 434-464, at p. 444.

so in 1902 Bishop F. J. Chavasse, the second bishop, obtained a second Liverpool Cathedral Act which provided that once worship was taking place in a new cathedral St Peter's would be demolished and sold, the proceeds of the sale providing the necessary endowment for the chapter. The site of St Peter's was eventually sold to the city council in 1919 for £235,000.⁶³ That St Albans Abbey (which had become a parish church at the Reformation) would be the cathedral for its new see was clear from the outset. A dean was appointed by the Crown in 1900, by Letters Patent in exercise of the royal prerogative, but no chapter was incorporated. By convention, the dean appointed by the Crown is appointed as incumbent of the cathedral benefice. For none of the dioceses founded after 1880 was a dean and chapter constituted. (As we have seen, Southwell's college had been abolished by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.) From 1931 the incumbents of the parish churches concerned were styled 'provosts'.

Varying Degrees of Success

Truro was (and remains) a single-county diocese with a natural unity. As Owen Chadwick commented, 'The Cornish diocese transformed the church in Cornwall.'⁶⁴ *Newcastle* was originally also a single-county diocese, and thus a natural unit in terms of correlation with the corresponding secular unit (the county of Northumberland⁶⁵). The suggestion that the diocese should be coterminous with the county was a local one, but it meant that the diocese excluded that part of Tyneside which is south of the river.⁶⁶ Because these were natural units they had stability and have survived to the present day. (However, the creation of Tyne and Wear in the 1970s as a third county between Northumberland and County Durham, incorporating parts of each, means that the Diocese of Newcastle now corresponds neither to county boundaries nor to a social and economic unit.) The *Diocese of Liverpool* too had a natural unity, based not on an historic identity or correlation with a county but on social geography. Its creation was an indication of the wisdom of the 1847 commission in retaining what became the new diocese within the Diocese of Chester rather than transferring it to Manchester only to be separated from that new see thirty years later.

The *Diocese of Wakefield*, by contrast, was not a natural unit. It consisted of the southern part of the 1836 Diocese of Ripon, and divided the industrial area which was ultimately to become the ceremonial county of West Yorkshire, separating Wakefield and Halifax from Leeds (which became its metropolis) and Bradford. To quote Owen Chadwick again, 'Wakefield had no natural unity but became a success thanks to the extraordinary personality of its first bishop, little Walsham How.'⁶⁷ There had been much discussion in the mid-1870s as to which of the West Yorkshire towns should be the see city. Huddersfield was the largest, with a population of 70,000, closely followed by Halifax (65,000), while Wakefield only had 28,000. (Leeds and Bradford, which were to be retained by Ripon, had 259,000 and 145,000 respectively). Huddersfield's parish church was completely rebuilt earlier in the nineteenth century, whereas Halifax was a prestigious and had an impressive late mediaeval church. Wakefield, though much

⁶³ Morrish, 'Parish-Church Cathedrals, 1836-1931', pp. 455-456.

⁶⁴ Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, 2, p. 346.

⁶⁵ Newcastle also included the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed and the ancient civil parish of Alston, with its chapelries in Cumberland.

⁶⁶ Morrish, 'County and Urban Dioceses: Nineteenth-century Discussion on Ecclesiastical Geography', p. 289.

⁶⁷ Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, 2, p. 346.

smaller than either, was the area's administrative centre and the focus of its railway lines, had a sizeable mediaeval church and was eventually chosen. Though the Diocese of Ripon was relieved of half of its population, much of what was left, in Leeds and Bradford, was now at the very southern edge of the diocese, as Ripon was on its eastern edge.⁶⁸

As we have seen, the need to create a see of *St Albans* was recognized in 1847, in order to remove the absurdity created by the transfer of Hertfordshire and Essex (apart from East London) to Rochester the previous year. The new diocese consisted of Hertfordshire, the whole of Essex (the East London parishes having been detached from London and transferred to Rochester in 1866) and North Woolwich (anticipating that Kent exclave's later incorporation into Essex). But the 1877 diocese proved no more stable than the 1846 Rochester diocese and lasted only six years longer. Its two counties, stretching from Harwich on the East coast to Dunstable near the border with Buckinghamshire, were in themselves no more a natural unit than the 1846 Diocese of Rochester had been. People in Chelmsford did not look to St Albans as the focus of their community any more than they regarded Rochester as such. In 1914, 37 years after the diocese's inception, Essex and North Woolwich were detached to form the new Diocese of Chelmsford, while Bedfordshire was transferred from the equally unnatural and unstable 1837 Diocese of Ely. Thus only in 1914 was a natural pairing of the counties north of London achieved.

Like the coupling of Essex and Hertfordshire first in the Diocese of Rochester and then in that of St Albans, that of Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire in the Diocese of Lincoln from 1839/41 had not worked. In both cases this had been predicted by the commission of enquiry established by Lord John Russell, which in 1847 recommended the creation of sees of St Albans and Southwell in addition to proposing a Cornish see. In both cases, that commission too was mistaken – not in recommending the creation of those two sees, but in the allocation of counties to them. As we have seen, Hertfordshire should have been linked with Bedfordshire not Essex. Nottinghamshire, it was ultimately recognized, could not be paired with Derbyshire any more than with Lincolnshire. As Owen Chadwick put it, 'Derbyshire did not easily marry Nottinghamshire.'⁶⁹ Indeed, when R. A. Cross proposed a diocese for Nottinghamshire and parts of Derbyshire Bishop Wordsworth of Lincoln warned that the people of the two counties would be averse to their union in a single diocese. When the proposal was published various interested parties pointed out that it would not work. There was also criticism of the size of the diocese in terms of population. As early as 1888, four years after the Diocese of *Southwell* was established, covering Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, the Canterbury Provincial House of Laymen called for its subdivision on those grounds. The following year, Canon Gregory of St Paul's Cathedral told the Convocation of Canterbury that all the two counties had in common was mutual rivalry.⁷⁰ 45 years after its inception the Diocese of Southwell was divided, when a new Diocese of Derby created in 1927. Southwell could then be returned to the Province of York in 1936.

⁶⁸ P. S. Morrish, 'Leeds and the Dismemberment of the Diocese of Ripon', *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, second series, vol. 4 (1994), pp. 62-97, at pp. 75-82.

⁶⁹ Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, 2, p. 346.

⁷⁰ Morrish, 'County and Urban Dioceses: Nineteenth-century Discussion on Ecclesiastical Geography', pp. 290-291, 293.

The creation of the see of St Albans would have reduced Rochester to its core of the Deanery of Rochester. At the same time, the Diocese of Winchester, whose integrity Sumner had defended to his death in 1869, had become impossibly large, stretching as it did from Bournemouth in the south-western corner of Hampshire to Deptford in South-East London. The parliamentary divisions of Mid-Surrey and East Surrey (South London and the rural area of Surrey to the south, between London and Sussex) were therefore transferred from Winchester to Rochester, which had already in 1866 received back the South-East London parishes which it had lost to the Diocese of London twenty years earlier). This new ('third') Diocese of Rochester was no more a natural unit, and no more stable, than that of 1846 to 1866/77 or the new Diocese of St Albans, and it lasted only 27 years until the creation of the Diocese of Southwark in 1905.

The final Victorian diocese, bringing the number of English dioceses to thirty, was the renewed Diocese of *Bristol*. Its separation from the Diocese of Gloucester was provided for by the Bishopric of Bristol Act 1884. Raising the necessary endowment took thirteen years, and the diocese was finally constituted in 1897. It consists of the city and deanery of Bristol, two Gloucestershire deaneries (Bitton and Stapleton), three Somerset parishes transferred from Bath and Wells and the two Wiltshire deaneries which had been transferred to Gloucester and Bristol in 1837.

Twentieth-Century Bishoprics (1905-1927)

A diocese had been abolished and a new one created in 1836, one additional diocese had been created in 1847 and six between 1877 and 1888. Bristol had been re-established in 1897. The net increase in the number of dioceses during the nineteenth century had thus been eight over a period of 61 years, bringing the total to thirty. The early twentieth century was to see an unprecedented rush to create new dioceses: five were established before the First World War (two in 1905 and three in 1913), two in 1918 and no fewer than five in the four years from 1924 to 1927 – a total of twelve in 22 years. The last five sees had been approved by Parliament in 1924 and 1925, but in 1926 the House of Lords rejected the creation of a new Diocese of Shrewsbury. Since then no diocesan sees have been created or abolished, the number of dioceses in England remaining at 42.

Until the reforms of the 1830s and 1840s there had been huge variations in both the area and population of the English dioceses. The Diocese of Chester encompassed about 4,100 square miles and contained nearly two million inhabitants, whereas the Diocese of Oxford only covered around 750 square miles and its population was only around 139,000. The Ecclesiastical Commission was able significantly to reduce these discrepancies. The average population of the English and Welsh dioceses in 1831 was about 530,000, but despite the creation of eight additional dioceses between then and the end of the century, by 1901 the average population was about 900,000.⁷¹ Not only the 'diocesan revival' but also the revival of the Convocations and the creation of additional central church structures (voluntary bodies as well the Ecclesiastical Commissioners) had greatly increased what was expected of diocesan bishops and hence their workload. These factors prompted calls for further increases in the number of dioceses as the twentieth century began.

⁷¹ Morrish, 'County and Urban Dioceses: Nineteenth-century Discussion on Ecclesiastical Geography', pp. 293-294.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the principle that dioceses should normally be coterminous with counties had become well established. It was furthered both by the criticism of the shotgun marriage of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire and by the strengthened identity given to counties by the creation of county councils in 1888. It was not an absolute principle, however; it obviously did not apply to the largest and smallest counties, and it was generally accepted that in the urbanized industrial areas the (newer) social and economic unit should take precedence over the (older often no outdated) secular administrative boundaries.

Two Urban Bishoprics (1905)

When the ‘third’ Diocese of Rochester was formed in 1877 it contained 1.6 million people, but by 1905 the South London area of the diocese alone contained 2 million. As early as 1883 the Bishop of Rochester had recognized that a Diocese of Southwark would eventually be necessary, and purchased the advowson of St Saviour, Southwark, which would obviously become the cathedral church.⁷² A suffragan bishop of Southwark was appointed in 1891. In 1896 Bishop Talbot even constituted a cathedral chapter (albeit unincorporated) for what in 1897 became a pro-cathedral for South London.⁷³ Several attempts to secure an act of Parliament failed, but the Southwark and Birmingham Bishoprics Act was finally passed in 1904 and the see was established in 1905. The new diocese consisted of that part of what was by now the administrative County of London which is south of the Thames, together with the parliamentary divisions of Mid-Surrey and East Surrey to the south of London.

Serious discussion of a new diocese for the industrial West Midlands began in the mid-1870s, but there were different opinions about the see. Should it be Birmingham (the largest centre of population, and more easily accessible from all parts of the proposed diocese) or the historic see city of Coventry, or even ‘Birmingham and Coventry’? However, there were more populous dioceses in the queue for division than Worcester (which now included the whole of Warwickshire) and there was no serious pressure from within the new diocese, so nothing was done. In 1887 a committee of the Canterbury provincial House of Laymen recommended a diocese for the Borough of Birmingham (whose population would be 478,000 at the next census in 1891), possibly to be followed later by a Diocese of Coventry for the rest of Warwickshire. The elevation of Birmingham to city status in 1889 was another indication that it ought to be the centre of a diocese. Bishop Philpott of Worcester now threw his weight behind the idea. However, Philpott wished to include Coventry as well as Birmingham and to defer until later the choice of see. This was problematic, because critics alleged that rural Warwickshire had little in common with Birmingham, and there were disagreements as to whether Warwick itself should be included. Resistance to the proposed inclusion of three Staffordshire parishes from the Diocese of Lichfield was beaten off, however. Response to the appeal for an endowment was sluggish, partly because of uncertainty over the extent of the diocese and the location of the see, and partly because of a belief that surplus parochial revenues, especially from St Martin’s in the Bull Ring, Birmingham, could provide sufficient resources (while others were opposed to using parochial revenues at all). Philpott then resigned because of his advanced age. His successor, J. J. S. Perowne, applied for a suffragan and recommended the Rector of St Philip’s, Birmingham.

⁷² Morrish, ‘Parish Church Cathedrals, 1836-1931’, p. 442.

⁷³ Morrish, ‘Parish Church Cathedrals, 1836-1931’, p. 453.

The fact that he was consecrated to the (suffragan) See of Coventry did not help to win confidence in Birmingham. After further difficulties, the scheme was abandoned in 1892.⁷⁴

Instead, in addition to the suffragan bishopric, a new Archdeaconry of Birmingham was created later in 1892 – mostly out of the Archdeaconry of Coventry (the deaneries of Birmingham, Aston, Coeshill, Polesworth, Solihull, Sutton Coldfield and Northfield), but with some parishes from the Archdeaconry of Worcester (notably King’s Norton and Yardley). Nothing more was done before Perowne’s retirement in 1901. He was succeeded by Charles Gore, who was probably appointed in the hope that his concern for the working class together with his aristocratic ‘country’ connections might enable him to appeal to a wide spectrum of opinion within the Diocese of Worcester and successfully revive the scheme for a new diocese. He duly launched an appeal in 1903. The bishopric was included with that of Southwark in the Southwark and Birmingham Bishoprics Act 1904, and the diocese was established in 1905, the necessary endowment having been secured. Gore chose to become its first bishop, rather than staying at Worcester.⁷⁵

Though the core of the Diocese of Birmingham was the Archdeaconry of Birmingham in the Diocese of Worcester, it included not only parts of Warwickshire and Worcestershire but also three populous Staffordshire parishes (Handsworth, Harborne and Smethwick), taken from the Diocese of Lichfield. It was unusual among dioceses established to reflect a ‘natural unit’ in that the natural unit concerned was not one or two counties but an urban area together with at least part of its rural hinterland, including portions of three counties. However, those parts of the West Midlands conurbation beyond Smethwick towards Walsall and Wolverhampton were omitted from the new diocese, remaining instead in the Diocese of Lichfield.

York Committee (1907)

A committee consisting of the Bishop of Ripon (convener), the Archbishop of York and the Bishops of Durham and Manchester met in September 1907 to consider ‘the increase of the episcopate’ in the Northern Province. In 45 years the Province’s population had almost doubled, from 6.1 million to 11.7 million. In the north, the average diocesan population was over 250,000 higher than in the south (a difference equal to the population of the Diocese of Hereford). Furthermore, hilly and moorland areas made communications slower and between some places virtually non-existent. The report pointed out that development of ‘diocesan consciousness’ in some dioceses was hindered by the fact that they lacked ‘territorial coherence’, comprising parts of different administrative areas. This was a factor that had often been overlooked in the shaping of northern dioceses. Where there was ‘territorial coherence’ (as in Newcastle, Durham and Chester) this should be maintained by appointing suffragans instead of dividing the dioceses. Carlisle, though vast in area, had a relatively small population. Therefore,

⁷⁴ P. S. Morrish, ‘The Struggle to Create an Anglican Diocese of Birmingham’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 31 (1980), pp. 59-88, at pp. 61-72.

⁷⁵ Morrish, ‘The Struggle to Create an Anglican Diocese of Birmingham’, pp. 75-82; ‘County and Urban Dioceses: Nineteenth-century Discussion on Ecclesiastical Geography’, p. 295.

‘The real problem... is the problem of Lancashire and Yorkshire’.⁷⁶ The committee proceeded to review the dioceses in these two counties.

The Diocese of York, it found, ‘possesses a heavy population, a wide area and an incoherent territory’ (including the East Riding and parts of the North and West Ridings). If the diocese were reduced to York and the East Riding, it would be of ideal population size (500,000) with a manageable area. Given the Archbishop of York’s national responsibilities, it was desirable that his own diocese should not be too big. In the committee’s view, the West Riding’s population was such that it needed two if not three dioceses in addition to the *Diocese of Wakefield*, with sees in Sheffield, Leeds and (if a third see were possible) Bradford. Progress towards the creation of a *Diocese of Sheffield* (which would include York’s West Riding parishes) was already well advanced. (The Diocese was in fact established in 1913.) If *Dioceses of Leeds and Bradford* were created, Ripon would lose almost all of its West Riding population. It was therefore suggested that the *Diocese of Ripon* could be refocused as the diocese for the North Riding, which was another coherent area. If the Ripon, Knaresborough and Nidderdale areas were added to the North Riding the diocese’s population would be 450,000 and its area not much smaller than the reduced Diocese of York. (The committee also floated the possibility of a Diocese of Middlesbrough for the York part of the North Riding, but with the rather ambivalent comment that ‘There is much to be said for this scheme, provided an additional Bishopric in Yorkshire is practicable’ – such a diocese would in fact have rendered Ripon, without most of its West Riding area, unviable.)⁷⁷

As for Lancashire, the committee recommended that the Diocese of Liverpool should basically remain as it was, but that Manchester should be divided, creating two and perhaps ultimately three new dioceses. Initially there should be a diocese for Lancashire north of the Ribble plus the Archdeaconry of Blackburn. This would eventually become two dioceses. The remaining Diocese of Manchester (consisting of the Archdeaconry of Manchester) might itself later be divided. However, the Bishop of Manchester believed that this could never be done satisfactorily, and the committee as a whole recognized that a Diocese of Bolton (covering Bolton, Bury, Oldham and Rochdale) ‘could never be a homogenous whole’; some of the parishes (those in the Prestwich and Middleton deaneries) ‘would, in all their civil life, be absolutely dependent on Manchester, and in no sense connected with Bolton’. The committee was clear, however, that following the separation of the two northern archdeaconries, with their suffragan sees, from the diocese, the Bishop of Manchester would require a suffragan in the Manchester area.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ ‘Report of the Committee of the Upper House on the Increase of the Episcopate’, *York Journal of Convocation* (1908), Appendix, pp. xiv-xix, at pp. xiv-xv.

⁷⁷ ‘Report of the Committee of the Upper House on the Increase of the Episcopate’, pp. xvi-xvii.

⁷⁸ ‘Report of the Committee of the Upper House on the Increase of the Episcopate’, pp. xvii-xviii.



Figure 4
The Dioceses of England and Wales, 1909
 from M. W. Patterson, *A History of the Church of England*
 (2nd edn, new impression: London, 1914)

Three More Dioceses (1913)

Three more dioceses were established in 1913: Chelmsford, St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, and Sheffield. Thus five dioceses had been created in eight years, bringing the total number of English dioceses to 35 on the eve of the First World War.

The first two of these new dioceses resolved instability created earlier. Having been detached from London in 1846 and placed, with Hertfordshire, first under Rochester and then, from 1877, under St Albans, Essex was finally given its own diocesan see at *Chelmsford*. The growth of East London – in the area initially retained by London but then joined with the rest of Essex from 1866 – having made a separate diocese necessary. The creation of the *Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich* reunited the Archdeaconry of Sudbury (transferred from Norwich to Ely in 1837) with most of the rest of Suffolk, which was now detached from the Diocese of Norwich. Norwich retained the Deanery of Lothingland (covering the Lowestoft area). That area arguably has more in common with the Great Yarmouth area to the north than with the rest of Suffolk – as demonstrated by the fact that in July 2008 the Boundary Committee proposed that Lowestoft itself and the parishes immediately adjoining it should be joined with Norfolk under a new unitary authority.

In 1915 Ely (which would otherwise have been reduced to the counties of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire) was ‘compensated’ with an area of South-west Norfolk. Although at first sight this seems anomalous, the western and southern portions of this area, west of the Great Ouse and south of Downham Market, are fenland and thus topographically like the Diocese of Ely and unlike the rest of Norfolk (the fenland originally having been a sparsely populated border area). The whole of the area is also significantly closer to Ely (which lies on the eastern side of its diocese) than it is to Norwich.

The third diocese, that of *Sheffield*, was formed out of the Diocese of York as the Diocese of Wakefield had earlier been formed out of the Diocese of Ripon. A small part of the Diocese of Southwell now in the see city of Sheffield was transferred to the new diocese.

Canterbury Provincial Review (1913-1914)

In 1912 the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury passed a resolution calling for a committee to consider additional dioceses and the adjustment of diocesan boundaries in the Province of Canterbury. The committee was established in 1913. Its approach was to establish principles to govern the division of dioceses and readjustment of boundaries and then to categorize dioceses according to those principles, as follows:

- (a) those which either did not need division or were too weak to be divided;
- (b) those for which schemes had already been formulated;
- (c) those which were too large and could simply be sub-divided;
- (d) those for which an effective scheme would need to involve territory from neighbouring dioceses
- (e) the Diocese of London, and
- (f) the dioceses of Wales

By the time war was declared in 1914 the committee had addressed – to some extent at least – all of these categories other than the Diocese of London and the dioceses in Wales. It therefore presented a partial report to the Archbishop in 1915, which was published the following year.⁷⁹

The report began by rehearsing the arguments for an increase in the number of dioceses. It is interesting to note that the case was based primarily not on the number of clergy nor on the number of churchgoers but on population, the whole population being seen as under the care of the bishops of the Church of England. In 1800 there had been 27 bishops in the two Provinces (including Wales and the Isle of Man) for a population of 9 million, whereas in 1914 there were 40 diocesan bishops (excluding Sodor and Man) – an increase of 50% – for a population of 36 million (an increase of 200%). While improved communications and new technology increased episcopal efficiency, they also placed greater burdens on bishops. Indications of a need for more dioceses included the following:

- In larger dioceses many parishes and clergy were losing touch with their bishop;
- at least half of the diocesan bishops had to make use of suffragan or assistant bishops (clearly seen as a second-best solution, the ideal being a diocese small enough for a diocesan bishop to oversee it on his own);
- most church people and even many active church workers had ‘no adequate sense of a diocesan corporate life’;

⁷⁹ *The Dioceses of the Province of Canterbury, being the first report of the committee appointed to consider the need for the formation of new dioceses and the re-adjustment of existing boundaries* (London, 1916), pp. 3, 6-7.

- many bishops were unable ‘to meet, as they would desire, the calls upon their time, thought and strength’ and some had sacrificed their health and even their life in attempting ‘to fulfil duties beyond the powers of any single man’ (Bishops Creighton of London and Paget of Oxford were named as examples).⁸⁰

Evidence was then supplied as to the stress that diocesan bishops were under and the benefits that had resulted from earlier sub-division of dioceses. The work of diocesan bishops was described under the headings ‘spiritual’, ‘disciplinary’, ‘administrative’ and ‘general’ (ie the House of Lords and church work at the national level).⁸¹ The report pointed out that recent creations of new dioceses had mostly been intended to address the needs of urban areas and pointed to the difficulties faced by clergy and people in the countryside – where, it was suggested, there was a need for a greater sense of diocesan unity to overcome problems of isolation, and for overnight visits by the bishop to isolated clergy in need of support and encouragement. Attention was also drawn to the time and expense involved when rural clergy and laypeople travelled to diocesan meetings in geographically large dioceses, as well as to the needs of urban and unbeneficed clergy.⁸²

The committee was clear that the territory of all dioceses should if possible coincide with a county, a ‘great municipality’ or a clearly-marked division of a municipal area. It believed that ‘The laity will be more ready to realise their place in the Diocese, and to regard their Cathedral as the centre of local life, if the areas of ecclesiastical and civil responsibility coincide.’ It quoted with approval a report which argued that ‘One of the great advantages in reconstructing a Diocese on county lines is to be found in the power of co-operating with the system of the State.’ However, where industrial developments had submerged ancient boundaries, dioceses should correspond to modern social and economic units, including both the municipal centre and its urban and rural hinterlands, so that the diocese contains ‘the population which is unified by easy communications, by daily intercourse in social and business life, and by common interests’.⁸³

The report stressed repeatedly that the circumstances of each case were different and therefore a cast-iron limit could not be imposed on the number of parishes, clergy, communicants or inhabitants in a diocese. Large numbers could be dealt with more easily in an urban diocese than in a large diocese of scattered settlements with indifferent communications. Where there was a strong diocesan identity, focused for example on a historic cathedral, its unity should not lightly be broken. The committee concluded that

‘Any attempt to reconstruct our Dioceses on lines adopted from considerations of population and extent only, without regard to county, commercial, social and other ties, would not serve the Church any better than it would be served by an attempt to treat all parishes on similar principles.’

Subject to these considerations, however, if a diocese contained more than 300 parishes and extended beyond the boundaries of a single county or county borough there would be a *prima*

⁸⁰ *The Dioceses of the Province of Canterbury*, pp. 10-11.

⁸¹ *The Dioceses of the Province of Canterbury*, pp. 12-15.

⁸² *The Dioceses of the Province of Canterbury*, pp. 15-19.

⁸³ *The Dioceses of the Province of Canterbury*, pp. 20-22.

facie case for reorganization, ‘provided that it is possible to form new Dioceses based upon such boundaries, or upon large industrial areas united by the common interests of the people’.⁸⁴

Where an over-large diocese could not sensibly be divided, suffragan bishops might be an acceptable solution:

‘Though the evidence submitted satisfies the Committee that such appointments cannot as a rule be accepted as a permanent remedy for the disadvantages of an overgrown See, yet it must be recognised that in certain Dioceses no basis of partition can be suggested which would not be injurious at the present stage, and in such cases the help of Suffragan Bishops appears to be still the wisest solution... The Committee is convinced by testimony from many quarters that the appointment of Bishops Suffragan in overgrown Dioceses is only desirable as a temporary expedient while preparing for future subdivision; or in Sees which cannot be divided without divorcing Diocesan loyalty and organisation from the natural currents and sentiments of local life.’⁸⁵

On the basis of these principles, the committee prepared proposals which it had hoped to discuss with diocesan representatives. It categorized the dioceses of the Province of Canterbury as follows:

- (a) *Dioceses which did not require division:*
Birmingham, Chichester, Ely, Rochester, St Albans, Truro;
Chelmsford, Lincoln, Norwich, St Edmundsbury & Ipswich (10).
(In the case of the last four, identity with a county, the accessibility of the see city and its importance in local life precluded division – though ‘the Parts of Holland’, having its own county council, could be transferred to Peterborough on creation of a see of Leicester.)
- (b) *Dioceses urgently needing division, for which plans had already been formulated:*
Lichfield (to separate northern Shropshire from Staffordshire),
Oxford (to separate the three counties of Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire),
Worcester (to separate Worcestershire and Warwickshire).
- (c) *Overlarge diocese which could simply be divided:*
Southwell (to separate Derbyshire from Nottinghamshire).
- (d) *Dioceses where reorganization would involve territory from other dioceses:*
Bath and Wells, Bristol, Canterbury, Exeter, Gloucester, Hereford, Peterborough,
Salisbury, Southwark, Winchester.

London and the Welsh dioceses were yet to be considered.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ *The Dioceses of the Province of Canterbury*, pp. 20-22.

⁸⁵ *The Dioceses of the Province of Canterbury*, pp. 22-23.

⁸⁶ *The Dioceses of the Province of Canterbury*, pp. 24-26.

The committee made the following specific proposals:

- a new diocese for Derbyshire (excluding suburbs of Sheffield and a few outlying parishes);
- division of the Diocese of Winchester;
- a Diocese of Plymouth (taken from the Diocese of Exeter);
- enlargement and consolidation of the Diocese of Bristol, taking in parts of the Diocese of Bath and Wells connected with Bristol;
- a diocese for Dorset (taken from the Diocese of Salisbury);
- a diocese for Leicestershire (taken from the Diocese of Peterborough);
- a redrawn Diocese of Peterborough, possibly including the ‘Parts of Holland’ from the Diocese of Lincoln, ‘making Peterborough the Diocesan Centre of the district of which it is the railway centre and market’.⁸⁷

Of the three schemes already under consideration in the diocese concerned, only one came about. A Diocese of Coventry was created in 1918, but Parliament rejected a Diocese of Shrewsbury in 1926 and the Diocese of Oxford continues to cover three counties. Of the committee’s seven proposals, three succeeded: in the 1920s the Dioceses of Derby and Leicester were created and the Dioceses of Guildford and Portsmouth were carved out of the Diocese of Winchester. The Diocese of Exeter continues to be a large diocese with poor communications, the Diocese of Bristol continues not to include the whole of the Bristol urban area, the Diocese of Peterborough continues not to include its rural hinterland to the north or south (or even much of the modern city of Peterborough), and Dorset remains within the Diocese of Salisbury.

Bradford and Coventry (1918)

The Bishoprics of Bradford and Coventry Act 1918 provided for the creation of those two dioceses. The *Diocese of Coventry* was constituted in the same year, consisting of the Archdeaconries of Coventry and Warwick, except for four rural deaneries which remained in the Diocese of Worcester.

By 1911 the population of the residual Diocese of Ripon (what remained after the southern part became the Diocese of Wakefield) had reached almost 1.2 million, and a need for division was generally felt. As we have seen, in 1907 a committee of the Upper House of the York Convocation had looked at the Yorkshire dioceses and proposed allocating the East Riding only to the Diocese of York, making the Diocese of Ripon cover the whole of the North Riding, and dividing the West Riding into four dioceses: Wakefield, Sheffield, Bradford and Leeds. Four of the dioceses would have been comparable in population: Ripon (nearly 450,000), York

⁸⁷ *The Dioceses of the Province of Canterbury*, p. 27.

(500,000), Bradford (475,000) and Leeds (525,000); Wakefield and Sheffield would be larger. The Diocese of Leeds would have been not unlike the metropolitan borough of Leeds created in the 1970s. Views about this radical proposal were mixed, however, and there was a certain lack of enthusiasm in Leeds itself for a Bishop of Leeds – not least in view of the prominent position and influence already enjoyed within Leeds by the Vicar of Leeds. Discussion rumbled on until 1913, when Archbishop Lang informed the Bishop of Ripon that he was willing to support a new Diocese of Bradford once the Diocese of Sheffield had been established (as it was later that year) but was not prepared to give up York's part of the North Riding to Ripon. Without that addition to the Diocese of Ripon, a Diocese of Leeds could not be created, since the rump of the Diocese of Ripon, with only 100,000 inhabitants, would no longer be viable. *The Diocese of Bradford* was duly established in 1919.⁸⁸ Two parishes south-east of Bradford (Wyke and Tong) were transferred to the new diocese from Wakefield in 1919 and in turn the deaneries of Hemsworth and Pontefract were transferred to Wakefield from York in 1926.

The Church Assembly Dioceses and the Proposed Diocese of Shrewsbury (1924-1927)

The Church Assembly, established in 1920, wasted no time in setting up a Committee on New Sees and Provinces, chaired by William Temple (then Bishop of Manchester), and this reported in 1922. (The Committee's nine clerical members comprised three diocesan bishops, two deans, an archdeacon, two canons and a prebendary. It is noteworthy that the nine lay members included, in addition to two lay women, the Duke of Northumberland, Sir Reginald Antrobus, KCMG, CB, and no fewer than five MPs – one of them a baronet.) In 1921 the Committee circulated a draft report to the dioceses which would be affected by its proposals. Its final report, dated January 1922, took account of their responses.⁸⁹

The Committee's report began by setting out principles for the formation of new sees, while stressing that these were not rigid rules but should be subject to variation according to new circumstances. These principles may be summarized thus:

Size

- Dioceses should generally consist of between 150 and 250 benefices, with between 200 and 300 clergy (bearing in mind that in a mainly urban diocese the number of clergy might be rather larger than in a mainly rural diocese).
- New dioceses should not be so large as to require more than one suffragan. ('The system of dividing a diocese between two or more suffragans is considered unsatisfactory.')
- No important town should be more than 25 miles and no village more than 30 or 35 miles from the 'place of diocesan meetings'.

⁸⁸ Morrish, 'Leeds and the Dismemberment of the Diocese of Ripon', pp. 82, 85-86, 88-9, 93.

⁸⁹ *Report of the Committee on New Sees and Provinces* (NA 53, 1922), p. 1.

Composition

- If possible, a new diocese should contain a fair proportion of rural parishes.
- The whole of any county borough should be in the same diocese.⁹⁰

The report also made the important point that the most convenient unit for ‘spiritual supervision’ might be different from the most sensible unit for administration, and that it would therefore ‘very likely be necessary that certain dioceses should be grouped together for the purpose of finance and patronage on the ground that the best unit for spiritual supervision may often be too small for these purposes’. It argued that since the Ecclesiastical Commissioners’ funds were largely derived from the former estates of bishops and cathedrals it would be appropriate for part of their resources to be devoted to the creation of new dioceses.⁹¹

In the light of its principles the Committee recommended twelve new sees, as follows:

- Guildford (Surrey west of the Diocese of Southwark)
- Portsmouth and the Wight (S.E. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight)
- Derby (Derbyshire, except Glossop)
- Leicester (Leicestershire)
- Shrewsbury (Shropshire, including southern Shropshire from the Diocese of Hereford)
- Blackburn archdeaconry (except the deanery of Rawtensall), plus Lancashire south of the Wyre (to be offset by transferring to Manchester the deaneries of Stockport and Motttram from the Diocese of Chester and the deanery of Glossop from the Diocese of Southwell)
- Lancaster (Lancashire north of the Wyre, including the area in the Diocese of Carlisle)
- Buckinghamshire
- Berkshire (except the deaneries of Abingdon, Vale of the White Horse and Wantage)
- Dorset (possibly offset by returning northern Wiltshire to Salisbury)
- East Sussex (not necessarily coterminous with the administrative division of the county, and possibly including portions of the Diocese of Canterbury so as to lighten the Archbishop’s workload)
- Plymouth (including some Cornish parishes)

It also considered that a new diocese should be formed out of the Diocese of York, and suggested a diocese for the East Riding as a possibility. Other cases requiring consideration in the near future included the metropolitan area (London, Southwark and Chelmsford), Devon (a possible diocese for North Devon), Somerset (a possible Diocese of Taunton) and the Diocese of Ripon (a possible Diocese of Leeds, offset by transferring part of the Diocese of York to Ripon).⁹² A supplementary report, issued in May 1922, accepted that the proposed Diocese of Lancaster would be too small and therefore proposed a new diocese consisting of the Archdeaconries of Lancaster and Blackburn, except the deanery of Rossendale.⁹³ The firstfruits of these reports

⁹⁰ *Report of the Committee on New Sees and Provinces*, p. 2.

⁹¹ *Report of the Committee on New Sees and Provinces*, p. 5.

⁹² *Report of the Committee on New Sees and Provinces*, pp. 4-5.

⁹³ *Supplementary Report of the Committee on New Sees and Provinces* (NA 53A, 1922).

were draft Measures introduced in 1923 for the division of the Dioceses of Winchester and Southwell (to create Dioceses of Guildford, Portsmouth and Derby) and the creation of a Diocese of Blackburn. Draft Measures to create Dioceses of Leicester and Shrewsbury followed in 1925.

The report was criticized by the Bishop of Gloucester, A. C. Headlam, in an article in the *Church Quarterly Review*. In part, his objection to ‘little dioceses’ was that the diocesan bishop would be expected (in modern terms) to become a ‘micro-manager’: ‘The tendency would grow more and more for many things to be referred to him which the clergy may reasonably settle themselves’:

‘If you transform a Bishop from an overseer of a diocese into a super-parish priest, you will increase his work, you will use him up on a large number of small details which other people could concern themselves with quite well, and you would take away the initiative of the parish priest.’⁹⁴

Headlam’s other main objection to the Committee’s report was that

‘The general characteristic of their work seems to be that they pay little or no attention to county divisions or to tradition. They are prepared to cut off bits of one county and stick them on to another, and they ignore the feelings of anyone but the enthusiastic members of their own party.’⁹⁵

For example, creation of a Diocese of Shrewsbury would leave Hereford too small, so it would probably need to be offset by the addition of an area of Headlam’s own Diocese of Gloucester. Similarly, a diocese for Dorset would leave Salisbury too small. Northern Wiltshire would need to be returned and this would need to be offset by transferring part of the Diocese of Gloucester to Bristol. To summarize his objection, the Committee appeared to regard the creation of new dioceses primarily as an exercise in in-house ecclesiastical arithmetic and to pay insufficient attention to issues of identity affecting the wider community. In his view, the fundamental principle should be that

‘Where possible a Diocese should be conterminous with a county, or nearly so. That harmonizes both with ecclesiastical tradition and with the habits and thoughts of English provincial life. Almost the whole of English provincial life is organized on the basis of the county, its local government, its amusements and its games, and where it is possible this should be the unit for the Diocese. But there are certain cases where counties are too small, and certain cases where counties are too large.’⁹⁶

Headlam accepted the need for three of the six dioceses which were the subject of Church Assembly Measures: a Diocese of Derby covering Derbyshire (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire having ‘no real connection with one another’), a Diocese of Blackburn to reduce the Manchester diocese to manageable proportions and a Diocese of Leicester. However, he objected that both the Portsmouth and Guildford dioceses would be too small and that ‘they will have no cohesion

⁹⁴ A. C. Headlam, ‘Little Bishoprics’, *Church Quarterly Review*, 97 (1923), 146-163 at p. 147.

⁹⁵ Headlam, ‘Little Bishoprics’, p. 147.

⁹⁶ Headlam, ‘Little Bishoprics’, p. 158.

at all, they will be purely artificial creations, divorced from the natural provincial life of the country'.⁹⁷ He was particularly critical of the proposed Diocese of Portsmouth:

'Portsmouth is a town with no commercial wealth behind it at all; it is decaying, dependent upon the Navy policy of the time; it has a huge number of unemployed at present, it may have more; it is not likely that great commercial developments will take place there... It is yoked with the Isle of Wight, which detests the arrangement, and with Rural Deaneries in Hampshire, which do not in the least see why they should be separated from Winchester. Altogether it seems a thoroughly ill-thought-out scheme.'⁹⁸

The 1922 report resulted in the creation of five dioceses: Blackburn (1924), Leicester (1926), Guildford (1927), Derby (1927) and Portsmouth (1927). It is interesting to note that two of these were county dioceses (Leicester and Derby) and that Blackburn and (despite Headlam's strictures) Guildford made sense geographically (Blackburn consisting of the bulk of Lancashire south of Cumberland and outside the Manchester and Liverpool areas, Guildford principally of Surrey apart from the area south of London).

The four Measures to create these five dioceses were approved by Parliament, increasing the number of English dioceses to its present level (42). In 1926, however, the Bishopric of Shrewsbury Measure was rejected by the House of Lords. There had been significant doubt within the Church Assembly about the wisdom of the Measure. The Revision Stage was adjourned to allow a survey of the incumbents, churchwardens and PCCs of the two dioceses concerned (Hereford and Lichfield) to be conducted and the results considered by a committee. The new diocese was supported overwhelmingly within the Diocese of Lichfield, and only eight parishes out of 138 in the northern part of Shropshire indicated a preference for joining the Diocese of Hereford. By contrast, only a small majority of the Shropshire parishes in the Diocese of Hereford preferred the new diocese to a transfer of the northern Shropshire parishes to the Diocese of Hereford, and the Herefordshire parishes, fearing that the new diocese would render their diocese unviable, voted more than 4 to 1 against it. In the light of these results the special committee recommended that the scheme proceed, but only after the New Sees Committee had reported on whether, after creation of a new Diocese of Shrewsbury, Herefordshire should be absorbed into the Diocese of Worcester (prefiguring the ill-fated 1974 merger of the two administrative counties).⁹⁹ An interesting (and perhaps unique) aspect of this case was that the Diocese of Hereford was a 1,200 year-old unit. It dated from Saxon times, when the diocese was established for the old tribe of the Magonsaetan. When that part of England was shired the Magonsaetan's area was divided between the two counties of Hereford and Shropshire (perhaps as a 'divide and rule' exercise), but despite this its unity has survived for a thousand years in the form of the Diocese of Hereford. The defeat of the Shrewsbury Bishopric Measure marked the end of the creation of new dioceses in the Church of England. The 1922 committee's proposals had been brought forward roughly in the order of their plausibility and local acceptability, and the rejection of the Diocese of Shrewsbury therefore meant the end of the road.

⁹⁷ Headlam, 'Little Bishoprics', pp. 154-155.

⁹⁸ Headlam, 'Little Bishoprics', pp. 156, 159.

⁹⁹ *Report of the Committee appointed to consider matters arising in respect to the proposed Bishopric of Shrewsbury* (CA 153, 1925).

**Diocesan Sees of England founded up to 1542,
grouped by date of inception**

Pre-Conquest Sees (11)

Canterbury
Bath and Wells (transferred to Bath in 1090; joint see 1245)
Durham
Exeter
Hereford
Lichfield (transferred to Chester in 1075; joint see with Coventry 1228)
London
Rochester
Winchester
Worcester
York

Sees transferred 1066-1094 (4)

Chichester (1075)
Lincoln (1075)
Salisbury (Old Sarum 1075, Salisbury 1219)
Norwich (1094)

Twelfth-century sees (2)

Ely (1109)
Carlisle (1133)

[17 pre-Reformation sees]

Henrician sees (5)

Chester (1541)
Gloucester (1541)
Peterborough (1541)
[Bristol (1542; united with Gloucester, 1836-1897)]
Oxford (1542)

[22 pre-19th century sees]

Diocesan Sees of England founded in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, grouped by date of inception

Sees founded by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners (1836-1847) (2)

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------|--|
| 22. | Ripon (1836) | <i>Ecclesiastical Commissioners Act 1836</i> |
| 23. | Manchester (1847) | <i>Manchester Bishopric Act 1847</i> |

Late Victorian Sees (1877-1888) (6)

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 24. | St Albans (1877) | <i>Bishopric of St Albans Act 1875</i> |
| 25. | Truro (1877) | <i>Bishopric of Truro Act 1876</i> |
| 26. | Liverpool (1880) | <i>Bishoprics Act 1878</i> |
| 27. | Newcastle (1882) | <i>Bishoprics Act 1878</i> |
| 28. | Southwell (1884) | <i>Bishoprics Act 1878</i> |
| 29. | Wakefield (1888) | <i>Bishoprics Act 1878</i> |
| 30. | [A separate Diocese of Bristol was re-established in 1897:
<i>Bishopric of Bristol Act 1884</i>] | |

Sees founded in the first quarter of the twentieth century (1905-1927) (12)

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------|---|
| 31. | Birmingham (1905) | <i>Southwark and Birmingham Bishoprics Act 1904</i> |
| 32. | Southwark (1905) | <i>Southwark and Birmingham Bishoprics Act 1904</i> |
| 33. | Chelmsford (1913)) | |
| 34. | St Edmundsbury) | <i>Bishoprics of Sheffield, Chelmsford,
and Ipswich (1913)) and for the County of Suffolk Act 1913</i> |
| | and Ipswich (1913)) | |
| 35. | Sheffield (1913)) | |
| 36. | Coventry (1918) | <i>Bishoprics of Bradford and Coventry Act 1918</i> |
| 37. | Bradford (1919) | <i>Bishoprics of Bradford and Coventry Act 1918</i> |
| 38. | Blackburn (1924) | <i>Bishopric of Blackburn Measure 1923</i> |
| 39. | Leicester (1926) | <i>Bishopric of Leicester Measure 1925</i> |
| 40. | Guildford (1927) | <i>Diocese of Winchester (Division) Measure 1923</i> |
| 41. | Derby (1927) | <i>Diocese of Southwell (Division) Measure 1923</i> |
| 42. | Portsmouth (1927) | <i>Diocese of Winchester (Division) Measure 1923</i> |

The only change to the diocesan and provincial structure of the Church of England in the mid-twentieth century came in 1936 when, following the decoupling of Derbyshire from Nottinghamshire, the Diocese of Southwell was returned to the Province of York (from which it had been removed in 1839).

The Genesis of the Dioceses Measure 1978 (1967-1978)

In 1965 a commission was established by the Archbishop of Canterbury with the agreement of the diocesan bishops concerned, under the chairmanship of Sir John Arbuthnot, to look at the diocesan structure of South-East England. The main commission looked at the Diocese of London and its neighbours (Chelmsford, St Albans, Southwark and Rochester, plus Canterbury), while two sub-commissions considered the Diocese of Oxford and the Dioceses of Winchester, Portsmouth, Guildford and Chichester. The Commission was instructed to take as the minimum size for a diocese a population of 900,000 or a total of 200 incumbencies (counting benefices held in plurality as a single incumbency), though it was free to recommend exceptions and also to consider as an alternative smaller dioceses co-operating together. It was also to consider whether each diocese should, as far as possible, consist of a mixture of urban, suburban and rural areas.¹⁰⁰

The Commission's report, *Diocesan Boundaries*, was published in 1967. In Chapter III it considered the optimum size of a diocese and identified a lack of general agreement within the Church of England about this. Views depended on how diocesan episcopacy was understood. Those who believed that a diocesan bishop as Father in God should spend a day a year in each parish and be in frequent contact with the clergy favoured small dioceses. Others thought it unnecessary for diocesan bishops to have such detailed involvement in the lives of their parishes. It was clear that smaller dioceses could only work if they shared administration and worked through joint bodies for certain purposes.¹⁰¹ There was a related disagreement as to the desirability of suffragan bishops, considered in Chapter IV. There could only be one Father in God and for some the ideal was dioceses so small that suffragans would be unnecessary. The Commission, however, believed that in each diocese there should be a suffragan to whom episcopal powers could be delegated completely during the illness or absence of the bishop. The Commission noted the problems arising when a suffragan appointed by one diocesan continued in office despite the very different needs of his successor and recommended (as the Pilling Report *Talent and Calling* did forty years later) that more use should be made of the possibility of translating suffragans to other suffragan sees. It also argued that the archbishop of the province should be involved legally (and not just as a matter of practice and convention) in the nomination of suffragans.¹⁰²

In Chapter V the Commission considered whether it was more important for dioceses to conform to county boundaries or to include a mixture of urban, suburban and rural parishes (which in London would have meant boundaries 'drawn radially, like slices of cake', from the centre out into the surrounding counties – as is the case with the Diocese of Southwark) and came down firmly in favour of adhering to civil boundaries, for a number of reasons, including the advantage of correspondence with local government units in matters such as education and the desirability of reflecting local senses of belonging: 'Much as co-operation and fellowship between areas of different character is desirable, it seems unlikely that in practice Wandsworth, for example, could be persuaded to look to Guildford as its spiritual centre, or Haringey to St Albans.' The

¹⁰⁰ *Diocesan Boundaries, being the Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on the Organisation of the Church by Dioceses in London and the South-East of England, 1965/7* (CA 1653, 1967), pp. 9-10.

¹⁰¹ *Diocesan Boundaries*, pp. 14-16.

¹⁰² *Diocesan Boundaries*, pp. 17-20.

Commission therefore recommended that diocesan boundaries should not cross the perimeter of the Greater London area.¹⁰³ The boundaries of other churches were also taken into account. The Commission noted that the Methodist Church consisted of societies not parishes, so that its boundaries could not be defined precisely on a map. At that time, Methodist districts were ‘more extensive in area than either the existing or the proposed dioceses’ and seemed ‘more related to the geography of Methodism than to the general distribution of population, and take no account of county boundaries’.¹⁰⁴ The other main free churches did, however, have units corresponding with the Greater London area. The Roman Catholic dioceses in the South-East were each co-terminous with one or more counties, and this was another reason for Anglican dioceses to be conformed to county boundaries.¹⁰⁵

In the light of these considerations the Commission identified the following ‘Guiding Principles’:

- ‘Pastoral considerations, bearing in mind the effective exercise of episcopate..., should pre-dominate.’
- Units of organization should be financially viable.
- ‘Economy should be exercised wherever this can be done without harm to the main purpose.’
- ‘Existing diocesan boundaries should not be disturbed unless there are clear advantages.’
- ‘People who regard themselves as a natural group in lay life should so far as possible be kept together in one diocese.’
- ‘Great regard must be paid to ease of communication. Minutes, not miles, are the important factor today.’
- ‘We pay considerable regard to local government boundaries, particularly those of counties and the new London Boroughs, because we feel that mutual loyalties strengthen both Church and State. No London Borough should be split between two dioceses.’
- ‘We do not think that an admixture of suburban, urban and rural livings is essential.’
- The bishop of a new diocese should have his *cathedra* in a parish church, with the minimal staffing for which the Cathedrals Measure 1963 provided.
- Changes should facilitate co-operation with other churches.
- ‘In considering any alteration in diocesan boundaries we have regard to the direction in which the area looks in its secular affairs and whether the alteration will make it easier or more difficult for the cathedral to be the centre of worship and diocesan life.’¹⁰⁶

With these Guiding Principles in mind, the Commission proposed five dioceses for Greater London, roughly equal in terms of population:

- London (City, Westminster, Camden, Islington, Haringey, Enfield and Barnet) [effectively, the present Two Cities and Edmonton Areas, plus Islington from Stepney];

¹⁰³ *Diocesan Boundaries*, pp. 22-24.

¹⁰⁴ *Diocesan Boundaries*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁵ *Diocesan Boundaries*, pp. 31-34.

¹⁰⁶ *Diocesan Boundaries*, pp. 35-36.

- Barking (Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Waltham Forest, Newham, Barking, Redbridge and Havering) [ie the other two Stepney boroughs and the five boroughs in Chelmsford];
- Kensington (Kensington and Chelsea, Hammersmith, Hounslow, Brent, Ealing, Harrow and Hillingdon) [effectively the present Kensington and Willesden Areas, minus what is now Surrey north of the Thames];
- Southwark (Southwark, Lewisham, Greenwich, Bexley and Bromley) [ie the present Woolwich Area and the two boroughs in Rochester];
- Croydon (Richmond, Wandsworth, Kingston, Merton, Lambeth, Sutton and Croydon) [ie the present Kingston and Croydon areas, minus the Surrey part of Croydon]

The cathedrals would be: St Paul's, Southwark, Barking Parish Church, St Mary Abbots and Croydon Parish Church. Each diocese would have one suffragan and two archdeacons, though in most cases the suffragan would also be one of the archdeacons. (This would represent a reduction, since in 1967 five dioceses had part of the metropolitan area in their dioceses, five suffragans and nine archdeacons worked almost exclusively within it, and three suffragans and one archdeacon had some responsibilities within Greater London.) It was envisaged that much of the work would be shared between the dioceses, and there would be a college of bishops for the Greater London area, with a Regional Council chaired by the Bishop of London and a Regional Board of Finance (in addition to diocesan boards) to pay for shared services.¹⁰⁷

In consequence of the removal of Bexley and Bromley from Rochester and in order to reduce the Archbishop of Canterbury's diocesan work, the Commission proposed to transfer from Canterbury to Rochester the Isle of Sheppey and the whole of the Maidstone rural district (currently split between the two dioceses). The See of Maidstone would go into abeyance, though a See of Ashford could be created if the Archbishop needed a suffragan to undertake special duties (for example, Bishop to the Forces). St Albans would lose its small area within Greater London but gain the small areas of Hertfordshire currently in the Diocese of London. Chelmsford would be viable as a diocese without its five London boroughs.¹⁰⁸

The sub-commission for Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight detected no general desire for division of the Diocese of Chichester, but recommended that Horsham become a second suffragan see. Guildford would gain Surrey north of the Thames from London and Surrey south of London from Southwark, while retaining its small areas of Hampshire. The sub-commission considered but rejected adding part of Chichester (a diocese with a natural coherence) to Portsmouth, adding Southampton to Portsmouth (the cities being very different and Southampton being an important component of the Diocese of Winchester) and reintegrating Portsmouth into Winchester (a solution which would make Winchester too big and was not advocated by a substantial body of opinion). Continuance of the Diocese of Portsmouth was therefore recommended. The sub-commission also recommended that if county boundaries were changed so as to unite Bournemouth (Hants) with Poole (Dorset) – as happened in 1974 – that area should be transferred to the Diocese of Salisbury. Winchester, which currently had one

¹⁰⁷ *Diocesan Boundaries*, pp. 39-42, 76-79.

¹⁰⁸ *Diocesan Boundaries*, pp. 43-46.

suffragan and an active assistant bishop, should have two suffragans. Generally, it was recommended that diocesan boundaries should be rationalized so as to follow county boundaries where there were currently minor discrepancies.¹⁰⁹

The other sub-commission recommended the division of the Diocese of Oxford into three county dioceses: Oxford (Oxfordshire), Reading (Berkshire) and Aylesbury (Buckinghamshire). A number of reasons for this were advanced, including the area, number of parishes and number of clergy and the fact that ‘In large parts of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire there is no sense of belonging to the diocese of Oxford, and no real unity with it, or feeling of common purpose.’ Combination of one or other of those counties with Oxfordshire was rejected, as were solutions involving the division of those counties. It was recommended that there should be shared administration and some joint boards and services between the three dioceses. Each diocese would have two archdeacons, one of whom would also be a suffragan bishop.¹¹⁰

Chapter XIII of the report offered a great deal of detail about the financial, administrative and staffing arrangements of the proposed new dioceses, while Chapter XIV showed how the South-East could be divided into smaller dioceses if that were preferred.

When the Church Assembly considered the report, debate was adjourned so that the Standing Committee could report on the issues it raised. In its report it commented that ‘the financial implications of the proposals have been the subject of weighty criticism’, but pointed out that the Commission’s work had arisen partly from the need for more suffragan bishops and that ‘If the Commission’s proposals are not implemented these needs remain and to satisfy them will cost money.’¹¹¹

In response to the report the Church Assembly commissioned three pieces of work:

- a Cathedrals and New Dioceses Committee was formed to prepare such legislation as the dioceses concerned might request and to prepare proposals for cathedrals for the new dioceses;
- the Standing Committee was asked to set up a committee to look at the London area and report on what proposals for it might be most generally acceptable;
- the Advisory Council on the Church’s Ministry (ACCM) was asked to report on the relations between bishops, clergy and laity with a view to establishing the most appropriate size for dioceses and to consider further the alternative of small dioceses.

In 1969 the Cathedrals and New Dioceses Committee submitted its first report, which included initial proposals for what eventually became the Dioceses Measure 1978.¹¹² The report of the ACCM working party, Bishops and Dioceses, was published in 1971. It proposed different forms of episcopacy for different types of diocese:

¹⁰⁹ *Diocesan Boundaries*, pp. 47-59.

¹¹⁰ *Diocesan Boundaries*, pp. 60-75.

¹¹¹ *Report by the Standing Committee on ‘Diocesan Boundaries’* (CA 1679, 1968), p. 2.

¹¹² *Report of the Cathedrals and New Dioceses Committee* (CA 1738, 1969).

- in the large urban areas, ‘collegial episcopacy’, in which a college of bishops would be (corporately) ‘the bishop of the diocese’;
- in many areas, small dioceses with a single bishop;
- in some rural areas, a ‘team episcopate of bishop-archdeacons’.¹¹³

The Cathedrals and New Dioceses Committee then produced a report on this report, which raised questions about some of the practicalities involved.¹¹⁴

The Standing Committee of the new General Synod decided that the best way to respond to these three reports was to commission a fourth report from one of its members, Canon Paul Welsby, summarizing their proposals and comments formulating questions for the General Synod to engage with.¹¹⁵ His report, *Episcopacy in the Church of England*, was published in 1973. In Chapter II of the report Canon Welsby described the division of responsibilities between diocesans and suffragans in nine dioceses. In some, suffragan bishops already had informal responsibility for territorial areas (for example, in London the diocesan and four suffragans each acted as ‘area bishops’). Chapter III looked at the nature of episcopacy and asked a number of questions about how the Church of England viewed various aspects of it. Chapter IV reviewed the proposals made in the recent series of reports for

- small dioceses without suffragans
- small dioceses, grouped regionally
- in large rural dioceses, suffragans with maximal powers, but with formal authority remaining with the diocesan, and
- for major conurbations a ‘college of bishops’ where authority would rest with the college rather than an individual diocesan.

To these he added, as a fifth possibility, the existing pattern in some dioceses of a diocesan with a single suffragan. Canon Welsby considered the comments made in response to these suggestions and their advantages and disadvantages, and asked (a) whether the General Synod favoured small dioceses (with or without shared administration) as a matter of policy, and (b) whether episcopal collegiality at the diocesan level was ‘sound in theology and workable in practice’. Though generally even-handed in his approach, he was critical of the ACCM working party’s theological arguments for its ‘college of bishops’ option as ‘misleading and confusing’ and the option itself as ‘open to question on pragmatic grounds’, since ‘the idea that a group of bishops can reach the kind of consensus which could be regarded as that of “the bishop of the

¹¹³ *Bishops and Dioceses (ACCM) The Report of the Ministry Committee Working Party on the Episcopate* (GS 63, 1971), pp. 25-32.

¹¹⁴ *Second Report of the Cathedrals and New Dioceses Committee* (GS 79, 1972).

¹¹⁵ *Episcopacy in the Church of England. A Consultative Document by Paul A Welsby* (GS 167, 1973).

diocese” ’ was ‘an unrealistic notion’ and the description itself therefore ‘a fiction, a misuse of terms’.¹¹⁶

In Chapter V Canon Welsby invited the General Synod to consider its own role in diocesan reorganization. He rejected a ‘top-down’ approach, pointing out that ‘in the Church of England the chief unit of Church life above the level of the parish has always been the diocese rather than the province or the Church of England as such’ and advancing a number of arguments of principle and also pragmatic reasons for leaving the initiative with the dioceses. On the other hand, he argued that

‘There must be some co-ordination and supervision, for proposals made by dioceses must be judged in the light of the general good of the whole Church and local needs and enthusiasms must be balanced against that general good. The appropriate body to make such a judgment would be the General Synod.’

Indeed, proposals involving legal changes would necessarily involve the Synod, and this led into a reprise of the Cathedrals and New Dioceses Committee’s proposals for a Measure, with comments and questions for the Synod.¹¹⁷

Chapters VI-VIII looked at legal questions concerning the commissions given to area and suffragan bishops, the appointment of bishops, and financial implications (including bishops’ stipends, differentials and expenses). Chapter IX looked at the question of whether diocesan boundaries should change to match the then forthcoming creation of new counties and changes in county boundaries, and at the possibility of ecumenical consultation to work out ‘common ecclesiastical boundaries’. Chapter X asked whether (regardless of whether a policy of ‘small dioceses’ was adopted) there should be regional groupings of dioceses for some administrative purposes. Finally, Chapter XI looked at the role of archdeacons and the desirability or otherwise of the same person being both suffragan bishop and archdeacon, and drew attention to the proposal of earlier reports (including the 1964 Howick Report *Crown Appointments* and the 1967 Morley Report *Partners in Ministry*, as well as the Arbuthnot Report) that ‘translation from one suffragan see to another should become more common’.

Canon Welsby’s report was debated by the General Synod in November 1973. The following June the Standing Committee published a report in which it drew conclusions from the debate:

‘The broad conclusion which the Standing Committee draw from the debate... is that there is no one pattern of episcopal organisation to which the Church of England would wish to commit itself, to the exclusion of all others. In other words, the General Synod is content that there should be a variety of diocesan structures. But the pattern of episcopal oversight in the Church of England has changed considerably within even the last twenty years and is still changing: and there is an evident desire that the Church should be able to respond to these changes by removing obstacles to the delegation and sharing of episcopal oversight, and by enabling those dioceses which desire to do so to establish an “area” system on an experimental and, in due course, on a more permanent basis. To do

¹¹⁶ *Episcopacy in the Church of England. A Consultative Document by Paul A Welsby* (GS 167, 1973), pp. 26-27.

¹¹⁷ *Episcopacy in the Church of England*, pp. 29-33.

this there must be legislation. Moreover, the General Synod ought to provide for the possibility that there might be need, at a future stage, for a complete reorganization of dioceses, to produce either smaller or larger units than we now have. Accordingly, the Church ought to equip itself with the machinery to create new dioceses or new groupings of dioceses without need for recourse to a Measure in each individual case.’¹¹⁸

As to the role of central bodies in diocesan re-organization, the Standing Committee took the view that

‘Many will feel that the diocese or dioceses concerned should ordinarily have the right of initiative in all matters affecting diocesan organisation, whether in matters affecting boundaries or in schemes for the sharing of episcopal oversight, although exceptionally it may be necessary for the General Synod, or some other central body, to take an initiative. But it seems right in all cases that the interest of the wider Church should be taken fully into account.’¹¹⁹

The Standing Committee therefore recommended the drafting of a Measure. This would provide a mechanism whereby the dioceses concerned would make proposals for consideration by a central body which, if it approved them, would embody them in a scheme. The Standing Committee also suggested that the creation (or revival) of suffragan sees should be considered by the central body and require the approval of the General Synod.¹²⁰ The eventual result was the Dioceses Measure 1978 which created the 1978-2008 Dioceses Commission..

In January 1975 the Standing Committee issued a supplementary report which addressed the issues covered by Chapters IX and X of Canon Welsby’s report, regarding boundaries and regional groupings. The Standing Committee had consulted the diocesan bishops of the metropolitan counties created in 1974 and found that the bishops responsible were already co-operating in relating to them. It believed that it would be important to reconfigure episcopal areas, archdeaconries and deaneries to match the new districts as far as possible, but did not consider it urgently necessary to redraw diocesan boundaries to correspond with the new counties. It judged it unwise to press for change in the absence of a conviction on the ground in the areas concerned that change was necessary. Four further arguments for taking no action were advanced: dioceses matching the new metropolitan counties would lack the traditional mixture of urban, suburban and rural parishes; the new counties’ boundaries might in any case be modified in the light of experience; the fact that the Roman Catholic and Methodist churches were not evenly distributed across the country meant that there was ‘no future in any general attempt to standardize ecclesiastical boundaries, short of full organic union’; and at a time of ‘turmoil’ on the local government side of local partnerships it would not be helpful for the church side also to be subject to re-organization. The possibility of the question being revisited in due course was left open. With particular regard to Greater London, ‘The Standing Committee’s judgement is

¹¹⁸ *Episcopacy. Follow-up of the debate on Canon Welsby’s Consultative Document (GS 167): Report by the Standing Committee* (GS 214, 1974), p. 3.

¹¹⁹ *Episcopacy*, pp. 3-4.

¹²⁰ *Episcopacy*, p. 4.

that, at this stage, the initiative should remain with the bishops and dioceses concerned, and that it would be mistaken for the General Synod to try to force the pace.¹²¹

The new Dioceses Commission was duly established in 1978. Reflections by David Hebblethwaite, who was Secretary of the Dioceses Commission for eighteen years of its thirty-year life (from 1984 until 2002), will form Section 4 of this report. Since 1996 the Commission has met only in 1999 and 2001. During the last eight years there has been no business requiring a meeting.

¹²¹ *Episcopacy in the Church of England: A Supplementary Report by the Standing Committee* (GS 246, 1975).

3: Suffragan Bishoprics

Origins

Before the Reformation, English diocesan bishops were commonly assisted by bishops who had been consecrated to sees ‘*in partibus infidelium*’ (parts of the world which had been Christian but which were now under Muslim control and no longer had a Christian population).¹²² The separation of the English Church from Rome meant that this was no longer possible. In order to respect the ancient tradition that a bishop cannot be consecrated for episcopal ministry in general but only to a specific see, the Suffragan Bishops Act 1534 provided that certain specified towns ‘shall be taken and accepted for sees of bishops suffragan to be made in this realm’.¹²³ (The term ‘suffragan’ originally referred to diocesan bishops in relation to their metropolitan, but was now used additionally to refer to the bishops of such sees in relation to their diocesans.) The act provides that the diocesan bishop wishing to have a suffragan shall ‘name and elect’ two ‘honest and discreet spiritual persons being learned and of good conversation’ and present them to the King in a petition, requesting His Majesty ‘to give to one such of the said two persons as shall please His Majesty such title, name, style and dignity of bishop of such of the sees ... specified [in the act] as the King’s Highness shall think most convenient for the same’. The King is empowered to give to one of two persons named in the bishop’s petition ‘the style, title and name of a bishop’ of such of the sees as he thinks most convenient and expedient. (The reason for that phrase is that the see would not necessarily be situated within the diocese concerned – just as the sees *in partibus infidelium* had not been.)

Twelve suffragan bishops were appointed in the 1530s and one in 1545 following the death of the first Bishop of Dover that year. Only three suffragans were appointed during the reign of Elizabeth I: a Bishop of Nottingham in 1567 (translated to Carlisle in 1570), a Bishop of Dover in 1569 and a Bishop of Colchester in 1592. Only the latter lived on into the reign of James I, dying in 1608.¹²⁴ Thereafter, the office lapsed.

From the 1830s onwards, high churchmen and Tractarians called for the appointment of suffragan bishops. The leading ecclesiastical reformer, Bishop Blomfield of London, opposed this, however. In his 1838 Charge to his clergy he commented, ‘The objections to appointing suffragans are so obvious, that I need not urge them in detail.’¹²⁵ Use was made instead of former colonial bishops as assistant bishops, but this was criticized as encouraging homesick bishops in the colonies to desert their posts. There was also a financial incentive for reviving suffragan bishoprics rather than creating new dioceses: suffragan bishoprics could be held with deaneries, canonries or benefices at negligible cost, whereas diocesan bishops cost over £4,000 a year. Finally, suffragan bishops could be appointed without dividing historic dioceses that represented natural (if overlarge) units. However, these considerations could be countered with others, both arguments of principle (concerning the nature of diocesan episcopacy) and practical considerations (for example, regarding the likely aspirations of suffragan bishops to succeed

¹²² For a list of bishops ‘in partibus’ see E. B. Fryde, D. E. Greenaway, S. Porter and I. Roy (eds), *Handbook of British Chronology* (3rd edn: Cambridge, reprinted 2003), pp. 284-287.

¹²³ In the quotations spelling, capitalization and punctuation have been modernized.

¹²⁴ *Handbook of British Chronology*, pp. 287-288.

¹²⁵ Blomfield, 1838 Charge, p. 27, quoted by Best, *Temporal Pillars*, p. 319.

their own or other dioceses).¹²⁶ In 1868 the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury resolved that the use of ex-colonial bishops as assistant bishops was to be deplored, both because it postponed reform and because it tended to encourage resignations from colonial sees.¹²⁷

It was not the desirability of suffragan bishops but the unwillingness or inability of the government to agree to the creation of new diocesan sees that led to the revival of suffragan bishops from 1870. For political reasons, Gladstone's government did not feel able to accede to the growing calls for new dioceses. As a second best the bishops therefore proposed in 1869 that the government exercise its power to appoint suffragan bishops.¹²⁸ The government agreed (as this could be done without legislation) and in 1870 Bishops of Dover and Nottingham were appointed to assist the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Lincoln in their respective dioceses. Though Gladstone publicly declared that the Crown was free to choose either of the two names proposed by the diocesan bishop, in practice the first-named candidate was invariably appointed – except in 1888 when the second candidate for a suffragan bishopric in the Diocese of Exeter (whom the bishop had not even informed of his nomination) was chosen in preference.

At first, the limited number of suffragan sees identified in the Suffragan Bishops Act caused difficulties. Some dioceses had no suffragan sees within their limits, and the Bishop of London's two suffragans, therefore, were the Bishop of Bedford and the Bishop of Marlborough. This difficulty was remedied by the Suffragans Nomination Act 1888, which permitted the addition by Order in Council of other sees to the list contained in the 1534 act. The Suffragan Bishops Act 1898 made it lawful to appoint as suffragan bishop a person already in episcopal orders. Section 6 of the Church of England (Legal Aid and Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 1988 made it possible to change the name of an existing diocesan or suffragan see, and this was replaced by a comparable provision in the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007, section 11.

Growth in Numbers

In his unpublished study of Walter Baddeley (Bishop of Whitby, 1947-1954, and Blackburn, 1954-1960), Anthony Hodgson has looked at the office of suffragan bishop during the century from 1870. In 1892 the Church of England Year Book listed 14 suffragan and 4 assistant bishops. In most cases, the post was 'funded' by the suffragan also holding a residentiary canonry or the incumbency of a wealthy living. (This was also true of most archdeacons: of the 78 archdeacons in 1892, 21 were residentiary canons and 51 were incumbents; only four held no other office.) Combination of a suffragan or assistant bishopric with an archdeaconry was also common: nine of the eighteen suffragan or assistant bishops were also archdeacons.

During the twentieth century the number of suffragan bishoprics increased, as documented by the table opposite. It needs to be borne in mind that no new dioceses were created after 1927, despite recommendations in 1922 and again in 1967 that the number of dioceses should be increased. This is clearly one of the reasons for the growth in the number of suffragan bishoprics during the sixty years from 1927 to 1987.

¹²⁶ Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England*, pp. 193, 196, 203, 210-214.

¹²⁷ Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, 2, p. 344.

¹²⁸ Marsh, *Victorian Church in Decline*, p. 101.

Numbers of Suffragan Bishops in England in the Twentieth Century

1901	9	(<i>Episcopal Ministry</i> , p. 186 [†])
1921	21	(<i>Episcopal Ministry</i> , p. 186)
1928	26	(<i>Episcopacy and the Role of the Suffragan Bishop</i> , p. 7)
1941	38	(<i>Episcopal Ministry</i> , p. 186)
1947	41	(<i>Episcopacy and the Role of the Suffragan Bishop</i> , p. 7)
1961	44	(<i>Episcopal Ministry</i> , p. 186)
1966	49	(<i>Episcopal Ministry</i> , p. 186)
1970	54	(<i>Bishops and Dioceses</i> , p. 5)
1973		Total number of suffragans and stipendiary assistants: 64, [‡] only three English dioceses had none. (<i>Episcopacy in the Church of England</i> , p. 9)
1974	59	(<i>Episcopal Ministry</i> , p. 186)
1983	62	plus two stipendiary assistant bishops (<i>Episcopacy and the Role of the Suffragan Bishop</i> , p. 7)
from 1987	64	(following creation of the see of Brixworth)
from 1993	67	including the three Provincial Episcopal Visitors

There is also a suffragan bishop in the Diocese in Europe
and there is currently a stipendiary assistant bishop in the Diocese of Newcastle.

[†] *Episcopal Ministry. The Report of the Archbishops' Group on the Episcopate* (GS 944, 1990).
The 1901 figure needs to be treated with caution; Anthony Hodgson has identified 20 suffragan sees that were occupied in that year.

[‡] Chandler, *The Church Commissioners in the Twentieth Century*, p. 187, gives different figures for 1972: 46 suffragans and 9 assistants, but these seem too low.

Caution is needed in counting only suffragan bishoprics rather than suffragans and full-time assistants together, since the latter have declined in number owing to a fall in the number of Englishmen returning to England having served as a bishop overseas. In some cases, a 'new' suffragan bishopric represented the replacement of a full-time assistant bishop with a suffragan. Excluding the Provincial Episcopal Visitors, the total number of suffragan bishops is 64, with just one stipendiary assistant bishop; in 1973 the total number of suffragans and stipendiary assistants was 64. Thus, though five suffragan sees were established under the Dioceses Measure 1978 between 1978 and 1987, apart from the PEVs the overall number of suffragans and stipendiary assistant bishops is now only one higher than it was in 1973, thirty-five years ago.

Funding

As indicated above, suffragan bishoprics were originally funded in most cases by being held together with a residentiary canonry or a parochial living. From 1943, however, the Church Commissioners were empowered to pay all or part of a suffragan bishop's stipend. In the mid-twentieth century, the sources of funding of suffragan bishops' stipends were:

- other preferments not annexed to the see (62.5% of the total funding)
 - 13 archdeaconries, 11 canonries, 16 benefices;
- preferments legally annexed to suffragan sees;
- resources of diocesan sees;
- diocesan boards of funding and other diocesan bodies;
- the Church Commissioners;
- the City Parochial Charities Fund;
- a variety of trusts.¹²⁹

The stipends of suffragan bishops varied greatly and unfairly. From 1 April 1956, therefore, a minimum stipend for all suffragan bishop was established, with a grants from the Commissioners towards the stipend of each and towards the costs of house rents, rates and repairs. In 1965 the Commissioners agreed a new plan to ensure that there would be at least one full-time episcopal assistant for every diocesan bishop. In time, the Commissioners' contribution towards the cost of suffragans increased from half to three-quarters of the cost of stipends and expenses, with assistant bishops costing them three-quarters as much as suffragans.¹³⁰ Eventually, it was agreed that the Commissioners would pay the full cost of the stipends and working costs of suffragan bishops and those assistant bishops whom they agreed to fund, the Commissioners, while the dioceses would be responsible for their housing.

Increased funding by the Church Commissioners is likely to have played its part – together with the failure to create any new dioceses after 1927 and the decline in the availability of former overseas bishops for appointment as assistant bishops – in the growth in the number of suffragan bishoprics. It would seem that after 1978 the need for a report by the Dioceses Commission and approval by the General Synod played its part in first reducing and then halting that growth.

The Role of the Suffragan Bishop

As mentioned in Section 2 of this report, the role of the suffragan bishop was examined by a number of reports during the twentieth century. The following extract from the Pilling report *Talent and Calling* (2007)¹³¹ is also relevant:

¹²⁹ A. Chandler, *The Church Commissioners in the Twentieth Century. The Church Commissioners and the Politics of Reform, 1948-1998* (Woodbridge, 2006), p. 133.

¹³⁰ Chandler, *The Church Commissioners in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 134, 184-185.

¹³¹ *Talent and Calling. A review of the law and practice regarding appointments to the offices of suffragan bishop, dean, archdeacon and residentiary canon* (GS 1650, 2007), pp. 43-46.

- 5.1.3 The office of suffragan bishop is distinct from the other senior offices to which diocesan bishops appoint (archdeacon, dean and residentiary canon) not only in respect of the bishop's role in making the appointment but also in its nature.
- 5.2.1 One difference is that whereas the 'core' duties of archdeacons and (to some extent at least) deans and residentiary canons are laid down in canon and statute law, Canon C 20 ('Of Bishops Suffragan') merely says that a suffragan bishop is to do 'such things pertaining to the episcopal office as shall be delegated to him by the bishop of the diocese to whom he shall be suffragan' (para. 1), shall 'use, have, or execute only such jurisdiction or episcopal power or authority in any diocese as shall be licensed or limited to him to use, have, or execute by the bishop of the same' (para. 2) and shall reside in the diocese unless the bishop licenses him to live elsewhere (para. 3).
- 5.2.2 This means that the role of suffragan bishop varies considerably from diocese to diocese, and [where there is no area scheme under the Dioceses Measure 1978¹³²] may be changed by the diocesan bishop and especially by a new diocesan bishop.
- 5.2.3 Suffragan bishops may be said to fall into five different categories:
- suffragan bishops who give general episcopal assistance to the diocesan;
 - suffragan bishops to whom the diocesan delegates responsibility for certain aspects of the life of the diocese;
 - suffragan bishops to whom the diocesan delegates (informally or more formally) varying degrees of responsibility for geographical areas;
 - suffragan bishops to whom oversight of geographical areas has been delegated by a scheme under the Dioceses Measure 1978;¹³³
 - the Provincial Episcopal Visitors appointed under the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993.

The only suffragan bishop who does not fall into one of these categories is the Bishop of Dover, to whom the Archbishop of Canterbury has delegated responsibility for day-to-day oversight of the Diocese of Canterbury as a whole (rather than just an area within it). [This delegation has been made by instrument rather than by means of an scheme under

¹³² [Under the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007 the words in square brackets are no longer relevant. See the following footnote.]

¹³³ The position on delegation of the diocesan bishop's functions to suffragan bishops is subject to section 13 of the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007. It replaces almost all the previous legislation on the subject, including that on area schemes, and gives the diocesan bishop power to delegate such of his functions as he thinks fit (with very few exceptions) to a suffragan (or assistant) bishop, either for the diocese as a whole or in relation to a particular area. In most cases the diocesan synod must approve the delegation, but the section does not require the consent of or consultation with any central church body. Existing area schemes will continue on a transitional basis, but the Measure gives the diocesan bishop power to revoke or amend them, subject to the approval of the diocesan synod.

the Dioceses Measure 1978 and therefore does not bind the Archbishop or his successors.]

- 5.2.4 There are at least two ways in which the role of suffragan bishops can be viewed.¹³⁴ Some emphasize the fact that legally all episcopal ministry in a diocese is exercised in virtue of powers delegated by the diocesan. On this view, the suffragan's ministry is an extension of that of the diocesan; the suffragan is involved in the diocesan's ministry and oversight, which is understood very personally. Others stress very much the suffragan's membership of a diocesan college of bishops, seeing episcopal ministry within the diocese as collegial. On this view the suffragan's ministry has its own independent basis in the ministry which is his by virtue of his ordination or consecration to the episcopate and his appointment to an episcopal see. The tendency to see the suffragan's ministry as an extension of that of the diocesan is likely to be greater where the suffragan's role is primarily one of giving general episcopal assistance to the diocesan. By contrast, the sense of an episcopal college within a diocese is likely to be greater where the suffragans are area bishops whose duties are defined by a scheme under the Dioceses Measure 1978.

¹³⁴ For a discussion of the issues, see *Episcopal Ministry: The Report of the Archbishops' Group on the Episcopate* (London, 1990), pp. 189-206: paras 423-469 and the House of Bishops Occasional Paper 'Suffragan Bishops' (GS Misc 733, 2004).

4: The Dioceses Commission, 1978-2002

Some Reflections on the Formation of a New Dioceses Commission

by *David Hebblethwaite*

1. The author's credentials to write on this topic are that he was Secretary to the 'old' Dioceses Commission from September 1984 to August 2002 – not the first Secretary (Keith Reading), but taking over while the initial membership under Sir William van Straubenzee was still in post. I worked with five Commissions under four chairmen. I then served as joint secretary (and later as consultant) to the working party which paved the way for the new Measure.¹³⁵
2. The Dioceses Commission was the product of the Dioceses Measure 1978. It was a 'maimed' body from the outset in that it was bereft of any power to suggest proposals or to indicate areas in episcopal and diocesan organization that might benefit from review. Its function was to report (on behalf of the Church nationally) on proposals advanced by diocesan bishops for changes in diocesan boundaries, creation (or abolition) of dioceses (!), creation or revival of suffragan sees and approval of formally constituted area schemes.
3. It had two initial high profile achievements – the London Area Scheme (1979) and the transfer of Croydon from Canterbury to Southwark (1984) – but in truth these had been largely designed in advance of the new Measure taking effect by the relevant diocesans (Ellison in London, and Stockwood and Coggan for Croydon – even though by the time it was implemented it was Bowlby and Runcie).¹³⁶ There followed a stream of other Area Schemes (Salisbury, Oxford, Chelmsford, Chichester, Southwark, Lichfield and Worcester¹³⁷) and a trickle of further suffragans (Wolverhampton, Warwick, Ludlow, Bolton and Brixworth; and later – though quite exceptionally – Ebbsfleet, Richborough and a revived Beverley). There was also a prolonged attempt at a significant reshaping of diocesan boundaries in the West Midlands which rumbled on from the inception of the Measure (the suffragan sees of Warwick and Ludlow were a part of it) – through a major consultation exercise,¹³⁸ on a par with the 1960s report on diocesan structures in the South-East,¹³⁹ to the eventual outcome in the transfer of one deanery from Lichfield to Worcester in 1993.

¹³⁵ *A Measure for Measures: In Mission and Ministry. Report of the Review of the Dioceses, Pastoral and related Measures* (GS 1528, 2004).

¹³⁶ See 'The Report by the Commission on the Church in Croydon' (1975) and *Diocesan Organisation in Greater London. Report of the Archbishop's Commission* (1976).

¹³⁷ The Worcester Area Scheme was an oddity best seen as part of the West Midlands exercise.

¹³⁸ See *Episcopal Care in the West Midlands. The Report of the West Midlands Bishops' Commission* (Bramcote, Nottingham, 1987).

¹³⁹ *Diocesan Boundaries. Being the Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on the Organisation of the Church by Dioceses in London and the South-East of England 1965/67* (CA 1653, 1967).

4. The area schemes it processed fell into two distinct models. The London, Salisbury, Chichester and Oxford schemes retained geographical areas under the immediate pastoral oversight of the diocesan bishop (though only the London scheme gave the diocesan a sizeable area). The Lichfield, Southwark and Chelmsford schemes parcelled the whole diocese out to the care of suffragans, the diocesan retaining a 'general oversight'. The two models illustrate an unresolved tension between different styles of exercising episcopal ministry which are of wider ecclesiological significance. Are such schemes attempts to create what are in effect smaller dioceses without the administrative chore of doing so definitively or a mechanism for parcelling out the duties of episcopal assistants? Different diocesan bishops will, I suspect, always differ in their attitude to such matters (and no diocesan succeeding the bishop who first set up an area scheme was entirely comfortable with the model he inherited). A good many dioceses throughout the 1980s and 90s were known to be operating 'de facto' area schemes but steered well clear of setting them in the administrative straightjacket of a formal scheme (York, Manchester, Exeter, Norwich, Lincoln). It is, I judge, a wise change which has removed the formal establishment of such essentially internal administrative arrangements from the necessity of formal scrutiny at 'national' level.

5. The most high profile impetus for the Dioceses Measure 1978 was a perceived lack of any control over a proliferation of suffragan bishops – coupled with a growing trend towards these being full-time posts, rather than being linked with canonries or incumbencies. In truth there was no scrutiny other than a negotiation between the bishop concerned and the Crown (via Downing Street, which no doubt took soundings at Lambeth/Bishopthorpe). Among those concerned at this trend (no fewer than nineteen suffragan sees established or revived between 1945 and 1978) were the Church Commissioners, who were likely to incur added expense. There was, however, a determined lobby in the (then) new General Synod *not* to give the task of national scrutiny to the Church Commissioners, hence the establishment of an independent Commission (though bound in all cases to work closely with the Commissioners in producing a financial comment on whatever was being considered). The Commission laboured hard to bring critical scrutiny to bear on proposals for new suffragans – always pressing diocesans hard on questions of whether there really was need for their assistants to be episcopal, and the geographical and communications difficulties that might make oversight by the diocesan and existing suffragans difficult – but it was difficult to stand up to insistent diocesans who were increasingly being involved in active central church bodies and voluntary society initiatives. In any case, by 1979 few dioceses remained without have a suffragan so that refusal to agree a proposal could be characterized as 'unfair' and the move towards indigenous bishops in former overseas territories was causing the supply of assistant bishops retired from overseas to dry up. Nonetheless, by 1990 diocesan bishops were aware that the Dioceses Commission was no 'easy touch'. Its existence and delaying potential were openly resented in the House of Bishops, but since the Commission was an unavoidable obstacle to such proposals there were fewer of them and it had less and less to do in the 1990s.

6. The ‘old’ Commission made a number of reports to Synod. Two were entitled *Episcopacy and The Role of the Suffragan Bishop*,¹⁴⁰ but the most substantial report came in 1990.¹⁴¹ It is significant that although it touched on suffragan and area organization the main strand was the need for national scrutiny of proposals for boundary change (a subtext, also related to territoriality, was a need to hold together proposals for new episcopal posts and proposals for archdeaconries – no concern of the Dioceses Commission – which have been increasing in number at an even faster rate than suffragans). Just before the 1990 report the Commission had been involved in vetting proposals for a fourth suffragan for Chelmsford¹⁴² and had (straining its powers to be involved to the utmost) vainly tried to explore the seeming insurmountability of the River Lea, being reluctant to sanction a new post to minister to Outer London boroughs without reference to the relatively small territory assigned to the Bishop of Stepney in London. That exercise greatly frustrated the Commission since the only way to promote any consideration of *diocesan* boundaries (as opposed to areas within a diocese) was if neighbouring diocesan bishops co-operated to bring forward proposals, and that had not happened since the Croydon transfer.
7. The climate (financial, ecclesiological and sociological) has changed since 1990 and it is a boon that the new Measure allows a new Commission to look at such issues without being asked to comment on already formulated proposals coming from diocesan bishops in post. That is not to say that the task will be easy. No national body can fully enter into issues of local loyalty and sentiment (the protracted consultations in the West Midlands proved that) and the radical and largely imposed changes in diocesan patterns of the 19th Century are no longer possible in an age when all must be consulted at every stage. It must, however, be right for a national body with a wider perspective at the very least to pose pertinent questions as to the continuing viability of the existing pattern of dioceses. The tension will undoubtedly continue between the ‘ideal’ early model of the small city-size dioceses of Italy and Gaul in the early centuries and the large, varied and viable fiefdoms of later centuries in Northern Europe (of which historically England is a part). The provisions for ensuring shared administration in the new Measure need to be used to minimize such tensions.
8. A final thought from experience of the ‘old’ Measure. The 1978 Measure devoted much attention to the need for diocesan and *cathedral* structures in any new diocese. When new dioceses proliferated in the second half of the nineteenth century up until 1928, there was little attention paid (after St Albans and Truro in 1877) to full cathedral establishments. Since the early 1930s (after the last crop of new dioceses) there has been increasing attention to standardizing the nature of cathedral establishments, and that – including the potential dismantling of cathedral establishments if they are no longer ideally located (Ripon, Southwell) – could be a powerful factor inhibiting flexibility in changing patterns of diocesan organization. Despite the lack of ‘standardization’ the sheer pressure of local sentiment led to immense work and effort on behalf of new cathedrals from 1880 onwards.

¹⁴⁰ ‘Episcopacy and the Role of the Suffragan Bishop. A report by the Dioceses Commission’ (GS 551, 1983);

‘Episcopacy and the Role of the Suffragan Bishop. A second report by the Dioceses Commission’ (GS 697, 1985).

¹⁴¹ ‘The Dioceses Measure 1978: A Review. Report by the Dioceses Commission’ (GS 925, 1990).

¹⁴² Although the Commission very reluctantly agreed the proposal the then bishop did not proceed further, though a new archdeaconry was created.

Wherever any future bishop chooses to locate his cathedra will surely trigger equivalent effort, despite any exhortation to 'travel light' in structures. There needs to be careful thought about the location of the 'diocesan centres' in any reconfiguration: 'co-cathedrals' rather than 'pro-cathedrals' or 'ex cathedrals'.

9. These paragraphs are offered in some hope that the new arrangements might be better suited to their purpose than the old and to preserve the memory that the 'old' Commission was not as supine or as spineless as it was popularly supposed to have been. One thing is certain: any change in diocesan structures will be mired in controversy. My hope is that good ecclesiology, not economic pressure, will be the guiding principle for the future.

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Secretary of the Dioceses Commission, 1984-2002

April 2008

Reports by the Dioceses Commission, 1978-2008

(a) General

'Episcopacy and the Role of the Suffragan Bishop. A report by the Dioceses Commission' (GS 551, 1983)

'Episcopacy and the Role of the Suffragan Bishop. A second report by the Dioceses Commission' (GS 697, 1985)

'The Dioceses Measure 1978: A Review. Report by the Dioceses Commission' (GS 925, 1990)

(b) Re-organization

Transfer of Croydon Archdeaconry (GS 637A, 1984)

Transfer of Himley Deanery (GS 1031, 1993)

(c) Area Schemes

London (GS 418, 1979)

Salisbury (GS 489, 1981)

Chelmsford (GS 597, 1983)

Oxford (GS 658, 1984)

Chichester (GS 662, 1984)

Southwark (GS 978, 1991)

Lichfield (GS 1029, 1992)

Worcester (GS 1030, 1992); Worcester (recission of area scheme: GS 1445, 2002)

(d) Suffragan Bishoprics

Lichfield (GS 389, 1978) – Wolverhampton

Coventry (GS 426, 1979) – Warwick

Hereford (GS 446, 1980; GS446A, 1981) – Ludlow

Manchester (GS 579, 1983) – Bolton

Peterborough (GS 782, 1987) – Brixworth

Provincial Episcopal Visitors (GS 1086, 1993) – Beverley, Ebbsfleet, Richborough

The report on the Chelmsford proposal mentioned in the text was never published since the Bishop did not pursue it. There were also unpublished reports on proposals from Leicester, Peterborough, Newcastle and Europe.

(e) Annual Reports

In addition to the reports listed above, attention is drawn to the succession of somewhat dry but, to the perceptive, interesting annual reports.

5: Cathedrals: An Historical Note[†]

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

Old Foundation Cathedrals

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

Former Cathedral Priors

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

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

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

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

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

Other New Foundation Cathedrals

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

The Reforms of 1840

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

Modern Cathedrals: 1836-1877; Liverpool and Guildford Cathedrals

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

‘The Parish Church Cathedrals’

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

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

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

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

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

The Cathedrals Measures

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

The Cathedrals Measure 1999

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

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

¹⁴⁸ *Heritage and Renewal*, p. 179.

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

Right of Appointment to Deaneries[†]

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

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

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

Cathedrals whose Deans are appointed by the Crown

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁵¹ Cathedrals Measure 1999, s. 12.

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

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

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

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

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

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