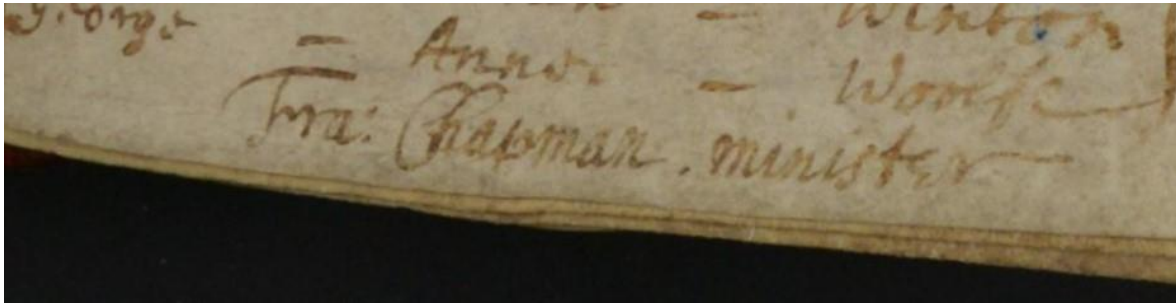


Francis Chapman (c.1640-1716)

Vicar 1673-1676

Francis Chapman was vicar of Ashby for three short years. The parish marriage registers had lapsed between 1653-1677, when his successor Ithiel Smart junior revived them, but his signature appears in the burial and baptismal registers.



Chapman was a graduate of St John's College, Cambridge, where many students from his time at Giggleswick School were educated. He was admitted there as a poor scholar, or sizar, in 1656 and graduated in 1659-60.¹ He was ordained priest in the Diocese of Lincoln on 23rd December 1660 and took up his post in Ashby in June 1673. He disappears from the records between 1660-1673.

It is believed that he was the son of Robert Chapman, a yeoman, of Bolton in Lancashire.² The yeoman classes were an intermediate class somewhere between the gentry and labourers and would either be landholders or officials of some kind. There must have been enough money to send young Francis to Giggleswick School, some 54 miles away from home, but not enough to fully finance his university education. However, it's possible that his origins in 'Bolton' may refer to Bolton Abbey, not the town of Bolton, Lancashire. This is just 22 miles from Giggleswick. Until evidence of Francis' birth comes to light, this is pure speculation.

Francis Chapman's patron in Ashby was Theophilus, 7th Earl of Huntingdon, who was known for appointing conforming ministers and for keeping a careful eye on church attendance, or the lack of it, in the parish. Chapman's 'cession' as vicar is recorded as 13th September 1676, when he took up his post as Rector of Teversal in Nottinghamshire. This would have been a promotion, giving him an increase in income.

The Parish church of St Katherine in Teversal dates from the 12th Century. A great deal of work was carried out there in the later 17th century, possibly in Chapman's time. Its box pews date from then. There is a substantial amount of information about St Katherine's available online via the Southwell and Nottinghamshire Church History Project.³

Chapman was a married man during his time in Ashby. His wife Elizabeth gave birth to their first child, Lucia Maria, in 1676 and she was baptised at St Helen's on 22nd June. Subsequent children, Elizabeth, Mary and John, were born in Teversal. Lucia Maria married Robert Hill at

¹ Cambridge University Alumni 1261-1900 (Ancestry)

² Clergy of the Church of England database.

³ <https://southwellchurches.nottingham.ac.uk/teversal/hintro.php>

Teversal in 1702 and had a least 4 children. Mary married David Loads in Teversal, also in 1702. Of John there is no further discernible record after his baptism on 15th June 1681, suggesting that he may have died or moved away.

Francis Chapman was buried at Teversal on 18th February 1715, having ministered there for forty years. His widow, Elizabeth, survived until July 1726, when she too was buried at Teversal by Chapman's successor, Edward Wilson, who noted in the register "Mrs Chapman widow of Mr Chapman late Rector of Teversal."⁴ Their daughter Elizabeth died a spinster and was buried in March 1727. Her will leaves most of her worldly goods to her eldest sister Lucia Maria and family, though there are small bequests to Mary and her 2 children. There is no mention of her brother John. Elizabeth was a fairly wealthy woman, with investments in land in the American colonies via the South Sea Company, some of which she had inherited from her mother. She owned around 300 acres of land in Maryland, almost certainly slave plantations. One curiosity of Elizabeth's will is her insistence that all her bequests to her sister Lucia Maria Hill and her children should be delivered in annual interest from her shares in the South Sea Company "wherewith her husband shall not meddle." Elizabeth's will is long and this point is made several times, which suggests that she may not have been overly fond of her brother in law.⁵

Julie Starkey
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⁴ Teversal Parish Register (Ancestry)

⁵ Will of Elizabeth Chapman. 1726. The National Archives. PROB-11-622-579.