

ROGER STEARE OF CHESTERFIELD

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THREE centuries ago the universities were also concerned with the problems of expansion. Then, however, the need for technicians was only slight and most graduates found their careers in the Church. While many were taking up teaching as a separate profession, most schoolmasters were also ministers. An interesting Derbyshire schoolmaster-cleric was Roger Steare, who was born at Chesterfield in 1624. His father, Peter, was a tanner, who came from a family long settled in the Darley district.

As Roger is the last of the family whose baptism is recorded in the Chesterfield Register, Peter probably moved his young family from there shortly after 1624. He may have gone to Darley, as in April 1630 his brother, George Steire, a husbandman of Darley, wrote his will and made bequests to Peter's two eldest daughters. By 1637 he had certainly settled in Manchester, for the Manchester Cathedral Register contains the burial in June 1637 of a daughter, Frances (besides the baptism of a grand-daughter in 1641, Peter's own burial in 1641/2 and his widow's burial in 1654). Because of confusion between the town and county of his birth, B. Tachella, in the *Derby School Register, 1570-1901*, claims Steare as an old boy of that school. It is more probable that he was at Manchester Grammar School before he went to University College, Oxford, in 1639, when only fourteen. Consequently, he had graduated by the age at which most university students start their courses to-day.

Nothing is known about Roger's activities for the next few years; however, the Sheffield School accounts for 1647 contain the items:

for going with a letter to Mr Steare	000 - 1 - 0
for a night charge of him att Sheffeld	000 - 1 - 0

Since 1645 the master at Sheffield, William Younge, had been very much concerned with the building of the new school, but he seemed anxious to resign as soon as the work was nearing completion, so the governors made inquiries about possible successors. They were apparently impressed by Steare, and chose him in preference to one William Whittaker. Steare, however, did not seem so satisfied with his position, and moved to Staveley after three months, for which he received £5. 10s. salary. It is, of course, possible that the appointment was only intended to be temporary, but it might be that Steare found the puritanical opinion of Sheffield less congenial than the royalist atmosphere favoured by Sir Peter (later Lord) Frecheville at Staveley.

Staveley School was smaller, having only one master, and did not send so many pupils to the universities; we know something of one of Steare's pupils, Ralph Hancock, who was in his care for four years before entering St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1653. A few months after subscribing as curate of Killamarsh, in December 1662, he was appointed by royal mandate one of the new Fellows of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, for the purpose of reversing the previous puritanical policy of that College. Hancock must have kept in close touch with his master, as in his will Steare left him "Dr. Hammond's Annotations upon the Psalmes".

In 1653 Steare became rector of Staveley after the death of George Mason. There is no evidence, however, as to whether Steare combined the posts of both master and rector, although his successor as rector, Ralph Heathcote, was also master. Heathcote came from a well-known Chesterfield family and probably went to Staveley soon after graduating in 1654/5, for he married there. When Steare wrote his will on 29 May 1662 he was sufficiently friendly to have Heathcote as a witness, and to leave him "Bishop Andrewes Sermons and all my sermon notes".

Heathcote subscribed as "schola Staveliensis Informator" on 14 August 1662 and as rector on 7 November; as both these dates are after Steare's death, he may have succeeded Steare in both posts. On the other hand,

Steare is only referred to as rector in his will, and the fact that Heathcote subscribed as master alone in August may have been because he had held this post for some time before Steare's death. It is also possible that another master of the school was appointed when Heathcote became rector.

Among Steare's other friends was another schoolmaster, Robert Stones, who had been at Chesterfield for several years. He was left "Dr. Taylor's Cases of Conscience in two volumes, together with a Manuscript Quarto covered with rough leather"; the author was a royal chaplain, Dr. Jeremy Taylor, who died as Bishop of Down and Connor. Stones subscribed as master of Chesterfield public school in July 1662, but was apparently instituted rector of Carsington some three months later, in place of another local boy, Dronfield-educated John Oldfield, who became one of the leaders of Derbyshire non-conformity after his ejection. Steare also gave a copy of Dr. Taylor's *Sermons* to Mr. Thomas Taylor, clerk, who was presumably the incumbent of Sutton near Chesterfield from 1637 and was described in 1650 as scandalous and having been in the royal army.

Steare's inventory showed the quite large figure of twenty-five pounds for "his bookes besides what hee gave away" and supported the indication of his will that he was an earnest reader. To another local clergyman, Marmaduke Carver, who owed him five shillings at the time of making his will, Steare gave "An Epilogue to the Tragedy of the Church of England" (1659), by Herbert Thorndike, who had been ejected from Trinity College, Cambridge. "Estiuss(?) Comment upon the Epistles and my old gown" were left to Mr. Will. Bennett, clerk, who was presumably the "scandalous" vicar of Ockbrook in 1650.

Steare was buried at Staveley on 4 June 1662. Cox (*D.A.J.* V, p. 74), quoting manuscripts formerly in the possession of Mr. John Fletcher of Staveley, says that Roger "lived and died a bachelor, and that he gave all his substance to the poor". It is difficult, however, to reconcile this with the evidence of his will (proved at

Lichfield on 27 October 1663) and inventory. He certainly gave five pounds to "the poor of the parish of Staveley" and forty shillings towards the binding of poor apprentices, while the inventory mentioned five pounds he owed "to the poore of Staveley Jervas Madens money given to them", but these represent only a small fraction of his total wealth, just over a hundred pounds. Apart from the books already mentioned, the largest single item was also for twenty-five pounds, for "pease and oates . . . wheat and barley", while a horse and mare were valued at eleven pounds. An indication of the size of his house is given by the list of rooms: "his Lodgeing Chamber . . . the Chamber next street . . . the Hall . . . the Parler . . . the nether parler . . . the cellar . . . the pantree . . . the brewhowse . . . the poultree howse . . . the ox house . . . the stable . . . the Barne".

By his will he left five pounds, as well as "one linen sheet and one of my best shirts" to his sister, Grace Sales of Wingerworth, and half as much shared between her son, Jervaise, and two daughters. His other sister, Faith Sales, had died, but her daughters were also given ten shillings each, while his brother-in-law, Tristram Sales, got his "best black cloth suit". Other clothes and furniture were included in the inventory, which also valued "a suite of Armes a musket a pike a case of pistolls and 2 swords" at two pounds. Finally, the residue of his goods was left, not to the poor, but to his brother James, of Rowgreene near Manchester, who was made executor; the difficulties of travelling may have accounted for the delay of more than a year in proving the will.

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