

BLAME IT ON THE DEVON VICAR

The Curious Conduct of Curates & Clergymen

Tom Hughes

It is wonderful the interest that is taken in the peccadilloes and sins of "the cloth" and were it the custom to charge admission into our law courts, on such occasions, I am satisfied that the prices might be doubled when a clergyman is the defendant.

A contemporary quote, 1854

The image of the Victorian country clergyman is that of a man pottering about with his books, bees and bells. They are the stock characters of countless novels and films. What are not as familiar are the stories of the remarkable number of vicars, rectors, and curates – not to leave out the odd canon or dean – who found themselves enmeshed in scandal. Be it an elopement, an adulterous divorce, a pregnant servant, an assault, a slander: Whatever it was, the papers of the day loved it.

A really good clerical scandal, well-spiced and judiciously prolonged in the months of September & October, is worth fifty pounds a week to the The Times.

A contemporary quote, 1863

And the media love it still – although today a good spicy story of a cleric gone wrong is worth considerably more than fifty quid.

The stories contained in this book, besides being highly entertaining, are a greatly overlooked aspect of local history. Here is a selection of the most interesting, some might say sensational, of those really good clerical scandals and cause celebres that have occurred in Devon.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom Hughes retired after four decades as a broadcast journalist in the States, Tom has found the time to bring to print the fruits of his years of reading and research in Victorian history. He has been a regular contributor to *The Marylebone Journal*. This is his first book. There are no clergymen in his immediate family.

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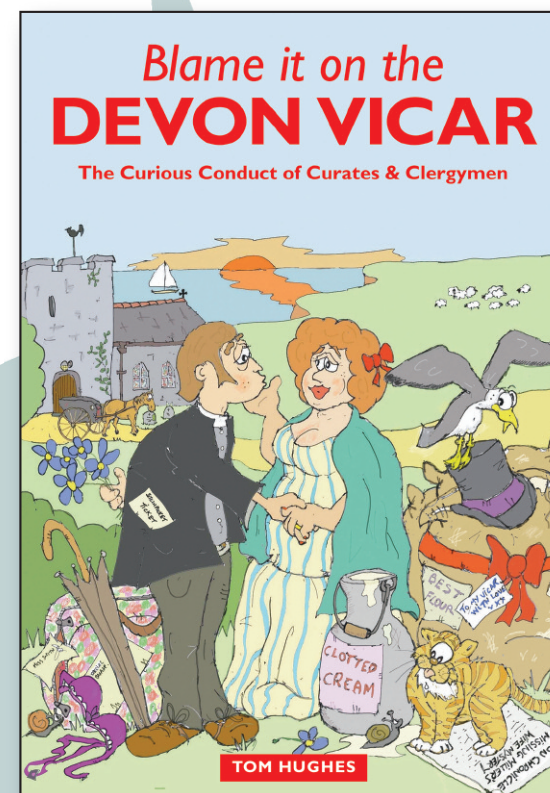
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Somerset TA21 9PZ
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Fax: 01823 216796
www.halsgrove.com
e-mail: sales@halsgrove.com

HALSGROVE TITLE INFORMATION



Format: Paperback, 128 pages, 210x148mm, with black & white illustrations

Price: £8.99

ISBN: 978 1 84114 861 8

Imprint: Halsgrove

Published: March 2009

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