

1837 General Election

Until a change of law in 1867, a general election was required to be held following the death of the monarch ('demise of the Crown'). General elections were therefore held following the deaths of George IV in 1830 and of William IV in 1837.

At the 1830 general election, two of the three solicitors in the town were actively involved. William Henry Hitchcock was Deddington District election agent for the unsuccessful Liberal candidate, Sir George Dashwood, whilst John Francis Lamb was agent for the Tory candidate, Lord Norreys.

Oxfordshire was a county constituency. After the passage of the Great Reform Bill in 1832, it was represented by 3 M.P.s (an increase from 2), whilst Banbury retained an M.P. as a parliamentary borough.

At the 1832 and 1835 general elections, there were 2 Tory candidates and one Whig candidate, each elected unopposed.

At the time of the general election in 1837, there was a Whig or Liberal government headed by Lord Melbourne. The leader of the Conservative party was Sir Robert Peel. Since the controversial Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829, Roman Catholics had been permitted to vote and hold public office for the first time.

At the 1837 election, the three Conservative candidates were:

- Lord Norreys (Montagu Bertie), eldest son of the Earl of Abingdon;
- George Harcourt;
- Thomas Parker, eldest son of the Earl of Macclesfield.

Norreys and Harcourt were the sitting Conservative members, and Parker was a new candidate.

The third outgoing member, a Whig, was not standing again, and the Whigs selected as their candidate Thomas Stonor, eldest son of Lord Camoys of Stonor Park, a prominent Catholic family. The Whigs did not seek to contest the other two county seats.

For voting purposes, Oxford, Deddington, Witney and Nettlebed were designated as polling places. The Deddington polling station was the Town Hall.

In the Deddington polling district, the election descended into acrimony, the Tories campaigning against the perceived threat of the spread of Popery.

The Anglican establishment was fully engaged, and 29 clergymen turned out at Deddington to lobby the electors to support the Conservative candidates. "The Polling booths and town of Deddington were placarded with bills inscribed 'No Popery' during the election."

In the result, on a 78.5% turnout amongst 5,253 registered voters in the county constituency, the Conservatives decisively won the third seat from the Whigs, Stonor polling only 14.4% of the votes cast, although the Whigs retained a majority, albeit

reduced, in the House of Commons. The number of registered voters in the Parish was 204.

It was subsequently alleged that "So great was the zeal of some persons in the cause of Popery and Mr. Stonor . . . that the Independent Chapel [in Deddington] was fitted up as a feasting-room for Mr. Stonor's supporters, and drinking and swearing were going on there."

Apparently, the Independent Chapel was subject to a lease of 7 years to the Rev. W.C. Risley, the new vicar of Deddington, which he had fitted out ready for use as a school room.

As a correspondent of the *Oxford City and County Chronicle* observed, this was difficult to reconcile with Risley's position as a strong supporter of the Conservative cause. So much so that he had allowed the Vicarage to be used as the Committee Room of one of the Tory candidates, Lord Norreys.

The Conservatives in north Oxfordshire were well pleased with the result in the three county seats, and encouraged by the further reduction in Melbourne's parliamentary majority, although the Whigs remained in power until 1841.

"A most highly respectable meeting, to celebrate the recent glorious triumph of Conservatism over the Whig-Radical and Popish faction in Oxfordshire, was held at Deddington . . . in the Infant School Room, which was most elegantly and tastefully decorated with flowers, evergreens, &c."

The dinner was attended by about 100 of the 'great and good'. The Rev. Risley (39) presided at the side-table.

Jackson's Oxford Journal carried an exhaustive account of the self-congratulatory proceedings at the dinner (see below).

"After the substantials and delicacies which Mr. Herring, of the King's Arms, had supplied in great abundance, were removed," the proceedings were devoted to toasts and speeches, with some musical interludes.

A total of 23 toasts were proposed, accompanied by cheering and 'three times three' (hip hip hooray), and there were numerous speeches and responses returning thanks.¹ The Rev. W.C. Risley returned thanks for the toast to 'the Bishop and clergy of the diocese', and also proposed a toast. A Mr. Field, possibly Samuel Field (33), a Deddington solicitor, returned thanks for the toast to party agents, and proposed another toast.² "The hilarity of the meeting continued until a late hour."

The landlord of the Unicorn, John Sturch, was a staunch supporter of the Whig cause. Following the general election, he hosted a lunch for Whig supporters at the Unicorn. The bill of fare featured prime venison.

¹ One of the toasts was to the 'Wooden Walls of old England', a reference to the Royal Navy.

² Risley and Samuel Field had attended a Conservative dinner in Oxford together in January that year. See *'Early Victorian Squarson - The Diaries of William Cotton Risley, Vicar of Deddington, 1835-1848'*, edited by Geoffrey Smedley-Stevenson, The Banbury Historical Society, Vol. 29, 2007.

The Rev. Risley's diaries might have been expected to provide further insight into the goings-on at Deddington during the 1837 election, but there is a gap in the diaries between 21 June 1837 and 25 January 1838.

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The Oxford City and County Chronicle, 12 August 1837, page 1

Lengthy letter to the Editor about the recent General Election, includes the following:

Turn we to another part of the electioneering business. Twenty-nine Parsons polled at Deddington in favour of the Conservative Members;

Footnote to another letter to the Editor:

The Polling booths and town of Deddington were placarded with bills inscribed "No Popery" during the election.

The Oxford City and County Chronicle, 12 August 1837, page 2

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY ELECTION.

To the Editor of the Oxford Chronicle.

SIR, - That ingenious and authentic public oracle, the Oxford University, City, and County Herald, has in its last number the following article:-

"DEDDINGTON. - So great was the zeal of some persons in the cause of Popery and Mr. Stonor at our Election, that it is a fact that the Independent Chapel, erected a few years ago by the late Mr. Harris, was fitted up as a feasting-room for Mr. Stonor's supporters, and drinking and swearing were going on there, where the good and venerable Rowland Hill had preached so shortly before !!!"

There can be no question that the Editor of the *Herald* intends this as a slap at the over-zeal, as he supposes, of Independent Dissenters in favour of Popery, and I would send him a correct statement of the matter, did I not know that he is less fond of truth than of a highly-seasoned paragraph against Dissenters. For the benefit of the public, however, and that they may not be gulled by such bold and false assertions, I will state exactly the fact. The building alluded to, and which was at one time as described, an Independent Chapel, is at present held for a lease of seven years the Rev. W.C. Risley, Vicar of Deddington, and has been fitted up by him as a School Room, though neither master, nor mistress, nor children have as yet enjoyed it. There are some, indeed, who shrewdly opine, that it has been so leased and fitted up, as the most effectual mode of preventing its

being again used as a Meeting House. Let the Rev. Editor of the *Herald* then, who is a staunch Churchman and no Papist, enquire of the Vicar of Deddington by whose zeal it was that the building he leases was so employed. It surely never could have been his own, for so earnest was he on the other side, that the Vicarage House (tell it not in Gath) which should be the residence of peace and unanimity, was the head quarters, in plain English, the Committee Room of one of the Tory Candidates - Lord Norreys.

It is amusing enough to see the Editor of the *Herald* talking, now that he is dead and gone, of "*the good and venerable Rowland Hill*," who preached in the before-named Meeting House. This praising of defunct Dissenters is very like "*building the tombs of the prophets, and garnishing the sepulchres of the righteous*," and saying, "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets," and yet at the same time forgetting who are "the children of them which killed the prophets."

VERAX.

2 September 1837, page 3

DEDDINGTON CONSERVATIVE MEETING.

A most highly respectable meeting, to celebrate the recent glorious triumph of Conservatism over the Whig-Radical and Popish faction in Oxfordshire, was held at Deddington, on Tuesday last. About 100 persons were present. The unfavourable state of the weather did not for a moment damp the zeal and ardour of the North-Oxfordshire Conservatives, who appeared anxious to show again and again their devoted attachment to our glorious Constitution, which they expressed themselves determined to uphold unfettered and unimpaired. The meeting was held in the Infant School Room, which was most elegantly and tastefully decorated with flowers, evergreens, &c. The banners were very handsome; the one over the Chairman, "The Queen and Constitution," with "V.R." was tastefully formed with flowers; and the others were "Norreys for ever" - "Speed the Plough" - "Queen, Lords, and Commons" - "God speed the Plough and prosper Oxfordshire" - and "Parker and the Constitution." In the unavoidable absence of J.H. Whitmore Jones Esq. [Chastleton], Daniel Stuart, Esq. of Wykham Park, was unanimously called to the chair. Amongst the company present we noticed the Chairman, T.A.W. Parker, Esq. M.P. Major Cartwright, Rev. S.R. Cartwright, Captain Henry Cartwright, Fred. Cartwright, Esq. William Willes, Esq. Colonel Dawkins, Rev. W.C. Risley, Rev. G.D. Faithful, Rev. Mr. Chambers, J. Davis, Esq. and many other very respectable gentlemen of the neighbourhood. The Chairman was supported by

Colonel Dawkins, who officiated as Vice-Chairman; the Rev. W.C. Risley presiding, assisted by James Gardner, Esq. at the side-table. After the substantials and delicacies which Mr. Herring, of the King's Arms, had supplied in great abundance, were removed, the Chairman gave the good old English toast, "Church and Queen," which was enthusiastically drank with three times three, the band playing "God save the Queen."

The Chairman next proposed "The Queen Dowager, and the rest of the Royal Family," which was heartily drank with three times three. - Tune "Here's a health to all good lasses."

The Chairman gave "The Army."

Colonel Dawkins, as the senior officer present, returned thanks for the honour paid to the army. He assured the gentlemen present that no class of subjects in her Majesty's dominions were more anxious to discharge their duties honestly and faithfully than the British army. They were good soldiers in time of war, and as good citizens in time of peace. He begged to offer his most hearty congratulations to that meeting upon the result of the recently contested election - not as a triumph of one candidate over another, but because it was a decided triumph of conservatism over radicalism and popery. (Great cheering.) It was stated that religion and politics had no connexion with each other, but he believed that we owed much of our national prosperity and power to the manner in which religion had been encouraged and fostered. He did not wonder that those who wished to pull down the fabric were displeased and angry that the influence of the Protestant Clergy was greatly increased. These were no times for wavering; it was time for every individual to speak out, and to show to what party he belongs. The utmost endeavours must be used to put down that wild, visionary, revolutionary party which were striving to overturn all that was valuable in the Constitution, and which was governed and controlled by that Popish Irish demagogue O'Connell - (great cheering) - who would sap, and undermine the Constitution which had raised England so high in the scale of nations, and by which this country had stood for centuries the pride and envy of all the nations of the world. He entreated them to be firm and vigilant in support of the good cause, as he, in his conscience, believed the happiness of the country depended upon the preservation of the British Constitution unimpaired in its efficiency. (Cheering.)

The Chairman begged to propose a toast which should always be drank at meetings such as the present - "The Wooden Walls of Old England."

The Chairman then gave "The Navy." Three times three, which were rapturously given.

The Chairman proposed the health of a worthy and estimable man, and an excellent conservative, which he was sure the company would have great pleasure in drinking - it was the health of "The Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, Lord Macclesfield." Three times three.

The Chairman next gave "The High Sheriff of Oxfordshire." He was a gentleman of great importance in the county, and an active conservative. Three times three.

The Chairman said he had been presented with a list of the musical gentlemen in the company, and he was happy to say it was a long one. He was pleased to find there were so many talented gentlemen present, and called upon Mr. Fisher, whose name was first upon the list, for a song. The call was heartily responded to, and Mr. Fisher gave, with much humour, the song "A Half-starved Whig," which was greatly applauded.

[Mr. Parker, our newly-elected Member, at this stage of the proceedings, entered the room, and was most enthusiastically cheered in his progress to the head of the table.]

The Chairman then gave "The Bishop and Clergy of the Diocese." Three times three.

The Rev. W.C. Risley was sorry he should have been called on to return thanks for the honour done to the Clergy, when there were two senior Clergymen present who would have much better acknowledged the compliment. The Rev. Gentleman said we now lived in most critical times, and every person ought manfully to come forward and avow his sentiments. The cry now raised was that the Church wants reforming - then let it be reformed; but those who raised the cry wanted not to reform but *to destroy* the Church. They would *reform* the Church by *pulling down the structure*. He would have any abuses which might have crept in reformed, but would support and preserve it in its purity, and in its union with the State inviolate. (Cheering.)

The Chairman gave the health of an old and well-tried friend, "W.R. Cartwright, Esq. of Aynho." (Great cheering.) Three times three.

Major Cartwright begged leave to return his sincere thanks for the honour they had done his father; he was sure he would highly value the compliment, coming as it did from so respectable a body of his conservative neighbours. His father was not in good health, but was recovering, and he doubted not he would be where all present wished him to be, "at his post" in the House of Commons. He required no stimulant to urge him on to do his duty. (Cheers.) When called on he was always ready - his cry was:

"Said I my limbs were old?

"Said I my blood was cold?"

(Great cheering.) No! he would say no such thing; he wanted no spur to cause him to attend at his post, at which he was sure to be. To the young conservatives, who were present, he would say -

"May you, like him, be ever true,

"And ever still support your blue."

Song - Mr. W. Merry, "Our glorious Constitution."

The Chairman gave the health of "Mr. Willes, High Sheriff for Northamptonshire." Three times three.

W. Willes, Esq. returned thanks for the flattering manner in which his health had been received. He was proud to appear there as an Elector of Oxfordshire, who had assisted, in a slight degree, in the return of their three Conservative Members. He was always ready to assist in promoting the good cause, which he had no doubt would be more and more successful.

Song - "The good old days of Adam and Eve."

The Chairman begged to propose a toast, which he was sure would be rapturously received by all present - "The health of the Conservative Members for the County of Oxford." Given with nine times nine, and one cheer more.

(The cheering, which scarcely subsided during the whole of Mr. Parker's manly address, prevented our catching more than detached sentences.) The following (as near as we could collect) is the substance of his speech:- He said that, in returning thanks, he much regretted the absence of his colleagues, who were unavoidably prevented from attending, as, had they been present, they would, from having been more accustomed than himself to public speaking, have better explained the line of conduct they meant to pursue. For himself, and his partner in the good cause, he would candidly, and without disguise say, that their rallying point should be the Church and Constitution - their flag, the Royal Banner - and their watchword, Conservatism. In intellectual England conservatism was rapidly and steadily progressing. England had nobly sustained the battle and happily won the victory, setting a pattern of loyalty and right feeling to all the world. He wished that Ireland and Scotland had come forward as heartily as England and Wales in the same good cause. He wished all might long live to enjoy the victory so gloriously achieved, and hoped all present would keep a sharp eye on the O'Connell-led-Ministry, lest by their constant mining and sapping they root up the sacred edifice of our national Zion,

and by their political quackery, destroy that glorious Constitution they have not sense to value. The Hon. Gentleman returned his most hearty thanks to his friends for their exertions during the late contest, and for their kindness to him at that meeting.

Song - Mr. Clark, "England, Europe's glory."

The Chairman gave "The Duke of Wellington." Three times three, which were given enthusiastically, with one cheer more, repeated again and again.

The Chairman next gave "Lord Lyndhurst and the House of Lords." Three times three.

Song - "The Exciseman."

The Chairman gave Sir Robert Peel, and the Conservative Members of the House of Commons." Three times three.

Mr. Parker acknowledged the toast. He said the Conservative Members had been rather remiss in attendance upon their duties; but he believed they would be more active, and always found at their post in future.

Song - "Mary's Ghost." The band afterwards played a march with great precision and effect.

Major Cartwright begged to propose a toast. Many toasts had been drank, and many conservative toasts, but he begged to offer them another - the health of a good practical, not a theoretical conservative, gentleman who had done much to further the cause of conservatism. He, without further preface, begged to propose the health of their Chairman, "D. Stuart, Esq," (Great cheering.)

Mr. Stuart returned thanks for the honour paid him, a compliment which he highly valued. No man felt more joy at the triumph which they had met to celebrate than himself. Five years since Lord Norreys was placed at the bottom of the poll. But where was he placed now? Lord Norreys headed the poll, and is the favourite of the county! It evidently showed that a great change of opinion had taken place. Major Weyland had resigned; but had he again come forward he (Mr. Stuart) had no doubt the Major would have been again triumphantly elected. Mr. Weyland had entered into Parliament as a reformer, and a reformer he was; but finding that the Popish faction were going to great lengths, (and that he could no longer conscientiously support their measures) like an honest man, he changed sides. He (Mr. Stuart) firmly believed that the county was quite as well represented as it would have been had Mr. Weyland still continued one of its representatives. Last winter, Mr. Tancred, the Member for Banbury, stated that when he first went into Parliament there were only 130 Conservative Members, and complained that, upon

returning to the House, he should meet nearly 300 conservatives. What would that gentleman return to now ? - a House of more than 300 conservatives! - (cheers) - and Mr. Tancred would soon find himself in a great minority. (Cries of Tawney forever!") Mr. Tancred must confess, if asked, that a great change in opinion had taken place. He had had great pleasure in taking the chair upon the present occasion. He had been asked, "Where could a more respectable class of Yeomanry than those of Oxfordshire be found ?" He did not believe there was a more respectable body of yeomanry in England.

Colonel Dawkins, having obtained leave of the Chairman, begged to propose a toast. He had always considered the agricultural, commercial, and manufacturing interests were intimately connected and interwoven with each other; but if the agricultural interest was not upheld, the commercial and manufacturing interests would fail. He begged to give the "Marquis of Chandos, and the Independent Yeomen of the county of Oxford." Three times three.

The Rev. Mr. Risley begged to propose a toast, which all would regret if omitted - it was the health of "Colonel Parker, the respected father of the worthy Member present." Three times three.

Mr. Parker returned thanks.

The Chairman proposed "The Agents of the Members for Oxfordshire," who had exerted themselves with great skill, zeal, and energy, and with very great success.

Mr. Field returned thanks. He was at a loss to account for the absence of other agents, but hoped they were as well satisfied with being absent as he was with being present. Another occasion would probably arise, when his exertions should be again used in support of conservatism, and he heartily hoped that they might be as eminently successful.

The Rev. G.D. Faithful, with an admirable preface, proposed the health of "Colonel Dawkins." Three times three.

Colonel Dawkins returned thanks. He had had the honour of twice addressing the company previously, and he felt great difficulty in thanking them as he could wish for the very unexpected honour paid him. For the manner in which his health had been proposed and received, he begged to return his heartfelt thanks.

He recollected with pleasure the days he had spent with the family of the gentleman who had proposed his health, and hoped their acquaintance would be renewed. He was very anxious to promote friendly feelings amongst all classes. He had had the honour of a seat in Parliament for 10 years, from

1820 to 1830, and during that period he had invariably given his vote in support of the conservative cause - (cheers) - and had never regretted a vote given. It gave him great pleasure to attend so highly respectable a meeting, and he again thanked them for the manner in which his health had been received. (Cheers.)

The Chairman proposed the health of "W.H. Ashhurst, Esq. President of the Conservative Association, and Chairman of the Quarter Sessions," a gentleman of great influence in the county, which he had used in support of the conservative cause at the election. Three times three.

Mr. Field begged to propose a toast, which, he felt assured, would be received with great pleasure. He gave the health of "Major Cartwright." Three times three.

Major Cartwright, in acknowledging the compliment, said he had come from another county to celebrate the festivities of this day. He hoped his exertions in the cause had been successful. He had taken a tour during the course of the elections. He first went to Bath, where there was a good chance of returning two conservatives; then to Devonshire, Lord John Russell's own county, where a gentleman of the same name and conservative principles as Mr. Parker, was returned in conjunction with another conservative; thence to Plymouth, where he got into a Plymouth mob, and where two radicals were returned. At Bridgwater he had gone to a radical house, and on inquiring if he could have accommodation, was answered "O yes; our Members have left the town, and we have plenty of room." They had left in the dark, as their proceedings generally are. Had he gone to the conservative house he could not have been accommodated. Then to North Wiltshire, where Sir Francis Burdett - (cheers) - was returned, and where he had changed names from "Westminster's Pride" to "England's Glory!" (Great cheering.) Next to East Surrey, where two conservatives were returned; thence to South Essex, where [sic] also two "good men and true" were returned; and last, not least, he went to Middlesex, where he had the great satisfaction of assisting to eject that great political quack - Joseph Hume - (great cheering) - from the misrepresentation of the county. He had said sufficient to shew that there were "good men and true" throughout England, who had done their duty like those present. The electors of Oxfordshire had done one thing - they had greatly displeased her Majesty's Ministers. (Laughter.) They say the electors have not acted wisely - in fact they are fools. They (the Ministers) say, "If you are Protestants you should encourage and support Popery; if loyalists, you should prove it by being disloyal and attacking the Throne of England, that you should support the Church by undermining it; if wishing to support the Constitution and preserve property, must bring it about by

revolution." Oxfordshire had well done her duty, and he hoped and trusted that, as the constituents had performed their duty, the Members, who had their's to perform, would do it (as he had no doubt they would) manfully.

Major Cartwright again rose, and proposed the health of "Lord Churchill and the Queen's Own Yeomanry."

Mr. Parker returned thanks.

The Chairman next gave "The Ladies of Oxfordshire." Three times three.

The Chairman then left, accompanied by Mr. Parker, and many other gentlemen, who were most enthusiastically cheered as they retired; after which J. Davis, Esq. of Swerford Park, was called to the chair, and the hilarity of the meeting was continued until a late hour.