

Legal profession

The leading legal firm in the locality in 1820 continued to be Messrs. Churchill and Field, which had built-up an extensive conveyancing, probate and bankruptcy practice. The partners of the firm were Samuel Churchill (1773-1840) and his cousin, Samuel Churchill Field (1775-1833).¹ The firm's offices were in The Hermitage, at the Horse Fair end of Market Place.

The firm also had a near monopoly of local public positions, such as:

- Clerk to the Magistrates;
- Clerk to the parish Vestry;
- Clerk to the Charity Feoffees;
- Secretaries/treasurers of the Deddington Association and the Deddington National School Society;
- Stewards of all three manors in the Parish (Duchy, Windsor and Christ Church);
- the clerkships of the five turnpike trusts in the district.

Messrs. Churchill and Field's London agents were the firm of B.C. Carter of Staple Inn. B.C. Carter had been born Bartholomew Churchill at Deddington in 1768, the eldest son of Bartholomew Churchill junior (1736-1806), himself the eldest son of Benjamin Churchill (1713-1783). Bartholomew Churchill junior had married Margaret Carter of Tadmarton. As their eldest son, in due course Bartholomew inherited Tadmarton Manor and a considerable sum of money under the will of Margaret's father, on condition that he took and used the surname and arms of Carter. His death was noted in *Jackson's Oxford Journal* in 1826.²

Samuel Churchill was prominent in local affairs. In 1824 he was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of the county by the Earl of Macclesfield, the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire. He had begun to run up large debts, however, and was declared bankrupt in March 1827. His total unsatisfied liabilities were subsequently found to amount to £58,232 18s. 8d. His bankruptcy was not finally wound up until 1867, 27 years after his death in 1840, aged 67. Creditors ultimately received in total 4s. 11½d. in the pound.

Samuel Churchill's financial difficulties became increasingly apparent during 1825, causing his partner Samuel Churchill Field to give notice of the dissolution of the partnership from 31 December 1825. Had the partnership not been dissolved, under partnership law Field would have found himself jointly and severally liable with Samuel Churchill for all the debts of the firm.

¹ See Churchill family -

https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/18953/7.Churchillfamily.pdf

² *Ibid.*

Samuel Churchill Field effectively inherited the client base of Messrs. Churchill and Field without payment. Although from 1 January 1826 Samuel Churchill became a sole practitioner, as did Field, Churchill was almost completely preoccupied with trying to salvage his deteriorating finances, and disappeared from Deddington for extended periods (on one occasion for two months).

Samuel Churchill Field purchased several partnership assets such as an Auction Mart share and the firm's office premises in The Hermitage for £421.

Unravelling the affairs of the dissolved partnership proved to be a complicated and drawn out affair, compounded by lax accounting practices, resulting in legal proceedings on behalf of Churchill's creditors in 1830 which were not resolved until 1844, eleven years after Field's death.

See 'Samuel Churchill's bankruptcy' on the list of [Particular Topics](#) for more information about the foregoing.

Samuel Churchill Field's son, Samuel Field junior (1804-1886) appears to have joined his father's practice around 1830, when he became a local agent for Globe Insurance. Samuel Churchill Field died in 1833, aged 58, and his son inherited the practice, being appointed a Master Extraordinary in the High Court of Chancery in the same year.

Samuel Field was one of 27 gentlemen invited to join the committee of the Banbury Association for the Protection of Agriculture on its establishment in 1834.

Samuel Field was a cricketing enthusiast and one of the principal supporters of the Deddington Cricket Club. He is recorded as playing in a match between the Deddington and Banbury clubs at Deddington in 1836. In the early 1850s he was President of the Club.³

It seems that Samuel Field's father had acquired a long-term lease of the Castle Grounds from the Dean and Canons of Windsor. At some stage the Deddington cricket ground was located there. In his diary for 6 July 1836, the new vicar, the Rev. W. C. Risley records "...saw two Mr. Fields & went into the Castle Grounds to see their Cold Bath-"⁴

At a Conservative party dinner in Deddington to celebrate the Tory success in the election for the three county seats in the 1837 general election, a Mr. Field returned thanks to a toast to the county election agents, and himself proposed another toast.⁵

The dissolution of Messrs. Churchill and Field created an opportunity for the entry into the local legal market of two new legal practitioners, William Henry Hitchcock (from 1828) and John Francis Lamb (from 1830).

³ In November 1851, the club members presented him with a handsome engraved silver chalice (capable of holding two bottles of wine) as a testimonial for allowing the free use of the Castle Ground "now for many years past" at a dinner held at the Unicorn Inn.

⁴ Cold water bathing had been popularised by the Georgians.

⁵ Samuel Field had attended a Conservative dinner in Oxford in January 1837 in company with the Rev. W.C. Risley.

William Henry Hitchcock likewise built-up a substantial conveyancing, probate and bankruptcy practice in the district. In 1830 he was appointed a Master Extraordinary in the High Court of Chancery, and a Perpetual Commissioner in the Court of Common Pleas in 1835. He was appointed a local agent of the Sun Fire Office and Sun Life Assurance Society in 1836.

Hitchcock was an active supporter of the Whig or Liberal cause, and in the 1830 general election was Deddington District election agent for the unsuccessful Whig candidate, Sir George Dashwood.

Hitchcock appears to have been a close relative, if not son, of William Hitchcock of Boddicott House. In September 1832 the latter hosted a cricket match between the Deddington and Banbury clubs, who were afterwards entertained "with an elegant dinner, and spent the evening with great conviviality".

John Francis Lamb (c.1799-1851) moved from Witney to Deddington in 1830, after marrying Eliza, the youngest daughter of the late John Churchill of Deddington in 1828.

Lamb also appears to have been active in local politics. In the 1830 general election he was the Deddington District election agent for the Tory candidate, Lord Norreys.

In 1832 Lamb was appointed one of the Oxfordshire agents for the Guardian Fire and Life Assurance Company.

If the number of notices involving Deddington solicitors in *Jackson's Oxford Journal* is representative, Samuel Churchill Field, and after his death in 1833, his son, Samuel Field, clearly had the larger legal practice in the 1830s.

Another Deddington lawyer was John Churchill (1785-1863), a younger brother of Samuel Churchill.⁶ He is recorded as being High Bailiff of Deddington in 1826.

It seems he was working at Messrs. Churchill and Field during the 1820s as a salaried solicitor, and turned down the prospect of taking a one-third share in the partnership.

Following his brother's bankruptcy in 1827, John Churchill became clerk of the Kidlington and Deddington Turnpike Trust, jointly with Samuel Churchill Field.

John Churchill otherwise appears to have maintained a low profile until the establishment of the new Poor Law structure in 1835.

It appears private practice did not suit him, and on the establishment of the Woodstock Poor Law Union in 1835, he was elected both Auditor and the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages for Deddington District. John Churchill was elected Coroner for North Oxfordshire in 1839, a position he held for 23 years. He later lived at the White House (now Ilbury House) in New Street.

⁶ John Churchill was the third son of Samuel Churchill senior.

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9 August 1823, page 2

Kidlington and Deddington Turnpike Road.

Notice of meeting of Trustees on 11 September at the Fox and Crown Inn, North Aston, and of the letting by auction of the tolls arising at Old Man's Gate, Kidlington (net income £451 in 1822) and Deddington Gate (net income £206 in 1822).

Samuel Churchill, Clerk, Deddington.

17 July 1824, page 2

FREEHOLD PROPERTY,

In Deddington, Oxfordshire,

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION,

By Mr. CHURCHILL,

At the King's Arms Inn, in Deddington, on Saturday the 31st day of July, 1824, at Four o'clock in the afternoon, in the following lots:-

Lot 1. - A stone-built and sashed HOUSE, situate in the New-street, in Deddington; comprising a front sitting room and shop, kitchen, cellar, 3 bed rooms, and a garret, with a yard, garden, and barn adjoining, now in the occupation of Richard Russel, tenant from year to year.

Lot 2. - A stone-built HOUSE, situate in Hudson's-lane, in Deddington; comprising a kitchen, weaver's shop, and pantry, two bed rooms, with a yard, garden, and hovel adjoining, in the occupation of Richard Olds, tenant from year to year.

For a view of the premises apply to the respective tenants; and for further particulars to Messrs. Churchill and Field, solicitors, Deddington, Oxon; or to the auctioneer, Woodstock.

11 September 1824, page 1

Mr. JOHN LEIGH, deceased.

ALL persons who have any claim or demand upon the Estate or Effects of JOHN LEIGH, late of Deddington, in the county of Oxford, surgeon, deceased, are requested to deliver the particulars of their respective demands at the office of Messrs. Churchill and Field, solicitors, Deddington: and all

persons indebted to the said John Leigh, at his decease, are desired forthwith to pay the amount of their respective debts to Messrs. Churchill and Field, who are authorised by the administrator to receive and discharge the same.

September 8, 1824.

The Star, London, 6 February 1826, page 2

FROM THE LONDON GAZETTE

DISSOLUTIONS OF PARTNERSHIPS.

Samuel Churchill and Samuel Churchill Field, Deddington, Oxfordshire, attorneys.

17 September 1831, page 1

Notice to Debtors and Creditors.

WHEREAS EDWARD LATHBURY, of Deddington, in the county of Oxford, ironmonger, hath assigned over all his personal Estate and Effects unto William Rose, of Deddington aforesaid, carpenter, and Rich. Jarvis, of Banbury, in the said county of Oxford, ironmonger, in trust, for the benefit of his Creditors; - *Notice is hereby given*, That the Deed of Assignment now lies at the Office of Mr. John F. Lamb, solicitor, Deddington, for the signature of the Creditors; and that such of them as shall neglect to execute the Deed on or before the 14th day of October next will be excluded all benefit thereunder.

All persons indebted to the said Edward Lathbury are desired forthwith to pay the amount of their respective debts to one of the Trustees, or to Mr. Lamb.

Deddington, Sept. 14, 1831.

17 November 1832, page 2

£6,000, £4,000, £3,000, £1,000,

AND SEVERAL SMALLER SUMS,

READY to be advanced on Mortgage, of approved Securities. - Apply at the Offices of Mr. W.H. Hitchcock, solicitor, Deddington; if by letter, post paid.

4 April 1835, page 3

Oxford News.

The Lord Chief Justice of his Majesty's Court of Common Pleas has been pleased to appoint Mr. W.H. Hitchcock, solicitor, Deddington, to be one of the Perpetual

Commissioners, in and for the county of Oxford, for taking the acknowledgement of Deeds by Married Women, under the recent Statute for the Abolition of Fines and Recoveries.