

## **Charles Faulkner (1798-1871)**

Charles Faulkner was the son of the Rev. John Faulkner, Vicar of Deddington 1790-1821. He was admitted to St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, in 1820.

He married Ann, first cousin of Susan Risley, the wife of the Rev. W.C. Risley, Vicar of Deddington 1836-1848. After a period living in Adderbury, he returned to Deddington in 1844, when he (re)built The Priory in Hudson Street (then Hudson's Lane). At the beginning of the 1850s, Faulkner was around 52 years of age.

As a gentleman of independent means, Charles Faulkner filled his leisure time pursuing his archaeological and ecclesiastical interests, as well as demonstrating a sense of public service.

He was no stranger to public speaking, or controversy, and could usually be relied on to be a principal contributor at any public meeting. Meetings at which Faulkner is reported to have made an important contribution include:

- crowded meeting in the old Girls' school room to protest against the 'Papal aggression' in December 1850;<sup>1</sup>
- large meeting at the Unicorn Inn organised by the Charity Commission to discuss the future management of the Deddington Charity Estates in January 1854;
- public meeting at Banbury Town Hall in November 1854 in support of the Royal Patriotic Fund for the widows and orphans of soldiers and sailors fighting in the Crimean War;
- Vestry meeting in May 1856 about the problem of the church drains, at which he spoke "in the most energetic manner", ultimately leading to the restoration of the whole church;
- public meeting at the Town Hall in May 1856 to consider the best mode of celebrating the Crimean peace at Deddington (Faulkner proposed presenting bibles to returning soldiers).

Faulkner was a strong supporter of the Deddington branch of the Church Missionary Society, and was a regular speaker at its meetings.

He also used to attend higher level ecclesiastical meetings in Banbury. At the annual meeting of the Banbury and North Oxfordshire Association of the Church Missionary Society in March 1858, chaired by the Lord Bishop of Oxford, Faulkner proposed the vote of thanks to the chairman.

Faulkner was also in demand as a speaker on historical subjects. In February 1851 he gave a lecture to a crowded room at the Unicorn Inn on 'The Ancient Charities of Deddington'. In February 1859 he gave a lecture to the recently established Deddington Reading Room and Library in the Town Hall, which was crammed full, on the history of Charles I and Deddington's civil war connections.

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<sup>1</sup> The restoration of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales by Pope Pius IX, with a Cardinal Archbishop and 12 bishops.

Nor was Faulkner slow off-the-mark with his pen, especially when his sense of social injustice was aroused. His report on the Deddington Charity Estates in a letter to the *Banbury Guardian* in January 1851 played a part in the subsequent adoption of a fresh constitution for the charity to address the existing mismanagement and lack of accountability.

In 1858, at the vexed outset of the project for the restoration of the parish church, Faulkner wrote two lengthy letters to the *Banbury Guardian*, one setting out the background to the contention over the appointment of churchwardens, and the second explaining the social, as well as the practical, object of 'repewing' the church.

Faulkner was an ardent believer in the importance of educating the children of the poor. The National Schools had been founded in 1814/15 whilst his father was Vicar. He was dismayed at the closure of the newly built National Schools only 26 months after their opening due to the interference of the Rev. Brogden.

In November 1855 Faulkner wrote a lengthy letter to the *Banbury Guardian* publicly decrying their closure. His initiative led to almost immediate steps for the re-opening of the schools.

Faulkner regularly took the chair at public meetings, not merely Vestry meetings whilst he was Vicar's churchwarden.

Faulkner is best remembered as a passionate antiquarian, and he established a private museum on the north side of Hudson Street opposite The Priory.<sup>2</sup> The curiosities which he collected included numerous Roman artefacts as well as relics from Deddington church (e.g. Elizabethan hour-glass formerly in the pulpit). Part of the building still survives, now occupied by the Cycological Shop and Medipill.

Faulkner's museum was not limited to antiquities, and he used to exhibit other curiosities at the annual Deddington Horticultural Society show. In 1850 he exhibited 30 specimens of wheat, maize and oats.

Faulkner was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1858, and was a founder member in 1853 of 'The North-Oxfordshire Archæological Society'. He was also a Fellow of the Geological Society of London.

Faulkner delighted in displaying curiosities from his museum at antiquarian meetings such as those of the North-Oxfordshire Archæological Society, the Buckinghamshire Architectural and Archæological Society, and The Archæological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland.

His son was Charles Duffell Faulkner, a solicitor, born in 1827. He also had a daughter, Ellen, born c.1832. Miss Faulkner used to accompany the Deddington church choir on the seraphina, a type of harmonium.

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Faulkner Museum of Curiosities.

<https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/buildings/faulknermuseumofcuriosities>

