

Charles Duffell Faulkner (1827-1894)

C.D. Faulkner, or C. Duffell Faulkner, as he was usually referred to in press reports, was the only son of Charles Faulkner. At the beginning of the 1850s, he was around 23 years of age, "a man of considerably over six feet and proportionately built."¹

He married, at South Newington, in March 1852, Elizabeth Tabitha Watts, of Norfolk, and step-daughter of the Rev. H.D. Harington, Vicar of South Newington.

The couple's early attempts to start a family were marked by several sad setbacks. In August 1852 Elizabeth gave birth to still-born twins. She successfully gave birth to a son in December 1853, and a daughter, Leila Harriet Duffell, in June 1855. Unhappily, Leila, the "only and attached daughter of Mr. C. Duffell Faulkner" contracted scarlet fever and died 3¼ years later. The son is not recorded in the 1861 census, although there is reference to a new born daughter, Edith. The 1871 census records two children, Edith, then 10, and a son, Henry, born in 1864.

The young Faulkner embarked on a career in the law. He was articled with Mr. Aplin's firm in Banbury, and was admitted as a solicitor in Trinity term, 1850. It seems he set up his own practice in Deddington almost immediately.

Whilst the existing practitioners in the town appeared to derive a good living from conveyancing and administration, Faulkner appears to have been more combative, and quickly carved out a niche as an advocate in the civil cases, such as debt claims, which came before the monthly Woodstock County Court. There might be over 20 cases on a hearing day, with Faulkner appearing in a number of the cases, usually for the plaintiffs.

Faulkner was a strong supporter of the initiative in 1852 to establish a local building society. He became Deddington representative on the management committee, which met at the Red Lion Inn in Steeple Aston. The Deddington, Heyford, and Aston Benefit Building Society was enrolled in 1854.

Notwithstanding his relative youth, Faulkner was not averse to being involved in local affairs. His first reported involvement was at a parish Vestry chaired by his father in April 1852 to discuss the most efficient means of dealing with fires. There was a "strong" discussion about whether to turn the Town Pool into a reservoir, ending in his father vacating the chair. Eventually, Faulkner (25) assumed the chair.

Some of the young Faulkner's actions might be described as impetuous. He was responsible for the calling of the two contentious public polls of ratepayers which were called during the 1850s.

Faulkner was party to the contention over the filling-in of the Town Pool in 1854, when he seconded John Calcutt's proposal at a Vestry meeting, attended by 37 ratepayers, to fill-in the pool, and replace it by a well which could be used as a reservoir in case of fire. When the result of the vote in favour of the *status quo* was announced, Faulkner demanded a poll of ratepayers. The disputed results of the subsequent public poll led

¹ Obituary, *Banbury Guardian*, 25 January 1894, page 5.

to increasingly acrimonious exchanges between Calcutt, a prominent Wesleyan, and the Rev. Brogden as chairman of the Vestry.

At the Easter Vestry in 1855, Faulkner proposed John Calcutt as Parish churchwarden. There are confused accounts of the meeting, but Faulkner apparently insisted on a vote, in which his was the only hand held-up in favour of his motion. Calcutt in any event rejected the nomination as inappropriate since he was a Dissenter.

Faulkner similarly found himself in a minority of one at a Vestry meeting in April 1856. Risley's diary records:²

I attended a Vestry at the Town Hall for the purpose of auditing the Surveyors of the Highways accounts which were passed, with one dissentient voice only, Mr. C.D. Faulkner - who made himself very ridiculous by demanding a Poll with reference to a charge of 5d. for mending the Town Hall Lock on the door.

Faulkner also triggered a call for a poll of ratepayers over the contested election of Parish churchwarden at the Easter Vestry in 1858. This reflected not only the differences between the supporters (led by Charles Faulkner) and opponents (led by Samuel Field, the leading solicitor in the town) of the restoration and 'repewing' of the parish church, but also the antipathy of low church Evangelicals, who included Field and C.D. Faulkner, towards the Cuddesdon trained Curate, the Rev. J.H. Burgess, who was suspected of Anglo-Catholic leanings.

The two nominees, Henry Franklin, builder, proposed by Charles Faulkner, and Samuel Field, proposed by John Scroggs, a local auctioneer, each received 8 votes, whereupon the Rev. Burgess, as chairman, exercised his casting vote in favour of Mr. Franklin. C.D. Faulkner asserted that the Curate had elected both churchwardens himself and demanded a poll of all the ratepayers.

The ensuing behaviour of the supporters and opponents of Samuel Field, who was publicly identified as opposing the church restoration and 'repewing', generated much invective, ostensibly causing Field to withdraw from the poll, although in reality he probably feared he would be defeated.

Relations between C.D. Faulkner and his father could be strained. This was manifested in public at the above 1858 Easter Vestry, when the Rev. W.C. Risley noted in his diary:³

Some abominable abuse was heaped upon poor old Mr. Faulkner by his son, & also by Mr. Mitchell the Doctor, during the Proceedings - most painful to listen to, & disgraceful, specially so the one, as well as the other.

Faulkner supported his father's initiative to redress the mismanagement and lack of accountability of the Deddington Charity Feoffees. He was one of the principal contributors at the public meeting in January 1854 convened by the Charity Commission to consult the inhabitants on the future management of the Charity

² Smedley-Stevenson, *op. cit.*, Vol. 32, p.380, 3 April 1856.

³ Smedley-Stevenson, *op. cit.*, Vol. 32, p.409, 8 April 1858.

Estates. There was evident tension in the exchanges between Faulkner and Samuel Field, who was treasurer and solicitor to the Feoffees.

The rapid growth of the Rifle Volunteer Movement led to a public meeting in December 1859 to form a Deddington Subdivision of the nascent Oxfordshire Rifle Volunteer Corps. Faulkner (32) was one of the principal speakers. Perhaps exhibiting a degree of impatience, he shortly after requisitioned a second meeting to take more speedy steps. When officially formed in 1860, the initial officers were Samuel Field (56), Lieutenant, and C.D. Faulkner, Ensign.

Faulkner and his wife, Elizabeth, shared a love of archery, and took part in various competitions organised by the Buccleuch Archery Club, which was formed in 1857, of which he was hon. secretary and treasurer. The Club found a convenient practice ground in Adderbury, although its 1st anniversary competition was successfully combined with the 21st anniversary show of the Deddington Horticultural Society on the Castle Ground. Both Faulkner and his wife were capable archers, winning prizes at various matches.

Horticulture was another of Faulkner's interests, and he was a member of the Deddington Horticultural Society. He became hon. secretary in May 1855, but stood down after a year citing lack of time. He is reported as chairing a committee meeting later in 1856. In 1855 he sent a stand of 12 pansies to the Lower Heyford Root Show, which ground was decorated with various flags lent by him.

Faulkner appears to have had an early interest in cricket. At least, he is recorded as being a member of the Cricket Club committee in April 1852.

Faulkner helped to organise the contentious Crimean peace celebrations in 1856, and was part of the procession. In the evening, he displayed a number of variegated lamps suspended over the doorway, and in his windows appeared the words "Feed the Poor" and "Rejoice for Peace".

At the end of the decade Faulkner was still only 32. In 1855 he became a freemason, being admitted to the Cherwell Masonic Lodge. In 1858 he presided at a dinner at the Exhibition Inn for one of Deddington's three benefit societies, the Union Benefit Society.

We have scarcely any information about Faulkner the family man, although he is recorded as supervising the provision of tea and cake to about 200 children from the National and Sunday Schools during the annual school treat on St. Peter's Day in 1857 in Rev. Risley's park.

Faulkner was to become a dominant, if controversial, personality in the life of Deddington in the 1870s and 1880s. Professionally he became Coroner for North Oxfordshire in 1870, retiring in 1892 through ill-health.

He is better remembered, however, as a militant advocate of the temperance movement,⁴ penning letters in strident terms to the *Banbury Guardian* on an almost weekly basis, lobbying magistrates not to renew 'drink' shop licences, and, in the

⁴ C.D. Faulkner's father, Charles Faulkner, was also a teetotaler.

1880s, presiding over free weekly 'Saturday Populars' entertainments (including his own conjuring tricks) in the new Temperance Hall in his converted stables in New Street as a counter-attraction to drink shops.

A man of seemingly boundless energy, Faulkner was also a prominent protagonist in the long-running 'civil war' in Deddington between high church and low church Anglicans, reflected by vitriolic letters to the *Banbury Guardian* (in his own name rather than concealing his identity by using a pseudonym as was common practice), and by Faulkner's annual Lenten Papers condemning Roman Catholic ritualistic practices.

See the Coggins Scrapbooks, Volume 2, 1855-1888.⁵ Volume 2 contains over one thousand local press cuttings, around two-thirds relating to the years 1880-1887, providing extensive reports on Faulkner's activities in the 1880s.

⁵ <https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/coggins,george1846-1920-scrapbooks>

