

Rev. William Cotton Risley (1798-1869)

The Rev. William Cotton Risley was appointed Vicar of Deddington in 1836. His residence was Deddington House in New Street rather than the Vicarage.¹ He resigned as Vicar in 1848 for family reasons, but continued to live in Deddington until his death in 1869. At the beginning of the 1850s, Risley was around 52 years of age.

Risley, a former Fellow of New College, Oxford, and a substantial landowner, was well connected with the Anglican hierarchy, in particular Bishop William Wilberforce, and the landed gentry.

Combined with his considerable status as a magistrate, his sense of social awareness and his ready benevolence, Risley exercised significant influence and authority in the locality, effectively performing the role of squire of Deddington.²

Risley continued to be involved in local affairs after standing down as Vicar in 1848, although he usually tried to avoid being too prominent. He was regularly invited to take the chair at important parish meetings. A disproportionate amount of his time after 1848, however, was spent seeking to mitigate the neglect of his successor, the Rev. James Brogden.

The most important source of information about the Rev. W.C. Risley is his diaries, of which 39 volumes survive at the Bodleian Library (MS. D.D.Risley c.66-72). Extensive extracts from the Risley diaries, with editorial commentary, have been published. See *'Early Victorian Squarson - The Diaries of William Cotton Risley, Vicar of Deddington, 1835-1848'*, and *'Mid-Victorian Squarson - The Diaries of William Cotton Risley, Former Vicar of Deddington, 1849-1869'*, edited by Geoffrey Smedley-Stevenson, The Banbury Historical Society, Vol. 29, 2007 and Vol. 32, 2012. See also Rob Forsyth's biographical notes, and identification of other sources.³

¹ The name of Deddington House was changed to Deddington Manor in 1930.

² At a presentation to the Rev. Thomas Boniface, Vicar of Deddington, in 1903, the Vicar made reference to the Rev. W.C. Risley's eldest son, the late Holford C. Risley (died 1903), as "their late good squire". *Banbury Guardian*, 17 December 1903, page 7.

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0001523/19031217/128/0007?browse=true>

³ <https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/people/indexr/cottonrisley>