

Rev. Dr. William Wilson (c.1791-1867)

The Rev. Dr. William Wilson of Over Worton House was Curate of Deddington 1850-1853 during the first prolonged absence and subsequent first sequestration of the living of the Rev. James Brogden. In 1850 he was around 59 years of age.

Wilson was the son of William Wilson of Over Worton, a successful London silk manufacturer. The Deddington National Schools had been founded in 1814 under the "benevolent auspices" of his father, who died in 1821.

Like his father, Wilson took a deep interest in educational matters. In February 1850 he chaired a large public meeting to discuss how the "efficiency" of the National Schools, then in a state of "deplorable decay", might be restored. The *Oxford Journal* commented: "To the Rev. W. Wilson, Curate, may be mainly attributed the measures now taken to secure good schools for the education of the children of this populous parish".

The growing number of children being taught by the rejuvenated schools caused problems because of the inadequacy of the existing accommodation. At a special meeting in June 1851 Wilson advocated building new schools, and donated land in Church-lane for the purpose, although this was subsequently sold when it was found to be too small.

As treasurer, Wilson was the prime mover in the efforts to build the new schools, which opened with a grand Fancy Bazaar in September 1853. At the formal opening in January 1854 which Brogden insisted on following the lifting of his first sequestration, special tribute was paid to Wilson's energy and liberality.

Wilson was active in the Banbury and North Oxfordshire Church Missionary Society, and was President in 1849.

The Wilson family were strong Evangelicals, taking every opportunity to point out the threat posed to the Church of England by the 'Romish Faith' and 'Tractarianism' (the Oxford Movement). This was reflected by Wilson's team of assistant curates, one his son, the Rev. Frank Garratt Wilson.

Public opinion was outraged in 1850 when Pope Pius IX restored the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales, with a Cardinal Archbishop and 12 bishops. Wilson was in his element chairing a large public meeting in Deddington, with standing room only, to protest against the 'Papal Aggression', at which he spoke for an hour and a half. It was resolved to petition the Queen about the Pope's insolence, and to subscribe to a pledge to protect the integrity of the Church of England against Tractarianism. The documents, which had been drafted by the Rev. Brogden, attracted over 300 signatures.

Wilson also donated land for a new church at Hempton, which was built at his expense, together with an adjacent school room. St. John's, Hempton, which was designed by another son of Wilson, the Rev. William Wilson jun., Vicar of Banbury, was opened in June 1851 as a licensed unconsecrated chapel. It appears that by 1860 it was not in a flourishing state, however, and was transferred to trustees.

Wilson's ministrations greatly endeared him to the parish. At the end of 1851, the inhabitants presented a heartfelt address thanking him for his "valuable and truly disinterested spiritual services", including his large pecuniary outlay, during the previous year.

When Wilson resigned in February 1853 in anticipation of the return of Brogden, a petition to the Bishop of Oxford signed by over 500 inhabitants seeking his replacement by the assistant curate, the Rev. George Venables, referred to their deep regret at hearing of the resignation of their "much respected and beloved Pastor".

The petition may have been premature, since Brogden did not return until 1 October 1853, and Wilson preached his farewell sermon on 25 September 1853.

