

Clergymen

The inhabitants of the parish were served by a succession of clergymen during the 1850s. Although the Rev. James Brogden was Vicar throughout these years, his incumbency was marked by a number of prolonged absences and/or sequestrations on account of his recurrent pecuniary difficulties. During such periods the spiritual charge of the parish was entrusted to a series of curates appointed by the Bishop of Oxford.

The dates of the absences and/or sequestrations of Brogden's living are:

Dates	Reason	Curate
February 1850 to December 1850	Brogden residing in London	Rev. Dr. William Wilson, sen.
December 1850 to September 1853	First Sequestration	Rev. Dr. William Wilson, sen.
October 1853	Second Sequestration	
October 1855 to April 1859	Third Sequestration	Rev. J.H. Burgess, March 1857 to October 1859

Brogden, a trained lawyer, arrived in Deddington in 1848 with a formidable reputation as a scholar and theologian. This was reflected by his erudite sermons and prolific writings.¹ The *Oxford Journal* described him as "a gentleman of considerable ability as well as literary attainments".

Brogden's incumbency has been succinctly summarised by Brian Carter as follows:²

Brogden proved to be a source of embarrassment, frustration and scandal during his sixteen years as Incumbent; he ran up debts with local tradesmen which he was not able to pay, on occasion his living had to be sequestered; he became an alcoholic and managed to quarrel with virtually everyone in the parish. His parishioners could not get rid of him, not even with the help of the formidable Bishop of Oxford, Samuel Wilberforce.

Brogden and his parishioners soon tired of each other, Brogden increasingly absenting himself from his duties.

By December 1849 Samuel Field, the Parish churchwarden, felt obliged to send a formal complaint to the Bishop. The consequent letter addressed by Bishop Wilberforce to Brogden dated 24 December 1849 concluded:³

¹ *'Illustrations of the Liturgy and Ritual of the United Church of England and Ireland'*, 3 volumes, 1842. Codrington Library, All Souls College, Oxford, N13355444-6.

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433061823724&view=1up&seq=14> Volume 2; *'Catholic Safeguards against the Errors, Corruptions, and Novelties of the Church of Rome'*, 3 volumes, 1846-51. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=yale.39002053180775&view=1up&seq=25&skin=2021> Volume 3, 1851.

² Brian Carter, *'Printers and Publishers in Deddington 1840-2004'*, 2004.

https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/2941/P-and-PinDeddingtoncomplete.pdf

³ *'The Letter-books of Samuel Wilberforce 1843-68'*, ed. R.K. Pugh, The Oxfordshire Record Society, Vol. 47, 1969, Doc. 341, p.180.

Have you not during the preceding part of the year been more than 36 days absent from your parish ? I greatly regret that you should have burdened yourself with a parish so unsuitable to you: but so long as you retain it you must provide properly for its duties.

Given the Bishop's strictures, arrangements were made for the Rev. Dr. William Wilson, sen. (59) of Over Worton House, to be appointed Curate, and his son, the Rev. Francis Garratt Wilson, assistant curate, whilst Brogden removed from Deddington to London. The Wilsons were strong Evangelicals.

The Rev. Risley's diary entry for 23 February 1850 noted:⁴

- about one o'Clock Mr. Brogden & his family took their Departure - from the Vicarage, for London, where they are to reside in future - an event long desired for the sake of the parish & its best interests -

In April 1850 the Rev. F.G. Wilson was appointed a Surrogate for granting marriage licences by the Bishop. His address was given as The Vicarage, Deddington.

In October 1850 the clergy team was joined by another assistant curate, the Rev. George Venables, likewise a low church Evangelical.

A judgment debt against Brogden had been granted in the Court of Exchequer in December 1849 for £140 17s. 10d. in favour of George Dungate, the Rev. Risley's footman. Non-payment resulted in the first sequestration of Brogden's living on 26 December 1850. Notice was published by being affixed to the door of the parish church on 29 December 1850. The Rev. Dr. Wilson was, however, already in place as Curate.

The Rev. George Venables served as assistant curate until the end of the first sequestration in September 1853. He regularly gave lectures on such diverse subjects as Jewish history, astronomy, Jerusalem and education. Another of Venables' interests was music, and he founded a Church Choral Society at Deddington, being its first President.

Venables was also a prolific writer. Whilst at Deddington, he wrote *'The Deddington Church Tracts'*, four tracts, three priced at 1d., and the fourth at three-halfpence, printed by J.S. Hiron.⁵ A sermon preached by Venables on Guy Fawkes Day in November 1850 entitled *'Rejoice with Trembling'* was also printed by Hiron.⁶ The sermon (16pp.), preached shortly after the 'Papal Aggression',⁷ amounted to a sustained attack on Papists and Romanism.

In January 1851 the Deddington clergy team launched a learned periodical entitled *'The Earnest Churchman'*, 16 pages, price 2d., published monthly, printed by J.S.

⁴ Smedley-Stevenson, *op. cit.*, Vol. 32, p.292, 23 February 1850.

⁵ See back sheet of a pamphlet (18pp.) by George Venables entitled *'Church endowments for new parishes, how we may at once provide them'*, printed by J.S. Hiron 1856. Bodleian Library, G. Pamph. 2439(1).

⁶ George Venables, *'Rejoice with Trembling : a Sermon preached in the Parish Church of Deddington, Oxon, on Tuesday Morning, November 5th, 1850'*. Bodleian Library, 100 e.1418 (1).

⁷ The restoration of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales by Pope Pius IX, with a Cardinal Archbishop and 12 bishops..

Hiron.⁸ The main contributors were the Rev. Dr. Wilson, the Rev. William Wilson jun. (another son, Vicar of Banbury), and the Rev. George Venables. At least four numbers were published, but that may have been all. Whilst published in conjunction with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the periodical contained parochial notices concerning Deddington and Banbury, suggesting only a local target audience.

The Rev. Dr. Wilson's son, Frank, stood down in July 1851 due to ill health. The Rev. Charles Rhenius, an ex-missionary in India, was appointed an assistant curate, serving until June 1852.

The Rev. Dr. Wilson, who was the principal landowner in Over Worton, appears to have discharged his responsibilities as Curate conscientiously. In January 1852 the parishioners presented a heartfelt address in gratitude for his voluntary and able services, and large pecuniary outlay.

Reporting on the leaving presentation to the Rev. George Venables in November 1853, the *Banbury Guardian* noted that his "indefatigable and zealous labors [*sic*] for the good of the parish had justly endeared him to his flock, and whose removal is most severely felt".

In February 1853 an address had been presented to the Bishop of Oxford signed by over 500 parishioners, lamenting the resignation of their much respected and beloved Pastor, the Rev. Dr. Wilson, and urging the appointment as Curate of the assistant curate, Rev. George Venables.

The first sequestration appears to have continued until September 1853, since there are no references to the Rev. Brogden performing any duties in the Oxford and Banbury newspapers during 1850-1853 before October 1853, and the Rev. Dr. Wilson preached his farewell sermon on 25 September 1853.

Attempts had been made, however, to prevent, if possible, the return of the Rev. Brogden to Deddington, and a 'Memorial' (petition) was presented by parishioners in August 1853 to the Dean of Ely (who had been collecting money for Brogden's family).

No sooner had Brogden returned in October 1853 than it was reported that the living had been sequestered a second time, on the application of a Cambridge solicitor for £153.

The second sequestration appears to have been discharged almost immediately, since the press reports indicate that Brogden continued to undertake his usual duties.

On 4 October 1855, however, the living was sequestered for a third time on account of a judgment debt for £235 18s. 5d.,⁹ although Brogden continued to live at the Vicarage, and to perform services, albeit erratically, until September 1856, when the contents of the Vicarage were auctioned by the direction of the landlord of the King's Arms Inn (Edward Hatten) under a mortgage deed. "The Vicarage is, therefore, now completely stripped."

⁸ <http://dbooks.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/books/PDFs/590324608.pdf>

⁹ There was also a related judgment debt for £1,442 4s. 4d. Oxfordshire History Centre, MSS. Oxf. Dioc. Papers c.1795.

The Rev. C.H. Travers was appointed Curate in September 1856, but resigned after two months in consequence of the ill health of his wife. He was succeeded by the Rev. John Hugh Burgess.

Burgess diligently performed the Vicar's functions from March 1857 until October 1859. From January 1858 Burgess was supported by two assistant curates, the Rev. A.S. Cave-Brown-Cave and the Rev. Philip Reginald Egerton. All three had trained at Cuddesdon.¹⁰

During the winter months Burgess organised a night school at the Vicarage for the sons of the labouring poor, while Mrs. Burgess, and other ladies, instructed young girls in another room.

As a product of the Cuddesdon Theological College, opened by Bishop Wilberforce in 1854, which Evangelicals viewed as promoting Anglo-Catholic doctrine and practices, Burgess had to contend with constant sniping by the low church Evangelical faction.

On New Year's Day in 1858, the Rev. Burgess preached a sermon at an early morning communion service at 6:00 a.m., intended to be accessible to working men. The sermon was printed and published by J.S. Hiron.¹¹ It appears that Burgess had been accused of popery for holding such a service, and he found it necessary to write a preface roundly rejecting such claims.

The Risley diaries contain the following account of a meeting of the church restoration committee in January 1858:¹²

A rather disgraceful meeting took place - headed by Mr. Field, Mr. D. Faulkner, Mr. Mitchell, Mess. Scroggs & others - who indulged in the most abominable insinuations as to Doctrine etc. (not founded in Truth) against Mr. Burgess - branding him as a Puseyite & Romanist, Mr. Mitchell stating that he preached up the Doctrines of Regeneration and Transubstantiation - More than half of the 3 hours & above was consumed in this manner.

It was not surprising, therefore, that at the 1858 Easter Vestry meeting a few months later, when equal votes for the election of Parish churchwarden were cast for Samuel Field and Henry Franklin, Burgess as chairman exercised his casting vote against Field.

Burgess could not have anticipated that a poll of all ratepayers would have been demanded, or the consequent circulars and letters to the Banbury and Oxford papers full of invective. A lengthy letter from 'A Lover of Consistency' to the *Banbury Guardian* described Field as a staunch defender of Protestant rights against Popish innovations emanating from Cuddesdon.

¹⁰ There is a photograph of the Deddington curates in Smedley-Stevenson, *op. cit.*, Vol. 32, plate iii (opposite p.16).

¹¹ 'God's blessing upon the New Year': a sermon preached in the parish church of Deddington at the early morning service, on Friday, January 1st, 1858. <http://dbooks.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/books/PDFs/590182692.pdf>

¹² Smedley-Stevenson, *op. cit.*, Vol. 32, p.403, 6 January 1858.

According to the Risley diaries, on 14 February 1859 Burgess received the following:¹³

This was Valentine's Day - & Mr. Burgess received a Blackguard Valentine by Post - in allusion to Popery - damn it written out with the pen followed by No Popery Here in printed letters.

A lengthy letter to the *Banbury Guardian* in April 1859 from 'One not likely to become a convert to the Church of Rome, or a favourer of the Church of Geneva' took to task the Vicar of Sandford [St. Martin], the Rev. Thomas Curme, J.P., a prominent Evangelical and critic of Wilberforce, for his interference in support of Brogden, and for his sarcastic description of Burgess's team as "Well-trained Cuddesdon Anglo-Catholics".

The same correspondent wrote to the *Banbury Guardian* in May 1859 claiming that the Rev. William Wilson, jun., Vicar of Banbury (an Evangelical), had rejected 40 out of 50 hymns submitted to him by Burgess for consideration for inclusion in a new hymn book as unsuitable for the Church of England, and returned the whole to Burgess.

There was widespread disquiet in the parish at the prospect of the conclusion of the third sequestration and Brogden's consequent return. A lengthy 'Memorial' signed by 128 parishioners was presented to the Bishop of Oxford by Charles Faulkner in February 1859, detailing Brogden's neglect, recounting the considerable improvements attributable to the Rev. Burgess's efforts, and opposing the rumoured return of Brogden.

Although Brogden returned to the parish in April 1859, Burgess's licence as Curate and tenure of the Vicarage did not end until October 1859, so Brogden had to seek accommodation elsewhere. He was met at Aynho station by J.S. Hiron, the principal creditor in his bankruptcy proceedings, and conveyed to Hiron's house in Deddington, where he stayed until temporary accommodation adjoining the Blacksmith's Arms became available.

Upon his return, Brogden became personally liable for paying to Burgess the Curate's stipend of £150 p.a. in quarterly instalments, which he refused to pay. The matter was referred to the Bishop's court in August 1859.¹⁴

Notwithstanding Brogden's return, a last ditch attempt, co-ordinated by the Rev. A.C.B. Cave, was made in September 1859 to procure his removal on account of his alleged scandalous behaviour in breach of canon law, in particular his "habit of resorting to Ale-houses". Brogden rebutted these accusations with a statement by eight publicans "solemnly denying" such claims, which testimony was confirmed by another statement signed by the churchwardens, Samuel Field and Frederick Gulliver, John Calcutt, chairman of the Woodstock Poor Law Union, and three other parish officers.¹⁵

When Burgess stood down in October 1859, the parishioners addressed a long letter to the Bishop expressing fulsome praise of his achievements during the sequestration,

¹³ Smedley-Stevenson, *op. cit.*, Vol. 32, p.421, 14 February 1859.

¹⁴ Oxfordshire History Centre, MSS. Oxf. Dioc. Papers c.1795.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*; Smedley-Stevenson, *op. cit.*, Vol. 32, p.435, 4 September 1859, fn. 26.

not least greatly increased congregations. The "compulsory leaving [of the Rev. J.H. Burgess] is, by all sincere Churchmen, most deeply regretted."

While the farewell Sunday services conducted by the Rev. John Burgess were crowded, and it was difficult to find a sitting at evening service, the resumption of services by the Rev. Brogden the following Sunday attracted even larger congregations, with about 1,000 at afternoon service, including a large number of resident Dissenters. Brogden delivered "the most impressive and eloquent" sermons.

Notwithstanding the petition in February 1859 opposing Brogden's return, paradoxically in April 1860 he managed to persuade 121 parishioners, headed by Samuel Field and J.S. Hiron, to sign a petition to the Bishop criticising Wilberforce for not supporting his application for a grant for the education of his sons.¹⁶

For more information about the Rev. James Brogden, and his troubled incumbency as Vicar of Deddington 1848-1864, see Rob Forsyth's biographical notes, including the link to an extract from the Introduction to *'Mid-Victorian Squarson - The Diaries of William Cotton Risley, Former Vicar of Deddington', Part Two, 1849-1869, edited by Geoffrey Smedley-Stevenson, The Banbury Historical Society, Volume 32, 2012.*¹⁷

The impression given by the local press reports during the 1850s is that the parish was well served by the succession of curates who substituted for the Rev. James Brogden during his absences.

¹⁶ Oxfordshire History Centre, MSS. Oxf. Dioc. Papers c.1795.

¹⁷ <https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/people/indexb/brogden,revjames>

