

BOROUGH AND PARISH OF BRIDGWATER,

OCTOBER 28, 1830

THE attention of the Parishioners having been lately called to the want of accommodation in the Parish Church, and some fallacious statements having been confidently put forth calculated to prejudice the question by misleading the inhabitants, it has been considered desirable to present to the Rate-Payers of the Parish an Abstract of the Church Seat-Book. The undersigned Churchwarden has voluntarily imposed on himself the task of arranging this Abstract, with a hope that the Parishioners at large will be induced to contemplate this important subject uninfluenced by the offensive personalities and gross exaggerations which have been so industriously circulated.

While the statement now published is calculated to remove many false impressions, the Parishioners will decide for themselves how far it affords grounds for believing that any material improvement can be effected in the allotment of seats, either in principle or in detail. The Parishioners will likewise be enabled to determine how far the allotment has hitherto followed its natural and proper course, of generally preferring the claims of the old established inhabitants to those of other persons. It will be seen that there are some few instances of Churchwardens rapaciously appropriating to themselves, and allotting to their friends in an undue extent of accommodation; but the injury sustained by the Public in such instances is only, perhaps, the just penalty which a community should pay for investing unprincipled men with authority. In contemplating such cases it should be remembered that, although the allotment of Seats is vested in the Churchwardens, the selection of a majority of the Churchwardens is vested in the Parishioners, and if, in the exercise of this privilege, they delegate their authority to improper persons, it is childish to complain of an evil which a want of public spirit has inflicted on themselves. If this truth is forgotten or neglected, the advantages which publicity and arrangement are calculated to produce cannot possibly be realized.

To enable the Churchwardens, promptly, to furnish the Parishioners with the particulars of any individuals sittings, an Alphabetical Index has been instantly referred to by any person who finds that the number against *his* name in the annexed List differs from the number which he believed himself to possess. Some instances of error in this respect have been already discovered; and it is hoped that the Churchwardens will now be furnished with further information and suggestions. To apply such information for the general benefit of the Parishioners will be the first duty of the Churchwardens, always remembering, in the performance of this duty, that a man cannot put his claim to accommodation in a Christian Place of Worship on a more unfavourable footing, than by urging that claim in a domineering and offensive spirit.

While the undersigned thus distinctly expresses his sense of duty, he does so with a conviction that no effort of the Churchwardens can alleviate, in any sensible degree, the evil complained of. It is a fact, and an astounding one, that although the Population of this Parish is presumed to exceed Eight Thousand Persons, the Sittings in the Church scarcely amount to Eight Hundred. Under these circumstances, it is respectfully asked, on what principle of allotment can this appalling deficiency be provided for, or its consequences mitigated? What principle of selection can conscientious Churchwardens adopt under circumstances so vastly disproportionate to the wants of legitimate claimants? If it were to be held that Rate-Payers only should be accommodated in the Church, would not the difficulties still be insuperable; for while there are more than Six Hundred resident Payers, representing heads of families, there are only Two Hundred and Three Seats or Pews in the Church, including the Corporation Seats. But is it proper to contemplate the exclusion of the Poor from the consolation afforded by any mode of religious worship? Is it safe to shut out the great body of the people from the Religion of the State? These questions are respectfully submitted to the consideration of the Parishioners at large. Those who

are Churchmen on principle should be especially reminded that more than Seven Thousand Inhabitants of this Parish would now be without the means of attending *any* Public Worship, had not our Dissenting Brethren, at their own expense, furnished these means to nearly Three Thousand Persons: and this *they* have done in addition to *their* full contribution to the Establishment.

The foregoing statements and observations are presumed to afford matter for the serious consideration of the Parishioners The undersigned does not venture to propose a remedy. The subject in itself being well adapted to unite it a spirit of generous emulation, all the unassuming Friends of the National Church ; while it affords those of more lofty pretensions an unquestionable opportunity of demonstrating their sincerity.

JOHN BOWEN

The subscribing churchwarden has not applied for the signature of his Brother Officers, because he would not willingly subject them to ferocious attacks or anonymous calumny. He well knows how indifferent they would be to either, in the execution of their duty; but he likewise knows that their feelings may be reached through the feelings of others. Three year's experience has taught him that the libellers of our community spare neither age or sex; he will not therefore, needlessly subject the families of other men to that malignant venom which has been so profusely poured out on his own. Nothing less than this consideration would have prevented him from soliciting the assistance of his Brother Officers.

A LIST OF THE SITTINGS IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF BRIDGWATER,
AS THEY NOW STAND ALLOTTED IS THE SEAT BOOK.

It is necessary, to the proper understanding of this List to consider, that in some cases, the *whole number* of sittings allotted to a family, stand against the name of the *head* of that family; while in other cases the sittings stand *singly* against the names of *each individual* of the family Thus it sometimes happens that the head of a numerous family has a considerable number of sittings against his name, without being so well accommodated as other families are, where the sittings are specifically allotted to the members by name, and no individual appears to have more than one sitting.

It should likewise be remembered that most of the family allotments took place at a period, when the Church afforded ample accommodation for *all* the church-going members of the community The representatives of these families naturally remained in possession, when, from the increase of population there was *not* room for *all* Therefore, what seems to be a partial distribution, is, in many instances, the necessary consequence of pre-occupancy.

Abbott, Hannah	1	Axford, Frederick	5	Baker, William, <i>Tailor</i>	2
Alexander, Abraham	4	Axford, Mrs Frederick	1	Brimble, James	2
Alexander, William	1	Axford, Charles	4	Bulpin, Ferdinand	2
Alexander, Mary	1	Axford, Mrs Charles	2	Bulpin, Mrs	1
Allen, Jefferys	12	Axford, Miss	2	Bulpin, William	2
Anstice, Jemima	1	Axford, Miss Jane	1	Bond, Mrs Sarah	6
Anstice, Mrs Mary	3	Baker, Benjamin	2	Bond, Reuben	1
Anstice, Robert	6	Baker, William, <i>Carrier</i>	3	Bond, Mrs Abbott Mary	2
Anstice, Richard	4	Baker, John	1	Burnell, Thomas	6
Anstice, Mrs	1	Baker, James	2	Burnell, Mrs	1
Anstice, Joseph	1	Baker, Thomas	7	Burnell, Ellen	1
Anstice, Maria	1	Baker, James	1	Burnell, Maria	1
Axford, Mrs	1	Baker, William	1	Bagekot, Robert	5

List of pew sittings in St. Mary's Church, Bridgwater, compiled by John Bowen, 1830

Text digitised and edited by Tony Woolrich, 03/01/2021

Many thanks to Ros Boon for JPEGs of the documents

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Bailey, William	1	Copp, Mrs	3	Freeman, Samuel	3
Bennett, James	1	Coles, James	1	Fuller, Edward	1
Burrows, Sarah	2	Cook, Sarah	1	Fuller, Mrs	1
Burroughs, Mrs	1	Cook, John	1	Fuller, William	1
Bowering, Benjamin	2	Coombe, Anna	1	Furze, William	1
Bowering, William	1	Cooze, Mrs	2	Gandell, Edward	2
Bowering, Juliana	1	Cridlaud, James	1	Gandell, Amelia	1
Bate, Robert	1	Croker, Samuel	1	Gandell, Eliza	1
Bate, Mrs Robert	1	Croker, William	1	Gane, Mrs	2
Boys, William	3	Croker, Mrs	1	Gaylor, Thomas	1
Boys, Mrs	2	Crosse, John William	8	Gaylor, Elizabeth	1
Brown, Richard	3	Crowden, Thomas	1	Gaylor, Frances	1
Briffet, James	1	Cabitt, Doctor	5	Cay lor, John	1
Brimble, Sarah	2	Dare, James	1	Giles, Mrs Mary	2
Burt, Richard	4	Dare, Elizabeth	1	Giles, Mrs Sarah	1
Bryant, Edward, <i>Tailor</i>	4	Davis, John	2	Gill, Thomas	5
Bryant, Mrs	1	Dawes, Rev John	4	Ditto, School Seat	12
Bryant, Edward,	4	Dean, Mrs William	2	Gilmore, John	2
Bryant, Miss Ann	1	Dean, Mary	1	Gilmore, Sarah	1
Bryant, William, <i>Mariner</i>	3	Dean, William	1	Gillard, John	4
Bryant, George, <i>Do</i>	1	Danger, Thomas	5	Glynn, Sarah	6
Bryant, Robert, <i>Do</i>	1	Danger, Thomas, Jr	4	Governor of the Poor House	1
Bryant, William, <i>Maltster</i>	4	Dibble, Hannah	1	Grabham, John	1
Bryant, Mrs William	1	Diffortl, John	1	Granger, John	7
Bryant, Robert	2	Dosson, Mrs Betsy	1	Granger, Mary Anne	1
Bryant, Mrs Robert	1	Drew, Thomas	6	Gwyther, George	1
Carver, Anne	1	Edolls, George	3	Halsen Robert	1
Carver, John Smith	6	Elworthy, James	1	Hartnall, James	3
Campell, Anne	1	Elson, George	1	Hartnall, Jenny	1
Cave, Richard	2	Evans, Mary	1	Huvilarul, James	5
Chapman, John	9	Evans, Anne *	1	Heard, Clement	5
Charley, James	1	Evans, Harriet	1	Helliar, Thomas	3
Charley, Mrs James	1	Evans, Elizabeth	1	Helliar, Jane	1
Chorley, Henrietta	1	Evered, Robert	7	Helliar, William	2
Ckorley, Mary	1	Ford Mrs	1	Hiorns, Richard	8
Chubb, Morley	1	Ford, Thomas	8	Hoare, George	3
Chubb, Mrs Morley	1	Ford, Mrs Thomas	1	Hoare, John	1
Chubb, John	2	Ford, Henry	3	Hobbs, Edward	2
Chubb, Thomas	1	Ford, Mrs Henry	2	Hobbs, Sarah	1
Chubb, Miss Lucy	1	Ford, William John	1	Hodges, Richard	2
Chubb, Mary	1	Ford, Robert	4	Holloway, Benjamin	5
Cape, Thomas	1	Francis, Joseph	1	House, William	7
Clouter, James	3	Francis, Mrs	1	Holloway, Robert	1
Clouter, James, Jun	3	Francis, William	1	Hole, Mrs Mary	2
Clouter, Mary Anne	1	Freeman, William O.	1	Hooper, Robert	1
Clouter, Samuel	1	Freeman, John	2	Hutchens, Rebecca	2
Codrington, Robert	3	Freeman, Joseph	1	Hurford, Henry	3
Cogle, Charlotte	1	Freeman, Mrs Joseph	1	Hurford, Samuel	1

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Hurford, James	3	Morgan, Mary Anne	1	Smith, Anne	1
Hurley, Mrs	2	Mogg, Carey Bailey	1	Smith, Richard	5
Hurman Henry	1	Mogg, Eliza	1	Smith, Mrs Richard	1
Hurman, Caroline	1	Mogg, Henry Jones	1	Smith, Richard, Juu	1
Hurford, John	1	Mogg, Frederic	1	Smith, Mary Ralls	1
Inman, Thomas W	3	Nicholls, John	4	Smith, Alfred Foy	1
Inman, Mrs	1	Nicholls, Mrs	1	Stockham, James	5
Inman, Mary Anne	1	Pain, George H.	4	Sparks, William	1
Inman, William Henry	1	Parker, George	4	Staples, Arabella	1
Inman, Thomas John	1	Parsons, James	10	Stefton, Jeffery	1
Inman, Robert Ford	1	Parsons, William	1	Stradling, Henry	2
Jefferies, Margaret	1	Priest, Edward Cogle	2	Stradling, Edward Anstice	1
Jerret, Nancy	1	Priest, Anne	1	Smallcorn, Mrs	1
Jesty, Robert	4	Poole, Joseph Ruscombe	12	Symes, Sophia	2
Jesty, Robert Jun	1	Prior, John	1	Symes, Jane	6
Jesty, Charlotte	1	Poole, John Evered	3	Symes, Benjamin	1
Jones, Robert	2	Poole, John Evered, Jun	1	Symes, Mrs Benjamin	1
Jones, William	8	Poole, Ellen	1	Symes, Sarah	1
King, Joseph	1	Poole, Eliza	1	Symes, Ann	1
King, John	1	Quarrell, Mary	3	Symes, Thomas	1
Kingtone	1	Radford, Jane	1	Symes, Mrs Thomas	1
Knight, Mrs	2	Rawlins, Elizabeth	3	Sully, George	1
Knight, George	1	Raworth, James	1	Staples, William	1
Knight, Charles	1	Raworth, Anne	1	Taylor, James	3
Knight, Mrs Charles	1	Ralls, Ebenezer	3	Taylor, Elizabeth	2
Knight, Frances	1	Head John	4	Trood, Edward	3
Knight, Elizabeth	1	Read, Mrs	1	Trott, John	3
Knight, Charles	1	Read, William	1	Toogood, Jonathan	8
Knight, William	1	Read, William Jun	1	Towells, Mrs	2
Leaker, John	3	Read, Elizabeth Sarah	1	Tottle, James	2
Leaker, Mrs	1	Reed, John	9	Tottle, Kitty	1
Leaker, Elizabeth	1	Reed, Henry	6	Turner, William	1
Leaker, Charles	1	Reed, Catherine	1	Tombs, William	6
Lewis, Miss	4	Reed, Augustus	1	Toleman Thomas	1
Lockyer, William	3	Reed, Herbert	1	Townsend, Mary	1
Lovatt, Mm Mary	3	Rich, Francis	1	Trevor, John William	2
Ludlow, Thomas	4	Richards, Thomas	1	Ware, James	1
Manchip, John	3	Richards, Mrs Thomas	1	Watts, James	1
Manchip, Anne	1	Rookley, Thomas	1	Webb, Mrs Joan	4
Marshall, William	2	Saunders, John	2	Williams, Thomas	1
Maynard, Mrs	5	Saunders, Louisa	1	Williams, Ann	1
May, Mrs John	2	Saunders, Rebecca	1	Woodland, Richard	11
May, Jane	1	Saunders, James	1	Woodland, John	4
May, Susan	1	Sealy, Edward	17	Wollen, Doctor	3
May, William	1	Smith, William	2	Woodrow James	1
May, Frederic '	1	Smith, Mrs William	1	Woodrow, Mrs	2
Mills, Mary	1	Smith, Eliza	1	Woolgrove, Thomas	1
				Woolgrove, Mrs	1

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Woolrove, Thomas, Jun	1	Wride, Mrs	1	Young, John	1
Wride, Francis	11	Woodward, Thomas	3		<i>Total</i> 737

If to this is added the Corporation Seats, the accommodation allotted to the family of the Incumbent, a seat for the Churchwarden, and two Faculty Pews, it will be found that the church contains somewhat more than 800 Sittings

J. B.

G. Awbrey, Printer, Bridgwater