

# St Mary's church and the Bridgwater newspapers

By Tony Woolrich – 15/07/2021

Part 2-1846-1858

1

This sequence covers the time when the Bridgwater Times was the only Bridgwater published newspaper. The topics covered were the rebuilding of the church by Brakspear, the churchyard burials, the formation of Wembdon Road Cemetery as well as general church activities.

1846

## *The Bridgwater Times and Somerset Standard*

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|--------------|---|
| 29 January   | Letter to the editor about desirability of evening services at St Mary's and Holy Trinity.  |
| 5 February   | Letter from Rev Nihill saying that an evening service was up to the churchwardens to organise, to lay on gas lighting instead of candles and also an organist. This dated Dec 3 1845.   |
| 12 February  | Meeting about the parish fire engine.   |
| 19 February  | Letters about the parish fire engine; account of the opening of the Catholic chapel.  |
| 7 May        | Account of the opening of St John's church.   |
| 9 May        | Leader headed 'What has become of our church choir'; Vestry meeting mostly concerned with this choir.   |
| 23 July      | Report of the erection of the Gill memorial in St Mary's. Leader about Dr Morgan's school and its trustees; Note about the bad financial state of the church of England schools in the town; extract from Dr Morgan's will.   |
| 30 July      | William Dark appointed Parish clerk; letter about Dr Morgan's trustees.   |
| 6 August     | Letter about the state of St Mary's. Flaking stucco on the outside walls and a major roof leak in the chancel.  |
| 13 August    | Letter in response to above — chancel partitioned by lath and plaster [To form Vestry?].  |
| 20 August    | Town Council meeting — report on state of chancel at St Mary's. Committee to get estimates.   |
| 10 September | Leader about St Mary's rebuilding. Mentions piece about this in <i>The Builder</i> in article titled 'Baths & Washhouses', Writer urges the removal of the galleries and the re-pewing of the church to provide more free seats. Also need to employ professional architect instead of a jobbing builder. |
| 15 October   | Report of the repairs at St Mary's. Some stucco removed and walls repaired underneath.  |
| 31 December  | Editorial note about excellence of the choir — says congregation ought to support it.   |

1847

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|------------|---|
| 7 January  | Leader about public health and the state of St Mary's churchyard.   |
| 4 February | Letter about St Mary's church clock.  |
| 8 April    | Very detailed verbatim report of the vestry meeting. Full financial account of the year, with report on the salaries of the officers and how they compared with other local churches. Organist 35 guineas. Parish Clerk £30 to keep vestry swept and wind the church clock daily with a further £1-10-0 <i>per annum</i> to clean and mend the surplices. Sexton £10 pa to clean the church and keep the churchyard mowed, [presumably there was a separate gravedigger — see later ] |

St Mary's church and the Bridgwater newspapers

By Tony Woolrich – 15/07/2021

Part 2-1846-1858

2

- 15 April Leader about the Vestry meeting at which it was agreed that efforts would be made to create more free seats at St Mary's. Mentions a report of 1830 by John Bowen on pew rents etc.
- 22 April Letter about the above.
- 29 April Special vestry meeting to discuss the salary of the parish clerk; Reprinted article about the Cambridge Camden Society's tract '24 reasons for not having pews [sic]' Hilarious, must copy for magazine. [ For Cambridge Camden Soc, see Kenneth Clark *The Gothic Revival* ].
- 13 May Reprinted article about church pews from *The Guardian*.
- 14 October Afternoon services at St Mary's to be restored.
- 28 October Parish meeting to appoint an Assistant Overseer — mentions meeting in St Mary's vestry rooms [? Where were they].
- 11 November Leader about evils of burial in town churchyards, mentions a National Society for the Abolition of Burials in Towns. Letter about churchyard burials.
- 25 November Leader about St Mary's churchyard.

1848

- 6 January Horrific account of state of St Mary's churchyard by 'Inquirer'. [Bowen] Says problem was reported in 1842; Report of Town council meeting which received a report on the state of the town's health. Includes a survey of mortality by district. Health committee formed.
- 13 January Leader about 'Inquirer' article. Note about the use of an iron bar to sound the ground before excavating graves to see if the bodies underneath were sufficiently decomposed to allow disinterment of the bones. Note about the Public Health committee, mentions coloured plans of the drainage system and health blackspots being produced. Letter about public health by 'Inquirer' [NB Enquirer was John Bowen]
- Ibid* 2 edition Letter from Richard Smith about public health, Says that the churchyard was declared full in 1842, but 811 bodies had been interred since. Much pollution of the water supply in neighbourhood.
- 20 January Report of Vestry meeting.
- 3 February Note of formation of committee to set up a new cemetery for town. Report of Vestry meeting about this.
- 9 March Lent lecture series started at St Mary's.
- 13 April Report of the committee looking into the cemetery question.
- 25 May Leader about resignation of Rev. Nihill. He claimed he was not suited to the town, but the newspaper disagreed, citing all the new initiatives he had established to get things moving in St Mary's.
- 8 June Note about Rev. Nihill's last sermon.
- 24 August Vestry meeting to discuss the bill of Mr Hutchins *the builder* for the work done on the church.[ He had claimed over £50 to supervise work costing about £180, and was accused of sharp practice]; Note also about St Mary's organ fund.
- 31 August Leader about the Vestry meeting and the state of the churchwardens accounts; Satirical

# St Mary's church and the Bridgwater newspapers

By Tony Woolrich – 15/07/2021

Part 2-1846-1858

3

letter about this.

- 7 September Leader about vestry and churchwardens accounts. Long verbatim report of the 2nd adjourned vestry meeting.
- 14 September Series of notes about St Mary's, 1) Sequestration of the living to two wardens. 2) Parish meeting over the churchwardens accounts. 3) St Mary's church sunday school tea-party. 4) Church rate arrears. Letter about the insanitary state of the cottages on the south flank of the churchyard.
- 21 September Extract from *The Builder* about Hutchins's bill. Report of the adjourned vestry meeting on this and on the church rate. Note about a picture cleaner coming from London to work on the alter piece. Also work about to start on cleaning and repairing the church.
- 12 October Leader about evils of clerical patronage causing delays in appointing clergy, with St Mary's in particular in mind.
- ?? 12 October Leader about vestry meeting on rebuild the organ.
- 9 November Report of the induction of Rev James to St Mary's. He came from Burnley in Lancs.
- 21 December Note of the restoration of the pulpit. Old layers of paint stripped off with hot charcoals and then washed with an alkaline solution, before finally being varnished.

1849

- 1 February Note with a letter from Rev. James about evening service at St Mary's. Proposes proper evensong. Mentioned that the greater part of his stipend came from Chilton. Note of a wedding at Chilton, the first for 100 years, people having been compelled then to go to St Mary's.
- 8 February Town Council meeting — letter from Rev James about afternoon lectures at St Mary's; note about the rebuilding of St Mary's organ; note about evening service at St Mary's.
- 15 February Note about boys caught playing in the churchyard with bits of a partially decomposed body.
- 22 February Note about St Mary's churchyard; letter about the state of the parish fire engines.
- 1 March Note about parish fire engine; letter about human remains in the churchyard.
- 22 March Note of testimonial for Rev Middleton one of the Sunday afternoon lecturers at St Mary's. Note that no evensong services had been held at Holy Trinity since the gas bill has not been paid and also a good account of the legal \* relationship of this church with St Mary's.
- 29 March Note of lack of gas at Holy Trinity.
- 5 April Note that Richard Lant Carpenter had resigned as the Unitarian minister [check RLC's autobiography for Bridgwater.]
- 12 April Long report of the Vestry meeting about the Holy Trinity gas problem. Also reports of the efforts to improve St Mary's - designs had been advertised for. Report of negotiations to have a new graveyard outside the town.
- 19 April Leader about vestry meeting, also letter about it. Reports of the activities of National .Association for the abolition of graveyards in towns.

St Mary's church and the Bridgwater newspapers

By Tony Woolrich – 15/07/2021

Part 2-1846-1858

4

- 26 April Note of removal of organ at St Mary's Choir now in the Chancel and not in the west gallery. Advertisement about extension of time for plans of restoration to be submitted.
- 3 May Report of vestry meeting about payment to overseers. Note about restoration of the parish church — Says that churchwardens had removed the galleries at the west end used by organ, choir and school pupils. Room to be made for the organ by removing the gallery in the northern chancel chapel; letter about Trinity church.
- 10 May Leader about restoration. Town Council meeting – discussion of the restoration, complaint about interference with corporation property in the Chancel.
- 17 May Note that nine sets of drawings had been received for the restoration. Row at Holy Trinity church when the wrong hymns were announced. Lady organist abused by the vicar.
- 24 May Leader about article in previous week's Somerset County Gazette about a wedding at Chilton claiming irregularities over the fees; letters about 1) Trinity Church and 2) restoration of St Mary's.
- 7 June Leader about appointment of Brakespear to restore Mary's; Statement of the committee of selection.
- 14 June Leader about Cholera — had now reached Keynsham. Note about cholera in Bridgwater.
- 12 July Advertisement for re-opening of the organ — full cathedral service on 22 July. Editorial note about this and of alterations to the vestry in the church.
- 19 July List of music at the various services held at the opening of the organ. Lady soloist at evensong.
- 26 July Leader describing the opening of the organ — 8 choristers in surplices and bands, worn for the first time.
- 2 August Letter on graveyards in London and Cholera.
- 16 August Note about St Mary's churchyard. Report of town council meeting — discussions of St Mary's alterations.
- 23 August Note note of special vestry meeting to arrange for a new burial ground.
- 30 August Long report of special vestry meeting to arrange for new burial ground.
- 6 September Leader on town graveyards; letter about proposal to produce a lithograph of St Mary's altar piece.
- 13 September Note of reopening Chilton Trinity church after re-pewing.
- 20 September Day of humiliation in Bridgwater, shops closed, all churches held prayer services.
- 27 October Leader about the burial of Poor House cholera victims in Chilton churchyard. Much muddle and confusion, because the Guardians would not sanction the extra cost of hearses going out to Chilton on the poor rate, burials in St Mary's churchyard instead. [Chilton burial book records about 60 interments of cholera victims in 6 weeks at Chilton at this time. Most resided in West/Friarn street area. APW]
- 18 October Note on restoration of the parish church; semi-humorous letter about the church.
- 25 October Note about cholera deaths; letter on alterations to the parish church — anti pews.

St Mary's church and the Bridgwater newspapers

By Tony Woolrich – 15/07/2021

Part 2-1846-1858

5

- 1 November Leader about the lethargy of the Guardians of the Poor — note about 32 cholera deaths. Note of publication of lithograph of the altar piece by J.R.Stothert, pub. by Whitby.
- 8 November Letter on St Mary's church; letter on water supply for the poor; leader on public health in Bridgwater; Town Council meeting - report of town meeting on public health act .
- 15 November Leader about public health; Town Council meeting - report and disussion on public health; letter 'Puseyism in a surplice' at St Mary's.
- 22 November Letter by Dr King of treatment of Cholera; letter on sanitary conditions; note about excessive delays in getting clergy to attend burials at St Mary's churchyard - families and coffin kept waiting; list of thanksgiving services for cessation of cholera in Bridgwater.
- 29 November Letter from Dr Parker about cholera treatment; note of 7 deaths in the week; note on church clock; letter on new
- 6 December Town council meeting - report on public health; letter from Henry Symes on cholera treatment.
- 27 December Letter about baths and wash-houses for the labouring; letter about state of the roads in Eastover; deader about restoration work on St Mary's church Note on estimates for the re-pewing in St Mary s, won by Wainwright of Bridgwater for £416.00.
- 29 December Note about dinner for 112 poor and aged people run by churches. Grace sung by the choirboys. Note of day of thanksgiving for relief of cholera. Note on the re-use of mural memorial slabs from the west end of the church in the restoration of the chancel.

1850

- 3 January Report of a special service of thanksgiving for relief of cholera.
- 10 January Note that the tender for re-pewing the church had been remarked on in *The Builder*.
- 24 January Note that the parish church vestry had been pulled down in the chancel, the picture moved and the church was very cold.
- 7 February Town Council meeting — discussion of work in the chancel - committee appointed to monitor the work in St Mary's and to report back.
- 21 February Note that the last gallery was taken down in the South chancel chapel.
- 7 March Note and letter from Rev G.T.James about the Sunday evening services.
- 14 March Letter on election of wardens at St Mary's; letter on public health in town.
- 28 March Note referring to article in *The Builder* on 'How shall we build our churches', need for decoration; letter about overcrowding in St Mary's churchyard, states that 15 interments had occurred in one small plot to the north in a few weeks, some only 2½ft below ground level. Graves kept open to await the next burial.
- 4 April Report of annual vestry meeting, 300 people attended, good humoured, complaint the new pews were not as comfortable as the old ones.
- 18 April Letter from Gabriel Poole about vestry meeting; long account of adjourned vestry meeting held in Crown Court — 400 attended — This was to raise a town rate to pay for the restoration work, following discovery of the unsafe structure.

St Mary's church and the Bridgwater newspapers

By Tony Woolrich – 15/07/2021

Part 2-1846-1858

6

- 2 May Copy of Brakespeare's report on the dilapidated state of the church.
- 16 May Note that St Mary's was to be closed to allow repairs to be done. Services at Chilton etc.
- 4 July Note that 2 nuns of the Order of Mercy and a priest had arrived in Bridgwater to establish a monastery.
- 15 July Report of St Mary's vestry meeting to discuss payment for work of restoration.
- 22 August Leader about a bazaar in aid of the restoration fund. Advertisement for a ballad 'Farewell to thee, daughter of all Erin's daughters' dedicated to the patroness and helpers at the bazaar. Written by E. H. Reed, music by G. Andrews, St Mary's organist; letter on churchwardens accounts.
- 5 September Leader with an account of the bazaar.
- 10 October Leader about opening Holy Trinity for use while St Mary's was being rebuilt. Quotes a letter from St Mary's wardens; letter about church rating.
- 28 November Long report of protest meeting in Town to discuss Papal aggression [ relates to the establishment in 1850 by Rome of regular catholic hierarchical dioceses in England. See Woodward in *The Age of Reform, 1815-1870*, p 521 ]; Leader about this meeting.
- 5 December Leader about the restoration of St Mary's. Detailed account of the building work done and how much was taken down. List of the texts under the corbels in the nave roof.
- 26 December Leader with list of the collections at St Mary's; Long report of vestry meeting to consider the wardens refusal to pay Rev. James and Brakespear the money for roof repairs. Tiles used instead of the slates specified. Also a detailed report by Brakespear of the state of the tower.

1851

- 2 January Leader about last week's vestry meeting.
- 23 January Letter about tower arch mentions 'last week's vestry meeting'.
- 13 February Leader about Council paying £200 to beautify the chancel. Note about the Council meeting on this; Town Council meeting — discussion on vicar's appeal — very long account; full account of adjourned vestry meeting to discuss new burial ground.
- 29 February Note that the Sunday evening services, at St Mary's were under- subscribed.
- 6 March Note about Lent lectures.
- 20 March Long account of vestry meeting to dispose of the old poorhouse in Taunton Road.
- 27 March Note about sermons at St Mary's for the Curate's Aid Fund.
- 24 April Leader about Easter vestry meeting, commenting on changes to the church service at St Mary's; discussion of the form of the services in St Mary's — objection to the Cathedral style.
- 8 May Town Council meeting - report of Brakespear's bill for the design of the mayor's chair; long discussion on repairs to chancel; report of sub committee.
- 22 May Report of the Bishop and Archdeacon's visitation to St Mary's. Note about forthcoming vestry meeting.
- 17 July Note about the Corporation being snubbed by Revs. James and Bearcroft [curate] at St

# St Mary's church and the Bridgwater newspapers

By Tony Woolrich – 15/07/2021

Part 2-1846-1858

7

Mary's when they came to a service in state. Not welcomed by the clergy on entry and no organ voluntary to play them in. Very interesting letter about this as well.

- 24 July      Advertisement displaying the churchwarden's accounts for St Mary's for the year; Note about wishing to complete the work on the North side of St Mary's before starting anything more; Note about the quality of the churchwardens; report of the vestry meeting on the accounts.
- 31 July      Letter about the wardens accounts.
- 7 August     Town Council discussion of county court summons against them for not paying a bill for work done in connection with the move of the corporation pews to the South Transept.
- 14 August    Leading article about summons for pew bill; note that the new cemetery would be consecrated on 10 September; note about County Court Summons; note on churchwardens accounts.
- 21 August    Leader on remarks made hostile to the work of the restoration at the Bristol meeting of the Archaeological Institute; letter about errors in accounts of the restoration; Long report of the County Court case to recover payment of money for work done on the pews.
- 28 August    Letter from Rev. James about the restoration fund.
- 4 September   Note about the consecration of Wembdon Road Cemetery; article 'Bridgwater Church, its architect and the archaeologist' taken from *The Builder*.
- 11 September Report of the annual school festival for Bridgwater parish — list of schools involved; report of the consecration of Wembdon Road Cemetery; report of the county court trial of claim against the council concluded — they lost.
- 25 September Town Council meeting — report on trial outcome.
- 9 October     Note that the Diocesan Society had approved the seating plan for St Mary's. Note that Rev. James was promoted a prebendary.
- 23 October    Note that Rev. James had taken up his stall at Wells.
- 30 October    Note of the proceedings of the Irish Society of London. One of the committee was Rev. James and another Rev. de la Hooke of Holy Trinity. This was set up to translate the scripture into the Irish tongue — a Protestant organisation whose aim was to evangelise native Irish speakers. Instigator was Rev. T. Moriarty, rector of Ventry.
- 13 November Note about the Axford bequest. Note about a subscription raised to augment this.
- 30 November Leader of Wembdon Road Cemetery and the town's apathy in using it - good background account.
- 27 November Note about forthcoming Vestry meeting on burial ground; important leader about this.
- 4 December   Leader about Wembdon Road Cemetery and the vestry meeting; letter about the vicar and burials; long report on the vestry meeting on interments at Wembdon.
- 18 December Note about the design of the stained glass window in the roundel over the South Porch [now it is plain glass].

St Mary's church and the Bridgwater newspapers

By Tony Woolrich – 15/07/2021

Part 2-1846-1858

8

1852

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|-------------|--|
| 1 January   | Report of the Freemasons meeting on St John's Day. Meeting of the Lodge of Perpetual Friendship No 157. Rev. T. G. James was chaplain.   |
| 22 January  | Note of the difficulties in getting coffins interred at Wembdon R Cemetery, no clergyman, leaking chapel roof, water in the graves.  |
| 5 February  | 'Independent party' formed in Bridgwater. Rev. James a founder member.   |
| 26 February | 'Restoration of St Mary's Church' letter by Junius. Suggests an exhibition to raise funds; leader about this.  |
| 4 March     | Allotment of seats in St Mary's — reprints an article from Bridgwater & Somerset Herald, 10 October 1830 with letter from the bishop to St Mary's churchwardens [This must relate to the reports noted earlier that John Bowen had prepared a list of seat-holders then.].   |
| 18 March    | Town Council Meeting — report on the furnishing of the corporation pews.   |
| 15 April    | Long leader about the opening of St Mary's on Easter Sunday — 1500 people; vestry meeting on cemetery fees, detailed schedule of charges.  |
| 29 July     | Farewell sermon of Rev, Thomas John Lee, curate at St Mary's. Report of committee set up to present a testimonial to him — evidently he was highly respected for his efforts in the 1849 cholera epidemic.   |
| 5 August    | Letter of thanks from Rev. Lee; letter asking why the organ was not being played — Rev James described as eccentric.   |
| 12 August   | Letter and leader about the organ. Bellows had given out and the instrument had been sent to Bath for repair; Town Council meeting — discussion about advancing money to St Mary's for the restoration.  |
| 19 August   | Important letter about the organ from Mr Acreman. Give an account of the state of the organ while the building was being restored over it. Frequently rained on. Acreman frequently had to remove half a barrow of brickbats and rubbish from the mechanism to get to ready for playing in the Sunday services.]; Note about a new vicarage being designed by Brakspeare for St Mary's on elevated ground at the back of the western turnpike gate.. |
| 7 October   | St Mary's organ brought back from Bath after repair.   |
| 21 October  | Note about the burial of the dead on Wembdon Road Cemetery — no clergymen. Letter asking why last year's wardens accounts had not been passed.   |
| 28 October  | Letter about St Mary's Chancel and picture.  |
| 11 November | Report of vestry meeting to discuss the accounts. Note that they had been printed in the <i>Bridgwater Times</i> ; discussion on St. Mary's painting and if it should be moved; letters about the painting. Town Council Meeting — discussion on moving the picture.   |
| 18 November | Note of vestry meeting to discuss the tower and spire.   |
| 25 November | Report of the above meeting. Discussion of the cost of consecrating the cemetery and   |



St Mary's church and the Bridgwater newspapers

By Tony Woolrich – 15/07/2021

Part 2-1846-1858

9

copy of Brakespear's report on the condition of the spire.

2 December Note of the collection at St Mary's services that week were for the use of the Parochial Visiting and Provident Society.

23 December Report of vestry meeting to discuss the Wembdon Road Cemetery charges.

1853

10 February Report of meeting of the Church of England Lay Association

10 March Report of farewell sermon of Mr Bearcroft, curate at St Mary's. Went to Cannington. Report of an address presented to Bearcroft by grateful parishioners.

24 March Leader about forthcoming Easter Vestry meeting and plan to pull down and rebuild the tower and spire.

31 March Long report of Easter Vestry meeting. Includes text of Brakespear's report on what was required for the tower and spire.

7 April Leader 'Easter Tuesday' on vestry meeting; report of a confirmation service at St Mary's.

14 April Letter from Brakespear about his proposals.

19 May Note that St Mary's bells had been rung for the first time in two years; Letter about this; Advertisement by Gabriel Poole saying he was withdrawing as treasurer of the restoration fund. Says money spent by the Vicar had not gone through proper channels.

26 May Letter from Rev. James repudiating Poole's claims; Leader 'An Item for Sir B. Hall — Church leeches'. Relates to the disputed bill for the consecration of Wembdon Road Cemetery. Letter about this from Archdeacon Dennison.

16 June Note of forthcoming Vestry meeting to consider churchwarden's accounts and a report on the Tower.

23 June Leader 'Church Reform - how business is managed in this Diocese' Consecration of Wembdon Road Cemetery; Long report of the Vestry meeting, with a report by the County Surveyor, Mr Carver, on what was wrong with the tower and spire.

4 August Leader 'Bridgwater Church Spire'; note of forthcoming vestry meeting.

11 August Report of vestry meeting on the spire. Very full statement by the restoration committee, also section about the Wembdon Road Cemetery.

18 August Letter from the churchwardens regarding the text of their report as printed.

35 August Note that Mr Hutchinson, a local builder was to make the repairs.

1 September Note of forthcoming Vestry meeting.

8 September Note says this was to be held over, but on another page a report of this meeting which concerned the spire renovations and church rating.

15 September Leader and letter about parish rating.

13 October Poem 'The Bridgwater Bells' by WW.

20 October Report of the funeral of William Baker at St Johns. Eulogy of Baker at the Town Council Meeting.

3 November Report on closing local burial grounds. Dr Holland sent down by the government.

St Mary's church and the Bridgwater newspapers

By Tony Woolrich – 15/07/2021

Part 2-1846-1858

10

Took evidence from the Wardens etc. Also the Parish books [?Vestry minutes or burial books] for past 20 years. It was thought that St Mary's, Holy Trinity, Baptist, Independent, Unitarian and Mariners chapel graveyards would be closed forthwith, and St John's, The Roman Catholic, Quaker and Wesleyan Methodist graveyards would be allowed to stay, but under strict control, and liable to be closed at any time.

- 24 November Leader 'The Picture in the Church' about a fracas in St Mary's when the Picture was about to be rehung by one of the wardens, and was opposed by the others. Note of the Archdeacon's forthcoming visit to sort it out; Note of meeting of Town Council about it; Report of the episode. Gas was turned off to hamper the work of the hanging and threats made to turn workmen off their ladders. Much bad language.
- 1 December Leader on the Archdeacon's visitation; Long report of the visitation, with interesting evidence, especially about the state of the church finances and the need to economise.

1854

- 5 January Leader 'Burying in churches' relates to vaults in North Petherton, Letter about this refers to piece in previous issue [not noted].
- 12 January Piece from London Gazette, saying that Burials in St Mary's, Holy Trinity, Zion Independent, Baptist Chapel and Mariners chapel were to be discontinued after 1 February 1854, and that until then no more than one body was to be placed in each grave.
- 2 March Leader about proposed exhibition to be held in Bridgwater in aid of the restoration fund; Advertisement about it as well.
- 23 March Note of death of John Bowen.
- 6 April Note of Bowen's funeral at St John's. Private, interred in same vault as William Baker. No obituary found.
- 20 April Leader 'Bridgwater Saturnalia' about the Easter Vestry. Long report of the meeting. No wardens forthcoming and finances blocked. [Few Churchmen compared with dissenters were entitled to vote at the Vestry, who as the result of the Braintree judgement held they were not compelled to pay compulsory church rates for upkeep. This duty was not in fact abolished until 1868]
- 27 April Letters about the vestry meeting, one complaining about James and how he spent more time being hail-fellow-well-met round town with his cronies than looking after the spiritual welfare of his congregation.
- 4 May Note of a service at St Mary's when the late Baptist minister, in Bridgwater, Rev. Henry Trend, preached following being deaconed.
- 13 May Note that the derelict houses in St Mary's Street would be pulled down and rebuilt, following the failure of efforts to buy them to make a new entrance into the churchyard; note of Archdeacon's visitation and rumour he was about to resign; note that some wardens had been found who were willing to stand.
- 23 May Leader about Dr Morgan's charity meeting in the chancel; letter from Archdeacon denying rumours of his resignation.

St Mary's church and the Bridgwater newspapers

By Tony Woolrich – 15/07/2021

Part 2-1846-1858

11

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|--------------|---|
| 1 June       | Letter from Dennison saying why he did not attend the Dr Morgan Trustees. Long account of Bridgwater Borough archives and charters.   |
| 8 June       | Note of meeting to arrange for divine service to be covered in St Mary's and Holy Trinity.  |
| 22 June      | Note of above meeting, also church rating and the painting.b[This seems to be involved with the start of a separate seat-holders meeting and pew rents to fund the church]; Note about the painting                 |
| 6 July       | Note of Bridgwater branches of the Church Missionary Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society; also about the exhibition.  |
| 13 July      | Leader about the exhibition in Bridgwater.  |
| 20 July      | Note about decorating the town for the exhibition; note about Dr Morgan's Trustees.   |
| 27 July      | Advertisement for Bridgwater Exhibition — tickets etc; Leader about the Exhibition.   |
| 3 August     | Leader about the Exhibition; Note about a flagstaff being erected at the East end of the church; Decorations going up.  |
| 10 August    | Leader about alterations to the length of church services; note of gas illumination used in the exhibition decorations. Long report on the opening of the exhibition; text of speeches, including one by Rev James. |
| 17 August    | Bridgwater Exhibition - Leading article #   |
| 24 August    | Bridgwater Exhibition – Leading article   |
| 31 August    | Bridgwater Exhibition - Leading article; Dialect letter about St Mary's church services.  |
| 7 September  | Article on exhibition.  |
| 14 September | Leader and article on exhibition.   |
| 21 September | Leader and article on exhibition, account of closing, with text of Rev James speech. Over 12,500 visitors plus season ticket holders. [Leader has section on what shall we do next?]                                |
| 2 November   | Report of vestry meeting to set church rate.  |
| 16 November  | Leader on misappropriation of funds by churches mentions Wembdon Road Cemetery;   |
| 30 November  | Note that railing would be placed round Wembdon Road Cemetery, not a stone wall.  |
| 7 December   | Note of disorderly conduct by boys at Sunday School in St Mary's; Long letter by Brakspear about the costs of repairs to St Mary's, and complaint about not being paid after six years.                             |
| 14 December  | Letter from G Poole about the costs of the work at St Mary's.   |
| 21 December  | Letter from Rev James saying he had suggested putting Brakspear's bill to arbitration.  |
| 28 December  | Letter from G Poole about this.   |

St Mary's church and the Bridgwater newspapers

By Tony Woolrich – 15/07/2021

Part 2-1846-1858

12

1855

8 February	Note about erection of dissenters' chapel at Wembdon Road Cemetery.
1 March	Letter about lighting in St Mary's, mentions Committee of seat-holders to raise money for running expenses.
15 March	Report of Vestry meeting on state of roads. Leader on Bridgwater's response to day of humiliation — list of the church services in the town.
29 March	Letter about lighting in church, not lit because of lack of funds. Suggests dispensing with paid officers. Report of vestry meeting for election of way-wardens.
5 April	Letter from the parish clerk in reply to letter on lighting and clerk's payments.
12 April	Leader 'Easter Thursday' complains that the vestry meeting was very tame this year, with no fights. Report of the vestry meeting.
19 April	Report of Bishops visitation to Deanery held at St Mary's — interesting views of the Bishop on church rates for the upkeep of the fabric.
26 April	Leader 'Bridgwater Church Restoration and Bridgwater Exhibition'; report of vestry meeting on church accounts; report of meeting to discuss expenses of divine worship in St Mary's.
3 May	Letter from Gabriel Poole about outstanding debt on St Mary's restoration fund; Leader 'The Churchwardens accounts'
10 May	Letter from Brakspear about his payment; letter on church clock; Leader on 'The Parish Church Evening Service'. It was to be stopped because of lack of funds — explains the legal position on how it was established; article on the outlay on the Parish church and the architects's fees.
17 May	Letter on forthcoming meeting to consider means of paying for churches; letter from Brakspear about his bill; Leader 'Mr Brakspear and his accounts'; note on the church clock.
24 May	Letter on evening services; note of meeting of churchwardens on improvements, rating etc; Article 'Mr Brakspear and his little bill'.
31 May	Report of St Mary's church meeting on paying for evening services; Letter about the previous week's meeting — to raise money for repairs.
7 June	Short article on Bridgwater church and the architects charges.
14 June	Long article 'Architects charges and Bridgwater Church'. Relates to a piece in <i>The Builder</i> where Brakspear's bill was dissected by the President of the RIBA and found to be excessive.
21 June	Note about service at St Mary's for local schools.
28 June	Note that the afternoon service had been transferred to Holy Trinity.
5 July	Letter by Brakespear and his charges reprinted from <i>The Builder</i> .
12 July	Article on the origin of the afternoon lectureship, with extract from the deeds, originated at time of James II.

St Mary's church and the Bridgwater newspapers

By Tony Woolrich – 15/07/2021

Part 2-1846-1858

13

- 19 July      Leader on church rates.
- 26 July      Note that the vicar had taken the choirboys on an outing to Lilstock.
- 2 August     Note that a deputation had been to see the Bishop about the afternoon lectures.
- 9 August     Town Council meeting to discuss using the old poor house as a reading room; discussion on the afternoon lecture.
- 4 October    Sermon preached at service in St Mary's in aid of the SPG.
- 18 October   Leader on parish poor rate;
- 25 October   Note on the Council paying the church rate from the navigation fund; leader on the poor rate assessment.
- 29 November Note on the new Vestry — described as frightful and looking like a blancmange. [ Note- in one of his letters Brakspear mentions that a rough sketch he produced for the wardens was traced without his authority and then built without the necessary ornamentation. Evidently the old vestry was a wooden shed in the churchyard]

1856

- 4 January    Letter about the need for church congregations to practice singing. Classes being run by Mr Waite at Zion Independent and Dr Lucette at Dr Morgan's School. Says that dissenters were better at it than churchmen.
- 31 January   Note of sermon about to be preached to Mayor and Corporation on the need for more funds to complete the restoration of St Mary's. They declined to attend.
- 7 February   Letter on singing in St Mary's. Says that congregational practices were being held there, but not well attended. Waite's system used; note about tidying up the churchyard; new paths cut, graves levelled.
- 14 February   Report of a public meeting in the Town Hall on Sunday Observance. Reporter surprised at lack of churchmen attending, mainly dissenters.
- 21 February   Leader on Sunday Observance; note of forthcoming confirmation at St Mary's; Letters about Sunday Observance.
- 28 February   Letter on laying out the churchyard; letter on Sunday Observance; Note on laying out the churchyard. Advertisement for sale of cottages on South flank of the Churchyard.
- 27 March     Leader 'Easter Tuesday' on the Easter vestry meeting; report on the vestry meeting.
- 10 April      Leader 'Take care of your pocket' about the expeditors meeting; report of the expeditors to the church — uproar and bullying by some of the wardens. This relates to unauthorised spending on further decoration of the chancel.
- 17 April      Letters about pew rents and the expeditors accounts.
- 8 May        Note of Archdeacon's visitation to St Mary's.
- 5 June        Report of amateur concert to raise money to clear restoration debt at St Mary's.
- 3 July        Advertisement from Mr Acreman wanting compensation for his losses, both financial and material, during his involvement with the rebuilding of the organ at St Mary's; note about vestry meeting on Wembdon Road Cemetery.

St Mary's church and the Bridgwater newspapers

By Tony Woolrich – 15/07/2021

Part 2-1846-1858

14

- 10 July Long report on a vestry meeting about Wembdon Road Cemetery; Leader 'What Bishops are paid for' — relates to costs of consecration of the cemetery.
- 28 August Very long report on the congress of the British Archaeological Association which included Bridgwater. Neither the vicar or curate welcomed them to the church; Leader about the corporation records.
- 4 September Archaeological Association report continued.
- 25 September Leader on the account of the British Archaeological Association meeting as described in the *Pictorial Times*. Evidently somewhat jocose at the expense of Bridgwater and not thought to be very funny.
- 2 October Report of the meeting of the Church of England Lay Association.
- 16 October Leader about sermons preached at St Mary's for the Additional Curates Society.
- 11 December Note of psalmody classes by Mr Waite at Zion Independent chapel.
- 18 December Advertisement for classes in 1) Psalmody and 2) Glees and Madrigals in the town. Letter on the style of services in St Mary's — writer objects to chanting, and says the style has only recently been introduced
- 25 December Leader 'Free Churches' relates to pew rents at Holy Trinity; Note of farewell sermon at St Mary's by Rev Mr Secretan, curate. Well liked and hard working, but dismissed by the vicar. Report very rude about Rev. James, says he is absent and lazy.

1857

By this time the *Bridgwater Times* had a lady publisher.

- 12 February Leader 'The Duties of members of the church of England' relates to financial problems of Holy Trinity and the non-payment of the Organist.
- 19 February Note that the Sacred Music class at Dr Morgans was not well supported. Note about forthcoming vestry meeting to discuss the insurance of the church and the repair of Wembdon Road Cemetery chapel.
- 26 February Report of the Vestry meeting — mostly Dissenters, since the vicar and churchmen came late.
- 9 April Report of a meeting to discuss the abandonment of evening services at St Mary's, due to lack of funds. Proposal that the Pew rents be increased.
- 16 April Leader 'A few words on Church matters' — relates to the Easter vestry meeting, very tame this year. This was the first year of the division of the old Bridgwater Parish to form St Johns and Holy Trinity as well as St Mary's, and this leader describes the historical background well. Short report of the Easter vestry meeting.
- 23 April Leader 'Church Matters' - relates to the departure of Rev. James and the arrival of Rev. Sadler, with no interregnum. Seems to have been a swop of parishes. Report of the seat-holders meeting.
- 21 May Letters on the restoration fund and the collecting box in the church. Complaint that no accounts had been published.
- 28 May Report of the Archdeacon's visitation to St Mary's — has material about Holy

St Mary's church and the Bridgwater newspapers

By Tony Woolrich – 15/07/2021

Part 2-1846-1858

15

- Trinity and church rates. Letters on the restoration fund at St Mary's.
- 4 June Note about the first sermon preached by Dr Sadler. Note that the restoration fund contribution box affair had been referred to the Bishop and Archdeacon.
- 11 June Leader 'The Church Restoration Fund Pox' Letters on the scandal.
- 18 June Leader 'A Dreadful Storm' — relates to church rating at Holy Trinity. Report of the Vestry meeting on rating at Holy Trinity.
- 25 June Leader 'Anti-church rate meeting'. Article on the origin of the afternoon lectures at St Mary's. Reprint of a letter from the Bishop relating to the exchange of livings between Revs. James and Sadler. Very long report of the anti-church rate meeting at Holy Trinity.
- 9 July Letter about church rating
- 16 July Letter on [can't read my notes] with rude comments about Rev James.
- 19 September Leader 'Harvest Home Festivities' — relates to Archdeacon Dennison and his newly invented Harvest Home service and dinner. Long account of the East Brent Harvest Home. Note that the new Burial Act had been passed.
- 16 September Letter about the old poor house. The committee of management with list of representatives from the different denominations. Report of a meeting of the local branch of the Church Missionary Society in St Mary's. Report of meeting to discuss the old poor house.
- 14 October Long report of the various sermons preached in the town for the Day of Humiliation, St Mary's, Holy Trinity, St Johns, Unitarians, etc.. Supplement to the paper has the text of a lecture given by Alderman George Parker on the history of Bridgwater.
- 2 December Report of dinner given by the corporation — text of speech by Rev. Sadler.
- 16 December Report of service and sermon in aid of the Curate's Aid Society in St Mary's. Report of a concert by Mr Andrews, organist at St Mary's.
- 30 December Letters about a vestry meeting on the disposal of the old poor house.

1858

- 13 January Report of the West Street Ragged School attended by local clergy.
- 20 January Note of fund raising events to extend the West Street Ragged School. Letter about St Mary's Restoration Fund box — no accounts published yet.
- 10 February Note about the Bridgwater Musical Class. Note about Holy Trinity Sunday Schools — ragged school, etc.
- 17 February Note of lecture given by Rev. Fitzgerald on the Gospel according to St Mark. [Is this the man who later became vicar of St Mary's. Was he then curate?]
- 24 February Leader about Trinity Church Rates Leader about public health. Note of a meeting chaired by Rev. Sadler on Indian Missions. Magistrates court trials of people who refused to pay Holy Trinity Church rates.
- 10 March Note about a new school room for West Street ragged school.

# St Mary's church and the Bridgwater newspapers

By Tony Woolrich – 15/07/2021

Part 2-1846-1858

16

17 March	Note of collection in St Mary's in aid of Diocesan Board of Education and the Pastoral Aid Society.
31 March	Report about Bridgwater vocal class.
14 April	Note of meeting of seat-holders of St Mary's — discussion of establishing a fund to pay for keeping order during evening services. Note about proposed new school room at West Street.
5 May	Leader about church rating in a national context.
12 May	Leader about church rates at Holy Trinity Note about Bridgwater Church of England Infants school — 140 attenders. Letter on church rates
19 May	Long report of meeting on church rates at Holy Trinity. •
16 June	Letter about the Holy Trinity Vestry meeting. Letter about church rates.
30 June	Leader about church rates. Note about the Bridgwater vocal class [Is the ancestor of the Choral Society?]
18 August	Letter on the Holy Trinity parish rates.
25 August	Report of judgment on court case Fripp v Bridgwater & Taunton Canal. Very interesting account of the trading methods used by the boat owners on the canal.
1 September	Long report on the East Brent Harvest Home.
22 September	Letter about St Mary's bells not being rung for Bridgwater fairs and races.
29 September	Leader about the Taunton newspaper starting up an edition printed in Bridgwater — origin of the <i>Bridgwater Mercury</i> . Letter about St Mary's church bells.
20 October	Article on the proposal to get a town fire engine.
10 November	St Mary's Bells rung for the Guy Fawkes Comhill celebrations.
24 November	Letter about the extent of Bridgwater Parish in the Poor Law Union. This does not seem to be the same as the extent of the ecclesiastical parish.
15 December	Note of a meeting of the Bridgwater branch of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel — Sadler in the chair. Comments on the poor attendance of churchmen.

The years 1859-1867 were ignored in the research as they were not relevant