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A RECTOR'S LEGACY

Notes on the parish of St Mary, Buriton, 1889, written by Reverend John Gedge for the benefit of Reverend Alfred Martell

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ABSTRACT

Unique briefing notes, written in 1889 by one Rector of Buriton for his successor, are discussed in relation to other available documentation from the period relating to the parish. The notes present a view of the parish from the perspective of the Rector, with an emphasis on parochial administration. Demographic information in the notes, including lists of parish residents, is compared with the census information from 1891. The notes also detail religious and educational activity in which the Rector had a hand. A picture of a rural Hampshire village between 1889 and 1891 is thus obtained, allowing study of changes over a much shorter period of time than is allowed by comparison between census returns, and reflecting the role of a Victorian rural parson.

On being appointed in March 1890 to the cure of souls at St Mary, Buriton, Alfred Martell would have been able to consult *Kelly's Commercial Directory of 1889* for a recent description of his new parish. The depiction is functional but hardly captures the spirit of the place: "Buriton is a village and parish two miles south from Petersfield, near the Sussex border, Eastern division of the county, hundred of Finch Dean, Petersfield union, county court district and petty sessional division, rural deanery of Petersfield and archdeaconry and diocese of Winchester" (Kelly 1889, 87–8).

Of more use to Martell would have been a small exercise book entitled *S Mary, Buriton. Particulars of Church, schools and other Institutions. List of Communicants etc.,* in which notes dated 1889 had been written by an unnamed author (HRO, 73M73/PI10; hereafter this exercise book will be cited as *Notes*, followed by the relevant page number). These notes outlined the parochial duties peculiar to Buriton. Details of the parochial accounts, the various self-help clubs and village institutions are amongst the items recorded, together with a list of every family in the village, which individuals took communion and how regularly they did so. It was a guide book on how to be Rector of Buriton.

The notes were written by John Wycliffe Gedge and the arguments identifying him as the author are rehearsed in full elsewhere (Harfield 1993).

Although Gedge spent his initial year of religious work as a curate at Cheltenham in 1859, St Mary Buriton was his first appointment as a parish priest after twenty-seven years of missionary work and appointments as an institutional chaplain or principal of educational establishments. In the ten years before he was appointed to Buriton, Gedge served as secretary to the St John's Foundation, Leatherhead (Kelly 1917). His was not a background of parochial pastoral care.

THE NOTES

Gedge's precise motivation for writing notes on his parish is not known. Nowhere is his reason for compiling them expressed directly or indirectly. Gedge inherited a parish formerly held by a relative of the bishop, who had been the incumbent at Buriton for over a decade before Gedge himself was ordained. Perhaps the problems he faced in such a transition, as a priest of twenty-eight years but with very little parochial experience, impressed upon Gedge the benefits his successor might derive from some advance information about the parish.

Not surprisingly, given that a rector retains control over parochial income from tithes, the notes begin with details of the parish financial arrangements.

To the nearest pound the parish was worth £1,081 a year, from which £419 was deducted and assigned to Petersfield, itself a new parish having been separated from Buriton by an Order in Council shortly before Gedge took up the incumbency (Kelly 1889, 88). The Rector of Buriton received a supplementary tithe of £46 from hops, and the parish also had a glebe income derived from the letting of allotments, potato patches, shooting land and quit rents. Gedge calculated his gross income as £671, from which was deducted Poor Rates, land tax and house duty leaving a nett income of £503 per year. The tithe was collected twice a year by a firm of Fareham solicitors who charged a two and a half per cent commission.

The details of the glebe show that Gedge rented parochial land to all social classes (*Notes*, 3). The local squire, John Bonham-Carter, paid six pounds a year *in advance* [Gedge's emphasis] for the land retained for shooting. The local industrialist, John Forder, who owned the lime works, was arranging in 1889 to rent thirty-one acres of arable at thirty-five shillings per acre. The allotments were let at three pence a rod to railway workers, limeworkers, a wheelwright and one of the village publicans.

From his income the Rector had to meet some of the parish expenditure. Gedge contributed twenty per cent of the Churchwardens' account, the rest being collected by way of voluntary Church Rate. He paid the organist's salary of ten pounds (having equipped the church with its first organ), as well as subscribing to the National and Sunday schools, the Clothing Club, Choir fund, Church fund and Reading Room. He even contributed towards the costs of cleaning the church (*Notes*, 11, 13, 49; the assumption that Gedge arranged for an organ to be fitted in the church is made on the basis of his Annual Letter to the Parish dated 1888, in which he asks "when shall we be able to place an organ in the Church?" (HRO, 73M73/PI1). Copies of the three Annual Letters to the Parish written by Gedge are to be found pasted into the *Register of Preachers, Readers, Collections, etc.*, in which Gedge wrote a brief preamble about his association with Buriton, and in which services conducted during his incumbency are recorded; hereafter referred to as *Register*.

The notes also reveal that, as well as subscribing to the many village charities, Gedge was the manager and treasurer of all the charities, institutions and clubs in the village, and was also honorary secretary of all except the Reading Room (*Notes*, 5). He was the correspondent of the school, over which he may also have had an interest as an H.M. Inspector, and Diocesan Inspector of Schools (Kelly 1889, 88).

There were three main self-help clubs. Women resident in Buriton and Weston contributed a shilling monthly to the Clothing Club, which earnt them a bonus of twenty-five per cent if the money was regularly deposited over twelve months. Payments from the club were made each December (*Notes*, 23).

Any person of the labouring classes resident in Buriton could be a member of the Coal Club. Payment was either by prior subscription or on a single payment of three shillings. The coal was delivered to Buriton siding, having been ordered early in January. The sexton was put in charge of the two or three trucks for two days, and was paid three shillings a day for his work. He was assisted by a man for two shillings and sixpence a day. Each person, on payment, was entitled to six bushels of coal (a bushel being the equivalent in dry goods of eight gallons, 2,218.19 cubic inches; *Notes*, 25). The Sick and Needy fund paid for the coal of those persons in receipt of Parish Relief (three widows, a spinster and five old men in 1889) and any coal remaining at the end of the two days was bought for the school.

The entry concerning the Childrens' (sic) Shoe Club indicates that it was founded in 1890 (*Notes*, 21). The Annual letter to the Parish dated August 1889 demonstrates that this club was already in existence before 1890. In the Letter the club is described as "new" and having been "the means of promoting habits of saving in the rising generation" (*Register*). The Annual Letter to the Parish dated 1887 reveals that there had been a Boot and Shoe Club in the village already on Gedge's arrival at Buriton. Gedge clearly felt it needed some reorganisation, and in 1888 restricted this club to children attending Sunday school. The notes show that membership in 1889 was restricted to all children attending the Day school. Up to three pence per week was collected

at the school on Monday mornings and taken out towards the end of the year to be put towards the purchase of boots for the children. No bonus was payable. The vicar of Denmead bought boots and shoes in a job-lot from the firm which supplied Dr Barnado's Homes, and prices varied from a shilling for leather shoes for a baby to seven shillings and nine pence for mens' nailed boots. Boys wearing hobnailed boots apparently several sizes too big for them, but which they would eventually grow into, can be seen in school photographs dating from this period (Couth & Dewhurst 1992, 55). In other parishes such subscription clubs were run by local tradesmen. In a diary entry dated 19th February 1885, John Egerton, Vicar of Burwash, East Sussex, complained that all but one of the tenors and basses had missed evening choir practice in order to attend a Shoe Club dinner. The village Shoe Club in Burwash was run by Samuel Ellis, the local bootmaker (Wells 1992, 318). This was a conflict of interests unlikely to occur in Buriton because of Gedge's autocratic control over the village institutions.

Gedge dealt at greater length with poor relief in the parish (*Notes*, 5, 42–5).

Eleven widows received Poor Law Relief in September 1889 from the Relieving Officer, Mr Gordan from Petersfield. Two widowers and a single woman also received help. Eleven others received help because they were sick, or aged and infirm, and presumably they had no family immediately to hand to care for them. Payments were usually between two and three shillings and in three cases four loaves were also given. Gedge did not specify how frequently these payments were made. The widow Hannah Harfield received just one shilling and two loaves but the census of 1891 shows that she lived with a son and daughter and had taken in two lodgers (PRO, RG12/0945 schedule 68, hereafter referred to as *Census* followed by the schedule number where relevant). In 1889 the ages of these children would have been fifteen and ten respectively, and so her son would probably have been working. The entry in Gedge's notes may indicate that the widow Harfield received a reduced relief rate because her son was working, and therefore supporting her. There is no evidence to indicate when she took in the lodgers but this may also have been a deciding factor in determining her level of Poor Law Relief.

At Christmas each widow and widower and all persons receiving parish pay, were given half a pound of tea and a pound of sugar. Most were paid a shilling as well. These people were visited either by the Rector or by the wives of some prominent residents, so that their prevailing condition could be assessed.

Occasional gifts in kind, such as vegetables, soup, beef tea, eggs, and even Sunday dinner, were given out from the Rectory where stores of linsead meal (sic), cod liver oil and "tarragona" were maintained, for distribution as required (*Notes*, 5, 43).

The Rectory was the hub of social welfare in the village, and Gedge, regarding it as all part of his parochial duties, took an active part. Such obligations enhanced his position of authority within the village because of his economic influence. The poor depended upon the Rector as much as upon the Relieving Officer.

Gedge's influence extended beyond the spiritual and economic life of the village to the social life. He included in his notes details of the Girls' Friendly Society (GFS), parish Mothers' Meetings, and the local branch of the Mothers' Union which he helped to establish in 1889. The GFS was run by Mrs Gedge. Members met at the Rectory for occasional meetings to support missionary work, and to organise working parties to achieve good works. Candidates for full membership were drawn from school children and they met monthly at the Rectory for two hours, during which they were served with tea and buns. There was an annual meeting at Petersfield for the various local branches (*Notes*, 33). It is possible that Gedge was instrumental in setting up the GFS in Buriton as well as the Mothers' Union. He does not refer to the Society in his Annual Letter to the Parish dated 1887, but it does receive mention as a club in its own right in his Annual Letter to the Parish dated 1888 (*Register*).

Mothers' Meetings in the parish were also quasi-religious affairs which took place between October and Ascensiontide, and which closed with religious readings, singing and prayers led by

the Rector. The essential qualification for membership was marriage rather than motherhood, the latter possibly being regarded as an inevitable consequence of the former. Members could purchase calico, flannel and other cloths at cost price from the Rectory, where the meetings were held, by arrangement with a local draper. Payment was either by subscription or in full and there was no credit. Tea was given at these meetings three or four times a year at "irregular intervals", presumably to ensure that attendance was not confined to just those three or four occasions each year (*Notes*, 31).

The Mothers' Union, being but newly established, receives only basic attention from Gedge in his notes. Quarterly meetings were held at the school during the winter, and at the Rectory during the summer when tea was also served (*Notes*, 31). The Annual Letter to the Parish dated 1889 records that there were twenty-seven founding members (*Register*), and the Parish magazine for February 1890 enthusiastically noted that membership had increased in number to nearly eighty by the AGM on the first anniversary (HRO, 147M85/101/14).

In attempting to influence the lives of the village women by Christian example and education, Gedge may well have hoped to influence indirectly the lives of their menfolk.

THE NOTES AS A SOURCE OF DEMOGRAPHIC HISTORY

In the second part of the 1889 notes Gedge conducts his own census, introducing his successor to the families living in the parish and giving some indication of their religious commitments (*Notes*, 47, 53, 57–68). Thirteen months after Gedge departed from Buriton, the official government census was taken.

Gedge recorded mainly families, and infrequently individuals. A typical entry reads "Baker, wife and family" (*Notes*, 57). Gedge occasionally includes details such as the occupation of the head of the household, or the fact that a member of the family is in the choir, or is a bell-ringer, or was recently confirmed (for examples of most of these see *Notes*, 59). In this way his entries can be positively identified by cross-referencing with instances elsewhere in the notes where these individuals are recorded by their full names.

The census return for 1891 recorded 126 tenements in the village, of which 124 were inhabited (*Census*). Of these, seventy-eight households can be positively identified with eighty named families or individuals in Gedge's main list of residents (*Notes*, 57–63). Five of the seven leading inhabitants listed separately by Gedge can be identified in the census (*Notes*, 47 other persons listed on this page of the notes are all repeated in the main list of residents). Of the forty-one households recorded in the census but not in Gedge's notes, fifteen seem to have consisted of household servants and estate workers whose accommodation formed part of estate grounds owned by a leading resident, for example the workers on the Ditcham House estate (*Census*, 19–24). Gedge does not appear to have concerned himself with household retinues.

The remaining discrepancy of twenty-six may be accounted for in part by immigrants to the village and by omissions made by Gedge.

Alfred Stillwell, his wife and five school-age children all originated from Sussex, and seem to be an example of an immigrant family recently arrived in Buriton in 1891. He is recorded as a "labour contractor" at the lime-works (*Census*, 82) and, in this capacity, he may have replaced a man called Belcher who is listed by Gedge as "foreman" at the limeworks (*Notes*, 57). Stillwell is not recorded by Gedge; Belcher is not recorded in the census return. The job descriptions seem sufficiently similar to allow the hypothesis that Stillwell arrived at the village to replace Belcher at the limeworks.

The Harfield family provides an example of an omission by Gedge. In his list of residents he records four Harfield households living in the village (*Notes*, 59). In fact there were five, the fifth being that of Edward Harfield, his wife and baby daughter, who were living on the Manor Farm in 1891. Edward Harfield is recorded elsewhere by Gedge as one of the bell-ringers (*Notes*, 14).

Gedge records 105 families or individuals living in Buriton (*Notes*, 47, 57–63), and a further twenty-seven households living in the nearby

village of Weston (*Notes*, 64–5). Seven of the Buriton families are described as "leading inhabitants" and are treated separately from the ninety-eight households or individuals recorded in Gedge's principal list of residents. Of the eighteen Buriton families or individuals he mentions, but who are not recorded in the census return, seven can be accounted for.

Two families, the Budds and the Twinmers, moved away from the village between Gedge completing his notes and the census being taken. Their names are deleted from the list in Gedge's notes as part of the amendments he made in late 1889 and early 1890 (*Notes*, 57, 62).

At least one parishioner recorded by Gedge, the widow Marriner who lived at Sunwood, died between the notes being compiled and the census being recorded (*Notes*, 60; Buriton Parish Burial Register, HRO, 73M73, entry dated 12th December 1889). Gedge noted that Mrs Bedford, a widow, lived with her widowed daughter, Rosemaria Aburrow in 1889. Mrs Bedford is not recorded in the census and may well have died (*Notes*, 57; *Census*, 117). Henry Baird, aged forty-five years, died in May 1889 leaving a widow and two sons who are recorded by Gedge (*Notes*, 57), but who appear to have left the village before April 1891 because they, too, are not recorded in the census.

In the case of the two Bone families recorded by Gedge, the census reveals that they lived as a single household (*Notes*, 57; *Census*, 126). Similarly Caroline Welch lived with her widowed sister-in-law (*Notes*, 63; *Census*, 48). Another "Miss Welch", recorded separately by Gedge in his alphabetical list of residents, nevertheless lived with the Ferry family in 1889 (*Notes*, 63).

No undue emphasis should be placed on the discrepancies between Gedge's lists of residents and the census returns, partly because it is not known how much detail Gedge intended to record. Indeed, if there were not some differences it would be necessary to accept the unlikely proposition that there had been no demographic changes whatsoever in Buriton for just over a year; no births, marriages or deaths. Although not all the differences can be fully explained, they do at least give an indication of demographic change within a village over a much shorter time period than is permitted by the comparison of ten-yearly census returns.

There is some demographic information which is to be found only in the census records because it was not relevant to Gedge's self-appointed task of briefing his successor. It is of use here, however, in providing background information about the parish for which Gedge had spiritual responsibility.

Of the 602 persons residing in Buriton on the night the census was taken, 316 were male, 286 were female.

188 men cited at least fifty-two occupations. Two of the men were visitors habitually residing elsewhere. In two instances the occupation given in the returns was illegible. 95.91% of the male population of the village over school-leaving age were employed. Forty-six males, ranging in age from eleven to seventy-six years, described themselves as "general labourers". Twenty-one men (seventeen to seventy-two years) referred to themselves specifically as "farm labourers", and a further twenty-one (fourteen to sixty-eight years) were employed in varying capacities at the lime-works. There may have been a number who called themselves general labourers who could, in fact, be ascribed to the latter two categories. Eleven men were employed on the railway, their ages ranged between seventeen and fifty-eight years. Eight individuals told the enumerators that they had more than one job and four of these were estate workers who mixed the various permutations of gardener, groom and coachman.

Forty-two women were listed as being in employment (24.56% of the female population in the village above school-leaving age), of which thirty-four were in domestic service. Their ages ranged between a thirteen year-old housemaid and a fifty year-old dressmaker. The remaining adult women appear to have fulfilled traditional role models and managed their own homes.

An expanding village population is evident from the number of children, and from the number of immigrant families.

235 children of school-age or younger lived in the village (39.03% of the total village population), of which ninety-two boys and eighty-seven girls had been born since the census of

1881 (179 children representing 29.73% total village population). Between the beginning of 1889 and Gedge's departure from the parish in March 1890, fifteen boys and seven girls were baptised. During the same period two children were buried; one child of ten months, and another aged six years who had been killed in an accident (Buriton Parish registers, HRO, 73M73). Three thirteen year-old girls left the village to go into service between March 1887 and March 1889 (*Notes*, 69).

The heads of forty-six families reported that they had been born in Buriton; fifteen of these had married women from outside the village. (Because people could intentionally or unintentionally misinform the enumerator about their parish of birth, and because persons were not always baptised in the parish where they were born, and because copying errors could be made by enumerators or clerks, the parish of origin is taken at face-value). Seventy-nine families had a head of the household who had been born outside Buriton (63.2% of the total number of families). Seven of these heads of household, all men, had married women from Buriton; four of these men had come from outside Hampshire. Altogether, twenty-nine heads of household had been born elsewhere in Hampshire, and twenty had come from Sussex.

In only thirteen instances had both parents and all the children in a family, been born in Buriton (10.4% of the total number of families). In three cases where both parents had been born in Buriton, at least one child had been born outside the village, which raises the possibility that these particular families had moved away from the village for a while, and had then returned. Two of these families each had a child recorded as having been born in a neighbouring village. The eldest child of George and Barbara Legg was born in Hastings, Sussex, and was the only member of that family born outside Buriton (Census 13, 84, 116).

This represents a not inconsiderable movement of population over the years, and the primary motive for migration was probably the search for employment. Apart from the large agricultural estates in Buriton, there was also the limeworks founded by the Forder family on land leased from the Bonham-Carters (HRO, 94M72/E/B41). The Forders owned other limeworks at Newbury and Dunstable. In the census of 1871 (PRO, RG10/1270) Benjamin Forder described himself as employing twenty-five men and four boys at his Buriton works. In fact only fourteen men, including Forder's son, are specifically recorded in the 1871 census as working at the limeworks (the rest were presumably recorded as general labourers). Of these, five had been born in Buriton, nine having migrated to the village from as close as Weston and Clanfield, and from as far as Bedfordshire and London. There was even one lime-labourer who had been born in Gibraltar. In the 1891 census fifteen men recorded as working at the limeworks came from outside the village (one having been born in Germany), whilst just six of the workforce had been born in the village.

Gedge, therefore, was dealing with a population which had a cosmopolitan geographical background. The background of the social classes preserved the rigid Victorian stratification in the landowner/tenant, farmer/labourer and industrialist/labourer working relationships. The distinction was maintained by Gedge, who recorded the leading inhabitants separately from the other residents (*Notes*, 47). He lists seven principal families of superior social status, one of these being the Seward family whom Gedge described as yeoman farmers at Weston (a small village to the north west of Buriton on the other side of the turnpike road), which was virtually their private fief.

Gedge then demonstrates some ambivalence because on the same page he goes on to record a secondary list of leading inhabitants, all of whom are recorded again in the general list of residents later in the notes. These villagers appear to have been the leading members of the working class or lower middle class. They include the sexton, the parish clerk, the postmaster and the parishioners' Churchwarden, the foreman of the limeworks, and the woodman and gamekeeper who worked for the Bonham-Carters. It is either their public and parochial duties, and in two instances the social status of their employers, which lent the individuals concerned a pre-eminence within the village, which caused Gedge to make especial mention of them, or else he is copying the

practice of the compilers of Kelly's Commercial Directory, who also listed in their descriptions leading residents followed by village worthies and tradesmen.

THE RELIGIOUS PROFILE OF BURITON AS PORTRAYED IN THE NOTES

It seems apparent from the way in which he records the leading inhabitants, and the contributions of these people to the village institutions (*Notes*, 49), that Gedge was not from the same reforming mould as some of his clerical contemporaries. He was a traditional member of the Establishment, who saw his spiritual guidance as being complemented by the need for temporal guidance, reinforcing in the working population a sense of their own position in the social strata, and their sense of obligation to the upper classes. This interpretation is supported by the similar manner in which Gedge refers to the leading inhabitants in his three Annual Letters to the Parish (*Register*).

The 1880s was a period of considerable political change. The franchise was extended to working class males, a fact bemoaned by John Egerton, Rector of Burwash, in two diary entries, the first dated 3rd August 1885, in which he noted that the village electorate had risen in number to 405 (from about 130). In the second, dated 26th April 1886 (in the run-up to the election on 9th July that year), Egerton expressed misgivings which may well have been shared by many of his more traditionally-minded reverend brothers: "Democracy seems inevitable, I can only hope that ye antecedents of English national and political life may give some qualifications to democracy wh[ich] may save England from ye consequences wh[ich] democracy has hitherto entailed upon ye countries in wh[ich] it has prevailed. I c[oul]d freely trust the common sense of the people, but now I am called upon to yield my unhesitating allegiance to the sense of the common people wh[ich] is a very different thing to do" (Wells 1992, 326, 343).

Not only had the national political arena taken on a new aspect by extension of the franchise, but also the local political administration had changed beyond recognition with the County Councils Act of 1888, which established local democracy outside urban areas at the expense of the power of the rural magistracy and parish vestry, although in practice the new councillors were often magistrates.

It was a period when radical politics often went hand-in-hand with religious activism, the latter taking the form of dissent from the Church of England. Over the course of the nineteenth century the non-established religious movements, particularly the Methodists in all their various persuasions, had altered their self-perception from "dissenters", to "non-conformists", to "free churchmen". This terminological evolution can be equated with a mellowing of the attitude of opposition to the Church of England, and was also evident in the removal of the Methodists from rough and ready barn chapels to High Street churches, in outward appearance little different from Anglican churches (Parsons 1988b, 98).

Gedge clearly made no allowance for this mellowing and regarded the Methodists within his parish as "dissenters". Often abbreviated to D, he usually emphasised this word by writing it in red ink, as opposed to the black ink he used for all other entries. He identifies the dissenters in his list of residents, sometimes twice in the same entry, for instance the entries for the widow Harfield and her family, and the Harnell family (*Notes*, 59). Only once does Gedge identify an individual as a dissenter in the main text of the notes. Two "chronic invalids" were each in receipt of weekly pensions of one shilling from the Fund for the Sick and Needy (*Notes*, 43). One was a "Churchman", the other a "Dissenter". There does not seem to be any good reason why their religious affiliations should have been recorded at this point, but perhaps this demonstrates that Parish Relief was supplied irrespective of religious persuasion.

Gedge set out to win over any non-conformists that were susceptible to conversion. But he also clearly saw a need to invigorate his Anglican faithful. He used his very first sermon in Buriton to announce changes in the weekly schedule of services, increasing the number held each week and introducing special services on Saints' Days

(see the Parish magazine for October 1886, HRO, 147M85/101/10, and his first Annual Letter to the Parish dated July 1887, *Register*, in which he also told his parishioners quite bluntly that they did not give enough each week in the Offertory). In each subsequent Annual Letter he made a perennial plea for increased attendance, and in particular for more people to take Holy Communion every Sunday and not just at Easter.

Such repeated pleas imply that Gedge met with limited success in his crusade. He was up against two opposing forces. The evangelical Primitive Methodists, and incipient apathy which had nearly led to the disestablishment of the Church of England in the 1830s (Parsons 1988a, 18).

If joining the Methodist movement was a positive act of non-conformity, then simply not going to church was a passive aspect of non-conformity with which Gedge also had to cope. The Anglican Church was the Established Church of England, but it was not the most popular church. In 1893 the largest religious movement was the Methodists with 4.71 million members either in church or registered at their Sunday schools. The Anglicans claimed 1.8 million communicants and 2.5 million Sunday school pupils (4.3 million members), out of a total national population of thirty-eight million (Lynd 1945, 308, 327).

The Church of England took communicants on Easter Day as its statistical base. More persons took communion on that particular day than on any other Sunday (see Table 1) so the 1.8 million communicants may be regarded as a reasonably accurate indication of the maximum number of communicants the Anglicans could expect in their churches. The Church of England in 1893 claimed to have the active support of only 11.31% of the population of England.

Gedge's following was not significantly larger than this. He recorded 11.46% of the total population of Buriton in 1889 as communicants (*Notes*, 66–8). Their weekly attendance rate is discussed in detail in the appendix; there were many Sundays when one per cent of the total village population, or fewer, took Holy Communion.

In Gedge's own eyes, the ultimate test of his success as Rector was almost certainly the number of communicants who worshipped with him. The statistics he himself quoted in his Annual Letters are summarised in the table below.

Table 1 Holy Communions celebrated at St Mary, Buriton.

	1887	1888	1889
Celebrations of Communion	65	69	72
Communions made	676	571	560
Communicants: Christmas	37	42	50
Easter	48	52	82

There is an increase in the number of Holy Communions celebrated, which is consistent with Gedge's promise in his first sermon, and reiterated in his first Annual Letter, to increase the number of services held. The number of communicants at Christmas and Easter demonstrate an increase over the three-year period, but the decrease of 116 in the total number of communions made indicates a falling attendance at all services except the major festivals. This is the perception Gedge would have had of his incumbency up to August 1889.

These figures should be considered in the context of the attendance figures for the whole period of his incumbency. (Gedge recorded only those persons receiving communion. He did not record attendance at Matins or Evensong.)

It was the practice at Buriton for Holy Communion to be celebrated every Sunday, alternately at 8.30 a.m. (sometimes 8.00 or 8.15) and at 11.00 a.m.. On Sundays which were also special Festivals, such as Easter, Whitsun and Harvest Festival, communion was celebrated both at 8.30 and 11.00. The early service was usually held on the first, third and fifth Sundays, and the later service on the second and fourth Sundays in every month.

In Table 2 below, the number of Sunday celebrations of Holy Communion, and the number of communicants attending is recorded, together with the mean attendance figure. For the three complete years the modal (most frequently occurring) value has been recorded as well, together with its frequency, in order to indicate how representative of the most common attendance figure, the mean attendance figure for that year actually is.

Table 2 Attendance at Sunday Communion, Buriton

Year	Communicants	Services	Mean	Mode
1886	162	15	10.8	–
1887	533+	55(1)*	9.51	5–6 (9x)
1888	488	55 (2)*	8.56	9 (10x)
1889	507	56	9.05	5 (10x)
1890	73	12 (1)*	5.61	–

(+ This figure includes forty-two Christmas Day communicants because Christmas Day was a Sunday in 1887.
** The figures in brackets are the number of communion services at which no communicants attended, or at which Holy Communion was not celebrated for some reason.)*

Large attendances on single occasions can bias the statistics, in this way producing disproportionate mean values. Twenty-four persons took communion when George Sumner, then Bishop of Guildford and brother of the late Rector, visited the parish on an otherwise typical Sunday, 13th January 1889. Only seven persons had taken communion the previous Sunday, and just two took communion on the 20th January 1889.

The extra services introduced by Gedge on Saints Days and special festivals seem not to have been popular, and an initially small attendance at such services decreased during the course of his incumbency.

Gedge's experience with these special services was not unique. Egerton experienced the same lack of interest at Burwash which caused him to write in his diary on 30th November 1885, after only a small congregation had attended the St Andrew's Day service, that "Burwash people do not understand week day services" (Wells 1992, 331). In the privacy of his diary entries, Egerton admitted from time to time that a considerable section of his working class parishioners was beyond the reach of organised religion. These people simply were not interested in any religious activity. Egerton seems also to have doubted whether his work had any fundamental impact on his parishioners (Wells 1992, 364).

The Notes convey the underlying impression that Gedge may have shared such doubts, but would never acknowledge them publicly.

At the same time the Anglican Church was feeling the economic consequences of the end of mid-Victorian agricultural prosperity. Clergy who depended upon the collecting of tithe and the renting of glebe, experienced a decline in real income which started with the series of bad harvests between 1874 and 1879 (Clark 1973, 239). The Extraordinary [Hop] Tithe Redemption Act of 1886 was viewed with dismay by Egerton, who calculated that this legislative response to agricultural economics would reduce his annual income by between £120 and £150; "the change will not improbably make living in the Rectory an impossibility" (Wells 1992, 344–5, diary entries dated 18th and 22nd June 1886).

Rectors could no longer afford curates to assist them. They could no longer afford to finance sufficiently their parish schools, and they could no longer afford the same level of commitment to the institutions associated with high rectory culture (Clark 1973, 264–5). Almost by default, some priests were forced to address the lessons of poverty and social decline.

Gedge's income at Buriton was derived from tithe and the renting of glebe, and was therefore subject to the uncertain fortunes of his largely agricultural parishioners. In addition to this the income of the living had just been reduced by the parochial reorganisation in 1886, which had created a separate parish of Petersfield from within the former boundaries of the Buriton parish. The improvements necessary to the Rectory before Gedge was able to occupy it, were funded under the Dilapidation Act and by a loan of £150 from Queen Anne's Bounty, a fund established in 1703 to augment poorer livings in the Church of England (*Register*).

The expansion of the Primitive Methodist movement, which was especially popular with the rural working class, was rapid. This was a direct result of their missionary zeal which emphasised the role of individual preachers, both men and, for the first forty years, women. In 1811 there were 200 founding members. By 1820 there were 7,842 adherents. The religious census of 1851 recorded 106,074 Primitive Methodists, and by 1891 numbers had risen to 181,518, 26.3% of a total Methodist following of 690,022 (Armstrong 1973, 201–2; Read 1979, 264 – the Church of

England registered 1,490,000 communicants on Easter Day, 1891, but as Gedge's Annual Letters and the Register of Preachers etc., demonstrate only too well, Easter Day communicants could be as many as ten times more than the average number of communicants on any normal Sunday, *Register*).

The Church of England, struggling in the second half of the nineteenth century to reassert its authority, clearly saw the Primitive Methodists as a threat in the rural areas. Gedge is a representative example of the traditional Anglican clergy. Kendall, writing in 1903, cited an example of an unidentified Hampshire parson visiting his parishioners and "ordering them to keep indoors and have every door and window shut" when a Primitive Methodist preacher came to the village. "And they did as they were told," (quoted in Armstrong 1973, 208).

The value of Gedge's notes rests on the facts he records, which put into perspective the generalisations quoted above. In identifying the "dissenters" in Buriton to Martell, Gedge clearly wanted to demonstrate to his successor that there was work still to be done. But he also demonstrated, perhaps unwittingly, the ambivalence of the rural working class towards religion.

Thirty-three dissenting families are identified by Gedge in his lists of residents in Buriton and Weston (27.27% of the total population of the two villages as he recorded it, *Notes*, 57–65; his list of communicants consisted of individuals from thirty-three families, *Notes*, 66–8). His list of leading inhabitants reveals one individual who was the Rector's churchwarden, a family of dissenters, one avowed agnostic and one Roman Catholic (who was entertaining a French Catholic priest as a house guest on the night the census was taken; *Notes*, 47; *Census*, 17). Of the thirty dissenting families Gedge identified in Buriton, ten demonstrated apparent adherence to both Anglicanism and Primitive Methodism.

The example of one family will suffice to demonstrate this. The Harfield family arrived in Buriton sometime between April 1861 and May 1862. Between 1862 and 1881 James Harfield and his wife Sarah had twelve children, and his brother and sister-in-law, Charles and Hannah, had seven. Of these nineteen surviving children, thirteen were baptised at Buriton Methodist chapel. No baptism dates or locations have yet been identified for the other six. All the grandchildren of James and Charles, for whom baptism records have been found, were baptised into the Church of England (Buriton Parish Registers, HRO, 73M73, Buriton Primitive Methodist Circuit records, HRO, 89M72).

The religious split did not occur just along the fault-lines between generations. Gedge recorded that Mrs Perry was a "dissenter", having been "formerly" an Anglican. She may have converted to Methodism because her husband was a Methodist (*Notes*, 61), but while Edward Burgess was a Methodist, his wife Eliza remained an Anglican (*Notes*, 58, *Census*, 105). Belcher, the foreman at the limeworks in 1889, was a Methodist; the rest of his family stayed in Gedge's congregation (*Notes*, 57). These examples seem to indicate a variety, and freedom of choice, even within families. There appear to have been no specific rules guiding an individual's choice of religious observance.

If there were no rules, there were at least influencing factors. In Belcher's case, Primitive Methodism was the religion of his employers, the Forders. The former Methodist chapel in Buriton is today an office known as Forder House.

An examination of the occupations (cited by Gedge or recorded in the 1891 census) for those individuals identified as "dissenters", reveals seven employees of the limeworks, as well as the Forders, to have been Methodists. At least seven other persons listed as limeworkers in the census, were not recorded by Gedge. Six general labourers, some of whom may have been employed at the limeworks, were identified as Methodists. So were four widows and three farm labourers. A variety of other occupations was represented in the Methodist congregation of 1889, including a woodman, a game-keeper, a farmer, a blacksmith and two gardeners.

The suggestion that the religious split was largely along occupational lines, that the agricultural workers were Anglicans and the limeworkers were Methodists (Robin Dewhurst, personal communication dated 9th February

1993), is a generalisation to which individual exceptions can be found. Edward Harfield, Henry Luxford, David Harfield, William Pretty and George Radford were all employed at the limeworks in 1891. The first two were bell-ringers at the Anglican church in 1889, and the other three members of the choir. Although David Harfield left the choir in 1890, there is no indication that he (having been baptised a Methodist) did so because he had converted back to his employer's religious persuasion (*Notes*, 14, *Census*, 2, 75, 96, 112, 119). Of the twenty-one men recorded as limeworkers in 1891, Gedge demonstrates that at least seven were Methodists and at least five were Anglicans.

GEDGE AND EDUCATION IN BURITON

Consistent with the practices of traditionally-minded High Church priests, Gedge sought to improve the lot of his parishioners, not through practical self-help measures such as those employed by the Methodists, but through spiritual fulfilment and education.

Even if he was convinced of the wisdom of this, Gedge doubted his own success. In his Annual Letter to the Parish in July 1888 he asked, somewhat rhetorically, "may I venture to hope that there has also been some progress in Spiritual things?". In his next Annual Letter he conceded "God alone knows whether there has been real progress" (*Register*).

Through village institutions such as the Mothers' Meetings and the Mothers' Union and the Girls' Friendly Society, and through regular Bible classes and communicants meetings, he set out to supplement the lessons taught from the pulpit each Sunday. To these social groups can be added the Parish Library and Reading Room, both seen as means of enhancing Christian and moral education through healthy reading and community activities.

The Parish Library was open to members who paid subscriptions of a penny to the rector; a sum which Gedge considered too small and advised Martell to double (*Notes*, 29). The schoolmaster was the librarian, but the rector bought all the books.

The Reading Room was a social focus within the village, open on week-day and Sunday afternoons from 2.30 until 4.30 between the first Monday in October and the end of March (*Notes*, 37). In his Annual Letter of 1887 Gedge recorded that this institution had not been a success the previous winter and that he proposed to improve it with penny readings, new games and popular lectures (*Register*. A fortnight after his induction in September 1886, Gedge departed for the West Indies and did not return until the end of the year, and so had not been in a position to organise properly the running of the Reading Room; Parish magazine, October 1886, HRO, 147M85/101/10).

The Reading Room was run by a committee presided over by Gedge and made up from the leading villagers (not to be confused with the leading inhabitants). It was funded by weekly membership subscriptions of two pence, other subscriptions, the proceeds of entertainments put on by the villagers themselves, and the rent of four pounds from the adjoining cottage which Gedge paid himself.

The expenditure of the Reading Room consisted of a rent of eight pounds paid to Mr Bonham-Carter, one shilling a week during the course of the winter for the services of a caretaker, the cost of fuel (bought from Stubbs' store, Stubbs being one of the committee members), and the costs of games, newspapers and books which were circulated by the Hampshire Union.

When the Reading Room opened in October 1888, the committee had planned a fortnightly programme of readings, lectures and entertainments intended to "attract a large number of the working men of the Parish" (Annual Letter to the Parish, 1888, *Register*). Gedge was able to report the following year that the season had proved a great success with good attendance and the Room being opened on Saturday afternoons as well by popular request. Entertainments had included choir concerts, a lecture on his travels by Mr Bonham-Carter and magic lantern displays by Mr Bennion and Mr Forder (Annual Letter to the Parish, 1889, *Register*). The success of the first concert of the 1889/90 season, at which a new piano replaced the previous second-hand instrument, was

reported in the Parish magazine in January 1890 (HRO, 147M85/101/13). At the same time there was a call for subscriptions to help pay for the new piano. As Egerton noted with reference to the Reading Room in Burwash, this institution was "self-managed, but not, of course, self-supporting" (Wells 1992, 340, diary entry dated 22nd February 1886).

Also reliant on subscriptions and fees was the village institution which catered for the education of the young. The school, built in 1845 (just three years before the Methodist chapel was built in the village), was enlarged to accommodate 125 children in 1887, at a cost of £150 which was raised by voluntary contributions (Kelly 1889, 89). School attendance was compulsory between the ages of five and ten years, and was compulsory until the age of fourteen years unless a child aged between ten and fourteen had reached specified levels of proficiency in reading, writing and arithmetic, in which case that child could be exempted from attending school.

Annual subscriptions for the school were received from Messers Bonham-Carter, Bennion, Cave, Forder and Seward who represented all the leading inhabitants and land-owners of the village, and all shades of religious persuasion since Cave was an agnostic and his wife a Catholic, Forder was a Methodist, and Seward the Rector's Churchwarden. Three persons of status connected with Buriton, but not listed as residents either by Gedge or the census enumerators, also contributed to the school (*Notes*, 49).

The school was run by a committee comprising Gedge, Mr Bennion and both churchwardens. Mr Seward collected a voluntary rate from the local farmers to help fund the school, and in 1889 paid the contribution of one farmer who had refused to pay the voluntary rate (Annual Letter to the Parish, 1889, *Register*). Parents also contributed towards the funding by paying each week for their children's education, the money being collected by the School-Master (sic) who, when he went to the Rectory to collect his monthly pay cheque, forwarded the collected fees to the Rector (*Notes*, 39). Schools funded by subscription or charitable trusts were termed "voluntary" schools.

If a parish could not fund its own voluntary school, then under the Elementary Education Act 1870, the Education Department could cause a School Board to be elected by the rate-payers in order to provide a school in any given locality.

In Buriton the voluntary status of the school depended on the annual report of the School Inspectors. Gedge, as committee chairman, secretary and treasurer of the school, and therefore the employer of the School-Master, determined the curriculum. He enjoyed this influence only so long as attendance and results were sufficient to earn a government grant with which to supplement the funding by subscription and fees. His struggle to reach the right educational formula for Buriton is recorded in his three Annual Letters to the Parish (*Register*).

The first of these, published in July 1887, reveals why the school was enlarged that year. The Inspectors, Mr Wylde (H.M. Inspector for the Government) and Mr Athill (Diocesan Inspector) had not reported entirely favourably, but they had indicated that if boys were to continue to be taught in Buriton, the school would have to be enlarged or else the boys would have to go to Petersfield. The report also apparently made comment on the absence of a School-Master, and Gedge announced in his letter that the services of the School Mistress were being dispensed with, owing to the appointment of a Master.

A year later school attendance had apparently increased considerably since the appointment of the new School-Master, and the Inspector had reported favourably on the enlargement of the premises. A school bell had been purchased, the first at Buriton, and this and other sundry acquisitions, together with urgent repairs to the roof, had left the school account in deficit.

By the time the Annual Letter of 1889 came to be written, the new School-Master appointed in 1887 had been sacked because of an unsatisfactory report, and a husband and wife team, Mr and Mrs Patrick from Guildford, had been appointed as joint Master and Mistress. The Annual Letters of 1888 and 1889 refer only to the Government Inspector. (Kelly's directory for 1889 describes Gedge as the Diocesan School Inspector but it is not clear whether he reported in this capacity on his own school at Buriton. The

Clergy List 1917 records Gedge as an H.M. Inspector of schools from 1868–71 and the Winchester Diocesan Inspector of schools from 1871–86: a contradiction in the sources which cannot be resolved here.)

In the Parish Magazine for May 1890, in anticipation of another bad report on the village school, parents were reminded that "the prosperity of the school rests very much with them, as it is impossible for any child to pass a good examination unless it has been sent regularly to school throughout the year" (HRO, 147M85/101/17).

The following month, part of the school report for that year was quoted. "The New Master has only been here a portion of the year, and the results were so lamentable last year that great improvements can hardly be expected. I am satisfied with the progress made in all subjects, but shall look for a very different state of things next year. The infants are fairly well advanced" (HRO, 147M85/101/18). The following year education was made free to all children of compulsory school age, and the financial consequences of poor attendance and results was less immediately significant.

In the 1891 census seventy-one boys and seventy-one girls are recorded as scholars. These figures include a boy of fifteen years, two girls of sixteen and nineteen years respectively, and four boys and four girls under five. Eleven boys and seven girls of school age were employed. Eight boys and six girls had nothing recorded by their names.

During Gedge's incumbency, average annual attendance at the Day school fell from 78% in 1887 to 74% in 1889, while registered pupils had increased in number from 110 to 148. This compares with a national annual average attendance figure in 1886 of 76% of registered pupils (Adamson 1964, 380).

The Royal Commission of 1886 reported in 1888 that average attendance at Sunday schools was between 66% and 70% of registered pupils (Adamson 1964, 366). Gedge's Sunday school attracted eighty pupils in 1887 (with an average attendance of 71%), seventy in 1888 (74%), and seventy-four in 1889 (70%), in which year a Sunday school was also started at Weston with twenty pupils.

In 1887 Gedge described the numbers at the Sunday school as "still small" but "increasing" and he noted that "one or two more teachers would be welcome". In 1888 he made no mention of the Sunday school, possibly because the numbers of registered pupils had actually fallen by more than ten per cent, but in 1889 his message was once again positive, announcing another increase in registered pupils, and asking once more for an extra teacher for both the morning and afternoon sessions (Annual Letters to the Parish 1887 and 1889, *Register*).

The Sunday school met in the morning at ten o'clock for fifty minutes, and then again in the afternoon for forty minutes either for a children's service at the church (during the summer), or for hymns and stories at the school (during the winter). They were taught by the Rector and his family, the School-Master and the Assistant Mistress (*Notes*, 41). There were occasional treats, and on all fine Sundays the children were allowed on the Rectory lawn till four o'clock. Accompanied, they could walk through other parts of the Rectory garden.

The poor reports from the School Inspectors indicate that Gedge's attempts to win the hearts and souls of the rising generation were probably thwarted by inadequate teachers. With the Sunday school, however, he seems to be claiming some success. Certainly he made strenuous efforts to revitalise whatever arrangements he had inherited from Sumner, and the apparent popularity of the afternoon services for children, and the establishment of a second Sunday school at Weston, seem to support his assertions.

Continuing religious education took the form of preparing candidates for Confirmation. There were three Confirmation services at which Gedge put forward candidates, in the March of 1887, 1888 and 1889, although in 1888 there were only two candidates (*Notes*, 69–70).

Gedge described only three of the fourteen candidates in 1887 as "regular" communicants after March. Two girls left the village to go into service following their Confirmation. Another he described as "not quite right, went wrong '88", which is interpreted as indicating mental illness. Another family simply left the parish. One of the candidates in 1888 also left the village to go into

service, whilst the other candidate was described as "good but ignorant". Of the twelve candidates for Confirmation in 1889, two left the village soon afterwards, and another left the Church immediately afterwards. One, however, was a member of a family "lately come over from Dissent".

The long-term success of their religious education in preparation for Confirmation, is brought into question by the fact that nine of the nineteen persons described by Gedge to his successor as in need of "working up for Holy Communion", had been confirmed in 1887 and 1889 (*Notes*, 71). Not everyone, it seemed, understood the significance of Holy Communion.

THE INCUMBENCY AND THE LEGACY

Just how committed Gedge was to his parish at Buriton is open to interpretation. Gedge had not performed missionary work for over twenty years and no reason is given for his departure to the West Indies for ten weeks only a fortnight after his induction, but this very act in itself raises questions about his attitude to his new living.

On the 17th October 1887, just a year after being inducted, Gedge broke his shoulder bone, and after this injury took the better part of two months to heal, he was incapacitated by sciatica for most of February the following year (*Register*).

Such periods of prolonged absence from duty cannot have helped his work or relationships with his parishioners. He identified himself readily with the leading inhabitants of the two villages, especially with the Sewards from Weston. How well this would have gone down with his working class parishioners, in the prevailing political atmosphere of working class self-assertion (enhanced through the Methodist movement), can only be surmised.

Gedge may have been unhappy at Buriton. The delay in finding suitable accommodation, and then being required to live in a house he had considered beyond habitation clearly vexed him, and in his Annual Letter in 1887 he described the whole business as "very trying".

Perhaps, after a religious career dominated by colonial and academic affairs, he was not best suited to the role of rural parson. By October 1889 Gedge had had enough. He arranged a mutual swap with one Canon Lester (whose parish Gedge did not record), and in the Register of Services he noted that on Sunday 4th October 1889 he bade farewell to the parishioners. He celebrated the end of his incumbency at Buriton, almost three years to the day since his induction, with three services of Holy Communion and an Evensong.

That he was still the Rector of Buriton the following Sunday probably came as an unwelcome shock to Gedge. An extra note in the Register of Services, dated Friday 9th October 1889, records that the arrangement had been broken off by Canon Lester.

Gedge persisted in his attempts to find an alternative living, and on 20th February 1890 he was able to record that he "this day resigned the living" of St Mary, Buriton (*Register*). This time the mutual exchange was effected with Alfred Martell, Rector of St Anthony, Stepney, London, whose wife was no stranger to the Buriton Rectory, being the cousin of the wife of a former vicar of Petersfield, and a regular house-guest of the Sumners (HRO, 147M85/101/15).

The postponement and rearrangement of his departure afforded Gedge the opportunity to revise and update the notes he had written for his successor, hence the deletions and insertions found in the main text.

Gedge departed the parish on Tuesday 25th March 1890, having conducted his last service at St Mary's the previous Sunday (a more subdued occasion than his previous final service, HRO, 147M85/101/16; *Register*). In a relatively short incumbency of just over three years (his predecessor had been Rector for forty-one years, his successor was to be Rector for sixteen years), interrupted by prolonged periods of absence due to travels abroad and sickness, Gedge gave himself little chance of achieving everything he set out to do at Buriton. So short an incumbency did not give him enough time to fulfil his ambitions. There were more opportunities each week for his parishioners to worship in their church, but the number of communicants had fallen, and no great inroad had been made in the numbers preferring the Methodist rite. The

village school in which he had invested so much time and effort, had been enlarged to cater for all the children of the village, and thus saved. But its future was still in the balance when Gedge departed.

His most significant achievement was probably made unconsciously: the legacy of his notes to his successor, in which Gedge left a valuable insight into his parochial administration, and a unique picture of the religious complexion of Buriton in 1889.

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Abbreviations

HRO = Hampshire Record Office, Winchester.
PRO = Public Record Office, London.

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