

THE REVEREND GEORGE W GREEN OF TYTHERINGTON

by *Allan Baddeley*

Through the centuries Tytherington has had some 50 vicars, but of these only one has come down to us through the years as a real person. Most are no more than names. Two or three receive passing mention in the records. John Lacy's bishop found him, in the 16th Century, 'not a graduate, not a preacher'. Thomas Price, vicar from 1570, owed Thomas Smith, yeoman, some £20 at Smith's death, and still owed Smith's widow £7 at her death. William Elbridge spent £133 on a new vicarage in 1662. William Jones, a graduate of Balliol and vicar from 1615, was recorded in 1650 as 'a man of note, a prominent Puritan 10 years earlier'. Thomas Birt, vicar from 1679-1708, added many provocative remarks in the Baptism register, such as 'reputed wife of' and 'supposed son of'. But in no case does a real man emerge. A lucky break, however, lets us see much more of George Wade Green, vicar of Tytherington from 1817 to 1830.

In the Church Visitors' Book there is a brief entry 'Thomas Lloyd, a descendant of Reverend G W Green'. A contact then established led to the estate in Dyfed, to which Green moved on leaving Tytherington, still occupied by his descendants, and to private papers about his life.

1817 was an important date for the church in Tytherington, for it marked the beginning of a short but stimulating interlude in its life. For almost a hundred years, the Lord of the Manor had been the patron of the living and had appointed various of his relatives to the benefice. This was a period when the Hanoverian church lost touch with its people, when many clergymen lived away from their parish, and were pluralists (by holding more than one benefice simultaneously), and when there was great disparity between the income of the wealthy clergy and the miserable stipends paid to curates. As an example, Thomas Shellard, vicar 1750-1785, was also vicar of Rendcombe some 30 miles away. His Tytherington stipend was £95 p.a. For 35 years he had a curate who was paid £30 p.a. Early in the 19th century the Reverend James Hardwicke had for years obtained his bishop's permission to live in Bristol, not Tytherington, 'on account of the insufficiency of the house of residence and from his inability from ill health to undertake any regular duty'. He died in 1817, at an unfortunate time for the patron of the living, who was running out of ordained relations, and whose son, destined for the living, was only 11 years old. The patron's wife, Mrs Hardwicke, had a niece recently married to a young curate in Chippenham; he was persuaded to take the living at Tytherington on the understanding that when the young Hardwicke was ordained, he would resign. In 1817 Revd Green was instituted to the church at Tytherington.

George Wade Green was born in Islington in 1785, the sixth of eight children of well-to-do parents. He was a scholar at Westminster School, a King's Scholar at Trinity College, Cambridge, and was ordained in 1808. Five years later, he married Mary Ann Key, daughter of a Lord Mayor of London, a wealthy stationer. The marriage settlement from his father was £5,000, from his father-in-law £3,500. But, curiously, his trustees had to buy a curacy for him, first at Marlow, and then at Chippenham. Then in 1817 he agreed to come as vicar of Tytherington.

REVD GREEN AS BUILDER

Green was one of the clergy who began to change the ways of the established church, with a sense of responsibility and with professionalism. He clearly intended to live in his village, and, the vicarage being old and probably run down, he proceeded to rebuild it, retaining some parts at the rear but renewing the front. Its appearance is almost unchanged to this day, apart



Revd George Green at Tytherington

from a recently added portico. (It was renamed The Manor some 70 years ago when a new vicarage was built.) Within the church he added a vestry and, possibly, the gallery at the west end which was removed at the restoration of 1884. He planted trees in the churchyard: it is very likely that the chestnut and the oak date from this time, as does the beautiful copper beech in the vicarage garden. The Green's first two children had been born before the Tytherington days but the next seven (of 12 in all) were born here. One of his sons, in latter years wrote about his parents,

'My dear Father, Mother and Aunt were much liked. My Father in sickness or health visited his poor people. My good Mother always had her medicine chest at hand to relieve their bodily wants and the poor considered her equal to, if not better than, the doctor. She was clever and successful in her treatments and that was sufficient. My Aunt, Miss Elizabeth Key, was better than any curate and visited the poor people at their houses, reading to and comforting them, as she only could, in her quiet way. She went daily to see the children at school when weather permitted, teaching them all that was good and the girls sewing to make them useful housewives'.

GREEN'S ACCOUNTS

Green's account book has some interesting entries; for instance, '24 flints 3s 0d, 2lbs of gunpowder 9s 0d' reminds us that flint and steel guns were then in general—and skilful use, it seems, for he records the size of a heron which had been shot, 4ft 1in high, 5ft 5in from wing-tip to wing-tip. Other items in the account book were 12½ lbs bacon 16s 4d, a bushel of barley meal 8s 6d, 2 lbs black tea 16s; bought in London were a pair of black silk stockings 15s, a pair of silver knee buckles 5s and a pint of rum 3s. The rum was doubtless welcome in bleak winter evenings in a large vicarage. In 1818 a top for Frank (the eldest boy) cost 2s 9d and, later, marbles were bought for him though the cost was not recorded. 'Killing mad dog 1s' is somewhat enigmatic; it does not seem to be a very munificent

reward considering the risk, but possibly it was no more than a contribution to a subscription list. In 1827, we have 'Matches for instantaneous light 1s 0d', which indicates that this was the transition period from flint, steel and tinder box to the 'Lucifer' match with combustible head. The change is underlined by the drop in the price of flints; in 1827 12 flints cost no more than 3d. There are payments to governesses (there were three changes within five years; were these nine children too much for them?), and, later, fees were paid to Joseph Helm who kept a school at Aust near the New Passage, which the eldest boy attended. Was the 'Parrot £2.10s' bought to interest the children? Green's grandson Francis remembered it from his childhood, as he did also the 'Single gun and caps £8.10s' bought in 1828 and with which forty years later he made a wonderfully long shot at a woodcock. One of the last entries made while in Tytherington was 'Rabbits for Frank 3s 0d'. Frank was by then 14 years old.

The vicar had the benefit of 61 acres of glebe which, in the previous years of absentee incumbents, was let to one of the farmers in the parish. In 1789 John Smith paid £44.2s rent for the glebe. Green, however, was interested in farming and especially in pure bred livestock and probably retained for his own use the nearer fields, while letting some of the more distant land. In 1826 he paid 3s for shearing 14 sheep and shortly afterwards bought 'two Spanish lambs' for two guineas, probably in an effort to improve the wool by introducing Spanish merino blood. The Napoleonic Wars had seriously interrupted the supply of Spanish merino wool, the preferred wool for the Stroud cloth industry. In the same year he bought a Devonshire cow and calf for 10 guineas, and in the next year a Spanish ram for the seemingly low price of 15s 0d. It was in 1826 that a severe drought occurred and Tytherington suffered badly. We read in his son's notes 'The cattle and sheep had to be driven three miles for water and came back as thirsty as they went'.

Perhaps they found water in the mill pond at Tortworth. After this, Green caused a well to be sunk nearly opposite the entrance gate to the Vicarage and put up an iron pump for the use of the inhabitants, and it is there today.

By this time, after 10 years in the village, Green and his patron the Lord of the Manor, Thomas Hardwicke, were no longer on the best of terms. Green found himself disapproving of the young man who, it was planned, was to take over the living. He began to look for other benefices. His wife was a grand-daughter of Bluett Jones of Iron Acton who had many close relationships in West Wales, and their thoughts turned in that direction. One day, after young Mr Hardwicke had taken Holy Orders, the patron asked Green to give the young man a title, in other words, to take him as a curate. Green declined to do so and resigned the living.

GREEN'S REMOVAL TO WALES

After searching North and West Wales and Devonshire, Green found a suitable property at Court Henry, some ten miles from Carmarthen, in an area in which Mrs Green would have found many friends. Removals, a century and a half ago, had their problems. Their furniture was loaded on wagons, taken to Bristol docks, shipped to Carmarthen and then taken on again in carts. The Green entourage went by road, taking five days. The second night was spent at the Castle Hotel in Brecon. Behind their carriages were the horses, and behind them were driven the cattle.

The parish in West Wales received a sympathetic and active parson; on the material side, a new church was built, also a new bridge over the river, and Green is credited with having established in his parish the first Benefit Club in the country. In Tytherington he had filled the church. Many years later his son revisited Tytherington and finding a very small congregation in the church spoke to one of the older villagers, named Taylor, (perhaps James Taylor of Tower Hill Farm).



Revd George Green, in retirement, c. 1860

His reply was 'Ah! It is not as it was in Parson Green's time. Then we were glad to get a seat on the gallery stairs or the pulpit steps, it was so full'. No doubt his Welsh parishioners responded in the same way. He died in 1868 aged 83. Revd William Roberson, a young parson of 27 years, followed Green in Tytherington and stayed for 50 years.

A book entitled *The Church Goer* was published in Bristol in 1850. Its author, J Leech, went out on his horse on Sundays to visit and—as it were—to report on a variety of churches, one of which was Tytherington where Roberson was vicar. His article is a formidable indictment of the state in which he found the church. On his way he enquired of villagers at what time the service began, but no-one could tell him. 'I can't tell you, indeed, Sir, tis so long since I was there, I have not been at church since Mr Roberson came'. His next enquiry produced no result '... for tis a place, Sir, I don't often go to'. Having heard that the incumbent of Tytherington 'was remarkable for the dispatch with which he went through the prayers', our visitor was surprised to hear the service read in a decorous and devotional tone and feeling. But the officiating clergyman was a stranger to the congregation of twelve, brought in at short notice as Roberson was elsewhere. Talking to a farmer in a blue coat, the visitor found that there was no sermon and no singing. 'How is it that you have no singing?' 'I don't know. There are some who do be for having it, but they are not encouraged'.

George Wade Green had twelve children and forty-five grandchildren many of whom had distinguished careers. A grandson became the first Archbishop of Wales. Two of his sons served with distinction in the Army in India: one led the 2nd Punjab Regiment 'with great heroism and distinction throughout the Indian Mutiny 1857-1858' and became a Lieut. General, and the other, besieged in Lucknow during the Mutiny, lost his newly-wedded wife there. On returning to England, he remarried and lived for a while in The Grange in Tytherington, chairing a vestry meeting in 1864. This was the family's last link with the parish.

[I am indebted to Mr Thomas Lloyd, a descendant of the Revd G W Green, for enabling me to see *A History of the Green Family of Court Henry*, by Francis Green, c.1908 (unpublished), and for providing photographs and much other assistance.]