

## Who was Bishop Tufnell?

How many of us nowadays, when we hear the name "Bishop Tufnell" think only of our primary schools, not knowing that Bishop Tufnell was in fact a real person who was once vicar of Felpham?

Yet, apart from our schools which now bear his name, there are many reminders in St Mary's Church of Bishop Tufnell's time here in Felpham. For example, the priest vestry on the North West corner of the church was built in his memory, At the back of the church next to the vestry there is a plaque on the wall which reads:

"To the Glory of God and in loving memory of EDWARD WYNDHAM TUFNELL first Bishop of Brisbane and Vicar of Felpham for fourteen years (1882 - 1896) this vestry was erected by his family friends and parishioners Oct. 1899."

Behind the font there is a stained glass window in the east wall of the south aisle, This is a "thank offering for the recovery of a dear son (Arthur Tufnell) from serious illness at Malta 1893, reminding us that Bishop Tufnell had a family - although we do not know what his son was doing in Malta in 1893.

And, of course, at the south side of the church, in the churchyard just outside the porch, is a distinctive pink coloured tomb where Bishop Tufnell himself lies buried.

So, Bishop Tufnell must have had a huge impact on St. Mary's and this parish during his time here.

What do we know of him?

Edward Wyndham Tufnell was born in Bath on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1814 (five years before Queen Victoria), the second son of Lt. Col. John Tufnell and Uliana Ivaniona, the only daughter of the Revd. John Fowell (who, judging from the Christian names of his daughter, must have had a Russian wife!). Edward was educated at Eton and went up to Wadham College Oxford, graduating with an MA, and subsequently obtaining the degree of Doctor Divinity in 1859.

After leaving university he was ordained deacon in 1837 and priest in 1839 at the age of 25. For the next 20 years he was successively the curate at Broadhinton in Wiltshire (1840 - 1846); Rector of Beechingstoke (1846 - 1857); Rector of St. Peter and St. Paul Marlborough (1857 - 1859) and from 1850 - 1859 he also held the post of prebendary of Salisbury.

Something in this progression must have caught the eye of his superiors as in 1859 Edward received what must have been an amazing invitation - to become a Bishop in Australia.

Queen Victoria had created the new diocese of Brisbane by letters patent in 1859, and in 1860 Edward set off in the sailing ship "Vimiera" to Sydney to become its first Bishop. He travelled with seven clergymen and four laymen to augment the few clergy already in the diocese. One Clergyman died during the voyage - it is not clear if this was through disease or the consequence of spending such a long time trammelled up with his fellow clergy.

From Sydney the group went by the coastal steamer "Yarra Yarra" to Brisbane. The Consecration was undertaken on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1860 by Archbishop Sumner and the Bishops of London, Oxford, Llandaff, Salisbury, Cape Town, Grahamstowne, Columbia and Argyle. Bishop Tufnell was installed at St. John's Brisbane on the 4<sup>th</sup> September 1860. Around 1866/67 Bishop Tufnell must have returned to England briefly, as on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1867, and at the age of 52, he married his second cousin Laura Louise Tufnell, aged 27. Laura returned to Australia with her new husband. On 12<sup>th</sup> September 1870 she gave birth to a daughter, Ida Mary Tufnell, and on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1872 (Four days after their fifth wedding anniversary) a son Arthur Wyndham Tufnell.

In Australia, one of the burning issues of the day concerned the provision of free compulsory education. Bishop Tufnell campaigned strongly for support for denominational schools and in this respect allied himself with the catholic Bishop Quinn, who was widely perceived as being a shrewd politician. The 1873 elections were fought largely on the issue of education, and it seems that Bishop Tufnell's position was not without controversy. Many in the Anglican community were apparently alienated to the extent that the Governor remarked that Bishop Tufnell might be happier as a Rector in an English village!

However that may be, Bishop Tufnell became curate in charge at Charing in Kent where he gave a set of bells to the parish church in 1878. He then became the Vicar of Croydon and Rural Dean. The 1881 census shows him living in the Croydon Vicarage, next to the Hare and Hounds public house, as the head of the household including Laura, Ida, Arthur, a governess Maria Hord aged 24, a housemaid Sarah Hewitt aged 22 and a cook Matilda Mansell aged 25.

In 1882 the family left Croydon, and Bishop Tufnell was installed as Canon of Chichester and Vicar of Felpham. Where the family lived is unclear as no entry can be found in the 1891 census.

However his interest in education seems to have continued. The proposal to move the school (which up until then had been at the small building which subsequently became the Catholic church in Middleton Road) nearer to the village had been opposed by the then Rector of Middleton. The idea was taken up by Bishop Tufnell and in 1887 - the year of Victoria's Golden Jubilee - a new school was opened in Felpham Way, near the present position of the traffic lights at the north end of the village. Bishop Tufnell defrayed the cost and the Duke of Richmond gave the site. The plaque on the new school building read: "These schools were dedicated to the Glory of God and the religious education of the little ones of Christ's flock on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of February 1887..."

In 1957 new school buildings were opened in the present situation, which were named in 1979 after Bishop Tufnell.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1896 the Bishop dies in Chichester and was buried in St. Mary's Churchyard.

It is interesting to think that "Bishop Tufnell" is not just the name of our local schools, but was a real person who knew and worked in our parish and in our church, where he has left legacies reminding us of his own life and family.