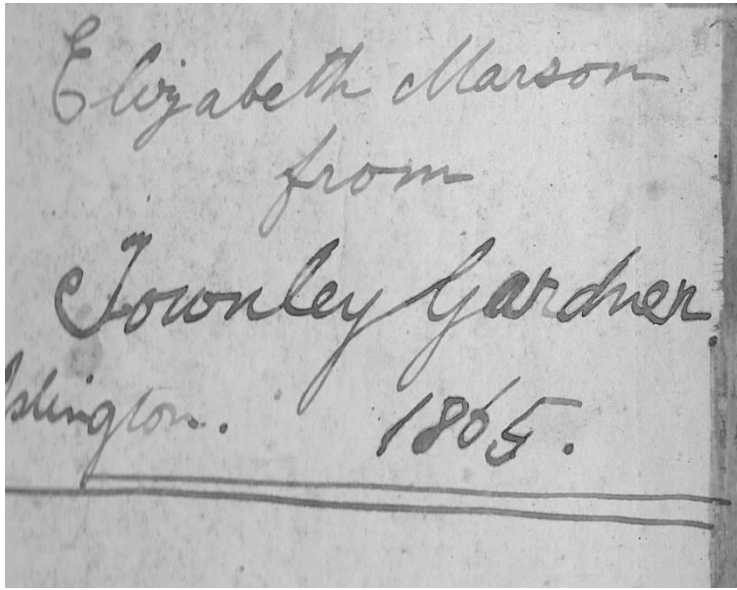


The Rev Townley Gardner

A dedication in a Bible owned by Peter Denton suggested a connection between the Rev Gardner, Ilkeston (Peter's great grandmother Elizabeth Marson was born in 1846 in Shipley near Ilkeston) and Islington as well as Tickhill where the Denton family lived. (Peter had been told by his family that the Rev Gardner became Vicar of Tickhill.) It was easy to verify Gardner's link to Tickhill. The Rev Gardner served as Vicar of Tickhill from 1868 to 1872, a comparatively short tenure. A further check with burial records and memorial inscriptions showed that he died aged 33 on 11 March 1872 and was buried in the western part of the churchyard on 14 March. The dedication on his gravestone recorded that it was placed there in December 1872 not by family members but by appreciative parishioners. The Rev Gardner died from chronic heart disease, his death being registered by local physician Dr George Griffith Phillips.



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To find out about the Rev Gardner's background British newspapers online were checked and this revealed some interesting details. While still a

student at Bishop Hatfield Hall, part of the University of Durham, he married Agnes Jane Watson of Gainsborough in Margate in September 1859 (*Durham County Advertiser*, 16 September 1859). Marrying so far from their homes when neither had reached the age of 21 raises a question: had they eloped? The 1861 Census shows that he was still an undergraduate of the University of Durham but living with Agnes at York Place, London. Gardner was ordained deacon in early 1862 then priest on 21 December 1862. At Whitsuntide 1863 Gardner took part in the Britannia Lodge of Oddfellows events in Ilkeston when he was a curate at St Mary's Church, Ilkeston. Other newspaper accounts showed that Gardner served as a curate in London, first at St Michael's Church Islington in 1864 and then at St Matthew's Church, Bayswater by 1867 from which post he moved to Tickhill.

Another newspaper account had an unusual piece of information: Gardner was listed as a bankrupt with a hearing scheduled for 20 April 1865 (*North London News*, 8 April 1865). Information about bankrupts is given in the *London Gazette* and so this was checked. Most usefully the account in the *London Gazette* of 28 April 1865 listed all the places where Gardner had lived. Before moving to Islington he lived in Salisbury and before that at Wilton Place, Ilkeston. All this explained why Gardner knew someone who lived in Ilkeston and why his residence was Islington in 1865. More questions are raised: Why did he become bankrupt? Curates were comparatively poorly paid but were not generally reduced to bankruptcy. By 31 July 1865 a hearing was scheduled to discharge the bankruptcy. Was this how he persuaded the Foljambe family, who owned the Tickhill living, to appoint him as Vicar?

Townley and Agnes did not have any surviving children: none was mentioned in either the 1861 or 1871 Censuses. In 1871 when at Tickhill's vicarage they had 10 year old Mabel Gardner, listed as a niece born at Rotherhithe, living with them as well as two servants, Elizabeth Cox, 21, born in Bath and Charlotte Barrow, 19, born in Hull, and a visitor, John Bailey age 62 from Doncaster.

The Rev Townley Gardner is credited with instigating the restoration of St Mary's soon after he was instituted Vicar in February 1868. During the subsequent work the organ was moved from the west end of the church to the north chancel. On completion of the work the Archbishop of York preached the sermon at a special service on Friday, 2 August 1868 when the Church was re-opened.