

A Tale of Two

**Barry Livesey
January 2019**

Introduction

....most readers, sensing mischief, will not have expected the literary answer of “Two Cities” and they would be correct. My choices focussed on “...Two Churches” or as an alternative “...Two Miles” but initially I choose to focus on one amazing man named Henry Miles whose great generosity had a huge impact on two parishes - Weethley near Alcester in Warwickshire and Clifton in Bedfordshire. My story adds to existing knowledge but still has some large gaps that some other historian may be able to fill. I hope that members of both parishes find it interesting and enjoyable.

Henry Miles

Henry was born in Knighton, then in Radnorshire, the son of John and Mary Miles and baptised 9th March 1794. Descendants indicate that John Miles was a Maltster and was extremely wealthy and had “a comfortable looking house by the River Teme on the Shropshire side”. It is reported that the family were very proud of their Welsh heritage and it seems reasonable to assume that Henry spoke with a Welsh borders accent. Thereafter there is a large and important time gap that hopefully can eventually be filled. However at present our story then jumps to 1822 with Henry Miles then living in Marylebone, London where he was a partner, with John Edwards, in a furnishing business that traded as Miles and Edwards from 1822 to 1844. It was located at 134 (which was later renumbered to 292) Oxford Street. They were “Designers and Manufacturers of Superior Furniture and dealers in “Moreens” (a strong fabric of wool or wool and cotton often used for curtains) and printed furniture. They were clearly a very well regarded top of the market supplier as shown by their list of customers that included The British Ambassador in Paris, The Empress of Russia, The Turkish Ambassador (introduced to them by Lord Palmerston), Charles Dickens and King George IV and many other members of the aristocracy. Their furniture is still to be found in many stately homes and from time to time comes up for sale.

The best full account of Miles and Edwards is an article by Felicity Mallet in The Journal of The Furniture History Society Volume VI for the year 1970 and an archive of papers is located in the City of Westminster Reference Library and in an archive in The Yale Center (*sic*) for British Art (accessible via the internet).

In 1833 the assets of the business were listed as £54000. Converting this to an equivalent in 2018 is complex but it could be well over £6m. However a large proportion was represented by outstanding debts. Many of the aristocracy were very poor payers and Miles & Edwards were constantly having to do debt chasing. For example they requested a half of a long outstanding payment of £86 15s. 7d (say £10250) from Lord Londonderry. Three months later a cheque arrived but it bounced!!

In September 1844 the business was sold to C.Hindley and Sons and I find no evidence as to any business involving Hugh Miles after that. However I think that we have sufficient evidence to indicate that he was a very wealthy man and in 1847 he was living in Downfield House, Lower Harpton in the parish of Old Radnor and according to his great grandson had “a large estate”. He was already the High Sherriff and in the census of 1851 he was listed as being “Magistrate and Land Owner” and was aged 57.

His wife Ann Eliza (born in Hunton Hampshire) was 56, his daughter Marianne was 25, her sister Georgianna was 24 and his son Henry Hugh (then an undergraduate) was 22. All the children were shown as being born in All Souls Marylebone. In 1876 Mrs Miles then a widow was listed as "Lady of the Manor."

Henry Hugh was born in 1828 and his Baptismal record indicates that his father's occupation was "Trade" and he was living at the shop address (134 Oxford Street). He was educated at Shrewsbury School followed by Exeter College Oxford where he obtained a BA in 1851. He was ordained priest in the diocese of Worcester in 1854 and was appointed curate of the Parish of Kinwarton that contained a second church in the village of Weethley. In 1856 the Weethley Church was described as "the primitive church ... The situation and prospect are extremely pleasant but the building contains no beauty, neither architectural nor picturesque, being as devoid of ornaments as any staunch puritan could desire." It was probably also in a very poor structural condition. History records that on his first visit to see his son, Henry Miles was passing along "the Ridgway" (now the A441 Evesham Road) when he espied the church through the trees. Greatly impressed by the beauty of the site but concerned at the poor condition of the church he immediately offered to rebuild the church at his own expense. The first stone of the new church was laid on 23rd May 1857 and fourteen months later it was consecrated by the Bishop of Worcester with a reception being held in a tent.

To help possible visitors using satnavs the postcode for Weethley Church is B49 5NA

The new, now existing Church was built of lias limestone from Inkberrow and is of "a well considered design comprising a chancel with an apsidal east end, a three bay nave, a spacious timbered porch, vestry and a new font". The building is relatively small but has an air of quality about it particularly the detailing. There are three stained glass sanctuary windows by Hardman and donated by the Rev R Seymour the Rector. Centre panel "Christ in Majesty", Left "St James with a shell symbol" and Right "St John with eagle" The cost of the new building was said to be £1500 (possibly equivalent to say £175000+ today). The architect was Edward Haycock Jnr (who was married to Henry Miles daughter Georgianna) from Shrewsbury where the family had been architects and contractors for several generations. His grandfather designed many civic buildings including the County Gaol and his father Edward Haycock Snr was the County Surveyor from 1834 -1866. Haycock Jnr who, like his father was well known for his philanthropy, specialised in church architecture.

Buildings that he designed or restored include All Saints in Castlefields Shrewsbury (where he was Church Warden), Meole Brace Church, Weston Lullingfield (regarded as one of the finest of its style in the country), St Marks New Ferry Cheshire, Titley Church Herefordshire and Llanerfyl Church Powys. A comprehensive review of the Haycocks appeared in an article "The Haycocks Changed the Face of Shrewsbury" published in "The Shropshire Magazine" for February 1960.

In 1858 when the Weethley Church was barely completed Henry Miles purchased the living of All Saints Church, Clifton in Bedfordshire from the Olivier family, ancestors of Lord (Sir Lawrence) Olivier the actor and Henry Hugh was installed as Rector. The post code for Clifton Church is SG17 5ET. It is much bigger than Weethley but Henry Miles was not deterred from initiating some major improvements to the church and the village.

Edward Haycock Jnr was again recruited and the first project he was given was to build a new "Parish School of All Saints" completed in 1860. After that, work on the Church started. The North Aisle was completely demolished and replaced with new. The low pitched medieval roof on the whole of the old church was removed and replaced with a high vaulted roof that was matched by the roof on the new North Isle. There was a new floor, heating system, a new set of pews, altar and sanctuary furniture including a new pulpit and organ. All the accumulated soot and whitewash was removed from the church stonework. There were new stained glass windows by Hardman (*cf* Weethley). In our times when a faculty is required for the slightest thing it is interesting to find that this huge restoration was done without a faculty. The Church was reopened on 26th April 1863. The report in the Hertfordshire Express stated that "the whole restoration cost not less than £3000 (equivalent in 2018 to say £350000+) and are at the expense of H.Miles of Downfield, Herefordshire the Rector's father". However there was more building to come after Henry's death in 1865. In 1867 four bells were recast by Robert Stainbank of London and in 1869 as a memorial to his father Henry Hugh and his mother and sisters purchased 5 new bells and a Carillon bell ringing machine (by John Moore and Sons London), a Curates House was built in 1870, a second School (Cliftonfields) in 1871, at least 7 houses in Church Street and Broad Street, a Father Willis organ in 1886 and a new Rectory 1890.

Rev Henry Hugh Miles

Miles family history reports that Henry Hugh was studious, artistic and very musical.

An examination of the Census records for Clifton reveals quite a story.

In 1861 Henry Hugh was living on his own in the old Rectory (now Clifton House) with just one House Servant Maria Elion who came from Kington in Herefordshire and was no doubt carefully selected by his mother! Little had changed in 1871 except that the House Maid was Esther Kitchener born in Stevenage. However in 1874 Hugh (aged 46yrs) married Elisabeth Mary Ballan (aged 22) who came from Bentley Heath in Barnet Hertfordshire. I am led to believe that Rev Miles and the new Mrs Miles were taken on a tour around the village in a carriage pulled by the village men.

The census entries for 1881 show a dramatically changed picture with Henry Hugh aged 52, Elisabeth Mary aged 28, Henry Arthur Hugh aged 4, Elystan aged 3, Hubert Elfric aged 1 and Mary Elaine aged 5months. On 12th March 1882 twin sons (Wilfred Barnard and Kenneth Lipscombe) were born but sadly died at 30 days and 25 days respectively.

Mrs Miles clearly required significant help and the household now included a Cook, a Nurse, and Under Nurse and a Housemaid.

His wife's ill health forced Henry Hugh to retire and leave Clifton in 1891. The 1891 census shows the new Rectory unoccupied but the Curates House (Chestnut Lodge) next to the church) and the old Rectory were both occupied and apparently rented out or sold.

A further daughter Dorothy Sybil was born in 1893 and I believe there was a son Bevis (birthdate date unknown)

In retirement Henry Hugh spent some time in the south of France but his main address was 2 Grantley Road Boscombe next to Bournemouth and he died there on 19th March 1910 in his 82nd year. He was buried in Clifton in a large square grave with short railings, located to the left of the path leading up to the church. History records that during his funeral children from the school filed past the grave and threw in flowers. His wife and his twin infant sons are recorded in the same grave.

The family less Henry Hugh appear in the 1911 census at 2 Grantley Road and the residents listed are Elizabeth Mary Miles 58 (widow) Mary Elaine Miles 30 (single daughter) Dorothy Sybil Miles 18 (single daughter), Arthur Edmund Ballan 56 (brother of EMM) and Edith Ballan 56 (his wife) Reginald George Bonsor 42 (nephew of EMM) plus a Cook, a House Parlour Maid and a Between Maid. Mrs Miles clearly still had very significant private means!

Interestingly Arthur Bonsor is listed as a Wharfe Manager and Reginald Bonsor as an American Railroad Agent. This may be an explanation as to how at least some of the Miles family relocated to Vancouver Canada. Elizabeth Mary died at Romsey Hants on 27th November 1920 in her 68th year.

On a recent visit to Bournemouth it was quite a surprise to find that No 1 (formerly No 2) Grantley Road is named "Clifton House" and is owned by "Together for Mental Wellbeing" a charity providing care and accommodation for people with mental ill health. They have a house newsletter "Clifton Times" (cf Clifton Chronicles for the current Clifton village magazine)

Appreciations of Henry Miles in Clifton Church are:

A large bronze plaque at the back of the Nave inscribed :

“This church having been enlarged and restored AD 1862 and the Parish School of All Saints built 1860 this tablet was erected by the Parishioners in testimony of gratitude and as a token of their esteem and affection both for their generous and noble minded benefactor Henry Miles of Downfield Herefordshire (at whose sole expense the good works above mentioned were carried out) and for his son The Rev Henry Hugh Miles MA the beloved Rector of Clifton.”

And a brass plaque on the other side of the choir vestry entrance inscribed:

“In memory of a beloved husband and father, eleven bells with chimes were installed in the tower AD MDCCCLXI (1869) by Ann Eliza widow, Henry Hugh Rector of this Parish and Marianne and Georgianna daughters of the late Henry Miles of Downfield Herefordshire Esquire, Deputy Lieutenant and Justice of the Peace for the Counties of Herefordshire and Radnor”

Miles Drive in Clifton commemorates the two Miles who were such great benefactors to the villages of Weethley and Clifton.

The right of presentation to the living in Clifton passed to Hubert Elfric Miles and stayed in the family until 1952 when it was transferred to The Bishop of St Albans.

From 1921 until 1925 Jervois Arthur Newnham a former Bishop of Saskatchewan held the position of Rector. Canon Rev Peter Pavey Rector of Clifton 1984 to 1993 researched various aspects of the history of Clifton church and especially the renovations of 1862. He became aware that members of the Miles family lived in Vancouver and when he received a letter from a Vancouver resident unconnected with the Miles he responded to their initial enquiry and then asked whether they knew any Vancouver residents named Miles. Sadly Peter died shortly after sending this letter but sometime later his widow Jane received a letter from a Basil Miles, a son of Elystan and Grandson of Henry Hugh Miles, who was a retired medical consultant at Hereford Hospital. It emerged that the lady in Vancouver had phoned every single Miles entry in the Vancouver telephone directory until she got a result and the Vancouver relatives had passed on the enquiry to Basil.

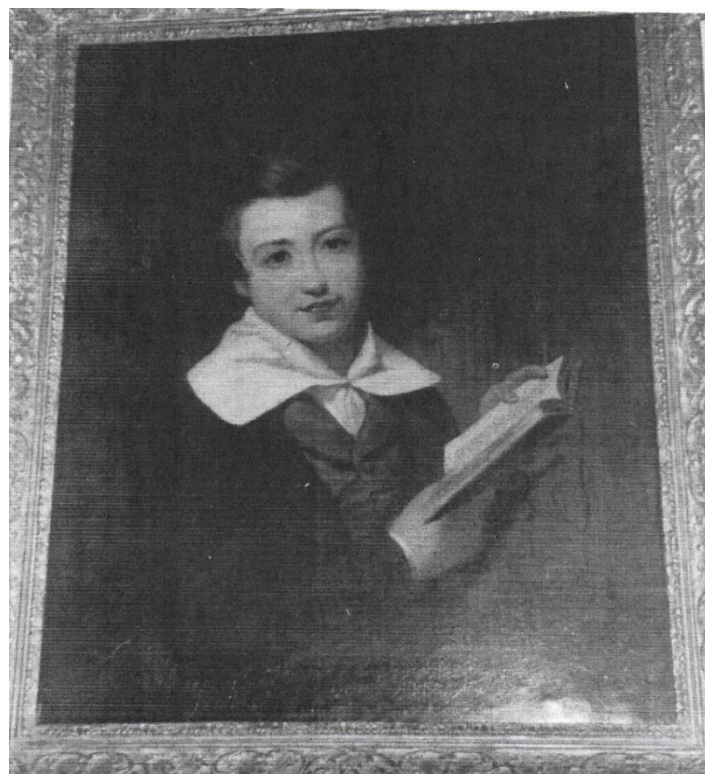
So the final link in our tale is that Jane Pavey and I travelled to Hereford in August 1993, collected quite a bit of useful information and some photographs of Henry Hugh. Then in June 2017 my wife and I managed to visit Weethley and garnered more information that enabled this piece to be written.

A corbel on the bottom right hand side of the Chancel Arch in Clifton Church.



An old village rumour suggests that this is Henry Miles. Of course there is no strong evidence but it does look quite different to the corbel on the other side. Of the arch and is it not likely that the masons, encouraged by Henry Hugh, took the opportunity to create this little memorial to the man who was paying the bill! I like to think so.



Photograph of a painting of Henry Hugh Miles when he was a student at Shrewsbury School.



An example of the high quality furniture sold by Miles and Edwards that still comes up for sale.


 <p>Antiquedesks.net UK Telephone: 0560 175 2007 Mobile: 0754 564 1953 International Telephone: +44 (0) 560 175 2007 +44 (0) 754 564 1953 Email: info@antiquedesks.net Use: ENQUIRY FORM Viewing by Appointment in Canterbury, Kent, UK</p> <p>Home About Us How To Buy From Us Stock List Stock Notes Payment & Delivery Contact Us Resources and Links Site Information</p> <p>SEARCH OUR STOCK OF ANTIQU DESKS</p> <p>ANTIQU DESKS - NEW ARRIVALS</p> <p>ANTIQU DESKS - BLOG & NEWS</p> <p>WANTED ! WE BUY ANTIQU DESKS</p> <p>Testimonials</p> <p>Antique Desk Finder Service</p> <p>"Designer" Desks</p> <p>Antique Desk and Desk Chair Sets</p> <p>Custom Made Desk Chairs</p> <p>Antique Desk and Antique Writing Table Archive</p>	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Antiquedesks.net</h2> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">ANTIQU WRITING TABLE BY MILES & EDWARDS</p> <div style="display: flex;"><div style="flex: 1;"><p style="text-align: center;"><small>Click here to view more photos of Antique Writing Table by Miles & Edwards</small></p></div><div style="flex: 1; padding-left: 10px;"><p>Reference: 3010 Writing Table by Miles & Edwards</p><p>Approximate Age: 1822-1844</p><p>Principal Wood: Satinwood</p><p>Size: 38"(w) x 22.5"(d) x 29"(h) 96cm(w) x 57cm(d) x 74cm(h)</p><p>Price: SOLD</p><p><small>XE.com Personal Currency Assistant</small></p></div></div> <p>A wonderful Antique Writing Table by Miles & Edwards of 134 Oxford Street, London (stamped to drawer top with their design number 7738) (see gallery photos). Made from satinwood and all original except for a quality replacement tan leather this is a fine Antique Writing Table of exceptional quality as evidenced by the immaculate drawer shut lines and detailing to the legs and finials.</p> <p>The careers of cabinet makers Henry Miles and John Edwards are recorded in The Dictionary of English Furniture Makers (1660-1840) (pages 606 and 607) and the firm was were active between 1822 and 1840 before being taken over by Charles Hindley and Sons. The firm had numerous prestigious patrons including the British Ambassador to Paris and the Empress of Russia. Commissions in the UK included furniture for Audley End House in Essex, Hampton Court, Burton Constable in Yorkshire and Wynyard Park in County Durham.</p> <p>FEATURES - 3010 Antique Writing Table by Miles & Edwards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exceptional Antique Writing Table in Satinwood by Miles & Edwards c1822-1840• Twin blind frieze drawers with almost perfect shut lines• Baluster turned and knopped end supports on square cut and C scroll trestle bases• Leaf carved scroll feet• Original concealed castors and brass wheels• Later replacement tooled leather writing surface in matching shades with gilded tooling and embossing• Elegant smaller proportions <p>DIMENSIONS - 3010 Antique Writing Table by Miles & Edwards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Width = 38" (96cm). Depth = 22.5" (57cm)• Height to writing surface = 29" (74cm)• Sitting height (floor to the bottom of the frieze) = 24" (61cm)• Drawer widths = 15.75" (40cm)• Drawer heights = 4.5" (11.5cm) <hr/> <h2 style="text-align: center;">Antiquedesks.net</h2> <p style="text-align: center;"><small>Small Antique Desks & Writing Tables, Medium Antique Desks & Writing Tables, Large Antique Desks & Writing Tables, Antique Partners Desks, Antique Pedestal Desks, Antique</small></p>
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Many of the gentry were reluctant to pay for things they bought and certainly never paid promptly. The copies of three letters from Miles and Edwards to William Henry Fox Talbot of Laycock Abbey (now owned by the National Trust) illustrate a typical situation. The bill was at least 8 months old and when they chased it up they were paid half the amount owed!

Talbot Correspondence Project: MILES & EDWARDS to TALBOT William Henry F... Page 1 of 1

The Correspondence of
William Henry Fox Talbot

Project Director: Professor Larry J Schaaf

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Result number 1 of 4: < [Back](#) [Back to results list](#) [Next](#) > [Back to the letter search](#) >

Document number: 1983
Date: 19 Apr 1830
Recipient: TALBOT William Henry Fox
Author: MILES & EDWARDS
Collection: British Library, Fox Talbot Collection, London
Last updated: 1st September 2003

London
134 Oxford Street
19th April 1830
Sir

Having a very large payment to make up on Saturday next & being kept out of a considerable sum which we calculated upon at this time we take the liberty of troubling you with this letter to say that if you can conveniently remit us the amount of our Bill £25 · 12 it will be of great service to us.

We beg leave at the same time respectfully to solicit your further commands & remain,

Sir
Your most humble Serv^{ts}

Miles & Edwards
– Talbot Esq
– Talbot Esq
Laycock Abbey
Chippenham

Result number 1 of 4: < [Back](#) [Back to results list](#) [Next](#) >

<http://foxtalbot.dmu.ac.uk/letters/transcriptName.php?bcode=Mile-Ed&pageNumber=...> 21/12/2011

The Correspondence of
William Henry Fox Talbot



Project Director: Professor Larry J Schaaf

Result number 2 of 4: < [Back](#) [Back to results list](#) [Next](#) >

[Back to the letter search](#) >

Document number: 2402
Date: 20 Aug 1832
Recipient: TALBOT William Henry Fox
Author: MILES & EDWARDS
Collection: British Library, Fox Talbot Collection, London
Last updated: 1st September 2003

London
134 Oxford Street

20th Aug 1832

Sir

We are sorry that we are compelled to trouble you respecting our account £98-9-0 for various Articles of Furniture supplied last Year & being greatly in want of money we shall feel **greatly** much obliged if you will favor us with the amount by first post.

We are very respectfully
Sir
Your obed^t humble Serv^{ts}

Miles & Edwards

Talbot Esq M.P.

Talbot Esq M.P.
Laycock Abbey
Chippenham Wilts

Result number 2 of 4: < [Back](#) [Back to results list](#) [Next](#) >

The Correspondence of
William Henry Fox Talbot



Project Director: Professor Larry J Schaaf

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Document number: 2403

Date: 22 Aug 1832

Recipient: TALBOT William Henry Fox

Author: MILES & EDWARDS

Collection: British Library, Fox Talbot Collection, London

Last updated: 1st September 2003

London
134 Oxford Street

22nd August 1832

Sir

We are favored with your letter <1> enclosing the half of a Checque for Ninety eight pounds <2> which when complete we shall place to the credit of your account – This remittance will be of great service to us & we feel particularly obliged to you for it.

We are very respectfully
Sir
Your obed^t humble Serv^{ts}

Miles & Edwards

W H F Talbot MP

W. H. F. Talbot Esq^{re}
Post Office
Cowes
Isle of Wight

Notes:

1. Letter not located.
2. See Doc. No: 02402.

Result number 3 of 4: < [Back](#) [Back to results list](#) [Next](#) >

In 1856 when Henry Miles first saw this view he saw a derelict church building but in a very good location.



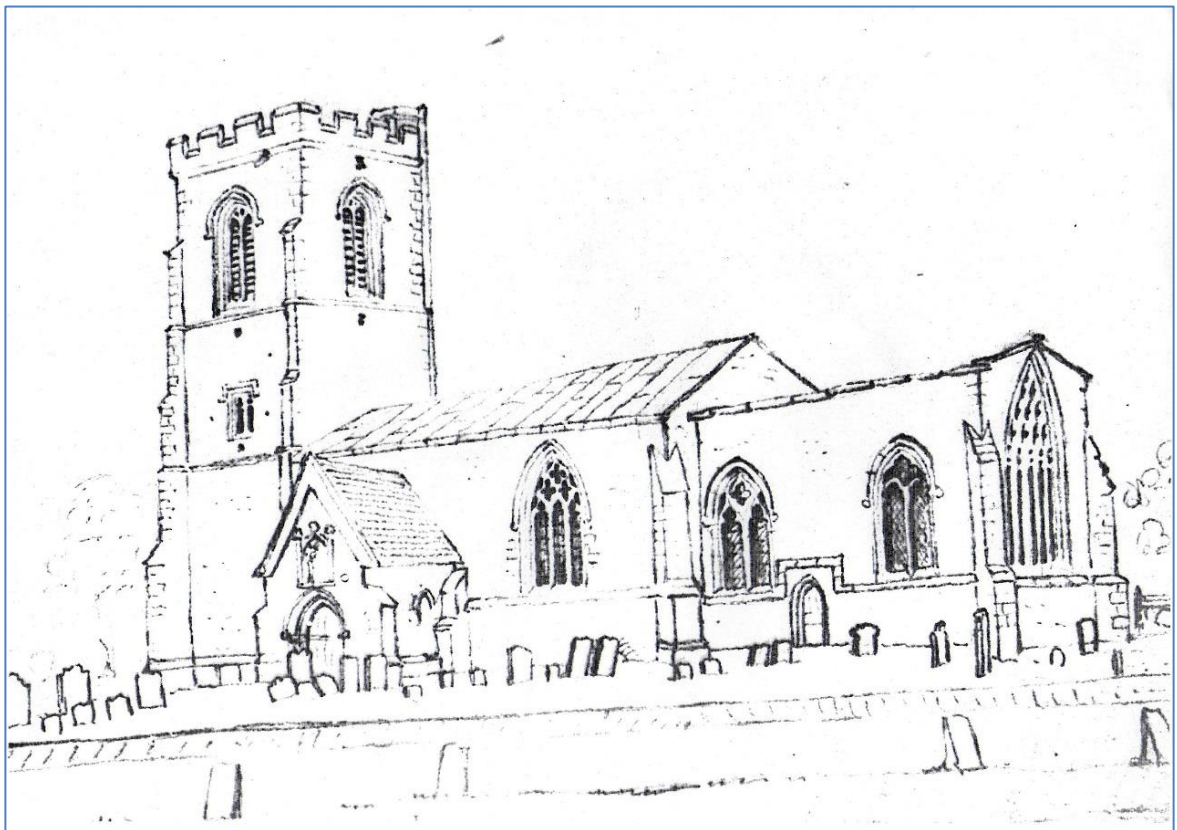
The Church of St James Weethley built and paid for by Henry Miles and completed in 1858.



The Small but high quality interior of the church.



All Saints Church Clifton as drawn in 1819 by Thomas Fisher a London based commercial artist.



In 1862 photography was not common and was, no doubt, expensive so Clifton Church is very fortunate to have two photographs taken by a Hitchin photographer of the completed restoration. One shows the totally rebuilt new north aisle and the other the east end with the new elevated roofs and the new vestry.



Photograph of Henry Hugh in middle age plus his wife, daughter and unidentified person. Could even have been taken in Clifton.



A family group possibly taken in Menton on the French Riviera where it is said they were regular visitors. Left to right Mrs Elizabeth Mary Miles, a daughter possibly Mary Elaine, Rev Henry Hugh Miles, another daughter possibly Dorothy Sybil. Notice the high quality ladies clothes and a camera.



A photograph probably taken at Boscombe captioned left to right: Bevis, Father, May and Arthur



The new “small rectory” built in 1890 by Henry Hugh Miles for his successor whom he knew would not be able to afford to live in the style that he had in the then Rectory now known as Clifton House. In the mid 1930s jet engine pioneer Frank Whittle rented the small flat that was contained in the Rectory when he was stationed at RAF Henlow. The building was demolished in the early 1970s and the site was developed and named Rectory Close.



The grave in Clifton Churchyard of Rev Henry Hugh Miles, his wife Elizabeth Mary, and their twin sons Wilfred Barnard and Kenneth Lipscomb who died at 30 days and 25 days respectively.



Front cover of the house journal of the current occupiers of the building that was the home of the Miles family in 1911, now owned by the charity "Together for Mental Health".

The Clifton Times

Edition: AUGUST 2018

