

1683. George Ritschell,* son of the above. Baptised at St. John's, Newcastle, and educated at the Newcastle grammar school. He entered as a candidate for the Durham scholarship at Corpus Christi college, Oxford, but was passed over in favour of one who was not born in the diocese. The corporation of Newcastle appealed to the visitor of the college in his behalf, but without success. He subsequently entered St. Edmund hall at the same university, matriculating 29th of May, 1674, aged 17. He graduated B.A. 17th Jan., 1678. Upon the death of his father he succeeded him as curate of Hexham, a post he retained until his death in 1717. During the earlier part of his life at Hexham he appears to have suffered from the persistent enmity of Thomas Allgood, the bailiff of the manor. In 1699 a determined attempt was made to turn him out of the curacy. Allgood had organised a regular opposition in the town, and they drew up a series of accusations against the curate, which they laid before the archbishop of York. Of these charges the principal were: that Ritschell was a very litigious person, at variance with most of his parishioners; that he styled himself the archbishop's deputy, and threatened to cite people for every frivolous matter; that he intended to re-introduce the High Commission Court and the *ex-officio* oath; and that he was a man of a very unquiet temper, malicious, and much addicted to lying.

At the October court of 1698 Sir William Blackett had appeared and enquired whether it would be possible to remove Ritschell from the curacy, adding that, if it were, he would turn him out immediately. On the 20th of May, 1699, he wrote the following letter:

Newcastle, 20 May, 1699.

Sir, I am obliged to the assistance you gave my friends att Hexham against their scandalous parson, for he's a perfect plague to that town, and by his quarrelsome conversation drives people away from the church to conventicles. I am told he is no more than my curate att pleasure; if he be then I am sure my duty to the church would command me to turn him out, but he being within the diocess of one for whom I have more than an ordinary veneration I am not willing to do anything that might give the least umbrage of an offence to his lordship by seeming to intermeddle with any of his clergy more than does become me, but the truth is, I am made very uneasy with the man by perpetuall complaints against him, nor has his carriage to me been so civill as I might have expected from him. I must therefore desire you to advise me what manner I must do itt, and whether you think my lord archbishop will take any offence att itt, and you will much oblige, Sir, your most humble servant. WM. BLACKETT.

Against all these attacks Ritschell defended himself with energy and spirit, answering some of the charges brought against him, and pointing out the absurdity of others. He asserted that Sir William Blackett's action against him was caused by nothing else than his resentment because he had voted for Mr. Forster at the last election, and not for Sir William Blackett's candidate. He explains that his right to vote was derived from the curacy, and adds, 'Mr. Allgood desires to have a curate that he can manage at pleasure, because the lord of the manor is impropiator, and has an absolute right to the church, and that his bailiff ought to manage everything under him; and being *parsona imparsonée*, as every minister may chose his own curate, so he may turn me off at pleasure.' In spite of the efforts of his enemies, Ritschell was not turned out, and it may therefore be assumed that Sir William Blackett did not possess so much power over the curacy as he imagined, that it was, in fact, a perpetual curacy, even before the augmentation of the living.

While engaged in these disputes with Allgood, Ritschell entered into a religious controversy with a Roman Catholic polemic, Thomas Ward, a friend of the Radcliffe family. Ward published his account of the controversy in a book entitled *A Conference with Mr. Ritschel, Vicar of Hexham*. Ritschell replied in 1698 at great length; and long after Ward's death the last word in the dispute was issued, with the title *An Interesting Controversy with Mr. Ritschel, Vicar of Hexham, by Thomas Ward, from a MS. written by Himself*, Manchester, 1819.

Ritschell was indefatigable in collecting the records of his church and parish, and copied out with his own hand the old church registers, and the names of former churchwardens, from the churchwardens' books. His only published work is *An Account of certain Charities*, containing a catalogue of several Benefactors, who have given or left anything to pious and Charitable Uses, as the Church, the Poor or Free-Schools, in Tynedale-Ward, in the County of Northumberland. Made at Easter, 1713. Also

* Also lecturer.

copies and Abstracts of several Bequests and Settlements, for the Use of those concerned in the management and Distribution of such Charities. With some remarks thereupon. To which is added a Brief Account and Description of the Parish and Parish-Church of Hexham, in the County aforesaid. Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1713. The book was republished, with additions, in 1780.¹

1724, Sep. 13th. William Graham, ordained deacon June 15th, 1712; priest 21st Dec., 1713. The first augmentation of the living was made in his time, and he at once licensed an assistant curate. This practice of appointing assistant curates has been regularly followed since then.

1765. Peter Rumney, M.A., also master of the grammar school.

1771. George Busby, also master of the grammar school, succeeded on Rumney's death.

1799, April 20th. William Fleming, M.A., licensed to the curacy on Busby's death.

1809. Anthony Hedley, son of Edward Hedley, born at Hopefoot, near Otterburn, 29th March, 1777. Educated at Glasgow and Edinburgh universities in 1795 and 1796. In 1809 he was appointed curate of St. John Lee. He resigned his charge at Hexham in 1813 and went as stipendiary curate to Whelpington, where he distinguished himself as 'a bold and unwearied manager of parochial schools.' In 1809 he resigned his charge, and went to live in Newcastle, where he remained until he was appointed rector of Whitfield. In this charge he remained until his death in 1835, aged 57 years. At Newcastle he acted as manager of the Savings Bank, and took an active part in the affairs of the Literary and Philosophical Society. As an antiquary he was enthusiastic and indefatigable. He contributed papers to the *Newcastle Magazine*, Mackenzie and Dent's *History of Northumberland*, and the *Archæologia Æliana*. He rendered valuable assistance to the Rev. John Hodgson in compiling his *History of Northumberland*, particularly by transcribing parts of several parish registers.²

1814, March 21st. John Gibson appointed; he resigned Sep. 25, 1826.

1826, Dec. 13. William Airey appointed. He had been assistant curate under Gibson for two years. Matriculated at Queen's college, Oxford, 10th October, 1818, aged 18. B.A., 1822; M.A., 1826. Vicar of Bramley, Hants, 1845, until his death, 16th March, 1869.³

1845, Feb. 22. Joseph Hudson, licensed by the bishop of Durham on the cession of Airey. Afterwards vicar of Chillingham.

1866, Aug. 18. Henry Christopher Barker,* licensed on the cession of Hudson. Educated at Caius college, Cambridge. B.A., 1840; M.A., 1845. Perpetual curate of Morton and East Stockwith, 1846-62; appointed lecturer of Hexham, 1862; became rector of Hexham, 1866; hon. canon of Durham, 1872-82; hon. canon of Newcastle, 1882; rural dean of Hexham, 1866-86.⁴

¹ Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses. Scholæ Novocastrensis Alumni*. *Archbishop of York's Papers*. Ritschell's will is dated June 14th, 1717; it runs as follows:

George Ritschell of Hexham, clerk and lecturer of Hexham. To my dear and loving sister, Jane Ritschell, £500 to purchase a reall estate of £26 per ann., to descend, after her death, to my nephew, George Sheldon, he paying therefrom, when he enjoys it and is 35, £10 per ann. for ever, *i.e.*, to the minister and churchwardens of St. John's, Newcastle, the place of my nativity, 40s. a year to be distrib^d to 40 poor widows on St. Thomas' day, 1s. each; other 40s. per ann. to the min. and ch^{ws} of the city of Carlisle, where my dear mother was born, to 40 poor widows, on the same day; also 40s. to the Mercers' lecturer of Hexham, where I now dwell, to 40 poor widows on the same day; 40s. per ann. to the min^r of Whitley chappell in Hexhamshire, and failing a min^r there, to the mercers' lecturer at Hexham for the poor of Hexhamshire and Slealy parish; the other 40s. per ann. to the stewards of the Soc. of the Sons of the Clergy, which meet at Newcastle every year upon this anniv^r feast. If the soc. be discontinued, or do not meet at Newcastle, the s^d 40s. to go to the mercers' lect^r at Hexham for six poor clergymen's widows within Tundale warde, a noble each, or to ch^h if not widows, the mercers' lect^r at Hexham, the min^r of St. John's, Newcastle, and the stewards of the Sons of the Clergy to be in trust for these legacies. To my bro^r in law, Mr. Wm. Sheldon, and Mary, his wife, my dear and loving sister, each £5. Nephew and godson, Geo. Sheldon all my books. I order that my parcell of oake timber wood in Hexham old schoole, being about 22 tunn, be sold for the use of my ex^r. To my successor my buriall place in Hexham church, w^{ch} I bought of Mr. Thos. Johns, and the two moveable beehouses in the garden, etc., etc., in the lecturer's house, wherein I now dwell, on cond. that my sister, Jane Ritschell, may live there a year after my decease that she may settle her affaires. To Mr. Thos. Johns, some time my reader, and to John Goss, my parish clerk, each a guinea. Residue to sister, Jane Ritschell; she is executrix.

² Hodgson, *Northumberland*, II. iii. pp. 331-4; Latimer, *Local Records*, pp. 34-5.

³ Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*.

⁴ *Diocesan Calendar*.

* Also lecturer.