

## **Henry Tacy's Curate: William Millett**

### **Introduction**

In my last article on Henry Tacy, I did mention William Millett, but it was, I am afraid, in a rather dismissive way because I had formed an image of him as a quiet, unambitious character who was content to spend his life supporting Henry Tacy. However, my recent research does reveal a rather different figure. They were certainly very close friends and he was indeed very supportive of Henry Tacy, but I suspect that the fact that he remained a curate for so long was also due to the fact that he had a very enjoyable lifestyle and was wealthy enough not to have to worry about seeking promotion.

He was born in Kirby Bedon in 1807, which makes him about 24 years younger than Henry Tacy. His first appointment was as a stipendiary curate at Swanton Morley. He came here in June 1830 – which was about five years after Tacy had been made rector - and he stayed here for most of his life. Despite the age difference, he developed a close friendship with Tacy – and he was sympathetic to Tacy's evangelical views. Unlike Tacy, however, he married twice and had seven children.

### **His two marriages**

His first marriage was to Ann Hurnard of East Carlton in August 1834 and it is interesting to note that Tacy performed the marriage, despite the fact that it took place at East Carlton. There were three children of this marriage, William Hurnard, Caroline Jane and Lucy. The 1841 census for Swanton Morley shows that they were living at 'Gorgate in Hoe' and that, for just this small family, they had six servants, including a gardener, so there would not appear to have been any shortage of money. However, 'Ann Millett of Gorgate Hall in the Parish of Hoe' died in September 1845 and was buried in Swanton Morley.

William then married Frances Morse at Catton in July 1847, and we then find that 'Anna Maria Millett of Billingford Hall' (an infant) died in Nov 1850 and was also buried in Swanton Morley. Thus, we know that they had moved to Billingford Hall by this date. I don't know how large a house it was at that time, but it is certainly a substantial property now. In the 1851 census for Billingford we find him living in the hall with his wife Frances and the three children from his first marriage. Also present were five servants. By 1861 they had had four children of their own and, once again, there were five servants living in the house – a cook, three housemaids and a nursery maid.

When Henry Tacy died in April 1863, it would appear that William Millett did not want to work under Edward Lombe, the new rector and by about 3 May 1863 he had accepted the appointment as rector of Lyng. Millett himself died in March 1867 and at the time of his death his abode was said to be Lyng, so he must have moved from Billingford Hall to the rectory at Lyng. This was another substantial house with a large garden that was originally designed by Humphrey Repton, so the move should not have involved too much hardship!

### **The graves in Swanton Morley Churchyard**

These are located just beneath the east window of the chancel. There are two separate ledger stones lying side by side surrounded by an iron railing. One is for Henry Tacy who died on 10 April 1863. The other was originally built for William Millett's first wife Ann who was buried there on 11 September 1845, but an inscription to William Millett was added later showing that he too was buried there on 6 March 1867.