

The Iles Family of Kempford

By Richard Barton (copyright)

Even the most cursory glance of a visitor to the Churchyard of the Catholic Church of St Thomas of Canterbury would reveal the long association between the Iles Family and the Fairford Mission. This association is strengthened further if we include members of their extended family – the Powells, the Arkells, the Hills and the Chards.

This link is illustrated by a letter in the parish archives which was received by Father Eamon Mc Glinchey, the then Parish Priest:

'29 Griffiths Avenue, Punchbowl, New South Wales 2196

Feb. 24th 1986

Dear Father Mc Glinchey,

Sad to say that my sister Mary Briscoe died on Feb 2nd at 91 years of age at her daughter's home at Helsby, Cheshire, would you say Mass for the repose of her soul during the coming weeks.

The church of St Thomas of Canterbury has had a very long association with the Iles family, in the first when my sister Margaret Iles died in 1962 she was the last member of the family to attend at St Thomas's.

During my visit to the U.K. in July 1968 with my late wife my brother Monsignor Iles who was Parish Priest at Taunton for forty years and my sister Mary attended Sunday Mass at St Thomas's that being the last time I think that members of the family attended there.

I came to Australia in 1924 at 20 years of age so have been here a long time, I am afraid all this sounds such a long time ago, the only member of the congregation in 1968 I knew who was there during my youth was Mr De Bono he used to live in the cottage next to the school, also an elderly lady my sister took me to see I just forget her name – lived opposite "The Retreat" Fairford.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely

Daniel B. Iles'

I don't know anything further about Daniel Iles or the Australian branch of the family but during the summer of 2003 Betty Williams, daughter of Mary Briscoe, came to Mass at St Thomas's Church. Having renewed the association with the family I was delighted to receive

from her a copy of an old photograph of her family taken in 1911 together with photographs of Richard and Dorothy Iles taken on the occasion of their Golden Wedding Anniversary in September 1893.

The Iles Family has supported the Catholic Mission and Parish at Horcott for three generations and in many ways their commitment mirrors the three generations of support given to the Woodchester and Nympsfield Missions by members of the Leigh Family of Woodchester Park. Both Richard Iles and William Leigh the Elder were converted to Catholicism at the time of the Oxford Movement and the third generation of active involvement ended with the death of a devout granddaughter who was a spinster. Both families gave sacrificially to establish rural Catholic missions and this article attempts to trace the long association between the Iles and the Horcott Mission that goes back to about 1843.

There is a family tradition that Iles had become exasperated with the local Anglican incumbent at Kempford who had refused to tend one of his dying labourers. Dorothy, and probably her husband, was received by the Reverend John Mitchell, Missioner of Chipping Norton, who was then visiting chaplain to Lady de Mauley at Hatherop. Lady de Mauley, was herself to die on 5th June 1844, six months after the reception of the twenty-five-year-old farmer and his young wife who had themselves only been married about three months when they were received.



Very Rev Canon John Mitchell

On 30th December 1893 Canon Mitchell wrote the following letter to Mrs Dorothy Iles from Taunton where he was then Missioner:

'Dear Mrs Iles

On this day 50 years, you remind me, thro' your (long) Kind letter, that you recd the blessings of the Holy Church at my hands. As I near the point when the examination will take place I have hopes that the good works of those whom I have recd into the church will plead for me.

I am carried back in mind to the very distant past and memories are awakened full of interest. My humble efforts at that time to keep the mission from utter destruction were untiring. Active – Zealous & in the full (vigor) of youth, I remember riding eleven miles in the rain to say mass at the keeper's house, & riding back the same distance to breakfast. My catechism class consisted of grown up old men. The oldest was John Betterton (75) the youngest over 50.

Mrs Peach had left a nest of Partridges under the table where I was saying Mass & in the middle of it they took wing & flew out alarming me much. On one occasion immediately I rode up to the door she was waiting for me & described the beating Peach had given her. She said that her arm was quite purified by his violence. The (t) had evidently made its escape from her alphabet. I heard confessions seated on empty sacks under a tree when the upper room was engaged by the sick. The only real comfort was your quiet & hospitable house which I much enjoyed.

The Bishop of Birmingham is with me and time is difficult to monopolize so I must wish you & Mr Iles & family the blessings of this holy season & a happy new year with many returns of the same.

Believe me

Very (sincerely) yours

Canon J Mitchell

P.S. Great running for the Derby consider the winning post within sight, & Canon Brownlow of Plymouth fully a-head.'

Austin Iles, their son, later wrote of these events in his 'Random Recollections of the Fairford Mission':

'These events occurred in the early forties of the 19th century as Lady de Mauley died in 1844 and the Horcott chapel was built in 1845. My father and mother, both converts, were received into the Catholic Church in the year 1844 (sic) and at that time Canon Mitchell used to come once a month to say Mass at a gamekeeper's lodge on the Williamstrip estate near Hatherop, which was inhabited by a Catholic named Peach, who was afterwards buried at Horcott together with his wife and two sons. At this time his wife was not a Catholic and she thought that the space under the temporary altar would be a nice quiet place to hatch out some pheasants. She tried the experiment unknown to her husband with the result that there was rather a commotion when some of them began to hatch out during Mass.'

Returning to contemporary correspondence, Mitchell wrote to Bishop Ullathorne in November 1845:

'Mr Iles gave the ground (at Horcott) and has enclosed it partially at his own expense and has offered hospitality to the officiating priest. He and his wife are converts of only two years and may be considered the founders of the Mission.'

Richard Iles, 'the Younger', was baptised at Kempford Parish Church on 1st February 1818, the son of Richard and Ann Iles of Kempford. The Iles family had inter-married in two generations - his father, Richard Iles the Elder, was married to Ann Iles and his grandfather, Albert, was himself married to a cousin Amy Iles.

Writing about the Iles Family in 1941, Mr Bloxome gives us the following background details:

"It happens that my mother's family, the Iles's, is easily accessible for two reasons: one, because its ramifications have been piously worked out by one of the Iles's and his wife about seventy years ago, and this family tree, on two enormous rolls of paper, is in the possession of Mr Austin Iles of Kempford, who is himself, an authority on the Iles family; and, two, because in Kempford Church Yard there are eight or nine large and imposing oblong stone tombs all commemorating Ileses and all clustered together so closely that a stout person can hardly squeeze himself between them. They are the most prominent objects in the Church Yard, and you encounter them directly you enter at the lych-gate. Most of the lettering on the tombs is indecipherable, but enough remains to make it easy to trace the family from the earliest known Iles, Daniel, who was born in 1677, in Charles the Second's time, and died at 85 in 1762. He married Amy Jenner who was two years younger than he and died in 1743."

(Notes on the Families of Iles and Bloxome by H.E.B. to H.B.)

This Daniel left his Kempford land to one of his sons but he left most of his property to his youngest son Richard Iles (1721-1759), including the family home at Reevey in Kempford. In contrast their brother, Daniel (1711-1791), received only one guinea. Bloxome noted "Poor Daniel had a family of eight children to bring up on that guinea, but he died aged seventy-nine and his tomb is the richest of them all." Interestingly this second Daniel's son, Albert (1755-1837), was to marry his first cousin, Amy Iles, the daughter of Richard Iles of Reevey. Albert and Amy Iles were the grandparents of Richard Albert Iles, the subject of this article, and furthermore he was farming land at Reevey that had been in his family for a number of generations.



Richard Albert Iles aged 75 years. Taken for his Golden Wedding Anniversary 1893

Richard Albert Iles married Dorothy Arkell at Kempford by licence in 1843. He was described in the register as the son of Richard Iles, a farmer, and his bride was the daughter of Thomas and Susanna Arkell of Kempford Farm. The Iles and Arkell families were closely connected and there were numerous marriages between them. The Arkells were brewers and farmers and they are still associated the breweries at Donnington and Kingsdown and members of their family farmed in Kempford, Dudgrove and Whelford. Dorothy's mother, Susanna Arkell, was also an Iles before she married. Dorothy was baptised at Kempford on 2nd June 1819.

In the 1851 Census Return Richard Iles of Reevey Farm was described as a thirty-three-year-old farmer of 406 acres who employed thirty-four labourers. His wife, Dorothy, was aged thirty-two years and their sons were Richard Albert who was four years old and John Albert who was aged two years. Their household included Sarah Ford, Mary Pool, Ann Newman, Thomas Hughes and William Barnes.

Almost as soon as Richard and Dorothy Iles were received into the Catholic Church they became involved with the Reverend John Mitchell in his search for a new chapel. After Lady de Mauley died the chapel at Hatherop Castle was closed for Catholic worship. A site became available at Horcott and this was purchased by Richard Iles.



Dorothy Iles aged 74 years. Taken for her Golden Wedding Anniversary 1893

On 1st February 1845 there is a record that John Hanks and a trustee released cottages etc at Horcott to Richard Iles and furthermore on 29th January 1846 the appointment of hereditaments passed from Iles to the Reverend John Mitchell. Horcott was then situated on the edge of Kempford parish, close to the town of Fairford and there is a tradition that the land was secretly purchased at Horcott. Austin Iles later wrote in his 'Random Recollections':

"With regard to how the money was raised to build the church. I am afraid I cannot give much information more than that the late Lord de Mauley contributed towards it. The total cost of the church was £700. The land was bought by a Protestant uncle of mine as the vendor would not sell any property in those days for the purpose of building a Catholic church."

When Canon Mitchell conveyed the land at Horcott to the diocese of Clifton on 1st April 1867 it consisted of:

"The site of three cottages with some garden ground situate at Horcott, a strip of garden extending from the site of the cottages up to the footpath leading from Horcott and containing 1 rood and 16 perches, and a piece of land 2 roods and 30 perches lying between the two footpaths "leading from Fairford to Horcott, and Horcott Lane."

In 1897 Richard Iles wrote to the Bishop saying:

“I bought the land for the mission, that is the land on which the church stands with grounds and gardens thereto belonging. Canon Mitchell built the Church. Lord de Mauley contributed (I believe) £200. Canon Mitchell collected the residue required for building the church.”

When the Church was opened it had no resident Missioner but in March of the following year William Leigh invited the Passionists to begin a Mission at Northfields, near Woodchester Park and for a time they looked after Fairford. Father Augustine from Woodchester became the Missioner and we know from the Baptismal Register that he baptised Richard Albert Iles, the son of Richard and Dorothy, on 6th September 1846.

On 10th November 1845 the Reverend John Mitchell wrote to Bishop Ullathorne, the Vicar-Apostolic of the Western District, stating:

“My Lord, sending by this post deeds of Fairford Mission, as I have given it up to Father Austin as regards duty. I consider I have now done with the mission and I hope in your Lordship’s hands it will not be permitted to die out after the difficulties sustained in preventing its extinction. I had someone from Oscott – Prendergast – in mind. ... Mr Iles gave the ground and has enclosed it partially at his own expense and he has afforded hospitality in a most liberal manner to the officiating priest. He and his wife are converts of only two years and may be considered the founders of the mission”.

These arrangements did not run smoothly and on 31st December 1846 Richard Iles was writing to Father Mitchell about the unsatisfactory situation at Fairford:

“Reverend and dear Sir, I am sorry I cannot report to you quite a favourable progress of the mission at present. I am quite aware that it is not my place to find fault with Father Dominic but I cannot help telling you that there appears to be wanting at Northfield House, a little order in the arrangements of their affairs. When Fr Austin was here on the first Sunday in November he gave out that he had been ordered to Manchester and he would be here a week sooner than he said. He then said he could not fix his next day, but would let me know in time; it was Christmas Day or the following Sunday. Three weeks passed and I heard nothing. I wrote, but he was not at home. I received an answer from Father Marcellian saying Father Austin would be here on Sunday. I had just time to let the Catholics know, but in consequence of all these alterations many protestants have stayed away not knowing when to come – hence a very thin congregation. It seems to me, Fr Dominic or Fr Marcellian (now Superior at Northfields) might have made better arrangements!

Mrs Petty made her first Communion last Sunday – an edifying convert. Two more have been some time on the anvil and are nearly hammered out. Mrs Powell is one and one of my servant’s mother. Both have made up their minds to become Catholics.

Mrs Powell is anxious to place her little boy under your care. If you will admit him to your school. He is now just 8 years old, and wants strict management. Pleased to tell you little Tom is nearly recovered. The tumour has been taken out. We have all colds, in fact I think I never

remember a time when colds and influenza are so prevalent as at present. Please give compliments to Mrs Mahony”.

Mary Powell, the sister of Dorothy Iles, had married John Powell a maltster from Donnington Mill. By the time of the 1851 census Mary Powell was described as a widow and was living in the Market Square in Fairford. Not only did she later provide the money to build the Presbytery but she was indirectly a substantial benefactress of the mission. In her will of 1888 she left her household effects to her daughter Anne Exton Powell. Other properties included her dwelling houses and premises and also land at the Moors. This estate, which was valued at £412-11-4d, was divided between her daughter, Anne, and her son, Joseph Louis Powell. When Anna Exton Powell’s own will was proved in 1899 it was found that she had left her investments (£877) to the Horcott mission upon the death of her brother.

Two of the Arkell family had now become Catholics and there is evidence of their brother John showing interest too. Fr Austin wrote to the Bishop Ullathorne on 9th July 1847:

“I have heard of John Arkell at the Iles’ as one not indisposed to the Catholic religion, but had no idea they were so warm as his letter shows. Everything persuades me Swindon is important to secure. I am sure if the ground did not suit it would easily be sold again. I asked Dr Fowler at Swindon, to look out a room for use as a chapel in Old Swindon. This John Arkell who writes the enclosed letter is brother-in-law to Mr Iles. I have never been to Arkell’s place, but know it is not far from the Cricklade Road, near Upper Stratton”.

John Arkell (1802-1881) was the eldest son of Thomas and Susan Arkell and he was the Brewer of Stratton. I have found no evidence to suggest that he followed his sisters Dorothy Iles and Mary Powell by becoming a Catholic. Certainly he took an interest in the development of Catholicism in Swindon and a letter of his, concerning this, survives in the diocesan archives.

John’s nephew, Henry Arkell (1876-1949), who was an Engineer with the Great Western Railway, became a Catholic in Birmingham during the War. It is a family tradition that a reason for his decision to become a Catholic was because he wanted to pray at lunchtime and that the only churches open in the city were Catholic ones. His father, Thomas, was a maltster of Donnington Mill and Kingsdown and owned Penhill Farm. Daniel Arkell (1815-1864), who was another brother of John, Mary, Dorothy and Thomas, was very much involved with the building of St Anne’s Anglican Church at Whelford.

Clearly the situation at Horcott was changing and already the growth of Swindon was becoming a factor. On November 28th 1847 Richard Iles wrote to Bishop Ullathorne stating that the state of the Mission at Horcott was now in a precarious situation and that Mass had not been celebrated there since 1st Sunday of October. Two missionaries were appointed who came and went during 1848 and things were clearly going from bad to worse so Richard Iles wrote another letter, dated 31st December 1848, to the new Vicar-Apostolic, Bishop Hendren:

“Mr Kelly having left this Mission is it your intention to appoint another? The reason for asking is that attached to the chapel is nearly an acre of garden land unoccupied, for which I have had several applications – a Catholic close by whose husband would be glad to occupy it. I fear

Lord de Mauley will cease his £40 unless an appointment is made, especially as Mr Kelly left so suddenly without notice."

Writing again on 7th March 1849 Iles informed Bishop Hendren that he has heard that the mission would not be served for sometime and that if the Bishop agreed Father Mitchell would make over the property to any religious order who would be prepared to staff it. If nothing were done the only alternative would be to sell the property and shut up the mission.

On 12th November 1849 Iles wrote again to Bishop Hendren saying that the time for Lord de Mauley's quarterly payment of £10 had passed. As there had been no Mass since August, Lord de Mauley does not consider himself bound to pay towards the running of a Catholic mission at Horcott unless Mass was said there. Iles remarked:

"We are looking for a priest having understood from Fr Anselm that one was coming. The last Mass was on the second Sunday in August. I have considered moving but have been dissuaded by Fathers Anselm and Austin. If the mission is to be kept on, I lay myself at your Lordship's service."

On 30th December 1849 Richard Iles wrote to Fr Neve at Clifton saying that he had just heard that a farm near a Catholic chapel would soon be on the market. As there was no priest at Fairford he welcomed the opportunity to be able to go to Mass and to be able to take the children. He asked whether he should move. Having discussed this with Fr Austin and Fr Anselm (of St Vincent) they had advised him to stay and he had acted on their advice. Now he wanted to know whether the Bishop thought he ought to stay for the sake of the Mission.

He wrote again on 7th January 1850 that he had given up all idea of leaving the neighbourhood at present and he added "You thought it a mistake to build a chapel" and he went on to explain the background to its erection. Lord de Mauley had for several years given £40 per annum to the Hatherop Mission as a result of a promise made to his late Catholic wife. There was no priest there, but Reverend John Mitchell had said Mass monthly in a house near there. Richard Iles had bought land at Fairford where the chapel was built, the principal cost given by Lord de Mauley. He added:

"We have had several converts, de Mauley still gives £40 per annum until last August when there has been no body to receive it. If you think more success and good be done by establishing a mission in Cirencester or Swindon I will support this. I think Lord de Mauley would too provided there is regular Mass at Fairford."

In 1850 the Passionists left Woodchester and the Reverend William Godwin was appointed as Missioner at Horcott. Eleven days after his last letter Iles wrote to Bishop Hendren saying that he will offer the next priest the best accommodation his house would afford. For a time things became more settled at Horcott with a resident priest serving the mission until 1855 but resources were now needed to provide for the Catholics of Swindon and Cirencester.

In the autumn of 1857 Iles offered to loan money for land for a chapel at Swindon but Bishop Clifford of the new Diocese of Clifton, made it clear that he has not got the money to commence building. On 19th June 1857 Reverend John Clarke informed the Bishop that he had

taken a house at Swindon but in March 1858 he left Swindon and was succeeded by Reverend James Clark. In May 1858 the latter was able to inform the Bishop that he had already celebrated Mass in Mr Iles private chapel at Reevey. In the event a school room was built at Swindon for the cost of £490 which was opened in August 1862.

On 18th February 1863, another missionary, Fr Peter Seddon, wrote to Bishop Clifford saying that he proposed to reside at Fairford and to say Mass every Sunday at both Missions – one Sunday an early Mass at Fairford and the next at Cirencester, and vice versa . When he said early Mass at Fairford Mr Iles (who had written to him to say that he would do all that he could to assist him) would drive him over to Cirencester to say the second one. When he had to say first Mass at Cirencester he would be obliged to go on Saturday evening, and Mr Iles had said he would send his conveyance for him to drive him back to Fairford to say the second Mass there. He had made enquiries with Mrs Powell, Mrs Iles' sister, as to whether, in the event of the Bishop allowing him to reside at Fairford, she could accommodate him and she had written back to say that she could.

On 3rd March Fr Seddon again wrote from Fairford saying that he was settled in his new quarters and that he found this arrangement far more convenient than being in Swindon. *"The person with whom I am lodging is, as I think I mentioned to Your Lordship, a widow lady, a sister of Mrs Iles... Mrs Powell."*

Austin Iles later wrote in his 'Random Recollections' of Seddon that 'he was a young energetic priest and made several converts' In 1897 Austin Iles supplied further details:

"The Reverend Peter Seddon built the Presbytery borrowing £250 from Mrs Mary Powell, with interest to be paid during the lives of the late Mrs Mary Powell and her daughter, Annie Exton Powell, but on the death of the survivor, the money should fall to the Mission. I am not sure whether £250 covered the whole cost of the Presbytery but I think so.

The Reverend Peter Seddon built the school. At the time young very wealthy Spanish gentleman came to study at the College and used to stay a day or so with Mr Seddon from Saturday to Monday, spending Sunday at the Presbytery. I believe from him came money to build the school.

I believe that Mr Seddon also got money from him to intend to build a church at Cirencester... I know nothing of two Spanish gentlemen giving money for Cirencester and I do not think it correct. A French or Spanish gentleman came some time later, went to Mrs Powell at Fairford and went to study Agriculture with Joseph Powell as guide, but I never heard of him giving money to Cirencester."

In the Diocesan Archives there is an undated Account of Receipts and Expenses for the Presbytery at Fairford. £250 was received from Mrs Powell and £62 from the sale of land. Mary Powell received her annual interest of £11.10.0d until she died. According to Austin Iles his father, Richard Iles, contributed £25 a year to the Mission, 'principally to keep the school going'.

Richard and Dorothy had nine children most of whom are buried at Horcott. The eldest was Richard Albert Iles who was baptised on 6th September 1846 by Father Augustine of the Mother of God, the Passionist Missioner from Northfields, Nailsworth. This Richard Iles the Younger who died at Scorton in 1920 was buried at St Thomas's. The second son was John Albert (1849-1857). The other Iles children were - Fr Daniel Iles (1856-1912), Anne (1850-1853), Francis (1858-1886), Dorothy (1861-1925) and Augustine Thomas (1864-1947). Dorothy married George Hill of Horcott in 1890 and they had a child Mary who married Leonard Perry and had a daughter, Muriel. As their dates reveal, at least three of the Iles children predeceased their parents.

Their son, Austin Iles, adds an interesting detail about the family in his 'Random Recollections':

'As our family has always lived more than 3 miles from the church, my father built a stable in the corner of the Presbytery garden. It was taken down and rebuilt nearer to the house for the convenience of Fr. Seddon as he also had a horse. Our family have always claimed the right to the exclusive use of this stable.'

Richard and Dorothy Iles would seem to have retired to Horcott and in 1888 she gave £200 to be invested for the benefit of the Mission. She died on 14th February 1895, aged seventy-five years, and she was buried in the churchyard of St Thomas's Church. Her husband, Richard made his will on 12th October 1896 in which he described himself as a Gentleman of Horcott. In 1897 he was a Justice of the Peace. He died on 23rd November 1902 aged eighty-four years, and was laid to rest with his wife and family in St Thomas's churchyard. In his will he left £400 to the Bishop of Clifton for the benefit of the Horcott Mission, to his son Austin a watch and an illuminated address presented to mark his time as Vice-Chairman and Chairman of the Cirencester Board of Guardians together with an address and silver inkstand presented by the parishioners of Kempsford. To his daughter Dorothy he left family plate together with a presentation fish knife and fork. The rest of his presentation plate was left between Austin and Dorothy equally. Probate was granted on 12th January 1903 and his executors were his sons Austin and Daniel Iles.

On 27th March 1912 Austin Iles wrote to the Bishop saying that he would like to put stained glass in the Sanctuary of St Thomas's Church in memory of his parents. In the event the dedication was extended to include his brothers, Fr Daniel Iles and Francis Iles and his sister, Susan Iles. The window contains a lozenge shaped medallion depicting the Lamb breaking the seven seals of the book in the Apocalypse. The 'Agnus Dei', or Lamb of God, with his vexillum or bannered cross, held in his uplifted foot, is seated upon 'a book, written within and without, sealed with seven seals' (Apocalypse 5.1).

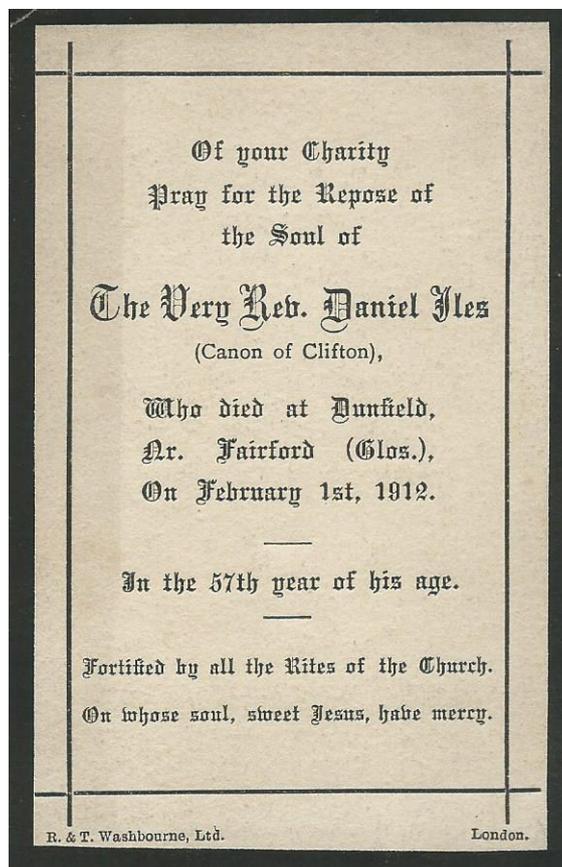


Lozenge showing St Augustine preaching to King Ethelbert in the Iles window

Canon Daniel Iles (1855-1912) studied at Prior Park and Oscott before his ordination in 1881. At the time of his mother's death in 1895, Canon Iles assisted for a short while at Horcott. During the 1890's he was sent as assistant curate to Canon John Mitchell during his declining years as Rector of St George's Taunton and in 1899 he succeeded Canon Mitchell at Taunton but occupied that post for a regrettably short period before being called for work at Prior Park College in 1902. On that occasion he was presented with a roll top desk from members of St George's Congregation, Taunton, "as a souvenir of affectionate regard on leaving Taunton – August 1902". This desk is still in the Rectory at Taunton. On February 1st 1912 Canon Iles died at his brother's home at Dunfield and was buried at St Thomas's. The bishop and many other clergy attended the funeral.



Canon Daniel Iles

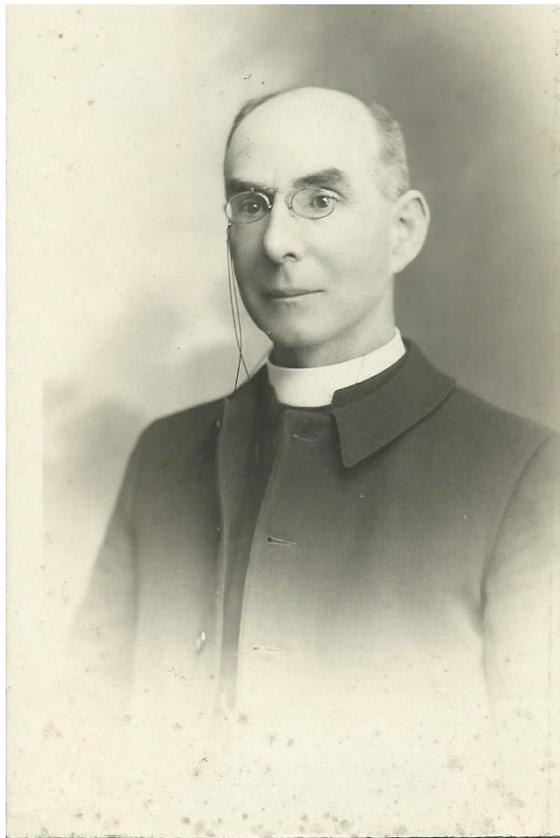


An 'In Memoriam' was produced drawing from the panegyric given by Dr Delany of Westbury-on-Trym and also from material supplied by a colleague at Oscott where he had obviously been much loved. Austin Iles also received a letter of condolence from Cardinal Bourne who had been a fellow student with Canon Iles at Louvain.

Austin Iles, his brother, wrote of him in his 'Random Recollections':

'Unfortunately Canon Crook failed in health during the summer of 1893 and the Mission was served by Fr. Daniel Iles (afterwards Canon) from Prior Park till the following June, when Dr. Edgar English came as resident priest and he was here until the early part of 1910, nearly 16 years.'

His youngest brother, Augustine Thomas Iles (1864-1947), was farming at Reevey until 1897 but by 1910 Reevey seems to have been sold and Austin was described as the Farm Bailiff to John Faulkner J.P. of Dunfield House. Austin Iles married Mary Agnes Chard (1862-1921) the daughter of Francis and Mary Josephine Chard. Austin's father-in-law, Francis Chard, was Innkeeper of the Bull in Fairford from the late 1870's until his death in 1892 when he left an estate valued at over £1000.



Canon Joseph Bernard Chard



Canon Joseph Bernard Chard

The eldest son of Francis Chard was Canon Provost Joseph Bernard Chard (1858-1935) who was born in Shepton Mallet and went on to become Rector of St Peter's Parish in Gloucester. He is buried alongside other members of the Chard family in the churchyard at St Thomas's. He left much of his property to his brother, Edward James Chard, the Clifton Chapter and St Peter's Church in Gloucester. He also left £25 and his books and pictures to his nephew, Monsignor Richard Iles. Inside the entrance to St Peter's Church in Gloucester is the parish's memorial to Canon Chard. It is a Holy Water Stoup beautifully executed in marble and alabaster and is the work of Messrs. Boulton of Cheltenham. In the window recess near the stoup is a marble slab with the inscription: *"This stoup was erected by grateful parishioners to the memory of V. Rev. Canon Chard, for forty years their beloved priest, 1894-1934."* The 1948 edition of the 'Story of St Peter's Catholic Church, Gloucester' adds, *"This is not Canon Chard's only memorial. He lives in the hearts of his faithful parishioners, and Mass will be offered for him in perpetuity in the Church he loved so well."*

Returning to Canon Chard's brother-in-law, Austin Iles, he had seven children but Edith did not survive childhood. The photograph of the family, which was recently sent by Betty Williams, shows Austin and Mary Agnes Iles, together with their children, Dorothy, John, Mary, Richard, Margaret and Daniel and the children's uncle, Canon Daniel Iles. Betty wrote:

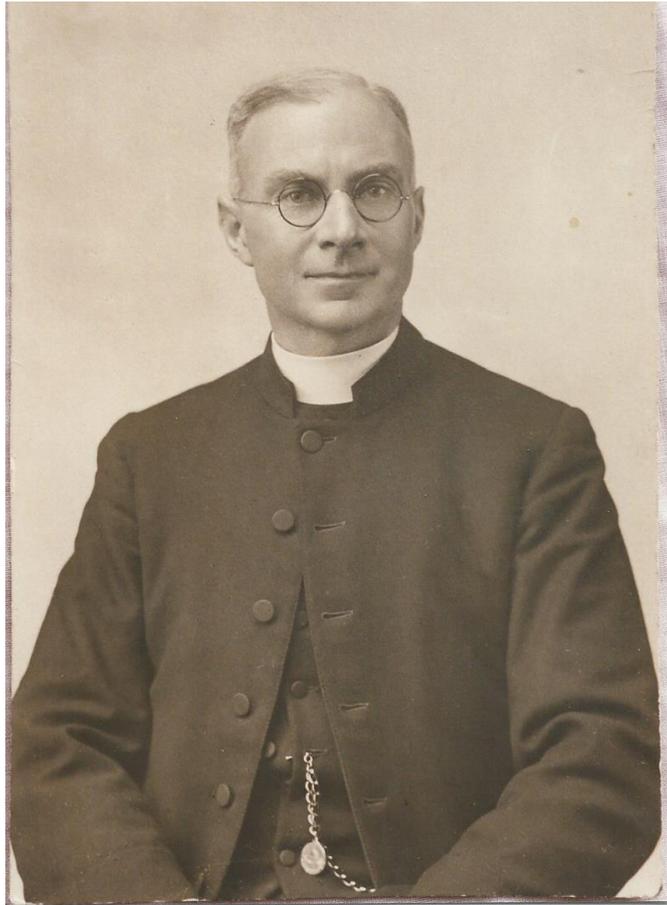
"...this is the only family group as John was killed in 1917. The photo must have been taken in 1911 as Great Uncle Daniel died early in 1912, I would date it as August as Uncle Dick was home from Rome and students in those days did not get home very often."



Back row: Dorothy, John, Mary, Richard, Margaret Iles. Front row: Dan, Augustine, Mary, Daniel Iles

Mary Agnes Iles died at their home at Dunfield on 10th July 1921, aged fifty-nine years. She was survived by her husband, Austin, who continued to live at Dunfield until his own death on 21st July 1947, aged eighty-three years. Both he and his wife are buried in St Thomas's churchyard.

The eldest son of Austin and Mary Agnes Iles was Monsignor Canon Provost Richard Iles (1890-1974) who followed his uncle Daniel as Rector of St George's Taunton. He was born in Fairford and was ordained in November 1913 after studying at the English College in Rome. He served as assistant priest at the Pro-Cathedral, Clifton, and as parish priest at Bridgwater before being appointed in 1927 as Rector of St George's Taunton where he served for forty years. He is still remembered with great affection in Taunton and the Rectory contains a clock presented by the boarders of St Brendan's College, Bristol as a "slight token of gratitude and affectionate esteem" and a portrait commissioned in 1963 to mark his Golden Jubilee of Priesthood. Monsignor Iles is buried at Taunton. During his time at Taunton he was responsible for the erection of the Church of St Teresa of Lisieux which was opened in 1959 and his memorial in St George's Church is a fine set of stations of the cross carved by Tom Preater. A brief volume of his memoirs has also been published.



Monsignor Richard Iles





Monsignor Richard Iles

Richard Iles.
Collegio Inglese
Roma.
ex dono
Mother Foundress of the
"Little Company of Mary."

Inscription in a book belonging to Monsignor Richard Iles

Gift from parish after Papal honour

THE Right Rev. Mgr. Canon R. A. Iles, rector of St. George's, Taunton, received a signal mark of esteem and appreciation on Sunday evening, when the Bishop of Clifton (the Right Rev. Dr. Rudderham) handed him a cheque for £180, subscribed by Catholics of his parish in grateful recognition of the honour conferred upon him recently — that of being appointed a Domestic Prelate to Pope Pius XII.



Mgr. Canon Iles accepting the parochial cheque from the Bishop, Dr. J. Rudderham. On the left of the picture is Canon Davoy.

The Bishop made a special visit to Taunton to preside over the presentation ceremony, which took place before a large gathering at St. George's Hall, shortly after Pontifical Benediction had been given in the church. Clergy present included the Right Rev. Provost Davey; Father Hayes, assistant priest of St. George's; Father Anderson, of Wiveliscombe, and Father Collins, Wellington. A most welcome guest from Fairford, Glos., was Miss Iles, sister of Canon Iles.

"One of the things that became abundantly clear to me before I had been Bishop very long (said Dr. Rudderham) was that something would have to be done to mark the outstanding merits of your parish priest. When I took over charge of the diocese from Canon Iles I could realise the hard work and ability he had put into his office as Vicar Capitular. There were constant references made by priests in the diocese to the work he had done, and he was spoken of constantly in terms of affection and loyalty. Thus it became my privilege to bring his merits to the notice of our Holy Father the Pope."

Chief spokesman for the parishioners of St. George's was Mr. R. F. Trevett, chairman of the Taunton Catholic Association, which body, representing all the parish organisations, had made itself responsible for organising the presentation. After remarking that, like Canon Iles, he came to Taunton 23 years ago, Mr. Trevett reviewed the Canon's career from his schooldays at Prior Park, his later studies at the English College, Rome, his ordination and first post as curate at Clifton, to his appointment as parish priest at Bridgwater and his coming to Taunton (in 1927). It was soon afterwards that he was made a Canon of the Clifton Chapter, and in 1948 when the vacancy in the See of Clifton occurred, the Canon was called upon to serve as Vicar Capitular.

An example

"Above all things his love of the Church, his devotion to the

Church's interests and to the duties incumbent upon a priest have deeply impressed us (said Mr. Trevett), and have been a continuous example to us of the way we ought to follow in our state of life."

Since he came to Taunton Mass centres had been established at Wellington and Wiveliscombe, St. George's Parish Hall had been erected and he had effected a number of improvements in the church.

In thanking the subscribers for their generous response to the presentation committee's appeal, Mr. Trevett voiced the hope that with the money subscribed Canon Iles would be able to equip himself with the Monsignorial robes he was now entitled to wear on ceremonial occasions.

Responding, after receiving the cheque from the Bishop's hands, Mgr. Canon Iles recalled that this was the second time they had made him a generous present—the first having been on his sacerdotal silver jubilee 12 years ago. Their kindness and generosity were a great comfort and encouragement to him. After all, a priest could not do much without the co-operation of his people, and it was much to their credit that their parish priest had been honoured as he had been. Letters of good wishes and congratulation had been rather overwhelming; he had answered at least a hundred. They had come from friends and priests inside and outside the diocese, and some from non-Catholic friends and clergy of other churches, whose kind messages he sincerely appreciated. He was very grateful to his Lordship the Bishop for coming down on that happy occasion, and for the part he had taken in the bestowal of the honour received from the Holy Father.

"Truly blessed"

When he first came to Taunton he laboured there alone for four years. Then the time came when they could have a second priest, and facilities for starting a

church at Wellington. During the war he had eight tabernacles, four communities of nuns, and three priests working under him, and a community of religious from France. Truly he had been blessed in coming to St. George's—a church in which one could lift one's head and feel proud to show to any visitor—and he was happy to have there in Taunton his old friend, Canon Davey, as chaplain of the Franciscan Convent.

After referring with gratitude to the good help he had had from his curates, and particularly mentioning Father Hayes, Canon Iles concluded: "With these few words, my dear people, I thank you very much indeed for your generous gift, which I am happy to accept as a token of your goodwill and appreciation."

Thanks to the Bishop for presiding were expressed by Mr. F. Revell, and his Lordship briefly replied, giving his blessing to all present. Being the feast of St. Gregory the Great and the anniversary of the Coronation of Pope Pius XII, the audience stood and joined heartily in singing "God bless our Pope."

There was a short musical programme before the presentation, in which viola and violin solos were played by Mrs. C. Kynaston, of Dulverton, songs rendered by Mr. Edgar Bowker and Miss Tilley Woodcock, a dance by Maureen Hex, and pianoforte solo by Mr. Trevett. Miss M. Krauss and Mr. Trevett were the accompanists. The decoration of the stage with many choice flowering plants was much admired, the plants having been kindly loaned through the Taunton Gardeners' Association and by Mr. W. G. Elsmore. Mr. Bowker was responsible for the decoration and preparation of the hall. The presentation sub-committee comprised Mr. Trevett (chairman), Father Hayes, Mrs. Whelan and Messrs. L. Southwood and E. G. Bowker (hon. treasurers).

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Extracts from 'Memoirs of Monsignor Provost Iles:

'I was born in 1890, during the reign of Bishop Clifford, who was a friend of the family. He had played an important part in the 1st Vatican Council... He was succeeded by Bishop Brownlow, a convert from the Church of England. He, together with Mgr. Northcote, produced a learned publication on the Roman Catacombs, known as "Roma Sotterania". The only time I saw him was on the occasion of his visit to the Church of St Thomas of Canterbury at Horcott, where I was baptised by a priest known in more recent times as Canon Lonergan of Frome. He was renowned for his collection of books, which appeared as soon as you opened his Presbytery door.'

'When the college (Prior Park) was closed in 1904, the problem facing many parents was to find another suitable school. As the seeds of my priestly vocation had been sown at Prior Park, it might be assumed that my uncle, Canon Iles, who was Professor at Oscott Seminary, advised my father to send me to Cotton College, where many of the Priests of Birmingham Diocese received their early training for the Priesthood.'

'During my life I have seen the reign of five Bishops. Bishop Clifford I never saw, although his name was frequently mentioned in family circles. Bishop Brownlow I remember coming to Horcott Church for Confirmation. It is of interest to acknowledge that three Priests came from the Parish of Fairford in my lifetime, and all were members of the Clifton Chapter, Canons Chard, Iles and myself.'

His brother John Francis Iles (1892-1917) lost his life in the First World War. There is a window in St Thomas's Church depicting St John the Evangelist, holding his Gospel in his left hand and a chalice in his right hand, which is in memory of John Francis Iles who was killed in France on 2nd June 1917, aged 24. This window complements the one opposite that shows a figure the Blessed Virgin Mary and this is in memory of John Chard, who died in 1918.

The youngest of the three brothers was Daniel Bernard Iles (1904-) who emigrated to New South Wales and married Miriam Broes and they had three children. He died in Sydney during the 1990's. The sisters of Richard, John and Daniel were Mary Agnes Briscoe (1894-1986) who married Francis Edward Briscoe in 1921 and whose daughter is Betty Williams. Margaret Cecilia Iles (1897-1962) who lived in what is now known as Vane House at Horcott and she supported St Thomas's Parish up until her death in 1962. Her garden was used for parish fetes and many today in Fairford fondly remember her. Dorothy Josephine Iles was born in 1900 and entered the Franciscan Convent at Taunton in 1924, where she died in 1951. The youngest, Edith Iles, was born and baptised on 1st January 1903 at St Thomas's.

In 1926 their father, Austin Iles, wrote to Father Long that Fr Staunton had asked him to write out for him all that he knew about the history of the Fairford mission. He had copied out all that he knew from memory and from old letters. He wanted Father Long to read it through and he added:

"I could say a good deal more in excuse for the mission not being in a flourishing state, as I remember, three Priests were sent away for misconduct and another went off with a barmaid."

In spite of the many difficulties and frustrations the Iles Family faced as founders of this small rural mission they laid the foundations for the present vibrant parish. Their generous financial contributions and sacrificial support has firmly established and endowed the Church of St Thomas of Canterbury and this is certainly not forgotten by the present generation of worshippers. May they rest in peace.

Richard Barton

CARVINGS BLESSED



Fourteen carvings of the Stations of the Cross, done in sycamore by Mr Tom Preater, a Taunton craftsman, were unveiled and blessed on Tuesday in St George's Catholic church, where they are dedicated to Canon Richard Iles, who was rector there for 40 years. The ceremony was conducted by the Bishop of Clifton, the Rt Rev Mervyn Alexander, seen here (right) with Father Patrick Lynch, the parish priest, and Mr Preater, beside the first carving.



Iles Family Graves

Sources:

Thank you to Betty Williams, Julia Arkell, Ann and David Ferris, Rev. J.A. Harding, for their help with background research. The chief sources are the Archives of the Diocese of Clifton, the Registers of St Thomas's Church at Horcott, typed notes of the late Miss Celia Willant, Trade Directories, the 1851 Census, Wills, 'Memoirs of Monsignor Provost Iles' (1969) and 'Notes on the Families of Iles and Bloxsome' which was published by H.E.B. in 1941 (Gloucestershire Archives has a copy).

From Lisa Andrews who is a great great great granddaughter of Susannah Iles and Thomas Arkell of Kempford:

'I came across your article by chance and can see that I have some shared family history with some of the people mentioned. It was quite exciting to read someone else's narrative of the family and realize that nearly all of the information agrees with my own. I am a great great great granddaughter of Susannah Iles and Thomas Arkell of Kempford. I have always looked at the Arkell side of my family and know that I am descended from the Iles family too and that there was a lot of intermarrying.

From what I can see, Dorothy Arkell who married R A Iles was my GG grandmother's sister. I particularly like the photos of Richard Albert Iles and Dorothy Iles on the occasion of their golden wedding anniversary in 1893. I have a photo of each of them when much younger and I attach them for reference. I also have quite a few unidentified photos of family members in a Carte de Visite photo album. I would love to be put in touch with anyone who may be able to help me identify the people in the album. About half of them have the names written on the back and that was a real boon to find that when I carefully removed the photos.

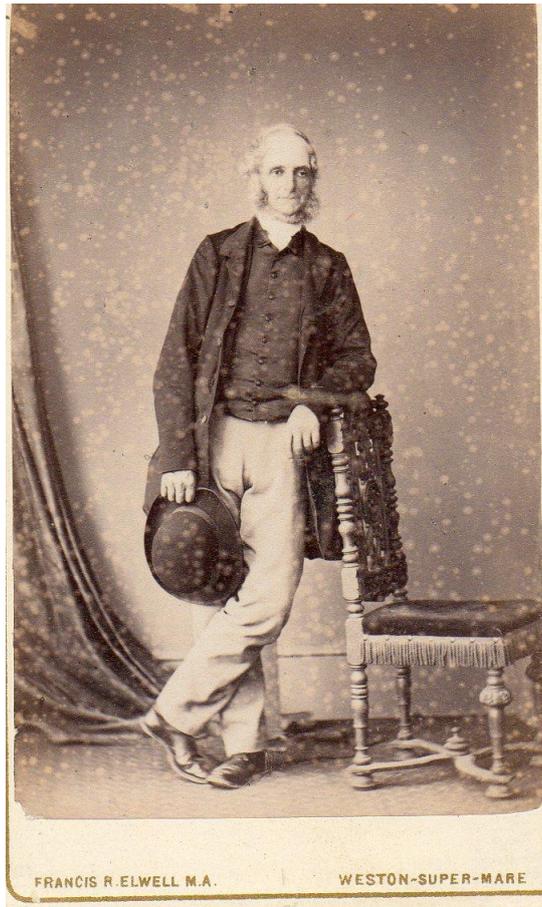
I also have some of my grandmother's letters (Mabel Elizabeth Lawrence) and have an annotation of one of the letters below that mentions Austin Iles. Now thanks to your article I can date the letter to his wedding in 1889. My grandmother was living at Longborough Manor and her sister at Brockworth Court, Brockworth. It seems that the families were in close contact with one another at that time, something that is all too rare in modern life. I copy below what I have written about this letter.

"Weather superb. Auntie, Mrs Sabin & Mollie are gone to Addlestrop to see Mrs Stowe.

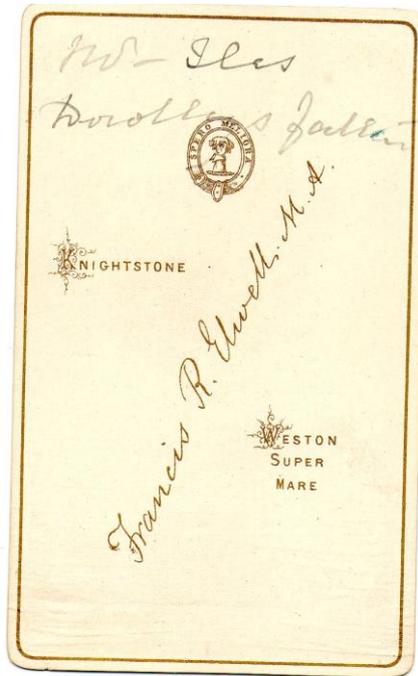
I suppose Mary is going to Stow to school weekly boarder, but it is not quite settled.

Write again & let me know how you get on. I scribble this anyhow.

Austin Iles was married Saturday & his card came this morn something quite new."

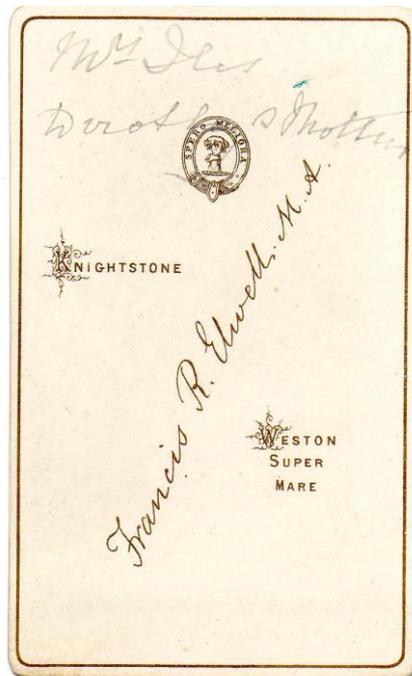


Richard Iles





Dorothy Iles nee Arkell





St Thomas's Horcott



Congregation at St Thomas's Horcott