

## Book Review

**Early Victorian Squarson: The Diaries of William Cotton Risley** [Part One], **Vicar of Deddington 1835-1848**, extracts selected by Geoffrey Smedley-Stevenson, 42 + 276pp., 2 maps of Deddington and environs, 5 illustrations, indexes, A5, hard-bound and jacketed. Banbury Historical Society vol. 29 [ISBN 978 0 900129 27 8] in association with Robert Boyd Publications [ISBN 978 1 899536 84 9], 2007. £15.00 + £3.00 p&p from B.H.S., c/o Banbury Museum. Free to subscribers.

These meticulously edited extracts from the diaries of William Cotton Risley provide fascinating insights into life in early Victorian England. They are a welcome addition to the published diaries of other Anglican clergymen, stretching from James Woodforde in the eighteenth century to Francis Kilvert in the 1870s. The present work represents only the first section of the diaries to be transcribed; a second volume, covering the period to 1869, is to follow.

The Introduction provides a useful and interesting outline of the major events in Risley's own life as well as in the lives of his immediate family and some of his wider social circle. His activities ranged from his clerical duties as vicar of Deddington to his role as a well-to-do landowner, a magistrate, a dispenser of charity to his poorer parishioners, and a committed supporter of the Conservative party. Also covered are his domestic concerns, particularly his relations with his servants. Diary entries show that these were sometimes fraught, as on 10 February 1843: "Our footman gave me notice to quit, not liking the confinement of his place. I had spoken to him however about the quantity of Beer that had been drank since he had been here". Of an earlier holder of the post, Risley noted when the man departed on 25 July 1839, after about five months service: "a good riddance [in] every way".

The Introduction is followed by an extensive *Dramatis Personae* to remind the reader of the identity of the leading characters mentioned in the diaries, and by pedigrees of the families of Risley himself and of his wife, Susan. A very detailed index adds to the value of the book.

Perhaps due to careful editing, Risley's diary entries are usually succinct and to the point. They sometimes indicate his prickly personality and his readiness to take offence. This was true of his relations with one of