

Between 1857, after Thomas Sherwood retired due to ill health and 1861 when Richard Handcock arrived, St Philip and St James in theory had two incumbents, although there is no evidence that the second ever took up the position.

Henry Pruen was the first. Like Sherwood he was not a young man when he arrived, and had the benefit of family money to make up for the lack of income from the benefice.

He was born in Cheltenham in 1802 the younger son of Richard, a solicitor and member of a prominent Cheltenham family who owned substantial property interests in the area. He attended Oriel College, Oxford from 1821, attaining his BA in 1825 and his MA in 1833. He was tutored at Oriel by the prominent theologian John Keble. In 1826 Pruen was ordained priest in Gloucester Cathedral by Christopher Bethell, the Bishop of Bangor.

Pruen's first post was as stipendiary curate at Buckland Church, Broadway, Worcestershire. He followed this in 1828 by being appointed rector of Child's Wickham, (now Childswickham) also in Worcestershire.

In 1829 he married Mary Pruen, the eldest daughter of Rev William Ashmead Pruen of Fernhill, Worcestershire, who at that time was curate of Fladbury, and between 1831 and at least 1836 was the stipendiary curate of Willersley, Gloucestershire. In 1836 his first daughter was born (Margaret). He went on to have a son and two other daughters. From Willersley he went to be the curate of St Nicholas, Ashchurch – in the 1841 census he was recorded as living in the Rectory House, Ashchurch, Tewkesbury.

Sometime in the 1840s he was appointed curate of St James Church, Cheltenham (now a Zizzi restaurant), and was there at the time of the 1851 census. Built in the 1820s, this church closed as a place of worship in 1976.

While at St James he served under Rev Francis Gilby. A friend of Pruen's later remembered that he was 'very much gratified, as I am sure were all the congregation, with the simple, devout and unostentatious manner in which Mr Pruen discharged his duties.' He resigned his curacy just before Gilby's retirement in 1857 and was, according to his friend, 'promoted' to the 'very small living of Hucclecote near Gloucester.' It is also reported elsewhere that his predecessor at Hucclecote, Sherwood, occasionally visited him during his time at Hucclecote, and that although trained by Keble, Pruen while at Hucclecote showed no leanings to the school of thought (high church) favoured by Keble, who in 1833, with others, launched the Oxford Movement. This sought to defend the church's independence from state control and reclaim its "catholic" heritage.

However, after just a couple of years at St Philip and St James Pruen developed TB, and his health rapidly deteriorated. As his friend later reported, 'ill health, promoted if not induced by deficient drainage, for I believe a cesspool then ran under the foundation of the parsonage house, compelled Mr Pruen to leave after a short time, and he went to reside at Weston-Super-Mare...'

But around the same time as his resignation, in 1860, the stained-glass windows behind the altar at the east end of the church were installed at St Philip and St James. They were dedicated to the memory of Frances Bradshaw who had died on December 22 1856, in Chosen House, Hucclecote, the widow of Rev Joseph Bradshaw of Holbrooke, Derbyshire. They had married in 1805, and Joseph had died in post as Rector of Wilmslow in 1819. The windows were designed by William Warrington of London and represent 'the Crucifixion, Burial, and Resurrection, of our Saviour.' William Warrington, (1796–1869), was an English maker of stained-glass windows and his firm, operating from 1832 to 1875, was one of the earliest of the English Medieval revival, and served clients such as Norwich, Gloucester and Peterborough Cathedrals.

After Pruett resigned there was reportedly great difficulty in finding someone to take over, and letters were exchanged between him and the Bishop. Eventually a Rev Samuel Bond was appointed in June 1860, but there is no evidence that he ever took up the role.

Born in London in 1824 the son of a cabinet maker, after graduating from Cambridge Samuel Bond was ordained deacon at Lichfield in 1850, and priest at Peterborough in 1852.

Then followed a succession of church appointments. A curacy at Tickenhall, Derbyshire in 1851 was followed by another at Osgathorpe, Leicestershire in 1853. But within months he was appointed perpetual curate of Woolfardisworthy, Devon, and clearly was short of money since in December 1853 he was putting an advertisement in the local press there offering to teach 'three young gentlemen.' Whether this scheme ever materialised isn't known, but probably not for he resigned the living soon after and in October 1854 an Alexander Munro was appointed to succeed him.

The story didn't end there though, as in April 1855 a court case was brought against him by his successor 'to recover £8 8s, being the balance of dilapidations on the parsonage house and premises.'

It appears that on Bond's departure both he and Munro requested a Mr White to value the dilapidations on the parsonage house, as is usual with church property. Mr White did so and found the amount to be £28 8s. He sent a copy of his valuation to both the plaintiff and defendant, and that 'he knew his estimate to be very reasonable.' However, Bond disagreed and held back £8 8s. But Bond lost the case, the judge ruling that since both he and Munro had appointed Mr White 'it would require a strong case to satisfy him that they were not both bound by it, and that he should therefore give judgement for the plaintiff.'

Between leaving Woolfardisworthy and being appointed to Hucclecote in July 1860, Bond seems to have left parochial ministry. In 1858 he was Secretary to the Church of England Sunday School Institute. If he ever arrived at Hucclecote is doubtful, for Handcock was appointed to the role in July 1861, less than a year later, and other commentators don't mention Bond being in post at all. Maybe it was the cesspool under the parsonage that put him off. But fortunately for St Philip and St James, Richard Handcock was made of sterner stuff and stayed until 1868.