

Who was William Watts, 17th Century Vicar of the Parish Church of St Peter & St Paul, Dinton, Buckinghamshire?

By Sara V Mosher, 2025
Manitoba, Canada

His name, one among many, is inscribed on a tall, narrow wooden plaque, fixed to a grey stone wall in St Peter and St Paul Church, Dinton, Buckingham. The memorial reads "Parish of Dinton List of Vicars". There rests his name below that of John Breton who resigned as vicar a day before the appointment of William Watts in 1692. The name might go unnoticed but for a generation hundreds of years in the future seeking to find one William Watts.



I often wonder about names inscribed on cemetery stones or other memorials, and sometimes I have reason to research them. I was searching for a William Watts thought to have been "perhaps vicar of Dinton, Bucks, 1692," according to an Oxford University record. (1)

I believed my research was on the right track when a drive through the Manitoba prairie presented a scene that appeared to be a meaningful coincidence. I saw a church and excitedly jumped out of the car to take a photograph.



I worked with one clue, the university record, for some time before coming across George Lipscomb's "The history and antiquities of the county of Buckingham". The book records vicars of the Parish Church of St Peter & St Paul, Dinton, Buckinghamshire from 1218 to 1882, including William Watts, 1692. (2)

The vicar of Dinton was not the same William Watts I hoped to find. That William Watts, it turns out, was preacher at Wraxall, Somerset from 1687, serving there for more than 33 years, baptised in 1661 at St Lawrence, Cucklington, Somerset. My Moger family and the Watts family were long-time residents of Cucklington, with a population of just 350 parishioners, and undoubtedly known to each other.

In the meantime, I learned a little about William Watts, vicar of Dinton. He was appointed vicar 2 July 1692, on the presentation of the Crown. He was a native of Rutlandshire, (2) born about 1660, the year Charles II was restored to the English throne.

William was the probable son of James Watts, and was educated at Cambridge, as the following records show:(3)

Watts, William. Adm. sizar at Jesus, Mar. 9, 1677-8. Of Ridlington, Rutland. Probably s. of James (1645). Migrated to Clare, July 5, 1678. B.A. 1681-2. (3)

Watts, James. Adm. sizar (age 15) at Caius, Sept. 18, 1645. S. of Richard, R. of Wolvcrton, Warws. B. there. School, Warwick. Matric. 1645; Scholar, 1647-50; B.A. 1649-50; M.A. from Jesus, 1653. Fellow of Jesus, 1650-7. Incorp. at Oxford, 1654. R. of Ridlington, Rutland, c. 1655-84. One of these names licensed schoolmaster at Little Walsingham, Norfolk, 1662. Will proved (Norwich. Archd. C.) 1662-3. Probably father of William (1678). (Venn, i. 360; Al. Oxon.) (3)

William Watts was ordained by P. Thomas at Lincoln in 1684, died unmarried, and was buried at Dinton in 1705. (4)

Now, 365 years later, we remember him.

**Vicars of the Parish Church of St Peter & St Paul, Dinton,
Buckinghamshire**

Source: The Clergy Database. Parish (Church): Dinton

1218 Henry, Capellanus, presented to the Vicarage of Dynton in 1218, by the Abbess and Convent of Godstow.

---- **William**, died Vicar in 1269.

1269 - Robert, Capellanus, presented 11 Cal. Jan. 1269.

12_ - Roger, resigned in 1290, and was succeeded by

1290 - Alan de Kenelworth, on the presentation of the Convent of Godstow 2 June 1290.

___ - **Thomas Saunderson**, exchanged for a Benefice in the Diocese of Worcester, with

1385 - William Rawlinson, 5 Nov. 1385.

13_ - Robert Bassett, exchanged for the Rectory of Ardley, Co. Oxon, with

1389 - Robert Kylton, 29 Sept. 1389.

1395 - John Pycot, presented 7 July 1395.

1417 - Robert More was Vicar in 1417.

1422 - William Uske, or Ufke, 1422, died in 1463.

1463 - Thomas Smith, LL.B., presented 6 Jan. 1463: and at his death,

1482 - Thomas Fymcot, A.M., was presented 24 July 1482.

14_ - Nicholas Braceburgh, resigned in 1498.

1498 - Seth Woodcock, presented 15 May 1498: died in 1516, and was succeeded by

1516 - Edmund Hord, or Flood, LL.D., 26 Nov. 1516; and on his resignation,

1520 - Robert More, A.M., was presented 25 August 1520, and died in 1531.

1531 - Morgan Jones, A.M., instituted 7 Mar. 1531, on the presentation of the Convent of Godstowe. He was deprived in 1553; and dying in 1558, ordered his body to be buried in the Church here.

1540 - Rychardum Clerke

1553 - William Reynolds, presented by Queen Mary 1553.

1557 - Edward Alston, presented by the Queen in 1557. He resigned, and

1561 - Richard Clark was presented by Queen Elizabeth 19 Oct. 1561. He died and was buried here 7 Nov. 1569.

1569 - Edward Pulton, presented in 1569 by Richard Shrimpton. He died

in 1610.

1610 - Thomas Carter, A.M., presented 31 July 1610, and died in London in 1646, having been the Author of "Prayer's Prevalence for Israel's Safety," declared in a Sermon preached in St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, before the Honourable House of Commons, at the late solemn Fast, 28 June 1643, published by order of that House: Lond. small 4to, 1643, pp. 38; with an Address or Dedication to the House, consisting of two pages. He was one of the Assembly of Divines appointed by Parliament, his name being introduced into the Bill with others nominated by the Lord's 26 May 1642, in addition to the persons first appointed, 1 July 1642.

1646 - John Shirley, succeeded in 1646. He was returned in 1650 " a constant Reader," and the living worth 10/. per ann. After his ejection, in 1661 or 1662, he retired to Braintree, in Essex, where he died a non-conformist.

1662 - Richard Strickland, inst. 30 Sept. 1662, on the presentation of the Crown. He was a native of Yorkshire, went first into Ireland, but returning, kept a school at Amersham: afterwards removed to Magdalen College, Oxon, of which Society he was Fellow. He lived several years, in Cromwell's Usurpation, at Cuddington. He died in 1685, and was buried here.

1685 - John Breton, inst. 16 April 1685, on the presentation of the Crown. He quitted this Vicarage for preferment in Lincolnshire; and was succeeded by

1692 - William Watts, inst. 2 July 1692, on the presentation of the Crown. He was a native of Rutlandshire, educated at Cambridge, died unmarried, and was buried here 26 Sept. 1705.

1705 - Benjamin Gatton, hist. 18 Jan. 1705: was the son of a citizen of London, and brought up as a Dissenter; but afterwards conforming to the Establishment, with the consent of his parents, entering into Orders, was first presented to Stone Vicarage, and was consulted by Browne Willis whilst engaged in making those Collections which have been principally embodied in this History; and wrote a long and elaborate account of some of his predecessors and their favourites, in a letter from Dinton 31 Mar. 1725, from which several extracts have been made. On his death,

1736 - John Lovell, was presented by the King, and inducted 10 March 1736; and was succeeded by

1773 - John Cooke, A.M., presented by King Geo. III, and inducted 11 Oct.

1773, on the death of the last incumbent, not named. He was of Trinity Coll. Camb. A.B. 1761, A.M. 1764: also, Chaplain to Greenwich Hospital, and one of the Official Directors. He, with his Colleague, the Rev. John Maule, published in 1789 "An Historical Account of the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich" and was Editor of "A Voyage performed by the late Earl of Sandwich round the Mediterranean, written by his Lordship, with Memoirs of his Life,". He died at his apartments at Greenwich in 1823, aged 85, and was succeeded by

1823 - Thomas Broke Clarke, presented by King George IV, and inducted May 1823.

1833 - John Harrison

1865-1869 - George Appleby Cuxson

1879-1882 - George Patrick Keogh

SOURCES

1. 'Wasborow-Wesley', in *Alumni Oxonienses 1500-1714*, ed. Joseph Foster (Oxford, 1891), *British History Online* <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/alumni-oxon/1500-1714/pp1577-1600> [accessed 1 December 2025]
2. Lipscomb, G., Hayday & Co. (1847). *The history and antiquities of the county of Buckingham*. London: J. & W. Robins, HathiTrust <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015005886323&seq=158&q1=Watts&start=1> pp. 144-5 [accessed 1 December 2025]
3. *Alumni cantabrigienses; a biographical list of all known students, graduates and holders of office at the University of Cambridge, from the earliest times to 1900; by University of Cambridge; Venn, John, 1834-1923; Venn, J. A. (John Archibald), b. 1883*. Publication date 1922-54. Publisher Cambridge, University Press. Archive Org <https://archive.org/details/p1alumniantabri04univuoft/p1alumniantabri04univuoft/page/350/mode/2up> pp. 351-3 [accessed 1 December 2025]
4. Find My Past: Buckinghamshire Burial Index, Denham, Buckinghamshire, England : William Watts in 1705 – Note: The record for William Watts 26 Sep 1705 gives burial place as Denham, but there are many transcriptions substituting Denham for Dinton.

REFERENCES

The Clergy Database. Parish (Church): Dinton. **CCed Location ID: 7131 (enter ID in upper right corner)**. <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/locations/index.jsp>

Genuki : Vicars of the Parish Church of St Peter & St Paul, Dinton <https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/BKM/Dinton/vicars>

Buckinghamshire Record Society. *Publishing historical texts, calendars, and indexes*. <https://www.bucksrecsoc.org.uk/QS-VOLUMES/QS2.html>