

# VICARS OF ST ANDREW'S

## LOOKING BACK AT SOME OF ALAN'S PREDECESSORS

**The job of a vicar** includes evangelism with pastoral care, preaching, teaching and leading worship, although some of St Andrew's vicars failed to live up to aspects of their job....

We don't have a lot of information about **the lives of the earlier incumbents**, except that they were mainly Oxford or Cambridge graduates.

**During the period of the Commonwealth** (the time of Oliver Cromwell and his son Richard 1649-1660) Bishops were abolished and the Book of Common Prayer was banned. When King Charles II was restored in 1660 they were reintroduced and those clergy who disagreed were forced to leave their posts. Records show that *Jeremy Burwell 1650-60* was ejected from St Andrew's, presumably because he was unwilling to accept this change.

A past member of the congregation, Len Bowyer, reports on an article from Lambeth MSS, Miscellanies, 639 called "**Mr Ashton of St Andrew's Hertford is reported to be of scandalous life.**" In brief *Thomas Ashton 1660-75* went drinking in London with a local tanner, Mr Manning. Late at night they set off towards Hertford but Rev Ashton was so drunk that he kept falling off his horse until eventually it bolted for home without him. Mr Manning gave Rev Ashton his horse but he fell off again and that horse ran home too. When the tanner's family saw the horse returning without its owner they raised a search party. They found the tanner supporting the parson but no one wanted to help carry Rev Ashton home so they left him at a little house at the edge of the town. Rev Ashton was

meant to be preaching at the funeral of the Mayor of Hertford the following day, and apparently got up in the pulpit but could scarcely hold his head up.

**William Johnson 1707-23** was the first rector of three combined parishes, St Andrew's, St Nicholas, and St Mary's.

**Robert Cholmondeley 1755-1805** married an actress, Mary Woffington. Her sister, the famous 'Peg' Margaret Woffington, became David Garrick's leading lady.

The vestry minutes tell that Robert was regularly absent, leaving the church in the care of a curate, or no one at all! At one point, there is a complaint that there is no curate and a plea to Robert's son to ask his father to send one.

**James Hooke 1805-17** later became private chaplain to the Prince of Wales and is buried in Worcester Cathedral. His claim to local fame was that he grew a potato root which yielded 240 potatoes - he also produced giant apples!

**Bernard Gilpin** was appointed Rector in 1829 but he left in 1835 to establish an Independent Chapel in Port Vale. Some parishioners moved with him.

**Henry Smith Warleigh 1861-7** was Chaplain of Parkhurst Prison on the Isle of Wight before he came to St Andrew's. Later Rev Warleigh informed the congregation that he had considered swapping livings with someone else as his doctor had told him that his health would never be good while he lived in Hertford. He decided, however, not to go through with this and later set up a meeting on

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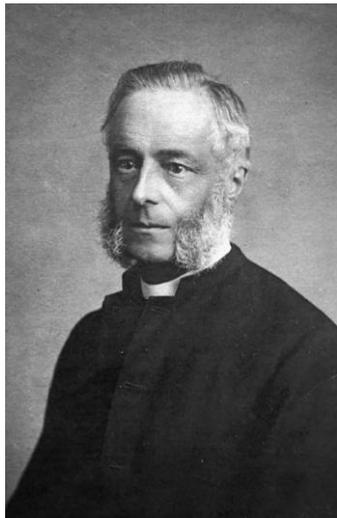
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18<sup>th</sup> January 1862 to discuss the building of a new church. An amateur Concert and Fancy Fair was held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1865 to raise funds for the rebuilding of the church.

**Charles N Williams 1867-76** was responsible for continuing to raise funds and overseeing the building of the new church.

**Woolmore Wigram 1876-97** was the fifth son of Money Wigram, a wealthy shipping magnate. He believed that everybody in the church community should be making contributions either of money, time or goods as they do nowadays. He continued to fundraise to improve the church and what it provided. His

son, Edgar Wigram, was responsible for the architectural drawing for the new pulpit, vestry and organ loft.



Canon Wigram was responsible for purchasing the cemetery on

North Road (because the graveyard was full), organising many improvements to the church, including new vestries, organ and new embroideries. He also had an infant school built in Hertingfordbury Road.

The chapel was built in the old organ chamber in memory of the Wigram family with the altar stone from St Mary the Great at Old Cross.

**Evan Killen Roberts 1897-1913** developed pastoral care in the parish.

**Nathaniel T Gardner 1913-1942** was appointed by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster instead of the candidates recommended by the churchwardens. He was a strict disciplinarian and insisted upon complete quietness and correct behaviour at all services but was loved for his gentle kindness and humanity. He rode about his parish on a bicycle in a cassock and visited his parishioners in their homes. Maisie Ditton remembered one harvest festival when the choir and vicar were processing round the church and a beetroot fell off a ledge and bounced off "Father Nat's" head. He totally ignored the incident but the choir and congregation were struggling to control their laughter.

Sele Farm was built when **Robert Henry Gill 1952-70** was vicar. He was interested in getting the children and young people engaged in the work and society of the church. He wrote *The Parish Church of Hertford, St. Andrew* an Illustrated history and guide book.

St Andrew's was not a good living for the next two vicars, **Richard Roper Wesson - 1970** who died after only three days as rector and **George Hilton Nicholson 1971** who died after only a few months, both of strokes.

Our present vicar, **Alan Stewart**, started his working life as a fashion designer and is a talented artist.

Thanks to **Jean Riddell** and **Peter Ruffles** for supplying a lot of this information.

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