

A list of Vicars of Bethersden and other notes found in the Parish Registers

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LIST OF VICARS OF BETHERSDEN

Surname	Forename	Qual.	Date (from)	Date (to)	Notes
Grisbrooke	Richard	A.M.	1598	1609	Died 1609, buried here
Hepborne	John	A.M.	1609	1612	Died 1612, buried here
Copley	John		1612	1616	Resigned 1616 for Pluckley, buried at Ashford
Arnogh	John	A.M.	1616	1622	Deprived 1622
Taylor	Richard	A.M.	1622		Resigned for High Halden
Thrift	John	A.B.	1626	1630	Died 1630, buried here and entered as minister of Godstone
Turner	William			1631	Died December 1631, buried here and entered as "Doctor of Physick & Vicar"
Abbot	Ralph	A.B.	1631		
Wood	?		1643		(altered from 1653)
Cole	Robert	A.M.	1661	1667	Died 1667, buried here and rector of Shadoxhurst. Also Rector of Smarden.
Bands	Richard	A.M.	1667		Also Rector of Smarden
Whiston	Jonathan	A.M.	1669	1697	Buried here died 1697. Also Rector of Smarden. His brother was vicar of Headcorn where he built the vicarage house, another Whiston was rector of Ringwood
Hughes	Henry	A.M.	1698	1704	Died 1704
Hughes	Simon	A.M.	1704	1711	Resigned 1711 became rector of Smarden and Died 1728. Son of (?)
Muriell	Thomas	A.B.	1711	1717	Died 1717, buried here (married Miss Hulse)
Hurdis	Thomas	L.L.B.	1717		Vicar of Ringmer, Sussex, where he (?)
Barham	James		1728	1734	Died 1734 buried here
Fetherston	John	A.M.	1734	1747	Died 1747
Dell	Henry		1747	1763	Died 1763 buried here
Jones	William	A.B.	1763	1765	Resigned 1765 for Pluckley afterwards of Nayland, formerly a Presbyterian minister of Canterbury
Kent	Henry	D.D.	1765	1780	Resigned 1780
Martin	David		1781	1786	Resigned 1786
Stretch	L.M.		1786		
Wilcox	Daniel		1787	1806	Also rector of Halden where he died in 1806 and is buried
Davies	?		1806	1808	
Greenall	Thomas		1808	1814	Died 1814, buried here. Master of Cranbrook School.

Keith	Patrick		1816	1823	Resigned 1823 for Ruckinge, also vicar of Stalisfield and author of a work on botany
Burnet	Richard	M.A.	1823	1857	Died 1857, buried here, formerly at Heligoland. Note in register (by Augustus Pearman?) see below.
Pearman	Augustus John	M.A.	1857	1866	Resigned for Rainham. See notes below
Cole	George	B.A.	1866		Exchanged for St Michaels, Toxteth Park, Liverpool
Clementson	William	M.A.	1869	1877	Resigned for Wymyngton

1857

Augustus John Pearman M.A. of Pembroke College Oxford curate of Ashford was collated to the vicarage of Bethersden on the twenty third day of February – by the Most Reverend John Bird Sumner Lord Archbishop of Canterbury. He was inducted on Saturday the twenty eighth day of February by his good friend the Reverend John Price Alcock vicar of Ashford in the presence of the Reverend Charles John Hughes D'Aeth curate of Bethersden and of Richard Waldo Burnet gentleman and on Sunday morning March 8th in time of divine service did read and declare his assent to the thirty nine articles of religion.

For the information of my successor I have recorded a few facts which may perhaps be read with interest when I shall be forgotten.

During the incumbency of my immediate predecessor the Rev'd Richard Burnet the present commodious school premises were erected and the interior of the parish church was handsomely renovated. These said works were accomplished by the energy of the Rev'd J. G. Darling curate of Bethersden.

The vicarage house built by Jonathan Whiston vicar in 1676 and in consequence of the small value of the benefice and the poverty of the incumbents long fallen into a dilapidated, I may say a ruinous condition. It was thoroughly repaired and beautified and the adjoining pasture drained, as well as a carriage-road formed at my expense in 1857-1858. During the progress of the repairs the workmen discovered under the floor of the hall some charred timber – the relics probably of the original wooden house burned in 1669.

The Bethersden marble chimney piece in the hall was brought by me from the "thorn" as I wished the vicarage house to possess a specimen of the productions of the parish.

There is still standing at Etchden an ancient chapel of wood. It is used as a stall for cattle but its original (character) may be clearly discerned.

At Wissenden House the residence of Mr Witherden the last of the family whose name occurs so frequently and for so many centuries in these registers is some very (? ous) tapestry representing scriptural subjects worked by some lady of the family.

I am informed that in a great storm which happened in June 1822 much of the old stained glass then in the windows of the church was destroyed. This storm I am told did so much damage in Bethersden and Woodchurch as to cause the ruin of some small farmers, and so severe were the holes inflicted on the (houses) by the hail stones that for three or four years they presented the appearance of having been struck with bullets. This I heard from a very intelligent farmer who remembered the circumstance.

Archbishop Jaxon augmented the vicarage with £30 per annum charged upon the rectorial seethes? It was further augmented in the incumbency of Mr Keith £400 of which the (?) is paid by the governors of Queen Annes (?). During the life of Mr Burnet 5 acres called the '(?) land'.

Purchased and added to the living in addition to this it has been (agreed) augmented with charges on property at Dover and Lambeth to the amount of £100 per annum.

A portion of the £400 stock mentioned above was allocated to be expended by me in erecting a stable – coach house on wood – lodge. A.J.P.

Copy of a letter sent to - Elgar. Vicarage, Bethersden 12 June 1850

Dear Sir

As I perceive you are about to erect some cottages upon a piece of ground belonging to this vicarage, I think it is but right that I should inform you that it is more than probable your title is very insecure, and that that it would be well for you to make matters safe before you proceed any further. Mr Wilcox a former vicar of this parish, I am aware allowed a house to be put up on the land, but I am confident he must have been ignorant of this fact – that before any land can be alienated from a living the consent of three parties is required by the law. viz: The bishop of the diocese, the patron of the living and the incumbent.

Richard Burnet, vicar

Mr J.A. Elgar

Elgar erected the houses which a serious nuisance to the vicarage were purchased by the bishop of Canterbury and taken down at my collation to the living, His Grace presented the land to me a vicar. It has been enclosed and levelled.

A.J. Pearson

Note at the end of the register 1847 – 1869

From May 4th to December 14th 1856 no baptisms are entered in the register although several were certainly solemnized during that period. I have been requested by the parents of one of the children so baptized to insert the following memorandum of the truth of which there can be no doubt.

George Turk son of George and Frances Gunner, baker of Ashford was born 16th May 1856 and baptized June 22nd 1856 in Bethersden Church by Charles John Hughes D'Aeth curate of Bethersden.

Witness my hand this 20th day of June 1866.

A.J. Pearman

Late vicar of Bethersden

Amongst the number the register of whose baptism was neglected between May 4th and Dec 14th 1856 is the name of Jane Harriett Tanton (dtr of James & Elizabeth Anne Tanton) born June 11 1856. That she was baptised shortly after birth there is not the shadow of a doubt and I have been requested to make a memorandum to that effect.

Witness my hand this 15th day of August 1895.

Robert Palmer

Vicar of Bethersden

Entry in the front of baptism register 1869 - 1925

An Assesment made Sept 27 1771 by the Churchwardens, Overseers & other Inhabitants of the parish of Bethersden for the relief of the poor of the said Parish after the Rate of eighteen pence in the Pound Rent.

Tennants	Landlords	Rent	Paid		
			£	s.	d.
Ed: Adams	John Toke Esq	22			
Ed: Adams	Genl Honewood	8			
Ed: Adams	Mr Dine	28			
Ed: Adams	Mr Witaker	28			
Ed: Adams	The Mill	12			
	Paid	98	7	7	0
Mr Belcher	Mrs Turner	80			
Mr Belcher	Pimpherst	34			
Mr Belcher	Mr Weeks	9			
	Paid	123	9	4	6
John Bright	Mr Witherden	37			
John Bright	Miss Whitfeld	36			
John Bright	Datson Land	9			
John Bright	Mr Whitfeld	9.1			
	Paid	91.1	6	17	3
James Barton	Mrs Waterman	30	2	5	
Mrs Brown		3		4	6
Matthew Bright	Mr Knowler	14	1	1	
Robt Buss	Mr Pomfret	37.1			
Robt Buss	Pluckley Land	6			
	Paid	43.1	3	5	3
Jas Boseden Junr	Mr Whitfeld	11			
Jas Boseden Junr	Mr Toke	30			
		41	3	1	6
Jas Boseden Senr	Mr Whitfeld	9.1		14	3

Note at the end of Burial Register 1978

For the benefit of those coming after me who might wish to know what happened as affecting the church during my incumbency which began here in 1957 let me put down a few facts which might be of interest.

The heating system which was inadequate was extensively added to by installing more radiators behind the centre pews in the nave, also in the baptistry & along the aisles & also in the front of the nave & in the chancel. This was a big improvement & the church is now well heated.

This happened about 1964.

During this time the new sanctuary carpet was put in & also a carpet running from the door on the south side to the vestry (the gift of Mrs L Royce).

About 1966 the organ was entirely overhauled at a cost of up to £500.

The church fabric (outside) has been kept in good repair by reason of the quinquennial inspections.

A faculty was obtained for the levelling of the churchyard & this work goes on slowly but surely.

In 1961 as vicar, I obtained a faculty for a grave plot for the burial of cremated remains. This is kept as such.

The churchyard is now in the best condition it has ever been according to the churchyard committee. The churchyard wall, in the front, was repointed about 1962 & quite a fair portion of the tower at the same time. During my incumbency a major work was carried out viz: the renovation & re-planning of the Lovelace Chapel. With the limited space available the plan was to "open out" the chapel as much as possible.

The altar lends itself to celebrating from the "western" position. The archdeacon of Maidstone (Ven. M. Nott) suggested we have no chairs in the chapel in order to preserve this open appearance – the congregation using the pews already provided close by in the nave of the church. Messrs Mowbray carried out the re-planning & furnishing of the chapel (1969) (the window was the gift of Mrs Amelia Francis Ring).

The new window (Madonna and child) was put in at the same time – Jan 26th 1969. Dedicated by the Archbishop of Canterbury (most Reverend Arthur Michael Ramsey) at a special service held at evensong. The vicar (Rev. Hugh O Albin) officiated at this service.

During my incumbency a new green frontal was given by Mrs G Dear in memory of her husband George, for many years parish clerk of this parish. A new white frontal was also given by Mr Norman Creswell Jones in memory of his mother, also respective pulpit falls, markers etc to match.

It may also be of interest to record that the vicar (Rev Hugh O Albin) dedicated the new school hall, costing £24,000 in 1969 (Nov). This was a great step forward in village history. During my time the village has increased in population & in building more than at any other period of its history. The new Forgefield Estate was built & Orchard Field as well, in the 1960's so that the parish population in 1969 is probably up to the 1500 mark. Where the normal average for years has been around 1100 to 1200.

In 1960 I started a planned giving scheme which has survived, though it needs from time to time to be continually revived.

In 1961 the display base with a local history of Bethersden written by members of the local Women's Institute was presented to the church in memory of Miss Gladys Anne Padgham & dedicated by me. The history is of course now the property of the church & not of the Women's Institute.

In 1968 (June 16th) the lovely gold altar curtain was donated by Miss Shirley Birch, a choir member & member of the P.C.C. & dedicated by me at mattins.

The litany desk has been placed at the back of the church on the advice of Mr Duncan Escott director of Mowbray's as he felt by so doing this gives an uninterrupted view of the sanctuary. I think he is right.

The next work of major importance to be done is the lighting. I understand the present system goes back probably up to 20 years & re-wiring & a new lighting system is urgently needed. This has been passed by the P.C.C. (1969) and has been given my support. On account of my preferment to the living of St Dunstan's with Holy Cross, Canterbury (1970) from Bethersden, I shall not be in a position to supervise this new work but no doubt my successor will do so.

So far as spiritual work is concerned, I would say that the house discussions groups which I initiated in the parish during my incumbency were well received & I hope & pray did much good. The church has always been noted for its good musical tradition & there have been many excellent musical services (hymn singing & others) held in the church in my time. However, normal Sunday church-going is not good especially among the

younger type of married person. The Sunday school is reasonably good & the children are happy in their work. The new housing areas on the whole, I would say have been disappointing as far as positive response is concerned. The above facts, as I have said, may be of some help not only to my successor but also as a continuation of the history of the parish. Perhaps I ought to add that the chief sources of employment in the village during my time (1957-1970) were Colts – the maker of cedar houses and more recently Coles on the Ashford Road – making iron-wrought gates.

Signed Hugh O Albin (Vicar from 1957-1970)