

The Vicarage & Rectory of The Parish of Canvey Island

Hoping for a Parsonage

On 9th November 1875 the Bishop of Rochester proposed a toast at the lunch which was held to celebrate the consecration of the newly built St Katherine's Church. The toast was, "*The Landowners of Canvey Island and the subscribers to this Church*". The Bishop expressed the hope that "*God would put it into the heart of some pious landowner in the place to give just a little parcel of land - some half acre or so - just to build a parsonage*".

The Hope is Realised

The Bishop's wish came true some six years later when the Vicarage was built and the Rev Henry Hayes, after nine years as Curate in Charge, was at last able to move to the Island and live among his parishioners.



This sketch by Janet Dolling shows the Vicarage

The Rev John Fleetwood who was the last vicar to live in the house (1957 – 1963) before the new Vicarage was built, describes the old vicarage thus:

The house was fairly large and double-fronted. To the left of the hallway was a nice-sized room. Behind this room was the kitchen, which gave access to a sort of scullery, and the side door of the house. In the scullery, as you face the side-door, a door on the left led you down a few steps into the "dairy", a dark, damp, musty cellar-place, half underground. To the right of the side-door, a short corridor led you past the coal and wood stores and a loo, and then another door on the right gave way on to the part of the garden outside the kitchen window. Beyond the end wall of the corridor was the stable which served as a garage. The very pleasant lounge was to the right of the front door. My study was behind the lounge, and the study window looked out across the fields. Similarly, from the landing window, at the rear of the house, there was in the early days a lovely view right over the fields to the sea wall, and one could see the great ships going up and down the Thames.

According to the census of 1881 the Revd Henry Hayes managed the running of the Vicarage with the help of 2 domestic servants and an assistant for the gardens and stables.

Henry Hayes was followed by the Revd Watson Hagger who came from the parish of Tolleshunt Major in 1901 and lived in the Vicarage until 1909. He was succeeded by the Rev Joseph Romanus Brown who came from Foulness Island. The Rev Brown leaves no word about the condition of the vicarage when he and his wife, two grown up daughters and their infant son moved in, although he had plenty to say about the state of the Church, with *“falling plaster and general dilapidation, completing a sad, sad picture.”*

Next came the Revd Edwin Green in 1919 and, ironically, the start of his ministry was delayed *“wholly owing to the state of the vicarage”*. The Churchwarden secured a cottage for the new vicar to live in until the vicarage was repaired.

Next to arrive in 1927 was the Rev Reginald Chute who had spent 6 years as Chaplain in Jamalpur, India. His time in Canvey was clearly a stop gap while he found a more permanent position back in England as within a year he had moved on to St Andrew's Leytonstone. But while in Canvey he painted this picture of the Vicarage.

(Painting to be shown here)

Between 1928 and 1957 the Vicarage was occupied by The Revds Hubert Pink, Allan Swallow, Arthur Mortimer and David Cullen.

Time to Move

By the time The Revd John Fleetwood moved in to the Vicarage in 1957, the population of Canvey was growing rapidly with the influx of people from Walthamstow, Dagenham and other parts of London. The new parish church of St Nicholas was opened in December 1960 and the new Vicarage completed in 1963. For eighty-two years the Vicarage in Haven Road had served as home and office for the vicars of Canvey Island. A more modern Vicarage was required near the new Parish Church and nearer the greater part of the population of Canvey Island. The site of the old Vicarage is now immortalised in the area of 20 bungalows in what is now called Vicarage Close.

The Rev John Fleetwood and his wife Joan had quite a say in the planning of the new Vicarage which was named *St Nicholas' House*. They worked closely with Stanley Bragg the architect who had designed St Nicholas' Church. The result, in John Fleetwood's words, *“was a lovely, convenient modern house, large enough, yet compact, and very well built”*.

Charles Hollingbury, a building contractor, agreed to build the Vicarage at cost price, making no profit at all. The Vicarage has four bedrooms, a through lounge, separate dining room, study, kitchen, a bathroom, two toilets, and a brick garage set back from the front of the house. The floors of the lounge, hallway and study are laid with parquet flooring of Rhodesian wood. The price for the whole house came in at just under £5,000 which was remarkably low even for 1963.

The Rectory

John Fleetwood was succeeded in 1974 by the Revd Geoffrey Wrayford. By then the population of Canvey Island had grown to such an extent that the Diocese felt the work was far too much for one Vicar. And so in 1976 a Team Ministry was formed with Geoff Wrayford as Team Rector having responsibility and oversight for Team Vicars. It was then that the Vicarage became The Rectory.



In the 1970s a fence was erected between the Rectory driveway and the church car park as each Saturday at the height of the wedding season the Rector's family found it quite impossible to get out of their front door due to the number of cars parked outside the Vicarage. Following a fire caused by an act of vandalism in 1999 the garage was moved forward to be in line with the house

The Revd Tim Stevens moved into the Rectory when he became Team Rector in 1980, David Thomas in 1988, David Ella in 1993 and David Tudor in 2000.



Horse Chestnut Tree planted by Christopher Ella in 1996



Ash Tree planted by David Tudor in 2000



Cherry Blossom Tree planted in memory of Kim Guzzan who died 14th July 2000