

Account of Purley on Thames

The Old Rectory

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Introduction

The Old Rectory stood where Lister Close now stands. The mediaeval building was replaced in 1724 to 1728 by a new Parsonage House build by James Harrison, the then Rector. In 1830 it was reported as being in a poor state of repair. A Reading Surveyor, James Jones, suggested a repair programme and this was duly carried out at a cost of £682. This meant that the rector, the Revd Charles Manesty had to take out a 25 year mortgage from Queen Anne's Bounty.

It continued in use as the rectory until 1931 when it was sold to Mrs Elizabeth Lister whose son Hugh was ordained and won the MC in the second world war as a Major before being killed in Belgium. A new rectory was constructed roughly where Allison Gardens and Westridge Avenue now are.

It was purchased by Berkshire County Council in 196x to be used as an old folks home. However the County Council never got around to making the necessary modifications and it was left untended for many years. However ducks found the roof a marvellous place to live and by blocking the drains they turned the flat roof into a pond. The outcome was that in 1968 the roof collapsed and the house became unusable so was pulled down to make way for the Lister Close development.



The old rectory in 1964

In the following pages we reproduce some articles about the old rectory. A more comprehensive story can be found by following the link to the Church chapter 14. The last remnant of the old rectory is the west wall of the grounds which supported stables and traces of the metal rings of the byres are still visible.

71. Purley Rectory Mortgaged in 1830

The Rev Charles MANESTY was baptised in Crondall, Hants, about 1774. Since his father, James, was Curate of Purley from about 1780 until 1800, it is very probable that at least part of his early life was spent in the parish which he was eventually to serve as Rector for 44 years. Educated at St. Johns College, Oxford, he gained an MA in 1798 and was inducted Rector of Purley on 21st March 1800. During his life here he was a JP for the county and, from 1835, a Poor Law Guardian for the parish in the Bradfield Union.

Although he was due to inherit property under his father's will of 1816 following the death of his mother, it may be that little ready cash actually came his way during his lifetime.

By 1830 the Rectory had fallen into a poor state of repair and on 23rd February it was examined by James JONES, a surveyor of Reading. He found the roof "in a very sad state", the walls of the drawing room at the SE corner of the house "dilapidated" and the roof of the "offices" north of the kitchen at the west end of the house "dangerous" due to decay and poor construction.

In his quotation dated 7th September 1830 he recommended removing the old roof, raising the walls and building a new roof of "foreign" timber and slates with new gutters,

In the drawing room, a new bow window extending up three floors was to be constructed with new floors, skirting, ceilings and cornices where necessary in that room and the best bedroom above, together with "all necessary plastering". Repairs to the stonework on the external walls was to be "stone colour" with new stone cills "to nearly all the windows."

A new storey 12 or 14 feet high with two sash windows and a timber and slate roof as above was to be built over the "offices" on the NW corner of the house. This also meant raising the north wall of the kitchen by 8 feet.

The estimated cost of the work was £682. With no suitable timber on the glebe land only £15 could be raised from the sale of old materials and the Rev. MANESTY applied to the church authorities for a mortgage.

Before this could be granted the Bishop of Salisbury asked the Vicar of St. Lawrence Reading and the Rector of Pangbourne to enquire into the state of the buildings when the Rev. MANESTY was inducted in 1800, whether he had received any money for "dilapidations" and if the proposed alterations were in keeping with the value of the living. They replied on 2nd October that no money had been received and that all had been kept in "common repair" with no sign of "wilful neglect".

On 27th November 1830 an indenture was drawn up between the Rev. MANESTY and the Governors of "Queen Anne's Bounty"* to borrow £560. 14s 8d on a mortgage of "the Glebe Tithe Rents and other profits" of the living. It was to be repaid over 25 years at £3 10s% per annum plus £5% pa of the principal sum. If not resident in the Rectory - i.e. leased to a tenant - then an extra £10% pa was due.

*Queen Anne's Bounty was a fund established by Queen Anne in 1704 to receive and use the tenths, i.e. church taxes, confiscated by Henry VIII. The revenue was often used to supplement the income of the poorer clergy. Since 1948 it has formed part of the Church Commission for England. (Local Historians Encyclopaedia).

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