

Account of Purley on Thames

Whats a Rector Worth?

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by John Chapman

What's a Rector worth? Not a lot! I hear you say. Well today we usually describe them as invaluable, even though it is not one of the best paying professions around. With the recent huge losses by the Church Commissioners, parishes are going to have to be very realistic as to whether or not they can afford one, even at today's prices.

But it was not always like that. While I was browsing in the Lambeth Palace library a few weeks ago I came across some of the personal papers of Benjamin Skinner who was our Rector from 1766 to 1787. The reason his papers were among the archbishop's things was that his wife was the sister of the then Archbishop.

In June 1777 he set down on paper a statement of his income and expenditure and it makes interesting reading. On the debit side he had:-

	£	s	d
Land Tax	13	6	0
Fee Farm rent	3	4	8
Quit rent		2	0
Tenths	1	6	3
Books procured		2	8
Archdeacons procurations	9	8	(Parish Share)
Synodals		3	0
Pensions			4
Repairs	1	14	9

	21	0	0

He did a deal with John Sherwood, a local farmer, who agreed to rent his Glebe lands for £130 and pay all parish taxes, and he hired a curate, Charles Chambers, at £30 pa to do the actual work for him. This left him with a clear profit of £89.

He also held the living of Waddesdon and with a similar calculation estimated its profit at £107 and had loaned out a sum of £800 for £32 interest pa. In other words he received a total of some £228-2-3 essentially for doing nothing. This was probably equivalent to a salary of about £150,000 pa nowadays if you compare it to a low paid worker then who might earn £25 pa (£15000 today).