

## St. Mary's clergy

Within a generation or two of St. Augustine's mission to convert the English to Christianity in 597, there were communities of priests based in minsters<sup>1</sup> in Surrey and elsewhere. They travelled to nearby areas to preach and minister to the people. Guildford was served by priests from Woking minster, probably near St. Peter's church in what is now Old Woking.

The first church or chapel in Guildford was probably in the king's residence, for him and his household, which developed into the parish church of St. Mary's. A stone church was probably built in the 900s and enlarged in the 1000s, but there are no names of the priests until much later. The medieval names are found in the records of the bishops of Winchester.

Around 1120 St. Mary's and Holy Trinity were given to Merton Priory, as a source of income. The two rectors kept their right to tithes and their title of rector but paid an annual pension to the priory. The prior and convent held the advowson<sup>2</sup> or right to present the rectors.

In the medieval period there were far more clergy than after the Reformation. There would be at least a priest, deacon and sub-deacon at St. Mary's, with various other clergy in minor orders, as well as chaplains serving guilds and singing masses for dead parishioners. The clergy are unlikely to have been graduates, though some were. In contrast to after the Reformation they were also more likely to be local men.

### c.1174-1189 **G. de Niweport**

In a letter written sometime between 1178 and 1188 G. de Niweport is mentioned as the parson of St. Mary's, but we do not know when he became rector or when he left or died. At this date he probably did come from Newport, but there are several towns of that name.

### c.1186-1198 **Richard de St. Omer** and **Gilbert de Pleisseto**

### 1224-7-? **Henry**

We know his name from another chance reference, but nothing more. Henry III gave him permission to hold a fair in the churchyard from 31 October to 2 November, at the feast of All Saints.

The church reached its present size around 1250, when the aisles were extended.

### ? **William**

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<sup>1</sup> A minster is a large or important church that was built as part of a monastery.

<sup>2</sup> The right to nominate a person to be parish priest subject to the bishop's approval.

**1309-1334 Thomas Constable**

Thomas was made rector of St. Mary's in May 1309 before he was a priest. He was ordained as an acolyte on the same day – almost the lowest grade of priest. In December he was ordained sub-deacon in Holy Trinity church, and in June 1310 he was made a priest. There must have been another priest who could celebrate the mass before Thomas was ordained. There was a curious incident in 1324 when another priest, Ralph de Conyngsby, was presented to the bishop to be made rector of St. Mary's, by the patron, the prior and convent of Merton, while Thomas was still there. The bishop asked the Dean of Guildford to send Thomas to him to show why he should not be removed. This may have been because Thomas was refusing to pay the annual pension to Merton Priory. By 1333 Thomas was twenty years behind with the payments and was ordered to appear before the king's justices in York. He must have claimed that the money was too much, because the bishop ordered an enquiry into the annual value of St. Mary's and Holy Trinity to see if the sums claimed were excessive. The rector of Holy Trinity was also refusing to pay but eventually did. We don't know quite what happened about it but Thomas survived.

**1334 John Purde de Rochford**

In 1334 John was given permission to study for two years, as long as he became a sub-deacon. It was not unknown for a rector not to be ordained as a priest.

**1349 Richard de Chaddesley**

Richard was an important official of the Bishops of Winchester from at least the 1320s, and a professor of church law. He may have been made rector in 1349 because so many priests had died in the Black Death. However, he was not ordained as a priest. He was made an acolyte in 1349 and was probably filling a gap temporarily.

**1350 Robert atte Mere**

**1369 William Dunmowe**

Sometime between 1340 and 1390 decorative floor tiles were laid in the chancel. Also in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, new windows were put in at the east and west ends, and a new west door.

**1374 John de Astone**

**1375 John Wergrave** exchanged livings with **John Bede/Rede**

**1392 John Wyllersey** was rector until at least 1408.

**1427 William Hugarton** was rector from at least 1427.

**?-1448 John Knockston** resigned in 1448.

1448            **Henry Carpeynter**

The aisles were re-roofed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and it is possible that Carpeynter gave some money, because the corbel in the north-east corner of the north aisle shows an imaginary coat-of-arms of carpenter's tools. Normally the parishioners paid for work in the nave, but the link is tempting. Carpeynter had a degree in law.

1452            **William Betheware** resigned in 1462.

1462            **John Lee** died in 1471.

1471            **William Preston** resigned in 1488.

1489            **John Husband** had a degree in law. He died in 1500.

1500            **Robert Darby**

Robert probably spent most of his career at St. Mary's. In 1530 he was in trouble for building a porch in front of the rectory door out into the street for which he received a fine two years later. He lived through Henry VIII's break with Rome. Another priest called Robert Walker was mentioned in 1514, and curates called Thomas Fryer and Richard Parmantory in 1540.

## The Reformation

*From Elizabeth's reign more clergy had degrees and were less likely to be local.*

1540            **John Amery**

John survived the half-hearted Protestant reforms of Henry VIII, the thorough-going Protestantism of Edward VI and the return to Roman Catholicism under Mary. (This was not unusual as often there was little choice.) In 1553 inventories were made of all church goods. St. Mary's had significantly fewer vestments and objects than Holy Trinity, but had sold a lot of items. They spent the money on re-building the south wall of the church, mending a pillar, new gutters, white-washing the church and writing up texts, and contributed a large sum to mending the town bridge. They had one silver-gilt chalice left, two sets of vestments for priest, deacon and sub-deacon, three altar cloths, an organ and four bells. Holy Trinity had far more vestments, crosses, candlesticks and many other things, but had sold very little. This may suggest that the people of St. Mary's were more enthusiastic about religious change.

1558            **Nicholas Chylton**

Nicholas was appointed by the crown, Queen Mary in this case, who had gained the right when Merton Priory was dissolved. Soon after his appointment, Elizabeth became queen, and the move to a Protestant England began in earnest. Presumably Chylton was happy as a Protestant. He had several curates: Thomas Mylles in 1564; Roger Cook 1565; Robert Street 1566; Walter Kelly 1567; Richard Smale 1568; and Thomas Poyntell in 1572, who became rector.

**1581 Thomas Poyntell**

Thomas was probably the first married rector. He was ordained in 1567 and became curate of Godalming. He became curate of St. Mary's in 1572, though he had witnessed a will (that he had also written as a dying man) in Guildford in 1571. Thomas' wife died in 1597, and he died in 1601. There are no children in the baptismal register.

**1603 William Oughtred**

There is a gap between Poyntell's death and the appointment of William Oughtred in 1603. William lived between 1574 and 1660. He was a famous mathematician who invented the slide rule and the 'x' symbol for multiplication. He left Guildford in 1605 and was rector of Albury from 1610 until his death.

**1605 William Kay (or Key)**

There were Key/Kay/Keyes parsons at all three churches in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is not clear if they were related. William was married – his wife died in 1647 – but there do not seem to have been any children. His brother John may have lived in Guildford, and William noted his death in Sussex in the register, and that of his other brother Ralph in London. William died in 1650.

**1649 Roger Percivall**

Richard was rector of Holy Trinity from 1645 to 1654, and took over at St. Mary's temporarily, for nine months during a vacancy.

**1650 John Holland**

Holland was from Gloucestershire, and went to Trinity College, Cambridge in 1646. He became a fellow in 1650, so may not have been resident in Guildford at first. He became rector of Holy Trinity in 1654 and resigned in 1665. In 1655 he also became Master of Abbot's Hospital, even though the master had to be single and aged at least 50, (John would have been born about 1630). He married in the 1650s and his daughter Barbara was baptised in Holy Trinity in 1660. His first wife (whose name is unknown) died a few months after Barbara was born, followed a few months later by the baby. John married Honour Westbrooke at Stoke in 1662. They had a son, John, in 1663 who died aged three months. A second John, born in 1664, lived until 1675 and died two weeks before his mother, perhaps of some contagious disease which they both caught. John and Honour had three girls: Elizabeth in 1665, Honour in 1668 and Ann in 1670. All the baptisms and burials are in the Holy Trinity register. In the parish register for Holy Trinity in April 1661 he noted that the book had been returned from the churchwardens, since civil authority had registered births, marriages and deaths during the period of the Commonwealth. He did not do the same in the St. Mary's register.

He was probably living in Abbot's Hospital: both rectories were medieval buildings and John came from the landed class, who would expect better housing. John must have been acceptable to the Puritan regime to be appointed in 1650 but adapted to the more Anglican church after the Restoration. He must have had curates to help him. He died in 1691 and was buried in Holy Trinity. He was master of Abbot's Hospital until his death.

## The Enlightenment

*From about this time rectors were more obviously gentlemen, and perhaps less close to their parishioners.*

**1691**            **Edward Vernon** (joint rector from 1715)

Edward Vernon was born in Shropshire in 1659, and went to Balliol College Oxford when he was 17. He became rector of Merrow in 1684 and married Mary Butler in London in 1687. They had a son, Thomas, in 1692, baptised in St. Mary's. In 1699 the benefices of the two rectories were combined but this did not take effect until Michael Woodward of Holy Trinity left in 1715, and Vernon took over both churches. He oversaw the complete refurbishment of St. Mary's around 1710, with a west gallery and box pews, and a new royal coat of arms of Queen Anne. There is an anecdote about him refusing to take a funeral at St. Mary's until he had finished his game of bowls in the castle grounds. He presumably continued to live in St. Mary's rectory opposite the church. Vernon died in 1721 and was buried at Merrow. He left everything to his wife, including property in Guildford and Worplesdon. (The list of Oxford graduates say that he was also the incumbent of three churches in the midlands in the 1690s, but this is another Edward Vernon who died in 1743.)

**1721**            **William Bannaster**

William, born in 1689, was the son of the vicar of Wonersh. He went to school in Horley, then to Trinity College, Cambridge and was ordained in 1713. He succeeded his father at Wonersh in 1718, and remained the incumbent of Wonersh and Guildford until his death in 1755. There were complaints about his lack of attendance at Wonersh. He was also curate of St. Martha's. Cornelius Jeale was Bannaster's curate at Wonersh and Guildford. Bannaster was rector when Holy Trinity tower collapsed. He died in 1755 when the new church was complete but not open, and was buried in the chancel with both his wives who had died before him: Elizabeth in 1731 and Susan in 1743 after only two years of marriage. Susan was a Quaker upon marriage to William, but was received into the Church of England soon after. There were no children.

Bannaster allowed the churchyard to be shortened to widen Quarry Street in 1755, on condition that the parishioners and wardens paid for any damage by vehicles. He was the first rector to sign the St. Mary's Vestry minutes and to choose a rector's churchwarden. Previously both wardens had been elected by the parishioners.

**1756 Charles Burdett**

Burdett was the son of a gentleman of London, and when he died he was buried in the family vault in St. Helen's Bishopsgate. In 1715 he went to Lincoln College, Oxford and was made a doctor of divinity in 1764. He was wealthy and unmarried. A niece lived with him and was handsomely rewarded when he died, in 1772. He also had a female servant, a manservant and a coachman. He left his books on divinity to the Rev. Mr. Weller who became rector two years later. He oversaw the completion of Holy Trinity and preached at the opening service in 1763 to such effect that the corporation wanted to publish the sermon, but Burdett declined.

**1772 James King (1715-95)**

King was from Yorkshire. He went to school with his cousin Fletcher Norton, later Lord Grantley of Woneshorpe, and to St. John's College Cambridge. When Norton became Speaker of the House of Commons in 1770 he made King his chaplain, and in 1772 helped him to the post of rector of Holy Trinity and St. Mary's. In 1774 King became a canon of Windsor, and in 1776 was made dean of Raphoe, in Donegal. He was a friend of Edmund Burke, the Irish statesman and philosopher, and like him, supported Catholic emancipation. He remained at Raphoe until his death in 1795. He had spent nearly thirty years at Clitheroe, where he married and had six children, before coming south. He made sure the Clitheroe youths did not play football during service time by keeping the ball until after evensong. King's four sons all did well: one was an astronomer on Captain Cook's third voyage, one became a bishop, and the other two held important political positions.

**1774 James Weller (1742-1832)**

James was born in Guildford in 1742, the son of James. He went to Oxford in 1759, and was perhaps rector of Worth, Sussex. In Worth, in 1769 he married Mary Ladbrooke of Reigate. He was the curate in Guildford before becoming rector. Charles Burdett (1756) left him his books on divinity when he died in 1772. All Weller's children were born in Guildford. His son James was baptised in St. Mary's in March 1771, (and was buried there a month later) and the others at Holy Trinity: Susanna, 1772; another James 1773; Charlotte 1774; Hannah 1775; Richard 1778. Susanna died in 1773, Richard in 1779 and they were both buried at St. Mary's. Weller was also rector of Woking from 1784-6, and of East Clandon from 1788 until his death in 1832. His daughter Hannah died at East Clandon in 1804 but was buried in Holy Trinity, as was her mother in 1812. James himself was buried in Holy Trinity in 1832. It was noted in the register that he had been rector in Guildford for fifty years, and rector of East Clandon. It is unclear whether they lived in the medieval rectory in Quarry Street or somewhere else, particularly as Holy Trinity rectory was sold during his tenure in 1806. The baptisms were mostly at Holy Trinity and the burials of children at St. Mary's. It is clear that the family were living in East Clandon by at least 1804, probably because there was a better house there. It was painted in 1823 by John Hassell who noted that Weller lived there. He had a curate called Thomas Townsend in 1777, then Richard Clifton in 1792, John Austin in

1794, Joseph Burnett in 1814, Thomas Roe in 1816, John Stedman 1819, Samuel Smith 1820, and Henry Beloe in 1821.

**1824 Henry Parr Beloe (1790-1838)**

Beloe was the curate from 1821. When Weller resigned in 1824, Beloe became rector. He was from Westminster, the son of a parson and writer, and went to Charterhouse, then Cambridge. He was a vicar in Bermondsey before coming to Guildford. He married Elizabeth Elkins from St. Mary's parish in 1824. She was a minor, aged twenty, but her father gave his consent. Beloe's place of residence was Stoke parish, so he was probably living in the Upper High Street. The medieval rectory was presumably thought unsuitable. He and Elizabeth had three boys: William Henry and Henry Edmund who were baptised in Holy Trinity in 1826 and 1828, and again the register noted that they were of Stoke. William Alciphron was christened in St. Mary's in 1829. Alciphron was an ancient Greek writer, whose works were translated into English by Henry's father William in 1791. William also founded a quarterly journal called the *British Critic*, running from 1793-1826.

Henry had coloured glass placed in the east window soon after he arrived – shown in a watercolour of 1827. It included his own coat of arms, and those of Mr. Weller, with the royal arms and the Sees of Canterbury and Winchester. He had St. Mary's rectory rebuilt in 1825, soon after moving to Guildford. It is still there, a fine Georgian house. The gate-posts of the churchyard are built in the same yellow brick. He was also rector when the church was shortened for road-widening, though this may have been on the initiative of some parishioners. Medieval floor tiles from the church were used in the hearths in the attic rooms.

## Victorian times.

The clergy were moving up the social scale in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and in Victoria's reign were definitely gentlemen with many servants.

**1838 Henry Ayling (1793-1872)**

Ayling was from Sussex and went to Oxford. He was curate of Haslemere in 1820 and of East Clandon in 1824. He was headmaster of the Royal Grammar School, Guildford, from 1822-37. He and his wife had five children, some baptised in Holy Trinity, some in St. Mary's. Three infants were buried in St. Mary's. Mr. Ayling had four servants. He moved to Gloucestershire in 1851. In 1840 a new churchyard wall was built north of the church.

**1851 Thomas Ludlum (1809-1863)**

Ludlum was born in Leicester and went to Cambridge. He was a vicar in Huntingdonshire before coming to Guildford. He and his wife Mary Jane had two children. It was Ludlum who organised the restoration of St. Mary's in 1863 but he died suddenly before it was completed. The stained glass in the east window was put there in his memory in 1865. Their

son gave a window in memory of his mother in 1897. Her funeral was held in St. Mary's in 1890. She had been living in Winchester.

**1863            Robert Trimmer (1821-1900)**

Robert Trimmer was born in Worcester, went to Shrewsbury School and Oxford. He married Helen in 1847, and became curate at Adlestrop, where two children, Robert and Helen, were born. In 1852 they moved to Hamstall Ridware, Staffordshire., where a son, Hargreave, was born. After a few years at Stoneleigh, Warwickshire, Trimmer came to Guildford. He was made an honorary canon of Winchester. He built a new rectory in Harvey Road in 1867, now part of Mount Alvernia Hospital. This may have been because Quarry Street was a mixture of shops and craftsmen's businesses, not really suitable for a gentleman. He met Charles Dodgson (Lewis Carroll) when Charles moved his sisters to Guildford in 1868. They attended St. Mary's, and Dodgson occasionally preached there. Mrs. Trimmer died in 1879. In 1881 Trimmer was living in Clapham with his daughter and her husband (Percy Woods, a civil servant, and historian of Godalming). Trimmer was married again that year, to Penelope Smith, a widow. In 1891 he was still living in Clapham and died in 1900. His funeral was in St. Mary's. He and his first wife were buried in the cemetery on The Mount.

**1882            Ferdinand Edward Tower (1820-1885)**

Ferdinand Tower was the son of a landed gentleman of Essex. He had a twin sister, Laura, and they had two older sisters, also twins. All of them had independent means. By 1851 Ferdinand was a curate at Hurstpierpoint, lodging with a carpenter's family. In 1861 he married Mary Champion there and moved to be vicar of Earl Shilton in Leicestershire. They had eight children there: Henry, Frederick, Agatha, William, Edward, David, Walter and Mary. Their mother Mary died in 1874. In 1882 Ferdinand moved to Guildford. The two older boys were at Lancing College but the other children presumably moved to Guildford with their father. They were aged from nineteen to about ten when Ferdinand died in 1885. He had been very keen on free seats in church, so that everyone had equal access.

By 1891 Agatha was living with a cousin in Winchester; David, Walter and Mary were living with another cousin in Brading on the Isle of Wight. Henry and Frederick were established as curates by then. Agatha became an Anglican nun. David became a market gardener and Walter became an architect. He later joined the famous stained-glass firm of a distant cousin, Charles Kempe, which he took over when Kempe died. He married the daughter of the hereditary chief of Clan McDonnell of Glengarry, Aeneas Ranald McDonnell. His brother-in-law, also Aeneas Ranald, lived with Walter and his wife in Kempe's old house at Lindfield, Sussex in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



**1885 Arthur Sutton Valpy (1849-1909)**

Valpy was born in Kensington to a civil servant. He went to Eton and Cambridge, and became a curate in Middlesborough in 1873, and Kensington in 1875, before moving to Farnborough in 1878, and Guildford in 1885. He married Jessie Forsyth in 1877 but does not seem to have had children. She died in 1897. Arthur then married Bertha Pattinson of Gateshead in 1900. He made improvements to St. Mary's soon after his arrival, with new vestments, new flooring and pews and a new pulpit in 1889. He moved to Winchester in 1895 where he was a canon. He had an 'ample private fortune ... which he devoted to the church'. Some of this was spent at Winchester in making part of the north transept into a chapel, with windows by Burne-Jones.

**1895 Cyril Fletcher Grant (1845-1916)**

Cyril was born in Romford, the son of the vicar. By 1871 his father was vicar of Aylesford. Cyril was a curate in north Kent then succeeded his father at Aylesford in 1876. He married Isabel in 1877 and they had three sons. He moved to Guildford in 1895. Isabel died in 1906 and was buried in Aylesford. In 1907 Cyril resigned, and moved to St. Alban's, where he re-married. He died in 1916. He was living in London but died in Margate.

**1907 Ernest Kirwan (1867-1936)**

Ernest was born in 1867 in Devon where his father was a rector. Ernest was the third of six children, but his father died when the youngest was only a baby, in an accident while swimming in the sea. Ernest went to Oxford and became a curate in Bracknell from 1891-3 before moving to Guildford as curate to Mr Grant in 1894. He was lively and active, involved particularly with Charlotteville and sports for the boys. In 1901 he became vicar of Yorktown and Camberley. He came from an Anglo-Irish family, much involved in the army and the church. In 1907 he succeeded Mr. Grant in Guildford. He continued to be active, and was involved with building the church hall. During the First World War he was regimental chaplain, then chaplain to the military hospital in Guildford. He was the first provost of Guildford Cathedral, using Holy Trinity as the interim cathedral.

When he came to Guildford as rector, he preferred a smaller house than the rectory in Harvey Road, and moved to Epsom Road, on the east corner of Hunter Road. (It is currently Rectory House dental practice.) He did not marry. He died in post.

**1937 Eric George Southam (1884-1952)**

Eric Southam was born in 1884 in Manchester, the son of a surgeon. By 1911 he was a vicar in Poplar, in the east end of London, then elsewhere in the east end. In 1915 he married Margaret, the daughter of a baronet. By 1931 he was vicar of Bournemouth. He lived in the Provost's House in Hillier Road, and must have been very much involved with the cathedral, where building had started in 1936. He may have retired in 1944; he died near Bournemouth in 1952.

1944            **Ronald Sutherland Brook Sinclair** (1894-1951)

Ronald Sinclair was born in Fulham to parents from Yorkshire. His father was a vicar and by 1901 had moved to Cirencester. In 1924 Ronald married Patience Chitty, when he was vicar of All Hallows in East India Docks. By 1939 he was a residentiary canon of Chester Cathedral. He came to Guildford in 1944 but left in 1951 to be vicar of Maidstone, where he died in post.

1952            **Walter Boulton** (1901-1984)

Walter Boulton was born in Staffordshire: his father died shortly after the birth. He went to Oxford and was ordained in 1925. Two years later he went to India as a priest. In 1932 he married Lorna Barley. In 1947 the family returned from India with two small girls and Walter became vicar of Fleet. In 1952 he became rector of Holy Trinity and St Mary's and provost of the cathedral. Building work had stopped at the cathedral because of the war, but Boulton revitalised it. It was finished in 1961 but Boulton was not appointed dean and he left Guildford for Rutland. He acquired the house called Castle Gate, on Castle Hill, as the rectory in 1953. He died in Sussex in 1984.

1962            **Michael Hocking** (1912-2013)

1978            **Adrian Carey** (1922-2017)

1986            **Kenneth Stevenson** (1949-2011)

1996            **Robert Cotton** (b. 1958)

Mary Alexander December 2020