

The Early History of Kells St. Peter's

By the winter of 1908 to 1909 there were already 140 houses built on the Kells Estate which then fell within the boundaries of Christ Church. That parish therefore began holding "Cottage Services" ¹ at an un-recorded location on the estate. In the 21st century these would be known as House Groups or a Church Plant. In November 1918 these moved into the Mid Street Rooms.

From 20th October 1920 these services were being held in a separate Mission Building, with its own Altar, Organ and general Church set-up. This was an old Army Hut on the site of the present Vicarage (next to the 1939 Church). This Mission Church was not actually licensed until 30th July 1934². The early ministry was provided part time by Rev James Watt, Curate of Christ Church then Captain Parry of the Church Army in 1923.

On 22nd November 1931 Revd Edward Ralph Bickersteth³ was appointed curate of Christ Church (his first curacy was at Christ Church, Liverpool) with his primary responsibility being Kells. In November 1934 Revd **Harry George Green** became Curate⁴ with the sole responsibility of Kells. He was then licensed as first Vicar of the new Parish of Kells on 8th December 1935⁵. As early as 1931 the Mission Hall is referenced as St. Peter's. Revd Green left in August 1943 to Warminster, Christ Church and Canon of Salisbury Cathedral. He retired to Berkhamstead.

The Parish of Kells was created by Order in Council dated 12th November 1935⁶.

For the sake of completeness it is worth recording that the Mission Hall was demolished in the Summer of 1939 to allow the new Church to be completed. Services were then held in the Welfare Hall between 7th June and 16th September 1939⁷ - the date of consecration of the new Church.

Revd Green was succeeded from Sep 1943 to June 1951 by **John Henness Vine Hall**. He left to be Vicar of Hutton Roof and then, from 1962 to 1977, Rector of Threlkeld. He died on 6th September 1988.

The third Vicar from September 1951 to 1958 was **C A W Ryley Eckersley**. He left to be Vicar of Maryport St. Mary until 1966.

The 4th Vicar was **Eric Ronald Chapman**. Born in 1919 he was educated at Manchester University and trained for the ministry at Bishop's College, Cheshunt. He was Curate of Chorley St Peter from 1943 to 1946 and then Skerton St Luke, Lancaster 1946 to 1951. He was then Vicar of Bolton St Mark 1951 to 1958 before coming to Kells in 1958. He remained

¹ Parish Magazines of Christ Church held at WRO Local Studies Shelves (uncatalogued)

² Bishop's Register, page 202

³ Bishop's Register page 143 (origin in Christ Church Parish Magazine)

⁴ Parish Magazine

⁵ Bishop's Register page 230

⁶ London Gazette of even date Pages 7155 to 7157, held by the Parish of Whitehaven private archives.

⁷ Bishop's Register page 298

at Kells until 1966, when he became Vicar of Egremont until retirement in 1985. He was also Rural Dean from 1966 to 1970 and an Honorary Canon of Carlisle Cathedral from 1979. He died in June 2011.

The 5th Vicar was **Stephen Swidenbank**. Born in 1937 he trained for the ministry at Lichfield Theological College. He was Curate of Penrith St Andrew from 1961 to 1964 and then Dalton-in-Furness 1964 to 1967. Kells was his first post as Vicar from 1967 to 1976 followed by Staveley with Kentmere from where he retired in 1985 due to ill health (at the end of his ministry he was in a wheelchair).

The 6th Vicar was **Michael Royce Braithwaite** from 1977 to 1988. He was born in 1934 and trained for the ministry at Lincoln Theological College in 1973. Before then he was an Agricultural Missionary in Guyana, South America for 8 years and had worked at an Outdoor Pursuits Centre at Ambleside, Cumbria. He was Curate of Barrow St George with St Luke from 1973 to 1977 before coming to Kells. He was also Rural Dean of Calder from 1984. In 1988 he went to become Vicar of Lorton with Buttermere and Loweswater until retirement to Bothel in 1999. He was also Rural Dean of Derwent from 1994 to 1998 and an Honorary Canon of Carlisle Cathedral from 1994 to 1999.

The 7th Vicar was **Thomas James (Jim) Hyslop** from 1988 to 1995. Born in 1954, he graduated from St. Andrews University in 1976 with a BD. He then did his theological training at Edinburgh Theological College, was deaconed in 1978 and priested in 1979. He was Curate of the Parish of Whitehaven from 1978 to 1981, then Curate of Walney Island from 1981 to 1983, Priest in Charge of Broughton Moor from 1983 to 1985 (and Vicar 1985 to 1988). He subsequently became Priest in Charge of Upperby, Carlisle from 1995 to 1997 (and Vicar 1997 to 2003), then Team Rector of South Carlisle from 2003 to 2014 (ongoing). He was Diocesan Mothers Union Chaplain from 2002 to 2014 and ongoing, and an Honorary Canon from 2006. He married a Church of Scotland Deaconess, Katie Wilson, in September 1978.

The 8th Vicar was **Antony Douglas (Tony) Whipp**. He was born in 1946, educated at Leeds University and trained for the ministry at Ripon College, Cuddesdon. He was Curate of Dalston, Carlisle 1986 to 1989, then Vicar of Holme Cultram St Mary & St Cuthbert to 1996 when he came to Kells. He left Kells in 2000 to Hartlepool St Aidan's and then moved to his current (2014) posting of Rector of Ebchester/Vicar of Medomsley in 2005.

The 9th Vicar was **John Dickinson Kelly** from 27th April 2001 to 2005. He was born at Maryport, Cumbria on 20th July 1942, the son of Joseph & Esther Kelly (nee Dickinson) who had married at Netherton All Souls, Maryport in the Summer of 1934. Esther was the child of John Thomas Dickinson & Elizabeth Dobie (married 7th June 1902). He married Sheila Jarrett in 1970 (born 1947)- daughter of Henry Jarret & Margaret Castle. They had three children- Stephen John, Andrew Aidan and Rachel Grace. (There is far more to the Dobie story in the History of Aspatria Church).

He was Deaconed on 26th September 1965 & Priested on 25th September 1966. He gained his M.A. at Nottingham University then trained at Ripon Hall (Oxford). His first curacy was at Egremont followed by Upperby St. John from 1967 to 1970. He was then Vicar of Arlecdon

from 30th May 1970 to 1973 then Barrow St. Aidan between 1973 and 1979, Milnthorpe from 1979 to 1985 (with Beetham from 1983), and Camerton St. Peter 1985 to 2001 (with Seaton from 1986) and with West Seaton from 1988. After Kells he went to Lamplugh from 2005 to 2007. After retirement from there he became House for Duty Priest at the Parish of Whitehaven until final retirement to Bigrigg on 22nd July 2012. During the vacancy from September 2012 to June 2014 at the Parish of Whitehaven he continued to take many services there, and also many services at other churches in the Deanery which were in vacancy during 2013 and 2014. This included several services at Kells.

In 2000 he was made an Honorary Canon of Carlisle Cathedral, and was Hospital Chaplain from 2003 to 2005 while at Kells.

Judith Ann Evans was instituted as 10th Vicar on 8th June 2006 and left in October 2013. She was born in 1955 and was formerly a Nurse before ordination in 2002. She served her curacy at Crayford St Paulinus, Kent and was also Chaplain to West Cumberland Hospital while at Kells.

Between October 2013 and July 2015 the Parish was in the care of **Allen James Banks** who has been a Non-Stipendiary Minister in the Parish since ordination in 2001. He was born in 1948. In 2013 he was appointed Rural Dean and Assistant Archdeacon of Calder.

The 11th Vicar, from 12th July 2015 is **Shaun Sandham** who came to the Parish from being Vicar of Sutton Park and Priest-in-Charge of Wawne (Diocese of York)⁸

There is a plaque in Church to Thomas Boyd Rushbrooke who was Assistant Curate from September 1947 to May 1950, who died on 10th January 1954 aged 29.

Thanks to Carlisle Record Office for providing access to the Bishop's Register's.

⁸ Church Times, page 29, 24th April 2015