

The Early History of Mirehouse St Andrew

In the period after the Second World War the Mirehouse Estate (locally colloquially known as 'The Valley') began to be developed, in connection partly with slum clearance of central Whitehaven and partly in connection with the influx of labour for the building of the Windscale (later Sellafield) Nuclear Power Station complex. Before the building of St Andrew's Church, a bus was run from Mirehouse to St John's, Hensingham from January 14th 1951 each Sunday evening to allow the people of Mirehouse to worship at Hensingham.

From the Summer of 1953 services were held at the new Mirehouse School.¹ A Conventional District of Mirehouse was formed on 8th June 1955², part of the new Parish being divided out from Christ Church and part from Hensingham, with the Revd **Ronald George Forward** appointed as its first minister, then as a Curate to Hensingham (other local sources which say he was a Curate to Christ Church are incorrect). He had previously been Curate of Carlisle St James'. The Church of St. Andrew (a Chapel of Ease to Hensingham) was consecrated on 19th May 1956³, and the new Parish came into being on 25th September 1961, still under the ministry of Revd Forward.⁴ He stayed until 1965 when he went to Kendal St. Thomas until 1990. He was born in 1925, educated at Selwyn College, Cambridge and trained for the ministry at Ridley Hall, Cambridge. He was curate of Denton Holme, Carlisle from 1952 to 1955 (before Mirehouse). He was subsequently Vicar of Crook, Cumbria from 1978 to 1990 and Honorary Canon of Carlisle Cathedral from 1979. He retired to Cockermouth in 1990.

He was succeeded by **John Archibald Ledward**- born 1930, educated London University. He was Curate of St Helens, Liverpool 1958 to 1962, then Vicar of Dearham, Cumbria to 1966 before coming to St Andrews on 30th September 1966. In 1971 he went to Daubhill, Manchester until 1977, then Newcastle with Butterton (Diocese of Lichfield) 1977 to 1988, and then Rector of Rockland with Hellington, Bramerton etc (Diocese of Norfolk) until retirement in Norfolk in 1995. From 1992 to 1995 he was also Rural Dean of Loddon.

The third Vicar was **Eric Fenton Hall Grimshaw** from June 1972 to 1991. He was born in 1934 and was educated and trained for the ministry at Bristol. He was curate of Moss Side, Manchester from 1958 to 1961 followed by Leyland St Andrew 1961 to 1964. He was then Vicar of Preston St Mark 1964 to 1972 and then Mirehouse. While at Mirehouse he was also Honorary Canon of Carlisle Cathedral from 1986. He was subsequently Vicar of Knowsley, Liverpool until retirement in 1999 and died in July 2012 (he is the only Vicar of the Parish to have died as of March 2014).

The 4th Vicar was **Michael Barber** (often spelt wrongly as Barbour). Born in Kent in 1940 he served in the Army (in the REME) for some years and then trained for the ministry at Oak Hill Theological College. He was Curate of Rothley, Leicestershire 1971 to 1974 and then of Leicester Martyrs Church 1972 to 1974. He was Vicar of Queeniborough 1976 to 1982 and then of Monkwearmouth All Saints, County Durham before coming to Mirehouse on 16th July 1992. He retired to Kirkcudbright in 2005.

The 5th and last Vicar was **Christopher Noel Casey**. He was born in 1961 and gained an Open University degree in 1995. He trained for the ministry at St John College, Nottingham and was ordained in 2001. He served his curacy at Penrith with Newton Reigny & Plumpton Wall from 2001 to 2006 when he came to Mirehouse. He left Mirehouse at the end of January 2016 to go to Rawstentall St Andrew with Constable Lee St Paul in Lancashire⁵.

¹ Refer Hensingham Parish Magazine May 1953 also PCC Minutes 15/5/1952 and various subsequent minutes

² Bishop's Register, page 459

³ Bishop's Register, page 467

⁴ Bishop's Register, page 517

⁵ Whitehaven News 26 November 2015, page 7

He was not replaced, ministry thenceforward being provided by Hensingham St John and Moresby St Bridget, the other churches within their "Mission Community".

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