

Of Rectories and Rectors by Patricia Williamson

The Old Rectory on Pook Lane is grade 2 listed, built in the 18th century. The first Revd William Norris (the elder) was installed as Rector of Warblington Church in 1789 and took up residence. His son William Norris the younger was curate at Warblington under the supervision of his father, whom he succeeded as Rector after his death in 1827. His long life (over 97 years) finished as it had started – in the Rectory. It was this William Norris (the younger) who requested a church for Emsworth which resulted in the building of St James' in 1840. He also set up a parish subscription for St James', which raised £1,865 to construct a house for the St James' incumbent. He and his family gave £730.

The elder William's younger son James ministered in Warblington and Emsworth occasionally but rose to be Master of Corpus Christi College in Oxford. His son William Burrell Norris, nephew of the younger William, was curate from 1775-8. Often called 'Young Willie' to distinguish him from his uncle and grandfather William Burrell Norris served 50 years as Rector, retiring in 1928. He bought the family home from the Ecclesiastical Commission and spent his last years in the Rectory, dying in 1941. The three Norris Rector's incumbencies spanned 139 years in Warblington Church and over 160 years as residents of the Rectory.



Kingsey House

This building, now known as Kingsey House, 52 Havant Road, served as the St James' Rectory from 1846 to 1920.

The first occupant was the Revd Sheppard (inducted in 1844 and Rector from



Former Rectory in Pook Lane, Warblington.

1863), until his death in 1889 — a man of means as the 1881 census tells us that he had five female and one male servant. He paid for extensions to the house and is commemorated in today's marble pulpit, given by his grandchildren. He was buried in St James' churchyard, where his memorial can still be seen, although moved from the site of his grave when headstones were relocated in the early 1970s.

He was succeeded in 1889 by the Revd Napier, a former Wesleyan missionary. In his short tenure of about three years, he made significant changes, i.e. enlarged the chancel, removed the old box pews, replaced the flooring and put in heating, amongst other improvements. His memorial is the brass eagle lectern.

The next incumbent was the Revd Herbert Guildford Sprigg, again a man of considerable means, who in 1913 bought land adjacent to the Rectory, including what is now Kingsey Avenue and up to the West side of what is now Clovelly Road, bordering on the property of the mansion Valetta. He also bought the 1890s house Rockbeare, now St Anne's, 34 Havant Road.

He attempted to retire in 1913 but a parish petition signed by 900 persuaded him to stay on until, in ill health, he resigned in 1920.

The new incumbent was the Revd Oswald Hunt, former senior curate of St Mary, Portsea. He made moves to unite the two parishes. An Order in Council approved this in 1924, but it was not until the retirement of

Revd Norris of Warblington in 1928 that this came about.

But where was Revd Hunt's Rectory? Not in the former building occupied by all the above as that was owned by the Revd Sprigg. He renamed it Kingsey House, after his birthplace in Bucks., and continued to occupy it until his death in 1931.

It appears from the local directory that Revd Hunt gave his address as The Rectory, New Brighton Road or Hollybank or Wraysbury House. This latter building in Long Copse Lane still exists and can be seen online, but is now divided into two 'semis'. The Revd Hunt, soon after his induction, married a young Naval war widow with two children living with her in-laws, the Darley's, in Wraysbury House. Presumably he was living there and calling it 'The Rectory'. Why the name Wraysbury? Well, the previous owner, one Guy Elliott Harcourt was the last Lord of the Manor of Wraysbury, but why did he choose to live in Emsworth and did he build the house?

The house Rockbeare (now St. Anne's) seems to have been sold to the parish, presumably by the Revd Sprigg, in the late 1920s and became the Rectory for the incoming Rector of the new parish of Warblington-with-Emsworth, the Revd H Lake, from 1930 to 1937, then for the Revd J Glynn until 1958 when he was succeeded by the Revd Douglas Caiger.

St Anne's House, formerly Rockbeare



He it was who sold the property to the nuns of St Anne's Convent, then on the site of the present Highland Road and Close, because as the sisters became fewer and older, a smaller house was wanted. Proceeds from the sale enabled the construction of the current

Rectory in Church Path. Revd Caiger laid the foundation stone and the Caiger family moved there in 1965.

The nuns of St Anne, who renamed No. 34 as St Anne's, continued getting older and fewer, resulting in the sale of the house in the early 1970s to Charing Cross Hospital Trust as a holiday home for patients, with an onsite purpose-built dialysis unit and a resident nurse. The nuns went to a sister house in Southsea but the name St Anne's was kept.

In early 2021, having closed as a holiday home, the hospital sold the property to a local developer. Although the Victorian former Rectory is not a listed building it seems to have some preservation order so has been retained and converted into flats for letting. Four, three-bedroom detached bungalows have been built, and occupied at time of writing in the once lovely Rectory garden, and the dialysis unit converted to a two-bedroom bungalow, the whole complex being named St Anne's Close. So many changes, but locals are pleased the St Anne's name has been kept.
