CLEWER RECTORY

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A RECENT WRITER has urged local historians to make and preserve records of the English parsonage, 'outpacing' as he says 'the auctioneer, demolition gang and developer.'[1] Perhaps the best recent example in Berkshire of such a need has been in relation to the Rectory of Clewer St Andrew's parish, within the Royal Borough of Windsor. Scheduled in 1948 as a building of historic and architectural importance[2] this Rectory was yet demolished in 1963, after vigorous but unavailing protests. When its advocates in Windsor sought to make out a case for preservation it was discovered that neither the *Victoria County History* nor any other work on local or ecclesiastical history had commented on its importance or even noted its existence. The present article, whilst too late to serve as more than an obituary, seeks to remedy this all too typical neglect, adding what could be observed of the Rectory, as its walls were being demolished, to documentary evidence, some of which has only subsequently been discovered.[3]

The Rectory stood some 500 yards south of Clewer Church in Parsonage Lane on glebeland. The curve made by that undoubtedly medieval lane round the Rectory and its grounds suggests an ancient origin for the parcel of land on which the Rectory stood, but not necessarily for the Rectory itself. It is, in fact, unlikely that this piece of land was the site of the original—that is, the pre-Conquest—priest's house, as it lies in a position relatively isolated from the highly nucleated group formed by church and village close to the bank of the River Thames.[4] A move to the Parsonage Lane site probably took place in the later middle ages, and it is perhaps such a late medieval structure that is mentioned in the first surviving piece of documentary evidence. A Bishop's Terrier of 1605 notes that 'The mansion house hath bene latelye built and repayared by Hughe Jones nowe parsone hereof to his great charges which had bene ruinated by his predissessors by resone of ther non resydensye; for no man liveth that can remember any parsone resydent upon the parsonage till this yeere last past. The mansyon house doth consist of five bayes and an Outlett with a portche before the hall dore and three doble chymneyes sett up.'[5] A terrier of 1625 lists the rooms in Hugh Jones's rebuilt parsonage[6]; on the ground floor were a hall, parlour, kitchen and buttery, with 'other necessary roomes', above were five chambers and a gallery—quite substantial accommodation at a time when many

[1]B. A. Bax, *The English Parsonage* (1964), p. 7.

[2]Under section 30 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947. The Rectory was placed in Grade II; that is, it was given statutory protection.

[3]I am most grateful to Mr. F. M. Underhill, F.S.A., Hon. Secretary of the Berkshire Archaeological Society; Miss P. Stewart of the Salisbury Diocesan Record Office; Miss D. M. Barratt, D.Phil., of the Bodleian Library, Oxford; and Miss Olwen Hedley, of the Royal Library, Windsor, for their generous help in providing and discussing with me much of the evidence on which these notes are based.

[4]A house of mediaeval origin, now known as The Limes, which stands at the southern limit of the present churchyard was suggested as having served once as the Brocas chantry priest's house (*V.C.H., Berks.* Vol. III, p. 72). There is, however, no evidence for this, and the house could equally well have served as the parsonage. For the general history of church and parish see the *Victoria County History, Berks.* Vol. III, pp. 71–77, and also W. Elwell, *History of Clewer Parish and Parish Church* (1928).

[5]Bishop's Terrier, 1605. Diocesan Record Office, Salisbury.

[6]Bishop's Terrier, 1625. Diocesan Record Office, Salisbury.

clergy were still living in small cottages, and a good example of the type of new Elizabethan parsonage which, as Mr. Tindal Hart has commented, 'began to ape the proportions of a manor house.'[1] A third terrier, of 6 September 1634, whilst merely describing the parsonage itself as 'a convenient dwellinge house in good repayre' gives more details of its appropriately elaborate appurtenances: 'two stables, one Dove house, one Granery, Three Barnes for Corne and Hay, one Hovell and other smale roomes for swine. There is also one smale orchard and three smale Gardens and one yard or Hesse with a pond in it. Before the house there is a smale close of pasture ground enclosed to the value of one Acre and a halfe or thereabout.'[2]

Some further idea of the dimensions and site of the parsonage as they were by the end of the century may be obtained from a parish map rescued from destruction[3] in 1962. This depicts the parish as it was in 1711, and its careful drawing provides measurements of the parsonage which correspond well with those of plans made in the 19th century and with dimensions noted at the demolition. Jones's structure by 1711 had acquired a southern extension at right-angles, perhaps during the Restoration period, but the main block may tentatively be reckoned as unaltered. The resulting parsonage measured only 27 feet in depth, but it stretched the considerable length of some 72 feet from north to south, and the right-angled projection was some 57 feet from west to east. A barn fronted the lane, measuring 48 feet by 33 feet; to its north was a pond (which survived until it was recently filled in); and, at the back of the parsonage were formal gardens with walks.

How much of the parsonage as it is represented in the terriers and the 1711 map survived to 1963? Certainly the greater part of the right-angled projection had gone, leaving a single bay projecting some 12 feet, closed by a brick wall on the east which had been rebuilt as recently as 1951. The southern half of the main building, however, together with the single bay at right-angles, were obviously 17th century work. These structures, although of different height (the right-angled bay was some 6 feet lower than the main wing), were alike of three storeys and covered with roofs of early if not original tiles; many of the original, rather thin, oak timbers of floors, roof and staircase survived; and the main walls were of contemporary brick, covered internally by lath and plaster, and externally, almost completely by roughcast. The general appearance of this 17th century part of the Rectory is well shown in the 1847 east front elevation, printed here as Plate I.

What had been ample accommodation in the 17th century must have become increasingly inadequate in the subsequent century, during the period in the parish's history when clergy of the standing of Fellows of Eton and Canons of St George's Chapel were being appointed as Rectors.[4] At some date between about 1770 and

[1] *The Country Priest in English History* (1959), p. 130.

[2] Glebe Terrier. Bodleian MS. Arch. papers Berks. c. 185.f.48.

[3] By Mr. G. W. Palmer of Oakley Green. The map is a copy, made for the Lord of the Manor in 1812 when inclosure was being considered, of an original of 1711. It is the only graphic evidence for the pre-inclosure appearance of what is now about a half of the total area of the Royal Borough of Windsor and its preservation is thus of considerable significance. Mr. Palmer has presented the original to the Berkshire Record Office; a copy is held by the Town Clerk of Windsor.

[4] Amongst whom were Thomas Doughty, D.D. (Rector 1680–1702), Fellow of Eton, Canon of St. George's, and chaplain to James II as Duke of York; Thomas Horne (1702–1720), Vice-Provost of Eton and chaplain to Charles II and his son, the Duke of St. Albans; Henry Justel (1720–1729), Keeper of the Royal Libraries; William Burchett (1729–1750), Fellow of Eton and Canon of St. George's; and John Bostock (1750–1786), Fellow of Eton and Canon of St. George's.

1800[1], the Rectory's rather mean depth of 27 feet was practically doubled to 50 feet, the northern half of the 17th century parsonage being replaced by the simple Georgian construction which can be seen in the 1847 elevation (Plate I) and which survived to 1963. Brick walls supported a massive first floor framework of Norway oak beams, two feet thick, and rose at the front to two storeys, but, as will be seen later, at the back this 18th century work was of one storey only.[2] The overall height of the front block was about 6 feet greater than that of the main 17th century parts of the building, with which it in fact blended extraordinarily well. The new structure was crowned with a parapet and hipped roof, but its most striking feature was an elegant doorcase of pilasters supporting a moulded door head, small cornice and pediment. The dignity of the new building would have justified an encomium such as that uttered on the contemporary rebuilding of Charlton parsonage, that it had been reconstructed 'in a substantial manner, at once calculated to convey to posterity a proof of [the Rector's] superior taste and public spirit.'[3]

The 18th century rebuilding of Clewer Rectory almost produced the parsonage of recent days; what remained to be added was the almost inevitable Victorian improvement—Miss McClatchey has noted how 'even houses built as late as the early years of the [19th] century were deemed inadequate by the incumbents of the mid-19th century'.[4] Clewer was no exception. Within three years of the appointment in 1844 of its most distinguished incumbent, Thomas Thelluson Carter (well known to church historians as 'Carter of Clewer') a commission of enquiry was investigating the condition of the Rectory. Grave defects were revealed.[5] The rear of the main Georgian block, of one storey only, comprised the Dining and Drawing Rooms (as may be seen on the Commission's plan, printed here as Plate II). These rooms, in the half century since their construction, had become barely inhabitable 'in consequence of the wet penetrating through the flat Roof which is covered with zinc and which has been repaired from time to time without curing the evil.' In addition, two extra 'sleeping rooms' were 'much required to make the Rectory a suitable residence for the Incumbent'. The commission's surveyor suggested that these could be built above the Dining and Drawing rooms, thus incidentally making them rainproof. Lastly, the back part of the servants' wing, which had also been added in the 18th century, was likewise in a bad condition, being 'very dilapidated and badly constructed' as a result of the use of brick nogging and elm quartering. The Commission's report obtained for the Rector a mortgage from Queen Anne's Bounty of

[1]The character of the facade suggests this date, but Mr. Howard Colvin has remarked, in a letter to the present writer, that the doorcase could conceivably be as late as 1810. The dimensions of the parsonage as a result of these changes were now about 50 feet by 80 feet. The tithe barn had been reconstructed by 1839 and measured then 70 feet by 25 feet (Tithe Commutation Map for Clewer, 1839).

[2]When the Rectory was being demolished in March, 1963, a brick-lined well, roughly 2 feet in diameter was found under the floorboards at the southeast corner of the Dining Room, just inside the door. The well contained metal piping and a pump; water was still visible at a depth of a little over six feet. Many Windsor premises had their own wells before the general introduction of a piped water supply, a well of similar construction with a pump being found during the demolition of No. 20 Peascod St. in February, 1955.

[3]D. McClatchey, *Oxfordshire Clergy, 1779–1869*, (1960), p. 22.

[4]*op. cit.* at chapter III, 'Parsonage Houses'.

[5]The remainder of this paragraph is based on the bundle of papers relating to the mortgage preserved in the Bodleian Library as MS. Oxf. dioc. papers b. 107 no. 6. They comprise a copy of the mortgage deed and related bond; a commission to enquire into the proposed work, endorsed with the commission's report; affidavit, certificate, specification, estimate, plans, section and elevations by Ingalton; and a brief statement of account by the nominees appointed to receive the loan of £580.

£585, and by August 1848 the third main series of alterations to the Rectory had been achieved (for this precise sum of money) by William Ingalton, a local builder. A first floor was added to the back of the main block, providing the extra two bedrooms (and also a dressing room); the dilapidated section at the back of the servants' wing was demolished, and, as may be seen in Plate II, equivalent accommodation for a servant's room and wash house, together with space for coals and ashes, added at the further end of the servants' wing, thus giving the Rectory once more a long rather than a four-square appearance.[1]

The reconstructed parsonage became, during Carter's incumbency of forty years, a famous centre of Victorian church life. From it, pamphlets, petitions, sermons, theological works and books of devotion came forth in quantity—the British Museum catalogue gives Carter some 150 titles—profoundly influencing the strategy of the second generation of Tractarian leaders. Although Carter was thrice prosecuted for 'ritual excesses' and even petitioned against by 150 of his own parishioners, it was possible for H. P. Liddon to claim that 'few clergymen are loved and revered throughout the Church of England as Mr. Carter', and the name of the parish, invariably joined to Carter's own, became for the first, and indeed the only time, of world-wide significance.[2]

On Carter's retirement in 1880, it was probably his successor, Roland Errington, who was responsible for the final change in the structure of the Rectory, by inserting late-Victorian type bay and French windows in the Dining and Drawing Rooms, looking out on to the garden at the back. The resulting building, which then survived unchanged to 1963, in its history of progressive expansion, symbolised the main stages in the enhancement of the status of the post-Reformation incumbent; and, as it finally stood, surrounded by tithe barn, ancient pond, gardens and glebe meadow, formed an artistic whole, the loss of which constitutes a marked impoverishment of the town landscape of the Royal Borough.[3]

[1]The dimensions proposed in Ingalton's plan, reproduced here as Plate II, correspond with the ground plan shown on the 25 inches to the mile Ordnance Survey map of August 1873. The depth of the main block was about 50 feet, its length 41 feet. The 17th century wing, as enlarged by Carter, was about another 41 feet in length, not counting the outhouses beyond. The tithe barn was not rebuilt in the Carter or Errington period and remained until destruction in 1963 of the same dimensions as shown on the 1839 map.

Mr. F. M. Underhill has most kindly provided the following notes concerning the brick dimensions and the fittings which he made during the demolition: The wall dividing the passage from the Dining Room and Drawing Room was 18 inches thick, and had some thin deal timber-framing in it. The bricks measured 9 in.×4 in.×2½ in. The Parlour had been wainscotted, but the woodwork had been removed some time previous to the demolition. The bare brick walls had several coats of distemper. Bricks in the back (west) wall of the room were stamped "L B C Phorpres." Bricks in the east wall (and Study wall) were 7½ in.×4 in.×3½ in. The wall dividing the old Kitchen from the Butler's Pantry was 22 in. thick and of varied bond. It was suggested by the demolition men that this had once been an outside wall. It contained bricks 8¼ in.×3½ in.×2½ in., also 8½ in.×4 in.×2½ in. Bricks in the Barn walls were: 8½ in.×4⅛ in.×2⅛ in. and 8½ in.×4 in.×2½ in. The wooden chimney-piece from the Drawing Room was marked "George Wright & Co. 155, Queen Victoria St. E.C."

[2]Canon Carter (he became an Hon. Canon of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford), after resigning in 1880 from Clewer, became Warden of the Community of St. John the Baptist, which he himself had founded, and for which he had built a mother house 500 yards to the south of the Rectory, in Hatch Lane. There he remained as Warden until his death in 1901. See the *Dictionary of National Biography, 1901–1911*; and also the well documented *Life and Letters of T. T. Carter*, ed. W. J. Hutchings, 3rd edition, 1904.

[3]It is good, however, to record that the Borough Engineer of Windsor arranged to have a photographic survey of the exterior before demolition began. The resulting photographs may be consulted at his office, Kipling Building, Windsor.