



Rectories of the Parishes of Laindon-cum Basildon and Langdon Hills.



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Rectories of Laindon-cum-Basildon

The parish of Laindon-cum Basildon has had a number of Rectories over the past five hundred years. Unfortunately, the several books on the subject of Basildon have either got them mixed up or their location confused.

After a fair amount of research, I believe I can put the story straight with a little history thrown in.

The first record of a house for a Laindon Priest is in the 1500's. It was known as the Chantry and it stood west of the church on the east side of Pound Lane and North of the Farm known as 'Salmons'. It is possible that this is part of an endowment by Thomas de Berdfield in 1329. This Chantry was endowed with "one messuage (dwelling house), 95 acres of arable and 13/4d. Rent" and is listed in the Commission on Chantries of 1547/8 to be confiscated.

The farm disappeared sometime in the early 1900's and in its place now stands Church View House an NHS Mental Health Rehabilitation Unit. Previously to this my grandparents had a bungalow on the site called "Concord" built in 1928. To the north of the bungalow, approximately three yards away, was a row of Elm Trees running up towards the church. It is believed that this row of tree may have once formed the hedge between the farm and Chantry.

The next possibility was St. Nicholas famous and unique Priest House, attached to the west end of the church. It is believed that it was built around 1630, possibly for a priest. R A Beckett, in "Romantic Essex" 1901 suggests that it may have been a "Church House", in which were kept utensils for cooking a "Church Ale", where "all things were civil and without scandal"



However, the Visitation (Questionnaire) of 1685 indicates that the building had been used as a schoolhouse and this is where our famous James Hornsby with his three wives were to live and teach the poor of Laindon and Basildon up to 1877 when it was replaced by a new school, Laindon Park.

The next, and really our first major rectory, was at the junction of Pipp's Hill Road, Rectory Road (now Cranes Farm Road) and Honey Pot Lane. The question is, when was it built? An inventory of 1610 described Laindon Rectory as a mansion house with sundry rooms. There was also a brew house, barn, two stables, a hay house and a long shed for hay. This is certainly not our Priest House at the west end of the church and looks as if it could possibly have been built before it.

In 1618 there is a report of locals being "annoyed by the hanging over of trees from the Laindon Parsonage" on the road to Nevendon at the junction of three roads. In my opinion the report is referring to the Pipp's Hill site.

In 1685 we have a further report that has the Rectors House "very much out of repair" All the lower rooms wanted flooring, the parlour wanted boarding and the gutters leaked into the upper room. The floor in the chamber over the parlour was "sunk downe all of one side, some faileur being in the beame."

An account of goods at the Laindon Rectory was taken in the mid eighteenth century and read as follows: -

"A large brass kettle, large boyler, frying pan, a jack (contrivance to turn a spit), seven pewter dishes, a dozen plates, 2 half hoggsheads and kilderkin, an ale stool, 3 tables, 7 chairs, a chest of drawers, 2 beds, 3 blankets and 3 quilts, 3 pilloughs, 1 bolster, curtains in the parlor and in the chamber, 2 tin pudding pans, 5 earthen pattipans, 4 earthen pudding pans, earthen saucepan, 2 earthen pots, 1 pitcher, 2 pint mugs, a Tray, a small sive, 6 earthen plates, firepan tongs and irons Trammel (iron hook to hang pots over fire) a chamber pot a besom."

Morant in 1788 stated: "that the Parsonage House at Laindon lies in a bottom betwixt Langdon Church and Basildon and by the form of the chimney seems to be a very ancient building" This house stood on the west side of Pipp's Hill Road near the entrance to Honey Pot Lane. This building was in the parish of Laindon and to get to it from St. Nicholas

church you continued along Church Hill into Basildon Road and at the 'T' junction with Pipp's Hill Road you turned right and it was on your right-hand side. The spot would today be roughly by the slip road off Cranes Farm Road called Pipp's Hill Close, leading to Holiday Inn, Festival Hall. All future Rectories until the latest were in the parish of Basildon.

There is no doubt in my mind that all these reports refer to the same building and it was to continue as our Rectory until the second one was built at the expense of the then rector, Reverend John F Colls in 1859. Whites trade directory of 1863 states that it was a handsome Rectory House, erected at a cost of about £4000. It was built in Rectory Road just opposite Church Road and was possibly the most impressive of all Laindon-cum-Basildon Rectories. On a marble slab, let into the outer wall, the Reverend Colls had the following inscription printed: -

***'If thou chance to find
A new house to thy mind
Be good to the poor
As God give thee store
Then my money is not lost,'***

T. Edwards described it as 'an old Victorian mansion in yellow brickwork and very large windows and a flat roof. One thing that always fascinated me was its chimneys built to copy the old Tudor style.' There is no doubt that it was a very attractive building and can still be remembered with affection by many local inhabitants.



Second Rectory

In 1929, following the death of Reverend Carpenter, this Rectory became 'Rectory Farm' also known as 'Grays Farm'. The building was uninhabited

during the Second World War, but was brought back into use as a nursery for some years before it was eventually demolished.

It was the new Rector, Reverend Michael Lake who decided that this rectory was too large and inconvenient. 'Oliphants Farm' situated at the end of a short track just off Rectory Road, few hundred yards away from Rectory Farm, became the next Rectory.



Old Oliphants

Oliphants can be traced back to the thirteenth century and took its name from the family who lived then. There is a mention of Juliana Honeywand in 1249 and Henry de Uniwent in 1254. In 1484 'Onyfaunts' was held by John Cornwallis of the Prior of St John of Jerusalem and in 1570 Thomas Kent left his son the lease of 'Allyvants'. As you can see there have been many variations on the spelling and even the name 'Elephants' has been used. There had obviously been a number of buildings by the name on the site and the building in the early part of the twentieth century was a timber built Tudor House. Unfortunately, it was destroyed by fire; a disaster that was going to strike many of Laindon and Basildon wooden buildings over the next seventy-five years.

It was soon rebuilt but not in such a grand style. The Terrier and Inventory for 1934 gives the following description of the building: - 'The house is built of concrete blocks, roofed with asbestos tiles and comprises, 8 rooms, 2 closets, larder and various cupboards etc, as fixtures' It had, however, a distinctive balcony right round the building.



New Oliphants

In the grounds was a two-room bungalow of timber construction, with asbestos tiled roof. Garage, some old farm buildings, potting shed and a timber closet.

'Oliphants,' turned out to be one of the most jinxed buildings in Basildon. During the war it was severely damaged by two bombs on the 17th September 1940 at the height of the 'Battle of Britain' and the Rector, Reverend F.W.J. Reynolds, his wife and three children luckily escaped injury. Then towards the end of the war on the 9th January 1945 it was hit by a V2 rocket which rendered the building uninhabitable. Before repairs could be completed it was struck by a second V2, virtually in the same crater on the 11th march 1945. It would appear that this second V2 was from the same launching pad.

Unfortunately, the building was beyond repair. A new one, the fourth, was commissioned, completed and occupied on the 18th August 1949. It was built on the same site as 'Oliphants.' Reverend Frederick W.J. Reynolds would have been the last incumbent in 'Oliphants' and the first in the new rectory. During the interim period reverend Reynolds lived in Billericay.



New Rectory

This building only had a very short life, being demolished in 1962 along with the old one in Rectory Road to make way for Ford Motor Company, tractor plant. It's a shame that Ford Motor Company did not build a new rectory for the Rector and the community.

The incumbent at the time was Reverend Winfield, Rector of Laidon-cum-Basildon and Rural Dean of Basildon. He and his family move to a new temporary Rectory, a corporation house, No. 1 Prior Close off Long Riding.



No1 Prior Close

On the 10th November 1963, St Martins-le-Tours the new church in Basildon Town Centre was officially open and soon afterwards a new rectory was built next to the church. The first incumbent was Reverend Dunlop to be followed by Reverend Grimwood and Reverend Webber.



Basildon Rectory – St Martins

In 1978 St Nicholas became part of a Team Ministry and our first Team Vicar was Reverend Fosbry who moved into 23 Claremont Road which

became the first vicarage in Laindon since 1859. He was followed in 1983 by Reverend Naunihal (Nihal) Paul. The team Ministry was disbanded in 1990 and Reverend Paul became our vicar. 23 Claremont Road was not really suitable, fortunately a nearby neighbour came to the diocese rescue and offered them their house at a price the diocese could afford on the understanding that Reverend Paul lived in it for at least five years. The offer was made because Nihal had made a tremendous effort to meet his parishioners. He practiced what he preached and his neighbours did not want Nihal and his family to leave the area. Claremont House, 38 Claremont Road became our last vicarage to date.



Rectories of Langdon Hills

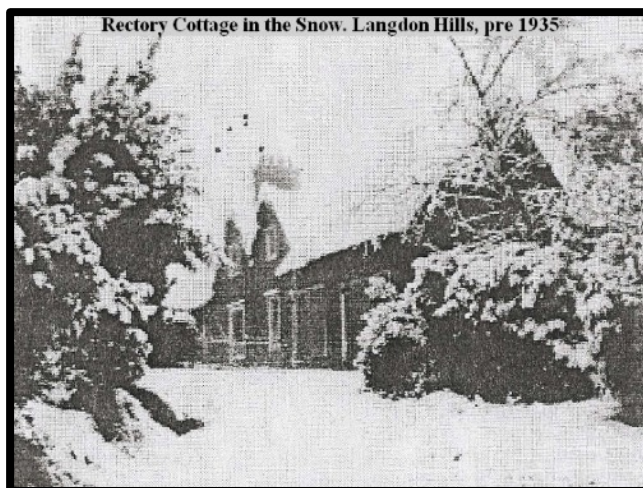
As far as I have been able to establish, I can only find records of there being three church rectories. The current one is a modern house in Berry Lane on the corner of the Badgers estate built in 1980. The first occupant being Reverend Alan Barrett (1987-1998).

The first was built for Reverend John Moore (Rector 1795-1821) because he was so charmed by the area decided to spend his summers in Langdon Hills. We must remember that until the 1800's, rectors tended to have several livings so it was rather unusually for them to live in the parishes where their ministries were. They tended to leave the day to day running of their ministries to their curates.

Reverend John Moore was therefore possibly one of the first rectors to spend any real amount of time in the parish. He obviously needed somewhere to live so he had a small cottage of wood built around 1795 in Old Church Hill Road.

When Reverend C Packman took up the living in 1825, he extended the back of the building. He also built another cottage, a stable and Chaise house at the back of the Rectory.

This building, like the building built for Reverend Moore, was of timber construction with a thatched roof and was still in occupation up to the 1930s. It was known as rectory cottage, possibly used by the Reverend Packman but more likely used by his various household servants.



First Rectory

In 1923 the Mayhew family moved to the cottage from Butlers Grove. The cottage at the time consisted of three bedrooms, large kitchen, sitting room, a lean-to scullery and the Chaise (Coach) house on the end.

Cooking and heating of water was done on a coal fired range in the kitchen, later improvements included a paraffin stove in the scullery. The stove had two wick type burners and a separate oven to place on top. In the scullery was also a brick-built copper with a fire place underneath for boiling the sheets etc on wash days. There was also a big mangle with wooden rollers for wringing the sheets and towels. The walls were only plank thick and the floor was composed of house bricks laid on the earth, a very damp room.

The only luxury was a flush toilet which emptied itself into the new rectory cesspit that was built in 1875. Just before the Mayhew family moved out in 1935 gas was laid on so the oil lamps and candles disappeared and a gas cooker was also installed. The cottage was demolished sometime in the 1950s to make room for a new bungalow and the remaining buildings were demolished in 1962.

In 1875 Reverend Euseby Digby Cleaver took up the living of Langdon Hills on the understanding that he did not only repair the church but also have a new rectory built at his own expense.

He instructed William White the same architect he used for the new church of St Mary's. The new rectory was built on the site of Moore's

cottage but nearer to the road. It was rather elaborate for the small Langdon Hills living but the Reverend Cleaver was obviously a generous Irishman from the linen family of Cleaver.

It is of red brick and its most striking feature is its rounded ‘tower’ of two rooms on its south west corner, the effect being somewhat like an oast house. The upstairs room of this tower was believed to have been used as a private chapel by his wife, Julian who was Italian, born in the East Indies and a practicing Roman Catholic.

The impressive chimney stacks were constructed so as to prevent smoking, though they do not appear to have been that successful. They were, however, commented on in 1889 when the building was described as *“the cosy little vicarage whose gable ends peeped pleasantly through the foliage and whose chimneys we observed, were ingeniously planned to prevent their smoking”*.

Although the Rectory had its own well in the back garden for water it also got water from a well opposite. The same well that supplied water to Goldsmiths and surrounding cottages, it was for a time, Donkey powered.



Back of the Old Rectory

The last Rector to live in the building which is now known as the Old Rectory was Reverend David Greaves (1979-1987). Many parts of the building were not being used as they had fallen into decay, especially the servants’ quarters. However, the current owner has restored the whole building to its former glory and beyond.

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