

A LITTLE HISTORY OF SOUTHCHURCH

By Mike Penry

Episode 18: THOSE HAPPY GOLDEN YEARS

... for the Rector, that is. In this episode we take a quick look back to the 1880s, by means of a fascinating Terrier compiled in 1887. No idea what a Terrier is? Me neither, so here's a helpful description from LutterworthHistory.co.uk:

"A church terrier is a document, usually a written survey or inventory, which gives details of glebe, lands and property in the parish owned by the Church and held by a clergyman as part of the endowment of his benefice, and which provided the means by which the incumbent (rector, vicar or perpetual curate) could support himself and his church."

Do bear in mind that this was much like a tax return today: the Rector was attempting to play down his income, rather than boast about his wealth!

Parsonage house

The Rectory is an old house and was enlarged by JHR Sumner, a former Rector, about the year 1860. He got a grant of £900 from Queen Anne's Bounty, which was gradually repaid; and in 1887 the Rectory was free from debt. The gardens surrounding are about 3½ acres.

Churchyard

The Churchyard adjoins the Rectory grounds and measures about three-quarters of an acre.

Farm belonging to the Benefice

No farm belongs to the Benefice.

Any other building belonging to the Benefice

A building, partly stable and partly dwelling house, is occupied by "May" our coachman. Rent-free on garden ground. Also two barns with thatched roofs used for fowls and school treats and wood cutting.

Any other several Fields belonging to the Benefice

Glebe land held by three tenants, viz:

John Brown	42 acres
Mr Belcham	9¾ acres
Mr Whittingham	2¾ acres

all in Southchurch.

Gross annual amount due from

(a) Tithe Rent-Charge in 1887	£670-0-0
lowered by:	
(i) house duty, income tax and land tax.	
(ii) double poor rates, double highway rates, necessary curate (£140),	
(iii) collection 5%	
to	£502-0-0
(b) Rents of glebe land for the year 1887	£148-0-0
<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	£650-0-0

So the real total - even excluding a rather nice house - was £818.

A curate was quite clearly necessary: the population of the parish had after all crept up to 909 by 1896! I suppose, to be fair, we should remember that a far higher proportion of the population attended church back then.

To put those 1887 figures in context, Anthony Trollope's Bassetshire novels, written in the 1860s, recorded:

- Josiah Crawley, the perpetual curate of Hogglestock, had a "miserable stipend" of £130 per annum,
- his reward for good behaviour at the end of The Last Chronicle of Barset was the living of St Ewold's at a much more acceptable £350 per annum,
- Mr Quiverful, the vicar of Puddingdale, had a reasonable benefice of £400, but it was a struggle putting food on the table for his 14 children,
- the exceedingly desirable living of Framley, which provided "a position in the world, and an income sufficient for a gentleman", had an income of £900 per annum.

Other fees collected by the church were:

- Baptism
 - nil (Baptism fees were outlawed by an act of parliament in 1872)
- Churching (the blessing and purification of a woman after childbirth, analogous to the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Luke 2:22)
 - 1/-
- Marriage banns
 - 6/-
- Marriage licence
 - 10/6
- Burial in common grave
 - 5/-

In fact, the high fees for marriages (often more than a week's wages) led to many couples shunning the tradition, to the horror of the clergy. The result was that some churches waived the marriage fees altogether to keep their flock on the 'straight and narrow'.

In case you were thinking that the incumbent had little need of the additional income from fees, it is also recorded that substantial alms were given to the poor by the Rector "doubly and trebly". What true Christian generosity!

Come back in a couple of weeks' time for Episode 19: "The Growth of Southend".

- Southchurch Park is gifted by Messrs. Baxter, Dowsett and Ingram.
 - Southchurch is swallowed up!
 - Our rector leads the resistance.

See all Episodes of 'A Little History of Southchurch' [here](#)