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COLESHILL
AND
GREAT COXWELL

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20 p.

COLESHILL

HISTORICAL OUTLINE

Journeying from Great Coxwell to Coleshill, the traveller passes Badbury Hill, now National Trust property, where once was an Iron Age hill-fort. Three thousand years ago men discovered the natural advantages of this fertile land, choosing a commanding position above the surrounding countryside. Below it to the west lies what is now the village of Coleshill, pleasantly sited on a hill sloping down to the river Cole, until recently the boundary between Berkshire and Wiltshire, crossed by a bridge at the south-west end of the village. It is now mainly a nineteenth century model village of attractive Cotswold stone houses, which together with the church form a pleasant group of native architecture.

On the green to the south of the church is the base and part of the shaft of a village cross.

Until 1952 the village was dominated by a superb seventeenth century mansion, which stood overlooking wooded parkland. It was designed by Roger Pratt for his cousin, Sir George Pratt, under the direction of the famous Inigo Jones, and was the first Jonesian house in the country. The staircase and moulded plaster ceilings were outstanding. In 1952 it was gutted by fire and subsequently entirely demolished; only the stables and outbuildings, a circular dovecote and two handsome gateways opening on to the road now survive. The tragedy is all the greater since the house was under repair when the devastating fire occurred; indeed it is the carelessness of a workman that is believed to have started the conflagration.

At the time of the Domesday Survey (1086) the principal manor was held by St. Mary's Abbey, Winchester, one of the four major nunneries in the country, and it remained in this possession until the middle of the fourteenth century, but was let to the de Coleshill family from the end of the twelfth century. In 1351 it was acquired by William de Edington, Bishop of Winchester, who made it over to his newly founded priory at Edington, Wiltshire, in whose possession it remained until the Suppression in 1539. Henry VIII granted Coleshill to his brother-in-law, Thomas Seymour, the plausible scoundrel who was later to marry Henry's widow, Katherine Parr. On Seymour's execution for high treason in 1549 the manor passed to his brother, Protector Somerset, another scoundrel, who also met his just deserts, in 1552.

In 1563 Queen Elizabeth granted the manor to Arthur, Lord Grey of Wilton, but his son and successor, Thomas, was attainted for treason in 1603, and the estate reverted to the Crown. It was soon afterwards acquired by Henry Pratt, and on the death of his grandson, Henry, in 1674, the manor (and newly built manor house) passed to his grand-daughter, Mary, wife of Thomas Pleydell. The manor remained in the possession of this family until the death of Sir Mark Stuart Pleydell in 1768, when it passed to his grandson, Jacob, 2nd Earl of Radnor. Sir Mark Pleydell's only child Harriet, who predeceased her father, married William Bouverie, Viscount Folkestone, who was created Earl of Radnor in 1765. Jacob their son assumed the name Pleydell in addition to his own. The Pleydell-Bouverie family remained lords of the manor until 1945, when Mr. E. E. Cook bought the estate. It was bequeathed by him to the National Trust in 1956.

The Pleydells seem to have lived in Coleshill from the second half of the fifteenth century, but their original status is uncertain. A moated enclosure to the north east of the village is claimed as the site of their residence. In about 1500 Thomas Pleydell erected an imposing chantry chapel on the south side

of the church, and endowed a priest to serve it, which suggests that the family was already of some consequence at that time.

The Bouveries were originally a noble family of Flanders and first came to England in 1568 when Laurence des Bouveries with his wife Barbara settled at Canterbury.

THE CHURCH

The church of All Saints stands on a small eminence above the village green surrounded by its ancient graveyard. There is a pleasing fifteenth century tower with castellated top surmounted by pinnacles, and containing a west window and door of the same period. Although the tower has been restored some old stonework remains, including a small quatrefoil window. The two-storeyed south porch is 14th century and has a charming lancet window in the parvise, or upper storey. The thirteenth century doorway has a trefoil head, and the door is ornamented with very fine wrought iron work. Just inside the door is a mutilated holy water stoup.

Inside the church the history of the fabric is not easy to decipher, largely owing to much refashioning in the eighteenth century and later. The earliest surviving feature is the south arcade which is late twelfth century. The north arcade is a hundred years later. The chancel was probably rebuilt in the fourteenth century, as is suggested by a blocked north window.

The chantry built by Thomas Pleydell was rebuilt in 1750 as a manorial chapel, for lord and lady, their family and servants, and remained so, with additions and alterations, in the nineteenth century. Fragments of the original worked stone from the chantry chapel are built in under the seats of the porch; in the chapel is a recumbent effigy of a lady, probably Agnes, wife of Thomas Pleydell, under a foliated canopy. Here there are late eighteenth century boxpews, a stone shield with the arms of Champneys

impaling Pleydell, and an inscribed brass plate asking prayers for the souls of Thomas Pleydell, Agnes his wife, his father William, mother Isabella and daughter Rose. There is also a most interesting genealogical brass tablet on the east wall of the chapel written in Old English giving the history of the de Coleshill and Pleydell families. The south Window erected by the Bouverie family is good twentieth century glass depicting St. Christopher, the Good Shepherd and St. George. There is a small mutilated pieta of uncertain date and on the west wall a fragment of late mediaeval carving.

The painted glass in the east window of the church was inserted in 1788, as is proved by the following note in the Registers:— 'The Earl of Radnor ornamented the chancel by the addition of an elegant painted window which was put up over the altar October 6 1788'. This is a 'Gothick' quatrefoil window, presumably made to fit the early sixteenth century glass which is said to have come from Angers, and is certainly of French origin; it depicts the Nativity with much charm.

The north arcade is normal thirteenth century work, but the west bay was cut short when the tower was erected; it has round columns and caps and double chamfered pointed arches. In the tower are corbels with heads which once supported or were intended to support vaulting. The chancel arch contains stonework revealing evidence of frescoes. In the east respond is a trefoil piscina which served the aisle altar. Owing to various reconstructions very little of the original south aisle remains; the east bay of the arcade, c1190, opens to the reconstructed chapel and the west portion is largely nineteenth century refashioning. The church is fortunate in retaining old paving, that of the chancel eighteenth century and the rest old slabs of uncertain date. In the south wall of the chapel are two tomb recesses, the western of which contains an early sixteenth century female effigy. Roofs:— Chancel cambered beam, plastered below the rafters and probably eighteenth century; nave cambered beam with wall posts, plastered below the rafters, possibly sixteenth century; north aisle plain plastered

lean-to, post mediaeval; chapel cambered beam, plastered below the rafters, post mediaeval; south aisle modern. It is probable that the principal timbers in the chancel and chapel are re-used material from earlier roofs.

FITTINGS

The fittings are not outstanding. The mediaeval items were mostly swept away in the eighteenth century and what then replaced them fell a victim to the Victorians. The font, with plain round bowl, is thirteenth century but has been scraped. In the north aisle is a marble altar on four legs, probably late eighteenth century and doubtless originally in the chancel. There are attractive gated altar rails with four heraldic shields and a carved oval wood panel displaying the Hanoverian Royal Arms before 1801.

MONUMENTS

In the chancel is an imposing wall monument to Henry Pratt (1647) in black and white marble with his semi-reclining effigy above and a recumbent effigy of his wife below.

Mural Tablets:—

(1) Rachell Pleydell (1743)

(2) Harriet Viscountess Folkestone (1750) erected 1751, with two profile portraits in an oval medallion by Rysbrack.

(3) Sir Mark Stuart Pleydell (1768), erected in 1802, a tall Gothic canopied structure.

BELLS

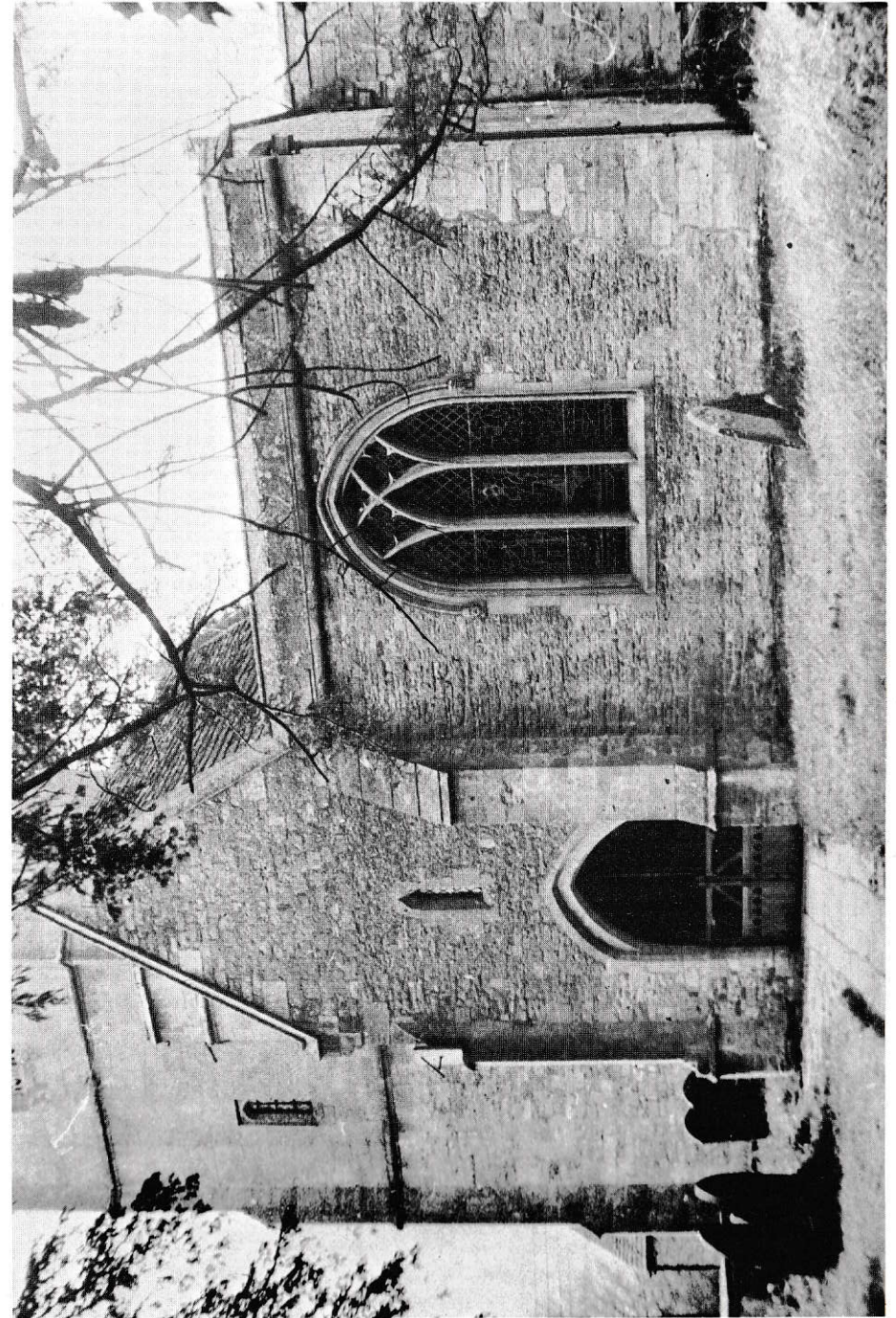
There is a ring of six bells and a sanctus. The second, fourth, fifth and tenor are dated 1708, the third 1884 and treble 1938; the sanctus is undated.

REGISTERS

There are mixed entries from 1559 to 1580, then separate entries of baptisms and marriages to 1674; baptisms 1675 to 1752; marriages 1675 to 1730 and 1733 to 1778; burials 1675 to 1752; marriages 1755 to 1796; baptisms and burials 1782 to 1812; there are also various entries on separate sheets. Full entries are continuous from 1812.

LIST OF INCUMBENTS FROM 1580

| | |
|------|-----------------------------|
| 1580 | William Burton |
| 1599 | Edmund Harris |
| 1644 | John Hinckley |
| 1663 | John Smyth |
| 1666 | John Pinsent |
| 1706 | William Gregory |
| 1731 | Charles Rich |
| 1741 | John Newton |
| 1764 | William Stock |
| 1771 | Samuel Swire |
| 1787 | Richard Laurence |
| 1800 | John Prince |
| 1806 | Edward Bouverie |
| 1855 | B. Hope Hooper |
| 1857 | Richard W. Allsopp (Curate) |
| 1875 | Edward Banks |
| 1899 | John Footman |
| 1907 | Herbert W. Scofield |

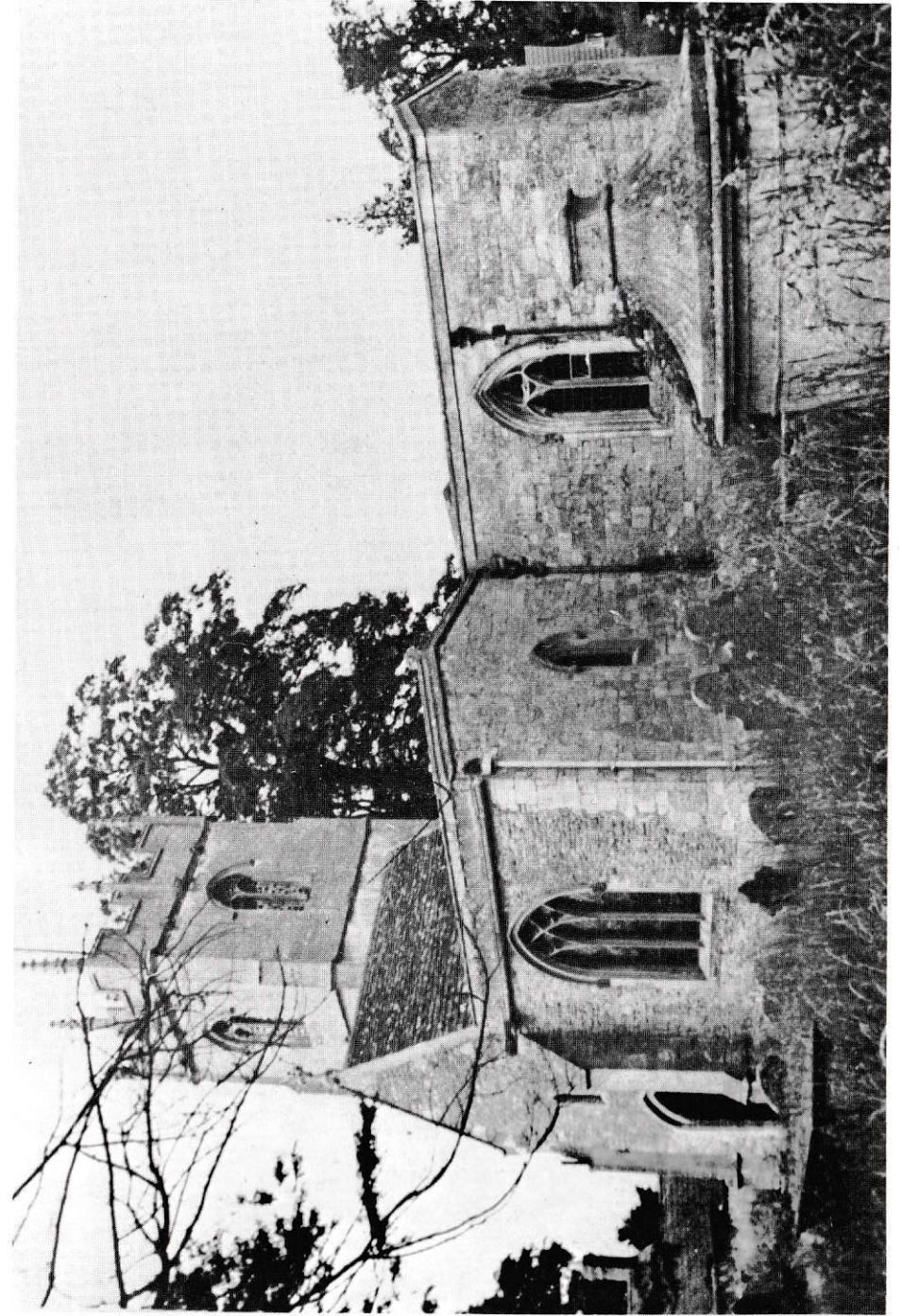


COLESHILL CHURCH - SOUTH PORCH AND CHAPEL

Photo F.C. Froud



COLESHILL CHURCH – INTERIOR FROM WEST
Photo F.C. Froud



COLESHILL CHURCH – EXTERIOR FROM SOUTH
Photo Peter J. Reason



GREAT COXWELL TYTHE BARN
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GREAT COXWELL CHURCH – INTERIOR FROM WEST
Photo F.C. Froud



GREAT COXWELL CHURCH – EXTERIOR FROM NORTH

Photo F.C. Froud

1938 William S. Porter
(Then held in plurality with Great Coxwell)
1943 George F. C. Bond
1955 Edward Kemble Wicks
1965 Kendrick C. Joyce
1969 Bernard J. M. Thackeray
1974 George Reginald Wells

GREAT COXWELL

HISTORICAL OUTLINE

At the time of the Norman Conquest (1066) the manor belonged to King Harold and consequently passed to the Conqueror. It continued as a royal demesne until 1205 when King John granted it, together with the rectory, to the Cistercian Abbey of Beaulieu (Hants.), which he had recently founded. It continued in monastic possession until the suppression of the Abbey in 1539. The following year it was purchased from the Crown by Thomas Morris (or Morys) who had previously had a lease of some of the land from the Abbey. This family continued in the Faith of their fathers and Francis, Thomas's son, had a secret chapel in the court house where he sheltered the future martyr, Edmund Campion, and for which he was subsequently imprisoned. In 1638 another Thomas Morris and his son sold the estate to George Pratt of Coleshill and the manor henceforth followed in that manorial descent. The Morris family had doubtless been much impoverished by the fines imposed for absenting themselves from worship in the parish church, as in conscience they must have felt compelled to do.

Early in the fourteenth century (i.e. before 1330) the rectory came into the possession of the Bishops of Salisbury who retained the patronage until 1836, when Berkshire being transferred to the diocese of Oxford it passed to the Bishop of that See. Within recent years the advowson has been united with that of Coleshill.

Beaulieu Abbey possessed a grange, or court house, to the north of the village. The house seems to have been rebuilt in the latter part of the seventeenth century, but it is quite possible that the core at least may be earlier. It is of stone

with stone slated roof and some of the windows are mullioned and transomed. The glorious late thirteenth century monastic barn to the north of the house is one of the finest mediaeval barns surviving anywhere. William Morris, whose home at Kelmscott is only a few miles away across the Thames, called it 'as noble as a cathedral'. It is 152 feet long and 31 feet high and is of stone with a vast expanse of stone slated roofing; it is of rubble masonry with ashlar faced buttresses. There are transeptal segmental arched entrances on either side and within it is divided by wooden posts on tall stone bases into nave and aisles. The roof is a splendid piece of mediaeval carpentry with tie beams, collars and braces. The large openings in the end walls are eighteenth century or later. Slit openings in the walls afford light and air. It may be noted here that the barn of another Beaulieu grange survives in a ruined state at St. Leonards in the New Forest which was considerably larger than that at Great Coxwell, measuring 210 feet by 70 feet and of much the same date. Here, too, are the remains of a contemporary chapel. These huge barns are readily explainable when it is remembered that the Cistercian monks were great farmers and required adequate accommodation for the storage of hay and corn.

HISTORY OF THE FABRIC

The church of Great Coxwell was endowed in 1086 with half a hide of land. In 1204, however, it is described as a chapel. How much of the original building, if any, remains is doubtful.

The present church of St Giles consists of chancel, nave, north porch and west tower. There is a stone sanctus bellcote on the east gable of the nave. The nave and chancel are probably c.1200. The chancel arch, which is very narrow, seems to be rather later. The south wall of the chancel and much of the east wall were largely rebuilt c.1290. The tower is fifteenth century and the former west window of the nave was apparently

reset in the tower. The porch, which has stone lateral walls and a timber front, is fourteenth century and the sanctus bellcote fifteenth century. The original string course of the chancel stops just short of the east window on the north thus indicating the degree of reconstruction c.1290. On the north are two original lancets. The east window, consisting of three stepped and cusped lancets under a round arch, is late thirteenth century and closely resembles the reset west window in the tower. The two-light south-east window with bar tracery must be of about the same date, as is the adjacent cinquefoil headed piscina. Further west is a plain square framed doorway. The south-west chancel window is a lancet continued down to form a lowside window with a shutter; the sill is cut away to accommodate a stone seat. The nave retains two original windows on the north but the doorway seems to be rather later. On the south the easternmost window is fifteenth century and next is a renewed three-light square framed one to the west of which is an original doorway converted at some period into a window. Further west is an early fourteenth century two-light with cusped rere-arch. The window high up at the west of the nave served the gallery, since removed.

In the south-east of the nave is the angled newel stair to the former rood loft which spanned the nave in front of the chancel arch.

The tower has diagonal buttresses on the west and an embattled parapet; the belfry windows are square framed of two lights and shuttered while lower down are lancet windows and an empty niche. The gargoyles are interesting, especially the sucking pigs on the west side.

The roofs of the chancel and nave are of braced rafter type, the latter with tie beams.

FITTINGS AND MONUMENTS

The font with plain octagonal bowl is probably fourteenth century and the wooden cover seventeenth century. The pulpit is Jacobean on a modern base. The altar rails and holy table are late seventeenth century, the former with the typical flat balusters of the period. The nave seating is made up from the eighteenth century box pews which the Victorian 'restorers' demolished. On either side of the altar there is an aumbrey, one probably for the holy oils and one for the reservation of the sacrament. Just above are two niches.

In the east window is engraved heraldic glass of 1796 by Eginton. There is a chest dated 1702 and the credence table in the sanctuary is formed from portions of seventeenth century carved woodwork. The attractive altar candlesticks are probably of foreign provenance and late eighteenth century date.

A recent addition to the fittings is the set of attractive embroidered kneelers designed and worked by the ladies of the village in 1970-73.

The oldest memorial is a brass to William Morys (Morris) 'sumtyme fermor of Cokyswell' and his wife Joan. There is no date but it is obviously early sixteenth century; the figure of Joan is now on a separate slab. Morris was the tenant of the Beaulieu Abbey estate and no doubt lived in the grange; it was probably his son Thomas who purchased the property from the Crown in 1540.

The following mural monuments are worthy of note:—

(1) The Revd. Philip Collyer (1749), his wife Barbara (1753), his daughter Frances Spindler (1743) and son-in-law the Revd. Bond Spindler (1783), with entablature and cherubs' heads at the top.

(2) Henry Roberts (1752), his wife Elizabeth (1758) and other members of the family, in grey and white marble with fluted pilasters and backpiece.

(3) Ann Batho (1774) in grey and white marble with a cherub standing at an urn.

(4) The Revd. John Bowles (1788) and his wife Sarah (1791) with entablature and pediment.

BELLS

There is a ring of five bells and a sanctus. The treble, third and fourth are dated 1738, the second 1824, the tenor 1911 and the sanctus 1839.

REGISTERS

The registers begin in 1557.

LIST OF INCUMBENTS

| | |
|------|--------------------------|
| | William de Capellanus |
| 1243 | William de Bodeham |
| 1280 | Thomas |
| 1302 | William de Hemyngborough |
| 1330 | Nicholas Beekote |
| | John de Neuton |
| 1350 | John Northem |
| 1363 | William de Radinfeld |
| 1414 | Robert Redeler |
| 1430 | John Drewest |
| 1470 | John Bokenaler |
| | Henry Stanfeld |
| 1508 | William Dalley |

| | |
|------|-------------------------------------|
| | John Knolles |
| 1541 | William Bayly |
| 1556 | William Netherton |
| 1590 | Richard Lewes |
| 1608 | Thomas Bybie |
| 1644 | Francis Osbaldeston |
| 1676 | David Collyer |
| 1724 | Philip Collyer |
| 1749 | Richard Payne |
| 1770 | John Bowles |
| 1788 | George Foxton |
| 1815 | John Francis Cleaver |
| 1861 | Henry Skinner Templer |
| 1878 | Richard Hope Hooper |
| 1899 | R. St. Lo Auber |
| 1912 | Walter Boldero |
| 1923 | Samuel Cox |
| 1934 | Sydney G. Farrar |
| 1936 | Vernon A. Busbridge |
| 1942 | George F. C. Bond |
| 1955 | Edward Kemble Wicks |
| 1965 | Kendrick C. Joyce |
| 1969 | Bernard J. M. Thackeray |
| 1974 | George Reginald Wells |
| 1980 | <i>Robert Charles Swankborough.</i> |