

Then and Now: The Very Old Vicarage



Take a stroll along the north side of Worle High Street and you will spot a building with a surprising history. Now occupied by Nigel Groves Funeral Directors and Berry, Redman, Gordon and Penney, solicitors, it is a long, shallow building with an oddly shaped roof line at the Weston end and is surrounded by concrete and car parking spaces. The attractive dormer windows have disappeared: even the bay window and the veranda are long gone. Now take a look at the photograph taken in 1907. The roof line is identical, but there is a pathway framing the house and climbing plants adorning it.

The 1840 tithe map provides the first evidence I have found for this building. Its plot is numbered 507 and is described as 'Vicarage house, garden and premises.' At that time it was the home of Rev. Nathaniel Wodehouse, who became vicar of Worle in 1829. The house stood in 5 acres of glebe land and whilst it may have looked attractive, it had nothing in the way of modern facilities, but the Wodehouse family lived there happily and only left in 1871, following Nathaniel's death. Rev. Charles Doherty moved in for a few years, and then in 1875 rev. William Rose took up residence for over 20 years before moving to the parish of Hutton, nearby. A succession of incumbents followed: Rev. Chas Kent [1896], then Rev. Alfred Cecil Harman [1902] and Rev. Frederick Bentley [1907]. In all this time very little was done to modernise the living quarters. Cecil Harman's son, Lancelot, wrote a book about his father entitled 'Cheers, Sir', in which he says of the vicarage at Worle:

"The vicarage apparently didn't boast a bathroom or indoor lavatory, the only available being at the bottom of the garden."

In 1910 Rev. George Bode and his family moved into the house and remained there, caring for his flock until after World War One, when the vicarage was sold in 3 lots; Lot 1: The Residence, Lot 2: Freehold Accommodation Land, Lot 3: Accommodation Garden Land. The auction was held on **13th February, 1919**, when it was bought by Mr. Jones of Fairfield House. The coach house, cowshed and tennis courts all disappeared over time and in 1934 the building was converted into 3 dwellings, known as 1, 2 and 3 Kirklands. Raye Green, Worle History Society