

3. Then and Now: The not-so-old Vicarage



Following on from article one, I thought some memories of the not-so-old Vicarage in Church Road might be appropriate.



The house, pictured left, was originally called 'Westacre' and was built by Mr Hardwick (of Springfield House) around 1890 in the high Victorian style. On the 1840 Tithe map of the area is undeveloped pasture land. Numbered 572a, the land was owned by Sir John Smyth and rented by John Wyld.

When the house was built Coronation Road (above) had not been developed and the area was known locally as 'Ten Acres'. 'Westacre' became the home of Dr. Frederick St. John Kemm and his family. Dr. Kemm was not a Worle man, but he married a local girl and brought up his family here before retiring to Clifton in 1911. Whilst living at Westacre he joined the hand bell ringers at the Church and is pictured with them, bewhiskered, in 1908. I think we can assume that Dr Kemm's heart was still in Worle, as he and his family are all buried in St Martin's Churchyard in grave A31, close to the Church.

Dr Kemm in red



The handbell group was formed in 1908 with 12 bells from the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, London. In this copy of a 1908 photograph

are (left to right): John White; Henry Wyatt, landlord of the Lamb Inn; Alfred White, captain; H.M. Day, farmer of Court House Farm (near the Nut Tree Inn); the Rev Frederick Bentley, Vicar of Worle

(1907-11); Doctor Kemm, who lived in the former vicarage in Church Road (now flats); Jack Burroughs, villager; Frank White; Jim White; and Arthur Badcock.

In 1919 the very old Vicarage in Worle High Street was sold and the Church purchased Westacre to serve as its new Vicarage. For much of the 20th century it was variously occupied by the Reverends Maurice Holme, May, Vallance Cook, Foster, Curtis and Radcliffe. Rev. May saw the village through the horrors of World War 2 and is also buried in the local Churchyard.

Eric Vallance Cook is fondly remembered to this day, despite leaving Worle in the early 1960s. He allowed the Guide Company to hold their meetings on Friday evenings each week in the outhouse at the rear of the building and occasionally the Church Lads' Brigade were permitted to use his back garden and orchard as a shooting range with Ron Tabrett's air rifle. So, a whole generation was very familiar with the vicarage and the vicar. He also took a great interest in the Century Club and spent his last evening in Worle at the Club before he and his wife made the move to Chard.

The house had few modern facilities. Hot water had been installed in 1953, but despite the wonderful views over the Mendips, the house was unwieldy and expensive to run, and was eventually sold to be replaced by a block of modern flats with balconies facing south, which are still there today.

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