

The History of Modern Wiltshire 1829 (extracts from)
By James Everard, Baron Arundell of Wardour & Sir Richard Colt Hoare, Bart

Rectors of Semley

1304 Thomas de Rouen
1339 John de Wotton on the resignation of T. de Rouen
1418 Wetherby
1422 John Fowey on the death of Wetherby
1423 John Ellis on the resignation of Fowey
1423 Simon Sydenham on the death of Ellis
1423 Thomas Rowland in exchange with Sydenham
1430 John Bordeaux
1466 Robert Pewsey on the death of Bordeaux
1477 Walter Helle on the death of Pewsey
1494 Edward Willoughby on the resignation of Helle
1508 Richard Panter on the death of Willoughby
1512 Thomas Martyn on the death of Panter
1512 John Willoughby on the death of Martyn
1540 John Wrynox on the death of Willoughby
15.... Thomas Lawrence on the death of Wrynox
1627 Eleusis Lawrence on the death of Thomas Lawrence
By the parliament return in 1640, it appears that Mr. Matthew Toogood was then the incumbent, that he supplied the cure, received the profits and preached constantly twice a day. In a return of what was called "The tryers of goodly and orthodox divisions" in 1645, a Mr. John Noake is described as "a painful preacher" and was allowed £10 per annum; he was probably curate to Mr. Toogood, as Mr. Toogood continued the incumbent till his ejection in 1661.
1661 Robert Haysome
1662 Thomas Smythe on the resignation of Haysome
1708 John Phillips on the death of Smythe
1725 David Gregory, D.D. on the death of Phillips
1759 Peter Foulkes on the resignation of Dr. Gregory
1778 Lewis Stephens on the death of Foulkes
1800 Charles Barker on the resignation of Stephens
1812 Ralph Ord on the death of Barker

Notes on the Rectors

The Rev. Edward Willoughby, who was presented to the living in 1494, was the brother of the Abbess of Wilton, he was also Dean of the cathedral church of Exeter, Rector of Berwick St. John, Chaplain of Avon, and Rector of Luddington. He was of the family of Willoughby of Eresby.

Of the Rev. Mr. Toogood, who was Rector during the Commonwealth, I extract the following account. "He had his grammar learning at a considerable school at Gillingham in Dorsetshire. Before entering on his ministry, he was master of a school at Shaftesbury where he educated two of his sons, who became men of considering learning; one was a minister, the other a physician. The father was for some time Rector of Hilperton in Wiltshire from whence he removed to this place sometime previously to the Act of Uniformity taking place. On that event he was ejected from his living; nevertheless, he preached privately in his own house and kept a school there for about seven years afterwards. He was buried in Semley church, on the wall between the chancel and the south door. Two of his grandsons are now (1775) living, and both dissenting ministers at Exeter; the one is Mr. Michael Toogood, son of the physician, well known by his writings in favour of religious liberty; the other is Mr. Stephen Toogood, son of the brother of the physician before mentioned". Nonconformist Mem.

The Rev. John Phillips, presented in 1708, was also Rector of the parishes of Holy Trinity and St. Peter in Shaftesbury. He was a native of Gillingham, at which place he was buried in 1735.

The Rev. Peter Foulkes, presented in 1759, was buried in Exeter cathedral, where a monument records him in these words: Peter Foulkes, M.A. third son of Peter Foulkes, D.D. Prebendary of this church and Rector of Semley Wilts. Born 19th February 1717. Died 27th April 1778.

The Rev. Lewis Stephens, presented in 1778, resigned the living in 1800 on account of his infirmities, expressing himself as not worthy of the labourer's hire, when he could no longer work.

The Rev. Charles Baker, M.A., presented in 1800, was Chaplain to the House of Commons, and one of the Canons of the cathedral church of Wells; he died at that place and was buried. He had deservedly the character of a learned and orthodox divine.

By the monument to Susannah, the wife of Thomas South, Rector, it is evident that there was such a Rector, but his name does not appear in the Institution Book at Salisbury.

Connected with the ecclesiastical history of the parish, I deem it not irrevelant (*sic*) to say, that in the year 1823, a Baptist meeting-house was built on the green near the church of Semley, having on the front the word "Bethesda, A.D. 1823". It is a neat building with an appropriate pool for the immersing or baptizing adult Christians. The present minister is Mr. Hull, whose residence adjoins the chapel. There is no other dissenting meeting house in the parish".