

Box 14-101

The Vicars' Boards

These are now (2018) on the wall in the N.E. part of the Nave near the Quex Chapel screen. Originally the oldest one was where the Second World War Memorial now is, on the site of the old north door. They were re-sited beside Quex Chapel for some time but moved to their present position in c. 2000.

Originally Birchington was a chapelry of Monkton, the Rector and Vicar of Monkton was also the Vicar of Birchington.

The mother church of Monkton was in existence at the time of the Domesday Survey 1088, together with either the church of St. Nicholas at Wode or Woodchurch or All Saints Birchington. Under the heading of Monkton, the Domesday Survey simply says there were two chapels, but does not specify which they were.

Very early on, the inhabitants of Birchington were required to contribute towards the repair of the mother church of Monkton.

It was in 961 that Queen Ediva, the widow of King Edmund the Elder, gave the Manor of Monkton, which included Birchington and Wode by then, to the monks of Christchurch Canterbury, as a 'thank offering'. From that time to the present day the living has been in the gift of the Archbishop who is really the head of Canterbury Cathedral.

In 1367 Monkton was made a Vicarage with chapels at Birchington and Wode. The first Vicar of Monkton was required to maintain a priest to serve at each chapel. The priest at Birchington was to celebrate every day "if conveniently he could" and to be paid £6 per annum by the vicar of Monkton.

The first Minister at Birchington to be mentioned in our documents is **Father Cuthbert**. In the Churchwardens A/C for **1532** is this entry,

"Itm of Fr Cuthbert for hys house VIIIls."

This is what he paid for rent.

Father Thomas is mentioned in the accounts again in 1532 -
"Itm for on(e) window to Fr Thomas cha(mbyr, bords, nails hokys, & ryde, & on(e) stapell Xd

Thomas Norman paid a half years rent of IIIls (4s)"

Father Thomas Norman was buried at Birchington in 1539.

The entry in the Burial Register is as follows,

"Ano Dni 1539

Thoma Norman Clericus pochialis sepult 15 die Maii

He was followed by **Father Richard Norwood**.

The following entry shows what he paid for rent -

"1539 of Rychard for ferm of the churche house (Vicarage) - Vs

"1541 he paid IIIls"

Father Edward Slater paid 5s. He was buried in Birchington in 1545.

Sir William Miles was Curate from 1545 to 1560.

He paid "for hys house Vs." per year.

He was buried near the font in Monkton Church.

Archdeacon Harpsfield in his Visitation of 1557 suspended **William Miles** for 'incontinency', until he had cleared himself. In his will, Miles left to Birchington Church his Corporal case of cloth of gold. (This was the case holding the cloth on which the sacred elements are placed during the Mass)

William Tye was Minister in 1600 and we owe a great due to him. It was while he was Minister that in 1603 the House of Convocation passed a resolution requiring parchment

registers to be provided. The old paper registers to be transcribed therein at least as far back as the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, and he carried out those instructions at any rate as far as the copying registers into a parchment book was concerned. He was one of the few priests who did this. We have to thank Father Norman who commenced keeping the registers in 1538 and those succeeding Ministers up to the time of William Tye that we are one of the few parishes possessing Registers dating as far back as 1538, the earliest possible date.

William Tye was married here at Birchington, the first priest to be married of whom we have a record.

Thomas Greenfield was Curate in 1618-19 but his name does not appear. He owned Laburnum House. He was a rebellious person and was brought before the Ecclesiastical Court in Canterbury.

He appears to have made much contention and debate in the parish and made 'many invective sermons, abusing texts of Scripture' to fit his own hands, "to gall, touch and personate such of his parishioners as he was offended at". He was Curate only two years.

He was followed by **George Stancombe**, one of our most notable Ministers, who served from **1618 to 1647**, during the difficult time of the beginning of the **Civil War**. He became a B.A. at 17. He was also Rector of Stonar, a sinecure in the gift of Sir Henry Crispe. Many of our Books and documents are in his hand writing – The Vow and Covenant, the Churchwardens Accounts, and the beginning of the Poor Books. He wrote 20 of the 80+ Apprentice Indentures which we have, and also the Contract for the casting of the treble bell with Joseph Hatch. When the Vicar of Monkton, **Dr. Meric Casaubon** was deprived of his living in 1642, George Stancombe took his place and was Vicar of Monkton as well as Minister at Birchington. He died in 1647 and was buried at Birchington. His wife died in 1643 and below the entry in the Burial Register is written sadly, "Let this day be expunged from the calendar."

Dr Meric Casaubon was a great classical scholar. In 1640 the parishioners made various complaints against him and he was deprived of his preferments, and a Nonconformist was given the living, **Nicholas Thorowgood**. Casaubon was restored in 1662. He died in 1671 and was buried in Canterbury Cathedral at the foot of the steps leading up to the choir in the S.W. transept. He was a Canon of Canterbury.

John Ayling followed him as Vicar, but there is no record of a Minister at Birchington in his time. Since his little daughter Elizabeth, aged 6, was 'buried in woollen' in Quex Chapel when she died in 1678, it rather looks as if he acted as Curate at All Saints as well as Vicar of Monkton. He even had a memorial stone erected on the wall of the Chapel to his daughter. By this date, the church at Woodchurch had been closed down.

The last Vicar of Monkton-with-Birchington was the **Rev Richard Whish**. His son **Rev H.F. Whish** became Minister (Curate) at Birchington. It was he who had much to do with helping to found the school in Park Lane, the **National School**.

The first **Vicar** of Birchington was the **Rev. John Price Alcock**. He was here for 17 years and oversaw the building of the School / Church at Acol.

[It only functioned as a school for about 10 years, but has remained in use as a Church week by week, now, for 141 years – (2018) updated by Jennie Burgess]

Birchington remained a Chapelry of Monkton until 1871 when it was made a separate parish with its own Vicar. That is why Birchington has had so few 'Vicars'.