

Henry Alfred Ransome



Henry Alfred Ransome was born on 13th July 1860 in the vicarage at Lindale where his father John Henry Ransome had been licensed by the Bishop of Carlisle as Perpetual Curate the previous month. Henry Alfred's mother Emily was the second daughter of Alfred Binyon who had built Merlewood at Grange following his retirement from the firm of Thomas Hoyle and Sons, calico printers in Manchester.

Henry Alfred attended the Durham Cathedral School when Dr Henry Holden was headmaster, and then was admitted to St John's College Cambridge in June 1879 where he was a Baker Exhibitioner.¹ He achieved mathematical honours and was awarded a B.A. degree in 1883, followed by M.A. in 1886.² He was ordained deacon by the Bishop of Carlisle in 1883 and appointed curate of St George's Church, Barrow-in-Furness where he was created a priest in December 1884. He was then appointed assistant curate to the Revd Alexander Colvin Ainslie, Prebendary of Wells Cathedral, at St Mary's Church, Langport, Somerset, and the following year he was occupying a similar position to the Revd Henry Kirby at Field Broughton. On the death of Mr Kirby on 21st December 1886, Mr Ransome succeeded to the living. He soon began to make improvements, and an excellent room in which to hold a Sunday School was provided in 1889 by Mrs T. J. Hibbert of Broughton Grove and her unmarried brother-in-law H. Hibbert Esq, repairing an old room in which the former incumbent had held a school.³



The old chapel

Served by a chapel in the ancient parish of Cartmel since 1745, Field Broughton became a separate parish in 1875. By that time the chapel was in poor condition, and in 1891 it was announced that the parish of Field Broughton was about to be provided with a new church, the structure being intended as a memorial of the late Mr Thomas Johnson Hibbert JP, with the cost of erection, upwards of £2,000, being met by his widow and his brother.⁴ The final cost was £7,500 or £8,000.⁵

The new church was designed by Paley & Austin of Lancaster, a firm of architects with whom Henry Alfred's uncle, the Revd Frederick Binyon⁶, had been involved when he was vicar of Burton-in-Lonsdale from 1866 - 1874. He instituted the building of a new church and vicarage there in 1868-1870, with Hubert Austin being the principal architect. Described as "one of the firm's very best village churches",⁷ St Peter's at Field Broughton is also likely to have been the work of Hubert Austin. The new church was consecrated by the Rt

Revd John Wareing Bardsley, Bishop of Carlisle, on 29th June 1894. In the new church Henry Alfred Ransome did everything possible to ensure that the singing and music were at a high standard, and he established monthly Choral Eucharists and was the first to have the Three Hours' devotion service on Good Fridays.⁸

In 1895 he married Hilda, daughter of Major John Ramsbotham, originally of Ocklye House, Crowborough, Sussex, in St Mary's Church, Primrose Hill, Hampstead, London. But the vicarage at Field Broughton was in a similar poor state as the church had been, and he then turned his attention to the raising of funds for a new vicarage. The 1901 census shows Henry Alfred alone in the old vicarage, and his wife and two children, a daughter and a son, at a property in Grange-over-Sands, where another daughter was born later that year. Paley & Austin were again employed as architects for the new vicarage, and the work was completed in 1903, although it was necessary to hold a fancy bazaar and garden fete the following year in order to raise funds for clearing off some of the expenses.⁹



The new church and the new vicarage

By 1911 the family were well settled into the new vicarage, with two daughters at home, their son away at school¹⁰, and two domestic servants living in. On more than one occasion the Revd and Mrs Ransome were very generous hosts of social events in the village, one such following the 15th anniversary of the opening of the church when all adult parishioners and a large number of personal friends were invited to tea on the lawn,¹¹ and another when about 150 adult parishioners responded to an invitation to a social evening in the parish room which, after refreshments and dancing, did not terminate until early the following morning.¹²

Outside of his church duties, Henry Alfred Ransome was renowned as a glass-plate photographer who recorded many local people and events,¹³ and who was invariably called upon to operate the lantern for the showing of slides at lectures held throughout the locality.¹⁴

In 1915, however, Mr and Mrs Ransome suffered the sad loss of their son. Edmund Henry Leigh Ransome had won a scholarship to Sherborne School which he entered in September 1913, but he died there on 13th December 1915 aged 16¹⁵, and was buried in the cemetery at Sherborne two days later. Within little more than eighteen months, Edmund's father died, on 4th July 1917. He had just recovered from an attack of pneumonia when he had a sudden seizure, but his obituary notice in the *Westmorland Gazette* also records that he had never fully recovered from the shock at the untimely death of his son.¹⁶

¹ *Westmorland Gazette*, 7 July 1917, p.5

² *Morning Post*, 14 May 1886, p.3.

³ Kirby, R.H. 1892. *The rural deanery of Cartmel in the diocese of Carlisle: its churches and endowments*. Ulverston: Atkinson.

⁴ *Manchester Courier*, 28 September 1891, p.6

⁵ Brandwood, G. 2012. *The architecture of Sharpe, Paley and Austin*. English Heritage. p.240.

⁶ Revd Frederick Binyon eventually retired to Grange, where he died in 1900. Revd H A Ransome led the funeral service.

⁷ Brandwood, G. 2012. *The architecture of Sharpe, Paley and Austin*. English Heritage. p.138.

⁸ Townley, C.G. 1917. In memoriam Henry Alfred Ransome, M.A.. Vicar of Field Broughton 1887-1917. A sermon preached in St.Peter's Church, Field Broughton, July 8th 1917.

⁹ Cartmel & Lower Holker Almanac, 1905, July 1904.

¹⁰ A boarder at Charney Hall Preparatory School, Grange-over-Sands.

¹¹ Westmorland Gazette, 3 July 1909, p.12

¹² Westmorland Gazette, 20 January 1912.

¹³ Sharphouse, M. & V. 2003. "The Old Vicarage", Field Broughton. *Quarterly Community News*, November, p.10.

¹⁴ Westmorland Gazette, January 1893, for example.

¹⁵ Shirburnian, December 1915, p.221.

¹⁶ Westmorland Gazette, 14 July 1917,