

The Original Allithwaite Vicarage

Researching the *House Histories* of parsonages is particularly interesting and rewarding. The residents are well known, as a list of the residents appear on a board in the associated church (Fig 3), and their activities appear regularly in the local press. Many of these grand residences were sold off in the second half of the twentieth century and in their place smaller properties now provide the abode for the cleric. Ron Steven, a church warden at the time of the sell-off of the Allithwaite Vicarage, records the details of the difficult situation during the consultation and sale process in his booklet entitled *The History of the Parish of Allithwaite* (1990).



Figure 1: The original vicarage. (Pat Rowland 1991).

In the 1850's Mary Lambert left a legacy for the establishment of a church and school in Allithwaite. £1500 was left in the bequest to provide for the building and furnishing of a residence for the minister. Mary Lambert must have imagined a fine residence was required as in contrast she only left £1000 for both the school and a residence for the school-master or mistress, whilst £2500 funded the church building.



Figure 2: Location map from about 1890

These buildings, located in a prominent position at the top of the hill in the village (Fig 2), were designed by Lancaster Architects, Paley and Austin, and were completed in 1865. The construction team (Table 1) was listed in the local paper on the occasion of a rearing supper celebration in 1864 at Miss Pedder's Cavendish in Cartmel. The vicarage (Fig. 1) was described as a fine Victorian building with large lofty rooms, a garden of at least an acre and a coach house. It was probably built from stone from the quarry in Allithwaite

Table 1. The Construction Team

E G Paley	Architect
H Gorton	Clerk of Works
C Baynes	Mason work
R Storey, Cark	Joiner
R Wright, Lancaster	Joiner
T Dickinson, Lancaster	Plumber
G Taylor	Slater & Plasterer
Mr Downward, Ulverston	Painter

The first minister residing in the Parish was Rev. Robert Townson, and his family moved into his fine house in March 1866. Indeed it was a large residence; for example in 1871, it accommodated the curate and family, comprising of his wife, 8 children, aged up to 11 years old, and 4 live-in servants which included a groomsmen. One wonders what the local fishermen, farmers and stone-masons thought of the vicar and his family living on their fine mansion at the top of the hill.



Figure 3: Clergy board in St Mary's Church Allithwaite (Pat Rowland 1999).

The second incumbent Rev John Hammersley and his wife Elizabeth also had a large family of 4 children, although they managed with only one servant (1891 & 1901 censuses). The much-loved John retired due to ill-health in 1907 and his successor James Gilbertson arrived with his wife Ethel and their three children and one servant (1911 Census). James looked after the Parish during the Great War years, and presided over the development of the Church and the installation of a stained glass memorial east window. After ill-health James died and he is interred in the churchyard in Allithwaite. The next resident was Rev Robert Hughes and his wife Emily, with their one domestic servant (1939 register). During the 1930's the electricity supply was brought to the vicarage and church.

In 1974, the process to sell off the Vicarage commenced, and initially they planned to build a new residence in the grounds of the older building. Ron Stevens records that there was revolt in the village and the dispute eventually took its toll on the vicar, Rev Walter Turner, who moved on away in 1979. A new parsonage was purchased on Boarbank Lane and refurbished for the Rev Philip Frost and Ida to move into in 1980. A footpath was created on the south side of the Old Vicarage land to allow easy access from Vicarage Lane for the vicar. The Old Vicarage became a private residence together with half of the original garden. The other half of the garden was developed into a car park some years later. In 1984, the property was sold and converted into a care home, subsequently purchased by the current owners, Dr & Mrs Siddiqui in 1984 (oldvicaragecare.net). Following refurbishment The Old Vicarage Care Home has the capacity to accommodate 19 residents. It is also noted that the Coach House was sold many years before the sale of the vicarage and converted into a residence. Today the ground floor of the property is a holiday let with the owners residing in the hay loft above (sykescottages.co.uk).

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