

Further Rebuilding of Swanton Morley Rectory by the Rev. Andrew Hunter

As I said in my previous article, it was the Rev. Andrew Johnston Hunter (Rector from 1896-1914) who commissioned further work to be done on the rebuilding of the old rectory. I have photographs of some beautiful colour- washed drawings of the work proposed by Edward Boardman (dated March 1895), but unfortunately they do not reproduce well so I have been unable to include them here.

There were two main parts to the work proposed. (If you still have your copy of the March 2015 Link Up, then the plans of Tacy's building may help to clarify this.)

1. A W.C. and cloakroom was built into the yard, and was accessible from the entrance hall. On the first floor, directly above both this new unit and the existing entrance hall, was built a new W.C. and bathroom. So Hunter was clearly keen on having modern facilities on both floors.
2. A second floor containing three rooms was built above the existing three bedrooms on the first floor. This was accessible from a rather narrow staircase on the landing and was probably intended for staff quarters.

A note on the Rev. Andrew Hunter

He was born in Scotland and attended Gonville& Caius College, being ordained priest in 1871. His first appointment was as assistant curate to the recently built (1856) church of Christ Church, Luton. He married Agnes Blanche Phillips there in Oct 1872. However, by 1875 he had been appointed Chaplain of Luton Hoo Park Chapel. (You may recall that the Luton Hoo Hoard of Roman coins was found on the Luton Hoo Estate of Sir John Shaw Leigh in about 1863.) Sir John had bought the estate in 1848 and had rebuilt the fire-damaged house. In 1875, he built the chapel, so presumably Andrew Hunter was the first chaplain. They lived in the Parsonage House.

In 1885 he was appointed Vicar of Mattishall and he lived there with Agnes and their daughter Elinor until 1896. During his time there he "restored and beautified the noble church." But, in 1895, the advowson of Swanton Morley was acquired by Caius College in exchange for that of Great Melton and Andrew Hunter was the first rector to be appointed by the college. Not only did he rebuild the rectory, he also did a lot of work on the church. His obituary says that "the new choir stalls, an organ and the furnishing of the altar bear testimony to his love for the house of God committed to his care."

Another thing that he did, was to start a "Swanton Morley and Worthing Parish Magazine" to be published monthly. I have a photocopy of the first issue, dated January 1898; it was quite a brief document mainly consisting of the times of services and lists of baptisms, marriages and burials. The April 1898 issue records with relief the end of the severe typhoid epidemic which had hit Worthing the previous October, with three deaths occurring out of the fourteen cases.

He made progress in the Church being appointed rural dean of Brisley (South) in 1900, and was made an Hon. Canon of Norwich Cathedral in 1906. At the time of the 1911 census his son Henry Malcolm Hunter (a brewer aged 33) and his daughter Elinor were living with him.

He died aged 69, on 12 June 1914 during a visit to celebrate his son's birthday in Newport, Mon. His funeral was held at Swanton Morley on 26 June and the Bishop of Thetford officiated. There is a tribute to him in the July 1914 edition of the Parish Magazine. You will also find a memorial to him in the churchyard (a large rugged cross to the east of the church, down the hill towards the Commonwealth War Graves (Item C6 on the plan in the church). His son Henry is also remembered on the plinth.

The memorial window

On the south side of the chancel there is a large three-light stained glass window, and below it is written:

To the Glory of God and in Memory of Andrew Johnston Hunter Rector of this parish 1896-1914 Hon. Canon of Norwich Cathedral who died 12 June 1914 and of his wife Agnes Blanche who died 18 Jan 1925 This window is placed by their children

The left light shows St Agnes, the centre light St Andrew, and the right hand light St Margaret of Scotland.

Elinor died in Acle in March 1961 and it is thanks to her executors that the earliest issues of the Parish magazine survive, for they gave them to Canon Noel Boston, sometime Vicar of Dereham. Then in May 1977, on the death of Canon Boston, they were given in his memory to the Rector of Swanton Morley, Canon Arthur Walter.