

❧ The Rectories ❧

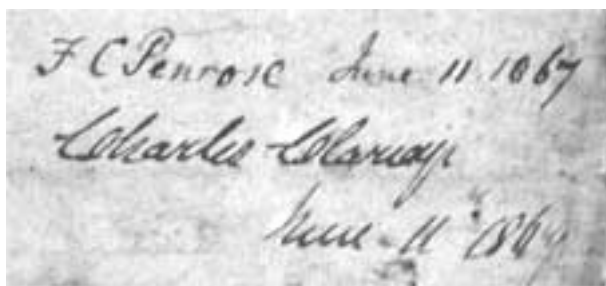
The first mention of a Rectory in Finmere is in 1601. It stood in what is now the garden of the Old Rectory and was destroyed by a 'tempestuous hurricane from the west' in 1661. Rebuilt, it burnt down in 1668. The replacement building was still standing in the 1850s:

It was really a picturesque old structure; roomy, rambling, and irregular, as all such tenements should be... A spacious projecting window on the south side admitted you into an umbrageous garden, which was simply delicious. (John Burgon.)

Lancelot (Capability) Brown designed the garden while he was working at Stowe in the 1740s. This Rectory was known as the Parsonage or Parsonage House until 1852, at which date William Jocelyn Palmer first describes it as Finmere Rectory.

Seymour Ashwell's' Rectory

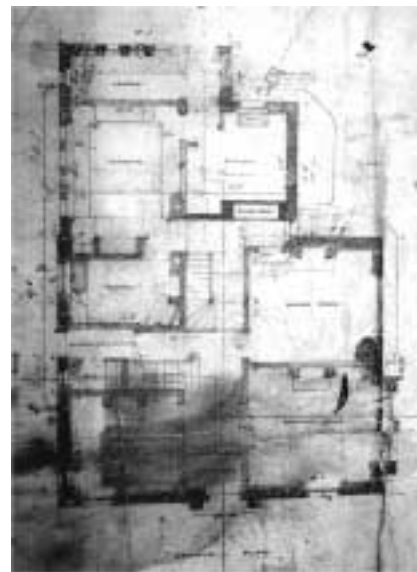
The old rambling Rectory was too modest for wealthy Seymour Ashwell. In 1866, his father William Ashwell, also the patron of the church, purchased the "Apprentice Ground." This lay south of the churchyard and was already in use as the Rectory garden. Rector Richard Ells had bequeathed it to the village in 1703 and the rent paid by his successors periodically sponsored a village apprentice. In 1867–68, a new Rectory was built in the garden (this is now the Old Rectory) and the old building demolished. The architects of the new Rectory were F. C. Penrose and Charles Claridge and their plans show a brick-built house of the decent proportions desired by wealthy Victorian families.



F. C. Penrose June 11 1867
Charles Claridge
June 11 1867

The signatures of the architects, F. C. Penrose and Charles Claridge

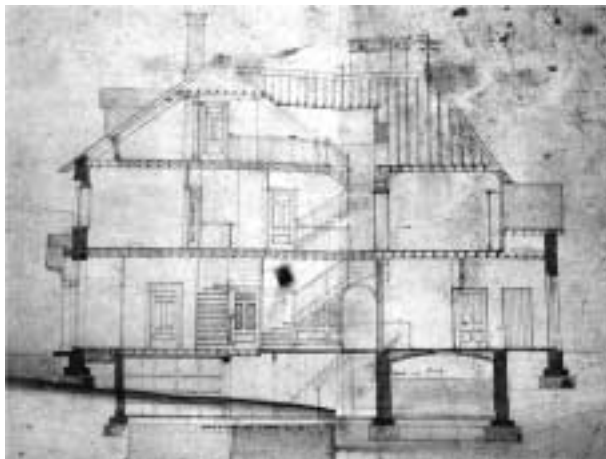
The house was built of brick, trimmed with Bath Stone. Its ground floor had a dining room and study, with pantry, kitchen, larder and scullery to the rear. There were three bedrooms on the first floor accompanied by a dressing room and nursery. Both floors had a water closet. The attic under the eaves housed four smaller rooms for servants; the Ashwells retained four servants and a governess, Rose Temple from London. The attic also incorporated



Ground plan of the 1886 Rectory



The South Elevation of the 1886 Rectory



West-east cross-section of the 1867 Rectory



**The new Rectory extension under construction
in 1996**

a lumber—a room used, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, ‘for storage of disused chattels.’

In the basement was a large tank, about 10 feet square. Rainwater was collected on the roof and diverted around the exterior of the house into the tank, which incorporated an overflow pipe. The soft water collected was pumped into tanks into the attic to provide additional washing water. The house also had cellars for wine and beer. An outbuilding housed a coal store, “knife, boot and wood house” and an earth closet.

Finmere was again bustling with building activity in October 1879 when work was under way on extensions to the Rectory and Lepper’s House (now Stone House). The Buckingham Advertiser reported the scene.

Building operations at Finmere are more active now than for some considerable time past. Among the improvements, great alterations and additions have been made at the Rectory for the Rev. Seymour Ashwell, Rector of Finmere. The work has been done by Mr G.W. Wells, builder at St John’s Road, Oxford. The whole work is being carried out according to plans prepared by Mr S. F. C. Penrose of St Paul’s Church Yard, London. Also the residence of Mr Alfred Lepper, of Finmere, is undergoing great attractions and additions by the same builder, Mr G. Wells of Oxford. The building will be a great feature of the parish of Finmere. The works are being done to a very satisfactory manner by Mr J. Roberts, general foreman, who is superintending both jobs and to whom great credit is due. (Buckingham Advertiser, 18 October 1879.)

The Modern Rectory

The Old Rectory was sold in 1931, when the parishes of Finmere and Mixbury became a joint living, and from 1931 to 1956 there was no resident clergyman in Finmere. The Old Rectory in Mixbury was sold in 1959 and Reverend Maurice Sheldon rented a bungalow, now called Terra Firma, at Tile House Farm in Fulwell Road, while the current Rectory in Water Stratford Road was constructed. The land for the new Rectory had been part of the Glebe land until sold in 1946; it was repurchased in 1957. The Rectory was designed by Surman and Chilton and was built and occupied in 1958. The Rectory was altered and extended in the summer of 1996. Surman and Chilton were based at St Aldgates, Oxford, and designed several new clergy houses in the Diocese of Oxford in the 1950s and 1960s including the Rectory at Lower Heyford, four years before Finmere.