

## ST. MARK'S VICARAGE BARTON ROAD, NEWNHAM



As the community of Newnham grew, so was it recognised that there was a need for pastoral care more local than Grantchester parish church could provide. At first, a temporary wooden church daughter to Grantchester Church was built in 1871<sup>1</sup> to designs by Richard Rodney Rowe, occupying the site of the current church and that of the vicarage. It was dedicated on the feast of St Mark 1871. The site was leased for 21 years from Corpus Christi College but in 1875 the freehold was purchased.

The idea of a Parsonage was first mooted in 1875 by Mr Vansittart, a local resident<sup>2</sup>; he considered that half the field on which the temporary church stood should be 'reserved for the Parsonage and a garden'. He was willing to pay up to £300 towards an endowment, 'providing the Committee with the help of the College can buy the other half'. A Trust was formed for the conveyance of the land, which included Professor G.D. Liveing (Professor of Chemistry), Mr Vansittart, Mr Clay, Mr Robert Piggott (market gardener living at Holmcroft, Barton Road) and Mr H.B. Watson (of the original Croft Lodge)<sup>3</sup>. There was some difficulty in obtaining a permanent Curate. The Rev. J.R. Bradstock of Corpus Christi accepted the post at a stipend of £100. It was decided to launch an appeal to supplement offertory collections towards the stipend and another appeal to raise 'Funds for the erection of a Curate's House'<sup>4</sup>. The Minutes of 17 March 1885 announce that an anonymous donation of £100 was promised for a parish room 'forming part of a future parsonage, provided building be commenced without delay'<sup>5</sup>. The decision was made there and then at the same meeting to go ahead, even down to

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of St. Mark's Committee, 5 June 1871: Richard Reynolds Rowe was invited to design and seek tenders for the wooden church. (Grantchester Parish Records Cambs Archive P79A/24/1)

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of St. Mark's Committee, 2 Nov 1875. (Grantchester Parish Records Cambs Archive P79A/24/2)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 7 June 1876

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 23 Jan 1883

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 17 Mar 1885

laying down the exact positioning of the buildings. A sub-committee consisting of Professor Liveing, Revd. Bradstock and Mr Humphry (of the original Maitland House) agreed to 'prepare plans for a Parsonage and Mission Room'. They proceeded to produce a 'rough sketch' 'which may be inspected at the house of Mr A.P. Humphry', for the purpose of inviting subscriptions. They estimated £400 were needed for the 'Mission' Room and £1600 for the Parsonage. William Sindall, the builder, came back with a tender of £576 for the Parish Room and £1222 for the Parsonage. Sindall also drew up working plans based upon the sketch plan signed by Liveing. Besides subscriptions, the sale of the gravel from the Church Field was predicted to raise at least £400<sup>6</sup>. A total of £500 was raised to build a 'parish room with two rooms above it'<sup>7</sup>. The second appeal, in 1889, 'resulted in the completion of the house for the curate'<sup>8</sup> at a cost of £1300. Works were completed in 1890 (see overdoor inscription), 'with the installation of iron gas pipes, an Eagle kitchen range with a high-pressure boiler, bookcases'. The Parish Room was an instant success and much utilized; a scale of charges was drawn up by the Committee on 8 March 1889. There was discussion about the use of the upstairs room over the Parish Hall by the Newnham Croft Club. (One is tempted ask if this was the forerunner of the Newnham Croft Social & Sports Club.) In 1967 Messrs Milner and Roberts were asked to convert the 'house into a Vicarage' and create a maisonette and flat. The plans also show an extended kitchen for the Parish Hall which ate a piece out of one of the Vicarage rooms and the Vicarage staircase was turned through 180° crossing a window to the right of the entrance door. Around this time, half the Vicarage garden was sold for the development of The Cenacle.

We learn in the *History of St. Mark's* by F.H. Stubbings that it was only in 1918 that St Mark's acquired the status of an independent parish of Newnham. A capital fund was established of £625 to augment the Vicar's stipend, to which King's College contributed £50.

Architecture: The Vicarage building pre-dates the current red brick Church by 11 years. It is built in white Cambridge stock, which has greyed with time. Its style is 'Victorian Jacobethan' and its very substance connotes the importance of the Victorian vicar, or indeed Curate at this stage. Might the bricks for the house have come from Edward Bolton's brickworks up Barton Road, now become Bolton's Lake? The Church, on the other hand, is in red brick, with a fairly sober exterior with gothic style windows. The architect of the existing Church was Richard Philip Day, ARIBA, Canterbury Diocesan Architect and Surveyor, and the builder William Sindall. With regard to the Vicarage however (or as it was then variously alluded to as the Curate's House or Parsonage), it is interesting to note that it was apparently Professor G.D. Liveing (1827-1924), the eminent chemist and spectroscopist, who designed it. He sat on the St Mark's Committee from the outset at the building of the original wooden church in 1871, drew a small scaled drawing for the 1889 Parsonage<sup>9</sup>. The Grantchester Parish Records contain Liveing's plans with his signature<sup>10</sup> (see also Appendix 3). Sindall was asked to produce working plans and a specification (see Appendix 4). Rather tantalisingly the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 22 Apr 1885. George Downing Liveing's drawing is very exact: he was reputed to have been actively involved in the drawing up of plans for the new Chemistry Laboratory in Pembroke Street

<sup>7</sup> *Newnham* by John A. Gray (Hanwell Publications, Cambridge, 1977) p. 54

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> *The History of St. Mark's* by F.H. Stubbings (1951); 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. with part two by M.F. Ingham (1985), with an introduction by Revd William Loveless, p.3

<sup>10</sup> Grantchester Parish Records Cambs Archive P79A/3/15

records contain only the specifications but no working plans or elevations. So far attempts to locate Sindall's plans have been unsuccessful. It is of interest to note that after the building of the new brick church, the old wooden church (designed by the Cambridge architect Richard Reynolds Rowe) was retained for some years for the purposes of the Sunday School. It was demolished only in 1967<sup>11</sup> to make way for the car park and the extended Church Hall, now Community Centre. Among the Parish papers there are various site plans showing all three buildings: the current Church, the Parsonage and the old wooden church.

Detailed analysis of the Architecture: The two-storey Vicarage building possesses considerable interest. Its exterior takes inspiration from the Tudor-Jacobean with its mullioned windows, but the façade is asymmetric about the porch, perhaps crossing with Arts & Crafts. The mullions with transoms above are elongated and grouped in multiples of 5 to the left of the porch and 3 to its right, creating a lively asymmetry in the northern façade. Symmetry is provided by a smaller window on each side of the porch, the porch itself being surmounted by a simple pediment. The rhythm of the windows is carried on consistently around the house and the south façade includes a bay window overlooking the garden. The Parish or Church Hall forms a continuum with the Vicarage but is on a 90° axis to the latter and continues the theme of the tall mullioned windows.



However, its windows are taller to ensure plenty of light enters the hall. The upstairs flat was part and parcel of the scheme. The entrance to the flat, however, detracts from the overall lines of the house and hall. There are three tall chimneys of rectangular cross section, two serving the house and one the hall or flat above. The stone medallion in the pediment over the Vicarage door testifies to the date of building, abbreviated to '89'.

The interior is made up of airy and spacious rooms. There have been structural alterations. Immediately on entering the hall, the staircase was realigned to rise diagonally across the windows of the façade rather 'encumbering' the hall and the windows. The far south-east room has a corner apparently taken out of it, since the coving stops. This was probably to accommodate the kitchen of the later extension to the Church Hall. The extension obscures part of the old Church Hall.

The Vicars: Clearly, with the rapid expansion of the community of Newnham Croft in the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the dramatic increase from the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in spacious dwellings along Barton Road's length, the Parish Church was of central importance. Among the Vicars who left their mark were the Revds Symonds, Edward Armstrong and William Loveless. Following lobbying by Rev Symonds, the Corporation of Cambridge bought the 14 acres of Lammas Land from St John's, St Catherine's and Caius Colleges and Storey's Charity for £854.6s.3d. for the benefit of the Newnham community. As available green spaces were dwindling due to development; at last this was a place children could play in instead of being shooed off for haymaking operations by the Colleges; a requested bowling green was installed.

An anecdote tells of the internationally-known ornithologist, the Revd Edward Armstrong (Vicar from 1943-66) whose love of bird was such that he created a bird

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. P79A/3/17

sanctuary at the bottom of the Vicarage garden. He was reported to the police 'as a peeping Tom by a too-observant resident' of Hardwick Street, which backed on the garden. His academic pursuits did not prevent him, though, from being tireless in the exercise of his duties and guiding his parishioners towards a better spiritual life<sup>12</sup>.

Besides taking care of the spiritual life of his parishioners, the Revd Loveless (1967- ? ) also brought a business sense into the management of the Parish. Church attendance grew from a meagre seven, as families and others from further afield were drawn by his informal style and his excellent sermons. At his suggestion the Diocese sold half the Vicarage garden in order to modernise the building, 'convert part into a self-contained maisonette and create a flat above the Parish Room services by an outside staircase'<sup>13</sup> - although this was not without controversy.

#### Historical heritage and Community Significance:

The story of St Mark's two Churches, its Vicarage (or Parsonage) with its Church Hall attached is a testament to a group of worthy Victorians who believed in the need to take care of the needs of the 'souls' in a growing parish. The Committee behind the development of the Parish buildings had the interests of the community at heart. This tradition continues strongly today.

Situated on Barton Road, the Vicarage with the Church Hall is part and parcel of the plot in which Parish Church of St Mark's stands. Its substantial proportions testify to the importance placed on the role of the Parish in cementing the identity of Newnham's flourishing community in Victorian times. This central role continues today into the 21<sup>st</sup> century giving cohesion and a sense of belonging. Church and Vicarage offset each other in terms of style and materials but form a pleasing and organic whole.

The house is no longer occupied by the Vicar since this role is now again shared with Grantchester Parish, but the Diocese of Ely has entered into a lease agreement with Ridley Hall, so that the Vicarage remains a dwelling for those involved in pastoral care. The current occupants often open the Vicarage and its gardens to events such as the St Mark's Church Summer Fête, which happens every year and is a key event in the community. It also hosts Newnham Croft Primary School events. It therefore continues to perform a lively and pivotal role in providing a place of gathering and celebration where the sense of community can be fostered.

#### Summary:

The group formed by the Church, the Vicarage and the Red Bull Pub, are arguably the main focal point of South Newnham, the other being the shops of Newnham Croft. They are centrally placed in the designated area of South Newnham and are prominent on its main thoroughfare. Any attempt to remove the Vicarage would severely damage the views from Barton Road and alter the balance of the streetscape negatively.

Tania Elliott  
For the South Newnham Neighbourhood Forum  
14th May 2018 (final revised, vn.A)

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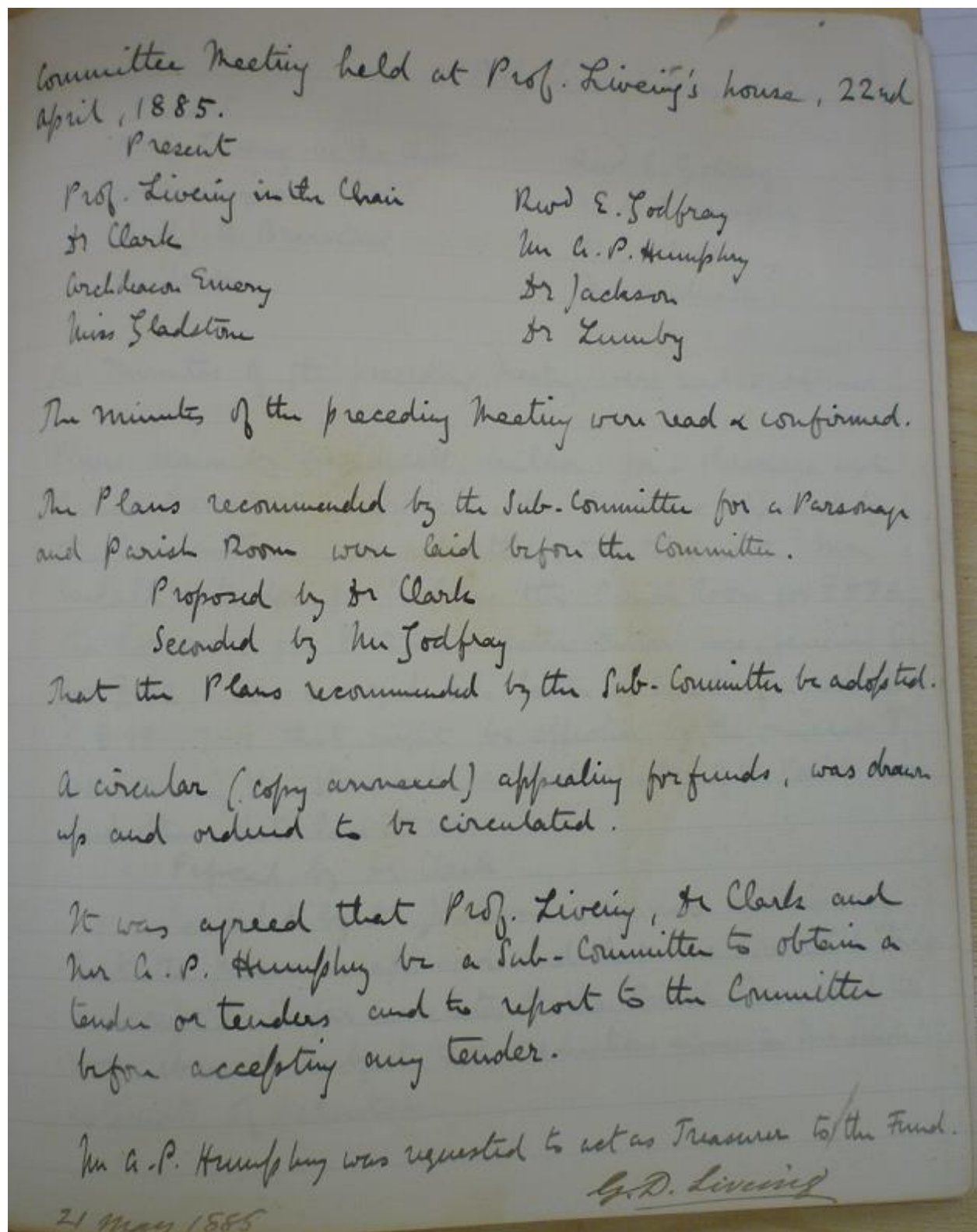
<sup>12</sup> *The History of St. Mark's* p.11

<sup>13</sup> *The History of St. Mark's* p.12



**APPENDIX 1.**

Page from the Minutes of the St Mark's Church Committee of 21<sup>st</sup> May 1885, recording the decision on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, to build the Parish Hall and Parsonage:



## APPENDIX 2.

### Launching a Subscription to fund the building of a 'Parsonage House and Room'

ST MARK'S

THE Committee of St Mark's Church on the Barton Road have for some time had under their consideration the urgent need of a permanent District or Mission Room for general parish purposes.

Such a Room could, in accordance with the terms of the trust, be erected on the land held in trust for the erection of a Parsonage, Church and School, if appurtenant to one of those buildings, but not otherwise.

The prospect of funds to be raised within the district and of assistance from without, does not at present justify the Committee in recommending the adoption of any scheme for building a permanent Church or School.

The Committee are, however, of opinion that immediate action might be taken, with a reasonable chance of success, for the erection of a Parish Room, which shall now or hereafter form part of a Parsonage House.

They have therefore prepared a rough sketch of such a Parsonage House and Room as are contemplated; which sketch may be inspected at the house of Mr A. P. Humphry.

The estimated cost of the Parsonage House exclusive of the Parish Room is £1600; of the Parish Room together with rooms above it, £400. It is proposed that the latter be taken in hand as soon as the necessary amount is promised.

The Committee invite subscriptions towards one or both of the above objects. Subscriptions may be paid to Mr A. P. HUMPHRY, Maitland House, Newnham Croft, or to the ST MARK'S PARSONAGE AND PARISH ROOM account at Messrs Mortlock's Bank. It is requested that Subscribers who wish their contributions to be exclusively assigned to one or other of the above objects will notify their wish to Mr Humphry.

The following subscriptions have been received or promised:

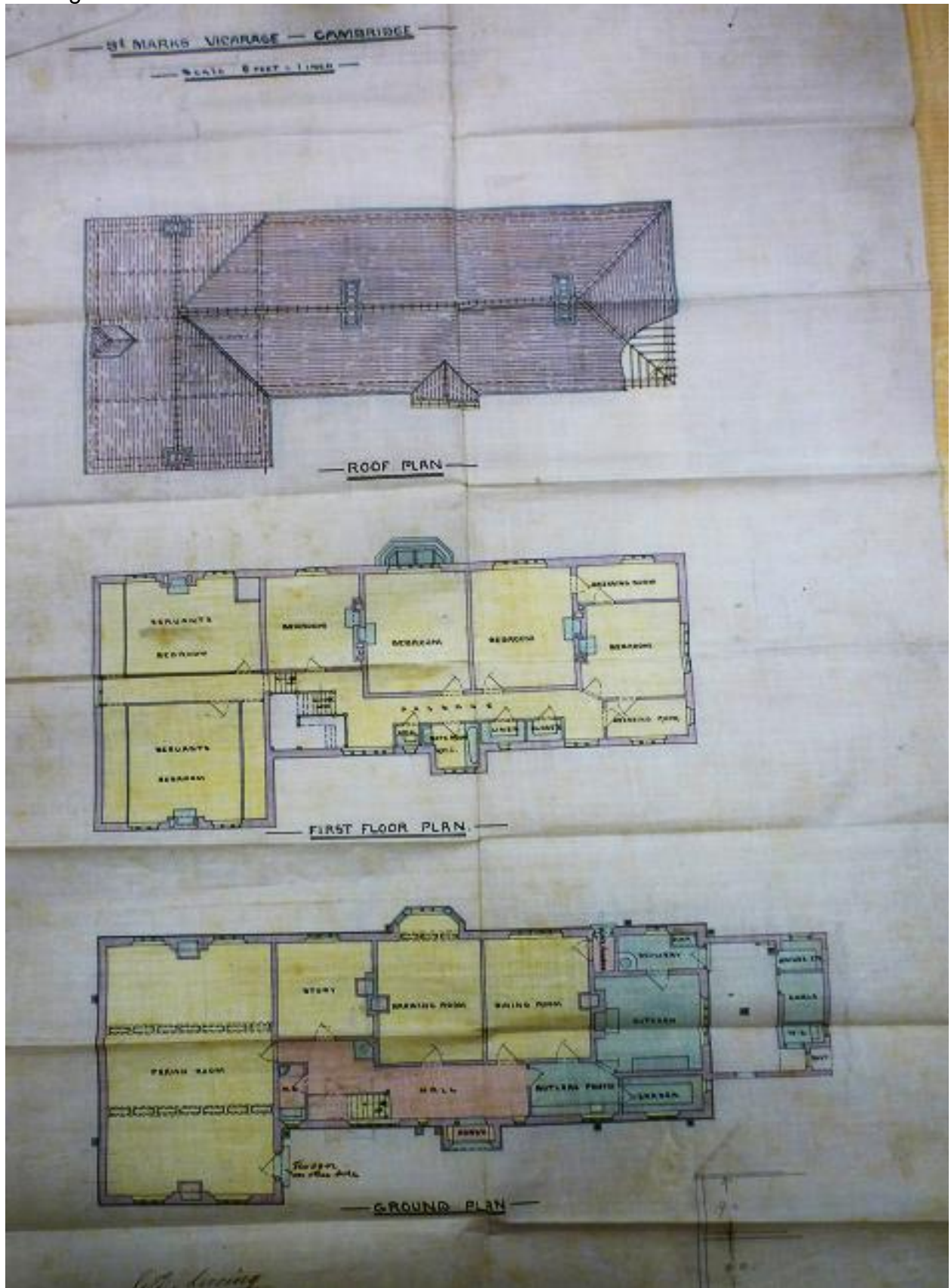
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Anonymous .....	100	0	0†	Rev. F. G. Howard .....	3	0	0*
Miss Bacon-Grey .....	10	0	0†	" .....	2	0	0†
Prof. and Mrs Clark .....	25	0	0	Dr Humphry .....	20	0	0
Mr C. J. Clay .....	25	0	0	Mr and Mrs A. P. Humphry .....	30	0	0
Ven. Archdeacon Emery .....	5	0	0	Dr Jackson .....	10	0	0†
Miss Powke .....	1	1	0*	Prof. Liveing .....	100	0	0
" .....	1	1	0†	Rev. R. St John Parry .....	2	2	0
Miss Gladstone .....	20	0	0*	Dr Reid .....	10	0	0*
" .....	5	0	0†	" .....	10	0	0†
The Vicar of Grantchester .....	40	0	0*	The late Mr A. A. Vansittart .....	50	0	0
" .....	10	0	0†				

\* For Parsonage.

† For Parish Room.

**APPENDIX 3.**

Plans of Ground, First Floor and Roof of the new Parsonage, signed by Professor G.D. Living



APPENDIX 4.

Committee Meeting held at Prof. Lively's house, 21 May, 1885.

Present

Prof. Lively in the Chair

Dr Anningson

Rev J. R. Bradstock

Dr Clark

Rev E. Godfrey

Mr A. P. Humphry

Dr Jackson

Mr Widnall

The Minutes of the preceding Meeting were read & confirmed.

Plans drawn by Mr Sindall, builder, for a Parsonage and Parish Room in accordance with the plans approved by the Committee, were submitted, together with Mr Sindall's tender for building the Parish Room for £576, the Parsonage for £1222, extra outbuildings, fencing &c, for £121.15.0, and his later estimate of a reduction of £98.17.9 that might be effected by the omission of portions of the stonework, a West Window of the Parish Room, and other details; & it was

Proposed by Dr Clark

Seconded by Dr Jackson & carried unanimously that the plans be approved and that Mr Sindall's tender be accepted so far as relates to the Parish Room and the rooms above it, subject to the reductions given in Mr Sindall's estimate of deductions.