

Ufford Heritage Trail

31. The Old Rectory



The core of the Grade II listed Old Rectory dates from the C15th and is known to have been a priest's house before the Reformation. It is one of the few surviving medieval priest's houses in Suffolk.

Part timber-framed and part brick-built with pargetted and colour-washed render, the house retains a hipped, thatched roof, although there are taller slate roofed extensions. The windows are a mixture of leaded casements, sliding sashes and some interesting windows with ogee heads. There is a shallow pitched, hipped roofed C19th veranda on the front entrance with wooden trellis supports.

The house has been altered and extended over the centuries, with additions in C18th, C19th and again more recently. In all, it is a particularly attractive building, where changes over the years have increased its charm and architectural interest.

The Old Rectory was home to the rectors and vicars of St Mary's Church over the centuries; several are buried in the church which also has a list of the incumbents. Perhaps most notable is Reverend Richard Lovekin who was rector for nearly sixty years in the C17th. A note in the 1813 publication of *The Beauties of England and Wales, Or, Delineations* edited by Thomas Hood, John Harris is described as follows:

The Rev. Richard Lovekin, rector of this parish 57 years, was an extraordinary instance of longevity. The mandate of his induction bears date June 2d 1621, and he was buried September 63d, 1678, in the one hundred and eleventh year of his age. This venerable divine is said to have performed all the duties of his function to the last, and to have preached the Sunday before his death. During the civil commotions under Charles I. he was plundered of every thing he possessed, except one silver spoon, which he hid in his sleeve.

However, Reverend Lovekin may have had a darker side. He was tried in 1643 at court in Bury St Edmunds where he faced allegations of being a "common swearer", a "cold preacher" and objecting to other ministers using his pulpit. Several prominent villagers appeared as witnesses at his trial and Lovekin disappeared from the Registers, only to return after the Restoration of Charles II.

During the Great War, the Rector of Ufford was Reverend Walter James Wyon. He lived at The Old Rectory where he had moved in 1908, from a Mission House in Oxford. Walter was one of the Wyon family: a long line of talented designers, engravers and medallists, active in the C18th and C19th.

Walter's ancestor, William Wyon RA was the official engraver at The Royal Mint from 1828 - 1851. In 1937, his medal design for the visit of Queen Victoria to the Corporation of London became the engraving for the 'Penny Black', the first postage stamp to be issued in Great Britain.



One exception to the tradition of living in the Rectory was the Reverend Jacob Chilton who was Rector from 1723. He married the daughter of local landed gentry, Sarah Hammond whose father owned Ufford Place. Jacob came from quite a wealthy background and he had his own house built by the Hammonds, - originally called Church Villas, but now The Dower House.

The tradition of living in the Rectory was revived after Jacob's death and the rectors lived here until quite recently; the 1939 Register shows Reverend Herbert Drake aged 71 living at The Old Rectory with his wife, daughter and grandson along with a nurse and housekeeper. The house was sold at auction by the Church Commissioners in the mid 1980s.