

## Part 1 - A Brief History



*Print from the Delineations of the North Western Division of the County of Somerset by John Rutter 1829 (Plate 2).*

Many who visit St Andrews would agree with Arthur Mee who said,  
"Best of all is the church with doorways worthy of a cathedral and one of the most graceful of Somerset's few spires,"  
yet few are aware of the wealth of interesting features that can be seen in and around the building today, let alone the fascinating history of religion in Congresbury over more than two thousand years.

## Early Days

### Henley Wood

At Henley Wood just to the north of Cadbury Hill a pre - Roman shrine was succeeded by three phases of Roman stone based temples, used at least to the end of the Roman period.



*The Henley bronze figurine – front and rear. Courtesy of North Somerset Council and Somerset County Council Heritage Service 2014.*

One of the finds, during the excavations over the period 1962 to 1968, was this bronze figurine. She is a 75cm high female figure and was deliberately concealed after or when the temple was abandoned. Possibly dating from not long before the Roman period she was obviously greatly respected by the locals.

Her face is worn by touch and this indicates regular handling during cultural rituals. She originally appears to have been mounted on a stand as there is what appears to be a rivet hole beneath her feet. Her eyes are close-set and deep and probably made of glass (traces remain in the left hand socket).

The figurine is nude except for the plaited band around her hair and the notched and grooved collar around her neck representing a twisted torque. Pliny wrote that women in Britain appeared naked at festivals and the Celts are said to have considered female nudity as powerful magic. The figure is probably a native counterpart to the Greek Aphrodite and Roman Venus.

A votive ring was also found during the excavation labeled "ISCONUX." Is this the name of the god/goddess worshipped here?

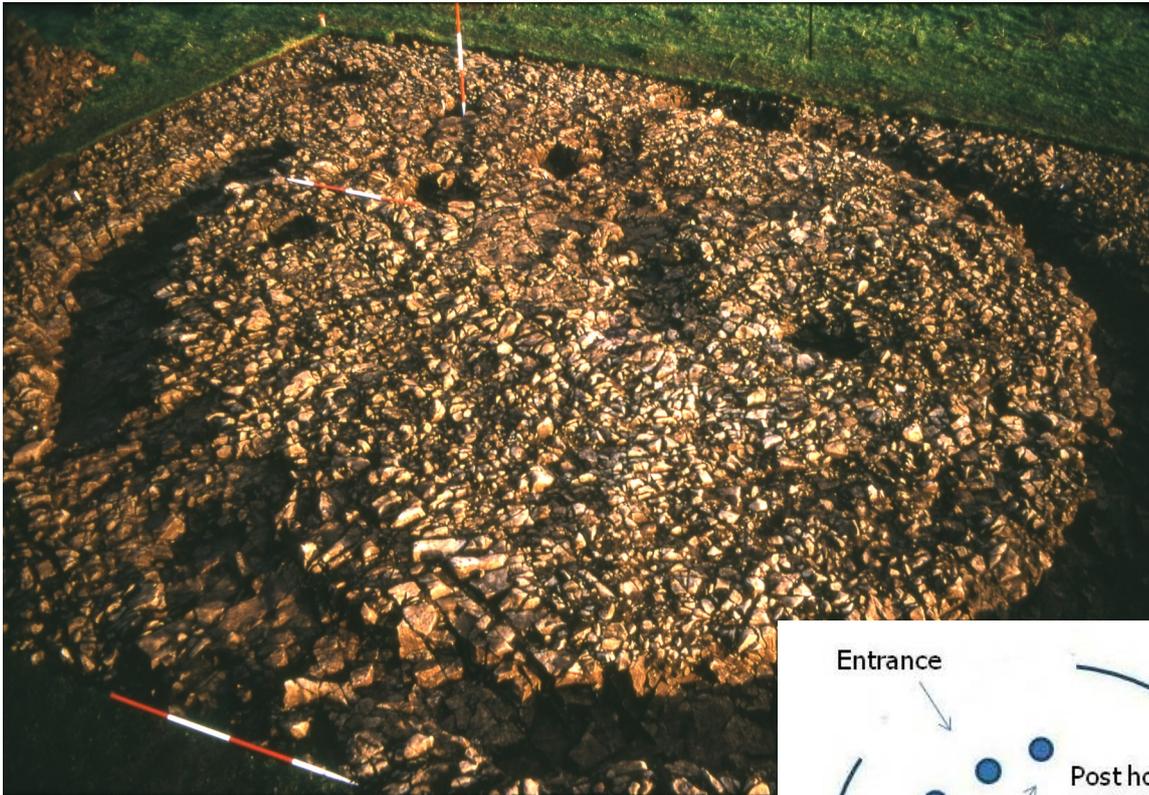
Post Roman burials were also found during the excavations at Henley Wood. Some 90 graves were revealed with the skeletons mostly orientated west to east (heads to the west) and with few grave goods i.e. in the Christian manner. The skeletons were dated to the period between the 5th and 7th centuries AD and may have been the occupants of Cadbury hill fort which was reoccupied in the 5th century AD.



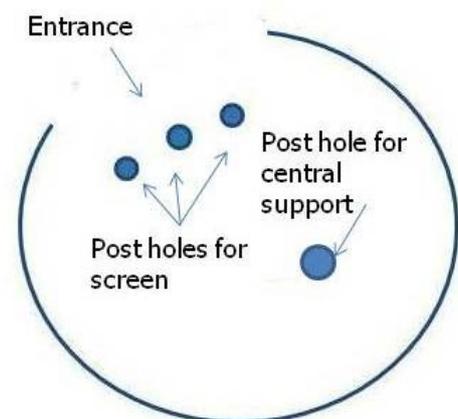
*A skeleton revealed during the excavation. Courtesy of Mr Derek Lilly.*

## Cadbury Hill –Congresbury

A possible shrine dating from the late to post-Roman period was revealed by the excavations on top of Cadbury Hill during the period 1968 to 1973.



*Above: The shrine on Cadbury Hill. Courtesy of the late Keith Gardner.  
Right: Interpretation sketch.*



The wooden structure may have had a thatched roof. It measured about 11m in diameter with a 6m wide entrance. The archaeologists found two amphora handles and two bone pendants within the building which they suggested were votive offerings.

In the central area of the building was a post hole which may have contained a central support and inside the entrance were three post holes which indicated the existence of some structural feature (a screen?).

Human skull fragments, also found during this excavation, were dated by radiocarbon to the period c790-390BC and were possibly associated with ritual acts during the Iron Age. They were found in a layer of rubble which suggested a structure destroyed in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The rubble was used to make a platform found to contain a space in which it has been suggested was a timber structure. It has been postulated that this timber structure was a wooden baptism tub or wooden cross indicating a focus of Christian activity.



*Above left: Area of the wooden baptism tub or wooden cross indicated by the central round depression.*

*Above right: A cross from Southern Ireland showing how the Cadbury structure may have looked.*

*Photos courtesy of the late Keith Gardner.*

Several eminent archaeologists are of the opinion that there was a monastery, founded by St Congar, on the hill top. Probably in the later seventh or early eighth century the current site of St Andrew's church was selected and a religious settlement established within an enclosure.

### **Early Activity Around the Current Church**

A limited excavation in 2011 in the Parish Council Burial Ground, revealed the possible remains of a mortared wall, a Roman roof tile and pottery suggesting that the site was close to a Roman building of some status. Early churches were invariably associated with such Roman sites.

Other recorded finds further support early activity in the area of the church as follows:

A Roman glass vessel was discovered in the orchard next to the Refectory.

A Roman coin of Theodora (about 292 AD) and a sherd of Saxon pottery (identified by Phillip Rahtz) were found by Gray Usher in 1963 and 1964 in the ancient churchyard.

When the current burial ground was created it allowed examination of sections and excess spoil from recent graves. Finds included Romano-British and later, but pre-medieval, potsherds, burnt stone and animal bones, suggesting occupation earlier than the church on the low knoll at the west end of the village.

In 1950 a complete Saxon skull of a man about 50 years of age, along with other skull bones, were found in the churchyard when a grave was being dug. Until recent times it was in Congresbury Vicarage.

The Congresbury Parish Magazine for June 1951 states that

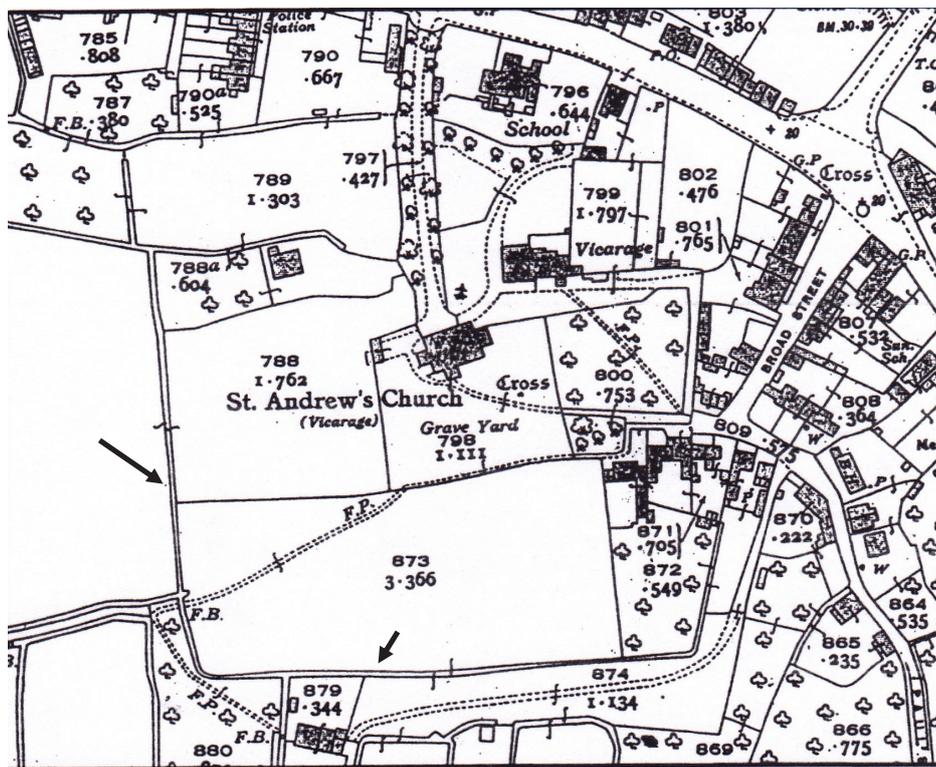
*"Mrs Green recalls that she was told how when the boiler house was excavated for the first steam heating of the church a complete skeleton was found in a stone coffin. Under direction of the then vicar, Rev Hunt (1867-1883), the skeleton was reburied in the churchyard. The coffin seems to have been broken up to make the steps into the stoke hole."*

Grave diggers reported in 1972 that when they were digging a grave in the new churchyard (previously a barren field to the west of the church) two skeletons were found.

### Evidence for a Monastic Site

There is also evidence to support an early monastic site in Congresbury.

A rectangle of land at the centre of which is the current church marks the likely boundary of such a site, which superseded any religious settlement on Cadbury Hill. The 1888 Ordnance Survey map shows the precinct, still bounded by rhynes to the south and west.



*Extract from 1888 Ordnance Survey map, 25 inch to 1 mile. The enclosure is most obvious to the west and south of the church as indicated by the arrows.*

Early high-status church sites throughout western Europe had more than one sacred building within the churchyard. In addition to the church Congresbury had a free standing chapel, dedicated to St Michael, standing somewhere in the churchyard. This was probably a mortuary chapel, first mentioned in 1503, which by 1548 was said to be "scituate within the churche yarde ther nuwe (now) in decay and unkevered (uncovered) wherin lyme is stecked, lead moltun, and such other necessarie busynes dun at the tyme of the reparinge of the paryahe churche."

There is a belief that Congresbury was an early British bishopric moved to Wells by Bishop Daniel in 721. This tradition may have no basis, but shows that Congresbury was recognised as an early centre of Christianity.

Bishop Asser of Sherborne writes in his Life of King Alfred that "I was summoned to him at daybreak on Christmas Eve, (probably in 886) and he presented me with two documents in which there was a lengthy list of everything that was in the two monasteries named Congresbury and Banwell in English ....as well as an extremely valuable silk cloak and a quantity of incense weighing as much as a stout man."

This record giving the Congresbury monastery to Asser is the first certain mention of Congresbury.

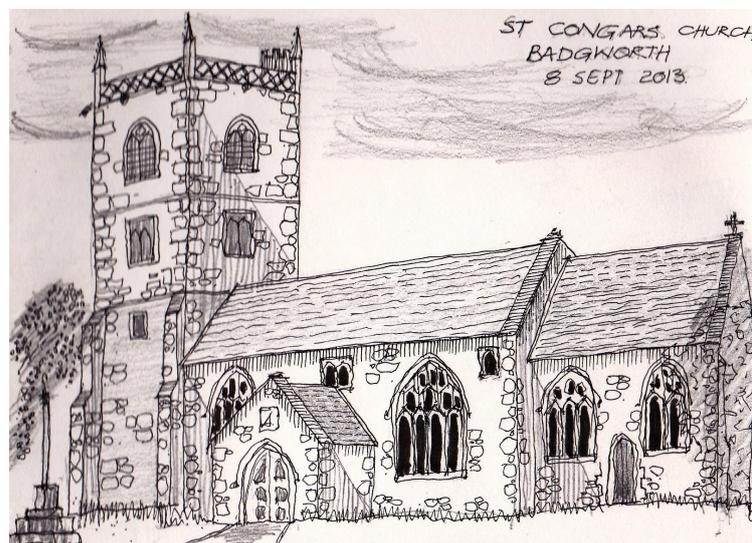
### **Did St Congar Exist?**

There is considerable evidence to substantiate the existence of St Congar although he is believed to be one of the worst recorded of all the British Saints.

Congresbury is said to mean St Cyngar's monastery (Congar being the anglicised version of the old Welsh name Cynger).

St. Congar's chapel (now the Merle chapel in St Andrew's church) was called this name throughout the middle ages. It was a place of pilgrimage, recorded in medieval pilgrim guides, and in medieval wills bequests were frequently made to St. Congar's chapel.

The church at Badgworth is named after St. Congar, though its dedication is medieval, and Congar's name is reflected in place names in Wales, Cornwall and Brittany.



*Badgworth church – Sketch by Michael Greaves.*

### **St Congar's Shrine**

In 1995 several pieces of carved stone were revealed that had been dug from the floor of a barn in Brinsea. The stones probably came from Congresbury church as fragments of memorial stones containing names local to Congresbury were found with them.

Three substantial carved stones, and one smaller piece, now reside in Taunton County Museum. They have been dated to the end of the tenth or beginning of the eleventh century and are believed to have come from the shrine of St Congar constructed between 1033 and 1060.

One piece is carved on two sides with two figures, Christ and an unknown saint.

Two other pieces, nearly life size and carved with drapery, fit together and contain a fragment of a figure, showing the lower abdomen and knee. Is this a representation of St Congar himself?



*Christ and the unknown saint and below the possible torso of Saint Congar.  
Courtesy of Congresbury History Group.*

St Congar was probably was born in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. There is debate about where he came from. Was he of local stock or from South Wales? There is a folk legend that he was a Byzantine prince. A Welsh genealogy records that he is the great grandson of Constantine of Cornwall, who is often confused with Emperor Constantine who gave his name to Constantinople, Byzantium.

## **The Miracles**

A Saxon tract from about A.D. 1000 called Resting Places of the Saints says that "*St. Cyngar the Confessor rests at Congresbury.*"

In 1516 a collection of stories entitled New Legends of England included the legend of St. Congar. This was taken from a manuscript from about 1150 called The Life of the Holy Congarus. Dr. Armitage Robinson, Dean of Wells in 1918, found early handwriting on a small piece of parchment used by a 17th century bookbinder. This was found to be part of a Life of St. Congar written about A.D. 900—1000.

Together they record that Congar, the son of the Emperor of Constantinople, fled from his father's kingdom to avoid marriage. Arriving in England he travelled as far as Somerset. A dream told him to halt where he saw a wild boar. Arriving at Congresbury he came upon a boar sleeping in the rushes. Here he built his wattle oratory and appointed twelve canons to form his monastic community.

Three miraculous events are recorded:

First, areas covered with water and reeds, which surrounded the oratory, were converted into fertile farmland.

Second, one day in his churchyard, surrounded by his clergy, it was wished that "*a yew tree might grow there, to provide shade from the summer heat and with its spreading branches to ornament the churchyard.*"

St Congar took a stick made from a yew tree and fixing it in the earth found himself unable to draw it out again.

"*On the following day, in the sight of all bystanders, it put forth leaves and afterwards it grew into a wide-spreading tree.*"

Finally, King Ine of Wessex (688 to 726) gave Congar the whole territory around Congresbury and promised that it should be a refuge for the saint. The place became so sacred that no kings dared to go to look upon it. King Edgar (958-975) is said to have come upon the spot accidentally while hunting. Though he repented, the King died, it was claimed, nine days after returning to his palace.

It is said that Congar's wattle church was replaced by a stone building during his lifetime; also that his reputation grew, he healed the sick, set up a hermitage in Wales and on pilgrimage to Jerusalem died and his body returned to Congresbury.

His feast day is recorded as the 27<sup>th</sup> November.

## **Changes in Ownership**

In c1030-1033 King Canute granted Congresbury and Banwell to Dudoc of Saxony who became Bishop of Bath and Wells. In 1060 he bequeathed the manors of Congresbury and Banwell to the See of Wells in perpetuity. However, when Edward the Confessor died King Harold seized the estates at Congresbury and Banwell.

The Domesday Books shows that in 1086 Congresbury manor was held by King William who gave the church, with half a hide attached, to his friend Maurice, Bishop of London.

Between 1206 and 1219, King John granted the Manor of Congresbury and right to appoint the vicar, to Bishop Joceline of Bath and Wells.

### **Consecration of the Current Church**

On July 11<sup>th</sup> 1215 Congresbury's new church, consisting most likely of just a nave and chancel, was consecrated by Bishop Joceline. It was probably at this time that the church was dedicated to St Andrew. This is the current church although the one we see has been much altered over the centuries.

An important event in English church history took place in 1281 when the Lambeth Council was called by Archbishop John Peckham (or Pecham). The Archbishop was concerned that the people hadn't enough theology to practice their faith and that certain clergy were not capable of teaching the theology. It was decreed that parishioners were to be taught the Fourteen Articles, Ten Commandments, Christ's Two Commandments, the Seven Works of Mercy, the Seven Virtues, the Seven Vices and Seven Sacraments. Seventeen years later all was not well at Congresbury for in 1298 Congresbury's rector, the Dean and Chapter of Wells Cathedral, ordered Master John, Congresbury's priest, to "*know your psalter and service within a year, " because he had not "a pleasing voice."*

### **The Bishop's Court**

Another building existed close to the church, for in 1215,  
*"The garden on the east side of the church and the bishop's court"*  
are noted in the charter of endowment of the newly dedicated church of Congresbury.

In 1262, William, Bishop of Bath and Wells, granted  
*"A croft which Stephen de Aguste, formerly vicar of the same church, held in the manor of Congresburi, between the way which leads to the cemetery of Congresburi on the north side of the church and the manse of the aforesaid William."*

In 1391 Thomas de Sudburie, Dean of Wells, gave consent  
*"to the demolition of any houses or buildings within the Bishop's manor of Congresbury, except the barn there, as unnecessary and superfluous considering that the Bishop has several neighbouring manors fully sufficient for his residence even if they were fewer."*  
Was the bishop's court included in the demolition work?

In 2008 a limited excavation was carried out in the orchard to the east of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Refectory, which itself is on the north side of the church. This established the existence of an early  
*"Medieval building with well preserved archaeology sealed by minimal topsoil and subsoils."*  
Geophysical surveys in 2010 in both the orchard and adjoining vicarage garden supported the documentary and previous archaeological evidence that a substantial building or buildings, larger than those extant, existed in the past to the north of the church. The building/s could well be the foundations of the vanished bishop's court mentioned in 1215.

### **The Lost Gatehouse**

There is no trace of a gatehouse at the church, said to have been mentioned by The Rev John Skinner (1772–1839) in his journal and dating to the time of Edward III (1312 to 1377).

## The Churchyard Cross

The churchyard cross at Congresbury is probably on its original site in the churchyard. When Pooley examined the cross in the 1870s, he described it as "*a fine specimen of fourteenth century work.*" Others have dated it to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. This cross commemorated all the dead, for at that time there were no gravestones in the churchyard and the churchyard was given over to music, sports, dancing, fund raising in the form of church ales (especially brewed for the occasion), general merry making and probably grazing the priest's sheep.

## Church Ales

Major fund raising events were church ales with ale and sometimes food being provided. All parishioners were expected to attend the "ales" and adjacent villagers attended each other's events.

There was a gradual change from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century when the church was considered a sacred building for the worship of God. Gatherings of the parish began to take place in houses in the village, usually called church houses. In 1445 Yatton built such a house. Perhaps Congresbury met for "ales" in the new vicarage (now the Refectory).

## Changes During the 12<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Over the centuries the church was enlarged.

The aisles and two chapels (one now contains the organ) were probably added in 14<sup>th</sup> century as was the tower.

The nave's roof was raised in the 14<sup>th</sup> /15<sup>th</sup> century (Pevsner says 14<sup>th</sup>) and clerestory windows added to provide greater light. (A clerestory is a high wall with a band of narrow windows along the very top.)

The entrance to the south porch is 13<sup>th</sup> century and must once have surrounded the inner door.

The current sumptuous inner doorway dates to the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The porch had a number of purposes. Here business was transacted and marriages performed with the giving of a ring followed by mass in the church. "*Churching*," a thanksgiving after birth was also performed in the porch before the mother was allowed inside the church. Baptisms commenced here as well. This is where the sponsors were received before being led to the font.

Medieval Congresbury apparently had at least two resident priests (a vicar and chaplain or curate with sometimes a chantry priest). The chancel of the church was the domain of the priests and during mass they often had their backs to the congregation so were probably only partially audible to those in the nave.

The nave "belonged" to the parishioners and until after the reformation would have been empty of pews and the resultant space used for both secular as well as religious purposes. It was the village hall where markets were held on wet days, school kept, and villagers could conduct business or hear the latest gossip. The villagers would no doubt have gathered here in 1371 to discuss Walter, then vicar, who was indicted with John Jere of having received at Congresbury William Lange, the tailor of Congresbury, knowing that Lange at "*Radyate in Kineswoode*" had killed John Chapman and robbed him. The vicar and the other two were later acquitted.

## The Refectory

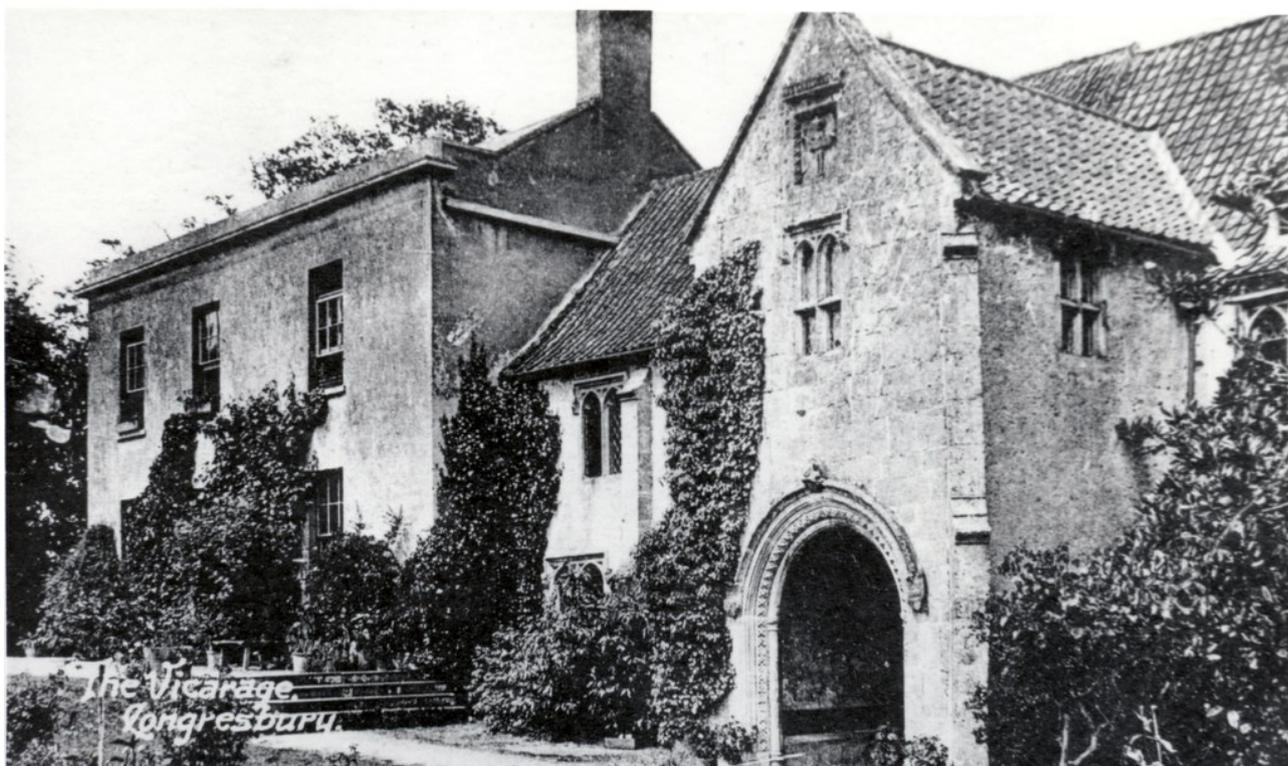
The vicarage (now called the Refectory) was built sometime during the period 1465 to 70 by the executors of Bishop Bekynton.

## New Vicarage

In 1823 the Rev Joseph Haythorne was appointed vicar and almost immediately applied for the old vicarage to be rebuilt as it was

*"so old and in every respect so low, damp and incommodious as to render it impossible to reside therein with any degree of comfort".*

The result was that part of the old building was pulled down and the present vicarage of late Georgian style adjoining the Refectory built in c1824.



*C1913. Courtesy of Congresbury History Group.*

## 19<sup>th</sup> Century

A vestry room was built in 1800 in the north aisle chapel (currently where the organ is situated.) However, in 1825 the Rev Haythorne had a vestry room built over the porch and the one in the north aisle chapel removed.

Following a visit to the church in the 1847 Joseph Leech, writing as "Churchgoer" commented that

*"there is for a county church a very fair and effective choir."*

This choir probably stood in a gallery at the west end. Sir Stephen Glynne, in January 1854, also visited the church and mentioned a gallery. By 1854 there was a "finger organ" with a keyboard.

After his visit one Sunday in 1847 "Churchgoer" praised the condition of the church and wrote

*"The Church filled well and I have never seen a service better performed. The rector*

*(Mr Haythorne) is an admirable and impressive reader."* All was not totally to his liking however as he complained about the boys at the back of the church.

*"I suppose there is a master to look after the boys, but not one of them ... seemed to have a proper prayer book ... all lounged during the service most lazily and listlessly ... some still more juvenile ... did nothing in spite of many black looks from me, but fight and draw figures on the wall during the Litany. If there is nobody else to do it, I should be glad to lend my gratuitous services to thrash them into propriety, and find myself in birches into the bargain."*

The black Purbeck marble shafts were added to the south aisle pillars in 1856 and the present pulpit donated by Rev Haythorne.

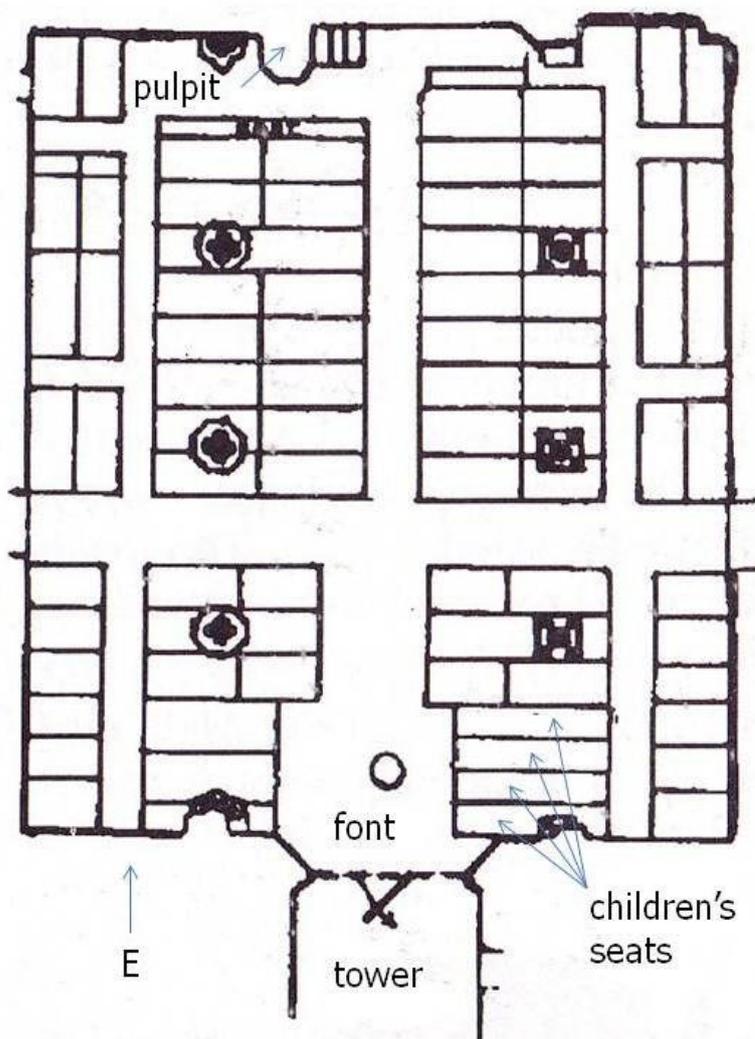
### Reseating in the 1880s

Mrs Browning's memories were recorded in the church magazine for August 1951 as follows:

*"The re-seating of the church caused great excitement. Till then people paid ten shillings a year for their pews as an exclusive holding. This privilege was so abused that some pew holders would allow none but their own family to share the sitting. People threatened to leave the church, but charity prevailed and all the new seats were free. While the new pews were being installed the services were carried out in a tent in the churchyard."*

*The seating plan in 1879 before the changes. Courtesy of the Rev Matthew Thomson and Somerset County Council Heritage Service 2014.*

*Accommodation, including 29 children's seats: 259.*





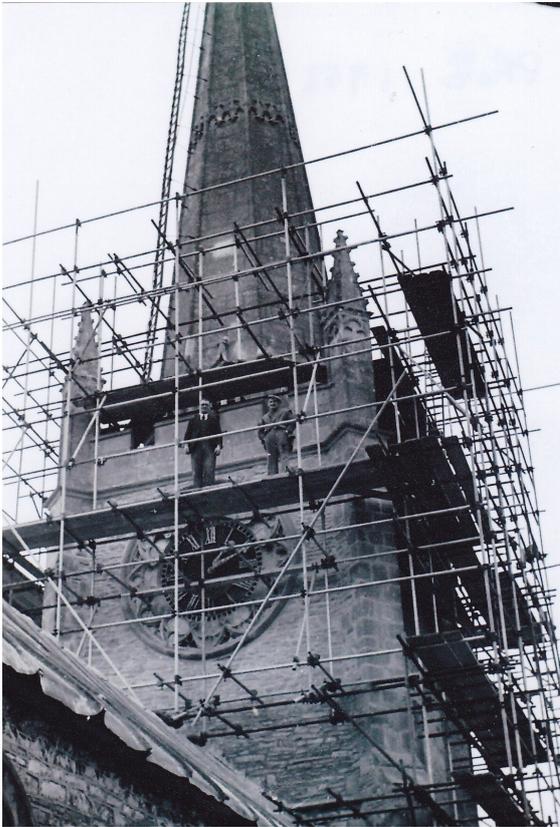
*An early photo of the east window. Note the reredos and statue niche to the left of the lamp which no longer exist. Courtesy of Congresbury History Group.*

### **Alex Cran and Urgent Repairs in the 1950s**

Prebendary Alex Cran was appointed vicar in 1948, and found both church and the Refectory in a very poor state. This was not surprising as only £160 had been spent on repairs to the church in the previous 100 years. Alex cared for and about his parishioners, the ancient church and village history and raised funds towards repair.

From 1950-52 extensive repairs were undertaken to the church at a cost of £11000. This included the tower being re-pointed and wholly restored and the nave roof reinstated with steel trusses and purlins. The ancient roof was replaced with copper and roofs of the north and south aisles, the external walls and chancel roof were extensively repaired and the ceilings of both aisles restored. In addition the chancel floor was lowered and the reredos removed.

The Refectory, which had death watch beetle (as did the church), was also repaired at a cost of nearly £3500.



*The church under repair. Looking up (top left), down (bottom right) and inside (top right). Taken in 1951 by K E Cox, apprentice plumber to A Scull & Sons, Bristol.*



# **The Great Restoration 1951-1960**

**The Restoration of the Tower.**

**The Nave Roof was reinstated by modern methods of construction, i.e., steel trusses and purlins.**

**The ancient lead roof was replaced with one of copper.**

**The Balance Weight and Platform in the Spire were renewed.**

**Extensive repairs were carried out on the roofs of the North and South aisles, the external walls and the Chancel roof.**

**The ceilings of both aisles as well as the nave ceiling were wholly restored.**

**The East Window was restored.**

**The Sanctuary and Chancel floors were relaid.**

**The Wall to the Screen was built and the Chancel Step extended.**

**The Choir and Sanctuary furniture was restored.**

**The Electrical installation was re-wired.**

**The Heating system was improved and extended.**

**The whole Church was re-decorated (mostly by voluntary labour).**

**The Vestry windows were renewed.**

**The Church Drive was re-laid by voluntary labour.**

**The Georgian Vicarage was repaired, re-roofed and separated from the Old Vicarage, known as the Refectory, to be a self-contained house.**

**The Refectory was re-roofed and wholly restored for use as a parochial hall.**

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**All this work, together with many other minor repairs and renewals, was carried out at a cost of approximately £20,000 (three-quarters of which amount will have been paid for under the Direct-Giving Scheme, known as the Seven Year Plan and the Church Contribution Plan).**

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**PRAISE BE TO GOD**

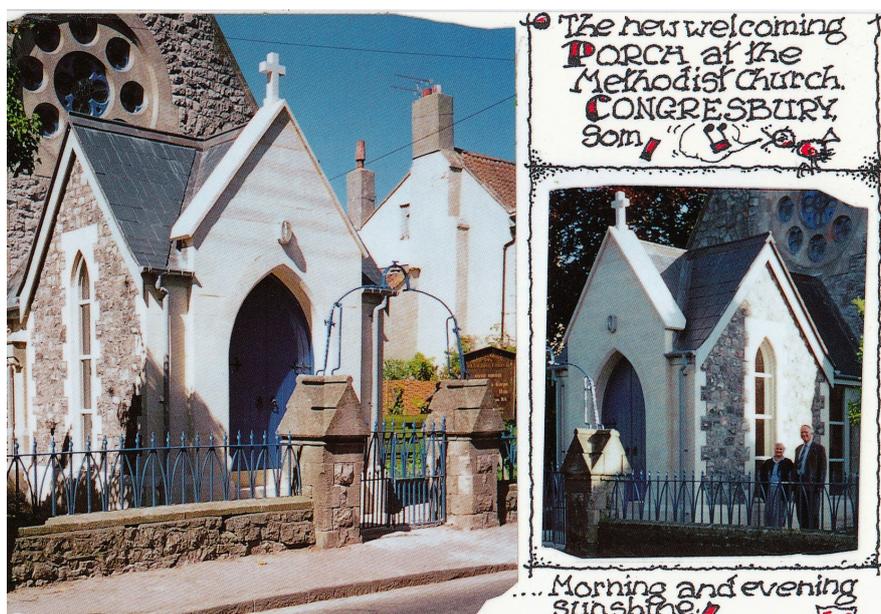
*A summary of the full repairs during the period 1951 to 1960 provided in a brochure produced for a thanksgiving service on Sunday October 30<sup>th</sup> 1960.*

## Competition

In 1852 members of the Methodist United Free Church worshipped in the Old Chapel, now called Roseleigh, in Kent Road. In 1859 the Baptists also had a chapel in Kent Road (the house can be identified by an 1859 date stone). In 1861 there were also Wesleyans and Plymouth Brethren in the village. In 1878 the Methodists built the current chapel in High Street, with 150 seats and a meeting room beside it.



*The current Methodist chapel in High Street c1910. Courtesy of Congresbury History Group.*



A new porch was added to the chapel in the 1990s.

*Card by John Walter.  
Courtesy of  
Congresbury History  
Group.*

**As we know a church is more than just its fabric and Congresbury church has had its fair share of interesting events and characters over the centuries.**

### **Excommunication**

In 1330, Henry de Insula, Congresbury's vicar, was ordered to excommunicate ten Congresbury men, with "*bell, book and candle*". After reading the sentence in front of the congregation, a book, symbolising life, was closed, then a candle snuffed out, removing the soul from the sight of God, and finally a bell was tolled, as for the dead. All in all a fearful dreaded punishment, with the men excluded from both church and society. Their sin? They had failed to pay 100 marks owed to the Dean and Chapter of Wells. This is £66.66, equivalent perhaps to £43600 in 2012 (Based on the retail price index).

### **The Hermit**

Early in the 15<sup>th</sup> century Congresbury had its own hermit for on January 16th 1414 the bishop committed to "*John Hexham of Milton of the diocese of Salisbury the administration of all goods of Robert Thomas Bourne, late hermit at Congresbury, who died intestate; he first making oath as required in such cases.*"

### **Vicars Who Became Bishops of Wells**

Congresbury remained a place of some importance.

William of Bitton II, Bishop of Bath and Wells 1267-1274, was vicar for a while and in 1466, another Congresbury vicar, Robert Stillyngton, also became Bishop of Bath and Wells. Robert would no doubt have admired the new vicarage.

### **Parish Registers**

In 1538 a mandate formulated by Thomas Cromwell instructed every parish to purchase a "*sure coffer.*" The keys to this parish chest were to be held by the vicar and churchwarden.

Every marriage, christening or burial, at which the minister officiated, were to be recorded in a book by him and kept safe in the chest.

Congresbury register dates from 1543.

### **The Aftermath of the Reformation**

The Reformation must have had a profound effect upon the villagers but the locals seem to have ensured that some church valuables were kept from the king.

On 19 March 1594 John Badman of Congresbury, husbandman, testified that about 34 years before (1560), when he was dwelling with his master, John Horte, a butcher in Congresbury

*"John Horte sent this dep unto one John Potter of the same parish and willed this iurate to bring him such a thing as the sd Potter would deliver unto him in a white pilowetie and willed him not to look into it nor to hurt it, whereupon the examine went to the sd Potter's house, and told him his errand, when and where the said Potter delivered unto this iurate a white pillowetie, with some weightie thing therein, and willed him to deliver it to his master, this examine took the sd pillowetie and going homeward, as he bare it*

*upon his [illeg], he heard some metal clattering in the same, and being desirous to see what it was opened the pillowtie, and found therein a great silver cross parcel gillte with gold, broken in pieces, the which this examine viewed, and as he judgeth was worth by estimation some £20 in money or thereabouts. And that after he had had his full sight thereof, he again put up the said pieces into the sd pillowtie, and carried some and delivered the same to his sd master John Horte. And he sayth that the very day after this iurate brought home the same, the sd John Horte, and one John Horte the elder, John Sprunde, John Tayler, Robert Neiles, David Yeeders, and Edmund Yardwell of the said parish of C took the sd pieces of the sd cross, (saying that the same did belong unto the parishioners of C) and rode to Bristol, as the sd John Horte, this deponent's master told him that they had there sold the same."*

## **Parishioners in Trouble**

An Act of Parliament, called the Act of Uniformity, was passed in 1559 and made refusal to attend Church of England services a legal matter. For every absence the fine was 1s (5p) and this was raised in 1581 to the enormous sum of £20 per month.

In 1608 the Church Court records show the following regarding two Congresbury men:

Johannem Baale

*"hee is a drunkerd. And that all the summer time hee (being a fidler) commeth little to the churche amd withdraweth much people from the church by his fidling."*

Johannem Hort de Brinsea

*"hee is verie often drunck seldome commeth to the churche, and on the xxiiijth day of September last being the sabbath day hee was not onlie bedlam drunck drawing out his knief against the companie, but also was so beastlie drunk that chast eares abhors to heere the report of his damnable behavioure."*

and this was during the Puritan period!

## **Another Vicar in Trouble**

John Eglesfield was Congresbury's vicar in 1614 and from 1631 also Loxton's vicar. By 1647 he was in London's debtors' prison, the Fleet, and was removed from his post *"for scandal, drunkenness and employing scandalous curates."*

## **Raising Money**

Under the Local Government Act of 1894 the civil functions of the vestries were transferred to the new parish council and so the church after 1894 was financially on its own. Church bazaars are recorded from 1896 which were the highlight of the village year. An 1895 bazaar raised over £88 and enabled the church to install a lightning conductor, regulate the weather cock, repair the spire, install new south doors and two lamps, and repair and clean the organ.



*Lady helpers at a 1904 bazaar, sitting outside the Old School Rooms in Station Road. Courtesy of Congresbury History Group.*



*The bazaar inside the building. Courtesy of Congresbury History Group.*

## The First World War



Favoured with a lovely fine day, the entertainment of 50 wounded soldiers from the Beauford Hospital was a great success. Tents given by Mr. J. Edwards and Mr. E. Poultney were utilised for tea, and the excellent band, which was greatly appreciated by all present. The men were met at the entrance by Rev. and Mrs. Maunsell-Eyre and friends and given a hearty welcome. After light refreshments and an abundant supply of cigarettes, the wounded soldiers enjoyed sitting and lounging about in the grounds, which looked bright and gay amid flowers and an abundance of bright flags lent by friends. The games, for which first, second, and third prizes were given, were entered upon with great delight. The committee and subscribing friends joined in the tea, provided in an excellent manner by Mr. Bird, of Winscombe. A bran dip, with a nice present for each soldier, was provided by Miss Maunsell-Eyre. At the close of the day the prizes were distributed by Mrs. Maunsell-Eyre to each winner, and another supply of cigarettes were handed round by Mr. A. H. Woodward; three sacks of apples were forwarded to the Hospital. Letters have been received by the Vicar from the Hon. Secretary and Matron thanking him and the friends who helped for the very delightful day, so much appreciated by the men.

*Above: c1916. The vicar, a few wounded soldiers and numerous ladies. Courtesy of Congresbury History Group.*

*Left: Extract from Congresbury and Wick St Lawrence Parish Magazine October 1916.*

The Parish Magazine for December 1916 records "*It has been necessary to darken our church lamps and we must bear the inconvenience cheerfully during the winter evenings, in case stray Zeppelins may come our way.*"

### **More Recent Times**



*Alex Cran welcomes carol singers.*

### **The 1968 Floods**

Mervyn Davis wrote in the Parish Magazine of the night of 10/11th July:  
: "*Floods following phenomenal rainfall brought terror, havoc and untold damage to many parts of the West Country. Congresbury suffered less than some; more than most.*"  
The church being a little higher than the surrounding area was fortunately not affected.  
Alex Cran, the vicar at the time, recalled how  
"*We put a lot of furniture in the church. How it stank.*"



*The church reflected in flood water.*

## The Current Church (2014)

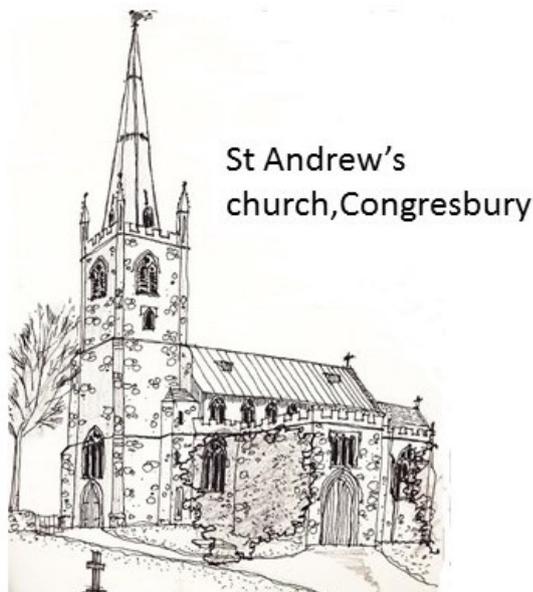
St Andrews is within the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

The current vicar, Matthew Thomson, is the Bishop's Healing Advisor, Chaplain to the Diocesan Office and Chairman of Vine Counselling Trustees.

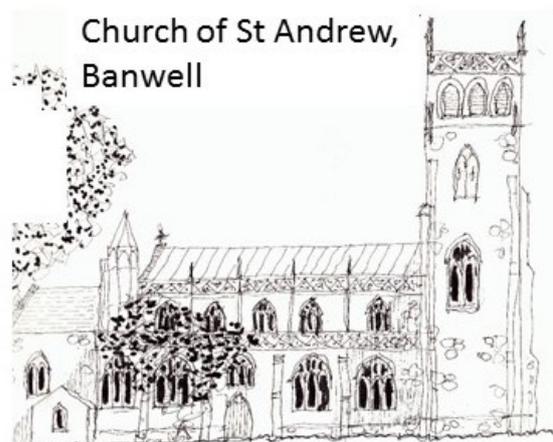
There are close links with the local primary schools, including St Andrew's school, Congresbury and the local academy school at Churchill. In addition St Andrew's church has a part time children's worker, who helps with assemblies and primary school work, as well as a part time youth worker.

An increasingly closer relationship is being developed with the two Methodist churches in Banwell and Congresbury.

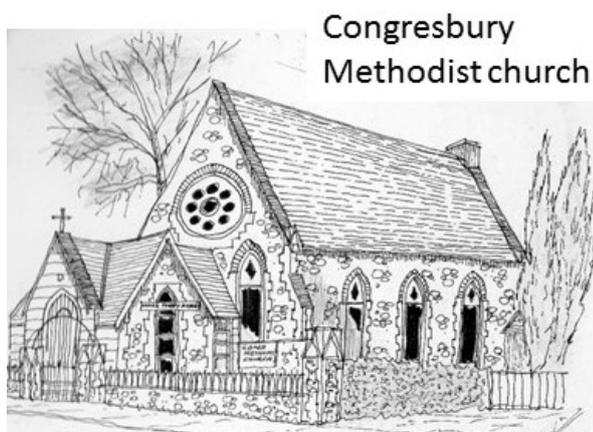
The parish joined as a Benefice (an ecclesiastical office in which the incumbent is required to perform certain duties) with Banwell in January 2013. On Christmas eve, probably in 886, King Alfred gave Bishop Asser of Sherborne the two monasteries at Congresbury and Banwell. Some 1100 years later the connection has been revived.



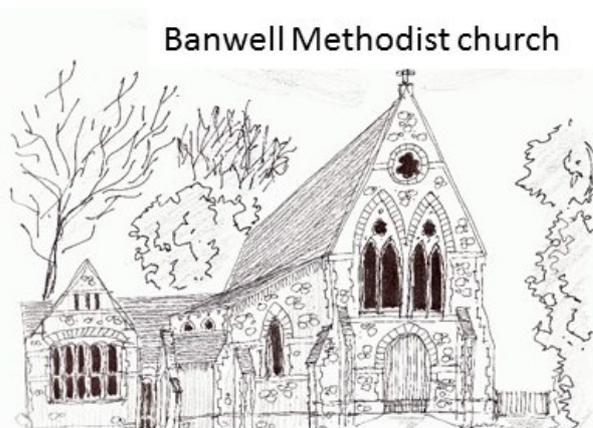
St Andrew's  
church, Congresbury



Church of St Andrew,  
Banwell



Congresbury  
Methodist church



Banwell Methodist church

*Sketches by Michael Greaves*

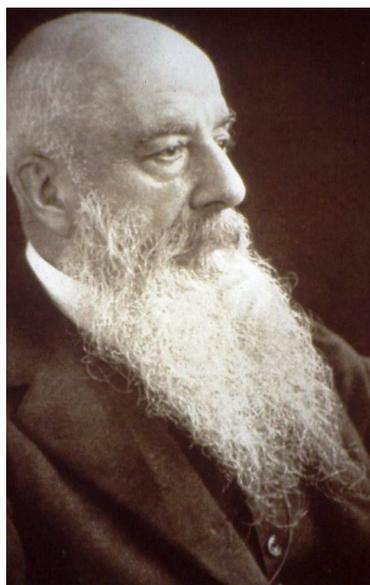
## List of Incumbents

1228	Theobald de BUCKETOT	1532	Richard DUCKE
1243	Peter SARACENUS	1557	John WHITING
1245	John de TAUNTON	1560	Edward BROCKELESBY
1251	William de BUTTON	1564	Thomas DAWBORN
1259	John de BUTTON	1573	Richard BENBOWE
	Stephen de AGUSTE	1574	John LONGE A.M. later Archbishop of Armagh
	William de BERNARS	1584	William BARNES (Chaplain to the Queen)
1320	WALTERUS	1591	Thomas ALDWORTH
1323/1330	Henry de INSULA	1604	Robert GULLIFORD A.M.
1349	William NEWEPOR	1613	Brent GULLIFORD A.M.
1351	Thomas BOWET	1614	John EGLESFIELD A.M.
1371	WALTER	1647	Samuel WADE
1409	John DUFFELD	1653	Christopher SADBURY A.M.
1412	Robert KENE	1667	John MILLER
1447	Robert STILLYNGTON LL.D. (later Bishop of Bath & Wells)	1687	Matthew MORGAN LL.D.
1449	John BERNARD	1688	Richard CODRINGTON A.M.
1459	Thomas BROMHALE	1732	Thomas TAILOUR A.M.
1479	Thomas OVERAY LL.B.	1762	George NORMAN B.A.
1493	William TOMSON S.T.B.	1798	Thomas Trogenna BIDDULPH M.A.
1494	Thomas TOMYOWE LL.D.	1799	Joseph Atwell SMALL D.D.
	John ALGAR	1814	Thomas Brown SIMPSON M.A.

1818	Harry BEVAN B.A.
1824	Joseph HAYTHORNE M.A.
1867	William HUNT B.A. (1842–1931) A historian and biographer he had a “well-nigh national reputation.” He was one of only seven contributors to the <i>Dictionary of National Biography</i> whose work appeared in all the original sixty-three volumes.
1883	Robert Hedges MAUNSELL- EYRE M.A.
1920	George Edward LAWS B.D. (Canon of Bristol)
1924	Charles PORTER M.A.
1928	Robert Woods COLQUHOUN M.A.
1936	Thomas GOODCHILD M.A.
1944	Frederick James PIZZEY
1948	Alexander Strachan CRAN M.A. (Prebendary in Wells Cathedral).
1973	John SIMMONDS B.A.
1985	Richard H SALMON B.A.
2001	Matthew J THOMSON B.A.



Joseph Haythorne M.A.  
From 1824.



William Hunt B.A.  
From 1867.



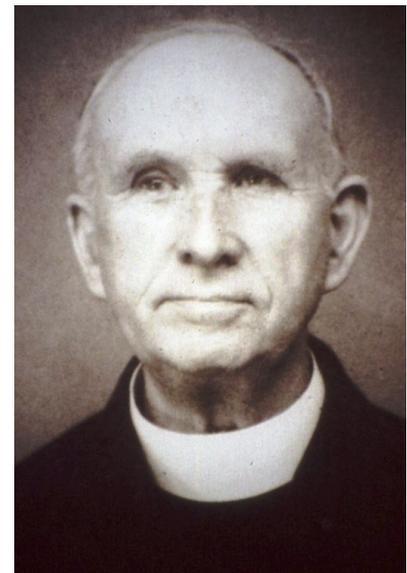
Robert Hedges  
Maunsell-Eyre  
M.A. From 1883.



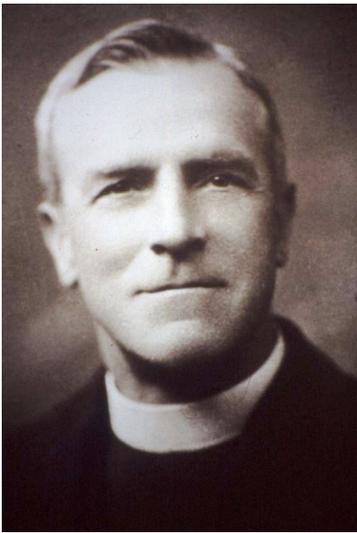
George Edward Laws  
B.D. (Canon of Bristol).  
From 1920.



Charles Porter M.A.  
From 1924.



Robert Woods  
Colquhoun M.A. From  
1928.



Thomas Goodchild M.A.  
From 1936.



Frederick George Pizzev  
From 1944.



Alexander Strachan Cran  
M.A. Prebendary in Wells  
Cathedral. From 1948.



John Simmonds B. A. (Third left). From 1973.



Richard H Salmon B.A. From 1985.

Matthew J Thomson B.A.  
From 2001.

