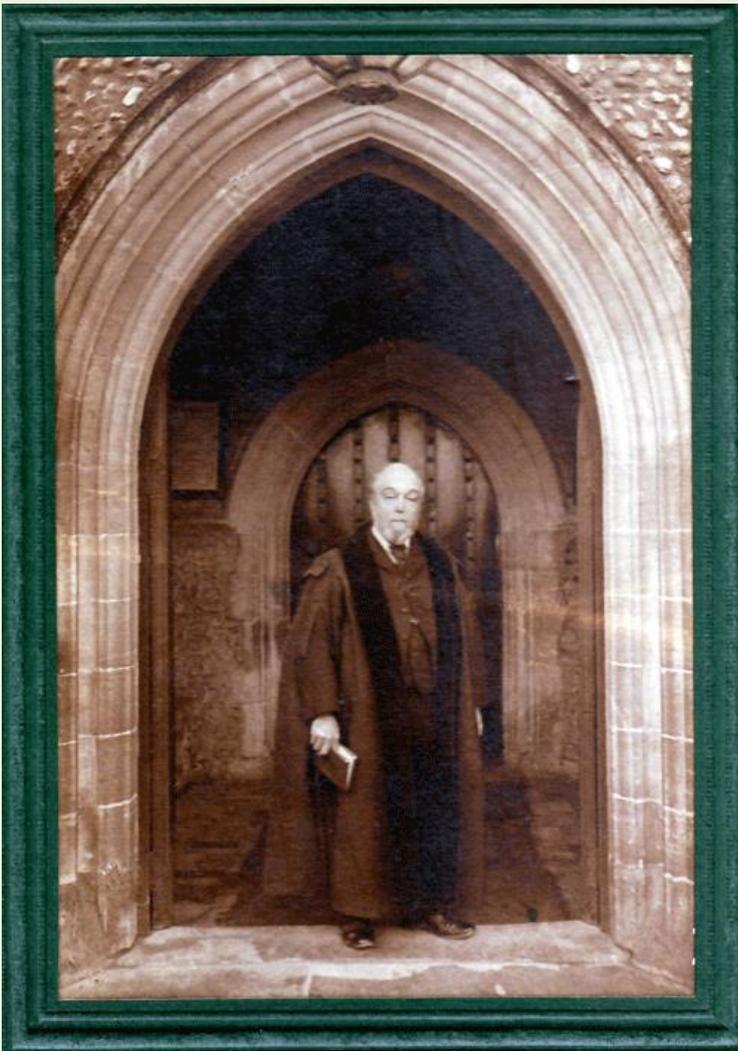


The Old Vicarage, Sawston.



The Old Vicarage, Sawston, circa 1636 – 1948

The Old Vicarage at Sawston became the home of George Godden and his family when they moved to Sawston in the late 1800's (the date still has to be confirmed but it is believed to be sometime in 1886). Again it still has to be confirmed but it is believed that he moved to Sawston with the new vicar, the Rev. Charles Edward Crump, in order to take up the post of Verger.



George Godden, together with his family, lived in the Old Vicarage until his death in 1913.

His wife, Charlotte Godden née Whent, who survived him, remained in the Old Vicarage until her death in 1927. Just a few years later, in 1935, the building partly collapsed and was finally demolished in 1948 under a Demolition Order of the District Council.





One of the last views of the Old Vicarage, a photograph taken around 1900 with [Charlotte Godden](#) standing in the doorway and her daughter [Alice](#) by her side.

The building itself enjoyed a chequered history much of which was set out by Ronald Bircham, Vicar of St. Marys Sawston from 1948 until 1978, in his history of the church.

Saint Mary's Sawston - A History 910 - 1800 by Ronald Bircham, Vicar 1948-1978

In January 1636 John Swan was given a Benefice house and other property by Deed of Gift made by Elizabeth Wakelin. The house stood between the Church Institute and Ward's House. It

was so close to Ward's House as to be almost semi-detached. Included with the house was the land on which the Church Institute stands and the two bungalows in Shingay Lane. The original Trust Deed is dated 26th. January 1636 and it appointed Charles Balaam, John Byatt and William Jeffery, who are described as gentlemen; John Gardiner and John Greenell, yeomen, and John Barker who is not described, as Trustees or Feoffees.



View [The Old Vicarage, Sawston circa 1636 - 1948](#) in a larger map

Her intention is described as being

the zeal and goodwill which she bore to John Swan the Vicar then being and for the better maintenance of him and his successors and for enabling him and them to live and reside in the said Towne of Sawston where there was then no dwellinghouse belonging to the said Vicarage.

The property was

ALL THAT messuage or tenement wherein the said Elizabeth Wakelin then dwelt with all the houses edifices buildings barns stables et cetera whatsoever to the same belonging or appertaining situate in Sawston between the tenement some time John Huntingdon's on the one side and a lane called Shingay Lane on the other side one head thereof abutting on the King's highway leading from Walden to Cambridge and ALL THAT Orchard or piece or parcel or pightle lying at the west end of the same orchard to the said messuage or tenement adjoining containing by estimation one and a half acres with the appurtenances thereto.

The bequest was conditional upon the Vicar paying to the poor forty shillings annually upon the anniversary of her death for she also had

zeal to the poore people which then and thereafter from time to time should be inhabiting and dwelling with the said Towne.

The Vicar was also required to make a Sermon in the parish of Sawston on the same day. Should the Vicar make default in payment of the forty shillings the Trustees were empowered to distrain and re-enter the said premises, but if any future Vicar neglected or refused to pay the forty shillings the Trustees were to take over the whole Trust and pay the whole of the rents et cetera to the poor in the form of stock for poor labourers and marriage portions for the poor maidens of the parish.

John Swan died on 23rd November 1639 and Elizabeth Wakelin died some time in 1645, so he did not derive any benefit from the Deed and in fact he had been Vicar for 39 years, the longest tenancy of the benefice the parish had known, before the Deed was drawn up; but it had provided something for his successors.

In the court book of the Dale Manor 14th. October 1645 Elizabeth Wakelin is said to have died since the last Court and that her brother John Carter was next of kin.

What John Swan felt about the lack of house and accommodation may be judged by the return of a Terrier made on 1st. October 1615.

WHEREAS it is required that I should give in a terrar into the Court of Vicaridge House and Glebelands of Sawston:

These are to certifie the Court that I have neither house nor gleabelands belonging to my Vicarage above sayd, no not so much ground as will serve to build a house.

In witness whereof I have set my hande.

(Signed) JOHN SWAN. Vicar of Sawston.

(Signed) RICHARD MEARCH

CHRISTOFER TILBROOK

Churchwardens.

The description of Elizabeth Wakelin's house as being between the tenement some time John Huntingdon's and Shingay Lane obviously refers to Ward's House, which may have been in the possession of John Huntingdon before it became vested in feoffees.

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Whatever he may have found when he became Vicar, within eighteen months of his Institution there was a further Visitation in 1686 which makes even sorrier reading than the Visitation of 1665.

XXV SARSTON Sept 18th.

Vicar: Mr. Haslop of King's, Mr. Haslop.

Value. £15. per annum ye Saffron lost wch impoverishes it.

**Patron) Mr. Greenhalgh of Harston guardian for
Impropiator) his nephew a minor.
The Great Tithes about £100 per annum.'
Hood, Homilies, Cannons, Table of Marriage, all wanting and a
Patin
Ye Minr non Resident not Constant Catechising nor Holy-Days.
The Bible to be bound.
A new Common Prayerbook to be bought.
The Church walls want Plastering within and wthout
The Chancell a dungeon the Windows stopt up wth pease- straw.
The Chancell wants seat-boarding, paving. glazing, Plastering,
Whiting.
The Rails to be restored from ye Belfry to ye Altar, and the Altar
steps to be raised as heretofore.
The Dore so broaken yt Hoggs may creep under it.
An old Vestry open to ye Air.
The font nasty and noe Plugg.
The Church-yard weedy and full of Elders, the Walls thereof want
Coping, the Hoggs have rooted up the graves.
Vicaridge House turnd to an Ale house and a sign upon ye Dore,
it rents for £5 per annum, 2s. 6d., from ye Vicaridge house to ye
poor.
£50. a year in Charity to ye Church and poor.
About 60 families. Noe Dissenters but Esqr Huddleston.**

(Cambridge Antiquarian Society Proceedings Volume XVIII 1879 p.339.)

The Vicaridge House was the house left to the Vicar by Elizabeth Wakelin and stood next to Ward's House. Whether it had ever been used as a Vicarage seems most doubtful as most of the Incumbents about this time were College Chaplains and lived in College. Apparently the house had been taken over by the Churchwardens and let for £5. per annum out of which they had to pay £2. 6. Od., not 2s.6d., to the poor.

The fifty pounds refers to the house next door, and still standing, Ward's House, and also the other land attached to the bequest which makes up Ward's Charity, or the Church Estate, as against the Town Estate, the name given to Huntingdon's Charity.

Even this little history provides some information about the Church in this period. This substantial though not palatial house, standing on 11/2 acres of land, was rejected as hardly fit for a "local vicar" from 1639 to the late 19th Century with one, in 1836, calling it "**a miserable wretched cottage**". For much of this period it was the second son of landed gentry who were provided a "living" and a parish. Then, in 1882, a fit and proper Vicarage was built, and utilized, and when in 1947 the Rev. Ronald Bircham first saw it he found it to be "**A very splendid mansion which thoroughly daunted me.**"



The New Vicarage of 1882

It was not long after Bircham left, in 1979, that it was found to be too large a building to maintain in this modern era and a new Vicarage, detached but more in line with houses on the adjacent estate, was built to replace it.



Today Wards House stands alone and only the land upon which the Old Vicarage was built remains. While opposite the future of The Queens Head, another ancient building, remains in doubt. What will tomorrow's view hold?

All the old photographs are courtesy of [John Godden](#), Photographer, Haverhill and Sawston.