

Hugh Duncan Hanford (1878-1968)

Vicar 1931-1957

Hugh Hanford was born in Loughborough, one of five children of William Hanford, a hosiery manufacturer, and his wife Eliza. William Hanford was a Loughborough Town Councillor for many years and Mayor from 1905-1906. Hugh's brothers, Albert and Arnold, followed their father into the hosiery trade.

Hugh was educated at Loughborough Grammar School, then King's College London and St Catherine's College, Cambridge, graduating in 1901. He was ordained deacon in London in 1903 and priest in 1904.

He was curate of Christ Church in London from 1903-1905 and of Windlesham in Surrey from 1905-1908. He then travelled to Pretoria in South Africa, where he was priest in charge of St Cuthbert's church and chaplain of the leper asylum there until 1915. He served in World War I, as a chaplain between 1916-1919, spending some time in France, and was mentioned in despatches in 1919. He then returned to Leicestershire, as vicar of Ratby with Groby from 1919-1923, vicar of St Michael's, Belgrave in Leicester from 1923-1931 and vicar of St Helen's, Ashby from 1931-1957.

On 5th July 1911, he married Sapphire Helena Gore Browne in her home town of Weybridge, Surrey. They had met in South Africa, whilst Sapphire was visiting her uncle, William Gore Browne, the Dean of Pretoria. Their first three children – twins Helena Mary and Margaret Monica (born 1912) and son Francis William (born 1914) – arrived in Praetoria. A second set of twins, Celia Constance and Sapphire Joy, were born in Headington, Oxford in 1917.

Canon Hanford served in Ashby during difficult times. He worked to help unemployed people during the depression years of the 1930s, maintained church life during the Second World War and built up the congregation again after 1945. It was he who set up St Michael's Chapel, where soldiers who have died in conflict are remembered. A plaque remembering him hangs in that chapel; the cross donated in his name still stands on its altar.



After retirement, he and Sapphire lived at 'Ashby House' in Hook, Hampshire for several years before going to live with their daughter Celia and her husband Canon Rees Phillips at Outwell

Rectory in Cambridgeshire. Hugh Hanford died there

on 8th May 1968. A memorial service was held at St Helen's and Canon Hanford's ashes were interred in the Garden of Remembrance. In 1969, a Faculty was granted to place a tablet in St Michael's Chapel, commemorating the ministry of Canon Hanford, who had served the parish for 26 years, retiring in his 80th year.

*Julie Starkey
March 2024*

