

THROUGH THE EYE OF A NEEDLE

The Journey of two churches towards the Kingdom of God
by Francis Wooley, Vicar of S. Luke's, 1985-1993, Mabel Stubbings and other members
of both congregations.

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Chapter 1

THE START OF THE TWO CHURCHES by Francis Wooley

1.1 Introduction

Where to begin -- how to proceed? At the beginning, of course! The second is more difficult because a reading of the histories of the two churches over their first hundred years shows that although passing reference is made by the one to the other, there doesn't seem to have been much interaction over the years. But this is a false picture. The members of the two congregations lived in the same community, and no doubt many went to S. Luke's School which was, after all, all that physically separated the two churches.

We begin our story in the mists of time with pre-historic Cambridge and look at the development of the area before going on to the founding of the two churches. As they are two separate churches, their histories will often diverge, sometimes coming together until we reach the last chapter in the present history with the use of the same building.

1.2 Roman Cambridge

In early times this part of Britain was occupied by the tribe of the Iceni. Their land was protected by a natural barrier which stretched from the Wash to the Thames -- in the north, the Fens, in the south, thick forest. In the middle was a narrow gap right in the margin of the Fens --there was founded the city of Cambridge.

The first settlement seems to have been in the region of Castle Hill. Certainly this was where the Romans made their fort, and its outer fortifications can still be seen on Mount Pleasant as the bank on which Storey's house stands. To the east was the river and soon a bridge was built for the Roman road which led from Godmanchester to Colchester. Later a settlement was built in the region of what is now Market Hill. Here at S. Bene't's we find what is probably the oldest building in the county.

1.3 The Parishes of Chesterton and S. Giles

It was in 1092 that the parish church of S. Giles's was built. (Parishes came into existence in the 4th century and were originally areas under the control of a bishop. Later they became sub-divisions of a diocese. By the year 1000 every part of England was in a parish with its parish priest, and even today everyone in the country lives in a parish of some sort or another.) S. Giles's parish was soon joined by that of S. Andrew, Chesterton, and the two parishes occupied the area to the west and north of the river, stretching from Grantchester in the south to Histon in the north, and from the river out to Maddingley and Girton.

Chesterton was a separate village and the area round S. Giles became somewhat run down over the years, its only importance being the presence of the City Gaol and later the police station.

With the turn of the 19th century the population in the area began to grow. Later on with the expansion of the university, more housing was needed for college servants, and with the emancipation of the dons (they no longer had to be clergymen and unmarried) new houses of a larger style were needed.

To celebrate the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1837, a new road was built from where the road to Histon crossed the Huntingdon Road -- it was named after the new Queen. It ran from Histon

Road in a gentle curve to join the Chesterton Road further down the hill. A few houses already existed near Chesterton Road, principally in Albert Street. But soon the Victoria Homes were built, and development then proceeded up the hill with a network of streets between Victoria Road and Castle Mound. The population grew apace.

1.4 The Building of the two Churches

The development of church and school in the area came about as the result of meetings held under the auspices of well-intentioned people from the other side of the river.

In 1850 the Industrial School was opened on the corner of Victoria Road and what would later become Harvey Goodwin Avenue (named after the founder of the school; he was a tutor of Caius College). The following year the Bishop of Ely gave a licence to the Vicar of Chesterton, in whose parish the area was, for services to be held in the school room.

In 1856 another meeting was held at Downing Place Congregational Church (later to become Emmanuel Church) at which it was decided to rent two rooms in Albert Street to cater for a growing population of children in the area. A Sabbath School was begun. The school grew so fast that they transferred to a small barn and then in 1859 built a brick building. Regular Sunday evening services soon followed, although it was sometimes difficult to supply preachers. In 1873 yet another meeting of undergraduates led to a proper servicing of the new Congregational Church.

Meanwhile in 1862 a meeting took place (another meeting!) in East Road. It was intended to launch an increase in clergy to serve in the developing districts of Barnwell and Chesterton. As a result a District of S. Luke's was established with a Rev'd C. Knowles as curate in charge. He was responsible to Chesterton and had a population of about 1,200 in his care. A temporary wooden church was built and opened in 1863.

In 1871 George Hale who was to become the first Vicar of S. Luke's was appointed. He came from Sidney Sussex College. It was under his leadership that the permanent building would rise.

A public meeting in December 1872, presided over by the Bishop of Ely and attended by distinguished persons from town and University, launched a public appeal for the new church -- the target to be £7,000. The foundation stone was laid on 18 October 1873, S. Luke's Day and by 1874 the first phase of building had been completed and worship could take place.

It was in this year that a meeting took place (17 February 1875) of a group of young enthusiasts who had done so much to get the preaching at Victoria Road off to a good start. The motion was to 'secure home missionary work and preach in New Chesterton' -- the seconder was one William Alfred Guttridge. He was duly appointed minister of the new Congregational Church. A temporary wooden building was bought for £110 but it was soon realised that it was too small -- often extra seats had to be put out in the aisles for the 200 seat building to cater for the large numbers attending. The church was still 'attached' to Emmanuel Church and in 1877 the ties were formally broken and the new Church came into being. A permanent building was now required and Emmanuel Church gave part of the proceeds of the sale of the Downing Street site for the project. By early 1884 nearly £3,000 had been raised and on 20 May 700 people crowded into the Guildhall for a tea held to celebrate the laying of the foundation stone by William Fowler MP. The architect of the new building was Lewis Banks. Ten months later the first services were held in the new building which had cost £3,800.

In 1879 Emmanuel Church gave up oversight of the Sunday School which now passed to Victoria Road Congregational Church. By 1886, as a result of William Guttridge's efforts, the Church was the largest free church in the area - in 10 years membership had grown from 63 to 210.

In 1885 the S. Luke's church building was completed with tower and spire. The total cost was £10,272 18s 2d (of which £500 had been given by the Vice Master of Trinity for the spire).

In 1874, a few days before the consecration of S. Luke's (the first part of the building) a mixed school for boys, girls and infants had been opened in the school room of the Industrial school. There were 25 children on the roll, but within a month, the number had grown to 135. A new building was provided at the east end of the church, dividing S. Luke's from the congregational church next door. 197 children aged from 3 to 14 were herded together in this small building with one teacher, one pupil teacher and six monitresses! At least they had the country right outside the door (well, almost). The school was demolished in 1989 leaving only a small part, which is now the workshop of David Kindersley.

In July 1875 heavy rain caused the closure of the building for 8 days, after which the infants moved to a new building at the west end of S. Luke's. By 1882 a new school over the road from the church had been opened and this was used by the girls. The boys were at the west end and the infants at the east end.

In 1969 the old school buildings were transferred to the Church and the school moved to new premises on French's Road.

Chapter 2 MEMORIES OF S. LUKE'S

2.1 The First Forty Years 1837-1877 by Mabel Stubbings

When Victoria became queen in 1837, Victoria Road had just been built, thus linking Chesterton Road with Histon Road, and forming a triangle with Castle Street. This area was to become the site chosen for both churches. There were only twelve houses in 'New' Chesterton in 1837.

The Victoria Friendly Societies Asylum was completed in the early 1840s and it was in the board room of the Asylum that the first religious activity of which there is a record was held. Charles Mackenzie, a young undergraduate began by visiting the sick there and progressed to holding a simple service on Sunday afternoons.

The Industrial School was founded in 1850 by Harvey Goodwin, and a committee of which he was secretary, with Mr Richard Bowing as its first master. Services were held in the Industrial School from 1851 and Sunday Schools until 1882.

The Congregational Church founded a Sunday school in Albert Street in 1856 which was so successful that by 1859 there was a purpose-built brick building in which services could be held.

The S. Luke's day school was built at the same time as the church but was not ready for occupation until 30 November; so for the first two months the Industrial School again came to the rescue.

Both churches started by acquiring a wooden building - S. Luke's in 1863 and the Congregational Church in 1875. It appears that the district would have had great difficulty in getting either church without the enthusiastic support of members of the University, who seem to have contributed generously with both time and money to get the young churches functioning.

The permanent church for S. Luke's was consecrated in 1874 and became a separate parish (from Chesterton) in 1881. George Hale was the first vicar. The Congregational Church next door was already independent though still closely connected with Emmanuel. The Rev'd W. Gutteridge was the first minister.

Like the churches, the day school buildings were added to as numbers grew and the need arose. S. Augustine's Church and school was built in 1898 to satisfy the needs of that part of the parish. One building served as both Church and school.

2.2 The First World War by Mabel Stubbings

The first World War caused a great deal of disruption to both congregations and to the schools and homes of the area. Supplies were scarce. In October 1918 the headmaster recorded: "Sent two boys with horse and cart to station for coals."

When the War ended S. Luke's Parish extended over a very much wider area than now. However, apart from a few houses and farms, the effective part of the parish was bounded by Oxford Road and the north side of Huntingdon Road, French's Mill on Histon Road, Victoria Road and the north side of Chesterton Road.

There were fields and allotments stretching from Milton Road to White House Land on Huntingdon Road, and from the end of Garden Walk (the allotment hut which was situated close to the sweet factory), French's Mill, and Oxford and Richmond Roads to Arbury (Meadow Road). Chivers' orchards were clearly visible from the allotment gate at the end of Oxford Road -- and we could smell what sort of jam was being made!

The large orchard behind the church became Stretton and Harvey Goodwin Avenues, joining up with Akeman Street and Bateson Road in the 1920s and then with Gilbert Road. The Eachard Road Estate and the N.A.I.B. and Howes Place were built in the 1920s and 30s and Windsor Road in the late 1930s.

The McManus and Arbury Estates with the necessary schools and the Good Shepherd Church came into existence after the Second World War in the 1950's.

In 1915 a new curate, the Rev'd W.W. Partridge, was appointed for S. Luke's Parish. When the vicar, the Rev'd F. Hird resigned in 1916, he became vicar. This was in the middle of the 14--18 War, and while the new vicar was serving as a chaplain in the H.M. Forces, the Rev'd Carpenter was in charge of the Parish. The Rev. P.G. Ward was also a curate and lived with his aunt in Victoria Park, quite close to Miss Sylvia Williams and her family. One of her early memories is of being taken to Sunday School by Mr Ward. She was then 5 years old and her sister Marjorie was eight.

There were boys', girls' and infants' departments; all quite separate, of course, with several classes in each. There were also Bible classes for the older pupils. (At some time, between the wars, a junior school for boys and girls was formed with Miss G. Attwood as superintendent.) Miss Ethel Croxall became superintendent of S. Augustine's Sunday School in about 1921 and her sister, Maude, assisted and also played the old harmonium. As they lived on Chesterton Road at that time, they had quite a walk - twice on Sunday - and Maude returned in the evening to accompany Evensong.

When she considered that we were ready, Maude invited us to accompany her at the Sung Eucharist at 11.00 am at S. Luke's. When Ethel took over S. Luke's Infants Sunday School, she

asked me if I would like to help her. I would, and I hope I did! Mrs Simpson then became superintendent at S. Augustine's and Lois and Mary Norris became her assistants.

Sunday School treats were great occasions! At first the venue was S. John's Playing Field in Queen's Road, and later it was moved to Fitzwilliam House Field in Oxford Road -- known to the local children as 'Mr Kind's Field', Mr King being the groundsman. The Treats were held on a Thursday afternoon in July when the schools were closed, I understand, to accommodate the various Sunday Schools in the town.

We all took a mug and sat on the grass in a large circle and ate jam or paste sandwiches and cakes and drank sweet, milky tea poured from large white enamel jugs. There were swings slung from trees and a favourite game was 'bat and trap'. Towards evening, as the mothers arrived to collect their weary offspring, several young men ran round the field like 'pied pipers' throwing handfuls of small biscuits and sweets for which their followers scrambled -- very unhygienic, but great fun! It always seemed to be sunny and warm -- I suppose it did rain sometimes!

Later on the Sunday School Treats became more sophisticated and took the form of a day trip by train to Hunstanton for a day at the seaside. [There are other peoples' memories of these days later in this book.]

Then came the 60s! More television sets, more Sundays or weekends in the family car or caravan meant more exiting things to do. So the Sunday Schools gradually got smaller and smaller until Fr Summers called a meeting of interested parties, as a result of which he decided to discontinue all but the infants' school which continued to meet under Mrs Winnie Manning. The Thursday Club was formed at the beginning of 1964 for children aged 6 -11 (later extended from 4 years old to secondary school age as members begged to be allowed to carry on). The Club met from 6-8 pm on Thursdays. The only condition for membership was that every member went to his/her own church (Anglican or non-Anglican). The Club was a 'Sunday School cum Social one and included some religious instruction followed by a choice of occupations - quiet and not so quiet. After Mr Skeet and I retired, the club continued under Mr Gillingham and his daughter, Dawn.

When my Father was demobbed at the end of the 14 -18 War, I was allowed to accompany him to evensong on Sunday evenings. I was old enough, just - to cope with the hymns, but singing the psalms, or understanding them, was beyond me, and I was glad when that part of the service was over. However, some years later as a teenager, I thoroughly enjoyed singing the psalms and canticles, and learned to love plainsong.

The greater festivals particularly were cheerful, happy occasions. The same favourite hymns were sung year by year, and the service ended with the clergy, choir, and servers processing round the church and returning to the altar rail to sing a triumphant Te Deum.

The floral decorations gave each festival a fragrance of its own. After the penitential period of Lent, with no flowers for the previous nine weeks, Easter burst forth in a blaze of white and yellow, and the church was filled with the scent of daffodils and lilies, and primroses and violets nestled in beds of moss on the windowsills.

Evergreens, white chrysanthemums, and lilies appeared at Christmas, and Christmas trees with their 'fairy lights' and piney smell.

Harvest thanksgiving brought the fragrance of autumn, with the scent of chrysanthemums, apples, pears, and all kinds of home-grown fruit and vegetables. Much of the produce was brought by the children in the day schools, who then had their own service, as well as helping with the decorating. The first service of thanksgiving was at Evensong on the Thursday evening.

At the children's service on the Sunday afternoon in S. Luke's week there was a procession of boys and girls, one for every year of the church's age. The Christmas crib and the Easter garden were, in their turn arranged over several pews in the north aisle. Fr Rees (1934--45) describes the care of the Easter Garden for which he became responsible: "The grass came, I think, from the vicarage garden and the plants from Garden Walk (the curate's house). The Garden remained for the great forty days, and I regularly cut the grass with Mrs Rees' scissors, and, of course, watered the plants."

When the Mothering Sunday tradition was revived it was the practice to give each child a small posy of violets, sometimes with primroses, to give to his/her mother at the children's service in the afternoon. It was still possible to find violets and primroses growing wild under real hedges in the 1930s.

In 1952 Canon Partridge retired in the spring and Canon Tibbatts arrived in the autumn. Soon Frs. George Braund and Eric Simmons joined him as curates. Then we kept a 'Watch' in the Lady Chapel, which was magnificently decorated with flowers, from the end of the Maundy Thursday Liturgy till Good Friday morning, when all the flowers were removed. Throughout the night there were usually several people present, with the clergy providing continuity, so that at no time was the Watch broken. [Graham Pilgrim remembers vividly the activities of the Holy Saturday and the preparations for Easter Day.]

Sylvia Williams and Reg. Ginn confirmed my very early memories of summer open air services at the bottom of Victoria Road. Sylvia writes:

"A harmonium was taken down on a cart, and hymns, prayers, and a speaker attracted quite a good crowd. I used to enjoy singing 'Tell me the old, old story' and other hymns of that description. I don't remember how long this was done, but I should think it was over a period of three years that

I remember it. On Rogation Sunday we processed round the allotments singing the Litany. Bob Gibson carried the cross in front; the choir followed, with the congregation joining in too. This was before the Harvey Goodwin Estate was built."

In the 20s and 30s, social life in the parish was well supported and varied. Mr Kelk produced excerpts from a number of Dickens' plays, which were very popular.

In the early 1930s the Guild of Entertainers was formed and a good deal of unexpected talent appeared. It had its own orchestra and choir, comedians and artistes as well as an army of back-stage workers. Concerts were produced twice a year, each playing to full houses on two or three consecutive nights. The G.O.E. flourished until the outbreak of war, but although it carried on for a while, so many of its members joined the armed forces, or the A.R.P. as air-raid wardens, or as fire-watchers, that it gradually faded out. [Graham Pilgrim's account in 2.8 below]

After the War a new generation tried to revive the spirit of the G.O.E. by forming the Crossways Club, which survived successfully for a number of years. But by this time, fewer people were satisfied to stay in one place and there was a restlessness that wasn't there before the War, and is still with us now.

During the schools' Easter holiday the annual Sale of Work was held in the old school. The partition was folded back and attractively decorated stalls were arranged all round the enlarged hall. The Mothers' Union had a large, heavily laden, cake stall which was very popular, as was the homemade sweets stall. There were two Working Party stalls, S. Luke's and S. Augustine's. The ladies at each end of the parish met regularly throughout the autumn and winter to produce the great variety of articles displayed - pillow cases, tablecloths, tea towels, children's clothes, many of which were made to order. Anything one needed, it seems, could be found somewhere in the hall.

Then there was the tea room, which later in the evening became a supper room, run by the untiring members of the Mothers' Union. The day ended with a concert of some sort organized by the G.O.E. One was invited to `estimate' (never `guess`!) the number of sweets, or beans, in a bottle -- or the weight of a cake, all for the good of the cause! What good, satisfying, serious fun it all was!

The S. Luke's Tennis Club was an active club, playing on courts in Haig Road (now part of Elizabeth Way) and later in Histon Road. Fr Partridge had a tennis court in his garden and a number of the younger boys and girls played -- indeed, learned the game there. I wonder how many members of the adult club learnt the rules in the vicarage garden! Most of the members of the club were to be seen in church on Sunday as choir or servers -- or Sunday School teachers or as ordinary members of the congregation. We are indebted to Reg. Ginn for this information.

Then there was the Church Lads' Brigade -- a project dear to the vicar's heart. Reg. Ginn remembers going to camp at Dovercourt on two occasions. Jack Willis joined in 1936 when about 12 members used to meet in the old derelict building (which served many purposes over the years) at the east end of the old school playground. [see Jack's story of his time in the C.L.B. in 2.10 below]

The `King's Workers' and the younger `King's Messengers', run by Mrs Rackham and Mrs B. Webb, put on plays of a religious nature, mostly on a missionary theme, in the vicarage garden or in the school.

The Junior Electoral Roll was formed about 1930 for 16--18 year olds. This was the group which chose the curtains and carpet for the original `Children's Corner' at the west end of the north aisle.

2.3 S. Luke's Church of England Schools by Reg. Ginn

The school teachers I can recall are: Mr Clay, Miss Waters (later Mrs Clay), Mrs Cater, Mrs Hensher, Miss Butler, Mr Holt, Mr & Mrs Berridge, Mr & Mrs Tompkins, Mr Claydon, and Mr Granfield.

I remember dishing out spoonfuls of cod liver oil and malt to some of the boys -- awful smelly stuff! I also recall marching round the playground past the Union Jack on Empire Day. I attended carpentry classes in the old building at the end of the playground, taken by Mr Endersby, and also gardening with Mr Tredgett on the allotment at the bottom of Garden Walk. I got a prize for gardening!

Am I right in thinking there were boards on the wall in one of the classrooms giving the names of pupils who had obtained scholarships? It is intended to place these boards on the east wall of the upper hall of the Community Centre.

by Mabel Stubbings:

Miss Ward was acting head of the Infants' School when I was appointed in 1937. The School was housed in the building between S. Luke's and the U.R.C. All that remains is my old classroom - David Kindersley's Workshop. Every time I pass, it brings back memories, mostly happy, of small people I met there!

I soon heard the good news that we were to have a `new' school -- the girls' school after re-organization. The girls joined the boys in the boys' school, leaving their building to be altered and made more suitable for the younger children in 1938. So, we packed everything in readiness for

the move - and unpacked in September as the work was not done. All this was repeated in 1939. But third time lucky! We moved in January 1940.

During the War we retained British Summer time all the winter, so lessons did not begin till 9.30 am in midwinter because it was not considered safe for children to be on the streets in the blackout.

There was a static water tank in the infants' playground in case we had to deal with incendiary bombs. Saturday night was my night for fire watching with 'Teacher Peggy', our first general assistant. We took our supper and slept on camp beds in the head's room, and returned home in time for breakfast on Sunday.

By about the middle of the War 1/3 pint milk bottles and straws were no longer available, so pint bottles were used and beakers. A mother was employed every morning to wash up about 150 beakers. There was also nasty, sticky, smelly, cod liver oil and malt to be spooned out of 12 -14 inch deep tins -- a very messy procedure when the tin was nearly empty.

I was appointed head of the infants' school in 1959 when Miss Ince retired. During the later 1960s the promise of a really new school took shape, and Mr Skeet and I were able to follow every step till we moved on 1st April 1969. The term started on 2 April, and the children actually saw the building grow. Sadly, the close relationship we enjoyed with the church was slackened – the church was no longer next door. The vicar and curates still visited, but the vicarage garden gate no longer opened into the school playground. The infants became part of the 'big' school so the change to the junior section was not so frightening and the wide green open space was greatly appreciated by everyone.

Sports Days, held on our own field, were very exciting. When it was decided to have a 400 yards race round the field for the juniors, the infants demanded one too. Everyone expected them to drop out long before the finish, but urged on by the juniors, almost every one of them ran the whole course.

2.4 Walter Wright Partridge, Vicar of S. Luke's 1915-1952 By James A. Rees (curate 1933--45)

Walter Wright Partridge, affectionately known as "The Vicar", was a man of sterling character, not always discernible to the indiscriminating to whom he appeared to be aloof and detached, but obvious to those who were privileged to work with him. He was no conversationalist and appeared to be lacking in those gifts which engender friendliness. To those who knew him well he was a man of great qualities, not the least of which were faithfulness and absolute loyalty, and he endeared himself to all, especially the children. He was a shy man and his shyness obscured a longing to be understood and accepted. This handicap often prevented him from making early approaches to newcomers to the Parish, but time generally erased any initial misunderstandings.

Having come from a large, closely-knit, family himself, he displayed an affection for his people which could find a parallel in family life. Something of this spirit could be seen in his deep affection for his sister, Mrs Cooper, and she for him. The parish was for him, his family and as a caring pastor he sought no higher ambition in life than to be a good parish priest. Not even his worst enemy could accuse him of any self-seeking and there is no better proof of his faithfulness than to remember the many years he gave to the people of S. Luke's in selfless devotion. He was an extremely kind man and no one person knew of his many kindly acts.

It was only by accident and then very rarely, that one became aware of generous giving in spirit and in kind. His kindness may perhaps have found expression in relieving a parishioner of the sorry burden of a bad debt, or the relief of hunger with a box of groceries, or providing a much needed holiday. This list of kindly acts was as long as the needs but was never out of proportion. In meeting so many material needs he was not unaware of the needs of the spirit and the need for sound catholic teaching.

In his desire to promote religious education he was second to none. He had a deep concern for the welfare of S. Luke's Schools, not only in the matter of the maintenance of the fabric but much more for the spiritual education of the children. He took regular classes and as far as the writer's memory will allow, conducted the opening prayers every day. His real love of children was expressed in many ways and the children eagerly responded. He loved children's parties and at Christmas time especially, there were parties for everybody.

At children's services at Festivals when there would always be a procession around the church, one or two of the children could be seen peering out from the voluminous folds of the one white cope as they walked hand in hand with 'the Vicar'.

Though always appearing as a quiet, extremely modest man, he was also determined and this was clearly shown in his persistent demand to have the Anson Bye-law (a means whereby children with the request of their parents, could be withdrawn from Council schools for special religious education) accepted by the local education authority. He launched what was virtually a campaign and eventually succeeded. The Anson Bye-law Classes became a significant part of S. Luke's activities. There was a withdrawal class every Thursday and a great number of boys and girls crowded into the church. It was a most impressive service as well as being most valuable.

The Church Lads' Brigade was another of his great interests in connection with youth and he always attended the annual camps as a chaplain.

His interest in young people also produced a latent love of acting. He encouraged their 'Pleasant Evenings' and often took part in a one-act play or sketch. It would be entirely foreign to his character to lay any claims to histrionic ability and the parts he took in plays were rather more enthusiastic than artistic. I well remember his producing and taking part in the 'Bishop's Candlesticks'. His movements were a little too spasmodic for his comfort and ours in the audience but he thoroughly enjoyed himself and gave great pleasure to many, particularly to his fellow actors. But perhaps his real interest in drama was to be seen in encouraging young 'dramatists' and above all in fostering what became a notable feature of parochial life - the annual Nativity Play which involved a great number of people from every section of the parish. The production was elaborate and was indeed a first class amateur effort. It was not without its difficulties. The lighting for instance was brilliant in more ways than one. The enthusiastic electricians had on one occasion overloaded the circuit and during the performance had to delegate one of their number to stand by the fuse box with a length of fuse wire to keep the play going after one or two interruptions.

'The Vicar' was extremely good at games but never at the expense of his pastoral duties. Consequently he played only in matches but somehow could always rise to the occasion. I cannot remember what his golf handicap was but I do remember that he could always beat his golfing brother with exasperating regularity. He was a valued member of the diocesan team. To play cricket with choir boys was perhaps no test of cricketing ability but it was obvious that 'the Vicar' could play a straight bat and never looked like getting out. His game of tennis too, showed that he knew the game well and in his later days he could make young people hop about the court with vigour while he himself invariably appeared to be nicely placed.

He was the most even-tempered man I have met. Nothing seemed to ruffle a calm, peaceful, demeanour. The P.C.C. was not always sympathetic and his critics were met with astonishing meekness. It is even more astonishing that he generally got what he wanted. Any anxieties or

worries he may have had - and there were many - rarely intruded upon his attitudes to others and he never bore any resentment or animosity, sometimes in the face of very trying circumstances.

In his extra-parochial activities there were three organizations which absorbed a great deal of attention. The first was the Church of England Men's Society of which he was diocesan secretary, and as such became known to many in the diocese. He was the 'king-pin' of one of the annual conferences held in Cambridge. His own branch at S. Luke's made valuable contributions to the society as a whole and I believe he was the pioneer in introducing a junior branch of the Society. The Discharged Prisoners' Aid Association of which he was local secretary was another of his 'caring jobs' and this one was very dear to his heart.

His war-time (1914--18) experiences as an army chaplain in Greece were extended into the peace time Salonika Association and apart from regular meetings, he always organized an annual function in S. Luke's vicarage garden. He had many good friends in the association.

To me, having worked with him for nearly ten and a half years, 'the Vicar' was a fine man. His inherent kindness and love for his people, born of a great sense of pastoral responsibility, was not readily recognized. When it was perceived there resulted a bond of friendship which was not easily broken. He will not appear in the lists of great men but he will long be remembered by those who knew him well as a man of God, not without weaknesses but with a strength of purpose which brings him well up in the lists of faithful priests.

My memories of S. Luke's, although shadowed by rumours of war and war itself, are among some of the happiest of a long life. It was in the year 1933 that my wife and I first appeared in the parish having just returned from Newfoundland where I first began my ministry. We lived in a house in Oxford Road which from the back of the house overlooked one of the college playing fields where S. Luke's had been accustomed to hold its annual parish fete. It was situated just around the corner from S. Augustine's. The vicar, Canon Partridge, soon paid us a visit and eventually invited me to be his curate. Mr Doggett was one of the churchwardens and a tower of strength in the parish. We met, I think, at the summer fete when he afforded me a very hearty welcome which became the basis of a friendship we maintained for many years. As a director of the Cambridge Instrument Company and as a Town Councillor he was a well-known and distinguished member of the community. During the war years his responsibilities were vital and heavy but were discharged with outstanding ability.

Organizing in the community at large certainly makes great demands and no less exacting are they in parochial matters. The work among young people at S. Luke's was of no little significance. Our Sunday Schools were numbered in hundreds. The Anson Bye-law classes were considerable and for the youth there were clubs, Confirmation classes, and the Guild of Entertainers (G.O.E.). But one event stands out clearly in my mind – the annual Sunday School trip to Hunstanton. I have visions of a fleet of buses conveying hundreds of children and parents to the railway station to board the S. Luke's Train for the seaside. The unperturbed marshal, Mr Doggett, in authority, ensured that all ran on oiled wheels.

In the early thirties life in Cambridge for the undiscerning was pleasant and placid. The town was, as usual, full of undergraduates and bicycles and we seemed to have made a good recovery from the First World War. Even Rag Days were normal and acceptable to the town. There was no sign of violence but only of goodwill and, as one would expect from a town of learning, genial wit and good humour. Looking back it is often the simple things which emerge from the depths of one's memory. I remember in particular one enterprising undergraduate fully equipped as a barrow boy selling apples with the caption over his barrow stating that 'an apple a day kept the proctors away'. Another undergraduate dressed as a medieval monk, offered to sell me an indulgence. Both in church and university life the art of living seemed to be fully appreciated and enjoyed.

Then came the blow which was to shatter our complacency to its very depth - the declaration of war. The lights had indeed gone out over Europe and, as we became painfully aware, all over the world, never for us in this present world to regain the illumination of confident living. Within hours of the declaration, a flight of our war planes flew over Cambridge with a frightening roar and I vividly remember an aged neighbour in Garden Walk pulling up his coat collar to cover his face and huskily saying: "Gawd, they were close". It was however, sometime in the future before the real war began.

In the meantime, we were rudely shaken out of normality by the wholesale evacuation of children from our big cities. A great number came to Cambridge from London and were expected to find shelter among the families in Cambridge. At the end of one exasperating day and certainly beyond the bedtime of children, a weary organizer and much more weary children appeared at the door of our house in Garden Walk. There were four pathetic looking children from the east end of London, three sisters and a brother, seeking shelter. There was, of course, only one thing to do. They were invited in and soon were at home having a meal while Mrs Rees hastily prepared some beds for our unexpected guests. Our own two babies were blissfully asleep. The evacuees were with us until Christmas, their parents joining them for a few days! Our resources in those days were not very great but we managed somehow. A little while after this our evacuees were transferred to another home, only to be replaced by a continuous stream of people, mostly students, elderly ladies, Polish soldiers, in fact we were 'full up' almost until the end of the war. I still wonder how Mrs Rees coped with two babies, some parochial duties and the management of a small hotel.

We were not alone in all this upheaval. Canon Partridge and Mrs Cooper, his sister, were superb in facing unprecedented disorder in their lives. In order to give place to the evacuees, the vicar gave up his bedroom and moved to the attic which had first to be cleared for his bed and a very small dressing table and then made almost uninhabitable because the floor had to be covered with sandbags! This latter proved to be a mammoth task for every sand bag seemed to weigh a ton and all had to be carried up the stairs. I know because I was one of the carriers. Mrs Cooper, as one of the many tasks she undertook, began to keep poultry for their eggs and was extremely liberal in their distribution. A part of the lawn was also dug up for growing vegetables; the war effort enlisted everything and everybody.

Fire watching too, became another of our chores and a vital one it was, for incendiary bombs were dropped in wholesale quantities. The school at the side of the church was used as the established 'station' for our team of watchers which fell to me to organize and many a sleepless night was spent in and around the 'station'.

As chapter clerk for the Deanery I became very much involved in making provision for the evacuation of the elderly and children in the event of an invasion. How fanciful and utterly remote that would seem now but then we were confronted with reality. I remember boarding a bus in Cherry Hinton Road and being stopped by an armed soldier who demanded to see my identity card. Road blocks were being erected on all main roads and all movements by ordinary people were severely restricted. The threat of invasion was very real.

Every effort was made to make our way of living as normal as possible in the circumstances. Services in church continued as usual except for Sunday Evensong at 6.30 pm. We did not attempt to 'black-out' the church but we did succeed in blacking-out one of the schools with moveable panels. These were made from wooden frames covered with thick black paper. These proved invaluable and enabled us to maintain many of our evening activities. In this and in many other ways we struggled to make daily life bearable. Church life at S. Luke's never faltered. The daily Eucharist, alas unannounced by Mr Levitt's five minute bell, was celebrated without fail and all other services of the church were continued and were magnificently supported by our loyal parishioners. To me and to many others it was a most satisfying reward to realise that the Parish of S. Luke emerged from all the privations and restrictions as a 'going concern'.

The first agreeable signs of returning normality were to be seen in the activity surrounding our street lights. Workmen were busily engaged in refurbishing the long neglected lamps with the exciting prospect of having them re-lighted. Our joy of seeing them re-lit - on 26 September 1944 - was unbounded. Illuminated streets helped to restore in a measure forgotten hopes and to foster an awakening desire to rebuild what had been destroyed.

This new spirit emerged in many ways but in particular through a national movement. In Cambridge it took the form of a campaign known as the 'Cambridge Christian Campaign' which set out to proclaim the fact that only the Christian Gospel offers the whole truth about human nature in the light of the truth about God. It embraced two movements -- 'Religion and life', and 'The Sword of the Spirit' -- the former representing the Anglican and Free Churches, the latter the Roman Catholic.

Many attempts during this century have been made to explore the possibilities of re-union among Christians. In the very early years of the century, a tentative approach was made by one of the leading churchmen to the Roman Catholics following the Edinburgh Conference of 1910. With the intervention of the two world wars our hopes sadly faded and I believe the Religion and Life and the Sword of the Spirit movements revived our hopes and opened up new and unexpected areas for fruitful discussions.

2.5 Memories from Canon Ronald Bircham

My memories of St. Luke's do not cover a long period, a matter of 30 months, but they are months of great significance. In my previous parish we had just celebrated VE Day (Victory in Europe) and now in my new parish I was to celebrate VJ Day (Victory in Japan). Rationing in its many forms still existed and persisted for some years, and life was certainly more difficult than it is today. Yet in spite of it all - and only 5 inches of bath water - we managed, and life was comparably pleasant and enjoyable.

The splendid vane of the Victorian Church provided a focus of worship of a high Anglican order for which it was specifically built. It reminded me of two particular Anglo-Catholic Churches of London where I worshipped and at which I served from time to time, St. Peter's, Vauxhall and St. Saviour's, Poplar.

The altar, high and lifted up, gave the sense of transcendence of God and the presence of Jesus in the Sacrament. The servers and acolytes, the lights, the gong, the choir, the singing, and so much else, all contributed to what has been called the sense of the holy. The small chapel where the daily Mass was said, where Confessions were heard and the Blessed Sacrament reserved provided a personal place for prayer and devotion and meditation. The overall Church environment, which was largely taken for granted, was a marvellous place from which, and within which to work. The Church, the School, the Church room, the Vicarage, the Assistant Curate's house were all of a piece and, almost without knowing it, all this made a great impression and became the inspiration of my future ministry.

The Vicar had agreed to have me for a few years before I became an Incumbent and so we came. The day began with the daily Mass at 7.30, after one was given the morning for study or for other purposes that happened to crop up. Once a week we had a staff meeting, mostly on Monday mornings. The afternoon was given to visiting. In my ignorance I asked what the system was. There was no system. I could visit where I liked. "Suppose," I asked, "we both turned up on the same doorstep?" "Well!" he said with that enigmatic smile, "I expect one of us would give way." He managed to visit some 30 houses in an afternoon; I found it difficult to manage 12. But I was getting to know people and he was, as it were, just showing his face, so that every parishioner

knew what he looked like -- rather a wasteful way of getting to know the needs of his parishioners some might say -- and yet it worked.

Among his reputations was that of being 'a soft touch'. One Monday morning during a staff meeting at the vicarage we were interrupted by a woman who wanted to see the vicar. I knew her as the mother of a large and happy family -- the children all came to church or Sunday School. She had come for financial assistance. But the vicar wanted to know where her children were yesterday: there were none at church at all. She explained that it was such a wonderful day she decided to take the family to Hunstanton; she thought it would do them good. There were not so many sunny days and Cambridge air was not the best. It seemed a God-given opportunity. Having mollified him with this explanation, he then wanted to know the purpose of her visit. Again, she explained, taking the family to Hunstanton had been more expensive than she had allowed for and now she was so short that she did not know how she was going to feed the family for the rest of the week, so could he advance her a loan etc etc. He could. More, he gave her some money and she went away happy and the children continued to be regular.

The vicar was a strange mixture of Christian gentleness and indecisions: yet he knew just what he wanted. He allowed me to make decisions when he was convinced of their rightness and took responsibility for their commission. He asked me what I thought about the Midnight Mass of Christmas; he had not yet made up his mind. I had and I told him so. It was something I had never had the opportunity of celebrating and there and then he asked me to do it. It was a very helpful exercise for me. It gave me the opportunity to arrange for an act of worship for which I would be largely responsible. I checked with him at all points but he never forbade me anything and so we had the first Midnight Mass after the war conducted with a full choir, servers, congregation and so on. It was a wonderful experience for me.

He was not good with women and young ladies so he left me to do the preparation of the girls for Confirmation, then all the young people, and then everybody, or so it seemed. It was all very good for me, although I did not see it that way at the time, but it was just what I needed in my training. I would have nobody to share it with in my first parish.

I was also given the older boys to teach in Sunday School. We met every Sunday morning before the service. They plagued the life out of me; perhaps they thought that was what Sunday Schools were for. I could not keep order. I had no sanctions. As fast as I quelled one disturbance another broke out somewhere else. I went to church worn out. I complained to the vicar, but he asked me to keep on, things would get better once they got to know me. But they didn't. We became good friends, I think, but they had to have their fun. Then I asked if we could have exercise books and pencils, to which the vicar agreed. All they had to do was to copy into their books what I had written on the blackboard. I took the books home and marked them and they looked forward to their return and my assessment of their work. So we overcame. They had been given something to do; their idleness had been taken out of the devil's hands.

I remember two outings to Hunstanton. In those days there was a railway line to Hunstanton and the station was very close to the seashore. The first occasion was not so good. The children rushed on to the beach to discover that the sea was out. Nevertheless, they quickly changed into their bathing attire, depositing their clothes at my feet and rushing the mile over the wet sand until they reached the sea. When they got there, it began to rain and went on raining for some time. I was worried about my charge and did my best to keep as much of the heap of clothes as dry as possible. I got wet through, since I had to stay put, and my linen clerical collar went limp and soggy with water (this was before the days of plastics). But we managed to dry out and had the usual wonderful time. The tide came in just before we were due to leave and I had to persuade the young people to forsake the sea and come to the train which was waiting to take them back to Cambridge. The vicar came by car so I was in command, as it were, with the many good helpers who came with us. The next year we had marvellous weather and I was more prepared for events, however they might happen!

We also had other outings when the vicar showed his eye for a ball. His handshake was like that of a wet haddock, which gave the impression that he was a simpleton at cricket. But with an irritating nonchalance as far as our young bowlers were concerned, he tackled their bowling and was far from easy to dismiss. The same was true at tennis. He would take on two members of the Youth Club and always seemed to put a ball where neither of them found it easy to return and when they did, they always seemed to put it where the vicar was. I think he secretly enjoyed this.

The terrible winter of 1946/47 sorely tried us. There was not a great deal of snow, but the frost was certainly cruel. The school lavatories froze up and the Church heating system gave up the ghost. The continued prayer was for a thaw, which was some time being answered, but when it came there were floods. The vicar took us out at Easter to see the floods and as far as one could see there was water, rather like the North Sea, but quite calm. This was followed by a marvellous summer when the temperatures reached heights for which the interior provided coolness and shade. Dr. Humphrey Gilbert-Carter, the Director of the University Botanic Gardens was a regular member of the congregation and also a friend of the family. The vicar remarked to him how wonderfully cool the church was, the coolest place in Cambridge. "Oh yes," he agreed, "I discovered that last winter." They both smiled.

Nobody could be at St. Luke's and forget dear old Levitt the verger. He really was a character. He had in his early days worked for Mr. Ambrose of Stuntney with whom I was slightly acquainted so we had a common link. He often told me how to break in a horse, something he had done many times and warned me against taking up such a risky occupation. Although brought up on a farm he had no room in his vocabulary for the word 'peasant'. When we sang "Yonder peasant, who is he?" at Christmas, he always sang 'pheasant'. He was more familiar with such game. He rang the bell every morning for the daily Mass and encouraged pigeons into the belfry for their manure which he disposed of to friends. It was powerful stuff, at least my runner beans thought so.

No-one could forget Harry Hall who was a very good friend. He was a marvellous Christian, and so was his wife; she ran the Castle Street Mission. We visited his house more than any other, I suppose. They were most hospitable and fond of Mary; they knew what it was to be poor.

Life wasn't easy for us, but help seemed to come just when we needed it. I remember one time when we were feeling low, we had enough to see us through to the end of the month. We decided to use it all for a holiday which we very badly needed and returned much refreshed but rather apprehensive about the immediate future. On the doormat was a letter from the Bishop with a substantial cheque in it from some charitable funds he had at his disposal. Oddly, he insisted we use it for a holiday; we had already used it.

Charlie Aveling was another tower of strength. Most of his spare time he gave to the church and was a willing co-operator in all that I asked him to do. I attended his funeral last year. May God rest his soul!

At Watson House we had a splendid neighbour in Mrs. Ball and her husband. She was a member of the Mothers' Union, and a really happy, busy soul. Her husband was very deaf. He was also fond of gardening. When I was in the garden and wanted to speak to him, I would throw a clod of earth to land near him and he would look up and come to the fence. I would shout into his ear and he would answer in his gentle modulated voice. He was not without humour however, for one day I was surprised by a clod of earth landing at my feet, and looking up, there at the fence with a broad smile on his face was Mr. Ball.

When I left to become Vicar of Sawston, the parish presented me with a list of those who had contributed to my testimonial written on Whatman paper in stylish calligraphy and bound in blue cloth.

My wife and I were going through the names in order to refresh our memories, putting faces to names, and trying to recall some of the things about them. It was a pleasant exercise and if all our recollections were possible, it would fill much more than these notes of mine. And yet it gave us much thought and also thanks for such a wonderful time at S. Luke's during those immediate post-war years among so happy and friendly a people.

2.6 Memories of S. Luke's by Tom Rackham

I was born in 1919 in Primrose Street within a few hundred yards of St. Luke's Church. My mother, in particular, was an enthusiastic parishioner, and later a Sunday School teacher, so it is not surprising that my sisters and I made frequent attendances not only to Church but also to the various social events connected with it.

Following the armistice in 1918, the northern area of the parish was ripe for development. One could walk from Victoria Road to the end of Garden Walk - about 300 yards - and find oneself in allotment gardens which gave way to farm land and uninterrupted vistas including the tower of Landbeach Church and railway engines trailing plumes of smoke between Milton gates and Histon station. Milton Road School was there and so was the 'Town Ground' with its football pitch and entrances in Corona Road and Milton Road. In Gilbert Road, about halfway between Carlton Way and Histon Road, stood a pair of semi's, one of which was the abode of Mr. Haines, a chimney sweep, whose grimy brushes helped to sweeten many a parochial flue.

Around 1923 the vicar, the Rev. W.W. Partridge took up residence in the new vicarage in Stretton Avenue. This was followed a few months later by the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the consecration of St. Luke's Church in 1874. The celebrations included a children's treat which was held on 20th October 1924 when commemorative cards were distributed. These bore the signature of the vicar, a 'cartouche' containing his photograph, and a photograph of the church. There were also 'Jubilee stamps' which were gummed and perforated and which showed the same photograph of the church. If any of them exist today they must be very rare.

The new wooden fence forming the boundary between the vicarage garden and the playground of the boys' school became the venue for a firework display to celebrate the Jubilee. I attended this event with my sisters and I suspect it was the older members of the Church Lads' Brigade who lit the Catherine wheels that were pinned to this fence. Judging by the sounds and glows it seemed that more memorable pyrotechnics took place in the garden. At any rate the fence survived.

These were the days of large attendances at church, disregarding the side aisles -- the nave pews were frequently two-thirds full -- and there were times when the congregation had no alternative but to overflow into the side aisles. One such event was a service attended either by the Boys' Brigade or the Church Lads' Brigade. I was a small child and cannot remember who they were, but they were smartly turned out in khaki uniforms and, after the service, they paraded outside the church and to accompaniment of bugles and drums they marched down Victoria Road and out of my life, for I have no recollection of ever seeing them again.

The afternoon children's services were usually under the direction of the vicar with Mrs. Barker (wife of the chemist on Chesterton Road) at the organ. Hymns were sung and prayers were offered and an address would be given. Traditional stories from the Bible and the life of Christ were recounted, and there were modern parables as well. One such was an illustration of faith. He described the occasion when he was at Earith during one of the fen floods when, to his consternation, he discovered that a bridge, over which he was hoping to drive his car, was under the flood water. A local lad with a bicycle offered to guide him across the bridge by riding in front of the car and this offer was gratefully accepted, the bridge was safely negotiated and the story ended happily.

The recollection of the first time I attended the Sung Eucharist on a Sunday with my mother remains with me. I was a small child and the standing up and sitting down, when I could see little but the book rest in front, plus the hardness of the seat when sitting was an experience more physical than spiritual. In my juvenile mind, I compared the ritual, vestments and music in the chancel to a theatre performance, and I think I might have been pardoned for this unrighteous thought for both events took place before a congregation or audience in large buildings in which the seats all faced in one direction. However, I was duly admonished for voicing this opinion!

Church services at festival times such as Christmas and Easter were joyous events, and the celebrant, with his retinue of servers, acolytes, cross and banner-bearers, and the choir and other clergy would walk in procession round the church. At Christmas the procession would halt at the Crib and the figure of the Christ child would be blessed and placed in the manger.

The Rev. Partridge always had a lantern service on Good Friday when a large white screen was erected between the choir stalls and a huge 3 ¼ inch slide projector was set up in the nave. The slides told the story of the Passion as depicted by the 'old masters'. The vicar, up in the pulpit, used a rectangular lantern which afforded light for his own notes from a candle within. On the back of this device was a lever which, when pressed, produced a small circular red light to signal the next slide. I was the lanternist on several occasions, and I am convinced that the signalling gadget got very hot towards the end of the 'Lantern Service' judging from the duration of the signals. The service was well attended and it ended an active day for the clergy which included a 'Three Hours Service' from 12 noon till 3.00 p.m.

I cannot remember my actual age when I entered St. Luke's Boys' school where I was placed in Standard 1, but I have a rich fund of memories. When I was at St. Luke's the headmaster was Mr. Gent. Miss Taylor taught Classes 1 and 2. She was kind and fairly strict but twinkles were never far from her eyes. Mr. Price, with his pince-nez spectacles (which he often cleaned by breathing on them and polishing them with his handkerchief) taught Class 3. On one occasion he took six of us in his car (complete with dickie seat) to see the source of the River Cam at Ashwell. There were very few cars on the road at that time so this was an exciting event. Class 4 was in the charge of Mr. Ouseley, the youngest of the teachers and Mr. Granfield (later the Headmaster of Chesterton Senior School) taught Class 5. He was very popular with the boys and encouraged them in boxing and other sports and he started an accordion band in which he himself played one of the instruments.

Mr. Clay, with his thick pebble spectacles, taught the senior boys in classes 6 and 7. He, too, was keen on sport and he was good artist. I still remember some of his pastel studies which included dramatic light and shade effects. When Mr. Gent left, Mr. Clay became the headmaster of St. Luke's Boys' School, but this was after my time in the school.

Before leaving the subject of St. Luke's Boys' School it should be mentioned, perhaps, that the first wireless sets were being constructed by the mid-1920s. The British Broadcasting Company had been transmitting radio programmes before the British Broadcasting Corporation was formed in 1926, and I remember one wireless set which was kept in the headmaster's office. Radio receivers then were large with 'bright-emitter' valves and multiplicities of knobs and dials for tuning, volume and other adjustments. Loudspeakers were separate bulky items. It was difficult therefore, to install such apparatus in a given classroom. I don't know who solved the problem, but the solution was to leave the radio in the office and run wires from it to a loudspeaker and for this purpose 3-inch diameter holes were cut through the wooden panelling adjacent to the classroom doors. Something like 50 yards of twin flex were sufficient to reach the loudspeaker no matter where it was installed. Loudspeakers looked more like sousaphones for they had large vertical horns to amplify the sound. There were, of course, no 'schools' programmes and this exercise was performed mainly to allow the boys to listen to this scientific novelty. There were very few domestic radios at that time.

The school also possessed a gramophone, which consisted of a spring-driven mechanism, which had to be wound by hand. The turn-table, sound box and associated components were hidden under a hinged, deep lid of a solid wooden box which had a louvred front through which the music came. I remember sitting in class 2 listening to Ernest Lough and the Temple choir singing "Hear my prayer" as well as "Oh, for the wings of a dove" and "Who is Sylvia?".

The school provided the raw material for the church choir which was under the direction of Mr. Adcock, one of the tallest men I have ever seen. For choir practices it was the task of the two top boys to haul a harmonium up the three steps between the nave and the chancel, where Mr. Adcock crouched over it and invited the boys to sing "Ahhh". After a few more "Ah's" in different keys the more serious practising commenced. Choir practices took place on Tuesday and Friday evenings, the latter being attended by the men of the choir.

The boys' choir included some boys from the Harvey Goodwin Home – they could usually be recognised by their brown or black knitted jerseys and corduroy shorts. One I recall was 'Tubby' Dawson who carried a remarkable collection of 'treasures' in his pockets: marbles, pieces of string, etc. When I joined the senior boys, included Graham Pilgrim (whose elder brother, Bob, sang in the men's choir) and Leslie Ward, then known as 'Ginner', which was evidently easier to say than 'Ginger' which was a more accurate description of the colour of his wavy hair. Other members were: Fred and Bill Levitt, sons of Mr. Levitt who later succeeded Mr. Warren as the church vergger; Charlie Butler, Lester Chenery, Eric Dewey, Jimmy Dant, Percy Frankham, Ronald Hickman and others whose names I cannot remember.

The men's choir had some permanent members -- among them George Mason whose fine baritone voice was well known in Cambridge concert halls and in the surrounding villages. The tallest member of the choir, who was also the Sacristan, was Bob Gibson. The choir was also augmented by the acolytes and servers.

I suppose I was nearly 'top boy' myself when Mr. Adcock died. His place was taken by a tall young man with handsome features named Arnold Richardson. As well as being a good choirmaster and organist at S. Luke's, he became a frequent broadcaster of organ music on the B.B.C. No doubt there will be some who remember him playing the organ at the Rex cinema, which rose, like the phoenix, from the ashes of the old Rendezvous cinema in Magrath Avenue in the late twenties or early thirties.

Returning to the subject of the large attendances at Sunday Schools, it is hardly surprising that the annual Sunday School outings needed considerable organisation. Suffice it to say that it was a rare sight indeed -- even in those days -- to see six double decker buses parked outside the church. Crowds of excited boys and girls of all ages and sizes, together with their teachers and, in some cases, parents, to say nothing of possible aunts and uncles, boarded these buses. The numbers were swelled by the children and teachers from S. Augustine's in Richmond Road.

The journey to the railway station took no more than a few minutes where the buses were exchanged for a chartered train bound for Hunstanton. The travellers wasted no time in clambering aboard. Doors were banged shut, whistles were blown and green flags waved, and with what seemed like some reluctance the train chuffed its way out of the station. The trip was interrupted at Kings Lynn, where the front engine was exchanged for one that was coupled on to the back of the train. Then the train resumed its journey - in the opposite direction - some children really did think they were going back to Cambridge! But they arrived in Hunstanton some thirty minutes later. And I know that some of the children had never seen the sea before going on these excursions.

In the early 1920s there were missionary plays and pageants put on by the King's Messengers at St. Luke's and on one occasion in Canon Hulbert-Powell's garden along the Backs. There were also tableaux, which were not very challenging because no one moved or spoke! Nevertheless

these events afforded the children the excuses to dress up and wear make-up and thoroughly enjoy themselves. More exciting were the plays with direct story-lines. One such was written by my mother and entitled "Early Christian Ordeal". It illustrated the problems of the early Christians living in Rome during the reign of Nero, and was enacted by the (older) King's Workers, with Mr. Kelk, a member of the PCC, in the role of Nero. Fortunately, the curtains were drawn when his improvised throne collapsed leaving him trapped with his feet in the air. The lines "tonight thou shalt be a living torch" were uttered by a tetchy Nero -- trying not to laugh -- to actors desperately avoiding his gaze.

In the mid-1920s and early 1930s, before the Guild of Entertainers was formed, Mr. Kelk adapted portions of the works of Charles Dickens – The Old Curiosity Shop, Our Mutual Friend, Martin Chuzzlewit, and of course, Scrooge, to be presented in the school hall.

The Guild of Entertainers was formed in the early 1930s, its aims being to exploit the latent musical and dramatic talents of all who wished to offer their services. Soon a small orchestra, led by Sylvia Williams, and under the direction of Tom Wheeler, was formed. A chorus of singers supported the soloists and provided choral interludes between the sketches and other items. The G.O.E. was well organised with a stage Manager, Ted Garner, and his assistant Eric Dewey; Les Germany, who was a specialist in electrical and electronic devices, was the electrician. By this time a proper stage had been constructed.

Among the most memorable productions were the Nativity plays that were presented in Church. As well as the actors, a great deal of work was put in behind the scenes -- the making of the angels' wings (thick wire frames covered with white crepe paper, curled at the edges to simulate feathers). The stage, on two levels, the heavy curtains borrowed from one of the colleges, powerful lights installed on the windowsills and a high wattage spotlight erected on the west wall of the church. These lights and the coloured ones at stage level provided some artistic effects.

It must have been for the first of the Nativity plays that it was decided to floodlight the church externally. This caused severe problems because the church electricity supply could not cope with the additional loading. I still remember Ted Garner pulling out hot blown fuses and replacing them from a heap of spares he had prepared in advance. I can only recall two Nativity plays produced by the G.O.E. jointly with the King's Workers in the Church. Perhaps there were objections to the erection of stages, curtains and lights or, again, the silver collections taken may not have covered the cost of production. The plays remain examples of what can be achieved when large numbers of people work together for a common cause!

From surviving photographs I can list many of the names of those who acted and co-operated behind the scenes in these productions. The clergy gave full support and, during this period many will remember Fr. Jimmy Rees who was curate at St. Luke's from the mid-thirties until the mid-forties, well after the beginning of the war. He succeeded Fr. L. Milne. He had a fine singing voice which was often heard in the productions in the school as well as in church. He was an enthusiastic leader of many parochial activities including tennis which was sometimes played on the vicarage lawn.

World War II, starting on 3rd September 1939, changed everything. Young men who were in the forces volunteer reserve were called to the colours immediately. Other men and women joined up, and the Nation got down to the grim task of fighting a war. Members of the Guild of Entertainers disappeared into Europe and North Africa and other distant places. Some of them were never to return. It was the end of an era which can survive only in the memories of those who were there.

2.7 St. Luke's as I remember it, by Frank E. Stubbings

Apart from attending St. Luke's with my parents and sisters, the first recollection I have of involvement in the Church was when the headmaster of the boys' school, Mr. Gent, came into Standard 4 classroom and asked the teacher, Mr. Ouseley, if he could take some boys out of class. I was one, and the others were Charles Aveling, Charles Peck and Ronald Faben. We were taken across to the church where a tall young man, who we were told was the new organist, Arnold Richardson, was waiting for us. After a voice test we were recruited into the choir. As Arnold Richardson gained in experience, so choir practices became longer and more frequent. Officially practices were held on Tuesdays and Fridays from 7.30 to 9.00 pm, with the men arriving at 8.00 on Fridays, but the practices frequently lasting until 10.00 pm. On special occasions there would also be a practice at 10.00 on Sunday morning until the 11.00 am Sung Eucharist, another after the service until 1.00 or past, and one at 6.00 pm until the 6.45 Evensong. We were, of course, paid for our efforts - if I remember rightly it was 2s. 6d. (12.5p) for the probationers and the princely sum of 17s. 6d. (87.5p) for head boys per quarter. At that time we had a choir of 14 boys plus one or two probationers, and about six or eight men.

On major Feast days like St. Luke's Day, Ascension Day and Harvest Thanksgiving the children from the schools attended a special service for which a choir from the school was enlisted. These were carefully coached by the vicar, the Revd. W. W. Partridge. This was in the days before he was 'canonised' as one member of the congregation expressed it when he was made an Honorary Canon of Ely.

After my confirmation I joined the junior section of the Church of England Men's Society, now regrettably defunct, which met in the vicar's dining room at 6.00 pm on Sunday once a month. Everything was done very correctly and minutes were carefully recorded (I wonder if those minutes are still available). I have since been very grateful for that first introduction to the procedure for conducting a meeting when acting as secretary or chairman. I also joined the team of servers, first of all every Saturday morning at 7.30 am (we had a daily Eucharist at St. Luke's in those days) and later, having left the boys' choir, on Sundays as well.

The outbreak of war in 1939 inevitably brought changes, and one of them was the calling up of the man who had regularly serviced the seven lamps that hung from the arch at the entrance to the Sanctuary. As far as I am aware the lamps never went out until black-out regulations made it necessary. After a short time it was decided that they should be lit for the Eucharist on Sunday mornings, and in a moment of 'madness' I agreed to light them after the 8.00 am service and extinguish them after the later one. This meant that I had to climb to the top of a very rickety pair of steps (I see they are still in the church, and I wonder if they are still as rickety). That 'twice a Sunday' mountaineering feat was the one job in St. Luke's that I never really enjoyed! But it continued until I joined the army in 1941.

The memory still lingers of the rather special smell that filled the church at Easter and the Harvest Thanksgiving, especially in the early morning when the church had been closed all night -- the smell of the masses of flowers that always seemed to fill the church on these occasions. (Is it that memories give us false impressions or do we not see so many flowers in our churches today?)

One visual memory that lingers is of the High Altar before Midnight Mass one Christmas (what a pity that the High Altars in so many of our churches seem to be redundant now). I had spent a large part of Christmas polishing the cross and candlesticks on the Altar (the candlesticks then had about three feet of white candleholder, surmounted by eighteen inches of candle, which gave a dignity to the altar which is now lost). I was first to arrive for Midnight Mass and I switched on the lights on the west wall of the church: the way the light was thrown back by the brass is something I remember vividly 40 years on.

I recall vaguely going to St. John's College playing field for the Sunday School treat, but later they were held on 'Mr. King's field' - Fitzwilliam College playing field in Oxford Road - Mr. King, the groundsman, ruling it with a rod of iron; even later, when I was a student at the college after the war, Mr. King was regarded with great respect. We played various games, including one I do not recall anywhere else, 'bat and trap'. At the end of the afternoon we had a scramble for sweets and I think we were all given an orange.

Eventually it was decided to take the senior and junior Sunday schools on an outing to Hunstanton by train. (I think the infants were taken to Royston Heath for an afternoon outing.) This was a great adventure as most of us had little opportunity to see the sea or even to travel much by train in the 20s and early 30s. We were transported to the railway station by 'Ortona' buses (the shiny green predecessors of Eastern Counties and Cambus), and so by train to Hunstanton. Early in the afternoon we were summoned by Mr. Percy Ashman who had brought his bugle, and we all lined up and marched to the Kitcat restaurant where tea was laid out for us in an upstairs room. Some time later we were summoned again for a roll-call before boarding the train for the journey home. Miss Attwood, the harassed superintendant of the Junior Sunday always went prepared to stay behind with any 'sheep' -- or should it be 'lamb' that got lost.

St. Luke's-tide was a major occasion before the outbreak of war in 1939. The celebrations lasted for most of the week, with a sung Eucharist at about 7.00 am on St. Luke's Day, a social evening, with games, dancing and various items by members of the congregation, and a diocesan service for the Church of England Men's Society at which we had a very large congregation. On Shrove Tuesday we had another social evening before the solemnity of Lent.

In the 1930s Nativity plays were held in the church, produced by Fr. Laurence Milne, the assistant priest, with Mrs. Milne playing the part of Mary. She had a good singing voice and always sang the Magnificat. The part I always recall, however, was the Archangel Gabriel, a most impressive figure with enormous wings, played by Mr. Baldry. One year a pageant was presented in the vicarage garden. I can remember very little about it except that I was a Roman soldier.

Every spring we had a sale of work in what was then the boys' school. This was a major event for which people worked long and hard. It ended with an entertainment in the evening.

In the 1930s the G.O.E. was formed (Guild of Entertainers - not to be confused with that other G.O.E. - General Ordination Examination, a much less enjoyable event which some of us have endured). We boasted a choir, orchestra, drama section and a number of individual artists who combined to stage a variety show. Among the solo items I remember were violin solos by Sylvia Williams, songs by George Mason, a very good bass who had been a member of King's College choir before choral scholarships were introduced, Ron Summers who played the xylophone, 'Maskeline Minor', a teenage magician whose name was, I think, Hancock, and Tom Rackham who drew lightning sketches. The G.O.E. also presented a full length play, produced by Mr. Kelk, in the autumn. The orchestra also played at evensong occasionally.

There were also the annual garden parties in the vicarage garden, something that did not appeal to me much then or now. There were such exciting events as the bonny baby competition (the judging always fraught with danger), a ladies' ankle competition in which some of us were more interested in putting names to the owners of the ankles than in their quality, and sometimes a men's knobbly knees competition. One year Canon Partridge organised a team of boys, including myself, to give a demonstration of Indian club swinging.

For three years after the war I was back at St. Luke's while studying at the University. During that time we had as assistant priest Fr. Eric Sidall who was an undergraduate at the university although a graduate of another university. After Evensong on Sundays we used to walk into town together to attend a meeting of the Cambridge Student Christian Movement. In my last year, after I had graduated, I was not, officially, allowed to walk into town with an undergraduate, so we carried our gowns under our arms until we got to the meeting!

After I finished my training I went to teach in Bath, and to get married, but whenever we returned to Cambridge I was invited to serve at the 11.00 am Sung Eucharist. On one such occasion, the last before our first son was born, I had the privilege of acting as Master of Ceremonies for a high Mass on Easter Day, the first High Mass of St. Luke's for 50 years. The Celebrant was Fr. Percy Clarke of U.M.C.A. (now U.S.P.G.), Canon George Tibbatts was the deacon and the sub-deacon was one of the staff of the University Divinity School but I cannot recall his name.

These days have long gone and many changes have taken place, and more will inevitably come in the future. Much as we look back on what has gone as the 'good old days' we cannot try to put the clock back, or even to stand still. To live, the Church, like every other organisation, has to move forward and the Church in general is faced with an exciting challenge, much as some people may dislike either the challenge or its effects. St. Luke's and the United Reformed Church (Victoria Road Congregational as I remember it), have their own particular challenge, a very exciting one, that they have to accept to carry them into the third millenium, and, hopefully, greater Christian unity.

Over to you, St. Luke's of the 1990s, God bless you as you pick up that challenge.

2.8 St. Luke's Guild of Entertainers by Graham Pilgrim

A meeting was held on 10th November 1932 to consider the possibility of forming a Guild of entertainers. Twenty-four people attended and the Guild was started on that day. The objectives were laid down clearly "to work as a united 'Guild of Entertainers' for the benefit of Societies, Clubs, etc. at entertainments and socials if so desired". Giving preference to all such entertainments connected with St. Luke's Church, but not necessarily confining its activities to this parish. It went from strength to strength and in its heyday reached a membership of around 130 although well over 250 members were accepted during its existence. There were six different sections -- dramatic, religious dramatic, chorus, quartet, general and orchestral.

Many, many shows were presented, there were autumn and spring shows annually, the latter reaching its sixth edition. Nativity plays and missionary pageants were produced from time to time and here are just a few of the plays that were presented -- The School for Scandal; The Countess Conducts; Coming a Cropper; Three Half-crowns; The Man on the Sofa; Faster We Go; The Bride; and Luck of the Draw. Variety shows were produced regularly - Gay Odds and Ends; Holiday Revels; Spring Frolics; Mixed Pickles (in two jars!); Easter Parade; and Pot Pourri. Several plays and variety shows were written specially for the guild by its members.

In the Parish of St. Luke's entertainments were provided for the Mothers' Union, Junior Electoral Roll, Sale of Work, Church Fete, Church of England Men's Society, Sunday School Garden Party, Parent/Teacher Association, St. Augustine's, Girls' Friendly Society, and the Organ Fund. In the City of Cambridge the Guild helped the parishes of St. John's; St. Andrew's, Old Chesterton; St. George's; St. Giles; and also at the New Chesterton Institute; Victoria Friendly Societies Institution; Railway Joint Orphan Fund; Zion Baptist Centenary; Harvey Goodwin Home; National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the Castle Ward Conservative Association. The minute book also reveals that help was given for many different projects in the villages of Impington, Soham, Grantchester, Caxton, Elsworth, Stapleford, Fulbourn, Milton, Coton, Rampton and Histon.

Who were the principals who made all this possible? In advance I apologise for any omissions, but can you recall Harry Chapman, Walter Dant, Trevor Chapman, Eric Dewey, Francis Doggett, Ted Garner, Harry Hall, John (Bob) Gibson, George Mason, W.H. Kelk, the Rev. and Mrs. L. St. B. Milne, Mrs. E. Rackham, Tom Rackham, Bob Pilgrim, the Rev. J.A. Rees, Lily Rackham (Bean), Bill Ridgewell, G. Mason Cooke, Wilf Wheeler, Tom Wheeler and Miss Worthy.

2.9 Easter Saturday in the early 1930s by Graham Pilgrim

This is a day that all servers of that time will recall. It was special and every server who did not have to work was expected to be there, and indeed would have felt hurt if he had not been invited! It was the servers' spring-cleaning day in the chancel. Work started not later than 9.00 am when everything from the altar was taken into the boys' school playground near the vestry door. Long trestle tables had been erected and John (Bob) Gibson, the sacristan, allocated the work. Pails of hot water were produced from the gas ring in the church and the large brass altar candlesticks were washed and the candle grease removed. They were then passed along the table where servers would dry and then polish them, together with all other brass items, acolytes' candlesticks, processional cross, etc.

While this was going on, John Gibson (and he would delegate this task to no one) ascended the massive ladder to the top of the curtains behind the altar. They were hung approximately level with the bottom of the chancel windows, and he would brush the dust off all the curtains, slowly progressing to ground level. Then the altar was cleaned and washed. The seven chancel lamps were similarly cleaned, trimmed and filled from the top of that amazing step ladder that was used in those days.

Eventually around mid-day, or soon after, the chancel had resumed its more normal appearance except that now it sparkled and when the sun shone was a joy to behold.

During the morning the vestry had taken on the appearance of a florist's shop as the ladies displayed their skills of flower arranging and by the late afternoon the church looked magnificent. Everyone's efforts were well rewarded by the result but what is perhaps more significant is the fact that all the helpers 'enjoyed' what they did, no matter how menial the task! I was so fortunate to be just a small part of that team because as you can see the memories are still very vivid and it was nearly sixty years ago!

2.10 The Church Lads' Brigade by Jack Willis

I joined the S. Luke's Church Lads' Brigade in 1936. There were 12 members and we met in the club room. This became derelict and was demolished in 1990.

It was more of a youth club than a religious organization and it was run on the lines of the better known 'Boys' Brigade'. At our Wednesday meetings the main activity was table tennis and we had two or three very good players. Boxing was another more painful pastime but nevertheless we had fun!

During the summer Canon Partridge, popularly known to us as 'Bill', invited us to the vicarage gardens and with his help we learned to play tennis. The large shed in the garden held two containers of refrigerated drink which was very welcome to perspiring tennis players.

Sport was foremost in our activities and beside table tennis matches against other youth groups, we had a flourishing cricket team. We arranged two matches a week -- against Victoria Youth Club (which met at the Congregational Church, later the United Reformed Church), S. Andrew's Youth Club, Rock Road Youth Club, and many church choirs. Jesus Green, Parker's Piece, and Chesterton Rec. were well used for these games. We walked or cycled to all these venues and paid for the hire of pitches - 2/6d (12.5p) per game.

We also played a game at Bedford against S. Michael's Church Lads' Brigade, again thanks to the generosity of 'Bill' who footed the transport bill and also provided the refreshments when S. Michael's visited us.

One year we had a camp at Holland-on-Sea when Brigades from all over England attended. There must have been some two or three hundred youngsters at this event and 'Bill' was always a popular chaplain to the camp.

In 1940 several of us joined the Local Defence Volunteers (later the Home Guard) so unfortunately our C.L.B. activities suffered, but we continued until our members were called up for military service. Then unfortunately, it faded away with happy memories for all who had been members.

There were several popular church activities in the year before the War. I remember one year a garden party held on the Fitzwilliam Ground, Oxford Road. This was a very happy and well-attended day. The afternoon centrepiece was a cricket match for adults and again 'Bill' showed his all-round capabilities with a very stylish half century.

Another group was the S. Luke's Guild of Entertainers. Usually they gave two shows a year. I remember one year being coaxed into a sketch depicting Walt Disney 'Wedding of Mickey and Minnie Mouse'. It was very hot in the heavy costumes we had to wear. My stage career was short lived and I was not asked to appear again.

I did, however, appear in the Nativity Plays in the church. Again, these were very popular in the pre-war years and usually played to good audiences during their run. The church made a superb stage and setting for the large cast and colourful costumes -- very enjoyable.

Another group I belonged to was the Church of England Men's Society (C.E.M.S.). This was a discussion group of about a dozen men and met weekly in the vicarage on Sundays just before Evensong.

One of the church families in those days was the Chapmans. They lived in S. Luke's Street, but during the Summer they migrated to a house on Mersea Island (near Clacton). During August they invited some choirboys to camp in the garden. It was fun although the garden backed onto one of the Essex refuse dumps which was burning continuously and also inhabited by large rats. The island was reached by a causeway which was covered at high tide, so the tide tables had to be referred to when leaving or going to the island.

2.11 Memories of S. Luke's School, by Mary A. Norris

I was born in the 'country' end of the Parish of S. Luke with S. Augustine, Chesterton. Oxford Road was a cul-de-sac leading to allotments which stretched towards Histon from where Windsor Road and Akeman Street now are. Beyond Fitzwilliam Playing Field were cornfields and a nursery garden.

I must have been about five years old when I started attending S. Augustine's Sunday School. Ethel Croxall, well-known at S. Luke's, was superintendent and her sister Maude played the harmonium for Evensong. Miss Croxall was keen to make us aware of our 'Mother Church' and on special occasions took us to 11.00 am Eucharist. There was no recreation ground so we had to go across 'The Cut' (waste land between Halifax Road and Canterbury Street) - we couldn't go if it was very muddy. Only a few elderly people received communion at this service. Younger people were expected to go to earlier services.

A few years before the War the Guild of Entertainers was formed so that concerts could be given in the parish. A few of us who could play instruments formed a small orchestra, led by Sylvia Williams, and provided items during the entertainments. After the War the club was revived as the Crossways Club and again the small orchestra thrived. Wilf Wheeler was the leading light in these concerts.

In 1940 I replaced Miss Barker as teacher of the First Year Juniors. Mr Clay was the headmaster and other members of the staff were: Mr Willshire (who soon went into the Navy), Miss Waters (who became Mrs Clay), Miss Gillingham, and Miss Taylor.

Being wartime, there were many restrictions. All paper had to be used on both sides -- even for painting. When an exercise book was finished the covers were taken off for drawing on and any pages not completely filled were torn out to be used for spelling or mental arithmetic tests. Our Air Raid Shelter was at the end of French's Road, where the school now is. When the Air Raid Warning sounded we had to hurry but the All Clear usually sounded when we were still in the street. We soon decided that it would be safer to stay in the classroom and if there was any activity to get under the heavy iron framed desks. Fortunately we never had to try this out.

There was always a close link with the church. It was easy to have morning prayers in church two or three times a term. During Lent there was a service directly after school once a week and carol services were held there too. Canon Partridge, Canon Tibbatts or Father Summers would often come into the playground during break and talk to the children. Some of the curates found their way into school when the staff were having a cup of tea.

In 1961 Mr Clay retired and Mr Skeet became head in 1962. He continued the close connection between school and church. When the nave altar was introduced the platform made an excellent stage for the Christmas play. For 29 years I watched the rowan tree flower and berry, then in 1969 we moved to the new school. The light, space, and cleanliness took some time to get used to. Facilities such as a sink in every room, and the playing field just outside were great improvements but there was one great disadvantage -- it was no longer possible to have morning prayers in church, no clergy wandering across the playground or curates visiting the staff for a cup of tea. By the time I retired in 1975 there was not the closeness between church and school. A pity!

2.12 Being a Sacristan, by Neville Kidman

Soon after moving to Cambridge around 1956 I, my wife, son and daughter started worshipping at S. Luke's. Around this time S. Luke's lost a great sacristan in Bob Pilgrim and the vicar, Canon George Tibbatts asked me to take on this work which I was pleased to do. I soon found out how much goes on, as it were, behind the scenes, before a service took place. There was the cleaning and polishing of the communion vessels, placing out the wine, water, and wafers, and making sure that the candles were long enough to last the service. Also laying out in the vestry vestments for the celebrant of the correct colour for that day and that the frontals on the altar, the fall on the pulpit were of the same colour. There are also black vestments used only for the Requiem Mass. The ordering of wafers, wine, and candles is also part of the sacristan's work, as is keeping light burning before the Reserved Sacrament, and the covering of all pictures and crucifixes in the church during Passiontide.

From time to time all the brasswork had to be cleaned and polished, usually done by Sylvia Pilgrim, my wife and myself. You also had to make certain that clean altar linens and linens used by the priest - amice and towel for drying hands after the ablutions were provided. These were beautifully laundered by Bertha Garner (whose memorial tablet is on the west wall of the church) and Sylvia Pilgrim, who gave up this job only in 1990. Another task for the sacristan was to provide the rota for those helping at the 9.45 service - that is the servers, two acolytes and a crucifer. The 8.00 servers were a team the members of which each had their own Sunday. I well remember that the server on the first Sunday was always Arthur Barham who would never use the bells at the consecration, always the gong which I believe was presented to S. Luke's. The rota of assistants at the 9.45 service was made quite easy because of the number of boys of the right age willing to do a duty. My apologies for any names missed but those that come readily to mind are: Paul Adams, Philip Aubrey, Ian Aldridge, Graham Batchelor, Ian Hawkes, Clifford Ison, Ian

Kidman, Alan Porter, Peter Cook, two Cooper brothers, Paul Francis, Richard and William Wheeler and their father Wilf, Robin Wookfendon, Neil Slater, John Miller, John Richardson, Brian Mc Craig, John Lanham, Eric Page, Doug Wier, Mick Nunn (who became sacristan when I retired). The Masters of Ceremony assisted the celebrant, finding places in the Missal and carrying it when necessary. They each had a Sunday for duty -- Henry Brand, John Miller, Eric King, Roy Papworth, and on a fifth Sunday Neil Slater or me.

There was a celebration of Holy Communion each morning at 7.00 and there was always a server, the one on a Saturday morning being Joe Fletcher. Another very necessary person in the chancel was of course the organist. When first at S. Luke's the organist was Mr Williams and Ernie Norman took over when he retired.

My reminiscences would not be complete without naming as many priests as I can remember who celebrated at Holy Communion. I must first name the vicar when I started helping at S. Luke's -- George Tibbatts, and his curates George Braund and Eric Simmons. Other curates who followed were Geoffrey Lang who became first vicar of the Good Shepherd, Robert Waddington, Dick Berry, Sidney Howard, Ron Mitchell, Tony Taylor and Peter Tamplin, and when the latter came in 1963, Tom Summers who became vicar when George Tibbatts retired. Other priests who celebrated at various times were Tom Akely, Paul Harvie, Ray Patston, Bernard Pawley (later Archdeacon of Canterbury and a leading authority on relations with the Roman Church), Father Doig, Anthony Phillips, Richard Smith, Michael Carmichael, Geoffrey Keeble, Father Hall from America, and some living in Cambridge such as Canon Waddams from S. Catherine's College, Fr David Bolt, the Franciscans, and I have a note that I once served for one of the Cowley Fathers. Another Priest was Martin Joyce and now the Rector of the Parish of the Ascension, Jonathan Young, and the team vicar Francis Woolley. Three other celebrants must not be missed out - the Bishop of Ely, Archdeacon John Long, and last but by no means least, for the centenary celebration, the Archbishop of Canterbury. I may have missed some names and to these I offer my apologies.

One great moment of my life at S. Luke's was when Tom Summers asked if I would assist by giving the chalice at the family Communion, and it was a proud, but at the same time humble, Sunday when I first carried out this duty on 23 May 1965. John Miller soon followed in carrying out this duty and others I remember were Doug Weir and Eric Page, and John Baker and Frances Klein.

I just hope that these reminiscences will be of interest to the congregation of S. Luke's. I must say that I have enjoyed compiling these reflections on my days of service at S. Luke's, which I enjoyed so much.

2.13 Phyllis Hensher talking to Mabel Stubbings

I have lived in the Parish for 55 years; not long if compared with some of you but quite a long time!

For some 20 years before he was ordained, my husband was Reader of All Saints, and for the Ely diocese. Therefore, my allegiance was given in Church Attendance Measures to All Saints, which so often linked with S. Clements. Canon Partridge was the incumbent here and visited us from time to time. I recall that he seemed always to be surrounded with children as he passed our window -- a veritable clerical Pied Piper -- and a precious memory.

Then came 17 years of absence when my husband took a curacy at Towcester and a living at Nether Heyford (multiple, 3 churches -- no sinecure!) in the diocese of Peterborough. After his sudden death in 1970, I returned to Cambridge and gave my allegiance to S. Luke's, attending All Saints, which was in the early years of becoming redundant, only on Sunday evenings. Father

Tom Summers was the new incumbent. It took some time for me to adjust both to the church and to finding myself at home alone. But my memory goes out in gratitude to certain of the then 'elderlies'. Mabel, your dear father was one of these with whom I felt a true link. I loved talking to him on Sunday mornings and occasionally he came to my home -- add Bertha Garner, Auntie May, and later Ron Fuller.

I attended Friday Evenings House Group (convened by Sylvia?) and led by Dr Cater, and from this I felt accepted and began to know more of S. Luke's good people. As the church seasons came round, I was approached -- "Maybe we could have a little extra meeting somewhere during Lent (the 'Elderlies' again). Therefore it came about that the rendezvous was at 46 Garden Walk on each Wednesday afternoon (for about the next 5 years). The meeting took the form of prayers, discussion, and talks illustrated with slides applicable to biblical subjects. These 'Master-works' I had accumulated over a number of years from the various galleries of Europe.

The Mother's Union at that time was under the care of Mrs Mary Capper. It was a flourishing concern, the members meeting once a month. When Mrs Capper retired the enrolling membership was taken jointly by Phyllis Kidman and Sylvia Pilbeam but on the sad physical incapability of Phyllis, the Mother's Union meetings came to an end.

And now those particular 'elderlies' have passed on and many of us have become octogenarians. Changes come; it must be so. This is not always easy for many of us -- but it is indicative of the ever-living church and of the spirit of S. Luke's.

2.14 A personal memory of St. Luke's by John Baker

This is far from being a historical memory; it is a very personal one, but it embodies one of the happiest days of my life.

The day was Candlemass, in 1974, and the event was the baptism of my daughter, Imogen. Father Tom Summers was the priest then, this being before the parish of the Ascension had been thought of. The ceremony took place during the 9.30 Eucharist, an arrangement I like very much; it seems entirely appropriate that the admission of a child should be in the presence of the whole church in that place - even if, as at St. Luke's, the 'whole church' is not very large! We were quite a small party -- two grandparents, two parents, two Godparents, and a few other friends. It meant a lot to me; I was a late beginner in the family way -- indeed, Imogen is my only child.

Nothing untoward happened during the service - I don't think she even cried; but it was a very happy event. When she got a little older, Imogen used to accompany me regularly to the Eucharist, and joined the Sunday School; she has now outgrown the latter, but still quite often comes with me to the Eucharist - not quite so regularly now she has acquired a mind of her own! Both she and I have made many friends at St. Luke's over the years; we are grateful for that, and hope to make many more in the future.

We kept the baptismal candle for many years, but one hot summer it got in the direct rays of the sun through a window and that was the end of it; but the memory has not faded.

2.15 Miss Maude Croxall, by Mabel Stubbings

Amongst the many loyal and hard-working members of St. Luke's none could have been more so that the Croxall family, and especially the youngest sister, Maude.

I first remember her when she became my Sunday School teacher when I was about eight years old. She guided me through the intricacies of the Sung Eucharist so that it became an integral part of my life, and so began a life-long friendship.

Later she was the very popular superintendent of the girls' Sunday School.

As secretary of the P.C.C. she did sterling work for the parish. Everything was efficiently organised and carried through.

For many years the Church flower rotas were among her many activities, and on most Saturday mornings, and on the eve of the festivals of the church she was to be found in the Church or vestry seeing that everything was spick and span and just as it should be for the next day.

After her sister Dorothy died she added the ordering and distribution of the Bible Reading Fellowship notes to her many other activities until the format was changed (and much more expensive) and membership dwindled.

Despite her own increasing disability, she looked after her sister, Ethel, until her own death in 1985.

Chapter 3

MEMORIES OF THE VICTORIA ROAD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, THE U.R.C.

3.1 I Remember, I Remember ... by Barbara Sealy

When our buildings come down many memories will be buried in the rubble, not only of the church but also of the two halls.

I remember the Sunday School held on Sunday afternoons, when I was promoted to the large hall and my little sister started in the small hall. The halls were full of children in the 1920s, the older ones having a short assembly before going off to their various classes.

My little sister was very proud of the drawings she took home. One in particular remains in my memory as it puzzled mother, much to the annoyance of little sister. It was definitely a drawing of a man wearing a bowler hat and carrying a walking stick. To complete the Chaplinesque look, there beside him stood a large pair of boots and a short distance away just a red squiggle. Finally mother had to ask who he was. "Moses and the burning bush, of course" came the indignant answer.

I remember the concerts too, when each class made their own contribution. One year I was a fairy in a diaphanous green gown that floated around me so beautifully I was sure that if I tried hard enough I could really fly; but after one attempt, I found it less painful to walk down the steps from the stage. Sister's class were going to sing "I'm for ever blowing bubbles" and actually blew bubbles with their little clay pipes and bowls of soap suds - none of your modern bubble blowing then! They had strict instructions, NO BUBBLES until after the first verse. Sitting in the audience mother hoped little sister would curb her impatience to get blowing, but before the curtains were parted, over the top came one large rainbow bubble and as the children were revealed, one look at the angelic expression on sister's face told us who the culprit was.

I remember the Sunday school treats, not to the seaside or the pleasure parks, but to St. John's cricket ground. 'Bat and trap' and all those different races, rice cake (4d. a lb.?) and the inevitable thunderstorm just when our parents arrived to take us home.

Memories of meetings in the small hall of the Young Wives' Group while their pre-school age children were cared for in the large hall by a rota of older church members. I don't know who enjoyed that part of it most, the children or the carers. My younger daughter called it The Little Girls' Meeting and thought the mothers were only there to wait for the children to finish playing. Those halls could tell so many tales of meetings and parties, of sales of work and jumbles, of badminton and youth clubs and so many folk could say, like me, "I remember, I remember..."

3.2 My Recollections of Victoria Road Congregational Church/U.R.C. by V.R.Vesey (nee Leete)

In the 1930s I lived at Old Chesterton with my family, and my first connection with Victoria Road Congregational Church (as it was then) was during the Rev. Barradale's ministry, when a school friend, Muriel Pedley, whose family worshipped at Victoria Road C.C. asked me to help in the choir. This I did and later became a member of the church.

The Rev. Barradale retired and in 1937 the Rev. Norman Armstrong became our minister. Norman Armstrong drew young people together and the Church benefited. Every Sunday after evening service we met in the vestry for discussions. In those days we were known as the 'Young People's Friendly'. Norman Armstrong had taken youth groups abroad and I remember we talked about the state of things in Europe, and hoped that war might not happen. We played tennis in Mrs. Golding's garden off Huntingdon Road and sometimes went on rambles. Some of us joined the badminton club which played in the church hall.

At that time I was employed as a secretary in the Export Department at Chivers of Histon. The head of the export department was Mr. W.J. Samuel, who was also a deacon of our church. Mr. Samuel was a considerate man with a great sense of humour -- a true Christian -- and he took considerable interest in what we did and was most supportive.

War came, and I remember how we felt at Morning Service on 3rd September 1939. We then had to cope with changing circumstances. Victoria Road Youth Club was formed and to a certain extent we were helped by the Local Authority, although not financially. It was intended that we should cater for the community as well as the youth of the church and we had several evacuees. Three leaders of the Youth Club were appointed. Mr. Harold Muggleton (Uncle Harold), who was a deacon and who took considerable trouble to help the young. When any members came home on leave he would take them out to coffee and he was always present at the Youth Club meetings. Mrs. Nellie Francis was another Leader. She was an evacuee herself and came with her husband and two daughters from London. She was very helpful. I was the third Leader.

We had various activities. We frequently went on the river in punts on summer evenings. During the war the river was more deserted as the only undergraduates were those who were medically unfit and those who were training for essential careers, such as medicine. We continued to play tennis and badminton. It was not easy to obtain shuttles but here we benefited through being a youth club. Sometimes we arranged concerts and had social evenings. At one stage in 1943 I was sent on a course by the Central Council of Physical Recreation so that I could take classes in physical training and square dancing. We also had ballroom dancing. We had our own little canteen with a very generous milk ration.

The youth of the church who were in the Forces were remembered in our prayers every Sunday, and Norman Armstrong wrote regularly to them. Mrs. Peggy Armstrong, his wife, was a great help in all that we did and in spite of rationing always managed to provide true Yorkshire hospitality.

In 1944 Norman Armstrong left for London to become Co-secretary of the Congregational Youth Department. We were sad at his departure, but welcomed the Rev. John Buckingham, who carried on the good work and was very much loved by us all.

In 1948 I left Cambridge for Berkshire, but I have always maintained my association with Victoria Road U.R.C. and my friends there, and look back with pleasure on the years when I was an active member of that church.

3.3 The Congregational Church Garden Parties by Kathleen Willson

Older members and friends of Victoria Road Congregational Church will recall the delightful garden parties which were held each summer at 'Ingleside', West Road -- the home of Mrs W. Eaden Lilley.

Apart from the opportunity for the guests to make their own entertainment, which indeed they did, there was equipment provided such as swings, and a see-saw for the children and a tennis court for the grown-ups. A Punch and Judy show and a ventriloquist provided professional entertainment and there were games, folk dancing displays, and charades also to be enjoyed. In evidence too was a certain gentleman with a cine-camera who took pictures of everyone enjoying themselves. He was also an expert with a pencil and pad, sketching life-like caricatures of people, usually unbeknown to them. Last but not least were the delightful old-fashioned teas served on small tables with lacy white tablecloths -- tomato sandwiches, cherry cake, and strawberries with ice cream all made their appearance on dainty china and glass dishes.

All very simple really -- but a pleasing event to recall from over 40 years ago.

3.4 Memories of Victoria Road URC, by Dorothy Pettit

I was a small girl of 10 years old when my parents moved to Cambridge from Bedford in 1931. The Rev Barradale, the minister at Victoria Road at that time had been previously at the Bedford Church my parents attended. Hence our introduction! From that time onward Victoria Road has been 'my' church.

In those days the Sunday School was very large -- the annual highlights being the Christmas Party and the Summer Treats - with the Scripture Exam, annual concert, and the Anniversary being other great occasions.

Looking back, I can see that certain people had a great influence on my life -- Mr Moody, the Sunday School Superintendent, a man of great integrity; Mr Muggleton, the church treasurer, a man of humour who would roar with laughter at some of the outrageous things we youngsters would say. In the evenings after church the young people would go into the small hall for an hour for discussions etc in Rev Norman Armstrong's time. He was wonderful with youngsters and that hour was a happy time of fellowship. As I look around the pews now, I can still 'see' some of the congregation of 58 years ago -- Billy and Ada Howarth (the latter of 'monologue' fame), Mr Sharp, Mr Samuel, Mr and Mrs Collis, Mrs Carter (always on the back seat), Mrs Mayes, who seemed rather formidable to a child, usually dressed in black, Mr Fromant, the church secretary, always rather nervous, and his energetic wife, also Mr and Mrs Littlechild. The young people sat in the gallery.

I remember fondly two of my Sunday School teachers in particular -- Miss Kath Patman and Miss Millie Endersley (later Hart).

I will close by recalling a very worrying incident in about 1968. Mrs Joan Neeves had arranged an outing for the Sunday School to the London Zoo. Everything had been organized perfectly - a small number of children each in charge of one adult and one teenager. What we hadn't bargained for were the toilets on arrival! We held the `bags' while children of both sexes obliged and they all returned except for one small boy. After a lengthy wait and an inspection found the toilets empty, we decided to start viewing the animals, telling everyone we met that we knew, to please lookout for `....'. It was almost time to return home by coach when he was found by Mr Neeves and Rev Wray. Where? Sitting happily by Regents Canal watching the boats -- not having eaten a thing all day. How had we lost him? A lesson I've never forgotten -- the exits were on the opposite side to the entrance!

3.5 Recollections of a Lifetime at Victoria Road URC (Congregational) Church by Gladys Carter

My earliest memory is one of attending Sunday School in the Small Hall, where a big black stove stood in the centre of the room and we sat on wooden forms. The primary school was then led by a Mr Hallett and his daughter who lived in Victoria Park.

As we progress to the `big' school memories are more clear, how we looked forward to the Summer and Winter treats! For the former we all assembled in the large hall, the tiny ones were taken by horse and cart, the older scholars followed on foot to the top of Victoria Road, across Huntingdon Road, down Mount Pleasant and Lady Margaret Road to S. John's Cricket Ground (impossible now!). There we found big and little swings, see-saws, cricket for the boys, `bat and trap' for the girls, where we ran flat, egg and spoon, sack, wheel-barrow, and three-legged races for different ages.

Mr Whibley our superintendent, who seemed so remote and austere on Sundays, pinned bags of sweets all over his clothing which the boys chased him all around the field to grab. For tea we sat on long wooden planks and had bread and butter, buns, and slab-cake, and drank lemonade from Sunday School mugs with their distinctive blue patterned edges, the teachers and senior pupils had tea in proper cups and saucers, these too with blue patterned rims.

After this prizes were given, also little presents for the Cradle Roll babies too young to be present sometimes, but proudly taken home to them by older sisters or brothers. Summer treats which followed in later years were to Wicksteed Park, Hunstanton, Clacton, Yarmouth, and during the war to Royston Heath, or the Town Football Ground, where chasing up and down the Stand proved irresistible. The Winter treat was held in the large hall, tinies first, later the older ones had their turn. We played games of all sorts, usually there was an entertainment and we went home with an orange and bag of sweets happy days.

The Sunday School began in 1856 and when we celebrated our centenary with a very happy social evening, four of our previous ministers were present: the Revs Frank Ballard, Roderick Dunkerley, Norman Armstrong, and John Buckingham. The minister at the time was the Rev John Green.

Over the years hundreds of children must have been taught in the school, some staying until past their teens. The writer of this article continued as a class teacher until the age of 22. There were six of us who stayed together until some of us became teachers; then the class split up. There was an annual concert, each class doing an item.

After teaching ten years in the big school, I was asked if I would become Primary Leader as Mrs Ethel Bareham (nee Lander) was expecting her first child. I agreed to stand until a more suitable person could be found, but was still leader when the afternoon school closed in 1962. This was not through lack of scholars, but as the Junior Church which was held in the morning had more contact with the congregation, it was felt that there might be a conflict of loyalties with the children. For many years our children took part in the Scripture Union Exam, some passing with honours.

The Cradle Roll was in the care of the Leader and in 1946 we had our first Cradle Roll service in the Small Hall. By 1955 this service was attended by some 140-150 babies, parents and friends and we had to use the church and continued to do so for some years. After the afternoon school closed I continued as Cradle Roll secretary and when Paul Custerson took over in 1979 we had held 33 Cradle Roll services.

During that time it was always a pleasure to add a baby's name to the Roll, one of whose parent's names I had written in some years previously, as Paul's own name had been. Of memories that stand out clearly one was when children sang their birthday hymn for Princess Margaret's 21st birthday and we received a letter of thanks from her Lady-in-Waiting. Another was a teachers' meeting with Mr Buckingham in 1946. There was a custom in the Sunday School Union for teachers to meet on the first Sunday in May at one of the Town Churches, usually S. Andrew's Street Baptist, for a special service. As we discussed this, Mr Buckingham said "Somehow I feel it would be appropriate to go on the top of Castle Mound early on Easter Sunday and sing 'Christ the Lord is Risen today'. Several of us said we would be prepared to go if it could be arranged. So on Easter Day 6 April 1947 at 7.30 am began a tradition which continues. The service is shorter now, we used to have a short bible reading, prayers for the town, university, and schools, ending with the singing of the hymn. At first it was just our little service of praise, but as it became known, friends from many other churches across the town joined with us and it was a lovely start to Easter. After all these years it is still a joy to meet with friends there, then proceed to church for Communion, although these days we have breakfast in the hall before Communion.

The first memory of church services is of being taken by my father, sitting on the back row and carefully sitting on my hands all through the sermon, to bring them out all flat and white for the last hymn!

There have been many very inspiring hymns, as at anniversaries when chairs had to be put in the aisles, and moving times with some of the festival services performed by the children, and evening services closing with the singing of 'Millions' to our own special tune.

An event which continued for many years was the New Year Social, each department taking turns at providing the programme of games and entertainment. This has been superseded by the Harvest Supper which is always very well attended. Another opportunity for meeting socially is the 'Sale of Work' or Autumn Fair, as it is now called.

We have had many young people's societies, one which was started by Rev Victor Barradale, 'The Young People's Friendly Society' carried on into Mr Armstrong's ministry. He held a meeting called 'Circle' after the evening service, where we had serious discussions.

During the week there were rambles, bike rides, or punts on the river, even in war time. We had our own tennis club with a badge designed and made for us by Mr David Eyres who was Sunday School superintendent for many years.

Very often only Saturday evening was spent at home, as there were teachers' meetings, choir practice, week night services, a dramatic club, badminton, and a missionary sewing circle where we sewed, knitted, or wound bandages which missionaries home on furlough took back with them to the mission field. The Circle would also have a special evening when we served supper and performed a missionary play.

There was a Young Wives Group for some years who presented us with the curtains which, at the time of writing, still adorn the small hall windows.

A women's meeting begun by Mrs Barradale, which celebrated its Golden Jubilee a few years ago, still meets on Wednesday afternoons.

Also the Pleasant Thursday Evening (P.T.E.) inaugurated by Mr Armstrong and Mr Sydney Hart in 1943 for people of 25 years and over still meets, its members being well into 'over' category, but with many friends from other churches over those years.

Many happy times were spent in Mrs Golding's lovely garden by old and young alike, and we still felt we were a family trying to witness to the world that to be a Christian could be a happy joyous thing. Over the years our church buildings have been very dear to us, our second home, some of our members' parents and grandparents worshipped there before us.

The church itself has a distinctive atmosphere all its own, which many friends, Christian and non-Christian have remarked upon when being shown around. It will be with great sadness that some of us will witness its demolition, but we trust that that atmosphere will not die with the building, but will go with us as we enter into a new page in the church's life in fresh surroundings.

A Letter from the late Archbishop Michael Ramsey written shortly before his death in 1988

Thank you for your interesting letter about S. Luke's Church in Cambridge. I should be grateful if you would let me know of any new thing that has been happening to S. Luke's or to the Congregational Church next door to it. In my childhood I lived in S. Giles's Parish, but used to attend S. Luke's fairly often, and my mother had a special role in being one of the governors of S. Luke's School. S.Luke's was a strongly supported church and was regarded as a good example of moderate high church practice being rather less high than S. Giles's was at that time.

I came to know Father Partridge well as boy and later while my own ministry was away from Cambridge I did occasionally minister in S. Luke's, and this was a great joy to me. As you know I took part in the jubilee in the autumn of 1974, just before my retirement.

I am glad to share these memories with you and any special news about the parish, I shall be most interested to hear.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Ramsey.