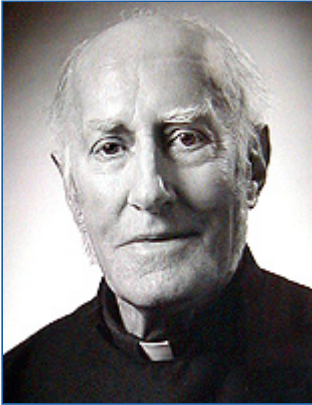


# Revd Rupert Hoyle Brunt, BA, AKA



Revd Rupert Brunt

## *Introducing Revd Rupert Brunt*

Revd Brunt was born in Manchester in 1910 to an American mother and a father who was a Water Engineer. The family lived in Rochdale before moving to Chiswick in 1918, and he finished his schooling at St Paul's, before going up to King's College, London, to read History. His mother hoped he would become a barrister and Revd Brunt liked the idea of journalism. However through his involvement with the SCM the idea of ordination grew so he completed his theological degree also at King's. It was through the SCM that he and Connie met, briefly in 1932, and finally married in 1944. The marriage took place at St James's by one of those amazing quirks of coincidence. Connie had moved from her post in Nottinghamshire to be closer to her parents during the war and worshipped at St James's. The wedding was to be in Sussex but because of the preparations for the Normandy landings

he wasn't allowed anywhere near the church! The rearrangement plans made St James's the obvious second choice.

Revd Brunt was previously vicar of St Faith's, N Wilford, Nottingham. He had a very happy link with St James's as he and Connie had actually been married here so they felt they were not coming to strangers in a strange parish, but were *"in a sense coming home - but not to rest, but to work with you and for you, to the best of our ability and to the utmost of our strength, in the service of God"*. The Church authorities had actually invited someone else to be vicar but he had declined because the stipend was so low. However, Revd and Mrs Brunt embraced this poor parish, accepting the challenge.

They had three children, Rosalind, Clare and Bernard. Mrs Brunt, née Middlemiss, used to teach at Lady Eleanor Hollis School when she lived here before her marriage. A flourishing Young Wives' Group was inaugurated due to her enthusiasm and personality.

## *Appointment and induction*

In the Autumn of 1950 Revd Brunt was unexpectedly invited to meet Revd Knapp (Vicar of Hampton and Patron of the living of St James's) to discuss a possible appointment to the vacancy. The interview commenced with Revd Knapp suggesting that since they both knew very little of each other, they should kneel in silent prayer for a while. The prayer over, Revd Knapp went to his desk and offered Revd Brunt the job. The Institution and Induction of the new vicar took place on the evening of Friday, March 16th 1951. *"A really crowded church, with all pews filled, added to the sincere spirit of worship and prayer which everyone had come to offer on this very important occasion. One had the feeling of belonging to a very large family, all gathered to welcome two people whom they were prepared to love."*

## *Significant developments during Revd Brunt's incumbency*

The patterns of worship were to undergo radical changes. Soon after becoming vicar, Revd Brunt and the Church Council had discussions about the times of different weekday services. There were so many different opinions that he decided to experiment over a period of time. Several Sunday services were dropped, some times of services were changed and some new services were added. The Eucharist at 09.30 became the



main service of the day, and became more relevant to our needs, in which *"we are not mere spectators, but actually taking part"*. On the offertory table were two plaques stating that *"offerings should go into the box now, as there would be no collection, and that if making our communion, we must place a wafer in the vessel provided"*. The congregation joined in the 'Collect for Purity', the 'Prayer of Humble Access', and the 'Prayer of Thanksgiving', thus reducing the number of parts said by the priest alone, and maintaining attention. The service was mainly sung, but the Creed was said, presumably with the intention of bringing even the most unmusical members of the congregation into this important part. The 'Prayer for the Church' was interrupted at various points for matters of parochial, local, and national interest to be mentioned.

Revd Brunt was keen to involve members of the congregation and also children, for example presenting the bread and wine in the Parish Communion service or reading the lessons. For many in St James's the principal legacy from Revd Brunt was a new and deeper insight and awareness of prayer.

The Sunday School also underwent many changes in order to cater for as many children as possible and the Rectory Sunday School was started to encourage children in that part of the parish.

The momentum of the parish quickened further with stewardship campaigns, parish weekends, and study and prayer groups. There was a very active Social Committee that organised parish outings and rambles, Harvest Suppers, firework parties, carol singing round the parish, New Year Parties, folk evenings, buffet and barn dances, and tennis matches. The wider community was also served by the parish with the Nursery School, the Old People's Welfare Committee, the Wayside Monday Centre, Newcomers Parties, a thriving Young People's Fellowship and so on.

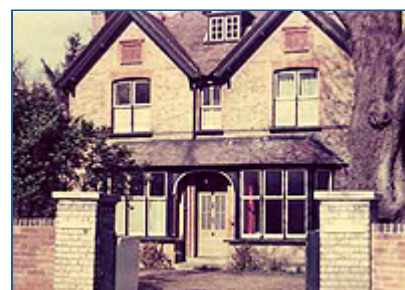


Revd Brunt with the barrel organ

Architects who made detailed inspections over the years reported that the condition of the church was poor and needed a good deal of renovation and renewal. A well planned *"Great Renovation Drive"* in 1953 saw many fund raising activities and a house-to-house collection. Revd Brunt and some parishioners in fancy dress pushed an ancient barrel organ around the streets, causing the villagers to give generously. Over the years many aspects of the church fabric were improved including re-roofing the building. By 1962 on the eve of the church's centenary Revd Brunt was able to report *"We now have a better and sounder building than at any time since its*

*foundation."* The organ was renovated during 1951 and more fully restored in 1972 with a new electric action replacing the old pneumatic action. In 1967 a Garden of Remembrance was created for the interment of ashes near the Lych Gate.

In 1954 the need for a new small hall was discussed and consequently Wayside, a large house in St James's Road, built in 1883 and originally called Armaside, was bought the following year. It proved a sound investment and provided the church with meeting rooms, for many years being the meeting place of the PCC, the Sunday Schools, the Young People's Fellowship and many other church-related groups such as the Mothers' Union, the Young Wives, the Tuesday Club, the Young Families Group, and the Wayside Monday Centre (a counselling service).



Wayside

Throughout Revd Brunt's incumbency the committees of the PCC were expanded in both scope and membership to consider many different aspects of the church's work locally and to make recommendations to the main Council. Financially the situation at St James's was improving but more was still needed so a Christian Stewardship Campaign was launched in 1961 with professional fund-raising support. In 1966 the parish adopted the Diocesan Scheme for Christian Stewardship which had a more spiritual approach, equal consideration being given to the value of time devoted to service and in worship as to the more material gifts. In January 1952 the old Hampton Hill Parish Magazine was replaced by 'The

Spire', which was organised by a committee who expanded the range of contents, and which was eventually distributed free.

## *The End of Revd Brunt's incumbency*

Revd Brunt retired to Seaford in December 1980. *"Our Vicar inherited a moribund parish and decaying church. Another had been the first choice of the Church authorities, but turned us down because the stipend was so low. Rupert and Connie accepted us in our poverty, welcomed in faith the challenge, and at the end of the night on thirty years they leave us immeasurably richer."* At his leaving he was given a presentation and thanked, among other things, for transforming St James into a warm, living church and for giving the parish a real understanding of Christian stewardship. *"It is not often a parish has the real blessing of having the ministry of such a good and true and Christian couple for so long. In recalling the past we shall be doubly grateful for the present and full of hope for the future."*



The garden of rest

The tributes were many and various but they all emphasised Revd Brunt's deep faith, humility and love. *"We can pay the greatest tribute to Connie and Rupert by continuing to live as they have lived themselves amongst us."* The September 14th issue of the Richmond Guardian recorded: *"Mr Brunt will be remembered for giving the parish new life when the congregation had fallen dramatically and its buildings were in a poor condition."* So, after nearly thirty years, they left the parish so much better off, both

spiritually and materially.

Revd Brunt died in 1989 and his ashes were buried in the Garden of Remembrance in the churchyard after the Parish Communion on 15 October. Family and friends filled the church for the service was also a memorial service for him.