

VICAR'S NOTES

THE CONDITION OF THE CHURCH

A letter recently appeared in the local press above the signature of a respected parishioner well known for his admiration of the tower and spire. He has now come forward as a champion of the whole building: "Our parish church is namely one of the finest of its type in the country.....a magnificent edifice." He strongly attacks me for daring to suggest that it was "built on the cheap."

Viewed from some distance, the church certainly appears to be all that he says it is, and we should be very much happier if this really were so. But when seen at close quarters, the church bears a less pleasing aspect. I have asked the writer of the letter to go round the building with me and see for himself. You do not have to be an expert to discern defects in the design and the poor quality of some of the brickwork. The difference between the steeple, with its good design and sound construction, and the older parts of the building is striking.

One's own impressions are unfortunately reinforced by the reports of architects who have made more detailed inspections. For instance, a long report made in 1942 begins with the words "Generally the work in connection with this building is not of the first order and some of the materials are by no means first-class.....most of the defects are caused more by the materials employed than by faulty workmanship." The report made two months ago by a different architect, under the scheme whereby the church is now inspected every five years, begins in a similar way. "The overall condition of the church is poor especially considering its comparatively recent date. The defects are practically all due to bad design and the use of poor materials at the time of building."

These general remarks are I think, substantiated in the body of both reports. There are references, for instance, to the very poor quality of the lead gutters and flashings, and apparently the roof over the south aisle has no such flashing at all, which has contributed to the dampness which had long been apparent until the matter was rectified last autumn. The slates of these roofs also come in for criticism—"judging by a sample of the slates which was shown to the writer, they are of very poor quality." Much of the external brickwork is not good — "extensive attrition has taken place owing to the use of poor materials, aggravated at some points by water running down the face of the walls from the faulty down-pipes." These pipes are of "atrocious design," and on the north side of the church they are completely buried in the brickwork of the buttresses. This has made it impossible for them ever to be cleaned out, and they have simply corroded away and the water penetrated the walls and made them permanently damp. This has caused interior damage as well. The most recent report also criticises the bad type of heating-system, and blames it for increasing the rate of internal deterioration and decay.

I do not see why these facts, if true, should not be made known to people concerned about the maintenance and renovation of our church. I cannot see that they add encouragement to sharp practice in business or to 'cosh-boys.' I do not know why poor materials should have been used, whether owing to lack of funds to buy better, or through insufficient supervision of the builders. But we are certainly paying the price for this now, and I hope that the writer of the letter and all others who admire the church as he does will rally around and help us to raise the £2,000 estimated to be required to put the church into really good order.

GREAT PERSONALITIES

This parish has recently lost by death two old ladies of tremendous character. Mrs. Chaplin, who lived by herself in an old cottage, had been in this neighbourhood most of her long life, and until her last illness was very energetic. The amount of sewing she did was amazing. Last autumn she broke her wrist, but even this did not hinder her activities for long.

Lady Stanton came to the district on her marriage in 1912. She too lived a most energetic life as long as her health permitted. She organised the children's parties at the National Physical Laboratory, and was one of the first members of the Teddington and the Hamptons branch of the Women Citizens' Association. She soon became connected with this church, and associated herself with all its concerns. In 1938 she trained as an Air-Raid Warden, and was on duty regularly at the A.R.P. post at the bottom of Park Road from the outbreak of war until November 1940, when her home was destroyed and she narrowly escaped with her life. She was possessed of amazing courage and will-power: this showed itself particularly in the way she faced ill-health when she returned to her rebuilt home in 1948; it showed itself in the way she did not allow the shock of the 1940 destruction to get the better of her. From 1941 to 1943 she was working with great energy in British Restaurants at Dorking and Kensington. In 1944 she took on a new job, and though she was now well in the sixties, became driver for Lord Daryngton, who was in charge of much of the war work of the Church Army. Her last years in Hampton Hill again were spent in an indomitable fight against physical weakness, to which she never yielded unless it was absolutely necessary. She insisted on dragging herself to church when it seemed as though she might fall at any moment. Her

interest in all that happened was as lively as ever, and her sense of humour as keen. She was ready for anything right to the last. And no one could have contact with her without being impressed by her dignity and graciousness, and realising that here was a great Christian lady.

It has been a privilege to know people like these, and their memories will long be fragrant.

RECENT CHURCH MEETINGS

The Vestry and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, sitting together, was held on 6th February 1953, when the following were elected:— Vicar's Warden—Mr. W. Wigginton; People's Warden—Mr. E. Western; Ruri-decanal Conference—Mrs. E. Beckett, Mr. G. Dunkerley, Mr. L. Rockliffe, Mr. F. Sargeant, Miss H. Stanton and Mr. E. Western; Parochial Church Council (new and re-elected members) Mrs. S. Forrow, Mrs. L. Mills, Mr. C. Smith, Mr. L. Sumner, Mr. W. Thomas, Mrs. H. Thompson and Mrs. M. Western; Sidesmen—The gentlemen of the P.C.C., and Mr. B. Harper. The Electoral Roll which was presented to the Meeting, showed 304 names. The annual accounts, following explanations by the respective Hon. Treasurer, were duly adopted. It was encouraging to note that collections had continued to increase. The total for 1952 had been £546, as compared with £425 for 1951 and £337 for 1950. £148 of this £546 had been given for various special purposes and good causes outside the Parish.

A report on the Council's work during the year was given and the Vicar in his remarks thanked all those who had worked for the Church. Refreshments were served by Mrs. E. Beckett and her helpers.

The new Parochial Church Council at its first meeting held on 12th February, occupied itself with the appointment of officers and committees for the ensuing year.

JOTTINGS

These included the Church Treasurer (Mr. E. Western), the Standing Committee, the Finance Committee, the Property Committee, the Renovation Committee, the Missionary and Evangelistic Committee, the Magazine Committee, the Social Committee (to include representatives from Church Organisations) and the Catering Committee (the ladies of the P.C.C. were all elected to this new Committee). Mr. W. Wigginton was appointed organiser and Secretary of the Frewill Offering Scheme and Mrs. S. Forrow organiser of the "People's Offering" for Moral Welfare. Mrs. A. Lewis and Mr. L. Brown were co-opted on to the Council and Mr. S. V. J. Forrow was re-elected Parochial Officer. The Council placed on record its extreme gratitude to those members who had retired from membership, for their many years of faithful service. These were—Miss Blackmore and Miss Phillips, Mr. and Mrs. Casey, Mr. E. Beckett, Mr. J. N. Cornish and Mr. P. Cowee.

The Scheme for the division of the Hampton Deanery into three parts was notified to the meeting. No objections were raised. Following the Order of Her Majesty ratifying the scheme, St. James's Church will form part of the new Deanery of Hampton, which will consist of 19 Parishes instead of 40, as now. The new Deaneries will be Heston and Isleworth, and Staines.

S.V.J.F.

FLOOD RELIEF

We are proud to have among our congregation Miss Jean Wertern who is now working very long hours at the Mansion House on the reception of the gifts in money to the Flood Relief Fund.

The million pound mark was passed last week: it is very good to think of the spontaneity of the giving towards helping those in distress, and we must not forget to sympathise with Holland in her still more serious disaster.

On Sunday March 8th there will be opportunities after the morning and evening services for gifts to be placed in plates at the door for this Fund, and we hope that those who have not yet contributed will take advantage of this.

Hugh Virgo is one of our regular church attenders when he is at home on vacation. Readers will be interested to learn that he is sitting for his Finals in Geography Honours at Hull University, this summer. We wish him all success.

John Grieg connected closely with this church before he was called into the Army last year, is now in Malta, David Thompson, though he has been in the R.A.F. for a long time now, has not seemed to have left us, as he has usually managed to travel from wherever he has been stationed late on Saturday or early Sunday and continue to take his usual place in the choir. Recently he has taken several solo parts in the anthem on special occasions. But now he has left for six months' service in Germany—after several false starts owing to the flood situation. We shall remember them both in our prayers, and look forward to seeing them amongst us again.

A postcard was recently received from Mr. Barrett with a cheerful greeting and a picture of the very pleasant township in Tasmania at which he is staying for a year with his daughter who was a keen member of our Young Wives' Group.

Two other pieces of pleasant news—one of the boys associated with the robbery at the church fourteen months ago recently called to see the Vicar and gave him back the greater part of the money he took. He had promised to do this a year before, but circumstances had made it difficult for him to do it until now. The Vicar had so often in time past received promises that money lent would be returned, and only in one case had this happened that he had come to the conclusion that this promise might also go the way of other similar ones, and it was encouraging to find that this was not so. Then our Parochial Officer, Mr. Forrow, had a pleasant surprise about the same time, opening a letter received through the post and finding a slip of paper saying, "For Church expenses—from a Member," enclosing four pound notes.

Congratulations to a young member of our Sunday School, John Lobb. He has won a scholarship to Christ's Hospital. The congratulations he received from the boys of his day school were of a more hearty kind—so enthusiastic that poor John's back was slightly injured, and he had to spend a week in an ordinary hospital!

Is your name on the Electoral Roll? If it is not and you are a regular worshipper at St. James's and over 18 years of age, you should complete an Application for enrolment form and hand it to a sidesman on duty.

At recent church meetings, appreciation has been expressed to the organist, Mr. C. Haydn Bull, and the gentlemen and boys of the choir, for the music and singing, which have done so much to beautify our services. One gentleman, Mr. Philip Cowee, completes thirty years with the choir in March. He joined as a boy and has served continuously, except for a period during the War when he was in the Army. Mr. Cowee is also an organist and has on a number of occasions presided at St. James's organ when the regular organist has been absent. Mr. Cowee is indeed a wonderful record and the Church is proud of him—and grateful too.

The choir boys had their Christmas outing rather late this year—on February 12th but everyone felt it was well worth waiting for. It was a whole-day affair—morning and afternoon at the Science Museum, and the evening at the Ice show at the Empress Hall. We are grateful to those who gave donations to help the Church Council pay for this.

NEW APPOINTMENTS ETC.

The standing-matter will be revised in June. Until then, please note the following changes:

Secretary of the Renovation Committee: Mr. C. W. Smith, 59 St. James's Avenue.

Treasurer of the Properties' Committee: Mr. W. F. Wigginton.

Mothers' Union meets at 3.0 p.m. not 3.30 p.m.

SOME DATES TO NOTE

Mar. 8—11.0 a.m. & 6.30 p.m.
Retiring collections for Flood Relief.

Mar. 10—8.0 p.m. Men's Society:
Open evening in the Hall—"The music of the Mikado."

Mar. 11—3.0 p.m. Mothers' Union
Annual General Meeting (Club-room).

Mar. 25—The Annunciation. Holy
Communion 7.30 & 10.30 a.m.

Mar. 27—7.30 p.m. Magazine Dis-
tributors' Meeting.

Mar. 29—Palm Sunday.

Every Wednesday 8.0 p.m.—
meeting at Vicarage for Bible
study and discussion.

BAPTISMS

Feb. 8—Barry Charles William
Brandon, 32 Cross Street.

Feb. 8—Perdita Helen Morgan, 51
Park Road.

Feb. 22—Anna Maria Dorothy
Pullen, 59 Windmill Road.

MARRIAGE

Feb. 14—Derek Frederick Manning
to Patricia Elsie Hoyle.

BURIALS AND CREMATIONS

Jan. 20—Charlotte Esther Beagley,
15 Seymour Road, aged 79 years
(at Teddington).

Feb. 9—Amy Chaplin, 68 Uxbridge
Road, aged 88 years.

Feb. 10—Eleanor Arthur, 65
Brockenhurst Avenue, Worcester
Park, aged 77 years.

Feb. 11—Martha Grace Stanton,
63 Park Road, aged 73 years (at
Kingston).

Feb. 21—Joan Lydia Chandler, 31
Longford Close, aged 33 years (at
Teddington).