

THE CHURCHYARD

The approaching date of the next major churchyard clearance operation may cause one to walk through it with more observing eyes. It is really very sad to see this potentially beautiful place almost totally neglected. The great efforts of the few volunteers who keep a regular eye on it, are obviously not enough to cope. In the spring the pools of bluebells under the shading old trees certainly have a charm of their own, and it is very peaceful hearing the crickets chirp in the long grass near the St. James's Avenue entrance on a hot sunny summer's day. But fallen crosses, sunken gravetops, and smothering weeds create above all an impression of near dereliction. It is in most cases impossible to read any names or dates because the grass of many seasons has by now grown right over the stonework. There is no doubt that vandalism is invited by the state of general untidiness. The few cared for graves stand out poignantly - incongruous, pathetic islands of bright flowers lovingly tended, in this engulfing sea of green.

What must it feel like for the relatives who come to these graves amid disorder? I cannot help comparing this with churchyards I know in Germany where the dignified atmosphere of general, carefully looked after beauty may in itself give a certain amount of comfort. Neat paths lead through pleasingly curved rows of graves, covered with various creepers, heathers and, according to the season, pansies or begonias; the whole interspersed with shrubs, rose bushes, and dwarf conifers, and sectioned off by decorative high hedges. In winter the plants on many graves are protected from frost by layers of branches from various coniferous trees, more or less artistically arranged into patterns. In dry summer weather sprinklers will be going, and there are taps everywhere for visitors to fetch the water they may need for their graves. At weekends these visitors come in a steady stream of single people or whole families, with flowers and tools, to care for these graves.

Why should there be this amazing difference between English and German churchyards? Do the English in general care so much less for their dead? The answer lies in what might be called the legal or institutional background which is so very different in Germany. First of all, and this seems to be the essential point, in Germany one buys a grave-site for a limited period of 25 years only. After that, it can be retained, against renewed payment of the full sum, or it is then sold again to new people. Thus, in the majority of cases, there will be relatives who are interested in keeping the graves beautiful. The cost of a double grave in the cemetery I have in mind is now approximately £80. That includes the initial planting. If one does not want to look after a grave personally, one can pay a maintenance fee of anything from £10 per annum, depending on one's particular choice of upkeep. Out of these payments, which are, in the case of a churchyard, made to the church, permanent gardeners are paid, who plan the overall layout and do all the work. If they have graves that no relative cares for, they may cover it with an ordinary lawn which they will then keep tidy. These gardeners will also specify the range of gravestones from which one can choose. Usually rectangular, natural stones of various tints and quiet beauty that stand at the head of the graves. When a site is resold after 25 years, these stones are taken away, and presumably refashioned by stonemasons. Incidentally, the church does not make any charge for a funeral as such. That is covered by its income from church members in general.

Bearing all this in mind, we cannot be surprised any more at the startling difference between German churchyards and that of St. James's, Hampton Hill, where chaos is kept at bay solely by the unselfish efforts of members of the congregation and the occasional other voluntary helpers, who have no personal interest in the graves there. It might, however, set us thinking about alternatives.

Hilde Bucknell

THE PRAYER CIRCLE

The Vicar said the other day that St. James's Church was blessed in that the members of the congregation felt real friendship and caring one to another. We are experiencing the strengthened faith of hopes, engendered by the vital mustard seed of initial faith, being realized in the growing prosperity, not only of material wealth but of the living Spirit among us, and this in its turn is beginning to bring a true spirit of love between us. "Faith, Hope and Love, and the greatest of these is Love"

The Prayer Circle has been in existence for a very long time. It consists of a group of people who are called to pray quietly in their own homes for those who ask for prayers to be said for them or their loved ones "in times of great stress and need". The Circle seldom meets, but a meeting was called some little time ago to add to its members the entire membership roll of the Group for Welcome and Contact, and to re-arrange communication methods. As soon as possible every member of the Circle will receive a communication plan and a copy will be displayed in church for guidance to the congregation as a whole. There are now 35 members in the Prayer Circle and room for everyone else who feels that this service is something they feel called upon to give. For instance, if you are elderly and feel that some of the other ways of service are beyond your physical strength, then your spiritual strength, garnered by years of experience in the faith, would be invaluable - the ideal of course is that the whole congregation should naturally become one great circle of prayer eventually.

We read that if we truly love someone our first concern should be to pray for them, but at the meeting Mr. Brunt electrified us by saying that he sometimes hesitated to ask for prayers for someone in church. Either the subject was unknown to many, or it was immediately assumed that they were in danger of death and if, shortly afterwards, or even at the moment, the subject was seen to be in church, the reaction could be "Who is that?" or "What's the matter with so-and-so, why do they need our prayers, they seem all right" and in all this conjecture the prayers could somehow be watered down and be ineffective through lack of understanding, or because fear blotted out faith and negative thought prevailed.

Of course we all need the prayers of others all the time, but very often we need them desperately. In an ideal situation it should be the accepted thing for one of us to be able to say "Listen, I'm worried about this, frightened about that, puzzled and in need of direction, will you pray for me that I be helped and guided?". But we seldom do, and if we do it is only to one or two special friends. We go on bearing our burden alone instead of having it lightened by sharing and prayer.

At our meeting we had a guest, a priest from Africa. He really wanted an explanation of Mr. Brunt's remarks about the difficulty we experience in asking for prayer since where he came from it was as natural as the air they breathed for his congregation to pray, in love for one another, and he could not understand a Christian scene where this was not so.

Mr. Brunt's remarks were brought home to me, personally, both at the meeting and afterwards. I was feeling very ill and greatly tempted to ask the Circle to say a prayer for me. I wanted to ask but I failed myself and the Circle by not doing so. Shortly afterwards I collapsed from what my Doctor described as "nervous exhaustion". I felt really terrible! I knew that I needed to ask for help through the Circle of Prayer, but withheld from the very reasons Mr. Brunt had mentioned. After all, I was up and about, bearing very little sign except to those who know me very well, that anything was wrong. "Why" I thought people would ask "was I in need of prayer?" I did ask, firstly Mr. Brunt and then a few others to pray for me and I know they did, because I felt upheld and strengthened BUT I failed the Prayer Circle by being ashamed and unwilling to ask them to pray for me since that was, and is, the very reason for which it was formed and exists.

To sum up my reason for writing this - We of St. James's have learned to play together, and pay together - now let us in true Christian concern and understanding learn to pray together "as naturally as the air we breathe".

Margery Orton.

THE ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP CONFERENCE: A BRIEF REPORT

(This is a very condensed summary of the full report which is in the keeping of the Stewardship Committee; several members of the Committee attended the conference, and found it to be stimulating and valuable)

The conference was held in the church hall of Holy Trinity, Brompton on 23 June; the chair was taken by the Archdeacon of Northolt who set the stage for the meeting. He hoped that the problems of the now mature (or even aging!) Christian Stewardship schemes could be discussed and solutions found.

Mr. A.C. Harland, stewardship adviser to the Diocese of Oxford, talking on worldwide stewardship, believed that the essentials of stewardship were permanent, developments would be matters of method only. He spoke with enthusiasm of a parish which had a vigorous and effective "Continuation Committee" (not unlike our Stewardship Committee!). He discussed the problems of national co-ordination and the continual uphill fight to raise giving in the face of inflation. His recent visit to America had given him many ideas, some of which may not have seemed very good ones to his audience. Questions followed the talk.

After coffee, a report on the work of the Stewardship Council was given by the Director. This mainly concerned staff changes.

The meeting continued with a vigorous, hard-hitting and perhaps controversial address by the Rev. Frank Humphries. His thesis was that the two most pressing needs of the church today are more funds and more clergy.

God was not silent in this time of need; the concept of stewardship if taken in its fullest sense gave us an opportunity to overcome both major difficulties by properly developing our unused resources of manpower. Let the people shoulder some of the present responsibilities of the hard-pressed clergy. To do this he suggested that we develop and train a lay ministry under Deanery guidance. Perhaps we needed a new "Directorate of Lay Ministry" to guide this vital work, which had in it the potential to solve our problems by serving God more diligently.

THE READERS' ROTA

For some years now, a number of members of the congregation have regularly read lessons at our services. Although from time to time individuals names have been added to the rota for various reasons there has been no general invitation to any who would like to be considered for inclusion. We are now extending an invitation to any who might be interested, and it is hoped to arrange an audition as we have done in the past at which an outside expert would be able to assess the voices of any who come forward. If you feel that you would like to be auditioned, would you please let the Vicar or Seymour Harris know and a suitable time will be arranged.

SERVERS

A traditional feature of our worship at St. James's has been the attendance of servers at our services, and to many this adds to the dignity of our worship. For some years we have had difficulty in covering services as we should like, and it has fallen on the few who have been able to attend. There must be many men who either have been servers or who would be willing to offer themselves for this work. If you would like any information, or if you could assist (even if only occasionally) would you let us know?.

THE MOTHERS' UNION

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the usual time, 2 p.m. in Wayside, on MONDAY 5th NOVEMBER.....take note that for this important event we are trying to choose a day when none of our members has another meeting. We want a full attendance as new Officers and Committee members have to be chosen. Mrs. Brunt is our Enrolling Member Elect and we hope that after the business side of the meeting, she will be able to show us some slides. Do make a big effort to attend.

SOCIAL COMMITTEE PROGRAMME

There will be a Whist Drive in Wayside on 24 October at 8 p.m. Do come along - the price of admission is only 10 p. Plans are now complete for our Fireworks Party to be held this year on Saturday, 3 November. Tickets are always hard to come by near the day, so get yours early from any member of the Social Committee, price 25p, this includes hot soup and baked potatoes. May we remind you once again that, for safety's sake, unaccompanied children cannot be admitted.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE UNMARRIED MOTHER AND HER CHILD.

The Bring and Buy Sale in aid of this Council, about which an article was written in the August Magazine, took place on Friday, September 21 as planned; we had morning, afternoon and evening sessions.

There was much anxiety about the weather beforehand, and as it was pouring with rain at 9 a.m., the donkey was cancelled for the morning. The weather, however, improved and we were most happy to have the donkey and a pony for the afternoon session.

Everyone was very generous, and we had a wonderful collection of new and nearly-new clothes, both for adults and children, jewellery, plants, groceries, cakes, toys and ornaments for the bring and buy stalls. Helen Taylor and Hilde Bucknell were our pricing experts, and put in much time selling during the day. Mr. Nunn organised the games, and numbers of other helpers dispersed refreshments, raffle tickets and general cheer.

Mrs Margaret Bramall herself came to the afternoon session, and also in the evening, when she spoke on the work of the Council leading up to the future changing of its title to the National Council for the One-Parent Family.

We cleared £72, and with subsequent donations this has now risen to £75.

Mrs. Patricia James and I are very grateful indeed for the very considerable help we have been given.

Hannah Stanton

EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAMME OF ADDITIONS TO EVENSONG

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 1973

The Liturgical Committee is now in a position to publish more details of the sequence of evening services during the next three months; an introduction to this follow-up of "That's the Spirit" was incorporated into the September magazine.

Arrangements for the first 6 Sundays are repeated in case readers have not made notes of these from the last magazine.

- October 7 6.30 Evensong incorporating a short discussion on "The Nature of Worship"
- October 14 6.30 Evensong. Introduction to worship expressed in dance form. Introduced by Ruth Mills.
- October 21 6.45 Combined Service at Hampton Methodist Church. No evening service at St. James's. Transport available 6.20 p.m.
- October 28 6.30 Evensong. Preacher: The Reverend Ivor Smith-Cameron, Canon-Missioner, Southwark Diocese. A dynamic preacher on mission in this country. We hope to have visitors from other parishes. The service will be followed by refreshments and discussion.
- November 4 6.30 Evensong. Followed by a Teach-in: "He has spoken by the Prophets...Has he?"
- November 11 6.30 Special form of Service for Remembrance Sunday.
- November 18 6.30 Evensong in which the Y.P.F. take part.

- November 25 6.30 Evensong. Stewardship Sunday, The Service will include some striking visual aids and will be followed by refreshments.
- December 2 6.30 Evensong. Advent Sunday. "Why does the Church stick to Advent, and not begin the Christmas Season today?"
- December 9 6.30 Evensong. Special Preacher with experience in the Mission field. Refreshments and discussion.
- December 16 9.30 a.m. Confirmation and Dedication Festival Service. Followed by breakfast in Church.
- 6.30 Evensong incorporating a short discussion on "Dedicated for what?".
- December 23 6.30 Evensong
- December 30 6.30 Christmas Play.
- There will be later and special announcements about Christmas services.
H.M.S.

SOME DATES TO NOTE

OCTOBER

- 17 7.30 p.m. Deanery Synod (St. Stephen's Hall)
- 18 SAINT LUKE'S DAY: 7.30 a.m. Holy Communion; 12.00 noon Service of Thanksgiving to celebrate the 21st Anniversary of the inauguration of the National Fund for Research into Crippling Diseases (St. Paul's Cathedral) 8.00 p.m. Group for Welcome & Contact (venue to be arranged)
- 19 7.30 p.m. Members of Deanery Synods in the Kensington area meet the new Bishop of London (Holy Trinity, Brompton) 8.00 p.m. First meeting of Augmented Choir, to prepare Passion Music (Vestry)
- 21 2.30 to 5.30 p.m.: Training Session for Sunday School Teachers (St. Mary's Hall, Hampton) 6.45 p.m. United Service at Hampton Methodist Church: transport available outside our church from 6.20 p.m.
- 23 8.00 p.m. Tuesday Club: Mrs. Bowes - 'The Land of a Thousand Lakes'
- 24 8.00 p.m. Whist Drive (W) (W)
- 27 WEL-CARE: A Festival of Thanksgiving at St. Andrew's, Holborn with special events and dramatic presentations from 11.30 a.m. until 4.30 p.m. Full details on posters.
- 28 FEAST OF SAINT SIMON & SAINT JUDE:→ Sunday services as usual on fourth Sunday. Canon Ivor Smith-Cameron preaches at Evensong.
- 29 8.00 p.m. Properties Committee (7, Blandford Road)
- 31 8.00 p.m. Parochial Church Council (W)

NOVEMBER

- 1 ALL SAINTS' DAY: 7.30 a.m. Holy Communion; 8.00 p.m. Group for Welcome and Contact.
- 2 8.00 p.m. Augmented Choir (Vestry)
- 3 6.30 p.m. Fireworks Party - admission by ticket only (Laurel Dene)
- 5 2.30 p.m. Mothers' Union: Annual General Meeting and Showing of Slides (W)
- 6 8.00 p.m. Tuesday Club: Film presented by Berger Paints (W)
- 7 7.30 p.m. a.m. Holy Communion
- 8 7.45 p.m. NEWCOMERS' PARTY in the Parish Hall - by invitation. (If you know anyone who has recently arrived in the area, and who has not received an invitation by October 31, please notify Mrs. Leatherdale immediately - 979 6999)
- 11 REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY: Special Form of Service at 6.30 p.m.

MARRIAGE

September 8 Peter David Hann to Susan Eunice Wright

BURIAL

September 6 Catherine Gough Harper, Dunluce, Barton Road, Hoylake, aged 87 years.