

CHURCH and CHAPELS

The Parish Church in East Bridgford in the 20th Century

The area around the Memorial Cross in the corner of St. Peter's churchyard was chosen as the venue for the East Bridgford Millennium celebrations on 31st December 1999. The Rector conducted a short service and the bells rang. The parish church was seen as the focal point and the symbolic heart of the village. In many ways it is still thriving - the building is in good structural condition and well looked after, congregations are better than average, christenings, marriages, funerals still take place regularly and the finances are sound. The main contention of this chapter is that the overriding reason for the continuing influence of the parish church here is the personality, drive and dynamism of the various rectors, especially at the beginning and end of the century.

The following pages do not claim to provide an exhaustive history of St Peter's in the 20th century. They are based almost entirely on the Parish magazines and the memories of some parishioners. Inevitably, such selectivity and 'reading between the lines' involves my personal judgements, so some of the chapter is written in the first person. Also, I have defined the parish church as a social unit rather than just a building and tend to look at its influence on the local community through the personalities of its rectors. However, I incorporate some of the more general trends in the Church of England and some specific events that have impacted on the church such as the two world wars. Finally, because of personal interest and because of the richness of writing and social detail of the earlier magazines, I have tended to concentrate on the period up to 1950.



The interior of St Peters from a postcard of about 1910 with the gas lighting a prominent feature.

Arthur Du Boulay Hill 1898 – 1927

The year 1900 began two years into the rectorship of Rev. Hill. He was born in Cornwall in 1850 and educated at Winchester College and Magdalen College, Oxford. To my knowledge he was married with a daughter. As well as inaugurating the East Bridgford Parish Magazine, he wrote at least two histories. The first was of his previous parish of Downton in Wiltshire, and the second the history of East Bridgford¹. He was a member of the Thoroton Society and a



scholar of some repute. The impression I have received from reading his comments and descriptions in the magazines is of a cultured, well-educated man who was, above all, a brilliant communicator of the written word; a social commentator who understood history, politics and current affairs; an energetic and dynamic man with a desire to initiate new technology and new ideas; a leader and organiser who could also be rather opinionated; a devout and paternalistic man who cared about his parishioners. I shall attempt to provide evidence for these initial impressions. Other topics discussed will be the role of the church during World War I, the church and its changing relationship with the school, and some of the changes in the C of E at a national level that had an impact on St Peter's Church.

The East Bridgford Parish magazines that cover the first quarter of the century are a fascinating account of social life in the village and are packed with the rector's own views and opinions as well as reports on activities of church groups, clubs and social events. I don't know what Revd. Hill's sermons were like but his written style was fluent, simple, vivid and beautifully expressed. In the early years of the 20th century, East Bridgford was an agricultural village and the majority of parishioners would probably not have had the opportunity of travelling any distance. Revd. Hill would write letters, published in the magazine, from his holiday destinations. The two most endearing were from Cornwall and from the South of France (where he was convalescing). The first, written in the summer of 1904, painted a quaintly colourful picture full of sentimentality, the second I find interesting because it was written in 1912 and gives a frisson of events that happened a few years later. It described the view from his house at Carquerianne where he was watching 6 large ('dreadnought') battleships in the bay at Toulon. I have reproduced the first letter in full to give an idea of Revd. Hill's powers of communication:-

Dear Friends,

We are spending part of our holiday at Newlyn, a quaint old-world fishing village in Cornwall, about 10 miles from Land's End. Below us is the harbour full of the boats of the fishing fleet, while far round to the east and south stretches the curve of the beautiful Mount's Bay running out to the Lizard Point 27 miles away, where a brilliant light flashes from the light-house every 3 seconds all night long. Out in the bay rises the grey cone of St. Michael's Mount crowned with a castle and church. Newlyn is a favourite spot for artists, who

¹ East Bridgford, Notts. The story of an English Village. Oxford University Press. 1932

form quite a colony here, and whose pictures of the life and incidents of the fisher folk, or the scenery of the wild Cornish moorland, are well known. Most of the streets here are much too rough or steep for bicycles. Scarlet and pink geraniums, magnolias and many other plants climb over the houses, blue and pink hydrangeas, escalonias, and palms flourish in the mild and balmy climate, though the high ground is bare and treeless from the continual Atlantic winds. Nowhere else in England can one see such magnificent coast scenery. For more than twenty years my home was in this county, and I love it.

We had a beautiful sight yesterday, when the combined squadrons of the Home and Channel fleets steamed into Mount's Bay. We sighted them on the horizon at 6 p.m. and in an hour's time they were brought to anchor in the bay below us. At a signal from the Admiral the anchors were let go and we could hear the rattle of the chains, so near were they to land, as the 48 great battleships and cruisers came to a standstill in nine lines and in beautiful order. At night the fleet was lighted up and signals were flashing from one ship to another, making another very pretty sight. These new sights and experiences add a great deal to the enjoyment of a holiday, but we shall be glad to be at home again on the 12th of August.

Faithfully yours,

A. D. Hill

Whilst Revd. Hill was on these holidays his place was taken by a number of visiting clergy. I wonder what the parishioners made of the Rev. R.J. Welwood from the Church of the Holy Spirit, Brooklyn, New York, and his daughter who resided at the Rectory in August 1909? He seemed to have enjoyed his visit.

As well as the humanity in Revd. Hill's communicative powers there was, also, a large element of didacticism. He saw it his work to educate his parishioners and explain current events to them. His history of East Bridgford was published in the magazines in serial form for all to read. His explanation of the reasons for the outbreak of World War I read like a contemporary textbook. He explained in simple language the problems and possible repercussions of the proposed disestablishment and dis-endowment of the Church in Wales, e.g. how this was the tip of the iceberg and could have financial consequences for the whole of the Church of England.

".....a bill which will divert money from religion to other purposes and inflict a cruel injustice on the unity and organisation of the church....."

Incidentally, this Bill led to a protest by over 1000 people congregating in Bingham town square.

In October 1905, the centenary celebration of the Battle of Trafalgar inspired him to preach a sermon explaining the event and using the theme of 'duty'. *"The popular indifference to religion is only a part of general indifference to all except the necessity of the moment and the amusement of the hour"*. He always attempted to exhort or explain in simple direct terms. Below is an extract from a sermon about one of the major evils of the 19th and 20th centuries: - drink.

"The new love of amusement may be guided into a new brightness of life which is better than the old dullness which led to such evils as drink..... And the tendency to

drink and sink which so complicates the looming problem of unemployment”.

He also explained new laws that would affect his parishioners. The 1911 National Insurance Act was spelt out in the simplest terms and he was keen that his male flock should make use of their fairly recently acquired democratic rights. Before the 1910 Election, he stated that, “.....the possession of the vote is a solemn responsibility of our manhood.”

The fact that he presided over two major restorations of the church building is sound testimony to his dynamism, energy and organizational powers. The first restoration took place in 1902 – 1903 and involved restoring the chancel, tower and porch with a later restoration of the organ chamber and cost £2301 – 2s – 5d. In 1913 the nave, aisles and rehanging of the bells were completed with additional gifts for adornments. The total cost was £4893 – 4s – 0d. The money was raised by collections, fundraising, gifts and subscriptions but was mostly down to Revd. Hill’s continual pressurizing of wealthier parishioners. Contributions were regularly listed in the magazines, which must have engendered some guilt and competition amongst contributors. The restoration was finally paid for in 1917.



St Peters Church in about 1910 between the renovations. St. Peter is back in his niche but the clerestory windows and roof are unchanged.

Revd. Hill was also chair of many village organisations both secular and religious. In the absence of a specific Lord of the Manor type in East Bridgford, the status of the parson may have been slightly elevated here and Revd. Hill’s position in charge of these organisations may have been expected. Nevertheless, he seemed to have stamped his authority on most of them. The major social event of the Parish Tea seemed to have become less important after WW1 but, up until then, it used to attract up to 50% of the villagers. Entertainment ranged from ‘Limelight Exhibitions’ to hand bells, to humorous readings to ‘delightful’ plays. Where are the scripts to such delights as “The backward child” and the “Edelweiss Gather-

ers”??

Revd. Hill was both opinionated and far seeing and far from conservative. He castigated men for not attending the Parish meeting of which he was chairman stating that these meetings were “*usually disregarded except where there is the useless excitement of an election*”. In the 1909 meeting the rector brought forward the resolution that the parish council should take the first steps with regard to the question of a proper water supply to the village. His proposal was turned down but this didn’t prevent Revd. Hill from strongly criticizing the decision and stating his own personal views in the next magazine. Again in 1911 he referred to the fact that East Bridgford was sadly behind the times in such matters as water supply and drainage. And again in 1913 he stated, “*The procession of water carts from the Trent has more than ever been bearing its annual testimony to the inadequacy of the water supply in East Bridgford.*” Finally, in 1927, just before he retired, he had his parting shot. Revd. Hill announced that one Dr. Owen Taylor had successfully bored an artesian well on the hill above his plantation and reached a supply of good water. Revd. Hill then went on to explain his own geological research into the probability of water in East Bridgford and ended with the view that he hoped the research would in future help to “*solve the question of a water supply for this waterless village!*”

He was in control of his own church too. For example, on the subject of church seating he stated that there were no seats held by families as private pews. The custom of private pews had been “*a source of great evil. If a stranger should happen to sit in the place you habitually employ thank God for giving you an opportunity of entertaining strangers and resolve to come a little earlier next time.*” Also, if a member of the congregation offered gifts to the church “*The rector should always be consulted before choosing a gift for the church however small.*” One wonders what incidents had led to the above pronouncements.

The church still had a large responsibility for the school although this was beginning to be eroded in the early 20th century. In 1902 an Act was passed whereby church schools were subsidised from the rates. St. Peter’s School was one such ‘provided’ school. The buildings and general repairs were still financed by the church and the school was managed by a body of parishioners. The school had regular diocesan inspections all of which were reported in some detail in the parish magazine and the Sunday School was held in the school with the headmaster as superintendent. It is interesting to note the number of times the school and Sunday School had to be closed because of outbreaks of various childhood ‘plagues’ like measles and scarletina.

The world beyond East Bridgford touched the local parishioners in a number of ways. The early 20th century was peppered with industrial disputes and mining disasters that were recalled in prayers and subscribed to in collections. For example, the coal strike of 1912 was remembered in prayers and thanks were given for the end of the rail strike in 1911. Prayers were also said for the 350 men and boys who were killed at the Pretoria Mine in Bolton in 1911, for the terrible mining disaster at Senghenydd Pit in S. Wales and for the earthquake victims of Italy and Sicily in 1909.

The Empire was still a major part of Britain's perceived greatness in the early 20th century and this impinged on East Bridgford life through visits of various missionaries together with a variety of lanternslides from such places as Burma, Borneo, New Zealand and the Bush Brotherhood in Queensland. One of the more exotic was in 1913 when the Revd. Wilkinson gave an account of his work among the parish settlers and natives of Adelaide. He spoke about*"the scenery of the Murray River in which he (Revd. Wilkinson) travelled in a strangely constructed little steamer with a deck cabin fitted up as a church."* During the war the Revd. Evans, late archdeacon of Zanzibar gave a lecture on a mission to Central Africa but the promised lantern slides didn't arrive because the trains were so overcrowded with troops.

The reason for the lost slides leads us to the major turning point of the early 20th century, World War One. Revd. Hill gave a beautifully explicit account of the reasons why Britain went to war in the Sept 1914 edition of the magazine. The involvement of the church was a mixture of pulling together, holding united services, rallying of the community to raise money for various causes, general morale raising and comfort giving – and the idea that life had to proceed in some sort of fashion. Muffled peels were sounded if someone died in action and rolls of honour were regularly printed in the church magazine. Revd. Hill issues some rallying cries,

".....one cannot help noticing that they (men at war) feel in some ways the nation at home is not backing them up as they could and should do.....more men, more ammunition, more sacrifice are needed not strikes, drink and indifference if we are to help our brothers in the fight that is going on 60 miles from our shores."

In respect to the men at war Parish Teas were not held at New Year and although the Feast was held the dancing and jollities were not.

The rector's encompassing of secular activities can be seen by his involvement in the war savings association. The object was to give facilities for investment in the national war loan. Certificates bought at 15/6 (78p) would be worth 20/- (£1) five years later. It must be noted that Mrs Hill also played her role in the war effort. She supplied bottles with covers for fruit bottling at 2½d (~1p) each from the Rectory.

As the war proceeded the Rector thanked God for the new found spirit of mutual helpfulness. One poignant example of morale raising is shown in the following description of an event in 1914.

"On a November Sunday evening after the evening service, the clergy and choir headed by the cross followed by the greater part of the congregation proceeded through the village to the open space between Straws and Browns Lane.....The beautiful moonlight, the mild evening air, the reverence of the company gathered there, the well known hymns, the remembrance of the sorrow and loss that has come to our village in this wartime will surely remain in our memories as a witness to the church's mission of repentance and hope in the fight for the future."

During the war no bells were allowed during lighting up time and later in the war the church windows were curtained. Revd. Hill was once again in paternal mood when he encouraged his congregation in the necessity of voluntarily rationing their food, ... "eat 2ozs less bread per day." Also, "We hear of cases in Nottingham lately where women were selling the crusts the children would not eat to dealers for ½d per lb (0.5p/kg) for which they had just paid 3d per lb. What nice bread puddings were wasted there!"

Soon after the war, an Enabling Act was passed to rationalise the organisation of the Church of England. An electoral roll was set up and those members on it would have the right to elect a parochial church council, representatives to the Rural Deanery and Conference of the Diocese and receive reports of the PCC. It was referred to as the 'enfranchisement of the laity'. It is interesting to note that Revd. Hill wrote that this was really the same procedure which St. Peters had followed for many years. They had had a church council for 20 years (inaugurated by him!). It is, also interesting to note that in 1922 in addition to the weekly collection a free will offering envelope scheme was set up whereby church people could send in contributions towards the upkeep of the church to the rector or church warden. No names were published but acknowledgements were made of the totals.

In 1926 Revd. Hill announced that during the following year he wished to resign. He would be 77 and would have completed 50 years in Holy Order. He believed he no longer had the energy to give full vigour and intimate attention, which he believed essential to the parish priest's work. On his retirement in 1927, he and Mrs Hill were presented with an album and suitcase with initials. He supplied photographs of himself and Mrs Hill to his parishioners initially by Christmas Card and then on application from everyone who wanted one. He moved to St. Winnow, Dudswell, Berkhamstead. Another pronouncement of his just before he left most aptly sums up his career in East Bridgford.

"Probably few people realize the amount and variety of work that often falls the lot of the country parson. It means far more than being at one's post and conducting services on a Sunday."

Alfred Benchley Bater (1927 – 1929)

Revd. Hill was a hard act to follow and Alfred Benchley Bater had to do just that. He had an MA from Trinity College, Dublin, was an honorary canon of Norwell and had been Principal of Derby Training College. He was inducted to the parish of East Bridgford in the summer of 1927 and resigned in September 1929. His stay in East Bridgford was not entirely happy.



On his own admission he was “*somewhat shy and retiring*” and felt that the men of the parish, the members of the friendly societies and the men’s club had withheld from the church “*their regular and kindly support.*” He bemoaned the fact that men were missing from the congregation and sometimes not only the men,

“Church bells may peel and organs play and services held but is the day kept holy when the church is nearly empty and women are busy at home and men looking after their gardens or men and women taking walks or cycling or holiday making.”

Those missing from the congregation were not alone in being subject to criticism. He dealt with complaints about the choirboys talking, shifting their books, music, etc. However, he did praise some parishioners (One Doris Hand whose services to East Bridgford church spanned the 20th century was praised for her ‘tasteful treatment of the font.) and he gave fulsome thanks for the beauty of the village. The tenor of most of his letters to the magazine was downbeat and many concern illness and death. One of them was about wills and the necessity of writing one.

There is no doubt that his short time in East Bridgford was dogged by ill health both his own and his family’s. He spent a good deal of time in hospital and convalescing in Bourne-mouth. His wife had problems with her sight and his daughter died in 1928. “*She was married, widowed and buried within the space of 2 years.*”

He was beset by financial problems. Whilst thanking the parishioners for the gift of the Easter Vestry he remarked that he found the maintenance of the rectory “*a burden more heavy to bear than is possible for men.*” And in his final letter he mentioned the fact that the financial situation was exacerbated by the Late Rector (Revd. Hill) taking a £100 per year stipend (presumably as a pension). His unhappiness was underlined by visits from Revd. Hill and an ebullient letter and poem written by the ‘late’ rector.

Another problem of his time in East Bridgford was the introduction of a new prayer book which obviously sparked off some moaning amongst the parishioners. He stated, “*Some church people have already made up their minds before seeing or knowing the next book.*” The essential conservatism of the British people is something which can be seen echoed over the centuries! Canon Bate was also disappointed by the lack of any prayers at the opening of the new Gunthorpe Bridge in 1927 although there was some small compensation for him.... “*The gathering was quietly glad to see him (the Prince of Wales) although the applause was less hearty than one might expect....except the Boys Brigade led by their energetic officer Mr Swain.*”

The Boys Brigade Skegness Camp is a glimpse into the social life of East Bridgford male youth at the time. This was the published programme for Summer 1928.

Reveille	6 – 00 am	Tea	4 – 30
Coffee and biscuits	6 – 15	Supper	9 – 00
Inspection	7 – 10	Prayers and roll call	9 – 30
Breakfast	8 – 00	Lights out	10 – 00
Dinner	12 – 30		

Presumably there were fun and games between times!

The Mothers Union has continued to do stalwart work amongst the women of the parish throughout the 20th century. An event in 1927, which involved the group, reflects the early stages of the 20th century transport revolution! East Bridgford was visited by a Mothers Union group from the parish of Thornhill near Doncaster. They motored to East Bridgford arriving at 2 – 30 pm. After a short service they proceeded to the Hall and were entertained by East Bridgford Mothers Union. After tea they left East Bridgford at 5 – 45 pm and reached Thornhill at about 10-30pm. They probably spent almost 10 hours travelling, - that was a sign of great dedication!

Canon Bater resigned in 1929 with the words that, *"Some members of the Parish have never quite forgiven me for succeeding Mr Hill."* He and Mrs Bater retired to Bournemouth.

Rupert W King 1929 – 1937

Rupert King was inducted in October 1929 having previously been a minister in the parish of Arnold. He had had 31 years experience in the ministry mostly in populous areas and a country parish was new to him. In this first magazine entry he wrote with humility that he could not hope to emulate the culture and learning of his two predecessors. Memories of present day parishioners suggest that he was a good pastoral clergyman with a reputation as a talented footballer in his youth.



One of Revd. King's early reforms was to the parish magazine. He believed it ought to pay its own way. Subscriptions were to be continued but on time, and local matter was to be limited to two pages only. Also, it was to be printed locally which meant that it would arrive from Nottingham by road instead of by railway via Bingham. The result of this was more adverts, less in-depth comments by the rector and much less detail about village activities. There were no longer as many insights into the Rector's personal life and beliefs as in Revd. Hill's time, although there was one description of a holiday in Glasgow in 1931 that reflected something of Revd. King's concerns for industrial Britain. He worried that,

*".....1000's of little children see no grass or foliage and smoke dulls sunlight.....
How one yearns to transfer little children from slums to uplifting influences of God's
work in nature."*

Another regular inclusion into the 'new' magazine was an obituary section, which contained many interesting details about deceased parishioners. Sadly one of the deaths that was recorded was that of Canon Bater on 21st March 1932. Amongst other things he was described as ...*"a religious educationalist and cultivated Christian gentleman"*. Also in 1934, there was a short obituary to Mrs. Du Boulay Hill who died and was buried in St. Peter's churchyard.

However, her husband was still active in the 1930's and paying visits to East Bridgford to preach at services and visit old friends. He had an appendectomy in Dec. 1930 but made a good recovery. His book, 'East Bridgford, Notts. - The story of an English Village' was put on sale in August 1932.... "Normal price 18/- but to friends at East Bridgford 13/- post free."

The 1930s was a time of major national and international problems which were sometimes referred to by the Rector, e.g.

Sept 1931 *there was "a real danger of the £1 note falling to a purchasing power below the present value of 1/-"*

Nov 1931 *"The disarmament is upon us in the near future. Are nations going forward to lasting peace or mutual extinction.....And who can doubt that in another world war civilization itself might finish..."*

July 1935 *"The old world is in a state of anxiety."*

A sad example of the effects of the Depression was a comment in a magazine of 1932 that fewer parents were able to send their sons to the Boys Brigade Camp of that year because of 'bad trade'.

Of more worry to the Rector was the decline in church attendance and the growing competition of other Sunday pursuits: -

"The Sunday programme of many a modern family reveals the motor car sitting in the place of God...." and

"Families are enslaved by the motor car, the gramophone and the wireless..."

Despite all this, on a social level, the ministry of Revd. King appeared to have been a happy one. There were major celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the founding of Southwell Diocese in 1934 and for the coronation of George VI in 1937. There were many bazaars, garden fêtes, parish teas, Sunday School treats, Christmas parties, tea and games in the Rectory for the choir, concerts and the introduction of a children's flower service. In 1931 there were 250 on the church roll. Also, the missionary committee of the PCC seemed fairly active, the main recipient of collections being a medical mission in Yezd in Persia, about which much was written in the magazines. The Mothers' Union was still meeting regularly with a full programme of talks and trips e.g. on 15th July 1930 there was a trip to Lincoln. Return fare was by special omnibus at a cost of 3/6 per person.

Unfortunately at this time St. Peter's church was beset by financial problems. On the plus side in 1936 the church was presented with a Lych Gate by Mr. Arthur Richardson...."to the memory of his mother and wife", but on the negative side there were major expenses concerning repairs on an ancient building, the cost of upkeep of the school building and the running costs of the Rectory.

Between 1929 and 1937 money had to be found for the following: -

In church

Electric lighting (installed by Messrs. J & S Farr with great attention to detail even down to skilled advice for appropriate lamps)

Renewing slate on chancel roof

Repairing the tower roof

Securing the chancel wall

Installing a new organ (cost £579 – 17s – 1d)

In school

Installation of electric light

Installation of new heating apparatus

Installation of water supply



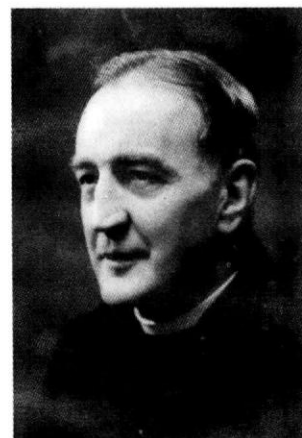
The church interior after the installation of electric lighting.

In October 1936 Revd. King had written that he hoped he would minister in East Bridgford for some years yet. In July 1937 he stated that circumstances compelled him to bring his 'happy ministry' to an end. He was very blunt about the reasons for this. In the year ending December 1936, after all compulsory and unavoidable charges on the Rectory House and Benefice of East Bridgford had been paid, only £297 – 10s – 0d was left of the parish income recovered and due to the Rector. And but for the kindness of generous parishioners, it would have been £197 – 10s – 0d. He found it impossible to live on such an income with 15 rooms, outbuildings and large garden even with minimum expenditure on domestic service. He hadn't sufficient resources in any other directions to continue meeting the deficit. He was offered the parish of Sutton Cum Lound near Retford and the Bishop had advised him to take it. He included in his final magazine the following statement,

"Mrs King and I would gladly have remained to work amongst you in this happy parish."

H. L. O. Rees (Lorimer Rees) (1938 – 1946)

Revd. Lorimer Rees received his degree from Magdalen College in 1929 and was ordained in 1930 in the diocese of London. He was assistant curate in St. Mary's Somerstown in NW London and was also a missionary at Magdalen College mission. He spent 7 years working in a poor district of London, which was characterized by bad housing and poverty. He had the reputation of being a 'sympathetic and capable clergyman'. His induction to St. Peter's was on 27th February 1938.



His magazine style was different from that of his predecessors. Often it was quite philosophical dealing with such issues as, 'just and unjust wars'. Sometimes it was quite harsh and extreme in tone: -

"The Bolsheviks and Nazis take no chances. With the greatest possible care every generation as it comes along is taught the lies of their creed and converted to it as soon as possible. In England we are content to live on our spiritual capital, on tradition inherited from the past instead of by our own exertions providing for present and future."

"Perhaps it is a pity that the fear of hell is out of fashion these days. We seem to overlook the fact that our Lord taught it."

"The trouble with the German people is that as a whole they are so disposed to evil..... Responsible for 5 wars in 80 years. When this war is over there still remains the greater task of converting them."

At other times, though, he introduced a mildly humorous tone into his writing. He described bats in church as entertaining the congregation with "*spirited displays of acrobatics*". He promised to form a Boxing Class for members of the Boys Brigade but "*he also hopes that he hasn't forgotten what little he knows of the noble art*". After the installation of a new heating boiler in church, he stated triumphantly that, "*The Boiler Fund has now died an honourable death. The boiler is paid for.*" And finally, he remarked about 3 new air raid shelters erected for the school, "*They don't look so grim as was expected. I hear that Mr Rhodes has plans of growing yellow geraniums over them or is it nasturtiums?*"

The Revd. Hill visited East Bridgford for the last time in July 1938 and presented the church with a set of hand bells. He died later that year and left a bequest of £100 a year to the church. The interest was to be paid to the Rector to spend on the church as he saw fit. He was buried in the churchyard but, strangely, his death was given only a cursory mention in the magazine with no obituary.

Revd. Rees was responsible for, amongst things, the binding of the earlier editions of the magazines. He was also interested in the embellishment of the church and there were some

pointers to the fact that he was of an anglo-catholic or high-church persuasion. In August 1938 he purchased (out of his discretionary fund) a pair of gilded candlesticks 'for our Lady's Shrine' and a gilded figure of Christ the King to be affixed to the processional Cross. Also, because of a woodworm/dry rot problem underneath the choir stalls, it was necessary to move them to the west end of the church so that the floor could be treated. Revd. Rees believed it would be a good idea to leave them there even after the remedial work in the chancel was completed. His reasons were that the chancel and sanctuary would recover their former dignity because the choir stalls obscured the views of the altar and robbed the sanctuary of space. This 'catholic' idea of separating the congregation from the Holy areas obviously didn't suit East Bridgford parishioners because at a PCC meeting later in 1940:

"It was decided by a large majority of votes that the choir stalls should be put back in their original position. The restoration will be done this month."

The war obviously had a major effect on the ministry of the Church. The blackout meant that eventually evening services were held in the WI Hut, the roll of honour was reintroduced to the magazine, the railings were removed from the Hacker/ Heathcote Vault to supply government demand for metal (according to the Rector they had, "*no artistic merit, the sooner removed the better*") and perhaps most importantly, the Rector himself was 'removed' in Spring 1941 to become a chaplain in the RAF. His wife and family continued to live in the Rectory but, apart from the occasional leave, St. Peter's had, in effect an absentee clergyman until September 1946 when Revd. Rees and his family left to take up a regular chaplaincy in the RAF.

Between 1941 and 1946 the ministry of East Bridgford was initially the responsibility of the Vicar of Shelford and then of the Vicar of Lambley. It would appear that the church had fairly serious financial problems: -

1941 *"We are not quite bankrupt but it is very hard to get enough money to make ends meet."*

March 1942 *"Diminished offerings due to the war have induced the Church Council to appeal for further support to enable church expenses to be met."*

Dec 1942 *"Until the last few years, East Bridgford has always paid its full share (of diocesan expenses) but latterly has been one of the two or three parishes in the Deanery which has failed to do so."*

To make matters worse, the organ needed overhauling and repairing, the heating was defective, paid labour was required to keep the churchyard in order and the magazine was "*in the red.*"

During these difficult times, I suspect it was probably societies like the Mothers' Union which took on the welfare and morale raising aspects of pastoral work normally carried out by the Minister, as well as parish stalwarts like the head of the school, Mr Rhodes. And so it was until January 1947 when East Bridgford welcomed its fifth rector of the 20th Century – Revd. Roger McLean.

Roger Dunbar McLean (1947 – 1963)

Revd. McLean's father was Rector of Epperstone. He had a degree from Cambridge and was,

"a secular lecturer above average. He was lecturer to the army and navy during the war. He coached Boat Clubs in Nottingham. He is young and charming and his fiancé (an ex WREN) whom he marries on 7 January is pleasing and attractive with artistic tastes. She has already had some of her paintings in London Galleries."

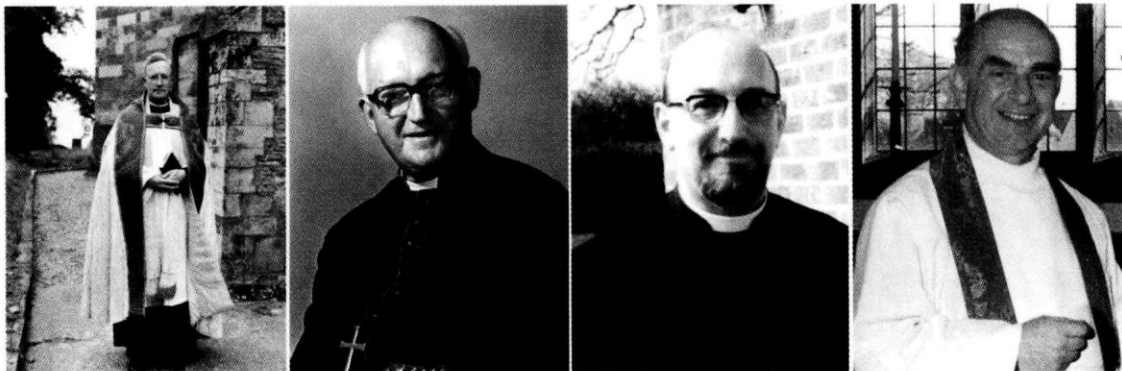


The old Rectory was finally considered too much of a financial burden and was sold at the end of the 1940's. The new rectory building was eventually completed in the early fifties. In the meantime, the Revd. McLean lived in a flat in the Old Manor. He was appointed as Chaplain to RAF Newton in 1948 and had to cope with the slow process of returning to normality after a major war. Finance was still a problem but things were slowly improving and in 1948 the church was redecorated, *"The church is still as light as ever, one of its best features, though now it is warmer looking."*

Presumably because of the cost, the village magazine was discontinued in 1951 although by this time church and village news had dwindled to a single page. The magazine was reinstated in 1968 but in the meantime any East Bridgford news was to be included in the Bingham Deanery magazine.

1950 – 2000

When I began this chapter I stated that I would concentrate on the first half of the century. My intention was to summarize the second half of the century in a few brief paragraphs based on comments of parishioners and my own suppositions and observations. Revd. McLean moved on to another parish in the diocese in 1963 and was succeeded by the Revd. Victor Johnson who died whilst still the incumbent in 1972.



From Left. Rev Victor Johnson, Bishop Markham, Rev John Wilkins and Canon Alan Haydock



Falling support did not just affect attendance at services. Photographs taken in the early 1970s show the church and churchyard in the unkempt state we see here.

One of the measurable aspects of secularisation, i.e. falling church attendance, affected East Bridgford parish at this time. A retired bishop, - Bishop Markham, was given responsibility for the parish between 1972 and 1978 and by all accounts, he was a popular and lively clergyman who saw a revival in the church's fortunes and influence. Revd. John Wilkins who took over East Bridgford parish in 1978 was highly thought of also but sadly became terminally ill and died in 1979. After a brief interregnum, Canon Alan Haydock became Rector in 1980.

I believe there have been a number of developments over the last 50 years which helped East Bridgford Church turn a corner away from the financial problems which hung over it at the end of World War II. The sale of the old Rectory and the building of a smaller more cost effective building was the first positive move. Secondly, the school was taken completely under local authority control so that the church was no longer responsible for the upkeep of the building. Thirdly, the inauguration of salaries for clergymen in the 1970s, although not large, removed the reliance on church collections, rents and the goodwill of parishioners. Fourthly, East Bridgford church was fortunate enough to be left a number of substantial bequests in the latter half of the century and finally, the organizing of formal covenanting campaigns in the 1980s provided the church with a regular income.

In conclusion, I return to my original point at the beginning of this chapter about the major factor for the continuing influence of the church in the community being the dynamism of

the incumbent clergyman. I believe that Canon Haydock is similar to Revd. Hill in many ways, not only in the number of years he has been minister here, but more importantly, in the way he (and by implication the church) plays a major role in both secular and religious aspects of the community. Our present thriving institution is a testimony to him and to all the other clergymen over the past 100 years who, in their various ways, have contributed to St. Peter's Church and its role in the life of the East Bridgford community.



St. Peters Church in the year 1967, sitting both literally and figuratively in the centre of the village. Also in the view are The Hollies (centre right) and the remaining cottages of Cuttle Hill (top centre).

The Methodist Church in East Bridgford

In 1900 there were two Methodist Chapels in East Bridgford: the Primitive Methodists' Chapel at 5 College Street and the Wesleyan Chapel on Main Street. There was also a Sunday School Building next to the Village Hall on Main Street.

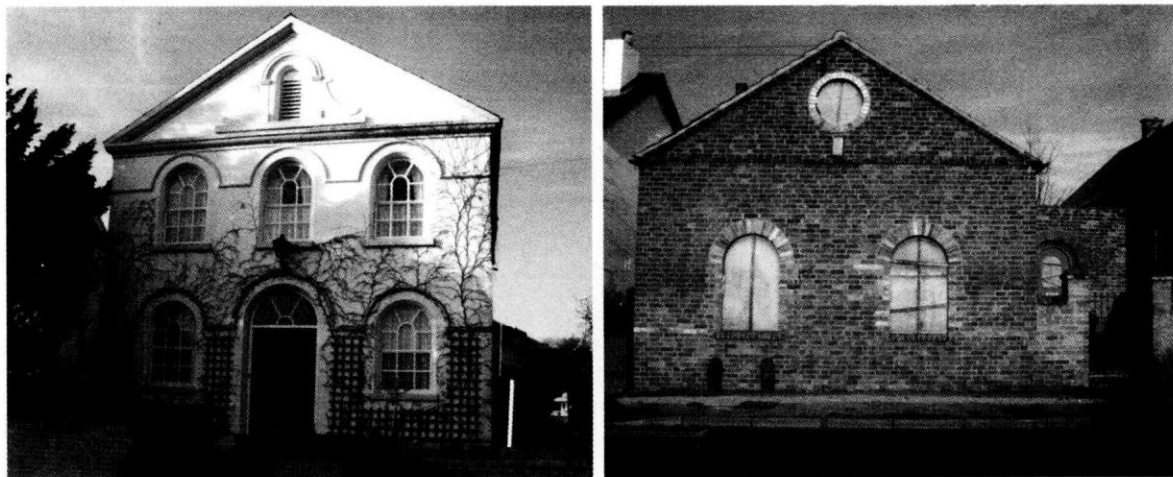
The PMC Chapel had been built in 1836 on the site of an older Chapel donated by William Lockwood, who also sold the congregation the land to build the Sunday School. The split in the congregation arose from differences over organisation and doctrine as the Methodist movement grew rapidly in the 1840s. Initially the Wesleyan Methodists moved into the School Room but rapidly outgrew it.

In 1854 the Wesleyans built their new Chapel on Blagg's stockyard on Main Street – it was 38ft long by 32 ft wide. In 1897 an extension was built to provide short transepts each side of a raised pulpit, with new pews to replace the box pews of the earlier building. The recently acquired single manual organ was housed in the west transept and the east transept led to a vestry and toilet. A sunken boiler house was provided for the boiler, which warmed the building through cast iron pipes.

The Schoolroom was retained for its original use until it was sold to Mrs M. Thompson in 1973, for use as an antique shop. It was subsequently partially converted to a dwelling but in 2000 was unfinished and unoccupied.

The union of the Wesleyans, the Primitive Methodists and the United Free Methodist Churches took place in 1932 and became the Methodist Church. In East Bridgford, the 'Prims' and the Wesleyans were holding joint weeknight meetings but worshipping alternately in the two buildings on Sundays. Eventually the difficult decision had to be taken as to which Chapel to retain.

The Primitive Chapel, which had been the Lockwood's place of family worship since the late 18th century, was sold in 1935 for £135 to Mr R. W. Swan and others for use by the Boys Brigade, which had been formed in East Bridgford in 1921. It was sold again in 1985 and is now a carefully converted dwelling house with the front facade retained and the date stone built into the front wall.



The Primitive Methodist Chapel (left) on College Street, now converted to a dwelling and the old Methodist Sunday School (right) in the course of a protracted conversion (as at the year 2000).

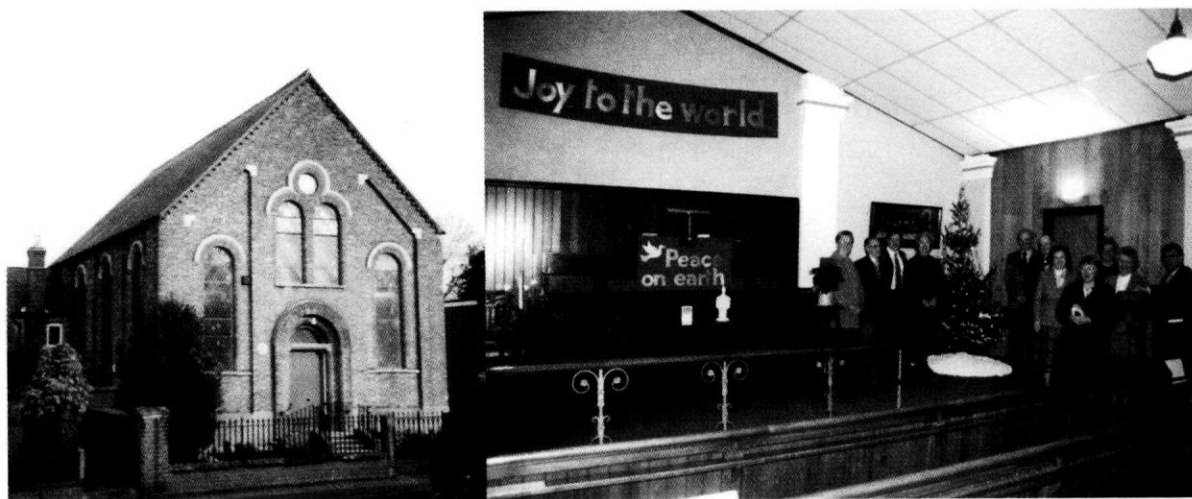
The united Methodists then worshipped in the Main Street Chapel, as part of a Circuit which extended, as it did in 2000, from Bottesford in the east to Cropwell Bishop. The membership remained fairly constant throughout the second half of the century at about 20, lead by Mr David Morris and others, succeeded by David and Cicely Atkins (organist), and Peter and Wendy Stay. New members have replaced those now departed.

No further changes were made to the Chapel until 1971 when a new preachers vestry was formed in the east transept and a suspended ceiling was installed. With the sale of the separate Sunday School in 1973, the young peoples activities were brought into the Chapel and the money raised enabled a level floor to be fitted over the stepped gallery to provide a Sunday School room. Gas fired heating was installed upstairs and in the boiler room and half the pews were removed to make room for youth club activities.

The Luncheon Club, formed in 1973 by Cicely Atkins, met in the Chapel once a week for over 20 years, increasing to twice a week in the mid 1990s and was still active at the end of the century. In 1987 the kitchen was enlarged by the incorporation of the Preacher's toilet.

A bequest in the will of Jack Bullers enabled further improvements to the interior of the Chapel. In 1997 the remainder of the fixed pews were removed and a new insulated suspended ceiling and lighting were installed. New central heating was provided which allowed the pipes between the kitchen and chapel, over which so many Luncheon Club helpers had stepped, to be removed. The porch was enlarged to the extent of the former balcony columns and a glass screen allowed a view of the interior of the Chapel from the street. The whole floor was carpeted and upholstered chairs provide comfortable seating for services as well as versatile use of the interior.

At the end of the century the Chapel accommodated monthly coffee mornings, twice-weekly Luncheon Clubs, Harvest Suppers, sales and meetings of various village groups as well as Sunday morning worship.



The (ex Wesleyan) Methodist Chapel on Main Street. The exterior is as it was in 2000 with the steps relaid and ramps for the less able. The interior is shown in the mid 1990s before the pews were removed. The occasion was the erection of the Christmas decorations.