

This is Your Church



PART I

THE HISTORY OF THE PARISH OF ST. ANDREW

I — IN THE BEGINNING

The Rev. A. A. K. LEGGE
(1870-1878)



The district was formed in 1870 by the Rector of Wigan, Canon Bridgeman. It was legally constituted a Peel District by order in Council dated 24th March, 1871. A Peel District is a sub-division of a parish or parishes. A minister is assigned to give pastoral care and attention to the district and to conduct services in a schoolroom or convenient building. When a church has been provided and consecrated, the Peel District becomes a Parish.

The Rector of Wigan collected £1,500 for the formation of the district of St. Andrew. This was met with an equal sum by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners; and so an endowment of £150 per annum was provided. The original district reached from Springfield Drive (now Springfield Road) to the brook below Ackurst Hall (now just beyond the Wigan boundary on the Marsh Green side). It was composed of a portion of All Saints' Parish and of Marsh Green taken from Pemberton. Here some 800 of the 1,700 people of the newly-formed district lived. The Marsh Green side was separated from the Wigan side by a canal, the river Douglas (constantly overflowing its banks), a railway, and—worst of all—a feeling of hostility, described by a later vicar as being almost parallel to that which existed between the Jews and Samaritans. At Marsh Green a tumble down school had been built in 1815 for sixty children. On the Wigan side there was a small school at Beech Hill for forty children; built for her tenants by Mrs. Thicknesse (whose grandson was later the Rector of Wigan, then the Dean of St. Albans, and now is in retirement). This school had been worked from the Parish Church, the duties being carried out by the Wantage Sisters from 1868. The school was under Government inspection.

To this district in 1870 the Rector of Wigan appointed the first incumbent, the Rev. Alfred A. K. Legge, who held his first service in the schoolroom on July 24th of that year. Apparently Mr. Legge was a shy man, rather sparing of speech and well liked by the people.

Mr. Legge laid down the lines on which, to a great extent, the church work was to continue. In addition to his vocational work he must have had artistic ability, because later he painted and gilded the front of the original altar for the church (not the present one).

Mr. Legge had the Marsh Green School renovated, and together with the Beech Hill School, he used it for services until the new Martland Bridge School, costing £1,044 and holding 180 children, was opened on February 11th, 1872. This latter school was placed where it would serve both the Marsh Green and the Wigan side. Services continued to be held there until 1882 and children were taught there until 1894. It then reverted to Sir Francis Sharp Powell, the original donor of the site (whose statue is in Mesnes Park), who made a handsome donation to the new school. The old school was eventually pulled down, and houses now stand upon its site. In 1875 Mr. Legge built a working men's club in Canal Street. The club failed, so he turned it into the first half of the Canal Street School. The building was doubled in size in 1877 and used as an Infant School until 1894, when Mr. D. McKay relieved the trustees of it and turned it into a shippon! The Beech Hill School has also been replaced by houses. Thus nothing now remains to the parish of the buildings of Mr. Legge's time.

The foundation stone of the Martland Bridge School (in those days spelt Markland Bridge) was laid by Miss Darlington in 1871. According to the local paper of that time the scholars marched to the site from the Beech Hill and Marsh Green Schools, and after the ceremony "were provided with refreshments in the form of buns and dismissed to their homes."

The Martland Bridge School was first open for Divine Service on Sunday, 11th February, 1872. Many Social evenings, Concerts and Congregational Tea Parties were held in this building. All these efforts were to finance the upkeep of this "School-Church," and to clear the debts. Mr. Walter Parratt was the Sunday School Superintendent until 1872 at the same time holding the post of organist and choirmaster of Wigan Parish Church. He then went to Magdalen College Oxford receiving a testimonial from St. Andrew's people, and leaving behind the memory of his good work and drastic methods of dealing with offenders. He was later to become Sir Walter Parratt, professor at the Royal College of Music, Organist of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and Master of the Queen's Music.

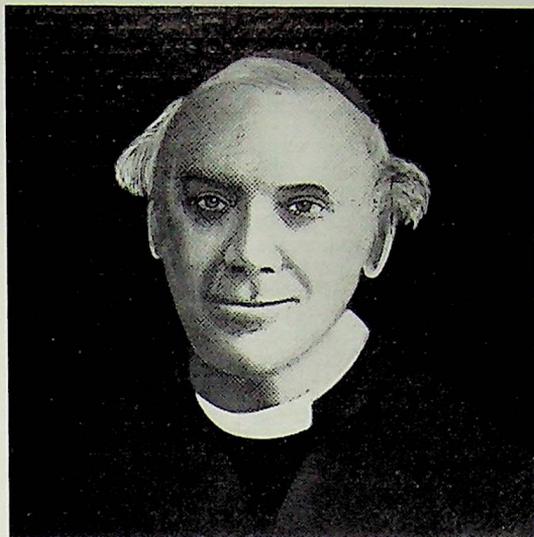
Mr. Legge held a big Bazaar in 1877; it was opened by Lady Lindsay and realised the amazing total of £1,000. It is interesting to compare the articles sold with those of the present day. They included: elegant fender stools, an ebony and gold drawing room chair, a banner screen mounted on a gold stand, an album on easel with steel mountings, tea cosies, anti-macassars, stuffed birds, ornamental baskets, brackets, woollen shawls, lace work, scent bottles, etc., etc., and in addition a stall was provided "for the accommodation of those who wish to refresh the inner man."

In his letter appealing for support of the Bazaar, Mr. Legge mentions that a site had been secured in Woodhouse Lane to cost about £240, on which it was proposed to build a Church. This, when finished, would cost about £8,000 and seat over six hundred people. The Bishop had given his approval and sent a donation. The Rose Bridge and Douglas Bank Coal Company and others had promised to subscribe.

Mr. Legge resigned the living in 1878 although he was then only thirty-nine years of age. He died in 1906 aged sixty-seven. When he left, St. Andrew's had £1,000 in the bank. In addition he had straightened off all debts of the school out of his own pocket.

II — STRONG FOUNDATIONS

The Rev. W. A. WICKHAM
(1878-1916)



The second Vicar of St. Andrew's was the Rev. William Arthur Wickham. Licensed to the district in October, he "read himself in" on 3rd November, 1878. Building was not new to Mr. Wickham; he was in fact fresh from similar work in the district of St. Saviour, in the colliery Parish of Talk-o' the Hill in Staffordshire. There, whilst he had been curate-in-charge, the Foundation Stone of a church as large as St. Andrew's had recently been laid.

Originally the plans for the church provided for a building some 10 feet higher than the present one, much more expensive to build, and on a site nearly opposite the Prince of Wales Inn. Mr. Wickham was neither satisfied with the plans nor the proposed site of the Church. His main objection to the latter was that it would be too near several public houses (he was a teetotaler) and the noisy rolling mills and engine sheds. He also considered the ground insecure, due to mining operations. Accordingly he paid off the architect and engaged in his place Mr. F. W. Hunt, of London, with whom he had worked on a former occasion. The Vicar asked him to reproduce in our parish a Church similar to the one he had built in Derby (St. Anne's), making sundry alterations, one being the addition of an East window, suggested by the west window of Dunblane cathedral. The plans were approved by the Bishop of Chester, and passed, with grants, by the Diocesan Incorporated Church Building Society. Building started on 21st May, 1879. The estimated fees of the original architect who had been dismissed, amounted to £209 4s. 9d., but after fourteen items of correspondence the Vicar talked him down to accepting £100. The architect considered that he had received unjust and unfair treatment and said that he had no wish to prolong correspondence on a subject which to him was "most painful." A quotation from the architect's specifications of the present church is included in another part of this booklet (see page 36).

The total cost was estimated at £5,400. The neighbourhood was flooded with begging circulars which brought in £72! It was then realised that the work was going to be uphill. The vicar, however, optimistically said that he believed in the reputed generosity of the Lancashire people (a bit of applied psychology perhaps?), was sure that the required money was in the pockets of those who were just about to give it, and that it would positively be forthcoming. The begging letters were headed: "A Parish Church for a poor Parish which is without one."

Mentioned in the letter was the population of the district—about 2,000 consisting chiefly of colliers and ironworkers. There was no Church, no Parsonage house, but three schools. In one of these, holding only 150, services had been held for some years. The income was £150 per annum which would be capable of increase when the Church was consecrated. It was also mentioned that the Foundation Stone would be laid in June that year.

The first Parish magazine was introduced in May of the same year (1879). Some statistical figures were included in it; ninety-seven candidates had been confirmed during Mr. Legge's incumbency whilst on April 5th of 1879 another fifty were presented to the Bishop. The Vicar formed a Sunday afternoon guild, open to all who had been confirmed, the subject of instruction being the Holy Communion service.

On the Tuesday after Whitsun (3rd June, 1879) at 3 p.m. the Foundation Stone of the Church was laid by the Rev. Canon Bridgeman, Rector of Wigan; F. S. Powell, Esq., of Horton Hall; Thomas Knowles, Esq., M.P., and Mr. James Hill, collier, of Marsh Green. They represented respectively "Clergy," "Land," "Capital," and "Labour." The Parishioners nobly rose to the occasion; banners and flags were flown from the houses and many turned out to witness the proceedings. The children belonging to the Day and Sunday Schools assembled in the Canal Street School and, headed by the robed choir, more than twenty clergy, and their teachers, marched to the site of the new Church. The Mayor was in attendance and so was the Rev. A. A. K. Legge.

In the cavity of the stone was deposited a bottle containing copies of the local newspapers and a document with a brief history of the rise and progress of the Church of England in St. Andrew's district. The hymn "The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord" was sung. This is still sung outside the Church on our Walking Days, before the procession moves off, thus providing a link with the past. The Foundation Stone lies beneath the centre east window (as it were behind the altar) and may be seen on the outside wall of the Church within the Churchyard. In the evening of the same day a special service was held in All Saints' Parish Church at which the Rev. W. A. Wickham preached.

The work of building (Mr. W. Winnard was the builder and Mr. Varty the clerk of works) progressed quite merrily until September, 1880. It then came to a standstill for want of funds. The shell of the nave and chancel had been roofed in, but, as the committee did not intend spending money upon temporary enclosures, it was decided to let the building remain as it was until further funds became available. £1,000 was needed, but £600 would allow the work of building to proceed.

Nearly 20,000 appeals were now sent out. The state of desperation is realised when one reads the headings on some of these appeals: "In order to save expense in printing you will oblige by returning this circular If you can please help us, and if you can do no more, be so kind as to send us stamps to cover postage Churchmen are earnestly asked not to allow a good work to languish for lack of £600."

To make matters more difficult there was a big coal strike in the Spring of 1881. So the Vicar sent out more begging letters to all parts of England; some of the replies he received make amusing reading. One man wrote that he had no wish to support a church which had as its patron the Rector of Wigan. Another sent 6d. in money, but forgot to register his letter, for which the Vicar had to pay 8d. A Churchwarden wrote that he could do nothing for St. Andrew's because in his parish "the amicable Rector had locked up the church and refuses to give up the key to anyone—even the Churchwardens."

Four items of Church property, in use at the present time, date back to these days. The prayer desk in the chapel was bought for Mr. Legge's use as far back as 1874. The Cross placed over the high altar, the present Bishop's Chair in the Sanctuary (originally a Bishop's throne), and the Chalice and paten (Communion vessels) which had been used in the Martland Bridge School-Church.

Even though the process of building had temporarily been suspended, St. Andrew's was still very much alive. The Bishop of Liverpool paid a visit on All Saints' day 1881. The following is quoted from the "Wigan Observer" of that time: "Evensong was at 7 p.m. and the Church-School was well filled. The service was, as usual, fully choral and very hearty. The Psalms and Gospel Canticles were sung to Gregorian tones and several members of St. Andrew's Band were present to accompany the Hymns and Canticles. The altar was bright with flowers and flanked by pots of ferns. The service was sung by the Vicar and the Revs. H. C. Bull, J. Crofts and R. Walmesley also assisted. The Bishop preached and gave the Benediction from a Throne erected on the south of the Church, which was surmounted by a canopy ten feet high"

It is interesting to note that the Rev. R. Walmesley was in charge of St. Margaret's, Pennington Green, at this time, whilst the Church of St. Elizabeth, Aspull, was in building. He subsequently became Vicar of that Church which was consecrated three months after St. Andrew's. During the 1939-45 war the son of Mr. Walmesley sent food parcels to our present vicar (Rev. E. O. Beard) from his home in Australia.

In March, 1882, the work of building continued. It was decided to proceed with work on the vestries and to put benches in the church instead of chairs. Many donations are recorded in the Magazine from £10 down to 10/- (from a mill girl). In May, Marsh Green (over 700 inhabitants) was separated from St. Andrew's Parish and given back to Pemberton, with the mention of the possibility of a new Parish being formed there.

On Tuesday, 1st August, 1882, the new Church of St. Andrew was consecrated by the Lord Bishop of Liverpool (Dr. Ryle). The service at 3 p.m. was attended by many clergy from the Deanery as well as a large congregation. After the petition to consecrate had been read, the Bishop and Clergy processed round the Church reciting antiphonally the 24th Psalm. After prayers, led by the Bishop, the Sentence of Consecration was read by his Secretary.

It will be realised that because the ornaments and furniture of the Church have been acquired by donations, the building originally would have been considerably more bare than it is today. There was none of the beauty of the rich oak work. The first chancel screen was made of wood and painted in light colours, the Pulpit forming part of the screen being placed similarly to the present one. The altar was oak, painted and gilded—as mentioned before—by the Rev. A. A. K. Legge. The Reredos was of wood painted in tints of white and gold. The present painting of "The Crucifixion" on the Reredos was also on the original one and so were the two side paintings, although they had been added later. The font with its oak cover dates from the time of Consecration, so do the present open benches of pitch-pine and the Bell. At the Consecration Service printed statements were placed on the seats showing that the total costs amounted to £4,500. Outside, the parish wore a holiday appearance, bunting being displayed freely from many of the houses. A band of men volunteers had laboured for weeks in their spare time to put the Churchyard in order.

The first Harvest Festival in the new church was an occasion long to be remembered. At Evensong every seat was filled, a large string band, numbering about 20, accompanied the Hymns and, after the service, played a recital of music by Handel and Mozart.

The Church narrowly escaped disaster six months after its Consecration, for during the great gale on 26th January, 1883, "the west windows of the church met the full force of the wind and were all but blown in. The stone mullions were bending like laths when the danger was first discovered and there was not a minute to be lost." However, one of the men of the parish came to the rescue and made the windows secure. The damage cost £7 to repair and the Vicar had to use the Harvest Festival thankofferings for this instead of giving them to the church expenses fund.

What was the singing like at St. Andrew's? Some said it was good, others thought it pretty bad! The Vicar said at the Annual Tea Party in 1883 "... for myself I steer a middle course. I am free to confess I have heard better singing. But on the other hand, when everything is taken into consideration, one is driven to the conclusion that things might be much worse. We must remember that most of the choir are new to the work, and an indifferent harmonium affords no great support . . . my desire is to have a simple, hearty and congregational service, in which everyone with voice or no voice may do his part."

The first wedding in St. Andrew's Church was on June 30th, 1883, between James Fisher and Margaret Martin; they were presented with a Bible. The first Baptism service was on 6th August, 1882, when Walter Andrews, Lavinia Moss, and John Staveley were baptized.

The Annual Tea Party, held in February, was the social event of the year in those times. It was always fully reported in the local press. On some occasions the Mayor of Wigan attended, and always the vicar gave an annual address. This was always followed by a concert of songs, recitations (humorous and pathetic!), duets, etc.

Parochial organizations were less numerous than they are today, but St. Andrew's had a Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society. Some idea of the excitement of the proceedings can be gathered from the note in February, 1883, that "during the past month papers have been read on 'The Wonders of Pond Life,' 'The Wonders of the Deep,' Dr. Darwin's book on Earth Worms, and one evening was devoted to the Microscope." This Society joined with the Excursion Club for a day's outing. Where to? Blackpool, of course! When the outing was under discussion it was noted that "If money could be obtained, it would perhaps be possible to take the choirboys; that is, supposing some scheme for securing greater regularity at both the weekly practices could be hit upon." Fortunately, the choir went!

In 1883 Mr. Wickham expressed concern about the outstanding debt of £500. Over the previous fifteen years £9,000 had been raised and he thought this a considerable achievement for a little "humble parish with unmade streets, muddy pavements, indifferent lighting, and one brave police-officer whom we share with our neighbours."

In December, 1884, a very successful Choirs' Festival was held in the Church. These Choirs came from all parts of the Deanery combining under their conductor Mr. Alexander. Most of their clergy came with them. There was a procession round the aisles to the hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers." The strings accompanied throughout the service with the brass instruments playing in the Glorias, etc.

The Church was completely cleared of debt by February, 1886. The final cost included building, furnishing and heating.

The money raised comes under four heads:

- (a) From parishioners, £1,765. This includes one gift of £500, one of £250, five of £100 or over and many of £60, £50, £40, etc. Parish entertainments raised £20 11s. 8½d.
- (b) From Wigan and District, £448. This includes one gift of £130 and others of £70, £45, £30, £25, £20, etc.
- (c) From outsiders came £1,473. This includes grants from various societies of £300, £250, £183 and other large sums collected by friends.
- (d) From mixed or uncertain sources £1,243, including £750 from a bazaar, £183 collected by Mr. Legge, bank interest £167.

Reading the above statement of accounts makes one realise how times have changed. Nowadays there would be very few big subscriptions, the Church would practically rely on the small contributions of the many, given regularly.

The next addition to the Church was the Organ. This was bought in 1888, and was opened on January 10th by Mr. Wilkinson (the organ builder) who played a recital. The newly-appointed organist, Mr. Robinson (formerly of Dalton Parish Church), played for the service. Everyone was delighted with the instrument, the comment of one musical clergyman being " Why, it's like a cathedral organ ! "

It had been built by Messrs. Wilkinson and Sons of Kendal. This firm originally specified for an organ of three manuals (i.e., keyboards) and pedals but the church could not afford the £500 required. It was decided that as much as possible of the original specification be done for £350 ; the completion being indefinitely deferred. Accordingly the three manuals were put in but only two were useable ; holes were left for the stops which would be included in the completed organ. In the meantime it was decided to add another stop (or set of pipes) costing £35. The pipes of this stop are placed at the east end of the south nave, over the Children's Corner. They are of German make, zinc and silver-plated. It would seem that this stop was added more because of the impressive appearance of the pipes than for the sound they give. It is the least valuable stop on the organ ! In fact the original organ has never been completed. It remained with its third manual locked, and the stop-holes empty until the original was removed at the time of the rebuild with electric action in 1960. The Church had always required the money for other purposes, consequently because the organ was in working order further attention was deferred. With the increased financial support from the Church Fund, the P.C.C. took the bold step of complete modernisation in 1960 costing £1,700. It was found to be in excellent condition when the builders came to estimate for its re-build. The pipes are of finest quality spotted metal, the pipework is good and being placed high (the height of the chancel screen), the sound resonates round the lofty building in a similar way to that of a cathedral organ, only, of course on a smaller scale. This produces the fine tone heard at St. Andrew's.

Additions were made to the furniture and ornaments of the Church year by year. In 1889 a set of paintings was acquired for the front of the original chancel screen, and for Christmas of the same year the oak panelling behind the font was presented to the Church as a memorial (the first memorial to be placed in the Church). Soon after this the capitals of the stone-pillars were carved and paid for by one of the churchmen as a thankoffering. The following year the side panels for the Reredos were purchased (paintings of the calling and martyrdom of St. Andrew). In June, 1891, the church obtained two new banners, bringing the total up to three. One banner (now termed the " Foundation " banner) had been given at the Consecration of the church, of the other two the " Sacrament " banner was a gift, whilst the " St. Andrew's " banner (carried on two large poles) was bought by the church. These banners have subsequently been restored or remade. St. Andrew's is fortunate in having a parishioner who is skilful in this craft. Later in 1891 the new Pulpit—made of solid oak—was bought by the congregation.

June 21st, 1892, was a happy occasion for the Vicar, the Rev. W. A. Wickham, for it was on this day that his marriage to Miss Clara Peck took place. They spent their honeymoon in Switzerland.

Another big strike occurred in the Autumn of 1893. St. Andrew's soup kitchen catered for meals for 350 children ; one of the parishioners possesses a photograph of the Vicar serving soup to the children. The Primitive Methodists also co-operated over the soup distribution. Each needy family received bread, tea and potatoes weekly, paid for from a central fund. The strike lasted sixteen weeks ; at its conclusion a special service of Thanksgiving was held in church.

In 1894 the choir stalls were presented by the congregation in memory of a respected parishioner who lost his life in an accident at Douglas Bank Colliery. The Credence table was bought in the same year. All this church furniture is of solid oak, beautifully carved.

June 6th, 1894, was a particularly important day for the Parish as the Foundation Stone of the Schools was laid. Four representative people were responsible, namely; the Bishop for the clergy, Sir F. S. Powell for the subscribers, Mr. Bryham for the managers, and Mr. John Heathcote for the parents. The Sunday School scholars and members of the congregation paraded the main streets of the parish with the banner of the school, and then assembled in Church. The cost of the whole was to be £2,700 towards which the managers had in hand promises of £1,400. After the stone-laying ceremony the managers made the bold decision of building a separate Infants' School. Up to then it had been their intention that the Mixed School should accommodate the Infants also. Now the Mixed School would be available for 276 children and the Infants for 177; the total cost was £3,207.

The schools were opened on November 28th, 1894. A service was held in Church at which the preacher was the Dean of Chester. Afterwards the children and congregation processed to the schools, where the door was unlocked by the Archdeacon of Liverpool. In the parish magazine the vicar said that this was indeed a red letter day in the history of the parish, the greatest day since the Consecration of the Church. In the evening a tea party was held at which six hundred people sat down; they even sat on the window ledges—to the alarm of the managers! Colonel Blundell in his speech described the schools as the finest that he had entered in the district. Two clocks were given by Mr. Ralph, the architect.

On the 25th of November, 1895, the death occurred of Canon Bridgeman, the Rector of Wigan. He was founder of St. Andrew's district and had always been ready to help with money and advice, so the Vicar—even though concerned about an outstanding debt of £911 at that time—decided that an extra effort must be made to provide a special memorial to him. The Church gates, together with the adjacent wall, were bought to his memory. A stone is set in the gate pillar inscribed:

“G.T.O.B. 06: Nov. 1895 etat: 72 R.I.P.”

The gates and wall were dedicated on 13th June, 1896. The gates were declared open by Colonel Harrington and the dedication stone was placed by Mrs. Wickham on behalf of Mrs. Turner-Greene. Immediately after this service the “Dedication” stone was placed in the Vicarage (which at that time was rapidly being built, the Vicar had been collecting for it since 1882). This stone is placed above the Vicarage door and serves to mark the special character of the house as a place dedicated to the use of God's minister in the parish.

By the beginning of the following year the Vicarage was completed. The Vicar and his wife received there 55 church-workers and officials to a “house warming” ceremony. The Vicar said of the Vicarage: “It is substantial, convenient, wind swept and sunny, its position is in every way admirable.” The total cost of the Vicarage was £2,732 (for the information of readers who belong to the building trade it took 798½ hours at 10d. an hour!)

Parish organizations began to take shape about this time. Mothers' meetings were conducted by Mrs. Bryham, whilst Mrs. Wickham held classes for younger women—pit-lasses, mill-hands and others. Miss Rogers held a class for girls 14-18 years of age, the Band of Hope was re-formed and so was the Communicants Guild. The Choir used to collect for their own trip; in 1898 they raised £8 14s. 9d. On the general holiday they assembled on the station at 6 a.m. in readiness for the train to Llandudno. Having arrived they spent the day on hired tricycles and bicycles, although some climbed Great Orme. At dinner they had four potatoes each! For tea they ate a whole currant loaf as well as bread and butter! The St. Andrew's Men's Society was formed in 1899.

The parish was growing considerably in size and in 1901 it became necessary to add two more classrooms to the Mixed School bringing its accommodation up to 586. Shortly afterwards an extra classroom had to be built for the Infants' department. The addition of a marching-room and a master's room completed the original plan for the school.

The heating of the Church building was a constant worry (as indeed it is today). One morning as the Vicar and his warden sat down to discuss the situation an envelope was handed in at the door containing an anonymous cheque for £100 towards the cost of the heating! So the old apparatus, weighing 4 tons, was removed shortly afterwards and replaced by new. In 1904 electric lighting replaced the old gaslight.

By this time other items of Church furniture had been acquired; the Litany desk in memory of the first Church caretaker, the Communion Rails and the Chancel screen in memory of a former warden, and the Bishop's desk. The panelling on the north wall of the sanctuary was presented by the Congregation in memory of Mrs. Turner-Greene who had been a great friend of the Church. As well as many handsome three figure donations, she had recently conveyed to the trustees the land between the Vicarage and the school. With the acquisition of the Church House in 1908, the facilities of the Church for providing spiritual, educational, and social leadership in the district were almost complete, conveniently and compactly placed on one area of land. A little while after, the building of the Gymnasium added to these facilities. The Church House was originally built as a Liberal Club in 1899. The Club broke up and the building was offered to the Vicar. It was conveyed to the Liverpool Diocesan Finance Association on the agreement that a Boys' Club should be started, using the building as its centre. In addition a Men's Club was also inaugurated. Both flourished well, the latter having remained open ever since, apart from periods of suspended animation during the two wars when the men were on active service.

On Friday, 2nd February, 1905, in spite of a very stormy day when rain and hail did their worst, the Bishop, with the Rector of Wigan and the Vicar of St. Andrew's, had a two hour "perambulation" of the parish. The growth of the Beech Hill district was considered and the Bishop expressed his firm conviction that a site ought to be obtained at once for a Mission Room, with a long term view for a Church and separate parish in this area. The Bishop and the Rector donated towards the new mission and the parish found £250. This was the nucleus of St. Anne's Parish.

During this time the furnishings of the Church continued to grow. In the same year that the Church House was acquired (1908), the Reredos was presented by the congregation to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Consecration of the Church. The Lectern was bought the following year and then the Churchwardens' staves, which were first used for the Consecration of the Liverpool Cathedral Lady Chapel. The two mosaics, by the side of the Pulpit and Lectern respectively, were presented in 1911 to commemorate the Dedication Festival. Other valuable additions to the Church furniture presented about this time include: the oak panelling in the chancel within and just outside the Pulpit and Lectern; and the Marble paving in the Chancel and round the Font. The lettering was carved on the stone on which the Lectern is placed.

In July, 1916, the Rev. W. A. Wickham accepted the living of the small Rectory of Ampton near Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk. In his final letter to the parishioners Mr. Wickham said that he had come to St. Andrew's with his eyes open to the difficulties of uphill work, but he had come without any misgiving. "I realised that if I did come here I must nail my flag to the mast for at least twelve years. Thirty-eight pleasant years have run their rapid course, and now another door has been opened for me, where the work will be better suited to my failing powers. So now I bid you Farewell."

The Rev. J. M. Buckmaster, M.A., was appointed in succession to Mr. Wickham. Before he left, the latter spoke highly of his successor, explaining to the congregation that Mr. Buckmaster, who was the eldest son of the Vicar of All Saints', Hindley, had been for five years assistant curate of the Parish Church of St. Elphin, Warrington, where he had done excellent work under the Rector. Mr. Wickham asked the people of St. Andrew's to give their new Vicar a "heartening" welcome, because he had heard enough about them.

There need have been no anxiety on this score. Not only did St. Andrew's give Mr. Buckmaster a "heartening" welcome, but they also gave their former Vicar a warm and appreciative "send off." Mr. Wickham received gifts not only from parishioners but also from Roman Catholics, Nonconformists and people of varying political opinions. For the Farewell the schoolroom was crowded from end to end; many clergy were in attendance, amongst whom was the Vicar-designate, Rev. J. M. Buckmaster.

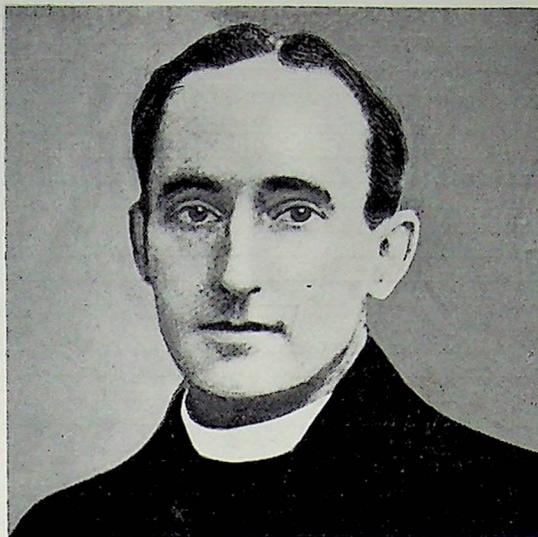
At this gathering it was announced that stained-glass was to be put in the east window as a memento to the pioneer work of Mr. Wickham in the parish. Mr. Squire Haworth, who had been the Headmaster of the School since 1882, said that he had been associated with the Vicar for thirty-four years of the thirty-eight of his incumbency. Continuing his appreciation, he said that when he came to the parish there was none of the beautiful ornamentation now to be seen in the Church, there was no organ to lead the singing, the Vicar played his double bass fiddle at one side of the chancel whilst he (Mr. Haworth) stood on the other side with his fiddle, and in this way the musical accompaniment of the services had been conducted. But for Mr. Wickham's energy there would not have been Church Schools in either St. Andrew's or St. George's parishes, both were standing memorials to his ceaseless energy on behalf of education in Wigan. Presentations were then made to Mr. Wickham and his family. He left in his sixty-eighth year. He had recently been ill, and with his failing sight, he felt that St. Andrew's was not a parish in which to "rest." Soon after he had settled in his new parish he heard that his son had been killed in action and had been awarded the Military Cross for bravery.

Twelve years later Mr. Wickham died at Ampton Rectory, the interment being at Ampton. It is noteworthy that he passed away on the eve of the 50th Anniversary of the laying of the Foundation Stone at St. Andrew's Church. As a final tribute to this great vicar nothing could be more fitting than to quote from Mr. Buckmaster's address delivered at the memorial service to their late Vicar, attended by the people of this parish. Mr. Buckmaster said ". . . if it had not been for Mr. Wickham's leadership, inspiration, his mind behind everything, we would not have had a church like this today. It was nearly four years after Mr. Wickham came that the Church was open for worship. The work had to stop for lack of funds and Mr. Wickham worked tremendously hard to get money, not only in Wigan, but throughout the length and breadth of the land. He had a great deal to put up with, he was attacked most scurrilously in the local press for his alleged 'high churchmanship.' But he had a sense of humour, he cut out these articles and preserved them. He never desired honours and did not seek them, but if any member of the Church deserved them William Arthur Wickham did. His name will always be connected with this church by all who have known of him. The church speaks for him."

There was little left to be done in the actual furnishing of the Church when Mr. Wickham left, apart from the addition of a side chapel. This was indeed a big item, undertaken and completed in Mr. Buckmaster's time. If Mr. Wickham built the Church in a material sense (i.e., the building and other property), Mr. Buckmaster certainly built up the spiritual and social life of the parish to a standard which it had never reached before.

III — OTHER FOUNDATION

The Rev. J. M. BUCKMASTER
(1917-1934)



The Rev. John Meredith Buckmaster, M.A., was instituted on the 17th January, 1917. In the spring of that year he formed the Women's Fellowship; the aim of this organization was threefold—religious, social and educational. This Fellowship still continues in direct succession to its formation in 1917. During the summer of that year a series of outdoor services were held after Evensong each Sunday, the services were intended as intercessions for men serving in the Forces. Services were held in Ingram Street, Canal Street, Martland Mill Bridge, Beech Hill Lane and Mort Street. A Children's Corner was formed in the Church at the end of the north aisle, the altar in the present Children's Corner being presented for use there together with the prayer desk and carpet. Later the other ornaments used here were given, including the crucifix, candlesticks and picture.

Mr. Buckmaster encouraged the support of Missions; he formed a study circle which met to study the work of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa. One of the aims of this circle was to raise £100 per annum for missionary work; S.P.G. boxes were called in twice a year instead of annually.

In October, 1917, a Sunday School Missionary Campaign took place. A missionary play was performed for two nights by the Sunday School. In his efforts to re-vitalise the Sunday School the Vicar held a Teachers' Training Week and re-arranged the school into four departments: Bible Class; Upper School; Middle School; Junior School.

The Vicar urged that the centre of fellowship should be the Church services, especially the Holy Communion, which is our Lord's own service. In 1918 Mr. Buckmaster started the "Family Eucharist" which took place on the third Sunday of each month. This has since grown into what is often called the "Parish Communion." An impressive Confirmation was held that year, including ninety-four candidates from our own parish, forty-two from St. Michael's and two from St. Mary's, Ince.

Servers were first introduced at the Holy Communion service about this time. They are Servants of the Sanctuary and assist the priest as far as it is possible for an unordained person to do so. They hand the elements to the celebrant and assist with the ablutions at the end of the service. Mr. Buckmaster said that his vocation for the Ministry arose from

being a server for his father at All Saints', Hindley. He hoped this might happen at St. Andrew's and offered to teach Latin or Greek without fees if anyone wished to go forward and offer himself for the Ministry of the Church.

On 11th February, 1918, a Roll of Honour made of oak was unveiled in the Men's Club. The chair was taken by ex-mayor Councillor J. P'Anson Cartwright. This provided a permanent record of those members who served during the 1914-18 war. Another unveiling and dedication took place on Tuesday, October 15th. This was the east window of the Church, commemorating the thirty-eight years' work of the Rev. W. A. Wickham (already referred to), and the circular window at the top to the memory of his son Lieutenant W. T. B. Wickham, killed in action. Mr. and Mrs. Wickham were present in Church during the ceremony, which was performed by the Bishop of Liverpool.

Other social organizations were formed, notably the Church Lads' Brigade, which held its first camp in the Summer of 1918. An "After-care" committee was established in the Parish to look after the interests of boys and girls from leaving school until they were eighteen. St. Andrew's team came up well in the results of the After-Care Football League.

One of the biggest social successes of this period was the launching of St. Andrew's Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society. Its first performance took place in Easter week 1919, when the thirty performers, under their musical director Mr. E. Jones, presented "A Royal Jester." The event was a great success financially, as well as being a "good show." The proceeds were given to school funds. The Vicar took a prominent part in these productions and they continued for a number of years. The production of "Don Quixote" gained a brilliant report in a local paper, headed "Local dramatic society's fine performances." The report filled two long columns ending with "this Society has gained an enviable reputation." A small orchestra performed the accompaniment. Performances during the next few years included "H.M.S. Pinafore," "Yeomen of the Guard," "Iolanthe," and "The Mikado." Mr. Jones directed the talents of his Operatic group towards Oratorio between stage productions; in Church they gave performances of Stainer's "Crucifixion" and Handel's "Messiah."

In 1919 the "Field Treat" and "Walking Day" were again revived after lapsing during the war. The following is from the parish magazine ". . . the most pleasing part of all was the way in which everyone turned out for the walk round the parish on the Sunday. There were about 850 altogether, and it was splendid to see such a large body of men at the back of the procession. The route taken was to Martland Mill Bridge, then up Beech Hill Lane and Avenue, on to Gidlow Lane, and then back by Park Road. We ended with a short service in Church at which the band played for the hymns and the children sang 'The Dream of Paradise.'" The same year the Vicar started an appeal for £1,000 to complete the Church by the addition of a side chapel. It will be remembered how Mr. Wickham had to overcome the difficulties presented by strikes, for they had impeded the flow of contributions. Mr. Buckmaster was faced with a similar shock when the news came out that Douglas Bank Colliery was to close down. Ever since the Church was built this Colliery had supplied free coal for its use. It was difficult for its employees to find other work. The Vicar, describing the closure as a "great blow to the parish and district," started a fund to supply clogs and stockings for those who were in need.

In spite of these difficulties, the War Memorial Chapel of St. George was opened on the eve of St. Andrew 1921 (November 29th). The Bishop of Liverpool performed the ceremony and preached. A partition was kept up until the opening and many people had little idea as to what the Chapel would look like. At the opening service the Church, porch, and vestries were packed to capacity. Some people failed to gain admission. The first part of the service was of a memorial character and included the hymn "For all the saints," prayers, the anthem "What are these that are arrayed in white robes" and a lesson. Then during Psalm 24 the

Choir and Bishop processed to the new Chapel. Here the "Veni Creator" (Come Holy Ghost) was sung kneeling and the Bishop then dedicated and blessed the Chapel and altar. The sounding of the "Last Post" by the buglers and drummers at the back of the church brought this part of the service to a close. During the hymn "We love the place, O God," the procession returned from the chapel. After the sermon by the Lord Bishop, the hymn "Mine eyes have seen the glory" was sung. This memorable service concluded with the Blessing and Reveille. The following day (St. Andrew's day) there were 80 communicants in the new Chapel. Gradually gifts were presented towards its furnishing, including oak panelling, Communion rails, Cross and candlesticks and the Reredos. The altar had already been installed for the Dedication, presented as a thank offering for the safe return from the war of five sons and one daughter.

After two experimental meetings the St. Andrew's Branch of the Church of England Men's Society was formally established on Sunday, 3rd February, 1924, when the Bishop came to admit thirty-one members at a special service. The Bishop shook hands with each member and presented them with their badges of membership. The badge helps members to realise that they belong to a world wide society of men communicants of the Church of England. The Vicar said that the Church could never do its work without men who are loyal to it and to one another and are regular communicants. He said that no other society in the Church of England binds men together into so great a brotherhood. The first annual meeting of the C.E.M.S. was held that year, the officers were elected and, after careful consideration, rules adopted. In August the men had an outing to Orrell. The following account is from the magazine: "Mr. Cox kindly met us and took us a walk round the higher ground of Billinge. We inspected the open coal seam and had a most interesting talk from Mr. Cox on the formation of coal and rock. An excellent tea was provided at Orrell Red Triangle Club. We ended the day with a game of bowls in which the Warden's team beat the Vicar's." In the Spring of the following year the C.E.M.S. undertook a systematic visiting of the parish. The Vicar said that this was one of the best pieces of work done during the past eight years. In 1931 the C.E.M.S. was presented with its banner by one of the members; it is now always used in processions. As well as many extremely interesting monthly meetings including discussions and special speakers, the C.E.M.S. has done a great amount of practical work in the parish. In 1954 some members concreted the yard in front of the Gymnasium, and recently, together with other men of the parish renovated and repaired the ceiling in the Church House. Their latest work has been the redecorating of the Memorial Chapel, most beautifully and carefully performed. As well as being skilled, these jobs require manual labour, the men showed abundant goodwill with their voluntary work. In 1962 Mr. Frank Colwell, the senior member of the St. Andrew's branch, was made an honorary life member.

The Brownie pack at St. Andrew's was registered in 1927, consisting of about a dozen very poor children who were provided with uniforms from the funds. They had picnics and a Christmas party—when each child took home a coloured bag containing an apple, an orange, a few nuts and sweets. The Brownies held Sales of Work (the proceeds of which went towards Church funds) and have always provided a stall at Church Bazaars. During the war they held efforts and raised money for the purchase of woollen blankets and mittens, towards "Red Cross" and "Aid to Russia" funds. They have presented evenings of entertainment including "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," "Cherry's Mistake," and "Hansel and Gretel." Most of the Brownies "Fly up" into Guides having gained their first class badge before eleven years of age and thereby attain their "wings." The pack averages thirty Brownies yearly. By 1962 upwards of 1,100 children will have passed through the hands of Brown Owl, Mrs. D. Leak. She has been connected with St. Andrew's Brownies ever since their inception. In 1957 she was decorated with a ribbon for long service after a special service held at Westminster Abbey to the memory of Lord Baden Powell. The birthday of Lady Baden Powell is "Thinking Day" for the Girl Guide Movement when they remember Guides and Brownies throughout the world.

In June of 1927 Mrs. Dwelly, the wife of the first Dean of Liverpool, came to speak to a large gathering of Mothers in the Church House. On the 22nd of that month at a special service, eighty mothers were admitted to the Mothers' Union, and received their cards at the altar rail, fifteen more were admitted the following month. On the actual day of these first admissions a special service was being held in Westminster Abbey to celebrate the Jubilee (50th anniversary) of the Mothers' Union. The following year the M.U. paid a visit to London. They were taken round the House of Commons and the Mary Sumner House ; they also visited Westminster Abbey. The Mothers' Union at St. Andrew's remains, as always, a very active branch. In addition to their monthly meetings they join annually with the other branches of M.U. in the Deanery to commemorate the Feast of the Annunciation or "Lady Day" (March 25th). In 1951 they acquired a banner. This makes a valuable addition to their representation in the Walking day and eve of St. Andrew processions. Nowadays the Mothers' Union has a planned syllabus of meetings. There are quite different from their first meetings, which consisted of weekly knitting sessions in the Vestry.

In 1927, the date of the formation of the above organizations, all the parochial meetings seem to have been very much alive. The Boys' Club held billiards matches, bowling handicaps, football matches and summer picnic outings ; the Scout troop and Guide company were establishing themselves.

The Girls' Friendly Society held its first admission service in the Chapel on 19th February, 1926. Twenty girls were admitted. Weekly meetings were held ; amongst other activities they presented two plays and took part in a big Rally in the town during their first year. In 1929 they attended the Annual London Rally, Display and Prizegiving in the Albert Hall. In 1931 they entered the Diocesan Competitions in both sections. These sections were singing and dancing, for which they were trained by Miss Churchill (the dancing instructress), and Mr. H. Pilling the organist and choirmaster of the Church. In July of the same year, they went to London and won a dancing competition open to Branches throughout England. The Vicar's sister, Miss Buckmaster, was in charge of the G.F.S. at this time and under her it prospered. In one year they were able to give £130 to the S.P.G., and purchase their own Banner made by the Liverpool School of Embroidery. Miss Benfold eventually became leader and continued the good work until the war years. Then it was disbanded. Although there is no longer a branch in the parish, in its day the G.F.S. seems to have been one of the most lively organizations of the Church.

The Church Lads' Brigade was revived in 1932. During the war it had been a purely military body, uniforms were khaki and rifles were used for drilling purposes. Now it was re-formed as an organization of Church Lads, to train them by fellowship and discipline in the Christian way of life. In September, 1936, the C.L.B. was placed under the command of Mr. J. H. Houghton. It began to grow in strength, and by 1937 was the largest company in the area with an outstanding Bugle Band. In 1935 it was the only company with second grade marching in the north of England. A Training Corps was formed in 1937 and became an immediate success. The company attended the annual Battalion camp and on many occasions took all the sports prizes. By the outbreak of the war in 1939 the strength of our C.L.B. was one hundred and two. One lad was lost during the war (Sgt. W. Woodcock), and a Roll of Honour, placed in the Children's Corner, commemorates members who served their country. A re-union was held after the war and the Company re-formed. Captain J. H. Houghton retained command until 1954 when he was appointed Battalion Adjutant. Captain F. Sheldon then took over the command and has maintained the tradition ever since. The C.L.B. colour was presented in 1945 by Mr. F. King in memory of his mother Ann King. It was dedicated by the Vicar (Rev. G. Hansford) at a service attended by all the Battalion. In 1953 the Honorary Members' Guild of the C.L.B. was formed, its main objects being to help raise funds and generally assist the company in its efforts. It has proved a valuable asset. Apart from arranging Christmas parties, trips to shows, and parents' evenings, this Guild presented a memorial donation to the widow of the late Mr. W. Jackson. In July, 1958, two members of

the Brigade, C.S.B. E. Disley and Corporal C. Glover were in a party of twelve from the Wigan Battalion who went to London for a Display at the Royal Albert Hall, in which eleven English and three overseas battalions took part.

A Church Girls' Brigade Company was formed in 1943 at St. Andrew's, it flourished very well for some years, under the able leadership of Mrs. J. Moss and Mrs. C. Hutchings, but does not now exist.

At the time that these organizations were flourishing St. Anne's Mission Hall was opened. The Sunday School had already been formed and took part in the procession. The large banner was made by St. Andrew's parishioners, the money for its purchase having been raised by the Sunday School. Members of the M.U. bought bricks, and organized a collection from the women of the parish to buy a chalice (known as the "Anne" chalice). This chalice is still in use at St. Anne's Church. 300 chairs, the altar and other ornaments, were bought for the use of the Mission Hall by parishioners. The Bishop came to dedicate the Hall on 26th May, 1931. The Vicar wrote in the parish magazine :

" Our choir with the Bishop walked in procession from the Church to St. Anne's Hall, which was packed to capacity. The service was a hearty one. We have now got a centre for Church life in the new district. Many years ago there was a little schoolroom near Martland Mill Bridge. No one could then have seen how the parish would grow and develop. So perhaps in fifty years time there may be seen as a result of what has taken place, a church, vicarage and all the organizations for a parish. For the time being St. Anne's still remains part of St. Andrew's parish. We say to all who work at St. Anne's ' We wish you luck in the name of the Lord.' "

In October, 1931, St. Andrew's held a Bazaar, one of the aims being to help clear the debt on St. Anne's Hall. All the organizations worked with a fine spirit throughout the summer towards this effort. The Bazaar lasted three days and was opened by Major J. S. A. Walker on the first day, with the Mayor as chairman ; Dr. F. M. Angior was the opener on the second day with J. A. Parkinson, M.P., in the chair ; the final day was opened by the Rector, the Rev. Canon C. C. Thicknesse. He, it will be remembered, is the grandson of Mrs. Thicknesse, who built the first school in Beech Hill Lane. The Bazaar realised £601 6s. 0d. and all the profits were put towards the Mission Hall expenditure. In the Bazaar booklet the Vicar summarised the history of the parish. A similar history had been written for the last big Bazaar prior to this (actually a " Sale of Work " in 1911 when Mr. Wickham was the Vicar!) The only other history to have been written before that was placed in a glass container in the cavity of the Foundation Stone beneath the Church !

The Rev. E. W. Vickery, who had been curate of St. Andrew's since 1929, had the supervision of St. Anne's Mission at this time. He had not had an easy first curacy. St. Anne's was a new district where there were no traditions, with people coming together from various other districts of Wigan who did not know each other. However, Mr. Vickery soon got to work, and chiefly through his energies the scheme for building was pushed ahead. He soon had gathered together so many scholars that a double Sunday School was necessary. In June, 1932, when Mr. Vickery, who had just been married, left the parish to continue his work in Cleethorpes, the Vicar thanked him for his loyalty and energy in laying the foundations of the Mission Hall work so well.

September of that year saw the arrival of St. Andrew's second curate the Rev. L. A. Pickett, B.A., who had just completed his training at Mirfield.

1932 was the Jubilee of the Consecration of St. Andrew's Church (50 years). The celebrations lasted from October 2nd to the 9th. Apart from the usual Sunday services an outdoor procession and service took place at 2-30 p.m. The service was held on Springfield Park, all the banners were used and Crooke band was engaged. On respective weeknights addresses were

given by the Dean of Liverpool, the Bishop of Warrington, and the Bishop of Liverpool. On the Sunday the Rector of Wigan preached. The Vicar, commenting on the celebrations, said that there had been a spirit of love, joy and friendship.

Gifts to the Church of ornaments and furniture at this time included a new banner borne on two poles ("Madonna and Child"); another mosaic, placed near the entrance to the chapel; the processional cross; the oak choir bench behind the men's stalls; and the oak high altar which was bought by the congregation to commemorate the Jubilee of the Church.

As the year 1933 was nearing its close Mr. Buckmaster announced to his congregation that he had accepted the living of St. Anne's, Stanley, near Liverpool. In his final letter he said that he was more than grateful to God for the sincere love and kindness which he had found at St. Andrew's. His one prayer would be that the people of this Church would be blessed by God, so that the Church might prosper and more and more people in the parish come to realise the full meaning of religion. He particularly asked the people to pray for and support his successor. After the service on the Eve of Ascension 1934 presentations were made to Mr. Buckmaster, the chair being taken by Mr. Gillyat, headmaster of the School. Mr. Buckmaster was instituted to his new parish on Friday, 18th May, 1934; in August of the same year he was married to Miss Helen Bass in Rainford Parish Church.

It has been previously mentioned that Mr. Buckmaster built up the spiritual and social life of the parish. His predecessor, Mr. Wickham, had built up the parish and the Church building. Mr. Buckmaster was to continue his ministry for a further twenty-two years, during which time he was made a Canon of Liverpool Cathedral by the Bishop. He died on 28th March, 1956. The death of Canon Buckmaster evoked many expressions of sorrow and sympathy from all over the diocese. Nowhere was there greater regret at his death than in our own parish where so many people have reason to recall with gratitude a loving, pastoral ministry of seventeen years. A later Vicar of St. Andrew's, the Rev. K. W. Warren, was a close friend of Mr. Buckmaster, having been Vicar of a neighbouring parish whilst Mr. Buckmaster was at St. Anne's, Stanley. Mr. Warren was the Vicar of St. Andrew's at the time of Canon Buckmaster's death, and we can do no better than quote from his "In Memoriam: John Meredith Buckmaster" from the parish magazine of May, 1956.

"The Rev. J. M. Buckmaster was instituted to St. Andrew's in January, 1917, at a time of great difficulty and stress. The nation was keyed up to play its part in the desperate struggle of the Great War, then about to enter its most critical phase. He came as a young man to a parish which had been served for thirty-eight years by a man of very great gifts and character (Rev. W. A. Wickham), who himself had passed from youth to age in creating the parish. In the material sense there was not much left to build; the only thing lacking was a proposed chapel. When the war was over, Mr. Buckmaster saw that such a chapel would be a memorial to the dead of the parish and to him we owe our lovely memorial Chapel of St. George. To the other and greater task of building the spiritual temple of God in this parish he brought a great love for souls, an untiring zeal, an abounding charity, a reliance on prayer and a whole-hearted dedication to his Lord and his Lord's Church. Many stories could be told of his disregard of self, of his love for the children, of his dignified and courteous regard for those who opposed him. In the days of depression, when so many people in the parish lived in extreme poverty, many homes had occasion to bless his generous yet sacrificial giving. In his later years in the parish he superintended the work of a Mission Hall for the Beech Hill area, a 'cutting' which has grown into the remarkably vigorous 'plant,' which is the parish of St. Anne's today. His appearance in the procession round the parish on Walking Day 1954 when he was the visiting preacher, drew in certain areas spontaneous clapping from the onlookers."

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