

# CHURCH

## Memoirs of the Church, its Choir and Sunday School. Also of the Dissenting Chapels

### *Tape 1 -*

**Sunday School** prizes – stiff competition for the Bishops Prize.

**Choir** 40-50 strong – no females. Male/female separation in church pews. Pegs for men's hats still on one side. Church was the focal point. Choir went to the Old Rectory every Sunday afternoon for tea and then to evensong. 40-50 in choir – no females!

### *Tape 2 -*

**Choir** in 1947 about 40. Rector K Jenkins had a bus took choir carol singing. Bus for hire to other club etc. Jenkins ousted from his post after taking a party of children into a pub in Nettlebed.

### *Tape 6 -*

**Choir** – all the Miners children sang in the choir. They attended the Poupart's chapel before going on to church in the morning and then attended church in the evening.

### *Tape 7 -*

**Church** - remembers that in 1905 the men and women were segregated in the church. Mr Jenkins was rector during the war. He built the house with a copper roof and had an excellent choir.

### *Tape 8 -*

**Sunday school** run at Thatchings by Hope Young and Ann Peebles, just after the war.

**Choir** She belonged to the choir as a child and her uncle [Frank Godden] belonged from age 3. Most Winfields had good voices, particularly Herbie. Steve Beecham, Dorian Winfield and Mr Quixley.

### *Tape 10 -*

**Sunday School** - Attended Sunday School and collected the stamps for attendance. When the book was full she received a prayer book. All three of her sons went there too. Played the harmonium in the Poupart Nonconformist Chapel when needed.

### *Tape 14 -*

**Choir** – often left because they fell out with the Rector. One Rector was drummed out of the village because he stayed too long with a widow and set tongues wagging. In 1950's there was a scandal because there was a judging of votes on the PCC.

### *Tape 15 -*

**Choir** always seemed to have been made up of the Winfield families. Sometimes choir outnumbered the attendees.

### *Tape 16 -*

**Choir** – Has always been in the choir, there are now about 15, but used to fill the whole of the choir stalls. Mr Jenkins had a bus and would go round his parishes collecting churchgoers. Also chaplain of the Borstal so would go and collect congregation from there. Always well attended church. Also collected prisoners (of War) from RAF Benson.

### **Tape 17 -**

**Church** - when I came I was a Reader which means I have been licensed to perform certain duties, among them is taking services. Early in the century men and women being segregated in church finished. I still do the family service when I am here, in the other churches and also at the RAF Station.

**Choir** - The first Sunday I arrived (1970), I was rather amused because I went to church in the morning and did not know anything about the village politics at the time, but I went to change into my church robes and I did that in St Johns Chapel. After the service I went home and I promised that I would come for evening service. I went to change in St Johns chapel but no-one came. Thought I had gone at the wrong time. When the Rector found me he said we do not change here in the evenings, we change in the belfry. Then I realised we had two completely different choirs. The split between old and new villagers was apparent in the choir. The old villagers would not change in the same part of the church as the new people [Chaucer Courtiers]. I thought it odd in church, but that's how it was. The morning one consisted of a lot of young people, Alan Vickers excellent musician and choirmaster. The evening choir were the older villagers, some of whom are still singing. Katherine Hare managed to get the two together.

### **Tape 22 -**

**Choir** - - Lively services. Mr Humphreys in my day. Very nice man with a superb voice. Had four brothers in choir, no women or girls allowed.

### **Tape 23 -**

**Choir** - He joined at age of 3 and sang in it ever since. Mr Herman asked his mother if she would let him join. She initially said no, what the use he can hardly read let alone sing. Mr Herman said never mind, if he was there he would soon pick it up. So Frank's mother said she didn't mind. Frank is the longest serving choirboy and has known 11 rectors! Sang at the Hick's baptism. Attended Sunday school, Miss Quinn of the Manor took it.

### **Tape 24 -**

**Church** - Mr Humphreys the Rector was a very nice man. Like Mr Poupart the children respected him and would always greet him. Then Mr Jenkins who used to punch the hassock in the pulpit so strongly to make a point that clouds of dust flew up and made the congregation sneeze. He put fear into his congregation with his sermons but the children found it frightening.

**Sunday School** - went to church where the children were given stamps on a card and if they collected enough they were given a present. An incentive to attend. If they attended Ewelme School and were regular at the church they were singled out for special favours ie extra pens and paper.

**The Choir** - he used to pump the organ when he had a cold and could not sing. When a boy was not strong enough on his own two boys had to do it. Used to cheat and not supply enough air so that the organ ran down and the organist was cross. All the Gilbey children sang in the choir.

### **Tape 29 -**

**Choir** - Sang in school choir for short time. Something they did. Nothing to do with school. Run by Mrs Hare. Once on Sunday (am) and one night during week for practise. Did it for about a year then moved on. Before voice broke.

### **Tape 31 - (Interviewed by George Cannon)**

**Church** - *I don't know whether you knew but in church the men had to sit one side and the women the other side. That was only in the middle aisles - the men were this side and the women were that side, and it didn't matter whether you were married or not you had to separate. And they had a meeting at the school and he [Mr Herman] said the school was packed and the farmer that used to be in the house opposite the school - old Mr Edwards, he 'demanded a poll on this job' he says and the meeting had to be cancelled until the next day. So the next day it was passed that in future they could sit together, so the church was then full. But what they were objecting to were the two sides seats men and women could sit together, it was all right there, it was just the two middle aisles.*

*Mr Franklin - I remember him, was a church warden lived at The Views and he sat with his wife because he sat in the first seat at the back so he could have his wife, of course the others objected to that.*

So as long as you went to the side aisle you could sit together?

*But it was only the better class of people that got the side, on the outside.*

*Years ago the Cloister people sat on the memorial side. They used St John's chapel. It was used every day. But in the service they always sat on that side because that all belongs to the Trust doesn't it?*

*All the Cloisters people sat that side.*

### ***Tape 32 -***

**Choir** - Participation of RAF increased gradually - the RAF station had a band and would play in the church occasionally for evensong. Visits looked forward to and appreciated by villagers - morale booster in civilian population. Hoped for a better future.

Rev Kenneth Jenkins had been at Oxford at Jesus College and had broken the record for the 220 yds race. Interested in Rugby, brisk man, I occasionally went to Oxford to see Rugby with him.

He ran a mini bus bringing people to church etc.

### ***Tape 34 -***

**Church** - I used to go to church quite a lot on Sunday I think it was 3 times a day. On Good Friday after we had been to church in the morning we used to go out to Oakley Woods to pick primroses and violets to decorate the church for Easter Sunday.

**Sunday School** - but we also used to go to Miss Hutchins who lived in the Thatchings to Sunday School and she had a lady living with her called Miss Peebles. It is near Betty Billings' mother's house. Miss Peebles was going blind and she was learning Braille and she had a machine. I used to be fascinated with that.

### ***Tape 36 -***

**Choir** - Sang in Ewelme Church choir 1948 - 1952. After the Swyncombe Rector died the church was administered by Ewelme Rector Rev Jenkins - priest in charge from 1948 to 1952. As young girls interested in singing they had started a little choir up there and also were in the Swyncombe Choral Society. Rev Jenkins asked if they would join the Ewelme choir and sing the Messiah.

At that time she lived at Howe Hill. Rev Jenkins would bring his mini bus to collect herself, her sister and friend Betty Hume now Hayward, to come to church and for practise.. Wore black gowns and black mortar board squarish caps. The boys had white ruffs because they were affiliated to the School of Church Music.

He also used to drive around villages collecting parishioners for services.

She remembers Kath Winfield (became Baker), Cynthia Winfield, Norman and Herbie Winfield. Norah Harwood and Fred. John Webb and 2 RAF men from the camp. Reg Winfield and Fred Greenway. Frank Godden, Sam who used to drive the bus sometimes, Jennefer and Wallis Miners, Virginia Townsend, Susan Harwod and the twins Patrick and Peter Harwood. Pat Ibbotson and two young sisters called Kerr from the camp.

Twice she went to Butlins at Phywelly in North Wales and Skegness in 1950 and 1951 as the choir holiday for a week at £7 per week! Choir went in a Tappins coach to Butlins. Rev Jenkins also took his car -I went in it with Peter and Patrick Harwood who said they couldn't travel in a coach. Fred and Norah Harwood did a lot of organising as they were keen on these holidays, they got it off the ground. Transport costs probably came out of church funds.

Enjoyed coming down for singing. We also went carol singing at Christmas. A week before we went to all the big houses and got invited in. We learned anthems, made us feel quite special. The village and the camp very close. Believed Rev Jenkins covered the station.

In 1953 Rev Jenkins had the BBC come and record a harvest festival. She didn't go as she wanted to listen to the programme on the wireless! They made 2 records of it, her sister still has them. Introduced by Freddie Grisewood.

Remembers Rev Jenkins as being married, quite attractive and his wife a pretty lady. Lived in the New Rectory. Thinks he had been in the RAF. Had 3 daughters. Seemed a go-ahead sort of man. Wanted to get young people involved. It was a lively church with lots of youngsters.

After the War people came from the Education Dept in Oxford to see what the village youngsters wanted and arranged evening classes etc. Mr Wood was in charge of doing these things in the villages.

Lady who did the choral societies was a Miss Pilkington.

All the Oxfordshire churches that had a choral society used to learn one big work every year which could be Haydens Creation or Elijah. Started with smaller works and things like Turn Back Oh Man, but all the Oxfordshire choirs learned the same and met up at the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford and sang with the whole choirs together. Dr Thomas Armstrong organised it.

Rev Jenkins knew we had the choral society at Swyncombe and started a little choir there just after the war. There was a write up in Picture Post about the choir which mentioned the Carol singing.

#### ***Tape 41 -***

**Choir** – He was in the choir in Mr Humphrey's time and is in it again now (2004). Mr Tipper was the first baptised by Humphreys and I was second. Tipper lived where Fred Greenway once lived. Now called "Tinkers Moon" on the way to Benson, one of the cottages.

**Heating** - There were three stoves in church one in St Johns Chapel and one by main doors at each end.

#### ***File 46 -***

**Church Choir** - I became a member of the Church Choir in the late 1960's. Rev Thomas was the Vicar at the time. Mr Tom Heather was the Organist. Practice was every Friday evening at 19:30, Church services Sunday 11:00-12:00 and evenings 18:00-19:00. Because we all now had television, we would be concerned if the Sunday evening service was likely to overrun past 19:00. The additional time to change and run home could make us late for choice programmes: Sea Hunt and the London Palladium. This was in the period of the Beatles, the Bachelors, Jimmy Tarbuck, Brenda Lee, etc. And for Bruce Forsythe's Beat the Clock – which led to all his Television Game Shows. Wedding Services were a frequent requirement for the choir and Christmas Carol singing took us to many of the big houses in the area. The Church choir would always go to Butlins holiday camp every September, these were memorable occasions and were well attended – I went on 2 or 3 occasions.

**Bell Ringing** - I also became a novice Bell Ringer in the late 1960's. Training and practice was held on Thursday evenings and the bells would be rung during the ½ hour before Sunday morning and evening services. Additionally for weddings and peels, which could go on for several hours. Richard Baker and Reginald Tuckwell were key members. Bell ringing outings were frequent, usually organised by Richard Baker and were well attended by members and families. I feel sure that some of the villager's will remember the outings to: Weston-Super-Mare, Mid-Wales and Shanklin on the Isle of Wight where we used the steam railway from Ryde to Shanklin.

**Primitive Chapel** - I do remember my mother taking me and my brother to the Mrs Pouparts Chapel. It wasn't very often. Don't know if the services were held on every Sunday. I would have been 4 to 6 years old (1952 to 1954). I remember a few of my mother's friends also attending, Tony Munday's mother Grace, the Hewits, Mrs Scaldwell. Molly Munday? and others. Also remember seeing one or two young airman in their best uniforms. I recall there being quite a lot of people there who socialised well after the service. It smelt a

little damp and musty inside. Lots of large framed biblical pictures on the walls. I think the organ had to be mechanically pumped. Not sure if it was connected to mains electricity.

**File 50 -**

My mother who thought it would be a good idea if I became the littlest member of the church choir. She must have enjoyed seeing me at Matins and Evensong on a Sunday, dressed up as an angelic choirboy. A relief from her naughty boy during the week. I liked the wages of singing. We were paid at the end of each Quarter. For weddings we were paid on the spot. My most high profile performance on one of those occasions was not with my voice. One of my senior colleagues had not turned up, so I was put in the front line. When the service was over the choir went in procession back to the Vestry, but instead of turning a sharp right at the bottom of the choir steps and leaving the field to the Bride and Groom to walk in their newly married state, I led the choir importantly down the central aisle of the church, then right, past the font and up to the vestry by the long route. I was not anyone's favourite boy on that particular sunny afternoon. But no one had told me.

**File 56 -**

As a school we went to church every week, most of my brothers, and me were either in the choir, or bell ringers, so we did Sunday's at church, each year we went carol singing, and we were paid a small sum for weddings.

**File 60 -**

Church on Sunday was a must, after which the men adjourned to the pub just across the way which I believe is now a private residence. [The Greyhound] While I was there I did audition for the church choir and failed abysmally.

**File 61 -**

Rector Kenneth Jenkins seems to have been a good man and an entertaining Hell Fire and Brimstone preacher, his sermons were very popular. My mother and grandmother regularly dragged my brother and me to Sunday morning church services. They loved his passion, and how he thumped the pulpit with his fist in emphasis, and our father enjoyed his company. My brother and I travelled to nursery school in Wallingford with our first girl-friends, his daughters Margaret and Mary, until the family left for New Zealand? in 1952.

**File 68 -**

Primitive Methodist Chapel - The chapel was used as far as I know until at least late 1960s I remember going in there in the 1950s. Mrs Poupart was my brother godmother. Mrs Poupart was never the same since she got hit in the head by a cricket ball. She used to go into Oxford and go round the streets praying with and helping the homeless and addicts. When her husband died mum got me to stay the night with Mrs Poupart or Kathleen as mum called her and I wasn't happy as she prayed all night and had 'visions' She was such a good lady though and they both did so much for the village. Their Sunday school was at their house and children went as they got given food and crayons etc. During the war lots of RAF attended the chapel and the many social events that took place there. I remember seeing group pictures from the 40s and 50s. Mr Poupart ran the scouts for a long time in the village.

**File 72 -**

Like most of the village children I attended Sunday school and the annual Sunday school outing was a highlight of the year, usually a trip on Tappins coaches to the seaside on the south coast – Eastbourne was one.