

HOW IT ALL HAPPENED

By

Canon K. F. Evans- Prosser M. A., B. D.

Vicar of Norton Since 1934

And of

The Leigh since 1947

Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Gloucester

and

Honorary Canon of Gloucester Cathedral

Rural Dean of Gloucester North 1952-72

“This shall be written for those that come after”.

Psalm 102. Verse 18

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Introduction

People have often told me I ought to write a book about Norton. When one has been a long time in a place, one has knowledge of how many things have happened or come to be. A book could have been written but it would have needed more time than I could give to it and, owing to the cost of printing today, it would cost much more than most would be ready to pay for it.

So, early in 1971, I tried to compromise by writing a series of articles containing my reminiscences of my life as Vicar of these two parishes. Those who read them thought they ought to be brought out in a booklet. This, for various reasons, I have been unable to do until now. On going through those articles I found them not entirely suitable for reproducing as they stood but they have served as a basis for what will follow here. The purely personal stuff I have already cut out and I have added quite a number of things that were not included in them. My prime object here has been to put down only what explains things that people are likely to want to know about and to refrain from putting in what would hurt anybody's feelings. Some of these things only I can recount and it seemed to me to be a duty to record them, for when I go a lot of the details will go too.

They period of my stay here has covered some of the time before the war, wartime and the years since. Naturally many things have happened in that time, and many changes have come about. We older ones sometimes are apt to look back to the past as a golden age, conveniently forgetting many of the disabilities of those days. If we could suddenly switch back forty years or more, I do not think we should really like what we found. It is quite true that some good things have gone, among them the unity with each other extending over the whole place. There was no one then who had little or no interest in the village affairs and perhaps we felt we belonged to each other in a way that we do not quite feel today. Apart

from that, I would like to say quite categorically that in other ways we have improved.

I have no hesitation in saying that, in my time, especially in the last few years there has been a vast change for the better in many directions. Most of these improvements have come about through the strenuous efforts of a few individuals. Let us never forget that they did not just happen; most of them came because people strove for them. Much could be said about the constant efforts made over the years by such bodies as the School Managers, the Village Hall Committee and the Parish Council. A great part of what we enjoy today has come to us because those men and women got them for us. This is not generally appreciated by the villagers. I could say much about the difficulties that were encountered and a lot about the frictions between various personalities in the past was quite unknown to the majority of people. I am not going to say it. There are things which are best forgotten. What I am going to say quite definitely, because it ought to be known, is that never in my time have we had such a good body of Parish Council, Village Hall Committee and School Managers as we have had during the last few years. Every member of each of these has had an active part in every decision that has been made and in everything that has been accomplished. Today there is no friction in any of them. Everybody speaks freely and without hesitation and can feel they have real say in what goes on.

Naturally there is much that can be recounted in these pages that has to be left out for lack of space. But I can claim that everything that is said in the following pages is authentic and could be documented. I Only hope you will enjoy what has been put down and that it will enable you to understand more fully what is the history of some of the things that have happened here since 1934, and of a few before that date.

The War Comes to Norton

In 1938 we began to prepare for a possible war. Many of the peaceful and respectable citizens of Norton attended classes to qualify as Air Raid Wardens. At each we had a lecture by Dr. Gaffney, a retired doctor living at Ashelworth. The greatest emphasis was placed upon dealing with incendiary bombs and how to cope with a gas attack. After a few months of these, we were ready to take the exam that would earn us a certificate if we passed. Part of the exam entailed putting on a gas mask and spending a few minutes in a rather fearsome contraption called a Gas Van. When we had passed, we were given with the certificate a large badge to represent our status as Wardens. There were grades of pass, the top ones enabled the holder to give lectures on the subject if asked.

Meanwhile, all the inhabitants down to the youngest were fitted for gas masks. There were special ones for babies and it was a job getting some of the babies to agree to being fitted.

Then there were the first aid classes. The lecturer for these also came from the other side of the river and had to be taken home after each class. I well remember having to do this on occasion and crossing the temporary wooden bridge at Maisemore. None of the post-war car drivers have any idea how difficult it was to drive at night during the war. All headlights had to be covered with a metal mask with narrow slits in it and little was the light that came through them. To make things worse, the tops of all the signposts were taken off so that no parachuting German could find his way. How we got along in those conditions and kept our cars from going into ditches is anyone's guess, yet there were few accidents. For years the signpost at the top of the lane was topless and the old milestones on the main road rendered impossible to read.

When the war actually began, the Air Raid Wardens were expected to patrol the highways and byways locking presumably for any ferocious specimens of the enemy that might be impertinent enough to land in

Norton. The village was portioned off between us and we went about in pairs. The whole thing had a faintly ridiculous air about it and after a few months of non-encounter with the enemy it was called off officially. Yet it is important for the younger generation to know that all through the war there was a possibility that this country might be invaded. We did not know then that Hitler gave up the idea quite early in the war.

We had our local Dad's Army though it was bigger than the one on TV. There were 45 men in it and its headquarters were at Twigworth Vicarage. Besides this we had 12 Air Raid Wardens, 8 messengers and 15 Fire Guards. In addition we had 3 special police. Of equipment, we had 3 tractors, 2 motor lorries, 15 cars, 20 farm carts &c and 4 handcarts. There was also a Labour Squad of 12 for digging trenches, and blocking roads, under the control of Mr. H.E. Bailey, the Estate Foreman.

Then there was the Invasion Committee made up of Captain Walker, Chairman, K.F.E.P. Vice ditto, Mr. & Mrs. Clinton Phelps, Mr.H.A.Cook, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Boodle, Mrs. M.E.T. Bridge, Miss. F.E.Mullens, Mr. Bailey, Mr. C.O.J.Perrett, Mr. Plummer (Court Head Gardener) and Lieut. Parker from Churchdown.

Mrs. C.D.Phelps was Head Housewife and Miss Mullens - Food Organiser. Being a small place we had to double some of our parts e.g. Mr.H.A.Cook was Head Warden and Head Fire Guard and I was his deputy for both. We had two Control Points, Warden's Centres and Rest Centres. The first two of these were at Norton Court and Norton Vicarage and the third at Norton School and Norton Court. These last were under Mrs. G.N.Walker and Mrs. C.E. Price who were also over the other women's affairs.

One of the features of the wartime set-up was the Youth Squad which was run by the County Education Committee who asked me to take charge of our village Squad.

This included all the boys and girls from about 12 to 15. It provided us with not a little free excitement and not a little argument especially over the collection of waste paper. Several of these boys now hold quite important posts up and down the country. Before long, the boys wanted me to start a Scout Troop here as I had been a Scout-master in other places but there were not enough of them to make a viable troop. They did however provide me with no less than 12 servers at our church. The County provided the members of the Youth Squad with metal badges and the Messengers with a cardboard one headed Public Assistance Dept. As I had one of the Warden's Posts, I spent months sleeping on the couch in my study in order to be near the telephone, in case something untoward happened. One midnight I was awakened by a terrific banging at the window. I went to the door and was told that bombs had fallen on the meadows and was asked what we were to do about it. As it was absolutely pitch dark, we made up our minds that it was quite useless to try and look for them. The next morning we were informed that the bombs had fallen at The Leigh, not here. A large hole had been made in Mr Hall's garden at Leigh House and the windows were shattered covering Mr. & Mrs. Hall with glass. As so some cattle were killed.

Until about 1944 we had a rota of firewatchers to look out for incendiary bombs falling on buildings and haystacks. There used to be two of us at a time on duty at the school throughout the night.

One afternoon Mr Marks, then Vicar of The Leigh, was having tea in this house when through the drawing room window we beheld some mysterious vehicles crossing a field on the other side of A38, we thought, the Germans have arrived. I went over to investigate and found not Germans, but an anti-aircraft unit. So a gun site was established, manned at first by a unit made up of men from Lloyd's in London. One of these was a solicitor in private life, was an excellent organist and played for us at Church. The unit did not stay very long and another one came which also provided us with an organist. This chap found our pedals so narrow that

he used to play them in his stockinged feet. I was made Officiating Chaplain to the Forces and used to go to the camp to take services. I still have my official armband that came almost too late to be used. One unit arrived just before aster and they were asked whether they would like to have a service on the site or come to our church service. They all opted for the church one, so many did that some could not be allowed to go because of the need for camp chores to be done. Anyway, 100 or so came to church and owing to the limited accommodation we had to squeeze them in on one side and the parishioners on the other. Between them, we had a huge number of communicants. The following day I went over to the camp to walk about at large and talk to any men I met. The first two I came across, who looked regular toughs, told me how glad the men were to have a chance of going to a proper church service and of being at our Sung Eucharist. Believe it or not, they further said that what the men had liked most was seeing ours boys in the choir with their surplices and cassocks. "You know' Sir", said one of them "Most of the men in this unit were at one time choirboys but have drifted-away from church for one reason or another but never because they really wished to do so."

One unit winged a German plane that passed over Norton. I was standing on the Vicarage lawn when I saw a German plane flying low over the church and heading south. The guns opened out and got him but did not bring him down but did enough damage to it to get it hit down towards Bristol.

I still have some shrapnel that fell on the lawn in this episode. The same day shortly afterwards I saw another German plane heading North East over the cover next door. It flew so low that I could plainly see the pilot and the swastika on the plane. At that moment a meeting was being held in the Reading Room for some purpose or other but I can no longer remember whether those at it heard the plane or not. For a short while we also had a small searchlight unit in the village.

NORTON VILLAGE HALL

Before we had our hall we were very limited in Norton for places hold any kind of entertainment. For this kind of thing we mostly had fall back upon either the school or the skittle alley at the King's Head. The Dramatic Society that we had for a short while before the Second used to perform at the school. It was here that we staged the pantomime that I wrote for the village children to perform back in my first win here. It meant moving the school furniture about and erecting a temporary stage. We had some footlights of a sort that were kept in the garage Norton Court. The Headmaster was never very willing for us to borrow school as it meant so much disruption and the sounds could be heard in the School House. So for most things we fell back upon the skittle alley which for this purpose was known as the Assembly Rooms. The W.I. made most use of it and many a whist drive was held there with the active operation of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph James, both members of old Norton family who then kept the pub. All the illuminations both there and at the school came from oil lamps. When the W.I. had their annual elections, Mr. Perrett the schoolmaster and I had to go to the King's Head to act as tellers and count the votes. For small meetings there was the Reading Room which belonged to Captain Walker. It was of no use for anything that required stage or for any but the smallest of whist drives. Originally it had procured or built by one of the Vicar's of Norton back in the seventies last century. He sold it to his successor who disposed of it to Captain Walker's father, who had it moved from its original site in Cold Elm its present position next door to St. John's. All this was not very satisfactory and one Sunday night during the war when Mr. H.A. Cook and I were fire-watching at the school we decided that the time had come for the village to start raising money for a village hall. Things began by having a fete in the field on the other of the main-road next to where the gun site had been. This fete was glorious success and we made £197 by it. I well remember carrying the money raised in two buckets. One of the things for sale by auction was an iced cake-very difficult to get in wartime. It was bought by Mr. Clinton

Phelps who gave it back to be sold again. It was then re-auctioned and bought for the same figure by Mr. George Jordan who wanted it for the wedding feast of one of his daughters about to get married.

There was however another fund in need of money. The village had decided to get up a Welcome Home Fund for its men who would come back from active service. Thus all profits from any such function were to be equally divided between the funds for this and for the proposed village hall. We got up various things including two fetes that were held at Mr. Minett's orchard at the top of Wainlodes Lane. At one of these we had a display by the RAF dogs from Innsworth. Between everything we managed to raise about £330 for the Welcome Home Fund and £400 odd for a village hall. The difference is due to the fact that we went on getting money for the latter after the former had come to an end.

Mr. Minett had promised us a site on which to put the hall and we had the £400 to buy the building. We were hoping to purchase an old army hut or something of the kind and Mr. Cook and I went round and inspected several possibilities. Then quite unexpectedly Mr H.A.M. Spiers saw an advert in the Citizen for a dance hall down at Cinderford for sale. The committee made up its mind to go and see this and we set off in a few cars on a pouring wet Sunday afternoon to have a look. I had to close Sunday School early to make it. We reached Cinderford safely and soon discovered the building that was right at the entrance to the town. It was not a very inspiring sight in the pouring rain but when we got inside we could see that it had possibilities. The owner told us he had run it as a dance hall for 19 years and had evidently fancied himself as an artist as there were a number of paintings of palm trees &c on it. We thought it had what we needed and would probably do us for 10 years or so. The price was just within our means and we got it for £405. All this was in October 1946. After a while our men went down there and dismantled it and the pieces were brought up to Norton. The actual re-erection on the site began on January 1st 1947, the very day that Mr. Perrett was moving

out of the school house after his resignation. The perishing cold winter of 1946-7 had also begun with its deep snow and severe frosts the deepest snow that has been seen in Norton for generations.

The work progressed under the supervision of Mr. Cook in spite of the weather. Of course many alterations and additions had to be made to the building. Cloakrooms had to be put in, a stage erected and a kitchen provided. Incidentally it is worth mentioning that the kitchen started life as a large henhouse. At this point we must record how much this village owes to Mr. Cook and his men for the work they did quite voluntary. Hours and hours of work under very unpleasant conditions. In recognition of all he did for this hall it was decided that it should be written into the Trust Deed that Mr. Cook should be a Life-Member of the Hall Management Committee. It was also agreed that Mr. Minett himself should be so enrolled. If he had not given us the site we could not have had the hall for we should have had nowhere to put it.

For the benefit of those who do not know it, the Trust Deed, which was modelled upon the specimen deed-of the Community Council vested the hall in the Parish Council as its Trustees and the hall could not be sold or demolished without its consent. It also provided for a Management Committee to do the day to day running of the hall. This committee was consist of one representative from each recognised organisation in the village, such as the Parish and Parochial Church Council, the W.I., M.U. and so on, elected by themselves. In addition there were to be five elected by the Annual Meeting, held in April each year, to represent the inhabitants of Norton as such. The first chairman was also named. I leave you to guess who that was. The Committee was given power to co-opt three additional members.

The great day of opening came at last. It had been agreed to invite Mr. Minett to open the new hall. So a vast number of parishioners gathered at the Village Hall on June 7th 1947 for the occasion. A prayer was said by the Vicar and we all settled down to enjoy a tea and-our new hall. Miss

Mary Spires (now Mrs. Lander) had drawn up an illuminated manuscript to record the opening and this was signed on the spot by Mr. Minett, the Chairman and the first- Honorary Secretary, Mr. A.J.Bradshaw. Also a small tablet recording the event and the gift of the site was put up on the wall. These can still be seen in the hall.

At the time, there were no mains water or mains electricity in the village but we managed in spite of this. The hall was wired for electricity by Mr. Roy Sparrow and for some time we had to light the hall by means of a generator bought from the American stores at Ashchurch. The first one we had was inadequate and we had to buy a larger one. In case it failed, as it often did at crucial moments, we had an oil lamp suspended in the middle of the hall.

Norton Village Hall has far exceeded the ten years we thought it would last but is beginning to show signs of age and for some time we have been getting together money to build a new one. Such was our independence at the beginning that we refused to consider applying for any grants for the original hall but the situation today is completely different. But however much better any new hall of the future may be, we still regard the present one with affection for all that it has meant us for so long.

NORTON PARISH COUNCIL

The first meeting of Norton Parish Council was held at the Reading Room on December 14th, 1894. No doubt the first one at the Leigh was held about the same time for 1894 was the year that Parish Councils first came into existence. The elected members were Messrs. A.T.Simmons (who got most votes), Walter James, Edwin Archer, Alfred Stubbs and John Duck. Mr.A.J. Cook acted as temporary clerk. There immediately arose the question as to who should be Chairman and this caused a little difficulty. Three were nominated - Edwin Archer, John Cook and the vicar (Rev.R. Marks). It had better be mentioned here that Parish Council members always had the right to elect a Chairman who was not actually an elected

member of the council. Well, the Vicar got three votes and there were two against him. So was decided to hold another meeting the following week and then the vicar was elected chairman unanimously.

Then, as now, most of the meetings were held at the Reading Room, but now and then at the Vicarage. Mr Marks continued as Chairman until his death in 1907. He was succeeded in this by the next Vicar, the Rev. A.J McLean. He in turn was followed by Mr Cherington, who became Vicar when he left.

The first permanent clerk was Mr. Walter James who continued as such until he retired in 1937 when Mrs M.E.T. Bridge was appointed. It was commonly said in the old days that Walter James always got his wife to write out the minutes for him, after each meeting.

The first time I came into contact with the Parish Council was in 1935 in connection with the Jubilee of King George 5th. The Committee that arranged the village festivities was very anxious to end the great day with a display of fireworks. If so, who was going to pay for them? There was not much money about in the village in those days and it was felt that the Parish Council ought at least to help out with the cost, if not pay the lot. Captain G.N.Walker of Norton Court, who had become Chairman of the Council in the early twenties, invited me to attend the next meeting of the Council to put the case for the fireworks. When I got there, I was faced with a collection of men who looked decidedly unwelcoming if not positively hostile. The case was put, but the Council decided it would have nothing to do with it. The members could not see why we should have fireworks at all. The proposal of a grant was turned-down flat. This enraged Captain Walker who said out loud in front of them all. "Mr. Vicar, you-buy whatever fireworks you think necessary and I will pay half the cost." This was an instance of the Squire siding with the village against its own representatives.

How was this Council elected? Up to 1948 at the Annual Parish Meeting by show of hands. This was rather an embarrassing procedure as it meant either showing publicly who you were-for or against or not voting at all. So one could never be sure that those elected were in fact the ones who were actually wanted. The following year all this was changed as an act of Parliament had decreed that from 1949 all such elections were to be conducted by secret ballot. So it was in Norton. A proper election was held, votes-being cast at the school. No less than 16 candidates-stood for election to 5 seats on the Council. When the result came out Mr. M.A.Cook was found to have headed the poll with 62 votes, I was next with one less. Captain Walker came well down the list and not being among the top 5; he was not elected. This led to a very awkward situation. He who had been for years an outside Chairman had unwisely put himself up for acceptance by the electorate and had not been elected. Thus it meant that members of the new Council would be confronted with the question - Would it be right to choose as Chairman again one who had been rejected by the electorate?

There were other factors to be considered. For some time past there had been a strong and widespread feeling in the village that it was no getting modern amenities such as mains water and electricity because Captain Walker did not want them and they would not be had as long as was Chairman. Now, they felt, was a splendid chance, in view of the election results, of getting a new Chairman appointed. Yet the situation would be awkward for the new councillors for they would have to choose between voting the Squire out or going against the shown wishes of the electors. People were getting on to me and saying they wanted me to be the now Chairman. The new councillors also wanted this. I had been Vice-Chairman for some time. One prominent farmer, long since dead, told me that if I did not allow myself to be chosen he would never speak to me again. Now I was in a very awkward position. If I refused to stand, it would look as if I were siding with the squire against the village. If I did stand, it would look to the Squire as if I were trying to push him out for my own ambition.

Anyway, there was a good deal of excitement about as to what was going to happen. I well remember seeing the other councillors standing outside the Reading Room on the night of their first meeting discussing what they were going to do about electing the Chairman when they got inside. They made it quite clear to me what they thought ought to be done. One thing in particular weighed with them - it could not be right to appoint Captain Walker again when he had been so decisively rejected by the electors. Otherwise it would look as if they were defying the wishes of the parishioners. So they felt it was their duty to elect me in his place.

The chief question now was, would he turn up at the meeting? If he did not, all would be plain sailing. If he did... As it turned out he walked just after we got inside. Now what was to be done? You who read this will not realise how difficult it was in those days to stand up in front of the man who owned most of the place and employed many of its men and vote against him.

Taking their courage in both hands, the members proposed and seconded me as the new Chairman. I think the Captain was astonished by this and not at all pleased. He picked up his walking stick, which he had placed on one of the card tables when he came in, and said "It looks as if I am not wanted, so I wish you luck under your new Chairman. Good evening." And out he went.

I felt then, and still do, that he felt I had pushed him out to get the job myself. It was not till years afterwards that he was persuaded this was not the case.

From that day to this, the Chairman of the Parish Council has been - you know who. Some years ago, Mrs. Bridge had to give up being Clerk owing to illness and she was succeeded by Mrs. June Hillier. So in almost 80 years there have been only 3 Clerks to the Council.

THE COMING OF GAS AND WATER

Up to the middle of 1934, there was no other means of lighting houses, school or church than oil lamps. You could have them plain or fancy. Most had the plain ones but others went in for lamps with mantles that gave a much brighter light. The trouble with these was that the slightest draught would cause the mantle to blacken which meant turning down the flame to burn off the soot before a decent light could be had again. There were a few lamps that burned petrol under pressure and these had to be pumped before they could be used. There was one hanging in the chancel in church that Christopher King the verger used to Pump up in the vestry before the service. Some of the housewives used oil cookers and these had to be kept scrupulously clean or they would not work properly. There were too some who used oil heaters in their houses.

In the summer of 1934 they brought Gas to the village. It came in instalments. That year it was brought along the main road and Cold Elm as far as the King's Head. The next year it was taken down to the village. In the interval we got up a small fete to pay for gas to be put in the school and schoolhouse. The gas was also put into the Reading Room where it was controlled by a penny in the slot meter. The older ones among us will remember how we had to delve in our pockets for coppers to activate this whenever we had a meeting or service there. As the Mothers' Union used to meet there, this was a feature of every meeting in the winter.

There were women in the village who would not have a gas cooker at any price. They swore that oil cookers gave much better results. I well remember being told this by a housewife in Tythe Cottage. They had the same attitude towards gas cookers as some have today over electric ones.

The gas was not taken to Prior's Norton, so the church had to continue with oil illumination, such as it was. There was the petrol lamp already mentioned in the chancel that had at one time been in the school and three big ordinary lamps in fancy holders, that collected dust abominably,

in the Nave. You had to mount a pair of steps to attend to these. The Leigh Church also had oil lamps but they always seemed to give a better light than those at Norton. We tried getting extra and better lights for St. Mary's but the problem remained until we got electricity. St. Stephen's was in the same predicament and the light the vestry was very poor; it was difficult even to see enough to sign the service book.

In all these cases, filling and cleaning the lamps was a dirty business. They not only had to be periodically filled but their chimneys to be cleaned.

I remember the nuisance these oil lamps were when dear Bishop Woodward, who was so widely loved, came to preach at Norton. He was very tall, 6 foot 3, and his mitre nearly got knocked off by the hanging lamps. Every lamp had to be dodged as he came to it. After the service he came to the Vicarage for a meal and, although we had a number of lamps dotted about, he could scarcely see his way around so he held forth vigorously about the need of better light in both house and church.

Mains water did not come to Norton till 1950, though The Leigh had it years before. Norton people used to say that they must have a problem at The Leigh with mains water and no drains but this did not stop the getting it put in when it eventually arrived. Before that happened we depended upon wells, the water of which had been condemned as unfit I drink. Yet we did not seem to be any the worse for using it. There was a well behind the King's Head that was very popular and held out after many others had gone dry. Many a bucket of drinking water did I carry from that well. On the rare occasions when this well gave out, we use to walk across the road to what was then a field belonging to the Kings Head but now built over. There was a well there known by some un-complimentary names. It can still be seen in Mrs. Hillier's garden. Getting the mains was quite a strenuous business. The late Mr. Scrivins who represented Down Hatherley on the RDC and I who represented Norton kept up a sort of guerrilla warfare for years to get the mains brought to our villages. Some years ago Mr. Scrivins wrote an account of it a letter to the Citizen.

As with the Gas, the water was brought in instalments. The people who had the most trouble in getting their water had to wait longest; those who lived in the Wainlodes area. Their source of supply was a spring near the top of Wainlodes and they had to climb that steep hill often elderly people, to get what they required. The chief snag in getting mains water for them was the cost of taking the pipes round those bends in the road. The Parish Council urged the RDC to take the pipes through the park of the Court, which would have to cut out a lot of the cost by avoiding the bend but they would not do it for they had a legal objection to taking the mains across private land. I had to much pleading at RDC meetings to get the houses involved connected to the mains. After some years, the difficulties were overcome and the mains were brought. Then there was another battle over the school, this time with the County Education Committee. It had been connected to the mains at the time they were first brought to Norton, but not its lavatories. These from time immemorial had been of the bucket variety and for years we the Managers used to get complaints from the Medical Officer of Health at the way in which the contents were disposed. A certain person now dead was paid to see to this but he was rather haphazard in the way he did it. So we asked for flush lavatories to be put in. Years and years passed before we got them.

I think it should be put on record that there has hardly an amenity we have had in school or village that has not had to be fought for, except the Gas. They have not just come. And the people who did the fighting were the Managers in the one case and the Parish Council in the other, with some help from the representative on the RDC.

THEN COMES ELECTRICITY.

I always used to say that if the story of how we got our electricity were put in a play, the audience would say it was too far fetched if not impossible. In this instance both our parishes were involved.

It all started just about the end of the war. At the time, Norton was the responsibility of Gloucester Corporation and The Leigh that of the West Shropshire Company. Both parishes were right at the end of their respective areas.

The story begins with Norton. We applied to Gloucester for electricity to be brought to our village. They decided to send out a couple of their officers to hold a meeting of parishioners to discover how great was the demand. The Meeting was held and the officers went away disappointed. This was largely because the farmers were not willing to install electricity in their farms when they were part of the estate and not their own property. So it seemed that that was that.

However, we did not let it stop there. Time and again I went to see the District Manager in Gloucester, letters were written and phone calls made. I shall not take up space and bore you with the whole story. Suffice it to say that after a lot of agitation on my part those concerned relented and agreed to bring the wires to part of Norton. Plans were drawn up for this and all appeared to be ready when a spanner was thrown into the works by West Shropshire. They asked Gloucester if it would take The Leigh into its area. Gloucester agreed to do so but this meant that the original plans would have to be scrapped and new ones made to bring in The Leigh. No sooner had they made the new ones than another spanner was thrown. This time it came from the Government which had nationalised all electricity services. Orders were issued to scrap all existing schemes and new ones made in their place.

So it looked as if we were back at square one again and the electricity as far away as ever.

Some time later another scheme was evolved for Norton and The Leigh. Then one morning I was unexpectedly rung up by the electricity people and asked if I would go that morning with the District Manager to see the County Planner. I was not told why but I agreed to go. In all innocence I

appeared before Mr. Higgins, then County Planning Officer, little knowing that I was putting my head in a noose. He glared at me and said "I am surprised at the Canon agreeing to this scheme. Do you not realise that you are destroying the one beauty spot between Gloucester and Tewkesbury?" This shook me as I could not understand what he was complaining about. At no time had I been told the details of the scheme, much less asked to agree to it. Mr. Higgins then made it clear what the trouble was. The plan drawn up by the electricity people included taking wires across the top of the church hill in front of the Church tower. This would have meant that from the road they would have been an eyesore. That pretty picture of the little hill surmounted by the tower, admired by so many hundreds going along A38 towards Tewkesbury, would have been irretrievably spoiled.

Under no circumstances would Planning agree to it and a new scheme would have to be drawn up in which the necessary wires would be taken behind the church. So there was yet another delay.

As it turned out, this was the very last delay and by September 1951 mains electricity was brought to Norton. Of course the church had been wired up and fitted with lamps in readiness and it was duly connected up to the mains when they came. It so happened that the very day the current was switched on was the day of our Harvest Evensong at which Bishop Woodward was going to preach. The chancel had been limewashed beforehand and to us who had been so accustomed to the rather dim light of oil lamps and dull walls in church the sight of the electric light was quite dazzling. I recollect someone saying to me afterwards that it was like looking into heaven. In this house that day we were like children going round and switching the light on and off just to see how different it all was. The following year we had electric heating and an electric blower for the organ put into the church.

The Leigh had to wait a bit longer. One of the difficulties there was that the Electricity Board wanted £100 to bring the mains to the church. This,

added to the cost of fitting out the church was a big burden to face. But these things were before long overcome and we did not have to pay the extra money. There too we went in for electric heaters under the seats and a blower for the organ. This solved an urgent problem as it had got impossible to get a boy to blow the organ-a job once much sought after - and we had to depend upon a member of the congregation coming up to blow.

St. Stephen's, which also wanted electricity, had another story to tell. They had been more or less officially told that there was no chance of electricity coming for years. So we made up our minds to light and heat the church by gas. The lights were put in and gas heaters with them. You would hardly credit it but we were told quite a short time after this that electricity was coming to the village after all. We had gone to all that expense over the gas only to discover that it was practically wasted. The heaters turned out to very disappointing. We stayed on the gas for a time but before too long we went over to electricity.

So after years of struggle and disappointment our churches and houses went electric.

WE GO GAY

When the Jubilee of King George 5th came in June 1935, Norton made up its mind to celebrate in style. We began with a service in church with a large congregation and a choir of 16 boys and 6 men. When that was over, we went down to the King's Head where Mrs. Norton Walker planted a tree and a commemorative tablet was placed near it. Both are still there in the afternoon we had sports for the children at Court Farm and a conjuror. After that there was tea in Mr. A.J.Cook's big barn. Later on there was a supper for men only in the skittle alley at the King's Head. The day ended with a firework display in Mr.Minett's field next to where the Village Hall now is. He was very nervous lest we should use rockets which might fall on his haystacks so we did not use any and kept what fireworks we had as far

as possible from his farm buildings. I took a few photographs of some of the incidents and had some enlarged for the Village Hall when it was erected. Unfortunately the man who enlarged them put the wrong date underneath 1937 instead of 1935.

At the Coronation of George 6th in the following year, the form of the celebrations was very similar except for the men's supper. Before the War, the schoolchildren had a treat once a year at the Court where they were given tea in the stables. About 80 to 90 children took part in this.

In those days people rarely went away for holidays and certainly none of us ever contemplated going abroad for them. There were few cars in the village and so people did not go about much even for a day except when we had the annual outing for the choir. For this we always had two coaches, one for children, and one for adults. Usually we went to Barry Island or Weston and now and then to Clifton Zoo. During the War we could go nowhere, so when it was nearly over and restrictions on travel were less everybody felt like going somewhere. At that time a Mr. Jones who worked at Bathursts, the boat people, at Tewkesbury lived in Norton- and through him we arranged to have a trip in one of their boats by river to Worcester. No less than 99 of us made our way on the great day to the pier that then existed at Wainlodes. It was a grey day with a slight drizzle every now and then and we found it rather cold on the boat. Yet we were all so glad to get away for a bit that we did not mind much. By the time we arrived at Worcester it opened out into a quite hot sunny day. Our return journey was quite a contrast to what we had experienced in the morning and we thoroughly enjoyed the trip. For some reason I was given a memento of the occasion - a photo graph of Worcester Cathedral.

The War over, a fashion grew up for going on much longer outings than we had earlier. In 1946 we went by coach to Weymouth. It was a fine day but windy and when we got there the sand was blowing about a lot so we did not enjoy ourselves as much as we had hoped to do. Next year 1947, we went even farther afield to Aberystwith. Again it was a damp grey

morning. On the way we made a detour to have a look at the famous Devil's Bridge. As a result we were very late arriving for lunch. The caterers were wondering what had become of us. We had a few hours enjoyment there in much brighter weather but we had a shock when the coach drivers insisted on our leaving at 5.30 p.m. We protested about this as it meant only about three hours' stay but they were adamant as apparently they had an agreement with their employers that all outings should start back home at that time. The journey back gave us some consolation as the visibility was excellent, the sun shining, and we saw the Welsh mountains in the best possible conditions.

It had now become obvious that these journeys were too long for the smaller children so we made do in future with our former haunts and Porthcawl.

VERY EARLY DAYS

In the time of Edward the Confessor, King of England before the Conqueror came, Norton belonged to the Archbishop of York, whose name was Stigand. It remained so for centuries. Some time before 1272, the manor of Norton was divided into two. One remained with the Archbishop hence the name Bishop's Norton, and the other became attached to St. Oswald's Priory at Gloucester and so became Prior's Norton.

In the time of Henry 8th, when St. Oswald's was dissolved, the manor together with the church of St. John was sold to William Broxholm. This church of St. John, which has completely disappeared, must have been the original church of the village and was certainly in existence in 1126 as it was then put in the patronage of St. Oswald's Priory. Nobody knows now where it was situated. The present Parish Church of St. Mary the Virgin has no work in it older than about 1250, which is considered to be the date of the Chancel.

So it must have been the case that for a long time Norton had two churches, St. John's and St. Mary's, probably one in Bishop's Norton and the other at Prior's Norton. This is why the name of St. John was given to the former Wesleyan Chapel when it was bought in 1958.

Going on down the centuries till we get to the 18th, we pause to correct two mistakes on the list of Vicars board in the Church. Whoever drew up the wording does not seem to have been aware that Rev. John Mower, in charge of Norton from 1686, was succeeded by his son also named John who lived for only a year afterwards. He in turn was followed by the Rev. Dan Bond Head master of the Crypt School, who combined that post with being Vicar of The Leigh and Curate in charge of Norton from 1729 till 20 years later. His date is given on the board mentioned as 1743 (?). This is entirely wrong as can be seen from the signatures in the registers. The statement of the late Roland Austin who wrote the official history of the Crypt, that he became Vicar on retirement from the Crypt in 1750 is also completely wrong. I have passed on this information to the County Records Office. The List of Vicars at The Leigh is even more wrong.

We have some old Churchwardens accounts in Norton that give us a little information about some features of the church. On April 26th 1826, the sum of £6.5.0. was paid for Tables of Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments &c. These have completely vanished and were presumably done away with when the church was restored in 1876. The Leigh still has its Tables of Commandments that were made in 1743. In 1832 one Daniels was paid £5.12.6. for "painting arms". This would be the coat of arms of King William 4th. It was customary to have these in churches but not many were made later than 1832. Then in 1838 comes a very interesting item. On June 15th £10 was given for "an oak communion table and chest to correspond". It is very probable that this refers to the table we now have and the chest by the font. Then comes "Crimson cloth cover of Table and Trimming &c. £2.18.0. I think it is quite possible that this refers to the

crimson alter frontal we still have as this has a most unusual top arrangement for fitting to the altar of a kind I have never seen or heard of.

Going on to the end of the century, we find that a surpliced choir was introduced in 1890 or possibly 1891, when the Rev. R.Marks was Vicar, as we see from the fact that £17.17.3. was paid for cassocks and surplices and Walter James was paid £1.16.0 for Choir Desks. I think these were the smallish movable desks that are still there; the stalls came later. At that date it was considered High Church to have surpliced choirs in country places. In connection with this I may say that many years ago I found a Hymns Ancient and Modern in one of the back pews with a date in the early 1880s written into it. At that date, this hymnbook also thought to be very High Church. All this is confirmed by what I was told by a stranger at an Evensong before the War who said that 40 or more years before that He used to live at The Leigh and added that in those days Norton was thought to be very High Church not least because they sang the responses.

The choir stalls were completed in 1916 at a cost of £24 when Mr. Cherrington was Vicar. Until 1908, the choir used the vestry but then it was found to be too small and so the base of the tower was adapted putting in matchboarding &c.

Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee was celebrated in some way but how we do not know but for the Diamond Jubilee we get the entry "Jubilee special prayers and hymns" 5/6. For the Boer war there is "soldiers hymn" 8/4.

According to Norton's Poor Law Terrier of 1838, Samuel Roberts lived at the School House which is described as Cottage and Garden and seems to have been in Bradley cottages. So he was the Schoolmaster.

Contrary to what some people imagine, the church attendances in the days were very small and much less than in these days. There was no Holly Communion on Christmas Day 1822 but they had it on the following Sunday when there were 17 communicants. The collection was 7/1. On

Easter Day 1824 there were 15- with a collection of 6/10. These and other particulars about the services in the 1820s and 60s are entered on the fly leaf of an old Prayer Book in the vestry. There are several references to congregations of 2 and even none.

In 1838, besides the King's Head and the Red Lion, there was a Beer House in Cold Elm kept by Hannah Baylis and a Cider House kept by Deborah Leech and it had 1 acre of land including an orchard and is described being near Norton Farm. I remember the late Walter James once telling me that he remembered quite a number of houses down the lane which have long since disappeared and also houses stretching from Yew Tree Farm to Sandhurst. Then old Mrs. Freeman who lived in Benge's cottage and was 90 in 1940 told me that she remembered many houses around the church and down on the main road near West House.

In 1846, the Rev. Marmaduke Cockin, who had been a chaplain to Queen Adelaide and had recently become Vicar of Norton, issued an appeal for money to build a Vicarage. A printed leaflet was issued saying that there never had been a vicarage at Norton. This disposes of any theory that there had been one here or there in the parish. There never had been a vicar resident in the parish so, he says "many things have been left undone which ought to have been attempted for the temporal and spiritual welfare of the Parishioners." So, we may gather, they had been neglected, and we should probably not be far wrong if we were to guess that this was a main reason why the Wesleyan Chapel was built on the Green by Richard Taylor and others in 1841. It was estimated by the architect that it would cost £1000 to build a vicarage plus £200 for expenses. Towards this Mr. Cockin gave £200 out of his own pocket and parted with £400 of the endowment of the living thus making its value only £38 a year. Miss Webb of Norton Court gave £100 and also the site.

Nearly 30 years later, another appeal was issued t time by the Rev. F.J. Atwood who had become Vicar in 1874. The Vicarage had been found to be too small, a new building was needed for a school and the church had

to be restored. About £1100 was needed for the church, £880 for the school and £900 to extend and alter the vicarage. He said the church was "in a most lamentable condition and, owing to the defective state of the roof of the Nave, to be most unfit for public worship. The Chancel, porch and south wall of the nave have to be entirely re-built and re-roofed. It is also considered desirable at the same time to construct a Vestry and Organ Chamber." Mr. Atwood followed the example of his predecessor and gave £200 of his own money towards the Vicarage and £50 each to church and school.

There are certain points that arise out of all this that are worth recording. One is this: the Victorians are often blamed in books for the way in which they restored churches with the suggestion that they were too heavy handed and needlessly altered this or that of the old buildings. What is not taken into account is that so often the churches they restored were in such a poor state of preservation that they had little option. The next point is how much the church owes to those clergy who had private means and were ready to give handsomely towards what was after all the financial responsibility of others. In the cases mentioned above, Mr. Cockin and Mr. Atwood contributed more than any other single body or person towards the costs of church, school, and vicarage. The third thing that emerges is that we now know the date of Norton School which was in some doubt before. It was 1875.

It is an interesting coincidence that the Vicarage at The Leigh was built at the same time as the one at Norton. The story there was a bit different. There had already been one but it was described in 1812 as "a cottage not fit for a clergyman to live in". There had for long been complaints that the Vicars had not been living in the parish. This seems to apply to all of them in the first half of last century. The badness of the house may have been a contributory reason. These Vicars of The Leigh employed curates to do their work for them. There is an impressive looking list of them on the church wall but it becomes less so when we discover that the parishioners

were complaining that they too did not live in the parish and in any case were of poor quality. They were so irate about it that in the 1840's the people not only complained to the Bishop but even to the Archbishop of Canterbury him-self. When we are inclined to be nostalgic about the past of the church, it is just as well recall things like this.

While the Vicar of Norton in 1851 was paid £38 a year for his work, the Vicar of The Leigh got £240. So we can now see why so often the Latter was also put in charge of Norton, or the other way round. It was so that he could get what might have been in those days a living wage and, of course, this is one of the reasons why our parishes were joined in 1947.

To go back to the restoration of Norton Church. The job was begun in 1875. Not only was the fabric of the church in a poor state but there was also a lack of some necessary furniture. A new pulpit and font had to be bought, five of the bells had to be rehung, one recast, and sundry repairs made to the Tower. New flooring had to be laid and much expense was caused by the necessity of lowering the height of the churchyard, Owing to the fact that graves had to be made on top of where there had been graves before over the centuries, in very many places the level of the churchyard had got higher and higher until it was well up the church walls. This was always especially the case on the South side of churches. Generally speaking you will never find ancient graves on the North side of the church as in the old days they did not like to be buried on that side.

The work was still uncompleted by July 1876. By then, the Nave had cost £695, Tower and bells £56, new Vestry £160, seats £48, church furniture £106, churchyard £65. It was reckoned that a further £152 was required to complete the job.

In the vestry there is a photograph of the church as it looked in 1876 after this work had been done. It was given to us by Captain Walker when he left the parish. There is a very striking difference in the look of the churchyard. Trees were conspicuous by their absence and the whole looks

very bare. Where the present path runs there was just a miserable narrow track with an even worse one going u to the old priest's door in the chancel.

At one time there was a gallery at the back of Norton Church and also one at The Leigh. These had gone by the time the churches were restored.

TESS HUGHES'S BELLS

Up to 1935 six bells hung in the tower of Norton Church. Treble bell, 5 cwt, made in 1685. Second bell, $5\frac{1}{2}$ cwt, same date and inscribed - If you ask who gave me, Squire Butt of Hatherlee. Third bell, 6 cwt 1685, inscribed- I am third bell for to ring many a day for Our King. The King referred to must be James 2nd. Fourth bell, $7\frac{1}{2}$ cwt, 1711, inscribed William Fluck, William Welch Churchwardens. Fifth bell, 9 cwt, 1735, inscribed John Poole and William Mann, Churchwardens. Sixth bell, 12 cwt, no inscription.

In 1931 Captain G.N. Walker paid for the bells to be overhauled and the Tower restored at a cost of about £600. The Bishop of Gloucester, then Bishop Headlam, came out to dedicate them. There is a photograph in the tower of the Bishop, Vicar, Churchwardens and choir and ringers taken on this occasion. There is also a board on the wall recording the event.

About a year after this, a resident of Norton, Miss Esther Hughes who belonged to a very keen bellringing family applied to the Parochi1 Church Council for permission to present two extra bells in memory of her father and brother who had been noted ringers in their day The Council was much agitated by this request as they were afraid to upset Captain Walker who might not like the idea. Anyway, some members would have preferred to have something else to be given to the church. Miss Hughes's champion on the Council was Mr.H.A.Cook who said he could not see why the offer should not be accepted as it would cost the church nothing. However the PCC suggested that they might be given a stained glass

window or a striking clock or a lych gate instead. So they deputed Mr. Cook to go and see Miss Hughes and suggest to her that she should give one of these instead and later they decided to send the late Miss Mullens as well. Miss Hughes would have none of it; it was to be bells or nothing. This was reported back to the PCC, presided over by the then Vicar the Rev. W.A.Congdon. He suggested that a ballot on paper should be held and the voting came out 6 each way. He refused to give a casting vote.

A few months later a new Vicar arrived. Another meeting of the FCC was held in due course, at which the voting was 9 for and 3 against. In the meanwhile they got the new Vicar to go to her and suggest that she should give a chalice. Answer - No. Then came the 1935 Easter Vestry meeting at the school. This was packed and was it the only time I have ever anywhere seen a full house for an Easter Vestry. It was commonly said in the village that the reason for this was to make sure that the right people, who would be in favour of the bells, were voted on to the Council. So, after much ado, the PCC agreed to apply for a faculty to hang these bells. To cut a long story, the bells were hung and then dedicated on October 17th, 1935 by the Archdeacon of Gloucester who was then Mr.Hodson, later Bishop of Tewkesbury. One very wet night about a week afterwards the Vicarage bell rang and there was Miss Hughes with a bootbox under her arm. In she came and opened the box. It contained a silver cup. She said that as I had been so kind to her and enabled her bells to be hung that she had bought a chalice for the church. As She had kept this a great secret and had asked no one's advice as to the right kind of cup for the purpose, she had procured one of not very suitable shape. She was never told this, and it was thankfully received.

Some months later, Captain Walker called my attention to the fact that the cup had no inscription upon it recounting its origin. He asked me if he could take it away and get one put on it. This was done and when it came back I was shocked as a large inscription had been engraved across the

bowl instead of on the base and it looked exactly like a cup that had been won in some competition.

It was rather too large for ordinary use so we restricted it to festivals when there would be more people in church. Having used it thus for many years, it mysteriously disappeared and we came to the conclusion that it must have been stolen. This was about 15 years ago.

Tess Hughes kept the village shop. At that time there was a cottage at right angles to the road opposite the top of Wainlodes lane. This was her shop but it was not the Post Office which was farther along the road and was kept by Mrs. Goulter. Outside was a cigarette slot machine much patronised by visitors going down the lane. On the other side of the shop was a dog kennel inhabited by a little and noisy black and white dog which always barked when customers came. Inside was a counter flanked by boxes of goods and behind it was an open fire in front of which Tess always dried her sticks. If you went inside and asked for some potatoes. Tess would sally out into her garden and dig them for you there and then. She was rather imposed upon by travellers and often persuaded to order far more goods than she really needed for her business. An example of this was when some firm made packets of picture postcards of Norton and got her to order a vast quantity of them. These packets contained six cards showing views of the inside and out of the church, the Green, the Cliff at Wainlodes and the landing stage and a view of the Severn taken from the top of the hill.

A fortnight after her bells were dedicated, the shop was burnt out. I am almost certain it was early in the morning of November 2nd 1935. She shouted for help from her bedroom window and was rescued by Mr. Bert Stephens who lived a few yards away. Mr. Joe Hughes also came to her help. The shop was gutted though Tess herself was not much harmed. She had a distrust of banks and kept most of her money in buckets that hung from the beams. The place after the fire was littered with coins. Even more serious was the fact that she had a lot of £5 notes on the premises.

In those days men working on the estate were often paid with these notes and they used to take them to the shop to be changed into coins. Fortunately, many fragments these still retained their numbers and Captain Walker was able to take them to the bank and get them changed for money, so the loss was not quite as great as it might have been. The building itself was a wreck and later on had to be pulled down.

For a time, Miss Hughes went to live with her niece at Longford to get over the shock but she soon came back to Norton and lived in one of Tythe Cottages, which Mr.A.J.Cook let her have, and there she opened a shop again. This arrangement did not last long and she moved to West House where she lived for the rest of her life with Mr. & Mrs. Hughes. There again she had a small shop. When Tess went from there on Sunday evenings to church, she used to find the steep bit of the Church Lane very trying and, believe it or not, she used to walk up it backwards as she found it easier that way. We often found her doing this and used to give her a lift up in the car.

A photograph of her bells was given to the church and it still hangs in the Tower. They were cast by Mr. Bond of Burford.

THE **CHILDREN'S** SERVICE

In the early days of the War, some of the Norton mothers one Sunday met me at the bottom of the Church Lane and asked me if it would be possible to have a children's service on Sunday afternoons instead of Evensong. It should be explained that during the War we could not have evening service at the usual time because of the black-out and we had it in the afternoon. This, of course, put an end to Sunday School which in those days we held at the day school. Incidentally we also had the ordinary church services there on Sundays when we could not get to church because of flooding at the bottom of the lane which used to occur quite often before they put in proper drainage years later.

Well, I said Yes. So we had this locally famous service on alternative Sundays with ordinary Evensong. At that time we had a lot of church going children in Norton aged from about 10 to 14. For this service, I wrote a version of shortened Evensong in modern English and children read the lessons. On a few occasions we had youngsters giving a short address. We had excellent congregations as many adults came to it and it even became known farther afield and people would come from Gloucester, including a mistress or two from Denmark Road High School. It could be called a success and went on for several years, though it is only fair to admit that a few parishioners did not care for it.

At that time I used to go occasionally to the BBC at Birmingham by the 9 a.m. bus to discuss church music and other things with Dr. W.K. Stanton who was then BBC Director of Music for the Midland Region. Naturally he was told about this service and the BBC got quite excited about it and wanted to broadcast it. It was arranged that Dr. Welch, then Religious Director of the BBC, should come to Birmingham to have a chat with me. I got to Birmingham on the day fixed for this but no Dr. Welch appeared. We could not understand why. Then he turned up very late and we learned that there had been a raid on the railway line on which he was travelling. The result was that we did not have long enough time for a real discussion but long enough for him to ask me to take part in a series of talks that the BBC was arranging to have. In the event, this series never took place because of war emergencies. In preparation for it, I had to go up to the BBC to have my voice tested &c and to attend a conferee of clergy, some of them well known personalities, in connection with broadcasting.

Later on I got a request from the BBC to allow them not only to broadcast the Children's Service but also one of our Harvest Service and an ordinary routine one. Unfortunately it all came to nothing when they found that we had no mains electricity in the village and so they would not be able to work their machines. So the BBC never came to Norton until this year of

1973 when the WI got them to broadcast a recorded programme of a panel of Gardening experts answering questions in the Village Hall.

I have always thought that in some ways the War years were the days of Norton's glory. Never before or since have we approached such a pinnacle of church attendance. In 1941 we had 108 communicants at Easter, and on no less than five occasions we had over 100 in those years, and just after the War. I well remember how in 1947, the year that I became Vicar of The Leigh and we had to start having Lay Readers to take some of the services. Mr. Holden, who was Manager of SPCK in Gloucester, came out to take Evensong at Norton. I met him few days afterwards and he went out of his way to say that he had been astonished by the size of our congregation. He had taken the trouble to count them and said there were between 60 and 70 in church, mostly young adults.

INSIDE THE CHURCH

While one could not say that the interior of Norton Church has been altered out of all recognition over the years since 1934, considerable improvements have been made. Take the immediate surroundings of the altar. In those days the curtains around it were not attractive. There were two tired sage green curtains at the sides and one behind covered with a design whose colours did not match the side-curtains it looked as if they were no relation to each other.

On the East wall were some slightly dingy and dilapidated red ones. The Frontals were in reasonable condition and the white and red ones are still in use. The first ones to go were the curtains. During the war money was got together in one way and another, quite a bit raised by the Mother's Union, to buy some new ones. At last in 1944 we had some new tapestry ones made - was the last piece of that material left to the makers owing to war conditions. The old red ones were removed from the wall and the present green ones hung in their place. At last the sanctuary was beginning to look worthy of its purpose. We had a set of purple curtains

that were of so dark a shade that thought they were black. Often we should like to have had them done away with but it was not till 1970 that we were able to do anything about it. We had been given £400 by Mrs. Watson of Sandhurst in memory of her husband. It was originally intended that this should be used for redecorating the walls but the PCC thought we were more in need of extending the heating to the chancel and back of the church. Mrs. Watson agreed to this and the money that was not used for this was devoted to purchasing materials for a new lot of curtains and two new frontals for the altar. So a band of ladies of the parish under the leadership of Mrs. Sparrow, and with much help from Mrs. Dorward, made a complete set of purple ones together with a new purple frontal as by this time the old ones had become discoloured and shabby. Later they made a new set of green ones, which we had lacked before, and a new green frontal. Both these sets are very handsome.

There were numerous hassocks in the church but over the years many had been moth eaten or worn out and these have now been covered in Mary blue by the same ladies. There was a strip of carpet along the altar rail which did not do much to ease the hardness of one's knees of the stone underneath. Mrs Sparrow set about making a long kneeler of generous depth and this supplanted the carpet.

In 1934 there were in front of the pulpit several pews that were beginning to sag and before long they began to sink into the floor at one end. By early 1936 it was clear that something would have to be done about them. The Diocesan Surveyor was called in and he made it obvious that much of the flooring of the church would have to be taken up and replaced, he having had a site meeting with the Churchwardens, Mr. H.L.Bailey (the estate foreman) and myself. His report was presented to an emergency meeting of the PCC. It recommended that three quarters of the floor should be removed, owing to dry rot, and wood blocks set in 10 inches of concrete should be laid down instead. Two members voted against but the majority was in favour and a week later an estimate for £60.6.0 was

accepted. The piece of floor not altered was that immediately behind the font which had been renewed not long before.

The church walls were painted a depressing grey shade and they were not given something brighter till many years later, about 1958.

Then there was the matter of choir dress. In November 1934 one of the FCC complained about the state of the cassocks and surplices. Three weeks later at another meeting, after Mrs. Walker and other ladies had inspected them, it was reported that practically all the boys things should be scrapped but the men's could be repaired though they also were in poor condition. It was passed unanimously that £17 but no more should be spent on getting new ones for the boys. At the same time a set of ruffs was given. These, however, proved to be a problem and they soon became very dirty and the buttons to fasten them regularly came off.

In 1941, Mrs. Walker presented the church with a very valuable piece of Portuguese lace for the front of the altar. Originally this had been in some church in Portugal but had been in this country in her family since about 1823. The other lace we use during Lent was made and give to the church by Miss Organ before 1934. Mrs. Walker at the same time also gave us a fine baptismal shell of mother of pearl. This has since been in regular use.

Back again in 1934. The altar linen was meagre in the extreme and poor at that so some more and better things were given. Men some years ago Miss. K.E.Cook gave us a new white linen cloth for the top the altar; this was a much needed and very welcome addition.

The white burse and veil for the chalice was in poor condition and a new one was given about 1946. Since then the others have gradually worn out as they must have been of great age. These were superseded 1973 when new green and purple vestments with matching burses and veils were presented to the church.

One very interesting gift was the Litany Book that we used to use. This was bought from profits made by the Dramatic Society just before the war.

The Mother's Union Banner was purchased by the MU early in 1939 Mrs. C. Price, Mrs. A.J.Cook and I were deputed by the Mothers' Union to get one, so we did the journey to Oxford to Mowbrays in March of that year and with the funds we had been given we bought what we have all seen standing by the altar ever since.

I was shocked to find when I came that the chalice was made of brass. I had never seen or heard of such a thing and I quickly got it silver plated. There was practically nothing in the way of altar cruets so new material had to be given.

The Children's Corner is another story. This grew up in the early days of the war when such things were much in fashion. The various items were given anonymously by various members of the congregation. But the crucifix with the brass figure was given some years later in memory of old Mrs. Walter Jordan.

The handsome green curtain of vast size, only recently put up place of the old red one that was filthy, moth-eaten and on its last legs, came from the same ladies as the other curtains mentioned above. It has greatly improved the appearance of the back of the church.

One fruitful source of trouble in the old days was a small stove that stood in the chancel. This often refused to draw and sometime when it did blew out such smoke that it blackened everything, reach. Then there was a large stove where the Children's Corner now is. This never gave out adequate heat. The Walker's used to have beside their pew rusty old oil stove that had at one time belonged to the WI.

At the same PCC meeting that discussed the choir dress, a report was given on the state of the church gate. It was said to be not worth repairing

Mr. P. Coulter offered to make a new one if oak could be provided for it. Mrs. Walker said she would give the wood and by Autumn 1935 a new gate was in place. There is a small brassplate on the back of the gate recording these facts.

One more fact must be mentioned. If you look at the inside wall of the porch you will see a gap in it. This was where for a very short while we had a so-called "burglar-proof safe" for visitor's gifts. It was soon burgled.

JOINING THE PARISHES

One Spring day in 1947, I was talking to Bishop Woodward in his study when he suddenly asked me if I would be willing to become Vicar of The Leigh as well as Norton. That parish was vacant as the previous Vicar had been appointed to another. The reasons were that The Leigh was badly endowed and had been heavily assisted by the diocese to provide a living wage for the incumbent. More than this, the supply of clergy was getting smaller and there were no longer enough to enable every small parish to have its own vicar. So all over the country the policy now had to be that small parishes should be held two or more together by one man. In the foreseeable future this would have to happen more and more. It was perfectly obvious that if The Leigh were to be joined to any other parish then Norton was the most suitable. Added to this was the fact that I had already been at Norton for 13 years and had upon occasion taken services at The Leigh, so I should not be a total stranger to its people. After some discussion I agreed to do so. The Patron of The Leigh was the Lord Chancellor and he was willing to make this appointment. This was not in fact a totally new thing. Norton and The Leigh had been under the same Vicar on several occasions. For example The Rev. John Mower, his son and the Rev. Dan Bond had all been Vicar's of the two, covering the period from 1686 to 1748 or 9.

No parish likes the idea of not having its own Vicar living on the spot and there is always a feeling that he may pay more attention to the one he

lives in. In the nature of things there is something in this and cannot be helped but as long as favouritism is not involved it is not serious. Up and down the country some wonderful reasons have been given by parishes why they should not be joined to their neighbour. There is at least one case on record (not in this diocese) where the Churchwardens have bluntly given the authorities their opinion of the next parish- "we hates the sight of they". I do know of two amusing ones in Gloucestershire which occurred about twenty years back. In the first instance the reason given was "They was for the Parliament and we was for the King" thus showing that local memories went back to the Civil War, 3 centuries ago. As a matter of fact these two places had been at loggerheads since the Middle Ages. The other one went back even farther They would not help us when the Danes came here" a thousand years before.

Though I was not actually instituted to The Leigh till July 1947, as the parish had no vicar and it was known that I was going to be the next one I took my first services in that parish as prospective incumbent on Easter Day, April 6th. This applies to both the Parish Church and St. Stephen's.

One problem at once presented itself and that was what would happen to the Vicarage. Obviously I could not live in two different houses and there was no reason why I should leave the one at Norton. So The Leigh Vicarage was let and to two doctors in succession. The first was Mr. Sugars the Surgeon. He soon obtained a post far away and Dr. Thornton came in his place. The church authorities, when he too left, decided that the house should be sold, as there was no likelihood of its being needed for a vicarage in any foreseeable future. In the inter al some undesirable persons broke into the house and ripped out the lead pipes, causing a great deal of damage. The police caught up with them and the penalty was paid.

The next question calling for solution was St. Stephen's; in those days always referred to as the Mission Church. This had been erected at Coombe Hill in 1890 with the idea that it should have alternate Evensongs

with the Parish Church and on the Sundays in between a Holy Communion service. However good this might have been in theory, it was a fact that there were those who thought it should never have been built and in any case should be closed now. The main reasons given were that it had for years been poorly attended and it was a drain on the finances of the parish.

What was the right thing to do about it? I soon found that the Coombe Hill people took the view that if it were close, they would never go to the Parish Church, as, for one thing, it was too far away. There were two people who more than anyone had kept the place going and they were old Mrs. Edward Cook and Mrs. Underhay. But it was undeniable that the collections and congregations were tiny. There seemed to be no cause for optimism as to its future.

Yet it was clear that the onus was upon me to make a decision one way or the other as to whether the church should be kept open or just left to die a natural death which did not seem too far away. Upon what criterion should that decision be based? Apart from the wishes of the few who attended it, that is. Well it was this - was there or was there not anything that could restore it to life? There it was with its genuine Jacobean altar, presumably discarded from the Parish Church when it was restored, covered with a rather dull frontal that did not fit or hang properly with two decrepit and peculiar candlesticks upon it and with very little in the vestry that was fit to be used for a service; with a broken down Bible on the lectern and little in the way of hymn and service books. In spite of unpromising appearances, I thought it could be rejuvenated. First, what was needed was a sense of security. No one likes being treated as poor and unwanted relation. No one likes having its finances, however meagre, managed grudgingly by some one else. No one likes to feel that it has practically no say in its own affairs.

So we got going. In a very short while, I announced that the church would certainly not be closed as long as I was Vicar. After this statement, the size

of the congregation began to increase steadily. Next, it was arranged that the Mission should have a proper amount of representation on the PCC and that it should have its own deputy churchwardens. Being thus encouraged, the people readily began to make improvements in the appearance and fittings - a work that has gone on ever since.

At first the two parishes were held in what is called plurality, which really means with no permanent arrangement. By 1953 it was clear that something more definite was needed and the two were made into a united benefice. This makes no obvious difference to the Parishioners but it is desirable legally. One thing it did alter. Up to then, the two parishes had been in different Rural Deaneries but now they had to be brought into one so The Leigh came from the Tewkesbury Deanery into that of Gloucester North, which had recently been formed.

This is the story of it. At one time Norton had been part of the old Gloucester Deanery which included the City of Gloucester and the villages North and South of it for some miles. It was, in fact, one of the largest deaneries in the country. For twenty five years past it to been felt that it ought to be divided up into two but nobody had discovered how it could be done satisfactorily. There was not enough in common between the city and the villages and meetings of the deanery clergy tended to be taken up too such with matters of interest to the city but of none to the country. Yet it seemed that the only way the deanery could be divided into two would be either to run an imaginary line through the centre of Gloucester and make a North and South deanery, and this was quite impracticable, or possibly to have a deanery of the city only and another one of the country parishes around it. This made no sense either. Then one day I had an unexpected brain-wave and suggested to the Bishop that we should divide the lot into three. Apparently no one had thought of this but Bishop Woodward liked the idea and soon it was put into effect and I became the first Rural Dean of Gloucester North.

THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

Why and how did we acquire the church on the Green? For a long time, Norton people had been saying what a pity it was that the Church was so far from the village. In those days, the centre of population in Norton was the village green and cars were not numerous. There were very few houses near the Parish Church. This was also true of Cold Elm, which the Post Office now calls Old Tewkesbury Road. Marry were those who told me that the Church was too far away for them to attend it, especially those who lived in the Wainlodes area. This was sad but there did not seem to be anything we could do about it.

What we did attempt for some time was to hold occasional services, about once a month, at the Reading Room. This Evensong used to be quite well attended but it had to be rather a makeshift affair. There was no organ or piano to assist the singing and naturally there was no altar. So what we used to do was to rig up an imitation altar made up of card tables covered over with some candlesticks put upon it. It also meant that hymnbooks and Psalters and Prayer books had to be brought to it from the church. All rather inconvenient, but it was better than nothing.

Then one morning in 1958, July, my telephone rang. It turned out to be the Superintendent Minister of the Gloucester Methodist Circuit, the Reverend Cyril Thomas who at that time I hardly knew. He said that the appropriate Methodist Committee had come to the conclusion that they could no longer keep their Chapel on Norton Green going. Their architect had told them that it needed a lot of money to be spent on it and such expenditure could not be justified when so few went to it, and nearly all these came from outside Norton. On the other hand were most anxious that the chapel should remain a place of worship if at all possible and not be put to some use unworthy of its history. The Methodists would be delighted if it could be used by the Church of England. Would I be interested in buying it from them? I had to do some rapid thinking and

make a decision then and there. So I said forthwith "Yes, certainly, I should be very pleased to buy it myself for the use of the parish".

Having gone so far, I next had to think out the details. I came to the conclusion that I would fit it up and give it to the parish in memory of the many years that I and my two aunts had been connected with Norton. It should be furnished with the very best that could be obtained of everything down to the last hymnbook. Not a penny would it cost the parish. You would have thought that the diocese would have been very pleased about this arrangement, since it would be getting another church for absolutely nothing. Not a bit of it. I met with nothing but discouragement. I had to report the scheme to the Diocesan Secretary and all I got in reply was "You know you are putting an additional burden upon the shoulders of the parish". At the same time, I had to write to the then Bishop about it. All the welcome it got from Bishop Askwith was that he hoped enough was going to be done to the chapel to make it look like a church. In neither case was there the slightest suggestion that I should have any thanks for doing this out of my own pocket. To do Bishop Askwith justice, when he saw the finished article afterwards he never ceased to praise its appearance.

The first thing to do would be to re-arrange the interior and to decorate it. As there was no vestry, one would have to be constructed. It would be necessary to move the pulpit to one side and to paint all the woodwork. I asked Mr.R.J. Stubbs, who lived in Norton as a boy to do all this and the splendid way in which he carried out the work can be seen today.

With the new layout there would be too many pews to be used and so the surplus ones were sent to Quedgeley Methodist Church.

In consultation with my aunt, Mrs. C.E.Price, I decided on a colour scheme; the walls cream, the woodwork white, and the carpet deep rose. The carpet was supplied and fitted by Cavendish House of Cheltenham. Then there would have to be an altar. This was specially made and is of

enormous weight. The frontal, the-crucifix and four gilded candlesticks &c were also specially made for this church, hand made. No flower vases were bought as it was felt to be too difficult for the village to supply two churches with flowers every week. Also, in view of the fact that there would be no room for storing things, we should have to make do with one frontal only that would do for all seasons of the Church Year. The only way this could be done suitably was to get one made of the right kind of tapestry. This was done. However, there was no reason why we should not have a full set of vestments, burses and veils in the appropriate colours as were obtained. It would further be necessary to get a solid silver chalice and paten with the chalice gilded on the inside. It may be worth recording here that the white chalice veil, which again was specially made, has a wide edging of valuable French lace. This part of the story must not end without mentioning the fact that much of the alteration to the wood-work that was needed and the making of new things in wood was carried out by Mr. W.H. Poulton of The Leigh. It was he, for example who made the new noticeboard with interchangeable plates to inform anyone interested what would be the services each succeeding Sunday. The altar and candlesticks and crucifix were made by S.P.C.K.; the other things by Vippells.

The two memorial tablets on the walls were not interfered with and they are still there to record the noble work done by two men in the founding and continuance of Norton Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. Neither was it ever contemplated to remove the tablet outside proclaiming that it was built as such in 1841. It was only right that posterity should know these things.

All was now ready for the Bishop to come and he did so on November 7th 1958. He consecrated the altar with its traditional five crosses upon it, and dedicated the chalice, paten, vestments, burses and veils &c. The building itself was not consecrated but dedicated. The special service for all this was printed and one or two copies of it still exist. It turned out to be a very

wet night and one consequence of this was that we have always had a dark patch on the carpet by the door ever since. The reason why the church was dedicated in the name of St. John the Evangelist was that centuries ago there was a church of this name in Norton.

I was most anxious that St. John's should never be thought of as in any way a rival to the Parish Church and that is why no font was put in it nor, by agreement with the Bishop, was it licensed for marriages. On the Parochial Church Council we discussed how the various services should be divided up between the two churches and we were quite unanimous that they should be exactly alternate: that if certain service was held at one church on any Sunday, the next one should be at the other church.

The following February, Mr. Walter James who had looked after the Chapel for so many years died at the age of 96. It was thought to be very appropriate that his body should be taken into it for the first part of the funeral service and that the Methodist Minister should have the principal part in conducting it. This was the right thing to do and it was so done.

The narrative shall be finished off by mentioning the tradition current in the village that when the Chapel was first built. Miss Webb, who had succeeded her father Colonel Edward Webb T.F. at Norton Court, was unwilling ever to pass the Chapel on her way to the church. To avoid having to do this, she had a new drive made across the meadows so that she could go direct from Court to Church. By the way, there is a tablet to Colonel Webb in the Cathedral on the North Wall of the Nave.

THE HORTICULTURAL STORY

During the Second War, we had a Food Production Society in the village. Its Secretary was Miss. K.Cook. This Society held a small show at the School in 1945. In those days people in villages were encouraged to keep rabbits to help out with meat production so it was arranged to cater for rabbits at this show. The result was that, in addition to the ordinary kind of

display inside the school, the playground was taken up with hutches of rabbits. The leading spirit of this show was Mr. Pratt who was then Head Gardener at Norton Court. We all thought it was quite a good show and it was much enjoyed. This was the first Horticultural Show in Norton.

When the War came to an end, so did the Society, so we did no more in this way until the Village Hall was erected.

In the Parish Magazine of October 1947, in the course of an account of the activities of our new hall I wrote these words: 'Now that we have a hall in which it could be held, we ought to consider whether we may not have a Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Show next year. Many will remember the quite successful show that we had a couple of years or so ago which we held at the school. This was, of course, an offshoot of the village Food Production Club which was then in existence. Although that club is now defunct, there does not seem to be any reason why a show could not be organised as a thing on its own. Anyway, I commend the idea to any who may be interested and I should be glad to hear whether there would be adequate support for such a show next year. If there is, we could set up a special committee to deal with it.

In May 1948, I wrote "I give preliminary notice that a Horticultural Show will be held at Norton Village Hall on Saturday, September 25th. There will be classes reserved for our own villages of Norton and The Leigh and others will be open to a larger area. Also there will be some classes for children and for ladies. A strong committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Purse has taken charge of the arrangements and more will be heard from them in due course". For those who do not know it, Mr. Purse had succeeded Mr. Pratt as Head Gardener at Norton Court.

In the September number we get the information that "Schedules may be obtained from the Secretary, Mr. Purse or from Mrs. H.Poulton at The Leigh."

Next month, October; "I think it is safe to say that the Show turned out to be a much greater success than anyone had dared to hope or expect. There were 361 entries and some late ones had to be refused as they could not be accommodated.. all the different sections were well patronised. It was especially pleasing to see so many entries in the children's classes. We were very fortunate to have the Mayor and Mayoress of Gloucester with us. They took a great interest in all heard and saw and were very impressed with the Show".

The judges were Messrs Hurran and Gough for the gardening side Mrs. Chamberlayne for the Preserves &c and children's classes. All the prizewinners deserve our congratulations, but especially Mr.W.Piff who won the largest number of prizes". "Our hope now is that the Show will become an annual event..I also hope that next year there will be at least one class for a collection of vegetables". But these hopes were fulfilled.

We must never forget how much the Show owes to its Chairmen and Secretaries over the years; Mrs. H.E. Poulton, Dr. Greene, Mr.H.A.Cook in the former capacity and Mrs. Hadley, Mrs. Finlay, Mrs. Arnold in latter. Nor should we forget how much the late Mr.Hadley did for us Show Organiser for so many years. But however good these officers have been they could not have done so much if it were not for the fact that they were backed up by all the hard work that has been done by the members of their committees. One more thing to notice; this show has from beginning been a two village affair in which both Norton and The Leigh have equally participated.

THE SCHOOL

In 1872, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners conveyed to the Vicar and Churchwardens of Norton - a piece of their land as a site for a school. The Vicar at that time was the Reverend Thomas Turner. The school was to be a Church of England School and no one could be appointed Head unless he was a member of that Church. The map on the Trust Deeds that Elm

House was then owned by Mr. Richard Vick; on either side of it the land belonged to Mr. Charles Walker as did most of the land round about, with the exception of that on the Gloucester side which was Glebe and the piece opposite the top of the lane which was owned a Mr. P.S. Meating. The large field now belonging to Mr. Whittaker named as Cold Elm Piece.

Then, as we have seen on an earlier page, an appeal was made in 1875 for money to build the school. As a result, the school was opened for use in 1876. In 1915 a new lavatory block was built and the Commissioners gave the Managers another small piece of land. This is the bit that forms a sort of triangle at the back of the playground.

When I came in 1934, there were 80 children in the school. It was an all-age school until they left. The exception to this was that from time to time a boy or a girl would win a scholarship to one of the Gloucester Schools like the Crypt or Rich's or Denmark Road. Those who did so had to cycle to Gloucester each day. The following year the numbers went up to 90 and this was the high point of our school numbers. These children were not all from Norton as the older pupils at The Leigh used to be transferred to Norton for their final years of schooling.

Then, in 1938 I think, national policy laid it down that children over 11 were to be transferred from these all-age schools and sent to secondary ones. So our older pupils had to leave Norton school and go to Longlevens. This was a great disappointment to Mr. Perrett, the Headmaster, who preferred teaching the older pupils and he would have liked to have got a post as Head of another school but the Shire Hall thought him too old to be given one.

In 1934 there was a staff of three teachers; Mr. Perrett, who had come to Norton in the summer term of 1919, and two women assistants. The Infants had the room that is now used as an office, while the big room contained two classes. There were no terrapins then; they were all housed in the original building. When the older pupils were removed, the school

population went down to 50 and by the end of the war was as low as 34. Mr. Perrett retired at the end of 1946 and was succeeded by Mrs. Morgan. In many ways she had a difficult task as the numbers fell eventually to as low as 15 or 18, which meant that for a long time she had no assistant at all and had to teach the children of all ages herself. I do not think that the parents always realised what a hard job this was. The reason for this low number of pupils was that for a long period in the fifties there were very few children in the village. Incidentally, this was why for so long we had no choir in the church.

Mrs. Morgan retired at the end of 1959. The County Education Committee then decided to close the school at The Leigh and to transfer the staff and pupils there to Norton. This did not actually happen until 1962. The Leigh School that summer celebrated its centenary and then closed down. Miss. N. Weston the Headmistress wrote a short history of the school for circulation so there is no need for me to say anything about it here. In due course, Miss Weston became Head of the combined school and remained so until she retired in 1966.

The following year the Managers appointed Mrs. D. Lewis to be the Head and happily she still remains such. Practically as soon as Abe took over, the LEA decided to close down the little school at Down Hatherley. This was not without a good deal of opposition there but it had to come about. When The Leigh children came here, a terrapin was supplied to make extra accommodation for no longer was it contemplated that a large number of children could be squeezed into the original building. Then when the Hatherley children came another terrapin was obtained. On this occasion a kitchen was attached to it. A kitchen had been built during the war on to the old school but this was no longer adequate. Since then after much delay and heartburning, this original kitchen has been transformed into a staff room.

At the end of the war, all over the country schemes of reorganisation of schools were produced. The Gloucestershire one was based upon three

five-year periods and in the third of these Norton School was to become an area school catering for Norton, The Leigh, Down Hatherley, Twigworth and Sandhurst. It was intended that children from all these villages should be housed in one school at Norton. Events overtook the scheme and it has had to be revised - a process which is still going on. Norton will still eventually become an area school but what it will include no one can yet say.

In the meanwhile, problems arose for the Managers. In 1946, they were invited by the LEA to extend the school at the cost of many thousands or preferably to build a new one at the cost of more thousands. Up to this date, the expenses of the school had been met by the Managers but they could not contemplate raising the money for this new scheme. So they had to apply for what is known as Controlled Status. This would mean that costs of upkeep etc. would be borne by the authority but certain restrictions would be put upon what may be called the Church side of the school. The School, however, would still be a Church of England School.

Now it is desirable to say a few things about this reorganisation, because parents still do not quite see the need for it. No village likes to have its school closed and its children taken to another village. There are many who feel that it helps to break up village life. What, then, is the need for it? One factor is the disproportionate cost of keeping open a very small school under modern conditions. It simply cannot be afforded if children are to be given modern education facilities and amenities. It costs very much less to transfer the children by bus elsewhere than to pay the large sums of money required to keep open a small school. Secondly, for the last generation it has been thought by the educational experts that no school is viable that has less than three separate classes, each taught by a different teacher. In short, no child gets full educational value unless it is taught in course by three different teachers. It is not possible to arrange this unless there are enough children in the school to justify it. If look in detail at the various things now provided at School for the children it will

be found to be way beyond what was in the separate little schools that children once attended. What parents do not grasp is the vast cost of modern education.

This brings me on to something else that needs to be understood. People often ask me when the proposed new school is going to be built at Norton; how much longer must we have the rather makeshift buildings that we have now got. The answer almost entirely depends upon money available. It is the government that decides how much each education authority can have each year for building new schools. The authority, when it knows how much it is going to get for one particular year then has to decide how best it can be used. Moreover, permission has to be sought from the Ministry before any school whatever can be built, or rebuilt, or added to, if the cost is more than so much. What the Ministry can allow in turn depends upon how much of the national income can each year be given to education. It is all very well to say that we ought to have this or that but it all has to be paid for and everybody knows how much building costs are rising each year. The money to get all we should like simply is not there, and none of us would like our taxes to be raised greatly in order to pay for what we should like to have. It is as simple as that. So we cannot have new school buildings until the ministry has the money to pay for them. All over the country, Education Committees are years behind in putting their schemes into effect for the simple reason that the finances of the country will not rise to it.

ODDS AND ENDS

The lane that is called Wainlodes Lane was constructed by ex servicemen from Wellington's armies against Napoleon. This means that it must have been made about 1820. The lower part from the Green contains the remains of a Roman Road.

The old road to Tewkesbury below the King's Head ran through the fields below the Vicarage field. There are a few small portions of it still to be seen.

The small by-pass taking the main road away from the village was made about 1931. Just after it was started the great financial depression began and the effect of this on the road was that it was made narrower than had been intended. That is why it has such unusually wide verges. During the war the surface of this began to break up and for a time the main road traffic had to be diverted through Cold Elm. In 1944 the traffic caused by the building up of supplies for the invasion of France had to take this route and those of us who were here in those days will remember that often we had to wait minutes before we could cross the road by the King's Head.

Most people in this country are fascinated by the weather. So it is worth putting down a few details of interest relating to the period from 1934. In that time the coldest day we had was not in one of the severe winters of 1946-7 and 1962-3 but came in January 1940, just after the war started. The date was January 20th/21st. The 20th was a Saturday and there was a funeral that afternoon. Then on the Sunday morning, I had to go to The Leigh to take the early Communion service. I set out in the car with my houseboy, Archie Newton, and we had some difficulty in seeing our way owing to frost forming on the windscreen as we went along so that it was practically impossible to see anything through it. When we got to The Leigh Church we found there was no heat whatever in it as we were told that Mr. Dyson did not reckon to light the stove till after that service had finished. There was a congregation of several people, including Mr. Hall of Leigh House who was one of the churchwardens. At the end of the services, Henry Arkell who was the server poured water on the paten in my hand and it immediately turned to small sheet of ice. This was so extraordinary a thing that I called Mr. Hall up to see it, telling him that he was never likely to see such a thing again. Then we got back to the vestry, I

found a bottle of ink frozen solid. I was afterwards told by someone who had an outdoor thermometer that the temperature was four below zero.

In 1947 winter produced the deepest snow, the 1963 one had less deep snow but lower temperatures. In the middle of March of the former a rapid thaw set in in the Welsh mountains and this produced a great flood in these parts. A lot of the lower parts of Gloucester had deep floods and many were the pictures of them. I well remember driving through much water in Longford one evening on my way to preach at a Lent service at St. James's. I got through it all right and successful) reached the church. After the service the car started up and went a short distance and then gave up. I had to go and fetch the Vicar of All Saints, whose house was nearby, to come and give me a hand to push it down the road to his drive and leave it there for the night. He was quite elderly but gladly helped and we got it safely to his drive. Next morning I went in by bus and the local garage discovered that the engine was full of water. On the main road in Norton towards the bottom of the Church lane there was 18 inches of flood. One lorry had got stuck in it and had to stay there several days. The flood got into West House and ruined a piano among other things. It got into the Mill and Miss Organ told me that she had found her walking stick floating about in it. It also got into the house that was the home of the old Jordan' at the bottom of Marlpit and did damage there. They were both in the nineties and were much upset. Fortunately, a Flood Relief Fund had been started for Gloucester and District and this paid reparation for the Norton damage.

One more item worth mentioning. A few months ago I baptised a baby boy whose mother I had also baptised, whose grandparents on the mother's side I had married, whose greatgrandfather I had married to his second wife and for whose great-great grandparents I had obtained a telegram from the King on the occasion of their Golden Wedding. Buckingham Palace told me to check it in the church registers and when I went to do this I found they had been Married 61 years not 60.

The Bus Shelter was put up in 1965. It cost the village nothing as we had grants from the County Council, RDC and the bus company. Expense was much reduced by the fact that Mr. Roger Stubbs drew the plan for it and direct labour was used in building it, so in this respect we were much more fortunate than some villages which have had to spend a lot to get one.

Before the war when we had a fete it was held in the grounds of Norton Court. Occasionally someone would say that we ought to have it on the Green as many passed it on their way through the village but we never tried it.

For a short time we used to have a Rogation service on the Green but we had to give it up when traffic increased to the point when we could no longer hear properly. From the Green we used to walk as far as the Bradley Orchard for prayers of blessing on the fruit crop but also this was stopped by the amount of traffic along the lane. On these occasions, of course, the Church choir would be dressed in cassock and surplice and we used to bring down hymn books from the Church.

One is often asked about the age of Norton Church. Very few of the thousands of ancient churches in this country can be exactly dated; all that can be given is an approximate one which can be found from the type of architecture used in its construction. The oldest part of our Parish Church is the chancel which is undoubtedly of what is known as Early English architecture. The date of it would be somewhere about 1250. The window over the altar is a very good specimen of its type and should be well looked at by any visitor. I refer here to the stonework not to the glass which is modern. The main body of the church, the nave, is decorated and would be about 50 years later than the chancel. One curious feature of it is that the windows on the South or right hand are of Perpendicular architecture. Why this is cannot be said. It may be that the original windows proved unsatisfactory and had to be replaced or it may be that the nave was built with windows on the North only and later on it was found to be not light enough and so additional windows in a later style

was inserted. Have a good look at the doorways inside the porch said on the opposite side of the church. The top of these contains unusual and very good decorated work, though the one in the porch has been restored. The Tower is Perpendicular in style and would be about 50 years younger than the Nave. This style of architecture was invented at Gloucester Cathedral about 1330. It was gradually copied all over the country and most English churches have at least some part of them built in this fashion. No church on the Continent has any, so it is considered to be the characteristic English architecture. On the outside of the Tower, near the top, are gargoyles. These were put in nearly every old church as ornamentation to cover up waterspouts from the roof. The one on the right hand side shows a man playing bagpipes and this kind is very rare. Few people know that bagpipes were once much played on the Cotswolds and Shakespeare refers to this. We are told that the men of olden days were much shorter than they are today. Proof of this can be seen in the small doorway that can be seen on the South, side of the chancel. This is what is known as a Priest's door. In former times, the Priest entered the church by this and not by the main one. If you go close to it and try your height against it, you, will notice that only a short man can go through it without having to stoop. There is a similar one at The Leigh. It shows that the Priests of those days must have been what we should now consider short men, or average.