

MEMORIES OF A FORGETFUL MAN!

DAVID BAGE

Peggy and I first saw Lynsted in the spring of 1954 when I was appointed as an engineer 'responsible for capital works' with the old Swale Rural District Council. Part of the attraction of the job was that a house went with it. At a time of an acute housing shortage many shortish term local government jobs in those days were advertised with a house for rent during the tenancy of the job - this was to attract a wider range of applicants than those available within travelling distance. On the day of the appointment Peggy and I were taken by the then deputy engineer to the council, Bob Coleman, to look at a couple of houses that the council had recently built. One was at Barrow Green and the other in the village of Lynsted. Peggy and I had no difficulty in choosing Lynsted.

We eventually arrived in Lynsted in the August (after I had given the required three months' notice to the Consulting Engineers by whom I had been employed for seven years - three of them in South Wales where Peggy and I lived when we were first married). A week after we moved into our house I took up my appointment with the old Swale RDC and in the event, what I thought would be a job for three to five years lasted eleven years before it was time to move on.

Amongst those who made us so welcome in the parish was the then vicar, David Reeve, and his wife, Vera. Before we knew it we were involved in in the church and village life. Very soon Peggy belonged to a church organization called 'Young Wives', which was associated with the Mothers' Union and, in those first two years, very quickly got involved in running things - several whist drives and a jumble sale I remember. In those days, because Peggy was the one with the high profile, people began to know who she was and I was often introduced to people as 'Peggy's Husband!'

In 1955 Peggy was elected to the PCC and although I, too, was a candidate I was rejected by the electorate! In 1956 as there were the same number of candidates as seats, we both ended up on the PCC. It was towards the end of that year that David Reeve was asked to take over an ailing parish and left us.

When we first arrived I enquired at the local pub about renting a garage (there was no garage available in connection with the house). The landlord, Harry Sutton, said that he had some garages at the pub but his tenancy agreement precluded his sub-letting, but I was welcome to garage my

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car there. Peggy and I got into the habit of going over to the pub on Friday night (we jokingly referred to it as 'paying our rent' - for the garage we were putting our car in rent free!). In the pub, amongst those in the little saloon bar, on these Friday nights were two great characters - Percy Sykes, the retired headmaster from the village school who then lived at Forge Cottage and Archie Wildash a local builder from Greenstreet and, proudly, a veteran of the Great War. Percy (who had also served during the Great War) always told people that he came to Lynsted for three to five years and was still here forty five years later! (who says history does not repeat itself?)

It was a chance remark one of these Friday nights (in 1956) which started me off being involved with parish life. Up to then I had only been marginally concerned as a helper in each of Peggy's ventures (I was that

person known as 'Peggy's husband' after all). Percy was telling us that he was clerk to the local parish council and that he had decided to give it up and Peggy made a remark that was to set me on a journey from which there has been no turning back. "That's a little job that would suit you". When the post became advertised (at the princely sum of £15 per year), I duly applied and was appointed (whether Percy put in a good word for me I don't know).

Less than twelve months later we received a visit from two of our friends from the church, John and Sheila Yerbury. They came to tell us that there had been some misunderstanding about the recent amalgamation of Kingsdown parish with Lynsted. It was usual for parishes joined together in this way to keep their PCCs and their churchwardens and to be managed separately. But it had now been discovered that Lynsted and Kingsdown had been joined in a way that legally precluded this and that the combined parish of Lynsted with Kingsdown was only entitled to one PCC and two churchwardens. As far as the appointment of the church wardens were concerned, the diocese recommended that there should be one from Lynsted and one from Kingsdown. Although one of the Kingsdown churchwardens, John Gwyer, was prepared to put himself forward, the two churchwardens at Lynsted were not happy with the situation and thought that both churchwardens should be from Lynsted the much larger of the two parishes and if this was not to be the case neither of them was prepared to stand for election. John and Sheila had come to ask me if I was prepared to stand. My natural reaction, of course, was to tell them

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that I was not likely to be in Lynsted more than a couple more years or so. This did not deter them at all and they told me that it did not matter but taking on the job at this time would help them all out. I accepted on this basis.

Actually the obvious candidate for the job was John Yerbury. Both he and Sheila had been in the parish and on the PCC for many years. Sheila was the church's sacristan. I have often pondered on this and think the reason may be as follows:-

It had been the custom within the Church of England for most churches since Victorian times to have as their main service on a Sunday morning a matins service and to have a rather austere said communion service once a month early in the morning at 8 o'clock. The previous vicar (Revd. Ehrmann) in the thirties had changed this and introduced the concept of the main service on a Sunday being a communion or Eucharist service, a pattern which David Reeve his successor had continued. The concept of the sung Eucharist service being the main service had not since Revd. Ehrmann's days been supported by one of the dominant characters of the parish and the church life, Queenie Dixon. The Yerburies on the other hand were supporters of the way Revd. Ehrmann and David Reeve had been doing things. How many in the parish thought like Queenie and how many thought like the Yerburies I do not know. My theory as to why I was invited is this, if there really were two groups of people who thought so differently, John Yerbury would not have been acceptable to those who thought like Queenie and a protégé of Queenie's would not have been acceptable to those who agreed with the Yerburies. I, a relative newcomer, did not appear to have a foot in either camp and was probably half acceptable to both sides. Although I knew there were these differing views I was never aware of any conflict amongst the congregation. In those days the situation where the communion is reduced to an occasional said service was generally regarded as 'low church' and to have your main morning service a communion or Eucharist service with music was regarded as 'high church' whether or not there were the other aspects of high churchmanship such as incense present or not. This distinction has no meaning now.

It was only in later years that I realised that I had grown up in a low church environment. Matins was the pivotal service with evensong in the

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evening of course. There was a monthly early morning dour communion service. There was no evidence, as far as I remember, of any cyclical colours on the altar, no vestments and, other than Christmas, Easter, and what was then known as Whitsun no other times in the church's calendar were specifically celebrated - there were no such things as palm crosses of course - I don't even remember Mothering Sunday being given any particular significance other than in the prayers. The churchmanship I found in Lynsted did increase my understanding of things.

By the end of the fifties Peggy and I realised we were growing roots in this parish, this parish that we thought was to be just a temporary resting place. It was then we decided that this was the part of the world where we wanted to live. Also, about this time Peggy was a little worried about her parents who, when they retired, bought a lovely little cottage in the village of Boughton but she was now thinking she would like to keep a closer eye on them. It was generally decided between us that I should purchase something that would be big enough for us all. The idea was that we should not be completely separate units but that we should each have our own space within the building. We did not confine our search to Lynsted where there seemed so little available at the time. Had we known that just ahead of us was a period of unprecedented inflation both of prices and incomes we might well have succumbed to one of the properties that we turned down as being just above our means. If this had happened our continued involvement at the heart of Lynsted might have come to an end.

Percy Sykes, who we mentioned earlier, had by now died and his widow continued to live in Forge Cottage, latterly with her sister. A friend of ours, Arthur Braham (whom I am sure there will be more about later), a local solicitor acting for Mrs Sykes, informed us (it was 1961 by now), that since the death of her sister, Mrs Sykes had been on her own and had had a number of falls. Her sons had decided that she could no longer live on her own and that she should now live with one of them. Consequently, her property was up for sale. What was on offer were the three cottages, the old forge itself and the land behind the forge, a lot which Percy had bought in three stages. All the purchases had been made from a Mr. Thurston who lived at Forge House. Indeed it had all been in one ownership for years and had originally all been the property of a Mr. Busbridge the village's last blacksmith. Percy had converted two of the cottages into one dwelling and had let the remaining cottage to a Mrs Webb who

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was the mother of Gwen Apps who lived in the village (in part of what we now know as Vicarage Cottage) with her husband, Len, who was shepherd to a local farmer, Fred Brice, who farmed Park Farm. When eventually Mrs Webb went with Gwen and Len when they moved to Wrendale (a house owned by Mr. Brice his employer), it was then that Mrs Sykes knocked down the partition with the remaining cottage and had started restoring some of the beams. Many years later talking to a local builder, William Gibb, I learned that it was he who did the work stopping, as he said, "when the money ran out"

We had a look at the property and decided with a bit of addition and the conversion of part of the forge into a room - the remainder to serve as a garage - we could do something with it. My offer of £2,300 was accepted (later reduced to £2,100 when the survey showed problems with the roof) and I set about drawing

up the plans and specification for the conversion and restoration work. A few years earlier the government had introduced what were called improvement grants to facilitate the restoration of old properties that may well have fallen by the wayside without them and I intended to apply for one of these. Although the funds came from central government it was the job of the local councils to operate the scheme. Swale RDC, therefore was responsible for the scheme locally. However, there was a snag as far as I was concerned. Early in the operation of this scheme there had been a few fiddles between applicants and builders regarding work supposed to have been done and the council decided that when future schemes were submitted the applications should only be made by professionally qualified architects. This meant that other professionals equally capable of producing the appropriate drawings and specifications such as chartered surveyors and civil engineers were excluded from the scheme. Therefore, if I wanted a grant, it meant that I would have to find an architect who would submit my proposals to the council on my behalf. There was no way that the council would have changed their rules to suit an employee. Just imagine what television's 'grumpy old men' (or their equivalent in those days) would have made of a situation where it appeared to be one rule for the employees and one for the public.

It was then I had a bit of luck! A chap who had recently bought Kingsdown rectory - a Mr. Stevenson if I remember correctly - was also a civil engineer and was equally dismayed to think that as a competent pro-

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fessional he was barred from submitting his own scheme for improvement to his property. He wrote to the council and pointed out that qualified professionals other than architects were perfectly competent to produce the necessary drawings, details and specifications. As a result the council amended their regulations to 'any suitably qualified professional' or some such words. This now meant that any civil engineer, including me, could now submit an application. This I did and was granted the maximum grant then available of £400. I then put my scheme out to a number of local builders who tendered for the work. Unfortunately the lowest tender was £3,800 which was way above my means even with the grant and the money from the sale of my mother-in-law's cottage. I therefore broke the work down to the work of a bricklayer, a tiler, a carpenter, an electrician etc. and invited quotes from them. I purchased all the materials directly from the suppliers, Peggy did all the painting and decorating and I did the plumbing (do-it-yourself plumbing had just arrived on the scene!). By this means we got the cost down to just over £2,000 and we were in business and by Easter 1963 we were resident in our new home and Lynsted was permanently lumbered with the Bages.

The object of these notes is to record as much as I can remember of life in the parish since I have lived here, together with notes of any information that others have given me. From here on it is likely to have even less shape and will be a bit on the random side.

Perhaps I will start with the church or 'village' fete

Lynsted Church Fete

When Peggy and I arrived in Lynsted in the middle of August 1954, Lynsted fete had been and gone - the August bank holiday in those days was on the first Monday of the month not the last as it is today. It was not until the summer of 1955 that we realised there was such a thing as Lynsted Fete; this was when the vicar, David Reeve, gathered a few of us together to talk about the event. Apparently there was no actual committee but each year the vicar collected people together and somehow the event got put on. I don't recall attending any other meetings but Peggy and I ended up agreeing to run the children's races which took

place in a field at the rear of Aymers in the grounds of which the fete had been held for many years. It was a happy event in which we had been pleased to take part.

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The next year, 1956, we learned that Mrs Ching who owned Aymers was selling up and the grounds would no longer be available for the fete. David immediately offered the vicarage garden as the new venue and seemed tickled pink to think of the event being there. When he first told me about it he had already worked out a site for the coconut shy between some trees and had ideas for other stalls too. During the spring of that year Peggy and I attended an event on Faversham Recreation Ground where they had sold 'hot dogs' and Peggy wondered if we could do something similar at our own fete. It should be remembered that this was before the days of ready-made barbecues and the availability of prepared charcoal. To facilitate the cooking I built two parallel lines of bricks surmounted by the shelves of our old cooker recently replaced and spent the morning building up a fire from wood found about the vicarage garden. We borrowed two large frying pans for the sausages and onions, bought our rolls from Wicks, a local bakery, our sausages from Peter Blain an excellent local butcher at the time and who Peggy had persuaded to sell to us at an advantageous price and we were in business. We had sold out by the time a violent thunderstorm curtailed the day's events about an hour before the scheduled end. The new venue for the fete had however been quite a success - we had only lost from the previous fetes at Aymers the pony rides and the children's races - and of course 'Mrs Ching's half-a-crown teas' which she always served in her drawing room! The vicarage garden was to be the fete's home for the next twenty years.

Towards the end of that year our vicar, David Reeve, was asked by the archbishop to take over an ailing parish and in October he left us and we were without a priest until somewhere around May when Vincent Puplett was instituted as our vicar and, incidentally, rector of Norton. In the meantime I had been elected churchwarden and was from then onwards to be much more involved in the organisation of the fete.

Vincent Puplett accepted that the fete was to be held in the Vicarage and decided that the fete should be the responsibility of the entertainments committee elected by the PCC. Now there had always been such a committee but up to then it had not been responsible for the fete only a few minor social functions. This committee was to run the fete for the next twenty years. Gradually through the years the committee developed a policy of co-opting members outside the PCC and church members.

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One of its first innovations was to add an evening fireworks display to the programme for the fete. This waited until it got dusk and meant that people went away and came back again. It provided no extra income and I doubt if it made the fete any more attractive to come to. We continued with this most years until, in 1972, the bank holiday was moved to the last Monday in the month and we took the opportunity to drop it from the agenda.

That first year, 1957, we invited Stephanie Davies, the wife of the new owner of Aymers to open the fete. I'm not going to say that there was not a sort of hope in the committee's mind that Aymers might again be the venue for fetes in the future. To say so I do not think would be wholly true! The policy of inviting some well-known local from one of the larger houses continued for a few years and then the committee became obsessed with getting what we would now call a minor celebrity to open the fete. This absorbed a lot of the committee's time and we all worked through friends of friends who might have a friend who knew someone

of note. I remember the fete being opened by Albert Elms, a composer who wrote the music for a popular TV series of the time "Robin Hood", Angela Buxton, a Wimbledon tennis player, once world champion table tennis twins Rosalind and Diane Rowe and Olive Stevens who was a regular on TV after winning a national quiz competition. Whether they added any extra people through the gate (apart from their friends and relations) I have my doubts.

Later we were a little more ambitious. We had, at that time, in our midst two people we thought might be able to help us get at some real stars. Scriptwriter, Terry Nation - who lived at Lynsted Park and who is credited with the invention of the Daleks in the original 'Doctor Who' series and journalist David Wigg who at the time wrote a column in the Daily Express about popular showbiz matters.

As a result we ended up with, among others John Junkin, actor, Alan Freeman, a disc Jockey, Jackie Trent, a 'pop' singer with her later-to-be-husband composer Tony Hatch, Ian McCulloch, an actor in Terry Nation's then current TV series, 'the Survivors' as well as both Terry and David themselves. There was a strange outcome to our invitation to David Wigg. There was a piece in the East Kent Gazette about his plan to open Lynsted fete but it pointed out that that weekend he was covering,

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for his paper, a pop festival on the Isle of Wight. It also pointed out that to get to our fete in time he was flying from the island in a helicopter. It was our custom at that time to charge for both adults and children and give them numbered tickets and by this means we were able to have a pretty accurate figure of those attending the fete (in fact we ran a competition based on this- more about this later). That year the ticket sales showed our attendance to have been 996 whereas we usually numbered between 550 and 800. Our only explanation at the time was that all these people turned up expecting David to land on the Vicarage lawn in his helicopter. No-one has yet come up with a better explanation. In the event David's helicopter landed in Doddington somewhere and he then drove to the fete.

Before I go any further, perhaps I should explain about 'the competition' I have just referred to. At that time the Church of England was not in favour of 'raffles' or anything that appeared to be gambling and Vincent Puplett, as did David Reeve before him, agreed to support this policy (supporting their bishop as they referred to it) I devised something that appeared to be acceptable. I sold tickets on which people were asked to enter their estimate of the number of people attending the fete. This continued for a number of years until during Basil Minchin's time we were allowed to have 'raffles'. It is strange how the process of this competition not only reflected the change in the church's attitude towards gambling but a radical change in what we ate. When we started the 'competition' we offered as first prize, a complete chicken dinner- the chicken itself, the vegetables, ingredients for the stuffing and something for the pudding afterwards. In 1957 chicken was something of a luxury and it was quite an attractive prize. However a few years later as I sat there near the entrance explaining to a would be customer, a lady who did not appear to be the wealthiest amongst us, that the prize included a chicken as well as all the other ingredients on display, she said, "poo just had chicken!". It was then that we fully realised that what a few years ago had been a luxury was now part of many people's regular diet. We chose a different prize for future competitions!

This gives me an opportunity to remember a lovely man from the past, Frank Cockroft - husband of our own Berta - who was a member of our fete committee for a time. At this time the country was awash with green shield stamps which you seemed to pick up nearly every time you

shopped and Embassy coupons, which the smokers amongst us had pockets full of. Both of these when enough were collected, could be exchanged for quite nice goods. Frank had the idea of getting people to pass on some of these stamps or coupons to him and each year he managed to collect enough to provide some very nice prizes for the various enterprises at the fete. People when approached seemed to be quite willing to hand over what they had in their pockets at the time of asking. We were all shaken when one night Frank was run over crossing the A2 near Cellar Hill when he got off a coach that had taken the Darby and Joan Club on an outing that day, leaving Berta a widow for the second time in her life.

Early in the fetes, after a few years of doing the hot dogs, Peggy took over the bottle stall from Sheila Yerbury when she went on holiday one year and must have carried on with it for nearly thirty years. Peggy never had to 'buy in' any prizes for it. She managed to get shops and her friends to donate bottles; even casual acquaintances weren't immune if she met them in a pub or the village shop where they were persuaded to buy something for her stall! She often sold out early and would think up something else to get money out of the unsuspecting customers. I in the meantime ran my 'competition and then latterly a treasure hunt based on a map of the parish. A map from which the customers got more fun trying to identify their own house than trying for the treasure. Latterly though I found that it became impossible to run a stall as I was always being dragged away from it to sort out some problem or other

The fete soldiered on at the vicarage until the summer of 1975. This summer Margaret, the wife of Basil Minchin, the vicar at the time, had had trouble with her back which had necessitated long periods in bed and poor old Basil himself was visibly deteriorating before our eyes and Peggy pointed out to me one day that we should not be expecting Margaret and Basil to cope with a fete in their garden. A day or two later when we were attending the school fete on the school playing field Peggy looked around and said "this would be a good place to hold our own fete". On our way home we popped into the vicarage to run the idea past Basil. The relief visible on Basil's face was amazing; it was obvious that the thought of having the fete in his garden had been concerning him for some time. The new venue was agreed not only by Basil but by all others concerned and the pattern was set for the next twenty years. Later that year Basil retired and we were again in an inter regnum.

The new venue had a lot more to offer us. There was more room for a reasonable arena for a start and gave us much more scope from the entertainment point of view. How some of the cadet marching bands and dance groups managed on the small space we offered on the vicarage lawn I don't really know. We were able to lay out the stalls in a systematic manner instead of the higgledy-piggledy arrangement at the vicarage where stalls were tucked into odd corners. We also had, nearby, the school hall to do something in if the weather was wet although we only had to do this once in the twenty years although the last year at the school was a different story... Watch this space.

We had many successful fetes at the school. There was never any suggestion that we should go back to the vicarage which I think was a good thing as I don't think Bill Hill - who had become our vicar by the second fete at the school - and his wife Pat could have coped for long with it there.

A major change in the running of the fete took place on the arrival of Bill Hill. He decided that we wouldn't have an actual committee running it but it should be organised by a series of open meetings which we did

under his chairmanship for his first year. The second year he started leaving me to chair the meetings. Although technically they were a series of open meetings, at most meetings we ended up with the same group of people who in effect were the committee - until the last meeting before the fete when we tried to get everyone who had offered to help together for a final discussion. This worked quite well for a year or two until one year the final meeting reversed a decision made by those who worked during the year on the fete. My regular members did not take too kindly to this although we all went along with it. I decided then that although I would accept Bill's idea of a series of open meetings at which anyone could have their say, we should still elect a working committee who would be responsible for any major decisions. Ever since I had been involved in the fete it had been the practice, as soon as possible after the fete for those involved to meet to discuss it. This was colloquially known as the "inquest" meeting. It has always been very useful to remember the shortcomings, while they are still in people's minds, to avoid making the same mistakes again and for the committee to take on board any fresh ideas for the following year's fete. It was at this meeting that I decided we should in future elect our committee for the following year's fete. Now some

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twenty years on this is still how we do things.

Another problem arose during our time at the school. Ever since I had been involved with the fete the church treasurer had also been the fete treasurer. A few years after Eileen Tonkin became church treasurer she decided she did not want to do both jobs and so we appointed our first fete committee treasurer - Paul Linnett. The problem was that the account was still a church PCC account - the fete and bazaar account - and the only person who could get access to the account was the church treasurer. Paul soldiered on for a few years having to go through Eileen every time he wanted access to anything. After a while after discussing it with my committee and the PCC we decided to separate the account from that of the church. Paul and his successors - Ray Clark, Paul Berry and now Nigel Heriz-Smith have all found life easier than it would have been before this decision. This is still true today. It is now a separate committee whose purpose is to raise money for the church. We have for a number of years 'opened our doors' - or should that be gates - to raise money for the school, the local hospital, the local hospice, the local fire brigade, church related charities and, occasionally, local branches of national charities. I have always felt that charitable giving is part of the church's work and the church should always be seen in the centre of such giving rather than just another organisation in the queue of begging bowls.

I only remember one fete rained off at the school when we had to adjourn to the school hall. It is surprising how many turn up even though the weather is impossible. What would have been our last fete at the school was never held. Although for some years we had a 'fall back' situation by using the school hall in the event of rain, a recent development had made it impossible to commission the school hall for a 'free to public' event. It did not have the appropriate emergency exits and emergency lighting. We had therefore been designating the church as our fall back venue (this by now had a loo and a kitchen). This year the weather was pretty horrible when we were about to set up and it appeared to be time for 'plan B' and we adjourned to the church. As it turned out, although we did have another shower, the weather vastly improved and those stall holders for whom there was no room in the church started to set up their offerings in the church grounds. The weather was kind to us and in the end we had quite a successful fete.

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We were, indeed quite pleased with the way things had worked out. The fete had been much easier to manage; we could bring a lot of our stuff on site overnight, we had water and electricity to hand and a loo available. On the other hand we'd lost any arena - though we did find room for a brass band to play throughout the afternoon. We also lost the children's races at first (though we were able to squeeze in some shorter races one year). For a year or two people seemed to accept the new venue but it soon came quite evident that public interest in the fete was waning. For one thing there was not enough room to do all we wanted and quietly quite a number of people told me that they felt uncomfortable 'walking over dead bodies' Going back to the school was not such a feasible option. The development of the play school cum pre-school now occupied part of the land as did some children's play equipment. It was doubtful whether the site was now big enough for what we wanted.

Fortunately, about this time I had got quite a bit of younger blood on the committee and they came up with the idea of looking for a new venue and the field adjacent to the old post office was suggested. About this time this field had returned to the ownership of the Davies family (who used to live at Aymers - a full explanation here would take too long!). I phoned up Brian Davies who was the husband of Stephanie Davies (now deceased) we have mentioned before and who now lived in Essex and asked him if we could use his field and he was only too happy to oblige. A member of our committee managed to get an offer from Brian Silcock who lived in Post Cottage (the old Post Office) next door to the field to give us access to water and electricity. He also loaned us a large Marquee We had also of course to provide Porterloos to provide a service that had never been a problem before.

After my first approach to Brian Davies he sadly died and I have made subsequent arrangements with his daughter and son-in-law Lisa and John Candy. Latterly there have been further complications as the field has been let for the grazing of horses and we have another party to consider before we can go ahead each year

The fete became more ambitious - we now had a beer tent for one thing and again, space for an arena for children's races and a light-hearted tug-of-war contest. We returned to the idea of a theme. Somehow there was a freshening spirit and more people seemed to want to get involved - but

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never enough of course. There is no doubt in everybody's mind that this is the best venue ever (although. I cannot speak for venues prior to the fifties)

What to write about next? 35 years of being involved with the parish council suggest the next subject!.

Lynsted Parish Council

In 1956 I attended my first parish council meeting. I can still remember all the councillors. The chairman was Stewart Dixon, a local farmer, the others being Tubby Olney who ran the local post office and stores, Fred Brice another farmer, Frank Waters who was Lynsted parish's representative on the old Swale Rural District Council, Bob Taylor, a shipwright who now lived in a flat over a boatyard down at Conyer, who was also a former licensee at the Black Lion, Ron Wyles, the school caretaker, Gordon Cork who worked on Batteries Farm, Ted Broad who worked on the buses and Ethel Saunders, a one-time suffragette. Frank Waters on the parish council was also the parish's representative on the RDC and as long as the RDC existed we always had Lynsted's RDC councillor as a parish councillor as well so there was a two-way link. Alan Brett, Mary Andrews and Geoff Ivory all followed in both roles. When the RDC was absorbed into the all-singing all-dancing district (later to be designated borough) council covering the Isle of Sheppey, Faversham and

Sittingbourne as well and Lynsted was absorbed into the Teynham and Lynsted ward covering a number of parishes, we lost this direct contact, though one of the ward representatives was always invited to our meetings and generally attended.

The council then met about every three months. The meetings never ended with a date of the next meeting, it was left for the chairman to decide when they should all meet again. Stewart would phone me up about three months later than the last meeting saying it was about time we had another one and he left it to me to notify the members. The responsibilities of the parish council were not so many in those days. It did not have any input into the planning procedure and was mainly a 'sounding box' for the residents' moans which it then passed on to the responsible bodies. These were mainly complaints about the highways - potholes etc.- and tenants' worries about council tenancies The council did have a respons-

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bility for the street lighting and was allowed to raise money for this purpose. It did have allotments it let to those that wanted them. Although at the time I joined the council there was still a reasonable demand for them such demand was exceeded by what we had available and we were able, soon after my appointment to return half of the land we rented, to Guy French the farmer (they've gone all together now). As there was not quite enough demand from parishioners we were able to let some people outside the parish have one when available. One such customer who lived in Sittingbourne put part of his allotment down to a little lawn and in his nice little shed he kept some deck chairs and on a Sunday morning he and his son used to sit out there reading the Sunday papers!

There was no News Letter of course in those days (that was still twenty years off!) so I started sending reports after the meetings to the local papers - The East Kent Gazette, the Faversham News and the Kent Messenger (it was to be some years before the Kent Messenger took over the Faversham News). The Faversham News, edited in those days by a delightful man, Maurice Knight, who I think will appear again in the Lynsted story, always published what I sent them exactly as written; the East Kent Gazette always felt compelled to paraphrase the lot, often losing the full meaning in the process and the Kent Messenger essentially a county paper rarely published anything I sent them.

One small happening arose out of those reports and quite undeservedly raised my standing with the councillors. One of the complaints that the parish council had had to deal with on a regular basis was from the residents of Greenstreet on the Lynsted side. This was about an old air raid shelter on a plot of land. This tended occasionally to encourage rats and although the rural district council always got rid of them on demand, the neighbouring owners were not too happy. Efforts to find the owner had proved unsuccessful. I included a note about the parish council's concern about the matter in my report to the press and shortly after the East Kent Gazette came out I received a phone call from Geoffrey Smith, who was senior partner of Harris and Harris a firm of local solicitors in Sittingbourne. He told me that he represented the owner of the land and he would advise him to demolish the shelter which he subsequently did. I was able to report to the next meeting that this had been done. Peggy told me sometime later that one of the councillors was telling her one day that they had been trying to sort out that air-raid shelter for years and I come

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along and sort it out 'just like that'. The fact that it was none of my doing just had not registered! My reputation also gained momentum by regular freak occurrences. The council would ask me to ask the KCC to

mend a pothole or cut back a dangerous overhanging tree and more than once I could see on my way to work next morning the council workmen filling in the pothole or cutting back the tree before I had chance to make a phone call or write a letter.

Actually I was in a very fortunate position to deal with the council's complaints. I worked for the RDC so all had to do the next morning was walk along the corridor to the officer responsible for housing maintenance, to put in motion what was needed to deal with the tenants' problems. The highway problems were nearly as easily dealt with. The KCC's Divisional Surveyor, responsible for the highways in this area, a Mr. Griddale, a charming fellow had his office in Crescent Street (now somewhere under the Forum and St Michael's Road). A couple of hours chat in the afternoon over a cup of tea generally sorted out the problems here. Later when the motorway was built his office was moved to Farthing Corner. It was not so easy for my successors!

One little success which I found very satisfying at the time concerned the local bus company. At that time the local doctors' surgery was on the hill as you leave Greenstreet on your way to Faversham. In those days there were fewer cars than there are today and there was a greater dependency on the buses. We received complaints from residents from the western end of Greenstreet, who found it difficult to walk the length of Greenstreet to the surgery, that they were paying dearly for the bus. At that time the bus 'stages' were 'Radfield' (towards Bapchild), Lynsted Lane and Norton Crossroads so if you wanted to travel from Claxfield Lane to Cellar Hill you had to pay for two stages i.e. From Radfield to Norton Crossroads in effect. I raised the matter with the bus company at the request of my parish council and their representative came to see me and after a very amiable discussion the bus company agreed that in future they would charge a special fare, the equivalent of one stage, travelling from one end of Greenstreet to the other. It seems so trivial today but at the time it meant quite a lot to quite a few people.

Swale Rural District Council were not strictly speaking the planning authority but had delegated powers from the KCC and were the body to

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whom application had to be made in the first instance. Such applications were discussed with the applicant and then the application was passed to the KCC with a recommendation for approval or refusal. At that time there were few bodies the RDC was required to consult before making their recommendations but not long after I became clerk, the Swale RDC, although at that time under no obligation to do so, decided that parish councils should be consulted on all planning applications in their area. Later it did become compulsory for them to do so. The timetable of when observations were required meant the council had to meet more frequently and eventually we ended up with meetings every six weeks with regular meetings, also, by a 'planning committee'. The council at this time already had a number of committees.

The first one that comes to mind is the 'footpaths' committee which advised on footpaths (there was not yet an official footpaths plan, although there had been several draft proposals amended from time to time). Later when the plan was approved the committee kept a watching brief on paths that were blocked either by neglect or by imposing wilful barriers

We've already mentioned the lighting. We had a 'lighting committee' to recommend new lighting and to keep a watchful eye on what we had already installed. There was a constant pressure from residents, in areas where there was no lighting, for adequate lighting where they lived. The council was relieved from

some costs when the highway authority took over the lighting of the A2. We also had governors to appoint and later three members for the Playing Field management Committee.

Time for a digression I think

The School

In those days the council had to appoint three members as 'school managers' as they were officially known then (although the public generally referred to them as school governors). They did not have to be members of the parish council and indeed it was common practice to make the Lynsted vicar one of their nominees - Vincent Puplett, Basil Minchin and Bill Hill were all nominated in turn. The council usually tried to appoint a woman and also to have at least one of their own members on 'the Board' so that they could receive reports from them.

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Eventually the time came when nominations from the parish council were due, we could not find three people prepared to be appointed and I was asked if I would fill one of the places. This I agreed to, thinking I could help out for a while. In the end I was involved for about twenty years. The first chairman I can remember was Laurence Easton although I think there might have been one before him when I first joined the 'board'. At some time I was appointed vice chairman and after Laurence died I had a short spell as chairman until we appointed Belle Friday as the chairman with me again as her vice chairman. Later, after her death, I spent another short spell as chairman until we appointed Dawn Butterworth with me once again as vice chairman. I always thought that Dawn and I made a good team and we saw the school through the period when things were changing - local management was now the order of the day and the governors were having an increasing say in how the money was being spent. I think I am right this time in referring to them as governors as I think the change back to the old name had happened by now

When I first joined the 'board' the main item on the agenda was the head-master's report with a few words from the education committee representative. The meetings very rarely lasted as much as an hour. Indeed, I remember once during one of my spells as chairman and I was faced with chairing a PCC meeting shortly afterwards, I managed to get through the whole meeting in thirty five minutes so that I would have time for a quick supper between the meetings!

No history of the period of my time of association with the school would be complete without reference to Ron Harwood. When I first came to Lynsted the Head teacher was a Miss Godfrey and when she retired Ron was appointed to take her place. Ron told me why he was attracted to the post in Lynsted. In his old post he found himself torn between two communities - the one where he lived and one where his school was. And he was the sort of chap who wanted to be involved in both. With a house offered with the job at Lynsted he would be living in the same community he would serve as head teacher and therefore there would be no conflict of interest.

Ron, his wife Ada often helping out with the children's reading, was much loved by the children of the school. Not long after I was appointed as a governor a strange thing happened. Ron was arrested for stealing

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something in London; I cannot remember what it actually was but strangely it wasn't anything he wanted! It was as the result of some strange compulsion and this explanation was accepted by all and he was not

charged. The governors and the education committee stood firmly behind Ron and he continued as head of the school. Not long before he was due to retire - he had moved out of the school house into a cottage in the village by this time ready for his retirement - we were all shocked to learn that he had committed suicide. We soon learned that he had once again been caught stealing something in London - again something he did not want or need and was unable to face the world yet again with what had happened. This was during one of my spells as chairman and I went round to see Ada on behalf of the governors both to convey their condolences and see if there was anything I could do. Ada, by way of some sort of explanation of what had happened told me that Ron set himself such high behavioural standards that she felt that something had to occasionally give and these lapses were part of this.

Ron had, over the years he was with us, thrown himself in to the life of the community and at one time was on both the PCC and the parish council. When he resigned from the PCC I remember Basil Minchin who was our Vicar at the time and a school governor telling me that Ron was having some problems with his faith - not in the reality of God but more as to how he was expressing it, going to church etc. I never had the chance myself to discuss the matter with Ron so I cannot say more. Ron still continued to be supportive of the community after this. When he was at the school house and we turned up for our fete on the August bank Holiday he opened up his house so that we could plug in for electricity and water. It was he who started Peggy out on her involvement with the school by asking her to open the school fete one year. He regularly contributed to the News Letter with news of the school activities and his interesting notes from the school 'log' of the past. There was a good turn out from the parish for his funeral at which poems dedicated to Ron by his ex-pupils were read out. I hope these notes will make sure that Ron's place in our history will be assured as a dedicated headmaster not just because of his untimely suicide.

Mention of Ron asking Peggy to open the fete reminds me that on my retirement Peggy got more involved herself with the school, always attending school events and raising money for the school. She regularly ran

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a ploughman's lunch, did the occasional coffee morning and one evening did an upmarket barbecue. Even after her first stroke in 1991 the ploughman's lunches continued for a while with the help of our good friends Jim and Margaret Neil. Her main helpers for many of her events, however, were Dawn Butterworth and Trish Doogan, the mainstays at the time of the school 'friends'. Peggy also at this time was often asked to judge the children's work especially at Easter and Christmas and to crown the school 'May queen'. She loved her involvement with the school and after her death I thought it fitting that she should be remembered by the school by awarding each year a prize in her name. After consulting the then head teacher Mrs Carol Wakelin we decided on a 'poetry prize'. I am making arrangements in my will for this to be in perpetuity. At present it is presented at the school leaving service at the end of the term that precedes Easter.

Just after Ron's death the roll started going down rather rapidly and the education Committee seemed to be reluctant to appoint a successor and we did wonder whether they were thinking of closing the school. Whenever I got a chance to discuss it with them they always denied that it was in their thoughts. We had one temporary head teacher for about a year who most of us liked and at the end of that year we were told that if the board wished she could be appointed to a permanent position without advertising the post. There was one dissenting voice from Chris Turner (the parent governor at the time) and we were told that for this method of appointment to be valid the decision had to be unanimous so we lost the chance and Mary Cron went on to pastures new. Another new temporary head was appointed and it was another year before we had a permanent head teacher in position.

Eventually a Mr. Pie Corbett, a young ambitious man very keen on poetry, was appointed. Things looked as if they were going to be settled for a time. About this time Norton School burned down and we at Lynsted agreed the pupils from Norton should come to us until their school was rebuilt. Later we learned that Norton School would not be rebuilt as the land on which the old school was built was not of sufficient area to maintain a school of modern standards. We agreed to open our doors permanently to the youngsters of Norton and to include Norton in the name of the school. This did much to boost numbers at the school. Pie was not with us long. He asked to be seconded for some other role - what it was

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escapes me at the moment - and we let him go for the year or two required. Then we learned that he was not likely to return to us so we terminated his appointment and appointed Mrs Jennie Edwards.

Those latter days on the board of governors were probably the most interesting. We were beginning to have control of our expenditure although not the actual account. We could decide whether we spent on things or on staff, but before I deal with this I should perhaps mention another matter that is important in any history of the school - that is the School house.

When the land was donated by Aymer Vallance in the 1870s, it was designated that it was to be for educational purposes and if it at any time subsequently it was not required for this purpose it was to revert back to the original owner or his successors. Either at the time the school was built, or subsequently, a house for the head teacher to live in had been built on the site. As far as I could make out the school's head teacher had always lived there. Percy Sykes (who we have mentioned before) Miss Godfrey who, was head teacher when Peggy and I arrived in Lynsted, and Ron Harwood certainly did. However when Ron left to find his own accommodation ready for his retirement the school house remained empty with occasional lettings. Eventually the education committee decided to sell it, until that is they were told that it was not theirs to sell! If they no longer wanted it for educational purposes it had to be given back to Aymer Vallance's heirs whoever or wherever they were.

After quite a period of indecision eventually both governors and KCC decided that the old house should be used as an adjunct to the school and provide a 'study' for the Head teacher, an office for the secretary and a sort of 'common room' for the staff, all of which took place up to this time in one small room of the school. This was the situation when the local management started to kick in.

Jennie Edwards was the Head teacher at this time and was very helpful to the governors coming to grips with their new role. The parish council were by this time only nominating one governor, the parents were electing a governor and so were the teachers. The school numbers were growing and we decided that the school really needed another classroom and by careful management we managed to save enough money from our allocated funds to finance an extension to the school house that would do just

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that.

My concept of dates about this time is a bit vague but I do recall before I retired as a school governor in the mid-nineties a play-school was started based in the school hall. This later became (in 1999) what is now known as a pre-school and is a thriving one at that, and did get lottery funding to build its own hall in the school grounds.

It is all meaningless now because the soulless people who now determine things have determined that distance from the school should be the only criterion but I should record an interesting decision we made about this time. As a result of the growing demand for attendance at the school numbers had now reached about 100 - we had to determine priorities and I remember us listing residence in Lynsted or Norton parishes as the first priority, having siblings at the school was the second and attendance at the 'play school' was added as the third priority. Sadly identity with the place where you live is no longer of any importance, we are at the mercy of people with little or no imagination.

Local management was now occupying a lot of the time of the governors and we were getting more involved with the finances. We started co-opting people who had financial and other experience. Indirectly this accelerated my giving up my involvement with the school. We had been managing the extra meetings in the day time but with the influx of people who 'had a job to do' we had to arrange many of these in the evenings. Peggy who had had a stroke a few years early was beginning to get to a stage when I felt I could not leave her for too long and certainly not in the evenings. Whereas I was so far managing the daytime meetings when usually there was a bit of coming and going of people to the house, I felt that I could not do justice to my school work if I had to leave out attending meetings which would expect me to be there. About this time Dawn Butterworth was considering giving up to concentrate on her magistrate's work. Whether he ever knew it or not but we had identified amongst the governors someone we thought would make a good chairman. This was David Potter who had originally elected as a parent governor but assumed a more permanent role on 'the board'. After I resigned he was appointed vice chairman and shortly after became chairman when Dawn, too, resigned.

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I as a governor nominated by the parish council always used to report on school matters at their meetings and later although no longer their nominee but still a governor I still reported to them. Indeed after I was no longer a parish councillor but was still a governor I would pop a report through the letter box of the clerk

The Playing Fields

Towards the end of the fifties a long awaited event happened. During the war, and after, the parishes of Lynsted and Teynham joined together to raise money via a 'welcome home, fund to provide a playing field for the communities. From time to time in the local press there had been odd letters demanding to know what had happened to the money. The truth was that what was called the 'Welcome Home' committee had until now (late fifties-early sixties) been unable to find a suitable site to spend the money on to provide a playing field. They had now acquired at a 'peppercorn rent' a site in Frognall Lane where brick earth had been excavated. The money raised had now been all spent levelling and fencing the site. The site was to be handed over to the Teynham and Lynsted parish councils to run. I got involved in the negotiations with Teynham council as to how the thing should be organised. My opposite number for Teynham was not their clerk as expected but the chairman of their council, a charming chap, Lou Nethercoat. Teynham's clerk at that time was what I call a professional clerk from outside the parish who competently did what he was paid for but had no real interest in the parish itself. Lou and I met regularly at Lou's house. It was agreed that the management committee should consist of three members of Teynham Parish Council and three members of Lynsted Parish council and three nominees from the old welcome Home Committee and that the honorary treasurer for the new management committee should initially be the treasurer of that committee Ronald Dixon. When I pointed out that the new committee would also need an honorary secretary Lou said that it was being assumed that I would take on that role!

I've been trying to remember where we used to meet initially. I am assuming that it must have been one of either the YMCA Hut or the St John's Ambulance Hut which rested side by side at the top of Station Road where there is now a house and a small block of flats. Now I come to think of it the YMCA was still going at that time.

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The reason I now remember this is that about this time (the early sixties) a lovely idea was started - a 'Father Christmas' service for the children of Lynsted and Teynham. The idea was that parents, uncles and aunts, grandparents, friends etc. who wanted to give a child a present, would leave them with the name and address of the child at a central collecting point and these would be delivered by a 'Father Christmas' on Christmas morning. I am pretty certain that the 'collecting point' was the old YMCA hut. These presents were delivered to the hut on Christmas Eve and sorted into areas. I cannot remember whether we had more than one 'Father Christmas' available or not. I know safety of the gifts overnight was a problem and those organising it took a brave step and invited some of the youths who they thought might be a problem to stay in the hut overnight to keep them safe from theft - and it worked. I know this scheme continued for a number of years and still from time to time happens these days.

Running parallel with the setting up of the management committee was the setting up of a Teynham and Lynsted Football Club and a Teynham and Lynsted Cricket Club. These were soon up and going and representatives from both organisations were invited to attend the meetings of our committee. All the committees were slightly incestuous as some people were involved in more than one and we were not always immediately sure who was representing what. I for instance in addition to being secretary of the management committee found myself vice-chairman of the cricket club! (I think I was the token Lynsted person on the cricket committee dominated by Teynham residents).

Shortly after its formation the management committee appointed a sort of ground and amenity committee (I cannot remember its real name) to sort out what we were going to do with the site now we had got it. One of its first tasks was to get a pavilion on the site. We got news that Manston Aerodrome were flogging off a number of huts or sheds and a few of us from the committee drove out there one Saturday afternoon and picked one of a suitable shape and size and bought it on behalf of the committee. It was dismantled and forwarded to the playing field within a week. We organised a working party from the football and cricket clubs - who would be the main beneficiaries of the pavilion - and re-erected it fairly soon one afternoon. I remember it was erected on brick piers but I cannot remember if we had someone in our working party capable of building

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these or whether we had commissioned a competent bricklayer to build them beforehand. It was all very primitive to start with but gradually after the years facilities became more sophisticated. I do remember the cricket club got a licence and organised its own bar. It was then that I realised the big difference between cricketers and footballers. Whereas cricketers after a game liked to socialise with their fellow cricketers (friend and foe alike) over a drink, footballers just wanted to get straight home after a game. We did not realise this until we found that the footballers were not interested in coming in with us in organising the bar, (I'm speaking as a cricketer here). After I resigned as secretary of the committee I lost regular contact with the running of the playing field but no doubt its latter history can be gleaned from the committee's minutes.

There was great pressure from the community 'to do something for the children'; the field was not just there for the enjoyment of grown-ups playing games! A children's committee was formed and money provided for the supply and erection of children's equipment - slides swings etc. - on the site. This became a constant worry to the committee as it was continually being vandalised and eventually had to be abandoned as a facility.

For a short while a tennis club was formed and they fixed up their own court. The Club only lasted a few years until the prime movers seemed to lose interest and gradually the court fell into disuse and was abandoned. However, at one time our management committee meetings were attended by representatives of the football, cricket and tennis clubs and the children's committee.

In the lateish sixties, soon after I started commuting to London I resigned as secretary and lost detailed contact with the committee and only learned from any reports made by our parish's representatives on the management committee to the parish council. About this time I stopped playing cricket and I was no longer associated with the cricket club.

I should not close these notes on the playing field without mention of the Playing Fields fete committee. With the advent of the children's committee and its recommendations it was obvious the full cost of the capital outlay and running the field could not fall entirely on the two parish councils. After a public meeting it was decided to run an annual fete to raise

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additional funds. The management committee being a committee of statutory bodies (the parish councils) was precluded from risking public funds so a fundraising fete committee was formed, a committee on which my Peggy served for a number of years. It was chaired by a colourful character of those days — Frank Cork.

Those were the days when the parishes had a police presence. There were two police houses in Cherry Gardens, Teynham, in one of which lived the sergeant, Frank Cork and in the other Ben whose surname (Hicks?) escapes me at the moment. Both were active members of the community as well as being policemen and Frank was invited to be chairman of our new committee. It was a very good committee (my Peggy was a member of it) which put on some very ambitious fetes over those years. As my involvement with the playing field waned so do my memories. I think a fete continued to be held there for a few years into the seventies but then appeared to fizzle out (Frank Cork had gone by then).

Now it's back to the parish council.....

Before I digressed on to the school and the playing fields I was discussing the various bodies that the council sent representatives to. I think I listed them all except the association of parish councils. Although they were generally only a body to collectively speak for the parish councils they were able to offer us good advice, legal and otherwise, when we needed it. Their local meetings were informative and kept us abreast of what we could and could not do as parish councils.

In 1965 I joined the London Borough of Islington and for the next twenty years I was to commute to London - to Cannon Street from where I used to walk to Clerkenwell where my office was. Although I continued as parish clerk for a few years I eventually found that it was much more difficult being away from the parish for at least eleven hours every day. So reluctantly I resigned and handed over to David Sevier, a solicitor, who worked with the then parish chairman Arthur Braham who had joined the parish council some years earlier at the suggestion of my Peggy who herself did a stint on the council from 1958 until 1961. Between Stewart

Dixon and Arthur the chairman had been Ron Wyles. Between Arthur's and my chairmanship in the eighties and part of the nineties the chairman was Bert Goldberg. As far as I can make out all the chairmen before me are dead and all those after me - Jean Waters, Fred Smith, Tom English,

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Bob Baxter, Frank Champion and the current chairman, Mark Jones are at the time of writing still alive! In the twenty five years since I got involved with the parish council there were four chairmen before I became chairman myself and in the fifteen or so years since my chairmanship ended there have been six and one of those was chairman for over ten years!

David Sevier was not clerk for long because when a few years later I was invited to join the council as a 'co-opted' member the clerk was Tony Vaughan another local solicitor: He was later a councillor as well for many years right up to part way through my chairmanship. Tony Doogan who later moved to the USA was the next clerk (he later became a councillor as well) and was the clerk when I eventually decided not to put up for election. Peggy had had a stroke and was gradually needing more care from me. This might be the time to point out that once a clerk also becomes a councillor he (or she) is precluded from receiving any payment for their services although of course they can be reimbursed for any expenses incurred.

The parish council had got much busier over the years. Planning matters now occupied much more of its time. In the early days and for many years the council met at the school. In the late seventies, Bill Hill became our priest and turned one of the rooms in the Vicarage into what he called the Parish Room. From then the council regularly met there— right up until Bill retired. Then I think we went back to having the meetings at the school.

Perhaps I had better not leave my notes on the parish council and planning without recording two instances in which I was involved. When Bill Hill retired and it was planned that Lynsted was to be part of a larger grouping of parishes (more about this later) the diocese planned to sell the Vicarage. However before putting it on the market (which was a bit depressed at that time anyway) they decided to apply for planning permission for an additional two houses on the site with access quite near the corner. The parish council considered this quite dangerous and proposed rejection on the grounds of a most unsatisfactory access. The Borough Council who had the final decision decided to hold an open site meeting at which the public could have their say. It didn't have a large turnout. I attended as chairman of the council at the time as did a number of resi-

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dents. And, of course officers of the Borough and one of our local borough councillors, Jean Newman It ended in a sort of slanging match between some of the residents and the council officers -- it was complete shambles as far as I could see. I was not sure at the end of it whether the borough council had taken on board the parish council's objections or not. In the end I donned my other hat and wrote as churchwarden to the archdeacon pointing out that it was not good for the image of the diocese to be seen to put its own financial gain ahead of the wishes of the parish. After a personal discussion with the archdeacon the application was withdrawn and the problem was solved.

However, the shambles of the meeting stuck in my mind and if a similar situation arose again I resolved I would get the parish council to organise 'public consultation', rather than the borough, in the hope we could do it better. A few years later there was an application for the development of Vicarage Farm which the

parish council felt might be controversial. Many of us, not only councillors, as individuals, had seen the draft proposals as the developers had invited us at different times to view what they planned. Talking to some of these people afterwards most of those approached had thought the scheme was well planned but many had doubts as to whether they wanted development there or not and whether access for so many properties close to the bend in the road on which the school was situated was advisable. Another complication arose. Between the applicants showing local residents their proposals and their actually making the application there had been a big item on the front of The East Kent Gazette about the Swale Borough Council having to find sites for gypsies in the Borough. When the planning application was made, added to the original draft proposals I had seen were four plots marked for mobile homes for gypsies. This sort of thing was very common practice amongst developers to throw into the proposals something that they thought the planners wanted. Some years earlier I remember when the house that had been used for the doctors' surgery was not available and the practice was looking for a new permanent site for the surgery, every planning application in the Greenstreet area included a site for a 'doctors' surgery'! As far as I know it was a ploy that never worked. Indeed in this particular case it had the opposite effect and at the well-attended public meeting the parish council organised, many of the objections seemed to be because some of the residents on the site would be

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gypsies! When the parish council came to consider their recommendations on the planning application they decided to recommend refusal on the grounds of the access, in addition to it being an area we did not particularly want developed! No mention was made by the parish council of the fact that the application included provision for gypsies. However a number of those who sent their observations personally to the borough as planning authority did just that. As the applicants have the right to see all objections this did for a time cause some ill feeling between the applicants and such objectors.

About this time Fred Smith (a future chairman) came to me and asked me if the church could be used for a meeting between the applicants and those who had upset them - a sort of meeting of reconciliation. I of course said yes (indeed it was a very appropriate place for such a meeting).

Subsequent to the application being turned down gypsies quite illegally appeared on the site in question and were causing some concern to the parish council. Fred, ever seeing himself as a sort of 'honest broker', suggested that the parish council also attended the meeting to sort out the problems arising from the presence of the gypsies. I said 'no' because I did not want the two issues mixed up. The fact that certain residents had used the proposed gypsy sites in the proposed development as their reason for objecting was not the concern of the parish council which had carefully avoided including the proposed gypsy involvement in the reasons for refusal. The presence of the gypsies which did concern the parish council was a different matter felt the two should be kept separate and not intertwined. In the end, the meeting never took place; eventually the gypsies moved on of their own accord and the whole thing is now part of Lynsted's forgotten history.

Also about this time I was having problems of my own. When I retired, in 1985, in my early sixties, I realised that my pension, although helped by the fact that the last thirteen months of my working life had been on the salary of a Borough Engineer, it had only been contributed to for thirty years (when I started work when I came out of the Navy in the forties I never gave a thought about a pension; indeed it was only because it was compulsory if I wanted to take the job with the old Swale RDC that I became superannuated) and that I would only be on about a third of my

salary. Although this would be more than adequate for a reasonably comfortable living it would not allow us to do some of the things we wanted to do and we decided a few months before I actually retired, to sell up and downsize and release a bit of capital from our property. Although very soon we had a buyer lined up we both were having second thoughts –we were having misgivings about selling a property into which we had built our very souls and which was the only property that had ever been our very own. One day Peggy phoned me up at the office and told me that she had been in touch with the agents and taken the house off the market. When I queried the financial implications she told me that she had decided what she was going to do - "do bed and breakfast"!

Now Peggy had often expressed her envy of husbands and wives who worked together, This was when we came across a couple who ran a shop together or where the husband was a tradesman and the wife managed the business -- did the books, arranged the advertising and was the 'front' person as far as the public was concerned. She became increasingly aware of this when in the last years of her working life she travelled the country selling advertising space for year books, church and club magazines and specialist diaries. Much of this was related to small businesses in which husband and wife were involved.

In starting a business in which we both, of necessity, would be involved she eventually got her wish! She went round and saw one or two people in the area who did `B & B' but also had her own ideas of how such a business should be run.

If time permits I may come back to our venture into the world of B & B but for the continuation of my parish council story it was necessary to introduce the fact that this was the situation at the time I'm talking about.

Around this time visitors to our house were having their tyres punctured and as some of them were amongst those who had objected to gypsies it was thought at first to be related to that but at least two of the occurrences related to our B & B guests - one Dutch family and some German lads who had been staying with us for quite a time. So that rather diluted that theory. It may well have been an objection to our running the B&B? I learned later that one member of the parish council often raised the point at meetings at which I was not present (I was beginning to miss meetings

as Peggy - who had had her first stroke by this time - required more of my time). The other unsubstantiated theory was that it was somehow related to the refusal to grant the planning permission I've already referred to (I find this difficult to accept as I always felt I had given the applicants a very fair hearing). Not long after this the parish council decided to change their chairman and not long after that as Peggy needed more of my attention I did not put my name forward at the next election for the parish council, ending some 35 years of being associated with the parish council in some capacity or other

Perhaps now some jottings about the church - Lynsted Church to be exact

Lynsted Church

I've already described how Peggy and I got involved in the church through the welcome we received from both the Vicar and his wife and from the congregation. We were both what might be called lapsed Christians both having been brought up in the faith but not thinking much about it latterly. Lynsted Church at the time had a priest to itself but think it was in 1956 that Kingsdown was joined with it. When David Reeve left what

had become Lynsted-with-Kingsdown, we were informed that we would be sharing a priest with the neighbouring parish of Norton in what was described as a 'plurality'. Although the Vicar of Lynsted-with-Kingsdown would also be Rector of Norton they were still quite separate units, the door being left open for the two parishes to each have their own priest again at some later date.

The new priest, Vincent Puplett, worked very hard to be as even handed as possible. He found that both parishes had their main morning service at 11 am and decided that Lynsted's morning service should be brought forward to 10.30 am and Norton's delayed to 11.30 am. Lynsted had previously had an 8am said holy communion and a 10.15 am said matins as well as a sung Eucharist each Sunday morning. I am not sure what Norton had prior to 1957 but I do not think it was a sung Eucharist (their churchmanship was much 'lower' than ours). Vincent (although as far as I remember few people addressed him as Vincent) decided on an 'eight o'clock said communion in each church on alternate weeks. On the days we had the eight o'clock we were to have a matins and on the alternate Sundays we had our traditional sung Eucharist which was sung right

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through. He did not attempt to be in both places for evensong and asked the churchwardens to find a lay reader for the service where he wasn't going to be! Until about the time David left us the parish had an accredited lay reader; although until latterly when he had been able to help out at Kingsdown after they joined us, he was a bit of a luxury. With the new set-up he would have been a tremendous asset but by this time his job had taken him away from us to Whitstable in fact! This lay reader was our own Gordon Sherwood who has been so much of our story in recent years.

I found this task of finding a lay reader every two weeks quite time-consuming. There was fortunately a list of lay readers in the diocesan directory and I would often spend an evening ringing round. I must say I found them all to be a most amiable bunch of people willing to help out if they could. I developed a few regulars, one of which was Gordon Sherwood who was still a lay reader but now attached to his church in Whitstable, another was Maurice Knight who we have mentioned before as editor of the old Faversham News. Sadly, though I can picture some of them, I cannot remember their names- there was a Mr. something or other hyphen Jones who lived and worked in London but had a weekend cottage in Rodmersham and Don something or other who was Clerk to Sittingbourne Council.

Mention of Maurice Knight reminds me that he had other strings to his bow. He was quite a good after dinner speaker and when I did my year's stint as the finder of speakers for the Round Table organisation I belonged to, I used him twice - once to talk about Bees and once to talk about the London Underground on which he was quite an authority. After he retired he did part time reporting for his old paper and always wangled it so he attended Lynsted fete and always gave us a good write-up.

To go back to the search for lay readers for the evensong service, one of the worries was that the evening congregations were dwindling and it often worried me when I got a lay reader from quite a distance away and only three people turned up! Sometimes I had gone as far as Ramsgate or Folkestone to get the service covered, then it was particularly worrying. One Sunday that was getting extremely difficult to fill found me phoning readers as far away as Ramsgate and this particular evening I got through to a gentleman who said he was willing to come but before I booked him

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he felt he had to tell me that he was blind. He was able to get to us as his wife drove him everywhere. When he came he gave us a delightful service and he was a lesson to us all in his tremendously positive attitude to life. Although I shall always remember that evening sadly I cannot remember his name.

Amongst the church's finances was an account with the title 'Church hall account' which amounted to just over £400. Apparently during David Reeve's time money had been raised to purchase a prefabricated wooden building to erect as a church hall. For years I understood at the time that they were unable to find anywhere to erect it and had eventually sold it for the princely sum of £400 to the parish of Norton. It was always a puzzle to me that Lynsted had raised money for a hall before they knew where they were going to put it... I learned later, from Gordon Sherwood, that the hall had been purchased by Lynsted Church on the assumption that it could be erected in the vicarage garden. The Diocese put a stop to this and Lynsted was left with a building it couldn't put anywhere.

Electricity had come to Lynsted village in 1953 and by the beginning of the sixties, the church was still lit by gas. We looked into the costs of electrification of the church and decided that if we used our money put aside for a village hall we could manage it. As costs were rising the hall money would no longer be anywhere enough for what we wanted and there was still no sign of a suitable site on the horizon. We were aware that if you raise money publically for one purpose and want to use it for another you have to publically advertise the fact, presumably so that if any donor objects they can have his or her money back. We did not have any response from the advert but a member of the PCC at the time, Les Clark, did not agree with the decision and resigned from the council. Les Clark owned, and lived in the middle bit of, Hametts Bogle (it had been divided into three) and may appear again in our story. A few of us went around to other churches which had recently been electrified - I remember a visit to Selling church - before we put a scheme in hand. We originally kept the old gas lighting in as a sort of `back-up if there was a power failure. In the event we never had need to do so and as the years wore on we realised the system was so old that it would probably not be safe to use if needed so we took it out.

Also during the Vincent Puplett era we updated our heating in the church.

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When I first arrived in Lynsted inside the church were two coke burning stoves only one of which was ever lit. These did not emit much heat but they had been the only form of heating for the church for many years

This might be the time to mention Fred Sherwood (Gordon Sherwood's father) who was the church's verger at the time Peggy and I were first involved with the church. If I remember correctly, he was paid a pound a week and amongst his duties were to stoke the boiler up for the services and wind the clock. He always seemed to be about the church and had certain ceremonial duties in the more formal services organised by David Reeve when he led the choir and the priest in and out at the beginning and end of the service. There was a story of an occasion before my time when apparently David Reeve had upset him and Fred led the procession round the church twice before conducting him to his stall. His knowledge of the ceremonial side of things was very useful when we were trying to work out what the churchwardens were supposed to do in the processional side of Vincent Puplett's Induction and Institution.

The Churchyard when I first arrived was very wild and overgrown and occasionally a working party hacked it down a bit. We eventually thought we should do something about this and obtained a faculty for `levelling' the churchyard which in fact meant to make it mowable. We gave this task to Fred and really that was his

main task from then on (Vincent had no need of him ceremonially although I think he helped out at weddings and funerals). He gradually hacked down all the growth and smoothed out the bumps and the dips and what we see as the churchyard today is really his legacy to us.

To go back to the heating I was talking about earlier, we eventually decided to install central heating which had not, of course, been possible before we had electricity put in. As I write I am not quite sure how we paid for it - I know we were very short of cash about that time, so short we did a major appeal sending out a letter to everybody in the parish explaining our position and a number of us followed this up with a visit. As a result of this a number of people joined our 'planned giving' scheme, signed up for covenants or gave us 'one off' donations. I can only assume in the end it eased the financial situation enough for us to be able to afford the central heating. We took out a few pews in the southwest corner of the church, built a boiler house there to house the oil-fired boiler. At first

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on advice from the experts we kept it on low throughout the week and turned up the thermostat on the Saturday ready for the next day. Later we abandoned this idea and kept it off during the week (unless there was a weekday service) and it was my job to put it on on Saturday afternoon for the service next day.

In 1967 my fellow churchwarden, John Gwyer, resigned to retire to Malta. John lived at Kingsdown House and had been my fellow church-warden for ten years. His logical successor was a farmer, Bill Coultrip, who farmed Hole Street farm and had been John Gwyer's fellow churchwarden when Kingsdown had their own churchwardens but at this time he was not prepared to stand. The parish elected Bill Hargraves in John's place but his tenure was short lived as he had matrimonial problems soon afterwards and resigned. The parish was awash with the Hargraves family at this time. Harry Hargraves the father who as engineer to the RDC was my boss and lived in a new bungalow in Cellar Hill, Bill the older son, a dentist, lived with his wife Lina at "Walnuts" and Peter the younger son and also a dentist lived with his wife Nicky at Lynsted Court Cottage in Ludgate Lane. Mention of Peter Hargraves living at what by this time was called Lynsted Court Cottage reminds me that in the late fifties the cottage was known as Ludgate Cottage and was semi-derelict and unoccupied. How it came to happen I don't know but John Thomas offered it to Peggy for the use of the church for £50. We looked into how we could use it and had some plans drawn up. The costs were way beyond our means and it looked as if the cottage would be a liability rather than an asset without a lot of money (which we couldn't afford) spent on it and we declined the offer in the end.

To take Bill Hargraves' place we elected John Yerbury who we've mentioned earlier and should have filled the role very much earlier (before me in fact)

In the Autumn of 1968, Vincent Puplett suddenly died, just outside the top gate of the church after he had said matins in the church. There had not been as far as I knew any signs that he was not well and it was a shock to us all.

Vincent's time as our priest had not been particularly innovative, after he had found a way to make the system work with a new pattern of services.

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How he would have coped with changes just ahead of us I do not know. Somehow thinking about it he would have accepted the changes and somehow made them work. However, I think that if he had been the priest

when we first arrived in the parish, it is doubtful whether our lives would have taken the course they did and I might not be writing these notes now.

I was now in my second interregnum. In both, my previous interregnum and this one, it was the custom to appoint the churchwardens as sequestrators and hand them over an amount of money each month equivalent to the stipend. This was to pay the expenses of visiting priests and lay readers to keep some pattern of services going. Some of the money went keeping the vicarage heated - during the 1956-57 interregnum the vicarage had been modernised (including knocking part of it down) and central heating installed (I think some of the money from the sale of Norton Rectory went towards this). At the end of the inter regnum we were expected to pass any funds remaining to the incoming priest.

During this inter regnum John Yerbury was my co-churchwarden although before it was over we learned that John and Sheila were selling up and moving to Petham the other side of Canterbury. John who was a dentist hated dentistry and had decided to retire when he could, although quite young (I doubt if he was more than fifty at the time). We never kept in touch although John was obviously involved with his church there because I did meet him a few times at the archdeacon's 'visitation' an anomalous term because it was we who visited him although originally, historically, it was the archdeacon who did the visiting.

Mention of the archdeacon's visitation reminds me that when John Gwyer was my fellow churchwarden after attending our first visitation he subsequently refused to attend. At that time we had to pay a visitation 'fee' of 18 shillings each year which was historically for 'fodder for the archdeacon's horse' dating back from the days when the archdeacon visited the parishes on horseback. This no longer, of course, was the case and we were required to attend a service at the cathedral and listen to the archdeacon's 'charge' which in those days consisted of reminding us of our duties regarding such things as drains and insurance. John felt quite strongly that if we were still paying a fee he should visit us and decided he wouldn't visit him!

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Funnily in the seventies long after John Gwyer had left us, the diocese did experiment with trying to visit us, partially at least. They held the visitation service for the Ospringe deanery (of which we are part) at Faversham Church and a meeting was held afterwards in a hall nearby for us all to discuss things with the archdeacon. Later for a few years about this time churchwardens of the parishes in the deanery were summoned on a particular day, each parish at a specific time, to meet the archdeacon and bishop at the rural dean's vicarage to discuss our parish problems. In those days after we had received notification of the Archdeacon's Visitation we were required to fill in a questionnaire and our answers formed the basis of our discussion with the archdeacon, originally in the cathedral and latterly for those few years in the vicarage of the rural dean. Nowadays we are back at the cathedral but there is no form to fill in and no discussion with the archdeacon.

To return to our story, eventually Basil Minchin was appointed as our vicar and again as rector of Norton. Unfortunately his appointment was not confirmed until Basil had taken a short term appointment in Sweden so we were well into 1969 before Basil and his wife, Margaret, joined us. Basil & Margaret were until 1968 joint secretaries of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Fergus an organisation which cultivated ties between the Orthodox Church and our own Anglican communion. Basil himself had the appearance of an orthodox priest and Margaret his wife was a dead ringer for the actress Margaret Rutherford! Peggy and I grew very fond of Basil and Margaret finding them excellent companions. Basil used to make all his own wine both from seasonal fruits and from grape juice and built up quite a 'cellar'. This came in handy when his daughter

married in the church and he was able to provide all the wine for the reception at the vicarage. Elizabeth the daughter in question married a Greek and went to Greece permanently to live.

Basil was quite a scholar and had written quite a few books on the liturgy' including one (in 1961) on the concept of celebrating the Eucharist facing the people which we all accept as normal now but which was then quite a revolutionary concept. He was quietly trying to introduce it to us gently. When I told him that I found another church doing it - Wimborne Minster (where we had been on holiday) - and that the priest had stood behind the high altar at its existing position at the eastern end of the church he did not think that was completely in the spirit of what he was

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advocating; He believed the altar should be brought forward nearer the people. On the occasions he celebrated facing the people he always did it with an altar at the beginning of the chancel.

I enjoyed the time with Basil as our priest and also our good friend. It was during his time we started the harvest supper (at my Peggy's suggestion) and started looking at the structure of our services. For a time we just adapted the prayer book service by changing the order of things which heralded the changes to come. We started the idea of all joining for a cup of coffee after the service - first at the Vicarage then at the houses of individual members of the congregation. This got a bit silly when it was the house of a member of the congregation a car's drive away; I thought it rather defeated the object of the exercise. Strangely we did not yet seem to be ready to have our coffee in the church! Another innovation was to get many of us to help with the service by doing the intercessions and acting as 'servers'. Also instead of alternating the sung Eucharist's with matins .we had a Eucharist each week which included some of the matins canticles in an effort to keep those that liked their matins 'on board' as it were.

During Basil's time we hit a period when we were woefully short of money and in the winter we tried cutting down on our fuel costs by huddling in the Roper Chapel with borrowed fan heaters and gas convectors or by having our services in the vicarage. This short time experiment was a false economy as by limiting the heat in the church it was obvious we were not doing the fabric any good.

About the time Basil joined us I lost John Yerbury as my fellow church-warden and Bill Coultrip of Kingsdown who had declined nomination earlier accepted the job and we were back to someone looking after the Kingsdown end and someone looking after Lynsted. A few years later he decided to sell up his farm – Hole Street Farm in Kingsdown – and live in Faversham. This meant there was a need for a new churchwarden. There was at the time an obvious replacement for Bill - George Washington but he declined to accept nomination so we again looked amongst the Lynsted congregation for our replacement. There was a fairly obvious choice – Peggy Dixon, our treasurer and she was duly elected.

Peggy Dixon and her mother, the legendary Queenie, were a vital part of

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the community when Peggy and I first arrived in Lynsted. They were indeed part of the community that made us feel so welcome that eventually we decided that this was where we wanted to live out our lives. They were always to be seen about the parish on some errand or other. Queenie had lost her husband in the Great War not long after Peggy was born; she was the church treasurer, a stalwart of the British Legion and was one of the trustees to the old YMCA Hut at the top of Station Road and was probably the nearest the

area had to village hall at the time. When Queenie died Peggy took over as church treasurer and continued to be a stalwart of the church as well as being active in the British Legion Peggy was a very forthright lady who never minced her words saying exactly what she thought. Her manner was not everybody's liking but she always meant well! She hardly ever missed a service and for many years pumped the organ. She remained as churchwarden until after Basil retired and saw us through the first part of the inter regnum. At the ACM before our new priest was due to join us when it came to nominations for churchwardens, in addition to the names of Peggy and myself there was a nomination for George Washington as well. This meant a vote and sadly George received more votes than Peggy

As can be imagined Peggy did not take too kindly to this. However I thought I had prevailed upon her not to abandon us altogether and retain her role as treasurer. A few days later she came to me and said that she felt that she had now to resign as treasurer. This was a bit of a blow as the treasurer's job was pivotal in the running of the parish. I discussed the matter with some of the PCC and learned that the father of Jennifer Bones a PCC member, Lawrence Easton, a retired local business man, would probably be prepared to take on the treasurer-ship and with Jennifer I went to visit him and he agreed.

Later Peggy approached me to see if she could rescind her decision but I felt having set a new sequence of events in motion it was now too late. Peggy had recently taken on the duties of sacristan and I prevailed upon her to not let these go. After Sheila Yerbury moved away the duties of sacristan had been carried out by a Miss Hills—she was always known by everybody as 'Miss Hills' never by her Christian name which I cannot bring to mind as I write. She lived in Teynham, in Froggnall Lane and was disabled. Locally she used a little invalid electrical vehicle but was always brought to Lynsted by car. This was first by Sheila Yerbury and

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later when she took over Sheila's sacristan duties by Basil and/or Margaret and occasionally by others of us in the congregation. When Basil knew he was leaving us he made arrangements with the then vicar of Teynham for her to be sort of transferred to Teynham Church in the care of their vicar who if I remember rightly was a Lionel Owen at that time. It was then that Peggy took on the sacristan duties.

Bill Hill arrived during 1976 and we took to him immediately. Whereas Basil tried very hard to appear as a 'man of the people' (always went in the public bar rather than the saloon bar to this end but he was so obviously a 'scholar' that people could not take to him in that way.) Bill, however, had no such problems. Bill did a lot to prepare us for things to come. Up to now our priests had been what I call more 'hands on' than they are today. Often dealing with the architect regarding restoration work, chairing all the committees and PCCs, very much involved in fundraising ventures As we've mentioned in our piece about the fete, Bill gradually left the fete to me. He suggested that a member of the PCC should deal with the architect and Reg Waters a quantity surveyor was appointed to fill this role.

Bill immediately accepted our habit of all drinking coffee after the service but suggested that we make and drink it in the church.. It seems so normal now and most churches now do it but thirty four years ago it was not usual. He also had us with an altar at the chancel step and celebrated 'facing the people'; the congregation took its communion in the front pews.

At the beginning of Bill's incumbency (is that the right word?) Bill had a new churchwarden, George Washington, a new treasurer. Laurence Easton and a newish sacristan, Peggy Dixon. When George decided to 'hang up his warden's boots' the obvious choice to replace him was Bill Tonkin. Bill accepted nomination

and remained churchwarden for eleven years. Laurence Easton sadly died while treasurer and after a rather unsuccessful period with a George Boswell-Cumming in the post the role was assumed by Eileen Tonkin wife of Bill. I cannot remember when Peggy gave up being sacristan. At some stage, she told us that failing eyesight was making her give up driving and from then on she stopped being a regular member of our church community and of course no longer sacristan. Duties taken over jointly by Marlene King and Ann Diamond.

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There was a marked improvement in attendance during the time Bill was with us although there was little innovative in the pattern of services. He more or less kept them the same as Basil had kept but dropped any attempt to incorporate aspects of matins into the Eucharist service.

In recent years, our morning service jumped about a bit. I think I've mentioned that traditionally both Lynsted & Norton, before we shared a priest, had their services at the almost universal time of 11 o'clock. So that he could be in both parishes in the mornings he brought Lynsted's service forward to 10.30 am and pushed Norton's on to 11.30 am. To get to Norton in time he used to nip out the north door as soon as the service was over without having a word with the congregation. Basil when he came was not happy with this arrangement and brought our service forward to 1.0 am so that he could spend a little time with us before going on to Norton. Later Norton switched their service to 9 am so Basil pushed ours on to 10.15 am where it still was when Bill arrived. Not long after Bill came to us he put Lynsted's service back to 10.30 am where it still is but not for long! Watch this space!

I suppose we cannot record Bill's time with us without mentioning the News Letter which is very much part of the life of the parish these days.

The News letter

There are probably not too many around who actually remember the now defunct Deanery News. This was a joint venture by the Ospringe deanery designed to help those parishes who did not consider themselves large enough to afford a magazine of their own. Each priest had a page for notes about what was going on in their parish(es). It was a pretty drab affair - most of the churches filling their allotted space with brass cleaning and sidesmen's rotas and notices of forthcoming whist drives and bazaars. When Bill Hill arrived he was a little bit frustrated by how early they wanted his copy - many low budget publications are printed on the presses at slack times and when it came time to distribute the copies he updated proceedings with a duplicated sheet of additional items to go out with each copy. The circulation was limited, only going to those who paid for it. There were probably only about 100 copies distributed in Lynsted—if that.

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There came a time when Bill started adding non-church items of news like school news and this made people sit up and take notice and there were questions as to how this could be developed for a wider circle of people. When Bill was talking to us about this problem Peggy came up with a possible solution.

Peggy had recently retired from selling 'space' in support of various publications - year books, church and club magazines, diaries etc. She pointed out to us that if we could get enough people prepared to advertise we could finance the supply of paper, stencils, ink etc. to print our own magazine. A few calculations regarding the cost of these to produce enough magazines to put in the doors of all the houses in Kingsdown, Lynsted and Norton and an assessment of what an advertisement would have to cost and Peggy was able to

approach local businesses, shops, pubs, tradesmen (plumbers, electricians etc.) to see if they were interested. I think she was planning a charge of £7 per year for 1/8 page and this brought enough promises for us to go ahead. We got quotes for printing the covers and the pages with the advertisements on from Wyvern Press Bill as editor drafted the text and a lady, Betty Martin who then lived round the corner from the vicarage at Lynchett House typed the stencils, Bill ran off 550 copies on the vicarage Gestetner duplicator and we collated them in the vicarage community room after a PCC meeting stapling them with a long arm stapler I had borrowed from my office. Peggy Dixon in Lynsted, Jim Gambell in Norton and Ann Washington in Kingsdown, who had seen that the various recipients of the Deanery News got their copies, organised the distribution of this new publication. The whole idea, as they dropped through the letterboxes seemed to meet with immediate approval.

I am not sure when all these features 'kicked in' but later we were collating each month with a team I got together by a quick 'phone round'. We did this on our dining room table and the typing was being done by a team of ladies that Bill had got together working on a rota Amongst those names I remember were Carol Turner, Elaine Broad, Barbara Langford, Maureen Lambe, Wendy Waters, Carol Whiteland and others I am sure I have missed out As pretty well all the volunteer typists had typewriters that would only take paper in the portrait position and , due to our format we wanted the typing in the landscape position we needed a 'long carriage' typewriter which we acquired when Arthur Braham's office were

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replacing their typewriters. Somehow, I don't remember how, I acquired the job of humping round to the 'duty typist' this heavy old long carriage typewriter, Bill's draft, a great wad of stencils and a big bottle of red 'gunge' used to correct any mistakes on the stencil and then collect the typed stencils, ready for Bill to run off, the typewriter and spare stencils (and bottle of red gunge) ready for next time.

On second thoughts I can probably think I know how I came to get landed with this job. Bill would from time to time let things get on top of him and I would find him exasperated because things weren't working out. It was then I would ask him to calm down and somehow ended up each time taking on another little job to do with the News Letter. By these means I ended up in addition to keeping the typists happy, ordering the paper and ink, dealing with the printer, doing some of the typing (explanations later), arranging for contributions from various people and organising collating teams etc. From time to time I would help Bill with the 'running off, sometimes doing it on my own.. As Bill's time with us drew to a close I ended up doing all the 'running off', first over at the church and later at home.

But I am getting ahead of myself So far we have only got as far as how it started. We had got a year's covers and adverts pages printed but we were not aware of what we had started and how long it would all last. During the year Bill's duplicator broke down and it was necessary for it to be replaced. Bill knew a character well known in Norton called Andrew Gray - Doctor Andrew Gray to be precise. Andrew knew a fellow in London who sold reconditioned duplicators and I remember Bill asking me to attend a meeting at the Vicarage with him, Andrew and a fellow who up to then I had not met, Bill Marks. Bill was satisfied and the duplicator was purchased. Bill, vicar Bill that is, later suggested that when I invited quotes for the following year's printing I invited Bill, who was actually a printer by trade,, to quote for the work. This I think had a great effect on the survival of the News Letter. Bill gave us a very favourable quote and became a friend to me as well as the News Letter. I found that his place of work was within walking distance (if I hurried) of my own office and was able to pop over and see him at lunch time to organise various bits and pieces we

needed. Indeed Bill Marks became a very great friend of the News Letter. More than once when vicar Bill's duplicator failed, printer Bill printed the editorial pages for us. In the village living in Heathfield

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in Ludgate Lane, was a genial gentleman, of the name of Brant Screeton, who had a paint factory in New Cross and when I wanted something that printer Bill had produced he would deliver them to Brant's factory who would then deliver them to me on his way home. At one time I had a longstop in this department - Adrian Harvey, of Japonica Cottage, whose office was near the Old Bailey not far from my own office in Clerkenwell.

It was not long before the Newsletter established itself as a feature of village life but I reckon it was about four years before every organisation realised it could publicise its doings. For quite a while if Bill and I didn't know about it, it didn't get reported. This rather limited the news to news of the church, of course, the school (we were both governors - although Ron Harwood the Head teacher was one of the first to contribute) and the parish council with which I was involved. It was sometime before the Horticultural Society, the two Women's Institutes, and other organisations cottoned on to the potential. The birth of the newly formed branch, the Lynsted branch, of the 'Men of Kent' was fully documented because I was secretary of the steering committee. The early days of the Age Concern at what was then known as Teynham Ballroom was again fully reported on by its founder, that lovely, gentle, lady, Belle Friday. I ought to record at this point (in case I don't think of it later) that Teynham Ballroom had originally been the local Salvation Army Citadel until no longer required by the Sally Ann when it was acquired by a dancing school which for many years ran dancing classes there. It continued to be known as Teynham Ballroom long after dancing ceased to be what went on there. It was available for organisations to hold their meetings and events there and that is where Belle started her Age Concern activities. Strangely Belle was herself a Salvationist and it is now named after her as the Belle Friday Centre.

At one time the owners of our village shop were Fred and Brenda Nixon although Brenda was the post mistress and ran the shop; Fred was a journalist by profession and was at the time editor of a magazine called Kent Life. He helped us quite a bit with the News Letter. With his journalistic experience he could fill an empty space at the drop of a hat. He often contributed little pieces under the pseudonym 'Wat Tyler'. We had also about this time acquired an electric typewriter which he was able to make work when others couldn't. I also took advantage at work of some of the

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offices clearing out old typewriters and acquired one which I kept in an empty office. I don't remember the sequence of events but also about this time we acquired a stencil cutter which could create a stencil from a typed master. This obviated the need for typing onto stencils which was a bit of a bind especially if corrections had to be made. My memory tells me that at some stage we dispensed with the rota of typists and Fred and I did the typing between us. Fred typed all the material that came to Bill on the electric typewriter and during lunch hours I typed, on my newly acquired typewriter, all the material that came to me. When I became Borough Engineer at the end of my working life I had the luxury of a P.A. who did much of my bits on her new word processor, which in the early eighties was one of the wonders of modern science! If either of us had any space left, I started what I called a 'Filibuster' column and Fred had no difficulty at all of course.

Perhaps, I had better explain the use of the word 'filibuster' which I often had to explain at the time. Owing to our format the number of pages had to be divisible by four which meant where we couldn't cutback to fill one number of pages we had to find extra material to fill the next multiple of four pages. I remembered from old American films the concept of filibuster in the American senate where a senator could hold up legislation as long as he held the floor - he could in fact 'talk out time'. This was called a 'filibuster' and I thought my concept of filling in space to be something similar. With modern computers with their ability to change sizes and shapes of fonts this need no longer applies. We just squeeze up things to get something else in! Strange to say for some time, when people (those who remember the filibuster days) offer me a light-hearted piece designed to fill an odd corner some still referred to them as 'filibusters'. Sadly such people are now very few!

There seems to be a gap in my memory covering the period after my retirement. I cannot remember who was doing the typing. Fred had moved away into Sussex. I had lost, of course, the use of the typewriter at the office and although I had a computer - a Commodore 64 plus 4 - it only had a dot matrix printer which was not the most readable of scripts although I did do the 'What's On' sometimes with it (I had devised a programme that automatically printed the items in date order). Whilst writing I have a sort of feeling it may have been Marlene King. Later I acquired an Amstrad computer - this was essentially a word processor

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which would also act as a computer unlike my Commodore which was a computer with a word processing programme built in. I know from then on I typed the lot. Later, of course I acquired a computer recognisable as a computer in modern terms and was able to do all the things we can now do.

I think I ought to say a bit more about Bill Marks who was so important for the survival of the News letter from about 1978 until early this century which is where my memory fades. While Vicar Bill was with us, Bill M mainly dealt with Bill although gradually Bill Marks started to deliver to me as I was organising the collating. When eventually vicar Bill retired I started ordering paper through Bill M and he visited me every month. And Peggy usually gave him lunch. Many times when my current duplicator broke down, he would 'lend' me another. I ended up in my shed with several old duplicators - on a number of occasions I acquired the odd duplicator from people who would phone up to say they had an old one they had just replaced. They seldom lasted all that long and my shed was becoming a graveyard for old duplicators which Bill always wanted to take off my hands - I think he thought he could recondition them and sell them. He never did collect them.

At one time I remember I had on 'permanent loan' from him a stencil cutter. This had a chequered career. At one time a rubber band that was an essential part of its drive snapped and when I got through to the manufacturers they said they had a minimum charge which would mean my rubber band would cost me £59. While I was protesting about this being a lot to pay for a rubber band the girl I was talking to said 'have you tried super glue?' When I had put the phone down I stuck the two broken ends together with superglue and the rubber band lasted for the best part of a year! It eventually broke, not at the old join again but in a fresh place. After that it broke again several times always in a fresh place. When it finally broke and I could not fix it any more, in desperation I grabbed one of the larger rubber bands from a packet I had handy and put it in the machine. To my surprise it worked. I continued with this.

Things were not looking too promising at this time we were running on constantly replaced duplicators and a stencil cutter either dependent on the efficiency of superglue or the availability of a suitable band in a mixed bag bought from the stationers Then I heard that my counterpart,

Joan Boucher who ran the Doddington Newnham and Wychling Newsletter had managed to acquire, second hand, one of these new copy printers which were very sophisticated duplicators with a built in stencil cutter. I put out feelers to see if the chap, Neville Legg, who had managed this for Joan could do something similar for me. Bless him, he did. He found me a second hand printer for £350 . This lasted for a few years and he found me another one for £500. About the time this was on its last legs I learned I could get a grant from an organisation called 'Community Champions' run by John Jackson. For a new one. I got a grant of £1,600 for the machine I am still using as I write

About this time - my memory cannot quite fix things into a sequence of events—a strange thing happened. Up to this moment ever since he had taken on the job in our second year Bill had printed the covers, and the inside pages containing the advertisements. The advertisement pages at this time included one double sided page and one single sided page on which we had been printing our 'What's On' pages. Each time as the advertisements were renewed I would send details to Bill and he would print the covers varying the colours each month. Although originally he printed all these for the year latterly as he was coming down to see me every month to deliver the paper he did them for three or four months at a time. By this time the Newsletter was being produced on a modern computer with all its different fonts and font sizes and I was including some of the advertisements in the text as they came in.

Each year I would send Bill a copy of the adverts for the covers and `insert' pages and on those months when a new print was due I would advise of the colours of the last few covers so that these were not repeated. At the time in question I had already sent him all the necessary details for the new covers and advertisement pages and I phoned him to arrange the delivery of them to me and also give him the recent cover colours. He queried the fact that there were less pages to print and I pointed out that I was now able to do a reasonable job on setting out an advert and was including some in the text. I then went on to tell him the recent cover colours and he asked me to hold on while he got a pen or pencil; he then said he couldn't find one and said he would ring me back. He never did and as hard as I tried I wasn't able to raise him on his home number his workshop number or his mobile phone and I never spoke to him again. I think I even wrote to him. David Wood was also trying to get him on another

matter and also failed.

Some years later his girlfriend Joy phoned to tell me that he had died but was unable to explain to me why he had avoided contact with us all these years. In my own mind I have never been able to think up a satisfactory explanation that fits all the facts. Towards the end not only was he providing the covers and advertisement pages he had printed he was also providing all the paper and occasionally printing some of the News Letter itself. From time to time It would produce an old duplicator when I was in trouble and I was working at the end on a borrowed stencil cutter (the one of rubber rings fame). I had great difficulty in getting a bill out of him, in fact only once in all this time did I get a detailed account and was able to 'pay him up' Every so often he would ask if he could have £500 or so which I always knew to be below what I owed him. At the time he disappeared from our acquaintance I am sure we were in his debt. When he died Joy was not able to enlighten me on this.

I shall always remember Bill with great affection; nothing seemed to be too much trouble for him in support for what I was trying to do with the News Letter and was always able to make sure the Newsletter got out even if it meant printing some of it himself or 'lending' me a machine to do it My Peggy was very fond of him and I was pleased to see him at her funeral. What happened to sever our relationship I'll never know

[END]