

Vicar's Notes

Our Summer Fete was a very happy occasion. Money was not the prime object, and we welcomed other people working for good causes in with us, so that they could make themselves known, and raise funds too, if they wanted. Our own organisations were also encouraged to keep some of the proceeds for their own needs if they wished. Local tradesmen gave great help, gladly taking out advertising space on the programme and offering valuable gifts. The amount remaining for the Church Council is £66, which it was decided should be spent on the purchase of a further set of new hassocks. There was good fun and fellowship, and many people enjoyed themselves. Mrs. Orton, our organising secretary, did a splendid job, despite the fact that she was dogged by ill-health all the time. We are sorry that she is now having to spend some weeks in hospital—and yet glad, in that this involuntary immobilisation will make her take the rest she badly needs.

A LETTER

August 2, 1960.

To the Priest-in-Charge,
St. James's Church.

Dear Sir,

I am on holiday, and visited Hampton Hill Cemetery to see the grave of my parents. I was really shocked to see the cemetery, which is so utterly neglected. The whole place is like a rubbish dump—I have never seen such a graveyard in this country before. If it were just a few month's growth, one could understand, but it is the growth and neglect of years. I could not even sit on the seat provided for visitors, it was too deeply coated with dirt!

A church and its surroundings—belonging to it—should show forth the Glory of God. If Christ's teachings are practically understood, there will be no lack of funds to keep His Church in order. Heaven is Law and Order. If this is not understood, at least one expects respect for those buried there. I must say many graves there are kept beautifully—that will have been by the owners.

Friends and relatives of mine living in Hampton Hill are now past speaking about that cemetery!

I don't know who is responsible for the place, but if they let the place go to ruins, then a complete stranger, like myself, who looks upon the place as sacred, must write about it.

I do hope, dear sir, that I will receive a reply to this letter, and that you will send it on to those responsible. Otherwise I will feel it my duty to write to a Bishop or someone.

With the kindest intentions possible.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

A.B.

. . . . AND A REPLY
4.8.60.

Dear A.B.,

I am sorry that you should have written to me, instead of coming to see me personally when you were in the district. A few minutes' chat might well have cleared the whole matter up. I am single-handed in a large parish, and not being able to manage all the more important things that await me, I feel it an unnecessary demand upon my time having to answer letters such as yours, written apparently with little knowledge of the true facts.

Strange as it may seem to you, what you mainly complain about is just a few months' growth: you are completely wrong in saying that it is the growth and neglect of years. By the late autumn it should all be down, unless anything unforeseen occurs—such as our gardener's having a long illness, as he did some years ago. (He is actually off-work at the moment, so this may have accounted for some uncleared grass when you made your visit).

Of course, though unfortunately, the churchyard does get abused—neither the police nor the church can mount continuous guard over it. Flowers and plants are stolen from graves; people do dump their rubbish there surreptitiously, just as they do on the golf-links; hooliganism occurs from time to time—graves are damaged, seats overturned and broken, bits of glass

scattered about; some people use it as a playground and worse. One sometimes wonders how civilised we really are!

The Church Council on its side spends approximately £150 a year on keeping the churchyard in as good order as it can and in repairing wilful and other damage. An excellent, wise and experienced gardener works two full days a week there, all the year round, and volunteers give a helping hand from time to time. We could of course spend more and do more if you and others like you would shoulder some of the burden. So far this has not happened: people who complain seem to prefer to say what others should do on their behalf, rather than help themselves.

I often wonder why the churchyard, in so many ways, seems to bring out the worst in human nature! Even letters of abuse are couched in more fiery terms than usual. I thank you for making yours so relatively mild, and courteous. (I also receive expressions of appreciation too, though not so frequently!).

At the moment, the cost of maintaining the churchyard falls almost entirely upon the worshipping congregation, most of whom have no such personal interest as you have, since they have no graves of relatives there. You continually speak of it as a cemetery, which it is not: the difference is great indeed. In a public or private cemetery you have to pay a large amount for a grave-space. In a churchyard only a small traditional fee is paid, and this does not go towards maintenance, but is part of the Vicar's stipend. Furthermore a public cemetery is heavily subsidised from the rates. But most cemeteries, even though they may have a large staff of full-time gardeners such as is beyond the church's means, find it difficult to keep the grass under control at this time of year.

So you will, I am sure, put your precept into practice, and play your part in seeing that there is no lack of funds for keeping things in order. You might also ask those friends and relatives in

Hampton Hill who 'are now past speaking of that cemetery' (churchyard, please!) to accept their share of responsibility, and not just leave it, as so many things are left, to those who go to church.

Cheques should be sent to me or the Churchwardens made payable to the Parochial Church Council of St. James's.

Yours truly,
R. H. BRUNT.

MISCELLANEA

How good it was to have Hannah amongst us again! The crowded meeting at Twickenham, where many of us had to stand, and others could get in at all . . . and the more intimate one here, where everybody had the opportunity for a personal word. She has left us many things to think and pray about.

I am hoping to be on holiday with my family in Cornwall from August 12, for three weeks. Whilst we are away the Rev. C. R. M. Poynting (Vicar of Holy Trinity, Ashton-under-Lyne; once a curate of Epsom) will be living in the Vicarage with his wife and two children. He will be in charge of the Sunday Services, and available to help with emergencies during the week—but I know you will all realise (as in past years) that this is his holiday, and spare him anything that is not absolutely necessary.

It is good to see new life coming into the Junior Sunday School, with the influx of young "assistants"—the Misses Susan Howard, Rosalind Brunt, Susan Willmott and Mr. Graham Peel—and the change to "St. James's Cross-Bearers," of which full details later.

It is sad to know that nearly all the work done during the last two years, in the vestry, choir stalls and at Wayside, which it was thought had eradicated dry-rot, has been entirely unavailing. It has all been undermined again by fresh outbreaks, and the situation is now far worse than it was before the work started. A detailed report from a specialist firm is awaited.

The certificates for those who had passed the Sunday School examinations could not be presented on July 24th, as they had come without having the names inscribed. Mr. Forrow, one of our expert pen-men, is now kindly dealing with this, and they will be

ready for presentation in September. Names will be given in the next magazine—also the names of those recently confirmed.

Another expert penman, Mr. Ford, recently brought the Baptismal Roll up to date, and it is now hanging in the Baptistery.

AROUND THE SPIRE

being notes and news about
people, activities & organisation

THE MOTHERS' UNION

We are very grateful to all Mothers' Union members who helped to prepare, and to serve, teas at the Garden Fête, and to all those who coped with the washing-up. The thermostatic urn, hired from St. Mary's Church, proved invaluable.

Owing to a severe thunderstorm only two members were able to attend the meeting at St. Mary's on July 19th, when Mrs. Marcus Knight was the Speaker.

We look forward to our new Session, which will open on September 7th with an Admission Service in church. The Secretary would be glad to have the names of any who wish to be enrolled on that date. Tea will be served in "Wayside" after the Service.

On Wednesday afternoon, September 21st, we have been invited to visit the Church of England Children's Home at Roehampton. The party is limited to 20. Mrs. Cliff (3, School Road Avenue) would be glad to have the names of any members who wish to go. A coach has been booked, fare will be half a crown per head, time and place of meeting will be announced on September 7th.

Mrs. Roberts, our Central President, will be addressing the Overseas Meeting in the Caxton Hall, Westminster, on Friday, September 23rd, at 2.30 p.m. Tickets one shilling each. Miss Swift, of St. Mark's, Teddington, who has become Deanery Overseas Representative recently, asks members to make up bags (from any remnants of material—the gayer the better) in which native women can carry their Bibles and personal treasures, these bags to be handed in at the Overseas Meeting.

On Tuesday, October 4th, at 2.30 p.m., the Mass Meeting will be held in Central Hall, Westminster. **Speaker:** Right Rev. Stephen F. Bayne. **Subject:** "The Family in Contemporary Society." Tickets one shilling.

As tickets for both these events must be applied for on September 1st, Mrs. Rockliffe would be glad to receive the names of all those who would like to attend either or both of these meetings.

V.R.

THE YOUNG WIVES' GROUP

The Young Wives were very pleased to see so many new members at their June meeting, and hope that they and many more will come to our enjoyable evenings.

At this particular meeting, Mr. Spackman gave a very interesting and instructive talk on Window Boxes and Indoor Plants. He brought some fine specimens along to give us encouragement and show us how our plants should look, and helpful tips in case they didn't.

P.E.F.

THE YOUTH CLUB

The Youth Club members combined with the Youth Fellowship in selling programmes for the Church Fête. Robin Ford organized a popular tombola as well as a few side-shows, whilst Ian Hirsch ran a somewhat unusual auction! The enthusiastic efforts of the members who manned the Youth Club stalls realized about £18 and this will help the Club to acquire a record player which it badly needs.

The attendance numbers at Friday evening meetings are now exceeding 60, so unfortunately a waiting list will have to be started for male members. Girls are still welcome!

The Club will have its Annual General Meeting on September 16th, at Windmill Road School at 8 p.m. It will close for school holidays on July 29th and will re-open on Friday, September 7th.

Members with all parishioners—whether travelling to such far off places as Australia, Germany, Switzerland or Muddeford Sandbanks—a very happy holiday.

SMALL ADVERTISEMENTS

Garden Produce Show and Fête, Saturday, August 27, at Hampton Water Works, 2.0—7.30 p.m. (see leaflet enclosed with this magazine).

SOME DATES TO NOTE

Aug. 24.—St. Bartholomew.
7.15 a.m. Holy Communion.
(This will be the only week-day celebration until Wednesday, September 7).

Sept. 7.—3.0 p.m. Mothers' Union Service.

Sept. 18. — 9.45 a.m. Sunday Schools re-open in Church and at Wayside.

Sept. 28.—8.0 p.m. Young Wives' Group "At Home."

Sept. 29.—St. Michael and All Angels.

7.15 and 10.30 a.m. Holy Communion.

7.15 p.m. Harvest Thanksgiving Service. Preacher: The Rev. E. J. Parkinson, Vicar of Hampton.
8.30 p.m. Harvest Supper and Entertainment (H).

Oct. 2.—Continuation of Harvest Festival.

11.0 a.m. Family and Parade Service.

Copy for the September issue of the Magazine should be sent to the Vicarage not later than September 5. Magazines should be ready on Friday, September 16.

FROM BEYOND THE SPIRE

THE WORK OF THE COLONIES DE VACANCES IN FRANCE

Life is hard for children in France. School is from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. with often three or four hours of homework each day. Many of them live in dilapidated houses, with six or seven people sleeping in the same room. They have only a week's holiday for Christmas and ten days for Easter. The only consolation is that the scholastic year ends in mid-June and recommences in mid-September. For many children, however, it would be necessary to pass these three months in the unattractive surroundings of their homes, if there were not the facilities of the Colonies de Vacances.

Organized by industries, municipalities, or even by the local parish priest, the children have the opportunity, on the payment of a small sum, to go to the country, the mountains or the sea. In their colonies, they can enjoy games, songs and manual arts, things which may be completely new to them. Moreover, they have the beauties of nature around them, a complete novelty after the dreariness of a back street.

Each "colonie" is run by a "directeur" with a staff of "moniteurs," one to eight or nine children. Each moniteur is responsible for the health and enjoyment of his "équipe" throughout the three to six weeks of the colonie and, prior to being placed, he must follow a training course.

It was difficult to know what to expect when I arrived in Nancy for my training course. In fact, I passed ten pleasant days in the company of 40 young men and women, doing exactly what the children do in the colonies. From there, I was placed in a colonie for the school-children of Rheims, which takes place in a château about 30 miles from the town, high above the valley of the Marne. Here there is a good cross-section of rich and poor, even, for example, in my "équipe" of nine mischievous but affectionate boys of eight years of age. It is necessary to be wide awake to separate those involved in a fight, to ensure no one gets lost in the woods and to give everyone a fair share at meal times. Hard work at a Colonie de Vacances? Harder than at a Youth Club!

RICHARD PALK.