

Old Morden

A CURATE'S WONDERFUL RECORD 1799-1835

Nearly two centuries ago (1778) Dr. J. Worthington Peers, graduate of Merton College, Oxford with a doctorate in laws, became Rector of Morden. Two weeks before his institution he received license from the Archbishop of Canterbury "to hold the Vicarage of Ickleford cum Pirton, Herts. with the Rectory of Morden, Surrey."

Obviously with the care of two parishes more than thirty miles apart the learned Rector would need at least one full-time curate resident in one of the parishes, or perhaps even one in each parish.

In his early years as Rector of Morden, Dr. Peers evidently spent much of his time in this parish, for most of the weddings and funerals were conducted by him, but in 1779 we find one R. Laxton signing himself "curate" in the register, and in 1796 John Peers A.M. (who was the Rector's son) describes himself as curate. (There is a much earlier record of William Booth having lived in Morden for eleven years before he became Rector in 1634 at the age of 39. He may well have been the first curate of Morden in the modern sense, but this must be verified.)

In 1799 one Edmund Turner Batley became curate of Morden, and his fame evidently spread into the neighbouring parish of Carshalton for at the end of July 1805 he married Martha Beynon of Carshalton and assumed her family surname. The link with Morden continued to the last year of Dr. Peer's long life for we find that a monument near the Vestry door in St. Lawrence church records his "gratuitous and valuable services as Curate of Morden during a period of 36 years from 1799 to 1835. He died at Carshalton highly esteemed and regretted on 15th November, 1842 aged 66 years."

There was a tradition in Morden years ago that when the parson lived at Carshalton he used to ride or drive along the old green lane from Rose Hill and that someone would watch for him to appear in the lane and would then signal to the sexton so that the church bell could be rung for service. Was there some uncertainty as to a service occasionally, or did punctuality count for less in those days? The curate's horse would then be stabled in the shed almost opposite the churchyard, or left to graze in the glebe meadow where Hatfield Mead now stands.

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The curate would enter the parish church by the Rector's (or priest's) door and use the interior porch, which then stood there as a vestry, putting on the long parish surplice over his riding clothes. Surplices in those days, like those still used in many old colleges were cut open down the front and fastened with a single button at the neck-band. It is said that this form was introduced to avoid putting the surplice over the full-bottomed wigs which were fashionable at one time ! But in 1804 the church vestry was built and the interior porch disappeared a few years later.

Some of our readers may have read in the press of the forthcoming sale at Sotheby's of an interesting silver model of "Morden Church, Surrey, the square tower with cremellated top and enamelled clock face, the long nave with projecting porch and vestry, by George Wintle 1825, and inscribed 'AD.1826 The Rector of Morden, Surrey presents this model of his church to his truly affectionate friend, the Revd. Edmund Turner Beynon, M.A. who has been giving his ministerial labours to him and to his parish.'"

This collectors piece last changed hands about twelve years ago and it certainly deserves to rest permanently in Morden parish church close to the memorials to the two men who between them served the parish for ninety three years, including a partnership of thirty six years which may well have been a record in English history.

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The Silver Model of the Parish Church 1825

At the time of going to press the fund has just passed £60, but the model is to cost us £100. Messrs. Sotheby's have persuaded the second dealer into whose hands it passed to let them have it on behalf of Morden parish.

It is hoped that the model will be on view in the parish church by Easter, but until we have £100 to pay Messrs. Sotheby we cannot take possession !

A generous member of the congregation who has already made a substantial gift towards the purchase is prepared to lend further cash to help secure the model, but the sum of over £40 is still to be raised as quickly as possible.

Several former curates have subscribed £10 between them as a "share" in honouring a distinguished predecessor in office. Shares of £10 have also been contributed by members of the congregation either personally or with the assistance of friends.

There is still opportunity to join in this effort. Any money over-subscribed will be returned to the donors.

We would like to record our thanks to Mr. Hancock of the Merton and Morden News and to Messrs. Sotheby for ready co-operation in securing this memento for the church.

hours of Lord and Lady Carbery: and my father used to relate the following story of their courtship:

"Mr. Freke, aged 25, called upon the Lady Sophia Whichcote to propose for her daughter, receiving the reply: 'My daughter's engaged but I'm not!'. whereupon the young suitor married the mother, then aged 50. After her death, Mr. Freke, then himself aged 50, became suitor for the hand of the Lady Victoria Cecil, aged 25. Her father, the Marquis, refused his consent: but on his death-bed asked his daughter what he could do for her. She replied: 'I want your consent to my marriage with Mr. Freke.' This her father then gave. "The couple were married as stated above; and their union, notwithstanding the disparity of years, was, I believe, quite a happy one. There were three children of the marriage. Mr. Freke's first wife, the Lady Sophia, was the widow of Sir T. Whichcote, Bt., and the daughter of the 5th Earl of Harborough. She died on the 23rd of September, 1851.

"Although, of course, I cannot vouch personally for the details of the story given above, it is as related by my father, who was ever a lover of truth. I remember being present, when quite a boy, during a conversation between Mr. Freke and my father; and my recollection is of the extraordinary deliberateness of Freke's utterance, there being a very decided pause between the words of every sentence.

"Inclusion of Authors' names in the Hymnal is, I think, helpful to complete understanding of their message."

Puzzle Corner



Why are some parsons called Rector and others called Vicar?

The difference in title is really a matter of the ancient Tithe system of this country. When the Parishes of England were first organised, it was arranged that the local landowner should have the right of appointment of the Parish Clergyman, provided a charge of one-tenth of the crops was to be at the disposal of the clergyman for his own use and for the poor of the parish at his discretion. The landowner usually provided, in addition, a house of residence, and the people assisted in building the Parish Church. The clergyman to whom these tithes were paid was known as the Rector of the Parish.

Subsequently, many local tithes were "alienated," i.e., they passed out of the possession of the parish clergyman into other hands. In many cases in the Middle Ages, when the right of appointment was transferred to a monastery or to a senior clergyman, arrangements were made for the tithes to be collected by other people, and a lower-paid clergyman (who was not given the right to collect the tithe) was put in the place of the Rector. This clergyman was called the Vicar, i.e., he took the place and performed the duties of the Rector. In later years, before the Reformation, a good many English benefices were held by Italian and other foreigners who never visited this country. This was one of the things that provoked the animosity of our forefathers against the Roman Church. It was not an uncommon thing for a foreign clergyman to draw the stipends of ten or a dozen English benefices, which he never visited, and from the revenues he paid, if he thought fit, some poor parson to perform the duties at the lowest possible price, keeping the balance for himself.

At the Reformation, much of this was remedied. The land and buildings, which had come into the hands of monasteries, etc., were restored to lay ownership, together with the right of appointment, but in a good many cases, the right to collect tithes passed also with the land to the lay owner, so that in many parishes the Rector of the Parish was a layman, and the spiritual responsibilities were with a Vicar. This was the position at Morden for five centuries before the year 1635, when Richard Garth restored the so-called "great tithes," then worth £30 per year, to the Parson of Morden, who thus became Rector of Morden and not simply Vicar.

The reverse process occasionally happened, e.g., in the 17th century, the Rector of Deptford displeased many of his congregation, and a local fund was established to build a new Parish Church in his Parish. An Act of Parliament was passed to permit the establishment of a new Parish, and one clause in the Act took away tithes from the then Rector of St. Nicholas, Deptford, and gave them to the incumbent of the New Parish of St. Paul, Deptford. Thus, to-day, the ancient Parish Church of Deptford is St. Nicholas, and its incumbent is known as Vicar of Deptford, while the parson of St. Paul's, Deptford, is known not as Rector of Deptford, but Rector of St. Paul's.

There is no question of seniority involved nowadays. Many Parishes known as Vicarages are more important than those known as Rectories, and it would be a good thing if the Church of England followed the practice of the Irish Church, and of the Church in South Africa, and gave the title "Rector" to every incumbent of a distinct Parish. The apparent inferiorities would thus be eliminated.

Some recollections of Old Morden

The following interesting recollections of life in Morden many years ago were written down by the son of a lady now aged 91 years.

It must have been 1873 when from my home near the Morden end of Green Wrythe Lane, Carshalton, I first went to school near St. Lawrence's Church and in Central Road. My two sisters were already attending the school and later on my brother attended.

Her son then takes up his story. "I attended the school in 1905 for about a twelvemonth, under the tutorship of Mr. and Mrs. Rewcastle and a wonderful fair-haired girl known as 'Teacher Lily'. I still remember a song she taught us. I write 'us' because we were boys and girls, as you see 'co-ed' is by no means new!

The Rector of St. Lawrence during my mother's schooling was the Revd. Wm. Winlaw. The schoolmaster was Mr. George Blunt who lived at the School House with his mother. He later married a kindergarten and sewing mistress, a Miss Allman. Mr. Blunt played the church organ and the school children—approximately 60—made the church choir. Only three family names are now remembered, viz. Thomas Harvey, Millie Harvey, Walter Groves, and a family by the name of Stone. (Some of the Stone family were later probably employed by Mr. Bush who lived in Crown Lane.)

The village carpenter was William Stockbridge; the undertaker a Mr. Lawrence. A Mrs. Wormald, after hay-making (in which many of the children took an active part) held a 'Fair' in her grounds near the church, especially for the school children. Each girl was given a petticoat, and each boy a scarf. If any boy failed to bow or any girl failed to curtsy to the said Mrs. Wormald when out in her carriage drawn by a white horse, then the offending boy or girl was reported to Mr. Blunt—later to Mr. Rewcastle.

A Mr. Tritton left in his will 'that all children at the school were to receive red capes and a pair of boots'. Later, for some reason, only boots were given out annually.

A very great day it was, perhaps beyond all others, when Miss Hatfeild of Morden Hall married.

A very small man (my mother used to say he was a dwarf) known as 'Punch Ale' used to pump the church organ.

Up to say 1930, Lower Mitcham and Morden had some curious attachment. Mitcham traders delivered in Morden, boys from my school in Lower Mitcham delivered morning papers in Morden and many men from Morden worked for Mitcham firms and many families in Morden and Mitcham intermarried.

Even now men I meet speak with affection of Morden—neither they nor I can quite understand why; and I am forced to the conclusion that Morden retained for a very long time all that was best of the feudal system !”.

SOME MORE NEW YEAR MESSAGES

From the **Rev. D. J. Powell**, Alberta, Canada. Our wishes for every blessing in the New Year. Recently we experienced our coldest spell, with temperatures around zero and below at night. We were carpeted with a thick blanket of snow but being in the Chinook area it can very well disappear in one day and temperatures rise quite rapidly.

During November we were thrilled to take a small part in the Leighton Ford Crusade in Lethbridge, some 90 miles east. The numbers of our Bible Study evening vary; please pray for us about this. Our two Sunday Schools presented their Christmas pageants in mid-December.

The children are growing up fast and abound in energy.

We were glad to hear of the successful Autumn Fair at St. Martin's. How we enjoyed the atmosphere there, with all the churches co-operating! And we were interested and happy to read in the Parish Magazine about Major Batt's recent Mission.

From the **Rev. H. A. and Mrs. Hatchman** and **Miss I. M. Tillet** (Norwich). Greetings from us all for 1965 with our motto "Consider Him . . .". We often remember you all in our prayers together.

A NEW CONVOCATION

Mid-January saw a newly-elected Convocation of Canterbury meeting in St. Paul's Cathedral for the Litany in Latin, beautifully sung by the Cathedral choir. The "prolocutor" (i.e. spokesman) was duly elected by the proctors for the clergy, and next day business was begun in time-honoured fashion.

Both the Convocations of York and of Canterbury meet "in full synod" each under the Presidency of its Archbishop, York normally conducting all their business together, while Canterbury divide into Upper (i.e. Bishops) and Lower Houses for debate. The lower houses have the right to dissent from the Bishops' decisions, so that nothing becomes an "Act of Convocation" without the concurrence of the Lower House, but sometimes the Upper House decisions are implemented without the assent of the Lower House, although it is rarely done.

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SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF SIXTY YEARS AGO

A few recollections of school days and happy memories of Mr. and Mrs. Rewcastle and Lily Stockbridge. It was by their teaching that I was able to leave school at twelve years of age and start working at the farm with my father at Bishops Farm.

The day at school always ended with a visit by the Rev. William Winlaw, (father of the Rev. G. P. K. Winlaw, a later Rector of Morden) when he said prayers and we sang a hymn.

During the summer Mrs. Wormald invited the school to the Park for tea and sports, and it gave her great pleasure to watch the races and present the prizes. A barrel organ provided the music on these occasions.

At Christmas Squire Hatfeild gave a party at the school. The rooms were beautifully decorated, and after tea there was a concert and a present for everyone as we left.

On Sunday mornings we used to go over to the church to join in the service with the grown-ups, and afterwards we had Sunday School. Mr. Rewcastle was the organist then.

At the George Inn on Guy Fawkes night the landlord, Mr. Tom Sawyer, gave a children's party followed by a grand display of fireworks. The Inn then was a livery stable for the coaching horses which changed over there on their daily run to Brighton: it was a grand sight. Then there were the old covered wagons going along from Ewell. Sometimes the roads at Lower Morden were flooded and we had to be taken to school by wagon. It was a common sight to see many gipsy caravans stretching from London Road to what is now Battersea cemetery. Many people are unaware that there used to be an inn at Lower Morden the Sheep Shearers—and after it was closed, my parents were the first people to live there: I was born there. It stood over the green opposite the farm which is now Hatfeild School.

I recall a Mr. Clayton who lived in Central Road and who ran classes on Saturday afternoons where things were made to help Missions.

E. W. LAMBERT.

(Many readers will remember Mr. Lambert who retired recently and is now living at Great Hormead near Buntingford, Herts.).

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by J. E. Budd

In a past number of the Magazine (February, I believe), there was mention of a bequest under the Will of a certain Mr. Tritton, and this intrigued me as one of my local Directors in the Bank where I work is Mr. Alan G. Tritton of the famous banking family. While we were chatting, I happened to mention about the bequest, and he told me that indeed the Mr. Tritton was one of his ancestors. Knowing how interested you are in the history of Morden, I asked him if he had any other details and he very kindly lent me a book on the family which was privately printed in 1907. This book, of which only 150 copies were printed, is number 67, entitled "Tritton—the Place and the Family," is extremely interesting, tracing as it does the family of Tritton back to 655 A.D., when the first Archbishop born and bred in the land was consecrated—one "Trithona."

There is a chapter in the book dedicated to Robert Tritton (Rector of Morden), third and youngest son of John Henton Tritton. Readers will be interested in the following extract from this particular chapter:

"Robert, the youngest son of John Henton Tritton was born May 2nd, 1792, and was educated at Harrow and St. John's College, Cambridge. After leaving the University he worked for a time in the banking house in Lombard Street, and it appears there were thoughts of a commercial career for him. He however took Orders and soon after his ordination was married to Mary, eldest daughter of Vincent Hilton Biscoe, of Hookwood, Surrey, the marriage taking place at Limpsfield. His first curacy was at Tatsfield, and he lived for a short time at Brasted House, near Westerham. For the next fourteen years or so, he was at Titsey, and soon after his father's death in 1833 was presented to the living of Morden, the advowson of which had been acquired by his father, some years earlier, with this in view. He had eleven children, four of whom died in childhood. He was left a widower soon after the birth of the youngest son, Vincent Biscoe Tritton, in 1835, and remained a widower until his death in 1877 aged nearly eighty-six.

Few men were more widely known or more respected than the Rector of Morden. His was a type of character less often seen now than forty or fifty years ago: abounding in common sense, hating extremes, always exhibiting in manner and bearing the utmost urbanity and old-world courtesy. Such was Robert Tritton.

The family was also prominent in Beddington, for a Mr. Henry Tritton bought the Carew Chapel, which opens out of the south wall of the parish church, and restored it with its monuments,

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invasions, and also attempted domination by Jesuits, the ancient Coptic Church has remained unreformed. Its ceremonies and Scriptures for centuries have remained in the dead language of Giliiz, which few have been able to learn and understand. The first step towards a spiritual reformation must surely be to place the Bible in the hands of the people. A revitalised National Church could have immense influence on a nation which has already emerged as leader among African states, surrounded by Muslim countries.

The great hunger for literature goes on. The first consignment of the popular version of the Amharic Bible was rapidly sold out, and a reprint necessary. The B.C.M.S. "Bookmobile" met with such a response that sometimes in difficult terrain it was necessary to telegraph for fresh supplies to be flown to a landing strip on the Bookmobile's route. Needless to say, the newly published book of Acts proved especially popular, with its story of the first Ethiopian Christian.

It was said of a great Ethiopian evangelist of the twelfth century, Tekla Haymanot, "He sowed Ethiopia from end to end with the Gospel". Nothing less than this is the aim of B.C.M.S. Much prayer is needed if there is to be a fruitful harvest.

4th MORDEN GUIDE COMPANY

After a short weekend camp for Patrol Leaders and Seconds a fortnight previously, the Whitsun camp was a very happy one. Eleven Guides went to the County Camp Site just past Cobham, in the charge of Mrs. Cooke, with Miss Mary Gibbins, Tawny with 5th Morden Brownies, as Quartermaster.

A visit to the nearby common for a game of flag raiding was combined with a most successful collection of wood for the fire, and a return to camp was made with a large truck piled high. A camp fire with 3 other companies took place, and on Sunday evening the campers received a warm welcome at the Cobham Methodist Church. The weekend was rounded off on Monday by camp sports, including the more hilarious races.

Miss Gibbins was successful in gaining a Quartermaster certificate, and Mrs. Cooke a camping permit.

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putting in a beautiful stained glass window. The sittings in the chapel were used by himself, his family, and household. On his death, his son-in-law, John Henry Bridges, son of the old Rector, bought it and handed it over to the Church.

John Henton Tritton's will was proved in the Canterbury Registry Prerogative Court and includes, "... the advowson of the Morden he leaves to Henry to present Robert thereto at the next avoidance."

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FORTY YEARS AGO

Morden was a village, with a population around 2,000. The appearance of a hundred new houses prompted the start of mission services in premises provided at Ravensbury Manor, by Colonel Bidder, at which the Colonel himself played the harmonium.

The Rector, Rev. W. H. Langhorne, was approaching the anniversary, on December 25th, 1925, of sixty years of ministry. Morden was his fifth parish, and he estimated that he had preached some 6,000 sermons.

He was being assisted in the parish on three days a week by the Rev. A. D. Pierpont. A curate for the parish was found in June 1924, but no accommodation could be found in the parish for him, and consequently the Rev. Thomas Smylie continued to live at his address in East Sheen, and travelled daily to Morden. Further help was given by the Churchwarden, Mr. F. J. Griffiths, who was admitted as Lay Reader on May 31st.

In the same year, a new organist was appointed, Mr. Hugh Clayson, from All Saints, Clapton. He was chosen from no less than fifty-two candidates!

The Parish Magazine was sold for 1d. and consisted of eleven pages of the Home Words inset, and one page of parish notes.

At Christmas time, gifts were made to some sixty parishioners, in the form of bread, meat, coal and blankets. The Christmas Sale of Work realised £83 13s. 6d. and was affected by bad weather.

In November, 1924, the Churchwardens and Curate together started a Youth Club, under the title "St. Lawrence Social and Athletic Club."

Morden received special mention in the newspapers in connection with the cruel sport of rabbit coursing, which was still a legal sport. This took place in Sutton Common Road on Sunday mornings, and 6d. was charged for admission. At these events, rabbits were released and chased round the field by dogs, until they were torn to pieces. Up to thirty or forty dogs would take part, and a crowd of 150 spectators would gather. One spectator wrote "one poor little creature seemed to think that a man could not be so pitiless as a dog, and rushed to him for protection. In a few seconds it found its mistake."

A report from a neighbouring parish illustrated the acute shortage of housing. In a five-roomed tenement, 27 people were found to be living, with a family of 5 housed in the scullery. The country was looking ahead to the prospect of 1½ million unemployed, in autumn, 1925.

In February, Bishop Garbett paid a visit to Morden. The Rector wrote of his previous visit when "he asked if I thought the people would mind his offering to shake hands with them."

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The Bishop advised the building of a new church, as 10,000 new people could be expected in Morden at the completion of the railway.

The Church Council consisted of six members, plus the churchwardens.

In the autumn, the churchwardens organised a great Harvest social gathering, held in the Council School premises which was attended by 400 people (one fifth of the population).

The combined parish and Sunday School outing went to Bognor, with 174 parishioners. There was one injury from broken glass on the beach, and a thunderstorm.

Monthly guest services were held at St. Lawrence, entitled "Musical Services," at which there were solo voices and instruments, and the Rector preached with visual aids, on such subjects as "What's wrong with the Church?" and "Can we trust the Bible?"

The Diocesan Quota was increased to £35 for the year. At a Diocesan Synod, an overwhelming vote was recorded against the reservation of the sacrament.

No small change?

News from St. Lawrence

Thanks to Messrs. Richardson, Groves and Moss the restored hatchments are now going back in their original places. Special wooden supports have been made so that, if need be, the hatchments can be removed for ceiling repairs and redecoration.

Five of the hatchments still await restoration by expert hands, but those completed look quite handsome.

The Churchyard. This winter it is hoped to clear a small section of the churchyard and to level it for grass. This will enable everyone to see how tidy and pleasant the churchyard will eventually be. Formal objection has been received to the removal of about fifty monuments, and about a dozen others will be preserved for historical or other special reasons. It will thus be possible to remove or to bury more than three-quarters of the existing memorials.

Attempted Break-in

At 5 a.m. on a recent Friday morning a man put his boot through one of the leaded windows of the church porch. But the inner door was locked (as always) and he failed to get into the Church.

Almost a Centenarian

Within seven months of her hundredth birthday Mrs. Frankling of Hillcross Avenue died recently, leaving her sister aged 98 to mourn her along with a daughter who is herself a grandmother. We would assure the family of our sympathy with them in their loss.