

Song – Stronger together

1. From “The Warminster Herald” 1865: 1 minute 15secs

On Thursday, the 21st of September, when the Right Rev the Lord Bishop of Salisbury consecrated the New Church, the truth and force of the text our Vicar used at the ceremony of laying the Foundation Stone, “The end of a thing is better than the beginning thereof,” came home to us people of Warminster with an unmeasured and peculiar power.

Few of the most sanguine amongst us ventured to hope, with the Vicar, that the church, the foundation stone of which was laid only on the 14th of July last year, would be finished in a twelvemonths from that time, and much less did we expect that before the morning of consecration, every penny of the £2,700 it has cost, in the bare structure and the burial ground, would have been realised or promised. Such, however, is the case, and our town now numbers among its places of worship one which must at present command the admiration of all, and which will become more endeared to us as time progresses.

**Songs: Wherever you are
Rule the world**

2. From “The Warminster Journal”, September 1915:2 minutes

“St John’s Church was filled to overflowing on Sunday evening last, when a special service, in connection with the Jubilee of the church, was held for the dedication of the four mosaic archangel panels presented by the Rev Brocklebank, Vicar of Longbridge Deverill.

The church was very prettily decorated, the principal note struck being of white, with a darker background of deep crimson. White daisies were almost entirely used in the adornment of the pulpit, and the same flowers, together with white chrysanthemums and red dahlias, were utilised in enhancing the beauty of the various parts of the interior.

The ladies of the congregation who had again so signally displayed their artistic qualities were:

Mrs Rule, altar

Miss Clark and Miss Pigot, pulpit

Miss Davis, screen

Miss Lowndes, Miss Wakeman, Mrs and Miss Vicary, north window

Miss Clark and Miss Hadow, font

Miss Jefferys, south window.

Lady Pelly had forwarded pot plants for the windows, which were arranged by her gardener, Mr Andrews.

The service was conducted by the Vicar, the Rev Canon Jacob, and the lessons were read by the Rev Rogers, Curate, who also acted as Bishop’s chaplain, bearing aloft the crozier.

**Songs: Make you feel my love
Vera Lyn medley**

3. *The following six memories are taken from the book, In Living Memory (hold up) available to buy at the back of the church.*

Pat Hayward, who was evacuated to Warminster during the Second World War *2 minutes*

We came away on the first of September 1939. I was eleven. We started off in London in double decker buses. We were in Ealing and the costermongers there, you know, the barrow boys; they gave every child a bag of fruit. A brown paper bag, with an orange and a pear. The train we came on was very dirty. The teacher was in our carriage. She had some tissues so we were wiping the windows, you know. Getting the dirt off and that. Make it more presentable.

The whole school came – well all those who parents would let them go. There were infants, juniors and seniors. We finally arrived in Warminster and we were all lined up in the Avenue School playground and they took different ones as they wanted them.

We weren't nervous at all. Oh no. Well, I think we were excited. Anyway, they took five of us to Major Teichmann's and I don't really remember arriving there. But when we met him we didn't know he was Major Teichmann at first, and he was so sweet.

We called him Major Teichmann. And there was Mrs Teichmann and the sons; we called them Mr Dennis and Mr Philip.

The first Sunday we were there, we went to St John's church. We came to Warminster on September the first. War was declared on September the third. So we were sitting in church and the minister - I think his name was Aldridge or Eldridge* - was talking and I wasn't paying attention and then I wondered why everyone was crying. Afterwards, I found out it was because he had announced that war had been declared. Oh dear!

Song: Bring him home

4. Tony Burden 1 minute 35 seconds

I had been made Head Server. We were just getting used to things when I got called back into the army in August for the Suez crisis, until Christmas Eve morning. I arrived back in Warminster on Christmas Eve just in time for the Carol Service! .

As I was Head Server, the first festival that came after Rev Skipper was in charge, I called in three servers for the Evening service, to carry the cross and two banners, as we had always done for years and years. Well, the Rev Skipper came in as he always did, about two minutes before the evening service and he said to me, "Why all the Father Christmases?" (Our servers wore red cassocks). I said, "They are carrying the cross and banners around the church in procession." He said, "No they are not. That is *playing* at churches." Mr Lambert, the lay preacher, said, "But we always do this, the church is full and everyone expects it." So Rev Skipper said, "All right. Carry on."

We used to process in and out of the service by going round the church, then back into the chancel, forming a cross, the boys along the communion rail and the men standing in between the choir stalls, the cross and clergy forming the top of the cross. Then we would all sing the Te Deum.

Song: Sing

INTERVAL

5. Margaret Burt *1 minute 37 seconds*

I used to go to Sunday School in St John's Church from about the age of nine, in 1939, all through the war years. There was quite a large group of us then and I can recall two teachers, Miss Dowding and Mrs Ferris; in between there might have been a Miss Glass also, I'm not quite sure.

We used to have Sunday School in the school building next door, then we would all walk in a crocodile line into the church for Morning Service.

When I started, the Priest-in-Charge was Rev Gulley. He was followed by Rev Walters who I remember best because he was the one whose classes I attended in 1944 for my confirmation. Our group that year was confirmed in the Minster Church.

The Priests in Charge used to live in one of the houses in Boreham Terrace (opposite Belmont) before the Rectory was built.

I remember going to Mrs Ferris' house once during the summer for a picnic and playing games in the field behind her house. She lived in one of those houses just above Boreham Post Office.

In the summer, also, there was a fete in aid of church funds, usually held in the garden of Major Teichman's house (where Teichman Close is now) I also remember various events in the Teichman Hall, now no longer in existence.

I got married in St John's Church in 1954. The Priest in Charge then was Rev Sherrell.

6. David Miles *1 minute 25 seconds*

I believe my maternal grandparents who lived at Boreham, attended St John's Church in the 1920s. My mother told me that she would take tea to the men when they were building the baptistery.

When we were lads, Mrs Charlton was the organist and also in charge of the choir. There were 20 – 24 choir members then. As you can imagine, the vestry, before the service started, could get quite noisy but the Sexton, Mr James, only had to stand in the doorway in his black cassock and all would go quiet.

The organ then had to be pumped by hand and occasionally one of us boys would be asked to do the job. If you lacked concentration the organ, through lack of air, would make strange noises so you would have to pump like mad to build up the air pressure. Sometimes we let it 'die' deliberately.

Some boys would play around during the sermon and try to make us laugh. I was a giggler and would sometimes get a tap on the head or a poke in the back from the men choristers behind. Once we were made to sit in the front pews where the vicar could keep his eye on us.

When we became servers we would carry the cross to process round the church and were told off if we walked too quickly. Now I'm old myself, I can see why.

Song: Amazing Grace

7. Andrew Parks *2 minutes*

In 1947, a gang of us, mainly pupils at St John's primary school attended Sunday School at St John's and I think that summer was the first time I went on the annual outing. We were taken on the train for a day in Burnham-on-Sea. In charge was our Sunday School teacher, Miss Dowding who lived in Smallbrook Lane. I cannot now remember the names others who went but on later outings, Paul and Diane Chapman, whose father managed the Palace cinema, and Rosemary and Ruth Dowding, whose father farmed the area now developed as Prestbury

Drive, were some. My brother Steve, three years younger than I, also came on later outings. Rosemary and Diane were around my age, Paul and Ruth, about the same age as Steve

On my first Sunday School outing, I was just six years old.

In due time, my brother Stephen joined the choir too, as did Peter House's younger brother, Martin. Although I cannot remember the occasion, Father liked to tell of meeting us as we came from the vestry one morning. It was after one of Steve's first attendances at Matins and Dad claimed to have overheard him ask one of the other boys, 'When they came round with that pouch, I managed to get tuppence. How much did you get out?'

One choir practice, Mr House caught us with peashooters firing elderberries at each other across the chancel and threatened to expel us. Fortunately, he did not, nor did he carry out his threat to tell our parents for had they seen the dark red stains on the oak choir stalls made by the ripe berries, there would have been serious repercussions. With hindsight, I realise this may have been because one of the boys involved was his elder son, Peter. To my certain knowledge, the stains were still visible several years later and possibly still are.

Songs: The Ash Grove
The Rose

8. Mike Rix 2 minutes 20 seconds

In the '50s, you were put on a waiting list, if you wanted to join St John's choir. There was an audition. No girls. Two "big boys" (David Miles and Tony Burden) kept an eye on you. It was dark and cold, in those dreary, damp days, walking around the back of the church, into the vestry. Then there was the matter of turning all "angelic", pulling on those stiff, starched surplices, and robing up in long blue cassocks, all set off with a delightful frill around the collar...

I can remember fellow choristers tipping out some tiny, black, tar-tasting capsules squeezed out of the minute square corner of a small, pocket-sized tin; these were intended to clear and prime the throat for singing. But we discovered other, darker purposes for these little lozenges. On at least one occasion - prompted, no doubt, by a particularly lengthy and, dare I say, uninspiring sermon - we amused ourselves by firing these minute missiles across the choir stalls to the enemy "angels" in the opposite pews.

A particularly popular occasion was the invitation to sing at a wedding, with the considerable reward of two (shillings) and six (pennies) pocket money.

Sometimes, as a treat, we would be taken on a local excursion by theological students assigned to St John's. These students were training for priesthood at St Boniface College, now part of Warminster School. One such romp around Westbury White Horse had us returning home coated in mud!

Then there was the visit to Salisbury Cathedral, to join other Diocesan choristers in celebration of the cathedral's 700 year foundation - a journey made in the back of Reverend Tambling's stately yellow and black Rolls Royce. It seemed like almost an entire choir crammed into the back seats, separated from the driver by a sliding glass panel: what fun, for small boys, in an age of austerity!

Songs: For the beauty
Calon Lan

9. From "The Warminster Journal", September 1965: 1 minute 50 seconds

“One of Saturday’s highlights in the centenary festivities was a colourful cavalcade of costumes dating from the Middle Ages to the 1920s, presented by the Mayor of Blandford, Mrs Penny.

Unfortunately, the coach carrying models and dresses broke down for about two hours, so their splendid show at Kingdown School was of necessity cut down to ‘second half’ proportions – costumes dating from Jacobean to Victorian times, complete with ‘gay flapper’ Charleston outfits of the 1920s.

Other crowd-pleasing festivities took place at Bishopstrow House. From the terrace of the house, after he and his wife had entertained the Bishop of Sherborne, the Mayor of Blandford, Archdeacons of the church and other clergy and guests to lunch, Mr Keith Neal opened the centenary celebrations by firing four ancient cannons. Then, in the spacious grounds, huntsmen and hounds of the Wylde Valley Hunt led by their Master, Colonel Bennett Shaw, paraded in sporting pink.

The festival continued at Kingdown School, owing to the recent vagaries of unsettled weather, although Saturday remained fine. A lively selection of music in the large hall was given by Aldbourne Silver Band from Swindon, conducted by Mr Robert Barnes. Polish dancers entertained the crowds as did the local pop group, the Skylons.

St John’s School hosted a barbecue at which there were fireworks, a passenger-carrying model railway, and once again, the Skylons.

Song: You raise me up

10. The remaining readings come from the book, In Living memory.

Elaine Ashley 50 seconds

John Rebbeck was born and brought up in the village of Imber, until all the families were evicted by the army. His name appears on the school records on display in the church.

John was a loyal member of St John’s congregation and a friend of my parents. I have some jewellery that John gave my mother after his own mother died. A simple, quiet man and staunch supporter of the choir. And just a little naughty. As teenagers (please don’t think we were any younger....), Marcia and I were always at church early to prepare the music, wearing our cassocks of course. For the uninitiated, cassocks have nice baggy sleeves that allow singers to move freely when holding music. Just baggy enough to encompass small bottles of Baby Cham. John would appear, sidle up and pass each of us a bottle to smuggle out. In our cassocks. If anyone else knew, they never said.

11. Sheelagh Wurr 1 minute 55 seconds

When I moved to Warminster in 1976, Olive Emm took me along on the Sunday and liked the service.

After I had been attending for a few weeks, Rev Lovatt said to me, “If you ever feel God is calling you to help with youth work, please tell me.” After another few weeks, he cornered me again. “Do you feel God is calling you to work with youth?” I said that I didn’t, particularly think God was calling me. To which he replied, “Well, never mind God. *I’m* calling you. Be here at 6pm on Monday evening.” Thus began my long association with the young people at St John’s. They would all arrive on Monday evening and sit in the pews where Mr Lovatt (as we always called him) led a short meditation. The children seemed to love it and were able to maintain silence for quite long periods of time. Then they all went off

in groups with an adult or two for some teaching and various discussions or activities. Mr Lovatt always had the lessons typed out for us on thin pink paper. They were copied on an old Gestetner machine and were sometimes so faint it was hard to read them.

On Feast days he held a Eucharist instead of Quest groups. In 1976, the Church Times published a series of letters debating the reason for the lack of young people in church. I wrote a letter, which was published, describing the youth work at St John's. In it I recorded the following:

“On All Saints Day a Eucharist was held specifically for young people. A straight Series 2. No gimmicks. Two hundred teenagers came to join the worship even though the majority were not communicants.”

I received several letters asking St John's for help in setting up groups in churches around the country!

Song: Halleluia

12. Jane Fowles 1 minute 55 seconds

From 1987 to 1996 I worked overseas as a volunteer, first in Indonesia and then the Gaza Strip. During this time members of the congregation supported me and my work in many ways as follows: several people, including Val Whatley, Jean Thornton, Phyl and Stan Rix and Monica Smith, wrote to me faithfully throughout this time. Their letters were like gold dust to me, particularly as these were the days before computers and mobile phones. One person, Phyllis Barker, even kept me regularly supplied with powdered milk as it wasn't possible to buy milk in those countries. Janet Campbell gave money on a monthly basis to support any of my students in straitened circumstances. Sheelagh Wurr recorded The Archers omnibus each week and sent the episodes to me monthly, on audio cassettes, which seems unbelievable in this day and age!

At one time the congregation helped provide finances to build a church in the remote Tanah Toraja region of the island of Sulawesi, part of the Indonesian archipelago, something that my Christian students and members of that community had requested. They even named the church, 'St John's.' Susan Oldham worked a kneeler to commemorate the parish's link with Indonesia. It can be found in St Aldhelm's Church.

Later, the congregation helped to bring a Palestinian teacher to England for a desperately-needed operation which couldn't be done in Gaza. Other Gazan teachers were able to travel to England to spend time at a school in Salisbury as a result of the support of the congregation.

13. Rachel Hornsey 25 seconds

Mum started taking me to the Pram Service when I was about nine months old. We kept going until I started school. I loved listening to the bible stories and stories about the saints and drawing pictures. My favourite memory, though, is singing, "Row, row, row your boat" with actions, at the altar. Thank you for such a happy childhood memory.

Song: Love changes everything

14. Becky Lear 1 minute 5 seconds

I was a member of the Quest groups, with my sister Rachel, my friend Meg and many more. We had lots of fun with Harold and Sheelagh. I remember a visit to the Convent. We saw the Sisters' bloomers hanging on the line and we couldn't stop laughing. We have carried on singing and am in a ladies choir now.

I was fortunate to go to Taizé a couple of times, and also to France with the Evreux Diocese Youth twinning

I remember feeling like I was part of a family and people really cared for each other. I think I found a real sense of belonging and continue to grow in my faith. I am now a member of the church in my village, my children have gone to a church school and I feel they also have a Christian foundation. My parents were not church people but supported my sister and I in what we wanted to do.

I was confirmed at St John's with many friends, with a party in the hall afterwards.

I think my sister and I were lucky to find such amazing people.

15. Mark Howard 2 minutes 15 seconds

St John's church was a significant and constant part of my life, from my very earliest memories until I went off to university in 1984.

My first memory of St John's was Sunday school and Mrs Emm. Mrs Emm was built formidably and ran a tight ship.

I joined the choir in the early 1970s. I remember the hustle and bustle in the vestry on a Sunday morning, and the disappointment that my singing voice was not quite as good as Katrina Dombkowski's. I also had never heard a girl swear like Roxanne Northeast.

Choir practice on a Friday evening has particularly strong memories. One winter's evening, walking through the dark churchyard Andrew Emery hid behind a gravestone and leapt out yelling as I approached, properly scaring me. In the summer, we would play football on St John's school field before choir practice.

We were all impressed when the new vicar, Rev Alan Elkins, came and played in goal on one of his first Fridays. He was surprisingly good.

There were numerous trips to Othona, Oxonwood and Grail House. The memories of the individual trips blur into each other, but the word "cold" runs through them. I remember the extensive efforts to try to get one of the girls to be able to swallow her travel sickness pill (sadly her name escapes me). I also remember watching the Glastonbury pilgrimage pass by while sitting on top of a red phone box with Prakash, the Indian lad from Grail House.

Scout and Guide church parades were a big event, marching down the main road behind the scout band. The annual church fete was a huge event with stalls all across the school field.

As a 15 year old, there was the excitement of the formation of Shekinah, the practices and performances will stay with me forever.

St John's was a superb part of my childhood and adolescence. I'm sure that there must have been tensions and disagreements, but I never saw them. St John's formed my view that the world was full of decent, kind and caring people; that God was in his heaven; and everything was right with the world.

**Songs: I vow to thee my country
Land of hope and Glory
I will light a candle**