

ST JOHN'S, REDHILL AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The following are extracts from the diary of Rev WAR Ball, then Vicar of St John's, and from the Surrey Mirror.

Part 3: 1940

From the report of Annual Parochial Meeting on February 27th 1940

"The vicar spoke of the high regard which the parish had for the Rev. H.H. Anderson and his wife, and their regret that he was leaving them, now that he was a Chaplain to the forces. Mr J. H. Wells seconded, on behalf of Hooley and then Mr J. Gear handed Mr Anderson a cheque, with a book containing the names of subscribers, and Mrs Anderson an umbrella. Mr Anderson made a modest and charming reply, and the meeting had an interval for refreshments."

From the Diary of Rev Ball – 1940

January 1st 1940

The number on our intercession roll, "On Active Service" is 67.

February 1st

The number on our intercession roll, "On Active Service" is 82.

February

The Rev E. A. Douglas joins the staff.

March 24th

Easter Sunday – The first service was at 6.15am and owing to the "black out" the service had to be started with candles only – the whole church being lit by 7 candles only.

From the Surrey Mirror

An appeal was made for the giving on Easter Day to be about £100 as "on Easter Day (offerings) will be given to the Vicar, as is the custom".

In response to the appeal the offering amounted to £99-2-7 (the previous year it had been £76-3-6).

From the Diary of Rev Ball

March 31st

A Canadian chaplain paid an unexpected visit and preached at Evensong. (The Rev. Capt. R. Melville).

April 1st

The number on our intercession roll, "On Active Service" is 90.

April 13th

The first war casualty which affected our congregation at St John's. On this day the mother of William John Ison RAF received notice that her son was missing, believed killed, while flying during the operation in Norway.

May 1st

The number on our intercession roll, "On Active Service" is 93 and one (W. Ison) killed.

May 12th

Whit Sunday. On this day an alms dish of old Flemish work was presented to the church by Dr and Mrs E. B. Brooke in memory of the late Mr Walter J Payne of Epsom.

May 26th

HM the King proclaimed this Sunday as a day of National Prayer. The congregations morning and evening were said to be the largest seen in St John's Church since the Thanksgiving Service on the first Armistice Day in 1918. Benches and chairs had to be brought into the church. The services were conducted by the vicar.

June 1st

On this day there were 100 names on our "Active Service" list and one (W. Ison) killed.

Sunday June 9th

Thanksgivings offered in church for the safe return of 335,000 men from Belgium via Dunkirk. After evensong a solemn "Te Deum" was sung.

Thursday June 13th

On this day the government issued an order forbidding the ringing of church bells except by the military or local defence volunteers to indicate that a raid by parachutists or airborne troops is imminent.

Saturday June 22nd

Advice received that the name of St John's must be removed or blotted out on church boards, hymn books etc.

Wednesday June 26th

The L.E.A. gave permission for the St John's Boys' School shelters to be opened on Sundays if an air raid warning was given. This was granted owing to representations from the Church Council.

July 1st

On this day there were 117 names on our "Active Service" list and one (W. Ison) killed and one prisoner (G. Partridge).

From the Surrey Mirror

July 17th

BISHOP OFFICIATES AT REDHILL WEDDING

...Miss Eileen Marjorie Ball, elder daughter of the Vicar of St John's, was married to Mr Patrick Sidney Wilson MacIlwaine only son of Mrs McIlwaine of Vale End Meadvale.

From the Diary of Rev Ball

Sunday July 28th

Lt. Col. Stillman, 5 officers and 36 men all of the 49th Battalion Edmonton Regiment C.A.S.7 attended the morning service and the Colonel read the second lesson.

August 1st

On this day there were 132 names on our "Active Service" list.

Sunday August 11th

This day was appointed for the "Intercessions of Youth". Special services were held and at 11am Sydney Harold Bish Jr read a lesson. He was killed on June 19th 1944 by a pilotless bomb. In the evening Captain the Rev. R. Melville of the Canadian Seaforth Highlanders preached. (The organ broke down just before evensong started.

From the Surrey Mirror

YOUTH DAY SERVICES

CANADIAN PREACHER AT ST JOHN'S, REDHILL

...Through some unforeseen misfortune the organ, always a pleasing feature of the services at St John's, declined to function and a piano had to be brought into use for accompaniment of the hymns and canticles.

From the Diary of Rev Ball

Tuesday August 13th

At 7.25am the sirens went for an air raid warning and it was not possible to have the 7.30 am celebration. The "All Clear" went at 7.45am and nothing happened.

Saturday August 17th

Owing to the prevalence of air raids it was decided to close down the children's services at Meadvale and Hooley.

Sunday August 18th

Owing to an air raid earlier in the day (bombs dropped at Shaw's Corner caused casualties) only 46 attended Evensong which was considerably shortened.

Monday August 26th

Midday intercession service interrupted by an air raid.

Friday August 30th

No midday intercessions owing to an air raid.

Sunday September 1st

On this day there were 140 names on our "Active Service" list. An air raid warning at 11.5am caused the morning service to be stopped. The congregation dispersed to the school shelter, the public shelter, to the church stoke hole and some remained in church. At the all clear at 11.37 many came back and a short service, lasting 15 minutes, was held – The Te Deum, creed and some prayers and a hymn.

At Evensong the Rev. G. H. Wolfendale, a Canadian priest but now a driver of a field ambulance preached.

Sunday September 8th

National Day of Prayer appointed by H.M. the King. At all services the congregations were larger than usual. None of the services were interrupted by air raid warnings but a warning went just as the celebrant (vicar) was leaving the chancel at the finish of the midday celebration.

From the Surrey Mirror

Thursday Sept 12th

MUSIC AT ST JOHN'S, REDHILL

...there were less than three dozen people present. Yet it was in no sense a wasted evening for if Mary Carter, Cecil Hope and Kenneth Turner helped only half of those present to forget the war for the hour taken up with their music making, they did something well worth doing.

From the Diary of Rev Ball

Saturday September 14th

On this day a wedding arranged for 11.30am was conducted by the vicar while an air raid was in progress. The all clear was sounded just as the couple were pronounced to be man and wife.

Sunday September 15th

An air raid warning went as the vicar was giving the blessing at the close of the Mattins. While the raid was still on the late celebration of H.C. was taken by the Rev. C. J. Butler.

Saturday September 21st

Bombs dropped near Earlswood Railway Bridge and at top of Cronks Hill Road near Mr T. J. Knight. Glass broken in various houses on Cronks Hill but no casualties at all!

Wednesday September 25th

A bomb (aerial torpedo?) was dropped in the early hours of this day in the Hawthorns grounds. There were no casualties in the school but all windows were broken and many tiles blown off the roof. The school had to be closed.

Friday September 27th

Bombs dropped in Clarence Walk and Hardwick Road (Meadvale) – no loss of life but some houses had to be evacuated and later some houses had to be demolished.

Sunday September 29th

Thank offering and Dedication Festival. No services were interrupted by air raids on this day except the 8am celebration when a warning went after all had communicated – but no-one left the church. At 11am the Bishop of Kingston preached. The thank offerings amounted to £56 –6-6 – later amount was £60.

From the Surrey Mirror

ST JOHN'S CHURCH REDHILL – DEDICATION FESTIVAL

Sunday last was observed in the parish of St John the Evangelist, Redhill, as the anniversary of the Consecration of the parish church.

The times being out of joint, the Parochial Church Council had decided not to have the Thank offering day on Sept 30th as last year when parishioners, individually or in families, could bring their gifts to be offered at the altar. Thank offering Day was therefore merged into the Dedication Festival.

Attendances at the Sunday Services, though good, were below the average for such an occasion, many people evidently being kept away by reason of the unsettled conditions of the time.

From the Diary of Rev Ball

Sunday October 6th

Harvest Festival. The 8am HC was interrupted by bombing and machine gun firing overhead. No-one left and the service was carried through in full. A raid warning went just before 11am but after 2 or 3 had left the church, a service lasting 35 minutes was held and then the late HC. The all clear went at 12.10. A time bomb was dropped in Ridgeway Road and bombs in Garlands Road. No loss of life but houses in Garlands Road were wrecked. Evening service held for the first time in the Parish Hall at 6.30.

From the Surrey Mirror

HARVEST SERVICES AT ST JOHN'S CHURCH

Harvest Thanksgiving Services on Sunday at St John's, Redhill were subjected to two interruptions but on both occasions the congregation were unanimous in wishing to continue their devotions. For morning service the church was beautifully decorated, with a plentiful supply of the fruits, flowers and vegetables regularly provided each year. The vicar curtailed the service but although it was necessary to dispense with his address, the remainder of the service fully expressed the spirit of the seasonal thanksgiving. Later in the day some of the decorations were taken from the church to the Parochial Hall where, for the first time in the history of the parish, at the request of the congregation, the evening service was held.

From the Diary of Rev Ball

Tuesday October 8th

Bombs dropped about 8.30pm in Upper Bridge Road (30 yards from the Rev. C. T. Butler's house) in Hooley Lane and Victoria Road – also time bomb in Brook St. No loss of life – a few minor casualties but some houses wrecked including that of Mr J. H. Wells, warden of Hooley Mission in Earlsbrook Road.

October 17th-18th

Bombs dropped in the night of October 17-18 in Meadvale. Incendiary bombs in Meadvale gardens and roads and a high explosive in the garden of Rose Mount (Mr T. J. Knight) badly damaging the roof and another high explosive in the garden of Mrs Sewill at Sand Dene. There were no casualties. A time bomb was dropped near High Trees Road and people were evacuated for some hours. The time bomb wrecked the lawn in Capt R. H. Heath's garden.

Sunday October 20th

A raid warning went at 10.5am but about 130 came to church at 11am and the service was held. Also HC at twelve noon. The all clear went at 12.10noon. At 11.30pm bombs were dropped in Meadvale in Mrs Cooper's garden. No loss of life and no casualties but Eileen and Pat MacIlwaine came to the vicarage for night.

Thursday October 24th

The Bishop of Southwark gives permission for the Holy Communion to be celebrated in Meadvale Hall as a war time measure.

Sunday October 27th

At 2am a bomb dropped in Emlyn Road and 4 houses were razed to the ground and two others rendered uninhabitable. Six people were killed in this disaster (47 injured). A raid warning went at 7.50am and ended at 10am. In spite of this warning (and air activity overhead) 29 attended the Holy Communion at 8am which was duly celebrated. Raid warning at all services throughout the day except at Earlswood Asylum!

Thursday October 31st

On this day four of the air raid victims of Emlyn Road were buried, in one service. The vicar (WAR B) and the Rev C. J. Butler taking part in the service. The interment was conducted in very heavy rain. The four who were buried were all related one another, namely : Eliza Gates – 75 years, Alice Gates – 50 years, Mabel Manktelow – 47 years, John Edward Newman – 14 years.

Sunday November 3rd

On this day Evensong was changed by request to the hour of 3.30pm and was held at St John's Church. On this occasion it was held during an air raid warning but 60 adults were present.

Monday November 11th

On this day Jane Newman aged 52 of Emlyn Road (an air raid victim) was buried.

Sunday November 17th

A raid warning was given during Evensong but no-one left the church.

Tuesday November 26th

On this day the hour of the early celebrations was changed to 8.30am and from November 26th 1940 to the end of January 1941 the church frequently could only be lit by 6 candles at the start of these 8.30am celebrations.