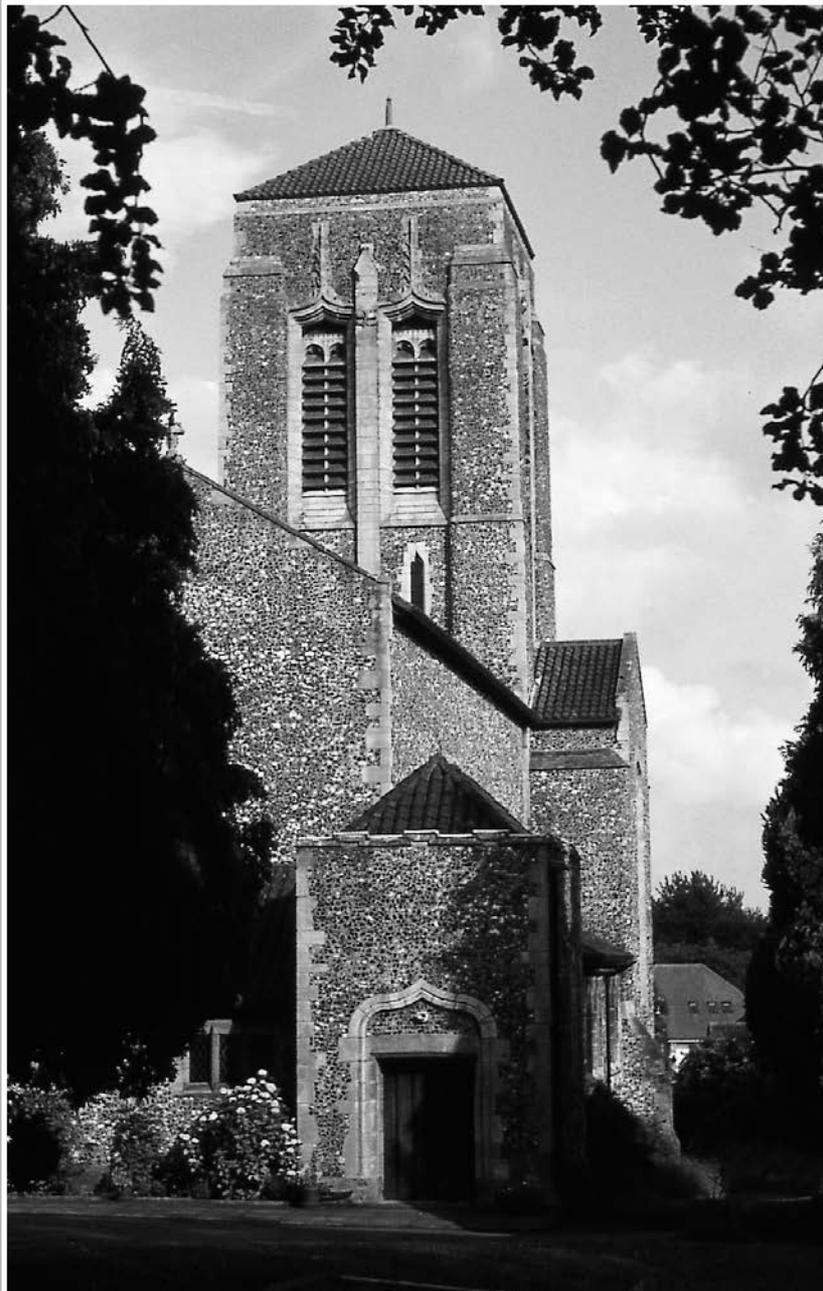


CHURCH AND COMMUNITY IN TERRIERS



70 Years of the Church of St Francis of Assisi,
Terriers and Totteridge

*So teach us to number our days,
that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*

(Psalm 90, verse 12)

PREFACE

On 11 October 1930 the new church of St Francis of Assisi, Terriers, was dedicated and consecrated. The church was unusual in many respects. It was a large building in a small community, designed by one of the most eminent architects of the time, and owed its existence to the wealth of a clergyman and his wife who had retired locally.

In 1930 Terriers was little more than a roadside hamlet strung out along the Amersham Road amid farmland on the outskirts of High Wycombe. Seventy years later the church is surrounded by the modern housing estates that have engulfed so many of the villages and hamlets around Wycombe. In spite of this, the tall tower still stands prominently beside the busy A404 and, together with a fine Church Hall opened in 1994, it proclaims the Christian presence in the modern community.

Early in 2000 five members of the congregation met to share ideas on how we might commemorate the church's 70th anniversary. We decided to produce a booklet with articles on the history of Terriers and its Church, but in just a few months we could not hope to write a comprehensive history. However, the development of Terriers belongs largely to the twentieth century, and the life span of St Francis' Church has only now reached the biblical "three score years and ten". This means that many events are still in living memory and there was a resource of oral history to be tapped as well as documentary records. So we decided to write a selection of historical essays, with an emphasis on the people of the church and the community that it serves.

This is the result: a 'People's History' celebrating seventy years of the Church of St Francis of Assisi, Terriers and Totteridge. We hope you enjoy it.



About this Booklet

This booklet is about the church and the community and concentrates on three main topics. First, it traces the development of the churches and, in particular, how the Church of St Francis of Assisi came to be established. This material has been written by Tim Edmonds, with a contribution on the organ from Hugh Brocklehurst. Second, there are glimpses of the life of Terriers through the memories of some local people who have seen the transition of the local community from a rural hamlet to a residential suburb. This has been written by Jo' Williams, based on interviews that she carried out early in 2000. Third, there is a look at the local schools through the eyes of people who have known them. Much of this has been written by Jean Finlan, with contributions from David Cox, Natalia Jones, Steven Greenhill and Tim Edmonds.

Wherever possible we do not want to repeat what has been published elsewhere, but we have used published sources to plug some gaps in the story and to provide the historical context.

Although our working definition of "Terriers" is the present ecclesiastical parish, the definition of "the local community" is deliberately a loose one because Terriers is neither an ancient parish nor a clearly-defined settlement. We would not wish to exclude Terriers House, clearly an important part of Terriers even though it is outside the boundary. Totteridge is another community whose boundaries are not clear, and because some of Totteridge falls within the present-day parish of Terriers it is included here.

Finally, there will be those who read this booklet and think "I could have written that", or "why haven't they included ...", or even "that's all wrong - I could have told them!". If this is you, then please write down your thoughts. The compilers of any future history of Terriers, perhaps for the centenary of St Francis' Church, will thank you for it.



Acknowledgements

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The photographs reproduced in this publication have all come from the collections of local people and organisations. The photographers are credited where known, but in some cases it has not been possible to identify them. In these cases the source is shown.

Finally, we are particularly grateful to John Tuck for his assistance with the layout and production.

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St Francis' Church from the air c. 1990 showing the old church hall and the Vicarage (Church Collection)

some background history

Terriers House and the origins of the name

Terriers is one of those places that has always been difficult to define and lacks a clear sense of identity. Until the twentieth century it was little more than a collection of farms and a few houses by the road from High Wycombe to Amersham. Now a residential suburb of High Wycombe, it is distinguished by three notable buildings - Terriers House, the Royal Grammar School, and the Church of St Francis of Assisi.

Terriers House is the oldest of the three and, more than any other building in the modern community, has links with the distant past. After the Norman Conquest the land that is now Terriers formed part of the manor of Wycombe; then, when this manor was divided in 1203, it became part of the manor of Bassetsbury. It is likely that the Terriers estate was a farm holding let from this manor and that the name was derived from one of the tenants. The spelling appears in different forms through the centuries - Tayers, Taryers, Tawyers - before the present name became settled in the nineteenth century.

In its present form the main part of Terriers House is Georgian, having been rebuilt in the mid eighteenth century, when the grounds were also landscaped in the contemporary fashion. By this time the land was freehold and was a prosperous farm, but all that changed in the 1890s and by the twentieth century the house had become a private residence. From 1910 to 1937 it was owned by a London physician, Dr Robert Priestley, then from 1938 to 1950 by Ralph Hazell, chairman of an Aylesbury printing firm. In 1951 it was sold as offices to the Marsham Tyre company; then in 1971



Terriers House in its modern guise as the offices of Montgomery Watson, 28 June 2000. (Tim Edmonds)

it became the head office of consultant engineering firm J.D. & D.M. Watson. The successors to that company, Montgomery Watson, occupy the building today.

Boundary confusions

Part of the Terriers identity problem is that it is crossed by constantly changing boundaries, both civil and ecclesiastical. Ecclesiastically it was for a long time part of the parish of High Wycombe, but in 1847, when the new parish of Hazlemere was formed, the boundary was defined such that most of present day Terriers and Totteridge was in Hazlemere. So it remained until 1924, when the boundary was moved so that most of Terriers, and some of Totteridge, returned once more to High Wycombe. However, Terriers House remained in the parish of Hazlemere, where it has stayed ever since. In 1937 the new parish of Terriers around St Francis' Church was carved out of High Wycombe parish, while the boundary with Hazlemere continued to follow rather a zig-zag route through the land to the south of Totteridge Lane. In 1973 this was tidied up so that the boundary with Hazlemere followed the line of Kingshill Road and Totteridge Lane. Another boundary change in 1981 saw the transfer of a triangular block of land containing Wellesbourne School and the housing on Brands Hill from Hughenden parish to Terriers. The most recent boundary change took place in 2000, when the Tyzack Road area was transferred from Hazlemere to Terriers.

The civil parish boundaries are also confusing, for Hazlemere was not set up as a Parish Council under the 1894 Local Government Act. Instead some went into Hughenden, some into Penn, and the main part joined Terriers and Totteridge as part of Chepping Wycombe. It was not until 1987 that Hazlemere managed to get its Parish Council. Meanwhile, as the town of High Wycombe expanded up Amersham Hill the borough boundaries were extended, so that by 1927 most of Terriers and Totteridge was absorbed into the municipality.

Ribbon development and urban sprawl

The Amersham Road has for long been a significant feature of Terriers. Its status as a major route dates from the Act of Parliament passed in 1757 for a Turnpike Road from Hatfield to Reading, and the

Turnpike Trust was set up by another Act in 1768. A tollhouse was built in Terriers, at the junction with Totteridge Lane near where Drew's bakery is presently sited, and until the repeal of the Act in 1867 the road was gated here and tolls were collected.

Ribbon development began in the 1890s, but most of Terriers was still clustered around the crossroads by the Turnpike tollhouse, which had been converted to an ordinary house after the tollgate was removed. Here were a few cottages by the road, with Terriers Farm to the north beside the Kingshill road and Little Totteridge Farm beside Totteridge Lane, where Freemantle Road has since been built. Beyond the crossroads were Terriers House and the Beech Tree public house, for many years a roadside landmark and still thriving today.

A significant stage in the outward expansion of High Wycombe was when the Royal Grammar



Geralds Road under construction in the early 1930s. (Jean Finlan collection)

road was renumbered from A416 to A404, which it remains today, and parts of it were subsequently widened and improved.



Amersham Road in the 1900s, looking north towards the site of St Francis' Church. (Jean Finlan collection)

School moved from the town to a new site at the top of Amersham Hill in 1914. The First World War slowed down development, but afterwards the road was metalled and the first council housing went up on land beyond the school in 1921. Private housing was built in a ribbon along the main road, but there were still fields all around when St Francis' Church was built in 1929-30. Then, with the houses going up in Geralds Road behind the church, the infilling of the fields towards Totteridge had begun. In 1935 the main

There were still undeveloped spaces at the outbreak of the Second World War, which proved fortuitous when in 1944 a V1 "doodle bug" flying bomb exploded on open ground close to the church, causing minor damage over a wide area. This was the only direct hit experienced in the area during the war. The post-war housing boom saw the remaining fields disappear under more housing estates and both Terriers and Totteridge were enveloped as residential suburbs of High Wycombe. By the 1990s the population of the parish was over 6,000, and this will have increased further as a consequence of the Tyzack Road boundary changes in 2000.



View north along Amersham Road towards the Arnison Avenue traffic lights, 16 July 2000. (Tim Edmonds)

The Pioneer Churches

Although today St Francis' is the only church in the parish, there have been two other churches within the current boundaries and both preceded St Francis'. They were built in successive years and, in contrast to the size and grandeur of St Francis', both were small and economically constructed.

St Andrew's Totteridge

In 1894 a Mission Church of St Andrew was built on land donated by Sir Philip Rose in Totteridge Lane. This was a daughter church of Holy Trinity Hazlemere and it was opened on 28 March with services at 3.00pm and 6.30pm. Although not a grand building, St Andrew's attracted a loyal and dedicated congregation who kept it in immaculate condition.

Soon after the church opened a hall known as the "St Andrew's Room" was built next to it and, as well as catering for church functions such as the Sunday School, this served as a centre of community social life for many years. The original building was destroyed by fire in 1946, but a brick hall was erected to replace it.

After 22 years there it was again replaced by a new organ and was surplus to requirements. Records from St Andrew's now held by St Francis' show that Martin & Coate, Organ Builders from Oxford, dismantled it at Penn Road on 25/26 September 1934, removed it for cleaning, then re-erected it at St Andrew's on 11 April 1935.



St Andrew's Church, circa 1950. (Eric Puddephatt)



St Andrew's choir, 1914. In the centre are the Curate, The Rev. Claridge, and the Vicar of Hazlemere, The Rev. Henry Clissold. (Church collection)

Music and a choir seem to have been important elements in the life of St Andrew's, and in 1934 the church had the opportunity to buy a small organ which had already served two churches in nearby Hazlemere. The instrument at Holy Trinity Hazlemere was replaced in 1912 and the old one was presented to the Penn Road Methodist Chapel.

Until the extension of the Terriers parish boundary in 1973 St Andrew's was in the parish of Hazlemere, and for most of its existence the church remained the responsibility of the Vicar of Hazlemere. Perhaps reflecting the gradual encroachment of housing development from the town, responsibility passed to the Vicar of Christchurch, High Wycombe, The Rev. Tony Richards, in 1963. St Andrew's continued under his wing when later that year he became the Vicar of St Francis' Terriers.

By 1975 it was only revenue from the hall that kept the church solvent

and, when it became clear that expensive repairs were needed to the hall, a meeting of the Vicar, Wardens, Committee and congregation decided to recommend closure. The last service was held, appropriately, on St Andrew's Day 1977, after when the congregation was joined with that of the church which has since been known as "St Francis' Terriers and Totteridge". Several of the fittings were moved



Festival of flowers in St Andrew's Church, September 1967. (Gertie Gamester collection)

Mission Church Fund "for furthering the religious and other charitable work of the Church of England in the Ecclesiastical Parish of St Francis, Terriers". Among the uses to which the money was put were a new sound system installed in St Francis' in 1980.

After St Andrew's was demolished the land was used for housing, and today the site at the corner of Totteridge Lane and Totteridge Drive gives no hint of what was there before.

to St Francis', including the altar rails, cross, candle holders and sanctuary light. The First World War Memorial, which is now on the wall of the north aisle, also came from St Andrew's. Meanwhile the little organ that came third-hand to Totteridge in 1935 found yet another home. It was sold to the Eye Bach Choir in Suffolk, who had it restored and fitted with a new case by a local organ builder, and installed it as a chamber organ in the magnificent medieval church at Eye.

Another part of St Andrew's seems to have been reused even farther afield. The bell had been removed from the turret on the roof some years before the church was closed, and an inventory shows it was kept at St Francis' in 1975 although it was never hung there. Ultimately it found a new home on a church in Nigeria, where it was used to call people to services - particularly useful in a community where clocks were a rarity!

The proceeds from the sale of St Andrew's were £10,805.98, which was put into the St Andrew's

Methodist Church



Terriers Methodist Church, date unknown. (Myrtle Church)

In 1895 the Terriers Methodist Chapel was opened in Amersham Road, at the crossroads opposite the toll house. As with St Andrew's down the road, this was a church with a small but dedicated congregation, but eventually the upkeep of the building was beyond their means. Mr P.D. Carter of Loudwater conducted the last service on 25 January 1970 and the building was then sold to the High Wycombe Deaf Church and Social Club for £3,650. There were seven members at the end and the congregation dispersed to other neighbouring Methodist churches.

Today the Deaf Club meets in the new hall at St Francis' and the Methodist "tin tabernacle" at Terriers is no more. However, its site can still be identified because the house that has replaced it has a name that provides a link with the past - it is appropriately called "Wesley House".



Cast of the St Andrew's Sunday School play, 1946. (Eric Puddephatt)

Early days at "St Mary's"

Among the documents in the church records at St Francis' is an indenture dated 1 December 1903 between Earl Carrington and the Vicar of High Wycombe, The Rev. E.D. Shaw. This is the legal document that for £4-10s-0d a year granted a 99 year lease of land in Terriers, described as "that piece or parcel of land situate on Amersham Hill ... and having a frontage of 100 feet to the road from Amersham to High Wycombe and a depth of 200 feet". It is marked in red on a small map attached to a transcript of the document. The lease required that within three years the lessees would "build construct and complete ... a Church or building to be used exclusively for the benefit of members of the Church of England" in the parish of High Wycombe. The cost value of the building was to be at least £100 and the land was to be fenced.

In spite of the requirement to build within three years, it took rather longer than this. David Gantzel, in his history of Hazlemere, records that in 1912 The Rev. Henry Clissold, Vicar of Hazlemere, "arranged for a wooden building, 40' x 20', to be built at Terriers for use as a church room there". The church records include some correspondence relating to the tenders and the cost of materials.

An article by Marjorie P. Hanks in the February 1974 St Francis' Parish Magazine gives an interesting insight into the struggles to establish a religious presence in Terriers when most active churchgoers already went to Hazlemere, Wycombe or the Methodist Chapel. She records that when Wycombe took Terriers over from Hazlemere in 1924 services had ceased, but that a weekly evensong at 6.30pm and a twice-monthly 8.00am Holy Communion were introduced, conducted by clergy from High Wycombe Parish Church.

The first Priest in Charge of Terriers was The Rev. A.D. Thompson, who arrived in 1926 and stayed until 1929, when he left for Suffolk to become Vicar of Walberswick and Blythburgh. During this period the service times were retained, and baptisms were carried out by appointment on Sunday afternoons. Attendances began to increase, and Miss Hanks recalled that five children from the new council estate were singing in the choir. One paragraph is worth quoting in full, as it gives a flavour of the early days:

"We called the Hall St Mary's to make it sound more like a Church, but it still needed a vivid imagination. However, once the service began one became too engrossed to notice the surroundings. They were conducted with reverence and sincerity, the sermons were stimulating and thought

provoking. One left feeling all the better for having been, with plenty to get stuck into mentally, and the happy thought that if nothing unforeseen happened you would be back again next Sunday."



The old Church Hall shortly before demolition, circa 1993. The original building is on the right. (Brenda Matthews)

The Fields and the new Church

In 1854 a large house called St John's was built at the edge of Hazlemere on the hill behind the Beech Tree public house. In 1913 the house was bought by a clergyman, The Rev. Frederick Francis Field, who had recently retired as Rector of Woughton on the Green, a village now swallowed up by Milton Keynes. When war broke out the following year the Vicar of Hazlemere, The Rev. Henry Clissold, volunteered for the forces and became an Army Chaplain. Consequently Field found himself called upon to handle much of the day-to-day running of the parish - including St Andrew's Totteridge and the Church Hall at Terriers.

Field had first raised the idea of a church for Terriers in 1916 but wartime problems in the building trade meant nothing was done beyond some discussions over land. When most of Terriers moved back from the parish of Hazlemere to High Wycombe in 1924, Field gave £1,000 as an endowment to finance a resident curate at Terriers and again raised his plan to provide a proper church building. Land was promised by Lord Lincolnshire (Carrington's brother) and Field was already talking to the architect Fellowes Prynne about a design. Unfortunately not only did the architect die in 1926, but the following year Field himself died. However, Henrietta Field decided to pick up where her husband left off and set about finding another architect. Her choice was one of the most eminent of the day, Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, perhaps best known for the design of Liverpool Cathedral, and Mrs Field laid the foundation stone on 10 June 1929 during a service conducted by the Bishop of Buckingham. The site for the new building was adjacent to the humble Parish Hall and the contrast could hardly have been greater, for

Scott built a cathedral-like structure with a massive central tower. With its hilltop location, the Church of St Francis of Assisi has dominated the local skyline ever since.



The way that St Francis' dominates the local skyline is clear in this recent view from Amersham Hill Drive, 2 July 2000. (Tim Edmonds)

The new church was opened and consecrated at 3.00pm on Saturday 11 October 1930 by the Lord Bishop of Oxford, the Right Reverend Thomas Strong. He was assisted by Bishop E.D. Shaw (formerly Vicar of High Wycombe and latterly Bishop of Buckingham), Bishop P.H. Eliot (Bishop of Buckingham) and Canon M. Graves (Rural Dean).

The Parish of Terriers

The Rev. Edwin W. Shaw had been appointed Priest in Charge at Terriers in 1929 and he duly took over the running of St Francis'. When the church was built the open ground around it was already being developed, with housing going up in Gerald's Road and along the Amersham Road, but it must still have appeared very out of place. Such a large building meant that maintenance costs were high and, as there were problems from the outset, Shaw and his small congregation seem to have struggled to manage.

Mrs Field died in 1935, and her funeral took place in St Francis' Church on 30 October. In her will she made a bequest of additional money, but it was conditional upon the Ecclesiastical Commissioners matching her endowment. Meeting the condition set in motion a train of events which led to the separation of St Francis' from the parish of High Wycombe and the creation of the new parish of Terriers in 1937. In 1938 a memorial tablet to Mrs Field was placed on the west wall above the font and it was dedicated by the Bishop of Buckingham on 3 November.

Edwin Shaw was duly appointed the first vicar of the new parish and was to lead his small, but slowly growing, flock through the war years and the housing developments and population growth of the fifties. In 1962 Shaw retired after 33 years at Terriers. He died in March 1973 and in an obituary in the parish magazine his successor described him as "a small man ... not one of your charismatic



The clergy process from Hall to the new Church, 11 October 1930. (Church collection)

clergy; but a man of considerable intelligence and industry ... consistently a faithful and hardworking priest in times often discouraging and baffling". Certainly the Register of Services show him to have been a diligent parish priest, for his is the name against the majority of services - three, sometimes four times on Sundays .

Clergy in the post-Shaw era

The new Vicar was The Rev. Tony Richards, who moved the short distance up the hill from Christchurch in High Wycombe. Richards was not a driver when he arrived and in his early years at Terriers became known for travelling between his churches by bicycle. During his period at St Francis' there was an exchange with a priest from the USA, and The Rev. David Gearhart was acting Vicar while Tony Richards was taking his place at The Church of the Good Shepherd, Ruxton, Maryland USA.

Tony Richards left in 1973 and, during an interregnum lasting nine months, one of the priests who took services at St Francis' was The Rev. Ralph Cartmill, a teacher at Aylesbury Grammar School and living at Chinnor. In March 1974 he was appointed as the new Vicar, with his Institution taking place on 19 June a month before he left his teaching post at the end of the summer term.

Ralph Cartmill stayed at Terriers until April 1985 and there followed another interregnum until the arrival of The Rev. Stephen Purnell, who was inducted on 2 October 1985. Purnell had a different style and churchmanship from his predecessors, and after he left St Francis' in 1993 he was subsequently received into the Roman Catholic Church. Non Stipendiary Minister The Rev. Michael Williams led the parish during another interregnum, which ended with the appointment of The Rev. Tony Dickinson, who was licensed as Priest in Charge on 15 July 1994. Then followed a period of uncertainty for the parish which ended when Tony Dickinson was instituted as the fifth Vicar of Terriers on 21 February 1999.

The Organ at St Francis'

notes by Hugh Brocklehurst

Mrs Field's gifts to Terriers included money to be used for an organ, so when the church was built tenders were put out for an instrument suitable for the musical needs at that time. The organ chosen was a standard product made by John Compton Ltd and comprising three ranks extended over two manuals and pedals, totally enclosed in a swell box and surrounding case work. It was installed in the north transept, with the console tucked away at its east end.

The performance of the instrument was limited to



The original organ in the north transept at St Francis', circa 1979. (Hugh Brocklehurst)

accompanying a small choir, and its placing and power were inadequate to lead a congregation of any size. Some efforts were made to boost the strength of sound, but the tonal quality suffered. When it began to show signs of wear and tear in the late 1960s several attempts were made to find an alternative instrument, and organ builders were asked to submit new designs, but these efforts came to nought, mainly due to cost. The suggestion that an electronic instrument might be used was investigated, but the development of the electronics was very much in its infancy at that time and it was considered that the situation would not be improved by going down that path.

The need for a replacement organ became more and more pressing with increasing choir size and a larger congregation who asked for a stronger musical lead. The main stumbling block was the price and installation cost of a complete factory-built organ. The breakthrough came in 1979 when the writer was introduced to a self-employed organ builder who was prepared to take on the project in small stages over a number of years, working in the church in the way of builders in former years. He was also happy that some of the work should be done by members of the parish under his guidance. A number of folk offered their services and the PCC at that time were very happy that the problem could be solved in this way.

After some thought and discussion a design brief was agreed in 1981, with the aim of achieving an instrument that would be powerful enough to lead the congregation, support the choir, be sufficiently versatile for recital work, and be easy to play! Also, the appearance should complement the design of the building and to be an asset to the church. The design consisted of using the existing swell box, replacing the Compton pipework, and building a steel and timber frame to support a new great organ section above the swell organ. Next a new platform was to be built over the vestry staircase to take the

old console and introducing the large bass pipes behind the new great organ to give a musical balance to the instrument. In addition there would be work on the blower and airways, platforms and ladders to access for tuning purposes, and electrical connections and cables hidden in the case or in conduits under the floor.

The work began in 1982 with the removal of the old swell pipework and installation of the new. This part went well but the next stage, steel and timber work, was delayed first by the construction of the new floor in the tower, then by the need to repaint the whole interior of the church! The new platform and moving of the console required Diocesan Advisory Committee approval, which was obtained in 1987 and work then began for this stage. At last the great organ, the part we had all been waiting for, was begun. The selection of suitable second-hand pipework to complement the acoustics of the church produced some surprising and unorthodox choices. The advantage of building on site, as opposed to relying on paperwork design, has resulted in a very satisfactory sounding instrument. Some minor changes have been carried out more recently to strengthen the swell organ and the pedal section but the original design concept has been followed fairly closely.

Discussion between the organ builder, the organist at that time and the writer pointed to a number of worthwhile changes, the foremost being the

replacement of the old console with a new drawstop unit and the addition of mixtures on both swell and great and a further rank of bass pipes. This work was carried out in easy stages in the next few years. It was also realised that to end up with a first-class recital organ a choir organ should be added, which would have the added advantage of providing a balanced musical support to the increasing number of services taking place in the choir stalls. This proposal was put to and agreed by the PCC.

At about this time it was noticed that the plaster on the tower walls was becoming very wet and was beginning to come away, and unfortunately the area most affected was where the new choir organ was to be built. This brought to a halt any further work until the architect and builder had formulated a plan to cure the trouble. The repair to the roof tiles and the removal of the crumbling plaster meant the organ loft was now a safe place to continue work on the installation of the new console, but unfortunately any work on the choir organ must now wait until a decision has been made on the replastering or painting of the tower.

So, twenty years work has very nearly completed the task of giving St Francis' an organ adequate for the service required of it. For my part it has been a very fulfilling and rewarding part of my life and I hope we shall soon be able to enjoy the completed instrument.



The rebuilt and extended organ seen from the new console platform, 30 April 2000. (Tim Edmonds)

Parish Life through the Annual Meetings

compiled by Tim Edmonds

Introduction

This section has been compiled from the minutes of the Annual Church Meetings, from the first in 1938 through to that in 2000. The minutes are in three books. The first covers the years 1938 to 1967 and is deposited in the County Record Office at Aylesbury (PR250A/8/7). The second covers the years 1968 to 1996 and is still in the possession of the church. The third begins with the 1997 meeting and is currently in use.

The minutes are only an annual snapshot of church activities; they often omit important events and gloss over the details of everyday church life. However, they do provide a continuous record through the life of the parish, with glimpses into some triumphs and troubles of each year. In addition to the events I have selected to include from the minutes, I have also used them to compile a list of Churchwardens and a table showing the numbers on the Electoral Roll. These are included at the end of this section.

Reading through the minute books I got a flavour of the successive eras of parish life. The building has always been larger than the population of Terriers has needed, and throughout there are concerns with keeping the finances up, damage from vandalism and the need for building repairs. Even with a new church there were problems from the outset, particularly with dampness and falling plaster.

The minutes from the 1930s and early 1940s show a small congregation with a massive new church trying to find its feet in the face of the war. Then into the 1950s there was the challenge of new housing going up all around, and the influx of newcomers to the parish. By the early 1960s the impression is of a church in stagnation, inward rather than outward looking. The arrival of a new Vicar was the catalyst to change this, and for twenty or so years from the mid 1960s the minutes have an aura of expansion and confidence. By the late 1980s things appear to be slowing down, and the minutes become bogged down in finances and other internal affairs, but the 1990s once more show signs of rebirth and fresh purpose.

The Annual Meetings are normally held in March or April and therefore document events that span two calendar years. The extracts below are shown by the year of the meeting in which they were recorded, but where the date of an event is known to have occurred in the previous calendar year I have indicated this.



Looking across the fields to St Francis' Church and Gerald's Road in the 1930s. (Jean Finlan collection)

Extracts from the Minutes of the Annual Church Meetings, 1938-2000

1930s

1938: Attendance at the first Parish Annual Meeting was described as "small".

It was reported that "we have established our own magazine" and that "a full quota of social organisations are running smoothly".

1939: Meeting attendance was "poor".

1940s

1940: Numbers on the Electoral Roll were reported for the first time - there were 56.

1941: The Church Hall was let to the Evacuation Authorities, but "the wear and tear by the children was heavy and extensive repairs will be necessary eventually".

A gate fixed at the bottom of the churchyard to give an entrance into Gerald's Road "was proving a mixed blessing" because it was being used as a right of way.

1943: There were 65 on the Electoral Roll, but this was believed not to represent all church goers. Churchwarden Mr Burnham promised to try to get more names on the Roll.

1944: Access from Gerald's Road is again a problem, Churchwarden Mr Plumridge "promised to get some barbed wire and deal with the matter".

1945: Mr Burnham had started a bible class for older boys.



Evergreen Club Christmas Party in the Church Hall, early 1950s. (Dorothy Saunders collection)

The barricade of the Gerald's Road entrance had been broken down, so it was resolved to leave the gate unlocked, but to lock it "for at least one day a year to preserve the path as private property".

In view of the "very small" attendance at the Annual Meeting, more publicity was to be given to it in future years.

1946: Attendance at the Annual Meeting was "poor", so a circular was to be sent to all members on the Electoral Roll before the next meeting.

1947: War damage repairs were being investigated.

A gardener had been secured to maintain the grounds.

1948: Reed of Farnham Common had been invited to undertake the war damage repairs.

For the first time ladies appear on the list of sidesmen - Mesdames Lynn, Kingwell and Burnham.

A new housing estate had been built in the parish and an invitation card with a list of services and activities had been distributed to all new residents "in an endeavour to bring the Church to their notice".

1949: A bill of £12-8s-8d for repairs to broken church windows led to a discussion at the Annual

Meeting which resulted in a proposal to close the Gerald's Road gate and to erect "effective fencing".

1950s

1950: War repairs were completed and three trap doors had been put in the tower so that future repairs did not require scaffolding.

Work was in hand on the fencing in Gerald's Road.

1951: The cost of £49-9s-0d for fencing "had depleted the Grounds A/c to such an extent that it had been necessary to transfer £45 from the Hall A/c".

1952: The Mothers' Union had provided a table in church, which gave "concrete evidence of the strength and spirit of the local Branch, and is an appreciable addition to the Church furnishings".

The vicar was "to approach some of the Grammar School Boarders with a view to augmenting the choir".

There was concern over the state of dampness in the church and state of the plastering "in spite of architect's reassurance".

1953: "Sir Giles Gilbert Scott had inspected the plastering ... and experiments were in progress in the hope of getting to the root of the trouble."

1954: There was no further news of the plastering

from Builder or Architect, so “the Secretary was asked to send a letter of reminder”.

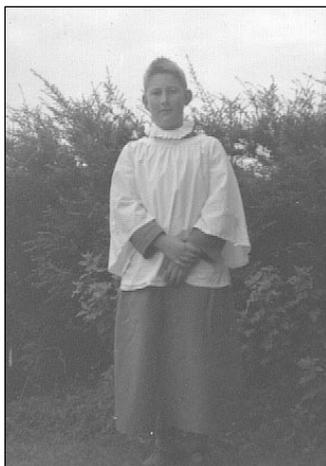
“The falling off in numbers of choir boys was discussed: no solution has been forthcoming but the Vicar promised to speak to Mr Tucker at the Grammar School and Mr Miller at Terriers School to see if any recruits could be canvassed.”

1955: Mrs Brocklehurst had presented a Silver Chalice to the Church in memory of her husband, Mr R.G. Brocklehurst, and Mrs Kingwell had given an Offertory Plate for use in the Mothers’ Union Chapel in memory of her husband, Mr Alfred Kingwell.

1957: “To assist the aged or infirm in climbing the steps, hand rails had been fixed, one at the Church door and one at the Pulpit side of the Chancel steps. These were both given by Mrs Brocklehurst.”



Mothers’ Union outing, 1958. (Mollie Jones collection)



Colin Jones, choirboy,
outside the Church in 1958.
(Mollie Jones collection)

1960s

1961: “Various suggestions were made for bringing the Church to the notice of the public, and it was finally decided that when occasion warrants, an announcement be put in the Bucks Free Press.”

1962: The number on the Electoral Roll reached 100 for the first time, but attendance at the Annual

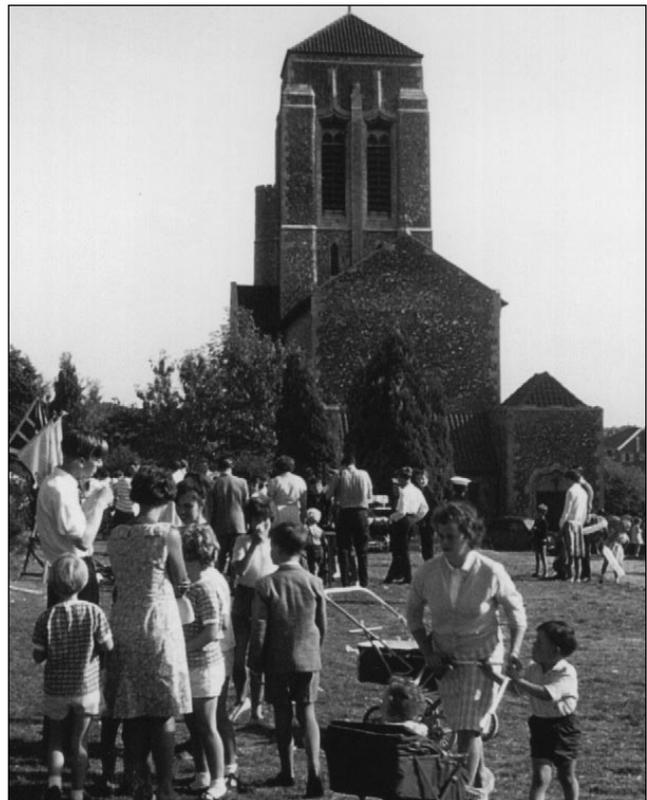
Meeting “consisted only of members of the retiring council”.

1963: The meeting was chaired by the new Vicar, The Rev. Tony Richards, who in his address emphasised the Church as its people and outlined plans for training courses, bible study and discussion groups. He also wanted a Parish Magazine or Newsletter and was considering a Christian Stewardship campaign.

The Sunday School was reported to have around 15 children and 2 teachers, the Mothers’ Union had 28 members and the Young Wives approximately 18 members.

1964: The Vicar’s Review reported on progress: Sunday School attendances were up and causing accommodation problems; a Discussion Group had been running; there were tea parties for the parents of baptised babies; a Book Stall had opened; a Youth Club had been formed; a Scout Troop and Cub Pack were in the course of formation; a Pathfinder Bible Class had been held; and the Mothers’ Union and Young Wives were running “satisfactorily”.

Some land at the rear of the vicarage had been sold.



The St Francis’ Summer Fayre, circa 1964, taking place in the churchyard. (Hugh Brocklehurst)

1965: Attendance at the Annual Meeting was “disappointing, between 20 and 30 people only”.

The Vicar’s Review saw three main steps to growth - the Sunday School, visiting and services.

The Church was now on main drainage. Trouble

was reported with water and birds in the tower.

1966: The Vicar's Review reported on a Stewardship campaign (in 1965) and a new Men's Society.

The tapestry behind the altar was cleaned, but parts of it had rotted.

1967: The Vicar's Review saw a need for closer co-operation with the Totteridge side of the parish. Two home discussion groups existed and there were plans for two more.

Churchwarden Mr C.O. Melsom died while in office.



The interior of St Francis' in 1968, before the tower roof was inserted. (Hugh Brocklehurst)

1968: Two kneeling rails were placed in front of the nave as a memorial to Mr Melsom.

1969: Thanks were extended to Mr Barlow for the installation of a loudspeaker system in church.

Vicar's report noted a continued increase in the Parish population through extended boundaries and new housing.

The Church was involved in helping the Wycombe Friendship Housing Association, whose objective was to provide accommodation for the homeless in the area.

A prayer desk was placed in the sanctuary in memory of Peter Swann.



The Rev. Tony Richards and the St Francis' Choir.
(Mollie Jones collection)

1970s

1970: There was much discussion at the Annual Meeting about the form of the Sunday morning service and the need to make it attractive to all ages "at the same time preserving beauty and dignity".

Plans for a new hall were passed and application for a grant was being made.

1971: "The possibilities of a new Hall are still remote as our maximum figure is £3,000 and the tenders received were in the region of £5,300."

A new dorsal curtain was hung at Christmas 1970, with the Friends of St Francis contributing to the necessary fund-raising, while "the architect will be asked for advice concerning the plaster falling from the belfry".

The Franciscan Committee, in its second year "had concentrated on visiting the sick, lonely and elderly".

1972: "About 55 people" attended the Annual Meeting.

The Vicar's Report welcomed Peter Ward as a Lay Reader and emphasised "Service to the Community" in planning for the future.

1974: The Annual Meeting was held in an interregnum, the minutes recording that on 13 July 1973 "the bombshell of the impending departure of the Vicar" (The Rev. Tony Richards) was announced.

The choir and the Sunday Schools (Explorers, Climbers and Pathfinders) were all reported as thriving.

1975: The number on the Electoral Roll is 205, the first time that 200 has been exceeded.

It had been agreed "with much sorrow" by the Vicar, Wardens, St Andrew's Committee and congregation to recommend that St Andrew's Totteridge should close.

1976: Falling plaster from the tower was once again a problem.

The 10.00 service was implemented “which had proved a success with no falling off in attendance”.

1977: There were 214 on the Electoral Roll, the highest annual total.

The nave was “being used almost daily helping to make the church the centre of parish life”.

1978: After the closure of St Andrew’s Totteridge in November 1977, the furniture and fittings “had been disposed of, quite a few being used at St Francis”.

The girls of Godstowe School had made the St Francis banner for the Church.

Church rewiring was “practically complete” and a quotation was being sought for a flexible velarium (awning) to hang in the tower.

The Mothers Union had closed in October 1977 through lack of support.

The Catering and Social report recorded that “catering had been provided at the Whit Walk, Jubilee Tea, Summer Fete, Harvest Supper, Christmas Fayre, Confirmation Service and Pancake Supper”.

1979: The range of activities at St Francis’ is shown by the groups submitting reports to the Annual Meeting: Wednesday Group, Table Tennis, Badminton, Choir, Church Hall, Catering, Keep Fit, Mission, Children’s Church, Youth Club and Claire Fellowship.



Dedication of new British Legion standard outside the Church, 1980 (Mollie Jones collection)

1980s

1980: 62 church members attended the meeting.

Political correctness arrives, with a reference to “sidespersons” instead of sidesmen.

Jubilee Year would be celebrated 5-12 October, when the Bishops of Oxford and Buckingham would each officiate at the Sunday Family Communion.

1981: The Vicar’s Report noted that “We had acquired three aids to our worship over the year. Alternative Service Books, sound system and the curtains for the choir vestry”.

1982: On 6 September 1981 two innovations were made - the greeting of fellow members of the congregation at “The Peace” was introduced at the 10.00 service, and coffee was served in the Church Hall afterwards.

The marking of the boundary of the Garden of Rest was in hand.

1983: The Churchwardens reported that “the western area of grounds were greatly improved since the completion of the re-surfacing of the drive and car parking area” and that “the first phase of the organ rebuilding” had been completed just before Christmas 1982.

Children’s Church involved 60 children, 7 teachers and a helper, while the Vicar reported that 24 youngsters attended the first meeting of a Mothers and Toddlers Group.

1984: Mrs Evelyn Evans had donated 250 text and 25 music copies of the new Hymns Ancient and Modern in memory of her husband, Dr G. Evans.

The Scouts stopped using the Church Hall, so the Youth Club now met there instead of in the Church. Some 15-20 boys attended regularly, and their activities included table tennis, indoor football, snooker and darts.

The Vicar’s Report noted that “it has become appropriate to consider how to improve the system of care we have in our parish”.

1985: Falling plaster continued to be a problem.

In his last report as Vicar, Ralph Cartmill mentioned the introduction of the Healing Service as “a step towards formalising care in the parish”.

1986: In his first report as Vicar, Steven Purnell mentioned his belief that “one of the great things we can offer children is the practice of religion, and they appreciate the sacramental side of worship”. He reported an increase of families with small children attending services, and that a creche had started.

Land at the rear of the Church had been sold for

development, with the proceeds to be used for repairs and improvements to the Church building.

A resolution was passed that Parochial Church Council members should sit for no longer than three years at a time, and Churchwardens for five years, with at least a year off.

1987: Dampness in the tower was again causing concern, and replacement of the velarium with a wooden floor was planned.

To tackle the lack of social activities a social sub-committee was to be set up, and having shared meals was suggested.

1988: "New heating was installed during the year, and a warm church is the result."

Michael Williams joined the parish, and the Vicar welcomed him "as someone to argue with, and mentioned especially his musical gifts".

1989: The new organ console platform (in the south transept) was now in use.

Proposals for a new Church Hall were discussed. The cost was estimated at £130,000 plus fees and VAT, but this did not include a car park or demolition of the old hall.

Portraits of The Rev. and Mrs Field were given to Equity & Law (whose offices at Hazlemere were where the Fields once lived) where they were restored to hang in the boardroom.

The use of incense in Church provoked much discussion.

1990s

1990: A new Electoral Roll was created during 1990, the reduction from 155 to 96 people being "a more realistic reflection of the congregation".

The Vicar was learning to sign so that he could work with the deaf community in the parish.

60th Jubilee events included special services, social gatherings, and commemorative mugs, teatowels and sweatshirts.

1991: Following the rejection by the Diocesan Advisory Committee of proposals to build a new hall between the drive and the vicarage hedge, the PCC decided to demolish the existing hall and build a new one on the same site.

The tower floor was built.

The rebuilding of the organ "is now almost complete ... there are now about six times as many organ pipes as there were before the organ console was moved to the south side".

1992: The diocese and the local council approved plans for the new hall and there was much discussion over funding. The PCC agreed to put forward £75,000.

1993: "The choir, about thirty strong, now sings at more services than before." (This was due to the efforts of Michael Williams and organist David Oldfield.)

Deaf Club services were to be held at St Francis'.

A grant of £50,000 for the new hall was obtained from Wycombe District Council, conditional upon the local community being represented on the committee. The Deaf Centre at Terriers voted £30,000 towards the hall.



Presentation of £10,000 cheque from Wycombe District Council for the new Hall, 6 September 1993. (Janet Smith collection)

1994: The old hall was demolished and the new one built in its place, with the official opening during Holy Week.

1995: A monthly youth service was introduced and a family area created in the north aisle.

Play Church had a busy year, and there were efforts being made to keep in touch with the families of those who had been baptised by sending cards on the Anniversary and by inviting them to services at Christmas, Mothering Sunday and Easter.

1996: There were 94 on the Electoral Roll, which had been completely renewed, of whom 48 were at the meeting - a 51% attendance.

A Healing Group had been started in February.

Jo' Williams, a member of the St Francis' congregation, had been accepted to begin training for the priesthood.

1997: The parish had suffered the loss of The Rev. Michael Williams, who had died at the beginning of Advent 1996. The Priest-in-charge's report made reference to "not only his liturgical and musical skills, but also his experience and wisdom".

The parish was twinned with St Franziskus, Kelkheim, from where a group had visited High Wycombe in August 1996.

The churchwardens reported that following two burglaries "the sad decision had now been made to keep the church locked".

1999: Work had started on upgrading the Garden of Remembrance, which was to be completed before the Mayor's visit in May.

The portraits of The Rev. and Mrs Field had been donated by AXA Sun Life (who had closed their Hazlemere office).

2000: Major projects during the year were the installation of a lift allowing access for the disabled, the removal of damaged plaster, and the Garden of Remembrance.

St Francis from the west, with the new Church Hall on the left, 1 July 2000.
(Tim Edmonds)



Numbers on the Church Electoral Roll, St Francis of Assisi Terriers

Year	Roll	Year	Roll
1938	?	1969	163
1939	?	1970	185
1940	56	1971	194
1941	?	1972	162
1942	61	1973	186
1943	65	1974	192
1944	68	1975	205
1945	?	1976	200
1946	66	1977	214
1947	68	1978	181
1948	68	1979	187
1949	72	1980	196
1950	70	1981	193
1951	78	1982	181
1952	78	1983	181
1953	80	1984	181
1954	90	1985	176
1955	81	1986	181
1956	81	1987	162
1957	88	1988	162
1958	88	1989	155
1959	90	1990	96
1960	86	1991	97
1961	88	1992	106
1962	100	1993	106
1963	?	1994	?
1964	122	1995	112
1965	133	1996	94
1966	142	1997	109
1967	149	1998	109
1968	150	1999	117
		2000	119

Source: Minutes of Annual Church Meetings

? = Not recorded in minutes

Churchwardens of St Francis of Assisi, Terriers

From	To			Notes
1937	1939	Mr Davis	Mr Beecroft	
1939	1941	Mr L.G. Burnham	Mr Hubert Youens	Mr Youens died while in office.
1941	1950	Mr L.G. Burnham	Mr Bob Plumridge	“People’s Warden” was contested for the first time by Mr Liddiard in 1949.
1950	1958	Mr Liddiard	Mr Bob Plumridge	In 1950 Mr Burnham retired as he was leaving the district.
1958	1959	Mr Liddiard	Mr Bob Plumridge	Mr Liddiard left the district during the year and was replaced by Mr Melsom.
1959	1963	Mr C.O. Melsom	Mr Bob Plumridge	
1963	1964	Mr C.O. Melsom	Mr Ted Messenger	Mr Plumridge retired. Both wardens were elected for the first time. Mr Dean was elected in his absence, but did not take up office - the retiring warden in 1964 is recorded as Mr Messenger, who was the third candidate in 1963.
1964	1965	Mr C.O. Melsom	Mr Jim Smith	
1965	1967	Mr C.O. Melsom	Mr David Evans	The election was contested and there were ‘a number of nominees’ in 1965. Mr Melsom died while in office.
1967	1969	Mr Keith Bunker	Mr David Evans	
1969	1971	Mr G.W. Brown	Mr David Evans	
1971	1972	Mr Brian Smyth	Mr David Evans	
1972	1973	Mr Brian Smyth	Mr G. Buckley	
1973	1980	Mr Keith Bunker	Mr Peter Dowsett	
1980	1986	Mr Keith Bunker	Mr Terry Dean	No election is recorded in the minutes for 1983; continuity has been assumed.
1986	1988	Mr George Wilson	Mr Terry Dean	The 1986 meeting passed a motion that the length of service of wardens was to be limited to five years, with at least one year off before another term.
1988	1989	Mr George Wilson	Mr Keith Bunker	
1989	1990	Mr Keith Walter	Mrs Susan Bossingham	
1990	1992	Mr Keith Walter	Mr Stewart Thorburn	
1992	1994	Mr Keith Walter	Mr Peter Lovelock	
1994	1997	Mrs Liz Helps	Mr Peter Lovelock	
1997	2000	Mr Mick Relf	Mr Keith Walter	
2000	2001	Mr Mick Relf	Mr Keith Walter	Only Mr Relf was elected. Mr Walter did not stand, but subsequently agreed to a further year in office and was appointed by the Vicar.

Terriers between the wars

personal histories recounted by Jo' Williams

Introduction

During February and March 2000 I had the privilege of talking with a few people who have known "Terriers Village" for many years. As a newcomer who has only been acquainted with Terriers for nine years or so, I have often smiled to myself when I have heard residents refer to it as "the village". How can such a busy road with row upon row of houses behind it be termed a village? Not by any stretch of the imagination! Yet after listening to Bill Hoing's, Dorothy Saunders', Len Owen's, Mollie Jones', Terry Dean's and Margaret Dobson's graphic descriptions of a childhood or youth spent in Terriers, to my surprise, I could see the fields stretched out before me in my mind's eye. This is Terriers of a past era, seen through their eyes.

An Idyllic Childhood

Bill Hoing was born in 1916 and lived in Amersham Road, Terriers. He has a vivid recollection of a happy childhood and all the activities which made it so memorable. For instance, opposite The Beech Tree public house was a large pond on which the children could skate when the ice was thick enough and where, when the weather was warmer, they could find tadpoles and newts. From there they could follow the footpath out to Widmer End and Hazlemere and in fact many places were far more accessible by foot than they are now after the construction of housing estates and roads on what had been open land, woods or fields. These fields were full of peewits and bird-nesting was a favourite pastime. If the nest had been abandoned or destroyed the boys would say it was "puggled".

As children they lived very well with plenty of freedom and the exercise that went with it and good food as many people kept chickens, for their eggs and to eat. There was a saying that you could always tell when it was Christmas Day because there wasn't a single cockerel crowing - they had all been killed for the Christmas Table! The family opposite Bill also kept pigs and these were always killed on a Saturday. Bill's aunt used to go along to clean the chitterlings and every bit of the animal was used. As Bill says, the only thing that was left was the squeal! People kept rabbits for their meat, too, and grew their own vegetables, so the food was very fresh and totally "organic" as we would say today. They could go on walks and pick nuts, mushrooms, wild strawberries, wild raspberries, blackberries and even wild plums, although these were rather sour to eat. And if they became sticky eating all these free gifts there were the stumps of

cut-down trees in which rainwater gathered and the children would use these bird baths for a wash-bowl.

Another resident of Terriers, Dorothy Saunders (maiden name Dorothy Smith) also remembers the good food which was part of childhood. There were the milk churns that came along on a cart, delivered by a farm in Widmer End, and people would take their jugs out to have it poured in. Dorothy's



Jim Smith in the fields between Terriers and Totteridge, 1930s. (Dorothy Saunders collection)

mother used sometimes to walk up to Terriers Farm to buy their freshly made, patted up butter. If that makes you feel envious of such country food, there were the allotments at the back of the houses in Green Road and Tower Street. Dorothy's father, Fred Smith, a Municipal employee, had three of these and used to win medals from horticultural shows for his vegetables, so that shows the high standard of his crops - and all organic! Wellesbourne Gardens has been built on this allotment area.

Bill still remembers childhood games they played in Terriers. The children and their fathers made their own toys, apart from a few tin soldiers and balls, perhaps. A favourite game was "Tiles" played with a tennis ball and boot polish tins. The tins were the tiles which you piled up, then knocked down by throwing the tennis ball, leaving the opposing team to stack up the tiles before the tennis ball was fielded and returned. There were whipping tops which dads would carve and put an upholstery stud in to form the mushroom shape. Wycombe's furniture influence was evident here! An oil lamp was used in "Jack, Jack, show the lamp" which was played after dark in the early winter evenings and was a game of hide and seek. Hoops were made from pram wheels with a spindle in the middle so they could be turned with a stick in any direction. The iron hoops with the loop on the end of the stick were not so mobile. They had marbles, of course, played along the gutter on the way home from

Priory Road (now Hamilton) School. It's an indication of how free of traffic the roads were that this game was so safe. They took a small piece of board with holes in to school to play marbles in the playground, too.

Another seasonal game Terry remembers was conkers. Cricket was played on "the Rec" behind Terriers School and kites were flown there, too. Terry had a paper round which covered Amersham Hill, Terriers and as far as The Farm and Big House at Four Ashes. He used his "wages" to go to one of Wycombe's four cinemas.

A favourite play area was the rubbish dump at the back of where St Francis' is now; it was in the "dip" and the children called it Dingley Dell. Old bicycles would be dumped there and the children would cannibalise them to try and make one they could ride on. They made "Coconut Shies" with bottles and stones and used old frying pans to sit on as sledges to slide down the banks.

No playing was allowed on Sundays and Bill and his brothers and sisters went to Chapel twice and Sunday School in the afternoons. There were six children and the boys had to go on alternate Sunday evenings to the girls as they would be fighting otherwise! The children could read or draw at home and usually they all went out for a family walk. Men always wore a buttonhole on these Sunday walks. There was a Sunday School outing every year to Burnham Beeches and they would travel there on Wheelers Brewery's drays, sitting on trestles, and they would have to get off the carts and walk up the steep hills. When they arrived they would have a treasure hunt and a picnic tea. There was also a Sunday School tea every year and Mr and Mrs Lee from Hazlemere, who ran the Methodist Sunday School, would buy big slabs of caraway cake and madeira cake. "Be Present at our Table, Lord" was sung as the grace. The Sunday School always swelled in numbers as time came round for the tea-party! There were different preachers each week at chapel, according to who was on the Methodist Circuit, and some were preferred to others. They had a number of Sunday School teachers, too, including Mr Bent who walked from Priory Road and was a pigeon fancier and kept tumblers. Mr Lord was another, and he kept the Ironmonger's. The Head Postmaster of Wycombe lived near the Grammar School and his daughters did a lot of work for Terriers Church and also held Bible Studies at home.

Len Owen, a contemporary of Bill, remembers other fun and games. Len and the other boys used to play football on the fields which are now Tower Street and Green Road and, when the houses were built, they went to Gerald's Road where they got access to Tappings Field, next to Len's granddad's farm. Football ended on Tappings Field when Terriers School was built on it.

School Days

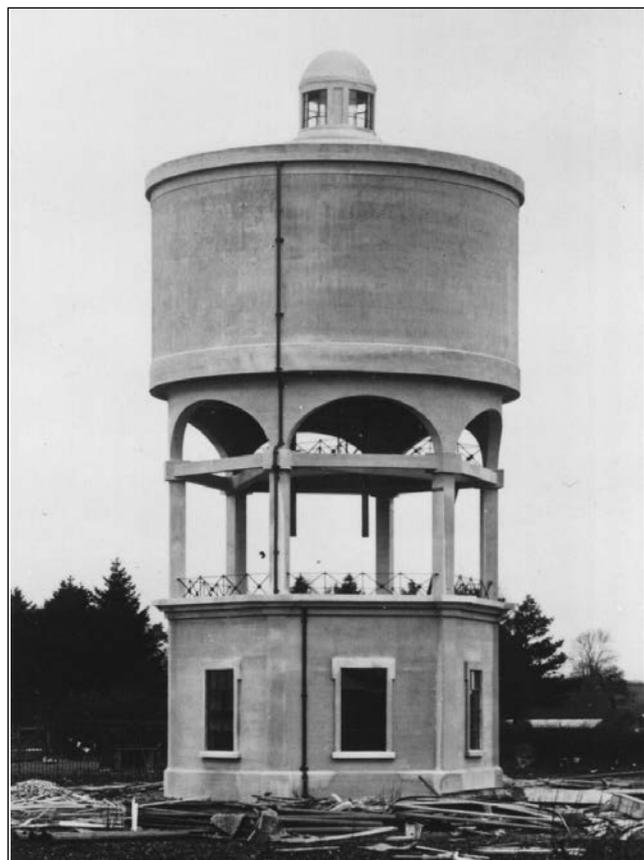
Bill well recalls his school days at Priory Road School before Terriers School was built. Bill's mother was a Methodist and this may be the reason he and his brothers and sisters went to Priory Road: it was non-denominational. The alternative one, Hazlemere, was a Church of England School. There was good natured "rivalry" between Priory Road School, Hazlemere School and the Grammar School and there were a few tussles now and again when they met on the path.

The Headmaster of Priory Road, Mr Pendlebury, was a stickler for having pens held "correctly". If the children didn't they were rapped on the knuckles with a ruler. The whole school assembled for Parade in the morning under the arches beneath part of the building. They called this "The Shed" and Mr Pendlebury would deliver his morning lecture and then they would have a shoe examination (checking the backs of the heels!) or a fingernail, neck, ear or hair inspection. If the children did not have a decent pair of shoes Mr Pendlebury would take them into his office where he kept a supply of good second-hand shoes which people would give him and the child would find a pair to fit. The music teacher, known by the children as "Wiggy Weaver", would sit at the piano inside the school and play a march as the children walked in and he would select - in march time - whatever was the most popular tune of the day so as to entertain the pupils. Bill had wanted to take the exam for the Royal Grammar School but his mother would not let him as they would never have been able to afford the uniform and books.

Thinking about the Royal Grammar School: another memory Bill has is of a First World War tank which was brought to stand in the grounds, leaving huge tracks in the road from its weight. It stood as a kind of memorial, perhaps, but over the years the fence in front of it went and it was gradually vandalised. When the grammar school playing fields were extended over the allotments, Bill and his friends would pick up stones and earn a penny a bucket for helping clear the ground. Terry tells us the Grammar School clock could be seen and heard in Terriers in the early days but now new buildings obscure the clock tower. The view from the Grammar School to Totteridge was of fields "where skylarks sang and nested". Many of the older children who attended Hatters Lane School walked across the fields and on the way home stopped for a sugar bun at the baker's on the corner of North Drive.

Dorothy went to Hazlemere Church of England School and the quickest route for her to take was through Terriers Woods, at the back of The Dolphin. This was on the footpath which went from a point on the Amersham Road between the Grammar

School and St Francis, across the fields to Totteridge and continuing on to the main road, next to Hazlemere Church. Dorothy says she used to be really frightened of that walk, even in broad daylight with her cousin Peggy. "Mum used to come out in her apron to start off the walk for me and I used to say, 'Come a bit further, Mum, just a bit further!'" Dorothy's parents had walked through those same woods to their wedding in Holy Trinity, Hazlemere. Dorothy was also nervous of what seemed like a huge, looming presence in Tower Street: the Water Tower. That was another place to get past as quickly as possible!



The Terriers water tower, date unknown. (Jean Finlan collection)

Dorothy went to Terriers School for a couple of years after it opened in 1929 and then back to secondary school at Hazlemere which was on the same "campus" (as we would say now) as the primary. The playground games Dorothy played then are still played today: skipping, "The Farmer's in his Den", and "Poor Jenny is a-weeping". Nowadays it's mainly thanks to Playground Supervisors that these traditions survive, but in Dorothy's day the large families of children passed the games on from one to another.

At Hazlemere, Mr Chapman, the Headmaster, was also the choirmaster of Holy Trinity Church, Hazlemere. Dorothy wasn't in the choir but has happy memories of school even though the cane was used to keep orderliness and discipline. She says that even then Needlework was a favourite way of passing the school day, as was English

"Composition". John liked Science and they both share a dislike of Algebra! Dorothy also enjoyed cooking, country dancing and attending Holy Trinity on such occasions as Ascension Day, as it was a church school.

Another memory Bill has of Priory Road School is of the clinic which was attached to it. That was where the dentist worked and it was also where Bill, aged about ten, was lined up in a waiting room with eight or ten other children, to have his tonsils and adenoids removed by his local doctor. A taxi took him home later the same day. Bill says "most" had their tonsils out in those days, and ten days later when he went back for a check-up the doctor saw he had not quite cut out all the adenoids so he finished the job then and there without anaesthetic! Those were the days... When children had been vaccinated they would wear red armbands to warn people to keep their distance and not accidentally knock the area which had been jabbed. If anyone had a chest complaint they would call upon a sort of communal long-spout kettle which would be kept boiling and steaming in the sick room. Bill can remember someone being taken ill in a house near the Royal Grammar School and the occupant put straw on the road to soften the noise from the steam locomotives. If all failed and an illness took an unfortunate turn, Bill's aunt would be called for to "lay out" the body of the deceased. When a death occurred there was a number of ways people showed respect: neighbours would close their curtains and keep them shut until after the funeral; relatives would wear black armbands or black diamond patches on their sleeves for some months after; when the funeral cortège passed people would stand still in the streets and if a policeman happened to be passing he would stop and salute.

Shops and Occupations

Between the wars the local people had many varied occupations. Bill's father and uncle had a small holding off Amersham Road. His father worked it part-time when he had finished his full-time job, but his uncle worked it all the time. There was an ex-army horse stabled there and they kept pigs and grew corn which they cut by hand. The corn was probably sold to local chicken-feed merchants. Bill remembers the sow from The Beech Tree being driven to his father and uncle's boar to be mated.

Mr Norman ran a greengrocer's business from his house and small-holding on Amersham Road and Terry and Len remember him calling round the village with his lorry at the weekend, delivering to the door. Archie Grimsdel sold papers and groceries in the shop which still bears his name and which still offers the same services. Mr and Mrs Dean owned the shop before Archie, by the way. The present day "Magnum" was also a grocery shop

with the Rance family running it for about thirty years. A bigger concern which Bill remembers being near the Royal Grammar School during the war was the Ingersoll works.

Mr and Mrs Jenno had the sub post-office and the Drew family had the “pepper pot” toll house where they baked bread and cakes and also, on Christmas Day after all the baking was done, the turkeys for local families who didn’t have a big enough oven. Then there was Mrs Long’s sweetshop opposite Gerald’s Road.

Mr Ives had a one-man factory behind Terriers Garage and with a diesel-powered saw he turned out the wooden harnesses for work-horses. Bill remembers six or eight would be nailed together before being carted off to the railway station. Mr Thorn, who lived four or five houses down from Archie’s, also had a workshop with a diesel lathe turning chair legs.

Mr Clark had a threshing machine and came round with it to the huge corn field, part of which was where the vicarage now stands. There was a little pond there, too, alongside the footpath to Totteridge.

Mr Lewis kept chickens and sold eggs and the coalman delivered coal in winter and ice-cream in summer! The milkman delivered by churn with a pint-pot for measuring, or else you could take a walk to Terriers Farm to get milk. There were pear trees en route but you never touched them, not even if they had dropped, because that would have been stealing.

Len remembers the fish and chip shop first opened in about 1924 or 1925 and it was run by Mr Claud Club, a part-time police inspector. The first night of opening was memorable as Mr Club unfortunately burnt the chips! Fred Evans took the shop over from Mr Club. Fred used to grow potatoes for his chips on his allotment just below the vicarage. Next door to the fish and chip shop was Les Simmonds’ shoe repair shop and the shop where the hairdresser’s is now was the butchers, run by Mr Ward. Mr Weston was the coal merchant and Mr Evans the oil man, who travelled miles selling his oil. Terry also remembers the Wall’s “Stop me and Buy One” tricycle with its bell in the summer.

There was a local historian, Mr Colmer, who knew a lot about Wycombe and Mr Brand, Head of sports at the Grammar School who had a little three-wheeler Morgan car, and Mr Sugg who was a Salvationist and used to preach at Frogmore where the Salvation Band would play, too. The band would then march back to the Citadel. The chauffeur and the gardener for Mr and Mrs Priestley of Terriers House lived in the village, too, and Bill’s sister was Housekeeper/Cook in the other big house near the Priestleys, which had a back stairs for servants.

Mr Bromage Smith lived locally, too; he bred wire-haired terriers and he was the organist at Penn Road chapel for a while. Bill thinks he founded the Orpheus Choir which was mainly composed of men who worked in the various professions: solicitors, school-teachers and so on.

The Black Boy pub (now called The Terriers) didn’t arrive for some time. It was originally situated by Wycombe Parish Church and came to Terriers when the road was widened. It was run by Mr and Mrs Foster and Bill says its arrival didn’t please the Methodists at all! The Beech Tree pub was originally a small flint cottage, now much extended, and was run for three decades by the Jackson family.

Terry remembers another enterprising chap, Mr Livings, who was the local carrier and operated from his home in Green Road. Very few people had their own transport and so, if you gave “Aunt Ethel your old dining table and chairs, Mr Livings would deliver it to her in Naphill for about two shillings” says Terry!

Life at Terriers House

Margaret Dobson was born “down in Wycombe” but her connection is with Terriers House, the “big, white house” mentioned by everyone who has recollections of the area in the years between the wars, and which is now the UK Head Office of the international water and wastewater environmental engineering firm Montgomery Watson.



Margaret Dobson at the front door of Terriers House, 30 March 2000. (Montgomery Watson)

Margaret was born in 1906 and began work for Dr and Mrs Priestley as an under parlourmaid when she was sixteen years old. Dr Priestley, a descendant of Sir Joseph Priestley who discovered oxygen, had retired to Terriers from his medical practice in Bayswater. Before she began working for them, Margaret remembers Mrs Priestley paying her mother a visit in Abercrombie Avenue, probably to ascertain the good character of Margaret and her family.

Margaret's bedroom was right up the top, in one of the rooms with dormer windows in the roof where all the live-in servants slept. At first Margaret shared with Ethel, the kitchen maid, but she snored! So Margaret was allowed to change rooms and share with Vera, one of the housemaids. The rooms were clean but sparsely furnished with lino on the floor, a cupboard and a washstand. The water had to be carried upstairs to all the bedrooms, including Dr and Mrs Priestley's, although there was a bathroom.

Margaret, the under parlourmaid, worked under the guidance of Ellen, the parlourmaid. There were also two housemaids, a lady's maid, a cook, a gardener and a chauffeur - all these servants to look after two people, because the Priestley's children were grown up and married by this time. They had one daughter and two sons and even though they were married adults the servants still had to refer to them as "Miss" and "Master".

Margaret's weekly wage was £1-0s-0d. Out of that she had to pay 4d National Insurance and the rest went to her mother. Margaret was given a half day off once a week and every other Sunday another half day off; but on her half day off she still had to be back at 9.00pm at the latest. So much for those who like to think Sunday working is a recent invention! Margaret visited her mother on her half days off and as there were no buses from Terriers to Wycombe it meant a long walk - especially up the hill coming home! As a consequence, most of her half day off was spent walking.

The land which was part and parcel of Terriers House extended into the village. Mr Lampard, the

gardener, lived next to Terriers House in a cottage which is now called Terriers Cottage and Mr Livings, the chauffeur, lived in a cottage on Amersham Road; both belonged to Dr and Mrs Priestley.

Dr and Mrs Priestley were a very "aristocratic" couple, says Margaret, and appeared very haughty, treating the servants as if they were invisible - part of the furniture of Terriers House. The servants were very hard-working in return for their pay and keep: three meals a day, bedding and clothing washed at the laundry. For a Christmas "present" the women servants were given a length of uniform dress material which the dressmaker in the village, Mrs Jupe, made up for them. Their morning dress was white with green stripes, a big cross-over apron and a plain white cap. In the afternoon they would change into a dark blue alpaca dress with white collar and cuffs which would have to be changed every Sunday. This was worn with a pretty, small white apron and a cap with a velvet ribbon threaded through.

Margaret and Ellen's job was to "butle" - to serve the food and wait at table, and to wash the silver and glassware in the "pantry"

(china went to the kitchen). They also had to tidy up the dining room, library, sitting room - wherever Dr and Mrs Priestley might have been and might be returning, clearing the grates of ashes as well as straightening cushions. Lunch was at 1.00pm and after serving it Margaret and Ellen would have to stand silently whilst the Priestleys ate: possibly grouse or salmon, pheasant or chicken. Sunday lunch was an enormous joint of beef surrounded by horseradish sauce. It was Margaret's job to carry the trays as Ellen was "the boss" in these situations.

The live-in staff had their own meals in the large, stone-flagged kitchen. The kitchen maid, under housemaid and under parlourmaid ate at the huge, scrubbed kitchen table whilst the cook, parlourmaid and housemaid ate in the housekeeper's room, a little room just off the kitchen. Meals were not exactly plentiful and their lunch would be something like mashed potato with a bit of meat,



Margaret Dobson on the staircase at Terriers House, 30 March 2000. (Montgomery Watson)

rather a contrast with that of her employers! In those days all cooks fed the staff as cheaply as possible, not just Mrs White at Terriers House (really a "Miss" but all cooks were called "Mrs"). This was to keep the food budget low so that they would be valued and, hence, their job would be secure. Breakfast for the servants was a small rasher of bacon on a large plate! And a favourite 10am snack for Margaret was a piece of bread and dripping. Nowadays this is thought to be unhealthy but Margaret still looks great at nearly 94! Margaret had to learn to be very disciplined at Terriers House. Not only was silence to be observed around her employers but she was also expected to eat in silence with the servants in the kitchen!

Evening meals at 8.00pm would be the same luxurious fare as that at lunch for Dr and Mrs Priestley, even though they had taken afternoon tea with hot buttered toast and cakes at 4.00pm. The tea was made in the sitting room with a little methylated spirit burner. The kettle, tea-pot and spoons, of course, were all silver and the china was Crown Derby.

Every morning the gardener would come in to the kitchen with the fresh vegetables and Mrs Priestley would consult with the cook about the day's menus. One of the jobs for Margaret and Ellen was to ring the "dressing bell" at 7.30pm to remind Dr and Mrs Priestley, and any guests, they had half an hour to change into full dinner dress (evening wear). Even if the Priestleys were "alone" they still dressed for dinner. At 8.00pm Margaret or Ellen would have to go to the library or wherever people were and announce: "Dinner is served".

Margaret can still remember the first time she had to lay up the table alone as Ellen was on her half day off. She remembered everything except the napkins which she had left on the side, only a couple of yards away from where Dr and Mrs Priestley sat at table. Nevertheless, the bell was rung and Margaret had to take up the napkins and put them at each place setting, rather than Dr and Mrs Priestley reaching for them.

Oddly enough, despite the stiff formality of the general way of life in the household, Mrs Priestley kept chickens and looked after them herself, dressing in an old coat and hat for once. One day when she was out with her chickens, a telephone call came and it was Margaret's job to answer the call. The caller wanted to speak to Mrs Priestley and Margaret was extremely nervous, repeating over and over to herself: "Would you please come to the telephone, Madam". When she got outside she quietly gave her message to which Mrs Priestley replied, shouting: "Come closer, girl, come closer!", which did nothing to put her at ease! Mrs Priestley had her chickens and Dr Priestley's routine was to go for a walk every afternoon in his plus-fours with

a walking stick.

Margaret remembers her employers coming back from holiday and, as she unpacked for them, the catch broke on the case. Ellen told her she'd better go and tell him at once. Margaret again rehearsed what she would say as she went to the library: "I'm afraid the catch of your hold-all broke, Sir" and Mr Priestley looked up from his paper and said severely: "You must have very strong wrists, girl".

Another job for Margaret and Ellen was to collect all the silver, every evening, and lock it in the strong room. There were tureens, dishes, salvers, cutlery, kettles, teapots... and when they got it out again the next day, woe betide them if there was a single fingermark.

Margaret remembers a General Election when Terriers House was used as the "campaign headquarters" for the Conservatives. Sir Alfred Knox was duly elected and he and his wife stayed to dinner to celebrate the victory. Dr and Mrs Priestley frequently entertained and the proceedings were overlooked by a beautiful portrait of Mrs Priestley, painted when she was a young debutante, dressed for her "coming out". She was wearing a headdress of Prince of Wales feathers and the most lovely ruby necklace. Miss Ella took after her mother for looks and hauteur.

In 1924 Margaret left Terriers House after two years to work for the Priestleys' daughter Miss Ella, The Honourable Mrs Luxmore, in Windsor.

Postscript: By arrangement with Montgomery Watson, Margaret Dobson was able to revisit her former place of employment in March 2000. In the course of this visit to Terriers House she was able to achieve a lifelong ambition by entering through the front door and walking up the main stairs - things that she was not allowed to do in the 1920s.

The Church

Moving from the Big House back to village life before St Francis' was built, Bill remembers Mr Berry who was the Minister when the Church was in the Village Hall (which Bill heard was built by villagers collecting 2d a week). Mr Berry was the only person in the village with a car and he lived next door to the Hall. The "Village Slate Club" operated from the Hall and this was a savings scheme for Christmas, although if people were ill (and therefore could not work and were not receiving their wages) money could be drawn from it to tide families over the hard times. When St Francis was built Bill remembers it standing amongst acres of fields, seemingly "out of all proportion" to the village community which existed at the time. But of course, the fields were all built upon after the war and so it no longer seemed to be so out of place.

Len went to live in Terriers in 1923 when he was 11 years old. His bedroom window overlooked the farmland which would become the site of St Francis' Church and he has a photograph of it under construction in 1930. Len was too old to attend Terriers School when it was built, instead he went to Hazlemere Church of England School. Len attended Sunday School in the "hut" (as he calls the Church Hall) and he remembers the first Vicar of St Francis, Mr Shaw, as a very kind man.



St Francis' Church nearing completion, 1930. (Len Owen)

St Francis' Church was "open for business" in 1930 and Terry Dean remembers Sunday School for the younger children, too, which was run by Miss Jean Hall with helpers, and was at 3pm, the same time at which Mr Shaw met with the older children in church, with boys seated on the right and girls on the left! Mr Vernon Goodall, a church member, took the seniors in the Vicar's vestry. Each year during the Christmas Holiday the children were taken to the Pantomime at Oxford. Some years they had some "hairy rides", weatherwise, Mollie remembers. After Terriers became a Parish in 1937 the first bride married in the new Parish Church was Agnes Gomm, who lived in Tower Street. As she left the church Mr Shaw presented her with a silver tray as a memento of the occasion.

In the years before the Second World War a happy and flourishing Guide Company was started. The first Captain and Lieutenant were the Miss Beatties from Penn Street (their father was the vicar there) then later a Miss Matthews from Tylers Green ran it. Terry says the "height of the social calendar" was the Youth Club, held on Tuesday evenings in the Old Hall with table tennis and badminton, joined in by the vicar and his family. Non church-goers would attend, too, and in the summer badminton was played on the vicar's back lawn. Cubs and Scouts also met in the Church Hall until

they received a grant for their own hut.

A successful Mothers Union was set up. Mrs Shaw was the first Enrolling Member and continued for many years. The Lady Chapel was originally the Mothers Union Chapel as the MU paid for its furnishings with the proceeds from Bring and Buy etc. Younger members of the Church were confirmed in a joint service with boys from the RGS before they had their own Chapel.

One Sunday the taps were left on in the loo and flooded the vestries and the lower part of the Church to the height of the lowest step. Mr Shaw gathered those parishioners living close, and Mollie and the others donned wellingtons and found yard brooms. Off they went to sweep water from the lower regions. It was quite a task because each time they brushed it out of the Vestry door, some of it rolled back. In its way it was fun. When finished they were invited to the Vicarage where Mrs Shaw had refreshments waiting.



Toll House and Post Office, Terriers crossroads, probably taken in the 1900s. (Jean Finlan collection)

Wartime and after - the end of an era

Then came the war. Mollie was told by her Mum that during this time members of the MU and friends held a sewing circle where they knitted comforts for the troops and regularly checked the choir's cassocks and surplices for loose buttons, hems, and so on, keeping them neat and tidy. Mr Shaw held Whist-Drives in the Hall, profits going to the Servicemen from the village! Mr Shaw also took a teaching post at the Royal Grammar School, part-time. Terry remembers that a V1 rocket, commonly called a "buzz bomb", fell on the field behind Gerald's Road, damaging houses and St Francis' Church.

The Second World War was a kind of watershed in the life and times of the village of Terriers. The young men went to fight in it but Len had already had a "taste" of army life: because he added another year to his age and joined up in 1929 and went to Burma in 1932 with the 52nd Oxon and Bucks



VE Day Party in Chadwick Street. (Dorothy Saunders collection)

Regiment. He continued his childhood's sporting interest and played football and hockey and boxed for the regiment. Len's time in the army came to an end in 1937 and he worked for Wycombe Post Office whilst remaining in the army reserves. Two days after war was declared, and just as he was due to get married, he found himself in France. He managed to return six months later on ten days' leave to finally tie the knot! This was obviously a very good move on Len's part, as he celebrated his Diamond Wedding Anniversary in February 2000 with a peal of bells at All Saints' and a congratulatory card from the Queen to mark the very special occasion.

Len found himself back in Burma as well as other theatres of war during the Second World War. The esteem in which Len is held is shown by Frankie Vaughan putting his name forward for a Buckingham Palace Garden Party, and on the fiftieth anniversary of VJ Day Len represented the Oxon and Bucks Regiment. After the war Len returned to the Post Office and in 1947 moved to Totteridge, although he still enjoyed a drink in The Black Boy pub at Terriers.

At twenty Bill was called up to fight in the Second World War and spent the next four and a half years in Egypt and related places, single men were not given leave in the same way as married ones, except on compassionate grounds. He remembers the anxiety of wondering how he would get on with army life but found he adjusted, which was just as well because a period of six years passed before he saw "home" again. Bill was back in Luxor recently and saw the changes which have taken place in the last 55 years. He is a member of the British Legion in Wycombe where he maintains contact with old friends, many of whom I saw in the Hazlemere Trinity Football Team photo of the 1925-26 season. The faces looked so familiar - their grandsons or great grandsons, rather, probably attend the schools where I have taught in Wycombe and their hairstyles are once more fashionable.

Dorothy's brother, Jim Smith, had been in the RAF

during the war and was awarded the DFC. He was in the ill-fated 101 Squadron but, as chance would have it, he was ill when it went on its last mission and so he survived to fight on. Everyone remembers Jim for his happy and optimistic outlook on life. Dorothy recalls that after the war there was a big VE Day party in the street at Green Road, and everything began to change.

After the war it was never quite the same. Those coming back from the Forces were older, getting married and having children. Everyone had to adjust and start again. The Hall was still a centre for community life after the war and Whist Drives were held to raise money for a variety of causes, one being the building of a new Hall. However, costs increased so fast that by the time the Hall was built only a small part of the cost had been raised by these efforts.

More and more houses were built and the pleasant country walks disappeared. The footpath from in front of the Royal Grammar School down to Totteridge via a pig farm was built on, along with a great deal of other farmland. Mollie says that at this time, the new housing estate was being built (Arnison Avenue, Adelaide Road, Walton Drive and so on) and young families were moving in, many of them commuting to London where they worked. Mollie describes them as young and go-ahead. Terry says there are many more people as a consequence who are part of the life of St Francis' church and that the activities which take place in the new Church Hall are far more varied than in the past and that the Hall has become a venue for many more community activities.



Children's VJ Day Party in Green Road. (Janet Smith collection)

Introduction

In 2000 there are three schools within the parish: Kingswood First, Highworth Combined and High Wycombe Royal Grammar School. Highworth was formerly known as Terriers Middle School, but the only other school to have carried the name of the community, Terriers Primary (later First) School, now no longer exists. There have been other schools, for the buildings that are now occupied by the Wellesbourne Campus of Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College were originally the premises of Wellesbourne Secondary Modern School and were later occupied by Lady Verney School. With the exception of the Royal Grammar School, which is the subject of the next chapter, the local schools are covered in this chapter. Most has been written by Jean Finlan, a member of St Francis' Church and a former Head Teacher of Terriers Primary School, but it includes contributions on Kingswood from David Cox, a former teacher, and Natalia Jones, a former pupil.

Although not in the parish of Terriers, Godstowe School in High Wycombe has had connections with St Francis' since the 1930s. On 25 June 1932 the School Speech Day Service was held in the church - the first of what was to become a regular annual event after the war until the late 1960s. Starting in 1936 there was even a regular term-time 10.00am service specially for Godstowe, but as with so many things this was stopped by the outbreak of war (although Godstowe girls were regulars at normal services for many years afterwards). More recently, the pupils and staff regularly held their end of term and leaving services in the church. We are indebted to the pupils for the banner of St Francis, made and

presented to us in 1977, and the beautiful tapestry we see hanging behind the altar each Christmas, made in the 1980s. Godstowe School celebrates its centenary in 2000 and St Francis' Church offers its congratulations to our friends down Amersham Hill.

There is another school with a link to St Francis'. The Minutes of the Church Annual Meeting for 1983 record that a confirmation service was held for girls from Wycombe Abbey School during 1982-3, but this seems to have been an isolated occurrence.

Jean Finlan looks back at Terriers Primary School

Terriers Primary School was opened on 30 January 1929 by Alderman Haines, in the presence of the then Mayor, Councillor Aleck Stacey. I worked at the school for 25 of the 71 years of its existence, first as a teacher, and then as Head Teacher. The children and their parents, past and present, became very important to me, and the history of Terriers has always been of interest to me.

It was not a "village" school in the true sense of the word - Terriers has never been a village. It did not belong to the church, although I have often indulged in selfish fantasies about the size of our Sunday School, had it been a Church School. Not so fanciful, perhaps, when I read in the school log-book that on 20 June 1933 the Mothers Union had an outing, which seriously depleted the numbers at school that day, and that on 29 June 1938 the Sunday School had its Annual Outing - and Terriers School was closed for the day!





The staff at Terriers Primary School: Esmé Smith, Joan Turnbull, Miss Howarth and the Head, Florence Cottingham, 1929. (Jean Finlan collection)

The School, at its inception, was an infant school gaining its 88 pupils by transfers from Hazlemere Church of England School and Priory Road School. Well-known Terriers names on that first page of the admissions book included Rackshaw, Bulpett, Pusey, Tilbury, Ing and Teuton. Another of the first to be admitted was Dorothy Smith, better known to us as Dorothy Saunders. Dorothy received a prize from the first Head Teacher, Miss Cottingham, for her "perseverance and effort" - no change there, over 70 years! Dorothy Saunders, and her husband

John, have been faithful worshippers at St Francis' for many years. Dorothy has belonged to various women's groups within the Church, and her liking for gardening and plants has been carried into Church life - she and John have usually been seen behind the plant stall at Autumn Fairs and Bazaars. John too has put his gardening skills to work, benefitting the gardens and general appearance of St Francis' over the years. He has also served on the Parochial Church Council. I have a wonderful video showing Dorothy talking to the children of Terriers First School on its 60th



Golden Wedding party of Dorothy and John Saunders in the Church Hall, May 1992. (Janet Smith collection)

anniversary, recalling her early days there.

Head Teachers were required to keep a log-book of daily events, and this gives us a small glimpse of life during the past 70 years. In the 1930s, almost as important as education was the reporting of communicable diseases to the local health authority - chicken-pox, measles, scarlet fever, mumps, tuberculosis, impetigo, ringworm, scabies, and the ever-present head lice. A weekly visit from the school nurse sorted these out. Attendance too was very important. The Attendance Officer visited the homes of absentees to find that frequent causes of absence were having to do seasonal farm-work, look after siblings, and even to wait for new shoes or trousers. There being no family allowance in 1933, the Unemployment Committee arranged for the distribution of clothing to needy children, when six shirts and two petticoats were distributed on one day. Bad weather was often a cause of absence. Deep snow, heavy rain, strong winds prevented children from walking to school, bearing in mind that Terriers was not much more than a rural hamlet in the 1930s.

In 1937 Mr Perfect was appointed Head Teacher, and in the log book there is interesting detail of the war years, when the School was shared by Fulham Palace Road School. Local children went to school in the morning, and evacuees in the afternoon. As early as September 1938 gas masks were being fitted at school. Air raid practice took place daily, although air-raid shelters were not completed until 1941, the school becoming an emergency feeding centre in that year. The school did not escape bomb damage - its windows were shattered by the blast from the one bomb that fell in the area.

On 14 October 1942 a small boy, name of Terence Dean, "cut his leg severely and was sent to hospital for dressing". I'm not sure that Terry remembers that incident, but he and his wife Sylvia are now both well-known members of our congregation. Terry seems to see all the little jobs that need doing and he does them, as well as the more visible jobs such as gardening. Sylvia is always ready to help at parish lunches, and many of the congregation have been grateful for lifts to church from Terry and Sylvia.

After the war, the school grew in numbers at a great rate. During the 1950s a huge building programme of housing took place, and open fields were transformed into Walton Drive, Adelaide Road, and all roads in between. Thirteen temporary classrooms were erected on the playing field behind the school, and in 1965 a purpose-built nursery was erected, serving a much wider area than Terriers. The number on the roll in 1961 was 401, compared to the 88 in 1930! Head Teachers after the war included Mr Holbrook, 1958, Mrs Isaacs, 1965, and Mrs Finlan, 1972.



Terriers School Football Team, 1950. (Mollie Jones collection)

With the raising of the school-leaving age to 16, and the resulting formation of First and Middle Schools, Terriers Primary School became Terriers First School in 1972 and the temporary classrooms disappeared. A look at the admissions book, as our children did when the school was 60 years old in 1989, showed us that the traditional 1930s names of Margaret, Agnes, Beryl, Ronald and Dennis had been replaced by Diane, Julie, Tanya, Wayne and Gary. Even more interestingly we saw that Shazia, Saida, Azra, Imran, Younis and Irfan, along with Delroy and Su Lin, were now all part of our school community.

The 1970s and 1980s were dogged by government legislation concerning expenditure, teachers' working hours, what was taught in schools and how it was taught. Successive Ministers of Education brought out new policies, few of them relevant to the working of urban schools in leafy shire counties. The threat of closure was ever present in 1982, and teachers and ancillary staff were ruthlessly cut.

At this time the school became closer to the local community than ever before. Children of all faiths visited St Francis' Church and were shown vestments and artefacts, and the then vicar, The Rev. Stephen Purnell, explained the sacraments to them. Children from the School took along the maypole to the Church Summer Fayre and entertained with dancing. Visits were made to the old people's flats in Kingshill Road at Harvest time and Christmas, and we invited all local pensioners to our Christmas play, with tea to follow. Our

Caretaker, Norman Hearn, lived locally in Tower Street, and is probably remembered by many who read this. Members of our congregation at school at that time included Tanya and Danielle Kant, Shirley Jones, Hannah and Oliver Williams.

The First School was eventually amalgamated with Terriers Middle School, and the 75 year old building was closed. Its windows and doors were boarded up against vandalism, but this did not prevent it being the target of arsonists early in 2000. The fire destroyed the staff room, office, and a large part of the roof and storage areas. In June 2000 it was razed to the ground, and sixty houses are to be built on the site. I look forward to meeting the numbers of new people destined to live on the site - and pray that our Sunday School will be revitalised one day.

Terriers Middle School

This school was opened in September 1972 and took children from 8-12 years old, who moved to the new building from the "old" Primary School. Its first Head was Mrs Isaacs, who moved from the old school. She was followed by Mrs Miller, and finally Mr Hill, who was Head until his retirement in 1993.

Like many buildings this one was not finished in time, and some pupils remained behind in the old building for at least a year. A split-site school is never satisfactory, so we at the First School heaved a sigh of relief when the building was completed. It is of modern design, including shared classrooms and working areas, designed by the County Architect, and schools of this design were built in many parts of Buckinghamshire during the 1970s.

Being in Totteridge Lane it was somewhat isolated from the strip of road that is Terriers, but it was convenient for older children to drop off their siblings at the First School before continuing on to the Middle School.

On the retirement of Mr Hill the powers that be decided that there should be an amalgamation of the First and Middle Schools, on the site of the Middle School. Numbers in both schools were falling once the plethora of children of the 1950s, '60s and '70s had gone, although many of their parents were, and are, still living in the area. Young families with children were not staying long in Terriers, but moving on to bigger and better things. So, after yet more building and expansion at the Middle School, the First School and Nursery were closed and the birth of Highworth School took place, under the Headship of Mr Kilner.

Sadly, Terriers does not now have a school to its name.

Kingswood First School

(David Cox and Jean Finlan)

Kingswood Infant School was opened on 9 October 1950, although its official opening by Mrs C.R. Attlee, wife of the Prime Minister, was not until January 1951. During the run up to the opening Buckinghamshire was experiencing a child population explosion, with large numbers of families moving in from the London area. Many new schools were built, and official openings were a common feature but, because of the expense and organisation required, Kingswood was one of the last to enjoy such an event. The school has always been part of Totteridge, rather than Terriers, although some children who lived in the Totteridge area left Terriers School for Kingswood on its opening. It is, however, within the parish of St Francis' Church.

This school had three unusual features from the start. The plan of the building was such that each

classroom had access to a large paved area that could be used as an extension to the classroom, with very expansive windows providing maximum light and a view of a grassed playing field, the main playground being situated on the other side. This layout prevented conflict in bad weather, caused no distraction from outside activities during class time, and was easy to supervise.

Infant Schools were always seen as the province of female teachers, but the then Education Officer, Mr R. Winter, took the unusual step of appointing a man to the teaching staff. So Mr David Cox was the first man in the division to be appointed to an infant school along with six, soon to be eight, female teachers (including Mrs Ball, Mrs Brion, Miss McCarroll and Miss Smith). That he subsequently became the deputy head teacher and was followed by several men in the following years proved Mr Winter's wisdom and foresight.



Staff at Kingswood Infant School, 1953, with David Cox on the right. (David Cox collection)

The first Head Teacher was Miss Carter, who had already been Head of both a private and a state school. She treated all the children as "hers" and the the school as her domain; it became a very



David Cox with class at Kingswood Infant School, 1956. (David Cox collection)

caring community in a very short time. One great gift she had was the ability to illustrate her lessons with “matchstick men” that appeared to march across the blackboard, a great attention holder and teaching ploy that worked wonders. The timetable was designed to encourage reading first, and there was an emphasis on learning by rote certain skills such as times tables. The afternoons were devoted to the activities of a wider social nature - the world, arts and games.

At this time a number of new ideas were floating about in the educational world, including counting rods of differing colours for mathematics and the Initial Teaching Alphabet (a symbol for every sound in the English language!) for the teaching of reading. Teachers were asked to try anything new, but in many cases Miss Carter agreed that they should be scrapped.

Intermingled within the framework of school life was a yearly programme of May Day celebrations, Christmas and Nativity Plays, Harvest Services and Open Days (and evenings). Jean Finlan remembers the annual crowning of the May Queen on May Day, as she was pleased to perform this ceremony in the mid 1980s! Also held annually were the District Sports, in which all local schools participated, and which were held in Turners Field, adjacent to the school. All these activities helped to bind the children, staff and parents into a functioning place of learning, and it is doubtful whether a varied and progressive system would be accepted by the powers that be these days.

Although opened as an infant school, Kingswood rapidly grew into a Junior School. With the rise in the birth-rate, the new housing estates close to the school, and the arrival of children from the Caribbean and Pakistan, there were over 400 children on the roll in 1962. Two classes were held in Totteridge Social Centre, and by 1967 there were 550 children on the roll and two coach loads of children were sent daily to Bellfield School. Miss Carter remained until 1972 when she was succeeded by Miss Lord, Mrs Little and the current Head Teacher, Miss Holtom - who has been there for 14 years at the time of writing.

The new Kingswood Junior School was built in Hollis Road (just outside the parish) and opened in October 1968 under the Headship of Mr J. Veysey. In 1972 the two schools became Kingswood First and Middle Schools. Since then, with the fall in the birth-rate, both schools have fewer pupils but continue to be an important part of the Totteridge community. Several local organisations meet in the First School, and for most parents it is the first call for information and help of all kinds.



May Queen Day at Kingswood School, 1971. (Val Jones)

Natalia Jones recalls life at Kingswood First School, September 1980 - June 1984

Most people remember their first day at school vividly. I can't remember a thing about mine, so it can't have been that traumatic. My first teacher was Mrs Garthforth, whom I remember calling me “Nartarliar” all the time, and among my first friends was Kerry, someone I still know 20 years on! Our classroom had the letters of the alphabet around the wall and a playhouse in the corner. In the cloakroom there was a water pit, and I remember having lots of fun playing in that. Every week we would have a different coloured corner, where we all brought in things that were that colour for display. The books we read included “Roger Redhat”, “Billy Bluehat”, and “Jennifer and Johnny Yellowhat”, and we had a poster of their village, a triangle green with a house at each corner. There were also the “Stig and Leaf” books about cave children and their lives.

Mrs Day was my second teacher, and in her class I remember country dancing with a boy called Dean and performing at the end of the year. I also dressed up as Boy George for a competition at the School Fete. The words from the books I was reading that year were written onto cards that I had to learn for my homework, and I can remember keeping them in my Granddad's old tobacco tins.

My third teacher was Mrs Mobbs, and she was my favourite. I remember making tie-dye cloths in her classroom. In my fourth year Mrs Hough was my teacher and the class was in the annex. We went to see “Wind in the Willows” at the theatre and I remember making a mole puppet out of clay and cloth. I also recall a performance we did of Old Time Music Hall songs - I was in “All the Nice Girls love a Sailor” and “Oh I do like to be beside the Seaside”. It was a very good show, the highlight being a boy called Danny Fryer dressed in drag performing “My Old Man”.

My other memories include playing, running under huge oak trees in the playground and doing handstands in the playing field. I remember playing in the orchard and looking into the field next door, where there was an old shed which we were sure was haunted! My memories of Kingswood First School are scattered and muddled, but they are all fond and I loved my time there.

Wellesbourne School

Wellesbourne Secondary Modern School was opened in 1960, to cater for the children of people moving into the new housing estates in or near Terriers. The name is from a family who lived in nearby Brands House in the sixteenth century.

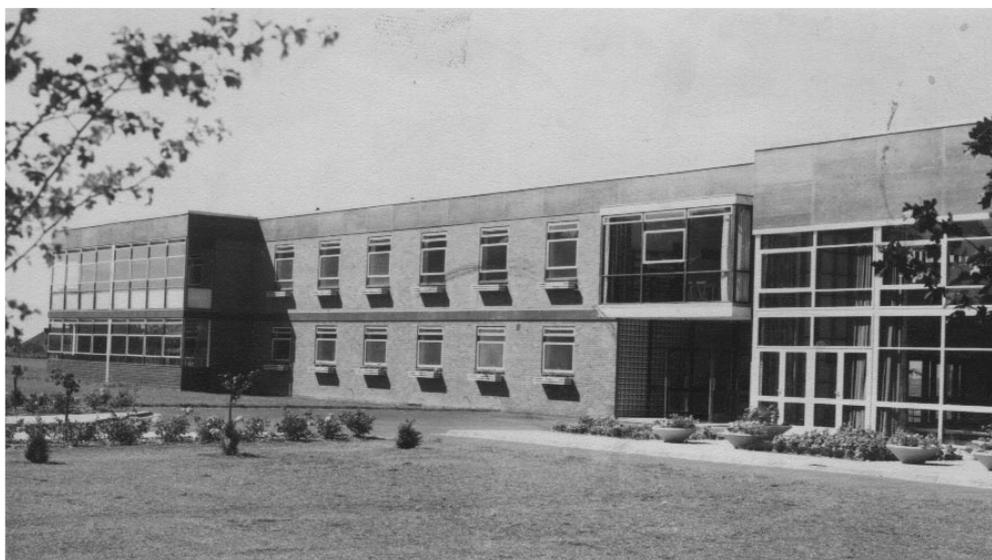
Brian Sharpe, the Head Teacher, did much to shape the school. The whole ethos and ambience of the school could be seen in a broad and varied curriculum to suit the variety of children receiving it. The huge playing field gave an opportunity for all sorts of sporting talents, and the excellent work experience department sent pupils into local factories, offices, schools, council run homes and clinics, giving them a close look at working life and enabling them to make decisions regarding their own future. There were wonderful dramatic and musical productions: "Grease", "My Fair Lady", "South Pacific" and "A Man For All Seasons" stand out in my mind among many, as does the lively playing of the jazz band. In 1980 "Instrument of Peace" was performed in St Francis' Church.

But almost as important as all this, maybe more so, was the County Council's decision to close this excellent school in the mid-1980s. No real reason was ever given, but the people of Terriers were outraged, and fought a bitter and lengthy battle with the County Council. Ralph Cartmill, the then Vicar of St Francis' Church, and his wife Jill, who was matron of the school at that time, played a large part in defending it. The following are

extracts from a letter written by Ralph Cartmill and sent to the County Council, after reading their reasons for closure:

"As a clergyman, whilst I would like to argue strongly that the Church is an important focal point for community, and whilst it labours to provide community activities and projects which have a wide beneficial appeal, I have to admit that the impact is very limited. The strongest unifying and community-creating aspect of life in this area is Wellesbourne School. It provides real bonds for all who live in the area, teaching skills in co-operation and the formation of community, which will be much needed in the years ahead. Wellesbourne is the leaven in a broad urbanising and increasingly ethnic area. The life of each pupil is infinitely enlarged into the life of others as the school successfully counters the frustration and apathy of urban attitudes and racist prejudices. In my prayers I offer heartfelt thanks for the existence of Wellesbourne School, where service to our area in terms of racial integration is impressive."

The community of Terriers, of whatever culture, joined together in a way never seen before or since in their common aim of keeping their school open. Sadly, they did not succeed, and the school closed in 1986, when pupils were dispersed and friendships broken. To add insult to injury, the pupils of Lady Verney Girls High School were moved to Wellesbourne from their site in the town. Alas, they too suffered the same fate as Wellesbourne School when the building was closed for the second time in the mid-1990s. Lady Verney School ceased to exist and all pupils went to Wycombe High School for Girls. The Wellesbourne School building has now become the Wellesbourne Campus of the Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, and the best that we can say is that it is still an establishment for Education.



Wellesbourne School, 1960s. (Mollie Jones collection)

Introduction

The largest school in the parish of St Francis is the Royal Grammar School (RGS) which occupies a large site bounded by Amersham Road, Green Road and Chadwick Street. In spite of its importance in the parish, and its proximity to the church, links between the two institutions never seem to have been very close. This chapter looks at the relationship and some of the personalities and has been compiled from archive and published sources by Tim Edmonds, a former RGS pupil and member of the Church. It also includes personal impressions from Tim and from another Church member and current pupil, Steven Greenhill.

Although the High Wycombe Royal Grammar School was founded in 1562, it remained small and insignificant until the latter part of the nineteenth century. By 1908 there were 129 pupils, and there was little scope for expansion in the school buildings in Easton Street. In 1914 the Bishop of Buckingham, E.D. Shaw, a former vicar of High Wycombe and a School Governor, laid the foundation stone on a new site at the top of Amersham Hill in Terriers, where fine new buildings were formally opened in 1915. Since then the RGS has undergone continual growth. In 1933 there were 350 boys, by 1946 this had risen to 665, and in 1999/2000 the school had a roll of 1,346 pupils

and a reputation as one of the leading schools in the state sector.

At Terriers in 1915 the school was at the edge of the town and the magnificent frontage, with its central clock, overlooked fields that stretched towards Totteridge. Indeed, a speaker at the Old Boys' Dinner in 1932 said that the school was "set on a hill and could not be hid" and, in a reference to the appearance of St Francis' Church in 1930, that architecturally "he did not think it had been eclipsed by ... the miniature cathedral nearby". The original school buildings of 1914/15 still exist, but they are now surrounded by later additions and obscured from the main road by the Queen's Hall of 1962. However, the school clock is still visible from some angles, and it is the source of the hourly chime that echoes round the parish on quiet evenings.

Arnison and Tucker

When the school moved to Terriers the headmaster was George Arnison. In those early days there was no St Francis' Church, but over the road from the RGS sat its humble predecessor "St Mary's". The minute book of the District Church Council for Terriers in the period immediately before the building of the new church show that its Chairman was one G.W. Arnison and that Mrs Arnison was





The view south along Amersham Road, Terriers, with the clock tower of the RGS just visible on the horizon, 16 July 2000. (Tim Edmonds)

also a member, so clearly the headmaster and his wife were both active Christians. Arnison continued as Chairman through the period when St Francis' was being built, and he was only replaced when a change in standing orders in 1931 specified that the Priest-in-charge should automatically be chairman of the DCC. After that Arnison disappears from the minutes, although Mrs Arnison's name lasts a little longer.

George Arnison retired in 1933 and his replacement was Edmund Tucker, a man who became a Church of England lay reader. Although they were close neighbours there is little evidence of contact between the RGS and St Francis' in Tucker's early days. However he was certainly active in encouraging Christian activity in the school when in December 1933 he began running occasional services, first in the School Hall (the present library) and then in the Parish Church of All Saints in High Wycombe (whose vicar, The Rev. W.L.P. Float, had been appointed a School Governor in 1934). There were Parents' Services, normally once a term, and an annual Commemoration Service on the evening of Speech Day.

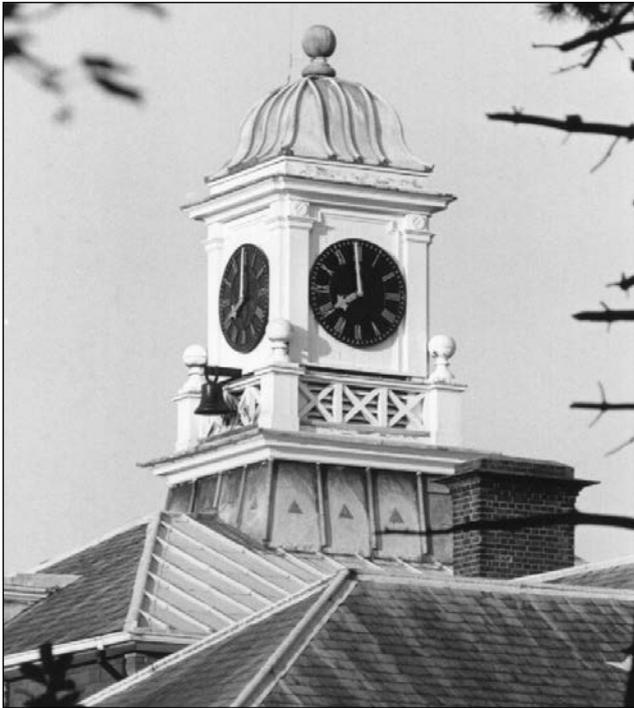
Confirmations at St Francis' Church

The RGS has always catered for some boarders and when the school was at Easton Street they attended services at All Saints' in the town and some boarders had been confirmed there. A significant event took place on 21 March 1945 when the

Bishop of Oxford conducted the first private confirmation service for pupils from the RGS, and the venue was St Francis' Terriers. The candidates had been prepared by The Rev. L.W. Cowie, a teacher of Scripture and History at the school (and still a layman on his appointment in 1943). The Rev. E.W. Shaw, the Vicar of Terriers, also taught at the RGS in 1944-45 and perhaps he influenced the change of venue.

This was the start of what turned out to be a close link between the school and Terriers Church that lasted for fifteen years. Although there appears to have been no service in 1946, the Register of Services shows a Confirmation service in March every year from 1947 to 1960 inclusive. There is evidence from the school magazine for 1949, 1950, 1951 which corroborates that large numbers of RGS boys were confirmed at St Francis' Church. In addition to the schoolboys, parishioners were also confirmed on at least some of these occasions, but it is not clear how often this occurred or how many were involved.

In addition to the confirmations the Register of Services shows that there was an annual Holy Communion service at the Church which seems to have been a corporate RGS service. The first such service took place the day after the 1948 confirmation service, presumably so that confirmation candidates could make their first communions, and it continued every year until 1960, usually within a few days of each



The clock tower at the centre of the 1914 RGS building, showing the bell at the rear, 7 July 2000. (Tim Edmonds)

confirmation. The number of communicants at these services was often the highest recorded in each year, the record being 179 at the 10.00 service on 20 March 1959.

Annual confirmation and corporate services at St Francis' Church ceased in 1960. The reason for this was that a chemistry laboratory in the main RGS building was converted into a chapel, which was consecrated by the Bishop of Oxford on 26 November 1960. The RGS confirmation services switched to the chapel, but I do not know for how many years they continued.

RGS men at St Francis

Tucker continued his predecessor's association with the local Church, but as a Lay Reader his involvement was in taking services from time to time. The Register of Services shows the name of E.R. Tucker as the celebrant/preacher at the 11.00 service on 3 October 1948 and he is recorded in a similar capacity at a total of eighteen services, the last being on 29 July 1956. These included the Youth Sunday service on 29 May 1949 and the Remembrance Sunday services in 1949, 1950 and 1952.

A part-time member of staff appointed by Tucker at the RGS was The Rev. A. John Skipp, an old boy of the RGS and Priest-in-charge of St Anne's Wycombe Marsh, who later became Mayor of High Wycombe. His name also appears occasionally in the St Francis' Register of Services. Both men are commemorated in the RGS chapel, which still exists above the entrance to the original building. A tablet there records "In memory of Rev. A.J. Skipp, JP MA, Housemaster, Chaplain and member

of staff 1954-1982, thanks to whose initiative and energy this chapel came into being." There are memorials to Edmund Tucker and to his wife, Alberta, in whose memory the chapel organ was presented.

Over the years many staff of the RGS must have lived in the parish and parish records suggest that at least two have served as sidesmen. From the first week that the new church was open until 1946 a Mr Brand was sidesman, and he also audited the accounts for many years. This is likely to have been the Mr H.G. Brand who lived nearby and from 1911 was a teacher of Mathematics and Sports at the RGS. For many years until his retirement in 1945 he was also Second Master. Just overlapping with Brand was a Mr Hollingworth, who became a sidesman in 1946 and remained so until at least 1966. This was almost certainly the Mr L.T. Hollingworth who joined the staff in 1945, and whom I remember as my English teacher in 1961.

Although regular RGS services at St Francis' ceased when the confirmations moved to the school chapel, John Skipp's name appears in the service register from time to time. These include services during the remainder of Edwin Shaw's incumbency as well as providing cover during both interregnum after Shaw left and that after Tony Richards' departure. The minutes of the Church Annual Meeting for 1983 record that an RGS service was held in the year 1982-3, but contain no further details.

The school in the early 1960s personal recollections by Tim Edmonds

The history of the RGS published in 1962 records that the laboratory block of 1960 "looks across the road at Sir Giles Scott's noble and imaginative Church of St Francis". I attended the RGS briefly as a day boy from 1961-3 and well remember the tall tower of St Francis' Church near the school. Something else that made a lasting impression on me was the large amount of new housing going up, particularly in Hazlemere where, as if in sympathy, Holy Trinity Church was sporting a new tower.

During my time at the RGS I was a boarder at St Mary of the Angels Song School in Beaconsfield, an independent Church of England Choir School. By 1960 the Song School provided only musical teaching and we attended local state schools for our general education, so after passing my 11+ examination at Beaconsfield Church of England Primary School I faced a daily journey by green London Transport bus to High Wycombe. In those days there were two routes from Beaconsfield: the frequent 441 along the A40 or the irregular 363 via Penn and Tylers Green. I usually tried to get the 363 in the morning as this would drop me right outside the school, but in the afternoon I would



The wooden hut at Uplyme that was Tim Edmonds' form room at the RGS in 1961-2, 12 July 2000. (Tim Edmonds)

walk down the footpath by the cemetery to the bus terminus at Frogmore and catch the 441. In those days all but sixth-formers had to wear caps to travel to and from school, and most of the boys in the first two years wore shorts rather than “long trousers”.

In 1961 the Junior School was in prefabricated wartime huts at Uplyme, where my form master and French and Scripture teacher, Mervyn M. Davies was also master of the boarding house. I remember him as a warm and friendly person, ideal to look after newcomers to a school with its fair share of more austere disciplinarians on the staff and with intimidating older boys in the playground. Having first joined the staff in 1937, he retired in 1979. In making enquiries with the school in 2000 when preparing this booklet I was delighted to find that, although he is now blind, Mr Davies was still living locally and I renewed contact with him. I was also surprised to find the hut that was my form room in 1961 was still standing at Uplyme!

A memorable event of my two years at the RGS was the visit of Her Majesty the Queen during the four hundredth anniversary celebrations in 1962, during which she unveiled a plaque in the new Queen's Building. All the boys were positioned so that we were able to see the royal visitor as she toured the school on 6 April, and I still have in my possession the commemorative programme and a copy of the next day's Daily Sketch with a report and pictures of the event.

The RGS in the 1990s - personal impressions from Steven Greenhill

In recent years, the RGS has expanded greatly and has attracted pupils from not just the local area, but from miles away. This has caused it to lose its links with St. Francis' because fewer and fewer pupils live nearby - improved transport links mean that we have pupils commuting to school every day from places as far away as Hillingdon! In fact, I am

in a minority who live within walking distance of the school.

Church links in general have also gone downhill since Tim Edmonds was in the school. Although assemblies are meant to have a Christian theme or moral, not all of them do, and only the lower school (from ages 11 to 14) have to sing hymns in them. I believe that many of the staff are Christians, but very, very few of the students are. Most assemblies are given by teachers, who talk on a particular “theme” for one week, then pass to the next teacher. Occasionally, we have outside speakers, such as priests from local Churches or wandering preachers like the youth-based River Church or Youth for Christ. Many of these speakers double up and talk for the Christian Union also.

The Christian Union (CU) is flourishing despite a relatively low turnout. While Wycombe High's CU contains about 30 regular members, ours contains only about 10, but all of these contribute greatly. Ours is, however, the best in the area because we serve cake! Since I joined the committee in January we have set up regular lunchtime prayer meetings, as well as designing the programme ourselves and giving our own talks and Bible studies. We also have links to other schools in the area through the Inter-School Christian Fellowship (ISCF). This allows Christians in the area to meet together, listen to talks and go away on weekends.

The school itself has been undergoing redevelopment for years. Since the 1960s the new buildings have included the Junior block containing ten classrooms, and the more recent Language block with ten more, including three conference rooms and an Information Technology room. More boarding houses have increased the range of the school's student base, allowing people to come to our “fantastic” school from miles away. Even now, with diminishing funds, we cannot stop building and our current project is a £60,000 Astroturf to which parents were asked to contribute.

When I first arrived at the school I was overwhelmed by its size, and this was before the addition of the Language block, the Biology block and the new boarding house. Compared to my previous school (Hamilton) it was HUGE but, more than that, so were the people. Previously, I had been amongst the oldest in my school, and then I was suddenly bottom of the pile. This was an immense feeling, though an exciting one. We were suddenly expected to be well-mannered (!) and refer to the teachers as “Sir” or “Ma'am.” This was quite hard to get used to, but it makes sense. Most of the teachers are excellent, although some are better than others! However, many of them are also very strict and this was not pleasant when I first started (I forgot my homework in my first week at the school and found myself doing a lunchtime

detention!!). A few years down the line, however, and I appreciate the discipline. When I arrived, Mr. Levin was the Head and was very South African, constantly telling us stories of his experiences there. When it was your birthday in your first year at the school, he would meet you in his office for a cake and a drink. This is a fantastic idea and really made you feel at home in the school. The present Headmaster, Mr. Dingle, is continuing this tradition.

It is unfortunate that we do not see much of the local area in the school, with no trips to see anything there apart from the odd Geography field trip down to the park. We are constantly contained within the school and therefore the students have little knowledge of the local community and our Church. There is the annual Carol Service and an occasional concert at All Saints' Church, and the annual choir trip to Magdalen Chapel in Oxford, but apart from that we have no external links to churches, which is a shame.

*Except the Lord build the house,
they labour in vain that build it*

(Psalm 127, verse 1)



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The late Archie Smith's scrapbook, courtesy Mrs Janet Smith.

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Note on currency values

In several places in the text, currency has been quoted in the pre-decimalisation £-s-d values (pounds, shillings and pence).

There were 20 shillings to the pound, and 12 pence to the shilling, so one new penny (1p) is equivalent to 2.4 old pence.

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