

PARISH NOTES (JANUARY, 1957)

LODERS, DOTTERY AND ASKERSWELL.

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Untraditional Christmas. A journalist writing a week before Christmas alleged that the snow and the icicles beloved of Christmas cards are not typical of the English scene, and that the English Christmas is much more often wet than snowy. History has proved him a true prophet of this Christmas. Not only was there a superfluity of rain; there was also a tempestuous wind which caused wet patches on the ceilings of supposedly weatherproof houses, and brought out the buckets in houses whose sponginess was well known. From Loders glebe, the mill stream and the River Asker could be seen in flood together - a rare spectacle - and in lanes with steep banks there were many landslips. Between them, the wind and the rain discovered all the weak spots in Askerswell Church. Enough rain got through the leads of the east window to soak the altar. At Dottery, which is still in the builder's hands, the congregation sat up when they heard Mr. George Gale tell the Vicar, in a colossal whisper, "to mind the bath in the vestry". The adverse effect which this weather was expected to have on congregations did not materialise. The crowd at the Loders midnight service was not quite as big as usual, but there were more at the eight o'clock service. The howling gale seemed to keep nobody away from matins, and it was a large flock of children that sang carols to their seniors from the chancel, and received chocolates put on the Christmas tree by the Mothers' Union. At Askerswell and Dottery, both of whose churches are much exposed to the elements, parishioners brought friends staying with them for Christmas, along the rain-swept roads to service, and service seemed the cosier because of the storm outside. The number of communicants again approached the 200 mark.

A surfeit of parties. If some of our children have worn a slightly jaundiced look this Christmas, it is probably the effect of too many parties. Parents say they have never known so many parties come so close together. On top of the private parties came the school breaking up parties, and on top of the school parties came the "Court Party", usually held in January, but coming close to Christmas this time. The Court party is one of the unchanging things in a world of change. It follows a time-honoured pattern of conjuring, punch and judy, tea in the great dining room, crackers, an orange and a half-crown for each child, and carriages at five o'clock sharp. But even the Court party had to suffer change this year; for Sir Edward Le Breton was prevented by the death of his brother-in-law from joining his lady in the duties of host and hostess. This was probably the first time he had missed the party in thirty-seven years, and the degree to which the children missed him was suitably expressed in David Skeats' speech of thanks.

Money is said to be very tight just now, but Loders Choir has a knack of loosening it. The choir sang carols through the parish on behalf of the Waifs and Strays, and collected £10.2.4d, which is above the average. Paul and Sarah Masters, feeling that the resources of Matravers had not been fully exploited, did a bit of singing on their own, and raised a further 13/8d. In Uploders the choir were happy to find Mrs. Lenthall waiting for them in Upton Peep with seasonable refreshment. The singing in Loders ended as usual with more refreshment round the Vicarage fire.

Being new to Askerswell, the teacher, Miss McCombie, was seriously exercised as to whether enough customers would turn up to buy all the things collected by the school children for their sale in aid of the school premium. In future she will be free from any such worry; for she has seen the unanimity with which Askerswell people support their school. The afternoon was beautiful, and the school drew everybody to itself like a magnet. The children, supported by the Brownies, served behind the stalls, and conducted themselves in a very grown-up way. A nativity play, which entranced the grown-ups, followed the selling, and the fitting end to a happy afternoon was the adding up of the profits, which came to the eminently satisfactory total of £20. The school correspondent can now sleep soundly on the fact that there is corn in Egypt.

Changes in Dottery. On the main road, near the Blue Ball, stands a tiny cottage. Dottery children could be forgiven for seeing in it the prototype of that cottage which Hansel and Gretel found in the wood. The Hansel and Gretel cottage was nice on the outside - made of sugar indeed - but inside was a nasty old witch who fattened boys and girls in a cage ... and ate them. The Dottery cottage was the exact opposite. Outside, it was a hovel of a place, in no wise sweet; but inside was old Mrs. Brown, who was very nice, and who put no child in fear of being eaten. The cottage is now empty; for Mrs. Brown has gone to live with her daughter in Bridport. She will be missed from Dottery Church, where she was a regular member of the congregation. We are glad of her assurance that she will be back sometimes. Her old friends will always be glad to see her. The "Blue Ball", that splendid monument of the brewer's art, towering above Mrs. Brown's cottage, has also undergone a change. Mr. and Mrs. Beach have relinquished the licence

in favour of Mr. and Mrs. Cooper. We ourselves have not yet had time to appraise the new physician, but the preliminary reports of the regular patients are promising.

Baby News. The infant son of Mr. and Mrs. Pym, of South Eggardon, was baptised Johnathan Charles at Askerswell. A daughter has been born to Mr. and Mrs. Marsh, of Matravers. Coming after two sons, we gather that the change was not unwelcome. Miss Sheila Dunkerton chose the best day in December for her marriage at Loders with Mr. Charles Hiscock, of Litton Cheney. Her efforts to keep the wedding "quiet" did not prevent a bevy of friends from accompanying her to church, neither did she escape a heavy shower of confetti at the gate. Thanks to the enlightened policy of the R.D.C., the newly-weds have secured a Council flat at Welplot.

Dottery Church can rarely have been more full than it was for the funeral of Mrs. Johnston, of Ash. Sympathisers from a large area were present, which shewed that it is possible for a great sufferer, confined to house for a long time, to be universally esteemed, and remembered though little seen. The day of the funeral was a sad one for our Miss Hayward's family, whose third bereavement it was, inside a few months.

Loders Sunday School raised £25 for the Church overseas by its Christmas sale. As always, it could rely on the help of sympathetic grown-ups, and the stalls were furnished with an attractive range of goods, and with plenty of buyers. Business was not restricted to buying and selling. There was an excellent day school entertainment produced by Mrs. Hinde and Mrs. Lennox, and songs by the Sunday School.

Honour for Loders School. Pat Maddison, of the Farmers' Arms, got the best marks among the children of the Bridport Rural District who sat for the latest "eleven plus" examination. As funds were available this year from the Canon Gooden Trust, Pat received a share of the books presented by the County Education Committee to all the pupils who won like success.

Remembered by Loders Choir. The older members of Loders Choir received the news of the death of Sir Francis Dalrymple with deep personal regret. He was a great musician, as well as a gunner, and had been master of Royal Artillery music at Kneller Hall. Loders Choir was proud to count him its honorary conductor. On his frequent visits to Loders Court he never failed to take command of the choir. Mr. Tiltman tells us that he wrote an anthem especially for Loders choir, and that in their minds he will always be associated with the Armistice Day anthem, "The souls of the righteous", which was an indispensable part of the high ceremony with which this day was wont to be observed in Loders. For the ten last years of his life, Sir Francis existed with one lung, which he was in the habit of testing by climbing to the top of Yellow Lane. At his home in the New Forest he worked to the end to make his parish musical.

The way of ringers. There is a touch of Thomas Hardy's "Under the greenwood tree" about the way in which our ringers do their business with a fine contempt for orthodoxy. Captain Harry Crabb sent word to the annual meeting that since he had become a shepherd, watching his flock by day as well as night, he could not be as dependable as he could wish, and wanted to be relieved of his office. Harry Legg was therefore elected captain. But Harry Legg thought it was time George Hyde did a spell as captain. George, however, was re-elected secretary, a job he knows from A to Z. But George contended that Bill Maddison was just the man for secretary, and that he would try to get him to take over. Whereupon Harry Legg said that if George managed to pass on his job to Bill, then George must be captain. We learn that Bill has fallen to George's blandishments and become secretary, but whether George has yielded to Harry, we know not. Only one thing we know, and that is that Frank Good is now tower warden. Were this a matter of election instead of appointment, this also might be in doubt.

Services in January

<u>Loders:</u>	6th. H.C. 8 & 11.45: Matins 11: Children 2.	
	13th. H.C. 8: Matins 11: Children 2.	
	20th. H.C. 8 & 11.45: Matins 11: Children 2.	
	27th. H.C. 8: Matins 11: Children 2.	
<u>Askerswell:</u>	6th. Evensong 6.30.	13th. Matins 10.
	20th. Evensong 6.30.	27th. H.C. 10.
<u>Dottery:</u>	6th. H.C. 9.30.	13th. Evensong 3.
	20th. Evensong 3.	27th. Evensong 6.30.

Loders, Dottery and Askerswell.

Servants above their Master. The man in the street may be forgiven for finding the thought processes of Christians a bit bewildering at times. On Friday, Jan. 18th, he sees flashed across the front page of his Bridport News a spirited protest by the religious leaders of Bridport against the proposal to allow a glass of beer at a dance in the assembly hall of the new Alfred Colfox School, on the grounds that it might contaminate the children, and would so pollute the hall as to render it unfit for morning prayers ever after. On Sunday, Jan. 20th, the Second after Epiphany, he opens his Prayer Book, and reads, as the gospel for the day, how Christ himself not only attended a "licensed" wedding feast at Cana of Galilee, but provided the equivalent of a hundred gallons of more excellent wine when the decanters dried up. The man in the street might remember, on further reflection, that Christ made wine an essential element in the Holy Communion, which is the most sacred act of Christian worship. If the man in the street were well up in his Bible, he might also remember that St. Paul said to Timothy "Be no longer a drinker of water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake". The religious leaders of Bridport are sincere and honourable men. But is sincerity enough? They have put their own Lord and Master in the dock; they have made the assembly hall of the Alfred Colfox School more sacred than our churches (which all have wine in their cupboards), and more sacred than our homes; for we in these three parishes are unconvinced that a glass of beer with our supper sets our children on the road to ruin, and makes the home unfit for them to live in.

Loders' Loss: Kenya's Gain. That is exactly how everybody felt when they heard that Miss Marjorie Randall had left Yondover for Kenya, with the powerful possibility of settling there for good. Her natural disposition (amazingly quiet for a woman, and becomingly shy) betrayed nobody into under-rating her huge capacity for work, and her skill in the domestic arts; for year by year, without fail, the prize lists of the Melplash Show proclaimed it far and wide, and the Askerswell Young Farmers valued her as their chief point-winner in inter-club competitions. Every year she made, and raffled, a cake at Loders fete, and the fact that it always made more revenue than anything else in that line shewed how keen the sweet-tooths were to acquire it. Busy woman though she was, she was never too busy to be in her place in church on Sunday. Her church will miss her almost as much as her family, which says a great deal. She left London airport in a snowstorm on a Tuesday, was in the summer heat of Nairobi on the Thursday, and her parents had a letter from her on the following Monday. The Bales, members of a Bridport family in Kenya, welcomed her with carnations and a suitably inscribed cake, and she is now at a mansion on the shores of Lake Naivasha, contemplating a plunge.

Wrath to come is being risked by your Editor in disclosing that Miss Wilkinson, late of Askers House, has sent the Church Council a cheque for £20 to be used as they think fit for the benefit of Askerswell Church. This gesture is characteristic of Miss Wilkinson's generous nature, and will give such pleasure to all her friends in Askerswell that we simply must turn a deaf ear to her "No publicity, please".

All the Bryan family gathered in Askerswell Church for the christening of the first grandchild, a boy born to Mr. and Mrs. George Bryan, who was named Robert George. It greatly pleased the company that Mrs. Bryan senior took her part with the Toller grandparents in spite of her indifferent health.

Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Frank Powell, of Dottery, on the birth of a son.

Mrs. Dowsett of Dottery, is making so light of her misfortune that some of her neighbours are unaware that she is managing on a broken leg. She was spending Christmas at Cheltenham when she fell on some frozen ice. The doctor fixed the leg in plaster and iron, and she was able to get home. She even contrives to be at church as usual.

The answer to our question as to why so exceptionally large a congregation attended the funeral of Mrs. Banger, of Pymore Terrace, was "She made a lot of friends, and she kept them". Mrs. Banger was a Harvey before her marriage, and they were the oldest family associated with Pymore Mill. Mrs. Banger herself worked at the mill for over fifty years, and seemed part of it. She was as faithful to Dottery Church as to all her other friends, and the loss of her company will be a sore blow to the regular Pymore contingent.

The many friends of Mrs. Clifford Harris, of New Road, Uploders, will like to know that she is making a good recovery from her recent operation in Portwey Hospital. Mrs. Hilton is back home at Vinney Cross, recovering from her first operation and awaiting a second.

Flying Ornaments. Mrs. Parsons, of Vinney Cross, went into her front room to do some cleaning and noticed on the mantelpiece a new ornament that she nor anybody else had put there. She was about to dust it (albiet rather gingerly, because

it was so lifelike) when it flew across the room. It was a baby owl, that had, presumably, come down the chimney.

Not a change for the better. Mrs. Elliott, of Morecombelake, left her cottage there because of the effect of its dampness on her rheumatism, and came to live in one of the new Council flats in Loders. But dampness has dogged her. She has found that water rises between the tiles of her new floors. Welplot is not so called for nothing.

Centenary of Askerswell School. In 1872 teachers of schools receiving government grants were ordered to keep a school log book. Miss McCombie has unearthed the Askerswell log book. It gives the history of the school down to 1913. The school began in March 1857. It was first held in cottages let for the purpose by Mrs. Bower and Mr. Frank White, the rent being met by the subscriptions of various landowners. The first mistress was Miss Fanny Fry. The log book continues thus:- "A neat school house having been built by Mrs. H.T. Bower, of Fontmell Parva, near Blandford, on land belonging to her, for the use of the parishioners of Askerswell, it was occupied and used as such on or about March 25th, 1872. The parish of Chilcombe was attached to Askerswell as a school district. The school room is calculated to hold fifty scholars, a number considerably in excess of the requirements of the two parishes. The same mistress, Fanny Fry, who has had charge of the village school since 1857, continues as sole mistress. The children pay 1d per week under 8 years, and 2d above 8 years. They also pay for copy books, slates, etc." Miss McCombie is hoping to mark the school centenary by some sort of celebration in March.

A source of social history. As a document of social history the Askerswell log book is on a par with the church registers and the churchwardens accounts, and must be well looked after. Reading between the lines of Mistress Fry's crabbed hand, one can glimpse the whole background of village life in the third quarter of the 19th century. As one delves deeper and deeper into the diary, one's estimate of the trials that beset a teacher in those days gets higher, and Mistress Fry's head takes on a halo. To do her job properly, the teacher must have pupils attending regularly, and Mistress Fry did not have this. In her day, attendance was not compulsory, hay and harvest field competed with her for the children's time, sickness (or at any rate the excuse of sickness) was rife, and the poverty of the labouring classes made even the small weekly payments an effort. Here are typical entries in the log book - "William and Sidney Walters withdrawn as they are going into the Union House". "William and Sidney Walters again put on the register, their father having returned to the parish and taken them out of the Union". "Alfred Symes has been absent three weeks, not having any shoes to wear". "The three Bridges' names have been withdrawn as they cannot get across the fields from Loderland in winter". "The school was reopened, but as usual a very poor attendance. This was to be expected, as the harvest is by no means ended". "There was no school today, it being Club Day at Litton, a great attraction to young and old in this parish". "Frances Gregory, aged six, died of fever last week. This has caused several people to keep their children at home for fear of the infection".

Every year Her Majesty's inspector examined the children, and if they were not up to standard, the government grant could be withdrawn. This was once the lot of poor Mistress Fry. The Inspector's report of 1877 says "There seems to have been a great deal of sickness during the past six months, which probably accounts for the poor result of the examination. The discipline must improve. At present it is very inferior. H.M. Inspector is unable to recommend payment of the grant under Art. 19A. Better results generally will be expected next year, or the grant will be endangered". But the report for 1878 was not much better. It reads, "The discipline has improved, but in other respects the school is in much the same state as before. The grant is reduced by one tenth, for faults of instruction in arithmetic".

After this, one is not surprised to read, "In consequence of Miss Fry feeling so unwell, it was determined to begin the harvest holidays a little earlier than usual in order that she may get some rest"..... nor this, "Ellis Walden, a farmer's son at Sturt Hill, was re-entered yesterday, he having been at Shipton school meanwhile, but does not seem to have learned much there".

Services in February

Loders:
3rd. H.C. 8 & 11.45: Matins 11: Children 2.
10th. H.C. 8: Matins 11: Children 2.
17th. H.C. 8 & 11.45: Matins 11: Children 2.
24th. H.C. 8: Matins 11: Children 2.

Askerswell:
3rd. Evensong 6.30.
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