

that time and we used to have sheaves sent to us from Powerstock, who were very friendly and there was a lot of arable there. The thatcher in the village, Harry Legge, used to make a corn stack and that was put on the chancel step as well as the sheaves. The Church really did look like an old-fashioned harvest ^{field} filled with wheat stocks.

Where did Harry Legge live?

Where the Marsh's live now - the Church Warden.

Where Mr Price lived afterwards?

Yes that's right.

And there was an awful fire there at one time wasn't there? Were you there at that time?

No, and Harry Legge didn't live there then either; it was the Master of the School - I don't remember his name and I never met him; he was before my time.

And then there was a Harvest Supper, which you and your wife used to attend?

Yes that's right, and that was always very jolly. Nothing particular to say about it - it was just a Harvest Supper, very happy and very well attended.

What about the Loders Feast? We know a little about it - that it was held on the 22nd July in honour of St Mary Magdalene.

Yes, well all I know is very second-hand - that it was originally a Church feast connected with the Patron Saint, Mary Magdalene, held on the 22nd July. The old inhabitants could remember stalls being put along the street selling trinkets and things, and somebody with a fiddle used to be in what was the Farmers Arms - in the upper room there - they took the window out so that they could be heard in the street, and there was a lot of dancing and a lot of drinking at the end of the day. But that had died out in our time and we tried to make the Fete a substitute for the old Village Feast.

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Describe the Fete at that time, because it used to be larger - they used to have a gymkhana and procession, didn't they?

Yes although I know nothing about that really - that was during the war and that had stopped, the processions and all of it, by the time I came.

And there were other organisations in the village, for instance there was a Mothers' Union and there isn't now.

Yes, they used to meet in the Vicarage. Mrs Lentall was head of the Mother's Union in my time when I came, and she was a rather overpowering lady - she was a very very good sort and a great tower of strength but she did rule the roost, as her husband Eli testified. And I shan't forget once she was ill and she sent a note down to say that she would appreciate a pastoral visit. So I called at the cottage where she was living - her husband was dead by this time and she was retired - and a voice bade me come upstairs and I went upstairs and there she was, sitting up in bed seemingly fully dressed, not in bed clothes at all. But the thing that caught my eye was one of these old-fashioned Victorian texts hanging right above her head, the words of which - the words of Our Lord - did fit Mrs Eli very well - "Without me ~~Ye~~ can do nothing"!

4 And of course you did a lot of pastoral visits.

Yes, it was a great thing of a parson's life I think.

How did you travel around to people's houses?

On a bike at first. Nobody had a car in Loders except Lady Le Breton: I think she was the only one when we came. Oh, Mr Tilley, the Council Foreman Roads & Bridges, he had a car. There were only about two cars and I used to go round on a bicycle. But later on when we acquired a car, of course, I went round in that. When Askerswell was added then I had to go in the car to Askerswell, and we had always had Dottery of course - two miles.

So did you regularly visit, or did you only visit if people were ill and wanted to see you?

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No, regular visits working through the whole parish and whatever religion there was. Some of the people were Chapel and some were Roman Catholic, but they all seemed to appreciate a visit.

What sort of problems did they talk to you about?

Anything but religion, as a rule! Anything but religion. But they used to share their hopes and joys and their worries, and all the rest of it. It made me realise the meaning of the word "parson" - the persona of the parish, not specifically religious but including that.

Quite a strain on the parson, to have to listen to other people's troubles when you might have problems of your own.

Sometimes yes, but I very much prefer listening to talking - you won't believe that but I am intellectually lazy I think, and it was very very amusing too to listen sometimes and let them do the talking. I used to say to them - it was my way of getting a rapport with them - when I knocked on the door and they answered I would say 'You come to listen to me on Sunday and I have come to listen to you for a bit now', and that worked very well.

And did you have any amusing experiences when you went round visiting?

Yes - the most amusing one landed me on telly! This was one afternoon when I called at Belshay Farm in Dottery and I was asked into the living room and there on the sofa was a sow laid out, and this sow was Sarah Barnes' - she was the farmer's daughter - pet and was living as one of the family! I wrote about it in my Parish Notes - the surprise of going to a house and finding a sow ^{stretched out} (there) - and the television people got hold of it and I had to go for an interview at Southampton, to TSW, and they talked all about the sow.

X Sir Edward and Lady le Breton at the Court, they were very 'matey' with the Vicarage. Sir Edward used to come over most mornings expostulating about some ridiculous thing he had received from the Government in the post, and Lady le Breton used to come round about 12 o'clock, just socially, and talk to my wife. Well one morning she came and she said 'I want a Judgment of Solomon from you'. The Court kept peacocks and one of the peacocks had come

into the hall and left his 'card'. Lady le Breton had told the indoor staff to get rid of it and they said it was nothing to do with them, that peacocks were the outdoor staff's responsibility and they should come and do it, and the outdoor staff wouldn't do it - they said it didn't happen in their domain, it happened inside the house - and so neither would do it, what was she to do. And she wanted a Judgment of Solomon from His Reverence. I said well I ^{will} may come and do it and she rushed out of the house with her hands in the air 'A Vicar ... a Vicar doing that!' and she disappeared. We learned afterwards that Mrs Thomas, the sort of tweeny, she gave way and did it - and that was the Judgment of Solomon.

What about the young adults in the village - did they come to Church?

Yes they were tolerably good at coming, but Sir Edward was their focus. He was the one that they were drawn to - they didn't need any youth club because he made the Court quite open to them. They came there and played tennis in the summer; in the winter there was billiards; and of course he was a great Scout. He had been Baden Powell's A de C in South Africa and he used to have Scouts from all over England camping in the park in the summer and often they would have a Church service in the open air which I would go down and take, and if it was wet they would come to Church and sit in the Lady Chapel; so we didn't need a youth club. Oh they were all devoted to Sir Edward, and chaps who were quite grown up and had left the parish for years when I met them would always be harking back to Sir Edward. It was a lovely set up really: it was rather like Sir Roger de Coverley in the Spectator - Joseph Addison's effort. He felt a great duty towards all the parish. Lady le Breton used to send a wreath to every funeral, but she ^{wouldn't} ~~didn't~~ attend - she didn't like funerals.

You were telling me that Loders was the only Parish that you had throughout all your career.

Yes, and I was well content to be here. I did have other offers but I never had an offer that I felt it was a duty to take up. I felt fully occupied here. When I came out of the Army, and before I came to Loders, I was in charge of Budleigh Salterton for a few months while the Vicar was dying and when he died the

Church Council, who were the Patrons, offered it to me. I had already accepted Lodgers from Sir Edward le Breton and I felt I could not let him down. Well they appointed somebody else and when he went they offered Budleigh to me again, and when he went they offered it again - I was offered it three times. But I felt I had plenty to do here. And then there came a sort of offer out of the blue - an invitation to come to see the Lord Chancellor's Ecclesiastical Secretary at 10 Downing Street on Church business - they didn't specify what it was - and when I got there I found that the Very Reverend A T A Naylor, who had been Dean of Battle near Hastings, had been a Regular Army Chaplain and I had been under him at one time in the war when I was in South Eastern Command that he was DACG of, and he had retired, and the Lord Chancellor always asks a retiring parson to suggest somebody suitable, and Naylor had suggested me. And it happened that at that time the Lord Chancellor's Ecclesiastical Secretary was one of my old CO's in Greece; we knew each other very well. And it was he who said if you would like it it's yours - but I didn't; I was quite happy.

And then another offer came in a curious way: one Sunday morning at Matins I noticed a pair, a man and wife, and he was not in clerical dress but I had a feeling he was a cleric. He was there the following Sunday and I said to my wife afterwards 'I'm sure that man is a parson'. Well a few days afterwards I had a letter come from the great Dean of Norwich, Dean Hook, to say that he had been on holiday in this area, he and his wife had been to our Church and they had liked the service, and he thought that I would suit very well the congregation of St Margaret Caton on the fringe of Norwich. But I didn't go.

And we were offered Symondsburry twice.

I did a locum in Kuwait for a few months: the Chaplain there was away on some business or other; and that was the place I really was tempted to because in Kuwait you had the use of, not the Shah, I don't know what they called him, but anyway the head of the community, we had the use of his 'plane when he was not using it.

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It was the oil company's, the Kuwait Oil Company, and we went all over the Middle East - Baghdad, Jerusalem, Persia, Ur of the Chaldees, and we were just back in Bible times really. Some time later when the Chaplain there was appointed to Dartmouth they offered me the Chaplaincy there. The pay was more than the Archbishop of Canterbury - and no tax! Very tempting. And I was really tempted then, but my wife was not very happy about the heat there, so I didn't go.

But we were offered many places. But I still felt that I was fully stretched here with the three Churches and all the visiting, and I loved it.

And people didn't want you to go anyway.

I don't think so: they didn't show any sign!

One of your services was recorded for the BBC on one occasion wasn't it?

Yes, it was a Lammas service. You know there is no harvest festival in the prayer book but Lammas Day I think is the 1st of August when they blessed the first fruits of the harvest and presented a sheave to the Lord; and we had that service in Loders Church and our young farmers came and presented a sheave, and it was broadcast.

And how did it come about that they came here?

I think because at Shipton Gorge a BBC official was living and he used to come occasionally from Shipton here to church, and it came from him I think, but I never knew.

And now of course you live in Bell Cottage, which has a long history of its own doesn't it?

Yes - it is about the oldest pub in Loders really.

Do you know when it stopped being a pub?

Not really, but as near as I can get is when we came here there was an old boy called George Ellery who lived in that rank of

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thatched cottages opposite the Loders Arms, and he told me that he had his first pint of beer as a boy at Bell when he was 12. It is on the Dorset List of Licensed Premises that was first drawn up in 1760, and the Archivist at County Hall told me that she had reason to think that it must have been built round about the time when the first bell was put in Loders Church - the tenor bell now - in about 1626. But it was very well established in 1760.

So that was why it was called the Bell Inn. And you have still got the remains of the old lime kiln.

Yes: it's in very good order; a listed building now.

And then they quarried behind there?

That's right, yes. Most of the stone was used for the roads. Some of it, the better stone, was used for building.

But as a pub Bell had a rowdy reputation. It lost its licence, I think it was in 1813, for smuggling and the then Squire, Sir Evan ^{Nepien} (Lepeen), managed to get it back from the Lord Chancellor because of the hardship that the landlord was suffering - a chap called Saunders who had six children. He got it back, and then when the railway was being built from Bridport to Maiden Newton the Irish navvies used to come across the field and it lost its licence again for rowdy Saturday nights.

Would it have been owned by a brewery at that time? How were the pubs in the early days - were they owned by the brewers or were they owned by the people who ran them?

I would think by the people who ran them in the very early days. I just don't know.

Of course there was quite a bit of activity around there at the time with the quarry and the lime kiln, and there were a couple of cottages close to Bell, which are in ruins now, and of course it was a drovers road to Powerstock. It wasn't really an inn, it was more of a pot house, an ale house, I think. The coach

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house is now our drawing room, and the old doorway made into a window. And the well is there: when we cleaned out the well - because it's the only water supply - they got out mostly bedsteads, so I think sleeping was the chief industry!

You actually use the well for your water?

Oh yes, we couldn't be without it. There is no public supply. Very good water. The well is 40ft down and there is a submerged electric pump there that automatically pumps it up to a tank in the roof.

I should think it's lovely water.

It is. Gwennie Townsend who comes one day a week to do some housework, she will never have a drink of coffee or anything like that, but just one glass of well water. She used to live there at one time.

I think it would be rather nice to re-start some of these old wells in and around the village: there are a lot of springs and wells.

Yes; there is one in the rank where Jude Greening lives at the back there, and one at Pound Cottage.

There used to be one just down at the corner in front of Bill Budden's: there used to be a village pump there. Does the water ever run low or have you always got plenty?

Touch wood, it gets very low sometimes. In the great drought in '76 it went very low - no baths or anything. But it didn't conk out quite. It's very hard water; supposed to be good for hearts now. Kettle gets very furred.