

## New VICARAGE & the CHURCHYARD Parish Magazine 1968



*The new Vicarage*

The Vicarage  
Birchington  
September, 1968.

My dear friends,

Here we are in the New Vicarage, 15 Minnis Road, and after four days, are almost completely 'straight'. As Monday 12<sup>th</sup> August approached and the rain continued to fall we became very apprehensive, but our fears were allayed at 6.00am on moving day. The sun was there after all and the transfer was complete by 7.00pm.

We are quite delighted with our new home and would like to pay tribute to the Operative Builders and Decorators for the very high quality of all their workmanship. I should also like to put on record our thanks to both Mr. Edward and Mr. John Tumber for their many kindnesses to us quite outside the line of duty.

'George', our pussy took a very dim view of the matter and disappeared for twenty seven hours – returning at 1.00am on Thursday morning! He refuses to say where he went, but I suspect that he found a quiet spot to think things over and finally decided that it was better to stay with those whom he had known for the past eleven years, for all their faults – rather than attach himself to strangers and have the bother of educating them to his ways!

### CHURCHYARD

During the past few weeks attention has been focused upon the untidy state of the churchyard, through letters in the local press. I, myself have received anonymous letters which haven't been very pleasant – but one has come to accept this during the past five years as part of the general 'set up'.

It is not my intention to quarrel with anybody in this matter, but I feel that we ought to look at this problem fairly and honestly. As I said, when I was 'phoned by the Local Press, the problem of Birchington churchyard is a problem which is exercising every church throughout the country. The church in this parish is very much concerned to see that something is done to improve the tidiness of our churchyard. We have given a great deal of thought to the matter at our last three meetings but we still haven't discovered a way of coping with the situation.

It is not generally realised that the upkeep of the churchyard is not the responsibility of the church – but of all who live in the parish since all who live in the parish have the right to be buried there – whatever their religious belief or unbelief. Once the churchyard is closed for burials it's upkeep becomes the responsibility of the local authority, and the ratepayers who though they may not be of the congregation, will then find the cost added to the rates. The church council has then only to provide a path to the church and the graves. Our churchyard is only partially closed. The situation at the moment is this - No new graves may be dug, but there are some graves remaining where particular folk still have room in the grave for one more relative. It will be about twenty years hence before the churchyard can be completely closed, but when that time comes all the ratepayers will have to make a

contribution to the local authority through the rates. The local authority will then carry out on their behalf the maintenance of the churchyard.

In the meantime we shall be very happy to accept the help of residents in Birchington to assist us to maintain their churchyard in a tidy condition. This help can be of two kinds. Practical help in the shape of work – a few hours each week. We are hoping shortly to put a plan of the churchyard in the porch of the church. This plan will be divided into sections which we hope parishioners will volunteer to keep tidy. And secondly financial help. The pile of rubbish which has been accumulating for the last 25 years should be removed. This will be a costly business. In place of this unsightly pile there should be constructed a brick container where old wreaths can be placed. This will cost money – a considerable amount of money which it is not reasonable to expect the church goes to provide for all the parishioners. The church receives no help at the moment whether in form of money or labour either from the State or from those who are legally responsible – the parishioners.

If one is going to talk in terms of 'rights' then indeed, it is the church who has the 'right' to complain about the state of the churchyard – not the parishioners. But please do not misunderstand me. I say all this not in a spirit of quarrelling, but rather in an effort to clarify the situation to the mutual help of all who live in Birchington.

You will notice that this year the Harvest Thanksgiving will be held earlier than usual. This is for two reasons. Firstly because in Thanet the 'Gathering in' of the Harvest is usually completed before the end of September and it seems reasonable that we should give thanks to God as soon as possible after the Harvest has been gathered. And, secondly, on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> September there will be a United Thanksgiving for the Harvest in the Minnis Bay Congregational Church in which both Father Wilfred Emery and I will be taking part.

Already it is becoming apparent that our Parish Church will look very beautiful when the restoration has been completed. This, of course, has been made possible because in times past a piece of land was left to the church, the income from which must be used to beautify the Parish Church and maintain its fabric. As you know, recently this land was sold, and we now have an income which will ensure the fabric of our church for the foreseeable future is well cared for. It's wonderful to think that one who is still very much part of the church 'though on the other side of death' is still helping the church he loved when he was here on earth in the village of Birchington. At the same time, we must be careful lest we should feel that because of this, we of our generation can take things easy.

Your affectionate Parish Priest  
FRANK V. FORDHAM

*All Saints churchyard 2008*

