

RINGMER PARISH MAGAZINES

by

Eric Butterworth

Introduction

For several years I have been trying to obtain previous issues of the Ringmer Parish Magazine but with limited success. This in spite of publicity through Ringmer History Study Group Newsletters and the Sussex Express, and personal enquiries to past incumbents, previous churchwardens, P.C.C. secretaries and editors. Nor were the East Sussex Record Office and the Chichester Diocesan Archives able to help. The latter, however, now receive a copy and have done so for the last three years.

The Study Group possess an unbroken run dating from 1978 to the present as well as complete sets for the years 1962-65 (see Appendix for details of the Study Group's holding of Ringmer parish magazines). Two pages from magazines published in 1921 and 1924 were reproduced in the last Ringmer History (1) but only four complete pre-1950 magazines are known to the writer and they form the subject of this article. As they are in private ownership photocopies have been made for the Study Group.

Why collect and write about church magazines? It would seem to me that over the years they have to some extent become parish newspapers that give a picture of village life as well as that of the local church. Surely this is the very stuff of local history! Dr. Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury, in his address at the National Parish Magazine prize giving at Lambeth Palace in 1981, emphasised their value.

"The life and growth of the Church in localities was underestimated in the past. The parish magazine was one of the great instruments for that to happen and was much more significant in so many homes than the national dailies which were ephemeral in character. The parish magazine was the local encyclopaedia lying there for a month to be consulted ... Anyone improving the quality of a parish magazine was doing the Lord's work in a most commendable and creative way." (2)

Early History

Parish magazines were started by a Victorian clergyman, the Rev. Erskine Clarke, who edited a paper called 'The Parish Magazine' from 1859 onwards.

He was also responsible for the 'Chatterbox', a great favourite with children in its day. 'The Parish Magazine' began to be circulated within parishes with the addition of advertising material and local church news. St. Mark's, Kensington was doing this by January 1865. At an exhibition of parish magazines held at Cambridge in 1942 the earliest was that of the Cumberland village of Plumpton, dated 1876. (3)

Make-up of Ringmer magazines

The three main sections are the same in the early magazines as they are at present. One is devoted purely to the activities of the local church and this section is henceforward termed 'parochial religious'. The central section of the magazines is taken up with what will be called the 'inset'. This concerns itself with wider aspects of the faith but also often includes a children's page, gardening and household hints and a serial story. The 'inset' was distributed to any parish which wanted it and was then clipped into the local magazine. It was produced for the Church of England on a national scale with clergy on the editorial staff. The last section can be called 'parochial secular'. It contains news of village matters such as meetings of clubs and societies and reports of the parish council meetings. Also it includes the advertisements of local tradespeople. The two 'parochial' sections contain much of interest to local historians and it is these that will be looked at more closely below.

March 1892

This is Ringmer's earliest known survival and belongs to Mrs. Kathleen Rice. It is called the 'Ringmer Church Monthly' and was printed by James Chevens at the Caxton Works in Station St., Lewes. It is quarto and cost one penny - the wage of a Ringmer agricultural labourer at the time was slightly under 15s Od a week. (4)

The 'parochial' sections occupy the inside and outside of the front and back covers only. On the front is a somewhat indistinct view of the south side of the church reproduced from a photograph taken in winter by Frank Burgess. The graveyard wall seems to be as it is nowadays but four large trees have disappeared. Also on the front cover are times of the daily services, Sunday services, celebrations of Holy Communion, Baptisms and Sunday School. This last was held at 10.00 am and 2.30 pm with a Children's Service on the second and fourth Sundays. The inner front cover has hymn numbers for the whole month for Matins and Evensong. The vicar, Rev. F. B. Gribbell, writes on Lent to the extent of 100 words and occupies the rest of the page.

On the inside of the back page is recorded the wedding of the Rev. C.D.P. Davies, described as "lately" Curate-in-charge, to Miss J.F. Mudge, "the latter having been for nearly twenty years so intimately associated with all the work done in the Parish for the benefit of the poorer inhabitants". We read also that "the Temperance Work in our midst has taken root and is most encouraging; the Monday evening meetings are well attended". The vicar commends the work to the prayers of his people.

Offertories and collections from 19th January to 22nd February are recorded. They include £2 16s 3d for the Sick and Poor Fund, £4 8s 5d for church expenses, 14d 0d for the Choir Fund, 6s 8d for the Central African Mission and from Miss Rickman £1 for the Sick Fund.

The outside of the back cover is devoted entirely to advertisements of local traders. The largest space is taken up by Thomas Miller.

Thomas Miller, the Ringmer Stores, Telegraph Office, Money Order Office and G.P.O. Letters arrive 7.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. Telegrams dispatched immediately on receipt at the very lowest charge for delivery."

(The shop also sold Ceylon, Assam and China teas, Epp's, Fry's and Dunn's cocoa, Mocha Plantation and Distilled Coffee, Peek Frean's biscuits, raisins and dried fruit of all kinds "and a great variety of goods, too numerous to mention".)

Other traders advertising were:

W.T. Duke, Grocer and Draper, "wines & spirits, boots & shoes, china & glass".

James Chandler, Coal Merchant, Brick and Tile Manufacturer, Lewes.

Frank Burgess. Photographic Studio. "Handsome photographic enlargement painted in oils by a silver medallist of the Royal Academy. Framed in massive gilt frame together with a half dozen Cartes-de-Visite photographs. Complete £1 1s 0d."

M.A. Paris. Grocer, Draper, Wine & Spirit Merchant. Sole agent for Sussex Co-operative Drug Company.

D. Seal, Bread and Biscuit Baker, New Town, Ringmer.

W.F. Martin. Established 1750. Builder and Contractor. Steam Wood works, Ringmer, Sussex. Contractor to H.M. Postal Department and Board of Ordnance. Bullock Cribs, oak bolted 6 ft. square each 33s 6d. Bullock Cribs, oak frame boarded 5 ft. square 35s 0d. Heifer Cribs 4 ft. square 25s 0d. Sheep Cribs 3 ft. square 10s 6d.

The 'inset' has twelve pages and includes stories, words and music of a new hymn which was especially written for the temperance movement, and some garden and cookery hints.

December 1930 (5)

Quarto with 16 pages which are equally divided between the 'parochial' material and the 'inset'. The 'parochial' sections were printed by W.E. Baxter of Lewes. It is not priced.

The front cover has a clear photograph of the south side and east end of the church, taken from the graveyard. The weather cock on the tower shows up well. Also on the front are the names of the vicar and church officials and the times of the services. The 'parochial religious' section contains a number of interesting items. The vicar, the Rev. the Hon. L.D. Campbell Douglas, writes that a confirmation had been deliberately delayed for three years so that "we could have it in our own church". What was the delay caused by? Was it perhaps something to do with the restoration of the chancel, which included the laying of the floor, that is mentioned elsewhere in this section?

It is noted that the services at Armistice-tide had been held in the church by special request and that they had been "remarkable for the excellent behaviour of the children and for the quietness which was gained which helped to make a most impressive service". We learn that the Carol Singing was to be done by Ringmer Choir Boys only. An official book was to be kept in which any gift made or money collected had to be entered. The money would help to defray the cost of their Christmas treat and outing. Mention is made of the gifts of altar adornments, the processional cross and the font cover as well as the acknowledgement of personal subscriptions towards the laying of the chancel floor.

The 'parochial secular' material includes a paragraph about the first dinner of the Ringmer Bowling Club. It was held on 18th November. Unfortunately the club captain, Mr. W. Wilmshurst, was unable to be present owing to illness. There were songs and recitations for the entertainment of the 43 present, which number included friends from the Lewes club. An item of news concerning the Ringmer Wolf Cubs tells that £2 10s 0d had to be taken from Troop Funds to meet camp expenses at Cooden. The Scouts said that this was due to the inexperience of the campers. However, the camp life showed that among the boys "there is material for making what we need so much these days, sportsmen and gentlemen".

Ringmer advertisers were as follows:

Ringmer Motor Works (under the personal supervision of Mr. W.J. Thorpe).

Wireless batteries, valves, loudspeakers always in stock.

The Goat Farm Dairy.

The Ringmer Cycle Depot. (Proprietor: F.A. Huggett.)

Dennett Huggett. Carpenter, Joiner and Decorator.

Ringmer Building Works, The Broyle, Ringmer, Sussex. Head Office:
38 North Road, London N7.

The Glyndebourne Estate Office. Shepherd's Mead. Residential Building
Land near the Village and Downs affords excellent residential building
sites.

C.H. Hooper. Butcher and Grazier.

W.J. Paris. Agent to the Northern Assurance Company.

"Little Thatch", Ringmer. Cosy Tea Lounge (Handicrafts).

W. Saunders. Hairdresser. Razors ground and set.

Ringmer P.O. Stores. (Prop: W.J. Wilmshurst.) Boots, shoes, petrol,
lamp oils, corn, meat, draper, stationer, wine, spirits, china, glass,
earthenware, ironmongery.

L.A. Geering, Baker and Confectioner. Self-raising flour a speciality.

J.S. Jackson, 'Brookside', The Green. Boots repaired. Est. 1913.

E. Gray, The People's Stores. Ironmongery, patent medicines, drapery,
boots, clothing, bacon, cheese and butter.

It is interesting to note that two Lewes establishments also advertised, namely Coppard and Likeman, Fishmongers and Poulterers, and T.G. Roberts, Grocer and Provision Merchant. They both delivered to Ringmer, the former on Wednesdays and Fridays and the latter on Friday mornings only.

The 'inset' contains some Home Circle wrinkles that help to make "A Merry Empire Christmas" plus recipes with Empire ingredients for Christmas pudding. Amongst "My Favourite Hints" (a shilling for each one published) is the following!

"Sour milk is very useful for making cakes and also for washing tiles or linoleum. After washing the latter over in the usual way, dry well, then wash them over again with the sour milk. It will be found when the floor is dry again that a lovely gloss and freshening of the colours of either the tiles or the linoleum results. Also, the next time the floors are washed the dirt will come off easily."

Articles entitled "What is the Soul?" and "The First Offender - a helping hand" along with three or four others go to make up the remainder of the 'inset'.

March 1932

This has the same photograph on the front cover as in 1930. It is still quarto

and still unpriced. There are fewer pages than in 1930 and there are no advertisements of local tradespeople. The 'inset', however, does contain some adverts of national products, e.g. Bryant and May's Matches and Ovaltine.

The vicar is now the Rev. John Wynward Capron but the church officers are the same as before, viz. Mr. D. Kibbler and Mr. W.J. Wilmshurst, churchwardens; Mr. M.E.G. Pink, organist; Mr. E.W. Turner, P.C.C. Secretary; Mr. E. Hills, clerk; Messrs. F. Clark, B.C. Dickerson, C. Burfield, H. Jones, J. Miller, C. Painter, W.E. Seward, G. Taylor, E. Turner and G. Wiggins, sidesmen.

In his letter the vicar appeals to everyone to be a church builder in response to the Bishop's Pastoral Letter, "Call to Sussex". Donations can be sent to Miss C. Stobart, Holm Lodge, Ringmer. He also asks for each person to spend some time at the Three Hours Devotion Service on Good Friday - "come in your working clothes if you cannot come otherwise". The offerings on this day were given to Lewes Shelter and Police Court Missions.

The Sunday School Christmas Treat and Prize Distribution was held in the Parish Room. At 4.30 p.m. tea was served to 100 children. The vicar provided music for the games. The first three prize winners were Ronald Marchant, Harold Jones and Norman Divall. Extra prizes were given to Fred Funnell (for perseverance) and Kathleen Goldsmith. Further prizes given by the previous incumbent, the Rev. Campbell Douglas, in the form of Bibles and Prayer Books were received by children "for answering in church". The function was organised by the Superintendent, Miss Bridge. Sweets given by Mr. W.J. Wilmshurst were handed round, milk was provided by Mrs. L Goldsmith of Norlington Farm and each child also received an orange.

On 6th February the choirboys had their outing to Brighton which was paid for by the singing of carols. The morning was spent by the sea, their own sandwiches eaten for lunch, and the afternoon on the pier with "a rattling good tea". The day ended with a show at the Hippodrome.

There is mention of a letter from Father Tinley, vicar of St. Luke's, Victoria Docks, London, (he was at Ely Theological College at the same time as the Rev. Capron) thanking Ringmer children for sending gifts from the crib to his church at Christmas. Attention is drawn to an Exhibition of Church Needlecraft at St. Michael's Church Hall in Brighton, showing banners and vestements made by the Sisters of St. Margaret's Community at the School of Embroidery at East Grinstead.

The 'inset' contains the usual articles and serial story as well as its Home Circle hints, the first of which might have some relevance at the present time.

"We hail the Spring days as a time when we can effect certain economies with coal. A capital way of saving this fuel is to treat it in this manner whenever a new supply comes into the coal cellar. Dissolve a handful of washing soda in a gallon of water and with this sprinkle the coal. Treated thus it will last longer, while the heat will not be lessened.

If you have a supply of small coal and coal dust left from the winter stores mix it with clay and sawdust, moistening it with water. Make it into balls and let these dry and harden in the Spring wind and sun. Put in the fire when it is once fairly red these will last a long time giving a lovely glow and warmth on a chilly evening."

Another wrinkle, appropriately enough on the same page:

"Never leave the hands grimy when washing them, no matter how great a hurry you are in but remove the dirt with soap of a good, mild type. Hands that need whitening should be treated with a lotion made of equal quantities of glycerine and witch-hazel. Or - if inclined to chap - apply a mixture of honey, sweet oil and lemon juice."

October 1935

Again quarto and again unpriced. The 'inset', which in 1930 and 1932 had been "The Sentinel", is now "The Church Standard" and takes up most of the magazine. The 'parochial' sections are confined to the front and back covers.

The front cover has the same picture of the church as previously, and also the same layout for officers and times of services. The vicar is still the Rev. Capron but there are changes amongst the officers. The Hon. G.G. Pelham is Vicar's churchwarden and Major E.W. Macdonald is People's. There is a blank space where the organist's name should be. The sidesmen are Messrs. C.A. Aldridge, C. Burfield, F. Clark, D. Kibbler, J. Miller, C. Painter, W.J. Paris, M. Plumer, W.E. Seward, G. Taylor, E. Turner and G. Wiggins. The times of services are as they were in 1932.

The vicar's letter deals with the Parochial Convention to be held in the church from Sunday 13th October to 20th October. The Convention is defined as a coming together in God's house for instruction in the Christian faith. The back page is given over to the programme of the week's services. Each day begins with

Holy Eucharist at 8.00 a.m. and ends with a "Convention" service at 8.00 p.m. The services are conducted by the vicar and visiting clergy, the chief of whom is the "Missioner", the Rev. John Cazenove-Poole, the rector of Plumpton. We learn that Mr C.E. Tritton is shortly to be licensed as a Parochial Lay Reader, the first the parish ever had.

The Sunday School treat in September took place on the Green with races followed by tea in the Parish Room. Musical chairs and charades followed. A bag of sweets was given to each child on going home with special instructions not to make litter when the sweets had been eaten. The vicar printed a letter he had received from the Children's Country Holiday Fund thanking their Ringmer hostesses. Do any of our older local readers remember this? How many children, where from and for how long?

The Ringmer branch of the British Legion raised £28 on Hospital Sunday, 21st July. This sum was divided between the Royal Sussex, Victoria Hospital, Queen Alexandra Hospital Home, Lady Chichester Hospital and the Ringmer Nursing Association, after certain expenses had been met.

There are no local adverts but the 'inset', as in 1932, contains some adverts of national products and services, e.g. Kolynos Dental Cream, Ovaltine - "build up your health against Autumn's chill" and Hew T. Fraser and Co. Ltd., Insurance Brokers, London W.C.2. The other material in the 'inset' comprises articles, a report from the Bournemouth Church Congress, another episode in the then current serial and some more home tips, with two of which we shall end (neither is recommended!).

"A Novel Night Light. Obtain from the chemist a piece of phosphorus the size of a pea. Put this into a small bottle and add enough olive oil (which has previously been heated, but not boiled, for a quarter of an hour) to fill a third of the bottle's capacity, then fix a very tight-fitting cork. This lamp is perfectly safe and the light it gives enables one to see the time or do many little things during the night. One would be an ideal night-light for the children. Should the light become dim uncork the bottle for a few moments when the glow will be renewed. The cost is only a few pence and it lasts for months."

"When you find your spring mattress breaking away, obtain a piece of strong, small-mesh wire netting big enough to cover the broken part. Turn the edges in all round and fasten on to the mattress with fine wire (as you would sew on to a patch). This prevents the hole from getting bigger."

Perhaps, having read this article, someone will remember that pile of dusty old magazines that have been in the attic since great grandad died. Even if you find that the combination of mice, damp and time have left only one copy intact, the Ringmer History Study Group would very much like to know of it.

References

- (1) A. Coombes, 'Some Glimpses of Parish Life' Ringmer History No. 2, pp. 8-14.
- (2) 'Church News', December 1981.
- (3) O. Chadwick, 'The Victorian Church', pt. 2, pp. 426/7. (A.& C. Black, London, 1972).
- (4) P. Ambrose, 'The Quiet Revolution', p. 10 (Chatto & Windus, London, 1974).
- (5) The magazines of December 1930, March 1932 and October 1935 were loaned to the author by Mrs. V. Trigwell of Anchor Field. They record the baptisms of her husband and his two brothers.

Appendix

In addition to the photocopies of the parish magazines discussed in the above article, the Ringmer History Study Group has obtained original copies of the following:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Month</u>	<u>Editor</u>
1954	December	Not known
1961	November, December	C.E. Tritton
1962	Complete year	"
1963	" "	"
1964	" "	"
1965	" "	"
1970	August	J Barrell (Asst. Miss E. Paris)
1974	May/June, July/August	J.B. Harbottle
1976	January/February	"
1977	April, May, September, October, November, December	"
1978	Complete year	"
1979	" "	"
1980	" "	"
1981	" "	" (Jan-June) Mrs. S.A. Squires (July-Dec)
1982	" "	"
1983	" "	"

Acknowledgements

Miss V.M. Hodsoll, Team Librarian, Lewes Library.

Mrs. L. Stone, present distributor of the Ringmer Parish Magazine.

Mrs. K. Rice and Mrs. V. Trigwell for loan of magazines.