

The First High Beach Church

1836 – 1885

Fifty years of St Paul's

Subscription List1834

From ancient times, High Beach was part of the Manor of Sewardstone in the parish of Waltham Holy Cross, one of the many monastic properties which passed into private ownership after the dissolution in 1540 of the Abbey of Waltham.

In 1833, Captain Charles Sotheby RN, who had recently finished thirty years active service at sea, succeeded his father as Lord of the Manor, which his family had owned since 1674, and took possession of the Sewardstone Manor House at Highbeech Green.

William IV was on the throne, Wellington had turned politician, Mr Gladstone had begun his long parliamentary career, the Epping New Road was being constructed through the forest to bypass the hilly main road through Loughton and England had been at peace since the defeat of Napoleon. The exiled ex-Emperor Napoleon had died on the island of St Helena, and the English admiral who escorted him there was now living at Wallsgrove House on "Highbeech Green". Vice-Admiral the Rt Hon. Sir George Cockburn GCB PC MP had started his naval career as a midshipman in 1786; he had been one of Nelson's captains, and after thirty years at sea, had become a Member of Parliament and one of the Lords of the Admiralty.

Living nearby at the Manor House was another naval officer, Captain Charles Sotheby who had been a midshipman in one of Nelson's ships at the Battle of the Nile in 1798; his last job at sea was to clear the Mediterranean of pirates in 1827. Succeeding his father in 1833 as Lord of the Manor of Sewardstone, which his family had owned since 1674, he adopted a plan first suggested by Sir William Wake, Lord of the Manor of Waltham, to build a chapel in the outlying parts of the Abbey parish.

With the Admiral's support, Sotheby started a subscription list for a building fund. He gave £200.00 himself and twelve members of his family contributed £342. Sir George, Lady Cockburn and Miss Augusta followed with £100.00. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London (in whose diocese Essex then was) gave £50.00 each. Many local people subscribed – Dr and Mrs Allen, the Arabins, Mr Collingridge and Mr Walford, the Rev Mr Capper, the abbey curate, Miss Banbury of Warlies, the Newell Connops of Honeylands, Col George Palmer of Nazeing Park and Mr Colvin of Holyfield, Hatch Abdy of Chigwell Hall and Brice Pearce of Woodford. The Board of Ordnance, which managed the Royal Gunpowder Factory in Waltham, gave £20.00 and Mr Fox and Mr Kirby 2/6 each (15p).

Archdeacon Hamilton, Rector of Loughton, a kinsman of Captain Sotheby's first wife, and several of his relations, subscribed generously as did the Maitlands of Loughton Hall, General Grosvenor of The Warren, a Waterloo veteran, and several other parishioners. The Rector's son, W K Hamilton (a vicar in Oxford and later Bishop of Salisbury) gave £100.00 and others of the Hamilton family contributed.

Many of the subscribers were London friends of the Captain's father, William Sotheby – poet and scholar – including Hallam and Palgrave (distinguished historians), Sir Coutts Trotter (a Cambridge don), Joanna Baillie the Scottish poetess, Lady Davy (widow of the scientist Sir Humphry Davy), and Lady Noel Byron (widow of the famous poet). Lord Carrington and the Marquess of Northampton, politicians, Lord Teignmouth (former Governor-General of India) and the Rev Christopher Wordsworth – nephew of another well known poet and Head Master of

Harrow School where the Captain's son, Charles William Hamilton Sotheby was a pupil, seventeen other clergymen, three judges and several MPs also contributed. Sir William Wake pledged £10.00 a year towards the minister's stipend, trusting his heirs to do the same (which they did, until 1909). At the final count, 205 donations totalling £2,273.00 were lodged with Coutts, Bankers in the Strand.

St Paul's Chapel 1836

While the subscriptions were still coming in, a site for the chapel had been agreed – a piece of land on the edge of the Forest known as Blencow's Green, about half-way between Wallsgrove House and Lippitts Hill, part of the "waste" or common land of the Manor, which Captain Sotheby conveyed by deed poll to the Church Building Commissioners.

A certificate was signed by four respectable house-holders that there were three hundred people living over two miles from the Abbey Church and within one mile of the new site. Compensation for loss of pasturage rights was paid to the Abbey Churchwardens. A meeting of subscribers appointed four trustees – Admiral Cockburn, Captain Sotheby, Newell Connop, and the Rev Thomas Hans Sotheby (Vicar of North Mimms, cousin and brother in law to Charles Sotheby who was later to marry the Archdeacon's daughter).

Notice of the proposal to build a chapel was sent to the incumbent of Waltham Abbey, the Revd W M Whalley, who had been non-resident for years and now lived in Swerford, Oxfordshire, and to the three patrons of the benefice, a lady in Tunbridge Wells, a gentleman in Ireland and Mrs Whalley of Swerford, requiring them to waive their duty of providing a church for the parishioners of Sewardstone.

Mr Hubert, a Lambeth architect, was commissioned to draw up plans for the chapel, and John Woodward, a builder also of Lambeth, was given the contract.

Early in 1836 the building work began, and Captain Sotheby and his London lawyer engaged in lengthy negotiations with the Commissioners, the Treasury and the Bishop of London. The chapel was authorised under an Act of Parliament "to promote the building of additional churches in populous parishes", the Bishop agreeing to hold the patronage – the right to appoint the minister.

By October the builders had finished and the lawyer and the Bishop's secretary decided that the chapel should be called "St Paul's, Waltham", and began to make arrangements for the consecration.

Coutts the bankers were instructed to invest, on behalf of the trustees, £1,000.00 in 3% Government stock as endowment for the benefice, and a further £65.00 for a repairs fund. It was agreed that the chapel should have 250 sittings, 150 to be "free" for the use of the poorer parishioners, and the rest to be "rented" by the gentry and farmers. Pew rents, after putting £2.5.6d (£1.285) annually into the repairs funds, were to be used to pay the clerk, beadles and pew-openers, any surplus to go to the minister's stipend. The deed of endowment was drafted, discussed, amended and finally engrossed on parchment, and signed and sealed by the four trustees in time for the consecration of "St Paul's Chapel in the parish of Waltham Holy Cross" on Tuesday the 20th December 1836 by the Rt Hon and Rt Rev Charles James Blomfield, Lord Bishop of London, who also preached the sermon. An enthusiastic promoter of church building, Bishop Blomfield had just launched his Metropolis Churches Fund, and over two hundred new

churches were built in his diocese (which included Hertfordshire and Essex) during his twenty-eight years in London. He was the first bishop to discard the ceremonial Episcopal wig.

Appointed by the Bishop in time to take part in the consecration service was the Revd William Watson MA, aged twenty-six and single, a graduate of St John's College, Cambridge, ordained deacon in 1834 and priest a year later by the Bishop of Oxford. He had spent two years as curate of Cottisford in Oxfordshire, a village only twelve miles from Swerford, where the incumbent of Waltham Abbey was living. Mr Watson's first services were on the following Sunday which was Christmas Day, and early in January 1837, he was present at a meeting at Admiral Cockburn's houses to appoint the first churchwardens; Richard Arabin nominated and appointed by Mr Watson, and Captain Sotheby by the inhabitants. George Hunt, the village Schoolmaster was appointed Parish Clerk. No parsonage house had yet been provided in High Beach but Mr Watson's home was in the pleasantly rural village of Stoke Newington, a coach ride to Waltham Cross or a twelve mile ride on horseback to High Beach.

Stipend and Parsonage 1837

The New Year came with St Paul's completed, furnished and consecrated, but without a minister – and an appointment was hardly likely until a parsonage was provided and a sufficient stipend guaranteed. Some services were held, however, as the first chapel-wardens (Captain Sotheby and Richard Arabin) were in office, and George Hunt (the village Schoolmaster) had been appointed parish clerk for the princely sum of £1.00 per annum. So far, the only certain income for the minister was £34.00 divided from the investment, the £10.00 from Sir William Wake, some part of the pew rents, and the odd fee – little more than £50.00. On the advice of the Bishop, the trustees applied to Queen Anne's Bounty – a fund to augment poor livings set up in 1704 from Crown Revenues – and were granted £36.00; Sotheby added £10.00 which brought the income to about £100.00 a year.

St Paul's, having an endowment, was regarded as a "perpetual curacy" – a benefice without tithes. These were a tenth part of the annual produce of a parish allotted to the parish priest since Saxon times, and commuted by the Tithe Act of 1836 to an annual rent-charge, which was often as much again as the stipend.

There were no tithes for St Paul's as Waltham was also a perpetual curacy, because part of the parish had been tithe-free monastic land and the rest, with the tithes, had passed into lay ownership after the dissolution of the Abbey in 1540. These tithes, valued at £1,400 a year, were now shared by the Lords of the manors of Waltham and Sewardstone, Wake and Sotheby, while the incumbent of the Abbey Church had a stipend of £187.00 (Waltham was a "donative curacy" in the gift of lay patrons and exempt from Archdeacon's jurisdiction).

Other perpetual curacies nearby were St John's Chapel, Epping with £120.00 and Theydon Bois where the Lady of the manor took all the tithes leaving the minister with £64.00 which had to be augmented by Queen Anne's Bounty. Perpetual curates were the lowest order of the beneficed clergy, but readers of Trollope's "Barchester" novels will not be surprised to know that some local parsons were very comfortably off. The Rectors of Chingford with £595, Theydon Garnon with £700.00 and Woodford with £788, also had tithes and glebe and the Archdeacon at Loughton enjoyed £500.0 plus tithes, a large rectory "recently much improved and handsome pleasure grounds" with forty-two acres of glebe in addition to other sources of clerical income. He paid his curate £100.00 a year when many curates had to make do on £50.00 or less. Glebe Land belonging to the benefice was another profitable perquisite, being rented to neighbouring farmers if not farmed by the parson himself.

A parsonage house for St Paul's was provided by Miss Maria Sotheby, the Captain's eldest sister, who gave a pair of weather-boarded cottages on a quarter-acre plot adjoining Wallsgrove boundary. Repairs, costing £19.6.0d (£19.30p) were hastily started; the rooms were small with no fire-places upstairs; the privy was in the ditch at the back of the garden under the Admiral's hedge. The only description of the parsonage is one given by Mr Norton, written in 1891 when he was still living there. "It originally consisted of two cottages occupied in the good old days by the village schoolmistress and habitable for a single man but wholly unfit for a married man with a family. Our six children occupy three bedrooms, the dimensions of which are 12' x 7 ½' x 6 ¾', 10 ¼' x 6 ½' x 6 ¾' and 10 ¼' x 8 ½' x 6 ¾'. There is no fireplace in any of the rooms and even in the coldest weather, we are compelled to leave the doors wide open that there may be some kind of ventilation. Later the deeds of the property were taken by the Bounty Office as security for a loan of £180.00 to make the cottages habitable for a bachelor clergyman.

First Incumbent ... 1837

It was not until the 21st April that Mr William Watson was instituted to the new benefice and he had to wait until 1st June to receive his first half-yearly payment from the endowment. No doubt the Easter offering had been welcome!

Early in May 1837, the news came from London that the King's failing health was causing concern and on the 11th, the Bishop signed the document which assigned part of the Waltham Abbey parish as the ecclesiastical district or chapelry of St Paul's and he sent the licence for marriages to be performed. On the 21st May, the worshippers at Morning Service were honoured by the presence of the Dean of York, the Very Rev William Cockburn DD, the Admiral's brother, who preached a charity sermon in aid of the parish school.

One of the Rev. Watson's first duties was to copy out the Description of the District from the Deed of Assignment and to mark the boundaries on a tracing of the Waltham parish map. He took charge of the three ancient alms-houses at Lippitts Lane End, built by Bishop Hall in 1608 when he was Curate of Waltham, and of the small Church School which dated from 1818.

The Rev. Watson "read himself in" with the 39 Articles on Sunday the 4th June when he also conducted the first baptism making the entry in the new Register of Baptisms in the Chapelry of Saint Paul, Waltham: "Ruth, daughter of Eliza and William Cordel, labourer of High Beach".

Three days later, he privately baptised John, son of Farmer Hampton of Sewardstonebury; on the 11th Mary Ann, daughter of George Chatten, gentleman's servant of High Beach and on the 18th, Charles Terry – whose father was a labourer of Lippitts Hill.

One of the new minister's first visits was to Waltham Abbey, where the resident curate – the Revd J L Capper – produced the Bishop's Deed of Assignment from which Mr Watson copied out the Description of the district and marked the boundaries on a tracing of the large scale parish map. Mr Capper handed over the supervision of the three ancient almshouses at Lippitts Lane end, given in 1608 by Bishop Hall when he was curate of Waltham, and of the small Church School, which had been started in High Beach in 1818 and now had about twenty-four pupils as well as being used for Sunday School. It was almost entirely supported by voluntary contributions, hence the annual charity sermons appealing for funds.

King William IV died in the early hours of the 20th June, and the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chamberlain went to Kensington Palace at 5.00 am to tell the young Princess Victoria

that she was now Queen of England. The Bishop of London and Admiral Cockburn were among the privy councillors gathered at the Palace later the same morning for the swearing in of the new monarch.

During the next six months, the Rev Watson christened ten more infants, including in July the daughter of his neighbours, Dr and Mrs Allen, and in September, Frederick Edward, son of Charles Sotheby and his second wife, Mary Anne. His elder son, Charles William Hamilton Sotheby, was now a senior scholar at Harrow School.

It seems that High Beach parents had been “saving up” their baptisms until the minister arrived, no doubt because of the discomfort of travelling to and from the Abbey Church, through the narrow rutted lands, deep in mud during wet weather. Funerals still had to make the weary journey as there was no burial ground at St Paul’s.

On the 20th August, the Ven A G Spencer DD, Archdeacon of Bermuda, preached in the morning and on the 12th November, the Revd. Thomas Stanton MA, perpetual curate of Buckhurst Hill, which was then still in the parish of Chigwell, came over to preach in the afternoon – an exchange of pulpits, giving Mr Watson the chance to admire the new St John’s, built at the same time as St Paul’s.

Poets and Parsons ... 1837

In July 1837, the poet John Clare came to High Beech as a patient in Dr Matthew Allen’s Asylum. Allen was an enlightened pioneer in the treatment of mental illness, and since 1825 his asylum had occupied three houses near St Paul’s – Fairmead House, Lippits Hill Lodge and Springfield House. Reliable inmates like Clare could roam at will in the forest. Clare wrote:-

“How beautiful this hill of fern swells on
So beautiful the Chapel peeps between
The hornbeams, with its simple bell; alone
I wander here, hid in a palace green.

I love to see the Beech Hill mounting high
The brook without a bridge and nearly dry ..
There’s Bucket’s Hill, a place of furze and clouds,
which evening in a golden blaze enshrouds.”

About the same time, Alfred Tennyson, the future Poet Laureate, came to live at Beech Hill Park. He and his mother were “seat-holders” at St Paul’s. The sound of the Abbey bells in the distance is said to have inspired his “Ring Out, Wild Bells”.

“Ring out the old, ring in the new,
ring, happy bells, across the snow;
the year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.”

Tennyson visited the Asylum and was reported as being “delighted with the mad people .. the most agreeable and the most reasonable persons he has met with”. He was “greatly taken” with Dr Allen, but not enthusiastic about his other neighbours. “Large set dinners”, he wrote, “with stores of venison and champagne, are very good things of their kind, but one wants something more; and Mrs Arabin seems to me the only person about who speaks and acts as an honest and true nature dictates”. The venison and champagne dinners must have been at the Manor House, Captain Sotheby as Lord of the Manor having an entitlement of Forest deer.

A lady who, as a child had lived nearby, wrote:

“I have a kindly remembrance of Lord Tennyson, knowing him when a schoolgirl; he was then Mr Alfred, with dark brown hair, living with his mother. The house stood in a small park belonging to Mr Arabin, who had his home in the vicinity. The park adjoined some fields belonging to my father, Mr Thomas Meeking. Being such near neighbours, Mrs Tennyson and my mother became acquainted. The former used to drive in a Bath-chair drawn by a Shetland pony led sometimes by Mr Alfred. He always had a kindly word for us children. When in the Forest, we frequently came across him, walking with his hands behind him under his coat, or sometimes with a book, seated on a tree that he been felled. It was a great loss to us when the Tennysons left the neighbourhood. The house was then pulled down and a large red brick one built in its place by Mr Richard Arabin.” (Richard Arabin, whose home, Arabin House, was “in the vicinity” was William St J Arabin, Serjeant-at-law, one of the Forest Verderers, and owner also of the Woodredon estate.)

Tennyson’s son remembered that “there was a pond in the park on which in winter my father might be seen skating, sailing about on the ice in his long blue cloak. He liked the nearness of London, whither he resorted to see his friends, but he could not stay in town even for a night, his mother being in such a nervous state that he did not like to leave her. ‘The light of London flaring like a dreary dawn’ was an especial admiration of his during the evening journeys between London and High Beech.”

In 1839 the poet wrote: “I have been at this place all the year, with nothing but that muddy pond in prospect and those two little sharp-barking dogs”, but in London he was happier. Thomas Carlyle, the famous philosopher, described Tennyson and Matthew Allen “discovered smoking in the garden. A fine, large featured, dim-eyes, bronze coloured, shaggy-headed man is Alfred; dusty, smoky, free and easy, a most restful, brotherly, solid-hearted man. Allen looked considerably older; speculative, hopeful, earnest-frothy”.

The Tennysons left High Beach in 1840 on medical advice. “So much to do”, Alfred wrote, “and so much to feel in parting from the house. Such a scene of sobbing and weeping was there among the servants at Beech Hill, and the cottagers’ daughters all joining the chorus.” As far as we know, Tennyson never returned to High Beach, but his friendship with Doctor Allen continued, a story to which we will return later.

Fabric, goods and ornaments ... 1838

St Paul’s was a neat brick and tile building with stone facings and bell-cote, a porch on the south side and a vestry on the north. The west end faced the road, where there was a gate in the tarred fence. A typical “preaching-house” of its time, the most prominent piece of furniture being the wooden pulpit with carpeted stairs, dwarfing the communion table.

Under the white ceiling, the walls were colour-washed. There was no form of lighting except for candles on the pulpit and heating was provided by a coal stove. Box-pews for the gentry, the seats covered with coloured baize, and benches either side for the free seats, were sufficient for 250 people to sit down.

The pulpit and the reading desk below had tasselled cushions, footstools and hassocks, and a Bible and Prayer Book of largest folio size. The communion table, standing on a carpet under the east window and covered with a red velvet cloth, had kneeling stools round the communion rails and on the wall behind was a Ten Commandments board. The font was near the door and

other painted boards showed the royal arms of William IV and the Table of Consanguinity, beginning with the solemn warning that “A Man might not marry his Grandmother”.

In the vestry, which had a fireplace with fender and fire-irons, drugget on the floor and a curtain over the window, were a table and two chairs, a washstand with jug, basin and soap dish, a decanter and glass, an ink-stand, the alma-box and four wands used at the Consecration. On the walls were a looking glass, a framed plan of the chapel, and a row of pegs on which hung two surplices and a black gown.

The register chest, a heavy iron box in which the parish documents were stored, had been kept in the vestry too, until Rev Watson had it moved to the Parsonage – a horse and cart job for two strong men.

Publick Worship ... 1837

Sunday morning service began at 11.00 o'clock. Cottagers and their families waited outside, doffing hats and curtsying as the gentry came in their carriages and traps or on horseback, and took their seats in the pews. Then the village people went in to their places on the benches, and last of all the Lord of the Manor arrived with his family party and led the way up to the front pew.

The bell stopped ringing and the Minister, wearing a long flowing surplice over his black clerical coat, took his place at the reading desk. He began the service of Morning Prayer, reading, as directed in the Prayer Book, “with a loud voice”, and continued as far as the second lesson, after which it was the time for baptisms. He then finished Morning Prayer, went on with the Litany and the Communion Services as far as the Creed. While the congregation, led by the Parish Clerk, sang a metrical psalm, the Minister retired to the vestry to change his surplice for the black preaching gown, and climbed up to the pulpit for the sermon, which was considered the most important part of Sunday worship. Forty or so minutes later, having finished his “lastly”, he escorted the Lord of the Manor to the door, followed by the gentry, and then the villagers at a respectful distance.

On the monthly Sacrament Sunday, the communion table was spread with a “fair linen white cloth” on which the chalice and paten were placed; the Minister resumed his surplice after the sermon and, standing at the “North-side of the Table”, went on with the rest of the Communion Service; the communicants “went up” in order of precedence, led by the Lord of the Manor.

There was hardly time to get home for a hasty meal before returning at 3 o'clock for Evening Prayer and another sermon. Except during the darkest months, the Minister, after the second lesson, was expected “diligently and openly” to instruct and examine the children in some part of the Catechism.

Getting Established ... 1838

Early in 1838, the Revd. Septimus Pope, Curate of Loughton preached at St Paul's, and Archdeacon Hamilton himself came on the 22nd April to preach the charity sermon for the schools. Other visiting clergymen who came regularly were the Admiral's nephew, G. A. Cockburn (Vicar of Pocklington, Yorkshire) and A P Saunders (Head Master of Charterhouse School), Clerkenwell, who was engaged to marry Miss Emma, daughter of William Walford of Beaulieu who in 1838 was elected chapel-warden in place of Richard Arabin.

On the 1st June, the legal documents conveying the house and thirty-eight perches of land to the benefice as a free gift by Miss Sotheby were completed and signed. The deeds, and a plan of the property were then handed over to Queen Anne's Bounty as security for a loan for improvements; "the Incumbent" Mr Norton wrote later "borrowed £180.00 on mortgage to make the cottages habitable for a single man". The Bounty also augmented the minister's stipend by £36.00 per annum.

On the 8th July 1838, Rev Watson published his first banns "between Charles Rodgers bachelor and Eliza Herbert spinster, both of this parish" whom he joined in matrimony on Sunday the 26th August. The first wedding at St Paul's had been on Saturday the 18th. As there was a parson in the Walford family, Rev Watson did not officiate but he made the entry in the new Marriage Register: "Augustus Page Saunders of full age, bachelor, Clerk of Charter House, London and Emma Frances Walford, of full age, spinster of High Beech, by Licence", the Officiating Minister signed "Oliver Walford". He was the Second Master of Charterhouse School.

During the year there were eight baptisms and two more weddings at St Paul's, for which the minister received fees at the same rate as those authorised at the Abbey Church, one shilling for a christening and for calling banns and 5/6d for a wedding.

The School .. 1839

Mr Watson now turned his attention to the village school, which was in fact a "National" school – one of a group of schools in the parish of Waltham supported by a parochial committee under the auspices of "the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church throughout England and Wales" which was founded in 1811. This society, and the smaller and non-denominational "British and Foreign Schools Society" were the only organisations then tackling the problem of elementary education on a national scale.

In 1818, there was a school in Waltham town (the Lady Chapel of the Abbey Church was used as a school-room), two small schools in Upshire, two more in Sewardstone, and the one in High Beach. the parish schools committee had to raise about £100.00 a year for their upkeep. In 1833 there were twenty-four children attending the High Beach School, the National Society by then having over 13,000 schools attended by 409,000 children.

In that year, the Government started to make building grants to help the two societies, on condition that the schools were made open to inspection, and by 1839, six hundred and ninety-two new National and one hundred and sixty British schools had been built.

The National Society regarded the parish clergyman as their local representative, and the parish school as his school, with a teacher working under his supervision, he himself giving the religious and moral instruction, based on the Church Catechism.

Mr Watson was therefore responsible for the running of the village school and for collecting subscriptions to maintain it. George Hunt, a shoemaker by trade, was "parish school master" and the school was probably held in some sort of outhouse attached to his cottage in Mott Street. It was high time that a proper schoolroom was provided, closer to both chapel and parsonage.

Captain Sotheby again released a piece of Forest land, 33 yards by 22 yards, adjoining the north side of the Dairy Farm, and almost opposite the parsonage. A trust deed, securing the site permanently for "the education of poor children" and designating the incumbent and churchwardens as trustees, was signed on the 11th September 1839.

Mr Watson applied to the National Society for aid towards building a new school, and received a Treasury grant of £36.00 and a further £7.00 on completion a year later; the balance of the total cost (about £150.00) had to be covered by donations.

Country schools were built by village bricklayers and carpenters by rule of thumb and to no particular plan, except that a barn was considered to be a good model. The new school was probably a brick and tile building like the chapel, one large brick-floored room with latticed windows high up the walls so that the children could not look out, a porch fitted with rows of pegs for hats and coats, a gravelled space in front and a couple of privies at the back. Inside were the teacher's desk and benches for the children, blackboard and easel, a few books and wall-maps, writing slates, and two necessary deterrents, a cane and a dunce's cap.

Some of the older children earned a few coppers a week as monitors, drilling the others in their lessons. The income of the school was about £50.00 a year, from the local subscriptions, church collections, and the weekly fees of a penny or two per child, known as "school pence". Children from the poorest families had their school pence paid by the local church people living in the large houses in the neighbourhood; others were put to work at an early age and did not attend school – education was not yet compulsory.

Sermons and Wedding Bells .. 1839

The Sotheby-Hamilton connection had begun with the Captain's marriage to the Hon. Jane Hamilton. After her death, he married his cousin Mary Anne, daughter of his uncle, Admiral Thomas Sotheby. The connection was strengthened when the Revd. Thomas Han Sotheby, Mary Anne's brother, married Jane Catherine Hamilton, the Archdeacon's daughter. The ceremony, at Loughton on the 27th December 1838, was performed by the bride's brother, the Revd. Walter Kerr Hamilton.

A feature of William Watson's time at St Paul's is the surprising number of visiting preachers. The regular charity sermons continued with the Ven G Robinson – late Archdeacon of Madras for the SPG – and the Rev T H Sotheby, for the schools and in 1840 the Rev G K Morell for the schools and the Rev R Davies, secretary for the CMS, for his society; in 1841 the CMS secretary again, and the Rev R B Heathcote, Rector of Chingford for the schools.

The four parsons who had relatives in High Beach, Saunders and Walford, Sotheby and Cockburn, were regular preachers and the Loughton curate, H R C Cobden, S Pope, R K Morell and C Tower, came occasionally, as did curates from nearby parishes, S. Compertz from Lambourne, T. Stanton from Buckhurst Hill and J. L. Capper from Waltham Abbey.

Other visiting preachers, all in 1839, were the Bishop of Nova Scotia, the Revd. J. M. Heath of Cambridge, T Clarke from Oakwood, Surrey, G Heathcote from Connington, Huntingdonshire and brother of the Rector of Chingford, and Tennyson's brother Charles, Vicar of Grasby, Lincolnshire where Alfred owned a small estate.

Mr Watson vacated his pulpit to visiting preachers at 23 services in 1838, 35 in 1839, 17 in 1840 and 12 in 1841. If he was away from High Beach on some of these occasions, we can assume in the light of a happy event in 1839, that he spent a good deal of time in Loughton, improving his acquaintance with a certain lady who lived there.

On Monday the 1st October 1839, the bells of the ancient parish church of St Nicholas, Loughton, rang for the wedding of William Watson and Eliza Lane, daughter of well-to-do Loughton residents. Their honeymoon lasted a month, the curate of Oakwood taking the duties at High Beach for three weeks and the Rev G Kidd Morell, curate of Loughton, for the fourth. Morell was a Fellow of St John's, Cambridge, Watson's own college.

It seems the new Mrs Watson was not prepared to move into the cottage-parsonage, and the happy pair set up house on York Hill, Loughton, where they remained for the whole of their married life. Watson's pastoral care of the people of St Paul's continued for two years longer, the wardens for 1839 and 1840 being Dr Allen and William Kettlewell, and 1841 being Captain Sotheby and Dr Allen.

The Incumbent's last entry in his List of Preachers at St Paul's is for the 26th September 1841 when the Rector of Chingford preached at both services and Rev Watson's last baptism was on the 29th November. He resigned the living after five years at High Beach, during which time he had conducted 45 baptisms, and 8 weddings. The burials, being at Waltham Abbey, were not recorded at St Paul's.

In 1842 Mr Watson was curate-in-charge at St John's, Buckhurst Hill, and he later became curate of Loughton and for some years also Morning Preacher at St Paul's Woodford Bridge. He died in 1869 at Loughton, where his gravestone in St John's churchyard carries the inscription: "Erected by those who remember with gratitude his labours amongst them".

Second Incumbent .. 1842

The Bishop of London appointed the Rev Henry Eley MA to St Paul's soon after William Watson's departure. Eley was a Londoner aged 42 who had been at Peterhouse, Cambridge and ordained by the Bishop in 1831. Since 1838 he had been Vicar of Coggeshall in Essex, a small ancient town with a large medieval church, recently restored, with a good organ. The stipend was £230.00 a year plus tithes and a good vicarage and sixteen acres of glebe and a large new National School.

Eley was author of several published books, including "The Geology of the Garden" and why he left a good living for the meagre emoluments of St Paul's is not known. His first recorded service in High Beach was on Sunday the 13th February when he published banns.

The following month sad news came from Loughton. The Revd. T. H. Sotheby had brought his wife back to her old home at the Rectory for the birth of their child. A boy was born on the 23rd February and christened Walter Edward Hamilton but Mrs Sotheby died on the 6th March, mourned by all who knew her.

The people gathered at St Paul's for morning service on the 26th February 1843 to find no less than five christening parties waiting round the font for the reading of the second lesson to finish, when Mr Eley proceeded to baptise three girls and two boys. His last three baptisms were all in one week – one at the morning service on the 19th March, a second "privately" on the 21st and a third in the Chapel on the 23rd. In his short stay of only thirteen months at St Paul's, he conducted four marriages and eleven baptisms. Eley left High Beach at the end of March as the Bishop had presented him to the vicarage of Broomfield near Chelmsford, where the stipend was £161.00 with an extra £194.00 in tithe rents, and he stayed there until 1861 when he retired and went to live in Brighton.

Third Incumbent ... 1843

The Rev. Samuel Pryer Field MA was appointed by the Bishop to “The District Church of St Paul’s High Beech in the Parish of Waltham Holy Cross” – it was no longer a “chapel”. He was another Londoner, aged twenty-six and son of an official of the Royal Mint, educated at St Paul’s Cathedral School and Pembroke College, Cambridge. Ordained deacon in 1839 and priest in 1841 by the Bishop of London, he had been Perpetual Curate of Emsworth, Hampshire.

Field arrived at St Paul’s at the beginning of May 1843 and his first Sunday morning service took place on the 7th May, the first Sunday of each month being Sacrament Sunday, and included Holy Communion. There were also Communion services at Easter, Whitsun and Christmas.

“The Church-wardens, or other fit person appointed for the purpose, shall receive the Alms for the Poor, and after Divine Service ended, the money given at the Offertory shall be disposed of to such pious and charitable uses as the Minister and Church-wardens shall think fit”. So says the Book of Common Prayer, and the Communion Alms were kept separate from the other collections, and used for the benefit of the poor parishioners.

In a new account book, neatly bound in white leather and inscribed in black ink on the cover “St Paul’s High Beech”, Mr Field kept a careful record of the communion alms, starting with the collection on the 7th May of £2.3.4d (£2.17p), and two sums handed over by Mr Hanson, one of the wardens – the Easter Day (April 16th) alms of £2.8.6d and the previous Incumbent’s balance of £8.6.6d. Mr Field’s first payment was to Mr Hubbard, the other warden, 3/6d (17.5p) for Easter Charities, and then he began the regular doles to old people in need. Typical entries are:-

Mrs Hale 1/-
Mrs Kirby 2/6d
Mrs Cordell 5/-
Widow Hills 2/6d
Old Williams 2/6d
Various small sums to the poor 5/-

Very soon after Mr Field’s arrival in High Beach, the people of the village were shocked to learn that Dr Matthew Allen of the Asylum, former chapel-warden and a resident since 1825, had become bankrupt. Some years before, the doctor had embarked on a “philanthropic undertaking” designed to occupy his patients profitably. He became very enthusiastic about a scheme for wood carving by machinery, and he persuaded his friend Alfred Tennyson to invest all his money, including the proceeds of the sale of his property at Grasby, in “The Patent Decorative Carving and Sculpture Company”. At first, all went well, with the prospect of producing carved oak furniture at low cost and selling to an interested public. By 1843, however, the business had failed, leaving the doctor bankrupt, and the poet penniless. The latter fell into such a state of depression that he had to take a lengthy hydropathic treatment at Cheltenham and he recovered only slowly. The unfortunate Allen died in 1845, and as his life had been insured for part of the debt, Tennyson was able to recover some of his unwise investment.

The Asylum continued under Mrs Allen, who lived at Fairmead House with the women patients. At Lippits Hill Lodge, an attendant supervised the men and a Dr Forrest came to take charge of the more difficult cases at Springfield House.

Meanwhile, Mr Field continued to record in his Alms Book the receipts of the offertories (which came to an average of about £40.00 a year) and noting how the money was used in “pious and charitable” ways including weekly doles to the alms-house widows and other poor parishioners.

There was coal at 3/6d (17.5p) a sack, loaves at 9d (3p) each, blankets at 5/5d (27.5p), a 1 ¼ cwt sack of rice “to be sold to poor at reduced rate” for £2.3.9d (£2.17p), buns for the children on Good Friday 3/- (15p), payment for nursing a sick widow 3/- (15p), faggots “delivered at the houses of some of the poor” £1.1.0d (£1.05p). Occasionally Mr Field made his charitable payments on the spot - “the communion alms distributed after the Lord’s Supper” and “alms given to poor at time”.

The Rev Samuel Field often made explanatory notes in the Alms Book .. “Sir G Cockburn, balance of £3.00 he gave me for Mrs Back. Her husband having recovered, he wished me to give her £1.00 which I did on Wednesday and to devote the balance to the charities of the place” “Mr Davis “gave me £5.00 to dispose of in the Christmas Charities which I did in the following manner – Benevolent Society £2.2.0d, bread £1.10.0d, Offertory Christmas Day £1.00, balance credited 25th December 8/- (40p)”. The following year, “Mr Davis brought me again £5.00”.

“Mrs Withers brought me £7.6.3d. School subscription, Bread, Benevolent, Schooling of Children.” The last was a common custom – the gentry of the parish paying the school pence for the poorest families who could not afford the weekly 2d per child).

To correct an omission, “January 31st. From my private account which ought to have been entered according to dates: 14th F Williams 2s, 15th Mrs Freshwater 2s, 19th, Mrs Sawyer 1s.”

In the Baptism Register, “nos. 57-108 inclusive were transcribed on the proper vellum forms and delivered to the Archdeacon’s Apparitor at Brentwood.”

“The entries in Pages 8 and 9 were made by me. Saml. F. Field, for the purpose of recording the dates of the children’s births in order to facilitate the searching of the Register at any time.

Parsonage	Saml. P Field
High Beech	Incumbent
	July 10 th 1846”

In 1845, only nine years after the church was built, Rev Field noted that he had to take a High Beech baptism at St John’s Buckhurst Hill, “High Beech Church being under repair”. He recorded several “private baptisms” – those sad occasions when the newborn child was not expected to live, and a clergyman was hurriedly called to the house. Mr Capper, the Abbey curate, took one in Mott Street – the baby was “base born” and the father’s employment was “in a baggage warehouse in Boulogne”. The Rector of Chingford, Mr Heathcote, was called to another in Sewardstonebury. Rev Field took others in Rats Lane and “Lippetts Hill”.

If a child who had been privately baptised did survive, the parents brought it to church later to be “received” and “certified” to the congregation, in accordance with the Prayer Book Order of “Private Baptism of Children in Houses”.

On one occasion, Mr Field went to baptise Isaiah, the son of an “itinerant Tin Man” and his wife, of Harrow, who were living in the Forest. Some years before, Rev Eley had baptised their daughter Naomi, the father then being described as a peg-maker. They were perhaps gypsies on their travels.

Under Mr Field’s supervision, the school was flourishing. Schoolmaster Hunt’s methods were now outdated, and Mr Field applied in 1844 to the National Society for a place in their new Westminster Training Institution for Miss Mary Ann Burrell, daughter of the village grocer and

postmaster, and formerly in domestic service. She was admitted in January 1845, and until she had completed her course, the Society sent one of their “organising masters” to High Beach.

Two years later, when there were twenty boys and twenty girls attending school daily and on Sundays, grants of £16.00 from the government and £5.00 from the Society were paid to the school. Miss Burrell’s salary as a trained teacher was £34.00 per annum and the cost of maintaining the school was £51.00, raised by Mr Field from subscriptions in addition to the children’s “school pence”.

St Paul’s National School, High Beech, Essex

The following extracts from the Reports and correspondence of the School Inspectors appointed by the Crown, as also by the Ruri-decanal Chapter, have been printed for the information of those who have evinced an interest in the welfare of the School.

Her majesty’s Inspector visited the school on the 14th March 1845 and reports thus:-

“This school is well supplied with apparatus; the instruction is very good. The children read History of England; write well on paper and slates; work higher rules in arithmetic, and receive good religious instruction.”

The Ruri-decanal Inspectors, the Venerable the Archdeacon Hamilton and the Revd. T. T. Storks, Curate of Loughton, visited the High Beech School on the 26th August 1845, and have recorded their opinion of the School as follows:-

“A favourable report may be confidently made in general terms of this school. Amongst the children were some remarkable for their intelligence.”

On the 7th July 1846, the Ruri-decanal Inspectors, the Rev. Thomas Shelford, Rector of Lambourne and the Revd. Thomas Hubbard, Rector of Stondon Massey inspected the School and their report read:

“That 15 children read well, and have advanced beyond the four rules of compound arithmetic; 10 have some knowledge of geography and the History of England. The religious instruction of the elder children is highly creditable.”

On the 18th November 1847, the Ruri-decanal Inspector, the Revd. William Hood, Vicar of Nasing, visited the School and gives the following opinion of its state and condition:-

“The subdued tone and quiet discipline of this School are among the first particulars that strike the notice of the Inspector; the acquaintance of the first class with religious knowledge generally, but more particularly with the Church Catechism and sacred geography, is deserving of especial commendations, and shows the importance of a school-room being well provided with maps, and of the proceedings of the School being frequently overlooked by some one who is possessed of such authority and information as may guide the Teacher and influence the children. The progress of the lower classes appears to be not less attended to than that of the upper.”

On the 30th November 1847, Her Majesty’s Inspector visited the School, and in a letter of recent date, he writes thus:-

“I am most happy to state that your school is in a most satisfactory condition, both as regards the moral and religious instruction, and the general proficiency of the children. There can be no doubt that constant pains have been taken, and that both the Teacher and the Managers of the School have endeavoured to

do their duty – and have succeeded.”

From the above, it is thought that the Subscribers, by whose kindness the School is supported, will be pleased to find that their liberality, upon the testament of competent and disinterested witnesses, is producing a real, and it is to be hoped, lasting benefit to the place, by imparting to the rising generation a right bias and tone of feeling, such instruction of a secular character as the present exigencies of society demand, together with habits of cleanliness, decorum and Christian-like demeanour.” (Copy of a printed circular – the final paragraph no doubt written by the Revd. S. P Field).

In 1846, under the reforms of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, the whole of Essex, with the exception of Chingford and eight parishes in the Barking Deanery, was transferred to the Diocese of Rochester, and the parishes of Chigwell, which still included Buckhurst Hill, Loughton, Epping Upland (including the town), Nazeing, Waltham Abbey and High Beach, now formed the Deanery of Barking in the new diocese – with the Rector of Loughton, Archdeacon Hamilton, as Rural Dean.

The Archdeacon

The Venerable Anthony Hamilton MA had known Loughton since his boyhood – his grandfather being Alexander Hamilton of Debden Hall. His father was Rector of Orsett and Archdeacon of Colchester, and also Vicar of St Martin’s-in-the-Fields and Rector of Hadham in Hertfordshire. His mother was the daughter of a Bishop of London.

Educated at Harrow School and at St John’s College, Cambridge and ordained in 1801, he became his father’s curate at Hadham, and in 1805 was presented to the rectory of Loughton by the Lady of the Manor, Miss Anne Whitaker, “a very formal lady and reckoned very rich, living in good style” at Loughton Hall.

In 1807 he married the daughter of the Physician to the Prince Regent, their children being Walter Kerr, who became a bishop, Edward, who lived mostly abroad and Jane Catherine, who married Thomas Hans Sotheby.

Well-known in influential circles, the Rector became also Prebendary of Wells in 1810, Rector of St Mary-le-Bow in 1820, Archdeacon of Taunton in 1827, and Precentor and Canon of Lichfield in 1831. He was a Chaplain-In Ordinary to the King, Librarian and Parish Clerk of St Martin’s-in-the-Fields, a magistrate, a Governor of Chigwell School, an Inspector of National Schools, and a Rural Dean.

Although often away on his other duties, he was much respected in Loughton for his benevolence and “high Christian character”. He was a “high and dry” churchman, loyal to the Church “as by law established and genuinely concerned for the spiritual and temporal welfare of his parishioners. His National School was “well attended and well-disciplined”, but he viewed with disfavour the activities of the “dissenting minister” and the British School at the other end of the parish.

The parish church of St Nicholas was a typical small Essex Church dating from the 12th century, a mile down a winding lane from the main road, along which were the villagers’ cottages and the houses of the well-to-do parishioners. The population had grown from 681 in 1801 to 1,333 in 1841, and “the pews were so full in the morning with the gentry that the working-people could only find room in the afternoon”.

So the Archdeacon started a subscription list for a new church, among the donors being Captain Sotheby and members of his family, and the Revd William and Mrs Watson. The subscriptions totalled over £3,500.00. A loan on the security of the church rate produced £1,000.00 and the Archdeacon contributed £1,134.00. The church of St John the Baptist was built on a hilltop site overlooking the scattered village at a cost of £5,850.00, a further £182.00 being collected at the consecration by the Bishop of London in November 1846. In the chancel is a stained-glass window in memory of Thomas Hans Sotheby and his wife Jane Catherine, a reminder of the links between Loughton and High Beach.

Parson's progress - 1848

In October 1848, Mr Field began to record in the Alms Book, the number of communicants at each service. On the 1st there were thirty-eight and the alms amounted to £5.0.6d (£5.025). The average for the next twelve months was twenty-five. He now held Communion services on Ascension Day and Trinity Sunday as well as at other Festivals, and from time to time, on Saints' Days as well.

By 1850, he had been incumbent of St Paul's for seven years, but his financial position had not improved – he still received the £70.00 stipend without tithe or glebe benefits, and the £10.00 each from Sir William Wake and Charles Sotheby (now Rear-Admiral), with the fees and part of the pew rents, barely brought his income up to £100.00 a year.

The 1848 edition of White's Directory of Essex rather unkindly exposed the situation to inquisitive readers:-

“St Paul's is a small, mean structure. The benefice is a perpetual curacy of small and uncertain amount”. It is not surprising, therefore, that Mr Field was contemplating a move.

Whether he sent his resignation to the Bishop of London, who had appointed him, or to the Bishop of Rochester, who was not his Diocesan, is not known but in July 1850, Admirals Sotheby and Cockburn started a complicated correspondence with the Bishop of London, pointing out that the Deed of Patronage of 1836 stated that “the right of nominating a minister to St Paul's shall for ever thereafter be, remain and continue in the Lord Bishop of the Diocese of London for the time being.” However, the Bishop's legal adviser, after studying all the relevant documents, ruled that the patronage had been transferred, with the parish, to Rochester.

Mr Field's entries in the Registers show that the occupations of bridegrooms, fathers of wedding couples and of children baptised, living in High Beach were:

a gentleman, a yeoman, a merchant and a farmer, 7 gardeners, 4 shoemakers, 2 shopkeepers, 2 policemen, 2 carpenters, a bricklayer, a blacksmith, an ostler, a gamekeeper and a silk weaver; 4 domestic servants and 39 labourers.

The Marriage Register also shows that there was widespread illiteracy in the parish. Thirteen of the first twenty-five marriages at St Paul's (1839-1849) were weddings in labouring families, and out of fifty-two people who signed as married couples and witnesses, thirty-one did so with a cross (“John Smith X his mark”) as they could not even write their names.

Local addresses include Mott Street, Forest Side, Clay Hill, Rats Lane, Pyners Green, Lippitts (or Leopard's) Hill, Sewardstone bury and Green, and Church Street.

There were fourteen marriages during Mr Field's incumbency, all of which he conducted himself. It is interesting to note that two were on Sundays, four on Mondays, one on a Tuesday, four on Thursdays, one on a Friday and two on Saturdays. Out of a total of sixty-eight baptisms, he performed fifty-seven.

On the 7th July 1850, Rev Field gave 15s (75p) to poor communicants in addition to the weekly doles, and on the 25th "12s (60p) to the poor at Church on St James' Day". He then totalled the figures with a balance of £6.14.3 ½ d for the attention of his successor, and he left High Beach at the end of the month when he moved to the rectory of Boulge with Debach near Woodbridge in Suffolk. In 1862 Field became Vicar of Dewsbury, Yorkshire, moving again in 1867 to be Vicar of Sawbridgeworth, where he died in 1878. His long and varied ministry covered nearly forty years, for seven of which he left in the Alms Book, a fascinating record of his pastoral care of his parishioners in High Beach.

Fourth Incumbent 1850

In the event, the next incumbent must have been appointed by the Bishop of Rochester, as he arrived in High Beach within a week of Mr Field's departure, whilst the correspondence with the Bishop of London was still continuing.

The Rev. Henry Francis Mallet MA of Balliol College, Oxford, arrived as the new Incumbent of St Paul's at the beginning of August 1850. Aged twenty-nine, he was the son of a gentleman of St Pancras and had been the Curate of Hardmondsworth with West Drayton in Middlesex.

Mallet continued the weekly doles to the almshouse widows and other deserving poor parishioners and was very generous with other charities.

	£	s	d
Flannel for poor person		7	4
2 pair sheets and other clothing for Bag			
Harknett Junior (case of distress)	1	0	0
Mrs Cornell, shoes etc crippled child		5	0
Mrs Pigram for daughter		10	0
Benjm Ellis, shoes		7	6
Ellis (Mrs in confinement)		5	0
Wine 8s, meat 3s for poor		11	0
Burrell for calico for poor		6	0
Expenses of Ellen Andrews to hospital		15	0
Towards funeral of Ellen Andrews		15	0
Harknett junior (wife again confined)		5	0

Mr Mallet took two weddings and six baptisms in his first ten months, and then for 1st June and 8th (Whitsun) he noted "Offertory alms collected by Revd. H Beattie". On the 3rd June, the Revd. William Streatfield, Vicar and Rural Dean of East Ham, conducted the wedding of Major George Hogarth of Newport Monmouthshire and Ellen Vardon Dawson, daughter of Mr Thomas Dawson, merchant of High Beach, and until the end of September, the Sunday services and six baptisms were taken by the Revd. W. R. Brown.

Mr Mallet returned to duty on the 5th October when he recorded an outstanding payment, "Nurse for Mrs Burgess in May, 9s (45p)", but on the 9th, Mr Watson came over from Loughton to conduct two weddings, one of the bridegrooms being George Hunt, the Parish Clerk's son.

In September 1851, Archdeacon Hamilton died at the age of 73, having been Rector of Loughton for forty-six years. The parishioners had hoped that his son, Walter Kerr Hamilton, now Canon of Salisbury, would accept the living, but unlike his father and grandfather, he disapproved of pluralities, and the rural delights at Loughton could not tempt him from the cathedral close. The Revd. Thomas Trundle Storke, the Archdeacon's curate since 1843, became Rector, and Canon Hamilton was consecrated Bishop of Salisbury three years later.

It soon became clear that Mr Mallet would not stay at High Beach much longer, and the two Admirals wrote to the Bishop of Rochester about the patronage of St Paul's; it seems that they were still insisting that the Bishop of London was legally the patron and should appoint the next minister.

Henry Mallet left High Beach in 1852, his last payment being to the "widows in advance to 7th June". He found that he had been too liberal with his charities as he had overspent the alms money by 2/7d (26p). He noted that Mrs Kendal gave him 1/6d (7.5p) and he put in 1/1d (5.5p) himself. He held no other benefice and died about ten years later.

Fifth Incumbent ...1852

The new incumbent, appointed by the Bishop of Rochester, was the Rev Louis Alexander Beck MA who arrived in time for Sacrament Sunday on the 4th July. A Warwickshire man aged thirty-eight of Jesus College Cambridge, he had been since 1847 curate of Great Ilford, (one of the Essex parishes which had remained in the London Diocese) and for the last year, Perpetual Curate of St James, Upper Clapton as well.

The communion alms on his first Sunday amounted only to 18/7d (95.5p) but improved in August with £2.6.0d (£2.30p) in the alms box so that he could continue the customary doles to the poor. Then he pencilled across the page in the Alms Book, a dramatic note:

"Church under repair – no communion from August to Christmas Day".

Miss Maria Sotheby, the Admiral's sister, who had given the two cottages which became the Parsonage, died in 1852, and by her will, made in 1847 when the school was flourishing under Mr Field's care, left £200.00 for "the Charity School connected with St Paul's Chapel, High Beach". The Incumbent and the two Churchwardens, Charles Sotheby and James Dawson, as trustees, invested the money as "The Sotheby Bequest for religious instruction in the High Beech School" and the investment brought in (as it still does) about £5.00 per annum.

The following year, the village lost another well-respected resident by the death of Admiral Sotheby, Lord of the Manor for twenty-one years, the man whose enthusiasm had inspired the building and development of St Paul's. The obituary notice in the Gentleman's Magazine reveals the interesting story of his naval career.

"January 20th, in Lowndes Square, London,

Charles Sotheby, Esq. Rear-Admiral of the Red.

He was the eldest son of William Sotheby Esq FRS of Fairmead Lodge, Essex. Born in 1772, he entered the Royal Naval Academy in 1795, and embarked in 1798 as a first-class volunteer on board the Alexander 74. Captain A J Ball, attached to the force in the Mediterranean, in which he was present as a midshipman at the Battle of the Nile, at the capture of Le Genereux 74 and Ville de Marseilles store-ship, at the blockade and surrender of Malta, and on shore as aide-de-camp to Captain Ball, at the siege of the Castle of St Elmo. He removed on the 12th December 1800 into the Foudroyant 100, the flagship of Lord Keith, in which he took an active part in 1801

in the operations in Egypt. On the 21st October 1801, he was nominated acting Lieutenant of the Penelope 26, and having been confirmed by a commission dated 25th January 1802, he continued in that ship in the Mediterranean and North Sea, until transferred in 1803 to the Princess Royal 98, the flagship in the channel.

On the 25th April 1807, he was appointed to the Thetis 38 in which he took part in a variety of operations against the Turks; on the 18th October 1808 to the Trident 74 as a Flag-Lieutenant to Rear-Admiral St A J Ball; and in March 1809 to the acting command of the Pilot 18 which on her return from the Mediterranean formed one of the advance squadron in the expedition to the Scheldt. He was confirmed in the rank of Commander on the 8th January 1810 and on the 6th July following was appointed to the Latona 38 employed off Lisbon, until the end of February 1812, when he was promoted to post rank.

On the 24th August 1814, he was appointed to the Slaney 20 lying in the Medway, and on the 1st October to the Tamar 24, in which he served on the Halifax, South American and Cape of Good Hope stations until March 1816. On the 18th May 1824 he was appointed to the Seringapatam 46 fitting out for the Mediterranean where during a stay of more than three years, he was very active in the suppression of piracy, and on one occasion in May 1825, by his spirited conduct forced the Bay of Rhodes to acknowledge an insult which had been offered to the British Consul. He obtained flag-rank on the 20th March 1848.

Admiral Sotheby married first, 15th February 1819, the Hon. Jane Hamilton, third daughter of William, 7th Lord Belhaven and Stenton; and secondly, 18th November 1830, Mary Anne, daughter of the late Admiral Thomas Sotheby by Lady Mary Anne Bourke, daughter of Joseph Deane, 3rd Earl of Mayo.”

Charles William Hamilton Sotheby, his son by his first marriage, succeeded him as Lord of the Manor.

The Rev. L A Beck's records are not so detailed as his predecessors'. In the Alms Book, he noted only the names and amounts of the weekly charities. When he reached the last page, in 1855, of the book which Rev Field had started in 1843, he wrote “carried on in another book” but unfortunately this has not survived.

Rev Beck however did start a new book – for the minutes of Vestry meetings. The District Churches Act of 1856 provided district churches to claim parish status, although the incumbents remained perpetual curates, and Rev Beck marked the change by heading the pages of the registers “The new Parish of St Paul, High Beech”. An annual Easter Vestry meeting now had to be held, all ratepayers, whether “church” or “chapel”, being entitled to attend, primarily to vote in the election of churchwardens. In December 1856, Rev Beck called a special Vestry meeting “at the National School Room” to consider steps for raising funds for church repairs (the original repairs fund must have been exhausted by the work done in 1845 and 1852) – but no decision was reached. The wardens in office were recorded as T C Hoseason whose son, a Commander RN, had married the late Admiral Cockburn's daughter, and John Hyde of Honey Lane Green Farm, who was to be churchwarden for the next twenty years.

The first Easter Vestry was held “after notice given in the Vestry of St Paul's Highbeech on Tuesday 6th April at 12 o'clock in the forenoon”. Mr Beck, in the chair, nominated Mr Hyde as his warden and Mr George Boss was proposed as Parish Warden, both being duly elected. Then the Incumbent re-appointed George Hunt as Parish Clerk with a salary of £6.10s (£6.50p); this

was the son of the original clerk who had retired in 1851. The 1858 meeting was delayed until July as St Paul's was again under repair. The wardens were re-elected, and after a discussion about raising money for the repairs, "it was determined to call upon the parishioners for their voluntary contributions".

In 1859 Messrs. Hyde and Wm S Lupton were elected churchwardens, and George Hunt re-appointed "for the ensuing year at the same salary as before". The same appointments were made in 1860 and 1861 but in 1862 "the meeting was adjourned as only one Churchwarden was present" and the entry for 1863 is "no Vestry".

Meanwhile at the school which Mr Field had left in such good order, "standards were declining" in 1852, and the Government Inspector reported in 1859 that "the children know next to nothing". Both Miss Burrell and her successor, Miss Sophia Crump, daughter of a local gardener, had married – the latter to Miss Burrell's brother, the village "letter carrier" – and by 1864 a Miss Day was the mistress.

Mr Beck recorded twenty-six marriages and 150 baptisms in thirteen years, his final entry being for the 9th February 1865. (Only six of the weddings and twelve of the christenings were taken by other clergymen, of whom Rev Watson was the most frequent – his last visit was in 1861).

A brief obituary notice in the Gentleman's Magazine completes this part of our history. "Clergy deceased: March 2nd 1865, in Stafford Street, Edinburgh, the Rev. Louis Alexander Beck MA, aged fifty, incumbent of High Beech, Essex." He left a widow, and a small daughter whom he had baptised in St Paul's Church on Christmas Day 1857.

Sixth Incumbent 1865

In 1836, when St Paul's was built, the coaches were in their heyday, providing local services to London from Waltham Cross and Loughton, while the long-distance mail-coaches from Newmarket and beyond used the Epping New Road, completed in 1834. Thirty years later, the railways, which had reached Waltham Cross in 1842 and Loughton in 1856, had rapidly developed, so that the journey to town (apart from the ride to and from the station at the speed of a horse) took little longer than it does today.

When the news of Mr Beck's sudden death in Scotland on the 2nd March 1865, reached the Bishop at his Palace at Danbury, he offered the vacant living to the Rev J Norton, vicar of a small remote Hampshire parish. Mr Norton accepted without hesitation. He settled his parish affairs, and arrived in High Beach in time to take the Sunday services on the 26th March – hardly giving the unfortunate Mrs Beck time to move her possessions. All this was done in little more than three weeks, thanks to the new-fangled railways and the greatly improved postal facilities.

It is not easy to see why he decided to accept the appointment. A church needing constant repair, a neglected school of ill-taught children, an inconvenient and no doubt dilapidated parsonage, income of £100.00 a year, would surely have discouraged most clergymen seeking preferment.

In 1860, out of 12,000 livings in England and Wales, 5,000 with stipends of less than £200.00 were considered "inadequate". Mr Crawley's plight as the Perpetual Curate of Hoggstock in the Diocese of Barchester, with a wife and three children to support on £130.00 a year, was described in 1867 by Anthony Trollope:

“.. three pounds of meat a day at 0d a pound, will cost over £40.00 a year, bread for such a family at 9d a loaf must cost at least £25.00. Clothes for five persons, of whom one at any rate must wear the raiment of a gentleman, can hardly be found for less than £10.00 a year a head. Then there remains £15.00 for tea, sugar, beer, wages, education, amusements and the like. In such circumstances, a gentleman can hardly pay much for the renewal of his furniture.

The Rev Josiah Norton MA, the new incumbent of St Paul's, was a married man in his thirties. Born in Newington, South London, son of a lace draper, he was Scholar and Exhibitioner of St John's College, Cambridge, then curate of St Mary's, Southampton, and in 1856, Vicar of South Baddesley near Lymington where a new church was built in 1858, perhaps a reason for his appointment to High Beach. Many years later, he wrote: “Acting on the suggestion of Bishop Wigram when he presented me to the living, I obtained permission from Bishop Claughton, Bishop Wigram's successor, to build a new church on a more suitable site.”

The parsonage was the same house contrived in 1837 from Miss Sotheby's two weather-boarded for roomed cottages – “wholly unfit for a married man with a family” as Mr Norton described it. Making their home even more cramped as time went on, the Nortons' six children were all born within ten years, Reginald George in 1866, Horace William in 1868, Gertrude May (Lily) in 1871, Florence Elma (Queenie) in 1872, Bertrand Josiah in 1874 and Eustace Gerald in 1876..

Mr Norton baptised two infants on the 26th March 1865, his first Sunday in High Beach, and on the 6th April, he took the chair at his first Vestry meeting, when Messrs Hyde and Holman were re-elected as churchwardens. The latter was replaced by Mr Croskey at a special meeting held later in the year.

The new Incumbent spent a great deal of time in the Village School, clearly accepting the dictum of the National Society that the parish clergyman was held responsible for the welfare of the parish school. He reported to the Education Department that children were often absent because of illness caused by the dampness of the school building. Although it stood well up the hill, it was sited in a hollow, and as Mr Norton wrote, “often after heavy rains, the School is flooded, and the children cannot attend on account of the damp, muddy state of the floor and walls”.

By now, the Education Department had gained firm control, and an annual grant was made provided the inspection was satisfactory and the teacher qualified.

On the 6th January 1866, Miss Louisa M Liddiard, a “certificated teacher of the 4th class”, took up her duties, starting a daily record of school activities and progress in the new Log Book. She soon “made a rule to keep every child in one hour to learn a lesson who were in school after 9 o'clock”. Mr Norton read prayers every morning, and then took the first class for Scripture and Catechism. Every Friday he examined all the children in their lessons, at first finding the writing indifferent, the spelling bad and the arithmetic and reading very indifferent, but rewarding those who repeated their poetry “very nicely” with cards (illustrations from The Pilgrim's Progress). He severely reprimanded a boy for “inattention to studies”, caned another “for showing bad temper when spoken to”, and punished several children for their “disobedience in bringing things to eat in the schoolroom”.

In July 1866, the Government Inspector's report was encouraging: “This school is increasing rapidly. The instruction and order are very creditable”.

As the school was so close to the parsonage, Mrs Norton often accompanied her husband on his afternoon visits to see the needlework and to hear the children sing a hymn learnt for Sunday School, rewarding some of them with cards “on condition that they were at school on time on Sunday morning”. Mr Norton “thought it a good plan for the children to learn the hard words in their reading books, and commit them to slate from Dictation”, and on one Monday morning he “expected the little ones to know the letters of the alphabet as far as M by Friday”.

In spite of his efforts, the next year’s report was disappointing: “The Mistress must endeavour to acquire more school management. Another group of Desks and Benches is required.”

Miss Liddiard tried to assert her authority. “Three elder boys kept in to write 500 words for playing during lessons”. “Found one boy in the Upper Standard very imperfect in the Catechism – to write a portion for home lesson”. “Two boys kept for showing a sullen temper”. “Four children kept for neglecting to do home lessons”. “Several reprimanded for not being at Sunday School”.

She left at Easter 1868, and other mistresses came but soon departed. One “stayed in school till 6 pm to superintend the sweeping and arrange the position of the classes”. Another found “the little ones very tiresome on account of the heat”.

The Inspector’s next report did not mince matters:

“The instruction is very elementary. The mistress is untrained and not certificated. No grant is due on account of the school since it has been in the hands of a teacher not qualified~”. In December 1872 the school was closed for three weeks while “the Room as enlarged”.

... Mr Norton was planning his next move ...

In January 1867 Mr Norton received a welcome letter from the Ecclesiastical commissioners to say that his stipend had been augmented by £100.00, giving him a basic £170.00. The Commissioners were empowered to bring all low stipends up to at least £150.00 and many “inadequate” livings like that of St Paul’s had by now been improved – locally, Coopersale to £180.00, Theydon Bois to £166.00, Roydon to £150.00 though Epping still remains at £120.00. High Beach had begun to rise in the league table!

Vicar of St Paul’s1868

The District Churches Amendment Act of 1868 authorised Perpetual Curates to style themselves Vicars, and Mr Norton used his new title for the first time in September 1868 in the Register of Baptisms.

Early in 1869, William Watson died at Loughton. He had “married money”, and the Watsons lived in some style with a cook, a housemaid, a laundry-maid and a groom. There is no doubt that he was remembered as kindly in High Beach as he was in Loughton. His gravestone in St John’s Churchyard also records the death two years later of his wife, who left £1,000.00 to the parish to provide bread, coal and clothing for the poor.

At the 1869 Easter Vestry, Mr Hyde and Captain Roger Upton were elected churchwardens. By now the Vicar was planning to build a new church to replace St Paul’s, and early in 1869 applied to the Bishop or a faculty (licence) to proceed.

In July, a diocesan official reported to the Bishop that “High Beech church is a modern building of small size of white brick and uninviting appearance, said to accommodate 250 persons. It is not in very good repair, there being signs of settlement in several places. It is situated at the foot of a steep hill on clay. It is proposed to remove this church (or build another) about a quarter of a mile to the top of the hill to a spot where four ways meet (where it would originally have been placed but for some objections of some leading inhabitants). This site, lately enclosed on the Loughton Road, would on the whole be more central and convenient for the majority of the present inhabitants. All the principal inhabitants are in favour of the proposal. There seems to be every reason for consenting to Mr Norton’s application. It seems to be in no doubt that the necessary funds would be forthcoming. I should recommend that a burial ground be attached to the New Church. there is nothing in or of the old Church worth preserving – it would make a good school room.”

New Church 1873

We now meet Thomas Charles Baring MA, a director of Messrs Baring Brothers’ Bank in the City, who had recently moved into Wallsgrove House. He soon became a Justice of the Peace and Deputy Lieutenant, and Member of Parliament for South Essex. He took a very keen interest in parish affairs, and at the Vestry meeting in 1870, when Mr Hyde was again appointed Vicar’s Warden, Mr Baring was elected Parish Warden.

Mr Norton wrote: “I was making efforts to obtain promises of aid in building the new church when Mr Baring generously offered to built it at his own expense if he might built it on his own plan”. The Vicar accepted the offer, and a London Architect, A W Blomfield (a son of the Bishop who had consecrated St Paul’s in 1836) was commissioned to submit plans. Bomfield, later Sir Arthur, now in mid-career as a fashionable architect (not only of churches), could, according to John Betjeman, “turn out an impressive church in almost any style”. At this particular time he favoured the Early English Gothic with the soaring broach spire of the 13th century stone churches of the East Midlands, and Mr Baring accepted his design. The new church was completed in 1873, at a cost of £5,500.00; it was described in a guide book of 1876 as “an elegant little church – from many spots amidst the old forest trees, the church peeps out prettily, and its spire is a landmark for miles around”.

The church was opened without ceremony on Sunday the 22nd June, licensed by the Bishop for Sunday services and baptisms; marriages still had to be performed at St Paul’s, the parish church, and for the time being, the new church was not consecrated, owing to unexpected legal complications.

The site had been given by Charles William Hamilton Sotheby, Lord of the Manor, who “released” the land in 1869 from the Forest as his father had done for St Paul’s and the school. About an acre in size, it was enough to allow for a churchyard, and it was hoped the High Beach burials would no longer have to be at Waltham Abbey.

School Duties 1873

The school continued to occupy a good deal of the Vicar’s time. As well as being responsible for the religious education, he had to check the registers, keep detailed accounts and have them audited, collect the local subscriptions and the “school pence” (2d or 3d a week according to age (1p)), pay the bills and wages, which were sometimes delayed when cash ran short, deal with an increasing amount of correspondence with both National Society and Education Department, and interview and appoint teachers.

He had to decided to employ no more school-mistresses, and advertised in “The Schoolmaster” periodical for a certificated master. Mr Brown came, and stayed for a year, followed by Mr Warren for two and a half years, Mr Beck for seven months and Mr Bray for 15 months, each in turn leaving to improve his prospects in a larger school.

The annum inspections began again. From 1873, the inspector was Matthew Arnold, son of the famous Dr Arnold of Rugby School, and himself a leading poet and literary critic. He praised the masters’ efforts and the improvement in the children’s work, but condemned the school building as damp, out-of-date and over-crowded. “I regret” he added, “that money has been spent enlarging the room as a wiser policy would have been to build an efficient school”.

On his last visit in 1878, when sixty-nine children attended, Arnold wrote: “The present master has been here only since April. He cannot fairly be judged until he has had the school longer under his care”. Arnold was known for being “unfailingly kind and charming” in the performance of his often unwelcome duties.

The new master, whom Arnold would not judge too hastily, was John Titt, aged twenty-four and newly arrived from Abbots Ann, a small village near Andover, where he had been pupil-teacher and then “acting-teacher”; by studying in his spare time, he had qualified by examination in 1877 as a certified schoolmaster. This time the Vicar had advertised for a master who could play the organ and train a choir, and Mr Titt had all the qualifications. Mr Baring ordered an organ from Henry Willis, already a well-known London organ builder, who visited High Beach to supervise the installation. It cost Mr Baring about £750.00.

New School 1882

In 1879, Her Majesty’s Inspector praised Mr Titt’s work, but threatened to stop the grant if “this most squalid school” was not rebuilt. His final warning in 1881 faced the Vicar with the prospect of either finding the money for a new building – or losing the school.

The 1870 Education Act had set up local school boards with powers to “fill the gaps” with “board schools” where there were no National or British schools, and also to take over inefficient voluntary schools. A school with its building condemned and its grant withdrawn was certainly “inefficient”. Once again, however, Mr Baring came to the rescue, and built and furnished a fine new school in Mott Street at his own cost. “Otherwise,” Mr Norton wrote later, “I should have been compelled to transfer the High Beech National School to the Waltham Abbey School Board”.

The new school opened on the 5th June 1882 with ninety-three children on roll, elementary education between the ages of five and thirteen now being compulsory. The Inspector on his next visit commended the “good arrangement and convenience of the new school” – and the grant was paid. George Hunt, the Parish Clerk, bought the old desks for £2.00, and the old school was pulled down and sold for £9.00. The site became the Vicarage kitchen garden.

Mr Titt’s teaching staff in 1878 had consisted of two monitors, Susan Guttridge and Henry Riding– both aged fourteen and former pupils – the latter soon becoming pupil-teacher articulated for four years. Monitors earned £8.00 a year and Pupil-Teacher £10.00 rising to £20.00. The master’s salary was £60.00 a year plus a half-share of the annual grant – an extra £20.00 or so if the exam results were good.

At the end of his apprenticeship, Henry riding was examined by the Inspector and “passed well”. He was recognised as “acting teacher” and took a post as assistant master (£40.00 a year) at the Loughton National School. About the same time, a cryptic note in the Log Book says: “S Guttridge left school (married)”.

The Epping Forest Act 1878

Several years before the new church was built, local protest and public interest led to enquiries about recent enclosures of common land in the Forest, reducing it from over 7,000 acres in 1851 to less than 3,000 in 1871, when the Corporation of the City of London began to collect evidence of enclosures made by lords of manors (including Mr Sotheby) and others, in preparation for a Chancery lawsuit.

In 1874, the Master of the Rolls ruled that enclosures made before 1851 were allowed, as well as those made up to 1871 and by that date built on, but all others were to be returned to the Forest. This made Mr Sotheby’s enclosure of 1869 illegal, and it seemed at first that the church would have to be removed.

Four years later, however, the Epping Forest Act, empowering the Corporation to assume ownership and management of the Forest, made a special exception in favour of the church, and allowed both enclosure and building to remain. Mr Sotheby had inherited a family property in Northamptonshire, and left High Beach after selling the Sewardstone manorial properties and rights to Mr Baring, who was appointed one of the Verderers under the Act. On the 27th June 1879, Mr Baring signed the deed which conveyed to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners the “parcel of land” together with “the unconsecrated building known as St Paul’s, High Beech”.

Then the Commissioners told the Vicar that the 1837 licence for services in St Paul’s was no longer valid and that the action taken in 1856 to make High Beach a New Parish had been incomplete, as an important part of the Act had not been complied with. This concerned fees taken at a district church, which belonged by right to the minister of the original parish out of which the district had been formed, and he must relinquish that right. The Revd. James Francis, who had succeeded Mr Whalley as Incumbent of Waltham Abbey in 1846 as Incumbent of Waltham Abbey in 1846, stated, when asked by Mr Norton, that he had never “recognised or exercised” his right to the High Beach fees.

In August 1880, Mr Norton received a new licence from the Commissioners, by which as “Incumbent of the Church of St Paul, High Beech”, he could perform the services, including marriages “in the said church”. The old church had rarely been used since 1873, and the new church had by now come to be known as “St Paul’s”.

Other notable events at this time were the arrival at the Manor House of His Honour Judge J T Abdy LL.D., the Waltham Abbey County Court Judge, and the Queen’s visit to High Beach, when she drove in procession from Chingford by the recently-made Ranger’s Road to the “gorgeous pavilion” set up in front of the King’s Oak, to dedicate the Forest to “the use and enjoyment of her people for all time”.

Consecration 1883

The Vicar then prepared and submitted to the Bishop of St Albans (in which diocese Essex had been since 1877) a Petition for Consecration “of the unconsecrated building known as St Paul’s, to be in substitution for the existing church”. The document was agreed by the legal experts, engrossed on parchment, and signed by the Vicar, the churchwardens, Messrs John Hyde and T

C Baring (the former aged eighty-three and warden since 1855) and nine other residents, Robert Edwards JP of Beech Hill Park, Judge Abdy, A J Arrowsmith of Arabin House, George Hunt the Parish Clerk and his brother Charles, Morris King of Beaulieu, Charles Cranville, Edward Kirby, and John Titt, chosen as being “principal inhabitants”.

The long awaited Consecration Day was Saturday the 18th August 1883, when the Bishop of St Albans, the Right Revd. Thomas Legh Claughton, accompanied by the Archdeacon of Essex, the Vicar and “others of the Clergy” and the churchwardens, Messrs Hyde and Baring, were met at the church door by the Diocesan Registrar.

They entered the church, and Mr Norton presented the Petition to the Bishop, who passed it to the Registrar to read aloud to the large congregation assembled. The Bishop announced his readiness to consecrate the church and churchyard, and the procession moved up to the chancel “repeating the 24th Psalm in alternate verses”. Standing at the north end of the altar, the Bishop laid on it the Deed of Conveyance of the site, and recited several prayers before “placing himself in his chair”.

Then the Registrar read out the Bishop’s Sentence of Consecration, which may well have surprised many of the people present, as it began by referring to the site as having been acquired for a church “intended to be called St Paul’s, High Beech”, and finished with the dedication of the church “by the name of the Church of the Holy Innocents” (commemorating the Baring’s two young sons who had died in the United States of America). The service continued with Evening Prayer – Psalms 84, 122 and 132, followed by a Lesson (1 Chronicles chapter 29 verses 1-17), Magnificat, Creed, and prayers led by the Bishop. Next came a hymn, for which Mr Titt presided at the organ, and then the Archdeacon preached on the ext of 1 Kings Chapter 8 verse 13.

The Bishop read more prayers, after which he left the church, followed by the Registrar, clergy, churchwardens, and congregation, and they all processed round the churchyard, which fortunately had been cleared of its forest undergrowth and levelled, repeating in alternate verses Psalms 49 and 88. After prayers of consecration of the burial ground, the Bishop pronounced the final blessing. A contemporary writer recorded Bishop Claughton’s “courtly bearing and his fine and sympathetic voice – one of the last of the old ‘prince-bishops’”.

Parish Church 1884

Two days after the Consecration, the Vicar applied to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for the Church to be made a parish church. They replied that the New Parish must first be legalised, and for this they needed to see the document by which the Vicar of Waltham Abbey surrendered his right to the High Beach fees.

Mr Norton had written again to Mr Francis, who had replied on the 10th August: “Some time ago, I had a note from you asking me to say that I had resigned my claim to marriage fees. My reply was to the effect that if I had a claim, it had never been recognised or exercised, and therefore I could not well say that I had resigned it; no occasion for that recognition ever had been put before me. Now hearing again from you, I have come to the conclusion that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners must mean to ask whether I will resign all future claims. this I am quite ready to do, if by so doing I can assist you to gain your end. But is it that the Church has come to such a pass that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have power to license a building for marriages?”

On the 13th September 1883, Mr Francis signed and sealed his Surrender of the fees “arising within the limits of the Particular District of St Paul’s High Beech” and Mr Norton paid the Solicitor’s charges:

“The Revd J Norton, Dr to Messrs Jessopp and Gough, Solicitors of Waltham Abbey. Engrossing Surrender of fees, 4s 8d (23p); Attending Mr Francis on his executing same, 6s 8d; Parchment, 1s 6d.”

When the Commissioners received the Surrender, they at last agreed to accept High Beach as a Parish under the provisions of the New Parishes Act of 1856, and could now deal with the Vicar’s application, which he had sent on the 24th August, for “the new church” to be substituted for “the old parochial church”. Among the information he had to give were the details of the benefice income:

“From Commissioners £100.00, Endowment £34.00, Queen Anne’s Bounty £36.00, Pew Rents £35.00, total £205.00”.

He received no Surplice fees in 1883 – there had in fact been no weddings since 1877, and no burials yet in the new churchyard. The annual £10.00 pledged by Sir William Wake in 1836, and now given by his great-grandson, Sir Herewald, had come to be regarded as an Easter Offering, and not counted as part of the income of the living.

The London Gazette of the 12th February 1884 published an “instrument” signed and sealed by the Commissioners, the Bishop and the Vicar on the 24th January, which substituted “the New Church of the Holy Innocents in the New Parish of High Beech for the Old Church of Saint Paul in the same Parish”, declaring the “the New Church shall henceforth be the Parish Church of the same New Parish” and that all endowments, rights and emoluments were transferred to the New Church and to the Vicar and his successors for ever”.

Since 1873, St Paul’s had hardly been used. The last baptism there, in March 1873, was the 400th in the Register, and the last marriage, in 1877, the seventy-third. there were no more weddings until the first in the new church on the 23rd February 1884. The first burial in the new churchyard on the 13th February 1884, was of Katharine Dellar aged two years, whom the Vicar had christened “Catherine” in 1882, daughter of Charles Dellar, labourer of High Beach, and his wife, Mary Ann.

In June 1885, the Bishop granted Mr Baring a faculty for “one pew at the west end of the Northern transept” and “a burial placed thirty feet square at the North Eastern corner of the churchyard” to be assigned to him “and his heirs and assigns for his and their use for ever”. The Vault was already in use, as the coffin of Mr Baring’s father, the late Bishop of Durham, was placed there in the previous October, and that of the Bishop’s widow in May; they are commemorated by the large brass tablet on the north wall of the chancel. (The vault is still used for family interments, the last in July 1985).

Mr Baring’s final benefaction to the parish was in 1890, when he provided new almshouses in Mott Street to replace the ancient ones in Lippitts Lane End.

St Paul’s demolished 1885

In March 1885, the Vicar met the Bishop at Chigwell and told him about the condition of the old church. “Last year, parties from London broke open the door, and not only did much damage inside but behaved very disgracefully. I tried every means to keep them out, but in vain. They

tore down notices and broke locks and bars". The Bishop advised him to "get the building removed as quickly as possible, and to put an end to the scandal caused by the desecration".

So Mr Norton and the churchwardens, Messrs Baring and Morris King (Mr Hyde had retired at the age of eighty-six) applied for a faculty to "take down" the old church on the grounds that St Paul's was very dilapidated, and fast being destroyed by "excursionists", that the churchyard was not consecrated, so there were no graves or monuments, and that it was proposed to sell the bricks, pews and fittings and put the proceeds towards the erection of a new vicarage.

A faculty to remove the old church was granted on the 2nd May, and after it was "pulled down", the materials were sold for £30.00. No trace of the building remained above ground and, except for the registers, books and documents preserved in the iron register chest, nothing has survived from St Paul's Church.

The position of the church can be located on the way up from Lippitts Hill just past the ditch which runs down from the pond by Fairmead Cottage and under the roadway, where Church Road (Church Street as it was called at that time), bends to the left uphill, where the trees on level ground on the edge of the forest are of more recent growth than the others nearby.

The site remained fenced and unused until 1913 when it was conveyed to the Conservators of the Forest for a payment of £50.00 – not a purchase price but a gift to the parish. The money was invested and not used until 1952, when it helped to pay for the blue chancel carpet in the present church. The old school site adjoining the north side of the Dairy Farm was used as a kitchen garden for the Vicarage until 1920, and then let at 10/- (50p) a year to various villagers until 1930 when it too was returned to the Forest.

Plans for new Vicarage 1891

Apart from having become a "Cockney Paradise" at summer weekends and holidays, High Beach had seen little change in the past fifty years. The state of the roads can be judged from the warning in a handbook of 1887 that "the hill leading from the church towards Waltham Abbey is very steep and unrideable for cyclists".

John Hyde of Honey Lane Green Farm and George Hunt, the parish clerk, both died in 1886 (their grave-stones can be seen from the road, side by side at the north-west corner of the churchyard), Mr C W H Sotheby in 1887 and the Revd. T H Sotheby, one of the 1838 trustees of St Paul's, in 1888.

In January 1891, the Vicar wrote to the Ven. H. F. Johnson, the Archdeacon of Essex: "We think that the time has come when we ought to make a strenuous effort to obtain a new vicarage. I met the Bishop of St Albans at Sir T F Buxton's and consulted with him as Patron of the Parish. He suggested that as you saw the house, I should write to ask you to kindly make some report to him as to the unfitness of the house to be a residence for the Vicar of the Parish. Then he will give his sanction to our efforts to raise funds for building a new vicarage. I have spent annually a sum amounting to a rent to patch up the old house, but it is now beyond repairing".

The Archdeacon replied:

"I have a very distinct recollection of the size and condition of your vicarage, and its absolute unsuitableness for its purpose. The only wonder is that you have borne with its discomfort for so long. I am very glad it is proposed to obtain a new vicarage. I consider it quite necessary. I shall

be very glad to promote the undertaking in any way in my power. I am well acquainted with the circumstances of the case, and am ready to report to his Lordship that the Vicarage is quite unfit for its purpose”.

An architect’s report at this time stated:

“I hereby certify that I have examined the two weather-boarded cottages which have been used as a parsonage, and am of the opinion that they are so old that the materials are completely valueless, and will not realise the cost of pulling down and carting away old materials, and making good the site”.

The Vestry meeting on Easter Tuesday, the 31st March 1891, assembled only to learn that Mr Baring was ill, and adjourned after passing a vote of sympathy. Mr Baring died on the 2nd April and the Vestry met again to express “great regret for the loss which the Parish has sustained by the death of the late T C Baring Esq. MP, and deep sympathy with Mrs Baring and her family”. The Vicar then appointed Mr A J Edwards JP, of Beech Hill Park as Vicar’s Warden, and His Honour Judge Abdy was elected as Parish Warden. Edward Kirby, parish clerk since 1886, was re-appointed (to be succeeded in 1892 by Ernest James Hunt, who continued until 1933).

In September 1892, the architect sent the plans of a new vicarage at an estimated cost of £1846.00. Mrs Baring promised £1,100.00 and Mr Edwards gave £200.00, followed by Mr Arrowsmith of Arabin House, Mr J W Melles of Sewardstone and Mrs Devoy of Beaulieu, with £100.00 each.

Unfortunately the proposed site near the Wallsgrove boundary was unacceptable to the Barings, and Mrs Baring was persuaded to withdraw her support. A few smaller donations came in from local people – Mr Kennedy of Arabin Cottage, Mr Horncastle of Rosemead, the Revd J W Maitland (Rector of Loughton), “H” (probably Horace Norton) and others; Queen Anne’s Bounty promised to help but at least £1,000.00 more would be needed.

The Model Vicarage 1894

By the end of 1892, the money already received towards a new vicarage was increased by a grant of £400.00 from Queen Anne’s Bounty, and the Vicar now set out to raise £1,000.00.

He had circulars and collecting cards printed, and with the help of Mrs Norton and the family, persuasive letters were written to likely subscribers far and wide. He put an appeal in the Church Times, and circulars were sent round the district. One of them was: “I enclose the appeal for aid in rebuilding the Vicarage at High Beech. Waltham Abbey is our mother parish, and I hope that my appeal will be favourably considered by the residents of Waltham”.

The building contract was given to John Bentley of Sun Street, Waltham Abbey, and the work was begun in August 1893, by which time another £350.00 had come in, with a further £400.00 from the Bounty Office. By the end of the year, £200.00 had been sent by Church Times readers, mostly clergymen, and including no less than 2,937 gifts of one shilling each (5p). The builders finished in March 1894, and the interior work completed in May.

Then a press notice appeared: “High Beech Vicarage Fund. The Vicar would be glad if all who have kindly promised to wish to give DONATIONS to the above Fund, or who have taken Collecting Cards, would send them to him as soon as possible, as he is anxious to print the Balance Sheet. There is still a debt of nearly £100.00 towards which the Lord Bishop of Colchester has kindly given £1.00”. He got the £100.00, and the total reached £1,980.00.

Further donations continued to arrive, and the Bounty Office, which had been holding the money at interest, notified a £43.00 balance, which was later added to the benefice endowment. Even the Norton's stationery and postages were covered.

The final figures were:

Queen Anne's Bounty	£800.00	Builder	£1,846.00
Sale of old church	£30.00	Architect	£ 162.00
Donations and interest	£1,311.00	Expenses	£ 90.00
		Balance	<u>£ 43.00</u>
	<u>£2,141.00</u>		<u>£2,141.00</u>

The new vicarage, with eleven rooms (including one parish room), kitchen and offices, was built behind the old house near the Wallsgrove boundary. The Vicar wrote: "The new Vicarage was built entirely by my own efforts, and with the most generous help of some of my parishioners and of a very large number of friends and well-wishers and the aid of a very liberal grant from Queen Anne's Bounty, but without a loan, so that my successors will have the enjoyment of a "Model Vicarage" (as it was designated by the architect when the plan of it was hung in the Royal Academy) unencumbered by any debt".

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In May 1894, Mr Titt had recorded in the School Log Book that a "terrible Gunpowder explosion occurred at Waltham Abbey on Monday the 7th at 4.10 pm. The School here was very much shaken; plaster fell from the ceiling, endangering the lives of the children and teachers, who rushed out in great fright. One of the windows was damaged. The Vicar, who was in the village close by, paid us a visit shortly after the occurrence, and read prayers at the close of the school".

Mr E J Kennedy had been Parish Warden since 1893. He was General Secretary of the YMCA and was also preparing, under Mr Norton's guidance, for the ministry. He was ordained at Advent 1894 and preached his first sermon in High Beach Church. He moved first to St James' Hatcham and then to Boscombe, and was an outstanding Chaplain to the Forces when the War came. At the 1895 Easter Vestry, Mr John Titt was elected Parish Warden.

Turn of the Century

1894 saw the Nortons settled in the new vicarage. Reginald, the eldest son, now aged twenty-nine, followed his father to St John College, Cambridge, and was ordained deacon in 1891 and priest in 1892. After curacies in Canning Town and Plaistow, he was now a curate in St Leonard's-On-Sea. Horace had studied at the Royal College of Music before being appointed in 1893 organist and choirmaster at St Mary's Loughton, where a new 3-manual organ was installed in 1895. He was also a church Lads' Brigade Officer, and secretary of the High Beach Cricket Club, of which Mr Edwards was captain. Nothing is known of Bertrand. Eustace, now nineteen, was preparing for university, and the daughters – Lily and Queenie – were still at home.

The Vicar had already been at High Beach longer than the twenty-seven years of his five predecessors, and during his ministry, the population of the parish slowly increased from 531 in 1861, 535 in 1871, 502 in 1881 to 548 in 1891 and was rising to 594 in 1901. Up to 1895 the average annual rate of baptisms had risen from ten to thirteen, that for marriages was still two, whilst burials (from 1884) averaged nine.

By the turn of the century, Mr Norton was in his seventies and still conducted most of the services. In 1901 he took twenty-one of the twenty-two baptisms, two of the three weddings and ten of the twelve funerals. The younger Mr Baring's marriage to Mr Henry S Brenton, a London Solicitor was performed by her brother-in-law, the Revd V T Macy, Vicar of St Luke's, Enfield, who had married her sister in 1893. The Revd. William Allen, first Vicar of St Mary's, came up from Loughton for one of the funerals.

In 1902, the Nortons' younger daughter, Florence Elma (called Queenie) was married to Mr Lyonel John Lock, MRCS LRCP and her father conducted the service. Bertrand and Horace signed the register as witnesses.

In the "Waltham Abbey Church Monthly" for March 1904 was a letter from Viscount Horncastle, a businessman in the city, Chief Commoner of the Corporation of London and first Mayor of Hackney, who had formerly lived at Rosemead, Forest Side.

"We are glad to know that some recognition is being made of the long and faithful service of the Revd J Norton, who has laboured faithfully and zealously for the well-being of the parish. It is greatly owing to his energetic and unwearied efforts that the parishioners now have the beautiful Church of the Holy Innocents in place of the old farm-like building of St Paul's. Also a new School on a beautiful and healthy site, and a new Vicarage, in place of the old unhealthy and dilapidated buildings that were used previously. Mrs Devoy has generously set an example of paying tribute to the Vicar's work amongst us. Cannot some effort be made by others to continue the much-needed help to our beloved Vicar?"

In the June issue was a reply from Mrs Macy:

"This is quite a mistake as the Church was built entirely by the late T C Baring Esq MP, as were the Schools and the Almshouses".

The Vicar himself replied in the July number:

"Mrs Macy must have quite misunderstood the letter. Everyone knew that the Church was built entirely at Mr Baring's expense, as was the School on his own property. Doubtless the writer of the letter, who well knew the facts, referred to the first steps to obtain a new Church taken by me long before Mr Baring came to High Beech. I may add that the School has been maintained by me for nearly thirty-nine years on my own responsibility with the aid of subscriptions from parishioners. Had there been any mistake in the letter, I should have felt bound to correct it".

Parish Activities 1900s

IN 1903, Reginald, the Nortons' eldest son, died at the early age of thirty-seven. He had returned from St Leonard's to Plaistow, moving again to Brighton, and in 1899 to his final curacy at St Paul's Ramsgate.

The same year, the Vicar noted that he received, in addition to the stipend of £170.00, £38.00 in pew rents, £9.00 in fees and £25.00 in Easter offerings. He had to pay £29.00 in vicarage expenses for rates, insurance and repairs, leaving him a net income of £213.00 – the highest figure during the whole of his incumbency.

In 1905 and 1906, he conducted all the baptisms, weddings and funerals except for one taken by the Rector of Loughton, the Revd. J W Maitland, and two by the Revd J H Stamp, the Curate of Waltham. In 1907, Mr Norton officiated at all occasional offices – nine baptisms, five weddings and eight funerals.

A list of lay workers in the parish in 1906 shows that there were ten adults in the choir (eight ladies and two men); Miss Lily Norton was secretary for the Church Missionary Society, the Missions to Seamen, and St Andrew's Waterside Mission to Sailors, Mrs Edwards for the Girls' Friendly Society and Mrs Norton was superintendent of the Sunday School with twelve teachers (nine ladies and three men).

During the winter months, social evenings were organised by a parochial committee. Tickets cost a shilling (5p) and fifty or sixty parishioners sat down to a tea; sometimes a piano was hired for a musical programme. Tickets for lantern lectures cost 2d (1p), covering the cost of refreshments, hire of slides and supply of carbide for the "magic lantern". There were children's treats, and at Christmastime carol singers went round the parish.

Early in 1908 it was evident to Mr Norton that at the age of eighty, he now needed clerical help in the parish. He therefore engaged a non-resident curate, and in August the Revd A t Kirkpatrick commenced his duties at £107.00 per annum, of which the Vicar and Mr Edwards each paid half. The new curate relieved the Vicar of weddings and funerals – Mr Norton managed to take all the eight baptisms during the year, the last in November. Since 1895, the average number of baptisms had remained constant at ten a year, marriages averaged three a year (in every case, at least one of each couple was a parishioner), and funerals still averaged nine. From January 1909, Mr Kirkpatrick took all the services, although the Vicar continued to make the register entries in his neat clerkly handwriting.

Alexander Thomas Kirkpatrick lived at Loughton in a house on Church Hill named "Priest's Garth" and for some years had been Curate of St Johns. He was MA of Trinity College, Dublin, ordained in 1886 in the diocese of Winchester. After three years as Curate of Dorking, he spent five years in Australia, first on the Queensland coast near Brisbane, and then 450 miles westwards in the Outback. Returning in 1895, he held curacies in Ireland and Sutton Coldfield, moving in 1903 to Loughton, where he lived until 1933.

A register of services was started on the 27th March 1910, Easter Day, and shows that Mr Kirkpatrick was now preaching at both services every Sunday, although Mr Norton was at church three times in April to publish banns.

The Vicar presided at the Easter Vestry, but was not well enough to baptise his grandson, Eustace Horace Bertrand, the infant son of Eustace Norton, now a school-master in Horsham. The christening, in August, was performed by the baby's uncle, Dr Lock, recently ordained, and now curate of St Thomas' Charlton and medical officer of the Billingsgate Medical Mission.

The end of an Era 1912

In 1911, Mr Edwards took the Chair at the Easter Vestry – and the Vicar wrote up the minutes. In April he compiled the parochial returns for the past year. Eleven candidates had been confirmed and there were fifty-four names on the roll of communicants. The day school had fifty-three children on the roll with average attendance of forty-seven, and three teachers; for the Sunday School the figures were sixty-two and fifty-nine, with nine teachers. There were five voluntary district visitors, and twenty-nine choir members (fourteen voluntary and fifteen paid). The church was incurred for £7,000.00 (it had cost £5,500.00 to build in 1873) and the vicarage for £1,200.00 (less than its original cost).

Queen Anne's Bounty had increased their annual grant to £44.00, pew rents came to £40.00 and fees £4.00, but Easter offerings were only £12.00; the annual Wake donation had been discontinued "on the plea of lack of funds". With vicarage expenses of £25.00 (land tax £2.00, rates £15.00, insurance £1.00, repairs £7.00) and his payment of £54.00 to the curate, the Vicar's net income was only £155.00.

Sunday offertories were used for church expenses and special collections were made for missions and charities. In 1911 these amounted to £102.00 and £61.00, and with pew rents and Easter offerings made a total of £215.00 in voluntary giving by the parishioners (about £4,500.00 in today's values).

The regular Sunday services were Morning Prayer at 11.00 with Holy Communion on the first and third Sundays and at Festivals, and Evening Prayer at 6.30 in the summer and 3.30 during the winter months. In January 1912 Mr Kirkpatrick introduced an "early service" at 8.00 am, once a month, later extended to Festivals as well.

26th March 1912 was the forty-seventh anniversary of the Vicar's first Sunday in High Beach and the 7th April was Easter Day, with twenty-nine communicants at 8.00 o'clock and a further thirty-four after Morning Prayer.

On Easter Tuesday, Mr Edwards again took the Chair at the Vestry Meeting, and once more the Vicar recorded the minutes, his handwriting now showing that it was an effort for him to put pen to paper. He died at the Vicarage on Friday the 26th April, less than a month before his 84th birthday.

"It is with great regret", said the May Church Monthly, "that we have to record the death of the Rev. Josiah Norton, Vicar of High Beech for the past forty-seven years. The late Vicar had been ailing for a considerable time, but his death comes as a shock to all who knew him, and we feel sure that he will be greatly missed by his flock and all his many other friends. The funeral took place at High Beech on Wednesday the 1st May, and was attended by many mourners and the beautiful wreaths testified to the great esteem in which the late Rev J Norton was held".

His curate and his son-in-law, the Revd L J Lock, conducted the service, and the interment was in a grave near the east wall of the churchyard.

Mr Kirkpatrick stayed on a Curate-In-Charge of the parish for a further six weeks. The Bishop offered the vacant living to Mr Oakley of Halstead, who declined it as there was no stable for his horse and motor, and then, the 20th May, to Mr Kempthorne of Takeley. The Bishop described High Beach as "a charming Essex village, a lovely and healthy spot", and advised Mr Kempthorne to get in touch with Mr Edwards, the churchwarden, "who takes a keen interest in the parish and will be hospitable and show you everything. He tells me that Loughton people walk out on fine Sunday afternoons, but parishioners are often slack simply, I believe, because the old vicar outlived his capacity for work. I want to send them a man of 'moderate views' who will visit the people".

7th Incumbent – 1912

Mr Kempthorne lost no time in making up his mind, and a week after his first letter, the Bishop wrote again: "I am glad you accept High Beech. It will be in tomorrow's 'Times'. I am asking the Bishop of Barking to license and admit you – High Beech is a titular vicarage and does not require the more costly process of institution and induction".

The Revd. Charles Henry Kempthorne BA, of London University and Lichfield Theological College, was ordained in the diocese of Chester in 1886, and spent two years as Curate of Middlewich. He moved to Essex to be Curate of Mistley, and in 1897 Vicar of Takeley, a village of some nine hundred inhabitants nearly Bishops Stortford, where his net income was £205.00 with three acres of glebe; High Beech with £209.00 was hardly a financial promotion.

On Friday the 19th July 1912, he was licensed to the living by the Rt Revd Thomas Stevens DD, the first Bishop of Barking (who lived at Ilford), with the assistance of the Revd R L Allwork, Rural Dean of Chigwell and Vicar of Epping.

Mr and Mrs Kempthorne moved into the vicarage in time for the new Vicar to take the services on the following Sunday – 8.00 am with sixteen communicants, 11.00 am and 6.30 pm with the 39 Articles.

Before moving to Buckhurst Hill with Horace and Lily, Mrs Norton had offered to sell or rent to Mr Kempthorne two pieces of land which she said had been given to her husband – one adjoining the vicarage garden to the south, where they had a tennis court, fruit bushes and flower beds, and the other, the site of the old school opposite which they had used as a kitchen garden. Mr H H J Baring, who had succeeded his father as Lord of the Manor, soon made it quite clear that he had only lent the garden site to Mr Norton, and Mr Brenton, the solicitor who lived at the Manor House, gave his opinion that the school site had been vested in the incumbent and churchwardens, and could not legally have become private property. Mrs Norton finally gave way after being threatened with a writ for possession and Horace handed over the keys in February 1913. The school site was late let for 10/- per annum to local gardeners.

The future of the old church site was then considered, and Mr Brenton negotiated with the Forest authorities, who would not accept his suggestion that the land should be exchanged for a similar sized extension of the churchyard, but did agree to take it in return for payment of £50.00, which could be used only on any permanent improvement to the church, or for the benefit of the living. This was authorised by a faculty in June 1913.

In January 1914, the diocese of Chelmsford was formed, covering Essex and part of Kent north of the River. The Rt Revd J E Watts-Ditchfield becoming the first Bishop.

The following month, Elma Caroline, the six-year old daughter of Dr and Mrs Lock, died of pneumonia at Mrs Norton's house in Buckhurst Hill, and was buried in High Beach churchyard. The Waltham Abbey Church Monthly noted "the officiating clergymen were the Revd Ernest Lock, Vicar of Pill, and the Revd. J H Bridgewater, Rector of Charlton. The absence of her father, who is on his way to China to take charge of the hospital at Piny-ying, was a distressing circumstance which rendered this sad bereavement especially grievous".

WAR – 1914

On the 4th August 1914, the newspapers announced the declaration of war with Germany, and the pattern of life in the parish began to change, with the younger men leaving for military service, and the older men and women too, taking up war work.

On the 26th March 1915 – fifty years to the day after the Norton's first Sunday in High Beach – Mrs Lora Anna Norton died at the age of seventy and was buried in the churchyard by the Revd F W Morris Woodward DD, Rector of Buckhurst Hill.

Now living at Arabin House was Arthur Morrison, journalist and author, whose detective stories about Martin Hewitt – a successor to Sherlock Holmes – were followed by his two novel, “A child of the Jago” and “Tales of Mean Streets” about life in East London. Morrison was a keen collector of Japanese paintings, and was also an inspector in the Essex Special Constabulary with the distinction of having telephoned the warning of the first Zeppelin raid on London. His son Guy was abroad with the Army in Egypt.

Bad news from the Front began to come all too often. An early casualty was one of the churchwarden's sons, Captain Noel Edwards, who died in Belgium in May after a German gas attack.

The War Office had commandeered Rigg's Retreat on Wellington Hill for use as a training camp, and the Vicar held Sunday morning parade services in church for the soldiers, with the help of the Revd G A Campbell, Vicar of St Mary's, his curate, the Revd R K Davis, who soon became an army chaplain, and a benevolent retired clergyman living in Loughton, the Revd. William Dawson.

One of the soldiers in the camp in 1916 was the poet Edward Thomas, an officer in the Artists' Rifles awaiting embarkation to France. His wife rented a cottage in Nursery Road “in the forest among the beech trees and fern and deer” where they spent his Christmas leave, and he wrote his last poem. Three months later, he was killed by shell blast at the Battle of Arras.

Heavy snowstorms on Palm Sunday 1917 left the snow lying deep during Holy Week, and the services were poorly attended; there were forty Easter communicants. The Zeppelin raids on London were close enough for High Beach people to be alerted. On Sunday the 17th August, the Vicar received a warning at 6.00 pm but carried on with Evening Prayer.

In January 1918 the church roof was damaged by shrapnel from anti-aircraft guns – fortunately the churchwardens had insured against “war risks”. In October the so-called “Spanish ‘flu” epidemic reached the parish, and on the 3rd November, a very wet Sunday, only twelve adults and seven children were at the morning service.

PEACE 1918

On the 11th November, the Armistice was signed and the War was over, but many High Beach people were saddened by bereavement.

During the war, sixty-four men from the parish served in the forces, and seventeen of them lost their lives. The names were recorded on a framed list which was hung in the church.

THE MEN OF HIGH BEECH PARISH WHO SERVED THEIR KING AND COUNTRY IN THE GREAT WAR 1914-1918

+Pte P ME Abbot	Cpl A Hunt
Cpl J Bartlett	Pte S Hunt
Pte J H Belsham	Pte S Joy
Sgt M Brucken	Pte W Kelly
Rfn S Carter	+Pte H J Langdon
Pte H G Clarke	Pte C Lankester
+Rfn F J Cordell	Ptd H Lankester
+Pte A T P Cornell	Seaman A Lawrence
Pte B Cook	L Cpl A Lawrence
+Pte P J Cook	Pte W Littler
Pte C Davies	Pte C R Marden
Pte W Dykes	Farr.Sgt-Maj T Meredith
+Capt. A N Edwards	+L.Cpl H Miller
Lt-Col G J Edwards DSO MC	Pte G Morrison
Capt R Edwards	Pte H Plumb
Pte C English	Sgt W Powell
Pte F English	Sgt W Riggs
Pte F Fish	L.Cpl H F Riley
+Rfn R Fish	L.Cpl H F Riley
Pte E Foreman	+Pte C G Reed
Pte E W Goodey	Pte L Reed
+Pte J W Goodey	+Major A Roddick
2 nd Lt L Gumprecht MC	L.Cpl A Sawyer
+Rfn E H M Gumprecht	+Pte P J Tarling
Rfn F Harvey	Cpl P Tozer
Pte R Hawthorn	S.Sgt-Maj R Tozer
+Pte C E Hind	+Pte W F Tozer
Rfn J H Hind	Gdsn C W Wright
Rfn W W Hind	Gdsn E Wright
+2 nd Lt E E Horn	Gdsn C Withy

On Sunday the 1st June 1919, the Memorial Tablet in the Church was dedicated to “The Fallen Soldiers of High Beech”. An address was given by the Vicar of Waltham Abbey, Mr Johnston, and the tablet was unveiled by Field Marsh Sir Evelyn Wood VC, who “spoke in praise of those in the Parish who had sacrificed their lives in the Great War, and hoped the lessons of the War would go home to the hearts of all classes”.

Vestry meetings during Mr Kempthorne’s time were mere formalities. Each year the minutes repeat the same theme: “The Vicar thanked the church-wardens for all they had kindly done in the past year, and suggested that if they could see their way clear to serve for another year, it would be a great help” – and each year, Mr Edwards and Mr Titt “consented to do so”. Then Mr E Hunt “was re-appointed Church Clerk for another year at the usual salary” of £7.10.0d.

An important event for the Church of England in 1919 was the passing of the Enabling Act, which required every parish to set up a Parochial Church Council (to end such situations as had developed in High Beach – the autocratic control of church affairs by incumbent and churchwardens). Also in 1919, Mr Titt reached the retirement age of sixty-five after forty-one years at the village school and Miss Laura Hooper was appointed to the headship.

Mr Kempthorne too had decided to retire, feeling perhaps that a younger man was needed to revive the parish after the debilitating effects of the war years. Rising costs and falling income had left the annual church accounts in the red, in spite of generous donations from Mr Baring. The offertories, £84.00 in 1913, had dropped to £67.00 in 1919, when collections for charities totalled only £18.00. Easter communicants, sixty-three in 1912, had numbered fifty-three in 1919; compared with thirteen confirmation candidates in 1913, there was only one in 1915, five in 1916, and none since. The roll of the day school had fallen from fifty-three in 1911 to thirty-eight in 1917, and the Sunday school from sixty-two to thirty-five. A depressing feature of church life was the constant difficulty of obtaining coke for the church boiler! The annual rate of baptisms had halved during the war, whilst that of weddings had doubled – ten of the thirty-one bridegrooms were servicemen, including an Australian signaller, a US Army mechanic and an Army Officer who married Miss Kempthorne.

Although there was no clergy pension scheme, an incumbent who retired on the grounds of age or infirmity could claim a proportion of the benefice income as pension. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners arranged to give Mr Kempthorne £60.00 a year from the High Beach endowment, which would leave his successor short by that amount.

The Vicar's last Sunday in the parish was the 12th February 1920, when he preached on "The Enabling Act" at 11.00 am and "The Fall" at 6.30 pm. The Kempthornes retired to Christchurch, in Hampshire.

8th Incumbent – 1920

During Lent 1920, Sunday services were shared by Mr Edwards the Churchwarden, Mr Kirkpatrick the former curate, the Revd Alexander Colvin, Curate of St Mary's before the War and now at St John's, and the Revd. A J Bell, Curate of Waltham Abbey. Meanwhile, the Bishop of Chelmsford offered the vacancy to the Revd W D Jones BD AKC, Curate of St Paul's Goodmayes, and came to High Beach on the 27th March to institute him as Vicar.

William David Jones, of King's College, London, Wordsworth Prizeman and AKC (1st class), had been ordained deacon in 1890 and priest in 1891 by the Bishop of Rochester, and had held a succession of curacies in London – Brockley 1890, Finsbury 1892, Stoke Newington 1895, South Hackney 1904 (while there he took his BD degree), London Field 1912 and Goodmayes 1915. A curate for thirty years and now in his fifties, he and his wife had three sons and a daughter – William Owen, married and living in Saffron Walden, Arthur Morris, an undergraduate of Keble College, Oxford, Bernetta Mary (known as Berta) and Lewis aged sixteen. Mr Jones, as his daughter wrote later, "believed in good Catholic teaching".

The day after the institution was Palm Sunday and the new Vicar took his first services – 8.00 am with twelve communicants, 11.00 am Mattins, and 3.30 Evensong when he read the 39 Articles. A week later on Easter Day, there was a record number of communicants – fifth-three at the early service and another twenty-six after Mattins.

On the 19th April, the Vicar took the chair at the Vestry meeting, when he nominated Mr Edwards as the Vicar's Warden; Mr Titt was proposed and duly elected as People's Warden (the obsolete title "Parish Warden" now being abandoned) and Ernest Hunt was re-appointed Clerk at the usual salary. The churchwardens' accounts were £7.00 in deficit.

In spite of moving from an urban parish of four thousand people to a country one of five hundred, the Vicar found much to be done. On weekdays, he read the morning and evening offices in church at 8.00 am and 5.00 pm, with Holy Communion on Saints' Days, introducing altar ornaments, brass cross, candlesticks, vases and a book rest. He compiled an electoral roll and set up a parochial church council; Miss Susannah Hunt, teacher at the village school and a sister of the parish clerk, was the secretary. He was chairman and correspondent of the school managers and was responsible for the parish coal and clothing club. On summer Sundays, he held open-air services in the churchyard before Evensong.

Years later, Arthur Jones wrote: "My brother Lewis was a keen gardener. In those days, rabbits were more than plentiful, and the only way he could grow cabbages was to make circular baskets of chicken wire, one for every single cabbage. We had American blackberries, currants, gooseberries and a profusion of apples, all of which we inherited from our predecessor-but-Oje named Norton, who built the Vicarage, and whose wife, I believe, had a hand in the planning of it – whence all those commodious cupboards. High Beach was indeed a very isolated village, except when the Sunday School outings came with their long lines of horse brakes, and later the flocks of cyclists who used to come out on summer evenings from London in droves to the King's Oak, and go back again after a rest."

On Easter Tuesday 1921, a meeting of parishioners was held in the vestry, and the churchwardens' accounts showed a deficit of over £10.00 which was "due to the large expense of providing a new boiler for the heating of the church". In accordance with a resolution of the PCC, the deficit was cleared by the proceeds of a sale of work.

In 1922, the Vicar presented fifteen candidates at the confirmation in Waltham Abbey (three boys, ten girls and two adults) – the first such occasion for High Beach since 1916.

In 1921 the Bishop of Barking, the Rt Revd James Theodore Inskip DD, came to preach – the first of many visits to High Beach church, for which he had a special affection, and where he later acquired by faculty a family grave-space. The Vicar was by now making the acquaintance of his clerical neighbours, and visiting preachers included Canon Olivier of Epping, Mr Gell of St Mary's, Mr Maitland of St John's, Mr Ames from Theydon Bois, Dr Woodward and his curate from Buckhurst Hill, and the Archdeacon of Southend, the Ven P M Bayne. The choir of St Barnabas' Woodford came to sing Stainer's "Crucifixion", the first of several visits. Arthur Jones, now ordained and Curate first of Ashford and then Maidstone, helped with services as did the Revd V T Macey, now a Vicar in Canterbury, when visiting his Baring relations in High Beach.

The Village Hall was built in 1924 –it did not belong to the church, but was available for the church to use. The vestry soon became too small for the annual meetings which were then held in the Village Hall, as were the services on a Sunday in 1926 when the church was being cleaned and distempered.

Bishop Watts-Ditchfield had died in 1923 and his successor, the Rt Revd Guy Warman, came to preach in 1927. Other preachers at this time included Mr Cleall, the new Vicar of Waltham

Abbey, Mr B J Stanley, a Lay Reader from Loughton, and the incumbents of Epping Upland, Woodford Wells, Theydon Garnon, Coopersale, Chigwell, Lambourne and Chigwell Row. There were also regular sermons and collections on behalf of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa.

At the 1928 Annual Meeting, the Vicar referred to the recent death of Mr H H J Baring, who "had been a most generous supporter of the church and institutions of the parish". The year's accounts showed a deficit after paying for repairs to the churchyard wall. Mr A J Edwards, who had been churchwarden since 1891, resigned owing to ill-health (he died the next year), and the Vicar appointed Mr Francis Pegler of Arabin House as his warden.

Mrs Jones died in 1929, and her husband and son officiated together at the funeral. Lewis, the youngest son, had recently emigrated to Canada, and Arthur was now preparing for missionary work in Central Africa. Miss Berta Jones remained at home to keep house for her father.

In 1930, severe gales damaged the church steeple and weather-vane, and a sale of work was held to defray the cost of repairs, £89.00. The following year, Bishop Warman having moved to Manchester, the new Bishop of Chelmsford, the Rt Revd Henry Wilson, paid his first visit to the parish. When Mr Pegler resigned in 1931, he was succeeded as Vicar's Warden by Col E N Buxton, MC, DL, JP, who was now living at Wallsgrove House. Ernest Hunt resigned in 1933 after forty-one years as parish clerk, and was succeeded by his nephew, William Ernest Hunt – the fourth Hunt to hold the office.

Eustace Norton, until recently Headmaster of the Junior School of Framlingham College, died in 1932 and was buried in the churchyard. His wife died two years later, and was buried by their brother-in-law, the Revd L J Lock, who had served with the RAMC during the War, and later became Rector of Walsoken; retiring to Chelmsford, he died in 1936, and was also buried at High Beach.

The Bishop of Chelmsford came again in 1933, and other visiting preachers at this time included Mr W E Crick a Lay Reader, and Father Driver, a retired priest, both from Loughton, the Revd S T Smith, the new Rector of Buckhurst Hill, and the Diocesan Missioner, the Revd H P Statham.

The Vicar had received various annual grants from the diocese and the Commissioners since 1920, to help towards the £60.00 pension he had to pay to the previous Vicar. These grants ceased in 1929 when the two Willingale parishes were united, and part of their tithe rents, amounting to about £30.00 per annum, was added to the High Beach stipend. When Mr Kempthorne died in 1931, the pension payments finished, but the total benefice income, with the addition of pew rents averaging £30.00, fees £37.00 and Easter offering £32.00 was little more than £300.00. There was now a vicarage car, (an Austin 7 costing £33.00 a year to run, repairs £19.00, petrol and oil £14.00) and a vicarage telephone.

In 1935, the Annual Meeting discussed a proposal to replace the old candle fittings in the church with electric light. This was eventually agreed, and the installation by "Northmet" was completed in November, the cost being covered by donations of £122.00, collected by Col Buxton. The first year's electricity bill was £8.7.7d, compared with a sum of £7.12.0d for a year's supply of candles. The Vicar and his daughter, however, still used oil lamps and candles at the Vicarage.

High Beach continued to be a favourite resort for weekend trippers, and the already popular family car brought more visitors, as did the motor cycle “dirt-track” stadium at the King’s Oak. Passers-by stopped to visit the church, and young couples from outside the parish wanting to be married at “the church in the forest”, found that they could acquire residential qualification by booking a room at the King’s Oak or “leaving a bag” in the parish for the three weeks while their bands were being called. This resulted in a sudden “boom” in the number of weddings at High Beach.

Up to 1931, the yearly averages were: seven baptisms, five weddings and eight funerals. There were ten weddings in 1932, eighteen in 1934 and no less than twenty-one in 1936!

In 1937, the Vicar presented four candidates for confirmation (making sixty-six in all during his time in High Beach), took all the ten christenings, ten of the fourteen weddings and eight of the nine funerals, the last in November, and conducted most of the Sunday services up to the 28th, Advent Sunday. That day, he took Mattins, preaching her sermon on the text “Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him”, and afternoon Evensong with intercessions. On the 30th, St Andrew’s Day, he celebrated Holy Communion at 10.30 am as was his custom on Saints’ Days; and this proved to be his final duty. He died on Friday the 10th December at the age of seventy-one, and the Bishop of Barking took the funeral service and burial on the 14th.

Interregnum 1937

The Revd Daniel Conoley BD, a retired priest who lived at Forest Gate, had taken the services on the 5th and continued as priest-in charge for the next six months (at three guineas a Sunday). The Bishop of Barking came for the early service on Christmas Day, when there were thirty-three communicants, and he came again on Good Friday.

The parochial returns for 1937 were compiled by the churchwardens, Col Buxton and Mr Titt. They showed fifty-seven communicants, fifteen boys and fifteen girls with two teachers in the day school, and seven boys and twenty-one girls with one teacher in the Sunday School. There were thirty names on the electoral roll but, although the Easter vestry and Annual Church Meeting were held as usual, the PCC had not met during the year. Offertories and donations came to £96.00; church expenses £84.00, a deficit of £8.00 from 1936 and £5.00 paid towards the diocesan quota of £14.00, left a deficit of £1.00.

Miss Berta Jones later married the Revd H S Jones, Rector of Monks Eleigh, Suffolk – a friend from their Goodmayes days – and the Revd Arthur Jones returned from Africa in 1950 to a curacy in Watford and a lectureship in African Music at the University of London, becoming D.Litt in 1961.

During the last forty years, with three elderly Vicars, the church had seen very little change. Electricity, motor cars, telephones, radio (“wireless as it was still called” and even the early stages of television, were no longer novelties. Changing the candles for electric light was an indication that the church was, at last, starting to move with the times. Another change came in June 1938, with the arrival of a young Vicar – whose own story now continues our Parish History.

9th Incumbent 1938

(Contributed by the Rev Walter F Jones, ALCD. Vicar of High Beach 1938 to 1944)

Something of my personal background will not be out of place as it was very different from that of any of the previous incumbents. Brought up as a boy in the parish of St John's Boscombe, Bournemouth, one of my early recollections is of being among the crowd of spectators outside the church for the funeral of the Vicar, who was E J Kennedy. The local school had been given a half holiday for the occasion.

Kennedy had been one of the outstanding army chaplains of the 1914 war but had died in 1915. I have dim memories of his towering figure, six feet five inches tall, and of his striking appearance. I mention this because of his past connections with High Beach and the small boy's later connection still very much in the future.

Before Kennedy was ordained he lived at Arabin Dower House. He became churchwarden, was prepared for the ministry by the Vicar of the time, Josiah Norton, and he preached his first sermon after his ordination in High Beach Church. His influence at Boscombe had been very great; some of it lingered on in my young days.

I left school early during the years of the 1914 war, and after some years in commercial life I felt the call to serve god not so much in the ordained ministry as to work in the church overseas with the Church Missionary Society. However this came to naught, and I went on to train for the ministry at St John's Hall, Highbury, known as the London College of Divinity, becoming an Associate – hence the initial ALCD.

I was ordained in the London Diocese in 1928 by Bishop Winnington-Ingram. At the ordination in St Paul's over forty men were ordained including one who a few years ago retired as Bishop of Ripon. I was privileged to read the Gospel at the service.

I served three curacies in all – Holy Trinity, Dalston, St Mary's Beeston, Leeds and St Andrew's Rochford in the Chelmsford diocese. That is how it was that after five years, married and with two small children, I was offered by Bishop Henry Wilson, the benefice of High Beach.

He had already offered me the parish of Takeley, where a former Vicar of High Beach, Kempthorne, had been Vicar. We found the vicarage a rambling house of sixteen rooms with no gas, electricity or inside water. The bathroom consisted on a large empty room with a hip bath in the middle.

In direct contrast was High Beach Vicarage which had been designated a "model vicarage" when it was designed by Josiah Norton. The income of £350.00 per annum which went with it, was hardly commensurate with the life style demanded by such a delightful house. It was apt to give one delusions of grandeur without the wherewithal to sustain them!

The income was made up in a precarious fashion by a system of pew rents (which had been abolished in the Church at large but lingered on in some of the remoter parishes), Easter offering which included not only what was actually given in church on Easter Sunday (fortunately for me because this did not exceed £12.00) but also the result of a whip-round by the churchwardens, and various sums sent to the Vicar personally. Then there was a sum creamed off from one of the more affluent parishes of the diocese. Who could have dreamed up a more haphazard way of financing the clergy? Even so, we had to pay for our own repairs and decorations. From this

patchwork income a sum had to be paid annually to the diocese known as “Dilapidations” which was spent for us every five years.

All my predecessors had used oil lamps in the vicarage, but electricity was now laid on. It was very difficult to grow anything in the garden, large though it was, without adequate protection against rabbits and deer. The church had already been electrified (only literally!) a few years back. Until then it was lit by candles, and many were the voices raised in protest. They told me candles were better – presumably more picturesque.

I found High Beach a scattered isolated parish consisting of houses on and around the high bank (or “Beach” from which the area got its name, though many swore by “Beech”), surrounded by various hamlets and isolated houses. It was indeed a geographical area between Chingford, Loughton and Waltham Abbey, with no cohesion or identity as a whole, and little sense of community beyond the immediate area of the Beach. There had been no new buildings for years with the exception of a few council houses, and they were a very long way from the church.

The occupants of the few big houses had their real interests elsewhere. When they came to church, it was in the morning. Quite a number of the smaller cottages were occupied by the present or former employees of the big houses. When they came to church, it was in the evening (or afternoon in the winter months) Those who were independent of this set-up found it difficult to belong or relate. Until the war put an end to much free movement, congregations were swollen by many visitors.

The fact that many young people from outside the parish did their courting in the Forest led to constant request for weddings in the church. The tradition had been established before I came, and I saw no reason to disturb it. Legal impediments were easily overcome!

The churchwardens were Lt-Col. E N Buxton and Mr John Titt. Mr Buxton was of the brewing firm of Truman, Hanbury & Buxton. When the war came, he took up a staff appointment at the War Office and was not around much. His wife, the Hon Sybil Buxton was of the Ulster family of O’Neill. Her brother Terence O’Neill (later Lord O’Neill) became Prime Minister in the Stormont Parliament.

The other churchwarden was John Titt who was also the organist. Indeed he had been the organist ever since he came to the village in 1878 and the church had had no other. He had been the village schoolmaster, but had retired from that post in 1919. He was a little gnome-like figure with a white beard. To say he was an eccentric player is an understatement! I well remember my first Sunday service. In solitary state I walked up the centre aisle, doubtless fully conscious of my newly-acquired dignity, for this was my first living. I stood to start the service. The organ continued. In some embarrassment I sat down. And I had to remain seated until John Titt finished, which he did abruptly. He explained that “the old Vicar took much longer to get to his place” than I did. When the old man finally had to give up, I had much voluntary help from Loughton.

Mr Searle, who played the organ from 1938 to 1939 remembered two unnerving occasions in 1938 when he played the organ for the morning service.

“The first was the only time I met John Titt, the veteran organist. Our conversation was rather one-sided owing to his deafness, but he told me sadly several times that “they” would not let him play any more. He hovered round me, darting from one side to the other showing me which

stops he always used. I am afraid I preferred my own choice of stops, but this did not deter him, and he persisted with his advice until the final hymn.

On the second occasion, I arrived to find that no organ blower had come – the organ was “pumped” by hand in those far off days. The verger said that he would do it – when he had finished giving out the books at the door. He started blowing just as the Vicar emerged from the vestry and made his way briskly up to the chancel, and I could play only a few bars of my carefully rehearsed voluntary. Having to watch the “tell-tale” which showed how much wind was in the bellows, he relied on memory for the words. His was the only voice I could hear in the Venite, but as he could not manage the psalm from memory, the Vicar’s voice now became audible in the distance. In the Te Deum, the verger again took the lead, but unfortunately, while we were with the glorious company of the apostles, he had jumped a couple of verses, and was with the holy church throughout all the world. When I realised what was happening, I tried to stop him by calling “wrong verse”, and drew a loud stop to drown his stentorian voice. He stopped singing eventually and order was restored. After the blessing, he deserted the pump handle to collect the books as the people went out – and again I lost my chance to play a voluntary”.

As churchwarden, Titt was followed by E J Bryant who had come to live at Arabin House with his sister Mrs Stone, but he left after a year, and for most of my time, the other churchwarden was W W Webster of “Torwood”.

When I came much clearing up had to be done. In my first year, a new boiler was installed, the chancel roof repaired, the church cleaned and the churchyard “tidied up”. It was necessary for me to re-assure the parish in the church magazine that I had no designs on the general lay-out and natural appearance of the churchyard. This was a very sensitive issue!

WAR 1939

The whole of my incumbency was overshadowed and dominated by the war. The Munich agreement came after my first few months, and my first Harvest Festival co-incided with the issue of gas masks to the civilian population. I managed to start a small church magazine monthly, and kept it going for the duration of my time. Miraculously an almost complete set of copies has survived. Reading these through after so many years was a salutary experience. It made me wish that I had devoted more of the little space to people and less to grappling with the spiritual issues of the war. A Women’s Fellowship and Working Party was started, and a Children’s Service. We had a Youth Club later on.

But as the war dragged on its course any kind of organised parish life became difficult. Various functions were held but life was mainly a matter of maintaining the services and keeping personal contact with as many people as possible. Although we were never able to get a choir together the services were always musical. I remember a Methodist minister who was on one occasion in the congregation telling me that the singing was worthy of Methodists – no higher praise! I noted in the magazine that out of 779 possible hymns in our hymn book (many of them impossible) we had sung 208 in the course of one year. Many churches with choirs have a smaller repertoire.

During these years many people passed through the parish. Bellair at Lippit’s Hill was taken over by the Borough of West Ham for use as an old people’s home. Two of the old people discovered that they had known each other fifty years before, and so re-discovered love’s young dream. They were married in High Beach Church. It was quite an excitement.

The Suntrap housed the Plaistow Maternity Hospital. At one time, we were sleeping six of the nurses at the vicarage. Being East Londoners, the mothers waked to church as soon as they were able for the service of Churching (now I believe largely abandoned). The practice ceased when one mother came before she should have done, and had to be taken back by ambulance.

The Vicar of Plaistow, Donald Tibbenham, a man of some charisma, as we should say today, brought a number of his congregation out to Wallsgrove House, many of whom had been “bombed out”. Together they lived a community life, even holding their own services. Their Vicar’s sudden death was a great shock to them. He was buried at High Beach amid emotional scenes.

I frequently visited the church school, which belonged to the unreformed era of education but kept the children in the village. An uncertificated teacher took the infants, and Winifred Hodges, the Headmistress, took the rest. When I came, Susannah Hunt was the assistant. She had been connected with the school all her life – first as a pupil and then as pupil-teacher and assistant. She died in 1942 in the same house in the Forest in which she had been born sixty-eight years before. She was the first secretary of the Church Council when it was formed after the Enabling Act 1919. When I came, the PCC I believe existed, but was in abeyance, and was resurrected. The school in 1939 had the largest number on the registers since 1930 – which was not saying very much. Miss Hodges was a great nature lover and tried to communicate to the children her own love of trees and birds.

At the out set of the war, a small company of the Home Guard (“Dad’s Army”) was formed and I myself was an Air Raid Warden and the Vicarage was the post for the village. Emergency rations were kept there, but fortunately never had to be called on.

During the bombing of London, we put up in the vicarage numbers of people who had to get away from the strain caused by the air raids. Some seemed to be under the impression that the vicarage was some kind of hotel. Numbers of bombs and land mines were dropped in the Forest. As far as I can recollect there were no casualties in the parish except horses in Wallsgrove. The church did have a very narrow escape on one occasion, but the only damage was cracked windows. The school was out of action for a while, and the children had their lessons in the church, but I cannot remember now whether this was due to the bombing.

It was an awe-inspiring sight to watch from the vicarage bedroom, London burning during the heavy raids. After the first heavy raid on London, there was what they called “unplanned evacuation” when many people just fled to the Forest. We got some of them into the Suntrap which was then empty, and they just slept on the floor.

Another time when people flocked into the Forest was on the first Day of Prayer after Dunkirk. People were indeed full of foreboding about what would happen. When I arrived at the church on that Sunday I was quite unprepared for the cars lining the road outside the church and the large congregation within. People seemed to turn instinctively to the quiet and peace of the Forest in this time of crisis. Perhaps the more cynical would put it in different terms. I remember that we had just received a message that the organist, who was then Carlton Roberts, was detained in Liverpool on business. My wife deputised at the organ, and she recalls our two children sitting on either side of her on the organ stool.

An anti-aircraft site was soon in operation at Lippitt's Hill after the declaration of war but only one parade service took place in the church as the site and others in the area were under the ministry of regular chaplains.

The Anglican chaplain was Joseph McCulloch, who afterwards became a City incumbent, and was well-known for his outspokenness. The Methodist chaplain, with whom I established friendly contact, was Cyril Downs. Years later when I was Vicar of St Barnabas, Plymouth, we walked together in procession at one of the services. One of the AA gunners at Lippitt's Hill was Maurice Denham, who has since become known to millions through radio, television and screen.

During the war years, I was able to keep in touch with the Loughton churches. Indeed although our historic links were with Waltham Abbey, we were more naturally linked with Loughton. I belonged to the Loughton Fraternal of Clergy and Ministers. More "Catholic" than any of us was the Methodist minister, Arthur Barr, who afterwards joined the Roman Catholic Church. I remember taking part in ecumenical study groups discussing the best-selling Penguin "Christianity and Social Order" by William Temple, who was then Archbishop of Canterbury. However, I cannot recall that any of my congregation at High Beach shared my need of fellowship with Christians outside the parish.

As the war years went by, the strain of the war took its toll. Families lost relatives in action but no in such numbers as in the 1914-18 War.

The figures of our Easter communicants tell their own story. There were one hundred and eight for my first Easter in 1939. Two years later this was down to ninety. There were seventy-six in 1942 and sixty-one in 1943. If Easter communicants reached their lowest point in 1943, the number of baptisms were at their highest – nineteen as again nine in my first year. I draw no deductions from this! Weddings on the other hand reached their highest figure in 1939 when there were twenty-one – no doubt due to the onset of war. They reached their lowest in 1944 when there were seven. Averages for the years 1938 to 1944 were Baptisms: twelve, Marriages: thirteen, Burials: nine.

At the beginning of 1944 the end of the war was in sight although the invasion of the continent was still to come. The magazine shows that some of us were thinking much of the kind of nation we would have after the war. I received an invitation from the Church Missionary Society to take the post of Area Secretary for the three dioceses of Southwark, Rochester and Canterbury. So in April of that year, we moved to Croydon where we were to live – in time to experience the flying bombs and V2 rockets.

For the next seven years, I travelled constantly in South London and South-East England. It was a life in direct contrast to my six years in the Forest. But it is these years I recall with affections and some nostalgia, and not my travelling years. Those walks through the Forest to church with our children when they were young have always remained in our memory.

After a spell as Vicar of St James, Hatchan, New Cross, South London – where E J Kennedy had been curate and vicar at the turn of the century – and then afterwards as Vicar of St Barnabas, Plymouth, I returned to the Chelmsford Diocese in 1966, first to Pattiswick and Bradwell, and then to Weathersfield where I finished my active ministry.

A final comment comes from the “Vicar’s Notes” in the church magazine for March 1944.

“My last Sunday with you will be the 9th April (Easter Day). There is still no news of my successor here. Nobody as yet has come to see the place. It will not be a surprise to me if an appointment is not made for some time, considering the serious shortage of clergy and the position of the income here. Average wages have risen 60% or 70% during the war to keep pace with the rising cost of living, but the income of the clergy remains fixed. This is felt especially in the smaller incomes and this parish is one of them. Again, the flow of men into the colleges has dried up on account of the war and many men have enrolled as chaplains. The prospect of having no Vicar for some time should put you on your mettle.. I know that every effort will be made to maintain the services every Sunday.”

However the vacancy lasted for only two months with no interruption to the regular services, thanks to the Revd. E F W Ames – Vicar of Theydon Bois - who was Rural Dean, the Revd A V G Cleall, - Vicar of Waltham Abbey, the Revd A Stainsby – Chaplain of Bancroft’s School, and Mr W E Crick – the lay reader from Loughton.

10th Incumbent 1944

The Revd. Frank Knibbs was instituted as Vicar of High Beach on Monday the 5th June 1944.

Mr Knibbs had studied at Leeds University and Keble College, Oxford, before being ordained deacon in 1937 and priest in 1938 by the Bishop of Ripon. From 1937, he was Curate of Meanwood, Leeds, and in 1939 became Vicar of Whixley with Green Hammerton, near York, a parish with a population of 1093 and a stipend of £237.00.

In 1942 he moved into the Chelmsford Diocese to be Vicar of the Good Shepherd, Collier Row, on the western fringes of Romford, where a large housing estate was still uncompleted and a new church had been built in 1934 through the generosity of Miss Violet Wills, the tobacco heiress.

There was a full church for his institution by the Bishop of Chelmsford, the Rt. Revd Henry Wilson. The Bishop of Barking and many local clergymen were present, and the large gathering moved on to Wallsgrove House by the invitation of Colonel and Mrs Buxton.

The following day was ‘D’ Day, when the British and American forces invaded Europe, and a week later Germany began to assault London, and the south-eastern counties with V1 missiles, the pilot-less aircraft commonly called flying bombs or “doodle-bugs”.

In his first letter in the Parish Magazine, Mr Knibbs asked parishioners with relatives away serving in the Forces to let him have their names and addresses so that he could write to them, and a framed Active Service List was displayed in the Church.

Three men had already made the supreme sacrifice and had been buried in the churchyard – Philip David Lloyd in 1940, Lionel Herridge in 1943 and William Morgan Davies in 1944. Arthur Freshwater, the Verger’s son, had been taken prisoner in 1942 after the fall of Singapore, and his wife and parents were still waiting for news of him.

LIST OF THOSE FROM THIS PARISH AND CONGREGATION ON ACTIVE SERVICE

K Belsham	S Glass	J Reed
A R Bolton	A G Holland	E Reed
J A Bolton	D S Howard	L Reed
F R Bolton	C S Howard	T Riley
C N Bolton	+L Herridge	J Riley
E N Buxton	F C Howlett	J Rawlings
A Cooke	G Hunt	W Salmon
A M Cooke	W Hunt	H Warlow
C Cooke	P Joy	D Wilson
H Cooke	S Lankester	W W Webster
R Cooke	E Lankester	
B Cordell	T Love	
L M D Davies	S Lloyd	
+W M Davies	+P Lloyd	
H E Dellar	H Martin	
H C Dellar	B Miller	C Brown
B Dickens	G Parkes	G Bateman
J Freeman	W C Payne	E Burton
+A Freshwater	J Piper	A Rayment
R Glass	F Porter	+L Rayment

BRETHREN, PRAY FOR US

In July, a “Serving Men’s Fund” was opened with a church collection, followed by house-to-house visits by Miss Hodges, headmistress of the village school, Mrs Brenton of the Manor House, Mrs Freshwater, Mrs Knibbs and Miss Patricia Webster of Torwood. Further collections and gifts, a garden meeting, a concert arranged by Mr Roberts the organist, a bring-and-buy sale, a whist drive and Mr Miller’s box at the tea hut, brought the total to £182.00 by the end of the year, when parcels and postal orders were sent to High Beach servicemen.

A matter which occupied the PCC at this time was the benefice stipend, so aptly described by the Revd. Walter Jones as “the patchwork income”. The incumbent received, at intervals during the year, £35.00 from the original endowment of the Old St Paul’s Church, £46.00 from Queen Anne’s Bounty, £143.00 from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and £29.00 from the tithes of Willingale parish – a fixed total of £253.00. In addition were the variable items – the wedding, burial and churchyard fees, the Easter Offering (the church collections on Easter Day together with a “whip round” made by the churchwardens) and the pew rents. The averages for the previous six years were £44.00 from fees, £39.00 Easter Offering and £38.00 in pew rents – showing that the Vicar expected to receive about £374.00 per annum.

The Bishop of Chelmsford considered the “the income of High Beach is impossibly small for these days” and recommended the PCC to adopt “Scheme K” by which the Ecclesiastical Commissioners would augment benefices below £450.00 by doubling a sum guaranteed by the parish. For a start, the PCC agreed to raise £36.00 a year so as to increase the stipend by £72.00.

The aid raids were intensified in September by the V2 rockets, which by January 1945 were arriving at the rate of eight a day; forty-six feet long and loaded with nearly a ton of explosive, they came over at around 3,000 miles an hour, too fast for warnings to be given.

On Monday the 8th January at 11.00 am, a rocket fell in the Forest a short distance to the south-east of the church and the blast of its explosion smashed the east and south windows, stripped the tiles off the nave roof, and covered everything inside the church with dust and plaster.

The cost of repairing the damage was estimated at over £1,000.00 with a further £200.00 for cleaning the organ. Temporary repairs were soon begun, the broken windows boarded up and the roof protected with tarpaulins. A restoration fund was started and generously supported by donations, concerts, collections and other activities. Until Easter, Sunday services were held in the music room of Wallsgrove House.

“At Evensong on Sunday the 4th March 1945”, the Vicar wrote in the Parish Magazine, “We made special remembrance of Arthur Freshwater, who died in the Japanese prison camp in Siam, and who, before joining the Sherwood Foresters Regiment at the beginning of the War, was a sides-man at the Church, a communicant, and a keen member of the High Beech Church”.

At this time the Vicar also recorded the death on active service of a fifth High Beach man, Cecil Rayment.

A year later the Vicar wrote: “With the return of ex-prisoners of war from the Far East, definite first-hand news is available concerning Arthur Freshwater. Contact has been made with several of the men who were his friends and with him up to the time he died, and all bear witness to the amazing courage, cheerfulness under terrible circumstances, and unquenchable faith in God, that Arthur displayed”.

A memorial stone in the churchyard gives further details:

“Arthur David, 1/5 Shewood Foresters, the beloved husband of Ella Freshwater, born 14.2.1917, died 21.7.43 whilst a POW at Touchan Spring Camp, Siam”.

VE Day, 8th May 1945, brought peace in Europe, and VJ Day on the 15th August, marked the end of the War. The temporary repairs had not been finished until June, being delayed by shortages of labour and materials, as priority was given to repairing bomb-damaged houses. The repairs cost £512.00 – the restoration fund fortunately had reached £600.00.

The activities in the parish showed that the Vicar and his people were not disheartened by the damage to the church and the difficulties of the post-war period.

There were many fund-raising events in aid of the church restoration. The first-ever confirmation in High Beach Church was taken by the Bishop of Barking at Whitsun 1945. The choir was started in the same year in time for the Harvest Festival and seated in the Chancel (in Mr Titt’s time, the choir had sat on chairs either side of the organ). The new electric organ blower was installed in time for the Christmas services. Two years later, blue gowns and hats were bought for the ladies and girls, and strips of carpet for the choir stalls were given by Miss Lily Norton.

Early in 1947, after a bitterly cold winter, there were burst pipes in the church, and the boiler was also found to be in a bad state. Wintry gales had damaged the temporary roof covering, and rain came through in several places. The roof was once more made water-tight, but restoring the heating system was not completed until April 1948, at a cost of £177.00 towards which a bring and buy sale raised £125.00.

The balance sheet for 1947 showed a total income of £1213.00, total expenditure £605.00 and balances of, Church account £183.00, restoration fund £272.00, heating fund £125.00.00 and Titt Memorial Fund £28.00 (part of the donations had been spent on repairing the bells and setting up the choir stalls). Scheme K payment had been increased to £86.00.

The licence for permanent repairs to the building arrived at last; the nave roof was to be stripped, rotted timbers renewed and tiles replaced, damaged interior plaster made good, the walls redecorated and the windows glazed. The cost was expected to be covered by compensation from the Government War Damage Commission.

In April 1948, Mr Knibbs announced that he had a “Call” to become a Missions to Seamen Chaplain, and was resigning the living. The following month, he had to withdraw from his new appointment after an unsatisfactory medical examination. Unfortunately, the Bishop had already offered the High Beach vacancy to the Vicar of Dovercourt, who had accepted, so that the obvious solution was for Mr Knibbs to move to Dovercourt.

The Vicar’s last Sunday was the 18th July. During his time in High Beach, communicants at Easter had averaged ninety-three (103 in 1947) and his Easter Offerings had risen from £15.00 to £52.00. Annual averages were twenty baptisms, eleven marriages and eight burials. The electoral roll contained sixty-eight names.

At the Farewell Social, the Vicar and Mrs Knibbs were given a cheque for £63.00 and a grandfather clock. As gifts from the choir, Graham and Rosemary each had a stamp album.

11th Incumbent 1948

The Revd. Herbert Purefoy Statham MA of Kin’s College, Cambridge and Wells Theological College, was ordained in 1904 and served in the Southwark diocese until 1929, when he moved to Chelmsford as Diocesan Missioner – he visited High Beach to preach in 1932. He had been Vicar of Dovercourt since 1935, and was instituted to the living of High Beach on the 24th July 1948.

The permanent war-damage restoration work on the church began soon after Mr Statham’s arrival, and when the outside roof repairs were completed, scaffolding was put up inside for the plastering and decorating. Although the organ was covered by sheets, all the Sunday services were continued in spite of the dust and mess. The work was finished during December - almost five years after the V2 explosion – and the windows re-glazed except for the three at the east end of the chancel.

Meanwhile, the War Memorial Tablet was completed, and erected in the church in time to be dedicated on Remembrance Sunday, 7th November.

The new Vicar was also immediately involved in the complicated affair of the vicarage drainage. Some months earlier, the diocesan architect had found that the drains were not connected to the main sewer nor to a cesspit, but discharged into the Forest, running by the front fence in an open channel, causing offensive smells in hot weather. It was proposed to build a cesspool on the land adjoining – the “garden site” formerly owned by the Barings, and let to successive Vicars at a nominal rent, and now the property of Mrs Brenton of the Manor House, who generously offered the land as a gift to the benefice. This was at first not accepted by the Church Commissioners (a body formed in 1948 by the union of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners with Queen Anne’s Bounty) who asked “Is it really intended to add over three-quarters of an acre to the grounds of

the parsonage house so that a cesspool may be put on the land/" By March 1949, however, they agreed to accept the gift, and the new drainage was soon completed.

In addition to the War Memorial Tablet, four other memorials were placed in the church during Mr Statham's time at High Beach: three stained glass windows in the chancel given in memory of his wife by Mr F F McKenzie, Superintendent of the Forest (Bishop Inskip was to dedicate them but he died three days before the date arranged and, after a service at St Mary's was buried in High Beach Churchyard beside his wife, daughter and granddaughter); the table by the south door in memory of David Freshwater, verger 1939 -50; the plaque on the front of the organ case to Mr Titt (who had died in 1940); and the tablet on the wall behind the Vicar's stall recording the Revd. Josiah Norton's long incumbency, given by his daughters, Miss Lily Norton and Mrs Lock.

A paragraph in the October 1949 Parish Magazine reported that "the Rev F Knibbs has unfortunately been obliged to resign the living of Dovercourt. The departure of his curate left him single-handed in charge of this large and complicated parish, and the task was beyond his strength. The difficulty has fortunately been solved by his appointment to the beautiful little village of Eridge Green in Sussex, where he will have a lighter task among rural surroundings".

The organ, which had been shaken in the explosion and later suffered from the effects of dust and damp, was dismantled and over-hauled in 1950, an "American organ" being used for two months.

The church spire was struck by lightning in April 1951, the lightning conductor and the wiring in the tower and vestry destroyed, the clock damaged and some of the stonework of the spire cracked and loosened. Fortunately the insurance company paid the bill for the repairs.

On being told of the stonework damage by the steeplejacks, the architect, Mr Rex Foster, sent a surveyor to advise on the necessary repairs. He arrived at the church to find vertical ladders from ground to the weathervane on the north side but no steeplejacks. On his own, he climbed to the top, inspecting the damage on the way. At the top the view was wonderful but, as there was a bit of a breeze, the tops of the trees were rolling and this gave something of a mal-de-mer feeling. On the way down his left elbow suffered a sharp knock on a ladder socket disabling the arm and the remainder was completed single-handed. The re-inspection after the repairs were carried out was done with the aid of field glasses. Twenty-five years later, that surveyor was elected churchwarden not, of course, anything to do with the lightning strike.

In July, the Vicar was installed as an Honorary Canon in Chelmsford Cathedral, and at the end of September, Mr S Carlton Roberts, who had been organist since 1939, resigned and was succeeded by his young assistant, Barry Rose of Chingford.

On Sunday the 14th October, Canon Statham died at the age of seventy-one. He was buried in the churchyard, the service being conducted by the Revd D A Rhymes, Priest-vicar of Southwark Cathedral, who had been the late Vicar's curate at Dovercourt. The Rt Revd H R Gough, now Bishop of Barking, preached at the memorial service when many of Canon Statham's clerical friends joined the large congregation.

Colonel Buxton wrote in the Magazine: "May we retain his certainty that love of his God and kindness to his neighbour made an infinitely cheerful way of living."

INTERREGNUM

For the next seven months from October 1951 to May 1952, the Sunday services and the baptisms, weddings and funerals were taken by the clergy of Waltham Abbey and St Mary's , Loughton – Canon Cleall (who was now Rural Dean) and his curates, C C C Wilson and N E H Westall (who was priest-in-charge at Upshire), and the Revd L S Bewers and his curates, D V Wright (of St Michael's) and R W East. The Bishop of Barking came for the early service on Easter Day and Mr W E Crick the Loughton Lay Reader, who had often helped out during the past twenty years, came several times.

12th Incumbent 1952

On the 3rd May, the parishioners welcomed back the Revd Frank Knibbs, 're-instituted' by the Bishop of Barking in the church which now showed no signs of war damage. In the caption on the cover of the church magazine during Mr Knibbs' previous incumbency had been "The Church in the Forest" – now on the cover was "The Cathedral in the Forest".

Mr Knibbs was delighted to be back as Vicar of High Beach – "the same loveliness of the Forest, same garden to mow, weed and scythe at the vicarage, the same charming church, the same unflinching friendliness and loyalty .. As a parish we have really made history. Apparently it has never been heard of before for a vicar to come back for 'a second innings', not even by the bishops, who surely ought to know."

One 'restoration' was necessary. The old chancel carpet had been stolen in 1949, and a team of ladies undertook the making of a replacement – a twenty-four feet long blue carpet (part of which is still in position in the Chancel). It was ready for "Coronation Sunday", the 31st May 1953, which began a week of parish festivities which included the lighting of the Beacon Bonfire at the King's Oak.

From the Parish Magazine 1953

"An unexpected pleasure was ours (those of us who attended Church) on the 17th May, when our morning congregation included no less distinguished a visitor that "Montgomery of Alamein". The complete surprise of this informal visit added greatly to its charm and inspiration. Had "Monty's" coming been advertised beforehand, the Church would doubtless have been crowded to overflowing but the pleasure of the occasion, both for him and for us, would have been thereby diminished.

After the service Viscount Montgomery stood at the porch and chatted with us, and expressed his admiration for our Church and its beautiful setting. That was not surprising. The sun shone out splendidly and our lilac was in full bloom, not to mention the bird-songs and the wonderful trees in May".

Also from the Parish Magazine:

"There must be many of us who pass the Church in the Forest every day of our lives who will never have noticed in the tail of the arrow of the weather-vane, the two words "Laus Deo" – Latin for "Praise the Lord". Perhaps our eyesight is not quite what it was. The arrow needs to be at the right angle to catch the light. Even then it requires a keen eye to pick out the letters. A friend who lives three miles from the Church picked them out with a telescope from his window recently and informed the Vicar."

Parish life was very active during this time. In 1953 the Vicar introduced an innovation – “Midnight Mass” on Christmas Eve, attended by eighty-five communicants. He conducted the Sunday services as usual on the 3rd January and died suddenly in hospital a week later, aged only forty-seven.

The wooden seat in the churchyard by the south porch is inscribed in his memory, and overlooks his heather covered grave which, at his own request, was not marked by a stone.

Interregnum

The living was again vacant, this time for only four months during which time the services were maintained by local clergymen from Waltham Abbey and Loughton, and some two hundred parishioners and friends contributed almost £600.00 to “The Revd F Knibbs Memorial Fund”.

13th Incumbent – 1954

On the 5th May 1954, the Revd Arthur Laurence Harriss BA, FSA who had been Vicar of Canewdon was instituted as Vicar of High Beach, and installed in the Vicarage with his two daughters, the Misses, Doris and Eileen Harriss.

The stipend was now augmented by £172.00 under Scheme K, making with fees and Easter Offering, a gross of about £500.00 (pew rents being phased out).

A kindly, cheerful man, Mr Harriss had spent his forty years of ministry first in London, and from 1930 in the Southend deanery. During his time in High Beach, he made no major changes in the parish routine, apart from appointing Mr John Hunt (who had been a pupil of Dr Harold Darke, an eminent City organist) in place of Mrs Knibbs, who had been organist since Barry Rose went off for the National Service in 1952.

A group of ladies, under the guidance of Mrs Clarke of the Dower House, worked for six months on a new altar cloth which was finished in time for Christmas 1955.

Early in 1956, Mr Harriss had decided to retire because he realised that the parish needed a vicar’s wife as well as a vicar, and also because he had reached the age of seventy.

He left High Beach in April and lived in Rochford, becoming a Public Preacher, Rural Dean of Canewdon, and Honorary Canon of Chelmsford. He died in 1976.

For the period 1948 to 1956 the annual averages were eighteen baptisms, fifteen marriages and eight burials. Peak figures were reached with twenty-three marriages in both 1953 and 1954, and twenty-nine baptisms in 1955.

Interregnum

Yet another interregnum followed (the fourth in twelve years), and a retired clergyman was found to act as priest-in charge, the Revd F G Frost, a former Lincolnshire Rector, now living in Buckhurst Hill. He had in fact spent four weeks in High Beach on a holiday exchange of duties with Mr Knibbs in August 1946.

Few parishes can have had as many changes as did High Beach between 1937 and 1956. During those twenty years, a regular churchgoer would have known six vicars (three of whom died in office), attended six institutions, and seen dozens of visiting clergymen during the five interregnum periods while the parish was without a vicar.

But for the whole period, and indeed since 1932, Col. E N Buxton had been Vicar's Warden, and his stabilising influence undoubtedly contributed greatly to maintain the continuity of the parish. He was to continue in office until his death in 1957.

14th Incumbent – 1956

The Revd. Joseph Crompton was instituted as Vicar on the 6th June 1956. Many years later, he wrote:

“It was a glorious evening on the day we moved into the Vicarage, so my wife and I strolled through the forest to the church. Tom James, a former churchwarden, was working the churchyard. When he saw us, he left what he was doing and kindly offered to show us round. We saw the “Father Willis” organ and learned that the great man himself had built it for High Beach Church; we were told how the blue chancel carpet had been made by the ladies of the parish and why it had become known as the Carpet of Reconciliation. Up in the tower, we saw the thirteen hemispherical bells and the Heath Robinson style of machinery which played them by gravity weights on a cable, which took two men twenty minutes hard work to wind. The apparatus had been put out of action by a wartime bomb, and after the war, Tom James and another church officer, Alfred Whitaker, did away with the cumbersome weights.

And so a pleasant evening was passed learning about the place in which we were to spend so long a time. As we left, Tom looked at me with a twinkle and said “By the way, two bishops are buried out there and four of our former incumbents!”. My wife's immediate reaction was to exclaim, “Let pack up and go back – it's not too late”.

But they did stay, for the next twenty-four years.

By 1971, Mr Crompton was vicar of High Beach with Upshire (Upshire was not then a Parish) and was in sole charge of the benefice without connections with any other church. Services followed a well established pattern, namely 8.00 am Holy Communion on the 1st and 3rd Sundays (2nd and 4th at Upshire) and Morning Prayer at 11.15 am with short Holy Communion after on the 2nd and 4th Sundays. The 11.15 timing was to allow sufficient time for the Vicar to get to High Beach after a 9.30 service at Upshire. However, on one Sunday each month, this was not possible and a Lay Reader, Dr Joseph Whiteley, took Morning Prayer. There was a Sunday School which met at the Village Hall before the Morning Service but, in the early 1970's, this was changed to meet in the Church.

All ran smoothly under the hand of Michael Shingleton who was both one of the churchwardens and also treasurer. Miss Brenton of the Manor House, “looked after” the church in so many ways and was Sacristan. She held the massive 7”-8” iron key to the front door. This key was later changed when the porch was closed in thus reducing the terrific draughts that occurred when the door was opened. Dr John Hunt played the organ and at one time, his wife and three daughters were all in the choir. In the late 1960's the mechanism for ringing the bells changed, and Jane Russell taught herself how to play the “lever mechanism” and compiled a book of over two hundred hymn tunes which can still be played on the bells. As she was in the tower anyway, she also became responsible for winding the clock each week – it runs for eight days before it needs re-winding. Phyllis Shingleton was in charge of the flowers.

One Good Friday, the main and side doors were damaged and could not be opened and the long sealed tower door had been smashed open and it was possible to get in easily. The vestry had been searched and the safe turned on its face and ripped open with masses of sand all over the

place. Nothing had been stolen except a ladies watch which was broken and had been in the safe for years. This caused cancellation of the Good Friday Service but after a weekend of hard work, the Easter services went on as usual.

During the 1970's, Series Two, the forerunner of the ASB was tried over a few weeks but the congregation voted not to adopt it.

Harvest Suppers were wonderful events, with, on one occasion, Bidy Webster bringing her goats along to the old Village Hall. The church used the hall for social and fund raising events such as Christmas Bazaars, with a Secret Shop for children made by Phyllis Mason, refreshments for Flower Festivals etc until the Hall was forced to close. Then the church used Sewardstone Hall until the new hall was built.

When Dr John Hunt moved in 1976, his place as organist was taken by Jack Haylett who had been playing the organ at Upshire. His wife, Vi Haylett, joined the High Beach choir but was always delighted to be invited back to sing at Upshire. It had been customary for a group of adults and children to go around the Parish singing carols just before Christmas but bad weather and the effect of cold and long walks in the dark, narrow lanes were discouraging and it was suggested that informal carol singing took place in the church and this is still a popular part of church life.

Mr Crompton decided to retire in 1980 after twenty-four years and various leaving parties for him were well attended.

Interregnum 1980

The interregnum which followed lasted for almost twelve months, during which it was "business as usual", all under the control the churchwardens. However, two things happened immediately. The large "Model" Vicarage was sold and Upshire severed connections with High Beach and attached themselves to Waltham Abbey. So High Beach was left without a priest, entirely on its own and nowhere to house a priest, if one could be found. The PCC, led by Michael Shingleton, worked hard to ensure that the church would not be closed. There were meetings with the Bishop, the Archdeacon, and any one else likely to listen. Not a service was missed and in fact, a mid-week service was held with the Bishop of Chelmsford preaching.

Apart from the day to day running of the Parish, there was the problem of getting a priest for each of the Communion services which was not easy but a few kind clergy did help, as did some of local Readers. The biggest problem was the Midnight Communion for Christmas Eve. Not a single priest was able to help – all being too busy in their own parishes. The Bishop suggested that if a priest could be found to consecrate the bread and wine, Dr Joseph Whiteley could conduct the service. With the Bishop's consent, the Vicar of St Mary's, Loughton joined the procession at High Beach at 11.30 pm, went straight to the altar, consecrated the elements, turned, went out to his car, drove through the forest, fully robed, and joined his own procession at 11.45pm. Meanwhile, Dr Whiteley, assisted by both wardens, Mr Shingleton and Mr Harold Bodley, continued the service at High Beach with a congregation of about ninety people.

The Sunday School continued, led mainly by Mrs Audrey Duerden, helped by her daughter Beverley, 'Trish Webster, Denise Bodley and others as they were available. The church has always been known for its beautiful flowers and its standard has never dropped, after the death of Phyllis Shingleton, thanks to Mary Mason supported by her husband Maurice.

At last the Bishop told the churchwardens he had got a priest for High Beach if somewhere could be found for him to live, but the new man could not be a vicar as he would only be serving his second curacy. The new priest could not be for High Beach only as he would have to be licenced to the Vicar of an adjoining parish as a Curate and would not be permanent, just a stop-gap for two or so years. So a hunt started for a house. Wallsgrove had a pair of cottages in Church Road, one for the gardener and one for the chauffeur. The latter was available and was purchased (that cottage is the right hand one of the pair which are now combined into the Vicarage) and a lot of work was carried out in preparation for the new occupants.

15th Incumbent – 1981

The Revd. Paul Haworth arrived in September 1981 to be Priest-In-Charge while the ecclesiastical powers-that-be linked the parish of High Beach (the benefice having been extinguished) first with St Mary's, Loughton and later with Waltham Abbey. Mr Haworth arrived with his wife, Kathrine, their sons, Roy and Bruce, and Paul's father, Alek. At a service of Evensong, the Bishop licenced Mr Haworth as Curate of St Mary's Loughton, with special responsibility for High Beach, and a fresh start was made.

By common consent no changes were made to the services so everything proceeded much as normal. After a short while Kathrine Haworth took over the Sunday School, Jack Haylett built up the choir from the congregation including his wife, Vi, Phyllis Mason, Joyce and Jane Russell and others. Phyllis Mason made a replacement Festival Altar Frontal in plain gold with ornamental orphreys which was used instead of the white frontal and then, with help from friends, made a replica of the original Festival Frontal which is used to this day on festive occasions.

Two major alterations were made to the Church. Due to a very generous bequest from the Misses Akers, the Chapel was moved from the South to the North transept and the "Akers Room" was formed by providing a sound resisting oak and glass screen to the South transept and furnishing it. At the same time, the church was rewired and the present blue carpet fitted in the aisle. These changes were designed and supervised by Michael Shingleton.

There were also changes in the situation regarding the church which resulted in Upshire being created a parish and that, with the Parish of High Beach, formed part of the Team Ministry of Waltham Abbey. Mr Haworth was made Vicar of High Beach and of Upshire as part of the Team headed by the Rector of the Abbey Church and in October 1988 he was instituted as Vicar of High Beach. This change ensured that High Beach would not be out on a limb as before but part of a larger unit with more staff to call upon. The second cottage then became available and the two were united, giving extra space for the family and an office and it was duly named "The Vicarage". In fact the Rector of Waltham Abbey gave the name board from Waltham Abbey to High Beach, as his house was now called "The Rectory".

The congregation was changing in nature. The older members moved away or passed on, and were replaced by individuals or families who found Morning Prayer rather formal, if not for themselves, then for their children who were used to having freedom to express themselves. Two services were held close together on a Sunday morning, the Family Service with news time, when the children could tell everyone what they had been doing, and the more formal Mattins.

In October 1992, Mr Haworth and his family left after spending eleven years in High Beach.

Interregnum 1992

A twelve month interregnum followed which was a little easier inasmuch as there was help available from the Team Ministry, and three people, Harold Bodley, David Jessop and Jane Begley, were available to lead Mattins. As before Michael Shingleton led the PCC through all this ably assisted by David Jessop, the other churchwarden.

16th Incumbent - 1993

The Revd Jonathan Pearce came to High Beach in October 1993, with his wife, Nina and three children as Vicar of High Beach and Upshire, in the Waltham Abbey Team Ministry. Mr Pearce was born in Castle Bromwich in the West Midlands and first felt the call to the ordained ministry at seventeen years old but completed ten years working in industry before entering St John's College, Nottingham. He was a curate from 1985 to 1989 in the Chesham Team ministry and then Assistant Priest from 1989 to 1993 and also Assistant Priest at Newport Pagnell in Buckinghamshire.

The services continued as normal but with the addition of some Combined Services for both congregations on special occasions and the inclusion of Holy Communion with Morning Prayer instead of after, for the 2nd, 4th and 5th Sundays. A Christingle Service was introduced for Christmas Eve and has proved popular, and also an Easter Garden Service on Good Friday. It was decided by the PCC to distribute the Parish Magazine free of charge to every house in the parish, thereby creating better lines of communication. The major change to the church was the introduction, for the first time, of running water in 2001 and, thanks to a very generous donation by Mrs Sully, the building of a disabled toilet. The perimeter walls on two sides of the church also had to be restored due to vandalism by joy riders. The number of baptisms and marriages conducted at the church increased, with twenty-five baptisms, twenty-three marriages, one blessing and eleven funerals in 2004. The Church still attracts people out for a walk from Loughton and from the inner city areas. It has moved with the times to such an extent that it now operates its own web site on the internet, thanks to the hard work of Nina Pearce.

Perpetual Curates of St Paul's

1837 William Watson

1842 Henry Eley

1843 Samuel Pryer Field

1850 Henry Francis Mallett

1852 Louis Alexander Beck

1865 Josiah Norton

Vicars of High Beach

1868 Josiah Norton

1912 Charles Henry Kempthorne

1920 William David Jones

1938 Walter Frederick Jones

1944 Frank Knibbs

1948 Henry Purefoy Statham

1952 Frank Knibbs

1954 Arthur Laurence Harriss

1956 Joseph Crompton

Priest in Charge

1981 Paul Haworth

Vicar

1988 Paul Haworth

1993 Jonathan Pearce

Churchwardens from 1837

1837	Charles Sotheby	Richard Arabin
1838	Charles Sotheby	William Walford
1839	Matthew Allen	William Kettlewell
1841	Charles Sotheby	Matthew Allen
1843	Mr Hanson	Mr Hubbard
1852	Charles Sotheby	James Dawson
1855	John Hyde	Thomas Hoseason
1857	John Hyde	George Boss
1859	John Hyde	William S Lupton
1861	John Hyde	John Gifford
1864	John Hyde	H W Holman
1865	John Hyde	Mr Croskey
1869	John Hyde	Roger D Upton
1870	John Hyde	Thomas Charles Baring
1885	Morris King	Thomas Charles Baring
1891	Arthur Janion Edwards	John Thomas Abdy
1893	Arthur Janion Edwards	Edmund John Kennedy
1895	Arthur Janion Edwards	John Titt
1928	Francis Pegler	John Titt
1932	Edward North Buxton	John Titt
1939	Edward North Buxton	Mr E J Bryant
1940	Edward North Buxton	Mr W W Webster
1946	Edward North Buxton	Mr T James
1949	Edward North Buxton	Mr G F Johnson
1957	Mr George Clarke	Mr G F Johnson
1961	Mr Mark Buxton	Mr G F Johnson
1965	Mr H J Cooper	Mr Mark Buxton
1967	Mr H J Cooper	Mr Michael A Shingleton
1969	Mr John F B Sizer	Mr Michael A Shingleton
1974	Mr John F B Sizer	Mr John H Hunt
1975	Mr Michael A Shingleton	Mr John H Hunt
1976	Mr Michael A Shingleton	Mr Harold D Bodley
1985	Mr Michael A Shingleton	Mr David Jessop
1997	Mrs Jean A Tyler	Mrs S A Jane Begley
1999	Mr Douglas Tyler	Mrs S A Jane Begley

Organists from 1878

1878 – 1938	Mr John Titt
1938 – 1939	Mr F J Searle
1939 – 1951	Mr S Carlton Roberts
1951 – 1952	Mr Barry Rose
1952 – 1954	Mrs Knibbs (assisted by son Graham)
1954 – 1976	Dr John H Hunt
1976 – 1990	Jack Haylett
1990 -	Mr Frank Manning

The Organ 1878

The following article was written by the late Dr J H Hunt on the occasion of the Centenary of the organ.

When in 1878 Mr T C Baring wished to have an organ in his new church at High Beach, he chose Henry Willis to build it; he could not have done better! Now acknowledged as an instrument of historical interest it is still in good playing order, its glorious sound a continuous tribute to the genius and craftsmanship of its maker.

“Father” Willis as he came affectionately to be known, made his name as a young man of twenty-six with his rebuilding of the organ at Gloucester Cathedral and soon after, with a large organ for The Great Exhibition of 1851. He became the leading organ builder of the last century and his ideas on organ design and tonal development had a considerable influence on the subsequent development of the organ in this country.

“A Father Willis organ is part of our artistic heritage; it should be jealously preserved” so says W L Sumner in his book on Henry Willis. So often, ageing organs have been allowed to deteriorate to a point where renovation is impossible. That the organ at Holy Innocents has survived so well can be attributed largely to the excellence of the materials and the soundness of construction which was a feature of all Henry Willis’ work, not least his many small organs. No doubt the Spartan condition in the Church during much of its life have also helped – heat is a great enemy of organs – but it is also due to the foresight of successive church councils who, realising its worth, have readily agreed to whatever steps were necessary from time to time to keep it in good order.

The organ passed out of the care of Henry Willis & Sons in 1906 and records are scanty until 1932 when, following a period of neglect, the late Col. E N Buxton had it examined by Gray & Davison Limited who were installing a chamber organ at Wallsgrove House. Part of the organ had been un-useable for some time owing to stiffness in the action and renovation was undertaken to restore it to reasonable playing condition.

It was in this state when John Hunt as a youth was allowed by the veteran organist Mr John Titt to play it. Amazingly, Mr Titt had been appointed in 1878 before the organ was installed. He continued as organist for sixty years until infirmity compelled his retirement in 1938. Mr Titt remembered Henry Willis himself visiting the church to supervise the erection of the organ.

The Church was partly unroofed by a German missile in 1945 but the sturdy organ suffered no serious damage except from dirt and rubbish showered into it, and after cleaning and minor repairs it was again in good order. It is recorded that some pipes of the clarinet stop were returned to Gray & Davison’s work-shop for repair after war damage. The electric blower was installed at this time also.

In the most recent renovation by Wm Hill & Son and Norman & Beard, in 1972, a new pedal board and a balanced swell pedal were fitted. Also, direct electric action to the pedal stops was substituted for a rather unsatisfactory pneumatic action which in 1950 had replaced the original long and complicated tracker work that had become badly worn and noisy. The original manual track action (now much in favour again) was also thoroughly overhauled. The pipe-work has never been altered in any way, and the organ still sounds much as it did when it left the hands of its illustrious builder over a hundred years ago.

In January 1989, all the pipes except the two pedal ranks were taken down, cleaned, replaced and tuned – a five days' job for the tuner and his assistant. It is believed some of the pipes for the clarinet stop were not returned after the Second World War. New pipes were installed in 2002 and in January 2005 all the pipes were taken down, cleaned and replaced and the keyboards also were cleaned.

Interesting facts about the Church

The cost of building our present church in 1873 was £5,500.00. The cost of adding on the disabled toilet in 2002 was £50,000.00.

The spire is a stone broach spire which soars to above the tree tops to a height of 125 feet.

In the tower are thirteen hemispherical bells cast in 1873 at the Whitechapel Foundry; the largest bell is 2'8 ½" diameter and weighs 4 ¼ cwt, the total weight of the bells being nearly 2 ¼ tons. They were originally played by a weight driven device with pinned barrels but are now operated from a key-board with manual levers.

The timber roof of the nave is a good copy of the hammer-beam type found in medieval churches. The main roof was repaired by wood from orange crates after the Second World War.

There are several interesting tablets on the walls including war memorials for two wars, some brass memorials and one in memory of the longest serving incumbent, Josiah Norton.

Victoria stained glass remains in the windows in the north transept. Similar windows in the chancel and south transept were shattered by a German rocket which exploded nearby in 1945, also damaging the church roof. The chancel windows were replaced with modern stained glass given in 1949 in memory of his wife by Mr F F McKenzie, Superintendent of the Forest for thirty-nine years. On the left is St Francis and on the right, St Stephen and the Holy Innocents.

The contents of the north transept were originally in the south transept which was furnished as a chapel in 1960 in memory of Col E N Buxton and Mrs Buxton. He was a Verderer of the forest; the altar frontal is embroidered with the cattle marks of the local forest parishes, and the kneelers with forest designs. A guide to the brand marks stands on the altar.

There are four carved stone heads inside the church and thirty-four others outside. High up at the corners of the tower are four splendid gargoyles – water spouts carved in the shape of fierce winged creatures. The weathervane bears the Latin words "LAUS DEO" – 'Praise the Lord' – an apt reminder of "Glory to God in the Highest".

The Lych Gate was erected in 1898 to the loving memory of the late Mr and Mrs Arrowsmith of Arabin House by their son, Mr Walter Arrowsmith.

In the churchyard near the main road, is a tall stone carved with runic script (Old Scandinavian). It is a quotation from the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf: "Then at the fated hour Scefing, very brave, passed hence into the Lord's protection" – a clergyman's memorial with the names of the wife and son on a flat stone nearby.