JUNE

FREE

marston times

PARISH CHURCH OF SAINT NICHOLAS

DREAMS AND VISIONS

That one who does not reside in the parish and is comparatively a stranger should be writing on the front page of the Marston Times may, I fear, excite comment, but the Editor has invited me to do so with such persuasiveness that I could not well refuse.

To explain, to those who do not know, I am a retired priest living in Botley and so I begin by saying what joy and inspiration my wife, Muriel, and I find whenever we are able to make the short journey to be with you in your Parish Church. It was, therefore, with the greatest pleasure I accepted the Vicar's invitation to take some of the Sunday morning services during his well-earned Sabbatical leave.

It was a very special happiness for me to be with you on Easter Day and to be privileged to give communion to such a large number of parishioners, including sons and daughters home for the festival from their schools and universities. The church was so beautifully decorated, the service was so well-attended and the atmosphere so friendly and welcoming as to be quite outstanding.

Soon now we shall be keeping the festival of Whitsunday, when we praise God for the gift of his Holy Spirit. There is an Old Testament prophecy which proclaims that one result of his coming will be that "Your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams". In my retirement I am able to look back on some of the visions of earlier days and now, as I look around, I sometimes dream dreams of what may be.

Too often we hear it said that the Church is losing its hold on people and failing in its job, but it is not the impression I get in spite of the difficult and testing times in which we live. As I recall the visions we had for the Church and for our parishes forty and fifty years ago I see how some, at least, have been realised - for example the widespread acceptance of the Parish Communion and all that it stands for in a large proportion of parishes up and down the country, your own St. Nicholas among them. Again, if we think of the closer co-operation between Christians of different traditions or the increase of that most Christian concern for our less fortunate brethren, those things have passed beyond visions and dreams and are on the way to becoming realities.

In ways of this kind Old Marston can surely claim to be well to the fore, and if one asks what is the secret of such vitality, it is of course, in the first place, that "fellowship, in the Holy Spirit" which was the outstanding characteristic of the first Christians: and from this comes the loyalty and willing co-operation with which the people support their Vicar and those who, under him, are responsible for the many activities which make up parish life. Where those things are found there need be no fear for the future of the Church, however difficult or however testing the times may be.

Let it then be our prayer this Whitsuntide, for the whole Church and for each particular parish, that the Holy Spirit will give to us all still clearer visions and a common mind and a common resolve under the Lordship of Christ to bring the, as yet, only half-realised dreams to richer fulfilment.

God bless you all.

Yours sincerely,

Bill Stratton

J. W. Stratton

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RATE RISES

Many people have expressed concern about the recent rises in the rates, so we asked South Oxfordshire District Council to explain the sudden increase. Their Public Relations Officer, Brian Read, sent us this reply.

A leaflet giving more detailed information is available from the Public Relations Officer, South Oxfordshire District Council, St. George's House, Wallingford, Oxon. OX10 8JZ. Telephone No. Crowmarsh 5351 Ex. 15 or 18.

In recent weeks every householder has had a bill for rates. We have all become accustomed to bills in recent years being higher but the rate increases were not just slightly up - they were "staggering" and "swingeing" to use words which appeared in newspaper headlines when the rates were fixed by councils in March. Last year your rates bill might have been, let us say £100; this year it could be somewhere around £130 to £165 depending where your house is situated.

WHO GETS THE RATES?

Before trying to explain why the rates bill is so much higher it should be made clear that although S. Oxfordshire D. C. collects the rates it only spends a small proportion of the money it receives: the rest is handed over to other councils or authorities who give services in the area. These are: the Oxfordshire County Council, the Thames Water Authority and the Parish Council.

Like the private householder all these bodies are faced with increasing costs due to rising prices. In addition all except the Parish Council are new organisations which have been set up to replace the smaller and older bodies which previously provided these services. Like the private householder who sets up a new home and takes a new job they are faced with unusual expenses in this their first year.

The reasons why the changes were considered necessary are very complex and there is not space to discuss them here but they were made for the improvement of your local services. Such improvements will not come in the first weeks because they involve the introduction of new procedures and practices which will take months or years to accomplish.

THE SERVICES WHICH COST MORE

Now to get down to the actual increases. The figures below are the average for the whole of South Oxfordshire. This is because the rate varies in different parts of the district according to which council administered the area last year.

Oxfordshire C. C. asks for a rate of 14.2p which is an increase of 36.4% over last years total rate.

S. Oxfordshire D. C. is asking for an increase of 0.75p which is an increase of 1.9% above the total average rate of the district councils last year.

The sewerage and service charge is 2.1p up, an increase of 5.4%

The water rate is 1.4p up, an increase of 3.6%

You will see from these figures that the largest increase is that of Oxfordshire C. C. It can be broken down as follows:

Provision for inflation 2.97p
Improvement of services to which the new Council were already committed 0.94p
Sum met from balances in 1973/74 which has to be rated for in 1974/75 1.35p
Additional services due to local government reorganisation 1.35p
Loss of Rate Support Grant 7.55p

The largest factor in the increase of the county rate is therefore the loss of the Rate Support Grant. What does this expression mean?

LESS HELP FROM THE GOVERNMENT

For some years the Government had helped local councils by giving them some of the taxpayers money. This is known as "Rate Support Grant". After the present Government was elected it decided to change the part of the grant which relates to "domestic" premises. In some places the grant was increased and in some it was lowered. South Oxfordshire was one of the places which had a lower grant. This added a little more to rates which already would have been higher than last year's.

It is, of course, impossible in a short article to cover adequately all the factors which have caused an increase in the rates. But ratepayers can be assured that the members and officers of the councils concerned look into every detail of the rate requirement very thoroughly. They are as anxious as anybody to keep the rates down, but at the same time they have to provide for the services which everybody expects.

The Water Authority too have made every effort to keep their demands down. Speaking on 18th January, 1974 the Finance Chairman of the Thames Water Authority, Mr. R. T. Whiteley, said: "We have kept our headquarter's cost under 1% of revenue expenditure and the cost to the public of all the services we provide, including water through the meter, is less than 25p per week per head of population".

REFUSE DISPOSAL

On 1st April South Oxfordshire District Council had the job of merging the refuse collection services of six different Councils. Each Council had its own depot and at each depot there were long standing methods of coping with bank holidays.

The Chief Technical Officer, Mr. Malcolm Campbell, hoped that all men employed by the new Council would agree to adopt the same system of working during weeks when there is a bank holiday. However, despite several meetings with Trade Union representatives, S. Oxfordshire D. C. have been unable to get the dustmen who were previously employed by the old Councils to agree on uniform holiday arrangements. At the Bullingdon depot, at Wheatley, the largest, the men used to overcome the lost day during a holiday week by working overtime.

Since agreement had not been reached notices were published in local papers about arrangements for the recent Spring Bank holiday. It is to be hoped that a more satisfactory arrangement than the omission of a collection can be made for future holidays.

Thanks

We would like to thank all our friends and neighbours for their kindness and sympathy over the death of our little boy and would like you to know that the money collected in memory of Alan has been used to buy a wooden climbing frame and slide for the small children at the Park Hospital.

Steven and Ruth Ogden

VICAR'S RETURN

The Vicar returns from his sabbatical leave for Whit Sunday, 2nd June. We are very grateful to Deaconess Lodge and to all the clergy, especially Mr. Stratton who took so many of the services and wrote this month's front page letter, for all their help while he has been away.

Did you know . . . ?

that in 1855 Bishop Wilberforce of Oxford wrote about the Vicar of Marston's "fearful account of the parish's utter demoralization". He described it as a "perfect Sodom for wickedness" and lamented its nearness to Oxford!

CAN YOU HELP?

Lolly Pop patrol man urgently required to supervise children crossing near St. Nicholas Primary School by Cherwell Drive. Would suit a housewife or retired gentleman. Uniform is provided. For further information apply to the Headmaster, St. Nicholas Primary School.

PARISH COUNCIL

At the recent meeting of the Parish Council, Mr. J. Busfield was re-elected as Chairman and Mrs. M. Smith was elected Vice-Chairman.

The Clerk reported that the Oxford Preservation Trust was willing to grant a strip of land for use as a motor-cycle track and that planning permission could probably be obtained. Some adult help had been offered but not many young people had yet expressed interest. Anyone who would like to use such a track, or could help in its organisation, should get in touch with the Clerk of the Parish Council, Mr. L. Garner, at 31 Oxford Road, Marston. Tel. 41888.

EVENTS

MARSTON WIVES

Wednesday, 12th June at 7.45 p.m.
"Handicrafts" - a talk and demonstration by Mrs. Argyle.

Wednesday, 26th June at 7.45 p.m.
Annual Supper Outing.

MARSTON W.I.

Tuesday, 11th June at 7.30 p.m.
"Colour Photography" by Mr. Sheasby.

OVER 60's CLUB

Monday, 17th June - Outing to Weymouth.

NOTICE

Friday, 28th June, 1974

DOUGLAS HURD, C.B.E., your Member of Parliament

AND

ROBERT WEIR, your County Councillor

will be at

ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH HALL, MARSTON

from 5.00 p.m. to 7.00 p.m.

to interview constituents concerning their problems and enquiries.

If you prefer a definite appointment, contact Mrs. M.E. Jay, The Merry Bells, Wheatley, or telephone Wheatley 2310.

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A YEAR IN MARSTON

A year living in Old Marston after a period in New Zealand emphasised the differences between the Old World and the New. The joy of buildings which had withstood the ravages of the centuries can really only be fully appreciated by those who have spent time in a country where things are revered if a mere hundred years old.

It was a joy to rediscover the network of public foot-paths crossing the countryside, as well as the individual character of the villages scattered about the country. Once away from the urban sprawl of Auckland with its population of over half a million, villages are few and far between in New Zealand.

Climatic differences influence details of the way people live their lives. England has four distinct seasons, whereas the part of New Zealand we came from is almost sub-tropical, with wet, mild winters with temperatures rarely less than 50°, and hot dry summers when the temperature is usually fairly constant between 65° and 70°. Children in New Zealand are used to playing outside all the year round, and such things as hats, coats, gloves and scarves are only used on holiday trips to colder parts of the country. In the summer months, shoes are noticeable by their absence. Auckland is a sea-side town, beaches are many and easily accessible - the calm harbour waters of the Pacific coast or the exciting surf of the Tasman coast. To our children Oxford seemed strangely sited so far from the sea.

By Mr. & Mrs. Ballance - who have returned to New Zealand

Climate also influences eating habits, hot meals are always evening meals in Auckland, except for Sunday dinners in the winter. There are no meals provided at school in Auckland, each child takes his or her own packed sandwich lunch. A year without the need to pack four school lunches was a real holiday to Mum. Primary schools finish their day at 3 p.m. giving time for a swim if the tide is in.

England itself has changed in the last few years. Many of the old buildings have been cleaned, the motorway system has ravaged vast tracts of land, and the removal of numerous hedgerows has detracted from the beauty of the country as well as disturbing a long-established balance of nature. And finally we were much more conscious of Europe and the influence of joining the Common Market.

CHRISTIAN AID

Christian Aid Week in Marston raised £256 - exactly the same as last year, though this year £120 was raised by the Jumble Sale as opposed to £102 last year, and only £136 by the house-to-house collection (£154 last year). Of the Jumble Sale profits, just over £11 each were from the Cake Stall and the Raffle, while the teas contributed a further £5.40. Many thanks to everyone who helped to organise and who supported this tremendous effort.

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