

*A Short History  
of  
St Anne's Parish Rooms  
prepared  
on the Occasion of  
the Centenary Lunch  
20<sup>th</sup> November 2011*



Parish Church Rooms, St. Annes-on-the-Sea.

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*St Anne's Parish Church:  
a Christian Presence at the Heart of our Community*

## FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this brief history of our Parish Rooms, which together with our Centenary Lunch celebrates the legacy of the past and encourages us in our efforts for the future. It is no exaggeration to say that we stand on the shoulders of giants. One hundred years ago in little over a decade Canon Butler and the people of this parish built the new church of St Thomas, extended the church by the building of the choir vestry and the erection of the Lady Chapel, introduced electric lighting to the church, and crowned their endeavours with the building of the Parish Rooms.

Immense efforts to raise money were made by the holding of Bazaars extending over several days and our luncheon marks not only the opening of the Parish Rooms on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1911 but also the Grand Floral Bazaar held on 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> November 1911. This raised £1200, equivalent to £180,000 in today's values, and cleared the debt on the building.

As the Parish Magazines of the time make clear, the Rooms were to be a facility not only for the parish but also for the whole community. This remains so today with many community groups making use of them. However, time has taken its toll and money must be spent to maintain the standards set for us a century ago and in particular to improve disabled access. A number of renovations have been made over the past year or so and this work must continue. The objective that *"the building should be one worthy of the parish and her organisations and not undertaken in any half-hearted manner"* remains as true today as it was one hundred years ago.

*Fr David Lyon*

*Vicar, 2011-*

## EARLY DAYS

For the majority of the nineteenth century the northern part of the ancient Manor of Lytham was a sparsely populated area comprising farms, and cottages for farm workers and fishermen, and was overrun by rabbits. The parish church for the folk of this area, known as Hey Houses (“hey” meaning a field), was St Cuthbert’s, Lytham. However, the farm labourers and fishermen had difficulty in getting to church on a Sunday morning. It was several miles walk .....and the path took them past the Trawl Boat Inn: the building is still there today opposite the Shell garage.

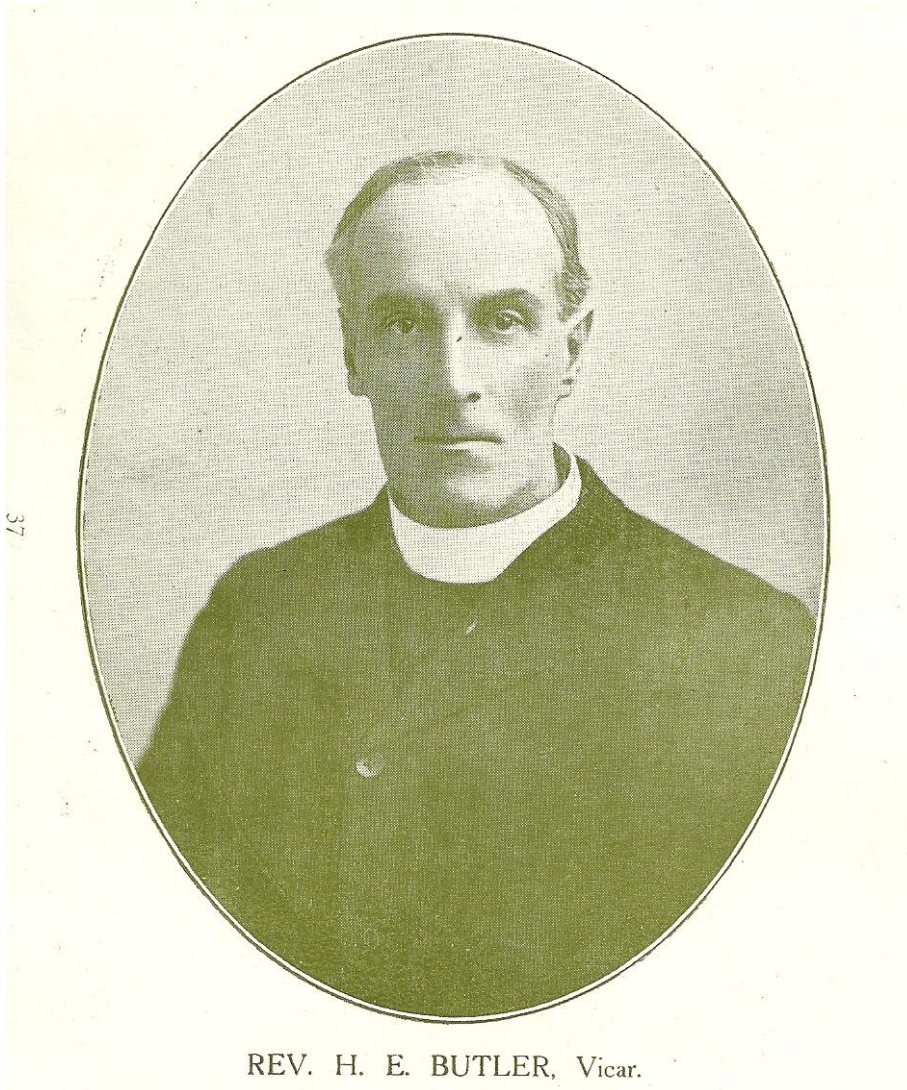
Lady Eleanor Clifton ever mindful of the welfare of the local people therefore commissioned the building of the church in the early 1870s. Originally, it was to be called the Fair Memorial Church in memory of James Fair, the land agent of the Clifton Estate, but at the behest of Lady Clifton it was eventually (and fortunately) put under the patronage of St Anne in memory of her aunt Lady Anne Beckett. The church was dedicated by the Bishop of Manchester on 6<sup>th</sup> August (the Feast of the Transfiguration) 1873.

Soon a small seaside resort sprang up, which took for its name the name of the church and became St Anne’s-on-the-Sea. With the growth in the size and population of St Anne’s the parish of St Anne was split from its mother church of St Cuthbert and formed as a separate parish in 1877. Rev WG Terry became its first vicar. The town and the congregation of the church grew apace and by the end of the century, there were 750 Easter communicants and many activities to support. A Mission Church under the patronage of St Thomas had been set up in Orchard Road (where the synagogue now stands) in 1883, and in 1899 the building of the “New Church”, eventually to become the present St Thomas’s, was commenced.

Unfortunately Mr Terry did not live to see its completion due to his untimely early death of dropsy on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1899.

### **CANON BUTLER TAKES OVER AS VICAR**

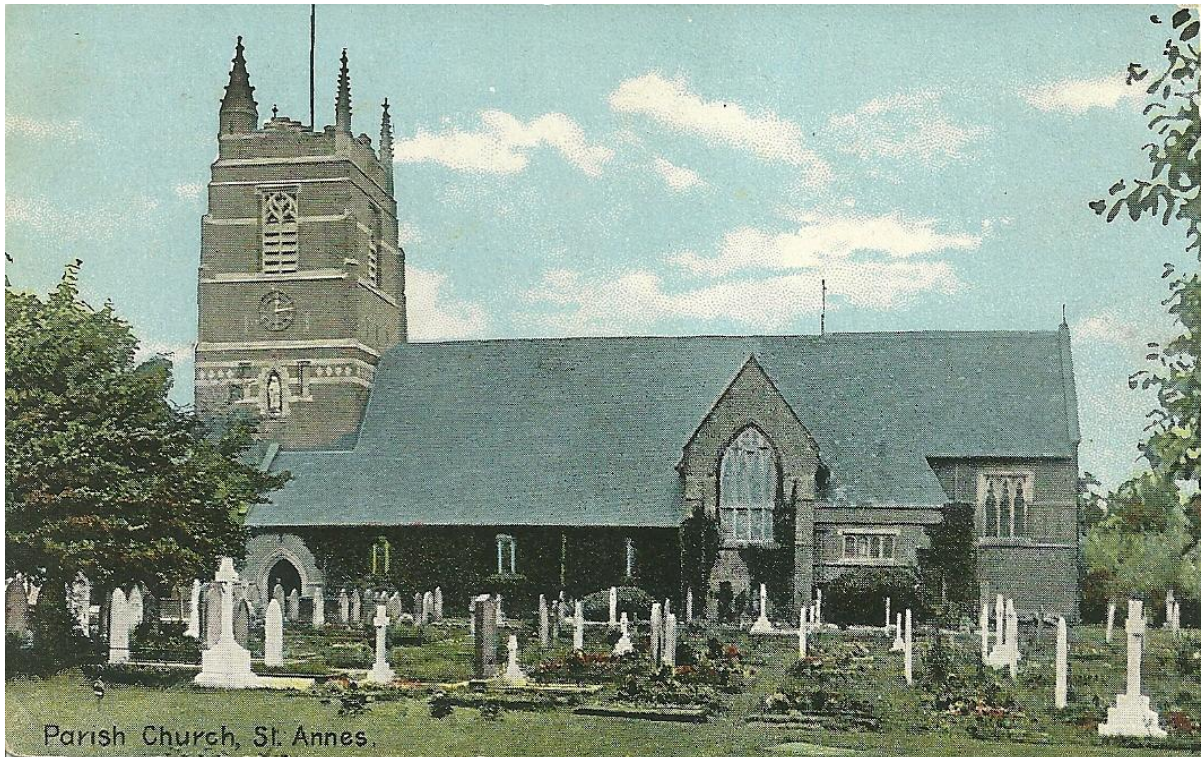
Within a matter of four months a new vicar was appointed in the person of Rev Herbert E Butler and he preached his first sermon on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1900.



He took over at a critical time for the parish with the building of the New Church and a fast growing population in the new town of St Anne's and much pressure on the facilities of the parish church.

By this time the church building had been extended by the addition of the north aisle, the tower had been built, and an

organ had been provided, but the church was still lit by gas, and there was neither choir vestry nor any side chapel.



## **CHURCH INSTITUTE**

In order to provide space for church classes and guilds and to provide a social club for the working men of the district, a room above the Blackpool Industrial Cooperative Society store in St Alban's Rd began to be used from 1900. Its opening hours were 6-10pm each evening and from 2.30pm on Saturdays. Subsequently the adjacent house just around the corner opposite to the Victoria Hotel was purchased and came into use on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1903. These premises are both now part of the Mica DIY store presently operated by a family from our congregation. The larger premises, known as the Church Institute, provided accommodation on three floors with a meeting hall, billiard hall, and several small meeting rooms.

## **A NEW “CHURCH HOUSE”**

However, with continued growth in the parish it was again evident that it would be advantageous to have purpose built rooms not only for the numerous guilds and classes, but a place where much of the social life of the community could be carried on. An initial open meeting of the congregation was held on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1909, at which the proposal was put that a purpose built Parish Rooms be erected. This was generally agreed. As the Parish Magazine records: *“The prevailing opinion of the meeting was that a suitable building was sorely needed at the present time, and that no time should be lost in pushing the project forward. The building should be one worthy of the parish and her organisations and not undertaken in any half-hearted manner”*. Obviously this project would need not only the moral support of the parish but also a considerable financial support as well: a subscription of £1 per year for three years, thereby raising some £2400 from the congregation, was suggested. This £1 pa for three years was stated to be equivalent to a week’s pay, or £500 in today’s values. However, the magazine of 1909 also records that one well-heeled donor promised £100 over 3 years, if ten other donors would do the same. Undoubtedly every penny would be required.

In his letter of October 1909 the Vicar wrote: *“It simply requires us all now to put our shoulder to the wheel and carry the project through”*, and over the winter fund raising continued in earnest. The detailed architectural and building plans were also developed with the engagement of suitable contractors to perform the necessary tasks. Finally, in July 2010 after the site had been cleared by the members of the Men’s’ Society, building work was ready to commence with the laying of the foundation stones.



The Parish Magazine for August 1910 records the proceedings:

*On Saturday, July 9th, the foundation stones were laid of the new Church House, from which we look for so much advantage to the life of the parish. In magnificent weather the choir and clergy walked in procession to the site at the corner of Oxford Road and Headroomgate Road, where at 2-30 a short service, with appropriate psalms and hymns, was held. In the presence of the church officers and many parishioners, the ceremony of laying the foundation stones was impressively performed by Mrs. Gillibrand and Mrs. Sacré. The Vicar spoke a few words of thanks to these ladies for their kindness in undertaking the task, and to those who showed their sympathy with the work by their presence and offerings. He expressed the hope that the glorious sunshine might be an augury of the bright future of the building around which so many interests are centred. A collection was made from those present, which realised the sum of £35 10s.*

The foundation stones of the new building remain very conspicuous today being white-painted stones in contrast to the Accrington brick of the building itself. Each stone has a pair of initials, LG being for Laura Gillibrand, the wife of the Vicar's Warden, Mr Robert Gillibrand, and HS for Henrietta Sacré, the wife of Peoples' Warden, Mr Walter Sacré.

## **OPENING OF THE PARISH ROOMS**

By the latter part of 1910 the new building was being called the Parish Rooms rather than Church House as presumably by this stage the complete architectural designs, which include the inscription Parish Rooms over the portal had been agreed. It had been hoped that the building would be ready for occupation before Christmas 1910, but as with nearly all such projects the aspiration was not met and the push was on to get it opened before the start of Lent, when suitable celebration would be thought inappropriate.

As the March 1911 magazine records:

*It is a matter for much thankfulness that after being favoured with beautiful weather for the building, and without any accidents to any of the workmen, we can at last record that our Parish Rooms are, to all intents and purposes, completed, and were opened on Monday, February 20th, at 5-30, by Mrs. Wrigley, of Vetusholme. The officials and church workers were invited to assemble at the schools, and we walked in procession to the building .....Arrived at the entrance door we found Mr. Muirhead, the architect, in waiting to present Mrs. Wrigley with a handsome silver gilt key, bearing in enamel the arms of the town. The doors were immediately opened and the procession filed up the central staircase to the large hall, .....As soon as the audience, which numbered about 300, were in their places, the Vicar offered a prayer of thanksgiving, and then proceeded to explain to the audience the purposes for which the rooms had been built, and appealed*



*to the laity for their support in making the work, which would be carried on in the rooms, effectual. Mrs. Wrigley was then called upon to declare the Parish Rooms open, and in doing so expressed her wish that they might prove a blessing to St. Anne's. Mr. Sacré (churchwarden) proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Mrs. Wrigley, and said what a great assistant she had been to the building committee. ....The Old Hundredth, hymn was then sung, during which a collection, in aid of the Building Fund, was made, and amounted to £37 1s. 6d. The National Anthem brought the opening ceremony to a close, and the annual Parochial Tea followed. ....We calculated about 500 people had tea.*

## **FURTHER EVENTS**

Over the ensuing period the rooms were well utilised not only for the guilds and classes of the church but also as a social centre for the whole town. Thus Room 2 was furnished with two billiard tables and Room 1 became a reading room where various newspapers and periodicals could be read.

Of particular note in the initial few months was a Grand Concert held in the Hall on May 10<sup>th</sup> with singers and accompanists from the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and the London Guildhall of Music. The stage was decorated with palms and flowers as well as artistic wallpaper kindly lent by Mr Pearson of the Crescent. The concert raised over £10, which was deemed to be "quite a success".

On April 25<sup>th</sup> there had been a Billiards Challenge Match between Mr Lonsdale of Manchester, Amateur Champion of Great Britain and Mr Crowther of St Anne's. The latter was allowed a handicap of 150, which enabled him to take the match by 650 to 572. The Parish Magazine for May records that it was "*a most enjoyable and interesting evening*" and "*a grand display of how billiards ought to be played*".

The Parish Rooms continued to be used on a daily basis as a social centre and a meeting place for both parish and community groups. As well as the Reading Room and Billiard Hall a Gymnastic Society was introduced run by Sergeant Instructor Moody of the Army Gymnastic Staff and operated on Friday evening from 8pm.

In addition there were numerous classes and guilds:

- Church of England Men's Society
- Men's Bible Class
- Band of Hope
- Church Lads' Brigade
- Sunday School Teachers' Class
- Mothers' Meeting
- Guild of St Agnes
- Guild of St John
- Guild of Perseverance
- Choir Boys' Guild
- Guild of All Saints
- District Visitors' Meeting

The Parish Rooms were a great boon to the parish and indeed to the whole town, but one problem remained, namely that there was still a large overdraft to be paid off on their construction.

## **GRAND FLORAL BAZAAR**

Despite previous intentions that the building should be paid for by subscription without recourse to a bazaar, it was reluctantly decided that a bazaar would be organised. Such major events were not unusual for the churches at that time and indeed in 1899 a four day bazaar had been held to support the building of St Thomas's Church and £1600 had been raised. A Grand Floral Bazaar was therefore planned in aid of the Parish Rooms.

As the Vicar's letter of October 1911 records:

*Let us be quite outspoken about it. We want to raise by the Bazaar on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> of November, £1200, and it is essential for the success of the Bazaar that we should have the*

*hearty co-operation of all our people..... Nobody should shrink from taking his or her share in the responsibility of crowning our efforts with success.*

The Bazaar was to be spread over three whole days (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday) and was open from 2pm to 10pm every day.

**PARISH CHURCH ROOMS, St. Annes-on-Sea.**  
.. A GRAND ..  
**FLORAL BAZAAR**  
Will be held on **THURSDAY, FRIDAY & SATURDAY, Nov. 16, 17, 18,**  
In the above Rooms in Aid of the Building Fund.  
**THURSDAY:** Opened by **MRS. GILLIBRAND.**  
Chairman: **WYKEHAM OLIFTON, Esq.**  
**FRIDAY:** Opened by **COUN. S. HODGKINSON, J.P.**  
Chairman: **COUN. R. H. IRVING.**  
**SATURDAY:** Opened by **The Right Hon. THE EARL OF DERBY,**  
**P.C., G.C.V.O., C.B.**  
Chairman: **CANON HAWKINS, M.A.**  
**OPENING CEREMONY** Each Day at 2-0 p.m.  
*Entertainments at frequent intervals. Music Afternoon and Evening.*  
*Refreshments.*  
**Prices of Admission:**  
**THURSDAY,** until 5 p.m., 2/6; afterwards, 1/-. **FRIDAY,** until 5 p.m., 1/-; afterwards, 6d.  
**SATURDAY,** until 4 p.m., 1/-; afterwards, 6d.  
**Family Tickets,** to admit 5 persons, 7/6. **Season Tickets,** 3/6; **Schools,** 1/-.

Each day's events were overseen by a chairman and started off by an opening ceremony. These roles were performed by various local celebrities:


- Wykeham Clifton, squire of Lytham, and Mrs Gillibrand, churchwarden's wife, on Thursday

- Mr RH Irving, former churchwarden, and Councillor Mr Samuel Hodgkinson JP, Chairman of St Annes Urban District Council, on Friday

... Third Day ...

On SATURDAY, NOV. 18th,

The . . .



THE EARL OF DERBY.  
[J. Russell & Sons, Old Bond Street, W.C.]

Photo by

"We'll bring this labour to a happy end."—KING JOHN.

**OPENING . . .**

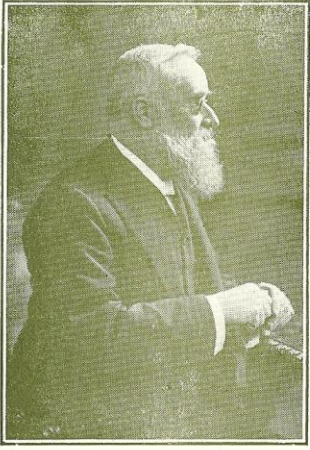
**CEREMONY**

Will be Performed by  
The Right Hon.  
**The Earl of Derby,**  
P.C., G.C.V.O., C.B.

✠

The Chair will be taken at 2.0 p.m.  
by the

**Rev. Canon Hawkins, M.A.**



REV. CANON HAWKINS.

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- Rev Canon Hawkins, vicar of Lytham, and the Earl of Derby, Peer of the Realm and Privy Councillor, on Saturday.

The hall was decked with the finest floral decorations under the direction of M. Le Maistre, of Manchester, who had already successfully undertaken two bazaars in connection with our parish." There were nine stalls, each named and themed after a particular flower, musical background from "a small but efficient orchestra", and entertainment from several novelty groups, namely the Scarlet Coons, the Other Woman, the Duet, the Money Spider, and the Little Pierrots, not to mention "*Madame La Sorcirini, in her mysterious and alluring cave*".

All in all it was a massive effort on behalf of the parish and was rewarded by a successful financial outcome. The vicar

summed up the general feeling of thankfulness and elation in his letter:

*How happy and satisfied we all felt on the evening when the grand total of our Bazaar was announced as £1,233 17s. 8d., a sum which really exceeded what one had dared to hope for. I, for one, fully realized the immense amount of work which had been going on in the parish for months past, and I ask you through the medium of this Magazine, to allow me as vicar of the parish, to tender my sincerest, heartiest and warmest thanks to all who contributed to the bazaar's success. There are our committee, there are those who have been working and making things at home and at the various working parties; there are those who have written to their friends for help; there are the stallholders and their assistants, the ladies who gave so much attention to the refreshments and ministered to the comforts of the inner man; there is the committee who were responsible for the delightful entertainments, the entertainers themselves, both children and adults, and also the musicians, who discoursed sweet music to enliven the proceedings; Mrs Gillibrand, Mr Hodgkinson and Lord Derby, who gave such an excellent start to each day's proceedings, by their presence and opening remarks; the Chairmen, Mr Wykeham Clifton, Mr. Irving and Canon Hawkins; the proposers and seconders of the votes of thanks; the buyers, who came and spent their money so liberally, and the ladies who made up the parcels and despatched them to their destination; and last, but by no means least, our thanks are due to our Hon. Secretary, Mr. E. Lawrence, and our Hon Treasurer, Mr. King, with their assistants. The help of all these was invaluable.*

*And one great point in our bazaar, which stands out prominently in my mind, is the harmony and the good feeling which has been manifest throughout, both at the time of pre-*

*paration and the bazaar itself. I firmly believe that in addition to the handsome amount raised, this bazaar has done a great deal of good in the parish, by establishing friendship which possibly did not exist previously.*

## **WARTIME USE**

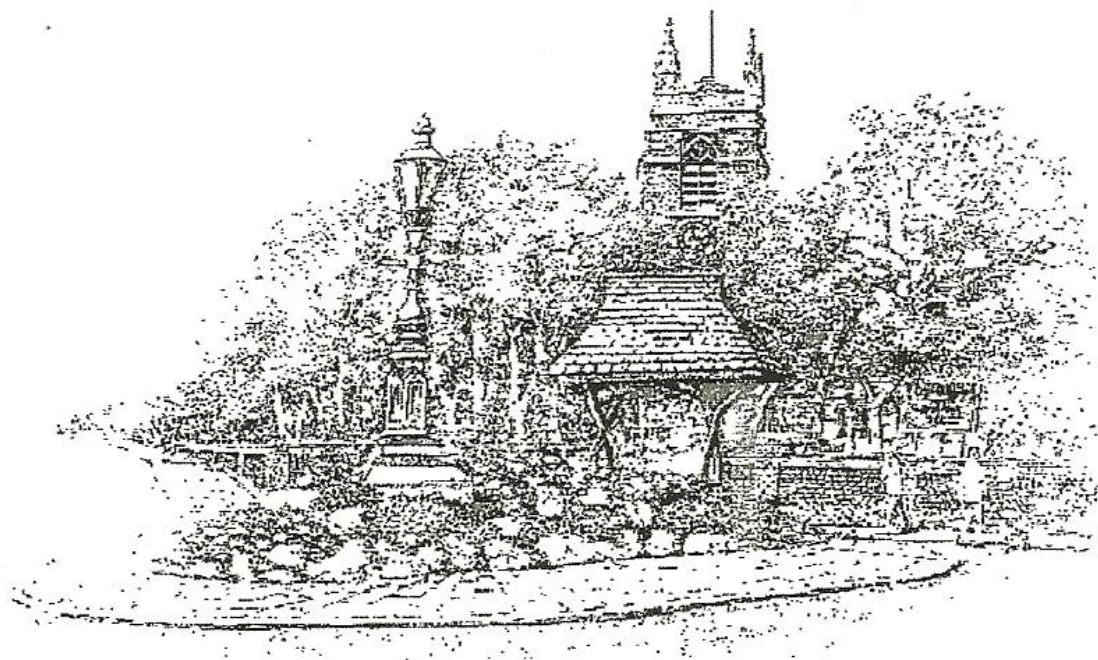
Soon the echoes of war sounded across Europe and the men of St Anne's answered the call to arms. Those left behind did what they could to support them. A Comforts Committee was formed by the Ladies Red Cross and the ladies of the town set to knitting mufflers, eye-bandages, flannel shirts, socks, cholera belts, and mittens. The Parish Rooms were used to prepare and dispatch these items to serving soldiers and sailors. By February 1916 8000 had been sent. In addition some 1400 soldiers, billeted in St. Anne's, used the large Hall for recreational purposes, following a church appeal for *"ping-pong equipment, dominoes, draughts, chess pieces etc"*. Weekly "Smoking Concerts" with tea, coffee, and cakes provided entertainment at what the troops called "The Hotel Cecil".

Once again during World War 2 the Parish Rooms were used for rest and recreational purposes by convalescent wounded servicemen and also as a receiving depot and dispatch centre by the church's *"Comfort for the Forces"* group, which between 1939 and 1945 supplied 2200 Christmas parcels to servicemen from the church and parish. Each parcel contained, *"50 woolly comforts, jerseys, helmets, scarves, mittens and socks"* Sadly some were returned, *"Killed in Action"* or *"Missing, and Prisoner of War"*. In addition *"knitted comforts"* were sent to St. Anne's lifeboat following Dunkirk. A record of all the items dispatched was made in the "Comforts Book", an important item, which is in the church archive.

## **TODAY & THE FUTURE**

Into the 21<sup>st</sup> century it was evident that further refurbishment and development of the Parish Rooms was required to maintain their usefulness to both the parish and the community. At one point it looked like a joint approach involving the joint resources of the YMCA, and the Roman Catholic and Church Rd Methodist parishes might be possible, but this initiative came to nothing. Thus, we have embarked on our own programme of refurbishment and development, including the re-introduction of a live-in caretaker, repainting of the outside and various internal improvements, which in due course will include improved disabled access. The rooms continue to be well used by the parish and the community with the following groups as regular users:

- Sunday School groups
- Scouts, Guides etc
- Men's Fellowship
- Mothers' Union
- Parish Opera & Drama Society
- Parent & Toddler Group
- Various Dance Classes
- Various Slimmers' Groups
- Various Martial Arts Groups
- Tai Chi & Yoga Groups
- U3A (University of the Third Age) Groups



*©St Anne's Parish Church:  
Prepared by Gerald & Fiona Wilson  
using material from the Parish Magazine*