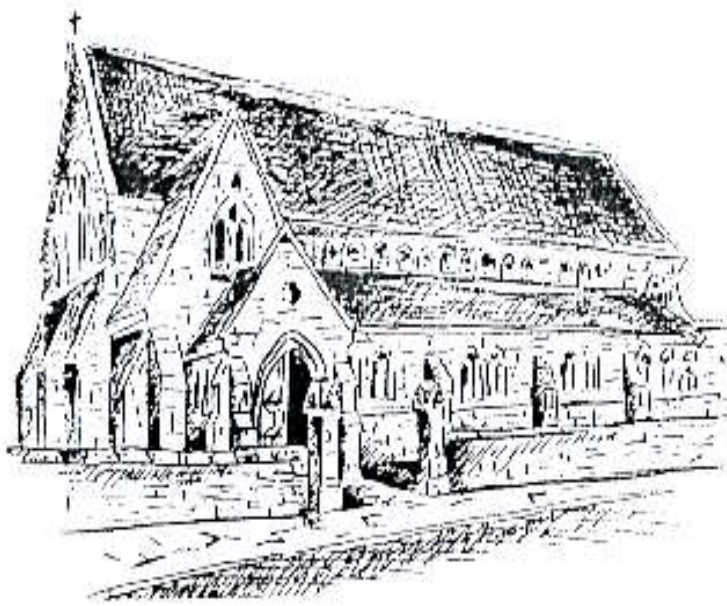


Christ Church, Gosport



A History

(Published in 2009)

The following text is a re-print of
The Parish and Church of Christ Church, Gosport, 1865 – 1965

(A booklet compiled by G. Civil with an afterword by the Revd. David Jameson, and printed in Gosport by Kemp Brothers and Wootton, Ltd of White Hart Road)

Note: I have replaced the phrase "is now" with "at the time of writing" throughout – for clarity.

HISTORY

THE FOUNDATION:

'The final stone of the Newtown church was laid in June, 1863, by an ex-curate of Alverstoke, Dr. Trench, Dean of Westminster, who has since been made Archbishop of Dublin'. Behind this bald statement lay more than a decade of pious hopes and aspirations mingled with disappointments and frustrations; prayers, charitable appeals, calls for sacrifice, and good intentions often countered by faint-heartedness, lack of support and even objections - but Christ Church, Our Church, became a reality.

RETROSPECT:

In order to appreciate the necessity for this new place of worship, we must go back and survey local conditions at the time of the Napoleonic Wars, when of all European countries, Britain alone was free from French domination and our sole defences were the 'wooden walls' - the ships of the Royal Navy. From 1800 onwards, the town of Gosport, as an adjunct to the premier naval port, Portsmouth, was at the height of its national importance and within its rampart and moat defences was a congested, seething hive of activity; naval victualling, ship-repairs, anchors and iron cables, sailors ashore, more than sixty inns and taverns, press gangs - while in the immediate neighbourhood were Haslar Hospital, Priddy's Hard naval magazine, the French prison at Forton, and lines of prize hulks moored off shore. In short, if Portsmouth fell to the enemy, Britain fell.

In contrast to the turmoil and tension within the Gosport ramparts, practically the whole of the countryside without was purely agricultural as it had been since Saxon times when the boundaries of 'Stoce' had been prescribed in 948 A.D. Alverstoke with its ancient mother church of St. Mary was still the administrative centre for the 'Liberty and Parish', the Bishop of Winchester was Lord of the Manor, and the annual Court Baron and Court Leet still elected its Bailiff, Constable, Jury and other necessary officials.

In 1805, Lord Nelson's victory at Trafalgar finally removed the threat of invasion and the nation could breathe again. It would appear, however, that a number of people in the town did not like the air they were breathing. From the squalor of their stinking ant-heap they gazed out over the rural scene beyond and the conception was formed - a New Town! Foremost among those promoting the scheme was the Rev. Richard Bingham, L.L.B., incumbent of Holy Trinity.

The site selected for this new residential suburb was but a few hundred yards from the defences. In those days there were three town gates. One, in Mumby Road near St. George Barracks, served the main route used by the stage coach via Forton and Brockhurst to Fareham, the Meon Valley and London. Another, the last to be constructed at a date later than 1803, afforded access to Haslar. The third stood at the western end of High Street, near, on the road leading to Alverstoke; and it was along this road immediately past the Horsefield (Walpole Park), that the new hamlet sprang up.

A SURVEY OF THE PARISH IN ITS EARLY DAYS.

STOKE ROAD, NORTH SIDE:

It may be possible to visualise the landscape at the time, and to trace the development of what was to become the Parish of Christ Church. The main Walpole - Stoke road was not 'made up' as we understand it today; it was a deeply-rutted cart track with enclosures, fields and orchards on both sides, particularly on the North where some houses may have been erected in Peel Road, Oak Street, and Holly Street but each was a cul-de-sac ending abruptly at the boundary wall of 'The Grove' later to be occupied by Admiral Field who took an active interest in the life of Christ Church. Spring Garden Lane existed as a muddy track leading to the 'Spring Gardens', then a 'pleasure' resort until the railway station was opened in 1841. 'Spring Garden House', (a furniture depository), was undoubtedly Gosport's 'Vaux Hall' and the 'Railway Hotel' (formerly the 'New Inn') and adjacent property had been in existence for a good many years, for 'Vaux Hall' is marked on Isaac Taylor's map of 1759.

Continuing west along the north side of Stoke Road, there was not a single side road until one came to Gordon Road (Love Lane) which, linking up with Green Lane, afforded communication between Forton and Alverstoke. There was a track approximately on the site of Avenue Road and it is recorded that Queens Road was opened in 1857, but the only houses standing at that date formed the terrace on the east side extending from Stoke Road to 'The Albert' public house opposite which was a pasture where cows grazed. This stretch of Stoke Road, including the church frontage, was remarkable for its border of fine elm trees. Those on the church land within the boundary wall were removed when the wall had to be set back on account of road widening.

ELMHURST ROAD:

Elms continued from Queens Road to the Bury railway arch. From Queens Road to the existing Elmhurst Road (how very aptly named!) these majestic trees fronted a meadow called Hobbs' Field. Normally this was a cow pasture; but on one memorable day in 1902 to mark the coronation of Edward VII, while the older school-children resorted to Gosport Park, the Infants from our newly-opened school

in Avenue Road were led here in procession and sat down to tea. Alas! Many little white garments bore the marks of this celebration for months afterwards.

Hobbs' Field derived its title from the family of that name. At about the time of the building of the church (1864) the southern end of Elmhurst Road was a cul-de-sac known as Hobbs Road, some two hundred yards long, leading to Hobbs' Brewery and mineral water works, and also to the family residence. Some bottling was still in progress after 1900. There was no other building whatsoever except on the sites of 'Leventhorpe' and 'Bourton House' ; the whole area bounded by Stoke Road, Queens Road, and the railway to Stokes Bay was open country, though on a chart of the period there were already indications of cart tracks suggesting newly-established brickfields in the locality now enclosed by Queens, Sydney, St Edwards, and Percy Roads. This brick-making industry subsequently spread over the whole of the northern part of Christ Church Ward encompassed by the railway and the widespread shallow depressions resulting from the excavation of the 'pug' (Brickearth) persisted down to the turn of the twentieth century. Every old parishioner as a youngster went to play 'over the brickfields', Less than fifty years ago it was customary for pedestrians to make a bee-line from the back of the Co-operative Society's Depot in Elmhurst Road across the barren expanse of abandoned brickfields to the railway footbridge at the end of Daisy Lane.

The existing residence, 'Leventhorpe', (at the time of writing, occupied by Dr. Suter), was erected for the late Mr. Charles Nicholson of yacht-building fame. This was followed a few years later, about 1908, by a pair of semi-detached houses with an ornamental facade of terra-cotta, built by the contractor, the late Mr. John Runt senior, who resided in the northern one 'Somerton'; the adjoining property is at the time of writing, Christ Church Vicarage. Until this was acquired, the previous vicar, the Rev. R Sedgwick, was lodged for many years in one of the tall houses (No. 4) at the end of Queens Road, and one advantage was that the back-way gave ready access to the church precincts. In 1917, Mr. Runt built for himself opposite the Vicarage a new residence, 'Alvington', at the time of writing in the possession of the Misses Hayward and the fine lawn perpetuates the greensward of a considerable area of the original Hobbs' Field.

The Co-operative Depot is not without interest. It was, to begin with, a builder's yard and the proprietor, Mr. Middleton, dwelt in a newly erected house (1904) fronting Elmhurst Road. The extensive glazed-fronted loft was used as offices, joiner's shop, etc. When the business closed down early in the twentieth century, the premises were let to two naval lieutenants, pioneers of aviation, who persevered in that same loft to construct a 'flying machine'. They were unsuccessful, but the science of aviation today owes much to the efforts of such early Gosport enthusiasts.

LEISURE, ENTERTAINMENT, SPORT, ETC:

At about this same period, in the Queens Road corner of Hobbs' Field, there sprang up a large building with rough-cast walls and galvanised iron roof. This was a roller-skating rink which catered for that popular pastime. When business declined it was converted into a cinema, 'Olympia', to exhibit that new wonder - the silent movie. Even prior to the advent of the standard cinematograph the people of Gosport were privileged to an annual show of 'living pictures'. This was West's (of Portsmouth) 'Our Navy', produced at the Thorngate Hall, and what a crush! No queuing; first come, first in; first come, hardest pressed; fainting women and squeezed ribs. The mechanical principle was the same; a strip of film photographs projected on to a screen from a machine turned by hand. As the film passed through, it merely fell to the floor and the writer recalls with a certain amount of trepidation seeing a mountain of inflammable film beside an unprotected lantern in the centre of a packed Thorngate Hall.

Entertainment some sixty odd years ago was very much of the 'do-it-yourself' variety. Public houses organised smoking-concerts, tripe suppers, outings (by horse-drawn brake), while for the more provident there were slate clubs, gift clubs, coal clubs, etc. Football and cricket were popular, and the Annual Sports Meeting of the Gosport Athletic Club held at Gosport Park for flat and cycle racing attracted professional competitors from all parts of the country. One of the most popular figures, year after year, was the five mile cycling champion, C. Kingsbury of Portsmouth.

The schools arranged concerts, magic-lantern shows, penny readings, outings and parties. It must be pointed out that the old established schools prior to 1908 were Church Schools of various denominations, originally built out of church funds and public subscriptions, and maintained by the churches. Most of them organised a school band and arranged for tuition in the playing of some musical instrument. A schools' football league came into being and Canon Brodrick presented a cup for annual competition. The difficulty was to find suitable pitches upon which to play, for, with the exception of the Horsefield, rough as it was, there were no convenient public parks and open spaces. Gosport Park remained as part of Ewer Common until 1894, Privett Park was plough-land until quite recent to the time of writing, and although the boys of Burney's Academy sometimes used the St. George's Field, they finally monopolised what has become known to us as Gordon Park. More than sixty years ago from the time of writing, a successful lads' football team, Christ Church Juniors, were sometimes permitted by Admiral Field to play matches on the fine expanse of turf at 'The Grove' where one kept well out of the way of a roaming emu.

Out of school football and cricket were played by hordes of boys on abandoned brickfields, vacant plots, alley-ways and quite commonly (and illegally) in public side roads, despite warnings from parents of the serious danger that might occur from an occasional fast-trotting horse or a man on a bike. The difficulty of finding a cricket

pitch is illustrated by records in the Alverstoake Parish Magazine of 1864, during which year a team selected by the flourishing 'Old Alverstoake Scholars' Improvement Society' played variously "in Captain Purvis' meadow", "in the meadow opposite the schools which was lent by Mr. Langtry for the occasion," and "on the Vine ground, with the Foresters' Benefit Society. After the game was over, the two elevens had supper together, Mr. Lawrence of the Vine providing most admirably".

The 'Vine' (still operating at the time of writing), with a couple of nearby properties, was the only building between Elmhurst Road and a little cluster of houses adjoining the demolished Union Chapel, the site of Erskine's Garage at the time of writing. Hearsay has it that the chapel was built for the Dissenters among the Irish navvies employed in the construction of the forts at Gomer, Grange, etc.

About 1910, the Gosport Secondary School (the 'Tech'), at the time of writing the Grammar School, acquired as a playing field a narrow meadow between the railway and the west side of St. Andrew's Road. Although the space was somewhat limited, the two hundred or so pupils attending the school in the Library building were enabled to make use of a small football pitch for the boys and a hockey pitch or two tennis courts for the girls.

Before leaving the north side of Stoke Road, it is worth recording a few more vanished glories. Around 1903-4 an eyesore of eleven vacant plots marred Queens Road where at the time of writing stands the Co-operative Hall, when out of the blue, there descended upon Gosport an itinerant repertory company under the direction of Mr. Arthur West. There sprang up on this Queens Road site a temporary theatre with a timber framework and canvas roof; therein, week after week, for six nights and an odd matinee or two per week, this intrepid and talented little band of players regaled the populace with the complete catalogue of melodramas, murders and blood-curdlers - "Maria Martin", "The Face at the Window", etc., whilst trifling items such as "Uncle Tom's Cabin" or "The Relief of Ladysmith", they just took in their stride for 'one night only'. A responsive audience got their money's worth in hissing the villain and cheering the hero. In the course of time this live entertainment became a feature of the life of the town. Some measure of their success and popularity can be gathered from the fact that a few years later they advertised a return flying visit to the Thorngate Hall which was packed to capacity.

After their departure a brick building was erected under the name of the "Shakespeare Hall" and it became a popular venue for dances and social occasions.

Some flats in Avenue Road mark the original site of the Baptist Tabernacle, which was a sizeable structure of timber and galvanised iron. When the congregation moved to the new Baptist Church in Stoke Road the old tabernacle developed into a low-priced cinema, "The Picturedrome". Here was genuine entertainment - of a kind. The chief functionary at the performance was the attendant or 'chucker-out'. He

patrolled the hall shouting, "Quiet! Quiet !" every few seconds, which naturally led to a crescendo of shouting on the opposite side of the auditorium and, what was worse, increased stamping of feet on the old, dusty, hollow-sounding floorboards, with the result that the atmosphere was always thick with dust. When the film broke down (which was far too frequently) there was pandemonium that continued until the picture returned to the screen; which miracle was greeted with raucous, cynical cheers, whistling and rude laughter and the chucker-out went on shouting "Quiet! Quiet!", all this of course was in the early days of the "silent" film.

Opposite the Tabernacle was a double-fronted, bay-windowed house (at the time of writing Nos. 2 and 4 Avenue Road) which for many years served as the Soldiers' and Sailors' Institute before it transferred to the fine old residence fronting the west side of Clarence Square.

Another, much more worthy, show was that given by the late Mr. George Leaf with his lantern slides of Gosport. Many a large audience has listened with the utmost interest to his description of the various slides that depicted buildings, churches, views, events, etc., of our town as well as ships, memorials and matters of local Naval interest. His valuable record still exists at the time of writing and a film strip of the slides has been made, together with minor amendments in the script, so that even today we are privileged to hear somebody give an illustrated account of 'Old Gosport'. Subsequent research workers have not been averse to having recourse to his efforts and only a small proportion of Gosport people show much enthusiasm, but for his part in fostering and sustaining interest in our local history, all too little credit is ever afforded George Leaf.

At the rear of the church, in 1908, Admiral Field laid the foundation stone of Christ Church Institute. This fine structure amply provided for the pressing needs of the Sunday School, Church Societies and Clubs, and for social and recreational purposes of the parish and the general public.

Since the building of the church in 1865, the whole of the once open land to the north of the parish has become a residential area of long roads of terraced houses.

This district suffered considerable damage and casualties from air raids during the Second World War with direct hits on properties in St. Andrew's Road, Marina Buildings, Queens Road and Avenue Road, while Gosport Railway Station was gutted by fire due to incendiary bombs. It is fortunate that the Post Office pillar-box which stands near the station entrance was not damaged, for this sturdy veteran is the second oldest in the whole Portsmouth and Gosport area and has been in active service for at least a century.

The church too, was spared, only to be struck some years later by lightning which caused minor structural damage.

STOKE ROAD, SOUTH SIDE:

The south side of Stoke Road, in marked contrast to that opposite, must have been fairly compactly lined with dwellings and business premises for well over a century. It is possible that geological and historical factors play a part in this. Stoke Road marks the junction of the clay (Brickearth) and the gravel to the south. There is evidence that in Saxon times the central clay core of our peninsula was thickly wooded, so that Stoke Road today probably still follows an ancient track-way that skirted the south fringe of the wood. Furthermore the clay land was more productive as is shown by the 13th Century Charter of Liberty of Alverstoke, wherein tenants agreed to pay an annual rent of 6d. per acre for such land as against 4d. per acre for the lighter soil overlying the gravel. Also, it was an advantage during sunny weather to have an open shop front, or goods behind glass, facing north.

The majority of the old premises (Nos. 1 to 17) from Willis Road to Joseph Street are contemporary with Bingham Town of which they formed the northern limit. Particularly noteworthy are the rounded form of the frontage of the first floor of No. 11 (at the time of writing, J. Colbern - Fishmonger) and the semi-circular bay window above the shop at No. 13 (at the time of writing, Wall Ltd.- Fruiterer), both reminiscent of the late Georgian period.

In a wall at the back of No. 11 there is at the time of writing a builder's stone plainly inscribed 'T. B.B.1808' which gives a firm date for the building of Bingham Town, i.e. soon after the Battle of Trafalgar (1805). Mr. Colbern volunteered the information that his premises had at some earlier date been a Post Office and Telephone Exchange.

In the rear of the Co-operative Store there is visible at the time of writing another builder's mark, 'T.B.B. 1809'. Nos. 19 to 21 (Smeeds Ltd., Wine Merchants) was formerly Wilson's. the old-established grocer's business with a bake-house in the rear, and boys attending

Newtown School often warmed their hands on the exterior wall during cold weather. The family has had a long association with the church. No. 23 (G. W. and A. Hunt, Gents' Hairdressers) was built in 1852, prior to which the site was described as 'a vacant plot'.

CHESTER PLACE:

The narrow passage-way at the time of writing beside the 'Royal Arms' leads to Chester Place which must have been a busy little spot long before the church was built. It is recorded that in 1847 there was established in Chester Place, 'John Galpin, twine spinner', and he was undoubtedly the last of the Gosport rope-makers. In 1828, Alexander Beattie of Forton is listed as a 'rope manufacturer' and a map of the 18th Century shows Parham Road as a 'rope walk'. The roadway of that little old terrace, Grove Buildings, was known locally to past generations as 'the rope walk',

and by gazing down its length one can conjure up the scene of industry of more than a century ago. At the back of No. 2 Chester Place, at the time of writing, lately the home of Mr. H. H. Pay (Builder and Decorator), the extensive garden is bounded on the east by a most unusual serpentine wall, on one section of which were indications of a building that at one time abutted on it. According to Mr. Pay this marked the site of the old rope store.

MIDDLE STOKE ROAD:

Many of the businesses in Stoke Road were originally dwelling houses and two of the last to be converted were Nos. 55 and 57. One noteworthy structure, directly opposite the church at the time of writing, is No. 65 (Home Trends). This three-storey building has no less than four out of six upper windows bricked in, which surely can be attributed only to the iniquitous Window Tax. (This tax was first levied in 1696, increased six times between 1747 and 1808, but reduced in 1823 and repealed in 1851 to be replaced by a tax on inhabited houses. Under this tax, all houses inhabited were assessed at 2/- a year with added tax according to the number of windows e.g. On 10 to 19 windows the additional tax was 14/-. William Pitt, the younger, was responsible for one increase in this tax on daylight but sought thereby to compensate for reduced customs duties imposed as a means of diminishing the smuggling that was then rampant).

No. 65, according to this, must have been standing there at least as early as the beginning of the 19th Century. One elderly informant stated that it used to be a public house (The Red House), and the proprietor at the time of writing has reason to believe it had been a butcher's shop.

The stretch from No. 79 (Foster Smith and Co., Ladies' Fashions) to No. 105 (Maggie Anne, Baby Linen) was originally a terrace (Wellington Terrace) of simple two-storey dwellings set back a few feet from the present frontage. No. 81 (X. Darling, Chemists), probably the longest established chemists in the borough, provides a clue as to age. The proprietress at the time of writing is aware that before it became a chemist's about a century ago, the premises were used by a coal merchant. During alterations it became evident that his customers approached by a short pathway to an order office at the front, while an unsuspected, long concealed doorway revealed how access was gained to the living-room behind. Under the flooring was disclosed an ample supply of coal. This by itself may amount to little, but a directory of 1828 shows that the only coal merchant outside the defences was Joseph Battershell, Stoke Road! Old stabling opening on to Jamaica Place is at the time of writing still standing at the far end of the back garden.

This busy shopping centre originated some century and a half ago (1815-28) as a row of undistinguished wayside houses.

SHAFTESBURY ROAD CORNER:

Modern building construction is, at the time of writing, proceeding to fill in the long-vacant frontage to the display grounds of W. H. Churcher and Sons (Monumental Masons and Funeral Directors). The mason's business, founded in 1867, has been handed down through three generations and continues at the time of writing under the direction of Mr. Nigel Churcher who, upon disposing of the Stoke Road frontage, transferred to a newly built house and offices at the far end of the plot in Shaftesbury Road. During the digging for the footings there were unearthed portions of rotted coffins, coffin lids, skulls, skeletal remains and a confusion of human bones - the site was on an old burial ground. This was no surprise, for it has long been known that a considerable area of the land bordering on the west shore of the Gas Works Creek arm of Oysterpool Lake (Haslar Creek) i.e. Churcher's meadow and behind Woodstock Road, etc., is studded with burials.

Gosport has several known historic burial grounds. At the rear of Chilworth Grove on the site of the old Detention Barracks lie American and French prisoners-of-war who died in the Forton prison during the 18th and 19th Centuries. Off Mill Lane, in the rear of the St. Vincent Barracks, are buried similar prisoners, many of whom were probably ex-patients in the barracks when it was a hospital; but the Stoke Road burials seem unaccounted for. Tradition has it that these were the bodies of Turks from hulks or ships moored in Haslar Lake. There are similar burials in the Experiment Works at Haslar on the opposite shore of the creek. All remains are of adults, but dating and identification have proved elusive.

Some indication of the age of No. 119 (at the time of writing W. H. Smith and Son, Ltd.) one of their earliest branches (1922), No. 123 to 5 (at the time of writing Beattie's Confectionery) and No. 127 (at the time of writing Wilkins, Bakers and Pastry cooks) can be noted by observing the roofing which is of the old peg-tile type.

A century ago the Stoke Road end of Shaftesbury Road was a short cul-de-sac with the peculiar bend it still retains at the time of writing, and led merely to a row of four houses just around the corner on the right-hand side approximately where Nos. 16, 18, 20 and 22 stand at the time of writing. Beyond these to the south was open country down to the creek. Both Nos. 20 and 22 still bear at the time of writing 'Fire Marks' of different companies. These signs indicated that fire-fighting was the sole responsibility of that particular Fire Company and in no case would it concern any rival company. The first fire insurance was issued after the Fire of London (1666) and the first company, the 'Fire Office', was founded in 1667. Fire marks became obsolete around 1800 and were finally abandoned about 1850. In 1828 there were several Fire Office Agents still operating in Gosport, so that the age of the Shaftesbury Road relics is uncertain. The road was opened up with the erection of Shaftesbury Terrace in 1872.

SEAFIELD:

Seafield in 1847 was known as Dock Village and comprised but two short terraces on the south side of Mayfield Road from No. 1, 'The Robin Hood', to No. 63 (Englefield, Grocery and Provisions). A part of the only direct track leading to it is at the time of writing still observable in the wide droke (Dock Village Lane) between Aldridge and Riddle's Garage and the back of Shaftesbury Road. At the far end, near the shore of the creek, was a cluster of half-a-dozen houses where the track way made a right-angle turn into Mayfield Road. As Dock Village developed, the Seafield Mission (Dolman Hall) c.1870 was established and before Christ Church Institute was built, this hall was used also as a recreational centre for the youth of the parish.

Aldridge and Riddle's Garage has at the time of writing taken over the premises of the 'Forum', a modern cinema that flourished in the nineteen-thirties. Hitherto, on this site, stood a large detached residence eventually converted into two houses, 'Stoke House' and 'Stoke Lodge'. Beyond these and fronting on Stoke Road was a miniature 'crystal palace'. This was the greenhouse shop of Groom, (Nurseryman), whose gardens and orchard behind the shop extended almost the whole length of the west side of what is now Molesworth Road.

UPPER STOKE ROAD:

The terrace, 'Prideaux', is little older than Brune Terrace (1871) and the combination, Prideaux-Brune, must refer to the family of that name, for many centuries Lords of the Manor of Rowner. Until fairly recently to the time of writing, Brune Terrace, by which name the road was first known, stood alone in Molesworth Road. Beyond the terrace on the right was unoccupied land used as allotments, while opposite was the long run of the fencing to Groom's orchard. The road turned sharp left into Mayfield Road, but for pedestrians it ended abruptly at a flight of stone steps leading down to the shore of the creek. If the water was low, one could walk along the shore and mount similar steps near the old Workhouse iron bridge at the end of Alver Road. This was impossible at high water, but venturesome boys risked the ire of cottagers by walking along the top of the high wall that protected their frontage from the-creek.

The area of Upper Stoke Road between Alver Road and Cleveland Road has been populous for at least a century and a half, for both these roads and Prince Alfred Street, together with Victoria Place (1836) and Stone Lane were well lined with terraces and detached properties before the church was built. Alver Road was bound to be a well-used thoroughfare as it led to the one bridge over the creek and, incidentally, to the Workhouse and Gosport Park. Stone Lane has a special link with Christ Church since at the time of writing it accommodates the transferred Newtown Boys School.

Unquestionably the oldest occupied site is that on which stands the 'Halfway House' (halfway between Gosport and Stoke) for a list of Quit Rents for the year 1737 shows under the Bury Rank :-
"Halfway House.....2d."

GOSPORT ROAD STATION:

As Stoke Road approached the old 'White Hart' it forked to either side of the hotel. To the right, the main road climbed sharply over the hump of the railway arch with a row of houses below it on the left and an orchard on the right where at the time of writing stands the modernistic Congregational Church. The narrower left fork (White Hart Road) led to Gosport Road Railway Station and there turned sharp left to the one-sided Cleveland Road that fronted the railway to Stokes Bay.

Gosport Road Station was most important when the Stokes Bay branch formed the final stage in the fast and most direct service between Waterloo and the Isle of Wight (1863), for passengers alighting at the pier could there embark on the paddle-steamer for Ryde. Until the railway was extended from the Town to the Harbour (1876), such facilities were not available in Portsmouth. The station was also more convenient for the residents of Alverstoke as it was nearer and one could always get a cab from the rank outside the entrance. But, the drive to Stoke was back round the 'White Hart', over the arch, up to Bury and down the Avenue, for there was no road linking Bury Road with what is at the time of writing Foster Road. Pedestrians could cross the line by a railway footbridge and proceed by the present direct route (Foster - Anglesey Roads), then a track referred to as a 'church path'. It is difficult to appreciate that as late as the 1870's there was not one solitary building in the vast area between Bury Road on the north and Ewer Common to the south; the first structure met with, walking south west, was Alverstoke School (1842).

NEWTOWN:

It was into a similar rural scene that the visionaries from Gosport town moved out and built their little New Town a hundred and sixty years ago. The lay-out was simple and formal; three parallel straight roads running north and south with frontages at both ends, and a short cross-street bisecting them. Provision was made for most sections of the community from 'gentry' to the 'poorer classes'. The east-facing road (Willis Road) was lined on one side only with villas (Elliott Place) and a superior terrace with first floor balconies (Richard's Terrace). Joseph Street was built on both sides with varied terraces of, for that time, commodious dwelling houses, while in narrower Henry Street accommodation was more compact. Not all existing premises were completed at the outset; there were gaps that were filled as the demand arose.

The influence of the Rev. Richard Bingham is apparent in that the roads (except Willis) were named after certain of his thirteen sons, i.e. Richard, Elliott, Joseph, Henry, Charles and John; the new suburb was known officially as Bingham Town

until the middle of the 19th century. The reverend gentleman himself died in 1858, in his 94th year.

By 1828 there were residing at such addresses as Elliott Place, Richard Street and Redlion Terrace, five naval captains, five lieutenants, four 'gents' and four 'ladies'. The same record tells of "Geo. White, Baker, Charles Street; Joseph Bridges, Brewer (retail), Charles Street and Joseph Evans (retail), Henry Street; Joseph Ridout, Shopkeeper, Henry Street".

Under 'Taverns and Public Houses' is listed, "Sceptre, Frederick Zeegeler, Henry Street, Bingham Town" ; in 1847 the landlord was Stephen Misselbrook. There were also, "Chas, 'West, professor of music, Richard Street; Thomas T. Grant Esq., Clerk of cheque (Weevill), Elliott Place; and Charles Foster, clerk of the third class (Weevill), Bingham Town". An interesting addition in 1847 was "Miss Emma Hayles, straw bonnet maker, Henry Street".

Of the poorer class there must have been many, for a history of the time states that in 1841 "Bingham Town is a populous suburb". The installation of the gas-works in 1835 adversely affected the amenities and as Anglesey Crescent was opened up in 1828, there was probably some drift of the more affluent towards Alverstoke.

THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST CHURCH:

The following is quoted from the 'Alverstoke Parish Magazine' of February, 1864, under the heading, 'A Retrospect': "In 1845 Mr. Wilberforce was made Bishop of Oxford, and was succeeded at Alverstoke by our present rector, Mr. Walpole. The subject of the parish church soon engaged his attention, and various plans were discussed and brought before the parishioners, of which the principal was to build a large central parish church, which should be equally accessible from all parts of the parish. There was much opposition and difficulty however raised against the scheme, and it was for the present abandoned. The pressing wants of the Newtown district were however provided for by the erection of a school-room (opened January, 1855) which during the week served as a school for infant children of the district, and on Sunday evenings was used for divine service. It has been very useful also for Advent and Lent lectures, winter night schools, day classes and a lending library".

The upper class residents of Alverstoke were faced with two serious problems. Their parish church (St. Mary's) was in urgent need of repair at a cost of over £4,000, and at the same time it was felt that Newtown must have a new church at an estimated cost of £3,000. It appeared that the Rector favoured a new central parish church, probably on the Christ Church site, but the opposition proved too strong. It is to the credit of all concerned, rich and poor alike, that both projects were successfully carried out.

NEWTOWN SCHOOL:

The 'School Room' in the Newtown district was, of course, Newtown School in Joseph Street, but the quoted date, 1855, conflicts with a directory of 1859 which states "Newtown School was built in 1853, at the cost of £212, and licensed for divine service", and this earlier date is substantiated by a personal diary.

Newtown School in this context should not be confused with the later Newtown Boys' School into which it developed, the memory of which at the time of writing still lingers in the minds of hundreds of parishioners who attended it. (The building was enlarged in 1879). Neither can one ever dissociate from it the name of Mr. Frank E. Gregory who, appointed Headmaster, church organist and choir master in September, 1900, built up its fine reputation until his retirement in December, 1934, and this in spite of a condemned, unsuitable building, with the monotonous clang of the anvil and the pungent smell of burning hoof from the smithy on the opposite side of the street.

Mr. A. B. Germain, who served the whole of his career with the school and associated with Christ Church, became Headmaster and carried on the old tradition until March, 1945, when due to reorganisation (the school having become a Junior Boys' School) it moved from the Newtown building to its home at the time of writing in Stone Lane School, and in the good hands of Mr. B. L. Searey.

THE CONSECRATION:

The following is a contemporary account from the 'Alverstoke Parish Magazine' for June, 1865, and we are indebted to Mr. F. G. Barron for the loan of this valuable record:

"On Friday, the 2nd day of June, the day appointed for the consecration, the Bishop, who had arrived on the previous day, proceeded to the church at half-past eleven. Though the weather was unfavourable, a crowded congregation had assembled, including strangers from a distance, friends from Anglesey and elsewhere interested in the church, and we rejoice to add, a large body of the poor resident in Newtown. The congregation amounted to about 430, and these added to the choir and clergy, raised the number present to about 470. Previous to the arrival of the Bishop, the clergy from the parish and neighbourhood had assembled in the house of a kind resident in Newtown. They followed the Bishop into the church, and as the procession advanced towards the chancel, the united choirs of Alverstoke and Newtown sang the hymn 'The Strain Upraise'. The petition for consecration having been presented by the Rector in his own name and that of the Churchwardens, the Bishop with his chaplain and the officiating clergy went in procession through the church, repeating the 24th Psalm. The remaining part of the consecration service was then proceeded with, and the petition for consecration afterwards read aloud by the Chancellor of the Diocese. This was duly signed by the Bishop, and the church declared to be 'for ever set apart from all common and profane uses, and dedicated

to God, under the name of Christ Church'. The morning service was then said by the Rector, and the lessons read by the Rev. A. C. Blunt and the Rev. J. Duncan. The Bishop preached the sermon, and took occasion to point out the high spiritual blessing to be derived from the ministrations in the new church, while he warned his hearers against the temptations that were certain to accompany their increased responsibilities.

The rejoicings on the day of consecration were brought to an end by a social gathering in the Newtown School Room, which had been prepared and decorated for the purpose. Tea and cakes were provided by the Rector for the Sunday school children, who assembled to the number of 150. After the children's feast, a large party of friends, together with the building committee and others specially connected with Newtown, sat down to tea. Among these were the Alverstoke clergy, Mr. Robinson, the Churchwarden (Admiral Gambier was unavoidably absent), Mr. Johnson of Stoke Road, and Mr. Larcom, the two newly appointed Wardens of Christ Church; Professor Burrows of Oxford, Mr. E. Burrows, Mr. Hoskins, The Rev. W. La Barte, The Rev. H. Walters, The Rev. N. B. Dennys, Admiral Blake, etc. Mrs. Walpole and several other ladies interested in the work were also present throughout the evening. After tea, the Rector addressed the company on the various interesting points of the days' celebration, and especially adverted to the presence among them of the Rev. W. La Barte, so well known to the people in the district for his labours and ministry among them in former years. Mr. La Barte, in reply, dwelt with much feeling on his connection with Newtown, contrasting its present advantages of a handsome church and all the appliances for permanent service with its state ten years ago, when he had commenced Sunday school in the district for the first time with thirty two children collected from the streets".

It was this last utterance that inspired the Rev. G. Curtis to entitle his tape-recording of the history of our parish: "It Began with the Children".

A SUMMARY OF THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

"The time of the last ten years has been redeemed in preparing the flock at Newtown for congregating in this new church, and many amongst us can look back in thankful memory to the evening service in the School Room, where we have been together Sunday after Sunday in the name of the Lord, to call upon Him and hear His word".- Thus the Alverstoke Parish Magazine of June 1865 refers to the early days of the Church community in the district. Now, as Bishop Sumner pointed out in his sermon at the consecration, there were to be new blessings and new responsibilities.

The pattern of Church life in the next twenty years seems to have been typical of that of a working-class mission at that time. Two curates from the parish church

(changing fairly frequently) worked in the district; there was a morning service at 10.30 and a more fully attended evening service at 6.30, with a monthly early Communion. The Sunday School flourished, and there was considerable welfare work among 'the poor'. The church building itself was austere, 'everything not essential to the structure' having been taken out of the original design owing to lack of funds. Nevertheless, from the start there were efforts to beautify and enlarge it.

By 1880 great progress had clearly been made. In 1882 the North aisle was added, the builders working all night to complete it in time for the dedication on the 6th December. A parish mission in 1890 seems to have made a deep impression on the Christ Church district. The mission is commemorated in one of the stained-glass windows (The Good Shepherd) by Mayer of Munich which were placed in the North and South aisles later that year. The remaining windows, portraying the life of Christ, are memorials of the Tribe and Cookes families.

The period from 1890 to 1914 might be called the 'golden age' of Christ Church. The average number of communicants on the Sundays in Lent had risen from 20 in 1880 (when weekly Communion services were established) to 67 in 1890; 50 in 1900 and 60 in 1910. This indicates the more deeply committed Church membership. No figures are available for the congregations at the more 'missionary' evening service, but some indication of this more 'occasional' membership may be afforded by the numbers of Easter communicants: 118 in 1880, 321 in 1890, 349 in 1900 and 397 in 1910. At this time too the range of Church activities was extended by the building of the Christ Church Institute (1908-09).

In 1908 the Reverend Ronald Sedgwick joined the parish staff, with particular responsibility for Christ Church. So began a devoted ministry in this church and district that was to continue until his death 51 years later. In 1910, Mr. Sedgwick was joined at Christ Church by a newly ordained deacon, the Reverend H. C. Montgomery Campbell, who was later to become Bishop of Guildford (1949-56) and of London (1956-61).

For some time the social and geographical cohesion of the Christ Church district and the increasing strength of its Church life had led many to urge the formation of a separate parish. At the request of the Rector of Alverstoke (Canon G. Landon), the Bishop of Winchester set up a commission to consider this, and by an Order in Council of the 15th August, 1913, the Parish of Christ Church, Gosport was created. In November, the Reverend R. Sedgwick, the priest-in-charge, was instituted and inducted as the first Vicar.

At the first Annual Vestry of the new parish in April, 1914, Mr. J. F. Lee and Mr. C. W. Batten were elected as Churchwardens. Together they were to serve for the next twenty years, making a remarkable contribution to the life of the Church. In 1922 Jesse Frederick Lee was to become the first Mayor of the Borough of Gosport and

to play an important part in civic life until his death in 1940. Charles William Batten was for many years Superintendent of the Sunday School.

War brought many changes, and the Church accepted new responsibilities. There were concerts for the troops and working parties to make sand-bags. In 1916-17 there were church parades for the Royal Engineers on most Sundays.

Soon after the Armistice, meetings were held to discuss the parish's war memorial, and it was decided to move the organ from its position in the south aisle to an organ chamber to the north of the chancel; to make a lady Chapel where the organ had been, and to build new vestries in place of the corrugated iron structure which up to now had served this purpose. It was five years before actual tenders for the work could be considered: that of Messrs. John Hunt Ltd., for £2,830 being eventually accepted. Mr. and Mrs. John Hunt, who had always been loyal supporters of Christ Church, personally met the cost of the Lady Chapel and its furnishings. The extensions proceeded during 1925 and were dedicated by the Suffragan Bishop of Southampton on the 28th December (Holy Innocents Day).

Church life had, as in so many parishes, been severely shaken by the war. Social convention and religious expression alike had changed. While the 'occasional' membership of the Church was still evident on festivals and great occasions (Easter communicants numbered 334 in 1915 and 367 in 1925, but had fallen to 269 in 1935), weekly congregations were much smaller and this is reflected in the average number of communicants on the Sundays in Lent (in 1915, 64; in 1925, 41; and in 1935, 38). Nevertheless, the Sunday School flourished, and there was much evidence of goodwill and zeal in the annual 'fairs' which had become a feature of Christ Church life and a mainstay of finances. Significant is the number of ordination candidates who came from the parish: the Reverend R. B. Ball, who served in this country and Australia, and was Archdeacon of Murray at the time of his death in a car accident in 1962; his brother, the Reverend L. G. Ball; the Reverend V. G. Sherwin, at the time of writing still serving in Australia; the Reverend J. H. Cawte, who also began his ministry in Australia and served in Norfolk; the Reverend W.E.J. Lindfield, well known in the Worcester Diocese; the Reverend H. W. T. Stamp, who has spent most of his ministry in Devon; and the Reverend E. W. F. Deacon, ordained in 1948 in the Exeter Diocese.

The 1930's saw substantial changes to the church building. Mr. Sedgwick had a zeal to make it more worthy of the worship of God and inspired others to achieve this. In 1930, new windows in the Lady Chapel were dedicated in memory of Sarah Jane Lee, the wife of Alderman Lee, the Churchwarden. In 1935 the window on the south side of the sanctuary was installed in memory of Nina Smith, by whose generous bequest to the church many of the improvements to the building and a complete re-decoration (1937) were carried out. In 1934 Sir Charles Nicholson was asked to prepare a plan for the improvement of the Chancel and sanctuary. This plan

included a new high altar, certain alterations to the reredos, the moving of the existing high altar to the North aisle, the removal of the chancel screen, new choir stalls and a new wrought-iron screen in the North aisle. The last item was installed in 1935 in memory of Mr. C. W. Botten and the first four were undertaken in 1938.

War in 1939 once again brought disruption and fresh responsibilities. With the closure of St. Matthew's, that parish was placed under the care of Christ Church. The congregation again made both church and institute a 'home-from-home' for the troops, to whom the vicar acted as chaplain. Throughout the autumn and winter of 1940-41 there were frequent and severe air-raids. On the 10th March 1941 an incendiary bomb fell on the North aisle and another by the south door, doing some damage. The church service-book records frequent sirens and falling of shrapnel on the roof during services. Christ Church again for a time had an Assistant Curate, the Reverend T. Barfett (at the time of writing Rector of Falmouth and a Canon of Truro Cathedral). He and a band of energetic helpers formed the Youth Fellowship, which from 1941 until the early 1950's played an important part in Church life, notably in the field of religious drama.

After 1945 there was again the challenge of new conditions and some removal of population. The average number of communicants on the Sundays in Lent was 23 in 1945, rising to 27 in 1950; 27 in 1955; 34 in 1960; and 107 in 1965. Over the same period, Easter communicants numbered 136 in 1945; 143 in 1950; 175 in 1955; 176 in 1960 and 206 in 1965. (Statistics are notoriously dangerous. Nevertheless, these figures for a parish whose population has been numerically static for fifty years do seem to confirm a general impression of English Church life since the War: that of a rise in the more regular and deeply committed membership and a falling-away of the more occasional 'attenders').

As the parish's war memorial it was decided to proceed further with Sir Charles Nicholson's scheme. In November 1949 the Bishop of Guildford dedicated new altar rails in memory of parishioners killed in war, and the North clergy stall in memory of all ranks of the 2nd Battalion, the Royal Hampshire Regiment, who fell at Tebourba in 1942 in the memorable action under the command of Lt. Col. J. M. Lee, the son of the first Churchwarden. At the same time, the South clergy stall was dedicated in memory of Jesse Frederick Lee himself and the choir stalls in memory of many choristers of the church. The scheme was completed in 1959 with the completion of the sanctuary panelling and sedilia in memory of Eliza Sedgwick, wife of the Vicar, and two standard candlesticks in memory of James George and Jane Anne Fowling, life-long worshippers at the church.

In 1959, Ronald Sedgwick, Vicar of the parish since 1913 and priest-in-charge for five years previously, died suddenly at the wheel of his car. A ministry of great devotion and patience ended, fittingly, in the course of duty. The congregation at the

funeral service in the church for which he had given so much, included three generations of those to whom he had ministered.

The Reverend David Kingsbury Jameson, Cathedral Chaplain of Portsmouth Cathedral, was appointed as the new Vicar and he was instituted and inducted on the 20th April, 1960. In the intervening months, pastoral care of the parish had been maintained by the Reverend M. A. Rich, a former colleague of Mr. Sedgwick in the Alverstoke parish, who acted as Assistant Curate from 1957 to 1960.

Recent to the time of writing, the most notable development in the worshipping life of the Church has been the establishment of the Parish Communion as the principal Sunday Service. In 1962 Miss H. A. Cawte retired as Superintendent of the Sunday School after a long period of devoted service, a remarkable but not isolated example of those Christ Church workers who have given so much in this and other fields over the years. Part of the challenge of the coming years is that others should enter into their heritage. There are encouraging signs that, in an inevitably changing pattern of parish life, the Church's ministry is extending.

The following text was written by **Mrs Joy Kretowicz** in 2000, as a follow-up to the above booklet. Grateful thanks to Julie Byrne for help with the typing.

At the time of writing, thirty five years have passed since Hr. G. Civil compiled the booklet "The Parish and Church of Christ Church, Gosport 1865-1965". It was thought appropriate therefore, for the year 2000, that the original booklet be updated and further information added, stating the changes which have taken place in the Parish and Church of Christ Church during the 35 years since the centenary of the church in 1965.

Since 1965 there had been little change to the interior of the church. (The nativity figures, used every Christmas, were donated to the church in 1967 in memory of Harriet Ann Cawte – by her family). Then, in 1971 the Vicar Revd Ivor Hancock and the P.C.C. decided that redecoration was badly needed. Proposals for the alterations were submitted to the Diocesan Advisory Committee, applying for a faculty, and a Redecoration Appeal Fund was set up. In 1972 the Reredos, composed of triptych paintings in a carved wooden frame was removed from the east wall which was painted white. On this was hung a simple modern brass cross (a donation from a parishioner) and six

matching candlesticks were also purchased. New flooring was laid throughout the church at a cost of £815.00 and a carpet was fitted in the Sanctuary. It was also decided to remove the two standard candlesticks (given in memory of James George and Jane Anne Fowling) the framed print triptych (Memorial to Hector Bean 1917) and the Roll of Honour War Memorial, hanging on the south wall, to give the church a more contemporary look. These three items were stored elsewhere in the church and reinstated in 1977. The large cross which had been suspended from the centre of the chancel arch was painted and re-sited on the west wall. The whole church was re-painted, the pews were cleaned and repaired where necessary and 100 new red kneelers were bought. The redecoration took six weeks, during which time services were held in the Institute with some joint services at Holy Trinity and St. John's churches and evensong with United Reformed Church, Bury Road. By April 1972 the target of £1,000 for the Redecoration Fund had been reached. The eventual cost was £1514.00 and ongoing fund-raising cleared the deficit.

The sedelia for use in the sanctuary, consisting of a chair and two stools, was donated by Myrtle Latter in memory of her close friend Honour Burt in May 1983.

In 1995 the Revd D. James discovered the reredos triptych in the vicarage attic, which is, according to experts, a fine example of Victorian art. After consultation with the congregation, it was decided that the Triptych be cleaned, restored and re-hung in its original place on the east wall behind the altar. Sadly the carved oak frame had long ago disappeared. The modern brass cross now hangs in the Sedgwick chapel. The north aisle was dedicated and named the Sedgwick Chapel, with a plaque commemorating Revd Sedgwick's service to Christ Church over 51 years. There is also a plaque to the memory of Frank Edward Gregory 1874-1943, organist for 40 years and head of Newtown School for 34 years.

A splendid addition to the church was the baby-grand Piano, a gift from Mrs. Gladys Constable in 1986, when she could no longer live alone and moved into her daughter's home. The fine oak stand for the Pascal Candle was dedicated to the memory of the Reverend William (Bill) Millard, purchased with donations from the congregation. Also a Silver Salver in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Summers and a silver water jug in memory of Mrs. Doris Tubb were additions to the silverware used at Holy Communion. When Mr. Kenneth Piper died in 1987 an oak Bookcase was bought and dedicated to his memory. Ken, as he was affectionately known, was the Honourary Treasurer for Christ Church for over 37 years when he retired in May 1986. He was an excellent Treasurer and it was his proud boast that Christ Church always paid their quota, (This is the 'levy' all parishes pay to their Diocese) no matter how tight finances were.

Ken tended the church garden singlehandedly and stalwartly pushed a hand mower to cut the grass in front of the church during the summer.

In 1993 a Sound Reinforcement System with deaf loop was installed and replaced the speakers and amplifiers previously donated to the church. These were paid for with part of a most generous legacy from the Misses Edith and Betty Piper (sisters of Ken). Both ladies, with Ken, were lifelong worshippers at Christ Church and Edith had been the Sunday School Superintendant for many years.

Other additions to the church fabric are a fine wrought iron stand, to hold the processional cross, a stand for the Mothers' Union banner and a Votive Candle Stand, all made and donated by Victor Smith, Head Altar Server for many years. In the children's corner are several pieces of furniture made especially for their use: two chairs, two stools and a table, given in memory of Michelle Arnold, a pupil of Newtown School, who collapsed in the playground and later died. The carpenter's bench was made by Mr. Ernest Wiltshire.

In 1985 Revd James proposed that the church be further enhanced by new kneelers to supplement the red ones bought in 1972. These are tapestry kneelers made and donated by the Vicar and the congregation, the first 50 being dedicated in June 1986. In fact Revd James worked many kneelers, including these at the altar rails, the cushions for the Vicars' pews; and the Christ Church Banner, which stood at the South Choir Stalls. Over the years more kneelers have been made and donated to the church, very often in memory of loved ones or to commemorate a special occasion. The latest addition at the time of writing is a kneeler commemorating the year 2000. Also, three collection bags and a Lectern Fall were donated and worked in the same pattern by members of the Mothers' Union.

STOKE ROAD IN THE YEAR 2000

Note: Not all premises in Stoke Road have been mentioned, but effort has been made to update some of the information given in 1965.

STOKE ROAD, SOUTH SIDE.

At the eastern end of Stoke Road No. 11 is still a fish-monger, "Tony's Fresh Fish", Mr. Colbern having retired. Nos.19-21 are now "Security Minded"; and Richard Martin, Antiquarian Books & Gallery. The long established Gents Hairdressers at No.23 ceased to exist when Mr. Arthur Hunt retired (his brother having retired earlier). Many older men regret the loss of the old fashioned Barbers Shop. These premises became an Indian Restaurant and Take-away. The Royal Arms public house still remains as it was in 1965 with the Victorian

canopy stretching over the pavement and the narrow passage way running beside it. At no.65, "Home Trends" are still surviving as (What used to be called an Ironmongers) a D.I.Y. Store. A boon to those who have no car to travel to out of town super-stores for their nails, pots of paint, kitchen and gardening equipment and many other items.

Nos.79-105 have changed ownership several times over the last thirty-five years. After X. Darling, Chemist, No. 111 was, for many years W. Chidlow, Chemist and is now a Health Food Shop. Mills Shoe Repairs, Travel and Leather Goods at Nos.93~95 is worthy of special note being established in 1890 and still a thriving business. Newly opened in June 1999 at No. 109 is Solent Funeral Services, an independent family business. The Co-operative Funeral Directors continue to serve the public from No.147, as do Churcher and Tribbeck, Funeral Directors and Monumental Masons from their office at No.3 Stoke Road.

The house and offices which face Shaftesbury Road, formerly the property of W.H. Churcher & Son, is now Oddfellow House. On the opposite corner of Shaftesbury Road, on the site of Aldridge and Riddle garage, now stands Waitrose, with a large car park behind, the first Supermarket in the Parish, built in 1973. The right of way on the eastern side of the building is still preserved.

A larger Superstore, ASDA in Dock Road was opened in August 1977. Next to Waitrose are another two shops and an elongated building, housing the Social Security Offices. Albray House at No.149, formerly doctors surgeries is, since 1995, the headquarters of the Gosport Branch of the St. John's Ambulance Brigade.

Continuing west along Stoke Road is Gambier Place, thought to have been built by ex-soldiers after the Napoleonic Wars. No.181 has been restored by the owner to its original condition, with railings in the original style fronting the cottage. Nos.183 and 185 were for many years a cycle repair shop called Turners, which had closed and fallen into disrepair. In 1999 the Borough Council re-made two cottages from this building. One is an energy efficient house, showing the public what can be done in homes with all the latest technology to conserve energy, from minimising heat loss through walls and roofs, to recycling water. After a year of being open to viewing, this cottage will be let through a Housing Association on a short term tenancy, to needy families. No.187, a Fish and Chip Shop, was refurbished at the same time, and renamed Gambiers.

STOKE ROAD NORTH SIDE

At the eastern end of Stoke Road is Prince of Wales Road which leads to the Nicholson Gardens and Carlton Way. Houses were built here in 1975 and a

further two were built in 1997 when part of the land at the rear of a house in Spring Garden Lane was sold for development. Next along Stoke Road is the Baptist Church erected in 1910. Further west are Holly and Oak Streets in which Gloucester House and Ivy House have been built, giving sheltered accommodation for Senior Citizens.

The southern end of Peel Road was designated a conservation area in 1981 and all the walls, hedges etc, fronting the Georgian houses, were replaced with iron railings. Lamp-posts were also replaced with ones in keeping with the period and the pavements laid with York Stone. This narrow end of Peel Road was made a one-way system at the same time.

In 1975 on Stoke Road, between Peel Road and Avenue Road (formerly Righton and Bennet Garage) a large three storey building named Cray House was erected as an office block with a car park below. Little use has been made of this building and apart from the John Lane Insurance Broker, who has used part of the ground floor since 1979, the rest stands empty. During the upgrading of Stoke Road in the year 2000 this building is scheduled to be converted into flats.

The Georgian style town houses at the southern end of Queens Road were built in April 1981 and the Shakespeare Hall, after having been used for many purposes since 1965, is currently named "Karato".

Elmhurst Road has seen some changes, not least the demolition in the early 1970's of "Leventhorpe", previously a doctor's private residence and surgery - and the erection of "Leventhorpe Court" a block of 6 storey flats with gardens and swimming pool which extends behind Stoke Gardens.

When the Revd Derek James retired in 1996, the Church Commissioners decided that the Vicarage in Elmhurst Road would be sold. It was thought that a large Victorian house was too expensive to heat and maintain and now was the time to make a change. In 1977, a newly built house was purchased in Carlton Way, prior to the arrival of Revd David Gibbons, which is now Christ Church Vicarage. The old Vicarage was sold in 1998 and opened as the "Vicarage Nursery School".

Further along Elmhurst Road the Co-op Depot has been replaced by a small industrial area called the "Elmhurst Road Business Park". Across the road at No.44 is J. C. Lawrence, Photographic Studios, which has been in the Lawrence family since 1898. James, grandfather of the present owner David, was the founder of the business and his sons Louis and Arthur joined the firm on leaving school. All the family were members of Christ Church, and Louis,

David's father, used to pump the church organ for Mr. Gregory the organist, at Sunday services. Louis also went to Joseph Street School.

In 1994 there was a ceremony in the High Street naming Lawrence Square after the Lawrence family and commemorating all their photographic service to Gosport over 102 years. Incidentally, the aerial photograph of the Parish in 1962 was taken by David Lawrence from the top of the gasometer in Mayfield Road. "Perpendicular steps to reach the top, carrying heavy equipment, and an undulating surface to stand on to take the photograph, was the most frightening experience I have ever had!" said Mr Lawrence.

For several years, Christ Church Garden Party or Summer Fayre was held at "Alvington" in Elmhurst Road on the fine lawn belonging to the Misses Hayward, prior to the annual event which has taken place in the Nicholson Gardens since 1961.

Continuing along Stoke Road from the corner of Elmhurst Road is a block of shops with flats above, built in 1973. Further along is the Vine Inn, shown on a map dated 1841 which has been derelict for years. This too, is on the Council list for restoration under the further regeneration of Stoke Road,

The Medical Centre is the Group Practice building specifically built in May 1993 for the General Practitioners who crossed the road from No.149. The railings in front of this building are copies of the originals along Gambier Place.

Between St. Edward's Road and on the corner of St Andrew's Road is "Homefort" sheltered accommodation flats for elderly and retired people, built on the site of Erskine Garage, in 1986 with a central courtyard garden which can be seen from Stoke Rd.

One of the most significant changes to the Parish was the building of the South Relief Road (as it was called then). To aid the flow of traffic through Stoke Road and the Town, it was decided to make this road south of the High Street, from the Ferry through to Foster Road. The first stage from the Ferry to Willis Road was completed and in 1979 the second part of the road was built. This necessitated the demolition of 80 houses to accommodate the new road through existing roads, from Willis Road to Prince Alfred Street, joining with Foster Road in the west of the Parish. Joseph Street and Henry Street, such important areas of history of the Parish, no longer have any houses. Only the names remain indicating short walk-ways through to Jamaica Place from Stoke Road. At the same time Jamaica Place was widened to give rear access to Stoke Road Shops for deliveries, and Park Terrace and Chester Court blocks of flats were built between Jamaica Place and South Street. The

Anchorage and four blocks of flats, Renown, Revenge, Resolution and Ramilles Houses were all constructed to the southern side of South Street.

An industrial site was developed in the Cranbourne / Dock Road area and in addition to the ASDA store, there are now various other small businesses. Addenbrooke House in Willis Road, a nursing home for elderly patients, was officially opened in November 1973 by Revd Ivor Hancock, who conducted the Dedication Service.

At Seafield, Mariners Way flats were built at the end of Dolman Road, which overlooks Haslar Lake, and further housing was built at the rear of Old Road and Mayfield Road, Hornet Close and Hilton Road. These overlook Workhouse Lake, but the Workhouse, which was reached across Alver Bridge, no longer exists. This was demolished to make way for housing, having been used for many years by a company called Blake's as an Iron Foundry and Paint Factory. Further West, at the southern end of Prince Alfred Street and Cleveland Road overlooking Alver Creek, is another retirement complex called Alver Quay opened on 25th March 1986. The School situated in Stone Lane, changed its name, and is now called Hazelworth School.

GOSPORT RAILWAY STATION.

Although the railway station is not in Christ Church Parish, it featured in G. Civil's history, so mention is again made of it here.

Gosport Railway Station in Spring Garden Lane, situated on the north-east edge, just outside the Parish, was officially opened on 7th February 1842 and a passenger service began which lasted for over 100 years. It was designed by the architect Sir William Tite, with a splendid row of columns along the south side of the building. Next to the station an hotel was built named the Railway Tavern Hotel. This building, which still stands at the time of writing, was later used as a private residence and renamed Spring Garden House. Her Majesty Queen Victoria was a frequent visitor to Gosport, using the train from London, to travel to her holiday home, Osborne House in the Isle of Wight. It was at her request in 1844 that the line was extended from Gosport Station across Forton Road into Royal Clarence Yard. The royal party could then board directly onto the Royal Yacht, instead of alighting at Gosport and driving by carriage to the quayside.

It was in 1844 that King Louis Philippe of France, accompanied by Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and the Duke of Montpensier, arrived in Gosport by train. The King was returning to France after a week long state visit to Britain. The station was very busy with passengers, as was the Gosport Road Station

branch line to Stokes Bay. Gosport being a Garrison Town, there was constant movement of troops and equipment by train, especially during the Boer War and the First and Second World Wars. A notable event was the evacuation, in the early days of World War II, when hundreds of Gosport schoolchildren, boarded trains at the station to take them to the safety of the country. On the night of the 10th January 1941 an incendiary bomb was dropped onto the Station roof which was soon ablaze and was the beginning of the decline of the Station.

Since the opening of the Station in 1841, there had always been extensive freight service to and from Gosport. One of the most important customers being the Victualling Yard within Clarence Yard, from where the ships of the Royal Navy obtained their food and water.

When the passenger service closed down in 1953 the freight service continued for another 16 years until January 1969. On closure, the track and equipment were removed and in 1980 part of the land was sold for housing. Earlier, the Queens Road Footbridge which led to Albert Street and Forton Road had been removed. Most of the rail tracks have now been converted into footpaths and cycle ways. In 1990, what remained of the Station was designated a Listed Building and in 1995 a large sum was spent on renovating the site, railings and gates to the original appearance. A preservation order was also placed on the Victorian Post-box which stands outside the Station in Spring Garden Lane.

Over the years, since the cessation of use as a railway, there have been many schemes proposed for the station site, but at the time of writing none have come to fruition.

Bury Road United Reformed Church, and the Ecumenical Scene

Although not in the Parish, the Bury Road United Reformed Church should be mentioned because of the close ties with Christ Church for many years. On the 5th October 1972 the union of the Congregational and the Presbyterian Church was formally completed and became the United Reformed Church in England and Wales. The Congregational Church as it was known then, was built and Dedicated in October 1957. The old church, situated in the High Street, was badly damaged by a bomb in January 1941 and in the intervening years the church members used temporary buildings for their worship. The Manse at No 6, Grove Avenue was also hit that same night, the minister fortunately being away at the time, serving as Chaplain in the R.A.F. In 1946 a temporary house, No.6 Elmhurst Road, was bought for the Minister, while the house in Grove Avenue was being rebuilt. This was ready for occupation in May 1947 and continued as the Manse until 1986 when it was sold.

In 1947 "Spring Garden" was bequeathed to the Congregational Church by Miss Bessie Nicholson. The Dedication and opening ceremony of the re-named "Nicholson Garden" took place in June 1951. The United Reformed Church very generously permit other churches and Organisations - Guides, Scouts etc. to use this lovely garden for their events. Christ Church is privileged to be included in this generosity and holds the Annual Garden Party there and other occasional events.

In 1965 a Playgroup was set up to be held in the Nicholson Hall, next to the United Reformed Church, for 3 - 5 year old children. This was organised and run by volunteers from the United Reformed Church, Methodist Church and Christ Church and catered for 45 children, 5 mornings a week. This venue was chosen for its suitability for small children, as there were more washing and toilet facilities in the Nicholson Hall than the Institute could offer. The Playgroup helpers and friends made a garden for the children on land behind the U.R.C. and on 6th June 1970 it was dedicated and named the Joan Compston Garden in memory of one of the founder members of the Playgroup who died after a long illness. The group is still going strong at the time of writing, although the name has been changed to Pre-School Group.

The church of St. John the Evangelist, Forton also has its Vicarage situated in Christ Church Parish, in Spring Garden Lane at the junction with Grove Avenue. This house, formerly St. Matthew's Vicarage, demolished by a bomb in 1940, was rebuilt and became St. John's Vicarage after the church of St. Matthew "closed for Divine Service on 18th December 1950". St. Matthew's Parish was joined with Holy Trinity, with the Revd C.L.T. Barclay being the first incumbent of the new benefice. St. Matthew's church and many other fine buildings in St. Matthew's Square were demolished in 1954 during the regeneration of the town centre.

Another Ecumenical venture is the Open-Door centre held at the Methodist Church. This was opened in March 1987 with the aims to "express in a practical way the concern of the Church for those who need encouragement, support or are lonely and in need". The centre is where people may drop in for a cup of tea/coffee, for company, for rest or for pastoral care; to be a bridge between Church and the community. Age Concern also hold an office there, with help and advice for those who need it. The Open-Door was run and funded originally by volunteers from Christ Church, Methodist, Baptist, United Reformed and Logos Church members and at the time of writing by Christ Church, Methodist and United Reformed churches. It was decided that the Methodist Church Hall, which fronted Stoke Road, would be the most accessible venue for passing patrons, but for two years, after the Methodist Church and buildings were damaged by fire in 1990, the Open-Door was transferred to the Institute whilst rebuilding took place. Although only charging

very modest amounts for refreshments, the Open-Door has been able to donate several hundred pounds to different charities over the last thirteen years. This is a much appreciated facility in the area, due to the volunteers who run the Open-Door five mornings a week, who are so welcoming and are good listeners.

MORE CHRIST CHURCH HISTORY

The Revd Ivor Hancock

The Revd Ivor Hancock was inducted as Vicar of Christ Church on 28th March 1969. Married to Margaret, they had two sons and a daughter. A clever, charismatic man, his style of preaching, his ability to write and produce shows held in the Institute and his involvement in all that went on in the Parish attracted many people to the church. The Mardi Gras, which Revd Hancock produced and which were acted on Shrove Tuesday, are still remembered. He took the role of Choirmaster and in 1970 there were 28 children and 8 adults in the choir. In 1972 Rev. Hancock closed the Sunday School and instead a "Teaching Session" began for children on Saturdays and was called Catechumens ("Cats"). A new youth Club was formed held on Saturday evenings, with 18 volunteer leaders to run it. The membership was restricted to Christ Church youth with the ruling that they attend church twice a month. Numbers at that time were about 40, aged up to 18. The Youth Club ran for 19 years, with 8 of the original leaders still running the club when it closed through lack of members in 1991.

The Parish Shop was started in 1970; held annually, and then twice a year until 1999, raising much needed revenue to supplement the weekly church income. 1973 saw the introduction of the Series 3 Rite of Holy Communion which was then used, with minor adjustments until the Alternative Services Book (ASB) came into use in 1980. Series 3 included the exchange of the Peace, an entirely new concept within the C of E Holy Communion Service and viewed with some misgivings. Initially the Vicar and PCC decided there would be no handshaking during the Peace. In April 1974 Series 3 had been in use for 6 months and was reviewed. It was decided there would be more participation by the congregation with some of the responses and that the Peace would be passed, by a handshake, from the Vicar to the Lay Assistants and Servers and along the pews. This method of exchanging the Peace was replaced in 1984 by the relaxed "walkabout" way which is used today.

It was at that time the Altar was moved away from the east wall to enable the Vicar to conduct Holy Communion Services facing the congregation and not standing with his back to the people, as had been the custom. There were

many Ecumenical Services held during the seventies and in 1973, United Services during Lent were started, involving Christ Church, Holy Trinity, St. John's, and United Reform Churches.

The insurance company had advised that the church buildings were under insured and the premiums needed to be increased. Also, churches in the Diocese were asked to consider giving at least ten per cent of their annual income to Missionary Societies for their work overseas. The Envelope Scheme was re-vitalised to encourage the congregation to increase their giving - and on a calculated basis. Every effort was made with fund raising events - Parish Shop, Gift Day, Garden Party, "Sunshine Bags", Autumn Fair and various coffee mornings, Whist Drives etc.

At an Extraordinary Meeting of the PCC held in November 1974 after discussion "on the problems associated with maintaining Spiritual Life and church buildings in the Parish of Christ Church" it was proposed "That this PCC is of the opinion that Christ Church is not capable of independently maintaining its present buildings". This was carried by nine votes to seven.

At this time too, a committee of three representatives from the PCC's of Christ Church, St John's and Holy Trinity were exploring the viability of these three churches with the possibility of one church closing and joining with another parish. St. John's Church was having similar financial difficulties to Christ Church but Holy Trinity contemplated no similar need for possible closure.

On 19th February 1975, a working party of the Diocesan Pastoral Committee, including the Archdeacon of Portsmouth met the three PCC's to discuss the future of these three inner Gosport churches. After weeks of investigating, consultation and discussion, the DPC working party gave a report on the 2nd May of their findings, which in effect re-iterated the points already considered in the deliberations of the three PCC's and gave no guidance on how to proceed towards formulating proposals for the next five years. The Working Party appreciated the concern of the three churches to find the right solution, and recommended that their report be sent to all the Gosport Parishes and to the Rural Dean of Alverstoke for consideration by the Deanery.

The Deanery Standing Committee met in June and reported to the churches and Diocesan Pastoral Committee. They proposed that Holy Trinity should be retained and Christ Church be made redundant for the following reasons: The architectural and historical value of Holy Trinity, the environmental setting, the parking facilities and greater viability of the plant (compared with Christ Church Institute) and the fact that Christ Church would be easier to sell with planning permission to develop.

In December of 1972, Revd Hancock informed members of the PCC that he had begun talks with Revd Capper and Revd Munro about future strategy for the Anglican churches in Gosport. All three churches were having financial difficulties and it was proposed that the PCCs of St. John's, Holy Trinity and Christ Church should hold an informal meeting to discuss future needs and possible changes.

The Institute was in dire need of modernisation and redecoration. There had been an inspection by the Chief Fire Officer as a result of an application from the PCC for the renewal of the Music, Singing and Dancing Licence. This was not granted because funds were not available to implement the extensive fire precautions and additional lighting of stairs etc. that were required. The cost to rewire the Institute and stage alone was £682.00. It was decided by the PCC that until a Licence could be obtained, in the interest of safety, restriction of 100 people using the Institute at anyone time would be imposed.

At the first meeting of 1973, the newly elected PCC were asked in view of the need for Christ Church to establish its financial viability:

1. To explore the future of Christ Church
2. To explore possibilities of selling the Institute and converting the church into an all-purpose building
3. To continue to explore the introduction of Pledged Giving.

The PCC and Church-keeping Committee in particular worked hard to explore every possible way forward. They calculated that £600.00 per annum for the next five years would be needed to gradually restore the Institute to a useable condition, with modifications to the kitchen and toilet facilities. A professional estimate was obtained and £2,500.00 - £3,500.00 was quoted. It seemed then, that the only solution was to sell the Institute and with the capital raised from the sale to modify the church. Gosport Planning Authority confirmed that the site could only be used for domestic use, and a maximum of two units could be built on the site, only raising approximately £10,000.00

This was not enough money needed for the church alterations, a sum of £12,000.00 being the amount calculated to carry out this work. There were other financial pressures at this time. The Portsmouth Diocesan Board of Finance were asking PCCs to match the proposed increases in stipends and that the Quota for Christ Church for 1975 would be increased to £766.00. The heating boiler had been given an expected life of 2 years and the church organ was in need of extensive repairs.

Instead of envisaging St. John's, Forton as the worshipping centre for the whole area, which the Diocesan Pastoral Committee proposed, the Deanery Standing Committee wished consideration be given to making the whole area

into one parish with two churches, one in Forton and one near the shopping centre. It was felt that there would be positive advantage in a group or team ministry in this part of the Diocese. Such a major parish would justify not less than four full time clergy and some modernisation of plant, all of which should be seen as a Diocesan responsibility, not merely dependant on local funds. These proposals, in which the Deanery Standing Committee were unanimous, were sent to the Diocesan Pastoral Committee for consideration.

In September the three PCC's met to discuss these two reports and the decision of that meeting was to commend the resolution to the Diocesan Pastoral Committee namely; St. John's Forton "to be the worshipping centre for the inner Gosport area. The present building either to be demolished and rebuilt or altered internally to suit modern needs". After a meeting of the Diocesan Pastoral Committee in November the Bishop of Portsmouth met with the three lay representatives and incumbents of the three inner Gosport churches on 15th January 1976 to further the discussions.

At the PCC meeting in January Revd Hancock informed members that he planned to resign from the benefice of Christ Church in June or July. The Revd Millard would be available for services during the interregnum.

Further meetings between the three PCC's and incumbents took place and consideration was given to ways of further cooperation between St. John's and Christ Church with thought to the future, combined Lent and Evensong Services continued, and Evensong at Christ Church was moved to 3.00pm during the winter months.

In May 1976 the Archdeacon of Portsmouth advised the PCC of the proposal to suspend the living of Christ Church and offered further consultation if required. This meant that as the future of Christ Church and St. John's was uncertain, in order to keep the options open, it was decided to suspend presentation to the benefice for the time being. Revd Hancock left the parish in July to serve in Westcliffe-on-Sea and in November notification of the suspension of the living of Christ Church was confirmed by the Bishop of Portsmouth.

A further report was received by the PCC in October from the Deanery Standing Committee and after discussion it was proposed in view of the DSC report that "this PCC declares its intention to make every effort to ensure that Christ Church will not close in the foreseeable future."

During the interregnum the life of the parish continued with services conducted by Revd Millard. Bookings for the Institute increased, enabling some repairs and decoration to be done.

The Revd Derek James

Then in February the Churchwardens met with the Revd D.G. James of St. Peter, Petersfield, the outcome being Revd James and his family moving to Christ Church Vicarage in May. Prior to the move, volunteers from the parish redecorated some rooms in the vicarage and Revd James was inducted as Priest-in-Charge of Christ Church on 16th May 1977. The Rev. Derek George James, his wife Mary and their five daughters were given a warm welcome to the parish at Revd James' induction Service and the reception which followed.

In May, at the first P.C.C. meeting after Revd James' arrival, the Silver Jubilee of her Majesty the Queen to be held on 7th June 1977 was discussed. A Civic Service to be held at St. Mary's Church, Alverstoke, a Drumhead Service at St. Georges Barracks and an Open Air Service at Stokes Bay. A request was made from the Bishop that all church bells be rung on that day. This led to the examination of and repair to the smaller bell; and also the securing of the larger bell which had been unsafe.

At the Garden Party held in June, a cheque was presented to Revd Millard from the parish in appreciation for all his service during the interregnum. Revd James eased into the life of the parish and continued the liaison with Holy Trinity and St John's parishes. Contact was made with Newtown School and their Harvest Festival was held that year in church during the week. This service, a Christmas Carol Service and School Leavers Service have been held in church for the pupils of Newtown School since that date.

Gifts from the Sunday church service, in which the "Cats", Brownies and all young people took part, were taken to Addenbrooke House for their Harvest Festival Service held in the afternoon, well supported by Christ Church members. This link with Addenbrooke House from 1973, continued for many years, with regular services being held there once a month and the choir singing carols for the residents at Christmas.

In Advent, Christ Church joined with Holy Trinity for their Christingle Service and Holy Trinity members came to Christ Church's Candlelight Service. This service was introduced in 1972, the candles and holders being donated by a parishioner, and is held every Christmas Eve. So popular is this event that extra chairs are brought into church to seat all the people who come to sing carols, hear the readings and watch the Nativity Play.

Revd James sent a Pastoral Letter to all members of the congregation, setting out his ideas for the future of the Parish and emphasising that he and Christ

Church were there to serve all people, not just those who attend church. Leaflets giving information of services and all other activities held at Christ Church, were delivered to every house in the parish.

In September 1977 the Series 3 Wedding Service was introduced, with the Register being signed in church instead of in the vestry as hitherto. Choral Evensong was started, using the Book of Common Prayer Service and held each Sunday. In the mid-nineties, the services were held once a month and then ceased altogether (except for the occasional special service), through lack of attendance. A joint Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve was held at the United Reformed church, but at the request of the congregation, subsequent Midnight Services are held separately. A naval working party of cadets redecorated part of the Institute and volunteers from the congregation painted the exterior window frames. Institute bookings were picking up.

The spiritual life of the church continued to grow with several new innovations starting between 1978 - 81. A Play Church for young children held in the Institute during church service on Sunday, was started - a mixture of creche and Sunday School. A youth Fellowship for young people between the ages of 15 and 18 started and a Friendship Group began for older people. Two additional Lay Assistants were needed to administer the Chalice and in 1982 the first two women Lay Assistants were appointed and licensed by the Bishop: Mrs. Pat Millard and Alison James (daughter of the Vicar) who was a member of the Youth Fellowship.

With the approval of the P.C.C., Revd James also appointed a women's serving team. Women had already served at the altar on Mothering Sunday in 1976 and 1977. The Salisbury setting for the sung Eucharist was introduced and a Confirmation Service was held in church in November 1981.

The British Legion held their first Annual Dedication Service in Christ Church in June 1980 and their Diamond Jubilee in September 1981 conducted by Revd James, Chaplain to the Legion. It was attended by the Mayor and Town Council.

In March 1980 Revd James and his wife Mary, together with the congregation, celebrated their Silver Wedding Anniversary with a service for the renewal of their marriage vows, followed by a party in the Institute. On the 29th March, Revd James baptised his first grandchild in Christ Church and subsequently 14 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren. The Vicar often used these baptismal services to teach the children the meaning of the Family of the Church.

August 1980 saw the first copy of the Courier, Christ Church Parish Magazine. Produced, typed and duplicated by the Vicar. He also canvassed local shops and businesses to advertise in the magazine for a fee, which covered the cost of production and was distributed free. Church members helped with the duplicating, collating and stapling of the magazine. This continued until 1991 when the Courier was printed by a local business.

Fund raising continued. The Parish shop raised £1273.00 in 1981, enabling further re-decoration to the back entrance hall and stairs of the Institute. The Sunday cake raffle was started, to raise funds for Overseas Missions. Also the giving of tins of soup during Advent to St. Petroc's Community for their work among the homeless.

In December 1981, the five year period of suspension was rescinded and Revd James was Instituted and Inducted as Vicar of the Benefice of Christ Church. The service was conducted by the Bishop of Portsmouth and the Archdeacon.

In 1982, 6 Estimates were obtained for the re-wiring of the Institute and in February 1983 the work was completed at a cost of £2,633.00.

The first United Study Course for Lent started, held in the Vicarage, and included U.R.C. & Methodist members. Later, Lent courses organised by St Mary's Church Alverstoke expanded to include the whole Deanery, Roman Catholics, Baptists and Salvationists.

1983. One of the highlights of 1983 was the Pilgrimage to Canterbury in May. 26 members of Christ Church, including 8 from the Youth Club, joined the special trains carrying 5,000 people from Portsmouth Harbour to Canterbury. A gift from Portsmouth Diocese to the Archbishop of Canterbury was a cross fashioned from a piece of timber from the "Mary Rose", flagship of Henry VIII, recovered from Spithead.

A children's Workshop was started in the Institute for 3-5 year olds and continued until 1998. 60 children enrolled on the first day.

The Electoral Roll increased approximately 30% in 5 years and there were now 100 Communicants per week.

1984. Following the Quinquennial and after the Archdeacon's Inspection in 1985, in his report to the Bishop, he said that "Christ Church Parish works hard to maintain its financial independence. The general state of the building and finances is better than 5 years ago and the officers are in good heart. There is congregational growth

and a lot of work undertaken on the buildings by volunteers. Deaconess Betty Hammond has been a source of great help and is valued by the people.”

And so began the pattern for the next decade.

Repairs to the Institute were carried out as funds permitted, the two rooms downstairs were sanded and sealed, the large hall upstairs was redecorated and new curtains were made for the windows and stage, cushion flooring was laid in the kitchen and improvements were made to the gentlemen's toilets. The heating boilers were nursed along but a series of break-downs in the winter necessitated the purchase of calor gas heaters to heat the church.

The church roof above the North Aisle was repaired with tiles also being replaced elsewhere. The drains and downpipes around the church were cleared and the South wall in the Lady Chapel was re-plastered. In 1993 a grant from Hampshire County Council Regeneration Fund enabled further work to be carried out to the North Aisle roof.

Fund raising was ongoing with Summer Fetes, Autumn Fairs, Parish Shop, Lunches, Coffee Mornings, Gift Day, Waste Paper Collection etc to augment the Sunday giving for the upkeep of the church and Institute.

But the church's mission in the world was not forgotten and in 1984 it was decided that a set amount each quarter would be allocated from church income for 'Good Causes'. Many and various donations were made to Missions Overseas, and to local and national charities such as The Children's Society and Christian Aid. £845 was donated to the Ethiopian Famine Appeal.

A Mums and Toddlers Group was started, called 'Sunbeams', and Deaconess Betty Hammond held a monthly PRAM service in church.

For many years there had been a thriving Women's Fellowship group and a Mother's Union afternoon group. In 1988 Revd Hammond (Betty was ordained Deacon in 1987) started an evening Mother's Union group, to enable working women to attend meetings.

On Sunday 24th November 1985, nine survivors of the Battle of Tebourba attended the Memorial Service held in church. Of the 689 of the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Hampshire Regiment who went into action, only 194 lived. The north choir stalls are dedicated to the memory of the men who lost their lives in this battle.

1986. A Civic Service was held in Christ Church on 1st June 1986. Mayor and Mayoress, Mr and Mrs Geoff O'Neill were members of Christ Church. The Royal Marine Light Infantry Marching Band played and the Archdeacon gave the sermon.

Revd James was Mayor's Chaplain for his term of office. Revd James was also Chaplain to the Scouts and St Georges Barracks and Chairman of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

A Liturgical group was started to review Services. Alternative Services Book, Rite A. was used at Holy Communion on Sundays. The Imposition of Ashes on Ash Wednesday was introduced for the first time in 1987.

In 1987 a friendship group for older children 12-15 years was started called "Top Cats". "Cats" (started in 1973) changed to Sunday meetings.

1988. Holiday Workshops were run during Easter holiday for younger school children 5-6 and 7-11 year olds.

The entrance hall and main hall of the Institute were re-decorated during August, whilst not being used for other meetings etc. The Parish Shop and Jumble Sale raised £2,062.

Newtown School led a Family Service which was produced by a different group each month. A service was held at Addenbrooke House in the afternoon on the 4th Sunday in the month.

1989. At Parish Communion, prayers for the parish were introduced. The people who lived in groups of roads and flats, from a different location each month, were prayed for. Sung Evensong was now once a month.

On 9th April 1998, Mrs Nell Wiltshire was chosen to receive the Royal Maundy Money from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth at Portsmouth Cathedral, in recognition of her service to the Sunday School and children of Christ Church and for her work in the wider community over many years.

1990. The Inauguration of the Gosport Deanery took place during which the Bishop of Portsmouth, the Right Revd Timothy Bavin, Commissioned Revd James as Rural Dean.

A Flower Festival was held in 1990 to celebrate 125 years of history and service at Christ Church. Another Flower Festival was held in 1995 in aid of Naomi House Children's Hospice, which raised £1,500.

In 1996 the organ had a major overhaul and was out of action for almost a year. Music for the services was played on the piano or small electric organ which had been donated to the church.

Over the years there had been ongoing problems with windows in the Institute and church being broken by vandals. The Institute glass was replaced with toughened

panes. The stained glass windows in the church were repaired with the cost covered by insurance. But in 1993 after a repair bill of over £3.000 it was decided to fit polycarbonate sheeting to the outside of the stained glass windows and render them 'stone proof'.

At that time the General Fund income was not sufficient to cover expenditure and another demand was made on the Contingency Reserve. This fund was set up in 1994 from a bequest as an 'insurance' against falling income.

In his Annual Review at the APCM in April 1996, Revd James said he planned to retire in August. He and his family would remember a very happy time within the parish, during 19 years at Christ Church. When Revd James first came to Christ Church there had been talk that one church in Gosport would close, but all remained. Much had been achieved during those years and Revd James thanked everyone for their support and hard work and wished Christ Church well for the future.

MUSIC

Music has always been an important part of the worship at Christ Church. Following Mr. Gregory's 40 years as organist Mr. Alfred (Alfie) Parrott served in that capacity for 32 years from 1962. Mr. Parrott played the organ at every service taking only two weeks holiday each year, when Mrs. Doran a member of the congregation, deputised for him. Mr. Parrott became Choirmaster in addition to Organist in 1976 and during his lifetime commitment to Christ Church he was a Server, Youth Club Leader and Sunday School Superintendant. Mr. Parrott retired as organist in 1994 and died in 1996.

Mr. Alfred (Alf) Botterill, who had been assistant to Mr. Parrott for several years before his retirement, succeeded him as Organist and Choirmaster. Mr. Botterill continued to maintain the tradition and quality of music founded by Mr. Parrott in hymns, anthems and the Sung Eucharist, even when the organ was undergoing extensive repairs and the piano and electric organ was substituted. Mr. Botterill, who was well known in Gosport and surrounding areas for his involvement with Scouting, was unfortunately forced to retire as organist in 1998 through ill health and died in 2000. Mrs Kathy Ford succeeded Mr Botterill as organist and Choirmistress in 1998.

Revd Canon Betty Hammond

Betty Hammond commenced service at Christ Church on 1st May 1984. The reason for her appointment was that she would assist the Vicar (Revd Derek

James) in ministry, in a complementary way as a Deaconess. In 1986 legislation was passed in Parliament which would enable Deaconesses in the Church of England to be ordained Deacons. The following year, twenty-two Deaconesses in the Portsmouth Diocese were ordained by Bishop Timothy Bavin, thus giving them the title "Clerk in Holy Orders", part of the three-fold order of Bishops, priests and deacons. Following ordination the lady deacons wore a clerical collar or "dog collar" which replaced the distinctive deaconess cross. Betty then also became Assistant Curate of Christ Church. In 1992 Betty was made an Honorary Canon of Portsmouth Cathedral - the first woman in the diocese to receive an Honorary Canonry. As a senior clergywoman, it was given for her involvement in women's ministry in the diocese and was a token of the valuable work being done by all women deacons.

In 1998 following a two-thirds majority vote in the Church of England's General Synod, the divisive issue of women's ordination to the priesthood was passed and in the following year (1994) most women deacons in the British Isles were ordained priest, thus allowing them to celebrate the Holy Eucharist, to give blessings and to pronounce absolution.

Throughout these eventful and historic years, women worked mainly on pastoral duties in parishes. They also ministered to the sick, led confirmation preparation classes and bible studies, baptised and preached. The particular ways in which women ministers served, was in accordance with their parish priest's wishes.

Betty also had duties in the diocese, serving on committees. In 1986 Betty was commissioned as Enrolling Member of the Christ Church Mothers' Union afternoon branch and in the following year started the evening group, to enable younger women who went out to work to attend meetings. Betty was also Deanery President of the Mothers' Union for six years and in 1985 represented the Diocese in a visit to Nigeria.

Betty retired in 1995 having served over eleven years at Christ Church and died in August 2002.

The Revd William J.E. (Bill) Millard

Bill Millard was licensed to Christ Church on 6th November 1966 as Assistant Curate. He was a pioneer in the concept of Worker Priests (which evolved into the Non Stipendiary Ministry) and must be unusual in being at one time both a priest and a trade union official. He was much loved and respected by Christ Church congregation and his humility, sincerity and faith were an inspiration to all who met him. During the Interregnum following Ivor Hancock's departure,

supported by his wife Pat and his family, the pastoral care of the parish was maintained by Revd Millard. Unfortunately he became ill at the time the Revd James was appointed and was no longer able to serve at Christ Church, but he was able to participate in the Licensing. After a long illness, Revd Millard sadly died in October 1981. He is still remembered with great affection by all who knew him.

Christ Church and the Parish since 2000 Stoke Road

Cray House was converted into flats and the Vine Public House restored as planned as part of the regeneration of Stoke Road.

At the time of writing, the Baptist Church is planning to build a new community orientated church building with better facilities than on their present site at 10-12 Stoke Road. The current estimated cost is around £1.4 million and they will have to fund the project themselves. The plans are yet to be approved by Gosport Borough Council.

In January 2007 the surrounds of Christ Church were improved, as part of Phase 4 of the regeneration to Stoke Road and funded by Hampshire County Council. This consists of new natural stone steps leading to the front door of the church, York stone paving from the front door to the rear of the church on the west side, macadam surfacing with a top dressing of golden pea shingle set in a buff coloured epoxy resin, each side of the path and 3 flower beds.

To the north is a larger flower bed with shrubs and ground cover planting surrounded by railings with a curved rail encircling a new flowering cherry tree. There are two York stone seats at the front and at the back of the church there is another stone seat formerly the threshold of the North Door. There are railings with a gate and a handrail leading to the church door.

Three trees, West Himalayan Birch (*Betula Utilis Jacquemontii*) were planted in the front garden to replicate the frontage of the church in 1865.

Following the retirement of Revd Derek James and after the interregnum of 9 months, Revd David Gibbons was inducted as Curate-in-Charge of Christ Church and Chaplain to the Further Education Colleges in the Deanery, in June 1997. (The Rector of Alverstoke being officially the incumbent.) Revd David was married to Susan with a 2 year old daughter Elise. Their second daughter, Sophia, was born in June 1999.

In 1998 an Institute Working Group was formed, to review the condition of the Institute to see how it should be changed to suit the requirements of the community. The working group estimated £50,000 would be required to put right structural and aesthetic deficiencies. A suggestion that the building be demolished was vetoed.

In his report to the APCM of April 1999, Revd David stated the need to develop a 5 year plan and Vision Statement for the future of Christ Church and the Institute. An Away Day was arranged for 23rd October 1999. Prior to that meeting, a booklet was produced for the whole congregation, to give their ideas in a question and answer format, for the way forward for Christ Church. These were collated and discussed at the Away Day in October.

From that meeting came a **Vision Statement**:

To have a larger, more committed, cohesive, enthusiastic group of Christian people, working together through a range of accessible activities.

A Vision Action Plan:

Tasks which the PCC has set for it's sub-committees:

Communications, Social and Fundraising, Youth and Children's Programmes, Finance and Institute.

At the APCM of February 2000, the Institute Committee had a business plan for the Institute development in which they:

- a. Had a full architects plan for the re-development of the Institute.
- b. Had bid to the Church Urban Fund to fund a Centre Manager post.
- c. Would bid to the Lottery for funding.
- d. Would re-launch at the end of the year as the Christ Church Community Centre.
- e. Full details and plans would be displayed in church.

Revd David unveiled the Mission Statement in a new logo form: 'Christ Church working practically and spiritually within the community'.

In 2000 design drawings were submitted for planning permission and quotations for the work to be undertaken. Some alterations had already been made to the interior of the Institute. Unfortunately, the funding bids for this project were not successful.

During this time children's activities were flourishing, Lazars, Junior Choir (formed in 1998), Brownies and Crèche. A Youth Club called Funtasia was started and ran for 5 years, until through lack of adult leaders and to comply with Health and Safety rules, it had to close.

Common Worship replaced the ASB form of worship. There was a Family Service once a month in Church, which involved the children from the different groups.

A Flower Festival was held in 2000. 'God's Creation and Harvest Festival'.

Having completed his 4 year appointment, Revd David left Christ Church in 2001 to become Rector of St Faith's Church, Havant.

After a short interregnum Revd Anne Gordon was inducted as Priest-in-Charge of Christ Church on 15th October 2001. Revd Anne was warmly welcomed at the APCM in February 2002 and she thanked everyone for their help in the first few months at Christ Church which had been a busy time. Revd Anne hoped that during her time at Christ Church there would be growth in numbers and more involvement in the community. After a complete revision, there were 94 members on the Electoral Roll.

Community Centre development plans and the plans for improving church surrounds were at a critical phase. It was hoped that work would start soon, although the alterations would not begin until the 2nd Lottery bid was successful. The surrounds of the church improvements will be carried out by the Borough Council and Hampshire County Council as part of the scheme for Stoke Road.

Necessary repairs to the porch were completed – part of the Quinquennial report and further repairs were to be considered.

At the July 2003 emergency meeting of the Deanery Synod, the key part of the discussion was about possible church closure, due mainly to lack of clergy. The 3 churches suggested for possible closure were St Francis and St Faith, both under control of St Mary's, Alverstoke; and Christ Church.

At the December meeting, the Archdeacon said that Christ Church would be involved in the Strategic Review Group (SRG) to start in Lent 2004, to discuss the future of Christ Church and other churches in the Deanery.

During 2003, the PCC felt that the burden of maintaining the Community Centre was beyond their means and therefore, asked Revd Anne to investigate selling the Community Centre. After preliminary discussions with the Diocese, the Council and various other interested parties, it seemed that this was possible. Subsequently Revd Anne met the architect from Axis Architecture and plans were discussed for a suitable replacement for the Community Centre. However, emergency repair work to the gable end of the Community Centre (which could be a danger to the public) was necessary before the process of selling could proceed.

There was a break-in of the church and Community Centre. 2 radio microphones were stolen and damage was mainly to the external and internal doors. A leaking radiator caused problems in the Community Centre.

The rooves above the Vestry, Lady Chapel and organ loft had all been stripped and renewed.

In church, the children's area was made into a Children's Chapel. After service coffee was moved into church and the Sunday Cake Raffle was re-introduced with the proceeds going to charitable causes.

Revd Anne produced new service booklets and continued links with the schools. She also spent time in the ASDA store (as ASDA Chaplain) in Dock Road to make contact with people who were not churchgoers.

Roger Miles joined the church as a Reader and Frances Jordan, a member of the congregation, was training to be a Reader.

After Revd Anne's departure in August, the Diocese recommended that process for appointing her successor was not initiated and the future of Christ Church would be discussed during the Kairos process due for completion in July 2005. Any recommendations that emerge from the Deanery consultations would be incorporated in the Deanery Plan.

The Kairos project was initiated by the Bishop to evaluate all the resources in the Diocese. To make changes to buildings, to make them more efficient, to work closely with other churches in the Deanery, to consider ways of being more involved with the community.

In September 2004 at an emergency meeting Revd Ian Booth, Priest-in-Charge of Holy Trinity and acting Priest-in-Charge of Christ Church suggested that plurality between Christ Church and Holy Trinity might be possible. Joint PCC meetings were held, chaired by the Archdeacon, Ven Peter Hancock, who explained in written detail for both congregations, what plurality means. After consultations, it was decided that plurality should proceed.

In April 2005 the necessary papers were signed and forwarded to the Bishop to allow final arrangements to be made to secure the future of Christ Church.

On Sunday 4th September 2005 a Service of Induction and Commissioning of Revd Ian Booth as Priest-in-Charge of Christ Church and Holy Trinity took place. The first part of the Service was held at Holy Trinity then a procession through the town with the Bishop and congregations to Christ Church for the completion of the Service.

Revd David Wood was appointed Hon Curate.

From that time Sunday services were changed to 9.30am for Christ Church and 11am for Holy Trinity to allow the Vicar to officiate at both.

The decision was made to dispose of the Community Centre and draft plans for the rebuilding of the new centre were shown in church. There were several meetings between Gosport Council Officers, the Architect, Revd Ian and the PCC. The new Community Centre will consist of the ground floor with hall, kitchen, toilets, store room, office and meeting room for church use, with four flats above. The plans submitted by Axis Architecture were approved after much debate and problems raised by the community. A developer was engaged and, at the time of writing, scaffolding surrounds the Community Centre and demolition has begun.

A sad time for some of the congregation who have known the old Institute for many years but the new design will incorporate the old bricks with names engraved into them and allow for the present congregation to add to them.

The electoral roll for year ending 2006 numbered 64.

In March 2006 Revd Ian Booth resigned from Christ Church and Holy Trinity.

During the four interregnums, support was given by the Deanery and Cathedral Clergy, to cover weekday and Sunday services.

Tribute must also be paid to the Churchwardens, PCC and congregation for all their hard work during these times.

Fund raising was ongoing and a generous legacy from Mr Horace Tubb (a life-long member of Christ Church and Sacristan for over 40 years) who died in 2001 helped to keep the church solvent.

It was then decided by the PCCs of Christ Church and Holy Trinity that an advertisement be placed in the 'Church Times' for a Vicar. The result was that at the final selection interview with the churchwardens and the Rural Dean, Revd Peter Sutton, it was unanimously agreed that the Revd Andy Davis be appointed the Vicar of Christ Church and Holy Trinity.

On Friday 8th June 2007 the Collation and Induction of Revd Andy Davis as Vicar of Christ Church and Holy Trinity by the Bishop of Portsmouth, the Right Reverend Dr Kenneth Stevenson, took place at Christ Church.

A warm welcome was given to Revd Andy and his wife Christine at the reception held after the service. A joyful occasion with over 400 people attending. The beginning of a new era for Christ Church and Holy Trinity.

Christ Church Clergy

Incumbents:

Revd Ronald Sedgwick	Priest-in-Charge	1908 - 1913
	Vicar	1913 - 1959
Revd David Jameson	Vicar	1960 - 1965
Revd Edward (Ted) Kelly	Vicar	1965 - 1969
Revd Ivor Hancock	Vicar	1969 - 1976
Revd Derek James	Priest-in-Charge	1977 - 1981
	Vicar	1981 - 1996
	<i>[Rural Dean</i>	<i>1990 - 1996]</i>
Revd David Gibbons	Curate-in-Charge	1997 – 2001
<i>(the Rector of Alverstoke was officially the incumbent)</i>		
Revd Anne Gordon	Priest-in-Charge	2001 – 2004
Revd Ian Booth	Priest-in-Charge	2005 - 2006
<i>(also Priest-in-charge of Holy Trinity and Rural Dean)</i>		
Revd Andy Davis	Vicar	2007 –
<i>(also Vicar of Holy Trinity)</i>		

Assistant Clergy:

Revd M.A. Rich	Assistant Curate	1957 – 1960
Revd Geoffrey Curtis	Assistant Curate	1961 – 1965
Revd William Millard	Assistant Curate	1966 – 1976
Revd Canon Betty Hammond	Deaconess	from 1984
	Assistant Curate	1987 – 1995
	<i>(Deacon 1987; Priest 1994)</i>	
	<i>Honorary Canon of Portsmouth Cathedral from 1992</i>	
Revd Reg Forse	Assistant Curate	1992 - 1996
	<i>(N.S.M.)</i>	
Revd John Aldous	Assistant Curate	1996 - 2000
	<i>(N.S.M. Deacon)</i>	
Revd David Wood	Associate Priest	2005 -