



**FROM THE PARISH ARCHIVES**  
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**Two More of Our Vicars**

Welcome to the fourteenth edition of "From the Parish Archives". We hope that you will enjoy reading about the history of the Parish. This is especially so with the 150th anniversary on 12 December 2011.

The "From the Parish Archives" aims to be factual. However, any opinions expressed are personal and may not be necessarily shared by other parishioners.

Geoffrey A Sandy

**Introduction**

In our August 2011 (Number 13) issue we featured Dixon Bertram, who although he was a Lay Reader, could be considered our first full-time Minister. Issue 3 told the sad tale of our first vicar Robert Mackie. Issue 10 featured four of our vicars - Mappin, Dowling, Rogers and Mathieson. This issue features two more of our vicars – Pickering and Sapsford, Much of the information comes from copies of articles from The Argus and The Advertiser Newspapers that are held in our parish archives. The October issue will feature two more vicars.

**The Reverend Arthur J Pickering**

The Reverend Arthur Pickering was the 4<sup>th</sup> vicar of the parish and probably served from 1873 to 1879. However, he is shown as a clergy representative at the 1879 Church Assembly (precursor of the Synod) for St John's Heidelberg. For most of his time at Eltham he had a license to officiate under the Reader category.

He was priested by the second Bishop of Melbourne, the Right Reverend Dr. James Moorhouse on Sunday 14 January 1877. His ordination at (Old) St James Cathedral is described in an article in The Argus Newspaper<sup>i</sup>. The service commenced with an address by the Bishop, who took as his text the 16<sup>th</sup> verse of the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of the 1<sup>st</sup> Epistle to Timothy – "take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine". He impressed upon Pickering and the other candidates the importance *at this time of preserving intact that deposit of faith which has been committed to us*<sup>ii</sup>.

We learn that Pickering was active in the community outside of the Parish. He was instrumental in the establishment of a market in Eltham. At the end of the meeting called for that purpose The Argus reports<sup>iii</sup> *a vote of thanks was tendered to the Rev. J. A. Pickering, through whose instrumentality the meeting had been convened, for the interest he had taken in the matter. Pickering in reply said he considered it the duty of a clergyman to look after the temporal as well as the spiritual wants of the district in which he lived...*<sup>iv</sup>

We also know that Pickering was a member of the Masonic Order. The Argus describes a masonic choral service held on Sunday 8 July 1894 at St Andrew's Clifton Hill at which he is described as Brother Rev. A J Pickering<sup>v</sup>. The service was under the auspices of the Albert Victor Lodge and the incumbent of St Andrew's was Brother E A Thomas a Past Master of the Lodge who gave the oration. His text was from Luke chapter 10, verse 29 – "who is my neighbour?" Pickering is described as assisting with the service.

At a service at St John's Heidelberg on Sunday 18 September 1904, the Bishop of Melbourne preached and made reference to Pickering's impending retirement from the incumbency. The Bishop spoke of *the respect and affection in which he was held in the parish, at the close of his ministry over a quarter of a century*<sup>vi</sup>.

### **The Reverend Thomas Henry Sapsford**

The Reverend Thomas Henry Sapsford was the 10<sup>th</sup> vicar of the parish and served from 1915 to 1922. He had been deaconed in 1904 and priested in 1905 by the foundation Bishop of Gippsland, the Right Reverend A W Pain. He was a seasoned minister before coming to Eltham with former ministries at Cunninghame 1904-7, St Silas South Melbourne 1907-9, St John's Camberwell 1910 and St Mark's and St Luke's Brighton 1910-15.

Sapsford apparently was a gifted speaker with an ability to deliver good quality sermons. The Evelyn Observer and Bourke East Record describes a "go to church Sunday" service held at St Margaret's on Sunday 29 October 1916<sup>vii</sup>. It mentions a large congregation with the vicar preaching an impressive sermon on the duty of attending public worship.

Sapsford is also described as a "popular vicar" in the Evelyn Observer and Bourke East Record<sup>viii</sup>. It describes how *the ladies of the Church of England are arranging for a Christmas tree and entertainment for the children at the Sutherland Home. It goes on to say this is one of the good works in which Mr Sapsford, our popular vicar, is to the fore and the movement is one to be commended. In an apparent reference to the war raging in northern hemisphere it goes on to state whilst doing good for those abroad, we would do well to think of those at our own doors and cheer the hearts of the orphans.*

As the Great European War drew to a close a Welcome Home Committee was formed and records of their meetings are held in the parish archives. The parish and the vicar the Reverend Sapsford, were most active in this group for Eltham. On hearing of the news that the armistice had been signed *the bell of*

*St Margaret's Eltham was set going and was rung until the bell rope broke<sup>ix</sup>. Also, some 60 people assembled in St Margaret's for a special service of thanksgiving conducted by the vicar. The order of service was the National Anthem, Doxology, Te Deum, Thanksgiving prayers, "god bless our splendid men" and the Benediction.*

One healthy sign of the parish is that it is recorded <sup>x</sup> that Sapsford is to assist the Right Reverend Dr. Green, late Bishop of Ballarat, in performing the rite of confirmation for 40 candidates at St Margaret's. Apparently, his priestly role, including preparing Confirmees, was very much appreciated by the congregation. The Evelyn Observer and Bourke East Record <sup>xi</sup> report on a *very pleasant little ceremony to all concerned took place in the first hour of the New Year in the school-room attached to St Margaret's Church of England, Eltham. At the close of the watch-night service the congregation requested to adjourn to the schoolroom, where the Vicar, Rev. T. H. Sapsford, was presented by Mr Gilseman, on behalf of the parishioners, with an envelope containing £16, a New Year's gift as a token of appreciation of his labours during the past six months. There being no parson's horse, the idea was to provide one or the means to do so...*<sup>xii</sup>

It was during Sapsford's ministry that the eldest daughter of the late C S Wingrove, Caroline, passed away unexpectedly. The Wingrove's were a prominent family in the parochial district and the wider community. They were primarily involved with St Katherine's church at St Helena. She is described<sup>xiii</sup> *as universally loved and respected for her untiring efforts for her Church, Red cross, and all worthy causes.* The funeral was at St Katherine's, which unusually for Victoria, has a church graveyard. The vicar, the Reverend Sapsford officiated, assisted by two former vicars Pelham Chase and W Green. This was followed 5 days later with a memorial service at St Margaret's in the evening at 7.30pm. The Saint Cecilia Window on the west wall of St Margaret's is sacred to the memory of Caroline Ada Wingrove. It was erected by relatives and friends.

## **Summary**

Our two former priests Pickering and Sapsford not only ministered to the spiritual and pastoral care needs of the parish under their care but were also proactively involved in the wider community. The historical sources suggest they were both well-respected and well-loved by their parishioners.

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<sup>i</sup> The Argus, Monday 15 January 1877, pp.5-6.

<sup>ii</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>iii</sup> The Argus, Monday 6 December 1875, p.6.

<sup>iv</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>v</sup> The Argus, Tuesday 10 July 1894, p.3.

<sup>vi</sup> The Argus, Monday 19 September 1904, p.5.

<sup>vii</sup> Evelyn Observer and Bourke East Record, Friday 3 November 1916, p.2.

<sup>viii</sup> *Op. cit.* Friday 10 December 1915, p.3.

<sup>ix</sup> Eltham and Whittlesea Shires Advertiser and Diamond Creek Valley Advocate, Friday 15 November 1918, p.2.

<sup>x</sup> Evelyn Observer and Bourke East Record, Friday 26 November 1915, p.3.

<sup>xi</sup> Evelyn Observer and Bourke East Record, Friday 7 January 1916, p.3.

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<sup>xii</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>xiii</sup> Eltham and Whittlesea Shires Advertiser and Diamond Creek Valley Advocate, Friday 30 may 1919, p.2