



## FROM THE PARISH ARCHIVES

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### Another Two Vicars

Welcome to the fifteenth 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.

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#### Introduction

In our August 2011 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. The September 2011 issue featured two more of our vicars – Pickering and Sapsford, This issue tells a brief story of two other priest of our parish - Peck and Tolhurst. The information mainly comes from copies of articles from The Advertiser Newspaper that are held in our parish archives.

#### The Reverend James Arthur Peck

The Reverend James Arthur Peck 1922 to 1929 was the eleventh vicar of the parish. He received his theological training at St Columbs Hall, Wangaratta. . He was deaconed in 1905 and priested in 1907 by the Bishop of Wangaratta, the Right Reverend T H Armstrong. His former ministries, before appointment to Eltham, were Myrtleford 1905-08, Alexandra 1908-10, warden of St Columbs Hall, Wangaratta 1912-20 and St John's Toorak 1920-22.

The appointment of Peck to Eltham was reported in The Advertiser Newspaper<sup>i</sup>. It states that the Rev. Peck of Malvern is to take up residence at the vicarage shortly. He was temporarily in charge of St John's but was unfortunately indisposed last Sunday, and there was no service. It claims that such an occurrence is unique in the history of the church.

On the Tuesday 2 December and Thursday 4 December, The Advertiser reports<sup>ii</sup> that the Sunday school children of St Margaret's gave a performance of the cantata "Prince Hal and his Dog". The venue was the St Margaret's schoolroom. The vicar apparently painted the necessary scenes for the performances. The report congratulates the children for their talent and the vicar, and his helpers, for their

services to children's ministry. We are told that the net proceeds are to be divided between the Forrest River Mission and the Sunday school.

On Saturday 2 July 1925 a continental tea, held under the auspices of St Margaret's was held in the Eltham Public Hall<sup>iii</sup>. A definition of a continental tea is not provided the newspaper report. It does talk about a fine musical programme as being presented and appreciated by the patrons. It also reports that *during the evening the vicar (Rev. J. A. Peck) made a presentation to Miss S. Taylor, who is leaving the district Cr Andrew responded on behalf of Miss Taylor*<sup>iv</sup>. The proceeds of the continental tea evening were given to church funds.

We get a further glimpse of the Reverend Peck in his priestly role at a marriage at St Margaret's. The Advertiser Newspaper describes the occasion as a "pretty wedding"<sup>v</sup>. The wedding took place on Saturday November 15 between Mr H Harrison and Miss Beatrice Brown. Apparently both had connections to Eltham. Mr Harrison, his first name is not provided, is described as a former Eltham resident well-known in cricketing circles. Beatrice is described as well-known throughout the district, being secretary of the Girls Social Club since its inception. The bridal party left the church amidst a shower of confetti and joined the wedding reception at the groom's father's house.

The Reverend Peck was involved in the Boy Scouts. Indeed he headed the Eltham troop as scoutmaster. The Advertiser reports<sup>vi</sup> that the scoutmaster and members of the troop travelled to Melbourne. The purpose of the visit, on Saturday 27 March, was to take part in the great farewell function for His Excellency Lord Stradbroke who will leave for England on April 6. It also reports that the boys enjoyed the outing and at the same time were duly impressed with the importance of the occasion. In the same issue of the newspaper it mentions that special services will be conducted at St Margaret's Church of England in commemoration of Eastertide.

### **The Reverend Frederick Edgar Henry Tolhurst**

The Reverend Frederick Edgar Henry Tolhurst 1929 to 1931 was the twelfth vicar of the parish. He was deaconed in 1927 and priested in 1928 by the Bishop of Ballarat, the Right Reverend P C T Crick. During those two years he served at Panmure 1927-28 and Cobden 1928-29.

Tolhurst was appointed to Eltham at a momentous time in history as it was the beginning of the great depression. Indeed, he was proactively involved in alleviating the suffering of those who impacted by the economic collapse. The Advertiser reports<sup>vii</sup> at his farewell from Eltham reference is made to his involvement in unemployed relief and too many other committees with which he was connected.

We are fortunate that we have copies of The Advertiser Newspaper with a detailed report concerning Tolhurst at the beginning of his ministry at Eltham and also one as he leaves to take up a position at Woodend. We are able to gain a greater insight into this man and his ministry more so than for any other priests that served prior to the 1960s.

First, The Advertiser article<sup>viii</sup> reporting on the induction of F E H Tolhurst. It reports that *the church of St Margaret's (Church of England) was crowded to overflowing to witness the induction ceremony, when the Rev. F. E. H. Tolhurst was installed vicar of the parish on Tuesday evening last*. On the Vicar's Honour Board Tolhurst is shown as vicar from 1929 yet his induction is May 1930. The reason is provided by The Advertiser. Tolhurst served as locum tenens during the past 12 months for the

Rev Peck. We are not told why this was the case. However, strictly speaking Tolhurst was not vicar in 1929.

We get a very positive assessment of the parish at this time. It is described as “flourishing” with crowded congregations at each service. The article attributes this to the good offices of the vicar. It states that during the locum tenens period Tolhurst has endeared himself to the parishioners so that it was a popular installation.

The Advertiser also states that whilst Tolhurst has done very well with his priestly ministry *he has not neglected the social side of the church...by fostering this phase of parochial activity has drawn the parishioners together, and at the same time laid the church on a more solid foundation.* It goes on to say that the vicar’s wife, who is described in the language of the time as “his good lady”, has been a powerful ally to Tolhurst in his work.

Obviously, Tolhurst had forged a good relationship with the leaders of the other local Christian churches as they are present at the installation. In fact the writer of the article comments “How often is this spirit lacking?”. We are told later in the article that Tolhurst’s father is a Presbyterian minister and chaplain of Caulfield Military Hospital. Apparently, he was cheered by the congregation upon rising as *he thanked the parishioners for the confidence expressed in his son, whom he congratulated on his succession to office.*

Apparently, after the Archbishop’s license had been read by the Rev. F. Slade, the new vicar was led by the three churchwardens to the various parts of the church. Tolhurst tolled the bell, signifying to the parishioners he had taken possession of the church. Bishop Stephen preached the sermon and made reference to the unusual circumstances concerning this induction. Tolhurst did not come as a stranger but as the Bishop put it *as a tried man. One who had won the regard of the people he would now minister to.*

Towards the end of the induction Archdeacon Hancock paid *a tribute to Mrs Tolhurst in her capacity as hostess and her assistance in parish activities. Special congratulations were also extended to the choir, which he said was one of the finest he had yet heard.*

Second, The Advertiser article<sup>x</sup> reporting on the vicar’s farewell. This time the gathering is not in the church but at the Eltham Public Hall. It is described as one of the largest gatherings ever held in the locality. It took place Tuesday 24 February 1931.

The article remarks that *as a tribute to the popularity of the pair was the attendance of members of all denominations who all entered wholeheartedly into what be termed a public “send off”.* A Mr A Doude spoke on behalf of St Mary’s Catholic Church and *said his church had always appreciated Rev, Tolhurst as a clergyman and a citizen. Personally he had worked with him on several committees and was proud to claim him as a friend. The harmony between the two faiths had been appreciated by members of both churches.*

Counsellor Andrew as chairman *paid tribute to the good work of the reverend gentleman , both as a clergyman and as a citizen. He presented Tolhurst with a wallet of notes as a token of esteem in which he and his wife were held by the parish.* A Mr Stewart *spoke at some length on the Rev. Tolhurst’s connection with the school, both as an instructor and a member of the committee.*

The Advertiser reports that in his reply Tolhurst thanked all the speakers and quite revealingly, he said that his object was to foster amicable relations between all the various denominations in the district. The reason being was this was desirable for the well-being of the community. Further, he had been pleased to work on many committees in the district. He paid tribute to his wife for her support and work in the life of the parish and thanked members of the parish and the wider community. It is reported "his remarks were soundly applauded". The meeting ended with musical items, a recitation in "quaint Scotch" and a dance.

### Summary

The report in The Advertiser<sup>x</sup> summaries the qualities and ministry of the Reverend Tolhurst as *the vicar is modern in his outlook on church activities, and it is by this that he was able to rejuvenate the almost decadent state of affairs in the parish. The church has never been on as high a pinnacle as at present.* Tribute is made again to Mrs Tolhurst as a "wonderful ally" in all of this. By inference, accepting then newspapers accuracy, the church was in a poor state under Peck after about a 6 year incumbency. More research is required here, especially of the reported attendances and statements of financial affairs for the two incumbencies.

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<sup>i</sup> The Advertiser, Friday 14 July 1922, p.3.

<sup>ii</sup> The Advertiser Friday 12 December 1924, p.5.

<sup>iii</sup> The Advertiser, Friday 10 July 1925, p.2.

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

<sup>v</sup> The Advertiser Friday 28 November 1924, p.3.

<sup>vi</sup> The Advertiser Friday 2 April 1926, p.2.

<sup>vii</sup> The Advertiser Friday 27 February 1931, p.1.

<sup>viii</sup> The Advertiser Friday 9 May 1930, p.4.

<sup>ix</sup> The Advertiser Friday 27 February 1931, p.1.

<sup>x</sup> The Advertiser Friday 6 February 1931. P.1.