



FROM THE PARISH ARCHIVES
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More Laypersons of the Foundation Period 1860-1888

Welcome to the thirtieth edition of "From the Parish Archives". We hope that you will enjoy reading about the history of the Parish.

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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Opening Comments

This issue provides some information about five laypersons for the period 19 November 1868 to 31 January 1882. The significance of the November date is that it is the first meeting of the re-formed committee with the major task to construct the parsonage. The January date is the last recorded meeting of the church committee of what the author refers to as Saint Margaret's Foundation Period, 1860 to 1888. The Laypersons featured in this issue are:

- William Frederick Ford
- Benjamin Oliver Wallis
- David George Clark
- George Knapman
- Isaac Briggs

William Frederick Ford

We lack biographical information about William Ford. However, he was a founding member of the committee established to construct the parsonage. He was also a member of the church committee, now referred to as the vestry, until 1881. He chaired a number of

meetings and was appointed vicars warden by both the Revds. Pickering and Gason.

It was William who moved on the 29 March 1876 that the church be consecrated in the name of Saint Margaret. On the 23 March 1877 he seconded the motion that the chairman be empowered to take the necessary steps to get the parochial district proclaimed a parish. He also moved that tenders be accepted for a proposed library/ Sunday school room on the 4 October 1881.

William Ford was an active member of the community. On the 10 August 1866 he was appointed a trustee of the Eltham Cemetery. He replaced Thomas Batt who had resigned. It was William Ford that purchased the Steam Flour Mill from Henry Dendy as he left Eltham for Walhalla. He served as a councillor for south riding and was described as a JP and a farmer at Eltham.

Benjamin Oliver Wallis

Benjamin Wallis was briefly a member of the parsonage committee but resigned after nine meetings. However, he had an association with the parish back to the 1860s. Committee and tea meetings were regularly held at his Eltham Hotel, of which he was the Hotelkeeper. Indeed Saint Margaret's has had an association with the Eltham Hotel in its three incarnations for over 150 years.

Wallis was present at the 3 December 1868 committee meeting that accepted the plans for the construction of the parsonage and soon after the tenders for the making of the bricks. We are unaware why Wallis resigned after only nine meetings. He refused to give a reason for his resignation to the committee.

No doubt as publican of the Eltham Hotel Benjamin and Mrs Wallis enjoyed some social standing in the growing community of Eltham. He was still a Hotelkeeper into the 1880s. Wallis also contributed to public life as a shire councillor of south riding from 1880 to 1887.

Benjamin Wallis was interred in the Eltham Cemetery at aged 79 on the 23 November 1896. His wife was interred on the 23 September 1887.

David George Clark

David George Clark was a founder member of the re-formed "second church committee" that met on the 12 August 1869. The

parsonage committee was already operating. He was a very good attender of meetings and contributor into the late 1870s. David served as warden, vestryman, trustee, treasurer and stipend collector.

David was married to Elizabeth and was a school teacher. So was his sister Catherine. They both established their first school in Little Eltham and sought assistance from the National School Board. This was not the Denominational School already established by the Church of England. Their school was established in 1855 and they used a slab and bark hut built by Thomas Hunniford in Henry Street.

As school teachers David and Catherine were probably held in high regard in the developing Eltham community. During the 1870s, David, presumably with the support of his wife Elizabeth, was an important contributor during the consolidation period of Saint Margaret's. The church opened in December 1861 and the parsonage was completed in 1870. There were no large building during this decade, although a small library was established.

The Baptismal Register record a number of children baptised at Saint Margaret's. Tragically an infant son died at 7 months 10 days and was interred on the 23 April 1865 in the Eltham Cemetery. The Sunday School Roll Book indicates that Jessie, Arthur, Victor and Horace attended Sunday school.

George Knapman

George Knapman was a member of the re-formed church committee over the period 1878 and 1882. However, his attendance was "patchy" although it was a little better during 1881 and 1882. George like his father, also George, was a blacksmith.

The Marriage Certificate indicates that George married Mary Jane Williams on the 28 May 1877. The Baptismal Register indicates that four children were baptised. It would appear that George and Mary Jane "jumped the gun", to use the colloquial, as Percival George was born on the 22 December 1877. The Sunday School Roll Book indicates that their children attended Sunday school.

George was active on the committee or vestry despite irregular attendance. He moved that the vestry building be attached to the parsonage at the 12 September 1881 meeting. It was located at

the north-east end of the church. At the 10 October 1881 meeting he seconded the motion that a specific, but unnamed, tenderer be approved to construct a Sunday school in accordance with the specifications. He also formally moved at the 11 November meeting 1881 that the tender of Mr Brown for the construction of the Sunday school be approved.

Isaac Briggs

Isaac Briggs and his wife Elizabeth were pioneer Church of England residents of Eltham. The Baptismal Register of Saint John's Heidelberg records the baptism of three children to Isaac and Elizabeth. The Sunday School Roll Book shows John Briggs, born in 1854, attending in 1860. Isaac is first described as a farmer and later as a carpenter. Elizabeth was interred in the Eltham Cemetery in 1891 and Isaac in 1894.

Isaac was appointed to the parsonage committee on the 26 November 1868. On the 5 July 1869 he moved that the tender of John Sweeney for the carting of bricks be accepted. He also chaired the meeting. It was agreed on the 22 July 1869, that he with Alfred Armstrong and William Andrew, write to a recalcitrant contractor threatening to withdraw his tender contract.

Isaac was a member of the re-formed church committee until 1881. Like a number of others his attendance was "patchy" until 1879 when he becomes a regular attender a meetings. He also served as a trustee of the denominational school before it closed in 1872. On the 26 March 1879, the Revd. Pickering appointed Isaac Briggs as a vestryman. He was also appointed vestryman by the Revd. Gason on the 9 April 1880. It appears he was not pro-active on vestry.

Summary

This issue of "from the Parish Archives" provides some information about five prominent laypersons associated with Saint Margaret's in the late 1860s to the 1880s. It was during this period that the parsonage was completed, the denominational school closed, the church was consecrated and a parochial library and Sunday school meeting room constructed. A foundational period, which confers great benefits for Saint Margaret's ministry and mission today.