

Memory of St Andrews, Edgware Martin Castle

When my parents (Ken and Betty) set up home, shortly after the outbreak of WW2, they started to attend St Andrews just two years after the church had opened. In fact, the church was established just 4 years before I was born and the first Curate in Charge, who I remember, was Gordon Harman – having recently returned from missionary service with China Inland Mission (now OMF). I recall him visiting our home at Apex Corner and arriving on his bicycle! Gordon, of course, later returned to Edgware as Rector of St Margaret's.

I have only two specific memories of my childhood at St Andrews. The first was attending the Sunday morning service and being intrigued by Alfred Kensit (Church Warden) whose duty it was to discretely count how many were in the congregation – a practice which I believe continues today! As a small boy, I recall standing on my chair and somewhat rudely pointing at each person whilst also attempting to count how many were present. I have always put my fascination with numbers down to that experience! The second recollection relates to the good sized Sunday school held, at that time, in the afternoon when my father was the Superintendent. On one occasion, after the offering had been taken, my father announced that they had found a penny shaped piece of a Meccano set in one of the bags and asked who it belonged to. I had to own up!

By the age of 12, early “rebellion” was developing and I became less inclined to come to Sunday school. I hasten to add that this should not be taken as any reflection on the quality of the Sunday school teachers. In God's goodness and grace, I was encouraged to attend Mill Hill Crusaders (where my father had also been a member before WW2) and I remained there for 21 years initially as a boy and later as a leader. Interestingly, a number of my Anglican co-leaders attended St Andrews (Jerry Heyhoe, George Luffman and, my best man, John Wedlake were some) and, indeed, we encouraged a number of our boys, who were ready to link up with a church, to come to St Andrews. If I recall correctly, this was when Ian Stephenson (who now lives in New Zealand) was Curate in Charge.

In 1954, our family moved from Mill Hill to Kenton and the links with St Andrews ended for a while although I remained linked to Mill Hill Crusaders. In fact, the earlier “rebellion” reached something of a climax in 1960 but that is another story not directly related to St Andrews although the same wonderful and merciful Sovereign God remained in control!

In 1962, my mother was killed in a road accident and 3 years later, my father re-married to Lillian (nee Powell) who was, at that time, linked to St Andrews. Lillian had been converted in 1939 (I believe at St Andrews) and joined the Campaigners where my mother (Betty) had a mentoring role for her. Thus, Lillian (now age 88) has known me all my life and it is ironic that my wife (Eedit) and I now oversee her care in a nursing home in Littlehampton. In the Mid 1960's, when Lillian oversaw the Primary section of the St Andrews Sunday school, I recall her asking me (then in my mid 20's) to act as Father Christmas where the children had “audience” with FC at the annual Christmas party. When Dad and Lillian set up home in Lamorna Grove in 1964, they started to attend St Margarets where they stayed until Dad passed to Glory and Lillian was transferred to Littlehampton in 2009.

It was a privilege for my wife and I to return to St Andrews in 2010 when we attended the re-confirmation of a friend who we had known for a number of years in the church we had attended as a family until 2000. The Castle link with St Andrews continues! PTL.

Martin Castle
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