

S*ParkLife 20

Stanborough Park Church Newsletter
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news@stanboroughchurch.org
s.parklifenews@gmail.com

Aka Lockdown News 36

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WISHING EVERYONE A BLESSED CHRISTMASTIME AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

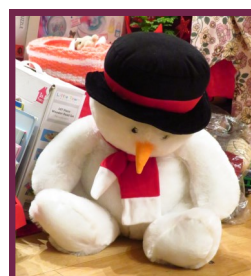


◆ 62nd ANNUAL TOY SERVICE HELD IN THE CHURCH

The 62nd Annual Toy Service was held in the church on Sabbath, 9th December and was attended as usual by the Elected Mayor of Watford, Peter Taylor. Pastor James preached the sermon stating that the greatest gift you could give your children was a stable home which was best achieved through marriage.

Pat reports that she thought that there were even more toys this year and that shortage of space on the platform meant that she had to accommodate the overflow in the Welfare Room!

SPCM students joined children from the church family in providing musical items. The orchestra performed as usual and Angel Voices and our Junior Choir performed along with the Handbell Ensemble. After the service social workers and representatives of local charities were seen sorting through the toys on behalf of their clients.





Choosing gifts:
Tim Whittaker from WTRRP and social workers selecting toys for clients after the service.

◆ FUNERAL OF PASTOR ROY BURGESS



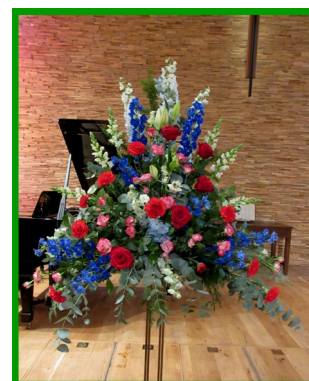
The Funeral service for Pastor Roy Burgess was held in Stanborough Park Church on 6th December followed by the committal at North Watford Cemetery. During the service son Dave gave a lengthy but fascinating insight into the long life of Pastor Burgess, who died aged 97,

and was the church's Senior Minister between 1983 and 1990.

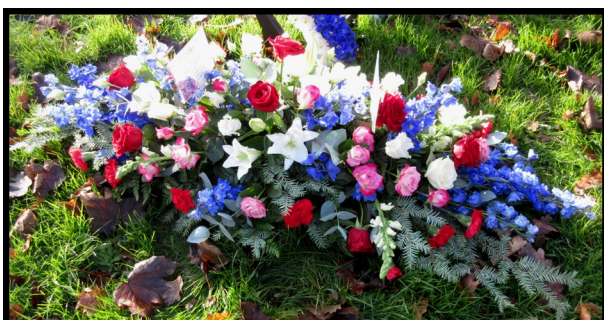
Amongst the congregation were several former ministers and church elders, some of whom had travelled a considerable distance to attend. Pastor Jacques Venter conducted the service assisted by Pastor Terry.

Audrey Huzzey produced the floral arrangements (with some help from Michele). PAPA was the name his grandchildren used and made in blue, his favourite colour, by taking delphiniums apart—a real labour of love much appreciated by the family. The service is available to view on the church's website.

<https://livestream.com/accounts/640318/events/3160916/videos/238891962>



Sheila Burgess, Elaine Harlin and David Burgess, along with their families, would like to thank everyone for the prayers offered, for the cards and flowers received, and the comforting words written as they grieve the loss of Roy.



◆ AN AUTUMN WEDDING FOR JEF NASCIMENTO



We may not have seen Jef around for a while after he moved to Portugal to complete his studies but he hasn't forgotten us and is still involved with bulletin production, distributing the church newsletter by email, the church's YouTube channel and social media and produces the banners for the church web site.

At the beginning of October he married Loreta Norkute from Lithuania. They met in London, studied the Bible together, and Loreta was baptised in September. (See web link below.)

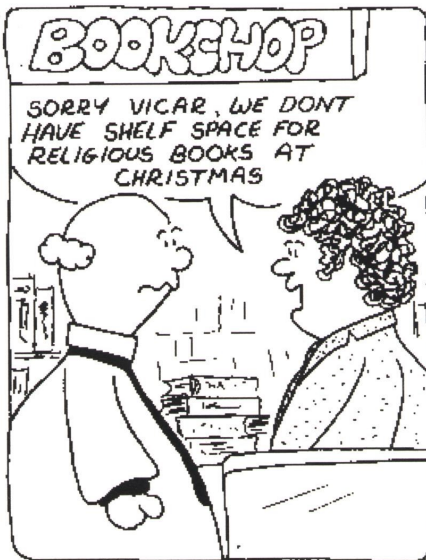
<https://noticias.adventistas.org.pt/noticia/baptismos/do-reino-unido-a-portugal-uma-jornada-de-conversao-culmina-em-albufeira/>

Jef currently works from his home in Portugal. He gives his job title as "Project Manager for 'Heroes: The Bible Trivia Game' app, working as a freelancer contractor for the GC Communication Department". Loreta works as a data analyst.



Photo: L. Guenin. Supplied by the bridegroom.

◆ PROFESSOR JOHN WALTON SPEAKS AT THE CHURCH ON WHY A SCIENTIST CAN BELIEVE IN CREATION



Professor John Walton of the University of St. Andrews talked about his book which presents a scientific case that the Earth is actually thousands of years old, not the millions so widely accepted, during a special programme in the afternoon of Saturday, 2nd December.

His talk during the Family Service on 2nd December on how recent scientific discoveries support creation and contradict evolution theories can be viewed on the church website. He particularly concentrated on dinosaurs and how recent analysis of dinosaur excrement has forced many evolutionist scientists to rethink their conclusions and come up with new theories. He maintains that there has never been a better time for scientists to accept the doctrine of creation.

Professor Walton's morning talk can be viewed on the church website at:

<https://livestream.com/accounts/640318/events/3160916/videos/238837644>

The afternoon talk about his book can also be found on the church website at:

<https://livestream.com/accounts/640318/events/3160916/videos/238839212>

His personal website is: <https://waltonjcbbooks.com>.



◆ THE LIFE OF PASTOR ROY BURGESS



In the early hours of 12th November this world said a final goodbye to Pastor Roy Burgess after a long battle with a neurological condition. During his lifetime of service to his Master he was loved

and respected by his congregations and colleagues for his quiet leadership and his Bible-based preaching. Many members who have joined the church in recent years may not be aware that he was a popular, well-loved and respected Senior SPC Minister between 1983 and 1990 remaining in the area after his retirement and retaining his membership of this church which had been so much part of his youth, attending regularly until his health deteriorated.

Early Life

Roy was a true Watford lad. Born on 14th June, 1926 he grew up in North Watford attending local primary schools Callowland, Parkgate and Stanborough Park Schools moving to Leggatts Way Boys School for his secondary education. He was baptised in 1941 and was actively involved with the church as a lay preacher and youth leader.

After leaving school he worked briefly for Clive Blackburn in his shoe repair shop on St. Albans Road (the site now occupied by Beken Court) and subsequently followed the example of many of his peers seeking work on Stanborough Park. He entered denominational employment at Granose Foods on 30th September, 1942 as a general hand and then as a baker leaving in April 1948 when he decided to study for the ministry and enrolled at Newbold College later that year.

Following four years of theological studies at the college he graduated with a B. A. in Theology during the final weekend of late May/early June, 1952. The following August he married Sheila at Stanborough Park Church, for both their 'home church', and they began their life together in Cornwall where Roy spent his first internship. In 1958

their daughter Elaine was born with David arriving the following year.

The Graduation

Graduation was held that year over the weekend of May 31st to June 2nd and was reported in the Messenger dated June 13, 1952 Volume 57 No. 12. Writing in the Messenger of that date the principal, W. R.A. Madgwick, stated,

'In presenting the diplomas to the twelve graduates, the principal charged them to uphold faithfully the traditions of Newbold Missionary College, which traditions, he stated, had been worthily established in Christian service by their predecessors labouring for God in every part of the world. With the prayer that God may endue them with dynamic power, he sent them forth proudly and loving to do exploits.

'The graduate responses in the mood of gratitude to God and thankfulness to parents, teachers, relatives and friends were ably given by Mr. Roy Burgess, Miss Elizabeth Ponder and Miss Ruth Tamblin.'

Elizabeth Ponder married fellow graduate Arthur Cooper and was known to many older SPC members as Betty Cooper. Fellow graduate Valerie Baldwin married Pastor Geoff Munson and some years after his death remarried and taught as Stanborough School for a while where she was known as Valerie Dust. Widowed again she was more recently known as Valerie Freeman.

Other fellow graduates, two of whom were also from Stanborough Park*, were Ken Clothier, Wilf Fatcher*, who became Head of Stanborough Park School for some years during the 1960's, Ivor Kinnersley, Ronald Surridge who was Senior SPC minister for some years and also worked for Clive Blackburn before attending college, Arthur Cooper who worshipped at SPC during his declining years - along with Betty, Donald McClure*, Joyce College and Walter Fenz from Italy. Joyce Watson, known professionally as Kathleen Joyce, another SPC member and a familiar name to many of the older members, sang at the service.

The Valedictory address on Sabbath was given by Pastor Victor Cooper, also a familiar name to many SPC members, who reminded the graduates that one purpose of the event was to seek God's guidance for the future.

'Perhaps when you first came to school you wondered if you would ever achieve graduation peak. Now as you stand here you discover it is but the foothill of loftier mountains which tower above

you and bid you climb higher. But there is a path winding up to the summit. Jesus says, "I am the Way". As you pause to consider the pattern of your future, we greet you as brethren and wish you well as you climb.'

The Ministerial years

Pastor Burgess was assigned to the South England Conference and his uphill climb began with an internship in Cornwall which was followed by Edmonton. He was ordained at the SEC Conference Session held in Watford Town Hall during the weekend of August 1st–4th, 1957. This was alongside another familiar name – Pastor Victor Hall, who was also SPC Senior Minister for some years during the early 1980's. Unusually there was only one paragraph mentioning the ordination in the Messenger with no photograph. However, the conference itself was competing for space in the journal with a similar NEC event and the Stanborough Park 50th Jubilee Celebration held on the following Monday which took up a very large number of pages (and has proved to be an invaluable source of information for the historical section of this newsletter!).

Following his ordination he was assigned to the Southampton and Portsmouth area and subsequently Gloucester districts. Later he moved to the Irish Mission serving in Dublin and then Portadown and Banbridge before transferring in 1963 to the Welsh Mission as minister in the Newport district and MV Sponsor for the Welsh Mission, moving to pastor the Shrewsbury and Wellington churches close to the Welsh border in 1967. He never forgot his love of Wales, its members and Welsh hymn singing.

January 1976 saw a return to the SEC where he served in the Gloucester, Chalford, Cheltenham and Stroud districts before becoming Senior Pastor at SPC in 1983. This involved yet another house move for them and he and Sheila made their home in the nearby Chiltern village of Sarratt which must be the home where they lived for the longest period in their entire lives.

Pastor Burgess was the minister who was involved with the church's Sabbath Service which was recorded by staff from BBC Radio 4 in the radio station's Sunday morning service slot, preaching a sermon on the Second Coming. (This was covered in a previous edition of this newsletter.) He finally retired from SPC

at the end of 1990 and was replaced by Pastor P. Boyle but this wasn't his final posting as he looked after the Hemel Hempstead Church until the following September completing 44 years of active service, although even then he still continued to accept regular preaching appointments in the West Country, East Anglia and the south coast, supporting local ministers for a further 20 years.

Pastor Burgess was always very interested in youth work and he was kept busy through his role as MV Sponsor in Wales and running an annual youth camp in Brecon in the days when sanitation was primitive and would send a shudder down most spines these days when we expect higher standards of comfort! During the 1960's and '70's he acted as leader of the Motor Camps taking youth to Ireland, Switzerland, Italy, France, Norway and Iceland and coordinated the music for many SEC Camp Meetings. He also assisted in evangelistic campaigns such as the Vandeman campaign in London in the 1950's and other campaigns in Shrewsbury and Dublin. Over the years he mentored a number of intern pastors who all faithfully served the church in Ireland and the UK and who remember him fondly.

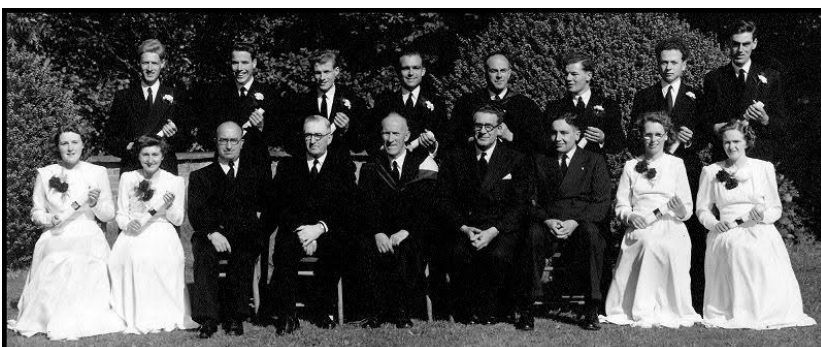
The Retirement Years

Pastor Burgess finally retired in September 1991 after 44 years of 'dedicated and enthusiastic service' (BUC News obituary 24/11/23). One can only say that during this time he certainly fulfilled those requirements stated during the weekend of his graduation.

During his retirement years he and Sheila continued to attend SPC and travelled extensively across Europe – especially to Switzerland, the USA and the Caribbean; he was a keen ornithologist. Last August he and Sheila celebrated their 71st wedding anniversary.

His funeral was held at SPC on December 6th in the church that had been so much part of his life. Pastor Burgess leaves two children, four grandchildren and two great grandchildren, Lillie and Elijah, as well as wife Sheila. We send our condolences to them and all members of his extended family.

We thank God for his long and faithful service in the UK and Ireland. There is no doubt that he followed the advice and challenges laid down at his graduation as he slowly climbed those mountain peaks.



Graduation photo supplied by David Burgess.

Men, back row: Doug McClure, Ivor Kinneresley, Ron Surridge, Roy Burgess, Wilf Fatcher, Walter Fenz (Italy), Arthur Cooper.

Ladies: Betty Ponder later Cooper far right next to Valerie Baldwin later, Munsen/Dust/Freeman next to Pr. Victor Cooper. Also, Ruth Tamblin, far left, next to Joyce College. The principal was W. R. A. Madgwick.

◆ **A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE:** written more than 40 years ago, for most a history lesson, for a few a nostalgia trip, it still contains a message for today and hopefully raises a smile.

*Author: D. N. Marshall, Editor, from MESSENGER
Volume 84 Number 25/26, 7 December 1979*

Do you remember Christmas in the old days?

I mean, before we learned to spend the bulk of it safely anaesthetized in front of the TV? Before we could afford to fill ourselves to the nostrils with provender bought in specially from the supermarket? Do you remember the days when carol singers sang at the tops of their lungs, knew the first verse of at least a dozen carols — and got through three of them before knocking at the door?

Do you remember when Christmas started in mid-October — not with the appearance of fairy lights in the shopping precinct or last year's cards sold at half-price in W. H. Smith's—but with Christmas cake tasting? You know; when mother made her own cake to her own recipe, did so two-and-a-half months before the day to allow it 'to mature' and let you scrape out the mixing bowl if you were on your best behaviour? When Christmas puddings in muslin cloth, mince-pies and sundry other home-made pastries seemed, from where you were looking, to make the pantry shelves groan and buckle beneath their weight? (But how they had all so miraculously disappeared by the end of Boxing Day?)

Do you remember all that home-made entertainment? Amply-proportioned aunts who came and recited poetry? How anyone who expected uncle's party-piece to be terrible was in for a shock— it was really terrible? But how you laughed yourself helpless at it anyway? Do you remember those comical machine-gun monologues? The sort of thing Sir John Betjeman might have written — if somebody had filled him up with Benzdrine and forced-fed him Guinness intravenously? Do you remember all manner of music and instruments — drums, trumpets, piano-accordions, squash-boxes? How Christmas would not have been Christmas without at least one full voiced rendition (all parts; bass, tenor, baritone, soprano, alto — because everyone was there) of every carol from 'Good King Wenceslas' to 'Silent Night', complete with instrumental accompaniment? Silent night?

Do you remember Christmas Eve? The excitement, the curiosity — as if none of it had ever happened to you before? How you said 'Merry Christmas' to everyone, whether you knew them or not, and how they replied, whether they knew you or not, 'Same to you and many of 'em'? The Christmas tree baubles made of thinnest glass. Stardust from a paper bag instead of an aerosol can. Brightly-coloured paper trimmings made in November evenings hung from picture-rail to picture-rail. And then, when you went to bed, do you remember being so keyed-up you could not drop off to sleep despite the threat that if you weren't in the Land of Nod by mid-

night, there would be no presents for you?

Coming to on the morning, to the sound of somebody hollering 'Christians Awake!' from the bottom of the stairs at the top of his tenor? Everything breaking loose all at once. Pandemonium for at least half-an-hour; Grandma threatening to sue for GBH of the inner ear. Breakfast getting forgotten. Friends from down the street turning up to show you their presents with the assurance that there were 'lots more'. A whole squadron of aunts breezing in on a cloud of perfume. Father tripping on a roller-skate and eloquently, but succinctly, stating the case for tidiness and shorter school holidays — before recovering the Christmas spirit. With the table set for Christmas dinner a cousin out of Hitchin turning up unexpectedly, but there being 'more than enough to go round'.

At 3 pm, His Majesty the King on the wireless. Those broadcasts from the dominions beyond the seas; wondering why they all had to be recorded against a background of chips frying. And the service at church; everyone in jovial humour. The minister's story, the one from 'Uncle Arthur' about 'The Luckiest Fellow that Ever Lived'. The Christmas Message; being aware that you had never listened more intently than now, the picture in your mind as crisp as the snow on the cards on the mantelpiece at home. The Angel Gabriel. Joseph. Mary, on the donkey, 'being great with child'. No room! The angel-driven shepherds, the star and the wise men . . . The Christ-child born amid the deep and dreamless sleep of a tiny town wherein the hopes and fears of all the years are met.

Grasping the cusp of the Christian Gospel;

knowing that, on the tick of prophecy, at the fullness of His time, God sent His Son as a baby. That in Him is housed the fullness of the Godhead bodily. The Word made flesh. In Him visible and invisible combining, God and man being brought together. The eyes accustomed to observe the earth from end to end, that have yet to focus on His mother's face. The hands that fashioned moon and stars that have yet to grasp His mother's finger. A Voice that spake and it was done, that is inarticulate and speechless. Through the arches of millennial years you see the shadow of His manger— and the shadow of His cross.

And faith leaps from a child-like mind to grasp so great salvation, knowing that in Him is our life, our hope, our promise of eternity. In Him our pardon, peace, power and ever-present Companion. Catching hold of the ladder that leads to glory . . .

Do you remember the atmosphere of Christmas; the Christ-child born amid the deep and dreamless sleep of ages, wanting to be born again — in us? Do you remember the window-pane with 'Merry Christmas'? The mass of debris left behind when the last guest had stepped out into the sharp of midnight? Do you remember the peace that descended, like the All Clear after an air raid?

Do you remember Christmas?



◆ ARCHIVES: THE PLIGHT OF ADVENTIST YOUNG MEN DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Taken from A CENTURY OF ADVENTISM (Messenger special edition 2000)

In both the world wars of the twentieth century, Seventh-day Adventists were, in the main, conscientious objectors to military service. By May 1916, ten thousand Britons had applied for exemption from combatant duty. Adventists were not on their own!

Whereas it was to be possible to survive World War II as a conscientious objector — and suffer no worse a fate than being sent to work down the mines or on the railways — the atmosphere in the 1914-19 War was supercharged by jingoism. In addition, as the vast casualties of the war became apparent, both the bereaved and those who had sons, husbands and sweethearts on the Western Front often felt justified in exerting social pressures of an extreme kind against those who refused to fight. In the lower ranks of the officer corps the hostility to those who refused to fight and, in addition to their non-combatant status, refused to do menial work on the Sabbath (tasks involving helping the sick were performed willingly), was particularly intense. Many were sentenced to six months' hard labour for refusing to work on the Sabbath. Among these were H. W. Lowe (later to be BUC president), A. F. Bird (who later became an evangelist), and W. W. Armstrong (who also became Union president at a later date).

The harsh treatment of Seventh-day Adventists has attracted the attention of historians. This is particularly true of the treatment of W. W. Armstrong. His own account of his treatment was published (anonymously) in *The Tribunal*, on 4 April 1918: 'In the cell passage the sergeants agreed that I was the ringleader, probably because I was the tallest. The smallest pair of "figure eights" was brought and screwed down on my wrists. So small was the pair that to get them on, my flesh was

ripped and cut in several places. The circulation was practically cut off, leaving my hands dead. I was then pushed into a cell, and pinned against the wall by one sergeant, whilst the others in a most passionate rage struck me continually about the head and in the stomach. Then one burly NCO lifted me up bodily, and with his knee threw me backward to the other side. The contact with the iron wall caused the irons to cut more, and sent acute pain to all my nerves. This kind of treatment continued until I dropped to the floor. I was picked up, but then collapsed again, whereupon I was kicked several times in the middle of the back. Finally, I became unconscious. I had made no opposition by force, or even uttered a word which could have given the slightest offence.

'About 10am I was taken out of my cell, and two cement blocks weighing about 35lb each were roped round my neck, one hanging upon my chest, the other upon my back. With my wrists still in irons behind my back, I was made to pace the passage at a quick march. At last, from exhaustion, I sank beneath the strain, and remained in a fit for about an hour. When I came to, I was placed in the cell again till the afternoon, when the governor visited me and gave permission for me to have my blankets. At 4pm I was given six ounces of bread — the first food for twenty-four hours.'

Armstrong remained in his cell that night, and until noon the next day, without medical attention. Later in life, the effects of this punishment caused Armstrong a great deal of suffering. A. F. Bird died prematurely.

When the treatment of the Adventists was brought to the attention of the Government, fourteen of them were lodged in Wormwood Scrubs.

A group of seventeen Seventh-day Adventists were sent to Dartmoor. Among them were Jack Howard (later to be president of the Welsh Mission), Hector Bull (later to be a pastor), and Charles Meredith, son of Welsh pioneer Pastor W. H. Meredith.



Seventh-day Adventists in Dartmoor. Britain's bleak military prospects in 1917 led to hostility towards those who stood out for the fourth and sixth commandments. Fred Cooper, Albert Pond, Walter Marson, Ron Andrews, Claude Bienco, ? Rutherford, ? Davies, J. M. Howard and Hector Bull were amongst those incarcerated. Photo: BUC Archive

◆ ARCHIVES: A Matter of Conscience

The Treatment of the Stanborough College Students conscripted into the army during the First World War.

The story was documented in 2014 by Pastor Victor Hulbert, then BUC Communications Director. During his research he discovered that one of those involved was a family member. His story was told at the SEC Camp Meeting and also at Stanborough Park Church – or rather the ‘tent’ that performed its duties during the church redevelopment. It is also recorded in the Review and Herald and the SDA Encyclopaedia.

The following is the work of Pastor Hulbert and is reproduced with his full permission.

With the outbreak of the First World War the denomination followed the Adventist example of non-combatance adopted during the American Civil War in 1861 to 1865. This was not an easy choice, and British Adventists were widely scorned as belonging to an odd, working-class church exported from the U.S.

But as World War I raged on, the British government needed thousands more troops to fight in the trenches, and about 130 Adventists ended up being drafted from 1916 to 1918.

Among the first to be called up were the 14 students from Stanborough. The young men were conscripted into the 3rd Eastern Non-Combatant Corps at Bedford Barracks on May 23, 1916, and soon dispatched by ship to France.

A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE: ADVENTIST HEROES IN WORLD WAR 1 – the story of the ‘Le Havre Martyrs’.

A Devotional Talk given at the South England Conference Camp Meeting, 27th June, 2014 by Pastor Victor Hulbert (slightly edited for brevity!)

It might have been difficult to say 'Praise God' in 1914 as 400 Seventh-day Adventist delegates to the British Union Session met in Battersea Town Hall the very weekend that WWI broke out. In their special prayer sessions that weekend it was not so much 'praise God', but that "the forces of strife may be restrained in Europe and that the lives of our brethren and the interests of the cause may be divinely guarded". They were fearful for what the future might hold. And, particularly for their young men, they had good reason to fear.

Even before conscription arrived life was difficult. Lord Kitchener's propaganda machine made 'conchies' very unpopular people. It was no joke to be given the white feather of a coward by a young lady in the street. In January 1916, conscription was enforced. Thousands more troops were needed to fight in the trenches of the western front. Soon 130 young Adventists were called up for military service. Most upheld the principle of the sacredness of life, and equally had strong views on Sabbath observance.

We could tell the stories of many. Seventeen young men, such as Pastor Hector Bull, and Charles Meredith spent time in Dartmoor prison – some better treated than others – but in a harsh regime. Conscientious objection was not to be seen as an 'easy option'. Garth Till, whose father was one of those who ended up court-martialled and in military prison in France, simply stated that prison "had to be worse than the trenches simply to discourage deserters." Interview with Garth Till, 9 April 2014).

If we want to focus on Adventist heroes, our attention needs to turn to fourteen students at Stanborough Training College – the forerunner to the present day Newbold College and the Training Centre for British Adventism. These fourteen were conscripted into the 3rd Eastern Non Combatant Corps at Bedford Barracks on 23 May 1916, and soon after, fourteen were sent to France.

It was on the boat that trouble started. They had been handed out their uniforms. On the ship to France they were handed rifles. The fourteen refused. At Le Havre they were put to one side on the docks... and after a while, to try and break the resistance, the tallest and strongest of them, and therefore perceived to be the ring-leader, was tasked with carrying large rocks from one end of the dock to the other. When he had completed his task he was made to carry them back. (Garth Till interview)

The sergeant, however, quickly softened his stance on orders from a superior, a colonel, who visited with the Adventists one evening and inquired about their former occupations and religion.

"On learning that we were Seventh-day Adventists, the officers inquired what were our peculiar beliefs and objections to warfare. Turning to our colour sergeant, the colonel (commanding officer) said: 'See that these men are excused duty from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday,' " soldier H. W. Lowe wrote in a letter dated May 28, 1916, and published the next month in The Missionary Worker (a predecessor of the Messenger).

What relief these words brought to us all!" Lowe said. "Bear in mind that we were granted the very thing we desired before we had asked for it. We believe God has been extremely good to us all."

However, despite that bad start, accommodations were made and for 18 months the Adventist group worked mainly as stevedores, unloading ships on the docks at Le Havre and elsewhere. Serving in this non-combatant role, and with the ability to keep the Sabbath, they appeared to do alright. There is even a photo in Romola Combridge's collection, of the group in fancy dress in some kind of social setting. (Romola, a former Stanborough Park member who died a few years ago, was the daughter of Alfred F Bird, another of the group of 14.)

But a new young officer took charge in November 1917, and he declared that Sabbath duty was mandatory. When the Adventists refused to work, they were placed under court martial and sentenced to six months of hard labour at Military Prison No. 3 in Le Havre.

"The prison routine was very rigorous and obviously geared psychologically to control a tough lot of men," Lowe wrote in an article published in 1973 in British Advent Messenger.

At the prison gates the guards promptly confiscated all the prisoners' Bibles. But one Adventist managed to hide a copy of the Gospel of John, which the group divided up into scraps of paper that they tucked into their caps.

The Adventists were isolated from each other, forced to work long hours at double pace, and faced severe punishment if they fell behind, Lowe said.

"The armed guards were not blessed with the milk of human kindness when administering these punishments," he said. "On some occasions a man

would be tied to a wheel in crucifixion fashion for hours in the sun. All prisoners dreaded what they called 'crucifixion.'"

Writing years later to a young man who asked about the experience, **Worsley Armstrong wrote, "I will not go into the details of the horrible treatment we received, but finally each one of us was cast into a small cell, approximately 7 foot by 4 foot with iron walls and a concrete floor. It was mid-winter. There, after punishment, our hands were placed behind our backs and locked with what were called 'Figures of eights'. This was very painful."** (W W Armstrong letter to S Cannon, 25 January 1957)

Alfred Bird died early, in 1944, partly as a result of ill health resulting from this appalling treatment. His daughter says the marks of these irons digging into his wrists could be seen until the day he died. (Written statement from Romola Combridge, 24 February 2014) Armstrong developed a heart condition, even in prison, and lived with the serious consequences of his treatment for all his life.

I've talked with the children of a number of these characters. Their parents did not talk after the war. They would talk to each other but keep silent with their families. Willie Till broke that rule just one – just before Christmas 1938. Garth, his then nine-year-old son, remembered it well. Willie's sister had scolded him, "war is coming, you need to tell us what happened. What lessons we need to learn." Willie spent an afternoon and evening telling his story. He suffered trauma and nightmares for the following month as a result.



Adventist conscripts of World War I, photographed in 1917.

BACK ROW: J McGeachy, W. Coppock, W W Armstrong (for several years British Union President - died 16 April 1970), A Penson, Jesse Clifford (missionary to West Africa).

MIDDLE ROW: S Williams, D Barras (died 1969), A F Bird, H W Lowe (British Union Conference for several years before, and during World War II), F Archer (died 1969 or 1970).

FRONT ROW: G Norris (Manager of Granose Foods, and pioneer factory builder in South America), H Archer, W G Till (Missionary for many years in West Africa). Not present when the picture was taken was J Hollis.

Photo: BUC Archive

I'm not going to give you those nightmares. The fullest account is in the 4 April 1918 edition of the clandestine paper, The Tribunal. The Bodleian Library in Oxford kindly emailed me a photo of one of only two copies still extant. Suffice it to say that in the account it talks about bullying, breaking men's hearts, and that they were authorised to use physical means to achieve their objectives.

On that first Friday afternoon, in the prison courtyard, the Adventists downed tools at 4 pm in preparation for Sabbath. The sergeants were ready, armed with sticks, revolvers and boots. Following severe beatings to every part of their body they were left in their cells, figures of eight irons tightly clamped on their wrists, digging into their flesh, their hands behind their backs.

Such mistreatment and worse continued the next day, according to the account in The Tribunal, but it is actually W W Armstrong's personal letter, 40 years later, that inspires me. Let me read you a section.

"When the Sabbath morning came, I remember hearing the door of the cell to my right being opened and the sergeant giving instructions to one of our young men to go to work. I could not hear his reply, but I did hear him leave the cell and the door was bolted.

The same thing happened to the youth on the other side, and I was left by myself. I heard other doors opened and bolted in the same way and finally the door to my cell was opened, and I was commanded to go to work. I refused to do this in a courteous way, explaining once more the reason for my refusal. I fully expected to be thrashed and beaten... but to my surprise the sergeant was quite affable. He told me not to be a fool; that all the other young men had come to their senses and they had all gone to work as good Britishers should, and that I would only get into further trouble if I was stubborn.

This news, of course, surprised me, and I could hardly believe it, but I remember making the statement that whatever my brethren might do, I must remain firm to the truth of God, and I endeavoured to get some sort of spiritual understanding into the mid of that gross sergeant. I learned later, however, that all our young men in the cells remained faithful."

The sergeant's attitude then changed and the inevitable beating came. But that was not the end of the story. Armstrong writes, "A short while afterwards a little way down the corridor I heard somebody whistling one of our well-known hymns – although I cannot remember just

which one it was. I was surprised to hear this because to whistle or sing was counted as gross insubordination, but to my surprise I heard a voice singing with the whistling, and it was only a question of seconds before many other voices were singing this hymn, and I found myself spontaneously joining in the singing of that good old hymn."

Armstrong noted that "the singing of that hymn brought wonderful comfort and strength to us as we were there in that prison." It had an effect on the sergeant and other non-commissioned officers who gathered in the corridor and didn't know what to do. They became very subdued, and, Armstrong reports, "We finished that hymn in an atmosphere of absolute quiet."

While much of the horrors of that time fell away over the years, that moment remained. Even forty years on he could state with clarity, "There was something in the hymn itself as well as the spirit in which it was sung which affected those brutal men, for brutal they were to the extreme, and although we did experience considerable persecution subsequently, I felt that these men had far more respect for us after they had heard our singing."

The men were not allowed Bibles – they were confiscated on entering the prison. However, one of them managed to secrete a copy of the gospel of John, which they then divided up between them and hid in their caps. (Garth Till interview)

A chaplain from a neighbouring camp was passing the prison one day and heard shrieks from the cells. He entered the prison and asked to see the Adventists. He knew they were there – but his request was refused – and moreover, he wasn't allowed inside the prison again even though he had held a service there once a week. (The Tribunal, p4) It may possibly be him that raised the alarm with higher authorities back in Britain.

By January 1918 the BUC committee voted to protest to the War Office about the treatment. They were told the matter had already been investigated and the officers responsible punished.

Thankfully their detention in Military Prison #3 lasted not much more than a month. They were released from the Army and sent to Knutsford Work Centre. By July all 14 were released to civilian life. (<http://www.adventisthistory.org.uk/documents/souvenirmessenger1902-1992.pdf>, p11)

Lives of at least two of them were shortened because of the cruel punishment they received – and yet many of these conscientious and faithful Seventh-day Adventists went on to lead the Church both in this country and overseas following the end

of the war. H W Lowe was British Union President before and during WWII. W W Armstrong also served as Union President after the war. Jessie Clifford and Willie Till both went as missionaries to West Africa. G Norris became manager of Granose Foods and later a pioneer factory builder in South America. A. F Bird, J McGeachy and others served as local pastors – and became valiant spokesmen on behalf of the Church – particularly as the issue of conscription raised its head again at the beginning of WWII.

We may never know the full story. Some of it is locked up in The National Archives until 2042.11 (<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/Details?uri=C4166800>) But all of us sometime, somewhere, have to make difficult choices. Those 14 young men who stood by their principles in France have to be

admired. The many more who served time in Dartmoor, Wakefield or Knutsford prisons – and who stood firm despite Lord Kitchener's pressure that 'Your country needs you', must be respected. It was not easy for them.

One of those young men was my great uncle. I didn't even know that when I started the research, but when I discovered that it really brought the story home to me. I hold him, and the other 13, in the highest admiration. I hold them as Adventist heroes.

- **Historical note:** W. Coppock, a Le Havre conscript, was the father of Sheila Burgess and fellow conscript W. W. Armstrong officiated at her wedding to Pastor Roy!



Wedding Bells
 BURGESS-COPPOCK.—On Monday, August 18, 1952, a pretty wedding took place in the Stanborough Park church between Roy Arthur Burgess and Sheila Ann Coppock, before a good congregation of relatives and friends.
 The bridegroom has recently graduated from Newbold College, and has been appointed to care for a talented young lady, and has for a number of years been in the teaching profession. Both are consecrated young people, and we wish them much joy and God's own blessing as they take up His service together in a more definite way.
 The reception took place in the Stanborough Park Annexe, and from there the happy couple left for their honeymoon.
 W. W. ARMSTRONG.



The Peace Garden adjacent to the church car park was opened in September 2016 to commemorate those who suffered in the cause of non-combattance and the desire for peace.

Garth Till, a former SPC member and son of Le Havre martyr Willie Till cut the ribbon. Seen here with Victor Hulbert with who is also pictured during his sermon to members. Also shown with him are Pastor Philip Anderson and Sheila Burgess who both had family members at the Le Havre camp.



◆ CHURCH MATTERS: ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Wednesday Prayer Meeting:** we are praying for our children every Wednesday. If anyone wants to pray for their children contact the SPC prayer leaders on 07988045461.
- **The Laverne Byng Student Fund** scheduled a fundraising banquet at Stanborough School on 17th December supporting financially disadvantaged students attending Stanborough Secondary School. You can donate to this worthy cause at <https://lavernebyngfund.squarespace.com>
- **40 days of prayer** began on 21st November and ends on 30th December. On December 30th we will be having Thanksgiving from 3pm to 5pm followed by supper. The Prayer Ministry team would like to invite all the church members and visitors to join us.
- **Donations accepted:** The Pathfinder Bible Experience Team is starting to make fundraising efforts to attend the various test levels from Jan to April next year. We invite the congregation to support them with your donations into the church bank account with reference to PF-PBE donation: Sort Code 600008 Account 49176714. You can also put it on an envelope clearly marked and give it during the offering.
- **Soup Run Minibus Update:** The 'Drive' towards a new Minibus for the Soup Run is making progress. The fund has reached an impressive £15,000 and has set us on our way to replacing the current care-worn, outdated and very exhaust emissions unfriendly vehicle. But we still need a further push before we can get to making the purchase of a replacement. The cost of an equivalent 17-seater minibus that complies with the ULEZ (ultra-low emission zone) in London and many other cities is around £30,000. <https://gofund.me/66ef90a5>



- **Transfer in:** Karen Plumb from Beckenham

◆ PRAYER CORNER

PRAYER REQUESTS

Bronwen Atkinson, Marlene Levy's Aunt, Linda Merchant, Douglas Farrant, Cheryl Success, Morgan Charles For the families who are struggling with inhumane conditions and bereavement due to conflicts in different parts of the world.

For all the members of the Burgess family as they mourn the loss of Pastor Roy.

For all The Requests in the Prayer Box.

You can place private Prayer Requests in the Prayer Box or via email STANBOROUGHPRAYS@GMAIL.COM

REGULAR EVENTS:

Let's talk about Jesus. We meet on the First and Third Tuesday at 2pm. Bring a friend, your Bible, your favourite text, favourite hymn or story so we can share and talk about our friend Jesus. Everyone is welcome.

Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting will now be held in the sanctuary as well as on Zoom at 7pm. Meeting ID: 721 857 1482; Passcode: pray3r or [click here](#)

The morning prayer meeting at 6am is currently reading Romans. All church members are welcome. Zoom Meeting ID: 8316619709 Passcode: 777

Women's Ministry Every Friday at 7:30 pm. Meeting ID - 83109855863 & Passcode - Fprayer

◆ CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS ACTIVITY WORKSHEETS

can be found on the church website. See https://stanboroughpark.adventistchurch.org.uk/document_groups/551

◆ THE LAST WORD

The Bethlehem Star by Gerard Manley Hopkins



Moonless darkness stands
between.

Past, the past, no more be seen!
But the Bethlehem star may lead me
To the sight of Him who freed me
From the self that I have been.

Make me pure, Lord: Thou art holy;
Make me meek, Lord: Thou wert lowly;
Now beginning, and always:
Now begin, on Christmas day.