

A History of the Dorcan Church



**Compiled by Christine Parsons
With contributions from members of the congregation**

With thanks to Rosemary Ayres, Bob Poole, Val Watts, Anna, Sarah Wanigasooriya (née Prichard), Margaret Smith, David Parsons, Paul Corkrum and Beth Gardner.

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Dorcan Church History

The Beginning

The History of the Dorcan Church starts in 1965 when St. Paul's Church in Edgware Road, off Regent Street in the centre of Swindon, was demolished. The old St. Paul's was built in 1881 to a design by Edmund Ferrey and extended in 1883 by John Bevan and served the centre of Swindon for over eighty years. The site was sold to Woolworths for £65,000 with a corner of the former church being retained and a small chapel, St. Aldhelm's, was constructed for occasional weekday services.

The processional cross displayed in the Church was presented by the congregation to the old St. Paul's in 1893.

From the proceeds of the sale a new church was to be built in Covingham and join the Anglican churches of St. John's and St. Andrew's in a new enlarged parish. The Dorcan Church serving the estates of Covingham, Nythe, Liden and Eldene.

Bishop Oliver Tomkins of Bristol believed that ecumenism was the future of the Christian Church. He discussed the idea of the new church at Covingham becoming the first official ecumenical church in the country with Dr. Leslie Wollen, Chairman of the Bristol Methodist District.

After much discussion and many meetings, it was agreed to commission the Rev. Michael Cripps (Anglican) and Rev Raymond Stevenson (Methodist) as the first ministers to jointly run the new ecumenical church. The commissioning took place on Friday 16th. September 1966 in Nythe School. The new parish was to be known as Dorcan.

The first services took place in Nythe School. Although the new area of Nythe and Covingham had over nine hundred homes, attendance at these services was poor. Some eighty people of all denominations, both clergy and lay people, were gathered together and given the task of visiting every home with the news of the Dorcan Church. Each person was allocated up to fifteen homes and, within a short space of time, everyone on the Nythe and Covingham estates were aware of the new church. On the 10th. July 1971 St. Paul's Church was opened built to a design by the Brand, Potter, Hare Partnership. The Church Centre was to be a flexible multi-purpose building for the whole community.

The Eldene congregation met for worship at the Eldene Community Centre when it opened in 1973. It was intended for a church to be built in Eldene, but the idea was abandoned in favour of using the local authority centre. Previous worship was held in other local venues. Eldene had now become part of the new Dorcan Parish.

In Liden, a small group first met for Holy Communion at the temporary community centre on 6th. October 1974. The church increased in number with the growth of the locality, meeting first of all in people's houses and then in the local primary school. A new church building, octagonal in shape, opened in 1977 and was joined to the new Liden Community centre. Liden was also part of the Dorcan Parish.

When Bishop Oliver Tomkins explained the new Dorcan concept to General Synod, he was saddened when some of his fellow bishops said, "It won't work". Forty years later, and many Anglican and Methodist clergy (both men and women) have proved the

Bishop right in his bold and imaginative concept, and continued the excellent ministry begun by Rev. Michael Cripps and Rev. Raymond Stevenson.

From the 40th. Anniversary magazine October 2006 by Nigel Sharp

St. Paul's

St Paul's have two services at 8.45 a.m. and 10.30 a.m. For many years we had an evening service at 6.30. which alternated with St. Timothy's. Later in the 1980's the evening services were held at St Timothy's in the summer and at St Paul's in the winter. From some time in the 1990s the services were usually at St Paul's and only at St Timothy's when there is a morning united service.

St. Timothy's

St Timothy's services are at 10.30 a.m. and more traditional Anglican/ Methodist. The early 9.00 a.m. service has been discontinued due to smaller numbers. There is a sharing agreement with the Roman Catholic Church who held a Sunday Afternoon Mass there until staffing difficulties caused it to cease in the 1990s.

Eldene

Eldene services are held in the Eldene Community Centre beginning at 10.30 a.m. and are usually less formal than at the other two church centres in Dorcan. At one meeting members decided to have the first Sunday in the month as a Prayer and Praise Service, the second and fourth as a Communion Service and the third Sunday a Family Parade Service. When there was a fifth Sunday in the month the format for this service varied from time to time. We used this format for the services for many years but there have been some changes over recent years.

During Brian Pearce's time lay members occasionally led the service themselves which the congregation appreciated. Eldene Sunday school were using all the rooms available in the community centre as we had a large number of children of all ages; as we grew a group met in the junior school.

About 1995 the number of children attending Sunday school dropped and just a few children attended which have been catered for at the back of the church.

During Hilary's time a Crèche was set up at the back of the church for the very young children where their parents looked after them with occasionally a church member to help. Later some groups met in the Junior school as there was not enough room in the centre.

For about eighteen months a number of members met to pray for about half an hour before the service. We prayed for God's protection for the service and for God's blessing on people leading the service. These were special times and well attended. From time to time we have shared coffee after the service.

About 1995 the number of children attending fell coming and we just had a crèche or Sunday school sat at the back of the church led by one leader.

When Brian Pearce left Dorcan the Eldene Church went through a difficult time so it was decided to invite John and Linda Emery to join our worship and help as assistant wardens, being on the rota helping setting up the Eldene church.

When Peter and Shirley Jones were church wardens tea and coffee was served after the service on a regular basis. In later times this has only been done for special occasions but during the summer of 2010 tea and coffee has been made on a regular basis with people sitting in a circle around the hatch and talk for a short while after the service.

It has always been the warden's responsibility to ensure that the church is arranged in a suitable way for the services. Over the years many of the church members have been encouraged to help and this has helped friendships to become established.

Morning Services

Some of the Sunday Morning services were informal group discussions in the school hall. I remember one with about eight or so people there with many more people involved in the Sunday school. Barbara (Graham's wife), Shirley Jones and Fiona Webb with a number of others helped to lead Sunday school. Numbers increased as the village grew.

Services held at the school when it was first built and then in the community hall when it opened. At this time we had not joined St Paul's church.

In the Community hall I remember there were a lot of people in Graham Potters time. Eric Delves and family from the Salvation Army joined us. Services were more structured now and we sang some lively hymns.

Family Communion

Family Communion Services were held on Thursday Mornings in the quiet room at Eldene Community Centre before it became the Bar. Christine recalls hearing about the fun the children had there.

As the Community Centre was struggling with money and the numbers for Church services were thought to be too big for the use of the Quiet Room the services were held in the main hall. Sadly the church lost this room as a quiet room. The Bar Club is now established in this room. It is understood that this room had been marked 'Quiet Room' on the original plans by the architect who sadly died so it was never established what his original ideas really were. This room would be ideal now for our Church services if it had remained available.

At the time of planning St Timothy's church building there was talk of a second church being built in Eldene. This was not however supported by either the Methodist or Anglican authorities due to being unable to afford it, so we had a member of staff instead.

Evening services

When we had four ministers, David Parsons, Brian Duckett/Tony Knapp, Paul Selly, Diane Daymond/David Hawks evening services grew in numbers and worship was very enjoyable as the preachers were able to experiment and plan varied ways of worshipping God in a relaxed atmosphere. We had regular healing services and for a short period Quarterly Sacred Dance worship evenings. Meditations with Communion passed round the circle.

Since 2005 during Tony Knapp's time the regular evening services have been discontinued due to not having many ministers or organists and many church members joining Monday Fellowship or Cell groups.

Sunday School

Eldene had a good Sunday school in the early years, 1970-1980, using the office and kitchen at times as well as the playgroup room. Later, some groups met in the junior school as there was not enough room in the centre.

Ethel Tucker and Carol led it for a number of years until Carol moved and Ethel retired. Christine Parsons and Violet Bell became friends and met for morning drinks and time for the children to play together. Soon things grew and they started a beginners group to cater for their children and Nigel Sharp took on a group which became Pathfinders. As our children got older numbers increased and we had a good sized Sunday school with outings to Coate Water. One year we hired a coach to take us for a picnic and games in Marlborough Forest. It went well and we finished off dashing back to the coach as a thunder storm started.

Evening Fellowship

Christine and Colin Parsons moved here in September 1972 and their first meeting with the Eldene Church was going to be in the hut which had been built by the developers. It was sited near the flats in Colingsmead opposite the site now occupied by the new Eldene Surgery which opened in 2008. This temporary building contained a shop and was also used by the play group. This building was very small and a lot of children were there enjoying themselves as it was 'harvest supper'.

Christine and Colin decided to go to the Sunday evening groups for discussions which met in different houses. They had a job to find the first one, although it was just across the road from them in John and Edna Sainsbury's house, not many people ventured out to these meetings usually just the hosts, Graham, Colin and Christine.

They went to a few but never seemed to meet these people again; so they soon decided to go to the Morning Services which had moved to the Junior the School Hall when the school was first opened. There were a good number of children; some met in the room next to the kitchen. The evening meetings closed shortly afterwards.

Eldene Socials

Graham Potter was very keen on social events and held a number of them, one included a fish and chip supper in the Community Centre. Drama plays were organized by Graham and Barbara and caused quite a laugh. Delphinium remembers dressing up wearing curlers and a scarf. Other times people brought their own food and put it on the table for people to help themselves (An American Supper). These social occasions brought in many people from the community with spouses joining members for the evening.

Bazaars at Eldene

We had annual Bazaars at Eldene. One year the ladies had great fun meeting in someone's home over a number of weeks. They sewed material and dressed dolls and to make them into fairies with net skirts and tinsel round the bottom stretched out and held in place with wire and with wings covered with silver paper. Another time a group met to make sweet pickle this time we met to prepare onions and other ingredients to make the sweet pickle and pickled onions. These bazaars were started by the Eldene congregation, were well attended and held on a yearly basis. After a few years members from St Paul's joined in to help us run it. When the churches joined to become Dorcan Church the bazaar moved to St Paul's church as the hall was bigger.

Fireworks

Graham organized an annual firework party In Eldene which was a popular yearly event in the community. This was held on the site where the Charles McPherson flats were subsequently built. Eventually this moved to St Paul's Church and went on for many years with people bringing their own fireworks for the display. Volunteers served hot dogs and soup as refreshments. Lots of the men got involved in helping to build the bonfire and light the fireworks. This brought in a lot of families to watch.

Thursday Family Communion in Eldene

When David Sutch was vicar the Family Communion Services were held on Thursday mornings in the quiet room at Eldene Community Centre before it became the room for the bar. Christine recalls hearing about the fun the children had there.

Carol Singing

Carol singing round the streets was another annual event and was enjoyed by all. We would knock on all the doors offering a tube of Smarties to the children. Everyone stood at their doors to listen. For a number of years the carol singers were invited to Charles McPherson Gardens for mince pies and a drink, before this we went to the vicarage at Kershaw road.

Mary and Martha Group

Every Wednesday afternoon when David Sutch was the curate we met at the vicarage with Megan Sutch for a 'Mary and Martha' afternoon. This was a time to meet, chat and sometimes we would make something for the bazaar. Some of the members of this group were Doris Yeo, Mary Friend and Christine Parsons. Later the kneelers for St. Timothy's and Eldene churches were embroidered with cross stitch. While the mums were busy the children enjoyed playing with the toys.

St. Timothy's

Graham Potter started what was to become St Timothy's in a hut and then in the school before the Church was built. The building was designed by Richard Bailey of

Swindon Council. He had ideas for the community complex to be built in a Norwegian style from his knowledge of this type of construction.

Stan Watson was a member of St. Timothy's congregation and did a lot in the early years including playing the Organ week by week. His wife, Edith, led the Sunday school and many other jobs. John Lamb joined the organ rota playing for many years. Edward Woolly and his wife Elizabeth joined us from an Anglican background with Elizabeth working hard in the Sunday school. Judy Park and Dianne Turner took Guides and Brownies.

St. Timothy's Monday Club

Monday Club was the idea of Barbara Bettington as an opportunity to provide a social evening once a month for church members and their friends, neighbours and indeed anyone in the parish to meet together. These meetings have been going for some time and in November 2009 a fortnightly games afternoon was added with the monthly evening meetings starting at 7.30 with a guest speaker.

Confirmation

Dorcan have held Joint annual spring Confirmation Services with Parks and Walcot which have been held alternately in Dorcan and Parks. Lately the Confirmations have been carried out by the Bishop of Swindon for the Anglican Church along with the Superintendent of the Methodist Circuit, In March 2010 the service started with a full immersion Baptism for two of the candidates.

Advent and Christmas

Over the years the church has held lots of services in the lead up to Christmas. Usually there is an annual toy service and Christingle services in all three centres. The Brownies and Guides have Carol Services at St Paul's. Regular Services at St Timothy's and St Paul's are Carols by candlelight; Midnight Service and Christmas Day Services. More recently 'Christmas Unwrapped' has been arranged explaining the Christmas story to the children from the local schools. Members of the church have met and shared the story of Christmas with activities for the children to make boxes in which they put items they have made to remind them of the different parts of the story.

Mission England with Nigel's Nurture Group in Eldene

When Billy Graham came from America in 1984 to hold a crusade in Britain Nigel Sharp had a lot to do with it and we had a nurture group at the home of Christine and Colin Parsons with Elizabeth Hogg, Malcolm Furner and Nigel leading it to prepare us for any new Christians who were referred on from the Crusade.

Prayer Nights

During Brian Pearce's time we held a couple of half nights of prayer at St Paul's and another one at St Timothy's which were well attended. There was a good atmosphere where you felt God's presence. We have had many healing services over the years since our weekend with the team from the [Harnhill Centre of Christian Healing](#).

Parish Prayers

For a time on Saturday Mornings at 9.00am. a regular monthly Prayer hour was held at St Timothy's. These meetings were led by different lay people; these prayer meetings were well attended and continued for many years.

A.G.M. Reports

For a number of years, in Brian Pearce's time, our A.G.M reports were written and each organisation was asked to give a report about their years activity. This meant that the report could be 20 pages long and was very interesting.

Local Meetings: Eldene, Liden and St Paul's meetings

Following Church Council Meetings individual meetings were held at each of the three centres helping people not on the Church council to know what was going on. Brian Pearce usually led these which were very informative and friendly meetings where lots of things were discussed including local issues such as our special services: e.g. Harvest and Christingle. Eventually this stopped as it was not in the constitution.

Dance Group leading to the Dancing Services

The dance group had a Friday night fellowship; Maureen Iles, Shirley Jones and the Girls, Ruth Parsons, Elizabeth Avery and Lisa Daymond met where they learned the dances and got the order of service together. They chose the readings, songs and dances with Elizabeth playing the Guitar. These five people led several evening services which involved and included teaching the congregation lots of different sacred dances. Members of the Church all enjoyed these services which became some of the best attended evening services. They wanted to wear the same so chose mauve t-shirts and black skirts. A large Cross made by Colin Parsons stood very high in the middle of the Church floor. I found this was very effective and meaningful especially when the congregation were invited to pick up leaves with bible verses on them or put prayers at the foot of the cross.

Monday Evening fellowship

Geoffrey Fison arranged a Monday Evening be-frienders fellowship held at his home in Kershaw Road. This encouraged people on the fringe to come and know more about Jesus, to talk about every day events and build up friendships. This increased our Church membership. Gerald Farmer remembers belonging to this group with Brenda Collier and her friend joining.

When Geoffrey left Eldene church and moved on to another church' it was decided that a replacement was not required straight away. Therefore Ralf Taylor from Queen's drive Methodist church and Kath Share from Stratton Methodist church came to lead many of our services until the job was filled by Hillary Cook.

Carnival and Summer Fair

When Geoffrey Fison was here, the Eldene Community Centre organised several annual summer fairs on the school field. For one or two years a carnival was arranged with youngsters walking round the road and ending up at the School field. The Eldene majorettes led the procession playing their instruments with others walking behind them or on their decorated floats which included Guides and Brownies.

Colin and Christine were involved with Pathfinders/Sunday school in decorating a float for the day; the church had a stall selling second hand books. One game that Colin Parsons organized was 'throwing the wellie'.

Children and Youth Work

Sunday Club (Sunday School)

Sunday Club was introduced in all three Centres when there were enough children. For a number of years, when there were enough adults to be teachers, each centre had a large group of children. We had training days held in Dorcan and in the 1990's some people joined other youth leaders for a two year course for the Diocese of Bristol Bishop's Certificate Course. The first large group of people finished their training and had a celebration service in Bristol Cathedral. The 'Dorcan Band' played for this service.

More recently Eldene and St Timothy's church have not had many children or enough adults to provide groups so we have concentrated on children being taught at St Paul's.

Eldene Sunday school grew and had about twenty children from 3-13 which was lead by Elizabeth Hogg and Christine Parsons in 1984 Later joined by Cathy Scott. Summer outings were organised to Coate Water. One teaching session looked at things in Old Town ending up with a picnic at the Lawns. Another year we hired a coach to take us for a picnic, games and walks in Marlborough Forest; we all enjoyed it but finished off dashing back to the coach as a thunder storm started.

(Details of St. Paul's and St. Timothy's Sunday Schools required)

TOFSS - (Too Old For Sunday School)

Alex Scot Lead this for a time and then Brenda Fisher came over to Eldene to lead this for a while. Brenda and the youngsters made a banner that was hung in Eldene Church (a Red felt background with candles and flames on it) this was much appreciated by members of Eldene Church who were sad when it became too old to use.

Scripture Union Exams

Organised through Sunday School - (Article required)

Holiday Clubs

Caroline Corkrum worked with Ian Gooding on the early Holiday Clubs and continued to organise these one-week events for a number of years after he left until Sandra Marshall took over.

Notable was the number of people from all centres who came together to make these a success.

(More information required)

Uniformed Organisations.

Over the years we have had Brownies, Guides, Cubs, Scouts and Venture Scouts and later Rainbow Guides and Beaver Scouts.

There were groups in all three centres and were well attended and enjoyed. The leaders were nearly all church members and although units were not attached to the church they all attended parade services.

Sarah Prichard remembers making a banner for St Paul's Church when she was in the Brownies.

Brownies and Guides have been led by:

St Paul's Barbara Wilcox and Barbara Dixon

Liden Judy Park and Dianne Turner

Eldene Caroline Corkrum, Colleen Wiseman, Edna Sainsbury and her

daughters.

A tree was planted outside St Paul's. by St Paul's Guides and Brownies. The Guides went on many Camps and other activities.

Girl's Group

The Girl's Group was held in Sue Wray's house for a while. Sue ran it with Linda Emery then Elizabeth Hogg and Lyn Charleston joined them. After a while numbers increased and it moved into the Church hall. They joined in with other Dorcan Church groups for weekends away on a barge, a trip along the Norfolk Broads and a number of annual trips to the London MAYC weekends which Hilary Cooke and then Ian Gooding organized.

They had a yearly fundraising morning serving coffee and items they had made.

Boy's Brigade 1990-2004

Brian Pearce and Paul Tayler started the Boys' Brigade which was a very successful group for 6 -18 year olds meeting every Friday and run for a good number of years. Leaders and helpers over the years were Paul Tayler, George Stratan, Gill and Nigel Sharp and Brenda Bennett The boys were involved in sporting events and won many cups. Nigel Sharp took them to many quizzes and sporting events where they competed against other churches youth/football groups unfortunately due to Nigel's poor health and leadership problems it closed down in about 2008.

An Article from the April 1995 magazine by Paul Tayler B.B. Captain

It gives great pleasure to make four very important and exciting announcements, The first concerning Nigel Sharp, The Boys Brigade national Staff will shortly be announcing that Nigel has been appointed as one of the 10 new Brigade Development Officers to help prepare and plan the 112 year old B.B. movement in the 21st Century. The position is part-time and is for five years. Nigel's communication skills and knowledge of the media will be a great help as he strives to raise the B.B. profile in preparing the way for 2000!

We in the Company and the Church are thrilled at his new appointment and will support him in prayer. Nigel is very surprised, as he had not considered himself on account of age and only being 3 years in the B.B. The Boys' Brigade announced they were to set up this new development project. He will now be part of the National team.

Gill Sharp has just qualified as a Boy's Brigade officer and at the last meeting of the Dorcan Church Council was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant. Gill will offer much to the male dominated movement, and will be working with the Anchor Group 5-8 year olds who form the backbone of our Company for years to come.

Adam Rumbold, 16. Is currently our one and only Sergeant. On the 27th April will become our first Staff Sergeant. This is not a common appointment as boys do not stay in the Brigade long enough to become a Staff Sergeant. Adam is a real leader among his peers, and has quite possibly contributed more than anyone to the success of the older group. His enthusiasm is infectious but more importantly, he is proud to belong to the company. His promotion is justly earned.

On the 11th March the boys Brigade had a 5 a side football team for the first time. They travelled by coach with Parents, supporters and leaders to Wandsworth in London to compete in the national semi-final.

Each match consisted of 12 playing minutes and the boys faced four other teams: - 70th. London; 1st Higham Ferrers; 3rd Gateshead and 1st Hoddeson. The size of the other boys stunned our team who were the youngest and smallest.

The leaders and parents were proud of our team who were wearing their new football kit. They had two tough matches against 1st Hoddesdon and 70th London. Our team struggled to hold onto their early lead in both games. The second match again slipped by after a 3-1 lead to start with. Our team beat the Gateshead team by 3-2 in the most exciting game of the evening bringing a standing ovation from everyone at the Wandle Sports Complex.

Although our boys were disappointed at losing they all had a wonderful experience meeting the other boys and gained invaluable experience realising they can be a Christian yet still compete in a tough but fair manner. The boys were planning to play in the European Competition later in the Year.

[End of article]

Tiny Tots

Tiny Tots was started by Brian Pearce in 1980 at St Paul's for 0-5 year old children and has been very popular over the years with both parents and children. They had a structured little service with Christian action songs, a story and a drawing or making activity and a play time at the end while parents chat over drinks. It was well liked and later was introduced to both St Timothy's and then Eldene. Gill Sharp ran the Eldene Tiny Tots for a while until she went to work. Then Hilary Cooke led it with Elizabeth Hogg helping followed by Christine Parsons. Hilary and Brian took turns leading the one at Liden. This mid week service attracted a lot of young mums and their children and has encouraged some to attend Church.

In Brian and Hilary's time an annual summer coach trip was organised, mainly to Cotswold Wildlife Park, when everyone would sing the Tiny Tots songs on the coach. Eldene had a picnic in Hilary's garden one year and Christmas parties have been held at each centre. This has continued at St Paul's and St Tim's with different people leading them. They have always been well supported with some of the children going on to Sunday school.

Pathfinders

Nigel Sharp joined Eldene Church in the 1970's and took over the older Sunday school after Ethel Tucker retired.

He established Pathfinders about 1988, meeting on Sunday mornings, leading it with the help of David Jones and some of his friends. Nigel was very enthusiastic and a good number of young people aged 9 – 15 enjoyed joining in the fun of this group. Our Church Parade services at Eldene increased in numbers with Pathfinder parents and their youngsters attending.

Nigel often organised outings for ice skating at Bristol, Saturday morning swimming and many quiz and football competitions. Later after he married Gill they shared the work of Pathfinder camps when Brian Pearce was Vicar.

Nigel would meet the wardens every now and then to talk over what was happening and shared Ideas. They performed a pantomime and went swimming on Saturday mornings from time to time.

The Pathfinders were taken on summer camps for a number of years. Hastings, Colwyn Bay and Sidmouth were places visited. There were organised activities, games, bible teaching etc. and sometimes midnight swimming. Our Church Parade Services at Eldene increased in numbers with parents and their children. The services were crowded and very lively we would often sing Father Abraham with all enthusiastically doing the actions. As the older members of Pathfinders left to do other things Nigel stood down.

Sunday Night Fellowship

This was a group of young people meeting on a Sunday night after the service. This was led by Ian and Ann Gooding in their home with Caroline and Paul Corkrum helping. Later when Ian had moved on this group moved to St. Paul's after Sunday evening worship. Nigel Sharp then took this on in the church hall a couple of years later with the older boys from Church and Boy's Brigade. They would have a structured talk, quiz and a games hour playing football. Nigel encouraged some of the church members to contribute to the sessions. Ian organised a trip to Fort Rocky, a Christian activity centre with Paul Corkrum driving the minibus.

Children's Activity days in Dorcan and the Circuit

Children's Activity days were started in the 1980s with Margaret and Brian. Some were just for Dorcan and others were organised by the circuit. The children would arrive and sit down in the front of the church and have some songs before being put in groups to do the activities which included cooking, making something in clay or other materials, drawing, quizzes, or a collage. The children were challenged with a word search. The children were always keen to be involved with the different activities and were able to take them home. The children were brought together at the end of the session for more songs and the teaching and the cooking was sampled. One year Brian Pearce and Colin Parsons took their work benches so that some were able to do simple wood work.

Maundy Thursday and Good Friday Activity sessions

For many years children were invited to an annual activity morning to think about Easter. They went round to different tables to do activities which included making Hot Cross buns which, when cooked, were shared out at the end of the session. Crosses were made and an Easter Garden was created; sometimes individual gardens and other times a larger garden was made to be displayed for the service at St Paul's. The children enjoyed these occasions and were pleased to take home the things they had made. At the end of the morning the leaders would share the Easter story and the children would sing hymns.

Passover meals were started during the 1990s at St. Timothy's with David Hawkes supported by churchwardens Caroline Corkrum and Dianne Mills.

King's Club

During Hilary Cooke's time numbers for Sunday Club in Eldene were low and not attracting many children so Christine Parsons and Gill Sharp looked into starting an after school Group. We found a number of helpers which included Margaret Smith and Diane Duckett from St. Paul's and others from Eldene and advertised it in Eldene's Schools. The initial after-school event was really overcrowded but after that we had a lovely small group of children from 6-13 come on a regular basis where we shared Christian stories and different activities. This went on for two to three years until lack

of adult help became a problem. Ian Gooding came over for some meetings and played his guitar which the children enjoyed.

United Services and Lent Groups,

Both Brian and Hilary got on well with the East Swindon Churches so we would often have united services at St Paul's, St Johns or Queen's Drive Methodist Church for Lent and Advent. Our Lent courses were also united and people were encouraged to go to a new group. Leaders were encouraged to lead groups outside their own area.

Pantomime

The Pantomime Cinderella was rehearsed and performed one year by members of the Dorcan Church. Another year we had one organised by Nigel about Angel Gabriela

Sales

Jumble Sales were a regular event and well attended raising much needed church funds.

St Paul's Garden Party and Dorcan School Fete

The Garden Party was always a fun occasion with people working together. We usually had good weather with a great number of stalls and games out on the grass by the side of St Paul's attracting a good crowd of people from the community. One big attraction was the strawberries and cream teas which were very popular. One year we had people in stocks and the young people enjoyed throwing wet sponges at the different celebrities. There were lots of different games. The book stall was always well stocked as W.H. Smiths would donate a box of new books and these sold quickly. One year the Dorcan School had a fete and our church agreed to have a stall selling scones and jam. Brian Pearce and John Fry, who were manning the stall, were taking it in turns to go home and cook some more scones as it was so popular they were selling out fast.

Christmas Bazaar

The Christmas bazaars are held annually. Although these changed venues they were mainly held at St Paul's. In the early years these were really well supported by the congregation and lots of people from the community joined in and the Church Hall was always rather crowded. For many years Father Christmas had his grotto, usually in the playschool room, which was always decorated attractively.

One year we had a sale at St Timothy's with lots of lovely cakes. One year we held a cake competition; some were very well decorated. There were so many Cakes it was a job to sell them all. Another year Diane Turner and Christine Parsons were asked to organize a Craft Fayre which went down well and was also held at St Timothy's. In the 2000s when people were more involved in every day life, working Saturdays and Sundays, support dropped and the hall was never so crowded and not as many

children came so we did not have a Father Christmas! Diane Killick organized more great days for 2009 and 2010 raising the Grand total of £1102 at the last event. We had many people busy manning the stalls. Everyone had a good time, friendships were strengthened, the atmosphere was friendly and people were happy to spend their pennies on raffles, books, a big cake stall and rolls for lunch etc.

Easter Bonnets, Fancy Dress and Auctions

There was a fancy dress and Easter Bonnet Parade arranged by Margaret Pearce which was part of the spring sale or the summer garden fete. We have held a number of auctions with one church member who was a good auctioneer making a lot of money. The Monday fellowship had an auction in 2000 to raise funds for an African church to replace their church roof. There have been two Auctions of Promises over the years where people have offered their time and talents to be sold for funds which have been well supported.

Flower Festival/ Art Competition

Themed Flower Festivals were held at St Paul's and a number of years later at all three churches that included Nigel Sharp organizing a Children's art competition held at Eldene Community Centre. These were good fun and got lots of people involved in doing the arrangements. They were well attended and raised funds for the Church. Friendships were made and strengthened as lots of different people were involved in making the flower arrangements

Harvest Suppers and Barn Dances

Suppers were held at St Paul's each year with Edith Watson and Barbara Wilcox organizing the food for a number of years with different social events happening. We had a varied programme with sketches and games. Barn Dances started when Brian and Margaret came and were a regular event usually for Harvest Festival supper. We invited the same callers, John and Therése, who were very good at leading the dances and we always had fun and this went on for many years. These evenings had a good mix of people from all three churches and it was great to have Brian and Margaret joining in the Dances. The suppers were well organised by members of the social committee, Chris Pearce, John Fry, Stuart and Brenda Fisher and helpers. Christine Parsons remembers once walking to and from St Paul's to Eldene with her children, Shelia Evans, Gill and Iona.

Trips to the Seaside

We had several coach trips to Bournemouth and Swanage. Christine remembers 3 or 4 trips, one year it was very popular and we had two coaches. On our way down we would stop off for the toilets at Salisbury and would often go for a walk in to the town from the Bus station. There was a good crowd of teenage boys with Brian's, the Lane's and the Fry's boys with a number of other friends who all got on so well together. We usually had a lovely sunny day and would all pile off the coach with most people heading straight for the beach, taking up a good part of the crowded beach,

then lots of us would all meet down in the water. One year Brian nodded off and found that his sons had gone a bit too far out on an air boat!

Some of the ladies from the knitting group would take a stroll round the shops and come back with bags of wool to knit for the bazaar. Our first trip we stopped at a pub on the way home and enjoyed a lovely warm evening sat in the garden and with some lovely fresh rolls for supper. The last trip was to Swanage. This will always be remembered for the Rain; this one was a wash out; It started just as we got off the coach and the rain fell down all day long, most of us spent the time in the café but Brian and Margaret and a few others walked a bit further up the street and found a Church coffee morning open and came back with a few bargains.

Church Holidays

Pathfinder Camps

Nigel and Gill organized a National Pathfinder Camp for four years running. They were held in boarding schools in Sidmouth, Hastings and Colwyn Bay. We had two leaders in charge of a dormitory which had about 10 young people in. The young people were aged from 10 – 14 years. We took between 80 and 100 young people away and with 30 or so Adult helpers.

There was a large group of helpers from Dorcan Church and some friends of Nigel and Gill being the leaders with Brian Pearce being the Ministerial Leader. Different people helped; from cooking, to doing craft, sports and hobbies and some being group leaders. A lot of organising went on with different sports and Games. Our young people from Eldene Pathfinders group joined a lot of other young people from around the country. There was a lot of fun had by all with some good Christian teaching and the youngsters enjoyed the songs that were popular at the time; favourites were 'For I'm building a people of power' and 'Bind us together with love'. Nigel also invited some well know Christian musicians to lead worship on different nights. The day activities were organised with time for craft or sports then we had outings to the beach and other well known local places.

One activity was for the leaders to dress up in disguise and go out around the town with the youngsters having to see how many of them they could find. Some leaders disguised them selves very well.

We had meals altogether in the dining room, the cooking team varied year to year but was mainly done by John Fry, Diane and Steve Lane and Margaret Pearce. The menus were varied. Christine remembers having stew and dumplings one night and we rather over estimated the dumplings.

The Swimming pools at each centre were well used and some youngsters even had a midnight swim as a special treat. We had competitions involving different water activities, swimming and walking across the pool. Some of the leaders even jumped in one warm evening causing quite a splash. Some young people in one dormitory had a midnight sing song.

Parish Holidays.

We had a few annual parish holidays organized by Brian and Margaret Pearce when we went to Sheldon, Dunsford in Devon and stayed in a converted Farm. The boys slept in the dormitory, the families had rooms in the converted barn and others had their own tents to sleep in. There was also a Ladies bedroom above the kitchen. . John Fry and Margaret Pearce were in charge of the food and menu with the rest taking turns to do some cooking.

We had organised outings and had two mini buses driven by Graham and Anna Nadin and Steve and Diane Lane to take us around. We visited the local tourist attractions; one was to an activity centre, doing rock climbing and caving while the second group went for a steam train ride and walk along the river. We also had walks from the centre and days by the sea.

We all got together in the evenings sitting in the lounge and joining in together doing quizzes, singing or playing games while some got involved in doing a large jigsaw. The last day of one holiday we had a dressing up competition which was rather fun.

We also went one year to a Christian holiday Centre called Coed-Y-Go in Snowdonia near Wrexham where everyone had their own chalet and we had worship and socials in the common room and dining room and the week included a climb up Snowdon.

Priory Weekends

(Details required)

Camping weekend

Held in Savernake Forest (More details required)

Spring Harvest

Spring Harvest is a Christian evangelical Easter holiday teaching event and for a number of years this was an annual trip for some members of the Dorcan Church which was first arranged by Linda Emery (now Francome).

One year Christine's family joined several other church members to the event at Minehead. They travelled by train to Taunton and went to catch the bus only to find they did not run on bank holiday Mondays. The local taxi firm caught on quickly and lots of cars came to pick us up and take us to the West Somerset Railway station at Bishops Lydeard where we caught the train and had a good ride on the steam train to Minehead; others made they own way there by cars.

We walked to the camp from Minehead Station; Joined a long queue to the check in to get our keys and find out where we were staying. As it was a group booking we were mainly all in one area of the camp, which worked out well as we enjoyed going to the meetings together or popping in to one another's flats for a chat. We had a big choice of meetings to go to during the day on all sorts of subjects. The Adults had the choice of two evening worship venues. The young people were well catered for with their own sessions for different age groups.

The worship was either in the big top where about 6,000 people were worshipping God which was an incredible experience. Every one had a great time of worshipping with the band playing and people waving flags and sometimes others dancing. The teaching was very varied and in depth and enlightening. Sometimes some people would choose to go to the smaller worship centre which was just as good with a different band playing and different speakers, this was where we learned lots of new modern choruses and songs.

The holiday was five days with the last day being just a service with Holy Communion. The next two or three years a coach was arranged to take people and a couple of trailers took the luggage.

Cell Groups

A number of Cell Groups have been formed in recent years.

The Knitting Group

In the late 1970s a number of ladies from St Paul's formed a knitting group meeting every Thursday afternoon with lunch included led by June Martin. These ladies made a lovely display of all sorts of knitted articles and were able to enjoy good fellowship while working and drinking tea. These ladies sold their knitted items on the stalls at the Bazaar and Garden fete which boosted the funds for the Church. For several years they also had enough work for a stall in the centre of Swindon for a day near Christmas and made a lot of money for church funds, over a £1,000 each year. Later they continued to knit stuffed toys and hats for children which were sent abroad.

Cricket match

In Brian Pearce's time cricket matches were arranged and played on Dorcan School Playing field. (More details needed)

Women's Groups

Liden 1986 - 1990

Eldene 1990-1995

A group of ladies from the Dorcan Church met at St Timothy's for a women's group and it was well supported for a couple of years. Meetings were in the afternoon and had different speakers, after a time numbers dropped due to people going out to work and having other commitments. As most people still attending were from Eldene it was moved to Eldene and was a very successful outreach for a good number of years.

Banner Group and Altar Cloths for Eldene

We had four banner groups over the years, first at Eldene where three of the church members got together designing and making banners to brighten up the Community Hall that was used for the Eldene church.

Then Eldene Banner Group was asked to make banners as a gift for our link churches so Barbara Wilcox joined the group for a short while. Three banners were made one for each of our link churches and sent over to Africa. One was of a rainbow design.

Just before Ian and Anne Gooding left there was an Activity day at St Paul's with visiting young people where we designed some banners and concluded our work at their home the following Saturday making two banners for Pentecost Sunday. Sadly, to my knowledge, these have not been used after this year.

The fourth group got together at St Paul's in 1999 to make a banner for the Millennium. Thirteen people were involved and made a section each of the two banners now hanging on the wall in the Church. Sandra Marshall had the finishing job of putting all the sections together.

The first Altar cloths, made by Dillys Furner, were getting rather old and drab looking so Christine and Gunhilde got together and agreed on three designs, Peter and Richard drove us to Devizes to choose some material and pick it up and then got involved in making the cloths which were made late 1993-95.

Eldene Wardens share a Meal with Hilary

The Eldene wardens got together over a number of years with Hilary Cooke for meals. Each occasion was special for different reasons. We had some good friendly occasions. We went to different homes and shared the cooking and the washing up was often done by the men; before washing up machines!

A Dorcan Carol Sing; On the Open Top Bus

For a number of years we hired an open top bus and would go round the estates and stop and sing in different streets. Brian would play his accordion and some would go knocking on doors to let people know we were there. We had a big notice that we attached around the bus to tell people we came from Dorcan.

'The Band' and Music Group

A number of young people joined The Band and were very committed meeting regularly on a Tuesday afternoons after school to practice, they were good at encouraging each other. They would play in the evening services at regularly intervals and special occasions, we always enjoyed these services as they were so lively always finishing with 'you go out with joy', getting faster and faster as we sang it three or four times. They became well known and were invited to many churches within the Methodist circuit, Christ Church and at Bristol Cathedral for a service to acknowledge the study of Sunday school teachers training for the Diocese of Bristol Bishop's Certificate. The Group started in about 1988 and went on for six or seven years!

Dawn Tayler and Alison Wray were the leaders followed by Elisa Stott with the help of Stan Watson followed by John Lamb, Hilary Cooke and Ian Gooding looking in. They played a variety of instruments: Dawn Tayler - Organ, Alison Wray - Saxophone, Elisa Stott - Flute, Stuart Elliot - Keyboard, Andy Park - Tuba, Paula Wray - Trumpet and Flute, Chris Lamb - Base Guitar, Sarah Mall - Oboe, Violin, and Cello, Mary Parsons, Helen Templar, Helen Dickson, Sarah Prichard and Bensley Smith - Violin. Clare Tayler and Kate Wilford - Cornet, Ruth Parsons - Tambourine, Christine Emery - Clarinet, Mike Emery - Trombone and her other brother Peter who joined later took over from Vicki ??(Matthew Brown's wife) - Electric drums, Noel Hunt (from Bath Road

Methodist Church) - Trumpet, Mark ?? - Bassoon, Stuart ?? and a vicar's daughter from Stratton - Piano.

[Ed. What a line up - nearly a symphony orchestra. Could we do it again now I wonder?]

They had Sweat-shirts with their own emblem which was sold to many church members, and raised money for this and other things.

A Group went to Totterdown Methodist Church, Bristol for an annual youth makes music day, this went on for many years. They also played at the Westminster Central Hall for an MAYC event.

At the time of writing [Dec. 2010] we have a small music group who perform on special occasions.

Youth Makes Music

Held at Methodist Central Hall - (requires article)

United Service at the Football ground and at 'Steam'

There have been two well attended Swindon United Services for special occasions. The Millennium service was held in the Football ground. For the other service lots of seating was arranged between 'Steam' and one of the other buildings in the Outlet Village with lots of Christians joining in the service.

Safari Meal

The Second Safari Meal was organized by Diane Killick and we had our first course at Barbara Bettington's large house in Okebourne Park helped by Sarah Patterson. We had fruit juice and a choice of two dishes and could arrive at any time between 6.00 and 7.00 p.m. We were then given the second address to go to. Six of us went to the home of Anna and Brian Newman with a choice of chicken or fish. Others went to Derek and Jenny's house and I believe there was another home visited for the main course by a third group. We all went to the home of Tony and Janet Prichard where we had a choice of a number of delicious puddings, cakes or flans. Drinks were in the home of Cathy and Tony made by Diane and Co. as Tony had a night out.

Alpha

Alpha went on for a number of years started by David Parsons and held at St Paul's. With many, sometimes different, people each year organizing the meal and leading the groups.

The Monday night fellowship group held their own Alpha with an away day at the Bishop of Swindon's house.

Conquest

This was a series of six weekly meetings held in the 1980s for people to take part in different crafts and activities. Prior to the meetings, people were given a list of the available activities which included needlework, flower arranging, cookery demonstrations, woodwork, car maintenance etc. and asked to state their 1st, 2nd and 3rd choices. Small groups were arranged with two sessions per evening with a refreshment break in between.

There were also invited speakers; a member of the post office sorting office staff came one evening to talk about the work of the post office in Swindon.

Garden visits

(Report needed)

News Letters

We have had many Newsletter editors over the years. Evelyn Merritt was our first editor followed by Elizabeth Bowlers and then Nigel Sharp continued working on it. Stuart Fisher was the next editor who worked on it until Derek Owen took it over from 2002 until 2010 when he moved to the Lawns.

Lea Abbey weekends.

Brian Pearce organised a weekend trip to Lea Abbey about 1982 and about 30 members went for a study weekend.

(Details required about later visits)

Other weekends/days

We had a weekend at St Paul's with visitors coming to talk this was organised by Sue Wray; Lay witness weekend.

We had a visit from the Harn Hill team learning about healing? In 2001

A weekend was organized by and held at St Johns with Marilyn Baker as guest singer all the east Swindon churches were invited to join this event

In Brian Duckett's time we had away days at Highworth Methodist church, for the Whole Church to ponder on different aspects of Christian worship, and Faringdon Methodist Church.

And in Tony Knapp's time we had away day at Queens Drive Methodist Church looking on ways to out reach and help the church grow.

The Dorcan Church Council had away day at the New Catholic Senior School

Ministers

Ray and Rita Stevenson 1964 - 1971

Ray and Rita moved into the Manse with their two sons. Ray was a tireless worker for the area. He and Rita were always fully involved in what was going on and were instrumental in a lot of the social functions that began to take place at St Paul's.

Ray felt that when the building was complete the community must make good use of it. His vision was for the building to be used by the community most of the time. I think he would be quite pleased with the way it has turned out.

Michael Cripps 1964 - 1973

Michael was the first vicar at St Paul's. He and Kay came to Covingham with their two daughters Elizabeth and Jenny. Peter and Rachel were born here. Michael and Kay had lived in Ceylon and were always able to tell wonderful stories and talk about different cultures. Kay showed the ladies how to wear the Sari, and Rosemary's daughters and their friends absolutely loved going to the vicarage to play with the 'Dressing up Box'.

Michael worked so very hard to build up St Paul's congregation and all the church members were so sad that he had to give up because of ill health. It was lovely to see him back for the 40th anniversary, back to his old self.

Occasionally he made the congregation break up in to groups and had discussions instead of a sermon, although these went well not everyone was happy doing this.

Michael retired from the Marlborough Team Ministry (Salisbury) in June 1994.

Graham Potter 1971 - 1974

Graham was the first minister in Eldene and was involved in getting to know people as they moved into the area. The Church started in the community's hut then moved into the School when it was built and later into the Community Centre. He lived in the Meads before the house in Kershaw road was built with his wife Barbara, Son and Daughter. Graham came round one evening and Colin and Christine joined his family for a trip out the Marlborough Downs.

Many churches were invited to the first service in the school hall and Elizabeth Hogg attended with her parents.

Graham was a friendly person and got on well with people and encouraged a lot of people to join in the services and community evening events that were well attended and enjoyed. We were all sad when he decided to move on and become an industrial chaplain, sadly he died not long after of a heart attack.

Paul Wheatley 1973 - 1979

Paul came to Dorcan in 1973 and was very active in the parish. He served on Wanborough Parish Council and H.M. Government Advisory Committee on Pop Festivals. Paul is now Archdeacon emeritus (Sherborne) and Emeritus canon (Salisbury cathedral).

Brian Pearce 1980 - 1991

Brian, Margaret and their two sons John and Andrew joined us from Birmingham. Brian was very involved in Christian Aid week in October and Christmas Care for the homeless was started with people from the East Swindon Churches. Brian had served in the Catering Corps and would regale us with tales of sparrow's legs sticking up through the rice pudding. Christine Parsons first remembers seeing them at the home of Keith and Judith Roberts. Brian was a very friendly man and was able to get alongside people; they never locked their door so people were able to just walk into their house to visit Brian who had his study in the room to the right of the front door. Brian liked lively songs and we often sang 'If you were a butterfly', 'Colours of Day', 'For I'm building a people of power' and 'Bind us together'. He was very humble and was known for wearing his sandals. He knew lots of people and remembered names well. His dog, Ben, was sometimes with him. He rode a motor Bike for a while. Margaret was a Schoolteacher and taught in several different schools including Covingham Infants. She was very outgoing, easy to get on with and very supportive of Brian's outreach work. Brian was a member of the hospital chaplaincy team and took a number of volunteer visitors with him each Thursday.

Brian recalls that some time in the 80's - and Colin will remember this - we had quite a long association with the Women's Refuge in Park North via John Fry where we have practical support to the leader, Jenny Manners, by doing repair and maintenance work on the hostel. One year a group of men from the Dorcan Church responded to their appeal for bunk beds by designing and making them - the hostel providing the material - in various members garages, loaned out for the purpose, over a period of about 6 months. This was one of Dorcan's great achievements in reaching out into the community.

Margaret arranged a surprise party for Brian's 50th birthday. It was kept a *big* secret until the morning of the party when Brian came out of the bungalow to find a crowd of people from his old church in Birmingham. People were invited to the manse in Larksfield and asked to position themselves so that they formed a shape representing the number '50' for a surprise congregation group photo to be taken from one of the bedroom windows.

Brian's farewell do was another big occasion and the Church at St Paul's was again very full of people

David Sutch 1975 - 1979

David was a young, well liked minister who brought in a number of new people. I remember David's introduction service, which was held on a Monday night in early spring, was very well attended.

David Sutch and his wife Megan were very involved with people with young children as they had two boys when they came and another while they were here. David had a ministry at the school gate when he picked up his sons. He had a soft heart for the elderly and helped lots of people in different ways.

St. Timothy's was built during David's time with us. He moved to Yate and is now (2010) Archdeacon of Gibraltar and a Canon of Gibraltar Cathedral.

Geoffrey Fison 1979 - ?

Geoffrey Fison lived alone in the house at Kershaw road and cycled everywhere he went in Dorcan unless he needed to give people lifts. He was very involved with the Eldene Centre Committee especially during the difficult times with money problems before the Bar club took over. At Christmas we had midweek carol singing service at Charles McPherson Gardens where Church members Kath Clack, Edith Day, Vera Rix and Gladys Loveday lived. We had Christmas midnight services at Geoffrey's house as the centre was not free. It was always well attended and was a lovely friendly atmosphere. Also the Christmas Day Service was often held in the small committee room and had its own special atmosphere where you felt you belonged and did not want to go home!

Geoffrey started the Good Friday 10.00 o'clock Morning Service either on Snod's Hill or by the shops. Geoffrey or someone else carried the Cross. We would parade down to the shopping Centre at Eldene and on the way we had people stopping to see what was happening, this progressed to people marching from St Paul's carrying flags and the Cross and joining us for the service, this carried on for a number of years, the procession changing routes eventually going to other East Swindon sites. Geoffrey Fison was a good walker and enjoyed many walking holidays. In one of his sermons he showed us what he took on his walking holidays.

When Geoffrey left Eldene church and moved on to another church it was decided that a replacement was not required straight away. Ralph Taylor from Queen's Drive Methodist church and Kath Share from Stratton Methodist church came to lead many of our services until the job was filled by Hillary Cooke.

Geoffrey is now retired (2010) and lives in the United Benefice of Thornbury and Oldbury-on-Severn with Sheppardine.

Ron Murphy 1984 - ?

Ron Murphy came for a short while as a non-stipendiary Minister. He was a chiropodist with a practice in town and was only with us for a short time.

Peter Muff BSc. 1975 -1980

Peter was a Methodist minister who lived in Larksfield with his a wife, Rita, and children. Peter has retired to Gloucestershire.

Kathleen Share 1977 - 1985

Kathleen was a Methodist Minister who lived outside our Parish and helped out while we were waiting for a replacement team member

Keith Roberts 1980 - 1985

Keith was a Methodist minister living in Larksfield, Covingham with his wife Judith and children, Helen and David, they were here just before Brian Peace came. He

was good at Pastoral care, visiting many people always riding his bike around the parish. Got on well with the older people often giving people lifts up to the church in Liden for evening services which were held there every Sunday evening at this time. Keith was very organized and well liked. Jean Gasson remembers he always turned up to services with his brief case and was quite upset if people were not organized and did not have their diary with them. The house in Larksfield was an unusual building as the loft room was not blocked off and was used as part of the house which they turned into a play room for their children. It had a long lounge with doors in the middle so it could be turned into two smaller rooms. The Study was at the side of the house right by the front door.

Keith was well liked and was very smart, organized, particular and precise. We all enjoyed his services. Keith would often be seen on his bike cycling around the parish. His wife worked at the hospital in the X-ray department. Keith had a ministry working with sick people and the elderly. When Kathy Scott was taken into hospital with a kidney infection, Alex Scott was left looking after their small boys and Keith brought a huge shepherds pie for them to eat for tea. I believe they delivered some thing to eat to a number of people when they felt it necessary. At this time the evening services were held at St Timothy's and he would often give people lifts from Covingham for the Evening Service in Liden. Keith was the first Minister to hold a Maundy Thursday Jewish Meal and invited a number of people to it. He and Judith's leaving present for the Church was to set up the preschool toy boxes for the children to play with when they sat in church services.

One Christmas I remember Keith leading our Christmas service in Eldene and having wrapped several boxes and getting the children to open them; one expressing God loves us by an empty box!

Keith and Judith are now retired and living in Launceston.

Hilary Cooke 1985 - 1993

Hilary was Superintendent Minister of the Swindon and Marlborough Circuit and lived in the vicarage at 27 Kershaw Road. The Dorcan Church arranged an exchange of houses so there was a minister in Eldene; there was also a curate in the manse at Larksfield in Covingham. We all remember Hilary for her fascinating tales from the Toy Room with Rainbow, the multicoloured dog, Warren, the mouse and the rest of her collection of soft toys. The bag of toys were used to illustrate her sermons, bringing to life bible characters and linking bible stories to everyday life. Hilary preached without notes moving around using her hands to make a point. She was very approachable, leading a Group of young people aged 15+, who were opting out of church life, in her home on Sunday Afternoons. Hilary and Brian had a very good working relationship and got on well with other members of the East Swindon churches. For one Sunday Evening Service she had arranged with two girls from girls group to lead the service but Alison Wray, her friend and parents and others had other ideas. They reorganised the service into 'THIS IS YOUR LIFE' for Hilary. The night went very well with Hilary's Mother, Sister, family and friends coming to Swindon with a lovely spread arranged in the hall behind, with a Teddy Bear birthday Cake.

Hilary is now retired and living in Longwell Green just outside Bristol.

Ralph Taylor 1977 - ??

Ralph Taylor was a Minister at Queens Drive who came over to Dorcan while we were waiting for replacement staff. He had a large family and had worked in the Church of South India for a while, we got on well with him and he led lively services.

Robin Hungerford 1988 - 1992

Robin Hungerford was a new curate who lived with his wife Judi, and children Nicholas and Kate, in Larksfeld. Robin had a really good sense of humour and was very well organized, preparing his services early, was always early to welcome the congregation and was well liked. Another minister who rode his bike around the Dorcan Estates.

They had Scottish ancestors and usually celebrated Burns night. his family owned [Farleigh Hungerford Castle](#) Near Norton St. Philip, Somerset now run by English Heritage. The congregation was invited to visit the castle for a church outing. A coach trip was arranged and the visitors were able to view the remains of the estate and the Church. On occasions Robin can be found serving in the gift shop.

Brian Duckett 1992 - 2000

Brian was the Rector at St Paul's, with his wife Diane, known as Di, and his youngest son Malcolm, 13, who was still at school when he arrived in the year before doing his O levels. They moved here from Dover in Kent and found it difficult fitting in to the parish as he was so different from Brian Pearce who was so easy going and well liked.

Brian was very efficient and respected. Church members grew to like him as he made his mark in a different way. He was very welcoming and friendly. He was particularly good at working with adults and older people within the church, which complemented the work of other ministers. He got the Church organised with a number of official Anglican practices, which the Dorcan Church Council, as an Ecumenical church, had not taken on board before. He led a very diverse team of staff, was exceptionally good at making the most of individuals' skills and encouraging talent. Brian worked very hard for the church, always turning up to support wide ranging events and managing to make time for his family.

During his services he often talked about his previous time in Dover, Kent. He lived in the bungalow at St. Paul's which had been specially modernised for them to move into; the very large lounge had been made smaller and the kitchen extended to have a utility room at one end of it. One of Brian's different contributions was outreach as a Chaplain to the Dorcan Industrial Estate. This was something that Brian felt he was particularly called to do. This resulted in attracting new people to the church, such as Derek Benfield. He also organised the Mayoral Services for several years and these were attended by the Mayor of Swindon and the Bishop of Swindon amongst many others. He is remembered for making the church seem approachable for people who do not have a church background.

Di attended a lay readers course with Beth Lamb and became a lay reader with her own very special ministry, her sermons often shared some personal experiences.

When Di was not working she helped run Kings Club for a time and also helped Brian with his ministry.

Dr. Daphne Greene was holding regular surgeries in St. Paul's vestry with the Snug as a waiting room and Brian investigated a plan for her to purchase the bungalow for use as a surgery. Unfortunately, due to legal requirements, things did not go to plan and the bungalow was left to become derelict and pulled down during the summer of 2010.

Brian is now Canon Emeritus (Bristol Cathedral)

Diane Daymond 1993 - 1998

Diane came to Dorcan fresh from college as a Methodist Minister and lived at Kershaw Road for the first year with her son Chris, while her husband, Roger, and Daughter, Lisa stayed in Cheltenham until Lisa finished her A levels.

Diane was a very short and petite well dressed women; well liked and carried on with more training while she was here. They had a grown up family of five children, the older ones having left home. Previously she had been a Primary School Teacher. Diane had a lovely pastoral care nature and was a very good listener. She worked endlessly caring for all her congregation. She always had time for people. Diane ran a year long Disciple Group which was well attended by members of the congregation. There were two groups one in the evening and one in the afternoon. She took over Tiny Tots and included 'have a talk' time for the parents as well as the children's story, song time and activities. Diane also organised a parenting group helping Parents learn how to bring up their children and talk through problems which might arise. For a while Diane held monthly pastoral care groups with teaching where we met and discussed different aspects of pastoral caring. Her husband, Roger, was a retired school teacher who carried out the odd teaching lesson and training for counselling. Diane and Roger now live in Cheltenham.

Ian Gooding 1991 -1993

Ian and his wife Anne lived in the Manse in Larksfield as a curate. A real ecumenical solution with the Anglican curate living in a Methodist manse. Anne worked full time and commuted each day to her work and was very much into computers. They hosted the 15+ young people group which was held in their house on a Sunday Evening. Ann was very involved in Traidcraft and held sales at their house on an annual basis. Ian involved his wife in helping during the services with her operating the overhead projector. He played the Guitar and we learned lots of choruses while he was here. They took a party of young people to Spring Harvest and MAYC weekends, where they learned all the new modern hymns, for a number of years.

Ian experimented with different approaches for services which would sometimes go over the hour; he was soon discouraged from this! A good number of the congregation enjoyed his ministry and his Guitar playing.

Ian and Ann led the Holiday Clubs for a number of years. Ian was able to get a good group of adults to help him. The young people played their instruments to accompany the singing, helped perform sketches and dramas and decorated the backdrop. We had about 100 children from about 4 -15 years old year (for the first couple of years)

enjoying these holiday Clubs. Each year we had different teaching themes and activities relating to the themes.

David Parsons 1994 - 2003

David, a retired Bank Manager, came as a non stipendiary vicar living with his wife Christine in their own house in Sedgebrook, Liden. David had a wonderful ministry especially when leading services and playing his Roland electronic keyboard. He then planned his own teaching course and led a Study Group which was formed after the members of the first Alpha course had requested some serious bible study. We all enjoyed his quiet evening worship and meditation services where he would sometimes sit at the organ and play while getting us to meditate on some theme; on more than one occasion you felt the spirit was close. We enjoyed singing new choruses which he introduced from the new hymn/chorus books which he had chosen for the church to buy. David and Christine have retired to Chipping Sodbury where he is active in the church of [St. John the Baptist](#). David did an excellent series of talks and presentations as a stand in replacing a video which had broken during a holiday club.

Paul Selley 1996 - 2000

Paul was a retired School Teacher and widower who came as a Curate. He lived with his two daughters at Larksfield for a while. Paul was a gifted musician who played the organ and piano demonstrating his talent at a couple of recital evenings. He fitted the manse with new carpets and then moved to the new vicarage at Sedgebrook when Larksfield was sold. After a couple of years of living in Covingham he married Sarah

David Hawkes 1994 - 2000

David was Superintendent in the Newbury Circuit and was asked to move to Swindon following the death of the previous superintendent leaving an unfilled superintendency. David replaced Diane Daymond bringing the Superintendent's Job with him, he lived in the new manse in Merlin Way, Covingham. Before moving to Swindon David had Pastoral charge of Stratton (both Upper and Lower). Part of his work was to bring about the creation of the Swindon and Marlborough Circuit and the Upper Thames Circuit from the former Swindon Circuit, Marlborough Circuit and part of the Chippenham and Brinkworth Circuit. Today (2011) the three circuits are now a federation looking to merge as a single circuit. David retired early from active ministry due to ill health and now lives in Pembrokeshire where he is a supernumerary minister in the Pembroke Circuit. Since retirement David has been awarded a licentiate ship of the Royal Photographic Society and you can see some of his work at [Bluestone Photographic](#).

Tony Knapp 2001 -

At the time of writing these notes (November 2010) Tony is the current Vicar in charge of Dorcan and is due to retire in 2013.

Tony and Cathy moved into the vicarage in Liden. Tony was well liked and got on well with everyone, he is a good pastoral visitor often popping over to the hospital when he

heard of someone being treated there. Tony took a small number of church members to Lea Abbey for two weekend conferences in 2009-2010. Often went on the Spring Harvest weeks when he first arrived in Swindon. He and Kathy ran a marriage course and are keen on cell groups where a lot of church members did the Freedom in Christ course.

His wife Cathy is involved in Tiny Tots, running a Cell Group, leading Sunday school or crèche, pastoral visiting and supporting people.

Beth Gardner 2001 - 2004

A new curate living in Nythe was out going and sometimes unconventional. Beth writes, 'Gave me a smile -not sure HOW I was unconventional - perhaps somebody could enlighten me!!'

Beth remembers one unique event, which she organised, that stands out in 2002 that was the celebration for the Queens Golden Jubilee. St Paul's Centre was packed all day as we had a big party for the community and got a live TV link with St Paul's cathedral. The mayor and local school children took part.

Derek Collins 2001 - 2010

Derek was a Methodist Minister and Superintendent for the Swindon area. Derek is known for his love of singing and we often sang unaccompanied with him leading us; he also was known for his uniqueness; longer services which we found inspirational. It has been said he is a much bigger man in build and similar to Brian Pearce for his easy relaxed way of going and doing things at the last minute. Derek had a wonderful humour. Derek ran some pastoral care training sessions and gave us all a visitor's badge.

He had a lovely singing voice which he used to lead the singing, often unaccompanied for evening worship which was really useful as we were short of musicians. I only remember him forgetting a tune once and he soon remembered it. He also came to Eldene and got the congregation to sing along with him without the midi.

We remember Derek for his laughter and jokes and all the jobs he did, sorting out the plumbing and the sound system. Derek and Jenny organised the annual Maundy Thursday Jewish meal held at St Paul's.

Jenny was a Learning Support Worker at Swindon College until moving to administration at the Great Western Hospital. She also acted as Derek's secretary and was involved in helping lead the young peoples' group on Sunday Morning.

***Farewell to Derek and Jenny Collins
by Tony Knapp***

August 2010 (Sept. magazine)

Eight years ago Derek arrived at the Dorcan Church. We welcomed you and Jenny among us, perhaps wondering a little what to expect. We soon discovered that all 'L' was let loose!

Derek you are a L arger than Life figure, a real presence among us. You are certainly L ofty – we all have to L ook up to you! And you are L oud – we always

know when you're around: but there's never any difficulty hearing you even when the rain is pelting down on St Paul's roof and the sound system is playing up.

We've all got used to your ways, Derek; Leaving your spectacles around the parish or circuit and your cap in various homes; from time to time arriving a Little bit Late; and your services maybe going on a bit Longer than other Leaders. However, we've all come to Love you – you've contributed a Lot of the Life of the Church; your ability with Long-division has helped sort out our finances; your Lighting, sound and other practical skills have helped sort out our buildings; and several members have appreciated the Lifts you've given them.

One of the main things you've shown is your Love of the Lord - he is the focus of your Life, through good times and bad. You've broadened our Liturgy and Lifted us in worshipful Lyrics with your powerful voice Lifting us in praise to the Lord. Many of us have been helped by your individually on our spiritual journey, and you have encouraged Lay ministry. And I have appreciated our times together; the uplifting times we've prayed, worshipped and discussed the business of the church, always interspersed with much Laughter!

Behind all you do Jenny has been there for you – supporting and encouraging you. Jenny, we at Dorcan are very grateful for all that you've been for us; for your leadership with Vybe; for your work as a Governor at Nyland's School; and for your hospitality – especially the very moving Passover meals; and the legendary turkey baguettes at the Christmas Fayre!

Thank you both for your deep faith and love, and your real sense of laughter and fun that we've all shared over the last eight years, you will be missed.

Beth Brown 2008 -

Beth was a vicar who came to help out in Dorcan for a short while. Beth has a gift for being sensitive, a good listener and a keen pastoral visitor visiting many people in their homes. In 2010 She set up the Pastoral visiting groups again and encouraged pastoral leaders to carry on visiting people not able to come to the services. 2010 Beth has been accepted to join the ministry team on a permanent basis here in Dorcan.

Wendy Tucker 2010 -

Wendy joins us from Stratton where she is a Local Preacher in the Swindon and Marlborough Circuit and is already known to many of us. She is joining us for a year to work part-time as a Pastoral Worker as well as carrying out pastoral duties and leading worship she considering the possibility of candidating for the Methodist Ministry.

Memories from the congregation

Reflections on Lee Abbey 2010 by Bob Poole

Another Dorcan Church trip to Lee Abbey in July 2010. Lee Abbey had the usual effect on me. Nestling in its fold in the Exmoor Sea Cliffs, it seems to enfold all who visit in peaceful tranquillity. The weekend seemed to stretch ahead in unending delights of walks, talks, sea views and cream teas. That is until the first night when Dud Messe started to outline his views that would become the central theme of the weekend. He proposed the unsettling idea that there didn't need to be any effort or indeed thought in becoming a Christian; just let go and accept God's Grace freely given without condition for all who would accept.

Dorcan Church and Dorcan Walkers by Anna

Paul Wheatley was the vicar when I joined Dorcan Church in 1975, and the Methodist minister I think was Peter Muff. Paul and his wife, Iris (who was a registrar), had three children, two boys and a girl (Fenella - who has since died).

I used to go to Paul's office in the vicarage on two mornings a week (paid) and do many secretarial things, weekly notices, correspondence etc. as well as wider things like Synod work – Paul was on a number of committees.

He had done some youth work in the past and was in the habit of taking youngsters on holidays. He had a link with a church in Germany (when the wall was still up) and took a group of youngsters over there. (I was to have been the female helper on this trip, but discovered I was pregnant and had to dip out).

One holiday he had arranged with a previous church was a walk for young people along the Cotswold Way. After joining Dorcan he suggested that some of the congregation might like to do it. Whereupon about 30 of us set off in a coach one May half-term day in about 1978 and walked 81 miles of it in a week. We slept on school floors, church halls, a water mill. Janet Prichard and Roy Wilcox manned a minibus which carried our sleeping bags, air beds etc. to the next stop and they also arranged for food to be ready on arrival. Some had to give up for various reasons in the middle of the week but most survived! It was a brilliant trip and I have never forgotten what a great achievement it was for most of us. My oldest two children walked every stop aged 6 and 8!

Following this adventure the Dorcan Church Walkers was born. The following year saw us doing part of the Pembrokeshire Coast and so it went on. Personally I took a break for a few years whilst having two more children, but my husband went with the older two several times. The group did stop walking for a while, maybe during the Sheldon years, but has long been revived. We always walk on the first Sunday afternoon of each month, and during the summer on the middle Saturday evening (followed by a pub meal).

We have done many longer walks – the West Highland Way, Across the Isle of Wight, St. Cuthbert's Way, Pembrokeshire again, the Wirral, many coastal walks, and been abroad to Ireland, Normandy and Madeira (where some people are going again this year).

We are usually between 10 & 20 in number on each walk but there have been as many as 25ish on a nice day. We now have friends of friends joining us and have regulars joining us from Manchester, Sheffield and Paris on our weeks away. The group still has many regular church members but anybody who loves walking is welcomed.

Memories from Rosemary Ayres

When my family came to Covingham in May 1965 there was no church as such. We were all visited by Father Gardener, who I believe was from the old St Paul's in Swindon, but I don't remember actually being invited to any services or meeting at that time.

Like most people I went back to the church I had attended before moving. However it was not too long before Michael and Kay Cripps moved into 24 Larksfield. Michael was an Anglican Vicar, and began with very small steps to build up St Paul's church. We had a service every Sunday in a tiny meeting room on the site of the now Covingham Square. This was a wooden hut, one half of which was a shop; and the other half the meeting room. Michael and Ray Stevenson, our first Methodist minister led the service alternate weeks.

Our little group was very tiny to begin with and I actually remember one Sunday morning when there were five members of the Cripps family and the five of us; (The Ayres family)! Usually there were two or three other regulars and very gradually we built up to about 20.

We had communion Services on weekdays in each others homes, and Kay Cripps started up a ladies group in her house, which eventually spread to regular meetings in various houses. A big change came when we began to have our Sunday Service in the temporary buildings at Nythe School. (Those Buildings are still there in 2010.). We had not had many people from Nythe in our little congregation in the Covingham hut. We now had enough infants to have a little crèche, in another room. When we were in the hut at Covingham we used to take the children's slippers because the wooden floor was so noisy!

I set up a crèche and tea rota, so the beginnings of the pattern of today's St Paul's Sunday morning had begun.

The really big change came with the Commissioning Service for the beginning of the Ecumenical Parish of St Paul's (I don't remember the exact date but there must be a church record of this). Michael and Ray had done had done a brilliant P.R. job for this and the hall at Nythe was packed. People were encouraged to come to Nythe instead of going to their former churches. Michael was very good at giving jobs and making them feel really needed.

Then came a time of real excitement in the area. Ray Stevenson had been an architect and was instrumental in the design of the manse in Larksfield. The lounge was designed to be two smaller rooms for the family and to open up into one big room for meetings. The unusual shape of the house intrigued everyone but it really worked very well.

One very exciting day was the cutting of the first sod for the building of St. Paul's Church. The children all thought it was wonderful to be a part of and along with the Bishop, the Mayor and lots of "important" people.

The design of the church centre was, in part, the result of discussions with everyone around the area and the ladies of the congregation were all consulted as to exactly what they wanted in the kitchen.

The St Paul's vicarage was also carefully planned. It is so sad that it has now gone Empty from 2000 and pulled down in 2010. It was a lovely bungalow. A family home with the Vicar's study just inside the outer front door, before you actually entered the house and like the manse a lounge big enough for meetings. Everyone who was able was involved in tidying up the garden after the builders had finished, laying the patio and planting shrubs.

A conversation I had one Sunday told me we had actually become an Ecumenical church. A gentleman said to me after the service "Well, that wasn't a Methodist service" and I said "Well it certainly wasn't an Anglican one either".

Rosemary's daughters were musical and were involved in playing with others for the services. There was a piano in the hut.

Memories from Val Watts

This is my life in St Timothy's Church – I was not brought up in a Christian faith, never attended Church or Sunday school but my mother had gone to a church school and one of my forbears was a preacher. My brother, sister and I were brought up in a moral house hold.

I married in 1967 and was widowed in 1977. That year I believe a foundation stone was laid and the plot blessed for the building of St Timothy's Church the ceremony my youngest daughter and I went to.

Being a very angry widow it seems I was looking for some answers. In 1978 I remarried and occasionally went to Liden Primary School on a Sunday where a short service was held.

It was not until several years later that I stepped into St Timothy's having taken communion after the birth of my daughter, Sonia, in 1979 at Princess Margaret Hospital even though I was not confirmed.

I was confirmed with my best friend Karen White and from there grew into the Christian faith giving my testimony when Brian Pearce was vicar at Dorcan.

In those early years St. Timothy's was full with a large congregation, Stan Watson played the organ and ran a small local choir. Everyone was welcoming, and I made many friends, several who still live in Liden and we all still meet regularly for a meal.

I attended a bible class run by Beth Lamb in her home; it took a long time to achieve a belief in the Lord, One stressful day whilst out and about in Old Town I confessed my love of Jesus to my brother and from there grew. I started to lead a bible study group on a Tuesday morning which ran for many years.

St Timothy's is beautiful inside with a statue of steel of Jesus was designed when the church was shared with the Roman Catholic Church for many years, this statue is now over thirty years old: I do not know the artist but it would be very interesting to find out. Unfortunately we have been vandalised outside several times so we have to have strong doors but maybe one day the outside will look as beautiful as well and encouraging people to step inside.

The Cross on the outside of St Timothy's had to be moved due to youngsters climbing up on it to the roof.

At St Timothy's many events over the years have been held here in the building, we hold a toddler group called tiny tots where mothers are encouraged to bring their small children for a story and activity each week, I attended this many years ago with my youngest child and my daughter has taken my two Grandchildren. W.I., Monday Club and a mid week communion are held regularly. Sadly now the congregation has grown smaller Dorcan Church hold only one service in the Morning and Sunday school has discontinued and families are encouraged to attend St Paul's where there is a bigger group of children and adults to lead Sunday school.

St Timothy's has been a refuge and an inspiration to me and enabled me to embrace the Lord friendship. I have made many friends over the years.

Appendix 1

Ministers of the Dorcan Church

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Vicarage/Manse</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Anglican	Graham Potter	1971 - 1974	Kershaw Rd.	
Anglican	Gerald Bostock	1971		
Methodist	Peter Muff	1975 - 1980	Larksfield	
Anglican	Paul Wheatley	1973 - 1979	St. Paul's	Team Rector
Anglican	David Sutch	1975 - 1979	Kershaw Rd.	
Anglican	Geoffrey Fison	1979 - 1983	Kershaw Rd.	
Methodist	Keith Roberts	1980 - 1985	Larksfield	
Anglican	Brian Pearce	1980 - 1991	St. Paul's	
Methodist	Allen Ashley	1982 - 1995		Queen's Drive
Anglican	Ron Murphy	1984		Non-Stipendiary
Methodist	Hilary Cooke	1985 - 1993	Kershaw Rd.	
Anglican	Robin Hungerford	1988 - 1992	Larksfield	
Anglican	Ian Gooding	1992 - 1994	Larksfield	
Methodist	David Hawkes	1994 - 2000	Merlin Way	Circuit Superintendent
Anglican	Brian Duckett	1992 - 2000	St. Paul's	
Methodist	Diane Daymond	1993 - 1998	Kershaw Rd.	
Anglican	David Parsons	1994 - 2003	Own House	Non-Stipendiary
Anglican	Paul Selley	1996 - 2000	Larksfield then Sedgebrook	
Anglican	Beth Gardner	2001 - 2004	Nyland Rd.	
Anglican	Tony Knapp	2001 -	Sedgebrook	
Methodist	Derek Collins	2002 - 2010	Merlin Way	Circuit Superintendent
Methodist	Kathleen Share	1977 - 1985		
Anglican	Beth Brown	2009 -	Coleview	
Methodist	Andrew Wigley	2011 -		