

A History of the Dorcan Church



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

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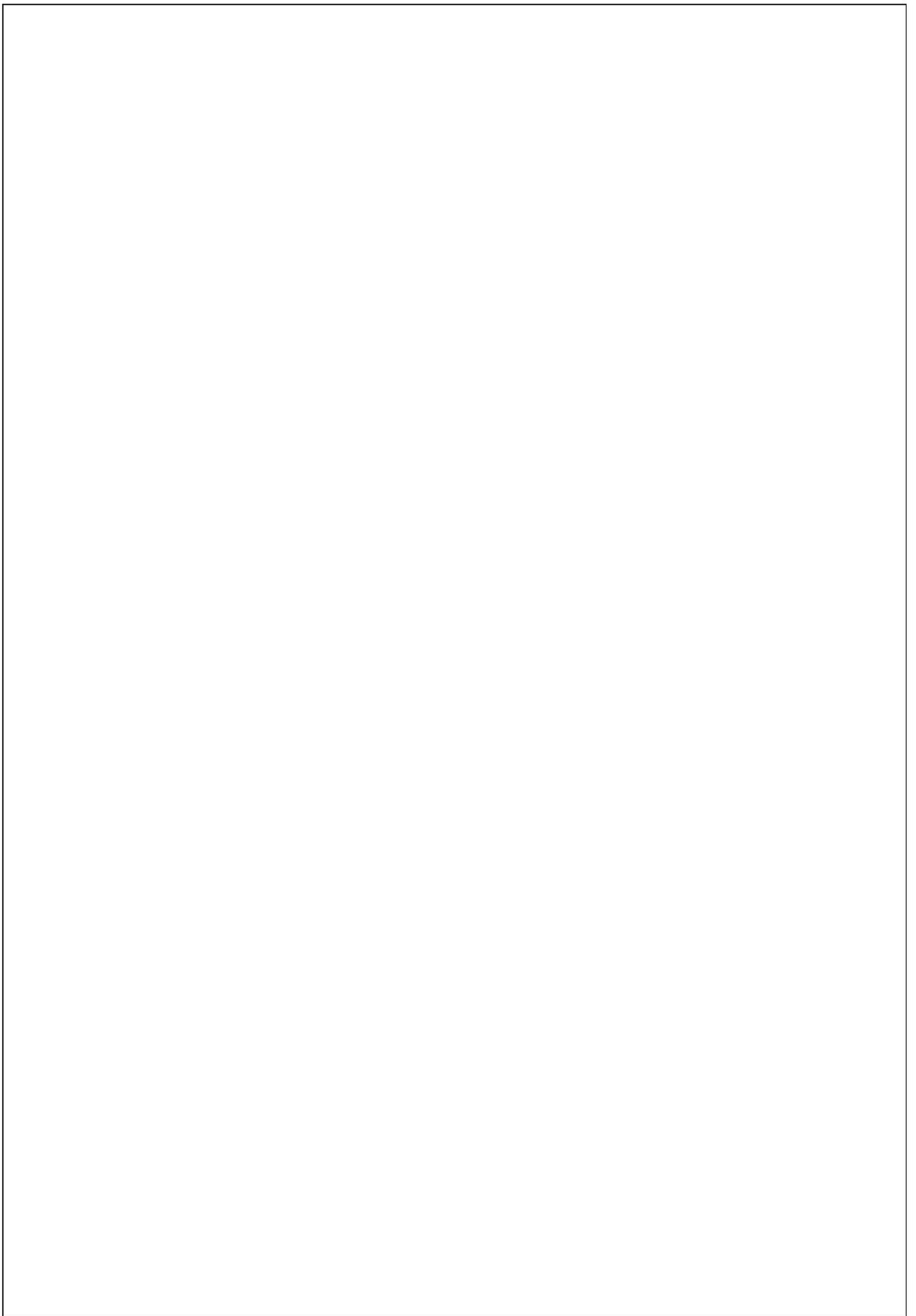
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Dorcan Church History

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.

Eldene

Eldene services are at 10.30 a.m. meeting in the Community Centre and are a less formal service than the others two churches.

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 was established in this room, which had been marked 'quiet room', when the building was planned: In 2010 this would be ideal.

Evening services

When we had the 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 199???? 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 Cell or Fellowship groups.

Sunday School

Ethel Tucker and Carol led it for a number of years until Carol moved and Ethel retired. Christine and Violet Bell 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 at this time 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.

Pathfinders

Pathfinders was established with Nigel Sharp 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 joined this Group. 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.

Nigel Sharp 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.

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 opposite the new health centre and was combined with the shop and also used by the play group. This room was very small and a lot of children were there enjoying themselves as it was 'harvest supper'.

Eldene Socials

Graham was very keen on social events and we had a number of them, one included a fish and chip supper. Drama plays were organized by Graham and caused quite a laugh. Delphinium remembers dressing up wearing curlers and a scarf. Other times we brought our own food and put it on the table for people to help themselves.

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 the 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 were now held in the School Hall.

Bazaars at Eldene

We had annual Bazaars at Eldene. One year we had great fun meeting in someone's home over a number of weeks. We 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. These bazaars were started by the Eldene congregation and well attended and held on a yearly basis. After a few years members from St Paul's joined in to help us run it.

Fireworks

Firework parties In Eldene was a well enjoyed yearly event held on the site where the Charles McPherson flats were built. Eventually moving to St Paul's Field and they went on for many years with hot dogs and soup served as refreshments. Lots of the men got involved in helping to light the fireworks. This brought in a lot of families to watch.

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 we 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 we met at the vicarage for a Mary and Martha time. 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. They later did the embroidery stitching for the kneelers for St. Timothy's and most Eldene people made one or two. The children enjoyed playing with the toys.

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. I believe this was the first time a full immersion baptism took place in the Dorcan Church.

Advent and Christmas

Lots of services are held in the lead up to Christmas, we have an annual toy service and Christingle services in all three centres. The Brownies and Guides have Carol Services at St Paul's. Carols by candlelight services, a Midnight Service and Christmas Day Services at both St Timothy's and St Paul's. We also arrange 'Christmas Unwrapped' explaining the Christmas story to the children from the local schools.

Eldene services

In Brian Pearce's time members occasionally led the service themselves. Eldene had a good Sunday school for the first number of years using the office and kitchen at times as well as the playgroup room and committee rooms, later some groups met in the Junior school as there was not enough room in the centre.

We decided at one Eldene meeting to have the first and fifth Sunday of the month as a Prayer and Praise Service, the second and fourth as a Communion Service and the third Sunday as a Family Parade Service.

At Eldene for about eighteen months a number of members met to pray for about 20 minutes 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.

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 Gods 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

At 9.00 a.m. on a Saturday Morning we had a regular monthly Prayer hour. These meetings were led by different lay people, were well attended and continued for many months.

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

We also had a individual meeting at each of the three centres which helped the people not on the Church council to know what was going on. These were very informative and a friendly meetings where lots of things were discussed. 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. They danced round a large Cross, made by Colin Parsons, which stood very high in the middle of the Church floor. The Cross was very effective and meaningful.

Monday Evening fellowship

Carnival and Summer Fair

We had a good summer fair on the school field with a carnival walking round the estate and ending up at the School field. The Eldene majorettes led the procession which included Guides and Brownies. Colin and Christine were involved with Pathfinders/ Sunday school in making a decorated a float for the day we also had a church stall selling second hand books. One game that went down well was throwing the wellie.

Geoffrey Fison was a good walker and enjoyed many walking holidays. He talked to the fellowship on one occasion and showed us what he took on his walking holiday.

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 Bishops 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.

TOFSS - (Too Old For Sunday School)

(Article required)

Scripture Union Exams

Organised through Sunday School - (Article required)

Holiday Clubs

(Article 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.

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 had weekends away at Fort Rocky, a Christian activity centre, 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 with Brian Pearce in 1980 at St Paul's and was very popular, with parents and children, they had a structured little service with Christian action songs, a story and a drawing or making activity. It was well liked and was introduced to St Timothy's and Eldene. Gill Sharp ran the one in Eldene for a while until Hilary Cooke took it on. 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 come to church on Sundays.

They had an annual summer coach trip, mainly to Cotswold Wildlife Park, and would often sing the Tiny Tots songs on the coach trip.

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 started Pathfinders which met on Sunday morning. He had a large group of youngsters who really enjoyed the group and got on well with Nigel. 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.

Sunday Night Fellowship

There 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 Carolyn and Paul Corkrum helping. Later when Ian had moved on this moved to Carolyn and Paul's house in Liden. Nigel Sharp took this over in the church hall a couple of years later. This was mainly for some of the older boys where they would have a structured talk, quiz and then a games hour playing football.

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 organized 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. Hot Cross buns were made and cooked and shared out, crosses were made and the Easter garden was created. Sometimes individually and other times a larger one 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.

King's Club

During Hilary Cooke's time about 1997 numbers for Sunday Club in Eldene were low and not attracting many children so Christine and Gill Sharp looked into starting an after school Group. We found a number of helpers which included Margaret Smith, Diane Duckett and others 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 who were a couple 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 the social committee. 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 themselves 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.

Sheldon Parish Holidays.

We had 2-3 annual parish holidays organized by Brian and Margaret Pearce we went to Sheldon 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.

Spring Harvest

Spring Harvest is a Christian evangelical Easter holiday teaching event and for a number of years this was an annual trip within 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 their 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.

They stayed for 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

The 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 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 Barbra 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 got 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 cloths on the tables 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 ?? (from Central Churches) - 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.

Garden visits

(Report needed)

News Letters

We have had many Newsletter editors over the years. Evelyn Merritt was our first editor followed by Elizabeth Bowers 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.

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.

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. For the Pearce's 25th. wedding anniversary we had a party in the vicarage garden of Margaret and Brian's home. We all sat round tables on the grass. It was a lovely social occasion and people enjoyed the sunny day.

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 on his own 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 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 Larksfeld 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 Larksfeld 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.

Keith and Judith are now retired and living in Launceston.

Hilary Cooke 1985 - 1993

We will remember Hilary for her fascinating tales from the Toy Room with Rainbow, the dog, Warren, the mouse and the rest of her collection of soft toys . 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 organised 'THIS IS YOUR LIFE' for Hilary. The night went very well with some of Hilary's family and friends coming down 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. He was very well organized and prepared 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, had a really good sense of humour; his family owned [Farleigh Hungerford Castle](#) Near Norton St. Philip, Somerset now run by English Heritage. We visited the castle on a church outing one day. We 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, who liked to be called Di, and his youngest son Malcolm 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. 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 was very different from Brian Pearce and much more particular and organized and not so outgoing. 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. Brian found it difficult being on call all the time as he lived next door to the church.

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. 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.

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 woman; 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 Teignmouth.

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](#).

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. After a couple of years of living in Covingham he married Sarah. He fitted the manse with new carpets and then they moved to the new vicarage at Sedgebrook when Larksfield was sold.

David Hawkes 1994 - 2000

David replaced Diane Daymond and transferred from Bath Road Methodist church bringing the Superintendent's Job with him, he lived in the new manse in Merlin Way Covingham. He was in charge of the arranging of the circuit plan.

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 with problems.

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 Maundy Thursday Jewish annual meal held at St Paul's on Maundy Thursday.

Jenny was a part time teacher and Derek's secretary and was involved in helping lead the young peoples group on Sunday Morning.

***Farewell to Derek and Jenny Collins August 2010 (Sept. magazine)
by Tony Knapp***

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; L eaving your spectacles around the parish or circuit and your cap in various homes; from time to time arriving a L ittle bit L ate; and your services maybe going on a bit L onger than other L eaders. However, we've all come to L ove you – you've contributed a L ot of the L ife of the Church; your ability with L ong-division has helped sort out our finances; your L ighting, sound and other practical skills have helped sort out our buildings; and several members have appreciated the L ifts you've given them.

One of the main things you've shown is your L ove of the L ord - he is the focus of your L ife, through good times and bad. You've broadened our L iturgy and L ifted us in worshipful L yrics with your powerful voice L ifting us in praise to the L ord. Many of us have been helped by your individually on our spiritual journey, and you have encouraged L ay 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 L aughter!

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 Methodist Local Preacher 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.

Appendix 1

Ministers of the Dorcan Church

	Name	Dates	Vicarage/Manse	Notes
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 -	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		

