

PORTRAIT OF A PARISH

ST. JOHN THE DIVINE,
PEMBERTON
1832-1982

by Michael A. Mason, B.A., A.L.A.



To Mum & Dad, with love, Michael.

Deo. Gratias.

© St. John's Church, Pemberton, Wigan, 1982.

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FOREWORD FROM THE RECTOR

This booklet has been written to offer some record of the life and work of the Church and Parish of St. John the Divine, Pemberton over the past 150 years. Obviously a comprehensive book of the history of the church and its influence on the life of the community would have to be a much larger volume, and thereby much more expensive.

My thanks to Mr. Michael Mason who wrote this booklet after considerable research.

I hope that it will not only be a souvenir record of the service of St. John's Church of a century and a half, but a challenge and an inspiration to all who read it, to renew their faith, so that St. John's may continue to be a centre of Christian worship and service for the community in which it is set.

JOHN A. SOUTHERN.

SEPTEMBER, 1982.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

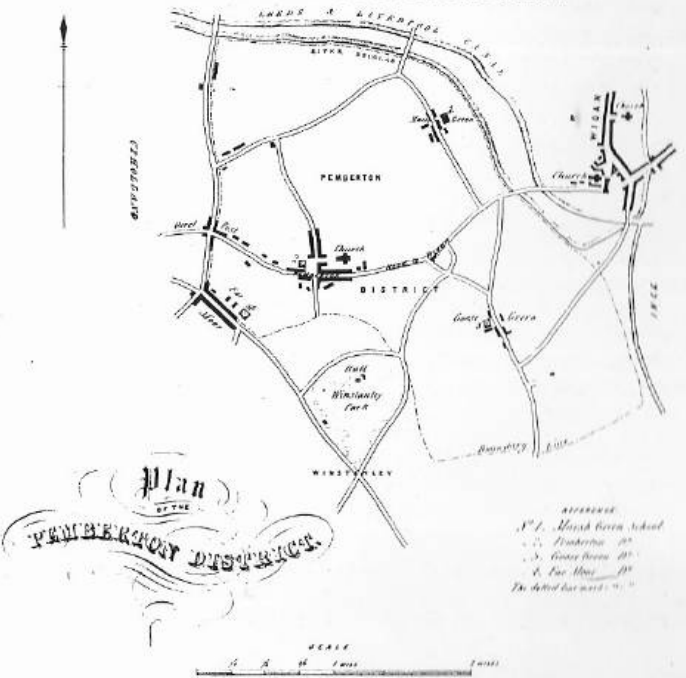
Rev. J. A. Southern and the Parochial Church Council for the use of P.C.C. records, parish magazines, and information on recent events.

Rev. E. Rowlands for verbal information and use of a scrapbook.

All who have supplied original material and loaned photographs for this publication.

The staff of Wigan Reference Library and Wigan Record Office, particularly Messrs. R. Blakeman, A. Gillies and E. Williams for photocopies of newspaper articles, parish records and infinite patience.

PLAN OF PEMBERTON DISTRICT c. 1850.



FRONT COVER EXTERIOR OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

BEGINNINGS

The township of Pemberton, lies two miles west-south-west from Wigan. Adam de Pemberton, reputed to have held lands here, was living in the twelfth century during the reign of Richard 1. In 1292, another Adam de Pemberton brought an action for trespass against a neighbour, Adam de Northlegh (or Norley) for cutting down his woods at Pemberton.

At one time there was a burning well of considerable fame in the district. Such a strong vapour of sulphur issued from its water that, when lit, it instantly caught the flame like spirits, burning for several hours. Roger Lowe, a famous Lancashire diarist, recorded that in 1665 he went to see the burning well at Pemberton, "and we had two eggs which was so done by no material fire".

Pemberton's links with Methodism are surprisingly old. At Lamberhead Green in 1775, William Atherton was born. He became a famous Wesleyan divine, and was president of the Methodist Conference in 1846.

By the nineteenth century, the several important roads running through Pemberton, and rich coal deposits had made it ripe for the Industrial Revolution. In 1911, the authors of the Victoria County History of Lancashire described the whole area as "unpicturesque, bare and open, occupied for the most part by collieries, mine-shafts and pit banks. There are however, fields where some crops are raised, potatoes and oats surviving the smoke of the environs."

A NEW "WATERLOO" CHURCH

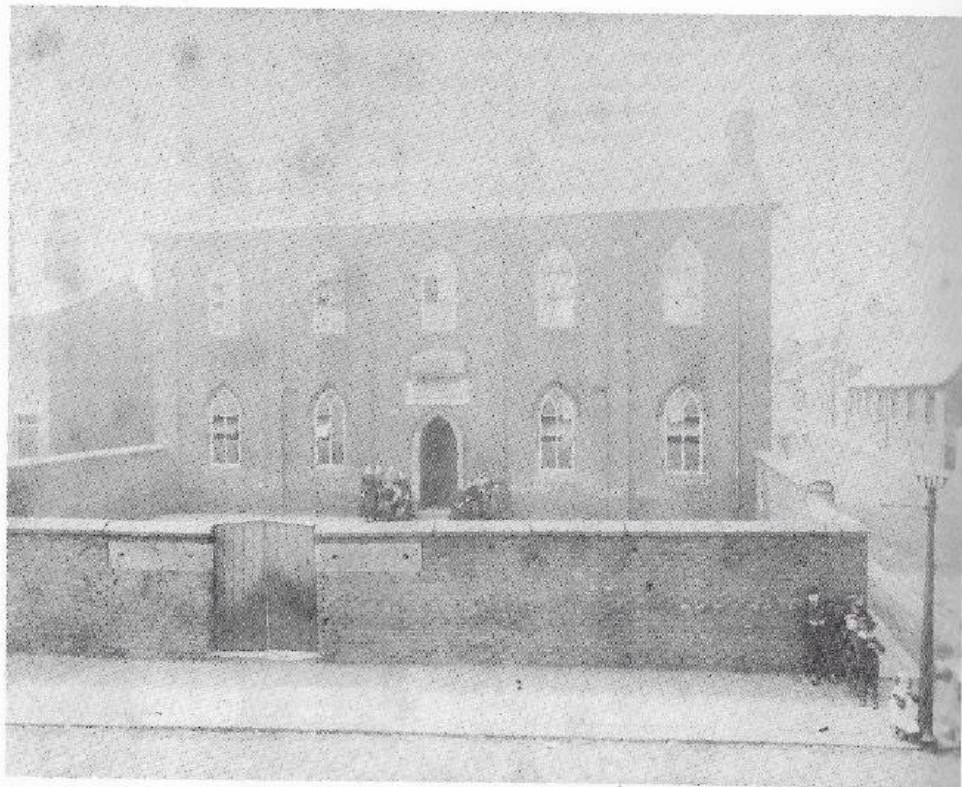
On June 18th, 1815, the Battle of Waterloo effectively ended the Napoleonic Wars, and England commenced an era of peace. In 1819, as a thanksgiving for the victory at Waterloo, the Government gave a million pounds to provide areas with fast-growing populations with new churches. The first grant was followed by a second half-million in 1825, and the government hoped that the new churches would help to civilize the new working class (as well as keeping them quiet!).

The churches built with assistance from these grants came to be known as "Waterloo Churches" or "Commissioners' Churches". The Commissioners themselves approved all designs and laid down stringent conditions regarding their siting and structure.

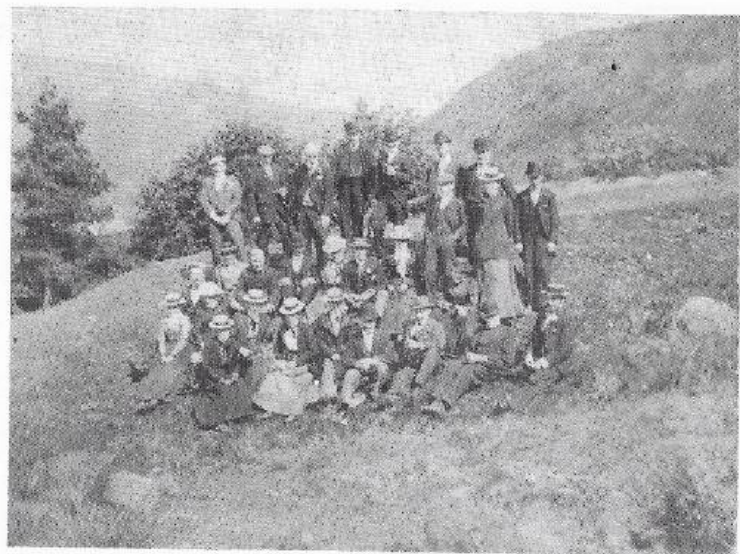
St. John's, Pemberton was designed by Rickman (a Birmingham Quaker) and Hutchinson, and is a characteristic Waterloo church, with its long lancet windows and three galleries on iron columns. Costing the commissioners £4,913 at the time of building, the church was remarkable for its great width of span.

St. John's Church was consecrated on the 26th September, 1832, as a chapel of ease to the parish church of Wigan, with a burial ground attached to it. Before 1832, Anglicans in the area had to travel to Wigan or Upholland for worship. The first vicar was Joshua Paley, M.A., and a district was assigned to St. John's in 1838, consisting of the township of Pemberton and part of the township of Orrell. The original church could accommodate 1,586 persons (1,038 free seats being appropriated to the use of the poor). In 1840 the vicar's income was paid jointly by the governors of Queen Anne's Bounty (£200), the locality (£400), the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the Rector of Wigan (£50). The following year a dispute arose between the church authorities of Upholland and Pemberton as to which church the Orrell ratepayers had to pay church rates, and for a while they were called upon to pay rates both to the new church and Upholland.

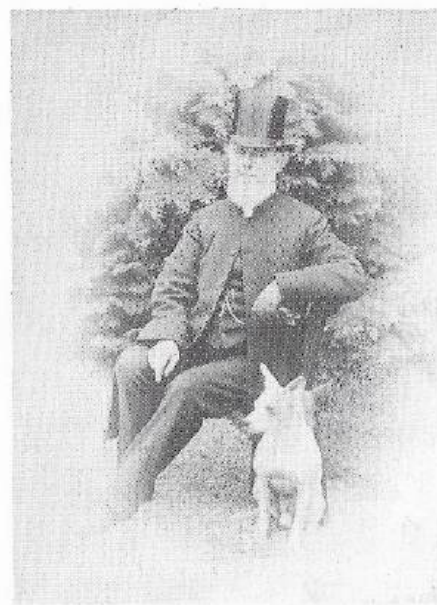
Joshua Paley set to work to provide schools for the children of the poor, and by his own efforts, aided by the National Society and the people at large, he built schools at Marsh Green, Far Moor, Goose Green and Kitt Green. He died in 1849, and was replaced by the Rev. Arthur Coates, B.A., a student from Trinity College, Dublin. The



ST. JOHN'S FIRST DAY SCHOOL (Later the Parish Hall).



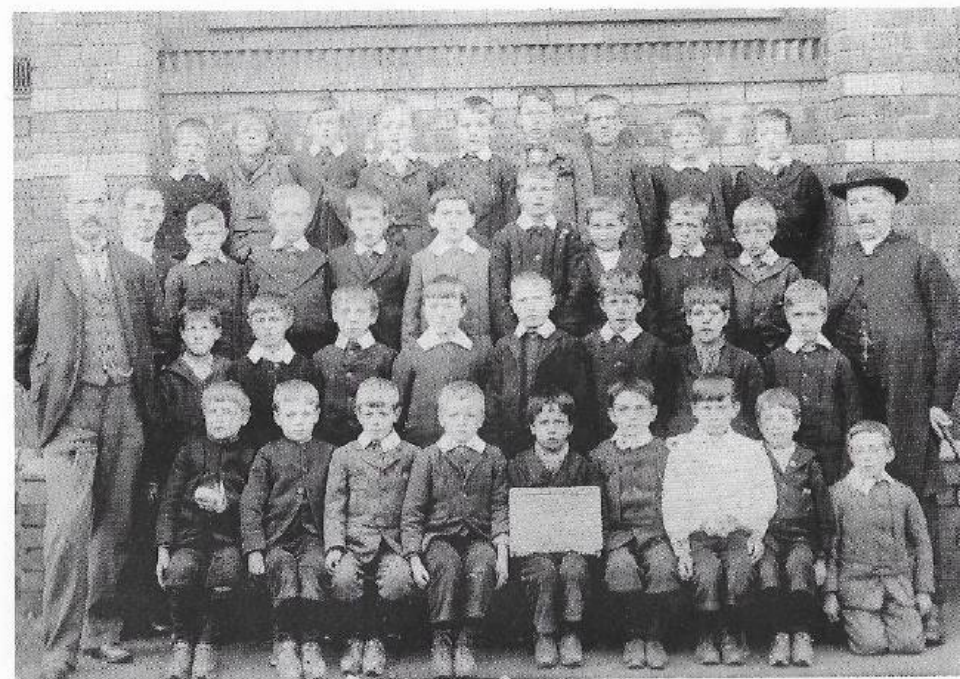
EARLY PARISH OUTING.



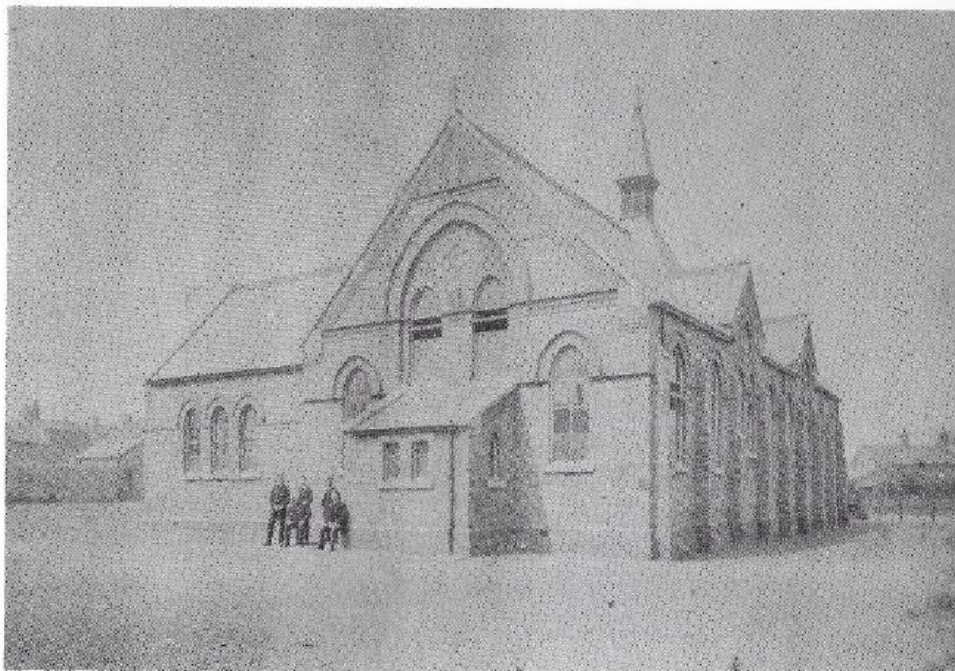
REV. ARTHUR COATES, M.A.
(Vicar, 1849-1872)



REV. HARRY MITCHELL, M.A.
(Vicar, 1881-1887)



**ST. JOHN'S DAY SCHOOL BOYS, c. 1898, WITH MR. J. T. MILWARD, HEADMASTER,
AND REV. JOHN LLEWELLYN, CURATE.**



ST. JOHN'S DAY SCHOOL BEFORE ALTERATION, c. 1890.



BACK VIEW OF ST. JOHN'S DAY SCHOOL.

population of the parish at this time was around 8,000. In 1854 the church was closed for painting and repair, and re-opened with "Divine Service" on Sunday, 5th November, 1854, when the Rev. J. Bardsley, Superintendent of the Church of England Scripture Readers' Society, Liverpool, was the preacher.

Annual vestry meetings have never been outstandingly popular, and that of 1870 was no exception, being attended by the Vicar, three curates and about twenty parishioners. The sum of £83.11s-2d was reported to be in the special purposes account, and the meeting resolved to remove the organ and choir from the West gallery to the body of the church, and replace the pews with open seats. By removing the organ, 280 extra seatings were obtained in the West gallery. The same year, the managers of Blundell's Collieries gave their annual festival treat for the Sunday and day school scholars - 254 scholars attended.

Arthur Coates resigned in 1872 when he gave up clerical work. He was succeeded by the Rev. Clement Leigh Coldwell, who only stayed at Pemberton for three years before being appointed to the Episcopal Chapel at Stirling. The fourth vicar of Pemberton was John Leech, who came to the district after a curacy at Higher Broughton, Manchester. During his incumbency the East window consisting of three lights was introduced as a memorial to his predecessor. The central light is of Our Lord, represented as the Good Shepherd, while on either side are the apostles, St. John and St. Paul. A carved stone pulpit, showing the calling of the disciples was introduced the following year (1880).

A NEW BISHOP AND A NEW VICAR

In 1880, the athletic, thrice-married Rev. John Ryle was appointed first Bishop of Liverpool. He was to rule his diocese with a firm hand. It was Ryle who instituted the Rev. Harry Mitchell in Pemberton Church on June 29th, 1881. Harry Mitchell came to Pemberton after being Vicar of Peak Forest for six years. A man with an eye for detail, he started to write a scrapbook containing information of life at St. John's, and enjoyed a demanding incumbency.

One of the Rev. Mitchell's initial tasks was to make arrangements for the jubilee of Pemberton Church. With the extension of the colliery business which was, by then, the means of maintaining most part of its population, Pemberton had grown in proportion. In 1832 there had been only one place of worship belonging to the Church of England in the parish. By 1882 there was no less than one church and seven church schools, and the large colliery proprietors, especially Messrs. Blundell and Son had been generous in providing church and school accommodation.

The following statement was printed and circulated:-

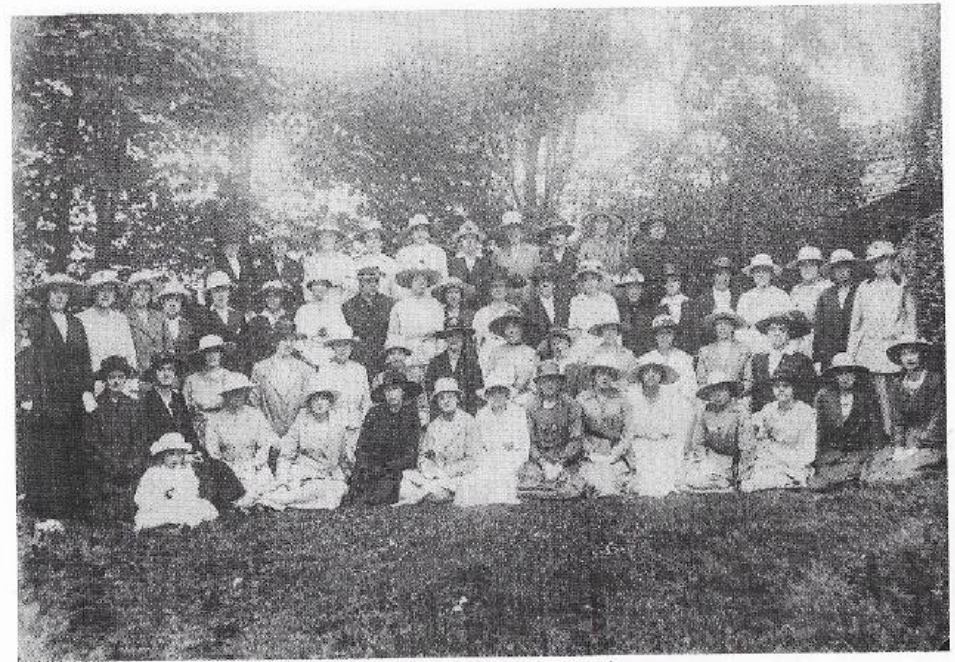
NAME OF SCHOOL	DAY SCHOOL			SUNDAY SCHOOL		TOTALS	
	Boys	Girls	Infants	Boys	Girls and Infants	Day	Sunday
ST. JOHN'S, PARISH CHURCH	240	212	167	252	352	619	604
ST. LUKE'S, FAR MOOR	145	127	88	71	98	360	169
KITT GREEN	60	61	66	100	129	187	229
ST. PAUL'S, GOOSE GREEN	198	193	202	150	191	593	341
ST. MATTHEW'S, HIGHFIELD ...	201	180	145	209	347	526	556
LITTLE LANE, HIGHFIELD	—	—	—	75	95	—	170
ST. MARK'S NEWTOWN	214	150	239	253	348	603	601
ST. BARNABAS, MARSH GREEN	60	46	58	60	127	164	187
Totals	1118	969	965	1170	1687	3052	2857

BURIALS.

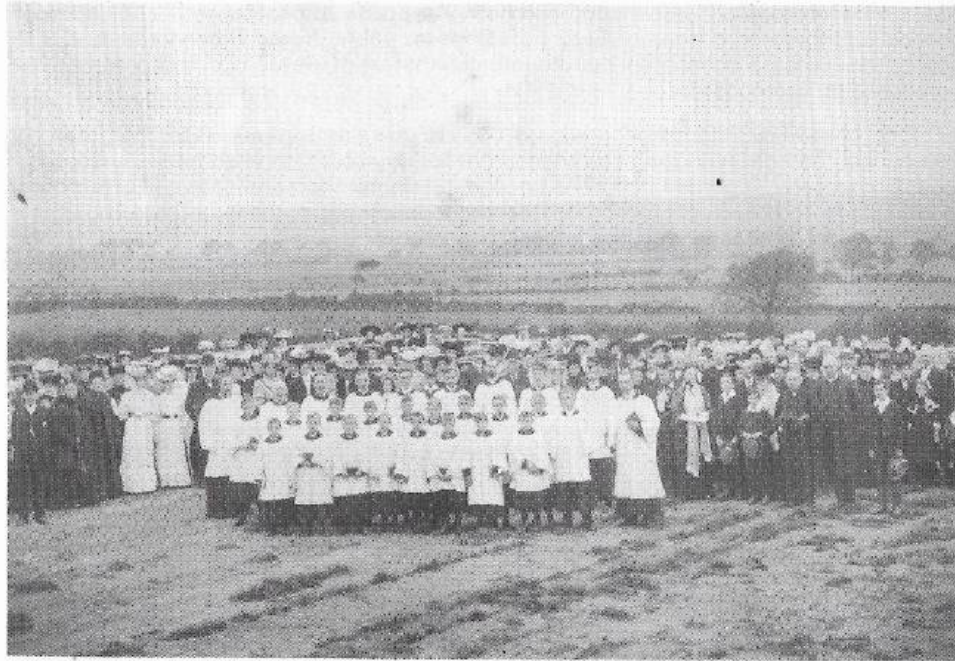
"Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord."—Rev. xiv., 13.

Sept. 26—Esther Unsworth, 6 months	Sept. 8—William Winnard, 2½ years
" 26—Sarah Jane Speakman, 5 months	" 8—George Baron, 61 years
" 26—George Parkinson, 2 months	" 10—Alice Price, 69 years
" 27—Joseph Galley, 11 months	" 11—Joseph Davenport, 3 years
" 27—Theodocia Martlew, 40 years	" 11—Albert Melling, 1 hour
" 27—Margaret Ann Watkinson, 21 years	" 13—Mary Louisa Shirlcliffe, 35 years
" 29—Alice Haydock, 5 months	" 13—Martha Barnes, 18 months
" 30—Ann Ascroft, 1 month	" 15—Betsy Tickle, 8 months
" 30—Barbara Campbell, 17 months	" 15—Ann Fawkes, 68 years
" 30—Martha Parkinson, 19 years	" 16—Ellen Berry, 2 days
Oct. 1—Mary Alice Berry, 1 month	" 16—Thomas Fairhurst, 63 years
" 1—Elizabeth Hest, 10 months	" 17—William Aspinall, 65 years
" 1—Peter Unsworth, 37 years	" 18—Ralph Peters, 18 years
" 2—Harriet Wallace, 27 years	" 20—George Tennant, 26 days
" 2—Elizabeth Alice Calvert, 2 years	" 22—Betsy Bradburn, 17 months
" 3—Mary Ashton, 13 years	" 22—William Worthington, 3½ years
" 3—Margaret Parkinson, 3½ years	" 23—Ann Ellen Fairhurst, 4 months
" 3—Ellen Dawber, 76 years	" 24—Margaret Barker, 3 years
" 4—James Lowe, 1 month	" 24—John Brookes, 62 years
" 4—Elizabeth Alice Taberner, 1¼ months	" 25—Lois Batchelor, 9 weeks
" 7—Nicholas Liptrot, 3 years	" 28—Ada Tickle, 7 years
" 7—John Edward Johnson, 1 month	" 29—Robert Dawber, 19 months
" 8—John Hart, 57 years	

BURIALS LISTED IN PARISH MAGAZINE, NOVEMBER 1890.
Note the high infant mortality rate.



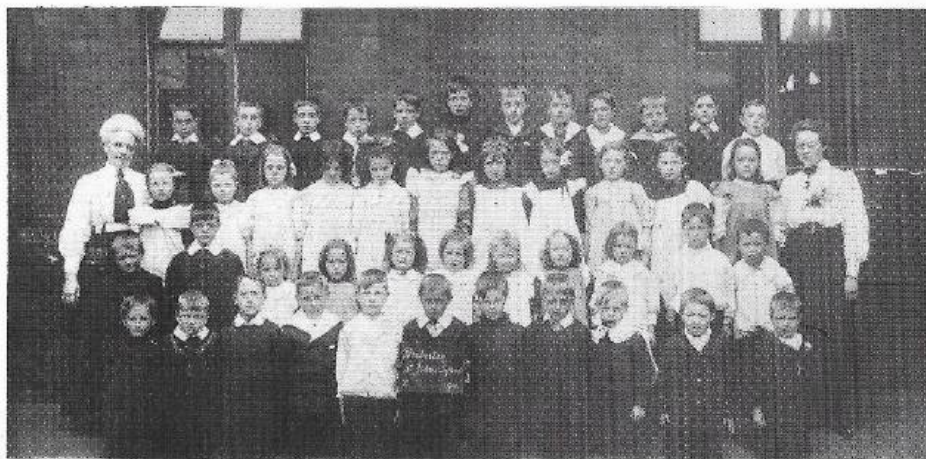
WOMEN'S CLASS, c. 1910.



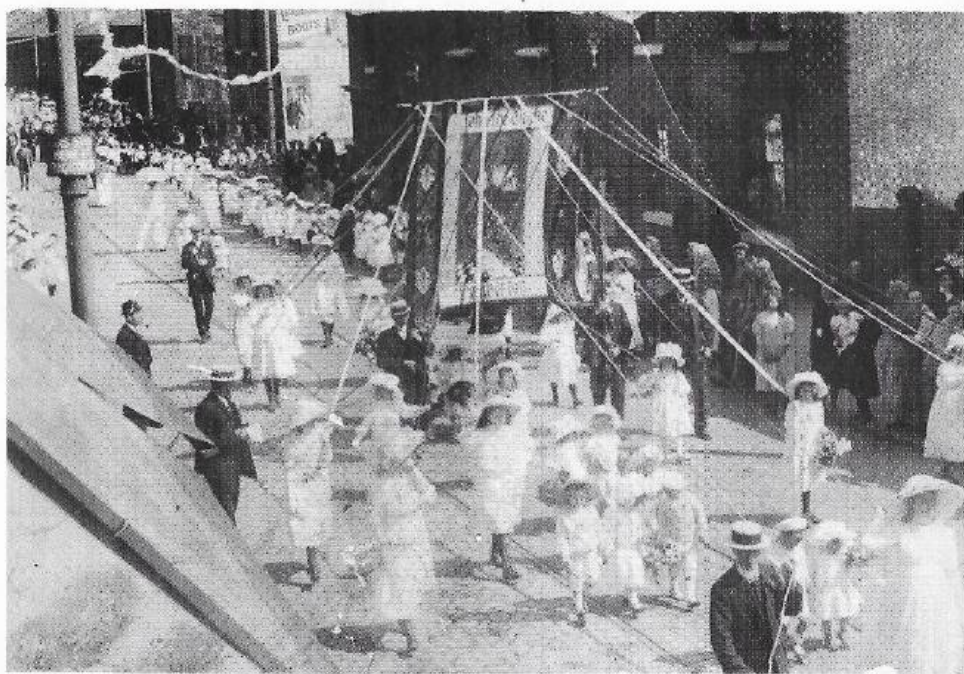
SERVICE OF BLESSING FOR NEW VICARAGE, 1907



WALKING DAY - ORRELL ROAD, c. 1910.



ST. JOHN'S INFANTS, 1911.



WALKING DAY - ORMSKIRK ROAD, 1912.

In preparation for the jubilee, a committee consisting of one representative from each school decided to have a united procession of the schools. A delightfully fine Saturday greeted the scholars, and they were accompanied by the rousing strains of local brass bands, including the Pemberton Victoria Band, the New Inn Band, Pemberton Temperance Band and Greenhalgh's Goose Green Band. About 3,600 people walked in the procession, the younger scholars being conveyed in carts and luries. Soon after arriving at Winstanley Park, refreshments were served out, and according to a local reporter "These were partaken of with great relish, the lengthy walk having given them an excellent appetite."

Bishop Ryle, who was occasionally known to make his congregations creep with pictures of hellfire, preached at length at the two jubilee services in St. John's the following day!

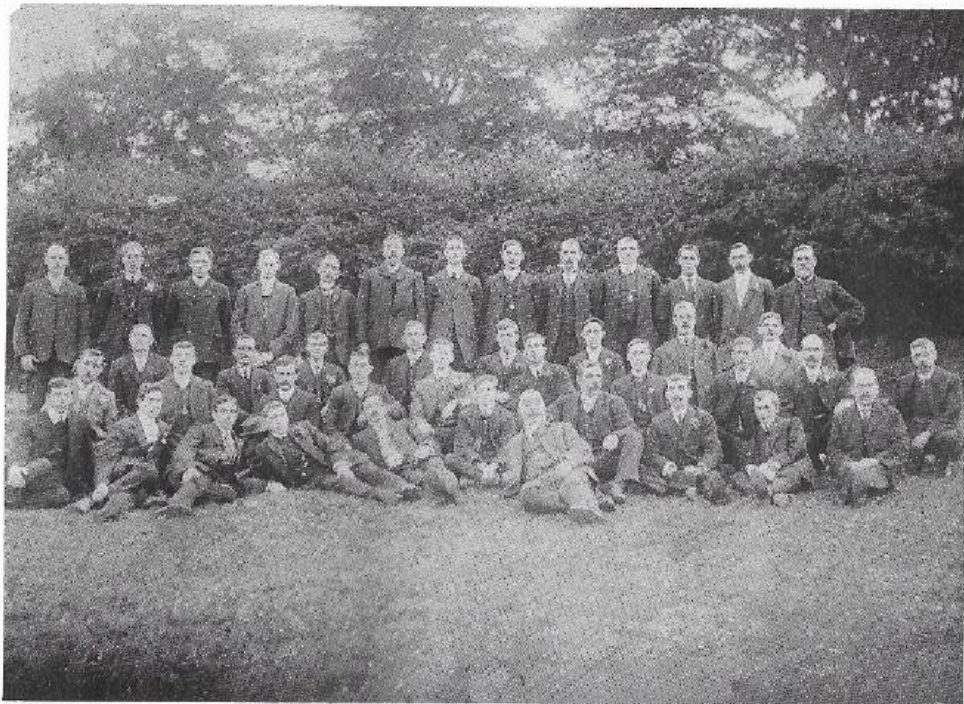
IMPROVED SCHOOLS AND PROTESTANT RUMBLINGS

In his first four years at Pemberton, Harry Mitchell undertook an extensive scheme designed to improve the parish schools accommodation. £2,120 was subscribed and expended on St. Matthew's, St. Mark's, St. Luke's, St. Paul's and St. Barnabas (re-annexed from St. Andrew's Parish, Wigan in 1882). At St. John's, the influx of children was so great that the authorities were compelled to hire the Free Church School and some pupils had to be temporarily located in the vestry of the church. However, the foundation stone of a brand new boys' school for St. John's was laid by Colonel Blundell in April 1884. Mr. Mitchell's father was dying at the time, so he was unable to be present at this particular ceremony. A 3-day sale of work culminated in the opening of the school by Sir Richard Cross, M.P., five months later, amid great rejoicing in the township. The speakers at the opening ceremony commented that voluntary church schools were much to be preferred to board schools, where religious education was often overlooked.

In 1865 a national organisation called the "Church Association" had been created. The Association stood for Protestant principles in the Church of England, and was formed with the avowed object of fighting ritualism by means of legal action. In 1882 the local press reported the formation of a branch of the Church Association in Pemberton. At the inaugural meeting, the speaker asked why the clergy at St. John's no longer wore a black gown. He continued, "They are carrying out at that church the very principle of the order of the Rev. "Father" Pusey himself, and the people were allowing it to be done with their eyes open." The Vicar alleged that there was no reason for a branch of the Church Association at Pemberton, as there were no ritualistic practices, and he himself refused to join. The Pemberton congregation appeared to think no less of the Vicar for his decision, and the vestry meetings of the next four years convey a feeling of goodwill and mutual respect.

PIT-BROW WOMEN AND WIFE BEATERS

Mr. Mitchell's social conscience led him to become leader of the local pit-brow women in their protests against threatened legislative interference with their right to work. The first meeting of the pit-brow women's campaign was held in St. John's School in February 1886, and attended by over 200. Another meeting held in the new school a month later attracted an audience of 400, of which about 120 were pit-brow women. The Vicar was later to compare the impact of this meeting to that of fired gunpowder.



MEN'S BIBLE CLASS, 1912.



ST. JOHN'S AMATEUR FOOTBALL CLUB, 1912-13.



ST. JOHN'S AMATEUR FOOTBALL CLUB, 1913-14.



PEMBERTON CARNIVAL, c. 1920.



PEMBERTON CARNIVAL, c. 1920.



LAMBERHEAD GREEN, c. 1920.

Drunkness and wife-beating were common in the area at this time. In 1870, a local miner, John Grigson, had been sent to the gallows for accidentally kicking his wife to death whilst drunk. In 1886, at the annual meeting of parishioners, the Vicar stated that according to the canon of 1603 it was the duty of churchwardens to present to the bishop any grave sinner who caused scandal or offence. There were a few drunken wife beaters in the parish and he thought they offended very much. The Vicar said that he considered it a pity that the stocks had been removed, and that the scamps deserved to be horse-whipped. He should be glad to know what would be the result of the churchwardens presenting these fellows to the bishop, and even suggested putting their names on the church doors!

Mr. Mitchell then was a seasoned intervener in local affairs, and never afraid to speak bluntly or involve himself, along with the local gentry, chiefly coalowners, in matters of social concern. His last entry in his scrapbook records the first Eisteddfod for Pemberton church choirs. Four choirs contested, and came in the following order:- 1st St. Lukes, 2nd St. Matthew's, 3rd St. John's, 4th St. Mark's.

REV. EDWARD FRANCIS FORREST

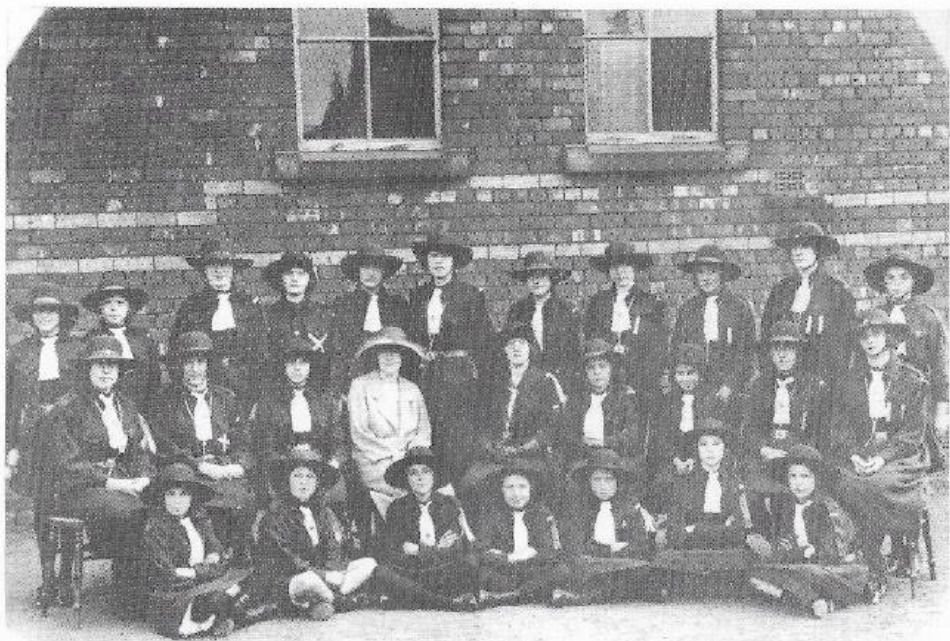
Pemberton's next incumbent, Edward Francis Forrest, M.A., was appointed in 1887 when Mr. Mitchell moved to Prescot. Printed returns showed that there had been a 30% increase in the number of Sunday School scholars during the previous incumbency, and the population of the parish was now 16,000. Mr. Forrest was to stay at Pemberton for the next 35 years, and during that time the parish inevitably came to bear his particular stamp.

In June 1887, Pemberton celebrated the Commemoration of the Jubilee of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria with a special service in Church on Sunday afternoon and a procession of Friendly Societies and schools to Winstanley Park the following Tuesday. There were about 7,000 people in the procession and 15,000 in the park; Pemberton Church Schools children numbered over 3,000.

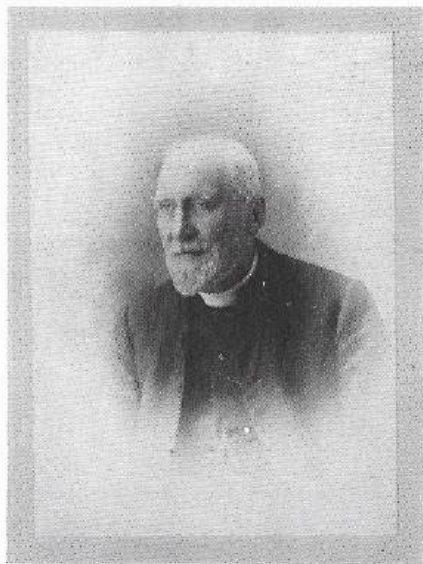
The Rev. Forrest published the church magazine for the first time in January 1889, when it had a circulation of 300. High church in practice, he met with some opposition when in 1891 he introduced a surpliced choir at the Pemberton Parish Church. Shortly after the choir had been supplied with surplices, the Wigan Observer reported an "outrage" at the church. The sexton, on entering the church one Tuesday morning noticed signs that someone had been in the building. On further investigation he discovered that nine of the new surplices had been taken away altogether, and the majority or those left had been very badly treated, large pieces having been torn out with a knife. In the light of the recent controversy concerning the wearing of surplices, the theory was that the vandalism was the outcome of spiteful prejudice. In this day and age it is difficult for us to understand the depth of feeling which existed against anything "Roman" in appearance.

The church was still concerning itself with social matters, and in September 1905 during the Pemberton Colliery Strike, a soup kitchen was opened in St. John's School to feed the poor children during the strike.

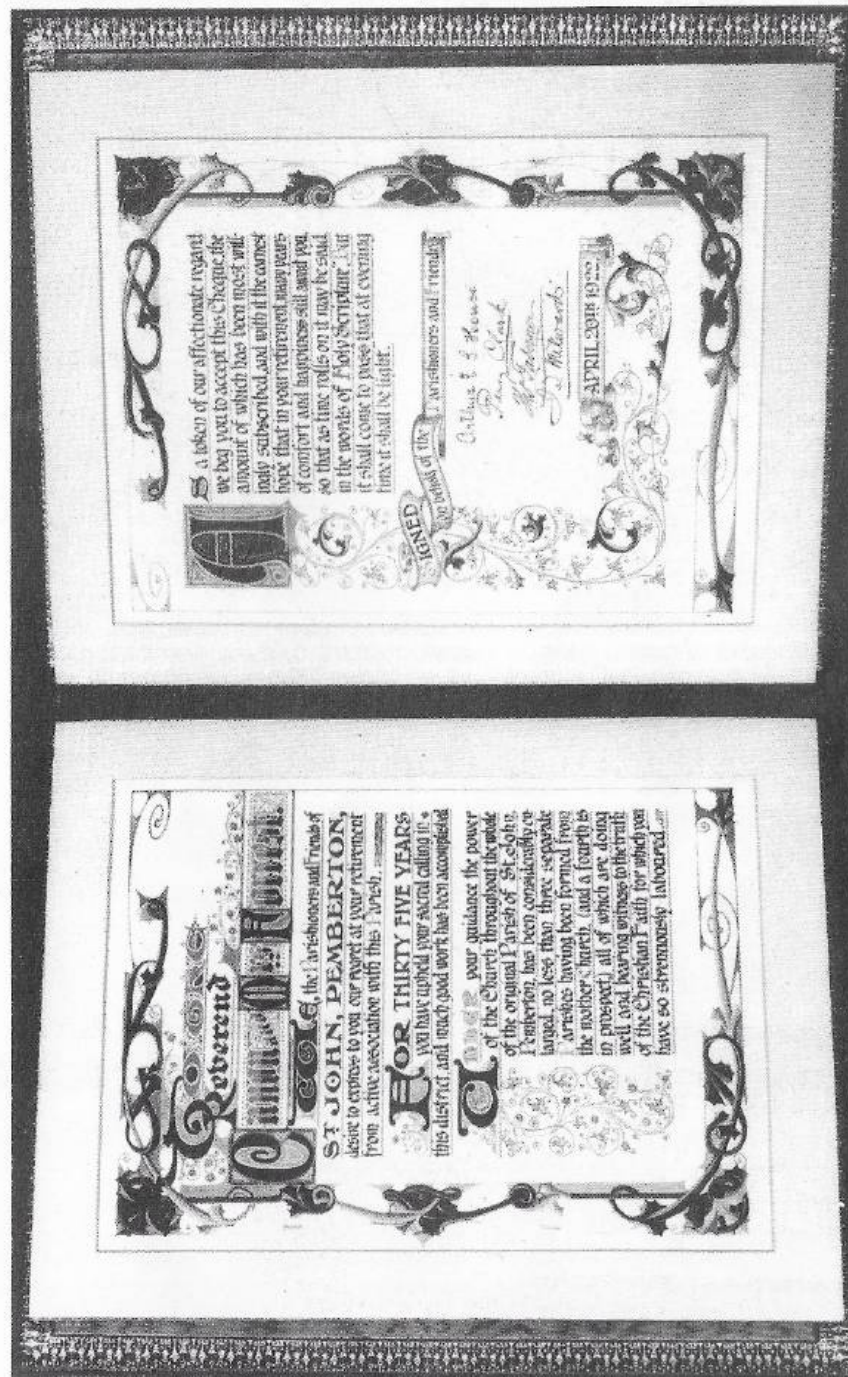
John Thomas Milward, headmaster of St. John's School, was charged and found guilty of unlawfully assaulting and beating a boy in March 1902. He was fined 40s and costs. On a happier note, school field treats and processions were still very much the order of the day. In 1903, over 700 scholars and teachers walked in procession to their annual field treat on Dr. Hartley's field behind Ashleigh, accompanied by the Pemberton Total Abstinence Band.



SOME OF THE GUIDES OF THE 1st COMPANY OF ST. JOHN'S, 4th WIGAN WEST, 1921.



CANON EDWARD F. FORREST, M.A.
(Vicar, 1887-1922).





PEMBERTON BAND IN ORMSKIRK ROAD NEAR QUEEN'S CINEMA, WALKING DAY, 1922.



1st PEMBERTON ST. JOHN'S BOY SCOUTS RALLY, 1923.
Rev. Arthur Longden is centre, back row.

In 1905, the church was again renovated, and re-opened with special services in November of that year. Plans were also well in hand for extending the churchyard and for a new Vicarage house so that the minister could live in the parish and be readily available to comfort the bereaved and attend the dying. Then, as now, loyal church workers had a reputation for long and devoted service. In January 1920, two memorial tablets were unveiled in St. John's Church; one in memory of Jeffrey Baynes, registrar for the past 45 years and warden for 18 years, the other in memory of John Rigby, 53 years teacher and superintendent of Kitt Green Sunday School. Two weeks earlier, the Rev. Forrest had been installed a canon of Liverpool Cathedral as a mark of appreciation for his work and ministry in Pemberton.

During Canon Forrest's incumbency, several organisations were started to cater for the weekday spiritual and social needs of the people of the area. These included the Men's Society, Girl's Guild, Men's Bible Class, Church Lads' Brigade, Football Club, Children of the Church, Guild of Goodwill, Communicants' Union, Mothers' Union and the Band of Faith. Sales of work and Smoking Concerts were very much in evidence.

Canon Forrest was an eminent preacher and lecturer, and in 1918 he published a book of five sermons called "Topics for the Times". The sermons were preached to congregations of about a thousand people on Sunday evenings during Lent 1918. In them he denounced conscientious objectors, warned against dabbling in spiritualism, and spoke against divorce and abortion. While Canon Forrest was at Pemberton, the old parish was sub-divided and four new parishes formed at St. Mark's Newtown (1891), St. Matthew's, Highfield (1910), St. Paul's, Goose Green (1915) and St. Luke's, Orrell (1922). Between 1887 and 1922 there were 7,548 baptisms, 2,663 marriages and 11,456 burials in the parish.

Throughout his thirty-five years in the Wigan district, Canon Forrest was held in the highest appreciation by his parishioners and the general public, ever prepared to take a stand and give a lead in times of doubt. He was a Christian Socialist, and was for some years known as a strong supporter of the Co-operative movement, while for some time he was a lecturer for the Land Nationalisation Society, when some of his addresses were published as brochures.

Canon Forrest's mother had been a Quaker, but despite objecting to war, he was not a pacifist. Two of his sons were lost in the First World War, one of whom was on the threshold of taking holy orders. These tragic occurrences bound Canon Forrest even more strongly to the Pemberton congregation, many of whom had lost sons of their own in the same war.

In the end, through shattered health, Canon Forrest was obliged to resign. He died at the homes of St. Barnabas, Dorman, Surrey, in his 74th year.

CHANGES

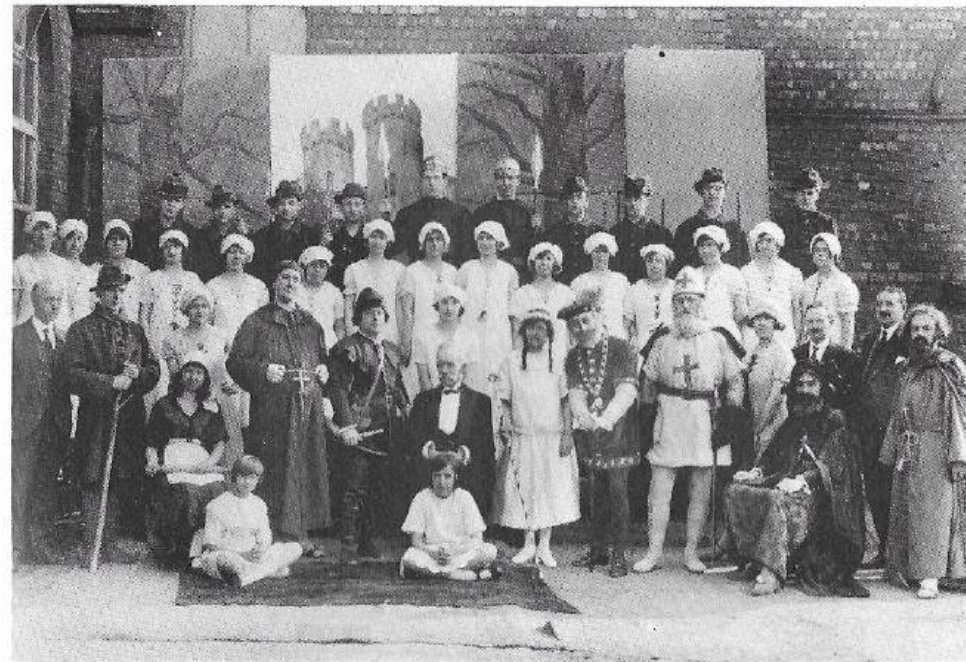
After Canon Forrest's departure, the Patron had great difficulty in filling the living. It was eventually accepted by the Rev. Skene, curate of St. George's Wigan, but he died in May, 1922 before he could take up the appointment.

The Rev. Arthur Longden, M.C., came to Pemberton after being Northern Secretary of the Church of England Men's Society for ten years. His main contributions to the parish (1922-30) was in building it up again after a world war, and attempting to make some changes in the election of wardens, as the same people had been re-elected for many years.

The Rev. Arthur Hope Johnson, the 8th incumbent, was married to a member of the wealthy and influential Buchmaster family, and he furthered the Tractation tradition. A new communion rail was installed as a memorial to the late Canon Forrest. Hope Johnson was much concerned with church finances, and enormous bazaars were held in 1931 and 1934 to reduce the debt on the schools. The 1931 bazaar raised £833 0s 11d, an admirable total.



WALKING DAY 1924.



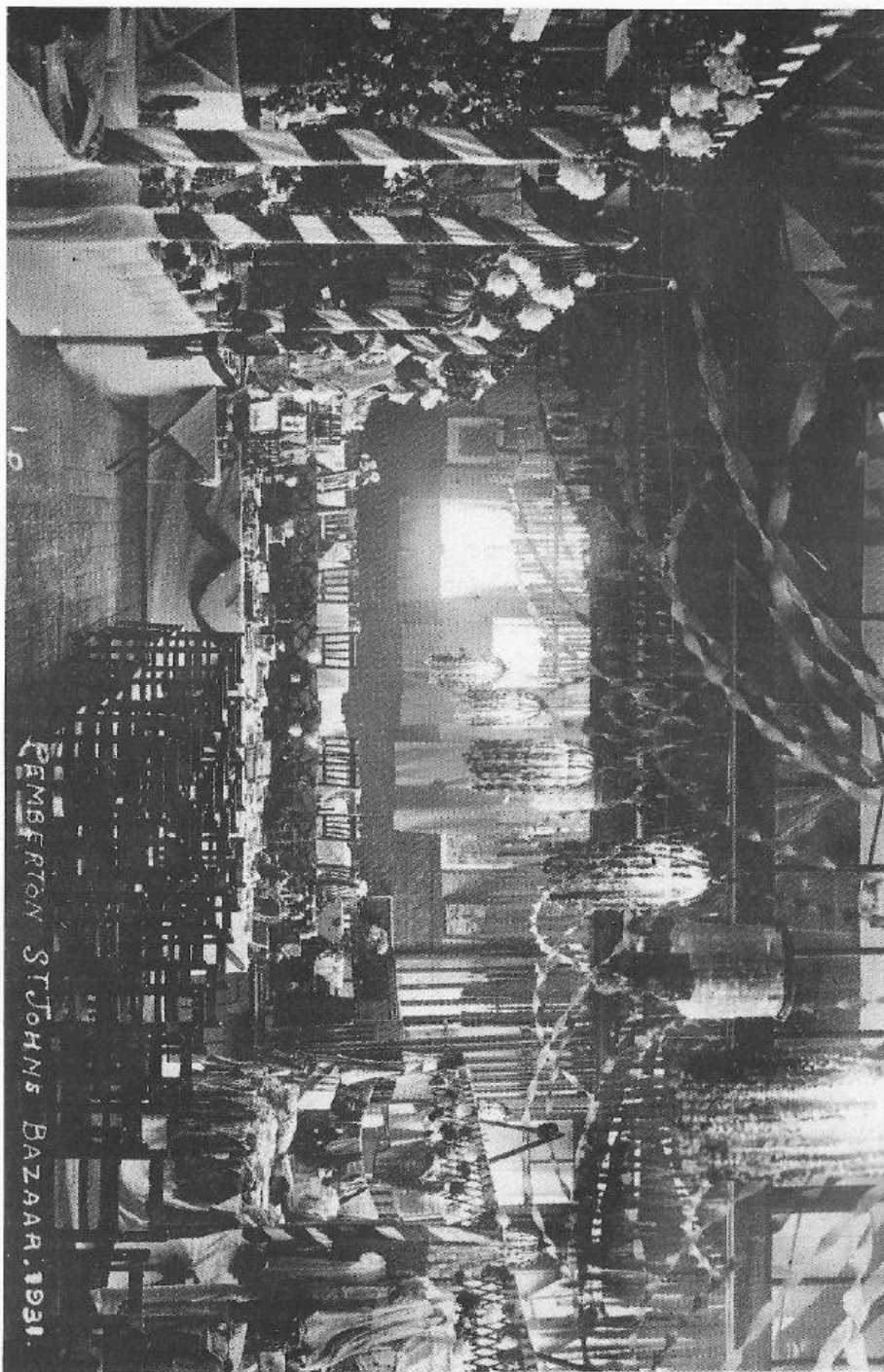
"KING OF SHERWOOD", 1925.



PEMBERTON CARNIVAL, c. 1924 - MISS LIPTROT'S CLASS.



ST. JOHN'S LADIES WHO FORMED A TABLEAU AT PEMBERTON CARNIVAL, c. 1928.



ST. JOHN'S BAZAAR, 1931.

In 1935, the assistant curate, the Rev. H. E. Wraige departed for Vryborg, South Africa. There he would be called upon to work in a parish about the size of Lancashire at a stipend slightly less than he received as assistant curate at St. John's! Later he was to become Archdeacon of Kimberley.

In 1936, the Rev. Edmund Troup, M.C. was appointed Vicar, and the same year the Bishop of Liverpool started a seven years building plan to provide clergy, churches, schools and halls in the large new areas that had sprung up in the Diocese. Almost a year later the pennies of the Pemberton faithful had produced over £100 for the scheme - this was a fine amount in poverty stricken times. (One man had struck the Pemberton relieving officer with a shovel when his unemployment relief was reduced from 27s to 23s after it was discovered that he had a paying lodger!)

Following an appeal from Mr. Wraige, the Pemberton Parish agreed to pay £18 per annum for four years for the education and training of Meshak A. Kashe, a 17 year-old native South African. In the following months, Meshak often wrote in the church magazine to thank the Pemberton people for their kindness, and inform them of his progress.

Another stalwart of St. John's, John Anderton retired in January 1938. He had taught in the Sunday School for fifty years.

By the time the Rev. Troup left Pemberton for Lincolnshire in 1940, he had been instrumental in inducing the Diocese to accept responsibility for the debt of £3,000 on the Church School. A new portion of the graveyard had been consecrated, the parochial hall had been renovated and a new institution had been provided for the men.

In September 1939, T. Barton, the headmaster of St. John's School retired, only to be ordained deacon six months later, and to assist with clerical duties at Highfield, Pemberton and Wigan.

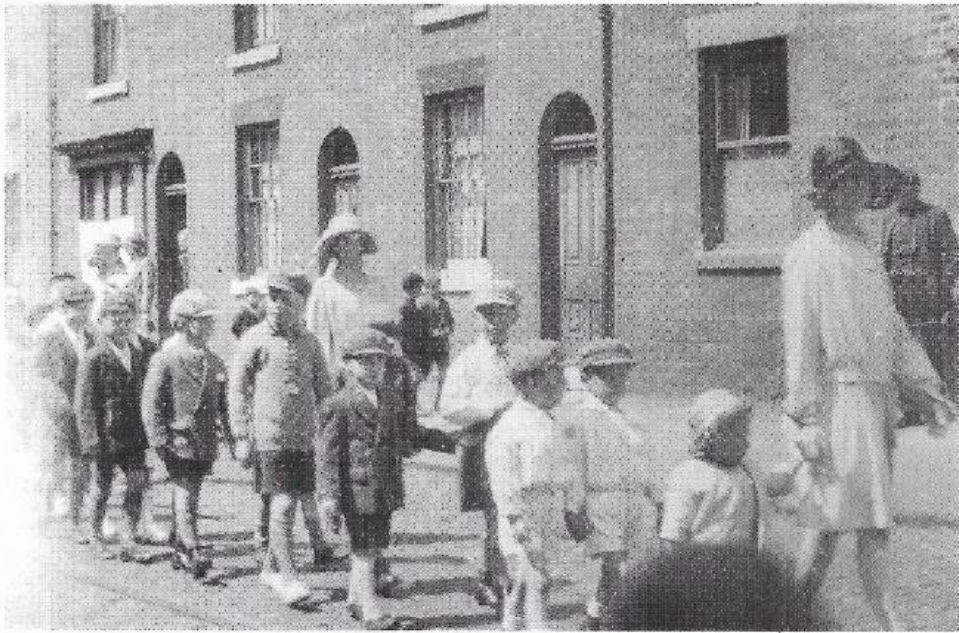
During the inter-war years, the parish was visited by the Church Army Crusaders. On the social side, popular dances were held in the Parish Hall, attracting large crowds.

Shortly after the onset of war in October 1939, the Rev. J. H. Bartlett was appointed Vicar of Pemberton after a curacy at the Holy Spirit Parish, Dovecot, Liverpool. A single man of high church tradition, he had a reputation for not being adverse to laying down the law vigorously whenever this was needed. On the advice of the police, it was decided not to hold walking days during the war years, and in July 1941 during the blitz on Liverpool, the parish halls were overcrowded with evacuees. At this time the Men's Institute was closed through lack of support. Nevertheless, the work of the church at Kitt Green and Pemberton was steadily maintained, and although social activities were not up to pre-war standards, the spiritual work of the parish increased.

The Rev. Bartlett laid emphasis on work amongst the youth. He often commented on slackness in Sunday School attendance, and a children's group called the "King's Messengers" was formed. The population of the parish continued to grow, and the 9a.m. Eucharist became more of a family service - there were 10,372 communicants during 1945-6.

The victory dances held at St. John's and Kitt Green on the Saturday after V.E. day were both crowded to capacity. In the next few years drama groups were re-started, and the social life of the parish began to re-awaken.

Mr. Bartlett left England on New Year's Day 1951 to take up the appointment of General Secretary of the Diocese of Jamaica. He later returned to his country and died as Vicar of Haigh in 1958.



WALKING DAY, 1930's.



WALKING DAY 1933.



FIRST ANNUAL REUNION IN 1936.
The picture shows some of the oldest guests with the Vicar (Rev. A. Hope Johnson) and Mrs. Johnson.



SERMONS SUNDAY 1944
 (On left of picture is Joe Robinson, now Master of the Temple)



"UNDER THE BANNER" IN CHURCH STREET BEFORE THE TERRACED HOUSES WERE DEMOLISHED.

RECENT YEARS

During the incumbencies of the next two vicars, the Revs. H. Hare and H. Seal, attempts were made to increase the share of laity in the work of the church. The custom of having lay district visitors was revived, and emphasis on Eucharistic worship was maintained.

Since 1950, St. John's has been remarkable for the number of men it has provided for the ordained ministry. Alan Bretherton, Malcolm Forrest, John Glover, John Macaulay, David Pye and Joseph Robinson have all answered a vocation in the Church of England. (David Pye died as Brother Jeremy S.S.F. in 1966). In addition, Dorothy Dean has become Sister Dorothy Stella O.H.P., and now works at a school in Bolgatanga, Northern Ghana. An ex-curate of St. John's, the Rev. F. C. Darwent has become Bishop of Aberdeen.

The Rev. E. Rowlands was appointed vicar in 1964. His contribution to the parish was mainly pastoral, and during his incumbency Kitt Green Institute was hallowed as the pro-church of St. Francis of Assisi, later becoming a parish in its own right under a separate vicar in 1978.

A branch of the **Mothers' Union** was formed in 1905, the third in the Wigan Deanery, the Enrolling Member being Mrs. Forrest, wife of the Vicar. The branch has a long and happy history of work and service in the parish. It is now the largest branch in the Diocese of Liverpool and its present Enrolling Member, Mrs. Audrey Southern, wife of the Rector, has just been elected as Presiding Member for the Wigan Deanery for 1983-6.

St. John's Amateur Concert and Dramatic Society has been tremendously active in the past few years. For most of their productions tickets are sold out well in advance - a local reporter claimed that he knew people who could not get tickets for love nor money, and they had tried both!

CHURCH FURNISHINGS

A brave attempt was made in 1973 by the Rev. E. Rowlands to modernise the chancel and sanctuary. The pulpit was demolished; the altar brought to the centre of the existing chancel and the choir stalls placed in three rows under the East window facing the congregation. The communion rails were removed, and movable rails placed at the foot of the chancel steps. These alterations, good in theory, did not work in practice and at a parish meeting on Ash Wednesday 1976 under the present incumbent, the Rev. J.A. Southern, it was almost unanimously decided to put the altar back within a sanctuary and re-create the chancel. An oak pulpit was obtained from a Methodist Church in Wandsworth, oak choir stalls from the Church of St Thomas, Seaforth (the choir stalls having been cut beyond restoration in the alterations) the Communion rails in memory of Canon Forrest were re-instated, and the front part of the old pulpit was incorporated into a feature in the porch and covered with a mahogany top for floral decorations. This work was completed and a dedication service conducted on November 20th, 1977.

An altar more suitable to the design of the church was obtained from St. Matthew's Bolton in February, 1982.

The best known smile and cheeriest wave in Pemberton belong to **Mr. Tom Worthington**, the Parochial Reader. Former choir-boy, Sunday School Superintendent, Tom was licensed in 1961, and has been, and is an excellent help to all the clergy, noted for his care and concern for the elderly and infirm. It is an education to walk with him through Pemberton and note the number of times he is greeted warmly by all and sundry.



MOTHERS' UNION OUTING TO TRENTHAM GARDENS, c. 1948.



TYROLEAN SCENE, ST. JOHN'S AMATEUR CONCERT & DRAMATIC SOCIETY.



FEATURE OF CHOIR STALL, 1977.



CHOIR, CHRISTMAS 1980.



INTERIOR OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, 1977.

VICARS OF PEMBERTON

JOSHUA PALEY, M.A.	1838-1849
ARTHUR COATES, B.A.	1849-1872
CLEMENT LEIGH COLDWELL, M.A.	1872-1874
JOHN LEACH, M.A.	1874-1881
HARRY MITCHELL, M.A.	1881-1887
EDWARD FRANCIS FORREST, M.A.	1887-1922
ARTHUR LONGDEN, M.C.	1922-1930
ARTHUR HOPE JOHNSON, M.A.	1930-1936
EDMUND TROUP, B.A., M.C.	1936-1940
JOHN HENRY BARTLETT, A.K.C.	1940-1950
HARRY DOUGLAS HARE, B.A.	1950-1957
EDWARD HUGH SEAL, B.Mus.	1957-1963
EDWARD ROWLANDS	1964-1974

RECTORS OF PEMBERTON

EDWARD ROWLANDS	1974-1975
JOHN A. SOUTHERN, B.A.	1975-

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