

PARISH PROFILE

Robert Leonard Parrott



Bob Parrott was born in Eades Cottages, a stone's throw from St Peter's Church, in the Street, Wrecclesham, in 1934, the youngest and only son of a family of five. The ParrOtt family, spelt with an O, unlike the Wrecclesham ParrAtt families, hail from Froyle, Bentley and Alton in Hampshire. At the beginning of the war the family moved to the new Cobbett's estate. By this time Bob, like his sisters, was attending St. Peter's School where Bob's father was later the Caretaker. In 1948, when Bob was 14, the government raised the school leaving age from 14 to 15 and Bob left St Peter's and was transferred to Bourne School to complete his schooling.

Bob's first job was at Rowledge Garage where, in his own words, he was a 'jack of all trades'. At 18 he joined the army. Bob was determined to be a 'Para'. He had been influenced by his Uncle John, who landed with the Parachute Regiment at Arnhem during the war. Bob initially had to join the East Surrey Regiment, but later applied, and was selected, to join the 'Paras'. There followed an intensive spell of training. Bob recalls that the training and discipline were tough: 'you go in as puppies and come out as dogs'. After eight successful jumps, from both balloons and planes, Bob gained his wings and served with the 16th Parachute Brigade for the remainder of his three years, mainly in the Canal Zone in Egypt.

Whilst in Egypt Bob was given the address of a young lady who wanted a 'Pen Friend'. This young lady, Doreen, from Bristol, was later to become his wife. Soon after his discharge from the army, Bob and Doreen became engaged. After the Banns were read for the first time, Bob was recalled to the army to serve at the Suez crisis. All wedding plans were put on hold. Bob was home by Christmas 1956 and the wedding was reinstated for the following summer. Bob and Doreen were happily married at St Leonard's Church in Redfield, near Bristol, in June 1957. Thus began a most happy union which was to last 47 years.

Following his army service Bob was to take a variety of jobs, delivering sand and ballast for the Victoria Transport Company, making breeze blocks on the Farnham Trading Estate, and concrete lintels back at Coxbridge. All of these were tough manual jobs but Bob has never been one to shirk hard work.

At first the young couple lived with Bob's parents in Cobbett's Estate, but later rented a bungalow in Lowicks Road, Tilford. During this period their family had grown with the addition of two baby girls, June and Lynne. It now boasts four grandchildren and soon to be two great-grandchildren. Bob would cycle from Tilford into Farnham each day, often, on his way home, picking up a small sack of coal from the depot at Farnham Station, which he balanced precariously on his handlebars.

The family's second home was at Chapel Corner, in Rowledge. Doreen was closely involved with the Baby Clinic in the old Village Hall. Bob's mother, Lilian was a voluntary worker at this clinic for 25 years, for which she was given an award. Doreen would walk to Wrecclesham, up and down the hills, with Lynne in the pram and with June helping her to push it up the hills and to help apply a 'human brake' when they were going downhill. During all this time Bob and Doreen were progressing up the housing waiting list and in 1965 they were offered the tenancy of a 'prefab' in Middlefield. Not long after, they were moved to new accommodation at Bardsley Drive where Bob has now lived for over 45 years.

At this time Bob took a new job, as he calls it, 'on the milk'. In some ways it was less physically demanding than his previous employment but it was still no sinecure. A milk round stretching from Farnham to Tilford, which might start by delivering his first pint at 3.00 a.m. and his last in Tilford at around 1.30 p.m. Bob with his friendly, outgoing personality was well suited to this work, and was well liked by his customers. He worked for Unigate for 21 years.

There have been many life changing events in Bob's life but certainly the saddest was the loss, in 2003, of his dear wife Doreen. Bob had not been a regular church goer prior to this, but he has found great comfort since, in a return to St Peter's, the Church of his Baptism 70 years previously. Bob has thrown himself into the life of the Church. Few people give the time and energy that Bob devotes to St. Peter's. Every Tuesday and Friday will find him sweeping the paths outside the Church. When a volunteer was required to raise and lower St George's flag on our flag pole on Sundays, Bob came forward. He is also a regular member of the team that helps print the church magazine, and in 2007 he represented the parish in the cycle ride around all the parishes in the Deanery, raising funds for the Surrey Historic Buildings Preservation Trust.

John Birch