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CLOCOLAN DISTRICT

On one of his first visits to the North of Modderpoort, Canon Beckett, the Superior of Modderpoort, returned via Clocolan, staying the night at Mr. Warden's. This was on Monday 27 March, 1871.

Previous to this there had been various Methodist Missions in the area, according to papers written by Mrs. June Boddam-Whetham. She cites the Lishuane Wesleyan Mission between the present towns of Ladybrand and Clocolan, on the site of the present farm Groenkloof, but very little is known of this mission and all signs of it have completely disappeared. Another was the Umpukane Mission, about five miles west of Clocolan, founded about 1834 but destroyed about 1850, and all records were destroyed with it.

A Mission was established at Mequatling in 1837 by M. Francois Daumas of the Société des Missions Evangéliques, and much has been written about it in books by Arbusset, Casalis, Ellenberger, and others. Bishop Gray was the guest of the French Missionary there in 1850, when he went to see the chief Molitzani.

It would seem that once the S.S.A. Fathers were established at Modderpoort they started making regular visits to Ficksburg and other places in that area, and Clocolan and district was certainly one of the places where services were held.

Early references to services at Clocolan refer to both Mr. Vincent's store and the Rudman's farm, and it would seem that they were far enough apart for services to be held at both places. Mr. Vincent's store was in the region of Clocolanberg, some five to eight kilometres north of the present town of Clocolan.

The Rudman's were originally 1820 Settlers, Benjamin Rudman and Samuel Rudman with his wife Ann arriving in South Africa with Sephton's party in the ship 'Aurora'.

Services were held on Mr. Rudman's farm from about 1878, at first about every two months, then Father James Douglas increased this to a service every month. By 1887 the Modderpoort Brotherhood were holding a service there every second and fourth Sunday in the month, with an early celebration on the fourth Sunday.

In November, 1887, Bishop Knight-Bruce passed through on a Visitation to his Diocese, and found that a meeting had been timed to take place while he was there. This meeting arose from the feeling that a building should be put up for the services, because, as Mr. Vincent wrote in a letter published in the "Bloemfontein Quarterly of April 16, 1888; ".the congregation has increased, so that the room so kindly placed at our disposal for so many years by the Rudman's is too small, and as there is every prospect of the congregation increasing, owing to the recent gold discoveries..."

At the meeting which followed a church service, it was decided to build a place on Rudman's farm, which could be used as a school in the week and for services on Sunday's. A building committee, consisting of Messrs. J. and S. Rudman, A. Bisset, and Mr. Vincent, was appointed to carry out the work.

Just how remote from civilisation people had been living in South Africa is highlighted by the comments by one old Englishman at the above service, to the effect that he had not seen a Bishop since 1832, which was about 20 years before Bishop Knight-Bruce was born. One can understand how appreciative the people were to have a Bishop in their midst and to know that their Church cared for their spiritual well-being enough to send priests, and even a Bishop, into the wilds of Africa.

In a letter written in January, 1889, by Mr. Vincent, we learn that the original plan had to be modified for want of funds. Mr. James Rudman rented them a house for 18 pounds per annum on the farm "The Grove"; the house being situated between the present farm houses of Lovedale and Rosebank.

The "Grove Church" was opened by the Bishop on Sunday 20 January, 1889. During the opening services the "Venite", "Te Deum", and "Benedictus" were chanted. The hymns were "Onward! Christian Soldiers," to the St. Alban's tune; "The Church's One Foundation"; "We love the place O God"; "Let's sing with Holy gladness"; and during the Communion, "Draw nigh and take."

Of a visit to Clocolan in 1890, the Bishop wrote, "I came for Sunday to the new church near Clocolan. Here there was not a large Confirmation, but it was a very interesting one. So large a number of people came from the farms around and some must have come considerable distances that I do not think the little church was large enough for them."

The Grove Church is remembered by quite a number of Rudmans as their first school, classes being held there during the week.

During 1889, the Bishop had requested Father James Douglas to send some of the members of the Society of St. Augustine into British Basutoland to open up a Mission station, and in return promised to relieve the mother church at Modderpoort of the

district work in Ficksburg, Ladybrand and Clocolan. As a result the Rev. R. Gresley Douglas, a nephew of Father James Douglas, sailed from England in October, 1889 to undertake the district work, taking up residence at Ficksburg, as has already been noted. When he left Ficksburg to go as Rector to Beaconsfield in 1893, the Brothers of Modderpoort took over the Clocolan responsibilities again.

It was at the Diocesan Synod of 1893 that the formation of the Chapelry of Clocolan was confirmed by a resolution of the Synod. The lay representatives at this Synod were Mr. H.W. Stockdale and Mr. C. Vincent.

In January 1894 the Bishop confirmed seven persons at Clocolan and in the Church Magazine for that same month we read that services were being held at Clocolan and 'Tandzsberg'. At the 'Grove' Church there was a Celebration of Holy Communion on alternate Sundays at 7.30, and Mattins at 11. In the afternoon a service was held for boys belonging to the English Church who were at St. Leo's College, Evening Star, and this service was held in Mr. Coleman's house, by his kind permission. In the Evening, at 8 p.m. there was Evensong at Mr. Vincent's store at Clocolan, and on the following morning (Monday) there was a celebration of Holy Communion.

At the beginning of 1894 the Reverend Vernon was also helping with services at Clocolan, and by the November of the same year he had agreed to take the twice monthly services at the Grove on a regular basis. Those at Mr. Vincent's store and at Mr. Coleman's were still being supplied from Modderpoort.

The Early Celebrations at the Grove Church on Christmas Morning in 1894 had the largest number of Communicants that had ever been noted in that little Church, and at the Midday Service the building was again full to overflowing. The number of communicants recorded on Christmas Day at the Grove was 33. It should be realised that at that time a large number of churchgoers were not confirmed, or not actually members of the Anglican Church, but still attended the services. Mrs. Vernon had thoughtfully prepared a picnic breakfast under the trees in Mrs. Rudman's garden for all those who had come from a distance. This enabled many who would otherwise have been unable to come to the early service, to do so.

On the feast of the Epiphany (January 6, 1895) the usual Quarterly Celebration for the Omega District was held at Tandjiesberg, in the house of Mr. John Dodd. Other than this there was a service at Tandjiesberg on the second Sunday of each month at 3 p.m. Services at the Clocolan Store were held on January 20th, 21st, and 22nd. The last was for a few Basuto Communicants in the neighbourhood.

On Christmas Day 1898, the Chapel of St. Michael and All Angels was Dedicated on the farm "Keble", owned by the Reverend A.H. Harcourt Vernon. The

Prayer of Dedication immediately preceded the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the service being conducted by the Reverend Harcourt Vernon.

At "Prynnesberg", also in the Clocolan District, although on the Ficksburg side of the town, Mr. Charles Newberry also set out to build a church on his farm. However it was not until 1903 that this chapel was dedicated to St. Saviour, the event being fully described in the "Bloemfontein Post" of July 9, 1903. Father Sanderson from Modderpoort conducted the service, at which were also present the Rector of Ficksburg, Father Kelly, Provincial Superior of the S.S.M., and the Reverend L.W. Olive, the Priest-in-Charge.

The "Quarterly Papers" of October 1903 gave the following extract from the "Bloemfontein Post".

"The Reverend Father Kelly gave a very practical and thoughtful Sermon, and the Service was of a hearty character throughout, though unfortunately the organ, a fine instrument, and most effectively played by Mr. Sam Barratt, met with an accident during the Office, so that it did not finish with the "Hallelujah Chorus" as had been intended." ...

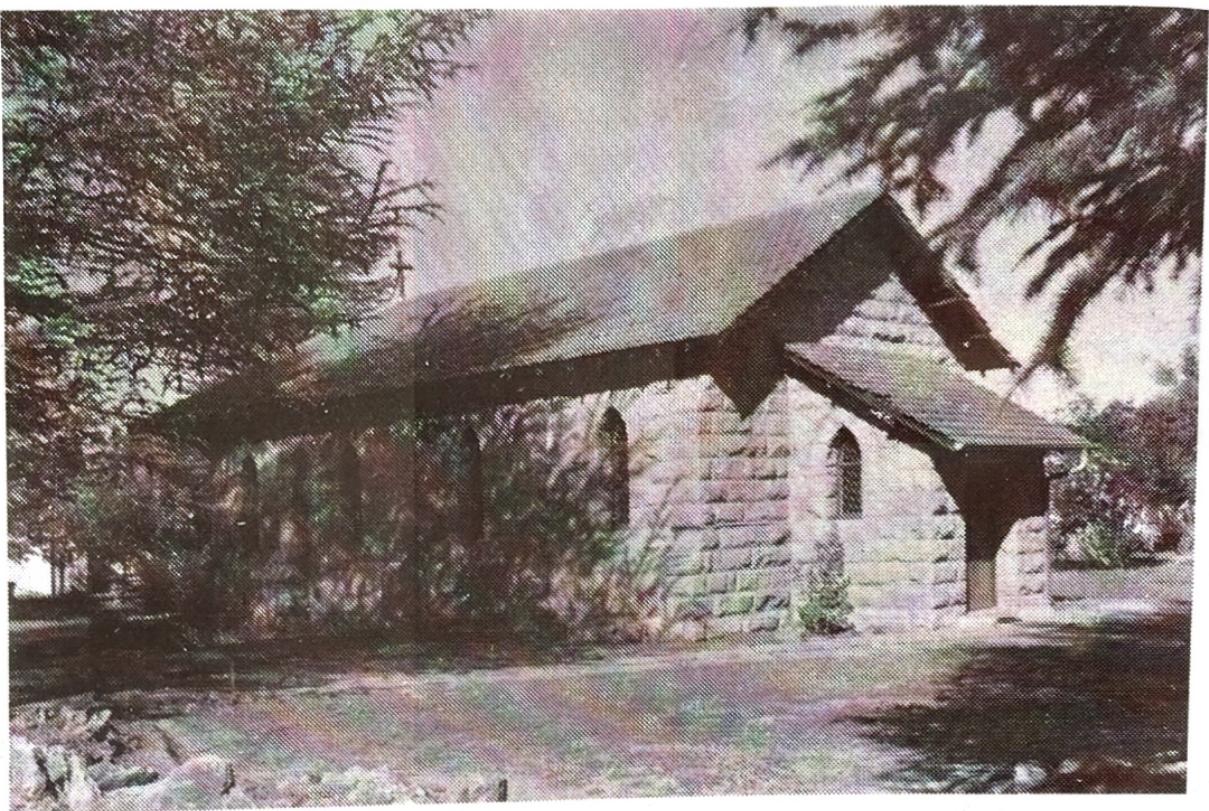
On September 7, 1904, another church on the farm "Prynnesberg", was dedicated to St. Andrew. This church was built by Mr. Charles Newberry for the use of the labourers from the surrounding area.

Both these churches are still in good condition, although the services at St. Saviour's have not been held on a regular basis since about 1985, only the occasional wedding or funeral now take place there. The folk from Gumtree all remember the services held at St. Saviour's, usually followed by a tea at the house afterwards.

Services at St. Andrew's have been continued to the present day, the church being now an out-station of the Church of the Holy Redeemer, Clocolan. To begin with, however, it was in the charge of Father Sanderson of Modderpoort.

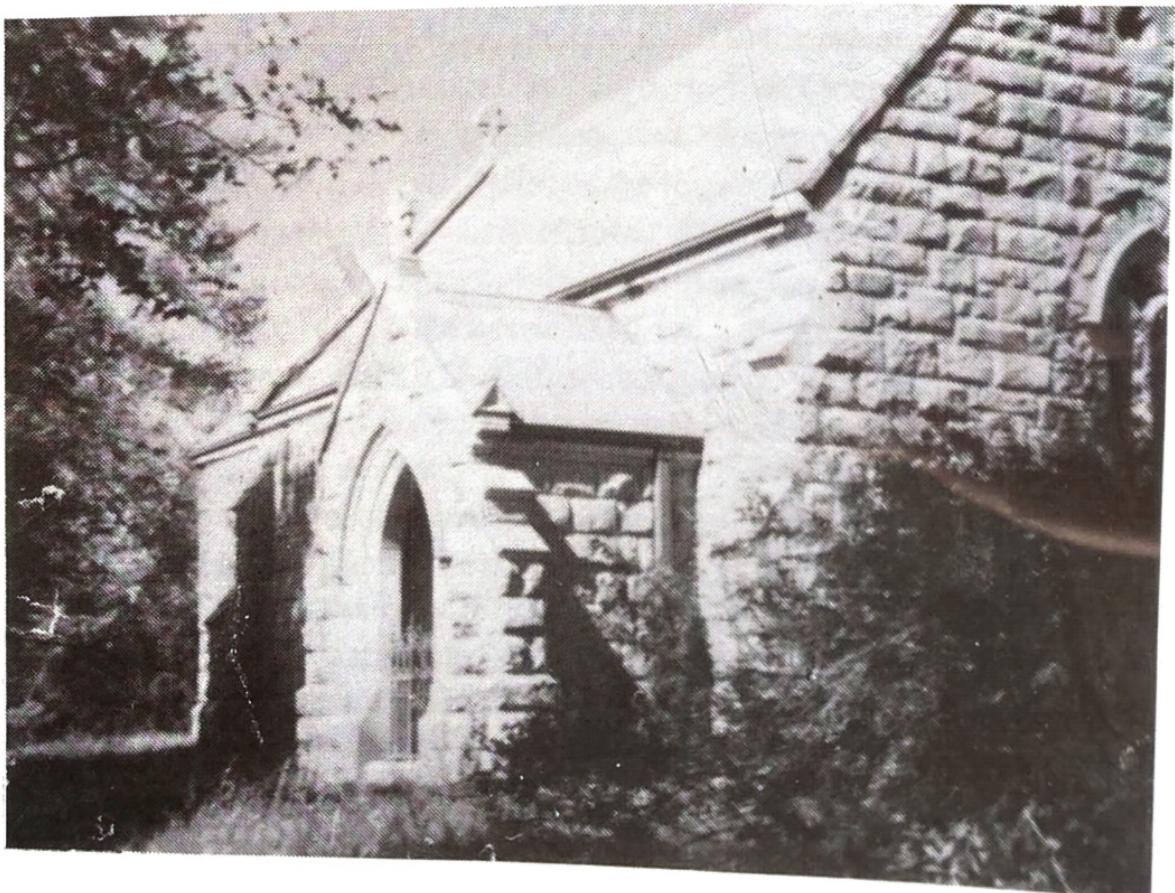
Meanwhile the Boer War had affected the lives of those in Clocolan as well. In 1901 the Quarterly Papers for January reported that Mr. Stockdale, (a brother of Sister Henrietta) who had been living quietly on his farm, was now a prisoner of the Boers for the fourth time. In 1900 the Reverend Harcourt Vernon had been threatened with being commandeered in person for the front, but subsequently only his goods were commandeered. The Reverend and Mrs. Vernon, as we will note in the next chapter, were very much affected by the war.

Following the advent of the railway line to the area, the town of Clocolan had moved to its present position, and in 1906 the "Clocolan Town Council" granted an erf to the church. In 1911 the Vestry of the Grove Church recorded a proposal by Mr. Stockdale that a committee be appointed to interview the Clocolan Town Council, with the object of having the grant of ground for a church and cemetery transferred to the Church's Finance Board. It was also proposed to put up a fence. Mr. Vernon and Mr.



Saint George's Church, Clocolan

Saint Savior's Church, Prynnesburg



Mardon were elected to have this carried out.

In 1913 the members of Vestry were considering the question of building a church at Clocolan. Initial plans for the church building appeared to be too costly and another architect was proposed, but who the architects were it is not possible to determine from the Vestry Minutes. It has been suggested that the church as it stands was designed by Sir Herbert Baker, and that the builder was a Mr. Rhode.

There is no foundation stone on the church but on June 3, 1917 the Vestry meeting were still discussing "the proposed Church", while the Annual Vestry Meeting on Easter Day, March 31, 1918, was held in St. George's Church, Clocolan. So it would appear that St. George's Church was built in late 1917 or early 1918.

Another Church built in the Clocolan District which must not be forgotten is that at "Flora", a farm bought by Herbert Nicholson. His wife was Agnes, neé Barry, a granddaughter of Bishop Merriman. Soon after their arrival on the farm she started a Sunday School for the Black children, and begged the Modderpoort Fathers, by now the Society of the Sacred Mission, to open up work at Flora. By January 1912 there was a school and teacher there, and services were conducted fairly regularly.

A church was built, rather on the lines of a big hut, and services were conducted at Flora in the morning, then the priest would go on for an evening English service in Marquard. After this the priest would probably return to Flora for the night.

In Marquard itself services were held in the Town Hall and in the Court House. It was planned that the Anglicans would build a church on the sites given to them in Marquard, but as the Methodists started to build before the Anglicans' plans came to fruition, the Anglicans decided it would be better to pay an annual rent to use the Methodist Church.

The new church at Flora was built by Father Cyprian Thorpe of Modderpoort. This Church, dedicated to St. Francis, was consecrated and licensed by Bishop Arthur Howe-Browne on August 7, 1938. The priest to whose care it was licensed was Fr. Norman Taylor.

The story is told that on the day before the consecration, the Altar Stone was dropped and broken. Cyprian Thorpe was in tears, after preparing everything up to this point for the Consecration. He sent a message down to Gordon Nicholson telling of the calamity, and asking "What shall we do now". Back came Gordon's reply, "Cut another one." So they did, working right through till just before the Consecration Service was due to begin. Bishop Howe-Browne arrived early and, as was the case when he was hungry, was most irritable at any delay. However, the church service duly took place.

Back at St. George's in 1919, it was proposed that a "suitable tablet" be erected

in the church in memory of those members of the congregation who had fallen in the European War. A design by Miss C. Stockdale was accepted in September 1920. In 1921 it was proposed that a mounting of "Verdite" be used, if obtainable. Otherwise that local men be approached with a view to getting it mounted in Burmese Teak.

The War Memorial was dedicated by Bishop Carey on Sunday April 2, 1922. On this day there was an early service at which the church was full and the Bishop gave quite a long address. Then at 10.30 there was the Confirmation Service, at which there was another address, then at 11.15 the dedication with another address. Finally Mattins and Sermon, finishing at 1 o'clock. I wonder how many parishioners would be able to stay the course today ?

During the singing of one hymn during the services, "the Bishop came to the steps and said, 'My dear friends, you are simply spoiling a beautiful hymn because you have no time, so I shall conduct you,' which he did and the hymn went much better!"

The Grove Church continued to be used for services up until about 1925, when in September of that year a meeting was held to decide on the disposal of the Grove furniture. Four seats were to go to Clocolan, the balance to Ficksburg. The organ was to be handed to Mr. A. Rudman for safe keeping.

In Clocolan the ladies were busy behind the scenes right from the beginning, and in our earliest records of the Vestry Minutes of the Grove Church we find recorded the thanks of the Vestry being expressed towards Mrs. F. Rudman and Miss Alice Rudman for their care of the church and organ playing.

The ladies of Clocolan did not at first seem aware, or did not make use of, their right to attend Vestry Meetings, as legislated at the 1914 Synod. Then in 1920, it was recorded that a few ladies had been present at a special meeting called to discuss the memorial fund. At this time it was Mrs. Clowes who was playing the organ and Mrs. Sturgess who was giving her attention to the church and flowers.

In 1921 there were no ladies present at the Vestry Meeting but in 1922 Mrs. Clowes was present, with no comments in the minutes regarding this event, while at the 1923 Vestry Meeting Mesdames E.; A.; and F. Rudman and Mrs. Clowes were present.

When it came to thanking the ladies at the Vestry Meeting of 1934, Mrs. Stockdale, Mrs. F. Rudman, Mrs. Higgs, and Mrs. Clowes names were noted, and the minutes record, "Speaking to the motion Canon Vernon warmly eulogised the ladies for their splendid services to the church." These sentiments were those of all members and we find, in 1935, the ladies being thanked for items such as repairs to books, Sunday School Services and a successful bazaar, showing that the ladies well deserved the "eulogy".

In March 1938 it was proposed to form a "Band of Church Workers", but no

mention is made as to whether this was to be formed of men and women or only ladies. Mrs. Hermanson is recorded as being elected secretary. However, no further mention is made of this body in later minutes.

Various additions in the way of furnishings were made to the St. George's Church over the years. In 1922 enquiries were made regarding a suitable font; and in 1928 Canon Vernon gave the church Bell from Keble to St. George's. In 1935 Mrs. Granville Vernon was thanked for the carpet; and in 1938 it was proposed to install electric light to replace the petrol lamps.

In 1932 the Wesleyans requested permission to hold their Sunday School in St. George's on the 2nd, 4th, and 5th Sunday, and this permission was granted.

During August 1940 the electric organ given to the church by Mrs. G.H. Vernon was installed and was played for the Services on the 3rd Sunday of the month by Mrs. Blau, who had taken on the duties of organist. At the dedication of the organ the Rector, the Reverend Findlay said that the organ was a gift to the church by a member of the congregation in memory of a sincere lover of music.

The matter of church heating was investigated in 1948, but it was 1966 before two heaters were installed, thanks to the Ladies Guild. These heaters, each two foot in length cost R54 and an additional R40 to install.

Interestingly enough, a proposal by Mr. H. W. Stockdale in 1950, to the effect that the meeting should consider sending women as delegates to Synod resulted in some discussion but the proposal was defeated on a show of hands.

The ladies in Clocolan must have been very proud of the amount raised at their bazaar in 1951/52. This amounted to 177 pounds 12 shillings and 7 pence. In the same year the All Saints Ladies Guild netted 128 pounds and 5 pence.

At the Vestry Meeting on April 15, 1956, Mrs. Deane suggested the formation of a Ladies Guild and the following ladies were "nominated" to proceed with this: Mrs. Deane, Mrs. Harcourt Vernon, Mrs. Fred Rudman, Mrs. John Stockdale, Mrs. Van Blerck, Mrs. Matt Heyns, and Mrs. Andrew Heyns.

At the 1957 Vestry Mrs. Webb spoke briefly on the functions of the Women's Guild and appealed to the ladies to make it work. As the first Annual General Meeting of the Guild was held on August 8, 1958, it would appear that it took about a year to really get it going. The Chairwoman for the first year and a half was Mrs. Matt (Marie) Heyns, but then her death after 10 days in hospital resulted in Mrs. Pietersen (as Vice Chairlady) taking over for the rest of the year after which Mrs. Alice Donovan was elected to the Chair.

Right from the start this Guild was very active, raising funds through jumble sales and morning markets. A Christmas treat for children in the Location was organised

at which nearly 300 children were given sweets, cool drinks, buns, plus a 6d, and the children sang Carols. A nativity play was organised at Prynnesberg and the collection received was given to be used for the purchase of new Prayer and Hymn Books.

Meetings during the year varied between instructive and knitting and tea parties. In December 1959 the Guild were able to send a maternity parcel to St. Monica's in Cape Town, and also decided to work for the Case Committee of the Child Welfare in Bloemfontein which catered for poor women who were not able to provide clothing for their new-born babies. The annual maternity parcel to St. Monica's was kept up until 1965, when St. Monica's closed.

Jumble-sale followed bring-and-buy, and in turn followed by catering of refreshments at farm sales, and the money raised was used for such deserving causes as Cripple Care, St. Peter's, Grahamstown, and Cotlands in Johannesburg. Of course the Guild was also giving attention to St. George's, - a piece of carpeting was given for the church floor near the organ and a white surplice was made for the minister. In addition tea, sugar, milk and cakes were given to the Location Church to help entertain the Bishop on his visit there.

In 1961 the Guild took the St. Cross Orphanage in Maritzburg as their main concern, and this included taking an interest in a 12 year old girl at the orphanage, named Mollie Nel. Two of the Guild members wrote to her every month, and the Guild sent her a birthday present and birthday cards. In July 1962 the Guild organised a holiday for her in Cloolan.

The Guild continued their work for the Church and in 1962 paid for the installation of water in the church grounds, and as Church funds were in arrears with the Diocesan Assessment, the Guild contributed to this in 1963. A new Alb was also provided as the old one was showing signs of wear. The Guild continued to donate to their customary charities, as well as keep a watch out for other instances to whom they could show their generosity. As an example of this, the Guild made a donation to the Mayoress' fund to buy an incubator for the local maternity home.

When Mollie Nel left St. Cross to go to school at the George Hofmeyer school in Standerton, the Guild kept up their interest in her, sending her Christmas, birthday and Easter gifts, as well as writing to her. This was continued to 1968 when it was decided that, as Mollie was now about 19 years old, the Guild would discontinue their gifts to her.

The Guild took on the project of heating for the church, and the installation of the heaters was completed in 1966, all paid for by the Guild.

In 1967 the Guild organised a service for the "Womens World Day of Prayer at St. George's, inviting the Methodist ladies to join them. This proved very successful.

Also in this year the Guild contributed R200 to the Clergy Pensions Appeal.

An annual "Apron Parade" was organised in conjunction with the ladies from Marquard for a number of years. The aprons being donated to the bring-and-buy sale after the parade.

In 1969 the Guild affiliated with the Anglican Women's Fellowship, a relationship they have maintained ever since.

Many of the names mentioned in the minutes are still remembered today, in fact it is surprising how many are still members of this small Guild. Among those mentioned as committee members over the years were Alice O'Donovan, Bertha Pietersen, Nora Heyns, Pi Stockdale, Daphne Newberry, Marthie Guiney, and Alice Kruger.

In 1961 a new Credence Table was suggested as a memorial to the late Mrs. Macaskill, as a legacy of R200 had been received from her, and in 1965 a further proposal was carried, "that the money be spent on a new Credence Table, a Rector's Chair, and new Altar Rails more in keeping with the Reredos." The Credence Table and Rector's Chair were ready by 1967.

The late Mrs. Thatcher had left the church R200 and it was proposed that the fence around the church grounds be renewed. On further discussion a low stone wall with pillars and a metal chain between the pillars was suggested. Some stone was cut at "Victory" but the stone cutter "disappeared" and things had come to a standstill by February 1969. However, at the Vestry meeting on February 15, 1970, Father Shepperson thanked all those who had helped with the erection of the walls and chains. The Chairman and Board of Ficksburg Co-operative were thanked for the stones. The remainder of the legacy was to be used to build a gate.

For many years the St. George's Ladies' Guild met at the house of Mrs. Edna Allwright until she moved to Ficksburg in 1982. The guild continued to work quietly in the background although at one stage there were only four members. Apart from continuing to pay the cleaning maid and arranging for the grass to be cut and a gardener to look after the gardens, they knitted squares and strips for blankets which were then donated to various organisations for the needy. Indeed, what strikes one very forcibly when reading through the minutes of their meetings is their dedication to working for the church and charities. Practically every meeting made mention of a donation for something relating to the church or to something done for a charitable organisation.

Another feature of the Guild meetings which has continued through the years is a "mystery parcel", which was donated by members in turn. Then the lucky member who drew the right ticket at the end of the meeting received the parcel.

Growing seedlings and selling them was another project for raising church funds which was continued for a number of years.

In 1977 it was proposed that the property adjoining the church erf be sold but after much discussion it was decided not to sell the property but to lease it instead. Then various parishioners felt there was a need for a church hall to serve as a central meeting place in town rather than on the farms. Mr. Ronnie Rudman planted crops on the vacant lot in order to pay the rent and this, together with "tea money", had resulted in an accumulation of funds. With this a special account was opened with the Diocesan Trust Board for a Hall Fund. Although it was proposed that plans for a hall be drawn up, no further action was taken in this regard.

At the beginning of the 1980's the singing of the "Amen" at the end of a hymn was debated and the rule was laid down by the Rector that if the hymn contained a "gloria" the Amen was to be sung but not otherwise.

For many years Mrs. Lorna Grovè played the organ at St. George's Church even after she moved to Ficksburg. Everyone was sad when in the 1980's she decided she no longer continue to play at St. George's and soon after this she moved to Pietermaritzburg.

Bible Study and Discussions were not neglected in Clocolan, and a group has met almost continuously up to the present.

In 1987 Passover Suppers were organised in Clocolan as well as in Ficksburg and Gumtree. The one in Clocolan was held at the farm "Lovedale", the home of AnnaMarie and Llewelyn Rudman, on the 9th of April, and on that evening "the heavens opened and it did rain". The road to Lovedale was like a river at the best parts and impassable for the rest. Mr. Llewelyn Rudman, barefoot and with the rain pouring down his neck, met the cars at the bottom of the hill and led them through the veld. All the cars got through and everyone enjoyed a warming "Sherry" before the Passover Supper began in earnest. Going home was easier as it was downhill and one had simply to keep the nose of the car pointed in the right direction.

Extensive repairs to St. George's Church were now necessary and these were carried out over the next few years, culminating in an all-out effort in 1990 when a sink was purchased by the ladies and installed in the vestry, electrical repairs were carried out, a new ceiling above the sanctuary was put in, new carpets were laid, and work commenced on the repair of the windows which had been vandalised.

A service was held out at the site of the old "Grove Church" as part of the All Saints' Centenary Celebrations in 1991, while in May of the same year the Guild met at "Libertas", the home of Peter and Patience Charleton-Perkins. Dr. Charleton-Perkins and his wife had been depressed by staff problems on the farm and the Rector offered to conduct a "Blessing of the Home" service at the farm. Instead of a regular meeting of the Guild they joined with the Rector in the service. The labour staff joined the group

in the gardens for prayers and the group then moved into the various rooms of the home and from there to the surgery. This was a most impressive and moving service which could be used more often to bless the homes of the parishioners.