

CHAPTER 12

A long ministry, Rev. George Hobson (1917 - 1945)

There then followed one of the longer ministries at Great Chishill when Rev. George Hobson (Jnr.) was inducted in 1917, for he remained its minister for the next 28 years until he left in 1945 to become secretary of the Cambridgeshire Congregational Union.

He was the son of a Congregational minister, Rev. George Hobson (Snr.), and was born at Camberwell in 1878. At the age of 8 years he had his legs in irons for a time, but despite this was a keen and skilful games player, being a useful slow bowler for the Great Chishill cricket team until the age of 60. When Mr. Hobson captained the cricket team, there was no swearing in the dressing-room. He was adept as well at croquet and billiards.

A very friendly, dapper man, Mr. Hobson was popular in both villages and would regularly help the smallholders at harvest-time. He was not noted for his preaching ability but rather for his fast motorbike, the sight of which scared his congregations. During the Second World War he served as an A.R.P. Warden, with the manse becoming the local headquarters.

A change in the very early part of Mr. Hobson's ministry saw the introduction in January 1918 of the hymnbook 'Congregational Hymnary'.

The early part of the Second World War (until 1941) saw the use of the schoolroom by children evacuated from London.

At a later stage in the war, the 250th anniversary of the church was celebrated by a special Service on 25th May 1944. The event was somewhat muted owing to war-time conditions, but a sandwich supper was

provided. A week later, the corresponding anniversary was celebrated at Melbourn Church, which a party from Great Chishill attended.

A further celebration occurred on 20th May 1954 when the Diamond Jubilee of the present building was observed. As part of the proceedings, a church history was written by Mrs.E.Oyston and offered for sale.

Mr. Hobson's first wife (Ethel Mary Gowlett) was the daughter of a farmer who was a member of his father's church at High Easter. She was a gentle person, as evident from the inscription on her tombstone in the graveyard 'She smiled on us and we believed in God'. She was consumptive, and the conservatory at the rear of the manse was built for her relaxation, but she died relatively young in February 1929.

Mr. Hobson's second wife (Gladys Mary Wilkerson), the youngest daughter of the local Squire, was church secretary, treasurer, and leader of the Women's Meeting, but she resigned as secretary on marrying the minister. She died in 1956 and is also buried in the graveyard. There were no children to either marriage.

Mr. Hobson was described as a 'most unassuming and friendly person, with shrewd and generous judgment and a serene spirit'. He was popular with other ministers, who frequently visited him. His only other pastorate was at Knaresborough, Yorkshire. He died on 27th September 1963, at the age of 84 years, and is buried in the graveyard.