

Stanley Collingwood

By the mid 1970s Stanley had already put in a quarter of a century of devoted service to Chiswick Parish Church (CPC) as church warden. From the moment he first looked out from the balcony of his and Rhoda's flat in Edensor Gardens across to the tower of St Nicholas in the distance, the bond between him and his parish church was sealed. He gave his time and his skills unstintingly to the church through the years and in so many ways. In him was lodged all the knowledge of the history of CPC and how it functioned. By 1976 he was ready to hand on the job of churchwarden.

For reasons best known to himself Fr Patrick Tuft asked me to succeed Stanley as vicar's warden (in those days it was still the custom for the vicar to appoint one warden and for the parishioners to vote for the other). I hadn't the least idea what was involved and was hopeless at dealing with buildings (rather an important part of being a churchwarden, I discovered) but as I had an excellent baby-sitting arrangement with neighbours for our three children under 6 and my husband was out at work in the evenings, I thought I'd give it a go. And so it was that Stanley found himself instructing a complete novice in the duties and history of the ancient office of churchwarden. The care and willingness with which he impressed on me what my responsibilities would be and his generous support thereafter were demonstrations of the qualities of the man.

Stanley never, as far as I or anyone could see, wavered in his unquestioning love of God, sense of purpose or his respect for the offices of God's family, the Church. Although he was thoroughly steeped in the history of CPC he didn't pressure others into being so too but offered his knowledge modestly and ungrudgingly when it was needed. His interventions at PCC meetings were unfailingly valuable, well timed and to the point.

Others will no doubt write about his family, his legal work, his physical energy, the swimming at Chiswick's open air pool and his tennis playing, and also about the hospitality he and Rhoda afforded to so many, especially to curates at CPC. What I particularly encountered were his kindness and the way he welcomed new people into the St Nicholas Family. And his patience ! Our fourth child, Matcus, was just one in a long line of 'boat children' trained by Stanley, our MC; he somehow managed to instil pride and confidence in every child who came to him and didn't seem to mind, in Marcus's case, the presence beside him of an extremely wriggly five year old !

For me the memory of Stanley will always inspire me. I shall be strengthened by his deep faith, his constancy, his belief that parish structures do matter and by his kindness. Thank you Stanley.

Christabel Ames-Lewis