

Yesterday's Church—Today's Faith

Testimony of Mary Fermor

(1895-1993)



**Deal Pentecostal Church
69 Mill Hill, Deal, Kent. CT14 9EW**

Mary Fermor was Paul's Grandmother



On June 1895 I was born in the Sussex village of Crowborough. My parents brought me to Forest Fold Baptist Chapel in my infancy where I have attended all my life. I can say with the poet

*I love her gates, I love the road
The Church adorned with grace
Stands like a palace built for God
To show His milder face.*

*My soul shall pray for Zion still
While life or breath remains
There my best friends, my kindred dwell
There God my Saviour reigns.*

There was always a good congregation of all ages from babies to elderly people. Inside the Chapel there were two aisles with long seats in the middle. Most of these were divided to make some short and some longer. There were short seats each side and a Tortoise Stove halfway up each side of the Chapel. The front side seats were facing the Pulpit the other way. Each family had their own seat with their name on the end of the book rest and every year they paid a small seat rent. Mr E. Littleton was the Pastor. Mr Chambers says in his book of Chapels of Sussex, that the Chapel was reconstructed in 1897 and there is a picture of the entrance to it, with a large iron gate and a small wooden one. These were removed when cars began to arrive. The Chapel was sometimes called *'The Two Chimney Chapel'*.

At the back of the Chapel there was the Minister's Vestry and also the Vestry where tea made for those who stayed to dinner. The kettles were boiled on an open fireplace and also water boiled in a copper at the back of the Chapel in the Coach House. The water was taken from a tank outside, which caught the rainwater. Inside the tank was a layer of charcoal and the water running through this was purified as it was drawn off by a tap at the bottom. As you may guess the tea had a taste of its own.

At the back of the Chapel were stables with a Schoolroom over. A few people came in a horse and trap, but most had to walk to Chapel, some from long distances. Because the Sunday School was held between the morning and afternoon Services and the long distance to walk, many brought their dinner and stayed the whole day. There was always a good congregation of all ages, from babies to elderly people. The Sunday School was well attended. The Summer Treat, (as we called it then) was held in the field above the Chapel. There were swings, games for all ages and races for each Class. Then tea in the Sunday School, and last of all, a bran tub with a present for all the children.

The winter treat was much the same as now with singing, recitations and a dialogue for two or three girls composed by Mr E. Littleton Jnr. Then a short address followed by the prize-giving. I can well remember my two youngest brothers, when very small, reciting the hymn on the platform together.

*I'm not too young for God to see
He knows my name and nature too
And all day long He looks at me
And sees my actions through and through.*

(Cliftons Hymnal)

I can also remember taking part in the dialogue.

Later on, in 1905 a Chapel was built in Crowborough Cross, which we called the Branch Chapel. Services were held there on Sunday evenings and Wednesday evenings and these were well attended.

There was also a small building at Motts Mill where services were held on Sunday evening and Tuesday evenings. The Sunday evening Service being taken by Mr. C. Turner who had been sent out by the Church to preach. About that time there were 4 men called to the ministry and sent out by the Church at Forest Fold. Mr. C. Turner, Mr. Webb, Mr. J. Pratt and Mr. W. Groombridge.

When I was 10½ years old my father was taken very ill suddenly. I can remember walking along the lanes up to the Chapel to let the Pastor (Mr Littleton) know about it and I am sure that I prayed in my small way. During the Service next Sunday I was feeling very anxious and wondering whatever we would do if my father died. We had a small general shop at the time and I was the eldest of 5 children, the youngest being just 2 weeks old. A line of one the hymns we were singing went like this: "*I will not leave you comfortless*". It was just as if God had spoken that to me. I felt comforted and knew that whatever happened God would be with us and help us. This promise has been fulfilled all my lifetime (my father recovered and lived another 45 years!)

In July 1908 Mr Littleton had been Pastor for 40 years and after the afternoon service there was a short meeting, when he was presented with a purse of money from the Church and Congregation and another purse with contributions from the children in the Sunday School. The deacons each spoke a few words, saying that this was done to express their love and union to him. His ministry had been blessed to many and it was felt '*The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.*' The hope and prayer was that the Lords' blessing would continue to rest upon them as a Church and people.

1910 was a year of rejoicing and encouragement to the Pastor and the Church. On the first Sunday in October 10 people were baptized and on the first Sunday in the next month 3 more were baptized. These were mostly young people (5 couples who

were married a few years later). I wished I was one with them, but I felt I had nothing to tell the Church. I felt I was a sinner and needed a Saviour and I longed to know my sins were forgiven.

Hymn 283 was suitable to my case at that time.

*Tis a point I long to know
Oft it causes anxious thought
Do I love the Lord or no
Am I His or am I not.*

But I could pray the 8th verse

*Lord, decide the doubtful case
Thou, who art Thy peoples sun
Shine upon the work of grace
If indeed it is begun.*

Soon after this I went to an Anniversary Service at Jarvis Brook and the Minister's text was Psalm 37:5 '*Commit thy way unto the Lord. Trust also in Him and He will bring it to pass*'. This was a great encouragement to me.

I always remembered Mr. Littleton telling us about when he was called by grace. How he felt his endeavours to do better and walk aright seemed fruitless and when he was coming downstairs once, this verse came to him.

*The more I strove against sin's power
I sinned and stumbled but the more
Till late I heard my Saviour say
Come hither soul, I am the Way.*

I loved Mr. Littleton and his ministry was a great help and blessing to me.

In 1914 the first World War started and gradually nearly all the young men from Forest Fold were called up for Service. Some lost their lives (I think it was three). One was my brother John (19 years) who was killed in France. In his last letter to us, which we received after the news of his death, he wrote;

I had to stand a long time by a dead man, before they came for him, and the tears rolled down my cheeks as I prayed to God to forgive all my sins... I often long to be sitting in the dear old Sunday School and Chapel on Sundays instead of sitting amid the roar of the guns.

In 1919 Mr. Littleton began to get rather feeble and shaky. When we were married in the October, Mr. Littleton Junior took the marriage Service and the Pastor gave the address. My husband was a life attendant at Forest Fold and in one of the books he received from the Sunday School it says '*Special Prize for not having missed once, morning and afternoon for 8 years*' and in another special one '*Always early*'.

On July 24th 1918 Mr Evans came to preach and Mr Littleton was presented with a purse of money and a Testimonial engraved and framed, as he completed 50 years as a Pastor at Forest Fold on 5th July. He continued to preach until towards the end of 1919. He passed away peacefully on December 29th 1929 aged 90 years. The funeral was attended by a very large congregation. He was much esteemed and loved, not only by his own people, but by many in the Causes where he used to go to preach.

After this we had Mr E. Littleton Junior and supplies to preach until Mr S. Delves was asked to take the Pastorate on 1st January 1924. He was married at the Easter time and then came to live at Chapel House. In the meantime, as there were no

buses one Sundays, several of us took turns to accommodate him on Saturday nights.

At the Branch Chapel one evening in January 1925 Mr Delves' text was 1Peter 4:1 'Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.'

I couldn't get this text out of my mind, although I had no special trial at that time. It was a very bad winter with colds and flu and pneumonia. A few weeks later I was taken ill with pneumonia suddenly. My mother and father lived next door and they took the children (Mollie 4 years and Doris 8 months) and I had a night nurse. I knew I was very ill and although I had a good hope that I was born again and that Jesus had died for me, I did beg the Lord to give me assurance of this. He answered my prayers and I seemed to have a sight of Jesus suffering for my sins. Words cannot express the love and joy and peace which came into my soul. The peace of God which passes all understanding. I felt I could leave everything in Gods' hands, and that hymn was so sweet to me.

*How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believers ear
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds
And drives away his fears.*

It drove all my fears away and I could say

*My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.*

When my husband asked me what he should read to me, I chose John 14. When I recovered, I went to stay with my Aunt at Eastbourne but my husband had to come for me earlier than we arranged as my Mother and Father had heavy colds. Then at Easter I had to call the Doctor in for the children. He heard me coughing and sent me to bed for a few days which meant that I could not go to the wedding of John and Nellie (John was my husband's brother). When I was better, I asked to see Mr. Delves and they asked me and the children to tea on the Monday. My husband came to meet us after. Mr Delves spoke to him but he couldn't say anything then. However, about three days after, he said to me, 'I must go and see Mr. Delves tonight'. So after all, we came before the Church at the same time and were both baptized on the first Sunday in June 1925.

Mary Fermor died in August 1993 leaving 3 children, 16 Grandchildren and 38 Great-grandchildren.



Mrs M. Fermor

Mrs M. Fermor (Crowborough)

Mary Fermor, who died recently at her home in Crowborough, was born in 1895 at Mardens Hill where her parents ran a general store and coal business. She attended St John's School until starting work as a dressmaker in Jarvis Brook. Her interest in dressmaking and needlework continued all her life.

During the first world war, in which her brother John was killed, she worked in a soldiers' comforts and general store at the entrance to Warren Camp.

She later worked in the St John's Post Office, Greenyers stores and Post Office in London Road and at Barclays Bank. For 25 years from 1936, Mrs Fermor was the local deputy registrar of births, deaths and marriages.

In 1919 she married Alfred Fermor, who died in 1968, and they had two daughters and a son.

As a baby she attended Forest Fold Chapel with her parents and worshipped there all her life, being a member for 68 years. From the age of 14 for 35 years she played the organ and she was also a Sunday School teacher for many years.

In 1948 she started handicraft classes for children and young people attending the chapel. The classes continue at the present time and her active participation until a few years ago resulted in her being affectionately known as Grandma to many generations of children attending the chapel.

More than 70 years ago she was a founder member of the Crowborough Auxiliary of the Aged Pilgrims Friend Society and Treasurer until 1978.

Mrs Fermor was very close to all her family and had 16 grandchildren and 38 great grandchildren.

At her funeral, conducted by Pastor Peter Rowell, she was carried by all of her 10 grandsons, four before the service and six to the graveyard at the rear of the chapel.

THE CROWBOROUGH AUXILIARY

Over 75 years ago a Sale of Work was held in a building adjoining the Sub-Post Office at Crowborough Town (St Johns), Crowborough. The proceeds were sent to the Horley Auxiliary where the organiser of the Sale, Mrs Stapley, had contacts. One of the helpers at the time was Miss Mary Taylor, who later married to become Mrs Mary Fermor, who lived close by. The Sale of Work became an annual event and the Crowborough Auxiliary was soon formed, Mrs Fermor being a founder member and looked after the Sale's cake stall.

Just after the Second World War Mrs Fermor with her husband, started handicraft classes in their home for the young people of Forest Fold Chapel. Other friends soon joined in to help. The object was three-fold; to teach young people to use their abilities in a practical way, to provide opportunity and encouragement for them to meet in the week, and to guide them in Christian service for the benefit of others.

The Crowborough Auxiliary welcomed the opportunity to have handicrafts at their Sale, and a very varied stall enhanced the annual event for some 40 years. Mrs Fermor continued as stall holder until, at the age of 94 a serious road accident restricted her mobility. She continued to attend and retain her interest in the sales, held each year in November.



An old photograph, date unknown. Mrs Fermor is second from the left.

Many of the current members of the Crowborough Committee, stall holders and helpers have been associated with "Handicrafts".

Mrs Fermor was Secretary and Treasurer to the Auxiliary from 1963 until handing over to Mr John Burch (now Executive Vice-Chairman of the Society) in 1978.

In August 1993 Mrs Fermor was called home at the age of 98. her death marked the end of an era and her long service, perseverance and interest in the Society has been an outstanding example to all who knew her.

Mrs Fermor was buried in the graveyard at Forest Fold Chapel. She had attended the Chapel all her life, and was an active member for 68 years. Her funeral service was conducted by Pastor Peter Rowell; all of her 10 grandsons shared in carrying her coffin before and after the service.





Family Day X

MOST WEDDINGS are family occasions, with brothers and sisters on both sides all playing their part in the ceremony. But last week's wedding between Mr Richard Denis Upton of **LOWER DICKER** and Miss Lois Ann Fermor of Pilmer Road, **CROWBOROUGH**, must surely break all records for family participation.

The wedding ceremony, at **FOREST FOLD**—Baptist Chapel, was conducted by the bride's brother Paul, and the reading was given by her eldest brother Philip. Three more brothers, Stephen, Simon and Marcus, were ushers, while brother James was best man.

Her sisters Rebecca and Deborah were among the bridesmaids, together with her brother Simon's fiancée Carolyn Burch. Her youngest brother Timothy was page boy and her father, Mr S. J. Fermor, gave her away.

Mrs Mary Fermor, the bride's grandmother, was registrar and the official wedding photographs were taken by her cousin, Mr David Bishop.

On the bridegroom's side of the family were two more bridesmaids, his sisters Shirley and Janice Upton.