

# All Saints Church, Great Ayton



## LIFE STORY OF A GREAT AYTON BOY

# Maurice Hodgson

Born April 1899 - Died February 1997

## Foreword

All Saints Church occupies a special place in our village. It was built at a time before the divisions came in Christendom that separate us now. Through the centuries it has born witness to the Christian faith and each generation have left their mark on it. In 1876 the Victorians built a new, much larger Parish Church for an expanding village, and walked away from All Saints. For many years it was just left unattended. This was before we valued our heritage as much as we do today.

Then came Maurice Hodgson, a local farmer who loved the old Church. He was for a time Churchwarden at Christ Church, but was also appointed Honorary Custodian of All Saints Church, and for many years he literally maintained it himself. Look around the Church and you may see his initials by a piece of work he did. Because of Maurice, when we finally woke up to what a gem we had in our midst, the Church was in a reasonable state of repair, and others were able to take it forward to help restore it's former glory.

It was my privilege to know Maurice when I became Vicar here in 1993. Advancing age never detered him, for he would still come regularly to worship in the old Church, which was far more friendly to his electric wheelchair than Christ Church! If it was cold, or the sermon long, he would produce a small hip flask for a sip of Whisky to keep him going. He worshipped with us to within weeks of his death. Over the years he had written a diary detailing some of his life and work. It follows, just as it was written, as a tribute to a good, honest, hardworking Christian man. He lived a simple faith, loved his Lord and did his best for his Church. Our thanks to you Maurice.

**Revd Paul Peverell - Vicar**

# The Life Story of a Great Ayton Boy

The following extract was written by Maurice Hodgson, former Churchwarden and Custodian of All Saints Church, who died earlier this year. Maurice wrote as a personal record. We publish it in Spire as an acknowledgement of all he did for our community.

I was born in the Mill House in Mill Street and have lived in Great Ayton all my life.

My father worked at the Whinstone mine as a whinman for some years and then he got a farm just outside the village and of course, me being the oldest boy, I always was with my father from when I could walk. I remember the time when I took my father a drink of tea to the field and stayed till he had finished rolling and I would have a ride home on the roller, which only had a board on the frame. When we got to the staked-yard gate one of the horses made a bolt and I fell in front and was run over but I held on to the tin can so it saved my head. I had no bones broken but I was only 4 years old, but I was cut down the right side of my face and my right eye was injured so I only have the one eye and a bit. I was in bed for weeks and I fed through a tube. When I did get going again I was very weak so did not start school till I was 7 years old but I still got through to X seven which was top class at the Marwood School. From being 13 years I had every Friday afternoon off to help my father on the farm. I left school at 14 and stayed till I was 16 years and as my younger brother had just left school I then went to work for Mr W Marton of Aireyholme Farm who was a friend of my father. My wage was 30/- for the week, which was 6 days.

I have not said about the First World War which was on at this time and all the corn and hay had to be lead up to the Roseberry Mines for the pit ponies. The snow was about 2 foot deep and you got your boots very wet before the day was out, you see there was no wellingtons in those days. The snow lay until the end of March but we had to get turnips out for the sheep every day, no matter what the weather was.

The end of April I had to go to help my grandfather who was in bed about all that winter and he only had an old man so father said I must go to help as the farm was 170 acres with 6 working horses and 18 cows to milk every day and of course they had to be milked by hand. The milk had to be taken to Nunthorpe Station every day, morning and afternoon. Morning train was 6 o'clock so you might know what

time we had to be up in the morning to get the milk away. Every Sunday morning I had to drive the trap to Middlesbrough, with milk, as there was no other transport. I can tell you it was no picnic as the milk had to be at the dairy by 7.30. I had to pay 4d at toll bar gate but I got out without having to pay coming from Middlesbrough.

I stayed with my grandfather for about 4 years as the war was over. A man which had worked for Grandfather before the 1914 war wanted to get back to farming so I went back home as father was not very good for a lot of hard work since he had an accident with lifting 2cwts bales of hay on to the top of the trucks at the station ( when the war was on) so I stayed at home all the time.

Father got worse and had to go to Newcastle hospital for an operation which did not do him much good as he could not get about walking so I had to do the best I could.

Father died in December 1924 at 52nd year of age so you can see I had to get down to the business of buying and selling. My mother got the farm so I managed it for 2 years and as I wanted to get married (1926) she got the farm turned over to me and she went to live in the village.

I had to get down to work seeing I had got the farm. Things were not very good - milk was only 7d winter and 5d per gallon in summer. I sold some potatoes at £1 per ton and had to find the bag so you see what sort of a start I had but I was lucky with the labour. I got a boy which had been on a farm with his grandfather

but the land had all been sold for building, so he wanted to get on to a farm and that same boy stayed with us for 28 years.

In the 1930's the farm had to be sold so I had just got going but had no money to buy a farm but I had a good friend who had known how I worked. The friend was Mr. Kitching of The Grange. So he got me to buy the farm for himself, so I could still stay on, which was very kind of him.

I had a bit of bad luck with a court case about milk prices which I will not dwell on too much but it cost me £45 expenses so after that I went in the village one Easter Sunday Morning with 5 gallons of milk and knocked at doors till I sold the lot and had to go back to the farm for more.

So - that got me retailing milk in the village which 2 1/2d per pint. I was the first retailer to bottle milk in the village and the first to have T.T. milk which helped me along with sales.

I went on retailing for about 10 years but I was having trouble with my health with getting wet in all weathers so the doctor said I should better give it up so I sold my round to Mrs Petch and went into the wholesale business. The milk went to the Co-op at Middlesbrough and was picked up at the gate every morning.

The years rolled on and the Second World War started in 1939. I had an old horse which went lame so I thought I would advertise for a tractor - any condition - so I got one from a threshing contractor at Harrogate. I got it home and my friend and neighbour had some spare parts for a Fordson so we got it going and it was very good to work.

I got my own work done with the tractor and soon I had farmers coming to me to do them some tractor ploughing and ditching so I made a bit of money doing their contract work and thought I would have a new tractor and keep on with contractor work as the war was on now and labour on some farms was poor. So they asked me to do the tractor work for them which I was very

pleased to do as it helped the cost of keeping the farm going in War Time.

We had some bombing just outside the village but no one was hurt so we had to keep going along with things in war time hoping it would not go on too long.

At last it finished and we got back to things as they were before the war started. I bought a bit of land in the village and we got the hay off it for the cattle, but of course we were bothered with the kids doing damage as there were some council houses at the side of this land so I thought I would sell some of it and just keep as much as would build a bungalow which I did the next year. So - if I was taken, my wife would have somewhere to go to but as time rolled on to the 50's and my daughter was getting married and of course would leave the farm, it meant my wife had more work to do, but we carried on until 56 so I thought we would sell up and go the bungalow in the village and I would go and help the friend which lived with us in his young days as he had got more land to the place so could keep more stock and he only had himself so I thought I could give him a little hand.

I have not said anything about my Church which I had always been a Churchman. I was a Church Warden for nearly 20 years but I retired when I was 70.

We have an old 12th Century Church in the village so I had been to look after it on my own but when a new Vicar (Rev Appleyard) came he made me the Custodian. So the years had clocked up to 23 since I started and am still carrying on the good work at 83 years old. So you see I have plenty to keep me busy.

In winter I like to go fox hunting but just in the car when the weather is fine.

As I write we have snow outside which has been with us for 5 weeks and has done a lot of damage to the water cistern and the date is 12th January 1982.

As I have served with 5 Vicars since I started. My Church work is getting too much for me as if I live till April I will be 89 years old and I feel things get too much for me as this Old Church could do with a new Church Roof but it is still water proof yet. I would like it to be done before I die as I don't know anybody who will take it on but since I started as Custodian we have had people from all over the world and of course this is Captain Cook's trail year. We shall be very busy with visitors which helps to add to our bank which we will have to find to pay for the Chancel roof. Our fund to date is about £3,400 but as things cost so much now it will take much of that saving to pay for it to be done. As I write this and put it on tape I thought it may be nice to record and hope for people to hear so I shall now close. February 25th 1988 Maurice Hodgson.

As I am still living I thought it would be nice to put a little more to my story to put it up to date. I am still looking after the Old Church and I got the new roof on it in 1989 so I am happy as I thought it would be looked after I was gone. So I was getting that lame with my legs and getting on to 92 years I would give the Old Church work up. It is now in the hands of the Church Council and I still can give them good advice to look after I have died as we are getting a lot of people to see the Church and the place where the Cook's grave of the family are buried. So I am happy it has been kept in good order up to now. I may put a little bit more if I live longer but you must excuse the writing and spelling as I am getting very bad at writing now .At my 92 years old, the Church Council gave me a lovely Carriage Clock as a parting gift also the Church Council invited me to go with them to a dinner at the Royal Oak Hotel at Ayton which I did enjoy. I am very pleased to tell you that the Old Church is now in good hands. The new vicar had taken such a liking to it as it has the Family pews in the Old Church. So I am very pleased, soon after he came and was so taken with the way I had helped things along. I have not been able to get to the other Church this winter as I have to get down the road with my wheelchair. As I am writing this chapter, snow about 2 feet deep, so I am house bound and thought I would try to put a little more to my story to date. 9th February 1991 As I

look out of the window it is still snowing, as I can feed the birds and my robin, the snow covers the food up making it more work keeping it open. Also the water for the birds to drink. I shall be glad when the snow gets away and spring gets here. The garden has to be dug for the potatoes etc. but I have got a man to dig it and my son-in-law put the plants in for me so - Goodbye- Maurice Hodgson.

As I am still living on into my 93rd year I thought I would put a little more to my story. I had to plant some Captain Cook Rose trees round the Chancel wall on Cook's birthday 27th October 1991 and we had a service in the Church to round off the day and had a full Church so I was very pleased to get down in my wheelchair. It was a nice day, so once more I will say goodbye and God Bless us all.

**Maurice Hodgson.**