



Dry Street Memorial Church and the Allpress Family



Registered Charity No. 1176037

Registered address: The Green Centre, Wat Tyler Country Park, Pitsea Hall Lane, Pitsea, Essex SS16 4UH

History of the Dry Street Missionary

The following is a report on the research carried out by Walter James Searl who was Paster of the Dry Street Memorial Church from 1960 until late 1990s on the birth of the mission in Dry Street:

DRY STREET MEMORIAL CHURCH 1817

The following is extracted from the Methodist Wildness. In 1807 a missionary crossed over from Gravesend to Tilbury and made his way to Leigh, thus establishing the Essex Mission. He preached wherever he could along the Coach Road from London, through Stanford le Hope to Leigh and South End of Prittlewell. In 1813 a Mr. Henry Smith left London and commenced business at South Ockendon and established a Methodist Service in a cottage in Baker Street. Four years later he built a chapel there called Ebenezer – which cost £300. It became the rallying place for Methodist of many villages – Ockendon, Grays, Horndon, East and West Tilbury Stanford and DRY STREET. The families worshipping at Ebenezer used to take provisions for the day, eating together in Love Feast fashion. They would travel home together as far as possible, singing and praying together at parting.

In Dry Street, Langdon Hills Mr. Wigglesworth – a farmer of positions and influence, a staunch Methodist and local preacher – who had been turned out of his farm in Yorkshire for holding Services in his house – opened his doors to Methodist preachers at DRY STREET FARM, the first service at the farm was held on 4 November 1834. John P Haswell, Superintendent of Southwark Circuit was the preacher. He was the first of a long succession of famous men who have preached in the room to the left of the farmhouse door as you enter. Scores of preachers can tell stories of happy Sundays spent on the beautiful farm at DRY STREET. William Wigglesworth's son of the brave Farmer, Mr. William Wigglesworth, had taken over the farm and was still living there in the late 1890s

Soon after the opening of the preaching room at DRY STREET FARM morning and evening services were commenced at Stanford le Hope. Ministers from Gravesend and Dartford came alternatively once month to visit the little Societies on the Essex side of the Thames. There was no steam Ferry to cross the Thames – the voyage had to be made in a rowing boat, crossing from Gravesend on Wednesday afternoon. The Minister would then walk to East Tilbury, preached and stayed the

night. The next day he would visit and dine and then walked to Stanford. On Friday he would visit DRY STREET FARM where he stayed on the farm. On the Saturday Mr Wigglesworth would drove him to Stanford – where he walked six miles to Tilbury Ferry and so to Gravesend Midday.

Some of great Methodist names associated with the work in this area are Joseph Carter, Jeremiah Butler, Mr. Sullins, Herbert and Mrs Massey and a Mr Allen who gave a chapel. It is also understood that the preacher John Westley preached at Dry Street farm, staying overnight in one of the bedrooms.

It would also appear there was a connection with the Vange Bell Hill Mission, in Bells Hill Road. This mission hall was built in 1886, it was built and funded through the efforts of William Belcham, a Rayleigh man who had moved to Bells Hill Road. He became it first Superintendant. It is also referred to as the Powerhouse. In the early 1900s a group of thirty people left the Mission Church and built a tin tabernacle hall on the corner of Dry Street and Old Tree Hill. The corner was known as Scherrers Corner. It is not known why they left it could be that the Bell Hill Tabernacle Hall had become too small.

The new Tabernacle building was used until today's memorial church was opened. The area where the tin tabernacle was built is today community orchard named Providence orchard and is looked after by the Friends of Langdon Living Landscape. For a time, there was initially a cottage (Dry Street Cottage) but was replaced in 1959 by a pair of brick-built cottages in 1959 which were demolished in the early 1970s.



(Dry Street Farm is a grade II timber framed weatherboarded farmhouse built around 1720)



Dry Street Farm

Memorial Church – One Tree Hill



The existing church building was erected in 1931 on donated land and the church hall was built in the 1950s in memory of the son of the then Pastor, Mr Allpress, who had been killed in a home guard accident. Various improvements and extensions have gradually been added to equip the church with modern kitchen and toilet facilities.

Dry Street Memorial Church, 3rd October 1931 - *Extract from the local paper*



To erect a memorial to someone who has passed away is by no means unusual, but Mr. T W Cook, of Leigh, has adopted a different procedure and has erected a memorial to himself.

The memorial takes the form of a church and it has been erected at Dry Street, Langdon Hills, at the top of One Tree Hill.

The Church was opened on Saturday 3rd October 1931, after the stone laying ceremony had been performed. Mr. Cook, who laid the foundation stone, explained that he was unable to lay the stone when the Church was being built, as he was in America at the time. Mrs. F Church, a daughter of Mr. Cook in memory of her mother, laid a second stone. Mrs. Cook also performed the opening ceremony, unlocking the door with a special key.

The large attendance at the ceremony when the proceedings were led by the Pastor, Mr Gillam of Leigh, who was formally connected with the Bell Hill Mission at Vange.

About half a century ago a little wooden mission building was erected at Dry Street and for a considerable time was connected with the work of the Bell Mission, but later on it was decided to carry on Dry Street Mission as separate unit. For some time, past, the little wooden building had been too small for the growing needs of the district, and it was decided to raise money for the building of a new mission hall. The work was proceeding when Mr. Cook, after having



already made a generous donation to the fund, offered to build the church at his own expense.

At the service outside the new building, on Saturday, 8th October 1931, prayers were offered by Rev T W Shepherd of Langdon Hills Baptist Church and the foundation stones was laid by Mr. Cook & Mrs. Church.

Mrs. Church also performed the opening ceremony, unlocking the door with a special key. In a few moments the little church was packed, and people stood in the vestries and kitchen adjoining and in the aisles. Forms were placed in the porch and even then, there was not enough room, many people having to sit and stand in the grounds outside, listening at doors and windows.

Mr. G T Veness, JP of Thundersley, presided, and Madame Kathryn Kind, who was the soloist, sang "The King of Love My

Shepherd is" and "Angel Ever Bright and Fair"

The Pastor, Mr. Gillam, after welcoming and he felt that in future, Dry Street should be renamed Merry Street, he went on to ask those who had not seen the little wooden box which they had previously used as a mission hall to make a pilgrimage to it that day.

It was about 50 years ago that a band of children of God first decided to extend their work to Dry Street and out of their meagre pittance they erected the little wooden temple which had been used ever since. There were on that day among the mission workers, children of that first band of workers. Things had on rapidly since that time and today they built on the foundations laid by those early workers of Christ in Dry Street.

When the day came that they felt they would have to do something to make their church adequate to the needs of the district, many suggestions were offered. The Woman's Own started to collect farthings; then they had a field day, under the organisation of Mrs. Gillam and her workers, and upon that day Mr. Cook was moved by God and offered a sum of £25 to the building fund

Then they began to look at their plans and found that, under the town-planning scheme for Dry Street, the road was to be widened, and would take away about half of their existing building. Mr K E Dowson, the owner of the present site was approached and he offered them the site at low cost

One Tree Hill was to be widened to a 60 feet road in 1932 under the town-planning scheme, so that they had obtained a really splendid frontage and a fine site. That brought him (Mr. Gillam) one day to one great day, a day he would never forget, when Mr. Cook, who was also his employer, called for him and, placing a hand on his shoulder, and said. "Well, boy, I have built a hall to the memory of my mother, and would like to put one up to the memory of myself", with a hand on his shoulder, Mr. Cook promised him he would erect the building they had opened that day.



Mr. Gillam went on to enumerate the various gifts which they had received. The site having been paid for by Mr. T J Dennis, of Leigh, gifts from various supporters and friends all over the district, including minister's chair, Communion table and chairs, Communion set, chairs for the church, hymn books and all the furnishings.

All that remained to be paid for were a few lamps and other articles, which he hoped, would be paid for by the end of the day. Other gifts were a chair from Messrs Kind and Co., the builders, a Communion chair from the maker of the chairs in the body of the church. A donation of £3 2s 6d in farthings from Women's Own and from a tiny girl, who had the money given her by her parents to spend. But who had come along with tears in her eyes to him and said she had heard that money was wanted to build a new mission hall and had offered him her two farthings.

The dedicatory sermon was preached by Rev E Barlow, of Leigh, President of the Essex Baptist Association, who spoke of the boldness of the early Christians, who refused to keep silent in their teachings of the Gospel when bidden to do so the chief priests.

At the end of the service, tea was served in a marquee adjoining the church, and another service was held in the evening, at which Mr. G T Veness spoke shortly. Madame Kathryn Kind was the soloist again and Rev F G Wheeler, of Leigh, and Mr. T W Cook gave addresses.

The church is a brick building roughcast with red brick pillars and porch. Inside, on the east wall, above the rostrum, a marble tablet has been let into the wall and bears the following inscription.

"This church is the gift of T W Cook, Esq. Of Leigh on Sea and was opened on October 3rd 1931, as a thank offering to God for many years' services amongst the boys and girls of Shoreditch, London." Beside the tablet hangs a picture of Mr. Cook.

The pulpit, rostrum chairs, communion table and chairs are of unpolished oak. The Minster's chair was a gift from Mrs. Delleany, of Leigh, in memory of her husband, Mr. James Delleany.

Heating is carried out by means of anthracite stove and lighting is by means of handsome plated oil lamps. The windows are opaque leaded glass and an organ and piano provide the music.

At the rear of the body of the church are the Minster's vestry and the kitchen, neither of which have been completed. The church is not attached to any denomination and is a Free Church in every sense of the word.



Stanley George Allpress



The following report on the death of Stanley George Allpress appeared in the Chelmsford Chronicle – Friday 18 September 1942

MILLS BOMB WAS DEFECTIVE CORONER THINKS

Young Home Guard killed in act of throwing grenade at Camp: Father Expresses Hope There Will be no More Such Accidents.

Compelled, as he said to come to the conclusion that the grenade itself was defective, Coroner L.F. Beccle returned a verdict of Accidental death at the inquest at Brentwood on Friday on Stanley Geo. Allpress, 18, veterinary student of High Road, Langdon Hills, who was killed while throwing a Mills bomb at a Home Guard Camp.

George T Allpress, clerk father of deceased said his son was a member of the Berkshire Home Guard, and during his holiday arranged to spend a week in camp with the Home Guard.

Capt. John V. Horn, Russell Road, Laindon, said deceased had received practice in throwing dummy grenades and was quite conversant with the technique.

The coroner: He was not at all nervous? Witness: Not that I was aware of.

Lieut. John W.A. Gardner, bombing officer, said deceased and others were practising throwing live grenades; each man was to throw a couple. He gave the usual orders and deceased threw his first grenade perfectly. He was unhurried and there was no question of nervousness. Removal of the pin had no effect, as a lever was held while the grenade was held and the bomb should not explode until four seconds from the time it left the hand. Witness, who stood two or three feet in front of the deceased, gave the order to throw and watched the deceased's hand come up to the full extent.

FLASH AND EXPLOSION

There was a flash and an explosion. "Deceased told me he was injured," continued the officer, "and I knew I was not myself, but said I would be there in a moment, but I was unable to do so". Witness added that deceased was one of the best men he had had under instruction.

A senior officer of the Home Guard said Lieut. Gardner was an experienced, level-headed instructor who had passed over 200 men through the course.

Lieut. Gardner said he had heard of a previous case and thought it must have been due to a premature burst. Had deceased released the lever he would have heard the striker and this would automatically fire the fuse, the smoke from which would have been visible. He was convinced that deceased did not release the lever.

The coroner observed that any defect in the individual being ruled out, the only other possible explanation would be a defect in the instrument and as there was little or nothing left of the grenade it was not possible to determine that.

Lieut. Gardner said he understood the fragments were considerably smaller than expected. Asked by the Coroner if the matter

had been reported to the War Office, a senior officer stated that there had been an investigation, but no useful evidence had been found.

INFREQUENT CASE

The coroner: Is this of frequent occurrence?

The officer said he had taken several thousand men in bombing practice and only had one personal accident like that before. He attributed it to premature detonation. All grenades were inspected to ascertain that there were no flaws which would, Brentwood, said death was due to shock and multiple injuries; and Lance-Corporal Edward A. L. Yull, Silverdale Street, Westcliff, also gave evidence.

The coroner said according to the bombing officer it was quite evident that it was not a human factor which had gone wrong and the only conclusion one could come to was that the grenade itself was defective.


The Camp Commandant and other officers expressed sympathy with the bereaved family and Mr Allpress said he hoped everything possible would be done to prevent recurrence of such accidents.

The coroner said it should be realised that the men were using lethal weapons and the authorities took every step that was humanly possible. Any defect was not done deliberately or carelessly, but occasionally things did go wrong. Those responsible were not infallible.



Parish: Langdon Hills

Stanley George Allpress



Birthplace : West Ham

Residence : Langdon Hills

Rank : Private

Number :

Regiment : Home Guard

Additional Regimental Info : 7th Berkshire (Reading Borough) Battalion

Date of Death : 16th August 1942

Age at Death : 18

Death Location : UK

Type of Casualty : Accidental death caused by defective Mills bomb

*Cemetery : St Marys & All Saints Old Churchyard,
Langdon Hills*

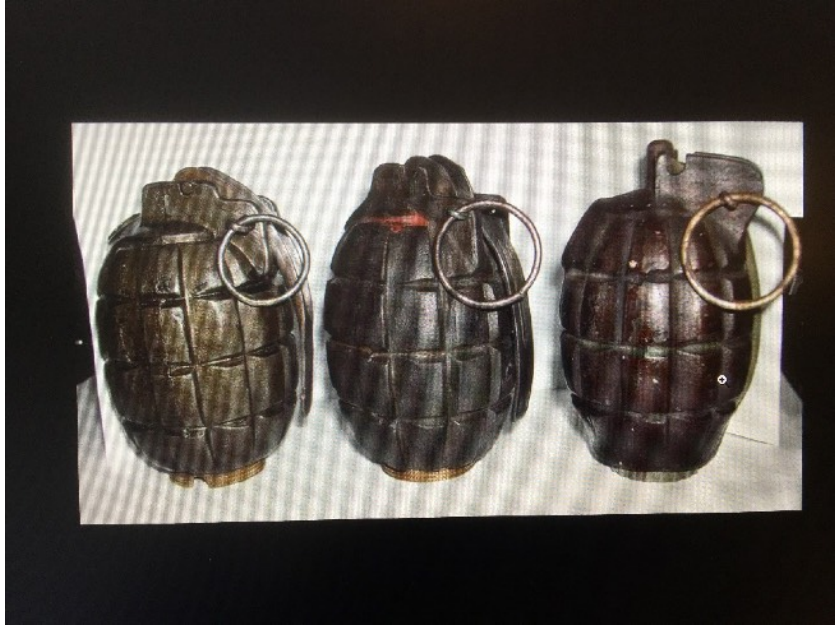
Grave Ref : Grave 113

Local War Memorial : Langdon Hills Memorial Hall

Campaign Medals : 1939-1945 War Medal & Star

*Other Information : Son of George Thomas & Mary Eliza
Allpress*

The Mills bomb was developed and manufactured at William Mill's factory Birmingham. It was the most common hand grenade used by the British troops during the First World War. The Perforated edges enabled it to fragment into many pieces of cast iron on explosion, creating maximum damage.



Ken Porter
Basildon Borough Heritage Society
January 2022