

# STOCKSBRIDGE: 1917 *Arnold P.E.A.R.I*

When one is requested to reminisce about life in the early days of this century, ie 1910 or so, it is not so easy, at 81, to remember names, dates, etc. So I hope I don't get it wrong too often.

### Good choir

My connection with St Matthias Church and the School began when we moved from Bolsterstone to Stocksbridge about 1910. Attending the C of E School as a matter of course. I soon found that, unless you were tone-deaf, as a boy, you were in the Church Choir, and a very different choir it was in those days.

Mr Marsh Swallow, Head of the School, was the Organist, he was one of nature's gentlemen in the full sense of the word. The Choirmaster was, at first, Mr W H Robinson, Manager of S Fox and Co. (which became part of the United Steel Co during the 1914/18 war).

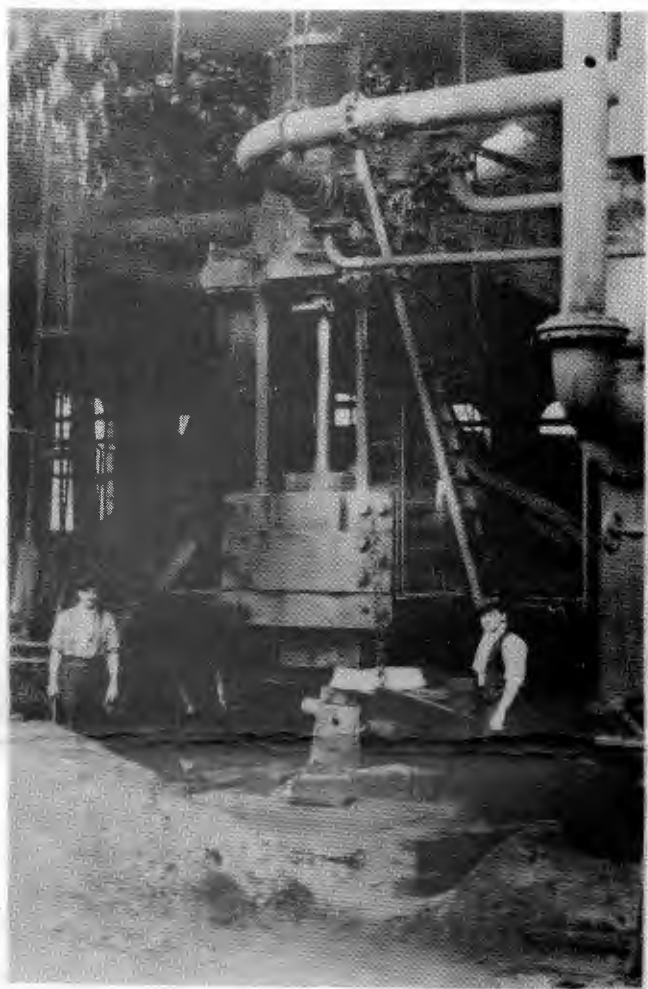
The choir was very large and very good. I should think we had 16 or so men and 18 to 20 robed boys, plus about 6 probationers sitting at the back, waiting for any vacancies, and who had their own practices under one of the men of the choir. It was the first time I had heard of Decani and Cantores, the two sides of the choir stalls, often utilised when we did an anthem, which was frequently.

### Fox's Church

Services seemed to be always well attended, and most of the church sidesmen, and the wardens, were fairly prominent men in Fox's, which might account for good attendances!

The Rev. C Edginton was Curate in charge, as we were part of

Bolsterstone Parish and became a separate parish in 1917, long after my voice (never that good) had broken!



*Making railway rolling stock 'tyres'*

So far I have devoted my remarks to school and church. Now a word about the community generally, vastly different to present day, I'm afraid.

### To work at 13

Children left school at 13 those days, unless you were lucky enough to pass the County Minor Exams and go to the Grammar School, way out of most of our reaches, mainly for financial reasons. Families seemed to want children to start work as soon as possible

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to augment the average poor wages and incomes.

I left school the day after my 13<sup>th</sup> birthday and started work in the Tyre and Axel Mill (see picture) the next day.

Most children went either into the steel works or into the colliery and the girls went into the Umbrella Department.

On the social side, the Church had quite a lot of activities, football and cricket teams, C E M S, and an amateur dramatic society.

I hope these somewhat rambling remarks will stimulate someone of my generation to produce perhaps more exciting reminiscences.

Arnold Pears

1980