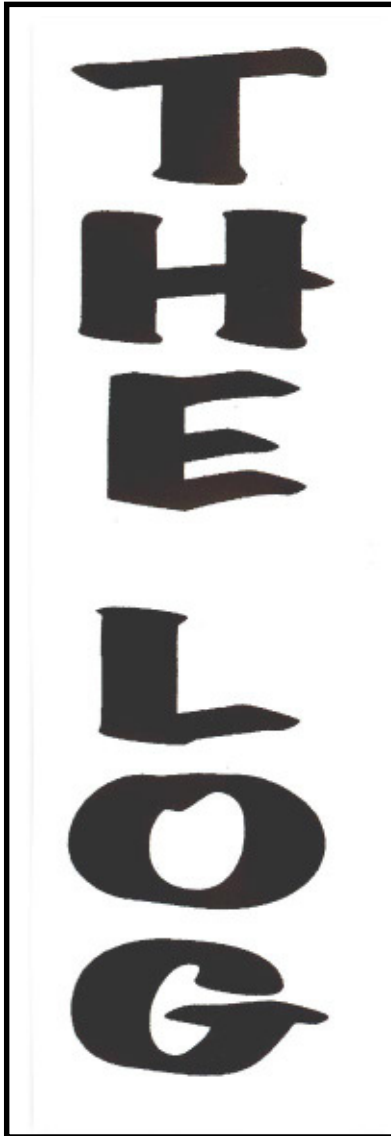




*St Lawrence's Church*

**A Tribute to  
The Reverend  
Edward Peter Alexander Furness**

**VICAR AND FRIEND**



*St Paul's Church*

Vicar of St. Lawrence with St. Paul, Longridge  
1964 - 1988

Died 25th January, 2008

Over the past month many of us in the church family and the wider community will have been recalling personal memories of Peter Furness. In the twenty four years Peter was Vicar of Longridge he touched the lives of so many of us in different ways and through different circumstances and as Canon Gordon Bellinger in his fitting address at the funeral service in St. Paul's recounted - the people of this community loved the man. We were reminded what a strong word 'love' is - Peter Furness spent all of his ministry trying to encourage people to 'love' Jesus Christ - did he know just how much people loved and respected him!

The Rev. E.P.A. Furness was of course not just the Vicar of Longridge he was curate at St. Andrews Ashton-on-Ribble, and in Storrington, Sussex - Vicar of Worsthorne, then Longridge and Worsthorne for a second time, before returning to Longridge on retirement.

**We need to go back to 1964 to start Peter's Longridge connection - one of the Churchwardens at that time was Roger Evans who recalls the year and that first meeting.....**

On a very cold autumn afternoon in 1964 two churchwardens, Stanley Dacre and myself were waiting in the Parish Church vestry for the arrival of the Rev. Peter Furness, then Vicar of Worsthorne, and candidate to become Vicar of Longridge. After a short wait, Stan, who had been gazing through the window, suddenly gave me a nudge and said "Hey Up!" "He's Here".

I left the vestry and went to meet him. As we approached one another we both smiled and in a manner reminiscent of Livingstone and Stanley we greeted one another. "Mr. Evans?" "Mr. Furness?"

From that moment I had the privilege to serve him in office for almost 20 years.

The meeting lasted for almost an hour and towards the end I ventured to ask Peter what his churchmanship was, could we expect any radical changes and what would be his immediate aims?

His answer startled me and I will always remember it. "I'm not interested in the politics, I would just like to know people and more importantly to get on with them". And so it came to pass!

After a few weeks I became aware of favourable comments circulating in the parish. "He's alright you know", "You can talk to him and he'll listen." "He has a keen sense of humour and likes a joke, furthermore, he will have a drink with you".

The general opinion, after a little while was, He'll Do!

Gradually Peter began to make his mark. Things began to happen and it was encouraging to note that with every initiative there was always a positive response.

At this point I would like to tell a little story concerning a vicar who had recently moved to another parish. After a few weeks he began sitting on the railway embankment near the vicarage, looking very sad and dejected. This behaviour became a regular habit and one day a parishioner dared to ask him what was wrong, why did he do it. Without looking up he muttered, "Its the trains". The passerby quite puzzled asked him "What about the trains." Back came the reply, "They are the only things that move round here."

Now I have certain sympathy for that vicar. It's a great pity he wasn't familiar with the axiom, 'If you want things to happen you have to MAKE them happen.

Peter did and he kept us all on our toes.

It is now necessary for me to say that Peter's ministry was not a 'Solo' effort. We all know that Doreen had a little bit to do with it!!

Her contribution to the life of the Parish is well documented and we thank her yet again.

Today I want to take this opportunity to salute her for the inspiration she gives to others.

May we continue to remember her and the family in our prayers.

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The Rev. Peter Furness became Vicar of Longridge on Monday 14th December, 1964. At the time he was a man in his thirties, married to Doreen and with two young children, Rosemary (6) and Rachel (3). In his first 'Vicar's Viewpoint' in the church magazine Peter wrote -

**'I am very happy indeed to be your Vicar and it is my sincere desire to be a good personal friend to you all. I very much hope that if an occasion arises when any of you think that I can be of any help or service to you, you will not hesitate to let me know'.**

And so began twenty four years of unstinting work in the parish - a young man with energy, ideas and commitment. Leading from the front and



sharing his faith in a very personal way - where each individual person mattered. Peter carried much of the weight of the parish on his own shoulders, always finding it difficult to delegate, wanting to ensure that everything was carried out to his own high standard. How many of us remember those daily lists he carried of people to see and jobs to be done - no emails in those days of course. Through personal endeavour Peter won the respect of the community and both in work and in retirement his efforts must have brought him much satisfaction.

For all those years The Log was that vital link between the Vicar and the parish - keeping people informed and keeping the parish together. Peter saw his monthly 'Vicar's Viewpoint' as an important communicating opportunity and some wonderful thought provoking messages he gave us. Not only was he a major contributor but he also edited the Log. How often must the midnight oil have been burned in the vicarage, getting copy ready for the printers. Those efforts were rewarded with a print run of 975 copies, (the 1,000 always eluding him), such was the interest in the parish magazine - and in the parish as a whole.



**The day school has always been an important contributor to the Log and the following is an appreciation from Margaret Edwards, ex-headteacher, and John Turner, ex-deputy headteacher, of Longridge Church of England Primary School**

Margaret recalls:

I first met Peter in an unofficial capacity in 1981, at a Pet Show held in the school hall and playground. He was here, there and everywhere, meeting, greeting and having a laugh with all and sundry. The atmosphere was excellent.

I later met Peter in an official capacity, when I was interviewed for the headship of the school. He was Chairman of the Governors, carrying out his duties conscientiously and meticulously, with another similarly thorough and painstaking man, John Slater, who was the governors' clerk. These two were my reliable, regular back-up team during most of my years as head.

It was one of Peter's voluntary duties to come into school once a week to lead Morning Worship (assembly). These visits were always interesting for both staff and pupils alike. His vast array of props often had us wondering, "How on earth is a bucket (or whatever else he brought) going to feature in an Act of Worship?" It always did though, and the assemblies would be memorable! When Peter was under pressure from other directions, I would urge him to give us a miss, but he never would. He liked to have his finger on the pulse.

His knowledge of parishioners was amazing - very useful when the school was over-subscribed and the governors had to make their selection based on the family's support for the church. Once a month, school notes would be prepared for the Longridge Log. Peter would often add his own extras! It became a personal challenge to make sure I covered absolutely everything!

John tells of Peter's contributions to the school's field study trips to Arnside.

For three consecutive years we were short of female supervision for the trips, but Peter was able to identify suitable parishioners and persuade them to accompany us so that the visit could take place. Peter eventually joined the team himself and enjoyed the experience for several years.

During one of the visits, pupil Alan Wormwell fell from the slide steps whilst visiting the park during Monday evening. This necessitated a visit to Lancaster hospital, and as Peter had taken his car, he took us. It was so easy spending three hours in Peter's company - always plenty to chat about in what could easily have been such a boring time. He was comfortable in the presence of a wide variety of people and struck up a lasting friendship with Ben, the warden of the hostel at that time. Both were ex-forces men and there was an immediate common bond.

Peter was often accompanied on the Arnside visits by his good friend Bill Reid. There were several

amusing moments - trying to open a bottle for one of the children whilst resting at Arnside tower was one. All the adults had tried - only Peter succeeded and unfortunately the bottle smashed as he tried to clip the metal top off by hitting it against a rock! Everyone fell about laughing - even the child who owned the bottle!

Getting lost crossing Arnside Knott was another memorable event. The idea was great in theory, but didn't work in practice. John took a sick girl to the doctor's, accompanied by Ben. After the consultation, Ben drove round to the other side of the Knott, where they would catch up with the group. They got all the way to Leighton Hall, but no sign of anyone - the group hadn't arrived. Peter and Bill had taken a wrong turning on the Knott and eventually arrived an hour later than scheduled!

Here's my favourite story, which went a long way to explaining Peter's tremendous sense of humour. His dad was obviously a character too. I never tired of hearing this story and heard it last about twelve months ago whilst standing in the fish queue on Berry Lane at ten past seven in the morning!

Apparently, Peter was quite a thin, scrawny boy when young, and his dad took him to watch Accrington Stanley who were in terrible form at the time and could hardly score a goal.

"Just look at my lad!" he shouted. "He's all skin and bone and it's all your fault! He never puts any weight on! I've promised him a pie every time you lot score and just look at him!"

My favourite story was when Peter told of the awful seaside landlady who was a terrible cook. "I cut my lip on one of her poached eggs!"

So many very happy memories, all underpinned by deep respect for a good thoughtful man who always gave of his best and whose memory will endure in the hearts and minds of those whose lives he touched.

The school and young people's groups were central to Peter's ministry - the Sunday School, the Youth Club and later the Brigade ensured that the church had a significant role in the lives of not only the young people but their wider families as well.

### **Marjorie Procter, recalling her time as Sunday School secretary , pays this tribute**

During Peter's ministry Sunday School continued to play a very important role in the life of the parish. From the start being a family man he soon endeared himself to the children and it wasn't an uncommon sight to see them around him tugging at his sleeve eager to gain his attention. Peter had become a father figure. At Sunday School meetings I soon became aware Peter was very meticulous and so I felt it only courteous to record the minutes neatly and accurately! Another was his compulsion to double check everything, before the annual procession he would always enquire if I had informed the police and did they have all the details and as an afterthought he would say 'By the way Marjorie what about the band?' That was Peter always making sure there would be no hiccups.

It was a very sad occasion for me and others when Sunday School closed. However I do not believe and I think Peter might share my belief that all is not lost, the influence he had at Sunday School still remains with some people still living in Longridge. The countless number of children who enjoyed the fellowship all had their memories, all had a story to tell and I believe their witness throughout their lives will have borne much fruit and will continue to do so.

To quote a line from one of Peter's favourite hymns at Sunday School - "The dance goes on".

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To run all the groups and organisations reliable people had to be found and in the 70's a new chapter for the Church Youth Club brought together - Bob Jackson, Dot Little, Syd Thorpe, Peter Turver and later Glynne Procter - people who didn't even know each other but who went on to serve the parish in this capacity for a good number of years.

As is the case now each organisation had to try and stand on its own two feet financially and hopefully raise extra money for the upkeep of the church as well. Times do not change - finance and balancing the books was as difficult in Peter's time as it remains today - one of the differences of course being that covenanted giving did not significantly feature - it was down to the weekly 'plate' collection, to donations and to social fund raising. The Spring Fair being the major annual event - with as much money raised with prior events as was raised on the day.

How many people remember the following occasions organised by the Youth Club - starting with the Funny Football when the Vicar's Villa X1 played a Youth Club All Stars XI - everyone in fancy dress and lead out by Longridge Band - the Vicar playing in goal. Did anyone ever find out the result? Then there was the



Generation Game, this time with Peter and daughter Rosemary competing. Longridge Olympics came next - and captain of the 'Middle East Team - you've guessed it EPA. The one Peter probably enjoyed the best was the Soap Box Derby, describing himself as 'Flash Furness driving the Burnley Belter'. - The programme indicated there were 45 entries that day - with some of the local trades people also taking part.

Peter's real sense of commitment was shown when the silver was stolen from St. Paul's and he arranged a sponsored 'Nip Round the Grounds' visiting all the Lancashire football grounds - a labour of love if ever there was one.



**Peters love of football is one of the things Brian Smith recalls.....**

My ten years as choirmaster started during the time Mr. Furness was Vicar of Longridge. At that time the two churches had two choirs and two choirmasters and to a certain extent two congregations each preferring their own church. Mr. Furness dealt with this unusual situation with skill and ease showing no favour for either. He himself was a very good musician being able to read music and join in with the basses or tenors if necessary. He had his own favourites in music and always enjoyed singing the chants particularly the chant named 'Worsthorne', as one might expect. It was customary at Christmas in those days, for Dr. Robert Hodgkinson to take an augmented choir carol singing round Longridge in aid of The Arthritis Council. Even with his busy schedule Mr Furness would join in on the travels, singing with gusto and enjoying the nights out.

At that time, many church funds were raised by having social events. These were organised by a social committee which Mr. Furness chaired with his customary determination. We cannot forget the Mothers Union with Mrs Furness as enrolling member of one of the largest branches in the Diocese - how we enjoyed those wonderful MU Concerts.

In 1988 a farewell concert for Mr. Furness and his family, was held in the Civic Hall, and all the church organisations were invited to take part. Looking back, with the aid of an old video tape taken at the time of that event, we are reminded, in humorous form, of some of the more interesting episodes in his life.

St. Paul's choir sang a psalm using known chants but having words describing his well known interests. His love of cats, three at that time living in the vicarage.

His liking for fast cars. He managed to get booked for speeding going through Grimsargh, and of course his favourite football team Burnley and all things connected with the Claret and Blues. He even gave each cherub above the chancel of St. Paul's the name of a Burnley footballer.

He enjoyed joining in concert party entertainment and delighted in playing with words. Dressing up was not something he avoided either and people still remember the time when he dressed up in a romper suit and stood in a playpen.

Replaying the old video of that concert, which was held in a very packed Civic Hall we are reminded of the legacy that was left by Mr. Furness and the respect and esteem in which he was held.

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**Being part of the concert party referred to by Brian brings us to Gilbert's Gang and Irene Reid's recollections.....**

There were two events in the Church calendar not to be missed. The Mother's Union concert and The Gilbert's Gang concert. Gilbert's Gang was a group of local "artistes" gathered together by Gilbert Pinder who was well known for producing local shows.

The Gang consisted of John Wilkinson, Gordon Lockhart, Veronica Reid and Alan Seed, all accomplished vocalists, John Parker and me doing the sing-a-longs and Peter. Peter was our comedian and he could have taught the other Peter (Kaye) a thing or two. We had a different theme every year and Peter always managed to come up with funny stories to match the theme of the year. The school hall was always packed and the audience would wait to see Peter do his turn. No-one who was there could possibly forget Peter as the farmer, the soldier, the holiday-camp comedian and perhaps, his most memorable role, as a strong-man in the circus. The Gang was invited to perform far and wide but we had to ensure a gig didn't clash with a Burnley or Accrington match. It wasn't unknown for the show to be held up while Peter laughed uncontrollably, at one of his own jokes. He loved jokes about Parish life so perhaps it would be fitting to end with one, out of hundreds, that I remember.

### CHURCH NOTICE BOARD

**Ladies, don't forget the jumble sale on Saturday. Get rid of the unwanted things lying around your house. Bring your husbands.**

I can't tell it like Peter. You had to be there.



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**The Church Lads and Church Girls Brigade has gone from strength to strength Hilda Marle recalls how it started.....**



In September 1976 I thought about a Church Brigade for Longridge, so my friend Elsie Smith and I went along to see Mr Furness - who was all for it but we didn't know where to begin. We visited Mr & Mrs. Sumner at St. Matthews, Preston and with their help Mr. Furness was able to contact Headquarters - fill up all the forms and things were underway - we were to meet in the School Hall.. There was a lot to do - uniforms to get etc. but it all came together in 1977 when we were official and we became (the first) St Lawrence with St Paul Church Lads and Church Girls Brigade Longridge. Mr Furness always asked about

the Brigade after he retired and was interested in what they were doing and what they had won in competitions. He was so proud of them He was a good Vicar, one of the people. He used to come and take prayers for the Brigade on meeting nights and encourage them to do their badge work and Church duties. At the end it was ironic because I brought him into the brigade and my grandson saw him out it can't get any better than that And now the Brigade lives on under the supervision of Mrs Proctor and here officers who donate so much of their time and do a wonderful job.

**Keith Kaye shares his own personal thoughts and recollections of Mr Furness.**

Having come to live in Longridge in 1975 we didn't really know what to expect and wondered if we had done the right thing in leaving our respective families on the far flung coast of the Fylde (don't scoff too much, just remember that the M55 hadn't been opened yet) to move into a farming community that we knew little about.

Not being particularly religious and/or church going it took a while before we got to know what was on offer on our doorstep. A personal sorrow changed our lives but help was on hand in the form of Mr Furness. From that day on we will always remember a "nice" man, not an adjective that is used much these days but is so appropriate to him.

In the following years Judith became a stalwart of the Longridge Mothers' Union and I just did the things that I had always done and attended the church as an ordinary parishioner.

When it came time for our son to be confirmed it cropped up in conversation that I myself had not been confirmed. Having enquired through the right channels Mr Furness couldn't have been more helpful and understanding when asked if I could be confirmed at the same time as our son.

This happened on Sunday February 9th 1986 and I am the proud owner of a much thumbed Good News New Testament Bible inscribed and presented by Mr Furness to celebrate the occasion. For some years after that I served as a sidesman as a mark of respect to Mr Furness until he moved on to Worsthorne.

His love of Accrington Stanley FC & Burnley FC were real enough, it might not be PC these days but I remember with fondness the tale of many a couple having to arrange their wedding day in Longridge on a Saturday when Burnley FC were not at home.

Within the service to mark his passing at a full St Pauls on Monday 4th February 2008 and all the magic words said about him I couldn't help but remember a nice man who had time for me when it mattered most.

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In the October 1988 Log - just as the family were preparing to leave Longridge for Worsthorne - Peter gave us a ministerial stock-taking - outlining in detail the demands and the joys of being a Vicar and he ended that piece as follows:-

**It has been a privilege to serve the Lord in this portion of his vineyard over the last almost quarter century. I am well aware of those places where I have failed him and only too conscious of my weak points and shortcomings but it is good to know that we place our work in the hands of God and that, in the end, the result rests with him.**

But of course 1988 was not the end. 1994 brought a new chapter for Mr & Mrs. Furness as they moved back to Longridge and to Severn Street to start retirement. An opportunity then for Peter to reconnect with The Royal British Legion, to strike up a friendship with the then Vicar of Chipping, Arthur Siddall where both Mr & Mrs Furness sang in the choir and Peter led worship as required. Time also to take daily walks, chat to people in Berry Lane, enjoy more time with the family, especially grandson Thomas - but still we understand the need to write those daily lists - hopefully then not as long.



Peter wouldn't wish us to dwell on the ill-health at the end of his life and we won't - appropriately the final Vicar's Viewpoint in November 1988 - was headed 'Thanks for the Memory' We thank God that Peter Furness was guided to Longridge and for all that he was able to achieve here and elsewhere in his lifetime.

***O Lord, support us all the day long if this troublous life, until the shades lengthen, the evening comes, the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over and our work is done.  
Then Lord, in your mercy, grant Peter a safe lodging, a Holy rest and peace at the last.***

***Amen***